

Victoria County History of Cumbria Project: Work in Progress

Interim Draft

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Parish/township: **Mansergh** (township)

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INTRODUCTION

Description and Location

Mansergh is an agricultural township, measuring about 2,668 acres (1080 ha.),¹² which lies to the east of the River Lune in Kirkby Lonsdale ancient parish. Roughly rectangular in shape, the most southerly corner lies about two miles north of the town of Kirkby Lonsdale. The western boundary, shared for the most part with Lupton, lies in a straight line across Mansergh Common to the summit of Great Swarther (224 m./735 ft.) before heading south just beyond Hazel Rigg (170m./558 ft.). It skirts around the northern edge of Terry Bank Tarn in the west, then more or less follows the course of Blea Beck until the point at which the Blea Beck bridge crosses the Old Town to Kendal road. From there the boundary, now with Kirkby Lonsdale township, follows closely along the watercourse which later changes its name to the Lupton Beck, until, just beyond Hazel Rigg, it turns south-east towards the river Lune, which it joins at Scar Ford, south of Mansergh Hall. The Lune marks the township's eastern boundary, separating Mansergh from Barbon and Casterton. The northern boundary, shared with Killington township, largely follows field boundaries along the southern edge of Killington Common.

The township's suitability for good pasture is shown by its name which derives from the Old Norse *erg*, a shieling, indicating that the comparatively gentle slopes were used for summer

¹ 1st edn. OS map

² Bulmer *Dir. Westmd.*, 537.

grazing. The other element in the name is a personal name, either Old English, or more probably Old Norse.³

Landscape

The geological basis is paleozoic slaty mudstone and siltstone, with a covering of well-drained fine loamy soil. There is a broad stretch of good grazing land near the river, all below 90m. (295ft.). In the northern half of the township the two hills of Talebrigg in the north and Shawrigg further south both reach 240m. (787 ft.). On their eastern slopes a number of becks flow to the Lune, while to the west various small streams join the Eller Beck which flows into the Blea Beck on the township's western boundary. In the southern half of the township the rise from the Lune is very gradual and reaches only 200 m. (656 ft.) at Blease Hill and Terry Bank, both near the western border. The only stretch of water in Mansergh is the Kitmere Tarn, covering some 10 acres at a height of 210m. (688 ft.) on the slopes of Talebrigg. The township presents a green, well-watered landscape, in modern times used entirely for grazing. There is no common land.

Settlement

There is no proper village in Mansergh. The pattern of settlement is of widely scattered farm houses with the exception of Old Town, close to the centre of the township and consisting of some dozen dwellings, for the most part built in the later nineteenth century, with later additions and modernisations. The name of Old Town, indicating something larger than a single dwelling, is found as early as 1451,⁴ the reason for a settlement here being that it stands at a crossroads,⁵ although it has never included a church, school or manor house. In the mid-nineteenth century it consisted of three farm houses, two on the west side of the road and one on the east,⁶ the most southerly including a beerhouse.⁷ About 1870⁸ Old Town was enlarged by the building of a row of seven cottages, which allowed for the establishment of two small shops, one of which included a Post Office.⁹ In 1901 there were sixteen

³ A. H. Smith *Place-names of Westmorland* (Cambridge 1967), I, 47

⁴ *Rec. Kend.* II, 384. Here named as Aldton

⁵ See 'Communications'.

⁶ CAS (Kendal), WDRC/8/269: Mansergh Tithing map 1843. It is unusual for the area to find three separate farms with their houses so close together, which may indicate that they are the remains of a larger settlement

⁷ See 'Communications'.

⁸ Census returns

⁹ Kelly's Directory of 1925 is the latest to list a Post Office, which is said locally to have continued into the 1940's. It was replaced by a GRVI postbox in the wall opposite the turning to the church.

dwellings, with a population of 32. In 1910 the row of cottages included a reading room.¹⁰ Alterations since have reduced the number of houses in this row,¹¹ and divided up the ‘Durham Ox’ complex. In the early twenty-first century the hamlet contained a dozen dwellings. The more important estates in the township — Egholme, Rigmaden, Nether Hall, Mansergh Hall¹² — were all established in the eastern portion of Mansergh, nearer the river. In the early nineteenth century Rigmaden became the centre of a large estate, the others diminishing in importance to farmhouses. There was no church in the township until the eighteenth century,¹³ and no school until the nineteenth.¹⁴

Communications

The road known as the ‘Old Scotch Road’, named as early as the twelfth century as ‘Galwathegate’,¹⁵ runs from north to south through the length of the township on its western side. For many centuries it was the drove road from Scotland, and at some time it has been walled, leaving wide verges for the cattle to graze. Until railway transport put an end to the droving trade in the mid-nineteenth century the inn at Old Town, the Durham Ox,¹⁶ was the next night stop after Three Mile House, ten miles to the north (see KILLINGTON). From there the drovers continued to Kirkby Lonsdale, a further ten miles south. At Old Town also the Kirkby Lonsdale to Kendal road branches to the west, towards Old Hutton, and another lane runs eastwards from the village to the church and the parish hall (once the school), and joins the minor road near the river which serves Rigmaden and the three other main estates of the township.

