

# Witton Gilbert

In the  
Seventeenth  
And  
Eighteenth  
Centuries

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## Introduction

This account of the parish of Witton Gilbert in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, has been compiled using material which is still preserved in the church safe at Witton Gilbert.

The Churchwardens' Account Books for the years 1738-1769, are in a good state of preservation. They give detailed items of annual church expenditure. There are lists of parish officials, and lists of property owners in the parish, with the values of their holdings, calculated for taxation purposes. The accounts of the Overseers of the Poor are included, with details of the relief given to the needy in the parish. In addition, there are some of the accounts of the Surveyors of the Highways.

The Church Registers are valuable, in that some of the people mentioned in the Churchwardens' Account Books, can be dated accurately, and some details of their families established. By making a systematic count of births, marriages and burials, decade by decade, an attempt has been made to calculate the number of people living in the parish, and any fluctuations in their number. Place-names, trades and occupations are mentioned in the Registers. Included in the Registers, are copies of some important documents, transcribed in order to ensure a secure and permanent record. Amongst these are copies of two wills, a list of recusants, a letter, and a list of goods in the possession of the church in 1792.

There is also in the church safe, a Banns Book, which dates back to 1754. It supplements the details given in the Marriage Register, and it provides the names of the assistant curates, who took services in the church, in the absence of the incumbents.

In order to broaden the horizons a little, and argue sometimes from the particular to the general, other sources have been used, and these are noted in the text, where they occur.

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W.E. Tate, "The Parish Chest"  
John Pound, "Poverty and Vagrancy in Tudor England"  
Paul Hair [Ed,], "Before the Bawdy Court"  
Henry Broxap, "The Later Non-Jurors"  
Edward Hughes, "North Country Life in the Eighteenth Century,  
The North East, 1700-1750"  
Christopher Hill, "Reformation to Industrial Revolution",  
Pelican Books

- In transcribing from source material, original spellings have been used.

## Witton Gilbert in the Seventeenth Century

The details of village life in the Seventeenth century here in Witton, are not so easily come by as those of the next century, as there are no Churchwardens' Account Books left to help. The Parish Registers, and copies of documents included in them, give some information, and there are various County lists, compiled for different purposes, in which Witton is included.

At the beginning of the century, the population of the parish was about two hundred and forty [1]. It increased at a steady rate until about 1670, when the numbers seem to have settled down to three hundred and sixty. There seems to be a dramatic fall in both the birth and death rate, from 1600 to 1620, and again in the 1690s. These were probably due to people leaving the parish, perhaps emigrating to the Colonies to find more freedom to practise the religion of their choice, or simply moving to the towns to find work.

The disasters that affected the county of Durham, seem largely to have passed Witton Gilbert by. From 1596 to 1600, there were four years of bad harvests, famine, and plague [2] the usual concomitant, but Witton's population went up steadily. There were more bad harvests in the 1620s, and this does seem to be reflected in the numbers of incoming paupers recorded in the Burial Register. In 1635, plague in Newcastle killed nearly half the population [3]. Of course, a small village would suffer less from famine, especially as most cottages would have their plot of land, and people would keep hens and a pig or two. A self-sufficient rural community would be less likely to catch plague, than that of a town, where there was always coming and going. There are three deaths in Witton in 1644, specifically mentioned as being from plague, but as there were only three, all in the same family, and all in winter, it is more likely that the cause of death was influenza with complications, rather than genuine plague.

Unless otherwise stated, information is from the Witton Gilbert Registers.

[1] Calculated from Pop. Table, appendix 1.

[2] "Vagrancy".

[3] "Ref. to Rev." p.46.

There are several burials in the 1620s, which seem to reflect conditions of poverty and starvation. In January 1623, a Francis Dicson, son of Thomas Dicson of Brademore howse, “intending to go back home, died in this parish from hunger”. There were other people wandering into the parish, perhaps from harder hit areas, in search of work and food. In February 1623, Maria Stoke, a vagrant, died in the house of Edward Robison at Kimblesworth, where she had found work, and was buried in a pauper’s grave there. Another pauper woman, a stranger, was “releaved at Edward Robison’s”, and died on December 8<sup>th</sup> 1624. In April 1623, a John Huicson from Skelton in Yorkshire, “a traveller coming to see his friends and to get work in this contrie, fell sick—and died”. His child George, aged three, died a week later. Two other unnamed poor vagrants died in April 1623, one at Sleythowse, and one in Witton.

In the previous century, the medieval manor of Witton was beginning to break up, as holdings were sold to yeoman and tenant farmers, and the process continued into the early seventeenth century [1]. It was a time of inflation, when it paid to invest in land, and we can see the emergence of several well to do families in Witton. There is a list [2] of the richer people of the county, who were assessed in 1605, for the purpose of giving a subsidy to James I. The four men listed in Witton are: John Snaith who had goods to the value of three pounds and eight shillings; Thomas Wray who had land to the value of two pounds and eight shillings; Edward Robinson who had goods worth three pounds and eight shillings, and John Sander who had land to the value of one pound and four shillings. It is very probable that the men were worth more, but it was politic to be assessed for less.

John Snaith had bought tenancies from Thomas Knevett Esq. In 1586 [1]. He died in 1610, and in 1618 the estate was shared between his sons John and George Snaith. This John was probably a churchwarden, as he witnessed a letter in 1625, in connexion with repairing the Church roof, and was responsible for administering the Cuthbert and Richard Watson charities. He died in April 1645, and it is his nephew John Snaith, son of George who left money in 1681 for repairing the “cawsey in Witton Gilbert leading along to Wrangham’s well and so along [by] the watertower to my ground.” Ten groats were to be paid every year to the curate on Easter Tuesday, for repair of this “and other cawseys about the Towne.”

[1] Surtees – Witton Gilbert.

[2] Record Office Lists

Thomas Wray seems to have been a rich man. In 1613, he obtained Fulforth and Findon Hill from the Hildyard family [1]. He witnessed the same letter of 1625, as John and George Snaith, but he only made his mark. In 1616, one of his workmen, John Taler, was named as a recusant; he would not attend church, probably because he was a Catholic. He had been working at Fulforth for three years, but was discharged and left the parish.

Edward Robison was another wealthy parishioner. He is called a “farmer at Kimblesworth” in the Register. He must have had quite a large farm there, as he was called upon to employ pauper women as servants, which would relieve the Overseers of the Poor from being at the charge of their support.

John Sander acquired land from William Musgrave Esq., in 1613 [1], and his family lived in Witton for at least a hundred years.

There were other wealthy farmers in the parish. Cuthbert Watson bought land from William Musgrave Esq., in 1613 [1]. He and his two sons left bequests to the town in their wills. Cuthbert, “in his lifetime did give unto the poor of the town of Witton Gilbert, five shillings, and after his death, yearly out of the dwelling house of Cuthbert Watson aforementioned—to continue for ever”, two payments of three shillings at Christmas, and three shillings at Easter. His son William Watson left ten pounds, in 1624, and his elder son Richard added “some portion of myne own for the better performing of his and myne own good intentions”. He had been given a present of six shillings and eight pence by the parishioners when he went up to Christ’s College, Cambridge, in 1594, at the age of twenty one, and he left the money in gratitude for this gift. He had done well scholastically [2], taking a B.A. in 1598, an M.A. in 1600, a B.D. in 1611, and a D.D. in 1628. He was ordained deacon and priest in London in 1601, and became Vicar of St. Stephen, Coleman St., in London in 1609. In 1618 he became Rector of St. Mary Aldermary, where he stayed till his death in March 1638.

Hugh Pattison was another farmer who bought a tenancy in 1613 from William Musgrave [1]. Robert Hopper increased his family’s land holding in Witton at the same time [1]. Another large and wealthy family was the Walton family. George Walton was an Alderman of Durham, and Keeper of Bearpark from 1616 to 1620 [1]. Other members of the family had land at Kimblesworth and Straitstripes in Witton.

[1] Surtees – Witton Gilbert. [2] Alum. Cantab.

From entries in the Registers too, we can see that the pattern of farms that was well established in the Eighteenth century was almost complete. At Fulforth, held of the Dean and Chapter, there was a Richard Murton in 1606, and a William Errington in 1609. Thomas Wray had the farm till his death in 1633, and in 1635 Thomas Dixon had it. At Sniperley, owned by the Hildyard family, there was Gavin Dobson until 1623, and Robert White in 1673. Potterhouse was held by Edward Jopling in 1614, by Rowland Stoker in 1624, and by Richard Robison in 1628. Straitsterrops was held by Gerard Hopper in 1638 and by Edward Walton in 1673. In 1616 Robert Farqueson was at Sleightshouse, John Jackson in 1631, and William Lumley in 1673. Sacriston Heugh was held of the Cathedral by Ralph Dormant in 1615, and John Dickenson in 1669. Findon Hill was held of the Bishop. In 1612, Hugh Stodder held it, and in 1613 Thomas Wray, in 1623 Cuthbert Holmes, and in 1635 John Charleton. Acron Close and Earles Houses are recorded in 1595, and St. John's Green in 1638 [1].

Occasionally, peoples' occupations are mentioned in the Register. In 1621 there was a Ralph Grey at Blakeburne Howses, who was a collier. Thomas Morison, a cobbler was married in 1607, and in 1698, Samuel Clarke, a soldier was married. Thomas Tayler, a weaver, died in 1649. John Farkson and Richard Johnson are called "fumor", which was either a charcoal burner, or a pitman. In 1620 a Margaret Wilson, "a Scotchwoman", died in Witton. Her son was George Wilson, "a Scotchman and workman at Howlemires dwelling at Blackburne Howses". In 1616 John Walton "custos" died. He was the father of the George Walton already mentioned, and was Keeper of Bearpark before his son.

The Civil War seems to have left Witton untouched, in spite of armies passing through Durham. Thirty years before, when there had been a general muster on Gilesgate Moor, of able fighting men, Witton had sent forty-four men [1], and perhaps some of their sons fought for the King in 1642. However, none seem to have been accused as Royalists after the war, and the Vicar, Henry Hutton, kept his living in spite of the vigorous enquiries into clerical sympathies and morals. The stern Puritan laws passed during the Commonwealth would have affected the life of the parishioners. There would be no work or games on Sundays, even sitting on doorsteps being idle was forbidden. Drinking, swearing and gambling were subject to fines, and even Christmas Day was supposed to be a Fast day when the consumption of meat or spirits was

[1] Surtees – Witton Gilbert

forbidden. All village festivities, seasonal celebrations and dancing were frowned on. The use of the Prayer Book was forbidden, so that the rites of baptism, marriage and burial could not be celebrated properly. A willing cleric might baptize a child at home; in 1658, Elizabeth; the daughter of John Snaith was baptized in this way. Marriages were performed by a magistrate. Accordingly there are gaps in the Parish Registers for these five years from 1653 to 1658.

