

# MARY ARMITT

## THE CHURCH OF GRASMERE: A HISTORY

**Mary Armitt**  
**The Church of**  
**Grasmere: A History**

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*The Church of Grasmere: A History:*

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# **Mary L. Armitt**

# **The Church of**

# **Grasmere: A History**

## **PART I**

PREFACE

INTRODUCTORY

THE DEDICATION OF THE CHURCH

THE SITE

# PREFACE

Grasmere draws many pilgrims in these latter days. It has become the Shrine of Nature and Poetry, for within its graveyard lies buried nature's austerest and most sincere interpreter. The natural beauty of the spot, combined with its associations, has given rise to a copious literature; and its praises have been rehearsed in poetry and prose of a high order. But by the historian Grasmere has been neglected. Its geographical position has tended to its eclipse. In ancient times locked up from the world in the farthest chamber of the mountains, and still the remotest parish of Westmorland (itself a neglected county), it has missed the attention of the careful chronicler, and no serious attempt has been made to penetrate its past. James Torre (1649-1699) indeed in his MS. collections for a history of the Archdeaconry of Richmondshire, compiled a list of five rectors who had served the parish of Grasmere before the Reformation; but no searcher has followed up his efforts. Nor has the excellent, though necessarily limited, information given in the pages of Nicolson and Burn (1770) been since filled up or supplemented.

The following historical sketch makes no pretensions to completeness, which would be beyond both the writer's powers and opportunities. It began as a small thing, a chapter merely in the yet unfinished "Chronicles of Rydal." But there seemed a need for the publication of such facts as had been gathered

together; and in response to an expressed desire, the sketch that had been laid by was overhauled, expanded and prepared for press. It contains (there is little doubt) some unsuspected errors and oversights, for which the reader's leniency is asked.

The information has been collected from many sources, public, private, and traditional. The earliest comes from the Record Office, where there are treasures still to be explored. For the seventeenth century – and particularly the period of the Civil Wars – the MSS. at Rydal Hall have yielded facts of great interest, especially those culled from the account-sheets of Mr. Richard Harrison, who was agent and executor of Squire John Fleming.

From all sources, however, the information obtained is fragmentary, and facts are disappointingly isolated. Always there is something beyond, that we want to know and cannot find out; and so the story of the great Restoration Tithe Dispute has no ending. The Presentments have been only available for a limited number of years. The church registers are defective. Even the church-wardens' accounts, which begin at the Restoration, are not complete. It is fortunate, however, that the second volume of these accounts, long missing, and strangely recovered from papers found at the house of descendants of a former parish clerk, was copied before it was again lost. There is a gap of seven years between the third volume and this copy, owing no doubt to the last leaves of the second volume having been torn off.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Vol. I. ends in 1735. Vol. II. overlaps four years and begins in 1732, but the pages

The writer has received more help and kindness than can well be acknowledged. Thanks are specially due to Mr. Stanley le Fleming and Sir Gerald Strickland for granting ready access to their muniments; to Dr. Magrath, author of *The Flemings in Oxford*; to the Revs. W. Jennings, J. H. Heywood, and M. F. Peterson for permitting the church documents to be consulted; to Messrs. W. Farrer, J. A. Martindale, and George Browne for their kind contributions of antiquarian knowledge; to Mr. W. Buckton I am indebted for the plan of the church.

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from 1734 to 1739 and from 1743 to 1750 are missing, and no entries are made for 1778 and 1779. The vol. ends in 1883. — Ed.

# INTRODUCTORY

## **How the Church was founded in Northumbria**

All history begins with geography. Grasmere was from early times the centre of a parish that embraced the twin valleys of Rothay and Brathay, whose waters drain into the lake of Windermere, while the lake empties itself into the great bay of Morecambe. Therefore Grasmere has always belonged politically to the fertile region round about the bay, and the history of that region – from the time when the Celt enjoyed it, onward through its conquest by the Angle, its aggregation with the province of Deira and the kingdom of Northumbria, still onward through its conversion to Christianity and its connection with the central church government at York as part of the Archdeaconry of Richmondshire – is the history of Grasmere herself: and to understand the origin of her church, it is necessary to briefly indicate the main events in the kingdom of Northumbria and the Church of York.

The actual rise of Christianity within the valleys can only be conjectured. The Celts who dwelt here through the rule of the Roman may not have embraced the faith, but some whisper of Saint Ninian's mission must surely have come to them, if not his direct teaching, as he passed on his way from Rome



through Cumberland, to found at Whithorn in Galway a new religious community, like the one his great teacher Saint Martin had founded at Tours. The mission of Saint Patrick too, who in the fifth century returned to finish the work of conversion and church establishment in Ireland, must have been noised abroad, for his name is imprinted on many a spot hereabouts; Patterdale or Patricdale,<sup>2</sup> with its well named after him, being distant barely ten miles from Grasmere.

The holy Kentigern is known to have made missionary excursions from Carlisle into the mountains, before 573; and Crosthwaite, where he planted a cross, is but 13 miles from Grasmere, along the line of the Roman road from Kendal to Old Carlisle. With this artery of communication open, it is impossible that tidings of the new faith should not have reached our valley before the close of the sixth century.

Soon these tidings were to come from the east as well as the west, borne by the triumphant arms of the invading Angles. Truly Ethelfrith who, in winning the battle of Chester, first laid our mountain fastnesses open to his kingdom of Northumbria, was a heathen; but his successor Edwin embraced Christianity and brought Paulinus, a member of Saint Augustine's mission, to preach the gospel (627). At York, the capital of the kingdom, a Christian church was built, a second one even being started in stone to replace the wooden structure; and the new bishop moved about with the king and his court, preaching and baptizing. The

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<sup>2</sup> Inquisition post mortem of William de Lancaster, 1246.

valleys of Northumberland and Yorkshire, which were the scenes of his labours, are named by Bede, who knew them well; but it is not known that he crossed into Westmorland.

Edwin's overthrow gave Northumbria to the pagan king of Mercia, but it was soon regained by Oswald, who identified himself completely with the new faith. He brought Aidan, who had been educated in the Celtic Church (now firmly settled in Scotland) to fill the place of the departed Paulinus. But instead of taking up the bishop's seat at York, Aidan with the strong predilection shown by his church for island-sanctuaries, chose Lindisfarne to be the centre of his missionary efforts in Northumbria. Here Finan succeeded him in 651, and rebuilt the first rude edifice, constructing it of hewn oak thatched with reeds.

King Oswald (slain at Maserfeld, 642) was shortly after succeeded by Oswy, an ardent disciple of the new faith, as was Alchfrith his son. Alchfrith acted as sub-king in Northumbria under his father.<sup>3</sup> He endowed a monastery at Ripon, which was presumably within his dominion, and placed there Eata, abbot of Melrose, with a little band of Scotie monks. At this time there was a young priest named Wilfrith, lately returned from a journey to Rome (658), with whom Alchfrith made fast friends.

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<sup>3</sup> Bishop Browne in *Theodore and Wilfrith*, pp. 20 and 36, inclines to the opinion that this sub-kingdom embraced the western rather than the southern portion of Northumbria, as generally supposed, in which case it would include those portions of Lancashire and the western coasts northwards, laid open by Ethelfrith's conquest at Chester.

Convinced by Wilfrith that the practices of the Anglo-Scotic church, where they differed from those of Western Europe, were mistaken, he turned out the monks of Ripon, when they refused to alter their customs, and gave the establishment over to Wilfrith, to rule as abbot. The kings attempted to settle the differences of practice between the churches at the synod of Whitby (664), where the counsels of the Roman party under Wilfrith prevailed; and this caused the retirement of Colman, bishop of Northumbria, who refused to conform. It was now necessary to supply his place, and the kings, father and son, seem without disagreement to have selected each his own man, presumably for his own province; thus making two bishops instead of one.<sup>4</sup> While Alchfrith chose Wilfrith for his bishop, and sent him to Gaul for consecration, Oswy chose Chad, sending him to Kent to be consecrated as Bishop of York "for him and his" by the Archbishop. But by the time that Wilfrith had returned from his foreign journey, things were changed at the court. Alchfrith was dead, possibly slain in rebellion against his father; and Wilfrith, deprived of his patron, settled down quietly at Ripon as abbot, while Chad ruled the whole church of Northumbria from York.

But when Oswy died (670 or 671) and his son Ecgfrith succeeded, Chad retired, and Wilfrith was made sole Bishop. Now began a very active and happy period of his life. Enjoying undivided power, a position which suited his nature, he moved

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<sup>4</sup> See *Theodore and Wilfrith*. The same.

about his huge diocese, everywhere creating new foundations and building fresh churches. With skilled workmen under him, he was the great architect and builder of his time. First he turned his attention to the head church in York, which had become, since Oswald's days, ruinous. After building there an edifice unique in its time, he took his masons to Ripon, and there he built a basilica of dressed stone with pillars and arches and porches. He also enriched its altar with vases, and a vestment of purple and gold, and laid upon it a book of the Gospels, marvellously illumined, and enclosed in a gold and jewelled case. Wilfrith made the dedication of this church, which was attended by King Ecgrith, and by tributary kings, reeves and abbots, an occasion of great splendour. Standing before the altar, with his face towards the concourse of people, he recited the names of the lands with which Ripon was endowed, as also of certain sanctuaries of the Britons which were taken over by it.

Now this enumeration of lands, said to be given by princes with the consent of the bishops, is of great interest.<sup>5</sup> Were these lands within Alchfrith's former sub-kingdom – the nucleus being his monastic endowment? – and was it intended to create a bishopric there at Ripon, separate from the one at York? Certainly the great tracts of country mentioned were to be ecclesiastically ruled from Ripon, whether by abbot or bishop.

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<sup>5</sup> For the meaning and scope of these early gifts to the church, which not only embraced whole villages, but even hundreds and provinces, see Maitland's *Doomsday Book and Beyond*, p. 498.

