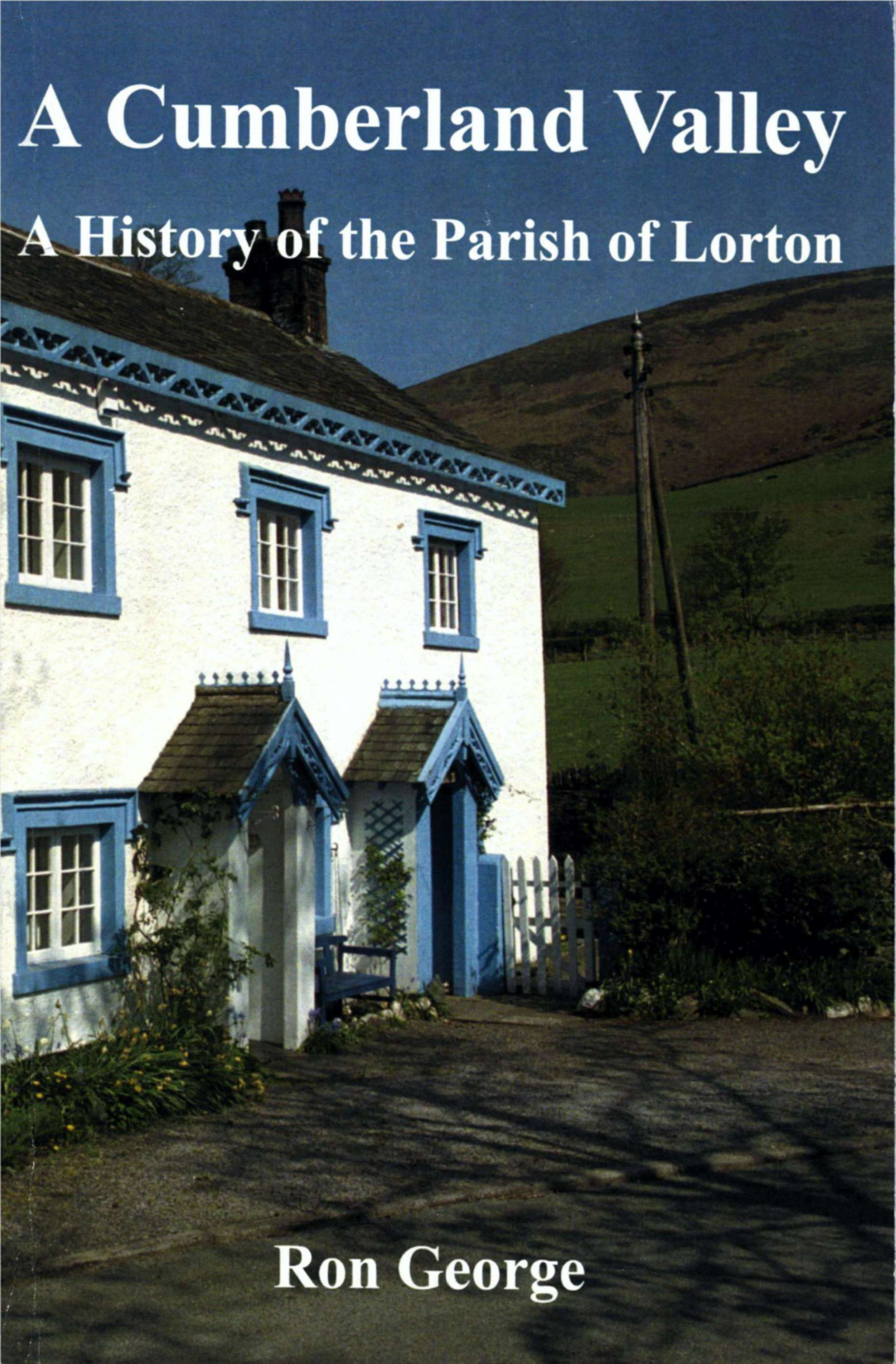
A Cumberland Valley

A History of the Parish of Lorton



Ron George

A CUMBERLAND VALLEY

Ron George has travelled widely in Europe, South and North America and the Middle East. He was born in London, and after training as a telecommunications engineer he worked in South America for twenty five years before returning to England. After retirement he lived in Lorton for twenty one years where he helped his wife, Stella, to run the White Ash Barn Tea Shop, whilst simultaneously researching this local history and tracing his own family roots back to 16th Century Cornwall. In 2000 he and his wife moved to Ontario to join their two daughters and their families.

Cover photograph: Wayside cottages, High Lorton. Photograph by Michael Grieve

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This book is dedicated

to my four granddaughters, for each of whom during their early years, "White Ash" was their home from home;

to my two daughters, for whom it was a refuge from the hurly-burly of city life;

and to my wife, who made it so for them.

This book is intended for the general reader and for those who have come to love the valley by residence or visiting. However, Chapters 9, 13 and 14 are the result of lengthy and detailed research and they invite further action from the more historically minded reader.

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Contents

A Cumberland Valley

A History of the Parish of Lorton

List of Figures

List of Tables

Appendices

List of Photographs

(Before Chapter 1)

Acknowlegements

My path whilst researching this book has been considerably smoothed by the ever helpful staff of the various record offices; the Public Record Offices in London, Chester, Preston, Whitehaven, and Carlisle. My special thanks for their time generously given goes to Mr. David Bowcock and Mrs. Susan Dench in the Cumbria Record Office at Carlisle.

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Finally, I must acknowledge that without the encouragement, tolerance and forbearance of Stella, my wife, this work would never have been accomplished.

Chapter 1: PREFACE

There is a Yew-tree, pride of Lorton Vale,
Which to this day stands single, in the midst
Of its own darkness, as it stood of yore:
W. Wordsworth

Here by the stream it stands alone,
As verdant and as hale
As when the Britons bows were drawn
To guard this lovely Vale.
John Bolton

I first came, with my wife, to live in Lorton "aht t'baack 'nd nainten aeirty" as our neighbours say. To us that means 20th October 1980. When the dust of activity of our move had settled we quickly felt very much at home. The initial feeling of being the "new boys" was inevitable but nevertheless we felt very quickly that we belonged, and at ease. Some of our new neighbours were "off-comers" like ourselves, but no small credit is due to those of our neighbours who were true locals. Both groups made us welcome.

Our new home was quite obviously old, and, being quite unschooled in architectural history, I guessed perhaps 200 years old. It was called "White Ash House". My wife and I would dearly have loved to call our new home by the same name we had used for the home we had just left, because of the very special significance that name had for us. We had come prepared for this, having brought the old nameplate with us. In the end, we decided it would be inappropriate to the locality, so we dropped the "house" and called the whole property by the name by which it became so well known, "White Ash Barn". This seemed reasonable because, quite obviously the buildings were originally a farmhouse and barn. But I was puzzled because "White Ash" did not sound either local or even particularly Cumbrian, and we are surrounded by names that so clearly are historical and Cumbrian. So why was it called "White Ash"? I began to wonder too about it's past; who had lived and loved here? Who had been born and died here? What had they done? How had they lived?

This was the first house I had ever lived in that was more than one hundred years old, and only the second that was more than fifty years of age; its background and history intrigued me, and I resolved I would try to find the answers to all these questions. This book is the result of that quest. Had I known at the outset what I know now of the extent to which my search would take me, of the cost in time and effort, as well as money, I doubt that I would have embarked on it. I wonder too, if my wife would have allowed it. As it turned out, our retention of the name "White Ash" was historically justified to a greater extent than I had imagined it might be. Although I have not yet discovered the origin of the uncharacteristic name, I have at least developed a theory about it, and this I will discuss later (1).

Back in my school days history was most definitely not my favourite subject. It was dull, uninspiring and insipid. Most of the dates and facts my teachers tried to drum into me seemed unmemorable, and were therefore unremembered. I was

pleased to hear during 1990 that there was a national debate on "Interpretative History" to review and revise ideas of how history should be taught. In this context a résumé of G. Kitson Clark's "The Critical Historian" should be obligatory reading (2). Apart from the signally important date of 1066 and the all-embracing concept of the Domesday Book, I remembered only one thing of my school days history. In one of the too frequent examinations, with my brain working desperately to save me from the ignominy of failure, it raced ahead of my pen. As a result I coalesced the Test and Conventicle Acts into one; one which had little to do with history but might have been useful in the biological field of study. This produced too good a howler for our teacher to pass. In my innocence I didn't understand the full implication of the joke. I wish he had taught a different subject because I really liked him personally, and to his everlasting credit, good man that he was, he did not tell the class the author of the blunder.

Not many years later, I became engrossed in the Pelican History of England Series of paperbacks. Here was history that lived, was explained, spoke of ordinary people doing ordinary, everyday things, and brought sense to the centuries. If this was history, I began to like it, to be truly interested. It was a quirk of fate that at the time I was living in the middle of the Brazilian rainforest and five thousand miles from the nearest relevant library.

Now, another forty years later, my interest was rekindled by the purchase of "White Ash Barn". The nearest library was now only four miles away, and I began to read everything I could find relevant to the village in which I had chosen to live. If this sounds melodramatic, or even just rather exaggerated and physically impractical, I suggest the doubting reader seek out a good reference library, and look up "Lorton" in as many likely books as there are available. Lorton is singularly noteworthy by its almost complete absence. The most likely and probably only reference will be to Wordsworth and his "Yew of Lorton Vale" poem, part of which is quoted at the head of this chapter. Even Cumberland and Cumbria fare little better outside the common tourist literature and run-of-the-mill books found in all small Public Libraries. By dint of much research I did begin to find some relevant literature, though some of this came from as far afield as the National Reference Library, a second-hand bookshop in Cambridge, and the University of Stanton in California. These and more are listed in the Bibliography. All were of great interest, and some are excellent reading in their own right. Amongst these I put authors Professor W G Hoskins and Dr Peter Laslett, both completely absorbing and exciting to a newcomer to the study on the immediate environment. Dr Oliver Rackham has produced an equally impressive mine of information though not much of the text appears to be directly relevant to Cumbria (3). I began to think of the people who had gone before, their way of life, how they had shaped the surroundings in which I now found myself; why they had done this, what in the horrible modern idiom 'had made them tick'. I attended Dr. Angus Winchester's lectures and field studies which made a superb complement to his own stimulating and detailed writings. About the same time I came across a short article by Dr Margaret Spufford, written back in 1973, in which she had preceded my thoughts on the subject by many years. I congratulated myself on having unwittingly stumbled into good company, and can only hope that my efforts will come, in a small way, sufficiently near to her ideal to be acceptable (4) to the general reader.

Some eighteen months after arriving at Lorton, a very good friend and neighbour died, and I found myself co-opted to take his place as a churchwarden. This very sad event had one important and practical outcome. I now had the keys to the church safe and the old registers. So, very quickly, it was there that I started my research. See Figure 1.1.

My interest and enthusiasm was soon conveyed to our friends and neighbours; and so it was after overcoming some considerable doubts as to the wisdom of doing so, and after some soul searching, I was persuaded to give a talk to the dozen or so members of the village social society known as the "Yew Tree Club". That afternoon in 1986 was rather prophetic, and it now seems relevant to reproduce some of it here.

"I have to thank you for your vote of confidence in asking me to talk to you today about Lorton – my village – your village – because I'm quite certain that most of you know more about it than I. Nevertheless, I'm broad-shouldered and thick skinned and who knows, I may bring out a few points that have slipped the memory – and perhaps I'll also encourage some of you to question more about the past and discover how it has influenced the present.

"My village! Your village! Our village! These words open up a concept of dominion – of permanence – of endless occupation by the same families, and implicitly, acceptance into the continuum of the the village life of we poor blighted off-comers who have so recently discovered the peace and beauty of this valley. This valley that two hundred years ago the Rev. Gilpin described as 'all is simplicity and repose'. (Demonstrably he was not a farmer). The writer and novelist Doreen Wallace called it the 'most beautiful valley in England', but admitted to being biased because she was born at Broomlands – just four hundred yards down the road.

"Ongoing scenic beauty – oh yes, but what of the simplicity? the repose? the implied idyllic life? Is it true of today? Or of yesterday? In our holidays we tend, as a nation, to tour the picturesque countryside, seeking out and admiring – ooohing and aaahing the lovely old cottage with a thatched roof or lovely weathered Buttermere slates; the stone, cobbled or half-timber framed walls; historic little cottages with a flower bedecked garden and a porch covered with honeysuckle and roses round the door. How lovely! So many people's dream home – especially of those who live in flats and don't have to do any gardening. We lap it up and encourage overseas visitors to visit our shores and enjoy the visual beauty of our past. And yet – do we really believe this idyllic view of the good old days? Was it truly ever so?

"Haha, you see, you thought I was going to give you all the answers, didn't you? Actually, all I'm doing is asking rhetorical questions. I thought originally to entitle my talk 'The village that History passed by', but after more thought realized this was not true. After all, St. Cuthbert is reputed to have rested here, although no one has found proof that even the village existed 1300 years ago. We know that Fox preached here, reputedly under the tree I can see even as I speak, and commended those who came to hear him: Wordsworth played here as a boy, and as boys will fell into the beck and went home in borrowed clothes, (was this the event that inspired his poem immortalizing our tree?); and the Duke of Connaught visited Lorton Park in May 1863, since when nothing of importance has happened – except you and I

have arrived. So I thought I'd entitle this talk 'The Village that History almost passed by'. But after yet more thought it came to me that England, not to mention the rest of the world, is made up of countless hamlets and villages like ours – small communities where no world shaking events happen – ever – no princely Tudors – no strutting Stuarts – no Royal Regents; and definitely no Bloody Battles. – if you discount the legend of the Secret Valley. No, – just ordinary folk going about the task of looking after themselves as best they might in a difficult and often hostile world. These villages, – and these people, – you and I – we are history in the making. So I came to my theme for today – 'One Village in History'."

My talk went on from there, and what I had to say that day is embedded in this book, which was the eventual outcome, as was the later formation of the Local History Society.

In 20th century phraseology, history is a "three-dimensional continuum". This is perhaps more true of the plains of central Asia, the mid-west of north America, and even the eastern counties of England, than of Cumbria where even the lesser fells determined the practicalities of economic and social life. In this latter area, history becomes a four-dimensional continuum, and it is this "continuum" of the parochial chapelry of Lorton that follows.

With limited resources and potentially restricted time before me, I cannot delve as deep nor as widely as my search tends to lead me. Remember, I started off with the intention of seeking out the background to my own property, but I quickly found that the answer to one query took me into a new area, and with it a series of new questions, so that the search began to cover an ever wider ground. In any case, as I did eventually discover, quite a lot has been written about Cumbria, both past and present by scholars and scientific authors vastly more competent than I, who can do no more than plagiarize them. There is no need. I can say no better than has Rollinson when he quotes the 17th century cartographer John Speed, "I have put my sickle in other men's Corne" (5).

We will find that although valley folk lived much as did their contemporaries in the rest of England, there were some subtle and some not so subtle differences in their lives. There is very little written evidence of events in Cumbria prior to the 16th century, and we find little direct evidence of the impact of the great national and international events, though these must have influenced the valley folk's lives. The effects can be inferred indirectly from the records we do have, largely starting from the mid-16th century. In 1586, Camden described Cockermouth as "a wealthy market town" and some of this wealth must have been derived from, and reflected back into, the Lorton valley. So similarly must have the later development of the West Cumberland mining and shipping interests, though again, any such benefit to the valley has to be inferred. Suffice to note that we shall find many signs of improving social life in the valley from the beginning of the 17th century when Cockermouth was apparently the most prosperous commercial town of Cumberland (6).

Professor Appleby analysed in considerable depth a whole gamut of factors surrounding the supposed famine in Cumbria at the turn of the 16th century (7) and Dr. Winchester provides a fascinating and detailed analysis of the growth of Lorton in medieval times (8). My own work led me to believe that Appleby came to the wrong conclusion, certainly as far as this area is concerned, and I have since learned

that more recent scholarly studies have also confirmed that Appleby drew the wrong conclusions from his own work.

What I do hope to achieve is to select from their efforts, and the work of others, such data and conclusions as will support and complement my own labours to chronicle the past of one very special corner of England, and put some flesh onto the dry bones of history. In so doing I hope also to bring to the attention of present and future inhabitants of the Lorton valley a more detailed knowledge of the past of their corner of Cumbria than has hitherto been available in one volume, and to give them a more intimate picture of their splendid inheritance, and mine.

I have preferred to arrange the chapters in what I think is a logical sequence of subject rather than one which might become a confusing chronological sequence. Also, I feel I should comment on the quotations which head various chapters. Literary critics say such quotations are pretentious and unnecessary, designed to show off the author's wide field of reading. They may well be right. Nevertheless, I have carefully chosen and used such quotations because I feel that they introduce succinctly the tenor of the following chapter, and the authors of the quotations used have, at this moment, one great advantage over me as I write – they have already been published. I must also explain why the reader will find both names, Cumbria and Cumberland in the text. I have tried to use "Cumbria" where there is a sense of the general and this seems most appropriate and "Cumberland" where the sense is of a specific historical time, and that was the term in being at that time. This division is often arbitrary and imperfect, but hopefully will add to the sense of time, and not confuse.

Since penning the above, some years have passed; years I was not expecting the research to require. I realize my work has become heavily biased to the Lorton villages, which was not my original intention. There are several factors influencing this bias. Clearly research on my own house and living in Lorton is one. Another was the availability and accessibility of records; and a third was the size of the project, which has necessarily been restricted to what one person can handle. The end result is that as I progressed slowly I become more and more aware of how much more one could research, given time (and money), and that this has inevitably led to a bias towards Lorton to the detriment of Wythop, Buttermere and Brackenthwaite. Just to confound me, during the years of gestation of this book, a number of writers have produced volumes of divers aspects of West Cumbrian local history and many of these are available over the counter in bookshops. I must hurry or soon become totally redundant.

Gradually, over the years, I have discovered and researched many types of documents found in many places and so, for those of you with a research yearning, I give a summary of my main sources of information in Appendix 1. This book is intended for the general reader and for those who have come to love the valley by residence or visiting. However, Chapters 9, 13 and 14 are the result of lengthy and detailed research and they invite further action from the more historically minded reader.

Finally, I must explain why this book is entitled "A History of ....." and not "The History of .....". A historian, and I would like to consider myself an initiate to that label, works from "sources". If he is careful and discriminating in his choice and use of sources, we may consider them to produce a list of "facts" that may be true, or possibly true. If he is less discriminating his "facts" may be true, or just plain

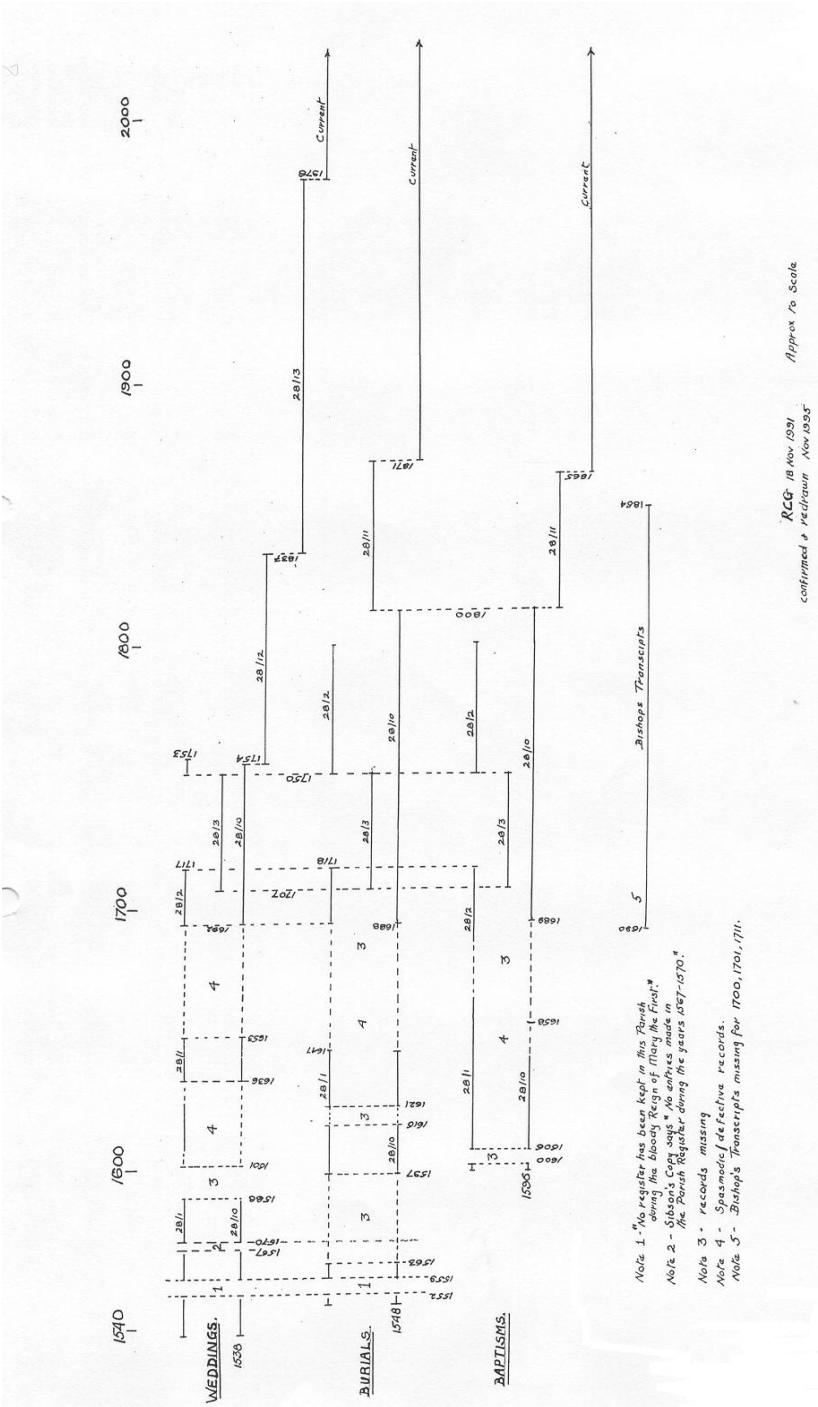
suspect, hearsay or legend. What the historian does with them, what he writes, is his own interpretation of those facts. I will endeavour to keep Clark in mind, as my guide. Posterity may produce more contradictory or illuminating facts to change things. In any case, there is bound to be someone to disagree with any one person's interpretation of the information available. Therefore no history, especially of the distant past, is likely ever to be a completely definitive work. This is my "History of Lorton" as I have been able to compile it from my own researches, and other men's 'Corne'. I hope future historians will enlarge and improve on it.

High Lorton, 1999

Postscript

Once more, fate has intervened and now my wife and I are living in Canada with the rest of our family. The intervening period has delayed the furtherance of this book and more local history has been unearthed by members of the Society I was privileged to start. I am grateful to them for permitting me to use some of this new evidence here. It behoves me, therefore, to make haste as best I can from across the ocean before this volume becomes completely outdated

Toronto, May, 2003



SCHEMATIC OF LORTON PARISH REGISTERS EXTANT

Figure 1.1

Appendix 1.1: SOURCES

My data has come from numerous sources, not one of which was intended for the purpose for which I have now used it. For the most part this means that each of them provided only a part of the information I wanted, often only a tiny fragment. I have pieced them together as best I might. The source that perhaps came nearest to meeting the needs in one document was, of course, the census returns of the series starting from that of 1851.

There are perhaps five main groups of source. The census returns already mentioned; the probate inventories and wills, mostly of the period 1550 to 1750; the Tithe returns of 1840 and Enclosure Award maps of 1832; the Manorial and national records held in Record Offices; and lastly, the Parish Registers and the various copies of them, from 1538.

Other documents are individually of lesser volume, but together form another huge and vital source for corroboration and in-filling. Such are the Parliamentary Survey of (High Lorton) 1649, Quarter Sessions papers, Hearth Tax and Protestation Returns, and various documents relating to the Manor of (Low) Lorton, especially the surveys of 1569 and 1578 being the chief ones. Finally there is a wealth of papers, still largely untapped by me, in the Public Record Office in Kew and the related offices in London, the Bishopric of Chester Archives at Chester, and the Estate Records of the Earl of Egremont held at Cockermouth Castle under the care of the Cumbria Record Office.

To say that Lorton is lucky in that the Parish Registers go back to the earliest possible date of 1538 is to overstate the case. The wedding register does so, the first record being 30th January of that year, but the burial register did not commence, or at least no records are extant, until 5th July 1548, and the baptism register not until 13th January 1596. Furthermore, there are 4 gaps of up to fifteen years each in the wedding and burial records, and one of six years in the baptismal register, all before 1621. In common with many other parishes, as the register proclaims, "No records were kept during the bloody reign of Queen Mary". The six year loss in the baptismal register appears to be just that – a loss of two pages of the original copy, but the other gaps are unexplained. There is, lamentably, one other huge gap of some 50 years, with a few scattered entries here and there at the beginning of the lacunae, though these are not identical in all three registers in this period corresponding to the time of civil unrest in the reign of Charles I, through the Commonwealth, into the beginning of the reign of William and Mary; that is to say during most of the Stuart period of ecclesiastical turbulence.

It must also be a matter of regret that, over three and a half centuries, our Curates were, as our Vicars are today, hard working men with too little time to embroider their records with helpful comments on the background to the events they recorded. The earlier ones, believed to be local men most likely with a rudimentary education, husbandman as well as churchmen, had little time for what to them were unnecessary flourishes to the obligatory entry in the register. There is much evidence that these too, were often written up with quite lengthy delay, and in rather a hurry, causing entries to be out of order, and, very occasionally, patently wrong. They could not have guessed, let alone understood, that people such as I would one day be so interested in the daily round of village folk that they might so easily have recorded which would have put life and soul into their registers.

Even more wonder then that of these men, two found it in them to sit down and laboriously and meticulously copy all the previous and decaying or damaged records into a new book. John Bell did it the first time, some little time before he died in 1608, signing and annotating the beautifully hand-written parchment copy "Wrytten & exd by the old booke". John was also a part time farmer, and was probably not very old when he died, quite possibly in his thirties, as two of his brothers married in 1611. Around the 4th November 1800, John Sibson, Curate of Lorton, signed the next copy with the annotation "perceiving that the Register Books . . . . are much decayed have transcribed their Contents into this Book & we do hereby Testify that we have Minutely examined & compared this Book with the former Register Books . . . and that it is an exact Transcript . . . ."; this was countersigned by four churchwardens, Thomas Burnyeat of Swinside, William Mawson of Scalehill, John Hurd of Buttermere and Jonathan Stout of Withop. We must beg leave to doubt their word, since there are a number of discrepancies between their sworn exact copy and the Bishop's Transcripts which should also be exact in the detail of the original entries. It is more probable than just possible that the four good men were not fully capable of reading either the first copy, or their Curate's new copy of it.

