Lorton & Derwent Fells Local History Society

Wanderer

No.62, November 2026

Contents

Society News

Forthcoming talk 1
Our programme for 2026& 7 2
Membership subscriptions in 2027 3
Message from the chair 3

Meeting Reports

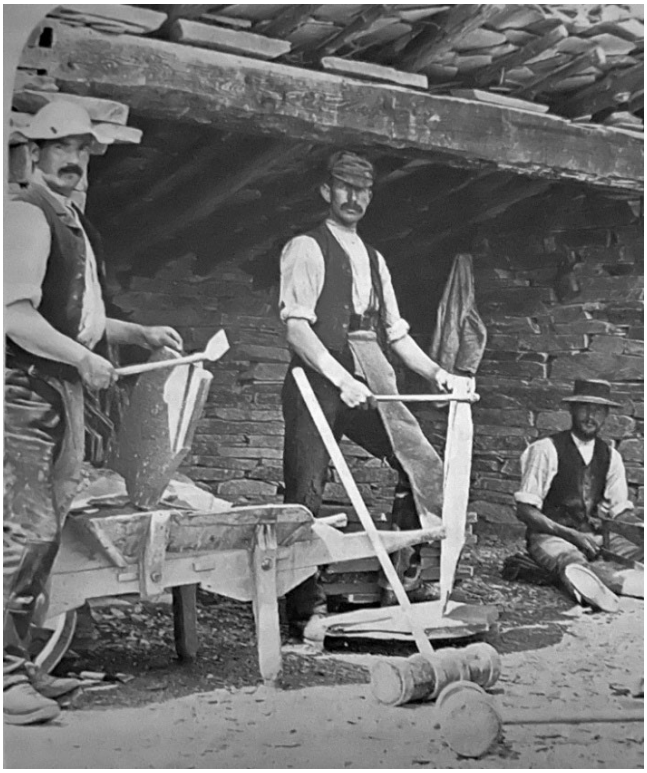
Fifth Study Week at Cockermouth Castle 22-25 September 5
Talk: 'In search of Arctic wonders: Cumbria and the Arctic in the 18th and 19th Centuries' 6

Articles

The Thackthwaite Road 8
Buttermere in 1851 13
J.M.W. Turner in Cockermouth 20
Some Private Schools in Cockermouth 29
Photograph of Lorton Vale 32

Forthcoming Talk, 19 November

'A History of Slate Quarrying in The Lake District'. Our next illustrated talk will be given by Mark Hatton, an industrial archaeologist of the Cumbria Amenity Trust Mining History Society who is well known to us. He will present the long history of the formation, quarrying and use of the Lake District's extensive slate deposits. It is an industry that shaped Cumbrian landscape and the lives of local people for centuries. The quarries spread over 200 sites and yielded millions of tonnes of highly-prized stone that were shaped into roofing slate by generations of miners. The demand for slate roofing expanded massively in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the growth of industrial towns in Northern England. As Mark Hatton points out just 65 years ago more people worked in the Lake District's quarrying industries than worked in tourism.



Our future programme 2026 &2027

19 Nov 2026	'A History of Slate Quarrying in The Lake District'.	Mark Hatton
14 Jan 2027	'Cumbria, 1000 years of maps',- a talk based on the late Bill Shannon's 2025 Lake District Book of the Year	David Fenton
4 Mar 2027	'A history of the world-famous Greenside Mine, Glenridding'	Warren Allison
Apr/May 2027	'Stories from the Cockermouth castle archives' A presentation by society members.	Date and location to be arranged. There may be a charge.
Apr/May 2027	Historical visit or walk	TBA
10 June 2027	Our AGM, followed by 'The Yew Tree Hall: a journey through time'	Adam Baker
9 Sep 2027	'A history of Fell walking in seven and a half guidebooks'	Dr Liz Woodham
Sep/Oct 2027	Historical visit or walk	TBA
11 Nov 2027	'Times of change: Solway life in the late Georgian Period'	Trevor Grahamslaw

Talks are held at 7.30 pm in the Yew Tree Hall in Lorton, and are included in membership. Note that in 2027 the Yew Tree Hall may use other locations while improvements are in progress.

Visitors are welcome, £4 cash payable at the door, including refreshments. Talks are also streamed live to members using Zoom but are not recorded. Other activities may be added.

Officers and Committee 2026/7

President: Professor Angus Winchester Financial Examiner: Dr Ian Shaw

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The **next issue** of the *Wanderer* will be published on 1 February 2027. Please send any items to the Editor, Derek Denman, by 1 January.

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

http://derwentfells.com *https://facebook.com/Lortonlocalhistorysociety*
L&DFLHS Archive: *https://derwentfells.org.uk*

Membership Subscriptions in 2027

With this issue of the *Wanderer*, members will receive a request for subscriptions for membership in 2027. Payments for membership were last increased for 2023, and after four years of increasing costs the Committee has concluded that we should raise further money in subscriptions from 2027, to avoid our reserves falling too low.

The Committee has also decided that we should now make a change to the structure of the subscriptions, to reflect the fact that our largest cost item is now the printing and delivery of the *Wanderer* and notices. While all members can now enjoy the talks programme, either by attendance or via Zoom, the printed *Wanderer* is received by around half of our members, currently at no extra cost. The committee feels that, for fairness, the subscriptions should in future include a charge for the option of receiving printed *Wanderers* and notices.

Therefore, the main change for 2027 will be a new optional charge of £4 per annum to have printed *Wanderers* and notices delivered, to a UK address, as well as by email. This will cover a part of the cost of the four *Wanderers* which we plan to create in 2027. All Members will be asked to confirm whether they wish to receive emailed or printed material, and will be requested to pay the appropriate subscription. The next *Wanderer* will be dated 1 February 2027.

This optional charge is expected to raise most of the extra income which the Society needs over the next few years. However, the annual subscription for full membership will also rise by £1 to £13 with emailed material, or to £17 with printed material delivered. Where there are two members at one address, the additional subscription for the second members will reduce by £1 to £7, leaving the 'family' membership at £20, or £24 with printed material delivered.

The Society will run a full programme in 2027, with five talks in Lorton, two outings to be arranged, and other special events planned, as in the programme on Page 2. We believe that membership gives good value.

These changes will make the renewal of subscriptions a little more complicated for 2027, but the notice that members receive should give sufficient information and explanation. We appreciate that most members now pay their subscription online and promptly. However, it is still possible to pay by cheque though the post, and at the talks in November 2026 and January 2027 by cash or cheque, though please come early to do that.

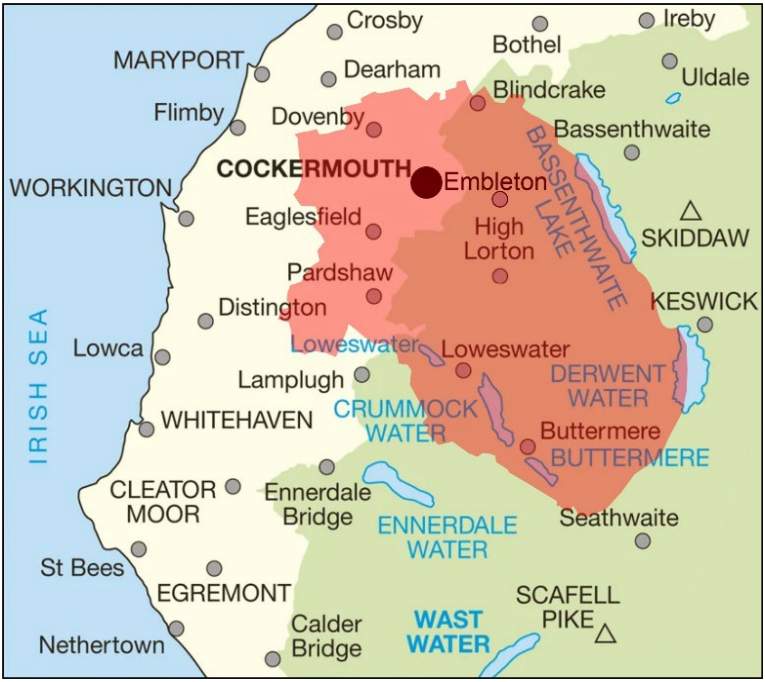
Lastly, the Committee has decided that the old Country membership will cease, to reduce complexity. The very few members involved will be invited to change to a current type of membership.

Message from the Chair

As I noted in the previous Wanderer, with Andrew Chamberlain as Chair the Society's committee grew to ten, which has enabled us to give some serious consideration to our future development as a local history society, including our principal geographical area of interest.

Back in 1993 the focus of interest started as the area covered by St Cuthbert's Church in Lorton, which included Buttermere, Brackenthwaite, Wythop, and part of Whinfell. Our name, 'Lorton and Derwent Fells', reflected Lorton as the 'home' and meeting place of the Society, while Derwentfells was the much larger forest manor, contained within the rivers Derwent and Cocker, and created soon after 1100. This was before Cockermouth was founded, with castle, market, and chapel being placed in what was the northern nook of Derwentfells manor.

In the new millennium, the interests of our increasing membership caused the Society's principal area of interest to grow to include Loweswater, Pardshaw, and



Embleton. More recently the Society has been undertaking the digitisation of many of the records at Cockermouth castle, covering a wider area, and that in turn has enabled a major project to be commenced by our President, Angus Winchester: to write the Cockermouth volume of the Victoria County History, over several years. Our *Wanderer,* as the name suggests, has never been restricted by firm boundaries and often contains articles on Cockermouth and more distant places. There is only so much that can be written about Lorton, though there is still more to come.

So, unlike a strictly parish history society, our society has adjusted its area of interest to match the interests of its members, and to reflect what it is actually doing. Our constitution permits that flexibility, and our name recognises Lorton as our continuing 'home' and the Derwent Fells as a general area.

At its recent meeting, the Committee agreed that we should adjust our principal area of interest as a local history society, to reflect changes in membership and in our activities. There is a defined boundary for the Cockermouth volume of VCH, roughly its catchment area as an ancient market town, and it was decided that we would adopt that as the Society's principal area of interest. Except that we would also continue to include Above Derwent civil parish, in Derwentfells and to the West of Derwentwater. This was in the ancient parish of Crosthwaite, and is in the area assigned to the Keswick VCH volume.

The Society's revised area of interest is shown in red on the map, but of course the Society is in no way territorial or exclusive, and welcomes and supports the activities of other groups or individuals in all or any part of that area.

Also, it should be re-stated that we are a local history society, rather than a heritage society, the distinction being that history studies the past as the past, and in the past tense. While heritage is concerned with how the past remains in the present day, and how we value and use it, both as material heritage and cultural heritage. History is a discipline which supports heritage activities and organisations, and we will be keen to continue that.

