

Victoria County History of Cumbria Project: Work in Progress
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Parish/township: CASTERTON
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CASTERTON

Casterton is a rural township with two centres now joined into one straggling village. It lies on the east side of the Lune, which forms its western boundary. In shape long and thin, it lies east and west, covering an area of 4324 acres (1750 ha),¹ rising from the river to the largely uninhabited fells. Its northern boundary is with Barbon township. The western end of this boundary follows a small tributary of the Lune, except between Howerigg and Whelprigg, where for about 500 yards the township boundary leaves the beck side and makes an unexplained loop to the north. The southern boundary with Lancashire runs along the Ease Gill Beck, another tributary of the Lune. At the furthest point east stands the County Stone, where the boundaries of Yorkshire, Lancashire and Westmorland meet.

In the second half of the eighteenth century² a dispute arose with Barbon regarding the boundary between the two townships across the common land to the east, which ought to run, the petitioners said, 'in a direct or strait line from Little Agle to Great Agle' (Aygill) 'not by a curved one.' Ten years previously Thomas Huck had grazed cattle and cut rushes unimpeded, but now it was unsafe, as Barbon people chased the Casterton cattle with dogs. The dispute appears to have been resolved in favour of the Casterton tenants.³

¹ Bulmer *Dir. Westmd.*, 362

² CAS (Carlisle) DLons/L5/4/15/7. Petition re Casterton Common. Undated, but Thomas Huck farmed Gale Garth at least from 1764-1800 (Kirkby Lonsdale parish register).

³ The modern boundary follows Little Aygill straight down to the junction with Great Aygill.

Landscape

The land rises steadily from the Lune eastwards, Brownthwaite (421 m./1381 ft.) being the highest point. The underlying bedrock is almost entirely carboniferous limestone, soils becoming thinner and sourer as the land rises. Near the river are small areas of river alluvium, providing good meadowland for cattle grazing.⁴ The name Bull Pot indicates an area of numerous sink holes in the limestone.

Settlement

The mainly inhabited part of the township, that lying between the Fellfoot Road and the river, covers only a third of the total area. In the other two-thirds there have never been more than five settlements, at Fell Yeat, Smithy House,⁵ Gale Garth, Hellotscales, and Bull Pot. Only Fell Yeat, nearest the valley, was still farmed in 2013: Hellotscales was a ruin, Bull Pot a centre for potholers, Smithy House a holiday cottage, and Gale Garth a private dwelling.

The township lies directly across the river from Kirkby Lonsdale, to which it is connected by the Devil's Bridge.⁶ This probably had an influence on the development of the western half of the township as a residential area. Kirfit Hall, now partly ruinous, was originally a handsome L-shaped seventeenth century house, partly rebuilt in the eighteenth century.⁷ Within a short distance of each other there are three houses which can claim to be called Casterton Hall. The first, in High Casterton, was 'an old ruinous building' in 1692,⁸ but was mainly rebuilt in the nineteenth century. The second, in Low Casterton, more properly called Beckside, dates to the second half of the sixteenth century.⁹ The third, a

⁴ *Soil Survey of England and Wales* 1983

⁵ So named from a local family, not because there was ever a smithy there.

William Smithys occurs in a list of tenants of 1772. CAS (Carlisle)

D/LONS/L5/4//15/3

⁶ See Kirkby Lonsdale for a description. The Casterton end of the bridge has a peculiar feature: in a shallow recess in the wall stands a short pillar bearing the badly worn inscription 'Fear God, Honer the King, 1673', and a reference to the Constable of Lonsdale Ward at the time of its erection⁶ In 1692 it was said by Machell to have been 'lately set up with a dial upon it,' but in its present position in the lee of the wall it cannot have worked as a sundial.

⁷ *RCHME*, 66

⁸ *Antiquary*, 27

⁹ *RCHME*, 66

neat neo-classical house dated 1811, probably designed by John Webb,¹⁰ was built above the river by the Carus Wilson family, who at that time also owned the second.¹¹ Both Kirfit Hall and the third Casterton Hall were set in considerable amenity areas, landscaped and wooded, and making the most of their proximity to a picturesque stretch of the river Lune.

Communications

Two roads and a green track run roughly parallel north and south through the township. Furthest east is the Fellfoot Road, a track which marks the edge of cultivated or good grazing land made up of fairly small fields outlined by stone walls. Since 1996 this minor track has been rendered noteworthy by an installation of Andy Goldsworthy consisting of sixteen sheepfolds behind the walls of the track, each with a large boulder in it. The middle road is partly on the track of the Roman road from Chester to Carlisle, believed to have been constructed under Agricola about AD 79.¹² The name of Casterton indicates 'farmstead near a fortification'. 'Ceaster' or 'caster' usually denotes a Roman settlement, but no trace of a fort or marching camp have been found.¹³ There is however a stone circle and mound east of the Roman road¹⁴ and it may be that this was the origin of the name. There are traces of Viking occupation in field names,¹⁵ and a silver brooch found in the nineteenth century.¹⁶

The Roman road passes only two dwellings, and its use has long been superseded by the third road, the Settle to Sedbergh turnpike, now the A683, nearest the Lune and passing through Low Casterton.¹⁷ Several lanes link these three and lead to isolated farms, that climbing the fell to the tenement of Bull Pot

¹⁰ J.M.Robinson *Architecture of Northern England* (London) 1986

¹¹ Claire Wildsmith 'Casterton Hall' (Kirkby Lonsdale & District Newsletter, Autumn 2010). It is now divided into five dwellings.

¹² J.M.Ewbank 'A Cross-section of the Roman road in Casterton' *CW2 LX* 28-31

¹³ PNW, I, 27

¹⁴ *RCHME (Westmorland)*, 66-7

¹⁵ As 'Hellotscales' indicating a summer shieling.

¹⁶ B.J.N.Edwards *Vikings in NorthWest England* (Lancaster 1998) p. 32. The brooch is now in the Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

¹⁷ Low Casterton is now always referred to simply as 'Casterton' but for clarity the old name has been retained throughout this article. 'Casterton' has been used to refer to the whole township.

continuing as a green track northwards into Barbondale and onwards to the Dent valley in Yorkshire.

Casterton's main line of communication is, and has been since at least the late eighteenth century, the road now called the A683, crossing the township: a tollhouse cottage stands halfway between the Devil's Bridge and Low Casterton village.¹⁸ The branch railway line between Clapham in Yorkshire and Tebay, opened in 1861 and closed in 1954, ran through Casterton. On the original plan it passed through the middle of the village, just to the east of the church, but this was altered, although the new plan necessitated a cutting. 'The friends of the' [Clergy Daughters] 'School will be glad to hear that the apprehended annoyance of a Railroad through the School premises is removed by the adoption of another line, behind the School, in all respects preferable.'¹⁹ No station was built within the township: the people of Kirkby Lonsdale petitioned against the proposal, as prospective passengers would have had the inconvenience and expense of passing through the tollgates, then still operative.²⁰ Casterton continued to be poorly served by public transport: in 2013 one bus a week, on Thursday, Kirkby Lonsdale's market day, passed through on its route from Sedbergh and returned two hours later.

