

Chapter 4 – Kildwick in the Later Middle Ages (1350 – 1480)

1. The Percy-Nevill Feud

Chapter 3 covered just 50 years; this one spans around 130 because there is much less source material for the later Middle Ages. The only extant Bolton priory account rolls to survive for the period are for 1377 and 1473. The rest is scrappy mainly genealogical material. Some rays of light, however, are shone on the darkness by the abundant records of the Plumpton family of Plumpton Hall in Spofforth. *Kirkby's Inquest* of 1284-5 records that Robert de Plumpton held four carucates in the manor of Steeton. No reference was made to the carucates by Juliana, widow of Nigel de Plumpton, in her claim to the property of her late husband in 1212, so they must have been acquired between the two events.¹ The date 1284 poses a serious problem because we have seen that Sir Robert de Stiverton owned the manor at this time. The property is described as being at Eastburn so Plumpton was probably one of de Stiverton's tenants but Eastburn was only worth two carucates. The anomaly may be explained by the 1315 Inquisition Post Mortem of Henry Percy, which records that the Robert de Plumpton of the time held five carucates in Steeton and Glusburn, where five out of the six carucates in the latter were also part of the Stiverton manor.²

In 1340 a case of novel disseisin was brought against Sir Robert de Stiverton and his wife and others by Robert de Dighton clerk, which the king ordered the justices of Assize at York to suspend for the present, because de Stiverton was 'about to set out to parts beyond the sea in the king's service.'³ The case clearly concerned Plumpton, as de Stiverton's tenant, because it ended with Thomas de Middleton granting Dighton his property in Glusburn in return for Dighton signing a quitclaim to Middleton's property in Stockeld.⁴ Stiverton was almost certainly joining the king's army in France and another old dispute must have resurfaced during his absence. In 1344, at the request of William de Plumpton, described as 'now the tenant of the manor of Styveton', an Exemplification was issued confirming that in 1305 John de Merkyngfeld, the king's clerk, had acknowledged the right of Sir Robert de Stiverton (d.1307) and his son John to the manor.⁵ By 1353 Sir Robert de Stiverton, the younger, was clearly dead and 'the tenements of Styveton and Estburn' were now held by William de Plumpton by homage and service of a moiety of a knight's fee.⁶

The Plumpton family held the manor of Steeton for over a century until they lost it in the turmoil which has become known as the Wars of the Roses. In order to explain the circumstances in which it was lost it is necessary to give a somewhat simplified account of the Plumpton involvement in the politics of the time. William de Plumpton died in 1362 to be succeeded by his son Sir Robert de Plumpton. Like Steeton Plumpton's other Yorkshire lands were within the Percy fee and he was a supporter of the Percy, earls of Northumberland. Northumberland supported Bolingbroke's deposition of Richard II in 1399 and his seizure of the throne as Henry IV but Plumpton was not destined for the new king's favour. Sir Robert's in-laws, the Scropes, headed an abortive rebellion in 1405, as a result of which his son, Sir William Plumpton, was executed for high treason. Sir Robert himself died two years later to be succeeded by his grandson, another Sir Robert.⁷



It was this Sir Robert who was responsible for a notable recovery in the family fortunes. His father's errors do not seem to have been held against him because no objection was made to his marriage to Alice, the daughter and heiress of Godfrey Foljambe of Hassop, which secured to him all the Foljambe lands in Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire.⁸ The improved status his marriage brought him was shown by his acquisition of the key North Riding office of steward of the Forest of Knaresborough in 1414 and his election to parliament for Yorkshire in 1411 and 1416 and for Nottinghamshire in 1414. He went with Henry V on his campaigns and is thought to have died in France at the siege of Meaux in 1421.⁹

Sir Robert's eldest son, yet another Sir William Plumpton, also fought in the French wars but he came into his inheritance at a time of rising tension, which was to erupt some thirty years later into what has become known as the Wars of the Roses. In the north of England at least this was a misnomer. What really mattered was whether you were a partisan of the Percy, Earls of Northumberland, who controlled the east march of the border with Scotland or the Nevill, Earls of Westmoreland, who dominated the west march.

Each family owned extensive lands outside the far north as well. The Nevills started the wars as supporters of the Yorkist cause, so it naturally followed that the Percies would back the Lancastrians. The Percy fee included extensive lands in West Craven and the North Riding. The family's dominance in the area was cemented when John, Lord Clifford, married Elizabeth Percy so, while Kildwick lies geographically in Yorkshire, at the outset of the wars at least, it was Lancastrian territory. Sir William was a crucial piece in the Percy jigsaw. He succeeded his father in the important post of steward of the Forest of Knaresborough, he married into the Stapleton family, whose members were Percy adherents and his eldest son Robert married Elizabeth, the daughter of Thomas, Lord Clifford, John's son. The importance of the alliance was underlined by the provision that if he died without issue, she should remarry to his second son, William. It was a wise precaution. Robert died in 1450, childless, and Elizabeth promptly took his brother as her second spouse.

