

The Vestry

In the parishes and the villages from the 14C onwards there was a tradition of local self government, in the sense that the maintenance of village life – the repair of local footpaths and bridges, the care of straying animals, the planting of crops, etc – was a matter of local self-help. In the 16C and 17C a great body of new legislation was forced through parliament which encouraged the development of secular parochial authority administered through 'vestries'.

In the government of the parish there were two legal factors : the right of the inhabitants to participate in parochial business, and the duty of inhabitants to participate in the carrying out of the parochial offices, namely, Constable, Churchwarden, Overseer of the Poor and Surveyor of the Highways, in effect the first tentative steps towards democracy for the common people. The open parish vestry was the only assembly, other than the House of Commons, which had the right to impose taxation.

In practice the politics of the village reflected the economic and social order of the village. There was usually a small oligarchy of intimate friends and neighbours, the tenants of the squire, the employers of pauper labour, presided over by the clergyman or senior churchwarden and perhaps dominated by the local Justice of the Peace.

Generally the rural parish oligarchies grew into orderley 'open vestries'. However, in some instances, local inhabitants of importance or influence appropriated powers to themselves and were able to control their fellow parishioners. These 'close or 'select vestries', more common in populous urban parishes, were bodies of a dozen or more persons, serving for life and filling vacancies by co-option. The 'select vestry' could become corrupt and pervert parish administration in order to take advantage of their neighbours.

The 'open vestries' in stable rural communities were able to get round the drawbacks of compulsory and unpaid local service in parochial offices. They allowed any formal holder of an office to employ an assistant or if, for example, the bridge-building or road mending was too difficult, the work might be farmed out to a contractor. Corrupt vestries however could turn the principle of compulsory service into a source of revenue for themselves.

The posts of Constable and Overseer of the Poor were often so onerous that, in the 18C, they generally were allotted throughout the parish in rotation. This system usually worked well in rural communities where everyone knew each other. If any problems arose, the authority of the local Justice of the Peace could be invoked, thus providing a degree of stability.

The civil and ecclesiastical components of vestral authority were separated by the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 which consolidated urban parishes into boroughs and the Local Government Act of 1894 established civil parish councils of elected members in rural areas with a population exceeding 300. Since 1919 the administration of the ecclesiastical parishes has been vested in parochial church councils.

Reference:

A History of Local Government KB Smellie

Vestry Minutes

At a Vestry Meeting of Parishioners of Great Ayton held in the Parish Church on Wednesday 14th Nov 1827 in pursuance of the following notice read in the Church during Divine Service and affixed to the Church door.

'Notice is hereby given that a Vestry Meeting will be held in this church on Wednesday 14 Inst. at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, to sanction the necessary rate.'

It was resolved

That instead of the rate of 2d in the pound allowed by the last meeting-- a rate of 3d in the pound be allowed.

Joseph Ibbetson Minister
Francis Sanderson Churchwardens

Vestry Minutes (Cont)

William Barker Churchwardens

Joseph Carlin
John Easby
Thos Fawcett
Robt Kilvington
John Longstaff

At a Vestry Meeting of the Parishioners of Ayton in Cleveland held in the Parish Church on Wednesday 28th of November 1827- in pursuance of a public notice duly given in the Church on Sunday 25 Inst- during Divine Service.

It was resolved

1st That this meeting fully approved and sanctioned the measures already taken by the Churchwardens and that the expenses therefore incurred be all discharged from the church rate.

2 That the churchwardens be authorized to advertise the Case in the 'Yorkshire Gazette' and 'Durham Advertiser' with a reward of five pounds to be paid to the informant on the conviction of the offender or offenders.

Joseph Ibbetson, Curate
John Stevenson
Thos Wilson
James Sanderson
Thos Fawcett
Humphrey Sanderson
John Longstaff
Francis Sanderson
William Barker

NB

In the Churchwardens' Accounts for 1827—28 there are two entries relating to the above minutes. The first an entry on Jan. 22nd, 1828, 'Mr Pratt for Advertising Breaking Church , 16s-3d.' William Pratt was a printer and publisher in Stokesley and would have printed a notice about the break-in at the church in a local publication. The second entry on July 9th, 1828 'Pd Pollice Officer at Stockton 2s-6d' possibly indicates a Stockton connection with the break-in.

