

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

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Parish/township: GAMBLESBY

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Date of Draft: 15.10.14

GAMBLESBY¹

ECONOMIC HISTORY

The township's economy was largely agricultural, with pastoral farming coming to dominate by the twentieth century. By the eighteenth century, agriculture was augmented by mining, while several ancillary trades met the needs of a growing population in the nineteenth century.

Agriculture and woodland

There is evidence of open fields in the township from an early date, with extended field plots radiating out from houses in Gamblesby village.² Access to these open fields was provided by the numerous lanes radiating out from the village, including 'Robertlands Lane'. There were large areas of common for summer grazing on Gamblesby High Fell on the slopes of the Pennines (indicated by numerous sheep folds and names like 'Weather Lair'), and on Gamblesby Low Fell and the area known as Viol Moor (so named in 1723)³ in the north-west of the township. In 1860, 1,480 acres [599 ha] of common were enclosed on Gamblesby Low Fell and Viol Moor, by act of Parliament,

¹ The author would like to thank Lydia Gray and the staff at Carlisle Archive Centre for their assistance in the preparation of this article.

² Roberts, *English Village*, 173-174.

³ *PNC*, 193.

followed by the enclosure of 1,720 acres [696 ha] on Gamblesby High Fell (Hartside Fell) in 1868.⁴ Private enclosures had occurred before this time: in 1825, approximately 150 acres [61 ha] of stinted pasture at Unthank Grassing was divided among eight individuals.⁵ The name Moor Thwaite, meanwhile, suggests early enclosure of moorland. The fell allotments were not only utilized for rough grazing but also as grouse moors. From the late nineteenth century, shooting rights were frequently leased out.⁶ By 1930 there were 947 acres [383 ha] of permanent grazing, with a further 594 acres [244 ha] for temporary grazing and grass for mowing in the township. In addition, there was 2,950 acres [1,194 ha] of rough grazing under occupation, including 800 acres [324 ha] of common grazing.⁷

All tenants in Gamblesby anciently held by tenantright and paid a fine of two years rent on a change of tenant.⁸ They also paid a heriot, although this was commuted to a money payment before 1600.⁹ In 1688, the yearly copyhold rents were said to amount to £16.¹⁰ Most estates were copyhold until the twentieth century. The process of mid-nineteenth century enclosure served to increase the size of existing farms. At the time of enclosure, several of the larger farms (100 acres or more) were in the hands of owner-occupiers. Among them was Thomas Watson, who owned and farmed some 300 acres, while John Armstrong had a farm of 180 acres.¹¹ But by 1910, the largest farms were in the hands of tenant farmers, four of whom held over 300 acres [121 ha] from a single landlord.¹²

⁴ CAS (C), QRE 1/111 & 113

⁵ CAS (C), PR 29/92.

⁶ CAS (C), DB 74/3/2/414, 1116, 1130.

⁷ TNA, MAF 68/3505.

⁸ Denton, *Perambulation*, 330.

⁹ CAS (C), P 90/15.

¹⁰ Denton, *Perambulation*, 330.

¹¹ Census 1871.

¹² CAS (C), TIR 4/59.

Meanwhile, just four owner-occupiers possessed more than 150 acres.¹³ Among them was Joseph Benson, who had added to his own 160 acre [65 ha] farm by leasing a further 198 acres [80 ha]. Farming remained the single chief occupation of Gamblesby's residents throughout the nineteenth century. In 1841, nearly two thirds of households were headed by farmers or agricultural labourers.¹⁴ By 1891, the heads of just over two thirds of households were involved in farming.¹⁵

By the sixteenth century, various crops were grown in the township, including wheat, oats, turnips, barley and rye.¹⁶ A high state of cultivation was reported in 1847.¹⁷ In the early twentieth century, over three hundred acres were devoted to growing crops, with oats predominating.¹⁸ Produce was susceptible to damage by the Helm Wind.¹⁹ Livestock rearing was also important, with sheep farming being favoured by the early twentieth century. In 1920, 4,287 sheep were recorded, compared to 491 head of cattle. There were 5,082 sheep a decade later, compared with 519 cattle.²⁰ The importance of pastoral activity is also noted in the numerous sheepfolds on Gamblesby Fell, as well as names such as 'Weather Lair' and 'Shiel Side'.²¹

In 1688 there was a 'young spring of oakewood' worth £200,²² perhaps to be identified with Oak Bank, on the edge of the township next to the border with Melmerby. According to the Tithe Award of 1841, there was 54 acres [22 ha] of woodland in Gamblesby township.²³

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Census 1841.

¹⁵ Census 1891.

