

AYTON HALL

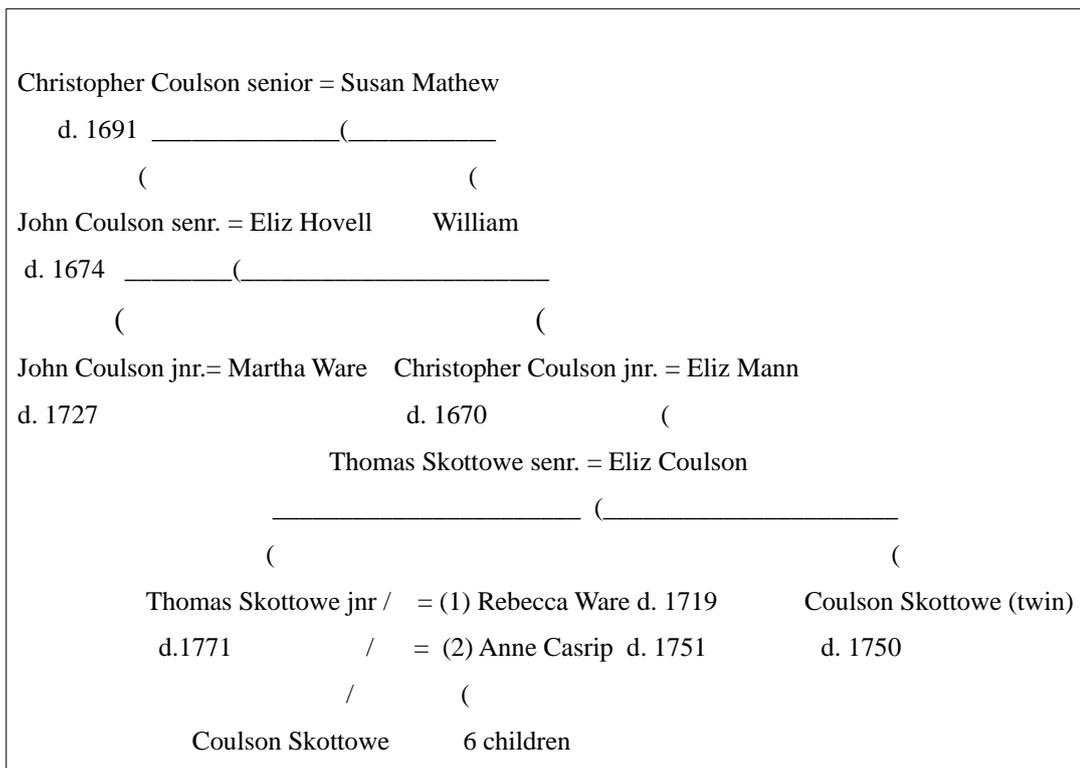


Ayton Hall is situated at the west end of the village, to the north of the Low Green and immediately west of All Saints church. Pevsner gives it a brief entry: 'W of the old church the HALL, seven bays with a recessed five-bay centre and quoins. The doorway is Late Georgian, the house probably older.'ⁱ

The Hall is a grade II* listed building, and the author of its list entry description estimates that it may have been built in about 1690.ⁱⁱ However, the description adds that certain alterations and extensions seem to have been made since that time. It also states that the rear wing of the Hall is clearly the oldest part, and mentions certain features which appear even to precede the seventeenth century, such as a 'flattened Tudor-arched north doorway'.

Given the above, it seems likely that Ayton Hall, largely in its present form, was built by John Coulson the elder, who died in 1674, or possibly by his son, John (died 1724).ⁱⁱⁱ We know that Christopher Coulson, the father of John Coulson, senior, bought from Sir David Foulis of Ingleby Greenhow a large property in Great Ayton, which included about half the arable land of the parish, as well as the Hall, and also the lordship of the manor. However, it seems likely that neither Christopher Coulson nor Foulis ever lived in Ayton, and it was Christopher's son, John senior, who was the first to do so. It is likely that this John came to Ayton with his wife, Elizabeth, immediately after his father's death, and took up residence at Ayton Hall. He is recorded as living in the largest house in the village in successive hearth tax assessments between 1662 and 1673, and the annual Manorial Court, of which some records survive from the mid- century, was held in his name between 1647 and 1661. He was responsible, along with other local landowners, for the enclosure of the village's open fields and commons in 1658. One's guess is that it was John Coulson senior who built the house, having inherited from his father a building in a delapidated state, in which no one had lived for some time. It was, however, John junior who built onto the back of the Hall the village's first Presbyterian meeting house.