There has never been any form of public transport on the narrow roads, but at an unknown date, probably soon after the Clapham-Lowgill line opened its station at Barbon in 1861, the Rigmaden estate built a bridge across the Lune to gain access to the railway. This was a private facility: fifty keys to the gates were struck and issued to the Rigmaden family, employees and tenants, and public servants such as the doctor and the policeman.¹⁷ In 1923

¹⁰ CAS (Kendal), WT/DV/2/44 Domesday Survey.

¹¹ One demolished, six doubled up to make three larger dwellings.

¹² *Rec. Kend.* II, 374. Four ancient freeholds dating to at least the fifteenth century. Machell named the same four (*Antiquary*, 20)

¹³ See ‘Religious History’

¹⁴ See ‘Social History’.

¹⁵ *Rec. Kend.* II, 417. Later this became ‘Gallowgate’

¹⁶ Parson & White *Dir.* 1829, 697. Not shown on the Tithe Map, 1843, but still named in Kelly’s P.O. Directory for 1873.

¹⁷ Local inf.

the bridge and access road were transferred to the South Westmorland District Council, who opened it to the public. In 1948 a plan, later abandoned, laid out the M6 motorway between Rigmaden house and the Lune.¹⁸

Population and Social Character

There is no evidence of the population before the later seventeenth century, when it may be estimated at about 150.¹⁹ This is confirmed by Thomas Machell, who calls it ‘a hamlet with about thirty families in all.’²⁰ In 1801 the population was 134, rising slowly but steadily to 247 in 1871,²¹ then falling steeply, in the wake of an agricultural depression and changes in farming methods towards greater mechanisation, to 180 in 1921. It continued to fall throughout the twentieth century, to 119 in 1961, and 93 in 1971,²² before making a slight recovery: in 2013 it was reckoned that there were 60 households and a population of 125.²³ In the seventeenth century the prosperity of the township is indicated by the fact that the Hearth Tax return of 1674-5 shows that Rigmaden Hall paid tax on nine hearths and Nether Hall on six. Of the other 31 houses listed, there was one with four hearths, four with three, and ten with two. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Rigmaden became an important country estate, owned by the Wilson family, the first of whom, Christopher Wilson (1765-1845) made a fortune as a tradesman and banker in Kendal, and then settled in the country, acquiring a large proportion of the township, much of which has since reverted to smaller private ownership.

MANORS AND ESTATES

Mansergh was a hamlet of Barbon, and often referred to as ‘in Barbon’, although they were divided by the river.²⁴ The two vills were ‘said to have been originally one manor; and only broken into separate divisions for convenience, by reason of the river Lune running

¹⁸ Hyde & Pevsner *Cumbria* (Newhaven/London) 1967/2010, 512.

¹⁹ Westmorland Hearth Tax Michaelmas 1670 and Surveys 1674-5, C. Phillips, C. Ferguson, A. Wareham (London/Carlisle 2008), 205.

²⁰ *Antiquary on Horseback*, ed. J.M.Ewbank (CWAAS Extra Series XIX, Kendal 1963), 26

²¹ Of which Rigmaden Hall supplied nineteen – five in the family and fourteen servants.

²² Census returns.

²³ Local inf.

²⁴ *Rec. Kend.* II, 374.

between'.²⁵ The Domesday Survey lists Barbon as part of Earl Tosti's land in Whittington, and Mansergh part of that held by Torfin in Austwick.²⁶ Later, the two were firmly linked, possibly at the time of the division of the Kendal barony in the mid-thirteenth century, certainly by 1349 when Thomas de Langker of Mansergh released his rights in certain land 'in the hamlet of Mansergh in the vill of Barbon'; a recognizance of 1356 uses the same phrase concerning certain lands held by Roger de Burton of Sir Thomas de Ros.²⁷

When the Barony of Kendal was divided from the mid-thirteenth century, Mansergh was also partitioned. In consequence, Mansergh Hall and Nether Hall in the south of the township were held of the Marquis Fee (from 1301), Rigmaden and Egholme in the northern half were held of the Richmond Fee. Two separate manors are referred to in the fourteenth century, one based on Mansergh Hall and the other on Rigmaden.

The manor of Mansergh (Mansergh Hall)

The southern portion of the township was held by the de Mansergh family, whose name occurs first in 1180 and survives for some 500 years.²⁸ In 1206 Mary the widow of Adam de Mansergh is mentioned.²⁹ In the first half of the thirteenth century Robert de Mansergh gave ten acres to the Canons of Cockersand, a gift which was followed up by other donors of the same name, Roger son of Adam being particularly generous with seven separate grants between 1210 and 1246, amounting to between twelve and fifteen acres.³⁰ Although familial ties between the early holders of the name cannot be firmly identified, kinship may be assumed. Several were of importance outside the area. In 1304 Roger de Mansergh went with the archdeacon of Nottingham to the court of Rome,³¹ probably the same Roger who at his death in 1332 held the serjeanty of king's forester in the forest of Pickering.³² Twenty years later John de Mansergh, clerk, was a commissioner for the crown with among other

²⁵ N & B I, 25. (Some farmland is still owned on both sides of the river. OS (1st edn. 1858) shows 'Sucky Ford', SD623839. There have been two other fords, SD634822 and SD634831, the latter still being used by farm vehicles).

²⁶ *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation* (London) 2003, 796

²⁷ *Rec. Kend.* II 383.

²⁸ *Rec. Kend.* II 374 .

