

ART. XI – *An early curate of Torver.*

By JANET D. MARTIN.

**A**MONG the wills of the Richmond Archdeaconry in the Lancashire Record Office (WRW/F) is that of Christopher Dawson, curate of Torver, who probably died in the summer of 1605, after he had written his will and drawn up his inventory. The quality of its language and the interest of the bequests it contains make amusing and absorbing reading. I have been unable to identify Christopher Dawson and his brothers and sister more fully. Although he ended his days in Torver, it is clear that he had close links with Kentmere, and he could well have been curate there before moving to Torver. None of the family were baptised in Kendal parish after the registers started in 1558, and I have failed to trace them elsewhere.

Christopher Dawson's care for his family is evident, especially, one feels, for his neice, "litle Em", whose cloak was to have a lining, but even for the drunken brother John, whose habits are brought vividly before the reader. He was clearly a man of some means for a curate whose salary, raised by subscription in the four quarters of Torver, would not have been large. In the 18th century the curate at Torver was paid only £5. 1s. a year. But Christopher Dawson had a reasonably extensive wardrobe, a surprising number of weapons (they are rare items in early 17th century Furness inventories), and an even more remarkable amount of stock and boxes for a man who would have lived on "whittlegate". Moving his property from one house in Torver to another at the end of his allotted time must have been quite a business, even with the horse, although the cows and the heifer and the bees must surely have stayed put on rented ground.

The register at Torver survives from 1599. The entry for that year is badly obscured, but it appears to be in the same clear hand as that of the will. Sadly there is no register for 1605, so the actual date of Christopher Dawson's burial remains unknown. In spite of his sickness he took great care with the details of his will, and himself drew up the lists of his property and of the various sums owing to him, between 2 May and 5 June. His goods were valued at £11. 18s., debts in Torver came to £5. 2s., and debts in Kentmere to £4. 14s. Unusually, and perhaps improperly, there were no witnesses to the will itself.

The will and inventories are transcribed in full, but the punctuation, which is eccentric, has been altered in places to make for easier reading. Abbreviations, except e.g. "y" and "w<sup>ch</sup>", have been extended. The testator's use of capital letters was arbitrary.

In the name of god amen: the thenth daie of maie. anno domini 1605. I christopher dawson, curett, beinge very sore sicke in my bodie; yet neverthelesse hole, & sounde of mynde: & in goode, & perfecte Remembraunce, maiketh this my owne Last will, & testament: in manner & forme Followinge. Firste I geve, & bequieeth my soule, unto Almightye god: my maiker, creatore & Redeemer. And my bodie to be humated, & and buryed in the church of torver. Itm I geve unto my brother john dawson: my lytle clocke<sup>1</sup> to maike hym a jerkine, & a paire of hoose. but he shall not have it untill my Executryx & others se hym brynge a taylior. for els he will sell it, & drinke it. And go ragged and naked. & also my better jacket, & my longe breches. Itm it is my will: that margrett, my sister shall geve hym: xs. in money. y<sup>1</sup> is to weett,

at Every sixe weekes End, After my wille be proved before the ordenary, xijd. & no more at once, whatsoever he saie. And if he be not content w<sup>t</sup> this I charge yow geve hym mone. Itm I geve & bequieeth unto bryan dawson, my brother, my jerkine, my dublet, & hose that cleeveth altogeth<sup>er</sup><sup>2</sup>; & halfe of all my debtes, m<sup>r</sup> gilpine of kentmer thelder, and nicholas Atkinson of howthwat excepted, my lytle sworde, w<sup>t</sup> longe girdell at the same, & the chuse of two litle daggers: if he doo well help his sister, for the gittinge of the same debts. Itm I geve unto Jennet my god dawghter, my olde gowne, to maik hir a coat. Itm I geve & bequieeth unto margrett dawson, my sister: my best gown, my best hatt, & my best clocke. Itm I geve to litle Em, my brothers dawghter, my olde clock, & some blanket to lyne it w<sup>all</sup>. Itm I geve to george Atkinson his wiffe children iijs. iiijd. Itm unto the wiffe of john Asburner xijd. Itm I geve unto fower children y<sup>t</sup> I am godfather of, y<sup>t</sup> is to wete, thomas parke, undercragge, john fysher of hedrynghome, Richard fysher of stable arvie, & Robert kendalls, Every one of them xijd. Itm I geve william ashburner, & george Ashburner his brother Either of them iiijd. Itm I ordaine & maik margret dawson, my naturall Sister, my whole Executrix, of all my goodes, cattles, debts, dewties, morgaiges, & tackes<sup>3</sup>, moveable & unmoveable, whatsoever: payinge & discharginge all my debts, dewties, legaces, & bequieethes, w<sup>ch</sup> of dewe & right ought to be payed. & bringinge my bodie honestlye unto the churche: payinge y<sup>t</sup> y<sup>t</sup> is dewe & right: & not as a great companye of them wolde have it, to spend y<sup>t</sup> litle thinge y<sup>t</sup> I have Lefte my sister, As they have caused me often tymes to doo<sup>4</sup>: Itm I maik supervysoures of this my said last will & testament, nicholas atkinson of wandow-sicke, and nicholas huddleston. & I geve unto Either of yowe: xijd. desiring yow boith for Jesus sake, to se this my said last will & testament be fulfilled & kept in every article so farre furth as lawe & custome will permitte & suffer. written w<sup>t</sup> myne owne feeble hand, beinge verye sicke. by me christofor dawson curett of torver.

