

The Gibsons and Firths of Slead Hall



Of the six flat ledger stones above four of them have memorial inscriptions to members of the Macaulay family. The two others are blank. Could one or both have also been over a missing Macaulay grave plot or plots? In the late 1920s / early 1930s a gentleman named Arthur Blackburn recorded the memorial inscriptions in many West Yorkshire churchyards including St. Matthew's. This is how we have a detailed transcription of a memorial inscription for seven Macaulay siblings which will be recorded for you later and which is also accessible via the Burial Search section on our website. We suspect that blank slabs were the base for a table or chest tomb on which the original inscriptions were made.

But before exploring more about the siblings' missing inscription an earlier family connection with Lightcliffe needs to be explained.

In Lightcliffe's old tower is a board which used to be in the old church. As you can see it now stands vertically on its end because of the limited space in the tower.



Rotating the image helps but only marginally. Fortunately, a transcription of the whole board is recorded at the back of our book *In the Shadow of Lightcliffe's Old Tower*.

The top right section of the board reads :

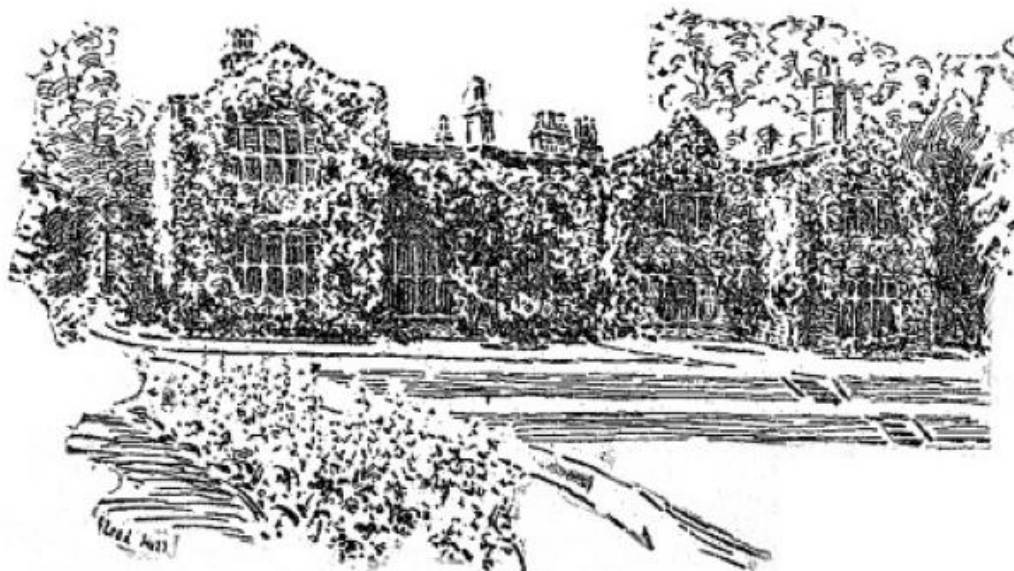


Benefactor	When left	Will of Deed	How to be applied	Whence issuing	Amount produce £. s. d.
Michl. Gibson Esq. of Slead Hall	AD 1738	Left by Will	To be distributed by the Ministers & Churchwardens on every Sunday in the year for ever at Lightcliffe Chapel the value of 1 shilling in bread to 12 persons residing in Hough Edge & Upper Lane. This is charged upon the Pear Tree Farm at Lightcliffe		2. 12. 0.

Lightcliffe Chapel was the old Eastfield Chapel as this was long before William Walker replaced that building with the old St. Matthew's Church – now also demolished - in 1775.

Hough Edge is an older spelling of Hove Edge. The building and barn of Pear Tree Farm are still standing between Wakefield Road and Lightcliffe Cricket Club.

This is the starting point. But who was Michael Gibson and where was Slead Hall?



