



**Contents**

**No.52 May 2024**

**Society News**

Message from the Chair	1
Our programme for 2024	2
New Lorton booklet available	3
Our next talk, 9 May	4

**Meeting Reports**

Talk: 'Secrets of Muncaster Castle: protecting the Tate Collection during World War Two', 14 March	5
House History Group Meeting – Palace How, 27 February	8

**Articles**

More on Cycling in Cockermouth	14
The Douglas Family of South Lodge, Cockermouth	18
To Travel so Far: the Key Family of Cumberland and Australia	24

**Society News**

**Message from the Chair**

The Society's programme of events this year got off to an excellent start with a Talk by the well-known and respected local historian Dr Rob David. He spoke about 'Secrets of Muncaster Castle: protecting the Tate Collection during WWII', and the Talk was well attended with a full hall and around twenty members joining online. Lena Stanley-Clamp's report on what was a most interesting Talk appears on page 5.

There have also been two house visits so far this year: to Palace How in Brackenthwaite and a repeat one to Midtown in High Lorton, hosted by the Society's House History Group led by Adam and Mary Baker. Both occasions provided Members attending with

fascinating insights into the owners, tenants, construction, and development of these properties over time. On behalf of these Members, I would like to thank Jan Evans, owner of Palace How, and John Hart plus Andrew Chamberlain (for the owner of Midtown House, Mr. Billington) in allowing Members the opportunity to visit, and to each of them along with Derek Denman for their respective insights into the history of the houses. A report on the visit to Palace How appears on page 8.

At the time of writing, an outing organised by Lena Stanley-Clamp which will be run by Mark Hatton to explore the history of Crosthwaite Parish Church and its graveyard is in the offing on 27 April. It's fully subscribed and promises to be of much interest. Apart from that, there's an excellent schedule of events to look forward to in the coming months. They include Talks on a diverse range of subjects, including an American historian's experience of the process by which he came to learn about Cumbria's history, the history of the way in which members of the Marshall family acquired and developed substantial land holdings in the Society's area, a presentation by the Ambleside Oral History Group (which are always popular among Members), and an examination of the rise and fall of the fortunes of Maritime West Cumberland. Also an outing to Carlisle Cathedral and its Close is being organised for 10 October, arranged through one of Andrew Chamberlain's contacts who is a member of the Cathedral's chapter.

There is a direct link between the ecclesiastical foundation that became the Cathedral and High Lorton. . . . . *page 2*

## Our future programme 2024

<b>09 May 2024</b>	'Getting to know John Peel: my experience of learning about Cumbria's history'	Dr Christopher Donaldson
<b>13 Jun 2024</b>	AGM followed by 'John, Jane, Dorothy, and William: creating the Marshall Estates'.	Dr Derek Denman
<b>12 Sep 2024</b>	'A place in history: three locations with a fascinating past.'	Judith Shingler and Alison Peak
<b>10 Oct 2024</b>	Visit: Guided Tour of Carlisle Cathedral. Pm plus tea	Contact Andrew Chamberlain (below)
<b>14 Nov 2024</b>	'The rise and fall of Maritime West Cumberland'	Alan Bell

Talks are at 7.30 pm in the Yew Tree Hall, are included in membership and are open to visitors at £4 at the door, with refreshments. Talks are also streamed live to members using Zoom but are not recorded. Other activities may be added.

### Officers and Committee 2023/4

President: Professor Angus Winchester    Financial Examiner: Hugh Thomson, FCA

Charles Lambrick <i>Chairman</i>	01900 85710	Lena Stanley-Clamp <i>Membership, Talks</i>	01900 336542 <i>ldflhsmembership@gmail.com</i>
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Sandra Shaw <i>Secretary</i>	01900 829812	Fiona Lambrick	
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Dr Derek Denman <i>Treasurer, Wanderer,</i>	01900 829097 <i>derekdenman@btinternet.com</i>	Andrew Chamberlain	<i>andrew.chamberlain2@btinternet.com</i>
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### Diary Dates

**Saturday 1 June:** The Regional Heritage Centre, Lancaster University offers, 'Carlisle Cathedral Library: past, present and future A full day study event, with several distinguished speakers'. At Carlisle Cathedral's Fraternity Hall  
Tickets £32 for a standard ticket (£28 for friends and patrons of the RHC), with an optional lunch at £12 if booked at the same time. Book through the RHC website.

### Next Issue

The next issue of the *Wanderer* will be published on 1 August 2024. Please send any short items to the Editor, Derek Denman, by 1 July.

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

*http://derwentfells.com https://facebook.com/Lortonlocalhistorysociety  
archive: https://derwentfells.org.uk*

Nine centuries ago, the manor of High Lorton was given to the Priory church of Carlisle. That was circa 1138, five years after the Cathedral was founded in 1133.

The Augustinian priors became the lords of the manor in High Lorton and remained so until the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in the mid-16th century.

Bearing in mind the link, I look forward to learning more about the Cathedral's history when the outing there takes place in the autumn.

Turning to the future of the Society, I'm pleased to report that some progress has been made towards finding new Committee members, and in recruiting additional people to help run the Society in various ways. Lena Stanley-Clamp has offered to stand for election as Hon Secretary and thereby take over from Sandra Shaw who has kindly completed a further two years in that role. I'm delighted that Lena has stepped forward.

I would like to conclude on a personal note. At the AGM on 13 June I shall be retiring from the role of chairing the Society. Consequently, this is the last time I shall be writing what has become in each of the quarterly Wanderers the regular 'Message from the Chair'. It's been a great privilege to have been entrusted by Members with fulfilling the role of chairing the Society over the last ten years. Throughout that time, I've been extremely well supported by fellow office holders and other Committee members. I have pleasure in saying that, with its very healthy membership, I've much enjoyed witnessing the ongoing enthusiasm of the Society's Members and, along with fellow Committee members, endeavouring to ensure that Members derive benefit in various ways from what the Society offers. May the Society thrive over the next ten years!

*Charles Lambrick*

### ***New Lorton Booklet available***

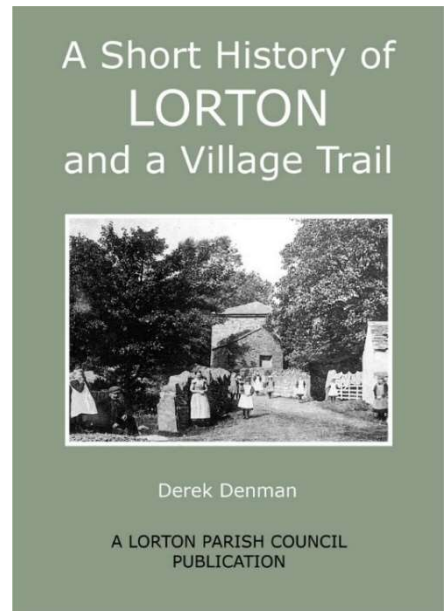
A new booklet, *A Short History of Lorton and a Village Trail*, by Derek Denman, has been published by Lorton Parish Council. The booklet is available at Lorton Village Shop, price £3, and it will be made available online for personal use from the Melbreak Communities website at <https://melbreakcommunities.org.uk/pari>

*sh-councils/lorton/interpretation-boards/history/* .

This is part of a project to promote the natural and cultural heritage of the parish to visitors and residents.

The project, including the printing of the booklets, has been supported by a grant to Lorton Parish Council from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, to provide two village Interpretation Boards and improve access to aspects of the local environment within Lorton Parish. One board, near the Low Lorton bus stop, will focus mainly on multiple outstanding wildlife projects, the natural environment and symbiotic relationship with farming heritage. Another board, sited at the Yew Tree Hall, focuses on the history and heritage of the village through buildings.

The booklet gives a basic, two page, history of Lorton and a trail around the village, which illustrates its history through its older buildings.



## **Our next talk, 9 May 2024**

**'Getting to Ken John Peel: An American's impressions of Cumbria's past'**

**An illustrated talk by Dr Christopher Donaldson**

**Thursday, 9 May at 7.30 pm at the Yew Tree Hall, Lorton**

Christopher Donaldson is Senior Lecturer in Cultural History at Lancaster University. He came to the UK from the US, where he gained a BA from Penn State University and a PhD from Stanford University. Since then, he has published widely on the history of northern England, especially Cumbria, the Lake District and the Anglo-Scottish border region. His current research projects mainly focus on the global histories of national landmarks and landscapes. He is currently finishing a book project entitled *A Shadow of a Magnitude*, which explores the history of people of African and Afro-Indian ancestry in the English Lake District between the 1600s and 1800s.