During the time that Robert Hawkesworth [1605-1629] and Henry Hutton [1635-1671] were Vicars of Witton, regular worship was probably held by them every Sunday. They both made regular entries in the Registers in their own very legible hands. We know that the Church was kept in good repair; the roof was restored in 1625. The Dean of Durham granted a warrant in that year for “six trees of great timber as also four other timlins trees to helpe towards finishing the ceeling of the parish Church of Witton Gilbert, which god willing we shall finish so soone as the same shalle be seasoned for ceeling.” The vicars would, according to the Canons of 1604, wear a cope and surplice in church, and acknowledge the Thirty Nine Articles on taking up their livings. In 1635 when Henry Hutton became Vicar, the following account was written in the Register:

“The sixth day of September being Sunday—I Henry Hutton vicar of ye parish of Whitton Gilbert in the County of Durham did publiquly in the time of divine Service in the audience of the whole Congregacon read ye articles appointed by the Kings Majestys monition for ye abating of Schism error and Heresy, whereto in the audience of the whole Congregation then present afford my free consent and assent. In witness whereof these persons of honest and sound credit here sett their hands”. There follows a list of names, including that of the clerk, Robert Copland. People who signed were: Nicholas Dawson, Thomas Dixon, Christopher Robinson and John Snaith. The others who made distinctive marks for their signatures were: Thomas Knott, Michael Pickering, Michael Sheperson, Thomas Dormant, John Mallome, John Wrangham and Michael Taylor.

Whilst no doubt, Robert Hawkesworth and Henry Hutton lived in Witton, their children were born here, and here they and their widows were buried, Joseph Craddock [1], who held the living in the time between

[1] Alum.Cantab.

them, was a different kind of man. Son of a learned divine, who had been Chancellor of Durham Cathedral and Archdeacon of Northumberland; he had an M.A. degree from Cambridge, and was not a priest. He had been ordained deacon at York in 1625. He probably spent little time here as his interests were angled towards politics. He was knighted in 1661 and became M.P. for Richmond in the same year. The parish was served by a subcurate, Timothy Barnes, who was the minister at Esh [2] and was buried at Witton in 1649.

Edward Kirby [1], who came into the living in 1671, was an M.A. of Peterhouse, Cambridge. Ordained a priest at Ely in 1670, this was his first parish. He made his own entries in the Registers in a large neat hand. He had duties at the Cathedral too, for he was Sacrist and Precentor, and a Minor Canon. John Smith [1], who followed him at Witton in 1684, was also a Canon of Durham and Sacrist there. From 1686-1689, he was in Madrid as a Chaplain to Lord Lansdown, so once more Witton would be served by subcurates.

Abraham Yapp [1], who came into the living in 1695, held others in plurality. He was perpetual curate of Croxdale, Precentor and Minor Canon of Durham, and Rector of St. Mary the Less in Durham. He was also one of the leaders of the Northern Non-Jurors [3], but amongst all this activity, he did have a little time for Witton. It is recorded in the Register that in 1698 "Ascension Day being the second day of June, Mr. Abraham Yapp being Minister of Witton Gilbert did order that the Parishioners should ride there Boundaries one Tuesday before Ascension Day." Mr. Yapp was the first minister of the largest non-juring Congregation in England, at Newcastle. He would have "High-Church" views, and Jacobite sympathies. He and nineteen of his male congregation were seized at Newcastle on suspicion in 1715, and held in the Guardhouse overnight [4]. He was asked to become a Bishop for the Non-Jurors of the North in 1726 [5], but his health was failing and he died in 1728.

In the days of Henry Hutton, the majority of the parishioners of Witton would follow his lead in orthodoxy. In 1641 Parliament decided that because of "adherents to the See of Rome", and "the Designs of Priests and Jesuits—to the undermining and danger of the ruin of the true reformed Religion", to take an oath to "maintain and defend—the true reformed Protestant religion expressed in the doctrine of the Church of

[1] Alum.Cantab. [2] Sur.Soc. – Durham Protestations. [3] Broxap p.109-110 [4] Hughes, Nth.C.L. [5] Broxap p.316

England, against all Popery and popish Innovations”<sup>[1]</sup>. The people who supervised the oath-taking in Witton were: Henry Hutton himself, the Churchwardens George Snaith, Symond Aire and George Robinson [ab]; the Overseers of the Poor, Thomas Horne and Robert Watson; and the Constables, Miles Shipperdson and Michael Taylor [ab].

All parishioners were supposed to attend Church each Sunday, and take Communion three times a year. This regulation was not enforced as strictly as might be supposed, but sometimes behoved the richer Papists or Non-Conformists to compound their recusancy by paying a large lump sum. In 1607 recusants throughout the county were listed <sup>[2]</sup>, amongst them we find seven from Witton Gilbert. Their names were: Ralph Anderson, John Thompson, Dorothea and Jane Hodgeson, [perhaps related to the Lanchester Hodgesons, who were Papists <sup>[3]</sup>] Anthony Trotter, Thomas Taylor and Mabel Smith. In 1616 Robert Hawkesworth listed in the Parish Register “The names of all suche recusante which are at this time in our Parishe of Witton Gilbert inhibitors ye 20<sup>th</sup>. Of May.

Alize the wife of Christopher Hopper hath not bin at divine servis this twelvemonth nor at any before hath received her sacraments.

Katherin Porter wydow, a notorious recusant.

Mary the wife of John Hallum, a recusant.

Clara Walker a widow and mother to the forenamed Mary Mallum, a recusant, a near stranger to the parish and Missen.

Isabel Walker her daughter, also to the above named Clara. A Recusant yet she saith that she is a servant to my Lord Clapton a and stayed here for her healthe.

John Taler a recusant having three years since his abode at Ffulforthe under Thomas Wray, but being finden to be a recusant he was discharged and is gone his way out of the parish.

Jane Kirkley a recusant some tymes having her abode at the Earlehowses where her father [was], maryed now widow, yet being by the Curate presented she is likewise fled out of our parish two years since.”

In 1665 another sort of recusant was found in Witton. This was a time when the Non-Conforming sects were being legislated against, and

[1] Sur.Soc. – Durham Protestations [2] Record Office Lists [3] Surtees - Lanchester

no-one who was not a communicant member of the Church of England could hold any office in government, or teach, or practise Law. Eight people of Witton were presented as Quakers in the year: John Mason and Margaret his wife, Michael Formesby and Francisca his wife, Thomas Jackson and Margaret his wife, and Roger Thorneton and Elizizabeth his wife [1]. There were still Quakers in Witton in the next century, and their numbers must have increased, for they bought a burial ground for their own use in 1744 [2].

There are few bastards recorded in the Register of Births. Up to the Civil War, the average was three a year, but the numbers seem to have dropped during the latter half of the century to only one a year. This was a failing of all classes then as it always has been. Ralph Hopper a yeoman farmer, and Dorothy Pattison the daughter of a Witton farming family had a bastard son in 1617. In 1623 Dorothy married the Parish Clerk, Robert Copland, as his second wife. The Hugh Pattison who had a bastard daughter about twenty years previously, was probably her father. Isabella Sander, the daughter of another farming family, in 1628 had a bastard daughter to Nicholas Ande, who had a house at Loaningcud, where Widow Hutcheson, probably his servant, died in 1623. Most surprising of all, an Elizabeth Hawkesworth had a bastard daughter in 1627. It is probable that Elizabeth was the daughter of Robert Hawkesworth, the Vicar, as there are no other Hawkesworths in Witton at this time, and she would have been the right age to be his eldest child, born before he came to the village, as her birth is not in the Register. The child Maria is probably the one recorded as dying in 1634.

There was an adult baptism in 1685, of John Mallom, son of John Mallom, born in 1666. Perhaps the family was Papist. Mary Mallom, wife of John was a recusant in 1616. This would be a serious disadvantage for a young man of nineteen, with ambition to get on in the world, so there may have been a rapid conversion.

Of the nineteen multiple births in the century, the infant survival rate was remarkably good. In twelve pairs of twins, both babies survived birth for at least a year. In three pairs, both babies died within two weeks, and of the three other pairs, one baby survived. In general families were large, children died in infancy or in their teens, and men often married more

[1] Journal of Friends Hist.Soc., v.13      [2] Friends Charitable Trusts p38

than once as so many wives died in childbirth. In 1611, Margaret Pallaser, the wife of Thomas Oliver, died in childbirth, and was buried at Witton with her son. Ten years later, Thomas' daughter Elizabeth, was buried here "because his first wife and her son were buried in the graveyard at Witton", although the family then lived in Durham, in St. Margaret's Parish. Thomas too was buried here in 1623.

People tended to marry in their middle or late twenties. In the 1630s there seems to have been a fashion for marrying in churches outside the parish. One pair married at St. Nicholas' Durham, and another at Pitlington. Perhaps some people did not like Henry Hutton's brand of Churchmanship. In the 1670s there were three Witton couples married in the Cathedral. Perhaps they had more relations in the city than they had in Witton, or perhaps a Cathedral wedding was more prestigious.

The Register of Burials for the century has several interesting items. In 1627, "The Ladye Trotter, wife to Mr. John Lumle", was buried here. The Lumleys had land in the village. In 1623, Peter Norman the Curate of Esh, and probably a personal friend of Robert Hawkesworth, was buried here, and also in the same year, an old woman who must have outlived all who remembered her name, as she is merely recorded as "a certain old woman called the Old One." One wonders what crimes Anna Smith, who died in 1628, had perpetrated to earn the comment, "a wicked woman". Robert Watson, who was buried here in July 1619, had been hanged for a thief.

In 1678 the Burial Register assumes a new format to include affidavits of the corpse having been buried in woollen, "according to ye Act of Parliament, under the hands and seales of two witnesses, and under the hands of ye magistrates before whome the same was sworn", The Act of Parliament said that [1], "no corpse of any person except those who shall die of the plague shall be buried in any shirt, shift, sheet or shroud or anything whatsoever, made or mingled with flax, hemp, silk, hair, gold or silver, or in any stuff or thing other than what is made of sheeps' wool only—or be put into any coffin lined or faced with any other material, but sheeps' wool only." There were heavy penalties for defaulters, chargeable on the deceased's estate, or the householder in whose house he died, or persons connected with the funeral. The minister

[1] Tate, The Parish Chest.

could be fined for not reporting the absence of an affidavit, or the Overseers could be fined for not levying the lawful penalties. Half of the collected fines went to the Parish Poor, and half to the informer. It could often be the case that relatives would “inform”, should they wish to break the law, and thus not lose entirely all the fine!<sup>[1]</sup>

[1] Tate, The Parish Chest.