²⁹ *Rec. Kend.* II, 376.

³⁰ *The Chartulary of Cockersand Abbey* (Chetham Society N.S.57,) 1025-1032.

³¹ *Rec. Kend.* II, 380.

³² *Rec. Kend.* II, 381.

responsibilities the survey of weights and measures in the East Riding.³³ In 1383 another John de Mansergh represented Westmorland in Parliament.³⁴

The first reference to a manor of Mansergh comes from an indenture of 1342,³⁵ by which John de Mansergh agrees that Alice, widow of William de Mansergh, should enjoy for life certain lands in Mansergh, including a moiety of the capital messuage of 'Gylderbek', with the grange, water-mill, and court that belonged to it. No early records of this court appear to survive, but an inquisition of 1617³⁶ lists the mill as belonging to Mansergh Hall, identifying it with the earlier 'Gylderbek'. Because of its position in the extreme south of the township, it was also known from time to time as 'the Nether Hall'.³⁷ Christopher Mansergh held this capital messuage and other lands by fealty and the service of six barbed arrows³⁸ until his death in 1568. The inquest of 1590 found that he left only an unmarried daughter aged 40,³⁹ but the Mansergh name continued, presumably through a minor branch of the family: William Mansergh was later referred to as 'of Nether Haule otherwise Mansergh Haule.' Bryan Mansergh (d. 1621); who in 1609-10 was appointed high collector of the subsidy granted to James I,⁴⁰ was the last of the family to live there. Family tradition states that the Civil War of 1642 caused the Mansergh family to sell their estate and migrate to County Tipperary.⁴¹ The old hall, whose position is uncertain but according to tradition, near the road, became tenements for labouring families, and was later demolished, the present Mansergh Hall being built nearer the river in 1843 by William Thompson of Underley (see KIRKBY LONSDALE), as the datestone over the front door shows.⁴²

After the death of Bryan Mansergh, his successors not living there, Mansergh Hall appears to have been in the hands of Rowland Dawson. An inquest of that year refers to a messuage and tenement called "le Holmehouse" held of Roland Dawson 'as of his manor of Mansergh'.

³³ *Rec. Kend.* II, 381.

³⁴ *N & B I*, 252.

³⁵ *Rec. Kend.* II, 381.

³⁶ *Rec. Kend.* II, 390.

³⁷ It is not always easy to decide which of these two estates is being referred to.

³⁸ *Rec. Kend.* II, 375.

³⁹ *Rec. Kend.* II, 388.

⁴⁰ *Rec. Kend.* II, 388.

⁴¹ *AWL*, 199.

⁴² *Inf. Mr. and Mrs. Hadwen.*

The estate was sold in 1661⁴³ to Thomas Godsalve of Borwick in Lancashire (1622-1694), a prosperous merchant of Amsterdam, who had also purchased Rigmaden (see below). Mansergh Hall descended with that family until it was acquired in the early nineteenth century by Alexander Nowell (1761-1842).

Born at Gawthorpe Hall in Lancashire, Nowell made his fortune in India as an indigo manufacturer before returning to England and acquiring an estate based on Underley Hall (see KIRKBY LONSDALE). After his wife's death in 1824 he used her fortune to purchase the Mansergh Hall estate including Lowfields, Deansbiggin and Belle Vue. In 1840 the estate was sold with the rest of his land to William Thompson M.P.⁴⁴ Thompson was born at Grayrigg in Cumberland, an association which led him to buy the north-country estate. He went to London in his youth, and made a large fortune in a family iron firm in South Wales, later extending his interests to docks and railways. He represented Westmorland in Parliament from 1841 to his death in 1854 at the comparatively young age of 60. He is buried in Kirkby Lonsdale. The estate descended through his daughter, Lady Bective, to the Cavendish-Bentinck family until it was broken up after the Second World War (see KIRKBY LONSDALE).

Nether Hall

It seems probable that the 'Mansergh Hall' was called 'Nether Hall' by the time it was acquired by the Redmanes of Thornton in the fifteenth century. It is referred to in a marriage contract of 1498 between Walter, son and heir of Walter Strickland to Anne, the daughter of Richard Redmane, which stipulated that the couple be awarded ten marks per annum from lands "called Manser Hall".⁴⁵ In 1580 the tenant was Rowland Hardye, a tenancy not without its problems. Marmaduke 'Readmanne' of Thornton, Co. York, esquire, stated that upon information given to him immediately after the death of his grandfather 'great variance, stryfe, suit, contention and contrariness hath been stirred, moved and had between the said Marmaduke and Rowland Hardye of Mansergh, his tenant, within his lordship of Mansergh, concening tenant right upon a certain ground called Tyrrebanke.'⁴⁶

⁴³ *Rec. Kend.* II, 397.

⁴⁴ Pearson, *Annals*, 52.

⁴⁵ *Rec. Kend.* II, 384.

⁴⁶ Greenwood *The Redmans of Levens*, 164.

