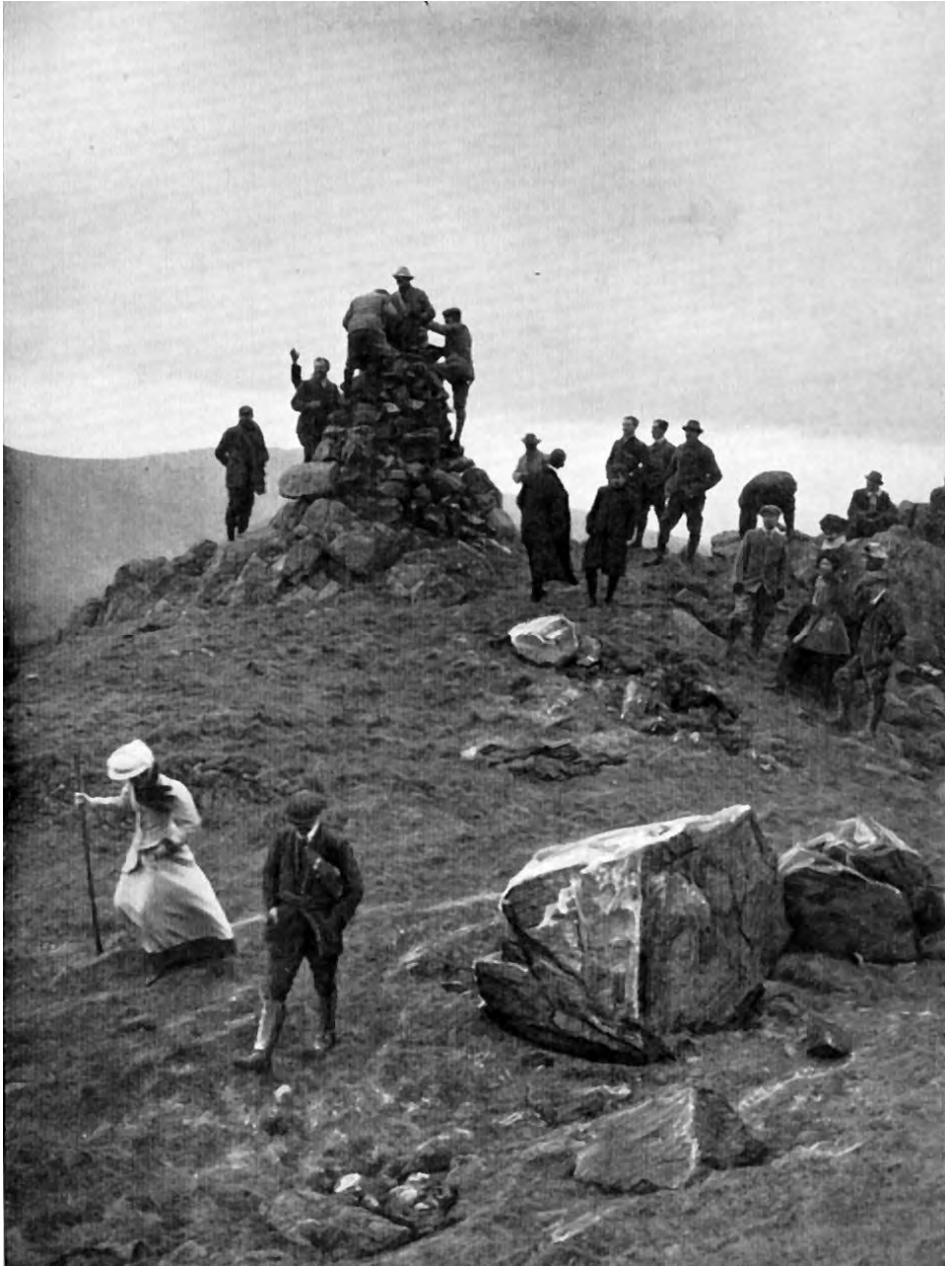


The Journal

Lorton & Derwent Fells Local History Society

Brackenthwaite Buttermere Embleton Loweswater Mockerkin Pardshaw Wythop

www.derwentfells.com



Building Robinson Cairn on Pillar – see page 6.

The Journal

Welcome to issue 41 of the Journal, with some new contributors who are most welcome. In particular, congratulations are due to our member Michael Waller on his new book.

This is a busy and visible time for the Society. In November the work of our Roman Road Group in 1998-9, in studying and excavating old roads with possible Roman origins, was published by CWAAS as notes in the Transactions for 2007. This records the work of the group in finding, recording and investigating the history of an old road to Knott Head in Thornthwaite. The eight year delay in publishing the results is down to the author, but is in keeping with the established traditions of archaeology.

The Society and the work of its members was also the subject of a feature in the BBC *Who do you think you are?* Magazine, which is primarily for family historians but seeks also to encourage involvement in local history. This important opportunity and publicity was gained through the kind initiative and support of Dr Alan Crosby, editor of *The Local Historian*.

We have been very pleasantly surprised by the practical interest shown by members in the National Trust's Historical Landscape Survey of Loweswater and Buttermere. Two survey teams will be established and trained to participate in the field work, and we hope will go on to independent work.

Editor

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The Committee 2007/8

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A New Home for the Archive

For the past year or so the Society's archive has been hosted by Hetty and Michael Baron at Watergate Barn, but their forthcoming move to Cockermonth required re-homing the archive.

The Society has been most fortunate in that John Hart has kindly offered the archive a longer-term place in his new home at 21 Strawberry How, and he fortunately has space for the Archive to be laid out in an accessible way and he will be happy to receive and assist members and others who wish to use the archive.

