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## Society News

### Message from the Chair

In the present Covid-19 Emergency, it became inevitable that the Society's programme of events would be significantly disrupted. It was fortunate, however, that it was possible for Society members and visitors to meet as planned on 12 March, and very pleasing amid the uncertainty that not only was Mark Hatton able to deliver his Talk but also there was a large audience present.

The Committee has had to postpone the Society's Annual General Meeting from the usual Thursday in June to a date yet to be fixed. We will give 28 days' notice when we are sure that it can be held. The May meeting, when Professor Peter Roebuck was due to deliver a Talk on cattle droving in Cumbria has, with regret had to be cancelled. Members' attention is drawn to the fact that they can read about the subject in his book *Cattle Droving in Cumbria, 1600-1900*, published by Bookcase. In the ongoing uncertainty as to how long the Emergency's restrictions will continue it remains to be seen whether it will be possible for the Talks scheduled for June, July and September to go ahead.

Apart from the Talks, the planned guided walk exploring the mining history in the Newlands valley led by Mark Hatton has been postponed, and currently the Committee hopes it will be possible for it to take place in October. The intended outing to Allonby and Silloth has been cancelled, but the Committee hopes that a relaxation of the rules will allow the walks led by Derek Denman exploring the history of Embleton, Lorton, and Loweswater to go ahead in August.

Regrettably, as Members and other readers will appreciate, it is simply impossible in the current Emergency to be definite about any future dates. Committee members therefore ask for your patience, and we shall ensure that you are kept informed about a revised programme and plans for the months ahead.

Charles Lambrick

## Our provisional programme for 2020

Events for April and May and our AGM have had to be cancelled. We may have to cancel other activities. We will call our AGM with 28 days' notice, and we hope to re-arrange some cancelled events for later in the year.

11 Jun 20	<i>From Roundhouse to Shelling: archaeological surveys of early settlement sites in the Loweswater and Buttermere valleys</i>	Peter Style
9 July 20	<i>The Border Reivers –Romance and Reality</i>	Max Loth-Hill
9, 16, & 23 Aug 20	Historical walks: medieval Lorton, Loweswater & Embleton. Arrangements tbc.	Organiser Derek Denman
10 Sep 20	<i>The Pilgrimage of Grace in Cumberland and Westmorland 1536</i>	Dick O'Brien
12 Nov 20	<i>Who shot Percy Toplis – the Monocled Mutineer</i>	Dr Jim Cox

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 2019/20

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The next *Wanderer* will be published on 1 August 2020. Please send items to Derek Denman, by 1 July.

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

## The Wanderer

Due to the current restrictions, this edition of the *Wanderer* has been produced with the minimum people involved in production of the printed version, and with minimum travel. It also includes more material and of a broader range.

There are more pages this time, the printed *Wanderer* has no colour images, to keep costs down. The email and website version has colour where appropriate, plus many hyperlinks to click on.  
<http://derwentfells.com/pdfs/wanderer/-wanderermay20.pdf>

## Meeting Report

### Talk: German Miners under the Derwent Fells

12 March 2020

Mark Hatton, who is a Trustee of Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society, addressed members of the Society and visitors on the Thursday evening just before the Covid-19 emergency lockdown was put in place. The large audience was

treated to a very well delivered and illustrated Talk.

Mark began by making the point that its mining and mineral wealth is a largely hidden dimension of the Lake District's heritage and, while most of its mines are scheduled ancient monuments, they are inherently dangerous places. Although mining had taken place in Cumberland from Neolithic times, the focus of Mark's Talk was the mining which began in the 16th century. He explained that, when she became Queen, Elizabeth I found a divided and bankrupt nation with a debased currency. She immediately recognised the urgent need to reform her realm's coinage.

It was essential to find silver, copper and gold deposits to mint new coinage, and to produce bronze to make carding wire for the woollen industry and brass cannon for the Royal Navy. In the absence of any English body of scientists, let alone metallurgists, to look to the Queen decided to seek assistance from abroad. She called on the established expertise of miners and metallurgists from southern Germany. To that end a joint venture was set up between members of her Court and a German trading company with large interests in mines in southern Germany. That company put up more than half the capital and the joint venture, the Company of Mines Royal, was granted a monopoly for mining rights and for patents associated with the new technology of metallurgy.

After an initial survey carried out by Daniel Hechstetter in 1563, when he decided that the area of Cumberland with Keswick at its centre showed most promise for the new venture, German miners and metallurgists from Augsburg in the Tyrol together with their families began to arrive in the following year. Not only an industrial and technological but also a social revolution was brought to an area which was suffering deep underlying poverty. Whereas the social range of indigenous people is estimated as having been little more than 10 miles, the arrival

of the miners meant that people from 1,000 miles away had come to interact socially with them. They took up lodgings wherever they could in hamlets and farmhouses.

Mark drew attention to the arms of the Company of Mines Royal which depicts miners as they may have looked, alien-like, to the local population.

Mark drew attention to the rich source of social information provided by the parish registers of Crosthwaite Church, in which the German miners and their families are referred to as 'Teutronics' or 'Dutch'. He cited examples of inter-marriage, and he provided statistics about marriages and births. He also mentioned the tensions that arose between the communities and the possible role that the Earl of Northumberland, owner of Newlands valley, played in fermenting trouble before he lost a court case, whereby he sought to gain an interest in the mining, which established that, due to the precious metal content, the mines belonged to the Crown.

The Talk concluded with explanations of why, by reference to the Goldscope mine in the Newlands valley and to the smelter established at Brigham by the river Greta, the German mining and metallurgical technology was so technically advanced.

After a lively question and answer session Mark was warmly thanked by all present for a very stimulating and informative evening.

*Charles Lambrick*

## Articles

### ***They Lie in Foreign Fields – Robert Mounsey***

*by Walter Head*

In the booklet *They Lie in Foreign Fields*, Sheila and I researched the details of all the soldiers from the six local parishes who are listed on the War Memorials of the respective parishes, see <http://derwentfells.com/pdfs/foreignfields.pdf>



**Private Robert Mounsey.** Photograph courtesy of Alan Thompson

There is however one Lorton born man, Robert Mounsey, who lost his life in WWI who is not listed on the local War Memorials. Assisted by Alan Thompson, grandson of Robert's brother Archibald, we have compiled the following.

Robert Mounsey was born in Lorton on 2 October 1876, the son of John and Mary Mounsey nee Ritson. We have no baptism record yet. John was born at Aspatria in 1829, and Mary in 1834 at Oulton. They married on 26 January 1864 in St Michael's Church, Burgh by Sands, with the marriage registered at Carlisle. Robert had seven siblings; Mary Eleanor 1864, William 1865, Archibald 1867, James 1868, Frances 1870, William 1872, Joseph 1875 and Robert 1876. All were born in Lorton and the first three were baptised in St Cuthbert's Church, Lorton, but the remainder were not baptised there. At various times the family lived at Dovenby, Holme Farm in Lorton, the Pack Horse Inn in Lorton, and Crag Farm at Papcastle.

