

# Lorton & Derwent Fells Local History Society

# Wanderer

August 2019

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### Autumn Visit to the Windermere Jetty Museum and Armitt Museum Ambleside, Wednesday 30 October

The Society's second visit of the year will be to the brand-new Windermere Jetty Museum. Opened very recently on the site of the former Steamboat Museum, the new building seeks to recreate and celebrate the splendid era of a century or so ago where industry and leisure cohabited on the shores of Windermere at Bowness.

On display are the oldest mechanically powered boat in the world, the oldest yacht, the oldest steam screw yacht in England, workshops for restoration and repair, artefacts relating to the site's industrial past, and Beatrix Potter's rowing boat.



The new museum has received many glowing reviews – one at <https://www.familyadventureproject.org/windermere-jetty-museum-review-best-lake-district-activities/> gives an idea of its appeal - and we believe it will provide a stimulating and entertaining day out.

The Armitt Museum has enormous appeal and our visit will coincide with the last days of the very well received exhibition *Langdale; In a Time of Change*.



Osprey, 1902

...continued on page 3

## Our future programme 2019

12 Sep 2019	<i>The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Border Regiment at the Battle of Arnhem, 1944</i>	Stuart Eastwood
27 Sep 2019 8pm	Bernard Bradbury Memorial Lecture. <i>Castles and Conquests: castle-building and the control of Cumbria, 1092-1237</i> , Cockermouth Civic Trust, with Cockermouth Heritage Group and L&DFLHS. Kirkgate Centre, 8pm	Professor Richard Oram Tickets £4.50 from Kirkgate Centre, Sept.
10 Oct 2019	25 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lecture. <i>Lordship and Manor: the Norman imprint on the Society's area of interest</i>	Professor Angus Winchester
30 Oct 2019	Autumn outing by coach to the Windermere Jetty Museum and the Armitt Library	Contact Tim Stanley-Clamp on 01900 336542
14 Nov 2019	<i>Roman Roads through the lakes</i>	Dr Paul Hindle

Talks are at the Yew Tree Hall at 7.30pm unless stated otherwise. Visitors £3. Please do not park to the left of the entrance (looking from outside) as the road is narrow.

### Officers and Committee 2018/19

President, Professor Angus Winchester	Financial examiner, Peter Hubbard
Charles Lambrick <i>Chairman</i>	01900 85710 Tim Stanley-Clamp <i>Vice-chair</i> 01900 336542 <i>Outings</i>
Dr Derek Denman <i>Secretary</i>	01900 829097 derekdenman@btinternet.com Christopher Thomas <i>Treasurer</i> 01900 822171
Lena Stanley-Clamp <i>Membership</i> ldlhsmembership@gmail.com	01900 336542 Mike Bacon Richard Easton Fiona Lambrick Hugh Thomson <i>Committee members</i>

### Diary date

**5 October.** Cumbria Local History Federation Annual Convention. AGM, displays and conference, with the theme 'All at sea'. At the Helena Thompson Museum, Workington, 10am-4pm. Cost £12 including lunch.

The next *Wanderer* will be published on 1 November 2019. Please send items to Derek Denman, by early October.

Published by the Lorton & Derwent Fells Local History Society, 19 Low Road Close, Cockermouth CA13 0GU.

<http://www.derwentfells.com>

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

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**The arrangements for the day:**  
**Depart Cockermouth:** approx. 9.30am - tbc  
**Arrival:** 10.30am  
**'Conservation Conversation':** 11.00am where we find out more about the restoration and conservation work.  
**Museum:** from 11.00am timed entry session. We anticipate the time to fully explore the galleries and boathouse will be around one and a half hours.  
**Heritage boat trip (optional):** 11.45am for those who would like to experience a steamboat ride from the very earliest years of the last century (max 12, extra cost of £10 on the day)  
**Lunch:** 12.30pm  
**Arrive Armitt Museum, Ambleside:** 2.00 pm  
**Return:** arrive Cockermouth 4 pm

#### Reserving a place

The cost will be £22.50 for the coach and admission to both museums. Lunch will be extra, and as noted above, those wanting a nineteenth century steamboat experience will pay an extra £10. (We must book this in advance. So be sure to indicate clearly if you want to book this.)

Please send your name and a deposit of £10 per person, as soon as is convenient, to T Stanley-Clamp, 3 South Lodge, Simonscales Lane, Cockermouth, CA13 9FB. Cheques payable to 'L&DFLHS'.

For more information, or to reserve a place, call Tim Stanley-Clamp on 01900 336542

## Society News

### Two Foundational lectures

This Autumn provides a unique opportunity for society members to gain an insight into the Norman conquest and civil settlement in our area of western Britain. On 27

September Professor Richard Oram will present the Bernard Bradbury Memorial Lecture on **Castles and Conquests: castle-building and the control of Cumbria 1092-1237**. This will be followed on 10 October by Professor Angus Winchester's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lecture **Lordship and Manor: the Norman imprint on the Society's area of interest**.

As the Romans did before them, the Normans created a division between south and north Britain, becoming England and Scotland. That division, at first unstable, provided a political and military context for the civil and religious control of the existing and developing population of north-west England. The two lectures will provide a foundational overview of the events and structures which defined the local history of our area.

Richard Oram will cover the period from William Rufus's seizure of Carlisle to the treaty that ended Scottish kings' claims to England's northern counties. *'This talk explores the planting of castles in Cumberland and North Westmorland, from Brough and Appleby to Cockermouth and Egremont, looking at their siting and purpose, and their changing form as their owners tried to accommodate often conflicting demands for defence, residence, administration and lordly display into their buildings.'*

Angus Winchester will explore the manorial, religious and civil structures developed in Cumberland over this same period, taking this forward into the creation of manors, parishes and townships. The focus will be on the land and people dominated by the castle-towns of Cockermouth and Egremont, which of course includes all the townships covered by our Society.

These two lectures will provide a unique opportunity to examine the Norman imprint in our area.