Population and social character

The 1674 Hearth Tax named six settlements in Casterton as well as nineteen houses in (Low) Casterton and fourteen in Chapel Houses which included High Casterton, seven were listed under Longthwaite, on the back road to Barbon, six at Fellgate on the Bullpot road, two at Elm Tree, now a single farm between Low and High Casterton, and two at Gorah, the modern Gowrey, whose farmhouse is now just over the Lancashire border.²¹ In terms of prosperity reckoned by numbers of hearths it was a very average country township: out of fifty dwellings five had three hearths, two had four and two five, these latter being identifiable as the original manor house and Edward Wilson's new house at Beckside. From the

¹⁸ Precise date of building unknown. The Sedbergh Turnpike Trust began building roads in 1762.

¹⁹ CAS (Kendal) WDS/38

²⁰ CAS (Kendal) WDY/139. The opinion of Casterton residents is not recorded.

²¹ C.Phillips, C. Ferguson, A. Wareham Westmorland Hearth Tax (London and Kendal 2008) 181-2

Hearth Tax the population may be reckoned as 200. In 1773 there were 46 households, giving much the same population.²² The 1801 census shows an unexplained rise to 266; the further very sharp rise to 623 in 1841 was due to the establishment of two boarding schools.²³ Numbers remained at about this level for the rest of the nineteenth century. The twentieth century saw a decline, the lowest figure of 175 being in 1971, probably during a school holiday. The 1991 figure was 250.

The nineteenth century growth of Low Casterton was shaped by the establishment of the schools, which expanded further until they constituted more than half of the village, but the proximity of Kirkby Lonsdale also introduced a suburban flavour. The sale in 1899 of the Lunefield estate in Kirkby Lonsdale included fourteen sites for houses in Casterton,²⁴ which were subsequently all built and others added. Early twentieth century housing expansion included the breaking up of Casterton Hall into five dwellings, and other small housing developments. The result is a village without any obvious centre, although to the inhabitants there is more community feeling than might be assumed from outside appearance, and from the dominating presence of the school.

LANDOWNERSHIP

Before the conquest Casterton was part of the lands of Earl Tosti, comprising three carucates.²⁵ At one time Casterton and Hutton Roof, though separated by the river, were linked as one manor. By the eighteenth century they had long been separated,²⁶ although some element of twinning remained as late as 1778, one of the Kirkby Lonsdale churchwardens still representing both townships.²⁷

²² CRO (Kendal) WQ/R/LT 1773 (Lonsdale Ward) Land Tax Return 1773

²³ See 'Social History'.

²⁴ Sale catalogue, 1899. Development was not immediate. The 1914 OS map shows seven developed plots.

²⁵ Domesday Book: A Complete Translation (London 2003), 796. As commonly reckoned this would amount to about 550 modern acres, or about one-eighth of the township's present area.

²⁶ N & B, I, 249

²⁷ Butler Cumbria Parishes, 132

There is no direct evidence of the descent of Casterton after the statement in Domesday Book, but in 1202 a release of land associated the township with estates in Kaber and Warcop, villages near Brough under Stainmore.²⁸ Further evidence of a link is provided by the unusual dedication to St. Columba, shared by the church at Warcop and the chapel in Casterton. In 1202 Eleanor, widow of Robert de Kabergh, held land in Casterton as part of her dower and passed it to her stepson, Hugh de Kabergh.²⁹ His granddaughter Matilda, wife of Nicholas de Buelles, in 1222 granted a moiety of the manor to Alice, daughter of Gilbert, the current tenant of the holding. Future transactions indicate that Alice was the sister of William de Lancaster III and wife of William de Lindsay, and it would seem that she and her brother were related to the de Kabergh line.³⁰ At a later date Hugh de Kabergh and another holder of land in Casterton, John Gernet, released their holdings under an action of mort d'ancestor to William de Lancaster, who settled them on his sister and brother-in-law. In 1247 another holding in Casterton passed from the de Kabergh family to William de Lindsay, probably concentrating the whole manor in his hands.³¹ It was however still in one way a divided holding. The inquisition post mortem of William de Lindsay's son Walter in 1272 shows that whereas he held most of his Casterton possessions of the barony of Kendale of the king in chief by knight's service, a smaller part of the holding, about a quarter of the vill, was held of Sir Peter de Brus by a yearly service of twelve pence.³² Sir Peter de Brus was married to Helewise, another sister of William de Lancaster, and therefore uncle by marriage to Walter de Lindsay.³³ Although Casterton was only one among many holdings of the de Lindsays, rendering no more than 60s in annual rent,³⁴ it would seem to have been a place of some importance. On October 2, 1292, Edward I's army rested there on its way to Appleby, Carlisle and ultimately Berwick.³⁵

²⁸ *Rec. Kend.* II, 328

²⁹ *Rec. Kend.* II, 328

³⁰ *Rec. Kend.* II, 326

³¹ *Rec. Kend.* II, 328

³² *Rec. Kend.* II, 331

³³ *Rec. Kend.* II, 326

³⁴ *Lancashire Inquests, Extents and Feudal Aids Pt. I* ed. W. Farrer, Record Society vol. 48 (1903), 235

³⁵ B.P.Hindle 'Medieval Roads in the Diocese of Carlisle' *CW2 lxxvii* (1977, 83-95

At the beginning of the fourteenth century it descended to Walter de Lindsay's granddaughter Christiana, wife of Ingram de Gynes,³⁶ but after Christiana's death in 1334 and the death of her son, Robert de Gynes, a childless priest, ten years later, it escheated to the crown.

At the end of the fourteenth century Robert de Bellingham held the manor from Robert de Vere, a favourite of Richard II given the new title of duke of Ireland by the king in 1386. Bellinghams continued to head the list of tenants until the mid-sixteenth century, when a Bellingham daughter, Katherine, married Richard Assheton of Middleton in Lancashire.³⁷ It descended by the marriage of Elizabeth, daughter of Katherine Assheton, to the Davenport family of Bromhall in Cheshire who sold it in 1638 back into the Bellingham family of Levens.³⁸ Elizabeth, daughter and coheir of Sir Henry Bellingham of Levens, married about 1650 John Lowther of Lowther,³⁹ and so it came into that family, and the manor house in Casterton, no longer needed, was abandoned. This house in High Casterton, now called the Old Manor, is almost entirely of the nineteenth century, although there are some seventeenth century walls in the north-west block,⁴⁰ as well as the remains of a large arched hearth. It was noted by Machell in 1692 as 'an old ruinous building now only fit to contain a farmer'⁴¹ and was still listed as a farm well into the twentieth century,⁴² reverting, by the beginning of the twenty-first, to private use as two houses.

