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Society News

Message from the Chair

At the Society's AGM held in September several committee members stood down, and one new member, Andrew Chamberlain, was elected. Andrew is a very welcome addition to our number. The new committee is now smaller than it has been in the past but, nevertheless, at its first meeting it was decided to request subscriptions from Members for next year, notwithstanding offering a reduced programme – see page 2. That decision was also made in the hope that during the

next six months or so more Members come forward to join the committee to help deliver the programme, and indeed to enhance it. In that connection, any Members who have suggestions as to possible Society outings or historical walks they are willing to organise, or at least to contribute to organising, should please contact either myself or the Hon. Secretary, Sandra Shaw.

The Pardshaw historical walk – which took place twice in September due to demand – was a great success thanks to Sandra's research in producing a handsome booklet and her careful preparation for the event. Fiona and I participated in the first one. The significant Quaker associations with the area, dating back to their earliest days at the mid-seventeenth century became very evident, not least with the walk ending at the famous Meeting House at Pardshaw Hall which is hidden away from the road through the hamlet. The Society's former Treasurer, Christopher Thomas, provided interesting information about the site, the buildings, and their use over the years. I felt the afternoon was a 'classic' Society occasion, and it was much enjoyed by all who participated. A report on the walks appears on page 8.

Another occasion of note that took place in September was the Bernard Bradbury memorial event at the Kirkgate Centre organised by the Cockermouth Civic Trust. The focus was the historic landscape of the Cocker Valley, based on Professor Angus Winchester's *The Language of the Landscape*. A Report appears on page 12, and Fiona and I much enjoyed what was an imaginative evening of readings, photography, and music.

Our future programme 2023/4

09 Nov 2023	'Mitchells: Auctioneers for 150 years' (May not be streamed)	Ian Powley
14 Mar 2024	'Secrets of Muncaster Castle: protecting the Tate Collection during WWII'	Dr Rob David
09 May 2024	'Getting to know John Peel: my experience of learning about Cumbria's history'	Dr Christopher Donaldson
13 Jun 2024	AGM followed by 'John, Jane, Dorothy, and William: creating the Marshall Estates'.	Dr Derek Denman
12 Sep 2024	'A place in history: three locations with a fascinating past.'	Judith Shingler and Alison Peak
14 Nov 2024	'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

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

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

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

This edition of the Society's *Wanderer* is the fiftieth in the series. The publication has evolved over the years from a biannual short newsletter that alternated with the Society's Journal into what it is today. This aspect of the Society's history is noted in the article by Derek Denman and Sandra Shaw to mark the Society's 30th anniversary which

appears on page 3. Both Sandra and Derek have been stalwarts of the Society for many years, indeed Derek has been a member since its foundation. Members have a great deal for which to thank both – not only their contributions in so many different ways, but also for their dedication to the Society.
Charles Lambrick

Our Society at Thirty

by Sandra Shaw and Derek Denman

In the beginning, back in 1993

On 17 October 1993 our founder, Ron George, chaired a meeting in the Yew Tree Hall of some forty people who might be interested in creating a local history society. Ron became chair, Michael Grieve was secretary and Daphne Holbrook volunteered for treasurer. Other members joined the committee. Subscriptions were set at £6 and the programme of meetings was arranged, which has now run at the Yew Tree Hall for thirty years.

The society had the good fortune to be located in an area to which Dr Angus Winchester, as he was at that time in the History Department of Lancaster University, had an attachment. He was persuaded to become honorary President, a position he has held with our great appreciation for thirty years, though now as Professor Winchester. Despite the local members in the first year tending to be past the first flush, eleven of the sixty members in 1994 are still members in 2023, including two of the 1994 committee – not the present writers.

The Thirty Years

This retrospective is not an attempt to record everything the society has done over the past 30 years and is too brief to contain a long list of office holders and others who have made major contributions. A few words about our founder are justified. The late Ron George became fascinated by his old house in Lorton, which led him to some formal education in local history. He widened his interest to the parochial chapelry of St Cuthbert, where he was Churchwarden, and then shared his interest by founding our society, being chair for six years. Despite having moved to Canada to be near family, the society's 10th year saw the publication of his book *A Cumberland Valley*. His daughters made a very generous gift in 2022, which enabled us to purchase equipment to allow livestreaming of our talks from the Yew Tree Hall.

The membership of local history societies is usually formed mostly of interested people who pay subscriptions, and who wish to attend talks and participate in outings, both for education and for social entertainment. The reason that such groups are strong in Cumbria, particularly in rural areas, is probably due to the large numbers of offcomers. We come in later life, attracted by the environment, but develop a curiosity about a unique residual culture of earlier times. So much remains here visible, while being generally overwritten elsewhere.

The mainstays of the Society's activities have always been its by-monthly talks and regular outings (local walks and visits further afield). It has published regular *Newsletters/ Journals / Wanderers*, starting in January 1994. These and other publications are available on the society's website as a resource for researchers and anyone who is interested. However, there have been many additional activities over the years including research, publications, local events, exhibitions, and engagement in wider projects, which has varied according to the interests, abilities, and resources of the society members.

The transformation of a local history society into active study and research, and the ability to maintain a level of creative work, depends on having a core of engaged people, and on refreshing that core with unsuspecting initiatives from time to time. This has become more difficult to maintain, for a variety of reasons (later payment of state pensions and reduction in early-retirement schemes, being squeezed between helping to care for elderly parents and young grandchildren). Our society first addressed this issue soon after 2000, by extending its area of study to include some places previously deprived of a society, such as Loweswater, Embleton, and even parts of Dean parish and Mosser. Over the following years membership grew to peak near 200, providing people and resources to support a significant programme of local history activities, both

within the locality and as part of county projects.

This article will draw attention to some of the less known examples of what the society has done. Our website, derwentfells.com, has now been running for over twenty years, but with our Facebook page, run by Lena Stanley-Clamp, becoming the focus of social activity. Reports of many of our previous activities can be found on our website, in the sections headed Publications, Projects, and Features.

Occasional Publications

Publications include the three walks booklets (Lorton, Loweswater, Pardshaw and Mosser). *They Lie in Foreign Fields*, is a special booklet researched and written by Walter Head and Sheila Gordon and published to mark the centenary of the end of WWI. It contains the stories of the men named on the war memorials in our area (Buttermere, Embleton, Lorton, Loweswater, Mosser, and Wythop).

The Greenwood maps of Cumberland and Westmorland, surveyed in 1821-2, were given to the Society in memory of Michael Grieve and are made available for study and use.

A Cumberland Valley (Lorton) by Ron George and *Life in Old Loweswater* by Roz Southey were both distributed by the Society. 2004 was the bi-centenary of a visit to Lorton's Yew Tree by William Wordsworth. The society marked this with a poetry competition, with the commission of a poem, and published *Wordsworth and the Famous Lorton Yew Tree*, edited by Michael Baron and Derek Denman. The Township Maps of Buttermere, Brackenthwaite, Embleton, Lorton, Loweswater and Whinfell were created for the society's 10th anniversary.

Projects

The society is a founding member of The Cumbria County History Trust, a charity, launched in 2010 with the purpose of writing the Victoria County Histories of Cumberland and Westmorland. Our society was a founder member and six individuals volunteered to take part in the

first stage, using prescribed sources to produce limited histories, known as Jubilee Digests, in honour of Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee. Our society contributed 21 of these, extending beyond our usual territory. The edited full set was published as an *Historical Gazetteer*.

The society's first venture into archaeology was in 1998, when its Lorton Roman Roads Group sought for the reported roads through Lorton, finding and excavating the likely road from Thornthwaite up to Knott Head. The report was published in CWAAS *Transactions*. In 2003 a geophysics survey was made near High Nook Farm.

More substantial level 1 surveying followed in 2008, led by the National Trust. The society formed a Historic Landscape Group of interested members who formed three teams, each of which went out on one day per week for six weeks surveying in Brackenthwaite, Loweswater and Buttermere. The survey results and slide presentation are available under 'Features'. Further surveying occurred in 2009, on the western shores of Derwentwater, as far up as the open works on the Catbells ridge. An attempt to build on this with a 'dig' of our own at Peel Place, Buttermere failed, but damage to that site by contractors later in the year, necessitated investigation by the NT, and the society was invited to assist. Inspection of NT sites continued over the next three years, including some remedial work at the Loweswater Peel (Crummock Water) in Sep 2012. The HLG was wound up in 2014. However, another opportunity presented itself in March 2022 when six members assisted with level 1 surveying of Brackenthwaite Hows over 3 days.

House History Groups – these have waxed and waned. There was a flourishing group in early 2000s, relaunched in May 2007. This ran successfully until 2012, with visits to local properties, reported in Journals of the time – Low Hollins in Brackenthwaite, Midtown High Lorton, High Mill High Lorton, Low Stanger Farm. This year Adam and Mary Baker have founded a new group.

A project to place the Manorial Records Register for Cumbria on-line was run in 2005/6, by our President, and our society was invited to provide example projects. Several members did so, using manorial records to research Cumbrian Pinfolds (Nigel Mills), Pardshaw Hall and Kirby (Sandra Shaw), The Borrowscale Family (Joan Borrowscale) and the Lorton 'Tenters' threadmill and walk mill (Derek Denman). Nigel's research was the foundation for his book on *Cumbrian Pounds and Pinfolds* published in 2015.

Our oral history recording started in 1999 as part of a Cumbria millennial project. It later became the Three Valleys Oral History project, run by Hetty Baron-Thieme. Transcripts of our forty interviews are available through Ambleside Oral History Group. Oral history is currently being revived by Fiona Lambrick.

We have been a co-organiser of the Bernard Bradbury Memorial lectures at the Kirkgate Centre since 2006, when Angus Winchester spoke on medieval Cockermouth. The lead alternates with Cockermouth Civic Trust and, formerly, the Cockermouth Heritage Group.

Anniversaries

The 10th in 2003, was marked by a Presidential address from Angus Winchester on the subject of Thomas Denton's Tour of Cumberland in 1687, followed by an exhibition at Loweswater Show and the YTH of the specially created large-scale township / tithe maps. That year also saw the Publication of Ron George's book *A Cumberland Valley* and the launch of the Three Valleys Oral History Project.

The 20th in 2013 was marked by an exhibition organised by John Hudson, telling the history of the society's area in 24 objects, held over two days in October and attended by 400 visitors.

The 30th anniversary was marked with a garden event at the home of the Lambrick Family at Armaside House. Our president, Professor Angus Winchester attended and nearly fifty guests enjoyed exploring the extensive and beautiful gardens in glorious sunshine. There was

plenty of tea, and copious quantities of cake to keep everyone satisfied.

The Society Today and Tomorrow

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 resulted in the cancellation of the planned programme of talks and outings from the lockdown in March. Activities resumed in 2021, with four talks arranged using Zoom, switching in July to a hybrid model of in-person and livestreamed, which has continued. The technical arrangements have been adjusted to ensure the audience both in the hall and at home are well served, but attendance of members and visitors has not returned to previous levels. In 2002 attendances often approached one hundred. We are now lucky if the combined attendance in person and by Zoom reaches forty.

During this past year, our attention has turned to the important consideration of archives and legacy. The society has created and made available a large body of work, which is used worldwide. Its accessibility and security needs to be improved, to survive an uncertain future. In 2023 the Digital Archive of Historical Sources, including a large amount of material for local research, has been created for members to borrow on flash drives / memory sticks. In 2024 our publications and historical images will be housed in an archive system.

