

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

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Parish/township: RENWICK

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RENWICK¹

Renwick is a small rural parish and township of 4299 acres (1740 ha) on the Pennine edge about 12 miles north-east of Penrith. The village lies about three miles east of the River Eden, at about 213m above sea level. Since 1934 the parish has formed part of the civil parish of Kirkoswald. The northern boundary of Renwick parish cut across the rising ground from Middle Moor to the summit of Thackmoor Fell (609m), descending from there to follow the upper reaches of Croglin Water to Black Fell on the Pennine watershed. From Black Fell the boundary ran across Long Tongue to the headwaters of the Raven Beck which formed the southern boundary of the parish. The western boundary, not defined by obvious topographical features, traversed higher ground to the west of the village, known as Long Moor and Middle Moor, separating Renwick from the adjacent manor of Staffield in Kirkoswald parish. There are two outlying hamlets, both at about 245m: Scalehouses to the north of the village and Outhwaite to the east. The boundaries of Renwick had been established before 1341 when the manor, which was coterminous with the parish and township, was given to Queen's College, Oxford. The manorial boundary was altered as a result of arbitration in 1808, when an area of some 40 acres in the south-west corner was transferred to Staffield.² The relationship of the parish boundary to that of the neighbouring parish of Kirkoswald suggests that Renwick may have been carved out of Kirkoswald parish at an early date.³ Renwick's name, regularly recorded as "Ravenwick" from the twelfth century to the seventeenth, is thought to derive from

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² Oxford: Queen's College muniments [hereafter QC], 5A-1a (1341) and 5A-118 (1808); cf. also Nicolson, *Misc Act*, p119: the 1808 alteration related only to the manor boundary.

³ A. J. L. Winchester, *Landscape and Society in Medieval Cumbria* (Edinburgh 1987), 24.

Hrafn, an Old Norse personal name, and *wic*, an Old English habitational name meaning “village or dairy farm”, the latter element suggesting that an agricultural settlement predated the Scandinavian settlement of the tenth century.⁴ ‘Ravenwickscales’, presumed to be an earlier name for Scalehouses, is mentioned in 1278 and the earliest known record of Outhwaite is in 1598.⁵

Landscape

In the west of the parish the underlying bedrock is Permo-Triassic St Bees sandstone, overlaid with boulder clay and glacial sand and gravel deposits; further east the higher slopes of the Pennines are formed from alternating strata of carboniferous limestone, limestone grit, Alston sandstone and coal measures, with a covering of peat.⁶ The soil was described in 1794 as ‘cold and unfruitful’; and in the early twentieth century as ‘clay and sand, sub-soil clay gravel and rocky’.⁷ For the most part the ground is well drained by hillside streams flowing into the Raven Beck. Until 1818 only a little over one fifth (920 acres, 379 ha) of the land was cultivated; 850 acres (350 ha), mainly on How Moor, Middle Moor and Long Moor on the west and north of the village, were enclosed under the Renwick Enclosure Act of 1814 and brought into cultivation thereafter. The remaining 2,525 acres (1,004 ha), on the Pennine slopes to the east, were enclosed in 1864, but remain largely uncultivated: amounting to some three-fifths of the surface area of Renwick, they have been exploited through the ages as summer pasture and for their mineral resources – coal, peat and stone, and lime-burning.⁸ This is a hillside landscape, which in modern times is predominantly under grass, divided by stone walls and many streams, and well wooded on the lower slopes.

Settlement

Before 1400 it seems that permanent settlement was concentrated on the village, with settlement also at Scalehouses,⁹ and at a hamlet called ‘Applebystreet’ which lay on the banks of the Raven Beck.¹⁰ By 1500, ‘Applebystreet’ had been abandoned, and permanent settlement had probably been established at Outhwaite.¹¹ The hamlets of Scalehouses and Outhwaite may have originated as summer pastures with seasonal human habitation. The name Dyrah, later given to a farmhouse

⁴ *PNC*, I, 236.