The Invetory (*sic*) of all the goodes, & cattell, moveable, & unmoveable w<sup>ch</sup> was christofor dawsons, curett of torver, at his death. priced by iiij men: viz. Richard crowdson, John Ashburner, nicholas huddleston & John prockter, beinge sworne the v<sup>t</sup> daie of June 1605.

Imprimis ij kine & a litle hepher.	iiij marks. iijs. iiijd.
Itm a horse.	xxijs. viijd.
Itm his rayment.	xxiijs.
Itm in beddinge & Insighte. <sup>5</sup>	xxjs.
Im a gunn. ij daggers, ij paire of boots, ii cheists, an arck, ij	
paire of showes, & books.	xxxxs.
Itm bees, ringes, a sponge, <sup>6</sup> & money.	iiijli xvijs.
debts <sup>7</sup> owinge to me christofer dawson curett, as hereafter	
are written if anye man canne denye anye of it:	
let him depose & have it.	

Imprimis nych Atkinson of the howthwat at St. James daie next.

xxs.

Itm myles oxenous, or roger atkinson for hym. upon the latter ladie daie in harvist<sup>8</sup> next & indefault of him: roger atkinson of heslehow.

xs.

Itm Rychard fysher of stable arvie.

vjs. xjd.

Itm thomas parke undercragge.

ijs. xd.

Itm Leonard parke.

iijs. ijd.

Itm william atkinson of roslythornes.

ijs. viijd.

Itm richard atkinson of hiesteell.

iijs.

Itm rychard taylior.

ijs. iiijd.

Itm william newbie.

xiiijd.

Itm myles gardner.	ijs. ijd.
Itm Robarte Addison.	xd.
Itm Rowlande atkinson & his mother.	xd.
Itm john wilson of more	xjd.
Itm Rowland Atkinson of banckende.	xiiijd.
Itm george atkinson of church house upon a morgayge of halfe a roodde of medow,	viijs.
Itm the said george, for the church house.	ijs.
Itm james wilson of brydgehouse.	xvd.
Itm Rowlande wilson of rosleythornes.	iijs. iiijd.
Itm george atkinson of my last yere wayges.	viijs.
Itm thomas fysher lychwyse for his quarter.	xiijs. viijd.
Nych atkinson lychwyse in his quarter.	vjs.

debts in kentmer as foweth (at foot of page)

Torver (at head of next page)

Debts dewe unto me christofer dawson clerk in kentmer, this seconde daie of maij. Anno regni regis domini nostri jacobi tertij (*sic*). Anno domini 1605.

Imprimis in m <sup>r</sup> george gilpine <sup>9</sup> hands, w <sup>ch</sup> he borrowed of henry robinson wiffe as a bill of his owne hande w <sup>t</sup> witnesses, can declare	xls.
Itm m <sup>r</sup> william gilpine for a table y <sup>t</sup> he had of me at jaine cowperthwats.	vs.
Itm christofer cowperthwat, other wise called cristofer of the greine head	vs.
Itm myles cowperthwat	iiijjs.
Itm Lancelotte airay, & his wiffe.	ijs. vjd.
Itm john airay wiffe of head. but if she will pay quietly taik of her.	vjs. vjd.
Itm gawen gilpine of greine quarter, john cowperthwat witnes	iijs. iiijd.
Itm Rychard robinson of brockstone	vs.
Itm Robart airay wiffe otherwise called robin of bank	xijd.
if she will pay yow taik	vs.
Itm the Administrators of gawen airay for wayges & woll, as jane his wiffe knoweth	ijs.
	xxs.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cloak.

<sup>2</sup> Not, I think, meaning that the doublet, jerkin, and hose matched one another, but that the hose were made like a pair of tights.

<sup>3</sup> Leases.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. not to waste his money on an extravagant funeral party, a condition which he had had to write into other people's wills.

<sup>5</sup> Usually furniture.

<sup>6</sup> Probably for cleaning parchment. I have come across at least one other will in Christopher Dawson's hand. Like most other incumbents he would have written wills and other documents for his neighbours.

<sup>7</sup> The debtors in this section are all from Torver.

<sup>8</sup> The feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, 8 September, but an unusual way of referring to it.

<sup>9</sup> George Gilpin of Kentmere Hall (d. 1617). William Gilpin in the next item is his son (d. 1628).

