

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

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Parish/township: HELSINGTON

Author: Sarah Rose

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HELSINGTON

Helsington was a rural township of 3,327 acres (1,346 ha), lying two miles south-east of Kendal, between the Lyth Valley and the River Kent. The latter marked the eastern boundary of the township, except for approximately one mile between Robin Hood Island and the southern edge of Low Park Wood, near the footbridge. Between these points, the boundary ran east of the river to encompass the Larkrigg estate, reaching as far east as the road connecting Sedgwick and Kendal. The southern edge followed field boundaries between Sizergh Castle and the slopes of Sizergh Fell, just north of Sizergh Cottages and the Strickland Arms. The boundary continued west, around the edge of Park Moss, where it headed north along Park End Lane into Brigsteer. Here it divided the hamlet in two, before continuing west along field boundaries to Helsington Pool. Much of the north western boundary ran along Underbarrow Scar, a limestone escarpment also known as 'Scout Scar'. The northern boundary, from the Scar to Kendal, is less well-defined by topographical features.

In 1935, 126 acres (51 ha) in the north east of the township was transferred to Kendal borough.¹ This area, which included the manor house at Helsington Laithes and the Howard Orphan Home, was developed as a suburb of Kendal.² The civil parish boundaries were further altered

¹ Westmorland Review Order 1934.

² CAS (K), WSMBK/11/3/12/M196; WSMBK/11/3/8/H637.

in 1970, this time to incorporate the entire hamlet of Brigsteer and an area to the south west, between Helsington Pool and the Brigsteer Causeway.³ Some territory to the west of Brigsteer Park was simultaneously lost to Levens. At present, Helsington lies on the edge of the Lake District National Park, but was recommended for inclusion within the Park in a 2013 report.⁴

The name Helsington, which was recorded in 1086 as *Helsingetune*, has obscure origins; it may derive from the Old English *helsingas*, meaning ‘a farmstead of those dwelling on the *hals*’, with *hals* denoting a ‘neck of land’ or ‘pass’.⁵ This could refer to the ridge of Underbarrow Scar.

Alternatively, the name could derive from the *Haelsingas*, a tribe referred to in Old English heroic poetry, or a form of Old English *haesling* meaning ‘hazel copse’.⁶

Landscape

Helsington’s landscape is one of contrasts. Extensive woodland lay along the banks of the River Kent in the east and in the south, where Sizergh Castle sat ‘in the midst of fertile grounds, beautifully sprinkled with wood’.⁷ Moving north and west, the landscape gives way to hill pasture and limestone scars. Here Helsington’s bedrock of carboniferous limestone breaks the surface, as is reflected in the name ‘Stainbank’ (Stonebank) Green.⁸ Rising 235 meters above sea level, Scout Scar lies on a north-south alignment, its dip slope falling to the east; its scarp slope facing west over the Lyth valley flats.⁹ Brigsteer village, meanwhile, clings to the cliffs below Burnbarrow Scar. The local limestone was once much exploited, being used for lime production and worked as ‘marble’ for decorative architectural features.

³ Westmorland (Parishes of Helsington and Levens) Order 1969. The County Council had been approached about changing the civil parish boundaries to incorporate the whole of Brigsteer village as early as 1946: CAS (K), WPC/34/1.

⁴ http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/images/lake%20district%20extension%20report_tcm6-10041.pdf [accessed 14.11.13].

⁵ *PNW*, I, 108.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Parson & White, *Dir. C. & W.*, 649.

⁸ *PNW*, I, 121.

⁹ Jan Wiltshire, *About Scout Scar* (Lancaster, 2008).

In the north west of the township lies Helsington Barrows, a walled parkland habitat of former common waste, now owned by the National Trust.¹⁰ Another area of former common was Helsington Moss. Lying in the south west of the township, the mosses were improved by the Drainage Act of 1838 (Award 1843)¹¹ and Enclosure Award of 1855.¹² This brought to an end a long tradition of peat cutting. Around Brigsteer and Sizergh the soil is still peaty, but across much of the township it is free draining and slightly acidic, with a loamy texture.¹³ In 1938 it was described 'clayey'.¹⁴

Settlement

Evidence of ancient settlement includes a Neolithic perforated stone axe-hammer and Bronze Age dagger found on Helsington Moss in the late nineteenth century.¹⁵ Roman and medieval finds have also been made more recently at Scroggs Wood,¹⁶ while an area near Bridge (Briggs) House Farm has been identified as a possible medieval village.¹⁷ The site is a scheduled ancient monument (no. 35019). From the thirteenth century, however, the main settlement in the township was at Brigsteer. Situated on the southern boundary of the township, on the edge of the Lyth valley, the hamlet was first recorded in 1227-37.¹⁸ Its name derives from *brycg* 'bridge' and probably the Old English *steor*, meaning steer or young bullock.¹⁹ The bridge in question may once have crossed Underbarrow Pool to Helsington Moss. Elsewhere in Helsington, settlement has comprised scattered farms and houses.²⁰ Many of these farms date from the medieval period,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ CAS (K), WPR 8/4/1/6.

¹² CAS (K), WPR/8/14/1/4 (Act); WPR/8/14/1/5 (Award) .

¹³ <https://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/> [accessed 2.10.13].

¹⁴ Kelly, *Dir. C. & W.* (1938), 53.

¹⁵ Oxford Archaeology North, *Sizergh Estate Lands: Historic Landscape Survey* (2011), 14-15.

¹⁶ 'Archaeological Projects in Cumbria', *CW3*, XI (2011), 266.

¹⁷ CAS (K), WDSO/374/5.

¹⁸ *PNW*, I, 109.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ In 1778, the vicar reported twelve farm houses in the Helsington besides the residents of Brigsteer: Cheshire Record Office, EDV/7/mff 44/4.

though the farmhouses themselves appear to have been largely rebuilt in the seventeenth century.²¹ The surviving manor house at Helsington Laithes dates from c.1500, but by far the oldest and largest dwelling in the township is Sizergh Castle. Begun sometime between 1292 and 1310, the castle lies between Brigsteer and the River Kent.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, several substantial residences were built in the township by wealthy industrialists and professionals. They included a villa at Stonecross, and the mansion at Prizet. Industry may also have resulted in the construction of homes for workers at Helsington mills, known as Marble Mills Cottages.²² Several bungalows have been built in the township since the 1940s, particularly at Brigsteer. A number of sites were considered for the construction of council housing during the 1950s, but plans did not come to fruition.²³ Instead, a small estate was built by private developers on a field in Brigsteer in the early 1960s.²⁴ Housing development has since been limited to the conversion of farm buildings. By the 1950s, several properties were described as holiday residences.²⁵ Helsington Community Land Trust was established in 2011 to address the issue of social housing.²⁶ In 2013, much of the population was still concentrated in Brigsteer, while the rural part of Helsington remained sparsely populated.

Communications

The major route through the township, running north to south, is the road from Kendal to Milnthorpe. This ancient route, which passes through the Sizergh demesne close to the castle, was widened in 1733²⁷ and subject to the Turnpike Act of 1759.²⁸ A toll gate stood halfway

²¹ RCHME, *Westmorland*, 108.

²² Cited in Census from 1841.

²³ CAS (K), WPC/34/2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ CAS (K), WDSO/209/1.

²⁶ <http://www.hclt.org.uk/> [accessed 22.10.13].

²⁷ *Rec. Kend.*, III, 110.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

between Helsington Laithes and Prizet.²⁹ After the construction of the M6 motorway it formed part of the new dual carriageway trunk road, re-numbered A591, leading from the motorway to the Lake District. During the 1960s, the stretch from Sizergh to Kendal was developed into a dual carriageway, opening in 1971.

To the west of the main road, another north-south route passed through the township, following the edge of the rising land from Kendal to the north of Brigsteer, along the edge of the former common on Helsington Barrows. The township was also traversed on an east-west axis by Whetstone Lane to the west and eastwards via Hawes Lane, leading to Hawes Bridge, the only point in the township where the River Kent can be crossed by vehicles. Dating from the eighteenth century, this two-arched structure carries a single carriageway road leading to Natland.³⁰ The New Sedgwick Gunpowder Company constructed a footbridge across the River Kent to facilitate access for workers.³¹ A new suspension bridge was built after the original structure was destroyed in a flood in 1874.³² The bridge was restored in the late 1980s and remains open to the public. The Lancaster Canal, which closed in 1955, once passed through the far eastern part of the township, through the Larkrigg estate.

By mid twentieth century, a three weekday bus service ran through Helsington. The then parish council attempted to procure a Saturday bus service to enable local residents to take produce to market in Kendal, but they were unsuccessful.³³ The Brigsteer community came together in 1970 to build its own bus shelter, only for bus services to the village to end soon afterwards.³⁴

²⁹ OS, 1:10, 560, first edition (surveyed 1858; published 1863). Henry Bell is listed as collector at Helsington toll gate in 1829: Parson & White, *Dir. C. & W.*, 671.

³⁰ <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-75280-hawes-bridge-over-the-river-kent-helsingt> [accessed 2.10.14].

³¹ CAS (K) WQ/O/15; footpath diversion order January 1860.

³² *Westmorland Gazette*, 10 Oct. 1874.

³³ CAS (K), WPC/34/1; WPC/34/2.

³⁴ CAS (K), WPC/34/2.

Helsington was without public transport for many years; but by 2013 Lecks Travel operated services between Kendal and Brigsteer, from Tuesdays to Saturdays.³⁵

Population and Social Character

Helsington was a rural community, with a limited gentry presence. In the absence of a resident lord, the Stricklands of Sizergh were the most socially prominent family in the township. The Hearth Tax return of 1674 suggests an estimated population of 162,³⁶ many of whom were resident in Brigsteer. By 1801, the population had grown to 230 persons. This increased further during the course of the nineteenth century, which coincided with Helsington's industrial episode. A peak of 360 was reached by 1891, including twenty-nine residents at the Howard Orphan Home (opened 1865). However, the first decade of the twentieth century witnessed a sharp population decline, with figures of 308 in 1901 and 279 in 1911. This rise and fall may reflect a downturn in agricultural employment. Of those whose occupations were listed in 1851, around sixty per-cent were engaged in agricultural activities, the vast majority of whom were described as agricultural labourers or farm servants. By 1901, around half of the work force was engaged in farming. But the number of labourers had markedly declined. Some roles had become more specialized (e.g. 'cattleman'), but farmer's children were often listed as farm workers, and few labourers had their own household. By the nineteenth century, an increasing number of farms were tenanted, and the turnover was high. Consequently, few families had long-established roots in the township. In 1851, a third of the population had been born in Helsington, including only seven heads of households.³⁷ However, relatively few newcomers came from very far afield, with half of the population being born elsewhere in Westmorland. These patterns continued into the early twentieth century.³⁸

³⁵ <http://jplanner.travelinenortheast.info/planner> [accessed 22.10.14].

³⁶ 34 households with a multiplier of 4.75

³⁷ Census 1851.

