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August 2023

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Society News

Message from the Chair

A Cry for Help

There has been a full programme of Society events and activities over the last three months, with more to come for the period to the end of the year. Apart from Talks, there are two historical walks scheduled and a social event to mark the Society's 30th year which will be held on 20 August. Please refer to the information about that event on page 3.

In addition, an inaugural meeting of the recently formed House History Group, led by Adam and Mary Baker, has been held (see page 8), and preliminary steps to begin a new round of recording oral history were taken by a steering group who gained valuable up to date guidance on the subject from representatives of the Ambleside Oral History Group. Apart from all that, Derek Denman has completed further work in establishing the Society's Digital Archive of Historical Sources. Issue 2 is now available (see page 17). Details can be found on the website.

In my message in May's Wanderer, I referred to a Questionnaire which was being circulated to all Members. Approximately ten per-cent of the membership responded (see report on page 4), and the committee is grateful to them for doing so. The responses indicated that broadly speaking Members are satisfied with the programme of Talks and other activities that are organised, and some are willing to help with specific tasks such as looking after teas following a Talk. While, disappointingly, among responses no one indicated a willingness to help run the Society, I'm very glad to report that recently Andrew Chamberlain has come forward to say he's willing to stand for election to the committee.

However, for the reasons I refer to below there is a very serious need for others to follow his good example so that by next June new leadership of the Society is in place. It is essential that after the AGM those forming the new committee are confident that it will be realistic to organise a programme and that it will be justifiable to collect subscriptions for 2024.

Our future programme 2023

20 August	Members' social event in the garden of Armaside House, Lorton	Charles and Fiona Lambrick
6 Sep 2023 & 12 Sep	Historical walk: Pardshaw & Mosser (6 Sep now full)	Contact Sandra Shaw
14 Sep 2023	Our AGM (revised date) followed by 'The Dacre Family, a history'	Maks Loth-Hill
30 Sep 2023	'Landscape and Memory – the Cocker Valley revisited'. BBML 2023. Kirkgate Centre – see this issue.	Prof. Angus Winchester and others. Tickets £7.50
15 October	Historical walk: Coniston Slate Mines	Contact James Lusher to book
9 Nov 2023	'Mitchells: Auctioneers for 150 years'	John Marr

Talks are at 7.30 pm in the Yew Tree Hall, are included in membership and open to visitors at £4 in 2023. Talks are also streamed live to members using Zoom but are not recorded.

Officers and Committee 2022/3

President: Professor Angus Winchester	Financial examiner: Hugh Thomson FCA
Charles Lambrick <i>Chairman</i> <i>Talks</i>	01900 85710 Lena Stanley-Clamp <i>Membership</i> <i>dfhlsmembership@gmail.com</i>
James Lusher <i>Vice-chair</i>	01900 85196 Dr Derek Denman <i>Wanderer, and</i> <i>archives</i> <i>derekdenman@btinternet.com</i>
Sandra Shaw <i>Secretary</i>	01900 829812 Fiona Lambrick
Linda Cameron <i>Treasurer</i>	01900 824200

The next issue of the *Wanderer* will be published on 1 November 2023. Please send any short items to the Editor, Derek Denman, by early October. The *Wanderer* is published by the Lorton & Derwent Fells Local History Society, 19 Low Road Close, Cockermouth CA13 0GU.
<http://www.derwentfells.com> <https://www.facebook.com/Lortonlocalhistorysociety>

The Society's Vice Chair, James Lusher, and its Treasurer, Linda Cameron, are each resigning at the AGM in September for personal reasons. Therefore, in the absence of people coming forward to fill those committee vacancies, and bearing in mind that at the AGM in June 2024 Sandra Shaw will stepping down as Secretary and I will not be standing again for election to the role of Chair, the Society is confronted with the very real prospect of being wound up in

2024 unless more Members come forward and follow Andrew Chamberlain's example.

Over the 30 years of its existence the Society has become part of what could be termed the social fabric of the communities in the Vale of Lorton and the wider area. I much regret that, so far, such few Members are apparently willing to join forces with others and take responsibility for helping to run the Society in the future. This is particularly

ironic given the very healthy membership numbers (around 200 over the last year), the interest and support shown by Members for participating in the busy programme of events and activities provided, and not forgetting the standing of the Society in the wider context of historical societies of the same kind in Cumbria and further afield.

Running the Society as a member of a team is not daunting, committee tasks typically being spread and shared among its members. There is satisfaction to be gained from being part of a group responsible for organising the Society's activities, not least for one that has been and continues to be held in good public esteem. And there's the opportunity for new people to put their own slant on the Society's development into the potential next phase of its existence.

Yet, despite apparently being a thriving Society, as noted above at present only one person has stepped forward. The stark reality is that the Society needs several Members to come forward to form a new team that will ensure its continuing existence. So, I must end this message on a sombre note and make an earnest plea for help. **Are there, really, no more Members willing to take responsibility for the Society's future?**

Charles Lambrick

30th Anniversary Garden Event at Armaside House, 20 August

An afternoon party for Members, hosted by the committee, will be held in the garden at Armaside House on the afternoon of 20 August to mark the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Society.

The event will take place between 2.30pm and 4.30pm when refreshments will be available and Members will have the opportunity to explore the gardens.

Members who wish to attend should please contact Charles Lambrick by email charleslambrick@btinternet.com or by phone 01900 85710 for further details and



Looking south-west from above Armaside House, photo Charles Lambrick

to book their place. Please note that the event will be weather-dependent.

Historical Walk at Pardshaw Hall and Mosser; another chance on 12 September

Full details of this planned walk were given in the May Wanderer, when it was hoped it would take place in August. This did not prove possible, and the date of Wednesday 6 September was advised to members. There was a rapid response, with almost twenty people keen to join. That would not be feasible given the nature of the route and the challenges of the terrain, and so the first twelve people have been booked, with a waiting list of a further seven.

A second date, Tuesday 12 September, has now been arranged to accommodate them, and anyone else who

is interested, but could not manage the earlier date. On both dates, we will leave the Meeting House at 1.30 and return there some time later for a look around. If interested, please contact Sandra Shaw.



St Michael's chapel at Mosser, photo Sandra Shaw.

A Report on the membership questionnaire

A questionnaire was sent to all members with the May mailout, and copies were made available at the May and June talks. Many thanks to all who returned completed questionnaires. Eighteen responses were received, representing a little under ten per cent of members. The good news is that overall, members are happy with what the Society is delivering. In my report to the committee, my rather cynical summary was 'keep on doing what you are doing, and we'll make the tea'. There was little appetite for new ventures.

There is general support for the hybrid model of simultaneously broadcasting talks via Zoom. There was only modest support for a change of venue, but some interest in holding afternoon talks, particularly in the winter.

Comments in the section 'what aspects of local history do you value most' were interesting. It is clearly the social history of people who have lived locally in the past that interests our members. They want to know what lives were like for

different occupations, and the contributions made by specific inhabitants in the area, including in agriculture.

There were a few offers of help with specific tasks – communication with members, promoting events, social media, digital archiving of our photo collection, interviewing for oral history, broadcasting via Zoom, putting up a display, conducting research, organising talks, and providing refreshments. This last received five offers, but one was anonymous.

It was disappointing that no one came forward to help run the Society by joining the committee. You will read elsewhere in this Wanderer, and the notice of the AGM that is enclosed, that we are in urgent need of a group of new committee members to take the Society forward into its next thirty years.

Sandra Shaw

An opportunity to visit the dam which supplied Aikbank Mill.

Prompted by the Wanderer recently publishing two articles about mills, Dr Jim Proctor has offered members of the Society the opportunity to see what remains of the dam, and other water works, at Aikbank Mill Farm. The two articles were by Lena Stanley-Clamp on Aikbank Mill in May 2022 and by Roger Asquith's article on the mills of Branthwaite in May 2023.

It is possible to follow Mosser Beck and its possible re-routing into what used to be the reservoir serving Aikbank Mill. The dam survives, but without water. The route of the head race can be seen crossing the farmyard. Walking round by road, the wheel-pit can be seen along with the tailrace, returning water into the beck.

This exploration would not suit the faint-hearted. The ground is uneven, very overgrown, with steep and slippery steps. It would only be possible to manage a small group or visitors at any one time. Should anyone be interested, please contact Sandra Shaw.

The Bernard Bradbury Memorial Event 2023

Landscape and Memory – the Cocker Valley revisited in words, music, and pictures. 30 September 7.30pm, Kirkgate Centre

The next Bernard Bradbury Memorial Lecture will be held at the Kirkgate Centre at 19.30 on Saturday September 30th, hosted this year by the Civic Trust. The event will feature our Society's President, Professor Angus Winchester, with three school friends. Tickets are available from the Kirkgate Centre, price £7.50 at: <https://thekirkgate.ticketsolve.com/ticketbooth/shows/873646341>

The format of this year's lecture will be novel in that it will include an audio-visual presentation and will feature a journey up the Cocker Valley from Cockermouth to Haystacks, based on words, music and pictures.

Bernard Bradbury was a teacher and local Cocker mouth Historian, publishing a number of books about the history of Cocker mouth that are still available today.

Bernard died in 2002, leaving a fantastic legacy to Cocker mouth in his historical research and in the fond memories of those who knew him, including all of this evening's lecturers. A regular Memorial Lecture has now been held for a number of years, organised alternately by the Civic Trust and the Lorton and Derwent Fells LHS. In more detail:

This year, four former Cocker mouth school friends with a lifelong love of the Cocker Valley, its lakes and fells, present a unique personal exploration of this special corner of the Lake District.

Historian Angus Winchester, musician/composer David Ashworth and photographer Rupert Ashmore reunited recently to walk from the confluence of the Cocker and Derwent rivers in Cocker mouth town centre, up the Lorton Valley to the source of the Cocker in the fells beyond Buttermere.

For one night only, the friends present the photography and original music (live and recorded) inspired by their

Buttermere Church by Rupert Ashmore



journey, with readings by Angus Winchester from his 2019 book *The Language of the Landscape – a Journey into Lake District History*. They are joined in conversation by their former classmate, journalist and broadcaster Marion Bowman.

For many, not just these four, the valley is their 'special place'. Even people who have never lived there have a strong sense of belonging. Why does it mean so much to them?

Angus Winchester's family moved to the area when he was five years old, and he spent much of his childhood in Lorton. He received his doctorate from Durham University and is Emeritus Professor of Local and Landscape History at Lancaster University. He has written and lectured widely on the history and landscapes of the North of England and Cumbria. He has been honorary President of Lorton & Derwent Fells LHS since its inception.

David Ashworth lived in Cockermouth as a boy then studied at Manchester and York Universities. For most of his career he was a consultant in music education across the country. As a performer and writer, he has worked with chamber ensembles, blues bands, theatre/dance groups and, more recently, multimedia presentation.

Rupert Ashmore was brought up in Maryport and developed an interest in photography when he acquired his first camera for a primary school trip. He attended art colleges in Carlisle and Kingston, and learned a lot by working alongside stills photographers in advertising.

Marion Bowman is also from Maryport. She studied at Manchester University and worked in newspapers, radio and television before retiring to West Cumbria. She is a volunteer and former chair of Trustees at Kirkgate Arts and Heritage.

