

# Lorton & Derwent Fells Local History Society

# Wanderer

November 2019

## Contents

### New Book by Angus Winchester

How to obtain your copy of *The Language of the Landscape* 1

### Future Programme

Our Programme 2  
Diary dates 2

### Society News

Help needed from members 3  
Subscriptions in 2020 3  
Follow us on Facebook 3  
E-books on our website 4

### Meeting Reports

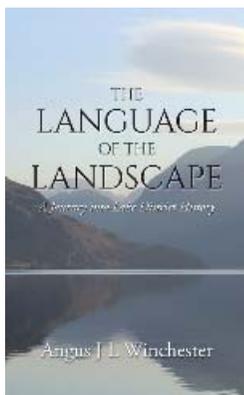
Talk: The Border Regiment in the battle of Arnhem, 1944 4  
Talk: Castles and Conquests: castle-building and the control of Cumbria, 1092-1237 5  
Talk: 25th Anniversary Lecture Lordship and Manor: The Norman Imprint 6

### Articles

Wash day blues 7  
Family and Finance: the Wilkinsons and Robinsons of Cold Keld 9  
Howett Worster: from 'Show Boat' to the Scalehill Hotel 13  
Taking control of the commons: discord in Embleton 15

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



This new book by Angus Winchester, the Society's President, will be available to purchase through the Society. The cover price is £10 and we expect to have copies for sale at our meeting on 14 November. The book will be available through bookshops, but Society funds will benefit from our sales. Local members will also be able to collect a copy in Cockermouth, and we will post to distant members for an extra £1.50. Please contact Christopher Thomas or Derek Denman for further information. 'Inspired by a life-long connection with a Lakeland valley, Angus Winchester draws on extensive research to discover something intangible – the effect of place on our imagination. Accompanying him on a journey from Cockermouth through the Vale of Lorton, to Crummock Water and Buttermere, part of the Lake District he has known intimately since childhood ...'

## Our future programme 2019-20

30 Oct 19	Autumn outing to the Windermere Jetty Museum and the Armit Museum	
14 Nov 19	<i>Roman roads through the Lakes</i>	Dr Paul Hindle
16 Jan 20 [note date]	<i>D'ye ken John Peel: the man and the journey of the song over almost 200 years</i>	Dr Sue Allan
12 Mar 20	<i>Mining in the Derwent Fells</i>	Mark Hatton
Apr/May	Spring outing, to be arranged	
9 May 20	<i>Cattle droving through Cumbria, 1600-1900</i>	Professor Peter Roebuck
11 Jun 20	AGM plus <i>From Roundhouse to Shelling: archaeological surveys of early settlement sites in the Loweswater and Buttermere valleys</i>	Peter Style
9 July 20	<i>The Border Reivers –Romance and Reality</i>	Max Loth-Hill
August 20	Historical walks, to be arranged	
10 Sep 20	<i>The Pilgrimage of Grace in Cumberland and Westmorland 1536</i>	Dick O'Brien
12 Nov 20	<i>Who shot Percy Toplis – the Monocled Mutineer</i>	Dr Jim Cox

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

## Officers and Committee 2019/20

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

## Diary dates

**9 November.** Lake District National Park, *Archaeology in the Lake District 2019*  
**30 November.** Lancaster University, Regional Heritage Centre, *Lancaster Canal, past, present and future*  
**25 January.** Lancaster University, Regional Heritage Centre, *North West antiquaries and the development of historical writing*

The next *Wanderer* will be published on 1 February 2020. Please send items to Derek Denman, by early January.

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>

## Society News

### Help needed from members

A lot of work goes on behind the scenes to try to ensure that what the Society offers its Members is of interest and of acceptable quality. Committee members devote time and energy in the hope that these objectives are achieved. Over the years various Members have helped with practical tasks, but the time has come when the Committee needs more support in small practical ways.

In the course of my introductory remarks at Angus Winchester's Lecture on 10<sup>th</sup> October, I requested help in putting chairs to each side of the Yew Tree Hall at the conclusion of the meeting. Members kindly helped with this, and many hands made relatively light work of this practical task. Their effort was much appreciated by committee members. Two other examples of comparatively small tasks in providing practical help spring to mind, for which I'd like to invite Members to come forward, please, and volunteer.

First, support is needed in setting up the Hall prior to an evening's Talk. This simply involves helping a committee member to move chairs and tables into position, and dealing with heating and lighting as necessary. Second, help is needed for the task of preparing the *Wanderer* for despatch to Members four times a year. This requires spending an hour or two at home on a day shortly before the despatch date, assembling packing and posting the material provided to you. The tasks are stapling and folding the *Wanderer* with a special booklet stapler, putting address labels and stamps on envelopes, packing copies of the *Wanderer* and notices into the envelopes, and posting. Hand delivery to addresses is not part of this operation, nor does it require use of a computer.

So, I make a plea to Members – your Society needs you! Please step forward and volunteer to help with these

small straightforward tasks. You won't need to be a committee member, and your support will be greatly valued by those who are.

Charles Lambrick  
Chair

### Subscriptions for 2020

With this *Wanderer* you will find a request for subscriptions for 2020, at the new rates of £10 for full membership and £8 for additional members at the same address. We hope that you will wish to continue in membership; we have a good programme.

