

Lorton & Derwent Fells Local History Society

Brackenthwaite Buttermere Embleton Loweswater Mockerkin Pardshaw Wythop



These photographs are from our archive and are both marked "Loweswater school", the upper one 1930 and the lower 1931. Please can anyone confirm that these are both Loweswater school - the teachers and the boy's clothing are very different. No names are given, so it would be interesting and useful to have at least some of them. So please, talk to your friends if necessary, and names to any committee member!

SECRETARY'S LETTER

Cumbria has been through a terrible period over the last few months and it's not over yet, especially in the Shap to Appleby area. We had to cancel Angus Winchester's talk in May but I'm really pleased that he has agreed to come next May and tell us about our area in the Middle Ages. Hopefully it is a sign of improving conditions that the Society arranged two walks (I nearly wrote 'ran two walks'!) in August - one around High Lorton led by Derek Denman who produced a very attractive 'flier' to go with it. The other was around Danny Leck's Waterend Farm which was full of interest, helped by Danny's comments, which finished with refreshments at the adjoining Grange Hotel. Both were well supported and, so far as I could tell, enjoyed by all. We certainly saw and learnt a lot and thanks to both of them for the work involved.

In this issue, we have the final part of Ron George's comparison of two nearby market towns and also the results of a detective investigation by Derek Denman into High Lorton long ago. And there are two of Walter Head's 'specials', one of which is a very poignant piece about a Lorton man in the First World War.

The activities we have introduced in the months between our talks have proved very popular and there are two remaining ones this year. In October we have a panel question and answer session organised by Walter Head. Please think if you have any questions on the history of our area which might be suitable for putting to the panel and get them to Walter or me (Michael Grieve) - the panel members are going to need questions to get them going! Then in December I am organising an old maps evening, so again, have you an unusual old map or plan, for instance an estate map, please contact me. And finally a third request - we need to arrange a programme of activities for next year so please put your thinking caps on and let any committee members have some ideas - the committee is waiting for you!! So I've landed you with three requests for feedback - please have a go at some or all of them because it will help, in many ways, the Society to organise what members want.

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

At the AGM in June, members adopted the new constitution which was distributed with the May Newsletter. The first result is that we now have two additional committee members, John Scrivens of Lorton and Alan Norris of Pardshaw, which will allow us to keep up a high level of activities for Society members. The Committee have decided that the full membership subscription will rise to £8 from 2002. I am sure that members will find this very good value and will be ready to find the new subscriptions at the November meeting!

A BRIEF LOOK AT COCKERMOUTH & KESWICK AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT, 1850 TO 1950 (PART 2) by RON GEORGE

[This concludes Ron's article and please note that the Appendix is in the last (May 2001) Newsletter]

The coming of the railways brought a change of character. The link from Lancaster to Windermere was completed in 1847. By 1850, horse-drawn coaches were leaving the Windermere railhead for Keswick and Cockermouth daily. Later, with part-time motorised transport even this link to Keswick was very tenuous, not operating at all in the winter months (West Cumberland Times, Jan 1911 et seq). This part-time link with the north western towns had unbeatable competition from the rail link on the west coast. Newcastle and Durham wanted to link the west coast route via Workington and Maryport to the North East coalfields. This was also urged by land and mine owners along the Cumberland coastal plain and with popular support, this was achieved in 1845. Cockermouth, also vitally interested, was joined to Workington in the following year. The people of Keswick also wished to be connected to the new network, but were thwarted by General Wyndham who complained that the railway, passing close by Cockermouth Castle, would destroy the natural beauty of the area, diminish the value of the land to landowners, and the smoke and fumes from the trains would annoy him at home in his castle (Bradbury p210). Can it be to Wyndham that goes the honour of being a very early conservationist, anticipating the formation of the National Park or should he be considered as an egocentric wrecker of Keswick's fortunes? Keswick was not to have its own railway connection until November 1864 and was the loser thereby. The line from Cockermouth to Workington was essentially a freight line and carried from Cockermouth the natural products of the region, lime, slate and stone and cattle from the market (Bradbury p212). Extensive sidings and cattle pens were built adjacent to the station. With proximity to Whitehaven and Workington with their own growth of coal, iron mining and shipping, Cockermouth benefited from the industrial and economic spin-off. In spite of its