There will be a twenty-minute interval, and copies of *The Language of the Landscape* (Handstand Press) will be on sale along with Civic Trust publications. A booklet about the project is included in the ticket price.

Meeting Reports

Talk: 'The Loweswater burglary of 1816 and its aftermath' 11 May

Ray Greenhow is a former Cumbria Police Inspector who has previously spoken to the society on the tragic drowning in Derwentwater of five women in 1898. He retired from the force in 2011 and has since pursued research into those executed at Carlisle Gaol between 1745 and 1922, when the last execution took place. John Donald was one so executed, for his part in a robbery that took place at Hudson Place, Waterend, Loweswater, on 8 April 1816.

"You've stretched a few necks around here," commented our speaker, because Donald was not the only person to be executed for what were then capital offences perpetrated in the Vale of Lorton and nearby. There were three others at least:

John Hatfield, the imposter 'Colonel Hope MP', the deceiver of the Maid of Buttermere, found guilty of forgery and executed in 1803.

Christopher Gale, in 1819, for stealing from a sealed letter in a mailbag he had been entrusted to carry from Cockermouth to Maryport.

George Cass, guilty of murdering Ann Sewell, a maid at Beckhouses, Embleton, executed in 1880.

Because, as Ray Greenhow explained, these were the days when, at times, up to 222 offences carried the death penalty; the days when deterrence was the means by which crime was prevented rather than by a well-trained and effective police force. Capital punishment for murder, of course, but also for impersonating a Chelsea Pensioner, for robbing from a rabbit warren, for picking more than one shilling from a pocket, for shoplifting. And for burglary and theft from a dwelling house. Which takes us back to John Donald.

After carefully casing the joint days before, four men with blackened faces and

hoods entered an isolated farmhouse, Hudson Place, Waterend, at the northern end of the Loweswater valley, on 8 April 1816. They tied and beat the occupants and then fled with £50 (the average annual wage of a shepherd in 1800 was £16) after their lookout warned them of someone approaching.

The leader was John Donald, a known felon. With him were his regular partner in crime, Andrew Kinghorn, John Pollett, one 'Whineray' who escaped and about whom little if any more is known, and the lookout, Sarah Armstrong. There is a question as to whether Donald and Armstrong were married: important as had they been she could not have been held culpable. They were certainly living together and three days after the robbery were found together attempting to burn evidence, then trying but failing to escape, running down the street half naked. Banns had been read for them twice in Cockermouth, but they had failed to turn up for any ceremony. However, doubt remained as to whether they had married or not when visiting Scotland. Armstrong thought they had, but also stated she had been too drunk to remember clearly. It was decided by the court that they were not man and wife, so Armstrong was tried alongside the three others accused. The case was heard at Carlisle Assizes Court in August 1816.

But why was Dalton executed for the capital offence of burglarising and stealing from a dwelling house, for tying up the servants, for beating and 'cruelly using' Mrs Hudson, for striking her two daughters, and for taking £50, while the others were not? Of the five involved, Whineray had managed to disappear and evade capture, Dalton's former fellow felon, Kinghorn, turned King's evidence and grassed on his colleagues. It was



**Hudson Place, scene of the crime,
L&DFLHS archive**

decided that Pollett had urged the others to desist from killing Mrs Hudson, and so he was shown some mercy, and Armstrong had remained outside when the actual burglary took place.

John Dalton, though, was found guilty of planning, of preparing for (they went armed with chisels, ropes and loaded pistols) and of perpetrating the offence. He was sentenced to death on 26 August, as, initially, were Armstrong and Pollett (Kinghorn by now having done his deal with the court), but with a recommendation that Armstrong be reprieved. Her sentence was commuted to transportation for life, as was Pollett's. His was a 'lucky escape' according to the judge.

Dalton was strung from the 'hanging tree' outside Carlisle Gaol and executed on Saturday 14 September 1811.

After being transported to Australia in 1817, on the convict ships 'Lord Eldon' and 'The Friendship' respectively, both Pollett, conditionally pardoned in 1828, and Armstrong, conditionally pardoned in 1835, lived the rest of their lives in relative freedom in New South Wales. But in April

1819, three years after the robbery, poor 16 year old Mary Hudson died. It was said she never made a full recovery from being 'beaten cruelly round the head with a stick' for attempting to raise the alarm.

During the course of the evening Ray Greenhow kept the forty members of the live audience and seventeen more on 'Zoom', royally entertained and informed. He was able not only to provide enthralling detail of a robbery that took place over 200 years ago at a property that many members know well (the current and former occupants of Hudson Place were in the hall), but also to give a fascinating overview of the world of early policing in Cumberland.

Peter Batrick

Group Meeting: 'Inaugural meeting of the House history group 23 (HHG23)', 6 June

The meeting took place at Woodlands, Rogerscale. Nine members attended the session where the ideas and objectives of the group were discussed resulting in the terms of reference of the group. It was considered that four meetings a year may be appropriate, with a report prepared to be published in *The Wanderer*. Field trips may also be a possibility.

A briefing paper was circulated and discussed which gave pointers of how to get started with research for a house history and contained links to appropriate websites. Other ideas were discussed. If in contact with past owners/occupiers of properties, it could be extremely helpful in researching and documenting the history of the house. Using old photographs to aid research was thought to be a great idea. Tracing previous families of properties who may have old pictures could provide a new thread of research. Old military or other aerial photographs would be extremely useful as well. Andrew Chamberlain will look to see if anything is available in this regard. It was also noted that the Society holds a significant number of (as yet uncatalogued) old photographs. Further discussion is needed on this point.

The separate project of 'oral histories' would also provide invaluable information. Residents with generational families of the locale could provide interesting information of who lived where and when or possibly when changes were made to properties or land sold/acquired. The group considered that oral histories would be an important source of social history that would add to overall research.

A discussion took place on the wealth of materials collected, collated and available to members of the Society. Most of the records were digitised with nearly 100 separate documents, records or information sources available. These have recently been re-indexed by document type and by geographical location (see Archive index and Geographical index). Additionally there are various books, letters and other documents in the Society's possession that could be examined and used as research. Some properties had already been the subject of research and a list was provided by Derek Denman of properties the Society had previously researched and published articles on.

Help or assistance with research is always available through Adam and Mary Baker or through the Committee of the Society. The next meeting date and venue will be decided in due course.

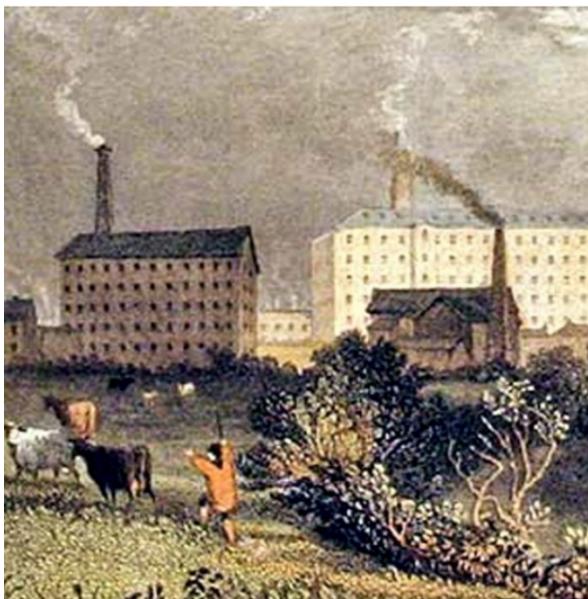
Talk: 'How was Lancashire fed during the Industrial Revolution, c.1780-1850', 8 June

Dr Winstanley's interest in the source of food in Lancashire during this period was inspired by thinking about our modern concerns about food security, and preoccupation with diet.

The population of Lancashire trebled from 683,000 in 1801 to two million by 1851 by which time an eighth of the population of the UK lived in Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire. By contrast, the population of the rest of England merely doubled. Yet Lancashire was not renowned for its agricultural

output and had the smallest farms in the country. The conventional wisdom, expressed by Lord Erle in 'English Farming Past and Present', is that changes in farming methods and technological innovation improved agricultural output. So that England was self-sufficient to feed itself in the first half of the 19th century making the industrial revolution possible. We were also believed to have fed ourselves primarily on wheat. In his 'Bread and the British Economy c1770-1870' Christian Petersen claimed that 'Bread was the chief food of industrialising Britain'; 'it was the age of the wheat loaf'.

The reality though was that England was still dependent on food imports in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the price of wheat and meat fluctuated widely, and shortages led to riots, primarily because of war with France. Authorities in Lancaster tried to protect their citizens by allowing a period of time, when the markets first opened, when ordinary inhabitants would be able to make their purchases. Only after that would the 'hucksters and higglers' be allowed to buy provisions to sell on. Motivated by concern about high prices, and personal curiosity, Sir Frederic Morton Eden researched the conditions of the poor in different regions in 1794 and 1795. In *The State of the Poor: An History of the Labouring Class in England* he reported a widespread prejudice in the South, shared by rich and poor alike, in favour of wheat and against 'coarse food'. Even when prices were high, the poor in the South would 'not be fed on meal, and chopped potatoes, like hogs'. Eden contrasted and compared workhouse diets. Wheat was a staple in the South featuring in almost every meal whereas menus in the North relied heavily on oats and broths featuring meat and potatoes, such as lobsouse (a kind of hash made with potatoes boiled with a small quantity of meat, served with onions and



**Swainson & Birley's cotton mill, Preston,
by Thomas Allom**

seasoning) popular in Liverpool. According to a 1794 report to the Board of Agriculture on Cumberland 'The bread generally used in this county is made of barley, or a mixture of barley and rye; oatmeal is made into hasty puddings and eat (sic) with butter, treacle, milk, or beer for breakfast and often for supper'. In the same year, John Holt wrote that in Lancashire the grain principally cultivated was oats, made into various kinds of bread-cakes or porridge. Except in Fylde and the Furness area, the climate and soil in the North West were not conducive to wheat production and oats could be grown much more intensively.

Potatoes were popular in the North even among the middle and upper classes and could be boiled, fried, roasted, and used as an accompaniment to meat or dripping. Depending on the variety, an acre of land could feed three to six times as many on a crop of potatoes compared with wheat. Potatoes were grown by cottagers and as well as farmers throughout Lancashire, using lazy-bed, drill or furrow, or dibble methods, and

were transported by barge to Manchester, via the Bridgewater Canal, and to Liverpool via the Mersey. (The Oxnohle in Manchester, adjacent to the Science Museum, is the only pub in England named after a variety of potato.)

By the 1830s families working in manufacturing had wider diets than families still employed in agriculture, particularly when trade was good. In Manchester, poultry, eggs, and pigeons were sourced from as far away as Lincolnshire and 'even from Kendal and Penrith' as well as Scotland and northern counties. But Lancashire did not grow enough oats to feed itself, and so grain also had to be drawn in from elsewhere. Analysis of regional imports and exports demonstrates that wheat and oats did not come, by rail or canal, from the Southern wheat heartlands (even after Goole port opened in 1826) but instead came by sea from Ireland. The Corn Laws, which prohibited foreign imports, had produced hothouse conditions for cultivation in Ireland following the Act of Union in 1801 which, in turn, lowered the price of corn and resulted in land in England being converted for livestock farming. During the Peninsular War, 1807-14, Ireland exported 500,000 quarts of corn to the army in the Spanish peninsula as well as supplying the navy and army in the West Indies. Ireland exports mainly to Liverpool in England for onward distribution to other cities. The prospectus for the Liverpool and Manchester railway described Ireland as 'the natural granary of the manufacturing districts of this country'.