With regard to the larger part of the township, Charles II gave the Richmond and Marquis Fees to his queen, Catherine of Braganza, and in 1669 she granted a 96-year lease to Edward Wilson of Park House in Burrow (later of Nether Levens), much of whose estate stretched into Casterton,⁴³ on the very peculiar terms that

³⁶ Rec. Kend. II, 330

³⁷ CRO (Carlisle) Court Roll 1560. Lonsdale papers, Kendal Barony, n. 3

³⁸ Rec. Kend. II, 334

³⁹ *Visitations of Cumberland and Westmorland* ed. J. Foster (Carlisle and Kendal, 1890) 9, 85

⁴⁰ *RCHME*, 66

⁴¹ *Antiquary*, 27

⁴² PRO MAF 32/194

⁴³ H.P. Brown *Edward Wilson of Nether Levens (1557-1653) and his kin* (Kendal 1930) Table 1

the lease depended on Edward's three sons living until the end of that period.⁴⁴ This lease was the renewal of one acquired by Edward during the interregnum, and whatever the precise meaning of the terms when the lease was granted, by 1705, when he wrote his will, he had fully acquired the estate, which with other land he left to his children by his second wife.⁴⁵

The house in Low Casterton, originally called Beckside Hall, now sometimes confusingly known as the Old Manor House, was built for Roger Wilson, Edward's son. The house has retained many original features, windows with three and four transomed lights, chimney stacks with twin shafts set diagonally.⁴⁶ The elaborately carved overmantel and fireplace surrounds in the main room, and a cupboard in the same room, are older than the house,⁴⁷ and presumably were imported features.⁴⁸

Sir Daniel Fleming's listing of 1695 ('Wee have no person above ye degree of a yeoman nor no p'son of £50 lands or £600 personal Estate within our township.'⁴⁹) seems to contradict the investment in the house by Edward Wilson for his descendants, but Fleming was writing during what may have been an interregnum in the family. Roger Wilson, the first inheritor, died in 1690 at the age of 27 leaving a widow four months pregnant with their third child. It seems likely that she would have moved back to her own family until the elder son, another Roger, came of age in 1708.⁵⁰ Of the second Roger's six children only two daughters married. The elder, Ann, married Rev. Marwood Place, Vicar of Kirkby Lonsdale, but had no children. The younger, Elizabeth, married William

⁴⁴ N & B I, 249-50. As the eldest son would have been aged 114 at the expiry date, this may have been just a legal fiction to terminate a lease.

⁴⁵ *Wilson of Nether Levens*, 63

⁴⁶ RCHME 66

⁴⁷ RCHME 66 and Plate 58

⁴⁸ The cupboard is dated 1613 and initialled W on the left, H above A on the right. The line from Edward Wilson, of Nether Levens (1557-1653) who was childless, was through his stepdaughter Agnes Richardson, who married Henry Fisher. The family name reverted to Wilson with their daughter, who married Thomas Wilson. The cupboard may be marked W for Wilson, H and A for Henry and Agnes. See *Wilson of Nether Levens Table I*

⁴⁹ CRO (Kendal) WD/Ry/5/2890 (HMC)

⁵⁰ *Wilson of Nether Levens Table 1*. She was Jane Foxcroft of Whittington in Lancashire.

Carus and had a son, also William, who inherited from his aunt Mrs. Place on her death in 1790, with the proviso that he should add the name Wilson to Carus. Apparently the first of the family to move into public life, he became a J.P. and Deputy Lieutenant for Westmorland, and briefly (1821-1827) represented Cocker-mouth at Westminster. His son, of the same name, was the founder of the Casterton schools. The elder Carus Wilson built the more modern and prestigious Casterton Hall in 1811,⁵¹ leaving the older house to be used by his land agent.⁵² The new house, described as a ‘stately mansion... standing upon an eminence and surrounded by fine plantations’,⁵³ was probably designed by John Webb of Staffordshire, and has been described as ‘a perfect example of its type, a neat neo-Classical house of smooth ashlar stone...Much of its effect derives from the geometrical contrast between the overall rectangular form and semi-circular features, a segmental bow on one front and a Tuscan porch on the entrance front.’⁵⁴ There is a fine hanging staircase circling the entrance hall. A guide book of 1820 recommends that travellers to the Lakes, passing through Kirkby Lonsdale, should take the time when visiting the church, to admire the view from the churchyard from which Casterton Hall is ‘a prominent feature in the charming scene.’⁵⁵

Kirfitt Hall is something of an enigma. In 1638 William Moore of Casterton and his son John sold to Roger Moore of Middleton for £50 ‘a certain close called Kirkfitt and the ancient messuage’.⁵⁶ There is no information as to who built it originally or later undertook various additions and reconstructions, on an L-shaped plan with the addition of a four-storey staircase tower in the late

⁵¹ J.M.Robinson, ‘Like the Countenance of a Madonna: Houses of the Lune Valley’ *Country Life*, 28 Jan.1982, 248-50

⁵² Mannex, *Directory* (1851), 360 Bulmer, *Dir. Westmd.*(1906), 364

⁵³ Mannex, *Directory* (1851) 351

⁵⁴ J.M.Robinson, ‘Like the countenance of a Madonna’

⁵⁵ J.Otley, *A Concise Description of the English Lakes and adjacent Mountains* (Keswick 1820)

⁵⁶ CRO (Kendal) WD/CW Kirfitt Hall deeds 1638-1795. As the text indicates, it was much older than that. Local tradition sets it back at least to the early sixteenth century, which may well be true, unlike the accompanying suggestion that Henry VIII lodged there while courting Katharine Parr at Kendal Castle.

seventeenth century and a further wing in the eighteenth.⁵⁷ The track which leads to it, little more than a field path, hardly noticeable as a turning off the A685, continues past the house, along the river and into Low Casterton by the old mill site and the seventeenth-century Becksid Hall. It is probable that this was the original road towards Sedbergh, the present road which enters Low Casterton at the old forge, with its toll house half way between the bridge and the village, being largely a product of the turnpike undertaken after 1762.

Kirfitt Hall was clearly built as a gentry house, but the various owners rarely seem to have lived in it. In 1682 it was owned by Edward Wilson of Dallam Tower.⁵⁸ In 1726 Hugh Ashton who married Susannah, elder daughter of Thomas Godsolve of Rigmaden⁵⁹ bought it from his father-in-law. The young couple lived there until her death in 1731, and then the second Godsolve daughter Margaret and her husband Thomas Mawdesley lived there until at least 1735.⁶⁰ Machell did not mention it,⁶¹ nor did Nicolson and Burn,⁶² and it may quite soon have been downgraded to a tenant farm. From 1740 to 1800 the parish register shows entries under eight different surnames, none of which has been traced as having any social importance. It was certainly a farm in 1829,⁶³ and has remained so.

⁵⁷ *RCHME* (Westmorland), 66. The east end and staircase tower are largely ruinous.