Of the building now known as ‘Nether Hall’ the earliest firm information is afforded by a handsome doorway and datestone set in the oldest part of the building, referring to John Baynbridge and his wife Isabel and the year 1637. John Baynbridge bought an estate from Roland Glover in 1631, probably that bought by an earlier Roland Glover from John Redman of Thornton in 1565.⁴⁷

The manor of Rigmaden

There was an early family ‘de Rigmaidin’: in 1260 Richard de Rigmaidin and Alice his wife owned land in Mansergh which they sold to Nicholas son of Roger de Mansergh.⁴⁸ The latest reference found to the family is in 1546 when John Rigmayden the elder and Mary his wife sold a tenement ‘in the vill of Manscer’ to George Banebrygg.⁴⁹ The first reference found to Rigmaden as a manor is in 1355. The inquest of Matilda, widow of Thomas Ward of Kendale, found that she held ‘the manor of Rigmayden’ by cornage, wardship and relief.⁵⁰ Rigmaden is also described thus in 1390 (though not in the Inquisition post mortem for Thomas Ward in 1411) and in two final concords from the mid sixteenth century.⁵¹ However, there are no records of manor courts being held and the 1612 Inquisition post mortem for Thomas Ward only refers to a capital messuage called “Riggmayden Hall”, with its demesne.⁵² Thomas Machell did not visit Mansergh on his journey of 1692, but he noted that ‘Rigmaden is the manor house’.⁵³

Rigmaden continued in the Ward family until Thomas Godsolve bought the estate in 1661 from Henry Ward, the latter of whom had been fined for delinquency in 1650.⁵⁴ Mr Thomas Godsolve is listed in the 1676 rental of the Richmond fee as paying 1s.⁵⁵ Thomas’s granddaughter Margaret, wife of the Rev. Thomas Mawdesley of Mawdesley Hall in Lancashire,⁵⁶ was in possession of the estate in 1773,⁵⁷ until her death in 1781.⁵⁸ In 1784 her daughter and granddaughter sold it to John Satterthwaite (1743-1807), of Castle Park, Lancaster, a

⁴⁷ *Rec. Kend.* II, 386.

⁴⁸ *Rec. Kend.* II, 379.

⁴⁹ *Rec. Kend.* II, 385.

⁵⁰ *Rec. Kend.* II, 382.

⁵¹ *Rec. Kend.* II, 385.

⁵² *Rec. Kend.* II, 389.

⁵³ *Antiquary on Horseback*, ed. J.M. Ewbank, CWAAS Extra Series XIX (Kendal 1963), 26.

⁵⁴ *Rec. Kend.* II, 396.

⁵⁵ *Rec. Kend.* II, 397.

⁵⁶ AWL,137.

⁵⁷ CAS (Kendal), WQ/R/LT 1773 (Lonsdale Ward) Land Tax Return 1773.

⁵⁸ CAS (Kendal), WD/Rig 1/Box 7/1.

prosperous West India merchant.⁵⁹ Christopher Wilson (1765-1845), hosier and banker of Kendal, bought it for £15,500 from John Satterthwaite's estate in 1822. At that time it was described as the 'manor' of Mansergh, including the capital farms of Rigmaden Hall, Holme House, Gillfoot and Hollins,' and 1,300 acres on Mansergh Common.⁶⁰

Thomas Godsolve rebuilt Rigmaden Hall in 1680, leaving a memento of the origin of his wealth in a Dutch motto on his datestone.⁶¹ There is no record of the appearance of this house, which Christopher Wilson⁶² (1765-1845) demolished and rebuilt magnificently to a design of Francis and George Webster.⁶³ His descendants continue there in the twenty-first century, the house having been unroofed and gutted after the Second World War, and rebuilt again in 1991.⁶⁴

Egholme

Egholme (or Hegholme) does not seem to have had any manorial pretensions. It was an area rather than a single holding, held of the Richmond Fee, and is frequently listed separately from Mansergh.⁶⁵

In 1370 it was held by Adam de Middleton and the family continued there until at least 1501⁶⁶ but at some time before the mid-sixteenth century the estate had passed to the Baines. A wooden tablet preserved in Kirkby Lonsdale church. refers in homespun verse to the Baines of Egholme, the last of whom, William Baines, sold the property to the Christopher Wood whose initials head the verse. 'This porch by ye banes first builded was

Of heigholme hall they weare;
And after sould to Christopher wood
By william baines throf last heyre;
And is repayred as you see

⁵⁹ *AWL*, 263.

⁶⁰ CAS (Carlisle), DLONS/L/5/4/21/2. It is not known when the manorial rights were extinguished, but after the death of William Wilson in 2010, lawyers could find no trace of them: Inf. Mrs. M. Wilson,

⁶¹ '1680. Niemant: sonderyvandt: waeckt: ende: bidt' ('No one lacks an enemy – watch and pray'). The local mason misspelt 'sonderyvandt'.

⁶² Second of the name, first of Rigmaden.

⁶³ A. Taylor & ed. J. Martyn, *The Websters of Kendal: A North-Western Architectural Dynasty* CWAAS Record series XVII (Kendal 2004), 119. There is an illustration of the Webster house in *Country Life* magazine June 10, 2004, p. 130. Its downspouts for collection of rainwater from the roof were inside the house, with the result that the building suffered severely from dry rot from the 1880's onwards. (Inf. Mrs. M. Wilson).

⁶⁴ Hyde and Pevsner *Cumbria*, 512. The architect was Edward Mason.

⁶⁵ *Rec. Kend.* II, 374.

⁶⁶ *Rec. Kend.* II 383.