With the introduction of steamboats in the 1820s, Ireland was able to start sending livestock across the Irish Sea. In his history *Cattle Droving* Peter Roebuck describes how mostly Scottish livestock was walked to market through Cumbria where overnight accommodation and grazing were provided. The practice came to an end with a growth in sea traffic from the 1820s with the introduction of steam and steam packet boats capable of carrying livestock. In 1841 a steamboat travelling from Belfast to Port Carlisle got

into difficulty in the Solway Firth and was described as having about 300 passengers and an equal number of head of cattle, as well as a few horses, pigs, and stores of bacon, flour, and oatmeal.

In 1839 the Anti-Corn Law League was formed. During the 'hungry 40s' Ireland dried up as a source of supply as the land had been over-used. The strength of the Anti-Corn Law League grew as prices increased whilst factory owners tried to cut wages until, in 1846, the Corn Laws were repealed. An influx of American flour soon followed, most of it going to Liverpool rather than London, from ports on the Atlantic seaboard and as far as New Orleans.

Dr Winstanley concluded that the cities in the Northwest were initially fed from foodstuffs that were predominately locally grown between 1780 and 1850, later superseded by food imports from Ireland, and then America, as the urban populations continued to grow. Diets were more varied than elsewhere in England, with a preference for oats, so productivity gains in the cultivation of wheat do not explain the North's ability to feed itself during the Industrial Revolution.

Carolyn Davis

Historical Walk around Allonby, 8 July

Twenty-five members assembled on this blustery morning, with threats of rain, which never quite materialised, for a guided tour of Allonby, led by Pam Jones of the Allonby Heritage Group. Her knowledge of the history of Allonby is extensive and we were treated to a fascinating and enjoyable tour of the village of Allonby from north to south. We began at North Lodge, built in 1824 by Thomas Richardson, a Quaker, a successful financier and a director of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. His wife Martha Beeby was a native of Allonby, so he must have felt a personal connection. North Lodge was built as their holiday home and was unusual in that from the outset, it incorporated a number of alms



Pam Jones, in mustard-coloured jacket, addressing the group in the Quaker burial ground

houses in the wings. Richardson later used his financial gains to support several other ventures in Allonby, including the village school, still open but with a falling roll.

Moving south through the village, we saw evidence of many aspects of its past; religious in the form of a small Quaker Meeting House, which could nevertheless hold 100 people, a Congregational Chapel as well as the Anglican Church. Its agricultural past remains in the form of converted barns and being on the coast, Allonby has been home to a fishing fleet, fish pickling business, shipbuilders and a ship breaking yard. It has played a part in aiding deprived children, as in the Sunshine Home and in the old vicarage, which at one time was a home for disabled children. There were attempts to cash in on the fashion for sea bathing with The Baths and it made provision for its residents in the Village Hall and the striking Reading Room, which dominates the sea front. We observed the range of its accommodation, from the poorest hovels to homes of the gentry as in North Lodge and Allonby Grange.

We diverted from the main road, to follow The Square, which is in fact a series of smaller squares and cobbled lanes. For

those of us who have frequently walked along the shore and enjoyed being by the sea, the maze of lanes, lined with brightly-coloured cottages was a revelation. Many properties, which formerly served the community in diverse ways, are now domestic dwellings. Allonby has long been a holiday destination with its surviving hotels and caravan parks, where farmers in the village diversified to bring in extra income. Several properties now have the tell-tell key box attached to the wall outside and Pam had previously told us there were now 47 Airbnb lets in the village, which is steadily being depopulated, leading to doubts about the future viability of the school.

This report does not attempt to repeat the full details of the tour we were given, as there is an excellent booklet, *Allonby Past and Present*, available from the tea-room and café on The Square. Members were particularly interested to see Glen Cottage, the former home, for twelve years, of renowned local artist, Percy Kelly. Some of the party left the tour at the tea-room, either before or after lunch; others continued southwards to Christ Church. The report ends with grateful thanks to Lena Stanly-Clamp, whose idea this visit was, and who made all the arrangements.

Sandra Shaw

Articles

A Conflict over Education in the Hamlet of Pardshaw Hall

by Sandra Shaw

It's funny how things come together. I have been researching the hamlet of Pardshaw Hall off and on for over 20 years. One of my sources has been *The Diary of Isaac Fletcher of Underwood, Cumberland 1756-1781*, edited by Angus Winchester. Another has been the small publication *Pardshaw; Quakers and others* by Bernard Bradbury. Last Autumn, I up graded my subscription to Find my Past and gained access to many old newspapers and learned about a school in the hamlet in the 18th century. Then, I read in Derek Denman's article in the February Wanderer about a conflict over education in Lorton. Finally, in a recent edition of the *Who do you Think you are* magazine, there was more about conflict over education. It was time to pull these threads together. In the 18th Century there were two schools in the hamlet of Pardshaw Hall, which only has 17 properties now, over half of which have been built or converted in the last 50 or 60 years. There cannot have been sufficient demand for both, and this situation was bound to cause conflict.

Education at the Meeting House.

The hamlet of Pardshaw Hall is home to the Pardshaw Quaker Meeting and it is well known that John Dalton (1766–1844) despite having been born at Eaglesfield, received his early education at the Quaker school at Pardshaw Hall. He entered the school in 1775, and while there he was taught by John Fletcher (son of Isaac, the diarist) who began his teaching there the same year. John Dalton always spoke highly of the education he received. The Diary tells us that John Fletcher began his teaching in 1775, to cover for the illness of the regular schoolmaster, taking over on his own account the following month when the master resigned. He ran it until

1778 but was persuaded to take up the job again for a further year in January 1779.

Dissenting religions were highly motivated to establish their own schools as education was important to them. They believed that people should have direct access to the Bible, to learn from the original, rather than through the interpretation of others. Many day schools were established, some not restricted to Friends' children. In Pardshaw, Friends gave or bequeathed considerable sums towards education of children of the Pardshaw Meeting, beginning in 1710. A basic education was provided free to some, while others were expected to pay, and some subjects were charged for. Until the new (present) building was ready for use at Pardshaw in 1729, the children were educated half the year at Greysouthen and half at Eaglesfield.

A minute of 1735 hinted that a new building was to be considered to house the school, but it was to be a further ten years before that happened. In the meantime, it was for the school's convenience that the porch was added to the main building in 1740. It was only in 1745 that a minute recorded agreement that a house fit for a schoolhouse should be built at the side of the yard, on the upper side facing the crag. This room is part of the range of buildings still to be seen beside the road.

Both *Pardshaw; Quakers and others*, and *The Diary of Isaac Fletcher* contain numerous references to the school, its funding, and recruitment and payment of teachers. An entry in the diary in 1766 suggests that part of the schoolmaster's remuneration consisted of a kind of 'whittlegarth', where the four local residents who were to pay the salary also agreed to provide board and lodging for one quarter each.

The building of a second school.

Isaac Fletcher's diary for 1775 includes several entries concerning what he called 'the affair about the school'. This relates to plans for the building of a new school, not a Quaker school, on the site of an old smithy, just outside the north-east corner of the Quaker burial ground. Shortly

before 'the affair' began, in February that year, the diarist records that there were 'above 30 scholars' at their own school. They were clearly not happy about this new development. On Tuesday 18 July Isaac Fletcher attended the Pardshaw Monthly Meeting. He says



'The affair about the school came on. It was agreed that [three friends] & self should speak to John Usher about the ground and to purchase it of him if we can & to talk him pretty closely over about it.' This John Usher was son of an earlier John Usher who had died six years previously; both of whom were wallers.

Both men were well known to the diarist, who had prepared indentures for them, bought stone from them and employed them on various walling jobs. They were both involved in building Isaac Fletcher's lime kiln (still to be seen on the crags) in 1759 and 1760. Immediately before the 'affair about the school', he had contracted with John Usher to clear moles for him on a 5-year contract for 5s per year plus victuals.

The affair continued. On Friday 21 July, he records 'Sent for John Usher this evening. He came. Talk'd him over about the old smithy which he pretends he has sold to the actors for the chapel in order to build a schoolhouse upon, which is within 8 or 10 yards of our school and calculated on purpose to prejudice us & out of a malicious view to injure & annoy our school.' On Wednesday 2 August, he says 'Went to Pardshowhall in the evening about the new school.'

Next day he continues 'Met about the schoolhouse. Had the affair talk'd over. They agreed to desist from building on yon place and gave the waller orders to proceed no further until further orders.' However, a fortnight later, on Thursday 17

**Remains of the school at Pardshaw Hall.
The higher wall marks the Quaker's land.**

August, his diary records 'At meeting in the morning. They have now begun to build their schoolhouse at the far end of our meeting house yard.' Nothing further is said about the school. John Usher completed his 5-year contract to remove moles and not long before the diarist died in 1781, was employed to whitewash Isaac Fletcher's house and parlour.

It is not clear when the Quaker School ceased to function. Margaret Irwin wrote in 1917 in her booklet *The History of Pardshaw Meeting and Meeting House*, that school furniture could still be seen in the schoolroom, although it does not sound as though the room was functioning as a school by that time.

What happened to the second school?

Pardshaw; Quakers and others mentions the new school building, adding that it was 'later demolished but leaving evidence ... in the roadside wall.' Indeed, this evidence can be seen to this day, with a little searching. Within living memory, these signs were more visible, but the wall was lowered in the last century, removing the upper portions of the window remains.

120 years after it was built, members of the newly formed Dean Parish Council were asking questions about this second school. Parish Councils were formed by the Local Government Act of 1894 and the Dean Parish Council minute books show



Remains of the second school

that they lost no time in discussing the old Pardshaw Hall school, and more particularly, what had happened to an endowment for paying a schoolmaster.

There were questions asked again in 1895, before they really got hold of the matter in 1896. The *West Cumberland Times* of that year carried reports of two council meetings at which this was raised. In the first, held in January that year, Mr Waite (probably of Waites Farm in Pardshaw) began by asking what had become of the endowment left by Mrs Robinson for the schoolmaster at Pardshaw Hall. He explained: her will left £90 in trust, with the interest to be paid annually to the schoolmaster. The rector and churchwardens were appointed trustees. Canon Sherwen, in the chair, said he was uncertain of the history of the school, but it had been pointed out to him that there had been no school for a long time. The accumulated principal and interest was now £300. He said his uncle, the late Rev S Sherwen had paid the school fees of Pardshaw Hall children attending Paddle and Mockerkin Schools for years and in his will, he directed that £40 be deducted from the interest of the endowment for this purpose. He (Canon Sherwen) had only moved that sum into a different bank and it could now be used

(along with the rest) for whatever purpose was decided. Mr Waite said there was no use leaving it in the bank and the meeting supported building a schoolhouse for the schoolmaster [of Dean School]. It was acknowledged that there would be a need to consult the Charity Commissioners and a committee was

appointed to report further. Conversation disclosed that the school had been closed for 45 years and it was stated that the last schoolmaster used crutches and came from Cockermouth, and frequented the school long after any pupils, to claim the interest on the endowment.