⁵⁸ Kirfitt Hall deeds

⁵⁹ See under 'Mansergh'

⁶⁰ CRO (Kendal) Kirkby Lonsdale Parish Register

⁶¹ Ewbank ed. *Antiquary*

⁶² N & B

⁶³ Parson & White *Dir. C. & W.*, 696

By 1773 considerable holdings in Casterton belonged to people living outside the township - Sir James Lowther of Lowther was the second largest landowner, Joseph Gibson and James Harrison of Barbon the third and fifth respectively.⁶⁴ The largest holding in that year (accounting for almost one-third of the township's total Land Tax assessment) was the Wilson estate, now in the name of the Rev. Marwood Place, Vicar of Kirkby Lonsdale. He and his wife may have lived at Beckside Hall until 1783, when Place rebuilt the Kirkby Lonsdale Vicarage.⁶⁵

One more large house is Casterton Grange, just to the north of Low Casterton. It was built in 1848 on Wilson family land by the Reverend David Barclay-Bevan, who married the younger William Carus-Wilson's daughter, although it is doubtful if they ever lived there.⁶⁶ They were married at Casterton in 1837, and from 1843 to 1857 he was Rector of Burton Latimer in Northamptonshire. The architect was Ewan Christian, a devout evangelical in his personal beliefs, a cast of mind which showed itself in the many churches for which he was responsible,⁶⁷ and was no doubt the reason for his connection with Carus-Wilson's family. Christian was much influenced by Pugin, and this house, designed round a toplit central staircase, has features strongly reminiscent of Pugin's own house in Ramsgate. It has had many owners, and considerable periods of standing empty, but since 2003 has been sensitively restored according to the original plan.⁶⁸

By 1816 2200 acres (890 ha.) were enclosed from a total of 4300 (1740 ha.). Joseph Gibson of Whelprigg⁶⁹ acquired 1500 acres (607 ha.) the greatest part of it by sale from the commissioners, notably the Brownthwaite area of moorland for shooting. At this date the Carus-Wilsons were allotted 400 acres (162 ha.), the Lonsdale estates 220 acres (90 ha.) , and James Harrison 88 acres (35 ha.). Apart

⁶⁴ CRO (Kendal) WQ/R/LT (Lonsdale Ward) 1773 Land Tax Return

⁶⁵ *'The Vicars of Kirkby Lonsdale'*, 189

⁶⁶ K. Humphris 'Casterton Grange', *Kirkby Lonsdale & District Civic Society Newsletter*, Winter edition 2012-3

⁶⁷ *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford) 2004, Vol.II, 519-20

⁶⁸ Humphris 'Casterton Grange'

⁶⁹ See Barbon

from these, the allocations were very small, many of them with only the right of turbary, not grazing.⁷⁰

By 1910 the Carus-Wilson family, by then of Faversham in Kent, had retained only 95 acres (38 ha,) and some shooting rights. The Underley estate of Kirkby Lonsdale had over 1400 acres (567 ha.).⁷¹ The Lonsdale estate kept the lordship of the manor until 1979, when it was sold, probably to an American buyer, the mineral rights being retained.⁷²

ECONOMIC HISTORY

In early times Casterton seems to have consisted almost entirely of open countryside, a landscape very suitable for hare coursing.⁷³ In 1770 only one patch of woodland is shown on the map, on the north side of the old hall in Low Casterton,⁷⁴. Quite extensive stretches of amenity woodland, mostly near the river, came with the building of larger country houses, particularly Kirfitt Hall, Casterton Hall and the Grange.

The earliest evidence of economic activity in Casterton is in the *inquisition post mortem* of William de Lindsay in 1271, which records the rent of a mill and a mill dam worth yearly 79s.⁷⁵ His great-granddaughter Christiana de Gynes possessed at her death in 1334 a water corn mill worth £3 6s. 8d. within the manor.⁷⁶ In 1454 a fulling mill which had been formerly let for 6s. 8d. per annum was in the lord's

⁷⁰ CRO (Kendal) WQR/I /14 Casterton Enclosure Award 1816

⁷¹ CRO (Kendal) WT/DV/2/33 Domesday 1910. No evidence has been found as to the exact date of purchase.

⁷² Info. from the Lonsdale Estate Office, Lowther, 2011

⁷³ *The Diary of Thomas Fenwick Esq. of Burrow Hall, Lancashire, and Nunriding, Northumberland, 1774 to 1794* ed. Jennifer S. Holt (List and Index Society Special Series Vol. 47) I, 213-5. In November 1782, for instance, Fenwick's hounds hunted hares in Casterton on at least three occasions.

⁷⁴ *Thomas Jefferys' Historic Map of Westmorland 1770* (CWAAS Record Series Vol. XIV) 2001

⁷⁵ *Lancashire Inquests, Extents and Feudal Aids A.D.1205-1307* ed. Wm. Farrer (The Record Society 1903), 237

⁷⁶ *Rec. Kend.* II, 330

hand, unoccupied.⁷⁷ In 1637 George Stockdall died possessed of ‘one water grain mill in Casterton’.⁷⁸ These, presumably successive uses of the same site, must have been powered by the Casterton Beck, which runs through Low Casterton and is the only watercourse of any size within the township.⁷⁹

The seam of coal high on the Brownthwaite Moor was noted as having been worked in the reign of Charles I.⁸⁰ William Garnett’s inventory of 1673⁸¹ included ‘a collier grindstone and tools’ and the workings were noted again in 1692.⁸² In 1732 the colliery, in possession of Rowland Tatham, was rented to James Stainbank together with Casterton Fell Farm;⁸³ the rent of £5 for the colliery against £65 for the farm suggests a very minor industrial operation, a suggestion supported by an indictment of 1735 against Robert Laws who ‘did break out and demolish several pieces of timber supporting the workings of several going coalpits called Casterton coalpits then in the management of William Willan causing earth to fall in and render them useless,’ for which he was fined one shilling.⁸⁴ Later the workings were extended and made much more profitable. Recommendations for six different applicants in 1769 have been preserved, the annual rent then being £30.⁸⁵ Traces of these numerous small surface pits, with their spoilheaps, can still be found.⁸⁶ In 1830 they were owned by the Earl of Lonsdale and rented to James Harrison, who paid Land Tax of 3s. 6d.,⁸⁷ but by mid-century, the operation would appear to have died altogether: a reference in 1851 to working in the time of Charles I is phrased to indicate something in the

⁷⁷ Rec. Kend. II, 332

⁷⁸ Rec. Kend. II, 338

⁷⁹ Although no direct reference to a mill has been found after 1637, the beck is named ‘Mill Gill’ on 1st ed. OS map. (1858) and a neighbouring field is called ‘Mill Field’.

⁸⁰ N & B, I, 250

⁸¹ CRO (Preston) WCW/L

⁸² *Antiquary*, 27. Machell reported the workings, but did not visit them.

⁸³ CAS (Carlisle) D/LONS/L/5/4/15/3

⁸⁴ CRO (Kendal) WQ/SR Quarter Sessions Rolls 1729-1804

⁸⁵ CAS/Carlisle D/LONS/L/5/4/15/3. One pair of applicants was recommended on the grounds that ‘They are persons who were friends and well wishers to our party in the last Election.’

⁸⁶ Inf. M. Kingsbury, Kirkby Lonsdale and District Civic Society.

