

# **Mowbrick Farm**

## **Introduction**

Mowbrick farm does not have an initialled date stone over the door and this makes it difficult to identify the original builder. It was built in 1691 and is therefore one of the oldest buildings in Hest Bank. The farmhouse is of a substantial construction and was clearly built by a yeoman of the day. A search through the local marriage records reveals three possible candidates:

Thomas Waller and Margaret Burrow, both of Hest Bank, who were married in 1689.

Thomas Borrwick and Frances Hunter, both of Hest Bank, who were married in 1686.

Thomas Ashton, son of Francis Ashton of Hest Bank and Elizabeth Wales of Bolton-le-Sands, who were married in 1679.

The land which formed Mowbrick Farm on the 1845 Tithe Map included Strand Meadow, Pasture Hill, Baines Field and Kiln Croft, all these were part of the original Ashton lands stretching along the shore to Bolton-le-Sands. This makes Thomas Ashton the most likely builder of Mowbrick Farm in 1691. The farm is named after the ancient word "Mowbreck"; it means "land on which stacks of hay or corn stand". One wonders if an older house existed on the site before 1691, was Mowbrick rebuilt at that time like many others?

Thomas Pape describes the farm and its interior as follows:

**The farm is now known as Robinson's Farm. It used to have a stone dating from the late seventeenth century. In the bedroom on the side-stone of the fireplace was the date 1691. In a room downstairs was a moulded plaster overmantel coloured brown like old oak. The windows were square mullioned with two lights and two rain-drip ledges went right along the front of the house.**

**[A Historical Guide to Slyne with Hest]**

## **Early Days**

If you try to visualise its original situation before the canal, railway and the Coastal Road were built, you see a farm situated on a high point of land with its fields sweeping down to the sea. William Stout's autobiography tells us that thousands of sheep were reared on these fields adjacent to the sea in the seventeenth century. Mowbrick Lane was possibly the "Main Street" of Hest Bank in the sixteen and seventeen hundreds, having past the Hest Bank Inn and the two farms, the road would carry on down to the shore. When the canal was built in 1795 and subsequently the railway in 1846, the fields belonging to this old farm were cut off from the Farm House. The canal bridge number 117, just beyond Mowbrick, is called Occupation Bridge and gave the farmer access to his fields. The bridge is a "grade II listed" structure and is similar to the nearby canal bridges, it is described as follows:

**Large punched gritstone blocks, single semi-elliptical arch with projecting keystone, string course under solid parapet with rounded coping.**

**[Listed buildings guide, Lancaster City Council]**

The letter below was written by Edward Tatham who owned the farm in 1807 and shows the difficulties arising from the building of the canal. When the canal companies bought the land from the owners they had to buy more land on either side for tow paths and, at certain points, for access to stables and other buildings. All this land was still subject to tithes and appears to have caused extremely complicated problems to the land owners and the canal companies.

To Jackson Mason Esq. deputy Steward  
of the Manor of Slyne-with-Hest.  
Sir,

I have been in London more than a week upon the business of the Lancaster Canal Bill and have enquired after you both at your Agents in Bow Street and at your Lodging in the Strand; and, as I can hear nothing of you, I suppose you will decline the attempt of receiving your application to Parliament in the present Session which will be very short and fully employed.

The Tythe Clause introduced in the last Bill by no means meets my approbation: The fee simple of the Tithes should be bought by the Company together with the fee simple of the land, and a proportion of the whole viz. a fifth of the arable and a ninth of the meadow should be given by the Act to the Tithe owner and divided between the Rector and Vicar according to their several claims, as is done upon enclosures. The provision made by the Tythe Clause in question is vague and prolifick of endless trouble and dispute but as there are so many other things to which I object, and in which objections I am joined by the Society of Trinity College Cambridge, Mr. Atkinson of Chancery Lane for himself and Mr. Hutton and other Tithe owners who are interested in the concern.

I have neither time nor paper to enter upon them at present. I have therefore to request that you will inform me by return of Post, when you intend to produce upon this business.

