

ART. XVI.—*Tithing customs in West Cumberland in the eighteenth century.* By R. F. DICKINSON.

Read at Kendal, April 21st, 1960.

THE collection of the traditional tenth of the first fruits of the soil, when the parson had actually to do so in kind, offered a number of delicate practical problems, the solution of which was largely governed by ancient customary procedure.

Some of these customs are noted in a memorandum dated 1771 by Richard Dickinson, Rector of the parish of Lamplugh at that time.¹

“Corn is pay’d in kind through the whole Parish and the maner of takeinge is this. The Owner cuts down, binds up and stooks the Corn, and the Parson by the Owners knowledge and consent sets out every tenth Stook and tenth part with liberty to dry his Corn on the Stubel.

“To the said Rectory is also belonging the Tithe of Wool, and the Ancient Custom concerning it is this: the Owner lays it in five heapes and the Rector takes one and divides that in two and the Owner takes one half back again, but no Hogg wool is pay’d.

“Lambs is pay’d in kind and the custom of taking is this. If the Owner have One he pays a Halfpenny, Two a Penny, Three three halfpence, Four Twopence, Five Half a lamb, Six a whole lamb paying Twopence out, Seven paying Three halfpence, Eight paying a penny, Nine paying a halfpenny, and the Owner sets them Ten together beginning with ten of the Best then takes up Two and the Parson One and so on. If Half a Lamb the Owner only takes up One and the Parson pays out half at the rate he sets them at and if Sheep are sold in the Spring, the Tithe of Lambs is pay’d by the Person with whom they were lamb’d Seller or Buyer.

“Tithe of Geese is pay’d at Michaelmas, two out of every flock.

“Tithe of Piggs is one out of every Litter.

“Every Hous pays 4d. for a Hen but no Eggs, and it is pay’d at Easter.

¹ Manuscript sheet: R. F. Dickinson, Red How, Lamplugh.

"Every Tenymment pays Threepence prescription yearly at Easter in lieu of Hay and Roots.

"Every person keeping Bees pays for every Swarm a Penny.

"A Fole a penny.

"Every person who has Ten Calves pays four shillings for Five and any number under Ten only Two shillings. For every New Milk Cow twopence. For every Hand or Stript Milk Cow only a halfpenny. Calves and Milk is pay'd on Easter Tuesday at the Parsonage House.

"For Every Communicant after the first time of Receiving is Three Halfpence pay'd on Easter Tuesday.

"An oblation for Every Churching of Women fourpence.

"Every Wedding by bands one shilling, by Licence five shillings.

"For a Funeral sixpence without a Sermon.

"Mortuary according to Act of Parliament.

"Kelton Mill pays two shillings and sixpence to the Rector on Easter Tuesday.

"One tenymment at Kirkland in the possession of John Dixon pays eight shillings yearly to the Rectory (viz.) half at Michaelmas and half at Easter.

"There is a custom in the parish if any person break fresh Ground never before plow'd if he make an improvement on it and do not worsen his other Tithe and shows no defraud by it he has it Tithe free for Seven years first after such improvement.

"The Parson hath right of Common on all the Commons in the parish."

In the neighbouring parish of Arlecdon, custom followed the same pattern, but a memorandum dated 1700 by Edward Steele and Henry Bowman (perhaps the purchasers for that year) records a number of variations which may have been local.²

"Corn every Tenth Stook and begin to tithe where the plow begins.

"Lambs set in Tens, owner take up 2; Tither take 1 out of 8. Touch and Take.

"Fleeces of Woll laid out in Tens, owner take up 2: Tither take 1 out of 8. Touch and Take.

"Every householder's Eldest Son or Daughter tith Woll and Lambs separate from Parents for the encurgement to Take care of Sheep.

² Manuscript: Mrs M. Holman, Rheda, Frizington (on loan to County Record Office).

"Young Geese Tither takes one out of 2, and if a hundred, no, more."

Touch and Take evidently meant that no handling by the Tither was allowed before he made his choice.

Hens were compounded at 7d., almost twice as much as in Lamplugh, and an additional prescription of 1d. was payable "for Hemp and Gardin." By the date of a Terrier of 1743 this latter had been merged in the General 4d. prescription for Hay.

