

**Victoria County History of Cumbria Project: Work in Progress
Interim Draft**

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Parish/township: **MIDDLETON**

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INTRODUCTION

The name Middleton is recorded in Domesday,¹ and may have been so named from a Roman signal station lying half way between the forts of Burrow in Lonsdale and Low Borrow Bridge.² Middleton is a largely agricultural township in Kirkby Lonsdale parish, 7276 acres (2945 ha.), in extent,³ lying on the east side of the Lune, which provides its western boundary. On the south it is divided from Barbon by the Eller Beck, and to the north and east it is bounded by Yorkshire. From the enclosed land near the river it slopes upwards to the uninhabited area of Middleton Fell, which covers about 4000 acres⁴ and reaches a summit of 1900 ft. (579m.). From these heights the main becks to the Lune are, from north to south, the Middleton Hall Beck, the Stockdale Beck (called the Luge Gill, the Wrestle Gill and the Thirnbeck Gill in its higher branches), and the Millhouse Beck which becomes the Abbey Beck before it reaches the Lune. The Yorkshire border runs along the open fells between the headwaters of these streams and those of the becks which run north and east into the Dent valley to join the river Dent. The population all dwells below the 130 ft. (40 m.) contour.

Landscape

The river Lune forms the western boundary of the township for almost its entire length, except for about a mile in the north, where the boundary is its subsidiary, the Rawthey. From the river the land rises gradually to the 100 ft. (30m.) contour, then increasingly rapidly to plateau at the top of the fell. Several becks run from the higher ground to the Lune, the main ones from north

¹ Domesday Book: a complete translation (A.Williams & G.H.Martin) London2003, 797

² D.J. Woolliscroft 'The Ring Ditch site above Middleton hall, Cumbria: Surface and Resistivity Surveys', *CW2*, xcv (1995), 61-71

³ Bulmer *Dir.Westmd.* 540

⁴ CAS (Kendal) WDRC/8/292 Tithe Map

to south being the Middleton Hall, Stockdale, Tossbeck, Abbey, and Blackbeck. To the east side of Middleton Fell the becks such as Western Gill flow eastwards into Yorkshire. There is some old woodland in the beck gills, and at the north end in the Rawthey valley, but most of the patches of amenity woodland have been planted since the 1830's.⁵

Settlement

A possible early village site, more easily identified from aerial photographs⁶ than on the ground, lies 400 yards south of Middleton Hall.⁷

Middleton developed as a mediaeval township, but it was always a township without a centre. In 1675 the population was listed under seventeen headings, some of which were sizeable hamlets - Eskholme had eighteen names, Beckside nine and Tossbeck six.⁸ None developed into an established village, and most later dwindled to single tenements. Middleton Hall, presumed to have been originally built in the late fourteenth century, stands at the midpoint of the road through the township. Half a mile to the south, in an isolated position, the church and school were built in the seventeenth century. The smithy was at High Green at least from 1806⁹, with a combined shop and post office nearby in the second half of the nineteenth century, until the business was moved to Barbon in 1890.¹⁰ Of the two licensed premises, the Swan, originally the White Swan, so named from the crest of the Moores of neighbouring Grimeshill, stands beside the Sedbergh road a little to the north of the church;¹¹ the Head is near the northern boundary, and acquired its licence with the coming of the railway. Some railway cottages opposite were demolished for the road to be widened in 1960.¹² Station House, nearby, was adapted from part

⁵ CAS (Kendal), WDRC/8/292. Tithe Map

⁶ *Middleton in Lonsdale: Written by and dedicated to the people of Middleton past and present* (Kendal 2000), 18. See also D.J. Woolliscroft 'The Ring Ditch site above Middleton Hall, Cumbria: Surface and Resistivity Surveys', *CW2*, xcv(1995), 61-71

⁷ SD 632875

⁸ *Westmorland Hearth Tax Michaelmas 1670 & Surveys 1674-5*, C. Phillips, C. Ferguson, A. Wareham (British Record Society/CWAAS) London/Kendal 2008, 205

⁹ *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*, 112

¹⁰ *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*, 20

¹¹ The date 1590 has recently been set on the front but this is wrong. Previous owners writing in *Middleton-in-Lonsdale* cite 1690 as the original building date, and a member of the family which left in 1983 remembers an engraved date, believed to be 1670, on an internal window.

Grimeshill, for which this was the home farm, was entirely rebuilt in 1690.

¹² *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*, 8

of the railway station buildings. Entries in the Middleton parish register for 1860 refer to railway labourers living in 'the huts'. These were temporary dwellings situated, it is believed, at High Green near the Swan inn.¹³ Apart from Abba, where four houses stand in fairly close proximity, the character of the township is that the farmsteads are scattered and isolated, although in recent times some have acquired a subsidiary cottage or two, sometimes with the conversion of unwanted outbuildings.

Communications

Three roughly parallel lines of communication traverse the township from north to south: two roads, one of them Roman, and the railway. For the most part the modern road (now the A683) follows the course of the Roman road, with slight deviations probably dating from the eighteenth-century turnpiking.¹⁴ There is one larger deviation near the centre of the township, where for a quarter of a mile the later road swings away from the river on to higher ground. At this point a Roman milestone was discovered in 1836.¹⁵ It carries an original inscription recording the mileage from Carlisle and a later one recording its discovery and subsequent setting up in a more prominent position, about 200 yards from where it was discovered and about 100 yards from the later road.¹⁶

Half a mile from the northern boundary of the township the road turns slightly to the west and crosses the Rawthey, a tributary of the Lune, into Sedbergh by a bridge dated 1670, while the track of the Roman road, here called Jordans¹⁷ Lane, continues in a direct line and appears to have crossed the Rawthey by a ford about a mile above the bridge.

The turnpike, part of the main Settle to Sedbergh highway, dates from the Turnpike Act of 1761/2.¹⁸ There was a tollbar at Middleton Head¹⁹ but no trace remains. Called the Street Bar it was built by John Bainbridge and Company in 1765 and tolls were first collected in that year,

¹³ *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*, 23

¹⁴ Three of the original milestones are still in place in Middleton, 6, 4, and 3 miles from Sedbergh (Inf. M. Kingsbury, 2014)

¹⁵ SD623859.

