

## RAVENSWORTH

The village of Ravensworth, 7.5 km (5 miles) north-west of Richmond, lies 122 m (440 ft.) above sea level, in a valley which has no name. It occupies a sheltered position below the high ridge on which stands the Parish Church at Kirby Hill, and is much the same as when Leland, Royal antiquary and chaplain to Henry 8th. described it in 1538:- 'Ravenswathe Castel in a Mares' (i.e. muddy) Ground - a parke on a little billing ground by hit It is 5 miles by north-west from Richemont .. and thereby is a praty village ... and by hit cummith a Bekke caulled Ravenswath Becket.

It is described thus in the Domesday Book of 1086:- 'In Ravensuuet, for geld, twelve carucates, and eight ploughs may be (there). Torfin had one manor there and sixteen villanes and four bordars with eight ploughs. A church is there and a priest. Four acres of meadow. The whole, one leuga in length and half (a leuga) in breath. T.R.E. (in the time of King Edward) it was worth forty shilling: now, thirty shilling'.

There is much in the valley to suggest that the Cumbrian hills are older than the Pennines. In several places, there are boulders of Shap Granite which were evidently brought down from Shap Fell by glaciers during the Ice Ages. One of these boulders is outside the Hack and Spade Inn at Whashton, and a few in the fields of Park House at Ravensworth; two or three in the yard adjoining the old joiner's shop at Ravensworth; and there was one in the old schoolyard which was brought there, many years ago, from about 0.5 km (half a mile) up the road leading to Gayles.

Some of the cottages in the village are built on a mound which could have been made by Holme Beck overflowing its banks and leaving, through the years, a deposit of mud and stones. In such a case, it would be expected that the mound would consist of gravel chiefly and soil, but this is not so. At the western end of the mound, nothing except soil and sub-soil is found up to depths of 2m (6 ft.). Again, on the north side of the mound, there is a ridge extending along the west end for about 275m (300 yds.) and it appears that something has brushed along the side to make the ridge. From these facts, it can be assumed that a large glacier became stranded here and that portions of it on the north and south sides broke off and then swept on, carving out the valleys on either side, while the central position melted and deposited the soil, thus leaving the mound on which the houses on the north-east side of the village are built. It is also possible that the ebb and flow of the ice left moraines which guided

subsequent ice or melt-water flows.

### **Local becks and waterways**

The course of the stream which bore the name of Ravenswath Becke in Leland's day and is now known as Holme Beck is the same as that followed before the Ice Ages by the River Tees as it flowed down Holme-Gilling Beck into the Swale but, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Smallways, the encroaching ice blocked its passage and it had to cut a new channel for itself. The water of Holme Beck comes from a number of streams, all of which have their source in the parish.

The first of these streams, Dalton Beck, rises on Gayles Moor, near the old, ruined farmstead of Hornbriggs where, as late as the 1850's, six people were in residence. It proceeds below Castle Steads, through Baxter Gill and past Throstle Gill Farm, and is joined by Scarbeck just above Dalton Mill. After this, the united waters pass through Dalton Village and continue to their junction with Browson Beck.



*Dalton Beck downstream of Throstle Gill Farm*

Scarbeck rises in Harker Moss, between Gayles and Long Green in Newsham township. After passing through Dousgill and Dalton Gill, it assumes the name of Scarbeck and joins Dalton Beck.



*Dalton Beck in winter, just  
upstream of Mill Farm,  
Ravensworth*

A further supply of water for Holme Beck comes from Browson Beck which is also known as Stalwath Beck in its lower reaches. This has its source in the Bottoms, near Smallways. These marshy fields are somewhat of a watershed between the Swale and the Tees. Some of the water escaping from the Bottom flows northwards into Hutton Beck which, in turn, becomes Caldwell Beck, Aldborough Beck and, finally Clow Beck, before emptying itself into the Tees near Croft. Browson Beck's chief tributary is Sprent Beck, now frequently dry in its lowest reach, which has its source on Cathaw on Newsham Pasture. After passing through Chapel Gill and Burdey's Gill, it is joined by Sker Burn. (This is the only stream in the Parish to be called such - probably a relic of Anglian nomenclature. The other streams are called 'beck'). Sker Burn once operated Newsham Mill; it then assumes the name of Cotton Mill Beck before emptying itself into Browson Beck.