Serious fighting began as a result of the Duke of York being appointed protector during the insanity of Henry VI in 1453. The Plumptons, father and son, fought on the Lancastrian side at the battle of St. Albans in 1455, during which the Duke of York was killed and Richard Nevill, Earl of Salisbury, was captured and later executed. The Yorkists managed to recover and the younger William Plumpton played a full part in the fighting which swayed first one way and then the other. It ended with the Yorkist victory at Towton in 1461, one of the bloodiest battles ever fought on English soil. It was a black day for Elizabeth Plumpton because both her husband, the young Sir William, and her brother John, Lord Clifford were among the slain.



As a result of the Yorkist victory Henry VI was deposed and the late Duke of York's eldest son became king as Edward IV. Sir William Plumpton was now in serious trouble. He was dismissed from all his offices and imprisoned in the Tower. Only the leaders on the losing side would be executed, their followers being pardoned, but the price of a pardon was a hefty fine which could usually only be raised by selling land. In 1462 Plumpton was released from his imprisonment temporarily, after posting a bond for £2,000 to ensure his good behaviour, in order to try and get the money for his pardon. The fine must have been a very large one because he failed to raise it and he was returned to prison with the prospect of losing the entire Plumpton inheritance.¹¹

In this desperate situation Sir William approached two of his Yorkist neighbours, Brian Roccliffe of Cowthorpe in Yorkshire and Henry Sotehill of Stockerston in Leicestershire for help. He offered to marry Margaret and Elizabeth, the two young daughters of his late son, William, (they were two years and one year old respectively!) to their sons, both called John, in return for 400 marks from Roccliffe and £333 from Sotehill. The deal was a very attractive one for both sides; for the two men because the daughters were co-heiresses to all the Plumpton lands and for Plumpton because the girls were now his only direct legitimate descendants, so it seemed inevitable that the Plumpton property would be broken up after his death anyway. The scheme worked. As a servant of Salisbury's son, Richard Nevill, Earl of Warwick, who had played a large part in the Yorkist victory, Roccliffe was in a position to influence him in Sir William's favour. This plus the money must have been enough because Plumpton was released, pardoned and regained control of his lands, though he remained out of favour and out of office.¹²

There was, however, to be another twist in the tale. In 1468 Sir William Plumpton was cited before the civil court at York for living with a woman, named Joan Wintringham, who was not his wife. In the normal way this would not have caused much comment. It was not uncommon for a man in his station at this time to have illegitimate children. Plumpton already had two by other women and he was a widower. This particular relationship had been going on for 16 years already and would have been well known so we must assume that the prosecution was brought by a political enemy. When the case came to trial Sir William claimed in his defence that he had clandestinely married Joan in 1452, at the beginning of their relationship.¹³

The couple had a son, Robert, but before the implications for the Plumpton inheritance of this apparent second marriage could sink in there was another turn of the political wheel. Edward IV and Warwick quarrelled with the result that Warwick made common cause with the Lancastrians. It shows the strength of the Percy-Nevill feud that Edward and Northumberland now sank their differences and became allies. In the ensuing fighting the Yorkists were once more successful. Warwick was defeated and killed at Barnet, Henry VI was murdered in the Tower and his son, Edward, Prince of Wales, killed at the battle of Tewkesbury. Plumpton benefited considerably from this turn of events. Though he was never to recover the influence he had formerly wielded he became a man to be reckoned with again and when in 1472 Dr. William Poteman (significantly perhaps, the Earl of Northumberland's confidant) certified that the marriage he had contracted twenty years before was a valid one, Roccliffe and Sotehill were in no position to contest young Robert's legitimacy.¹⁴



Sir William now proceeded to execute a whole series of conveyances, which had the effect of settling all his property on himself for life with remainder to his son Robert. Having done this he then had Robert marry Agnes, daughter of Sir William Gascoigne. This union violated a crucial clause of the original 1464 agreement, by which Plumpton had promised that if he remarried and had a son, that the son would be married to Rocliffe's daughter. Consequently when Sir William died in 1480 there was an almighty row. Eventually after three years of mutual recriminations all the parties accepted the arbitration of the King, who was now Richard III. Half the Plumpton inheritance was awarded to Robert and the other half to Rocliffe and Sotehill as the heirs general. There were to be more disputes but they did not affect Steeton, which passed out of the Plumpton estate, half of the manor being awarded to Rocliffe and half to Sotehill.

Of course no part of the north was entirely Nevill or entirely Percy because the process of inheritance and sub-infeudation could lead to lords of the manor being of one party and tenants of another. Steeton, Eastburn and most of Glusburn adhered to the Percy cause, Bradley and Silsden remained firmly under the control of the Cliffords, Sutton had passed to the Vavasours who held Addingham from them. The priors of Bolton, who owned Kildwick, tried their best to stay out of the conflict but in other parts of the parish the position was more confused. In the previous century Dame Margaret de Nevill had controlled half of Farnhill and Cononley and was a sub-tenant of the Boyvilles in Cowling. She was the widow of Geoffrey Nevill, a younger brother of the Earl of Westmoreland, and her property had by this time been inherited by Robert Nevill of Hornby near Lancaster.¹⁵

