

The Customary Tenants of Watermillock c.1760-c.1840: Continuity and Change in a Lake District Township

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Summary

THIS article contributes to the debate on the decline of small farmers in the Lake District. It is based on the analysis of 36 listings, notably land tax duplicates but also rentals and other sources, to examine changes in the customary tenants of the Lake District township of Watermillock in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Numbers of customary tenants dropped only slightly over the period though there was a trend towards greater social differentiation which may have been encouraged by the enclosure of the Watermillock commons. There is no indication of major changes in tenant numbers or turnover rates suggestive of an agricultural crisis following the Napoleonic Wars. Unlike some previously studied communities, socio-economic changes at Watermillock were gradual and unspectacular rather than rapid and dramatic.

Introduction

There has been considerable debate concerning the origins, tenure, social status and fate of the distinctive Cumbrian customary tenants who accounted for around 70 per cent of landowners in Cumberland and Westmorland at the end of the eighteenth century.¹ These tenants had come to enjoy property rights almost equivalent to freehold. They paid rents which, despite residual feudal obligations, had on most manors failed to keep pace with inflation. The main disadvantage of such tenure was the obligation to pay more substantial fines on the death of a tenant or the lord of the manor. The consensus is that, having had their tenant right confirmed in various court cases in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, customary tenants remained numerous into the late eighteenth century.² In Cumberland, Westmorland and North Lancashire there were relatively few aristocratic and major gentry landowners.³ As a result the more substantial customary tenant families, who had profited modestly in the century or so before 1750,⁴ dominated rural society at a local level forming dynasties which sometimes lasted for centuries.⁵ Searle has gone as far as to claim that a peasantry with a near-subsistence economy and little penetration of market forces survived in Cumbria until the end of the eighteenth century, although it is clear that small landowners in Cumbria had been involved in the market from at least the sixteenth century.⁶ The growing impact of a capitalist economy, however, led to increasing social differentiation among the ranks of the customary tenantry.⁷ There was a trend for their numbers to fall gradually during the eighteenth century due to the buying up of their property by larger estates and the process of enfranchisement which converted them into freeholders.⁸ A more dramatic decline is thought to have occurred during the post-Napoleonic Wars slump which lasted into the 1830s.⁹ For Leath Ward between 1780 and 1829, Uttley calculated a 29 per cent fall in the number

of yeomen.¹⁰ Almost a third of the yeoman class (comprising some small freeholders but overwhelmingly made up of customary tenants) went within 50 years with remarkably little contemporary comment. Uttley claims that the drop in numbers of yeomen between 1818 and 1829 reflected the post-war economic slump. He identified a rise in numbers of landowners who were not owner occupiers between 1780-1818 from 664 to 765. He attributed this to speculation in the purchase of farms vacated by failed owners. Duxbury suggested that numbers of yeomen in Ravenstonedale fell by half between 1716 and 1781 with increasing differentiation between larger and smaller owners. Marshall and Walton, however, considered that much of this late eighteenth/early nineteenth century fall was apparent rather than real, due to a decline in the use of the term 'yeoman' in sources like directories.¹¹

Part of the difficulty in studying changing rural society in Cumbria at this period has been the lack of consistency in the definitions employed by different writers. Customary tenant, owner-occupier, yeoman and, less frequently, statesman have been used to describe heavily overlapping but slightly different groups distinguished by tenure, land management, social status and amount of land held.¹² Compared with the notion of a 40 shilling freeholder which has often been used as a means of identifying yeoman status in other parts of England, the problem is complicated in Cumberland and Westmorland by the inclusion of customary tenants as well as freeholders.¹³ Uttley has simply equated yeomen with owner-occupiers¹⁴ while Duxbury, for Ravenstonedale, identified yeomen quite specifically as customary tenants paying more than $\frac{3}{4}$ d. of customary rent who farmed their own land.¹⁵ He only counted as yeomen customary tenants who were resident in Ravenstonedale though many non-resident landowners were arguably yeomen too. In such studies it is important to note that the enfranchisement of customary holdings, with conversion to freehold, removed customary tenancies from manorial records but did not necessarily reduce the numbers of small landowners.¹⁶ In this study the focus is specifically on customary tenants rather than yeomen or owner-occupiers on the basis that this group is more readily identifiable.