One of the duties of the Minister was to send, annually, a copy of the Parish Register to the Bishop. These Bishop's Transcripts as they are called are, for many parishes, a valuable source of information when the parish original, and any subsequent copy which would have remained in varying states of decay in the parish chest, have been lost.

At Lorton we have been relatively fortunate. In the first place, our marriage registers start at the earliest possible date, 1538 and the others by the turn of the century. Secondly, as said above, copies of all the registers were made in 1600 and 1800. Thirdly, apart from the usual gap found in the registers of virtually all parishes during the Reign of Queen Anne, the registers for St Cuthbert's have only a few regrettable, but for the most part not very large, gaps. Lastly, some of the original vellum entries from 1538 have been saved and with the other records are now in the Cumbria Record Office. So, in spite of the few gaps, most of our records have been preserved in their original, and sometimes idiosyncratic, form thus filling in unsuspected omissions in the Bishops Transcripts. Unfortunately, as already noted, there are discrepancies between the Bishop's Transcripts and the Parish Registers.

It is the "1800" register, itself in use as the current register until 1812, and the new register books which followed it from which I have worked, comparing them with the Bishop's Transcripts for the period during which these latter were produced, 1690 to 1854. I was also privileged by the staff of the Carlisle Record Office to use the original 1538 parchment entries, not normally available to the public, to check the later copies of the registers. Thus my "Lorton Parish Register transcript" is based on the combined detail of the Parish Registers, as detailed above, and the Bishop's Transcripts.

Until the year 1800, the details recorded in the register varied very considerably from the absolute minimum of the name of the person who was buried, married or baptised (in the latter case usually, but not always, with the father's name), to details of spouse, age, occupation and dwelling. Furthermore, the detail given varied from one Curate to another and also, very frequently, from one Curate from one time to

the next, depending one suspects, on how much his husbandry was in arrears, and to what extent he wanted to rush out and take advantage of a fine spell of weather.

Some of the missing entries in the Parish Registers can be inferred, to some degree, from the 67 wills and 105 probate inventories which have survived for the period up to 1692. There are also entries culled from registers of nearby parishes which relate to Lorton people. As many of these latter names that I have found are given in appendices to my Lorton Parish Register transcription.

Note. Documents originally held in the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle archive were under the class reference EM 5. They are now in the CRO but not yet catalogued.

Chapter 1 References

(1) See Chapter 12, "Buildings"
(2) G Kitson Clark, "The Critical Historian", 1967
(3) Dr Oliver Rackham, "The History of Countryside"; J M Dent & Sons, London, 1986
(4) Dr M Spufford, "The Total History of Village Communities", Extract from The Local Historian, Vol 10, No 8, Nov 1973
(5) W Rollinson, "A History of Cumberland and Westmorland", Preface, Phillimore, 1978
(6) C M L Bouch, " Prelates and People of the Lake Counties", Herald's Visitation of 1665, p 233
(7) A B Appleby, "Famine in Tudor and Stuart England"; Liverpool University, 1978
(8) Dr A J L Winchester, "Landscape and Society in Mediaeval Cumbria", John Donald, Edinburgh, 1987

Chapter 2: INTRODUCTION

"Here it comes sparkling,
And there it lies darkling;
Now smoaking and frothing
Its tumult and wrath in"

"The Cataract strong
Then plunges along,
Striking and raging
As if war waging . . .
And shaking and quaking
And pouring and roaring."

Extract from "Lodore", Robert Southey, 1820

No one who has been to High Lorton and seen Whitbeck in spate can fail to understand why Norse settlers here might have called their new home "the farm by the roaring stream". But did they? It seems unlikely we shall ever know. It is not uncommon for ancient place names to have a disputed origin, and Lorton is no exception. Toponymists will have it that a 'ton' ending is Old English for 'farm' or 'village', whereby Lorton becomes of Anglo origin. But whence the 'Lor'? One commonly repeated theory, which appears to stem from Thomas Denton's "Perambulation of Cumberland, 1687-8", is that the name is a contraction of "Lower Town". Lower than what other town? The only other 'town' within reasonable distance would have been Cockermouth, and that is even 'lower' than Lorton in any interpretation of the term. A further suggestion, one favoured by Dr. Winchester, is that 'Lor' is a reference to the Norse 'Llora', or a Norwegian stream name. If so, whence the 'ton'. Of the several interpretations that have been suggested, I find this one not only the most attractive, but the one which appears to me to be the most logical. Perhaps we have a twin development of Anglo village on a knoll beside the river Cocker, and a later Norse settlement developed out of the fellside waste beside the 'roaring stream' that is Whitbeck, and a fine confounding of the two name parts.

The twin villages of Lorton have certainly existed since early Norman times, though their names have undergone various subtle changes. Originally, Lorton Inferior (nothing more significant in this name than the use of the Latinised version of Lower), became Anglicised and later changed to Nether Lorton before changing a second time to Low Lorton about 1700. As far as we can judge, similar changes were simultaneously applied to Over Lorton, which became successively Upper, Higher and later High Lorton. That these name changes occurred but slowly, with their use over-lapping, is amply demonstrated by finding the name in its various forms over a period of years, and sometimes in the same document. Certainly since the mid 17th century, and probably much earlier, the villages have had much the same plan as we see today; they are typical "linear villages" (1).

To the 20th century traveller, used to seeing urban spread in towns and villages alike throughout this land, it may seem strange that these two villages should have existed separately, with virtually no building, stretching land-grasping tentacles,

between them for some 700 to 800 years. Equally mysterious is the isolated church, halfway between them. In fact both these statements may be untrue, as we shall discover. Exactly where was the area known as Lorton Cross and how extensive was it? It was not until the latter half of the 19th century that any significant new building took place, yet that and subsequent modern building has not been obtrusive or excessive. At least, not yet, though pressures are growing, and in the closing years of the 20th century, buildings were allowed that the final joining of the two Lortons is all but completed. See Chapter 12, "Buildings".

Low Lorton today, seen to advantage from a gap in the hedgerows on the Rogerscale road, offers a pleasant, green, sleepy, bucolic atmosphere. But whichever way one comes into High Lorton, the impression is one of quiet under the avenues of fine deciduous trees which form green, golden or open twiggy tunnels over the narrow roads, depending on the season. Here too is the late 20th century quiet, that caused one writer to think he may have stumbled on a ghost village (2). This is misleading because the late 20th century view hides an industrial past.

Today, both the villages, but more particularly High Lorton, offer the visitor a sight similar to that he would have seen in about 1650. There have been quite a lot of houses demolished in Low Lorton, and some in High Lorton, but the two major differences would be the replacement of poor mud and wattle dwellings with their thatched roofs, by the solid stone and slated houses and barns we see today, and the change from largely arable to almost entirely pastoral use of the land in the valley bottom.

Going back further in time, things become hypothetical. There seems little doubt that the original settlement, carved out of woodland above the soggy, marshy flood plain alongside the River Cocker, dates to the Norse settlement period. After centuries of land improvement and drainage and enhanced river management, the meadows beside the river still flood. It seems unlikely that a village could have grown in this area in the earliest days of settlement, and for that matter there is still no housing there. On the other hand, Low Lorton was firmly established as a Manorial seat in the reign of Edward I, at the spot where the East bank of the Cocker rises briefly a few feet higher than the flood plain on either hand and by the same token, the twin villages were both in existence at that time.

It is a sad fact that the Lake District National Park in the 1980s and beyond is undergoing a crisis caused by too many people, both visitors and inhabitants, and too many sheep, over-stretching its finite, limited resources. This is creating serious environmental problems for visitors and inhabitants alike. In the 1990s, many farmers volunteered to join the environmentally sensitive area (E.S.A.) scheme which aims to reduce the agricultural impact on the environment. As I hope will become evident during this book, I count myself fortunate in the extreme to be able to live here, and wish it in my heart that everyone, everywhere, could live under such conditions as are met with in this peaceful valley.

I fell in love with the valley when, approaching from Cockermouth the very first time, I breasted the rise at the Round Close Hill crossroads. The valley was exhibiting one of its many breath-taking moods. I find it difficult to define the causes for such admiration, to explain why living here brings such feelings of joy and satisfaction. Sometimes I find it difficult to realize that I am not still dreaming of a past holiday, until the present intervenes and reminds me of my great good fortune.

But such sentiments are not mine alone. The Vale has been the subject of similar comment for a long time. Tourism began modestly, if the numbers of visitors is to be the criterion, in about 1750. Gilpin, who was a cleric from the south of England wrote in 1760 of the Vale of Lorton "All is simplicity and repose, Nature wears a lovely smile". One wonders if Gilpin realized how much of the hard life of the yeoman farmers lay behind that lovely smile.

A more recent writer, W.G. Collingwood, evoking the repose of a more leisurely age than today, wrote of this valley "made by Heaven for Summer evenings and Summer mornings, green floor and purple heights, with the sound of running waters". This lovely description is still appropriate for the modern holidaymaker, who may very well not be native born. Many overseas visitors, including those who live amongst the beautiful European Alps and the majestic Canadian Rockies, can still find it in themselves to describe Cumbria in general, and the Vale of Lorton in particular, as they have to me personally, and in one word, "magical".

But let us return for a little to the wider scene, and place Lorton in its context. The Lake District was first likened to a wheel by Wordsworth, one of Cumberland's illustrious sons, born in Cockermouth, just four miles from Lorton. The spokes of the wheel are represented by the various hill ranges radiating from a central high dome, the lake-filled valleys between them being the spaces between the spokes. This representation of the 900 square miles of the Lake District is not very precise and maybe somewhat misleading, since the wheel is anything but perfect.

Geologists tell us the region started dome-like, after which some five hundred million years of geological, volcanic, glacial, and climatic activity have produced the highly complex pattern of rock, mountain, and lake terrain that we have today. Volcanic activity is not completely finished. I have twice experienced minor earth tremors, one strong enough to awaken me and rattle the windows. In 1908, it was reported that weeks of rumblings finished with smoke rising from Whiteside and rocks falling down the fell side (3). What they did not make was the scenery we so much admire; that is almost entirely man-made. It is claimed that nowhere else in the world, can such a variety of rocks, minerals, scenery, and vegetation be found within such a small compass. Many of us who are fortunate enough to live here also claim that nowhere else is there such beauty. But beauty is in the eye of the beholder, subjective and a matter of opinion.

What is not a matter of opinion is that the Vale of Lorton occupies a slot in the North West corner of Wordsworth's wheel and that the underlying base rock of the valley and most of the surrounding hills are of "Skiddaw Slate", and that where I sit as I write is three hundred feet above sea level. Skiddaw Slate is not a true slate in as far as it will not cleave cleanly and is therefore not fit for roofing, but it eventually weathers to a fine useful soil for the growth of grass, and invasive bracken. There is also the lovely whin (gorse), that clothes the fell sides in clouds of bright yellow through spring and into summer.

The Lake District has a reputation, not wholly deserved, for being very wet. Of course it rains; it rains everywhere in the United Kingdom. At Lorton, the annual average rainfall is about twice that of London. Only six miles away, at the head of Borrowdale, it rains twice as much again and thus has the distinction of being the wettest place in England. There are two well-documented occasions when rainfall in the valley was excessive. The first was in September 1760, the exact day subject to dispute, when a sudden rush of water down Whiteside very nearly carried away

much of Brackenthwaite (4). The second was when heavy rains caused the reservoir above Crab Tree Beck to burst and carry away that dwelling, killing two inhabitants (5). Nevertheless, three times in the period 1980-95, much of the Lake District has suffered a drought and water been rationed. Such rain as we do have produces the innumerable trickles that become gills tumbling down the steep fell sides, producing that almost inescapable sound of running waters. In turn these become the fast flowing becks that fill the lakes and produce my drinking water, as well as that for many millions of other people in the north-west and north of England, from Manchester in the south to Silloth in the north. They also inspired Southey's poem "Lodore", of which an extract is quoted above, as well as that poetic comment by Collingwood.

How often have my wife and I sat silently in the garden in the still of a late summer evening, the purple hills in view, not a breath of wind, the only sound being the occasional bleat of a lamb and, yes, the sound of running water. Collingwood was so right, but I am no farmer up before dawn to milk the cows, or passing long successive sleepless nights with the "yowes" (ewes) at lambing time. Even today, with all the mechanization and electronic gadgetry at the farmer's disposal, all is not simplicity and repose for those who still live here and work on the land.

Lorton Vale is the textbook example of a glaciated valley. It has steep U-shaped fell sides, a suspended river at Scale Force, a tarn filled circe, and the moraine-dammed lakes of Buttermere and Crummock. Loweswater is in a subsidiary valley and, together with the former two, contributes to the fast flowing river Cocker which runs, meandering the length of the valley, from the foot of the towering and almost perpendicular rock face of Haystacks (1900 feet) to its conjunction with the slower flowing lowland river Derwent at Cockermouth. Here, with the two rivers forming a bastion on three sides stands the Norman castle. This was largely destroyed by royalists during the Civil War, but is still inhabited, and it holds today many of the archives relating to the Percy family estates in the Vale of Lorton.

The fells surrounding the valley have their highest points at their southern, innermost end, reaching 2,644 feet at High Stile on the west side, and 2,791 feet at Grasmoor on the east side. These quite respectable heights, beautifully snow covered in winter, slowly reduce as the successive peaks march northwards and finally peter out well before reaching Cockermouth itself, just fourteen miles from Haystacks. The lowest pass out of the head of the valley, Newlands, is at 1096 feet above sea level, whilst the alternative into Borrowdale climbs Honister steeply to 1200 feet.

It is at Haystacks that the Skiddaw Slates give way to the Borrowdale Volcanic Series of rocks. This, then, is the topography of the region in a fairly large nutshell. Over several millennia, it has determined the progress, or otherwise, of human settlement and the nature of that settlement, the attendant activities of farming and husbandry, the growth of industry, social intercourse and communications.

In general, in spite of tracks over the inter-valley passes, the topography has resulted in colonisation of the land, and social life, being restricted to the valley bottoms, spreading laterally along them and outwards to the towns which grew as focal points where the valley and lowland meet, rather than inwards towards a regional centre as is normal in lowland regions. Such is the case with the Vale of Lorton and Cockermouth, to which point we will return later. See photos 1, 2 and 3.

Until the age of the train much, if not most, of the social intercourse of the valley folk was restricted, by use of foot or horse, to those living within its confines, though

these were stretched to include both the Wythop and the Loweswater valleys; to a lesser extent to Newlands valley and Cockermouth; and to an even lesser extent, to the Solway coastal plain. Since Wythop was within the ecclesiastical area served by the Lorton church, it too is included in this study.

Thus as a social study, the geographical area covered reaches from the northern end of Bassenthwaite Lake between Peilewyke and Beck Wythop, includes the Lorton Valley from Gatesgarth to Armaside and from east to west, the Whit Beck side valley up the Whinlatter Pass and over to Littlethwaite and Rogerscale on the west side of the Cocker; see map (Figure 2.1). Specifically excluded, as far as possible, partly because it would extend the scope of this study beyond the limit of what was practical and partly because it always fell within a different parish, is the Loweswater valley. Logically, when possible, Loweswater should be the subject of a further study to be integrated with the present work.

The area so defined above is an Administrative jungle. The political and Lordship aspects are dealt with in the next Chapter. But overlying these have been the ecclesiastical and parish organizations, which have changed much over the centuries. From early Christian times, the study area was within the jurisdiction of the mother church at Brigham and the Diocese of York. That part of our area east of the Cocker was the Parochial Chapelry of Lorton. Within this were the two chapels of ease at Wythop and Buttermere. West of the Cocker lay within the Whinfell or Mosser Chapelries of Brigham, though folk from Littlethwaite, Whinfell and Rogerscale normally attended church at Lorton. Higher up the valley, Hill and other hamlets in that area were in the Loweswater Chapelry of the mother church of St. Bees, though the inhabitants occasionally divided their loyalties equally between Lorton and Loweswater churches. Similarly, so did those living east of the Cocker at Brackenthwaite which was originally within the Lorton Chapelry, but in April 1886 was transferred to the parochial chapelry of Loweswater. These arrangements were changed when Lorton became a Parish in its own right in 1883 (6). By this order, the Littlethwaite to Rogerscale area was incorporated into the Parish of St Cuthbert's as was the hitherto detached portion of Buttermere chapelry at Swinside. Wythop was attached to the new parish of Embleton when it was formed. The new parish of Buttermere was established in 1884 (7) and Loweswater in 1895. Long before these changes however, in 1541, the Parish of Brigham was dissociated from the Diocese of York and was joined to that of Chester, but remained within the Archdeaconry of Richmond until in 1856, when it was attached to the Diocese of Carlisle. Henceforth, throughout this book, the church of St. Cuthbert's serving the Parochial Chapelry of Lorton with Wythop and Buttermere, will be called the Parish of Lorton, which was exactly as the inhabitants themselves thought of it.

The bones of the history of kingly succession of the whole region of modern Cumbria and its incorporation into, and later disconnection from, Strathclyde and Northumbria in pre-Norman times have come down to us in some incomplete and sometimes contradictory detail. But of the lives of the ordinary folk we can only conjecture. Even after the Norman conquest, detailed accounts of life, land and its ownership in the Vale of Lorton are very sketchy and infrequent.

It came as a shock to me to learn that my cherished school-time memories of "1066 and all that" and the Domesday Book did not apply to most of modern Cumbria, as this part of England was not effectively occupied and governed by the Norman conquerors until long after Domesday. So much for school history lessons.

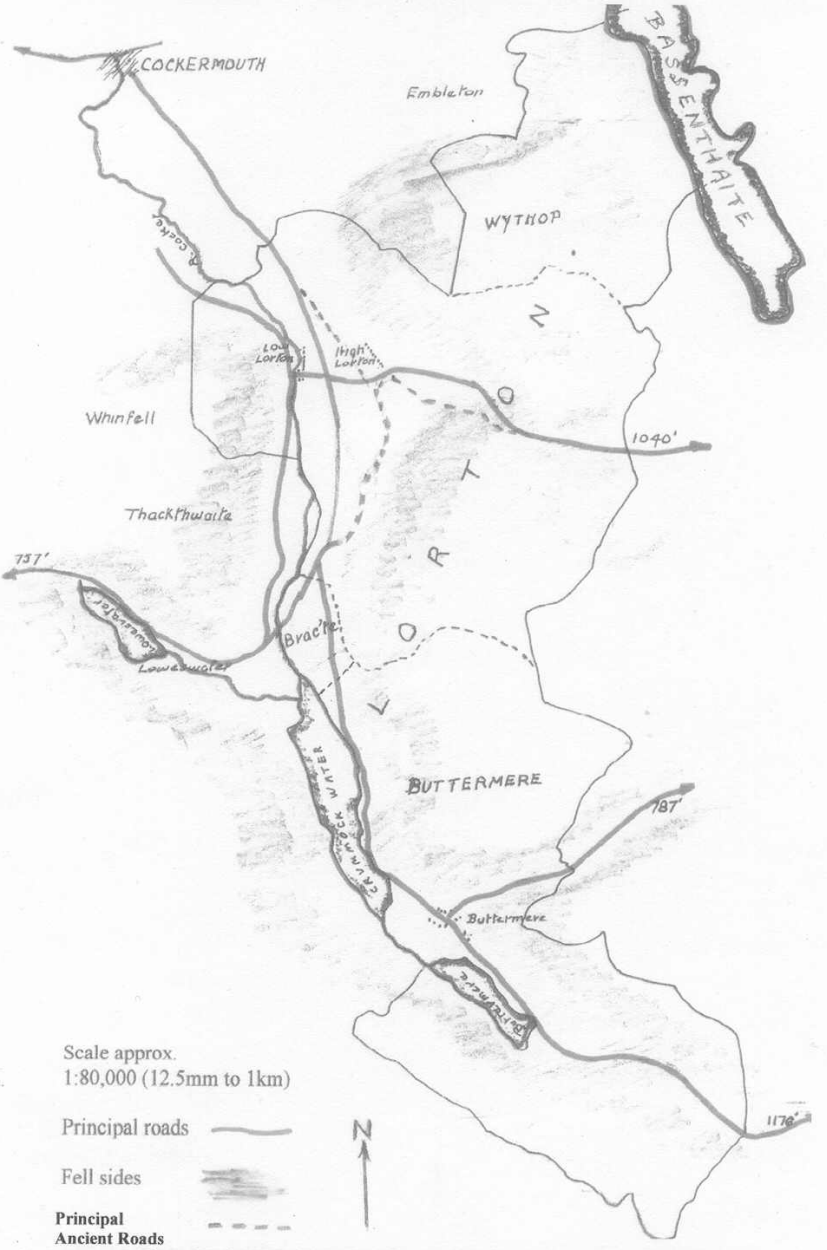


Figure 2.1 SKETCH MAP OF THE PAROCHIAL CHAPELRY OF LORTON

Chapter 2 References

(1) Village Plans, Roberts
(2) Lakeland Villages, Jim Watson, Cicerone Press, 1988, p 101
(3) Ramshaw & Adams, p 18
(4) W Gilpin, "Observations ... made in the year 1772 ..."; also Rosemary Southey, parish magazine, October 1988
(5) Ramshaw & Adams, p 47
(6) Order in Council, 11th September 1883
(7) Order in Council, 15th August 1884

Chapter 3: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

"…and God saw all that he had made, and it was very good…" Genesis, 1. 31

Let us begin at the beginning.

The Vale of Lorton is situated on, and surrounded by some of the oldest rocks in the world, certainly the oldest in the Lake District. These are known as the Skiddaw Slates, for the obvious reason that probably the most salient feature of the landscape in this area is "Skidda" itself. Now, slates as we all know, are formed by the almost timeless deposition of fine particles of mud at the bottom of still water, which are subsequently subjected to extreme pressure. In this case the pressure was supplied by an estimated 5000 metre, yes 5000 metre high layer of volcanic rock provided by an ancient volcano in the Ordovician Era, plus heavy layers of carboniferous formations and sandstones. Whilst the rock formations are extremely complex, it is apparent that they have suffered considerable changes over the 450 million years since the volcano spewed out these Borrowdale lava flows. But this did not happen here in Cumbria. The rocks forming this Vale of Lorton were about 20 degrees south of the equator at the time (1); and it is not unknown for present day residents to wish it were back there now.

Earth movement eventually brought them here where, after much folding and bending, they were subjected to a sequence of Ice Ages. The last of these occurred about one million years ago and overlaid the land with an enormously thick ice sheet, such as is found in Greenland today. The huge weight of ice moving slowly downhill scoured out the valley we know, with its smooth rounded and U-shaped sides. As the climate changed, the edge of the ice cap retreated northwards but as recently as 20,000 years ago, the Buttermere glacier filled our valley, more or less to the top of the surrounding fells we see today. As the ice retreated further, it left behind the circe with Bleaberry Tarn, the hanging valley of Sour Milk Ghyll, and the moraines across the lower end of the valley and along the valley sides. The house in which I write is built on one of the latter as a gardener quickly discovers.

Dates for prehistoric ages vary according to the authority and the date of authorship, and have a tendency to change in the light of later scholarship, so dates quoted here should be taken as approximate. Some authors of considerable repute even go so far as to give a continuous story of evolution of man in the landscape without quoting any dates at all (2). When this last Ice Age ended, about 11,000 BC, Palaeolithic Man (Old Stone Age) began to be replaced by Mesolithic man in the British Isles, though no trace of him has been found in this area. As the ice retreated northwards, the land was progressively colonised by reindeer moss and lichens, then by dwarf scrubs and bushes, then by trees such as willows and conifers. Later, the great wooded forests which our forefathers found here, especially oak and ash, covered the land to a height of 2,500 feet or more, whilst the valley bottoms produced alder and marsh-loving plants. So it is quite possible that even the highest peaks of the Lake District hills were tree covered.

Mesolithic Man (Middle Stone Age) came onto the scene and left evidence of his activity on the Cumbrian coastal area. In particular, at Walney Island where he could forage for food such as nuts and berries, hunt at the forest edge, catch shell-fish and

make his rather elementary small flint tools, the latter limited by the size and quality of the flints found in the area. Many, many years were to pass before significant progress enabled the inhabitants to begin to encroach on the forest and move away from the coast (3).

By about 3,500 BC, New Stone Age Man in Cumbria had discovered fine volcanic ash and stone deposits, known as rhyolitic ash, just below the summits of Pike o' Stickle and Scafell and was learning to fashion fine stone axes. Here was the first Lake District industry, because these axes have been discovered in Scotland, Southern England and on the Continent. These early "Cumbrians" now had the means to begin clearing small areas from the forest in which to grow their simple form of wheat called "emmer". With these two considerable advances in mans' ability to modify his environment came two more. These were the beginnings of domestication of dogs and animals such as cattle. Sheep followed the Neolithic settlers migrating westward through Europe. The consequence of this, inevitable in this environment, was the need to settle. So it is from this time that we find traces of the first buildings to leave a mark on our landscape.

Stone circles appear, and these are the first evidence of lasting construction (4). As such work required the co-operation of many men, so by implication, we credit the earliest evidence of social organization to the people of this era. Sometime between 2000 BC and 1000 BC, the Lake District climate deteriorated and low level land became boggy. Prior to that, the climate was much more amenable than we know it in the 20th and 21st centuries, so movement on the Irish Sea for transporting copper from Wicklow and tin from Cornwall would present much less of a problem then than it would for the same craft today. As the Neolithic age moved gradually into the Bronze age, by 2,200 BC the higher land had been largely cleared of trees for cultivation, and the fully developed Bronze age which followed was established in Cumbria at about 2,000 BC; then as now, there was a time delay before Cumbria caught up with the rest of the country. Now, bigger monuments were being built and the nearest of these ancient monuments to Lorton Valley, and a most prominent one, is the Stone Circle at Castlerigg, just outside Keswick.

