

Victoria County History: Cumbria. 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: MOSSER

Author: Angus Winchester

Date of draft: 13.10.2011

MOSSER

Mosser was a small rural township of 1489.6 acres on the north-western edge of the Lake District, four miles south of Cockermouth. Since 1934 it has formed part of the civil parish of Blindbothel. The bulk of the township consisted of a north-west facing slope rising from the ill-drained valley facing Pardshaw (the ‘moss’ from which the township takes its name) to the summit of Fellbarrow (416m.) but the township boundary straddled the watershed with the Loweswater valley to include the south-facing slopes of Bramley Seat. The settlement pattern was one of dispersed farmsteads and small hamlets scattered across the western half of the township; Mosser Fell, the rising eastern part of the township, and a smaller area of moorland adjoining Sosgill, remained as unenclosed common land until 1867. For the most part, the township boundaries followed topographical features: the former mossland on the north west; Cat Gill on the north east; the watershed along the crests of Fellbarrow and Loftbarrow on the east; and Whittern Gill and Dub Beck on the south.¹ The boundaries of the township were those of the estate granted to Adam de Mosser c.1203.² However, Adam’s grant also included pasture rights over land in Loweswater parish, between Whittern Gill and Crabtree Beck, an area subsequently known as ‘Waterend Wood’, which was the subject of periodic disputes between Mosser and Loweswater, which were finally settled only in 1828.³

Mosser lay on the margins of the seigniorial forest of Copeland, close to the boundary between the barony of Copeland (or Egremont) and the honour of Cockermouth. Its subinfeudation to Adam de Mosser by Richard de Lucy, baron of Egremont, presumably initiated a period of colonisation and clearance. The name Mosser (from Old Norse *mosi*, ‘peat bog’ and Gaelic-Norse *aergi/erg*, ‘summer pasture’) suggests that the north-western fringes of the fells had been seasonal grazing grounds in the Viking Age.⁴ Permanent settlement is implied by 1220, when the tithes of Mosser were disputed between the parishes of St Bees and Brigham. In the ensuing agreement, Mosser was deemed to lie within the parish of St Bees, reflecting its feudal allegiance to the barony of Egremont, but the rector of Brigham would thenceforth take the tithes of

¹ Ordnance Survey 1st edition 6” map, Cumberland, Sheet 62; Mosser enclosure award: CRO, QRE/1/127.

² Below: Manors and Estates.

³ CRO, D/Law/1/242/19; D/WM/11/405. The disputes will be discussed at greater length in the article for Loweswater.

⁴ Diana Whaley, *Dictionary of Lake District Place-Names*, (Nottingham, 2006), 243-4.

Mosser, paying a pound of incense to St Bees.⁵ Thereafter, the link with St Bees was forgotten and Mosser was recognised as a township within Brigham parish.⁶

The dispersed settlement pattern was probably established as a result of colonisation in the thirteenth century, though the names of individual farms and hamlets are not recorded before the sixteenth century.⁷ The most substantial clusters of dwellings in the eighteenth century were the hamlets of Mosser Mains, where there were four holdings and a mill, and Mossergate or High Mosser, where there were five holdings. There were two holdings each at Bramley and Underwood; most of the remaining settlement sites were single farmsteads by that date.⁸ No major routeways passed through the township; external links were provided by lanes through farmland to adjacent townships and by fell roads across the open commons to Whinfell, Loweswater and Sosgill.

Population was never large. There were around 20 holdings in the later seventeenth and early eighteenth century.⁹ The number of households in the township appears to have remained remarkably stable across the early-modern period, reflecting stability in the number of holdings in a farming community with few cottagers. There were 23 households in 1662 and 22 families in 1801 when the population stood at 101.¹⁰ The number of inhabitants declined across the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, remaining at around 100 until 1841, settling at around 75 in the late nineteenth century but falling to 56 in 1931, the last census year for which separate statistics are available for the township. The number of families had dropped to 12 by 1901.¹¹ The fall in population was accompanied by amalgamation of farms and a reduction in the number of steadings: several farmstead sites had been deserted by the mid-twentieth century,¹² while former dwellings adjacent to surviving farms were converted into farm buildings.¹³

Among the yeoman farmers of eighteenth-century Mosser was Isaac Fletcher (1714-1781) of Underwood, whose diary provides vivid insights into life in the township in the mid- and later eighteenth century.¹⁴

LANDOWNERSHIP

⁵ *Reg. St Bees*, no. 105 and p. 142n.