## The Parish in the Eighteenth Century

In the Eighteenth century the parish of Witton Gilbert was larger than it is now [1]. It included what is now Kimblesworth and Plawsworth, and to the North it was bounded by Chester-le-Street. Large parts of the higher areas would be moorland and furze, useful for sheep grazing. The wooded areas were much more extensive than they are now and sheltered a variety of wild life. The churchwardens paid a bounty for the heads of certain animals which were regarded as destructive predators. Foxes, which would wreck havoc on precious poultry, were worth one shilling each, and a bounty was paid on three or four per year. Badgers and otters were worth six pence each but seem to have been in less plentiful supply. Bounty was paid on a few ravens at two pence each. The most common woodland animal then, now extremely rare in England, was the polecat or "foulmart". Between five and twelve of these were caught every year and bounty paid at four pence per head. There is some evidence [1] that there were large areas of marshy ground by the river from where the sewage works now are, and up along Kays Burn. There was still a certain amount of Common land on the outskirts of the village, which was not enclosed until 1801, and 1809 [2]. The "Town End Fields", which were of eleven pounds value in 1750 were enclosed, but still carrying Common rights "from St. Cuthbert's Day in March to St. Cuthbert's Day in September [2]".

The census of 1801 says that there were 3249 acres in the parish, and 359 people [3]. At the beginning of the Eighteenth century there were about 360 people, which would represent about 80 households [4]. Through the century there was very little change in numbers. The number of births drops slightly from 1750-1770, but for the rest of the century, births averaged about 12 per year, marriages remained constant at about 3 per year, and deaths averaged about 9 per year, apart from the 1720s when epidemics of influenza perhaps, or typhoid, caused the numbers to rise dramatically. Thus more people were being born than were dying, so there must have been a small but steady migration out of the parish. This would be caused by women marrying out of the parish and thus leaving the area, and by men leaving to look for work in the mines, in the towns, or to become soldiers or sailors.

Unless otherwise stated, information is from the Churchwardens' Account Books.

[1] Surtees-Witton Gilbert. [2] Fordyce-Witton Gilbert. [3] V.C.H.-Witton Gilbert. [4] Calculated from Pop.table, Appendix 1.

A majority of people would live in the village itself, the more prosperous, and the tradesmen having some land with their houses. Mr John Drake Bainbridge, a Durham alderman, had a house in the village, and Mr. John Mann, an attorney at law, had a farm. Lancelot Herring, a weaver, had his own house in Witton, as did John Smith a tailor [1]. Anthony Bunton the blacksmith owned his own house in the village, and land worth three pounds. Ralph Ferry a pitman, had a house and land here, as had John Lawson a tailor, and Peter Stephenson, the owner of Charlaw Colliery. William Bell a shoemaker had his own house in Witton Fold. There were several farms in the village, as there are today. Witton Hall Farm, the largest, was divided into several holdings, but it is likely that Joseph Errington lived in the house [2]. John Foggan had a farm and house rented from Mrs. Lee, valued at thirty-seven pounds in 1750 [3]. There was at least another large farm here with a "great house", owned by Thomas Clark, and in 1750, valued at twenty pounds. Henry Mason had a small farm in the village, valued in 1750 at seven pounds, and George Cuming had one of similar size.

Cottages for the more humble were to be had for rent. Many would be built in groups round yards, and the tenancies would in many cases, be tied to jobs. There was a pinfold, or pound in the village, where stray livestock was kept until ownership could be proved. In 1743 Peter Stephenson provided the timber, and Anthony Bunton the nails and hinges, for a new door for the pinfold, and in 1768, work was carried out there which cost eleven pounds, three shillings and six pence.

There were several small collieries within the parish: Charlaw Colliery, owned by Peter Stephenson, Foulforth Colliery owned by John Smith, Blackburn Colliery which was probably owned by John Grieveson, and West Hall Colliery, owned by Robert Grieveson. These pits would be run as family concerns, with possibly one or two labourers. There are a few people mentioned in the Church Registers as being "pittmen", but mining here was not on a large scale until the 1840s, when the village population tripled [4], with the influx of miners.

[1] Trades from W.G. Reg. [2] Gravestone. [3] Poor Tax List, Ch. W. Bk. [4] V.C.H. Witton Gilbert.

The Parsonage would be one of the largest houses in the village. It was a stone-built house, standing on the rise along the coach road to the church. It was “extremely improved”<sup>[1]</sup> by Dr. Richardson towards the end of the Eighteenth century, no doubt in the latest Georgian style, complete with stable-block and coach-house. The parson when he was here, [he was away at his other parish of Elwick for about half the year], lived in grand style, with servants and a butler <sup>[2]</sup>. He entertained the Archbishop of Canterbury and his Lady, Sir John Eden and his wife, and the Dowager Lady Eden to dinner on August 25<sup>th</sup> 1783, and considered the occasion one of such importance that he recorded it in the Parish Register.

Other important buildings in the village were the School, built about 1730, and the Poor House, established in 1755 <sup>[3]</sup>. There was at least one inn, kept by a Ralph Dixon, who was also a glover <sup>[2]</sup>. There were probably two forges, one owned by the Bunton family who were village blacksmiths for several generations, and the other run by a Nathan Cook who was probably new to the village <sup>[2]</sup>. Smiths were most important people in an agricultural community, where their skill was vital for making and repairing what machinery and implements there were, and for shoeing the horses upon which the community depended for work and transport.

There would be workshops attached to the houses of the village craftsmen, of which there was a surprising diversity <sup>[2]</sup>. There were masons, Joseph Wright, James and David Purdy, and Bartholomew Jackson; glaziers Henry Smith and William Clark; carpenters George Benson, Matthew Newby, Robert Weatherburn and Jacob Dixon. There was a Cartwright called William Walton, and a cordwainer, a man who made new shoes out of new materials, called William Rather. There were three shoemakers William Bell, Thomas Johnson and Robert Proud, and a cobbler called Phillip Hazzard who would make shoes out of second-hand leather, and repair old shoes. Presumably the shoes not bought by the villagers would be sold in Durham, as was surplus cloth made by the weavers William Beeman, and Lancelot and Thomas Herring; the Herring family produced weavers for several generations. John Lawson the Elder and his son John were tailors, and towards the end of the century, another tailor, John Smith, worked in the village. There was even a hatter Andrew Marshall, and leather dresser, Thomas Rivers, who was the son in law of Peter Stephenson, already

[1] Surtees-Witton Gilbert. [2] W.G. Registers. [3] See later chps.

mentioned as a Colliery owner, who was also a woodmonger providing two ladders for work at the church in 1743.

A few other occupations are mentioned in the Church Registers. In 1776 Thomas Elliott, a servant to George Pattinson, died. William Eden an officer of excise was buried in 1724, and in 1733, Peter Strickland, another officer of excise had his daughter baptized. Henry Clark, a "marriner", was buried in 1763. Maybe the Thomas Cowin, "a traveller", who was buried in 1719, was a pedlar and not merely a tramp.

Of course the main occupations of people in the parish were concerned with agriculture. Many people are referred to as "husbandman", or "labourer". There were many farms in the parish [1], several owned by large landowners like Esquire Lambton, or the Dean and Chapter of Durham, and rented out to tenant farmers. Some families like the Hoppers, the Pattinsons, the Waltons, the Joblings and the Pickerings, farmed the same land for more than a hundred and fifty years [2]. Fulforth, Findon Hill, Sniperley, Earls House, St. John's Green and others, were familiar names in 1700.

It is interesting to see that women were not quite the anonymous creatures we suppose them to have been. In 1748, anyone who owned land or houses in the parish, agreed to apply certain rules in connexion with the employment of workers [3]. Amongst the signatories are Elizabeth Lee, who owned land in the village, Mary Salkeld of Bearpark, Elizabeth Sanders a house owner in Witton, Isabella Bewick who owned Paper Mill Farm at Bearpark after the death of her husband, and Mistress Clark the wife of the Parish Clerk. All three women could sign their names, so we can presume a certain degree of education. One who witnessed by making her mark was Elizabeth Taylor, who had a farm in the parish valued at twenty-three pounds in 1750. In the Poor Tax Assessment list of 1750, Ann Smith had a farm worth fourteen pounds, Isabel Moor, a house worth six pounds, and Ann Foster property worth seven pounds ten shillings.

Sarah Cowans [2], the daughter of Joseph Errington of Witton Hall must have been a woman of some character. She was his third daughter, born in 1759 into a Quaker household. She was married by licence

[1] Appendix 2. [2] W.G. Registers. [3] Doc. Included in Ch. W. Bk.

in January 1783 when she was twenty four to John Cowans from Ovingham, Northumberland, and in April of the same year she had her first child – Jane. The couple lived at the Hall, John helping with the farm. Sarah had six more children, the last being born in 1796, and then her husband died in February 1798 at the age of forty-nine, “much regretted by his family”. [1] Sarah had all her children baptized into the Anglican Church. She was herself baptized in September of 1799. Two of her sons died young, Errington in 1803, at nineteen, and John her youngest, was only four when he died in 1797. Jane her eldest daughter married Thomas Nixon, a farmer in Witton, and had her first child, Joseph Errington Nixon in 1809. It may be that it was Sarah’s second daughter, another Sarah, who had bastard twins in 1805, and she would have had all the scandal to deal with. After the death of her father, Sarah Cowans seems to have taken over the running of Witton Hall Farm. Her family were of importance in the village, and often she and her older children were called upon to act as witnesses at weddings [2]. When rumours of a French invasion under Napoleon were rife, the inhabitants of the parish were asked to make donations “against the machinations of an implacable and resistless enemy, who impiously wagemeth war against the most High, and threateneth the utter subversion of every Christian and well regulated state” [3]. Mistress Sarah Cowans is high on the list with a handsome contribution of ten shillings and six pence, equal to that of the Vicar’s wife. Only seventy-one people contributed, and the sum raised was eleven pounds, fifteen shillings and five pence halfpenny. The clerk sourly comments, “The other inhabitants were equally called on, but would not give anything”.

The people of Witton seem to have been just as anxious to avoid their road-repairing duties, which were incumbent on all property owners. The Surveyors of the Highways [4], two of whom served annually, collected many fines from defaulters “for neglect of their Common Days works at the High Ways viz Carriages and Labourers”. It looks as if some of the richer people paid a supplementary rate to the Surveyors. John Foggan, Peter Stephenson and Mistress Lee were often in arrears. In 1758 “The Causeway was made new this year up the Kennel side in the Town, and paid for by Mistress Lee’s money: three shillings and four pence a year, for seven years in arrears”. On January 15<sup>th</sup> 1765, the

[1] Gravestone. [2] Banns Book. [3] Donations list in Ch. W. Bk.  
[4] Surveyors’ Accounts in Ch. W. Bk.

Surveyors decided that they themselves should be excused a certain amount of expense. Should they have only one carriage, it was to be excused from working on the roads, and if they had more than one, "one shall be excused and the other shall attend and work as the other carriages do". The cash collected by the Surveyors was expended on "stones, stoops and labourers" for the repair of bridges and roads. There were "Horse causeys" and "Foot causeys", which were banked up as their names suggest, as protection from the mud churned up by "wagon Wains and carts". In 1796 and 1797 there were Acts of Parliament, which forbade encroachments on them. There were to be fines for infringement of the law, and rewards offered for informing. The Surveyors add their terse comment, "Great abuses have of late been committed in the constabulary by such unlawful practice, [encroachments] and the Surveyors of the Highways intend to apply the Act rigorously".

