



Snow Hall

Describing Snow Hall in *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham* Robert Surtees wrote,

'one of the loveliest spots in the river valley stands a mile to the east of Gainford on swiftly rising ground, with a haugh of rich pasturage in front bounded by a sweep of the Tees. The surrounding grounds are warm and sheltered, richly sprinkled with hedgerows of lofty ash and oak and elm, and with luxuriant growth of native holly.'¹

The hall was then occupied by his relation, friend and fellow antiquarian Thomas Sherwood. By tracing the lives of many of its owners through a wide range of probate records deposited in the Special Collections at Durham University Library, and which are now made accessible through the North East Inheritance catalogue, we can chronicle something of the times they lived through and gather together a history of this fine old hall.

The first owner of Snow Hall we find in the Durham probate records is Edward Rayne, yeoman, in 1667. But a lease held in the collections of Durham County Record Office locates him there in 1656, and in 1666 he was assessed for three hearths, placing his establishment at Snow Hall among the better of the second rank in Gainford township in that year.

He died in the spring of 1667 aged 71 leaving property in Gainford and Bolam and a pair of oxen to his son Cuthbert Rayne. To Ann Eden his daughter he left five pounds. His grandson John, the eldest son of his eldest son Richard was to inherit land and a house at Bolam at the age of 21. Aside from gifts to other grandchildren and his nephew's children of a heifer, a ewe and lamb and money, all the rest of his property and belongings went to Richard who was also named as his executor.

¹ Surtees, R. *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham*, (1816-1840), vol.IV, p15.

1667/R1/1

In the name of God Amen This 14th day of Novem^r
 1667 in the nineteenth year of the reign of our Soverain
 King Charles the first by the grace of God of Eng^l
 land Scotland France and Brittain King in the
 year of our Lord God 1667 the fourth of King
 Charles the first in the County of Cambridg^e
 Edward Rayne of Cambridg^e in the County of Cambridg^e
 yeoman being sick in bed out of a year and
 a half more (Praised be God) did make his last will and
 testament in writing upon good and lawful consideration
 of his soul's health and for the better
 satisfaction of his estate which he hath devised and bequeathed
 the satisfaction of my wife and children make this my
 last will and testament (writing and seal) in
 all other forms by me made either by word or writ
 (being) in manner and form following

I bequeath my land to Helen my daughter being
 my second wife through the death of my first wife
 to be had in the 1st year of Cambridg^e as above
 with as much more as she shall receive in
 her dower being in Cambridg^e or in any other
 or which shall be devised

I bequeath my land to Robert my son all his lands
 in Cambridg^e and Bolam which he is now possessed of
 together with a cottage in Bolam after the death of
 which is yet to be devised

I give unto my son Robert a pair of Oxen
 and bequeath unto my daughter Jane ten
 pounds

I give and bequeath unto Henry my second wife
 ten pounds

I give and bequeath unto Edward my grand
 child one cow and a lamb as also one horse

I give and bequeath unto Robert my grand
 child one cow and a lamb as also one horse

I give and bequeath to Edward my grandchild
 one cow and a lamb as also one horse

I give and bequeath to Henry my grandchild
 one cow and a lamb as also one horse

Will of Edward Rayne of Snow Hall, yeoman [Ref: DPRI/1/1667/R1/1-2].

The inventory lists a fore house, a low parlour a west chamber and three lofts. The furniture, utensils and linen are itemised for each room and a milk house and include his implements of husbandry and livestock. At his death he owned a pair of oxen, 6 kine and 2 calves, three steers, 2 yearling calves, a mare a colt and a filly, and twenty ewes and lambs with a ram.

1667/R1/3

Novem^r the 13th 1667

A true and exact Inventory of all the good and chattels
 of Edward Rayne late of Cambridg^e deceased deceased and
 called by us whose names are subscribed to

And his wife and his appurtenances ——— 10 - 0 - 0

Item in the fore house one stand bed with bedding
 featherbeds and other furniture thereto belonging
 one table one cabinet one long stool two chairs
 two biscatt stales one furnis one working yoke one
 pair of tongs one Bible with some other small
 things } 3 - 6 - 8