small population and small-scale industries, by 1850 it was a highly industrial town. It is ironic that having but recently acquired the facilities to improve its economic status, it then began to enter into industrial decline, but began to assume a central role for the hinterland to the coastal ports. This is nowhere more noticeable than in the application of the Poor Law. The local Poor Law Union was based on Cockermouth, with four sub-districts: Cockermouth itself, Keswick, Maryport and Workington, the last already a far larger town than Cockermouth. The total population covered by the Union was over 71,000, though by no means all of these would look to Cockermouth as a natural focus for daily needs (Bulmer p694).

The improvements, begun about 1820-30 under the impetus of civic-minded councillors, gathered pace after 1850. New schools and public buildings were erected to cater for education of young and adult; from infant school to Gentleman's Newsroom, Mechanic's Institute and Industrial School. Although church attendance had become less by this time, the religious needs of the community were encouraged by, or possibly forced by, the building of a Catholic church in 1856 to replace the stable room previously used; a new Congregational chapel in 1850 was followed by a rebuilding of the Friends Meeting House in 1885. Entertainment and public meetings and recreation were catered for by a Public Hall built in 1874 and the 13 acre Harris Park, overlooking the railway station with attractive riverside walks, was donated in 1894. The Appendix analyses the state of Cockermouth in 1871 and shows to what extent the town had become a service centre. By the mid-19th century, Keswick too had a number of urban amenities to offer tourists including museums, exhibitions and concerts. More so than its competitors in the field of tourism, it catered particularly for the elite, and because of the literary associations, Oxbridge was much in evidence. Not yet having the railway, in 1862 Keswick could still be described as "the greatest surviving coaching centre" (Marshall & Walton p188), but showed little enthusiasm for encouraging less affluent short-stay visitors when the railway did arrive, though their numbers did increase as noted above.

Notwithstanding that Trade Directories are unreliable in details, it is interesting to compare Bulmer's Directory entries for Cockermouth and Keswick for 1901. Cockermouth is quite clearly orientated to rural life, with no less than 38 hotels and inns to cater for visitors and those attending the horse and cattle markets. Equally obviously, the population served by the town's shops were becoming socially mature and sophisticated. On the other hand there were only 6 lodging houses, whereas in total contrast, Keswick had sixty nine lodging houses listed as well as twenty hotels. This last sums up the essential difference between the two towns and signals the growing divergence between them during the next fifty years to 1950.

Those statistics hide a downward slide in Keswick's affairs between 1847 and 1864. Keswick had been enjoying a growth rate several times the county average during the decades of 1830 and 1840, but in 1847 the railway reached Windermere and siphoned off much of Keswick's emerging tourist trade. The situation was not remedied until Keswick got its own railway in 1864, when the lure of the Lake District as a premium tourist area was recognised by the up-and-coming travel agent "Cook", who was instrumental in getting the English Lake District Association founded in 1876. Again,

Keswick was backward at taking advantage because, in this promotional venture, it had only one representative out of 12 on the committee (Marshall & Walton p195). With the railway, Keswick could respond to the demands of the tourist trade which was now beginning in earnest. The *nouveau riche* from the industrial towns of North West England had both money to spend and leisure time in which to do it. They employed both in their new large luxury homes that they built in the most favoured sites all over the Lake District and Keswick was one target area. Cockermouth also attracted tourists, but in much smaller numbers. Some evidence for this can be seen in the blue plaques announcing distinguished past guests, now found on divers buildings in the town.