Robert attended Lorton School, starting there on 12 July 1881. He also attended the Sunday school and was a member of the church choir. Robert gave his occupation as farmer's son, aged 26, when he married Sarah Whitehouse, aged 23, a descendant of the huntsman

John Peel. They married on 10 December 1902 at the Independent Chapel in Workington. Robert then secured work as a domestic gardener, employed by Lord Downe at Danby Lodge near Grosmont, and was employed there until he enlisted. Robert and Sarah lived at Park Hill, Danby, Grosmont.

Robert enlisted at Castleton, originally in the 20th (1st Tyneside Scottish) then in the 1st/4th Northumberland Fusiliers (Territorials) at Castleton York, as private 31596. His regimental number indicates enlistment between 8 and 13 November 1915. At this time Sarah and their daughters, Mary Louise and Winifred, returned to live at 1 Pilgrim Street in Workington. Sarah died 8 April 1948 and was buried in Salterbeck Cemetery.

In January 1916 Robert embarked with his regiment for continued training in France before proceeding to the front line as a rifleman in number 9 section.

In April 1918 Robert received shrapnel wounds and was treated in No. 9 General Hospital at Rouen, France, and died there on 9th April 1918 from the wounds received in battle, aged 42.

Robert was buried in St Sever Cemetery Extension at Rouen in grave reference P.IX. F. 4B. Robert always said that "his thoughts ever turned home when his pals and he tramped many a weary mile to the tune of John Peel".

Robert was awarded the British War Medal, the Victory Medal, and his family received the bronze plaque awarded to each family of soldiers killed. (There is a collection of these plaques mounted on the wall in St John's Church Workington but the one for Robert does not appear to be one of them). Sarah, as a widow with children, received a pension of £9-18-3 paid on 17 June 1918 and a war gratuity of £8-0-0 paid on 25 November 1919.

Robert is not listed on the War Memorial at Lorton or Workington but is on the Roll of Honour at St Hilda's, Danby and on the Castleton & Danby War Memorial.

## 'Thorstein of the Mere': The Collingwoods and History

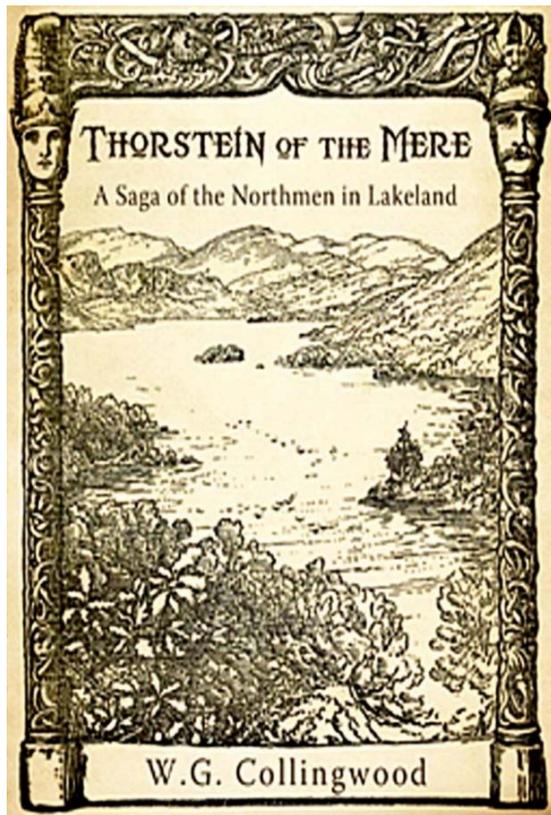
by Tim Stanley-Clamp

In *The Language of the Landscape* Angus Winchester reminds us of how prone we are to being deceived when it suits us. In the chapter on stories and myth-making attached to the Lakes, 'Storied Ground', he contrasts the reality of Rannerdale's history with the account given of it by Nicholas Size in *The Hidden Valley*. Literally thousands of visitors descend on the slopes and fields under Rannerdale Knotts every Spring to marvel at the bluebells, most of those who have heard the story no doubt fully aware that they do not represent the re-florescence of the blood of Norman soldiers defeated in battle there 900 years ago, but quite content to enjoy the suggestion for its romantic blend of the magical and the sanguinary.

The same chapter deals with Rosemary Sutcliffe's take on the story in *The Shield Ring*, written for children thirty years later, and also with W G Collingwood's *Thorstein of the Mere*, published in 1895, still in print but little read these days. All three are fiction (though Size's publication, aided and abetted by Hugh Walpole, who probably should have known better, pretends to be based in fact) but do they all fail completely as history? Is it possible to do 'historical reality' through the medium of a work of fiction? Size was simply making things up, while Rosemary Sutcliffe was making use of the fiction to entertain, though perhaps she hoped there would be an element of instruction in her novel too. Collingwood, though, believed himself to be doing real history, to be communicating important truths about the past. The chapter from *The Language of the Landscape* deals less harshly with Collingwood's claims than with the others', but Angus Winchester's

scepticism about its value as history is clear enough.

We habitually take works of imagination seriously as purveyors of truth in other fields. No-one has ever seen Crummock Water looking just as it appears in Turner's painting of it but it seems true to us in important ways. Novels which deal with the past are works of imagination but Tolstoy in *War and Peace* and George Eliot in *Middlemarch* chose to put their characters to work in a past which they tried very hard to realize truthfully. They are asking us to think of them as historians as well as novelists and it's hard to imagine an attentive reader who is not better informed about the Napoleonic Wars and provincial England in the 1830s after reading them.



Sketch by W G Collingwood of son Robin reading a review of 'Thorstein'. Abbot Hall Gallery

This might form part of Collingwood's general defence of his novel as a work of genuine history, but if we take a line through the testimony of his son, Robin, the matter goes more deeply than simply stating the right of creative artists to comment on the past intelligently. According to family correspondence, Robin was a very active collaborator in the writing of *Thorstein of the Mere*. Later in life he would describe working with his father on Thorstein the book as his 'first experience of real history'. Much of what he meant by this is evident in *The Idea of History*, published posthumously in 1946. Its arguments are detailed and at times very complex but the central idea is plain enough. If History wants to be taken seriously as a science, he says, it must devote itself to the study of the human intellect in action. Narratives about the past are not in themselves History. For example, recounting the stages through which the human species evolved is not history and neither are the narratives of the paleontologist and the geologist, though they might be useful in describing the context in which human beings act; not as natural organisms but as rational creatures capable of thought.