Moreover, in the confused and certainly corrupt list of names that has come down to us of Wilfrith's remarkable recitation, several have been localized within that last conquered portion of Northumbria lying to the west, which may have been called by the Celts who lost it, Teyrnllwg.<sup>6</sup>

Whatever had been Alchfrith's intentions about Ripon, Wilfrith's were clear in thus making it the church centre for a district as wide as a diocese. In effect, it was a diocese; though only for a short time was there a recognized Bishop of Ripon. And this was after Ecgfrith and Wilfrith had unhappily quarrelled, and Wilfrith had been expelled from Northumbria, when Theodore, the new archbishop, who had been called north to re-organize the huge diocese, made finally five bishoprics out of it; and Eadhed (after temporarily ruling a see at Lindsey) became, according to Bede, the Bishop of Ripon. But upon the reconciliation of Wilfrith with King Aldfrith, who succeeded

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<sup>6</sup> See Rhys' *Celtic Britain* for a suggestion that Edwin's conquest and Teyrnllwg may represent a considerable portion of our district, also "Rydal" in *Westmorland Gazette*, May 2nd, 1903. Mr. Farrer, while noticing this point in *Victorian History of Lancashire*, vol. ii., considers that better authority could be desired. For the list of names of gifts to Ripon that have come down to us, see Canon Raine's *Historians of the Church of York*. Amounderness, between the Ribble and the Cocker, is one. Cartmel is probably another. The region "dunutinga" may possibly be referred to the Duddon and beyond, where still are manor and fells called Dunnerdale, and the hamlet of Old Dunning Well and Dumerholme. Donya is the name of some explored earthworks at the junction of Bannisdale beck with the Mint, north of Kendal. "Goedyne" suggests "Gadeni" or "Cadeni," a name applied to the people of the Borders. See Prof. Veitch's *History and Poetry of Scottish Borders*. The lands of William de Dunnington are mentioned in the *Furness Abbey Coucher Book*, ccviii.

Ecgfrith, Eadhed retired from Ripon, and Wilfrith again took possession of it, and ruled it – though only as abbot – until his death.

Wilfrith's inauguration of Ripon, which took place in the period of his sole prelacy of Northumbria (671 to 678) was then an event of great importance for the district round the great Bay, and for Grasmere; indeed it is hardly too much to say that its results lasted over a thousand years. For in spite of the bishop's loss of power, his scheme ultimately held good. When the long dark days of Danish anarchy were passed, the western district which he gathered in to the fold of Ripon emerged as an ecclesiastical entity, and it kept its bounds through the administrative changes of the Norman kings, which carved out of it the barony of Kendal, and made of it parts of Westmorland, Cumberland, Yorkshire and Lancashire. The archdeaconry of Richmondshire, which was formally constituted a section of the diocese of York in 1090, is in fact almost identical with Wilfrid's province of Ripon. It is true that Ripon ceased to be its centre, that establishment sinking again into a monastery, which lay indeed a few miles beyond the boundary of Richmondshire; while a new centre was created at Richmond, a little town without significance standing in another Yorkshire vale.<sup>7</sup> This great church province was ruled over by an archdeacon, who

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<sup>7</sup> In 1140 Alan, earl of Richmond is stated to have oppressed Ripon; and in 1143 he assaulted Archbishop William by the shrine of St. Wilfrith within the church. *Mem. of Ripon*. Surtees Society.

possessed almost the powers of a bishop,<sup>8</sup> until it was transferred by Henry the Eighth in 1541 from the diocese of York to that of Chester; and it remained intact until 1847, when it was broken up among what are now the dioceses of Carlisle, Manchester, and Ripon.<sup>9</sup> Our own part of it became the archdeaconry of Westmorland, under Carlisle.

After Wilfrith had lost favour at the Northumbrian court, and carried his grievances to Rome, King Ecgrith secured the co-operation of Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury (669) in the organization of the Northern Church. As has been said, there are indications that church work went on busily in the district of the great Bay. St. Cuthbert, who had served his apprenticeship as a monk at Ripon, was made bishop in 685 and administered his great See from Lindisfarne. Into his charge Ecgrith expressly gave Cartmel with its Britons, and the newly-conquered district round Carlisle. Carlisle became indeed a thriving church centre, with royal nunnery and monastery, and with missions spreading round it. Bede has drawn a striking picture of the bishop's visit to the ruined Roman city, when a vision of the king's overthrow came upon him; as well as of his last meeting with St. Herebert, the hermit of Derwentwater, who was wont every year to seek his counsel. The district of Cartmel he placed in the charge of the "good Abbot Cineferth," as if it were too

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<sup>8</sup> Wills and inventories of the Archdeaconry of Richmondshire.

<sup>9</sup> This did not take effect, however, until after the death of Bishop Percy in 1856. *Victoria History of Cumberland.*

distant from Lindisfarne for his immediate care. But, while his own easiest route to Carlisle would be by the straight road along the Roman Wall, he would not be ignorant of that other road striking northwards through the mountains from the great Bay. He may, indeed, have travelled this road himself on his missionary journeys, and even have halted to preach in the vale of Grasmere. It is certain at least that some of the holy men working for the Anglo-Scottish Church at this period must have done so. With the defeat and death of Ecgrith the glory of the Northumbrian kingdom came to an end indeed; but the church continued to prosper; and in the two hundred years between that event and the final relinquishment of Lindisfarne as a See, on through the ravages of the Danes, it wrought a mighty work, not only in the old kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira, but in the region westward. Many of our existing foundations may well date back from that time; and it is probable that the ruined or entirely vanished chapels of our district were built in that age of piety.<sup>10</sup> We know from Bede that there was a monastery at Dacre in Cumberland, which existed at least until 926.<sup>11</sup> It has been suggested that a certain monastery, founded by a Northumbrian nobleman in the reign of Osred (slain in 717) was situated at Heversham in Westmorland.<sup>12</sup> Certainly at Heversham may be

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<sup>10</sup> See "Lost Churches in the Carlisle Diocese." *Transactions* Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian Society, vol. xv.

<sup>11</sup> See *Victorian History of Cumberland*.

<sup>12</sup> See Bates's *History of Northumberland*.



seen the fragments of a cross wrought in patterns such as experts ascribe to the Anglian school of workmanship introduced by Wilfrith.<sup>13</sup>

Then too a thrilling event in hagiological history touched our parts nearly. When the monks of Lindisfarne fled before the ravaging Danes with St. Cuthbert's body, they went westward for safety, and their wanderings brought them into Cumberland and Westmorland.<sup>14</sup> A gap in their travels which the antiquary has yet failed to trace may possibly have been filled by a route through Craven – that perpetual haunt of refugees – and about Morecambe Bay.

Certainly a well-used road must have passed not far from our district in the days of Northumbrian anarchy, when Danish kings and allies reigned alike at York and at Dublin. Windermere indeed is associated with the murder (741) of two young princes of the royal house.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See *Sculptured Crosses of the Diocese of Carlisle*. Calverley & Collingwood.

<sup>14</sup> See "Translation of St. Cuthbert." *Transactions* Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian Society, part 1, vol. ii.

<sup>15</sup> See D. F. Hodgkin's *History of Northumberland*.

# THE DEDICATION

To the question so often asked, When was the church of Grasmere founded? no more than a conjectural answer can be given. The district formed part – though a remote one – of Northumbria, and doubtless shared in the conversion of that kingdom. Even before that time it may have been touched by those successive missionary efforts, which have been happily classed as the Romano-British of Ninian at the end of the fourth century, the Irish of Patrick in the fifth century, and the Kymric of Kentigern in the sixth; and these efforts were followed up by the steady work of the Anglo-Scottish monks, and the establishment under the Anglian kings of an organized church.<sup>16</sup>

The dedication of the Grasmere church favours the supposition that its foundation was early. Its name-saint is King Oswald, who planted a cross as a standard in the battle by which he gained Northumbria, and who was killed at Maserfeld by the heathen Penda in 642. He became the idol of the Northumbrian christians, and his relics were cherished in many a shrine. When danger threatened Lindisfarne, his head was placed for safety in the coffin of St. Cuthbert;<sup>17</sup> and with this sacred burden the monks, as stated above, fled westward, wandering for years in

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<sup>16</sup> See "Lost Churches in Carlisle Diocese," *Transactions* Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian Society, vol. XV.

<sup>17</sup> Where it is still, with the mark of a cut from sword or battle-axe plain to see. – Ed.

parts adjacent to Westmorland, if they did not actually cross its borders.

A well in the Grasmere valley shared the dedication with the church, and indeed may have been antecedent to it, as a place of resort. It is at the foot of Kelbarrow (formerly Kelbergh,<sup>18</sup> the hill of the spring); and the Celts were wont to decorate their *kels* or springs with votive offerings of a heathen kind. The church, however, always took care to possess herself of such wells, absorbing any sanctification that was ascribed to them; and the water of St. Oswald's well continued to be carried to the church for baptisms until quite recent times.<sup>19</sup>

Church and well are not, however, close together. The well springs in the flat meadow between the path to the Wray and Wray Beck, but it is now covered in. The adjacent bay of the lake is called Well-foot, and the bridge over the beck has the same name; and when the Wray property was "bounded" in 1683, the "welfoot bridge" was spoken of.

It is suggestive that the farmstead close by owns the name of Pavement End, being formerly known as Padmire. Could it be proved that the name is an ancient one, the idea that the spot was much resorted to of old would be confirmed, since the causeway went so far and no farther.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Monkbergh by Windermere has become Mountbarrow.

<sup>19</sup> The spot was pointed out to Mrs. Simpson by the Rev. Edward Jefferies, who from 1840 was curate in charge.

<sup>20</sup> I find, however, in deeds of the early seventeenth century, only *Padman*

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hereabouts. Or is this a mistake for Padmar? Padman appears in the register.

## THE SITE

The present site of the church may not have been the original one. It is hardly a likely halting-place for a travelling preacher. The Roman road which traversed the valley could neither have been the present one, that leads to church and village, nor the straight cut from Town End that passes the Swan Inn. Both of these cross the flat bottom; and the Romans from the summit of White Moss (by which they certainly entered the vale) would never have dropped into the marsh below (even now water-logged in places), only to climb out again, to that gap of the Raise that plainly beckoned them to their goal northward. Instead, they would maintain their level as far as might be, and keep along the firm slope of the fells at a height of some 300 to 400 feet; then, with only two rapid becks to ford, they would come easily and gradually to the ascent of the pass. It is interesting to find that along this presumed route there exists a line of scattered homesteads; while the modern road below was – until the recent spurt in building, vacant but for a cottage and the Swan Inn; and this last stands in reality on an ancient cross "loaning" between the higher road suggested, and the village. Many of these homesteads have been turned into houses for the wealthy, and great alterations have taken place; but a track the whole way may still be made out, though hidden in places by private drives and occupation roads. From White Moss it dropped but

little at first, passing behind the highest of the modern houses, according to the belief of old people, who say that this section of it, though remembered, was stopped up before their time. It touched How Head, a farmhold now deserted; then the Hollins, Forest Side, Ben Place and Beck Houses. It crossed Greenhead Gill and passed behind Knott Houses, Winterseeds and Gillside, continuing by the present ford over Tongue Gill, whence the pass is soon gained.