Artefacts of successive stages of human development and habitation have been found in areas adjacent to the Vale of Lorton – Stone Age, Bronze Age, Celtic, Old English, Roman and Norse. Something of each of these, but very little has so far been found and positively identified in the Vale of Lorton. A Stone Age axe head found at Low Lorton in 1960 and now in the Tullie House Museum at Carlisle, is thought to be more likely a discarded import from an unknown collection. The most famous local ancient relic is the Embleton sword, of Brigantian origin about the time of the Roman invasion, and now in the British Museum.

As far as we know, neither the Romans nor the Celts left any permanent sign of settlement in our valley, though Iron Age forts and possible Stone Age hut sites have been found in the surrounding area. There is an Iron Age fort on top of the hill at Caermote, also the site of a Roman fort (near modern Bothel). Nearer to Lorton, and within what would much later become its most eastern parish boundary, is the Romano-British hill-fort of Castle Crag at Peel Wyke (5). At the foot of Whiteside, at Lanthwaite Green, there is evidence of a "British village", of indeterminate date. This was surveyed carefully in 1923 (6), since when further loss of definition has taken place. There are signs of yet another "settlement" at the foot of the northern end of Mellbreak, whilst Papcastle across the river from Cockermouth was the site of the

Roman base of Derventio. The known network of Roman roads suggests that there was almost certainly a road over the Whinlatter Pass, probably following the track of the now gated Hopebeck road past High Swinside, or down into what is now High Lorton, thence on to the coast road. It is also believed there may have been a Roman base, as yet undiscovered, at or near Keswick. In 1998, members of the Lorton & Derwent Fells Local History Society carried out research followed by surveys on the Roman road which almost certainly went over the Whinlatter Pass on its way to the fort at Papcastle. The results of their findings will be published and these show strong evidence for a section of the Roman road below Knott Head. Provisional routes down into the Lorton valley have been identified and these await further work.

The evidence of the past that does remain, and that most strongly and indisputably, is in the personal and place names in the local dialect and, until recently, the local customs. The so-called "Dark Ages" are not so called without good reason. At the turn of the 19th/20th centuries, the writer of the Victorian County History of Cumberland wrote, "For a long period after the withdrawal of the Roman forces from the district south of the Solway the district has little or no history. There is nothing but darkness unrelieved by a single gleam of light . . . . until the coming of the Teuton" (7). Another century of research has done little to change this picture, and even the complex situation of small kingdoms, the names, dates and genealogies of the principle players in the 6th to 9th centuries AD are subject to varied dates and interpretations.

Christianity may possibly have come into the area in about AD 72 when the Romans first arrived here, overcoming the Celtic tribes of which the Brigantes were the major one, but this is improbable. One of the earliest churches discovered to date is at Vindolanda on Hadrian's Wall and dating from the early 5th century (8). There is an ancient earthwork, believed to be that of a church, in a field near the northern foot of Mellbreak (9). Certainly by about 400 AD when the Romans withdrew from this, their most north westerly province, this part of what is now England was inhabited by Celtic people who had intermarried with Romans. They called themselves Cymri and set up an independent Kingdom of Cumbria. The first of the kingly line was Coneticus. One of the leading Cymri families is reputed to have been Christian and their son Ninian, born near the Solway, was educated in Rome. He returned and is credited with evangelising in this part of Cumbria now known as Allerdale, with the result that Christianity was becoming firmly established here by the 6th century. Ninian was the first of a number of saintly people particularly associated with that area, although the only historical evidence for Ninian's story comes from Bede and Ailred, c1150 (10).

The one that concerns us here is Cuthbert. Born in 634 AD, he was rather a mystic and a "loner", travelling widely to preach to folks in the remote valleys of the Cumbrian and Northumbrian fells. He was called to become Prior of Melrose Abbey, then Bishop of Lindisfarne, now known as Holy Island, off the coast of Northumberland. He relinquished that post and spent the last years of his life as a hermit on Farne Island near Lindisfarne and died on 20th March, 687. Some hundred years later, in 793 AD, the Vikings sacked and destroyed Lindisfarne whose monks fled taking the preserved remains of Cuthbert with them, vowing never to let these fall into the hands of the pagan Vikings. So began a long trek round the north country, the monks always moving ahead of Viking marauders. Legend has it that

where the cortège stayed for any length of time, a church dedicated to St. Cuthbert was built. Hence, so we are told, the presence of St Cuthbert's Church in Lorton, though there is no factual evidence that the monks ever did visit this immediate area (12). It requires too much stretch of the imagination to consider that the monks would have stopped long enough at Lorton and again at Embleton to encourage the population of both places to build to St Cuthbert. But it is quite conceivable that at a much later date both should decide to dedicate to Cuthbert. In 1987 Lorton had a special celebration year to mark the 1300th anniversary of St Cuthbert's death.

King Oswald of Bernicia (Northumbria) who reigned 635 to 641 AD had a brother, Oswy, who reigned 641 to 670 and whose second wife was the last royal Cymri princess, Riemmelch, and thus combined the whole of the north country from coast to coast under the control of the Angles (13). From this beginning, Angle Land became England and much of the Cumbrian plain to the south of modern Carlisle, which was covered by heavy woodland, "Angle Wood", later became known as Inglewood Forest, one of the largest Royal Forests in England. The Vale of Lorton was not far from the south western edge of this forest.

It used to be taught that Vikings from Scandinavia attacked this island from the west whilst others were attacking Northumbria from the east, so making Cumberland an area of sporadic fighting, attacked from all sides. But we now know that, as Professor Collingwood and Dr. Rollinson have written very forcibly, the evidence contradicts this proposition. Celtic and Norse personal and village names are found in co-existence all round the west coast of Cumbria. This looks much more like mutual acceptance. The Norsemen – Vikings – came to this area about 900 AD, not from Scandinavia, but as fugitives from Scandinavian attacks on their own homes in the Western Isles, off Scotland. They came to colonize and farm, not as raiders (14).

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle relates how Edmund, the Saxon King of Wessex, overran the whole of Cumbria. Later, Ethelred II lost Northumbria to the Danes, as a result of which the Earl of Northumbria, Siward and his nephew Gospatrick, moved into Cumbria where we know they had arrived by 1050 (15). See also Figure 3.1 which is my own interpretation of the several alternatives offered by divers authors, and not necessarily correct in every detail.

We are now approaching the date at which so many English people think their history started. The year 1066 brings us to the Battle of Hastings which was, if we ignore one local minor incident (16), the last wave of conquerors to attack our shores. The Normans under William, themselves Norse men who had settled across the Channel in what is modern France, landed at Hastings and beat Harold who was King of most of what is modern England.

It took another twenty six years before William's son, Rufus, William II, came north and took Carlisle from King Malcolm of Scotland, so most of Cumbria, as we know it today, was not included in the Domesday Survey. A detailed analysis of the politics of the region is given by Charles Phythian-Adams, but the following is a simplified version of events. William gave his friend Ranulph de Briquessand the job of pacifying and ruling Carlisle and the west coast area of Cumbria as a "viceroy". In his turn, Ranulph divided his territory into three parts. One part included Carlisle and the Border country, the second was Allerdale which he extended as far south as the mouth of the Derwent, inland from the River Caldew to Caldbeck, along the west side of the Skiddaw massif taking in Bassenthwaite Lake

and Derwent Water. The third part was effectively unexplored wilderness as far as Ranulph was concerned. This was the area south of the Derwent, "above Derwent" the Normans called it, otherwise known as Coupland. Ranulph considered this area to be unexplored wilderness, i.e. 'coup land', and he gave this third part to his younger brother, William.

When Richard, Earl of Chester, was drowned at sea in 1120 AD, Henry I made Ranulph, Richard's cousin, Earl of Chester. In 1122, Henry I extended Allerdale across the Derwent and added five vills including Cockermouth, and made it into a Barony under the Lord of Allerdale, Waldive, son of Gospatric. All the rest, from the Derwent to the Duddon he made into the Barony of Coupland. There were many smaller Manors owing homage, suit and service to the Lord of Allerdale and one of these, with its Church at Cross Cannonby, Waldive gave to the newly founded Priory of The Holy and Undivided Trinity at Carlisle.

When Henry I died in 1135, Stephen and Maud fought over the English throne so whilst the royal court was thus engaged, David I of Scotland, with the connivance of Stephen (17) took advantage of the opportunity and overran all of northern England, Cumbria and Northumberland. Cumbria again became part of Scotland and fighting continued in the border region until 1173 when Sir Richard de Lucy, on behalf of King Henry II, took a hand and forced the Scots back over the border.

The de Lucy family had married into the new Baronies of Allerdale and Egremont. Reginald de Lucy became Lord of Allerdale and married Annabel, daughter of William FitzDuncan and later, Alice Romilly, granddaughter of Ranulph de Briquessand (see Figure 3.2).

When William FitzDuncan, third Lord of Allerdale died, Alice inherited Allerdale and held it of King Richard I and John "by cornage of 151 and 1 mark for her five vills in demesne and 19 in homages". This expression is repeated ad nauseam in all the Victorian reference books and their later copies without being explained, presumably on the assumption that everybody is quite conversant with early medieval legal jargon. Homage was essentially a ceremonial pledge of loyalty to the lord or over-lord of the Manor, in implicit return for the lord's protection. In this case, there were five townships of which Alice was herself the lord and 19 other holdings for which sub-tenants did homage to her. The exact nature of Cornage is the subject of some disagreement, but was a rent paid by the tenant to the lord based on the number of horned cattle the tenant possessed, in this case a presumably nominal 151.

Alice and William had four children. The heir, William, was drowned in an accident in Yorkshire in 1160 when he was 21. Of the three sisters, two were childless, and the other, Annabel, married Reginald de Lucy of Egremont. Their son Richard, later knighted and the Fifth Lord of Allerdale, married Ada Merville in 1204 and had two daughters, Annabel and Alice. Richard died in 1215 after which Ada married Thomas de Multon who already had two sons, Lambert and Alan from a previous marriage. Annabel married Lambert, and Alice married Alan. It is at this point that we begin to get the first written records relating to "Loreton vill" and the neighbouring townships, because Annabel and Alice were in dispute as to who should get what of the split estate. Alice claimed, amongst others "Homage and whole service of Thomas Marishall and his heirs for the vill of Loreton; of Sarra de Whinefell for moiety of tenement of Whinfell: of Walter son of Rayner and his heirs for tenement in Loreton; of William Marishall and his heirs for a tenement in

Loreton; "the whole hamlets of Saurscales and Morcekyn within ancient bounds; the whole hamlet of Loweswater with the lake of Loweswater and the lake called Therncran with moiety of the lake of Crombokwatr…" (18). A "moiety" means a half share.

In the year 1158 (19) or earlier, Ranulph de Lindsay gave to the Priory of the Undivided Holy Trinity in Carlisle two pieces of land, with a mill. Ranulph had acquired this land through his wife, Ethereda, sister of Alan, son of Waldive, Lord of Allerdale. (See Fig. 3.1) The Lorton part of this gift became what is now the village of High Lorton and formed part of the Manor of Lorton and Allerthwaite. It is from this date that we know manorial references to the vill or township of Lorton exclude what is now High Lorton. After King Henry VIII sacked the Monasteries, the Manor of Lorton and Allerthwaite was awarded to the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle, whose property it remained until the Law of Property Act of 1922 obliged the tenants to buy the freehold of their properties. The earliest known document detailing this manor is in the Survey made at the order of the Commonwealth Parliament in 1649, to which we shall return in detail. However, there is a brief mention in 1534-5 quoting the Priory having a holding in Lorton worth £5 2s 4d pa (20).

So, in 1231, Thomas Marishall held the "vill of Loreton", whilst there were two other holdings in Lorton, one held by William Marishall and the other by Walter, son of Rayner. By the time Maud, wife of Henry Earl of Northumberland died in 1398, "Lorton inferior", as Low Lorton was then known, was further sub-divided. One third was held of her by Margaret de Wyndare for 3s 4d cornage, one third similarly by John Mounceaux, the other third being divided into two holdings each of two tenements (21). Subsequent subdivision ensued (22) and towards the end of the 16th century we find there are still three estates, though each is now subdivided into six messuages, that is six tenements or holdings, and now owned by the Winder, Sands and Huddlestone families.

The dispute between Alice and Annabel was settled by a King's Court ruling in about 1247 and, as part of the settlement, the Manor of Wythop was granted to Alan de Multon and his wife Alice de Lucy. It was inherited by their son John and his heirs in fee tail. It was the last sub-infeudation in Derwentfells and when he received it was called "waste", worth only 20s pa for herbage. By 1307 it had been built on and developed and was worth £10 pa (23). It can not be coincidence that Wythop valley became part of the parochial chapelry of Lorton, but reasonable to postulate that the de Lucy family contrived this after acquiring the Wythop Manor.

Maud, the last of the de Lucy family, bestowed all her lands and titles upon her second husband, Henry Percy, First Earl of Northumberland, on condition that the Percy Arms were quartered with the de Lucy Arms. Maud died in 1398, and Henry Percy was killed in battle in 1408.

The paragraphs above are a précis of what is a very complex, and still imperfectly documented history of the Border and Cumbrian area. What is rather simpler, though no better documented in the Medieval period, is the Manor of Lorton and Allerthwaite. For the purposes of this study, we will ignore Allerthwaite, which was a separate "enclave" relating to the modern Orthwaite area near Uldale.

As a social/political and geographical concept "Lorton" became a very complex area and our study will necessarily embrace much of what is better described as the "Vale of Lorton". To further complicate matters this is extended to include the

Wythop valley and Whinlatter Pass as high as the watershed, or in other words, the early Parochial Chapelry of Lorton.

The next references we find to this area are within the body of documents known as the Inquisition Post Mortem, which were enquiries regarding the possessions, services and heirs of persons holding lands directly of the Crown. In 1300, Thomas de Lucy and his wife Christiana, who survived him, were owed suit at his court at Lorton every three weeks for all service by John de Plumbland (24). Five years later, Thomas de Lucy was holding the hamlet of Thakthwait for 1d and John de Lucy held land as a free tenant in both Wythop and Quinfell (Whinfell) by homage and 2d yearly, whilst in Lorton, Robert de Plumbland held land by homage and suit of court every three weeks, paying 3s 4d pa for his free farm (25).

When he died in 1348, Hugh de Moriceby held (jointly with another) of Thomas de Lucy by fealty and suit of court at Cockermouth every three weeks the manor of Brakonthwayt. Hugh's heir was his son Christopher.

Much of the Vale of Lorton was in the hands of Anthony de Lucy. When he died in 1368 he held various lands in Quinfell whose tenants at will rendered him 41s yearly, and a mill. In the hamlet of Buttermire (the spelling "Buttermere" did not come until very much later) his tenants at will rendered him £12 1s 2d yearly and there he had another watermill. Free tenants at Lorton rendered him 21s 3d yearly plus a pound of pepper, whilst his tenants at will rendered another 13s 4d for their holdings. The manor of Loweswater which he held of the king in chief by knights service included the hamlet of Thakthwayt worth 101s pa, whilst tenants at Emmelton and Harmondesheved (now Armiside) together rendered 62s 6d. In the adjacent valley of Newlands, tenants at will in the rather mixed grouping of Rogersate (Rogerside), Newlands and Keskadale combined were worth a further 63s yearly (26). Anthony de Lucy was a wealthy landowner.

These lands and tenements all passed through Anthony's daughter and heir Joan to Anthony's sister Maud (27). As already mentioned when Maud died in 1398, all these holdings passed to her second husband, Henry Percy, 1st Earl of Northumberland. At this time the Quinfell (Whinfell) land was sub-infeudinated to Armand Monceaux and the manor of Whitehope (Wythop) was held of her by Robert de Lowther (28).

The Manor and village of Low Lorton remained in the hands of the Dukes of Northumberland until inherited by Charles Seymour, Duke of Somerset on the death of Elizabeth Percy in 1682. The estate was split in 1750, the Cumberland part passing to Sir Charles Wyndham, a nephew of the 10th Earl of Northumberland. Since then, the Lorton lands have been in the hands of the Wyndham family, Barons of Leconfield and Egremont.

Having dealt as best we might with the earlier historical ownership of the land, let us now look at the land itself, which when we last considered it, had come out of the last Ice Age, had become covered with forest, scrub and marsh, and was being subjected to the first attempts to clear land and grow crops. If we keep this picture firmly in mind we cannot fall into the trap that is so often heard expressed as "is not the Lake District so naturally beautiful", or "how marvellous is Nature to produce such a beautiful landscape". Any such comment completely overlooks the fact that the landscape of the 20th century is virtually entirely man-made – involuntarily, we might add. Our current experience tells us that we more easily, selfishly and thoughtlessly destroy our environment rather than create a masterpiece out of it.

Progressively, man felled and cleared the trees either for arable land, where it was good enough, or for pasture for cattle where it was better for nothing else. He let swine and cattle root and eat the young shoots of regenerating forest and later when sheep became more economically important they added their multitude of teeth to demolishing all but grass, so that slowly but surely the fells became more and more denuded of their tree cover.

The Norse incursions – the name 'Viking' tends to conjure up the wrong image, and immigration would be a better word – into the area of the Solway plain, led to increased pressure on the land and the beginning of settlement further up the highland valleys. It is about this time we believe Lorton was founded. They brought no new field system with them but adopted whatever system was used by the existing population; open field or small, enclosed field. The huge two or three open-field system considered to be traditional of medieval ages, was in reality found principally in the midland counties and progressively less so round the more peripheral counties. Why this system of huge open fields, with its inherent problems, was adopted in remote time seems to be a mystery. Certainly in terrain such as is found in the valleys of Cumberland, the terrain would have determined whether open or small wall-enclosed fields should be established. Small fields were cleared piecemeal and stone-wall enclosed, with surrounding head dykes built to keep out cattle and what was left of the wild beasts of the forest. As hamlets grew in size it would be natural to lay out bigger and perhaps open-plan fields around them such as we once had in the valley floor in the area around Low Lorton, especially as increasing pressure for more land forced drainage and improvement of the low lying land bordering the river. This dual pattern of small irregularly shaped walled fields and larger regularly shaped fenced fields is still immediately evident to even a casual observer.

When William Rufus and his Earls took over the fells and vales of Cumberland, they found a land looking very much like we see it today. That is not to say there were no more trees than we have today, there must have been substantially more over much of Cumberland, but the general picture would have been similar. The great forest of Inglewood stretched to within a few miles of the Vale of Lorton, and there were, in Norman times, already huge tracts of open moorland "waste" not subject to the Forest Laws, and available for rough summer pasture for both cattle and sheep. The Plantagenet Normans brought with them a great passion for hunting and their Forest Laws were designed specifically to preserve their ability to hunt. Some "forests" were Royal, some were "free chase", that is, reserved for the sport of the great feudal landlords as private hunting grounds. The area between the River Cocker and Derwent Water, known as the Forest of Derwent Fells, was one of these, as part of the Honour of Cockermouth. It is supposed this was created in about 1100 by separation from the barony of Copeland and may well represent a pre-Norman territorial holding (29). Considerably more woodland must have remained in this area of high fells until the expansion of farming, which occurred in the 13th century, began to make serious inroads on the oak woods. Until then, the woods supported large numbers of swine, note names such as Grisedale and Swinside in our own valley; 250 swine were reported in Derwentfells in 1282 (30). The increase in colonisation of the land soon brought extra pressures on the woodland and rough pasture, slowing and eventually destroying regeneration of the trees, not to mention additional felling for building. With the eventual loss of much

of the woodland-pasture, the swine disappeared. By the time we find probate inventories, towards the end of the 16th century, there are hardly any pigs mentioned at all, even the odd domestic animal for home consumption is rarely mentioned.

In the Norman period up to about 1300, there was a large growth in population resulting in the further growth of villages and hamlets in the valleys as pressure for land forced more in-taking of the "waste" and increasing use of higher land for summer pasture. The valley farmers took their cattle, as the Viking farmers had before them, onto the higher ground in summer, camping with their herds in a summer "saetr" on which they built a "scali". Eventually these became permanent homes, their names modified through time to give us "seat", "side" and "scale", such as Lord's Seat, Swinside, Rogerscale and Scales.

Very early on, pigs were replaced by sheep on the open fells, and after about 1400, the summer pasturing of cattle on the open fell diminished and was replaced by increasing numbers of sheep. Although the Scottish raids across the border in the 12th and 13th centuries caused much deprivation in the Border lands and the Black Death visited the region in about 1350, it is now believed these were not the prime reasons for regional economic decline, certainly not in our valley. This decline, which lasted right through the 13th and 14th centuries, was probably started by the repeated years of poor harvest and livestock diseases such as rinderpest and sheep "murrain" which reached epidemic proportions in about 1320. Coming close on one another as they did, these agrarian and environmental disasters brought an end to new "assarting", in-taking of land from the "waste", for many years to come. For much of the first quarter of the 14th century, the whole of the north of England suffered from disease attacking cattle and sheep and it seems unlikely the Vale of Lorton would have escaped. Quite possibly the Lorton valley did escape the highly destructive visit of the Scottish raiders in 1345, when they swept through much of the north-eastern part of the County, and got as close as Embleton. There the lord of the manor was killed and nearly half the peasant holdings destroyed (31). Did Wythop escape? We do not know. When the Black Death reached this area in about 1350, Lorton Vale may again have escaped, if not entirely, much of the terrible loss of life suffered elsewhere. This and the subsequent re-incidences of the plague which broke out in 1361 and in England periodically, were caused by bad sanitation and overcrowding in towns and far less likely to spread in areas where houses were comparatively far apart. This is not to say that small country villages could not be hit by the plague as two particularly bad cases are well known and documented – Colyton in Devon in 1645-6, and Eyam in Derbyshire in 1665-6 (32). One of my initial objectives in researching this book was to discover what evidence, if any, there was of plague in Lorton, or as Appleby might suggest, of famine. For this sombre subject, see (38).

In spite of the various disasters to hit the region, in general there is little remaining evidence of reduction of farming and other activities in Lorton, although Winchester offers two possible sites further up the valley, a farmstead at Rannerdale where old footings can still be seen and evidence of what may have been two bloomeries directly across Crummock water from Rannerdale, at Scales (33). This, of course, is to ignore the obvious disappearance of mills, of which there were quite a number in Medieval times.

Not until the end of the 15th century approached did a degree of recovery occur and the economics of the region began to climb back towards its earlier level and farmers again began to think of enlarging their holdings. This would often be on a small scale, any part of the marginal land left idle during the preceding decades brought back into use, then little pieces of adjacent "waste" being taken into production, for pasture or for ploughing. By the mid-16th century, Tudor prosperity was such as to encourage some larger scale enclosure. In our valley, the people of Low Lorton together as a group enclosed what was called "Lorton Head" as early as 1473. This area of low lying land alongside the Cocker separated Lorton land from that of the township of Brackenthwaite and resulted in the rather strangely inter-woven boundary still seen in the 20th century boundary pattern. Even more drastic, at Buttermere, a bank of fell side, called Blackrygge (Blackrigg), or alternatively Blakerigg, was enclosed into three closes, held commonly by 7 men, but this was not until nearly a century later, about 1568 (34).

In 1569, the Crown made a survey of The Estates of the Earl of Northumberland in Cumberland. Like his father before him, he had involved himself in plots against the State, if not the Crown, and like his father before him, was executed for treason. The surveyors' comments, reflecting the interdependence of the tenants and their environment, not only give a good picture of the latter's circumstances but also gives an insight of southern low-landers' reaction, one might almost say awe, of what they found (35):

"and albeyt the country consyst most in waste grounde and ys very cold hard and barron for the wynter yet ys yt very populous and bredyth tall men and hard of nature whose habitacons are most in the vallyes and dales where every man hath a small porcon of ground where albeyt the soil be hard of nature yet by contynuall travell he made fertyle to their great releyf and comfort, for the greatest gayne consysteth in bredyng of cattell which are no charge to them in the somer buy reason they are pastured and fed upon the mounteynes and waste wher they have sufficient pasture all the yere unles great snowes chance in the wynter to cover the ground for remedy whereof they are dryven eyther to fell there cattell or else provyde for wynter meat for them and because the greatest part of the country consisteth in waste and mountaynes they have but little tillage by reason whereof they lyve hardly without east (?) which makyth them tall of p[e]rsonage and hable to endure hardnes when necessyte requyeth."

This report does little more than confirm a situation that had been so since long before the Normans came on the scene. There were two distinct farming zones in Cumberland, lowland, and upland. Although farmers in the lowland could and did use, and pay rent for, the lower parts of the upland summer pasture, the farmers in the uplands and valley heads depended on the vast areas of high fell and moor land for their very existence; and they had rights and obligations regarding their use of this upland "waste" or "Commons". Whereas it was usual for farmers, or their tenants, to have rights such as Common of pasture and Common of Turbary (to dig peat for fuel), and Common of Estover (to take wood for fuel), housebote (for house repair), haybote (for repair of enclosures), or ploughbote (to repair ploughs), the way these were applied varied. Tenants in Lorton shared the Commons of Derwent Fells with their counterparts in Wythop and Brackenthwaite; and the latter with

Buttermere, as all these were considered part of the manor of Derwent Fells. The fells were already subdivided by name into common of Lorton, of Brackenthwaite and of Wythop, but these were not fenced or separated and in practice the cattle strayed. Sometimes this led to controversy, as each township looked after its own adjacent area and tended to reserve its rights to its own. There was a 'de facto', if not a 'de jure', division of the commons. To make sure that these bounds were known, they were followed in a "beating the bounds" perambulation. Those of the Commons of Lorton were ridden on horseback and this act was recorded, and that for the year 1705 is given in Chapter 4, Appendix 4.2.

On the other side of the Cocker, around the year 1500, the townships of Mosser, Whinfell and Loweswater were each separate manors, and the waste of each was considered to be the common of that township and closed to stock of the others (36). Thus, though commons were manorial property and their use governed by the manorial courts, in practice there was a fairly lenient and practical approach to their use by the 15th century. Apart from the common rights mentioned above, cutting bracken for fuel and animal bedding, or burning it to make ash for soap-making were also important factors in community life. The remains of a potash pit can still be seen near the beck in Rannerdale.

Management of woodland was always important for reasons already discussed, but also because young shoots provided winter feed for animals. Lopping, topping and shredding were different ways of obtaining these. Even today we still see trees, often now standing alone, which have long past been topped and cropped, or pollarded. Trees also served an industrial purpose where "bloomeries" could be established for smelting iron-ore. The monks of Holm-Cultram were allowed to set up a bloomery at Whinfell at the end of the 12th century, for which they could gather dead wood between the Ennerdale and Cocker valleys; and we have already mentioned evidence of others on the shores of Crummock Water. There is also evidence of a small bloomery in Brackenthwaite on the north side of Brackenthwaite How. The greater area of woodland seen in south Lakeland in the 20th century is attributed to wise management, coppicing and re-forestation when the industrial demand for wood in south Cumberland was seen to be excessive to the supply. If this is so, then it seems most likely that bloomeries in the Cocker valley and the lack of similar woodland management would, between them, account for much of the almost total loss of ancient woodland in this valley.