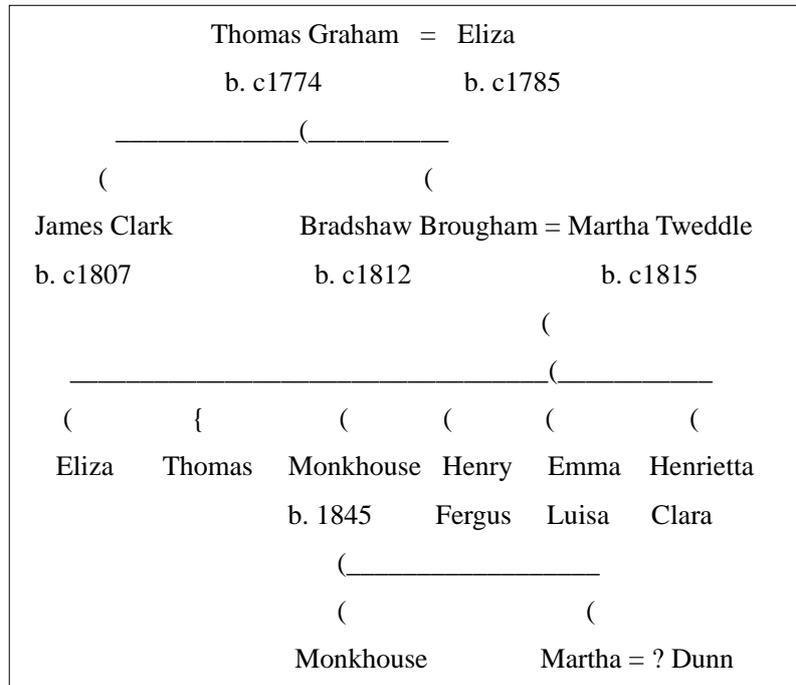
COULSON & SKOTTOWE FAMILY



After the Coulsons, ownership of the Hall passed to Thomas Skottowe, who inherited the Ayton estate and lordship through his mother, and who came to live there in 1729, having spent the first 34 years of his life at the family home in Norfolk. Skottowe, and his second wife, Anne, brought up six children at the Hall, no doubt with the help of numerous servants. However, dogged by ever increasing debts, Skottowe was forced, in 1758, to sell most of his inherited property in Ayton, including his own home.. He moved next door, to a much smaller property known today as Manor House. The Hall was bought by the Rev. Daniel Wilson who remained a mere three years before moving to Lancaster, and selling up to Commodore William Wilson, late of the East India Company. William Wilson, together with his wife, Rachel, and their three young daughters, retired to Ayton after a highly successful career in the East India Company, They chose the village so as to be near Rachel's brother, Ralph Jackson the diarist, who lived five miles away, in Guisborough. In Ralph Jackson's diary for the year 1762 there are descriptions of how Ralph purchased the Hall on his brother-in-law's behalf, and how he helped him to transport his belongings there.^{iv}

William Wilson died in 1795, and Rachel in 1810, leaving the Hall to her daughter Rachel, who eventually sold it to Thomas Graham who is shown as living there in the 1823 trade directory. The Graham family may have continued to own Ayton Hall over several generations. Thomas is recorded in the census returns as 'farmer' or 'landed proprietor' , and was living at the Hall in 1841, 1851 and 1861. He was born in Cumberland, and was married twice, firstly to Eliza, and later to Mary, who was 47 years his junior. At some stage he also acquired Ayton House on Easby Lane. By 1841 his son, Bradshaw Brougham Graham, was farming 46 acres in Ayton as one of his father's tenants. Thomas Graham was 84 in 1861 but does not appear in the 1871 census, so he presumably died between those dates. In 1871 Richard Craggs, aged 45, and his wife Margaret were living there, but whether as tenants of the Grahams or as the new owners is uncertain. From 1871 on there is no mention of the Graham family in the censuses, nor in the directories after 1872.

THE GRAHAM FAMILY OF AYTON HALL



Whether Monkhouse Graham (either senior or junior) lived for any length of time at the Hall is also uncertain, though Margaret English, who was born in 1928, and who was Monkhouse junior's granddaughter, says she can remember being taken to visit there when she was little. She writes as follows about the family:

My Grandfather [Monkhouse junior] was one of six children, he was the youngest and the only boy. The others were Beatrice, Gertrude, Ethel, Mable and Martha Montague. The story I got from my late mother was that Monkhouse senior ran off with a married lady whose husband had a furniture shop in Middlesbrough, at one time they ran off to America and got married, they then had Martha and Monkhouse. When Monkhouse senior died the hall and house [i.e. Ayton Hall and Ayton House] were left to my grandfather and Martha as these were the only two children born in wedlock, there were tenants in both the houses. Then Martha who I knew as Aunty Monty came over from Detroit and decided they would increase the rents. The tenants moved out and the places were empty for a long time, they were then auctioned, at one time my mother had the catalogue of the sale, I seem to remember they mentioned the Adam fireplaces. The story I got was that a man called

Herbert who had a travelling cake shop bought the Hall, someone else bought the House and it was demolished and a new house built. I think Herbert lived in the house [i.e. Ayton Hall] for a while, as far as I know when he moved out or died it became a hotel.