Unlike the natural scientist in the laboratory the historian is dealing with past events which have by definition no material reality, the evidence for which is often partial, or equivocal. Instead of 'gaping' at them (as he put it) we have to put our imaginations to work in analysing and re-constructing them so that they mean something. We create mental pictures which fill in gaps based on what we already know. So, at some point after 850, Scandinavians who came from Norway originally via the northern isles travelled across the Irish sea and settled in Cumbria. The imagination has 'interpolated' a necessary connection between the documented presence of Norsemen in Ireland and the dense concentration of Old Norse place names in Cumbria. Based on the available factual evidence (if you just make things up you're writing a novel and nothing else) this provides our narrative with a basis for its 'outside' as Collingwood put it, with the aspects which would have been accessible to our senses. It counts as knowledge even though we have no documentary evidence of a single journey bringing a Norwegian to Furness. But the real work of the historian begins when they enter into the thoughts and motivations of the actors: to use his own term, when they 're-enact' them and uncover the narrative's 'inside'. Imagining the 'outside' of events is only really worth doing - is only History - when it is accompanied by a re-enactment of their 'inside'.

Collingwood Senior's practical starting point for the writing of the novel was a map of Cumbria devised forty years earlier showing all the Old Norse place names its author could find. Collingwood was well aware of its many mistakes - many of our local place-names were attributed to imagined Scandinavian notables - but

nevertheless, when he added those he knew to be accurate to the wealth of dialect words taken from Old Norse which were still in use around him in Cumbria, Collingwood felt confident that he had enough concrete linguistic evidence to make a start on reconstructing the historical setting. So, he took the name of his hero from the old name for Coniston Water, Thurston Mere. A letter of the time tells of his excitement at discovering a family in nearby Nibthwaite with a name – Swainson – which he believed might be traced back to the earliest Scandinavian settlers. (Thorstein's father was given this name, Swein.) The same letter describes how, digging one day with a friend, he discovered the remains of an ancient dwelling on Peel Island in Coniston Water (the model for Wild Cat Island which occupied Arthur Ransome's fictional children in *Swallows and Amazons*). His work on the geology of the region taught him the novel's main Lakeland settings: the agricultural land between the fells and the Solway, the densely forested uninhabited valleys and the open moorland which made up most of the higher ground. Meanwhile his archaeological studies provided another layer of the evidence he was thinking of when he wrote that he had '... tried to stick as closely to ascertainable facts as I can'.

The story itself changed several times in the course of its writing. For one thing, Collingwood seems not to have started with a settled view of what had happened. His researches were carried out alongside the writing of the novel so that much of what he learned at this time as a geologist, an archaeologist and a linguist was motivated by the search for historical accuracy. At a deeper level, his thinking about the Vikings themselves was evolving as he studied them and re-imagined their lives as they made the difficult transition from 'warriors and rovers' to 'settlers and traders.' This helped in the creation of a richer, more layered story than the one he started

with. His first draft did not have either the central relationship between the young Northman and the Celtic woman he would marry or all but a few hints at the pagan newcomers' progressive conversion to Christianity. In the finished version a family is forced to leave the Isle of Man in the first quarter of the tenth century to escape the unremitting bloodletting of the Danish and Irish kings. It finds land in Furness which will support livestock and cultivation, while still allowing for the traditional sea trading used to bolster income – often undisguised robbery, and slave-trading, in truth. The land between the fells and the coast is unoccupied, and although there are tensions with neighbouring peoples – English speakers across the bay and Welsh and Gaelic speakers living high on the moorland of the fell tops – there is only sporadic actual conflict. The Celts have no interest in contesting the possession of agricultural land and the Northmen have no interest in the hunter gatherer economy of the Celts.

The larger political world of Kings and their rivalries provides context - the novel's characters are involved in three major battles, including an imaginative reconstruction of the climactic defeat of Domnhal at Dunmail Raise – but these 'outside' events are included mainly as a way of showing how people's thinking evolved. The same point can be made of the prolonged account of Thorstein's voyage round the British Isles, visiting Ireland, Norway, York and London before returning home to the agricultural life his family has taken up. Journeys, battles, meetings with Kings, are all important elements in the historical 'outside' but the genuine history as Robin Collingwood would later define it, takes place in the thoughts and feelings of the main characters, either in solitude or in family settings. There is sibling rivalry, thwarted ambition and personal treachery of a very painful kind, along with examples of loyalty and steadfastness in moments of great



**Self-portrait of William Gershom Collingwood, as a sea captain**

personal danger. All this takes place as part of a major change in the Northmen's thinking. Living relatively peaceably alongside their Celtic and English neighbours was a choice made initially for them by circumstance perhaps, but by degrees, in the person of Thorstein, they make a deliberate choice to join their neighbours as fellow countrymen, signalled in their conversion to Christianity. In the end, there is peace and optimism about the future, though it has been won at the cost of Thorstein's life. We are left with a sense that important changes have taken place in the mentality as well as in the economic security of the Northmen and their neighbours.

Collingwood had not always taken so favourable a view of the Northmen. Ten years earlier he wrote: 'The decadence of the Norsemen was when they left the plough for piracy, and through generations of rapacity, lost every virtue except that of courage ...'.

The Vikings had been a source of controversy in British intellectual culture for well over a century before Thorstein was published. In the hands of Thomas Gray, Coleridge and Southey, they represented an alternative way of engaging with the past – their very mysteriousness was the point to a great extent, providing a lens through which the social world could be re-imagined. Later, they would be taken up by 'Old Northeners' and celebrated for their love of liberty and their courage in what became a century-long dispute about how to define what is best in the national character. Until quite soon before he started his work on Thorstein Collingwood subscribed to the 'Germanist' position: that the nation's character is defined by the Anglo-Saxon virtues which consisted in their 'love of order, which gave us our constitution and its laws' (*Philosophy*, p. 118).

What changed Collingwood's mind seems to have come from a very strongly felt local patriotism, brought into focus by his reading of Robert Ferguson, a founder member of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society. Ferguson was the first English writer to note the very strong probability that Cumbria was settled by Scandinavians who originated in Norway and Sweden, arriving from the west - not from Denmark and the east of England. He followed Jan Worsaae, a Danish archaeologist who wrote extensively on the impact of Scandinavian settlement on the British Isles, in claiming that the Northmen enhanced the culture they found here, that the 'English virtues' were in large part due to the merging of different cultures. Cumbria's place names are the most polyglot of any region in the whole of Britain, with Old English, Danish, Gaelic, Welsh and Old Norse all crowded together on the map he produced, the very same which inspired Collingwood: jostling each other, overlapping and merging into suggestive hybrids. All this spoke to a

kind of longing in Collingwood to claim for Cumbria a fitting place in the nation's identity as a triumph of peacefully evolved co-existence and unity, a place where the violence and rapacity of the Northmen was abandoned as they 'returned to the plough' and joined the larger nation we have inherited. The association of these two findings – the distinctive identity of Cumbrian settlers and their key role in creating the nation, was motivation enough to begin work on the novel.