Derek Denman

### Forthcoming Book on our area

It is always a pleasure to see that a new book by our Society President, Professor Angus Winchester, is imminent. This time it is particularly welcome because he makes our 'patch' the subject of his latest study. The book will be available in November and we will advise in our next *Wanderer* on how to obtain a copy. Meanwhile, we include the advance publicity:

Derek Denman

#### **The Language of the Landscape: a Journey into Lake District History**

by Angus J L Winchester

***'If we can learn its language, the landscape has much to tell us, through its place-names, through tangible features and through the accumulation of memory reflected back from particular places'*** Angus Winchester

Inspired by a life-long connection with a Lakeland valley, Angus Winchester draws on extensive research to discover something intangible – the effect of place on our imagination. Accompanying him on a journey from Cockermouth through the Vale of Lorton, to Crummock Water and Buttermere, part of the Lake District he has known intimately since childhood, we learn how clues to the evolution, history and culture of the Lakeland landscape may be found in the names given to its farms, becks, villages, fields and boundaries. The language of the landscape can 'speak' to us, not only in place-names but also in tangible features and through layers of memory and meaning built up across the centuries.

This book is a personal journey in search of the essential spirit of a much-

loved place. More than that, it teaches us how to look at landscape afresh and through a deeper understanding of its history appreciate it all the more.

You will find yourself looking at the magnificent scenery of the Lake District in a completely different way.

**Release Date:** 1 November 2019

**Price:** £10

**Publisher:** Handstand Press, East Banks, Dent.

### Subscriptions in 2020

The proposal to make an increase in subscriptions was discussed in the May *Wanderer*. Following the AGM the Committee has confirmed that the subscriptions from 2020 will be £10 per annum for full membership and £8 for an additional member at the same address. There are a few existing 'country members' who pay £5, without the talks.

The Committee expects these new subscriptions to allow the Society to maintain the current full programme and the extended *Wanderer* for several years, as well as allowing occasional special projects to be funded.

Derek Denman

Secretary

### Additions to our Website

by Derek Denman

With the creation and development of our Facebook page, the website is becoming more of a repository of historical work, sources, and information. The Facebook page is the place where our current programme and historical topics are discussed, linking to website content as appropriate. You can read this without having a Facebook account, but you will need one to participate. <https://www.facebook.com/Lortonloca/hsociety>

The publications page on the website, *www.derwentfells.com*, will increasingly contain or link to the work of our members, and you can now read or download our book, *Wordsworth and the Famous Lorton Yew-tree*, which has been out of print for many years.

Our features page includes the text and images of various talks given on local historical subjects, including the recent talk on Loweswater.

Our sources page now contains a collection of booklets produced on the churches in our area, plus the fascinating will of Richard Robynson, clerk, died 1549, with a transcription by Roger Asquith.

More will be included. Please watch out for new additions and let me have any suggestions for content.

### ***Request for Information***

We have received an enquiry from Stephen Reid, who asks:

'I am just getting in touch as I am writing a history of climbing on Pillar Rock. I hope to have this ready to publish in 2026 which will be 200 years after the first ascent of Pillar Rock. I wrote the latest FRCC guidebook (2007) to Pillar and probably know the crag and climbs on it better than anyone else.

I am trying to track down a number of things and wondered if you or your members might be able to help.

Any early mentions of Pillar Rock prior to Wordsworth's poem, *The Brothers*.

The burial place of John Atkinson of Croftfoot, Ennerdale who made the first ascent in 1826 (and indeed, any information about him).

The burial place of Thomas Walker (17yrs) of Whitehaven who was killed on Good Friday 1883 when he fell the length of the gully splitting the North Face of the crag which has

subsequently been called Walker's Gully.

Any photos of farming at Low or High Gillerthwaite Farms prior to the arrival of the forestry.'

Would anyone who can help please contact Stephen on *stephen@greenfootcumbria.co.uk*

## **Meeting Reports**

### ***Talk: Viking Longhouses in Cumbria - 9 May***

Steve Dickinson's highly detailed, stimulating talk last May provided a compelling account of recent discoveries by archaeologists at a site in Kentmere which have added significantly to our knowledge of Scandinavian settlement in Cumbria. He balanced a principled reluctance to engage in abstract speculation about the mysteriousness of Viking settlement in this area with an infectious enthusiasm in showing his audience what is securely known, thanks, it must be said, in large part to his own work as an archaeologist.

One of the problems faced by historians of the Viking presence in the Northwest of Britain is that all the contemporary accounts of the relevant period were produced by Anglo-Saxons. The Scandinavians left virtually no written history of their early arrival in and settlement of Britain, and this problem is felt most in Cumbria where there is very little evidence of their presence.

To add to the challenges faced by historians, there is little to link particular sites to the Vikings, probably because they seem to have frequently made use of earlier Roman and Neolithic settlements. Studies of the known Viking villages at the Brough of Birsary, on Orkney, and at Jarsholf on Shetland helped guide the search for

settlements in Cumbria and proved especially useful in identifying dwellings of Scandinavian origin.

Much of the talk described the findings from an excavation at Bryant's Gill, in the Kentmere Valley, an upland site set in the middle of a prehistoric landscape which after intensive analysis was found to have strong similarities with sites of the same period found in Norway.

About 500 square metres of turf were removed to reveal the outline of a building which has unmistakable Scandinavian features. Carbon dating suggested two dates for this structure, from c.760-800 AD and from 800-975 AD. In all likelihood, the building was constructed first in timber and then dismantled to be rebuilt in stone.

Several important artefacts were discovered, including a cornelian gem stone, iron slag from metal work, honestones and spindlewhorls which had been lathe-turned and were made from shale. It seems that the Kentmere Valley provided the Viking settlers with a familiar environment, furnished with the minerals and physical resources they needed to ply their ingenuity and establish a prosperous, successful community. There is no way to be certain but it appears that this area was settled and worked successfully well into the medieval period.

Many in the audience will have been struck by the sheer difficulty of life in this period, in this landscape, when we compare it to the altogether softer environments the Danish settlers found east of the Pennines, let alone to the lives we lead today. Steve Dickinson's talk illuminated and celebrated the knowledge, skills and character which those early settlers from Scandinavia brought to this wilder, less forgiving part of Britain.