Derek Denman

Meeting Reports

Fifth Study Week at Cockermouth Castle, 22-25 September

by Sharon Arrowsmith

A short report about the September 2026 Study Week at Cockermouth Castle by Sharon Arrowsmith Chair, South West Cumbria Historical & Archaeological Society.

I first heard about the Leconfield Archive Project during a 2025 talk on Percy House at the Kirkgate. As Chair of SWCH&AS in Egremont, newly retired from my role as curator of a castle within the Barony and keen to use my available time, I was eager to learn more. The following October, I was invited to take part and encourage my group to assemble a team to help photograph these fascinating documents. I was warned that time was short and that the aim was to photograph the sometimes very ancient manuscripts, not study them. The rest, as they say, is history.

We assembled a team and travelled to Cockermouth Castle the following Spring to help L&DFLHS record as much of the Honour of Cockermouth Archive as possible during the four-day study week. Lord Egremont strongly supports the project: he permits us to work on his family muniments, provides a workspace and makes two members of his estate team available to offer expertise and guidance. In September, he gave our group permission to work on the Egremont Barony archive, while Angus Winchester conducted research for the Cockermouth volume of the Victoria County History - alongside an independent researcher.

The week went smoothly. Although the room was busy, careful planning by Derek Denman and Charles Lambrick allowed everyone to work without getting in one another's way. The boxes yielded some fascinating documents, as evidenced by the initial excited comments giving way to a contrasting silence as everyone concentrated.

This time, L&DFLHS focused on finding documents that would complete a more coherent archive for the area and provide material for the Cockermouth volume of the Victoria County History. As a result, the group took fewer images than previously, but was able to photograph selected unique and valuable maps and plans. For example, Andrew Chamberlain captured a particularly interesting plan of Brigham dating from around 1800.

Derek's review of the photographs taken suggests that there are some 11,000 additional images, bringing Issue 4 of the Digital Archive of Leconfield Sources to roughly 68,000 images. This should be available on a flash drive in late October or early November.

SWCH&AS concentrated on the Egremont Barony archive and produced around 4,000 images. I was particularly interested in a collection of iron-mining related documents signed off by Rob. Copley, a seventeenth-century agent responsible for William Pennington's interests on the Muncaster Estate—a period that especially interests me. The tenant lists, rents and fines are also a treasure trove for future family historians and researchers.

My thanks go to Lord Egremont for making this valuable project possible; Alison McCann, consultant archivist, and Andy Loukes, curator, for keeping us on track; George Platt for professionally photographing some of the more important items; Derek and Charles for organising and facilitating the study weeks; and all the volunteers who gave their time.

Talk - 'In Search of Arctic Wonders: Cumbria and the Arctic in the 18th and 19th Centuries' – 10 September

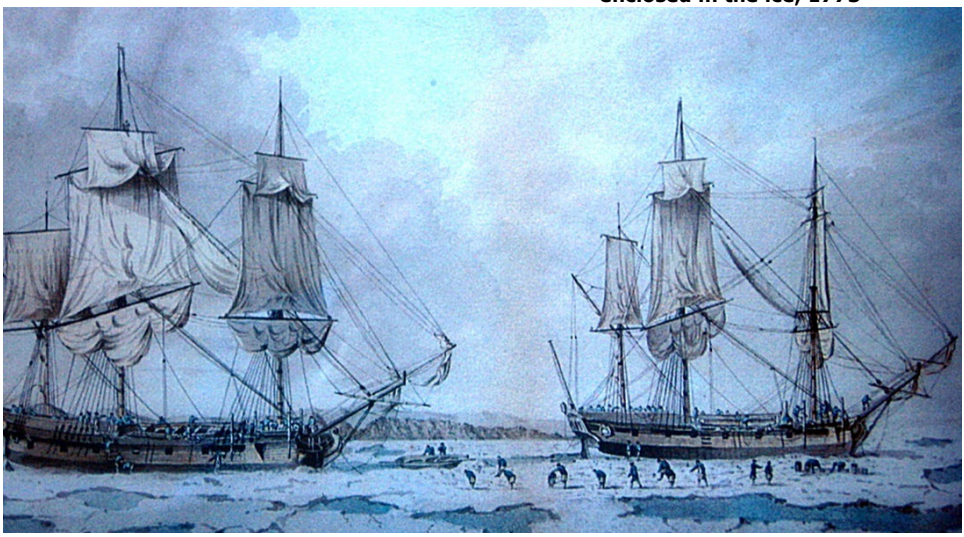
In his introduction to the talk, Dr Rob David addressed the question, why was Arctic exploration so doggedly pursued by the British despite huge material costs and the loss of hundreds of lives? The reasons were both commercial and involved with national pride: The explorers and their sponsors at the Admiralty hoped to be the first to discover a Northwest Passage that would provide a shorter navigable sea route through the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and bring big rewards in the expansion of trade with Asia. It was also a matter of national prestige and British imperial ambitions.

Dr David focused his talk particularly on explorers with connections to Cumbria, starting with the role of Captain Skeffington Lutwidge (1773-1814) in the North Polar Expedition of 1773. Lutwidge commanded HMS Carcass and would later live at Holmrook Hall. The explorers were keen to investigate speculations about an ice-free Open Polar Sea that surrounded the North Pole. They mapped the uncharted waters and gathered data on oceanography and natural history.

That expedition sailed around Spitsbergen and got to within ten degrees of the North Pole, but it was prevented from sailing further by thick sea ice. Under Lutwidge's command was a fourteen-year-old midshipman, one Horatio Nelson. A story has circulated ever since telling of how the young Nelson stalked a polar bear on the ice in an attempt to get the bear's skin for his father, and how he found himself in serious trouble when his musket misfired. A crack in the ice and a cannon fired from the ship saved the young Nelson. The event was memorialised in an 1809 painting *Nelson and the Bear*. The two ships, although heavily trapped in the ice, were eventually able to return to England in October.

A key person in the history of Arctic exploration in the 19th century was Sir John Barrow (1764-1848) who was born in Ulverston. He served as the Second Secretary to the Admiralty and was behind most of the exploration plans. The Hoad Monument, a 100-foot-high tower in Ulverston, was built in his memory by public subscription.

HMS Carcass and HMS Race horse enclosed in the ice, 1773



He was responsible for a number of expeditions including Sir John Franklin's voyages in search of the Northwest Passage. Franklin (1786-1847), a Navy officer and former Governor of Tasmania, led three expeditions to the Arctic, the last of which was in 1845. After charting unmapped waters and with only some 500 kilometres of the final Northwest Passage still to be completed, the two ships HMS Erebus and HMS Terror became ice-bound off King William Island where Franklin died in 1847. The ships were abandoned ten months later, and the entire crew of 129 died from starvation, hypothermia, scurvy or lead poisoning. Cut marks on some of the bones that were recovered later supported allegations of cannibalism. The two shipwrecks were eventually located on the bottom of the sea at Terror Bay in 2014 and 2016.



Young Nelson and the polar bear, by Richard Westall, 1809

Among several other explorers mentioned in the talk was Sir John Richardson (1787-1865), a Scottish naval surgeon, naturalist and author who mapped large areas of the Canadian Arctic coast. A friend of Franklin, he travelled with him on earlier expeditions, and then with another Scottish surgeon and explorer John Rae on an unsuccessful search for Franklin in1848-49. Richardson retired to the Lake District and lived at Lancrigg House in Grasmere.

Information about the fate of the last Franklin expedition was obtained by John Rae from the local Inuit people. A poignant hand-written message known as the Victory Point Note was found in a cairn on King William Island. It was scribbled around the margins of a pre-printed Admiralty form. The final message dated April 25, 1848 reported that Sir John Franklin, nine officers and fifteen men had died and the remaining crew would start the following morning for Back Fish River. The Northwest Passage was eventually found and navigated by the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen in 1903-6.

This was a fascinating talk, well attended and warmly appreciated.

Tim Stanley-Clamp

Articles

The Thackthwaite Road

by Roz Southey

In November 1958, my family moved to Loweswater, to live at Cold Keld on the Thackthwaite road, the road that ran from near the Village Hall all the way through Thackthwaite and on to Lorton; days after moving in, my mother and I went for a walk along the road, past farms at Latterhead, High Latterhead and Red How, and so to Thackthwaite itself. That was a first exploratory stroll but in later years we often walked to Thackthwaite as it had the nearest telephone box – there was no telephone in Cold Keld. The minibus that took me to school also travelled this way, picking up children at almost every farm.

I must have travelled the road a thousand times. In memory, I can still walk that mile-long route. I remember every turn, every corner, every building, the places where the snails bred, the hedgerows where wild strawberries hid, the bushes that flaunted rose hips in autumn. From Cold Keld, the road rose up a little climb between high hedges, then a gentle downhill took you past a single-storey prefabricated cottage hidden in trees on the right – this had been a



Latterhead in the early 1980s



Farm buildings at Latterhead showing road running through the centre of the farmyard: late 1970s



Dick Bell with his tractor: early 1970s

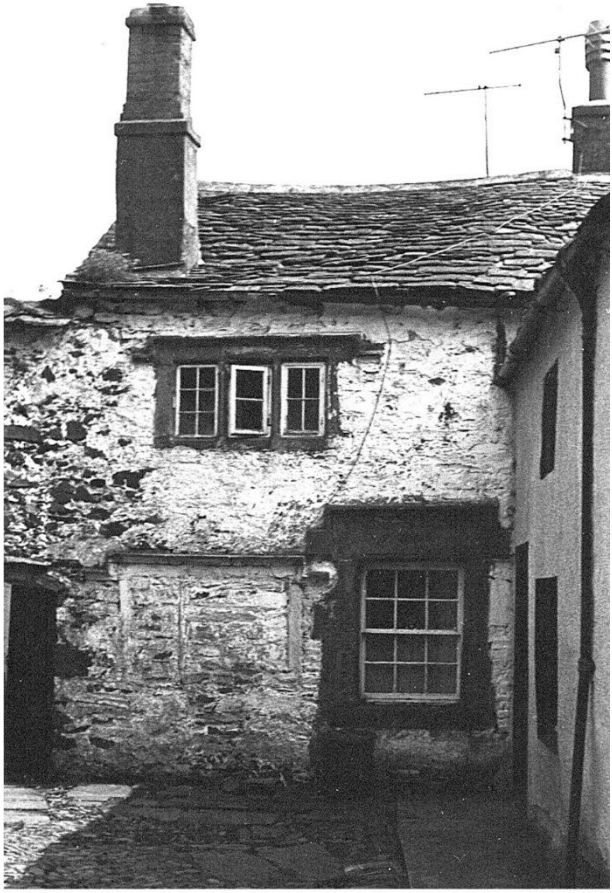
temporary post-war structure but had become permanent and housed an elderly lady I never met.