And sett in order good
By the true owner nowe thereof
The foresaide Christopher wood'

There is good reason to believe that the 1668 date given for this sale on the wooden tablet is an erroneous repainting, possibly of 1608, 1606, or even 1596, since there is little doubt that it refers to the Christopher Wood who was escheator for Westmorland in 1610 and died in 1612; the church porch and the burial plots it covered were his private property.⁶⁷ The Tithe Map shows two farms, of Egholme and Egholme Gate. These are now absorbed into one, under the latter name. It is part of the Rigmaden estate, with buildings no earlier than the late eighteenth century.

The later nineteenth century saw Mansergh township almost entirely divided between two landowners.⁶⁸ As listed in 1910, Lady Bentinck of Underley in Kirkby Lonsdale owned 450 of its 2,670 acres (1,081 ha), Christopher Wyndham Wilson of Rigmaden almost all the rest. At the beginning of the twenty-first century the Wilson family continued at Rigmaden on diminished estates of 1,446 acres (585 ha).⁶⁹

Two smaller estates deserve mention. Gillfoot, a farm in the north-east corner of the township, close to the Lune, gained notoriety in the late seventeenth century as the home of the Bainbridge brothers, members, in spite of their standing as well-to-do yeomen, of a notorious gang of malefactors.⁷⁰ The Conders, a yeoman family, owned Terry Bank farm since the sixteenth century at least.⁷¹ In 2011 the small estate of about fifty acres was sold, the family having moved south.⁷²

⁶⁷ R.P. Brown 'Christopher Wood's Inscription in Kirkby Lonsdale Church', CW2, xxv (1925), 321-330.

⁶⁸ CRO (Kendal), WT/DV/2/31 1910 Domesday Record.

⁶⁹ Inf. J. Lambton of Carter Jonas, land agents, Kendal. The figure is within Mansergh: they also owned land in Lupton and Middleton.

⁷⁰ A. Macfarlane *The Justice and the Mare's Ale* (Oxford) 1981.

⁷¹ Edward Conder buried Kirkby Lonsdale 8 Feb. 1542. (Not necessarily first of the line but the Kirkby Lonsdale parish registers go no further back.) From a wall tablet in Kirkby Lonsdale church. Bulmer's Directory 1906 (p. 538) quotes 'in the time of Henry VII' (died 1509). Source of this information not known, possibly from the Conder family.

⁷² Inf. C. Hollett, Sedbergh.

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Agriculture

The pattern of settlement in Mansergh has varied little over the centuries. Apart from the small cluster of buildings at Old Town, the farms were always few and widely scattered. An analysis of seventeenth century inventories⁷³ indicates the fertility of the land, and the corresponding prosperity of its farmers: one in four owned plough oxen, and one in five one or more wheeled vehicles; almost all had cattle, whereas sheep, which are typically run on less rich pastures, appear to have been of comparatively minor importance. Also significant as indicating prosperity is the listing of books in six households out of the 30 studied, and guns in five. No inventory mentions potatoes, but at a later date these were grown in some quantity. In 1789 Thomas Fenwick of Burrow Hall noted 'Ned went for five loads of potatoes to Mansergh, they are to be 3s.6d. a load.'⁷⁴

The number of farms in the township varied little through the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries. Fifteen, possibly not a complete list, are named in 1826.⁷⁵ Towards the end of the century Colonel Christopher ('Kit') Wilson of Rigmaden (1844-1918) was notably responsible for agricultural improvements and innovations, which must have had their effect on his tenant farms. He was one of the chief breeders of shorthorn cattle in south Westmorland.⁷⁶ From the 1870's he developed horsebreeding. He crossed his famous pony stallion 'Sir George' with fell pony mares to establish a breed eligible for the Hackney Stud Book, and took a first prize for his stallion 'Lord Derby' at the 1878 Paris exhibition. Characteristically, his enthusiasms waxed and waned: in 1880 he sold off eleven Clydesdale mares and stallions, 53 hackneys, two coach stallions and seven roadster stallions.⁷⁷

In 1943 thirteen farms are listed.⁷⁸ Of these only four were of less than a hundred acres; in addition all had access to considerable acreages of rough grazing. Apart from Rigmaden which had 'some barley' and Mansergh Hall with six acres of wheat, there was no ploughed

⁷³ Analysis of 30 inventories 1570-1700 held at Preston R.O.

⁷⁴ Diary of Thomas Fenwick Esq. of Burrow Hall, Lancashire and Nunriding, Northumberland, 1774 to 1794, ed. J.S.Holt List and Index Society Vol. 47, (2011) II, 277.

⁷⁵ Parson and White Gazetteer, 697.

⁷⁶ A breed developed by Lord Lonsdale in 1810. (*Westmorland Agriculture 1800-1900*: F.W. Garnett, Kendal 1912), 185, 187.

⁷⁷ *Westmorland Agriculture*, 187.