The Surveyors have left another tangible piece of evidence of their labours, apart from their Accounts. In 1902 when Wallnook Bridge, a stone bridge of one arch, over the Browney, was being repaired, an inscription was noticed on the West side of the South end. Apparently the bridge, an important one on the old road from Witton, through Langley to Esh, was built in 1750 at public cost, the builder being one Ralph Walker from Auckland [1].

[1] N.S.A. Proc., 4<sup>th</sup> series, Vol. 4, p 97.

## The Church at Witton Gilbert in the Eighteenth Century

The Churchwardens' Account Book for the years 1739-1768 have very detailed accounts of church income and expenditure, and from these an accurate picture of what the church was like can be built up.

The churchyard was slightly smaller then, the new portion to the West not being consecrated until 1855 [1], but it was bounded by part wall, part hedge, as it is still. In 1738 Joseph Wright, the local mason, and a labourer, who was probably Joseph Young, worked for three days to repair the wall. In 1758 the mason, now a James Purdy, worked for twelve days and was paid eighteen shillings. He used two carts of lime and five carts of sand, which was probably brought up from the river to make his mortar. In 1762 and 1766, there were more repairs to the wall, minor ones, which cost seven shillings, and two shillings and six-pence respectively. The hedge was mended in 1744, 1749 and 1764. The churchyard itself sometimes had new sods laid. In 1756 the bill for carting sods and laying them was seven shillings and six-pence. In 1757 more sods were laid by David Purdy and his labourer, for two shillings and four-pence. Rubbish was cleared away; in 1739 the charge was two shillings and eight-pence, in 1764, only one shilling. The road to the church was kept clear too. The winter of 1766 must have been a bad one, for the snow had to be shovelled from the road three times. The churchyard gate was kept in good repair. In 1748, the smith nailed on new iron bands. In 1750, the gates and gateposts were renewed and in 1758 a hang-lock was provided at the cost of one shilling. There was a stile too, probably the same as the one we have now; it was repaired in 1765, at the cost of two-pence.

From the outside, the church would look rather different, as there were then no North aisle or vestry [2]. The North side of the church may well have had round-headed windows to match those still in position in the South wall. The church roof was slated. In 1739, Joseph Wright, the mason, took the slates down, and a William Kay put up new laths, and re-nailed the slates. Some new slates were bought in 1757, at a cost of one pound and fifteen shillings.

[1] Note in the Register. [2] Ibid. North aisle and vestry, 1859.

Their carriage cost seventeen shillings and six-pence. Timber was bought from Newcastle and Durham, and a large quantity of nails purchased for seventeen shillings and six-pence.

In 1741 the West gable end of the church was taken down and rebuilt. Timber was bought to make scaffolds, and six carts of stone were required. Three lintels were needed for the West window, probably a square-headed one at that time, and the window had new glass put in. The church has always had two bells, and at this time it is likely that they hung in a somewhat larger bell-cote. It was called a belfry, or steeple, and was probably made of wood and hung with slates. In 1743 new deal was bought for a frame for the steeple, and Joseph Wright spent nineteen days on mending it, together with some minor wall repairs. A bell was re-hung in 1747; two new bell-ropes were bought in 1748, and more were required in 1749, after the bells had been mended. Bell-ropes seemed to wear fast, as more were bought in 1751, 1758, 1759 and 1768. They could snap as they appear to have done in 1756, as someone was paid six-pence for tying the bell-ropes twice. The bells were taken down, checked and re-hung in 1757 and 1759. A bell-striker was repaired in 1755, and a new striker was bought in 1762.

Re-glazing the church window, seems to have been a very regular job for the local glaziers, Henry Smith and William Clark. The glass would come from South Shields or Newcastle, where there were glass-works<sup>[1]</sup>. Re-glazing was carried out in 1741, 1743, 1746, 1750, 1751, 1752, when the East window needed four new iron bars, 1755, 1756, 1758, 1763, 1764, 1766, 1767, and 1768.

In 1752, the church door had a new key for its mended lock, probably made by the smith Anthony Bunton; and in 1767 the door itself was mended and painted. Inside, the church was smaller than it is now, being just an aisle less nave and chancel. The chancel was separated from the nave by an old rood screen made of oak, "of very rude and homely description", which was unfortunately taken down in 1886 <sup>[2]</sup>. There was a gallery at the West end, which Surtees says was built in 1742. The only mention in the accounts, is of George Benson providing wood and workmen to work at the reading desk and stairs. The gallery was painted in 1759, but unfortunately we do not know the colour. The church walls were whitewashed with reasonable regularity.

[1] V.C.H. [2] Note in the Register.

The cost in 1743 for doing this work, was eighteen shillings, and the two brushes required cost one shilling and two-pence. More whitewashing was carried out in 1755 and 1756. The belfry was painted in 1757.

The altar was painted, and had a mat in front of it. There were mats on the church floor too; new ones were bought in 1761, for five shillings and six-pence. There was a pulpit and a reading desk, which were both repaired in 1760, being provided with twenty pounds of iron plates and screw bolts for ten shillings, and given a coat of paint to complete the operation. The "seats" were mended regularly, and the front seats were painted. There were "kneeling-boards" and "book-boards" too, made from fine deal in 1743, probably by George Benson, the village carpenter. There were seats in the choir, which needed minor repairs in 1766. Somewhere in the church, hanging on the walls, were boards on which were written "sentences", portions of the Lord's Prayer and the Commandments. In 1739, five of these boards were repaired and "coloured", and in 1741, Matthew Newby the joiner, spent three days repairing others and putting them up, as well as mending some of the church seats. In 1759, the "sentences" were cleaned.

In 1792, John Dawson, one of the churchwardens, made a list of the "goods belonging to the Church of Witton Gilbert". They were:-

A silver cup and cover. [dated 1570, the Elizabethan ones we still have.]

A pewter flagon. [replaced by Dr. Richardson for a silver one of 1773, and which he purchased at a "fair valuation, lest it should be put to some profane use, and the money was given to the poor".]

2 pewter plates, a large dish, [the brass Alms-dish of 1736]

2 pewter candlesticks

A chest under the Altar Table

2 bells and ropes

A surplice and table linen

A large folio bible, 2 large folio prayer books, 2 large quarto prayer Books

A pitch pipe

A shovel, a spade, a hack [a pick-like tool], and besoms

The Churchwardens' Accounts have many interesting references to these possessions and several others. In 1739, a new Common Prayer Book was bought for fifteen shillings, and a new Bible was bought in 1740. Cloth costing two pounds and two shillings was purchased in 1742, to make Altar-cloths. John Lawson, the village tailor, charged eight shillings and six-pence for making them. The trimming was a very expensive item at nineteen shillings. The surplice was kept in good repair, Holland cloth being bought in 1739, to mend it. It was mended again in 1746, 1747 and 1748, when "the black cloth", probably used for covering coffins was also mended. In 1749 and 1752, the surplice was mended yet again, and now necking was put on. At long last, a new surplice was bought in 1755, for three pounds. The minister had a hood too, bought in 1740, for one pound five shillings and four-pence. It was apparently fraying in 1755, for it was turned then at a cost of two shillings and six-pence. The old surplice was thriftily kept, and mended again in 1759 and 1761. The new surplice had new necking in 1768, and in 1767 a powder was purchased for one shilling, "to take out the stains in the surplice".

The "old register book", the one we still have of births, marriages and burials, dating back to 1570, was bound in 1749. Other books and stationery had to be bought. In 1746, Articles, a Fast Book and a Thanksgiving Book were bought. More Articles and a Fast Book cost two shillings in 1747, and a "large tinn box", probably for keeping them in, was bought in 1748, for four shillings. Another Fast Book and Articles were bought in 1761. In 1768 a new book was bought for the Parish Accounts, which unfortunately we no longer have.

A new spade was bought in 1748 for three shillings. It would be used by the sexton for digging graves. The sexton too would use the besoms for tidying up the churchyard and sweeping out the church. Besoms were cheap; two were bought in 1760 for six-pence. The hack was sharpened every year by the blacksmith. In 1758, Robert Bunton was paid one shilling and four-pence "for smith work and sharpening the hack for the whole year".

Other regular expenses detailed every year in the Accounts are the "two Visitations", when the Archdeacon would come out from Durham to swear in the new churchwardens, and inspect the church. The visitations cost two pounds, two shillings and six-pence. About two bottles of wine for Communion were bought every year. In 1745, the wine cost one pound and five shillings. Every year, ten shillings was paid "for washing the linen and bringing the wine".

The Accounts stop in 1768 so we have no further details of the yearly running of church affairs. But there exists an account of a visitation made in 1826 by the Rev. W, Darnell, representing the Dean and Chapter [1]. The recommendations it makes imply that less care was being taken of the church and its possessions some sixty years later. The Rev. Darnell recommends that attention be paid to ventilating the church, that a new surplice be provided, that the Minister's Prayer Book be given to the Clerk, and that a new Bible and Testament be provided, or a least a New Testament. Further he advises that the "ash heap be removed immediately", and that the churchyard hedge "be made up and railing added".

[1] Note in W.G. Register.

## The Clerk

The Parish Clerk was an important person in the parish. He was educated and literate, when many of the village landowners could only make their marks. His appointment was carefully made. In 1780, on July 15<sup>th</sup>, the Curate, the Rev. James Douglas nominated one Peter Bone to be his Parish Clerk. It was the task of the subcurate, Samuel Viner to publish this in church the following day “during Divine Service”. [1]

As the vicars of Witton Gilbert in the Eighteenth century usually held more than one living or ecclesiastical office, the Clerk would often be called upon to read the service in church on Sunday in the Vicar’s absence. The Clerk kept the Parish Registers and Accounts, for which he received an annual salary of one pound eleven shillings and six-pence [2]. In addition, he was entitled to charge fees for special services; for a marriage by licence he received two shillings and six-pence, for a marriage by banns, one shilling, and one shilling for writing the notice for publication. At the “burying of a corpse”, he would receive six-pence, and one shilling if the corpse was not that of a local inhabitant. At the churching of a woman he received five-pence, and six-pence for registering a child’s baptism. If, for any purpose a search of the Register was required, the Clerk could charge four-pence for his pains, and if a copy of any entry signed by the Minister was needed, the fee was one shilling. The Clerk was the recipient of Easter offerings; all farmers paid six-pence and all other householders paid four-pence. This would amount to a very acceptable sum, as there would be about thirty farmers in the parish, and almost as many householders [3].