¹⁶ P. Graystone, *Walking Roman Roads in Lonsdale and the Eden Valley* (Lancaster 2002), pp. 9-10. In 2013 it fell down, perhaps owing to cattle rubbing against it. It may be reset in a different position, more accessible to the public.

¹⁷ A family name which appears in the 1674 Hearth Tax.

¹⁸ CAS (Kendal), WQ/R/TT: the Sedbergh Turnpike Trust account book shows operations beginning in 1762.

¹⁹ CAS (Kendal), WDRC/8/292. Still shown on the Tithe Map (1832).

although the chain was not put in place until 1766.²⁰ Most of the farm settlements however, lead off a narrow road higher up the fell, running more or less parallel with the A683 from Middleton Hall to the Barbon boundary. Gawklands, a ruined building near the Barbon boundary on the 160 ft. contour, is said to have been an inn on a drove road from the Dent valley, which continued to a ford across the Lune at Scar Brow.²¹

The Ingleton to Lowgill branch of the London and North-Western Railway opened in 1861 and was connected to Clapham in 1862.²² The line ran the length of the township, for the most part some hundreds of yards to the east of the turnpike, crossing to the west at the northern end to accommodate Middleton station, and crossing back again. The more northerly of the two bridges which carried the line across the road remains, the other was demolished in 1984 to allow for road widening.²³ Two other bridges remain in the southern part of the township, carrying the approach roads to the farms of Sowermire and Barwick Hall. The building called Middleton Smithy, now a dwelling, has the date 27 March 1861 crudely inscribed on the window lintel, said to commemorate the passing of the first train.²⁴ The station was closed to passenger traffic in 1931, but the line continued for passenger traffic until January 1954, for freight until 1964, and was kept open for a further three years as an alternative in case of heavy snow or other blockage on the main west coast route to Scotland. The track was finally closed in July 1966, and the rails were removed in 1967.²⁵

In 2014 public transport consisted of one bus between Sedbergh and Kirkby Lonsdale on Thursday (market day). A small building on the side of the main road a short distance south of the church looks like a bus shelter but was not so intended. It was built with money left over from the millennium project to provide a shelter for the township notice board.²⁶

Population and social character

²⁰ CAS (Kendal), WQ/R/TT Sedbergh Turnpike Trust account book

²¹ SD608811. Local inf. 2014

²² D. Joy, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain Vol. 14. The Lake District* (Newton Abbot/London)1983, 14

²³ *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*, 24

²⁴ *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*, 23

²⁵ Joy, *Railways Vol. 14*, 45

²⁶ Inf. P.Yorke 2014

There is no village in Middleton, and although the township was at one time quite heavily populated, there seems never to have been such a centre. In 1675 89 dwellings paid hearth tax,²⁷ suggesting a head count between 350 and 450. Fleming's listing of 1695²⁸ gives a head count of 288.²⁹ In 1773 52 dwellings paid Land Tax,³⁰ but this may have been an under-estimate as in 1779 it was reckoned that there were 69 houses.³¹ In 1801 there were 303 inhabitants. In 1821 the head count was 321,³² at the 1851 census 275. A sharp rise to 366 in 1861 was due to the building of the railway: eight huts were built by the railway company to house the large number of labourers employed. These numbers did not last: in 1906 the population was 239,³³ in 1921 209,³⁴ and in 1931 193.³⁵ The 1991 census recorded the population as 114, and by 2014 it was almost certainly lower, as young people left and dwellings were used as second homes and retirement homes.

The uneventful character of the township has not been much disturbed since the seventeenth century, when it gained a brief notoriety through the activities of the Smorthwaite brothers of Abbey Farm, the elder of whom, William, in spite of his position as High Constable of the ward in 1677/8, was hanged with his brother Henry in 1684 for house-breaking and robbery.³⁶

LANDOWNERSHIP

At the Conquest Middleton was one of the twelve members of Thorfinn's manor of Austwick which was in the king's hand in 1086.³⁷ About the middle of the twelfth century Gospatrick son of Orm exchanged it with the first William de Lancaster for Workington and Lamplugh.³⁸ It was held of the barony of Kendal, partly of the Richmond and partly of the Marquis Fee. The lesser part was of the Richmond Fee for a rent of 4s 4d, paid in 1283 by Gilbert de Milneburn to William of Lindsaye.³⁹ At the end of the fourteenth century the same rent was paid by Thomas

²⁷ *Westmorland Hearth Tax*, 180, 205

²⁸ CAS (Kendal) WDRY Box 32 File 1 4/4/39. Lonsdale Ward

²⁹ It seems likely that he omitted younger children.

³⁰ CAS (Kendal), WG/R/LT Land Tax Returns 1773

³¹ *The Cumbria Parishes 1714-1725 from Bishop Gastrell's Notitia*, ed. L.A.S. Butler (Kendal, 1998), 224

³² Parson & White *Directory* 1829, 686

³³ Kelly *Dir. Westm.* 1906, 540

³⁴ Kelly *Dir. Westm.* 1925, 102

³⁵ Kelly *Dir. Westm.* 1938, 98

³⁶ Alan Macfarlane, *The Justice and the Mare's Ale* (Oxford, 1981)

³⁷ *Domesday Book*, 796

³⁸ *Rec. Kend. II*, 400

³⁹ *Rec. Kend. II*. 401

Warde and William son of Thomas Whyttington, and in 1411 William Whyttington was again mentioned as the tenant, but this is the last mention which has been found of a connection with the Richmond Fee.⁴⁰

The Manor of Middleton and two thirds of the vill was held in 1390 by Henry de Ullaythornes, of the Marquis Fee, at a rent of 27s.⁴¹ A farmstead in the township still bears the name of Ullathorne. They may have been tenants of the Middleton family and were certainly connected with them: there is mention in 1359 of John de Ullathornes as guardian to Thomas son of Alexander Middleton.⁴² Numerous occurrences of the name 'de Middleton' appear at least from the twelfth century (William son of Ketel de Middleton is mentioned in 1180),⁴³ but reliable evidence of the family's lineage begins with Thomas Middleton of Middleton at some time during the reign of Edward III (1328-1377).⁴⁴ Three versions of the Middleton descent have been preserved,⁴⁵ of which the 1664 version is probably the most reliable, attested by William Middleton (b. 1605), a Colonel in Charles I's army, who did not attempt to record more than four generations before himself, back to Sir Geoffrey Middleton, major-general to Henry VIII in the expedition to Boulogne in 1513 and knighted by him. The three generations after Sir Geoffrey appear to have held no public office.