*The confluence of Stalwath Beck and Dalton Beck*

The confluence of Stalwath Beck and Dalton Beck is about 300 m (327 yds.) below Stalwath Bridge on the lane between Dalton and Duns Bank. From here, the united

waters journey under the name of Holme Beck - a name which is probably derived from the Old Norse, holm, meaning 'a land partly surrounded by a stream or streams' - and after skirting Ravensworth village, run past the village of Whashton before entering Hartforth Wood and Gilling.

There were two corn mills at Ravensworth in the middle of the 16th. and early 17th. centuries, belonging to the lord of the manor, one of which existed until comparatively recent times. The water for these mills was drawn from Holme Beck upstream and followed a roundabout course to the millpond; a supplementary supply was obtained from a dam half-way up Alston Hill in the Park.



*The old bridge at Ravensworth over Holme Beck, from a picture postcard.*

Until the 1960's the bridge over Holme Beck was narrow, awkward to negotiate, but picturesque. Its replacement is broad, easy to negotiate, but ugly. In the days when packhorses were used, coal was brought from the Durham Collieries via Winston Bridge, Caldwell, Greenless Lane, Colliers. Lane, West Layton and Waitlands Lane. Here it crossed the bridge and entered the village by a narrow passage or ginnel between two cottages.

From Ravensworth, the road then led up Flats Bank to Quarry House, Sturdy House, Buddle House and No Man's Land to Marske-in-Swaledale. This was probably the main road between the collieries of South Durham and Swaledale, and doubtless some of this coal would be taken from Ravensworth to the copper smelting-mill which was upstream from Copper Mill Bridge. Most of these roads are still in existence but many of them are unsuitable for modern traffic.

On the south side of the road, between the village and the bridge, there was recently demolished an old cruck house which probably dated back to the early 16th. century or even earlier. Before its removal in 1978 to the Richmondshire Museum in Richmond, it was much dilapidated and seemingly beyond repair, although the two central back-to-back stone fireplaces were still in position. A cruck house got its name from the crucks which were selected tree trunks - or sometimes split trunks - which were placed inclining towards each other, tapering and meeting at the apex, where a ridge pole held the crucks together. There were no structural walls and the roof extended nearly to the ground.

The strength of such a house lay in its timber frame since the self-supporting panels and low sides of the house served merely to keep out the weather. The crucks carried to earth the whole weight of the roof, and there would be two or more crucks in a building, with rows of purlins on each side, and cross ties for uniting the opposing members of the pairs of crucks. The top was usually thatched with straw or some other available material such as ling, and the walls were usually of mud and wattle.

Although no longer fashionable, this type of construction was in a constant state of development, particularly in raised crucks and upper crucks, and was used in some areas as late as the 19th. century. There are few remains of them today in this area, although there are still existing a few half-cruck houses.

There are numerous little gills and steep-sided ravines along the valley which are worth exploring - and the valley carries a good bird population. Some of the woods sustain the Pied Flycatcher (*Muscicapa hypoleuca* L), a bird of very, local distribution. The valley is also interesting botanically. Some of the plants to be found include:- Wall Whitlow-grass (*Draba muralis* L), Herb Paris (*Paris quadrifolia* L), Shining Geranium or Cranesbill (*Saxifraga tridactylites* L), Spindle Tree (*Euonymus europaeus* L) and Bay Willow (*Salix pentandra* L).



