

THORNTON-IN-CRAVEN

BYGONE DAYS IN AN ANCIENT PARISH

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Mr. A. H. Clegg's first of a series of articles on the ancient parish of Thornton-in-Craven is continued below. The first instalment appeared in the CRAVEN HERALD on April 26.

The Overseers were occasionally troubled with defaulting ratepayers

The following items appear to indicate that some unfortunate persons were in arrears :-

Earby Overseer received of A.B. for clock and drawers sold to C.D. under a distress £5. This was in 1816. In 1829 the proceeds of M.W.'s furniture amounted to

£7 18s.7d. In 1834 the Overseers received for goods sold belonging to the late R.N., 6s.4d.

Also in 1816 the arrears of cesses in Thornton township amounted to £7 8s.10d.

The Overseers frequently lost rates through property being unoccupied, empty houses, and through rates allowed to poor cottagers. The following items are from the accounts of 1830 :-

Commons unoccupied, £6 3s.41/2d ; barhouses, chapels rates, but cesses not collected, £4 4s.6d.; rates allowed to poor cottagers, £5 13s.9d.

The Vestry seems to have its share of trouble with regard to the re-assessment and revaluation of property in the parish. At a Vestry held 16th November, 1826, a re-valuation of all property in the parish was decided upon in the following term :

"At a meeting of such persons as are assessed or are likely to be assessed for the necessary relief of the poor of the parish of Thornton held in pursuance of notice duly given for the purpose of taking into consideration and deciding the best measures to be adopted for making and laying upon all rateable property within the said parish, a fair and equal assessment for the necessary relief of the poor thereof and for other purposes in the several Acts of Parliament mentioned relating to the poor. It was unanimously resolved : "That a new valuation of all rateable property within the said parish of Thornton shall with all convenient speed be made by such person as the committee hereinafter mentioned shall select for that purpose. That in the making of such valuation such valuer be guided by the admeasurement recently made of lands in the said parish of Thornton under or by virtue of the Thornton Inclosure Act. That the expense of making such valuation shall be paid by the churchwardens and overseers of the poor of the said parish out of moneys arising from the poor rate for such parish."

Further at a meeting held 11th February, 1830, pursuant to notice for the purpose of considering the propriety of reducing the rates on the moorland throughout the parish of Thornton, it was resolved that the overseer be directed to demand not more than, after the value of, one shilling and three pence per acre on all such land.

A short time afterwards, at a Vestry held 1st April, 1830, "pursuant to notice for the purpose of regulating and altering the assessment of cottages, houses and other buildings within the parish of Thornton, it was agreed that there shall be a rate made after the present valuation."

THE WORKHOUSE

From 1824 to 1837 there seems to have been a workhouse for the parish. At a Vestry held 25th March, 1824, the following was resolved :-

"This meeting considers a workhouse very necessary and of the greatest importance, and we, the undersigned, consider and authorise the overseers to procure a part of Holden Clough, if it

can be obtained, if not to procure one where it can be obtained for the most advantage." Apparently the suggested workhouse was obtained, for the accounts show that during the year £48 15s. was spent on it.

The following interesting items relating to the workhouse are taken from the accounts. 1827. To cash for fixtures (sic) in Holden workhouse, £2 8s.6d. ; Dec 27th, 1837, Holden Workhouse bills, etc., paid, £22 8s.51/2d. ; by cash for H.B. weaving at workhouse, £3 19s.2d. ; by cash for H.A. weaving at workhouse, 3s.6d. ; by cash to K.T. weaving at workhouse, £2 9s.6d. The last three items are also referred to in the accounts as "Received by paupers' work at Holden Workhouse £6 12s.2d." Does this mean that handlooms were installed in the workhouse, and that they received the above amounts for weaving done by the inmates?

There is nothing to indicate where Holden Clough or Holden Workhouse was. But it seems probable that the above minute refers to a workhouse that was already in existence. No trace of such a workhouse having existed in the parish of Thornton can be found, hence it appears that the overseers obtained the use of part of some workhouse outside the parish. It is possible that the workhouse referred to was at Holden, near Bolton-by-Bowland, as a workhouse was in existence there at that time.

The following items are rather puzzling : 1817, the overseer for Kelbrook and Harden received by payment of looms rent etc. £19 13s 31/2d. ; 1827, to cash for barrows sold at Thornton, £3 14s.9d. ; 1827, to cash of R.W. for Ingeon (sic), 10s. ; 1830 received of J.B. in part of £1 for looms, 7s.6d ; received of C.R. in part of 10s. for loom 3s.6d., received of B.T. part of his rent, 3s.6d. ; 1830, received of H.E. for one pair of looms £1 10s.

COUNTY RATE

As at the present time, the County rate formed part of the Poor Rate. The payment of the County Rate is shown in the Thornton accounts for 1824. For the period of fourteen years from 1824 to 1837 the total amount paid by the parish in County Rates was £2,057, an average of £146 per year.

The year of the highest County Rate for this period is also the year of the highest Poor Rate, namely, 1826, when it was £185 15s. The journey to pay the County Rate cost as a rule 10s.

CONSTABLE ACCOUNT

The Constable Account is entered in the overseers' accounts, the amounts paid to or received from the Constable Account by the overseers being given. Unfortunately, from a historical point of view, no individual items are shown.