The family was locally important, considerable landowners beyond the bounds of this township. An inquest in Kendal in 1581, after the death of John Middleton, son of Sir Geoffrey, listed his holdings as 80 messuages and the manor in Middleton, and other estates in Kirkby Lonsdale, Hutton Roof, Lupton, Casterton, Barbon and Mansergh. Moreover through his wife, Anne Tunstall of Thurland Castle in Lancashire, he held 30 messuages in Kirkby Lonsdale, twelve in Sedbergh, and twelve in Dent. He had also purchased nine other messuages in Middleton from Thomas Ward gent.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ *Rec. Kend. II*, 407

⁴¹ *Rec. Kend. II*, 407

⁴² *Rec. Kend. II*, 405

⁴³ *Rec. Kend. II*, 400

⁴⁴ *N & B. I*, 253

⁴⁵ *Cumberland and Westmorland Visitation Pedigrees*, ed. Joseph Foster (n.d.) 88-90. The three versions are irreconcilable.

⁴⁶ *Rec. Kend. II*, 408-10

Middleton Hall, the ancient seat of the family, presumed to have been originally built in the fourteenth century,⁴⁷ and much altered in every century since, still stands at the midpoint of the township. In 1692 it was described as ‘an old, ruinous, castle-like house’.⁴⁸ Soon after it became a tenant farm, and has remained so, which may explain the survival of original features which an owner-occupier might well have modernised. The great hall with its south cross wing dates from the original build, although the hall chimney stack was inserted in the sixteenth century.⁴⁹ The screens passage remains, with three doorways which probably led to the cellar, the kitchen and the buttery. There is now no trace of the chapel, which was already ruinous in 1692.⁵⁰ The outer walls, except where modern buildings have replaced the original north wing, date from the fifteenth century, the courtyard being originally approached through a gatehouse which has vanished but can be recognised by two window openings and the remains of a fireplace at first-floor level.⁵¹ Some fragments of fifteenth century glass remain in the hall windows.⁵² In the south wing an upstairs room has a sixteenth-century fireplace with the arms of Middleton on the left and Middleton impaling Tunstall⁵³ on the right. The ground-floor parlour or withdrawing room (at one time used as a Methodist chapel)⁵⁴ has a seventeenth-century overmantel and some panelling, all apparently made up of different pieces, including two columns from a bedhead on either side of the fireplace. At one end of a board inserted at ceiling height and running the width of the room is carved the motto ‘Venturum exhorresco diem’.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ RCHME *Westmorland*, 170-2

⁴⁸ *Antiquary on Horseback*, ed. J.M.Ewbank (CWAAS Extra Series XIX; Kendal, 1963),34

⁴⁹ RCHME 170-2. Presumably it replaced one in the same position as there is no other trace of a hearth in the hall.

⁵⁰ *Antiquary* 34. See also ‘Religious History’.

⁵¹ This wall is the only part of the building to be listed.

⁵² One of the four panels contains a monogram MR (RCHME) or M/AR (M.W.Taylor ‘On Middleton Hall’, *CW1*, vii, 1884, 96-102). Flower’s Visitation of Yorkshire (quoted in Foster’s Pedigrees of Cumberland and Westmorland) shows Richard de Mydelton who married Alice Middleton at roughly the right period.

⁵³ John son of Sir Geoffrey Middleton (temp. Henry VIII) m. Anne Tunstall of Thurland Castle (N& B, 254)

⁵⁴ See ‘Religious History’

⁵⁵ ‘I dread the coming day’. Amateurish lettering and a mis-spelling of ‘exhorresco’. The woodwork and beamed ceiling of which it is a part could well date to the time of William Middleton, Colonel in Charles I’s army, fl. 1664 when he certified a pedigree at the Visitation. The phrase might refer to the execution of Charles I.

Three sons of the last John Middleton died young,⁵⁶ and the estates descended to two daughters, the elder of whom, Mrs. Bridget Heblethwaite, was still alive to be visited in 1691 by Thomas Machell, who to his regret found that both women had married ‘countrymen, and it troubled me much to see so small a difference between a person so well descended and a plain country wife.’⁵⁷ Bridget’s husband was John (or Joshua) Heblethwaite of Dent. Her three sons all died childless,⁵⁸ and her two daughters married into a family of attorneys in Kirkby Stephen. Bridget’s sister Mary married James Cragg, also of Dent, and again there were three sons who all died without issue.⁵⁹ About 1707⁶⁰ Mary, the daughter of Mary Cragg, married Giles Moore of Grimeshill⁶¹ to whom she carried part of the Middleton Hall estate, an inheritance which she had shared with her sister. The marriage raised the fortunes and the profile of the Moore family.⁶² Giles is called ‘yeoman’ in the parish register, but later members of the family progressed through the eighteenth century from ‘gent.’ to ‘esquire’,⁶³ remaining in the township until the twentieth century. They had been of some importance in Middleton since at least the seventeenth century, when Thomas Layfield of Fellgarth petitioned that he was threatened by Roger Moore because he reported him for speaking against the king. ‘Moore is very rich’, he reported, ‘and so great an oppressor that almost no poor man dares speak against him for fear of him and his sons who are the rudest, most drunken, desperate young men in the county’.⁶⁴ The case was heard at Orton the following year by Sir Philip Musgrave and Sir Henry Bellingham but it appears that no action was taken.⁶⁵

By the later seventeenth century, the majority of the tenants were freeholders⁶⁶ of small estates. In the next century part of the demesne remained in the Moore family⁶⁷ while another part, including the manor and the old hall, was sold (through an intervening Benjamin Middleton,

⁵⁶ N & B, I, 255

⁵⁷ *Antiquary on Horseback*, 34-5

⁵⁸ N & B, I, 255

⁵⁹ N & B, I, 255

⁶⁰ First child baptized at Middleton, 1708. CAS (Kendal), W/PR 19 Kirkby Lonsdale parish records

⁶¹ N & B, I, 255. Grimeshill stood at map ref. SF621866. Rebuilt 1836 to a design by George Webster, demolished in 1938. A photograph appears in N. & P. Dalziel Kirkby *Lonsdale in Old Photographs* (Stroud 1996), 75.