³⁸ Census 1901.

The population recovered slightly after the First World War, rising to 297 in 1921 and to 319 in 1931. The recorded population fell to just 225 in 1951 but this may reflect the loss of land through boundary changes in 1935. Conversely, the increased figure of 299 recorded in 1971 probably reflects the incorporation of Brigsteer village into the township in 1970, which affected some twenty dwellings.³⁹ The number of households rose from 74 in 1961, to 105 in 1971. The total population figures of 343 and 334 were recorded in 1981 and 1991, respectively, but these may well have included holiday makers at Low Park Wood Caravan Park. The numbers of permanent residents were recorded as 276 in 1981, 283 in 1991 and 288 in 2001. Housing and family size has perhaps helped to stabilize the population in recent years. Age may also play a part in determining the size of households: in 1991, thirty-one per-cent of Helsington's population were of pensionable age – above the national average.

LANDOWNERSHIP

Manor of Helsington

Before the Conquest Helsington was one of the nine members of Gillemichael's estate centred on 'Stercaland' (a name preserved in Strickland Ketel and Strickland Roger).⁴⁰ By 1100 it was in the possession Ivo de Taillebois. Following the death of William III de Lancaster, baron of Kendal, in 1246, the manor of Helsington passed to his nephew, Peter de Brus (d.1272).⁴¹ Peter's cousin and coheir, Walter de Lindsay (d.1271), also acquired some interests there, having held twenty acres of land and twenty-one acres of meadow in Helsington, which descended as part of the Richmond fee.⁴² On the division of Kendal barony between the four sisters and coheirs of Peter de Brus in 1272, Helsington passed to Margaret de Ros (d.1307).⁴³ By 1297 she had

³⁹ CAS (K), WPC 34/2.

⁴⁰ *Rec. Kend.*, I, 130.

⁴¹ *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, I, no.114.

⁴² *Cal. Inq. p.m.*, I, no.820. This appears to have become Holeslack Farm, which was the only property held of the Richmond fee in Helsington: CAS (C), D/Lons/L5/2/11/169.

⁴³ *Cal. Close*, 1272, p.40.

granted to her son, William de Ros, forty-five acres of Helsington's demesne (subsequently part of the Marquis fee), while the manor, including the remaining demesne, meadow, park, mill and tenants, was granted to her nephew, Marmaduke de Thweng (d.1322).⁴⁴ On the death of Thomas de Thweng without issue, in 1374, Helsington manor became part of the Lumley fee, descending through the Lumley family until 1531/2, when John, Lord Lumley, exchanged it and other northern estates with Henry VIII, who gave them to his illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, duke of Richmond.⁴⁵ When Richmond died in 1536, Helsington reverted to the crown.

The manor house at Helsington Laithes is first mentioned separately from Helsington in 1511.⁴⁶ Once the location of the manor court,⁴⁷ the earliest parts of the building date from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.⁴⁸ Plasterwork bearing the initials I and AB, and the date 1538, probably records the Bellingham family,⁴⁹ who leased Helsington Laithes from Lord Lumley in 1517.⁵⁰ A lease of 1540 describes it as having been 'late in the tenure of Thomas Bellingham'⁵¹ and four years later, in 1544, Allan Bellingham purchased the manor of Helsington and its members from the crown for £137 10s.⁵² As the Bellinghams subsequently resided at Levens Hall, the manor house at Helsington Laithes was leased out. William Curwen, a member of a cadet branch of the Curwens of Workington,⁵³ was assessed jointly with

⁴⁴ *Cal. Pat.*, 1297, pp.304-5; *Final Concords of the County of Lancaster*, ed. William Farrer, (Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, XXXIX, 1899), 213-215; *Lancashire Inquests, Extents and Feudal Aids* (Lancashire and Cheshire Record Society, XLVIII, 1903), 320-322.

⁴⁵ *Statutes of the Realm*, III, 409-410.

⁴⁶ Inquest citing the possessions of George Lumley: *Rec. Kend.*, I, 151.

⁴⁷ Rev. J. Whiteside, 'Notes on the Chapelry of Helsington', *CW2*, vii (1907), 119. For Helsington court rolls 1552-1730, see Levens Hall Bagot MSS, Box 2/2.

⁴⁸ Hyde & Pevsner, *Cumbria*, 445. It includes a pre-Reformation chapel widow.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* It has been suggested that this represents the Bindloss family: see N&B, I, 86-87; Parson & White, *Dir. C & W*, 649; Rev. J. Whiteside, 'Notes on the Chapelry of Helsington', *CW2*, vii (1907), 119. The family were free tenants of the manor in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century for Wattsfield: Levens Hall Bagot MSS, Box 2/2; *Rec. Kend.*, I, 166.

⁵⁰ Whiteside, 'Notes on the Chapelry of Helsington', 120. The lease was reported to be at Levens in the early twentieth century.

⁵¹ *Rec. Kend.*, I, 155; original at Sizergh.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 156.

⁵³ J.F. Curwen, *A History of the Ancient House of Curwen* (1928), 314.

Christopher Hudson for nine hearths at Helsington Laithes in 1670; in 1674 Curwen alone was assessed for seven.⁵⁴ The manor house was the ‘Helsington Hall’ Machell described in 1692 as having been recently re-built by the then lord of the manor, Col. Grahme.⁵⁵ By 1693, the demesne farm was occupied by Christopher Wilson (d.1731),⁵⁶ and in 1766 by Richard Wilson.⁵⁷ William Stavert, one time High Sheriff of Westmorland, who served as church warden in Helsington for 43 years, was living at Helsington Laithes with a large household in 1891.⁵⁸ In 2013 the manor house provided Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

Helsington manor remained in the Bellingham family until 1689, when Allan Bellingham (d.1693), burdened with significant debts, sold it and other estates to Colonel James Grahme (d.1730).⁵⁹ Like Bellingham, Grahme also faced financial difficulties. In 1699, he mortgaged Helsington and other properties to Christopher Musgrave for £3,000 (later increased to £4,000).⁶⁰ The debt was not paid off until 1722.⁶¹ In 1700, at this time of financial crisis, Grahme enfranchised at least three of his customary tenants in Helsington: Lancelot Thompson, who paid £101 5s for three messuages;⁶² John Jackson, who paid £37 18s 4d for his estate at Netherwells;⁶³ and Robert Kilner who paid £63 10s 5d for his estate at Berryholme.⁶⁴ The latter also had a separate arrangement to enfranchise timber, trees and underwood there.⁶⁵ After

⁵⁴ *Westmorland Hearth Tax*, ed. C. Philips, C. Ferguson, A. Wareham (London: British Record Society, 2008), 176, 226. The probate inventory of William Curwen (d.1679) makes references to his goods at Helsington Laithes, but his principal residence was apparently Holeslack: Lancs. Archives (Preston), WRW/K/R420d/29; CAS (C), D/Lons/L5/2/11/169.

⁵⁵ *Antiquary on Horseback*, ed. Jane M. Ewbank (1963), 67.

⁵⁶ A. Bagot and J. Munby, ‘*All thing is well here: letters from Hugh James of Levens to James Grahme, 1692-5*’, CWAAS, 10 (1988), 177.

⁵⁷ CAS (K), WDFCF/1/66.

⁵⁸ Census 1891.

⁵⁹ J.V. Beckett, ‘Art. XIV: The Finances of a Former Jacobite: James Grahme of Levens Hall’, *CW2*, 85 (1985), 132.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁶² CAS (K), WDX/405, T2.

⁶³ CAS (K), WDRIG/Box 12 (Netherwells Deeds), no.1

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, no.19.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, no.18.

Grahme's death, Helsington descended with Levens, coming in 1883 to the Bagots, who remained lords of the manor and one of the principal landowners thereafter. At enclosure, the lord of the manor was awarded 217 acres [88 ha] on High Common, in addition to 117 acres [47 ha] at Helsington Laithes.⁶⁶ By 1910 the Bagots possessed 694 acres [281 ha] in the township, including 255 acres [103 ha] at Helsington Barrows.⁶⁷

Manor of Sizergh

Between 1170 and 1180, Gervase Deincourt⁶⁸ was granted fifteen librates of land in Sizergh, Natland, 'Bothelford' (in Natland⁶⁹) and 'Windergh' (Winder?) by William de Lancaster, in return for the service of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a knight's fee.⁷⁰ Gervase was succeeded by a son Ralph, who was in turn succeeded by a son, Ralph. The latter was in possession by 1235, when he is recorded as holding one knight's fee of the barony of Kendal.⁷¹ However, Ralph Deincourt may have resided at Natland rather than Sizergh, for in 1246/7 he was given privilege to have a private chapel at his 'court at Natland'.⁷² He was still alive in 1251,⁷³ but his widow was demised property at Sizergh c.1260.⁷⁴ Ralph left two sons, both of whom had died without issue by 1271.⁷⁵ Sizergh consequently passed to his daughter, Elizabeth, and her husband, Sir William Strickland, in whose family it remained until the twentieth century.⁷⁶

⁶⁶ CAS (K), WPR/8/14/1/5.

⁶⁷ CAS (K), WIDV/2/40.

⁶⁸ A cadet of the Deincourts of Thurgarton (Notts.) and Blankney (Lincs.).

⁶⁹ A. J. L. Winchester, 'Early Estate Structures in Cumbria and Lancashire', *Medieval Settlement Research*, 23 (2008), 19.

⁷⁰ *Rec. Kend.* I, 130; original at Sizergh. Grant confirmed by William Marshal 1184x89 and by Roger Fitz Rinfred 1190x1200: *Ibid.*, 131.

⁷¹ *Book of Fees*, I, 552

⁷² S.H. Lee Washington, 'The Early History of the Stricklands of Sizergh – Part II: The D'Eyncourts and Le Flemings', *CW2*, xlv (1944), 26.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁷⁴ Dodsworth MSS, vol 149, fo.137d.

⁷⁵ De Banco Roll, Westmorland, Easter 5 Edward II [1312], no.192, as cited in Washington, 'Stricklands of Sizergh – Part II', 17-18, 28.

⁷⁶ S.H. Lee Washington, 'The Early History of the Stricklands of Sizergh – Part I', *CW2*, xlii (1942), 211.