*Tim Stanley-Clamp*

## ***Summer Outing to Yanwath Hall and Penrith - 22 May***

The Society's outing in May to Yanwath Hall and to Penrith took place on a lovely breezy early summer's day. It was very ably organised by Tim Stanley-Clamp, and for the 25 members who participated it is likely to stand out vividly in their memories as a particularly interesting day.

In the morning, we were very fortunate to have the opportunity of visiting Yanwath Hall, by kind permission of David Altham who lives there and runs the adjacent farm. The Hall is not open to the public but is an outstanding example of a fortified house, and considered by Matthew Hyde in the second edition of the Cumbria volume of Pevsner's *Buildings of England* to be '*Arguably the best of all Cumbria's towered houses, providing generously for comfort and self-sufficiency as well as defence. It stands on the steep S bank of the River Eamont at that most strategic spot where all the N-S routes cross between Westmoreland and Cumberland*'.

Although the Hall and associated buildings can enticingly be seen across the roofs of modern barns when travelling by train a little south of Penrith, it is otherwise rather hidden away. Nevertheless, members managed to find their way and duly gathered in the farmyard at the appointed hour. Having been welcomed by David Altham, we listened to his introduction to the history of the Hall as we stood in the three-sided courtyard to its north. Its origins date from the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> Century. After he had pointed out some of the external architectural features, we were ushered inside where we learnt more about the building's history while standing in the actual hall. Already, a strong sensation of stepping back in time was apparent,

and this became increasingly so as members explored the tower rooms set one above the other. Having noted interesting internal architectural details, members were all agile and intrepid enough to climb the narrow and steep spiral staircase to reach the roof of the tower from which a greater understanding of the Hall's strategic position set above the Eamont could be appreciated.

The sense of history at Yanwath Hall was very manifest, partly because it has remained in private hands largely unaltered for many centuries and the tower has been uninhabited since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The absence of warning signs and guard rails etc, so prevalent in other historic buildings, was very refreshing, and certainly didn't deter members – rather the reverse, in fact – from exploring the interstices and upper parts of the building.

Having expressed grateful thanks to David Altham, members went by car the short distance to the Yanwath Gate Inn for lunch. The party was well looked after there, and following suitable refreshment proceeded to the centre of Penrith to park prior to the afternoon's guided tour of some of the town's historic buildings.

Tim Stanley-Clamp had arranged for the eminent historian and Penrith expert, Professor Michael Mullet, to be the party's guide. We met him outside St Andrew's Church where he provided an admirably clear and concise exposition by way of an introduction to some of Penrith's interesting history. Having examined the 'Giant's Grave' in the churchyard, a composite monument of the 10<sup>th</sup> century which includes hogbacks and two crosses, and learnt something of its history, we entered the church. While the massive



**Examining the Giant's Grave**

west tower is of 13<sup>th</sup> century origin, the body of the church is early 18<sup>th</sup> century, reminiscent of the baroque style of Hawkesmoor or Wren. Professor Mullet provided us with an historical overview and drew attention to, among other points of interest, the paintings at the east end by Jacob Thompson.

The party then proceeded to walk through the Market Square and Angel Lane to the Two Lions Inn which, having been unused for a long time, is in the course of renovation. The building is a fairly substantial one, having as its origins the New Hall which had been purchased by Gerard Lowther in 1584. External features were noted and although access to the interior was not possible, members were able to peer through the windows and get a sense of its layout.

Professor Mullet, whose erudition and pithy turn of phrase was much appreciated throughout the tour, then led the party through the passage at the east end of the Two Lions Inn into Great Dockray. Here members gathered outside the 16<sup>th</sup> century building formerly known as Dockray Hall and more recently The Gloucester

Arms. Apart from explaining its history and its association with King Richard III, Professor Mullet drew amusing attention to points of ambiguity to be seen in the armorial above the principal door. He rounded off the all-too-brief tour of the centre of Penrith with a short history of Robinson's School, which later became Penrith Grammar School, the original site for which is situated at the north end of Middlegate.

After Professor Mullet had been warmly thanked for a most interesting guided tour, some members proceeded to walk through Little Dockray into Middlegate in order to make their way to Robinson's School building which now houses the Penrith Museum. The significance of some of the exhibits in it could be appreciated all the better as a result of what Professor Mullet had imparted to us during the afternoon's tour.

The outing more than lived up to its promise, and I'm sure I can express on behalf of all members who participated very grateful thanks to Tim Stanley-Clamp for having arranged the day so well.

*Charles Lambrick*

### ***Talk: A social History of Loweswater – 14 June***

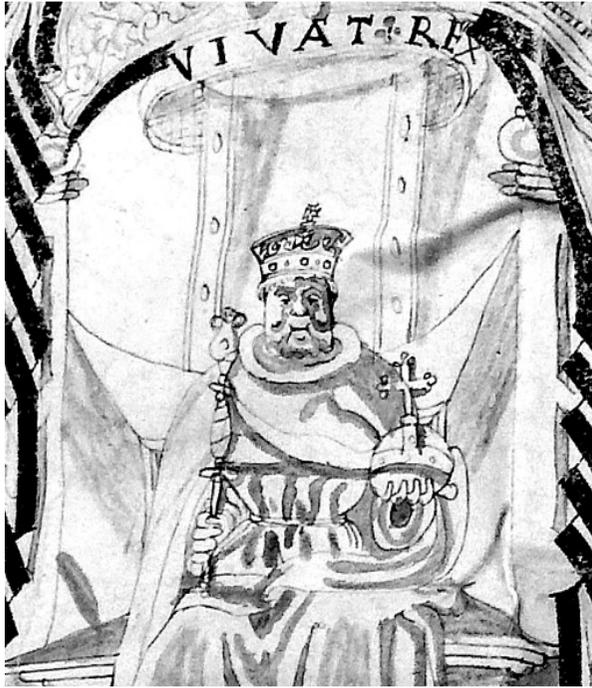
Following the Society's Annual General Meeting on 14 June, Derek Denman addressed a full Yew Tree Hall on a subject of immediate local interest: *A Social History of Loweswater through Three periods of Change*. It was pleasing that he continued the tradition that, if feasible, a member delivers this particular Talk in the Society's annual programme. It was notable that the subject attracted many visitors.