Meaningful generalisations regarding social and economic change require solid foundations of specific case studies. As regards Cumbrian customary tenants there have been comparatively few of these.¹⁷ The accumulation of detail through further local research allows comparisons and contrasts to be made which bring out the richness and variety of Cumbrian rural society as well as allowing generalisations to be tested and new theories regarding social change to be developed. This article investigates the changing structure of rural society in a Lake District township, Watermillock, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It examines a group of customary tenants during a period of marked social and economic change including the French Wars, the rise of Lake District tourism, parliamentary enclosure and the post-1813 agricultural slump.

Watermillock Township

The township of Watermillock is located on the north side of Ullswater (Fig. 2). It stretched from the high fells north of Helvellyn at a maximum altitude of *c.* 720m to

lower ground along the shores of Ullswater and in the valley of the Dacre Beck and had a population of 338 in 1801. A range of hills including Little Mell Fell (505m) divided these lowland areas. Watermillock had a variety of terrain and land quality. The tithe survey of 1841 records 1,716 acres under arable against 6,925 acres of meadow and pasture and 217 acres of woodland.¹⁸ Watermillock's physical environment was similar to that of many other townships on the eastern margins of Lakeland.

Watermillock was a manor within the Barony of Greystoke which belonged to the Howard family, Dukes of Norfolk. Within the manor Gowbarrow Hall and Park, including the hunting lodge of Lyulph's Tower, formed a 2,200 acre block of demesne land, parts of which were leased out, as were the manorial cornmills at Knot and Sparket. Almost all the remainder of the improved land was held in customary tenancy. There were no major gentry holdings within the township. There was very little freehold land in Watermillock until parliamentary enclosure in 1835 created freehold allotments. Unlike some other manors in the Barony of Greystoke none of the customary tenements were enfranchised until late in the nineteenth century.

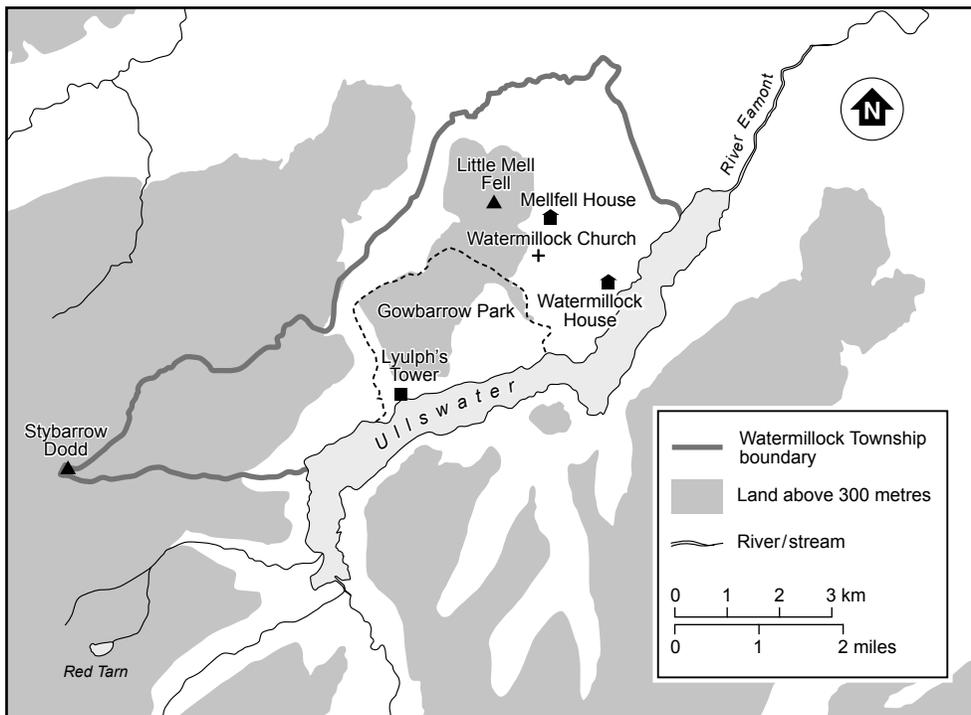


FIG. 1. Watermillock: location map.