The period also saw the appearance of branches of the Copley family in the parish. They originated in Batley and during the 14th century, acquired the manor of Near Oxenhope in the adjoining chapelry of Haworth. Batley and Oxenhope were both within the Honour of Pontefract which at this time was as much Nevill territory as the Craven area was dominated by the Percy affinity, so Nevill influence may have been at work facilitating the marriage of John de Copley of Oxenhope to Isabel, the daughter of John de Farnhill, by which he acquired the manor of Farnhill in 1374. The 1379 poll tax lists him as paying 3s-4d. John was joining relatives who had already settled in Sutton and Cowling. At some point Edmund de Boyville seems to have disposed of his interests in the two townships to his Cumbrian neighbour, Sir Richard Denton of Nether Denton in Eskdale. Denton in turn appears to have 'given' it to Adam de Copley, whose wife Margaret is thought to have been Denton's daughter.¹⁶ Adam died around 1348 to be succeeded by his son, John. John is not listed in the 1379 poll tax for Sutton because he paid 6s-8d at Batley where he had also inherited property. The poll tax does list a Robert Copley and a William Copley at Sutton who appear to have been his uncles. Robert was probably the man involved in the Pendle forest fracas of 1337¹⁷ and also acquitted of the murder of John Bateson de Lyster of Halifax at Woodkirk near Ardsley the same year.¹⁸ There is a William Copley in the 1379 Glusburn tax list but none in Cowling. A member of the Copley family was listed as the chief lord in Cowling as late as 1522 so he too may have paid elsewhere.¹⁹



The Nevill penetration of Kildwick probably peaked in the early 15th century after John, Lord Clifford died in 1421 and Westmoreland was given the wardship of his young son, Thomas.²⁰ It declined rapidly thereafter. Thomas proved no friend to the Yorkist cause and any clients they had soon disappeared or trimmed their sails. Sir Robert Nevill's interests in Cowling, Cononley and Farnhill, passed after his death in 1362 into the hands of his son, another Sir Robert, who died in 1413. His son Thomas predeceased him so the lands became part of the dower of his only granddaughter Margaret. She married Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter, one of the illegitimate sons of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster. Exeter in his turn died without issue so the Kildwick property was divided between her aunts, Sir Robert Nevill's two daughters - Margaret, the wife of Sir William Harington and Joan who had married John de Langton²¹

Another family where the male line failed was the Copleys of Farnhill. John only had a daughter, Margery, who married William Eltoft of Rishworth Hall, Bingley. The Eltofts were to remain the lords there until 1636, later acting as local agents to the Cliffords but their political allegiance in the Roses period is unknown. Eltoft also inherited Near Oxenhope and at some point in the 15th century acquired Far Oxenhope as well. The most likely occasion was in 1472 when its previous owner, Robert de Bolling, seems to have sold it to raise money for his pardon.²² Too much, however, should not be read into the transaction because by this time Northumberland and the Cliffords with him had changed sides. As for the Sutton Copleys, they probably just kept their heads down, because the township was still a sub-manor of Addingham whose lord, Henry Vavasour, was an adherent of both Clifford and Northumberland.²³

2 The Waning of the Middle Ages

Following the fortunes of families like the Plumpton can often lead to missing the wood for the trees because the surface turbulence of the period concealed striking shifts in the makeup of English society. Archers were used in considerable numbers for the first time in Edward I's campaigns in North Wales but heavily armoured mounted knights still provided the bulk of the army until the defeat at Bannockburn after which it was radically reorganised. The victory over the Scots at Homildon Hill in 1332, which restored English supremacy, was the first in a line of successes in which the long bow was to secure victory for the English army wherever it fought, the best known successes being over the French at Crecy in 1346, Poitiers in 1356 and Agincourt in 1415. Knights were still needed to follow up the devastation created by the archers, who were largely immobile as their weapon could not be used in the saddle, but massed charges of heavily armoured knights were a thing of the past, at least as far as English armies were concerned.

Even as late as the early 16th century when the introduction of fire arms was already severely reducing the influence of the archers the English still relied heavily on the long bow. Before the war with Scotland which led to the defeat and death of James IV, the Scottish king at Flodden in 1513, Henry, Lord Clifford, held a muster of the forces available in his Craven lands.²⁴ There is no entry for Silsden which must have been counted separately with the lands held in demesne because Skipton and Skibeden are also missing. The rest of the parish of Kildwick is included though as usual Cononley is subsumed in Farnhill and Eastburn in Steeton.



The parish list is typical of the rest. 28 men are named. 7 of them are recorded as being able to provide a horse and harness and one just the harness. 24 came armed with a bow including 6 of the 7 with horse and harness and the man who just had the harness. The seventh horse man had a bill, a sort of pike. The remaining 3 men were also equipped with bills. The men who had a horse with harness were not medieval knights but 'hobelars' the late medieval equivalent of dragoons. They rode to war but when the battle began they dismounted and joined the ranks of the archers.

This change in the nature of warfare broke the direct link between the knight and his land. If you wished to become one you would now enlist as a feed or paid retainer under one or other of the great nobles and your further progress would depend on the patronage your employer could command. Supporting retainers required large amounts of money, so nobles came to see their manors as a direct source of income not as a means of supporting individual knights. We have already seen that being on the wrong side led to forced sales in order to pay for pardons, land which could then be acquired by the side on top and distributed to their retainers, so the appetite for it contributed to the instability of the country.