¹⁶ CAS (C), DRC 8/76; Kelly, *Dir. Cumb* (1910), 25. Barley and rye were particularly common in sixteenth and seventeenth century probate inventories.

¹⁷ Mannex and Whellan, *Dir. Cumb.*, 228

¹⁸ 296 acres of oats were grown in 1920 and 208 acres in 1930: TNA, MAF 68.

¹⁹ Kelly, *Dir. Cumb.* (1894), 17.

²⁰ TNA, MAF 68/3505

²¹ OS, 1:10,560, first edition (surveyed 1860; published 1867).

²² Denton, *Perambulation*, p.331.

²³ CAS (C), DRC 8/80.

Manufacturing

A corn mill was in existence from at least 1230, when reference was made to Robert *molendinarius de Gamelesby*.²⁴ The corn mill was the only freehold property described in the enclosure award of 1860²⁵ and was still in use by the turn of the twentieth century.²⁶ The mill was powered by a man-made beck, which ran from Hazelrigg and was also fed by Dale Sike. By 2014 the mill pond belonged to the neighbouring Bridge Farm. A second mill dam to the north of the village is shown on the first and second edition Ordnance Survey maps,²⁷ but was subsequently filled in. This may have fed the saw mill, which was in existence by 1860 and still there by 1898.²⁸ The saw mill subsequently became Bridge Farm.

Mining and ancillary trades

Coal and lead in the Carboniferous rocks on Hartside (Gamblesby) Fell were being mined by 1688, when it was said that they ‘might be of good profit if any would be at the charge to search for the same’.²⁹ In 1709 the coal seam at Hartside Colliery was said to be ‘about half a yard thick’.³⁰ In the early nineteenth century development drifts were made to open up the seam before coal was extracted.³¹ By 1837 the Duke of Devonshire (lord of the manor) possessed a colliery in the township.³² Ironstone mining was also in operation from the mid-nineteenth century. In 1849 several applications were made to the duke to extract ironstone. Dues paid for the privilege were a

²⁴ *PNC*, 193.

²⁵ CAS (C), QRE 1/111.

²⁶ Census 1891; CAS (C), TIR 4/5/9.

²⁷ OS, 1:10,560, first edition (surveyed 1860; published 1867); OS, 1:10,000, second edition (revised 1898; published 1900).

²⁸ OS, 1:10,560, first edition (surveyed 1860; published 1867).

²⁹ Denton, *Perambulation*, p.331.

³⁰ R. Smith and S. Murphy, *Mines of the West Pennines* (British Mining, no.191, 2011), 16.

³¹ I. Taylor, *Cross Fell and the Mines of the Cumbrian Pennines* (Carlisle, 2013), 238.

³² CAS (C), DPH 2/2. A coal mine is marked between Hartside Cross and Rowgill Cleugh on the first edition OS map, 1:10,560, (surveyed 1860; published 1867).

rent of £25 plus a royalty on one tenth of other ores found in the manor.³³ In 1872, Benjamin and Joseph Salkeld leased some of their land on Gamblesby Fell to William Barrow Turner (a civil engineer from Ulverston), William Crossley (an ironmaster from Askham in Furness), and their associates, in order for the construction of a tramway to transport ironstone and equipment to and from their mine on the fell.³⁴ The Gamblesbly Iron Mining Company was formed in c.1915 to exploit limonite iron. This was an open cast operation, with the ore being transported by road to Langwathby station.³⁵

In addition to mining, there were also numerous small quarries within the township by the nineteenth century. The quarrying of limestone led to lime production. A lime burner lived in the township in 1847, and there were four limekilns by 1860, three of which lay at Sail Rigg Quarry on Gamblesby Fell.³⁶ The Greenfell quarry, which lay by the Penrith-Alston road, had closed by 1929 and the quarry plant moved to a quarry at the summit of Hartside.³⁷ The Whin Sill dolerite quarried there was used for road surfacing. Several quarries were also created west of the village after 1860, but many of these were disused by 1900. The exceptions were those at Woolhead and Crofton Sike.³⁸

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ CAS (C), DX 1491/18. The tramway is marked on OS maps.

³⁵ Taylor, *Mines of the Cumbrian Pennines*, 238.

³⁶ Mannix & Whellan, *Dir. Cumb.*, 227; OS, 1:10,000, first edition (surveyed 1860; published 1867).

³⁷ CAS (C), C/C/3/2/155.

³⁸ OS, 1:10,560, second edition (revised 1898; published 1900).