Many members pay at the November meeting, and if you plan to do so then please come early, with the payment slip. Also, please take the opportunity to update your details, particularly your email address which we really need to let you know of changes, and your preference for an email or printed *Wanderer*.

Derek Denman

### Follow us on Facebook

by Lena Stanley-Clamp

Our Facebook page promotes our talks and publications, and reaches out to thousands of viewers. The history of the Lorton bridge published in the *Wanderer* attracted 6000 views. The post about the Edwardian Inebriates at Hassness, Buttermere, was also widely read. The recent publication on our website of 'A Cumberland Valley', a book devoted to the history of the Lorton Parish, has met with an enthusiastic response from former residents and visitors to the area.

Other popular items included the dramatic, but largely forgotten, life-story of Lord Mayo, who watches over Cockermouth Main Street (shared from the local paper the *Cockermouth Curiosity*), posts about neolithic stone axe factories in the Langdales and about German miners in Cumbria in the 16th century, both shared from Mark Hatton's page.

Follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/lortonlocalhistorysociety](http://www.facebook.com/lortonlocalhistorysociety)

### E-books on our Website

by Derek Denman

The three books previously published or distributed by the Society are now on our website as e-books, to read or download freely. We thank the various authors and editors for enabling this.

The books can be found on our publications page, [www.derwentfells.com/publications](http://www.derwentfells.com/publications) and are made available for non-commercial use under a licence. The books are:

*A Cumberland Valley: a history of the Parish of Lorton*, by Ron George, our founder.

*Life in old Loweswater*, by Roz Southey, which has had a few amendments, and an afterword provided by Roz.

*Wordsworth and the famous Lorton yew-tree*, a commemorative edited by Michael Baron and Derek Denman.

We intend to continue to build the publications and sources on the website, as available time permits.

## Meeting Reports

### The Border Regiment in the Battle of Arnhem, 1944

12 September 2019

Stuart Eastwood gave his talk to the Society in the month which commemorated the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Arnhem. The operation was a disastrous military failure; losses were severe and none of its strategic objectives were accomplished. Yet it has a hold on the imagination, especially here in Cumbria, because of the gallantry of the men sent to fight there.

By Autumn 1944, The German army was in retreat before the advancing Russians in the East and across northern France and Belgium, as the Western Allies broke clear of Normandy after the D-Day landings. By the end of August, with Paris liberated, it had been forced back as far as the Rhine. Military victory

for the Allies, given time, was assured. But the speed of the Russian advance from the East made a swift victory an urgent political priority. Operation Market Garden was devised by Montgomery with the aim of ending the war by Christmas.

The plan was to cross the Rhine further north, avoiding the heavily defended Ruhr valley in the hope of bypassing the bulk of the German defences. The operation aimed to capture three bridges across the river Nederrijn in the neighbouring Dutch towns of Arnhem and Oosterbeek and secure a safe crossing for the bulk of the British and Canadian forces. Once across the river, Germany itself would lie open to their advance.

Stuart Eastwood was careful to avoid retrospective judgements about the plan's shortcomings in his eloquent, superbly detailed and very moving talk. Yet the losses were dreadful. The Allied airborne forces, made up of British, Polish, Dutch and American troops, landed some distance from their objectives and were hampered by



In the skies above Arnhem, 1944

unexpected resistance, especially from elements of the 9th and 10th SS Panzer Divisions. Only a small force was able to reach the Arnhem road bridge while the main body of the division was halted on the outskirts of the town. Meanwhile, the main force was unable to advance north as quickly as anticipated and they failed to relieve the airborne troops according to schedule. Two thousand men were killed in the battle for Arnhem and nearly

seven thousand captured or missing. Four thousand were safely withdrawn.

The talk was full of first-hand accounts of the fighting, many of them recounted to Stuart Eastwood himself. Former soldiers from across northern England and Scotland spoke to him of how as young men they fought and suffered in a doomed enterprise, without complaint or rancour, even from those who fell foul of the heartless stipulation that no-one captured could receive a decoration for gallantry. Some spoke of the medical attention they received from German as well as British medical staff. Many spoke of the lifelong regard in which they were held by the local people, whose sufferings were as intense as those of the military. Thanks to a German blockade of food supplies, some 50,000 Dutch civilians died of starvation between September 1944 and the liberation of Holland. Arnhem itself was heavily bombed and shelled until its liberation in April 1945 yet contacts between the Dutch survivors and their families and the surviving soldiers continue to this day. As Stuart Eastwood was giving his talk, preparations were under way in Arnhem and Oosterbeek to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle.

Where Dragons Flew, An Illustrated History of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, the Border Regiment, 1939-1945 By Stuart Eastwood, Charles Gray and Alan Green is available to buy from Carlisle's Museum of Military Life.

<https://www.cumbriasmuseumofmilitarylife.org> Tel\_ 01228 532774

Report by Tim Stanley-Clamp

### **Castles and Conquests: castle-building and the control of Cumbria, 1092- 1237.**

27 September 2019

Professor Richard Oram of the University of Stirling gave this Bernard Bradbury Memorial Lecture to a packed audience at the Kirkgate Centre. The lecture was



organised by the Cockermouth Civic Trust, but also on behalf of our society and the Cockermouth Heritage Group, in memory of Bernard Bradbury, noted for *Bradbury's History of Cockermouth*.

