

## Crow Nest Mansion part 2



Titus Salt returned to Crow Nest in December 1867 after an absence of just eight years. In 1869 he was knighted on the recommendation of W. E Gladstone, the prime minister. Four years later, in September 1873, he held another party at Crow Nest, this time for his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was estimated that 4,200 attended being brought by three special trains provided by the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Company. The list of provisions showed a proportional increase to that of the 1856 event. The tables, inside an enormous T-shaped tent, measured nearly 1,200 yards in length. The entertainments provided were mainly held in the top part of the grounds and included three bands, various games, Punch & Judy shows and dancing. Rev Balgarnie commented on the lofty and extensive conservatories on the south side of the mansion. The central conservatory is more spacious than the others and includes an elaborate rockery and cascade inspired by an attraction at the Paris Exhibition. He also referred to Sir Titus's delight in bananas and the immense height of his plants.

During his time, Salt had the lake with an island built in the southeast corner of the grounds. The 1867 plan shows a pond in the same location, indicating this was used as the start of the lake. During construction of the lake in 1869, the foreman, William Nicholl, drowned himself. <https://www.lightcliffchurchyard.org.uk/attachments/article/186/Some%20Lightcliff%20suicide%20cases.pdf> ) The lake was stocked with fish and aquatic birds. It is still there today as a feature on the golf course.



Although the Salt family were Congregationalists Sir Titus Salt was supportive of the new parish church being built near the Crow Nest lodge on Wakefield Road. He gave a handsome Caen stone pulpit to the new St. Matthew's Church. The building, which was completed in 1875, was funded by Major Johnston Jonas Foster of Cliffe Hill, his neighbour.

One of the many visitors to Crow Nest was Dr David Livingstone, the African explorer and missionary, another was Dr Robert Moffat. Moffat was a Scottish Congregationalist missionary and father-in-law to Livingstone. There are several very detailed descriptions of life at Crow Nest and what the buildings looked like in Rev R Balmgarnie's biography.



**A portrait of Sir Titus Salt perhaps at home in Crow Nest mansion**

During his time at Crow Nest, it is said that Titus Salt spent £110,000 on the mansion and parkland. He had sheep, alpacas and llamas grazing in the surrounding fields.

Most large houses of the period would have had an entrance carriage way designed to provide an impressive view of the main facade. Not so for Crow Nest. Visitors would have travelled down the coach road and made a right angle turn to arrive at the front of the house - no spectacular view.

In the 1860s, Evan Charles Sutherland Walker had drawn up plans to remedy this (the plans are in the West Yorkshire Archives). They show a lodge on Wakefield Road and a carriage way leading down, under a newly constructed bridge, to the front of the house. Both in the sale document and the accompanying plan, the carriage way and lodge are shown. When Titus Salt bought the mansion, he incorporated more detail into the lodge. This included, after he gained his knighthood, a coat of arms including rams and llamas.



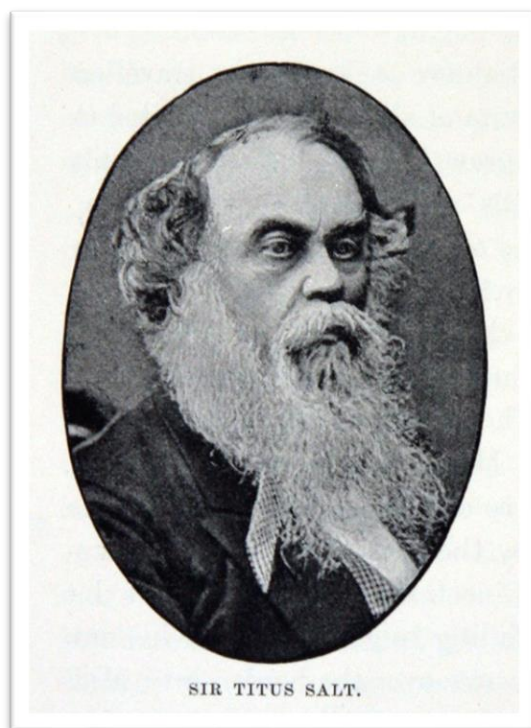


**The bridge over the carriage way**

A recent publication suggested that there was an ornamental gateway to Crow Nest with two lodges on Wakefield Road. There is, however, no indication of this on either the 1867 plan or the 1894 OS map. An internet image search places this entrance at Askern Lodge, Campsall Hall near Doncaster. It was demolished in the 1950s.