I remain your Humble Servant,  
Edward Tatham,  
No. 22, Old Bond St. London. 27th. June 1807.

The old farm is now hardly recognisable as a building from 1691, it has been externally rendered, it's stone window frames replaced and the rain drip ledges are now red terracotta. The farm buildings and the area wall remained the same as they were in the late Seventeenth Century until 1996, when they were to be demolished to make way for new houses.

A gentleman from Morecambe, who had worked on renovations on the farm in the 1940s, told me they had found an old bricked-in door made of heavy wood and on it was carved the initials BC. They brought Tom Pape, the local historian, to see it. Mr. Pape thought it stood for Beer Cellar since the farm could have been used as the public house whilst the Lantern Room was being built at the Hest Bank Hotel. I doubt if this is correct, the initials are more likely to be those of a tenant or an owner. The door was completely rotten and fell apart. One candidate for these initials is Christopher Bush, who we later note as a tenant in 1834, and using the surname first gives us BC.

By 1759 Edward Tatham of Hipping Hall owned Mowbrick. It was a Freehold estate which was rented out but unfortunately I cannot trace the name of the tenant at that time. The earliest information I have comes from a rental notice from 1826, at this time Richard Ewan was the tenant.

**June 30th. 1826, Mowbrick to be let.**

To be let by Private Contract for a term of years. And to be catered upon at the usual time next spring. A desirable farm, situate at Hest Bank in the parish of Lancaster within 3 miles of the town of Lancaster. Consisting of a farmhouse with convenient outbuildings and about 84 acres, of arable meadow, and pasture land now in the occupation of Richard Ewan. The Lancaster Canal runs through the estate and liberal encouragement will be given to taker.

Apply to the tenant, or Thomas Wilkinson of Hest Bank who will show the premises, for particulars apply to Edward Tatham of Hipping Hall Esq., the owner.

June 30th. 1826.

By 1834 Mr. Christofer Bush was the tenant and it is possible that he rented it as early as 1826. He was well known and well liked in the village but died suddenly in March 1840.

**Death Notice.**

**March 16th 1840.**

**On Tuesday last, Mr. Christopher Bush of Hest Bank. A more worthy neighbour, or kind-hearted friend never passed into the grave. His loss will be deeply regretted.**

**[Charles Quarme, Editor Lancaster Gazette.]**

## ***The Heaton Family***

Thomas Heaton was the son of Thomas and Mary Heaton of Slyne Hall. Thomas Heaton the elder had died in 1836 and he was described as a husbandman but he must have been quite wealthy because his will was proved at Richmond. His wife Mary continued to farm at Slyne Hall until 1861 and she then went to live with her son at Mowbrick. Thomas the younger was the tenant at Mowbrick from 1840 to 1871. In the 1841 census he was 28 years old and was listed with his wife Barbara. They had no children but employed four servants, the three male servants would have been agricultural workers.

Thomas Heaton, aged 28, farmer, born in the village.  
Barbara Heaton, aged 31, not born in the village.  
Jane Hathornthwaite, aged 16, female servant, born in the village.  
George Birket, aged 21 male servant, born in the village.  
Bartholomew Bradshaw, aged 14, male servant, born in the village.  
John Wilson, aged 16, male servant, born in the village. [1841 census return]

There was a second family, the Thompsons, listed for Mowbrick on the 1841 census. There was a second smaller house on the Mowbrick Estate which the Thompsons rented. This house disappeared after 1845.

John Thompson, aged 63.  
Mary Thompson, aged 63, born in the village.  
Margaret Thompson, aged 31, born in the village.  
Ann Thompson, aged 25, born in the village.  
Margaret Bossy, aged 19, female servant, born in village. [1841 census return]

In 1845 Mowbrick estate, numbers 134 and 135 on the 1845 Tithe Map, was owned by Edward Tatham, the son of the first Edward Tatham, and tenanted by Thomas Heaton. It was 74 acres in extent with a total rent charge payable to the Appropriator of £19-3s-10d.