At present the contents are still in boxes, and John will have a task to familiarise himself with the contents and update the catalogues. Anyone who wishes to help should get in touch with John on 01900 823534. Also, if anyone is upgrading their computer system and could donate a fairly modern Windows XP based PC to the archive, John would find this helpful.

In due course we will distribute fuller information on the content of the archive, but it contains an extensive collection of books and pamphlets, fairly comprehensive tithe-commutation information/maps from around 1840 and extensive old maps. In addition there is a good collection of information on buildings and families, manorial records, wills and parish registers/memorial inscriptions, but these focus mostly on Lorton and Derwentfells at present. Please contact John or me about the archive and its uses.

Derek Denman

Change

by Ted Petty

No! not the coins left over from the excesses of the festive season, but change as in “cause to be different” or to “alter or transform”. Changes to dwellings or buildings are sometimes small and go unnoticed, or if larger and noticed soon fade from memory.

Over the last decade or perhaps longer seeing builders vans or those of allied trades has been a daily occurrence in these dales, how great has been the changes wrought to local dwellings and how much has been recorded ?

The cottage pictured here and its environs have been much altered by various owners and tenants over a considerable period of time. The name alludes to a tree which once stood between the cottage and the road frontage.

An undated photograph taken from the field across the river, of the west facing rear of the cottage and showing the very delapidated state of the river bank and walls, illustrating how changes have been made over a number of years.

The photographer of this tiny piece of Lorton was, in all probability, draper and photographer of W.H Youdale of Cockermonth. The photograph is probably contemporary with the photograph on the cover Society Newsletter No. 33 (see also No34 January 2005).

Since photographer Youdale carried his no doubt heavy camera, tripod etc from the Rogerscale road, the cottage roof has been raised, a set-pot house demolished, the lime tree felled and a small barn structure built nearby. Dates of alterations are not known; can any reader help?



Times Past

by Dr Roz Southey

I have recently been looking through the articles – forty two of them – that I wrote for the Loweswater parish paper in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Most of them deal with remote times, going back to the Middle Ages or even earlier, and coming up to around the Victorian era. Reading through them, and chatting to people at the Yew Tree Hall during my recent visit, I realised that there is one area I never covered, because it was too close: the valley within my own lifetime. What was the present day has now become history and I think it is high time I recorded it. So this article is a kind of postscript to those earlier papers.

But before I begin – for those of you who like a quiz, can you answer the following questions?

1. At what three different houses in Loweswater were there shops between 1958 and 1975?

2. Which berries did children gather to sell in the 1960s and 70s, how much did they sell the berries for and where did they take them?

3. Who owned the garage and petrol station in Lorton in the 1960s?

My parents moved to Cold Keld, Loweswater in 1958 when I was five years old and my earliest memories read like something out of Laurie Lee. I remember seed being manually broadcast across the fields by means of a ‘fiddle’. (See photos 1 and 2). I remember hay being forked up onto the back of a cart, and riding on top of the hay to the haybarn. I remember hens and ducks running wild in Oak Bank farmyard, with their trains of chick or ducklings tagging along behind. I remember finding their clutches of eggs hidden amongst all that hay. The milk came fresh from the cooling machine at the end of the byre and the milk lorries still clanked their way along the narrow roads to collect the milk churns from the stands at the top of every farm lane. It was, however, a world in process of rapid change, which we recognised even then. Farmhouses were becoming retirement or second homes; the land which had belonged to them was being

amalgamated with other properties creating fewer, larger farms.

My father worked in Workington so I attended primary school there and therefore have no memories of Lorton school. Nor do I remember much about Loweswater church or services at that time; my father was organist at Isel and I always went with him to sing in the choir there and to pump the organ bellows. My mother attended Loweswater church, however, and we knew the vicar, Geoff White, very well. He was a devoted maker of marmalade and an equally keen fisherman; we always knew when he had had a successful day’s fishing as he would slice up the fish he caught and distribute portions amongst his parishioners.

There was always a shop in the village although my memory is hazy as to where it was when we first arrived in Loweswater. One shop was at Thrushbank, kept by Mrs Cowan. Thrushbank had access directly onto the road at that time, with a yard in front of the house; the shop was on the right of the main block. There are two windows there now – the shop door was in place of the left hand window of the two. Inside was a counter with a flap which lifted and the goods were all kept behind the counter and had to be asked for; the shop always seemed dark and mysterious to a small child. It was also a post office. Before or after the Thrushbank shop (I forget which) there was a shop and post office at the house we knew only as ‘Dora’s cottage’, after the lady who lived in it; it is the cottage at the foot of Vicarage Hill. The shop was inside the angle formed by the two wings of the cottage; we used to walk to it across the fields from Fouslyke, past the old fish ponds.

When I passed the 11 plus early in the 1960s, it was decided that I should go to Cocker mouth Grammar School, so I had to start catching the local buses. The single-decker bus ran only along the Scale Hill road and out to Loweswater Lake, so for those of us who lived on the Thackthwaite road, there was a mini-bus service driven by Mr Walling who ran the garage at Lorton. Early in the morning, he picked up seven of us: myself from Cold Keld, a girl called Elizabeth from High Latterhead, John and David Norman from Red

How, the McAvoy sisters from Thackthwaite, a girl from Hill and another from Littlethwaite. Mr Walling would run us to Lorton School where we would wait for the arrival of the single-decker; the process would be reversed in the afternoon.