Not only was he Clerk of the church, but also Clerk of the parish in the full sense of the word, for at this time parish government was largely in the hands of the church. Church officials collected the Church Tax and administered the Poor Law. They supervised the repair of roads and bridges, and ran what education there was. They appointed the village constables, the collectors of the Land and Window Taxes, and also collected subscriptions to the Militia. In Witton Gilbert, the Church Council met every Easter Monday to discuss parish affairs, and in 1758, they decided to complete their deliberations by indulging in a dinner, which was to cost ten shillings and to be continued annually, the ten

[1] Note in W.G. Register [2] Details of Clerk’s fees, Ch. W. Bk

[3] List of witnesses to Poor Settlement Doc., 1748 Ch. W. Bk.

shillings to be provided from the Poor Tax funds [1]. A further annual meeting was held on May 1<sup>st</sup> at which twelve people were present in 1758. On Easter Monday 1745, eighteen people were chosen “to settle affairs in the Parish of Witton Gilbert”, so we have a list of members of the Parish Council for that year [2]. Amongst them were the most important landowners in the parish. Mr. John Pattinson, probably the richest man, had a large estate, which was valued in 1750 for the purpose of paying the Poor Tax, at the huge sum of sixty pounds [3]. Mr. Robert Pattinson, probably his brother, had a farm called Lingy House, which was valued at thirty-eight pounds. Mr. Henry Bainbridge owned part of Witton Hall Farm, valued at eighteen pounds. An attorney at law called Mr. John Mann, had a farm called Cocklathorns, valued at nine pounds. Mr Thomas Bainbridge was a Durham Alderman with farms in the parish, Straight Stirrups, valued at eighteen pounds and Sniperlaw, valued at twenty-one pounds, and another valued at sixteen pounds. John Lawson, who was a tailor, owned land at Fewsters House valued at eighteen pounds. Mr. Peter Stephenson, who although he could not sign his name, was obviously an astute business man, for he had his own house and land in the village, valued at six pounds and ten shillings, other land valued at thirty pounds, and Charlaw Colliery too. These men regularly took their turns to be Churchwardens, Overseers of the Poor, Constables, there were two in Witton Gilbert, Collectors of the Land and Window Taxes and Surveyors of the Highways [2].

The Parish Clerk was important enough to take his turn at all these offices too. We know a lot about one of these Parish Clerks, a man called Stephen Clark, who was responsible for leaving us records of all these transactions in a beautiful clear script. He was born in 1706 and became Parish Clerk on April 25<sup>th</sup> 1725 [1], at the age of nineteen. We know that he was also appointed Village Schoolmaster when the school was built in 1729, or 1730 [4]. He married Mary Taylor of Houghton le Spring on Tuesday November 18<sup>th</sup> 1735, when he was twenty-nine, and had five sons by her; John born and baptized on the same day, Thursday August 19<sup>th</sup> 1736, Thomas born on May 28<sup>th</sup> 1740 and baptized the following day – he died at the age of ten; Stephen born on the 19<sup>th</sup> November 1743 and baptized the following day; William born and baptized on June 15<sup>th</sup> 1753. Mary Clark died at Christmas in 1754

[1] Ch. W. Bk. [2] Appendix 3. [3] Following details from Poor Tax Ass. List, Ch. W. Bk.

[4] Gravestones.

and was buried on the 27<sup>th</sup> December. Partly we may suppose to provide a mother for his bereft brood, Stephen Clark married again a year later on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1756. His second wife was a widow called Mary Scorrer, who was a farmer's daughter from Lanchester [1].

Stephen and his family would have a comfortable house in Witton Gilbert with some land attached – its value was assessed at two pounds in 1750 for the purpose of paying the Poor Tax [2]. By 1760 he had acquired more land valued at six pounds and ten shillings to rent from Mr. Pattinson and a Mr. Miller, and was probably with his wife's encouragement, working a small farm. He would have a reliable yearly salary from his position as Parish Clerk, from the Easter offerings, and from all the fees he was entitled to charge every time he wrote documents for anyone.

He played his full part in office holding in the Parish [3]. He was churchwarden in 1756 and 1757, together with Thomas Darling, a farmer at Foulforth; he was one of the two Overseers of the Poor in 1753, and in 1758 was paid ten shillings for serving in the place of one of the chosen Overseers called William Burdon, who for some reason could not carry out his duties. This post would involve assessment and collection of the Poor Tax from all householders in the parish, and the duty to see that defaulters were brought before the Justices and fined. The Overseers would have the general supervision of the Poor House, which was founded here in 1747 [4], and which was in the immediate charge of a Master, at this date probably a man called Henry Sharp, and they would have responsibility for vagrants found wandering, or even dying [5] in the parish. They would check on peoples' right to claim a settlement in the parish, and keep the Orders of Settlement. Stephen Clark was a Surveyor of the Highways in 1747, 1761 and 1762. There were two Surveyors chosen annually, whose duty it was to superintend the mending of roads and bridges in the parish. All parishioners were supposed to turn out and work on the roads every year, and if they defaulted, as many would, the Surveyors were responsible for collecting their fines. Stephen Clark was a collector of the Land and Window Taxes in 1747 and 1768. In 1765, he was one of the two Village

[1] Family dates, W.G. Register. [2] Poor Tax Ass. List, Ch. W. Bk.

[3] Appendix 3 [4] Ch. W. Bk. [5] Burial Reg. – March 30<sup>th</sup> 1773 “a man found dead in Kimblesworth Lordship, name unknown.”

Constables [1]. This was generally thought an unenviable task. They had to make assessments of peoples' ability to pay taxes, and would have to check on everyone's right to live in the parish, deporting aliens from other parishes, and also presenting vagrants and criminals before the Justices.

As Clerk he would be kept busy writing the Registers and Accounts, attending meetings, church ceremonies and services. He would be in charge of giving charitable grants of money authorized by the churchwardens to the sick and the poor. The Watson family, had left a house in Witton Gilbert and twenty two pounds to buy some land, the rent and interest therefrom to provide "pitt coales" for the deserving poor and to contribute to general church funds [2]. There are many mentions made in the Churchwardens' Accounts of moneys paid in sickness. For example, in 1752, money is given to a woman called Ann Cooper "in her lameness", and Dr. Bainbridge is paid one pound and one shilling for "mending her leg". In 1743, thirteen shillings are paid for Edward Matthews' sickness expenses, his coffin and his funeral. Other social work would be undertaken by Stephen Clark. In 1751 the four Pallister children were orphaned, and arrangements had to be made for placing them in homes about the village, for clothing them, apprenticing them and for selling up their parents' house and goods. The parents' funerals were organized and the coffins paid for; even the ale, bread and cheese provided for the mourners after the ceremony [3]. Stephen Clark seems sometimes to have been involved in bringing cases before the Justices. In 1744, a warrant was obtained "to take Thomas Jennison for begetting a bastard child on the body of Jane Robson". The errant father had to be taken to the Justices at Durham, and it looks as though Stephen Clark did this, for he was paid fourteen shillings for "going several times to Durham with him, sitting up to attend him and expenses about him at several times". [3]

[1] Appendix 3 [2] See Chapter on Seventeenth Century [3] See Chapter on the Poor

Stephen Clark was the village schoolmaster too, but his tasks here would be none too arduous. The school was built in accordance with the will of Jane Finney, who was the widow of James Finney, Rector of Ryton. In the will, dated November 14<sup>th</sup> 1728, she gave “a little close in Witton—through which there is a footway to Witton Church”, the rent of which, fourteen pounds a year, was to endow a school in the villages; “the master whereof shall teach four poor children of the town or parish of Witton Gilbert to read English gratis” [1]. The Schoolhouse would have been a simple stone barn-like building with a thatched roof. It was thatched in 1744 [2], when it took the thatcher and his labourer two days to complete the operation, for which they were paid four shillings and four-pence. This was probably a simple mending job as it took only one thrave of thatch, whereas a much more complete thatching job was carried out in 1768, when eighteen thrives of thatch were used, and the thatcher and his labourer earned nine shillings and eight-pence. The Schoolhouse had windows which needed almost as much re-glazing as those of the church. School furniture was locally made and repaired in 1764. Such a building would have been capable of providing room for more than four poor children, and it is highly likely that other children attended and paid to learn to read. The churchwardens in 1751 and 1753, paid for the orphans Elizabeth and Jane Morrison to attend school [2].

Stephen Clark died in 1777 on May 30<sup>th</sup>, aged seventy-one. He was buried on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. His writing in the Records stops in 1776, so he had probably been ill for about six months. He must have had a large circle of good friends in Witton, because they joined “in testimony of their esteem for so useful a character” to buy him a handsome tomb-stone, which is still in good condition in the churchyard and reads:

“Reader be admonished by this stone to imitate the example of the deceased, who as a Man felt for every distress, and to the utmost of his power relieved, as a Neighbour cheerfully performed every friendly office for all who solicited him, as a Christian he lived in faith and died in hope.”

His wife, Mary, survived him until 1803.

[1] Surtees, Witton Gilbert. [2] Ch. W. Bk., under year.

## The Sexton

The Sexton was not such an important person as the Clerk. No names of any particular sextons survive in the Parish Accounts. In 1759, the "Saxton's Sallery" was "two half years in arrears at Christmas last", and he was then paid one pound and six shillings [1]. He would keep the churchyard in order, cutting the grass and moving the rubbish; indeed he would be the chief user of the church hack, shovel and spade. He would ring the bells, and sweep out the church with the church besom. He, like the Clerk, was entitled to extra fees on special occasions [2]. Presumably in return for having the church open and ringing the bells, he was paid one shilling at a marriage by license, and six-pence at a marriage by banns.

His most important function was performed at funerals, for which he was paid one shilling if the dead person belonged to the parish, and two shillings if he did not. He, of course, dug and re-filled the graves.

There is the copy of a letter in the Parish Register, written from Durham in 1764 by an official called Samuel Dickens, to the Churchwardens of Witton Gilbert. In it he says that it had become the practice to bring corpses to be buried "at an improper time----to the great inconvenience of the Minister and other officers whose duty it is to attend and perform the funeral service". He reinforces the Minister's ruling that in winter [from Michaelmas to Lady Day] every corpse was to be buried by three in the afternoon, and in summer [from Lady Day to Michaelmas] burials were to be by six in the afternoon. Presumably this was to give the Sexton sufficient daylight after the ceremony to complete the grave-filling operations.

[1] Ch. W. Bk. [2] Table of Fees, Ch. W. Bk.

## The Poor

We tend to forget in these days of the Welfare State how precarious life was in the past. For subsistence farmers, the slightest accident to their stock or one bad harvest could make all the difference between survival and ruin. For labourers on small wages, large families could be a heavy burden. When the wage earner of the family was not able to work, the whole family fell into instant poverty. Where the tenancy of a cottage was tied to a job, old people must work till they dropped, or simply be turned out of their homes. There would be no place for them in their children's homes, as they would need every penny for their own children. For people like this, Parish Relief was the only solution.