⁸⁷ CRO (Kendal) WQ/R/LT 1830 (Lonsdale Ward) Land Tax Return 1830

past.⁸⁸ The coal was of poor quality, and seems to have been used mainly if not entirely for burning lime. The three kilns which remain nearby were established at the time of enclosure, and those who were awarded land under the enclosure act were given the right to burn lime.⁸⁹ This was only the renewal of a much older activity: in 1666 William Garnett was admitted tenant of a kiln for a rent of twopence, and a year later Edward Mansergh was admitted tenant of the north end of a kiln for a rent of one penny.⁹⁰ Sites of nine other limekilns have been identified within Casterton, seven of them along the old road which follows the line of the Roman road.⁹¹

Apart from these small industries, Casterton was entirely a farming district, the land towards the river in particular producing good grazing for cattle. A study of inventories⁹² shows considerable fluctuation in size of holding and prosperity of individuals, but almost without exception the value of a farm, small or large, depended on the number of cattle it would feed. Horses seem to have been little valued except as a means of locomotion: there are very few examples of local breeding. Sheep were invariably kept (as they had need to be at a time when wool was the basis of all country clothing), but in small numbers except in one or two cases of high country farms (Thomas Fawcett of Gailgarth in 1576 had a flock of almost 200, Roger Wilson in 1690 had 250 at Fellhouses). Few individuals could afford to keep their own oxen for ploughing, and must have rented them from richer neighbours such as Edmund Witton, who in 1679 had six oxen among his 28 cattle, worth in all £63. The other necessity was a bull, and none has been found privately owned, but William Tatham's will in 1606 indicates how this problem could be solved. He left money to buy a bull which was to be kept by his brother John, 'and to kepe the said bull for ever, if the towne will helpe to kepe him in the somer, if they will not, then to have none of him.'

⁸⁸ Mannex 1851, 353

⁸⁹ Inf. David Johnson

⁹⁰ CRO (Kendal) WDX 1352 Transcript of Casterton Manor Book 1662-1705

⁹¹ Inf. David Johnson

⁹² CRO (Preston) WRW/L. An analysis of 35 inventories from 1578-1694

In 1829 23 farmers were listed,⁹³ 21 in 1851,⁹⁴ 24 in 1906.⁹⁵ But if the number of farms remained constant, the methods of working altered. In 1851, there were sixteen cottagers in the township labelled as agricultural labourers.⁹⁶ In 1891 there were only two. This change may have been due to the introduction of peripatetic Irish labourers during the busy summer months.

In 1943 there were sixteen farms in the township, only two owner-occupied.⁹⁷ The Underley estate owned five, and Whelprigg three. By the end of four years of war, farms had been encouraged towards crop growing, and most of them reported at least a small acreage of oats, kale, potatoes, barley, even 'trying a little wheat'. Some were more efficient than others, and the Casterton inspector from time to time expressed his frustration ('Born lazy'. 'incompetent', 'hopeless'). There were a number of smallholdings under twenty acres in extent, many owned by people living in Kirkby Lonsdale just across the Lune. The farms were still small, almost all under 100 acres, and unlike most neighbouring townships, nearly all of them kept commercial numbers of poultry, up to 300 hens.⁹⁸ Whether this was the result of wartime encouragement is not clear. Ten farms are noted as having no electricity, five as having no water, two others with water only to the house. Kirfitt Hall, Cragg House and the township's Bellgate had petrol engines, presumably stationary ones rather than vehicles. No tractors or mechanised vehicles are mentioned.

In 2013 only four working farms remained - Kirfitt Hall, Bee Nest, Fell Yeat, and Old Manor Farm. These mainly provided grazing for sheep, but Bee Nest and Fell Yeat also had dairy herds.⁹⁹

By that time also Casterton Hall had been broken up into five dwellings, and there were other small housing developments. Casterton School, absorbing two

⁹³ Parson & White *Dir. C & W*, 696

⁹⁴ Mannex *Directory*, 1851, 360

⁹⁵ Bulmer *Directory 1906*, 364

⁹⁶ 1851 Census returns (Kendal Public Library)

⁹⁷ National Archives MAF 32/198/76

⁹⁸ National Archives MAF 32/198/76

⁹⁹ Local inf. - Mrs B. Magee.

other schools on its way,¹⁰⁰ had expanded its buildings considerably during the twentieth century, constituting more than half of Low Casterton.

An inn at Low Casterton was called at least since 1829 the ‘George and Dragon’,¹⁰¹ more recently the ‘Pheasant’. Very close to the site of the blacksmith’s forge, it may well have been established when the road was turnpiked; no earlier mention of an innkeeper has been found. There was a forge from at least the seventeenth century, Thomas Ustonson’s inventory of 1683 valuing his ‘smeddy tooles’ at £1 1s.6d.¹⁰² It was mentioned again a hundred years later,¹⁰³ probably always on the same site in Low Casterton,¹⁰⁴ to be replaced in 1973 by a garage and motor repair shop which in 2013 employed nine people.¹⁰⁵ Other opportunities for employment arose in the twentieth century from the growth of tourism. At the end of the Devil’s Bridge is a considerable parking space, well-known as a gathering place for motor-cyclists. A tea-bar van was established here in 1955 and in 2013 continued in the same family ownership, with six employees.¹⁰⁶ On the hillside between the bridge and Chapelhouses is Woodclose Park, a family-run caravan park on about fifteen well-landscaped acres. It started modestly in the early 1960s but by 2013 was licensed for 121 static and mobile holiday homes, with two full-time and two part-time employees.¹⁰⁷

SOCIAL HISTORY

Until the 1830’s Casterton’s social make-up differed little from that of other local country townships. The majority of the population consisted of small farmers, mostly in isolated dwellings. There was no church and no proper village. The old manor house stood isolated and downgraded to a farm, and the inn was probably a recent establishment after the road was turnpiked.

¹⁰⁰ See ‘Social History’

¹⁰¹ Parson and White *Dir. C. & W.* 696

¹⁰² CRO (Preston) WRW/L

¹⁰³ *Diary of Thomas Fenwick* Vol. I, 142. On the 28th July, 1781, Fenwick ‘paid Harry Roberts, blacksmith at Casterton, 10s. for grate etc.’

¹⁰⁴ The 1829 and 1851 Directories specifically cite Low Casterton

¹⁰⁵ Local inf.

¹⁰⁶ Local inf.

¹⁰⁷ Inf. M.McAvoy, manager

Change came with the establishment of the school which William Wilson Carus-Wilson founded as the Clergy Daughters' School in Cowan Bridge, Lancashire, in 1823,¹⁰⁸ and ten years later moved with 90 pupils to custom-built premises at Casterton, providing a higher and more healthy site, which was moreover on his own family estate.¹⁰⁹ It is to Carus-Wilson's credit that at a time when girls' education had barely been considered, both his foundations were for girls. Even before the Clergy Daughters' School, about 1820 he had started the Servants' School, to instruct girls of a lower social class in basic household skills and a carefully restricted amount of general education.¹¹⁰ This institution was also moved to Casterton, to a house built for the purpose facing the Clergy Daughters' building from the opposite side of the beck which runs through the village. In the 1880s, the original objectives being out of date, it was refounded as the Endowed Church School, a boarding school for girls, but by 1921 the numbers being too low for viability, it was fused with its neighbour and its premises renamed Bronte House.¹¹¹

The Casterton village school also owed its origins to Carus-Wilson, who in 1841 sold a plot of land between the two boarding schools to the church authorities of Casterton,¹¹² and built a single-roomed school, 36 feet by 14, with a second room added in 1913.¹¹³ Its fortunes were varied. In 1917 'The work, tone and general management of the school reflect great credit upon the mistress'.¹¹⁴ The numbers rarely rose above twenty. In 1939 there were only thirteen pupils, a number augmented by ten evacuees and a teacher from Newcastle. At different times the question was raised as to whether it would be better to send some of the children, either the boys, or the older children, into Kirkby Lonsdale, a suggestion always defeated by the dangerous state of the road between the village and Devil's

¹⁰⁸ Famous for the brief attendance of the four Bronte sisters.