Then on to Latterhead, where Dick Bell lived with his widowed mother. Dick was the latest representative of a very old Loweswater family which had owned Latterhead for several centuries; he had just bought Oak Bank farm, next door to Cold Keld, but rented it out. In later years, he farmed both farms himself, and eventually retired to live at a new house built on the Cold Keld site. In the middle of the twentieth century, the Thackthwaite road drove straight through the middle of Latterhead farmyard; on the left of the road was the old, rather undistinguished farmhouse with barns on either side, on the right were more barns and byres, usually gated to prevent animals wandering onto the road. Latterhead has since changed out of all recognition, with the buildings on either side of the road being transformed into separate houses.

Up a little rise and the next house was High Latterhead, where the Normans lived – I went to school with two of their sons. Then a quarter of a mile of flat road led to Red How, another house which has changed considerably. A gate led into a small garden and a path to the front door; an extension on the back behind a tiny farmyard was



Red How in 1976 - front facade as seen from the Thackthwaite road.



Side facade of Red How showing the confused remains of many restorations

a patchwork of windows, both mullion and sash, some blocked-up, some adapted. On the other side of the road was a massive barn, new when we first moved in but since fallen into disuse and demolished.

Red How assumed more importance in later years as it was the retirement home of a former neighbour. Ronnie and Isa Gill came to farm Oak Bank as tenants of Dick Bell, in the very early 1960s. Ronnie had been born at Waterend, and Isa (Sarah Isabelle) was of a Whitehaven family and had one of the thickest Cumbrian accents I've ever heard – it was the best part of a year before I could fully understand what she was saying. She also had a mischievous sense of humour – in later years, she used to tease my husband who was from Kent, by deliberately putting on her thickest accent and scattering dialect words in every sentence. She also drove a battered old car frighteningly erratically.

When Ronnie died, Isa went to live at Red How. She always had a red-haired terrier at her heels and it was always called Nettle. She must have had four or five Nettles and only lost one before its time – it went down a rabbit hole and was never seen again. Every so often she would walk down to see us and have tea with my mother. Eventually she



Isa Gill with one of her dogs, Nettle: 1976



Dora's shop at the foot of Vicarage Hill: photograph probably taken late 1960s

went to live in sheltered housing in Cockermouth and died in 2005.

If we walked the other way along the Thackthwaite road, we came first to the road down into the valley, past Netherclose and on to Jenkin Gap which was the nearest bus stop to us. If we continued walking along the 'top' road, we came first to what was left of an old farmstead called Riggbank; this had long been incorporated into Oak Bank land and become merely a barn or two for animals. The barns were roofed with Honister slate which was continually being stolen, so Dick Bell eventually gave up replacing it and took the roofs off the buildings, reducing them to their current state.

Beyond that lay Foulsyke with its magnificent view over Crummock Water, and a half-mile walk to the end of the road near the village hall. We rarely used this bit of road. We were more likely to take a much older road, or the remains of it. Directly opposite Foul Syke, climbing a field gate allowed access to a hard footpath beside a dry-stone wall, downhill to another field gate. This second gateway was always muddy even in dry weather; just beyond and to the right were odd marshy hollows – the remains of fish ponds of uncertain date; we believed them to have been medieval but they could



Joan White's shop at Jenkin Gap in Summer 1976



Muncaster House under restoration:
photograph taken in Winter 1981



Muncaster House in Spring 1988



The old ruined farm building at Riggbank

have been more recent. Carrying on alongside the field wall, over a hump of land, the road that led from Scale Hill to Loweswater could be seen running between tall hedges at right angles to the path. Directly in a dip below, at the foot of Vicarage Hill, was the reason for making this trip: Dora's shop.

The only picture I have of the cottage makes it look idyllic, a chocolate-box idea of a country cottage, with roses climbing the walls. I never explored the cottage itself, though the chimneys on the photograph makes it clear that it had been extended at some time – the original must have been very small indeed. The shop was in the end nearest the road; a tiny gate from the road led up an equally tiny path in a miniscule garden to the yawning always-open door of the shop. Inside, it was dark and gloomy, so dark that I don't remember seeing what goods she had for sale, or how they were displayed. We always went either for stamps or for sweets. As for Dora herself, I have only the vaguest image of a small elderly woman.

I don't remember when Dora's shop closed, but later a shop opened at Thrushbank where it was run by the Cowans. That was succeeded by a shop at Jenkin Gap, where Joan Robinson (later White) ran it in an extension to her house. She had a basic stock of goods and was always in demand for ice-creams and sweets. When she started, there were still many people in the parish who had to go by bus to Cockermouth to shop and were glad to have somewhere closer for essentials; in the end, however, the bus service stopped and most people had cars to take them to the much-cheaper supermarkets – the shop became too expensive to run for the limited number of tourists who patronised it.

Just beyond Joan's shop and house was Muncaster House, which was under extensive repairs in the 1980s. I knew nothing of who lived there, but it always had an attraction for me simply because of the name. The Muncaster family, who originally built it, were a well-off yeoman family, who had married into the Fisher family of Cold Keld late in the eighteenth century and who had bailed them out when they ran into financial troubles in the early nineteenth century. As far as I was concerned, that made them practically family.

Buttermere in 1851

by Denis Mollison

This article is centred on Henry Mayhew's description of the population of Buttermere in his novel *1851*. Together with the census that took place a few months after Mayhew wrote, and the information on land ownership and occupation from the tithe survey of 1845, as mapped by L&DFLHS, we can put together an unusually detailed and comprehensive picture of a mid-nineteenth century rural village community.

Henry Mayhew

Henry Mayhew (1812-1887) was a pioneering sociologist and demographer, describing himself in the 1851 census as an 'author (social philosopher)'. He combined individual interviews with statistics to give a vivid assessment of social conditions. His most important work was *London Labour and the London Poor*, which exposed in graphic detail the miserable life of the poor and working classes in London, and was a major influence on social reform, and on writers associated with it such as Charles Dickens. Near the end of 1850, he was in the middle of this work, and in the process of changing publishers. But somehow he found time to visit the Lake District, and describe in detail the population of Buttermere. It was probably the contrast that attracted him, indeed the main fault in his description of Buttermere is that he portrays it as more of a rural idyll than it was.

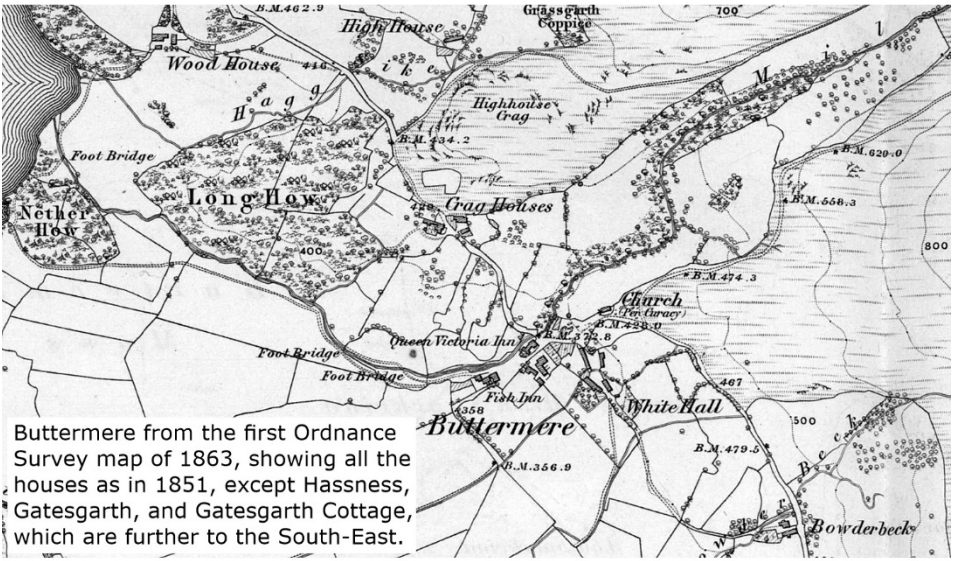
His motivation is likely to have been the need to take a break – and to earn some money while doing so, Mayhew being chronically broke throughout his life. Thus the description of Buttermere is embedded in an otherwise fanciful sub-Dickensian pot-boiler. Called simply *1851*, it is one long shaggy dog story, about how the rural Sandboys family go to London to view the Great Exhibition of that year, with one accident after another preventing them from ever actually getting to the Exhibition. The greater part of the novel, which was the subject of an article by Gloria Edwards in February's *Wanderer*, is about their time in London, and seems to be entirely fictitious.

However the first three chapters centre on a careful and exact description of the people of Buttermere and their way of life in early 1851, with the Cumberland characters – apart from the Sandboys family themselves – all being real people. More than that, Mayhew includes the entire population of Buttermere, and many of the tradespeople round about that they depended on for services. We can check this with relative ease, because it is set only a few months before the census of 1851. Mayhew's novel was initially published in instalments, with the three chapters on Buttermere appearing in the first of these in January 1851.

Context

The novel opens with a description of the bustle and global connections associated with the Great Exhibition, and then contrasts this with 'the peace, the simplicity, the truth, and the beauty which aggregate into the perpetual Sabbath that hallows the seclusion about and around the Lake of Buttermere'. Mayhew then moves into sociological detail:

> *According to a statistical investigation recently instituted, to the great alarm of the inhabitants, there were, at the beginning of the ever-to-be-remembered year 1851, in the little village situate between the Lakes of Crummock, and Buttermere, fifteen inhabited houses, one uninhabited, and one church about the size of a cottage; and within three miles of these, in any direction, there was no other habitation whatsoever. This little cluster of houses constituted the village called Buttermere, and consisted of four farm-houses, seven cottages, two Squires' residences, and two Inns.*
>
> *The census of the nine families who resided in the fifteen houses of*



Buttermere from the first Ordnance Survey map of 1863, showing all the houses as in 1851, except Hassness, Gatesgarth, and Gatesgarth Cottage, which are further to the South-East.

Buttermere – for many of these same families were the sons and nephews of the elders – was both curious and interesting. There were the Flemings, the Nelsons, the Cowmans, the Clarks, the Riggs, the Lancasters, the Branthwaites, the Lightfoots – and The Jopson, the warm-hearted Bachelor Squire of the place. The remaining Squire – also, be it said, a Bachelor – had left, when but a stripling, the cool shades of the peaceful vale for the wars of India.

