

Lorton &

Derwent Fells Local History Society

Brackenthwaite Buttermere Embleton Loweswater Mockerkin Pardshaw Wythop



The area just north of Crummock Water at 6 inches to the mile
From the 1st Series 6" OS maps, surveyed 1861 to 1863 and published in 1867

Secretary's letter

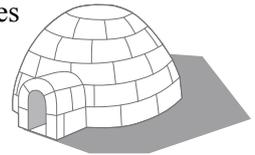
Writing this in the middle of December, Ron and Stella George have said their goodbyes and are now in Canada, near Toronto. Earlier, a carved ash bowl, a pencil sharpener from Rheged (!) and a beautiful bunch of flowers had been presented to them from the Society; in particular, we hope that the bowl will continue to remind them of their old house, White Ash, in Lorton. I'm sure that all members wish them real happiness with their family over there.

I have now become the contact for the Millennium Yews project. Since their "distribution" at Greystoke Church last autumn and taking into account their very small size, they are now being supervised in a nursery until they are a bit stronger. When I get some news about them, I'll let you know.

A questionnaire was included in the last Newsletter to get members' opinions about various aspects of the Society and I got 14 back. They include some interesting views which will be studied and hopefully will improve what we do in the Society. Fourteen does leave quite a number outstanding so, if you haven't sent one in, please think about it and if you can't find the form, I'll try to remember to have some available at our next meeting on 11 January in the Yew Tree Hall.

Ron George and Hetty Baron taped ten local people for the Cumbria Oral History Project earlier this year and those tapes joined those from other societies, along with photographs and documentary material, to form the basis of the 'Voices of Cumbria' exhibition which is now touring Cumbria. It started at the Helena Thompson Museum, then went to Cockermouth and has gone on from there and if you would like to visit the exhibition, a call to the Carlisle Record Office (01228 607285) should locate it for you.

The Society's property survey, which was delivered to all the properties in Lorton, Thackthwaite, Loweswater and Buttermere, has been quite a success. We (Hetty Baron, Danny Leck and I) delivered 234 survey forms and up to now we have had 130 back. That's quite a lot of information and they're still trickling in! In due course, they will be put into the Society's archive along with copies of the survey forms that Walter Head got back from Brackenthwaite properties in his own survey earlier in the year. They will provide a mine of information for future researchers and we're grateful to everyone who returned a form. If anyone knows someone who never got round to doing their own, please give them a reminder!



A few Society members visited the Whitehaven Record Office on 14 December and had a very interesting time. There is a list there of the 'Dlec' records (Leconfield Estate) that are held in Cockermouth Castle and any of these can be ordered for viewing at Whitehaven. The Record Office is very willing to run an evening session for a group of about 15 people and is intended to be a general introduction to the Record Office; it would consist of an hour's guided tour plus another hour to let people look at items for themselves. It would start at 7 or 7.30pm and we are considering organising such an evening. We should like to know how many would be interested, so if you are keen on the idea, please fill in the flier in this Newsletter as soon as possible. The flier also invites you to a visit to the Honister Slate Mine in the afternoon and/or the evening on 12 April so, again, please fill that part in if you are interested.

Michael Grieve 01900 85259

And words from the Chairman.....

The New Year finds the Society's archive relocated to Winder Hall and available to members for use. I have been quite surprised by the amount of information that Ron George has collected over the past twenty years and very pleased that he has donated so much material for our future use. Fortunately Ron and Michael Grieve have been able to organise and index most of the archive over the past few months, which will be of great help to future users.

It lives, appropriately, in the old silver safe of Lorton Hall, which is in our reception area and so is very convenient for members to use. We have now added to the archive a comprehensive series of 1863 and 1898 large scale Ordnance Survey maps, plus the maps and schedules of the 1840 Tithe Commutation survey for all our area except Pardshaw. The archive is now really the first place to look for information needed for any local history project. Both Michael Grieve and I have a good knowledge of the contents and will be happy to give advice and help with using the archive. Anyone who wishes to have a look through or a guided tour is particularly welcome during January, which is a quiet time.

There is more space for extra material. So if anyone has old photographs, maps, deeds or other documents that need a permanent home, please get in touch.