It was refreshing to have this lecture given by an eminent Scottish historian, who provided Scottish perspective of the border, though the Scottish kings still proved to be equally as nasty as the Norman occupiers. We were reminded that early medieval Cumbria (or Strathclyde) was centred on the Solway, rather than delimited by it, and that this territory was not part of the England of William I, nor subjected to his harrowing of the North in 1069/70, but remained under Malcolm.

Professor Oram explained the need for William Rufus to counter a Norwegian advance of influence through the north-western waters, as much as any Scottish threat, when taking Carlisle and annexing our area to England in 1092. The driving out of the Northumbrian Dolfin, the settling of the Eden Valley with Anglian peasants from Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire, and the building of Carlisle Castle, at first in wood, marked the start of a permanent occupation.

Castles were created and developed not so much as structures to support offensive warfare, though they housed the mounted

knights which were unassailable weapons, but rather they were strategically placed and developed in stone as symbols of power, wealth and for local control.

Professor Oram gave an outline of the lordships and castles in modern Cumbria and North Lancashire, up to the 1130s. Notably, Egremont castle was developed early by William Mechin as a Norman stronghold in Coupland, but by contrast Allerdale north of the Derwent was left in the hands of the reliable native lord Waldeof. His seat may have remained at Papcastle, but he may have created the early motte and bailey castle at Cockermouth, as Bernard Bradbury thought likely.

We heard how after the death of Henry I in 1135, in the resulting English civil war between Stephen and Matilda, David I of Scotland, had pledged to support Matilda's claim. His incursions from 1136 were noted for atrocities of the Galwegians (see the image), though perhaps more in Northumberland and not in the more ethnically Scottish Allerdale. Stephen was forced to cede Cumberland, Westmorland and Northumberland to David. So that the castles were in the gift of David and he, formerly Prince of the Cumbrians in Scotland at Roxburgh Castle, seated himself comfortably also in Carlisle Castle, where he built the keep.

The subsequent expulsion of the Scots in 1157 by Henry II led to a period of English control during which Cockermouth Castle, if not created by Waldeof, may have been first established or developed. With the reign of Malcolm IV the Scots again pursued their claim of those northern counties, and Professor Oram covered the role of the various castles in resisting those campaigns from the 1160s.

The final phase covered in the lecture was the campaign of Alexander II to regain the northern counties for Scotland, and the role the castles played leading up to the Treaty of York in 1237, by which Cumberland, Westmorland and Northumberland were agreed to have English Sovereignty under Henry III, and

the familiar border was established, excepting Berwick. There followed a long peace during which castles decayed, until the aggressive campaign of Edward I to annex Scotland.

During questions Professor Oram used his knowledge as Professor of Environmental History to illuminate the living conditions and social relationships of those within and without the castles. Charles Lambrick gave the vote of thanks for a lecture which fully met the high standards sought for the Bernard Bradbury series.

Report by Derek Denman

### **25th Anniversary Lecture Lordship and Manor: The Norman Imprint**

10 October 2019

The Society's President, Professor Angus Winchester, delivered this anniversary lecture to a large audience. The lecture dovetailed nicely with the Bernard Bradbury Memorial Lecture, reported above, enjoyed by a good proportion of the current audience, about a fortnight before.

Professor Winchester opened his address by congratulating the Society on having reached its 25th anniversary and on the amount of work it has done, as a relatively small, rural, society, particularly in its published work.

Professor Winchester discussed the development of administrative control of the Society's area following the Norman extension of its influence to this area. The message was that we should not overstress the changes in administration due to the Norman Conquest in this part of the country. It occurred at a time of great change in Northern Europe, with a warmer climate leading to increased population and new lands being settled. Change was happening in any event. We should think of the post-Conquest changes as being evolutionary rather than necessarily revolutionary.

Norman influence in this part of the world did not follow immediately on the Norman Conquest. Cumberland and Westmorland mostly did not feature in the Domesday survey, then being part of the kingdom of Strathclyde, or medieval Cumbria. The boundary between the kingdoms of England and Strathclyde was marked by the enormous cairn at Dunmail Raise. It was only following William Rufus's seizure of Carlisle Castle in 1092, and his driving out of the native lord Dolfin, that the Normans really took control. Early in the 12th century, Henry I gave the earldom of Carlisle (roughly the whole of Cumberland and Westmorland) to Ranulph de Meschines, a Norman. He later gave the barony of Copeland to his brother William The lordship of Allerdale was confirmed by Ranulf to Waldeof, son of Gospatrick of Northumbria, a native.

In demonstration of continuity, Professor Winchester invoked a number of factors – names, boundaries and tenure. The names Egremont and Cockermouth are Norman, while Copeland derives from the Norse Kaupland, meaning 'bought land'. The name de Meschines is clearly of Norman origin, but that of Waldeof, of Allerdale, is native. Some of the new grants of manors were held by the ancient forms of seawake and cornage.

The boundary of the diocese of Carlisle, created in 1133, preserved the pre-conquest boundary of the land annexed by William Rufus in 1092. Within the dioceses the parishes covering lakeland were large and radial, containing many vills, and with the parish churches often in ancient sites, such as Brigham.

Turning to the details of the formation of our local manors and townships, Professor Winchester explained the creation of the Honour of Cockermouth and its constituents, and the creation of Loweswater manor. Meregill, north of Thackthwaite was shown to be an unassuming beck which had formed a major division between baronies and parishes, as well as



**Cockermouth Castle**

townships. The curious case of the interdigitated boundary between Lorton and Brackenthwaite was presented as the result of early enclosures from the waste by both townships.