We have now reached the point in our history where generalities backed by inference and intuition can be sharpened and brought into better focus. In September 1538, after years of discussion, considerable unrest and popular protest at the supposed financial implications of such a measure, Cranmer finally introduced his order for the regular registration of every wedding, baptism and burial in Parish registers. The background was the turbulent period of religious bigotry together with Catholic revolt at Henry VIII's anti-Popish measures, culminating in the Pilgrimage of Grace. This failed and over 200 people were executed, including 74 at Carlisle, at least one of whom came from Embleton (37). The Registers were to be kept in a "sure coffer" with two locks, one key of each to be held by the parson and churchwardens.

Whatever the political and religious reasons for this measure, and they were many and varied, bureaucracy had taken another step towards the common man. Bunyan's Everyman, but not woman, was at last to have his own name and a place

in the records, though Identity Cards, that ultimate piece of bureaucracy, were still 400 years away. The following chapters are based much more firmly on the written records relating to this "Parish".

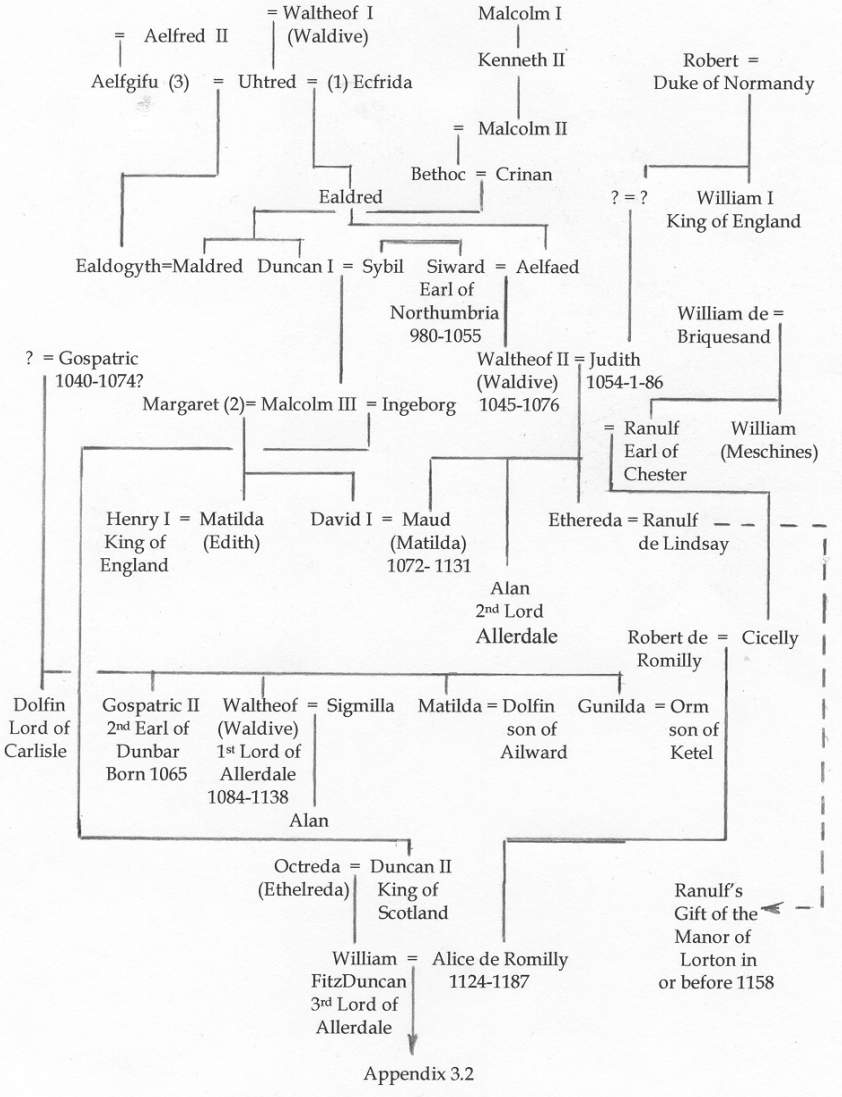


Figure 3.1 Genealogical table showing the derivation of land tenure in Scotland, Northumbria, and the Lorton Valley

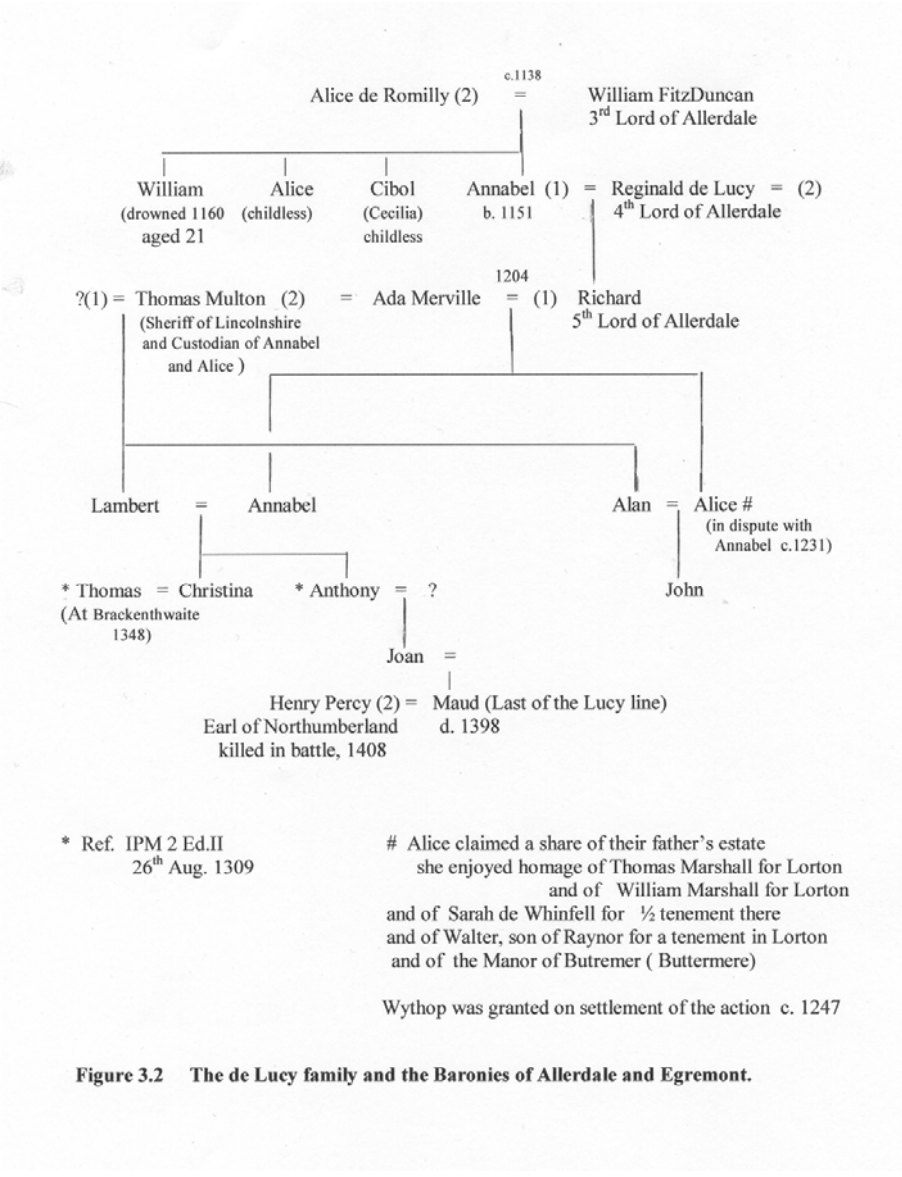


Figure 3.2 The de Lucy family and the Baronies of Allerdale and Egremont.

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Chapter 4: THE LAND AND THOSE WHO WORKED IT

Who were the yeomen, the yeomen of England?
The freemen were the yeomen, the freemen of England,
stout were the bows they bore,
when they went out to war;
stouter their courage for the honour of England.
And nations to Eastward and nations to Westward
as foe-men did curse them , the yeomen of England;
no other land could nurse them but their motherland old England,
and on her proud bosom shall they ever thrive.

Extract from "Merrie England", German & Hood, 1902

How accurate is this word picture penned by Hood in 1902? Shall we find evidence to support his fine patriotic prose in Lorton? In passing, we may note that Wordsworth, in his poem about the Lorton yew tree, anticipated these thoughts in a passage that has not only become famous, but has brought many overseas visitors to seek out the celebrated tree. As far as bows and arrows are concerned, the last known mention of them amongst the belongings of Lorton vale folk was in the Probate Inventory of the yeoman John Rudd of Beckhouse in Brackenthwaite in 1657, along with a sword and his fowling piece. With the exception of the gun, these were probably house decoration; John was fairly well off and there was a rather large family, so one must question whether the present size of Beckhouse represents the total size of the buildings he occupied at that time. In writing, or rather, dictating his will, John did not describe himself as either a yeoman or by any description at all, but on the evidence of his will and probate inventory, he was one such (1).

But rather than discussing the indefinite descriptions applied to those who worked the land, let us take our thoughts back to consider what lies behind the chapter heading. Logically, we should start our detailed investigation of the history of the valley, or for that matter any place, with the land, because the rise of man from his aboriginal state to what we are today, began with an increasing ability to work the land. From our vantage point in the twentieth century, we tend to think of 'farmers and farming' within the annual routine of sowing and reaping and the cattle market. Even today, as we begin our journey into the twenty first century, this is an oversimplification. Until comparatively recently, those who lived and worked on the land were very nearly self-sufficient as individuals, and the communities in which they lived were almost completely so. As well as growing their own subsistence food, they wove their own clothing and built their own houses. There was very little they needed that could not be produced within the community – milling the corn, tanning their hides into leather, making their own tools and husbandry equipment whether in iron or wood and fashioning their own furniture and household equipment. Even taking all this as understood, we are still looking backwards with minds conditioned to the standard text-book description of rural life in Great Britain in general and middle England in particular. In so doing we are completely overlooking the heavy dependence of the valley dwellers in these upland areas on the produce of the fells which surrounded them. It is hardly an over estimate to say that without the fuel, bracken and wood from the fells they would

not have been able to exist in these valleys. Only the more exotic items such as salt and spices, books and paper, silks and fine linens, would have to be bought in; and in this valley, apart from salt, which, as it happens, gets no more than a single mention in the personal records that remain (2), there was precious little of any of the other items, even books, until very late in our history. Life was very simple and all the people, irrespective of status, lived very simply indeed, as we will see when we look at the probate inventories in detail.

Much of the valley is what Rackham defines as "Ancient Countryside", characterised by the presence of hamlets and ancient isolated farms, as opposed to villages and isolated farms of 18th and 19th centuries; many roads, sunken lanes, and footpaths, as opposed to few surface roads and few footpaths; winding mixed hedges, as opposed to straight mostly hawthorn hedges (3). The valley bottom land is described in the Mannix and Whelan Directory of 1847 as 'rich', but is in fact only of low intermediate Grade 4 on the Ministry of Agriculture classification, whilst all the surrounding fells are thin acidic Grade 5 soils. Arable working required the liberal use of manure, 'mook' in the local idiom, to keep the ground in permanent cultivation, and this animal product held an important place in the yeoman's livelihood. Unauthorised removal of it led to court cases. Well-drained land was necessary, and therefore the land-holder had to channel the waters that ran off the fells onto the flatter valley bottom into well defined courses. As we shall see, maintenance of these channels and flooding was a constant problem, and in spite of 19th and 20th century under soil drainage, even today much land still floods after heavy rain. As the Norse invaders, who first arrived in this area about 900 AD (5) were pastoral people tending to live in independent units, it is believed they would not have materially interfered with the existing one-field system which was in common use here. From the early days of settlement in this valley, suitable well-drained and non-flooding land for crops was cleared piecemeal, the rocks and stones being put aside forming a handy means of building a wall around with the double purpose of keeping out both animals and encroaching forest. These colonisers embarked on forest clearance on a large scale, and established small hamlets on this newly won land. The fell side hamlets along the Lorton valley probably originated in this way. Growing populations progressively cleared and ring fenced more land, producing those small irregularly shaped fields we still see on the lower fell sides today. There are no records extant referring directly to the beginning of settlements in the valley; so as far as can be ascertained, the fell side sites such as Armaside began during the 10th century (6) & (7). Nor do we have direct evidence of the detailed use of the surrounding fells, though surviving place and fell side names offer useful indirect evidence. As far back as Anglo-Saxon times, before the coming of the Vikings, the unfarmed no-man's land, or 'waste', was used as common land by village tenants whilst under the control of an over-lord. Gradual modification took place and in 1235 the 'Statute of Merton' firmly placed the 'waste' in the hands of the lord of the manor (8). The tenant's rights generally included 'estover', the right to gather wood for fuel, 'turbary', the right to dig peat for fuel and gather bracken for thatching and animal bedding and 'levancy and couchancy', the right to pasture cattle on the common to the number that could be over-wintered on the tenant's own lowland 'farm'. To these three, more common rights might also be various 'botes', such as 'housebote', to take wood for repairing houses, or 'pannage', the right to feed pigs in the manorial forest. Naturally, as these resources were

limited and likely to be seasonal there were strict rules about where, how and when they could be exercised. Naturally, too, and especially where the fells were open, there was scope for overlapping or just plain stealing from another man's ground, and for those of one manor taking from the ground of an adjacent manor. Manor bounds were strictly defined using unvarying geographical markers, such as fell tops, rivers and roads. Nevertheless claims and counter-claims of overzealous interpretation of the bounds did arise. But perhaps the most important of all the rights held by the villagers was that of grazing their cattle on the uplands during the summer months. Although the distances between the home farm and the related upland pastures might be quite small, perhaps not more than a mile or so, the use of upland shelters had been in use from very early times. (This "transhumance" still exists in the less developed mountainous regions of Europe today, eg the Pyrenees and Tatra mountains.) These shelters were called 'skali', the West Scandinavian word for 'hut', although they were not necessarily temporary structures, often being in permanent use as, for example, to store peat (9) but they had virtually dropped out of use by the 16th century (10). These places have come down to us as 'scale' as in Scales at High Lorton, the summer pasture for Low Lorton. The use of the word 'seatr' for the summer pasture ground comes down to us, as in 'Seat', e.g. Lord's Seat above Whinlatter. This all added up to a fine balance between the rights of the lord, those of his tenants and tenants to each other. In practice, the use of land was under the strict control and agreement of the manor court and the ancient and established 'custom of the manor' which bound the community into a living, working, whole.

As the population continued to expand, the flat low-lying and fertile flood plain was drained and improved by the inhabitants of Nether Lorton, which hamlet had already been established by 1100. The available evidence suggests that when this land was first cleared it was used as one large open field, subdivided into five furlongs from which the field names derived, for example, Avenam, Flatts, Low Raines and Sandy Butts. Some of these are still in use, although the unsympathetic system based on OS grid references is now the official designation. There appears to be little evidence of agrarian practice, or the results of rural activities, before the 16th century for the Lorton valley. However, we do know that by 1215 there was a mill at Buttermere, which must have been associated with a farming community on the alluvial land between the two lakes, and not much later fell side farms were established in the vicinity (11). But on the other hand, our earliest known reference to High House, which Winchester believes to be the older "Soirscaile Bank", is the admittance of John Peile, in 1634 (12), described in 1677 as "near to the chapel" (13). High House was demolished about 1910 when the adjacent Syke House, the property of the same family, was rebuilt using material won from High House (14). Cattle ranching, to use a modern phrase, at the head of the valley, was certainly firmly established by mid-13th century at Gatesgarth, where in 1259 the demesne forest pasture there, valued at 10s, could support over sixty cows and their offspring; and also that in 1267, the Countess of Aumale's vacary there could over-winter forty milk cows (15).

At the other end of the 'parish' of Lorton, as the result of a dispute between heirs, in about 1260, the estate of Wythop was detached ('sub-infeudated' is the technical term) from the forest of Derwentfells (16), and awarded to Alan de Multon and Alice de Lucy, his wife. At that time, the estate was largely 'waste' and of very little value, just 20s for herbage. Under their son John de Lucy it was enclosed and rapidly

developed into an estate worth £10, thus being a documented case of a "sheiling being turned into permanent settlement" (17). It is interesting to compare this former valuation with that of Gatesgarth (above) supporting sixty cows and wonder just what was being done on the Wythop 'waste'. The estate passed from the Lucy to the Lowther family about 1314; Hugh Lowther built Wythop Hall, which was rebuilt about 1550-60, the remains of which form the core of the present building. This is described in the chapter 'Buildings'. Land ownership and use around the township of Wythop had become intricately complicated and, by implication, profitable for in the 1280s, the lord of Wythop had to buy out rights of pasture on the fells which were claimed by Lorton landowners (18).

Between the Conquest and the end of the thirteenth century, the population grew and 'waste' was progressively colonised for arable and pasture. By late thirteenth century tenants in the forest of Derwentfells generally held their land at the will of the lord, they were described in the manor records as 'tenants at will', or 'customary tenants' and by this time were paying money rent for their 'land, pasture and pannage'. Historically, their position is believed to have derived from the requirement to provide Border Service when required by the Crown. They effectively had title to the land and were able to pass it down to their heirs, or to sell it. For this they were required to pay a 'fine' each time the holding changed hands, and this also included change of ownership when the lord of the manor died. From Hutchinson onwards much play was made of the fact that as the lord of the manor of Over (High) Lorton was the Dean and Chapter, 'who never dies', the implication being that therefore no general fines were levied on the tenants there. It might be assumed that these tenants would be better off than their fellows in other manors, but analysis shows that, for whatever reason, this was not so. Winchester has commented that, for practical purposes, 'tenants-at-will' and 'customary tenants' were almost equivalent to freeholders, and that "they have the look of frontiersmen, paying rent for the land they hold or have colonised" (19) and much later this concept of themselves led to the idea of the 'estateman', that is, 'Statesman' or 'yeoman'.

The Manor of Lorton and Allerthwaite was given by Richard Lindsay to the Priory of Carlisle in 1158. That is virtually all we know of the Manor until the earliest records of what is now known as High Lorton at the beginning of the 16th century. We have a Court Roll dated October 1613 with a list of 13 names, presumably, but not necessarily, 13 different persons and also presumably holding land from what was then the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle as the successors of the Priory as a result of the Dissolution. Although there is a second and undated list of 1613, our next item of information, which has survived by good fortune, is the Parliamentary Survey of 1649, commissioned by Parliament to seek out details of all properties owned by the Church. I would be churlish to complain that there is not as much detail as we would now wish, which is true, but it does give us a remarkably detailed picture of High Lorton at that time. It not only gives the names of 13 persons with 20 tenements but also gives the rents paid for the copyhold, past history of ownership, the relative positions of their dwellings, their land holding within the Manor, the use to which the land was put and the authority by which they held it; the Survey thereby defines the Manor boundary. It also, in passing, mentions several other persons with adjacent land. The Survey allows us to make quite a detailed analysis of farming in this part of the valley.

But all was not plain sailing for those working the land. The quality of harvest year by year was a major factor governing life and death and this is a question to which we shall return. Very little detail of weather, crop yields or indeed what crops were grown in this period is known, but the fourteenth century became colder and wetter than previously, and useable arable land would have suffered and diminished in area. Nor do we know details of the sicknesses which plagued both man and beast, but both suffered periodically from disease over and above the norm. The worst of these was, of course, the Black Death, which arrived in this area about the end of 1349. Estimates vary, but on a nationwide count it is believed the total population may have reached five million, of which somewhere between 23% and 45% succumbed to the Black Death (20). Subsequent outbreaks in 1361 and 1369 were almost as disastrous. The Diocesan registers, which give some indication of the death toll elsewhere, are missing for Cumberland (21). Nor do we do know the effects of this plague in the Lorton valley (then in the Diocese of York), but as it was essentially a rat carried phenomenon and largely confined to towns and villages where dwellings were close together (22), it is quite possible that it had a very small influence in these higher valleys with their widespread dwellings. Nevertheless, the folk of Lorton and adjacent valleys would have suffered from crop failures which followed from the worsening climate, together with the terrible loss of their stock due to rinderpest and sheep 'murrain'. The latter was particularly bad in 1315 and 1316, when the whole country and much of Europe was affected (23), continuing intermittently to 1322. This combination of bad weather, poor crops and animal disease was a major factor in creating the turning point (24) from which the continued expansion of population and economy went into a long progressive decline, possibly to as low as two million, from which there was no recuperation until around the mid-15th century (25).

In the country as a whole, this meant that land was available – almost for the taking – and landlords were happy to let land at reduced rents to anyone who wanted it. A further result of the depression and chronic lack of labour to work the land was an increase in labouring wages, which were coming more and more into vogue in lieu of the lack of villeins for their labour 'boon' days or commutation of those dues. In early medieval times, the labour services demanded by the lord of the manor in Whinfell were one day each of plough, harrowing and reaping, a comparatively light load compared with many in other parts of the country (26) and is, doubtless, a reflection on the restricted area of arable land on the manor. The "Statute of Labourers" of 1351 tried to hold down wage rates, but as Briggs commented "this statute was as unsuccessful as the twentieth century wages and incomes policies" (27). Evidence of the retreat from the land in Lorton parish is scarce but there are the terraced lynchets above Old Scales in Wythop, the remains of footings of buildings on the west bank of Crummock at Scale Beck Buttermere and, as may be reminders of these old tragedies, the footings of the abandoned farmsteads in Rannerdale. Evidence of changes of rent in this valley has still to be sought. By the early 1500s, the position was beginning to recover and land that had been left waste was being brought back into use as the population increased.

It was in the 16th century, as society began to recover and people became more conscious of status, that Parliament felt it necessary to pass laws saying what clothing was to be worn by those of different social rank and it was then that the

terms yeoman and husbandman came into being; and from this grew the later legislation of the Poor Laws, seeking to keep the poor in their proper place (28).

As late as 1500, areas of open field were still being reclaimed from waste in Cumberland in general (29); and in particular the waste, called Lorton Head, between Whitbeck and the boundary with Brackenthwaite township was enclosed in 1473. New House Farm almost certainly derives from that enclosure, if not from that date (30). It follows that the track from the village southwards through the earlier "Lorton Field" was extended to the new farm and only much later became the principal road up the valley to Brackenthwaite and beyond. This is confirmed in the 1649 survey in which John Watson's enclosures "Gales" and "Peat Marsh" are described as "abutting on the Brackenthwaite highway on the west" (31). This was known as Stockgate Lane, being the continuation of Crossgate Lane, and had "Lorton Head on its other, western, side. Blake Rigg on the fell side above Buttermere was stated to be "newly enclosed" in 1568 (32), and may date from late 15th or early 16th century enclosure. Subsequent sub-division, combination and interchange of ownership of divisions, produced the smaller regularly shaped fields of the valley bottom, mostly enclosed with hedges of quick thorn that we see today, most of which were already in place before 1840. Since the production of the tithe map of that year, amalgamation of fields has continued to a lesser degree so that at the end of the 20th century, we find a smaller number of fields than in 1840. See Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below.

Continual maximum return from the land was vital, and in this context it is interesting to study how this requirement has influenced the changes in distribution and size of individual holdings. This can conveniently be considered for the village of High Lorton. Our earliest detailed record is the Survey of November 1649, which lists 20 copyhold tenements within the township of Over Lorton, owing rent and customary suite of court at the Manor Court. As was frequently the case, the survey details the holdings, not with a map, but by describing each parcel of land by size (often estimated), by use such as arable, meadow or pasture and by juxtaposition to others and natural features such as rivers or highways. It is comparatively easy to draw up an approximate map of the farmsteads comprising the township and their immediate surroundings – the 'bunne-house closes' and crofts. Fifteen of the homes are shown in their approximate positions on the sketch map, Figure 4.1. Thomas Peale had three, whilst Michael Wilkinson and Robert Stubbs each had two tenements listed separately. The mill of John Bell is off the map to the south, and Richard Pierson's dwelling did not figure in the original document and is included by intuition. Within the Dean and Chapter Manor at Over Lorton, there were therefore 14 tenants holding 17 buildings, and three tenants with ground only. Even as late as the 19th century, individual land-holders had their holdings as a number of scattered 'closes', in spite of the natural result of centuries of amalgamation of riggs and gradual voluntary enclosure of the 'town field'. In 1840, the farm centred on Bridgend consisted of 10 widely spread closes in the valley bottom, partly in what had once been the upper 'town field', partly on the lower fell sides, as well as the allocation of commons after the 1832 enclosures.

Later we will look at the alleged famine in this region, part of the blame for which has been laid at the door of uneconomic small land holdings, and partible inheritance (33) & (34). Whatever the rights and wrongs of these arguments, there is no doubt that individual holdings in this area were very small, and would surely

have been easier and more economic to work had they been larger. Table 4.1 analyses the holdings of the Dean and Chapter manor of Over Lorton in 1649 and shows that the average size of 96 closes was a meagre two acres. This figure hides Robert Stubbs' close of 14 acres, another of 13 acres belonging to Thomas Watson, Senior, not to mention many as small as between one and three roods, Thomas Watson, Junior being the principal loser on this score.

In broad terms, the biggest and most obvious difference between the 17th and 20th centuries to the passer-by is that the great expanses of ploughed arable land have given way almost completely to pasture and grazing. Not that there would have been many passers-by in the 17th century and it is a moot point how many 20th century tourists notice that the valley through which they are rushing is almost totally non-arable. In 1649, by far the larger proportion of the land was arable. Of the 198 acres worked by the folk of Over Lorton in that year, at least 60% was under the plough and the true figure was probably nearer to 75%. Meadow accounted for about 11% and the rest was mostly pasture with a little woodland. There is an indefinite feel to these figures because the land use of two of the largest holdings, numbers 3 and 4 in Table 4.1, together totalling 20% of the total acreage, was not described, but was probably in much the same proportions as the part that is detailed. These farmers had sheep and cattle, details of which we do not have; and though all the farms had byres, the stock would have spent much of the time on the fell side and common land. By 1840, the appearance of the land surrounding the village had changed significantly. The arable land had been reduced to 58% and was concentrated in the fields round the village. Meadow had remained largely unchanged at 18% of the total, being found spread along the valley floor. Pasture, 32%, now formed most of the balance, see Table 4.3.