⁶² N & B, I, 255

⁶³ *The Registers of Middleton-in-Lonsdale 1670-1812* transcribed by J.F. Haswell (Penrith 1925)

⁶⁴ Calendar of State Papers – Domestic – Charles I, Vol. 13, p. 360

⁶⁵ Calendar of State Papers Vol. 15, p. 585

⁶⁶ *Antiquary*, 34

⁶⁷ N & B, I, 255

who was no relation of the original family) to Dr. Adam Askew of Newcastle, the second of three generations of eminent physicians, descendants of a family of that name originally from the Millom area.⁶⁸ In 1773 ‘Doctor Askew’ paid Land Tax on Middleton Hall and Ullathornes, he and the Moore family being responsible for a third of the township.⁶⁹ In 1830 Askews still paid land tax on the hall among other property⁷⁰, but very soon after it and the manor reverted by purchase to the Moores, who in 1832 held 2700 acres⁷¹ out of a total of 7276. They were recorded as still holding the estate in 1910,⁷² the last male of the line, William Middleton Moore, having died in 1909. His widow lived at Grimeshill until her death in 1937, although it was acquired in 1919, with almost 6000 acres of Middleton⁷³, by George Morland Beck, a member of a Ravenstonedale family. Originally a cattle-dealer, he had eloped, about 1889, with a Miss Hewitson, also of Ravenstonedale, heiress to her grandfather who had migrated to London and there made a fortune in the furniture trade.⁷⁴ In the financial slump of the 1930’s, in order to preserve the farms, Grimeshill⁷⁵ was demolished in 1938 and the building materials sold. At the same time and for the same purpose about 5000 trees were cut down, including some fine old timber round Middleton Hall. The Harrison-Beck family continued into the twenty-first century as Lords of the Manor and landowners in Middleton, retaining the land to enlarge certain farms and selling off the redundant houses to private owners.⁷⁶

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Until the nineteenth century the economy of Middleton was entirely agricultural. The population was confined, as it still is, to that part of the township, less than a half of the total acreage, lying near the river and below the 130 ft. (40 m.) contour. This reflects the geological division

⁶⁸ N & B, I, 255

⁶⁹ CAS (Kendal), WQ/R/LT (Lonsdale Ward) Land Tax Return 1773

⁷⁰ CAS (Kendal), WQ/R/LT (Lonsdale Ward) 1830 Land Tax Return 1830

⁷¹ CAS (Kendal), WDRC/8/292 Tithe Map 1832

⁷² CAS (Kendal), WT/DV/2/45 1910 Domesday Survey

⁷³ The difference between this figure and that taken from the Tithe Map is the 3500 acres of Middleton Fell, common land registered to C. Harrison-Beck as Lord of the Manor, 25 August 1980, under the Commons Registration Act 1965, at a hearing in Kendal held by the chief Commons Commissioner. (Ref. 262/U/275)

⁷⁴ Inf. C. Harrison-Beck, Ravenstonedale, great-grandson of George Morland Beck, 2014

⁷⁵ Photograph in N. & P. Dalziell Kirkby Lonsdale and District (Stroud 1996), 75. The house stood off the road, behind the Swan inn, which was then a farm called Close Foot.

⁷⁶ Inf. C. Harrison-Beck. By 2014 twelve farmhouses had been sold under this plan.

between the well-drained fine loam of the lower ground and the shallow and peaty soil in the upland, some of it barely suitable for rough grazing.

A list of tithes from 1370 shows considerable cultivation of corn,⁷⁷ but this lessened in favour of cattle on the lower ground and sheep on the higher slopes. The same list shows less disparity in the size of land-holdings than was evident by the seventeenth century,⁷⁸ when for instance Miles Buskell, who died in 1612, owned only ‘half a horse.....part of two stots and a calfe’, while William Mansergh of Borwick Hall in 1641 was a breeder, and therefore supplier, of oxen (‘8 oxen....2 ox beasts....2 ox calves’). He owned, and would have rented out, a bull. Significantly, he also had ‘wheels and carts’ at a time when these were rare. John Middleton of Middleton Hall in 1626 had even more wheeled vehicles: ‘Two peeple carres and their wheeles and one wodde carr and one waine carte.’

The number of holdings varied relatively little over the years. The mediaeval list shows twenty; in 1826 there were 26 farms in the township, four of them owner-occupied;⁷⁹ in 1851 there were 27,⁸⁰ in 1906 28.⁸¹ In 1943⁸² there were 24, only one of which, the owner-occupied Applegarth, had electricity. At that date thirteen of the holdings had the second George Morland Beck as their landlord, who in almost every case was labelled by the inspector as one who neglected his property.⁸³ Only five acres in the township were noted as arable - four acres of barley, one of wheat. Six farms are noted as having ‘unlimited grazing on Middleton Fell’ and the sum total of sheep held by the township was over 7000. In the year 2000 there were fifteen working farms, of which six still had dairy cattle.⁸⁴ By 2014 there were still fourteen working farms but only two dairy herds.⁸⁵

In 1832 there were only 123 acres of woodland in the township,⁸⁶ an area which was later considerably enlarged by amenity planting round Grimeshill.