The bus service was never frequent; when we first arrived, it ran three days a week and there were separate services to Loweswater and to Buttermere. At some point these were amalgamated, and the bus came out from Cockermouth, went round Buttermere, came back to Buttermere road ends then went round Loweswater as far as Waterend, before travelling straight back to Cockermouth. The entire round trip took about an hour. In addition, there was the school bus during term time, which usually deposited us in Cockermouth around five to nine and brought us back again later, leaving Cockermouth at around 4 pm.

The bus always took the main road through the valley, via Scale Hill, Vicarage Hill and Loweswater Lake. I have an errant memory of it trying the Thackthwaite road past Foulsyke in summer when the hedges had grown so thickly that the bus got stuck; I am now far from certain, however, whether this is a real memory or whether I imagined it. There was one never-to-be-forgotten winter's morning when, contrary to instructions (there was a new driver) the bus drove down Scale Hill and was unable to get back up it again because of the ice. We were all sent home and ever after hoped for a repetition of the incident. There never was.

When I came to do O'levels and A'levels (in 1968 and 1970), I was faced with the difficult task of getting to and from morning and afternoon exams. The school bus ran only morning and evening, and there was in addition, being summer, one other bus journey per day. A morning exam was easy to get to; I went in on the school bus and came back on the 2.30 pm bus. For an afternoon exam, there was only the 10.30 am bus down with a long wait in Cockermouth until the exam at 2 pm. The journey to Cockermouth took only half an hour but coming back the bus went round Buttermere first so it was best to get off at Buttermere road ends and walk home from there.



Two views of a 'fiddle' used in 1958 to broadcast seed manually across the fields. Seed was fed from the bag into the wooden chute, which in turn fed it into the metal fan below. This was rotated by means of a bow, causing the seed to spray out across the field as the operator walked.



Other children in my class living in the town may have had paper rounds to earn a little pocket money but that was not open to me. In any case, we had a newspaper delivery man – a Polish emigrant called Gus who had come to this country after the Second World War. He drove a huge motorbike and talked in an accent that took us years to understand. Like the postman, he was always invited in for a cuppa

and must, like the postman, have taken hours to complete his round.

The best way to earn pocket money (though admittedly the opportunity came round only once a year) was by collecting rosehips for Delrosa to make syrup from. There was eager competition between local children to collect the most berries, although in practice there were enough for all and our collecting areas did not usually overlap. I used to go out with the milk cans and could bring back six pounds in weight each time. Delrosa paid sixpence per pound for the rosehips; they had to be taken to Moss Cottage to be weighed. Every child who collected 36 pounds or more in weight in one year received a badge. This I almost always achieved, although some years it was a struggle. I can't remember when Delrosa discontinued this practice.

By the time I was in my late teens and going away to university, the shop had moved again, although the post office had lapsed. This time the shop was in Jenkin where it was run by Joan Robinson (later Joan White). This was a more modern style shop; customers could walk around choosing their own goods from freezer and shelves rather than have to ask the shopkeeper for goods behind the counter. The shop was eventually given up in the late 1970s or early 1980s. By the 1970s, the bus service too was on its last legs, running only two or three times a week, chiefly on Mondays – market day in Cockermouth. The service was removed altogether the year my father retired, 1975. Too many people by now had their own cars and found the bus service too inconvenient. As the only service reached Cockermouth around 11 am and the left again around 1.30 pm, it was always a rush to get shopping done, particularly if you wanted lunch as well.

I shall always have fond memories of the bus service, however. I remember walking down to meet my mother off it; she would get off at Jenkin Gap and we would help her carry the shopping home. When catching the bus for exams, I would deliberately catch it on its way out, so I could ride in solitary splendour on the back seat, bounding up and down on it on the narrow roads around Loweswater lake. There were some nerve-wracking moments as a car

appeared suddenly round one of the bends and brakes were suddenly applied; I remember only one accident, however, in the narrow approaches to Low Lorton when a yellow car travelling too quickly smashed into the front of the bus. Fortunately, no one was hurt.

And finally, for those long winter evenings, there were the Loweswater Players, putting on play after play in the village hall to full audiences every time. Inevitably, there were always more women available to act than men, which led Geoff White, the director, to some unusual plays; my mother once played an admiral in a play set after a nuclear war. The play I remember best was a dramatisation of Agatha Christie's *Ten Little Indians* (under its original now unprintable title) which turned from tragedy into farce as one after another the characters were found dead. The audience were unable (or unwilling) to separate the actors from the characters they played and as each were found dead, someone would shout out from the audience in gales of laughter: 'There's John gone now,' or 'That's Jane died.'

I've rarely had such a hilarious evening's entertainment.

John Wilson Robinson of Whinfell Hall

by Prof Michael Waller



John Wilson Robinson in 1883

The year 2007 was the centenary of the death of a remarkable Cumbrian, John Wilson Robinson, who was born at Whinfell Hall in Lorton on 5 August 1853. Robinson was a key figure in the birth of rock-climbing in the English Lake District, yet he has not received the attention that his climbing prowess in the early years deserved, partly because he has been eclipsed by the greater attention paid to his partner on the rocks, Walter Parry Haskett-Smith, generally regarded as the father of Lake District climbing. Again, while most of the early pioneers approached their climbing partly in a spirit of rivalry, Robinson was not given to putting himself forward over others. Thus, very few first ascents are attributed to him alone. On the other hand those in which he participated, often as leader, are numerous. He has remained a mysterious figure, who people knew was of the first importance but did not fully know why.



