



John Losh, the Big Black Squire 1723-1789

Henry Lonsdale gave an heroic description of Sarah's formidable grandfather, John Losh. He was born in 1723 and died three years after Sarah was born in 1789 at the age of 66.

In the middle of last century, Woodside had for "laird" John Losh, a man strong in character and personality. Judging from his portrait, showing broad shoulders and broader paunch, he would be a man of twenty stones weight. Though of fair complexion, and sanguineo-lymphatic temperament, the fact of his riding a big black nag obtained for him the appellation of the "Big Black Squire" of Woodside. Of lofty stature and inordinate bulk, yet possessing the action and intrepidity of youth, his presence was one to be felt either in the sportive competitions of the field, or the more daring antagonisms of Border warfare.

When a mere lad, nothing gratified him so much as being permitted to join his neighbours engaged in conflict with the mosstroopers. He used to relate with some gusto that one night a band of Scotch freebooters were driving a lot of cattle from the Wreay district northwards, and had just reached the ravine and beck within two hundred yards of Woodside mansion, when he discovered their character, and immediately assailed them with, "Come on, ye Scotch rascals, and I'll give ye a damned good hiding!" The daring voice and equally daring form of the squire seen through the moonlit trees caused a panic among the marauders, who speedily decamped, leaving the stolen beeves to the victor without a fight. He was probably the last of the Cumberland squirearchy who took part in the Border expeditions that were brought to a close after the '45, when Scotsmen's heads were spiked on "Carlisle yetts" to "guard the wall" against northern invaders.

Mr John Losh, *alias* the "Big Black Squire," found an exceedingly pretty wife in Miss Liddell, the sister of Joseph Liddell, Esq. of Moorhouse, four miles west of Carlisle. The true *bonhomie* and frank, generous character of Mr Losh made him a great favourite in society, and his wife, being of good family and charming manners, contributed in no small degree to his popularity. Mr Losh, in all his physical and mental strength, had his gustatory fancies—bramble-berries, fresh or preserved, all the year round, and water from a special spring at Woodside, daily carried to his Carlisle residence; both were held by him of sovereign virtue till 1789, when death stepped in and claimed the fine old squire.

The family born to Mr and Mrs John Losh were— 1st, John, born in 1756, who inherited the name and estate of his father; 2nd, James, born in 1763; 3rd, George, born in 1766; 4th, William, born in 1770; 5th and 6th, Margaret and Robert, twins—Robert died in early life at Newcastle. There were two more sons—one, a mere youth, lost his life by falling from a high tree in birdnesting; the other was an ensign in the army, who fought a duel at Bath, and was mortally wounded.'