

## VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY OF CUMBRIA - KIRKOSWALD

Two years ago the Parish Council kindly signified support for this project, and a public meeting was held in the Church Institute on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2014, chaired by Dr David Unwin. Some 30 people attended, and several agreed to help with research, including two parish councillors - John Haugh and Neville Jackson. Timothy Fetherstonhaugh has been involved throughout, and Ruth Lee has coordinated locally, with regular meetings at the Crown to review progress.

On 10th February 2016 I submitted a fully researched draft article to the editorial staff at Lancaster University: it deals with that part of the parish which was (always) Kirkoswald, as distinct from Staffield (which has still to be researched) and Renwick which has been done. The draft is about 70 pages long, double spaced, and has 15,000 words and 358 footnotes. Several members of the team have proof read the full text, and that has led to further revision: and we have reached the point where local research is largely completed, and will now be subject to academic scrutiny. There are likely to be further changes, and I do not expect the article to be posted on the web before the end of June. So far, so good. Our intention was to make this a community project, and it may be that Kirkoswald has set an example to the whole county (but we must await the academic verdict on our work!). In the meantime I shall now turn my attention to Staffield, and will form a team for that too.

There was a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Cumbria County History Trust (CCHT) on 11<sup>th</sup> February, at which Professor Angus Winchester, director of the Cumbrian project, submitted his progress report. It contained the following paragraph, under the heading *Possible "VCH Short" on Kirkoswald and Renwick*:

"By later in 2016 Richard Brockington hopes to have completed articles for three of the East Fellside townships in Cumberland: Renwick (complete and commented on favourably by Richard Hoyle, national director of the VCH project); Kirkoswald (very nearly complete) and Staffield (in progress). Taken together these could form a volume in the "VCH Shorts" series, covering the whole of the modern civil parish of Kirkoswald. These are attractive illustrated paperbacks published by VCH central office within London University, which contributes editorial overview and typesetting, other costs being met by the County Trust who must also contribute £500 towards editing costs. Proceeds of sales will be received by the County Trust to fund further activity at the local level. Preliminary soundings have received a positive response."

The CCHT trustees also responded favourably. A word of caution however: copyright lies with CCHT, and they are (loosely) governed by national guidelines from London University. The VCH project is under continuous review in London: the Cumbrian volunteer-based methodology has been supported so far but is not yet generally applied. The Kirkoswald volunteers are enthusiastic to see their work in print, and a strong message of welcome for the idea from the Parish Council to the CCHT will not go amiss.

Richard Brockington

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