

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

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Parish/township: HELSINGTON

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# **HELSINGTON**

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

### **Manorial Government**

From the evidence of surviving records, the lords of Helsington held an annual court baron at Helsington Laithes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> By 1700, it was noted that the courts were only held 'from time to time',<sup>2</sup> but they continued at least into the 1740s.<sup>3</sup> According to Machell, the Stricklands themselves once held courts leet and baron at nearby Crosscrake chapel for their estates.<sup>4</sup> However, he noted that these courts had ended some eighteen years previously (c.1674), the Sizergh tenants having 'bought themselves free'.<sup>5</sup> Through divisions of the Barony of Kendal in the thirteenth century, the tenants of Holeslack were subject to the courts of the Richmond fee.<sup>6</sup>

### **Township Government**

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<sup>1</sup> Levens Hall Bagot MSS, Box 2/2. Referred to as 'Helsington Hall in 1680: Bagot MSS, Box 18M/2. According to a Book of General fine, 1678-80, Underbarrow was administered as a member of Helsington manor: Bagot MSS, Box 18M/2, 6.

<sup>2</sup> WDRIG/Box 12 (Netherwells Deeds), no.1; WDRIG/Box 12 (Berryholme Deeds), no.19.

<sup>3</sup> Levens Hall Bagot MSS, Box 2/3 (Call book 1741).

<sup>4</sup> *Antiquary on horseback*, 68.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> CRO (Carlisle), DLONS/L5/2/11/156 & 169. The Lowthers held their courts for the Richmond fee at Kendal Moot Hall in the eighteenth century: CRO (Kendal), WDNT/15.

In the nineteenth century, vestry meetings of rate payers, chaired by the vicar, met annually to elect two overseers of the poor and a guardian of the poor; two surveyors of highways; two chapel wardens, one representing the vicar and the other the township; and two township constables.<sup>7</sup> The post of assistant overseer was created in 1857.<sup>8</sup> Those appointed to these roles were largely tenant farmers, although figures such as Walter Charles Strickland and W. H. Wakefield also served (as overseer of the poor and chapel warden, respectively) in the 1850s and 1860s. William Stavert of Helsington Laithes, and later of Prizet, served as church warden from 1862 to 1905. Representatives of some of the larger landowners, including the lord of the manor, also attended meetings on occasion. In his will of 1739, John Jackson left a small parcel of land called 'Jack Parrock' specifically for the use of the parish clerk.<sup>9</sup> However, at the vestry meeting of 1864, it was noted that the clerk was to receive £2 per annum, as the precise location and value of 'Jack Parrock' could not be fixed upon.<sup>10</sup> Vestry meetings were held at the school until 1963, after which they transferred to the church room in Brigsteer.

Eighteenth-century Quarter Sessions records reveal several petitions against poor rate assessment and difficulties faced by the overseer in getting inhabitants to pay. In 1737/8, Thomas Strickland refused to pay, alleging that the assessment was irregular and the poor were neglected.<sup>11</sup> Helsington became part of Kendal Poor Law Union in 1836. In 1845, James Garnett, overseer of the poor, collected £62 17s 5d, out of £63 1s 5d due.<sup>12</sup> At that time, fifteen occupiers owed more than £1 each, the largest sum being £6 9s 9d paid by William Ellison, the tenant farmer of High Sizergh (270 acres; 109 ha).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> CRO (Kendal), WPR/27/5/1/1 (Vestry Book 1853-1979).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Lancashire Archives, WRW/K/R449a/57.

<sup>10</sup> CRO (Kendal), WPR/27/5/1/1.

<sup>11</sup> CRO (Kendal), WQ/SR/86/5.

<sup>12</sup> CRO (Kendal), WPR/27/7/2/2.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

A parish council was established in 1894 and had representatives on the board of school managers and Rural District Council. Meetings initially took place in the church room in Brigsteer, but from c.1929, the school became the preferred venue until c.1946.<sup>14</sup> The church room was again used until it was sold off in 1984.<sup>15</sup> The new village hall has been used for meetings since 2010. In the mid-twentieth century, key items on the agenda included housing for agricultural workers, the need of a Saturday bus service, and parish boundaries.<sup>16</sup> The latter issue was raised in 1947 and again in 1967, by which time South Westmorland Rural District Council felt that the ecclesiastical and civil parish boundaries should match. Twenty residences in Brigsteer were affected by the proposals for the whole village to be moved into Helsington, but all were in support of the plan.<sup>17</sup> The boundary changes took effect in 1970. Helsington community land trust was established in 2011 to maintain and improve public amenities and address the issue of social housing.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> CRO (Kendal), WPC/34/1.

<sup>15</sup> CRO (Kendal), WPR/27/6/1/3.

<sup>16</sup> CRO (Kendal), WPC/34/1; WPC/34/2.

<sup>17</sup> CRO (Kendal), WPC/34/2.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.hclt.org.uk/>