The first period covered was the post-Norman 'political' settlement in what became part of Cumberland. Derek explained how large tracts of land had initially been split between

two baronies and how land ownership in the vicinity of Loweswater subsequently devolved over the following four hundred years. He made the point that in the mid twelfth century what was then the chapel of Loweswater and the adjacent Kirkstile (now the Inn) were in common ownership. The economic life of the inhabitants was focused on sheep farming throughout the mediaeval period. Indeed, that has continued to be a common thread connecting pre-Conquest times with the present.

Derek turned next to the Tudor and Stuart periods, when land ownership began to become more diverse. The Reformation had a direct impact on ownership of land in Loweswater. He cited as a striking example King Henry VIII's forfeiture of land formerly belonging to the powerful Percy family and sale to a prominent local figure, Richard Robynson. Among other interesting aspects of this period, Derek drew attention to Robynson's Will, a facsimile of which plus transcription by Roger Asquith, together with other facsimiles of important Loweswater-related documents, were on display in the Hall. These included the significant agreement made 400 years ago in 1619 whereby local people purchased more secure tenant ownership rights.

The third period of Loweswater's social history covered by Derek was the later 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. He referred not only to the development of early tourism in the area, but also to the impact of the wealthy John Marshall of Leeds who in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century purchased the manors of Loweswater, Thackthwaite, and Brackenthwaite. He wanted to plant much woodland, and in 1819 drew up plans for proposed changes for his manors. However, he clashed with the tenant owners about the planned changes and stalemate between them ensued until his death in 1845. The consequence was that little



**Henry VIII on the grant of the manors of Loweswater and Thackthwaite to Richard Robynson in 1546**

in the landscape or in the sheep farming way of life in Loweswater changed. Indeed, during the following 200 years little has altered because enclosure only took place in the 1860s, and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the preservation movement developed.

A transcript of the notes Derek Denman used for what was a very well-received Talk, along with the slides (in their full form rather than the partial form displayed during the Talk because of technical problems), can be found on the Society's website at <http://derwentfells.com/features/features.html>  
*Charles Lambrick*

**Talk: Cumbria's explosive coast – 11 July**

The talk given by Bill Myers on the 11 July dealt with a previously overlooked but significant part of Cumbria's history. The excellent and often rare accompanying photographs indeed set the tone for the evening by starting with one of a controlled explosion on Drigg Beach.

The end of the nineteenth Century had seen mounting anxieties with the military might of nations like Germany, hostile to British interests. In 1897 Vickers Sons and Maxim, formed through a merger with the Barrow Naval Construction & Armament Company, obtained firing rights over the foreshore near Bootle, establishing the Eskmeals artillery range. This enabled the guns of all sizes that Vickers manufactured for army and navy contracts (and including weapons of friendly nations) to be individually test fired out to sea. The coastal section of the railway allowed branch line spurs into the facility allowing even the largest weapons access to the range. During the war, Vickers ran the firing range and the production of explosives on behalf of the Ministry of Munitions.

WW1 saw a huge recruitment drive and the establishment of sufficient accommodation for all the workers needed in the range and explosive works. Holmrook Hall and nearby Greengarth Hall were quickly taken into charge to house much of the workforce which in common with other strategic industries in war time contained a preponderance of women.



**ROF Drigg Street 1**

The explosive manufactured was TNT (Trinitrotoluene) which was replacing the much more expensive and dangerous Lyddite in general use in the forces. The plant for production of TNT was complicated by the series of stages involved in adding oxides of nitrogen to the toluene base, each stage in the process being carried out in a dedicated building separated from the others for safety reasons. The final stage involved filling the empty shell cases with molten TNT and then screwing on the fuse caps. Needless to say, there were many serious accidents over the war years in both wars.

Peace time brought some return to normality and as the country turned its back on munitions the plant was abandoned and became derelict leaving few traces but eventually war threatened and re-armament saw rebuilt and new facilities open at Eskmeals, Bootle and Calder Hall. The

firing range was taken over by the military. WW2 saw Barrow come under attack on several occasions, but the ranges and munition factories survived. The nearest incident which could have been a disaster was the explosion of a burning train load of depth charges which occurred just outside Bootle but with only one unfortunate casualty, due to the quick thinking of a railway employee.

After the war the ordinance factory at Windscale became the site of a plutonium separation plant followed in 1956 by the Calder Hall Nuclear Power Station. Part of the foreshore at Drigg beach became a depository of low-level Nuclear waste. Apart from the Eskmeals firing range, which is still functioning under new management, nothing of the wartime activities on the Cumbrian coast can be seen.

*Mike Bacon*

## Taking a Pew in 1827: the new Chapel in Loweswater

by Hugh Thomson

In 1824, four local landowners, John Hudson, John Bell, Jonathan Pearson and Joseph Iredell, forming 'a committee nominated by the parishioners and inhabitants of the chapelry of Loweswater in vestry assembled,' found Loweswater's medieval chapel to be 'in such a ruinous and decayed state that divine service could not safely be performed therein.' Lancaster Dodgson, d.1828, the second son of Lancaster Dodgson of Shatton Hall in Embleton (*Journal 45*), after taking his M.A. at Queen's College, Oxford and a period as curate of Embleton, had been presented in 1811 by the Earl of Lonsdale as Curate to Loweswater.<sup>1</sup> He had moved on in 1817 to become Vicar of Brough, leaving Loweswater to an assistant curate, and seems to have played little or no part in proceedings. The initiative to rebuild the church came from the leading parishioners, not from the clerical hierarchy.