We can follow the sad story of one poor farmer reduced to ruin from our parish records [1]. There is a copy of a letter from John Pickering who farmed at Slatehouse, then in Bearpark, to the Dean and Chapter at Durham in which he "humbly sheweth that his ancestors and himself have been tenants to the Rev. the Deans of Durham for above a hundred years last past till the year 1745, when by a numerous family and several misfortunes he was so reduced as not to be able to make good payments of rent etc., which obliged his goods to be sold to pay his credit, and has been ever since in very low circumstances; would therefore your worship be pleased to bestow your charity upon him. Your Petitioner as in duty bound shall ever pray etc., Jno. Pickering". What reply the Dean made we do not know, but Pickering's name disappears from the list of tenants after 1745, so he must have been turned out. His holding, for which he had paid forty-five pounds per year in rent, a large sum as were most of those tenancies belonging to the Dean's personal estate, was taken over in 1746 by John Mowbray [2]. Perhaps it was several bad harvests, low prices for his surplus produce, or an outbreak of foot and mouth disease or swine fever amongst his stock, but what caused his final ruin must have been a short, sharp disaster. That he had been reasonably well to do is shown by the fact that he was a churchwarden in 1735 [3]. He gave his eldest son a tombstone when he died in 1737 at the age of twenty-two, a handsome stone [probably carved by the village mason] which can still be seen in the churchyard.

[1] Unless otherwise stated, information is from the Churchwardens' Account Book.

[2] Rent-roll of the Dean's personal tenants, Prior's Kitchen

[3] See Appendix 3.

John Pickering was one of at least eight children, born in 1679, the third son of John Pickering and his wife Bridget, who were married in Durham Cathedral in 1673 [1]. His great grandfather was also called John Pickering, and he died in 1642, so it was no exaggerated claim that his family had farmed at Bearpark for more than a hundred years. He married Jane Roakesby in 1710, and had three children by her; George born in 1710, John born in 1715, and Jane. Possibly he had been married before, as the deaths of John, Barbara and George, children of John Pickering of Bearpark, are recorded in the year 1711. His surviving son George, married Ann Bunton in 1738, and the farm at Bearpark would have had to support him and his family too. John's wife Jane died in 1744, and he would lose all the help her work would give him.

From a combination of all these circumstances, he was so poor in 1747, that he was paid parish relief for fourteen weeks at twelve pence per week. In 1748, he was on regular parish relief at four shillings per month, and this continued till his death. His house rent was paid by the parish, and when he was ill in 1751, extra money was given, and the Doctor's fee paid. In 1752 and 1753, some of his goods were removed and sold, presumably to pay his debts. John Pickering died in 1757, and his funeral charges of two pounds four shillings, were also paid by the parish.

Of course when John was ruined, the surviving members of his family followed him into poverty. His son George had his rent paid by the parish and had several cash grants. In 1755, he was given wheat, and in 1758 he was given coal. His daughter Jane died in 1753, and his daughter Elizabeth in 1760. Another daughter Sarah was cured of her illness by Dr. Bainbridge for the sum of two shillings and six-pence. In the winter of 1762, his son Thomas died in November, and George himself died in December. The funerals were paid for by the parish, and his widow Ann received a firkin of potatoes, and went on parish relief until the day of her death in 1798 at the age of eighty.

[1] Details of the Pickering family from W.G. Registers

Poor Rate was levied on landowners in the parish, and was administered by the Overseers of the Poor. In 1739, the Overseers were collecting three pounds, fourteen shillings and eight-pence halfpenny per month in Poor Tax. They gave regular monthly pensions to fifteen old or poor people, and had numerous other expenses. In all they spent twenty-six pound, thirteen shillings and two-pence for the year. During the next few years poverty seems to have increased. In 1752, there were twenty regular pensioners, and in spite of the fact that the amount of Poor Rate collected had gone up to four pounds, seven shillings and five-pence per month, the Overseers' account was one pound, seventeen shillings and seven-pence farthing in deficit. The total amount spent for the year had risen to the staggering sum of sixty pounds, two shillings and eight-pence three farthings. In 1755, the parishioners agreed to have a Poor House in the village, as it would save their paying so many house rents for individuals. The Poor House rent was six pounds per year. The first Master of the Poor House was Henry Sharp, who was succeeded by Matthias Dickenson, on a probable salary of three pounds, thirteen shillings and two-pence per year. The cost of keeping people in the Poor House was fairly high nevertheless. Thomas Moore, who seems to have moved in in 1757, cost the parish three pounds, eighteen shillings per year. His clothes cost fourteen shillings and eleven-pence, and some shoes from the cobbler were the cheapest available at five shillings. He died in 1765, he would have a pauper's funeral, and Stephen Clark brought home and washed his bedding.

Some of the poor were still living in their own houses; perhaps the Poor House would only take a few residents and healthy ones at that. There were special arrangements made for the care of an old woman called Jane Surtis, who had been on a regular monthly pension of two shillings for several years. Perhaps she was too ill to go into the Poor House, for at the Parish Meeting on March 21<sup>st</sup> 1758, it was agreed that Cuthbert Mills' daughter, Mary Mills, should "wait and attend on Jane Surtis [one of the poor of the said parish]", and that she should have "for such servitude, all the household goods and wearing apparel that the said Jane Surtis shall then be in possession of". Obviously the old woman was in her last illness, as it was assumed she would have no further need of her possessions. It was further agreed at the next annual meeting on April 16<sup>th</sup> 1759, that Cuthbert Mills should be paid six shillings per month "to take to keep and maintain the above mentioned Jane Surtis, from the first day of May next, until the day of her death."

The parish agreed, “to be at the charge of burying the said Jane Surtis, provided they have timely note of her death.” It was not far away, for the old woman survived a mere week after this meeting. The Register records her burial on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1759 “Jane Surtis widow, pauper.”

The story of the Pallister family is a sad one too, and it illustrates more of the demands made upon the Overseers. Pallisters had been in Witton since about 1600, and seem to have been farmers [1]. Henry Pallister was Constable in 1740 for Foulforth [2], so it is likely that he farmed there then. In 1733, Mary Ferry bore him a bastard daughter [1]. It is probable that he married his wife Mary in 1740, regularising the situation, as they had a daughter Elizabeth in 1741. Mary was born in 1744, Henry in 1748, and Robert 1751. Henry Pallister must have been struggling in 1750, as it was in that year that the Overseers of the Poor paid him six shillings and six-pence, and had other business about him which cost two shilling and ten-pence. The following year, 1751, he was dead, probably some time in the autumn. A sale of his possessions produced the extremely small sum of five pounds, fourteen shillings and ten-pence halfpenny. His funeral was paid for by the Overseers; ale, bread and cheese being provided for the mourners.

Immediately, his whole family was thrown into poverty. Bread-corn was provided for them, and an allowance was paid for eight weeks, when it seems that the mother, Mary Pallister, died, probably after giving birth to her youngest child on December 8<sup>th</sup>. The baby was put out to nurse, first to Isabel Matthew, and then to Joseph Hill’s wife for four months. He could not have had much chance of survival, and he probably died in the spring, as there is no further mention of him. There remained the other three young children to care for. Ann Young “waited on the family” for a little while, and then the children were boarded out with families in the parish, and clothes were bought for them all. Mary, now eight, was apprenticed to George Ferry – maybe he was a relative. Her apprenticeship fees were paid in 1752, 1753 and 1754. Apprenticeship for a child of this age was a derisory term; it simply meant that he would be an unpaid skivvy. Henry, aged four, went to Thomas Ferry, perhaps another relative, and boy-like, he was hard on this clothes, as he was provided with extra ones “at several times” in 1752. When he was five, he was apprenticed to George and Elizabeth Taylor. His fees were paid for five years, and then like Mary, we read no more of him.

Elizabeth Pallister had not been formally apprenticed, but had gone to Robert Grieveson at Findon Hill. The next year, 1753, her position was regularized and she went properly into service at the age of twelve. A complete outfit of clothing was bought for her for one pound, six shillings and five-pence halfpenny. In 1762, when she was twenty-one, she fell seriously ill. She probably had tuberculosis, and must have lost her place, as she was sent to the Poor House, and lived there for twenty-two weeks. The Doctor visited her there, but when she became too ill to stay in the Poor House, she went into the Infirmary in Durham. She died, and was provided with a coffin by the parish, and received a pauper's funeral. Henry Sharp, the Master of the Poor House was given two shillings to pay for this "trouble about her."

It is not surprising, when one family could incur this kind of expense, that the Overseers were very careful when it came to letting new families into the parish. In 1748, when the calls on the Poor Rate were becoming severe, the most influential people in the parish decided that a Poor House was not the complete answer to the problem. Because the Poor Rate "hath of late greatly increased and is becoming a great burthen and charge to the inhabitants", they decided that no one "who hath not a legal settlement" was to rent property of less than ten pounds yearly value unless "he produce and leave with the overseers of the poor a proper certificate of his or her settlement elsewhere." [1] These Certificates of Settlement were virtually work permits. They certified the parish of settlement, legally obtained through birth\* or work there, or by the holding of any parish office, and were obtainable from the Justices of the Peace should a person desire to move to another parish. If an immigrant was undesirable or became so through sickness or unemployment, the Overseers could then obtain a warrant from two Justices of the Peace, and return him to the parish where he was last legally settled. There are several items of this nature in the Churchwardens' Account Book. An entry in 1744 reads, "To a warrant, men, horse hire and expenses and removing Edward Hall and his family to Middleham." In 1754 George Huitt obtained a removal warrant from the Justices and duly removed the undesirable character whose name is given merely as Robert, "to his settlement." The total cost of the operation was eight shillings and sixpence, a great saving to the Poor Rate of Witton no doubt. There were occasionally desirable immigrants.

[1] Poor Settlement Doc., Ch. W. Bk.

- See end of Chp.

George Jennison was acceptable in 1764. Entries about him tell the story of his arrival in the village, his apprenticeship and his acceptance here:

“To cash and expenses the first time Geo. Jennison came	1s-2d
To his bed and board for a week	1s-6d
To writing his indenture	1s-6d
To Geo. Jennison’s Register	6d”

We can be sure that immigrants’ credentials were carefully scrutinized before they were accepted. There is a brief undated note bound in with the Churchwardens’ accounts, which says, “Upon examining Joseph Hills about his settlement he says that his last year’s servitude was with Michael Bewdly in Stanhope Parish, Rookup Quarter”

The parish agreement made in 1748 was anxious to avoid the wrong people gaining legal settlement in Witton. All newcomers had to give the Overseers certificates of settlement, or be removed. No farmer was to employ any person “as a hind” who was not legally settled here, unless he had such a certificate, and no one was to “hire any person as a servant in a fraudulent or clandestine manner with a view only to gain such a servant a settlement.” Moreover, if anyone let property of any kind for less than a yearly rent of ten pounds, they were to pay all the taxes on it themselves, so that the tenant could not obtain a legal settlement on those grounds.

A further charge on the Poor Rate, which the Overseers would be anxious to avoid, was the care of bastard children. Even the few that were born in Witton [1] could be a formidable expense. The normal procedure in such cases was to discover the father, and serve him with what was virtually a maintenance order, a warrant from the Justices. If the girl was unwilling to reveal the father’s name, it was considered part of the midwife’s duty [it came into her oath], to try to discover it [2], even by threatening to withhold her services. Even if all went well, and the father was discovered, there were expenses which had to be stood by the Poor Rate. In 1741 five shillings and two-pence were paid “To expenses and attendance about Anthony Tilley’s bastard child.” The Register reads, “Anthony, natural son of Margaret Saint, baptized February 9<sup>th</sup> 1741.”

