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Society News

Message from the Chair

I'd like first to draw to Members' particular attention an article on page 7 in this edition of The Wanderer. Sandra Shaw has written about the history of Lothwaite Side, a farm and house in Wythop, and the people who have lived there. The article is an excellent example of 'house history', and I'm delighted that Sandra has taken the opportunity of including in it an explanation of how she went about researching the history. This is very instructive, the key message being that with many resources now available online, and with a new facility being launched by the Society to enable Members to use its

archives, much if not all relevant research about a dwelling can be undertaken from home. It remains the Committee's hope that the prospect of carrying out research about their own house or other type of building will appeal to Members interested to learn more about the property and neighbourhood in which they live.

An important development this year, the Society's thirtieth anniversary year, is the launch of the Society's digital archive, to be known as the Derwent Fells Digital Archive of Historical Sources. Derek Denman has devoted much time and attention to creating this resource, and in the article appearing on page 3 he has set out what it comprises at present and how to access it.

A resource of the Society that it's hoped will become a specific section of the digital archive is the substantial number of photographs in its possession. Any Member, whether with previous experience in indexing and digitising photographs or not, who is interested in this aspect of what the Society has (potentially) to offer is encouraged to contact either Derek or myself about what would be involved in developing the Society's photograph archive.

I would like to remind Members that the Society's Oral History Archive is already in existence at www.aohg.org.uk, providing a useful resource with the added interest that the researcher can read an individual's first-hand recollections of events in the past. Committee members hope there are Members interested in expanding the Society's oral history resource who, after some straightforward basic learning, will be willing to undertake interviews. page 2

Our future programme 2023

9 Mar 2023	'Lake District Geology'	Dr Ian Francis
11 May 2023	'The Loweswater burglary of 1816 and its aftermath'	Ray Greenhow
8 Jun 2023	Our AGM and 'Feeding the industrial revolution'	Dr Michael Winstanley
13 Jul 2023	'Loaves & Fishes; the Mills, Fishponds and Grange of Shap Abbey'	Kevin Grice
14 Sep 2023	'The Dacre Family, a History'	Maks Loth-Hill
9 Nov 2023	'Mitchells: – Auctioneers for 150 years'	John Marr

Talks are at 7.30 pm in the Yew Tree Hall, are included in membership and open to visitors at £4 in 2023. Talks are also streamed live to members using Zoom but are not recorded. Other events are expected to be added to this programme.

Officers and Committee 2022/3

President: Professor Angus Winchester Financial examiner: Hugh Thomson

Charles Lambrick <i>Chairman</i> <i>Talks</i>	01900 85710	Lena Stanley-Clamp <i>Membership</i>	01900 336542 <i>ldflhmembership@gmail.com</i>
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James Lusher <i>Vice-chair</i>	01900 85196 <i>LDFLHSzoom@gmail.com</i>	Dr Derek Denman <i>Wanderer, and archives</i>	01900 829097 <i>derekdenman@btinternet.com</i>
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Sandra Shaw <i>Secretary</i>	01900 829812	Fiona Lambrick
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The next issue of the *Wanderer* will be published on 1 May 2023. Please send any short items to the Editor, Derek Denman, by early April.

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>

The Committee plans to mark the Society's thirtieth anniversary with an exhibition of twenty or so house histories. It is envisaged that these will be illustrated summaries of histories which have previously been written for one of the Society's publications. We intend to include dwellings from around the Society's area of interest and may include 'new' house histories.

Our Talks for 2023 cover a wide variety of subjects. March will take us to

pre-history – the geology of the Lake District. Dr Ian Francis will be giving the Talk. He is joint author of the recently published book on the subject, which is reviewed enthusiastically by a previous Chair of the Society, Michael Baron, on page 6.

Finally, may I ask those Members who haven't yet renewed membership of the Society for 2023 to do so.

Charles Lambrick

The Derwent Fells Digital Archive of Historical Sources

During the last thirty years a great deal of historical information about our area has been collected by members of the Society. Much of that information has accumulated in the Society's archives, and mine. This collection is used to help members and enquirers with historical sources for their projects, but it was not in a form suitable for lending to others.

During 2023 I plan to organise and make available material from the Society's archive, and this will start with the availability of the Derwent Fells Digital Archive of Historical Sources, from February 2023. The content available will then grow and improve over time.

The information in this Digital Archive will be primary sources, which means original historical records which are the foundation of all research and writing. Secondary sources, that is articles such as you find in the *Wanderer* and CWAAS *Transactions*, will not be included, but all the Society's publications can be found on derwentfells.com. Photographs will be the content of another Derwentfells archive.

Our archive of historical sources will contain very few copies of unique original material held by the Society, because we believe that original material is best held by the Archive Service. Rather, this archive will contain mostly copies or transcriptions of original records held elsewhere, which are relevant to local history projects in the Society's area of interest. Most will consist of photographs of original documents as .jpegs, transcriptions of documents in .pdf form, or occasionally transcriptions in database format.

I plan to act as the first editor of this archive, to keep it up to date, to increase its content, to make it available to members and researchers, and to provide assistance on its use when needed.

This archive will be made available through the Society on a number of flash drives/memory sticks which will belong to the Society and which can be borrowed by members and researchers for historical

research, writing and other projects. This archive cannot be made available online because much of the material, though not all, has been collected by various people under agreements which prevent the actual images of records being published. However, very little is subject to remaining copyrights. People who borrow the archive on flash drive will need to agree to respect some conditions of use, mainly concerning publication.

The first issue of this digital archive will contain records in the following categories:

Life events, including parish registers, memorial inscriptions, wills etc.,

Taxation and rates, including the land valuation of 1909-15,

Tithe commutation records, Enclosure records, Manorial records, Maps and plans

A more detailed listing of contents is given on www.derwentfells.com.

Each record or group of records will have an explanation of its content and use, plus the original reference. There will be a finding aid, organised geographically, to help to identify the key records that will be relevant to a user's project.

More information can be found on www.derwentfells.com/sources and then please contact me, preferably by email, if you would like to use this archive, or to contribute to it.

Derek Denman

Notices

Omission in printed 'Wanderer' November 2022: In the report on the historical walk in Loweswater, the credit for the photograph on page 7, requested by the author, was unfortunately omitted. The photographer is John Macfarlane. – DD

Missing historical postcard: At the 10 November Talk several photographs of early motor cars in the Keswick area were on display at the back of the Hall. Unfortunately, one depicting cars in Keswick's main street disappeared during the evening. If a Member has inadvertently picked it up, please contact Sandra Shaw.

Meeting Reports

Talk: 'The impact of motor transport in Westmorland 1900-39' 10 November

Dr. Jean Turnbull's presentation showed the different ways that the development of motor transport impacted the county of Westmorland in the early part of the 20th century. Road improvements increased in opportunities explored during the presentation.

Major roads were turnpiked in 1740–70. This development delivered good financial returns initially, but these became eroded with the introduction of the railways, and their impact on the movement of goods. The last turnpike trust came to an end in 1885.

At the end of the 19th century, some of the county's roads, which were generally in a very poor state, were in the ownership of the County Council, in other cases they were run by rural councils.

1903 saw the introduction of legislation with the Motor Car Act. Fuel tax, road tax and registration were introduced in 1909/10 Finance Act, part of Lloyd George's famous 'People's Budget', the funds going to road development. Two major new trunk roads were so designated in the early 1920s, the A6 and the A66, which were very important in the development of the region. Later the A591 was to prove key for tourist traffic.

Fingerposts were introduced following the 1903 act and Dr. Turnbull provided one interesting example surmounted with an Earl's crown, a reference to the so-called Yellow Earl, Hugh Lowther, Fifth Earl of Lonsdale. He was a keen motorist, purchasing a charabanc in 1913 to carry guests on tours of his estate.

After 1909 grants for roads were provided by the Ministry of Transport, but Westmorland remained resistant to tarmac until WW1.