Sir Titus Salt died on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1876. For a few years before his death, his doctor had been Dr. William Charteris, then on The Crescent, Hipperholme.



The *Bradford Observer* for January 5<sup>th</sup> 1877, recorded that Sir Titus Salt's funeral was held that day with part of the report noting that :-

... in the village of Lightcliffe the shops were closed and the streets lined with the villagers assembled to witness the departure of the remains of one who had so long gone in and out among them.

As the hearse left Crow Nest, escorted by mounted police, a large number of villagers were clearly present to pay their tributes to a very popular neighbour on his final journey to Saltaire via Manchester Road.

Whilst at Crow Nest the Salt family had worshipped at the local Lightcliffe Congregational Church. A beautiful stained-glass window was later installed there in his memory.

After Sir Titus Salt's death, the house was bought by businessman Richard Kershaw for £34,000 as the *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* reported on Saturday July 20<sup>th</sup> 1878.

CROW NEST ESTATE. The mansion and estate of Crow Nest, near Halifax, the residence of the late Sir Titus Salt, Baronet, have been purchased from the trustees of the will of the deceased baronet by Mr Richard Kershaw, silk spinner, Brighouse. Mr Kershaw is already the owner of a large part of the Giles House estate, adjoining the Crow Nest estate.



Richard Kershaw (pictured above) was an eminent local man with wide business interests and a genuine commitment to the area. In 1881 he had Wood Vale Mills built and was generally regarded as one of the founders of the silk industry in our area. He was a member of the Brighouse Local Board for 21 years and chairman for five. One of the first members of the Brighouse Town Council when it was formed in 1893, he was also an alderman until he retired in 1908. From 1895 to 1898 he was Mayor of the borough. He was a Conservative and a justice of the peace. Over the years he was closely associated with three local Anglican churches, namely St John's at Clifton, St Martin's and St Matthew's, Lightcliffe.

From 1870 Kershaw had bought a considerable amount of land in the area including Giles House and Lower Green House. In 1890 he took advantage of the sale of the rest of Sutherland Walker's estate and bought more land in the Hove Edge area and the Stoney Lane area. J. Horsfall Turner says that Kershaw was the first to find valuable beds of stone under the land which he could extract without disfiguring the surface.

After Richard Kershaw's death in 1917, the mansion, parkland and other parts of estate were auctioned on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1917. The house was described as a 'commodious family mansion' situated in its own park and pleasure gardens comprising 82 acres. Also highlighted were spacious conservatories with their accessories, stabling, outbuildings, ornamental lake, flower and kitchen gardens. Crow Nest cottages, at the northeast end of the parkland, were also included. The mansion had an entrance hall, a dining room, two drawing rooms, a morning room, a boudoir and a billiard room. There were eight principal bedrooms and eight secondary bedrooms, three dressing rooms and three bathrooms as well as servants' bedrooms. There were rooms for business meetings, and the housekeeper's room. The list of rooms continued with a butler's pantry fitted with two massive safes for silver and the usual domestic offices. Outside were mentioned lawns, a six-stall stable, six loose boxes, a garage for five cars and a coachman's house. The kitchen garden contained peach and grape houses and other garden houses. There was a substantial head gardener's house and ample farm buildings.

At the sale, although there were 100 people present, there was little activity. Bidding for the mansion and grounds opened at £15,000 but there was no advance beyond £21,000 and the lot was withdrawn. On the following days the contents were sold off, and examples of the items and prices are contained in the following press cuttings.

OCTOBER 26, 1917.

## Crow Nest Sale.

LITTLE COMPETITION FOR PROPERTY.

ONLY ONE LOT DISPOSED OF.

Yesterday afternoon, at the Bradford Mechanics' Institute, Mr. J. E. Jennings offered for sale by auction the Crow Nest estate and other properties belonging to the late Mr. Richard Kershaw, J.P. A company of 100 people were present, but there was little competition for the various lots which were offered. Messrs. S. Wright, Morgan & Co., were solicitors for the vendors. The auctioneer offered first of all the entire estate with the exception of Commercial Buildings, Brighouse, but no purchaser was forthcoming.

The Crow Nest mansion and park (on which it was stated the late Sir Titus Salt spent £110,000), and four dwellinghouses known as Crow Nest cottages, were then put up for sale, bids opening at £15,000, but there was no advance beyond £21,000, and the lot was withdrawn.