When the council held its annual meeting in April 1896, the subject was raised again and the committee reported, giving a little more detail, some slightly at variance with what had been stated previously. The school had been built on land belonging to Mr Wood and had a window which abutted the road. Rumour had it that when the school ceased, the owner of the field could take it down. When the school was built or how long it stood, Canon Sherwen (chair) said he could not find out. It was standing in 1819 when Mrs Dinah Robinson left a legacy of £100 in trust to the rector and churchwardens of Dean Parish, the interest to be paid annually to the schoolmaster. Towards the close of its existence, very few children attended, sometimes none, but the money was there, and the schoolmaster was paid. When he retired or died, the school closed and eventually the building was removed.

Since then, the money had accumulated to about £300, and Mr Waite suggested it should be used for an educational purpose. It was generally agreed to build a house for the

schoolmaster. Canon Sherwen offered land and said he was 'long ago' given £10 by a friend of the parish. Discussion continued and in answer to a query about what would happen should the full amount of money not be raised, Sherwen promised it would be found. The point was made that this was really a matter for the rector and the churchwardens but support from the parish council would help any application to the Charity Commissioners. They then resolved 'The Parish Council request the rector and churchwardens of Dean to take such steps as to them seem desirable to obtain the consent of the Charity Commissioners to the appropriation of Mrs D Robinson's bequest to the building of a house for the master of Dean School'.

Progress was glacial. In 1908 the matter was raised by the Parish Council with the comment that no use had been made of the money for 50 years and that the schoolhouse had been taken down 'quite 50 years ago'.

The Dean Educational Foundation.

I am grateful to Michael Bonner, treasurer of Dean Church, for his help in bringing the story up to date. It was not until 1923, that Dinah Robinson's bequest, by then valued at £617 4s 9d (capital plus accumulated interest) was rolled up, along with two other charitable foundations, into The Dean Educational Foundation. The three earlier foundations were those of John Fox, founded by will dated 14 March 1596/7, of Sarah Fidler founded by will in the year 1851, and of Dinah Robinson founded by will in the year 1819.

Section 11 of the 1923 trust deed provides for three ways in which the Trustees could use the money in the foundation, to the benefit of boys and girls within Dean Parish - a. In assisting pupils to attend schools, institutions or classes for purposes of education other than elementary, by paying their fees or travelling or other incidental expenses or by providing them with maintenance

allowances ... b. In making arrangements approved by the LEA for attending to the health or physical condition of children attending any Public Elementary School ... c. In otherwise promoting the education, including social and physical training ... of the poorer classes In addition, Section 17 allowed for the provision of a residence for a schoolmaster, and permission to do that was granted in 1924.

The plot of land adjacent to Dean School was purchased and a house was built there, funded in part from the Trust funds and partly by a loan from the then Workington Building Society. The house was leased to the school headmaster from its completion (in 1925) until 1973, when the headteacher decided to buy his own house. The house was then rented out until 1990, when it was sold, with the proceeds of sale invested as Foundation funds in accordance with the Trust Deed. The income from its accumulated investments currently enables the Foundation trustees to make an annual grant of about £4,500 to Dean School for specified 'non-educational' activities for the welfare of pupils - for example breakfast and after school clubs.

The first use of the Foundation was to assist Mary Huddard, daughter of the

The schoolhouse adjacent to Dean School



blacksmith in Deanscales, to attend Cockermouth Grammar School, because she clearly showed great promise. She was further assisted to attend college in Manchester and although she did not return to the area immediately, Miss Huddart taught French at Cockermouth School for many years. She returned to the house where she had been born and lived there until she passed her 100th birthday. She died in 2022.

It would be interesting to know more about Mrs Dinah Robinson and her will, but that has not been forthcoming. When I began my research into the hamlet, I looked at all the wills that mentioned Pardshaw and Pardshaw Hall, but hers was not among them. I recently consulted Cumbria Archive Service and they confirmed for me that they too have been unable to find it. Dinah Robinson was buried at Dean on 30 March 1822 and her death notice, recorded in the Cumberland Pacquet of 22 April read as follows 'At Pardshaw, in the parish of Dean, Mrs Dinah Robinson, relict of the late Mr Joseph Robinson, a respectable yeoman of that place, in the 80th year of her age.'

Conflicts about education.

I think it is clear that the second school was built to provide a different kind of education for children in the village and there are hints that this was done by members of the established church. There can never really have been sufficient need for two schools, so Isaac Fletcher is right in stating that this was done to injure the Quaker School.

Derek Denman's article in the Wanderer, concerned Robert Bridge (1794-1857), whose name is recorded on the dedication stone on St Cuthbert's school house at Lorton. Robert was intolerant of protestant religious dissent and although he supported improvement for the local population, he increasingly saw this through the lens of the established church. While resident in Lorton (1847-1857), he offered £50 towards rebuilding the schoolroom on condition that the Trustees would resign in favour of the officiating minister and

churchwardens. His offer was rejected. Robert Bridges was not alone in his wish to control education in his locality. Derek refers to the 'battle in England between the dissenters and the established church for control of state-mandated education' which he notes had raged since the 1830s.

The article in *Who do you think you are* magazine refers to conflict that followed the passing of the 1902 Education Act, which gave control of education to Local Education Authorities, thereby removing the elected school boards. Dissenters often saw this as supporting Church of England schools, while denying funding and support for non-conformist education. In protest some non-conformists refused to pay their Council rates and could be summonsed to court for non-payment. The article carried details of a non-conformist clergyman who was summonsed to Huddersfield Borough Police Court in February 1905. He failed to appear and was dealt with as though he had been fined and refused to pay. His cruet set was seized by bailiffs and taken to be auctioned. Friends bought it back for him and this sequence of events was repeated over subsequent years.

Arguments continue today about the religious basis for education, with faith schools now accounting for about a third of all state-funded mainstream schools. According to the government website, this proportion has gradually increased over the past two decades. They are controversial because, although they must follow the national curriculum, they are allowed to choose what to teach in religious studies lessons and may have specific religious practices within the school day. They can select students based on faith, and as the proportion of faith schools has increased, the proportion of non-faith-based schools has necessarily decreased and a faith school, possibly not of the parents' faith, may be the only school within a reasonable distance of a child's home. This is probably not the place to go into these arguments at further length, but they are clearly nothing new.

Photographs by the author

Using Manorial records for property history: the L&DFLHS Digital Archive of Historical Sources

The Digital Archive of Historical Source, DAHS, is a large collection of copies of historical sources about our area, which was made available in February. It is available to borrow, for as long as needed, on a flash drive/memory stick and contains mainly photographs of original records, made over many years. It should give a good start to any local history project in our area.

Issue 1 of DAHS had a wide range of sources about people and property, from parish registers, through taxation records, enclosure records, tithe apportionments, and maps and plans. Issue 2 now includes manorial records. A full listing can be downloaded from our website at http://www.derwentfells.com/pdfs/source_s/DAHSArchiveListingIssue2.pdf. The DAHS itself, on the memory stick, includes a geographical finder to help identify which records are relevant to a particular part of our area, parish, township or manor, plus notes for each archive.

What are manorial records?

Manorial records are records of landed property, and so are directly relevant to study of property or house history. The records include people principally as owners of manors or holders of property within manors, either by freehold or as manorial tenants.

Our local manorial system derives from the Norman Conquest, the creation of the baronies, and of the manors within those baronies. Because our area was not under the control of the Normans until 1092, we are missing inclusion in the Domesday Book, which benefit historians of the districts which came more easily to the Normans. On the other hand, and more importantly for property history, because the manorial system continued, unusually, in our area until abolished by law between the two world wars, we have a rich source of information for modern

local history which few other districts have.

The existence of modern manorial records has been especially valuable since the advent of the land registry as the root of a title in property, after which old deeds were no longer necessary. Many were lost, although some solicitors or property owners have deposited old deeds in record offices. The records of manors, by contrast, are protected by law and subject to listing in the Manorial Document Register, which can be found at <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/manor-search>.

A few members of the society, including the late Joan Borrowscale, were involved back in 2006 in an exemplar project on the use of manorial documents in local and family history, as part of a project to create the online content for Cumbria. See the report at: <http://www.derwentfells.com/pdfs/cmrreport.pdf>

Manors

A manor is a piece of landed property owned by a lord of the manor and containing manorial tenants, who hold their property according to the custom of that manor. The use of the land was managed through the manor courts, which are the main sources of surviving records. A figure on page 21 of this Wanderer provides a convenient overview of manors in our area.

Manors can be very large or very small. Some manorial tenants can be directly managed from the original baronies, such as the tenants of Mosser, who were part of the barony of Coupland, or later Egremont. Some baronies had parts removed and made into separate manors held of the King, such as Derwentfells and Loweswater. Up to 1290 there was a practice of 'subinfeudation', by which a baron might grant, say, a 'vil' within his barony to a knight as freehold. This created a smaller manor within which the holders were tenants of the knight as lord, but that lord himself owed feudal obligations to the baron, the superior lord. Examples of this would be Embleton and



Brackenthwaite, which were within the superior lordship of Derwentfells, the land between the Derwent and the Cocker.

Getting smaller in size, Lorton was subject to between two and four freehold grants; High Lorton became a manor of the Priory of Carlisle circa 1138, while Low Lorton was a freehold subinfeudation before 1230. Highside and Gillbanke (Gillbrae) may well have been separate grants. Plans are given in the DAHS.

Low Lorton itself was later split three ways, probably between daughters, and so one gets to the point at which the manor owned in the sixteenth century by the Winder family, who built Lorton Hall, probably contained only about six farms. The small illustration is of the tenant's copy of a document of 1611 whereby the lord, Peter Winder, admitted a tenant, Henry Pearson (and his wife Agnes), to a tenement within Winder's manor in Low Lorton, the rent being 10s a year. A tenement is a general term for a defined piece of manorial property which has a rent. It could be a cottage, a close, a large area of land, or a farm. A farmhouse is usually indicated by a 'messuage and tenement'. A tenement may have appurtenances, or associated rights, for example to use the lord's common.

Types of manorial record

Manorial records link tenants and manorial property, though they have an annoying tendency to identify property by its rent and the chain of manorial or customary tenants, rather than a property name. The

changes of customary tenant for a property were recorded in the court of dimissions by a surrender of the old tenant, who might be dead, and the admittance of the new tenant, who by custom might be the eldest son. The rent would be noted and the new tenant would pay a fine to be admitted.

A distinctive feature of border manors, including ours, was that the tenancy lasted only as long as the lord lived, and that when the lord died there was a general fine of all tenants in the manor, for them to be admitted or re-admitted. The lists of tenants created for a general fine in a manor is very useful for house history because all properties and all tenants must be included, in some way. High Lorton is excluded, because the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle Cathedral never died. But other rentals and call-lists were made, and physical surveys of this and other manors were also made.

Manor courts, or courts baron, were regularly held by the steward of the manor with a jury formed from the greater tenants of the manor. They would decide matters brought before them over a wide range of subjects, from appointing officers, civil disputes for debt or trespass, identifying the customary heirs of property, managing the use of the common, and enforcing obligations towards others in the community. Some manors had responsibility for crime, as discussed on page 21. The records of the verdicts of these courts contain the most information about named inhabitants.

Lastly there are records of enfranchisement, where manorial tenants have purchased their freeholds from the lord, and thereby exit the manorial system. Once enfranchised there are no more manorial records.