Walled whitlow grass



Herb Paris



Spindle Tree



*Saxifraga tridactylites*

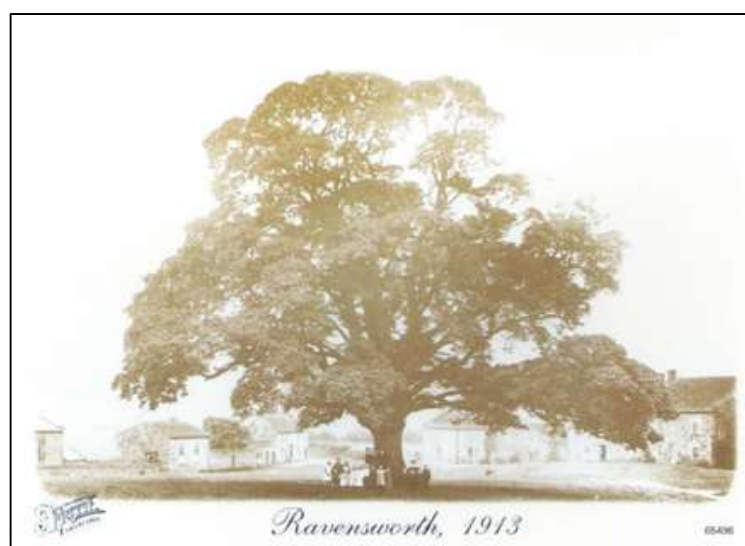
A few years ago, such interesting plants as the Birds Eye Primrose (*Primula farinosa* L),

the Globe Flower (Trollius europaeus L), Grass of Parnassus (Parnassia palustris L), Common Twayblade (Listera ovata L) and Marsh Helleborine (Epipactis palustris L) were all to be found in small isolated colonies in damp situation but drainage operations have so altered the environment that they are probably no longer able to retain a foothold in the parish.

The name Ravensworth suggests that it was the ford leading to the estate of the Norseman, Hrafn - Hrafn's ford. In Old Scandinavian, Hrafn was a personal name, and 'vao' signified a ford. But like other places of ancient origin, the name of the village has been spelt in various ways through the years. In the Domesday Book, it is referred to as Ravenesuuet; in the 12th. century as Revuneswaht; Ravenswade in 1201; Ravenswath from the 13th. to the 16th. centuries; and it assumed its present-day style in the 17th. century.

The village green was legally transferred some years ago by the then Lord of the Manor to the Ravensworth Parish Council. It is a spacious green of some 2 ha (5 acres) in extent, around which is grouped a number of two-storeyed houses of late 18th. century and early 19th. century date.

An imposing and attractive feature of the green used to be a giant sycamore tree towards its west end, whose branches covered a circle 90 m (100 yards) in circumference.



*The original Ravensworth Sycamore tree*

This tree fell about the year 1925 and was replaced by another tree planted nearby.

Until comparatively recent times, the remains of an Anglian cross - its short staff leaded

into its base - stood under the old tree, around the trunk of which was a square of flat stones, 1.5 m (5ft.) square. Other traces of the Anglian occupation consist of a remarkable series of lynchets (Anglian cultivation terraces) on the eastern side of Stoneygate Hill on the road to Richmond.



*The 'lynchets' which run along the north-facing hillside between Whashton and Kirby Hill*

Travelling in the direction of Whashton and Kirby Hill at the southeast corner of the village, is the ancient pinfold, where stray animals were impounded.



*Engraving dating from 12th May 1784 showing the castle and (in the foreground), the pinfold as it was at that time*



*The Pinfold as it is today, viewed from the road out of the village towards Richmond, in winter*

The old village school stands on the south side of the green; built in 1841 in the Gothic style favoured in that period, it was converted into a Church Hall in 1969. It was sited on a parcel of waste ground of about 0.2 ha (nearly half an acre) which belonged to the lordship of Ravensworth. It was given by Mr. Sheldon Cradock of Hartforth, lord of the manor, to 'the Minister, Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of the Township of Ravensworth'. In 1893, a second classroom was added, and the school continued under the care of the Church until it assumed controlled status in 1944. It was replaced by the present school, a short distance away, in 1968. Adjoining the old school, the Methodist Chapel was built in 1862 to replace an earlier structure.



*The village hall as it is today and as it was during the early 1960's, when it was the village school*

Other interesting buildings in the village include Tofta House, built in the 18th. century but altered in the 19th. century, which possesses a Welsh slate roof with stone coped side gables, Park House of similar structure, with a front door having fluted pillars and



other classical embellishments, and Mill Farmhouse with colour-washed cement rendering and composed of two contiguous buildings forming one dwelling-house. Both Tofta House and Park House contain what appear to be Jacobean cores to which have been added Georgian fronts.