Sources

The basis of the study was an examination of listings of customary tenants within Watermillock between *c.* 1760 and *c.* 1840. While Duxbury's and Healey's research was based on rentals and other manorial records,¹⁹ for Watermillock the most numerous

surviving listings were land tax duplicates.²⁰ These are a notorious minefield for historians due to problems of interpretation which have been discussed in detail by Ginter.²¹ Problems of using them are, however, reduced when they are used for comparisons within townships or parishes rather than between them and when they can be cross-checked against other sources to resolve problems such as whether the same name entered twice indicates two landowners with identical names or the same person owning more than one tenement.²² There were 29 land tax lists available between 1767 and 1841. Only one (1839) was rejected as being too damaged and illegible to be usable.

The surviving land tax lists for Watermillock have a gap between 1795 and 1817. This was partially filled by manorial rentals from 1798, 1812 and 1816.²³ Other rentals were available for 1786 and 1842.²⁴ These, together with the 1829 Parson and White directory, the enclosure award for 1835, the 1841 census enumerators' books and the 1841 tithe survey, provided a total of 36 listings spanning an 80 year period.²⁵ Supplementary material was obtained from manorial court records for the Barony of Greystoke, the parish registers, both published and manuscript, and Thomas Rumney's diary.

Methodology

Each land tax duplicate was transcribed and alphabetical lists of owners and (after 1780) occupiers were produced. A database of 215 customary tenants recorded at some point between 1767 and 1841 was created. A limited number of tenants with very short periods of occupancy which did not span any of the listings may have been omitted but such cases were reduced by incorporating additional information from manorial court records and the parish register. It was established that the post-1780 land tax duplicates listed almost all the customary tenants by comparing them with contemporary rentals. The 1785 tax list contains every customary tenant on the 1786 rental with the exception of William Pollock who, occupying only a cottage and garth, was probably too small an owner to be liable for taxation. Likewise only one customary tenant on the 1816 rental cannot be traced on the 1817 land tax list. Detailed comparison of the land tax lists of 1767, 1769 and 1770 with that of 1780, the first to have columns listing both owners and occupiers, shows that the names on the pre-1780 lists are those of customary tenants rather than a mixture of owners and occupiers as occurs in other parts of England.²⁶ A feature of the duplicates is that they always list owners in the same order, facilitating comparison between successive duplicates. The order with which customary tenants were recorded was the same as in the manorial rentals, again making cross-checking of names easier. Healey has identified similar regularities in the Grasmere rentals which he studied.²⁷ The logic behind the order of the names emerges from the 1786 and 1798 rentals which gave the location of each messuage and tenement. Both rentals and land tax lists recorded customary tenants in Watermillock in a clockwise progression starting with Ulcatrow at the headwaters of the Dacre Beck, continuing north down the valley, east around Little Mell Fell, south towards Watermillock church and finally south-east ending with Gowbarrow Park.