Now of these names many represented of old not one house, but a couple or even a group. Doubtless most of them were planted by the Norse settlers either upon or below the Roman road, on some spot conveniently above their meadows and common field; and devious lanes would in time become trodden between one and another, to the final discarding of the old straight track. Still this can be traced in places; and a bit to be seen above Winterseeds is probably the actual Roman road. A stone celt was recently found in the beck close below it. A quern was also found not far off.<sup>21</sup> The fact that a smithy existed until recently at Winterseeds – which is only reached now by climbing the steep brow from the main road – is strong presumptive evidence of an old line of traffic passing by it. There the last of the smiths, John Watson, made the ironwork of the present outer church-door. When he became old, a smithy was set up on the lower road, at Tongue Gill.

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<sup>21</sup> See *Transactions* Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian Society, N.S. 3, p. 419.

Now it is a singular fact that a field lying a little below this road, near the gateway of Forrest Side, bears the name of Kirk How. And there is a tradition attached to the spot. It is said that the church of the valley was to have been built here, and that the materials were even gathered together ready for the start, when lo! they vanished in the night-time, only to be found upon the present site, and that a second attempt only produced a like result, the inference being conveyed, by sly looks and chuckles on the part of the narrator, that the task had been wrought by some supernatural Being, not to be lightly mentioned. Whether this was the Hob, or Hobthrush who played so large a part in the stories of the past, cannot be said, but the legend, in its humorous fearlessness, and love of a practical joke, is characteristic of the dalesman,<sup>22</sup> and coupled with the name of the field it is suggestive. It seems possible that here, at a spot where a traveller upon the road might so conveniently halt and set up his cross and portable altar, an early rude (perhaps timbered) structure may actually have once stood. A well, too, for baptism was not far off. There is one in the grounds of the Hollins whose water has remained in repute, and which was examined by an expert at the time (1843) when an effort was made to establish a hydropathic

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<sup>22</sup> The same legend is attached to three Lancashire churches, the foundations of which date back to Saxon times. One is St. Oswald's, Winwick, where the saint's well was once a place of resort. Tradition has preserved, in the case of St. Chad's, Rochdale, some particulars of the elfish rabble who wrought the change. See *Memorials of Old Lancashire*, vol. —, p. 91-92.

cure in Grasmere.<sup>23</sup> The water was then pronounced finer than that of St. Oswald's Well; but as the owner of the land would not sell, the establishment was placed at the Wray, close to St. Oswald's. The enterprise, started by Mr. Phillips, and conducted by a resident doctor and a German bathman, was not successful, and was given up in five or six years. If the well at the Hollins ever had a name, it is now unknown.

It is hard not to let conjecture play round this tradition of a change of site. Might it not actually have been made? Could it be connected with the turning of Grasmere into a manor, and with the parcelling out of a demesne in the valley? The barons of Kendal, of whom Ivo de Talbois was the first, possessed all these parts, from the time of Henry I. He and his successors governed by feudal methods, through agents. There was here no intermediary lord between baron and vassal; and the baron's officers – his bailiffs and his foresters – would be placed in secure houses or fenced lodges, whence they would control and govern. A demesne of Grasmere is mentioned on the death of William de Lindesay, 1233, and a manor and park in a charter of 1297.<sup>24</sup> The woods sold by Henry the Eighth in 1544 were the residue of the lord's forest; he being the inheritor of the Fee.

Now we may reasonably suppose this demesne to have been planted in Kirktown, as the present village came to be called,

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<sup>23</sup> From Edward Wilson, parish verger till November, 1906. His father, a joiner like himself, did the woodwork for the hydropathic establishment.

<sup>24</sup> Inquisition post mortem. *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 25 Edward I.



where the meadows were rich and the soil deep for ploughing, but distant from, and below the ancient line of road with its scattered homesteads. The demesne made a village nucleus; for all the accessories of a manor house would spring up about it. We know the lord's brewery was not far off, at Kelbergh, where springs – beside the holy one – are still abundant.<sup>25</sup> In a rental, dated 1375<sup>26</sup> that concerned the part of Grasmere then held by the Hotham and Pedwardyn families, it is stated that "Richard Smyth holds the forge and should render 12d and 1d," with the addition that he pays 2s 0d per annum for "Kelebergh." From another document we learn that certain tenants of Grasmere pay an unspecified sum for the brewery of Keldbergh.

This manorial centre was united to the high line of road on the other side of the valley by several ways. One, a footpath, still passes hard by Kirk How, a now disused smithy being upon it. Two others approach and meet to cross Raise Beck together by White Bridge, the name indicative of a stone fabric at a time when timber was commoner. Here the village pinfold still stands.

What more natural than that the church should be added to this central group, and at a time perhaps when enlarged space and entire rebuilding of an existing edifice required to be done? The site by the river would afford deep soil for burial. To such a change of site (supposing it were made) there would naturally be

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<sup>25</sup> The modern house built upon the knoll had a well within it, and behind the house – where a hidden runner gushes out by a rock – there are traces of old pavement.

<sup>26</sup> Levens Hall MSS.

opposition from some quarter; whence the tradition.

This, however, is but conjecture. The fabric of the present church shows no feature that is of a certainty older than the introduction of manorial rule into Grasmere; while it may be as late as the fourteenth century. But before considering the question of its age, it will be well to point out other evidences of the existence of a church in the valley before record began, and then pass on to such scant records as time has left to us.

# **PART II**

THE PARISH

BOUNDARIES

THE TOWNSHIPS

LEGAL ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH

THE EIGHTEEN

# THE PARISH

The church of Grasmere is found when record begins, serving as the centre of a large and regularly constituted parish. The date of the creation of this parish is not known; but from the fact that its southern boundary runs by the Stock Beck – thus cutting the now thriving town of Ambleside into two parts, one of which belonged to Grasmere and the other to Windermere – there seems a probability of it having been delineated at an early period, when the *sæter* of some Norse settler was but an insignificant clearing in the forest.

Every parish is but a unit in a complex Church organization, which passes upwards by rural deanery, archdeaconry, to diocese. In historical evolution, there is a descent from the greater to the less; while each successive ecclesiastical demarcation followed as a rule some political line of kingdom or state. The diocese for instance was conterminous with the Anglo-Saxon kingdom; the parish represented the township, or the manor.

But in the vast kingdom of Northumbria the superposition of church boundaries upon state boundaries was not so simple a matter, and the subdivisions that took place are not easy to trace. Archbishop Theodore, when called in by King Egfrith (678) to portion his kingdom for purposes of church rule, made at least three bishoprics out of the one whose centre – after a removal to

Lindisfarne – was fixed at York.<sup>27</sup>

Next, the archdeaconries were marked out under Thomas, Archbishop of York, some time between 1070 and 1100. The archdeaconry of Richmondshire, lying in the mountainous region west of the old Anglian kingdom, was a great and peculiar province, and the archdeacon ruled over it with almost the powers of a bishop.<sup>28</sup>

The archdeaconry was divided again into rural deaneries, of which Kendal was one. This deanery embraced ten parishes, Grasmere being the westernmost of them. It appears singular that this group of ten parishes lay in three different counties, – Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Westmorland; and from this circumstance it has been argued that here (as in our own parish) the ecclesiastical division was made prior to the political one of counties. This probably was so; and it is clear that the deanery represents in reality another political area, viz.: that of the barony of Kendal created by William Rufus.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Bright's *Early Church History*, p. 291. Bishop Browne's *Theodore and Wilfrith*, pp. 132 and 690.

<sup>28</sup> It may possibly represent an old sub-kingdom of Northumbria, and is suggestive of Edwin's conquest of a district to the north-west called by the Britons Teyrnllwg. See Rhys's *Celtic Britain* (quoted in "Rydal," *Westmorland Gazette*, May 2nd, 1903). It contained large portions at least of that great church province which Wilfrid made over to Ripon Minster, which was for a short time the seat of a bishop. The creation of Richmond as a centre was a late Norman measure.

<sup>29</sup> Whitaker's *History of Richmondshire*. Dr. Wilson (*Victorian History of Cumberland*) gives 1120 to 1130 as dates between which Henry I. marked out the county divisions as fiscal areas. In the latter year the new county of Westmarieland

Kirkby Kendale, the *caput* of the barony, became from this period the official church centre. There the Synods and Archidiaconal Courts were held, and all dues were paid which the higher church authorities exacted from the parishes – Grasmere among them.<sup>30</sup> Thither the rector or his substitute, along with the churchwardens, annually repaired.

The exact relationship between the central church at Kirkby and the churches of Grasmere and Windermere in early days is hard to make out. They were considered in some sort as dependencies, and were called chapels after they had become parish churches. This uncertain position recalls the constitution of the early British church. And it must be remembered that Theodore's *parochia* was not a parish but a diocese. Again, the laws of Edgar (959-975) place churches in three classes: first, the ancient church or monastery of a district; second, the church with a corpse-ground; and third, the church without a corpse-

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was placed under the jurisdiction of a separate sheriff.

<sup>30</sup> For the connection between mother churches and chapelries or vicarages under them, see *History of English Church*, edited by Dean Stephens, vol. ii., p. 295. ["Walter Gray, Archbishop of York in 1233 consolidated 10 chapelries in the two parishes of Pocklington and Pickering into five vicarages, two and two. Each vicar had two chapels, and was endowed with a sum to support chaplains at both, while he also paid a small sum annually to the mother church in token of subjection."] From the rural deanery of Kendal there were paid the following dues, according to an old voucher, c. 1320: at Easter 12s. 0d. for Synodalia; at Michaelmas £4 16s 8d for Procurations; besides £3 for Presumptiones, and £3 9s 6d in Peter's pence – a goodly tribute this for the Pope from our mountains lands! Whitaker's *History of Richmondshire*.

ground.<sup>31</sup> Tithes moreover were enjoined to be paid to the ancient or central church.

Now Grasmere may at first have ranked in the third order, as a mission church (*capella*). It would in that case pay its tithes, or a large proportion of them, to Kirkby Kendal, and bury its christian dead within the consecrated soil of that church. It may not have acquired the right of burial until the lord created a demesne there.<sup>32</sup> This view is strengthened by the fact that the church of Kendale claimed certain dues from Grasmere and Windermere down to a late date. One was a pension of 13s. 4d. (one mark) paid to the vicar out of the tithes of the parish. The other was a mortuary fee, exacted by him as late as the seventeenth century.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Selden's *History of Tithes*. Easterby's *Law of Tithes*, pp. 4, 8, and 13.

<sup>32</sup> The early practice of burial in distant churches is inexplicable to this age. But it should be remembered that in early days man was a peripatetic animal, to whom the distance between Grasmere and Kendal, or Hawkshead and Dalton, would be slight; and that a corpse wrapped in a winding-sheet would be much lighter than one coffined.

<sup>33</sup> Of the first, still paid, there is plenty of evidence. It was even allowed during the Commonwealth. In 1645 the Rydal Hall account-sheets show that arrears were paid to the Kendal parson out of the tithes "upon order for 5 yeares stypd out of Gresmire," amounting to £3 6s 8d or five marks. Next year is entered "Rent due to mr. M. out of Gresmire tithes" 13s 6d. The order came from the Puritan Committee at Kendal.