Nor were the upper middle class alone in seeking out the pleasures of leisure time amongst the fells. From the later part of the nineteenth century onwards, the lower middle and working classes were taking short holidays from the drudgery of their working lives. Although the seaside resorts such as Blackpool took the lion's share of this trade, the Lakes became increasingly attractive. Both Windermere and Keswick had the advantage of easy access by rail.

The early visitors came to Keswick in response to the eulogies of the writings of the Lake Poets. They came not for commercial considerations so much as to get near to nature and enjoy a kind of moral and spiritual well-being by observing the views from Thomas West's "stations". They were few in number, but had increased to about 40-50,000 pa by 1883 (Marshall & Walton p190) and many of these also came to enjoy the scenery and spiritual well-being. In 1875 occurred the first Evangelical Convention of serious



The front of Keswick station around 1900

church minded people seeking 'practical holiness amongst the mountains' (Walton & McGloin p176). This convention became an annual event that continues to this day and attracts many hundreds of people from all over the world for two weeks, filling every available bed in the town in July. The overall result of these changes in the town's fortunes produced a rising population; from 2,618 in 1851 to 4,500 in 1901 and increasing to 4797 by 1951.

If the successive national Housing Acts between 1851 and 1930 have played any significant part in the development of either town, the records of any related action have either been destroyed or hidden from current knowledge. Both towns have clearly either benefited or suffered, depending on one's point of view relating to the character of the property, from piecemeal clearance of decayed and obsolete properties; but in what way this has



Cockermouth station around 1900

come about still remains to be discovered. Cockermouth was variously described in 1880 as "wearing the aspect of opulence" (Marshall p184). But during the period of industrialisation, the town had developed many narrow courtyards and alleys inhabited by small workshops, mills, tanneries, foundries and dye-works in which the workers and artisans lived cheek-by-jowl with their work place, in quite appalling squalor. In the Report by the Commissioners regarding the proposed implementation of the Cockermouth Improvement Act, 1847 (quoted in Bradbury p88), some areas in the older part of town "have areas of narrow and winding alleys" and again "a cluster of privies for the common service of some houses at a place called Camperdown were found to be as revoltingly offensive in their exposure as in their foulness". On the other hand, the civic-minded population of Cockermouth was pioneering in the field of utility services. Piped clean water from Crummock Water was taken to the town in 1878 and in 1881 the town was the first in England to have electric street lighting (Cockermouth Guide Book, 1970, p11). Some of these courtyards, improved to 20th century standards, remain whilst many have been demolished during the first half of the 20th century.

We would expect the population to decrease, which it did, but for reasons that are not yet clear, the town spread physically. Slum courtyards were demolished or abandoned and new estates of quite substantial terraced houses built outside the traditional town limits. The New Street estate of small terraced houses was built in 1856 and was favoured by the employees of the Harris mill, for whom it was conveniently situated. Building progressively extended outwards up the Brigham road area, many more houses, some terraced, some more substantial, appeared by 1895 and more on the other side of town, along Windmill Lane towards Slate Fell in the early decades of the 20th century.

Keswick grew rapidly as a tourist resort and many hotels and a quite enormous number of boarding houses sprang up, particularly in the area to the east of the town known as Leonard's Field (Bott p111). Here, between 1878 and 1897, were built streets of substantial terraced houses with a tiny strip of ground between them and the road and another patch of ground behind between them and a narrow rear access lane; they are still there. A crescent of elegant houses, "The Heads", for the better-off section of the population was built overlooking the Lake between the wars. After the second war, a new estate was built up on Windy Brow, for now Keswick was becoming popular for the retirement of off-comers.

So the two towns, which started in similar circumstances, diverged in purpose and character. Cockermouth's population contracted whilst losing industry, but whilst improving the quality of the housing. The town strengthened its rural activities and became a social, cultural and service centre for a broad expanse of rural country. Keswick lost out during and after the Industrial Revolution because of a *laissez faire* attitude in the population, and the lack of railway for some 20 years after its arrival in Cockermouth and Penrith. The development of the town became geared to catering for tourists and is typical of the situation described by Walton and McGroin (p155) where, by 1950, this trade had become the main factor in the town's economy, over the hundred years creating an 83% increase in the permanent population.