195 years ago, Britain was a world power, with a rapidly expanding population, an army and navy which had played a major role in the final defeat of Napoleon and an overseas empire which, despite difficulty with the North American colonists, retained Canada, held more than a foothold in India and Africa and had already established colonies in Australia. William Wordsworth, now aged 57, was living at Rydal Mount and fully reconciled with Coleridge. The West Cumbrian coal magnate William Lowther, Earl of Lonsdale, had rebuilt Lowther Hall. But local churches in West Cumbria, many of them built in

the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, were in a similar condition to the Loweswater chapel

In 1773, the tiny chapel at Mosser was rebuilt, after being down for about 100 years. In 1805 John Sibson, the curate in Lorton, told the Bishop that 'the villagers take their lives in their hands' by entering his church, and proposed to use a local farmhouse for services! According to Sibson 'the parishioners ... proposed to repair the said Chapel and ... took down a part of both the East and West ends of the same, when to their great astonishment they discovered that the interior part of the walls was filled with clay. ... This being the case, a great part of the said Chapel tumbled down.' A faculty was granted, and 'the re-edification of the said Chapel' was completed in 1809, followed, 'at the expense of the Parish', by the construction of a tower.<sup>2</sup>

In 1806, Lancaster Dodgson, as curate of Embleton, rebuilt the church in Embleton, possibly at his own expense, for a total cost of £428-8s-4d (the quality of the work was considered 'inferior' and this church had to be rebuilt in 1884).<sup>3</sup>

The Chapel in Loweswater, a part of the Parish of St. Bees, may have been rather better cared for. In 1751, according to the Register, the roof had been taken off the body of the church and the south side slated with Ewe Crag slate. In 1753 the roof was taken off the chancel and a great part of the church was plastered. In 1778 'the church was 'ceiled, flagged and pewed, and a new pulpit and reading desk were then made in it.'

The committee resolved to 're-erect and rebuild the Chapel or edifice intended for a chapel [!] upon the site of the old chapel.' Although census figures show that the population of

Loweswater had increased by 50% from 294 in 1801 to 440 in 1821, the new building was constructed on the foundations of the building which preceded it, 67 feet long and 27 feet 8 inches wide. It was completed and consecrated in 1829, and has survived to the present day, though extensively remodelled in 1884-6.

The entrance was at the west end (the porch on the north wall was added in 1886). The font was placed near the entrance on the south side, underneath a gallery reached by a spiral stair on the north side. Ahead, at ground level, there were 13 rows of 'large, roomy, high-backed pews with doors' on each side of a central aisle. These pews were for the congregation; the choir was posted up above, in the gallery. When a Psalm was to be sung, the clerk told the congregation to turn around and face the choir. He then marched down the aisle and blew on a square pitch-pipe to give the choir a note.<sup>4</sup>

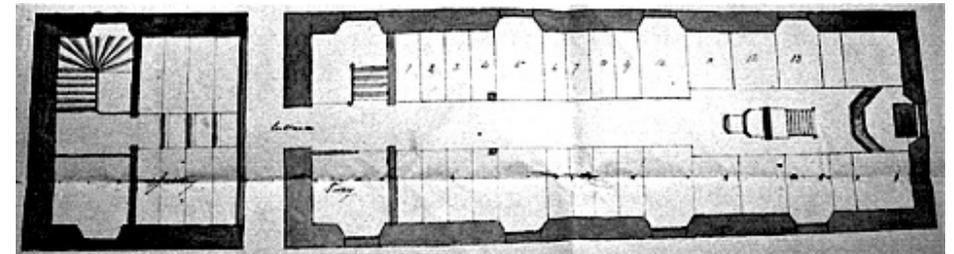
In the absence of a chancel (added in 1886), the altar was placed against the east wall, in front of a plain window. As can be seen in the illustration, the (surviving) board inscribed with the Ten Commandments, flanked by the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, was placed behind the altar, against the east window. The internal furniture, probably rescued from the original church, included a 'three-decker' (a

combination of pulpit, reading desk and clerk's desk) located, in the absence of a chancel, between the first three rows of pews. All these were lost when the church was modified in 1886.<sup>5</sup>

The committee (John Hudson, John Bell, Isaac Dodgson and Joseph Iredell) raised the money required to fund the rebuilding and fitting out (said to be around £1,200, equivalent to £130,000 today) by selling 'sittings' in the new church. A faculty approving this and detailing the allocation of pews is available for inspection in the Whitehaven records office. In total, 190 'sittings' were paid for; 26 seats in the gallery were allocated to the choir, 6 'sittings' were reserved for 'occupiers of property belonging to the curate' and there were 42 'free sittings.'

Pew rights were controversial. They were elitist, tending to exclude poorer parishioners and encourage them to defect to dissenting chapels, but Sir John Nicholl, Dean of the Arches, held in 1821 that an exclusive right to a pew could be granted by faculty to a parishioner. He observed that '[pew] faculties have certainly been granted in former times with too great facility. ... By the general law ... all the pews in a parish church are the common property of the parish ... for the use in common of the parishioners.'

The floor plan of the new Chapel



<sup>1</sup> See L&DFLHS *Journal 45* for this family.

<sup>2</sup> Cannon Farrer, *Lorton and its Church*, 1946

<sup>3</sup> Raymond Hartland, *A short history of Saint Cuthbert, Embleton*

<sup>4</sup> John Bolton, *Lorton and Loweswater 80 years ago*, 1891, p.17

<sup>5</sup> Ames & Edwards, *The Parish Church of St Bartholomew, Loweswater*

But until 1963 a parishioner could enforce a pew right by an action for 'perturbation of seat' in the ecclesiastical courts. Since 1963, a pew right can be enforced only in the secular courts, if at all.

The official document gives us the names of the subscribers and enables us to create the plan of the seating arrangements on pages 14&15. 42 individuals and one couple (Jonathan and Jane Iredale) subscribed; two of the subscribers were women. In many cases, subscribers paid for more seats than they and their immediate families would occupy. It is significant that the allocation provides 6 seats for 'occupants of property belonging to the curate', showing that a landowner might be responsible for providing seats for his tenants as well as for himself.