After delivering his lecture, Professor Winchester was warmly thanked, both for tonight's contribution, but also for his support and encouragement during the 25 years of the Society's existence, particularly during its early years. Angus responded that he is pleased that his involvement with the Society continues, as he has a long-standing connection to the area, which this association helps to maintain.

The evening was rounded off with 'enhanced' refreshments, enjoyed by many.

*Report by Sandra Shaw*

## Articles

### **Wash Day Blues**

*by Walter Head.*

With no automatic washing machine, tumble dryer or electric iron, washing operations 100 years ago were much longer affairs than today.

Small items were washed as and when needed. Clothes for the average working man's family were much heavier than today and made from coarsely woven wool or cotton cloth. Often worn for a number of days, the soiled clothes were kept until wash day. Monday was usually wash day as then as well as the work clothes and bed clothes, the better



**Dolly peg and tub in use**

Sunday best clothes could be washed and dried ready for the next weekend. Another advantage of Monday was that no cooked meal was required as cold meat from the Sunday lunch was available to be used.

Washing was normally carried out in the back kitchen or a wash house. Both of these had stone flagged floors which were capable of coping with the large amounts of water spillage. It also made cleaning of the floor after wash day much easier. In working class families, the washing was carried out by the mother assisted by the elder daughters. In better off families who employed domestic servants, then the servants carried out washing duties.

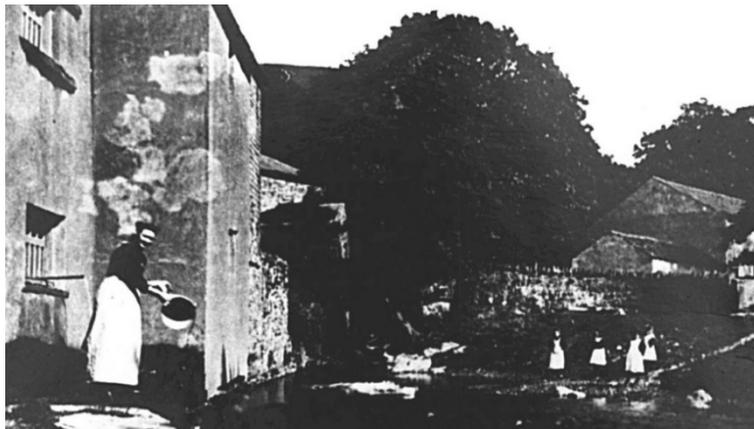
Wash day started as early as 0500hrs, the first job was to fill the sett pot with water and light the fire under the sett pot. The sett pot was usually a cast iron bowl approximately 27 inches wide at the top and 21 inches deep. This pot was contained in a square stone structure with a fire grate below and a side flue which allowed the smoke and heat from the fire to travel around the sett pot before exiting up a chimney to

the outside. Once heated the water was transferred to a dolly tub where the coloured items were washed. Dolly tubs were originally made of wood but were replaced by corrugated zinc tubs 21 inches tall with a diameter of 18 inches. Heavily soiled areas of clothing were rubbed with green carbollic soap before being put into the dolly tub. Soap was added to the water and the clothes agitated using a dolly peg. The dolly peg was made of wood with four or five legs and a tall 'T' shaped handle which allowed the clothes to be agitated by turning the dolly peg back and forward by hand. A later version was the dolly poss which had an inverted colander type copper base and a straight shaft which was used in an upward and downward motion to agitate items in the tub. This sequence could be repeated until washing was complete, then the water was replaced by clean water to rinse the clothes. This was repeated several times until the clothes were soap free.

Whites were boiled in the actual sett pot. Once washed and rinsed then the whites were whitened by the use of a dolly blue bag which was dipped in the final rinse. The dolly blue was a small bag containing a mixture of synthetic ultramarine and baking soda with a distinctive stick handle protruding from the top which allowed the bag to be dipped in and out of the water. These were manufactured by Lancashire Ultramarine Company at Backbarrow on the river Leven near Ulverston, from 1890 until the factory was purchased by the Rickett Company in 1928. Production finally ceased in 1981. This process was repeated with further batches of washing – no wonder wash day lasted so long.

Once the clothes had been washed and rinsed the next problem was drying. Most drying was carried on outdoors on a washing line. So drying times were very weather dependant. Prior to being taken outside to dry the washed items were passed through a mangle. The mangle consisted of two rollers in a

sturdy frame connected by cogs, the rollers were turned by hand and the gap between the roller surfaces could be adjusted by using a screw device located on the top of the frame. With a strong pair of arms to turn the rotating rollers water could be squeezed from



the washing so that the material was almost dry to the touch. On a good windy day the washing could be completely dry when brought back into the house. Any dampness in the washing was finally dispelled by using a clothes maid or clothes horse in front of the fire. In houses with high ceilings a pulley maid clothes airer could be used making use of the rising warm air. (In the 1881 census Isabella Liddle aged 72 was living at Parton and her occupation was recorded as 'Mangle Keeper'.)