The opportunities were increased by the progressive deterioration in the weather and repeated years of high mortality which destroyed one family after another. Plague returned in 1361 with a virulence only exceeded by the notorious Black Death years. 1391 was another bad year. Attempts to measure life expectancy are fraught with difficulty but it has been calculated that in 1300, among the better off, it was around 48; by 1400 it had sunk to 38. The years 1431 to 1439 saw a series of savage winters in Western Europe culminating in England in 1438-9 with a combination of famine and disease which decimated the population again.²⁵

An examination of the 107 Inquisitions Post Mortem of Yorkshire landholders which have survived for the reigns of Henry IV and Henry V 1399-1422 shows that 67 of them had a son living at the time of their deaths but that of those 67 just 24 were of age, so that in only a quarter of the cases was there an adult son who could succeed.²⁶ As we have seen Kildwick provides a number of examples. The Copleys of Farnhill only produced a daughter and their property passed through her to the Eltofts. The lands of the Nevills in the parish were completely fragmented. In 1407 Steeton passed directly from Sir Robert de Plumpton to his grandson, another Robert. Of course this was because his son was executed but he was unusual in actually having a grandson living! Later the central character of our earlier story Sir William Plumpton had two sons by his first marriage, the elder, Robert, died without issue and the younger, William, was killed at Towton, leaving two daughters aged two and one, who eventually divided Steeton between them.

The breaking of the direct link between manorial ownership and military prowess had other consequences. Kings too began to rely on money instead of service. This further weakened the link between knights and specific manors, allowing many of them to be bought by individuals who could not be expected to go on campaign in person. The group which benefited most was the lawyers. They thrived on fees from the many succession cases caused by the frequent changes of political fortune and the high mortality rates. They also provided the administrators that the powerful magnates needed to run their estates. Kildwick had its own local examples. Rocliffe and Sotehill were both lawyers. The Eltoft family too relied on the law for its income.



The lawyers were not the only ones trying to take advantage of the fluidity in the land market. Influential merchants were also eager to acquire the status that only land could give. John Ayscough of Cowling appears to have been a merchant. In 1425 he is recorded as suing William Bryam of Masham for the non-payment of a debt of 10 marks.²⁷ He was clearly not living in Cowling because in 1444 he was named as one of five men, headed by the Bishop of Durham, and all of them dead by this date, to whom the manor of Hinton, Cambridgeshire, had been entrusted on the understanding that it would be conveyed to the abbess and convent of Saint Saviour, Syon, when it should be founded.²⁸ The roll of general pardons issued at the beginning of Henry VIII's reign includes a William Ascough of Skalyngburgh, Lincs. and Cowling, Yorks., showing that the family had acquired an estate there.²⁹ There were incomers as well. In 1372 Stephen de Malgham, mercer, acquired 7 messuages, 4 bovates, 20 acres of land and 6s-1d rent in Skipton, Eastby, Appletreewick and Bradley for 100 marks.³⁰

This volatile land market had effects lower down too. Tenants found themselves in a much better bargaining position as labour became scarcer and scarcer particularly in the later 14th century. Some of the better placed were able to secure larger holdings for which they paid an entry fine instead of performing services on the lord's land. By 1473 all Bolton Priory's land in Cononley was rented out.³¹ Freehold properties which could be bought and sold or willed to whoever the occupant wished were beginning to appear. Some of the more astute bond tenants used disputes in the manorial courts to secure written copies of the judgments which they later produced as evidence of ownership by copyhold. It was in this badly documented period between the 1379 poll tax and the Tudor subsidy rolls that most of the families who were to dominate the parish in later more stable times were founded.

The movement towards conditions in which freehold land could appear varied. It was probably fastest in Bradley which was dominated by its free tenants. As early as 1278 Edward I was making a grant to John de Eshton which included 'the hamlet of Bradley (Kildwick parish), member of the castle of Skipton-in-Craven, extended at 23s, with the exception of suits of freemen doing suit at the court of Skipton.'³² They are listed in the 1302-3 *Nominarum Villarum*, as William the carpenter, Robert and Elias Buck, Robert the mason, Robert, son of Geoffrey de Bradley and Richard son of Walter de Bradley.³³ During the 14th century these free tenants appear frequently as witnesses to deeds and to the ages of heirs succeeding to property. In 1304 Robert Buck aged 41, Robert, son of Geoffrey de Bradley 80 and Richard Bradley 60 all testify that John son and heir of Richard Tempest was 21 and of age. Buck in particular says he remembers that John's birth took place while he himself was at school in Clitheroe on an exhibition paid for by Sir Henry de Kighley.³⁴ Buck was also a witness when Emma, wife of Richard Fauvel and daughter of Elias de Rilston was declared to be of age.³⁵ In 1311 a William Buck 50 was among those testifying to the majority of John de Eshton.³⁶



Particularly prominent in subsequent years was Robert, son of Robert de Bradley. Without proper surnames linking men of the same name together can be somewhat speculative but he appears to be the Robert de Bradley of Hamblethorp, who had the reversion of 2 messuages and 30 acres of land in neighbouring Farnhill from Richard Dughty and Elena his wife in 1342.³⁷ He can be found witnessing land grants in Draughton and Berwick in 1346, the grant of the manor of Carleton in 1362 and deeds relating to property in Glusburn in the same year and in 1368.³⁸ He was probably dead by the time of the 1379 poll tax and Stephen Malham appears to have paid elsewhere but the generally better status of the Bradley tenants is shown by all but two of them being charged at the higher rate of 6d instead of the more usual 4d.³⁹

