

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

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Parish/township: RENWICK

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RENWICK¹

SOCIAL HISTORY

Social Structure and Character ²

After 1341 Renwick had no resident lord of the manor, nor any resident 'squire' - until Joseph Nicholson assumed that role in the 1870s. Freeholders of tenements at Scalehouses, on land purchased from the Countess of Arundel c.1602, paid no rent and no entry fines, and had the parliamentary franchise in 1722, but seem otherwise to have enjoyed equal social standing with the customary tenants.³

This was a farming community bound by the rules of husbandry laid down by the manor court, and whose members took it in turns, annually, to assume the offices of churchwarden, constable, overseer of the poor (from the 1630s) and surveyor of highways.⁴ The use of 'yeoman' was uncommon before 1660; and the use of 'Mr' infrequent at all times. From time to time individuals rose to prominence: for example Thomas Gosling (d.1680, bailiff) and his son (d.1702); John Westmorland (d.1704) and his cousin Jeffrey Westmorland (d.1721); and Thomas Sowerby (d.1728)

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² Almost no records survive from Renwick vestry and parish/township officials: for all periods before the Victorian age this account relies mainly on the manor court and other records of Queen's College, Oxford.

³ CAS(C) D/Lons/L/13/11 (poll book 1722).

⁴ Churchwardens are named in Bishops' Transcripts from 1662; other officers only occasionally - eg the constables in hearth tax and land tax documents, and the overseer in the Protestation Return 1642.

who owned the glebe land and was described in 1723 as ‘proctor’.⁵ None of these men established dynasties in Renwick - although James Westmorland, a grandson of Jeffrey who lived in Stafffield, bought the rectory of the parish in 1739. Men who were prominent as foremen of the manor court jury in the 25 years leading to Parliamentary enclosure in 1818 included Robert Monkhouse of Scalehouses (d.1791) and his son John (d.1856), William Lawson (d.1819, owner of the rectory), Jonathan Tallentire of Outhwaite (d.1815), and John Lowthian of Sickerhill (d.1826).⁶ It would seem that before the 1870s no one family was dominant in the parish. The influx of miners in the early nineteenth century would have altered the social fabric of the village. It is possible that an increase in illegitimacy in the 1820s and 1830s reflects social turbulence at that time.⁷

In 1834 there were 24 Renwick men on the electoral roll, including several tradesmen - a result both of enclosure in 1818 and the Reform Act 1832.⁸ After 1840 it was usual for half the manor court jury to be tradesmen, but only those who held some customary or freehold land.⁹ Women appear infrequently in Renwick records. Ann (Beckton) Richardson (1674-1772) seems to have managed the Horse & Jockey Inn for half a century, and Eleanor Rickerby held the lease of Renwick mill from 1725 to 1761.¹⁰

Cottagers and servants

Before 1660 only one cottage in Renwick was recorded; about six were built between 1660 and 1715; four between 1750 and 1800; and about 20 between 1800 and 1830 – occupied in 1841 by coalminers, labourers and small tradesmen.¹¹ Renwick farms were small and before 1750 usually relied on family labour when available, but servants are occasionally recorded in Tudor and Stewart records.¹² In 1782, 20 out of 46 households included persons who were additional to the nuclear family - most no doubt servants in husbandry; and there were 10 household heads who, holding no

⁵ CAS(C) Renwick burial register 1723, 1728; P1704 (Westmorland), P1721 (Westmorland)

⁶ QC, court records *passim*, these men sharing the foremanship of the jury for long periods.

⁷ There were 16 illegitimate baptisms (to 12 mothers) in Renwick 1821-1836, compared with only 8 between 1721 and 1780; CAS (C), PR 72.

⁸ CAS(C) QRP 2/1/1.

⁹ QC, court records *passim*.

¹⁰ QC, court book, rolls of freeholders; CAC(C) QRP/1 (Land Tax 1767); QC lease ledger F p201, 5A-108.

¹¹ QC, 5A-13 (1598), 5A-28 (1631); QC, court book *passim*; TNA E179/90/76 (Hearth Tax 1673/4) lists 31 householders, 18 exempt, at least 5 of which seem to have been cottages built since 1660; 1841 census.

¹² eg QC, 5A-10 (1595); court book (1675), p. 3.

land, were likely to have been employed agricultural labourers.¹³ In 1881 there were 24 indoor and farm servants, and 13 agricultural labourers in a population of 258 (about 15%).¹⁴ Up to 1939, most Renwick farms employed farm servants ('hired lads'). Mechanisation and other 20th century changes reduced employed farm labour to about 2 percent of the population in 2012.¹⁵

