

The following is a draft section for an expanded and revised edition of the VCH Cumbria Volunteers' Handbook, which will aim to combine the guidance on 'Writing a Parish History' on the national VCH website and the Cumbria-specific guidance in the current Volunteers' Handbook.

5. Religious History

The treatment of local religious history in modern VCH parish articles is rather different from those published in earlier volumes. It is worth quoting the preamble to the guidance prepared by VCH Central Office a few years ago:

The intention of these new guidelines is to make it possible to offer an *intelligible, broadly chronological, and interpretative analysis* of religious activity within the parish, giving *especial attention to crucial periods of change or transition*. It is intended to be *an integrated account*; authors should analyse the interaction of varying religious groupings within the parish and to bring out their impact on parish life in general. This broad account of religious life as a whole is to be *followed by institutional appendices* that will ensure that the VCH continues to offer authoritative reference material.

The phrases we have highlighted are the key characteristics for which to aim.

The national guidance suggests that the section should be structured as follows, and divided into four sub-sections:

1. Origins of the Parish Church
2. Religious Life (which should be divided chronologically, as outlined below)
3. Non-Christian Religions
4. Institutional Appendices (factual material on individual places of worship)

In practice, a simpler, two-fold structure will suffice for most places in Cumbria. The 'Origins of the Parish Church' section is conceived of as an account of the very early history of a medieval parish church. Where the place in question did not have a medieval parish church, the account can move straight into the 'Religious Life' sub-section, as this will need to cover the religious life of the township before it had its own place of worship and the circumstances surrounding the establishment of a chapel of ease or a later parish church can be woven into the chronological account. Since only a handful of places in Cumbria possess(ed) non-Christian places of worship, Subsection 3 will not be needed in the majority of articles. In practice, therefore, the 'Religious History' section of most articles for VCH Cumbria will be divided into two or three:

1. Origins of the Parish Church (only for places which possessed a medieval parish church)
2. Religious Life
3. Institutional Appendix

The following notes give guidance on each of these in turn.

General sources for the Religious History section.

Starting points are provided by:

- *CW1, CW2, CW3*: these contain numerous articles on individual places of worship, many of which are well-researched and provide useful data.
- Church guidebooks can be useful as a starting point – but remember that you should aim to check for independent evidence of the statements they contain.
- 19th-century trade directories (e.g. Mannix & Whellan, *Dir. Cumb* (1847); Bulmer, *Dir. Cumb.* (1901)), which often summarise the institutional history of the Anglican church and list of places of worship of other denominations:

www.historicaldirectories.org

The key archival sources for this section will depend in large part on whether your township/parish lay before 1856 in the Diocese of Carlisle (northern Cumbria, north of the Derwent – Dunmail Raise – Stainmore line) or in the Archdeaconry of Richmond, which formed part of the Diocese of Chester from 1541 (southern Cumbria, south of that boundary) – the sources for each area are noted below.

1. Origins of the Parish Church

This subsection should provide an account of the earliest evidence for the existence of a church – whether documentary or archaeological/ architectural. If there is evidence (architectural or, not infrequently in Cumbria, in the form of pre-Norman sculptural remains) that the church originated before the Conquest or in the 11th or 12th century, even though the first occurrence in the written record is not until the 13th century, then it is important to draw attention to the physical evidence in this opening subsection. The siting of the parish church in relation to the settlement(s) should also be discussed. The dedication, if known, and the earliest reference to it should also be mentioned here.

The subsection should also offer a brief account of the extent of the ancient parish and the status of the living, i.e. whether it was a rectory or vicarage, whether it had been granted away to a monastery and was served by its nominees (appropriation). Did the church have

any dependent chapelries or chapels of ease? Were there any ancient burial rights over a wider area, or dues payable to it from neighbouring churches, which could be evidence of superior, 'mother church' status? Daughter churches or chapels to which separate parishes were later assigned should be mentioned.

