

Lorton & Derwent Fells

Local History Society

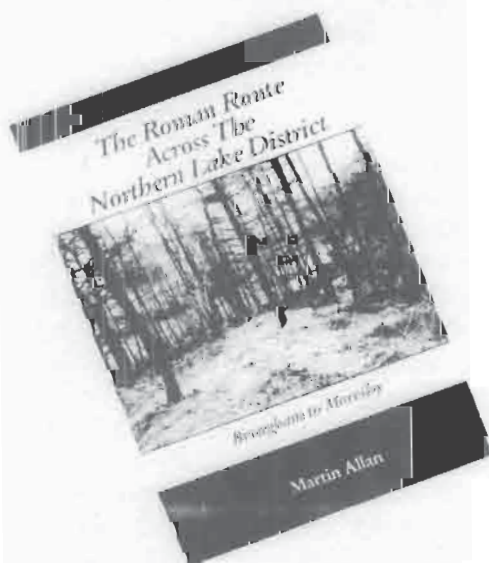


The first report from the Lorton Roman Roads Group inside



Most of the Group
on Whinlatter

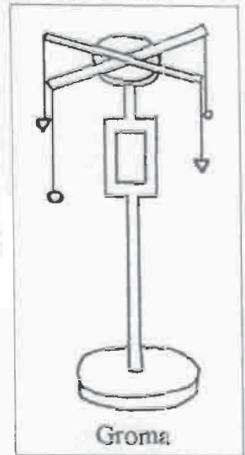
The book that started it all!



Derek with his excellent home-made groma

Secretary's letter

In this issue, we have the first report (ever, I think) from a working group formed from Society members. I find this a very healthy sign and hope that it bodes well for the future. I'm one of the members of the group, so maybe I'm biased, but I hope my optimism isn't misplaced. While on this subject, having (I hope) looked at the front page, you may still be puzzling over what a groma is - it is a Roman surveying instrument! The two horizontal arms on top are at right angles and are on a turntable; plumb lines hang from each end of the arms. Sighting along two opposite plumb lines is done looking through the rectangular cut-out in the support. Because vertical cords are used, sightings can easily be done looking up or down a slope with the groma itself vertical. It has been suggested that one use of the groma was for defining the line of a road across country, from one sighting point to the next. With a number of sighting points, all the points can be adjusted so they are all in a straight line, if the terrain allows it. Some of the sighting points might have been signal stations and if a Roman road did go over Whinlatter and Whinfell, we presume that there would have been two such stations, one up Whinlatter and one up Whinfell, within sight of each other. We have already identified a possible site for one on Whinfell! Derek Denman made and calibrated 'our' groma (which looks very much like a Hadrian Mark IIIC to me) and, on the Scales road, he found that sightings could be taken very accurately. (With many thanks to DD for his sketch of a groma).



Could I just remind you that our AGM is on 11 June at 7.30 pm in the Yew Tree Hall. Please come if you can and there may well be a talk or presentation afterwards.

The article from Hettie and Michael Baron has already appeared in 'The Link' but it was thought that not everyone would have seen it there, including of course our Country Members. I have received enough material this time just to fill the Newsletter nicely, but please, all of you, keep the Newsletter in mind and if you think of anything of interest for future editions, please let me have them - even simple questions or comments!

I've had a note from Maud Vickers who confirms that Lorton Hall was a school for handicapped children, then called 'spastic' (N/L 13 page 3) and she confirms Angus Winchester's grandfather's view that Crosshill on Whin Fell was locally called Dry Throple (Thrapple?) (N/L 13 page 4). And referring to the photo looking down over the Lamb Inn in the same Newsletter, Maud says that the fell on the right, which is wooded in the photo but not now, is locally called Sunny Brows - some or all of which is now High How on the OS map. Other woods she mentions that were felled in the 2nd world war were Holme Wood, Loweswater, the wood opposite Hassness and Ashlands below Miller Place (which had really big pine trees and was dark inside!). Many thanks Maud.