Attached to the Ravensworth school is the Lax Charity of 1851. Thomas Lax, by his will proved at Richmond on April 22nd of that year, left £300., the dividend from which was to be applied for the benefit of the minister and schoolmaster on condition that the Vicar would hold at least 40 services of divine worship in the school every year, for which he would receive the annual sum of £5. The trustees of the Charity were the Vicar of Kirkby Ravensworth, the Vicar of Gilling West, and the owner of Park Farm at Ravensworth. After all expenses were paid, the balance of the income was to be given to the schoolmaster for the teaching of eight poor children from the township of Ravensworth in writing, reading and arithmetic in the said school, the children to be selected by the owner for the time being of Ravensworth Park. In 1904, the stock was transferred to the Charity Commissioners, and £200 worth of Consols were allocated to the minister and £107.7s.6d. worth to the Lax Educational Foundation. The Trust is now administered by the Ripon Diocesan Board of Finance under Section 86 of the 1944 Education Act.

The only other school in Ravensworth of which there is a record was a private boarding school in the latter half of the 17th. century. Mark Milbanke, the son of Sir Mark Milbanke of Halnaby, near Croft, was educated there. In 1669, at the age of seventeen, he matriculated as a Fellow Commoner at St. John's College, Cambridge. He succeeded his father as the second baronet and was Member of Parliament for Richmond in 1680 and High Sheriff of Northumberland. He died in 1690 and was buried at Croft. Another scholar of this school was John Ovington, son of James Ovington of Melsonby, farmer, who later entered St. John's College, Cambridge, as a sizer (an undergraduate receiving college assistance) in May, 1679, at the age of twenty two.



*Historical photo of the Bay Horse Inn,  
Ravensworth*

In 1840, there were four inns in Ravensworth:- Fox Hall, proprietor, Wm. Scaife; Hat and Feather, proprietor, Robert Thompson; King's Head, proprietor, Jacob Swales; and the Lord Brougham, proprietor James Lair. Of these, only Fox Hall on the A66, renamed The Fox in 1912, still survives. In the same vicinity at the junction of the A66 and Waitlands Lane, there stood the King's Arms - the house is now called Ravensworth Lodge - but this inn was closed about the year 1906. Until the late 1940's, two inns stood opposite each other in Ravensworth village - The Two Greyhounds and The Bay Horse - but only the latter has survived.

Few people of outstanding prominence have come from the village of Ravensworth, but worthy of mention in the Dictionary of National Biography is Cuthbert Shaw, a minor poet, the son of a shoemaker, born in 1733. He received his early education at Kirby Hill Grammar School, but was soon removed to Scorton where, after a few years, he was appointed usher. From there he became usher at the Grammar School at Darlington where, in 1756, he published his first poem entitled Liberty, which was inscribed to the Right Honourable the Earl of Darlington. He was then obliged to quit his employment and go in quest of fortune to London, where his first occupation consisted of writing essays and paragraphs for the newspapers, since he had a great 'gift for annotation upon contemporary personalities and events'.

For a short period, he became an actor, but he possessed few requisites for the stage, except figure, and he returned to a literary career. Hitherto he had led a somewhat dissipated life but having greatly profited from the sale of quack medicines, he was able

to marry an amiable and accomplished young woman of good family. He then started his political career in earnest and, for a short period, was tutor to the young son of the Earl of Chesterfield. He printed proposals for publishing a collection of his poems by subscription, but this was not accomplished, and he returned the money which he had received. In 1768, he had the misfortune to lose his wife on the birth of their first child, and he wrote a monody (a poem mourning someone's death) entitled *A Monody to the Memory of a Young Lady, by an Afflicted Husband, with a poetical dedication to Lord Lyttleton*. When his daughter died shortly afterwards, he lamented his second loss, in strains not inferior to the former, in an *Evening Address to a Nightingale*. He died 'overwhelmed with complicated distresses' at his house in Techfield Street, Oxford Market, in 1791.