Malcolm Bull's Calderdale Companion

Sleed Hall sketched above was situated in extensive private grounds at Sleed Syke between Brighouse and Hove Edge. It was thought to have been built in 1636. In the late seventeenth century, it was bought by a clothier Robert Gibson (1628 – 1691/2). Robert and his wife, Rhenetta had a number of children of whom Michael born about 1666 was the eldest and so he inherited Sleed Hall. He married Elizabeth Lord probably in 1696. They baptised most of their children in Halifax; Robert on 30th August 1697, Elizabeth on 30th August 1699, George on 11th June 1703, John on 13th May 1705, Anne on 4th March 1707 and a second Michael on 1st May 1710. The baptism record for their first Michael says that he was baptised at Lightcliffe on 14th August 1701 just before he died. The second Michael also died as an infant in 1711. The youngest son William was also baptised at Lightcliffe in what would have been Eastfield Chapel on 10th January 1714. Their father was of Hipperholme for all these baptisms.



Meanwhile in 1702 Michael Gibson bought Giles House in Lightcliffe. He later altered it according to a datestone set within the gable and inscribed **MG 1723**.

A similar datestone inscribed **MSG 1718** notes Michael Gibson's complete renovation of Sleed Hall.

Elizabeth Gibson née Lord died in 1722. She was buried, as many of the Gibson family were, in St. John's Church, Halifax now Halifax Minster. A transcription of the Gibson memorial plaque from Malcolm Bull's Calderdale Companion, gives more details of their age and when they died.

Inscription on the North wall of the Church

Near this Place is Interred
ELISABETH GIBSON, Daughter of
ROBERT GIBSON of Slead Hall,
Who died A.Æ.S. 23^o A.D. 1690^o.

And [ROBERT GIBSON](#) of Slead Hall,
Who died A.Æ.S. 63^o A.D. 1691^o.

And MICHAEL GIBSON, the Son of
[Michael Gibson](#) of Slead Hall,
Who died A.Æ.S. 1^o A.D. 1701^o.

And MICHAEL, y^e Son of MIC.GIBSON
Who died A.Æ.S. 1^o A.D. 1711^o.

And RHENETTA, y^e Wife of RO. GIBSON
Who died A.Æ.S. 84^o A.D. 1715^o.

And ELISABETH, the Wife of
MICHAEL GIBSON
who died A.Æ.S. 52^o A.D. 1722^o.

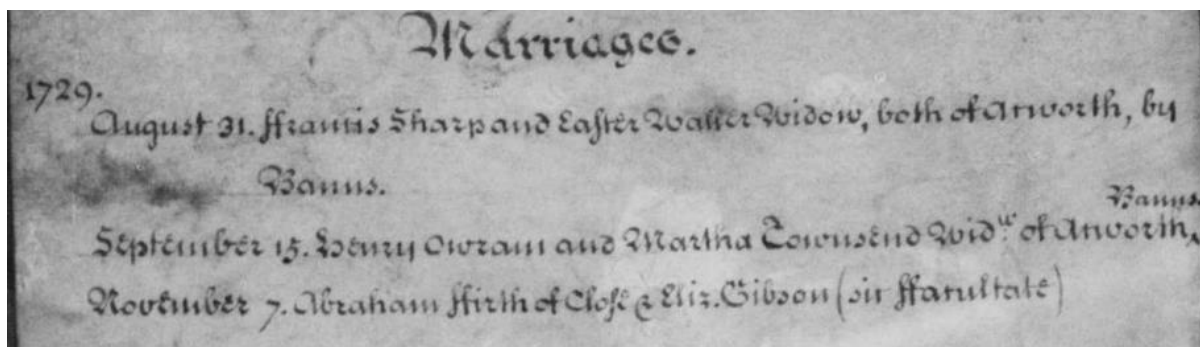
And [MICHAEL GIBSON](#) of Slead Hall,
Son of ROBERT,
Who died A.Æ.S. 72^o A.D. 1738^o.

And [ROBERT GIBSON](#) OF Slead Hall,
son of MICHAEL,
Who died A.Æ.S. 41^o A.D. 1738^o.

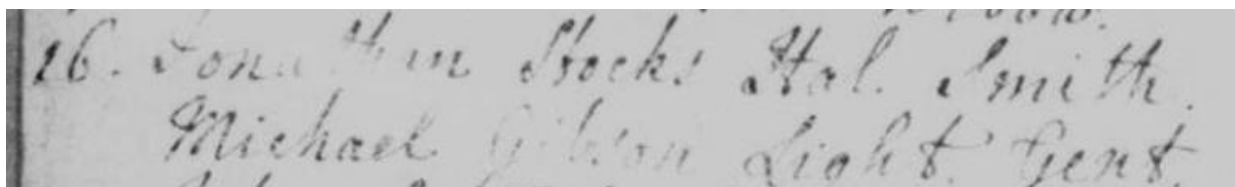
And [GEORGE GIBSON](#) OF Slead Hall,
son of MICHAEL,
Who died A.Æ.S. 41^o A.D. 1738^o.