*Thorstein of the Mere* is not great literature. The concentrated sense of being involved in a coherent social world which gives Walter Scott's stories their power is lacking. I think this is mainly because the style of narration is so often at odds with itself, one moment sonorous and booming in the manner of a Nordic saga, the next didactic as a lecturer would be, then poetic in the romantic manner, all the while with characters speaking in a dialect largely made up of an old Cumbrian vocabulary set in an approximation of Old Norse syntax.

That said, there is a lot to respect in the book, I think, and a lot which justifies R G Collingwood's loyalty to it in his later thinking and writing on History. After reading for a while the mind becomes acclimatised to the many northern British dialect words, most of which refer to the material world, and adjusts gradually to the almost complete absence of a Norman/French vocabulary anywhere in the text. The novel is set in 925-50 so that makes perfect sense as a strategy in the storytelling but there is a strangeness to it as we are so used to using our Latinate and French lexicon to describe the doings of the mental world and it takes some getting used to. Collingwood's hope, realized pretty successfully for this reader at least, must have been that he was communicating patterns of thought which, while different from our own, nevertheless are capable of being reconstructed and brought to life in our own minds.

A kind of moral choice was made in the writing of this book too. As we have seen, the true nature and meaning of the Vikings was contested throughout the Victorian period. They were put to use variously by their advocates as the first creators of true political liberty, symbols of racial purity, exemplars of a properly functioning social Darwinism, and a warning that, if we did not seek to emulate them, the human species would surely degenerate. Collingwood was having no truck with what he saw as a kind of cultural theft in pursuit of a misguided political agenda. He saw the Vikings' crimes as clearly as their virtues and wrote a history of their adaptation to new circumstances in which crime was not only morally wrong but also against their best interests. The person of Thorstein's oldest brother, Orm, who stole from his relatives, beat his slaves and sold Raineach, his brother's best friend, and later his partner, into slavery does not survive. He meets the violent death – at the hands of his brother Thorstein - which suits our sense that the time for his kind is passing. And the novel avoids racial or eugenicist theorising in the portrayal of other peoples; on the contrary, the central relationships bring together both Stein and Unna, the half-Irish daughter of a high-ranking Norwegian, and Thorstein and Raineach, the daughter of a Welsh chieftain.

Perhaps a key test of how valuable the novel can be considered purely as history was provided by Collingwood himself in a letter written just as it was about to be published. It was written in part to show '... the meeting point of Christian and pagan thought'. If he were to be successful in this it would be absolutely essential to re-enact the thoughts and ideas of the Northmen and the key moment in his portrayal of their gradual conversion takes place in York Minster with Thorstein in the congregation, outlawed and alone, but about to be given a reason for hope:

*Thorstein knelt on the paved floor, and beside him and around him knelt the people, men and women, rich and poor; .....and in every church of Christian folk from thence throughout the round world. Everywhere the same, and in every age.....*

*No prayer said Thorstein as he knelt thus, while the voices from the choir rolled forth like gathering thunder, or murmured though the aisles uncomprehended like the wind in winter trees. ....Surely the Lord Christ was there, somewhere in the dim bewilderment of gold and gloom, amid those cloudy odours and mysterious answerings of music, surely He was looking forth. And what was the word? The Lord looketh at the heart. Peace, then.*

Collingwood was a devout Churchman for all his life but I think it would be a mistake to think of this passage as mere proselytising. Collingwood is doing something far more important by demonstrating thought in action and its historical consequences. In this re-enactment of another mind on the cusp of changing the course of its owner's life with new beliefs, and a new purpose, he has given intellectual history its proper place in the unfolding of historical events. We have already learned earlier in the novel how State and Church put economic pressure on non-Christians to convert by making it harder for them to trade. But these inducements were far less important than the changes in human behaviour which were brought about by the exercise of the reason. In this case, Thorstein is shown choosing the protections afforded by membership of a catholic community of shared interests, bonded by common values.

At root, Collingwood is optimistic about the human world and about the qualities in the human mind which enable us to make sense of it and put our time in it to good use. While he was writing *Thorstein of the Mere*, H G Wells was publishing *The Time Machine* with its

nightmare vision of a degenerate future and Thomas Hardy gave us *Jude the Obscure* in which the nightmare is already upon us. Collingwood's optimism is bound up in the view of history *Thorstein of the Mere* embodies as much as in the conclusions it arrives at. The 'outside' meaning of Thorstein's mystical experience in York Minster is Christian in its specifics, but behind the particular experience is a necessary confirmation that acknowledging our common identity is both reasonable and true, the 'inside' meaning. The fact that by 950 practically the whole of the Scandinavian population settled here had converted is an arresting piece of information, but it only becomes of any use to us as historians once we have re-imagined the ways in which it happened. The epiphany, intellectual and emotional, in the above passage provides us with an example of what would become Robin Collingwood's manifesto for a scientific way of doing History some forty years later.

#### **Booklist**

*The Language of the Landscape*, Angus Winchester  
*The Hidden Valley*, Nicholas Size  
*The Sword Ring*, Rosemary Sutcliffe  
*Thorstein of the Mere*, W G Collingwood  
 Full text  
[www.allthingsransome.net/literary/thorhtm2.htm](http://www.allthingsransome.net/literary/thorhtm2.htm)  
 Podcast reading  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/id668447389>  
*The Idea of History*, R G Collingwood  
*The Northmen in Cumberland*, Robert Ferguson  
*The Vikings and Victorian Lakeland: the Norse Medievalism of W G Collingwood and his Contemporaries*, Matthew Townend  
*The Philosophy of Ornament*, W G Collingwood  
*An Account of the Danes and Norwegians in England, Scotland and Ireland*, Jan Worsaae  
*The Vikings and the Victorians*, Andrew Wawn

## Some Boggles and Ghosts of Lorton

by Derek Denman

Careful readers will have noticed that boggles made an entry into the February *Wanderer*, which included John Bolton's statement of 1891 that 'Where Cass How sand pit is now was as far back as 1800 the locale of boggles, & robbers'.<sup>1</sup> The non-material inhabitants of the valley have had little attention from the Society, an omission of cultural history which this article hopes to correct. Naturally, these entities are infrequently recorded and therefore under-represented in primary sources, or original records. So, this short study must rely on few reliable sources.

Only three Lorton-based entities have been found to have a sufficient presence in historiography to justify inclusion here, the boggle of Cass How, the fellside *skrati*, and the Grey Lady of Lorton Hall. Therefore, this must be a qualitative and rather anecdotal assessment, rather than quantitative.

### The Cass How boggle and other Lorton boggles.

John Bolton was an excellent local historian, but he had no personal knowledge of the boggle of Cass How, relying on the testimony of his grandmother-in-law. We are not told whether she spoke from personal experience of the boggle, or had been told of it by others, but the specificity of the 'sand pit' as its locale adds credibility.