Lorton Fancy Fair 1920

by Walter Head

A Sale of Work was held on Thursday, 3 June 1920. This was advertised as a Fancy Fair and a poster advertising it is currently on display in the Yew Tree Hall. The Sale of Work was held in the school and commenced at 3pm. Lady Lonsdale declined an invitation to open the Fair and this was carried out by Mrs R J Holdsworth who was presented with a bouquet of flowers by Irene Hardisty.

The Fair comprised five main stalls:

| | | |
|-------------|--|----------------|
| Work stall | Pottery, basket, flower, plant & fruit stall | Farmers' stall |
| Men's stall | Toy, sweet & cake stall | |

and side shows included hoopla, hidden treasure, fortune telling and a bran tub. Late attractions added were a young ladies' stall and a white elephant stall. Admission was 1/- until 6pm and 6d after 6pm.

A marquee 34' x 34' was hired for £2-10-0 and erected on Broom field. A band was engaged for the afternoon and evening, which was supplied by Mr Dickson of Coker mouth at a cost of £1-17-6 and it gave 3 performances. A drawing was held with 30 donated prizes. The total income from the event was £485-9-10 and expenses were £56-15-4, giving a profit of £428-14-6.

A second Sale of Work was held on 2 September 1920 at 3pm in the Yew Tree Hall and admission was 6d and children were free. Sports were held on Broom field and a dance was held in the evening in the Yew Tree Hall. The total income was £61-16-10 and expenses were £5-19-2, giving a profit of £55-17-8.

These two events raised a total of £484-12-2. In 1920, this represented a very successful venture.

The Lorton Roman Roads Group: the story so far

by Derek Denman

It was in December that a number of Society members formed a group to study the two Roman roads which were believed to pass through the Lorton area, the first coming over the Whinlatter Pass and going to Derwentio, the Roman fort at Papcastle, the second branching off by the Yew Tree Hall and passing over Whinfell to a Roman crossroads at Dean, and then to the fort at Moresby. The members of the group, Ruth and Ken Deas, Anne and Robert Flower, Michael Grieve, Joan and Adrian Head, Daphne Holbrook, Alan Norris and Derek Denman have been very active during the last few months. Singly, or in groups, we may have been spotted wandering in zigzags over field and fell in unusual conditions of sunlight or melting snow. Thrice the group has met in more comfortable surroundings to study the subject and plan the work.

The Group soon found that it had a comprehensive common knowledge of the subject which was summed up as 1), all Roman roads are dead straight and 2), they all lead to Rome. For completeness, however, the group decided to study the detail. This has included the Roman occupation of Cumbria (350 years), the strategy for building and using roads, surveying methods, construction techniques, and message signalling methods. On the road-finding side the group has studied the historical texts and the published papers relating to 'our' roads and others around Cumbria and has made field trips to Whinfell and Whinlatter to follow the route suggested in published texts. Help and advice has been generously given by several experts in the field. We were also very fortunate to be invited to Isel Hall to see the maps and research work done by Miss Burkett. Most recently a small group of weatherproof members went to see the more obvious remains of the road over Kirkstone Pass - and found them!

This is a participatory group in which all members are making a contribution to the work and we are now entering that period where our enthusiasm, character and stamina will be tested to the full; in other words we haven't found any convincing Roman roads through Lorton yet! But watch this space for developments.

ROMANI ITE DOMUM!

The Yew Tree Hall – the early years as a village hall. Part 2: 1910 – 1918

by Walter Head

Following the formal opening of the Yew Tree Hall in December 1909, the Management Committee looked forward to their first full year of events and insured the contents of the Hall for £5.

Both Conservative and Labour candidates held political meetings in the Hall in January 1910. The ladies of Lorton had held a meeting at Lorton Park on 27 October 1909 and decided to hold a Sale of Work to raise funds for the Hall. This was held in April 1910. By April 1910, the funds available were £169-7-10 with £108-13-3 allocated to pay outstanding invoices. This left a working balance of £60-14-7.