Flooding has always been an issue in the county and many bridges were rebuilt

during this period, indeed Ings had the first concrete bridge in the county.

1935 saw the introduction of the Restriction of Ribbon Development Act, which provided 'for the imposition of restrictions upon development along the frontages of roads; to enable highway authorities to acquire land for the construction or improvement of roads or for preserving amenities or controlling development in the neighbourhood of roads.' (Source: vlex.co.uk)

Significant improvements were made to the A6 south of Kendal in the inter-war years, aided by the provision of a 75% grant from the Ministry of Transport, through the new Road Fund. Other improvements included a number of bypasses around urban centres, such as Kendal.

During the early part of the 20th century, the main method of transporting goods was via the railway network. During the 1920s, though, motor (and steam) lorries were being used increasingly more for local delivery. Dr. Turnbull provided an example of the Penrith and District Road Carrying Company, which was set up by the Greenside Mining co. at Glenridding in 1903 to carry goods to and from the railway stations in Penrith and Troutbeck.

The milk industry became established in Westmorland in the inter-war period, at Barbon in the 1920s, and at Appleby and Milnthorpe in the 30s, causing considerable churn. These factories were setup near railway stations and used motor lorries to collect milk from outlying farms. The factories at Appleby and Milnthorpe in particular employed large numbers of local people and this industry changed dairy farming practices in the county.

The first trade directory listing for motor haulage in Westmorland came in 1929 and by 1938 there were 29, showing the growth in this new industry. Shops, such as butchers, grocers and fishmongers, began using motor transport too, replacing horse-drawn deliveries.



Charabanc trip to Keswick, 1920s

1918 saw the creation of a national motor bus network and by 1921, there were 10 bus companies operating in Westmorland, although this newly developed industry experienced a fair amount of consolidation soon afterwards, with Ribble Motor Services taking over most of these companies and quickly becoming a regional giant. During the early to mid-part of the 20th century, tourist maps of the region were produced and distributed as Britons were encouraged to explore their country. A number of roadside businesses arose to exploit this new market.

Two of the earliest garages to be set up in Westmorland were Hewertson's of Windermere, although this only lasted until 1920, and Atkinson & Griffin of Kendal, which remained in operation until the 1960s. By 1929 there were more than 54,000 petrol stations and garages operating besides Britain's roads. In Westmorland there were 29 in 1921, but by 1939 there were 78. In rural areas, they also provided additional services, such as a café or a shop and became an important part of the rural community.

1921 saw the first motor excursions by charabanc and by 1938 there were 6 operators in Westmorland. There was little regulation in the early 20s, but mechanics

and drivers made good use of the experience they had gained during the war. One of these bus companies, Winder, operated from offices in Highgate, Kendal and had garages in two locations in the town by 1938, describing themselves as Motor Car Proprietors. Another, Robinsons of Appleby is still in business today. A study of advertisements in Morecambe's annual Guide shows that tours of the Lake District were an important offering to visitors to the town, which started to style itself Gateway to the Lakes!

We learnt, too, that from the outset of motoring in the 1890s, car drivers had acquired a bad reputation for careless driving and speeding. Early pioneers of motoring were keen to use Westmorland's mountain passes for what was originally called 'Motor Mountaineering', especially Kirkstone Pass, The Struggle and the Shap Fell road. The Westmorland Motor Cycle Club was founded in 1910 and organised many activities on the county's roads, including hill climbs, long-distance runs and time trials, until the Road Traffic Act of 1930 prohibited the use of public roads for motor sport.

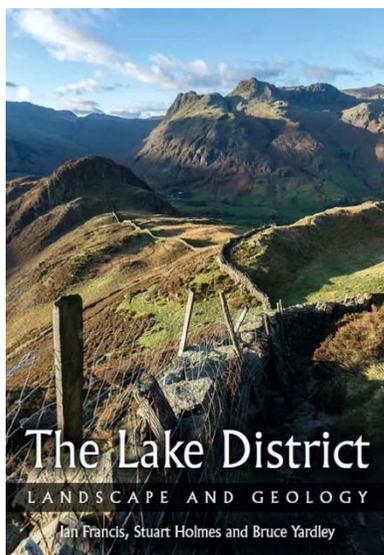
On behalf of the Society, I'd like to express our appreciation to Dr. Turnbull for sharing with us this fascinating piece of social history.

Andrew Chamberlain

From the Bookshelf

'The Lake District, landscape and geology'

How often have I wanted a guide like this. Even though walking days are over, this book by the trio of Ian Francis, Stuart Holmes, and Bruce Yardley is the history of geology and local development from then to now. It is the Lakes at their best. Every walker should read and keep it and with much more than a sidelong glance at the history of the place so dear to us. So, I have no doubt as a one-time walker that this *The Lake District – Landscape and Geology* is the one on which to spend £18.99. Published by the Crowood Press Ltd of Ramsbury, Marlborough, Wiltshire (ISBN 978 0 7198 4011 1), it is immediately attractive and a must-have. Lavishly illustrated by photographs – so good as almost to put on those battered boots and sally forth. And, where necessary for those who now want to know more, a list of seven excursions (with those boots on) at the end of a very readable book. It has explanatory maps, and it's the essential guide which easily fits into the pocket of an anorak.



The authors are not shy of telling the reader that this is now a fragile landscape, challenged by climate change, mass tourism, environmental pollution, footpath erosion, and other perils. Nor how much is owed to the National Trust, the Geology Geo Conservation project, and Fixing the Fells, and others which include the farming community for whom rewilding polluted places are not fringe middle class white movements but integral to the geology and the history. The bibliography reminds that we ought to read, maybe travel with, as companions both Angus Winchester on landscape and Alan Smith on the rocks of the Lakes. My imaginary anorak has subsidiary pockets for these.

This local habitation as the celebrated poet Norman Nicholson reminded us in his many verses, particularly 'Rock Face', the title of the 1948 collection, is one of the the living examples of a 'remarkable interaction between geology, climate, and human activity', and which has 'produced some of the world's most glorious scenery'. We are also witnesses to this unique heritage as the Cocker mouth painter Julian Heaton-Cooper shows in the paintings reproduced here. It's about the land beneath our booted feet, the land before our eyes. As the authors say in their introductory chapter a 'remarkable landscape'.

It is not without significance that the word 'remarkable' appears twice on the opening page. And nor surprising that there is quoted the view of the author of 'Robinson Crusoe'. In 1724 Daniel Defoe visited the Lakes, writing that Westmorland had the 'wildest, most barren and frightful landscape of any he had traversed'. So, it is very much the fascinating story of how this wild landscape was formed, and how millions of years later geologists, poets, artists, settlers, and the adventurers of today, whether active observers or passive viewers, are still in thrall to the romantic imagination. It is there in the tale of geology that forms the bedrock and the history that embraces us.

Michael Baron

Articles

Lothwaite Side, a tenement in Wythop

by Sandra Shaw

This article was prompted by contact from a member of the public, but it also serves to pay tribute to Joan Borrowscale, a longstanding society member who sadly died in September 2021. Although Joan did not live locally, she joined the society in its early days, in part to facilitate her family history research, as her Borrowscale family are from this area. There is a further purpose in publishing this account now, namely, to encourage others to have a go at researching their own, or another nearby property. Apart from four sources, a visit to the site to take photographs, a face-to-face conversation with another member who lives near the site, an email to a friend with a different family history subscription and a visit to the L&DFLHS archive to collect a flash drive, the research has all been carried out from my living room.

Lothwaite Side is the current spelling used by the Ordnance Survey and I shall use this unless quoting directly from another source. It is also spelled Lowthwaite or Lothat, with the 'side' suffix as either one word or two. The Borrowscale name also has numerous different spellings, some of which will crop

up in the article. Joan was the last of her family line.