According to a map locating the Boggles of Cumbria, 'West Cumb Times of May 1935 said it was a man who returned from market with a new scythe and accidentally lopped his own head off. Headless ghost still wanders around Lorton'.<sup>2</sup> Further information on this boggle comes from Frank Carruthers,

who in his *Lore of the lake country* confirms the Cass How boggle as a suicide boggle, presumably where a man deliberately cut off his own head with a scythe – which would not be easy.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the coroner's inquest records do not identify this person and event, leaving the contradictory claims of suicide or accident. It does not take much historical imagination to consider the implications of the sand-pit location, if it was then a sand-pit, and to propose that he might have been a keen golfer, wishing to practice his bunker play and not having a proper sand wedge with him. However, the presence of the restless boggle might itself be confirmation of a sinful suicidal demise, rather than an accidentally fatal swing. Accidental deaths were frequent, and boggles are few.

A boggle need not be a human ghost. In his dissertation for the University of Uppsala, Sweden, in 1913, on *A grammar of the Dialect of Lorton (Cumberland)*, Borje Beilith included the name of a boggle known to Lorton folk only through fellside sounds heard at night. I repeat here the entry from the appendix on Lorton dialect words with a Scandinavian origin, without attempting to interpret it, except to say that similar boggles were also said to inhabit other valleys:-

**skrati** (or skrat) the name of a hobgoblin or boggle, a mysterious being, which used to haunt the fell-sides, emitting fearful sounds; cf. ME. skratt, scratte \* wizard, monster, hermaphrodite', ON. skratti a wizard or hobgoblin, Swed. skratt(en) ^ a ghost, heard by night'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John Bolton, 'Lorton and Loweswater 80 years ago', 1891, p.3,

<http://derwentfells.com/pdfs/JohnBolton.pdf>,

<sup>2</sup> Alan Cleaver, The boggles of Cumbria,

[www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1c7mYr9s7E7u3dX0AZG3o5S:U84&ll](http://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1c7mYr9s7E7u3dX0AZG3o5S:U84&ll)

<sup>3</sup> F J Carruthers, *Lore of the Lake Country*, 1975, p.134

<sup>4</sup> Borje Beilith, *A grammar of the Dialect of Lorton (Cumberland)*, <https://archive.org/details/grammarofdialect00brilrich>

## DID THE GREY LADY WALK LAST NIGHT?

### Lorton apparition is 'more than a legend'

West Cumberland Times  
Saturday 22 July, 1967

IF TWO YOUNG schoolgirls had had their way, they would probably have been heavy-eyed and thankful to see the dawn this morning after a night in quest of the Grey Lady of Lorton Hall.

She has lived in local legend for generations, and there are well authenticated instances of supernatural sights and sounds there after the full moon; but nobody from outside the Hall thought of putting it to the test until a party of children visited the Hall.

Nine year olds Allyson Clark of Mosser and Kim Griffith of Pardshaw went with classmates from Paddle School at the invitation of the vicar, the Rev. J. A. Woodhead Dixon, who takes religious instruction classes at the school twice a week.

#### INTRIGUED

They were intrigued by the story of the room where Charles II slept, the mysterious opening door, and the form of an 18th century lady.

They worked out the date of the next full moon—last night, Friday, the 21st. "We wanted to sleep in the ghostly bedroom when there was a full moon, but Mr. Dixon thought it wiser not to" they said afterwards.

To Mr. Woodhead-Dixon this is no mere legend. "I have seen the Grey Lady" he told a West Cumberland Times reporter.

He traces his ancestry back to pre-Norman owners of this land in Lorton valley (once part of the old Kingdom of Strathclyde) and of the old pele tower which was the first part of the Hall to be built. It was here that Malcolm III and his queen Margaret stayed in 1089, an historical fact vouched for by a document recently on display in Edinburgh.

Mr. Woodhead-Dixon has lived at the Hall since 1961, when he bought it back after it had passed out of the family ownership for a few years.

#### NO PROOF

There are two possible foundations for the legend of the haunting of Lorton Hall. One, which the vicar dismisses as "legend, without proof" says that the Grey Lady is the widow of a member of the Winder family, first owners of the Lorton estates, who was so distraught when her husband came back dying from one of the Crusades in 1153 that she still laments him after death.

The clue to these manifestations, Mr. Woodhead-Dixon is convinced, lies in a heavy, fallen stone cross, covered with weeds, which he found on a low bank facing the river.

It marks the grave of a former occupant of the Hall ("she was one of three children whom we would call mongols today" says the vicar) who survived until she was 63, slipping more and more into insanity.

She was said to bay the full moon like a dog, and when she died in about 1803 she was denied burial in consecrated ground.

#### A PATTERN

She is the Grey Lady, says Mr. Woodhead-Dixon, who has spent many hours of the nights of full moons trying to establish a pattern of the strange sights and sounds.

"Between five and seven-thirty a.m. on some mornings following the full moon I can hear a non-existent door—one which has long been built-up—opening and closing with a definite slam seven times. Quite definitely, on the main staircase, I have felt something passing like a cold wind, and the rustle of skirts.

"This emanates from what we call the King's Room; and one of the old doors to this room cannot be kept fastened whatever kind of lock we use."

It was about 9-30 on the morn-

ing of October 1 last year that he saw the Grey Lady.

#### APPARITION

"I saw an apparition pass the library door. At first I thought it was my wife and went to speak to her, and then I saw a grey, gauzy shape with a lighted candle, and wearing a dress of the latter part of the 18th century."

Mr. Woodhead-Dixon can quote the names of others who have seen the lighted candle moving about in the Hall even when it has been unoccupied. In one such period, during the last war, a party of Surrey Girl Guides were camped on the lawn when they saw the lights, heard the inexplicable sounds and saw the Grey Lady walk out.

They struck camp without waiting for daylight.

Mr. Woodhead-Dixon has contemplated digging below the cross and re-interring what remains he finds in consecrated ground, which he is convinced is the only way to end these manifestations.

#### EXORCISM

But, he confesses, he feels a little uneasy about it. He recalls that in 1923 the lady owner of the Hall was so distressed by the sounds that she decided to have a service of Exorcism. After some difficulty it was arranged, but on the day the minister who was to have performed the rite died suddenly!

"That was taken as a signal not to proceed," says Mr. Woodhead-Dixon.

And so, last night, two little girls slept while the full moon came and went, and never knew whether the Grey Lady walked or not.

Their headmaster, Mr. Allan Stubbings, commented: "I have an open mind on this, but watching for a ghost could not even be considered. Children's imaginations could run riot in those circumstances."