The period 1850 to 1950 can be seen as one of consolidation of the positions each town was already assuming in the earlier decades of the 19th century. As Chalkin says of the country as a whole (p286), "generally the (smaller) county town altered slowly over the decades". This is well exemplified by Cockermouth and Keswick, each in its own contrasting way. What was not evident in 1950 was the further exceptional growth that Cockermouth would experience in the following decades to the end of the 20th century.

Bibliography

- G Bott "Keswick, the story of a Lake District Town", Cumbria County Council, with others, 1994
 J B Bradbury "A History of Cockermouth", Phillimore, 1981
 Bulmer Directory, 1901
 Major Broatch Lecture given at Keswick, reported in West Cumberland Times, February 18th, 1911
 Census for Cockermouth, 1871
 C W Chalkin "Country Towns", G E Mingay (Ed), The Victorian Countryside, Vol 1, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981
 R Lawton and C G Pooley "Britain 1740 - 1950"
 J D Marshall "The Rise and Transformation of the Cumbrian Market Town, 1660 to 1900", Northern History, Vol 12, 1976
 J D Marshall and John K Walton "The Lake Counties from 1830 to the mid-twentieth century"
 Parson & White Directory, 1829
 J K Walton and P R McGloin "The Tourist Trade in Victorian Lakeland"
 West Cumberland Times, 1911
 Thomas West "Guide to the Lakes", 1778

THE EARLIEST GUIDE TO PICTURESQUE MOUNTAIN SCENERY

Ron's last reference above was to Father Thomas West's book, which was the first of a very long line of guides and which was first published in 1778. It was carried by almost every visitor to the Lakes for nearly 50 years. He concentrates on the lakes, and the mountains are backgrounds in his descriptions of places. For Buttermere, he goes up Newlands and, having criticised the 'track' over the Hause, he writes:

"Descend the track on the left, and you soon have in sight the highest possible contrast in nature. Four spiral towering mountains, dark, dun, and gloomy at noon-day, rise immediately from the western extremity of the deep narrow dell, and hang over Buttermere. ... Here all is barrenness, solitude, and silence, only interrupted by the murmurs of a rill, that runs unseen in the narrow bottom of a deep dell. ... for you now approach the village of Buttermere, which is situated betwixt the lakes and consists of sixteen houses. The chapel here is very small, the stipend not large, for though twice augmented with the queen's bounty, it exceeds not twenty pounds per annum." And about Gatesgarth, he says it "is under the most extraordinary amphitheatre of mountainous rocks that ever eye beheld. ... a hundred mountain torrents form never-failing cataracts, that thunder and foam down the centre of the rock, and form the lake below."

Michael Grieve

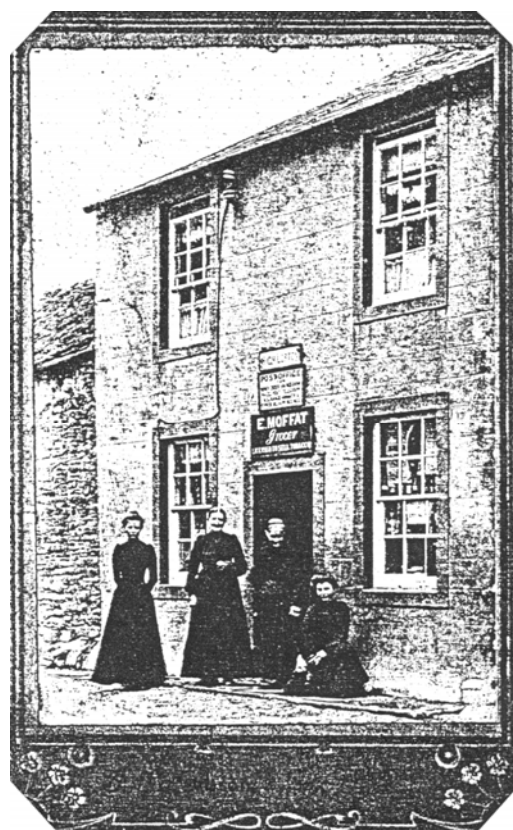
"FOR THEIR TOMORROW WE GAVE OUR TODAY" by WALTER HEAD