Membership remains high, the finances are good, the Wanderer continues to attract new work, the programme of talks has been maintained and our walks, outings and visits are often oversubscribed. However, the society is in difficulties; attendance at talks has declined and we enter 2024 with a committee smaller than in the past, with the officers having expressed a wish to relinquish their roles at the next AGM. The number of talks has been reduced, but unless there is a substantial influx of committee members prepared to take on the roles of officers, and to maintain the programmes of activities, then it seems unlikely that there will be a 40th anniversary. That is the challenge.

Meeting Reports

Talk: 'Loaves and Fishes: the mills, fishponds, and grange of Shap Abbey', 13 July

Kevin Grice is an archaeology supervisor for the National Park, and archaeology volunteer for the National Trust and Historic England / English Heritage. He opened his talk by explaining that the usual view of the Abbey remains, as shown in the photo used on the poster, and reproduced here, is of the West Tower, built much later than the main abbey buildings, but the only part to have survived the abbey's dissolution.

The remains were listed in 1915, including a reference to the lack of disturbance by modern development, mention of a mill and its millrace, and two fishponds. The full listing, including a map, can be found on Historic England's website. Kevin's task (supported by a team of other volunteers), the subject of this talk, was to check the accuracy of the scheduling. Backed by published works, maps, plans and historic photos, on-site surveying took place in wet, windy conditions in 2020 and 2021.

Shap Abbey was built by the Premonstratensian Order, also known as the White Canons; founded in France in 1120 and located at Shap in 1199. There

Shap Abbey today



were twelve canons, an abbot, lay brothers and others. The order was never rich, but it was supported by land grants from the Vieuxponts and the Cliffords. The abbey was one of the last to be dissolved, having been valued in 1536 and surrendered on 14 January 1540. Part of the property became a farm, which it remains today. The land was granted initially to the Wharton family in 1544, then to the Lowthers in 1732.

The Mill

The abbey would have had a mill from an early date, and it is mentioned in 1536 and included in the dissolution four years later. The scheduling refers to a mill south of the abbey, comprising the lower courses of a four-roomed building along with extensive earthworks, including the water management arrangements. The map and description imply a mill to the east of the river Lowther. The OS map of 1863 shows an unroofed two-roomed ruin, gone by the 2nd edition in 1898, which demonstrates that the mill had declined and gone out of use. The scheduling arrangements, including the footings of four rooms, were confirmed by surveying in 2020.

However, the documentary research showed that this was not the full story. Henry VIII's valuation of 1536 referred to mills (plural), in 1540 two mills below the site of the former monastery were mentioned; a lease of 1625 stated two watermills with two races of water. A drawing and plan by Bland, commissioned by the Lowthers in 1837, shows a corn mill

with its race on the west bank. An earlier plan by Flintoff in 1768 also shows a structure in the same place as well as an 'ancient mill' further south on the east bank. Exploration in the area on the west, shown by Bland and Flintoff discovered robust foundations (pictured) capable of supporting a two-storey building in the right place, close to, but not directly associated with, the farm buildings

Finally, a painting by Peter de Wint of about 1805 was found

showing 'The Old Mill, Shap Abbey'. De Wint was known to have stayed with the Lowthers and to have painted around the estate. A favourite subject of his was mills, and a surviving painting of the mill at Dunham Massey attests to the accuracy of his depiction. The Old Mill, Shap Abbey contains enough detail for it to be clear that it is not of the East Mill. So, both mills have been found. It is thought that the West Mill was probably the earliest, as it is closer to the abbey buildings, and on the same side of the river. It may have closed some time after 1625, and been converted into domestic use (there is washing shown in de Wint's painting). The East Mill continued into the 1830s when the last miller moved to Kendal. Rev. Whiteside, writing in 1904, said that the mill on the east side was last inhabited about 60 years ago; not far off the 1830s.



Foundations of the West Mill

The Fishponds

Fishponds are a common feature of monastic houses and varied in size. Those at Shap are described in the listing as comprising two ponds to the north of Abbey Mill, separated by a bank six metres wide. They were quite small, probably intended as holding ponds for fish caught at fisheries elsewhere. Kevin Grice and his team found two depressions with the bank between, as referred to in the scheduling, but were doubtful that these fitted the usual expectations of monastic fishponds, lacking sluices, leats, nearby springs, or facilities for drainage. What was the mound in between for? Was there another possible site? Bland's 1837 plan showed a fishpond on the east side of the river, and this was discovered, clearly visible on the ground, albeit, having been in more recent use for a spot of illicit fish farming. It appeared to be a much more suitable site.

The Grange

The word 'grange' is from Latin *granum* meaning grain but has come to refer to a

farm. Many monastic buildings had several, and indeed Byland Abbey had one at Shap. Shap's grange came after the original grant and would have been worked by lay brothers or paid labourers under the direction of a canon. Following the dissolution, it was let as a farm and was known as Guard(e)s. Flintoff's plan of 1769 shows its location, away from the abbey, near what is marked on current maps as 'Thunderstone'. Lowther's survey of 1803 - 1811 describes 'the guards with a house in bad repair'. Shortly after that, a limekiln was built on the site, shown on the 1859 OS map, and a 1950s photo. In 1847, the abbey and grange were reunited and let as a single unit, an arrangement that continues today. The site was fully surveyed and recorded in 2021 as part of the recent investigations.

Summary

To conclude, Kevin Grice said that he and his team established the second mill, corrected the location of the fishpond and found the grange. Not a bad record for nearly two years of research during the Covid pandemic.

This talk was attended by thirty people in the hall, and fifteen on-line.
Sandra Shaw

Historical Walk: Exploring Isaac Fletcher's World; from Pardshaw Hall to Mosser and back, 6 & 12 September

This Walk, led by Sandra Shaw, proved to be very popular. 25 people expressed an interest, so Sandra kindly conducted the walk twice. It was inspired by the activities of Isaac Fletcher (1714-1781) of Underwood, Mosser. Fletcher was a prominent yeoman farmer and businessman who kept a diary from 1756 until shortly before he died. The diary, edited by our President, Angus Winchester, was published by the CWAAS in 1994, and provides a fascinating insight into the life of the period and the activities of many local inhabitants. The walk was a circuit of Fletcher's local area, and covered many places with Fletcher connections, but Sandra took the opportunity to point out some other interesting features.

Fletcher's parents were Quakers, and although little is known of his early life, he was probably educated at the Quaker School at Pardshaw Hall. He was born at Underwood, Mosser, which he subsequently inherited, and which remained his home until he died. In 1743 he married Susannah Harris, with whom he had five children. As well as farming his land around Underwood, Fletcher

**The first group approaches St Michael's,
photo by Penny Poole**



conducted business as a land surveyor and as a lawyer (since he was a Quaker he was barred from becoming a fully qualified attorney-at-law, but nevertheless it is clear he fulfilled that role and his ability was widely recognised). He also had many commercial interests – he was a partner in a stocking factory in Cocker mouth, he built a lime kiln near Pardshaw Hall, and opened a trial mine for lead ore in the area. Finally, he was a prominent member of the Quaker community. As a result of all this activity he was widely known and respected.

The walk started near the Quaker meeting house in Pardshaw Hall. We walked along the road and turned down a lane heading towards the low-lying land between Pardshaw Hall and Mosser. We passed Jacob's Well, situated on the boundary where the overlying limestone terminates and the water seeps out. There is a line of these wells on this boundary at Pardshaw Hall. Continuing down the path we emerged on to the field and looked back where we could see Isaac Fletcher's lime kiln on the top of the hill. Passing ice-age drumlins, we then crossed a stile on to land that formerly belonged to Fletcher, who must have used this path countless times walking between Underwood, which we could just see on the other side of the valley, and the Meeting House. After viewing Underwood, we continued up the hill to emerge on the Mosser-Sosgill road. We diverted up a path from the road to look round the charming small Church of England chapel of St Michael. It is still used occasionally, but has no electricity. It is famous for its Christmas services, illuminated by gaslight and candles.

Returning to the road we continued to Mosser, passing the property Gill Brow, which receives several mentions in the diary. Nearby is a barn with stonework which shows much evidence of alteration. Also of interest is the postbox set into the barn wall which is a rare example of one dating from the time of Edward VII, and carries the relevant insignia. We continued along the road, turning left, passing between the ponds and up the hill. We passed the site of a

house called Kirby, since demolished. It wasn't a public house in the modern sense but provided simple meals with tea or ale. It was visited many times by Isaac Fletcher to see clients and conduct business.

Shortly afterwards we had gone full circle and had returned to Pardshaw Hall where we were able to enter the famous Quaker Meeting House. Although built in 1729 it is not the first Meeting House in the village; it replaced one that was constructed on Pardshaw Crags in 1672. No trace of the earlier building exists, but some of the stones from it are thought to have been used in the construction of the 1729 building. This comprises two rooms, separated by removable wooden screens. Christopher Thomas gave us an account of the activities in the Meeting House in Fletcher's time. The men met in one room and the women in the other, but when they had finished their separate meetings the screens were removed enabling a joint meeting to take place. Also on the site is a stable block, a school room and a burial ground. The stable block incorporates a date stone from the earlier 1672 building, and the school room is where John Dalton, born at Eaglesfield in 1766, received his early education. One of Fletcher's sons, John, was his teacher. Dalton spent most of his adult life in Manchester and is internationally famous for propounding the chemical atomic theory, which is one of the cornerstones of modern science. There is a memorial stone to him in the burial ground. The Meeting House now provides basic accommodation for visitors and is also used occasionally for weddings and funerals. Christopher and Catherine Thomas are Trustees of the Meeting House and are involved in its upkeep and management. The event concluded with tea and biscuits in the Meeting House.

Sandra mentioned that she had first led this

walk back in 2007, and several of the points of interest had changed markedly in the intervening years. Jacob's well is now almost hidden by vegetation, as is an interesting old gate stoop near Kirby, which has on it an original Ordnance Survey benchmark. And after leaving Mosser there is a stream alongside the road which in 2007 still had a ford across it leading to the field opposite, but the floods of 2009 and 2015 have swept it away completely.

This was a walk to remember, and we were all very grateful to Sandra for devising and leading it. Every path and lane we took, every field we crossed, and many of the buildings we passed, all had interesting historical associations, and Sandra explained them all. The link between most of them is Fletcher's diary, which is a mine of information for those interested in the history of the area. It would seem that the diary's brief, daily entries were intended mainly to serve as a reminder to Fletcher of his multifarious activities, but he could hardly have guessed it would be of such interest almost 250 years after his death. Perhaps we should all keep diaries.

John Hudson

The booklet for the walk can be downloaded from our website at:
<http://www.derwentfells.com/pdfs/PardshawMosserHistoricalWalk>

The second group at Beech Hill, photo by Derek Denman



Talk: 'The Dacre family: from border bruisers to regional magnates', 14 September

Maks Loth-Hill gave Members a scintillating and well-illustrated Talk on 14 September about the Dacre family's rise and decline over the centuries. Maks explained that he had grown up in the Brampton area and during his youth had become fascinated by the history of Lanercost Priory and by the Dacre tombs situated there. He had delved into the family's history and became more and more interested in their local standing and rise to national prominence.

After the Norman Conquest the family had been given the opportunity to settle at what became the village of Dacre, near Penrith, where in due course they acquired the castle through marriage. Although not then a noble family or members of the elite, evidence from the 13th century onwards points to successive generations rising in political and social standing through toughness of character and quickness in action. The Dacres began to fill important positions – a William Dacre being appointed a sheriff in 1236, others becoming constables of castles and also travelling justices – not only in Cumberland but over in Yorkshire and further south as well. They were on the rise, becoming trusted representatives of the Crown for maintaining order.