...

Of the families above cited, two were related by marriage. The Clarks had wedded with the Riggs, and the Cowmans with the Lightfoots so that, in reality, the nine were but seven; and, strange to say, only one of these – the Clarks – were native to the place. It was curious to trace the causes that had brought the other settlers to so sequestered a spot. The greatest distance, however, that any of the immigrants had come from was thirty miles, and some had travelled but three; and yet, after five-and-twenty years' residence, were spoken of by the aboriginal natives as "foreigners".

Population

In the second chapter, there is a description of the entire population as they (fictitiously) all set off to see the Great Exhibition. It begins: 'There was the stalwart Daniel Fleming, of the White Howe, mounted on his horse, with his wife, her baby in her arms, and the children, with the farm maid, in the cart, – his two men trudging by its side.' If we check this in the 1851 census (on page 15) we find this family at White Hall / White Howe, more usually known as Wilkinsyke.

The main difference here is that Mayhew refers to children where (apart from the baby) the census only gives one child; in this, Mayhew is right – the Flemings had three older children who can be found staying elsewhere in the census.

Mayhew continues with descriptions of the other fourteen households (see 'Families' below), which can all be checked against the census.

Mayhew lists the occupations of the 72 Buttermerians as: 'two innkeepers, four farmers, (including one statesman and one sinecure constable,) nine labourers (one of them a miner, one a quarrier, and



one the parish-clerk), twelve farm-servants, seventeen sons, nine daughters, fourteen wives, three widows, one 'squire, and one pauper of eighty-six years of age.'

With a little adjustment between categories (the census only has nine farm-servants, but Mayhew is perhaps counting the census's 'general servants' as farm-servants), this can be matched almost exactly to the census taken a few months later, on 30 March. The census gives a total population of only 68: the discrepancy can be accounted for by Mayhew including four children who were away from home on the census date, plus the 86-year old pauper, Braithwaite Rigg, who died on 11 March 1851, just before the census; while the census includes a visitor, Charles Richards, owner of the Victoria Inn – in a rare joke for the census he gives his occupation as 'General Servant'.

The families: landowners and farmers

As Mayhew says, there were nine families (counting by surname of the head of household) in the fifteen occupied houses, with several of those having inter-married.

Two that he does not mention, because they were never resident, are the major landowners General Henry Wyndham (of the Egremont, later Leconfield family, also lord of the manor (of Braithwaite and Coledale)); and William Marshall, the industrialist whose family bought up most of the township between 1815 and 1900.

One of the two 'squires' that Mayhew mentions ('gentry' or 'landed proprietor' would be a more appropriate term) is the absentee Major-general Richard Benson, the owner of Hassness, a small estate with a villa built for his father Thomas Benson (lawyer and agent for Henry Wyndham's father) in the 1780s, and left by him to his second wife, from whom Richard inherited it. As Mayhew describes, he was a long term absentee serving in the East India Company's army, from which he eventually retired to spend a few years at Hassness, dying there in 1858 at the age of 73.

The resident 'squire', whom Mayhew treats as a key figure in the community, is Robert Jopson of Wood House. While his father came from a long line of Jopsons living over the hill in Seathwaite in Borrowdale since at least the 1500s, his mother Jane Norman came from an equally long line of Normans living in Buttermere, and at Wood House from the early 1700s. His great-grandfather Charles Norman (1694-1762) had the lease of the Honister slate mine; and had extended his lands by buying Wilkinsyke in 1749. Robert owned 130 acres in Buttermere at the time of the tithe survey in 1845 (and also some small holdings in Loweswater and Brackenthwaite). While he was the last of his family to live in Buttermere, the family continued through his brother William in Liverpool, and his sister Jane in Cockermouth. Jane had married the local doctor, George William Johnston, but had died in March 1850.

In 1845 Robert Jopson's tenant at Wilkinsyke was Daniel Fleming. Daniel was a relative newcomer: born in St Johns in the Vale, in 1838 he married Elizabeth, daughter of Jonathan Payle, the landlord of the Fish Inn (which was still owned by the family of the famous 'Maid of Buttermere' Mary Robinson, who had moved away from Buttermere about 1815 with her second husband, Richard

Harrison). Following Jonathan's death in 1839, Daniel took over the Fish Inn for a time, before becoming farming tenant at Wilkinsyke.

The other resident farm owner was John Clark of Syke House. Baptised at Lorton in January 1774, his ancestral line goes back through at least four other John Clarks of Buttermere. In 1851 he owned Crag House farm (46 acres), and was tenant of Syke House and High House (102 acres in total), farms both owned by Henry Wyndham.

While Robert Jopson was the last of an old family to live in Buttermere, John Clark had plenty of his family still in the village: 'there was John Clark, of Wilkinsyke [Syke House], the farmer and statesman, with his black-haired sons, Isaac and Johnny, while Richard rode the piebald pony; and Joseph and his wife, with little Grace, and their rosy-cheeked maid, Susannah, from the Fish Inn, sat in the car, kept at other times for the accommodation of their visitors'.

The other two farmers were both tenants of William Marshall. Mayhew's list includes 'Isaac Cowman, of the Croft, the red-faced farmer-constable, with his fine tall, flaxen, Saxon family about him; and, following in his wake, his Roman-nosed nephew John, the host of `The Victoria', with his brisk, bustling wife on his arm'. Isaac had been tenant of Croft farm since Marshall's father bought it in 1824. In contrast, the last of these farmers was a newcomer to the village, though already with a reputation for his role in the development of Herdwick sheep: 'Edward Nelson, the sheep-breeder, of Gatesgarth, dressed in his well-known suit of grey, with his buxom gude-wife, and her three boys and her two girls by her side; while the fresh-coloured bonnie lassie, her maid, Hetty Gatesgarth, of Gatesgarth, in her bright green dress and pink ribbons, strutted along in their wake'. Hetty's surname was actually Gaskarth; she was one of the children of a previous tenant at Gatesgarth, which had been bought by Marshall in 1815.

Families: other

The two innkeepers, Joseph Clark of the Fish Inn and John Cowman of the Victoria, were as mentioned above members of two of the farming families.

The remaining eight households were headed by people classed as 'labourers' in the census. Three were from the Rigg family: 'Then came the Riggs: James Rigg, the miner, of Scots Tuft, who had come over from his work at Cleator for the special holiday; and there were his wife and young boys, and Jane Rigg, the widow, and her daughter Mary Ann, the grey-eyed beauty of Buttermere, in her jaunty jacket-waisted dress; with her swarthy black-whiskered Celtic brother, and his pleasant-faced Saxon wife carrying their chubby-cheeked child; and behind them came Ann Rigg, the slater's widow, from Craig House, with her boys and little girl'.

The Rigg family came to Buttermere between 1806 and 1809, with the arrival of Braithwaite Rigg (1764-1851, 'from youth to age well known and respected as a workman in different slate quarries in Lancashire, Westmorland and Cumberland' according to the newspaper report of his death) and his wife. The widows were of two of their sons, John and Michael, while James Rigg was a son of John. Michael had married John Clark's daughter Ann, while daughter Jane Ann Rigg had married Joseph Clark of the Fish Inn.

Three were Lancasters: John at Gatesgarth, his son Andrew at Bridgend, and his brother Robert (whom Mayhew confuses with his son Robert) at Scots Toft (the houses opposite Crag House). There were other Lancasters in Buttermere early in the century, but these ones were likely later immigrants; John's sons were born in Newlands in the 1820s. The other two householder labourers in 1851 were 'John Branthwaite, of Bowtherbeck, the parish-

clerk, with his wife and wife's mother', and 'keen old Rowley Lightfoot' of High House with his wife and son John. All the Lightfoot children had been born in Buttermere, from 1819 onwards; one daughter, Jane, was married to John Cowman.

Their trades network

By this point in the book Mayhew has already raised the question: 'if this be the entire community, how do the people live? where are the shops? where that glorious interchange of commodities, without which society cannot exist? Where do they get their bread, their meat, their tea, their sugar, their clothing, their shoes … ?' He first gives a fairly general answer:

> *It is five miles to the nearest tailor. Wear the sole of your shoe to the bone on the sharp craigs of Robinson or of the Goat-gills, and you must walk to Lowes Water for a shoemaker. Be mad with the toothache, caught from continued exposure to the mountain breeze, and, go which way you will to Keswick or to Cockermouth, it is ten miles to the nearest chemist. Be seized with the pangs of death, and you must send twenty miles, there and back, for Dr. Johnson to ease your last moments. To apprise your friends by letter of your danger, a messenger must go six miles before the letter can be posted. If you desire to do your duty to those you may leave behind, you must send three leagues to Messrs. Brag and Steal to make your will, and they must travel the same distance before either can perform the office for you. You wish to avail yourself of the last consolations of the Church; the clergyman, who oscillates in his duties between Withorp and Buttermere, (an interval of twelve miles,) has, perhaps, just been sent for to visit the opposite parish, and is now going, at a hard gallop, in the contrary direction, to another parishioner. Die! and you must be taken five miles in a cart to be buried; for though Buttermere boasts a church, it stands upon a rock, from which no sexton has yet been found hardy enough to quarry out a grave!*

Later, when the fictitious Sandboys family have been left on their own by everyone else's departure to the Great Exhibition, Mayhew explicitly names over twenty tradespeople whom they seek out in vain, almost all of whom can be found in the census. For example, in Loweswater we can find the tailor Isaac Johnston at Thackthwaite, shoemaker (and farmer) John Jackson at Thrushbank, and post office messenger Thomas Sancton at Gillerthwaite; and in Cockermouth the chemist Joseph Bowerbank and doctor George William Johnston. Further, 'Brag and Steal', who sound as though invented by Private Eye, are actually slight corruptions of the names of two real life lawyers Bragg and Steall, also in Cockermouth. Others range from the manager of the circulating library in Keswick to the pig butcher in Lorton. Even the farmer's wife with whom the fictitious Mrs Sandboys competes in home baking is a real person – the Buttermere native Jane Tyson now living at Boad Hole in Newlands. The Sandboys' servants are real people: one of the Lightfoot daughters, Anne, who was a servant in High Lorton at the time, and James Postlethwaite, who also appears in the book in his real-life role of 'Squire Jopson's man'.

Other social observations

In some of the descriptions of tradespeople Mayhew adds more personal details, for example when the Sandboys family run out of tea, sugar and soft bread, for which they depend on Matthew Harker, the itinerant tea-man from Keswick 'in whom the Sandboys took a greater interest from the fact of their having subscribed, with others of the gentry, when Harker lost his hand by blasting cobbles, to start him in the grocery business, and provide him with a horse and cart to carry his goods round the country.' Mayhew refers to Harker having nine children; he can be found in the census in Keswick with his wife and six of the children.