In January 2001, a survey of secondary school pupils, carried out for text book publishers Osprey, recorded that 4% of students thought that the British leader during World War II was Adolf Hitler!

The history of World War I and World War II is rapidly being forgotten, along with the debt we all owe to ordinary people who fought during these conflicts and, in particular, those who gave their lives for their country. The memorial plaque in St Cuthbert's Church, Lorton, records the names of those local men who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Robert Moffat was baptised in St Cuthbert's Church, Lorton, on 31st March 1895 and his mother Elizabeth was the daughter of John and Elizabeth Moffat who ran the post office and grocer's shop at Corner House, Lorton.

In the autumn of 1914, Robert Moffat responded to Kitchener's poster campaign and enlisted to become a Kitchener Volunteer. He originally joined the 6th (Service) Battalion of the Border Regiment B Company as Private 11351 and saw action in Gallipoli where he was wounded. On his recovery, he was posted to the 1st Battalion Border Regiment and it was with this Battalion that he saw action on the Somme. He was killed in action near Beaumont Hamel on Saturday, 1st July 1916, only 21 years old. Along with thousands of others, he has no known grave. He is commemorated on Pier 6A, Face 7C of the Thiepval Memorial to the fallen of the Somme, which can be found on the D73, off the main Bapaume to Albert road, the D929.



Corner House, High Lorton

The following is an extract from the War Diary of the 1st Battalion Border Regiment for the 1st July 1916:

“Front Line 07.30 hrs

The Battalion, less 10% [who were held in reserve], advanced just south of Beaumont Hamel, their objective being Beaucourt Redoubt. The 2nd S.W.B.'s, whose objective was the first two German lines, were wiped out by machine gun fire in our own wire.

The 1st Battalion the Border Regiment then went over the top from our support line, and over the first line, the bridge over our front trench having been ranged by the German machine gunners the day previously. We met with heavy losses while crossing these bridges and passing through the lanes cut in our wire. The men were absolutely magnificent, and formed up as ordered outside our wire, made a right incline and advanced into 'no man's land' at a slow walk, also as ordered. The advance was continued until only little groups of half a dozen men were left here and there, and these finding that no reinforcements were in sight, took cover in shell holes or wherever they could.

08.00 hrs

The advance was brought entirely to a standstill.”

By noon of 1st July 1916, of the 23 officers and 809 men who took part in this action, 8 officers were either killed or missing in action and 12 were wounded, which is 87% of the officers; 208 men were either killed or missing in action and 411 were wounded which is 77% of the men.

Robert Moffat lies far from the Vale of Lorton in an unmarked grave.