How did the Dacre family acquire land near Lanercost Priory, founded in 1169 by Roger de Vaux? There being no male Vaux heirs, Thomas de Moulton of Gilsland inherited the property, including Naworth Castle, leaving it on his death to his thirteen year-old daughter Margaret, who was betrothed to a seven-year old of the Clifford family. However, Ranulph Dacre asserted that there was a marriage contract entitling him to marry Margaret. Despite her promptly being whisked away from the Borders to Warwick Castle, Ranulph kidnapped her from there and returned to marry her in Cumberland. As a result, Naworth and the large estate that went with it together with property in

North Yorkshire devolved on him. In 1321 Ranulph was summoned to Parliament as the first Lord Dacre of Gilsland.

Successive heirs to the title married into influential families over the course of the next century or so. However, matters almost came unstuck when another Ranulph, who had been summoned to parliament as Baron Dacre of the second creation, was fighting on the Lancastrian side during the Wars of the Roses and was killed at the battle of Towton (1461). He was accompanied on the battlefield by a younger brother, Humphrey, who managed to escape to Scotland but became the subject of a writ of attainder, accused of treason. Nevertheless, the status of the Dacres was such in the North of England that he was pardoned and elevated to the peerage as Lord Dacre of Gilsland of the third creation.

Humphrey had married Mabel Parr of Kendal Castle, whose great niece Catherine was to marry Henry VIII. Their eldest son, Thomas (2nd Baron Dacre of the third creation), fought on the losing Yorkist side at the Battle of Bosworth Field (1485), but as a hard fighter and politically canny he quickly ingratiated himself with the victor, Henry Tudor, who became Henry VII. He was appointed Warden of the Western Marches and subsequently Warden of all the Marches. Echoing the action of his forebear, he was determined to marry into a wealthy family and on learning that Elizabeth, sixth Baroness Greystoke, was a Ward of the King held at Brougham Castle, he raided the castle and eloped with her at the age of 20. Thereby the extensive lands of the de Greystoke family passed into the hands of the Dacres, and Thomas had become one of the wealthiest men in England. Henry VIII appointed him a Knight of the Garter in 1518, perhaps the zenith of the fortunes of the family. A photograph of his stall plate in St George's Chapel, Windsor, was among the images with which the Talk was illustrated.

Maks drew attention to the fact that Thomas appears not only to have been a canny and strong-minded soldier but also a cultivated person who was responsible

for building-restoration work - notably at Lanercost Priory and Wark Castle on the south side of the river Tweed in Northumberland. He also built the gateway of Naworth Castle. During his accumulating of possessions, he acquired four heraldic beasts - believed to have been carved from the wood of one oak tree - to adorn the great hall of Naworth. They remained there for more than four centuries but are now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Maks also drew attention to iconography associated with the Dacres, notably prisoners' carvings at Carlisle Castle (which the King had placed in the Dacres' charge) comprising heraldic symbols, including representations of scallop shells, three of which are the only ones on the Dacre coat of arms.

Among members of the family who were Governors of Carlisle Castle was William, 3rd Baron Dacre. But in 1534 he was charged with treason for collusion with the Scots and was tried in the notorious Star Chamber. He avoided being executed but was fined the then enormous sum of £10,000 which, bearing in mind the family's wealth, he managed to pay off over seven years.

Maks explained that while the Dacres continued to hold influence in the North for succeeding decades and generations, their standing began to be undermined from within, partly through tensions arising from illegitimacy. Thomas Dacre, a bastard son of the 2nd Baron Dacre of the third creation, was one of those who caused trouble. Having converted to Protestantism and having been put in charge of the dissolution and despoilation of Lanercost Priory, he played an important part at the Battle of Solway Moss (1542), following which he was knighted and granted the priory and lands of Lanercost. There he established his new residence in the west range of the monastic cloister which later became



The Dacre beasts at the V & A

known as Dacre Hall, and which is now used as Lanercost village hall. Traces of mid-16th century wall paintings remain on the north wall.

Sir Thomas Dacre's presence so close to Naworth caused much tension with William, who remained a Roman Catholic. William's son, another Thomas (4th Baron Dacre), left no male heirs and, despite an attempt by Leonard Dacre (a descendant of Humphrey) to assert his right to it, the Dacre title fell into abeyance. Leonard was the source of trouble to other Dacre family members and got on the wrong side of Elizabeth I and her advisors. Deemed to be a traitor, he fled to Scotland. Each of the three daughters of Thomas, the 4th Baron, married into the Howard family, who thereby acquired, among other properties, Greystoke Castle, Naworth Castle, and the lands in North Yorkshire where Castle Howard was later built.

Maks concluded his Talk by drawing attention to the fact that a Howard descendant, George 9th Earl of Carlisle (1843-1911), who was a noted pre-Raphaelite artist, took much interest in Lanercost Priory including the tombs and memorials of his Dacre forbears. They along with examples of Dacre iconography and buildings associated with the family were among the illuminating images that accompanied what was a very well received Talk.

Charles Lambrick

Special event: Landscape and Memory, the Cocker Valley revisited' 30 September

At a sold-out event in the Kirkgate Centre on 30 September, four friends from the former Cocker-mouth Grammar School gave a captivating and thought-provoking presentation on the Cocker valley and what it meant to each of them – a place they first knew in their childhoods and youth. The project was inspired by Angus Winchester's 2019 book *The Language of the Landscape*.

Having developed the idea, Angus Winchester, Rupert Ashmore, David Ashworth and Marion Bowman explored the Cocker valley and melded their personal recollections and memories of the Valley into readings, music and images. The memories related to both their personal life stories and the experiences which linked them to others, past and present, who have also known and loved this landscape. Through additional conversation, reflections, and questions, they interpreted the meanings of some special places, and the human longing for roots and a sense of belonging.

A Lakeland author, Peter Crosthwaite, had developed the idea of 'stations' – viewpoints where tourists could admire scenic views from points

along the Buttermere Valley. The Landscape and Memory presentation identified seven stations along the entire length of the Cocker Valley from the confluence of the Derwent and the Cocker at the old Brewery, right up to Innominate Tarn behind the summit of Haystacks. These stations were not necessarily touristy or scenic in the conventional sense, but were points of interest which collectively captured some of the themes of *The Language of the Landscape*: the social geography, the myths and legends, the spirituality etc. The stations were also visually interesting – artistic photographs by Rupert Ashmore, with a clear influence in some of them of the Lakeland painter Delmar Banner, provided a fabulous backdrop to the spellbinding words spoken by Angus Winchester and atmospheric guitar instrumental arrangements by David Ashworth.

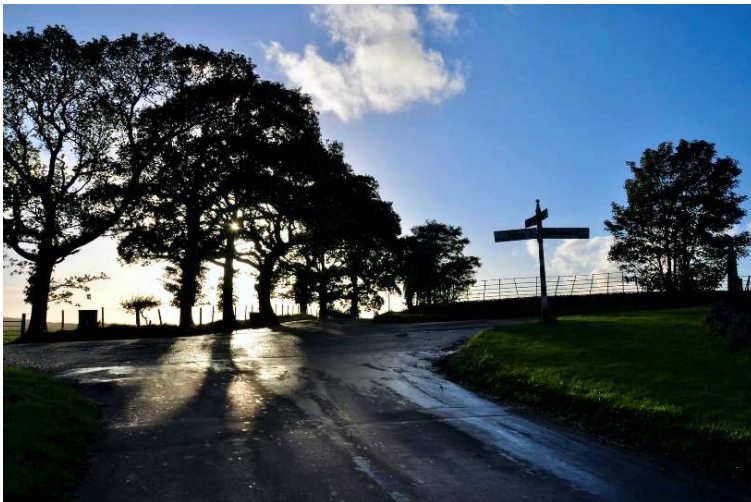
The slick presentation, skilfully produced by Marion Bowman, was rounded off by a poignant discussion between the four friends, sprinkled with humour and a touch of sadness at the untimely loss of another friend – John W. Reay, to whom the project was dedicated.

The evening concluded with drinks in the bar and an opportunity to meet the presenters. The whole presentation can be viewed online at <https://cockervalley.wordpress.com/>

Adam Baker

This event was organized by the Cocker-mouth Civic Trust as a Bernard Bradbury Memorial Lecture

Four Lane Ends, at Roundclose Hill, photo by Rupert Ashmore



Articles

Clogs

by *Walter Head*

The heyday of the clog in Britain was the period from 1840 to 1920 and it is estimated that in 1850 ninety-five per cent of the agricultural workers in Cumberland were wearing wooden clogs. By the turn of the century the wearing of boots was becoming more common. The decline of the clog continued as servicemen returning from the war took the opportunity to retain some of their equipment, such as boots and greatcoats. During WWI the War Office made a contract with the North British Rubber Company to supply Trench Boots (wellington boots) for troops on the Western Front who were fighting in waterlogged and muddy conditions. These waterproof boots took over from the clog when working in wet conditions. Prior to this it was the practice to put hay in the clog, which gave insulation, and when the hay became wet it could be discarded and replaced with new dry hay. This was not a new idea as when the body of a 5000-year-old man was revealed by melting ice two miles high in the Otztal Alps, on the border of Italy and Austria, it was found that he was wearing footwear stuffed with dry wild grasses.

Although the wearing of clogs was in decline by 1920 many of the older generation, and children, were still wearing clogs up to the 1950s. The wooden clog with its shaped wooden sole and leather upper was comfortable to wear. The poor heat transfer properties of the wood insulated the wearer from the cold ground. The clogs were very good for children when playing on ice slides in winter. In snow conditions compacted snow would build up on the bottom of the wooden clog sole and if

one were careful it could increase your height by one to two inches.

The clogs were hand-made by skilled craftsmen. In Cumberland the wood used was primarily Sycamore or Ash. The leather upper was attached to the wooden sole using brass tacks, and the toe of the clog was protected by a shaped metal toe-piece. The clog, which had brass eyelets, was laced up using thin strips of leather for laces. Clogs for children and women were fastened by clasps instead of laces. The bottom of the clog was protected from wear by metal corkers, which were an elongated 'U' shape approximately 3/8 inch wide, 1/4 inch thick, with a groove down the middle with holes for nails. This was to protect the heads of the clog nails used to fasten the corker to the wood. A smaller version was used to protect the heel. Lorton, of course, had its own skilled clog maker, Alf Wise. Alf was the son of William Wise and his wife Sarah, nee Smallwood. He was born on 11 December 1894 at High Mill, Lorton. After being educated at Lorton School he served a Shoemaker Apprentice with Mr Rydriat at Main Street, Cockermouth.

Alf enlisted in the Border Regiment a few weeks after the outbreak of WWI and his battalion was attached to the East Kent Regiment. He saw action on the Western Front and at Solonika. He was promoted to Lance Corporal and in August 1917 he

**Alf Wise in his shop with local children,
photo from Eric Wise**





The ? shop sign in 1938, laying sewers

was wounded in the head and neck, and spent seventeen weeks in hospital, partly at the Military Hospital at Banklands, Workington. After his demob, he continued the shoe, boot, and clog business at Tenters at Lorton, in an upstairs workroom accessed by wooden steps, before moving to a shop in Cocker mouth between the bridge over the Cocker and Banks ironmongers.

