

Transcription of Grinton and Arkengarthdale Parish tithes 1844 – sources and methods used

The Tithe Commutation Act 1836 ordered valuation and apportionment surveys to be undertaken throughout the country. A comprehensive explanation of the purpose of the tithe commutations and of the meaning of the information contained in the apportionment records can be found at The National Archives web site by clicking through the tabs: Records - Research Guides - Tithes.

The original parish tithe maps and apportionment records for England and Wales were retained by the National Tithe Commissioners, while a copy for each parish was made for the registrar of the appropriate diocese, and another copy for the incumbent and church wardens of the parish. When the Grinton and Arkengarthdale surveys were completed, by 1844, the parishes were part of the newly formed diocese of Ripon. Today all the commissioners' originals are held at The National Archives (TNA) in Kew. The diocese copies are held at the West Yorkshire Archive Service (WYAS) in Leeds, and the parish copies at the North Yorkshire County Record Office (NYCRO) in Northallerton.

The transcriptions of the Grinton and Arkengarthdale tithes that appear on these web pages were completed over 15 months, during 2015-16, by a small group of volunteers within the local-history sub-group of the Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group (SWAAG). For convenience, we used the parish copy of the apportionment held at NYCRO as our principal source. For this we must acknowledge our grateful thanks to the staff at NYCRO who assisted us in obtaining digital and paper copies from which we could work at home, and at leisure.

The Grinton parish was so large that the survey was subdivided into the four townships within the parish – Grinton, Reeth, Melbecks, and Muker. Transcribing some of these presented a particular challenge because at one or more times in their history they had been updated. We were of course keen to produce a transcription that accurately reflected the surveys when they were originally made. Fortunately none of the numbers had been altered but several names of owners and occupiers, had been crossed out and replaced.

The handwriting of the updater was identifiably different from the originator, so the changes were easy to spot. However, in some cases the names crossed out had been rendered undecipherable. Fortunately one of the online commercial genealogy web sites – The Genealogist – had the unadulterated commissioners' copies from The National Archives, and since one member of the group had a subscription to the web site he was able to compare and check our work.

Among other challenges, some of the less-common surnames and the more obscure field names were sometimes difficult to read. Also, the clerk who wrote the original record sometimes spelled the same personal name differently in different parts of the document. Wherever possible local knowledge and/or common sense were applied to resolve such difficulties with confidence. Otherwise, where such confidence was lacking, we have transcribed names as best we could, however strange or inconsistent they may have appeared.

We checked and cross-checked our work rigorously, however no guarantees of accuracy can be given, and researchers in any doubt are advised to check the original documents, all of which are accessible as explained above. The transcribers were Judith Mills, Will Swales, Andrea Dixon, Jane Harrison, Geraldine Coates, Mike Keenan, Gavin and Joan Graveson, and Delyth Rennie. If anyone becomes aware of any error in the transcription please email will.swales@ntlworld.com so it can be rechecked and corrected.

Images of all the very large tithe maps for the parishes of Grinton and Arkengarthdale, held at NYCRO, have been uploaded to this web site. Please be aware that the maps for Melbecks and Reeth have some holes in them. Better maps are available at WYAS and TNA, or through the subscription service at www.thegenealogist.co.uk.