### The Grey lady of Lorton Hall

Much more is known of the ghost known as the Grey Lady of Lorton Hall, from independent testimonies. The late Charlie Allison of Holme Cottage, a native of Lorton and a founder member of the Society, told me that in the 1930s, when he was young and when the hall was unoccupied, it was in the charge of a caretaker located in Lorton Hall Lodge. In those days there was still a large wheel outside the lodge, with which to open and close the gates. This caretaker had seen the ghost and had been so scared that he would no longer enter the hall after dark. However, at this time the name and origin of the ghost had not been revealed.

We are fortunate to have testimony of personal experience from the late Rev. James Addison Woodhead-Keith-Dixon, vicar of Lorton between 1958 and 1980, and a man of high spiritual sensitivity combined with the interest and intellectual ability to identify and investigate the possible origins of the Grey Lady. In 1961 he announced that 'his prayers had been answered' when he had the opportunity to invest the proceeds of his marriage in the purchase of Lorton Hall, moving there from the vicarage, which was subsequently rented to various families.<sup>5</sup> Later he opened the hall to the credulous public, having collected information and artefacts related to the history of the hall, and to its past owners and important visitors, creating a 'house history'. While not a historian himself, he had the scholarly work on *Lorton and its Church* by Canon Farrer, vicar from 1947 to 1954, to provide some firm anchor points from which to stretch his historical creativity.<sup>6</sup>

### Investigations in the 1960s

Here we reprint an article of 1967 from the West Cumberland Times, praising Woodhead-Dixon's wisdom in not

allowing two impressionable young girls, from his Paddle School religious instruction class, to spend the night of the full moon in the King's Room, believed to be the origin of the emanant spirit of the Grey Lady. The interview which he gave to the nameless reporter provides by far the most reliable and comprehensive analysis of her nature, and possible origin.

Many of his historical facts must have been gained through a process of spontaneous knowledge, or perhaps revelation, and have only an approximate relationship with the records, but often he was intuitively correct. For example, in dismissing, as 'legend without proof', the identification of the Grey Lady with the spirit of a Winder whose husband returned from the crusades in 1153, mortally wounded. We now know that the Winders did not own their third of Low Lorton until after 1397.<sup>7</sup>

He is probably also more realistic in identifying the idea of the Grey Lady with the spirit of a lady who descended into lunacy and died in the nineteenth century, though rather later than 1802. It is a common practice to ascribe unrecorded events in Lakeland to an earlier date. Visitors expect the romance of antiquity, and no doubt that influenced Woodhead-Dixon to include the Lorton pele tower in his interview, and in his later advertisement for visitors, as a place stayed at by Malcolm III and Queen Margaret of Scotland, who both died in 1093. The later advertisement of the 1970s revealed that this hospitality occurred circa 1089, at which date he now knew that there had been not just one but two towers. This is improbably early even for a real pele tower, rather than a folly tower built in the 1840s and converted in the 1890s. When the architectural historian, Nikolaus Pevsner,



**L**ORTON HALL began its existence as a Pele or look-out tower near to the site of one of the traditional resting places of the body of St. Cuthbert, circa 850. There were two towers, circa 1089, when King Malcolm III and Queen Margaret of Scotland stayed there on a tour of the Kingdom of Strathclyde. Additional building took place up to 1663 when the East front was given a Classical finish. Further alterations in the 19th century made the West front the main entrance—overlooking the lawn leading to the River Cocker. The gardens contain many fine specimen trees—one magnificent beech connected with the visit of King Charles II in 1653. The house is a lived-in family home and not a museum—containing a collection of antiques, paintings and "objets d'art." The Chapel, built on the site of St. Cuthbert's resting place, remained in use for the village and family till the Reformation, after which it continued as a private (Roman Catholic) chapel till circa 1630, when it was turned into farm buildings. Converted into a stable in 1880 it was restored and re-consecrated as a Chapel in 1965.

### Opening Times :

The House and Grounds are open on all the Bank Holidays, 2-00—6-00 p.m. and at other times by appointment.

### Admission:

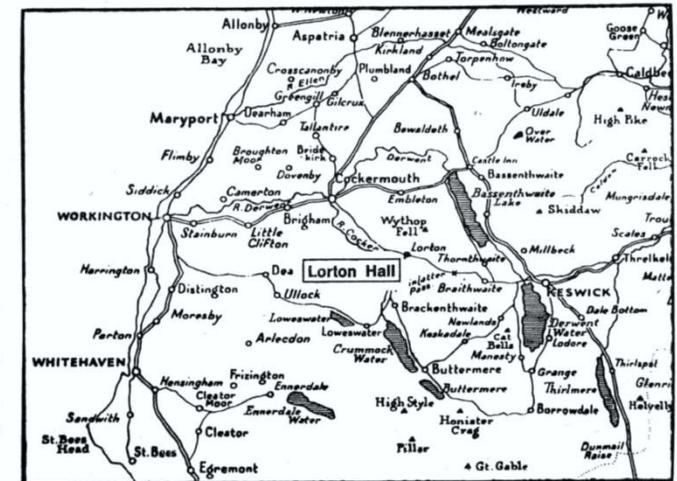
Adults: 15p.

Children under 14: 10p.

Lorton is situated on the main road (B5289) from Cockermouth to Buttermere.

For further information apply to:

The Revd. J. A. Woodhead-Keith-Dixon, Lorton Hall, Cockermouth, Cumberland. Telephone Lorton 252.



rolled up in his Wolseley Hornet, between 1964 and 1966, for his *Buildings of England*, he relied not on research, but on what he saw and what he was told.<sup>8</sup>

He was persuaded that the tower had been converted from the medieval tower, 'originally with tunnel vaulting at ground level and a spiral staircase'.<sup>9</sup> Presumably

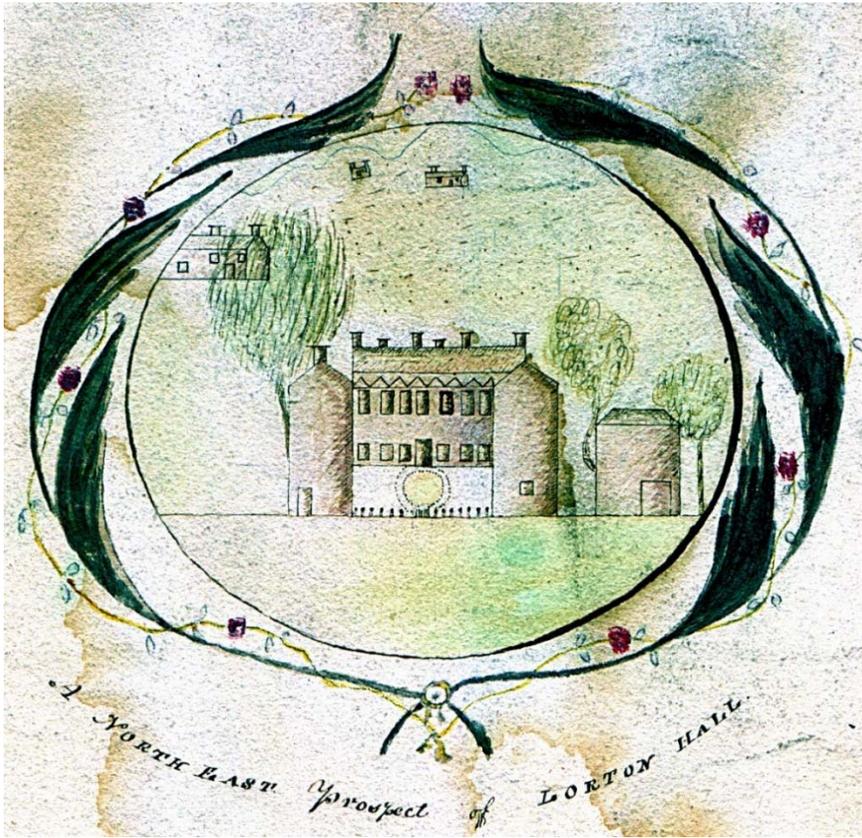
<sup>5</sup> The quote is evidence from an undisclosed witness