⁶ Below, Religious History

⁷ Most of the individual habitation names are recorded before 1620: Bramley, 1545 (CRO, D/Law/1/239); Graythwaite, 1563 (*PNC*, p. 423); Aikbank, 1575 (CRO, D/WM/11/405); Beech Hill, 1592 (CRO, YDX/208/3); Fellside, 1614 (PRO, C2/JAS I/B31/62); Mosser Mains, 1606 (CRO, D/WM/11/405); Mossergate, 1611 (*ibid*).

⁸ Fletcher, *Diary*, 464-9.

⁹ Conclusion derived from analysis of changes of ownership recorded in Egremont Lordship court leet, 1677-1845: CRO, D/Lec, box 247.

¹⁰ PRO, E179/90/77, rot. 48; Census 1801.

¹¹ Census, 1801-1931.

¹² Settlements recorded in the nineteenth century at Milldam, Gillbrow, High Houses and Whinnah had been abandoned by 1950: CRO, DRC/8/134; OS 6" Map, sheets NY12NW and NY12SW (1957 edn).

¹³ Cottages at Mossergate Farm were converted into loose boxes in 1967 (local inf.).

¹⁴ *The Diary of Isaac Fletcher of Underwood, Cumberland, 1756-1781*, ed. Angus J. L. Winchester (CWAAS Extra Series XXVII, Kendal 1994).

The origins of the manor of Mosser can be traced to a grant from Richard de Lucy, lord of Egremont or Copeland barony, to Adam de Mosser c.1200 x 1203, by which Adam received a bounded block of land comprising the later township of Mosser together with the land between Whittern Gill ('Raysethwaytbec' in the charter) and Crabtreebeck, later in Loweswater township.¹⁵ Adam, his heirs and their men living in Mosser were granted freedom to cultivate, assart and build on lands within the bounds of the later township but were only granted pasture rights over the land later in Loweswater. In recognition of the grant, Adam and his heirs were to pay an annual money rent of one mark (13s. 4d.) and a cluster of services common to subinfeudated estates within the barony of Copeland: bearing witness against wrongdoers to Richard's foresters, giving hospitality ('puture') to his landsergeants, paying market tolls and rendering so much foreign service as pertained to one-third of a vill in Copeland.¹⁶ The site of the manor house is not known but probably lay in the vicinity of Mosser Mains, the name of which suggests the location of the demesne land ('mains').

The manor probably passed to Adam's descendants: John of Mosser was lord in 1290 and Joan of Mosser in 1322.¹⁷ Joan had married John de Pardshaw by 1334; on the partition of Egremont barony between the heiresses of John de Moulton in 1338, the rent and service of John and Joan for the manor of Mosser were assigned to Elizabeth wife of Walter de Bermingham.¹⁸ John de Pardshaw and Joan his wife seem to have been alive in 1353, when the manor was granted by Gilbert Chappell and Adam Eaglesfield, apparently trustees, to them and William Aykenheade, parson of Workington, for their lives, with remainder to John of Pardshaw's son, John, and, failing his heirs, to Beatrix, sister of John de Pardshaw.¹⁹ On the death of John son of John de Pardshaw without heirs the manor came into the hands of the Salkeld family through Beatrix. Hugh Salkeld, son of Beatrix, was lord in 1418,²⁰ and the manor descended through Hugh's heirs to Thomas Salkeld (d. 1555), whose son Richard Salkeld (c.1516-1575) held the manor c.1558.²¹ His daughter Barbara (1540-1626) married her kinsman George Salkeld (d. 1597) of Rosgill and Thrimby (Westmorland); she held the manor of Mosser in 1578.²² Their son, Thomas Salkeld (1567-1639) of Corby enfranchised his tenants in Mosser in a series of sales between 1602 and 1612, by which he conveyed the fee simple of their holdings to individual tenants.²³ After a dispute in 1614, arising out of Salkeld's claim to have retained his right in the residue of the commons,²⁴ Thomas Salkeld and his son and heir apparent, Richard, sold the manor in 1623 to two of the tenants, Richard Norman and John Hutchinson, as trustees to the use of the rest, for

¹⁵ Original: CRO, D/Lec, box 301; printed in *Reg. St Bees*, pp. 544-6 and W. W. Farrer, 'An early Mosser charter', *CW2* 51 (1951), 89-91.

¹⁶ These services were confirmed in 1203: *Abbreuiatio Placitorum*, p. 42 [reprinted *Reg. St Bees*, pp. 546-7].

¹⁷ Lucy Cartulary, no. 62; *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, VI, no. 331.

¹⁸ *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, VII, no. 628; *Cal. Close Rolls 1337-9*, p. 496.