Item in the low parlour one stand bed with fur-
 niture thereto belonging one table and chair } 3 - 0 - 0

one Linen cabinet with other furnishings ———

Item in the west chamber one cabinet one book trough } 1 - 0 - 0

two shifts with some other small furnishings ———

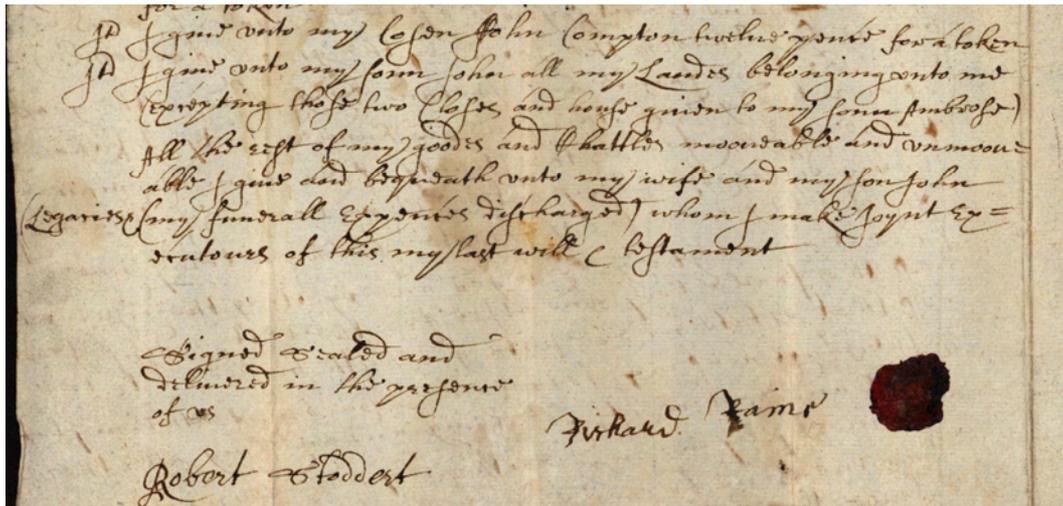
Item in the west loft one table one Linen cabinet } 0 - 10 - 0

one shift one chair ——— } 0 - 03 - 4

Inventory of Edward Rayne of Snow Hall, yeoman [Ref: DPRI/1/1667/R1/3].

His purse and clothing were valued at £10. He was owed £40 with debts termed desperate, or unlikely to be repaid, of another £40. The appraisers reckoned that his personal property was worth £142 6s 8d in total, with liabilities of £38 9s 2d for funeral expenses, legacies and rent due at Whitsuntide.

Upon the probate of Edward Rayne's will in 1667 his son Richard inherited all the remaining property in Gainford, but died only two years later aged 48. In his last will and testament he too describes himself as a yeoman, but unlike his father he signed his name.



Detail of the will of Richard Raine of Gainford, yeoman [Ref: DPRI/1/1670/R2/1].

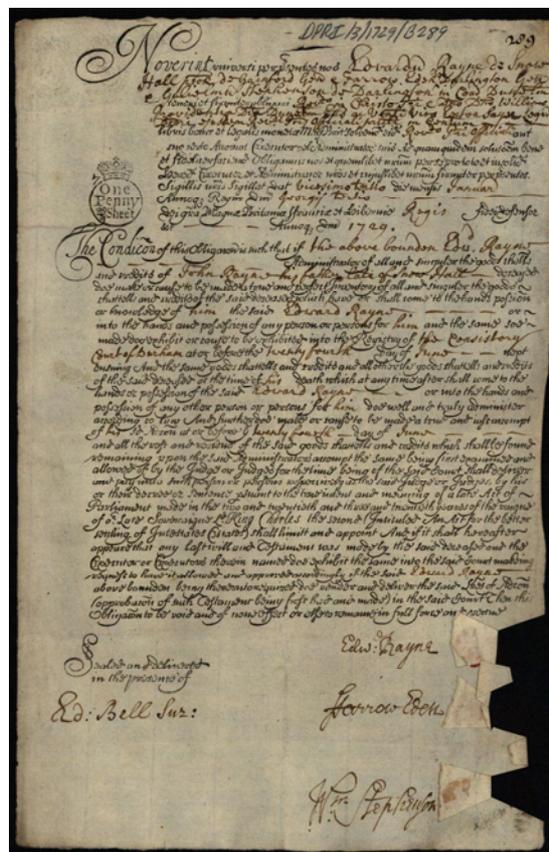
The house and its contents, listed in an inventory taken in June 1670, are essentially the same as described in his father's recent probate inventory, although the names of some rooms vary. The estate appears to have prospered in the short time since Edward Rayne's death: Richard possessing at his death a cheese press, six oxen, but more cattle and double the number of ewes and horses his father had owned. There is also a pig and a hive of bees.