⁷⁷ *Rec. Ken II*, 406

⁷⁸ CAS (Preston), WRW/L. An analysis of 32 inventories from 1585 to 1713

⁷⁹ Parson and White *Gazetteer*, 697

⁸⁰ Mannex, *Directory* 1851, 362

⁸¹ Bulmer, *Directory* 1906, 544

⁸² TNA, MAF 32/199/86

⁸³ But see above, ‘Manors and Estates’ p. 12

⁸⁴ *Middleton in Lonsdale* (Kendal 2000)

⁸⁵ Inf. Mrs H.Watson (2014)

⁸⁶ CAS (Kendal), WDRC/8/292 Tithe Map (1832)

There have been mills on two sites in the township. The deeds for 'Millhouse' date back to 1597, and refer to a 'water corn mill'.⁸⁷ Small settlements called Millbeck and Mill House, named in the Hearth Tax returns,⁸⁸ and the present Millhouse Beck, indicate the site. A 'miller from Middleton' is mentioned in 1782,⁸⁹ but by 1851 both Millbeck and Mill House are listed as farms,⁹⁰ and no trace now remains of a mill building or mill leet. An eighteenth-century map shows another mill, apparently on the Stockdale Beck, just south of Middleton Hall. Again, no trace remains.

The Clapham Junction to Lowgill branch line was opened to passenger traffic in September 1861,⁹¹ at first with only one train a day each way, later increased to three. The station, goods yard and some railway cottages were on a site at the north end of the township near a farm called the Head whose owner acquired a licence during the building operations and renamed the premises as the 'Railway Tavern', which after the closure of the line retained its license but reverted to the old name. The station closed to passengers in 1931, but the line continued for freight until 1964, and was kept open for a further three years as an alternative in case of heavy snow or other blockage on the main west coast route to Scotland.⁹² The track was finally removed in 1967, and the railway bridge over the A683 at the northern end of the township demolished in 1984 to allow the road to be widened.⁹³

The 1851 census cites a blacksmith, basket weaver, tailor, joiner, two gardeners, a shoemaker, a schoolmaster and two railwaymen. At the dominant mansion of Grimeshill lived William Moore, his wife and one child, with twelve living-in staff: butler and footman, cook, two housemaids, schoolroom maid and dairymaid. Unusually, the coachman, gardener, carpenter and a farm labourer also lived in. Another gardener lived in the lodge and the gamekeeper in a cottage. Forty years later,⁹⁴ with agriculture depressed, Grimeshill, still the centre of an important landholding, was more modestly staffed: a family of three had six indoor servants.

⁸⁷ CAS (Kendal), WDSO 264/2 *Important Houses in Middleton: A summary of documents*, K.J.Lancaster (2002)

⁸⁸ *Westmorland Hearth Tax*, 205

⁸⁹ *The Diary of Thomas Fenwick Esq. of Burrow Hall, Lancashire and Nunriding, Northumberland, 1774 to 1794*, ed. J.S.Holt, I, 170

⁹⁰ *Mannex Directory* 1851, 362

⁹¹ R.G. Western *The Lowgill Branch: a lost route to Scotland* (Longfield 1971) 29

⁹² *The Lowgill Branch*, 42

⁹³ *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*, 25

⁹⁴ 1891 census

In the late nineteenth century there was a post office and grocer's shop at High Green, but in 1890 the owners moved their shop to Barbon (q.v.).⁹⁵ The Post Office was noted at Low Green in 1906, but had gone by 1923.⁹⁶ A post box remained in the wall of the house called Smithy. By the year 2000 there was an increasing number of small industrial sites in the township. The old railway yard housed a builder, an industrial timber company, two gas distribution businesses, and a fuel depot. Elsewhere in the township there was an electrical business at the Head, the Water Board's fish hatchery near Middleton Hall, classic cars for hire at Tossbeck, and a business at Beckside Hall producing plants for green roofing.⁹⁷

SOCIAL HISTORY

Middleton, two and a half thousand acres larger than any other of the Kirkby Lonsdale townships, nevertheless has no village. The area was once far more heavily populated than it is today: ninety dwellings paid Hearth Tax in 1674⁹⁸ compared to half that number in 2000.⁹⁹ At the earlier date the largest grouping, under the heading of Eske Holme, had eighteen taxpayers, where now a single house, built in the eighteenth century, is so-called. None of the earlier groupings, which may in any case have been fairly scattered, could have been called a village. There was no church, no school, no inn, no tradesmen. The only focal point was provided by Middleton Hall, which stood isolated more or less at the centre point of the township. It became a tenant farm at the beginning of the eighteenth century and remained so.

The earliest evidence for recreational activities is the great Middleton Hall clipping in July, first held in the early nineteenth century, a day when as many as 2000 sheep might be clipped, ending with a feast and dancing in the great hall.¹⁰⁰

A hut, without running water or other basic necessities, was set up near the school for the Women's Institute which met here from its establishment in 1923¹⁰¹ until it was disbanded in

⁹⁵ *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*, 70.

⁹⁶ Bulmer, *Dir. West*.

⁹⁷ Inf. Mrs. H. Watson (2014)

⁹⁸ *Westmorland Hearth Tax*, 204-5

⁹⁹ *Middleton in Lonsdale*

¹⁰⁰ *Middleton-in Lonsdale*, 30

¹⁰¹ *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*, 37. No early records have survived but the W.I. celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1973.