The document provides a remarkable and detailed insight into the character of Loweswater society in 1827. This article is intended to introduce the subject: I hope, in future articles, to be able to go into further detail on the subject, by exploring the character and history of the families who were present in St. Bartholomew's church in 1829, when the Bishop of Chester presided over the consecration service.

First off the mark as subscribers were the Hudsons of Kirkhead, Joseph Skelton of Fouslyke, and Isaac Dodgson of Mockerkin, allotted seats in the front pew on the north side, and blocks in double pews in the rows nearest the front of the church.

John Hudson the elder and his wife Fanny were both 82 years old in 1827. Fanny 'used to ride a black horse with a white snip face and went regularly to Cockermonth market. She wore a cloak with cape and skirt to keep clean and used to complain to the



The east window and pews before 1884

master at Loweswater School if any of the children did not make their "honours". The children would complain "She never gave us owt, nut a laal apple".<sup>6</sup>

Joseph Skelton was only 53, with a wife, Mary, aged 50, three young daughters and an even younger son, born in 1821. His great-nephew, Skelton Wood, 29 years old in 1827, was the second son of Joseph's cousin, Ann Skelton, who had married a Reverend Jonathan Wood. Both Skelton Wood's parents and a younger brother died before Skelton was 3 years old, and he was brought up at Godferhead in the household of his grandfather Richard Skelton, described by John Bolton as 'a portly old gentleman ... greatly looked up to in the parish as a man of experience in business matters'.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> John Bolton, *Lorton & Loweswater*, p.18

<sup>7</sup> John Bolton, *Lorton & Loweswater*, p.19

PEW HOLDINGS, St. Bartholomew's, Loweswater, 1827		EAST		SOUTH	
No.	NAMES	NAMES	No.	NAMES	No.
13 double pew			16 double pew	John Hudson the elder (4) John Hudson the younger (4) Joseph Skelton (2) Isaac Dodgson	WINDOW
12 double pew	John Towerson (2) Joseph Mirehouse (4) John Tyson (4)		17 double pew	Robertson Walker Esq. (10)	
11 double pew	Skelton Wood (10)		18 double pew	Joseph Skelton (10)	
10 double pew	John Fletcher (13)		19 double pew	John Hudson the elder (13)	WINDOW
9	John Harrison (6)		20	Isaac Dodgson (6)	
8	Daniel Jenkinson (2) William Dixon (4)		21	Joseph Iredale (6)	
7	David Jenkinson (1) Isaac Fearon (5)		22	Thomas Bushey (4) Joseph Graham (2)	

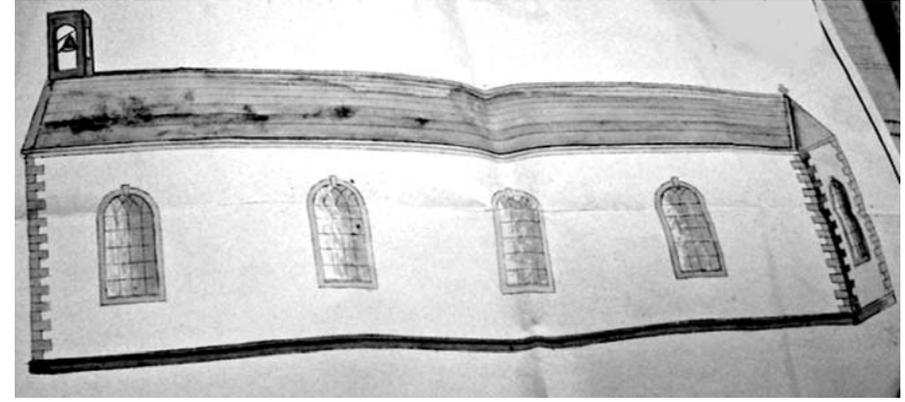
6	Ralph Bushey (3) John Bell (3)	23	Peter Burnyeat (4) Joseph Pearson (2)
5 double pew	Jonathan Iredale and Jane Iredale (7) George Topping, Henry Johnson, John Walker (3) William Tyson of Thackthwaite	24 double pew	John Marshall Esq. (10) John Fisher (3)
4	Henry Muncaster, William Wilkinson David Jenkinson, Simeon Proddow	25	Occupiers of property belonging to the curate (6)
3	John Mirehouse (2) Henry Fisher (4)	26	Joseph Fletcher (2), Hannah Sturdy, Thomas Wilson, James Mirehouse
2		27	Dinah Hudson (3), Christopher Wilson, William Tyson of Park, Isaac Tyson
1		28	

34		29	
33	John Fisher (6)	30	
32	Jonathan Pearson (6)	31	Skelton Wood (6)

WEST

26 sittings for singers

42 free sittings



The south elevation of the new Chapel

According to the mining historian John Adams, the vein of lead ore between Godferhead and Netherclose 'was discovered in 1816 during land drainage, and the mineral rights [were] leased in 1819 by Messrs. Joseph Skelton and Skelton Wood.' Skelton Wood inherited Godferhead from Richard Skelton in 1819, when he was just 21 years old. Two shafts, the Old Wheel shaft and the Flat Rod shaft, were opened and a building constructed, now part of Moss Cottage. 'Veins of lead ore occur in several places; and have been worked between Skiddaw and Saddleback, in Thornthwaite, Newlands, and Buttermere; but one in the parish of Loweswater and one below the level of Derwent Lake are the most productive ... at present in this district'.<sup>8</sup>

Joseph Skelton owned 2 sittings in a front row pew shared with the Hudsons and Isaac Dodgson, and 10 sittings in a double pew opposite a double pew with 10 sittings paid for by Skelton Wood, who also subscribed for 6 sittings in the gallery, perhaps for the benefit of the miners!

<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Otley, *Description of the English Lakes*, 1823

Isaac Dodgson of Mockerkin is recorded in Parson & White's *Directory* (1829) as 'yeoman', a lower status than that assigned to the other occupants of the front pew, but his youngest son, Henry, born in 1833, studied medicine in Edinburgh and Paris and became a Fellow of both the Royal Astronomical Society and of the Meteorological Society, as well as Chairman of the Cocker mouth School Board and principal of one of the most extensive practices in Cocker mouth. Isaac was 43 years old in 1827 – his wife Bella was 36. In addition to a single sitting in the front row pew, he subscribed for 6 sittings in the 5<sup>th</sup> row.