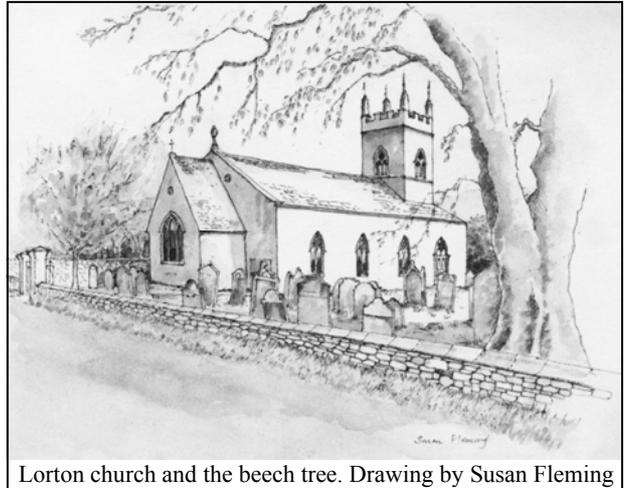
Derek Denman 01900 85551

Under the churchyard beech tree - the sad history of the Lucock Braggs of Lorton Hall

by Derek Denman

The beech in Lorton churchyard is a beautiful old tree. At least 250 years old, and with the largest girth of any tree in Lorton, it is usually included in pictures of the church. Under the spread of its boughs are two flat memorial stones, covering the nineteenth century graves of the Lucock Braggs and the Bridges of Lorton Hall. Who were they? The Lucock Braggs owned and lived in Lorton Hall for 75 years; Elizabeth Lucock Bragg became Elizabeth Bridge. They were the principal gentry of Lorton but suffered great misfortune, and their name did not continue after them. But we can infer from their history that they cared for their family and their village.

Joshua Lucock Bragg and his wife Rebecca (née Wilkinson) moved into Lorton Hall in 1800, after the death of Eleanor Barnes in that same year; John Piele Barnes, her son, had already impatiently mortgaged the estate for £720 in 1797. Joshua and Rebecca Lucock Bragg were a couple in their twenties with a four year old son, Raisbeck. Then, in Lorton Hall, John was born in 1800, Sarah in 1802, Joshua junior in 1804 and the twins George and Elizabeth in 1806. All were baptized in Lorton church. But all was not well with the children, for in 1834 and as adults, 'separate commissions for lunacy were issued against Raisbeck, Joshua, John and Sarah Bragg. Their brother G L Bragg was appointed "committee of their joint estates"' (1), since it appears that George and his twin sister Elizabeth did not have the condition. We do not know the nature of the problem, but we must remember that in those days lunacy covered a wide range of conditions. From the late date of committal it seems that the action was probably taken because they were unable to manage their affairs, not that they were any danger to anybody, and it seems that brother George had to take charge of the estate from his brother Raisbeck. So an educated guess would be that the four elder children had significant learning difficulties.



Lorton church and the beech tree. Drawing by Susan Fleming

Fortunately we have some records of the Lucock Braggs through the lecture of John Bolton in 1891 on Lorton as it was around 1800 (2). Of Joshua Lucock Bragg senior he writes 'Mrs Lancaster says that she remembers Mr Joshua Lucock Bragg hunting in Brackenthwaite. He kept a pack of hounds and hunted regularly. He was not like "John Peel with his coat so grey" but wore a scarlet coat.' This is of course the same Joshua who as squire of Lorton led the petition to rebuild the church in 1806 and was to contribute a tower built three yards square. But when he saw that it looked like a chimney, he had the work stopped, and there followed in 1809 an unseemly argument with the parishioners during which they attempted to 'frustrate the whims of our capricious Village Squire' [Lorton Vestries Minutes]. The current tower was the outcome. That same year he sold the land for the schoolhouse for 5s - and then he died, aged 37. His name appears first on the memorial, but his burial is not in the church records.

John Bolton describes the family at church. '... the Bragg pew was about half way up the aisle on the left - a roomy pew, but no curtains.' Of Mrs Lucock Bragg and the family coming into church: 'John and Joshua were about the same size. The two girls were blue-eyed and light haired and they used to wear red coats made something like these common ulsters [long loose overcoat of rough cloth]. It was fine scarlet cloth. They had red hats with large white ostrich plumes. The youngest boy used to come up the church with his hat in his hand, then he opened the large pew door and stood by to let Mrs Bragg pass. As she passed in George used to make a grand bow, then came the others and then George went in'. This would have been around 1812, a few years after Mrs Lucock Bragg had become a widow at 34 with six children between three and thirteen, four of whom probably had learning difficulties. We can also see George starting to take on the responsibilities of his father at a very early age, and evidence that the four were well cared for and not hidden away.

