

PARISH HOUSE – ALLITHWAITE

Research By Barbara Copeland

The Parish house in Allithwaite is one of the oldest buildings in the village and has a long history of being the home for the poor of the village. When was it built, by whom and how did it become the refuge for the homeless in the village in the 1700s?

We do know that in 1757 the building was referred to as “Poor House Croft, Templand Bank, Allithwaite” in Extracts from the Old Church Book in Cartmel (Stockdale states in *Annals of Cartmel*) From the records of the Overseers of the Poor it continued to be the poor house until 1831. The land, approximately 3 acres, was always rented out and the income from the rent went towards the poor rate.



Poor houses housed ‘indoor poor’, usually for those who were elderly or ill. The parish was the primary unit of local government, administered by officials elected by the Vestry. The Overseers of the Poor administered poor relief such as money, food and clothing as part of the Poor Law system. They were elected by the Vestry, subject to the approval of the Justices of the Peace.

The Vestry in relation to Allithwaite refers to the Vestry at Cartmel Priory and the Vestries were replaced in 1894 when a system of elected rural parish councils and urban district councils was established for all administrative purposes.

From 1831 until 1894 I have not been able to find records relating to the poor house in Allithwaite. Ulverston Poor Law Union was formed in 1836 and following the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 almost all outdoor relief was abolished and indoor relief was in the workhouse. So it can be assumed that from this time the poor house commenced to be rented out by the parish. This can be seen by comparing information from 1821 and 1841. In 1821 there were 6 or 7 people living in the poor house but in the 1841 census in Allithwaite there is no house that shows that number of persons living there and unrelated to each other.

In 1895 Allithwaite Lower Parish Council had its first meeting and in the minutes from that date the poor house is discussed as a property rented out by the parish council.

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Notes from the visit of Andy Lowe (retired Conservation Officer for the Lake District National Park) May 2011

The outside of the building

The building is covered by modern cement render which hides external evidence except for the apparent symmetry. Large boulders are evident at the corners and the boulder base of the rubble and mortar wall can be seen in the storeroom on the eastern end of the house. This type of construction suggests a 17th century or earlier building. The front door opening has one side wall straight and one wall splayed inwards.



Ground floor

Inside, the window openings are splayed to let as much light as possible into the rooms. (photo 1) The shelf opening in the western room has one wall splayed so this was a window originally. (photo 2)

The cambered and chamfered western ceiling beam is typical of 17th and 18th century buildings. (photo 3) The eastern beam has a slight camber but most of it has been boxed in and therefore hidden. (photo 4) Both beams seem to be in situ and suggest a 17th century date for the building.

First floor

Stud partitions could be 18th century depending on the type of wood used for the laths (this cannot be seen because of the plaster). (photo 5) Oak would be earlier in date than soft wood. The 'best' sides of the partitions, i.e. the 2 main bedrooms, are plastered over. This is typical of an 18th or 19th century 'makeover'.

Roof space

The roof space has late medieval or early modern (roughly Elizabethan) timbers reused. (photo 6) Adze marks, square pegs, augur drilled holes and carpenters' or joiners' marks can be seen as well as wide shallow slots for wide flat plank purlins and slots for wind braces. (photos 7 & 8) Re-used cruck frames now have the slots for cross braces at the 'wrong' angle (i.e. not horizontal) because they have been re-cut to be used for a roof with a different slope from the original. (photo 9) Thatched roofs normally had a slope of 55-60 degrees which is steeper than the present roof. Cruck-frame roofs are 16th or early 17th century at the latest.