The Watermillock customary tenants

Healey notes that while customary rents in Cumberland and Westmorland were loosely related to holding sizes in the eighteenth century the relationship was not necessarily close due to the effects of inflation, improvement and encroachment from the commons over the centuries.²⁸ For Watermillock it is possible to examine the relationship between holding size, customary rent and land tax assessment. Data on holding sizes for customary tenants are available for 1829 when the enclosure commissioners invited those claiming common rights to submit details of their claims.²⁹ The standard unit of landholding in Watermillock was a tenement paying 10 shillings customary rent a year and just over 9 shillings land tax with fines at 20 times the annual rent. In 1829 the size of such holdings varied from 25 to 60 acres though most were in the 30-40 acre range. Some 10 shilling tenements had been split into two equal or unequal portions which might be held together or separately. Such divisions seem mostly to have occurred before the period of study and tended to remain fixed. The division of a tenement appears to have been a complicated procedure which had to be carried out by the jury of the manor court.³⁰

The Watermillock tenements comprised closes of arable, permanent pasture and meadow: very little land within the manor was in common arable fields by this period. In addition the customary tenants had rights to grazing and other resources from over 4,500 acres of common pasture. Many tenants owned more than one tenement. Rentals show that in 1786 this applied to 28 per cent of customary tenants, in 1798 to 42 per cent, in 1816 to 36 per cent and in 1842 to 40 per cent. In 1829 a few customary tenants had more than 100 acres such as the Robinsons of Watermillock House, the Nicholsons at Sparket, and the Rumneys of Mellfell. A number of other families with two tenements, such as the Castlehows, had around 80 acres. At the other end of the spectrum were a few smaller holdings with a dozen acres paying customary rents of 3 to 5 shillings and one or two customary cottages and garths. The existence of sub-tenants, craftsmen and married labourers in the parish registers indicates that there must have been many other cottages and houses, presumably leased from customary tenants rather than the manor.

The mean size of the Watermillock holdings recorded in 1829 was 55 acres. This is larger than in many Cumbrian communities. In the Barony of Gilsland the average holding size on many manors in 1828 was 18-27 acres, though larger (40-71 acres) in the more upland ones. In 32 per cent of customary tenements had under 20 acres and 56 per cent under 40 acres.³¹ At Witherslack average holding size in 1736 was 15.7 acres and 43 per cent of tenants held under 10 acres with only 14 per cent over 50 acres³² while at Lupton most customary tenants had 15-40 acres.³³ Although there are no directly comparable data on holding sizes in Grasmere and Ravenstonedale the customary rents and land tax payments suggest that average holding sizes there were smaller than in Watermillock. An early nineteenth century account of Ravenstonedale mentions that few farms there generated incomes of over £60 a year.³⁴ By contrast, at almost the same date, the Rumney's estate at Mellfell, not the largest in Watermillock, was generating an income, after deduction of taxes, of around £100 a year.³⁵ At this time Bailey and Culley reckoned that most customary tenants had incomes in the £15-30 range with only a few exceeding £100.³⁶

Customary tenants: Changes c.1760-c.1840

It would be wrong to assume that the social structure of Watermillock remained unchanged during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Beckett and Healey have both identified falls in numbers of customary tenants on other manors over this period.³⁷ The lack of early rentals for Watermillock prevents many conclusions being reached about changes before the mid eighteenth century. A rental of c. 1600, however, lists 65 customary tenants in Watermillock compared with 53 in a rental of c. 1743 and 54 in 1786, a drop of c. 17 per cent.³⁸ A feature of the early seventeenth century rental is that few tenants occupied more than one tenement. Over 180 years there had clearly been some holding amalgamation although the changes were not dramatic and their exact timing, though evidently predating the 1740s, cannot be established. From 1767 onwards, however, elements of continuity and change can be identified in more detail by comparing the various listings. For Ravenstonedale, Duxbury examined changes in numbers of holdings for the period 1716-1851, measured by their customary rents.³⁹ This was possible for Watermillock between 1786 and 1842 (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Changes in distribution of holding sizes in Watermillock measured by customary rents 1786-1842.

Customary rent	1786	1798	1812	1816	1842
Under 5/-	4 (8%)	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	6 (13%)
5-9/11	4 (8%)	3 (6%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	4 (9%)
10-14/11	32 (63%)	34 (67%)	35 (69%)	29 (63%)	21 (47%)
15-19/11	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)	4 (9%)
£1+	7 (13%)	7 (13%)	8 (16%)	10 (22%)	10 (22%)
Total	51	51	50	46	45

(Source: manorial rentals CRO (C) DHG 205, DBS 4/72/1/1/2, 3).