1983, the membership having dwindled to low single figures.¹⁰² The building was also used for other occasional meetings and as a polling station, but having become derelict, the remains were cleared away about the year 2000 and the church became the only public building, used for meetings and exhibitions as well as services, although not entirely satisfactory as it had no effective water supply, kitchen facilities or cloakrooms. Plans were made to supply these but were put on hold as available funds had to be used to repair the roof.¹⁰³

In the 1920's annual point-to-point races were held at Bainsbank, but these were moved to Whittington (Lancashire) in the 1930's.¹⁰⁴ A programme of the Sedbergh and District Sports Committee of 1967 shows trotting, galloping and whippet races taking place at Middleton Hall but these had been discontinued by 1980.¹⁰⁵ By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Middleton had few social activities: a carol service was held in the church, an annual domino drive alternately at the two public houses, and a summer gathering at one of the farms.¹⁰⁶ The township's millenium project was the illustrated book written by its inhabitants, based on the separate buildings, their history, current inhabitants and modern uses.¹⁰⁷

The first evidence found of education in Middleton is in the will of Robert Nicholson who in 1589 left money and personal effects to his scholars, the sons of Edward Middleton of Middleton Hall.¹⁰⁸ It is not clear whether he was a personal tutor to the Middleton family, or a schoolmaster to the township. A school was in existence by 1633,¹⁰⁹ which in 1670 was endowed by John Moore with a third of the interest accruing from a gift of £60, the other two thirds to be divided between the curate and the poor.¹¹⁰ George Ashton was schoolmaster in 1683¹¹¹ and John Procter, a bachelor aged over 25, in 1695.¹¹² In 1725 it was reported that the school was endowed with 40s. per annum for teaching poor children, but adds 'no schoolhouse', which may

¹⁰² CAS (Kendal), WDSO 144 (A 1309) W.I. Minutes 1978-1983

¹⁰³ Building repairs completed 2012 (Inf. P.Yorke, 2014)

¹⁰⁴ *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*, 108

¹⁰⁵ Inf. Mrs. H. Watson (2014)

¹⁰⁶ Inf. P. Yorke, churchwarden (2014)

¹⁰⁷ *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*

¹⁰⁸ CAS (Preston), WRW/L. To 'John Middleton gent my Scoller £4 and one little goulde ring. Thomas Middleton my scoller £3 and one paire of Seelk garters.'

¹⁰⁹ Borthwick Institute, York. 1633 CB2 f. 163

¹¹⁰ Bulmer, *Dir. Westm.*, 542

¹¹¹ *Lancaster Marriage Bonds 1648-1710*, ed. J. Brownbill (Record Soc. Vol. 74) 1920, 74

¹¹² CAS (Kendal), WDRY Box 32 File 14/4/39. Lonsdale Ward

indicate that school was held in the chapel. Endowments at the time included £20 from Thomas Rowland and £3 from Philip Walker. In 1779 the curate was the schoolmaster. The school was not free.¹¹³ At an unknown date a purpose-built school was situated to the south of the chapel, on a site now part of the graveyard.¹¹⁴ In 1829 the schoolmaster, Richard Nelson, was living at 'Chapel'.¹¹⁵ The accommodation was probably only suitable for a single man, as in 1841 Nelson, still the teacher, lived with his wife at Green, and in 1851 at Ratten Row. The teacher in 1861 was Ellen Nicholson, wife of the parish clerk, both living as lodgers at Ullathorne.¹¹⁶

Little other information has survived until a logbook dating from 1894,¹¹⁷ which shows the difficulties and deficiencies of education in such a small rural school. The fault was not in the pupils who were 'eager, attentive, interested, well-behaved and well grounded',¹¹⁸ but the single male teacher, David Ireland, appointed in 1885,¹¹⁹ had charge of all ages from four to twelve or thirteen, sometimes as many as 28 children. If he was sick or otherwise occupied, such as the annual choir outing (he was also the church organist) the school was closed. It is said that if he were needed for a funeral, he would lock the children in the schoolroom while he was away.¹²⁰

In 1894 an inspector singled out the teaching of needlework as unsatisfactory and a sewing mistress was appointed for half a day a week, but she was a farmer's wife and a number of entries indicate that if the farm needed her, the school came second.¹²¹ The same was true of the older pupils; the start of the month's holiday in summer was flexible, geared to haytime.¹²² Apart from the regular vacations, there was a generous allowance of days off for local festivities - Kirkby Lonsdale and Sedbergh Shows, Sedbergh Gala Day, a party at Grimeshill for the landlord's birthday, and the great Middleton Hall clipping in July, first held in the early

¹¹³ *The Cumbria Parishes*, 135

¹¹⁴ CAS (Kendal), WDRC/8/292 Tithe Map (1832)

¹¹⁵ Parson & White, *Dir. C. & W.*, 697

¹¹⁶ Census returns

¹¹⁷ CAS (Kendal), WDS 89/1. Logbook 1894-1912

¹¹⁸ Logbook 1895

¹¹⁹ Logbook April 1906

¹²⁰ *Middleton in Lonsdale*, 21

¹²¹ July 21, 1894. "Sewing mistress busy harvesting and not able to attend."

¹²² 12 July 1894. "Many children are required at home to assist in the hayfield, so it is thought advisable to close today for the midsummer vacation".

nineteenth century, a day when as many as 2000 sheep might be clipped, ending with a feast and dancing in the great hall.¹²³

By the end of the nineteenth century the old school could not match the Board of Education's requirements and a new one was built, financed partly by the church and partly by local donations in building materials and services such as carting.¹²⁴ William Middleton Moore donated the plot of land about a quarter of a mile from the chapel and the new school was opened by the Bishop of Carlisle on April 16, 1899.¹²⁵ With its two classrooms separated by a movable screen, two playgrounds, two entrances for boys and girls, facilities for drying clothes, and flush lavatories, it was a huge improvement on the old school.¹²⁶ A further improvement was the appointment of a monitor to assist the master. David Ireland resigned in April 1906 after, as he recorded, 22 years four months in office. The school closed in 1952: the number of children having reduced to four, they were moved to Barbon,¹²⁷ until that also closed in 1982.¹²⁸ After that Middleton children attended primary and secondary schools in Sedbergh to the north or Kirkby Lonsdale to the south according to choice and convenience.¹²⁹ The school building was later altered to a dwelling,¹³⁰ the old school bell, subscribed for in 1899 by David Ireland's pupils past and present,¹³¹ being preserved in its original place under the eaves. In the 1920's annual point-to-point races were held at Bainsbank, but these were moved to Whittington (Lancashire) in the 1930's.¹³² A programme of the Sedbergh and District Sports Committee of 1967 shows trotting, galloping and whippet races taking place at Middleton Hall but these had been discontinued by 1980.¹³³ By the beginning of the twenty-first century, Middleton had few social activities: a carol service was held in the church, an annual domino drive alternately at the two public houses, and a summer gathering at one of the farms.¹³⁴ The township's millenium

¹²³ *Middleton-in Lonsdale* 30

¹²⁴ *Westmorland Gazette* April 22 1899, p. 2

¹²⁵ Logbook 2 April 1899

¹²⁶ Logbook 16 June 1899. 'It is very pleasant working in the beautiful new building.'