Here are some of the questions and characters he will present in his talk:

*What do warring bishops, fugitive slaves and suffragettes have in common? They are all part of Cumbria's history. The annals of the county's past are full of extraordinary individuals; some were born here, and some came from farther afield.*

*In this talk I will be considering a few of my favourites, beginning with a medieval monk who became a warlord and ending with old John Peel, 'with his coat so grey'. Along the way, we will encounter showmen, scientists and statesmen (including American presidents). We will also look into the lives of Cumbrians who left the region to seek their fortunes overseas. Collectively, the historical figures discussed in this talk attest to a set of simple facts: namely, that Cumbria's history is diverse and it is entangled with the history of the wider world.*

All welcome, members free, visitors £4 (cash) including refreshments payable at the door.

## Meeting Reports

### ***Talk: 'Secrets of Muncaster Castle: protecting the Tate Collection during World War Two', 14 March***

The opening talk of our programme this year was given by Dr Rob David, who treated our audience to a little-known episode of Cumbrian history. Shortly before the outbreak of the war the priceless art collection of the Tate Gallery was evacuated in great secrecy, from central London to safe locations in the country. One of the three country houses chosen for safe storage of the collection, away from the expected enemy air raids over London, was Muncaster Castle. Owing to its top-secret nature, the operation did not leave many traces in the Cumbrian archives or in people's memories, and was largely forgotten. Rob David based his research mainly on the

documentation kept in the Tate Archives and Library and in the National Archives.

Besides the threat of enemy bombs, the greatest perils that had to be considered by the director of the Tate's collection John Rothenstein and his staff were the risks of fire, unstable room temperature, and too much humidity. Three country houses were eventually selected: Hellens at Much Marcle, Herefordshire; Eastington Hall in Upton upon Severn, Worcestershire; and Muncaster Castle, Cumberland.

Muncaster Castle had much to recommend it from the point of view of its remoteness and solid stone construction. The absence of residing owners was also an advantage. Sir John Frecheville Ramsden Bt (1877-1958) preferred to live in the Highlands in his fairytale castle of Ardverike. Sir John welcomed the approach from the Tate in January 1939. He thought the storage of the collection much preferable to the

**The drawing room at Muncaster Castle, after repairs, ©Muncaster Castle**





***Sunflowers, Vincent van Gogh 1888, Tate Gallery***

threatened presence of "the hordes of small children" evacuees. Lady Joan Ramsden (1881-1974) paid only occasional visits to Muncaster and the staff of the Tate were given free rein.

The Tate Gallery closed at the end of August 1939. One-third of the collection counting about 700-800 of the most important works of art came to Muncaster. They were taken out of their frames, carefully packaged and dispatched in railway containers to Ravensglass, accompanied by nine members of staff. From there they were transported to the Castle in a small estate wagon, which must have necessitated many trips. The pictures were then stored in their cases in the Drawing and the Dining Rooms while the Great Hall was most likely used for restoration work.

An inventory revised in May 1944 reveals the artists and their works. On the first page were listed many paintings by Turner, Constable,

Reynolds, Gainsborough, Burne-Jones, Sargent, Manet, and several others. A page headed 'Special Cases' lists works by Van Gogh, Pissarro, Degas, Vuillard, Utrillo and others. Some new acquisitions also found their way there, among them the bequest by the writer Hugh Walpole, who lived at Brackenburn, Manesty. Some of the pictures were sent to be exhibited at temporary exhibitions at the National Gallery to raise the morale of the people. The inventory also shows that works from other public and private collections were stored at Muncaster.

The evacuation provided a great opportunity to conserve and restore a number of pictures between 1939-45. The most famous of all in storage at Muncaster was Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*. The picture was entrusted to a foremost restoration expert Helmut Ruhemann, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany who worked for the National Gallery, the Tate, and the Glasgow Art Gallery. The *Sunflowers* hung for a while at his home in the Trossachs before returning to the Castle. Ruhemann later recalled the makeshift equipment he used to reline the canvas and to flatten the paint: a cheese-grater, a laundry iron, and a dentist's instrument.

***Wheat Field with Cypresses, Vincent van Gogh, National Gallery***



**Lord Ligonier, Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1760, Tate Gallery**

Due to its size the equestrian portrait of *Lord Ligonier* by Joshua Reynolds presented a challenge in getting it through the small entrance to the castle. Like many Reynolds' paintings its varnish did not age well and had to be removed. Jack Lee, an assistant keeper of the collection undertook less challenging work of 'tidying-up' the pictures. He also sent regular reports to London.

The men from the Tate did not find it easy to adapt to their new environment: "living in the castle is all right but it's a very different life from London" reported one of them. Nevertheless, their first Christmas at Muncaster, when Lady Ramsden invited the wives and children to stay, would have been rather special.

Despite all the secrecy some people in the area must have known about the presence of the Tate collection and its staff. Rob David quoted an oblique reference by Norman Nicholson, who lived in Millom:

***Ravenglass Railway station***

*Here, too, in the winter of war, the children came....*

*And here the gold and graphite of the Tate,*

*Crated and stacked like lemons.<sup>1</sup>*

The head of the Royal College of Art, which was moved at the beginning of the war to



Ambleside, inquired whether he could bring the students to see the collection. The story finally got into the newspapers in October 1945 with headlines such as "Tate Men Kept Guard on the Remparts, Castle Life is Ending" (*News Chronicle*).

The Tate building at Millbank in Pimlico was badly damaged by bombing during the Blitz but its invaluable collection survived the war and returned safely from Muncaster for all of us to enjoy.

Rob David's fascinating lecture was very well researched and delivered, and greatly appreciated by our audience at Yew Tree Hall and online.

*Lena Stanley-Clamp*

<sup>1</sup> Norman Nicholson, *The Pot Geranium and other poems*, Faber & Faber, 1954.

## House History Group Meeting – Palace How, 27 February

The House History Group has enjoyed two visits to local properties in the past months. Such was the demand to see Midtown, a further visit took place in March, hosted by Andrew Chamberlain. The tour was conducted by Derek Denman and assisted by John Hart. Many thanks again go to Mr Billington, the owner, and to John Hart for facilitating the visit. For details of the tour of Midtown, please see the previous *Wanderer*.

In February, a group visited Palace How at Brackenthwaite. Jan Evans, and her late husband Gwyn, spent a number of years expertly and sympathetically renovating and updating the property. The tour, hosted by Jan herself, demonstrated how they had originally found Palace How and how they went about planning and undertaking the complete restoration.

### Palace How before 1800

Formerly a farm with barns and outbuildings, there are a number of historical records charting the development of Palace How. The property was in the manor of Brackenthwaite, which was given into custody of Henry VIII



in 1531 by Henry Percy, 6th Earl of Northumberland. In 1549 the manor was acquired by Richard Robynson and combined with Loweswater and Thackthwaite. In 1593, the freeholds of 20 manorial tenements in Brackenthwaite, including this tenement, were sold to four of the yeomen tenants, who in turn sold most of the freeholds to the individual tenants. Throughout this process, and since at least 1547, the owner was a John Tolson. After 1593 entries in the Brackenthwaite manorial records ceased, but this property was also one of those tenements which paid a small, ancient, free-rent to the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle's manor of Lorton and Allerthwaite. Using their records the



Palace How  
(image from  
Google Earth)



Tolson ownership can be traced through most of the seventeenth century, being in the hands of Joseph Beeby in 1691. By 1800 the free rent was paid by John Sumpton, who owned the much larger property across the road, Corn Howe, and it can be assumed that John Sumpton had purchased the freehold. (See *Wanderer* nos. 43 & 45 for more information.)

From the Loton parish registers, the name in 1607 was Withbeckreane, a locational name, and then generally Withbeckraine until the early nineteenth century, when it was changed to Palace Howe. That name appears to have been taken from Palace Howe in Eaglesfield, recorded as such by 1779. The name Palace Howe derives from the Pallashowe family of Eaglesfield in the sixteenth century, *pallas* being Latin for an olive tree. By the time that Palace Howe was chosen to replace Withbeckraine, the old family-name meaning had been lost.

**The nineteenth century**

Ferdinando Muncaster, 1770-1810, was one of four sons of James Muncaster, a

shoemaker of Netherclose, Loweswater. In 1793, then a farm servant, Fernando Muncaster married Elizabeth Tyson of Loweswater, and by 1800 he was farming Withbeckraine, when daughter Elizabeth was baptised. Wife Elizabeth died in 1805, and in 1806 Ferdinando married Mary Irven at Lorton. They baptised three more Withbeckraine children at Lorton by 1808. Mary died in 1809 and Ferdinando was buried at Loweswater in 1810, aged 39, of 'Palace how', the first recorded use of the new name. There was one more use of Withbeckraine in the parish registers in 1812, and then baptisms from Palace How took place in 1823 and 1824.