Sketch of Whinfell Hall by John Wilson Robinson

His image has thus reached us partly in the form of legends. One tells how he would leave his homestead at three in the morning and walk the length of the Vale of Lorton, over Scarth Gap, and on to Pillar Rock or some other central climbing venue. Having spent all day on the rocks he would walk all the way back home down the valley in the evening. But despite this air of mystery, a reasonably clear portrait of Robinson can be obtained. Paragraphs about him in books on Lakeland climbing and articles in journals show him to have been prominent in the surge of pioneer climbing that followed the first visits of Haskett-Smith to Wasdale Head in 1881 and 1882, and became the great decade in

which the new sport was established in the Lake District. The visitors who came to stay at Wasdale Head were often university folk (like Haskett-Smith himself), but Robinson had a temperament that enabled him to get on with them extremely well. The respect was mutual, and the visitors clearly saw something special in him, quite apart from his enviable familiarity with the mountains.

Robinson is particularly associated in the history of Lakeland climbing with Pillar Rock. The Rock has a special status for climbers. It is not a high summit, no spectacular view can be had from the top, and the only reason to visit Pillar is to climb on rock. It was also the scene of a first phase of climbing activity from 1926, when a shepherd named John Atkinson was featured in the *Cumberland Pacquet* for having climbed it. He was followed by an increasing number of visitors and local people. These early 'Pillarites' were really the first cohort of Lake District rock-climbers, but they were thrown into the shade by the burst of interest and achievement of the Wasdale Head fraternity in the 1880s.

Robinson first climbed Pillar Rock in 1882, and it was to remain his favourite climbing venue, his hundredth and hundred and first ascents being made in the year before he died. Not only was he a pioneer of routes up the Rock, but he never tired of leading others up. In terms of the transmission of rock-climbing skills Robinson was unrivalled. Notable in this was his encouragement of women climbers and of novices. Haskett-Smith wrote of him: 'Never was there a man more utterly unselfish, never one who so cleverly continued to give the impression that he and not you was the person benefited'.

Another leading feature of his climbing personality was his concern over the taking of unnecessary risks. This brought him at times into conflict with his companions. O.G.Jones, whose bravado bordered on rashness, nicknamed Robinson 'Nestor' after the wise king of Pylos in the *Iliad* who with his sage words sought to restrain young Greek hotheads in the Trojan War. This characteristic has to be seen against the growing number of fatalities that occurred during those early years, and which was a major concern of the Fell and

Rock Climbing Club when it was founded in 1907 – with Robinson as joint Vice-President.

In appearance Robinson was strongly built, with sandy-coloured bushy side-whiskers and a bald head that was always covered by a hat. He was habitually clad in a tweed Norfolk jacket matching the colour of his whiskers. The Robinsons, like the Wilsons from whom they inherited Whinfell Hall through marriage in 1734, were Quakers. Both sides of John's family had been Friends since the days of George Fox. Whinfell Hall lies over the hill from Pardshaw, itself celebrated in the history of the Friends, and it was to Pardshaw that the family would go to Meeting. No doubt the family's Quaker and local Cumbrian values influenced John's attitude towards his companions on the rocks. In 1883 John married Eliza Janet Willis, the daughter of one of his teachers at Ackworth School, and thus herself a Friend. They had no offspring.

By the end of the century economic pressures on Robinson were making themselves felt. He turned to speculation in South African mines, hoping to prop up his declining fortunes. By then he had had to mortgage Whinfell Hall. Unfortunately, his speculation was a failure. It may be that these pressures contributed to his illness in 1906, which led to his early death, from a cancer in the gut, on 20 August 1907.

It is said that some people are born great, some achieve greatness while others have greatness thrust upon them. John Wilson Robinson was certainly not born great. He did, however, achieve greatness within the development of Lake District climbing in its formative years. But to what extent did circumstances contribute to his greatness? What is important here is the 'being there' factor. It was Robinson's destiny to have been in his physical prime, with a deep knowledge of the fells, and with an expansive personality that invited partnership, at the particular historical moment when the sport of rock-climbing arrived in the English Lake District.

For more read Michael Waller's book *A Lakeland Climbing Pioneer: John Wilson Robinson of Whinfell Hall*, published by Bookcase, Carlisle.

Our cover photograph shows the building of Robinson cairn on Pillar

Not the Yew-tree – Wordsworth in Loweswater in 1804?

by Michael Baron

In mid-2004, the Duddon Valley Local History Group published *William Wordsworth and Wonderful Walker*. This monograph is the inspiration for this foray into literary investigation of a mystery. Were William and Dorothy Wordsworth in the Vale of Lorton in September 1804, not to see the yew-tree, but to seek proof that a deceased curate of Seathwaite, had learnt Latin, and taught at school, in Loweswater. Or were they in Loweswater in 1812?

The book's author, Felicity Hughes, a resident of Seathwaite, has written an original and learned account of the life and times of Robert Walker, curate of Seathwaite (1736 - 1802) and how Wordsworth came to memorialise him as the 'WONDERFUL ... That lowly, great and good Man' (Book VIII of *The Excursion* -lines 341-51, 1814). Walker is the "Gospel teacher ... whose good works formed an endless retinue:/ A Pastor such as Chaucer's verse portrays." - Sonnet XVIII, 'Seathwaite Chapel ... written in 1818 in the Duddon Valley sequence'.

The imaginative hold Walker's life had over Wordsworth reached its climax in the *Memoir of the Rev. Robert Walker* a 6,000 word essay - a mini-biography, appended to Sonnets XVII and XVIII. One might summarise, inadequately, Walker's life (as related in the Memoir) a good life of 66 years service; honourable, committed, on a meagre annual stipend, augmented by labouring with his sheep and small holding. A man with time to help neighbours, and attend to pastoral duties- baptising, marrying and burying , teaching at the village school, a family man and more. Surprisingly, he is the local ale seller. Truly, a case of *laborare est orare*. So exceptional his virtues that he was 'the WONDERFUL'. And 'withal left an estate at death of £2000.'