Another notable person appears in the Parish register among the list of burials:-'George Inman ye Redman, died at Ravenworth, aged 114, buried June 22nd., 1757'. Acts of transgression were frequent, and one such case recorded in Ravensworth is when Leonard Marshall, John Ranshawe, James Foster and Richard Dunn, all of Ravensworth, were each fined 10s. for keeping lundersettles', i.e. lodgers, one month, at the Richmond Quarter sessions of October 8th., 1607 - the harbouring of strangers was a civil offence. The records also tell of how Richard fil Henry de Ravensworth was murdered by William Garbell of Ravensworth on Layton moor on Sunday next after the Feast of St. Matthew the Apostle in the year 1344, and that the said William fled, having no goods or chattels. Shortly after this, in 1352, the sheriff of Yorkshire was ordered to arrest Henry fil Hugh de Ravensworth and to keep him safely in the King's prison until a debt of £20,000, which he acknowledged he owed to William de Graystone, was paid. (This enormous sum is quoted by G.H. Plantaganet Harrison in his book, *The History of North Yorkshire*, but he has most probably converted the original amount in the currency of 1870).

In Plantaganet Harrison's lengthy catalogue of local charters contained in the above book, there is also one of 1278, in the reign of Edward 1st., which relates how a certain Richard Hulk of Kirkby killed William Stellyng with a club, during a fracas in the village. In consequence of this, he was outlawed, and his goods, valued at 13s. 4d., were seized by the sheriff.

## The Fitzhughs

The history of Ravensworth - indeed that of the parish in general - revolves around the ancient castle and the noble family which owned and occupied it until the 16th. century - the FitzHughs - who were also the feudal lords of Cotherstone. Sir Walter Scott refers to them in his poem, Allen-a-Dale:-

'The baron of Ravensworth prances in pride

As he views his domain from Arkindale side'.

The Barons FitzHugh were among the foremost of their time; their blood and family connections were so great that their coat-of-arms is found in religious houses throughout the land. In those days, the erection or restoration of religious houses or churches was counted worthy of great merit, and the display of their chevrons (intertwining inverted 'V' motif interlaced on their shields) in so many of the churches of North Richmondshire testifies to their many acts of charity in this direction - but they cared little for the care and adornment of their own parish church at Kirkby Hill. It is possible that a few of the early members of this family were interred there, but their tombs are unknown. The family of FitzHugh chose rather to be buried in the more magnificent but more transient resting place in the quire of Jervaulx Abbey, which they had founded and had long supported. For centuries, the name of FitzHugh occupied first place in the abbey's remembrance of the dead, but their only commemoration there today are two ruined statues. It is possible that had the FitzHughs been content to find their rest in their own parish church, their places of interment might have been more easily preserved. The lords of Ravensworth were:-

Akarias Fitz Bardolf	d. 1156
Hervey Fitz Akary	d.1182
Henry Fitz Hervey	d. 1210
Ranulf Fitz Henry	d.1225 (c)
Henry Fitz Ranulf	d.1262
Hugh Fitz Henry	d. 1304
Henry FitzHugh	d. 1356
Henry FitzHugh	d.1387
Henry FitzHugh	d.1424
William FitzHugh	d.1453

Henry FitzHugh	d. 1483
Richard FitzHugh	d. 1488
George FitzHugh	d. 1513



*Fitzhugh family crest*



*Fitzhugh family coat of arms*

The Arms, or Shield of Arms are usually termed Coat-of-Arms, because in the days of chivalry the arms were commonly displayed on the surcoat as well as on the shield; this is an essential feature and may constitute the whole of the bearings, although most personal arms have a crest associated with them. The blason or coded description of the FitzHugh arms is - argent, a chief with three chevronels in base azure. This translates - a shield of silver with the upper portion (roughly one third) blue and a pattern comprised of three inverted V motifs also blue in the lower two-thirds. This arrangement, illustrated on the previous page, is seen in Richmond Parish Church, on the wall of the chancel in York Minster, on a corbel in Egglestone Abbey, and on a small shield on the chancel screen of Kirkby Hill Church. It is illustrated in both the Victoria County History and in Dr. Whitaker's description of Romaldkirk Church in his History of Richmondshire. The Crest is a device borne on the coat-of-arms above the helmet, and often used on seals, notepaper, plate and such like. The blason or coded description of the FitzHugh crest is - on a chapeau, gu., turned up, erm., a wyvern, sans legs, wings expanded, ar.. This can be translated as 'on a crimson cap with a turned up crimson brim, a rampant or

springing silver griffin without legs'. The griffin is a mythical animal with the legs and body of a lion and the wings and head of an eagle. A wyvern is similar to a griffin but related to a dragon, with eagles' feet.