The Initial Contact

In March last year I was contacted by John Nichols who had grown up in Cockermouth but left in the late 1960s to go to college. I was intrigued by his comment 'I know the Wythop valley very well as my parents rented the House known as Lothwaite Side for several years whilst we lived above the Nat West Bank in the middle of Cockermouth (no garden).' In the correspondence that followed, I told John what the Society already knew of the property, and he told me about it in the 1960s when his parents rented it, staying there for many weekends. He included a photo taken in 1969 which contrasts strongly with the more recent one I took in October, which shows its fall from grace.

John says 'When we had it, it was clear it had been built in a number of phases with the smaller, western end of roughish stone and consisting of a one up one down part and a second part for animals with stalls, as for cattle/horses. The main house was also stone with a brick extension to the eastern end housing a fire heated copper and a sink fed by a hand worked pump with water drawn from a spring to the front of the property.

'The main house had two downstairs rooms and the kitchen/dining area had a

Lothwaite Side in the 1960s, photo John Nichols





Mary Graham weighing butter at Wythop Hall Farm – L&DFLHS archive

Society's earlier information about Lothwaite Side, which came from Joan Borrowscale as a contribution to the Manorial Records Project, in which a small number of members had participated in 2005-6. This had been designed to demonstrate ways in which Manorial Records, which have a reputation for being difficult to find and use, could help in local and family history research.

Joan's research found that Lothwaite Side was a part of the manor of Wythop, which was purchased by the Fletcher family in 1606. This date marks the start of known manorial records for Lothwaite Side, now held as part of the Vane archive at Carlisle Archive Centre, to whom the manor descended through marriage via the Fletcher-Vanes of Hutton Hall.

Through her use of the Vane archive, Joan was able to take her family back a further generation and firmly linked it to Lothwaite Side for almost 100 years, from 1655 to 1757. She also learned that there were now two manorial holdings, (or tenements), each with a messuage (or dwelling house) held separately. The major part, which had formed the long-term Borrowscale holding had a manorial rent of 11s 7d and was held along with a parcel of land called Woodside with a rent of 1s 6d, giving a combined rent of 13s 1d. There was in addition a smaller part comprising a messuage and tenement with four enclosures, with a rent of 5s 6d.

Lothwaite Side in 2022- photo the author

metal range with a side oven. Outside was a very prolific, if small, vegetable/fruit garden, a pig sty and bucket loo. I can't remember the peppercorn rent but we paid it at Wythop Hall and also bought hand churned butter from them. (I remember it was interesting to find the colour and flavour of the butter changed through the year.)'



The Society's previous knowledge 1601 – 1757
 Contact with Derek Denman, who houses the Society's archive, disclosed the



Lothwaite Side on the Donald map of Cumberland, surveyed 1770

Joan's direct forebear, William Borranskill was admitted initially to Woodside in August 1665. Two years later he was described as 'William Borranskill of Lothwaiteside' in a dispute, suggesting he had taken on the larger tenement as well. When he died in 1697, his son John Borransgill was admitted to two parcels of land at a combined manorial rent of 13s 1d, being the combined larger part of Lothwaiteside and Woodside. In March 1755 his daughter Brigit Borranskaile was admitted as manorial tenant to the same property, named as Lothat Side and Woodside. In April 1757, John Borranskaile acquired the smaller part at

rent 5s 6d on the surrender of William Thompson. In October that year, the whole holding of Lothwaite Side, was surrendered by Brigit Borranskill now married to Richard France, and Alexander Hoskins was admitted. That ended the Borrowscale involvement.

Prior to her involvement in the Manorial Records Project, Joan had already found an entry in the Lorton parish burials, showing that a Thomas Borraskell of Lowthwaite side had buried a daughter Jane on 18 September 1601. Although she was unable to prove conclusively that this Thomas was a direct forebear, for our purposes, this is the earliest reference to Lothwaite Side.

More recent discoveries

I set out to see what else I could discover, particularly during the gap between 1757, when Joan Borrowscale's family connection to the property came to an end, and the 1960s when John Nichols's family had its connection. I was particularly looking for anything more than just names and dates. I used various spellings to search online sources, including local and national archive catalogues, censuses and newspapers. I have not accessed the actual documents held in the archives, only the online summaries. One class of data that is generally a starting point for research, is parish registers as they point to people who were actually resident in the parish. These are not available online for

Cumberland and it was not until I had sent an early draft to the editor, that he made me aware that he had just finished putting several local records onto a flash drive so members can borrow them. (This Wanderer has a separate article about this on page 3.) I was invited to try this out. Prior to 1865 Lothwaite Side was in Lorton Parish, but where residence is referred to, it tends to be 'Wythop'. There are baptism records for Wythop from 1792 to 1865, covering the chapel, and thereafter St Margaret's church, consecrated in 1866, which replaced it. These tend to be more specific about residence. Lothwaite Side folk could also choose to use St Cuthbert's, Embleton and the records in the Digital Archive cover 1699 – 1839, but are not searchable.

Manorial Tenants after the Borrowscalles

I uncovered some more detail from the period which Joan had summarised in her report, and without getting too bogged down in details of names, dates, mortgages, conveyances etc, it is worth adding a little detail. In a conveyance of 1747 the four enclosures comprising the smaller part of the Lothwaite property, rent 5s 6d, were named as Croft, Middlefield, Farrfield and High Meadow. Alexander Hoskins Esq, who took on both parts of Lothwaite Side in 1757, was a 'gentleman' whose residence was at Broughton Hall, Great Broughton. It was his grandson Thomas Hoskins (1800 – 1886), son of George, who built Higham Hall at Setmurthy. The family made its money from business interests in Liverpool.

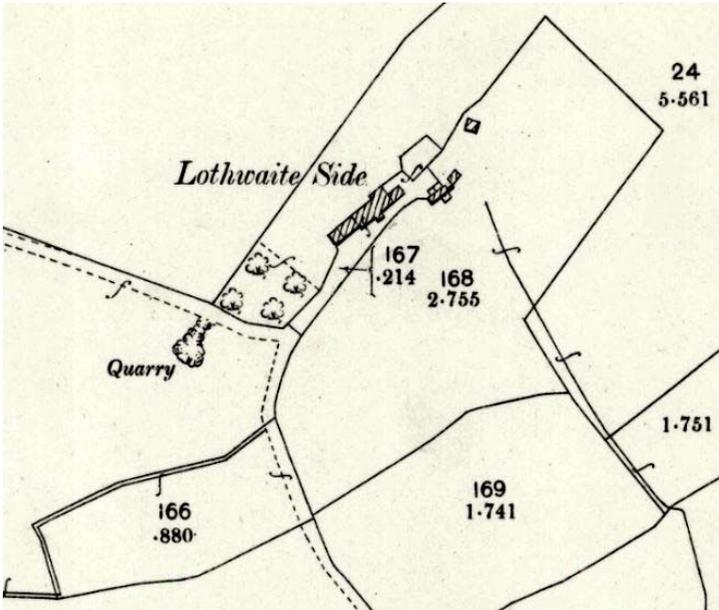
After 1757, the picture becomes complicated with numerous changes of occupiers and, apparently, ownership. Documents from 1778 – 1780 in relation to Lothatside and Woodside mention manorial rents of 3s 1d, 5s 7d and 8s 6d, which suggests that the holding has been split along different lines. The Parish registers confirm the impression gained from documents in the Cumbria archives, namely that, with a few exceptions like the Borrowscale family, there was rapid turnover of occupants. They appear in the

registers just once or twice and are then gone. Another exception is the Wilson family whose earliest appearance is at Lorton Church in 1708 when Gawen Wilson married Mary Wilson, both of Lothwaite Side. There follow regular Wilson entries; in 1723 the burial of James, a householder, between 1744 and 1778 the baptisms or burials of children of John and finally in 1782, the burial of John, a householder. He is memorialised in an inscription in Lorton Churchyard where the date of his death is given as 7 June, at the age of 66.