In addition to the general sources listed above, the best starting point for this sub-section is likely to be C. M. L. Bouch, *Prelates and People of the Lake Counties* (Kendal: Titus Wilson, 1948) contains lists detailing evidence for the dates of foundation of churches and chapels, which often allow one to short-circuit the standard sources (*Taxatio* and *Valor Ecclesiasticus*), though *Calendar of Entries in Papal Registers* ought to be checked:

- *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae, auctoritate Papae Nicholas IV circa 1291*, ed. T. Astle and J. Caley (RC, 1802) See: www.hrionline.ac.uk/taxatio
- *Valor Ecclesiasticus, temp. Henrici VIII*, ed. J Caley and J Hunter, 6 vols. (RC, 1810-34). Latin only, in record-type.
- *Calendar of entries in the papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters*, ed. W H Bliss and others, 14 vols. (HMSO, 1893-1960). Now fully on-line on British History Online: www.british-history.ac.uk/catalogue.aspx?type=3&gid=150

You should also check R. N. Bailey and R. J. Cramp, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 2: Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire North of the Sands* (Oxford, 1988). This is the standard work on pre-Norman sculpture, which is often the earliest evidence for religious activity at parish church sites in Cumbria.

For **church dedications**:

- T.H.B. Graham and W.G. Collingwood, 'Patron saints of the diocese of Carlisle', *CW2* 25 (1925), 1-27

2. Religious Life

This is likely to be the longest part of the Religious History section of your article and should provide an integrated, chronological survey from medieval times to the present day. The account for a township without an Anglican church will obviously be much briefer than that for a parish with an ancient parish church and one or more nonconformist places of worship. Having said that, even an out-township without a place of worship of its own will have had a religious life. For such places (or, in others, for the periods before a chapel of

ease was built) you should try to investigate this. It may be that there is little more to be said than to indicate where the inhabitants went to be baptised, married and buried. Parish registers should provide the answer, and remember that instructions about place of burial in wills can also be informative.

The section should aim to paint a picture of the character of religious life in the community and how it changed across time. The role played by local clergy should be described and the section should also include material on the character of worship, how church buildings were changed as styles of worship changed, church music and choirs, for example. For the centuries after the Reformation the subsection should also seek to convey some sense of the interrelationship of the Established Church with any nonconformist or recusant communities within the parish. Where appropriate the surviving fabric, the monuments, stained glass, and fittings should be used to illustrate religious life.

Depending on the size and complexity of your parish/township, it may be necessary to further divide this into chronological sub-sections. The following scheme is suggested in Central Office guidance as 'a possible model for a medium-sized rural parish. It is **not** intended to be rigidly prescriptive or exclusive'. The sub-section could be divided into five chronological sections:

The Middle Ages. If you are dealing with a medieval parish church (or a parochial chapel which originated before the Reformation) questions to ask include: Were the incumbents resident, did they hold the parish in plurality? What, if anything, is known about their status, education, social contacts etc.? Was there a parsonage? Were there any cults associated with the parish? (Local saints could often be celebrated not only through the liturgy but by fairs or special customs held in association with the feast day.) Were there any guilds or chantries located in the church? What were their religious activities?

Where the article deals with a township which did not have its own place of worship in the middle ages, the main question to ask is whether there is any evidence of the relationship with the parish church.

From the Reformation to the Interregnum. If your account is dealing with a medieval parish church, the effects of Dissolution should be addressed, particularly the transfer of an appropriated living to a lay impropriator or the consequences of the dissolution of a chantry or a guild. Did the living change in status – e.g did it acquire a new parsonage house or a close association with new lords of the manor? Is there any evidence of doctrinal and liturgical changes? (e.g. fittings, vestments and plate retained for the use of the parish or removed and sold off. Especially significant are the removal of stone altars, roods etc. in the mid 16th century; any further iconoclasm (destruction of stained glass, images etc)

thereafter; Laudian innovations in the earlier 17th century, if any). Is there any evidence for a Puritan outlook (Lectureships are relevant here) or for dissent or recusancy before c.1650? Where there is evidence, particular stress should be laid on clerical-lay relations in this and the succeeding section.

