

A H I S T O R Y O F S I L L O T H

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HISTORY OF THE AREA

The first beginnings of the development of an identifiable settlement at Sillloth began after the establishment of the Cistercian Abbey at Holme Cultram in about 1150 AD. Until 1150 the countryside was something of a wilderness, with few inhabitants, and was only gradually brought into cultivation by the monks, under whose management it became habitable and profitable. The monks intensively cultivated their land and encouraged local people to farm the Solway Marshes. The Cistercians developed a small port at Skinburness to export wool from their extensive flocks and a settlement grew at Sillloth; the name being derived from the "sealathe" or "sea barn" for the storing of grain.

This place-name has been found recorded and written down over the years as follows:- SELATHE 1292; SELATHES 1361; SEELET MEDOO 1538; SELYTHER 1552; SILLUTHE 1576; SILLETH 1589; SELLETH 1605; SILLATH and SELLATH 1649; SILLOTH GRANGE 1718.

On the dissolution of the Abbey in 1535 the Selathe is entered in the accounts as being worth £10 per annum, a large sum of money at the time.

Until the middle of the 19th Century however, the pattern was principally of isolated farms and clusters of cottages with Skinburness, Greenrow and Blitterlees being the principal hamlets.

In the Mannix and Whellan History Gazetteer and Directory of Cumberland, published in 1847, Sillloth is mentioned as part of the Low Holme township in the Parish of Holme Cultram. Low Holme was the largest division of the parish, comprising a semi-circular district, extending North and West from the Abbey at Holme Cultram, surrounded on three sides by the sea and the estuary of the Waver and the Wampool, and terminating on the north by a narrow tongue of land called Grune Point (in 1883 it was noted, 'Grune Point bears a singular resemblance to a place on the French coast, name Le Grunn, ie. Pigs Snout'). Low Holme township contained the village of Skinburness, with several detached hamlets, 6290 acres of fertile land, rated at £5,666 in 1847, and had a population of 933 'souls'. It's principal landowners were Charles Joliffe Esq., the Earl of Lonsdale, and William Hodgson Esq., but there were many resident Yeomen, several who had 'neat and commodious dwellings'.

From the Abbey Black Dyke hamlet was $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles W by N; Blitterlees village 5 miles W by N; Calvo hamlet 3 miles NNW; East Cote $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles WNW; Hayrigg 4 miles W; Seaville hamlet 2 miles N by W; Sillloth hamlet 4 miles NW; Skinburness 5 miles NW by N; Causewayhead $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles W by N; Greenrow hamlet $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles WNW; Wath 4 miles N by W; and Wolsty hamlet 5 miles W of the Abbey. They were all part of the township of Low Holme.

The above places were described as follows in the Mannix and Whellan Directory of Cumberland 1847:

"Silloth, a hamlet on the coast, called Silloth Bay, and is the property of Charles Joliffe Esq.

Greenrow is a small hamlet, pleasantly situated near the sea-shore, and commanding fine prospects of Criffel mountain and the Scottish coast. Here is a large seminary called Greenrow Academy, established about 70 years ago (1770) by Mr John Drape, who died in 1795, when he was succeeded by Mr Joseph Saul, who conducted this establishment for nearly 50 years, and under whose superintendance it rose to great celebrity - as many as 150 students, not only from Britain, but also from the West Indies and different parts of Europe, having been accommodated in the house at one time. He died in 1842, deeply lamented by a large circle of friends, chiefly of his own training; and as a testimony of their esteem in which he was held, a number of his pupils erected, in 1845, a beautiful marble monument to his memory in the Abbey Church. His son, Mr John Saul, is the present headmaster, and is assisted by competent teachers in the different branches of a comprehensive system of classical and commercial education.

Causewayhead - here was erected in 1844-5 St Pauls Church, a neat Gothic edifice which can seat upwards of 300, free and unappropriated. The once raised road known as Causeway Head is undoubted a portion of the great Roman Road which led from the station at Bowness to the camp at Ellenborough.

Seaville, is a small but pleasant village on the west bank of the Waver. In this vicinity are several farm houses, bearing different names, occupied by their owners; but the ancient farm house called Seaville Coate is the property of James Losh Esq., of Newcastle.

Skinburness is a pleasant village and considerable bathing place, near Grune Point, commanding an extensive view of the Solway Firth and Scottish Hills. Here is a comfortable Inn, and a few neat lodging houses, for the accommodation of the visitors who resort hither during the summer for the purpose of sea bathing. Several neat houses have been erected here within the last few years, amongst which is one belonging to Mr Samuel Rigg of Wigton which he occupies during the bathing season.

In the 13th Century therestood here on the edge of the bay a considerable market town, by the Charter of Edward I, declared to be a free borough as will be seen by the following quote -

'The village of Skinburness, within the boundaries of the Island of Holme, shall be a free borough, and the men inhabiting there free burgesses, with all the liberties and free customs for ever, so that the said borough be kept by some faithful man chosen by the abbot and his bretheren. That all merchants might resort thither with their merchandise by land

and water; that there should be a weekly market on Thursday, and a fair every year.'

