

August 2018

The Derwentfells Wanderer

Thanks to Sandra and Richard
from the Chair

The Society's 2018 AGM was notable for the fact that it was the occasion when Sandra Shaw stepped down as Honorary Secretary after fourteen years on the committee and ten as secretary. On a personal note, I could hardly have wished for a more effective and efficient person in the role from the moment I was elected Chairman.



Sandra Shaw

On behalf of members of the Society I would like to reiterate what I said at the AGM in expressing very grateful thanks for all that Sandra has done for it over the years. And I can report that at its meeting in July, in recognition of her much-appreciated work, the Committee offered honorary membership of the Society to Sandra which she has accepted. I should add that the Committee hasn't lost her contribution to its deliberations, as she has been co-opted as a committee member for the current year.

Nor has the Committee lost Richard Easton as a member. Although he has handed on the baton for organising and administering the annual programme of bi-monthly Talks to me, after four years successfully and efficiently running them, for which on behalf of members I express grateful thanks to him, he will continue to contribute his skills to the running of the Society, particularly with IT.

Charles Lambrick

Our Autumn Visit to Caldbeck
by Tim Stanley-Clamp

On 1 January, 1901, the first day of the new century, Richard Greenup took a walk round his home village and later wrote it up for his neighbours, eventually publishing it under the title

*A Walk Round Our Village of
Caldbeck, Cumberland*

*On the First Morning of the Twentieth
Century, New Year's Day January 1st
1901.*

Our Autumn Visit on September 26 will take us to Caldbeck where members of the local history society have generously offered to act as our guides. Re-tracing Richard Greenup's steps will form part of the programme and there is an interesting and important Church to see. Lunch will be provided at the village pub. We plan to travel by coach, Leaving Lorton Tennis Club at 9.30, picking up at Boots in Cockermouth and returning to Lorton by 4.00. The cost will be £10 each for the coach, plus the cost of lunch.



Caldbeck

To reserve a place please send a cheque payable to L&DFLHS giving your contact details. Please address it to Tim Stanley-Clamp.
Reply Slip enclosed.

**John Bolton, 1855-1915: first
local historian of
Cockermouth, Lorton, and
Loveswater.**

an article by Derek Denman

John Bolton is best known to Society members for his lecture Lorton and Loveswater 80 years ago, given at Lorton in 1891. Less well known is his more scholarly study of Cockermouth in *Wordsworth's birthplace*, of 1912, which is a study of the development of modern civil administration in the town. Despite these works, little has been written about him.

John Bolton was born in 1855 to Hannah and James Bolton, a stonemason, either in Main Street or following a move to Derwent Street. John had an older brother, Joseph, aged five, but his sister, Dinah, had died in 1854, aged four. Elizabeth Hannah arrived in 1860, and James in 1861-2. By 1871, the stonemason trade had expanded into a substantial building business employing sixteen men.

The first son would usually go into the family business, and the second would find other employment. John trained as a teacher, though details have not been sought, and in January 1877, at age 22, he became the master in charge of Lorton school. He held this position well into 1882, lodging for some time at what is now Kent Cottage, High Lorton. During this period he gained much personal knowledge of Lorton. Meanwhile, the Cockermouth family had moved to a smart house at 3 Skiddaw View.

John's career in teaching ended in 1882, aged about 26, and that he moved back to the family business in Cockermouth. The cause of this seems to be two family tragedies in 1879. First his younger brother, James, died aged 18, and then his older brother was drowned in Bassenthwaite, aged 30. By 1881, the business employed only 8 men, and in 1885, John's father died aged 62. After late 1882, John joined the family business, and after the death of his father, John had sole charge of the business as a builder and freestone quarrymen. That business needed to support his mother and unmarried sister, who moved to South Street, probably when John married. John's mother lived on to be 82.

John Bolton married Dorothy Harding in 1889, and James was born in 1890. Staying with them, in the 1891 census at 19 Mayo Street, later Ivy House, was Dinah Lancaster, aged 88, who was Dorothy's grandmother. She had been born in 1802 at Low Hollins, Brackenthwaite, and 'although blind and rather deaf her mental faculties are unimpaired and her memory good and reliable. ... what a storehouse of old world recollections is her memory'. Mrs Lancaster's recollections add the colour of oral history to the research that John Bolton presented in 1891, at the invitation of W L

Alexander, the squire of Lorton, and probably at Lorton School. The text is at www.derwentfells.com/pdfs/JohnBolton.pdf where, for example, Bill Jennings, the maltster and father of the first brewer, is described as 'a fine looking old man, fresh and full of face, and used to wear a bottle green coat, a real swallow tail with bright brass buttons. He wore knee breeches tied with tape, but she cannot remember his shoes, whether he wore buckles or not, but very likely he would'.

In 1891 John Bolton was still just 36. His main work was published in 1912, just three years before his death in 1915, aged 59. *Wordsworth's birthplace: being the parochial history and local government of the ancient Borough of Cockermouth*, is a scholarly piece of historical writing, almost wholly from records. It is set out chronologically as the progression of Cockermouth's civic development up to the 1860s – after which, to him, it was no longer history. He notes his father's works as a contractor, but within a general recognition of the Cockermouth people who had been responsible for the market town's development, and sometimes for holding it back. The publication was funded by subscriptions from the middle classes of Cockermouth and its environs. Perhaps the curious title helped to swell the list to over 200 names, some of whom might have expected more notice of Wordsworth inside.