According to John Bolton, an old custom was kept up in the Hall. 'Mrs Bragg used to ask all the girls in Low Lorton, whose ages might range from 8 to 14, to the Hall on Pancake Tuesday evening. On their arrival in the kitchen with its huge fireplace and the great rannel balk, they were seated on forms and, when all had arrived, Mrs Bragg and her family of girls [Sarah and Elizabeth] came in to see the fun. There was a large bowl of batter made ready and the cook commenced to fry the first pancake. When it was ready - it was not a very little one - it was put out on a plate, and given to one of the invited lasses. If she had not

finished her pancake before the next one was fried the other girls would click her up - legs and arms and away with her on to the midden! Those who had been shanghied then had a chance with the others, and so the fun went on till each one had had her turn.'

Rebecca Lucock Bragg, with the help of George, presumably took responsibility for the family and estate while she could, but Raisbeck the eldest became the owner in name at least, listed in the Brigham parish directory for 1829 and the Tithe Commutation documents of 1841. In 1828 Elizabeth Lucock Bragg (George's twin) married Robert Bridge, a widowed gentleman from Weymouth. They were married in Lorton church and probably went to live in Weymouth, where there is a 'Lorton House' built by Robert Bridge. By 1834 Rebecca Lucock Bragg was sixty and still responsible for the four adult children living in the house. One can understand why it was necessary to take out the commissions of lunacy and make George the trustee. Rebecca Lucock Bragg was laid under the beech tree in 1839.

It was George Lucock Bragg who, by 1843, had built the grand additions to the west side of Lorton Hall and made the long carriage drive to the new front of the building. As the youngest and ablest son George (who never married) would probably have expected to outlive his elder brothers and to inherit the estate, and Elizabeth would have expected to live happily in Weymouth. But as usual for the Lucock Braggs fate intervened. In 1847 George was killed in Lorton, aged 40, as he 'leapt from his carriage when a pole broke' [coroner's inquisition]. A plaque at the west end of the church to the right of the arch commemorates his gift of a capital sum of £100 for education of poor children at the Parish School. That same year, Elizabeth and Robert Bridge were back in Lorton Hall - Robert Bridge listed in the 1847 Brigham Parish directory - presumably to take charge of the household, which still contained the four dependent adults.

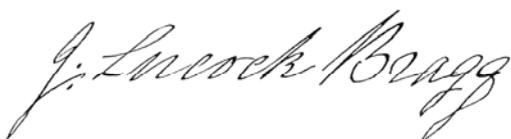
Robert Bridge as trustee for Raisbeck played a full part in the village community and obviously cared about the environment. In 1849 'it was agreed to Wall off Holm Farm midden from the road, Robert Bridge paying half the cost' [Lorton Vestries Minutes]. Holm Farm was not owned by Lorton Hall at that time. In 1850 Raisbeck Lucock Bragg died, aged 54, and joined George and their parents in the Lucock Bragg plot. The estate ownership, in name, went to John Lucock Bragg, the next eldest. Robert Bridge lived until 1857 and was buried by Elizabeth in a new plot next to the Lucock Bragg plot under the beech tree. In 1859 Joshua junior died, aged 54, leaving Elizabeth Bridge responsible for an elder brother and sister in Lorton Hall.

In 1863 Elizabeth Bridge gave the land for and built the new Sunday School which stands next to the church; it was later extended and is now a holiday cottage. An inscription in memory of Robert Bridge can be seen from the road. Sadly, Elizabeth Bridge died in 1865, aged 59, and was buried with her husband. She predeceased her elder brother and sister, leaving the estate in the charge of trustees and her siblings John (the owner) and Sarah in the care of attendants in Lorton Hall. In 1869, through his trustees, John Lucock Bragg sold the land to make the original round churchyard into a square. John and Sarah lived until 1875 in Lorton Hall when, after 72 years together, they died within three months, to complete the family group under the beech tree.

It took some time to sell Lorton Hall. In 1881 it was occupied but officially empty. The next owners, the Dixons of Rheda, were obviously in negotiation since the Lorton Vestries Minutes of 1881 suggest that Mr Dixon of Rheda should repair the footpath to the church, but in 1883 the trustees of the estate were asked to do the same work! It would be around 1885 that Mr A J S Dixon, another young man like Joshua Lucock Bragg Esq, would take on the role as the village squire.

