

## EMIGRANTS FROM HUGILL TO NEW YORK, 1838

### A Letter from Thomas Bateson to his son John<sup>1</sup>

Grassgarth,  
March 1st,  
1838

My Dear Son,

A great length of time has now elapsed since the last time a pen was taken in communicating anything to you. Nothing very material has transpired of recent date in this neighborhood, but my earnest endeavors shall be employed in attempting to relate to you everything which I deem worthy of insertion that will in the least be gratifying to your perusal. Should it prove to be so my utmost expectations will be fully realized.

My first attempt shall be to give you a brief detail of the death of your late esteemed friend, George Suart Senior, and the awfully sudden manner in which his earthly career terminated, which lamentable occurrence took place on the seventeenth of February last between eight and nine o'clock in the morning, having taken his breakfast on that morning about half an hour before he received the dreadful summons to appear before the Lord, our redeemer. His breakfast was taken with his usual hilarity and good humour with which he was usually wont to do. A friend and formerly an apprentice was remaining at Gatefoot a few days, having had the good fortune to have received a legacy a short time previous and had been regaling himself to rather a late hour the preceding night, and did not arise to breakfast in the morning. George wanted to see him before he went to Scroggs Mill to his daily employment. He (George) had taken a short walk after breakfast but very soon returned and mentioned to some of the family that something stuck in his breast. His visitor had now arose from his bed. His name is Isaac Jackson who has been a sojourner into that much talked of land of plenty; viz. America. George and his friend had about commenced conversation and when in the very act of speaking to him he fell from his chair and expired without a groan and was interred at Ings on the Tuesday following his decease, at the East end of the Chapel.

I have also to inform you of the death of the Reverend Peter Strickland who died of a lingering disease something resembling a dropsy. A Clergyman of the name of James Godmond Elleray has succeeded Mr. Strickland to the perpetual Curacy of Staveley (*sic*) nominated by the Vicar of Kendal after having obtained a majority of the resident voters within the Chapelry (he) Mr. Elleray has commenced teaching the School at Staveley and has rented the House belonging to the late Thomas Taylor and now occupies the said house, Mr. Ellary

came from Knutsford in Cheshire where he had resided a number of years and was a native of Longsleddale.

I must also enumerate the death of Mrs Agnes Braithwaite of Rawgill and George Harrison of High House Hugill. Having related the deaths of all excepting William Benson of Grassgarth I must now revert to circumstances of a more novel nature. Since the decease of John Hird of Height, his widow, old Betty, and her son James have rented the Farm and Beer Shop at Grassgarth formerly occupied as such by John Birkett. A disagreement took place between Betty and her son respecting some love affairs which was the cause of a separation and Betty left her son to seek her fortune, but whether it has proved so or not I am at a loss to inform you, but at all events she has got married to a person named Robert Vickers. His age is twenty six years and Betty fifty three. They are now keeping a Beer Shop at Low Millriggs, Ulthwaite and Betty is enjoying the affections of a young spouse in her old days.

James Braithwaite of Hill has Sarah Jenkinson of High House in an advanced state of pregnancy. Thomas Jenkinson, Senior has been at Hill making proposals for a match, also offered some considerable pecuniary matters, but report informs us that James still lends a deaf ear to matrimonial alliance, but in what way the matter will terminate we are unable to inform you of anything. I don't know whether you will be aware or not that James Bethom has two natural children, one to Margaret Dixon, Misslet and one to Margaret Jenkinson, High House, nearly both at one time. M. Dixon's was born first, law commenced, and the parties were twice at Appleby at the Assizes and a verdict of £20 damage was given to Thos. Dixon. In the latter part of last May James married M. Dixon and then T. Jenkinson started law and Jenkinson got damages of £80. James is now occupying C. Wharton's house at Ings and has all the Bobbin Turners.

In approaching towards the end of the sheet it reminds me that I must conclude, and having chiefly confined myself to the affairs of others I must now turn to something relating to ourselves. This leaves us all in very good health and sincerely trust that it will find you all the same. Your sister Della has three children, 2 girls and one boy called Thomas which is nearly one year old. Your sister Aggie still continues as Ben Rigg's housekeeper, Bella and William live in the Meeting House, Misslet, which is converted into a dwelling house. Jonathan Gilpin has married one of your Uncle James' daughters at Green Quarter. Your sister

Aggie, Bella, William and your Mother unite with me in sending their kindest love to you & your sister & family & believe me to remain your affectionate Father,

Thomas Bateson

Be so indulgent towards your aged parents as to take an early opportunity of writing to us again, and mention what information you can collect respecting Chris Rigg as his father will be very inquisitive about him, also about William Birkett, as both parties are equally desirous of hearing anything with the greatest avidity that you may think worthy of relating to us.

#### Addressed to

Mr Jno. Bateson, Mr Stotts  
Hudson  
New York, North America

#### Postmarks

“Kendal, Ma 2 1838”  
“Liverpool ? M? 3 1838”  
and “New....” (NewYork?)