Sizergh was held of the lords of Helsington. But in the late sixteenth century, the precise relationship between Sizergh and Helsington was a matter of dispute. In 1592, Thomas Strickland (d.1612) denied that he held his estate at Sizergh of James Bellingham by knight service and 2s rent as Bellingham claimed.⁷⁷ The issue was still unresolved at the time of Thomas's death in 1612, for an inquisition recorded that he held Sizergh of Bellingham by service unknown.⁷⁸ In 1640, the Stricklands were named by Daniel Fleming as among five freeholders in Helsington,⁷⁹ and Helsington manor court rolls also identify them as such.⁸⁰ The Stricklands had enfranchised many of their own tenants as early as 1491.⁸¹ Sizergh was referred to as a manor in its own right in the Drainage Act of 1838.⁸²

In 1292, Sir William released Sizergh and other Deincourt properties to his eldest surviving son, Walter.⁸³ From then on, Sizergh descended from father to son for another fourteen generations, until the death of Walter Strickland without issue in 1761. As his eldest surviving brother, William, had become a Jesuit priest in 1756, Sizergh passed to Walter's youngest brother, Charles, who married the Lancashire heiress Cecilia Towneley in 1762.⁸⁴ When her husband died in 1770, Cecilia took over the management of the estate until their son, Thomas, came of age in 1784.⁸⁵ Thomas (d.1813) left Sizergh to his younger son, Thomas (d.1835). Thomas's son, Walter Charles, was born in Paris in 1825. Aged ten when his father died, Walter Charles did not come of age until 1846. Encumbered by debt, in 1896 he entailed the estate upon his fourth cousin, Sir

⁷⁷ *Rec. Kend.*, I, 160-161. The Bellinghams and Stricklands did not see eye-to-eye: a fray between Thomas Strickland's father, Walter, and Allan Bellingham, resulted in Strickland being imprisoned in the Fleet in 1546: *Acts of the Privy Council 1542-1547*, new ser., I (1890), 367.

⁷⁸ *Rec. Kend.*, I, 163-164.

⁷⁹ CAS (K), WDRY Box 28/17, (Fleming of Rydal notes), 197.

⁸⁰ Levens Hall, Bagot MSS, Box 2/2.

⁸¹ N&B, I, 98.

⁸² CAS (K), WPR 8/14/1/6.

⁸³ *Rec. Kend.*, I, 136; original at Sizergh. Walter (knighted in 1306) was rewarded for his military service in Scotland by a grant of free warren in 1307: *Cal. Chart.*, III, 100.

⁸⁴ The Stricklands did not acquire the Towneley estates at Standish and Borwick until 1807: *VCH Lancs*, VI (1914), 170-175.

⁸⁵ Her detailed accounts survive at Sizergh.

Gerald Strickland (1861-1940).⁸⁶ On Walter Charles's death in 1903, Sizergh passed to Gerald Strickland and to Walter's children, Roger, Ida, Henrietta and Mary, as tenants in common, with remainder to Gerald Strickland and his children in tail. In 1931 Sir Gerald settled the estate on his eldest daughter, Mary, and her husband Henry Hornyold-Strickland (d.1975).⁸⁷ They and their son, Thomas Hornyold-Strickland (1921-1983), made a gift of the estate, totalling 1,500 acres [600 ha], to the National Trust in 1950.⁸⁸

Between 1292 and 1310, Sir Walter Strickland constructed a substantial house at Sizergh, which included a great hall and service block.⁸⁹ The property may have been damaged in 1321, when William de Thweng and numerous armed men broke into the close at Sizergh, where they set fires, took goods and assaulted servants.⁹⁰ The four-storey high solar tower, which dates from the mid-fourteenth century,⁹¹ was added by either Sir Walter (c.1255-c.1343) or his son, Sir Thomas Strickland (1290-1376). During the lifetime of Sir Walter Strickland (1516-1569), the medieval house underwent considerable remodelling, beginning with the addition of a new south wing and first floor hall in 1555.⁹² This was followed by the rebuilding of the service block as a three-storey tower, and the extension of the north wing, with a kitchen, service rooms and servant accommodation.⁹³

In the late seventeenth century, Sizergh was described variously as 'a very fair house and a pleasant seat',⁹⁴ and 'a noble but irregular old house surrounded with woods with a park at the

⁸⁶ CAS (K), WD/PP/Box 9, bdl 2, no.28.

⁸⁷ Goodall, *Sizergh Castle: Architectural Survey Report*, 88.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁸⁹ OAN, *Sizergh Estate*, 67.

⁹⁰ *Cal. Pat.*, 1321, p.56

⁹¹ I. Goodall, *Sizergh Castle: Architectural Survey Report* (English Heritage, 2000), 8. [move full details to 1st citation]

⁹² OAN, *Sizergh Estate*, 67.

⁹³ Goodall, *Sizergh Castle*, 2.

⁹⁴ Sir Daniel Fleming's 'Description of Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness' (1671) in E. Hughes (ed), *Fleming-Senhouse Papers* (1961), 11.

door.⁹⁵ However, owing to their Roman Catholicism and royalist sympathies, the seventeenth century saw a period of decline for the Stricklands, and resulted in long absences from Sizergh. Having supported Charles I in the Civil War, the Stricklands had their estates sequestered, for which they compounded.⁹⁶ Following the Restoration, Sir Thomas Strickland (d.1694) spent much time in London, serving as knight of the shire for Westmorland from 1661 until he was expelled in 1676/7.⁹⁷ His duties obliged him to neglect his estate; ‘these Stricklands are in a declining condition’, wrote a contemporary, ‘occasioned by Sir Thomas living at Court’.⁹⁸ The hearth tax returns of 1670 and 1674 shows that Sizergh Hall, with its 22 hearths, was then occupied by Mr Thomas Shepherd, Strickland’s steward.⁹⁹ In 1689, Sir Thomas Strickland joined the exiled court of James II at Saint-Germain and, to prevent the confiscation of Sizergh, placed the estate in trust by making it over to two (Protestant) servants: his steward, Thomas Shepherd, and Robert Carne.¹⁰⁰ After the death of Sir Thomas Strickland in 1694, Lady Strickland returned to Sizergh, followed by their son, Walter, in 1699.

Among the changes to the house that followed the Stricklands’ return, were alterations to the hall and the expansion of family and servant accommodation. A private chapel for celebrating mass was also built in the east end of the long gallery before 1773.¹⁰¹ The Stricklands were largely absent from Sizergh during the late eighteenth century and up to the mid-nineteenth century, and in 1841 the hall was home to the Kendal banker, William Crewdson.¹⁰² Walter Charles Strickland (d.1903) was resident there with six servants in 1851, when the hall was described as

⁹⁵ *Antiquary on Horseback*, 67.

⁹⁶ *Cal. Com. for Compounding, Dom. Ser. 1643-1660*, pt. i, 176, 203; *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1660-1690*, III, ed. B.D. Henning (1983), 504.

⁹⁷ *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1660-1690*, III, ed. B.D. Henning (1983), 504.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Westmorland Hearth Tax*, 176, 226. A Thomas Shepherd was described ten years earlier at Sir Robert Strickland’s estate at Thornton Bridge in Yorkshire as ‘a servant at Sizergh’, and a man of the same name was steward of Sizergh in 1689: *Sixth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (1877), 466; Goodall, *Sizergh Castle*, 39.

¹⁰⁰ Goodall, *Sizergh Castle*, 39.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁰² Census 1841.

‘Sizergh Castle.’ Walter Charles oversaw the addition of a two-storey banqueting hall between 1852 and 1888,¹⁰³ but by 1890, the house was reported to be in a ‘ruinous state’.¹⁰⁴ In 1891 the panelling of the Inlaid Chamber was sold to the South Kensington Museum (renamed the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1899)¹⁰⁵ for £1000, and many items from the house were auctioned in 1896.¹⁰⁶ Substantial modernisation work was carried out by Sir Gerald Strickland between 1897 and 1902, including the insertion of a carriageway through the ground floor of the hall range.¹⁰⁷ This was followed by work to the gardens from 1926 to 1928. The Castle was designated a Grade I Listing in 1952, with outbuildings listed as Grade II in 1983.¹⁰⁸ The panelling from the Inlaid Chamber was returned from the Victoria & Albert Museum and reinstated in 1999-2000.¹⁰⁹

By the 1820s, the Sizergh estate included 975 acres [395 ha] in Helsington.¹¹⁰ In 1855, the Strickland Trust were awarded 123 acres [50 ha] on Helsington common, in addition to their purchase of a further 191 acres [77 ha] of former common.¹¹¹ In 1910 the Stricklands were still largest landowners in the township, with almost 1,000 acres.¹¹² Besides the Bagots of Levens and the Stricklands, there were fifteen other landowners in 1910, nine of whom also occupied at least part of their property.¹¹³ Christopher Wyndham Wilson of Rigmaiden (d.1915)¹¹⁴ owned several ancient tenements, including Berryholme (149 acres; 60 ha of land and 26 acres; 11 ha of wood),

¹⁰³ Goodall, *Sizergh Castle*, 80-81.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁰⁵ *The London Gazette*, Issue 27081, 19 May 1899, p.3186

¹⁰⁶ Goodall, *Sizergh Castle*, 82.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ OAN, *Sizergh Estate*, 71, 101.

¹⁰⁹ Goodall, *Sizergh Castle*, 100.

¹¹⁰ CAS (K), WDB/22/3/1 (Sizergh estate plan dated to c.1820s).

¹¹¹ CAS (K), WPR/8/14/1/5.

¹¹² CAS (K), WTDV/2/40.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* The Sedgwick Gunpowder Co. owned 166 acres at Hawes farm, which they leased out. But they owned and occupied 20 acres of wood there.

¹¹⁴ CAS (C), PROB/1915/A126.

Bridge House (87 acres; 35 ha),¹¹⁵ Lane Head (87 acres; 35 ha), and Netherwells (52 acres; 21 ha), as well as 80 acres [32 ha] on Low Common. The Wilsons of Rigmaiden had accumulated these freehold estates over several generations, beginning with the purchase of Netherwells in 1753 by Thomas Wilson of Natland (d.1757).¹¹⁶ His son, the Kendal hosier and banker, Christopher Wilson (1731-1804), acquired Berryholme in 1786¹¹⁷ and Bridge House in 1798.¹¹⁸ The Wilsons of Rigmaiden were still significant landowners in 1932.¹¹⁹ By the close of the nineteenth century, several estates had also been accumulated by the Braithwaite-Wilsons, including Lane Head, Lane Foot and Stainbank Green, the latter of which was sold off in 1946.¹²⁰

Another landed presence to be noted from the mid-nineteenth century is the owner of Prizet. The mansion house, situated on the estate formerly known as Prizet End,¹²¹ was built in 1860 by the banker and gunpowder manufacturer, William Henry Wakefield (mayor of Kendal 1860-61 & 1868-69).¹²² Though Prizet's estate farm was not large – approximately fifty acres¹²³ – the mansion house was comparable to Sizergh in terms of the size of the household.¹²⁴ Prizet was subsequently home to the Metcalfes,¹²⁵ and in 1891 to a retired army captain, E. J. Garstone.¹²⁶ By 1901, it was in the ownership of William Stavert (d.1905), J.P., D.L.¹²⁷ His widow continued to occupy the house until her death in 1911. In 1924 the Stavert family sold it to Colonel John Heaton, in whose possession it remained until its sale by auction in 1955.¹²⁸ The estate then included a dairy farm and cottage, both of which were leased out, and a bungalow known as the

¹¹⁵ Held of the Marquis Fee.

¹¹⁶ CAS (K), WDRIG/1/12/1, no.38.