Wordsworth's 1820 collection of poems contained the Duddon sonnets, the Walker memoir and as well the second version of the *Guide To The Lakes*. The third edition of

1823 - a best-seller of the time - has a footnote at page 65 on 'interesting notices' in parish registers. On that more anon.

Loweswater has a significant place in the narrative. To those nourished on the visceral link between the poet and High Lorton, then a living, working real village with the yew tree at the onset of its guide book 'must-see' status, it was a shock, to read Ms Hughes describe the September 1804 tour - Keswick - Lorton - Wasdale - Seathwaite - Grasmere - as a Walker research trip. Had she not heard of the famous Lorton Yew and its iconic status - to us at least? Nor had we any idea that the Yew, might not be the major purpose of the visit. A suggestion which might border on heresy!

The poet had other things on his mind than trees as the jaunting-car trundled down Tenter, He was brooding on the Reverend Robert Walker, just two and three months years dead in the beloved Duddon Valley. Dorothy's 'Patriarch of Yew trees' was a side show to a matter of greater moment. Oh dear! The Famous Yew has been relegated to the Second Division!

Hughes has it and marshalls with style and enthusiasm the evidence for Loweswater church being the object of the first part of the tour, and the Parish Register for its supposed Walker-Loweswater connection. The second part would be to interview the inhabitants of Seathwaite.

It seems, per Hughes, that sometime in 1803, Wordsworth had read in issues of the Gentleman's Magazine a notice of this statesman-priest's death, and consequential letters about him. It is possible but nowhere mentioned in the Memoir that William may have encountered Walker as a teenager, or heard talk of him, when he travelled in the Duddon. It is Hughes' thesis that he now became intent on learning more. Perhaps to add Walker to his assembly of Lake Counties characters:- Martha Ray of *The Thorn*, The Mad Mother, Ellen Irwin, Lucy Gray, The Cumberland Beggar, Michael and others.

So, Wordsworth asks himself, where did Walker, from an impoverished fell-farming background learn his Latin? Was it at Buttermere that he was a Reader or an assistant to the curate (whose name is unknown if there was a curate resident then), met and

married Ann Tyson from Brackenthwaite? "All sources agree that Walker began his clerical career at Buttermere" (Hughes p.11), though this cannot be confirmed since we have no records of Buttermere chapelry at that time.

Now Wordsworth and Walker's great-grandson, Robert Walker Bamford, who came to Grasmere in 1811 and published his memoir in 1819, believed that Walker once taught at Loweswater. Hughes has found that issues of both the Gentleman's Magazine and the Annual Register - established 18th century publications - and accessed by Wordsworth for the Memoir have references to Walker as 'the curate of L.' This, she judges, is a printer's error for 'S'

And so there is no evidence to support what Wordsworth believed about the Loweswater connection, and this brought him to the church, which once would also have housed the school. It is the only communal building in the parish.

Later there was a school which may have been in what now known as Rose Cottage - midway between the 19th century vicarage and church. As if to confirm this, In a bundle of notes mostly in the hand of Dorothy Wordsworth, (which are critical to this enquiry and to be discussed later) she writes, of Loweswater ... "The School House was built in 1780 because it was not thought fit to teach in the church as formerly". This is from the register and signed "T.Cowper". We know from the register of two Loweswater addresses - 'the Parsonage', and 'the School-House'.

Wordsworth, the argument goes, came in 1804 find an answer to that question of Walker's Latin learning. There are no references to Walker - but by inference to the classical education of the early 18th century parson, Henry Forest, He had Latin and writes a motto in the register. These William copies in full in the Memoir. Perhaps in September 1804 - if it was then - he hoped to talk of his search to the Rev. John Barnes (curate 1795-1811) before asking looking for the vestry for the register. That is a permissible guess. He found the register and copied some entries onto the back of a copy of a letter he was carrying. The letter and Dorothy's notes (see above) are archived at Grasmere.

In 1819, unabashed, Wordsworth writes in the Memoir. 'In his youth he became schoolmaster at Loweswater; not being called upon, probably(!), in that situation to teach more than reading, writing and arithmetic. But, by the assistance of a 'Gentleman' in the neighbourhood, he acquired, at leisure hours, a knowledge of the classics, and became qualified for holy orders'. Further "it is not improbable that H. Forest was the gentleman" when Walker would have been school-mastering in 1731/2. Hughes has unearthed testimonials Walker solicited in later years to support applications for clerical appointments. But 'no curate of Loweswater appears among the signatories'.

That copy letter carried by Wordsworth is of September 1755 from Walker to the Bishop of Chester, and also to a Mr Collinson of Lancaster. Hughes does not know how this then 49 year old copy came to be in Wordsworth's possession before 1804. It is a relevant fact that he does not meet Robert Walker's great-grandson, Bamford, until 1811. Who before 1804 would have divined William would be interested in gathering material for the Memoir of 1819? This seems to be unanswerable.

The 1755 letter is a plea for the living of Ulpha to be added to that of Seathwaite. Is it it merely an aide-memoire to Wordsworth "this will remind me to pop in at Loweswater church next time I'm near the place"? But we do not know whether in 1803 how and why Wordsworth should have had access to the 1760 publications – Gentleman's Magazine and Annual Register-and the reference to 'the curate of L.'. Or why then, if it be the case, he had been referred to the correspondence by someone very familiar with Walker's life?