"By Act of Parliament, Cows fed out of the Barn with Corn, Chaff Hay and Straw in the House and hir Dung goes to manuer the Corn ground, A tenth of hir Fother is gone before she has any and she is tithe free. In Aftergrass such as Fog in meadows and stuble that has paid if she draw in plough she is tithe free: In Summer pasture like Horses or other Barren Cattel: All Peas and Beans eaten in a man's own House or Stable and not sold are not Tytheable."

The parson employed Tithe leaders to gather his wool and his corn (if he were, as in Lamplugh, entitled to the Great Tithe) and cart it up to the Tithe barn. The money payments, known collectively as "Easter Dues" were made at the parsonage house every Easter week.

In the Tythe Book of the parish of Dean, a note of what are called "Surplice Dues" in 1750 include the following items:

"For a Funeral Sermon when the deceased chuses the Text	1 1 0
"For a Funeral Sermon when the Text is chosen by the Minister	10 6"

The list concludes hopefully with the item

"Some women for churching give me	0 6"
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In Dean, the parson had the additional trouble of numbering among his parishioners several Quakers who resolutely refused to pay their tithe, and it became the regular annual procedure to bring them before the Cocker-mouth or Workington magistrates, obtain a warrant of distress, and from the sale of their goods collect the money owing. The total sum involved was generally £3. 8s. od.,

and since the expenses on each occasion were around £4. 17s. 6d., it would appear that the Rector like his Quaker parishioners, acted upon principle rather than expediency.³

The convenience to both sides of money payments, in lieu of tithe in kind, had become obvious by this time. The demesne lands of Lamplugh Hall had long been tithe free and paid a modus of ten shillings annually. In 1682 and 1689, Daniel Dickinson of Streetgate in Lamplugh (who was a Cockermouth attorney) had made a private arrangement with the then Rector of Lamplugh, George Lamplugh, for a period of five years by which he made an annual payment of £2. 8s. od. (in two equal instalments at Michaelmas and Lady Day), and was discharged from liability to "all tithe of Havercroft and my half of Streetgate land, except hens at 4d. apiece, geese, mortuary of Burials, Marriages and Kirkings. For the other half of Streetgate land being my mothers half, to pay Hemp Hay Commutants and what Easter reckonings my mother hath to pay, and if I plough any of that half of land I am to pay tithe corn in kind unless I can otherwise agree for the same."⁴

By 1750, in the parish of Dean, all tithe corn was paid for by prescription, and small tithe (pigs, hens, etc.) were universally compounded for in money payments.⁵

One method of collection in common use was to farm out the tithes to the highest bidder, who paid cash down to the parson and then made what he could out of the collection. The Reverend Richard Dickinson, the rector of Lamplugh mentioned above, was inducted on 6 May 1768 and did duty at the parish church on the Sunday, when he advertised the tithes to be let by public auction on the following Friday.⁶ Three years later he was con-

³ Tithe Book, 1752-94: Rector of Dean, near Workington.

⁴ Bound memo. book of Daniel Dickinson, 1678-99: A. F. Dickinson, 16 Brackley Road, Beckenham. Manuscript: R. F. Dickinson.

⁵ Letter (Geo. Mackereth (curate) to Rev. Thos. Lamplugh (patron)): J. L. Brooksbank, Hasfield Court, Gloucestershire.

⁶ Copy letter in bound memo. book of J.D.: R. F. Dickinson.

sidering a return to the method of direct collection. His uncle, John Dickinson of Streetgate writes a letter to him that "the parish are greatly satisfied to hear it" and offers to collect the tithes for him to the whole amount of £102. 3s. od. without taking a profit.⁷ Whether this offer was accepted or not we do not know, but in 1784 the living was let by public auction again for the price of £96. This was incidentally a better bid by some £16 than that obtained by his predecessor twenty years before.

These old customs and all the business of collection in kind, and of payment according to numbers of stock, were swept into disuse by the Tithe Commutation Act of 1837 which instituted an extraordinarily detailed valuation of every field and building in the parish, upon which an annual tithe rent charge was then based. The actual sum payable, or "value of the tithe rent charge," varied from year to year with the price of wheat, barley and oats, and tables were published annually to assist the parson and the owner to calculate this figure from the amount of the rent charge apportionment.

All this in its turn is now a matter of history, but the list of apportionments for the parish of Lamplugh is full of pencil annotations made by the Reverend Richard Haythornthwaite, to whom, as late as the nineteen twenties and thirties, the keeping up to date of this list was of immediate personal and practical concern.

⁷ Letters: J. L. Brooksbank.