[1] See Appendix 1. [2] Paul Hair, Before the Bawdy Court.

It seems to have longer to settle the case of Mary, natural daughter of Mary Wheatley”, who was born in June 1751. Not until 1756, is the sum of fourteen shillings paid “To a warrant and bond and expenses at a meeting about Thomas Grieveson and Mary Wheatley in a case of Bastardy.” In some cases the affair settled itself, and the expenses were slight, as in 1762 when the account reads, “Expenses at a meeting on a Coroners Inquest on the body of a child born on the body of Ann Wilkinson: two shillings and six-pence.” Sometimes the mother would be helped, as was the case in 1744 with Jane Robson, who received eighteen shillings “while lying in etc.”

Although the lot of the poor was unenviable, at least in Witton the Overseers seem to have been honest and diligent, and as generous as possible in dispensing the Parish Charity.

\*In the Register, a Memorandum of November 25<sup>th</sup> 1722:

“At the instance of Ann Brunskill who came to the parson with a lye in her mouth the three preceding, John, Hannah and Isaac Brunskill were registered unknown to the Parson of the Parish, and thereas we have great reason to suspect they aforesaid three were not Baptised in any Church we have caused the aforesaid persons registered to be blotted out.”

The woman had probably tried to gain a legal settlement for her children, by having their names entered in the Baptismal Register.

## Appendix 1

### Record of Births, Marriages and Deaths taken from the Parish Registers of Witton Gilbert for the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Decade	Total Births	Twins	Illeg.	Marriages	Burials	Births minus Deaths
1570-1579	49	1 female	-	15	33	16
1580-1589	66	1 male 1 female	-	17	51	15
1590-1599	85	1 male	-	17	56	29
1600-1609	66	-	3	21	39	27
1610-1619	74	1 male 1 female	3	23	48	26
1620-1629	84	-	5	13*	60	24
1630-1639	94	-	3	16*	54	40
1640-1649	110	1 male 2 female	-	30	72	38
1650-1659**	68	1 female	-	11	21	-
1660-1669	114	1 mixed	2	31	75	39
1670-1679	119	-	2	33	102	17
1680-1689	124	1 female 1 mixed	-	30	103	21
1690-1699	94	2 female	1	24	75	19
1700-1709	110	1 male 1 female 1 triplet	-	27	74	36
1710-1719	132	1 male 1 mixed 1 triplet	1	31	90	42
1720-1729	133	1 mixed	5	20	126	7
1730-1739	133	1 female	4	39	91	42
1740-1749	127	1 mixed	5	29	78	49
1750-1759	96	1 mixed	3	33	71	25
1760-1769	94	-	4	25	90	4
1770-1779	131	1 male 1 female	4	30	89	42
1780-1789	103	-	3	30	76	27
1790-1799	135	1 mixed [illeg.]	7	32	79	56

\* no marriages recorded for the years 1628-1633

\*\* no records for the years 1655-1658

## The Population of Witton Gilbert in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

From the figures of Birth, Deaths and Marriages, it seems that the population doubles during the period from 1570 to approximately 1660, when it appears to stabilize. The population increase per decade can be found, and from this and the number of years during which the population apparently doubles, the actual population can be found as follows:

If  $x$  is the fractional increase per year, and the initial population is taken as unity, then  $[1+x]$  years = 2 and hence  $x$  is approximately 0.0083.

The population increase at the beginning of the Seventeenth century is approximately 2 per year, and by 1660 it is approximately 3 per year, when it appears to remain constant. Therefore the population at the start of:

- a] the Seventeenth century is 240+/-24,
- b] the Eighteenth century is 360+/-36.

These calculations assume no gain or loss due to immigration or emigration during the period of population growth and are probably only accurate to within 10% as shown. The assumption is supported by the fact that the marriages double during the period 1570-1660, which fact suggests a doubling of the population. Furthermore a population census [1] of 1801 gives the population as 359, which agrees quite well with the figure calculated.

It must be noted that as the calculated figures do not include Non-Conformist Sects, or Roman Catholics, they are approximate only.

[1] V.C.H. Witton Gilbert

## Appendix 2

### Some Farms in the Parish in the Mid Eighteenth Century

Witton Hall A large estate divided into several holdings.

1. Mr. Henry Bainbridge "gentleman" 1745-1750, value £18
2. John Smith 1750-1755, value £36
3. Hugh Hopper 1750, value £15
4. Ralph Weatherburn 1750-1756, value £18
5. George Taylor 1751
6. Joseph Errington [a Quaker] 1750-1765, value £23  
1765 rents Mr. Pattinson's land, value £29 as well, and  
has rented his house from 1747-1758. This was  
probably Witton Hall Farmhouse.

St. John's Green

John Mason 1739-1765  
In 1750 and 1759 its value was £33

Cocklathorns

1. Robert Buck [died 1751] 1747-1751, value £7  
[probably rented from Mr. Spearman]
2. Isaac Easterby 1752-1768  
1759 value £8
3. Mr. John Mann [Attorney at Law] 1750-1759 value £9

Findon Hill

Robert Grieveson rents from John Clark. 1750 value £8  
In 1760 and 1767, Grieveson's holding is called "His house"  
and "his own". He died in 1799.

Ackron Close

1. Thomas Grieveson 1742
2. Richard Brown 1750-1751 value £25
3. Joseph Hull 1758-1759 value £24
4. John Cook [died 1768] 1760

Wellfield

1. John Rippon 1746-1761 value £18
2. Robert Ramshaw 1769

### Lingey House

1. Robert Pattinson, 1747-1760 [when he left the parish]  
died in 1777 value £38
2. George Pattinson [farmed at Seggerston – his brother]  
1761-1770

### Foulforth

1. John Ferry and Henry Pallister 1740
2. John Foreman 1744-1750 value £48
3. Thomas Darling 1755-1771  
1760 value £58

### Flake Hall

1. Cuthbert Smith 1744
2. Mr. John Richardson 1750-1759 value £6

Sniperley There is evidence from Surtees that it was owned by Thomas Hopper Esq.

1. Mr. Thomas Bainbridge [Durham  
Alderman] 1750 value £21
2. William Horseley 1756-1757
3. Cuthbert Carr 1765 value £22

### Millburn

Ann Foster 1750-1761 value £7.10s

### Slatehouse

1. John Pickering c.1710-1745 value £45
2. John Mowbray [died 1791] 1746-1750 value £43

### Charlaw

John Mason 1750-1759 value £22  
In 1751 rented by Thomas Coltman

### "Mrs Archer's"

1. John Smith 1750 value £26
2. John Watson 1755
3. Peter Stephenson 1759 value £26

### Seggerston Haugh

William Pattinson 1750 value £40  
George Pattinson [his son] 1752-1772

### Earls House

- |                                  |           |           |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. William Mallom                | 1741      |           |
| 2. Thomas Cooper                 | 1745-1754 |           |
| In 1750 both men held it jointly |           | value £20 |
| 3. Thomas Smith                  | 1751-1771 |           |

### Hartside House

- |                    |           |                           |
|--------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| 1. William Jopling | 1748-1761 |                           |
|                    |           | In 1750 its value was £22 |
| 2. George Moore    | 1722      |                           |

### Bearpark Hall

- |                              |                       |           |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| 1. Henry Clark [the Elder]   | - 1739 [died aged 90] |           |
| 2. Henry Clark [the Younger] | - 1745 value £57      |           |
| 3. Robert Salkeld            | 1746-1759             |           |
|                              | 1750                  | value £53 |
| 4. John Watson               | 1764-1768             |           |

### Bearpark Paper Mill Farm

- |                               |           |           |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. John Bewick [died 1748]    | 1745      |           |
| 2. Isabel Bewick [his widow]  | 1748-1752 | value £33 |
| 3. Thomas Mowbray [died 1776] | 1752-1768 |           |

### The Low Haugh, Bearpark

- |               |           |          |
|---------------|-----------|----------|
| Thomas Taylor | 1750-1761 |          |
|               | 1750      | value £5 |

### Bearpark Lodge

- |              |           |           |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| George Huitt | 1743-1767 |           |
|              | 1750      | value £40 |

### Rennoldson's Mains

- |                     |      |          |
|---------------------|------|----------|
| 1. John Appleby     | 1750 | value £8 |
| 2. Robert Grieveson | 1759 |          |

### Mrs. Lees', Witton

- |             |           |           |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| John Foggan | 1750-1759 | value £37 |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|

## Appendix 3.1

### Lists of members of the "Vestry", 1745 and 1760

Names of the Several Persons chosen to settle affairs in the Parish of Witton Gilbert on Easter Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup> 1745.

Thos. Burdus Esq.	dead
Mr. Wm Spearman	
Mr. Anthony Lee	dead
Mr. John Hutchinson	dead
Mr. John Pattinson	
Mr. Wm Archer	dead
Mr. Robert Pattinson	
Mr. Henry Clark [no Parishioner]	
Mr. Wm Burdon	
Mr. John Clark	
Mr. Henry Bainbridge	
Thos. Rudd Esq.	
Mr. Thomas Mann [Attorney at Law]	
Mr. Peter Stephenson	
Mr. Thos Bainbridge [Alderman]	
Mr. John Lawson	
Mr. John Drake Bainbridge	
Mr. John Cook [Ackron Close]	

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Names of 12 persons chosen to settle the material affairs in the Constabulary of Witton Gilbert taken from the old list on Easter Monday April 7<sup>th</sup> 1760.

1. Robert Spearman Esq. dead 1762
  2. Mr. John Pattinson
  3. Mr. Robert Pattinson left the parish
  4. Mr. Wm Burdon
  5. Mr. John Clark
  6. Mr. Henry Bainbridge
  7. Thos. Rudd Esq.
  8. Mr. John Mann
  9. Mr. Peter Stephenson
  10. Mr. John Lawson
  11. Mr. John Drake Bainbridge
  12. Mr. John Cook, Ackron Close
- Rich. Wharton Esq. In lieu of Robt. Spearman Esq. - dead  
Mr. John Lawson in Room of his Father  
Mr. Bows Grey in Room of Rich. Wharton  
Mr. Geo Pattinson in Room of his Brother Robt.

