

# THE LORD MOVES IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

Visit a forgotten corner of Newton's history



**NEWTON INDEPENDENT CHAPEL**

The Lord moves in mysterious ways. The Lordship of Bowland may only have been revived in 2009 but the new Lord's ancestral links to Newton date back more than three hundred years: to a renegade preacher who brought radical religion to the Forest of Bowland and helped found its first dissenting chapel.

Newton's Independent Chapel – rebuilt in 1832 and 1887 - stands on the site where the Reverend Thomas Jollie, a founding father of Congregationalism (now the United Reform Church), preached his firebrand sermons in the 1690s.

## **NEWTON'S RENEGADE PREACHER**

Thomas Jollie (1629-1704) was the second son of Major James Jollie (1600-66), Cromwell's Provost Marshal General of Parliamentary Forces in Lancashire during the English Civil Wars.

James Jollie later became Quarter Master General to Sir Thomas Fairfax and served under Colonel Robert Duckinfield at the

Leaguer (Siege) of Chester.

In 1647, he captained a company of foot during the Plantation of Ireland. After the Restoration, James Jolly fell from favour, suffering persecution as a religious dissident.

His second son Thomas Jollie was born in Droylsden, Manchester in 1629. At Trinity College, Cambridge, he read divinity before taking up a Presbyterian ministry at Altham in the late 1640s.



**THOMAS JOLLIE, RENEGADE PREACHER**

During the Commonwealth and Protectorate, Thomas Jollie rose to prominence as a leading puritan thinker. However, with the Restoration of Charles II and the introduction of legislation against dissenting religion, his prominence turned quickly to notoriety.

### **RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION**

In November 1660, only months after the return of Charles II from exile, Thomas Jollie was arrested in Preston and charged with sedition.

He was arrested again in early 1661 and shut out of his chapel, charged with forming a renegade congregation called *The Society* which opposed baptism and the sacraments. He was denounced

for his rejection of the Book of Common Prayer and for having private religious meetings at his house. He was even accused of Satanism.

Persecution intensified throughout the 1660s. Jollie's religious services were repeatedly broken up, often by armed soldiers, and he was forced to move frequently. He was detained at Burnley, Bury, Skipton and imprisoned for a month at York on suspicion of treason. Twenty prisoners were executed but Thomas Jollie was released. He was soon again in trouble, however. By 1665, he was back in gaol, this time at Lancaster Castle.

The Five Mile Act was passed in 1665, requiring all ministers deprived of their livings to live at least five miles from their former abode. Thomas Jollie then purchased a house at Wymondhouses on the side of Pendle Hill where he revived his Society. He suffered repeated arrest and harassment between 1665 and 1672.

The Act of Indulgence of 1672 promised some relief to dissenters like Jollie and Wymondhouses was eventually licensed for preaching. However, the Act was repealed within two years. In June 1674, Jollie was once again arrested – this time at pistol point whilst preaching.

Between 1679-93, Jollie kept a journal of his frequent journeys to preach in Lancashire, Yorkshire and Cheshire as well as of his various arrests. In 1694, he was appointed by a general meeting of the United Brethren (Presbyterians and Independents) as one of their leaders in Lancashire.

In 1696, with Jollie's assistance, Richard Leigh of Birkett built Newton's first independent chapel. Thomas Jollie's grandson, also Thomas, had married Leigh's daughter and his nephew, John Jollie, served as Newton's first Congregationalist minister from 1696-1702.

Yet Jollie was never destined for the quiet life. He quickly drew fire by publishing an impassioned attack on witchcraft, "The Surey Demoniak, an account of Satan's strange and dreadful actings in and about the body of Richard Dugdale of Surey near Whalley in Lancashire".

Newton's first and only renegade preacher died in 1702 at the

grand old age of 73. Now, more than three centuries on, in the shape of William Bowland, it seems his radical spirit may mysteriously have returned to Newton ...

*The account of Thomas Jollie's life is drawn from Craig Thornber's account based on Chetham Society, New series, Vol. 33 : 'The Note Book of the Rev. Thomas Jollie A.D. 1671 to 1693. Extracts from the Church Books of Altham and Whymond Houses, AD 1649 -1725 and an account of the Jollie family of Standish, Cotton and Altham', Edited by Henry Fishwick. Published in Manchester, 1895. The portrait of Thomas Jollie is reproduced courtesy of Mansfield College, Oxford.*