Inventory of Richard Raine of Gainford, yeoman [Ref: DPRI/1/1670/R2/3].

Richard was owed £196 and was considered to be worth £321 14s 4d in total. The names of the legatees, witnesses and appraisers are essentially the same as those in his father's probate records. All Richard's properties, except for a house devised to his youngest son Ambrose, went to John the eldest son. He nominates his wife and son John as his executors. Money bequests are made to his son Henry (£130) and daughter Elizabeth (£140), though he also gives to Henry a piece of land called Marr Haugh. Cousins and nephews, recognisable from his father Edward's will, receive several shillings or twelve pence for a token.

John Raine of Snow Hall, Richard's heir, died intestate - leaving no will - in late 1729 aged 77. Administration was granted to the nearest next-of-kin, in this case his son and heir Edward Rayne on 29 January 1730. The penal sum of the administration bond was £100, which sum is usually double the value of the personal estate of the deceased person, only a third of the value of his father's personal estate in 1670.



Administration bond of John Raine of Snow Hall [Ref: DPRI/3/1729/B289].

This Edward Rayne who inherited Snow Hall from his father John in 1729 was born in 1691. A Streatlam Canvassing Book drawn up in 1741 for the election of George Bowes lists Edward Rayne then of Snow Hall, but describes him as being 'unhappy

circumstances'.² Unlike his ancestors he made his will in February 1758 eleven years before his death in August 1769. When he wrote it his wife Ann and daughter Margery were already dead, and so too, but more recently, was his son Edward Rayne junior, a 'gentleman of Greys Inn, Middlesex'. Edward senior, also describing himself as a gentleman, had moved out of Snow Hall and was living some five miles away at Raby Castle. He leaves Snow Hall to Timothy Wright then already resident at Snow Hall itself, and also nominates him to execute his will.

1769/R2/1

In the name of God Amen I Edward Rayne of Raby Castle in the County of Durham Esq^r do make & Ordain this my last Will & Testament as follows
 I Give & Devise to Timothy Wright of Snow Hall in the County of Durham the said Snow Hall & all Lands & Grounds thereto belonging & all other my Lands & Tenements in the Lordship of Gainford & elsewhere in the County of Durham to hold the same to the said Timothy Wright his heirs & assigns forever & I hereby make & appoint the said Timothy Wright sole Executor of this my last Will & Testament & I have hereunto set my hand & seal this fourth day of February in the year of our said 1758

Sealed & signed
 Subscribed
 & attested by the said Edward Rayne as per his last Will & Testament who at his request & in his presence subscribed our names as Witnesses to the same

Ed. Rayne

Jm^o Gordon
 Thomas Gordon
 Christopher Jobling

Will of Edward Rayne of Raby Castle, gentleman [Ref: DPRI/1/1769/R2/1-2].

Edward Rayne junior, the lawyer of Gray's Inn who predeceased his father some time before 10 January 1750, left in his 1748 will property at Norton in trust to John Eden gentleman of Gainford, a cousin. Eden was descended from one of the grandchildren of the Edward Rayne of Snow Hall who died in 1667. From the rents and profits John Eden was to pay £15 a year 'into the proper hands of my sister Ann Nicholson during her life for her own separate use and benefit, free from the power and controul of her said husband where with he shall not intermeddle'. Another trust endowed with the residue of his estate was established for the support and

² Canvassing book at Streatlam for the 1741 election of George Bowes, quoted in *The antiquities of Gainford, in the county of Durham* (1846), by John Richard Walbran, p8.

maintenance of his father Edward Rayne senior, this income passing upon his father's death to Timothy Wright.

my said Copyhold Messuage or Tenement Lands and Hereditaments shall
be and remain And I do hereby give and devise the same to the said
Timothy Wright his Heirs and Assigns for ever to and for his and their
own use and benefit And I give unto the said John Eden all my personal
estate (after Payment of my Debts and Funerals) In Trust to apply
the same for the Benefit of my said Father and Mother in such manner as
he the said John Eden shall think fit And I appoint the said John
Eden Executor of this my Will and revoking all former Wills by me made
I declare this to be my last Will In Witness whereof I
have to this my last Will and Testament contained in two Sheets of
Paper to the first whereof I have set my hand and to the last my hand
and Seal this Tenth Day of Decembre in the year of our
Lord one Thousand seven hundred and forty eight