This copy letter is genuine enough. And Wordsworth has it on his desk in 1818/1819 for he writes "Mr W. in a letter to the Bishop (a copy of which, in his (!) own beautiful handwriting, now lies before me)..." Putting aside the question of the origin of this document in 1803 (Hughes p.25), one can see him poring over the register - with the 49 year old paper in one hand, scanning the pages, jotting down items of interest. Outside in the autumn sunshine, Dorothy is writing out epitaphs from gravestones. A family habit?

Wordsworth published three essays on epitaphs. The horse, let us imagine, is munching mouthfuls of good Cumberland grass.

This item for example...on Sarah Hudson of Kirk Head ... 'she and the said John Cowper were pleasant and lovely in their lives and in their deaths they never were divided their graves being contiguous at the south east corner of the porch ... John Cowper who died in 1779 was the son of Thomas Cowper, curate of Loweswater ... buried Feb 13 dies at age of 19 years 6 mths being a sober and religious youth and well versed in the Latin and Greek language'. Elsewhere noted that John Cowper had 'studied philosophy and arithmetic'.

And while he is looking - in vain - for Walker evidence, William has time for this. 'John Johnson of High Nook - 23 June. NB. This John of High Nook was said to have been haunted by Devils a great part of his life. Supposed that he had murdered a pedlar.' And to show the register is thoroughly perused; 'Buried Anne Baker of Loweswater, Spinster, a charming singer of psalms. She was buried October 25 1759 aged 33'. These are the 'interesting notices' mentioned in that footnote to third edition of The Guide. And he does not forget the weather. 'On 7th day of January 1767 there fell a pretty thick snow which lay upon the ground till the 10th. Upon the two next days it was followed by one of the thickest snows that ever was seen by any person then living and laid upon the ground for many days. Many houses were buried in the snow. Mary Sharp dies and Sunday the 11th no service was done in any church in Cumberland. T. Cowper'.

This must have been a long day. The pair left Keswick in the morning of a late September, perhaps reaching Lorton at midday. Stopped by the yew-tree., continued to Loweswater, tethered the horse and car by the church. Then went to find Rev. Barnes at the parsonage for any information about Walker?

Opposite – Wordsworth's notes of the Loweswater register written on the back of the letter of 1755. Reproduced by permission of *The Wordsworth Trust* Ref. DSCF0018

Perhaps Barnes led them into the vestry and settled Wordsworth down with the register. His notes suggest he read it back to 1708, long before Walker's assumed sojourn. How long was he bent over the pages, reading and copying? Then Dorothy, getting restless in the church yard; she has done her checking up on the epitaphs, and put pen to paper. Both must have carried ink in some container. However, Dorothy's original notes of 1804 (?) are long lost, if they were not destroyed after the 12 page booklet was compiled. The archived transcriptions are on paper watermarked for 1812 (Mark Reed 'Wordsworth- the Chronology of the Middle Years p.673 - Harvard University Press, 1975). Moreover, the graveyards visited are listed in this order- Ulpha, Ashdale, Nether Wasdale and Loweswater. Odd, if Loweswater was the first graveyard visited.

After this long day did the pair drive on to Ennerdale or stay in Loweswater? Dorothy in her letter to Lady Beaumont (see *Wordsworth and the famous Lorton Yew Tree* LDFLHS, 2004, p. 9) tells her friend 'we passed... through the Vale of Lorton and by Loweswater to Ennerdale'. Her remarks on the yew are too well known to quote. Such a good reporter writes nothing about an afternoon amidst the memorials of Loweswater, and the quest for Walker.

I have drawn heavily and I hope not unfairly, upon Hughes' account of the Wordsworths in Loweswater. It is a work of some scholarship, yet not without speculation where there are gaps in the record. But was 1804 the year of the Walker research trip?

How does William in 1803 get possession of the letter of 1755? Why does he keep this very old piece of paper safely for 16 years, with his notes on the reverse until, it is before him on his desk and he writes the Memoir. Biographer Mary Moorman (*William Wordsworth, the Later Years* - Oxford, 1965) declares those to be 'one of the best short biographies in existence'. One clue may or may not lie with meeting young Bamford. We know that in 1819 he writes a memoir. That means he has some Walker papers. It is likely that during his Grasmere time, the two

men talk about his grandfather. We can assume Wordsworth knew of him - for he had a reputation wider than the Seathwaite valley. Bamford show him his papers, and Wordsworth has copies made. Rydal Mount was a hive of Wordsworth ladies copying. He hears of the material in the Annual Register of 1760 and searches that out. They converse; questions -answers and more questions. Bamford presents Wordsworth with the copy, probably a draft, letter of 1755.

And so to September 1812 William and Dorothy go on another tour. According to Moorman, they arrive at Greta Hall, Keswick, to visit Southey - 'in a wet and dirty condition' on their way back from a tour of a few days to West Water and Borrowdale where Wordsworth had been 'obliged to share a bed with a Scotch pedlar'. They went also to Seathwaite.

The unpublished Journal of the tour mentions the chapel there and the grave of Robert Walker and his wife. Wordsworth examines the Seathwaite Parish Register. He notes 'the brass plate upon the tomb is already loosened from the stone. Yet these Memorials, with the exception of a few letters preserved in an early volume of the Annual Register are, I believe, the only public Records of this inestimable Man...'