¹⁰⁹ See 'Landownership'

¹¹⁰ 'It is deemed a vital point to guard against the evils of over-education.' *Report on the Servants' School*, 1846. (Casterton School Library)

¹¹¹ M. Williams *Notes on the Clergy Daughters' School, Casterton* (Beverley 1935). Miss Williams was headmistress 1892-1921, and could call on the personal recollections of women who had been at the school since its inception.

¹¹² CRO (Kendal) WDS/40/13

¹¹³ CRO (Kendal) WDS/40/6 *Casterton School Managers' Minute Book 1903-1965*

¹¹⁴ CRO (Kendal) WDS/0/6 *Diocesan Inspector's Report*

Bridge. By 1951 it was officially to be closed, and in 1972 this was finally carried out, and transport provided to Kirkby Lonsdale.¹¹⁵ The building was acquired by Casterton School as part of its junior department.¹¹⁶

The antagonistic portrait of Carus-Wilson painted in 'Jane Eyre' and later by Mrs. Gaskell in her 'Life of Charlotte Bronte' was contradicted by Emma Jane Worboise, also a pupil of the school. Her novel 'Thornycroft Hall' provides a contrasting picture to that in 'Jane Eyre'. Carus-Wilson was clearly a character to provoke strong feelings: there is no doubt that he had a great interest in children, and the most sympathetic picture of him is that of his entertaining children who were left at school during the holidays (many of the early pupils were admitted through the Church Missionary Society and their parents were therefore scattered world-wide) at his seaside house in Silverdale, Lancashire, arranging a steamer trip on Windermere, or a picnic on the fells.¹¹⁷

In 1840 the school was unexpectedly visited by Queen Adelaide, who, on her way to the lakes had noticed the uniformed children lining the road by Kirkby Lonsdale Bridge. In spite of the shortness of time available, a suitable welcome was organised. 'Over a tasty wreath at the entrance of the Clergy School, "Long Live Queen Adelaide!" appeared in letters of gold. The passage from the front door to the school-room was covered with scarlet cloth, and a handsome arm chair, adorned with flowers, was placed for the Queen.'¹¹⁸

Apart from this event, the 1840s and 1850s were a time of great difficulty for the school, marked by constant changes of staff and the failing health of its founder. In 1840 it suffered an outbreak of typhus, which resulted in two deaths at the Clergy Daughters' and one at the Servants' School.¹¹⁹ The years 1844-8 saw a succession of four Lady Superintendents as well as the publication of 'Jane Eyre'

¹¹⁵ CRO (Kendal) WDS/40/6 *Casterton School Managers' Minute Book 1966-1972*

¹¹⁶ Local inf.

¹¹⁷ The novel is available in full on line. Chapter 14 ('Casterton') provides this enthusiastic portrait of Carus-Wilson by one who spent seven years as a pupil.

¹¹⁸ *The Queen Dowager's Visit to Kirkby Lonsdale, July 23, 1840* (Kirkby Lonsdale 1840). The school has preserved the 'Queen's chair'.

¹¹⁹ M. Williams *Notes* 35-6

in 1847. Carus-Wilson retired to the south of England and tried to ensure continuity in school and parish by getting his son-in-law, the Rev. Henry Shephard, an equally convinced Evangelical, appointed to the curacy, and handing over the school to a committee of churchmen, but the two failed to work together.¹²⁰ In the early 1850s ‘a large number of girls had to be expelled. The numbers went down to 67, there were difficulties among the Trustees.’¹²¹ In 1856 Dorothy Beale, later founder of Cheltenham Ladies’ College, was appointed but left after a year. Shephard brought an accusation of Tractarianism against the school, which failed because it appeared to have no grounds except that Miss Beale had a crucifix hanging on her bedroom wall. She commented adversely on the extreme restriction and monotony of the pupils’ lives, and a system which had punishments but no prizes. She also seems to have been the first to doubt whether it was a good idea that all the pupils had the same clerical background.¹²² 1857 saw the publication of Mrs. Gaskell’s ‘Life of Charlotte Bronte’, with its damaging picture of life at the school.¹²³

The 1860s however marked a turning point. The coming of the railway in 1861, with its rapid connections all over the country at a much cheaper rate than the stage coaches, widened the catchment. Two lengthy vicariates, of the Rev. Frank Armitage (1865-1889) and the Rev. Arthur Burton (1889-1920), both of them of a much broader persuasion than Carus-Wilson, but with an equal interest in the school’s progress, saw the facilities and the educational aims steadily improved.¹²⁴ By the 1950s only 25 of 200 pupils came from clerical families, and by 2011, although the right to lower fees for clergy daughters remained, in fact none of the pupils, now divided between junior and senior schools and including boys in the junior department, was eligible.¹²⁵ For some years the numbers of secondary pupils had declined, and in 2013 the school, with unfeasibly low numbers, combined with the boys’ school at Sedbergh, the remaining senior girls moving to

¹²⁰ G. Sale *The History of Casterton School* (1983), 53-5

¹²¹ M. Williams *Notes* 41

¹²² E. Raikes *Dorothea Beale of Cheltenham* (London) 1908 Ch. 3 ‘Casterton’

¹²³ All unsold copies of the first edition had to be destroyed after action by Carus-Wilson. (DNB) I, 759

¹²⁴ Sale *Casterton School* (1983)

¹²⁵ Inf. from Casterton School.

a building in Sedbergh, and some of the Casterton buildings becoming the junior or preparatory department.¹²⁶

The school had since its inception a considerable influence on the life of the village. To some extent it has resulted in two populations, the smaller of which has sometimes felt overwhelmed, although some on each side at different times have done their best to integrate.¹²⁷ Another cause of fragmentation is that Casterton is divided into High and Low Casterton. Low Casterton is compact and contains the village amenities - church, school, inn, garage and village hall. High Casterton straggles down a narrow back lane towards the river crossing, its most notable building the original Casterton Hall.

In the early twenty-first century the population of the whole township contained a high proportion of those of working age, attracting parents who valued being able to send their daughters and young sons as day scholars to Casterton School.