The Lord of Ravensworth and Dalton in Evrviescire in the reign of Canute (1017-1035) was Gospatric, and in the time of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066) Tirphin, his successor, is recorded as having 26 manors, of which one was Ravensworth. After the Conquest of 1066, the manor of Ravensworth was part of the vast territory given to Count Alan le Roux of Richmond, and it continued as part of the honour of Richmond as did the other manors in this parish, until the over-lordship was vested in the Crown in the 16th. century.

Later, twenty four of Tirphin's manors including Ravensworth, were given to Bodin who, at the time of the Domesday Survey of 1086, possessed 12 carucates of land at geld, i.e. some 582 ha (1500 acres) of cultivatable land on which taxes could be levied. According to Breton historians, Count Alan had two bastard brothers - Bodin and Bardolf - natural sons of Eudes, Count of Penthièvre. They accompanied the Conqueror to England where they settled, but there is no record of Bardolf having any possessions at the time of the Domesday Survey.

It is therefore probable that Bardolf, who is considered to be the ancestor of the FitzHughs, was not Bodin's brother but his son-in-law, having married one of Bodin's co-heiresses; and it is indicative that although the FitzHughs succeeded Bodin in his Ravensworth possessions, Bodin's possessions went as often to the FitzAlans who were descended from Scotland, who married the other co-heiress, as to the FitzHughs, sometimes being divided between the two families. In their old age, Bodin and his brother, Ribald, lord of Middleham, became monks of St. Mary's Abbey at York, to whom Bodin presented the advowsons of the churches of Kirkby Ravensworth and Patrick Brampton, giving all of his other Ravensworth possessions to Bardolf.

Bardolf's son, Akarius or Aker Fitz Bardolf, founded the Abbey of Fors on a site near Grange Beck on the south side of the Yore, nearly opposite Bainbridge in Wensleydale about the year 1141, and he and his wife were buried there before the year 1156. In that year, his son and heir, Hervey, was given permission by Conan, Earl of Richmond, to remove the Abbey of Charity at Fors from its bleak position to the green banks of the Yore at East Witton; the Abbey later became known as Yorevaux, and then Jervaux.

Hervey died about the year 1182 and there is little of note about his descendants until the year 1304 when his great-great-grandson, Henry, adopted the name of FitzHugh, by which his descendants were ever after called. Henry served his King in the Scottish Wars, was governor of Barnard Castle in 1315, was summoned to Parliament as a Baron from 1321 to 1351, and died in 1356.

Henry's grandson, Henry, who assumed the inheritance in 1387 at the age of 23, was a renowned warrior and diplomat, and spent the whole of his life in the King's service. At the coronation of Henry 5th., he was Constable of England, and afterwards Lord Chamberlain of the King's household. He attended Henry 5th. in his wars in France with 66 men-at arms and 209 archers; his followers at Agincourt in 1415 included three brothers of the Newsham branch of the de Berningham family—Richard, the eldest was an esquire whilst the two younger brothers were men-at-arms. At the seige of Harfleur in 1416, he was sent by the duke of Clarence to treat with those inside the town, and in 1418, he participated in the seige of Rouen.