Community Activities¹⁶

From the mid-nineteenth century, community activities developed under the auspices of church and chapel, including from 1857 to 1919 a Renwick Sons of Temperance group.¹⁷ An offshoot of this group was the Renwick children's 'Band of Hope' which was still functioning in 1945.¹⁸ Music and singing seems to have been important in Renwick, which, said one writer in 1945, 'used to be noted for its singing, so let us recover our lost fame'¹⁹ - perhaps a reference to Thomas Greenop (1845-1908), stonemason and Methodist lay preacher, and his musically gifted family; and to a choir which in the 1930s held rehearsals at the school with a conductor from Alston (a performance of Honegger's 'King David' was given in Renwick in 1937).²⁰ In the 1950s the school was used for Christmas entertainments, whist drives and occasional dances. By 1975 Renwick had become a quiet place, with no pubs and shops, an annual church fete, and some Methodist events, such as a Sunday school New Year concert, and a sports day on Easter Monday, both discontinued in the 1980s.²¹ The Reading Room, established by the vestry in 1879 as a new use for the recently-replaced 1838 school building, and a place of resort for 'hired lads', was furnished with a daily newspaper until 1950, but was closed soon after that.²² The Renwick branch of the Women's Institute, formed in 1953, was suspended in 1974.²³ This trend was reversed from the Queen's Jubilee in 1977. The Reading Room was reopened as a place for meetings and community activities, with John Lishman (churchwarden 1977-2007) holding a tenancy from Queen's College. The committee which organised the Jubilee celebrations continued in being as a Sports Committee and, together with the

¹³ Dr Heysham's census, Carlisle Central Library, Jackson Collection, M839.

¹⁴ 1881 Census.

¹⁵ Local inf, Stanley and Hardy Greenop.

¹⁶ No useful evidence of community activities before 1800 has been found.

¹⁷ CAS(C) DFCM 4/5/165 and 4/6/161/1 (a printed contribution card for the 'Hope' Division, Renwick); see also curate John Watson's 1858 visitation return at CAS(C) DRC Acc A3966.

¹⁸ CAS(C) DFCM 4/5/165.

¹⁹ CAS(C) DX1274/13 Parochial Magazine, June 1945.

²⁰ Local inf & concert handbill, Greenop; the base soloist was Thomas William Greenop, son of Thomas.

²¹ Local inf. (Stanley, Hardy and Rose Greenop).

²² *Cumberland & Westmorland Herald*, 17 Jan. 1914; local inf.

²³ Inf. from Anna Hartley, membership committee secretary, National Federation of Women's Institutes.

Anglican PCC and the Methodists, oversaw growth in fund-raising activities of many kinds, supported by increasing numbers of experienced ‘off-comers’. In the 1990s a boule pitch was created, and in 2005 a barn was fitted with a dance floor. The musical tradition was revived in 2005 when a community choir was created to celebrate the centenary of the chapel: it was flourishing in 2012.²⁴

Education

There was a schoolmaster with a schoolhouse near Renwick church for a few years from 1675, but the schoolhouse was disused by 1711.²⁵ The curate-teacher John Rumney (died 1737) probably held classes in Renwick (and perhaps children walked three miles to Maughanby where for a time he taught).²⁶ A school at Highbankhill, 2 miles from Renwick, is mentioned in 1717, may have existed much earlier, and was in continuous use from about 1745 to 1851.²⁷ A school house was built in Renwick in 1758.²⁸ This is probably the school referred to by Chancellor Fletcher in 1814 as in receipt of the few shillings interest from a small endowment by Thomas Tallentire of Outhwaite.²⁹ Jonathan Grisedale was schoolmaster from 1797 to 1809, and may have continued to teach on his own account until his death in 1842.³⁰ The curate-teacher Thomas Robinson opened a school at Linghouse (near Scalehouses) in about 1790.³¹ In 1818 there was a schoolhouse, perhaps the 1758 building, in which a mistress lived and taught 12 girls; and ‘two schools, one containing 27 children, and in the other 45 are taught by the minister [probably Linghouse], 17 only of whom belong to this parish’;³² and in 1833 there were three daily schools (the 1758 school and two which had commenced after 1818) at which some 67 children, both boys and girls, were educated, instruction (the endowment apart) being ‘wholly at the expense of the parents’.³³ It seems that by 1833 Linghouse school had closed, and that in addition to the 1758 school there may have been two

²⁴ Local inf. (John and Kate Lishman).

²⁵ CAS(C) DRC5/4 p126 and p. 168 (1675/7); QC, court book, p 159.

²⁶ CAS(C) DRC/5/5 and 5/6.

²⁷ CAS(C) DMus 1/7/1/2 (Staffield manor court, 1717); Bulmer *Dir Cumb* 1901, 470.

²⁸ CAS(C) PC72/7, a 1914 copy of a lost 1838 document seeking grant for a new school. The 1758 school is not otherwise recorded, the site is unknown, and no teachers have been identified before 1797

²⁹ Chancellor Walter Fletcher’s Diocesan Book, 1814; directories *passim*, probably an inter vivos gift of Thomas Tallentire (1696-1775).

³⁰ CAS(C) DRC5/72-80.