It must be clear from this tale that the Lucock Braggs and Bridges of Lorton Hall have earned their rest beneath the beech tree. The final injustice was just avoided in 1984 when, after a branch of the tree crashed into the road, the PCC was advised to cut down the tree as unsafe. Fortunately, after the intervention of an expert living not a million miles from the aforementioned walled-off midden, an alternative plan of pruning and cable-ties made the tree safe and saved for the village a tree enjoyed by both the Lucock Braggs in their lifetime and the villagers of today.

The signature of Joshua Lucock Bragg has been taken from a petition dated 1806 about the "ruinous state" of the church and that of his wife Rebecca from a document relating to the enclosure of Lorton Fells where she was acting as an agent for the local people:




- (1) 'Lorton Hall and the Victorian Houses of Lorton' by Ted Petty, WEA Class on Victorian Lorton 1985 (L&DFLHS Archive)
- (2) 'Lecture on Lorton 1891 as it was 80 years ago' lecture by John Bolton 1891 (L&DFLHS Archive)

A Scale Hill letter

The following is a transcription of a letter sent on 3 October 1825 from Scale Hill, Loweswater, addressed to Mr H Marshall at Revd. Butler's, Shrewsbury. It was sent from Penrith on 6 October and the Penrith circular mileage handstruck (red) stamp, denoting 280 miles from London, is shown below.

Scale Hill
Oct. 3rd 1825

Dear Henry,

William and I have set up our quarters here for a few days campaign against the partridges and grouse, and have so far been favoured with delightful weather; as to our execution in the way of powder & shot we have no great account to give; the birds are wild and the dogs out of order from their having been so much accustomed to grouse lately; after which they are always mighty indifferent about partridge. We came over on Thursday and go to Penrith tomorrow being the first day of the races and I return to Leeds the next day; I suppose you know that my brothers have now got a regular game keeper here; Tyson did not answer, so as thieves make the best thief catchers, they have now got a poacher Varty as game keeper. He was one of the great gang of Aldstone Moor poachers who set the whole country at defiance a few years back. They used to go in parties of 20 or 30 well armed & threatening destruction to all who opposed them. A large party called one day at the lodge of the game keeper of Mr. Graham of Edmund Garth who found them so strong that he was obliged to receive them & give them whatever he had of eatables and drinkables and then shew them into the beds prepared for Mr. Graham & his shooting friends; in which they took a comfortable nights rest & after a good breakfast next morning they departed telling the game keeper to present their compliments to Mr. Graham & thank him for the hospitable reception he had given them in consideration of which they would in future abstain from poaching on his manor which agreement they honourably fulfilled. But they became such a nuisance to Ozackanthorpe Wyburg and others who had manors adjoining the moors that they got a Bow Street officer to come down who disguised himself & pretended to be a receiver of game & lived in the midst of the gang till he had ascertained the ring leaders and all their modes of proceeding & hiding places when he got a great force of constables & police officers from London & took a great number of them & broke up the gang. Varty would have been taken but that he luckily lost his way in a mist. On Saturday we went onto Mellbreak to shoot grouse but only got a trace; The birds are only on that end of the top next Scale Hill so that we went round & round & across & back again over & over again the ground very uneven & the sides everywhere craggy & precipitous; as to marking the birds that was impossible; it was always the same story gone round the corner of the hill. In short it was pretty much like shooting on the dome of St. Pauls; when we did shoot a bird it fell $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile down the hill. On Sunday we went to Buttermere & Gatesgarth, & looked at a new copper & lead mine opening by a new company in Birkness How & also at some stills we have been built under the crags of the Haystacks and Fleetwith for the sheep to shelter in in bad weather & to prevent them attempting to cross the beck in which many are lost in the snow. A still is a circular wall 6 feet high & about 8 to 10 yards diameter. When in the sheep soon learn to fold themselves. I have been proposing to make them roofs as there is great difficulty in preventing bosom winds from blowing it away. To make the still all roof like a tent & the eaves hanging over into a large ditch going round it so as to be on a level with a surface of the ground; the earth thrown out of the ditch onto the outside would form a mound (a) & would prevent the wind from gathering under the eaves & lifting the roof up. There would be no expense of walling; the rafters would come out of the thinning of the plantations & the heath close at hand to thatch it that I don't think it would cost more than a normal still, An open still 4ft walls at bottom 6ft high -yds diam. outside = 5 roods of 7yds each, at 7/- a rood = 35/-. Mr. Homer an Edinburgh gentleman who was with us a day or two at Headingley & came on the coach with me as far as Penrith said that a friend of his travelling in the Highlands called at a cottage one stormy day to ask their road & asked for the good woman of the house of some children they found there. Oh sirs, said they, Mummy's just sitting e'en now. Sitting, said they, what can that mean! But the children took him round the corner of the house & there was the good woman sitting very patiently on the windy side of the roof to prevent it being blown away with the storm.