Following drying the clothes, sheets, etc could be ironed before being stored away. At this time a number of different designs of irons were available but two particular types were in use in the valley. One type was filled with hot coals from the fire. This was messy and the temperature was difficult to control. A second type used a triangular piece of cast iron which was heated in the fire before being inserted into the iron. This was cleaner to use. A third type was the flat iron but this relied on a clean surface to heat up the iron. The temperature of the iron was gauged by a quick touch to the surface with a wet finger and seeing how fast the moisture evaporated.

My maternal Grandmother lived at Asby in a row of houses. Each property had a sett pot and a designated drying location. After wash day was finished the families took turns to use their sett pot

**Washing day in Whitbeck, behind the disused malt kiln, in 1898**

to make soup in the sett pot for the whole row of houses. I am told that the quality of the soup produced varied considerably.

As you see washing was not a simple or quick affair.

### ***Family and Finance: the Wilkinsons and Robinsons of Cold Keld***

*by Roz Southey*

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Wilkinsons and Robinsons – both living at Cold Keld, Loweswater – intermarried: Thomas Wilkinson married Jannett (or Jennett), daughter of Thomas Robinson. The families were connected by more than marriage – in 1634, Wilkinson also lent Robinson money, by means of a mortgage for £32 which Robinson took out on his property at Cold Keld. Robinson later moved to Park where his elder son, Henry, was already living; a younger son, Thomas junior, at first lived with his father but then moved to High Iredale, a property gifted to him by his father.

The principal occupation of both the Wilkinsons and the Robinsons must have been agriculture, but Thomas and



**The old farm at Cold Keld (Oak Bank).  
Photo by Roz Southey.**

Jannett Wilkinson also operated an ale house at Cold Keld, referred to in 1650 as a 'common alehouse or tippling house'; the word common suggests it may have been unlicensed. The early part of the century and the Commonwealth was a period at which drinking was frowned upon but the ale house at Cold Keld doesn't appear to have been under pressure to close. It was, however, at the centre of a family dispute that led all the way to the Court of Chancery in London.

Jannett's younger brother, Thomas Robinson, visited the alehouse frequently – his sister allowed him food and drink without paying, and it seems he thought he would never have to pay. When he passed the age of 21, however, Jannett presented him with a bill for £6. The enormous size of this – more than his father had paid for three pieces of land in 1628 – astounded him; he claimed he'd never received 'the third parte thereof in drink, neither did [he] ever [get] any penny or pennyworth of other goods or Comodities whatsoever in lieu of the same'. He said he could not

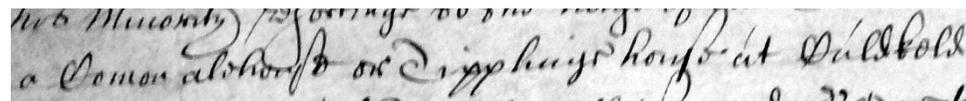
pay – he was entirely dependent on his father and was frightened Thomas senior would be so appalled that he'd disinherit him. In May 1643, therefore, he signed a bond – in effect, an IOU – promising to pay the debt later.

Two years later he signed another bond for 40s, which his sister claimed that he'd spent in the meantime. Thomas was not naive enough to sign this second bond without querying it, but later said he was persuaded to sign by his sister telling him that, if he did, she'd return the original bond for £6, marked as paid. Thomas said in court that he paid off this 40s within a year (by 1646) – probably because by that time he'd been given High Iredale by his father and may have used some of the income from the property to pay the debt.

But Thomas was still apparently in need of money. He asked his sister to lend him a further £5 despite the fact that she'd not yet returned either of the previous bonds. Jannett said she didn't have £5 to give him, but offered £2 instead, and said she'd give him the rest within twenty days, providing Thomas signed yet another bond there and then, stating he owed her the full £5 he'd asked for. Thomas, in a triumph of hope over experience, appears still to have trusted his sister and agreed.

The extra £3 did not materialise. When asked for it, Jannett repeatedly found excuses, saying she'd been disappointed in money she'd expected to be paid. This state of affairs seems to have continued for some years, until at last Thomas lost patience and demanded the return of the two bonds, for £5 and for 40s, in December 1650. Presumably he had at some point received back the original bond for £6, or he'd have asked for that too.

#### **Description of the house**





Burnyeat, had exerted undue influence upon them – they called the suggestion ‘scandalous’. When Burnyeat himself was questioned, he merely confirmed the accounts of Jannett and her husband and said he’d never been consulted by them or advised them on what they should do.

One particular reply shows that however remote Cumberland might have been, it was not out of touch with political and social developments and its inhabitants were not stay-at-home. The Wilkinsons said that Thomas had no witnesses who could attest to what had happened, ‘some of them being dead and others removed into some place or places unknown to the defendants ... or else gone beyond the seas or in the publique service of this commonwealth’. They claimed they were in much the same position, having no evidence to support their claims either, only in their case it was because they’d ‘lost or mislaid’ the bonds – a claim to which the reaction of the investigators can only be imagined.

Finally, all three defendants insisted that Thomas had brought the case ‘merely out of malice & without any manner of cause’. He had, they said, only one purpose: to put these defendants to unnecessary charges and vexation and excessive expenses’. They believed they’d answered all his accusations and asked the court to dismiss the case and to award them their costs and charges, ‘also for the interest and [redemption] money’ for the bonds.

Unhappily, the documents detailing the decision of the court do not survive, so we’ll never know whether the investigators believed Thomas or his sister.