Enfranchisement, or purchase of the freehold

Between 1777 and 1779, Lionel Wright Fletcher as Lord of the Manor reached agreements with his tenants for the enfranchisement of lands at Wythop. In other words, the customary or manorial tenants were given the opportunity to purchase the freeholds of their tenements plus the wood growing on them. The Cumberland Pacquet in June 1779 confirms the planned enfranchisement in advertisements for land for sale at the Globe, Cocker mouth on 12 July. This included Woodside and Lothwaite Side together with 200 heath-going sheep, then being farmed by Daniel Vicars at £40 per year. The property was to be enfranchised before the sale and attention is drawn to the large quantity of woodland including oak, and the right of common on Wythop common.

Among those who were enfranchised, were John Mandale, yeoman, and John Wilson both 'of Lothatside'. When John Wilson died in 1782, his eldest son and heir was also named John, a whitesmith of Cocker mouth. Later, a George Wilson held property at Lothatside, which was purchased in 1800 by Daniel Harrison, a butcher of Dunthwaite in Setmurthy. The parish registers show continued turnover of occupiers' names, suggesting sub-letting to tenants. Finally in 1807, Sir Frederick Fletcher Vane of Armathwaite Hall, Bassenthwaite paid £1080 for the



The remaining farmhouse and barn, shown on the 1898 Ordnance Survey map.

Lothatside estate, lately held by John Wilson.

Census Information

The next source of useful information is the censuses starting in 1841 and taken every 10 years. They are available online up to 1921. Much information can be gained from censuses, and this is particularly useful to family historians. For our purposes, it is necessary to summarise, but I have included information from other sources to flesh-out the picture. 1841 is the last time there were definitely two properties in occupation. Later censuses for 1861 and 1871 showed two properties, but one was described as unoccupied.

In 1841, one household comprised Daniel Mandle, a farmer, his wife Elizabeth and their six children along with Robert Mandle who may have been Daniel's brother but was described as a servant. The other family was James Boak, an agricultural labourer, Sarah his wife and their five children. The Wythop parish register contains the baptisms of four

children of James and Sarah, showing that they were there from as early as 1836 up to 1847.

In 1851 the occupants were John Robinson, a farmer and Ann his wife, with two servants; Samuel Scott who was working on the farm, and Elizabeth Boak employed in the home.

In 1861, identifying Lothwaite Side is difficult, however the likely property was occupied by a family called Birkett; Abraham, a

widower of 69, his son and daughter-in-law, two servants and his grandson. All the adults were occupied on the farm, which comprised 350 acres.

That is the last census that specifically records farmers, and associated parish entries refer to farmers, husbandmen, householders or labourers.

Use for Country Pursuits

From 1871 all census enumerations, show that a gamekeeper was resident in the household. From 1881 the heads were gamekeepers. The implication is that the land had been let to farmers living elsewhere and the dwelling was used to house estate workers. This is borne out by the Wythop baptisms, where the first mention of a gamekeeper is in the baptism on 15 February 1865 of Mary Ann the daughter of John and Ann Kendal, gamekeeper of Lowthwaite Side.

However, moving back a bit, local newspapers show that country pursuits were important well before that. The Carlisle Journal of 21 September 1833 included Joseph Williamson of Lowthwaite in its published 'Game Lists' i.e. a list of those who have bought a licence to take

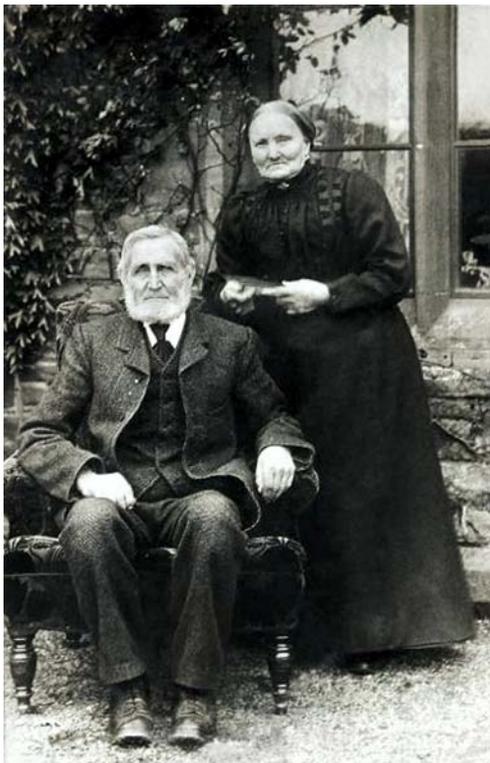
game. The same paper of 01 December 1865 (and The Sportsman of London, the Penrith Observer and the Lancaster Gazette) all carried the report of a foxhunt under the title 'Gallant Fox Hunt in the Lake District'. The Mellbrake (sic) Hounds had set off from Wythop Hall. The poor fox was chased for five and a half hours before breaking into the open at Lothwaiteside. The article praised the pack of six couples of hounds and 'many old hunters' who had hunted the same place for the last 30 years. They had never seen a pack run so close, ignoring many distractions along the way.

In 1871 the family in residence was Joseph and Dinah Spencer and their five young children. They had a gamekeeper, Joseph Dixon, lodging with them. Joseph Spencer was described as a labourer, but information found on the Mealsgate website, suggests he might have been a woodsman. The Wythop baptisms include that of Hannah Spencer, (father Joseph, a labourer) on 30 November 1872. That Mealsgate.org.uk website, within the section on the gardens at the Whitehall Estate, had a little more information about the Spencers. Dinah had been a Graham before her marriage to Joseph at Bassenthwaite Church in 1855. He later worked as a woodman for the Whitehall Estate, Mealsgate for many years, though not the 'more than 50 years' claimed on the website. The couple celebrated their golden wedding in 1905 and Joseph died in 1913 in his 80th year.

The Wythop baptisms show that Thomas Dixon was a gamekeeper at Lothwaite Side in 1876, with his wife Sarah.

In 1881, the gamekeeper was John Reid, with his wife Catherine and their four children. The Wythop baptisms record the family (spelled Reed) twice, in 1881 and 1883. The importance of game to the community is indicated by the fact that in 1881, there was also an under-gamekeeper living at WytheSyke. From this date, all the gamekeepers at Lothwaite were recruited from Scotland.

In 1891 two gamekeepers were in residence; James Wallace was with his



Joseph and Dinah Spencer, of Whitehall Lodge, celebrating their golden wedding in 1905 – photo from <http://www.mealsgate.org.uk/whithall-gardens.php>

wife Mary, while William Queen was a boarder. In 1901 William Pattinson was the gamekeeper, with his sister Sybella acting as his housekeeper. The West Cumberland Times of 12 October 1901 carries a report of the Harvest Thanksgiving at Wythop Church, and Miss Pattinson of Lothwaite Side was included in the list of those who sent flowers, grain and vegetables, and assisted with the decoration of the church. Ten years on, in 1911, William Pattison (sic) was still the gamekeeper. Now however, he had a wife, Mary and infant son whose baptism was recorded at Wythop in 1907.

In 1921 we see Charles McDuff and his family for the first time. It comprised Charles, his wife Grace and their three

children; Gordon, Charlie and Helen. Charles was a gamekeeper employed by the Hutton Estate and working in Wythop. His widowed father Peter aged nearly 80 was also living with them.

In 1934, the Penrith Observer for 11 September reports on the Keswick Show and tells us that Charles McDuff of Lothwaiteside, Wythop was a judge of four of the dog classes (shepherd's dog and bitch, wirehaired terrier dog and bitch, terrier puppy dog and bitch, and spaniel dog and bitch).

Charles and Grace, now in their 60s, were still there in the 1939 register, but Charles gave his occupation as poultry farmer with his daughter Helen assisting. Jonathan Scott, a carpenter and joiner was also listed and the fact that Helen's name had been changed to Scott, suggests that she had married him.