³¹ Kenneth Harper *John Atkinson, yeoman schoolmaster*, CW2 (1983); also Chancellor Walter Fletcher’s Diocesan Book, 1814.

³² Parliamentary Survey of Schools 1818 (‘the Minister’ was Thomas Robinson).

³³ Parliamentary Survey of Schools 1833; Bishop Percy’s notebooks, no 2, Carlisle Cathedral Library gives 38 boys and 41 girls (date uncertain); Parsons and White *Dir Cumb* 1829, p511 (for Moses).

private academies, perhaps run by Grisedale and by Henry Moses (1791-1843). In 1838, the 1758 building being in decay, a new school was built, on waste land near the church: in 1840 34 girls and 30 boys attended, and the school won the support of the National Society and (from 1847) Betton's charity.³⁴ When the new school was built, the curate, John Watson, commented that 'The population is chiefly agricultural, but many families are employed in coal and lime works, these are mostly so poor that the charge for schooling is often more than they are able or willing to spare.'³⁵ In 1854 Watson estimated the number of pupils to be 50 or 60, including those at a school for girls started the previous year: numbers were higher in winter than summer, and he complained of the difficulty of retaining good teachers at the low pay offered (the National school was funded by prescriptions and scholars' pence).³⁶ In 1860 the National school was said to accommodate 40 pupils.³⁷ It was replaced by a larger Board (later Council) School in 1876, over 80 children being enrolled in the first year. The numbers declined until 1939 but increased with evacuees and then for some years with children from Croglin. Before the Education Act 1944, girls on average left school at 12, and boys at 13.³⁸ Renwick school closed in 1987, after which Renwick children attended Kirkoswald Primary School. Secondary education has been provided by schools in Penrith and Brampton.

Charities and Poor Relief

Employment on family farms and in coal mining, and the application of the settlement laws, would have helped to reduce the numbers of destitute persons in Renwick, until the 1820s.³⁹ William Parcival (d.1746) left £10 'to the poor of the parish', the interest divided at Christmas and Easter at the discretion of the incumbent and churchwardens: in 1938 it was invested in consols.⁴⁰ Between 1730 and 1833, when clergymen recorded poverty at burial, 19 deceased persons were described as 'poor', 'pauper' or 'pensioner': nine were men; and ten were women, all but one being widows and all (whose ages are known) over 70. A single pre-1834 Renwick poor relief rate assessment survives:

³⁴ CAS(C) PC72/7, 1914 copy of 1838 writings of curate John Watson; 1838 datestone on building.

³⁵ Quoted in CAS (C), PR72/7.

³⁶ CAS(C) DMH/10/13/8 (diocesan education return 1854); 1861 census household 58 (Richardson); CAS(C) DRC Acc A3966 (1858).

³⁷ Whellan, 620; after 1876, the 1838 building became the village Reading Room: in 1912 its ownership was disputed between the church and the parish council, but was successfully claimed by Queen's College (QC 5A-295, CAS(C) PR 72/7).

³⁸ CAS(C) DS 5941/6 (school admissions register).

³⁹ No overseers' or churchwardens' accounts survive; a pain of 1591 forbade the giving of 'any shillinge (corn husks) att the mylne to any poore folkes' (QC 5A-8); CAS(C) Q/11/1/179/2 (removal order 1735).

⁴⁰ CAS(C) P 1746 Parcival; *Kelly's Directory of Cumberland & Westmorland* (1938), 244.

in 1807 an assessment of 1s in the £ was levied, yielding £20 7s, or 2s per head of population.⁴¹ In 1832 Joseph Watson, assistant overseer, gave, in answer to Parliamentary enquiry, the following levels of poor rate with cost per head of population - 1803, £52 (5s 2d); 1813 £48 (3s 5d); 1821 £63 (3s 5d); 1831 £139 (7s 4d). Watson estimated the average labourer's wage as £35 p.a., and thought that 'the generality are always very poor'. Few owned the cottages in which they lived, and only exceptionally would relief be given for rent.⁴² Before 1836 no Renwick resident received indoor relief, but after the creation of the Penrith Poor Law Union some were sent to the workhouse in Penrith.⁴³ In the four years 1861-5, the average annual recharge to the Renwick vestry from the Penrith Union was £122 (9s 2d per head), of which £57 was for out-relief.⁴⁴ In the five years 1892/1897 it had fallen to £66 (6s per head).⁴⁵

⁴¹ CAS(C) PR/9/118, a copy made in 1859 from a lost Renwick Rate Book - perhaps a half year assessment.

⁴² PP 1834, xxvii-xxxix, pp 1818, 2514, 3208, 3905, 4599.

⁴³ CAS(C) SPUP/1 pp126,195.

⁴⁴ CAS(C) SPUP/2, pp10, 18, 59, 68, 110, 114, 119, 154, 167, 215, 223, 264, 275, 300, 315, 358, 367.

⁴⁵ CAS(C) SPUP/10, p. 261 and similar half-yearly records in vols 11, 12.