

THE ASHWORTH FAMILY OF ELLAND, YORKSHIRE

Notes by Jan Wood, descendant of this family, updated to October , 2005

*Burkes General Armoury*¹ in its introduction to the description of the arms of the ASHWORTH family as held by John Harvey ASHWORTH in the 19th century, states that the ASHWORTH family of Ashworth, County Lancaster, were “*possessed of that township for many generations*”. In the reign of Henry III, Bernard de Hesseworth supposedly devised the manor of Ashworth to his two sons. The senior line became extinct in 1349, but younger branches were stated by *Burke* to have preserved a male succession “*even until the present time*”. During the Civil War the ASHWORTHS were engaged with Fairfax in support of the Parliament; according to *Burke*, “*...one branch of the family has been long seated at Hall Carr, [in the county of] Lancaster, and the other at Elland Bank, Elland in Yorkshire*”.² How long the Elland branch had been settled there was not mentioned.

Elland was an ancient village, which with Greetland formed a chapelry within the parish of Halifax. Halifax town was 3 miles away to the north-west and Huddersfield was 4 miles south-east of Elland, which was set on the main road between the two places. Elland village lay on the banks of the River Calder, and goods were transported there via the Calder and Hebble navigation. Coarse woollen cloths were manufactured there. There were eventually a variety of non-conformist chapels in the village, including Calvinist and Independent Chapels, as well as Elland Church of England Chapel.³

There were not many streets in Elland in the early 19th century; among the principal ones were “The Bank”, which by 1901 was called Saddleworth Road. It helped to form one of the peculiar and beautiful features of Elland – three roads one above the other – Saddleworth Road on the Bank, Long Wall or Walk, and the Nab, which was later renamed Hullen Edge Road.⁴ Miss Hamerton described the wall rue fern which grew on Elland Bridge and outside the walls of the *Bank House*,⁵ which is another name for *Elland Bank*, where the ASHWORTHS once lived.

Information on the *Elland Bank* branch of the ASHWORTH family, from which we descend, and dating from the early 18th century, follows here.

1.1 John ASHWORTH of *Elland Bank*, Elland,⁶ near Huddersfield in the West Riding of Yorkshire, was born at Knot Hill, Rochdale, Lancashire, on 22 May 1732.⁷ Knot Hill is a hill in the countryside within the large parish of Rochdale, and it is likely that the ASHWORTHS were a farming family. It is not known whether he moved to Yorkshire with his parents and siblings, or by himself, as a young adult. The Elland branch of the ASHWORTH family was obviously only in Yorkshire from the first half of the 18th century, which was not very long at all, and they were originally Lancastrian.

John ASHWORTH was married at the age of 22 years, to Susanna CHILD at Birstall parish church, in Yorkshire, on 20 January 1755.⁸ He was a merchant, maltster and corn factor; in later life he was referred to as a gentleman, which implies he was living off the proceeds of land rentals and investments, and he was certainly a small landowner and shareholder during his life time. According to the memorial tablet in Jepson Lane Chapel, Elland, which he built as a Baptist Chapel at his own expense, he led a ‘*...life of indefatigable exertion, judicious economy, exemplary temperance and steady rectitude of conduct*’, and ‘*...acquired a competent fortune and a character eminently respectable*’.⁹

He purchased at least three batches of stocks in Calder and Hebble Navigation, between 1781 and 1798. In August 1781, John ASHWORTH, mal[t]ster and corn factor, of Elland in the parish of Halifax, purchased some

¹ *Burkes General Armoury* [ref 51/BUR, Devon Record Office, Exeter]

² *Burkes General Armoury* [ref 51/BUR, Devon Record Office, Exeter]

³ Unidentified 19th century Directory on on-line website: website.lineone.net/~stevejgarton/sowerby.htm

⁴ Lucy Hamerton, *Olde Elland, being Reminiscences of Elland*, publ. Elland, 1901, pp. 77, 79 [Sheffield City Library].

⁵ Lucy Hamerton, *Olde Elland, being Reminiscences of Elland*, publ. Elland, p. 80.

⁶ *Burkes Landed Gentry*, Vol. I (A-O), 1862, p. 29

⁷ Information from a tablet on the north wall of Jepson Lane Chapel, Elland, commemorating John ASHWORTH, transcribed by descendant Michael Ashworth of Scotland, sent by email, 25 Feb 2005.

⁸ Information from an unidentified documentary source, by descendant Michael Ashworth of Scotland, by email, 25 Feb 2005; IGI 1992 on-line at FamilySearch lists this marriage.