At some point the Cliffords appear to have rather belatedly sub-infeudated Bradley because under the date 1466 there is a quitclaim by Maud Ratcliff, widow of the late Thomas Ratcliffe to James Ratcliff, concerning the manor of Bradley and all other lands in the parish of Kildwick late of Thomas Radcliff, father of the said James.⁴⁰ When the sub-infeudation took place is not clear. A William Radcliff witnessed a deed in 1410⁴¹ so the Radcliff family may have bought or inherited the moiety of a knight's fee in Bradley which at the time was held by Robert atte Lydzate, Thomas Crouthre, William de Popley and the heirs of Thomas de Nesfield.⁴² In 1492 it was then bought from the Radcliffs by Richard Dixon of Bradley, yeoman,⁴³ showing a purchasing power which was not to manifest itself elsewhere in the parish until much later.

At the other end of the spectrum was Silsden which remained firmly within the demesne of the Honour. In 1314 there were 68 $\frac{1}{2}$ bovates of land held by ancient custom, rents and services, the same as in 1086 and there were two other settlements in the township at Swartha and Brunthwaite.⁴⁴ In 1327 the tenements were held by bondmen and customary tenants, there was a grange (presumably Gillgrange), two vaccaries, pannage in the woods at Holden for pigs and a halmote worth 10s.⁴⁵ We know that the vaccaries were still in existence in the late 14th century because in 1390 a pardon was issued to Thomas Wodkok who had been convicted of a number of misdemeanours, including stealing 60 oxen and cows at Silsden and driving them to Barwick in Elmet, Rest, Roundhay and Pontefract!⁴⁶

There appear to have been a number of reasons for the strict enforcement of the tenurial arrangements. One was that Silsden supplied much of the food and services which supported the garrison and household of Skipton castle. Another was that the township habitually formed part of the dower which supported Clifford widows. A third was that the 15th century witnessed a passion for private parks and chases among the nobility. The Cliffords created their own at Barden in Wharfedale, Crookrise near Skipton and Holden in Silsden. The fullest description of the township is contained in the inquisition of John, Lord Clifford, in 1422 which runs - '...and 67 oxgangs in the villis of Sighlesden, Swarhowe and the hamlet of Brynthwayt, worth yearly £12 at the said feasts; (of St. James and St. Martin in the winter) 140 acres of demesne land in the hands of the said tenants, worth yearly 2d per acre, payable at Michaelmas only; 8 cottages and 30 "Grescroftes" in the hands of the same tenants, worth yearly 13s-4d, payable at Michaelmas only. There is a chase called Holden Chace, in which are two tenements called vaccaries, worth 40s a year, payable at Michaelmas.'⁴⁷



Whitaker notes that as late as 1437 the men of Sighelsden are described in the Compotus of Thomas, Lord Clifford, as 'nativi' which is why their lands are computed by oxgangs and not carucates, though by this time their 'base services' had been largely commuted to 'pecuniary payments.' Whitaker comments: 'These, from lands held in pure villeinage, seem now to have become copyholds; and accordingly I find a Halmote court held in Silsden alone of all the ancient demesnes of Skipton.' A halmote was the equivalent of a court baron, which had the right to determine the inheritance of the properties within its jurisdiction, but his assumption that the existence of one automatically conferred copyhold rights on the tenants does not seem to be justified and may have been one of the issues in the long legal case which lasted from 1605 to 1654 between the Cliffords and their Silsden tenants. He also notes the existence of 'several' grass tofts which he assumes were held separately from the other tenements but which the 1422 IQM numbered at 30 and showed clearly that they were included within them. He concludes with a curious passage relating to the oat drying kiln at Brunthwaite. For the privilege of using it instead of taking their oats to the Skipton corn mill the tenants were charged $2\frac{1}{2}$ quarters of oats per acre for the 60 acres reaped which he computed would cost each tenant earning the notional wage of 2d per day six weeks labour. As he knows neither how many tenants there were nor the yield per acre the calculation must be considered suspect. Nor does he quote a source for his contention that 1437 was a bumper harvest. It may have been but we have already seen that the 1430s were a period of savage winters and that 1438 was to be the worst harvest of the century.⁴⁸

The other townships came somewhere between Bradley and Silsden but the change to a community of freeholders was slower and had to wait until much later than in the Pennine areas to the south. There the engine which drove the change was the development of the textile industry centred on the town of Halifax. The upper Aire valley, in common with most of rural west Yorkshire, had always manufactured some cloth. One of the earliest references in Herbert Heaton's history of the industry is to cottars weaving cloth in the 13th century at Skipton and it had a fulling mill already by 1327 which all the local weavers were expected to patronise.⁴⁹

This cloth, here as elsewhere in the Pennines, was only for local use, most of the wool which was produced, mainly on the monastic estates, being exported. It was only after the Black Death that large scale production of cloth moved outside the towns of York and Beverley into the countryside. In the 1379 poll tax for Steeton Richard Ryder describes himself as *textor* i.e. weaver⁵⁰ but one swallow does not make a summer and there is scant evidence for the development of the dual economy in the parish. Analysis of surnames in the chapelry of Haworth shows that the population there was swollen by migrants from Calderdale, in search of land where they could make a living by combining cloth production with farming but even there it was the mid 16th century before their presence began to be really felt. Kildwick names show no such influence. Yet despite this almost total lack of concrete evidence the parish may have taken a part in the development of the cloth trade in western Yorkshire as the purchase of land at Bradley by Stephen Malham, a mercer, indicates .