One of the cruck frames has a remnant of its original sole plate, and there is a carpenter's V (5) mark which suggests that it originally came from a large building with 5 pairs of cruck frames, perhaps a barn. (photo 10)

One A-frame is made from a single beam that has been split lengthways in a sawpit (sawmarks in evidence). The original outer surface has broad chamfers which suggest a high status beam in a principal room in a 16th century building. (The broader the chamfer, the older the building). This surface is now against the lath and plaster partition. (photo 11)

Props bolted into the first floor ceiling beams help to support the A-frames and suggests the roof has been lifted to make more space. (photos 12 & 13)

Store room

Beams in the store room could be Elizabethan. The largest beam is a cruck-frame with chamfered detail, another beam from a high status room. (photo 14)

Fireplace

The fireplace on the eastern wall has a wooden lintel which is higher than the stone lintel. Was the fireplace made smaller? (photo15) Inside the construction of the building can be seen uncovered next to the fireplace on the eastern wall. (photo 16)



Photograph 1



Photograph 2



Photograph 3



Photograph 4



Photograph 5



Photograph 6



Photograph 7



Photograph 8



Photograph 9



Photograph 10



Photograph 11



Photograph 12



Photograph 13



Photograph 14



Photograph 15



Photograph 16

The Origins of the Parish House

The origins of the parish house have been impossible to prove definitively. From the use of maps, documents and the building itself we know that it was probably erected in the 1600s, towards the end of that century. From 1650 to 1720 there was a great rebuilding in the country, maybe the house was built as part of this rebuilding.

The clearest evidence for the date of the house comes from the construction of the building. The boulder base and the cruck-frame roof suggest that the building is seventeenth century. The earliest map to be seen on which the house appears is the Yates Map of Cartmel and Allithwaite in 1786.

The first reliable mention of the house is 1757 and this is from Stockdale's Annals of Cartmel¹ in relation to an encroachment on the commons on land belonging to the house at Allithwaite.

From documents held in the local record offices it has been possible to examine some ideas and descriptions of buildings which may be the Allithwaite poor house.

- 1) From Cartmel Priory documents relating to the churchwardens there is a bundle of miscellaneous deeds and papers dated 1668-1875. Dated 24 November 1668, one is an indenture between *Francis Dickenson of Wraysholme to William Browne younger of Kents Bank £12 messuage and dwelling house in Allithwaite wherein John Brockbank now dwelleth, barn, stables, outhouses and orchards and gardens*. Noted on this description is the note ***supposed the House, now 1816, called the Poor House.***²

The above description of the house and outbuildings appears to be too large to be the parish house as we know it today but yet in 1816 surely the note maker would have thought that too.

¹ Stockdale *Annals of Cartmel* 1872, 197

² WPR/89/01/PR2718/1 (Kendal Record Office)

- 2) **Templand Bank** could be a clue to the whereabouts of the house. Stockdale gives this address for the poor house ...*which shows how part of the land belonging to the house at Allithwaite, near the church (Which, up to the passing of the Poor Law amendment Act, was “the poor house” of Allithwaite township) was acquired – “Poor House Croft, **Templand Bank**, Allithwaite...”*³

In 1640, Charles 1 Patent Letters (the original document is in Cartmel Priory church) granted certain areas of land in the area to local landowners and land at **Templand Bank** was mentioned in the document.

In 1662 a sale of Templand Bank, amongst other parcels of land, was made to Richard Turner of Over Newton, bachelor for £6 4s. ⁴ But in the probate of Richard Turner in 1697 there is no mention of the land.⁵

- 3) Could the area be called **High Bank** in relation to **Seatles Road**? In 1728 a conveyance of a close of land called High Bank, Allithwaite was between Robert Robinson, a mariner from Allithwaite and Thomas Seattle of Allithwaite, a mariner for £36. ⁶ It is interesting to note that on the Enclosure Map of Allithwaite dated 1807 the lane that passes the house is called Seatles Road. ⁷ In 1763 a Mr Seattle was paying rent of 16 shillings for the rent of the Poor Close for the year. ⁸ The Seattle family throughout the 17th and 18th centuries owned land in Cart Lane, Kents Bank and Allithwaite and were shown as owning land in Allithwaite on the Enclosure Map.
- 4) Two further intriguing descriptions of the Poor House in Allithwaite come from Rev J C Dickinson.

