

ORIGIN OF AN EASTBY RELIC

An oven was built into the outside wall of the small Eastby cottage at the bottom of Eastby Bank (at the east end of the village). In response to a query the following letter sent in the early 1940's to the 'Craven Herald and Pioneer' explains how it was converted to another use:

*"Dear Sir,
The origin of the 'Eastby Relic', mentioned in the Craven Man's Diary last week, is very simple indeed. The oven was built into the wall at the foot of Eastby Bank in about 1882 by the late Mr. Geo. Heyworth, who farmed Stud Fold. At that time, there was no delivery of letters further than Eastby Hall, and Mr. Heyworth's letters were left at his father's house, which was at the other end of the village. So to obviate the necessity of walking so far he, with the help of the local blacksmith, converted the disused oven into a letter-box, fastened with a padlock, a key of which the postman carried so that any packet too large to go through the slit might be left inside.
Sometimes we found letters and cards which had been put in by strangers passing through the village, which, of course, we transferred to the village letter-box.
Yours truly, Margaret E. Heyworth."*



The letter was written by George's widow. George had been born at Croft House, Eastby (at the western end of the village) in 1852 and started farming at Studfold in 1876. He married Margaret Ellen Mason in 1880 but died at the early age of 41 in 1894. Margaret outlived her husband by 50 years, having moved from Eastby to live in Morecambe with her brother

Dennis in 1938, but she obviously continued to get the Craven Herald. She died at Morecambe in 1944.



Based on its appearance, George's childhood home, Croft House, was built about 1800-1820. It was probably built for Richard Chippindale, a gentleman farmer and landowner who was living there from at least 1822. He also owned Studfold Farm, Eastby. He never married and was described as 'a man of eccentric habits' when he died in January 1849 aged 75. After his death, gold and silver amounting to over £2,000 was found in the house (Liverpool Mercury).

He died intestate and his land and property was sold by auction later in 1849. This is likely to be when Croft House was bought by John Heyworth of Park House, Eastby, who may have also bought Studfold at the same time. He married in 1850 and had 5 children, one of which was George Heyworth of Studfold who was responsible for the oven/postbox.

John Heyworth died in 1891 and Croft House was taken over by his younger son Johnny Heyworth who died there in 1947.

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