There is not much firm evidence for partible inheritance in Lorton. Certainly the two half shares in the farm "Above the Beck", modern 'Boon Beck', along with their two equally divided closes 'Broad Croft', now in the corner of the grounds of Lorton Park opposite the Yew Tree Hall, must represent a division between two heirs. Unfortunately it has not been possible to connect up the various family connections to prove this. It is also possible that at least some of the four divisions of 'Broom' and the various divisions of some of the other small closes sharing a common name, represent the result of earlier partible inheritance. But this is to make unsubstantiated guesses and the reason for many sharing a name may be that larger closes were formed during the period of economic decline mentioned above, followed by sub-division during the period of recovery between 1450 - 1550 as described by Winchester (35).

Table 4.1
ANALYSIS OF USE AND OWNERSHIP OF COPYHOLD LAND HOLDINGS IN OVER LORTON, 1649

Order by size	Total Acreage Enclosed	Arable acres	% of holding	Meadow Acres	% of holding	Unspecified Land Acres	% of	Holder holding	No of 'parcels' of land
1	24.5	20.0	82	4.5	18			Thomas Wilson	8
2	25.0	21.0	85	1.15	5	2.85	10	Tho. Watson Snr	11
3	21.7					21.7	100	Tho. Watson Jnr	19
4	21.5			3.0	14	18.5	86	John Watson	17
5	20.5	15.25	74	5.25	26			Robert Stubbs #	5
6	18.75	13.75	73	2.0	11	2.75	16	M. Wilkinson *	7
7	13.25	9.25	70			4.0	30	Jane Bouch	6
8	12.75	9.50	75	1.75	14	1.5	11	Thomas Peile **	9
9	11.5	10.25	89	1.25	11			John Wilkinson	3
10	11.0	8.0	73	3.0	27			Robert Stubbs #	2
11	7.75	7.75	100					Peter Burnyeat	2
12	5.75	3.75	65	1.25	22	0.75	13	Richard Pierson	4
13	4.5	1.25	28			3.25	72	Wm. Robinson	3
14	0.25	Mill and Kiln excluded from calculations						John Bell	1
Total	198.50	119.75		23.15		55.30			96
% overall		60.3		11.8		27.9			
Total less holdings 3 + 4	155.3	119.75		20.15		15.10			
Amended %		77.2		13.0		9.8			

The above acreages do not include houses and garths, of which the ground sizes of most were not quoted in the survey.
The two holdings for Robert Stubbs almost certainly refer to the same person. The first listed is the half tenement 'above the beck' which came to him through his wife. The second he inherited, but had not yet been admitted at time of survey. If true, strictly speaking at the time of the survey, he was the largest landholder with 31.5 acres of which at least 75% was arable.
** Thomas Peile held his modest estate on three separate copyholds, which we must assume came to him from three different sources.
* Michael Wilkinson's two holdings presumably also came separately from different sources.

The series of land tax records, which in the case of this valley are extant for various years between 1767 and 1829, provide our next source of information for land use. We are unfortunate as these give varying amounts of the full information we might expect from them. Also, because this tax was based on historic rateable values, that is, on the quality of the land and buildings, it means that these data, although very useful and interesting, are not directly comparable with those from other sources. Nevertheless it does give an approximation of the relative sizes as

well as ownership of the holdings. At a first attempt it did not prove possible to establish continuity through the series, which was disappointing, but some trends were discernable. Over the period 1767 to 1829, there was a consistency in the number of parcels of property taxed, varying between 49 and 44. The land tax was levied at various rates between 1s and 4s in the pound during this period, but apart from these variations, the total tax raised at each level was also consistent. Individual taxes tended to be invariable within small limits, such changes as there were suggesting the possibility of interchange of closes between owners. Very few names of owners, and an even smaller number of occupiers, were in constant possession over long periods. In as far as the taxes were indicative of the size of the holding, throughout the period there was a preponderance of the smaller holdings with taxes less than 4s pa: 18 out of a total of 49 in 1767 and still 19 in 1827 out of the same total. There was also another group of 18 or 19 holdings with taxes between 10s and 30s throughout the period. Perhaps the most noticeable change was that of owners occupying and working their own land. It is not possible to be certain of the number in 1767, almost certainly over twenty, whilst 26 in 1784 reduced to 25 in 1796 and slumped to 18 in 1827. In the earlier years these owner/occupiers were concentrated in the smaller holdings, but by 1827 the much reduced number were evenly spaced across the spectrum.

Table 4.2
ANALYSIS OF COPYHOLD CLOSES OF OVER LORTON BY SIZE – 1649

Size of close in acres in 1649	No. of closes	No. / % Arable	No. / % Meadow	No. / % Unclassified
0 - 0.99	26	4 / 15	4 / 15	18 / 70
1.0 - 1.99	33	9 / 27	7 / 21	17 / 52
2.0 - 2.99	16	8 / 50	2 /13	6 / 32
3.0 - 3.99	11	7 / 64	2 / 18	2 / 18
4.0 - 4.99	4	3 / 75	-	1/ 25
5.0 - 5.99	1	1 / 100	-	-
6.0 - 6.99	1	1 / 100	-	-
7.0 - 7.99	-			
8.0 - 8.99	1	1 / 100	-	-
9.0 - 9.99	1	1 / 100	-	-
Over 10	2	2 / 100 (one at 13; one at 14 acres)		
	96	totalling approximately 199 acres.		

93.8% of the closes are of less than 5 acres, and over 61% are less than 2 acres in area. The average area of all 96 closes was a mere 2.05 acres. Considering that at least 37, i.e. 60% - 77% of the total are listed in Table 4.1 as arable, the loss of productive land and time must have been considerable. That this was recognised is clear, because the two largest closes were obviously amalgamations of smaller closes, now each with one owner and both arable in prime flat land near the church.

Very much more difficult was an attempt to correlate the more widespread holdings of each individual into the 1840 tithe map field boundaries. Initially some

success was gained because field names, such as "Rudding", "Windings" and "Broom", had persisted over the intervening two hundred years since 1649. The areas often differ significantly, but generally this is taken to be the difference between 'estimation' in 1649 and accurate measurement in 1840, but may also represent boundary changes. Also, many names had changed. The area south of Whitbeck, which had a very complex pattern of irregular closes in 1840, was particularly difficult to match to the verbal descriptions of 1649, even though the names came through without very much variation. A check showed that the same statute measurement, 16½ feet to the perch, had been used but regrettably the task became impossible to complete. One important point emerged. Some closes on the 1840 map appeared to have been made up of several smaller closes of 1649. One such, named "High and Low Avelands" of 5 acres 3 roods in 1840, itself indicative of amalgamation of two smaller closes, appears to have been made up of three, possibly four, small closes in 1649. Only one of these was called Avenum in 1649, 2 acres 1 rood belonging to Jane Bouch. If improved output had been obtained by amalgamation of closes, we should expect to find more closes listed within the Manor boundaries in 1649 than in 1840. Analysis of the 96 closes in 1649 is given in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 4.3
ANALYSIS OF COPYHOLD CLOSES OF OVER LORTON – 1840

Size of close in Acres	Arable	Pasture	Meadow	Total
0 - 0.99	3	1	4	8
1.0 - 1.99	5	3	5	13
2.0 - 2.99	6	6	1	13
3.0 - 3.99	8	5	3	16
4.0 - 4.99	7	3	-	10
5.0 - 5.99	3	3	-	6
6.0 - 6.99	-	-	-	-
7.0 - 7.99	2	1	-	3
8.0 - 8.99	-	-	-	-
9.0 - 9.99	1	-	-	1
Over 10	-	-	-	-
Total	35	22	13	70
Average area	3.5	3.5	1.75	
Approximate areas as % of total	57.5%	31.9%	10.5%	

Area of close	unclassified	
2.0 - 2.99	1	1
3.0 - 3.99	1	1
5.0 - 5.99	1	1
total approx. 11 acres		----
		73

Contrast this with the situation within the same overall boundary in 1840, shown in Table 4.3. There are now 73 closes, 28.7% of which are under 2 acres and the

average area of arable closes has increased to 3½ acres. Another significant change is that 60.3% of them are now between two and six acres and the two extra large fields have disappeared. Only the thirteen meadow closes average less than 2 acres. Even ignoring the very large number of closes with unspecified use, of which at least some would have been arable, the number of closes of less than two acres has decreased from 35% of the total arable to 23%. There has not so much been an increase in size as a rationalization of size.

At the end of the 20th century, many of the fields are still liable to flood after heavy rains, particularly those on either side of the Cocker between Armaside and Rogerscale and under these conditions it is evident that Crossgate lane and its continuation in either direction to Brackenthwaite and Cockermouth represented the lowest track on the east side of the Cocker that was not liable to flooding. As late as 1870, a major land drainage project was undertaken by Mr Wilson of Oakhill. This however was aimed more at improvement of land above the Cockermouth road and consisted of inserting a major land drain from Cass How down to the river, employing some 100 Irish navvies to do the job (36). This reference, which is from a descendant of that family, also states {against apparent reason – author's comment} that he (Wilson) carried the drain on under the river and down to Stanger.

But this is to get ahead of ourselves. The land of Lorton town field north of the village has always been, and still is, subject to flooding and water control in that area has therefore always been especially important. An early record of the Court Leet with Baron, held in Cockermouth on 19th April 1681, gives explicit instructions as to who was responsible for which section of the two water courses flowing across Low Lorton's "Towne Field" and the rasting and cleansing of them so that each flowed within its banks and caused no trouble to neighbour's land. See Appendix 4.1. All the minutiae regarding water is of considerable interest because it throws light on the problems of working the land, as well as giving details of who did so. This Court record also carries the important implication that the closes now held individually, must once have been an open common field.

The crops grown were all for subsistence and domestic use. They were needed to feed the family and there was no profit to be got from their sale. In this context, the family included the hired help, mostly unmarried lads, who lived on the premises and shared the family meals. It is most important to realize, and constantly remind ourselves that, in medieval and Tudor times and even later, the single most important, the critical factor, in the life of the whole country was the fluctuation in the harvest.

Like the rest of Cumberland, Lorton emerged from the medieval straightjacket slowly. The harvest was the controller of all life, a poor harvest meant tighter belts, successive poor harvests meant near starvation and for some years modern researchers considered that there were periods of death by starvation in this area (37). Although bad weather exercised a considerable influence, the second important factor was the ratio between seed corn and harvest. Hoskins studied these fluctuations in England between 1480 and 1759 and considered that there was a definite tendency for good and bad harvest to come in groups of three or four years. A bad sequence would eventually be broken by a very good year and the cycle would recommence. Hoskins derived his findings from national statistics of the price of corn and bread in London (38). Two major increases in Lorton burials coincide with years Hoskins identified with much higher than average wheat prices.

However, during all that period for which we have Lorton burial records, we find an almost equal number of positive and negative correlations between Hoskins' high prices of wheat and Lorton burials significantly higher than average. This implies that factors other than the price of corn and 'dearth', in the then current vernacular, were regulating Lorton's death rate (39). Nevertheless, the general principle applies, the sequence of good, average, and poor harvests was, as Hoskins says, "the heart-beat of the community", the very essence of life.

As the medieval customs fell subject to an increasing dependency on money, or the monetary equivalents of service and ancient manorial customs, these latter fell into disuse. Men, women and children were then working for wages. Slowly the village society split into those with copy-hold land who were able to improve their lot, perhaps through a better business acumen, perhaps through marriage or luck; and those who sank lower down the scale and, though free of villeinage, worked as labourers and farm servants. In this valley, where no one was really wealthy, the former classed themselves as yeomen. I have seen no document referring to a Lorton inhabitant as a "statesman", though these terms are often considered synonymous. Later the term 'husbandman' became more common, but it is quite common to find these terms interchanged, one being called sometimes yeoman, sometimes husbandman, whilst another sometimes husbandman and at others labourer.

In common with about half the Manors in the country as a whole, neither of the two Manors in our valley had a resident lord. Both were 'open' in the sense that individuals were able to enter and leave residence therein, subject of course to the normal procedure of admittance by the Manorial court and admittance fines. Nevertheless, through the court Steward, the lord of the manor had a reciprocal relationship with his tenants, whether they were free-holders or copyholders. The wellbeing of both sides was dependent on this relationship. The number of freeholds had increased during the lean years, when lords were anxious to let their land and would-be tenants able to drive a harder bargain. But even free-holders, with fixed and sometimes nominal rents and a security of tenure, were obliged to attend the Manorial Court.

Copyholders largely derived their land from earlier feudal villein status, which with the passage of time and the progressive breakdown of the feudal system, had led to 'customary' tenancy, which in turn became 'copyhold'. The tenant was obliged to attend the lord's Manorial Court, the custom of which determined the exact conditions of land holding. Again, these 'customs' determined the limits of action of both lord and tenant. On the death of a tenant, the land reverted to the lord, who 'admitted' the tenant's heir on payment of a fine, who was given a parchment copy of the 'admittance'. This was his legal proof of ownership for his life and his copy of the admittance gave rise to the style of 'copyhold'. Such land could be inherited and sold, subject to the deal passing through the manorial court and an entry fine being paid. During the retreat from marginal land in the 14th and 15th centuries, rents had tended to be reduced, but hard evidence for this in this valley has not yet been seen. The size of the entry fine, normally measured in terms of so many years rent, was also determined by manorial custom, but was, over later centuries, subject to attempts by lords to exact higher fines. One way of achieving this was to levy the 'customary fine' to which was added another 'fine' for 'improvements'. This latter was much employed on tenancies at Buttermere. For

more detail, see (40). In the early decades of the 16th century, the economy was beginning to pick up again after many years of depression and stagnation. Over the country, attempts were made to increase income from land, but this was by no means uniform. The Earl of Cumberland, Henry Clifford, had a reputation for being particularly grasping and evoked riots at Giggleswick, but luckily for the folks of this valley, he owned no property here. In High Lorton, copy-holdings remained in existence until the 1920s, when they were progressively eliminated, not without protest, by the Extinguishment of Manorial Incidents under Section 140 of the Law of Property Act, 1922 (41).

After 1540, the price of grain rose considerably and though many folks in the valley produced their own grain, the craftsmen on the whole did not, and had to buy all or some of it. In any case, following a poor harvest everybody might have the need to purchase or go short. In 1563, the "State" sought to regulate and order the situation after centuries of change. Local wage rates were fixed by JPs and attempts made to fix grain prices. A Poor Law was introduced imposing a fixed Poor Rate. A minimum wage for wage earners was also introduced. It is probable that this valley avoided the worst of the problems which beset much of the country caused by rising prices and enclosures which caused very many "master-less" men to wander the country begging and causing chaos under the Poor Law rules. A further Poor Law Act of 1598 embodied principles which were to be the controlling features of the Poor Law for another two hundred years. In the late 1870s, four successive wet summers produced a slump in agriculture with many farmers going bankrupt and wages fell rapidly. The 1881 census shows 100,000 labourers leaving the land in Cumberland during the previous 10 years, but strangely, the Lorton Census shows that there was an increase from 30 to 43 during that decade; no doubt the individualistic recording of the different enumerators will account for some of the divergence.

It is handed down wisdom that in times gone by, the population was non-mobile, that families lived in the same village for many generations and we can all think of houses where, to this day, we are told the one family has lived in the same house for many hundreds of years. A moment of thought will remind us that with few exceptions, these are 'great houses'; we are in fact talking about a very small section at the upper end of society. The one possible exception in our valley is the Winder family of Lorton Hall, whose passage into and out of the valley we will be investigating in a later chapter, along with a look at our antecedent valley citizens. Contrary to the accepted wisdom, William Harrison's "fourth and last sort of people" – 'the peasantry' were very mobile (42). In truth, migration has been a major factor affecting the population of the Lorton parish (43).

The progressive improvements in farming required capital and so those with more funds available, mostly the yeomen, prospered more in relation to those who had less. Ignoring technical improvements in farming machinery, considerable benefits in farming techniques did not come into this area until much later than further to the south. Clover first came into Cumberland in 1752 and turnips three years later. John Curwen started penning sheep on turnip land in 1782 and, by the end of that century, potatoes were grown commonly. However, there is no evidence in surviving probate inventories of these items in the Lorton valley during the 18th century, so we are unable to say with certainty whether or not they were grown here.

It is to John Bell that we are indebted for the first copy of the earliest register, about 1600. As well as carrying out his clerical duties and copying the many entries of births, deaths and marriages, he lived all his life and farmed, worked would be a better word, a small parcel of meadow land at Scales on which he kept two cows, brood sheep and one nag; and since these were all valued at £8, he would have had something of the order of 20 to 30 sheep. He had four brothers and a sister, all of whom, with their children and all his godchildren, he remembered in his will. This was quite extensive with useful information and also, but not surprisingly, there is very little mention of land and houses since, commonly, these passed automatically to the eldest son as of right. In this case, the disposition of his land remains unknown. However, in 1794, Hutchinson says that both potatoes and root crops were grown in Lorton (51).

The will of John Iredell of Armaside, who died in June 1710, is worth quoting as it shows clearly the deep concern the yeoman farmers had in maintaining the integrity of their holdings and passing these down the family line (44). John was quite a wealthy man by local standards of the time, and lived more comfortably than many of his fellow yeomen. His will reads (spelling as in the original, but abbreviations filled in between square brackets):

" unto my son John Iredell all my sheep, my greate bible, my greate Table in my now dwelling house, my Gunn, my Gavelicke, my greate brass pott, my Chist with the writeings in it standeing in Grandfathers loft and the Two bedsteads in the s[ai]d loft and allso Three arkes in the new barne all the Iron Teames belonging to the plough all the Cultors and the Grate standeing in my now dwelling house a chest to lay his Cloathes in which was Jonathans. In Consideration for paying one Hundred pounds to Michael Wilkinson that is charged on a parcell of ground called Ruddings which he must pay when he comes to the age of one and Twenty" (sic).

"Item. to my daughter Sarah Iredell one hundered pounds. Fifty of it is for and in consideration that she has allready released to me all her right that she had from her unckle Peter Iredell by will in the two closes called Taill and Hill meadow ajoyneing to the Ruddings together with a mowestead att the northend of George Scot barne att Hill which said Hundered pounds I order my son John Iredell to pay to my daughter Sarah Iredell as followes that is to say Twenty pounds when comes to the age of Twenty one yeares other Twenty poundes when he comes to the age of Twenty two yeares other Twenty pounds when he comes to the age of Twenty Three yeares and Forty poundes when he comes to the age of Twenty foure yeares without paying any use endureing the time and for causeing my son John Iredell to pay the s[ai]d sumes unto my daughter Sarah I do give Sarah all the two closes called Taill and Hill meadow which she has allready released to me with Reversion and Reversions Remainder and Remainder of the two closes called Ruddings which said groundes I bequeath unto her untill he have payed the s[ai]d sums and no longer and when he has payed the sumes as above he shall enjoy the two closes and the Reversions of the Ruddings peaceably he and his heires without any claime or molestation by his sister or any in her behalfe and further it is my will that my daughter Sarah shall not in the mean while whiles the sumes are unpayed to her she shall make no entry nor claime any benefit of the Two closes above mentioned nor Reversions of the said Ruddings but my sone John Iredell shall have the possesion and benefit of the same helpe to raise the s[ai]d sumes he is to pay his sister"

{Author's note – this is the block of Closes 56, 57, 110, 115, 116 and 117 on the 1840 Tithe Map}.
"Item. All the residue to my loving wife Ellinor, John Irdell my son and Sarah Iredell my daughter . . . . . and my will is that that my wife and daughter with John shall have the wooll and the draught sheep till he comes of age of Twenty one yeares and no longer provided that the pay the use to Michael Wilkinson and helpe to pay his fine to the lord and my will is that John shall draw as many sheep yearely as he can or can be expected by his stock and that my wife and daughter nor none in theire behalfe shall claime any part or propriety in the said sheep after John attaines to the age of Twenty one yeares".

The closes mentioned in John Iredell's will are now part of Gilbrea Farm and though their outlines have been partly modified, they retain their ancient names. In view of the actual date and the use of the expression 'my now house', we can reasonably assume that it had been recently built or rebuilt, along with the 'new barn'.

The residue of Peter Winder's estate at Browe went, when he died in 1614, to his son Peter whom he charged with the care of his brothers and sisters during their minorities and admonished them also "to keep houses and hedges in goode repaire during their occupation".

John Winder of Armaside was essentially an arable farmer. Although nominally a hill farmer, he had no sheep and most of his effort went into ploughing and reaping. When he died on about 24th April 1649, he had £10 of value in seeded grain, with another £12 of grain in store. To provide himself with meat and milk he had, perhaps, half a dozen unspecified 'beasts' and although he had a one year old black shire foal, the mare was not listed. To work his land he owned an iron harrow.

In 1649, the survey of the Over Lorton estate of the Dean and Chapter in Carlisle, the successor of the Priory Church of St. Mary to whom the Manor was originally given, showed 20 copyhold tenancies. Of this total, there were 13 persons holding tenements of house, farm buildings and land, including Thomas Williamson who held 2 acres of freehold land within the manor but lived outside it. Thomas Peale held three parcels of land and Robert Stubbs and Michael Wilkinson two each, John Bell held Lorton High Mill on Whitbeck and two copyholders owning no land within the Manor. It is not known if these latter held land elsewhere, or were simple cottagers. The worked land averaged about 16 acres per householder. There were also two other villagers who held a mixture of freehold house and land with some copyhold land. Their holdings averaged 11 acres. The total acreage within the bounds of the Manor was just two hundred and eleven, the individual holdings varying in size from twenty four down to four acres, see Table 4.1. This seems to be rather larger than those found in similar circumstances elsewhere within the Lake District and, so far, no reason to explain the difference has emerged, unless it reflects the poorer quality of the soil and area needed to sustain the family, although this seems unlikely. We are lucky to have a record of the "beating of the bounds" of the Dean and Chapter Manor (45). These 'bounds' relate to only a part of the then 'parish' of Lorton, but probably correspond with the same part of the 1990s parish, although not all the points of reference can be identified on the OS map. See Appendix 4.2.

In terms of numbers of animals, sheep were far and away the most common. Virtually every yeoman, husbandman and widow farmer had sheep, varying in number from the odd one or two for the humble widow or retired and elderly yeoman, to flocks numbering, in the case of John Head of Turnerhow in 1740, an estimated 240. An average was probably in the region of 60 to 120, but as pointed out above, there is insufficient detail in the inventories to be more specific.

Next in numbers were, as might be expected, the cows, calves, and heifers. Whilst oxen are generally to be regarded as lowland stock, they were still being used as heavy draught animals and we find them scattered about the whole area in small numbers throughout the period covered by these inventories. In 1586, Anthony Pearson had four on his land centred on Over Lorton. At least 7 others were to be found round Lorton and Wythop between 1586 and 1599. Henry Peirson had 4 oxen in Low Lorton, valued at £4 5s each in 1651. John Fearon had what must have been either two very young or very old oxen for his ploughing at Over Lorton in 1652 because they were only valued at £1 15s each. John Wilson had 4 on his farm at Rogerscale in 1676 valued at £3 5s apiece. Further up the valley in 1718, William Pearson at Langthwaite Green probably had two or three, valued together at £8 2s. Others were to be found in uncertain numbers up and down the valley, at Bank, Browe, Highside, Routenbeck, Armitside and Cornhow. That none appear at Buttermere is possibly because very few inventories from there have survived.

Horses are frequently mentioned, nearly always a single animal though a few of the wealthier yeomen had a couple and even rather impecunious widows needed their means of getting about, even if they were not still farming, as some were. We must go back to pre-Norman times to find swine in significant numbers, as the origin of such features of the landscape as Swinenside, but a few pigs were still to be found; four at Peter Peell's at Lorton in 1586, just before the alleged famine; one valued at 5s for John Peile at Littlethwaite in 1635; William Wilkinson had three at Rogerscale in 1659 and there was one at Highside in 1669; and in Lorton, Thomas Bank had two in 1673. There were a few more but none mentioned at all after 1699. No doubt these are examples of stock kept for domestic consumption.

Also meriting an occasional mention were bees and poultry. On the whole, both were kept for products of domestic consumption. The latter never amounted to more than two shillings, representing perhaps a dozen birds but bees, though less widely kept, did sometimes represent a modest commercial interest.

From earliest times there were fulling mills in the valley. There is no definitive record of either the building or disuse of these mills, but the tenants at Buttermere paid 2s 8d in "Walking Silver" for the use of their mill in 1483, whereas two mills on Whinfell had fallen out of use by that year though a new one, costing 2s, was built at Lorton about 1439 (47). Was this the mill at Brackenthwaite close by Picket How or Lorton High Mill? The history of this mill is dealt with in some detail in Chapter 12, "Buildings". Presumably it was not the mill on Whit Beck beside Tenters, reportedly built about 1480 (48), also dealt with in Chapter 12, "Buildings", nor that at Whinfell Hall, about which no history is known and which is not technically in Lorton.

Much of the above is written with arable farming in mind, but we must not overlook the extensive interest in livestock and sheep. The areas discussed in Tables 4.1 to 4.3 refer to the 'in-field', or 'town field' – the 'enclosed' land – whether that was within ancient ring-fences of the whole 'in-field' or a number of ancient small enclosures, such as we see in the Tables. The meadow and pasture represented that

part of the townships 'in-field' that would provide over-wintering of cattle. But this represented only a small fraction of the land available to the villagers. The extensive open common land on the fells provided an essential component of life for the villagers, without which they would surely not survive. It has been said that notwithstanding the commonly held view that sheep were the backbone of the upland farming community, in reality cattle were more important. Marshall has analysed a large number of inventories, arbitrarily selected, between 1691 and 1750 relating to modern south Cumbria and the Early Diocese of Carlisle (49) and shown that during that period sheep represented only about 37% to 41% of the livestock. He also shows that there was then no autumn slaughtering of cattle. A careful check through all the inventories extant for this Chapelry, analysed in the same way as Marshall's, shows a rather different picture. Admittedly the numbers available are very much smaller and may therefore be a less reliable statistic, but they do represent all the inventories extant (excluding any gentlemen farmers), and also cover a different date range, from 1576 through to 1720. We find that 97 inventories show that, overall, there was a small preponderance of sheep over cattle 52%/48%. The numbers of sheep were fairly constant, whereas those of the cattle tended to vary between wider limits. However, over the whole period covered by the inventories extant, 1576 to 1720, in this 'parish' sheep were a rather more valuable asset than the cattle. But as Marshall found, there is no sign of mass slaughter of cattle in autumn, since, as we have noted elsewhere, well before 1649 each of the farmsteads of Over Lorton had its byre. In any case, up to then the numbers kept by each farmer were nearly always very small but were increasing and from about 1660 began the "great rebuilding" of the farmsteads. It may be that the very low value of cattle registered between 1691 and 1720 is due to an anomaly in the inventories. See Table 4.4.