Giles House, with a gross rental of £85, was started at £600, and offers were carried to £1,500, but no sale was effected. Hoyle House farm was similarly withdrawn at £1,700.

The best competition of the afternoon was that seen for possession of Lower Crow Nest Farm, which opened at £2,000, and the offers were taken rapidly forward to £3,475, but that was not sufficient to satisfy the vendors and the property did not change hands.

Little Smith House farm was withdrawn at £1,700; a parcel of building land at Whinney Hill at £900; Laverack Hall farm at £1,100; and a piece of building land in Well Green Road, Hove Edge, at £500.

The only actual sale at the auction was a parcel of building land in Wakefield Road, Hipperholme. Bidding commenced at £500 and there was rather brisk business as offers of £50 and £25 each carried the amount to £1,000, and for £1,010 the property was sold.

Four plots of building land in Huddersfield Road, Brighouse, were withdrawn at £500, and there was no bid beyond £2,000 for the block of shop property known as Commercial Buildings and adjoining cottages in Church Lane, this not being accepted.

## CROW NEST SALE, LIGHTCLIFFE

### SOME OF THE LOTS AND PRICES.

The sale of the contents of Crow Nest, Lightcliffe, by order of the executors of the late Mr. Richard Kershaw, commenced yesterday, Mr. J. E. Jennings being the auctioneer. The contents of the kitchen and other rooms were first taken.

We append some of the prices:—Set of seven copper pans, £6 10s.; ten-piece dining-room suite, £13; piano, by Hopkinson, £9 10s.; Milner's fire-proof safe, £12 10s.; antique oak hall set, £3 7s. 6d.; blue and white dinner service (86 pieces), £6 10s.

Morning-room. — Brussels carpet, £5 15s.; mahogany sideboard and bookcase, £18; mahogany square dining table, £4 10s.; pollard oak carved suite, £7 10s.; miniature oak hand loom, 10s.; two fine stags' heads with antlers in the hall, £7 10s. (Horobin, Waterhouse-street).

The glassware attracted considerable attention. Seventeen champagnes sold for £2 10s.; 18 clarets, £2 10s.; 23 sherries, £1a10s.; 12 liqueurs, £1 6s.; 12 tumblers, £3; twelve finger bowls, £3 2s. 6d.; Crown Derby china set (24 pieces), £13 10s.; Crown Derby tea set (37 pieces), £19 10s.; Copeland breakfast service, £4 15s.; Copeland china tea service, £4 7s. 6d.

## THE CROW NEST SALE.

### WHAT THE DRAWING-ROOMS REALISED.

The second day's sale yesterday at Crow Nest, Lightcliffe, consisted of the contents of the two drawing rooms, and attracted a large attendance, ladies being very prominent in purchasing the dainty ornamental items. The auctioneer was Mr. J. E. Jennings. Amongst the lots disposed of were the following:—The china cabinet fetched £100, drawing-room suite £130 pair of easy chairs £12 12s., grand pianoforte by Hopkinson, £52 10s.; centre octagonal table, £25, oval mantel mirror £8 8s., inlaid circular table £11, four-fold screen £7 15s., gilt occasional chair £4 15s., carved window table £5 10s., a massive timepiece in English gilt with carved figure of crusader on his charger and weapons of war, was knocked down to Mr. Horobin, of Waterhouse-street, for £19 19s. The velvet pile carpet sold for £16 15s. Amongst the bric-a-brac were a pair of Japanese porcelain vases £6 10s., pair Japanese vases, 36in. high, 24 guineas; another pair of vases 31 guineas; fine Carrara marble group, "The Three Graces," fetched 7 guineas. Amongst the silver was a case of eighteen engraved knives with eighteen forks, having pearl handles. The lot sold for 25 guineas, and a case of fish knives fetched £25. A few oilpaintings included two Irish scenes by Charles Hunt, which realised 76 guineas; a pair of paintings of shell life, by Holt, went for 6 guineas, an animal study by Graeme 9 guineas, the Hunting Party 4½ guineas.

Details of the sale taken from local newspapers October/November 1917

These photographs were taken from the sales brochure. Although they may not all be contemporary, they give you some idea of the internal features and fittings.



More images perhaps of different rooms



The house was subsequently sold to the Brooke Stone Company whose headquarters were just to the north of the estate on St Giles Road. The failure to reach reserves would, probably, be down to a depressed market during war time.