The years 1377 to 1381 brought further Scottish incursions together with the threat of French invasions so money was needed for the defence of the kingdom. Poll taxes were imposed in 1377, 1379 and 1381 which caused great unrest culminating in Wat Tyler's rebellion. The returns for the 1379 poll tax have survived for most of the West Riding. The tax was not a straightforward head count. Each household was charged once with a household being defined as a group having at least one individual over the age of 16. Most households paid either 4d or 6d but with a few large property holders being charged anything up to half a mark (6s-8d). Often these wealthier land holders are apparently missing. This is because they owned land in more than one place. John de Copley of Sutton is one example, Stephen Malham of Bradley another so we must be careful how we handle the information the tax returns give.

1379 POLL TAX : PARISH OF KILDWICK, NUMBERS OF HOUSEHOLDS TAXED

Township	Households with a Male head	Households with a Female head	Total	Taxed at 4d	Taxed at 6d	Taxed at some other rate	Total tax paid
Bradley	17	1	18	2	16	0	8s 8d
Cowling	23	2	25	24	1	0	8s 6d
Farnhill & Cononley	22	10	32	26	5	1 @ 3s 4d	14s 6d
Glusburn	19	4	23	21	1	1 @ 1s 0d	8s 6d
Kildwick	10	0	10	10	0	0	3s 4d
Silsden	35	6	41	37	4	0	14s 3d
Steeton & Eastburn	27	11	38	37	1	0	12s 10d
Sutton	15	6	21	19	1	1 @ 1s 0d	7s 10d
TOTAL	168	40	208	176	29	3	£3 17s 4d

In the parish of Kildwick 208 households were taxed which if we allow between 4 and 5 per household suggests a population of between 850 and 1,000 but this may well be an underestimate because taxation was avoided wherever possible and we do not know how many households were exempted on the grounds of poverty. An interesting feature of the records for the period covered by this chapter is the relatively large number of women who figure in them which suggests that more men than women were killed by the recurrent bouts of disease. This apparent imbalance in the sexes has fuelled speculation about how it affected the position of women.

In the higher echelons of society there can be little doubt that the relative scarcity of male heirs led fathers to try and secure them for their daughters at as early an age as possible. Kildwick again gives us examples. Plumpton's grand daughters were affianced to the sons of Rocliffe and Sotehill at the ages of two and one respectively. Elizabeth Clifford was also a child bride when she married Robert Plumpton. So was Margaret Nevill when she married the Duke of Exeter. There could also be pressure for widows to remarry if their husbands died early. Elizabeth Clifford got through three husbands and men who did live on could take their pick as Sir William Plumpton's extra-marital affairs demonstrated.



Yet this was far from the only course events could take. Widows could and did resist attempts to force them into second marriages, often because their marriage articles stipulated that they would lose their dower rights if they married again. Outside landed society patterns varied as well. Marriage could not take place until the couple had enough to live on so two contrasting scenarios seem to have developed. Some girls would find spouses where they lived and would marry relatively early. The remainder often migrated to the towns and entered service. The 1377 poll tax records of three York parishes list one man who hailed from as far afield as Barden with six servants and two from Keighley. This raises the possibility that hidden among the ones which have not survived were individuals of both sexes from Kildwick parish, though it is more likely that the local magnet would be Skipton with its castle household, regular market and attendant trades. These women would marry late after a period in service, if at all. There too some of them would emerge as the widows of tradesmen. York probate and guild records show an unusually large number of women, around 10% of the total, controlling businesses which they inherited from their husbands or even, particularly in the provision trades, may have been running themselves independently. Many of those who stayed back home may well have survived to become widows and heads of households too, the proportion being determined by the casualty rate among the men.

While these developments may seem intriguing, in the countryside at least, freedom could be double edged with the likelihood that a parish with a large number of households headed by women could denote a particularly poverty stricken area. The table shows that of the 208 households in Kildwick parish in the 1379 poll tax 178 were taxed at the lowest rate of 4d and only three exceeded 6d. No less than 40 households, an unusually large 19% of the total, had female heads, all of them taxed at the lowest rate.

The Church and Manor of Kildwick 1350-1480

The plague, the worsening weather and the difficult economic conditions of the period affected Kildwick church as it did the other parts of the parish. Two of Kildwick's vicars died in quick succession, Richard Syrwoode on 17 January 1347/8 and John de Goldesburgh on 8 September 1349, the latter almost certainly a victim of the Black Death. John de Mikelfield lasted longer but seems to have perished in the 1361 outbreak. Roger de Slateburn, the next vicar, only stayed a year before exchanging livings with William Glayne of Poddington, the vicar of Friskney. Glayne is last recorded as being vicar in 1366 but whether he died or resigned is unknown because no date for the installation of his successor, Nicholas de Rimington, has survived. We first hear of him in 1372. On 1 October he was recorded as 'being of unsound mind and unable to perform the duties of his vicarage', a curator was appointed at least until the following Whitsuntide and an inventory was made of his goods. He must have recovered because he and the vicar of Carleton acted as feoffees for the manor of Carleton in 1376.⁵¹