He had been in Seathwaite in 1811 with his wife, Mary when amongst much else they 'returned on foot up the Duddon' (Moorman: op.cit). 'And makes notes concerning Ulpha churchyard and collects information about Robert Walker' (Reed op.cit p 480). Reed further asserts the 1812 tour encompassed Loweswater and Buttermere. 'W or perhaps DW now(!) makes notes at Loweswater and Nether Wasdale from which W draws information on Henry Forest included in W's Memoir'. He continues that the notes... 'may have been received from correspondents ... all (were) plainly written down about the same time ... it is reasonable to suppose that the notes and the mss that draws on them were written not before late 1812.'

Reed's interpretations seem not to have been known to Ms Hughes. And it is not evident that she looked at the unpublished 1812 tour journal. With respect to *Wordsworth*

and *Wonderful Walker*, I suggest it is unlikely that the Walker research trip of 1804 took place. It was 1812 when William and Dorothy were in Loweswater church.

Acknowledgments

E-mail from Ms Felicity Hughes- 20 December 2007

Dr Jeff Cowton - Librarian of the Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere

The 1812 Tour Journal; is transcribed in full in Owen and Smyse's *Prose Works of William Wordsworth* (Oxford, 1976)

The House History Group Half-year Report by Sally Birch

On the evening of the 12th June, the reformed House History Group held its first meeting at Wayside Cottage in High Lorton hosted by Sally Birch who is the group coordinator. It was attended by Christine England of Hope Farm, Gwyn and Janet Evans, Palace Howe, Ted Gilbertson, Boon Beck Farm, John Hart, formerly of Kent Cottage, who is researching Midtown, Christine Judd, Rose Cottage, Thackthwaite and Dr. Tim Sowton and Eileen Palmer, Low Hall, Blindbothel. Peter Kerr of Low Stanger Farm sent his apologies and Roger Humphreys from the Kirkstile Inn and Lorna Meadley of the Grange Hotel in Loweswater were unable to attend but all three expressed an interest in being kept informed of any future meetings.

Each member started off by giving a brief resume of the type of property they live in and why they wanted to investigate its history. Some were definitely more interested in the architectural evolution whilst others were keen to find out just who had owned or occupied their homes in the past.

After a brief pause for refreshments, Sally did a shortened version of the talk she gave on Wayside Cottage a few years ago, explaining that the oldest part probably dated back to the mid- to late sixteen hundreds and that it originally comprised a house (nos.2+3 Park Cottages) and a byre (no.1). Everyone inspected the unusually wide dog-leg stone staircase (unusual according to official House

Detective Chris Craghill but which proved to be not so as Chris Judd owned to a very similar one in Rose Cottage) and had a look at the various books and documents on display, including a set of vellum deeds complete with their original seals.

It was agreed that everyone would return home with further food for thought and we would reconvene sometime in October.

On 16th October 2007, the House History Group duly held its second "meet" at Midtown, allegedly High Lorton's oldest house, courtesy of owners Mr. and Mrs. Billington.

True to form, Midtown, which has always been somewhat baffling, at first proved elusive to some group members, but finally our group of most of the usual suspects was assembled with the addition of Peter and Michelle Kerr. They had brought along some very interesting documents relating to Stanger Farm and we are looking forward to hearing more about that in the coming months.

Back to Midtown, we were given a tour by John Hart. He used to live next door in Kent Cottage and helps the Billingtons to provide the TLC which a house of this rarity most surely deserves.



Midtown farmhouse from the East

John's knowledge of its history is extensive, both in regard to the people who built and lived in it and to the architectural evolution of this blissfully unspoiled property. Its various stages of development were pointed out and explained by John whose love of the house was obvious to his audience. In an earlier incarnation, what is

now known as Midtown had been a ruinous cottage and a separate barn, owned by different individuals. By 1678, the two properties had been extended into one by Peter Wilkinson and the whole was brought under single ownership. This no doubt accounts for some of the more idiosyncratic features of what is essentially a vernacular statesman's farmhouse.

After the tour we gathered in what is now the dining-room, following in the footsteps of a group of Dissenters who are said to have held a meeting there. Our more prosaic purpose was to exchange ideas and discuss general aspects of Lakeland architecture.

Whilst John is still puzzling out some of Midtown's more unyielding mysteries, a privileged group of amateur house detectives was able to experience at first hand a taste of old Cumberland in this hidden Lakeland gem.

Our thanks to the Billingtons for their generosity and to John Hart for imparting his knowledge in such a relaxed and friendly manner.

Following the seasonal break we shall be holding our next meeting in the Spring, hopefully at Palace Howe which, according to Gwyn and Janet, has, like Midtown, been hiding some intriguing architectural lights under its own particular bushel.

It is proving a useful exercise to compare and contrast these Lakeland properties, all of which have much in common but with evidence of their individual evolutions and histories superimposed on the basic plan. However, as I have already said, it is not just about buildings. Ted Gilbertson has become interested in John Musgrave who was associated with Boon Beck Farm in the early 1900's and we look forward to hearing about his discoveries in due course. It goes without saying that any revelations which help us to form a picture of life in this valley in times gone by will be shared with Journal readers as our investigations progress.

Wayside Cottage, January 2008.

Ouse-bridge: revisited

by Derek Denman

My article in Journal 40 on the view from the inn at Ouse-bridge had a couple of small errors. Firstly the date of the writing of Northanger Abbey in its original unpublished form as 'Susan' was mistyped as 1788-9 instead of 1798-9.

But more importantly I wrongly implied that the Fish Inn in Buttermere was called by that name in 1797. According to the recently published tour of William Gell in 1797 'at the door of the inn, known only by the name of Joseph Robinson, for there is no sign, we were received by the landlords daughter, the celebrated beauty of these parts'.¹ However, the inn had acquired the fish name by late 1802, when Coleridge used it in his Morning Post articles about the bigamous marriage.