By 1800 John Sumpton of Corn Howe probably owned the freehold of Withbeckraine, and leased it as a farm. Meanwhile, John Sumpton's daughter Grace had married Joseph Fisher, a gentleman of Crosthwaite, and they had numerous children at Corn Howe before her death in 1809, aged 31. Their son, Joseph Fisher, married Mary Coulthard of Bridekirk in 1829. A few years later, in



From the land tax survey about 1912

- A: House; Ground Floor Kitchen, 2 parlours, dairy, back kitchen, First Floor 5 bedrooms.
- B: 4 stall stable lofted
- C: Coal house and hull, lofted.
- D: Barn, byre for 10 lofted, Hen house lofted, hull etc.

The house is stone built, slate roof, walls rough cast in moderate repair. Buildings also stone built and rough cast in moderate repair. Part meadow land. Water supply to house from pump.



**Palace How in the 1950s or 1960s, showing the old coal house**

baptised. Mary Fisher lived on as owner of Palace Howe and died in 1879.

January 1835, Joseph, a yeoman and therefore owning and working his land, and Mary Fisher were living at Palace Howe when daughter Grace was baptised. Joseph was the younger son, while his brother, John, took on the much larger Corn Howe. Curiously, from the registers, Joseph was buried on the same day, 16 May 1837, that his daughter Elizabeth was

The new name of Palace Howe therefore appeared by 1810, at the end of the farm tenancy of Ferdinando Muncaster, when the property was owned by the prosperous Sumpton/Fisher families of Corn Howe. It is likely that the fine interior of the principal rooms would have been created between 1810 and the marriage of Joseph

Fisher, yeoman son of a gentleman, in 1829, ie Regency or George IV. It is significant that there are identical Georgian wooden decorative mouldings in both Corn How and Palace How. After that makeover the name 'Palace' would have been truly appropriate.



**The gate and name-plate from the 1990s**



**Leslie Cunningham and girls outside the Post Office, c.1954**

**The old pump, 1950s**



### **The Twentieth Century**

In the survey and valuation for the land tax, of circa 1912, the occupier of Palace How was a George Hinde. However, the freehold owners of Palace Howe were given as Grace Bell and Elizabeth Prince. 'Howe' and 'How' were used interchangeably at this point, but also recorded as one word, Palacehow, on maps and to this day on the OS maps. It certainly would not have gone unnoticed that Ms Prince was the owner of a palace! By the early twentieth century the name of Palace How (no 'e') was cemented, although Jan has a wooden name plate with 'Palace Howe' on it (and a picture from the 1990s showing the plate) but the 'e' has been chiselled off – obviously a bone of contention for decades or even centuries!

Palace How remained as a farm with over eleven acres of land and in 1945 also became the Loweswater sub-post office, when Leslie & Mary



**The buildings before conversion**

A cupboard in the current dining room housed the original post office equipment, with drawers and drop-down writing leaf – beautifully restored by Gwyn and Jan and testament to their attention to detail.

Cunningham moved in. The Cunninghams also opened Palace How as a seasonal B&B. Jan remains in contact with one of the three Cunningham daughters, Sheila Drewery, who still lives in Barrow, after the family moved there in 1960. Sheila is the youngest girl in the family picture on page 11, outside Palace How, dated around 1954.

In 1960, Brian & Pat Williams bought Palace How for the princely sum of £1,700 (average UK house prices in 1960 were £2,189) and lived there until 1979. From 1979 until 2002 Alan & Kathryn Johnson lived at Palace How and ran it again as a seasonal B&B. Kathy Johnson created the formal garden and lawn area at the rear.

**The old stable floor revealed**



**Looking up into the old inglenook hood**



As frequent visitors to the area, Gwyn and Jan spotted Palace How for sale and moved there in 2002. After much planning, the restoration commenced in earnest with many photographs being taken throughout the process. Some significant changes were made, like the removal of the old coal-house that stood opposite the main buildings and allowed a much bigger area for access and parking. The position of the hand pump is in the general vicinity of the earlier one and is fully operational – another example of Gwyn’s fastidiousness.

### Tour of the house

A significant conversion was the bedroom and bathroom extension on the rear of the property, known affectionately as ‘the honeymoon suite’. This involved moving a (modern) staircase in the enlarged living room (where the old, cobbled, stable floor has been carefully retained and covered). A garage was added on the north end, and, more recently, a conservatory provided to look onto the formal garden. The original rooms and features, such as beams, panelling, bannisters and floors, both wooden and stone, have been retained and meticulously cleaned and restored. One of the most significant finds was the seventeenth-century inglenook fireplace. This would have acted as a smoke room (like the National Trust property at Townend, Troutbeck) and there is some evidence of this with a small door set high up the wall in one of the bedrooms upstairs. The original cavernous fireplace had been infilled including a flue for a more modern fireplace in the dining room behind the inglenook. Jan explained the time and effort that Gwyn had undertaken to expose and stabilise the inglenook while retaining the original blackened surface of the chimney area.

Jan showed us albums full of different stages of the restoration and of her family enjoying the developments into a beautiful, tastefully-preserved property. The name of Palace How befits its



The late Gwyn Evans, above, and Jan, below, working on the house



footprint, style, and position, nestled under Brackenthwaite Hows and Whiteside.

Palace How was an extremely interesting and enjoyable social visit and pretty much a perfect example of the activities that the House History Group can undertake. Jan rounded off the tour with coffee and biscuits in the fabulous kitchen accompanied by the trials, tribulations, and achievements of the restoration.

Many thanks to Jan Evans for her time and care of the group and to Derek Denman for the earlier historical context, dates, and records. If you would like to join the House History Group, please contact Adam & Mary Baker.

*Adam Baker*

## Articles

### **More on Cycling in Cockermouth**

by Gloria Edwards- Cockermouth  
Heritage Group (Kirkgate Arts &  
Heritage)

Further to Roz Southey's excellent article on Cockermouth Cycling Club, I have found an advert, below, for H W Fletcher's Main Street business, which appears in Mate's Guide, probably 1905. Fletcher's

# Heskett W. Fletcher

**General Furnishing Ironmonger,  
Registered Plumber.**



— CYCLE AND MOTOR AGENT. —

—  
OFFICIAL REPAIRER TO THE C.T.C.  
—

**102, Main Street, COCKERMOUTH.**

**W. & J. HERBERT,**  
**Iron and Brass Founders,**  
**ENGINEERS,**  
**GENERAL SMITHS & RANGE MANUFACTURERS,**  
**DERWENT FOUNDRY,**  
**COCKERMOUTH.**

*Makers of Stationary Steam Engines, Thrashing Machines,  
 Water Wheels, Force Pumps for Water and  
 Liquid Manure.*

**IRON AND BRASS CASTINGS OF ALL KINDS.**  
**CORN MILL WORK MADE OR REPAIRED.**

**Wrought-iron Continuous Fencing, Hurdles, Wire Fencing,  
 and Field Gates.**

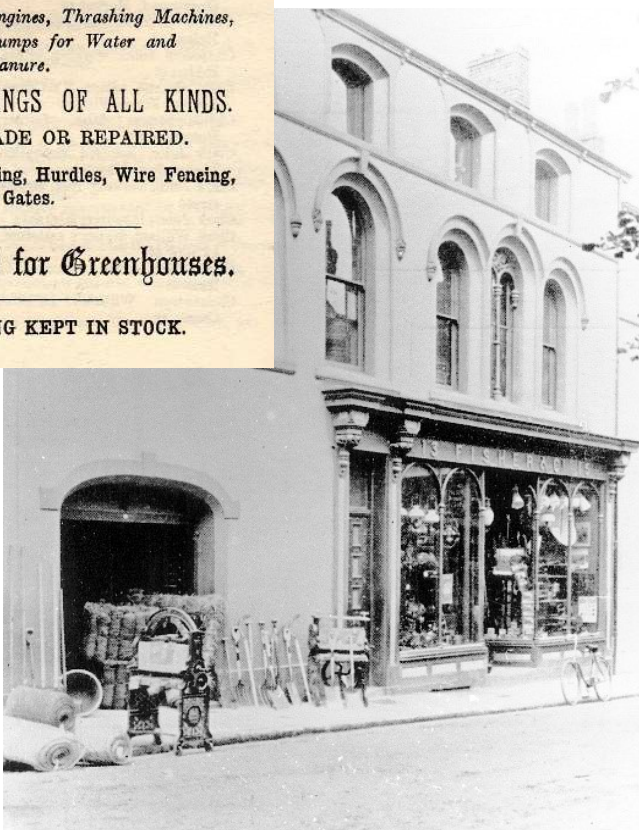
**Heating Apparatus for Greenhouses.**

**LEATHER BELTING KEPT IN STOCK.**

specialised business, and there were many cycle manufacturers in various other places eager to meet the demands of a pastime that continued to grow massively in popularity. There were other candidates who might have been up to the task of producing bicycles. Herbert's Derwent Foundry, left, and Noble's; Fisher & Co., below, were on Station Street (which became George Firn's shop many years later). One of the items they produced was a large school bell for Fairfield Girls' School (now part of the Heritage Group's collection).

was essentially an ironmonger's shop, but the window display features several bicycles and a sign clearly advertising 'cycles by leading makers', 'Cycle and Motor Agent', and 'Official Repairer for the C.T.C.'