Poor Close

There are also in this township 2 cottages and a close containing with a recent allotment made to it about 3 acres and worth about £10 a year the rent of which has been always carried to the poor rates it is called the Poor Close, but it is not known by what means it was acquired. An inhabitant for the Parish who had resided there 80 years stated that he had heard that these premises were purchased by the township at the time of King Charles restoration for £24. It was also suggested to us that some paupers might have been permitted to build cottages on the waste and inclose part of the common and that on their death the cottages and the land might have been claimed and taken by the township. We could not find any grounds for supposing that this property is charged with any charitable use. ⁹*

*King Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660

³ Stockdale *Annals of Cartmel* 1872, 197

⁴ DDX499/63 (Preston Record Office)

⁵ W/RW/F/R58C/20 (Preston Record Office)

⁶ BDHJ/448/1/5, 29/1/1728 Barrow Record Office

⁷ WPR/89/Z3 Kendal Record Office

⁸ WPR/89/01 Kendal Record Office

⁹ Dickinson notes – microfilm and papers BDX176/1/92 (Barrow Record Office)

Although the above account talks about 2 cottages, Dickinson goes on to quote Stockdale's account of Templand Bank as described in No 2 above in relation to the Poor Close, therefore describing the 2 cottages and the Poor House Croft as the same place in the one account. Was Dickinson wrong in his description of 2 cottages, had he seen them? Was one cottage destroyed or was the house split into 2 cottages inside, but with one door?

From the above descriptions it is clear that it is impossible to give a definite date for the building of the property or the date when it was established as the poor house. Others in the past have wondered on the same point - a note written in 1816 on a document dated 1668 'supposed' the house was the poor house (see 1 above) and Rev JC Dickinson states *...it is not known by what means it was acquired...*(see 4 above).

Two further statements highlight the unknown origins of the Poor House.

*The Poor Close brings in £10, which is applied to the relief of the rates (fn 133)
Footnote 133 – the origin of it was not known in 1820. One-fourth of the rent is given to the new township of Grange.*¹⁰

*Poor-Close --- about three acres, worth £10 a year. The rent is carried to the poor rates. How this acquired is not known.*¹¹

A further document dated Epiphany 1683/1684 is a Petition to the Quarter sessions at Lancaster from Allithwaite township. The 1662 Poor Relief Act (The Settlement Act) recognised the role of townships officially and this impacted on villages such as Allithwaite who were responsible for the settled poor in their township. By 1683 the inhabitants of Allithwaite stated that they had maintained the poor within the village but now they were finding it financially difficult and asked that the poor of Allithwaite may be charged to the whole parish (of Cartmel). This petition was accepted, as shown by a signature at the bottom of the page.¹² It is difficult to know from this document whether the maintenance of the poor as described relates to indoor relief, outdoor relief or both. So we cannot assume from this document that the poor house was in use to support the poor at this time.

¹⁰ Victoria County History, the parish of Cartmell, a History of the County of Lancaster: Volume 8 (1914) pp 254-265

¹¹ Bulmer's History and Directory of Furness and Cartmel (pub 1910) p197

¹² QSP 576/11 (Preston Record Office)

Allithwaite Poor House 1763-1902

The following accounts are from the accounts book of the Overseers of the Poor 1861 - 1832 ¹³ which relate to the poor house in Allithwaite.

Most of the entries relate to the rent of the paddock which was paid to the poor rate. There is an entry for paupers' clothing and others for maintenance of the poor house. One entry mentions the amount received for selling apples from the poor house, so did the poor house have an orchard?

To cash received from Mr Seattle being rent for the Poor Close for year 1762 ...16s
1765 Poor close rent received from Edward Fell ...19s
1766 17 Feb to poor close rent received from Jno Briggs.....£1
1767 to poor paddock.....£1
1769 to poor paddock.....£1
1773 to rent of poor paddock....£1
1775 Rent poor close fee.....£1
1776 12 months pay to Thomas Bateman at £3 3s 16d per month.....£53 7s 6d
1777 one years rent for poor paddock for year 1777...£1
1778 to one years rent poor paddock for year 1778.....£1 1s.
1779 To one year rent of the Poor Close....£1 6s rec'd
1780 by cash Dr (?) H Taylor house rent.....£1 15s paid
1781 by paid Robert Hall undertaker of poor 13 months pay at £4 2s 2d till 16 May
1781.... £53.8s.2d paid
1781 Widow Dawson's house rent£1 12s 6d paid
1782 By sundry paupers clothing laked into poor house and also house rent and other expenses£9 3s 3 ¼ d paid
1782 To poor house and paddock rent£1 12s 6d rec'd
1783 poor house expenses.....£11 10s 5 ¾ d
1785 Poor house rent from Edward Muchable (Muckelt).....£1 10s
1785 Glazing the poor house.....11s ¾ d
1787 Poor house mending.....£1
1800 Maintenance of poor house£25.8s.3 ½ d
By walling poor paddock.....£20.17s.0d
1802 – By maintenance of poor house....£57 15s.0d

