

## Victoria County History of Cumbria Project. Draft parish/township histories

[Note: This is a provisional draft and should not be cited without first consulting the VCH Cumbria project team: for contact details, see <http://www.cumbriacountyhistory.org.uk/>]

Parish/township: RENWICK

Author: **Richard Brockington**

Date of draft: 3.12.2012

# RENWICK<sup>1</sup>

## ECONOMIC HISTORY

The parish's economy was largely agricultural with a strong pastoral bias: it was augmented by coal mining and associated trades between 1631 and 1865.

### Agriculture and woodland

Crop land (both arable and grass), was limited to about 750 acres (309ha) until about 1450, and was extended between 1450 and 1500 to about 920 acres (379 ha) by assarting land at around the 220-240 metre contour to the north and east of the village.<sup>2</sup> Nineteen customary tenements, listed in 1571,<sup>3</sup> were described for the first time as 'tenantright' in 1589,<sup>4</sup> and remained largely unchanged until 1750. All farm holdings, including the freehold tenements at Scalehouses, seem to have been of comparable size, each about 30-40 acres (12.5-16.5 ha). The tenants of Scalehouses and Outhwaite had their own fields, about 84 ha and 68 ha respectively.<sup>5</sup> Entry fines, payable upon change of tenant, were twice the annual rent until 1630, when by an agreement between the College and its tenants they were raised to 12 times the annual rent.<sup>6</sup> Between 1500 and 1818 further intakes were

---

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank the following for their assistance during the preparation of this article: Jane Platt, Lydia Gray, David Grisenthwaite, Graham Brookes; Michael Riordan, archivist at The Queen's College, Oxford, David Bowcock and Tom Robson at Cumbria Archive Centre, Carlisle, Stephen White at Carlisle Central Library; and local residents in Renwick.

<sup>2</sup> Analysis based on rental evidence from the Long Rolls of Queen's College, and QC, 5A-2a (rental 1506), and from traces of a medieval head dyke.

<sup>3</sup> QC, 5A-4.

<sup>4</sup> QC, 5A-6.

<sup>5</sup> Analysis from tithe commutation award and map 1842 (CAS(C), DRC/8/161); 'Scalehouses field' court books, *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> QC, 5A-49 (1616) and 5A-56 (1630)

few and small: both to the west of the township and upon the steeply rising slopes of the Pennines to the east, there remained large areas of common waste land whereon the tenants enjoyed summer pasture and turbary rights.<sup>7</sup> The common fields of Renwick, upon which were grown oats, barley and rye for human consumption, remained largely unenclosed until 1750, after which enclosure proceeded piecemeal.<sup>8</sup> By 1810 Braithwaite Field (between the village and the Raven Beck) and North Field were almost wholly enclosed, but Crooked Hills and Harberry common fields to the west of the village were not fully enclosed until the 1830s.<sup>9</sup> Moorlands totalling 850 acres (350 ha), called Middle Moor and Long Moor, lying between Renwick and Staffield, were enclosed, along with the village green and other small parcels, by act of Parliament in 1818; and the remaining 2,525 acres (1,004 ha) of wastes on the Pennine slopes by statutory instrument in 1864.<sup>10</sup>

By ancient custom livestock was removed from the town fields at ‘mid-April day’, and returned from the upland waste at Michaelmas.<sup>11</sup> As late as 1733 pains were made by the manor court controlling the movement of livestock, the use of pasture and the appointment of ‘frithmen’ to oversee the upkeep of enclosures.<sup>12</sup> It seems likely that seasonal movement of livestock continued until the last common fields were enclosed in the 1830s. Stinting of the commons by ‘cattlegate’ is recorded by 1707.<sup>13</sup> From 1819, and until 1864, a stints committee was appointed by the manor court to control grazing rights on the remaining waste.<sup>14</sup> The medieval landholding pattern, passing by primogeniture, remained largely unchanged until after 1750. Thereafter the number of small owner-occupied holdings declined through amalgamation of farms, inheritance by persons not resident in Renwick, and the break-up of tenements. By 1842 there were only eight owner-occupiers, all other tenements being farmed by subtenants.<sup>15</sup>

The persistence of small-scale farming may have retarded agricultural improvement.<sup>16</sup> Ploughs were drawn by oxen until about 1690; numbers of cattle rarely exceeded ten, and sheep 150, before 1700 – although the inhabitants were said in 1688 to be ‘very rich by their great flocks of sheep grazing

---

<sup>7</sup> QC, 5A-60 (exhortation to the jury in court baron) ‘peats needful for their own fuelling’.