Whilst it is perfectly possible that bicycles might have been produced in the town, such an undertaking would probably have been a fairly





We have a photo of the Cockermouth Cycling Club, taken probably in the 1890s by a local draper, William Youdale, who was a keen photographer, giving magic lantern slide shows to enthusiastic audiences.

Around the same time there were also the Derwent Cycling Club, shown below in 1899, and the Wesleyan Cycle Club in existence.





Roz mentioned various cyclists in her article, one of whom was George Blackburn. His grocery business appears in an advert in Mate's Guide , below. Additionally, Thomas Smails and James William Hall (Smails Bros. and Hall) also

had a drapery business together. It's fascinating to see how both the working lives and social lives of these men were intertwined. Cycling certainly seems to have been embraced with enthusiasm in the local area.

# George Blackburn,

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL

**Grocer, Provision Merchant, &  
Italian Warehouseman.**



GOODS DELIVERED BY OWN CARTS IN TOWN AND  
COUNTRY.

**60, Main Street, COCKERMOUTH.**

## **The Douglas Family of South Lodge, Cockermouth**

by Lena Stanley-Clamp

My first attempts at discovering anything about the past of South Lodge, a Georgian mansion on the outskirts of Cockermouth, began by looking randomly online for the people who had lived there.<sup>1</sup> Among the early clues were three letters published in the *New Scientist* in 1958–9 by a Mr A.A.H. Douglas of South Lodge, Cockermouth, about the unusual natural phenomena he observed in the daylight sky above his home. However, with no knowledge of his first name and a surname that runs into thousands, it proved difficult to find anything more. With renewed efforts a few years later, a picture began to emerge.

Archibald Andrew Henry Douglas (known as Andrew in private life) was born in 1902 at Keillour Castle in Perthshire, Scotland. His father Archibald Charles Douglas was the headmaster of a preparatory school in Clifton, Bristol, and his mother was Betty McClelland. His grandfather was Bishop of Bombay. The family can be traced back to William of Douglas in the 12th century. Among his ancestors was Sir William of Drumlanrig Castle who was killed in action at the Battle of Flodden Field in 1513, and William Douglas, the 1st Earl of Queensbury. The 3rd baronet, Sir John Douglas, who served as a Member of Parliament for Dumfriesshire, was imprisoned in the Tower

of London for suspected Jacobitism.<sup>2</sup>

The young Andrew Douglas was educated at Clifton College where he was awarded an open scholarship. In 1919 he matriculated in the first division of the London University examination and in 1920 he enrolled at Glasgow University, where he studied mathematics, natural philosophy, physics, and chemistry. He specialised in Heat Engines and Thermodynamics, and the Theory of Structures. He graduated with Special Distinction in 1923.<sup>3</sup>

### **Wedding in Edinburgh, 1935, in *Courier and Advertiser***



<sup>1</sup> See previous articles on this subject by Lena Stanley-Clamp in the *Wanderer*; 'From Antigua to Cockermouth: the story of South Lodge and its residents', Aug. 2020; 'The Robinsons of South Lodge', Feb. 2021; 'The Williamsons of South Lodge', Nov. 2021; 'The Armstrongs of Armaside and South Lodge', November 2023.

<sup>2</sup> According to <https://www.douglashistory.co.uk/history> he was also related to Sir James Douglas aka Black Douglas (c. 1286 – 1330), one of the chief commanders during the Wars of Scottish Independence.

<sup>3</sup> The Archives of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers

In the following decades he held a succession of engineering jobs with ever increasing responsibilities. His work took him to Argentina, Chile, Nigeria, Peru, Colombia, West Indies, British Guyana, and India. Between 1941 and 1950 he served successively as Chief Engineer at Markham and Company, Chesterfield, Head of the Engineering Department at the National Institute of Agricultural Engineering, and Project Engineer for Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in London. His last employment before coming to Cumberland was in Chesterfield as General Manager of the Heavy Engineering Division of Sheepbridge Engineering Ltd. He was a Member of the Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders in Scotland and of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers.

### **Wedding at the cathedral**

In the midst of a busy professional career, which involved a great deal of travel, Andrew Douglas somehow found time for a private life: on 19 June 1935 he married Marjorie Gordon Brown. Their wedding at St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh was reported in *The Scotsman* and other Scottish newspapers. The reports provide the only photograph of Andrew and Marjorie Douglas I could find and tell us something about the bride and her family.

"St Giles Cathedral was the scene of a pretty wedding yesterday between Miss Marjorie Gordon Brown and Mr Archibald Andrew Douglas. The bride is a daughter of the late Dr H. Grey Brown, Tighbeag, Ballater, and the bridegroom the elder son of Mr & Mrs Archibald Charles Douglas of Alt-nar-ros, Onich, Inverness-shire. The ceremony was attended by over one hundred guests, many of whom wore Highland dress ... . The bride, who was given away by her uncle, Mr J. Paterson Brown, looked very stately in a princess gown of heavy parchment and gold

brocade with skirt continued to form a long train ... . On her golden hair she wore a tiara of orange blossom from which fell her mother's bridal veil, and the bridal bouquet was of white camellias with golden stems." After the reception the young people left en route for Sweden, Germany and Switzerland.<sup>4</sup>

The Douglas family lived in Glasgow<sup>5</sup> when their two sons were born: Archibald Sholto Gordon in 1937 and Ian Andrew in 1939. The twin daughters Katherine Veronica and Ursula Rosemary were born in 1943 in Chesterfield.<sup>6</sup>

### **At the helm of the Distington Engineering Company**

The family moved to Cockermouth following A.A.H. Douglas's appointment in March 1950 as Director and General Manager of the Distington Engineering Company (D.E.C.), a subsidiary of the United Steel Companies (later British Steel Corporation).

The company was located in Workington and was known locally as Chapel Bank. Its Distington name was a war-time ruse adopted for security reasons. The only thing linking the plant to Distington were the imposing iron gates which came from Distington Hall. The company had a design office, engineering workshops and one of the largest foundries in the country. During World War Two D.E.C. employed three thousand people. It remained a large employer after the war.<sup>7</sup>

In November 1950, D.E.C. won a £300,000 order for 1500 mine cars for the State-owned mines in Turkey. The deal made the headlines in the *Yorkshire Post* and other papers announcing the biggest mine-car contract ever signed in the country. 'Mr. A. A. H. Douglas, managing director of the company, said it had been obtained against severe opposition from

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<sup>4</sup> *Courier and Advertiser*, 20.6.1935

<sup>5</sup> Glasgow, Lanarkshire Electoral Registers 1857-1962.

<sup>6</sup> Ancestry.org.uk

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.cumbria-industries.org.uk/a-z-of-industries/iron-and-steel/>



**Distington Engineering Company entrance, c.1960**

24 firms on the Continent and in the United States. "Besides submitting designs on paper, we also had a £1,000 gamble and shipped to Turkey a full-scale prototype mine car specially designed and constructed to meet the customer's working requirements," he said. "We were the only competitors to do this, and I think it swayed the result of the seven weeks of persistent negotiations."<sup>8</sup> Winning this order was quite an achievement at a time when the British steel industry was in much need of modernisation.

The 1950s were a turbulent decade for the industry. The Labour government introduced the Iron and Steel Act of 1949 that brought in effect the nationalisation of the industry. It created the Iron and Steel Corporation of Great Britain which bought the share capital of certain companies, including D.E.C., but not their

undertakings. The individual companies continued to operate under management Boards appointed by the Corporation.