Personal Recollections

From this point on, I have had to rely on personal recollections and have talked to fellow member and long-term resident of Wythop Mill, Dorothy Graves, about her memories of Lothwaite Side. She remembered Charlie McDuff as a farmer, and being taken up by her father to visit, probably in the early 1940s. Once there, she would receive a glass of milk and a biscuit. To do her regular shopping in Cockermonth, Mrs McDuff would walk down across the fields and through Wythop woods to catch a bus, then having to lug the shopping back up the hill afterwards. As far as Dorothy is aware, no-one else farmed there after the McDuffs.

When the property was empty after the McDuffs had left, Dorothy remembers being taken on a school walk from Embleton School. As this was before her move to secondary school, it possibly occurred about the end of the war. The walk took them past Lothwaite Side where they found the door open. As children will, they went in for a look round. There was no furniture, but coal in the coalhouse and utterly bizarrely, there was a violin in a cupboard next to the fire grate.

Some time later, maybe in the 1950s, Joe Swainson came as shepherd for Arthur Graham at Wythop Hall. Joe and his wife, Madge (Marjorie Graham) lived for a time at Lothwaite Side, and their eldest son Raymond was born during this time. When it became available, they moved to Kelswick to try their hand at farming on their own account and their younger three children were born during this time. Both are buried in St Margaret's Churchyard, Wythop.

In the early 1960s, after a period of absence from the area while Dorothy's husband was serving in the forces, she was seeking to move back to Wythop. Her mother managed to secure the offer of a tenancy of Lothwaite Side at a rent of 17s per week, but with stone floors, water obtained via a hand-pump in the kitchen, no hot water, no electricity, and its isolated position (Dorothy had three young children), she turned it down, moving instead to East House in 1963. Surprisingly she recalls that there had been a telephone at Lothwaite Side. I asked a friend with a subscription to Ancestry, where telephone directories are available, to investigate, but she was only able to find one relevant directory record, which was for the Bassenthwaite Lake exchange in 1980 where Joe Swainson was listed at Kelswick Farm.

In Conclusion

I hope this article demonstrates the range of information that can be easily uncovered with a little searching from the comfort of home. More adventurous research, visiting archive centres and using more of the forthcoming Derwentfells Digital Archive, could provide additional information.

I have omitted numerous details which would also be useful to a family historian, as connections can quickly be discovered between many of the names mentioned here. I have a 'Pro' subscription to Find my Past (other family history websites are available) which also allows access to a considerable archive of British Newspapers that help flesh out basic details.

Robert Bridge, 1794-1857, at Lorton Hall

by Derek Denman

People familiar with Lorton will have seen the St Cuthbert's School House, adjacent to the Church and now a second home. The dedication stone on this gift to Lorton attributes it to Robert Bridge, who died at Lorton Hall on 20 December 1857 and was buried at St Cuthbert's. However, very little was known about Robert Bridge, a gentleman from Dorset who married Elizabeth Lucock Bragg of Lorton Hall in 1828.

A recent booklet by Chris Miller about the Bridge family and their property in Dorset has drawn attention to Robert Bridge's Memorandum Book, which he wrote at Lorton Hall from 1854-7, and which survives in Dorset History Centre.¹ The photo-record of the book, kindly shared by Chris, provides a good understanding of Robert Bridge, his experience of Lorton, and why he was remembered in the Sunday School House.

This article illustrates Robert Bridge's life and his time in Lorton, but also examines his interactions with and his written opinions about the society and culture into which he was unwillingly and unhappily inserted.

Robert Bridge before the marriage

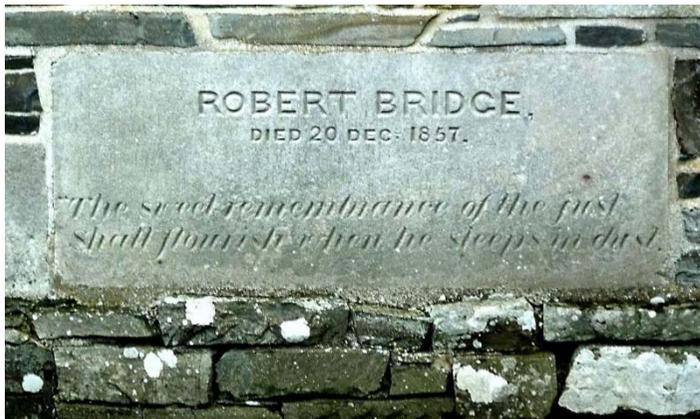
Robert Bridge was born on 15 November 1794, as a later son in the family of ten children of Robert snr, 1758-1836, and Anne Bridge of Dorchester. Robert snr was in business, unspecified. In infancy Robert suffered a 'paralytic attack' which left him with a 'great weakness of my right side', a limp, and a 'weakness of nerves'. After a 'very slender education', in 1807, aged about 14, he was sent to the farm of his uncle Thomas for five years, essentially in a role as a farm apprentice. Here he 'learnt little of the farming business' and was 'left to do much as I pleased, but without money ...'

St Cuthbert's School House, photo the author



¹ Chris Miller, *The intriguing history of a gentleman's residence in Dorset: Montevideo House*, The Edward Press, 2022. Copies are available to purchase. Please contact Derek Denman for details.

Dorset History Centre, D-BDG/3/6/52i, Bridge family archive, 1709-1954, Memorandum Book of Robert Bridge. All unreferenced quotations in this article are from the unpaginated Memorandum Book.



to tenants from 1827. Robert started to learn French, hoping that his uncle would find him a place in his Canadian mining venture, but he 'received no encouragement'. That same year son John went away to school, aged seven, and Robert, with no prospect of useful occupation from uncle John, moved to lodgings in Weymouth.

The inscription to Robert Bridge, photo the author

Robert's uncle John Bridge, 1754-1834, also came from modest circumstances but through hard work and dedication he became a half-partner in Rundell and Bridge, a major London goldsmith's and jeweller's business. He bought the Piddletrenthide estate in 1813 and installed his brother, Robert snr, and his family in the Manor House. Robert returned there from the farm and lived there for six years 'passing my time pleasantly enough but with my habitual carelessness.'

Again uncle John intervened, buying Broadwey Farm, near Weymouth, in 1818 and installing Robert, now aged about 25, as manager in 1819 at a salary of £150. This position enabled Robert to marry Julianna Moore on 26 December 1820. Their son, John Moore Bridge, was born on 25 December 1821. Unfortunately, 'milk fever' turned into 'consumption of the lungs' and Julianna died on 31 August 1823. Her death was a great loss for Robert.

On 11 September 1826, uncle John offered Robert an allowance of £400 per annum if he preferred to give up farming, which had not gone well. The farm was let

Elizabeth Lucock Bragg

The Lucock Bragg family, of Lorton Hall, has been extensively covered in the Society's publications.² Joshua Lucock, 1772-1809, of Cockermouth, married his cousin, Rebecca Wilkinson, in 1794. He bought Lorton Hall in 1800 and purchased a large estate. In 1805 he became Joshua Lucock Bragg, through inheriting his uncle's Liverpool estate, and went on to purchase the manor of Loweswater before he died in 1809, aged only 37.

Eight children were born, three in Cockermouth, of whom only Raisbeck lived to move to Lorton. Of the five born in Lorton Hall, the twins George and Elizabeth were the last, born on 6 August 1806, just three years before the death of their father. The four eldest, Raisbeck, John, Sarah, and Joshua, all became 'lunatics' quite suddenly as young adults. The twins led normal lives, though their prospects must have been damaged by the risk that they too could become afflicted or could pass a susceptibility to any children they might have.³

As children, the family appeared normal, though Joshua Lucock Bragg collected some notoriety as the squire of Lorton. In 1891 John Bolton recorded his grandmother-in-law's recollections of the

² See *Journal 52* and *Newsletter 36* for Joshua Lucock Bragg and family, and *Journal 59* for Lorton Hall generally, www.derwentfells.com

³ TNA/PRO/C211/4, Court of Chancery, Braggs commissions of lunacy, 1834

family after the death of Joshua Lucock Bragg in 1809:

Mrs Lancaster says that she remembers Mrs Bragg & family coming into Church. John & Joshua were about the same size. The two girls [Sarah and Elizabeth] were blue eyed & light haired, & they used to wear red coats made something like these common Ulsters. 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 & stood by to let Mrs Bragg pass. As she passed in George used to make a grand bow, then came the others & then George went in.⁴

When Elizabeth married Robert Bridge on 14 June 1828 her older brothers had become lunatics in 1816, 1819, and 1823, but her sister Sarah's lunacy was stated, at committal in 1834, as having been established by 1 November 1828, that is after Elizabeth's marriage at the age of 21. Robert Bridge's memorandum does not mention her siblings until an entry for 1834.