Millbeck and Buttermere Chapel,
G Pickering 1832-5

Mayhew follows his statistical outline of the population - and its lack of facilities - with an eulogy of the environment and way of life that morphs from romantic description of the scenery into snapshots of everyday life:

The rays go slanting down towards the lake, leaving the steep mountain sides bathed in a rich dark shadow - while the waters below, here dance in the light, sparkling and shimmering, like scales of a fish, and there, swept by the sudden gust, the spray of their tiny waves is borne along the surface in a powdery shower.

...

In the village road, for street there is none, not a creature is to be seen, save where a few brown or mottled short-horns straggle up from the meadows, now stopping to stare vacantly about them, now capering purposeless with uplifted tails, or butting frolicsome at each other; then marching to the brook, and standing knee-deep in the scurrying waters ..

...

Here, too, the visitor may, sometimes, see the farmers' wives grouped outside one of the homestead gates, watching their little lasses set forth on their five-mile pilgrimage to school, their baskets filled with their week's provisions hanging on their arms, and the hoods of their blue-grey cloaks dancing as they skip playfully along, thoughtless of the six days' absence, or mountain road before them.

Mayhew also records births, marriages and deaths since the last census. The deaths rather cut across the idyllic rural spin that colours the rest of Mayhew's description of Buttermere, with three of the seven deaths being violent:

The deaths of Buttermere tell each their peculiar story. … Two were brothers, working at the slate-quarries high up on Honister Craig: one had fallen from a ladder down the precipice side - the other, a tall and stalwart man, had, in the presence of his two boys, been carried up bodily into the air by a whirlwind, and dashed to death on the craigs below. … The last, a young girl of twenty, perished by her own hand - the romance of village life! Mary Lightfoot,

wooed by her young master, the farmer's son, of Gatesgarth, sat till morning awaiting his return from Keswick, whither he had gone to court another. Through the long, lone night, the misgivings of her heart had grown by daylight into certainty. The false youth came back with other kisses on his lip, and angry words for her. Life lost its charm for Mary, and she could see no peace but in the grave.

Death certificates confirm the death by poisoning of Mary Lightfoot, and the mining accidents that killed two of the Rigg brothers. They were working at the Honister slate mine, which in the 1840s was run by Robert Jopson's brother Charles in partnership with John Clark of Syke House; one wonders if this created additional tensions in the community, in conflict with Mayhew's relentless positivity.

Why/how did Mayhew pick on Buttermere?

The role given to Robert Jopson, including coopting his real-life servant James Postlethwaite to serve the fictitious Sandboys family, suggests he may have been Mayhew's main local contact and provider of information. The connection may have been through the Wood family of Low House, Brackenthwaite, and their friends the Reeds. Robert was Trustee for Marianne Wood (nee Sladen) following the death of his second cousin John Wood in London in 1835. John's children were close associates of Frederic Reed (1808-88), a lawyer dealing with bankruptcies in London in the 1840s, as did the Mayhew family firm there. John's son was witness at Frederic's wedding, and Frederic was married to John's daughter Mary Ann (and after her death in 1856 he married her sister Eliza). John's widow Marianne appears in the 1840s tithe survey as a major landowner in Brackenthwaite; Frederic later bought Hassness from the estate of Richard Benson, and Wilkinsyke from Robert Jopson. [Both were eventually sold, in 1900, to the Marshall family.]

Having lived in Buttermere all his life, Robert was well qualified to introduce Mayhew to the local population, and a likely candidate to have access to the census information-gathering process, or 'statistical investigation' as Mayhew disguises it.

Extending the picture

Setting Mayhew's description in context has inevitably involved looking both earlier and later than 1851. We need to look back at least to the beginning of the century to disentangle those with long ancestry in Buttermere from those – the majority as Mayhew says – who were relatively recent arrivals. A natural question arising is why had so many of the long-resident families moved out? Enfranchisement, much of which occurred in Buttermere around 1758, gave empowerment to those who had always been tenants, but that power also made it more likely that they would sell and move away. Other factors, such as enclosures and the industrial revolution, will also have played a part. And of course the small size of the Buttermere population meant that the majority married outwith the community.

Looking forward in time, having met these families of 1851, it is natural curiosity to ask what became of them, and whether their descendents stayed or moved on? This is an easier task, particularly thanks to the further detailed censuses that are now available every 10 years up until 1921.

Supporting information

I will be happy to share my extensive but somewhat disorganised notes on the people and places of Buttermere with anyone interested in its history.

In conclusion, I should admit a personal interest: I am descended directly, five generations on, from Robert Jopson's sister Jane (1793-1850) and her husband the Cockermouth doctor George William Johnston (ca. 1800-1851).

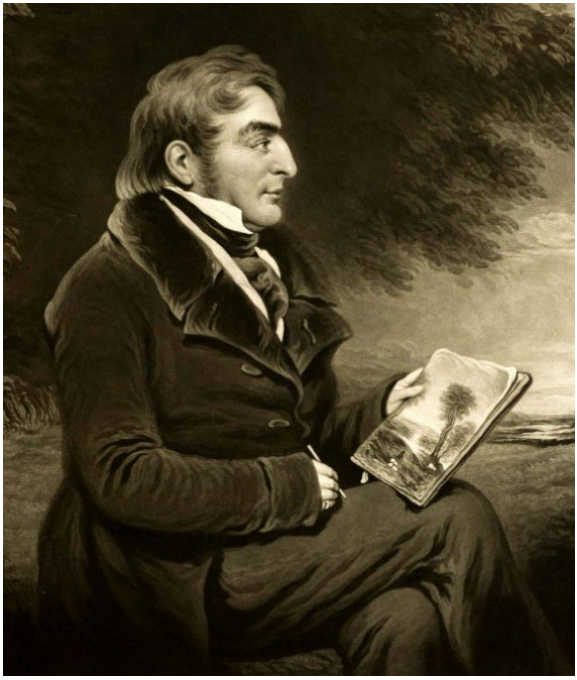
J.M.W. Turner in Cockermouth

by Lena Stanley-Clamp

There is a great deal of research relating to Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) presence in the Lakes but his visits to Cockermouth have not attracted much attention. This article looks at Turner's two visits to the town, the artwork they inspired and the artist's relationship with the 3rd Earl of Egremont, George O'Brien Wyndham, the owner of Cockermouth Castle and Turner's patron.

Although Turner did not leave any diaries and little correspondence, his sketchbooks were in effect his journals. The 309 sketchbooks dating from 1789-1845 contain over 30,000 pages of drawings, watercolour studies and inscriptions that are part of the Turner Bequest. Taken together with his other artworks they reveal the story of his life as an artist. They also allow us to trace his travels with some accuracy.[1]

J. M. W. Turner, adapted from Charles Turner's drawing of 1841, published in 1856. National Galleries of Scotland



Turner's first visit to Cockermouth occurred during his eight week-long Tour of the North which he undertook in the summer of 1797. The tour was financed by a lucrative commission from Edward Lascelles to paint his house and grounds at Harewood in Yorkshire. And so aged 22, the ambitious topographical artist and graduate of the Royal Academy Schools, toured Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Northumberland and the Scottish Borders before reaching the Lakes. He travelled in search of picturesque subjects that were likely to bring him success at the Royal Academy exhibitions and secure the coveted status of a Royal Academician as well as further commissions. It became a regular pattern of Turner's life: travelling and sketching during the summer months would be followed by intensive work in London fulfilling his commissions, developing some of the sketches into watercolour studies which would be shown to prospective clients to choose from and commission fully completed artworks. He travelled by coach, on horseback and was not averse to exploring on foot in search of a good view. In later years steamboats became a favourite mode of transport that lent itself well to sketching.

According to Turner's contemporaries he prepared for his travels with the precision of a military campaigner: planning his itinerary, gathering information and maps. He would certainly have studied the third edition of

[1] J.M.W. Turner: Sketchbooks, Drawings and Watercolours, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner



Cockermouth Castle from the North side of the River Derwent, Joseph Farington, August 1786, Tate Gallery

Thomas West's Guide which carried illustrations and maps. Among the people he consulted would have been Joseph Farington (1747-1821) the topographical artist and Royal Academician who spent several years in the Lakes, based mainly in Keswick, to produce a volume of engravings *Views of the Lakes etc in Cumberland and Westmorland* published in 1789. The two were well acquainted through the Academy (RA) where the young Turner began attracting attention since exhibiting at their annual exhibitions. After Turner unsuccessfully stood for election as an Associate Member of the RA in 1798, it was thanks to the influential Farington who rallied the support of a few other artists that he was elected Associate Member of the RA in 1799.[2] Farington noted in his diaries how they celebrated that night in Turner father's cramped home in Covent Garden's Maiden Lane.

Joseph Farington is best known in posterity as a diarist who noted the goings on at the Royal Academy and in the London art world. In his 12-volume *Diary* he mentions the advice he gave to the young Turner which the latter rarely followed. However, Turner was grateful for Farington's support in his early career and insisted on giving him a present. He asked Farington to select a subject from among his watercolour studies of the Lakes of 1797. Turner completed the *Head of Derwentwater with Lodore Falls* in 1801 and presented it to Farington. It is Farington's view in ink and watercolour of *Cockermouth Castle from the North side of the river Derwent,* dated August 1786 that merits our particular attention here. This detailed view of the Castle and the industrial buildings on the bank of the Derwent at its confluence with the Cocker is a valuable illustration of the manufactories located in that part of town. Contemporary historical sources mention the existence in the area of the Old Brewery (known also as the Castle Brewery) and of the tanneries.[3]

[2] Joseph Farington *The Farington Diary,* Hutchinson & Co, 1922-1928, https://archive.org/details/faringtondiary01fariuoft

[3] William Hutchinson, *The History of the County of Cumberland* published in Carlisle 1794-97.