⁹ Information from a tablet on the north wall of Jepson Lane Chapel, Elland, commemorating John ASHWORTH, transcribed by descendant Michael Ashworth of Scotland, sent by email, 25 Feb 2005.

of these stocks from the trustees of the late Thomas SAYER of Halifax, for the sum of £747.3s.6d.¹⁰ In August 1784, John ASHWORTH, corn factor, purchased more of these stocks from the widow and son of the late Dr Roger SEDGWICK of Manchester, for £747.0.0.¹¹ In 1798, John ASHWORTH the Elder of Elland, Esquire, purchased another lot of stocks for £2,050.0.0 from Joseph Robinson PEASE of Kingston upon Hull.¹² The signature of John ASHWORTH was the same on all of the deeds of purchase.

The signature was also identical on a lease by the same John ASHWORTH, corn dealer, made on 8 January 1799, of one of his messuages (a property with dwelling-house) on the north side of Westgate in Elland for 14 years to the trustees of the late Mr Brooksbank's Charity School, for £9.16s.0 per annum.¹³ The property was in the tenure of the Reverend Josiah TOWNSEND, who also occupied two rooms over the gateway into Luke TOWNSEND'S yard, which also belonged to John ASHWORTH, and which adjoined the leased property on the west side. For these rooms, the Reverend TOWNSEND paid an extra £2 per year. John's son Philip was occupying the property on the east side; it also belonged to his father.¹⁴ When his oldest son Thomas ASHWORTH had died young in about 1786, John took over his affairs, settled his debts, and arranged that the rents from properties in Westgate and other places in Elland, were paid to his widowed daughter-in-law Agnes, as an annuity in settlement of the dower to which she was entitled on the death of her husband.¹⁵

In March 1798, John bought properties in Spotland, Rochdale and other places, from the devisees under the will of the late Robert ENTWHISTLE Esquire of Foxholes, Rochdale, for the large sum of £2,450.¹⁶ John also owned fields adjoining Gibbet and Hopwood Lanes in Halifax, which were leased by his two sons as his trustees, on his behalf in January 1801, not long after his death, to a merchant, a grocer/tallow chandler and a gentleman, for a total of over £42 per annum.¹⁷ It is likely that John owned a lot of other properties. Some of those in Elland are mentioned in the deed of grant relating to his daughter -in-law Agnes's annuity,¹⁸ and his will may mention others.

John ASHWORTH was obviously a Baptist, and it is likely that he grew up in a Baptist family. There were a number of ASHWORTHS living in the area close to Rochdale who are recorded as early members of the Baptist church in that area, and he was not baptised in Rochdale parish church. Baptists do not believe in infant baptism, which makes it very difficult to trace their family history. The published history of Blackley Baptist Church, near Elland,¹⁹ states that two Baptist chapels were founded in Elland, Yorkshire, in 1789 – one in Elland proper and the other at Blackley. The history recorded that one of these had been founded in the village that year [1789] by a man named in the history as 'James' ASHWORTH. Whether or not there were two ASHWORTHS living in the village, it is clear from a plaque on the interior wall that John ASHWORTH was a founder of Elland Baptist Chapel, and built the Baptist chapel in Jepson Lane, Elland himself. It states that he did so '*...for the worship of God and the cultivation of morality*'.²⁰

The other chapel, in the nearby coal mining hamlet of Blackley, "poached" the Reverend James HINDLE from Elland Chapel. When he left, it caused the Elland Chapel to break up, because most of the congregation followed Hindle to Blackley Chapel. He preached his last service at Elland in September 1792.²¹

According to the publication *Olde Elland* by Lucy Hamerton, the building in Jepson Lane was owned by the ASHWORTHS who lived in *Bank House*, until the Misses ASHWORTH gave it to the Church of England.²² John's children did not appear to have been baptised locally in the Church of England as infants, and neither were his grandsons Thomas Ramsden and John Harvey, the sons of his son John ASHWORTH Junior. John's youngest surviving son Philip ASHWORTH was a member of Pellow Lane Particular Baptist Chapel in Halifax for many years.²³ Philip's children were later baptised into the Church of England at Elland, in one batch, as adults or older children. This was part of a movement among the Elland ASHWORTHS towards established religion as they became wealthier.

¹⁰ West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], The Brayshaw collection, ref: BRA:5.

¹¹ West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], The Brayshaw collection, ref: BRA:6.

¹² West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], The Brayshaw collection, ref: BRA:7.

¹³ West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], The Brayshaw collection, ref: BRA: 8.

¹⁴ West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], The Brayshaw collection, ref: BRA: 8, 10.

¹⁵ West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], The Rushforth Collection, ref: RU: 6.

¹⁶ West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], The Rushforth Collection, ref: RU: 388.

¹⁷ West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], The Brayshaw collection, ref: BRA: 63-65.