Service Industries and other businesses

The only commercial site within the township was Gamblesby village. By c.1800 there were two inns in the village: the Pack Horse, which was a location for manorial courts,³⁹ and the Red Lion, which was in existence by 1741.⁴⁰ By 1847 there were four shopkeepers in the township, in addition to a grocer and baker.⁴¹ By 1861 several tradesmen often practiced a second occupation. Thus one shoemaker had on a secondary role as a bacon factor, while his mother became a grocer.⁴² The stonemason, both innkeepers and the miller, meanwhile, were all additionally described as farmers. By 1891 the population of Gamblesby had begun to decline,⁴³ and the Pack Horse Inn had long since closed.⁴⁴ Yet the village still boasted a blacksmith, stonemason, publican, tailor, and shoemaker – all of whom now lived by a single trade. Only the grocer and miller continued to ply their trades in conjunction with farming. In addition to these tradesmen, there was also a game watcher and gamekeeper by 1891, which coincided with the leasing out of shooting rights.

In c.1900, local carpenters Moore & Son were commissioned to build a new smithy and cottage,⁴⁵ with the Old Smithy (referred to as such by 1900) being converted into a dwelling. The Red Lion Inn (then the only public house in the village) had been acquired by Glasson's Penrith Breweries before 1910. By 1938 there was a single shopkeeper who also ran the post office.⁴⁶ In addition, a new business had been established at Unthank: Dixons Motor Omnibus. At that time, John William

³⁹ Parson and White, *Dir. C. & W.*, 450; CAS (C), DMBS 5/51; QL 3/6.

⁴⁰ The door lintel reads 'Thomas Harrison and Jane Harrison 1741'. The building was listed in 1984: <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1137274> [accessed 26 April 2014]

⁴¹ Mannix & Whellan, *Dir. Cumb.*, 227.

⁴² Census 1861.

⁴³ Census 1891.

⁴⁴ The Inn was sold by Thomas Parker to Joseph Parker in 1861: CAS (Carlisle), DMBS 4/53. It was recorded on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1867, and it appears to have closed before 1871 as there is no mention of it in the Census of that year.

⁴⁵ CAS (C), DB/88/7.

⁴⁶ Kelly, *Dir. Cumb.* (1938), 25.

Dixon was recorded as a carrier to Penrith.⁴⁷ In 1934 the ‘Helm Wind Café’ was built at the summit of Hartside Pass on the A686.⁴⁸ It lies on the very edge of the township boundary at just over 1,900 feet (579 m) above sea level.

Economic History Since 1945

During the twentieth century, livestock farming continued to predominate, with growing investment in dairy farming. Between 1947 and 1963, at least seven new byres, two cooling rooms, a dairy and a milk room were built on a dozen farms in the township.⁴⁹ Other farms continued to focus on sheep rearing, including Church View, which had specialised in sheep farming since the early twentieth century.⁵⁰ In the twenty-first century, the same farm rears Swaledales and Greyfaced Mules.⁵¹ Gamblesby was hard hit by the epidemic of foot and mouth disease in 2001.⁵²

During the course of the twentieth century, the number of amenities and tradesmen in the village declined. In 1956, plans were approved for the old corn mill, which had previously been converted into a dwelling (Old Mill House), to become a post office (closed by 2014).⁵³ The former corn mill barn was converted into a dwelling (Old Mill Barn) in c.1990 and used as holiday accommodation:⁵⁴ one of several such lets in Gamblesby. In 2014 there was also a Bed and Breakfast business in the village. The ‘Summit Café’ at Hartside was re-opened in 1957, after being derelict for many years.⁵⁵ An application was made at the time to erect a hotel, motel, café and petrol filling station on the

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ CAS (C), C/C/3/1/28.

⁴⁹ CAS (C), SRDP 3/PLANS/676, 904, 1010, 1121, 2163, 2414, 2956, 3016, 3358, 3512, 3730, 3993.

⁵⁰ CAS (C), DB 74/3/2/1130.

⁵¹ *Cumb. & West. Herald*, 26 Sep. 1998; <http://www.swaledale-sheep.com/05salereports/Laz280905.htm> [accessed 16 October 2013].

⁵² *Cumb. & West. Herald*, 21 Apr. 2001; 16 Nov. 2007.

⁵³ CAS (C), SRDP/3/15686.

⁵⁴ <http://www.oldmillbarn.co.uk/> [accessed 4 April 2014].

⁵⁵ CAS (C), C/C/3/1/28.

existing cafe site, but the plans were rejected.⁵⁶ Applications to extend were also refused in 1959-60.⁵⁷ However, the existing timber café was rebuilt using permanent materials in 1962, and again by a different owner in 1972 using stones from Nenthead smelt mill.⁵⁸ It is now called the Hartside Café.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ CAS (C), C/C/3/1/155.

⁵⁸ CAS (C), SRDP/3/PLANS/3693; C/C/3/2/155; Taylor, *Mines of the Cumbrian Pennines*, 238.