⁵ - *ibid* - (quoting Assize rolls); CAS(C) DMH 10/6/12/3, a 16th century copy of *Cal. Inq. p.m.* Humphrey, first Baron Dacre of the North; for Outhwaite QC, 5A-13.

⁶ Geological Survey sheet 24 (Penrith) 1:50,000, surveyed 1962/8.

⁷ Hutchinson p212, and Kelly's trade directories 1894 -1938.

⁸ cf *Economic History*, below.

⁹ *PNC*, I, 236.

¹⁰ QC, 5A-1a, the only surviving mention of this hamlet. The most likely location is some 400-500 yards west of High Raven Bridge, downstream of a point (NY 599428) where there are archaeological traces of a possible ancient river crossing, and, nearby on the south bank, traces of house footings.

¹¹ QC, 5A-58 (1630) ‘street’ in place of ‘hamlet’; rental evidence from the Long Rolls of Queen’s College.

between Renwick and Scalehouses, is thought to mean ‘deer hedge’, perhaps indicating the existence of a park or hunting reserve.¹² In Renwick village, by 1500, there were some 13 customary farmsteads in two rows enclosing a small green, together with a church and priesthouse at the northern end, and, on the western side, a small house, probably once the manor house and possibly fortified, on what was later known as ‘Castle Hill’ or just ‘the Hill’.¹³ In Scalehouses there were five farmsteads, two customary and three owned by the Dacres, and (in 1587) a separate freehold house called ‘Slotingsteads’.¹⁴ In Outhwaite there were, by 1550 if not earlier, four customary farmsteads.¹⁵ Very little survives of late-medieval buildings. Rebuilding in stone seems to have begun after 1660 and to have proceeded slowly through the eighteenth century. Town Head farmhouse retains internal evidence of cruck frames, and appears to have been rebuilt between 1660 and 1700; the adjacent Thackmoor House, much altered later, also has internal evidence of rebuilding c.1700.

As well as the village and the two outlying hamlets there were, from the eighteenth century, several isolated farmsteads. Dyrah, between Renwick and Scalehouses, was abandoned in about 1960, and its ruins remained visible in 2012.¹⁶ Woodcroft, between Renwick and Outhwaite, was abandoned before 1840 and no part of the building remains.¹⁷ Rayles House, also known as Wyberghdale, was recorded near Scalehouses in 1707 and 1798 but the site has not been found.¹⁸ Sickerhill, built about 1720 on land taken in from the waste in 1696 in the south western corner of the manor, was transferred by arbitration to the manor of Stafffield in 1808.¹⁹ Lincowell, built by a Scalehouses tenant on lower ground near Scalehouses, was still occupied in 2012. A three-story mansion called Hetherington's was built on the site of the old manor house in the mid-eighteenth century, and subdivided between 1827 and 1841 into five, and after 1945 into three, dwellings.²⁰ Between 1800 and 1830, a period of intensified coal-mining and rising population, many cottages were built in the village, together with one three-story house called Highland Hall and five cottages at Spa Lane and Kiln Bank on its south side. Shops and public houses were built in the 1820s and 1830s on land

¹² PNC, I, 236; cf also Charles Phythian-Adams *Land of the Cumbrians*, Aldershot 1996, 37-8, for possible royal demesne on the Pennine edge; a rivulet near Dyrah is called ‘Kingdale Beck

¹³ QC, 5A-2a (1506 rental); *The Black Book of the Priory of Hexham*, Surtees Society 1864, I II, 12; cf *Manors and Estates* below.

¹⁴ QC, 5A-5a.

¹⁵ QC, 5A-23 (1603) – call roll listing Scalehouses and Outhwaite tenants; rental evidence (note 11 above).

¹⁶ Land Tax duplicates 1767f; censuses and trade directories; and local inf (Robert Pattinson).

¹⁷ The site of Woodcroft is shown on OS 6-inch map, Cumb. sheet 40 (surveyed 1860).

¹⁸ Title deeds of Scalehouses End Farm (Mrs Jane Fawcett), and CAS(C) P 1798 Lowthian.

¹⁹ QC, Renwick Court Book p. 71 (1696); QC, 5A-118 (1808).