The water supply had been obtained from a well on land owned by Mr H Pearson but the pipes were so corroded that a connection was made to the water supply in the old brewery at a cost of £9-12-3½. The Hall was used by the Border Regiment as a miniature rifle range. A smoke room with a heating stove was planned, in addition to the kitchen and ladies' cloakroom which had a lavatory basin fitted. A slopstone was installed near to the kitchen and four bracket lamps were purchased along with a storm lantern for the porch. The window size had been increased by cutting out below the cills.

In 1910, Jennings offered a ten year lease on the Hall at £5 per year from September 1910. After discussions, a seven year lease at £3-10-0 per year was signed in June 1910. The rateable value was fixed at £3. The last event in the Hall during this first year was an old scholars' gathering held on 30 December 1910 which later brought complaints that festivities had gone on well past the 2.30am finishing time! At a subsequent meeting of the Management Committee, an attempt to extend the finishing time for dances from 2.30 to 3.30am led to two members tendering their resignation. This amendment was withdrawn and a compromise was agreed with the finishing time extended to 3.00am.

By 1 February 1911, the cash balance had fallen to £46-0-5. During 1911, six forms were purchased from Mr A Wilson of Cockermouth for £19-10-0. The piano was tuned twice, in April and October for 10/6. The charges for use of the piano in the Hall when required by persons living within the parishes of Lorton, Whinfell and Brackenthwaite were 4/- for a concert, 5/- for a ball and 7/6 for a concert and ball. These were increased to 5/-, 7/6 and 10/- for persons not residing within the above parishes. Liquor was prohibited on the premises and the insurance on the Hall contents was raised to £75.

The Hall was used by the Royal Engineers from 24 July to 18 August 1911 as a base while they carried out a topographical survey of the area. The Border Regiment formed a Lorton section of the 5th Border Regiment Territorials and used the Hall for training. Wm Armstrong of Scales used the Hall for one hour each Sunday afternoon, at a cost of 2/- per Sunday, for an adult men's class.

In 1912, the driving force behind the acquisition of the Hall, Mr C L Burrows, resigned as Chairman and Secretary of the Management Committee due to his leaving the district and Mr J D Pearson was elected as the new Chairman. The piano was showing signs of damage due to damp so it was decided to store it in the supper room when not in use and the stove lit for one hour per week. During 1912, the Hall was used as a meeting place by the Clickem Club.

The Hall was redecorated in 1913 at a cost of £6-11-3 and the Rates were 6/-.

By 1914, four types of oil were used in the Hall, Broxburn at 10¼d/gallon, White Rose at 10d/gallon, Royal Daylight at 9d/gallon and Crown Diamond used in trials at 8d/gallon. The hostilities with Germany resulted in a recruitment meeting being held in the Hall on 12 August 1914. This was followed by a meeting on 15 August 1914 to enrol Special Constables for the district. A concert was held on 1 October 1914 in aid of the War Relief Fund. A scheme to construct a ladies' cloakroom in the basement was passed in 1914.

Lectures were given on 20 January and 17 March 1915 in aid of charitable objects in connection with the war and a whist drive was held in November 1915 in aid of the War Relief Fund. Jennings reduced the rent by 50% due to the war and subsequent loss of revenue and they continued with this rent reduction until the end of the war.

In 1916, the cleaner Mrs Marley, who received £2-10-0 per annum, returned 10% of her wages in view of the low use of the Hall due to the war. Whist drives and dances raised £20 which was handed to the Lorton Women's War Work Party with the stipulation that £6 should be devoted to soldiers serving from Lorton. Dark paper was attached to the Hall windows to ensure that light emission conformed to the Order under the Defence of the Realm Act as to shading and subdued lights. Empire Day was celebrated in the Hall by Lorton school children.

In 1917, a large slow-combustion stove was presented to the Hall by Mrs Dixon to improve the heating and this replaced the Contesse stove.