There was little spare space for images in the previous issue, and so here is an image of the 'reigning lily of the valley' of the 1790s. I had wondered what Joseph Budworth meant when he described her in a coded way as 'a very

¹ Gell, William *A tour in the lakes 1797*. Ed. William Rollinson, Smith Settle, Otley 2000

Lavinia' in 1792. A little research gives the superficial answer that in Greek mythology Lavinia was the beautiful daughter of the king of the Latins. But also, Lavinia was destined to marry a foreigner, and she provided one of the more agreeable impediments for Odysseus on the long journey home. William Gell, then aged 20, played the game in 1797:-

'While our good old hostess, prepared our beds the lovely daughter waited on us at supper, with that good nature and attention which soon determined us as much in favour of her disposition, as we were captivated by the charms of her person. Indeed so much attention was paid us, that we all agreed to remain at Buttermere some days, though our original intention was to have left it the day after our arrival.'

Gell eventually escaped to build a cottage on the west shore of Grasmere, but as we know in 1802 poor Hatfield fulfilled the prophecy, married 'Lavinia' bigamously and paid with his life in 1803, as an imposter. It is good that Buttermere no longer provides such dangerous hospitality.



No such temptations faced Budworth at the Kings Arms in Patterdale where *The Queen of Patterdale* was enthroned in 1792, as in this bottle-and-pipe representation of the lady of the manor, or wife of the lord, by John White Abbott. Unflattering it may be, but how many of us will have our portrait in the Victoria and Albert Museum?

Help Requested

Does anyone know when the new road around Buttermere Hause on Rannerdale Knott was constructed? Up to 1800 Rannerdale Knott was a serious obstacle on the road on the east side of Crummock Water, but by 1819 the new road had been cut. For C18th tourists this was a problem, because a carriage from Keswick could get no further, and to some extent this helped Scale Hill to develop into a sort of terminus for the carriage trade. From about 1770 the tourist could travel by carriage to Scale Hill via Whinlatter and Hope Beck. From Scale Hill tourists would walk through Scale Woods to Crummock lakeshore, where a boatman would take them to Low Ling Crag, from which they would walk to see Scale Force. They could then either walk on to Buttermere or cross Crummock from Low Ling Crag to the north side of Rannerdale Knott, directly opposite, where their carriage would collect them to return to Scale Hill or Keswick. Only when the new road was built could carriages pass from Scale Hill to Buttermere. William Green gave some detail in 1819:-

... in progress from Lanthwaite Green to Rannerdale Knott; arriving at which, are the new and the old roads. The new road has been cut, at a great expence, through the rock, and is now nearly horizontal. This lower end of the Knott is called Buttermere Haws; on which, the road, to a considerable height, anciently ascended; and, like other steep acclivities, in many sudden turnings.

Does anyone know when the new road was constructed, and who paid for it, being on the boundary between Brackenthwaite and Buttermere townships.

Derek Denman 01900 85551

***Last Call for Members to
Join the
Lowswater/Buttermere
Historical Landscape
Survey***

At the Yew Tree Hall on January 10, Jamie Lund, the National Trust Archaeologist, gave an excellent presentation about the National Trust's 2008 archaeological survey of Lowswater and Buttermere to some 15 keen volunteers. The full survey and report will be done by Oxford Archaeology North. Our involvement will proceed in conjunction with John Hodgson, Senior Archaeologist for the National Park.

Training days fixed for 26 February and 3 March. Each will start at the Yew Tree Hall at 10.00am and include a field outing to Rannerdale. Thereafter, the volunteers will be divided into two or three teams and agree on further sites to be visited

and surveyed from mid to late March to mid May. It is possible that there are 200 sites in the valleys - some on Trust land and others on land which is under NT covenants. The NT will obtain landowner permissions for visits and will supply surveying equipment for the teams.

It is hoped that by mid May the surveys will be completed and our findings can be incorporated in the full, detailed report to be published by Oxford Archaeology North.

The roster of volunteers is not closed. If there are more volunteers than another team can be assembled

Michael Baron. 01900 85289
Or contact Sandra Shaw 01900 829812

The next Journal will be published for 1st August 2008. Please send contributions to Derek Denman by 7th July.

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L&DFLHS Events in 2008

Date	Event
<i>10th Jan</i>	<i>Talk: by Tim Padley – Unearthing Carlisle's history</i>
<i>26th Feb & 3rd Mar</i>	<i>Training days for the Lowswater/Buttermere historical landscape survey</i>
<i>13th Mar</i>	<i>Talk: by David Cranstone – Salt from the Solway</i>
<i>April/May</i>	<i>Visit to be arranged</i>
<i>8th May</i>	<i>Talk: by our President, Dr Angus Winchester – The Discovery of the Vikings: changing views of Cumbria's past</i>
<i>12th June</i>	<i>Our agm followed by a member's presentation</i>
<i>10th July</i>	<i>Talk: by Stan Beckensall – Prehistoric rock-art and stone circles in Cumbria.</i>
<i>11th Sep</i>	<i>Talk: to be arranged</i>
<i>26th Sep</i>	<i>The Bernard Bradbury Lecture, by Dr Mike Winstanley – The buildings of Cockermouth 1910-3: insights from a unique survey. At the Kirkgate Centre, Joint with CCT and KCMG</i>
<i>13th Nov</i>	<i>Talk: by Dr Rob David – The abominable traffic – slave traders, plantation owners and abolitionists in Cumbria</i>

Except for the Bradbury Lecture, talks are held at the Yew Tree Hall in Lorton starting at 7.30pm. Visitors £2 including refreshments.