Over the last century or so, records of who exactly owned Ayton Hall and who lived there are rather sparse. Richard Craggs is mentioned in the 1872 directory, and his widow was living in the Hall in 1879. In the directories of 1889 and 1893 the head of the household was John Theobald Butler, but by 1912 it was Arthur I'Anson, who is also said to have been the first in the village to have owned a motor car. Between 1925 and 1929 Frederick Wyer Hardy was living there. Whether any of these gentlemen owned the Hall, or whether they were all tenants is not known. In the 1937 directory there is no mention of Ayton Hall at all, which suggests that this was during the unoccupied period mentioned above by Margaret English. It was during the 1930s or later that the Hall was bought by the shipping magnate, Joseph Constantine, who also endowed Constantine College, Middlesbrough, later to develop into the University of Teesside. Certainly the Constantine family were in residence when I first came to the village in 1973. In 1982 a local entrepreneur, Melvyn Rhodes bought the Hall from the Constantines, and converted it into a hotel with nine ensuite bedrooms and a restaurant. Melvyn's flamboyant style of business was not to everyone's taste, however, and he subsequently sold up to Bryan Seymour, who reconverted the building into a private house. At the time of writing, the Seymour family were still in place.

It remains only to say something of the original Hall which, as mentioned above, was probably demolished and entirely rebuilt by a member of the Coulson family in the seventeenth century. The earliest probable mention of the Hall occurs in 1282. It is from the *Inquisition post mortem* of Baldwin Wake, the son and heir of Joan de Stutevill:

The capital messuage, the buildings of which are badly constructed, together with the garden, curtilage and other easements, is valued by the year at 20s.^v

Very possibly, this 'badly constructed' house had been built by a member of the de Stutevill family who held lands in Ayton from the beginning of the twelfth century.^{vi}

During the 14th century the lordship of Ayton, and hence probably also the 'capital messuage', were held by the earls of Kent, but when this earldom fell into abeyance in 1408 their various estates in

North Yorkshire, including Kirkby Moorside and Ayton, passed to the powerful Neville family.^{vii} It seems that Ayton was in the hands of Christopher Neville, brother to Charles, earl of Westmorland, when the rebellion of the northern earls against Elizabeth took place in 1569. We learn that this Christopher Neville was a stormy character who had already been involved in various affrays before he joined his brother in the rebellion.^{viii} After its failure his lands, including Ayton Hall, were forfeit to the Crown, and were later rented out to suitable tenants. A document in the National Archives states that the Hall's annual value, together with a corn mill 'situated on the water of Leven' was £10/6/8d, and that the new lessee of the Hall and the mill was to be Charles Hall. The document adds that Christopher Neville 'had suffered the houses to decay and fall to utter ruin therefore it is mete that the former [i.e. Charles Hall] be bound . . . to repair the said houses at his own costs and charges having sufficient timber within the Queen's manor there'.^{ix}

In 1610 the Crown sold the manor of Great Ayton to Sir David Foulis, a Scotsman and a courtier much in favour with James I. Foulis probably never lived in Ayton - he had also acquired the lands and lordships of Ingleby Greenhow, and it was there that he built himself a mansion for his retirement from court - Ingleby Manor. Some years later Foulis fell out of favour with the new king, Charles I, and was probably then forced by his debts to sell Ayton to a wealthy London merchant, Christopher Coulson.

ⁱ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Yorkshire. The North Riding*, 1966, p. 173

ⁱⁱ <<http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1150651>>

ⁱⁱⁱ On the Coulsons of Ayton see <<http://greatayton.wikidot.com/skottowe-coulson-family>>.

^{iv} <<http://greatayton.wikidot.com/ralph-jackson-diaries>>

^v *Yorkshire Inquisitions*, vol.1, 1892, pp.237-9

^{vi} Victoria County History, *York, North Riding*, I, p. 513 & II, p. 226.

^{vii} VCH, II, p. 227.

^{viii} VCH, I, pp. 105,112.

^{ix} Nat. Arch. E 310/29/170 fol 42.