John Towerson, Joseph Mirehouse and John Tyson, yeoman farmers on a smaller scale than the Hudsons and Skeltons, may also have been quick to subscribe. They secured allocations in the second-row pew on the north side.

James Robertson Walker, Esq. (a gentleman rather than a farmer), paid for 10 sittings in the double pew opposite them. Robertson Walker was 44 years old in 1827, the son of James Robertson, a Justice of the Peace in Ross-shire. He had joined the Navy in 1801, before his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, and

during a long and distinguished naval career, served as fore-castle mate on the *Victory* at Trafalgar, was involved in the first attempt to destroy Napoleon's invasion fleet at Boulogne by means of Congreve rockets fired from small boats, and was blown up on a captured French privateer off Guadeloupe. He was lucky enough to be thrown by the explosion into his own ship's boat, 'not much hurt'.

Robertson Walker acquired the 141 acres of High Cross and Mill Hill, and an addition to his surname, after his marriage, in 1824, to Anne, the daughter of William Walker of Gilgarran, near Distington, a rich merchant of Whitehaven.

The other gentleman to subscribe, John Marshall, Esq., aged 62 in 1827, was a hugely successful industrialist, who had pioneered the factory spinning of yarn from flax in Leeds, using waterpower and steam. His involvement with Loweswater has been documented by Derek Denman.<sup>9</sup> Marshall's wife had met Dorothy Wordsworth when Dorothy was at school in Halifax, and his family's friendship with the Wordsworths contributed to his interest in the landscape of the Lake District. He purchased Loweswater manor in 1814, in 1823 bought Netherclose, with its land overlying the Loweswater mine, and Pottergill farm in 1824. Marshall, a dissenter, subscribed for 10 sittings in a double pew on the south side below the third window from the front, which his tenants and employees shared with John Fisher of Cold Keld.

Fisher was 77 years old in 1827, According to John Bolton, 'he was a large, fine-looking, good type of Cumberland statesman. It was said of him that he could hold a horse by its hind leg, and that he had been known

to lift a cow from one field to another'.<sup>10</sup> The Fishers had been the bailiffs during the Lawson lordship, until 1807. John, who also subscribed to 6 seats in the gallery, may have been the last of the Loweswater Fishers - he died in 1835.

The Tithe Commutation records, completed in 1839, 10 years after the consecration of the new church, provide a detailed record of flocks and landholdings across the country. Much had changed in the country. There was a new Queen, Victoria. The Reform Act in 1832, had enfranchised the middle classes and the publication of the People's Charter in 1838 had proposed a programme for radical reform.

In Loweswater, John Hudson (the elder) had died, as had Joseph Skelton and, at the age of 34, Skelton Wood. Production at the Loweswater mine had ended, soon after Skelton Wood's death. Mining rights were being transferred to a new company, of outsiders, who continued working a new level in Kirkgill Wood. Although efforts in Kirkgill, Mosedale and Coalbeck continued until nearly the end of the century, and the processing of lead ore continued in the field outside Moss Cottage until 1896, Loweswater escaped the prospect of major industrialisation through lead and iron working.

My intention, in future articles, is to attempt to build a more complete picture of Loweswater society in the early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by investigating the family histories and landholdings of all the families who subscribed for sittings in the new church. We know how they arranged themselves in church. What were their lives like, and what can this tell us about our past at the dawn of the modern age?

## ***The Edwardian Inebriates at Hassness, Buttermere***

*by Derek Denman*

Hassness is the only gentry mansion and estate created on Buttermere. It lies about halfway along the eastern shore, set back from the road and well separated from the village and Gatesgarth. It was therefore well suited to its use as a retreat for the treatment of inebriates, from about 1905 as The Ghyll Retreat, and later the Ghyllwoods Sanatorium, until in 1915 WWI made other demands on its proprietor.

The Hassness estate has its origins in an offer by Lord Egremont in 1759 to the tenants of customary tenements in the manor of Braithwaite and Coledale, which included Buttermere, to buy the freeholds of their farm properties. At that time, before tourism, the remote and inaccessible lake of Buttermere was not a desirable habitation for the gentry. The Gatesgarth estate, which included the land for Hassness, was owned by the Senhouse family, and the offer to purchase the part-freehold was not taken up until 1783 by Joseph Tiffin Senhouse of Calder Abbey, by which time Buttermere was much better known.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Benson, 1742-1807, a Cocker mouth attorney from an Egremont brewing family, was agent for Lord Egremont, having married the daughter of the previous agent, Robert Baynes. Thomas Benson was able to purchase part of the freehold Senhouse estate. The mansion house is shown on Crosthwaite's map of 1800, and in 1803

it was painted by I Mason (see page 20). Around that time carriage access from Cocker mouth to Buttermere was made possible by the new road around Buttermere House on Crummock. In 1803 the highway went past the front door of Hassness, but in 1805 Benson obtained the necessary order from two JPs to divert the highway away from the house, but within his land.<sup>2</sup> This has been annotated, together with the 1844 boundaries of the forty acre Benson estate, on the OS map of 1863 (see page 20). The diversion of the road would improve the suitability of the property as a retreat in 1905.

Thomas Benson enjoyed the property until 1807, but it stayed in the family into the 1840s, sometimes tenanted. The only grand house in a remote and rustic neighbourhood, it would present a challenge as a main residence. It's most famous inhabitant at this time was the fictional Squire Sandboys in Mayhew's *1851 or the adventures of Mr and Mrs Sandboys and family who came up to London to enjoy themselves and see the Great Exhibition*.