After this, he was sent, as Lord Chamberlain, to the great Council of Constance in Germany, for which important service he was granted, under the Crown, the estates of Lord Scio'e of Masham, who had forfeited them. When this grant was surrendered, he was given the grant in the same year of the manors of Masham, Clifton, Watless, Thorn, Nesterfield, Burton Constable, Norton, Barston, Bellerby, Coverham, Ainderby Steeple, Barningham and Newsham, all of which had belonged to Lord Scrope, to hold for the term of his life. He travelled twice to Jerusalem and visited the Souldan at Grand Cairo, from whence he returned to fight the Saracens and Turks. In cooperation with the Knights of Rhodes, he built a castle there in honour to St. Peter- the patron saint of his own parish church - and this castle still stands today. In 1423, a year after the death of Henry 5th., he was honoured with the gift of many of the late King's jewels - of great worth - but he died the following year at Ravensworth. His body was interred in the Abbey choir at Jervaulx, and his will directed that 1,000 masses be said for his soul. He had previously given, with the King's permission, one messuage (manor house), 1.6 ha (4 acres) of arable land and 2 ha (5 acres) of meadow in West Tanfield for prayers to be said for the souls of himself and his ancestors. According to Whitaker in 1823, his tomb lies in the north transept of Jervaulx, neglected but entire.

His wife, Elizabeth Marmion, Lady of Tanfield, the sole heiress of her father, was also

meticulous about her funeral arrangements. She decreed that her body should be carried in all godly haste after her death to Jervaulx, and there buried before the high altar, near to her departed lord. Twenty-four torches were to burn around her hearse at the funeral, and fifteen tapers, each one a pound in weight, before the high altar. She left to her son, Robert - Bishop of London from 1431 to 1435 - a psalter covered with red velvet, and a ring containing a relic of St. Peter's finger. She did not favour heavy funeral expenditure for she willed that 'they that come thither that time unbidden be few, after that mine executors think honest and reasonable, as well the poor men as the other. And if mine executors seem this not enough, I pray them fulfil it more in paying off my debts and marrying of my children'. She willed that one thousand masses be said for her within three months, and after giving her executors directions to pay her debts immediately and disposing the remainder towards marrying her children, she entreats them to 'do for her soul as they would answer to God'.

Little is known of the fifth lord - William - but in spite of the fact that the FitzHughs were firm adherents of the Lancastrian cause, Henry, the sixth baron, was taken into great favour by the Yorkist Edward 4th. on his accession in 1461. He was straightway appointed Steward of the Honour of Richmond and Chief Forester of the New Forest of Arkengarthdale and Hope. He participated in most of the wars of that period and, shortly before his death, went with Sir Thomas Tunstall and others on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. His wife and co-founder of the Castle Chantry in 1467 was a daughter of Warwick, the King-Maker. He was succeeded by his grandson, Richard, who was appointed Governor of the Castles of Richmond, Middleham and Barnard Castle in 1486, but he died the following year leaving a son of six months - George - who came into his estates in 1509 but died without issue four years later. The estates were then divided between the descendants of Henry, the sixth baron - Lady Alice Fiennes and Sir Thomas Parr. The manors of Ravensworth, Dalton and Whashton, with others, passed, by agreement, into the possession of Sir Thomas Parr who died in 1518. His son and heir, William, was created Marquess of Northampton in 1546-7, but because of his support of Lady Jane Grey, all of his estates were forfeited in 1553. He was pardoned by Queen Mary in 1558, and his Marquessate and part of his lands were restored to him that same year by Queen Elizabeth. On his death without issue in 1571, they reverted to the Crown, where they remained until 1629 when Charles 1st. granted to the citizens of London the manor of Ravensworth with its castle and park lands. Since that day, these



have passed through many hands; the lordship of Ravensworth and 86 ha (212 acres) of the estate were sold in 1814 to Sheldon Craddock of Hartforth, in whose family the lordship remains. The castle and the manor farm had been sold previously and have passed through various owners to the present day.

The Barony of FitzHugh is in abeyance between the noble houses of Pembroke and Dacre who are lineally descended from Alice and Elizabeth, sisters of Richard the 7th. baron, and aunts and heirs of George, the 8th. and last Lord FitzHugh.

### **The Castle**

The castle was built about the year 1080 by Bardolf, under license from William the Conqueror. The site chosen was a mound in the middle of a lake or morass. It would appear to be a very questionable site for such a building, but the most suitable site was already occupied by the church at Kirkby Hill. It is probable that this shallow lake or bog-land was partly drained and a broad, deep moat made, the remains of which are still visible. Other than this, the castle had no natural means of defence, but the site had one great advantage - during time of seige, there was always available a plentiful supply of pure spring water, which was conveyed to the castle in lead pipes from Hungeram Well, which is known locally as Far Lark. Some years ago, lead pipes, rich in silver, were found during drainage operations, leading from Hungeram Well to the castle.