¹³ WPR89/01 1788 – 1832 (Kendal Record Office)

*Be it recommended that, Edward Hall has taken the poor paddock on the same conditions as before, that is to pasture for four pounds three shillings a year to be paid to the overseer of the poor at Christmas yearly and every year and he is to have it three years agreed this first of March 1802 and to enter in to possession immediately and quite at Candlemas
Dated 02 March 1802£4 3s*

1803 – received from apples sold out poor house....10s 6d

1804 – By Maintenance of Poor house....£50.13s.9d

1804 – Poor Paddock rent received.....£4.3s

1806 Maintenance of the poor house.....£74.5s.0

There were entries for orders made to the fathers of illegitimate children and some of the mothers had to rely on support from the poor rate. Below is one example.

Memorandum that Mary Fisher came to the Poor House from Preston with child the 2 July 1804 and she Father'd it on Joseph Kay and on 2 October 1804 he appeared at the quarter Sessions at Lancaster and the Justices made an order on him to Pay Indemnity to the Division for her maintenance in the Poor-house and lying In, and one shilling per week toward the maintenance of the child so long as it shall remain Chargeable to the Township, it is a Female born 2nd of August 1804 at Allithwaite Poorhouse and Baptized by the name of Mary... Amen

The depositions at the Quarter Sessions at Lancaster for the examination of Mary Fisher and the apprehension of Joseph Kay, a labourer from Preston can be seen in Preston record office.¹⁴

The Cartmel commons enclosure minute book 1796-1803¹⁵ refers to the poor house, garden and close.

Thomas Askew and James Stockdale as Trustees for the poor of Lower Holker and Lower Allithwaite for 2 fields in lower holker. As trustees for the poor of Lower Allithwaite, for a house and garden and field paying tyth corn.

The Cartmel Enclosure Act of 1807 refers to the poor close at Templand Bank.¹⁶

Poor land – p154 We allot and set apart for James Stockdale and Thomas Askew as trustees of the poor of lower Allithwaite a ...parcel of ground on Templand Bank containing in like measure out and bounded on the east by ...inclosures of their own on the west and south by the Seatle road and on the north by land purchased by Richard Winfield. And we do hereby order and direct that the said James Stockdale and Thomas Askew as trustees as aforesaid and their successors and the future owners and occupiers of the said allotment shall make and forever keep in repair all the fence on the west, north and south sides thereof which said last mentioned allotment is situate within the division of chapelry of Lower Allithwaite. 1807.

There are no entries between 1807 and 1818

¹⁴ QSP/2504/34 and QSP/2504/35 (Preston Record Office)

¹⁵ CPR89/PR/2714 Page 7, no 28 (Kendal Record Office)

¹⁶ WPR 89/Z3 (Kendal Record Office)

1818 Expenses in the poor house ..9 paupers?

1819 Expenses in the poor house

Rent and pensions.....£35.13s 8d
Edw Myers clothing.....1 3s 5 ½ d
Betty Towers£1 8s 9d
Mr Hadwin's interest.....£1 5s
Mr Ashburners' guardianship.....£2 2s
Making and mending clothes.....5s 2 ½ d

Expenses in the poor house 1819

Pensioners.....£28.19s..0d
Proportion of rent...£16..4s..3½d
Mr Hadwin interest...£1..5s..0d
Making and mending clothes...£0..6s..2d

Rent and pensions...£35..13..8d
Edward Myers clothing...£1..3s..5½d
Betty Towers...£1..8s..9d
Mr Hadwin interest...£0..1s..5d
Mr Ashburner's guardianship...£0..2s..2d
Making and mending clothes...£0..5s..2½d