#### Sources

The Wilkinsons/Robinson case is documented in the National Archives at C5/380/114. Thomas Wilkinson’s will and inventory is in the Lancashire Archives.

## Howett Worster: from ‘Show Boat’ to the Scalehill Hotel

by Derek Denman

**STAGE STAR TO CALL TIME!**  
—Gentlemen, Please.

**Howett Worster Buys Hotel and Will Retire From Stage.**

(By THE PROMPTER.)

**HOWETT** Worster, Drury Lane leading man and one of the best-known actors in the country, is to retire from the stage and become an hotel keeper.



The decision at the height of his career will come as a great surprise to the theatrical profession.

Mr. Worster told me to-day that he will become “Mine host” of the Scalehill Hotel, in the Lake District, north of Crummock Wate, early next year, when his present contract in “Rio Rita” ends.

He made the vital decision after spending a holiday in the district, famous for its scenery and fishing. “The Scalehill was in the market,” he said, “and I had just completed negotiations for the purchase.

**“The Life for Me!”**

“Why do I want to retire? Could I stand the life? The answer is: ‘Yes, I think so.’ I love the country; my great passion is trout fishing.”

Mr. Worster added that he had always wished to leave the stage when still at his best; leaving the public with kindly memories of his acting.

A courageous thing to do, but he believes he has the courage and business acumen to make a success as an hotel keeper.

The romantic hero of “Rio Rita,” at the Empire this week, went on the stage at an early age. He joined Mr. George Edwards’s companies in South Africa and remained there for some years to dig up diamonds. Later he went to India and was there during the war, where he received a commission in the Indian Army.

Hostilities over, he played in Australia, and returned “star” at Drury Lane in “The Desert Song,” “Show Boat” and “The New Moon.”

I found this newspaper cutting ten years ago when researching the Marshall family. They owned Scalehill from 1824 until 1931, when the family sold to Howett Worster Ltd.<sup>1</sup> The Lake District has attracted interesting people since its discovery as an English Arcadia, and their stories are very welcome in the *Wanderer* – if they are well in the past.

It is easy to pass Scalehill, in Brackenthwaite, without being aware of its former importance and glory as an eighteenth-Century coaching inn for the gentry and nobility. It was the base for touring Crummock, Loweswater and Buttermere, before the road to Buttermere was improved, and became a noted fishing hotel. *Journal 44* records its early history. The Marshall family maintained and developed its reputation, which clearly attracted Howett Worster.

Alexander Howett Worster, 1887-1952, returned to England in 1925 and had a very successful five years as a leading man in West End musicals. This included a stage partnership with Edith Day, 1896-1971, known as ‘The Queen of the Drury Lane Theatre’.



The Scalehill Hotel, 1898

<sup>1</sup> Balliol College Archives, J/9/3; Cumbria Archives DWM/634/6



Howett Worster and Edith Day with chorus in ‘Show Boat’ at Drury Lane, 1928

‘Show Boat’ of 1928 may be their best known musical. Worster played the riverboat gambler, Gaylord Ravenal, while Day played Magnolia Hawks, the eighteen-year-old focus of his affections. The photograph shows the UK original production, and you can hear the original cast singing ‘Make believe’ at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pXhy7UoBvs&feature=youtu.be>

Why did Howett Worster leave the stage at this time, while still ‘at his best’? Probably because ‘Rio Rita’, the current production starring Worster and Day at the time of the newspaper report in 1930, was a complete flop. They both effectively ended their stage careers at that time. Worster was looking for a new and different challenge and had made some money.

Alexander Howett Worster purchased the Scalehill Hotel, as intended, in 1931, but he did not stay long. In about October 1932 Howett Worster Limited sold Scalehill, and the lease of the fishing in Crummock Water, to Edward Keith Milburn of Keswick, and his wife Ella. Alexander Howett Worster does seem an unlikely character to settle in Brackenthwaite, his life to date being one of travel, adventure, fame and considerable notoriety, in that he changed wives almost as frequently as leading ladies. Perhaps the breakup of his fourth marriage contributed to the shortness of his tenure.

Some information on Howett Worster's time in the lakes would be very welcome. Anyone interested in following this story could start with the company records, sale documents and correspondence on family issues in DWM/463 at Whitehaven Archive Centre – unseen by me. His planned alterations to the hotel are at Carlisle Archive Centre at SRDC/3/2/1265. It is probably unlikely that anyone will remember his short time here in 1931&2?

### ***Taking control of the commons: discord in Embleton***

*by Derek Denman*

There are two well-known stories about Embleton (see the plan on page 20). Firstly that Embleton was almost redefined by acquiring a railway station in 1864, moving the focus of its development to its north-western corner. And secondly that it once had a medieval centre, between the chapel of St Cuthbert to the north and Beckhouse Mill to the south, probably with open arable strip-cultivation to the east. This settlement, looking Anglian in origin, was supplemented in the Norman twelfth

Century with a grant of the freehold manor of 'Emelton' to Orme of Ireby, in 1195, followed by other grants.<sup>1</sup> In 1322, during the Scottish wars of independence, Embleton was laid waste, and its lord Thomas de Ireby was killed, and his five-year-old son William surviving.<sup>2</sup> By the early twentieth Century the only sign of the manor house was its ancient moat, convenient in the 1960s to dump the track bed of the railway. So that both railway and manor house were erased.