The nationalisation was reversed by the Conservative government and the Iron and Steel Act of 1953. This new Act dissolved the Corporation and replaced it with the Iron and Steel Holding and Realisation Agency. The Agency gradually sold the nationalised companies back into the private sector and D.E.C. returned into private ownership. The 1953 Act also established a new Iron and Steel Board. The Board had a duty 'to exercise a general supervision over the iron and steel industry... with a view to promoting the efficient, economic and adequate supply, under competitive conditions, of iron and steel products'.<sup>9</sup>

The 1950s were a period of expansion in the steel industry and the Distington Engineering Company continued to prosper in Workington for many years. In January 1956, the company announced a

<sup>8</sup> *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 25 November 1950

<sup>9</sup> [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron\\_and\\_Steel\\_Act\\_1949](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_and_Steel_Act_1949)



**Duke of Edinburgh's visit at D.E.C., 1955,  
Cumbria Archives Service, Carlisle,  
C/C/X/1/43, Cumbrian Newspapers**

Duke of Edinburgh inspected the works of Distington Engineering with Mr Douglas.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Douglas children's education and careers**

record production of 1,663 tons believed to be the largest single production unit of its kind in the country.<sup>10</sup> The same year it was announced that D.E.C. would produce the steel construction for two giant Arc Melting Furnaces with a capacity of 150 tons – almost twice that of any existing furnace in the country – for a branch of United Steel.<sup>11</sup> Employment conditions were good: the Company's advertisements mention a five-day 37-hour week, a pension fund, and housing available for suitable applicants.

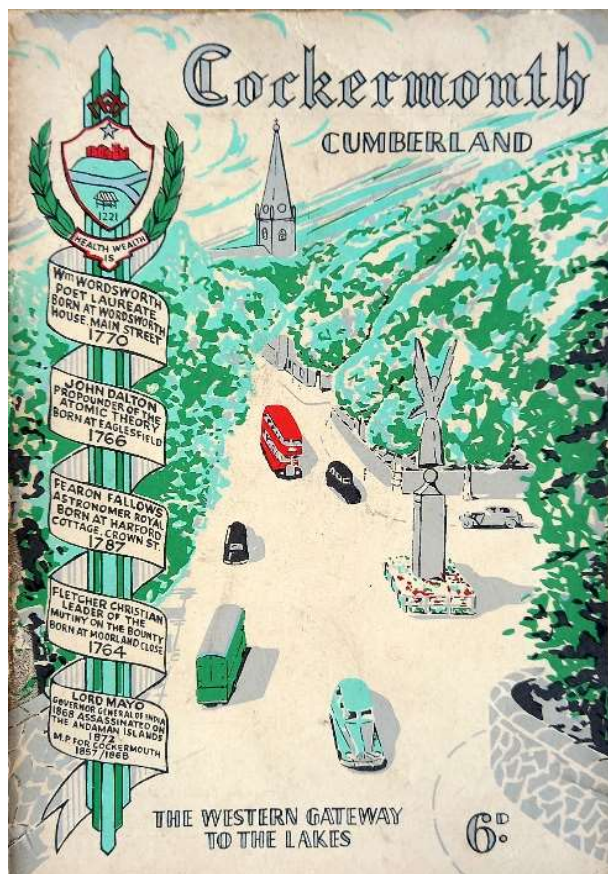
Not much can be found in the public domain about the Douglas family during their residence at South Lodge from 1950 to 1959 and beyond. The sons Archibald Sholto Gordon and Ian Andrew McClelland were both educated at the Loretto School in Edinburgh. Sholto Douglas later studied to become a land agent while his younger brother Ian Andrew became a Wing Commander in the RAF. The twin daughters Veronica and Rosemary were educated at the Moreton School in Shropshire. They graduated from Durham University College and Girton College, Cambridge respectively.<sup>13</sup> Rosemary Righter became an author specialising in international politics and economics, and a chief leader writer for *The Times*.

The visit of the Duke of Edinburgh on 24 November 1955 must have been a memorable day for the General Manager of D.E.C. and his staff. It was the Duke's first visit to West Cumberland. He visited a number of industrial plants including the Solway Chemicals at Whitehaven where he went down an anhydrite mine at his special request. In the afternoon, the

Mr Douglas was for a time deputy chairman of the Cumberland and

<sup>10</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 4 February 1956  
<sup>11</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 December 1959  
<sup>12</sup> *Shields Daily News*, 24 November 1955

<sup>13</sup> *The Peerage of Great Britain*  
<https://www.thepeerage.com/>



history of Cockermouth and its more famous inhabitants concluded:

'Cockermouth's motto is "Health is Wealth" and with its wide, well-kept, well-lighted streets, up-to-date sanitation, pure water supply and smoke-free, health-giving air, it offers everything that an open-air loving visitor or the person seeking a place in which to spend his retirement could desire. Come to Cockermouth, enhance your health, and forget your cares'.<sup>15</sup>

Cockermouth was then a functioning market town: Monday was Market Day. There were still Hiring Fairs at Whitsuntide and Martinmas. The Agricultural Society Show was held on the last Saturday in July and the Fur & Feather Society Show was in November. The advertisements and a trade index reveal an impressive variety of shops and other businesses.

Under *Local Information* one can find seven educational

Westmorland Association of Boys' Clubs and in that capacity presented trophies in cross-country championships and similar events.<sup>14</sup> He retired from Distington Engineering in 1959 after ten successful years at the helm.

### Cockermouth in the fifties

The 1954/55 edition of the *Cockermouth Official Guide and Directory* (see above) gives some interesting insights into life in the town. There is definitely a 1950s feel about the charming illustration on its cover with a slogan *The Western Gateway To The Lakes*. An introduction on the

establishments, eight places of worship, a number of municipal, county council and government offices, and political organisations - all rather impressive for a small town. Equally noteworthy is the list of eighteen local societies and organisations: from the Agricultural Society and Bee Keepers' Association to the Mountain Rescue and Townswomen's Guild. Under the heading *Educational, Arts and Drama*, were listed a Camera Club, Cockermouth Players, Folk Dancing Club, Harmonic Society and Workers Educational Association. Sports were well catered for with eleven clubs including

<sup>14</sup> *Lancashire Evening Post*, 12 April 1954

<sup>15</sup> Issued by the Cockermouth District Council with the Co-operation of the Cockermouth and

District Chamber of Trade & Commerce, published by *West Cumbrian Times*.

Cricket, Cycling, Fox Hounds Melbreak Hunt, Football, Golf, Hound Trailing, Rambling and Tennis at Harris Park.

### The Douglas family in the 1960s and beyond

After leaving Cockermouth, Mr and Mrs Douglas settled at Orchard Gap in Hexham, Northumberland. I owe this information to *The Tatler* which in 1963 published a report of the wedding of Katherine Veronica Douglas to Richard Ninian Barwick Clegg (a future Queen's Counsel), held at Hexham Abbey.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1960s, after a life devoted to science and engineering Andrew Douglas pursued his other interests and had two books published. His translation of *The Bruce*, a Scottish national epic by John Barbour (c.1320–95), was published in 1964 by William MacLellan in Glasgow. This long narrative poem in Early Scots is the first major work of Scottish literature. It is an account of the First War of Scottish Independence, with a focus on Robert the Bruce and Sir James Douglas.

His second book appeared in 1965. *Credo, The Faith of a Humanist* is a collection of 25 poems with a foreword by the novelist E.M. Forster. It reveals that Andrew Douglas was a passionate humanist who was opposed to all religions. In his introduction he states that the poems were written for those who find themselves pulled between sentiment and tradition in one direction, and knowledge and reason in the other. Here is what E.M. Forster had to say about *Credo*:

"I have read these poems with interest and sympathy, and I completely agree with their attitude. Their quietness and modesty might be deceptive. But they not only celebrate the private life, they indicate its

profound importance to society. The sooner we stop supposing we are in possession of supernatural truth the likelier we are to stop abusing and threatening fellow men."

Marjorie Gordon Douglas died in 1992. Archibald Andrew Henry Douglas died in 1997 in Salisbury, Wiltshire, at the age of 95. His memorial stone describes him as Engineer, Musician, Poet, Artist, and Humanist, and includes three stanzas of his poem *Credo*. The memorial stands near Birse in Aberdeenshire where his ashes were scattered.

This foray into the past of South Lodge has provided an opportunity to recall some aspects of local history in the nineteen fifties and remember a man who made an important contribution to West Cumbria's economy.