Such income as the farming family had from their hard work, came from their sheep and cattle, especially the sheep. Perhaps one beast that had not been sold at market (Cockermouth received its charter for a market in 1227) would be killed and salted for use during the winter months. In contradiction of the received wisdom, however, in this valley as we saw earlier at Gatesgarth, in the latter half of the 13th century, the Countess of Aumale had a vacary sustaining at least 40 head of milk cows through the winter (50). More mature sheep, the twinters and older animals are hardy enough to spend the winter in the open. Herdwicks, the dominant variety since Tudor times, are particularly hardy and can survive all but the very hardest winter weather for many days. They do well on poor pasture such as we have on our fells and have the useful habit of becoming so used to the part of open fell side on which they were weaned that they do not wander from this, their own "heaf", and will return to it if moved to adjacent fells. For this reason when farms are sold, the "landlord's" flock is often an integral part of the sale, so a particular flock and its offspring will be continuous on one farm holding. The herdwicks' wool is very dark greyish black on the newly born and becomes a much lighter colour in following years. Their wool is coarse in summer but becomes fine in winter. Because this phenomenon is rare and occurs only in some primitive Scandinavian sheep, the legend that the original herdwicks swam ashore from a Scandinavian shipwreck has the possibility of truth.

Table 4.4
MEAN INVENTORY VALUES OF AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE PAROCHIAL CHAPELRY OF LORTON, 1576 - 1720

	Sheep		Cattle		Crops		Overall	No
	Summer	Winter Avge.	Summer	Winter Avge.	Summer	Winter Avge.	Total	
1576-1599	13.08	9.20 = 11.14	11.14	11.37 = 11.26	4.77	11.75 = 8.26	30.66	17
1600-1625	14.37	17.66 = 16.02	7.95	13.11 = 10.53	11.88	14.38 = 13.13	39.68	15
1626-1660	18.41	18.70 = 18.56	20.58	22.44 = 21.51	25.14	14.68 = 19.91	59.98	18
1661-1690	11.22	15.04 = 13.13	13.54	15.33 = 14.33	9.77	15.52 = 12.65	40.11	38
1691-1720	17.27	15.43 = 16.35	15.23	11.54 = 13.38	9.33	12.24 = 10.79	40.52	47
		-------		-------		---------	---------	----
		75.20		71.01		64.74	210.95	135
		= 35.6%		= 33.66%		= 30.69%		

Not included in Table 4.4 are all those who are clearly not farming either full time or as a by-employment to a trade, or inactive widows and widowers. Horses are not included with livestock.

It is noteworthy that, taken together, sheep and cattle represent 69.3% of the farming value of the holding, the arable crops the other 30.7%. Correlating this with Table 4.1, we see that between 60% to 77% of the enclosed land furnished only 30.7% of the farmer's capital. In other words, it provided the family sustenance in corn and other comestibles, whilst cash to buy other essentials, pay the rent and periodic 'fines', would come largely from sale of livestock.

How can we account for the apparent large rise in the inventory values of the period 1626 -1660? Several times during this period there recurrent cases of bad harvests and resultant shortage of basic foodstuffs nationwide. During this period there was also a general increase in the price of meat, so elevating the value of northern cattle. So it sems likely a combination of these factors became apparent in Cumbeland inventory values of cattle and crops, whilst not affecting substantially the value of wool.

Apart from the common items, oats, bigge and hay, that are mentioned in most of the inventories, very little detail of what crops were grown in this valley has survived. Writing in 1794, Hutchinson states that Lorton, Buttermere and Wythop had about 10,500 sheep and he commented on the loamy fertile soil at Lorton producing all sorts of grain, turnips and potatoes, but that Wythop was clay and only fit for growing oats (51). In the national acreage returns for 1801, the Curate of our mother church at Brigham, Revd. Pearson Simpson, listed 53 acres of wheat, 142 of barley, 473 of oats, 67 of potatoes, nearly three of peas and half an acre of beans. Root crops of turnips or rape occupied another 40 acres. Our earliest detailed inventory shows that in 1586 oats, bigge and hay were harvested (52) and these are recurrent throughout the series as the main crops. But both 'pease' and 'wheat' are mentioned for the first time in the inventory of John Wilkinson of Cross who had £8 of 'wheat and rye' as well as some 'pease' listed with his ladder at £1 1s in February 1676 (53). When he died in July 1680, Peter Winder of Over Lorton had "wheat, pease and beans" to the value of £27 (54) and again in October 1686 when John Scott's inventory lumps all corn and hay with pease at over £42 (55). Pease were also included with the 'bigge' of Henry Fisher of Old Scale in 1693 (56). We find the remains of another crop of wheat, valued separately this time, at the not

inconsiderable amount of £5 in the barn of Thomas Barn at Upper Lorton in March 1695 (57). Thomas Dixon's inventory of May 1694 includes a rare mention of hemp (58). Why we find these few references to the more esoteric items in a group only in the two decades prior to 1695 is something of a mystery, as the inventory appraisers were not common to all, though some did appear more than once. Was this a mini golden age for growing wheat in the upper valleys? Not if Hoskins, analysis is held to be relevant (59). About the same time there are also several references to 'hemp' in the inventories, but nothing to indicate exactly for what purpose it was put, nor from whence it came. There is one exception to the above discussion. Anthonye Pearson of Over Lorton died in February 1586 owning "five pecks of wheate and two pecks of grottes" valued at 14s out of a total £24 of corn, bigge and oats. The whole inventory rather suggests he was running a "village store", in which case the wheat may well have been bought-in, and we note our earliest direct statement of values – sheep average at 3s, cows and heifers average £1.18.0, oats at 7s 6d a bushel and bigge at 3s 8d a bushel. However, no references to potatoes or turnips have been found in any of the Lorton valley inventories between 1576 and 1727, which is not surprising as potatoes are not known to have come into use in this area until late in the 18th century and then only into the west coast lowlands. Dean is the nearest, for which the earliest known reference is 1742 (60); and turnips were even later. Perhaps, as Hoskins found in Leicestershire, some crops for family use were grown on a small scale on tiny pieces of land, so did not figure in inventories. In 1901 Brigham parish contained 1760 acres so, assuming there had been no significant change during the intervening century, 777 Acres of arable represented only 44% of arable of Brigham township land, so these figures must relate to that township alone. Revd. Simpson also gave us the benefit of his comment "more ground under the plough this year than in the preceding years. The crops are abundant and the harvest favourable. The farmers and dealers are exerting their utmost endeavours to keep up the price of grain, but I hope their endeavours will be frustrated. During the last two years the sufferings of the poor have been inexpressible." (61). But Brigham parish, excluding the Lorton valley, lies on the edge of the coastal lowland plain at an altitude of 200 feet or less, whereas the altitude of the valley rises from 300 feet, and at the time of the 1801 survey was about 70% arable.

We must not forget that this is the Lake District and the lakes also played their part in the livelihood of the local villagers. There is not much known about fishing in the lakes and rivers, but we do know that both were exploited fully for fish and eels from very early times. Four inhabitants of Buttermere each held quarter shares in an "eel fisherey", for which they paid rent of 12d in 1547; and in the same year, Thomas Peylle of Buttermere devised the major share, rent 30s, of the fishing rights in 'Crommbock', whilst John Cowper did likewise with his 3s 4d share, Lancelot and Anthony Hudson each similarly devising their 20d shares (62). There was a fish garth (trap designed principally to catch salmon) on the Cocker at Brackenthwaite, held by Thomas Wilkinson and his wife for which they paid rent of 12d, as well as other established fishing rights on Buttermere and Crummock. Crummock must have offered much better fishing for Richard Cowp[er?], 'fisherman of Buttermyer', who held one half share of the rights on Buttermere water at a rent of 3s 4d in March 1569, whilst another one quarter was held by Barnard Hudson Junior for a rent of 20d (63); and in September 1669, John Fletcher of Buttermere passed to Thomas Patrickson Junior, one fourth part of the fishing in 'Cromacke', for which the rent to

the lord was 7s 6d and again in May 1696, Thomas Patrickson passed this and another quarter, rent 7s 6d each, to his son Thomas, together with part of the fishing in Dubbs, rent 3d (64). The 'fine' for this transaction was £3 1s, equal to four times the rent, which was the normal going rate on admission of new customary tenants at that time.

In the century starting about 1650, there was a steady increase in both national and international trade, rising prices and inflation. Nationally, probate inventories show a growth in the wealth of yeomen farmers, in both stock and household possessions. Marshall has shown and analysed this in considerable detail for the Kendal and Hawkshead area, between 1650 and 1750, and demonstrated the consequential growth of a tradesman and craft element in their populations (65). In that period, the mean gross value of 50 inventories rose some 300%, the value of cattle stock, winter and summer average, by some 40% and the value of sheep stocks by 50%. This was also the period of large scale re-building of the farmhouses and barns. Compare this with Lorton's figures in Table 4.4 which do not wholly bear out Marshall's findings, though certainly there is a considerable increase in the value of farming activity after 1600 as compared with 1576 to 1599. The growing prosperity is reflected in the steady growth of the population shown in Figure 13.1 of Chapter 13.

Making a long jump forward in time, we have the detailed land schedules that accompanied the Tithe Commutation Returns, which in our case was in 1840, see Table 4.3. We have already looked at the changes in land use in High (Over) Lorton since 1649 and note that there is still a preponderance of some 57% arable. This, of course, is considering what is essentially the same boundary as that of Tables 4.1 and 4.2. The copyholders had by this time also received their allotment of the commons, those of Lorton being enclosed in 1832. There had been a drive to cultivate marginal land during the Napoleonic wars and the results of those efforts can still be traced by the residual plough markings seen in the meadows of the lower fell sides, for example, above the old road above Scales, seen from the B5292. Although these later fell out of arable use, on the national scale, arable farming remained profitable with prices relatively stable right through to the early 1870s in spite of the Government repealing the Corn Laws in 1846. However, for those who had sought to take advantage and settle on marginal ground, the repeal brought disaster. A local example is the Hattergill farm established on Whin Fell in about 1826 by William Moffat and Richard Little, following the Enclosure of Whinfell, and abandoned and left uninhabited by 1851, leaving field clearance still uncompleted (66). There now remains only the fallen walls of the homestead as a reminder of their unhappy venture on this high and exposed fell side.

There was a very wet summer in 1879 over most of Europe and in 1880 there were heavy imports of cheap wheat from North America, which much troubled agriculture in England. Being now largely pastoral, Cumberland in general, and no doubt this valley too, was not much affected by this at the time, but subsequently the value of land in Cumberland fell by some 12%, to the detriment of land holders who were trying, for whatever reason, to sell or raise mortgages (67).

We saw above that during the late eighteenth century, farming practices had changed considerably, but like other national changes before and since, the agrarian revolution arrived late in this part of Cumberland. Wheat was also introduced into those few areas where it could be grown at all, which did not really include this valley, although one or two references to wheat have been seen. The great

advantage of clover and turnips was that for the first time, the smaller landholder could feed more cattle during the winter months and avoid selling or killing them. In turn, where fields were enclosed, as here, it meant that selective breeding could be introduced and improved animals reared.

But there were other more important factors. To what extent did the economics of life in the parish affect the living standards of the population and to what extent can we deduce an answer to this question from the surviving probate documents? Throughout the period covered by the inventories studied here, the cost of living remained variable but fairly constant and the figures quoted are not corrected for any change on this account. Certainly in the late medieval and Tudor periods, Lorton's was essentially a subsistence economy, but towards the end of the seventeenth century there is reported to be a general economic improvement in the lot of the Cumbrian farmers; and by the turn of the 18th century, improvement, or complete rebuilding of farmsteads and their byres, was becoming widespread (68). This not only improved the life style and standard of the farmer and his family but, more importantly, provided another way by which more cattle could be over-wintered. Up to about 1800, we can say that there was no significant influence of whatever 'industrialisation' might have been starting elsewhere.

The average net estate value of about £40 hides a wide disparity of individual values. We might pick out for closer examination a few of those representing the two extremes; highest and lowest values together with one with a large negative value. Outstanding by far as the wealthiest (among those whose inventories we have traced, but excluding the gentlemen farmers of Lorton Hall) was Henry Peirson of Low Lorton, whose Probate inventory was made on 9th April, 1651 which totalled £908.8s.7d and was made not more than nine days after he made his will (70). He is considered in detail in Chapter 9, "Life and Death".

Winning the wooden spoon for the largest negative value inventory was Peter Fisher of Highside, who was buried on 16th May 1710 (71). His inventory, made two days later, showed that he died owing £175 10s to set against his total estate of £52.15s. He had no debtors. We have been unable to trace how he came to own Highside, which had long been in the hands of a branch of the Peile family, but it is possible it came to him through his marriage to Ann Barn in 1692. At £52 15s the estate, which included some 50 sheep and perhaps half a dozen cattle and two horses, backed by sown seed to value over £5, is quite comparable in value and content with those of the Peile family which proceeded him to the church yard. Peter had quite a good funeral, which cost his estate another £3. Apart from two small debts to Lorton folk, he owed four people £170 between them. Why? We look to Peter's Will for a clue and that is all we do find. He gave to son Peter "all Peill's tenement at Highside excepting two Rie fields lying between Little Intak and New Ley, and another little close called Rudd lying between Twenty Riggs and Leri How and the old house stead paying the sum of £70 to Jonathan Burnyeat of Hightrees in Mosser and £10 to my son Jonathan."

He gave to son Thomas "one grate and Crooke in the firehouse late Winder's and the half tenement thereunto belonging" – the closes excluded from his bequest to Peter and "the high house, late Peille's . . . paying out of the same £40 to Deborah Ilston of Fellside and £30 to son Jonathan". There were conditions and provisos to both these legacies and the remainder went to his wife Anne. It seems likely therefore that Peter Fisher acquired Highside by purchase and not by marriage.

Although older widows might normally be expected to go and live with a son or in-law and leave very little, if any, document of their lives, some continued to run their late husband's farm. Such a one was Ellin Wilkinson of Scales, a respected senior citizen, who was buried on 16th February 1614 (72). We have no record of her age, when she married, or when her husband died, but this last was probably between 1586 and 1601 (the previous gap in the registers). Like her contemporaries, Ellin lived modestly but with a comparatively good standard for the times – plenty of good kitchenware, a goodly quantity of bed linen and a by no means insignificant wardrobe at £3 10s with cloth to make up more. She had two married daughters and a grandchild and apparently lived with one or more of her sons, Robert, Peter and John, and daughter Elline, but also ran a sizeable farm, probably with their help as a family affair. It was Robert who inherited the remainder, after small monetary bequests to the rest of the family and two servants, and, presumably, the copyhold. Ellin had cattle worth £26.10s, possibly ten to a dozen animals, 100 sheep valued also at £26 and some £10 of corn and hay in her barn. She had several beehives worth 22s 6d, still had her own horse and at £3 it was a good one. Her books were more or less balanced with unspecified debtors owing her a total of £20; she owed her creditors £22 and left a net estate of £82.

To finish this brief search into the yeomen's lives, let us return to where we started, at Bridgend. On 25th of January, 1711, "I Peter Pearson of Bridgend in Lorton, Yeoman, being sick and weak in body, but of good and perfect memory, praised be God . . . . ." So began his Will in the formal manner then prevalent (73). Peter's bequests were of comparatively small sums to his five grandchildren, to Anne his one daughter-in-law and to Mary his married daughter then living in Ireland. To his son Thomas he bequeathed "one chest in the parlour-loft". The residue went to his last grandson, John Pearson of Bridgend. So we see here a typical well-to-do yeoman in quasi-retirement. He had kept very little in household goods, one or two chests and arks, a few brass and pewter vessels, a bed and a little bedding, perhaps a change or two of clothes and his mare. But he had not quite given up – he still kept sheep valued at £23 10, over 70% of his entire 'worth'. After deducting his debts of £18 10s, his Estate was valued at £11 10s and from this were deducted £4 for his quite costly funeral expenses. He was a senior figure in the community. Grandson Joseph Fearon also got "ten lambs to be delivered by my Executor at Michaelmas next" as well as his 20 shillings. Son Thomas, by inference, got the land and the farmstead in accordance with custom. There is no direct family connection with Henry Pearson whose inventory of 1651 we mentioned above. Either Henry was a great uncle in one of two part shares at Bridgend, or we were mistaken in assuming that Henry "of Low Lorton" lived at Bridgend.

We will skip briefly over the last three centuries. Except in song, the 'yeoman' died and was replaced by the 'farmer'. The 'husbandman' also died and became the paid farm hand, the shepherd and farm servant of the census returns. This did not happen at a stroke, of course, but in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries. The well-documented industrial revolution, which was ill-named and not a revolution in the true sense, took place; as did the less well-documented agricultural changes. These successive scientific and rural events brought slow but inevitable change to the land during those two centuries. In this valley, as elsewhere, change was slow and progressive, with major landholders in the vanguard. It is not well documented as far as this valley is concerned, and no attempt is made here to detail when and

how these occurred. The 19th and 20th centuries saw the arrival of the 'nouveau riche' who not only built large mansions in favoured beauty spots, but built up large estates to go with them. Such were the Lorton Hall and Lorton Park estates at Low and High Lorton respectively. Before mid-20th century, both had been broken up and sold off into their constituent parts.

There is very little firm evidence of wages paid to the agricultural labourer in this valley, but at least during the nineteenth century, agricultural wages in the northern counties tended to be as much as twice that in the south-western wheat growing counties. A mid-century survey suggested figures of 13 shillings and 7 shillings respectively. This was partly due to the mixed farming and partly due to the competition for labour with the newly emergent industialized towns. Nevertheless, the ebb and flow of the economics of farming and rural industry, with their dependence on factors outside the control of the local farming community, were felt here as elsewhere. Typical of this was the valiant attempt by Moffat and Liddle, as we saw above, to farm the marginal land at Hattergill when the value of grain went up; and how, with the repeal of the Corn Laws, the effort to build a farm house and clear the land failed, leaving nothing but the pile of stones we see today. So too the demise of the Flax mill, turned thread mill, on Tenters. During the twentieth century there were many instances of intervention by the national government and one international incident that created havoc among the Cumbrian farming community. The nuclear cloud resulting from the disaster at Chernobyl in the Ukraine in 1986 passed over the UK and particularly heavy dropout was experienced in the Cumbrian fells. As a result, there was an embargo on the movement of Cumbrian sheep from their home heafs for years after movement was permitted elsewhere. Under a motto such as "Digging for Victory", much grassland was ploughed during two World Wars, as it had been during the Napoleonic wars. As already said above, signs of the latter are still visible on Swinside. In the 20th century, deteriorating farm and agricultural economies resulted in a plethora of farming subsidies and a mountain of paperwork to accompany them, to the growing despair of the farmer. In the latter years of the 20th century, three particular cases of well intentioned, but not necessarily or universally successful, government action are noteworthy. Under the voluntary ESA scheme, subsidies were offered which sought to protect the environment by "limiting the amount of inorganic and organic fertilizer consistent with conservation of biodiversity" and by limiting the amount of livestock in different areas, for example the number of sheep on the fells. The third case was the introduction of 'set-aside' which was obligatory in certain individual circumstances. This proposed to pay arable farmers for not using land for production in order to control the surplus production of cereals in the EU and thereby maintain price stability. As there was virtually no arable farming in the Lorton valley in the later years of the century, this had no immediate local effect.

The 20th century saw itself out with the nationwide onslaught of BSE, otherwise known as 'mad cow disease' followed by an equally widespread and heartrending outbreak of 'foot and mouth' disease. These catastrophes hit all the farmers in the Lorton valley and the surrounding area very hard. With the 'foot and mouth' outbreak, most of the cattle and virtually all the sheep in the north end of the Lorton valley were slaughtered and the fells were strangely silent. For months, movement of any remaining livestock was banned, personal access to the fells was denied and many social as well as agricultural events had to be cancelled in the years 2001/2002.

One additional bureaucratic complication is that, whereas records have been kept with the traditional field names, augmented by Tithe map numbers after the introduction of the latter, from the last years of the 20th century, the numbers have been changed on all official documents to relate to the National Grid Reference System. This is clumsy and subject to memory retention. Much more importantly, it will cause the complete loss of the historic field names, many of which have a tale to tell.

How farming in the Lorton valley went through these latter centuries is considered in more detail in Appendix 4.3 with studies centred on Gilbrea, Highside and Terrace farms.

The valley yeomen had pride in the results of their labours. The Loweswater and Brackenthwaite Agricultural Society was founded in 1870 and in 1872 ran the first Agricultural Show which in spite of nearly foundering after a few years, has since gone on from strength to strength. It is still held annually at Loweswater on the third Thursday in September and is visited by many hundreds coming from a wide area across northern England and the Borders. Unfortunately the show had to be cancelled for two successive recent years due to the restrictions imposed on cattle and human movement because foot and mouth disease.

Appendix 4.1:
COURT LEET VERDICTS WITH RESPECT TO WATERCOURSES.

The Court Leet with Baron held in Cockermouth on 19th April 1681 gave explicit instructions as to who was responsible for which section of watercourse. The Jury found that:
"We are informed that a Trench or Water-race hath beene usually carryed along from neighbour to neighbour in the Towne fields of Low Lorton begining at the foot hereof into Richard Winder head race and so up through a Close of Cuthbert Peile's Junior and along by the foot of a Close of Henry Peirson and then into and through a Close of Peter Peile called 'Cuble' and then into a close of Thomas Williamson called 'Cowridden' which belongs to the said Peter to cast and there into another close of the said Thomas Williamson called 'Midlemost cowridden' which Widow Iredel is to rast as far as the half ground adjioyning. Then into a close of Richard Fletcher called 'gate of lat' which Thomas Williamson is to rast, then into a Close of Thomas Williamson which the said Richard Fletcher is to rast as fare as his ground adjoyes, then the hayres (heirs) of Francis Smith or John Wilkinson who possesses his right to rast as fare as the said hayre or John Wilkinson hath or possesses ground adioyning upon the said race is into a close of John Bell's called 'Hard riggs' through the same into the loaneing called 'great close loaneing'; Therefore we order and putt in paine the said race be sufficiently trenched and scaured by each of the said parties according to their particulares expressed and that betwixt or before the first day of June next and so yearly and every yeare for ever before the first day of June and for every default thirteen shillings four pence."

"Also upon like information we finde another waterace descending into Cocker forth of a close called 'wring' of Henry Perirson then into a Close of Peter Peil's called 'wring banke' then through the end of a Close of John Fisher called 'wring' and then along the great close loaneing ajioyneing a Close of Henry Peirson's called 'Big Croft' and then into a Close of Peter Peil's called 'Buskett Ing' through the same up the Ancient place (or way) into the great close loaning. Therefore we verdict that the said race be sufficiently trenched by each of the said parties acording to their particular proportions before the 1st day of June next and soe yearly and every yeare for ever upon paine of thirteen shillings and four pence a year each default".

These explicit instructions regarding the two watercourses were followed by similar instructions regarding the lane into which they fed:
"Whereas there is an Ancient way called Great Close Loaning we doe order and putt in paine verdict that the same be sufficiently repaired before the first of June next by the severall persons to whome the same belongeth according to their particular proportions as the same hath been formerly divided amongst them upon paine of 20s a years".

That these orders were not carried out adequately became only too apparent in the years that followed, when there were frequent complaints and fines imposed for various sections of either the watercourses or the lonnings. In spite of all the modern improvements and expensive more modern drainage schemes the whole area still floods badly after heavy rains. Great Close Lonning, now the beginning of the footpath from the north end of Low Lorton towards Stanger was, and still is, an occupation lonning. In 1743 and again in 1749, Isaac Sibson and others were charged with its repair, and if not repaired in 40 days and "such as refuse to repaire their

respective shares within the time limit shall have the fine levied by distress". That was local talk for "and we'll have no nonsense about this". In 1762 Henry Pearson with 10 others was charged with the same lonning being out of repair and fined 10s each.

Similar problems with watercourses occurred elsewhere in the villagers' land. In April 1718 John Peirson of Low Lorton and "all the other persons who ought to repaire and amend" the water course of Whit Beck between Over Lorton Bridge and the River Cocker, were given two months to correct the beck which was "beaten out of its course by Sand and Gravel" or be fined 6s 8d each. A similar situation arose again in March 1761 when the 15 owners of land beside Whitbeck were in similar trouble for letting the Beck get "out of repair" between Lorton High Mill and the Cocker and were fined 20s each.

The Turnman presented John Head, George Peil of High Lorton, Henry Taylor and Frances Benson in October 1733 for "not cleansing their water courses in Cass How Beck". The four were given two weeks to correct this or be fined 6s 8d each. The problem of maintaining a good flow of surface and drainage waters got so bad that in 1733 the Manorial court imposed a general fine of 10s on each of the inhabitants of Lorton, giving them seven days grace to cleanse and scour their respective water courses adjoining the highways or elsewhere within the township. Cass How Beck was the source of problems again in 1786 when George Mounsey was in trouble because of inadequate flow in the beck and again in 1789 for that part of the watercourse adjoining Low Cass How Parrock.

The same complaint was made in May 1813 regarding the occupation road from Scales through Abbatt Land and Far Croft. This road gave access to the lands of John Robinson and John Jennings but ran through the land owned by John Pearson of Scales and his farmer Robert Hodgson, who were given 4 weeks to effect adequate repairs or be fined 39s.

Holmes Lane in Lorton (probably the 20th century main valley road through Low Lorton), was cause for complaint by John Thompson in 1753 against Joseph Peil, John Key and Peter Pearson, whilst it seems Joseph Peil was similarly complaining against John Thompson.