There was a 12 per cent fall in total numbers of tenants over the period but no evidence of a massive decline after Waterloo. The percentage of tenants paying less than 10 shillings fell in the early nineteenth century then rose substantially. The proportion of middling tenants (rents 10/- to 14/11d.) rose in 1798 and 1812 before falling. The proportion of tenants paying over £1 rose markedly from 13 per cent in 1786 to 22 per cent in 1816 and 1842. Overall there was some trend to greater stratification among the customary tenants.

The land tax lists also allow monitoring of changes in numbers of customary tenants and the sizes of their holdings. There was a drop of c.8 per cent in total numbers of customary tenants between 1767 and 1841, broadly comparable with the trend identified from the rentals. The difference in total numbers between the rentals and the land tax lists is due to the omission from the latter of a couple of small tenancies which were not liable for taxation. Changes in the size distribution of holdings, as measured by their land tax assessments, also mirror those seen in the rentals. It should be noted that land tax payments before 1780 cannot be used for this particular exercise as the township quota, or at least the sum recorded as collected, was lower than in later times. From 1780 the quota stood until 1841 and beyond. The proportion of small holdings paying under 4 shillings fell between 1780 and 1816 but then rose to reach

TABLE 2: Changes in size distribution of holding sizes in Watermillock measured by Land Tax assessments 1780-1829.

Land tax	1780	1790	1795	1817	1829
Under 4sh	4 (8%)	3 (6%)	3 (7%)	2 (5%)	4 (9%)
4-7/11	9 (19%)	4 (8%)	4 (10%)	3 (10%)	4 (9%)
8-11/11	19 (40%)	30 (63%)	23 (51%)	20 (49%)	23 (51%)
12-15/11	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)
16-19/11	9 (19%)	7 (15%)	8 (18%)	8 (20%)	5 (11%)
20sh+	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	4 (10%)	5 (12%)	6 (13%)
Total	48	48	44	41	45

(Source: land tax duplicates (Source CRO (C) QPR/1).

9 per cent by 1829. Holdings paying between 4sh and 7/11d. declined to 8 per cent by 1790 then stabilised. Numbers of middle-sized holdings assessed at between 8 and 12 shillings rose in the 1790s then levelled off to form under half of all estates by 1829 compared with two fifths in 1780, similar to Ravenstonedale.⁴⁰ Large estates assessed at over 20 shillings increased in importance. Overall the evidence of the rentals and land tax lists confirms a trend towards greater differentiation in holding sizes but only a small reduction in numbers rather than the major fall identified in some studied. The trend towards greater social inequality was also found in Ravenstonedale though it was less marked in Watermillock. Overall there was a lack of drastic change and much evidence for continuity.⁴¹

Continuity and turnover

Although numbers of customary tenants may have remained fairly stable this does not tell us anything about the actual turnover rates of tenants. If it is accepted that the land tax duplicates for Watermillock are reasonably complete lists of customary tenants then comparison of successive lists should allow some conclusions to be drawn regarding their turnover rates. The proportion of names which changes between each list, calculated as annual turnover, was mostly around 2 to 4 per cent – or one or two people a year. Changes in tenancy would have been the result of inheritance or sale due to death or, in some cases, transfer to heirs before death. When customary tenants became old they sometimes transmitted their lands to their sons and became what the parish register termed ‘householders’. An annual turnover rate of 2 to 4 per cent fits well with the *c.*5 per cent level of overall population turnover due to death and migration which has been found for other English rural communities.⁴² One would have expected that, as stayers rather than movers, the rate of turnover of customary tenants would have been lower than that of Cumbrian or English rural society in general which included more geographically mobile groups such as living-in servants, labourers and husbandmen.⁴³

It might have been expected that periods of economic difficulty, especially the post-1813 slump, would have increased the rate of turnover of customary tenants but this does not seem to have been the case. Although land tax lists are not available for the

first 17 years of the nineteenth century the percentage annual turnover between 1812 and 1816, calculated from the rentals was, at 6 per cent, only slightly higher than the normal for earlier land tax lists.