In conclusion

The survival and availability of manorial records is variable, but the DAHS has relevance for all our manors. It is strongest for High Lorton, Loweswater, and Thackthwaite. Please contact me for further information.

Derek Denman

***The Newcom families of
Rannerdale and around,
1472-1537: yeoman murder
and state executions.***

by Derek Denman

In *The Language of the Landscape* Angus Winchester pauses at Rannerdale to consider 'storied ground', or places that are associated with influential narratives, whether factual or fictional.¹ The story attached to Rannerdale, *The Secret Valley*, a product of Nicholas Size's imagination, tells of an early twelfth century battle in this Norse chieftain's secret stronghold, where the Normans were bloodily defeated. 'Rannerdale's true history is less romantic than the myth created by Nicholas Size', which is easy to agree considering that the only story of a resident Rannerdale inhabitant before 1900 is of Jak Newcom, who murdered a man on Rannerdale Knotts in 1516. A brief discussion of those events at Rannerdale is given in *The Language of the Landscape*, together with a description of the consequent use of the land in Rannerdale. But there the story of the Newcom family ends, and more would not properly fit the scope of the book. The lives of the local Newcoms are followed and examined further in this article.

In a way, the Lake District is all storied ground, because the idea of the Lake District is a cultural construct, overlaid on a distinctive geographical and geological district. The idea of the Lake District is in part a canonical collection of stories in text and images, published after 1750, and the public interest in the inhabitants of those stories lies chiefly in their relationship with the land. The land is the subject of *The Language of the Landscape*; the role of the inhabitants and their true stories is to give a voice and a history to the land; just one valley which might speak for the whole.

From a historian's viewpoint the impressive achievement is that the framework of, essentially, landscape heritage is used for a masterclass in how to present a great depth of historical knowledge in an accessible way. This reliability of the historical facts is what distinguishes the work from, say, the other story discussed at Rannerdale, W G Collingwood's *Thorstein of the Mere*. Collingwood used a fictional family's story as a vehicle for promoting a historical knowledge of the medieval Norse-Irish settlement of western mid-Britain, including their encounters with other cultures at critical times in history.²

All the stories support the Lake District as a World Heritage Site, designated for its heritage resulting from human activity, and not for its natural beauty. The landscape, or the view of the surface of the land, is not natural, with its valleys cleared for oats and hay, and its fellsides impoverished through a thousand years of grazing, to sustain the inhabitants. The heritage of the Lake District, that which we value from the past, contains both factual history and, as cultural heritage, the whole of the discourse of the Lakes in prose, poetry and painting. What matters is not historical accuracy but agency, and despite its far greater historical value, *Thorstein of the Mere* has far less agency as heritage than the romance of *The Secret Valley*, intended to promote tourism in Buttermere.

In 1769, soon after the creation of the Lake District in discourse, and known at that time as the English Lakes, the elderly and frail poet Thomas Gray visited, looking for and finding the last survivals of the English village life which he had portrayed in his 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard', of 1750. His view of Grasmere, seen from a distance, as a 'little unsuspected paradise' led him to imagine that 'all is peace, rusticity, and happy poverty in its neatest most becoming

¹ Angus J L Winchester, *The Language of the Landscape*, Handstand Press, 2019, pp.177-91.

² See Tim Stanley-Clamp's article in *Wanderer*, May 2020, *Thorstein of the Mere: the Collingwoods and History*'.

attire'.³ This romanticism lay dormant through the late eighteenth century, a period of picturesque tourism when the rustic inhabitants were just a rough part of a picture. The romanticising of the inhabitants blossomed through Wordsworth and Southey. The yeoman, who owned and farmed a small tenement, was an ancient and worthy figure to be protected, and had been earlier awarded the specially invented and distinguished title of '(e)statesman'.

Today those yeomen, their lifestyles, and their characters are represented and remembered by the preservation of the farmed landscape and the un-clothed fells which they left, and by their stories, fact and fiction. If writing about the history of the early modern people of Cumberland, it can be difficult to avoid viewing them through the teleological lens of Lake District Heritage, perhaps the modern Claude glass. Jak Newcom of Rannerdale lived in the township of Brackenthwaite, in the manor of Derwentfells, in the county of Cumberland; also in the Catholic parish of Brigham, within the Diocese of York. He knew nothing of the Lake District, or Cumbria, or his possible future place in its heritage.

Records of the Newcom families

Our knowledge of the Newcom families, and the murder on Rannerdale Knotts in 1516, comes from the survival of the court roll and verdicts of the manor courts, which were managed from Cockermonth Castle by the steward of the Percys, earls of Northumberland. The original documents, now sadly inaccessible at the castle, are available in translation as DLec/299T, some one thousand manuscript pages of detailed information, transcribed and translated by an uncredited archivist.⁴ That archive provides considerable information about the Newcom family in Brackenthwaite, and Newcoms in other local townships and

manors, from 1472-80, 1487-9, 1501-9, and 1515-34. For this article, the scope has been limited to the areas covered by the head courts of Derwentfells and the Five Towns, plus the Loweswater court. See the map on page 21.

The manor court of Brackenthwaite, including Rannerdale, represents the lowest level of surviving records. A search for Newcom in CASCAT at any date produces only two results, and another four if an 'e' is added. Yet surprisingly our lowly local Newcoms made it twice into the highest level of records, the State Papers of Henry VIII. These papers provide another perspective on the behaviour and culture of the female Newcom family members, in 1536-7 after the Pilgrimage of Grace.

Newcoms in Derwentfells from 1472

The arrival of the Newcom families in Derwentfells predates the records, and so they cannot be labelled as newcomers to the area, though the name is rare. The dwellings of people were not recorded, unless there was a need to disambiguate people of the same name, or if they were distant, for example grazing their foreign animals on the common of another manor. However, they were likely to be resident, or at least holding property, in the court area for which they acted as a juror, or served in an inquisition, or were regularly fined for routine use of materials from the common, such as 'vert' for the use of green wood.

Before 1480 the records give locations for only Thomas Newcom of Brackenthwaite, John Newcom of Buttermere and William Newcom of Buttermere.⁵ Buttermere was covered by the court of Braithwaite, and the roles of John and William Newcom in those court proceedings tend to confirm them as Buttermere yeomen. However, there was also a regular involvement of a John Newcom in the manor court for

³ W. Mason, *The poems of Mr Gray, to which are prefixed memoirs of his life and writings*, Vol. II, Dublin 1775, p.122

⁴ CASW/DLec/299T. Cockermonth Castle court verdicts 1472-1534. Subsequent references will give folio and page numbers.

⁵ Fos.311; p.5; 261, p.31; 260, p.8.

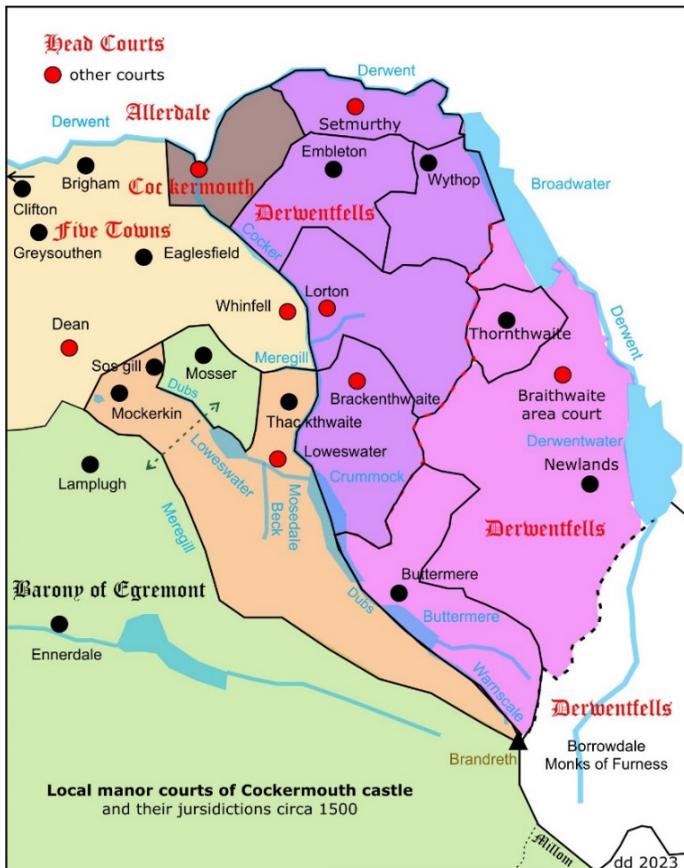
Brackenthwaite, which suggests a second John Newcom. In May 1474 the Derwentfells head court confirmed that there were two, father and son, when John Newcom, supported by a pledge given by John Newcom snr, was admitted to a property called Cletebank 'as to which he has the will of Agnes, late wife of Richard Rayson [Mayson], which tenement was in the tenure of the aforesaid Richard'.⁶ It seems that the son was marrying a widow, and gaining some property, more likely to be in Braithwaite than in Brackenthwaite. So probably there were two Newcom yeomen in Buttermere, and two in Brackenthwaite, but no names of dwellings were recorded.

William had a son, probably also William. He and John Newcom of

Buttermere were fined at the Loweswater court in June 1476 for taking thorns and wood in Graynlossok, the ancient stinted-pasture at Scales, to the west of Crummock and Buttermere.⁷ There seem to be no Newcoms holding property in Loweswater or Lorton before 1480, and so this Derwentfells branch of the medieval family seems to have been settled in Brackenthwaite and Buttermere. Rannerdale was not mentioned.

The manor courts and their role

The verdicts cover the administration of land and its use, but also the civil disputes among the tenants for debt or trespass,



and the hearing of criminal cases. This role in criminal cases roughly corresponds to the later workings of the magistrates' court, dealing with minor matters with a fine, or a birching, or removal. In October 1519 the Lorton court acted against gambling and 'ordered that no one shall keep dice in his house nor play at the game under the penalty of being removed'.⁸ In October 1518, 'William Wilson of Ullak shoemaker is a night wanderer and walks at night to procure the daughters and servants of the neighbours', for which he was fined 40d at the Dean court.⁹ The felonies, such as murder, rape, and serious theft, were

⁶ Fos.311, p.12.

⁷ Fos.262, p.31.

⁸ Fos.232, p.35.

⁹ Fos.287, p.40.

investigated and then sent on to a judge at the Assizes, for sentencing.

This criminal role of some manor courts resulted from the incorporation of the View of Frankpledge, by which the inhabitants of the township, or the earlier 'vil', took responsibility for dealing with the transgressions of their community members. The juries of those courts were generally drawn from the local freeholders, if any, and from the yeoman tenants of the manor. The steward of the manor ran the court for the lord. So that the earl of Northumberland had oversight of the tenants in matters of land use, civil disputes, and criminal cases.

Looking at the behaviour of the Newcoms there is nothing unusual. John Newcom was the victim of violence when Thomas Robynson was presented at the Brackenthwaite court in January 1473/4, for shedding John's blood.¹⁰

John alias Jak Newcom of Rannerdale

The presentments of Jak Newcom at the manor court before 1501 are unknown because the records are lost, but then the tale of Jak Newcom unfolds over fifteen years, leading to the murder of Robert Thomson in 1516.