¹¹⁷ CAS (K), WDRIG/1/12/3, no.9; purchased from the devisees of William Wilson.

¹¹⁸ CAS (K), WDX/405/T22-23; purchased from William Bird of Crosby Garrett, clerk.

¹¹⁹ CAS (K), WQRC/6.

¹²⁰ CAS (K), WDAG Boxes 154-155.

¹²¹ CAS (K), WDW 2/6/5 (surveyed 1802; then the property of Joseph Maude esq.)

¹²² <http://www.kendaltowncouncil.gov.uk/content/view/21/37/> [accessed 9.8.14].

¹²³ CAS (K), WDB/35/1/59.

¹²⁴ In 1861 there were seven servants besides a governess, coachman and gardener.

¹²⁵ Bulmer, *West. Dir.* (1885), 503.

¹²⁶ Census 1891.

¹²⁷ Formerly resident at Helsington Laithes.

¹²⁸ CAS (K), WDB/35/1/59. The purchaser was a Mr Kendall who bought it for £8,000.

‘South Lodge’ by Hawes Lane. The house was later divided into three residential properties. The stables were converted into a B&B business in the 1970s.¹²⁹

In 2013, Levens Hall Estates and the National Trust were still the largest landowners in Helsington.

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Helsington’s economy was largely based on agriculture, with pastoral farming coming to predominate in the twentieth century. Orchards were common from an early date, and residents also once derived an income from exploiting the peat moss on Helsington Common. In the nineteenth century, the power of the River Kent was harnessed to fuel various manufacturing industries, including a gunpowder works. However, gunpowder manufacture ended in the early twentieth century, at a time when agricultural employment also began to decline. From the 1950s, employment was increasingly found in Kendal and further afield, while leisure and tourism became a significant aspect of Helsington’s economy by the twenty-first century.

Agriculture

Field names, such as ‘ewe close’, ‘bigcroft’ (‘bygg’ meaning barley), and ‘oxen close’,¹³⁰ reflect the mixed nature of farming in the township. By the sixteenth century, ploughs and oxen were present on several farmsteads, with barley and oats as the main crops.¹³¹ In his memoirs, Stephen Brunskill, who leased Berryholme farm in the 1790s, referred to the failure of his barley crop ‘on which we greatly depended.’¹³² There is evidence that the long-ley system was used in the township by c.1800.¹³³ Orchards were also a feature on many farms from the medieval period

¹²⁹ <http://fox-hall.co.uk/prizet-prizet-stables.htm> [accessed 7.6.14].

¹³⁰ *PNW*, 112; CAS (K), WPR/27/7/2/6.

¹³¹ Based on an analysis of sixteen probate inventories, 1578-1744.

¹³² *The Life of Stephen Brunskill of Orton* (London, 1837), 47.

¹³³ CAS (K), WDX/140/10 (Lease of Holeslack Farm, 1801).

right through to the twentieth century.¹³⁴ Mild winters and free-draining limestone soil supported grass growth for grazing. At his death in 1577, Allan Bellingham, lord of the manor, possessed a flock numbering 138 sheep and 37 lambs.¹³⁵ Sheepfolds were concentrated in the northern half of the township where the land was more suitable for rough grazing.

Prior to the enclosure award of 1855, there were two areas of common waste, totalling about 1,000 acres: Helsington Moss in the south west of the township, and Helsington Barrows in the north. Following a dispute between the Stricklands and Bellinghams in 1592, the right of Sizergh tenants to pasture cattle on Helsington Barrows, which they had done for forty years, was endorsed.¹³⁶ The same legal case also made reference to the piecemeal improvement of the commons over the previous thirty years.¹³⁷ Rentals from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also identify rents owed for newly improved land.¹³⁸

The absence of a resident lord resulted in the demesne farm being tenanted from an early date. In 1320, William de Thweng leased the Helsington demesne to Roger de Kernetebey, vicar of Kirkby Kendal, for thirteen years, with de Kernetebey agreeing to build a new oxhouse and repair the old grange.¹³⁹ However, two years later, the manor was in a poor state having been burnt by the Scots.¹⁴⁰ There seems to have been no improvement by the time of William de Thweng's death in 1340, when the chief messuage was described as 'waste and ... worth nothing'.¹⁴¹

Nevertheless, the demesne at Helsington Laithes, including the water corn mill, were leased thereafter. In 1722, rent for the demesne mill and mill house amounted to £160: far greater than

¹³⁴ CAS (K), WPR/27/7/2/6; WTDV/2/40l; *Sizergh Estate Lands*, 84; Kelly, *Dir. C.&W.* (1938), 53. Examples survive at Nether Wells, Holeslack, Park End and Lane End Farms.

¹³⁵ Lancashire Archives, W/RW/K/R405B/23.

¹³⁶ *Rec. Kend.*, I, 161.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Levens Hall, Bagot MSS, Box 2/3.

¹³⁹ *Rec. Kend.*, I, 141.

¹⁴⁰ *Lancs. Inq.*, pt ii, 147. There were then 86 acres in demesne, worth 3d per acre and 5 acres of meadow worth 6d per acre.

¹⁴¹ *Rec. Kend.*, I, 143.

the £17 collected from the rents of free and customary tenants.¹⁴² Heriots had been commuted by 1680¹⁴³ while the earliest evidence of enfranchisement by the lords of Helsington dates from 1700.¹⁴⁴ By 1758, just five customary tenants remained.¹⁴⁵ Enfranchisement began much earlier for Sizergh's tenants: Sir Thomas Strickland is said to have enfranchised 82 tenants across his estates, including those at Sizergh, in 1490/91.¹⁴⁶

Among the oldest recorded farms in Helsington was Hawes, which was granted by the Stricklands to John de Camera (Chambers) in 1288.¹⁴⁷ On the death of Walter Chambers in 1581, Hawes consisted of 38 acres of arable land, 12 acres of meadow, 20 acres of pasture, and 10 acres of wood, with an orchard and a water mill.¹⁴⁸ Most of Helsington's other farms can be traced from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries,¹⁴⁹ including Bridge House (a corruption of Briggs' House), which once belonged to the first recorder of Kendal, Robert Briggs.¹⁵⁰ Bridge House farm contained 55 ½ customary (c.76 statute) acres in 1798, by which time it and many other farms in Helsington had been acquired by wealthy landowners (including the Wilsons of Rigmaiden) and let to tenants. By 1845, only one farm, High House, was owner-occupied.¹⁵¹

By the mid-nineteenth century some of Helsington's farms had also undergone a significant expansion, with five containing over 170 acres.¹⁵² The largest single farm, at 347 acres [140 ha],

¹⁴² Levens Hall, Bagot MSS, Box 2/3. By the late seventeenth century, it was common for tenant farmers to pay the bills of their lord, in lieu of rents: Bagot and Munby, *'All thing is well here'*, 177.

¹⁴³ Levens Hall, Bagot MSS, Box 18M/2.

¹⁴⁴ CAS (K), WDX/405, T2; WDRIG/Box 12 (Netherwells Deeds), no.1; WDRIG/Box 12 (Berryholme Deeds), no.19.

¹⁴⁵ Levens Hall, Bagot MSS, Box 2/3.

¹⁴⁶ N&B, I, 98.

¹⁴⁷ *Rec Kend.*, I, 136; CAS (K), WDCH/T3.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 159-160.

¹⁴⁹ Several farms have structures dating from the seventeenth century or earlier: RCHME, *Westmorland*, 108.

¹⁵⁰ Briggs was appointed by the Kendal Charter in 1575.

¹⁵¹ CAS (K), WPR/27/7/2/6.

¹⁵² Namely, Hawes, Larkrigg, Low Sizergh, Sizergh Hall Farm, and Helsington Laithes.

was at Sizergh Hall, the former demesne farm run by William Ellison.¹⁵³ Hawes stood at 177 acres [40 ha] by 1845,¹⁵⁴ rising to 198 acres [76 ha] at the time of its sale in 1896.¹⁵⁵ Between 1700 and 1845, Berryholme had grown from 40 acres [16 ha] to 83 acres [34 ha];¹⁵⁶ in 1910 it measured 149 acres [60 ha], plus 26 acres [11 ha] of wood.¹⁵⁷ In 1910 there were six farms of more than 150 acres, the largest being on the Strickland's estates at High Sizergh (282 ac; 114 ha) and Low Sizergh (166 ac; 67 ha). By 1860, all farms still practiced a mixture of arable and pastoral farming, although the emphasis varied.¹⁵⁸ Thus at Hawes, around two thirds of land was arable, while at Sizergh Hall the majority was pasture. Around half of farms also then possessed at least one orchard. Farming was still a key feature of Helsington's economy in the early twentieth century, but it had begun to decline as a source of employment.

By 1941, there were a dozen farmsteads sited within Helsington.¹⁵⁹ Just four were owner-occupied, while three had electricity. Most had over 100 acres devoted to a mix of permanent grazing and cultivation, with oats as the chief crop. All but Prizet farm had both sheep and cattle, with the largest herd being 121 head of cattle at Hawes Farm. Four farms possessed flocks of 200 sheep or more. There was also a significant number of poultry on most farms; flock sizes ranged from sixty-six at Prizet, to 411 at Bridge House. A few pigs were kept by most, although Grate Farm had 304 - in addition to large numbers of other livestock. There were sixty seven horses across these farms in total, with most being used for agricultural purposes.

Peat Cutting

¹⁵³ CAS (K), WPR/27/7/2/6. Census 1841 and 1851.

¹⁵⁴ CAS (K), WPR/27/7/2/6.

¹⁵⁵ CAS (K), WDB/22/2/1/8 (sold as two lots: one 188 acres, the other a field of 10 acres).

¹⁵⁶ CAS (K), WDRIG/Box 12 (Berryholme Deeds), no.19; WPR/27/7/2/6.

¹⁵⁷ CAS (K), WTDV/2/40.

¹⁵⁸ CAS (K), WPR 27/7/2/6.

¹⁵⁹ TNA, MAF 32/197/45.

Peat was not only used locally to fuel domestic hearths and limekilns, but was also sold to the residents of Kendal.¹⁶⁰ Properties in the township often had ‘peat cotes’ (buildings for storing peat) attached to their estate.¹⁶¹ However, the tradition of peat cutting was irrevocably changed by the Underbarrow, Helsington and Levens Drainage Act of 1838.¹⁶² The installation of a drainage system, using catchwater dykes, enabled areas where peat had once been cut to be brought into agriculture. Whereas twenty-six carts of peat a day were once transported to Kendal, by 1907 it had become an occasional occurrence.¹⁶³ By that date, only the Parsonage, Berryholme and High House possessed mosses. Surviving peat enclosures became wooded in the twentieth century.¹⁶⁴

Woodland

In 1421, the lord of Helsington had 100 acres of wood in demesne, considerably more than the forty-one acres on his estate in 1910.¹⁶⁵ In contrast, by the early twentieth century, the Sizergh demesne boasted 277 acres [112 ha] of woodland,¹⁶⁶ much of which originated from deer parks established in the fourteenth century. In 1332, William de Thweng granted to Walter de Strickland waste and wood in Helsington, with the right to enclose his land (except that at Brigsteer), with estovers for him and his tenants.¹⁶⁷ In 1336, Sir Walter Strickland was given licence to empark his wood and demesne at Sizergh.¹⁶⁸ This resulted in a park straddling both sides of the River Kent: that on the west bank became Sizergh Park (later Low Park Wood), while that on the east became Larkrigg Park. In 1361, Thomas Strickland, was given licence to empark a further 300 acres in Helsington, Levens and Hackthorpe, as a reward for his good

¹⁶⁰ CAS (K), WDSO/209/1.