Is there any evidence of lay people's belief? Involvement in the Pilgrimage of Grace may be relevant here (though remember that in Cumbria secular factors – particularly landlords raising entry fines – were important). The wording of religious preambles to wills may indicate Puritan outlook. Where your article deals with a chapelry or a township with a chapel of ease, the origins of the chapel may well lie in this period.

The Interregnum. Topics to be discussed here include:

- Changes in personnel - whether the local clergy conformed or were ejected. Did the church become Independent in its pattern of worship? The key source is B. Nightingale, *The Ejected of 1662 in Cumberland and Westmorland*, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1911).
- Is there any evidence of dissenting groups (eg. Quakers) in the parish?
- How was the building treated and used (some chapels of ease were used by nonconformist groups at this time)? Fonts and any surviving images, glass, etc may have been removed from parish churches. Were local ceremonies, feasts and customs suppressed?

1660-1840s. If you are dealing with a parish church or a parochial chapel, this section should open with some account of the transition from the Interregnum to the reestablished Church. Did the clergy conform or were they ejected? Again, the key source here is Nightingale, *The Ejected of 1662*. If they were ejected did they remain active in the parish and set up (in effect) a nonconforming congregation? If there was a change did it represent the restoration of a former incumbent or a new man? If he was new what was his background? - i.e. had he suffered for Anglican beliefs or conformed during the Interregnum? Again, if there is evidence there may be something to say about changes to the fabric reflecting the teaching and worship of the new regime.

The section could then continue with an extended look at the Established church across the 'long 18th century'. By this date there is usually information on how even the humblest chapels of ease were served: the key sources are the published visitations records (see below: Nicolson, *Miscellany Accounts*; Butler, *The Cumbrian Parishes*; Platt, *Diocese of Carlisle 1814-55*). These and other visitation records provide detail about clergy, services, attendances and the general condition of church life at this time. Particular attention should be paid to evidence for the presence of Nonconformist groups and how these grew

or declined. If applicable, the formal establishment and licensing of nonconformist congregations should be considered, together with their early history and relationship (if known) with the parish church. Any early evidence of Roman Catholicism, recorded for example in bishops' or archdeacons' visitation records, should be noted here.

1840s-Time of Writing. This suggested date-range includes in its early years the evangelical revival, the rise of the Oxford Movement, the formal establishment of a Roman Catholic hierarchy and parochial system and the major fractions within Methodism. In many parishes the period also saw the founding of missions. It will conclude with the profound changes which have affected religious life since the 1950s (declining attendances; growing secularism; introduction of female clergy; 'traditional' versus 'liberal' theology and styles of worship). This section should offer a brief overview of developments at the parish church - including types of service, the nature of alterations to the fabric, numbers of communicants and wealth and status of incumbents. It can conclude with modern liturgical reform (introduction of central altars, re-ordering of pews etc). There should also be some assessment of the rise and decline of nonconformity in the period- new chapels built in the parish, any changes in affiliation, amalgamations, closures etc.

Sources for the 'Religious Life' sub-section.

i. Starting points:

The key sources to obtain an overview are the snapshots provided by 18th- and 19th-century episcopal visitation records:

For the ***pre-1856 diocese of Carlisle:***

- William Nicolson, *Miscellany Accounts of the Diocese of Carlisle: with the Terriers Delivered to Me at My Primary Visitation*, (Carlisle, 1877). This contains Bishop Nicolson's notes on the parishes in his diocese, made at his primary visitation in 1703.
- *The Diocese of Carlisle, 1814-1855. Chancellor Walter Fletcher's 'Diocesan Book', with addiitonal material from Bishop Percy's parish notebooks*, ed. Jane Platt. Surtees Society Vol. 219/CWAAS Record Series Vol. XXII (Woodbridge, 2015). This excellent edition also contains a very full biographical index of clergy in the diocese in the late18th and early 19th century.