The 1377-8 account roll shows that Bolton Priory was experiencing difficulties similar to those of other landowners. The income of the priory both in cash and in kind was now considerably less than when John of Laund was prior before the Scottish invasions. As the number of monks was approximately the same in 1377 as in his day this entailed a more frugal life style. The account shows a drastic fall in the amount of wine and spices consumed by the canons and an absence of the annual jaunts to St. Botolph's fair at Boston.⁵² Like every other landowner Bolton was leasing out its lands and demanding rent instead of services. The manor of Kildwick however was still held in demesne and at sometime between 1325 and 1377 the vaccary must have been reconstituted because the account roll shows that it provided 5 stones of butter and 10 stones of cheese to the priory.⁵³ The prior visited Kildwick just after Christmas 1377, where he must have found a difficult situation because the largest item among his charitable donations for the year was 'to the tenants of Kildwick towards their tax 3s.'⁵⁴

When Nicholas de Rimington died or resigned is not known but Thomas Hulot was installed in 1403 and stayed until his death in 1436. In 1428 the church at Kildwick was valued at 20 marks [£13-3s-4d] and the priest's house at £5 making a total of £18-3s-4d.⁵⁵ This sum is better than the £12 of 1319 but still well below the £38 of 1291. Hulot was followed by Richard Hanlay who only stayed a year. Robert Clayton lasted 15 years before exchanging livings with Richard Walker. It was during Walker's incumbency that the priory decided that a drastic reorganisation was necessary.⁵⁶ On 9 May 1455 the prior and convent of Bolton petitioned William Booth, the Archbishop of York, for a revision of the endowment of the Kildwick vicarage because of the costs of hospitality and the great charges to be paid for the fruits of the church of Kildwick where the lands once arable were reduced to pasture. The Archbishop refused to alter the terms of apportionment made by his predecessor Archbishop Melton in March 1322 but he did acknowledge the difficulties which the convent faced and instructed that the vicar should pay Bolton an annual pension of £1-6s-8d. Booth's response led to a striking change in the recruitment of Kildwick vicars. When Walker died in 1459 his successor was Brother Thomas Colton, one of the priory's canons. All the three remaining vicars down to the dissolution of the priory in 1540 were also to be drawn from among the Bolton monks. It is not clear whether this was an economy measure forced on the priory by what it saw as the archbishop's unsatisfactory award or whether there was a lack of suitable secular priests willing to accept the reduced emoluments of the living.⁵⁷

Other changes were taking place too. The 1473 Rental shows that the priory had consolidated its demesne land about half a mile away from the village proper at Kildwick Grange and like all the other demesnes it was leased out. At Cononley on the other hand the demesne still appears to have been in one or more of the open fields mixed in with those of the tenants. The same trend towards the appearance of a small number of free tenants who could afford to take on the lease of the demesne lands, alongside the tenants at will who tilled the open fields, was observable.



At Kildwick, as at Bradley, they took on the manorial rights as well. A William Scott held two parts of the manor there with lands, together with *le Oxeclose* and *Coteflat*, and 1 close called *Gedterne* and two parts of *Horneclose*. John Netherwood held the 3rd part of the manor and a third part of *Horneclose*. There then follows a list of 11 tenants at will. At Cononley the pattern is the same. There is one substantial free tenant, Richard Jenkinson, and two small ones - Adam Scarburgh and Sir John Langton. Langton owned one half of the manor and held most of his lands in the parts not owned by the priory. The Scarburghs were also far more important than the one toft suggests. A Nicholas Scarburgh held priory lands in Sutton as a free tenant at a rent of 5s-4d In fact all the priory lands at Sutton in 1473 were held by three free tenants, the other two being Nicholas Rakes and John Blakey.⁵⁸

The rental value of the property at Kildwick had remained largely the same throughout the late 14th and early 15th centuries showing that there was no pressure on the land market but by 1473 there were the beginnings of a change. There is a note on the Kildwick rentals attached to the entry of Thomas Maymond, the tenant who holds 1 messuage with *le Kyrkcroft* that after the 'coming year 1476' the rent will be increased from 5s to 10s. An extra line was also inserted recording that the free tenants who rent the manor, William Scott and John Netherwood, are also paying an 8d rent for an intake from the moor. Indications from other parts of the rental also show that a gradual recovery was taking place in the later 15th century so that by the time of the dissolution Bolton's finances were on an even keel again.