<sup>8</sup> eg QC, 5A-191, court roll for 10/2/1803, ‘. lately enclosed from the common field called North Field’

<sup>9</sup> CAS(C) D/RGL/18 (pre-enclosure map of 1815); Christopher Greenwood, *Map of Cumberland* (1822).

<sup>10</sup> Renwick Enclosure Act 1814; CAS(C) QRE/1/53 (1814/18); SPC/35/1 (1864).

<sup>11</sup> QC, 5A-10, pains made in 1595.

<sup>12</sup> QC, Renwick Court Book, p.234.

<sup>13</sup> Scalehouses title deeds, 1707, 1819.

<sup>14</sup> QC, 5A-191, item 37, presentment of 29/4/1819, and subsequent manor court records.

<sup>15</sup> CAS(C) DRC/8/161 (Renwick commutation award and map).

<sup>16</sup> Hutchinson, 212 quotes Housman ‘no attention [is] paid to breed [of sheep], they are bred off the same old stock, and are less and lighter than those of Croglin.’

upon those mountains'.<sup>17</sup> John Westmorland (d1704) enlarged his landholdings by purchase and by assarting land in the south-west corner of the manor, and at death his livestock included 13 cattle and 334 sheep - but his holdings were divided into three after his death.<sup>18</sup> A sheepwalk on Renwick wastes, licensed to a Kirkoswald farmer in 1592, was exercised up to 1647 but thereafter extinguished - the only known case of agistment as evidence of proactive management by the lords of the manor of Renwick.<sup>19</sup> Most households kept cows for small-scale dairying,<sup>20</sup> but herds remained small until after 1750 - pasture was scarce and required also for horses, and sheep farming was the main source of income.

Throughout the nineteenth century the number of farmers in Renwick remained high, and the size of farms comparatively low, even after the large 1864 enclosure: both in 1851 and 1881 there were 15 farmers, the average size of holding having doubled to 204 acres (84 ha) in those 30 years, largely due to enclosure of the upland fells.<sup>21</sup> In 1910 20 persons were listed as occupiers of 4,228 acres (1740 ha) of farmland - an average of 211 acres (86.8 ha), with three tenant farmers holding over 500 acres (206 ha) each.<sup>22</sup> By 1938, there were 14 farmers, seven of whom farmed 150 acres (62 ha) or more, only one being an owner-occupier.<sup>23</sup> The second half of the twentieth century, after the death of George Wilfred Armstrong in 1956, saw a return to owner-occupation and the growth of individual holdings: by 2012 there were seven farms, of which six were owner-occupied.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw an adjustment away from arable towards pasture, leading to the closure in the 1880s of Renwick mill, but some cultivation of oats for human consumption continued to 1950.<sup>24</sup> Before 1900 most Renwick sheep were Black-faced Scotch: Swaledale sheep were introduced between 1900 and 1914, and Blue Leicesters after 1945.<sup>25</sup> By the twenty-first century all Renwick farmers specialised in animal husbandry. Dairying continued at all

---

<sup>17</sup> CAS(C) - series P, inventories of persons dying at Renwick 1650-1700 included 6 men with more than 100 sheep, but only three with more than £100; Denton *Perambulation*, 330.

<sup>18</sup> CAS(C) - P 1704, Westmorland; QC, Renwick Court Book, pp 71 (1696), 110 (1705), 129/130 (1711)

<sup>19</sup> QC, 5A-9 (1592) grant of sheepwalk to William Bowman, and call rolls to 1637 (QC 5A-35); drovers (cf the 1841 census for Renwick) probably purchased grazing for their beasts from individual farmers.

<sup>20</sup> CAS(C) - P 1739, Barker (a mine adventurer); P 1742, Watson (a stonemason).

<sup>21</sup> 1851, 1881 censuses; Outhwaite farm was the only farm over 500 acres in 1851.

<sup>22</sup> CAS(C) TIR 4/78.

<sup>23</sup> Kelly, *Dir Cumb*, 1938, 244.

<sup>24</sup> QC, long rolls (1404f); QC, 5A-56 (agreement of 2/11/1630); Bulmer *Dir East Cumberland* 1884 (last mention of a miller); local inf, Stanley and Hardy Greenop.