¹²⁷ CAS (Kendal) County Education Committee Minutes 30 Oct. 1952

¹²⁸ Local inf. (2014)

¹²⁹ Local inf. (2014)

¹³⁰ *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*, 88

¹³¹ Logbook 1899

¹³² *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*, 108

¹³³ Inf. Mrs. H. Watson (2014)

¹³⁴ Inf. P. Yorke, churchwarden (2014)

project was the illustrated book written by its inhabitants, based on the separate buildings, their history, current inhabitants and modern uses.¹³⁵

An undated list of Middleton charities¹³⁶ shows that John Bainbridge (d. 1721) gave £10, the interest on which was to buy Bibles and prayer books for poor children who could repeat the catechism. Jeffrey Hadwen (d. 1721) left £10, the interest on which was to be distributed to poor widows. John Hadwen of Town Head (d. 1747) left £10, the interest of which was to be distributed on Good Friday in wheat loaves to the poor, and Margaret, his widow, (d. 1758) left £10 the interest of which was to be distributed at Whitsuntide in clothes to poor children. Mr. Giles Moore of Borwens (d. 1762)¹³⁷ gave the interest on £20 to poor householders without pensions, a further £10 for the schoolmaster, and another £10 towards apprenticeships for poor children.

In 1838 the charitable fund owned four fields (Poor Barrows, Long Barrows, Caradice and Slough, in all about twenty acres),¹³⁸ the rent from which brought in about £20 per annum. Records show that at Easter 1844 about £10 was distributed in sums mainly under twelve shillings to 23 recipients under the headings of poor householders and poor widows. Possibly about the same time £40 was spent to build two houses at Millhouse for the use of poor families not receiving parochial relief. A later, undated list of 'some late benefactions to the Township of Middleton' amounted to £91 for bibles, prayer books and clothes for poor children, money to poor widows, and a dole of white bread on Good Friday.¹³⁹

In the twenty-first century two rented fields produce nearly £1500 a year, providing a Christmas gift of about £25 to children of school age and to households which include pensioners, and £100 to the church.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ *Middleton-in-Lonsdale*

¹³⁶ CAS (Kendal), WPR/40/12/6/1. By the handwriting, eighteenth century. Possibly incomplete as it is headed 'Some late benefactions'. Only the wills of Jeffrey Hadwen, Margaret Hadwen and Giles Moore have been preserved (CAS (Preston) WRW/L)

¹³⁷ In a different handwriting, presumably added later. Giles Moore d. 1762

¹³⁸ CAS (Kendal), WDRC/8/292 Middleton Tithe Map 1832

¹³⁹ CAS (Kendal), WDEC 24 H2417

¹⁴⁰ Inf. M. Roberts (2014)

RELIGIOUS HISTORY

The earliest chapel in Middleton was in Middleton Hall, and was probably open to all for services, as it was for education: a visitation of 1633 reported that one Braithwaite was ‘teaching schoole in the chappell.’¹⁴¹ Machell saw the remains of this chapel in 1692.¹⁴² It was probably within the rear courtyard,¹⁴³ which was added to the main block in the fifteenth century, although his sketch does not show the site.¹⁴⁴

In 1634, according to a datestone later built into the churchyard wall, which is all that remains of the building, a chapel was erected on the road from Kirkby Lonsdale to Sedbergh, in a position roughly central to the township.¹⁴⁵ It was raised by the inhabitants on land given by the Rev. Christopher Bainbrig, one of an extensive local family from neighbouring Hawkin Hall.¹⁴⁶ The new chapel was consecrated by Bishop Bridgman in 1635 and dedicated to the Holy Ghost,¹⁴⁷ a dedication typical of a period which had rejected the veneration of saints. In 1667 it was recorded that John Middleton of Middleton Hall was a separatist,¹⁴⁸ and as he was the most prominent inhabitant of the township his default may have caused the bishop to strengthen the position of the established church: in 1671 licence was given to bury in the chapel yard, which was enlarged in 1712. The curate, John Procter, signed the Association in 1696.¹⁴⁹

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the chapel was served by a priest who preached on Sundays. The salary was £8 p.a. There were two chapel wardens. There was no parsonage house but none the less some very long incumbencies: John Procter was the minister 1691-1722, and William Garnett, after a brief period as schoolmaster at Walney Island, came to Middleton in 1724 and remained for sixty years, retiring in 1784 and dying in 1789.¹⁵⁰ Towards the end of his incumbency, in 1779, there were two services and one sermon every Sunday; the catechism was

¹⁴¹ Borthwick Institute, York. 1633 CB2 f.163

¹⁴² *Antiquary on Horseback*, 34

¹⁴³ W.R.Taylor, *The Old Manorial Halls of Westmorland* (CWAAS Extra Series XIII; Kendal, 1892), pp.232-6

¹⁴⁴ *Antiquary on Horseback*, 34

¹⁴⁵ SD622861

¹⁴⁶ *Antiquary on Horseback*. 31. The reference is confusing. There were two Christopher Bainbrigs. One died in 1604, thirty years before the chapel was built. The other, his grandson, did not inherit the Hawkin estate until 1647. The intervening owner was called Edward.

