



Farming

For centuries, the 100 or so people living in Wreay worked in the fields and at their looms.

In 1561, the widow, Alice Railton, left 23 yards of 'hempe teare' and 23 yards of 'harden' and 12 yards of lin[en] cloth . . . besides cattle, 14 sheep, a nag, 4 hens, a swine, and 9 bushels of malt. She also left two jacks, 2 doublets and 1 cap - essential equipment if she was to defend herself against Scottish reivers.

Thomas Parker of Petteiril Wreay, in April 1594, left: 'Item one Jacke one steall cappe with his rydinge geare & his apperell'; his other goods included 13 bushels of byge and 10 bushels of oats, a mare and colt, an old cow and a calf, 2 stirks, 3 geese, 1 cock and 3 hens.

In 1681 Thomas Phillipson, left 'shetes and wooling cloths line and yerne', also 'deweres lwemes and geeres with ffatt and whell', besides cattle, bible 'and other litte books', and bees.

A little later Celia Fiennes was struck by the poverty of the country: 'you pass by little huts and hovels the poor live in like barnes some have them daub'd with mud-wall others drye walls'.

Thomas Denton when he made his Perambulation in 1688, viewed the area which was held as copyhold from the lords of the Manor of Botchardgate, who were the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle: 'This demesne runs up southward, as high as Petteirell Wrey, . . . Their lands are rich in soyle and very well wooded all along Petteirell.'

Farming changed little over the centuries until the enclosure acts. In 1777 Parliament passed: 'An Act for dividing and enclosing the Common and Waste Grounds, within the Townships, Villages, or Hamlets of *Carleton, Brisco,* and *Wreay*.' 490 acres in Wreay were enclosed: 230 acres were awarded to the Dean and Chapter, and 188 acres to John Losh.

John Losh and others now had an incentive to improve their land: 'The young squire improved his mansion and property, and gained the credit of making everything smile around him. He became a prominent agriculturist, and had the credit of introducing Italian ryegrass into Cumberland.'

The country roundabouts was dominated by the houses of the wealthy, but it was well kept and productive: 'Leaving this village, (Low Hesket) we observe, on our left hand, *Moorhouse-house*, the residence of ISAAC PARKER, Esq.; *Barrock Lodge*, the pleasant, modern-built house of JAMES GRAHAM, Esq. standing on the verge of a high bank, half surrounded by the river Peterill, and looking down a fertile vale inclosed with wooded eminences; *Wreay Hall*, the property of THOMAS BENSON, Esq.; *Wood-side*, the exceedingly neat house of JOHN LOSH, Esq. having woods and plantations of considerable extent stretching from it in various directions; *Newbiggin Hall*, which surveys the vale of Peterill from a pleasant situation, and is the residence of the Rev. Mr. BATEMAN, who has made considerable improvements there; and *Brisco-hill*, the mansion of JOHN THOMLINSON, Esq.'

Returning to his family home in 1825, James Losh found that 'The country is greatly improved not only by the enclosures of Englewood Forest etc. but also by the formation of new roads, growth of trees and improved cultivation of the country in general.'

From 1839, at Wreay, customary tithe payments rendered to the church were commuted to rent charge payments. 730 acres were tithe free, but 355, extending from the school and chapel south, had hitherto been required to make customary payments of 1d for every milch cow in lieu of the tithes of milk, 2d for every cast of bees, 1d for a plough, and 2d for the eggs of hens kept by each occupier. Of these acres, 323 were arable, 24 meadow and 8 woodland.

In 1841 there were 166 people living in Wreay. Men like John Bell at Chapel Hill and Thomas Stubbs were agricultural labourers, hired by the half year at the fairs at Carel Cross. They worked for men such as Andrew Little on his 110 acres at Low Hurst, or Thomas Lancaster, who farmed 250 acres at High Wreay. Many would have worked on the 500 acres owned by Sarah Losh. Richard Wilkinson and Robert Brown were tile-moulders. William Nicholson was the village joiner and David Robinson the blacksmith. James Longrigg kept the Plough Inn. 60 year-old Elizabeth Little was the schoolmistress and Joseph Story, aged 25, the schoolmaster. The Rev. Richard Jackson was the curate.

A century later, apart from small holdings, most farms at Wreay were dairy farms. There was one feeding, one stockrearing and one breeding farm. Bankdale Home Farm, of 330 acres, was owned by Messrs. J Teasdale and Sons. Oats and mixed corn were grown along with permanent grass, and grass for mowing and for grazing. Men and horses did the work. There were 11 horses at Bankdale and two each at Croft House, Blackwell Park, and Low Burthwaite. There were few tractors. Almost all farms kept cattle and calves, sheep and lambs, pigs and poultry. Mr E. Fairbairn of Wreay Syke Farm had no fewer than 2101 poultry as well as 82 cattle and calves, 262 sheep and lambs and 3 horses.