Rent of poor paddock...£4..11s..0d

1st poor rate for 1819...£198..13s..11d
2nd poor rate for 1819...£198..19s..2d
3rd poor rate for 1819...£198..19s..2d
4th poor rate for 1819...£198..19s..2d
£800..0s..5d

Expenses in the poor house 1821

Rent and Pensions...£40..0s..2d
Mr Hadwin's interest...1..5s..0d
Mr Ashburner as guardian...£2..2s..0d
Agnes Brockbank clothing...£0..16s.5d
Ann Woodburn ... £0..10s..1¾d
Grace Cleminson...£0..18s..10½d
Jane Newby...£0..6s..0d
Edward Myers...£0..9s..½d
Betty Towers...£0..18s..2¾d
Shoes and clogs from W. Woodburn...£1..5s..9d
Making and mending in the house...£0..14s..0d
£58..5s..8 ½d

There are no entries between 1821 to 1831

1831 John Story – potatoes for poor house ...£0..1s..6d

In 1834 the Poor Law Amendment Act (New Poor Law) came into force and outdoor relief such as that given to those in the poor house in Allithwaite, was almost entirely abolished. The new system was still funded by rate payers, but was now administered by unions – groupings of parishes (including Allithwaite Lower)– presided over by a locally elected Board of Guardians. Each union was responsible for providing a central workhouse for its member parishes, and out relief was abolished except in special cases. Ulverston workhouse was built in 1845. For the able-bodied poor, it was the workhouse or nothing and that would suggest that the residents of Allithwaite poor house would have had to move to the Ulverston workhouse and the poor house then appears to have been put into a trust and rented out. The income from the house and land was paid to the relief of the poor rate of the township.

The Local Government Act of 1894 introduced elected councils at district and parish level. Below are minutes of the meeting of Allithwaite Lower Parish Council on 13 September 1895 with regard to the Poor House and Land, Allithwaite. ¹⁷

The income from this trust has been paid to the relief of the Poor Rate of the Township. On 4th December 1894 the date of the coming into force of the Local Government Act of 1894 the Rateable Value of the existing Township was £10532 and on this date by reason of the Kentsbank portion of the Township as hitherto being made a portion of the new Township of Grange the Rateable Value of the Township was reduced to £7906. The council in determining the future division of the income from this Trust as between the present township and the portion of the Old Township now within the Township of Grange, resolved on the proposition of Councillor Wm. R. Nash, seconded by Councillor J.M. Tyson, that the net income after expenses are deducted, be paid proportionally to the Township of Allithwaite Lower on the Rateable value of £7906 and to the Township of Grange on the Rateable Value of £2626.

8 January 1897

...to approach to obtain signed agreement with the Overseer of Grange with a view to obtaining signed mutual agreement for administering and dividing the income or in case of sale an equitable division of the nett proceeds in respect of this property.

9 July 1897

Rebuilding wall of field facing into Allithwaite Lane...John Akister

10 September 1897

Half a years rent received by Clerk be paid to J Akister in settlement of his contract account for rebuilding the fence wall abutting Allithwaite Road.

19 March 1900

¹⁷ WPC/29 1-3 Minute books 1894-1974 Kendal RO

Resolved that of the balance in hand after payment of all outgoings of the rents received after the proportion due to the Overseers of Grange £1..0s..6d to be paid

13 July 1900

Ask auditor what course should be taken to obtain permission to dispose of the said property or any portion.

14 March 1902

Agreement re proportion with Grange signed.

RDC Water supply to be laid into this house, the tenant being willing to pay the Rate of Charge.

31 October 1902

Decided to sell land and property – application to Local Government Board to sanction this.

It appears that the Parish council wanted to sell the house at different times but nothing ever came of this and the house is still in the possession of Allithwaite Parish Council. There are not many entries in the above minutes with regard to the maintenance of the parish house, one example below stands out.

10 March 1939

Councils Cottage

...level the floors, make passage behind the house, make through ventilation.

In 2011 the Parish House was refurbished by the Parish Council. For over 250 years this property has been managed by various local officers for Lower Allithwaite, from overseers to parish councillors.

END.