

THE SPIKE AND BLAYDON CASTLE

I WAS BORN IN 1907 IN A PLACE NAMED BLAYDON CASTLE
OR TURRET PLACE. I SHOULD LIKE TO GIVE YOU THE HISTORY OF THE
SPIKE AND BLAYDON CASTLE BEFORE I TALK YOU OF OUR LIFESTYLE THERE.

THE SPIKE WAS THE NAME GIVEN TO THAT PART OF THE TOWN ALSO NAMED
BLAYDON HAUGHS. "SPIKE" IS AN IRISH NAME FOR A LODGING HOUSE,
AND THE DISTRICT WAS SO CALLED BY THE LARGE CONTINGENT OF IRISHMEN
WORKING LOCALLY AND LIVING THERE IN THE 1860s.

THE ORIGINAL LODGING HOUSE WHICH GAVE THE SPIKE ITS NAME WAS PROBABLY
THE BUILDING KNOWN AS BLAYDON CASTLE, NOT A MILITARY BUILDING IT WAS
OF CASTELLATED STRUCTURE PROPERLY KNOWN AS TURRET PLACE AND, ALTHOUGH
OBVIOUSLY A BUILDING OF GREAT PRETENSIONS IN ITS LATER DAYS IN THE
18th ~~1800s~~ IT WAS MADE INTO TENAMENTS AND HOUSED EIGHT FAMILIES. THE
COUNCIL'S PRE-WAR CLEARANCE RESULTED IN ITS DEMOLITION. IT WAS
A LARGE BUILDING, SQUARE IN PLAN, OF GOOD QUONING AND RUBBLE MASONARY
WHICH HAD A BROAD DUTCH GABLE ON EACH FACE WITH CORBELLED AND CRENNALATED
TURRETS AT EACH ANGLE. MANY OF THE ORIGINAL WINDOWS WERE LARGE ROUND
HEADED OPENINGS, JUDGING FROM WHICH THE DETAILS, THE CASTLE WAS BUILT
IN THE DAYS OF CHARLES II.

WE CAN HAZARD A GUESS AS FOR WHICH FAMILY THE HOUSE OR CASTLE WAS BUILT.
IT'S SIGHT FORMED PART OF THE SELBY ESTATE IN BLAYDON, THIS IS SHOWN
ON THE MAP FACING PAGE 68 OF OUR "HISTORY OF BLAYDON", AS SIR WILLIAM
SELBYS HAUGH. THE CASTLE STOOD IN THE WAIST OF THIS PLOT. AS A
RESULT OF THE CIVIL WAR AND FAMILY TRAGEDIES, IN THE MID SEVENTEENTH
CENTRY THE SELBY FAMILY ENTERED UPON HARD TIMES. SIR GEORGE SELBY
WAS FORCED TO SELL OFF HIS ESTATE IN PARCELS AND AS A RESULT, THE
CLAVERINGS ACQUIRED THE WHITE HOUSE AND ALL ADJACENT LANDS AND IN
1675 THE REST OF THE SELBY SHARE OF THE LORDSHIP OF WINLATON WAS BOUGHT
BY SIR WILLIAM BLACKETT. BUT MEMBERS OF THE SELBY FAMILY CONTINUED
TO LIVE IN BLAYDON, FOR ON THE 4TH JANUARY, 1721 MRS. FRANCES SELBY
OF BLAYDON WAS BURIED IN THE CHOIR OF THE CHURCH OF RYTON. WE THINK IT
HIGHLY PROBABLE THE SELBYS RESIDED IN THE CASTLE.

THE SPIKE WAS IN REALITY A VILLAGE ON ITS OWN, DIVORCED FROM BLAYDON
BY THE RAILWAY. THERE WERE SIX STREETS OF HOUSES, PIONEER ST, TOWNLEY ST,
VICTORIA ST, COWEN ST, AND AT RIGHT ANGLES TO THESE DOUGLASS TCE AND
PATTERSON ST. THERE WERE TWO PUBS, THE BOTTLE HOUSE ARMS AND THE PIONEER,
THE FORMER STOOD TO THE SOUTH OF THE "CASTLE", AND THE LATTER AT THE END
OF PIONEER ST. THE PIONEER HAD A MOST BEAUTIFUL DOORWAY, WITH
HOODED CANOPY.

It was the late sixteenth century and the beautiful Mrs Francis Selby could often be seen walking from her castle along the banks of the River Tyne. She would stand smiling at the fisherman as they hauled in their nets full of the most beautiful salmon. The River Tyne at that time was a pleasure to behold - clear, clean, glistening water in which the salmon excelled. Francis would undoubtedly return to her castle on the 'Haughs' and she would not be empty handed. She was thought very highly of by the workmen and all who knew her.