In 1919, in a civil case, the executors of Richard Kershaw laid a claim against Messrs. Brooke's Chemical Ltd. Damages of £13,400, in respect of permanent depreciation of the Crow Nest estate owing to fumes and effluent from the company's picric acid works to the north and upstream of the parkland, were claimed. Brookes had created a chemical factory during the latter part of WW1 to produce munitions. Picric acid was used as a bursting charge in shells, grenades and mines. The executors claimed that the value of the property was reduced. Although significant evidence of damage was produced, the case was lost. It looks as though the amount of damages claimed may have been the difference between what Brookes paid and what the Kershaw family had expected, remembering that Richard Kershaw had paid £34,000.

In 1920, Newton Brooke was claiming trespass against poachers on the Crow Nest land, which indicates a degree of ownership. In July of the same year, Mr and Mrs Newton Brooke of The Grange, Lightcliffe entertained many children from across the Halifax parishes. Contingency arrangements were made in case of inclement weather to use the hall. A similar event took place the following week. The *Yorkshire Post* carried an advert in May 1923 for the sale of the mansion. By this time there were tennis courts, a lake for bathing and a garage but the parkland available had been reduced to 16 acres. Enquiries were to be directed to Newton Brooke. All of this suggests that it was the Brooke Stone Company that had bought the estate.

In 1926, a *Courier* article reported that Brookes were extracting coal from 10 feet below the surface and that an estimate of 7,000 tons would be extractable. OS maps covering the period from 1900 to 1950 show stone quarries such as Park Quarry which was to the north of the park close to the railway. Back in 1891 the *Brighouse Echo* had reported that the foundation materials for Blackpool Tower came from this quarry. There is no evidence that the house was lived in from 1917 although caretakers were looking after the buildings.

During World War II, the house was used to billet soldiers of the Royal Engineers from Dunkirk. After that Italian prisoners of war were accommodated in the buildings. The house suffered further damage during this period. As did Sir Titus Salt's gateway, when a lorry collided with it, damaging the pillars and breaking a decorative urn in January 1943.

In January 1949 the War Office considered using 30 acres of Crow Nest parkland for a Territorial training ground. The plan was opposed by residents and the War Office decided, after a survey, not to proceed. By then the house was described as being almost derelict with Nissen huts standing near the main road.

The building fell into further decay and was finally demolished somewhere between the mid-1950s and the 1960s. It could be that Brookes finally decided that the stone material from the house was more valuable than the house itself. Who better to demolish and sell the stone than a specialist stone company? Its loss does not seem to have been covered in the local newspapers so perhaps there was no interest in a derelict building being pulled down. The OS map, revised in 1955, shows the building exactly as it was in previous versions. The next version, surveyed in 1958, has the site marked RUIN with an outline of the former house. It is claimed that several houses in the area were built using stone from the mansion.

During the late 1950s and early 60s, many youngsters played in the grounds. Some now look back with fond memories. "I'm sure we were able to climb up the half destroyed semicircular staircase around 1957/8. Arriving at the first floor there was too much damage or wood rot to be able to access the rooms upstairs."

"Outside the perimeter wall of the house (north side) on the left as you face the house, were two wooden 'landing craft' type structures which, we thought, must have been for practicing purposes anticipating a coming invasion. They had empty ammunition shells inside. Again, just looking from this same viewpoint, on the right, there was a track or short roadway just within the perimeter wall where there was a 3 or 4 step, freestanding stone staircase, which would have been used for mounting horses. To the right and up a slope was Tony Wilson's pig farm situated where there had originally been a market garden for the mansion. The house was demolished over a period of years. It then left exposed a stone flagged area which gave us access to some cellars and ducts /tunnels with cast iron pipes in them ...early central heating. Probably the last structure to be demolished was the centre part of the orangery, which was a cave-like construction which was great for hide and seek."

The lake was also an area for play including, they recall, walking on a frozen surface when the ice was not as thick as they thought!

Brookes as a company closed in 1969. Richard Harrison, a dairy farmer at the neighbouring Hoyle House Farm, bought the parkland in 1980. He transformed it into a golf course. Crow Nest Park Golf Club opened in 1995.

Ian Philp

December 2025

### **Acknowledgements:**

Further research by Dorothy Barker

Chris Helme's magazines

Bob Horne and Dave Lister

David Glover

Lightcliffe & District History Society

West Yorkshire Archive and Calderdale Libraries.