For those ***parishes in the diocese of Chester until 1856:***

- *The Cumbria Parishes 1714-1725 from Bishop Gastrell's Notitia, with additions by Bishop Porteous 1778-1779*, ed. L.A.S. Butler, CWAAS Record Series Vol. XII (Kendal, 1998)

1851 Religious Census (PRO, HO129) provides a snapshot of all denominations in the mid-19th century. It includes returns from all places of worship, giving numbers attending services on 30 March 1851 (a wet day!), details of the building and when it was erected, number of sittings etc. Records are arranged by Registration District:

- Cumberland: HO129/564 (Alston) to 572 (Bootle)
- Westmorland: HO129/573 (East Ward) to 575 (Kendal)

Note that returns are missing for some parishes.

Each of the following classes of record should also be consulted:

ii. Parish records – the contents of the ‘parish chest’, most of which are now deposited under the terms of the Parochial Records Measure of 1975 with Cumbria Archive Service, where they have the reference PR (WPR at Kendal and YPR at Whitehaven). Many extend back to the 18th century; some as far back as the 16th. Key documents which contain evidence for the religious life of the parish community include churchwardens’ accounts, vestry minutes, registers of services and church inventories. Remember also that **parish magazines** (where they have survived) can yield vivid information on the religious life of a parish from the Victorian period.

iii. Diocesan records – the records generated by the system of ecclesiastical administration, specifically:

- *Bishops’ registers* contain ordinations and appointment of clergy among many other matters. Those for Carlisle diocese from 1292 to 1972 are in Carlisle Archive Centre, reference DRC 1. The surviving medieval registers have been published by the Canterbury and York Society (CYS) as follows (copies are available in Carlisle Library):
 - *John Halton 1292-1324* ed. W N Thompson (CYS vols 12, 13, 1913)
 - *John Kirkby 1332-52 and John Ross 1325-32* ed. R L Storey (CYS vols 79 and 81, 1993-5)
 - *Gilbert Welton 1353-62* ed. R L Storey (CYS vol 88, 1999)
 - *Thomas Appleby 1363-95* ed. R L Storey (CYS vol 96, 2006)
- *Parish bundles*. For parishes and chapelries formerly in Chester diocese collections of documents concerning clergy appointments etc are preserved in parish bundles transferred to Cumbria Archive Service, reference DRC 10.
- *Diocesan visitation records*. The records generated by the visitation process, whereby the church authorities enquired into the state of church fabric, clergy and

lay morals, can shed valuable light on the religious life of a parish. As well as the three published volumes listed above, archival material includes:

- For parishes in Carlisle diocese: CAS (Carlisle), DRC 5/22 et seq. Visitation call books, 1731 to modern times; DRC 5/128-131. Churchwardens' presentments, 1690, 1696-1717, 1734, 1737.
- For parishes formerly in Chester Diocese: Lancashire Record Office, Preston, ARR/15: visitation records, 'Compert books' etc., from 1665. Cheshire Record Office, EDA 6; EDV 7: articles of enquiry 18th and 19th centuries, recording incumbents' answers to enquiries about services, patronage, nonconformists etc. Images of the returns in Cheshire R.O. for 1778/9 and 1821 are available in the VCH Cumbria project office.
- The archbishop of York also carried out visitations. Records of these 'metropolitan visitations' survive in the Borthwick Institute, York, for Carlisle diocese in 1693/4 and for Chester diocese for several visitations between 1571 and 1694.
- *Ecclesiastical court books.* Cases ('causes') brought before the church courts included disputes about tithes, clergy discipline etc, which are relevant to this section of a VCH article. The early eighteenth-century court books for Carlisle diocese are discussed in Mary Kinnear, 'The Correction Court in the Diocese of Carlisle, 1704-1756', *Church History*, 59 (1990), pp 191-206.
 - For the diocese of Carlisle: Consistory court records (1571-1990s) are held at CAS (Carlisle), DRC 3 and DRC 5
 - For the diocese of Chester: Consistory court books in Cheshire Record Office, EDC 1
 - Cases which went on appeal to the archbishop's court are in the Borthwick Institute, York, and are listed in W.J. Shiels, *Ecclesiastical Cause Papers at York: files transmitted on appeal 1500-1993* (Borthwick Texts and Calendars, 1983).