¹⁹ The grant is recited in TNA, C1/1463/33 (answer of Richard Salkeld, c.1558).

²⁰ *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, XXI, no. 72.

²¹ TNA, C142/102/13 (I am grateful to Robert E. Salkeld for this reference); C1/1463/33. For the Salkeld family, see *CFH*, p. 290; *AWL*, p. 259.

²² CRO, D/Lec/301 (Percy Survey, 1578). For Barbara Salkeld see *CFH*, p. 290.

²³ CRO, D/WM/11/405: list of deeds from Salkelds to Mosser landowners, drawn up 1827.

²⁴ TNA, C2/JAS 1/B31/62.

£120. Norman and Hutchinson then released their interest in each holding in a series of quitclaims dated 5 May 1625.²⁵ As a result of these transactions, the manorial rights were effectively extinguished. The free rent of 13s. 4d. payable to the baron of Egremont was apportioned between the tenants, who continued to pay it and to perform suit of court to at Egremont, sending a ‘turnsman’ each year to the court leet for Egremont Lordship, at which changes of ownership were enrolled until the nineteenth century.²⁶ The performance of suit of court at Egremont was declining by the 1770s.²⁷ In the absence of the immediate lordship, it appears that the overlords of Egremont barony came to be regarded as lords of the manor: when the township proposed enclosure of the commons in 1758, they addressed their request to purchase the wastes to the earl of Egremont, whose son, the 3rd earl, was said in 1827 to claim lordship over the commons and wastes, despite never having exercised any manorial rights.²⁸ Thereafter, his successors were regarded as lords: General Wyndham, was said to be lord of Mosser in 1847 and Lord Leconfield was deemed to hold the manorial rights in 1910.²⁹ Despite this, on the eve of enclosure in 1863, the surviving commons at Mosser were deemed not to be waste of any manor, suggesting that any claims the overlords might have had were negligible.³⁰

After enfranchisement in 1625, ownership of land in Mosser was fragmented into small freeholds. In 1910 there were eight landowners in the township, the largest holdings being those of Henry Peacock at Mosser Mains and Gillbrow (413 acres) and Thomas Robinson, who owned the farms at Bramley, Graythwaite and Whinnah (291 acres in all).³¹ More significant concentrations of landownership occurred in the later twentieth century, when the owners of surviving farms accumulated the lands of former holdings.

ECONOMIC HISTORY

The township’s economy was largely agricultural until the later twentieth century and had a strong pastoral bias. Crop land was limited and restricted to the vicinity of the farmsteads, in a zone hemmed in between the wet mossland and meadows of Mosser Moss, along the township’s north-west boundary, and pastures on the spur of higher ground at around 250m stretching to Bramley Seat. Small cores of open-field arable land are probably recorded in field-names such as ‘Stoney Dales’ and ‘Short Butts’, near Mosser Mains, and ‘Flatts’, at Mossergate and Beech Hill. Parts of the higher ground were recorded as ‘outfield’ land in the eighteenth century, implying that sections of the pasture were cultivated on a long-ley rotation.³² Enclosure of shared arable land and meadow appears to have taken place in piecemeal fashion over an attenuated period,

²⁵ CRO, D/WM/11/405; CRO, DX/127/8-11.

²⁶ CRO, D/Lec ,box 247: Egremont Lordship court leet verdicts, 1677-1845. Fletcher, *Diary*, pp. 17(18 Oct. 1756), 36 (15 Oct. 1757), 402 (n. 24)

²⁷ Fletcher, *Diary*, pp. 308 (17 Oct. 1775), 326 (15 Oct. 1776), 384 (29 Oct. 1780), 399 (19 Oct. 1781).

²⁸ Fletcher, *Diary*, p. 55 (28 Oct. 1758); CRO, D/WM/11/405: case and instructions for brief (1827), pp. 11-12.

²⁹ Mannix & Whellan, *Dir. Cumb.* 1847, p. 529; CRO (Carlisle), TIR/4/106, p. 7.

³⁰ *Special Report of the Inclosure Commissioners, 1863* [HC 1863 (347)], p. 2.

³¹ CRO (Carlisle), TIR/4/106, pp. 5-7.