On 19 April 1502 the Derwentfells head court found 'by inquisition that John Newcom otherwise called Jak drives astray cattle of his neighbours with dogs daily and separates them at all times of the year and also has enclosed common land with a wall contrary to the orders of the deputy lieutenant and forester under a penalty of 40s. ... Also they say that the aforesaid John Newcom keeps one dog running wild as before contrary to the penalty'.¹¹

For those transgressions he was fined 40d for the first and 12d for the second. He was still in default of the previous order for the walled enclosure, for which he risked a penalty of 40s, the maximum the court could apply, if he did not reinstate the common. This must have been a significant intake of common land

to have attracted the intervention of the Deputy Lieutenant and the forester.

Jak's location was not stated at this time but he was later identified as a yeoman of Rannerdale.

In March 1502/3 Thomas Newcom of 'Raverd', made a complaint at the Derwentfells court against Thomas Aldcorn, John Newcom and John Corbett.¹² That record suggests that Thomas Newcom was also a yeoman of Rannerdale, but perhaps not the Thomas whose wife died in 1473. The relationship to Jak was made explicit in the Brackenthwaite court in October 1505, when Thomas Newcom complained of Jak, and Jak counter-complained against his father, John Newcom, and his brother, Thomas Newcom.¹³ The brothers, Jak and Thomas, were therefore yeomen at Rannerdale. Perhaps their father, John, was the John, of Brackenthwaite or Buttermere, who was admitted to Cletebank in 1474. Clearly, the family relationships in 1502 were as volatile as the relationships with others, but with Jak being the most persistent problem for the courts. By October 1516 Jak's brother Thomas was of Buttermere, leaving Jak and his household in Rannerdale, still in conflict with his neighbours and with travellers, as he took in more land from the common for his exclusive use and denied the rights of others.¹⁴

At the Derwentfells head court in October 1505 Jak was presented by Buttermere township for 'wrongfully chasing and driving the neighbours cattle from his improvement', and by Brackenthwaite township for the same plus 'the blocking up of the high road at Hoescale and the breaking of the common sheepfold'.¹⁵ His 'improvement' suggests that the walled enclosure of 1502 had been retained. Perhaps worth the 40s.

In October 1507, at the Braithwaite court, which included Buttermere, Jak was again presented 'for the blocking up of the highway at Ranerthwate by means of a

¹⁰ Fos.311, p.6.

¹¹ Fos.129, p.9

¹² Fos.129, p.8.

¹³ Fos.247, p.11

¹⁴ Fos.287, p.35

¹⁵ Fos.247, p.8.

fenced improvement', which offence was escalated to the Derwentfells head court in May 1508.¹⁶ In September 1508, at the Brackenthwaite court, Jak was presented for 'one improvement not lying among the improvements adjacent to his improvements in Ranerdall', and for 'blocking up the highway at Ranerdall'.¹⁷ It seems that Jak Newcom was aggressively building up the enclosed land of his farm by taking in common land, in a process that reduced his neighbours' rights and interfered with the rights of others, and their animals, on the public highway through Brackenthwaite. This continued and was tolerated by the manor courts right up to the murder in 1516.

The only recorded building in Rannerdale, other than the implied Newcom farmstead, was the chapel of Mary Magdalen, recorded as being repaired in 1453, and recorded again in May 1508, when the wife of John Jenkinson was presented at the Derwentfells head court 'for a rescue [taking an impounded animal] on the guardians [chapel wardens] of the chapel of blessed Mary Magdalen of Ranerdall'.¹⁸ Earlier, in January 1503 at the Derwentfells court, Jak Newcom had complained of John Mirehus, chaplain, John Stubb, Richard Robynson, chaplain [later lord of Loweswater, Thackthwaite and Brackenthwaite] and Peter Robynson in four pleas contrary to agreement.¹⁹ Jak won two pleas and lost two. Given the involvement of two chaplains, perhaps Jak's intakes of land were affecting the use of the chapel, or of its property or rights.

The murder of Robert Thomson and its aftermath

There is an eight-year gap in the surviving court records to 1516, in the eighth year of the reign of Henry VIII. In October Jak Newcom was in trouble again at Brackenthwaite and Lorton for unmarked swine without rings.²⁰ On Thursday 13

November he killed Robert Thomson on the common at Rannerdale Knotts, in Buttermere township. Buttermere township presented Jak Newcom to the Derwentfells head court on 30 April 1517:

Verdict: The township of Buttermere say ... John Newcom late of Ranerdale ... yeoman ... otherwise called Jak Newcom on Thursday next after the feast of St Martin in the winter last past ... at the Raneknott in the Common of Derwentfells ... did make an assault on Robert Thomson and with an iron shod staff called an irnefork ... did feloniously strike the said Robert on the anterior part of his head and did give him a mortal blow ... the said John took to flight ...

Accessory: ... Richard Newcom of Ranerdale ... labourer son of the aforesaid John ... was present ... aiding and encouraging ... took to flight

Accessory: ... Agnes Newcom of Ranerdale ... labourer daughter of the aforesaid John ... was present ... aiding and encouraging

Accessory: ... Elesabeth Newcom of Ranerdale ... otherwise Elesabeth Symson of Ranerdale ... labourer ... was present ... aiding and encouraging

Accessory: ... Margaret Mirus of Ranerdale ... labourer ... was present ... aiding and encouraging

Accessory: Also they say that John Peill of Buttermyr ... labourer ... son of William Peill ... on the day in the year and place aforesaid knowing that the aforesaid John Newcom had committed the aforesaid felony ... did aid him and harbour him and offer encouragement ...

The township of Brackenthwaite agree ... with Buttermyr.²¹

Jak Newcom and his accessories should have been in custody awaiting the

¹⁶ Fos.154, p.19; 194, p.8.

¹⁷ Fos.194, p.26.

¹⁸ CASW/D/Lec./29/4, Minister's accounts 1453, Loweswater manor expenses; Fos.194,

p.9. See *Wanderer* May 2021 for the chapel at Rannerdale.

¹⁹ Fos.192, p.9.

²⁰ Fos.264, pp.35&37.

²¹ Fos.357, pp.11-13.

assizes, but Jak and Richard had fled and had joined the ranks of the fugitives from justice, who tended to lurk in woods and remote places. However, Richard found refuge within the district for many years. On 21 April 1525 the manor courts reviewed aspects of the case. Robert Hudson of Gatesgarth, Buttermere, was presented at the Lorton court. He 'on divers occasions in the last year did harbour one Richard Newcom son of John Newcom knowing him to have been convicted accessory to murder of Robert Thomson ...'.²² On the same day the Brackenthwaite court stated that Richard Newcom, late of Rannerdale, had been harboured by Richard Skelton of Branthwaite Esq., Peter Burnyeate of Loweswater Kirksteill, John Newcom of Frankeshow and James Robynson of Cold Keld.²³ Richard was well connected.

On the next day, 22 April, the Loweswater court ordered 'Be it remembered that Janet late the wife of Jak Newcom shall be of good and lawful behaviour towards the lordship and all the said lord's tenants and inhabitants viz James Newcom of Branthwaite and Thomas Person of Lowiswater'.²⁴ This confirmed that Jak's widow was called Janet, that she was not prosecuted for the murder, and that Jak was dead, either by hanging or other means.

What happened to the farmstead?

As a result of the felony the property and goods of Jak Newcom would have escheated to the lord, as a general condition of manorial tenancy. Whether Jak was hanged or a fugitive in 1517, we do not know, but on 17 December William Worms received for the accounts of the fifth earl of Northumberland, 'Of Lamplughe, by Laites and Harrison, his servant, part payment of goods forfeited by Jack Newcome'.²⁵ Thereby, Jak

Newcom made his appearance in the state papers of Henry VIII, but delayed until 23 August 1527, when the debts and accounts of the sixth Earl came under the acquisitive royal gaze.

Surviving court records do not record the admission of new tenants. In 1531 Henry Percy, sixth earl of Northumberland, gave his lands into the safe keeping of Henry VIII until his nephew came of age. When Henry VIII died in 1547 he still held the manor of Brackenthwaite. The consequent general fine for Brackenthwaite lists seven tenants of Rannerdale, each holding a share rented at 3s 9¾d, or a total of 26s 9¾d.²⁶ Those shares were described as 'a seventh part of various holdings and closes formerly in the tenure of John Newcom'.²⁷ On 3 September 1528 'The tenants of Rannerdale' headed the list of those paying a routine 2d fine for vert, suggesting that the division of Jak's property might have followed an escheat to the lord.²⁸ Jak's property is not defined in records, but the survival into the nineteenth century of an equal seven-way division of High and Low Rannerdale, in stints and strips, suggests that Jak owned all High and Low Rannerdale, as it had been in 1516, plus the farmstead and some other closes.

The position of Jak Newcom, yeoman.

In 1547 the former property of Jak Newcom was rented at 26s 9¾d, which would make him one of the largest landowners in Brackenthwaite. However, High Rannerdale may not have been as large in 1517 and may have been extended to the present boundary by the seven sharers. That boundary is likely to have been fixed in 1549, by the grant of the manor, including 'Dale Howe and Thwaite', by Edward VI to Lord Grey, and then by sale to Richard Robynson.²⁹

²² Fos.456, pp.48-9.

²³ Fos.456, pp.49-50.

²⁴ Fos.456, p.52.

²⁵ British History Online; *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 4, 1524-1530* Henry VIII: August 1527, 21-31, no.3380

²⁶ CASW/DLec/314/38 ff.77-80

²⁷ I am grateful to Angus Winchester for use of his expert transcription and translation of this critical item.

²⁸ Fos.310, p.50.

²⁹ *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 3 Ed VI, 19 Jul 1549

A plan of Rannerdale showing High and Low Rannerdale

made for William Marshall late C19th but showing the division of Low Rannerdale into six strips, including probably a double strip. Also showing High Rannerdale shared as seven stints.

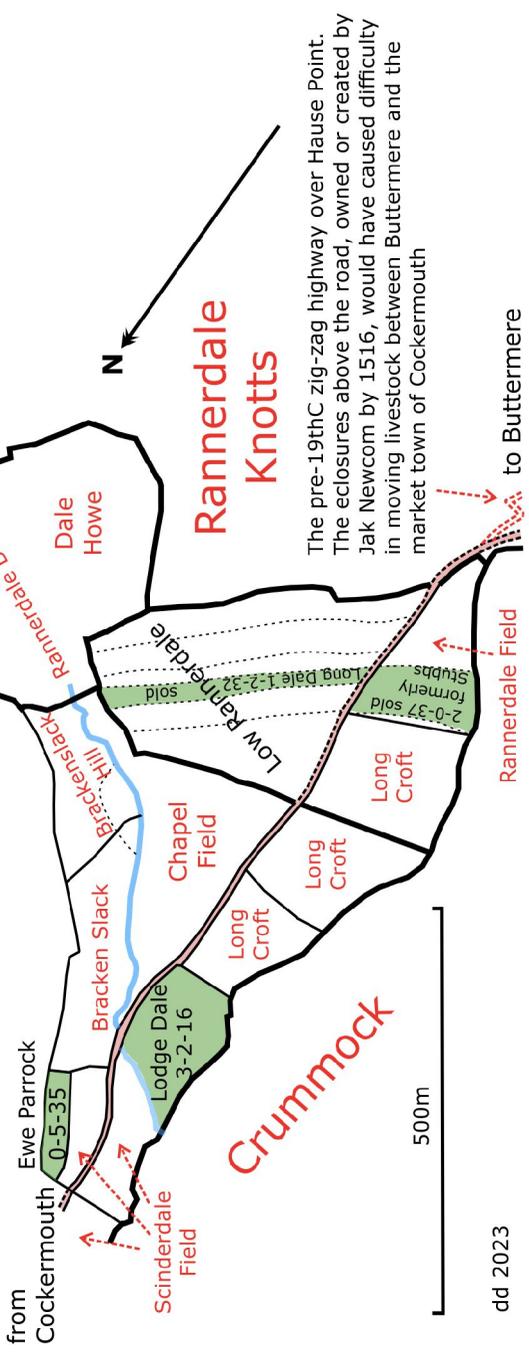
Black lines and legend are from the original, CASW/DWM/1/36.