*Ravensworth Castle showing the remains of the moat*

King John visited the castle in 1201; and in 1391, Henry FitzHugh received a licence to empark 80 ha (200 acres) around the castle, thereby doubling its former area and making its enclosure the largest in Richmondshire, except for Richmond. The wall of this

enclosure, 4.8 km (3 miles) in circuit and composed of stones about 90 cm (3 ft.) square, although now greatly dilapidated, was still in good repair in some parts within living memory, especially on the west side of the lane leading to Whashton.

The exact proportions of the original castle are not known since the remains are much dilapidated. Moreover, although the external fowls resemble the Norman, there are so few characteristic marks remaining in the architecture that it is impossible to pronounce with certainty upon their antiquity.

There are no round-headed lights, no perpendicular buttresses at the angles, nor anything else to identify the architecture with that early period.

There is no ground plan either of the original castle or of any later developments, although the buildings must have covered a considerable area. The buildings which remain, however, are of very stout proportions, both stone and mortar being of great durability. The cement with which the Castle was built possesses great tenacity and appears to include pounded oyster shell, pieces of which are :- still available. It is said that when the Castle was used as a general quarry for building purposes, the masons often found it more remunerative to obtain and dress fresh stone rather than labour in separating the adhesive mass of the old buildings.

Leland visited the Castle in 1538 before it fell into ruins and has left an account of it in his Itinerary. He describes it thus:- 'Passing over the praty River at Ravenswath, I cam to the village and Castelle ... The Castelle, excepting two or three square towers and a faire Stable with a Conduct cowitlyng to the Haully syde, hath no things memorable. There is a Parke by 3 miles in compass. The Castel is in a Mares' (i.e. marsh) Grounds and a Parke on a little hangging Grounde by hit. It is 3 miles by north-west from Richmond and thereby is a praty village. The Lord Parre is owner thereof ....'

When Camden (1551-1623) - the great topographer, Royal antiquary and chaplain to Henry 8th. - visited the Castle in 1596, he found it much more dilapidated: 'Ravensworth Castle rears its head with a large extent of ruinous walls and so much stone was purloined and taken away for building purposes that it was deemed 'ruybated' in 1616, the baliff of the manor having been the 'chief offender in taking cartloads of stone for his own use'. A report published by a Special Commission in 1608 states:- 'On the 14th. April, 5 Jas. 1 (1608), James Foster of Ravensworth, aged 60 years, was examined and deposed that within these last six years, there were ten wayne loads of stone carried

from the castle of Ravensworth, some of them piked forth of the walles of the said castle and some of them pulled furth of the gate-house tower, which stones were carried away by Sir Francis Boynton's men, James Ponsonby being the bailiff of the manor; and he said that there had been divers stones cast down from the gate-house At the time of its dissolution in the reign of Edward 6th., the net income of the chantry was £6.13.4d. Its inventory included 'gold and plate twelve ounces gilt', and it was served by two priests - Gyles Cook of the age of 80 years and Robert Syghton of 44 years, 'of indifferent learning and honest conversation and qualities:

For many years, the Castle continued to be plundered for its stone, until today it is a complete ruin with few stones left. However, in 1933, the Castle and its three outlying earthworks were declared scheduled monuments and no longer subject to despoilation.

St. Aegidius (St. Giles d. 710) was a particularly popular saint all over Europe in the Middle Ages and was the patron saint of cripples, e.g. St. Giles -- in Cripplegate. His popularity was mainly due to a 10th. century legend which relates how the Visigoth, King Wamba, when hunting, shot an arrow at a pet hind which had taken refuge with St. Giles. The arrow wounded and crippled St. Giles but the hounds remained motionless, rooted to the ground by some invisible power. The saint's emblem thereby became an arrow, as is seen on a misericord in Ely Cathedral. In England 162 ancient churches are dedicated to him and at least 24 hospitals; his feast was celebrated by all English Benedictine monasteries and those of the Sarum rite, as elsewhere in Europe.