**Memorial stone, © Copyright Stanley Howe and licensed for reuse under a Creative Commons Licence.**



<sup>16</sup> *The Tatler*, 25 September 1963

## ***To Travel so Far: the Key family of Cumberland and Australia***

*by Glenn Keys*

Family history reminds me of movement. As a minimum it is the inexorable march of years, of generations, of centuries from as far back as we can find, until we arrive at ourselves. It is also the distance that someone moved in their lives "he never travelled outside his village"; how far they progressed in their social circles, be it up or down "he has come so far" or "they have fallen on hard times"; or even how we look for common traits across the generations "the apple does not fall far from the tree".

As a non-indigenous Australian I know that my ancestors must have travelled far. While knowing only some of my recent lineage, back to my great-grandfather, I knew it must have been almost two centuries ago that they came to Australia. Overall there was little detail, and many unsubstantiated stories, about how the Keys came to Australia from the UK.

When I was younger my father told me that one of his ancestors, James, came to Australia in the early 1800s as a young child, about twelve years old, with his parents, James and Sarah. Apparently, his father was a grocer and tea dealer.

Back in the 1980s it was much harder to research your family history. I went to Sydney to look through microfiche but with limited details, such as names and dates, I collected a series of ship's records that were close to the stories I had heard, but not close enough. Later my father, Ray, engaged a family friend to do some research, who found details of wills and inheritances that described how James had come to Australia and pulled himself up by his boot straps. He had died in Carcoar, west of Sydney near Cowra, leaving a wife, Mary-Ann, with nine children, a farm, and numerous sheep and cattle. However my father did not keep copies of this research, meaning I had

many unsubstantiated stories and only a few birth, marriage, and death records to go on.

In the 1990s, my brother, Shane, did some more research and made a significant breakthrough. James had been a convict and came to Australia where, after many years, he gained a Pardon. This was a revelation to me. My grandfather and father had been straight as arrows, never in trouble with the law. In fact, I never remember my father even getting pulled over by the police, let alone fined. To think that a distant relative had been a convict made me hungry to learn more. Unfortunately, we hit a dead end trying to follow James' heritage before his conviction. Once again we only had stories that perhaps the family had come from Taunton in Somerset, UK. When I was working in the UK in the 1980s I went to Taunton and again looked through microfiche, but with a lack of understanding of how to conduct family history research and with few details to go on, I once again drew a blank.

As my parents aged, then my mother passed away and my father slowly started to lose his memory, I felt the need to understand our family journey. I gathered stories from my father and other family members and collected old photos. I organized family reunions, so we could celebrate while everyone was well and the event was a joyful commemoration, rather than only meeting up at funerals. Family members who attended added to the family tree, contributed family stories, and even brought artifacts that had been in the family for generations.

Then for my 60th birthday in 2023 my wife, Amelda, gave me the gift of a trip to the UK to research my family history, to walk the ground of my ancestors and hopefully fill in the story before James arrived in Australia. Not only was this an amazingly thoughtful gift, it also galvanized me. Where would we go? How long should we stay in each location? Did we need to request access to records when we were over there?



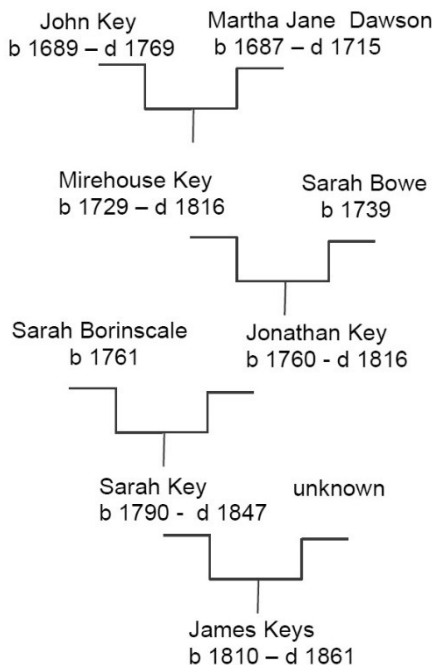
The major difference in tracing my ancestors now, as compared to the previous decades, was the advent of hundreds of thousands of records, be they Church or Government departments, being digitized and placed on the internet. Not only did Governments and archives start adding more and more historical records, but people started creating family trees that could be shared with the world.

Amelda and I started spending hours combing the internet and different family history sites, chasing names, births, deaths, marriages, court and church records. I joined different family history groups and starting compiling a list of potential locations to visit.

I have learnt, during my intermittent researching, that the journey of my ancestors was at times hard, sad, and also rewarding and beautiful. It had luck, both good and bad, and was filled with stories, many of which I will never know.

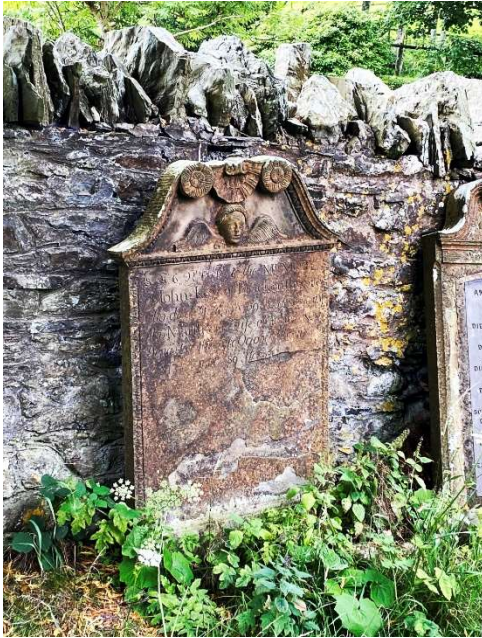
Going back as far as records will allow, we arrive in the Lake District, Cumbria. This beautiful part of England is located in the north, pushing close to Scotland. It has amazing mountains, lovely streams and picturesque villages with warm and inviting pubs. It has given the world William Wordsworth and has maintained its charm and beauty over the centuries.

And in this beautiful region of England in 1652 and 1664 John Dawson and Anne Wastell, respectively, were born. John was baptized on 11 December at Lamplugh, Cumberland. In 1683 they were married at Great Crosthwaite, Cumberland. On 30 June 1687 they baptised their daughter Martha Jane at Crosscanonby, Cumberland, a small village less than two kilometres from the West Coast of England. St John the Evangelist's Church is one of the earliest Christian sites in Cumbria, dating back to approximately 1130, with Viking-era gravestones and with some of the stones in the original church from earlier Roman settlement in the local area.



John Key was born in 1689, twenty-three kilometres to the south east, at Lanthwaite Green Farm, Brackenthwaite. The area is a short walk from Crummock Water, a stunning lake surrounded by imposing hills with sheep running fearlessly up what looks like impenetrable fields of ferns. John's family do not appear as owners or even tenants of any farm in the area, so they may have been workers for someone else's farm at Lanthwaite Green. Whilst it looks a beautiful area to grow up, it is likely John was working on the farm at a young age, and these skills stood him in good stead for his future life as a tenant farmer.

John Key and Martha Dawson married on 14 November 1715 at St Bartholomew's, Loweswater, Cumberland. St Bartholomew's has been a place of worship since circa 1538, when the chapel was given to St Bees Priory. The old chapel was rebuilt in 1829. Loweswater is a small village situated between Loweswater lake and Crummock Water, surrounded by magnificent hills and scenery in every



**Grave marker for John and Martha Key, St Bartholomew's Loweswater**

direction. The village appears to have changed little over the last few centuries as evidenced by the village's only pub, the Kirkstile Inn, which has been providing food and shelter for some 400 hundred years.

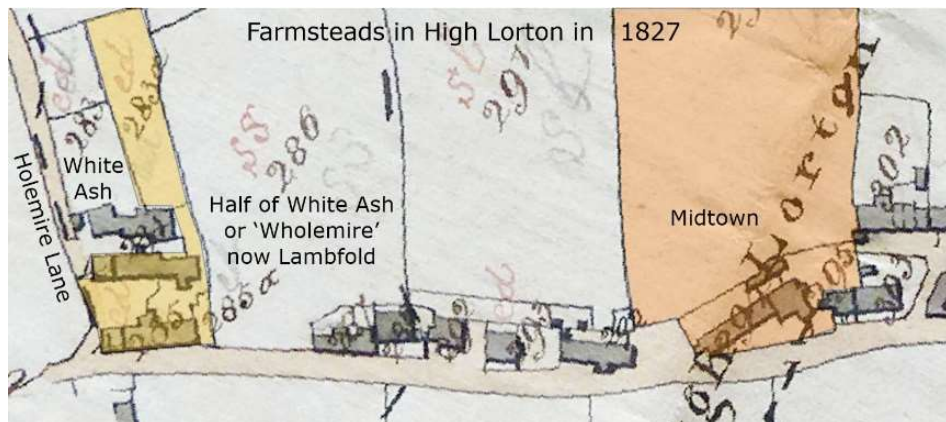
Their first child, Diana, was baptised in March 1716. She was followed by six boys, born from 1720 to 1729, when Mirehouse, the youngest of John and

Martha's children, was baptised on 9 November. Mirehouse is an unusual first name, but is reflected through numerous following generations of the Key family tree. Mirehouse is an ancient family surname in the area. Benjamin, Mirehouse's elder brother, married Martha Mirehouse (she had previously been married to a gentleman with the last name of Fearon) so there is a possible link there. It has also been suggested that the Key family married into the Mirehouse family well before John Key was born and took the name as a first name for their children as a sign of respect for the Mirehouse clan (and perhaps to garner some credibility as well). In fact the headstone for John and Martha Key leans towards the Western stone fence surrounding St Bartholomew's, and on the right of it stands a headstone for several generations of the Mirehouse family. The headstone has been repaired and additional names added to it, and it may not be a coincidence that John and Martha's headstone is so close to the parents-in-law of their son, Benjamin, as well as the potential forebears of their last-born son's first name.