Green shading also from the original, being remaining customary lands (not freehold) in Marshall's manor of Brackenthwaite and owned or formerly owned by Stubbs of Low Hollins.

Additional close names in red have been made using the tithe map.

The boundary is probably that which existed in 1549, when Brackenthwaite was acquired by Richard Robynson.

The arable closes below the road may be the earliest. Those above will probably be, or will contain, the Newcom intakes.



By 1516 Jak would have been a very substantial yeoman in Brackenthwaite, at least the third generation of yeomen, and not some poor offcomer trying to build a few closes into a viable family farm by intaking small parcels from the common.

Why was Jak’s antisocial behaviour tolerated by the manor court from at least 1502? The answer might lie in the balance of interests between the lord and the tenants. The power of a lord such as the earl of Northumberland lay in the extent and location of his lands, the number of his dependent tenants, and the income from them. A particular role of that earl under Henry VII and Henry VIII was to provide a buffer against the Scots, by means of his border lands and an armed tenantry.

Date	1086	1290	1377	1600
Persons	9k	61k	23k	76k
Percent England	0.54	1.27	0.91	1.84

Source, Broadberry et al, 'English medieval population: reconciling time series and cross-sectional evidence', 2011, https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/seminars/seminars/conferences/venice3/programme/english_medieval_population.pdf

The population in Cumberland was rapidly recovering from the wars, famine, and plague of the fourteenth century. The lord’s common of Brackenthwaite gave him very little income, while tenants’ intaking increased his rental and supported more fighting men, like Jak Newcom. The disbenefits of intaking common land fell on the other tenants, as seen in the presentments against Jak Newcom. The large enclosure of Lorton Head, from Whitbeck to Hope Beck, had been agreed in 1472, despite the disbenefit to Brackenthwaite.³⁰

The jury of the manor court of Brackenthwaite was made up of the greater yeomen like Jak, and that jury needed to be careful when controlling individuals in ways which might prejudice the interests of other yeomen, especially

considering that the fines from presentments went to the lord, after the expenses of his steward.

Why are there no complaints in the records about Jak from the Hudsons of Gatesgarth? They were the majority holders of Buttermere by the later sixteenth century, and they leased the grazing of the extensive forest lands of Gatesgarthside and Birkness, at the head of the valley. As major traders throughout the valley they were perhaps the family most represented in complaints. Their clear passage through Rannerdale, or their servants’ passage, was important, but they did not complain about Jak. They harboured Jak’s fugitive son, Richard.

Only when Jak Newcom moved up from offences against custom to serious criminality, did the manor courts take real action, in the most comprehensive way. They named the accessories to murder, clearing out the whole family from Rannerdale, and chopping the holding into seven parts, controlled from elsewhere. The Lorton parish registers, covering Brackenthwaite and Buttermere, start in 1538. The only Newcom(e) was Jenatt, who married John Nycholson in 1544, and thereby was no longer a Newcom. In 1547 no Newcom held property in Lorton, Brackenthwaite or Buttermere. The muster rolls of 1535, at The National Archives, in Kew, have not been seen. Newcom families continued in Five Towns, but on the receiving end of recorded violence. On 10 March 1531/2, at Brigham, William Newcom, son of Thomas, was feloniously assaulted with a dagger by John Warde, the servant of Ralphe Bowmyr, vicar of Brigham. William died on 24 March.³¹

Newcom women in 1536/7, burying traitors.

On 16 May 1537, the Duke of Norfolk wrote to Henry VIII from Bridlington. He enclosed ‘a bill sent by Sir Thos. Wharton and Sir Thos. Curwen of examinations of those who have taken down part of your

³⁰ Fos.311 p.6.

³¹ Fos.229, p.10.

rebels where they were hanged.³² They are all women—not one man. "It is a small number concerning seventy-four that hath be taken down, wherein I think your Majesty hath not be well served." Has not been well used himself, being kept ignorant of it so long, and that he can get no better knowledge of the illdoers in spite of quick messages. Desires to know how he shall punish offenders, both men and women. ...

[Sayings of certain women concerning the taking down from the gallows and burial of their husbands.]

(1.) Of Janet late wife of John Jakson of Hemellton, traitor:—How she and Margaret Jakson her mother-in-law, Janet Symson, Isabel Adeson, widow, one Rodre's widow of Emellton, Janet Berkyd of Cockermonth and many other women, buried him in Cockermonth churchyard on a Monday at nightfall. (2.) Of Chr. Smyth's wife:—She and John Hudson's wife, Newcollon's widow, Person's widow and **Newcom**'s widow of Brawnthat, and John Smyth's wife and Sander Buttermer's wife buried him in Brawntwhat churchyard on Shyer Thursday in the night. (3.) Of Ric. Crage's wife She and Janet Harres and Janet **Newcom** of Egyllsfelde brought her husband's body home, but the priest would not suffer it to be buried, so she buried it in a dyke. (4.) Of John Wyllson's wife:—She and Thomas Bell's wife, one Besse dwelling with Ric. Atkynson, Nan **Newcom** and Janet Dyckeson of Bregham buried Wyllson in Brygham churchyard on a Wednesday. (5.) Of Percival Hudson's wife:—Brought her husband to Torpeno churchyard but the vicar would not suffer him to be buried, so she took him back to the place he had lain, and 3 days after she and a woman she hired buried him in Torpeno churchyard at night. (6.) Of Thomas

Byll's wife:— Cut down her husband with a "thorncroke" and, with Janet Jenkyns, Besse wife of one Blandeman and 2 of her own daughters, buried him at daybreak in Cokermonth churchyard. (7.) Of John Fyssher's wife:—She and other women buried him in Cockermonth churchard. (8.) Of John Buele's wife:—Knows not who cut him down. After he had lain 9 days where he fell, she wound him in a sheet, and, eight days after, he and Annes Burton (?), John Wylson's wife, Ellen Stevenson, Janet Carde, and Ellen Man buried him at night in Deram churchyard. (9.) Of John Peyrson's wife:—Did not know of his "lowsying" from the chain. Gave a sheet to Besse Matson to wind him in and afterwards, with Dan Symson's wife, John Staysses's wife, and Ric. Brown's wife, buried him by daylight in Brydekyrcke churchyard. Signed, Thomas Curwen—Thomas Whartton.

In this way, three Newcom women of Branthwaite, Eaglesfield, and Brigham, all in Five Towns, entered the state papers of Henry VIII. They assisted in the illegal cutting down and burying of nine of the bodies of those who had been hanged in their communities and were to be left to rot as a spectre to discourage others. The men had been involved in the rising of the commons as part of the Pilgrimage of Grace in January 1536/7, some of the 74 who had been selected for execution in Cumberland and Westmorland.

The Act of Supremacy and the Treason Act, 1534

Catholic England also tends to be viewed through a teleological lens employing a Church of England filter, or that of other protestant denominations. Foxe's book of martyrs, the gunpowder plot, and the glorious revolution of 1688 chart the ascendancy of Protestantism in England,

³² British History Online, *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII, Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 12 Part 1, January-May 1537*; See also George Watson,

'Aske's Rebellion, 1536-7', *TCWAAS 1897*, pp.337-370, for an extraction of the relevant papers.

while sufferings for religious belief are locally associated with Quakers, who were often imprisoned for civil debts, rather than the persecution of Catholics.

The word Reformation suggests improvement and can imply that the succeeding church was superior and that the people benefitted, overall, from the change. The common people in this area were, in 1534, devout Catholics. Henry VIII also retained traditional beliefs and practices throughout his life. He resisted changes in worship and compelled uniformity through the Statute of Six Articles, 1539, repealed by Edward VI.

In 1521 Pope Leo X had conferred on Henry the title Defender of the Faith, in recognition of Henry's book *Defence of the Seven Sacraments*, which included a defence of the sacramental nature of marriage and the supremacy of the Pope. It did not worry Henry that Leo X had been running, since 1515, the notorious campaign to sell indulgences to pay for St Peter's with the slogan "When a penny in the coffer rings, / A soul from Purgatory springs." People believed that.

What seems to have driven Henry, later, was not a divergence of religious belief but rather the will to absolute autonomous power under his god, which power was publicly limited by the Pope. Henry's process of becoming head of the Church started in 1531, with the independence of the Church being removed by the submission of the clergy in convocation in 1532. The Act of Supremacy of November 1534 declared that the king was the only supreme head on Earth of the Church in England. The Treasons Act of 1534, which followed, made it high treason, punishable by death, to disavow the Act of Supremacy. The Treason Act provided the means of enforcement of Henry's self-appointment. The required oath of supremacy led to the execution of Sir Thomas More in 1535, and to the voluntary surrender of many of the greater monasteries. The first was Furness in April 1537, avoiding the oath after they

had supported the Pilgrimage of Grace. Henry settled for the property.

The rising of the commons around Cockermonth

The lives of people in the local rural communities were determined by the land and the border. They were usually controlled by the earl of Northumberland, and through him by the King. In 1536, at the start of the Pilgrimage of Grace, the lands of the earl were in the hands of Henry VIII and had been since 1531. By 1536, Henry Percy, the sixth earl, was a weak and broken man who would die in 1537. His brother, Thomas, supported the Pilgrimage, and was executed.

What is missing from the discussion above, and from any detailed records, is the role that religion played in the lives of the common people in this area. Their religion was based on belief, which was effectively universal and fundamental, and in its observance in daily life, rather than any personal understanding of theology and choice. While their lord and their king might have control over their lives, they believed that they stood equal with the king in an afterlife. The doctrine of papal supremacy, in matters of religion, had supported that equality for centuries. The story of the murder of St Thomas Beckett, the consequent penance of Henry II, and the popularity of pilgrimage to Beckett's tomb, which Henry would obliterate in 1538, had reinforced papal supremacy and independence in matters of religion.

From late 1534 it became treason to maintain papal supremacy. In addition to the taking control of religious belief in mortal life, the King would now be supreme in determining the qualification of English people for their afterlife. Furthermore, rumours spread that the sacraments, such as baptism, marriage, and burial, would soon be taxed. Economic grievances, such as a tax on cattle and sheep, and rising entry fines, are thought to have been key to the rising in Cumberland and Westmorland.³³

³³ See Peter Weightman, <https://northumbria-cdn.azureedge.net/>-

[/media/documents/pdfs/departments/humanities/history/history-research/ug-](https://media/documents/pdfs/departments/humanities/history/history-research/ug-)

We do not know what role the local chaplains had in spreading acceptance or dissent, but both Brigham and St Bees parishes were monastic property, though Dean was not. The Abbot of Holm Cultram encouraged his tenants to join the rising. Through an Act of 1535 the King had gained the power to compulsorily dissolve monasteries with annual incomes, as declared in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, of less than £200. The dissolution of Calder Abbey followed swiftly. Local support for monasteries was strong, partly as the principal source of charity, which would not be continued by Henry.