# BOUNDARIES

The boundary of the parish of Grasmere followed geographical lines. Starting from the point where the Rothay and the Brathay unite for their entrance into Windermere, it ascended the first river for a short distance until it reached the tributary, Stock beck. This it ascended until, near the source, it struck upwards to the line of the watershed. It then followed a devious course along the mountain tops, as "heven watter deales" (divides), according to the quaint old boundary phrase. Always clinging to the sky line between waters flowing north and south, it dropped to Dunmail Raise, to rise to the tops again. From these lonely heights it made another short artificial course to reach Little Langdale beck near the source, and with these waters – named Brathay after emerging from Elterwater – it continued to the uniting place of the two rivers at Bird-house Mouth. Thus, with the exception of the right bank of the Brathay, the parish embraced the whole area of the two valleys of the Rothay and Brathay and their confluents. Its boundary marched with that of parishes in Westmorland, Cumberland and Lancashire. Its northern line was for centuries the boundary between the Anglian rule, and the Celtic kingdom of Cumbria. Its circuit counted some thirty-five miles by flat measurement; but much of it lay on summits that reach to a great height.



# THE TOWNSHIPS

This parish – a wild tract of fells, becks, and tarns, was divided into three component parts.

It has been pointed out<sup>34</sup> that the ancient church of Northumbria left certain marks upon the districts she administered which may yet be distinguished. One peculiarity was the great extent of the parishes, some of which embraced several – occasionally many – townships. Another was, that each parish was governed secularly by a body of men known as the Twenty-four. Now Grasmere conformed nearly, though not exactly, with these rules; for the controlling body consisted of Eighteen, not Twenty-four, being in this respect like the Cumbrian parish of Crosthwaite to the north. But other parishes of the district had their Twenty-four – as Cartmel and Dalton in Furness.<sup>35</sup> In the next parish of Windermere, the Twenty-four are still an active body, and collect at the church every Easter Tuesday, eight coming from each of the three townships, Under-Milbeck, Applethwaite and Troutbeck.

The parish of Grasmere also embraced three townships. One was Grasmere proper, situated in the basin-shaped vale that

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<sup>34</sup> Creighton's *Historical Essays*.

<sup>35</sup> At Cartmel in 1642 measures were taken "for the makinge upp of the twentie-fourte ... that there may be four in everye churchwardens division as hath formerlie been used." Stockdale's *Annales Caermoeleensis*.

catches the sources of the Rothay, Langdale; the sister valley formed the second township, which extended to Elterwater; the third was Rydal-and-Loughrigg (often called Loughrigg and Beneath-Moss) which included all the rocky mass between the converging rivers, the compact village of Rydal with part of Ambleside.

From three sides of the parish then, by mountain path and "horse-trod," the folk wended their way for worship to Grasmere Church. Those of the vale of Grasmere proper would gather in units or little groups from all the scattered farmsteads, from Far Easdale and Blindtarn Gill, from Town Head, Gill Side, and all the houses that lay "Aboon Beck" as far as How Head and Town End, till they met at their lych-gate on the north side of the church.

From Loughrigg and Beneath-Moss they would collect by many a devious track, starting as far back as Clappersgate and Ambleside. From Ambleside ancient "trods" passed Nook End, and rose from Scandale Bridge by easy grade to Nab Lane (where Rydal folk would join them) and White Moss, and thence descending to cross the church bridge to enter the garth by the present gate, which was specially their own.

The third stream of worshippers flowed from the farthest sources west, from the recesses of Little Langdale, from Blea Tarn, and Fell Foot, from Forge and Hackett and Colwith they came, on through Elterwater, and across Walthwaite Bottom. Mounting the brow, they would meet a tributary stream of

fellow-townsmen, that gathered right from Steel End and Wall End, increasing as it flowed down Mickle Langdale, till it crossed the ridge of Hunting Stile. Dropping steeply into the vale, they would at Nichols (where stood an inn) meet a third contingent (from Loughrigg) which, starting at Skelwith, mounted by Foul Step to Little Loughrigg, passed by the Fold, the Oaks and Scroggs, to descend by Red Bank to the level of Grasmere Lake.<sup>36</sup> From Nichols onward the united groups would travel by the lake, and past the Holy Well, to enter the church garth by a gate at the north-west angle, now gone, called the Langdale

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<sup>36</sup> There is a tradition that a route from Skelwith Bridge dropped sharply from the top of Red Bank to the old ford of the Rothay known as Bathwath (Rydal Hall MSS.), and that it had even been used for funerals. This seems unlikely, unless the use were a repetition of a custom that had prevailed before the present Red Bank road was made; and of superstitious adherence to old corpse-roads the Rev. J. C. Atkinson (*Forty Years in a Moorland Parish*) gives instances. There may indeed have been once a well-trodden path there. In former times a fulling-mill stood on the left bank of the Rothay, near to the ford, and within the freehold property of Bainrigg. The mill was owned by the Benson family in the fifteenth century, but Bainrigg had belonged before that time to a family of de Bainbrigg, who had at least one capital dwelling or mansion-house standing upon it. Now a road to this house or houses there must have been. The woodman recently found a track leading up from the site of the mill to the rocky height, which emerged upon the present Wishing-Gate road. On the line of this (which was engineered as a turnpike road only about 1770-80) the older way doubtless continued towards Grasmere, past How Top and through Town End. A huge stone standing on this line was known as the How Stone. Levi Hodgson who lived at How Top, and who described the route to Mr. W. H. Hills, remembered fragments of a cottage in the wood. If the Skelwith Bridge folk ever used it as a church path, they would meet their townsmen (who had come over White Moss) at How Top. Close by there is still a flat-topped boulder used for resting burdens upon.

gate.<sup>37</sup> Here, at Church Stile, stood an important inn, long owned by the Harrison family. Shelter and a fire must indeed have been often needed (as well as something for the inner man) after the long travel – especially at funeral gatherings, when the corpse had to be borne through ford and flood, or through the storms and deep snows of winter time. The Ambleside folk, when in 1674 they petitioned their bishop for the right of burial in their chapel, stated that "by reason of the heat in summer and the great snowes and sudden inundations of water in winter it is very difficult and dangerous to carry their dead thither [to Grasmere] for burial";<sup>38</sup> yet their distance from the church was nothing like that of the Langdale folk. There were not infrequent burials from the right bank of Little Langdale beck, in the parish of Hawkshead or of "Ulverston."

Once within the churchyard, the different streams of the townships mingled as fellow parishioners. The sexes however, divided, the women seeking entrance (presumably) by the great south porch, and the men (after business done) herding in by the west door, known as theirs. Yet once inside, they again fell rigorously into ranks of townships, as we shall see.

The gathering of the dalesfolk for worship must have been a striking sight, especially on the great feast days when – four

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<sup>37</sup> This gate is shown in a map of 1846, as well as the stile which gave its name to the house then still standing, that was immediately opposite. Both disappeared at the widening of the lane from Stock Bridge to the church.

<sup>38</sup> Ambleside Town and Chapel.

times in the year – the sacraments were administered. Certainly attendance at church was obligatory upon every Sabbath Day, and fines were levied for default. But from the early seventeenth century, if not before, the dependent chapels in Langdale (at Chapel Stile) and Ambleside would absorb many of the more distant worshippers. For the four great celebrations, however, the whole of the adult population of the valleys, except the sick and infirm, would attend the parish church.<sup>39</sup> It is of course impossible to compute the number of the people, especially in early times; but if we accept the statement made in the Presentment of 1712, that there were then about 200 families in the parish, it may be reckoned that at that time and for at least a century previously, no fewer than from 500 to 700 communicants would gather for the rite. Besides the master and mistress of the homestead, there were grown-up sons and daughters, with farm

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<sup>39</sup> It is not easy to discover what was the early practice of the church concerning the administration of the sacrament, or the number of times it was received yearly by the laity. As early as 750, laymen who failed to communicate at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, were not esteemed christians; they were expected to make offerings four times a year. A later rule, which was stringent, seems to have been once a year, though a more frequent attendance – specially at Easter and Christmas, was urged. See Abbot Gasquet's *Parish Life in Medieval England*, Wall's *Old English Parishes*, p. 90, and Wordsworth's *Medieval Services in England*. The sacrament was called *housel*, and the bread *houselling-bread*. Henry VII's queen, Elizabeth of York, appears to have communicated three times a year, at the festivals of Easter, All Saints, and Christmas (Canon Simmon's *Notes to the Lay Folks' Mass Book*, p. 239). Queen Victoria no doubt clung to an old custom when she communicated no oftener than three or four times a year. (See *Life*.)

servants.<sup>40</sup> The garth would be crowded with the concourse of folk; and when they trooped into the fane, each township to its own quarter of the building, where men and women again divided to take their accustomed places upon their separate forms, and the dogs sneaked in, hoping to escape the dogwhipper's eye as they settled under their masters' legs, the whole space must have been packed.

The old, narrow close-set forms seated far more people than the modern benches, but even they could not have accommodated the crowds that attended certain funerals. (See Charities.) At Mrs. Fleming's funeral, for instance, few short of 2000 persons must have been present, including dole-getters, neighbours and relatives.

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<sup>40</sup> The population must have been greater when the Kendal trade in cloth was at its height. There were 1300 "houseling people" reported for the parish of Windermere in 1549 (Commission quoted in Mr. Brydson's *Sidelights on Mediaeval Windermere*, p. 95), and there is no reason to suppose that Grasmere was far behind. At the same time the numbers to collect at one celebration would be considerably lessened if the Easter communion were spread over several occasions, as was the case in the late seventeenth century at Clayworth, Notts, where celebrations were held on Palm Sunday, Good Friday, as well as Easter Day. All parishioners – to judge from the rector's careful record – must at this season have communicated; but at the celebrations of Whitweek and Christmas (for there was none at Michaelmas) the numbers were much lower. (*Rector's Book of Clayworth*).