According to the accounts of the Bragg trustees, Sarah led a normal life at least up to 1823, when she came of age

and was due her legacy of £3000. She had received instruction in music and attended schools for young ladies at Crofton Hall and in Halifax. Elizabeth was away at school 1821-4, finishing at Ambleside at age eighteen. Both sisters went for a short stay at fashionable Allonby in 1823.⁵

Of the Lucock Bragg children only Elizabeth married, but she had no children other than her stepson, John Moore Bridge. The Lucock Bragg line ended in 1875, with the deaths at Lorton Hall of Sarah and John.

The Memorandum Book

Robert and Elizabeth were married at St Cuthbert's, Lorton, on 14 June 1828. Further knowledge comes only from Robert Bridge's Memorandum Book, and so it is necessary to describe the book.

The memorandum book was commenced on 10 March 1854, by which time Robert and Elizabeth had for some seven years been living at Lorton Hall and were fully responsible both for the estate and for the care, at Lorton Hall, of Elizabeth's three surviving lunatic siblings, Joshua, Sarah, and John. They had buried the heir, Raisbeck, in 1850.

Detail from John Norman's survey of the Lorton Hall Estate, 1803, L&DFLHS archive



⁴ John Bolton, 'Lorton and Loweswater 80 years ago', 1891 lecture, <http://www.derwentfells.com/pdfs/JohnBolton.pdf>

⁵ TNA/PRO/C101/5337, Court of Chancery. Bragg v Wilkinson 1838. Accounts of the estate of Joshua Lucock Bragg, deceased

For the three years to 1857 the book was a contemporary account, but before 1854 it was retrospective. It is well described by the opening statement: 'This Memorandum Book compiled from others of older date is intended for a useful reference in matters of Business and domestic occurrences with some particulars of my little property, my works, and my ways, mistakes and misfortunes.'

The books of an older date are unknown, but the many literary quotations added throughout appear to date from 1854.

The book starts with a comprehensive record of assets and the financial position of the Bridges and of the Lorton Hall Trust Estate, together with an identification of the relevant papers. Then follows a chronological account of his life, heavily biased towards financial and legal matters and very thin on people and personal relationships, except where they affect his financial interests. His mistakes and misfortunes predominate over his achievements, which were very few, and he clearly regretted his early wasted opportunities for self-improvement, which was the Victorian imperative. While he took some personal responsibility in the book, there is a clear sequence of misfortune at the hands of those whom he considers have let him down in some way. Even his uncle, to whom he owed all his good fortune, was judged a mixed blessing due to having natural children, without marriage, who shared his bequests.

His greatest sadness was the loss of his first wife Julianna, at which point some pages have been removed. Although he had been married to Elizabeth for 26 years when he started the memorandum book there is no recorded emotion in the writing of his time with 'my present wife', though he cared for her during illness. However, he was clearly deeply concerned about the development and choices of his son in the 1840s and 1850s.

The book is sprinkled with apposite literary quotations, which provide an insight into his feelings about past and present events.

Circumstances of the marriage

In 1827, some 27 years before writing this account, he recalled that his son first went away to school. In August 'I therefore [lacking employment by uncle John] found myself left in the shallows to lounge away amongst the idle society of Weymouth.

About this time I became acquainted with Elizabeth my present wife and began to think I should be happier to marry again.'

It may be that Elizabeth was visiting or holidaying in Weymouth, rather than being part of the idle Society, but nothing more was worth recording, except that he started reading books at this time.

On 2 March 1828 he dismissed his servants and then travelled alone towards Lorton, taking in a tour of North Wales on the way, climbing Snowdon.

'1828 Whit Monday. Arrived at Lorton Hall. 1828 June 14th I married Elizabeth second daughter of Joshua Lucock Bragg of Lorton Hall Cumberland. A magistrate of the County and whose Grandfather was Sheriff of the County in the year of the rebellion in 1745. [Wife's Grandfather described]

My wife Elizabeth Bridge was born on the 6th of August 1806.'

Life in Dorset, to 1842

After their marriage Robert and Elizabeth 'returned to the South through North Wales to Aberystwith where my father and my son and two of my sisters joined us.'

They took lodgings at Weymouth and in 1829 took a cottage at Nolton near Rampton, 'to live frugally'. In August 1829 Robert 'was corresponding with my wife's trustees in order to obtain her legacy of £3000 under her father's will'. This was received on 30 December 1830, and in April 1832 he 'Bought with part of my wife's legacy the dwelling house at Wyke for £800'.

The house at Wyke was their residence until 1842, when they moved to Westmorland. During that period Robert lived the life of a gentleman, taking a part in local affairs, though it seems not much in society. He recorded various tours, and



Lorton Hall, the Church and the Sunday School on the Ordnance Survey, 1863

visits to Cumberland and Lorton Hall. There were visits by Mrs Bragg to Dorset.

In 1834 uncle John died and Robert's family inherited some £200,000 of assets. Robert was given Broadway Farm, which he rented out and later assigned to his son. However, with this inheritance came many tangled financial relationships, and in particular his benefit from the jewellery business depended on its management by his older brothers who, it seems, took full advantage of their position. The management of money and assets seem to have become a time-consuming and stressful preoccupation for Robert, though he seems to have become competent in the processes.

The running of the Lorton Hall estate and the care of its four lunatics was managed by Mrs Bragg and Elizabeth's twin brother George. In 1839 Mrs Bragg died, and Elizabeth and Robert became jointly responsible, with George, for their four siblings. Just before 1 December 1840 Elizabeth suffered a 'severe depression of spirits without apparent cause'. By February this was worse with

'frequent fits of hysteria and nervous excitement'. In April 1841 the depression was eventually treated with daily morphine which produced 'tranquility of mind and refreshing sleep' and by 29 May Elizabeth was 'quite recovered'. However, she had another long period of serious depression in 1855-6 in Lorton.

On 17 May 1842, Robert let his house for four months 'having decided on visiting Cumberland'. He did not record the reason for the visit, but that was the end of residence in Dorset, and they would be gradually drawn to Lorton Hall. 29 May was 'my last Sunday at Wyke'.

Life in Cumberland and Westmorland

On 1 June 1842 he 'strolled around the Lake District with my wife on a donkey'. Probably they stayed at first at Lorton Hall, because on 3 October he left Lorton and arrived by railway at Weymouth on 4 October, to deal with the rental of Wyke. He signed the lease, for seven years, on 28 October. On 30 October he noted an agreement to rent Lord Tyrconnell's cottage at Bowness on Windermere from 1 November until 1 May 1843. This was found by Elizabeth, and he arrived there to join her on 17 November 1842. 'The

change of scene betwixt Weymouth and Lorton is great – the brass band fashionable promenade and dashing dragoon officers at the former place. The lone hills and rustic society at the other. – Coarse and sordid.'

From May 1 they rented Langrigg Hall in Bromfield parish, Cumberland, moving on to Flimby Cottage on 30 April 1844. By May 28 they were in lodgings in Keswick, but this was for a short period before taking a seven-year lease on Derwent Lodge, where they clearly intended to remain.

July 9th [1847] My wife and I were called out of our bed at midnight in consequence of her brother George having met with an accident. We arrived in time to see him alive but insensible. He had been out for his usual drive when not far from Loweswater the pole of his carriage broke and caused the horses to run away which induced him to jump out, this produced a concussion of the brain and apoplexy.