³² CRO, YDX 208/92: sale, Brown to Robinson, 1736. Fields near Wilkes How were named ‘Outfield’ in 1840: CRO, DRC/8/134.

through exchanges of ground between neighbours, as recorded in 1690 and between 1756 and 1759, though 25 acres of common fields remained in 1874.³³ Reclamation of Mosser Moss, an area of wetland containing c.20 ha, was undertaken by agreement in 1767 and 1772.³⁴

In the mid-eighteenth century, each farm consisted of a comparatively small acreage of farmland, typically of between 35 and 55 acres (14-22 ha), together with grazing rights on the common. Much of the enclosed farmland was under rotational grass: at Underwood, Isaac Fletcher generally ploughed only three fields each year. He ploughed the ley for oats in the first year, manuring it the following year for barley or potatoes, which was followed by one or more grain crops until the land was put down to grass again. The better land was cropped for four or five years, followed by a ley period of three to seven years; on fields which would probably have been formerly classed as 'outfield' land, only two or three crops were taken in succession and the ley period ran for up to nine years.³⁵ The pastoral accent of farming in Mosser was marked: in 1801 little more than 112 acres (a mere 7.5 percent of the township's acreage) was under crop, the bulk of it under oats (80.5 acres). The only other significant crops were barley (16.75 acres) and potatoes (10.75 acres).³⁶ In 1920 the acreage under crops was slightly greater: oats (94 acres) had replaced barley and the acreage under roots (44 acres) had increased. Sheep and cattle breeding dominated the farming economy: almost 90 percent of the sheep flock (which totalled 1518) comprised sheep (695) and lambs (670), while cattle rearing focused on small-scale dairying and suckler herds. Milk cows and heifers accounted for approximately one-third of the 313 cattle and young under one year old for a further one-third.³⁷

Two areas of common waste, totalling 464 acres, survived until the nineteenth century: Mosser Common, 70 acres on the western edge of the township, separating Mosser's farmland from that of the hamlet of Sosgill, and Mosser Fell, 394 acres of hill grazings on the slopes of Fellbarrow, on which the tenants had rights of pasture and turbarry.³⁸ In the early seventeenth century the lord of the manor attempted to enclose part of the common, claiming his right to approve the residue of the commons.³⁹ Whether any enclosure took place then is not known. The township community proposed enclosure in 1758 and were again said to be keen to enclose in 1827 but neither initiative appears to have succeeded.⁴⁰ The commons were finally enclosed by act of Parliament under an award of 1867.⁴¹ The smaller section of the former common at Leady Moss was reclaimed and much of it was planted with conifers in the later twentieth century, but on Mosser Fell enclosure created a landscape of stone-walled allotments of rough grazing without reclamation for more intensive use.

³³ Agreement between Allan Allanson and Peter Fawcett, 6 Sept 1690 (in possession of Mrs D. Fawcett, Broughton, Hants., 1991); Fletcher, *Diary*, pp. 1 (17 Jan. 1756), 27 (29 Mar. 1757), 60 (24 Jan. 1759); PP (HC) 1874 [85], *Inlosures*, p. 35. In 1840, the surviving undivided strips were in the Outfield and other fields on higher ground to the south of Mossergate: CRO, DRC/8/134, parcel nos. 161-5, 170-2, 181-194.

³⁴ Fletcher, *Diary*, pp. 197 (11 Feb. 1767), 247 (21 Feb. 1772),

³⁵ Fletcher, *Diary*, pp. xvi-xvii.

³⁶ PRO, HO67/26/310, which, unusually, gives full details of crops on each holding.

³⁷ PRO, MAF68/2965.

³⁸ The common rights were recorded in 1614: PRO, C2/JAS I/B31/62.

³⁹ PRO, C2/JAS I/B31/62.

⁴⁰ Fletcher, *Diary*, pp. 55-7 (20 and 28 Oct, 15 and 29 Nov. 1758); CRO, D/WM/11/405: case and instructions for plea (1827), p. 12.

⁴¹ CRO, QRE/1/127.

The number of farm holdings in the township dropped from 15 in 1801, to 13 in 1880 and to 10 by 1910.⁴² In 1920 all the holdings were let to tenants. Apart from one smallholding, the majority (7 holdings) then contained between 50 and 150 acres; only two fell into the 150-300-acre category.⁴³ By 2011 there were only four working farms.⁴⁴ As farms were laid together in the later twentieth century, many of the farmhouses were sold as private dwellings, though one steading was built on a new site at Mosser Heights in 2001.⁴⁵

There were two corn mills in the township. One, close to Mosser Mains at Milldam (a name recorded from 1602), was known in 1736 as Briscoe's Mill, and is perhaps to be identified with the mill which formed part of the endowment of Mosser chantry in the 1540s.⁴⁶ The mill had gone out of use before 1840.⁴⁷ According to local tradition its stones and machinery were taken to Aikbank, on the northern edge of the township, where a mill, recorded from 1698,⁴⁸ remained in use until the twentieth century. The mill dam immediately above the farmstead at Aikbank drew water from three streams: Catgill Beck (which was dammed under an agreement of 1713),⁴⁹ Mosser Beck and Kirkby Beck. In its latter days the mill had two pairs of stones and also ran a saw, thresher and grindstone.⁵⁰