The database of customary tenants allowed a study of their careers. One hundred and fifteen tenancies began and ended within the period under study (Table 3).

TABLE 3. Length of completed tenancies.

Length of tenancy	Number of tenants	Proportion of total
1 year	30	26%
2-5	16	14%
6-10	4	3%
11-20	17	15%
21-30	18	16%
31-40	13	11%
41+	17	15%
Total	115	100%

Some apparently very long tenancies may have been due to fathers and sons having the same names; again the use of manorial court records reduces such instances. The pattern of occupation revealed by Table 3 is a polarised one. Over a quarter of tenants had very short careers, appearing in only a single tax listing and sometimes not in any lists at all, but appearing in the manor court records as being admitted to their tenements in one court and alienating them in the next. In many such cases the new owners probably lived outside Watermillock and either did not want the trouble of managing or subletting the land: or preferred to take the money. On the other hand a similar proportion occupied their holdings for over 30 years. This suggests that when a tenant inherited, if they did not sell their tenancies quickly they tended to hold on to it for a long time, providing an element of stability and continuity.

Owner occupation and subletting

Owner occupation has been seen as a defining characteristic of yeoman status in Cumbria.⁴⁴ It is considered to have declined through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From 1780 the land tax lists for Watermillock indicate those customary tenants who were owner occupiers, and those who sublet part or all of their lands. Table 4 shows this information. The proportion of customary tenants who were owner occupiers fell from over 60 per cent in the early 1780s to 34 per cent in 1789, but rose to 40-46 per cent in the early 1790s and in 1817, then recovered to around 50 per cent in the 1820s and 1830s. The overall decline in owner-occupation matches the findings of other studies⁴⁵ but the marked year-to-year variations suggests either considerable flexibility in land management or possibly variations in the recording of occupiers. To understand what was happening a closer look at the question of subtenancy is necessary.

Customary tenants who sublet part of their estates are likely to have done so for various reasons. They sometimes held two tenements in different parts of the manor

TABLE 4. Owner occupation and subletting of customary land,
Watermillock 1780-1841.

Date	Total customary tenants	Owner Occupiers	Owners who sublet some land	Owners who sublet all land
1780	48	29 61%	6 13%	13 26%
1781	48	30 63%	5 12%	13 25%
1783	47	24 51%	4 13%	17 36%
1784	51	25 50%	4 6%	44 44%
1785	51	26 51%	4 8%	21 41%
1788	51	25 50%	4 7%	22 43%
1789	47	16 34%	8 19%	22 47%
1792	48	19 40%	6 13%	22 47%
1795	48	22 46%	6 14%	19 40%
1817	46	19 40%	8 23%	17 37%
1818	43	20 47%	8 18%	35 35%
1819	44	21 48%	7 16%	16 36%
1824	44	26 59%	4 11%	14 30%
1827	47	23 50%	4 9%	20 43%
1831	46	21 45%	8 19%	17 36%
1832	47	23 50%	8 18%	16 34%
1834	46	25 54%	9 20%	12 26%
1837	48	24 50%	7 15%	17 35%
1838	46	20 43%	11 24%	15 33%
1840	48	25 52%	9 19%	14 29%
1841	45	24 52%	6 18%	13 30%

(Source: land tax duplicates CRO (C) QPR/1).