Let me tell you the history of this castle that was in that era the home of the Selby Family. It was known as 'Blaydon Castle' - it was not a military building, it was of castelated structure and was a building of great pretensions. It was square in plan, had good quoning and had broad Dutch cable on each face with corbelled and crennelated turrets at each angle. The windows were large round headed openings. Its detail all pointed to the castle having been built in the days of CHARLES II. The castle was built for the Selby family - it's site formed part of the Selby estate in Blaydon. Sometimes it was known as Sir William Selby's Haugh. As a result of the civil war and family tragedies the Selby's fell on hard times and in the early seventeenth century were forced to sell off the estates in lots. These lots were bought by Sir William Blackett and the Clavering family. Members of the Selby family continued to live in Blaydon, for in 1721 Mrs Frances Selby was buried in the choir of the church in Ryton. It was highly probable she still lived in the castle until her death.

The castle remained the home of the Selbys but later was deserted by them due to costs. In 1800 it was made into tenements and housed twelve families. It was said Frances Selby never did leave her castle as on more than one occasion she was seen by many gliding around, a ghostly apparition and still smiling.

Now getting on to the tenements. They were mostly Irishmen who got local work, for by this time the Blaydon Haughs had turned into

a hive of industry. Factories were popping up like mushrooms. There was a chemical works, a sanitary pipe works, three engineering works, a glass bottle factory and a lamp black factory. My forebears happened to be one of the families who lived in the tenements - I myself was born there in 1917.

The tenements consisted of two large stone floored rooms and two very small rooms. The living room had a huge fireplace which had a large, round oven. The ceilings were heavily beamed, the beams must have been oak but were coal black with years of smoke. The walls were rough cast plastering so could not be wallpapered - people kept them whitewashed. There was no hot water and no electricity. All the tenants had oil lamps. The oil man called each week with his oil drums on a horse drawn cart. The toilets were dry closets or 'netties'. Two men referred to as 'midden men' came each week to clean these out. They shovelled the rubbish out from a small hatch at the back of the closet. Each tenant had large tubs called 'poss tubs'. These stood outside the door and were used for washing clothes in and also for the family bath tub. Filling the tubs with hot water was quite a task, remembering that the water all had to be boiled in pans, kettles and whatever else could be used on the fire. It was a regular thing for either one woman or two who had their tubs filled to grab all the kids playing around and strip them, scrub them, wash their hair then send them off home to have their hair combed. Actually the tenants in the castle were one big family - very close knit and protective of one another. None of the children came to any harm, as someone was always around to keep an eye on them as though they their own.

Some of the men kept pigs, others had poultry and others had allotment gardens. There was always a pan of broth, a side of bacon and a roast of pork for everyone. The fresh eggs went mainly to the children and the very old.

The castle was on its own - it was divorced from Blaydon by the railway at one side and to the north of it, divided by fields, was a little village named the Spike. The Spike had six streets of

houses, two ale houses and two chapels, one a Methodist, the other a little tin hut - it was Anglican. On the other side in Blaydon was the Roman Catholic church. Blaydon was a very quaint old market place - the shops, which were very small, were more or less built around a large square named Wesley Square. Any meetings or gatherings congregated in Wesley Square - on a Saturday night you could be entertained by the speakers of different religious sects shouting to the crowd of the ways of the Lord and damnation. The opposition would throw old fruit and tomatoes at the speakers but this did not deter them. They would brush themselves down and continue to shout their anthems. The shops in old Blaydon were all low, stone floored little places at that time. The roads leading to it from the railway were all cobbles and at regular intervals were the old horse troughs for the horses to drink - the horse cabs being the main conveyance to travel. The shops were small but plentiful. There was a cloggers and a boot and shoe shop, a milners, a tailors, a hardware shop, a blacksmiths, several butchers, bakers and even a candlestick makers. The candlesticks were mainly used by the miners. In those days they were a small tin affair with a sharp spike at one end which they pushed into a pit prop - this held the candle.

At Christmas time it was fairyland for the children going to the shops at Blaydon. One shop competing against another in Christmas decor and Santa didn't have his reindeer, he always turned up in his horse driven trap. I think the biggest fascination was the butchers shop window, always with his pigs heads in there - they were done up with holly and had an orange in their mouths. The ducks and geese always were well decorated with holly and small sugar pigs etc. surrounding them - it was childhood magic, it did not matter that Santa only left them a sugar pig, an orange, an apple and a new penny.

Dare I say a funeral in those days was a very grand affair, also very mournful. The night before the interment the men of the castle gathered at the home of the deceased and had the wake. This was the sitting up all night with the dead. It was unheard of for a dead person to be left alone. No need to say the whiskey ran freely

all night - also the old clay pipes were handed around with free tobacco. The funeral coaches were magnificent, black, shining horse drawn coaches. The horses drawing these coaches were black and groomed until their coats shone like black silk. They had black feather plumes done up with the black ribbons. The hearse was figured glass panels and the horses drawing the hearse were very special indeed. Everyone went to these funerals - they walked two abreast behind the mourning coaches all the way to the Blaydon cemetery. Afterwards there was quite a spread, roast hams, pease pudding, pickles, cakes of all descriptions and of course the large spice loaf. I remember this beautiful old castle being demolished, it will be 68 years ago now. It will be remembered with nostalgia and affection by anyone who is still living who lived there. Alas the site is now given over to industry. I wonder has Frances Selby left it too.

Memories by Mary Green (Age 83)