July 10th. On this day Mr G L Bragg died This death of her twin brother is a great grief to my wife now left in charge of an afflicted family.

Life at Lorton Hall, 1847-57

The estates of Joshua Lucock Bragg were held by trustees after his death in 1809, and by 1847 had long been under the control of the notorious Court of Chancery and its legal costs. In 1843 the estates had been put up for sale, by order of the Court, and George Lucock Bragg had purchased Lorton Hall and the 26 acres of land, cottages, and the Packhorse public house which, on his death, came to Elizabeth Bridge, together with a life interest in other estates in trust. Robert Bridge was most reluctant to take on Lorton Hall and its four inmates:

It was with great hesitation that I undertook the office and care of these lunatics and their estates under such disheartening circumstances and was reluctant to give up my pleasant residence at Derwent Lodge but was induced to do so as my wife wished it in the hope that with the allowances by the

Court of Chancery for the maintenance of Mrs Bridges Brothers and Sister (about £500 per annum) and a house rent free I might with a considerable outlay at the commencement find means to put things in better order and to allow my Son a better income than I otherwise could out of my own property.

He valued the net annual value of the bequest at £128. George had made two bequests, to the National School in Cocker-mouth and £100 to Lorton School, which were paid by 1848.

Robert surveyed the Lorton Hall estate and found its condition poor:

1847 August 15th ... On a careful inspection of the house and estate I found both in a state of delapidation the rain penetrating in many parts of the roof making new lead work requisite - the large sitting rooms wanting paper and proper chimney pieces and grates – the house scantily furnished – the timber of all of the outhouses and stables with floors all decayed – the river banks or Guards for want of guarding in a bad state and trees swept away by the floods.

The estates with poor and sordid tenants and empoverished by their having no certain tenure. Fences very bad with very few gates and scarcely any gateposts. Farmhouses of Church Stile and High Side without common comforts of sealed bedrooms. Barn doors rotten. Drainage throughout both in farm premises and the wet lands of the farms utterly choked neglected and many acres unproductive for want of draining and the waterbanks requiring guarding throughout. Game exterminated. Add to this two drunken men servants in house. Cottages inhabited with the poorest of the working classes & delapidation.

So the best interests of the two of them, Elizabeth to support her siblings and Robert to provide for his son, were judged to coincide by taking on Lorton Hall, its estate and its inmates. The price was a life of work in estate management rather than a life of leisure. Plus a personal



**Lorton Farm at Broadway, Weymouth,
photo Chris Miller**

financial investment in the improvement of the property which, by 1848, 'greatly drained my purse. And that keeping the two housekeepings at Derwent Lodge and Lorton Hall are very expensive and tiresome.'

Commitment to Lorton Hall.

Despite projects such as an orchard of fruit trees at Lorton Hall in 1847, Robert did not fully commit until 1849. On 29 December 1849 he heard that his son, John Moore Bridge, now 27, wished to marry his cousin, Emma Bridge, and asked for consent and support. Robert consented but expected John 'add a little to his income by his own exertions'. However, by 3 January Robert had offered his son an allowance of £300 per annum. 'In order to furnish this income for my Son I must use rigid Economy and give up Society, the latter without regret.' That rigid economy required giving up Derwent Lodge. On 5 January 1849 'I have therefore decided on making Lorton Hall my only residence – and have this day put that resolution in force by beginning to move my furniture from Derwent Lodge'. There was now no escape, and lasting regret.

In January 1849 son John resolved to become a clergyman. He gained his BA in

in 1845 and his MA in 1850. On 22 September 1850 'My Son was ordained Deacon to the Curacy of St Johns in the Vale near Keswick with a stipend of £45.' He was ordained priest at Carlisle on 14 September 1851. John spent three years at St John's but his inclination was to be a country gentleman, without the responsibility of cure of souls, and not in Cumberland.

On 5 March 1850 Raisbeck Lucock Bragg, the heir of Joshua, died at Lorton Hall aged 54. After the cost and work of the funeral and Chancery proceedings, this simplified Robert's life and improved the financial position a little. 'One less to support' but now still three lunatics remaining, who would all outlast Robert Bridge when he died on 20 December 1857, aged 63.

Magistracy and social improvement.

Outside of Lorton Hall, Robert's main achievement was to be appointed a magistrate in 1853. 'It is some satisfaction to reflect that notwithstanding my humble beginnings, negligences and ignorances without patronage or solicitation I have obtained this rural honor.'

Through his work as a magistrate he would engage with the condition of the working classes and the reasons for which they appeared at the Cockermouth bench. So he had some practical experience,

rather than the simple disdain of one who had risen to gentry status and wished to differentiate.

Though his retrospective comments, written in 1854, on his dissatisfaction with the rustic folk of the Lake District and Lorton imply a worse state than in Dorset, his early experience as a Dorset farm apprentice with his uncle Thomas had clearly damaged him.

... from his indifference to me and my carelessness I learned little of the farming business. ... I spent or rather lost five years without books or any means of improvement. ... The society that frequented my uncle's house was farmers who divided their and attention betwixt their business – smuggling and tipling [sic]. ... I had mortifications to endure from the temper of my uncle's vulgar wife who had two daughters living with her by a former husband.

But it did seem to be his view that the rustic classes in rural Cumberland and Westmorland were more backward than elsewhere, a view that would chime with that of Harriet Martineau in Ambleside, writing a few years earlier. Like her and many in the district, Robert Bridge wished for the improvement of the rustic people, their farming, their dwellings, and their towns.

A stranger looking from the Ambleside Road upon this enchanting view [the Vale of Keswick and Derwent Lodge] would imagine that its cottages of gentility were inhabited by a society of refined social communion but a little experience would teach him that it does not differ from other places in disunion and sectarian cant. The gentry for the most part passing their time in idle routine of gossip and insipid luxury, the working classes given to drunkenness looking upon visitors as their prey to be victimised by their imposition.

The accusation of sectarian cant, made above about the time of leaving Derwent Lodge in 1849, was reflected also in his comment about one William Moore in Dorset, who in 1840 Robert considered

to be misusing his elderly father, the father of Robert's first wife. William was judged to be 'hiding his selfish schemes under methodistical cant and incoherent chatter'. Robert clearly was not tolerant of protestant religious dissent and wished for unity under the established Church.

Robert Bridge's view of Lorton and its improvement

In Lorton, Robert supported improvement of its population, but increasingly saw it through the lens of the established Church. The Cumberland Pacquet of 29 August 1848 reported that 'The children of the Sunday School established at Lorton, by the late Mrs. Bragg, were entertained by the lady of Robert Bridge. Esq., [in] the pleasure grounds of the Hall, with tea ...'.

On 14 January 1857, in his last year, Robert recorded his poor opinion about Lorton and the prospects for improvement:

Lorton remains much as I found it in 1847. About half the people dissenters and a considerable part ill conditioned and ignorant as neglect and bad example can make them. Licentiousness, tipling & poaching – the affairs of the Parish managed by a clique of Farmers, who through their influence into the scale of opposition to any improvement that would add in the slightest degree to the Parish Rates. The school originally endowed by Churchmen – fallen into the hands of dissenters who will do nothing for its benefit, but determined to keep out the Parson of the Parish. Perhaps this state of things may be attributed to the incapacity of the nonentity incumbent for this last 30 years or so [William Armitstead, curate 1825-64] combined with the small divisions of the estates and there many of them mortgaged, so that no one has a strong interest or much influence. ... The village ... would not allow a few subscribers to warm the Church with a stove unless I would insure it and pay the Annual Premium. And my offer of £50 towards rebuilding the schoolroom on condition that the Trustees would resign in favour of the Officiating

Minister and Churchwardens was also declined. [page cut out]

On 3 March 1857 the Cumberland Pacquet reported that 'William Armitstead [curate of Lorton] has become annual subscriber of 10s. to the Lorton Mutual Improvement Society, and Robert Bridge, Esq., of Lorton, ... forwarded [a] donation 10s. [to] the funds of the same society'. Robert Bridge made no mention of that society in his book, unless cut out, nor any further comment about Lorton, though his entries on other matters continued into November 1857.

