



Tarn House Farm . . . at the head of the dale, ancient seat of the Fothergills.

Historic Farmhouses of the Dales

## IN RAVENSTONEDALE

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**O**N the borders of Yorkshire and Westmorland lies the valley of Ravenstonedale. Here for centuries the Fothergills were the principal family. Indeed tradition has it that they came over with the Conqueror, that one of the family was present at the siege of York and there so distinguished himself that he was granted the manor of Ravenstonedale. This story has been much repeated but its authenticity seems doubtful, and, whether by gift from the Fothergills or otherwise, by the end of the twelfth century the manor was certainly in the hands of the Gilbertine canons of Watton Priory, who established a cell adjoining the church, of which they held the rectory. After the dissolution, the manor passed to the Whartons of Wharton, and from them to the Lowthers.

During the Middle Ages, the Fothergills held their lands of the Gilbertines, and in the seventeenth century they emerge as "Statesmen," that is, as tenants by inheritance and custom. The seat of the family was at Tarn House at the head of the dale. Browner at the foot of the valley belonged to a younger branch, but at the end of the eighteenth century the main Fothergill line died out, and for many years Tarn House passed out of the family until it was re-purchased by a Fothergill of Browner. Halfway down the valley stands Lockholme, where dwell Sir William Fothergill who bore the English standard at the Battle of Solway Moss in 1542, when

a large Scottish army was put to disastrous flight by a few hundred borderers, resulting in the death through chagrin a few days later of King James V, and the accession of his weak-old daughter, the ill-fated Mary, to the throne of Scotland.

It was Sir William's younger son who built Browner which, however, has since been completely rebuilt. It is perhaps most interesting as having been the home of Elizabeth Gaunt who was born at Fothergill and was the last woman to be burnt at the stake in England, in 1685. She suffered death for harbouring and aiding a man who had conspired against James II. Her judicial murder may well have been one of the final acts of this most unattractive monarch which resulted in the revolution of 1688. There is a memorial to Elizabeth Gaunt in the church of Ravenstonedale.

Lockholme has been greatly altered but still contains some original panelling and has a doorway which bears Henry Fothergill's initials and the date 1697.

Tarn House presents much the same appearance as it did when it was rebuilt by George Fothergill in 1664, with its original mullioned windows whose drip labels end in ornate scrolled stops. Above the fine moulded doorway with its four centred arch is a panel with the building date and the initials of George and Julia Fothergill, and above this again another panel bears the arms of Fothergill, and of Scrope, Dent, Brand and Skelton, families with which the Fothergills were allied by marriage. There are windows in the east wall with medieval heads, which may be from an earlier house on the site or may perhaps have been brought from the old monastic buildings of the Gilbertine canons. Inside the house there is some fine oak panelling and doorways, and altogether Tarn House is an interesting and complete example of a well-to-do statesman's house, whilst the group of houses and their family connections may be taken as typical of many of our smaller dales.

Browner has been completely rebuilt. Here lived the last Englishwoman to be burnt at the stake.