I remember Alf as a stout white-haired man who was best man at the marriage of my aunt and uncle at Lorton in 1949. I recall Alf at his shop giving my father a piece of wood to shape a clog sole. The result was a good piece of firewood! Clog making was not easy.

Lorton also had a bootmaker. Isaac Benson was the son of Isaac and Ann Benson and was born on 16 November 1885 at Rogerscale. He carried out his trade at Tenters in High Lorton.

More about Alf Wise

Walter's piece on clogs is very welcome, especially from someone who actually met Alf in 1949.

In April 2023 Alf's grandson, Eric John Wise, in association with Caryl Churchill, a refugee in Lorton during WWII, contacted the society for any

information about Alf and his legendary shop in Tenters. 'Eric ...visited Lorton with his parents on many occasions in the 1950s and 60s. He remembers Pace Egg contests at Easter, playing with Keith Edmondson [Edmunds] at Terrace Farm, the Wighams at Kirkfell House, Scotts Garage and his imaginary friend who lived at Casshow Wood!'

Eric provided the pre-war photograph of Alf in his shop with children and would like to identify them.

In June 2000 the late Charlie Allison, born in 1922 and fondly remembered by many, gave an oral history interview to our founder, Ron George, in which Charlie recalled Alf Wise as follows:

Respondent: ... Alf Wise was a very notable character of course. He was a clogger and bootmaker and lived at the bottom of Tenters in a little shop; he'd a sign outside; on one side was a question mark and if you walked round to the other side, it said 'Alf Wise, Clogger and Shoemaker'. Alf was an absolute font of information, he could converse on any topic, national or international. Visitors to Lorton used to love to go and sit there, even if they didn't avail themselves of his services, just to listen to his 'crack' which was very good. With a mouthful of nails, he'd carry on a conversation all day long. Locals used to come in to order what they wanted. You'd hear such demands as "Make us a pair of strong shoes, Alf", which would be strong, heavy boots favoured by farming and hunting communities, a high ankle boot with laces right down to the end of the toes, very heavy boots. He also made clogs which were very, very common. Most people wore clogs in those days and they were very cheap.

Interviewer: Wooden soled?

R: Yes, usually made out of birch or alder, yes.

I: And did he buy in blanks or did he form them?

R: He bought in the wooden part, yes, and fitted on the leather and the corks as they were called, which was the ironwork that went on the bottom.

Derek Denman, Editor

Lorton's Playing Field

by Fiona Lambrick

The Playing Field in High Lorton, known as the Parish Field, is adjacent to the west side of the school yard and to the south side of the tennis courts. It is rather tucked away and not immediately seen from the road leading west towards Cross Gates. How did it come into being?

The Parish Field was established following discussions in the village on how best to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary on 6 May 1935. At the Parish Council Meeting held on 1 March a discussion had taken place on how to celebrate the Silver Jubilee. On the motion of Council Members Mr George Scott, Lorton Garage owner, and seconded by Mr Jos Jackson, Farmer of Bridgend, Low Lorton, it was decided to call a public meeting in the Yew Tree Hall. The Clerk was instructed to send notices of the Meeting to the School Managers, the Women's Institute, the Parochial Church Council, and the Village Club, to have the village organisations represented to consider the best way of celebrating.

The Public Meeting duly took place on 18 March in the Yew Tree Hall and was well attended. Mr Stanley Dickinson Stanley-Dodgson, J.P., of Armaside, was appointed Chairman. A full and lengthy discussion took place. On the proposal of Mr Jos Jackson, and seconded by Mr Alfred Wise, cobbler of High Lorton, it was decided that a Tea should be provided for the school children.

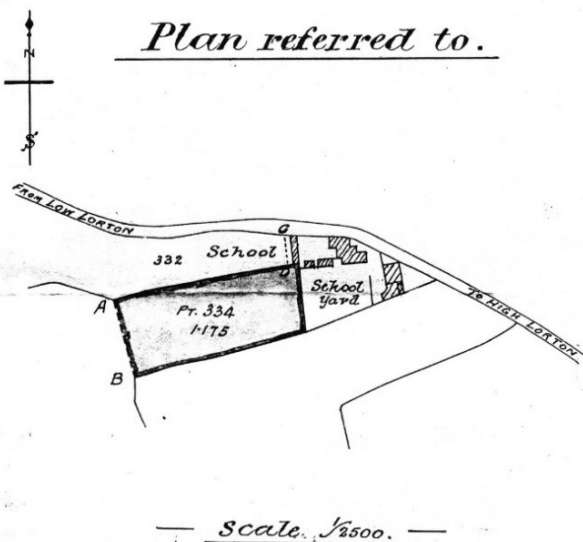
More pertinently for the future, on the motion of Colonel Jackson, of Broomlands, and seconded by the Rev. W. Lewis, Vicar of Lorton, it was decided that, if possible, land should be purchased as a playground for Lorton's

children 'in as convenient a position as could be arranged'.

Following the Parish Council AGM on 1 April 1935, it was reported that a gift of land for a playing field was being made. Mr Stanley-Dodgson confirmed that he had purchased part of a field from Mr Anthony Thomas Steele Dixon, of Lorton Hall, whose offer to sell the land he 'thoroughly appreciated', and he signified his intention to gift the land to Lorton Parish Council for the use of the village children.

The Chairman of the Parish Council, Mr Robert Wigham, of Kirkfell House, High Lorton, voiced the best thanks of the Parish Council to Mr Stanley-Dodgson and moved a resolution, seconded by Mr George Scott, which recorded 'with gratitude the generous gift of Mr Stanley-Dodgson of Armaside of a Playing Field adjoining the school for the use of the children' and 'further expressed their appreciation of Mr Dixon's kindness for offering the field for the above purpose, thus adding to the numerous ways on which he had acted for the benefit of all sections of the community'.

Plan of the Playing Field from the Conveyance





Lorton Sports, 1935-7, L&DFLHS Archive

At the village's Jubilee Celebrations Committee Meeting held on 25 April, a decision was made that Mr Robert Wigham, Col Jackson, and Mr J H Stoddart, publican of the Horseshoe Pub, were to see to the gate, posts, and fence for the playing field, and Mr Stoddart offered to make the gate. It was also agreed to have a children's tea at 4pm on 6 May and that Mrs Mabel Stanley-Dodgson be asked to declare the playing field open after the tea, followed by sports. Although the legal formalities had not yet been completed, the Silver Jubilee Celebration festivities duly took place on the playing field land which was to become known as the Parish Field.

On 9 August 1935, a conveyance was executed whereby 'a parcel of land being part of a close measuring approximately 1 acre and 28 perches known as Brooms Field numbered 334 on the Ordnance Survey map (Second edition)' was transferred by Mr ATS Dixon to Mr SD Stanley-Dodgson in consideration of a payment of £40. The conveyance also granted a right of way from the public road over Mr Dixon's land adjacent to the highway 'not exceeding eight feet wide between point 'C' and 'D' on the plan with the liberty to construct a gateway with

suitable posts and gate at point 'C' as near as possible to the eastern boundary of the close numbered 332', where three grass tennis courts were already sited. The conveyance required the purchaser 'not to erect any dwelling house on the land and within three months at his own cost to put up a fence or wall along the western boundary between points 'A' and 'B' as shown on the plan and to maintain a good and efficient fence on the northern boundary on the land conveyed'.

A fortnight later, on 23 August, Mr Stanley-Dodgson conveyed the parcel of land to the Parish Council for use as a recreation ground. The Council agreed to improve and maintain the land 'and look after any hereditaments'.

The Parish Council minute books record various incidents and issues occurring over the next few years. In May 1936 a letter was received by the Parish Council from Miss Clulow, Headteacher of Lorton School, complaining of the misuse of the Parish Field and asking the Council to see that users of the field did not interfere with the adjoining wall 'which belongs to the Education authority or any other of their property to which Miss Clulow is responsible for its good condition'.

The following year at the April meeting it was reported that stock were straying onto the Parish Field. The

Chairman proposed that Mr John Nicholson interview Mr Baxter, farmer of Boon Beck, regarding keeping his stock from straying. Some members of the Parish Council formed a deputation and reported back at the July meeting 'that they deemed it advisable to buy two rolls of netting, 20 posts and to pay Mr John Ullock, farmer of Low Swinside, 12/- for erecting the same to keep out poultry. This was agreed. The cost of netting £1-5-8d, posts 10 shillings, erection 12 shillings, total £2-7-8d'.

In September 1937 a letter was received by the Clerk to the Parish Council from Mr Stanley-Dodgson who wrote about enquiries he had made as to whether there were conditions or rules as to the management of public playgrounds. He had found none, and he wanted to know whether the Parish Council could suggest any improvements or additions to the terms he proposed, as set out in an accompanying document.

Lorton Children's Playground

1. *The field shall be called and known as "The Lorton Children's Playground".*
2. *The ground shall be vested in and be under the control of the Parish Council.*
3. *No animals of any kind or poultry to be allowed on the ground.*
4. *The council may permit the field to be used on special occasions for village picnics or the like when amusement of the children is the primary object of such special occasion or use.*
5. *The Council may make a charge for entering the field on such special occasions and any money obtained must be used for upkeep and maintenance or improvement of the field and its fences appurtenances.*
6. *The Council shall insure and keep themselves insured against accident or loss of any kind arising out of the use of the said playing field.*

These Rules were adopted by the Parish Council at its meeting in February 1938.

However, at the Parish Council meeting on 1 May 1939, it was reported

that representations had been made by the Police for more specific rules for the Parish Field. It was unanimously agreed that further rules be displayed at the Parish Field and a copy sent to the Police Constable. The rules below appear to have been copied into the minutes from elsewhere.

1. *The playing of all games by adults is prohibited on Sundays.*
2. *Cricket is prohibited at all times.*
3. *The Police Constable must be notified of all football matches or other organised games and must not exceed two games per week. In the event of damage being incurred, or this privilege abused, all permissions will be withdrawn.*
Special objection will be taken to the use of bad language.

The Police Constable concerned was Mr John Huck, the first Policeman to live in Lorton, he and his family having moved into the newly built Police house in 1937.

Allotments and other issues

After the outbreak of World War Two, two applications for allotments were reported at the Parish Council's meeting in October 1940 as having been received from householders in the Parish. This was no doubt in response to the national Dig for Victory campaign. Notwithstanding the Rules adopted in 1938, it was decided to stake off portions of the Parish Field and have a notice fixed up for the letting of these. The rent for each allotment was to be 4 shillings per year payable in advance from 1 January, 1941. In the following March it was reported that applications had been received from Mr Hyde of Lorton Park, who required two, Mr Jos. Conkey, of Conkey's Corner, High Lorton, Mr W Benson, and Mr Noble, all of High Lorton. This was deemed satisfactory. Further allotments were advertised and in May the Parish Council Chairman said there was still room for more. He offered to see the Youth Movement about taking one.

The allotments continued to be let over the years and at a Parish Council



The swings and table tennis

meeting in March 1958 it was noted that no more applications had been received.

Mr Joe Kennon, builder and owner of the Low Lorton shop, agreed to see Mr Tommy Gibson, farmer of Croft Farm, Low Lorton, about his hens being kept on the allotments and that it was his responsibility to keep the fence between the allotments and Parish Field in good repair. At the September 1961 meeting the continuing untidy state of the allotments was discussed, it being noted that they were not being cultivated. It was decided that Mr Gibson would be asked to take over the six plots on the western boundary and provide adequate fencing for his poultry. The rest of the land would be returned to the Parish Field.

