

1 Background

Land ownership has always been an important issue, usually for taxation purposes. Another important aspect of land ownership was that, for many years, it conferred the right to vote in elections. In the nineteenth century, this led reformers to argue that too much land was concentrated in the hands of too few people. The Prime Minister at the time, Lord Derby, refuted this and in 1872 he commissioned a survey to prove his point. Unfortunately for him it did nothing of the sort, and showed that land ownership was dominated by a privileged few. The outcome was increased demand for electoral reform, leading to the third Reform Act of 1884-5.

The survey was carried out through the Local Government Board. Forms and instructions were sent to the Poor Law Guardians in each parish. Owners were legally obliged to declare all land ownership of one acre and above, whether built upon or not, with the estimated acreage and annual gross estimated rental. The results were published in two large volumes, county by county, and these became known as the 'New Domesday Book'. In the North Riding as a whole, there were 293,278 population (1871 census figure), 58,898 inhabited houses, 553 parishes, 10,115 owners with less than one acre, 6,198 owners with more than one acre, 16,313 owners in total, 1,017,475 acres of land, £1,841,945 gross estimated rental and 247,409 acres of common or waste lands.

The huge mass of figures was analysed by John Bateman in *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*, published in 1883. One of his conclusions was that about a quarter of all land was owned by only 700 or so individuals.

2 Data for Great Ayton and Little Ayton

Both 'Ayton' and Great Ayton' appear in the 'Address of Owner' columns. Where 'Ayton' appears with other lands near Scarborough, it has been assumed to be one of the Scarborough Aytons. Where there is some doubt, entries for 'Ayton' have been included for the time being, but should be checked against the census return for 1871. A further difficulty lies in some entries where, what must be the same person, has lines for 'Ayton' and 'Great Ayton', as for both William Dale and William Garbutt. Perhaps this distinguished between Great Ayton and Little Ayton?

There are some of the inevitable difficulties in transferring local, hand-written, information to a nationally printed publication. The Elizabeth Proctor Trustees entry appears as 'St. Ayton'. What must surely be Jeremiah Thistlethwaite appears as 'Hustlethwaite, J'. Two adjacent lines, for John Snowball and William Snowden, have exactly the same acreages and rentals. Is this an equally-shared property or a mistake?

It is not immediately obvious whether the place-name given refers to the location of the land holding, or to the place where the land-owner lives. In spite of the literal meaning of the column, it appears that the data here refers to the location of the land, for example James Emerson of Easby Hall has several lines giving an acreage in each parish. If this is the case, then the total ownership under Great Ayton should be roughly equal to the area of the parish. In the case of George Dixon, who owned some land in Great Ayton but who had sailed to America in 1865 to assist in the education of the recently freed slaves, probably had his form completed by one of his sons who gave his father's address simply as 'America'.

Entries for Great and Little Ayton						
Name of Owner	Address of Owner	Extent of Lands			Gross Estimated Rental	
		A	R	P	£	s
Biggens, Elizabeth	Great Ayton	8	0	0	33	0
Carlen, Richard, Trustees of	Great Ayton	9	3	29	74	8
Craggs, Robert	Great Ayton	1	2	0	4	0

Dale, William *	Ayton	6	0	15	8	6
Dale, William	Great Ayton	38	0	0	41	10
Dixon, George	America	1	1	24	4	0
Dixon, Hannah	Ayton	5	0	6	8	0
Donaldson, James, Trustees of	Great Ayton	1	3	0	13	12
Eaton, Thomas	Great Ayton	1	2	30	57	12
Eldon, Thomas	Great Ayton	4	1	23	41	16
Emerson, James	Great Ayton	2,789	3	21	3,562	18
Garbutt, William	Ayton	41	0	0	95	0
Garbutt, William	Great Ayton	28	0	0	50	5
Graham, Thomas, Trustees of	Great Ayton	114	0	6	277	9
Holt, John	Great Ayton	1	1	0	21	4
Hunter, Jane	Great Ayton	7	0	35	53	4
Hustlethwaite, J	Great Ayton	31	2	0	93	6
Ibbetson, Rev Josh	Great Ayton	63	1	23	116	17
Jackson, John, Trustees of	Great Ayton	6	1	0	35	10
Knaggs, William	Great Ayton	50	0	0	60	0
Littlefair, Ann	Great Ayton	72	1	0	81	0
Loy, William A	Great Ayton	40	2	25	154	6
Proctor, Elizabeth, Trustees of	St. Ayton	363	3	0	393	4
Richardson, John	Great Ayton	220	1	11	640	14
Sayer, Rd. J	Great Ayton	6	1	34	30	15
School, Trustees of Agricultural	Great Ayton	58	3	6	185	2
Sheene, John (possibly Skeene)	Great Ayton	11	0	0	33	0
Skilbick, Mrs	Great Ayton	6	3	21	20	0
Snowball, John	Great Ayton	3	3	20	25	12
Snowdon, William	Great Ayton	3	3	20	25	12
Wetherell, William	Ayton, Stokesley	3	0	0	8	0
Wilson, George	Great Ayton	1	3	2	4	0
Wilson, Hannah	Little Ayton	3	0	0	6	7
Wilson, John T	Great Ayton	1	3	35	50	16
Winn, William	Great Ayton	1	2	9	9	10
Totals for Ayton		4011	1	35	6319	15

Notes: One acre = 4 roods. One rood = 40 square poles.

The area associated with the entry for William Dale (marked *) needs checking. I originally wrote it down as 6-15-0 which is not possible since there are only 4 roods in an acre, so I have assumed the correct entry was 6-0-15.

For comparison, John Walker Ord gave the area of the parish of Great Ayton as 3160 acres in his publication of 1846.

There are four entries (see below) where the address of the owner is given as 'Ayton' only, and the associated names do not appear in the Great and Little Ayton census records for 1871 or 1881. It can be assumed that these really belong to East and West Ayton near Scarborough.

Halls, F, Executors of	Ayton	59	0	0	135	0
Lister, Robert	Ayton	24	0	0	52	0
Peacock, G E	Ayton	90	0	0	64	16
Tindall, Alfred	Ayton	2	3	8	25	15

3 Reference

RETURN OF OWNERS OF LAND, 1873, VOL. II.

Includes the county of York, North Riding.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty

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The two volumes are available at the Yorkshire Archaeological Society,
Claremont, 23 Clarendon Road, Leeds LS2 9NZ.

They are located at Bookcase 60, Row C, Book 2.

The four entries below are given for 'Ayton' only. These names do not appear in the Great and Little Ayton census records for 1871 or 1881, and are hence assumed to be in the Aytons near Scarborough.

Halls, F, Executors of	Ayton	59	0	0	135	0
Lister, Robert	Ayton	24	0	0	52	0
Peacock, G E	Ayton	90	0	0	64	16
Tindall, Alfred	Ayton	2	3	8	25	15