It is also mentioned as having been the chief place for the King's magazines (and all supplies for his army) in these parts, on Scottish expeditions. It is reported at least 50 ships were moored at Skinburness (in 1299 Skinburness was the chief port for the collection of stores, and the base, for the navy expeditions against Scotland, which until 1303 were not pursued with vigour owing to the difficulty found by Edward I in collecting forces).

But the calamities the borough had soon after sustained (a very large tide washed away the road and village on the west side (west of the present shore line) of Grune Point; no exceptional geographical disturbances such as earthquake or land subsidance was recorded.) caused the abbot to apply to the crown to have a market and fair at Kirkebi Johannis (Newton Arlosh) and in 1305 it is reported 'we find it thus mentioned in the parliamentary records':-

'At the petition of the abbot, requesting that whereas he had paid a fine of 100 marks to the King for a fair and market to be held at Skinburness, and now that town, together with the way leading to it is carried away by the sea, the King would grant that he may have such fair and market at his town of Kirkebi Johannis instead of the other place aforesaid, and that his charter upon this may be renewed. It was answered, 'let the first charter be annulled, and then let him have a like charter in the place as he desireth.'

The breaking in of the ocean, whereby the town of Skinburness was laid waste, must have happened after the year 1301; for in that year Bishop Halton, in consideration that the inhabitants were a great distance from all places of divine worship, granted a power to the abbot and convent of Holme Cultram, to build a church there, with proper endowment, and all parochial rights. But it is supposed this power had never been carried into execution (though there is a field on Grune Point that has always been called Church Field), for in 1303, the same bishop granted to the abbot and convent power to build a church at Newton Arlosh, with all parochial rights, and authority to nominate a priest for institution, and a salary of £4 a year.

(Edward I and the Abbot of Holme Cultram did plant, and it is believed, began construction of docks in Silloth Bay in the vicinity of Old Skinburness. There are records of the ships that sailed from anchorage here across the Solway Firth, carrying men, stores and 'engines' for their war against Scotland. But when the great storm washed away the main settlement here, and the works already constructed, the plans for the Port were not concluded, although the Edwards continued to use the anchorage whilst they persisted in their Scottish Wars. In the reign of Elizabeth I, in 1566, Commissioners for the Survey of the Cumberland Ports, reported that Silloth Bay Port was not in use - 'no shippes, vessels, ne any maryners' - the reason was obviously such industry was impossible as long as the Scottish raids by boat persisted.)

Wolsty hamlet is situated near the coast, and here stood 'Wolsty' or 'Wulsty' Castle, formerly a building of great strength, encompassed by a large and deep ditch or foss, crossed by a draw bridge, and erected by the abbots as a place of security for their treasures, books and charters, against the sudden incursions of the Scots; and here it is said were kept the 'magic' books of Michael Scot, till they were mouldering into dust. This monk who lived about the year 1290 was astrologer to Frederic II, Emperor of Germany, and applied himself so closely to philosophy, mathematics and other abstruse parts of learning, that he was looked upon by many as a conjuror. It is said that this area seems to be the Moricambe mentioned by Ptolemy, 'for the estuary is crooked, and Maricambe signifies, in British, a crooked sea'.

The walls of the castle were 12 feet thick, and the site, as now visible, is 45 yards from east to west, and 36 yards from north to south. The ditch though filled up may still be traced."

GREENROW ACADEMY

After Mr Saul's death in 1842 the academy, as previously stated, passed to his son, but he did not reign long. In the 1870's the academy passed to another part of the family who turned it into cottages for 'ordinary people'. Today nothing remains as part of the Stanwix Park Holiday complex has been built on the site.

But as a matter of interest the following is a copy of a piece from the Carlisle Journal, 4 July 1812:- about the Academy:

"The Midsummer vacation commenced on Saturday, the nineteenth instant and the Academy will open again on Monday, 26 July next.

The Christmas vacation has been discontinued for some years, and friends of the students are again requested to abstain, as much as possible, from whatever may have a tendency to interfere with its discontinuance being strictly observed.

At Green Row young gentlemen are boarded and taught the English, Latin, Greek, French and Spanish languages; Writing, Stenography, Drawing, Arithmetics, Mathematics, Natural Philosophy in Navigation, Geography and Astronomy; the students are accommodated with Maps, Globes, Sextants, Telescopes, etc., and in the several branches of Natural Philosophy they have the use of appropriate apparatus.

The French and Spanish languages are taught by Foreigners properly qualified, and Drawing by a Student of the Royal Academy.

Divine Service by a Minister of the Church of England is performed in the schoolroom every Sunday morning and afternoon, and the rest of the day is devoted to reading a portion of Scripture, preparatory to a General Examination in the evening. This examination now long established has for its object, not only the inducing of the Students to read the Bible attentively, but,

the affording of an opportunity for Scriptural information to the other branches of the family.