iv. Clergy records. Establishing the names of as many of the clergy who served the parish or chapelry as possible is a necessary first step. Once you have done so, try to discover something of their career and biographical details. Were they young men or old? Local or not? University-educated? What was their religious outlook? Did they go on to higher office? Biographical sources for Church of England clergy include:

- For the period between 1540 and 1835, the Clergy of the Church of England Database: <http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk>.
- For Carlisle diocese in late 18th and early 19th century, the biographical index in Platt, *The Diocese of Carlisle, 1814-1855*
- For the period since 1855 use Crockford's *Clerical Directory*, parts of which are available online at <http://www.crockford.org.uk>.

Remember also to check the registers of alumni of the ancient universities:

- *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, Part 1, to 1751, Part 2, 1752-1900, comp. J. Venn and J. A. Venn (Cambridge, 1927-1954)
- *Alumni Oxonienses*, 1500-1714; 1715-1886, ed. J. Foster (Oxford, 1888-92)

v. Nonconformist records

For general guidance on the records of non-Anglican denominations, see Michael Mullett, *Sources for the History of English Nonconformity 1660-1830* (British Records Association, Archives and the User No. 8, 1991).

The 1851 Religious Census and/or 19th-century trade directories should enable you to establish which nonconformist groups had places of worship in the township or parish you are researching. Other essential sources are:

- B. Nightingale, *The Ejected of 1662 in Cumberland and Westmorland*, 2 vols. (Manchester, 1911). This not only lists Puritan ministers who lost their livings at the Restoration but also much detail of the incumbents of each parish in the two counties in the 17th century.
- Nonconformist meeting house certificates from 1689, when nonconformist places of worship were required to be registered with Quarter Sessions or with the diocesan authorities.

For *Quakers*, start with:

- David M. Butler, *The Quaker Meeting Houses of Britain*, 2 vols (London, 1999) [The standard work, which (for Cumbria) updates and should be used in preference to his *Quaker Meeting Houses of the Lake Counties* (London, 1978)].
- *The First Publishers of Truth*, ed. Norman Penney (London, 1907). [Prints the text of return requested by London Yearly Meeting in 1720 about the origins of each Quaker meeting].

For *Roman Catholics* see:

- Registers of papist estates: useful for establishing Roman Catholic families [CAS, QRR/12/21]
- 'Compert Books' and churchwardens' presentments include lists of 'Papists' in the later 17th century.

- *Protestation Returns* of 1641-2, which include the names of Recusants who refused to take the oath of protestation. The Westmorland Protestation Returns are available in print: *Westmorland Protestation Returns 1641-2*, ed. M.A. Faraday, CWAAS Tract Series vol. XVII, 1971. Copies of the original Cumberland Protestation Returns are available through the VCH Cumbria project office.

The administrative records of many nonconformist denominations have been deposited with Cumbria Archive Service. The excellent CAS online Guide to Ecclesiastical Records takes you straight to the records of different denominations:

http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/archives/Online_catalogues/ecclesiastical.asp

3. Non-Christian Religions.

Their religious life and contribution to the parish (e.g. the construction of places of worship) should be discussed here. Any relations with Christian churches should be noted.

4. Institutional Appendices

This section is intended to provide brief, factual information about each place of worship in the parish/township under consideration.