In days gone by, stocks, whipping posts and ducking stools were in frequent use and the unfortunate person who had to inflict these parochial punishments was the Constable. It was an ancient office dating back over a thousand years.

When a new Constable was required he was appointed by the Vestry.

From 1818 to 1820 there were two Constables, but from 1820 onwards only one. The Constable received 2 guineas a year for his pains.

At a Vestry held 22nd April, 1824, six Special Constables were appointed, three for Earby township and three for Kelbrook township. These were in addition to the regular Constable and it was unusual, but there may have been some special reason for it.

From 1818 to 1823 the Constable Account seems to have been a profitable concern, for during this period the overseers received sums varying from £2 to £9 per year from it, but from 1823 onwards they paid to the Constable Account an average of £8 10s. per year.

ROAD MAKING

The accounts for 1826 include the following :- Cash belonging roads making and repairing, £541 10s. ; expenses belonging the road, £295 12s.9d. But there is nothing to show whence this money was obtained or on what roads it was spent. The date leads one to think that the expenditure had some connection with the Thornton Award of 1825, based on the Thornton Inclosure Act of 1819.

In this award the Commissioner appointed by the Act set out and appointed certain public carriage roads to be constructed. It is possible that the Surveyors of Highways for the parish supervised the construction of the roads, but it is probable that the money came from rates paid by the several proprietors, who had land allotted to them as a result of the Inclosure Act, and perhaps from other land owners in the parish.

Other miscellaneous items in the accounts are as follows :- On May 15th 1817 the Thornton overseer received of A.B. "for one year's rent of house in Cam Lane to Michaelmas 1816, 10s.6d." A rent which would be a joy to present day householders! On April 6th, 1818, the overseers received of J.C. for militia money the sum of 10s.

In 1826 the parish paid "By proportionate share for powerlooms damaged belonging to J.Mason, £9 14s.9d." This item invokes interesting speculation. Who was J. Mason? Who damaged the powerlooms and why? Why did the parish pay a share? Who paid the other share or shares? I think it is probable that the item is connected with the riots which occurred at Addingham and Gargrave in 1826.

As stated above, 1826 was a year of great distress, and in addition to the distress the handloom weavers and spinners were haunted by the fear of further trouble to come through the introduction of power-driven machinery, and some took to rioting.

W.H. Dawson, in his "Loose Leaves from Craven History" gives interesting accounts of these riots.

Mr. Jeremiah Horsfall had decided to install power-looms at his mill at Addingham. During April, 1826, a wagon load of machinery was sent from Cheshire for Mr. Horsfall's mill. It travelled by way of Colne. A large number of hand-loom weavers from Colne, Trawden, Wycoller, Laneshawbridge, Cowling and maybe other villages, met the wagon there and followed it. Eventually, near Laneshawbridge they broke up the machinery. Within a few days of this outrage the same crowd decided to visit Addingham and break up the machinery in the mill as they had broken that on the wagon. Their designs were frustrated by the action of the work people in the mill and the timely arrival of soldiers.

The rioters then decided to proceed to Gargrave to destroy the looms in Mr. Mason's mill there. Mr. Mason met them outside the village and tried to dissuade them from their misguided plans. He even offered them money to buy food. They persisted, however, and in a quarter of an hour completely destroyed the looms and then quietly dispersed to their own villages. For the damage done by the riot the parishes in the wapentake of Staincliffe had to pay. Each parish paid its share. Whether any persons from Thornton Parish took part in the rioting is not stated, but Thornton Parish would have to pay its share, which probably explains the item of £9 14s.9d. paid as a proportionate share for power-looms damaged belonging to J. Mason."

In the same year the overseers received from Mr. A. for the conveyance of T.B. to Wakefield House of Correction the sum of £2, and in the following year they also received of Mr. A. for the conveyance of M.E. to Wakefield House of Correction a further sum of £2.

In 1837 the overseers paid £23 0s.10d. for a map and plan of the parish, and this "was the balance between the charge of map and the money paid by the proprietors." The reason for the making of this map is not given, but it may have been required in connection with the formation of the new Skipton Poor Law Union.

The next two items throw an interesting light on the cost of postage in 1827, for in this year 5d. was paid for the postage of a letter from Colne respecting H.N's rent and 8d. was paid for the postage of a letter from Thornton near Bradford, respecting R.E. and his family.

The first payment to the Skipton Union was made in October, 1837. The overseer's accounts cease in March, 1838, as in this year, after nearly three and a half centuries, the duties of the overseers of the parish respecting the relief of the poor, were taken over by the Skipton Union.

At a Vestry held 22nd March, 1838, two overseers were appointed, namely : J.S. and T.B., and it was decided " that this meeting do agree to pay J.S. for his services as overseer and guardian the sum of twenty five pounds, he being to attend at the meetings of the Board of Guardians and also to assist the relieving officer on the weekly pay day and make out and deliver all lists to magistrates and Chief Constable without further charges ; that this meeting be binding upon all ratepayers of the parish."

And so ends an interesting but unfortunate phase in the history of the ancient parish of Thornton-in-Craven.

A.H.C.

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