Also [W^m GIBSON](#) M.D. & Anat P. Cantabrigie
Who died Feb. 16th 1753, Aged 39

There were two family weddings in 1729. Widower Michael Gibson married Mrs Martha Dade in Otley. She was the widow of the Rev Dade of Otley. And then his eldest daughter Elizabeth married Abraham Firth of Clough House on 7th November 1729 at Ackworth.



The Eastfield Chapel benefactor, Michael Gibson a gentleman of Lightcliffe, was buried at St. John's Church, Halifax on 16th November 1735.



His name appears on the *Prerogative & Exchequer Courts Of York Probate Index, 1688-1858* dated June 1736.

19 Gibson Michael of Sleadhall P. Halifax J. rp

His oldest two sons, Robert and George Gibson, are reputed to have both died in 1746 according to the family's Halifax memorial. Robert was apparently a bachelor, but no further records have been found for him. George was married perhaps twice and according to his November 1746 *Prerogative & Exchequer Courts Of York Probate Index, 1688-1858* record he lived at Slead Hall.

110 Gibson George of Slead Hall p. Halifax. March. T. C. Cod. 2p.

Their brother, John, has not been positively identified after his baptism in 1705. His name does not appear on the transcription of the Halifax memorial. As his baby brothers, both called Michael, were remembered there can it be assumed that he survived to adult hood? Who knows.

Similarly, nothing more has been found about the youngest sister, Ann baptised in 1707. Again, her name does not seem to appear on the Halifax memorial. There is a note on Malcolm Bull's *Calderdale Companion* to say that she died aged 83 ie about 1790. But that has not helped to identify her.

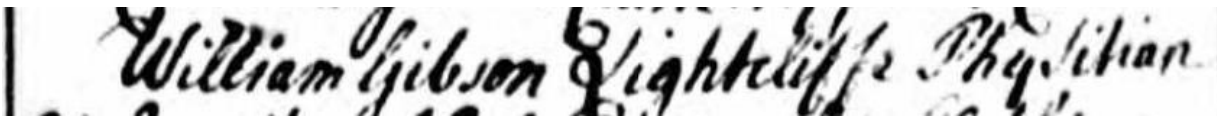
The youngest son William who was baptised at Lightcliffe on 10th January 1714 studied medicine as his Cambridge University Alumni record notes.

William Gibson

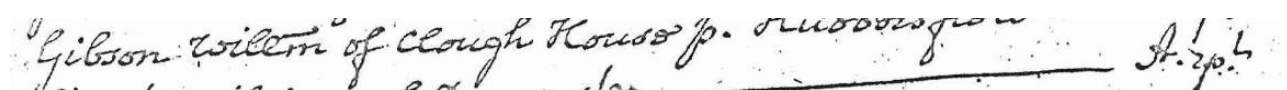
in the Cambridge University Alumni, 1261-1900

More Information: [Adm.](#) sizar at JESUS, Oct. 19, 1731. B. at Slead Hall, Halifax, Yorks. [Matric.](#) 1731; B.A. 1735-6; Scholar, 1736; M.A. 1739; M.D. 1746. Professor of Anatomy, 1746-53. Practised at Brighouse, Yorks. Died Feb. 16, 1753, aged 39. (A. Gray; Whitaker, *Loidis*.)

Physician William Gibson was buried at St. John's Church on 20th February 1753 and does get a mention on the family memorial. His November 1754 *Prerogative & Exchequer Courts Of York Probate Index, 1688-1858* record seems to indicate that he resided with his sister Elizabeth Firth née Gibson and brother in law at Clough House, Huddersfield.