Parish churches and parochial chapels

For such places of worship the account should contain (a) a summary of the institutional history (descent of the advowson, the income of the living, its tithes, property etc.) and (b) an account of the building's history.

The ***institutional history*** should deal with the ownership of the advowson, and the property of the church and rectory. If the advowson passed with the manor, this can be dealt with via a cross reference to the descent of the manor. You should note any instances when the lord of the manor did not exercise patronage (remember that the advowson might be held by a grantee for one turn/vacancy or for a term of years); when/if the patronage was divorced from ownership of the manor and the descent of the patronage to the present, if known.

The lands and tithes attached to the living, and the value of the living at particular dates should be summarised. Any unions of benefices, notably in the 20th century, should be noted (the background to them and their consequences will have been discussed under 'Religious Life'). Medieval chapels of ease that did not survive the Reformation are usually best noted briefly at the end of the institutional history of the parish church.

The account of **building history** should summarise the chronological development of the building from documentary and physical evidence, identifying the main building phases. The style of architecture should be described in summary and architects named where known. Is the building typical of other local churches or particular to that parish or patron? Furnishings and fittings should be covered here and major reordering of the interior noted (briefly, as their relation to changing liturgical practice will have been covered under 'Religious Life'). The shape, size and any extension of the churchyard should be mentioned here.

Questions you should consider include:

- Can different building periods be dated by changes in the fabric, building materials or styles?
- How does the arrangement of the church reflect what went on inside it, who paid for it or parts of it and who was buried in it?
- Have notable architectural contributions been made at particular periods?
- How far has the work of restorers changed the style and character of the building?
- Can the contribution of particular architects be related to other examples of their work?

Sources

For patronage, income and endowment

Property belonging to a living will be listed in *glebe terriers*, late 17th to early 19th centuries, preserved in parochial or diocesan archives.

Where a living was appropriated to a religious house, details will usually be found in the cartulary of the monastic house in question. Those in print for Cumbrian houses are:

- *The Coucher Book of Furness Abbey. Vol. II, Parts ii and iii*, ed. J. Brownbill, Chetham Society new series Vols. LXXVI and LXXVIII (1916, 1919) [these sections of the Furness cartulary contain most of the Cumbrian material]
- *The Cartulary of Byland Abbey*, ed. J.E. Burton, Surtees Society CCVIII (2004)

- *The Lanercost Cartulary (Cumbria County record Office MS DZ/1)*, ed. J.M. Todd, Surtees Society, CCIII; CWAAS Record Series XI (1997)
- *The Register and Records of Holm Cultram*, F. Grainger & W.G. Collingwood, CWAAS Record Series VII (1929)
- *Register of the Priory of St. Bees*, ed. J. Wilson, Surtees Society CXXVI (1915)
- *The Register of the Priory of Wetherhal*, ed. J.E. Prescott (London and Kendal, 1897).

For other Cumbrian houses, check the material in W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum: a history of the abbies and other monasteries....in England and Wales*, ed. J. Caley et al., 6 vols (London, 1846)

For the **church building**:

- M. Hyde and N. Pevsner, *Cumbria: Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness. The Buildings of England* (London, 2010).
- Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *Westmorland* (London, 1936). Now fully on-line on British History Online: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=1297>
- Visitation records (particularly those listed above, p. 8)
- *The Church Notes of Sir Stephen Glynn in Cumbria 1833-1872*, ed. L.A.S. Butler, CWAAS Extra Series Vol. XXXVI (Kendal, 2011)

Other places of worship

For each building, you should provide details of its date of opening, its affiliation(s), an indication of numbers (membership or attendance) and how that changed across time, and, if relevant, its date of closing. The building should be described briefly (noting whether it is like other buildings built by the same denominations or is particular to the area), major alterations should be noted, and you should state whether it is still standing. In the case of places of worship which have closed, their later use should also be mentioned.

AJLW

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