Hanging in chains, on a tree

The main rising in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire erupted in late 1536, with Robert Aske as the leader of around 40,000. Thomas Howard, duke of Norfolk, for the King, found himself outnumbered and offered a settlement, including a pardon. After that Aske stood the rising down and worked to prevent the later risings, though that did not save his life.

The pardon was proclaimed by the royal herald throughout the North, at Carlisle on 23 December 1536 and at Cockermouth on 26 December.³⁴ Those who would accept the pardon had to sue for it through Chancery, ringleaders had to be identified for punishment, and the oath of supremacy was to be sworn. This proclamation may have inflamed the rising in Cumberland. On 4 January 1536/7 Thomas Lamplugh of Dovenby wrote to Peter Middleton:

The tenants of Broughton, on Saturday last, put the threshers of Sir Thomas Wharton out of "teyth laythe" (the tithe lathe or barn), of Broughton, and set a lock on the door, and yesterday your tenants did the same to your threshers at Talentire. Whereupon I sent for the bailiff and four sworn men, ... who came to me to-day and agreed to take off the lock and allow 14 days to see how the country ruled; but meantime your other tenants had gone to the barn and divided the corn amongst them. Remedy must needs be had at the law or by the law as you think best. I hear they will do the same to-day or to-morrow at Broughton, Eglistfield, and Ceton, "but your tenants are the first that I hear of contrary their promise unto you and me to suffer eight days after other occupied in the country." If I would have meddled for you they uttered me

dissertations/peter-weightman--the-role-of-the-commons-of-cumberland-and-westmoreland-in-the-pilgrimage-of-grace-1.pdf?modified=20190129184148

³⁴ British History Online, *Letters and Papers, Henry VIII, Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 11*, July-December 1536

plainly that 2,000 would take their part against me. ... There is like to be as ill a world in this country as ever was.³⁵

Punishment of the traitors

With the main rising settled, the duke of Norfolk had sufficient forces to deal with the later risings of Cumberland and Westmorland. The commons submitted at Carlisle, and Norfolk took the King's vengeance:

NORFOLK TO THE COUNCIL.
[1536/7, 19 Feb]

Thanks for their last letter, with the King's approval of his proceedings. Thinks, if he suffered to follow his own mind for one month, he could give his Highness satisfaction. Has so many places to punish it will require some leisure, as he must be present at every punishment and proceed by martial law; for if he were to proceed by indictments many a great offender would be acquitted as having acted against his will. There is no lord or gentleman of these two shires but his servants have been at this new rebellion.

"And, good Mr. Comptroller, provide you of a new bailey at Embleton, for John Jackson, your bailey will be hanged Thursday or Friday at the furthest, and I think some of your tenants will keep him company." You will hardly believe the trouble I have to keep the prisoners, there are so many. Carlisle, 19 Feb.

Norfolk proposed to punish the offending commons under martial law, despite their having surrendered to the King's mercy. Rather than have trials, he would choose 74 to be hanged in their communities. He was incorrect with the need for 'Mr. Comptroller' to choose a replacement for John Jackson, bailiff of Embleton, because although the King held Derwentfells, Embleton was a manor held

freehold by another lord. That was no comfort to John Jackson, whose family cut him down and buried him in Cockermouth churchyard.

Henry approved the rough justice, but wished to be sure that his subjects would be fully in awe of his wrath:

HENRY VIII TO THE DUKE OF NORFOLK. [1536/7, 22 Feb]

We have received your letters of the 16th, ... We approve of your proceedings in the displaying of our banner, which being now spread, till it is closed again, the close of our laws must give place to martial law; and before you close it up again you must cause such dreadful execution upon a good number of the inhabitants, hanging them on trees, quartering them, and setting their heads and quarters in every town, as shall be a fearful warning, whereby shall ensue the preservation of a great multitude.

NORFOLK TO HENRY VIII. [1536/7, Feb. 24]

Since his coming to Carlisle on Sunday has put such order that besides rebels taken before he came, on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday there came to him in effect all the offenders in this last insurrection from Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Cockermouth, who submitted as humbly as could be, and if ropes enough had been found would have come with the same about their necks. But they were no fewer than 6,000, out of whom, by the advice of the Council and gentleman of these parts, 74 were chosen as principal offenders and judged to suffer death by martial law, your banner being displayed. Carlisle, 24 Feb.

SIR THOMAS WHARTON TO CROMWELL. [1536/7, 12 Mar.]

³⁵ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 12 Part 1*, for this and the following extracts.

According to the King's commands repaired to Norfolk at York, and before him into Westmoreland and Cumberland, where he did all he could to serve the King. After Norfolk's departure from Carlisle, went with the Sheriff of Cumberland to the execution of the traitors in that shire, and remained at Cocker-mouth and thereabouts. That country stands in good obedience, Repaired to the poor country of Westmoreland which is also obedient. The goods forfeited of those traitors amount to a good sum. My Lord of Cumberland has seized all in Westmoreland, and the sheriff in Cumberland. Thinks the goods in Westmoreland worth 300 mks., in Cumberland the third part thereof or under. The West Borders are quiet. Cocker-mouth Castle, 12 March.

The names of the 74 traitors 'chosen' to die were given on 24 February, of which the ten around Cocker-mouth were 'Robt. Fyssher and Thos. Bell, of Cocker-mouth; John Wilson, of Brygham, jun.; John Jackeson, of Emelton; Ric. Cragge, of Egles-fyld; Percival Hudson, of Perdishewe; Chr. Smyth, of Branthwayte; John Bewley, of Dereham; John Peyrson, of Talentyre; Sander Banke, of Wedoppe.'

Investigation of the cutting down

The King's instruction on quartering and hanging in chains, for longevity of horror, arrived too late, as Norfolk reported. 'Aglianby I doubt not or now hath shewed your highness what was done at Carlisle. And though none were quartered because I knew not your pleasure therein before; yet all the threescore and fourteen be hanged in chains or ropes upon gallows or trees in all such towns as they did dwell in.'

The cutting down appears to have been widespread, and on 11 May Norfolk wrote to Wharton and Curwen requiring an investigation. They replied:

SIR THOMAS CURWEN AND SIR
THOMAS WHARTON TO NORFOLK.

Have received his letters dated Sheroffheveton, 11 May, commanding them to inquire into the taking down of the traitors executed for their late rebellion. Have taken examinations at Cocker-mouth, Penrith, and Carlisle, and send the result by bearer: the people are anxious to retain Norfolk's favour and have aided the examinations. In Westmorland divers persons under the earl of Cumberland have been investigating this. In that county eight traitors were hanged in chains and in Cumberland six.

The following associated report, received by Norfolk, gave a brief listing of the Cocker-mouth ten, and explains why only nine were included in the report given to Henry, as on page 27.

"A brief remembrance for the cutting down of those that was hanged in ropes and chains; "upon examinations taken before Sir Thos. Curwen and Sir Thos. Whartton, 18 May.

Cases of Percival Hudson, Thos. Bell, Alex. Bancke, John Wylson, John Jackeson, Robt. Fyscher, Chr. Smith, Ryc. Crag, one Bewly, and one Person. All these except Bancke were buried by their wives, who in some cases confess also to cutting them down and burying them by night. John Dawson is suspected by John Richerdson, clk., of cutting down Bancke. Crag's cousin and Bewley's brother afterwards died from the "corruption" of the bodies they cut down.

So, all of the Cocker-mouth ten were cut down and buried, against the King's commands, but only the nine around Cocker-mouth were reported to the King, those done by women, and they were suggested as the only cuttings down by the unclear words quoted on page 27, 'It is a small number concerning seventy-four that hath be taken down'.

It is clear from the following extracts that all 74 were cut down, but not clear whether Cromwell ever told the King of the scale of the failure of his minions in

Cumberland and Westmorland. The King was not satisfied with the report of the nine around Cockermouth.

NORFOLK TO CROMWELL.

Sends a certificate from Sir John Lowther of the offenders who took down and buried 74 traitors in Westmoreland and Cumberland. If the King is displeased at that matter not being sufficiently tried, will not be sorry that he should show it by his letters to those who have the rule there.

CROMWELL TO THE DUKE OF NORFOLK. [1537, 22 May]

The King is not satisfied with the depositions "taken of certain women anempst the cutting down and burial of the traitors in Westmoreland and Cumberland," which could not have come only of women's heads. If those depositions had been earnestly taken the truth might have been known. Norfolk must find out and punish the principal doers.

The story of the illegal takings-down ends there in the records, and it may be that the royal gaze was moved on by Cromwell, and the offenders escaped another round of executions.

No Newcom men were hanged around Cockermouth, though they may well have been present in the estimated 6,000 who surrendered. Three Newcom women were involved in the illegal burials of three men in Branthwaite, Eaglesfield and Brigham, where a few Newcom families continued to reside after Newcoms had left Brackenthwaite. No traitors were hanged above Embleton and Wythop in the Cocker Valley, most being direct tenants of the King.

The question to be asked, but not answered here, is whether the common people were wise to resist the transfer of their religious allegiance, and guidance for salvation, from a corrupt Pope to a despotic King?

In conclusion

The Tales of the Newcoms may be the exception to the rule that social histories of common people in this period cannot be evidenced. In good hands the Newcoms might inspire a historical novel better than *The Secret Valley*. Both embrace Cockermouth and Rannerdale. However, the factual Tales of the Newcoms fail a key test, understood by Miss Prism when writing her mislaid three-volume novel; "The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means". One Newcom villain died, but the three Newcom heroines had only small comfort from not being punished for helping to bury their neighbours' husbands.

As Lake District Heritage, the Tales have other problems. As a greater yeoman, the romanticised Jak Newcom should be more concerned to return safely the lost sheep of his neighbours, rather than aggressively grabbing large tracts of land from the common and offering violence to his neighbours and travellers, ending in murder. To be fair, sheep returns were not recorded, unless rescued from the pinfold, and those times were well before the Golden Age, promoted by Gray and Wordsworth, when at the heads of the valleys existed 'a perfect republic of shepherds and agriculturalists'. That 'republic' might be a little easier to evidence in the early eighteenth century.

In *The Language of the Landscape*, which acknowledges the discordant notes, Angus Winchester notes the irony of the use of the Victorian Rannerdale Farm 'to exemplify a long hill-farming tradition'.³⁶ That irony might apply also to John Bolton's claim that at Rannerdale 'there was a survival of the very oldest system of land tenure & cultivation'.³⁷ In Lorton the previous open arable fields, in strips or 'riggs', were probably of pre-Norman origin; in Low Rannerdale the system seems to be a post-medieval creation, resulting from the sharing of property forfeited by a rogue yeoman. It is the legacy of Jak Newcom.

³⁶ Angus Winchester, *Language ...*, p.190.

³⁷ John Bolton, 'Lorton and Loweswater eighty years ago', 1891, p.25, www.derwentfells.com