⁷⁸ TNA MAF32/199/85/1943 Survey.

land. Cattle and sheep were kept in considerable numbers, as also poultry. Electricity had not yet come to the area, but one or two farms had an engine of some kind. Green End worked with a 'converted Austin' and Mansergh Hall owned a tractor, one of very few in the area. Elsewhere horses were still in use, Rigmaden, as yet unmechanised, having no fewer than twelve. The inspector's⁷⁹ comments showed very varied standards, from 'Extraordinarily well farmed and managed', 'An education to inspect' to 'Capable of much improvement' and the damning 'Too much theory, not enough work'. At the beginning of the twenty-first century only six working farms remained in the township, four of them (Nether Hall, Gillfoot, Mireside and Hawkrigg), owner-occupied, Rigmaiden/Holme House and Mansergh Hall rented. Two had dairy herds, Rigmaden/Holme House with about 200 cattle, Hawkrigg an organic herd of about 40.⁸⁰

It would seem that at an early date there were considerable woodlands in the township: in the first half of the thirteenth century Lambert de Santhon gave to the canons of Cockersand as part of a gift 'free mast fall in the woods of Mansergh, saving to the grantor and his heirs his wood between the two Holegills.'⁸¹ Later, apart from growth at the edge of the Lune, the woodland was mainly amenity plantation on the Rigmaden estate after its acquisition by Christopher Wilson in 1821.⁸² There has been further woodland planting on the estate since 1992.⁸³

Mining and quarrying

The only evidence of mining or quarrying is a small quarry, probably for roadstone, already marked as 'disused' on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey, lying on the Kendal road half a mile from Old Town.

Service Industries and other businesses

A water-mill is mentioned in 1342, associated with the capital messuage of Gylderbeck.⁸⁴ It was still active in 1661, included in the estate bought by Thomas Godsolve⁸⁵ from Henry

⁷⁹ Inf. Mrs. M. Wilson.

⁸⁰ Inf. Mr. and Mrs. Hadwen.

⁸¹ *Chartulary of Cockersand Abbey*, ed. T. Brooke and W. Farrer (Chetham Society 1905), 1033. The name Holegill has not been traced.

⁸² The Tithe map (1843) shows approximately 170 acres of woodland, much of it recently planted.

⁸³ Inf. Mrs. M. Wilson.

⁸⁴ *Rec. Kend.* II, 381.

⁸⁵ 1622-1694. Pedigree of the family CWAAS Vol. XIV (1897), 450-1.

Brabyn.⁸⁶ For how long it continued is not known; no mention of mill or miller has been discovered in directories or census returns, but a field called Millholme Bank on Black Brook, a small tributary of the Lune, probably indicates the site.⁸⁷

In 1829 two blacksmiths and a grocer were listed,⁸⁸ and later in the century the growth of the Rigmaden establishment brought with it a variety of small trades, such as laundress, coachman and gamekeeper.⁸⁹

Economic history since 1945

In the twenty-first century, there was little obvious manufacturing or trade premises in the township, with the exception of a hog roast business at Mansergh Hall,⁹⁰ holiday cottages at Hawkrigg, and second-hand farm machinery for sale at Birks. but the advent of the computer meant that businesses could be run from private houses.⁹¹

In the early twenty-first century public water supply was not available to all properties. Electricity came to the township about 1958, although Rigmaden continued to use the private facility installed by Kit Wilson.⁹²

SOCIAL HISTORY

Apart from the cluster of buildings at Old Town, Mansergh has always consisted of scattered individual dwellings. In 1674, the only grouping in the Hearth Tax list was for three names under the heading of 'Rigmaden Hall'.⁹³ Old Town was not mentioned although it may be indicated by five names listed separately from the rest. The township has had few community buildings, apart from the Durham Ox alehouse in Old Town. Local tradition maintains that the house called Mansergh High⁹⁴ was also a tavern, because of the representation of a black horse on its datestone, and its position midway on an old road between Old Town and

⁸⁶ *Rec. Kend.*, II, 396.

⁸⁷ SD 611 842.

⁸⁸ *Parson & White Directory*, 697.

⁸⁹ Census returns.

⁹⁰ Local inf.

⁹¹ Local inf.

⁹² Local inf.

⁹³ *Westmorland Hearth Tax Michaelmas 1670 & Surveys 1674-5*, ed. Colin Phillips, Catherine Ferguson and Andrew Wareham (London and Carlisle 2008) 205.

⁹⁴ SD 603 836.

Rigmaden, now mostly degraded to a grass track. The 1732 initials B/JF refer to John Bland and his wife, but nothing has been found to confirm or deny that he was an innkeeper.

In 1692 Machell noted ‘great horse matches’ at Blackbrow in Mansergh, a quarter of a mile south east of Rigmaden,⁹⁵ a pastime which was probably carried on for many more years. It was still labelled ‘Race Course’ in 1825,⁹⁶ and on modern maps is called the Racecourse Allotment. Later community activities were slow in developing, perhaps owing to the dominating influence of the Wilson family, the first of whom, Christopher (1765-1845), moved out of Kendal where the family had made their fortune in banking. He employed Francis and George Webster to replace the ‘superior newly built farmhouse’⁹⁷ at Rigmaden with a ‘wonderfully sited, severely Greek’ mansion. ‘Of finest buff ashlar, with corner pilasters, it has a grand porte cochere on the entrance side and a semicircular bow framed by tripartite and pedimented windows overlooking the valley’.⁹⁸ He was succeeded by his elder son Edward (1796-1870), followed by a younger son, William (1810-1880), and William’s son, Col. Christopher (‘Kit’) Wyndham Wilson (1844-1918). The last was the most colourful member of the family, subject of many local anecdotes,⁹⁹ owner of the first two motor cars in the district, registered as EC1 and EC2, in whose time Rigmaden became the first house in Westmorland, and the second in the country, to be lit by electric light.¹⁰⁰ The family continued in direct succession with Christopher Hulme Wilson (1875-1941), Charles Eric Wilson (1916-1995), and William Wilson (1946-2010), last of the male line.