²⁰ QC, 5A-191 (1827) for name ‘Hetherington's’; title deeds of no 1 the Hill (Mr & Mrs Lindemann).

enclosed from the village green, along the west side of the road constructed through the village in 1818 (all by 1970 occupied as private houses). In 1948 two pairs of semi-detached council dwellings were built on the southern edge of the village.²¹ Between 1950 and 2012 there were some barn conversions in Renwick, a new house in Spa Lane, and four new houses at the north end of the village, all within the building line. Overall, the footprint of the village seems to have changed little for 500 years.²² Scalehouses expanded after 1789 by two new cottages on the waste to the east of the hamlet,²³ and by twentieth century barn conversions. By contrast Outhwaite contracted, the farmland being combined, by 1850, in a single farm, with a cottage and (later) a bungalow.

Communications

Renwick appears to have lain close to the *magna via de Appelby*, recorded in 1167, probably linking Brampton to Appleby though the villages along the foot of the Pennine scarp.²⁴ The road defined the western boundary of the manor of Little Haresceugh, south of the Raven Beck, crossed the beck by a bridge recorded in 1585,²⁵ and seems to have passed to the west of Renwick village (via what is now Spa Lane, Yetland Lonnen, and a stone and grass track) to continue towards Croglin and Brampton. By the eighteenth century Renwick lay at the confluence of five roads linking the village northwards towards Brampton; eastwards to the Hartside Pass across the Pennine watershed to Alston; southwards towards Gamblesby and Melmerby, crossing (as did the Alston Road) the Raven Beck at High Raven Bridge; south-westwards to Glassonby (crossing the Raven Beck by a ford until Sickerhill Bridge was built in 1898);²⁶ and westwards to Kirkoswald. Public transport routes were limited: a bus service from Renwick on one day per week was commenced by Henry Lace of Kirkoswald to Carlisle in 1928 and to Penrith in 1929.²⁷

Population and Social Character

Population was never large, there being five freeholders and 23 customary tenants in 1603 - suggesting about 130 inhabitants in all, if each represented a resident household – and the Protestation Return 1642 suggests a population of 148.²⁸ In 1782 there were 189 inhabitants, and in

²¹ CAS(C) SRDP/1/2/16 (minutes of Housing Committee of Penrith RDC).

²² Thomas Donald, *Historic Map of Cumberland 1774* (preceding the post-1800 population expansion of Renwick), compared with OS Map Cumb. Sheet 40 (1st edition, surveyed 1860).

²³ QC, court book p354 (1786) and date stone 'AW 1789'.

²⁴ *Lanercost Cart.* 87 (item 34).

²⁵ The bridge was mentioned (but not described) in 1585 (CBP item 309) and listed in Denton *Perambulation*, 57; it was rebuilt in 1781, CAS(C) CQAB/4

²⁶ CAS(C) SPC/35/1/1 (1897); 1898 date stone on bridge parapet.

²⁷ Lace business records at Kirkoswald examined by David Grisenthwaite; Kelly *Dir.Cumb.*1929.

²⁸ QC, 5A-23 (call roll 1603); Appleby *Famine in Tudor and Stewart England*' (1978, Stanford U.P.), 199;

1801 201.²⁹ There followed a rapid increase to 375 in 1831. Thereafter, and with the cessation of coal mining after 1860, there was continuous decline of population to 174 in 1931, the latest year for which separate census data are available.³⁰ With the exception of the period of mining activity in the early nineteenth century, Renwick was a comparatively egalitarian farming community without a resident lord or squire (except between c.1875 and 1956).³¹ From c.1970 an influx of retired persons, and others commuting to and from work elsewhere, replaced inhabitants who hitherto had worked on the land.

Denton's figure of 265 (1687) looks too large.

²⁹ Dr Heysham's census, Carlisle Central Library, Jackson collection M839; Hutchinson, 212; 1801 census; cf *Economic History* (below)

³⁰ Decennial censuses 1801-1931.

³¹ cf *Manors and Estates* and *Social History* (below).