and may have sublet one because of the difficulty of working it at a distance.⁴⁶ In other cases where an entire holding was sublet it is sometimes evident from the names of the subtenants that the land was being leased within the family to a son or other relative. This could have happened when customary tenants were elderly or infirm and unable to continue farming but were not yet ready to relinquish ownership. The subletting of an entire customary holding sometimes involved widows who were probably unable or unwilling to work the land themselves, although single women managing customary tenancies for long periods are recorded. The proportion of customary tenants who were women stood around 18-22 per cent in most of the land tax listings without the sharp drop in the early years of the nineteenth century noted by Duxbury.⁴⁷ A fourth possibility was where a customary tenant lived outside Watermillock but had inherited or bought a tenement there. Duxbury and Hope have shown that absentee owners became increasingly common from the end of the eighteenth century.⁴⁸ Although the manorial court records for the Barony of Greystoke do not usually give details of the domicile of those inheriting or buying land there are indications that such people were not uncommon in Watermillock in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. There are also signs that property in Watermillock was being bought up by urban

professionals and tradesmen from Penrith and even Carlisle from the end of the eighteenth century.⁴⁹

The subletting of customary land has been seen as being incompatible with yeoman status by Duxbury, who linked yeomen firmly with owner-occupation.⁵⁰ When a customary tenant lived outside the manor, perhaps with another source of income as, for example, a clergyman and sublet an entire customary holding this may well have been true. The Revd Jonathan Harris, for example, was curate of Greystoke 1791-5 and of Matterdale from 1795 to 1828. In 1794 he bought a tenement at High Birch Close in Watermillock but he also owned property in Hutton Roof and in the 1817 enclosure award there purchased additional land from the commissioners. However, in the other scenarios outlined above, it is more relevant to consider subletting strategies as being tied to the circumstances of particular families, representing periods when customary tenants did not have sufficient labour within the family or household to work all of their land. The reverse could also apply and the existence of families with a surplus of labour might help to explain situations where customary tenants leased additional land from their neighbours. Some 16 per cent of tenants in some of the land tax lists worked additional land in this way.

The impact of parliamentary enclosure

Parliamentary enclosure has been blamed for the decline of small landowners in England⁵¹ but conditions were different in Cumberland and Westmorland where most of the land enclosed under parliamentary act was common pasture rather than common field arable, and where customary tenants not only had a vote in the decision regarding whether or not to enclose but also received a share of the former commons as allotments.⁵²

The Watermillock commons were not enclosed until the early 1830s with the final award being drawn up in 1835.⁵³ Four thousand, five hundred and ninety-one acres were surveyed but 882 of them were considered too poor to be worth improving and were merely converted to a stinted pasture.⁵⁴ The lord of the manor received his customary sixteenth share and some plots of land were sold off by the commissioners to cover costs. Even after all these deductions there was enough land left, as allotments, to add significantly to the sizes of the holdings of the customary tenants. Many of them had the areas of their holdings increased by 50 per cent or even 100 per cent. Some of this land, like the summit of Little Mell Fell, was capable, at best, of only limited improvement but much of it was of reasonable quality: some of it was still under cultivation when the Land Utilization Survey was undertaken in the 1930s. A few customary tenants, mainly the larger ones, bought additional land from the commissioners and from fellow tenants.

The distribution of holding sizes following enclosure, recorded in the 1841 tithe survey, is shown in Table 5. In 1829 there had only been three customary estates in Watermillock with a little over 100 acres. Following enclosure there were 13 with two exceeding 300 acres. The average holding size in 1841 was 83 acres compared with 55 acres in 1829, a rise of 50 per cent. It is important to remember that the enclosure

allotments were granted in lieu of the customary tenants' former rights of common. It is uncertain how effectively the Watermillock commons were being managed immediately before enclosure was undertaken and how valuable the common rights were to larger and smaller customary tenants. In particular it is not clear whether overgrazing was a major problem. However, the addition of substantial quantities of improvable land adjoining or in close proximity to their original tenements seems likely to have had broadly positive effects on the viability of the customary holdings in Watermillock. What is clear, however, is that there was no major shake out of existing customary tenants or an influx of outsiders as an immediate and direct result of enclosure.

Larger holdings are likely to have improved potential profitability and encouraged a more boosted commercial orientation though this requires to be demonstrated in more detail.

TABLE 5. Distribution of holding sizes in Watermillock in 1841 following enclosure.