<sup>25</sup> Local inf, Stanley and Hardy Greenop and Robert Pattinson.

farms until about 1990, but by 2012 had ceased altogether. Total agricultural employment in Renwick in 2012 was about 12 - outnumbered by residents working in Penrith and Carlisle.<sup>26</sup>

Woodland, from which the tenants had allowances ('boot') for house building, fencing, and farming implements, was owned by the lords of the manor.<sup>27</sup> The largest area of woodland adjoined the Raven Beck: in 1608, when some 400 trees were felled, it was noted that some 1,240 remained.<sup>28</sup> Theft of timber was one of the most frequent causes of amercement in the Elizabethan and Stewart manor courts. Thomas Gosling (1652-1702) was dismissed from the office of bailiff in 1690, partly because 'he encourag'd many of the trespasses made on your woods'.<sup>29</sup> A long-running dispute about ownership of hedgerow trees was resolved by arbitration between Queen's College and its tenants in 1782.<sup>30</sup> 8 acres (3.3 ha) of coniferous plantation was owned by the College in 1910, and still owned by them 100 years later.<sup>31</sup>

### **Coal mining and ancillary trades**

There may have been casual mining of outcropping coal since medieval times, and a manor court verdict of 1620 complained of trespass and theft of coal by the tenants of neighbouring Staffield.<sup>32</sup> The first surviving lease of coal-mining rights on Renwick Fell was granted by Queen's College to Anthony Fletcher of the Silver Hall, Caldbeck, in 1631, for 40s per year.<sup>33</sup> The rent was increased to £3 in 1653, £5 in 1691, £10 in 1720, and £33 5s in 1734 - a rental which remained almost unaltered for 80 years, notwithstanding the opening in 1762 of the bridge over the river Eden at Lazonby, which was expected to improve the market.<sup>34</sup> For the most part coalmining at Renwick was profitable before 1800; the mine was said to be worth £40 p.a. in 1688.<sup>35</sup> In 1812 the lease was taken by Joseph Dixon of Scalehouses, in partnership with his Walton in-laws, an Alston lead mining

---

<sup>26</sup> - *ibid* -

<sup>27</sup> QC, 5A-49, letter c.1616 to Queen's College from steward George Warwick.

<sup>28</sup> QC, 5A-48.

<sup>29</sup> QC, 5A-171, letter from arch-deacon Nicolson to Queen's College, 15 Dec. 1690.

<sup>30</sup> QC, 5A-114, 115.

<sup>31</sup> CAS(C) TIR 4/78; local inf, Stanley and Hardy Greenop.

<sup>32</sup> QC, 5A-53: '[the boundary riding] was allwaies done peaceable without interruptione of anie, untill nowe of late that the tenants of Staffle did forceable enter to certain coales gotten within our said boulder and carried the same awaie.'

<sup>33</sup> QC, lease ledger B, pp. 280-1.

<sup>34</sup> QC, lease ledgers D p. 142 (1653), E p. 267 (1691), F p. 93 (1720); 5A-175 (1734); 5A-105a (letter from Timothy Fetherstonhaugh esq to Queen's College 9 Jan. 1761)

<sup>35</sup> Denton *Perambulation*, 330; cf also CAS(C) D/Hud/8/56 – R v Whitfield & Scott 1762.

family, at £210 per year.<sup>36</sup> There followed a period of greater activity, but by the 1830s there were signs that the seams were nearing exhaustion.<sup>37</sup> The opening of the Newcastle-Carlisle and Lancaster-Carlisle railway lines (1839 and 1846) weakened demand for Renwick coal: in 1841 there were 8 coalminers in Renwick, but by 1871 there were none. Neither the thickness nor quality of the seams had been good: before the railways there had been a steady local market for Renwick coal, and it was used in particular for lime-burning.<sup>38</sup>

Renwick and Thackmoor Fells are rich in outcrops of limestone, and lime ‘of the finest and whitest quality’, burned with coal, was produced in Renwick in 1794 and until the 1880s.<sup>39</sup> It is likely that lime-burning was an older tradition. Before 1812 coal leases do not mention lime-burning but there is no doubt that earlier mine lessees, who were permitted ancillary constructions and removal of stone, routinely operated lime works,<sup>40</sup> and the modus paid in lieu of tithes by Scalehouses tenants in 1749 was *inter alia* for lime.<sup>41</sup> Coal mining created other work for the people of Renwick: coal and lime had to be transported, by packhorse or cart, off the fells to markets and customers; and blacksmiths prospered - in 1851 there were four smithies in this small village, but before 1800, and after 1901, only one.<sup>42</sup>

### **Inns, shops and other trades**

Coal mining also stimulated growth of population, housebuilding, shops and inns. There may have been an inn in Renwick from about 1620: Bernard Westmorland (d1630), who seems to have been a victualler, acquired a plot of freehold land, formerly demesne, which later included the site of the Horse and Jockey Inn.<sup>43</sup> It was sold in 1689 to Richard Beckton whose descendants traded there as publicans until the 1840s:<sup>44</sup> the inn was enlarged in about 1800 and the manor courts were held there from 1803 to 1816.<sup>45</sup> In the 1890s it was purchased and further enlarged by Joseph Nicholson, and

---

<sup>36</sup> QC, lease ledger J, p. 103.