Small veins of lead ore in the Ordovician Skiddaw Group rocks have been noted in geological surveys of the Mosser Beck valley. Isaac Fletcher of Underwood explored a vein of lead on his property 'in the gill' in 1758 and made several attempts to mine lead between 1765 and 1773, though little ore appears to have been won. One trial resulted in a shaft, abandoned because of flooding in 1771, which reached a depth of 12 fathoms.⁵¹ Further mining took place on the former common in the western corner of the township at Leady Moss in the later nineteenth century.⁵²

By 1840 a tile works making field drainage tiles had been established on the northern edge of the township near Aikbank by William Dixon of Toddell. In 1847 it was run by his son, Jonah Dixon. Production had ceased by 1864; the site of the clay pit survives as a water-filled

⁴² PRO, HO67/26/310; MAF68/1090; CRO (Carlisle), TIR/4/106, pp. 5-7.

⁴³ PRO, MAF68/2965.

⁴⁴ In 2011 the four working farms were Mosser Mains, Mossergate, Fellside and Mosser Heights.

⁴⁵ Lake District National Park Authority: planning application no. 7/2000/2264 (decision dated 13 Feb. 2001).

⁴⁶ At approx. NY 1175 2495: OS 6" map, Cumb. sheet 62 (surveyed 1864). CRO, D/WM/11/405: list of deeds (Salkeld to Wilkinson, 1602); CRO, YDX 208/92: sale, Brown to Robinson, 1736. In 1684 Lancelot Briscoe was responsible for maintaining the mill dam: CRO, YDX 159/1/9.

⁴⁷ No evidence of a mill at Mosser Mains is recorded on the tithe plan: CRO, DRC/8/134.

⁴⁸ CRO, YDX 159/1/2: sale to John & Ann Dixon, 10 Feb. 1698.

⁴⁹ [Reference to be checked: CRO, YDX 208/92 or YDX 159/1/2].

⁵⁰ Field observation, 1968.

⁵¹ Fletcher, *Diary*, xxv-xxvi, 232-4; Brian Young, 'Lead mining at Mosser: a geological note', *ibid* 483-4.

⁵² A level there, disused by 1898, appears to post-date 1864: OS 6" map, Cumb. sheet 62 (surveyed 1864); sheet 62 NE (2nd edn; revised 1898).

depression.⁵³ Other economic activity in the township has included handloom weaving at Mossergate in the early nineteenth century and fish smoking at Aikbank in the late twentieth.⁵⁴

SOCIAL HISTORY

There is little record of communal activities in Mosser, probably reflecting the small size of the community, its inhabitants scattered in dispersed farms and hamlets, and the absence of a focal point provided by a parish church or resident gentry family.

Education. The reader at Mosser chapel in 1653 taught a school there, in which he had 24 pupils, each paying 12d. per quarter year.⁵⁵ In the eighteenth century, the children of several Mosser families attended school at the Quaker meeting house across the fields at Pardshaw Hall, their fathers entering into partnership to hire a schoolmaster, who was not always a Quaker.⁵⁶ It seems likely that the school served both conformists and Dissenters. In 1774 the first nominee to the curacy of the rebuilt Mosser chapel was described by the inhabitants of the chapelry as ‘our present schoolmaster’ and the Anglicans proposed building their own school at Pardshaw Hall the following year, but were prevailed upon by the Quakers not to do so.⁵⁷ In 1792 Mary Porter of Mosser Mains left the sum of £100, the interest of which, amounting to £3 per annum, was to be applied to the education of poor children of Mosser chapelry whose parents did not receive parish relief.⁵⁸ In 1818 it was reported that there was a small school in Mosser, endowed with the income of the charity, in which 30 children were taught.⁵⁹ However, by 1821 the interest was paid to a schoolmaster at Pardshaw, in Dean parish, for the education of three poor children from Mosser.⁶⁰

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

After the tithes of Mosser were assigned to Brigham in 1220, the township community presumably looked to the parish church of Brigham, four miles away, for religious needs and rites of passage: by the seventeenth century, the inhabitants of Mosser were regularly baptised, married and buried at Brigham.⁶¹

⁵³ Mosser tithe plan, parcel no. 128: CRO, DRC/8/134; Mannix & Whellan, *Dir. Cumb. 1847*, p. 530; Ordnance Survey 1st edn 6" map, Cumb. sheet 62 (surveyed 1864).