Appendix 3.2  
The Churchwardens of Witton Gilbert 1716-1769

1716 James Robinson Nicholas Joplin	1744 John Lawson Joseph Taylor
1717 Henry Clarke	1745 George Robinson Thom. Walton, Bearpark
&1718 John Bainbridge	1746 John Lawson, Jun. Thom. Cooper, Earls House
1719	1747 Thom. Herring
1720 James Middleton John Pickering	&1748 John Bewick
1721	1749 Thos. Herring John Mowbray
1722 Richard Burdon William Ffoggen	
1723	1750 Peter Stephenson
	&1751 Wm. Pattinson
1724	1752 Mr. Hy. Bainbridge of Witton Hall
1725 Joseph Walton Henry Clarke	&1753 Robt. Grieveson for John Clark's
1726 Edward Lodge Peter Stephenson	
	1754 Ralph Weatherburn of Witton
1727 Peter Lawson George Ferry	1755 Thos. Taylor for Bearpark
1728 Edward Lodge Peter Stephenson	1756 Stephen Clark
1729	&1757 Thos. Darling, Foulforth
1730 Edward Mathew John Rippon	1758 George Taylor
1731 George Robinson Wm. Stephenson	&1759 Robert Pattinson, Lingy House
1732	1760 Anth. Bunton, Witton Town
1733 Wm. Baister Thos. Walton	&1761 Thos. Smith, Earls House
1734	1762 John Shields, for his house Witton
1735 Lancelot Herring John Pickering	&1763 Geo. Pattinson, Seggerston
1736 Wm. Pattinson Geo. Cuming	1764 John Lawson, for his house Witton
1737 Rob. Liverick Rob. Buck	&1765 John Rippon, Wellfield
1738 Paul Taylor	1766 John Lawson John Watson, Bearpark Hall
&1739 Hy. Bainbridge	1767 Mr. Hy. Bainbridge, Witton Hall
1740 James Clark Henry Clark	&1768 John Watson, Bearpark Hall
1741 Peter Stephenson	1769 Thos. Herring Thos. Mowbray
&1742 Wm. Pattinson	
1743 Anthony Bunton Robert Pattinson	

### Appendix 3.3

#### The Constables of Witton Gilbert 1749 – 1772 [and the houses for which they served]

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1740 Wm. Burdon, own house in Witton<br>Hy. Pallister, for Foulforth | 1757 Peter Stephenson, for his own<br>house that he lives in    |
| 1741 Hy. Mason, own house in Witton<br>Wm. Mallam, Earls Houses      | Thos. Taylor, farm at Bearpark                                  |
| 1742 John Cook, own house in Witton<br>Thos. Grieveson, Ackron Close | 1758 Ra. Weatherburn, Thos Horn's<br>House in Witton            |
| 1743 John Cook, Ann Smith's house<br>in Witton                       | Geo. Pattinson, Seggerston                                      |
| John Mason, St. John's Green   | 1759 Anthony Bunton, his house in<br>Witton                     |
| 1744 George Robinson, Mr. Lee's<br>house in Witton                   | Wm. Jobling, Hartside House                                     |
| Thos. Walton his farm in<br>Bearpark                                 | 1760 Wm. Burdon, his house in Witton                            |
| 1745 John Appleby, Mrs. Bunton's<br>house in Witton                  | Rbt. Grieveson, for his house<br>Findon Hill                    |
| John Bewick, his farm in Bearpark                                    | 1761 Wm. Bell, for his house in<br>the Fold, Witton             |
| 1746 John Lawson, the Elder, own<br>house in Witton                  | Thos. Walton, for Bearpark                                      |
| George Huitt, the Lodge<br>Bearpark                                  | 1762 Wm. Bell, for himself again                                |
| 1747 Joseph Errington, Mr. John<br>Pattinson's house in Witton       | Thos. Mowbray, Bearpark   |
| John Mowbray, Slaithes Houses  | 1763 Wm. Clark, for the heirs of<br>Wm. Mason's house in Witton |
| 1748 George Robinson, Mr Meabourn's<br>house in Witton               | George Huitt, for the Lodge<br>Bearpark                         |
| Wm. Jobling, Hartside House  | 1764 Ralph Ferry, his house in Witton                           |
| 1749 Hugh Hopper, own house in<br>Witton                             | Mr. John Cook, Ackron Close                                     |
| Rbt. Salkeld, farm in Bearpark                                       | 1765 Stephen Clark, for himself                                 |
| 1750 Thos. Clark, for his Great<br>house in Witton                   | John Mason, St. John's Green                                    |
| Rbt. Pattinson, Lingy House  | 1766 John Foster, Mr. Kidson's<br>house in Witton               |
| 1751 George Taylor, Witton Hall                                      | John Mowbray, Slate House                                       |
| Ricd. Brown, Ackron Close  | 1767 John Chambers, his house in<br>Witton                      |
| 1752 John Foster, for his or his Mother's<br>Estate                  | John Watson, Bearpark Hall                                      |
| Isaac Easterby, Cocklathorns   | 1768 John Clark, for Jos. Errington's<br>house in Witton        |
| 1753 George Cuming, his house in Witton                              | Isaac Easterby, Cocklathorns                                    |
| John Rippon, Wellfield   | 1769 John Appleby, Mrs. Bunton's<br>house in Witton             |
|  | Rbt. Ramshaw, Wellfield   |
|  | 1770 John Clark, at the East End of<br>Witton for his house     |
|  | Thos. Smith, Earls Houses                                       |

Appendix 3.3  
The Constables of Witton Gilbert 1740-1772  
[and the houses for which they served]

1754 John Lawson, Junior, for John  
Fewster's house  
Thos. Cooper, for Earls Houses  
1755 John Watson, Miss Archer's land  
Thos. Darling, Foulforth  
1756 John Shields, for Mr. Baister's House  
Wm. Horseley, Sniperlaw

1771 Mr. Matthew Foster, for Mr.  
John Pattinson's house  
Mr. Thos. Darling, Fullforth  
1772 Lancelot Herring, for his house  
in Witton  
George Pattinson, Seggerston

Appendix 3.4  
The Overseers of the Poor 1739-1768

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|---|--|
| 1739 Wm. Baister<br>John Mason of St. John's Green                  | 1755 Robt. Grieveson, for Mr. Kidson's<br>house, Witton          |
| 1740 George Robinson<br>John Ferry, Foulforth                       | Geo. Pattinson, for Seggerston<br>Haugh                          |
| 1741 John Lawson<br>Wm. Leighton                                    | 1756 Anthony Bunton, for his house at<br>Witton                  |
| 1742 Lanct. Herring<br>Joseph Taylor                                | Thos. Walton, for Bearpark                                       |
| 1743 Mr. Hy. Bainbridge<br>Henry Clark, Bearpark                    | 1757 John Appleby, for Mr. Crowie's<br>house                     |
| 1744 James Clark<br>Cuthbert Smith, Flake Hall                      | Wm. Horseley, for Sniperly                                       |
| 1745 John Lawson, the Younger, for<br>Fewsters House.               | 1758 Joseph Errington, for Mr.<br>Pattinson's house, Witton      |
| Thom. Cooper, for Earls Houses                                      | George Hewett, for the Lodge                                     |
| 1746 John Cook, for his own house<br>in Witton                      | 1759 Stephen Clark, who served in<br>place of Wm. Burdon, Witton |
| John Rippon, Wellfield  | John Mason, for St. John's Green                                 |
| 1747 John Smith, for his house<br>at Witton                         | 1760 John Shields, for Baister Houses<br>John Cook, Ackron Close |
| Rbt. Buck, Cocklathorns   | 1761 John Foster, for his mother at the<br>Mill Burn             |
| 1748 Hugh Hopper, for his blacksmith's<br>shop, house etc at Witton | Thos. Darling, for Foulforth                                     |
| John Mowbray, Slates House  | 1762 Wm. Bell, for his house, Witton                             |
| 1749 Peter Stephenson, Witton                                       | Thos. Smith, for Earls Houses                                    |
| Robt. Pattinson, for Lingey House                                   | 1763 Thos. Jopling, for Miss Archer's<br>farm                    |
| 1750 Ralph Weatherburn, for Walton's<br>House, Witton               | John Rippon, for Wellfield                                       |
| Rbt. Grieveson, for Jno. Clark's<br>Findon Hill                     | 1764 Geo. Robinson, for<br>Mr. Meabourne's house at Witton       |
| 1751 Wm. Mason, for his house in<br>Witton                          | John Watson, for Bearpark Hall                                   |
| Thos. Coltman, for John Mason's<br>house Charlaw                    | 1765 Mr. John Smith, for Mr. Cook's<br>house, Witton             |
| 1752 Geo. Taylor, for Witton Hall                                   | Isaac Easterby, for Cocklathorns                                 |
| Thos. Mowbray, for Bearpark<br>Paper Mill Farm                      | 1766 John Lawson, for his house at<br>Witton Town                |
| 1753 Stephen Clark, for Witton Town                                 | John Mowbray, for Slate House                                    |
| Thos. Taylor, for Bearpark  | 1767 Hugh Hopper for his black-<br>smith's shop at Witton        |
| 1754 John Foggan, for Mrs. Lee's<br>house, Witton                   | Robt. Grieveson, for his own<br>house, Findon Hill               |
| Wm. Jopling, Hartside House   | 1768 Thos. Herring, for the Town<br>Thos. Mowbray, for Bearpark  |

Appendix 3.5  
Collectors of the Land Tax and Window Sess 1742-1772

They always being assessed the year following.

1742 David Mitchell Thos. Baker	1759 John Appleby, Witton Geo. Pattinson, Seggerston
1743 Wm. Baister Thos. Embleton	1760 John Foggan, for his farm at Witton John Rippon, Wellfield
1744 John Foggan John Rippon	1761 John Smith, for Witton Thos. Taylor, Bearpark
1745 John Smith John Bewick	1762 Jos. Errington, for Jno. Pattinson's house, Witton Rbt. Grieveson, for his house, Findon Hill
1746 Joseph Errington Joseph Taylor	1763 Wm. Bell, for his house in Witton Fold Thos. Mowbray, Bearpark
1747 Peter Stephenson Stephen Clark	1764 John Clark, for Jos. Errington's house in Witton Mr. John Cook for Ackron Close
1748 John Lawson, Senr. John Mason	1765 Wm. Burdon, Jnr. for the town of Witton John Watson, Bearpark for the outside
1749 Geo. Taylor Richard Brown	1766 John Chambers, for his house in Witton Thos. Walton, for Bearpark
1750 Anthony Bunton Rbt. Salkeld	1767 Ralph Ferry, Witton George Hewet, The Lodge
1751 Thos. Walton Geo. Cuming	1768 Stephen Clark, for himself of Witton Town Isaac Easterby, Cocklathorns
1752 Wm. Mason Geo. Hewett	1769 John Lawson, for own house and land in Witton John Mowbray, Slatehouse
1753 Hugh Hopper Isaac Easterby	1770 Jos. Errington, for Witton Hall Geo. Pattinson, Lingy House
1754 John Watson John Mowbray	1771 James Gidling, Witton Thos. Smith, Earls Houses
1755 Geo. Robinson Robt. Pattinson, Lingy House	1772 Wm. Clark, for the township George Moore, Hartside House
1756 Thos. Herring Wm. Jopling, Hartside House	
1757 Ra. Weatherburn Thos. Smith, Earls House	
1758 James Clark, his house, Witton Thos. Darling, Foulforth	