Occasionally the Parish Field was used by other organisations for the benefit of children. For example, in 1958 a letter was received from two Girl Guide leaders, Miss Chance and Miss Minns, asking for the use of the Parish Field during the summer for three Guide's camps. This was agreed.

There were numerous problems over the years with the children's swings and see-saws in the Parish Field. They required constant repair of damage caused either by wear and tear or a certain amount of vandalism. Regular inspections were made by members of the Parish Council. In 1958 the Clerk was instructed to get them repaired to the satisfaction of

Miss Clulow, who continued as head mistress of Lorton School. Three years later, in March 1961, it was reported by Mr Cartner, who had become Headmaster of the School, that one swing and one see-saw were broken. The Council agreed that Mr Jack Bowen, joiner of Packhorse Cottage, Low Lorton, be asked to provide an estimate for repairs. Mr Cartner was a very keen sportsman and organised cricket and football in the Parish Field. Cricket was played at lunchtime in fair weather.

In the early days of the Parish Field, it was usual for a farmer to be asked to put his sheep on the land to graze it from September onwards through the winter months. In 1956 Mr John Ullock was asked by the Chairman of the Parish Council to cut the grass in May on the footing that he could let his sheep graze from September. By May 1959 members of the Parish Council agreed to ask the Tennis Club to allow the County maintenance men and their grass cutting equipment to use the entrance on the other side of the club's car park into the Parish Field. It was also decided to ask the Director of Education if the maintenance men would make the entrance wider and fix a suitable gate. This was done in 1960.

In October 1963 further damage had been done to the swings, and it was decided to contact Mr David Livingstone, who ran a dairy engineering business selling milking machines in South Street, Cockermonth. He had originally been involved with the erection of swings. His estimate for repairs of £18.17.00 was accepted. Five years later in 1968, after another inspection of the swings, further repairs were needed. Mr George Abbott was approached this time to do the repairs to the broken parts, as he had taken over David Livingstone's business in Cockermonth.

Developments in the 1970s

In the early 1970s a new Telephone Exchange was being built on a site at the

western end of the tennis courts. This caused a problem for the Parish Council for suitable access into the Parish Field for the grass cutting machine. The legal right of way for the Parish Field was beside the School shed, but this had been considered a road hazard and was not in use. The upshot was that the Clerk to the Parish Council approached the owner of the plot of land giving access from the road into the Parish Field over which the Parish Council had established footpath rights for over twenty years.



The entrance today

The freehold owners of the tennis courts were Mrs Ethel Florence Senhouse, sister of Mr ATS Dixon, the last Dixon to own Lorton Hall and its estate before it was sold in 1947, and her son Patricius Senhouse, both of The Fitz, Cockermouth.

No immediate action was taken so at the request of the Parish Council a further approach was made in early 1975 by my late father, Lorne Thom-Postlethwaite, of Armaside Farm, to Mr Senhouse. In due course the Parish Council enquired whether Mr Senhouse would be prepared to sell a strip of land adjacent to the land which he had sold to the General Post Office for siting the telephone exchange.

Another issue relating to the GPO that arose during 1975 concerned their request for permission to drive 'earth poles' into the Parish Field. Mr Tom Walling, son-in-law of George Scott, reported to the Council that he had seen Mr McIntyre of the GPO and that he had offered, in exchange for permission being granted, to allow access to the Parish Field over part of its land.

This still left the right of way over Mrs and Mr Senhouse's land to be negotiated. It was decided that if Mr Senhouse refused to exchange rights of way the Parish Council could then claim footpath rights of way consequential on the uninterrupted and unchallenged use over twenty years.

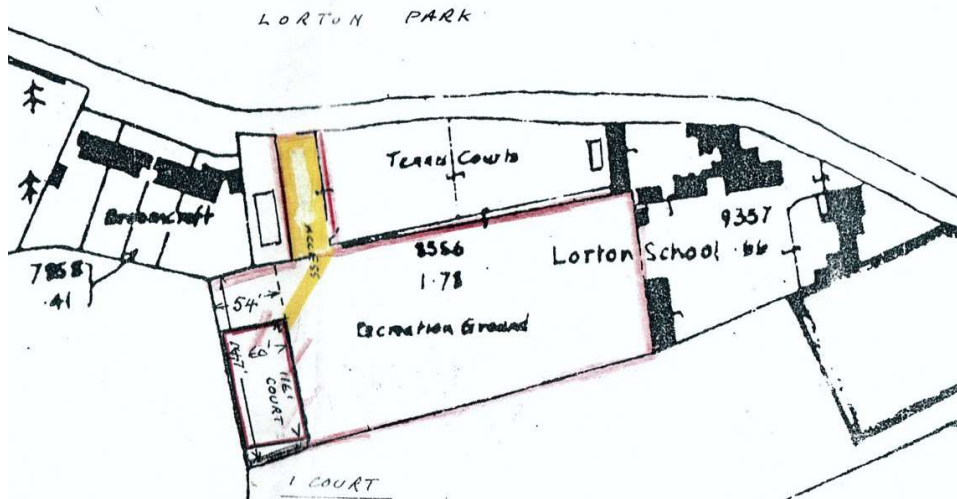
In the meantime, the District Valuer had been asked to value the entrance.

After the Parish Council Annual General Meeting on 8 April 1976, Mr Tom Walling informed Parish Council members that Allerdale District Council was hoping to buy the entrance to the Parish Field. As soon as he had seen Mr Senhouse's solicitors he would contact the Council.

Later in the year issues relating to the entrance had been resolved. At the Parish Council meeting on 2 July a letter was read out from Mr Delia at the District Council asking for a cheque from the PC for £125 - the sum to be paid for the new entrance. It was reported that all legal procedures were completed, and the Clerk then applied to the Allerdale Treasurer for a grant towards the cost of the entrance and £61.20 for fence adjustment.

In 1977, to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II on 7 February, Mrs Judith Benn, of High Lorton, together with a team of people in Lorton organised a Sports Day on the Parish Field, which was held soon after that date. All the local organisations and clubs in the village were contacted. The Women's Institute organised the tea, there was fancy dress for the under fourteens, competitions, many stalls selling items, and lots of races.

The People from Loweswater, Buttermere and Embleton were all invited



Plan of the proposed all-weather tennis court

and the money raised was donated to the School and the Yew Tree Hall. The Sports Day became an annual event for nearly ten years, before responsibility was handed over to the parent teacher association at Lorton School.

The all-weather tennis court

In April 1983 the Lorton Tennis Club made a request to the Parish Council for a lease of a portion of the Parish Field for all-weather tennis courts. Mr Hilty Hope, farmer of New House Farm, proposed that if land on the Parish Field was to be leased to the Tennis Club it should be for no more than one court. At a subsequent Parish Council Meeting this was agreed, and a letter was to be written to the officials of the Tennis Club informing them that the Council was, in principle, willing to lease sufficient land for one all-weather tennis court at the west end of the Parish Field for a period of up to thirty years provided a satisfactory form of agreement as to tenure was reached, and at a time when the club committee's plans for raising the necessary money were further advanced. The Parish Council were in favour of the principle of improving the village sports facilities by having the addition of a hard-court area, and representatives of the Tennis Club were asked to provide a plan to facilitate further discussion.

At the Parish Council Meeting in May the Parish Clerk, who had already taken legal advice on the form of the letter to be sent to the Tennis Club, read out to the Councillors the draft suggested by a solicitor. It pointed out that the Council could not, without getting permission from the Secretary of State for the Environment, lease land for seven years or more. As the Tennis Club required secure tenure for at least 25 years it seemed permission would have to be sought from the Secretary of State. It was a condition of the Sports Council grant aid offered to the Tennis Club that it was granted a thirty-year lease and that the court was to be available for use by the general public.

At about the same time Mr Senhouse, owner of the land where the original tennis courts were located adjacent to Lorton School's western boundary, had agreed in principle with the tennis club to a lease of not less than 28 years. This had subsequently been granted by October 1983. A member of the Parish Council, Mr Eric Swanston, teacher of Horseshoe Yard, drew attention to the fact that in certain circumstances the Council could grant a lease for much

longer than seven years without permission. Letters were then exchanged with Cumbria County Council, whose legal department gave conflicting advice.

However, a letter to the Parish Council from the Department of the Environment and Transport dated 16 November 1983 stated that under the provisions of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980, 'open space land', such as the portion of the Parish Field in issue, could not be disposed of without publishing notice of the intention to do so for two consecutive weeks in a local newspaper, giving due consideration to any objections received. 'Open space land' is defined in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 as meaning 'any land laid out as a public garden, or used for the purposes of public recreation, or land which is a disused burial ground'. Two notices were placed by the Parish Council in the Times & Star on 8 & 15 October requesting notification of any objections to the proposed plan. Some letters were received, in which the main concern was the parking of cars.

The lease to the Tennis Club was eventually granted from 11 December 1984 for a period of thirty years and has since been renewed between Lorton Parish Council and the Trustees of the Tennis Club. The Court, situated at the western end of the Parish Field, has been available for the general public to use and the Parish Field remains an important asset both for Lorton School and the wider Lorton community.

Sources

Whitehaven Archive Centre, Lorton Parish Council Minute Books,
YS/PC 10/10/5 (1935)
YS/PC 10/1/1 (1936-1964)
YS/PC 10/1/2 (1964-1976)
YS/PC 10/1/3 (1976 -1989)
Lorton Jubilee Celebration Committee Minute Book (L&DFHS archives)
Lorton Parish Council Tennis Club file
Mrs Christine Poate (Chair of Lorton Parish Council)
Mrs Judith Benn (former Chair of Lorton Parish Council)

House History: gathering the low-hanging fruit; 1. Maps

by Derek Denman

This article is for those members who would like to know more about the history of a house or property and of the people that lived or worked there, but are put off by perceptions of difficulty and lack of time. It is very easy to get started and to find out a great deal. The true danger is in becoming addicted.

At the September talk and the Lorton coffee morning we provided a display about the pleasant garden now adjacent to the entrance to Smithy Fold, High Lorton. We tracked back the history of the use of that land to a written survey in 1649. That land was then a 'plume garth', or an enclosed orchard of plum trees, but this article will pick the more recent low-hanging fruit, available as online maps going back to the 1770.

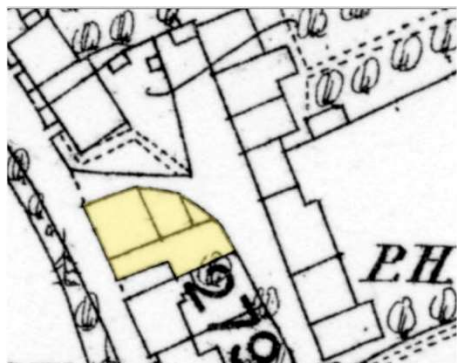
The four panels of garden history are available on our website at:

<http://www.derwentfells.com/features/features.html> as the history of the wooden bungalow, which was demolished in 2015, and below that are four similar panels on the history of Scott's Garage, which occupied this site from 1921 to 1936.