⁵⁴ Information on Joseph Allison (c.1777-1845), weaver, from Martha T. Johnstone, Rochester, NY, 2002; local inf.

⁵⁵ *Journal of the Life, Labours, Travels and Sufferings ... of ... John Banks* (London, 1712), pp. 2-3.

⁵⁶ Fletcher, *Diary*, 107 (16 Aug. 1761), 127 (29 Aug. 1762), 193 (10 Nov. 1766), 242 (7 Oct. 1771), 274-5 (29 and 31 Oct. 1773). Jonathan Wilson, schoolmaster at Pardshaw Hall 1766-71, was an Anglican: *ibid*, 451.

⁵⁷ CRO, DRC/10/26, nomination paper 28 Jun. 1774; Fletcher, *Diary*, 304-5.

⁵⁸ Bulmer *Dir. Cumb.* 1901, p. 739.

⁵⁹ PP (HC) 1819 [224], *Digest of parochial returns made to select committee appointed to inquire into the education of the poor*, p. 116.

⁶⁰ PP (HC) 1821 [159] *Report of commission for inquiring concerning charities*, p. 53.

⁶¹ *Reg. St Bees*, nos 104-5; CRO (Carlisle), transcript of Brigham bishop's transcripts, 1676-1766.

The church of St Michael (formerly dedicated to St Philip), a ‘tiny fell chapel’ with a bellcote and plain, oblong windows,⁶² stands in the fields between Mosser Mains and Mossergate. Its origins lay in the foundation of a chantry in Brigham parish. In 1546 Mosser chapel was held by an elderly priest named Harry Bankes, who received an annual stipend of £4 from Thomas Salkeld of Corby, the lord of the manor, though the chantry was endowed with lands and a watermill, of which at least some appear to have been in Mosser, yielding an annual rental income of over £7.⁶³ In 1653, John Banks, a fifteen-year-old youth, son of a local fellmonger, was reader at Mosser chapel: whether his family was connected with that of the chantry priest Harry Bankes has not been established. His duties were to read the Scriptures and homily, sing psalms and lead prayer on Sundays, for which he received a salary of 12d. yearly from each household on top of free board and lodging, probably an example of the ‘whittlegate’ system by which readers in Cumbrian chapels of ease were often maintained.⁶⁴ The chapel seems to have fallen into disrepair not long afterwards: it was said to have been ‘down’ for about one hundred years when it was rebuilt by subscription in 1773.⁶⁵ Prior to rebuilding, the site was bought by three trustees, who vested the right to nominate a curate in all who contributed chapel dues.⁶⁶ The subscribers included inhabitants of the neighbouring townships of Blindbothel and Whinfell, as well as Mosser,⁶⁷ suggesting that the chapel was intended to serve Anglicans in the three communities, none of which had a chapel of ease and all of which contained significant numbers of Quakers. The chapel was endowed with an annual salary of £4, given by the subscribers, the income from a small field, valued in 1779 at 25s. per year, augmented by a grant from Queen Anne’s Bounty of £200.⁶⁸ In 1829 the endowment was valued at £45 15s. and in 1851 at £55 to £60.⁶⁹ The chapel of St Philip and its small adjacent burial ground were consecrated in 1776.⁷⁰

In the late eighteenth century, the right to nominate was claimed by the inhabitants of the chapelry (defined as the townships of Mosser, Blindbothel and Whinfell), who regarded themselves as patrons with the right to ‘elect and appoint’ curates.⁷¹ In 1802, however, Viscount Lowther nominated and the Lowther family thenceforth exercised patronage,⁷² until the earl of Lonsdale transferred the advowson to the bishop of Carlisle in 1889.⁷³ The district served by the church was redefined in 1883 when a new ecclesiastical parish was established, combining Mosser with the townships of Eaglesfield and Blindbothel and the western part of Whinfell

⁶² Hyde and Pevsner, *Cumbria*, p. 534.

⁶³ R. L. Storey, ‘Chantry of Cumberland & Westmorland, Part I’ CW2 60 (1960), p. 87. The value of the endowment was given as £7 9s 2d in 1547 (*ibid*) but as £7 17s 3d c.1555 (PRO, C1/1466/41). At least three of the five tenants of the chantry lands listed in 1548 (*Cal. Pat.* 1548-9, p. 70) and c.1555 (Joan Watson, John Williamson of Mossergate (‘Mosgate’) and Anthony Fletcher) are probably to be identified as inhabitants of Mosser. (Conclusion drawn from comparison with names recorded on muster roll of 1535: PRO, E101/549/13, f. 4).