¹⁶¹ See, for example, the particulars for Holeslack Farm in 1780: CAS (K), WDNT/15.

¹⁶² CAS (K), WPR/8/14/1/6.

¹⁶³ Whiteside, ‘Notes on the Chapelry of Helsington’, 122.

¹⁶⁴ OAN, *Sizergh Estate*, 86.

¹⁶⁵ *Rec. Kend.*, I, 147-148; CAS (K), WTDV/2/40. Wood and stone from Helsington was used at Levens Hall for improvements: Bagot and Munby, ‘*All thing is well here*’, 3.

¹⁶⁶ CAS (K), WTDV/2/40.

¹⁶⁷ *Rec. Kend.*, I, 143.

¹⁶⁸ *Cal. Pat.*, 1336, p.196.

service in France.¹⁶⁹ This led to the formation of a second deer park at Brigsteer, the western pale of which followed the parish boundary between Helsington and Levens.¹⁷⁰

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Sizergh estate was disparked to become managed woodland.¹⁷¹ In 1713, Brigsteer Park was reduced in size, becoming restricted to the east of Park End Lane by a large park wall.¹⁷² Afterwards, the western half of the park was disparked to become Low Brigsteer Park Wood, while the eastern half, or High Brigsteer Park, was re-enclosed to keep the deer in. The distribution of woodland on the Sizergh estate remained fairly static during the nineteenth century, although some post-enclosure planting took place at Helsington Barrows and Brigsteer Brow.¹⁷³

Woodland on the Sizergh estate was actively managed. In 1841, ‘several hundreds of feet of timber’ were put up for auction, while late nineteenth-century plans show where coppicing had occurred and the areas to be cut.¹⁷⁴ Coppicing was particularly prominent at Low Brigsteer and Low Park Woods.¹⁷⁵ In 1733/4, the Backbarrow Iron Co. was granted permission to fell trees in ‘Sizergh Park’ for charcoal, though there is no indication that any was produced on-site¹⁷⁶. There is some evidence of bark peeling and potash production at Brigsteer Park Wood.¹⁷⁷ A Jubilee plantation was created for shooting purposes in 1935, and other woods, including Low Park Wood, also had open spaces for shooting.¹⁷⁸ On taking over the estate in 1950, the National Trust produced a woodland management plan, which recorded 5,000 acres of woodland across the estate. Much of this lay within Helsington township, including Helsington Barrows,

¹⁶⁹ *Cal. Pat.*, 1361, p.551.

¹⁷⁰ OAN, *Sizergh Estate*, 4, 77.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Rec. Kend.*, III, 109-10.

¹⁷³ OAN, *Sizergh Estate Lands*, 81.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 82-83. Coppice was widely used in the local bobbin-turning industry.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

Holeslack, and Low Park Wood. By 1969, Brigsteer Wood (79 acres; 32 ha) was derelict due to a lack of coppicing, with no saleable timber left.¹⁷⁹

Manufacturing

The power of the River Kent was harnessed at an early date, with a corn mill at Helsington Laithes by 1297.¹⁸⁰ In about 1800, the mill site was developed as a marble works by Kendal Architect Francis Webster, who leased the premises from the lord of the manor.¹⁸¹ Webster constructed two water-powered mills on the site, and built a weir further upstream to improve the water supply to the mill race. The marble mills were not large employers in Helsington, with just three local residents (all living at Marble Mills Cottages) working there between 1841 and 1861.¹⁸²

The larger of the two mills polished locally mined limestone for ornamental use.¹⁸³ The building was acquired in 1895 by J. Chaplow and Sons, who used the buildings as engineering workshops for the maintenance of their traction engines and other machinery.¹⁸⁴ In 1905 the firm was described as 'haulage contractors, threshing machine proprietors and furniture removers'.¹⁸⁵ The water wheel was used to generate electricity until the 1940s, but has since been dismantled.¹⁸⁶ In 2013, the company still operated their tarmacking business from these premises.¹⁸⁷ The second, smaller mill was a saw mill. This was taken over by Gawith, Hoggarth & Co. in the 1880s and converted its use for snuff manufacture.¹⁸⁸ Snuff continued to be produced on site by water-driven machinery for more than a century after. The only change to this method of manufacture

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Cal. Pat.*, 1297, p.304.

¹⁸¹ J.W. Dunderdale, *Kendal Brown: The History of Kendal's Tobacco and Snuff Industry* (Helm Press, Natland, 2003), 131.

¹⁸² Census 1841, 1851, 1861.

¹⁸³ Parson & White, *Dir. C. & W.*, 639.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 431.

¹⁸⁵ Bulmer, *Dir. West.* (1905), 385.

¹⁸⁶ Dunderdale, *Kendal Brown*, 131.

¹⁸⁷ <http://www.jchaplow.co.uk/> [accessed 23.8.13].

¹⁸⁸ 1882 according to P.N. Wilson quoted in 'Proceedings', CW2, LXV (1965), 432.

was the addition of a small electrically-driven 'hammer mill' which was installed in 1980 to help increase production.¹⁸⁹ The snuff mill closed in 1991 and the Grade II listed building was sold and converted into a dwelling.¹⁹⁰

Gunpowder manufacture was the most significant industrialised process in Helsington in the nineteenth century. The New Sedgwick works covered an area of 27 acres [11 ha] on the Sizergh estate in Low Park Wood, on the east bank of the River Kent.¹⁹¹ The company, established by Walter Charles Strickland in 1857,¹⁹² failed in 1864, and the works were taken over by a Manchester syndicate who traded as the New Sedgwick Gunpower Company Ltd.¹⁹³ Following the Explosives Act of 1875, which introduced regulations for the gunpowder industry, the New Sedgwick works was granted a licence to continue manufacturing in 1876.¹⁹⁴ In 1886, Henry Swinglehurst became director of the company, now known as the Sedgwick Gunpowder Company.¹⁹⁵ On his death in 1896, Henry was replaced by his son, Addison, and the business became a private limited company. It remained with the Swinglehursts until late in 1917, when it was acquired by Explosive Trades Ltd.¹⁹⁶ They, in turn, became part of Nobel Industries Ltd in 1920, which was incorporated into ICI in 1926.

Most of the workforce at New Sedgwick came from neighbouring townships, rather than Helsington itself.¹⁹⁷ According to the 1861, census, only the foreman of the works lived in Helsington itself.¹⁹⁸ To facilitate access, by 1860¹⁹⁹ the company had built a footbridge across the

¹⁸⁹ Dunderdale, *Kendal Brown*, 154.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁹¹ English Heritage, *New Sedgwick Gunpowder Works, Cumbria: and Archaeological and Architectural Survey* (2003), 3.

¹⁹² *Rec. Kend.* III, 111.

¹⁹³ EH, *New Sedgwick*, 20; *Westmorland Gazette and Kendal Advertiser*, 25 June 1864.

¹⁹⁴ EH, *New Sedgwick*, 20.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*. The year 1918 is given by R. Vickers, *South Lakeland Gunpowder Manufacturing Industry, 1746-1936* (2003), Appendix II.

¹⁹⁷ EH, *New Sedgwick*, 6.

¹⁹⁸ Census 1861.

River Kent, close to the works entrance. The bridge had to be replaced when the original structure was washed away in a flood of 1874.²⁰⁰ There were numerous explosions at the site, some fatal. On 30 June 1875 an explosion killed five men and destroyed the corning and power press houses.²⁰¹ Two men were killed and four injured on 30 March 1903, in an explosion which caused £4000 worth of damage.²⁰²

The site closed in May 1935 and around fifty employees were transferred to other works or made redundant.²⁰³ A number of buildings were subsequently demolished on safety grounds. The site was requisitioned during the Second World War, the main block serving as a munitions store.²⁰⁴ The works were acquired by the National Trust in 1950 as part of the Sizergh Castle estate. Further alterations were made in 1977 to make way for Low Wood Caravan Park.²⁰⁵ The site contains a number of surviving structures, including the mill race, turbine pit, the saltpetre house, refining sheds, office and stores, together with the leat that brought water from a weir on the Kent. The works has been designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument and several of the remaining buildings are Grade II listed.²⁰⁶

Mining and Quarrying

There are remains of numerous limestone quarry workings in Helsington.²⁰⁷ Initially, limestone was used locally, but the improvement of transport networks in the eighteenth century allowed it to be exploited commercially. Several limekilns were constructed in the township, and an almost intact example survives at Holeslack Farm.²⁰⁸ Lime was in high demand to improve the soil

¹⁹⁹ CAS (K), WQ/A/11/15.

²⁰⁰ *Westmorland Gazette*, 10 Oct. 1874.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 7 Aug. 1875.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 4 April 1903.

²⁰³ EH, *New Sedgwick*, 20; *Westmorland Gazette*, 8 June 1935.

²⁰⁴ EH, *New Sedgwick*, 23.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁰⁷ Sizergh quarry (now Duke Plantation quarry) is marked 'old quarry' on the 1860 OS map.

²⁰⁸ OAN, *Sizergh Estate*, 85.

following the drainage and enclosure of the Lyth Valley. Some limestone contained colourful veins, which led to its use as ‘marble’ in decorative architectural work, particularly in Kendal.²⁰⁹

Ancillary Trades and Service Industries

Despite the establishment of several industries and an increasing population in the nineteenth century, Helsington had few tradesmen. A grocer was recorded in Brigsteer in 1851, followed by a joiner and stonemason by 1861.²¹⁰ A joinery business was recorded in the township in 1934²¹¹ and in the 1960s.²¹² No mention is made of a resident blacksmith until 1891.²¹³ The smithy, located next to the Wheatsheaf Inn, was still operational in the early 1920s,²¹⁴ but was later converted into a dwelling. The inn itself dates from the seventeenth century and remained in use in 2013.²¹⁵ In the early twentieth century, more amenities appeared in Brigsteer village, including a shop and post office, which were established by 1906 and 1910 respectively.²¹⁶ A filling station and garage was built at Prizet on the A591 in the 1920s.²¹⁷

Economy since 1945

Many of Helsington’s historic farms survived into the twenty-first century, with most coming to specialize in livestock, particularly dairy farming.²¹⁸ In 2013, the 341 acre [138 ha] farm at Low Sizergh (owned by the National Trust since 1950) had a dairy herd of 150 cattle, cross-bred from Holsteins, Swedish Red and Montbeliards, as well as a flock of 200 Swaledale and Mule sheep.²¹⁹ Low Sizergh is also an example of diversification, producing strawberries, free-range

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 85; Parson & White, *Dir. C.&W.*, 639.