#### The Story behind the Letter

Thomas Bateson was tenant of St Anne’s Farm, Grassgarth<sup>2</sup>. Born about 1770 in Skelsmergh, he married Isabella Hutchinson of Crag Quarter Kentmere and they baptised a daughter, the “sister Aggie” of the letter, in Kentmere in 1796<sup>3</sup>. Between then and 1809 they had other children, including the John to whom the letter was addressed, Elizabeth, the sister to whom the family send their love at the end of it, and the Isabella who lived in Misset Meeting House in 1838 with her husband William Bateman and their three children.

From at least 1816 till about 1840 Thomas rented St Anne’s Farm, Grassgarth from the Trustees of the Ings charities. He was a respected local farmer, and acted as Overseer of the Poor for Hugill in 1822<sup>4</sup>.

Although this was in general a time of prosperity for local farming, there were problems at St. Anne’s farm in the 1820s. The trustees had borrowed £200 to improve the buildings, including putting up a new bank barn in 1816, when Thomas took a nine year lease at the high rent of £75 a year. In 1821 he found he couldn’t pay and the trustees reduced it to £55 - “This appears to be the full value”,<sup>5</sup> they say.

In 1829 John and Elizabeth emigrated to the USA, John aged 22 or 23 and Elizabeth probably 20. We can only guess why they took this drastic decision. They knew well enough that life on a Westmorland farm was hard and uncertain, and at this time industry was offering new chances. In 1822 one William first had started a new woollen mill in Hugill (later known as Rawes Mill) and it seems quite probable that Elizabeth and perhaps John too worked there. But first’s mill was not very successful and he sold out in 1828. It was at this point and perhaps for this reason that the two young Batesons decided to seek their fortunes in “that much talked of land of plenty viz. America.” At any rate they got to New York in 1829<sup>6</sup> and found work in the developing woollen mills of Jonathan Stow at what became Stottville in the Hudson valley. John was (or now became) a weaver, and Elizabeth worked in the mill and in 1835 married another weaver, Richard Clarke. At the time of the letter they had two children. John did well enough to buy his own woollen mill in 1845, and he too married in America.

*St Anne’s Farm 1994; the 1816 barn is in the background*



We can be fairly sure then, that when John got round to answering his father's letter he would give a glowing account of life in the USA. Matters were probably less rosy at Grassgarth. Thomas and Isabella were getting old, 68 and 69 respectively, and when the lease of the farm ran out, they would have to move out. Their daughter Isabella, her husband William Bateman and their three young children (and a fourth on the way - born 1839) lived not very far away in Misset Meeting House, but there would be no room there for the old people. William was a farm labourer (had he perhaps worked for Thomas at St Anne's Farm?) and in the 1841 census return he and Isabella have five small children. Their prospects cannot have been very bright. By this time Thomas and his wife had in fact left Grassgarth and were living in the Knott, an abandoned farm-house on Hollin Hall land in Nether Staveley. The farmer at Hollin Hall was Nathan Hutchinson, probably a relative of Isabella's. Our next evidence suggests what they were waiting there for.

It comes from the passenger list of the "Ovando", sailing from Liverpool to New York in 1843. There we find William Bateman, aged 35 and his wife Isabella and five children (William junior was two) accompanied by an old couple aged 73 and 74, who although listed as Bateman are clearly Thomas and Isabella Bateson, on their way to join John and Elizabeth and their families in the Hudson valley. If we remember the conditions on wooden sailing ships on a voyage that could take several weeks, this journey with five small children and two old people must have required a good deal of courage as well as a firm conviction that life would be better in the USA.

As far as we can tell it turned out that it was.

Thomas lived another seven years and died aged 80 at Stottville. Isabella lived on, now with her daughter Elizabeth (Clarke), till 1855 when she would be 86. Elizabeth herself died in 1903 at the ripe old age of 94! All we know of the Bateman family is that William died in 1869, aged 60.

Joe Scott 1996

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Letter in the possession of William A Clarke of Connecticut, great great great grandson of Thomas Bateson, and sent to me in 1993. It isn't clear whether the odd spellings and use of capitals are Bateson's or Clarke's. Copy in Staveley Society papers.

<sup>2</sup>Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Charities and Education 1815-1835- Hugill, Westmorland. in KRO

<sup>3</sup>Kentmere parish register

<sup>4</sup>Petition 1822 D/Lons/L5/2/11/25 1b CRO

<sup>5</sup>Report of the Committee on Charities and Education

<sup>6</sup>Personal communication from William A Clarke. All the information from American sources is from letters to the Staveley Society from William A Clarke of Avon CT. USA, in the possession of the Society. Clarke gives as his sources various deeds, registers, family documents etc. and is clearly a precise and careful researcher.



*Isabella (Bateson) Clarke, born in 1809, in Kentmere (?). Emigrated in 1829. Died in 1903 in Massachusetts, USA.*