⁶⁴ *Journal of... John Banks*, 2-3.

⁶⁵ Fletcher, *Diary*, p. 271(16 Aug. 1773); Butler, *Cumbrian Parishes*, p. 155.

⁶⁶ CRO, DRC/10/26: lease and release (7-8 May 1773); Butler, *Cumbrian Parishes*, p. 156.

⁶⁷ PRO, HO 129/570/2/6.

⁶⁸ Butler, *Cumbrian Parishes*, p. 155.

⁶⁹ CRO, DRC/10/26: nomination 14 Jul. 1829; PRO, HO 129/570/2/6.

⁷⁰ CRO, DRC/10/.26: sentence of consecration, 5 Aug. 1776.

⁷¹ CRO, DRC/10/26: nominations, 1774-1787.

⁷² CRO, DRC/10/26: nomination, 1802. Lord Lonsdale nominated in 1823 (*ibid.*) and was subsequently regarded as patron: Mannex & Whelan, *Dir. Cumb.* 1847, p. 529; Bulmer, *Dir. W. Cumb.* 1883, pp. 491-2.

⁷³ Order in Council, 15 Oct. 1889 (copy in CRO, DRC/23/1889).

township.⁷⁴ A new church, the John Dalton Memorial Church, was built outside the village of Eaglesfield in 1890-1, replacing the church at Mosser as the focus for religious life in the newly-expanded parish.⁷⁵ The dedication to St Philip was transferred to the new church, the old chapel at Mosser church becoming known as St Michael's.⁷⁶

In the years following the rebuilding of the chapel in 1773, services were held twice on Sundays, except during the two winter months, and communion only rarely. The congregation appears to have been small, the number of communicants in 1779 being only 14.⁷⁷ In the late eighteenth century the curacy was held in rapid succession by a series of young local men in their twenties.⁷⁸ Greater stability was achieved in the nineteenth century when the chapel was held in plurality with neighbouring livings, first, from 1802 to 1823 by John Sibson, incumbent of Lorton, then from 1823 to 1870 by Samuel Sherwen, rector of Dean; both appointed assistants to act in their stead.⁷⁹ In 1851 services were held morning and afternoon in alternate weeks: the afternoon congregation on census day was 22, but attendance varied widely depending on the weather. The curate noted 'I have been there when there was none present on a wet day & I have seen above 100 in the chapel'.⁸⁰ After the building of the new church, the old chapel was used only for Sunday afternoon services during the summer months.⁸¹ The church was renovated in 1923-4 and re-opened in June 1926; it continued in use as a subsidiary chapel.⁸² In 2011 'the fell church of St Michaels' remained in occasional use for services.⁸³

A substantial proportion of the inhabitants of Mosser were nonconformists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Quaker meeting just outside the township at Pardshaw Hall, established as a result of George Fox's preaching journey through Cumberland in 1653, was one of the largest rural meetings in England and included inhabitants of Mosser from its earliest days.⁸⁴ Writing in 1687, Thomas Denton commented that the inhabitants of Mosser were 'almost all Quakers, being too near neighbours to Pardsey-crag, and too far distant from any church'.⁸⁵ Prominent among the first generation of Quakers were John Banks, the young reader at the chapel, and John Steel of Graythwaite.⁸⁶ Across the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Mosser contained a strong body of interconnected yeomen Quaker dynasties: the Robinsons of Beech Hill; Wilsons of Graythwaite; Burnyeats of Mosser Mains; Allasons and

⁷⁴ Order in Council, 23 Aug. 1883 (*London Gazette*, 28 Aug. 1883) (copy in CRO, DRC/23/1883).

⁷⁵ The later history of the parish of Mosser will therefore be treated in the township history of Eaglesfield.

⁷⁶ No formal record of the re-dedication of the old church to St Michael has been located but the change had occurred by 1938: CRO, YPR/30/10.

⁷⁷ Butler, *Cumbrian Parishes*, p. 155.

⁷⁸ CRO, DRC/10/26: nomination papers, testimonials, proofs of baptism 1774-1799.

⁷⁹ CRO, DRC/10/26: nominations, 1802, 1821, 1823; PP (HC) 1861 [517], *Returns relating to pluralities*, p.

9. For Samuel Sherwen see W. Dickinson, *Cumbriana* (1876), 153-9.

⁸⁰ PRO, HO 129/570/2/6.

⁸¹ Bulmer, *Dir. Cumb.* 1901, p. 738.