Joshua Lucock Bragg had contributed the land for Lorton School just before his death in 1809, and George Lucock Bragg left an unconditional bequest of £100 on his death in 1847, but that would not have suited Robert Bridge when he died in 1857, due to the lack of control by the church. Instead, his wife built a Sunday School in his memory, owned by the church and close to the Church. For comment on the disposal of the Sunday School by the Parochial Church Council, see *A Cumberland Valley*.⁶

Lorton House at Broadway, Weymouth,
www.lortonhouse.co.uk



The condition of Lorton in the 1850s

Robert Bridge's assessment of the changes in Lorton and of economic conditions appear to be well-founded. In the case of the Lorton Hall Estate, this had been built by Joshua Lucock Bragg during the Napoleonic wars when the price of land was high due to the high price of grain, including oats. However, much of his compulsive purchasing was based on borrowed money. So that in the post-war depression and through the 1820s the rental value of the estates fell, as did the capital value. The mortgages reduced both net income and equity. The purchase by John Marshall of the manor of Loweswater and the Bragg estates in Loweswater and Brackenthwaite by 1824, for some £21,000, must have provided a lifeline for the Bragg trustees – perhaps enabling Elizabeth's £3,000 legacy to be provided to Robert. Add to this the control and costs of the vulturous Court of Chancery, who held a £1000 charge on the estate bequeathed by George to Elizabeth in 1847, and the cause of any dilapidation in the estate taken on by Robert is clear.

At the level of the yeoman, that much valorised and romanticised, but also much criticised owner and farmer of his

⁶ Ron George, *A Cumberland Valley*, Bovate Publications, 2003, p.184

own land, there was fundamental change in farming which worked against the viability of their small unimproved farms. Through the eighteenth century these had been mixed arable and pastoral farms, capable of sustaining the occupants and providing some goods for market. After the Napoleonic wars grain imports, increasingly of wheat, tended to make the oat production in Lorton for sale less viable. After the repeal of the corn laws in 1845, and with the coming of railway transport, the inevitable change from mixed farming to pastoral farming was in full swing. Those who had borrowed money against the value of the farm, perhaps just to pay child portions owed to emigrating siblings, would lose equity and would probably have to sell up, or lost their farms to the mortgagees. Even the large Pearson Bridgend estate was heavily mortgaged. Keeping the parish rates low was a necessity for keeping small farms viable for longer.

That change from mixed to pastoral farming reduced both the value of the arable land and the farming population, but High Lorton, with its good position on the turnpike road, the Whinlatter Road, replaced much of its farming population with families engaged in trade and industry, becoming similar to Cockermouth in character. Those families were more likely to support the Methodist chapel of 1840, and they contributed to 'half the people are dissenters'. The church parish, rather than the township, included much of Whinfell where there were many more dissenting Quakers, who preferred a Quaker schooling.

The battle in England between the dissenters and the established church for control of state-mandated education, had been raging since the 1830s and would continue way beyond Robert Bridge's time. He must have been very naive to think that he might buy control of Lorton School for £50. In Loweswater, John Marshall, lord of the manor and a dissenter, paid far more for the building of

the new school in 1839, and he was content to allow the village to choose the curate to control the education.

Robert Bridge in Lorton

The improvement of Lorton and its inhabitants required leadership, as Robert Bridge identified above, but he did not provide it:

Having but little pecuniary interest in the place beyond what is absorbed in my weighty responsibilities and no one to share the cost of any beneficial purpose I have been content to live peaceably without attempting improvement beyond the great outlay of putting my wives neglected estate in tenantable order.

Lorton Hall had once been the seat of the Winder family, who had been lords of a third of Low Lorton. Through the eighteenth century the Winders had been replaced by a string of nonentities, and it was only with the coming of Joshua Lucock in 1800 that the role of Squire was properly filled, though he was a mixed blessing. After his death in 1809 Lorton Hall again ceased to provide the seat of leadership for Lorton, and Robert Bridge, from 1847-57, was not the man to change that. The social leadership, plus philanthropy, would shift to High Lorton and would be provided by William Lancaster Alexander, from the new mansion at Oakhill.⁷

Robert Bridge had two purposes in Lorton. The first was to manage and improve Lorton Hall and its land and cottages, plus the three farms which were still in the control of Chancery, that is Church Stile, Holme Farm and Highside. Whether they had been neglected by George Lucock Bragg and how much of Robert's personal fortune had been expended may have been exaggerated, as he often seems to overstate the failings of others, the magnitude of his required labours, and the diminution in his finances. In 1843, just four years before

⁷ See *Journal 45* for Lorton Park and *Wanderer* November 2022 for W L Alexander

Robert's survey the sale particulars had claimed that 'The mansion house has lately been much enlarged, and the Coach-house, Stables, and other Buildings are in excellent order and thorough repair'.⁸ However, Robert did leave his wife in a position to control and manage the estates for the benefit of herself and her three lunatic siblings, until she died in 1865. Elizabeth had greatly benefited from his labours and support.

His second purpose was to provide the maximum income and inheritance for his son, all of which had originated from uncle John. He made over the Broadway farm to his son but retained a life interest. No available parish in Cumberland was good enough for John Moore Bridge, and he and his wife left for a curacy at Hamble near Southampton on 27 March 1854, leaving Robert 'living remote and unfriended', though pleased that his son had an occupation. However, by September 1856 John found that various physical and mental issues prevented him from doing any clerical duties. Robert gave his son at least £1500 by July 1857 and agreed that money 'should be laid out on building a house on Broadway Farm for his residence'. This was completed in 1858, after Robert's death, and it was named Lorton House.⁹ With his inheritance John did not need any further occupation.

Robert Bridge

From his memorandum book written between 1854 and 1857, the strong impression is that Robert Bridge was dissatisfied with his life, with his inescapable position in Lorton, and with most other people in and around his past and present life. His humble upbringing did not prepare him for the social life of a gentleman, an opportunity which was gradually handed to him through the gifts and bequests of his uncle John. Both clearly felt in 1826 that the 31-year-old Robert had not succeeded in managing Broadway farm for his uncle. Robert's acceptance of the allowance of £400 to do nothing, the end

of any occupation until 1847, was later noted by Robert as a specific past mistake, and a more general problem, 'knowing that want of occupation is one of the chief sources of unhappiness'. However, the chief cause of unhappiness for Robert was the loss of his first wife in 1823.

What is notable is that Robert, even with financial means, did not at any point take charge of his own life nor decide on its future course for himself. Instead, the course of his life was determined by others, and if the result was unsatisfactory to him then he would be sure to apply much of the blame to others – though he was also self-critical.

The major turning point in his life was his marriage to Elizabeth Bragg in 1828, before which he had no known connexion with Cumberland, but after which he was ineluctably drawn towards his eventual role as a small estate and financial manager for the Bragg family, in the parish of Lorton. The marriage followed his lack of occupation in 1827 and his descent into the 'idle society of Weymouth', where presumably he met Elizabeth as a visitor.

It is significant that after this meeting he developed his strong interest in reading for self-improvement. This suggests that she contributed more than her fortune and her interesting family, though nothing was recorded explicitly. This reading enabled him to annotate his book, in 1854, with apposite quotations. Immediately after his recollection of meeting Elizabeth, when he 'began to think I should be happier to marry again', he quoted the following from *Hudibras*, the mock-heroic satirical Restoration poem by Samuel Butler, which unusually has a strong theme promoting the superiority of women.

'Whate'er we do or perpetrate
We do but row, we are steered by fate.'

Robert did the rowing but he had realised that Elizabeth had steered their boat.

⁸ CASW/DDIX/Box4/20, Sale Particulars of the Lorton Hall Estate, 1843

⁹ Chris Miller, *MVH*, p.28