# SOME LEGAL ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH

Thus for worship did the folk gather in the church. They came thither also to bury their dead within consecrated soil – for baptism of their "barnes" by the priest, and the binding of man and woman in holy matrimony. But the edifice and the enclosed space about it served in early times not only for purposes of religion, but of the law. Like the Roman Forum, it was used for the transaction of public business and the administration of justice. Bargains were ratified, covenants were witnessed, and protestations made solemn by an oath taken upon the Holy Gospel where it lay upon the altar – once a wonderful script illuminated and jewelled, that is now represented by the dirty little Testament of the Law Courts. Manor Courts and legal enquiries or inquests were frequently held within it. Public notices that concerned the townships – private ones even of auctions and the like – were proclaimed before the assembled people in the garth or the porch, if not in the building itself. Punishments for moral offences were carried out in face of the congregation.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> We have no evidence of this to show for Grasmere Church. But in 1622 "Sir" Richard Pearson, curate of Troutbeck, was empowered by the rector of Windermere to publicly revoke the sentence of excommunication under which one Adam Birkhead lay. An edict was issued from the registry of the Archdeaconry of Richmondshire as

The priests and the clergy acted as legal agents for the unlettered folk till comparatively recent times. They were versed in the intricacies of law, as well as ritual, and skilled in penmanship and the Latin tongue. The higher of them are found acting as agents and accountants for the holders of the fees into which the barony became split, as documents which concern our parish show.

Frequently the chaplain or the village priest drew up indentures, petitions, and secular agreements for the living, as well as the testaments of the dying. Wills were proved at the church registry of the diocese, and were stored there. The wills of the parish of Grasmere went to the town of Richmond, the centre of the archdeaconry; and not until 1719 were they proved at the secular courts of Kendal and Lancaster.<sup>42</sup>

Instances of the use of the church fabric for secular purposes in the neighbourhood may be quoted. A Court Roll of 1443 is headed "Court of Wynandremere held at the church of

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late as 1715, citing a form of penance to be gone through by George Birkett, who before the congregation of Troutbeck, and in "penitential habit," was to confess his grievous sin of incest with his deceased wife's sister. An additional note, however, empowered Mr. Barton, rector of Windermere, and Mr. Grisedale, curate, to use their discretion as to the manner of confession, and to allow the sinner, if properly penitent, to make it "in his Ordinary apparell" (Browne MSS.). It may have been the dislike of public penance, with its peculiar habit, that caused the churchwardens of Grasmere so often, and so incorrectly, to return a clean bill of morality in their Presentments.

<sup>42</sup> *Wills and Inventories of the Archdeaconry of Richmondshire* (Rev. J. Raine). The privilege of probate was withdrawn finally from ecclesiastical courts by Act of 1857 (Dr. Cox's *History of Parish Registers*).



Wynandremere 9 July 21 Henry VI."<sup>43</sup> An award concerning a private dispute in 1534 between George Browne of Troutbeck and Myles Dickson of Applethwaite decrees that the former pay to the latter "upon the secunde sonday in lente next comynge O-XLs of able ynglyshe money upon or. layde Alter in Wyndandermer church betwixe VIII of the clock and XII of the said sonday."<sup>44</sup> Again, an indenture made 1571 between Mr. John Benson and his Baisbrowne tenants stipulates that the payment of certain moneys should be made "in langdaill chappell betweene thoures of eyght of the clock at afr. noine" on the 1st of August in the two ensuing years.<sup>45</sup> In 1601, when Widow Agnes Fleming of Rydal Hall with her sons sued a Penrith man for debt, the commissioners sat and examined witnesses in Ambleside Chapel.<sup>46</sup> And within this building were probably taken down depositions in several other cases.

As regards Grasmere itself record is scant. The manorial courts were occasionally held in the Moot Hall of Kirkby Kendal, as in 1603,<sup>47</sup> but in early times it would be impossible to summon the holders from so far; and it is stated in 1436 that two courts were yearly held in Grasmere.<sup>48</sup> No other building

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<sup>43</sup> Public Record Office Court Roll 207/122.

<sup>44</sup> Browne MSS.

<sup>45</sup> Rydal Hall MSS.

<sup>46</sup> Rydal Hall MSS.

<sup>47</sup> Public Record Office Court Roll 207/111.

<sup>48</sup> Church inquisition post mortem, Henry VI., No. 36.

than the church could have contained this official gathering. The judgment on the 1583 tithe dispute enjoined that the parishioners were to pay their tithe of lambs in money every Easter "in the parish church of Gresmier." The church or chapel was as a rule the schoolroom where the priest taught.

The churchyard, even more than the church itself, had its secular and popular uses, which came down from ancient time. The fairs, the markets, the sports and the wrestlings<sup>49</sup> which took place within its enclosing walls, and of which we obtain faint intimations, were but the survival of the festivals sanctioned by the early church, when the wake, or fair of the patron saint was kept. This again, with its bull-baiting, its rude sports and its temporary stalls, may be linked on to the earlier rites of heathen times, when beasts were brought to the Temple for sacrifice, and when the people built booths about it, in which to hold a three days' feast. The annual or biennial fair, and even the Sunday market, were quite usual in the churchyard, before the boroughs obtained a special privilege for them. And though an express statute in 1285 forbade the practice, neither this nor the later injunction of the Church were heeded. In 1300 the town of Cockermouth complained that its market was spoilt by the bartering carried on at Crosthwaite Church, where not only flesh and fish were sold at festivals (and this distinctly smacks of an ancient sacrificial practice); but that corn, linen, cloth and other

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<sup>49</sup> See Coulton's *Chaucer and his England*, where miracle-plays and dances are added to the list.

commodities were conveyed thither every Sunday for barter. In 1380 the town of Appleby was suffering from a like cause. Merchants were carrying their goods to sell in the churchyards of the surrounding district on Sundays, to the detriment of the accredited market.<sup>50</sup> If this was done in other places of the district, it was certainly done at Grasmere, for the market town of Kendal was sixteen miles distant on a road often impassable.<sup>51</sup>

It was not until the seventeenth century that markets were established in the neighbouring towns of Hawkshead and Ambleside, after Grasmere had in vain attempted to secure the privilege.<sup>52</sup>

A good deal of informal business besides was conducted in the churchyard, such as sales proposed or private bargains struck. Of proclamations and sale notices made within the church or garth we have abundant evidence; and for these the clerk received generally a fee of 2d. No doubt the "citation" we hear of for tithe wool due to Squire John Fleming (1631) was made at the church. The prohibition against cutting wood in Bainrigg (1768) which the Rev. J. Wilson suggested should "be given at our church of sunday" and which was to deprive the holder of his winter fuel, has been preserved.<sup>53</sup> In recent times, according to Edward Wilson, the notices were given out by the clerk in the yard,

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<sup>50</sup> Calendar Patent Rolls, 4 Richard II., p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Browne MSS.

<sup>52</sup> Rydal Hall MSS.

<sup>53</sup> Rydal Hall MSS.

outside the so-called men's or western door.

The officers of the townships transacted business at church; and the notices still hung in church porches are a survival of the custom. The overseers of the poor worked in fact in close connection with the wardens; and the latter were responsible for some county rates which are found entered in their accounts, such as (1708) "To the Jaylor at Appleby" and "Prisoner Money." The Overseers' books for Rydal and Loughrigg show that when they failed to board a pauper within their township, they paid to the clerk 2d. "for advertising her to let."

The constable (and there was one for each township) had a far older connection with the parish church. He caused meetings for his division to be proclaimed at the church. Among the miscellaneous duties which he still performed in late times was payment for the slaughter of harmful beasts and birds. The heads of these were hung, we are told, on the church gates as visible proof; and Stockdale, writing in 1872,<sup>54</sup> says that he has seen them so exposed both at Cartmel and Hawkshead. The same practice no doubt prevailed at Grasmere. The constable's books for Rydal and Loughrigg record 4d. as the price usually given for a raven's head, and 3s. 4d. for that of a fox. In 1786, 5s. 0d. was paid "for one old Fox and two young ones." Ravens were frequently entered, and as the payments went to William Parke, we must suppose them to have been taken on the precipice of Nab Scar. Five were paid for in 1787, and twelve in 1790. These

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<sup>54</sup> *Annales Caermoeleensis.*

would decorate the Rydal and Loughrigg gate. Two foxes were paid for in 1793.

# THE EIGHTEEN

Not Twenty-four, but Eighteen represented the interests of the townships in the parish church. This was the case also at Crosthwaite in Cumberland, where this ancient body of "sworn" men were swept away by the Charity Commissioners at the time that they took over the schools. Of the Eighteen in Grasmere six represented – along with two wardens – each township. While the wardens, who were all landholders, took office for one year only, and in rotation, like all other officials of the village communities, such as constable, overseer, surveyor of roads, and frithman, the Eighteen appear to have been freely elected, and they kept office for an indefinite period.

The names of those who served the office at the Restoration are given in the important document concerning the fabric of the church printed later, and these names were but slowly altered. In the churchwardens' books of 1723 is written "Then chosen Edward Brockbank to be an Eighteen man for Little Langdale in the place of John Brockbank his father, deceased." Again in 1824 comes "Sides-Man Chosen by the Minister Churchwardens and Sides-men," followed by their names. A list of these was but infrequently written out, only an erasure marking a change, as when in 1708 John Green, serving for Grasmere "being Very Old and infirm, desired to be excused," and Thomas Green took his place.

The choice of a new member of the body lay apparently with the Eighteen themselves, the wardens, and the parson. This is still the case in Windermere, where (I am told) the choice of a new member of the Twenty-four is discussed in full vestry, the clergyman, however, finally nominating.<sup>55</sup> Yet the Eighteen were acting representatives in church affairs of the folk of the townships. All contracts for the improvement and alteration of the church were made by them. They were responsible for the share of their township in its upkeep, and laid a rate on the landholders to cover the yearly expenses. It is almost certain that the appointment of a clerk and schoolmaster lay with them and the wardens, though the parson no doubt sat at the conclave. We have no means of knowing whether their powers extended further.<sup>56</sup>

It should be noted that the old name for them was simply

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<sup>55</sup> From Mr. George Browne, one of the Twenty-four.

<sup>56</sup> At Holme Cultram, Cumberland, a like body – chosen, however, by the people themselves – were responsible for the care of the bridges and common wood, besides providing for the upkeep of the sea-dyke. See "The Sixteen Men of Holme Cultram," *Transactions*, Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian Society, N.S., 3. The Eighteen of Aston, Oxfordshire, were found in 1583 to have control over the common field and meadow, with the yearly allotments made within them. See "Survival of Archaic Communities," Prof. F. W. Maitland (*Law Quarterly Review*, vol. 9). Prof. Maitland regards the existence of this body as an exceptional case, and thinks it dangerous to assume it to have been a survival of ancient times. Mr. G. G. Coulton in *Chaucer and his England* considers that the Black Death of 1348-9 and the consequent diminution of the clergy may have thrown the people on their own resources, and caused the lay control over parish finances which appears to have dated (he says) from the fifteenth century.

"The Eighteen." They are called Questmen in a contract of 1687, but this appears to have been drawn up by a stranger. The term Sidesmen occurs late, and so does "The Twenty-four" which reckons the six wardens, two for each township, in the number. Strictly, the wardens (of whom there were eight in Cartmel) should not be included.