"A little rivulet called Whit Beck" between "upper town mill and the Cocker" was presented in April 1750 as "insufficient to contain the water" which was to be repaired by Thomas Stubb and 8 others or each be fined 39s if not done in 40 days. A similar complaint occurred in 1753 and yet again in May 1772. On that occasion no less that 13 persons, all those with land bordering "a rivulet running from a bridge in Upper Lorton to the River Cocker", were fined 6s 8d each, "it being filled with pebbles and sand"; no doubt a case of inadequate attention to the ravages of water and weather.

Appendix 4.2:
BEATING OF THE BOUNDS OF THE MANOR OF LORTON

Line

1. Upon the perambulation of ye Common of ye Lord of the said
   Manor belonging to Lorton and ye limitts & bound
3. between ye Inhabitants of Lorton afowsaid & ye Inhabitants
   of Embleton and alsoe of Lorton & Wythopp, Lorton &
5 Thornthwaite the 23 day of September 1705 by adjoiment we do finde upon ye
   oathes of Edward
   Winder of ye age of seventy nine years Peter Watson of
7 ye age of fifty years Jonathan Pearson of ye
   age of fortysix years & James Lawrence of ye age of
9 sixty years that ye said Common extends by those limitts divisiory
   and grounds herein after mencoined That is to say beginning
11 att Stubb Close nook & from thence to Bolton Gill Head
   and from thence to Gray Beck & soe to Jenkin Walk & soe along
13 upwards to ye Fell Side to a place called Stone Rays
   & thence to Birk Snabb & soe to
15 Milkin Beck Foot & from thence to Bledder keld
   & soe upwards to Meare beck head & from thence to
17 Witty howe & soe to ye topp of Brown fell & from thence
   as ye [he _ _ _ _?] Weltor Deales to ye Lords Seate Pike & soe to
19 Seate Howe & from thence to Coom beck head & soe to Broken
   Gill head & soe downe broken Gill to Whinlatter
21 high way.

Memorandum
Mr. Joseph Relfe &
Mr. William Eward
was at the riding of the above
Bound (and 9 other names added)

The above is partially coincidental with the parish boundary of 20th century but departs from this to bring in more of Embleton High Common on the north to Bladder Keld and some of Thornthwaite Forest on the East. Bladder Keld is shown on the 2½" OS map, "Witty howe" is "Widow Hause" and "Brown Fell" now appears as "Broom Fell". Seate Howe is on the 2½" map and Coom beck head now is shown as Ullister Hill but other names have either changed or are too insignificant to be marked the modern map.

Appendix 4.3:
HISTORIES OF GILLBROW/GILBREA, HIGHSIDE & TERRACE FARMS

Gillbrow/Gilbrea Farm

In addition to the three holdings first discussed in Chapter 3, by 1385 we have a record of two more. One is of Margaret Elston, formerly Christian, and sister of Alice Taylour for 1/6th of the vill of Nether Lorton, rent, we note proportionally, at 20d. The other was held by William de Park and his wife Christian for rent 1 lb pepper. By 1547, this latter tenement had passed to Peter Wynder and was called Gilbanke (74).

For some reason, Manorial records relating to Gillbrow seem to be far less in evidence than of either Armaside or Highside which lie on either side of it. The records of the parish register have a huge lacuna between the 1620s and 1700, but this can be partially covered by a handful of manorial records and a few wills and other probate documents. Of course, these same comments apply across the board to the whole population, to a greater or lesser degree.

Mabel Wilson was a widow when she died in 1585, leaving the "title to my tenement" to daughter Jenat because son John was still a junior. Unfortunately Mabel did not say what her tenement was, but John eventually came into his inheritance and he passed it on to his own son Thomas, from whom it passed to his brother Anthonie in about 1669. Now, we know from the Survey of 1649 that Thomas had the tenement (numbered 8) in the centre of Over Lorton. This appears to tie up the matter and confirmation comes from two manorial records. The first, of 1668, relates to the surrender of a barn and two closes, Low Longdraughts of 1 acre and Moore Plats of 1 acre for a rent of 2s (75); the second relates to a barn and cow house in the middle of Over Lorton by John Fawcett of Gillbrow to Arthur Wilson, but these were not part of the fell side Gillbrow holding. The year 1692 saw the surrender, by Robert Wilkinson to Peter Fawcett of Gillbrow, of the closes Great and Little Gainbanks of 4 acres, with Gainbanks 1 acre, which had earlier belonged to Thomas Wilson. However, these three closes were part of the Dean and Chapter Manor and, according to all the known records, total some 11 acres. These records suggest that there was some mortgaging going on, but that the Wilson family were firmly entrenched in the Dean and Chapter lands with a house in the village. So these records do not mesh with other known facts. But there is a complication – a little detective work offers some possible explanations of the transfer of at least part of the Gillbrow land. Widow Mabell's daughter Jennat married John Fisher of Cornhow in 1608.

In 1710, John Iredale of Armaside died leaving four closes and a 'mowstead' to his daughter Sarah until such time as her brother John had finished paying her the sum of one hundred pounds. Those closes were the two High and Low Ruddings, Tail and Hill Meadow, and the mowstead was described as 'at the north end of George Scott's barn'. One hundred and thirty years later this barn is shown in the close called Hill Wood on the Tithe map, but we are left wondering where Scott fits into the picture. Tail and Hill Meadow came to John through his daughter who inherited them from her uncle Peter Iredale. All these closes eventually became part of Gillbrow farm, but the two Ruddings closes have again reverted to the adjacent Armaside land. There are no parish records of George and no other Scotts in the record before 1686. Cousin Joseph Fisher of Highside was appointed a Supervisor of the Will (78). Jacob Scott moved from High Lorton to Gillbrow after losing his son

Isaac and later buried his son John from Gilbrea in 1729. There is a third Manorial Court record, of an unspecified date in 1761, which introduces another aspect to the tenure of Gillbrow. John Westray of Gillbrow owed rent 3s 4d for the house, barn, stable, and ten closes "by the house", being a total 25 acres of annual value £18 10s 0d. These correspond to the eastern of the two sub-divisions of Gilbrea, closes 124-133 on the Tithe map, which in 1840 were in the ownership of John Wilson. The parish registers are unhelpful in telling us what was the relationship between John, Arthur and Thomas Wilson.

We can fill in some eighteenth century details from the parish registers, although as in the case of Highside, they do not discriminate between the two half tenements. In 1720, householder Thomas Bow of Gillbrow, was buried, followed by his 'poor' widow, Mabel, in 1724. John Scott 'of Gillbrow' was buried in April 1729. He was a short-term holder, remembered subsequently for the family barn in the corner of close Hill Wood (Tithe map 116). John Taylor, yeoman, was at Gillbrow between 1721 and at least 1741; and in November 1747 John Harrison of Gillbrow – was he a farm servant? – married Mary Taylor and had two daughters, Ann in 1751 and Grace in 1753, before Mary died in 1755. John married again in 1763 to Martha Stricket, by whom he had another daughter Sarah in 1774. Martha died at Gillbrow, aged 78 in 1810. Joseph Harrison of Gillbrow married Mary Askew in 1757 and had four daughters there by 1769, Grace, Ann, Mally and Jane. These may all have been farm servants, as presumably were Henry Robinson who was at Gillbrow from 1781 to 1789 and Joseph Turrel from 1792 to 1796 (76); but what were John and Sarah Fisher doing at Gillbrow when they baptized son John in 1798 and where did John come from? – he was not a member of the Highside Fishers. Could he have been a descendent of Jennet and John? Thus the picture of the tenure during the 18th century remains obscure.

The Land Tax returns (77) show that, between 1808 and 1829, Gilbrea was in split ownership of John and Mrs Fisher as the relict of John Fisher, for a tax of 24s 1½d on the one hand, with John Westray followed by John Wilson, tax 4s 5 3/4d on the other hand. One John Wilson of the parish of Brigham married Anne Fisher in June 1770, and one John Fisher of Armaside farmed one of the portions of the Armaside land and a John Fisher died in December 1829 at the early age of 38. How these fit into our history of Gillbrow is not known. The commercial directory for 1829 gives Samuel Johnson as farming Gillbrow. John Fisher and Sarah were married in Buttermere in 1796, but were at Gillbrow in 1802 when they baptised daughter Martha. It might seem just a little strange that this is the sole entry for the Fishers' children, but further search shows that Sarah married at the relatively old age of 42. She died at Low Lorton aged 82 in 1836, so the Tithe list of 1840 should read 'heirs of Sarah Fisher' The connection between Joseph Fisher of 1710 and the Fishers of Gilbrea at the turn of the century have not been established in Lorton records. The Gillbrow tenants were variously John Lancaster, Robert Coulthard, John Tomlinson and Samuel Jackson.

We have no parochial register of John Fisher Junior's death but the Tithe list of 1840 shows Sarah as owner of the northern part of the Gilbrea holding with Samuel Jackson as the farmer. In 1836, Mary Ann (sic) was born to Samuel and Margaret at Highside and when her daughter, also Mary Anne (sic), was buried at Lorton, aged 93 in 1966, she was described as 'formerly of Highside', so there was a certain degree

of inter-farm mobility. John Wilson owned the southern portion with Joseph Lawson as his tenant farmer.

The 1841 census shows that there were three families at Gillbrow. Daniel and Margaret Jackson, farmers, with their three young children, having lost baby Sarah aged four in 1833, two farm servants, Joseph and Hannah Lawson with their three young children, two farm servants and a farm hand and John Cass, farm labourer and his wife Faith. The registers are unforthcoming regarding the relationship between Samuel and Daniel Jackson and the commercial directory for 1847 lists Mrs Jane Jackson of High Lorton with Joseph Lawson as the sole mention against Gillbrow.

Things had changed considerably by the time the census was taken ten years later in 1851. Then listed as Gilbrea, two houses were uninhabited and one was occupied by Thomas Pickering, a farm labourer born in Lorton, his wife Isabella and five young children. The fourth house was filled by no less than seven women and a young boy, none of whom was born in Lorton – Mrs Mary McGinley, four daughters, a lodger and two small children, all except the mother working in the Lorton flax mill. We are left to wonder where the husband of Mary McGinley might have been; as the family was Irish and brought over to work in the flax mill, he probably remained in Ireland to work. Another ten years further on, in 1861, it is again shown as Gillbrow and Pickering and his family are still present, although he is now a miller. One house is occupied by Richard Irving, a farmer of 45 acres, with his wife and two adult children helping on the farm. The third house is occupied by Mary Mandale a widow from Ireby and her son, who is an apprentice tailor, and daughter and grandson. There are no other houses listed in the census so apparently the Pickering and McGinley families shared one house or one has been demolished. An intriguing thought about Mary Mandale comes to mind. Was she related to Dinah Mandale of Wythop, who married Joseph Plaskett of Tenters who emigrated in 1851 and founded Lorton, Virginia?

By 1871, the miller Pickering, and his wife are still present, the children having flown the nest. The only other listed house now provides shelter for William Wise, a mason from Uldale, his wife and granddaughter, who is still a scholar at Lorton School.

The census now lets us down. In 1881 and 1891, again listed simply as Gilbrea, we have only two families on each occasion and we know that by at least 1876, the modern farmhouse and a barn had been built, after which the original was re-named 'High Gilbrea'. Oswald Head, born in the parish with his family, figures in both those censuses as agricultural labourer or shepherd and from 1883 to 1901 he was the Hind (a sort of caretaker-cum-steward) for Gilbrea. Young agricultural labourers and their infant families appear in the other home, Thomas Nixon of Cockermouth in 1881 and William Sandwith from Sunderland in 1891. Kelly's directory for 1938 shows Jonathan Nicholson to be farming over 150 acres at Gilbrea, which of course included the rough fell grazing awarded by the Enclosure Commission in 1832. This is where our written record overlaps with living memory. Jonathan, known locally as Jimmy, had served in the First World War and reached the rank of sergeant, experience which served him again later as a volunteer in the valley Home Guard unit during World War 2.

These few paragraphs offer a complicated picture of life on the fell side. There was much coming and going of yeomen farmers and their helping hands, and seen from this distance, there was an equally complicated pattern of ownership between the fell side holdings and those held by the extended family within the Dean and Chapter Manor of High Lorton.

Jumping to the 1990s, the occupiers of Gilbrea, Irving and Marjorie Blamire farmed some four hundred acres, half of which is rough grazing on the open fell. They also rented some ten to twenty acres of summer grazing in the valley and on this combination they had, in 1999, 450 ewes, 100 gimmers, 62 cows and their calves. In this same year a large new barn was built. There is no arable, so there is no 'set aside' and the whole holding is either ESA or LFA. As with all other farmers, the rock bottom price of sheep during much of this decade, and the effects of BSE, have proved economically very difficult. It is interesting to note that with the occasional help of a son, the whole farm was managed by Irving and Marjorie Blamire. It incorporates the 45 acres of the age-old original farm, the land award from the 1832 enclosures, and much of the adjacent land which was originally part of the Dean and Chapter Manor, shown in Figures 4.2, 4.3.1 and 4.3.2. High Gilbrea is now used as a holiday home by the Gaunt family which is the landlord of Highside, Gilbrea and Terrace farms.

Highside Farm

Alexander Highmore was an absentee landlord whilst Highside Farm was being worked by the several branches of the Peile family. When she wrote her will in 1589, Elizabeth was already a widow, with sons Henry and Thomas still in their minorities. When she died in Feb 1591, she had over-wintered and still had three cows, a heifer and two calves, 21 sheep, a cock and hens. Given the time of year, her larder was well stocked. There remained for the survivors, until the next harvest, 30 bushels of oats, six bushels of bigge and an unspecified quantity of hay and straw valued at 10s and some 'flesh'. The net value of her estate was a rather poor £15 (79). Either Henry or Thomas, or possibly both, got into a bit of a financial mess. It is not clear if we are dealing with one or two branches of the family, but it seems probable from interpretation of the parish registers that there were two related Peile families at Highside from sometime earlier.

On the 7th January 1634, John Peile's Probate Inventory (80) of his goods and chattels showed that he and his family were adequately set for food until the next harvest. He had two nags and cattle to a value of £27, probably about ten beasts, to go with his rather large flock of over one hundred sheep valued at £21. In the barns were £20 of grains and 10s of peats and brackens. Nothing is noted of food in the 'larder' other than our only recorded note of salt – 12 pence. However the exceptionally large amount of £6 for the one each 'arke and chiste' suggests that there were more than one and they were full of stores at that, to be augmented by eggs from his chickens. We can imagine the use to which he put two ladders, but what on earth was a 'stange' that was recorded with them? Although his substantial inventory of £88 was indebted by £42 to his creditors, the balance of almost £47 still placed him above average.

In 1643, John Peele the elder, of Highside, (what was his relationship to the last named?) mortgaged three closes of meadow, Lowe Field, Cowyate and Parrock, together with a close of arable called Farr Side of the Field, in all five acres. The names of these four small closes have not survived, nor evidence of their position, but this is early evidence of the amalgamation of closes into larger units. It was a condition of the mortgage that it be repaid by 40s at the feast of Pentecost 1647. The fine for the mortgage was 25s, and a further penalty of 45s if the repayment was not paid on time. The whole tenement was stated to be of rent 3s, apportioned from 12s, so Alexander Highmore's successor had increased the rent by 20% (81). Over the years, under the guiding hands of the Peile family, the farm prospered again. Anthony, son of John was baptised in 1612. We know very little about him. He acquired ownership of at least part of the farm, as he was credited with a close adjacent to that of Thomas Watson's in the Dean and Chapter Manor in 1649, and was still around for the Hearth Tax of 1664. William died in December 1662 and his inventory shows a significant improvement in the standard of living. His household contained linen as well as woollen bedding and cloth, cushions and brass pots. Cupboards, chairs and stools furnished his 'great house'. Outside he had a horse and mare and beasts worth £14. Strangely, he appears to have had no sheep but had already planted his early crops, which with remaining seed were valued at £10. In spite of all this, or perhaps because of it, he died with a net estate just in the red (82). William Peill who followed him, died on 24th October 1693, leaving his son Peter to administer the estate. This was very similar to that left by the earlier William, but now included a number of old sheep at £4 15s, probably about 20, and some young sheep at £1 10s. The net value was now happily positive at just over £43. This William was quickly followed to the churchyard by John in February 1694, also of Highside, who had a much smaller estate of just £10, half of which was for an unspecified number of sheep. His beneficiaries were his nephew John and niece Elizabeth Peile (83).

Did illness or some other disaster overtake both branches? Christopher Fisher was in residence in 1700 when he baptised his daughter Ann, and Peter Fisher of Highside who baptised his son John in 1701 died suddenly of illness in May 1710, leaving all his "land and tenements, and premises" to his wife Anne towards the upbringing of his sons Peter, Thomas and John, all in their minorities (84); but one Christopher Fisher and his son, or grandson, Christopher continued at Highside until 1781.

Peter was to have all Peile's tenement at Highside except "two Rie fields lying between Little Intak and Newley (sic), another little close called Ruide lying between Twenty Riggs and Leary How and the old house stead". Thomas was to have "one grate and crook in the fire house late Winder and the half tenement thereunto belonging, two closes called Rie fields and another close called Ruide lying between Twenty Riggs and Leary How and the high house late Peills adjoining to the said Toft". (Author's note – this could well be 'Rud' or 'Rudding', but has apparently disappeared before we get the Tithe map of 1840) Everything else, one third of his lands and tenements, he left to his wife during her life for the maintenance of herself and younger son John. It is an inescapable conclusion that Highside was etched in the community mind as Peile's tenement, notwithstanding that in 1691 John Winder of Highside was 'to find a Constable for that tenement' and must therefore have been either owning or occupying part of Highside (85). John had been at Highside

since at least as far back as 1683 at which time he was left a bequest of 5s by his cousin William Winder of Over Lorton, and it is possible that John was probably the stepson of widow Ann Fisher.

Where and how John Dalton fits into this picture is a mystery. He died in 1728 leaving his Freehold Estate at Lorton Highside to his daughter Sarah, and was very remiss not to leave us the details. (RCG W.059) This is the John Dalton who acquired half of White Ash in 1714, and presumably he, who at Armitside in January 1711 married Mary Wilkinson, also of Armitside. Sarah married Thomas Westray in 1731, and thereby carried ownership of her part of the Highside estates to the Westray family where it remained well into the 20th century.

Throughout the eighteenth century, Highside was the scene of much movement of people and their family affairs. The economics of the two farms may already have been in decline and, to boost it, paying guests were taken in. For three years Jonathan Bank, a tailor lived there, as did Adam Bell, a slater in 1725. Martin Normand, a weaver living at Highside married Anne Key of High Swinside in 1718. Barbara Curwen was buried from there in 1731, though she could not herself have provided much help to the farm economy, but was there with her daughter Barbara who married Thomas Fisher, a carpenter of Upper Lorton, and she died at Highside in 1752. Thomas, who inherited the half tenancy, went on to live at Highside until at least 1738 when his son Jonathan was baptised, and Thomas died in 1750. The family remained at Highside, as it was from there that his son Christopher, then aged 27, married Ann Harrison in 1755. Ann Bolton, who was married from Highside in 1724, as was widow Mary Wood in 1725, were probably both farm servants, but went off with their new husbands, both members of the Fisher family, to Embleton and Isel. Probably also farm servants were John Rud in 1741, John Jelfrey and his wife in 1749, Joseph Thompson who married there in 1754 and stayed until 1761, John How in 1762, Joseph Taylor (who moved to Highside in 1769 after 12 years at Gilbrea) and John Dobson in 1787.

No taxes are ever popular and the Land Tax was as unpopular as any other but its extensive records are now of considerable help to history. After Christopher Fisher died in 1781, the holding went to his wife Ann, who paid annual Land Tax of 8s 4½d between 1784 and 1796. Over the same period, the second parcel of Highside was in the hands of John, then Mary Wilkinson, with Robert Banks (or Gillbanks) as tenant, although Ester Wilkinson died there in 1788. Mr L Bragg of Winder Hall came on the scene in 1800, and from 1808 to 1827, his tenants Joshua Hodgson, then Jonathan Musgrave, were paying Land Tax of 9s on Highside. Jonathan gave up his 33 acres at Highside in 1831. At the time, the 47 acres allotted under the Enclosures had not then been fully taken up and walled (86).

John Wilson acquired the tenancy, but he too had moved on before the 1841 census. The tithe returns of 1840 show that thirteen closes of the southern portion of the Highside holdings were then owned by Thomas Westray, who was living and farming himself from Lambfold under the name of Holemire Farm, with Joseph Lawson as his tenant. However, according to the census of the following year, there were three families at Highside. Young Henry Tyson and wife Sarah, who were farmers, middle-aged John Birkett, a farm labourer and wife Jane with three young children and Richard Tyson an auctioneer; with him were wife Anne, daughter Mary and son Richard, a farm servant, presumably for his brother Henry. The writing was already on the wall regarding the decline of hill farming. Ten years

later they had all gone, to be replaced by Robert Watson, another young farmer, wife Sarah and baby son. Robert employed a house servant and a live-in farm servant, Isaac Stamper, presumably one of the two he said he employed on his 400 acres. In the other house, elderly Mary Crosthwaite was keeping herself busy in her husband's absence by taking in lodgers. At this period, change was frequent as the commercial directory for 1847 gives John McDowell and Peter Burnyeat both at Highside, though it fails to say in what capacity. By whatever means, by the time of the 1861 census, Robert Watson had doubled his 400 acres to 800. If true, this could only have occurred by the acquisition of more of the recently enclosed commons. This figure may have been a clerical error as we shall see. To help him, he employed but one man, according to his reckoning, a shepherd. He conveniently did not count as 'employed' his twelve year old niece, who was the dairy-maid, nor his own son Joseph, also aged twelve, who worked with him as another shepherd and had by then left the family education and schooling to his brothers of eight and six. The family was completed by three daughters, Mary aged two and twins of but one week, plus Mary Head, a young lady from a Brackenthwaite family, who was their nurse. In all, an extended family of eleven in what was, to put it mildly, not a very large house. The other house at Highside was occupied by John Hunter, a farm labourer, his wife and smaller young family of three children. He was possibly the grandson of Francis Hunter who was a fuller, living in a cottage in Tenters (pulled down in the mid 1800s) opposite John Bowe's house.

Farmer James Mounsey, a stalwart young fellow of 33 years, coming from Torpenhow, claimed to have only 312 acres at the next census, 1871. He and his wife had four children, a domestic servant and a farm hand twice his age – his widowed father-in-law. The second house was occupied by retired farmer Robert McDowell and his wife Rebecca. There are no records of McDowells in the parish registers, who originated in Harrington.

Moving on another ten years to 1881 we find the rundown of the farmhouses as a centre for agriculture already well into their decline. There are still two families, one occupied by a young farm worker, wife and baby daughter and the other by an older couple from the Workington area, the man working as a gardener. The Highside population rocketed up again in 1891, and childish laughter could be heard echoing around Kirk Fell. The two families at Highside were John Simon, a road labourer, his wife and six children in one house and, in the other, John Eland, a Lorton born joiner of 33, his wife and no less than six children, plus an Irish labourer as a boarder.

The Highside farmhouses were effectively abandoned with the building of Terrace Farm lower down the fell side, but were occupied occasionally – woodcutter M Wild in 1951 and Robinson, 'a hunt servant' in 1957, but most famously for many years by the elderly and somewhat eccentric Maud Alexander MacDonald who owned both Gilbrea and Highside until a couple of years before she died aged 91 at Hames Hall Cockermouth. Maud was a member of the extensive Wilson family, who in the 20th century owned much of the land in the area.

Terrace Farm

Pending the publication of the 1901 census or access to the land-owners diaries, we do not know who was farming the Highside land during these last decades of the 19th century, but by the opening years of the 20th century, Terrace Farm was built as the new centre and John Dixon is the farming tenant until he died in about 1914. Barrow Jackson of Terrace Farm died in 1922.

Then James Nicholson, who was born in 1897 at Gilbrea where his parents Jonathan and Eleanor farmed, followed by James's son-in-law 'Sammy' Edmunds, between them worked Terrace Farm for 45 years. They were followed in 1975 by Robert and Agnes Armstrong who, in 1999, were farming some 530 rented acres. Much of this is rough fell side grazing. Additionally, they owned 53 acres at Tallentire and rented 20 acres for summer grazing in Lorton. On this they ran 560 Swaledale ewes, 120 gimmers and 25 Leicesters; they also kept a herd of 75 suckling cows with 75 calves, 10 heifers and two bulls. They managed all this with only part time help from one of their family. This is a far cry from the original Highside farm, which land it incorporates, and is shown in Figures 4.3.1 and 4.3.2. This clearly shows the continued amalgamation of closes, with the accompanying loss of hedgerows and stone walls, which has taken the weighted average size of enclosure from 3.1 acres in 1840 (Table 4.3) to the current value of 11.1 acres.