²¹⁰ Census 1851 and 1861.

²¹¹ Kelly, *Dir. C.&W.* (1934), 55.

²¹² CAS(K), WPC 34/2.

²¹³ Census 1891.

²¹⁴ Kelly, *Dir. C.&W.* (1921), 55.

²¹⁵ RCHME, *Westmorland*, 109.

²¹⁶ Kelly, *Dir. C.&W.* (1906), 56; Kelly, *Dir. West.*(1910), 60.

²¹⁷ Kelly, *Dir. West.*(1929), 53.

²¹⁸ The National Trust have introduced Galloway Cattle from the Isle of Mull on their tenants’ farms on Helsington Barrows.

²¹⁹ http://www.lowsizerghbarn.co.uk/dept/working-farm_d014.htm [accessed 6.11.13]

eggs, and opening a tea room and farm shop.²²⁰ The 150 acre [62 ha] Larkrigg Farm has been in the Wilson family since 1957. They kept sheep and cattle (beef and dairy) until the early 1980s when they focused on rearing sheep for meat.²²¹ One of Helsington's few ancient farms to be lost was Holeslack. Absorbed into the Sizergh estate in 1935,²²² it ceased to function as a working farm after 1950. The Grade II listed, seventeenth-century farm house was subsequently converted into a holiday let.²²³

In 1967 the post office closed and its services were transferred to the village shop.²²⁴ This too closed some years later and was converted into a dwelling in the 1980s. However, the later twentieth century has also seen the growth of several local businesses associated with leisure and tourism. The Shenstone Country Hotel operated in the 1950s through to the 1970s.²²⁵ Since 2002 the former hotel has been a Financial Management Bureau. By 2013, there were three bed-and-breakfast businesses in the township, with caravan sites at Grate Farm and Low Park Wood. The latter site was established by the National Trust in 1977 and subsequently leased to the Caravan Club.²²⁶ Sizergh Castle and gardens have been open to the public since the 1950s, and a new visitor facilities building was constructed in 2005-6.²²⁷ There is a riding school at Larkrigg (separate from the farm).²²⁸ The opening of the A591 dual carriageway in 1971 brought more business to Prizet service station, which was run by BP in 2013. A Travelodge hotel opened on the northbound side of the site in 2006,²²⁹ replacing a Little Chef restaurant which closed in

²²⁰ http://www.northernfarmer.co.uk/diversification/10142303.Up_close_with_the_animals_at_cafe/ [accessed 22.10.13].

²²¹ Information supplied by Graham Wilson of Larkrigg Farm.

²²² CAS (C), D/Lons/L5/2/11/156 (enfranchisement 15 Oct. 1935).

²²³ <http://www.nationaltrustcottages.co.uk/cottage/holeslack-farmhouse-009017/> [accessed 22.10.13].

²²⁴ CAS (K), WPC 34/2.

²²⁵ *London Gazette*, 4 Apr. 1952, 1910; *Kendal and District Dir.* (1953), 93; *Kendal and District Dir.* (1975), 144.

²²⁶ *Westmorland Gazette*, 27 May 1977.

²²⁷ OAN, *Sizergh Estate*, 5.

²²⁸ <http://www.larkriggridingschool.co.uk> [accessed 1.11.13]

²²⁹ *Westmorland Gazette*, 3 Nov. 2006.

2005.²³⁰ Next to the filling station is the ‘Energy Centre’, a firm specializing in eco-friendly products.

SOCIAL HISTORY

Social Structure and Character

Brigsteer village was the only site of concentrated settlement in Helsington township, the rest of the community being dispersed among several farms and hamlets. Of the thirty-four households recorded in 1674, twenty had a single hearth.²³¹ More than two thirds of these were found in Brigsteer, which was largely home to peat cutters and agricultural labourers. Except perhaps for a brief period in the sixteenth century, the lord of the manor of Helsington was absent, while increasing enfranchisement in the 1700s further weakened the lord’s influence within the township, at least among the yeomany. In the long-term, more immediate social leadership was likely provided by the Stricklands. The family had been resident at Sizergh from at least the thirteenth century, albeit with significant periods of absence from the late seventeenth century.²³²

From the mid-nineteenth century, Helsington was increasingly home to individuals of independent means and professionals. Stonecross, a Victorian villa on the northern border of the township, was home to solicitor Joseph Swainson (d.1906).²³³ An even more significant addition to local society followed the building of a villa at Prizet by the Wakefields of Kendal in 1860. Prizet was later home to William Stavert (d.1905), High Sheriff of Westmorland. These large houses were also home to a number of domestic servants: in 1861 Sizergh Castle had six live-in servants, plus a gardener; while at Prizet there were seven servants besides a governess,

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 18 Mar. 2005.

²³¹ *Westmorland Hearth Tax*, ed. C Phillips, C. Ferguson, A. Wareham, (London: British Record Society, 2008), 226.

²³² See Landownership.

²³³ CAS (C), PROB/1906/WCOD/797.

coachman and gardener.²³⁴ Throughout the nineteenth century, however, most of Helsington's working community was still engaged in agricultural activities. During the first half of the twentieth century, the character of Helsington began to change as increasing numbers of residents began working in Kendal. Indeed, by the 1950s, the population was described as 'urban'.²³⁵

Community Activities

By the late nineteenth century, Helsington's communal buildings included St John's Church, the adjoining school, and the church room in Brigsteer village.²³⁶ From 1946, the parish council attempted to procure a village hall using money from the sale of timber at Strickland Quarry.²³⁷ A site for the hall was offered by the lord of the manor, Oliver Bagot in 1949.²³⁸ It was not until 1958 that a hall was acquired, in form of an old Nissan Hut. It was used as a venue for various communal activities, as well as meetings of both the parish council and the Brigsteer Women's Institute, until it was demolished in 2009.²³⁹ In 2010, a new eco-friendly Community Hall was built, the £400,000 cost of which was largely met by Lottery funding and donations.²⁴⁰ In 2013, regular activities included pilates classes, table tennis, and circle dancing. The hall also continues to host meetings of the parish council and the Brigsteer Women's Institute.

Kendal's first racecourse was constructed on Helsington's northern border, on a site at Bradleyfield farm. The venture was short-lived, with the first race taking place there in 1821,²⁴¹

²³⁴ Census 1861.

²³⁵ CAS (K), WDSO/209/1.

²³⁶ In 1913 the use of this room was charged at 5s for non-parochial purposes and 2s 6d for parochial purposes: CAS (K), WPR 27/1/2/1.

²³⁷ CAS (K), WPC/34/1.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ http://helsingtonpc.org.uk/5_8_2009.pdf [accessed 10.5.13].

²⁴⁰ *Westmorland Gazette*, 29 Oct. 2010:

http://www.thewestmorlandgazette.co.uk/news/8478886.Eco_friendly_400_000_building_for_South_Lakeland_village/ [accessed 10.5.13].

²⁴¹ *Westmorland Gazette*, 4 Aug. 1821.

and the last in 1834.²⁴² The land was afterwards returned to pasture. During the 1960s, Helsington hosted annual and bi-annual motocross races, organised by the Westmorland Motor Club.²⁴³

Education

In his will, John Jackson (d.1739) left 13s 4d a year from the rent of a shop in Kendal to provide for the education of three poor children, boys or girls, in Helsington.²⁴⁴ Jackson's additional endowment to St John's chapel of the Scar House estate was intended to provide a stipend for a teaching curate and for a school room to be built adjoining the chapel.²⁴⁵ Records show a small school to have existed in the township by 1778, with quarterly payments for instruction.²⁴⁶ This may have been replaced, however, for in 1822 it was reported that a school had been built by subscription some twenty-five years previously.²⁴⁷ By the early nineteenth century, a school master had been appointed, whose salary was made up from John Jackson's endowment, subscriptions, and school pence, with the remainder being met by the curate himself.²⁴⁸ The earliest known master (and probably the longest serving) was Joseph Pearson (d.1861), who was both clerk of the chapel and master of the school for 40 years. His tombstone in Helsington churchyard was erected by a grateful former pupil.²⁴⁹

In 1854 a new school building was erected adjacent to the church, at a cost of around £300, which was met by subscription.²⁵⁰ A house for the school master followed in 1861.²⁵¹ The church

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 24 May 1834.

²⁴³ CAS (K), WDSO/51/3/2.

²⁴⁴ Lancashire Archives, WRW/K/R449a/57.

²⁴⁵ N&B, I, 103-104. This was later questioned by the Charity Commissioners: CAS (K), WPR 27/12/1/5/1.

²⁴⁶ Cheshire Record Office, EDV/7/mff44/4.

²⁴⁷ CAS (K), WPR/27/12/1/5/1.

²⁴⁸ CAS (K), WPR/27/5/1.

²⁴⁹ Transcription of Tombstone provided by the W.I. churchyard survey of 1984, available in Kendal Archives Centre.

²⁵⁰ CAS (K), WPR/27/3/2/1.

²⁵¹ CAS (K), WPR/27/5/1; WPR/27/5/1/1.

room in Brigsteer was also used as an infant school from 1867, with the curate contributing to the mistress's salary.²⁵² In 1903, Westmorland County Council took over the running of Helsington School from the Church, but appointed Helsington's vicar, Joseph Whiteside, and the people's warden, William Stavert, to the board of managers, along with two other Helsington residents.²⁵³ By this time, the school's endowment not only included Jackson's charity of 13s 4d, but various rents from other shops and properties in Kendal and Brigsteer.²⁵⁴

From 1886, all but two of the teachers were female; indeed, on the retirement of Miss Jackson in 1919, it was remarked that there was 'no chance of a male teacher being appointed for such a small school'.²⁵⁵ Between 1886 and 1910, the school was served by 10 teachers, none serving more than six years in post.²⁵⁶ One of the shortest serving teachers stayed barely six months, citing the lack of cleanliness at the school as one of her reasons for leaving (her nine-mile walk from Gatebeck must also have been inconvenient).²⁵⁷ Short terms of office continued after the First World War: six headmistresses were appointed between 1920 and 1939. In 1920 the Education Commission were approached about the possibility of hiring a supplementary teacher; the first appointment to this post was made the following year.²⁵⁸

There were fifty-two children on the books in 1899, but average attendance was only thirty-seven.²⁵⁹ Work on farms or peat mosses often kept children away, as did poor weather.²⁶⁰ As the school building was used for meetings of the parish council, the children also received a half holiday when meetings were taken during school time.²⁶¹ There were thirty-five children on the

²⁵² CAS (K), WPR/27/5/1.

²⁵³ CAS (K), WDX/132.

²⁵⁴ CAS (K), WPR/27/11/2/1.

²⁵⁵ CAS (K), WPR/27/11/2/1.