Eventually, Hassness was purchased by Frederic John Reed, 1808-88, as his country seat. His

**Hassness in 1910**



<sup>9</sup> L&DFLHS Journal 48

<sup>10</sup> John Bolton, *Lorton & Loweswater*, p.19

<sup>1</sup> DLec./Box 9, No.56

<sup>2</sup> DLec./Box 81, Copy order 89/5, 1805

connection with the area was through his marriage in 1835 to Mary Ann Wood, daughter of John Wood of Low House in Brackenthwaite. She may have influenced the purchase, but she died in 1856 leaving Reed in ownership until his death in 1888. He was buried at Lorton.

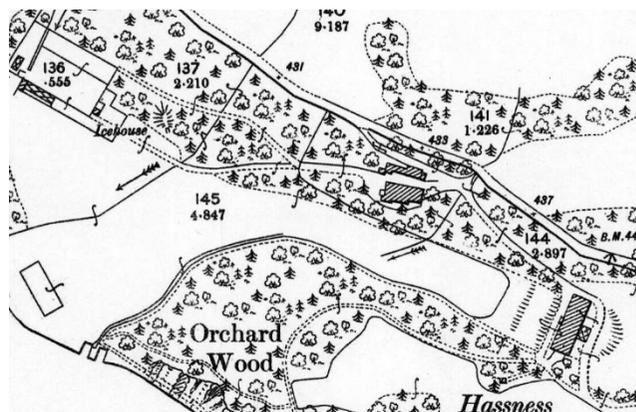
Reed's extensive additions to the house, on the 1910 photograph, are not shown on the 1863 OS survey. The OS map of 1898 shows the estate and house as Reed left it, with a notable icehouse. When advertised for sale in 1900, the estate had 141 acres of land, with much of the Buttermere shore and the house had twelve bedrooms.<sup>3</sup> But it was still a difficult location for a large residence, and was not sold, but let.

#### The Ghyll retreat

The possible social isolation of this location, which might cause a problem for a country gentleman and his lady, would be a benefit in a retreat for inebriates. They would have some status and wealth, but lacked the capability to cope with the required social drinking of Edwardian society. There would be a need to keep the inebriates away from the company and the temptations of the Buttermere hotels, one mile away, but that would be the only problem with the location.

The Ghyll Retreat was a partnership between Dr James Woodman Astley Cooper and Major George Magill Dobson, RAMC, d. 1919 aged 58. He retired as an army surgeon in 1905, while Cooper was aged 35 at that time and had practised in Sheringham, Norfolk. In 1908 the

<sup>3</sup> Liverpool Mercury, 22 May 1900, p.6



Part of the Hassness estate in 1898

partnership was ceased, after which Cooper continued as the sole proprietor. The name was changed to the Ghyllwoods Sanatorium, and it continued successfully until Cooper took a commission in the army in 1915. His son Hugh also joined when old enough and both are remembered on the Buttermere Roll of Honour.<sup>4</sup>

The retreat was clearly run on strict medical principles, because in 1913 Cooper was able to publish his book *Pathological inebriety, its causes and treatment* in 1913, based on his work at Ghyllwoods.

The work of the retreat and the identity of its paying patients would naturally be kept private and confidential, except that no such institution was exempt from the Spanish Inquisition of the census in 1911. We therefore have just one detailed snapshot of the staff and inmates at that time.

On census night there were 34 people at Hassness, 31 in the house and three in the gardener's cottage. Cooper was identified as the medical superintendent and his wife as the

<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to Walter Head for information on their war service

lady superintendent. That was the extent of the resident family, the two boys being at St Bees School, and also the extent of the medical staff. There were fourteen patients and two visitors, the rest being staff and servants.

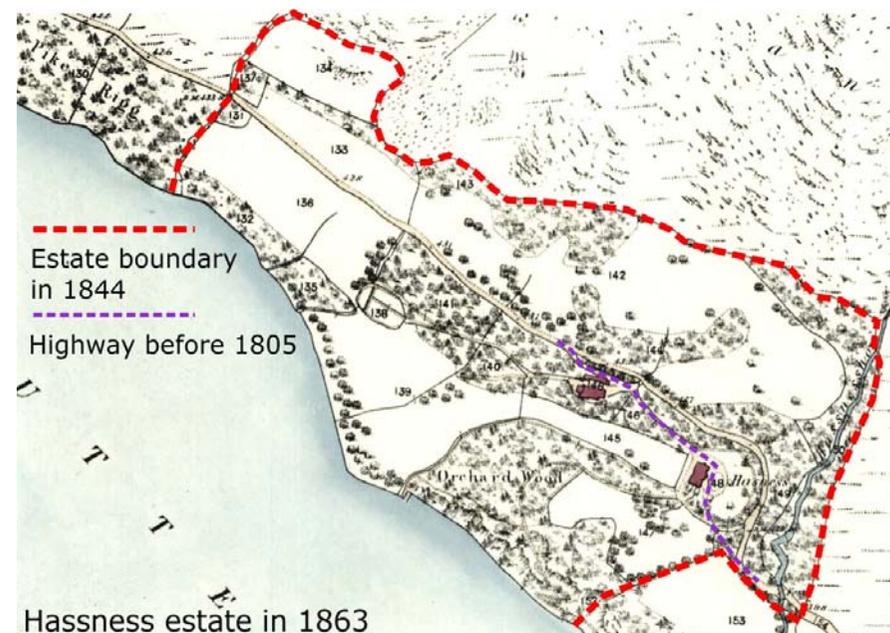
All the patients were men, ranging in age from 21 to 54, with an average age of 37. Five were gentlemen with no occupation, two were physicians, two were manufacturers, plus a master mariner, miller, engineer and cigar importer. The staff were also mostly male, including two young bedroom assistants, and the staff were mostly not of local origin. The grounds offered extensive recreational facilities for the patients. The retreat/sanatorium seemed to be self contained and separate from the local community, allowing a high degree of supervision.

The sanatorium appears to have been flourishing at the time of its closure, advertising regularly in



Hassness, by I Mason, 1803

the medical journals, suggesting that many patients were recommended by their physicians. The war required surgeons for more pressing roles than the treatment of inebriates, and this use of Hassness had to cease. After the war there was a fire, following which the house was rebuilt. So the current building is not recognisable as Benson's original mansion house.



Hassness estate in 1863