¹⁴⁷ N & B I, 260

¹⁴⁸ CAS (Preston) Diocesan Visitation Records ARR

¹⁴⁹ *Rec. Kend. III*, 55

¹⁵⁰ *Cumbria Parishes*, 135

expounded; Holy Communion was celebrated three times a year, Easter communicants numbering 54. The chapel income was augmented twice by £200 from Queen Anne's Bounty, and from other sources, which allowed the purchase of estates in Middleton and Garsdale, and resulted in the annual revenue rising to £38.¹⁵¹ Various members of the Moore family of Grimeshill¹⁵² were generous benefactors.

Surviving from the first chapel building is the single bell in the bellcote on the roof, probably by Samuel Smith of York, dated 1723, and carrying the words 'Voco veni precare',¹⁵³ and a handsome memorial plaque to Mrs. Anne Moore who died of smallpox in 1772, set up by her disconsolate husband, John Moore.

No information remains concerning the 1813 rebuilding, which appears to have been complete, from a rescued datestone set in the wall of the churchyard saying 'Rebuilt', but must have been of poor quality, since it lasted less than seventy years and was then said to be in very poor condition.¹⁵⁴

The present severely unadorned church, in perpendicular style, consisting of nave and chancel with a bellcote on the chancel arch, dates from 1879. It was designed by C.J.Ferguson of Carlisle and funded by Margaret Middleton Moore of Grimeshill. The pulpit, reading desk and lectern were all made by a local woodworker, William Martin of Sedbergh. The curious tracery in the east window was devised to incorporate stained glass angels by William Wailes from the old church, installed there in 1862.¹⁵⁵ Nothing else was preserved from the 1813 church except the west window. Other glass, from 1879, is by Lavers, Barraud and Westlake.¹⁵⁶

After William Garnett retired the tradition of long incumbencies continued. John Knipe served from 1784 to 1838. He was followed by J. A. Addison for two years and then John Holmes Abbott was appointed perpetual curate in 1840 and continued in post until his death in 1891. There was no official vicarage and he considerably altered Hawkin Hall for a residence; it is said

¹⁵¹ *Cumbria Parishes*, 224

¹⁵² See note 71

¹⁵³ B.L. Thompson, 'Westmorland Church Bells', *CW*2, lxx (1970), 51-68. 'I call you to come and pray.'

¹⁵⁴ From an inscribed plaque in the church.

¹⁵⁵ Hyde and Pevsner, *Cumbria* (Newhaven and London, 2009), 521

¹⁵⁶ *Kendal Mercury* 18 June 1879, p.8

that his predecessors had also lived in the older part of the same house. Another short incumbency of Henry John Palmer was followed by that of W. A. Breay (1894-1925). He built for himself, or had built by his parishioners, an official vicarage called Middleton House a few hundred yards from Hawkin Hall, on the main road.¹⁵⁷ Perhaps it was a condition of his accepting the post as the house is dated 1893. The Rev. Breay was followed by C.W.B. Haslam (1926-1953)¹⁵⁸ and he by Walter Blackett. In 1954 the parish was combined with Barbon, and served from there. In 1976 Mr. Blackett retired as the combined parish was absorbed into what was locally known as 'the rainbow parish' consisting of seven churches served from Kirkby Lonsdale,

In 1851 all 140 sittings were free. On the day of the census a congregation of 50 attended the morning service. There was no Sunday School. At that time the annual income was £716.¹⁵⁹ Until 1939 there were two services every Sunday and on occasional feast days. In the war these lessened to one a week, by the 1970's to three a month, then two, and finally in the twenty-first century, to one. In 2014 there was an evening service once a month and on occasional feast days, served by the team from Kirkby Lonsdale.¹⁶⁰ Attendance dwindled over the years; the average attendance recorded in 2008 being six persons,¹⁶¹ but harvest festival and a Christingle service at Candlemas could still attract 30 to 40,¹⁶² and the annual carol service attracted a congregation which overfilled the seating.¹⁶³

In 1667 it was recorded that there were twelve Quakers in the township and two separatists, including John Middleton Esq.¹⁶⁴ In 1669, 22 names were listed of 'Quakers or sectaries that come not to church'.¹⁶⁵ In 1706 the house of John Thornbeck was licensed for a Quaker meeting.¹⁶⁶ In that year Robert Atkinson, yeoman, left 50s. 'to the poor of Brigflatts meeting.'¹⁶⁷

¹⁵⁷ Local inf.(2014)

¹⁵⁸ Crockford's *Directory*

¹⁵⁹ PRO HO129/575 1851 Religious Census

¹⁶⁰ Notice in the church (2014)

¹⁶¹ Returns held at Church House, Carlisle.

¹⁶² Service register in the church (2014)

¹⁶³ Local inf. (2014)

¹⁶⁴ CAS (Preston), Diocesan Visitation Records ARR

¹⁶⁵ Borthwick Institute York. 1669 CB.

¹⁶⁶ *Rec. Kend.* III, 303

¹⁶⁷ CAS (Preston), WRW/L

Middleton has seen sporadic Methodist activity. In 1819 it is recorded that Roger Moister preached at the Holm. In the 1920's there were services held at Middleton Head, when the owner was one John Atkinson. During Thomas Todd's tenancy of Middleton Hall, Methodist services were regularly held there, until 1947 when the tenancy changed.¹⁶⁸

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

By the end of the seventeenth century most of the tenants were freehold and attended the court baron which was held at Middleton Hall.¹⁶⁹ No surviving records of this court have been found. Middleton was one of the seventeen townships included in the Union using the Kirkby Lonsdale Workhouse from 1811. It acquired a parish meeting in 1894, but no records earlier than 2004 have been found. It holds one meeting a year; it has no precept and pays no salaries. The business of the meeting, apart from accepting the accounts of the charity committee¹⁷⁰ concerns minor amenities in the township, such as the planting of fifty oak trees to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee. As with other townships on the road to Appleby, there have been occasional problems arising from the traffic to and from Appleby Fair, but these are few, as a byelaw, following a long-established tradition, allows parking on the common for three days before the fair and three days after.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Middleton-in-Lonsdale, 36

¹⁶⁹ *Antiquary*, 34

¹⁷⁰ See 'Social History'

¹⁷¹ Inf. M. Roberts, Chairman Parish Meeting (2014)