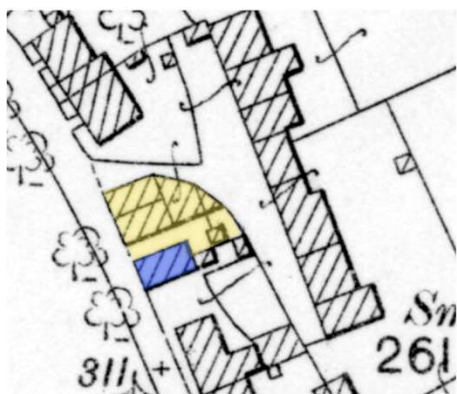
The idea is not to list all the sources of information used in these histories, but to use the example in a series of articles which illustrate the property history information which can be gained from the most accessible sources. In our February 2023 Wanderer, Sandra Shaw gave an example of how research from home could create a history of Lothwaite Side in Wythop and its people, and that is well worth reading again. This article will be focussed just on general maps which will support most house history projects.

How to start

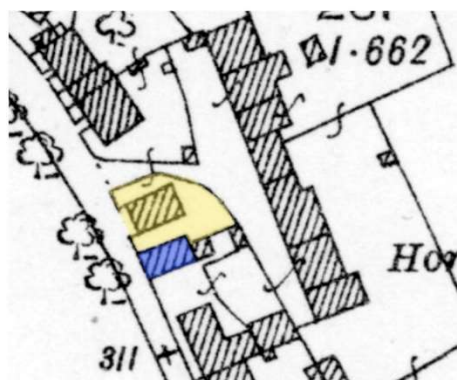
The place to start is not the local archive centre. A first-time visitor can spend a day in familiarisation without finding anything which cannot be more easily found from home. There will be a time to go to an



Ordnance Survey 1863



Ordnance Survey 1898



Ordnance Survey 1923

archive centre, but only when you know what you want to see, from the catalogue.

This assumes, however, that you have access to a laptop or similar and can use the internet. If so, then that is the first way to access a wide range of information to be found from home and free, plus more on family history sites for a fee. The second resource, relevant to future articles, is our Digital Archive of Historical Sources, DAHS, which you can borrow from me on a memory stick. This provides a vast range of information about our area which has been collected over the years by several local researchers. This first article will cover only the online map sources.

The first sources – maps

Maps can tell a great deal about a property and are easy and free to find - if you know where to look. Ordnance Survey maps will take you back to the 1860s, showing the detailed footprint of a building and its curtilage. Less detailed maps, but accurately surveyed, will take you back to 1821 and 1770.

Ordnance survey maps before the 1960s are out of crown copyright and may be freely copied, used, and published without any permission or acknowledgement. However, there is money to be made in the supply of historical maps, and so those who have them tend to restrict free access. It is the National Library of Scotland <https://maps.nls.uk/> that gives access online to the first three surveys of, for Lorton, 1863, 1898, and 1923. These were published at 25 inches to the mile, which gives a very good footprint of buildings, and six inches to the mile for more context. These cannot be freely downloaded from NLS maps, but the individual sheets are copyright free, and your device should have a PrintScreen facility.

Here are small extracts from the three 25 inch maps showing the bungalow site, highlighted yellow. In 1867 the map shows the block of housing noted by John Bolton as being occupied in around 1811

by Martha Pale, who kept a 'back room', probably serving alcohol. By 1898 the block remained as housing, but the adjacent property had been rebuilt by Mr Burns as Red House, now Dale House. His new joiner's workshop, highlighted blue, was on the boundary of his property. By 1823 the housing had been demolished and the site was occupied by George Scott's newly-built first garage. The joiner's shop remained at this time.

Earlier county maps at 1 inch to the mile were surveyed in 1770 and 1821, the second updating the first.

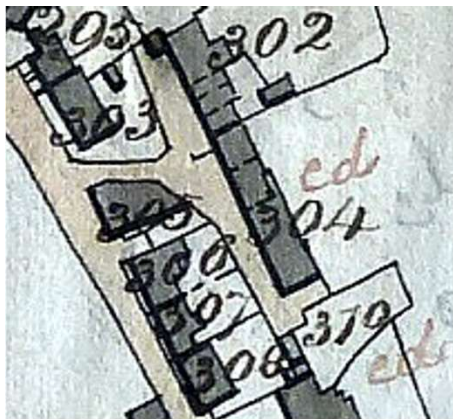
The first properly surveyed county map of Cumberland was published in 1770. This was the Hodkinson and Donald map, and Thomas Donald later married a Loweswater Skelton and was buried at Loweswater. A local extract of the map is on our website at <http://www.derwentfells.com/vch.html> as M009. As a copy of an original, it can be freely used.

The Greenwood maps resulted from two brothers seeing a commercial opportunity in updating the 1770s county maps with 50 years of development. The Cumberland survey was made in 1821-2, the railways being added to later copies. The Society was given the copy belonging to the late Michael Grieve and we publish it for free use through our website at <http://www.derwentfells.com/greenwood.html>.

Enclosure survey – tithe maps

The survey for the enclosure, made in 1826-7, is not a published map but is a rare survival, copied in the DAHS. It was reused, without updating, for the Lorton tithe map of 1840. In that form it provides the basis of our Township Map, published on the website and using the tithe map from The National Archives. Township maps for Brackenthwaite, Buttermere, Embleton, Lorton, Loweswater, and Whinfell are available on our website at: <http://www.derwentfells.com/townshipmaps.html>.

However, please be aware that these maps may use an earlier survey. The next Wanderer should give more information.



Enclosure Survey 1826-7



Greenwood Survey 1821-2



Donald Survey 1770-1

The Armstrongs of Armaside and South Lodge: their lives in Lorton and Cockermouth, 1860s-1940s

by Lena Stanley-Clamp

In the first ninety years of its existence, South Lodge, the Georgian mansion built in 1831 on the outskirts of Cockermouth, had been a home to three different families. They included the Quakers Jeremiah and Lydia Spencer; Jessie and Robert Alleyne Robinson, chief land agent to the Lowthers; and Marion and Richard Williamson, the senior partner at Williamson Shipyards in Workington. Their life stories were published in earlier issues of the *Wanderer*.¹

During that time the South Lodge Estate remained in the ownership of three generations of the Spencer family passing from Jeremiah Spencer (1789-1865) to his daughter Mary Ann Spencer-Bell (1831-91) of Fawe Park, who bequeathed South Lodge to one of her daughters, Helen Johanna Spencer-Bell. The estate extended from the river Cocker to the Lorton road, and her bequest included also properties in Cockermouth, Embleton, Broughton and Wigton.² South Lodge remained in Helen's possession until 1919.

Helen Johanna Spencer Bell

Before making acquaintance of the new owners of this mansion, the Armstrong family, let us throw some light on the last member of the Spencer-Bell family to have owned South Lodge. Helen Johanna Spencer-Bell (1865-1927) had a privileged upbringing in the family home at Fawe Park on Derwentwater and in London. Together with her sisters she was presented at Court in 1886 and frequented the best of upper-middle class London society. Unlike her sisters she married rather late. Her marriage in 1903 to Louis

Hilary Shore Nightingale was duly reported in the society pages of the London papers. Helen's husband was a relative of Florence Nightingale; he later became known for the work he did to perpetuate her memory. He also served on Derbyshire County Council and on the Board of Governors of Nottingham University College.³ The couple were childless and lived near Matlock in Derbyshire and in Kensington.

Local newspapers reported on Helen's involvement in charities, attendance at social functions or prize-giving at a local school. Her obituary in *Derbyshire Times* of 29 October 1927 painted a portrait of a well-liked local figure: "Mrs Nightingale died very peacefully at Lea Hurst after a long illness borne with great courage and cheerfulness, at the age of 62. She had the charm of simplicity of character and spontaneous vivacity, and a keen interest in many sides of life. She had artistic gifts in many directions, her embroidery especially being of very high quality."

She left an estate of the gross value of £10,325. In her will she remembered her niece Helen Juliette Rachel Money-Kyrle and her nephew Frederick M. Fox with a gift of £750 each, and left generous legacies to friends, secretary and coachman. The residue of her estate was left to her husband.⁴

William Upton Armstrong, his family background and early years

Following the sale of the South Lodge Estate by auction, William Upton Armstrong became the new owner of the Lodge and moved there with his family in 1920. William was born in Cockermouth on 3 April 1860 and was baptised at All Saints Church. He was one of the three sons of George Dawson Armstrong, a prosperous surgeon, with a practice on Main Street, and his wife Sarah Jane

¹ 'From Antigua to Cockermouth: the story of South Lodge and its residents', *Wanderer*, Aug. 2020; 'The Robinsons of South Lodge', *Wanderer*, Feb. 2021; 'The Williamsons of South Lodge', *Wanderer*, Nov. 2021.

² 'The Spencer-Bells of Fawe Park on Derwentwater', *Wanderer*, May 2021.

³ *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 9 Dec. 1940.

⁴ *Derbyshire Times*, 31 Mar. 1928.

Adelaide Armstrong née Slack from Bridekirk.

The family fortunes took a turn for the worse after the death of the father in 1865. His will provided for his 'dear wife Sarah Jane Adelaide' (named as one of his executors during her widowhood only), and for his orphaned sons. They included the eldest George Dawson Armstrong Jr (born in 1857), William Upton and John Hervey (born in 1861). The children were placed under the guardianship of the other two executors: Joseph Monkhouse Richardson, a land steward of Hutton and Joseph Pearson, a medical doctor from Maryport.⁵ The probate document mentions that George Dawson Armstrong left effects valued under £1,500. His wealth was largely invested in commercial rental properties in central Manchester that were administered by third parties.

It seems the income from the rentals was not reaching the family as Sarah Jane Adelaide together with the executor of her husband's estate, Joseph Monkhouse Richardson, filed petitions to the High Court asking for support for her children. Sarah remarried in 1868 but died the following year. In the 1871 census, her three orphaned sons were listed as boarders in Lancaster under the care of their cousin, Mary S. Birdekin, who was a schoolmistress.

A protracted legal case *Slack vs Bell* concerning the complex dealings regarding the properties in Manchester, as well as the maintenance of the Armstrong children, is documented at the Cumbrian Archives in Whitehaven.⁶ In the matter of maintenance payments, the High Court of Justice ruled on 12 April 1880 that funds should be paid to enable John Harvey Armstrong to enrol at Sandhurst Military College and to his brothers William Upton and George Dawson for their education. The sons recovered their inheritance eventually. George Dawson emigrated to

New Zealand on marrying a Miss Shipton of Dunedin.⁷ The youngest, John Hervey, joined the army. He served in the 1st York & Lancaster Regiment and was severely wounded in the Boer War.⁸ William Upton's share of the inheritance provided him with a large income for the rest of his life.⁹

A student of agriculture

The 1881 census finds William Upton Armstrong at Stocksfield Hall, Bywell near Hexham in Northumberland. According to the census he was then an agricultural student boarding with the family of John Lee Bunting, a farmer of 400 acres. Stocksfield Hall was a substantial farm with an 18th century farmhouse and extensive 19th century farm buildings. No doubt it provided a good model of farm management to a young student.

We can surmise that William found a warm welcome in this affluent farmer's family as ten years later, on 22 July 1891, he married the daughter of the house Katherine Bell Lee (born in 1873) at St Andrew's Church in Bywell. The report in the *Gentlewoman* tells us that the groom lived at The Glen, Hereford and in Cockermonth, and that the wedding was an elaborate affair with no expense spared. Three vicars celebrated the marriage, including William's maternal uncle. 'A salvo of cannon was fired on return from the church and again on the departure of the happy pair south en route to Paris, the outcome of the great respect in which the bridegroom and family, and the bride are held in the district. The presents were numerous and handsome, and the cake was from Messrs Buszard of London.'¹⁰

By the time of his marriage William was a well-respected young man of sizeable fortune. It is difficult to ascertain whether he was ever involved in agriculture or what he was doing living in

⁵ The will of George Dawson Armstrong proved on 18 May 1865, HMCTS Wills.