<sup>6</sup> [Farrer], *Lorton and its Church*, 1946, <http://derwentfells.com/pdfs/sources/Lorton-ChurchFarrer1946.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Derek Denman, 'A history of Lorton Hall', <http://derwentfells.com/pdfs/journal/Journal-59.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> See Michael Baron, 'Reflections on two architectural guides to Cumbria', <http://derwentfells.com/pdfs/journal/Journal49.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Cumberland and Westmorland*, 1967, p.158



**Lorton Hall from the Estate Plan, 1803**  
Missing a pele tower.

he did not see the sketch of the hall, shown here, made on an estate plan of 1803.<sup>10</sup> This visit and publication created a reputable authority for a medieval tower.

Queen Margaret of Scotland was known as Saint Margaret, accredited as a moderating influence on the barbarous Malcolm III (Canmore or bighead), r.1058-1093. His domain included Lorton until 1092, when taken by force by the equally unpleasant William Rufus. The first Norman to be appointed overlord of proto-Cumberland was then Ranulf le Meschines, and perhaps Woodhead-Dixon teased his parishioners a little too

far when he disclosed to them, in his parish magazine of February 1965, that he was himself descended from Ranulf, through the female line.<sup>11</sup>

His pedigree evolved during his time at the hall, as we found from the deeds we acquired as successors-in-title to the hall-range. He came to Lorton as Woodhead, but on realising, without formal evidence, that he was also of the Dixon family of Rheda, who rebuilt the Lorton Hall in the 1890s, he added Dixon by deed poll. By a similar process, he

<sup>10</sup> 'A plan of Lorton Hall Estate ... 1803' [copy] <http://derwentfells.com/pdfs/sources/LortonHallEstatePlan1803>

<sup>11</sup> *Parish Magazine of St Cuthbert's Church Lorton*, Feb 1965, L&DFLHS archive

later discovered that he was also a Keith, and in fact chief of the clan, which required a further addition to the name. These lineages created complexity in his armorial bearings, with quartered arms, two crests, and three Latin mottoes, as given in *Cumberland Families and Heraldry*, unfortunately without any space left for a pedigree.<sup>12</sup>

#### **Who was the Grey Lady, really?**

Returning to the Grey Lady, and her corporal origins, it is the case that in 1800 Eleanor Barnes, the widow of Thomas Peile-Barnes, died in Lorton Hall. However, she was not known to be mad. Her death at a good age had a compensating benefit for her son, John Peile-Barnes, in that her dower was released and he could finally sell the pile, having mortgaged it for cash in 1797.

The purchaser was Joshua Lucock, of Cockermouth, with wife Rebecca, nee Wilkinson, and young son Raisbeck, the survivor of three born at Castlegate in Cockermouth. Joshua Lucock settled in as the Squire of Lorton, and later as lord of the manor of Loweswater – having become Joshua Lucock-Bragg. It is interesting that this hall owner also needed to extend his name after moving in, and it is tempting, though scary, to consider whether that tendency might be just one dimension of the agency of the *genius loci*.

The sad Lucock-Bragg family has been well recorded, including the death of the father in 1809, who might be called eccentric, to be polite, and including the descent into lunacy of Raisbeck and three of the five children born in Lorton Hall.<sup>13</sup> These four lunatic siblings lived out their lives in Lorton Hall, at first in the care of their mother and then their siblings, until 1865, when Elizabeth Bridge died, the last competent sibling. Thereafter, John and Sarah Lucock Bragg survived in the

<sup>12</sup> C Roy Hudleston, *Cumberland families and heraldry*, 1978, p.94

<sup>13</sup> Derek Denman, 'Joshua Lucock Bragg (1772-1809) of Lorton Hall: mad, bad or sad?'

Hall for a further ten years, as lunatics in the care of attendants. They both died in 1875, while the officers of the Court of Chancery circled overhead. Sarah Lucock-Bragg, 1802-1875, was the last female lunatic of Lorton Hall, and would clearly provide the best candidate for the source of the ghost of the Grey Lady.<sup>14</sup> John Bolton, who was Lorton schoolmaster in 1875, said nothing except that 'the history of Lorton Hall over the past eighty years is a singularly sad one'.<sup>15</sup> There is no known written record of the Grey Lady before the 1960s, after which she appeared more frequently in guides to the area.

#### **Epilogue**

When, in 1993, we converted the old hall-range into Winder Hall, as a country guest house, the Grey Lady became rather a problem, in that visitors often asked, "do you have a ghost?" A difficult question to answer without causing possible offence, or worse, loss of business. A solution was found by considering the evidence of other historical features which the hall contained:- the priest hole behind the fireplace in the 'King's room', constructed using authentic Carolinian chicken-wire and plaster, the ancestor-portrait left in the cellar which had been painted on early-modern hardboard, the Winder coat of arms naively carved into the plaster of a Victorian bedroom, and including some very dubious *putti*.

The solution we found was to embrace the Grey Lady and to give her employment. Thereafter, the Grey Lady Snacks menu was created, and they would be served by her between 2pm and 5pm – if you could find her to place an order. Members in Lorton are warned of the danger in trying to find employment for the Cass How boggle.

April 2020

<http://derwentfells.com/pdfs/journal/Journal-52.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Sarah was buried 6 Jan 1875, while John lived longer, buried 22 May 1875

<sup>15</sup> Bolton, 'Lorton and Loweswater', p.14



8 Reference No.

Map. No. LXIII. 5. HQD  
LXIII. 9. EFJK  
LXIII. 10. A  
LXIX. 2. AB.