The encounter with the Lakes

Turner arrived in the Lakes at the beginning of August 1797. He would have travelled from Jedburgh to Keswick by coach. Like other notable visitors before him, including Thomas Gray in 1769, Turner probably stayed some time at the Queens Head, a coaching inn on the Market square in Keswick. He spent two weeks in the Lakes, exploring and making 54 sketches in his *Tweed and the Lakes* sketchbook before returning to Yorkshire to execute his commission at Harewood House.[4]

Using Keswick as his base Turner explored the views around Derwentwater, Borrowdale, Buttermere, Crummock, Ullswater, Grasmere, Ambleside, Windermere and further afield. The weather was disappointing, the summits of the fells often hidden by cloud as shown in his watercolours. Turner's exploration and sketches of the Crummock area resulted in his oil painting *Buttermere with parts of Crommackwater, Cumberland, a Shower* exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1798. David Hill, who travelled over many years in Turner's footsteps devoted a chapter to Turner's 1797 tour of the Lakes in his book *Turner in the North*.[5] More recently a study of the Buttermere painting was carried out by John and Rosamund Macfarlane who established the exact viewpoint, the weather conditions and the elements of artistic licence Turner introduced in this sublime landscape.[6]



During this first stay in the Lakes Turner made a very brief visit to Cockermouth and, unusually for him, produced just one drawing in his *Tweed and the Lakes* sketchbook. It is a distant view of the Castle and the lands to the north with hills in the far distance. The river is shown flowing towards his viewpoint. This pencil sketch must have been very rapidly executed judging by the hurried marks he made; he may even have been sketching on horseback. Turner usually made sketches of his subjects from a number of vantage points but this time Cockermouth did not detain him long. However, he would be back twelve years later, studying and sketching the views around Cockermouth Castle for an important commission for the 3rd Earl of Egremont.

The 3rd Earl of Egremont in the North Gallery, Petworth House by Thomas Phillips, 1839, oil on canvas, Petworth House

[4] J.M.W. Turner: Sketchbooks, Drawings and Watercolours, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner

[5] David Hill, *Turner in the North. A Tour Through Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Durham, Northumberland, the Scottish Borders, The Lake District, Lancashire and Lincolnshire in the Year 1797*, Yale University Press, 1997

[6] See John Macfarlane, Crummock Water and JMW Turner in the *Lorton Link*, December 2025-January 2026

The 3rd Earl of Egremont

The Wyndham family inherited the earldom of Egremont, their Northern seat at Cockermouth Castle and the lands of the Honour of Cockermouth from Charles Seymour, 6th Duke of Somerset who had inherited them from the earls of Northumberland, the Percy family. George O'Brien Wyndham, the 3rd Earl of Egremont (1751–1837) succeeded to the earldom at the age of eleven after the death of his father. His subsidiary title was Lord Cockermouth. He inherited vast estates in Sussex, Cumbria, Yorkshire (Leconfield), Wiltshire, Somerset and later in Ireland. He was educated at Westminster School and Eton College and matriculated at Christ Church College, Oxford in 1767. He completed his education with two European grand tours.

He was a prominent figure in London high society where he was known for his romantic liaisons. In 1794 the Earl sold Egremont House in Piccadilly and a part of his Old Masters collection, and withdrew from London society to settle permanently at his country estate and palatial mansion in Petworth, Sussex. His friend Charles Robert Leslie reported in his *Autobiographical Recollections* that Egremont said "London can find me if it wants me, but I shall not go to seek London".[7] London did find him, most spectacularly in 1814 when the Prince Regent and the Allied sovereigns including Tsar Alexander I and Frederick William III, King of Prussia accompanied by the Duke of Wellington, visited Petworth on their tour of England after the Peace of Paris.

At Petworth the Earl was an agriculturist who invested in agricultural and industrial innovation including crop rotation and canal and road building. He served for many years on the Board of Agriculture and as Lord Lieutenant of Sussex. He was also a generous philanthropist reportedly spending £20,000 annually on charitable causes.[8] A decided critic of the harsh Poor Laws and of workhouses, he sponsored the Petworth Emigration Scheme to Upper Canada aiming to relieve rural poverty in Sussex and the neighbouring counties.

The 3rd Earl of Egremont is remembered today as a collector and a major patron of the arts. He inherited from his ancestors a remarkable collection of Old Masters but his main interest was in commissioning work from living British artists. In 1827 Egremont built an extension to the North Gallery at Petworth to accommodate his growing collection. He was a gifted curator who took great care in displaying his commissions of contemporary British art alongside the European Old Masters. Lord Egremont's patronage of the arts at Petworth is presented in a fascinating essay by Andrew Loukes, the curator of the Egremont Collection: *Solid, Liberal, Rich and English: the Patriotic Patronage and Curatorship of the Third Earl of Egremont*.[9]

Turner's work attracted Lord Egremont's attention early in the artist's career. The first Turner painting he bought was *Ships Bearing Up for Anchorage*, also known as *The Egremont Sea Piece*, which was exhibited at the RA in 1802. Egremont was a generous host to many artists at Petworth who were given an opportunity to study the art in the Earl's collection and encouraged in their work.

In Cockermouth, Egremont was an absentee lord of the manor and landowner who employed stewards or land agents to manage his estates and oversee manorial courts on his behalf. Notwithstanding his family's history of rivalry with the Lowthers over electoral influence, Egremont could not be induced to take an interest in Cumbrian politics. Cockermouth remained a pocket borough

[7] Charles Robert Leslie, *Autobiographical Recollections*, 1860.
[8] Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004.
[9] *https://www.artandthecountryhouse.com/essays/essays-index/patriotic-patronage-and-curatorship-of-the-third-earl-of-egremont*

of the Lowther family until 1832. However, Egremont took a close interest in matters relating to his Cumbrian estates. When his agent Robert Benson (the third member of the Benson family of lawyers to serve in this role since 1778) became embroiled in local politics, Lord Egremont dismissed him abruptly in 1836.

After centuries during which the owners of Cockermouth Castle showed little interest in their northern seat which was left to decay, the 3rd Earl built a summer residence there by the north wall of the outer bailey. A stable block was probably built at the same time. The work was completed in 1805 when the Earl started to visit in late summers. Bradbury points out that with the Earl's regular visits, the Castle began to be better cared for.[10] Lord Egremont's summer visits at Cockermouth Castle continued for many years. In c.1829 the Earl built Skiddaw House, a remote hunting lodge in Skiddaw Forest. The lodge had accommodation for the game keeper and his family on one side and for a shepherd's family on the other, with some rooms for Lord Egremont and his grouse shooting parties.[11]

The Earl's contribution to the construction of the new Market Hall in Cockermouth which opened in 1837 survives in the records. Responding to an appeal from John Steel, a future MP for the town, Lord Egremont contributed £2000 with more funds raised by 106 shares of £25 each from local merchants. Egremont made a provision that the interest from his shares should be used "to aid decayed tradesmen in the decline of life". As lord of the manor, Egremont was entitled to "market rights" such as the payments for setting up the stalls and for tolls on the sale of produce and cattle. He handed over these rights to the Trustees of the Cockermouth Market Company. The rights then passed to the local Board of Health and later to the Urban District Council. The income generated from market rights brought a considerable relief to the town rates.[12]

Tour of the North-West in 1809

Turner returned to Cockermouth in August 1809. He was by then a Royal Academician (elected in 1802) and Professor of Perspective (since 1807) at the RA. He was much in demand by wealthy patrons as an artist who elevated the status of landscape painting to an unprecedented height. Turner came to Cockermouth at the invitation of the Earl of Egremont who had commissioned him to paint his two seats: Petworth House in West Sussex and Cockermouth Castle. The visit to Cockermouth followed Turner's stay at Petworth earlier that summer when he worked on sketches that would result in his oil painting *Petworth, Sussex, the Seat of the Earl of Egremont: Dewy Morning.* This painting was exhibited at the RA in 1810 and would later find a pride of place alongside other Turners at Petworth.

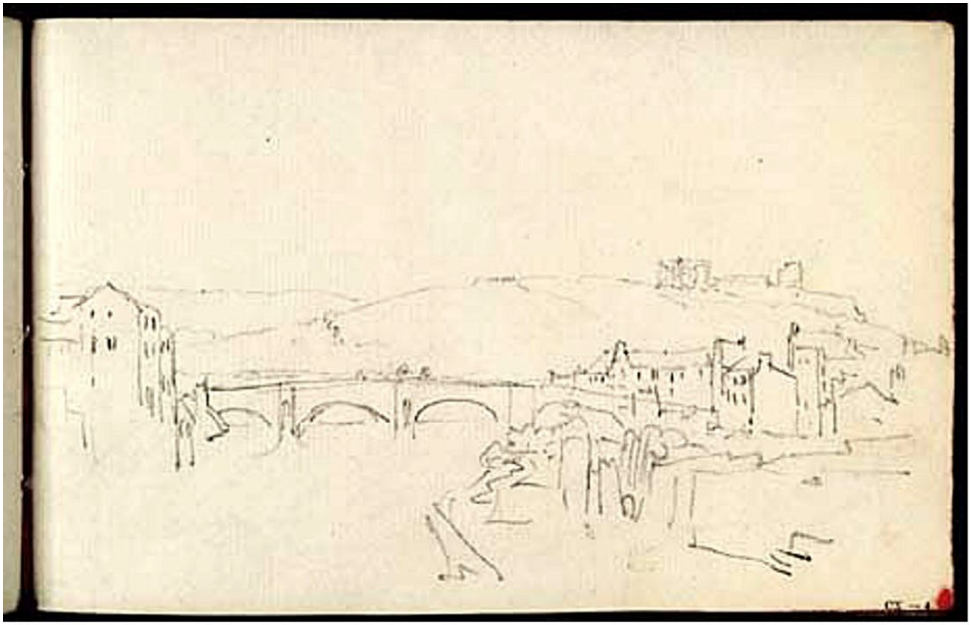
On his tour of the North-West, Turner brought four sketchbooks: the large format *Petworth* and *Kirkstall Lock*, and the smaller *Lowther* and *Cockermouth* sketchbooks. The sequence of subjects was not always systematic; he sometimes used the sketchbooks randomly looking for blank pages.