Edw Rayne

Signed Sealed Published & Declared
by the said Testator as and for his last Will and
Testament in the presence of us who in his presence
and at his Request have subscribed our Names
as Witnesses thereto

Diana Mainwaring
Wm Brockoth
Wm Logg

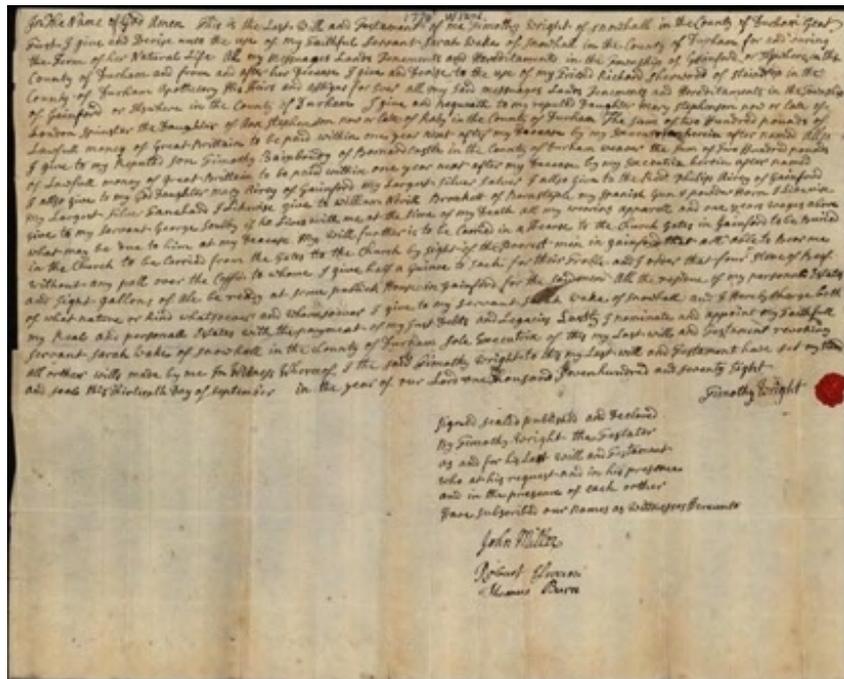
Detail of the will of Edward Rayne of Gray's Inn, gentleman [Ref: DPRI/1/1749/R3/1-2].

The arrangement to leave Snow Hall to Wright was clearly one of long standing, for Edward Rayne junior stipulates that after the deaths of his father and himself all his copyhold, messuage and tenement lands and hereditaments were to pass to Timothy Wright 'late of Snow Hall but now of General Bland's Dragoons'.

General Bland fought in Europe and led the cavalry under the Duke of Cumberland in Scotland during the 1745-1746 campaign and led the pursuit after Culloden. He then commanded one of the four military districts into which Scotland was divided, becoming the commander-in-chief in 1747. Timothy Wright would have been part of the army that 'pacified' the highlands after this '45 Jacobite rebellion. Wright was

living at Snow Hall by 1757, when he and Edward Rayne 'late of Snow Hall and now of Raby Castle' were involved in a series of property transactions.³

Timothy Wright's will dated 13 September 1778 shows his character. He leaves Snow Hall to his housekeeper Sarah Wake and makes her his executor. After her death the hall was to go to Wright's friend Richard Sherwood an apothecary of Staindrop. A reputed son in Barnard Castle and a reputed daughter in London each received £200.⁴ His servant George Soulbey is left his clothes and a year's wages, His largest silver tankard is bequeathed to the Reverend Philip Airey of Gainford, and Ann Airey his god-daughter is given his largest silver salver. His Spanish gun and powder horn are left to William Nevill Brockett of Barnstaple whose guardian he had been.⁵



Will of Timothy Wright of Snow Hall, gentleman [Ref: DPRI/1/1778/W12/1].

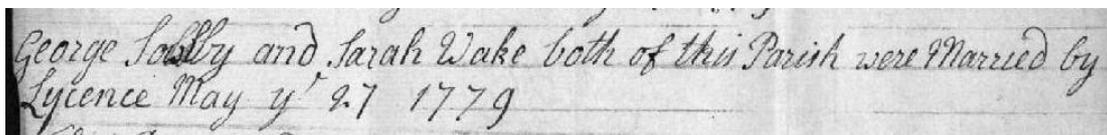
His body was to be 'carried from the gates to the church by eight of the poorest men of Gainford that are able to bear me, without any pall over the coffin, to whom I give half a guinea to each for his trouble, and I order that four stone of beef and eight gallons of ale be ready for them at some publick house in Gainford'.