# PART III

RECORDS

PATRONS

MONASTIC CONTROL

THE CLERGY

THE CIVIL WARS

THE COMMONWEALTH

# RECORDS

The church constitution of Grasmere was therefore from early times that of a parish controlled and administered by a body of men representing the people, who were responsible for the funds that maintained the building and its services, while the clergy who officiated were supported by the ancient system of the payment of tithes.

The offering of pious folk of the tenth of their yearly yield was at first intended to cover all expenses, but it soon became diverted into purely ecclesiastical channels. The tithe-paying parish indeed early excited the cupidity of the least scrupulous members of Church and State. Already in 1254 a rector of Grasmere is found to be drawing the revenues of the parish without troubling to serve it except by deputy; for the Pope in that year granted a dispensation to Henry de Galdington, rector of "Grossemer" in the diocese of York, to hold an additional benefice with cure of souls.<sup>57</sup> This is the first record of the church discovered so far.

The value of the rectory is stated in the dispensation to be ten marks (£6 13s. 4d.). Estimates, however, varied widely. About 1291 a taxation was made out for all ecclesiastical benefices in England, the cause being Pope Nicholas I.'s promise of the tenths which he claimed from them, to Edward I. for a term of six years,

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<sup>57</sup> *Calendar of Papal Registers*, vol. ii., p. 294.

towards the expenses of a crusade. This great valuation remained the standard of taxation until the time of Henry VIII. It is said to have been completed for the Province of York in 1292; and it sets down the "church of Gressemer" in the Archdeaconry of Richmondshire as being worth £16, and that of Wynandermere as £10.<sup>58</sup>

But the high valuation of 1292 did not hold good. Complaints from the northern clergy that through impoverishment by various causes, but chiefly the invasions of the Scots, they were by no means able to pay so high a tax, produced some amelioration. A correction was made in 1318, when Windermere was written down at £2 13s. 4d., and Grasmere at £3 6s. 8d., or five marks. And at this figure it remained.

It stood indeed at five marks in 1283, when the first mention of the church occurs in connection with the secular lordship.

## Editor's Note

The writing down of the value of the tithes of Grasmere was the subject of correspondence between the author and myself, and she writes: "The so called taxation of Pope Nicholas IV. was acknowledged to be too high for the Northern Counties; but the reduction of Grasmere, when the alteration was made in 1318, from £16 to five marks (£3 6s. 8d.) is unaccountable

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<sup>58</sup> *Tax. Eccle. P. Nicholai*, iv.

to me." It had stood at this figure previously but had been raised to £16, and, as will be seen in the text, as early as 1301 in the reign of Edward I., when the abbot of St. Mary's, York, was allowed to appropriate "the chapels of Gresmer and Wynandermere," Gresmer is described as being worth £20. In 1344, at the Archbishop's Visitation, it is described as worth 5 marks; only to be again raised in 1435. In that year upon the death of John, duke of Bedford and earl of Kendal, to whom they had been granted by his father, Henry IV., we find among the items of his property "the advowsons of Wynandermere and Gressemer each of which is worth £20 yearly." After this the tithes again reverted to 5 marks and in the reign of Henry VIII. the "pension" paid to the abbey is put down as only half of that sum, viz. £1 13s. 4d. at which it still remains.

The terms "pension" and "advowson" may not always mean the same thing, thus advowson seems to be used sometimes as synonymous with tithe. Hence Miss Armitt writes "The parish churches, such as Kendal, Grasmere, etc., were "taxed" from the twelfth century onward at a certain figure – ten marks (£6 13s. 4d.) £16 or £30. What did this taxation represent? The absolute sum to be paid by the rector from the tithes to king, pope, archdeacon, court, or feudal lord? or was it a valuation only of the tithes, from which was calculated the amounts of the various 'scots' or annual payments to ecclesiastical or temporal authorities?" It seems not unlikely that the rise from £3 6s. 8d. to £20 in the reign of Edward I. may be accounted for by the

fact that the "Old Valor" which was granted by authority of Innocent the fourth to Henry III. in 1253 was superseded in 1291 by the "New Valor" granted to Edward I. by Nicholas IV., so that when Henry IV. granted the chapels of Grasmere and Windermere to his son John they were valued in 1435 at £20 each. They were only being put back to the sum named in the "New Valor" of 1291 which had been allowed in 1344 to drop to the 5 marks at which they had stood in the "Old Valor." The tithe taxation as established by the "New Valor" remained in force until Henry VIII. But a "Nova Taxatio" which only affected part of the province of York was commanded in 11 Edward II. (1317) on account of the invasion of the Scots and other troubles. These various taxings will account for the variation in payments which were collected for the benefit of the king.

*W.F.R.*

# THE PATRONS

William Rufus, upon his conquest of Carlisle, gave over to Ivo de Tailbois all these parts as a fief. After Ivo a confusion of tenure and administration prevails, into which it is useless to enter. The line of patrons of Grasmere may perhaps be begun safely with Gilbert fitz Reinfred, who married Helwise, daughter and heiress of William de Lancaster II., because it was he who first held the Barony of Kendal in chief from Richard I., by charter dated 1190.<sup>59</sup>

His son William, called de Lancaster III., died in 1246 without a direct heir; and the children of his sisters, Helwise and Alice, shared the fief between them. It is Alice's line that we have to follow. She married William de Lindesey, and her son Walter took that portion of the barony which was later known as the Richmond Fee, and which included the advowson of our church.

Sir William de Lindesey, his son, was the next inheritor. After his death, in 1283, a jury of true and tried men declared that he had died possessed of "A certain chapel there (Gresmer) taxed yearly at 66s 8d."<sup>60</sup> The chapel of Windermere, set down at a like sum, belonged to the same lordship.

Christiana, William's heiress, was then only 16. She was married to a Frenchman, Ingelram de Gynes, lord of Coucy.

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<sup>59</sup> *Lancashire Pipe Rolls*, Mr. W. Farrer.

<sup>60</sup> *Lancashire Inquests, etc.*, ed. by Mr. Farrer.

There is evidence that they spent a considerable part of their time in these parts, their seat being at Mourholm, near Carnforth. Ingelram indeed fought in the Scottish wars, as did his son William. Christiana survived her husband some ten years. They had at least four sons, William, Ingelram, Baldwin, and Robert. It was William who inherited the chief part of Christiana's property in the barony of Kendal, which was declared (1334) to include the manor of Wynandermere, and the advowsons of the chapels of Wynandermere, Marieholm, and Gressemer.<sup>61</sup>

The new tenant at once incurred King Edward III.'s displeasure. His interests lay apparently in France, where he resided, being styled lord of Coucy<sup>62</sup>; and without waiting to do homage for his mother's English lands and receiving them formally from the king's hands (as was the feudal custom), he passed them over to his young son William. The king pardoned the offence, and ratified the grant,<sup>63</sup> but he kept the youth, still a minor in 1339, about his person,<sup>64</sup> and William's short life seems to have been spent in service under the English banner.<sup>65</sup>

The family of de Gynes had a difficult part to play during the wars that followed upon Edward's claim to the throne of France.

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<sup>61</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 8 Edw. III. and 14 Edw. III., pt. 3, mem. 11.

<sup>62</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 8 Edw. III. There was a question of a marriage between his daughter Mary and the king's brother.

<sup>63</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 8 Edw. III.

<sup>64</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 13 Edw. III.

<sup>65</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls*.

Their hereditary instincts carried them naturally into the opposite camp, and they lost their English possessions in consequence. On William's death in 1343 the king – while he seems to have acknowledged the claim of his brother Ingelram as his heir,<sup>66</sup> kept the heritage in his own hands. Moreover, he declared such lands as were held by Robert de Gynes, a son of Christiana, who was a cleric and Dean of Glasgow, to be forfeited, because of Robert's adherence to his enemy,<sup>67</sup> and for the same reason lands at Thornton in Lonsdale held by Ingelram, son of Ingelram and grandson of Christiana, were likewise forfeited.<sup>68</sup>

The king presently used the escheated heritage to reward a knight who had served him well in the Scottish wars. John de Coupland had had the courage and address to secure Robert Bruce as prisoner at the battle of Durham; and Edward in 1347 granted to him and his wife for their joint lives the Lindesey Fee which was the inheritance of Ingelram. He excepted, however, from the grant (along with the park and woodlands about Windermere) the knight's fees and advowsons of churches belonging to the same.<sup>69</sup>

The fortunes of war brought Ingelram, lord of Coucy, and son of Ingelram, William's brother, as hostage for John, king of France, to the court of Edward. There he gained by his handsome

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<sup>66</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 17 Edw. III.

<sup>67</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 17 Edw. III.

<sup>68</sup> *Calendar of Close Rolls*.

<sup>69</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls and Close Rolls*, 22 Edw. III.



person and knightly grace the favour of the king, who granted him the lands of Westmorland which had belonged to his great-grandmother Christiana, created him Earl of Bedford, and gave him in 1365 his daughter Isabella in marriage. Ingelram for some time satisfied his martial instincts by fighting in the wars of Italy and Alsace; but on the renewal of the struggle between England and France, followed by the death of his father-in-law in 1377, his scruples were at an end. He renounced his allegiance to England, haughtily returned the badge of the Order of the Garter, and joined the side of Charles II.<sup>70</sup>

The Lindesey Fee was once more forfeited to the Crown. Richard II. granted it, however, to Phillipa, daughter of Ingelram and Isabella, and to her husband Robert de Vere, earl of Oxford (1382); and when the latter was outlawed by Parliament in 1388 it was confirmed to her.<sup>71</sup> After her death (1411) she was declared to have been seised of the advowson of the chapel of Grismere, taxed at £10, and that of Wynandermere, taxed at 100s.<sup>72</sup>

Phillipa had no children. Henry IV. now granted the Fee to his son, John, created duke of Bedford and earl of Kendal. He died in 1435. His property in the barony of Kendal included

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<sup>70</sup> Rymer's *Foedera, Dic. of Nat. Biography*. "Proof that Ingelram Earl of Bedford was son of Ingelram brother of William, who was son of William de Coucy, Christiana's son, is contained in *Inq. p.m.*, 50 Edw. III. (1) No. 18." Mr. W. Farrer.

<sup>71</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 5 Rich. II., 9 Rich. II., and 2 Hen. IV., part iv.