<sup>37</sup> QC, 5A-159/160 (1832, letter from colliery agent W. Peile, with section chart of Renwick mines); 5A-161/2 (returns of falling coal yields for 1834/5); 5A-163/4 (letters of 1836).

<sup>38</sup> For a fuller discussion of coal mining in Renwick, cf G Brooks, ‘The East Cumberland Coal Field’, in *British Mining Memoirs* no 88 (Northern Mines Research Society, 2009), 124-36, published.

<sup>39</sup> Hutchinson, 212; CAS(C) DRC/6/122 (Bishop's Transcripts 1828); censuses, trade directories *passim*.

<sup>40</sup> QC, 5A-105a (cf 32 above); *Carlisle Journal* 25 May 1811 (advert for applicants for mining lease).

<sup>41</sup> CAS(C) DRC22/226 – Scalehouses freeholders may have operated mines and kilns.

<sup>42</sup> 1851 census, households 14, 21, 43, 56; Post Office *Dir Cumb et al* 1858, 201.

<sup>43</sup> QC, 5A-23 (court roll 1603, small claim for price of food); 5A-37 (1647 call roll of freeholders).

<sup>44</sup> QC, court book p41 (1689).

<sup>45</sup> QC, 5A-191 (verdict papers, Renwick manor court, 1803-16).

as part of the Ravenwood estates continued to trade until 1953.<sup>46</sup> A second inn, the Black Bull, was opened by the Head family at the east end of the village in the 1820s and was still trading in 1871:<sup>47</sup> a third and a fourth were opened in the 1830s, perhaps in response to the Beer Act 1830, in newly erected buildings on land enclosed in 1818 on the south side of the village green.<sup>48</sup> One traded for less than ten years, but the Queen's College Inn was still trading in 1901.<sup>49</sup>

Until 1750 it was usual in Renwick for trades to be practiced as an adjunct to farming. The first Renwick men to live wholly or mainly by trade, and to be routinely described thereby, appear to have been Anthony Sowerby (1717-1801, a blacksmith); Jonathan Watson, (1734-1797, a tailor); and Paul Richardson, (1742-1799, a stonemason). Sowerby was granted a small freehold intake on which to build a smithy in 1752.<sup>50</sup> There were plentiful sources of freestone (red sandstone) in the parish and many Renwick men were employed in stone masonry, walling and housebuilding, the Watson family being prominent from the 1690s to about 1900. The Lowthians of Sickergill described themselves as maltsters in 1782.<sup>51</sup> Henry Moses described himself as a grocer in 1818: in 1829 he was a schoolmaster and shopkeeper.<sup>52</sup> In 1841 there was both a grocer/draper, and a merchant; by 1851 three grocers, and in 1861 four. There were three in 1911, one of whom was postmistress: there was a post office in Renwick from 1901; by 2012 it functioned on two half days each week. The last grocery shop in Renwick closed *c.*1970.<sup>53</sup> John Frost made clocks and watches in Renwick between 1815 and his death in 1841.<sup>54</sup> Isaac Robinson (1813-1887) established a tailoring business in Renwick which was still trading in the 1930s.<sup>55</sup> A haulage and motor garage traded between the 1930s and 1960s.

---

<sup>46</sup> Date stone 'JN 1892'; title deeds of Castle House, Renwick (Mrs A St John); local inf.

<sup>47</sup> Trade directories *passim*.

<sup>48</sup> CAS(C) DMus/10/122 - sales records of Kirkoswald Brewery, four Renwick alehouses in the 1830s.

<sup>49</sup> Bulmer *Dir Cumb* 1901, 470; 1901 census, household 28.

<sup>50</sup> Church registers for descriptions; QC, court book p240 (1752) for smithy.

<sup>51</sup> QC, Court Book pp. 277, 300, 321/2; 5A-114.

<sup>52</sup> Methodist Chapel trust deed 1818 (at Kirkoswald Manse); Parsons and White *Dir Cumb* 1829.

<sup>53</sup> Census 1841-1911, *passim*; trade directories 1847-1938, *passim*; local inf, Stanley and Hardy Greenop.

<sup>54</sup> J. B. Penfold, *The Clockmakers of Cumberland* (Ashford: Brant & Wright, 1977), , 202.

<sup>55</sup> Slater, *Dir Cumb*, 1884, 122; local inf, Stanley and Hardy Greenop.