¹⁸ West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], The Rushforth Collection, ref: RU: 6.

¹⁹ *Blackley Baptist Church, Elland: 175 Years of Witness, 1789-1964*, chapter 1.

²⁰ Information from a tablet on the north wall of Jepson Lane Chapel, Elland, commemorating John ASHWORTH, transcribed by descendant Michael Ashworth of Scotland, sent by email, 25 Feb 2005.

²¹ *Blackley Baptist Church, Elland: 175 Years of Witness, 1789-1964*, chapter 1.

²² Lucy Hamerton, *Olde Elland, being Reminiscences of Elland*, publ. Elland, p. 119 [Sheffield City Library].

²³ See IGI, 1992, for the births of Philip and Ruth's children, recorded in the Pellow Lane Particular Baptist Chapel register.

In 1799, John ASHWORTH the Elder entered into an agreement with his eldest son and heir, John ASHWORTH the Younger, also a maltster, whose financial affairs he had already been managing for some time. It appears that he had been regularly paying off his son's debts, and John the Younger was now responsible, as arranged in a previous indenture written in 1797, for the maintenance of his estranged wife and their two young sons, since she had left him a second time.

John ASHWORTH the Elder was about to discharge more debts, and fulfil the arrangements relating to his daughter-in-law and her sons. In return, his son was to sign over his property and stock in trade, together with his business account books. His father was to sell the personal effects and estate, and discharge his son's financial responsibilities to his wife and children, after paying off his other debts. The boys were to come under the legal guardianship of their grandfather on the death of their father.²⁴

However, John ASHWORTH the Elder is said to have died "*suddenly*" at Elland Bank, Elland, Yorkshire, not long after this, on 19 January 1800, at the age of 67,²⁵ and was interred in the burial ground adjacent to the Jepson Lane Chapel.²⁶ He predeceased his son John by about 6 months, so he never took over legal guardianship of his grandsons, and was not alive to ensure they were educated under his control. In the event, they soon came under their uncles' guardianship instead.²⁷ According to his oldest grandson's entry in *Burke's Landed Gentry*,²⁸ John ASHWORTH Senior died seized of (i.e. in possession of) certain lands in Whitworth, "*which formed part of the ancient possessions of the family.*"²⁹ This would have been just part of his estate at death. John meant to make some alterations to his will, but he died before doing this. Because of this, his three sons John, Philip and Richard and their mother Susanna ASHWORTH, had instead made an agreement on 7 February 1800, that SYKES, WRIGHT of Walton, and Joseph CARTLEDGE of Brow Bridge, should value the real estate of their late father, before it was conveyed to John's two brothers Philip and Richard, and sister Susanna. They also agreed that £250 should be paid to their mother, Susanna.³⁰

I have not yet located a copy of the will, which was written on 12 April 1794,³¹ and was the version which was submitted for probate, but it must have been proved at one of the church courts in Yorkshire in 1800.

John's widow Susannah ASHWORTH is said to have died at Elland Bank, Elland, Yorkshire, on 8 June 1813.³² I have not checked to see if she too left a will, although widows of her status often did.

John and Susannah ASHWORTH were the 5x-great-grandparents of Jan WOOD.

²⁴ West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], The Brayshaw collection, ref: BRA: 11.

²⁵ Information from a tablet on the north wall of Jepson Lane Chapel, Elland, commemorating John ASHWORTH, transcribed by descendant Michael Ashworth of Scotland, sent by email, 25 Feb 2005. Also see Will of John ASHWORTH [the Younger] of Elland Esq., proved 1800, West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], in the Rushforth Collection, ref: RU: 9.

²⁶ Information from a tablet on the north wall of Jepson Lane Chapel, Elland, commemorating John ASHWORTH, transcribed by descendant Michael Ashworth of Scotland, sent by email, 25 Feb 2005.

²⁷ Will of John ASHWORTH [the Younger] of Elland Esq., proved 1800, West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], The Rushforth Collection, ref: RU: 9; Death Duty Register, 1800 [PRO, Kew].

²⁸ This grandson was John Harvey ASHWORTH, the older of the two sons of John ASHWORTH the Younger, who was a small boy when his grandfather and his father both died.

²⁹ *Burkes Landed Gentry*, Vol I (A-O), 1862, p. 29

³⁰ Will of John ASHWORTH [the Younger] of Elland Esq., proved 1800, West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], The Rushforth Collection, ref: RU: 9

³¹ As cited in the will of his son John Ashworth the Younger, 1800. West Yorkshire Archives Service, Calderdale [Halifax Archives], The Rushforth Collection, ref: RU:9.

³² Information from an unidentified documentary source, by descendant Michael Ashworth of Scotland, by email, 25 Feb 2005. Original source has not been checked.