There was a school in the township at an early date: the parish register records the christening of Sibella daughter of Richard Shawe schoolmaster of Mansergh in 1646.¹⁰¹ Where this school was held is not known, probably in the schoolmaster’s house, and perhaps after 1726 in the church. In 1839, among other improvements to his extensive estate, the first Christopher Wilson of Rigmaden built a school and gave £20 for the schoolmaster’s salary¹⁰², a sum which was continued by his successors until 1880.¹⁰³ The building is

⁹⁵ *Antiquary*, 26.

⁹⁶ Hodgson’s map of Westmorland.

⁹⁷ A. Taylor & J. Martin *The Websters of Kendal*. CWAAS Record Series Vol.XVII (Kendal 2004).

⁹⁸ Hyde and Pevsner *Cumbria*, 512.

⁹⁹ He was to be seen in Kirkby Lonsdale with a tame otter on a lead. T. Wilson Goad *My Valley* (Kirkby Lonsdale 1993), 53-4.

¹⁰⁰ A. Pearson *Annals of Kirkby Lonsdale* (Kendal 1930) 215-6. The first was Cragside in Northumberland.

¹⁰¹ CRO (Kendal) Kirkby Lonsdale parish register.

¹⁰² J. Satchell and O. Wilson *Christopher Wilson of Kendal* (Kendal 1988).

¹⁰³ Local inf. 2011.

inscribed on the outside ‘Rigmaden School’ with the Wilson crest.¹⁰⁴ It was built with two schoolrooms although for most of its existence there was only one teacher. The available records do not go back to the opening, but it is recorded that in 1851 Alexander Robinson was the schoolmaster.¹⁰⁵ In 1905 there were 31 children attending, and Miss Nibbs was the schoolmistress.¹⁰⁶ Inspectors in the first half of the twentieth century found the education consistently good,¹⁰⁷ but other problems arose. The numbers may well have fallen below sustainability, and the last teacher, Miss Wilson, was ill for a considerable time. In March 1945 the school was temporarily closed and the children transferred to Kirkby Lonsdale.¹⁰⁸ In July 1946 the school closed finally, on the advice of the managers to the Primary Education sub-committee. The schoolteacher’s house remained a dwelling, the school building was converted for use as a community hall, and in 2015 was being considerably improved.¹⁰⁹

In contrast to the pattern in some neighbouring townships, very few buildings in Mansergh are rented to holiday-makers. In 2010 there were only three, and no houses offering bed and breakfast accommodation.¹¹⁰ There has however been some use of farm houses and buildings, no longer needed as the size of farms has increased, by people commuting to Kirkby Lonsdale and Kendal.¹¹¹ In 2016 there were eight houses occupied by retired people, mostly in dwellings set up in the outbuildings of Rigmaden house, and in the old estate buildings which were developed in the 1980’s.¹¹²

Probably owing to the long domination of a single landowning family, the Wilsons of Rigmaden, there is no history of communal welfare and no established charities in the township.

¹⁰⁴ AWL, 322. ‘A demi-wolf rampant double-queued sable.’

¹⁰⁵ Mannex *Directory* 1851, 361.

¹⁰⁶ Bulmer *Dir. Westmd.* 539.

¹⁰⁷ CAS (Kendal) School Inspectors’ Reports WPR/73/11.

¹⁰⁸ Education Committee Minutes.

¹⁰⁹ Local inf. 2011.

¹¹⁰ Inf. Mr. Metcalfe, Parish Council Chairman, 2011.

¹¹¹ Local inf.

¹¹² Inf. Mr. and Mrs. Hadwen.

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Mansergh had no church until 1726. Although there was a manorial connection with Barbon, the only way to cross the Lune to Barbon church was by a ford, which must have been often impassable, the river rising and falling very quickly according to the weather conditions. Mansergh people therefore used the church at Hutton Roof (see HUTTON ROOF), and the connection continued after Mansergh church was built,¹¹³ one curate serving both.

Jacob Dawson, a Kendal man who had made his money in Patna in the East Indies, and then moved into the country to Nether Hall in Mansergh, was responsible for the building of the first church, dedicated to St. Peter. It was on the present site which was part of his estate, but nothing now remains of it except a small datestone showing 1726 inserted in a plaque concerning the later rebuild. Dawson, who died in 1737, is not buried here,¹¹⁴ nor mentioned anywhere in the church, although he was very concerned that his heirs should look after it in a fitting manner. 'As I have been liberal to my said son Edward Cooke Dawson I desire he will be very careful in performing every part of my will on his part and that he will wall out the Chapel yard at Mansergh Chapel and make it large in front and that he will promote the Interest of the said Chappel not only according to his promises made to me in the presence of his Brethren and others that were Witneesses with him to the conveyance I made of the Ground to erect the said Chapel upon.'¹¹⁵

The local inhabitants agreed to pay for their seats in the first church to provide some income. With Jacob Dawson's help they raised the £200 necessary to acquire a similar sum from Queen Anne's Bounty. Further augmentations and charitable bequests raised in all £1000, which was spent on land in Old Hutton, Casterton and Dent, resulting in an annual income of £41.¹¹⁶ The catechism was taught and the Sacrament given twice a year to some 23 communicants.¹¹⁷ No entry has been found for Mansergh in the 1851 religious census.¹¹⁸ In 2013 the congregation averaged ten except for occasions such as a carol service.¹¹⁹

¹¹³ Butler, *Cumbria Parishes*, 223.