A great addition to the buildings will be completed before the close of the present holidays, and several improvements effected in the accommodation, with a view to make the Establishment still more worthy of the public support which it has so long, and so liberally obtained.

Upwards of 140 students were admitted during the last twelve months, whose Names and Subjects of Education have been published.

TERMS: 25 GUINEAS PER ANNUM

Inclusive of Board and Education, the foreign languages accepted, which are charged Three pounds per annum.

Vacation from June 20th to July 20th Annually.

Charged to Students residing at the School during the time of its continuance - TWO GUINEAS.

Wigton is the post town nearest Green Row, with which it has communication four times a week."

POPULATION OF THE AREA

From the table overleaf showing the householders in the Holme Low Township, the population of Silloth, in 1847, would have been the residents in the property of:-

Mr Robert Smith	- tailor
Mr John Bainbridge	- farmer
Mr George Edgar	- farmer
Mr Jno. Littleton	- farmer
Mr Wm. Scott	- farmer

Extract from the Holme Cultram Parish Directory 1847.

HOLME LOW TOWNSHIP

Marked - 1 reside at Blackdyke; 2 Blittlees; 3 Calvo; 4 Seaville; 5 Silloth; 6 Skinburness; 7 Wolsty; 8 Causewayhead; the rest where specified.

2 BARNES Mrs. Alpha
 6 BEATY Wm, nail maker
 3 BELL Eliz, beer house
 6 BELL Thos, shoe maker
 BLAYLOCK Thos, corn miller,
 Lowholme Mill
 6 BROUGH Wm, preventv. officer
 8 CARRUTHERS Jph, blacksmith
 8 CREIGHTON Isaac
 2 DAVISON Jane, grocer/draper
 6 FORTAY Wm, preventv. officer
 6 GEDDES Wm, superintdt of
 buoys + lights of Solway
 4 GOODFELLOW Wm, Schoolmaster
 HAYTON Jno, gent, Green Row
 7 HOLLIDAY Mrs Mary
 3 LOMAS Jas, shop keeper
 6 LOW Jno.
 MANN Isaac, mason, Meadow Lodge

Farmers * are Yeomen

BARNES Rd, Wolsty Close
 BARWISE Jas, Cowlyers
 7*BEEBY Wm.
 7*BIGLANDS John
 1 BLENKIN John
 *CHAMBERS Jno, Waitefield
 5 EDGAR Geo.
 4*FARLAM John
 FRENCH Thos, Seadyke End
 4 GIBSON Jph.
 *GLAISTER Rd, Hartlow
 1*GLAISTER Robt,
 2 HARRISON John
 4 HARRY John
 7 HARRY Robt.
 2*HAYTON John
 HESLOP Jno, Pelutho Mire
 HIND John, Seaville Coate
 *HOLLIDAY Jerh, East Coate
 8*HOLLIDAY John
 8*HOLLIDAY Josp.
 3*HOLLIDAY Jno, (surgeon)
 6 HOPE Geo.
 HUTTON Jph, Wath
 3 JEFFERSON Jno, Backhouse
 LITTLE Robt, Ballydoyle
 5 LITTLETON Jno.

3 NICHOLSON Wm, blacksmith
 3 OSTLE Jph, shoe maker
 6 PENRICE Foster, vct. Dukes Head
 4 RALPH John, blacksmith
 6 ROBINSON Wm, gent
 SAUL John, headmaster,
 Green Row Academy
 8 SCOTT Rd, blacksmith
 5 SMITH Robt, tailor
 2 STUBBS Mrs. Abigail
 STUDHOLME Richd, carrier to
 Maryport
 TAYLOR John, joiner and beer-
 house, St Helena
 8 TIFFIN Jane, shop keeper
 2 WAITE Mrs Mary
 2 WILLIS Jno, carrier to Carlisle
 2 WILLIS Wm, beer house

2 LONGCAKE Jph
 1 MARTIN Cable
 *MESSENGER John, Cow Lane + East Cote
 2 MESSENGER Jno.
 *MILLER Jph, Hayrigg
 1 MOOR Jno.
 8 NICHOL Thos.
 4*OSTLE Wm.
 1*PAPE John
 4 PEAT Rt.
 PENRISE Thos, Field Head
 PENRISE Thos, Whinsey Rigg
 *SAUL Jph, New House
 5 SCOTT Wm.
 2 SHARP Wm.
 6*Skelton John
 *TORDIFF Geog, Wolsty Hall
 *TORDIFF Geog, Jnr, Wolsty Stangs
 3 WAITE Jph
 WAITE Wm, Whin Close
 2*WILKINSON Thos.
 2 WILLIS Thos. (and beer house)
 3 WILSON Robt.
 *WISE Jno, Whin Close
 4*WISE John