William Gibson & Lightcliffe Physician



Gibson William of Clough House p. suuooosigooon St. 2p. 4

With no surviving male heirs – as already explained it is not known what happened to the son John Gibson – Slead Hall was passed to William's sister Elizabeth Firth. By then the Firths of Clough House near Huddersfield had a large family. Their eldest child Sarah was baptised on 21st July 1732, Abraham on 1st August 1734, Anne on 17th December 1735, Mary on 27th April 1737, Amelia on 17th May 1738, Catherine on 25th October 1739 and William on 14th October 1742. For most of these Huddersfield baptisms their father Abraham Firth was recorded as being a gentleman of Clough House. There may have been two more daughters born in 1750 and 1751 as well as a couple of infant burials. Records show that Amelia of Clough House was buried on 4th January 1738 so either this or the baptism are a year out. And an Elizabeth, possibly Elizabeth Mary, was buried on 28th March 1753.

Clough House stood on Halifax Old Road which led from Huddersfield to Halifax via Grimescar and Ainley Top.

It was demolished in January 1899 to allow for the widening of Halifax Old Road.



But it is only the two eldest daughters, Sarah and Ann, who will now be followed. By the end of March 1771 these two may have been the only survivors of this Clough House family. Father Abraham was buried at St. Peter's Church, Huddersfield on 20th September 1767. Daughter Catherine was also buried there on 14th August 1769, followed by son Abraham on 25th November 1769, then his wife Elizabeth née Gibson on 15th February and finally his youngest son William on 15th March 1771. They all had probate records listed in *Prerogative & Exchequer Courts Of York Probate Index, 1688-1858* where all of them are recorded as being 'of Clough House'.

The two Firth sisters married within weeks of each other as reported in the *Leeds Intelligencer* with interesting observations!

1 December 1772

On Saturday last was married at Huddersfield, Mr Nichols, Merchant at Booth-Town, near Halifax, to Miss Firth, of Close; an amiable lady with a fortune of 15,000 l.

26 January 1773

One day last week was married, Mr Thomas Macaulay, of Manchester, to Miss Firth of Close near Huddersfield: a lady of great accomplishments, with a fortune of 15, 000 l

15,000 l = £15,000 = about 3 million pounds today

Eldest daughter Sarah Firth married a widower Jonathan Nicholls on 26th November 1772 with sister Ann as a witness. He and his first wife, Elizabeth née Ellis, who died 20th May 1771, had two children, another Jonathan born about 1763 and a daughter Elizabeth born about 1764. Jonathan and Sarah Nicholls then had another daughter, another Sarah who was born about 1775.

Just a few weeks later, on 17th January 1773, her sister Ann Firth married Thomas Macaulay again at St. Peter's Church, Huddersfield.

In 1775 William Walker replaced Eastfield Chapel with a new Lightcliffe church, St. Matthew's and as churchwarden issued the first pew plaques. Pew plaques No. 2 and No. 37 are for Mess^{rs} Nicholls & Macaulay two brothers in laws, the husbands of two very wealthy sisters who were the granddaughters of Michael Gibson of Slead Hall, a Lightcliffe benefactor. The pew plaque on the left is inscribed 'Slead Hall' but for some reason the other one says CROW NEST.



Thomas Macaulay was a doctor as were many of his descendants as you will discover later. His sister in law's stepson Jonathan Nicholls was recorded as being a surgeon of Hipperholme when he died in 1809.

14 Jonathan Nicholl Esq. Surgeon Aged 46.

Surgeon Jonathan Nicholls was named on his parents' Nicholls memorial in Halifax Church along with his sister Elizabeth. His stepmother Sarah née Firth and her daughter Sarah were remembered in Huddersfield Church.

Inscription on a marble tablet on the north wall of the Church

In Memory of

**JONATHAN NICHOLLS of Boothtown,
but late of Clough House, Gentleman,
who died 4th April 1784, aged 61 Years.**

**And of ELIZABETH his Wife,
who died 20th May 1771, aged 39 Years**

**Also of JONATHAN NICHOLLS
of Hipperholme, their Son,
who died 9th September 1809, aged 46 Years.**

**Also of ELIZABETH NICHOLLS
their Daughter, who died at Halifax
15th November 1809, Aged 45 Years**



The Macaulays had a son Abraham Firth Macaulay and a daughter Ann Macaulay both baptised at Scalby near Scarborough. After the deaths of their parents, their uncle and aunt they inherited both their mother's and their aunt's properties including Slead Hall and Clough Hall. Their stories are told next in

The Ashworths of Strawberry Hill and Clough House

The Macaulays of Slead Hall

D.M.Barker
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