¹¹⁴ Buried in Kendal, as was his wife (RCHME, 122).

¹¹⁵ CRO (Preston), WRW/L 1737 Will of Jacob Dawson.

¹¹⁶ *Cumbria Parishes*, 223.

¹¹⁷ *Cumbria Parishes*, 223.

¹¹⁸ PRO HO129/575 1851 Religious Census.

¹¹⁹ Local inf.

There is little evidence of the appearance of the original church as it existed before 1829. Plans by George Webster exist for additions in that year, but it is not clear from these exactly what was done.¹²⁰ In 1851 it was described as ‘a neat building with a turret and one bell’.¹²¹ The present church in Late Perpendicular style, of dark limestone with thin sandstone bands, is by Paley and Austin, and dates from 1880.¹²² It was paid for by subscriptions and donations. The original estimate was for £1700, the final cost £1844. The stone for its building was brought from Hutton Roof. The font is of fine white marble from New Zealand. The west window is by Lavers, Barraud and Westlake and is from the earlier church.¹²³ On the wall of the tower is a remarkably large and ornate monument to the first Christopher Wilson of Rigmaden (1765-1845). A vicarage was built in 1866, on a site given to the benefice by Lord Kenlis, and sold as a private house about 1966.¹²⁴

Not all incumbents can be traced. William Shield served 1872-1881, Edward Furnston 1881-1922.¹²⁵ The available service book¹²⁶ dates only from 1934. In that year the incumbent, John Muirhead (1928-37), was conducting four services on Sundays and three on some others: not infrequently he was the only person present. The twentieth century saw a number of short incumbencies, during which the number and frequency of services steadily declined - two on Sundays in the 1940’s, one in the 1950’s alternately morning and evening, one a fortnight in the 1970’s, and one a month from the 1980’s. In 1938 Mansergh, in spite of objections from its parishioners, was absorbed by Kirkby Lonsdale,¹²⁷ the effective beginning of a process which ended in 1976 with an Order in Council merging seven churches into the new parish of Kirkby Lonsdale, known as the Rainbow Parish. To celebrate the merger, a stained glass cross in the colours of the rainbow was inserted into a south window.

¹²⁰ A.Taylor and J. Martin *The Websters of Kendal*, CWAAS Record Series XVII I (Kendal 2004), 143.

¹²¹ *Mannex Directory 1851*, 356. There is a photograph in the vestry taken probably in 1880.

¹²² Hyde and Pevsner *Cumbria*, 512.

¹²³ Letters at Rigmaden from Paley and Austin.

¹²⁴ Inf. from a local inhabitant who bought it in 1969.

¹²⁵ Inf. in the church.

¹²⁶ In 2015 in the hands of the chairman of Mansergh PCC.

¹²⁷ *Annals Today*, 358.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The two vills of Barbon and Mansergh were ‘said to have been originally one manor; and only broken into separate divisions for convenience, by reason of the river Lune running between’.¹²⁸

Some copies remain of eighteenth century manor court proceedings, covering transfers of land rentals, at courts held at Rigmaden under the chairmanship of the owner, Thomas Godsolve (1699-1750), and his granddaughter Margaret Mawdesley (1708-81).¹²⁹

A parish meeting was established in 1894. Two subjects dominated its first years. One was the establishing of the township’s rural lanes as public roads to ensure their better upkeep, the other was the Recreation Ground. This 4.1 ac.(1.7 ha.) enclosure, established under the act of 1836 ‘for the purpose of exercise and recreation of the inhabitants,’ lies half a mile out of Old Town on the Kendal road. In an unsuitable position and too rough for its primary purpose, from the beginning it has been let for rough grazing, originally for £1 10s. a year, a sum which in the twenty-first century had risen to £150. In 1912 some of the modest accumulated income was used to buy a piano for the school. In 1921 it helped to finance the War Memorial, and has since at intervals been used to support the parish hall.¹³⁰

In 1935 a request from the Rural District Council that all rights of way should be marked on a map was turned down by the parish meeting on the grounds that there were so many pathways commonly used in the township that it was impossible to map them all. The poor upkeep of the roads was fairly constantly reported to the County Council throughout the twentieth century, evidently with little result.¹³¹ In 2010 the meeting voted against Mansergh’s incorporation into the Yorkshire dales National Park. The Diamond Jubilee of 2012 was celebrated by a party in Rigmaden garden and a bonfire on Stangana Hill.

In contrast to many rural townships, in the early twenty-first century the annual meeting regularly secured a very good public turnout, commonly about 25 members of the public attending. The reason possibly was that the parish, the parochial church council and the

¹²⁸ N & B, I, 25. (Some farmland is still owned on both sides of the river. OS (1st edn. 1858) shows three fords, SD623839, SD634822, SD643831, the last still being used by farm vehicles in the 21st century.

¹³⁰ Minutes 1894-present day with the chairman/secretary.

¹³¹ Parish meeting minutes.

parish hall committee arranged their annual meetings to take place one after the other on the same night.