All of John and Martha's children were registered as having been born in Lanthwaite or Lanthwaite Green, but this seems to suggest that they were born in Langthwaite Green Farm where John Key had been born. All the children were

**Looking towards Langthwaite Green Farm from Crummock, photos the author**





baptised at St Cuthbert's, Lorton, just over eight kilometres away. Interestingly, the parish recorded Myres Key as the last child baptised of John and Martha Key on 9 November 1729. As the siblings' names and dates of birth are the same as Mirehouse Key, we assume that Myres was an abbreviation, or best guess at the spelling, of Mirehouse.

John died on 19 April 1769 and Martha on 16 October 1774, just over five years later. Both were registered in the Loweswater Parish records as having died at High Hollins, Brackenthwaite, a lovely but secluded farm that still exists and is operated as a farm even today. John's will left some funds to the eldest grandchildren to be fathered by Benjamin, Mirehouse, and Joseph, as well as £80 to his eldest son Robert, £100 to Benjamin and £60 to a third son (perhaps Mirehouse, though he did have three male siblings that were born before him and after Benjamin). John also guaranteed in his will an annual income to his wife, both from his estate and from the estate of the three sons that he left his money to, as well as all his goods and chattels.

He also had a provision in his will that if any of his sons challenged the will they would lose the entirety of their inheritance, and only receive five shillings. Why did he make such a provision? He had not equally divided up his estate amongst his children (even his male

children) and also had appeared to play favourites with his estate going to just a few selected grandchildren. It is not unusual of the time that the estate was not given to daughters, but to have divided it unequally, across some of his children, with no apparent acknowledgement of their birthing seniority, seems unusual. Was he picking his favourite, apparently Benjamin, or did he just believe that Benjamin was the best bet for the legacy continuing? Did he think that the children might demand a greater percentage of the estate, and thus put in the failsafe clause that if they contested it they would get effectively nothing? Regardless of the reason, it may have meant that Benjamin had access to greater financial assets, and thus became the first Key to own land. In 1767 and again in 1772 Benjamin was assessed for land tax on land he owned in Brackenthwaite (noting that Mirehouse was the collector of those taxes in 1767).

We know quite a lot, relatively, of Mirehouse and his family. We know that he married Sarah Bowe, from the long established Bowes of Lorton and the region, on 5 May 1757 in Lorton at St Cuthberts Church. Today St Cuthberts is a lovely, well maintained local church located between High and Low Lorton. It is reached by footpaths from the two villages, High and Low Lorton, and by the ancient Crossgates Lane. The earliest



**Looking down across Mirehouse's land towards Holemire, High Lorton**

known record of a chaplain in Lorton is 1198. The old chapel was replaced with a new building in the early 19th Century. One of Mirehouse's elder brothers, Benjamin (the one who received the largest inheritance), was a signatory, with Sarah Bove's father, John Bove, on the 1806 petition to the Archdeacon of Richmond for the repair of St Cuthbert's chapel, due to its '...ruinous state...'

Lorton contains two villages, High and Low Lorton, and is spread over a lovely valley with the two villages separated by Church

Lane. The land between the two villages is now used to graze stock, but in the time of Mirehouse it would have been used for farming crops for the respective local farmers. My wife and I have walked the pasture that Mirehouse farmed and sat at the top of the land looking down towards his home at Lambfold, and out across High and Low Lorton towards Blindbothel, and revelled in the natural beauty of the area that he grew up in and raised a family.

We know that in 1784 Mirehouse Key was farming Midtown Farm, which was owned by Peter Garnett. However, by 1796 Jonathan Key (one of Mirehouse and Sarah's sons) was tenanting Midtown Farm and Mirehouse was now a tenant farmer at what is now Lambfold. At that time Lambfold was the farmhouse of a large farm owned by Joseph Westray, and was formed from the previous division of White Ash. John Bolton referred to the house as 'Wholemire', being on Holemire Lane.

The seventeenth century farmhouse and stable-conversion remains in Lorton, though it has changed since Mirehouse's time. Several of the rooms appear to reflect the shape and size of the rooms that the house had when Mirehouse and his family lived there.

Mirehouse and Sarah had eleven children, seven boys and four girls. We know that Nancy, born in 1765, worked as a housekeeper in Huntington House, now Park View, for a local Priest, Mr Sewell, who had the chapelries of Wythop and Setmurthy. He owned Huntington House as well as some livestock, several fields, farming them himself, and was known as a good farmer.

Like his brother, Benjamin, and father, John, before him, Mirehouse was the churchwarden in 1801 at St Cuthberts, Lorton Parish. The churchwardens were elected every year and it would be

**Lambfold in 1962,  
photo John Hart**

expected that settled farmers and yeomen would fill such a position within the community. We know that the post was entrusted with the parish funds and when Mirehouse took over the churchwarden role on 6 Jun 1801 from Thomas Burnyeat he assumed responsibilities for a total of two pounds and two pence (equivalent to approximately £185 in today's currency), which was witnessed by John Sibson. John was the curate at the time, having just taken over as curate in 1800, and would stay as perpetual curate until 1820.



*who went to Redmain. His wife was an old person, rather what is called a tizzy-tazzy body, but old Mirehouse was a very sensible man & greatly looked up to & respected. He was Churchwarden in 1801 for Lorton. In this house there was at this time an iron case in which were kept the bits & stirrups & spurs & shoe buckles and the women-folk used to clean them regularly. A long table used to stand all the length of the kitchen, it was an oak table, but cleaned as bright as hands could make it. I acknowledge I have a great respect for Mirehouse Key & should liked to have had a crack with him. Wholemire lonning was then a very narrow, dirty, watery lonning & no doubt deserved its name of Wholemire.*

We are lucky to have a keen description of both Mirehouse and his wife, Sarah, as well as some details of their home, from approximately 1811, when Mirehouse was about 82 years old, five years before his death in 1816. These details come from a lecture given by John Bolton entitled 'Lorton and Loweswater Eighty Years Ago', given in 1891. To have such detail on a tenant farmer at this time was very unusual and we have much to thank John Bolton for. In this lecture Bolton says:

*In the adjoining house Wholemire lived Mirehouse Key & his wife Sarah. He was a very old man, & used to wear a grey russet wig, bare on the front & looped at the back. He was a tallish man & used to wear short knee-breeches, that just came over the knee, & were fastened with a strap & a little buckle at the side. He wore low shoes, with broad silver gilt buckles on. Mr Mirehouse Key evidently had been an old swell. I find that a son of his also Mirehouse Key was born in 1777 & a granddaughter Agnes born in 1794 at High Hollins. This was a daughter of Jonathan*

Whilst we have a great deal of detail relating to Mirehouse, we have much less relating to his son Jonathan. Jonathan was baptized in Lorton on 6 June 1760. The records suggested he was born in Bath, but this seems unusual, noting that Bath was far south of Lorton. He married Sarah Borrinscale (sometimes spelt Borrenscale or Borranscale), who was born in Oldscale, Wythop, and baptized in Lorton on Christmas Day 1761. Her parents, John and Ann, nee Wilkinson, were part of the Borrinscale's who were well known in Lorton and the region.

The 5th inst. at Lorton, Mr. Mirehouse Key, aged 86.—  
The same day, at Redmain, Jonathan Key, his second son,  
aged 56. They were interred at Lorton on the 7th, both in  
one grave. The former had been married nearly 60 years,  
the latter 30, and have each left a widow, three sons, and  
seven daughters. *“They were loving in their lives, and in  
their deaths they were not divided.”*

Jonathan and Sarah were married at Lorton on 3 May 1786, and had ten children; four boys and six girls. The third child was Sarah Key, born on 23 Feb 1790.