At a Vestry Meeting held in the Parish Church of Great Ayton, pursuant to the notice given on Wednesday the 27th of Feb, 1828.

1 That the Meeting approves the adoption of the service in the evening with a lecture in the place of the afternoon prayers.

2 That the Meeting approves the proposal of Mr Ibbetson to pay himself one half of the expense of providing the needful lamps and candlesticks etc and the oil and candles wanted, and that the other half be paid out of the Rate.

3 That this Meeting authorizes the churchwardens to pay one Pound out of the Rate for repaying the expense of teaching the children and others to sing.

Signed Joseph Ibbetson Minister
Francis Sanderson
William Barker
Thos Simpson

At a Meeting of the Vestry duly called and holden on July 22nd, 1828.

It was resolved that in future no allowance of ale or liquor be given at any of these Meetings.

2nd That in future the sum of five shillings be allowed to each person necessary attending the Visitation.

Vestry Minutes (Cont)

The above accounts have been examined and approved by us.

Joseph Ibbetson
Joseph Jackson
Thos Fawcett
Jas Wilson
Jno Sturdy

At a Vestry Meeting held in the church on Friday the 22nd of August, 1828, pursuant to due notice given on Sunday

the 17th of August, 1828.

It was unanimously resolved ;

That this Meeting fully approves the repairs and alterations to be done by the archdeacon; and that the Churchwardens obtain proper specifications and estimates by Monday 1st September next, and then lay such a rate as will be adequate to defray the expenses of the same.

Signed Joseph Ibbetson, Chairman.

Great Ayton 23 day of September, 1830.

At a Vestry Meeting held in the Church at Great Ayton.

Present the Inhabitants of the Parish of Great Ayton assembled according to due notice given in the church on the nineteenth of september, 1830.

Resolved that where it has been the custom to collect throughout the Parish or Township of Great Ayton one shilling on every person occupying Lands, or House and lands together, and sixpence on every person occupying a Cottage. But on taking the matter into consideration and in order to relieve the labouring poor , it is agreed; that in future the sum required shall be taken from the poor rates or otherwise raised, the amount of which shall not at any time exceed the sum that can or may be collected in the old established customary manner, and that the Townships of Little Ayton with Tunstal and Nunthorpe shall and in equal parts raise a sum equal to Great Ayton as has been accustomed formerly to be done, which sums together if at any time should not be sufficient to defray the necessary expenses in supporting the Church then such further sums wanted over and above the sum raised as before mentioned shall be collected in Great Ayton, Little Ayton With Tunstal and Nunthorpe respectively by an equal Rate of so much in the pound as has heretofore been the custom. It is also further to be observed, that in taking the customary sum out of the Poor Rate or otherwise paid as before mentioned it is not intended to set aside or do away with the old established custom but merely to be considered as a casual relief to the Poor and may be to at any future period.

Ayton 23rd, 1830

Joseph Ibbettson, Incumbent Ayton.

Joseph Wilson Churchwardens

John Easby Churchwardens

William Ayre Overseer of the Poor

Thos Wilson Overseer of the Poor

Joseph Jackson

Thos Simpson Chapel warden of Nunthorpe

John Longstaff

John King

In pursuance of due notice given on Sunday the 24th day of March last, for the levying a church rate for the Township of Great Ayton. This agreed by this meeting that a rate of one penny in the Pound be levied.

Ayton April 2nd 1839

Vestry Minutes (Cont)

Signed J Ibbetson

Joseph Wilson

Humphrey Sanderson Jnr

William Sanderson

At a public Vestry Meeting held in the Parish Church of Great Ayton, in pursuance to public notice given

It was resolved

That Mr John Goulton and Mr Francis Audas be appointed Churchwardens for the year ensuing.

Signed

Joseph Ibbetson

Bartholemew Simpson his Mark

Humphrey Sanderson Jnr

John Longstaff

At a Vestry Meeting of the Ratepayers of the Parish of Great Ayton held (in pursuance of a notice duly given) in the Church on Thursday the 12th day of Nov, 1840.