I have such a miserable pen & ink that I can scarcely write at all. I hope however that you will not make an excuse for not answering it on account of its being illegible; the more so that I think I shall not get over to Shrewsbury this half year & I am anxious to hear how you are getting on. We had a good deal of conversation on the subject of education last holidays & I have a great deal more to say, but not with this pen. Next to a clear conscience there is nothing so invaluable as a good education, & no person can be well educated who does not do his best to educate himself; if you have good sense enough to be fully convinced of this & resolution to act on it you will be a happier man for it the rest of your life.

Yours afty.

G. M.



Michael Thompson at Scale Hill has the original letter and a typewritten transcription - which I used - and I'm very grateful for his lending them to me.

Michael Grieve

Notes on the Bell family of the Parish of Lorton

by Ron George

The Bell family is reasonably representative of life within the community, between the mid-16th century and mid-19th century. We do not know as much about the individuals comprising the various branches of the family as we would like because there are too many gaps in the various records which remain to us.

There is no doubt that, although we have no record of the family before the marriage of John Bell of Over Lorton to Margaret Bancke in 1539, there were at least four separate branches of the family thriving in the valley, if the number of their progeny is to be a criterion, by about 1560. Between 1565 and 1573, no less than four different girls named Agnes Bell married various of their neighbours. From which precise branch these four came we cannot tell - was one a daughter of John and Margaret? The time scale is just right. Then there was Peter and Cuthbert at Nether Lorton, either one or both of which probably lived in the vicinity known as 'Crosse'; there was John at Swynsed and another John at Buttermyre. There were, we must presume, the parents of Nicholas at Hill, and of William at Schailes. Later, if not earlier, there were other members of the family at Crag End, from where Richard baptised his son Peter in 1597 and at Hermonsid from which hamlet William baptised his son Thomas during the same year. Unfortunately, we cannot even tell if this geographical spread represents progressive stages of 'Bell colonization' of available land as the family grew during the quinquennium either side of 1600, or whether they already held all these tenements from an earlier age. That was the age of greatest birthrate, certainly until the Victorian age. But the Bells were certainly prolific. Between 1560 and 1883 there were no less than 95 burials in the family and in the period 1596 to 1870 there were 113 baptisms. These figures represent averages of 2.4 baptisms and 3.4 burials in one extended family for each and every year over a period of approximately 300 years. If the difference between these two rates appears strange, it can be accounted for by the fact that the baptism records started much later than those for the burials, and that was the period of maximum procreation within the family. It is true that we cannot be certain that all the Bell records do in fact relate to a single extended family, though this seems most likely. Certainly this apparent explosion of little Bells fits in with what is known of the national trend over the same period.

The first male birth, and one of which we have only indirect knowledge is of 'John' in about 1560 and we do not find another registered until 1597, when John was born to William at Armaside.

Regrettably, too, we can have no detailed knowledge of their daily lives, but an outline picture emerges from the manorial records of their dealings with land and from the few wills and probate inventories which have survived.

In 1547, John of Nether Lorton had a tenement comprising a close with a barn on it of 8 acres, for which he paid an annual rent of 5s 7d. There was another tenement for which John, presumably the same John, paid 11s 9d. At the same time Peter held a smaller tenement, containing 2 acres, for which he paid a rent of 2s 2d. Cuthbert is recorded as having a tenement of 12 acres in Nether Lorton, rent 11s 6d in 1569. This is clearly neither of those mentioned above, nor an amalgamation of the two. Eighteen years later, in 1587, Richard was admitted by the Manorial Court Leet, with Court Baron to tenancy of Lorton High Mill and his son John was still tenant there in 1674.