As previously noted Jonathan was tenanting the Midtown Farm in 1796, aged 39, and he later moved to Redmain (occasionally spelt as Redmane). Redmain is a relatively small village, with many farmhouses still forming a large number of dwellings in the single street of the village. Redmain village looks towards the hills, with a beautiful valley in the foreground.

The next news we have was a tragedy for the Key family. Mirehouse and his son, Jonathan, died on the same day; 7 May 1816. The circumstances of their deaths are not explained. Were they working the land and there was an accident that took both their lives or was a contagion sweeping through the region? The deaths, and their subsequent burial, were reported in the Cumberland Pacquet Newspaper (above). It refers to Mirehouse dying in Lorton at age 86, and Jonathan dying on the same day at Redmain. It also mentions they were buried in the same grave, and a quote provided “They were loving in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided.” Mirehouse moving off his tenanted farm at Midtown farm for Jonathan to take over the tenancy might allude to their closeness.

Detailed searches of church records and the successive work of many to map out the remaining headstones at Lorton graveyard has failed to reveal the burial location of Mirehouse and Jonathan. In

fact, according to parish records there were fifteen members of the Key family buried in Lorton Churchyard between 1615 and 1823, but not a single headstone or other record survives.

Turning now to one of Jonathan’s children, Sarah Key. Sarah had come from a long line of hard working farmers, but had one significant difference to the previous ancestors outlined; she was a woman. In the early 1800s, most farmers’ daughters would become farm servants on other farms between 14 and 21 and could expect to make a good marriage to a farmer, or a farm labourer (also known as a husbandman). Sarah probably would be better educated than other local women, such as mill workers, domestic servants or dressmakers, and would normally have their family support if they had any difficulty. Or she could work as a housekeeper, like her Aunt Nancy, which could mean she may not end up marrying at all.

It would appear Sarah was not enamoured with any of these local options and decided to leave the land of her forebears and travel south looking perhaps for work. We will never know why but something seems to have happened to Sarah that made her leave the land of her families. Sarah headed south, probably by boat from Whitehaven to Bristol, and was next found in Twerton (previously Twiverton), about two kilometres miles west of Bath.

Sarah may have thought that she had a good chance of getting work in the mills or supporting the emerging tourist market further south. Twerton or Bath might have held out such a promise. Twerton

(probably derived from "Two Weir Town") was known for its industry with several mills in the area. Even though now it is a suburb of Bath, back then it was separated from Bath by some distance, and Twerton was populated mainly by workers in the local textile and other industries.

However, this was a difficult time in England. Many soldiers had returned from the Napoleonic wars looking for work. Accordingly, there was a surplus of labour, and salaries were depressed. This situation was only made worse by the onset of industrialized processes, which had a significant impact into the mills. Industrialization took the jobs of many manual labourers and the textile industry was one of those with significant impacts. The Spinning Jenny could do the work of eight women and led to the Luddite movement and riots in mills across the country. The mill owners in Twerton were recorded having called in the police to protect the mills against those who would destroy the machinery that was taking their jobs.

The next records are of Sarah having three baseborn children in Twerton; Eliza in 1808, James in 1811, and then William in 1814. All three were registered with no father's name and took the surname Keys. William died in 1815 and was the first of Sarah's children to be buried in St Michael and All Angels Church in Twerton.

Sarah then married George Mitchel on 11 November 1816 at St Michael and All Angels Church. George came from Gorbal, in Scotland, and was a labourer. Their first child, assuming that George was not the father of Sarah's first three children, was Elizabeth, born in December 1816, and died in December 1817. Another daughter was born in December 1818, also named Elizabeth, who died in 1819.

By 1819 Sarah and George were obviously struggling to survive in these challenging times and ended up in the Parish Workhouse in Twerton, with her surviving children, Eliza and James. They were not the only ones struggling in these times.

The parishes were responsible for much of the administration in the local community, and between the surplus of labour, as well as the migration of people from the country to the cities, parishes were finding great difficulty in supporting the poor in their regions.

Sarah, by this time, had buried four children in the previous four years, and was pregnant with her sixth child, Henry. It would appear that the parish felt that George and Sarah were deemed "not deserving" of support and the Parish used the recently passed Sturges Bourne legislation to evict the family. Sarah resisted vociferously, kicking and biting the parish representative, and drawing a crowd of over 100 onlookers. George then caused a riot and broke back into the rooms of the parish workhouse, moving his family back in.

For this breach of the peace, George received three months in gaol, and Sarah, noting her pregnant state, received a month in gaol. There is no record of what happened to the children during this period of their parents' incarceration.

Sarah and George went on to have three more children but continued to struggle with homelessness, lack of work and run-ins with the law.

Their children also had clashes with the courts, with Eliza serving three months in Ilchester Goal for stealing.

James Keys began his run-ins with the law when he was convicted for burning the hay rick of Mr. J. Drafter in Dec 1828. On 28 June 1830 he was taken to Ilchester Goal for assault of John Cole. There was insufficient evidence for a conviction and he was released on 28 August 1830.

James moved to Wales from Twerton, perhaps in search of work. We know from his later convict records that he was employed in cloth manufacturing, and that Twerton, which employed the vast majority of locals in mills during the 1820s and 1830s, went into decline during this

period and James may have left in search of work. Merthyr and its surroundings were thriving industrial areas, due to the local iron mines. The conditions, however, were appalling and death and debilitating accidents commonplace. The end of the Napoleonic War led to a dramatic drop in the need for iron and huge increases in unemployment. Locals were angry with workers from outside the area, and tensions erupted in May/June 1831 with widespread riots. Some protestors were killed, arrested or transported.

In the *Monmouth Merlin* on 30 April 1831 James was mentioned as a member of a gang of housebreakers. Apparently, over a two day period, they committed five or six robberies in Merthyr. The following month James was identified in the Midsummer Quarter Sessions in Glamorgan for stealing a watch and other articles. Once again there was insufficient evidence for a conviction.

We know from another article in the *Monmouth Merlin* on 15 December 1832 that James had recently left the Usk House of Corrections after a three month sentence, through there is no record why he was goaled. He was finally convicted of street robbery on 23 Feb 1833. He and his accomplice, Charles Gillman, were convicted of robbing a Welsh local butcher, Evan Morris, of four shillings by coercing him to play a game of thimbles, the cup and ball game. People who did this were known as "thimble riggers" but James and Charles' hustling of Mr Morris, who felt in fear of his life, was assessed as a Capital Crime by the Judge. Due to the severity of the case, the Cardiff-based judge sentenced both James and Gillman to death, but the jury called for mercy and they were both sentenced to transportation to Australia for life.

After a number of months on the hulk *Justitia*, at Woolwich in London, James sailed aboard the barque *Lloyds* for Australia and arrived in Sydney on 18 December 1833.

In Sydney, James was allotted to Henry Fulton, a clergyman of the Church of Ireland. Henry was implicated in the Irish rebellion of 1798. In August 1799 he was convicted of seditious practices and sentenced to transportation for life. On 8 November 1800 he was conditionally pardoned and made an assistant chaplain and in 1805 he was granted a full pardon. Rev Fulton supported Governor Bligh during the Rum Rebellion, at great risk to his life. He founded the first private school in Australia in 1814, and was responsible for numerous parishes in the Sydney area. James Keys worked as a labourer for the Fulton family, serving through the death of Ann, Henry Fulton's wife, in 1836, and then Rev Fulton in 1840.

In 1842 James was given a Ticket of Leave, which allowed him to secure land to farm, and in 1846 he gained approval to marry Mary Ann Hillyard, which he did on 27 January 1846.

In 1847 James gained a conditional pardon and that same year James and Mary Ann Keys became settlers in the Lachlan River on a property called Cockatoo Station, later renamed as Cucumgilliga Station. Finally, in 1850 James gained a full pardon, which granted him significant rights, including the rights to use convicts to work his land, own sheep and cattle, and travel outside Australia. However, he must never return to England.

On 27 August 1861, James Keys died in Carcoar, New South Wales, leaving behind a wife, nine children and a sizable property with numerous livestock. By the time his son and my ancestor, James Keys, died the Keys family were highly esteemed and a well-regarded family who were early settlers of the region.

In tracing the footsteps of my ancestors, I've uncovered stories of hardship, resilience, and ultimately, hope. Each generation faced its own challenges, but their collective journey laid the foundation for the life my family lead today.