### ***Lines on a Recent Distressing Event***

I came across a poem in the Lancaster Gazette of 1847. It was written by someone from Hest Bank after the death of their daughter. It shows the tragedy of the death of small children at that time, but also the acceptance of the situation. I think this poem was written by Barbara Heaton because no other person listed on the census fits the initials.

A little lily lately blew  
A few short summers here  
It was well nurtured, and it grew,  
Under unwearied care  
It was the pride of all the bed  
On which it reared its lovely head.

Weep not for her aye mourn her not  
She was her fated happy lot  
Heaven opens round her funeral urn  
Too pure to mix with mortals here,  
But in their dreams at night.

Hest Bank 14th July 1847.  
BJH.

In 1850 Barbara Heaton sadly died aged 38 leaving no children. Thomas continued at Mowbrick and by 1861 his mother then aged 85 was living with him. You will notice from the census that

she was the Farm Holder and this meant the tenancy was in her name. I have found that mothers at that time were definitely in charge of their sons. The farm was referred to as Tatham's Farm.

**53, Hest Bank Road, Tatham's Farm.**

**Thomas Heaton, aged 48, farming 65 acres, with 3 men and 1 boy.**

**Mary Heaton, mother, aged 85, widow, farm holder.**

**John K Lund, brother in law, aged 40, husbandman.**

**Elizabeth Lund, sister, aged 51, female servant.**

**Mary Lund, aged 12, niece, scholar.**

**Isabella Lund, aged 6, niece, scholar.**

**Mary Lancaster, aged 24, female servant.**

**Henry Swindlehurst, aged 24, husbandman.**

**Joshua Parkinson, husbandman, aged 19.**

**Tobias Kellet, aged 14, farm servant. [1861 census return]**

Henry Swindlehurst listed here as a husbandman was killed eighteen years later in a railway accident at Hest Bank station. He was then working as a platelayer having changed from agricultural to railway labour as did many of his contemporaries.

On Christmas Day 1862 a Mr Makin of Slyne Grange was drowned in the bay at Hest Bank. The Inquest was held at Mowbrick Farm, the home of Mr. Heaton, and the verdict of the Jury was accidental death by drowning. Many of the inquests concerning deaths in the village were conducted in the Hest Bank Hotel and Mowbrick was probably used on this occasion because it was Christmas. The inquests in those days were usually done immediately or within two days of the death to allow burial within three days!

Thomas' life changed considerably in the ten years after 1861; his mother died in 1862 aged 85, and Thomas must have married immediately. By 1871 he had five children by his new wife Annass. Many of the men in Slyne and Hest Bank seemed to marry very late in their lives but this is a second marriage.

**Thomas Heaton, aged 58, farmer of 74 acres.**

**Annass, wife, aged 42.**

**Thomas, son, aged 9, scholar.**

**William, son, aged 7, scholar.**

**Margaret, daughter, aged 5, scholar.**

**Elizabeth, daughter, aged 2.**

**Annie, aged 8 mos.**

**John William, aged 24, agricultural labourer.**

**Stephen Foster, aged 18, agricultural labourer.**

**Emanuel Hutchinson, aged 12, domestic servant. [1871 census return]**

By 1881 the family had moved away from Mowbrick but there were Heatons recorded in the village in the census of 1891, and of course there are Heatons living in Slyne-with-Hest today. If any of them are related to the family who occupied Mowbrick for so many years I would love to hear from them. The new farmer at Mowbrick in 1881 was John Canby with his wife Bridget, two young children and two servants:

**59, Hest Bank Village.**

**John Canby, head of household, aged 34, farmer of 70 acres.**

**Bridget Elizabeth, wife, aged 33.**

**John, son, aged 2.**

**Robert, son, aged 3 mos.**

**Ann Bell, general servant, aged 18.**

**Moses Mawson, aged 25, indoor and outdoor servant. [1881 census return]**

There is no information on Mowbrick in the 1891 census and no further records of the Canby family. Living at Mowbrick Farm in 1913 is Robert Milner who was brought-up at Slyne Hall.