³ See Durham County Record Office (DCRO) D/HH8/3/233 (23 Mar 1757) and D/HH3/5/614 (6 Dec 1757). Wright is described as resident at Snow Hall.

⁴ Wright is the bondsman in a bastardy bond for Timothy the son of Ann Bainbridge of Barnard Castle: see DCRO EP/BC7/133.

⁵ See the will of Reverend Laurence Brockett, Fellow of Trinity College and the Kings Professor of Modern History in the University of Cambridge, proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury 31 August 1768, [TNA PROB 11/941].

In 1795 the name of a George Soulby of Snow Hall, now a gentleman, appears on a deed.⁶ Soulby had married Wright's old housekeeper Sarah Wake at Gainford the 27th May 1779, and he was churchwarden there for many years.



The Bishop's Transcript of the Soulby's marriage in Gainford's parish register
[Ref: DDR/EJ/PBT/2/110/47].⁷

Wright's devisee and the new owner of Snow Hall, Richard Sherwood, seems never to have lived in the hall. He died in 1816. Thomas Sherwood his son, also a medical man, moved from Bishop Auckland to Snow hall in 1815 when he was 45 years old.⁸

Thomas Sherwood's twelve page will was made on 21 February 1828. It was clearly drawn up by a lawyer, and it makes for very dry reading after Timothy Wright's will. As Sherwood also owned property outside the diocese of Durham his will was proved at the Prerogative Court of York.⁹ Snow Hall was left to his children in order of preference rather than of strict male primogeniture: he had quarrelled with his eldest son Richard Thomas, and his second son Ralph had abandoned his medical studies in Edinburgh to go on the stage. So it is that his younger son Christopher is nominated to inherit the hall, preceding his brothers William, Ralph and Richard Thomas; and their sisters Elizabeth Sarah and Mary Sherwood are then named to follow their brothers in line of inheritance to the property. The will reveals nothing of the tragedy of his death.

Sarah Elizabeth, Thomas Sherwood's daughter died on 24 October 1829. At her request Ralph was allowed to come home, but he soon died of consumption (tuberculosis) on 11 January 1830. Their father was overcome by these deaths in such quick succession and committed suicide the following month on 28 February.

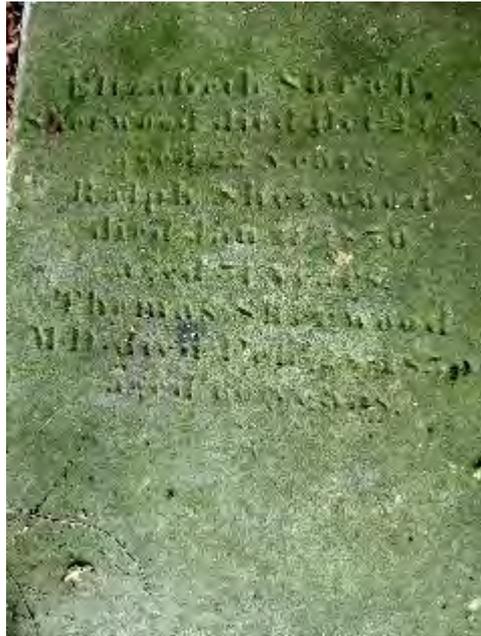
⁶ See DCRO D/HH8/3/69.

⁷ See

<http://search.labs.familysearch.org/recordsearch/start.html?datestamp=1202469782569#p=imageBrowser;c=1309819;w=353>, image 63 of 437. They were married by licence, the allegation and bond for which were made by Soulby on 22 May that year (DDR/EJ/MLA/1/1779/219). Soulby stated in the allegation that both he and Wake had not been married before, and both were over 21 years of age. Soulby's bondsman was a Durham watchmaker named John Charlton.

⁸ Surtees Raine, B., 'Thomas Sherwood of Snow Hall' in *Teesdale Record Society Journal*, 1944, no.12, p.24.

⁹ This court's jurisdiction encompassed the whole of the northern province of England and Wales and included the dioceses of York, Durham, Carlisle, Chester and Sodor and Mann.



The gravestone of Thomas Sherwood and his son and daughter, from Gainford churchyard.