²⁵⁶ One teacher died, while another left to get married without giving notice.

²⁵⁷ CAS (K), WPR/27/11/1/1.

²⁵⁸ CAS (K), WPR/27/11/2/1.

²⁵⁹ CAS (K), WPR/27/11/1/1.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

register in 1903, falling to nineteen by 1909,²⁶² and then rising to fifty by 1930.²⁶³ However, numbers began to decline thereafter, and the school was threatened with closure in 1946.²⁶⁴ After opposition was raised, the school was allowed to remain open. The School's primary school status was affirmed in 1960, when children aged 11 were ordered to continue their education in Kendal.²⁶⁵ In March 1965, Helsington School closed with just four pupils on the roll.²⁶⁶ The children were transferred to Kendal and the teacher, Mrs M. J. West, retired, having worked at the school since 1939.²⁶⁷

The building was leased between 1966 and 1984 by Bury Grammar School.²⁶⁸ Thereafter, Bramley Parish (Yorkshire) leased the premises before they was bought for the benefit of Bramley parishioners by the Stonestreet Trust in 1985.²⁶⁹ The building was developed by Bramley Parish Community Projects as a residential centre for children from the Leeds area.²⁷⁰ Re-named 'Lumley Fee', the centre opened in August 1987. It was run by Bramley and Rodley Community Action Group (BARCA-Leeds) from 1997.²⁷¹ In 2013 the building was purchased and redeveloped by the company 'Individual Inns', opening in 2014 as a bunkhouse, offering accommodation for walkers and holiday makers.²⁷²

Charities and Poor Relief

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ *The Westmorland Gazette Directory* (1930), 217.

²⁶⁴ CAS (K), WPR/27/11/2/1.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁸ CAS (K), WPR/27/6/1/2; WPR/27/6/1/3.

²⁶⁹ CAS (K), WPR/27/6/1/3. Named after the Rev. Stonestreet.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ CAS (K), WPC/34/Acc6722; <http://barca-leeds.org/lumleyfee.pdf>. [accessed 14.6.13]

²⁷² <http://www.lumleyfeebunkhouse.co.uk/> [accessed 4.7.14]

The Howard Orphan Home at Stainbank Green, built in 1864 and opened in 1865, was founded by the lady of Helsington manor, the Hon. Mary Howard (d.1877) of Levens Hall.²⁷³ The Home took in girls aged four and above, primarily from the Kendal Union Workhouse, and trained them for domestic service. There were twenty-nine residents in 1891²⁷⁴ and forty-four by 1911.²⁷⁵ Following the Home's closure in 1954,²⁷⁶ the property was purchased at auction in August 1956 by Westmorland County Council for £4,500.²⁷⁷ It was used as a nursery school from September 1957 to May 1958,²⁷⁸ before being converted into an old people's home in 1960.²⁷⁹ The Home closed in 1990 and the premises were sold. The building subsequently became the Stonecross Manor Hotel.

There were no privately-endowed charities in Helsington for the benefit of the poor. In 1778/9 it was reported that money collected at the offertory was given to the poor, who usually attend in person to receive it.²⁸⁰

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Helsington township lacked its own place of worship until the 1700s. As a chapelry of Kendal parish, Helsington's community instead looked to the parish church of the Holy Trinity for their religious needs: by the sixteenth century, the township's inhabitants were regularly baptized, married and buried in Kendal.²⁸¹

²⁷³ *Kendal Mercury*, 8 April 1865. A donation of £1,600 was made to the project by John Wakefield.

²⁷⁴ Census 1891.

²⁷⁵ Census 1911.

²⁷⁶ CAS (K), WDSO/209/1.

²⁷⁷ CAS (K), WDSO/165/3/2/4; WC/W/A1568/Box18/W/5/10a.

²⁷⁸ CAS (K), WC/W/A1568/Box18/W/5/10a.

²⁷⁹ CAS (K), WSMBK/11/3/12/M188 (plans approved Dec. 1959); WC/W/A1568/Box18/W/5/10a. The first resident was admitted in Jan. 1961: WC/W/A1568/Box18/W/5/10a.

²⁸⁰ Cheshire Record Office, EDV/7/mff44/4.

²⁸¹ Kendal parish registers date from 1558, and are available in print.

The church of St John occupies a site above Brigsteer village with commanding views over the Lyth valley. Founded in 1726 by John Jackson (d.1740), the chapel's position probably owes much to the fact that Jackson lived at nearby Holeslack farm. In addition to an initial grant of £200 from Queen Anne's Bounty, Jackson himself endowed St John's with Chambers Tenement²⁸² and the Scar House estate in Brigsteer.²⁸³ These endowments were granted on condition that Helsington's inhabitants subscribed £100 towards obtaining an augmentation from the Bounty.²⁸⁴ The sum of £44 12s was duly raised, with a further £55 8s donated by the curate, James Matson.²⁸⁵ In 1735, these subscriptions and £200 from the Bounty were used to purchase Kirkbarrow Field near Kirkland, Kendal, and land at Rawnrigg in Barbon.²⁸⁶ In his will of 1739, John Jackson also left a small parcel of land called 'Jack Parrock' specifically for the use of the parish clerk.²⁸⁷ The living was further endowed in 1762 with £200 given by the Dowager Countess Gower, and a further £200 from Queen Anne's Bounty. This money was used to purchase Scar Foot Farm in Underbarrow.²⁸⁸ St John's Chapel was consecrated in 1745.²⁸⁹

By 1779 the living was valued at £77 10s.²⁹⁰ This increased significantly during the nineteenth-century, largely through subscriptions, a further augmentation from Queen Anne's Bounty in 1838, and interest from invested stock in the Furness Railway.²⁹¹ In 1876, the living was further increased by a grant of £10 per annum from Trinity College, Cambridge out of Kendal rectory.²⁹² The total value subsequently amounted to £157 9s.²⁹³ In 1907, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners

²⁸² Approximately 27 acres, leased for £50 per annum in 1894: CAS (K), WPR/27/4/4/2.

²⁸³ Butler, *Cumbrian Parishes*, 207.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁶ CAS (K), WPR 27/3/2/1; Butler, *Cumbrian Parishes*, 207; N&B, I, 103-4.

²⁸⁷ Lancashire Archives, WRW/K/R449a/57.

²⁸⁸ Butler, *Cumbrian Parishes*, 207; CAS (K), WPR 27/3/2/1.

²⁸⁹ Butler, *Cumbrian Parishes*, 207.

²⁹⁰ Butler, *Cumbrian Parishes*, 207; N&B valued it at £80.

²⁹¹ £337 of Furness Railway Stock yielded £13 4s annually: CAS (K), WPR/27/3/2/1.

²⁹² CAS (K), WPR/27/2/2/2; WPR/27/3/2/1.

²⁹³ CAS (K), WPR/27/3/2/1.

awarded a further £250 to Helsington vicarage, which equated to £7 10s per annum.²⁹⁴ In 1919, the Glebe land at High Chambers Tenement was sold to Trinity College for £1,401.²⁹⁵ By c.1929 the living amounted to £246 16s 10d per annum, of which £170 came from Queen Anne's Bounty, £35 from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and around £29 from the rent of the remaining Glebe land.²⁹⁶ The latter included Kirkbarrow Farm, which was leased to Kendal Corporation prior to their purchase of it in 1931.²⁹⁷

According to his will, John Jackson desired the living to be in the gift of the owner of Holeslack and the vicar of Kendal.²⁹⁸ However, there is no evidence that subsequent owners of Holeslack exercised patronage. In 1779, it was noted that the vicar of Kendal alone had the right to nominate.²⁹⁹ At this time, the perpetual curate was John Wilson, M.A., of Lambrigg, who was appointed as a young man in 1767,³⁰⁰ and remained until his death in 1791.³⁰¹ His successor, William Moore of Kirkland, M.A., held the perpetual curacy of Helsington for forty years until his death in 1831.³⁰² The next longest serving incumbent was Thomas Whitwell Rogers, M.A., who came to Helsington aged thirty-four in 1861 and remained there until his death in 1895.³⁰³ Robert George Elton Bowers (1929-1959) served as curate for 30 years.³⁰⁴ Some incumbents, including Moore and Rogers, matriculated from Trinity College, Cambridge; but most took their degrees elsewhere.

²⁹⁴ CAS (K), WPR/27/2/2/4.

²⁹⁵ CAS (K), WPR/27/2/2/5. High Chambers was a 40 acre freehold farm.

²⁹⁶ CAS (K), WPR/27/2/2/7; WRP/26/3/1/2

²⁹⁷ CAS (K), WRP/27/2/2/7. The sale fetched £725 which was invested and the dividends paid to the incumbent: WRP 27/2/2/9.

²⁹⁸ Lancashire Archives, WRW/K/R449a/57.

²⁹⁹ Butler, *Cumbrian Parishes*, 206.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 207.

³⁰¹ Cheshire Record Office, EDA/1/9 (Act Book).

³⁰² *Ibid.*; EDA/1/11 (Act Book 1825-35). Moore was buried at Helsington.

³⁰³ *Alumni Cantabrigiensis*, v (ii), 346. Rogers was buried at Helsington.

³⁰⁴ Crockford's *Clerical Directory*, (1914, 1958-59).

Helsington appears to have been without a resident curate until the parsonage house was built in 1840. The presence of an assistant curate in 1778 implies this,³⁰⁵ and in 1783 it was reported that the minister did not reside permanently in the parish, but provided a ‘sufficient person in full orders’ to attend for him.³⁰⁶ George Wilson of Heversham is known to have officiated on behalf of William Moore.³⁰⁷ In the late eighteenth century Divine services were held twice on Sundays during the summer months and Holy Communion was celebrated four times a year.³⁰⁸ At that time the church also lacked an enclosed churchyard and font, though it was claimed that there was a ‘decent bason’ for baptisms.³⁰⁹ Whether use was made of this is uncertain, for the baptismal registers do not begin until 1813.³¹⁰ The churchyard, meanwhile, remained unconsecrated until 1822.³¹¹ The parsonage, built during the incumbency of Rev. James Muckalt (1838-50), was enlarged in 1852 and a coach house added in 1867.³¹² In 1867 a Mission Room was built in Brigsteer for use as a Sunday school. Restored in 1905, it was also used for evensong in the winter months,³¹³ and as a venue for meetings of the parish council.³¹⁴

The church was declared ‘insufficient for comfortable accommodation’ in 1858, presumably reflecting the township’s increasing population.³¹⁵ The chapel was subsequently enlarged by removing the stable on the west end and adding a vestry room. The existing gallery and pews were also removed and rearranged, and a bell gable (containing a single bell) added.³¹⁶ Just over

³⁰⁵ N&B, I, 103-4.

³⁰⁶ CAS(K), WDX/140/6.

³⁰⁷ Parson & White, *Dir. C. & W.*, 649.

³⁰⁸ Butler, *Cumbrian Parishes*, 206.

³⁰⁹ CAS (K), WDX/140/6.