There remained just the Church, a chapel from before 1210, formerly within the parish of Brigham.<sup>3</sup> The tithes and the advowson, that is the right and obligation to appoint the clergy, became monastic property in 1439, when appropriated to support the Collegiate Church of Staindrop, in Durham.<sup>4</sup>

Between those two stories, of a medieval feudal village and railway-based modern growth, lie six centuries of ordinary Cumberland farming lives, bearing witness to a distinctive border evolution from feudal peasants to small landowners, rather than leasehold farmers. In Embleton there were no transformative changes in land use until the early nineteenth century, when the local yeomen decided to enclose and divide the commons. Dealing with the ancient feudal rights, once belonging to manor and Church, resulted in serious disputes, which provide the subject of this article.

#### **Enclosing the commons.**

At the end of the eighteenth Century there was a national drive to increase food production, both to provide for an increasing population, and due to a reliance on home production during the wars with France. Wartime grain prices increased rapidly, which supported the cultivation of more marginal land, such as the commons in Cumberland.

A general enclosure act made it easier to enclose commons via a single enabling bill in Parliament. The opportunity to produce grain for market lies behind the timing of Acts covering the townships of Eaglesfield & Blindboethel in 1812, and in 1813 Cockermonth, Brigham, and Embleton & Setmurthy. This was rather late, because grain prices fell after the war was won in 1815. The more mountainous townships, Lorton, Loweswater and Wythop, where the commons were suited only to pasture, did not enclose at this time. The unusual case was the enclosure Act of 1812 for the manor of Thornthwaite, where the Greenwich Hospital grew trees on the common, now the Whinlatter Forest.

The initiative for a 'parliamentary enclosure' came from those landowners who had rights on the common, in this case the yeomen of Embleton and Setmurthy. A sufficient number by value could cause the commons to be physically divided among all those who had any kind of interest in the commons, including the owner of the commons, in the manor of Derwentfells, the Earl of Egremont.<sup>5</sup>

The process was self-financing, in that all valid claims would be met by allotment of a part of the commons, rather than by cash payments, and the general costs of the enclosure would be met by the early sale of part of the commons, by the appointed commissioners. Often the lord of the manor, as owner of the commons, would receive one fourteenth of the commons for relinquishing ownership and manorial rights, but would retain the mineral rights, other than for public stone quarries to build the walls and roads.

The two local commissioners were responsible for managing the process, and for setting out the allotments, roads, walls, quarries etc. Each landowner was

then responsible for fencing their allotment and for any necessary improvements for arable crops, such as clearing, levelling, liming, ploughing and tile drainage, probably employing the brick and tile kilns near Mire End, now the Hundith Hill Hotel. Some landowners would raise funds by mortgage to exploit their allotments. There was a considerable investment in capital and labour, which was to be returned by sales of future crops to the market, as yeomen became capitalists.

The process of progressing from the Enclosure Act to the Enclosure Award, which conferred legal title, would take at least two years, as in Thornthwaite, or could take nineteen years, as for Cockermonth. Initially there would be a process of surveying the commons and establishing, validating and quantifying the claims of the applicants. Disputes on boundaries and rejected claims were numerous, expensive and time consuming – but remunerative for various professionals. Once the allotments, roads, etc had been planned and set out, then the allotment holders would be able to take possession quickly and build fences, well before the award was published, because agriculture must continue throughout.

#### **Whose commons were they**

In 1818, five years after the Act, and with the work virtually complete, over thirty of the landowners of Embleton decided to petition Parliament to repeal the Act, and to alter and amend it. They had recently discovered, or decided, that the Earl of Egremont did not own the commons within the township of Embleton. The landowners, they claimed, were lords of their own manor, which included the commons within the township. The commons in the township of Setmurthy were not claimed.

<sup>1</sup> Cal Docs Scot Vol.1 no.233

<sup>2</sup> IPM Ed.II File 75, no.395

<sup>3</sup> Hartland, *The Church of St Cuthbert, Embleton*

<sup>4</sup> Lysons, *Magna Britannia*, Vol. 4, Cumberland, 1816, Brigham parish.

<sup>5</sup> DBen. Box 277 contains the commissioners' papers used in this study; QRE/1/37 is the enclosure award

This claim sought to deny Lord Egremont his one fourteenth of the allottable commons of Embleton, some 74 acres, but also it would place the mineral rights with the owners of the allotments, rather than being retained by the Earl.

In their petition to Parliament, the Embleton landowners explained that a chest of deeds had been removed from the Chapel in 1806, for safe-keeping during its rebuilding, and that the chest's content of valuable deeds had not been known to the landowners when agreeing to the Enclosure Act. They now found that Embleton was a manor in its own right, and was owned by its landowners, including the commons within the township. A legal case had been brought at Carlisle in 1816, but was negated by the existence of the Enclosure Act, which mandated the award to Lord Egremont.

It was true that Embleton was once a manor in itself, and that it had been purchased by its inhabitants. The manor, originated through the grant to Orme of Ireby, had passed intact by sale through many hands, until being purchased by John Gunter, bachelor at law, before 1679.<sup>6</sup> The manor passed to his son Humphrey, a minor, between 1684 and 1692. By 1698 Humphrey Gunter had sold the manor for two thousand pounds to a consortium of nine yeomen of Embleton, who vested ownership in two trustees in Cockermonth.