⁶ CAC(W)/DWM/575, Legal case of *Slack vs Bell* 1859-1877 and DWM 554/112.

⁷ *New Zealand Herald*, 16 Mar. 1900.

⁸ *Lancashire Evening Post*, 3 Feb. 1900.

⁹ DWM/806/527, Probate Papers of the estate of William Upton Armstrong, 1942.

¹⁰ *Gentlewoman*, 8 Aug. 1891.

Hereford at the time of his marriage. It could be that the 'missing' decade of his life (1882–1891) was spent in Herefordshire trying his hand at farming. His and Katherine's only child John Upton Armstrong was born in Swainhill near Hereford on 2 December 1892, this being the only record of the couple's life in Herefordshire I could trace.

Lost and found: A life of leisure and involvement in Lorton affairs 1895-1920

A notice in the 'Lost and Found' column of the *West Cumberland Times* finds the Armstrongs in Lorton from late 1895: 'Lost, between Cockermouth and Lorton, on Monday last, a Fawn HORSE SHEET, with a monogram W.U.A. on each side. Return to W. ARMSTRONG, Armaside, or The Globe Hotel.'¹¹

The Armstrongs settled at Armaside, taking on the tenancy of the house and its grounds. It could be that William's transformation into a gentleman of leisure took place around that time.¹² The 1901 census states that the head of the household lived on his own means. The household included his wife Katherine, son John (then aged 8), a governess, a cook, and a housemaid.

From then on frequent mentions of William Upton's involvement in Lorton affairs appeared in the local paper. His support for many good causes led by the Lorton notables such as William Lancaster Alexander or the headmaster of the Lorton school George Oglethorpe were duly noted. In 1887, Mr Armstrong was on the Committee planning the festivities for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.¹³ By 1899 (and in subsequent years), he was a member of the executive committee of the Loweswater and Brackenthwaite Agricultural Society organizing the Loweswater Show.¹⁴

Both he and Mrs Armstrong supported the Lorton Reading Room by

attending the annual concerts and balls in its aid.¹⁵ The Armstrongs' social standing and integration into Lorton society was further strengthened when he was elected a sidesman at St Cuthbert's church and started attending Vestry meetings and auditing the accounts.¹⁶

Mrs Katherine Bell Armstrong,

unsurprisingly for a woman of that time, did not make frequent appearances on the pages of the newspapers. She had a household to run and a small boy to look after. However, her name appeared in the papers in connection with the Lorton school fête she helped to organise in 1896 and school concerts she attended.¹⁷

An oral testimony is the only source that tells us about Katherine as a person. It reveals that she was kind to children. Margaret Cook (born 1913), the youngest child of Wilson and Sarah Jane Cook at Armaside Farm, who were neighbours of the Armstrongs, had clear recollections of her early childhood. "Margaret Cook remembers going over to the kitchen [at Armaside House] where the cook would give her a piece of cake. She remembers always getting a Christmas present from Mrs Armstrong and still has a book given to her one Christmas".¹⁸

The 1911 Census reveals the name of the kindly cook: Annie Errington, 21, was born in Lanercost. The parlour maid, Isabell Mirehouse, 26, was born in Ullock. William Upton, the head of the house was 51 and lived on private means. His wife Katherine was 38 by then. They had been married for 19 years.

John Upton Armstrong

was nearly three-years old when the family moved to Lorton. In his early years he was educated at home by a governess. Like many middle-class boys he was sent later to a public boarding school. In the 1911 census his name is listed at the

¹¹ *West Cumberland Times*, 9 Nov. 1895.

¹² 1901 Census return describes his occupation as 'gentleman'.

¹³ *WCT*, 22 May 1897.

¹⁴ *WCT*, 1 Jul. 1899 and 13 Sep. 1902.

¹⁵ *WCT*, 8 Feb. 1899.

¹⁶ *WCT*, 28 Apr. 1897 and 8 Apr. 1899.

¹⁷ *WCT*, 19 Aug. 1896.

¹⁸

<https://melbreakcommunities.wordpress.com/p/arish-councils/lorton/lorton-folk/>



Mr Armstrong, Joint Master of the West Cumberland Hunt and the huntsman, Herbert Stokes on the Terrace at Scale Hill, 1911

Uppingham School in Rutland, aged 18. John followed in the steps of his uncle Captain John Hervey Armstrong by joining the army. He served in the Royal Field Artillery from 1914 to c.1922. During World War One he served with the rank of second lieutenant (1916), then lieutenant (1917) and eventually captain (according to the Lorton Memorial Inscriptions).¹⁹

Master of the hunt

In common with most of the local gentry, William Upton Armstrong was passionate about hunting. The apex of his social ambitions and sporting life must have been reached when he became Master of the West Cumberland Otterhounds. From 1906, he was Deputy Master (to J. H. Jefferson of Hundith Hill) and secretary of the hunt. By 1911 he was Joint Master and eventually sole Master for many years.²⁰ At that time otters were considered to be vermin and did not become a protected

species in Britain until 1978, due to the dramatic decline in their numbers.

Practiced from medieval times, otter hunting became increasingly popular in the late 19th century and the Edwardian period. It was certainly a popular sport in West Cumberland. Photographs of W.U. Armstrong and his huntsman Herbert Stokes show them at a meet on the terrace of the Scale Hill Inn or with the pack's hounds cooling off in Crummock Water.²¹ One Lorton inhabitant's recollection of hunting was recorded by Ron George: Doreen Wallace, who lived at Kirkfell House as a child, told him how she diverted the Melbreak huntsmen up the fell while she hid the fox in her parents' greenhouse. She was nevertheless happy to join the otter hunt with the rest of the

¹⁹ UK British Army Records 1882-1962, World War 1, Pension Record Cards & Ledgers via Ancestry.

²⁰ *Wigton Advertiser*, 14 April 1906.

²¹ Reproduced here courtesy of Scale Hill, <https://scalehillloweswater.co.uk/history>



The West Cumberland Otterhounds cool off in Crummock Water, 1911

village because "the hunt never seemed to get beyond jolly old Kirk Stile pub".²²

Mr Armstrong was also keen on fox hunting and grouse shooting. The *Carlisle Journal* reported in detail about the hunting season all over the county. One report depicted Mr Armstrong dispensing hospitality at a meet of the Melbreak Pack at Armaside in December 1911 when 'hounds were cast off behind the house and put a fox off in Wilson's Plantation which went straight away for Whinlatter and then back by High Lorton to Armaside, and over Harrot Fell, past Yuken [Jenkin?] Farm to the low ground near Embleton Vicarage. ... all villagers being in at the kill behind the residence of Mr Wilson, Fell Close Villa. He was a fine fox of 14 1/2 lb'.²³

There was also 'good sport' to be had at Lord Leconfield's shoots on Caldbeck Moors or in Skiddaw Forest where Mr

Armstrong was frequently mixing in a very select company.²⁴

The pattern of social life in the Lorton valley changed after the outbreak of World War One. The local events reported in the newspapers were mainly concerned with the war and refugee relief. The Loweswater Agricultural Show was abandoned from 1914, but some hunting and shooting parties including the West Cumberland Otterhounds continued to meet, albeit less frequently. In Workington however, Mr Curwen's foxhounds pack was given up, all leading officials of the hunt being engaged at war.²⁵

No other mentions can be found of the Armstrong family presence at Armaside. From the outbreak of the war they must have been consumed with worry about their only son who served in the Royal Field Artillery. The military historian John Terraine wrote 'The war of 1914-18 was an artillery war: artillery was the battle-winner, artillery was what caused the greatest loss of life, the most

²² Ron George, *A Cumberland Valley. A History of the Parish of Lorton*, 2003.

²³ *Carlisle Journal*, 16 Dec. 1913.

²⁴ *Wigton Advertiser*, 6 Sep.1924 and elsewhere.

²⁵ *Whitehaven News* index World War One events 1914-1919.

dreadful wounds, and the deepest fear'.²⁶

On 8 December 1917, the *West Cumberland Times* reported that Lieutenant John Armstrong of Armaside was severely wounded in action.²⁷ He was probably deployed in the Battle of Cambrai (20 November–7 December 1917), a very large-scale raid that employed new artillery techniques and massed tanks. It was initially successful, but the British advance was brought to a halt and a counter attack regained much of the ground. 'Ultimately a disappointing and costly outcome'.²⁸

The sale of South Lodge at auction

The South Lodge estate was offered for sale by auction on 27 October 1919 by J.R. Mitchell & Son at The Agricultural Hall in Cockermouth.²⁹ The property was offered for sale through the land agent Joseph Birkett, Penrith acting on behalf of Mrs Shore Nightingale. The whole estate extended over 165 acres and was sold in 10 lots.³⁰

Lot 1 (coloured pink on plan) describes the South Lodge house as "A Desirable Moderate-Sized Mansion with well-timbered and tastefully laid-out Grounds, Lawns and Gardens together with Two Enclosures of Excellent Pasture and Meadow Land containing altogether 11 acres 0r. 21p., in the occupation of R. Williamson, on a yearly tenancy expiring on 25th March 1920." The schedule of land pointed to the exact locations on the Ordinance Survey: the House, Grounds and Gardens were extending over 6 acres 0r. 25p.; Pasture occupied 2a. 3r. 30p.; Meadow, 2a. 9r. 21p., amounting to just over 11 acres in total. Lot 1 was formerly of customary tenure in the manor of Cockermouth but had been enfranchised, subject to a yearly quit rent of 1s.1d. The Apportioned Tithe Rent Charge was £1.2s.3d payable to the Earl of Lonsdale's

Trustees. The Armstrongs also bought lot 2, which extended over 16a 3r 7p and comprised permanent pasture, a barn and a loose box. Lot 2 was in part enfranchised from customary tenure and subject to a quit rent of 7d. The Tithe rent charge was £1.16s.10d. The archive does not reveal how much Mr Armstrong paid for the lots he bought.

The particulars of the property give an insight into the lifestyle of the occupants of South Lodge.³¹ The mansion comprised:

Vestibule, Entrance Hall of 33ft by 17ft; Dining Room, 23ft by 17ft, Service Room, Drawing Room, 23ft by 17ft, Morning Room 17ft by 17ft, Servants Hall; Kitchen, Butler's Pantry, Store Room, Larder, Dairy, Wash-house, Wine Cellar, Lavatory, Front and Back Staircases, Nine Bed Rooms, Three Dressing Rooms, Box Room, Bath Room (with hot and cold water), WC, etc. (Today's buyer would have been astonished by the large number of rooms but only one bathroom and two lavatories.) The outbuildings included: 'Three Stall Stable, Harness Room with Hay Loft over, Loose Box, Coach-house, Coal House, Boot House, Outside WC, Potting Shed, Wood Shed, Three Stall Byre and Hay Loft, etc.

There were also two conservatories.

Lots 3–5 were enfranchised from customary tenure of the Manor of Cockermouth. Lots 6–9 contained pastures and meadows, lot 10 consisted of arable land. They were freehold. Lots 9 & 10 were in the Civil Parish of Embleton. The land was occupied by a number of tenants. See map on page 30.

Shortly before the family took possession of South Lodge, a sale on 8-9 April 1920 was advertised in the *Lancashire Evening Post*:

²⁶ John Terraine, *White Heat – The New Warfare 1914-18*, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982.