The family tenement at Hill first comes to notice with the marriage of Nicholas, who presumably had hitherto lived there with his parents, to Agnes Peirson in 1579. Once again the records fail us, as the first subsequent birth registered to 'Nicholas of Hill' is apparently of twins James and Elisabeth in 1599. There followed Margaret in 1604, and John, with no date, by implication of other evidence. What happened between 1579 and 1599? Agnes did not die, and Nicholas did not remarry before 1585, and there are no burial records between 1563 and 1598, nor baptism register prior to 1596. It rather looks as if Nicholas remarried between 1585 and 1599. However, the register records Agnes Bell of Hill was buried in 1614, approximately two years after Nicholas. As this entry does not state 'widow', it is possible this Agnes was a child of the 1579 marriage, which would leave the reasoning intact. John, whose birth date is lost, married Mabel Winder in about 1620 (in the period of another of those irritating gaps in the register) and produced seven children between 1621 and 1633. As Nicholas was still at Hill and registered a single Hearth for the Hearth Tax return of 1664, this holding was occupied by at least four generations of the same family for a known period of about one hundred years.

Forty two years after receiving the tenancy of his 8 acres in 1547, it passed from John to his son Richard, designated 'of Lorton'. This was annotated in the manorial record as rent 5s 4d and a portion, formerly of John Wynder, rent 3d. The holding appears to have been part of the tenement at Hermonsid held by John Wynder in 1547 for a fixed rent of 13s 1d, leaving a portion, rent 6s 6d to John Wynder [CRO D/Lec/314/38 f.32]. This introduces a difficulty because it seems that we can now place John of Nether

Lorton, rent 5s 7d, at Hermonsid; but certainly in more recent times, this has not been considered as Nether or Low Lorton. If our supposition is correct, it is not unreasonable to assume, in the absence of other information, that in 1566 Agnes married her nearest neighbour, or his son.

Adjacent to Richard's newly acquired tenement, noted in the same manorial record, Nicholas Bell held a close called "Cass Close of the How", which had formerly been in the hands of Robert and Richard Laythes, for the fixed rent of 1 lb of pepper. The area is not given but it probably represents the area listed as closes 56 to 70 on the tithe map of 1840.

The next important piece of information about the family is that in 1598, Mr John Bell was the village schoolmaster. It would have been normal for the parish Curate to act as schoolmaster, and since Curate Antonie Borranskil had been buried in 1596, and Curate John Bell was buried in 1608, it follows that he must have been the replacement for Anthonie, which neatly fills in another hole in our list of early clergy. John Bell was an important man for more than the normal reasons that the Curate was in the village in those times because he copied out and preserved for us the church registers from their beginning in 1538. It was not his fault that, either before or since, a number of sheets of parchment have been lost, thus contributing to the lack of information of his own family history. John would no doubt be fascinated to know to what purpose his work is now being put

The above is no more than an introduction into what could be an interesting and challenging exercise in local studies and genealogy of a parish. The Society archive contains many references in the manorial records and census returns to augment the outline sketched above. Who will rise to the challenge and follow up Curate Bell's work with his family tree?

* * * * *

House History Group update by Walter Head

18 people have expressed an interest in joining this group and 11 were in attendance at a meeting held on 12 October 2000 during the archive evening. 15 properties are to be researched and members are currently reading up on the subject and methods available for research.

There was an opportunity for those interested to visit the Whitehaven Record Office on 14 December to view manorial records which Chairman Derek had arranged to be transferred from Cockermouth Castle for the day. There will be a meeting of the group shortly to discuss a "Plan of action".

* * * * *

I have received, from Michael Baron, the following quotation from the US historian Gertrude Himmelfarb on the writing of history:

“..... And there is no doubt that the old history, traditional history, *is* hard.

Hard - but exciting precisely because it is hard. And that excitement may prove a challenge and inspiration for a new generation of historians. It is more exciting to write true history (or as true as we can make it) than fictional history, else historians would choose to be novelists rather than historians; more exciting to try to rise above our interests and prejudices than to indulge them; more exciting to try to enter the imagination of those remote from us in time and place than to impose our imagination upon them; more exciting to write a coherent narrative while respecting the complexity of historical events than to fragmentize history into disconnected units; more exciting to try to get the facts (without benefit of quotation marks) as right as we can than to deny the very idea of facts; even more exciting to get the footnotes right, if only to show others the visible proof of our labours.”