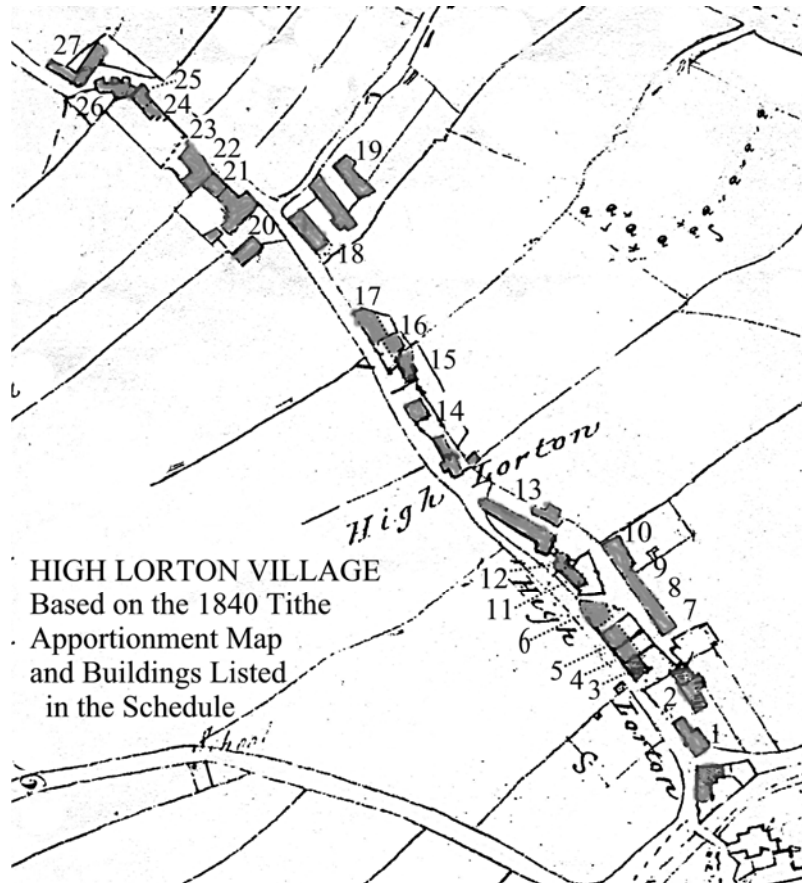
If anyone has any information or photographs of Robert Moffat, or anyone else on the Roll of Honour, please contact Walter Head on (telephone) 01900 85697.

**HOUSES AND OCCUPIERS IN HIGH LORTON VILLAGE AROUND 200 YEARS AGO
FROM JOHN BOLTON'S 1891 LECTURE
by DEREK DENMAN**

In 1891 John Bolton, once a schoolmaster in Lorton, gave a lecture on Lorton and Loweswater as it was eighty years before. This was based on the recollections of his grandmother-in-law, Mrs Lancaster, born at Low Hollins, Brackenthwaite, in 1802. The lecture (available in the Archive) contains a perambulation of the village discussing the houses and inhabitants over the late C18th and early C19th.

The lecture lacks a map and it is easy to become out of step with the progress through the village if it is read in conjunction with a modern map. This article attempts to add that map, based on the buildings shown on the 1840 Tithe Map and locates the historical characters of the lecture to the houses of the early C19th and the early C21st.

This reconstructed map of High Lorton uses the 1840 tithe map as a base and has been decluttered of irrelevant information, has had buildings shaded and reinstated where necessary and is believed to represent the position at both 1840 and 1810. Numbers have been added as a key to the buildings and inhabitants. It is therefore not an authentic historical map. Information in brackets in the table is not in the lecture.