Situation *Scale Hill*  
Description *Scale Hill Hotel & Land*  
Extent *45 a*

Gross Value { Land £  
Buildings £ *14* Rateable Value { Land £  
Buildings £ *140/10*

Gross Annual Value, Schedule A, £

Occupier *Mr Holder*  
Owner *W<sup>r</sup> Herbert Marshall* *Prattendale Hall*  
Interest of Owner *Freehold* *Pewrith*  
Superior interests

Subordinate interests

Occupier's tenancy, Term *Nearly* from *25<sup>th</sup> March 1870*  
How determinable

Actual (or Estimated) Rent, £ *148. 17. 2*

Any other Consideration paid

Outgoings—Land Tax, £ paid by  
Tithe, £ paid by  
Other Outgoings

Who pays (a) Rates and Taxes (b) Insurance (a) *occ* (b) *owner*  
Who is liable for repairs *owner main repairs*  
Fixed Charges, Easements, Common Rights and Restrictions  
*Compensation fund charges under Licensing Act 1904 £6. 13. 4*

Former Sales. Dates  
Interest  
Consideration  
Subsequent Expenditure  
Owner's Estimate. Gross Value  
Full Site Value  
Total Value  
Assessable Site Value

Site Value Deductions claimed

Field Book for Brackenthwaite and Loweswater Parishes,  
property reference 8, Scalehill Hotel and land.  
Four book pages plus insert. TNA/IR58/18790

Roads and Sewers. Dates of Expenditure  
Amounts

Reference No. ....  
Particulars, description, and notes made on inspection *Scale Hill*

*Hill Hotel etc comprising 55.931 acres of grassy arable land with coppice fair quality scattered fences wall and quick as shown on plan. Hotel: Hall, kitchen, servants' kitchen, drinking kitchen, pantry, larder, bar. 5 sitting rooms. Bath lavatory. Cellar & dairy. 10 bedrooms.*  
Charges, Easements, and Restrictions affecting market value of Fee Simple <sup>(over)</sup>

Valuation.—Market Value of Fee Simple in possession of whole property in its present condition

*As per detail valuation.* £ *2915.*

Deduct Market Value of Site under similar circumstances, but if divested of structures, timber, fruit trees, and other things growing on the land

£ *1200*

Difference Balance, being portion of market value attributable to structures, timber, &c. *& licence* £ *1715*

Divided as follows:—

Buildings and Structures *& licen* ..... £ *1665*  
Machinery ..... £  
Timber ..... £ *60*  
Fruit Trees ..... £  
Other things growing on land ..... £

Market Value of Fee Simple of Whole in its present condition (as before) ..... £ *2915*

Add for Additional Value represented by any of the following for which any deduction may have been made when arriving at Market Value:—

Charges (excluding Land Tax) ..... £  
Restrictions ..... £

GROSS VALUE... £ *2915*

LXIII. S. 150

Reference No. 210

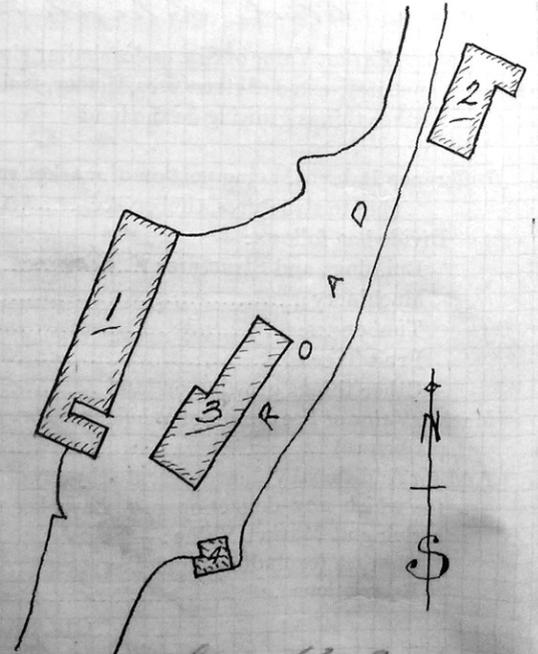
Index letter	Description of Buildings	Dimensions			Cubical Contents	Condition	Remarks
		Frontage	Depth	Height			
2	5 Stall stable, carts, byre for 11. lofted						
3	Bottle store, stone room & stall stable Coach house etc. Garage. lofted						
4	Hull. (A on plan) Hull. B on plan Wood built shed.						

All stone built part cemented, slated  
oldish, good condition

- 155 ✓ .939 pasture
- 168 ✓ 1.973 "
- 203 ✓ 1.383 "
- 198 ✓ 1.786 "
- 199 ✓ 4.097 "
- 210 ✓ 4.463 "
- 211 ✓ 2.483 "
- 213 ✓ 2.159 "
- 216 ✓ 1.990 "
- 215 ✓ 2.732 "
- 248 ✓ 7.122 "
- 299 ✓ 3.250 "
- 1134 ✓ 3.285 meadow
- 142 ✓ 2.170 "
- 135 ✓ .612 arable
- 140 ✓ .931 "
- 160 ✓ 2.585 "
- 201 ✓ 1.696 "
- 196-212 ✓ 390 river
- 214 ✓ .933 blange
- 197 ✓ .156 "
- 196 ✓ 7.333 Coppice
- 191 ✓ 1.163 "

55.931  
11.226 - 220 Hull  
55.951

550. 3N 32p.



add 203 = 1382 area sheet 63-9

Reference No. ....

GROSS VALUE £ 2915

Less Value attributable to Structures, timber, &c. (as before) £ 1715

FULL SITE VALUE £ 1200

Gross Value (as before) £ 2915

Less deductions in respect of—

Fixed Charges, including—

- Fee Farm Rent, rent seek, quit rent, chief rents, rent of Assize .....£
- Any other perpetual rent or Annuity .....£
- Tithe or Tithe Rent Charge .....£
- Other Burden or Charge arising by operation of law or under any Act of Parliament £
- If Copyhold, Estimated Cost of Enfranchisement .....£
- Public Rights of Way or User .....£
- Rights of Common .....£
- Easements .....£
- Restrictions .....£

TOTAL VALUE £ 2915

Less Value attributable to Structures, timber, &c.

(as before) £ 1715

Value directly attributable to—

- Works executed .....£
- Capital Expenditure .....£
- Appropriation of Land.....£
- Redemption of Land Tax.....£
- Redemption of Other Charges.....£
- Enfranchisement of Copyhold, if enfranchised .....£
- Release of Restrictions.....£
- Goodwill or personal element.....£
- Expense of Clearing Site.....£

ASSESSABLE SITE VALUE £ 1200

If Agricultural land, the value for Agricultural purposes including Sporting Rights ..... 1545

Value of Sporting Rights.....£ 15

If Licensed Property, the annual license value.....£

Liable to Undeveloped Land Duty as from.....£

For further reference as to Apportionments, &c., see