⁸² Kelly, *Dir. Cumb. & Westd* 1934, p. 215; *West Cumberland Times*, 12 June 1926, p. 9; CRO, YPR/30/10-

11.

⁸³ Parish notice sheet, April 2011.

⁸⁴ For the history of Pardshaw meeting, see Fletcher, *Diary*, pp. xx-xxiv; Butler, *Quaker Meeting Houses*, I, 103-7.

⁸⁵ Denton, *Perambulation*, 121.

⁸⁶ N. Penney (ed.), *The First Publishers of Truth* (1907), pp. 38-9; *Journal of ... John Banks*, p. 3.

Fawcetts of Mossergate; Harrises, Rogers and Fletchers of Underwood and Fletchers of Whinnah.⁸⁷ By the latter decades of the century, when the number of Quakers in the chapelry was said to be declining,⁸⁸ there were seven Quaker families in the township, probably accounting for approximately one-third of the population.⁸⁹ The decline in the number of Quakers in the later eighteenth century can be attributed in large part to disownments as a result of marriage to non-Quakers.⁹⁰ By the early twentieth century the Quaker community at Mosser had declined to extinction.⁹¹

In the later eighteenth century, at least one family in Mosser appear to have been members of the Independent congregation at Cockermouth.⁹²

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

No records of a manor court at Mosser are known to survive, other than a copy of an award by a jury of thirteen men at a court held there 'for Lord and Neighbourheid' in 1583, settling a dispute concerning the division of pasture ground.⁹³ After the effective extinguishment of the manor as a result of enfranchisement, disputes between tenants and other agrarian matters were brought to the baronial court leet of Egremont Lordship, to which the township regularly continued to send a 'turnsman' until 1780.⁹⁴

In the later medieval period, Mosser was one of the hamlets which formed the vill of Murton.⁹⁵

By the mid-eighteenth century the community at Mosser held regular meetings to discharge the local government responsibilities which fell to it as a township. Constables, overseers of the poor and surveyors of highways were appointed, apparently by rotation among the rate-payers. The 'vestry' meetings were held in farmhouses, usually at the home of the overseer, on a Friday or Saturday evening.⁹⁶ As well as an annual meeting in the spring to settle the overseer's accounts and to appoint the new overseer, vestries were held as required (often in January) to determine how the township should proceed in the cases of individual paupers.⁹⁷ The vestry also

⁸⁷ For these farms and families, see biographical and topographical notes in Fletcher, *Diary*, pp. 418-52, 464-9.

⁸⁸ Butler, *Cumbrian Parishes*, p. 155.

⁸⁹ Fletcher, *Diary*, p. xx.

⁹⁰ E.g. Jacob Fletcher of Whinnah, disowned 1755; John Burnyeat of Mosser Mains, disowned 1757; Jonathan Wilson of Graythwaite, disowned 1758; John Fawcett of Mossergate, disowned 1775: Fletcher, *Diary*, 420, 422-3, 425, 450.

⁹¹ No members of the Religious Society of Friends were living in Mosser by 1919: *List of members of Cumberland Quarterly Meeting 1919*.

⁹² Joseph and Mary Porter of Mosser Mains: Fletcher, *Diary*, p. 440.

⁹³ CRO, YDX 208/2.

⁹⁴ CRO, D/Lec, box 247, Egremont Lordship court rolls 1639-43; court leet verdicts, 1677-1845.

⁹⁵ CRO, D/Lons/5/1/MP. See A. J. L. Winchester, 'The medieval vill in the western Lake District: some problems of definition', *CW2*, 78 (1978), pp. 55-69.

⁹⁶ The pattern of meetings is drawn from Fletcher, *Diary*, pp. 6, 41, 46, 52, 82, 139, 169, 250, 254, 342, 384.

⁹⁷ E.g. Fletcher, *Diary*, pp. 8 (3 June 1756), 22 (14 Jan. 1757), 77 (9 Feb. 1760), 296 (21 Jan. 1775), 382 (5 Jan. 1780).

met to decide whether to pursue action over agrarian matters (such as encroachments on the common, or the upkeep of hedges) at the court leet of Egremont Lordship.⁹⁸

Mosser fell naturally within the hinterland of the market town of Cockermouth and the township became part of Cockermouth Poor Law Union in 1838 and Cockermouth Rural District in 1894. Mosser lost its identity as a separate administrative unit in 1934, when it was combined with the adjacent townships of Blindbothel and Whinfell to create the new civil parish of Blindbothel.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Fletcher, *Diary*, pp. 254 (18 and 21 Aug. 1772), 342 (23 Sep. 1777).

⁹⁹ Cumberland Review Order, 1934.