1918 was a year of little activity in the Hall but one new venture was dancing classes which were held each month by Miss M P Jennings.

The Winders of Lorton Hall

by Derek Denman and Ron George

Most members of the Society will know that the Winders were the principal family in Lorton up to 1700 and many members will have seen the exhibit on Lorton Hall at the Lorton Festival in 1996. Recently some old research has come to notice, and new finds have been made which enable the Hall and the Winders to be connected back to the early 1500s with a fair degree of certainty. This article gives the relevant family tree (or Pedigree) and supporting evidence.

The Hall

The pele tower is of Norman design and probably dates from around 1400, but nothing is on record. The Hall range to the North, facing the road, is dated 1663. But this is when it was renovated by Mr John Winder gent (the elder), incorporating nice new stone mullioned frames with diamond lattice lights (would the National Park authorities have approved then?). These windows were in some cases set in older, larger,

arched openings and the front door was moved from between the kitchen and hall to the middle of the hall. It may be that the first floor windows were first installed in 1663, but this needs to be proved. By this time poor Mary Winder was three quarters of the way through her twenty years of child bearing and would be needing space for her ten children who survived to be adults. The hall range in original form therefore predates 1663 and may well go back to the time when the Winder family were first resident in Lorton.

The Winder years

From the earliest records, the Village of (Low) Lorton has been divided into three freehold estates, the one which was to contain Lorton Hall having a rent of 3/4d. This estate and its holders are found from time to time in the manorial records. By 1398 Margaret de Wyndere had taken over one third of the Vill of (Low) Lorton from William de Park who held it in 1385, but we do not know if she resided here. By the early 1500s there are plenty of Winders or Wynders in Lorton, and William Wynder, holding the estate in 1526, is the first we can place with some confidence at Lorton Hall, which probably consisted of a pele and hall range at this time. The Winder succession continues until 1699 with the death of John Winder, of Gray's Inn London, who is the last Winder to own Lorton Hall. His memorial in Allhallows church, Barking, includes the words 'Lorton in ye County of Cumberland, where ye family flourished in lineal succession above 300 years.' (And since this was written in 1718 and apparently documented it follows that the family had at that time traced their lineage back to Margaret in 1398). And flourish ye family did in the 1600s, with young Winders seeming to be produced in every house from the Browe to Armesyde. But this John and his nine siblings started the Winder exodus from Lorton, many of the high status ones finding fame overseas. So today the cycle is complete and not a single Winder name is to be found in the parishes of Lorton or Whinfell, though many are proud of their Lorton origins.

The succession of Hall ownership⁽⁴⁾

The Pedigree produced here is mainly drawn up from information collected by Mr F A Winder in the 1890s⁽¹⁾ and shows the owners of Lorton Hall and its estate on the left from William, up to its sale by John Winder in 1699. William Wynder owned other lands in Lorton in 1503 and by 1526 has obtained, probably as heir, the Lorton Hall estate, when he pays a fine on the death of the lord. Richard Wynder, the next in the Pedigree is presumably William's son and heir and is likely to be the same Rye' Wynder at the top of the 1535 Muster Roll for Lorton Township (see the article by Dr Angus Winchester, Newsletter, September 1995). This is reinforced by the inclusion of Rycherd Wynder in a list of all the gentlemen in Cumberland relating to Border service between about 1512-1537⁽²⁾. Nicolson and Burn, II, 62, state

"This manor [of Lorton] was early broken into severalties. In the 35 Hen. 8. [1543-4] *Richard Winder* held one third part of the vill of Lorton of the king as of his honour of Cockermouth, by homage and fealty, 3s 4d free rent,..."