Footnotes

1. Early Yorkshire Charters vol.xi pp5, 21, 267
2. Inquisitio Post Mortem (IQM) vol.v Edward II no.526 pp324.
3. C.Close Rolls 1339-41 p486.
4. Yorkshire Deeds vol.vi no.485 p146.
5. C.Patent Rolls 1343-5 p1.
6. IQM vol.x Edward III No.43 p26 IQM Henry de Percy
7. C.Patent Rolls 1405-8p 333; C.Close Rolls 1418-9 pp18-9; IQM Henry IV & V Henry Vavasour p97-8. An examination of the evidence suggests that land bought by Henry Vavasour called Eastburn is not the one in Airedale but the one in the East Riding.
8. See the Genealogical tree in Kirby, J.W.: *The Plumpton Letters and Papers*, Camden 5th Series vol.8, 1956 printed by CUP for the RHS.
9. Wilcock, Ruth: *Life and Career of Sir William Plumpton from 1404-1480*, NH vol.xliv no. 2 Sept. 2007 p31; Kirby, J.W.: *A Northern Knightly Family in the Waning Middle Ages* NH vol. xxxi 1995 p89. In 1418 Sir Robert had provided for such a contingency by executing a deed which secured the



reversion of all his property to his widow and his eldest son Plumpton Letters and Papers Appendix III No.5 pp248-9.

10. Genealogy printed in Plumpton, Letters and Papers

11. *Ruth Wilcock: Local Disorder in the Forest of Knaresborough c1438-61 and the National Context* NH xli part I March 2004 p69 does not seem to grasp the link between fines and pardons.

12. *Kirby, Joan: A Fifteenth Century Family, The Plumptons and their lawyers* NH vol.xxv, 1989, p112; *Wilcock, Ruth: Life and Career of Sir William Plumpton from 1404 to 1480* NH vol.xliv part 2 Sept.2007 p31 for the Warwick connection.

13. Kirby NH xxv 1989 p114.

14. Ibid.

15. *Pollard, A.J. : The Northern Retainers of Richard Nevill earl of Salisbury* NH xi 1976 p61; IQM Henry IV & V p99.

16. C. Close Rolls 1339-41 pp633-4 Enrollment of a Release; Early Pedigree of the Copley Family pp201

17. See previous chapter.

18. Early pedigree p203.

19. YAJ vii p161. No Christian name is given in the 1522 list but his absence suggests that he is the same man who was chief lord at Sutton. The situation at Cowling at this period is somewhat confused because deeds name John de Tong as lord of the manor who paid at the lowest rate of 4d in the 1379 poll tax list, less than the blacksmith!

20. C.Feudal Aids 1284-1431 VI Yorks etc. p275

21. C. Patent Rolls 1429-36 pp257-8; C.Close Rolls 1435-41 pp170-1; IQM Henry IV and V no.92 pp98-9]

22. See my *History of Haworth* forthcoming. The fact that Eltoft inherited both Oxenhope and Farnhill suggests that there was only one John de Copley of Oxenhope not two as W. Paley Baildon thought- see his *Notes on the Early Pedigree of the Copley Family* Thoresby Society Publications Vol. xxviii, Miscellanea pp194 and 207.

23. IQM Henry IV & V no.91 pp97-8. They were still possessed of the manor in 1522 see the 1522 Loan Book in *Hoyle, R.W. (ed.): Early Tudor Craven, Subsidies and Assessments 1510-1547* YASRS vol.cxlvi 1985 p19

24. Hoyle, R.W. Appendix 4 The Clifford Muster of 1510-11 pp114-9.



25. *Lamb, H.H.: Climate History and the Modern World*, Methuen 1982 repr. 1985, pp186-7.
Goldberg, P.J.P.: Mortality and Economic Change in the Diocese of York 1390-1514, NH xxiv 1988 pp39-41.
26. *Rosenthal, J.A.: Heirs' Ages and Family Succession in Yorkshire 1399-1422* YAJ vol.56 1984 pp87-94.
27. C.Patent Rolls 1422-9 p306
28. C.Patent Rolls 1444-6 p276
29. Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII vol.1, part 1 p239 no.438 part 3 membrane 8. There are hundreds of names. What the pardons were for is nowhere explained except that they were not for debt.
30. Feet of Fines 1347-77 p158.
31. *Hodgson, Trevor and Gulliver, David: The History of Cononley*, Kiln Hill 2000 p21
32. Yorks Inquisitions 1295-1301 p109n.
33. Feudal Aids 1284-1431 pp108-10.
34. IQM Edward I, vol.iv, pp171-2.
35. Ibid pp172-3.
36. IQM Edward II no.282 p166.
37. Feet of Fines 1327-47 pp147 and 152.
38. Yorkshire Deeds VI pp60 and 6 and *Craven Herald article 2* Dec.1904.
39. YAJ vii p161.
40. C.Close Rolls 1461-8 p362.
41. Yorkshire Deeds vi no 23 p7.
42. 1390 IQM of Roger de Clifford *IQM vol.xvi Richard II* 843 p327.
43. C.Close Rolls 1485-1500 No.634 p187.
44. IQM Robert de Clifford 1314; IQM Edw.II pp300-7
45. IQM Maud, late wife of Robert de Clifford; IQM vol.vii Edw.III no.52 p1b.
46. 1390 C.Patent Rolls 1388-92 p336.
47. 1422 IQM Henry IV & V p183-4]



48. Whitaker 1878 pp218-9.
49. 1327 *IQM vol.vii Edw.III 77 pp41-2* Roger de Clifford. It is listed again in 1422 *IQM Henry IV & V* p183.
50. YAJ vii p144.
51. Fasti pp79-80.
52. Compotus intro.p21.
53. Ibid p556
54. Ibid pp559-60
55. Feudal Aids 1284-1431 vol.vi, p324
56. Fasti p80
57. Fasti pp79-83.
58. 1473 Rental