Taxes by Walter Head

Tax assessment was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 with the unit of taxation in the south of England being a "hide", an area of land which varied in size dependant on the type of land, but was basically the area which a team of eight oxen could plough in a year sufficient to support a family. The normal size of a hide was approximately 120 acres. An alternative name for this measure, used in late Anglo-Saxon times, was an oxgang. An area of land twice the size of a hide was called a sulung.

However, no regular taxation existed in England before the Civil War of 1642 to 1646. Prior to this, direct taxation was only demanded intermittently to fund wars with no taxes payable at other times. After 1660, regular taxation in some form or other became established as a feature of life.

One of the better-known early taxes was the Hearth Tax of 1662 which had a rate of 1/- (5p) for every hearth, payable twice a year on Lady's Day, 25 March (which was the official start of the year until 1752) and Michaelmas, 29 September. Properties worth less than £10 were exempt. This tax was withdrawn in 1688 after the glorious revolution which saw James II deposed and succeeded by William of Orange, with his wife Mary, daughter of James II.

The second well-known tax was the Window Tax introduced in 1697 at a rate of 2/- (10p) per year with an extra payment of 8/- (40p) with properties with over 10 windows. A legacy of this tax can be seen in the blocked up small fire windows in some older properties. This tax was finally abolished in 1851.

Although the great fire of London in 1666 resulted in only nine deaths, it destroyed half of London - 400 acres. The fire destroyed much of the slums and helped to end the great plague of 1665. It also brought home the fact that brick buildings were much safer than timber constructions and there was an upsurge in the building of non-wood houses. This, in turn, resulted in one of the less well known of the early taxes, the Brick Tax. The Brick Tax of 1784 was calculated on the number of bricks used, irrespective of size and resulted in the increase in the size of a standard brick from 2 to 2½ inches. The tax was due at a rate of 2/6 (12½p) per thousand bricks, 3/- (15p) per thousand plain tiles and 8/- (40p) per thousand pantiles. Small paving tiles were rated at 1/6 (7½p) per hundred and large paving tiles larger than 10 inches at 3/- (15p) per hundred. The tax was assessed while the bricks or tiles were at the drying stage. A certificate of duty paid was required before any bricks could be exported. Anyone taken to court for evading payment could be fined three times the value of the tax evaded. Attempts by some Nottingham brick makers to reduce the tax payable by producing "bricks of extraordinary size" - 10½ x 5¼ x 3¼ inches was thwarted by a change in the law making extra duty payable on bricks larger than 9 x 4 x 2½ inches. The Brick Tax was in operation for over 60 years and was finally abolished in 1850.

There are no records of the Brick Tax in the Cumbria County Archives.

* * * * *

Talks and activities - 2001

This year, we hope to organise some 'activity' sessions on Thursdays between our normal talks; these will involve members more actively, for example in visits or presentations. These sessions will be on the second Thursday of alternate months, starting in February. Talks and activities will start at 7.30pm unless otherwise stated.

11 January	Talk by Ken Mills, professional forester and author, on "The Cumbrian Yew". There are 28 ancient yews in Cumbria, with three into their third millennium.	YTH
8 February	Activity - impromptu exhibits, plus one or two short talks by members, plus an organised exhibit.	YTH
8 March	Talk by Howard Hull, Director of the Ruskin Museum at Brantwood, on "John Ruskin and the Lake District".	YTH
12 April	Activity - visit to the Honister Slate Mine in the afternoon or evening or both if there is the demand. If you're interested, please fill in the flier in this Newsletter.	
10 May	Talk by Angus Winchester, our President, on "Lorton and Derwent Fells in the Middle Ages".	YTH
14 June	AGM followed by a presentation by a member.	YTH
12 July	Talk by Brenda Callaghan, history lecturer and tutor, on "Courtship, marriage and births in Cumbria, 1500 to 1900".	LVH
9 August	Activity - historic walk(s).	
13 September	Talk by Mike Davies-Shiel, geography and geology teacher, author and local history enthusiast, on "The flax industry in Cumbria".	LVH
11 October	Activity - panel question and answer session.	
8 November	Talk by Dennis Perriam on "Medieval fortified buildings in Cumbria".	YTH
13 December	Activity - old maps evening.	

YTH = the Yew Tree Hall, High Lorton and LVH = the Loweswater Village Hall.

Information about forthcoming talks and activities will be updated in future Newsletters and final arrangements will be announced at the preceding talk.