Abstract of Will, of Richard Winder, of Lorton

16 Apl. 1544.-"I Rycharde Wyndr of Lorton make my Will - my sawl to Almighty god, to our laydy saynete Marye, & to all Saynts in hevyn - body to be buryed in the chappell of St. Cuthbert of Lorton - to my doghters Elisabeth & Helen 30th pounds to theyr maryage... with such Insyght & Clothyn...accordinge to custome of cotre... and Resydew of all my goods ...Sones Petr, John, Robert, & Rycharde to be executors - Petr...to bring up his bretheren and systers," etc.

Peter Winder would have inherited Lorton Hall in 1544. We find Peter Wynder holding the same third of the Vill as Margaret in both 1547 and 1570, but by 1578 it has passed to John Wynder. We also find that Peter Winder of Lorton was named in 1567 as supervisor of the will of Isaac Tullie of Blindcraick⁽³⁾. Unfortunately there are no Parish records of Peter, who was born before baptisms were recorded and died in a gap in the burial records, and we have no will. Four of the earliest marriage records are believed by F A Winder⁽¹⁾ to be of his siblings.

John Winder of Lorton, gent, was a well-documented person, apart from his birth. He was married at St Bees in 1569 to Mabel, eldest daughter of Robert Grindal, brother to Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1575. John Winder died in 1609. It is reasonable and logical to assume that John Winder was the son of Peter Winder above, there being no other reasonable route of succession. However some doubt has been caused by a 1589 reference to John holding the estate formerly held by William (his father or great-grandfather?).

Inquisition taken after the death of John Winder, of Lorton, Gent

Taken at Keswick. 27 Sept: 1610 before Christopher Wood Esq: Escheator, in Co. Cumberland ...
"and to make enquiry after the death of John Wynder of Lorton, gent, on the oath, &c., &c., who

say he died, & was seized in his demense as of fee, of & in, a messuage & tenement with its appurtenances in Lorton [must be Lorton Hall-DD], in a tenement with appurtenances, in tenure of Henry Pearson, ditto Peter Skynner, ditto Peter Wilkinson, ditto John Myrehouse, & also a tenement in tenure of William Peale..... [plus many items outside Lorton-DD] ...and that the aforesaid John Winder died on 20th November. And, that, Peter Winder is son & next heir and is of the age of 35 years and more.....”