The considerable part of the township to the east, which has been described as virtually uninhabited, was used, apart from sheep grazing, for recreational purposes, walking, potholing and grouse shooting. Between the Devil's Bridge and Casterton village, on the east side of the road, is the nine-hole Casterton Golf Course. Originally the Kirkby Lonsdale Golf Club Course, it was moved from Biggins in 1954. The Kirkby Lonsdale Club moved on to Barbon in 1990, but the Casterton course remained.¹²⁸

The village hall, near the church, was originally a mission hall, given to the village by the Miss Bickersteths, members of a long-standing Kirkby Lonsdale family who at the end of the twentieth century lived at the Grange, and the building is still owned by the Diocese of Carlisle. At its centenary in 2013 it was the centre of a lively village life which included church and parish meetings, Cub Scouts,

¹²⁶ Local inf.

¹²⁷ Council Minutes of 1986 report the schoolgirls helping with a village litter-pick. The Deputy Head (retired 2013) was president of the Women's Institute and chairman of the Village Hall Committee. (Local inf.)

¹²⁸ *Kirkby Lonsdale Golf Club 1906-2006 The Centenary Book*

dancing classes, a Women's Institute with about 35 members, and numerous one-off lettings for private and public occasions.¹²⁹

A charity known as the Poor Lands was set up in 1682 and administered by five overseers, their heirs and assigns for the use of the poor of the township. It owned three small pieces of land in the township - two and a half acres on Casterton Fell, eight acres called Poor Carrs nearer to the Roman Road, and a small patch called Hospital Garden near the site of the old chapel. Over the years the rents varied considerably, but in 1956 amounted to about twenty pounds per annum. In that year the Charity Commissioners were appealed to because the administration of the charity had become entangled with that of the parish council. They clarified how the trust was to be administered, and the purposes for which the income could be used: material gifts, convalescent grants, weekly allowances, none of them to run from one year to the next, subscriptions to charitable institutions, and, perhaps unusually, grants to those setting up in a trade.¹³⁰ The land was then sold and the proceeds invested, producing about twelve pounds a year which in recent times, there being no poverty in Casterton, has been administered by a committee meeting twice a year, in small gifts to Casterton people recently bereaved or in poor health.¹³¹

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

The site of the first chapel in Casterton is marked by the name of Chapel House in the extreme south-western corner of the township. Chapel House Lane, a deeply worn track, running between fields named as Chapelside and Chapelhead,¹³² marks its position, on a commanding site at about the 80 foot contour, looking down to the river and the Devil's Bridge, some 40 feet lower. Its foundation so close to the parish church of Kirkby Lonsdale is explained by the fact that it was built near a holy well which may have dated to pagan times and

¹²⁹ Inf. J. Sykes, chairman

¹³⁰ CAS (Kendal) WPC/40/1/1 No original documents have been found. All information from the Charity Commissioners' instructions on the running of the charity, preserved with the Parish Council Minutes.

¹³¹ Inf. Chairman of Casterton Poor Fund.

¹³² CAS (Kendal)Tithe Map WDRC/8/250

been taken over by the church perhaps as early as the twelfth century.¹³³ In 1347 it was named as being in the possession of Gilbert de Brunolvshed, but it may well have been in his family since the thirteenth century at least.¹³⁴ It passed to his heir, an infant daughter Margaret who latter married Robert de Bellingham, and during her minority was granted to Sir John Coupland as a reward for his prowess at the battle of Nevile's Cross. Bellingham became lord of the manor of Casterton, but the chapel advowson remained with the superior lord. Among the assets held at her death in 1411 by Phillippa widow of Robert de Vere, duke of Ireland, was the advowson of the chapel called Colmekilnechappell in Casterton with certain lands adjoining to it worth 13s.4d.¹³⁵

In 1531 the last chantry priest, Robert Redman, died, and the chapel was closed by Sir Roger Bellingham and left unserved and abandoned. In 1547 the second Chantry Act was passed, which closed down all chantries and authorised commissioners to collect any gold and silver in their possession for the use of the Crown. Under this act Alan Bellingham, one of the statutory commissioners and a junior member of the original Bellingham family, took possession of the decaying building which had no valuables but some 46 acres of land. A bill of complaint was lodged by the tenants that the chapel had been despoiled of timber, glass and iron which had found their way to Bellingham's house, and that their rents were being dishonestly siphoned off by Bellingham's agent. They demanded a commission, and for the next four years, until one was set up, withheld their rents. The commission sat in Kirkby Lonsdale in April 1552 and appears to have disposed of any imputation of dishonesty.¹³⁶

Then or later the site was very thoroughly robbed, as in 1692 Thomas Machell noted that there was a ploughed field where the chapel had stood. He noted

¹³³ Rev. R.P.Brown 'The Chantries of Kirkby Lonsdale' (CWAAS Transactions N.S. XXVII) 54-99

¹³⁴ 'Chantries of Kirkby Lonsdale'

¹³⁵ Rec. Kend. II, 331

¹³⁶ 'Chantries of Kirkby Lonsdale'

two houses, called Chapelhouses, nearby.¹³⁷ Other buildings have since obscured the site of St. Columba's well.¹³⁸

Casterton was then without a church until 1833. The present one was probably designed by George Webster,¹³⁹ but very much according to the ideas of William Carus-Wilson, a strict Evangelical. (He had at first been refused ordination by the Bishop of Chester because of his views on the inevitability of eternal damnation for those who sinned after baptism, but the Archbishop of York was more accommodating.)¹⁴⁰ Carus-Wilson was appointed Perpetual Curate of Casterton in 1833. Much of the township had been granted to his forbears by Catherine of Braganza in 1681, and further estates near Kendal had been brought into the family by his mother, Margaret Shippard of Natland. He was therefore able to use the family's own land and money to establish schools¹⁴¹ and build the Casterton chapel. He was interested in church architecture and in 1835 published 'Helps to the Building of Churches and Parsonage Houses', his convictions leading him to recommend an extreme plainness of style.¹⁴² The church as first built was almost brutally plain, and as such was highly praised by Queen Adelaide when she visited in 1840, not only for its simplicity but also for the low cost of its erection¹⁴³ - £641.¹⁴⁴

In 1860, shortly after Carus-Wilson's death, the chancel by E.G.Paley was added. Wilson's sons protested at this alteration of the original ascetic style, but lost their case at Carlisle.¹⁴⁵ The stained glass windows and wall paintings by Henry Holiday and James Clark date from the 1890s,¹⁴⁶ during the incumbency of the

¹³⁷ Antiquary on Horseback, ed. J.M.Ewbank (CWAAS Extra Series XIX) Kendal, 1963, 26

¹³⁸ Datestone 2007

¹³⁹ Hyde and Pevsner Cumbria, 274

¹⁴⁰ J.M.Ewbank The Life and Works of William Carus Wilson (Kendal 1960), 4

¹⁴¹ See 'Social History'

¹⁴² Hyde and Pevsner Cumbria, 274

¹⁴³ The Queen Dowager's Visit to Kirkby Lonsdale (Kirkby Lonsdale 1840), 20

¹⁴⁴ C.M.L Bouch Prelates and People of the Lake Counties (Kendal 1948), 460-1

¹⁴⁵ From information in the church by M. Williams.