The Incumbent in the chair,

It was resolved, that a rate of a penny in the pound be levied to defray the necessary expences of the Parish Church.

2. That the Churchwardens be authorized to obtain a correct Folio Copy of the Bible of the authorized version for the use of the Reading Desk, the present one being incorrect.
3. That the Churchwardens and Overseers have the consent of this meeting to add the empty Chamber adjoining the upper school room to the said school room to render it more commodious.

Signed Joseph Ibbetson

At a Vestry Meeting of the Ratepayers of Great Ayton held (in pursuance of the notice duly given on Sunday last) in the Church on Thursday the 15th of April, 1841

The Incumbent in the chair.

It was Resolved

That Mr John Goulton and Mr Humphrey Sanderson Jr., a shoemaker, be appointed Churchwardens for the year ensuing.

2nd. It was also resolved

That a partition of wood be put up near the Font, at the Back of the Stall reaching to the Gallery Stairs, to shelter that part of the church from the Cold.

Signed Joseph Ibbetson

At a Vestry meeting held in the Church on the 31st of March, 1842, pursuant to public notice duly given.

The Incumbent in the chair.

It was resolved;

- 1 That Mr John Wilson and Mr John Sayer be appointed Churchwardens for the year ensuing
- 2 That the Churchwardens be authorized to make two pews from the children's seats, near to Mr John Richardson's pew.
- 3 That the Sexton have 20s a year instead of 8s.

Signed J Ibbetson, Chairman

Thos Fawcett, Barth Simpson, Thos Wilson, John Goulton, John Audas,
Humphrey Sanderson, William Sanderson, William Weatherill

Vestry Minutes(Cont)

The following Notice was affixed to the principal door of this Parish Church of Ayton on Sunday last during divine service as required by act of Parliament.

Notice is hereby given that a meeting will be held in Ayton Church on Thursday the 25th Instant at 11-o'clock in the morning for the purpose of fixing a rate for the necessary Expences and repairs of the Church.

Ayton John Wilson Churchwardens

August 20 1842 John Sayer

At a meeting of parishioners of Ayton held in pursuance of the above Notice in the Church this 25th day of August, 1842.

The Incumbent in the Chair.

It was resolved unanimously

That a rate of Three farthings in the pound be made on the Parishioners for the necessary Expences and repairs of this Church.

Signed Joseph Ibbetson

John Wilson Joseph Darcy

William Weatherill Thos Simpson

Humphrey Sanderson John Paul

John Powe
William Weatherill
Thos Wilson
Henry Peacock
William Sanderson

The following Notice was affixed to the principal Door of the Church of Ayton on Sunday last during divine Service as required by act of Parliament.

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the rate payers of this Parish will be held in the Church on Thursday the 10th Instant at 11-o-clock in the forenoon for the purpose of auditing the Churchwardens accounts and of levying a rate for the ensuing year.

Ayton
October 5th 1844

John Wilson Church
John Sayer Wardens

At a meeting of the Parishioners of Ayton held in pursuance of the above notice in the Church this tenth day of October 1844

The Incumbent in the Chair

It was resolved unanimously

That the accounts being now examined are approved and passed by this Meeting.

2nd That a rate of Three farthings in the pound be levied on the Township of Great Ayton and that the Townships of Nunthorpe and Little Ayton with Tunstall raise the same amount in equal proportions as has been accustomed.

Joseph Ibbetson
John Sayer Churchwardens
John Wilson
Charles Francis Hutchinson
John Powe
William Weatherill
Joseph Darcy

A Register of Books belonging to Ayton Church.

- 1 A Dictionary of Church words in all Singing.
- 2 Cause of the decay of Christian Piety.
- 3 Considerations upon Eternity.
- 4 Tully's offices translated from Latin into English.
- 5 A Sermon preached at the Spittall on Wednesday in Easter Week 1671.
- 6 The triumph of God's revenge against unjust and premeditated Murder.
- 7 A Course of Sermons for all the Sundays in the Year.
- 8 Moral Philosophy by Plutarch Translated from the Greek into English.
- 9 A Translation of the new Testament in 1601.
- 10 The Antiquity of the Laws by Josephus.
- 11 The Law of Ecclesiastical Politic.

c. 1844