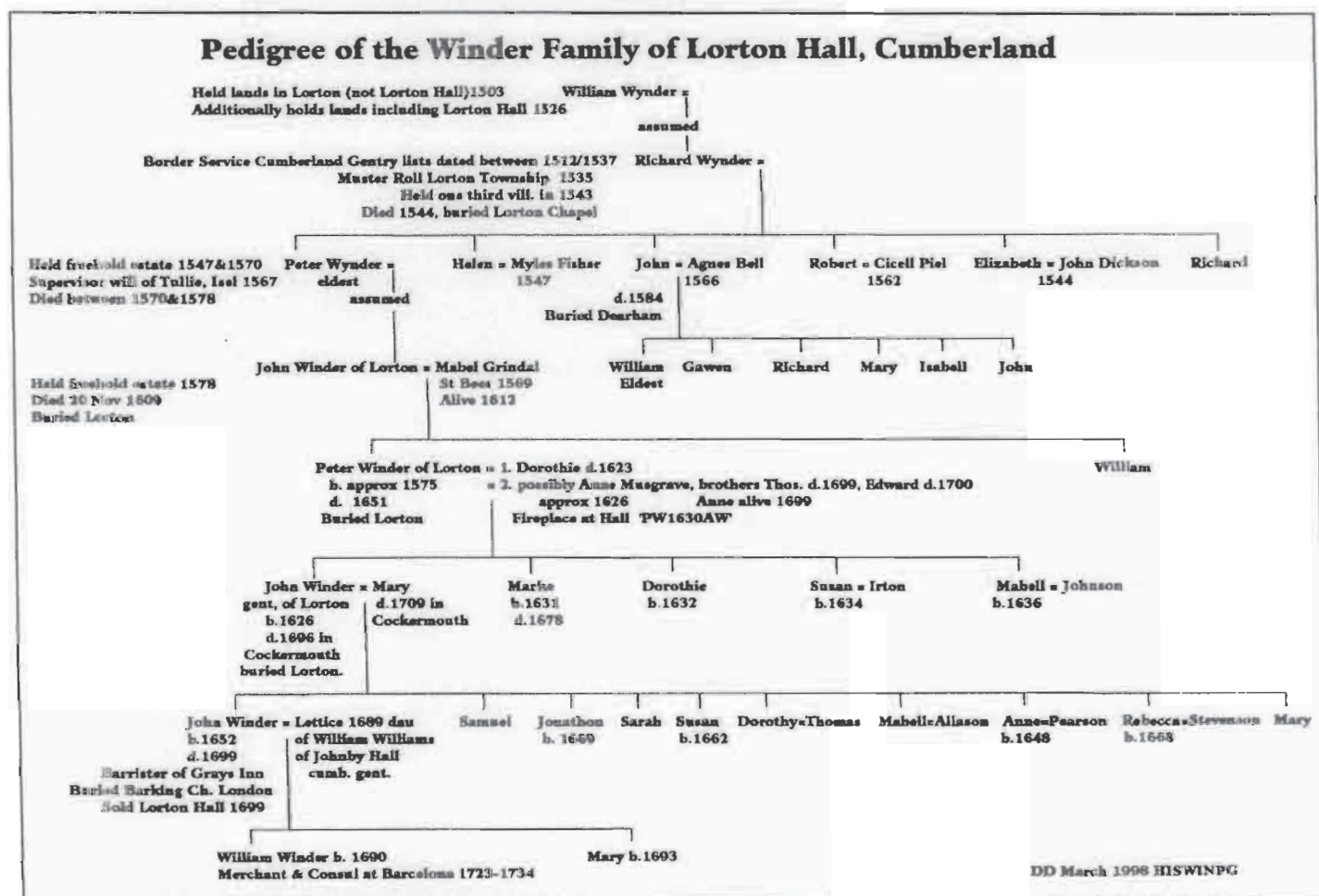
Peter Winder therefore inherited the Hall and the registers show his wife Dorothe buried in 1623, without producing an heir. In 1626 at latest Peter remarried a lady with initial A who bore six children including the heir, John, in 1626. The initial A is attested by an inscribed fireplace in the hall 'PW 1630 AW'. A could be Anne, since this is the only A used for a grandchild's name (out of seven girls), and we know of a prominent Anne Winder in 1699. Peter Winder died in 1651, leaving a brief and simple will.

John Winder (the elder), born in 1626, married Mary before 1647 and they had ten surviving children at Lorton Hall, from Anne in 1648 to Jonathon in 1669. The heir, John, was born in 1651/2, and probably was not seen by his grandfather. John and Mary were the last Winder owners to live at Lorton Hall and he was responsible for the major renovations of about 1663. In 1690 he transferred ownership to his son, John, then a barrister at Gray's Inn, and at some time, maybe also in 1690, John and Mary Winder moved from Lorton to Cockermouth where they spent their later years (plus ça change).

John Winder the elder died in 1696, his son John in 1699, after selling Lorton Hall to one Christopher Dalston in that year. So ended the Winders of Lorton Hall.

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2. Extracts relating to border service, by Sir G Duckett C&WAAS Old Series Vol iii 206- 214.
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4. This section is based on the original records that we have so far, and the most probable interpretation of them. Full references have been omitted for lack of space.



The Society's archive – miscellaneous published papers at 15 April 1998 - by Ron George

A listing of the books in the Society's archive was given in Newsletter No 12, September 1997. All the following papers have been consulted and found useful in my local history research over the last fifteen years. They could prove useful to any members following their own line of research and are available for borrowing from the archive.