<sup>72</sup> *Inq. p.m.* MS. Rawl., B 438, f. 71.

the "advowsons of Wynandermere and of Gressemere, each of which is worth 20 li yearly."<sup>73</sup>

The Duke of Bedford's widow, Jaquetta of Luxemburg, received the third part of the Fee as her dower, with the advowson "of the church in Gresmere." She married Richard Woodville, created earl Rivers. After her death she is said (1473) to have possessed "the advowson or nomination of the church or chapel of Gressemere," though in 1439 she had allowed her privilege to lapse.<sup>74</sup>

The Fee was next granted by Henry VI. (who inherited it as heir to his uncle John) to John Beaufort, duke of Somerset.<sup>75</sup> The duke's daughter Margaret – afterwards countess of Richmond – came into possession of it at his death.<sup>76</sup> After a lapse, when Yorkists sat on the throne, and Sir William Parr of Kendal held it, the Fee (now including the advowson of Grasmere) returned to Margaret and passed to her grandson Henry VIII. He sold the advowson and patronage of Grasmere. Its subsequent history will be given later.

Such was the illustrious line of our church's early patrons – some of them the most striking figures in a chivalrous age. But it is not to be supposed that they knew much of the little parish

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<sup>73</sup> *Inq. p.m.*, 14 Hen. VI., No. 36.

<sup>74</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 1 Edw. IV., pt. 7, mem. 8; and *Inq. p.m.*, 12 Edw. IV., No. 47.

<sup>75</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 22 Hen. VI.

<sup>76</sup> *Inq. p.m.*, 22 Hen. VI., No. 19.

hidden amongst the mountains. When the rectorate fell vacant, they would grant the post to some suppliant clerk or priest, who would carry their nomination to the higher ecclesiastical authorities. The right to nominate often fell into the king's hands, through minority of the heir, confiscation, or inheritance. For instance, the king appointed to the rectory of Windermere in 1282, in 1377 and in 1388. Edward III. nominated Edmund de Ursewyk to "Gressemer" in 1349; and Henry IV. did the same for Walter Hoton in 1401.

# MONASTIC CONTROL

Our church of Grasmere was not left to the control of parson and manorial lord like other tithe-yielding parishes, it was snapped up by a big monastery. The abbeys that had sprung up all over England in post-Norman times were of a very different order from the simple religious communities of Anglo-Saxon times; and before long it became a question as to how they were to be maintained on the splendid lines of their foundation. By the reign of Henry I. they had begun to appropriate rectories, and in 1212 the parish church of Crosthwaite was given over to the control of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire, which carried off all the profits of the tithes, merely restoring £5 a year to the rector, who was elected by its chapter.<sup>77</sup> St. Mary's Abbey had been founded in York city in 1088, and its chapter found it necessary by the end of the thirteenth century to look round the great church province of Richmondshire to see if there were no revenues which might by royal favour be appropriated.

In December, 1301, Edward I. despatched a writ to the sheriff of Westmorland, bidding him inquire of true and lawful men whether it would be to the damage of the Crown or others if the abbey of St. Mary of York were allowed to appropriate the church of Kirkeby in Kendale with its chapels and appurtenances. The inquisition was held, be it noted, not at Kendal but at

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<sup>77</sup> *Victorian History of Cumberland.*

Appleby, where a sworn jury declared the appropriation would damage no one. An explicit statement was added which concerns us. "The chapels of the said church, to wit the chapels of Gresmer and Winandermere are in the patronage of Lord Ingram de Gynes and Christian his wife, by reason of the inheritance of the said Christian, and they hold of the king in chief... And the chapel of Gresmer is worth yearly 20 li."<sup>78</sup>

Accordingly a license was granted by Edward I., under date February 23rd, 1302, for the Abbot and Convent of St. Mary's, York, "towards the relief of their impoverished condition," to appropriate the "church of Kirkeby in Kendale, which is of their own patronage, in the diocese of York, and consists of two portions, on condition that they appropriate none of its chapels, if there are any."<sup>79</sup>

The appropriation took effect; and moreover the Abbey succeeded in gaining jurisdiction over the "chapels" of Windermere and Grasmere. The nomination of the rector indeed remained in the hands of the lord of the Fee, but it was passed on to the chapter of the Abbey for confirmation, before being finally ratified by the Archdeacon of Richmondshire. Thus three august authorities had to bestir themselves, when a fresh parson was needed for our parish; and in 1349 King Edward III., the Abbot of St. Mary and Archdeacon Henry de Walton were all

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<sup>78</sup> *Inq. ad quod damnum*, 38/6.

<sup>79</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 30 Edw. I.

concerned in the business.<sup>80</sup> No doubt the monks seized the right to nominate whenever they could, and in 1439 George Plompton was named by them before his admission by the archdeacon.<sup>81</sup>

This change was not put into effect, however, without fierce opposition in the district. In 1309 an appeal went up to the king from the Abbot of St. Mary, who styled himself "parson of the church of Kirkeby in Kendale," wherein he stated that when his servants had gone to carry in the tithe corn and hay, they had been assaulted by Walter de Strykeland and others; and moreover that Roger, the vicar and the other chaplains and clerks appointed to celebrate divine service in that church, hindered them in the discharge of the same, trampled down and consumed his corn and hay, and took away the horses from his waggons and impounded them. Whereupon three justices were appointed to adjudicate upon the case.<sup>82</sup>

From this it would be seen that the local clergy were as bitterly opposed to the monastic rule as the gentry and the people. Sir Walter de Strickland with armed servants at his command headed the opposition. His lands at Sizergh lay to the south of the town of Kendal and he refused to the men of the monastery right of way across them for the collection of the tithes of corn, which was always made while the stooks stood upright in the field. After much wrangling, for no abbot was ever known to withdraw

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<sup>80</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls.*

<sup>81</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls*, 17 Hen. VI., p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> *Calendar Patent Rolls.*

a claim, articles of agreement were made out between them, which reiterated the statement that the church of Kirkby Kendal was "canonically possessed in proper use" by the monastery.<sup>83</sup> However, the convent found it easier to let the tithes to the opponent, rather than to wrestle with an obstructionist policy, and in 1334 Sir Walter is found agreeing to furnish to the monastic granary now established at Kirkby Kendal three good measures of oatmeal for the tithe of the sheaves of Sigredhergh, sold to him by the abbot and convent.<sup>84</sup>

But the people were not appeased, and when in 1344 the archbishop made a visitation, opportunity was taken to lay before him, in the name of "the common right," complaints against the monopoly of funds by the convent, as the following document shows: —

### **Release of the Abbot and Convent of the Monastery of St. Mary, York, concerning their churches, pensions, and portions**

In the name of God, Amen, Since we, William, by divine permission Archbishop of York, ... in our progress of visitation which we have lately performed in and of our diocese ... have found that the religious men the Abbot and Convent of the monastery of St. Mary, against the common

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<sup>83</sup> Sizergh Castle MSS.

<sup>84</sup> MS. Dodsworth 28, fol. 78.

right detain the parish churches and chapels, portions, pensions, and parochial tithes underwritten, namely, ... the annual pensions in the parts of Richmond: of the church of Richmond 100s. and 20 lbs of wax, ... of the vicarage of Kirkby Kendall £4, of the churches of Gresmere and Winandermers 5 marks... We have commanded the said abbot and convent ... to show their rights and titles before us and have caused them to be called, ... and we ... having considered the rights and good faith of the said religious men ... release the said abbot and convent ... as canonical possessors of the said churches, chapels, portions, pensions (&c)... Dated at Cawood, on the 20th day of the month of August in the year of our Lord MCCCXLIIII, and in the third year of our pontificate.<sup>85</sup>

The appeal had been made in vain. Yet opposition could not have ceased, as the case was finally carried to Rome. In 1396 a confirmation of the abbey's possessions (including the chapels of Gresmere and Wynandremere, worth 5 marks each) was made by the Pope, on petition by the abbey, according to letters patent of Thomas Arundel, late archbishop of York, dated November, 1392.

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<sup>85</sup> *Calendar of Papal Registers*, vol. v., p. 1-4.



# THE CLERGY

Though not successful, Sir Walter de Strickland's opposition had done some good, but for exactly 200 years longer did the monastery by the walls of the city of York hold sway over the church of Grasmere. In what degree its influence was felt in the mountain parish cannot be told, or what it gave in return for the pension it abstracted. It may have assisted in the rebuilding of the edifice, lending aid by monastic skill in architecture. Probably it supervised the worship in the church, and improved the ritual, passing on to the village priest the tradition of its own richly furnished sanctuary. Signs were not wanting at the Reformation that the district had been ecclesiastically well served.

It has been seen that the parson of the parish was a pluralist and a non-resident as early as 1254; and so were those of his successors of whom we have evidence. The glimpses obtained through scant record disclose the tithe-taking rector of the valley as a figure distinguished by education, if not by family, and known to the lofty in station. He is termed "Master," and bears the suffix "clerk"; while "Sir" is reserved for the curate, his deputy, who has not graduated at either university.<sup>86</sup> He was skilled in law more than in theology. He may have served an apprenticeship in the great office of the Chancery; sometimes

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<sup>86</sup> Dr. Cox, *Parish Registers of England*, p. 251.

men of his position are termed "king's clerk."<sup>87</sup> He was not an idle man, and was often employed in secular business by the lord of the Fee. It may have been in the collection of the lady's dues – for the heiress Christiana de Lindesay, had married Ingelram de Gynes, of Coucy in France, in 1283 – that the parson of Grasmere suffered an assault (1290) at Leghton Gynes (later Leighton Conyers). It is certain that when Robert de Gynes, one of the sons of Christiana, and possessed of some of her lands about Casterton and Levens, went "beyond the seas" in 1334, he empowered Oliver de Welle, parson of Grasmere, to act with Thomas de Bethum as his attorney. Oliver de Welle had a footing in our valleys besides his parsonage, for he is stated to have held, under the lord William de Coucy, deceased, "a certain place called Little Langedon in Stirkland Kettle," which was then (1352) in the custody of the executor of his will, John de Crofte.<sup>88</sup>

Edmund de Ursewyk, "king's clerk," whom the king nominated to Grasmere in 1349 – the young lord William de Coucy being dead – doubtless came of a Furness family, and may have been related to Adam de Ursewyk who held land for his life in the barony, by grant of the elder William,<sup>89</sup> as well as the office of chief forester of the park at Troutbeck.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> In 1383 Richard de Clifford, "king's clerk" was presented to the church of Warton in Kendale, *Calendar Patent Rolls*.

<sup>88</sup> MS. Rawlinson, B. 438, f. 2.

<sup>89</sup> *Calendar Patent Roll*, 20 Edw. III.

<sup>90</sup> *Calendar Patent Roll*, 20 Edw. III.