³¹⁰ CAS (K), WPR/27/1/1; WPR/38/1/6/4. The marriage register begins 1823.

³¹¹ CAS (K), WRP/27/4/8/1.

³¹² CAS (K), WPR/27/4/4/2.

³¹³ John Hodgkinson, *The Township and Chapelry of Helsington* (2007), 22.

³¹⁴ CAS (K), WPC/34/1; WPR/27/6/1/1.

³¹⁵ CAS (K), WPR/27/4/2/1.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

£500 was raised by subscription for this work.³¹⁷ Further internal alterations were made in 1897, partly to accommodate an organ and boiler house.³¹⁸ The stained glass east window, made by Kayll & Co. of Leeds, was also installed, having being given by William Stavert, church warden, in memory of his sister, Elizabeth Vose of Liverpool.³¹⁹ A replacement chamber organ, made by Renn of Manchester c.1845, was purchased in 1902.³²⁰ Further work was carried out in 1908 when a new vestry was built and oak panelling added to the north, east and south walls.³²¹ At this point the position of church clerk was extinguished, and the rental income of 'Jack Parrock' instead used to pay for a caretaker.³²² Perhaps the most notable feature of the church is a mural at the east end, painted as a war memorial in 1919 by Marion Saumarez. Electric lighting was installed in 1938³²³ and the churchyard extended and consecrated in 1957.³²⁴ A kitchen extension was added to the church's north west corner in the late twentieth century.³²⁵

The Parochial Church Council first met in 1920.³²⁶ In 1929, R. G. E. Bowers was given permission to hold Helsington in plurality with Underbarrow.³²⁷ Two years later, Helsington and Underbarrow became a united benefice, with the Glebe House at Underbarrow being chosen as the new vicarage.³²⁸ As a result, Helsington parsonage and two adjoining fields in Brigsteer were sold off.³²⁹ By 1948 the former parsonage was known as 'Helsington Lodge'. Scar Cottage, the

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*; WPR 27/3/2/1: £80 was donated by Mary Howard, £68 18s 8d by William Wakefield of Prizett, and £50 by Trinity College, Cambridge.

³¹⁸ CAS (K), WPR/27/4/2/2.

³¹⁹ Hyde & Pevsner, *Cumbria*, 404.

³²⁰ CAS (K), WDX/132; WPR 27/15/1/1.

³²¹ CAS (K), WPR/27/4/2/3; WPR/27/2/8. The parsonage land totalled 5 acres.

³²² CAS(K), WPR/27/4/4/3.

³²³ CAS (K), WPR/27/4/2/4.

³²⁴ CAS (K), WPR/27/6/2/10; WPR/27/4/8/4.

³²⁵ <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1393890> [accessed 26.7.13].

³²⁶ CAS (K), WPR/27/6/1/1.

³²⁷ CAS(K), WPR/26/2/1/5-6.

³²⁸ CAS (K), WPR/27/2/3/3.

³²⁹ CAS (K), WPR/27/2/3/8. Sold for £927 10s, the proceeds were used for improvements to Underbarrow vicarage: WPR/27/2/2/8.

home of the school mistress, was also sold in 1931,³³⁰ though the church room in Brigsteer village was retained. The room continued to serve as a venue for the Sunday school and vestry meetings into the late 1970s.³³¹ However, after the Sunday School was discontinued in 1979,³³² the church room fell into disuse. It was sold at auction in 1984 and became a private dwelling.³³³

Despite Helsington being joined with Underbarrow, morning and evening services continued to be held each week at St John's until 1938. Matins and Holy Communion then took place every fortnight, though evensong continued to be held weekly.³³⁴ This pattern continued until 1959, after which there was only one service each Sunday, with Holy Communion and Evensong held on alternate weeks.³³⁵ From 1970, family communion was held on a weekly basis, but evensong only every third Sunday.³³⁶ This change coincided with the unification of the benefice of Underbarrow and Helsington with Crook in 1970.³³⁷ Two years later, the ecclesiastical boundaries of Helsington parish were re-defined to bring them into line with those of the civil parish (formed in 1969).³³⁸ Some in the PCC feared that this would mean the loss of some of their 'strongest support' in the Lumley Road area.³³⁹ But the result was a net enlargement of Helsington ecclesiastical parish. Although land between Milnthorpe Road and the River Kent were transferred to Kendal, and part of Park Moss west of Brigsteer Park was lost to Levens, Helsington gained half of Brigsteer village and a large area to the west that had historically belonged to Levens.

³³⁰ CAS (K), WPR/27/2/3/1.

³³¹ CAS (K), WPR/27/5/1.

³³² CAS (K), WPR/27/6/1/2.

³³³ CAS (K), WPR/27/6/1/3.

³³⁴ CAS (K), WPR/27/1/5/3 (Service Register 1932-1941).

³³⁵ *Ibid.* (Service Register 1942-1960).

³³⁶ CAS (K), WPR/27/1/5/4 (Service Register 1960-1980).

³³⁷ CAS (K), WPR/37/2/3/1.

³³⁸ CAS (K), WPR/98/4/5/6.

³³⁹ CAS (K), WPR/27/6/1/1.

In 1978, the merger with Crook was reversed, with Helsington, Underbarrow and Crook becoming separate benefices.³⁴⁰ That year Alexander Lofthouse was appointed vicar of the parishes of Helsington, Underbarrow and Levens,³⁴¹ holding Holy Communion and evening services on alternate Sundays at St John's.³⁴² On his retirement in 1995, he was succeeded to all three parishes by Alexandra Stockley.³⁴³ In c.2005, Helsington joined the Two Valleys Team, an informal group of eight churches,³⁴⁴ with weekly services and Holy Communion held every fortnight at Helsington. In 2013, joint services with other churches were held every fifth Sunday.

Nonconformity

There was a significant Catholic presence in Helsington during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, largely centred on Sizergh.³⁴⁵ In 1767, nineteen Catholics were recorded in Helsington, nine of whom were either members of the Strickland family or their servants at Sizergh.³⁴⁶ Ten were native to Helsington township, of whom eight were children. Out of thirty-six resident families recorded in 1779, sixteen were Papists., and it was noted that Sizergh Hall served as a 'meeting house' for Catholics.³⁴⁷ In 1431/2, Pope Eugenius IV had granted to Sir Thomas Strickland licence to possess a domestic chapel and portable altar.³⁴⁸ A Catholic chapel had been constructed at Sizergh Hall by 1773,³⁴⁹ and a priest resided there.³⁵⁰ The Strickland family continued to adhere to the Catholic faith into the twentieth century.

³⁴⁰ CAS(K), WPR/98/4/5/7.

³⁴¹ CAS (K), WPR/27/6/1/2; Crockford's *Clerical Directory* (1998/99), 433.

³⁴² CAS (K), WPR/27/1/5/4 (Service Register 1960-1980); WPR/27/6/1/2.

³⁴³ CAS (K), WPR/27/6/1/4.

³⁴⁴ <http://www.crosthwaiteandlyth.co.uk/twovalleys.html> [accessed 26.7.13]

³⁴⁵ Sizergh Hall was searched for weapons at the time of the Popish Plot: <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/strickland-sir-thomas-1621-94> [accessed 17.5.13]

³⁴⁶ *Returns of Papists 1757, Diocese of Chester* (Catholic Record Society, 1980), 156.

³⁴⁷ Butler, *Cumbrian Parishes*, 206-7.

³⁴⁸ Printed in N&B I, 95.

³⁴⁹ Goodall, *Sizergh Castle*, 51.

³⁵⁰ Cheshire Record Office, EDV/7/mff 44/4.

Methodism failed to take root in Helsington, despite the fact that the Methodist preacher, Stephen Brunskill of Orton, leased the Berryholme estate in c.1790. Brunskill initially held services at his home, where he said the ‘multitudes flocked together’.³⁵¹ However, his landlord, Christopher Wilson, did not approve.³⁵² Brunskill had more success in Levens township, where he founded a Society at Beathwaite Green in 1793. In 1751 a servant living in Helsington was described as a Quaker³⁵³ and in 1779 there was one Quaker family of five in the township.³⁵⁴

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.³⁵⁵ By 1700, it was noted that the courts were only held ‘from time to time’,³⁵⁶ but they continued at least into the 1740s.³⁵⁷

According to Machell, the Stricklands themselves once held courts leet and baron at nearby Crosscrake chapel for their estates.³⁵⁸ However, he noted that these courts had ended some eighteen years previously (c.1674), the Sizergh tenants having ‘bought themselves free’.³⁵⁹

Through divisions of the Barony of Kendal in the thirteenth century, the tenants of Holeslack were subject to the courts of the Richmond fee.³⁶⁰

Township Government

³⁵¹ *Stephen Brunskill*, 45.

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁵³ CAS (K), WQ/SR/22/12.

³⁵⁴ CAS (K), WPR/98/4/5/6.

³⁵⁵ Levens Hall Bagot MSS, Box 2/2. Referred to as ‘Helsington Hall in 1680: Levens Hall Bagot MSS, Box 18M/2. According to a Book of General fine, 1678-80, Underbarrow was administered as a member of Helsington manor. Levens Hall Bagot MSS, Box 18M/2, 6.

³⁵⁶ WDRIG/Box 12 (Netherwells Deeds), no.1; WDRIG/Box 12 (Berryholme Deeds), no.19.

³⁵⁷ Levens Hall Bagot MSS, Box 2/3 (Call book 1741).

³⁵⁸ *Antiquary on horseback*, ed. Jane M. Ewbank (1963) 68.

³⁵⁹ *Antiquary on horseback*, 68.

³⁶⁰ CAS (C), D/Lons/L5/2/11/156 & 169. The Lowthers held their courts for the Richmond fee at Kendal Moot Hall in the eighteenth century: CAS (K), 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.³⁶¹ The post of assistant overseer was created in 1857.³⁶² 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.³⁶³ 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.³⁶⁴ 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.³⁶⁵ 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.³⁶⁶ 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).³⁶⁷

³⁶¹ CAS (K), WPR/27/5/1/1 (Vestry Book 1853-1979).

³⁶² CAS (K), WPR/27/5/1/1 (Vestry Book 1853-1979).

³⁶³ Lancashire Archives, WRW/K/R449a/57.

³⁶⁴ CAS (K), WPR/27/5/1/1 (Vestry Book 1853-1979).

³⁶⁵ CAS (K), WQ/SR/86/5.

³⁶⁶ CAS (K), WPR/27/7/2/2.

³⁶⁷ *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.1946.³⁶⁸ The church room was again used until it was sold off in 1984.³⁶⁹ 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.³⁷⁰ 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.³⁷¹ 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.³⁷²

³⁶⁸ CAS (K), WPC/34/1.

³⁶⁹ CAS (K), WPR/27/6/1/3.

³⁷⁰ CAS (K), WPC/34/1; WPC/34/2.

³⁷¹ CAS (K), WPC/34/2.

³⁷² <http://www.hclt.org.uk/>