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Who's afraid of Eilert Ekwall?

by Hetty and Michael Baron

Eilert Ekwall was the Swedish scholar from Lund University who spent years compiling 'The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names', a veritable treasure house for place-name browsers. The first edition was published in 1935. It is still the definitive work. But Cumberland browsers (there must be a dialect word for this happy activity which one shares with other ruminants) also, in seeking out the old meadows of history, have to consult 'The Place Names of Cumberland and Westmoreland' published in 1915, and 'The Place Names of Cumberland' published by the English Place Names Society in 1950. To challenge, therefore, such scholarly opinions on the origins of Loweswater - the first reference is Lousewater in a document of 1160 AD - is a formidable task for the amateur.

It is more than a little strange that Ekwall claims a generalised Old Scandinavian source for the place name, not Old Norse. He goes on to compare it to Swedish lakes known as Lovsjon, and from there to Lovsjonvatn and thence, with a few changes over the centuries, to Loweswater. Another version, not cited in Ekwall's entry, is that 'Lawes' comes from the Old Danish personal name 'Laghi' - (O. Nielsen - Olddanske Personnavne - Copenhagen, 1883). Nielsen's book is quoted in his bibliography but by inference he dismissed Laghisvatn as a possible meaning. But betraying a lack of confidence in his version, Ekwall writes "Lowes - probably represents OScand Laufsæter...meaning leafy lake.." How can anyone be sure it was a leafy lake in, say, 900 - least of all an academic from Lund? Why should the lake then be significantly leafy compared to Crummock (an ancient British name) or Buttermere (lake of the butter pastures)? Holme Wood does not appear on maps until the 19th century. When it does, it is 'Mr Marshalls Wood' - the Marshalls being an established Cumbrian landowning family, and one of them Lord of the Manor of Loweswater. On that name source, 'probably' is all Ekwall can say. Compare his reference to Lowick in Lancashire. There is no 'probably'. The first written versions of Lowick in 1202 are Lofwick or Laufvik, the latter, he says with certainty, is Old Norse for 'leafy bay'. It may be a funny thing but there are no 'laufs' in any version of Loweswater.

To that 'probably', we boldly propound a revolutionary interpretation. It is not the leafy lake of Swedish echoes. Swedish 'Vikings' were never anywhere near here. The Norse settlers in West Cumbria were from the Isle of Man and Ireland, and of Western Norwegian stock. The same people who settled Iceland around 870 AD and which included 'many from the Viking areas of Britain' (David Wilson - The Vikings and Their Origins: 1970). What then is Loweswater?

In last summer's journey through Iceland, we halted one afternoon by the lake known as Ljosvatn. The country's round-the-island ring road passes the lake, a farm and church of the same name. This, for Icelanders, is the Lake of Lights. In dull weather, under snow-streaked hills, the lake is ordinary. No trees, no leaves. Yet in sunshine it sparkles. The farm site is historic. One of the many Sagas names it the home of a local chief, Thorgeir Thorkelsson, and speaker of the Althing, the Icelandic 'parliament'. In 1000 AD, Thorgeir made a gesture that secured his fame. He gathered up his pagan statues, left Ljosvatn, and encouraged by several skinfuls of 'bjor', with a mighty throw (or throws - it is not recorded how many carved images he owned) and shouts in Old Norse of "there they go", chucked the lot into the nearby waterfalls. Which were immediately christened Godafoss or "Falls of the Gods". It followed that, as a leading politician, he was instrumental in the Althing's decision shortly after that "all people should be Christian and those baptized who still were unbaptized in this land".

Who knows, Thorgeir's great-grandad might have come from Loweswater, and remembering amongst icy winds and rumble of volcanoes those idyllic sunny days, named the lake and his farm, from the lake he had left behind? Place names in Iceland are derived from a natural or man-made feature. Maybe, at the same inspired moment, Thorkel (senior), in place-naming mood, took off his helmet and, after a scratch or two, also recalled the Liza Beck. That is, without doubt, from the Old Norse 'lioss' meaning bright. Bright beck - bright water - lake of lights - Loweswater. Eilert Ekwall, did you get this one wrong?

Next meeting 14 May - 'The history of the boundary of Cumberland' by John Todd