"Magister George Plompton" was another learned cleric of good family, being the son of Sir William Plumpton of Plumpton, knight. He was a bachelor-at-law, and was ordained sub-deacon in 1417. It was in 1438-9 that he was nominated to the rectory of Grasmere, by the Chapter of St. Mary's, and some years after he acquired that of Bingham in Nottinghamshire. This he resigned (and doubtless Grasmere also) in two or three years' time, owing to age and infirmities. He retired to Bolton Abbey, and in 1459 obtained leave from the Archbishop of York to have service celebrated for himself and his servants within the walls of the monastery – a permit which gives a picture of affluent peace and piety in a few words.<sup>91</sup>

Master Hugh Ashton, parson, acted as Receiver-general for the lands of the Countess of Richmond (the Lindesay Fee) in 1505-6.<sup>92</sup> On his resignation in 1511, Henry VIII. exercised his right as inheritor of the Fee, and nominated John Frost to the rectory; the abbot and convent presenting in due form. This happened again in 1525, when William Holgill was appointed.<sup>93</sup>

Of other rectors of the post-Reformation period we know little or nothing. Richard, "clericus," was taxed in 1332 on goods worth £4, a sum higher by £1 than any land-holding parishioner in the three townships.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Canon Raine's Notes to *Testamenta Eboracensia*, Sur. So., vol. 30, p. 68.

<sup>92</sup> Min. Acc., Hen. VII., 877.

<sup>93</sup> "List of Rydall-Writings." D.F.

<sup>94</sup> *Lay Subsidy Roll*, West, 195/1A, 6 Edw. III.

# LIST OF RECTORS AND CURATES

1254	Henry de Galdington. <i>Calendar of Papal Registers</i> , vol 2, p. 294.
1290-91	William de Kendale. <i>De Banco Rolls</i> , Rev. 86 in 79d. Adam de Ottelay, "capellanus." Levens Rental of Ed. 2 or early Ed. 3.
1332	Richard "clericus." <i>Lay Subsidy Roll</i> . West., 195/1A.
1334	
June 24	Oliver de Welle. <i>Close Rolls and Patent Rolls</i> . 8 Ed. 3.
1349	Edmund de Ursewyk. <i>Patent Rolls</i> .
1362	Hugo de Middleton. Torre's <i>Archdeaconry of Richmondshire</i> .
Dec. 3	
1401	
Jan. 13	Walter Hoton "parson." <i>Patent Rolls</i> , Henry IV.
—	Reginald Pulham. Torre; no date given.
1443	
May 24	Peter Yrford. Torre.
1459	
Feb. 10	George Plompton. Torre. <i>Calendar Patent Rolls</i> .
1486	James Chaner "capellano."
1505-6	Hugh Ashton, "clerk," Min. Acc., Henry VII., 877. Resigns Grasmere Rectory in 1512. Rydal Hall MSS.
1511	John Frost, on resignation of Hugh Ashton. Rydal
Oct. 18	Hall MSS.
1525	William Holgill or Hawgill. Rydal Hall MSS. Chester
Mar. 14	Diocesan Registry.
1548	Gabriel Croft, instituted on death of Holgill. Chester
Jan. 11	Registry. Called Rector at Visitation of Bishop of Chester, 1554, when the following names accompany his.
	Dns William Jackson. His will was proved Jan. 21, 1569, which calls him "late curat of Gresmer."
	Dns John Hunter.
	Dns Hugo Wahn. Hugh Watson "preist" bur. March 8, 1577. Grasmere Church Register.
1563	"Sire Thomas Benson, curate" witnesses will of John Benson Esq. of Baisbrowne.
1569	? Master John Benson, rector.
?	Lancelot Levens. Chester Diocesan Registry.
1575 <sup>25</sup>	John Wilson, instituted on death of Lan. Levens.
July 18	Chester Diocesan Registry. Bur. May, 13, 1627. Grasmere Church Register.
1627	Robertus Hogge. Removed following year. Rydal Hall
July 16	MSS.
1628	Henry Wilson, B.A., instituted, according to Chester
May 24	Diocesan Registry, on death of John Wilson, by presentation of Agneta Fleming. Ejected 1644. Died 1647.

95 1575 – March 20. James Dugdall, "Clericus" witnesses Indenture between Wil. Fleming of Rydal and his miller.

## CLERGY DOING DUTY DURING THE COMMONWEALTH

1645.	"Mr. Benson."
1646.	"Sir Christopher Rawling." Probably had served as Curate for some time previously. The Register gives the baptism of his child in 1641 when he is called "Clericus." He likewise joined Parson Wilson in a bill in 1642.
1653.	John Wallas. Independent. Ejected 1655.
1655	John Tompson. Probably Presbyterian.

## RECTORS AFTER RESTORATION

1660.	John Ambrose. Probably nominated on death of Henry Wilson, but not allowed to serve.
1684	Henry Fleming, B.A. on death of J. Ambrose.
1728	William Kiher on death of H. Fleming.
1728	George Fleming, LL.D. (Dean of Carlisle) on session of W. Kiher.
1733	William Fleming, M.A. on resignation of Geo. Fleming.
1743	John Craik, B.A. on death of W. Fleming.
1806	Thomas Jackson on death of J. Craik.
1822	Sir Richard Fleming, Bart., on death of T. Jackson.

## Curates

The curates who officiated under the rectors were a different class of men. Constantly resident, and seemingly holding the post for life, they belonged as a rule to the district – even it might be, to the township – as did William Jackson, who died 1569. A sharp boy, son of a statesman, might attract the notice of the parson, or of the visiting brother from St. Mary's Abbey.

After serving an apprenticeship, as attendant or acolyte within the church, he might be passed on from the curate's tuition – for the latter almost always taught school – to Kendal or even to the abbey at York. On being admitted into the order of priesthood, he would return to his native place (should the post be vacant) and minister week by week to the spiritual needs of his fellows and his kinsfolk. Sometimes he even took up land to farm. Adam de Ottelay, "chaplain," is set down in an undated rental of the early fourteenth century, as joining in tenure with John "del bancke."<sup>96</sup>

The "chaplain" James Chamer, who witnessed a Grasmere deed in 1486, was probably the curate there.<sup>97</sup> It must be remembered, however, that the three townships appear to have been, from an early (but unknown) date, furnished with resident curates, acting under rector and abbot. Little Langdale too, if tradition be correct, had its religious needs supplied by a chapel. It is possible, indeed, that this may have been served through the priory of Conishead in Furness, to which William de Lancaster III. – the last baron to rule Kendal as a whole, who died 1246 – granted a settlement or grange at Baisbrowne and Elterwater, which was later called a manor. This grange lay within Grasmere parish, as does the field below Bield, where tradition asserts the chapel to have stood. The first express mention of a chapel at Ambleside (within the township of Rydal and Loughrigg) is found in a document of Mr. G. Browne, dated 1584. But in

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<sup>96</sup> Levens Hall MS.

<sup>97</sup> Rydal Hall MS.

the rental of 1505-6, William Wall, "chaplain," is entered as holding in Ambleside one third of the "pasture of Brigges." There is little doubt, therefore, that he was resident in the town, and uniting husbandry with his clerical office. Of a chapel in Great or Mickle Langdale the first evidence that occurs (after the strong presumptive evidence of the four priests serving the parish to be given immediately) is the indenture of 1571, which expressly mentions it.

## **The Start of the Reformation**

The revolution which Henry VIII. brought about in the ecclesiastical world of England shook our parish, as the rest of England. Not content with the suppression and spoliation of the lesser monasteries, he turned to the greater ones, whose riches in gold and jewels, in land and revenue, excited his cupidity. Remote Grasmere even, by diversion of the pension she had dutifully paid her church superior, might supply something to the royal pocket! So the new supreme Head of the Church is found in 1543, bartering what he could to two of those job-brokers of ecclesiastical property, who were so evil a feature of the Reformation. The parchment at Rydal Hall runs thus: —

A Breuiate of the Kings Grant of Gersmire

Advowson to Bell & Broksbye in 35to Hen. 8

Be it remembered that in the charter of our most illustrious

lord Henry the Eight, by the grace of God king of England, France, and Ireland, defender of the faith, and on earth supreme head of the English and Irish church, made to John Bell and Robert Brokelsby within named, among other things it is thus contained: —

The king to all to whom, &c. greeting. We do also give, for the consideration aforesaid, and of our certain knowledge and mere motion for us, our heirs and successors, do grant to the aforesaid John Bell and Robert Brokelsbye, the advowson, donation, denomination, presentation, free disposition, and right of patronage of the Rectory of Gresmere in our county of Westmorland, which, as parcel of the possessions and revenues of the late Monastery of St. Mary near the wall of the City of York, or otherwise or in any other manner or by any reason whatsoever, has or have fallen, or may fall, into our hands. Witness the king at Walden the twenty-first day of October in the thirty-fifth year of our reign.

This is clearly a copy of but a part of the original charter, and the "consideration" which Henry received does not transpire; but in the following month the two speculators procured a licence to sell again, and they passed over their purchase of the Grasmere advowson, and of all woods upon the premises — meaning no doubt the old demesne of the Lindesay Fee — to Alan Bellingham, gent., for £30 11s. 5 1/2 d.<sup>98</sup> Bellingham in the same

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<sup>98</sup> "List of Rydall-Writings," by D.F., in which he writes the names as Bellowe and Brokylsbee.



year purchased direct from the Crown that portion of Grasmere known as the Lumley Fee – thus gaining the lordship of some part of the valley.

Henry's sale of the advowson did not touch the tithes, which were left in the hands of the rector; but he reserved for himself the "pension" of 21/2 marks which had been regularly paid out of them to the abbey. It passed down with other Crown property to Charles II., and in his reign was sold, according to an Act of Parliament which was passed permitting the sale of such royal proceeds. Since that time it has been in private hands, and bought and sold in the money market like stocks. It may perhaps be traced by sundry entries in account books, as paid by the titheholder: in 1645, "for a pension for Gresmire due at Mich: last" £1 13s. 4d. It was paid in 1729 by Dr. Fleming as "Fee-farm Rent" to the Marquis of Caermarthen; and later by Mr. Craike to the Duke of Leeds; while Sir William Fleming, as owner of the tithes of Windermere, paid the same from them.<sup>99</sup> It is still paid through a London agent, being officially set down as "Net Rent for Grasmere, £1. 6s. 8d.: Land tax, 6s. 8d." This sum represents – not five marks – but five nobles, or half-marks. Thus it may be said that the dead hand of Henry VIII. still controls the tithes of Grasmere.

This tyrant wrought other changes for Grasmere. When creating the new diocese of Chester, he swept our parts of Westmorland within it. The archdeaconry of Richmondshire

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<sup>99</sup> Rydal Hall MSS. and Tax Eccles. P. Nicholai.

remained, but the archdeacon was shorn of power. He no longer instituted our parson, as in the days prior to the rule of St. Mary's Abbey, and this empty form fell to the Bishop of Chester; who, on the death of parson Holgill in 1548, appointed to the office one Gabriel Croft, upon nomination by the patron.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Chester Diocesan Register.

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