¹⁴⁶ Cumbria 275

Rev. A.D. Burton¹⁴⁷ who was also responsible for replacing the old boxed side pews and the airless gallery.¹⁴⁸

The church was not to twentieth-century taste.¹⁴⁹ Henry Holiday's painted stencilling was largely removed in the 1950s as were large wall-paintings of angels. The twenty-first century is more sympathetic.¹⁵⁰ A comprehensive repairs project started in 2004 and costing about £225,000 was largely funded by English Heritage.

At the census in March 1851 the total sittings were entered as 570. Attendance was 372 in the morning and 390 in the afternoon, largely from the two boarding schools. The officiating curate, William Paterson, noted that Casterton Hall and two other principal houses were empty at the time, which affected the population of the township.¹⁵¹

Services in the later nineteenth century were still held on Sundays only, in the morning and the evening, with communion four times a year. The number of communicants might fall as low as seven, or rise to 80 on the Sunday after a confirmation. From 1890 the pattern changed: three services were regularly held on Sundays, and in the week before Easter there were two services every day and five on Easter Sunday, with 130 communicants.¹⁵² This coincided with the appointment of the Rev. Arthur Burton as vicar, school chaplain and secretary to the trustees.¹⁵³ After his retirement in 1920, the three services on Sundays continued, but Easter celebrations were reduced to Good Friday and Easter day.

¹⁴⁷ See 'Social History'

¹⁴⁸ Inf. M. Williams

¹⁴⁹ Not included by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (1936). Pevsner in 1967 used the terms 'sentimentality' and 'all-too-easy idealizing realism'.

¹⁵⁰ Hyde and Pevsner, *Cumbria*, 274-5.

¹⁵¹ PRO, HO 129/575 1851 Religious Census

¹⁵² CRO (Kendal) WPR/12/1/5/1-9 Service registers 1889-1989

¹⁵³ G.Sale *The History of Casterton School* (Casterton 1983), 82

Established as a separate parish in 1888, in 1976 Casterton's status reverted to that of a chapel of ease within Kirkby Lonsdale.¹⁵⁴ There was a Sunday service at 11.00, and early communion mainly during school terms. In 2008 the average Sunday attendance was sixteen,¹⁵⁵ although the building also continued to be used as a school chapel until the closure of the school.¹⁵⁶ But after 2013, with no more pupils of secondary age to use the organ and the piano, to attend confirmation classes and to be confirmed, the link between church and school was almost broken, and the very small congregation found itself with a burden of repairs and replacements, which left the future of the church in doubt. The building however, since the addition of the chancel by Paley in the 1860s, acquired remarkably good acoustics, and in the later twentieth century became a concert venue drawing audiences from a wide area. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the congregation and the village combined to raise money to replace the heating and install a sound and loop system.¹⁵⁷

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Some records from the seventeenth-century courts baron have been preserved.¹⁵⁸ Held apparently twice a year, their tenant lists show about 40 customary tenants, a dozen freeholders and four or five tenants of the 'hospitall ground'. Local regulation seems to have been light: bylawmen and 'sessors' are the only posts recorded in the court records, but there were others. The 1674 hearth tax list was drawn up by a surveyor and a constable.¹⁵⁹ Tenants were fined for failing to make good their fences, particularly on the open high land to the east of the township, for failing to cut turf properly,¹⁶⁰ and for using the heather on the common as a cash crop.¹⁶¹ Towards the end of the period recorded, for whatever reason, there were a great many fines for turning cattle and horses into the highways to browse, highways which, even in modern times, are so narrow

¹⁵⁴ See under Kirkby Lonsdale.

¹⁵⁵ Inf. Church House, Carlisle. Thanks to Jean Hardman and Eleanor Scott.

¹⁵⁶ See 'Social History'.

¹⁵⁷ Inf. R. Bulman, churchwarden.

¹⁵⁸ CRO (Kendal) WD/CW Acc 1914 Casterton Manor Court 1642-85.

¹⁵⁹ Westmorland Hearth Tax, 204

¹⁶⁰ 'For not bedding his turfe pits' (1680)

¹⁶¹ 'For pulling of ling upon our Comond and caryeing away' (1682)

that they are frequently grass-grown in the middle. Neighbouring owners were sometimes fined for allowing these lanes to become waterlogged.

Spats between neighbours are rarely recorded. In 1673 Christopher Witton and Dorothy his wife were fined 3s.4d. for ‘scandalising Edmund Witton with these words following that is to say thou art a theefe thou stole Thomas Servants horse and I will prove it’, but this seems to have been an unusual occurrence.

No further records of local government have been traced from this period until 1894 when the parish council was set up with five councillors, a treasurer and a clerk. Apart from the treasurer, who was the manager of the Lancaster Bank in Kirkby Lonsdale, and one councillor, a shopkeeper, the council was drawn from the larger farmers in the township. Their business at first was mainly confined to the passing of the accounts for the Poor rate, the Highways and the Poor Land, and the letting of two occupation roads. The state of the roads, sign posts, and the need for fencing round an unprotected quarry, took up much of their time in the early years. Most needs had to be passed on to the District Council, and the District Council was characteristically slow to respond. By 1904, an urgent need was warning signs to slow down the increasing motor traffic. This remained a priority for the next hundred years, particularly from the 1920s onwards, with the spread of Casterton School to both sides of the road. In the 1920s the unsatisfactory water supply was the subject of much discussion, as was the provision of public seats. During the second World War, fire hydrants, long neglected and more or less useless, had to be disinterred and brought back into use. The provision of allotments became important. After the war, with the increase in motor traffic, parking at Devil’s Bridge was a particular and ever-increasing problem.¹⁶²

At different times in the twentieth century, the council varied greatly in enthusiasm and commitment. During the 1950s the number of meetings dwindled from the statutory five a year to two or three, with the addition of an annual general meeting usually unattended by any member of the public. Towards

¹⁶² CAS (Kendal) WPC 40/1/1 Parish Council Minutes 1894-1995

the end of the century the council became much more vigorous, attracting greater interest, holding more meetings, and addressing itself to general improvement of amenities in the village. In 1994 it won the small village award in the 'Cumbria in Bloom' contest, and was then awarded £500 to enable it to enter 'Britain in Bloom' in 1995. By the end of the century these were usually ten meetings a year.¹⁶³

In 2011 it happened that all five members were replaced and a new, experienced and salaried clerk appointed, and in the next three years the council entered on a particularly busy time. The seven street lights had to be given their own standards.¹⁶⁴ Five grit bins were provided for icy weather. Parish notice boards were set up. The village green opposite the 'Pheasant' inn was tidied, reseeded, given a bench and planted with trees. A village event was held for the Diamond Jubilee. A footpath to provide a safe walkers' route between Low Casterton and the bridge was cleared and made more usable. A parish plan was published, and a quarterly newsletter printed and delivered to every house.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³CAS (Kendal) WPC 40./1/3 Parish Council Minutes 1894-1995

¹⁶⁴ They had previously been attached to poles belonging to British Telecom or Electricity North West, both of which companies now objected.

¹⁶⁵ Inf. Mrs. E. Hastings, chairman.