No. 1810

Other Information

Later and 1891

1	William & Betty Jennings	Old Bill Jennings the Maltster, father of John. A fine looking old man, fresh and full of flesh, wore a bottle green coat with swallow tail and brass buttons (d.1848 aged 97)	1891 home of John Moffat, shoemaker, Parish Clerk. (Corner House. P O and Store of Moffats)
2	Mr & Mrs Nicholson	Well to do people. Son Isaac. (Mary d.1816 William d.1817 Isaac d.1827)	Mrs Musgrave. (Grace Musgrave to 1943. Named The Cedars then Graceholme)
3	Thomas & Mary Crosthwaite	Old Tom Crosthwaite. Tallish, slenderish and rather lame. Worked Whinlatter quarry. Parish Clerk. A good-tempered jolly fellow. (d.1830) Wife and dau. did not share his good nature.	1891 Yew Tree Cottage. Owner Mr Allen Pearson
4	Mally Borranskill & father, Henry Robinson	Kept a dame's school, taught reading, knitting and sewing. Owner John Crosthwaite.	House and No.5 fell down (Now Dale View)
5	John and Mrs Crosthwaite	Very old couple. Old Jack Crosthwaite one of oldest in Lorton. (d.1828) House passed to Misses Crosthwaite.	House fell down. Replaced by Mr Burns' house (Dale View)
6	Martha Pale	Kept a public back house. (d.1823)	1891 Mary Benson (replaced by The Bungalow)
7	James & Mrs Sargison	Public House. Son John b.1778. Taken on by John Lennox after Mrs Sargison died (Rachel d.1820)	Lennox a middle-sized man, gaily stout and jolly with a cheery face and a pleasant word. (Horsehoe PH)
8	James & Mrs Sargison	Smithy. Taken on by John Lennox after death of James Sargison (d.1813)	Still in Lennox family 1891
9	Peter & Mary Robinson	Carpenter, lived in house next to joiner's shop. A good fiddler, four children. Sawpit (Yew Tree View)	Smithy Fold
10	Sister of Jonathon Musgrave	End House, Musgrave Todd's grandmother	Bought by Peter Robinson
11	John Jennings	First brewer b.Dec 1782. Married Miss Wilkinson of Scales	(Beech Cottage). Barn converted by 1891 (Causey)
12	Mrs Crosthwaite and servant	An Elderly lady with an old servant. Aunt to Misses Crosthwaite of Whitehaven	(Kent Cottage) John Bolton lodged here. Owned Misses Crosthwaite.
13	Anthony and Nancy Garnett	Brother Peter also. Anthony was reckoned a very clever, knowledgeable man. Allowed nonconformist meetings in kitchen.	(Midtown held by Thos Ewart in 1840. By Michael Wilkinson in 1649) Mr Brown in 1891.
14	Priest Sewell	Elderly man, perhaps 60. Chapelries of Wythop and Setmurthy. Passed to Huntingtons of Loweswater on his death (1834)	Huntington House, (now Park View)
15	John & May Turrel	A middle-aged couple. A middle-sized man, stoutish and good looking. Little shop, tea, coffee tobacco, snuff, marbles and noted for mint cake.	Son Matthew b.1799 (held shop in 1840). (PO 1851)Beck crossed road here. (Now Spring Garth)
16	Jonathon & Grace Musgrave	Superintendent Sunday School 1813.Grace nee Jennings. Son Wm drowned Whitbeck. Son Jonathon 1808.	(Now Rose Cottage)
17	Captain Russel of Workington	Family came for summer only	(Now 2 Rose cottage)
18	Mirehouse & Sarah Key	Wholemire. A very old man, used to wear a grey russet wig, bare on the front and looped at the back. Evidently had been an old swell. Churchwarden 1801. Wife a tizzy-tazzy body.	Once part of The Ash farm, (Wholemire farm 1840. Now Lambfold).
19	Isaac & Nanny Harrison	Nanny Piele owned and sold Rising Sun and move to White Ash farm. Large family, many girls.	White Ash farm, (once part of The Ash farm).
20	Bella Thomson	A short, thick, roundabout body who kept a bakehouse.(d.1856). A very old house and outbuildings, very likely an old farm. Mr Dodgson was Mr Alexander's great uncle and the gentleman who built what is now (1891) Miss Harbord's house. This Mr John Dodgson, Low House, Loweswater, was brother of Mrs Mary Hutchinson, the Misses Harbord's grandmother.	1891 Miss Harbord's house stands here (Lorton Park, completed by Richard and Eleanor Harbord by 1862) (on this site was William Robinson's house of 1649) (Mary Hutchinson 1840)
21	John Martin (d.1822)		
22	John & Betty Graft	Owned this and 23. Jwonne Graft a shortish man walked half double (d.1821). Wife was Betty Cherry.	1891 Where Mr Bragg's house now stands (Lorton Park Cottage)
23	Nanny & Becca Fisher	Dressmaker sisters	As 22
24	Robin Hartley (Robert?)	House and weaver's shop. Access via fold.	Demolished before 1891
25	John & Betty Bell	A Waller. Access via fold.	Demolished before 1891
26	The Exciseman	Only house available. Access via fold. Beck across road	Demolished before 1891
27	John Thompson	Mrs McDowell's father (tenant)	1891 John Eland (Park/Wayside Cottages)

SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

This year, Derek Denman has produced two publications - 'Old Trees of Lorton Township and their histories', being an expanded version of the presentation that he and Charlie Allison gave at our AGM in June. It is on circulation and if you would like to see it, please contact Derek (85551). The other is an

attractive ‘flier’ which went with Derek’s walk around High Lorton in August. I can produce copies of this if anyone would like a copy.
Michael Grieve (85259)

RECORDING THE PRESENT - THE FOOT & MOUTH EPIDEMIC

One of the important activities of a local history society is to record present times for the benefit of future generations and historians. The foot and mouth epidemic is probably the most serious event to affect our area in the last 50 years, with probably every person being adversely affected in some way. The committee has agreed in principle that we should set about making a proper record once the disease is behind us but still fresh in the mind. In late September we hope to set up a group to organise this as a project with a leader who can take an independent and balanced view. We have in mind to collect oral tapes, written pieces and to collect information and documents, which give an overall picture of the experience of the people of our area.

If you would like to be involved in this project, either in its organisation or to contribute material, then please contact any committee member during September and October.
Derek Denman 01900 85551

TELEPHONIC COMMUNICATIONS by WALTER HEAD

The postal service, telephone, fax and emails are now taken very much for granted. But 100 years ago, other than by personal contact, the main method of communication was by the postal service, introduced in 1609 by James I who created a monopoly - the Royal Mail. Letters were carried along the principal highways by horseback and from 1784 by mail coaches until they were superseded by the railways.

In 1840, a standard charge, regardless of distance, of one penny was introduced - the famous penny black.

Locally in 1900, the post, the money order office and the savings bank were run by John Moffat at his grocer’s shop at Corner House in High Lorton. Letters arrived via Cockermouth at 8.30am and were collected at 4.55pm Monday to Saturday each week.

In the early months of 1900, workmen were busy gradually working their way along the Vale of Lorton prompting a local newspaper to print the following.

“Visitors to the Vale of Lorton will be surprised to find an increased evidence of civilisation in the poles and wires along the highway.

The provision of telegraphic and telephonic communication should not only be a boon to the inhabitants but may possibly result in an increase in visitors who in previous years have partly fought shy of the district owing to it being totally cut off from businesses, but people are asking ‘Is the wire for use or ornament?’”

The telegraph was opened to the public in Lorton on Wednesday, 7 March 1900 and Mr George Oglethorpe, Master of Lorton General School, was the fortunate individual to receive and dispatch the first telegram.

The West Cumberland Times on Saturday, 10 March 1900 reported “an absurdity which requires rectification however is the naming of the Post Office as High Lorton instead of Lorton simply. High Lorton is only a local name and has no special significance and, to our own knowledge, the postal name has already led to confusion. Simplicity in such matters is to be desired.”

By May 1900, steady progress was being made by workmen putting up poles to extend the system to Loweswater which was finally connected to the outside world by telephone at Whitsuntide.

FUTURE TALKS & ACTIVITIES

13 September	Talk by Mike Davies-Shiel, geography and geology teacher, author and local history enthusiast, on “The flax industry in Cumbria”.	YTH*
11 October	Activity - panel question and answer session.	YTH
8 November	Talk by Dennis Perriam on “Medieval fortified buildings in Cumbria”.	YTH
13 December	Activity - old maps evening.	YTH

***Please note that Mike Davies-Shiel’s talk will now be in the Yew Tree Hall**