Size of holding	Number
0-19a	3
20-49a	13
50-79a	15
80-99a	3
100-199a	9
200-299a	2
300a+	2
Total	47

(Source: tithe survey (CRO (C) DRC/8/195).

Conclusion

First it must be reiterated that this article has focused on the customary tenants within a single Lake District township. If it had been concerned with yeomen or owner-occupiers slightly different stories would have emerged. Any study of a single community suffers from problems of typicality.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, by working at this local scale evidence from a range of sources can be combined to provide a detailed picture. The findings of studies of single communities can also be put together to produce more generic findings. It has been shown that in Watermillock, numbers of customary tenants fell only slightly during the later eighteenth century and early nineteenth centuries. There was no sharp decline in numbers of customary tenants between 1815 and the 1840s, a pattern similar to Healey's findings for Grasmere.⁵⁶ There was, however, a trend towards increasing social differentiation with more larger and smaller estates and fewer middling ones. The growing status of the larger customary tenants is reflected by the fact that in the late eighteenth century only two of them were accorded the title of Esquire in land tax lists and rentals. In the enclosure award of 1835 there were seven. The Watermillock tenants, along with the rest of those in the Barony of Greystoke, also benefited from having to pay general fines on the death of a manorial lord only in 1786, 1816 and 1842. Elsewhere the occurrence of such fines at shorter intervals has been described as leaving customary tenants perpetually impoverished.⁵⁷

It is much easier to explain sudden, dramatic socio-economic changes than gradual evolution. Tenant numbers and turnover provide no indication of an agricultural crisis in Watermillock after 1813 due to the collapse of prices. By the end of the period of study it is likely that agriculture in this area, along with much of the rest of Cumbria, was once more experiencing modest prosperity.⁵⁸ It seems probable that larger than average holding size in pre-enclosure Watermillock, the trend towards larger estates with the engrossment of holdings, and the addition of substantial enclosure allotments all helped to maintain the viability of the customary tenants. It is also likely that commercial farming in this area was aided by the development of the turnpike network which certainly encouraged the dissemination of new fashions and tastes.⁵⁹ The significance of agricultural improvement on Watermillock's customary estates is difficult to evaluate but in this part of Cumbria local food supply seems to have improved sufficiently in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ Certainly the area was sending large quantities of butter to London and meat to south Lancashire and Liverpool before the end of the eighteenth century.⁶¹

Overall the findings of this study support Walton and Uttley's conclusions that the yeomen of the eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries simply evolved into the farmers of the mid-late nineteenth century. Here, as elsewhere in Cumbria, small, independent landowners continued to form a significant element in the landowning structure into the twentieth century.⁶² The implication is that, in Watermillock at least, customary tenants were more resilient and adaptable, less vulnerable, than has sometimes been suggested. There is likely to have been a good deal of variation in the rate and nature of social change between Cumbrian communities depending, among other things, on the structure of rural society, the character of the economy, manorial policy, the date of enclosure and the amount of land enclosed.

It is not suggested that society in Watermillock at this period was changeless, merely that alterations were gradual and unspectacular and are likely to have been more evident at the level of the individual family than the customary tenants as a group. Some trends that will not be explored in detail indicate involvement in the wider economy. The purchase of land along the lakeside for amenity rather than economic reasons by incoming professionals and industrialists is an illustration of this. Yet, notwithstanding these developments, continuity is emphasised by the fact that 61 per cent of surnames in the 1767 land tax list were present in the 1841 duplicate. It has not been possible to consider in detail the strategies used by Watermillock tenants to survive and, in a number of cases, prosper. This would require an examination of inheritance strategies, the structure and operation of the land market, and the detailed landholding histories of the main tenant families, something which space does not permit. In addition, we cannot fully understand the circumstances of the customary tenants in a township like Watermillock without considering the other strata in its society; the occupiers and subtenants, the demesne leaseholders, the craftsmen and the labourers and how the customary tenants interacted with them. It is intended that these themes will form the focus for further study.

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