

A Brief History of the Ownership of the Kirk Sandall estate

At the time of the Norman Conquest the Saxon manors of Sandal and Streethorpe (later Edenthorpe) were included in lands granted by William to the De Warrenne family who based themselves in Conisbrough some 7 miles to the west of Doncaster.

In turn the land seems to have been leased/given to William fitz Godric who was the ancestor of the Fitzwilliam family.

In the early 1400s Lord Percy, 1st Earl of Northumberland defeated an invading Scottish army and captured a large number of Scottish nobles. King Henry IV forbade him to benefit from the tradition of ransoming of prisoners. Percy then mounted a rebellion against the King from his extensive lands in the north of England. There were numerous battles until in 1408 Percy was moving south when Sir Thomas Rokeby, the head of the famous Rokeby family of North Yorkshire and then High Sherriff of Yorkshire, gathered a force of Yorkshire troops and engaged the Percy army at Bramham Moor near Tadcaster. Percy's troops were defeated and Percy himself was killed.

For this victory Sir Thomas Rokeby received a grant for life of Spofforth, one of the largest Percy manors in Yorkshire, from a grateful king. Thus began the link between the Rokeby family and South Yorkshire. Most notably in Kirk Sandall this is marked by William Rokeby who seems to have been born about 1460 and as the second son went into the church becoming the Rector of the parish of Kirk Sandall between 1487 and 1497. From Kirk Sandall he moved to Halifax and subsequently rose to become Archbishop of Dublin in 1512. He died in 1521 and left instructions for chapels to be built in his name at Halifax and Kirk Sandall and for his body to be divided between the two. The Rokeby Chapel at Kirk Sandall contains much eroded monuments to a number of members of the Rokeby family ending with the large memorial to Sir Thomas Rokeby, a judge at the Kings Bench who died in 1699. His widow survived him and continued to live in Kirk Sandall until she too died in 1705 when with no direct heirs the estate passed to relatives living at Ackworth near Wakefield. The next few years were marked by gambling debts and law suits as the various members of the extensive Rokeby family argued about their respective claims.

Eventually the Kirk Sandall estate passed to a distant relative living in Northamptonshire and it was from here that in 1776 the lands were sold to a Mr. John Martin of Barnby Dun (the neighbouring village to Kirk Sandall).

This ended the relationship between the Rokeby family and Kirk Sandall.

Three generations of the Martin family appear to have been buried at Kirk Sandall. Their names are recorded on tablets on the wall and floor of the Rokeby Chapel. The following inscriptions are on the wall adjacent to the monument to Sir Thomas Rokeby.

Near this place
lies interred the body of JOHN MARTIN gentleman
who
by his indefatigable industry and proper economy
purchased the estate in this town belonging to the above [Rokeby] family.
He died June IV MDCCXCVIII
aged LXIII years

(according to the Google calculator this translates to June 4th 1798 aged 63 years)

Near this place lie the remains of GEORGE MARTIN gent:
who departed this life
December the 12th 1830
aged 49 years

Near this place lie the remains of MARIA wife of GEO. MARTIN, gen.
who departed this life October 11th 1808
aged 29 years

On the floor of the chapel is a grave slab with the inscription:

Beneath this stone
lieth the body of GEORGE MARTIN Esqre
of KIRK SANDALL
who departed this life on
the 28th day of June 1854
aged 45 years.