Turner's correspondence reveals that he first travelled to Yorkshire where he stayed with his great friend Walter Fawkes at Farley Hall near Otley. On his way to Cockermouth, Turner stopped for some days near Penrith where he sketched the local views and Lowther Castle then still under construction. This was for a house portrait commission for William Lowther, the first Earl of Lonsdale of the second creation, a coal magnate who was keen to

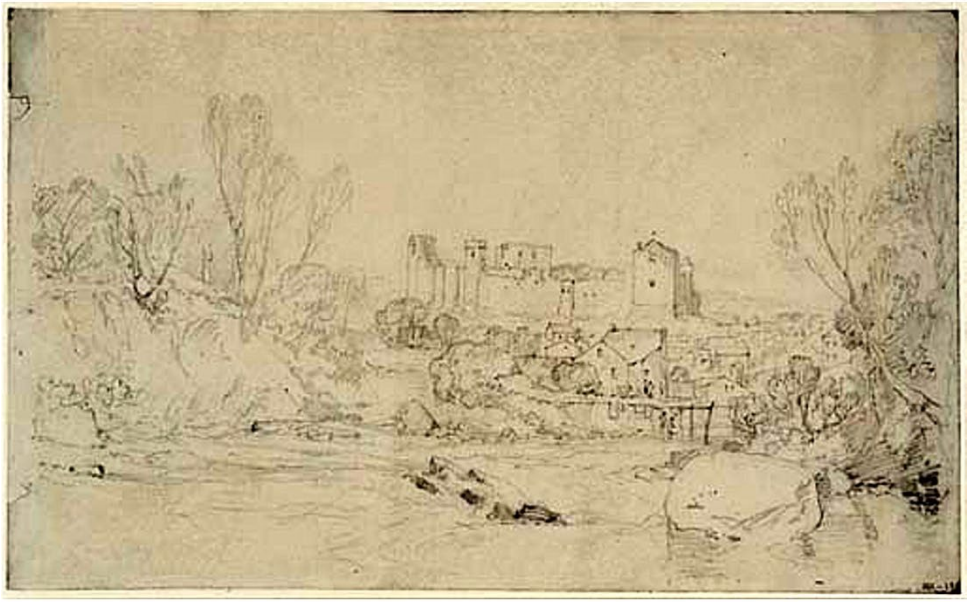
[10] J.B. Bradbury, *A History of Cockermouth*, Phillimore, 1981

[11] Skiddaw House Foundation, https://www.skiddawhouse.co.uk/history

[12] J.B. Bradbury



Sketch of Gote Bridge and the River Derwent, J.M.W. Turner 1809, Tate Gallery



Sketch of Cockermouth Castle, the South Curtain Wall from the river Cocker, J.M.W. Turner 1809, Tate Gallery

show off his new Gothic seat. The two oil paintings: *Lowther Castle, Westmorland, the Seat of the Earl of Lonsdale (the North Front), with the River Lowther: Mid-day* and *Lowther Castle, Westmorland, the Seat of the Earl of Lonsdale: North-West View from Ullswater Lane: Evening* were exhibited at the RA the following year. Today the first is in the private collection of the Lowther family while the second is at the Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle. They were the only paintings the Earl of Lonsdale ever purchased from Turner.

Turner at Cockermouth Castle

Turner's main objective during his time in Cockermouth as a guest of Lord Egremont was to gather material for the painting of the castle. The number of pencil sketches of the castle drawn from various angles show that he spent considerable time exploring the area in search of the best view. Some of the sketches are just quick impressions, others are drawn more carefully. He revisited the outskirts of Cockermouth where he had been on his first visit; this time the view shows the Derwent flowing under the Gote bridge with the town's buildings outlined on the right and the castle in the far distance.[13]

The sketchbooks reveal that there was also time for fishing on the Derwent. Sir John Leicester, one of Turner's patrons complained the previous year that Turner "did more fishing than painting" when working on his commission at Tabley. Lord Egremont, a generous host and a keen angler himself, did not seem to mind. A sketch inscribed 'from Lord Egremont's room' shows a fishing jetty built over the river. Another annotated in the *Lowther* sketchbook shows the Earl wrapped in a greatcoat and fishing from the same place beneath the castle mound.[14] The skies in some of the sketches are inscribed 'dark' and 'murky' which indicates typical Cumbrian weather.

A careful sketch of the South Curtain Wall of the castle from the Cocker may have been considered but it was a study of the North Curtain Wall and the Derwent from the *Petworth* sketchbook that was chosen for development as an oil painting. The composition would have been discussed with Lord Egremont who took a close interest in his commissions.

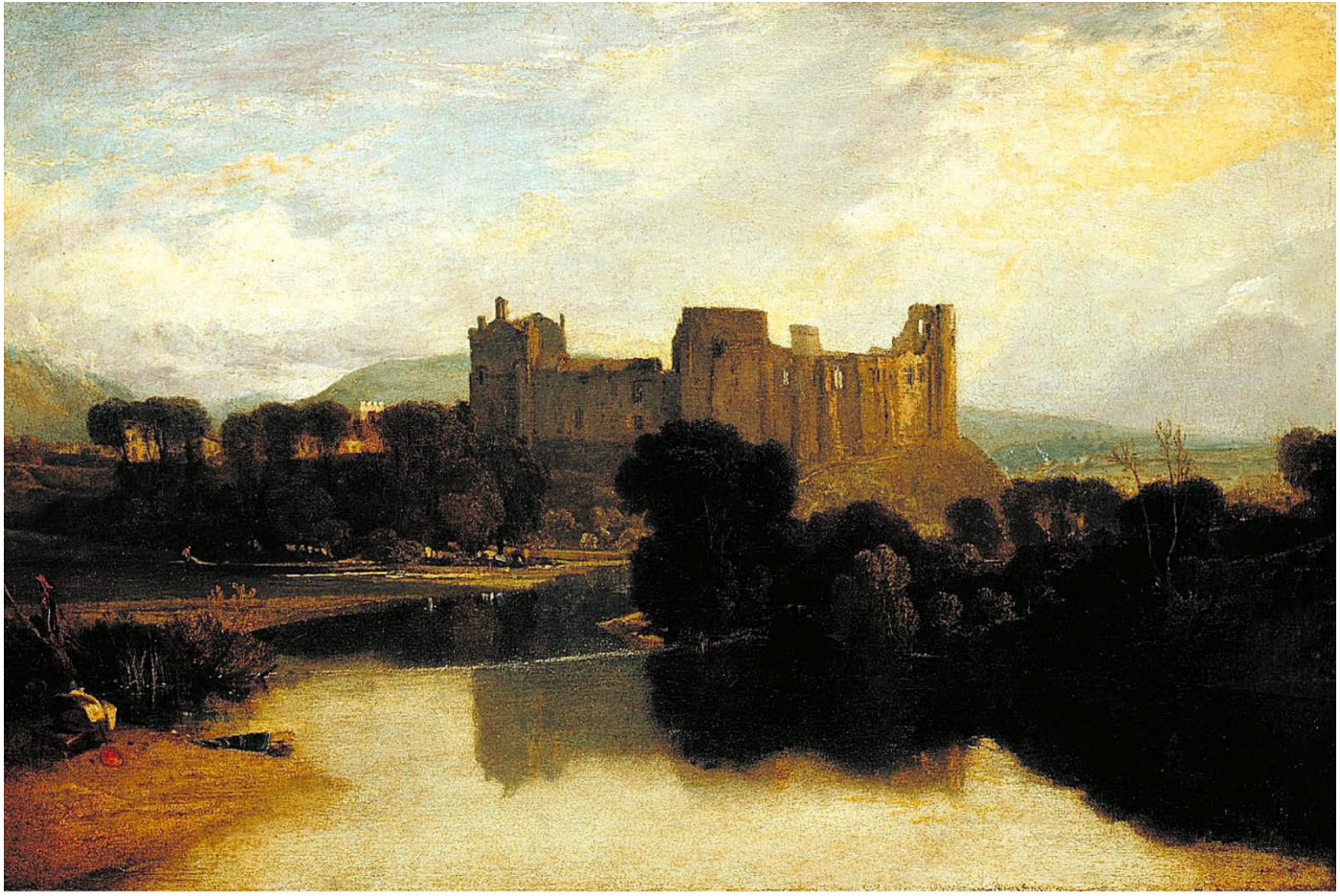
In Turner's oil painting the castle is bathing in a golden light and is reflected in the Derwent with a magical effect. The big sky and the whole scene are illuminated by the afternoon sun. The ruined castle stands on its mound in the middle distance with the hills beyond and the Derwent flows across the foreground. The trees provide a dark contrast and a sense of scale. A few details of the town are just about discernible in the distance beyond the castle such as a square tower gleaming between the trees. A basket of linen left on a bench on the river bank is a reminder of everyday life in this historic scene.

Cockermouth Castle was exhibited in 1810 at Turner's own gallery in London. A note of payment in one of Turner's sketchbooks records Lord Egremont's purchases in June that year which included the painting of the Castle for 100 guineas. After Petworth was given to the National Trust in 1947 and a major part of the collection was accepted in lieu of tax by the Government in 1956, the painting was allocated on a long-term loan to the Tate Gallery in 1984. It is on display in the North Gallery at Petworth House.

After his stay at Cockermouth Castle, Turner travelled South-West to

[13] https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-gote-bridge-and-the-river-derwent-cockermouth-r1135657

[14] https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-lord-egremont-fishing-in-the-river-derwent-at-cockermouth-d07941



Cockermouth Castle, J.M.W. Turner, 1810 oil painting, in situ at Petworth House, National Trust

Whitehaven and Egremont pausing at Ennerdale. He visited Whitehaven where a painting of Lord Lonsdale's residence may initially have been proposed as a pendant to the painting of Lowther Castle. A similar idea may have been entertained for Egremont Castle to feature as a pendant to Cockermouth Castle but neither were realised. Turner's other sketches include interesting drawings of the port and industrial activities around Whitehaven. St Bees, once home to the Lowthers, is the subject of several drawings. Turner also sketched an annotated map of Ennerdale and an itinerary for his return journey to Manchester.[15]

Twenty years later

Turner's visits to Petworth resumed in 1827 and continued until Lord Egremont's death in 1837. In the intervening years he travelled extensively on the Continent and spent many summers visiting a close friend and patron Walter Fawkes in Wharfdale for the shooting season and to paint – but that is another story. When Turner became a regular visitor at Petworth alongside other artists, he was given his own studio and further commissions by Lord Egremont, as well as access to the well-stocked lake. Petworth became for a time a home from home.[16]

Over the years a close friendship and understanding developed between Lord Egremont and the artist despite the huge gap in their social status. Charles Greville in his memoirs described Egremont as a man "blunt without rudeness and caustic without bitterness; shrewd, eccentric, and benevolent" who hated all ceremony.[17] The painter Benjamin Haydon described the hospitality at Petworth to have resembled that of a great inn. Egremont's motto was 'Live and let live'.[18] As for Turner, despite his reputation for eccentricity and his detractors among the art critics, he had many friends who admired the wide range of his interests and his piercing intellect. He had a champion in John Ruskin who considered him "the greatest of the age". The mathematician Mary Sommerville who used to visit him in his London gallery observed "None could imagine that so much poetic feeling existed under such a rough exterior".[19] A Romantic painter of light and sublime landscapes, Turner became a painter of the age of steam and railways fascinated by science and industry. In his later paintings he was a precursor of Impressionism and abstract art.

Turner paid one last visit to see the ailing Lord Egremont a month before his death. At the funeral, he walked behind the Earl's coffin. The legacy of their friendship lives on in the art collection at Petworth: twenty oil paintings, inspired by landscapes and other subjects. Among them is the painting of *Cockermouth Castle* and Lord Egremont's building projects such as the Chichester Canal or the Brighton Chain Pier. The collection at Petworth includes also 150 evocative watercolour sketches or studies. This is the largest collection of Turner's work outside of the Tate Gallery.