²⁷ *West Cumberland Times* soldiers index 1915-1928.

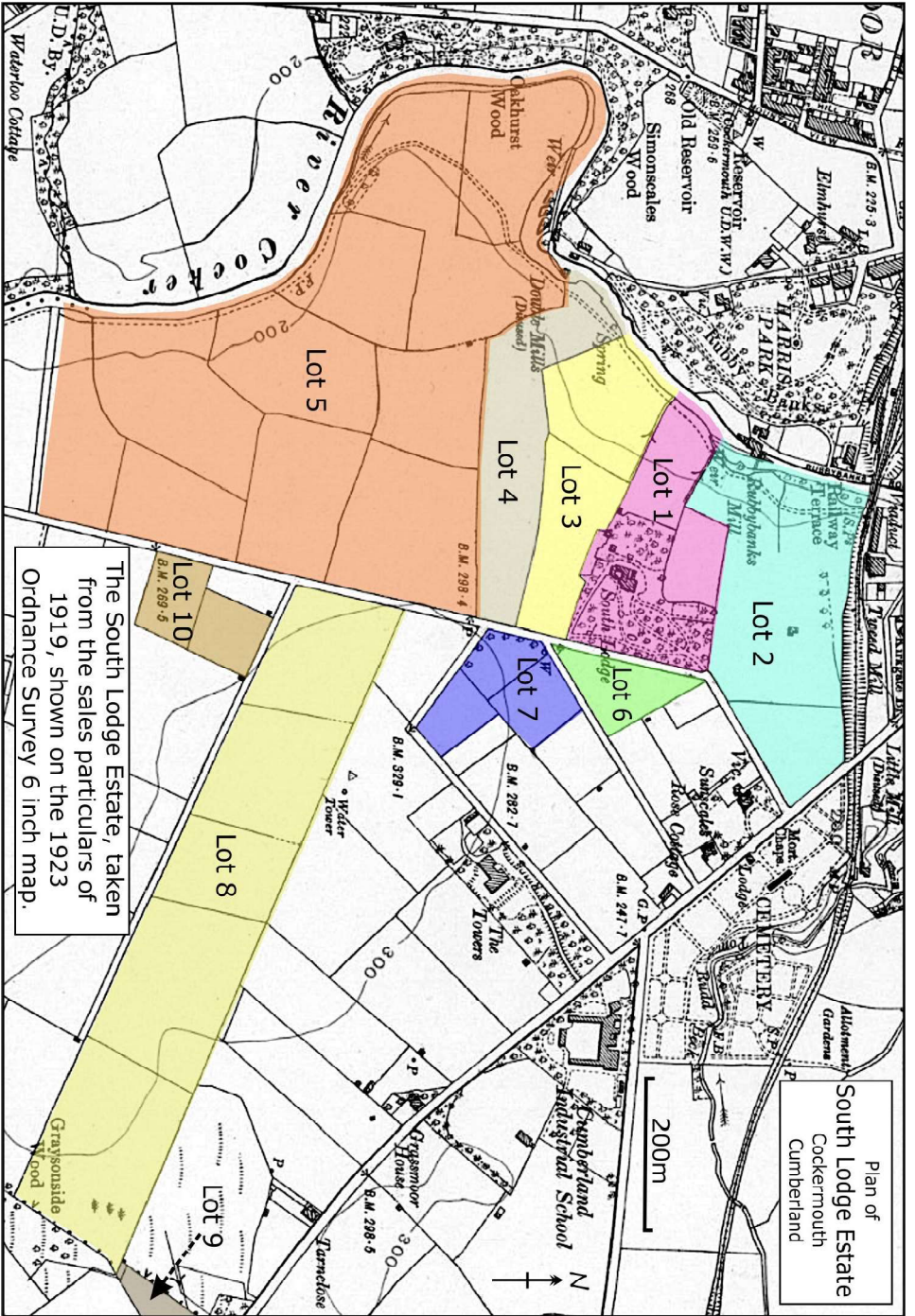
²⁸

<https://www.longlongtrail.co.uk/battles/battles-of-the-western-front-in-france-and-flanders/>

²⁹ DWM/10/118.

³⁰ One statute acre was 0.4 hectares, and was divided into four roods, each containing 40 (square) perches.

³¹ DWM/10/118.



Plan of
South Lodge Estate
 Cockermonth
 Cumberland

The South Lodge Estate, taken from the sales particulars of 1919, shown on the 1923 Ordnance Survey 6 inch map.

*HIGHLY-IMPORTANT and Interesting SALE of exceptionally well-made and Costly FURNISHINGS, including: FINE OLD MAHOGANY CHIPPENDALE CHAIRS, Grandfather's Clock, massive carved oak Dining-room Furniture, choice mahogany Drawing-room and several superior walnut Bedroom Suites, handsome brass Bedsteads, excellent Turkey Carpet, together with a large quantity of other necessaries to a well-equipped residence. The above will be Removed to the AGRICULTURAL HALL, COCKERMOUTH, for convenience of Sale. Apply to Messrs. J. R. MITCHELL and SONS. Auctioneers. Cockermonth.*³²

This would have been the property of Richard Williamson, who was a tenant at South Lodge from 1893 to 1920.

In 1919, a very tidy sum came Mr Armstrong's way, which must have helped him to acquire South Lodge. John Norman Dickinson of Hames Hall, Cockermonth repaid a mortgage for £11,500 to the three Armstrong brothers, including William.³³ By 1941, in addition to the South Lodge mansion and grounds, W.U. Armstrong and his son John owned jointly 26 acres of freehold closes of land as well as fishing rights in the Cocker held by Lord Leconfield at a yearly tenancy of £10.³⁴

Life at South Lodge: fishing, hunting and public service

The 1921 census found the Armstrong family well-established at South Lodge. The residents included the head of the household William Upton, aged 61, whose occupation was 'gentleman' and his son John, 28, who was in the army. There were two servants: Fanny Tinning, 55 was a housemaid and Fanny Ellen Kendall, 24, was a cook. On the day of the census Mrs Armstrong was away in Northumberland visiting her widowed mother. She was perhaps on a mission to persuade her to move to South Lodge. Dorothy Helmsley

Lee did join the Armstrong family sometime later and lived there until her death in 1934. She was buried in St Cuthbert's churchyard in Lorton.³⁵

The timing of the 1921 census deserves a mention as it brings to light the political and economic unrest of that period. The census was taken on 19 June instead of 24 April because of the expected general strike. Due to start on 15 April, the strike would have brought public transport to a halt thereby distorting the returns on census day. The general strike did not happen, but the date of the census had been moved by then.

The first mention of the Armstrongs' residing in their new home tells us something about the state of fishing in the local lakes. The *Lancaster Evening Post* of 17 May 1921 reported that 'Mr John Armstrong of South Lodge, Cockermonth caught a char of half-a-pound while trolling minnow. This is believed to be the earliest day on which char has ever been caught in Crummock. The lake used to be famous for its char fishing, but ever since the use of plumb line was prohibited few fish have been taken, the nets having taken the only char that has been seen out of the lake.' The report went on to say that Buttermere had not a single rod on it while fly fishing was to little avail on Loweswater, which held a good stock of trout. Sometime later, John Armstrong's sporting success was reported again in the paper when he caught salmon of 14 and 16 pounds.³⁶

W.U. Armstrong continued as Master of the West Cumberland Otterhounds until at least 1926 when he presided at the annual meeting at the Globe Hotel, Cockermonth. The report in the *Lancashire Evening News* was headed 'Vital Need of More Subscriptions'. The hunt's bank balance deficit had increased to £217 and the hounds could not be kept going on the current level of subscriptions.

³² *Lancashire Evening Post*, 3 Apr. 1920.

³³ DWM/704/31, repayment of mortgage of 1887 by J.N. Dickinson.

³⁴ DWM/806/527 Schedule of real and leasehold property, probate documents, 1942.

³⁵ Lorton Memorial Inscriptions, www.derwentfells.com.

³⁶ *Lancashire Daily Post*, 9 Sep. 1930.

'The Master of the hunt said it would be a pity to give up hunting, the West Cumberland pack was one of the oldest in the country. He said he would like to resign and let some young fellow take his place.' In the event, the Master and secretary were re-elected, and it was decided to advertise for a new master to join Mr Armstrong in that role.³⁷ The West Cumberland Otter Hunt closed down at the end of the 1938 season, owing a debt of £80.³⁸

On the magistrates' bench

In November 1922, W.U. Armstrong together with a dozen other notables had the distinction to be placed on the Commission of the Peace for Cumberland by the Lord Chancellor, who was acting on the recommendation of the Earl of Lonsdale, the Lord Lieutenant. They were to qualify at the January Quarter sessions. Reports of the cases that came before Mr Armstrong in the following years point to various minor offences: a salesman was fined for having used a car without a revenue licence attached; a coalminer for having allowed a goat to stray on the highway, etc.

The 1939 Register, a survey of the population taken shortly after the outbreak of World War Two, reveals who lived at South Lodge at the time. The family included: William Upton, Katherine Bell Armstrong, John Upton Armstrong (who was described as incapacitated and a munitions inspector) and William Upton's younger brother, Captain John Hervey Armstrong, who had been living in London until then. He brought with him his long-serving housekeeper, Frances Elizabeth Hames. The household included a housemaid, Ellen Todd.

A list of suppliers of goods and services dated 1941 provides some information about life at South Lodge.³⁹ Several names stand out: Doctors Gowan

and Ellis, whose dispensary was at 7 Market Place, provided medical care; County Fruit Stores, supplied Fruit etc., Lindsay & Sons of Workington supplied groceries; A. Johnson of Station Street, confectionery. Wines and spirits came from James F. Dixon of Main Street and from R & H Jefferson, Whitehaven; J.B. Banks & Sons provided ironmongery and plumbing. Gas was supplied by Cocker mouth U.D.C. but there was no electricity. The telephone bill was payable to the General Post Office.

William Upton Armstrong died on 5 April 1941, aged 81. His widow and son were the executors and beneficiaries of his estate. He left £29,182 net. The news - published in many newspapers in the Northwest - referred to his many years as master of the West Cumberland Otterhounds. John Hervey died in 1943. He left effects valued at £2,047 to his housekeeper Frances Elizabeth Hames.

Katherine Armstrong and her son John moved to Devon where they lived in a grade II listed pair of semi-detached Victorian villas at Instow. Katherine died in 1956. She left effects valued at £1,323 to her son. John Upton died in 1966 in a nursing home in Northam, Devon. He left £44,230.⁴⁰ William Upton, Katherine Bell, John Upton and John Hervey Armstrong were buried at St. Cuthbert's, Lorton.

The lives of the Armstrong family researched in this article illustrate a slice of social history in Lorton and Cocker mouth of the times. For the Armstrongs, the acquisition of South Lodge and its grounds confirmed their standing as a gentry family at a time when that status and lifestyle were becoming somewhat obsolete. The partition and sale of the South Lodge estate led to the urbanisation of that area of Cocker mouth around the newly developed Vicarage Lane and along the Lorton Road.

³⁷ *Lancashire Evening Post*, 15 Jun. 1926

³⁸

<http://lakelandhuntingmemories.com/LostOtterhoundsNew.html>

³⁹ DWM/806/527, Probate papers W.U. Armstrong, schedule of debts owing.

⁴⁰ Probate records, <https://www.gov.uk/search-will-probate>