Robert Surtees wrote to Sir Cuthbert Sharp, a fellow historian,

'Poor Sherwood contrived to drown himself in two foot water with stones in his pocket and had set up his hat and stick by the river's edge that he might be found. He wrote a letter to Raine (his friend and executor) and left it sealed the night before and at 8 o'clock on Tuesday morning walked deliberately to the Tees and talked rationally on his way to a farmer he met about a sick child. He left by a will made some time back almost everything to his son Chr. An attorney at Darlington.¹⁰

Christopher, William and Richard Thomas died within a few years of their father without marrying and the house passed to Mary Sherwood, who married her cousin William Surtees Raine (no relation of the Raynes) in 1840. A number of illustrations of the south front of the old house survive in Durham County Record office dating from 1823 onwards. There is also an intriguing elevation of the same south front with three gables dated 1836 and with a prominent Rayne coat of arms above the doorway. It is presumed to be a proposed plan of alterations that was never carried out.

¹⁰ Sharp MSS, Durham Cathedral Dean & Chapter Library, vol.44 f.495.



Sepia drawing of Snow Hall, drawn, perhaps by Jane Raine, on 18 June 1859, [Ref: DCRO D/X/ 332/138]. Reproduced with the permission of Durham County Record Office.



Pencil drawing of the South front of Snow Hall, 1836 [Ref: DCRO D/X 332/137]. Reproduced with the permission of Durham County Record Office.

Eleven years later she returned with her family to live at Snow Hall, which in the interim had been let to Anthony Lax Maynard. The present hall is said to date from around this period, and so we must assume that the story of the old hall ends here.

COUNTY OF DURHAM
GAINFORD, DARLINGTON

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION

At the King's Head Hotel, Darlington, in the County of Durham, on Monday, the 19th Day of September, 1864, at One for Two o'Clock in the Afternoon,

Mr THOMAS WETHERELL, Auctioneer,
THE SNOW HALL FREEHOLD ESTATE, comprising the Family Mansion of Snow Hall, with Coachhouse, Stables, and suitable Domestic Offices, Garden, Pleasure Gardens, and Ornamental Plantations, beautifully situate on the Picturesque Banks of the River Tees, (which divides Durham from Yorkshire,) and commanding extensive and varied Views up and down the rich and well-wooded Valley of the Tees. It is within easy Access of two capital Packs of Foxhounds, is in good Partridge Country, and is within Half-an-Hour's Ride by Rail of the well-known Bowes Ticket Moors. The Estate has a Frontage of more than Half-a-Mile to the River Tees, which is a well-known Trout and Salmon River.

There are Two good Farm Houses and requisite Out-Buildings, a Water Corn Mill, and about 250 Acres of First-class Meadow, Pasture, and Arable Land, which is well drained, in a high State of Cultivation, and in the Occupation of good Tenants. Snow Hall is distant about a Mile from the Village of Gainford, where there is a Railway Station, and seven Miles from the large Market Town of Darlington, at which the principal Railways of the District unite.

WILLIAM SURTEES RAINE, Esq., of Snow Hall, will on Application, send a Person to show the Estate; and Printed Particulars and Lithographed Plans may be had of the AUCTIONEER, at Durham; of Messrs SHUM & CROSSMAN, Solicitors, 3, King's Road, Bedford Row, London; and at the Offices of Messrs BOWSER & WARD, Solicitors, Bishop Auckland, from whom further Information may be obtained.

Newcastle Courant, 12 August 1864.

Most of the estate was sold in 1865 to the Duke of Cleveland, who made alterations and additions to the house in 1876.

Extension of Time

TO BUILDERS. – TENDERS are invited for the various Works required to be done in ALTERATIONS and ADDITIONS to SNOW HALL, near Gainford, for His Grace the Duke of Cleveland. Plans, Specifications, and Conditions can be seen, and Bills of Quantities obtained, on application at our Offices, Feethams, Darlington, from Monday, May, 31st, to Monday, June 21st, on which day sealed Tenders are to be delivered to us, endorsed "Tender for Alterations at Snow Hall."

The lowest or any Tender not necessarily accepted.

ROSS AND LAMB, Architects.

Feethams, May 28th 1875.

The Northern Echo, 21 June 1875.

The remainder of the estate in Mary Sherwood's hands was sold upon her death in 1889 by her trustees. Snow Hall after many enlargements is now divided into several self-contained wings.



Snow Hall as it is today, viewed from the South.