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[15] David Blayney Brown, 'Cockermouth sketchbook 1809', sketchbook, August 2009, in David Blayney Brown (ed.), *J.M.W. Turner: Sketchbooks, Drawings and Watercolours*, Tate Research Publication, December 2012, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/cockermouth-sketchbook-r1135651

[16] JMW Turner's biography, David Blayney Brown, 'Joseph Mallord William Turner 1775–1851', artist biography, December 2012, in David Blayney Brown (ed.), *J.M.W. Turner: Sketchbooks, Drawings and Watercolours*, Tate Research Publication, December 2012, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-1775-1851-r1141041, accessed 29 September 2026.

[17] Gerald le Grys Norgate, George O'Brien Wyndham, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography 1885-1900, vol. 63, Wikisource.

[18] As above

[19] Jenny Uglow, Turner's Modern World, 27 October 2020, https://www.tate.org.uk/tate-etc/issue-50-autumn-2020/turners-modern-world-jenny-uglow

Some Private Schools in Cockermouth

by Josephine Brown

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries several private schools were established in Cockermouth. Some were day schools, and others accepted boarders. Many of these schools were managed by single women or widows, because teaching was one of the few opportunities open to single women, where they could be self-supporting.

After the Education Acts of the 1870s, private establishments co-existed with state schools. They still had a role for parents who had the financial means to choose, especially where there was a requirement for boarding or a single-sex school. While national schools often had purpose-built buildings, such as that in New Street from the 1840s, private schools belonged to their owners and could be established in any suitable accommodation.

No. 7 Castlegate, previously the school of Miss Naisbit and Miss Todd





CASTLEGATE, COCKERMOUTH.

BOARDING AND DAY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

PRINCIPAL:

MISS TODD,

Assisted by Visiting Masters and Resident Governesses, Certi. Senior Camb., Senior Oxford, R.A.M., Trin. Coll., and South Kensington.

The Course of Instruction includes every branch of a sound English Education, with French, Latin, German, Music (Violin and Piano), Drawing, Painting in Oil and Water Colours, Class Singing, Musical Drill, Needlework, &c.

NEXT TERM COMMENCES TUESDAY, May 5th JANUARY ~~xxth~~, 1896.

An advertisement for Miss Todd's school

Bernard Bradbury notes that in 1874 there were ten private schools and four dame schools in Cockermouth. This article covers two of the private schools in Cockermouth at the end of the nineteenth century.

Schools run by Miss Elizabeth Naisbit and Miss Sarah Jane Todd

Information about schools can be found in the census and in directories. In 1871 these ladies were joint heads of a day school at 52 Kirkgate, but by 1873 the Misses Naisbit and Todd's 'ladies' boarding school' had moved to Castlegate. In 1881 they had four boarders, and the school continued in Castlegate for the 1883 directory. However, in 1885 Elizabeth Naisbit married the prominent Cockermouth solicitor, Edward Musgrave.

AN ICE HOUSE AT COCKERMOUTH.

An ice house, about twenty-seven feet long by nine feet wide, has been erected by the side of the Mill Dam at Rubby Banks Mill, Cockermouth. Messrs Wren and Lindsay have given their services in superintending the work of erection. The wall is formed of solid blocks of ice taken from the Cocker. The blocks are six or seven inches thick, and about a score of persons who have been among the unemployed were occupied in putting them into position. Ten hours were spent in making the house, and a score of men were engaged, the remuneration being at the rate of 5d per hour. Within the house is an ice cascade. The building was lighted by means of Chinese lanterns, and it looked very attractive. It was opened yesterday (Friday) by Dr Hutchinson, who said that the building was designed for the benefit of the unemployed. Miss Todd's pupils sang, and instrumental music was given by the Mechanics' Band. The ice house attracted a considerable number of persons and a charge was made for admission. Tea was handed round inside the building. The house will be re-opened to-day (Saturday).

A report of the ice house in which Miss Todd's pupils sang – West Cumberland Times, 16 February 1895

Miss Todd continued to run the school, with two other teachers in 1891, but no boarders were listed in that census. Sarah Jane Todd then continued as the principal of the school, being listed in directories and censuses to 1911.

In 1895 the children of Miss Todd's school provide entertainment at the Ice House that was constructed on the banks of the frozen River Cocker, during the extreme Winter of that year.

Sarah Jane Todd was born in 1850 and died at Greystoke in 1927. She was buried in Cockermouth Cemetery. Sarah Jane was the acknowledged illegitimate daughter of William Cook of Camerton Hall. He left her bequests in his Will after his death in 1866, naming the Naisbit family. Sarah Jane shares a grave-space with Margaret Mary Naisbit. Edward Musgrave administered her estate under the terms of William Cook's will and he, of course, was the husband of Elizabeth Naisbit. Edward and Elizabeth Musgrave lived at Bridge End House, where Elizabeth died in 1934. She was buried in Cockermouth Cemetery.

William Cook acknowledged another illegitimate daughter: her name was Belle Story who, after training as a nurse, became Matron at Haslar Naval Hospital, Portsmouth, where she died in 1887 at the age of 44.

The school at Moorfield House on upper Fern Bank.

The principals were Mrs. Jessie Irwin and her sister Jane Merrick. Jessie was a widow, her husband,

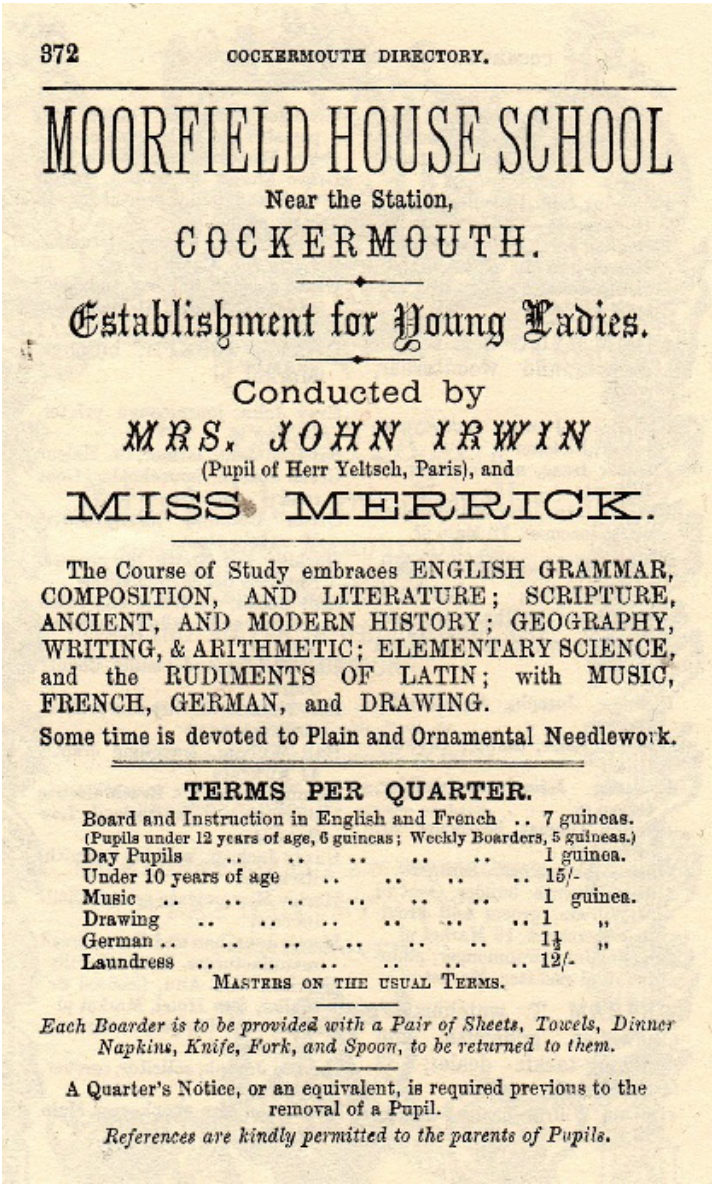
11 Fern Bank – the location of Moorfield House



John Irwin, a Master Mariner, having died circa 1876-7. The first record of the school is in the Census of 1881 where the sisters are described as 'Governess or Teacher of Private School' . Jane's son Theodore, born in 1876 in Melbourne Australia, was living with them.

By 1891 the sisters had moved to Liverpool and set up another school. After the death of her sister in 1899, Jessie emigrated to the United States with her son, Theodore, who was a Professor of Music. She died there in 1901.

An advertisement for the school, of 1882, is reproduced here and gives considerable detail about the school. It is presented as a suitable establishment for young ladies, whose ages ranged from below ten to eighteen and above. The subjects taught would provide the students with all the accomplishments expected of a young lady in gentle society, with appropriate fees.



372 COCKERMOUTH DIRECTORY.

MOORFIELD HOUSE SCHOOL

Near the Station,

COCKERMOUTH.

Establishment for Young Ladies.

Conducted by

MRS. JOHN IRWIN

(Pupil of Herr Yeltsch, Paris), and

MISS MERRICK.

The Course of Study embraces ENGLISH GRAMMAR, COMPOSITION, AND LITERATURE; SCRIPTURE, ANCIENT, AND MODERN HISTORY; GEOGRAPHY, WRITING, & ARITHMETIC; ELEMENTARY SCIENCE, and the RUDIMENTS OF LATIN; with MUSIC, FRENCH, GERMAN, and DRAWING.

Some time is devoted to Plain and Ornamental Needlework.

TERMS PER QUARTER.

Board and Instruction in English and French .. (Pupils under 12 years of age, 6 guineas; Weekly Boarders, 5 guineas.)	7 guineas.
Day Pupils	1 guinea.
Under 10 years of age	15/-
Music	1 guinea.
Drawing	1 „
German	1½ „
Laundress	12/-

MASTERS ON THE USUAL TERMS.

Each Boarder is to be provided with a Pair of Sheets, Towels, Dinner Napkins, Knife, Fork, and Spoon, to be returned to them.

A Quarter's Notice, or an equivalent, is required previous to the removal of a Pupil.

References are kindly permitted to the parents of Pupils.

So where was Moorfield House? From Census evidence it can be seen that it was later 'Western View' and was the fourth house down on the upper part of Fern Bank, then known as 'Michelton'. Why 'Mitchelton'? Because Robinson Mitchell was the original owner and developer of this area of town.



This photograph, entitled Lorton Vale by W Robertson, was provided by James Lusher
Taken from High Rogerscale, it shows detail of the north of Low Lorton. We have no date.