Until 1698 the joint lords of the manor of Embleton were: Allan Peile of Stanger, Jonathan Bell of Houndeth Hill, Thomas Watson of Byerstead, Peter Peile of Bouch House, Benjamin Casse of Sheaton [Shatton], John Wilkinson of Troughbridge, John Westrey of Beckbank, Richard Casse of Close, and William Rothery of Esps.

The final stage of their plan was to recover most of the two thousand pounds by enfranchising all the

customary tenants of the manor, that is by selling every tenant his or her freehold. This enfranchisement was made in 1698, according to at least four original deeds which survive, but may have taken a little longer to complete.<sup>7</sup> Once all tenants had been enfranchised the manor of Embleton would cease to exist, and the feudal past would be remembered by a free or quit rent of 39s 4d, payable to the superior lord of the manor of Derwentfells. The enfranchised yeomen agreed to take turns to act as Grave or Reeve to collect and pay this money each year.

One of those original indentures of enfranchisement, for John Ewert of Westray, came to the enclosure commissioners and was filed with the papers.<sup>8</sup> It may have been that which came from the misplaced chest and stimulated the petition to repeal the Act. It must surely have been clear to the Cockermonth solicitor for the complainants, John Fisher, that the process of enfranchisement had extinguished the manor over a century ago, and that his clients were not lords.

Whether or not they were still lords, the petitioners needed to establish that the manor of Embleton once contained the commons within the township of Embleton, as well as the enclosed lands. They would not have had access to the original grant to Orme, which clearly stated otherwise, and that Orme's men would intercommon with the men of Cockermonth and Lorton.<sup>9</sup> Assuming that the petitioners relied on the indentures of enfranchisement of 1698 for their claim, there was a long list of types of property that would be conveyed to them, which included 'common, pasture of Common'. However, this did not establish ownership of the common, only that their rights on Derwentfells common

within the township of Embleton were transferred.

Furthermore, parts of the common within the township had long been enclosed by the yeomen, paying rent as customary holdings in the manor of Derwentfells. This land had also been surveyed and offered by Lord Egremont for enfranchisement in 1758-9.<sup>10</sup> Even in their claims submitted for allotments on the commons, they had listed their lands as freehold where it was once in the manor of Embleton, and customary within Derwentfells for their unenfranchised intakes from the common. They had no case at all.

Regardless, the landowners instructed their solicitors and agents in Cockermonth and London to prepare the petition and Bill of revocation. They required John Christian Curwen to present it to Parliament. Separately they wrote to Lord Egremont in February 1818, with feigned deference, expecting that 'the known Liberality of your Lordship's Character' would facilitate their legal challenge to his title to the commons. Writing privately to Curwen, Lord Egremont considered the 'principle of the Bill ... objectionable' and he had his written objections presented to Parliament. The Bill was withdrawn before the second reading. Lord Egremont received just 74 acres for manorial right in Embleton. He retained his mineral rights. The final Award was dated 1824, eleven years from the Act.

Why did the landowners undertake and persist with this hopeless and invalid cause? One answer might lie in the enclosure of adjacent Thornthwaite manor (not the whole township), under an Act of 1812, which quickly resulted in the final award in 1814. Like Embleton, this manor had been granted out of Derwentfells, to the ancestors of the Curwens in the thirteenth Century. However, in this case the original grant was considered to have included a defined common. There was no

allotment awarded to Lord Egremont on this mountainous common, and in fact his steward was happy to co-operate with the Greenwich Hospital, as undisputed lords, to straighten the boundary with Derwentfells to facilitate the fencing.<sup>11</sup> The yeomen of Thornthwaite Manor had done very well and were now freeholders at no cost in money. Maybe their success encouraged their Embleton neighbours.

#### Caught by the tithes

The new allotment holders had even more of a problem with the tithes, the second remaining element of the medieval feudal settlement. The tithes were part of Brigham Parish and had been granted to the Collegiate Church of Staindrop. After the dissolution of Staindrop by Henry VIII, the rights of Brigham were sold to a lay impropiator, and were now owned by the Earl of Lonsdale, William Lowther. He had the tithes of Brigham and the right to appoint and pay Brigham clergy, which is how William Wordsworth obtained the living of Brigham for his son, John.

The Lowthers were noted for their business acumen, and in 1812 they had grasped one eighth of the commons of Eaglesfield & Blindbothe for the tithes, making the new commons enclosures free of tithes of corn. This was in addition to the Earl of Egremont's one fourteenth for manorial right. So that church and manor took 20% of the common. The landowners and commissioners for Embleton sought to avoid this loss. They saw expert opinion of 1812, from Mr Littledale, that this one eighth in Eaglesfield had been an error, because the corn tithes of the common should have been covered by an ancient township modus, or fixed cash payment.

Embleton was covered by farm moduses, not by a township modus. It was considered, unwisely, that corn could be grown on the allotments of the expanded farms without additional tithe

<sup>6</sup> YDX230, Wigham manuscripts, A23, A2, A30  
<sup>7</sup> YDX230/A36, A37, A38; DBen.Box 277

<sup>8</sup> DBen. Box 277, enfranchisement to John Ewert of Westray

<sup>9</sup> Cal Docs Scot Vol.1 no.233

<sup>10</sup> DLec.300, Browne's survey of Derwentfells

<sup>11</sup> DLec.136 has a plan of the changes