John Bolton's two works provide an invaluable resource for anyone interested in the history of Cockermouth, Lorton and Loveswater. Perhaps it is no co-incidence that the Cocker Valley, from Loveswater to Cockermouth, also contains the homes of most members of the Society.

Our future programme 2018

13 September	'Breaking up is hard to do': selling the Lowther Estates in West Cumberland	Dr Alan Crosby
26 September	Outing to Caldbeck by coach	see the insert
08 November	Markets to Supermarkets: 200 years of shopping	Dr Michael Winstanley

Talks are at the Yew Tree Hall at 7.30pm unless stated otherwise. Visitors £3. Please do not park to the left of the entrance (looking from outside) as the road is narrow.

Officers and Committee 2017/18

President Professor Angus Winchester **Financial examiner Peter Hubbard**

Charles Lambrick <i>Chairman</i>	01900 85710	Lena Stanley- Clamp <i>Membership</i>	01900 336542
Derek Denman <i>Secretary, Wanderer</i>	01900 829097 <i>derekdenman@bt internet.com</i>	Tim Stanley- Clamp <i>Outings</i>	01900 336542
Christopher Thomas <i>Treasurer</i>	01900 822171	Mike Bacon Fiona Lambrick <i>Committee members</i>	Richard Esaton Hugh Thomson

The next issue of the Wanderer will be published on 1 Nov 2018. Please send any short items to the Editor, Derek Denman in early October.

The Wanderer is published by the Lorton & Derwent Fells Local History Society, 19 Low Road Close, Cockermouth CA13 0GU.

<http://www.derwentfells.com>

<https://www.facebook.com/Lortonlocalhistorysociety>

Diary dates

Cockermouth Heritage Group free exhibition *The end of the war and a new beginning* runs at the Kirkgate Centre from 30 July until 12 August, 10am – 4 pm

The CLHF Convention and AGM is on Saturday 6 Oct at Newbiggin Village Hall, CA11 0HT. The Convention is £12, including lunch, and starts at 10.30. Subject: *The Victoria County History of Cumbria: Studies in Local History*.

Our Society moves forward

by Derek Denman

At our AGM in June, some important changes were made. Firstly, it was agreed that our membership year should be the calendar year. Consequently, this year contains two extra months, and the November talk.

Secondly, our Constitution was changed to require a privacy policy. You can find the new Constitution and Privacy on our website, www.derwentfells.com.

Thanks to a good response to requests, the Society now has a committee of ten and is able to fully resource its activities. More than that, we expect to develop our programme further, increasing member benefits, and to carefully extend our local history offering to members. One project is to consider the development of the Wanderer, to provide more content and interest. If you have views on what you would like to see, please contact me or any committee member.

Our Spring Visit – a report

by Tim Stanley-Clamp

We enjoyed a beautiful day in May at Mirehouse, the family home of the Spedding family since 1802. Mirehouse had only two weeks earlier been the subject of a talk by its present owner, John Spedding, who gave us a fascinating insight into his family's many connections with the intellectual and artistic history of the middle years of the nineteenth century. In fact, the list of prominent artists and intellectuals with whom the family was connected throughout these years reads like a prospectus for a treatise on early Victorian intellectual history. Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy, Coleridge, Southey, Carlyle, Fitzgerald, Ruskin, Constable were all visitors and Alfred Tennyson wrote much of the *Idylls of the King* and *In Memoriam* while staying there.

There was evidence too of the energetic part played by members of the family in the cultural life of the period. James Spedding wrote a respected biography of Francis Bacon, while Anthony Froude, a cousin, spent most of his adult life involved in controversy, often rancorous, at the highest levels of the nation's intellectual life. He was expelled from his fellowship for publishing *The Nemesis of Faith*, which intervened in the increasingly bitter religious disputes prompted by the Oxford Movement of the 1840s.

There is a lovingly preserved early Victorian ambience in Mirehouse which somehow manages to communicate both the cultural importance outlined in John Spedding's talk and also its role as a much loved family home. We saw this in the Library, with many of the publications it played host to, and the nursery with its recollections of children at play. Outside the grounds stretch down to the shoreline of Bassenthwaite Lake, through the fields and woods past the lovely Church of St Bega.

On a personal note, this was the eleventh or twelfth time I had visited Mirehouse – everyone who comes to stay gets taken there – but Mr Spedding's talk and his generous welcome and introduction on the day of the visit helped me see it with fresh eyes and made it memorable

Watermills, Roman Legions and Benjamin Franklin join us on Facebook

The Society's Facebook page attracts much interest. My post about Double Mills, one of the 15 watermills for which Cockermouth was once renowned, attracted over 4,000 viewers and many shares.



Double Mills – photo by the author

A post by Mark Hatton, shared from the Lake District & Cumbria Life page, told of the inscriptions on the banks of the river Gelt near Brampton, a major quarry where Roman Legions worked the faces to build and maintain the Roman wall. The men left inscriptions dated AD 207: "A detachment of the second legion Augusta worked these rock faces, under Agricola" or "The century of Julius Peculiaris detachment of the Twentieth Legion Valeria Victrix".

The announcement of our July talk about the 18th century Cumbrian physician and scientist, William Brownrigg FRS, stimulated lively feedback from the Facebook community. It provided photographs of the houses lived in by this distinguished, but little-known man, and a link to the US Government archives holding a letter to Brownrigg from the American politician Benjamin Franklin. The two men shared a passion for science and experiments, although Franklin's letter of 7 November 1773 reveals also some amusing domestic details about Brownrigg's household.

You can follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/Lortonlocalhistorysociety / You do not need an account to view.
Lena Stanley-Clamp