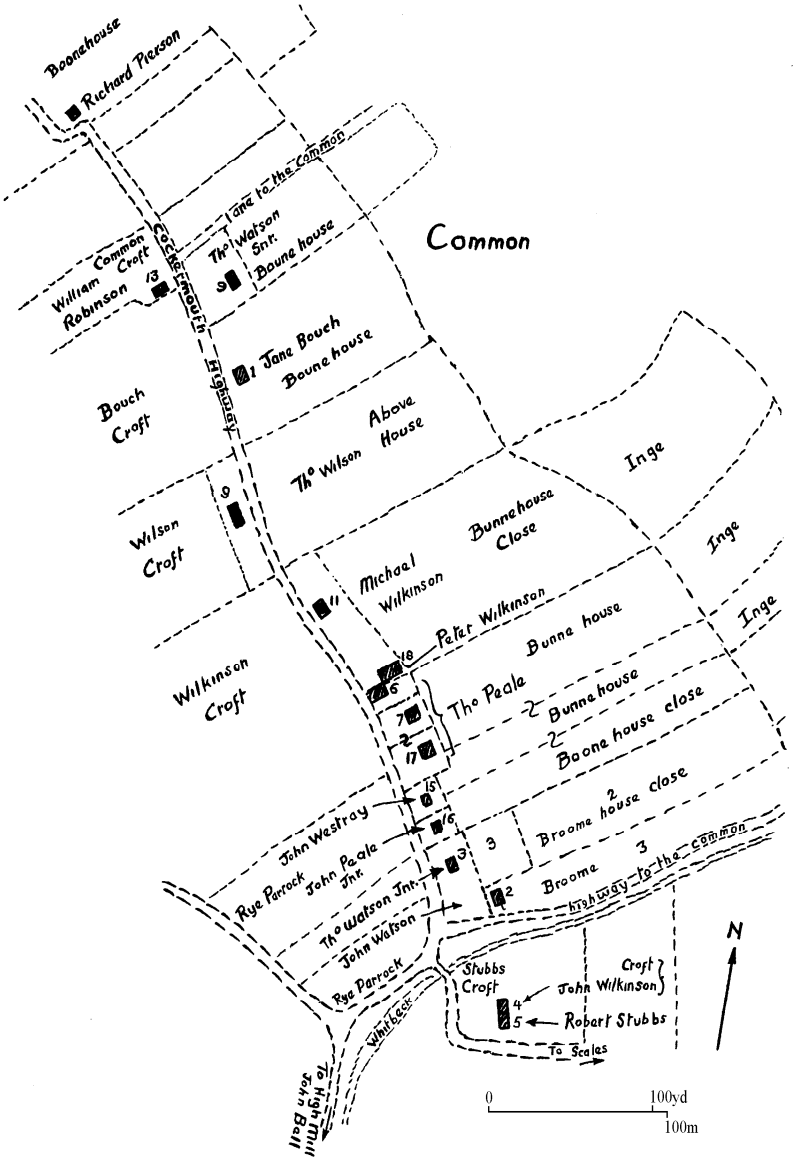


Figure 4.1 Schematic of High Lorton dwellings and their occupiers, 1649
The numbers relate to the numbers in Table 4.1

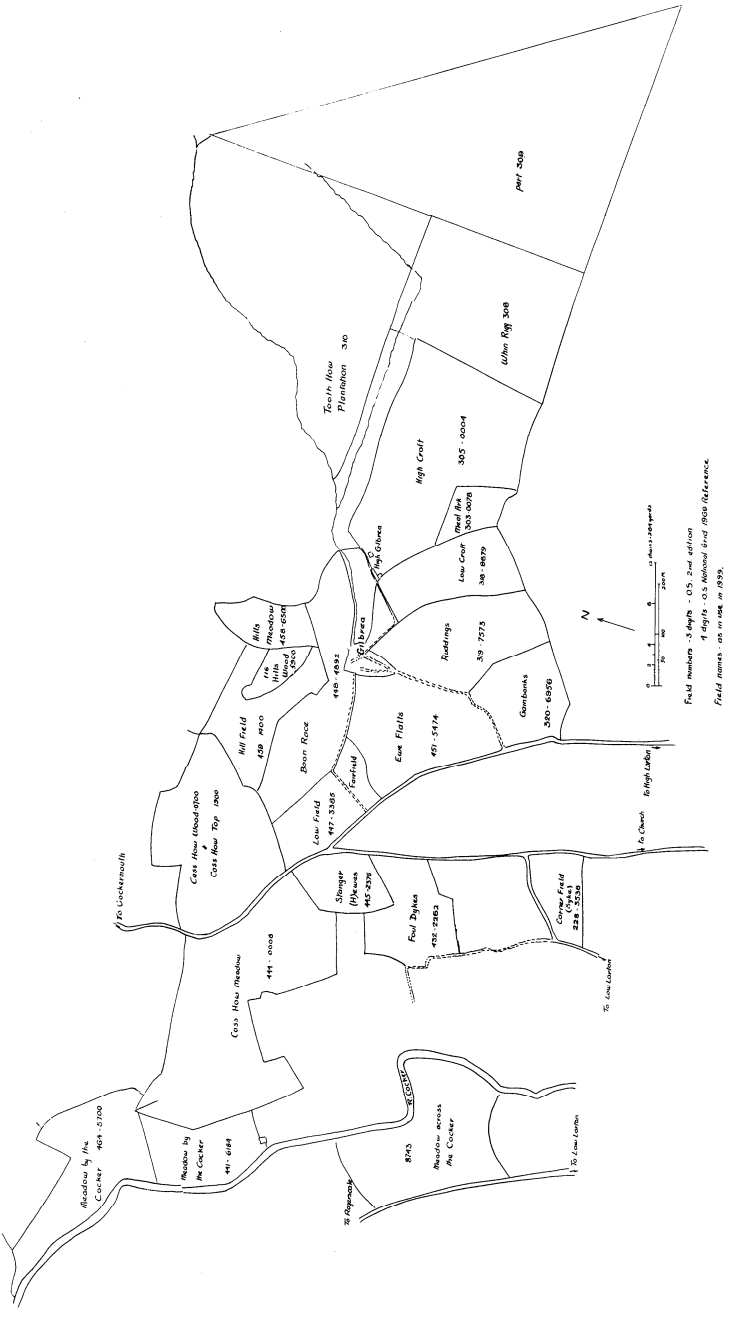


Figure 4.2 Gilbrea, 1999

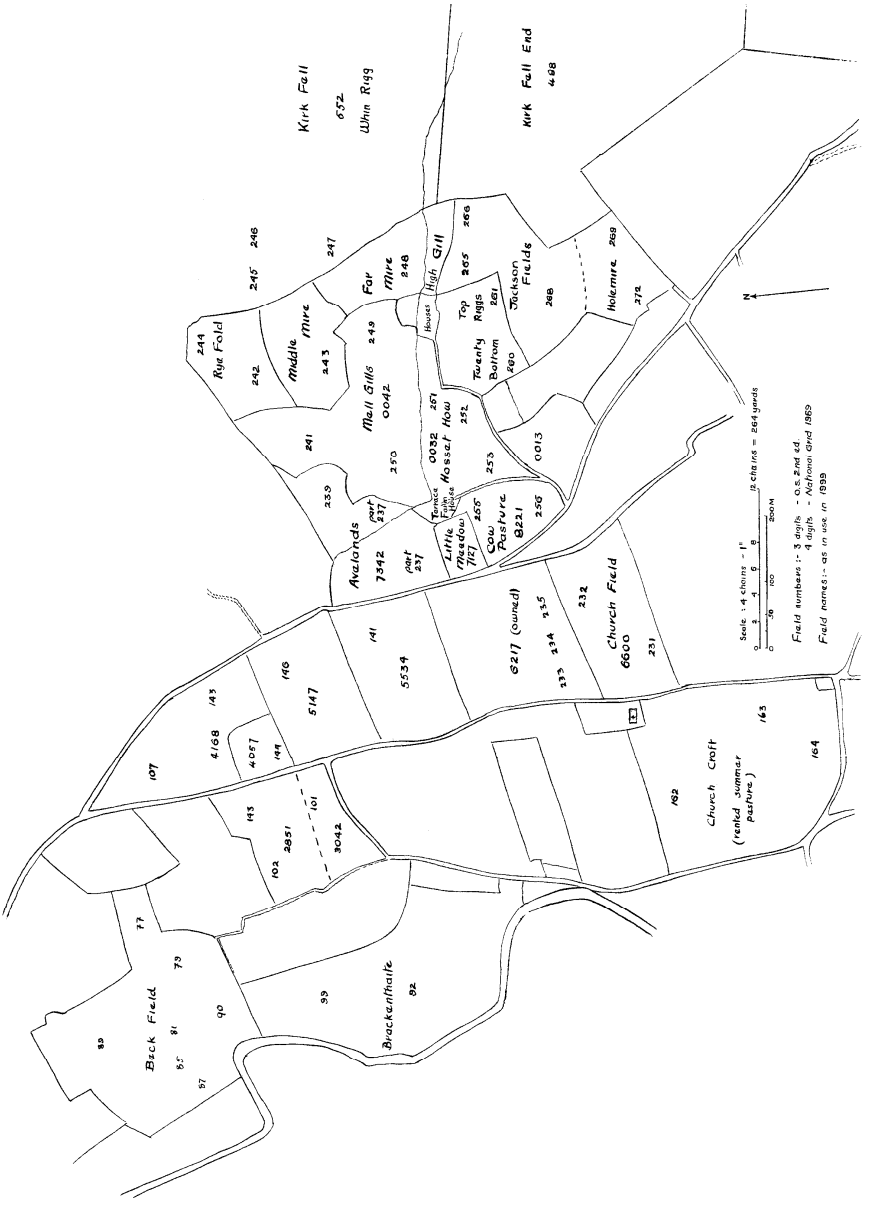


Figure 4.3.1 Terrace Farm (W), 1999

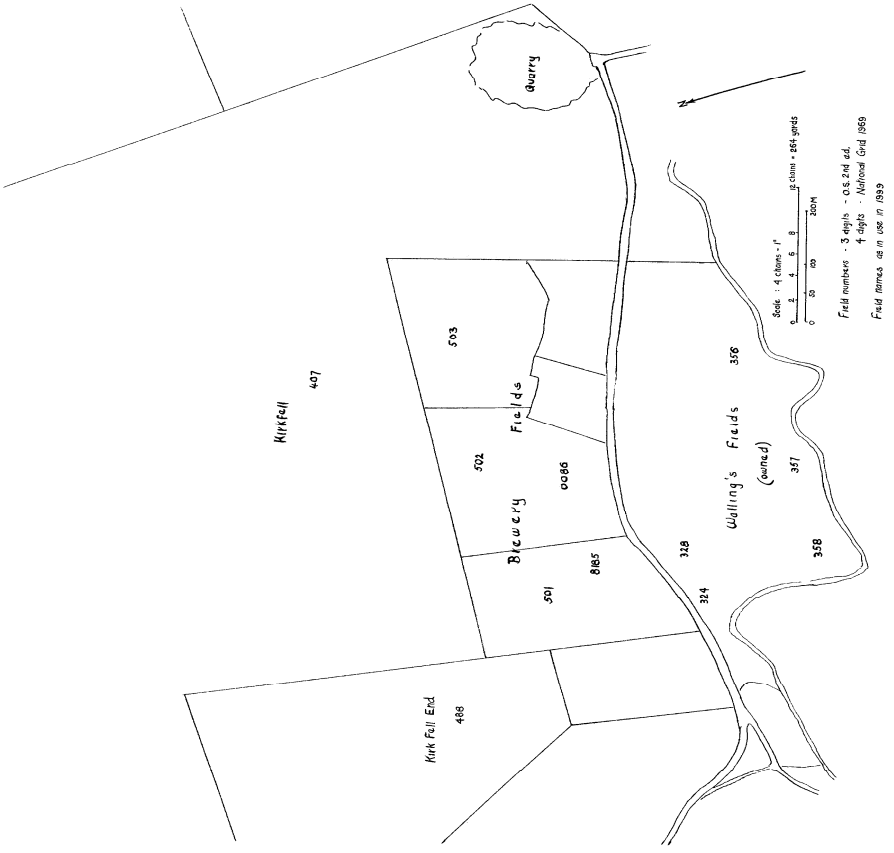


Figure 4.3.2 Terrace Farm (E), 1999

Chapter 4 References

(1) RCG W.150
(2) RCG W.008, April 1589
(3) Rackham, p 4
(5) Winchester 1, p 37
(6) Hoskins 2, p 72
(7) Winchester 1, p 37
(8) Winchester 1, p 82
(9) Winchester 1, p 93
(10) Winchester 1, p 95
(11) Winchester 1, pp 140/141
(12) D/Lec/314/41
(13) Will of John Mirehouse, RCG W.042
(14) Statement to the author by Mrs Kyle of Syke House
(15) Winchester 1, p 142
(16) Winchester 1, p 29
(17) Winchester 1, p 39
(18) Winchester 1, p 40
(19) Winchester 1, p 62
(20) Ziegler, pp 236 - 239
(21) Ziegler, p 192
(22) Appleby, p 98
(23) Kershaw, p 6 et seq
(24) Kershaw, p 50
(25) Winchester, p 7
(26) Winchester 1, p 65
(27) Briggs, p 87
(28) Briggs, p 87
(29) C&WAAS NS LIX and PRO MB (Exch KR) Vol 37 f.33
(30) Winchester 1, p 146
(31) CRO.EM/5/1 ff. 47, 48
(32) Winchester 1, p 143
(33) Appleby Ch 4 in part pp 51-54
(34) Winchester 1, pp 54 and 64
(35) Winchester 1, p 55
(36) Letter from Miss McDonald, living at High Side, 16 March 1985
(37) Appleby, p 1
(38) Hoskins "Harvest Fluctuations and English Economic History", Part 1, 1480 - 1619, Agricultural History Review 1964; part 2, 1620 - 1759, AHR 1967
(39) George, "Population History of Lorton", pp 39/40
(40) Wrightson & Levine, pp 4/5
(41) Ref: exchange of correspondence between John Stoddart of White Ash and the Commissioners, March/April 1939; LDFLDS archive
(42) William Harrison, "The Description of England" Ed G Edelen (1968) p 118
(43) George, "Population History of Lorton", Chapter 7
(44) RCG W.001

(45) CRO D/Lec/85 Court Leet verdicts, 28th September 1705; transcript 22 Nov 93/rcg
(47) Bouch, Prelates and People, p 29
(48) Winchester 1, p 149
(49) J D Marshall, "Agrarian Wealth...." p 505 and Table 3, p 513
(50) Winchester 1, p 142
(51) Hutchinson, 1794
(52) RCG W.219
(53) RCG W.25
(54) RCG W.37
(55) RCG W.146
(56) RCG W.104
(57) RCG W.53
(58) RCG W.82
(59) Hoskins Harvest Fluctuations 1620 - 1759 Fig 3 and Appendix 1
(60) J D Marshall, Agrarian Wealth and Social Structure in Pre-Industrial Cumbria, Economic History Review, 22nd series, Vol 33, 1980
(61) PRO HO.67/6
(62) CRO D/Lec/314/38 ff48 48v
(63) CRO D/Lec/314/34 f.3v
(64) CRO D/Lec/314/46 f.u-n
(65) J D Marshall, "Agrarian Wealth and Social Structure in pre-industrial Cumbria" Economic History Review, 2nd Series, Vol 33, 1980; Table 1, p 509, footnote 2, p 511 & Table 3, p 513
(66) Winchester WEA lecture July 1985
(67) Bouch, Prelates, p 407
(68) Brunskill, p 16 and chart p 17
(70) RCG W.009
(71) RCG W.164
(72) RCG W.24
(73) RCG W.74
(74) CRO D/Lec/314/16
(75) CRO D/Lec/85-1
(76) Joseph Turrel and wife Mary moved on to Picket Howe at Brackenthwaite. Joseph and a child were subsequently drowned in Loweswater when the Crabtree Beck reservoir burst during a storm
(77) CRO Class RQP
(78) RCG W.001
(79) RCG W.010
(80) RCG W.186
(81) CRO D/Lec/314/7
(82) RCG W.199
(83) RCG W.096
(84) RCG W.010
(85) CRO D/Lec/85 verdicts
(86) Cumberland Paquet, 2nd August 1831, p 1

Chapter 5: THE COMMUNITY

"John Thomson and Agnes, late wiffe of Peter Norman were wedded
the XXXth day of Januarye 1538"

So begins the Lorton parish register and to John and Agnes goes the honour of being the first parishioners so recorded, though not by much as Robert Norman married Elsabeth Tomson on the same day, their ceremony being the second recorded. Though the spelling is different, a very common occurrence, names being spelled many ways, even on the same document, this looks as if Lorton started its new circumstance with a double wedding. This is by no means certain, although in spite of the Canon regarding prohibited affinities for marriage, there must have been much inbreeding within the community. There were a number of Thomson and Norman families in the valley. So soon in our recourse to the register to unravel the parish history we bemoan the lack of more recorded detail. Were these two weddings a double family affair or not – it seems unlikely we shall ever know, but it is a reasonable assumption that all the participants were of Lorton parish. By implication, Peter Norman is the first villager to have his death recorded in the parish, although the burial register was not started until ten year later.

Life for the common man was hard and usually very short, but in more recent times Lorton people have acquired something of a reputation for longevity of life. This can not be wholly justified, since the age at death of both males and females was appreciably higher in the 18th century than in the 19th. In fact the age at death progressively dropped during the first sixty years of the 19th century. Nevertheless, even in the period 1840-1860, 30% of the population attained 80 years or more before their last journey to St.Cuthbert's churchyard. Our earliest Lorton registers give no age at death and do not do so consistently until 1800, but when they do, for those infants passing the age of five years, the average age for males in the two decades 1801-1820 is 57.7, whilst that for women, who had the additional handicap of child bearing in conditions of poor hygiene shows, surprisingly, the higher average of 60.4. The total of 78 each male and female is a small number on which to base any theories, but with similar absolute numbers over the century, the findings are reasonably consistent over the next four double decades. (1) In comparison, we know of at least two cases to further the reputation for longevity. Widow Jane Wood of Buttermire was buried in Lorton churchyard in March 1778 aged 100; and spinster Anne Moffatt received her congratulation message from the Queen before she died in 1994 having recently celebrated her 100th birthday. The total of all recorded deaths for the years 1961-1980 were 57 male and 66 female, with an average age at death being 68.7 and 77.9 respectively.

Semantically minded readers may quibble at my use of the word 'community' in this accompanying context. Macfarlane devotes two whole chapters to try and explain and define what the word means to experts in a range of specialized 'isms'. Here, by 'Community' I am trying to show the various actions and reactions of the folk who lived within a given geographical area – the parochial chapelry – without attempting any sociological theorising: so in Macfarlane's terms, I am falling between at least two stools, probably more.

So, returning to the earliest registers, we are not surprised to find that there is frequent re-marriage of both widows and widowers. Again, the earlier records indicate re-marriage of widows but not widowers and, strangely, three of the first five wedding entries were of the re-marriage of widows. Stranger still, and I suggest accounted for by lassitude on the part of the Curate, only one more mention of civil status occurs at all in the next 62 entries which takes us to 1552 when there is a complete loss of the register for seven years during the reign of Bloody Mary. Over that first 14-year period there was an average of about 5 weddings each year. All this goes to confirm the oft-repeated complaint that the registers are not wholly to be relied on. When Lancellot Fysher married Elsabeth in 1563 she was not dignified with a surname, but was still more respected than the lady who married John Threlkeld in 1549 and was denied any name at all. The Parish Registers therefore, though they may be considered by some to be a very comprehensive set when compared with many other parishes, are not as useful as we could hope for when it comes to continuity and analysis of their contents. We find a number, albeit a small number, where apparently the marriage has been between cousins, but whether of first or subsequent degrees we can not know. There are also cases where two brothers have married two sisters. Just imagine the joy in the village on 6th August 1611; background problems caused by the developing national religious arguments forgotten for the day: lush grass in the hay meadows; the new seasons lambs growing fast; and the church bells ringing loud and clear as more Bells, Peter and Andrew make their vows with Jennet and Agnes Braythwat.

Roundabout 1720 there were some 600 communicants (2) and in 1779 there were 100 families (3). These two figures do not seem to be inconsistent with each other nor with the parish records (cf Figure 13.1 of Chapter 13).

What should we make of the fact that from the introduction of the baptisms register in 1538 until the present day there are only three entries that can be described as "commentary". Were the Curates and parish clerks illiterate? We know they were not. Were they overworked? Quite possibly. But perhaps the reason for their apparent reticence is they just didn't see anything worthy of comment; and if so they were not unique to Lorton. The second commentary related to Mrs Nutchea, the schoolteacher, and the third was the analysis of the population in 1801, done at the Bishop's request. But the first and most intriguing was the brief statement that Daniel Dixon, the Negro, was baptized on 4th October 1771 (4). Where did he come from?, why was he here?, what happened to him?, but, most intriguing of all, why was this entry not copied into the clean copy of the register in 1800 and why was it not included in the Bishop's Transcripts? Surely the good folk of Lorton were not ashamed of Daniel's presence, were they? If so why was it entered at all? Was his father the Daniel Dixon, black man, buried at Whitehaven on 9th October 1773? or was he connected with the slaving captain Thomas Dixon, of Whitehaven ? (5)

We have already seen that life was hard. The report by the Commissioners in 1649 said so and the Probate Inventories imply it through and through. Life did have its lighter moments too, but we have to wait until much later for direct evidence of these. For example, the following verses of the humorous village event on May Day 1896 were composed by Mr Sewell of Lamplugh, assisted by Mr and Mrs Joe Burns. It was recited by Nellie Wise (later Mrs Milburn) at the Lorton school concert that year, when she was about 11 years old. It is written here as recorded by that same

Mrs. Milburn on 1st March 1967(6). Though no more than doggerel, the verses give us a lovely feel for the occasion and in this respect are unique.

1. It occurred on the Saturday evening
Did Lorton celebration,
And young and old, both great and small
Joined in with exultation.

2. When the finishing strokes to dress of Queen
And maids had been imparted,
From the Yew Tree, pride of Lorton Vale
The grand procession started.

3. First in her robe of white crepon
On Joe Burn's handcart seated,
Effie Sandwith, Queen of May was throned
And with due homage greeted.

4. They had no horse to pull the cart
But they had similar forces,
Jop Lennox and Isaac Benson proved
Their strength was like a horse's.

5. The May Queen's maids of honour next
In white lace robes so airy,
Annie Sandwith and Mabel Lennox
Along with Burrow, Sarah Mary.

6. Three pretty flower girls next we see
In tortoise-shell muslin glowing,
Nell Wise and Robinsons C and E
Their cheeks their gladness shewing.

7. Two cunning gipsies queerly dressed
Maggi Sandwith and Clara Burns,
Next joined the revels with the rest
And talked and laughed by turns.

8.Then Cousin Charley's Motor Car
A wheelbarrow next came running,
By Alf Mawson driven
Midst any amount of funning.

9. Two pretty nurse girls now tripping along,
Ann Moffat and Annie Wise
Their patients, Robert and Janie
Seemed as frisky as dragon-flies.

10. The Ivy Queen, Bell Sandwith
Followed closely after,
Then Jane Benson and Margaret Wise
And all created roars of laughter

11. But while folks watched along the route
The humourous pretences
J R Borthwick collected with his hat
To help to clear expenses.

12. Alice Wighham was treasurer to the firm
And she kept a right close hand,
While Johnny Burrow acted well
With a herring bell for a band.

13. When all the accounts were added up
they found they'd money plenty,
To buy some cakes and Boonbeck milk,
Enough or more for twenty.

14. So getting these with laughter much
They take their seets with utmost speed,
And endless jubilation,
Beside a snug plantation.

15. And there they had a jolly feast
And there they laughed and chattered,
Till all their cakes were gone and t'milk
Was either drunk or slattered.

16. And that was Lorton's first May Day
And no exaggeration,
For beauty, wit, and grand display
It fairly licked creation.

John Peel, the great-grandson of the John Peel of the song fame, married Elizabeth Wise in 1899 and the ceremony was followed by an evening dance for the village in the Jennings' Malt Kiln. Can that be the very first time and the precursor of the social life of this building that was to follow some twenty years later? Although that was an occasion for all the village folk, it was a lesser affair than the traditional Public Bidden Wedding. This custom is poorly documented, but we do have a copy of a poster, which strangely does not state the venue for the Festival, though the wedding took place in Lorton church (7). It reads

" Joseph Rawling and Mary Dixon
of High Lorton
intend to have
A PUBLIC WEDDING
on Thursday 21st May, 1807
when and where all their Friends, Acquaintances, and others, are desired to attend the FESTIVAL, and spend the Day with that usual Conviviality always accompanying similar Occasions. They flatter themselves that every Effort in their Power will be used to accommodate the Company, and render the Day agreeable. There will be given PRIZES to the different Competitors who may be so lucky as prove Winners: viz.
One SADDLE to be run for, and two BRIDLES to be trotted for, by Horses – Two BELTS to be wrestled for. Two HATS to be run for; GLOVES to be leaped for, and a TANKARD to be shot for, by men – A pair of COUPLES to be run for, by Dogs. In the evening PANTOMIME EXHIBITION"

This is followed by a description of what to expect and a number of verses composed by the Groom himself, which surely would have been censored in a later age.

Some time after the postal service came to the valley, Harry Peel, the Buttermere and Lorton postman, drove in his pony and trap the 12 miles from Buttermere to Cockermouth every weekday carrying the mail in, then doing all kinds of shopping and delivering messages for the folk, then collecting the letters and parcels at the Post Office just before going back, after which he had to deliver them all. The following story has the ring of truth since the author, John Peel, was a cousin of Monica Milburn. He and his father John before him worked a total of 100 years service with the Earls of Lonsdale and at Lowther.

One Sunday morning the parson was passing Harry's stable on the way to church and saw Harry clipping his pony.
"Why, Harry", he called out in his rather rough homely way "I'm surprised to see you working on a Sunday, you know you should be coming to Church"
"Nay", said Harry, "yeh knaw varra weel Ah's that thrang awt week an' that late finishin' wid runnin'
efter yeh aw, that Sundays t'only time Ah've got for jobs like this".
"Aye, and what's more", said the Parson with a gleam in his eye, "you're not making a very good job of it either – here give me those clippers a minute and I'll show you" The next thing he knew was when he heard a sort of shuffling and whispering and, looking up, saw his little congregation clustered around the doorway watching him with great amusement. While the Parson was engrossed with his clipping, old Harry, who was a bit of a wag, had sneaked quietly out and down to the nearby church and announced from the aisle in a loud voice "Nay fwolk, yeh needn't stop any langer, ther'll be neah sarvice teday – t'Parson's thrang clippin' me powny" (5).

So how well did these very much inter-married families get on with one another? Some idea can be drawn from the Manorial records.

Within the Manor of Derwent Fells the various townships elected "turnmen" annually. In 1705 Joseph Peile of Lorton was appointed turnman for Lorton. These nominees – appointed 'in-turn' by their community – had a duty to report to the Manor court and, failing this, the Township was fined. In 1719 Buttermere was fined 1s for not appointing a turnman, and again in 1721 for his "non-appearance". How the fine was determined is not clear, for at the same Court in 1719 Lorton was fined 5s for the same "want of a Turnman", but only 2s in 1756 for the same omission. This was not a very popular duty which required the holder to report to the Court that, within his township, all was well and all the normal manorial customs and ordinances were being obeyed; or if that were not so, to "present" those in default. John Gasgarth was made turnman for Buttermere in October 1832 and this entry is the first time (in these Manor records) that Buttermere is spelled '...mere'.

On the other hand, the Constable, who was originally a manorial appointment of the Court Leet, had duties to see that the law of the land was being obeyed. His duties of supervision of the Watch and Ward were originally laid down by the Statute of Winchester in 1285, but subsequently became much more varied. They included maintenance of law and order, the stocks and lock-up, inspection of licensed premises, parish arms and the local militia, convening parish meetings, collecting taxes, compilation of jurors' lists and appropriate action relative to itinerant beggars and the relief of the poor. Eventually the constable's duties became merged with those of the vestry, and were finally abolished in 1842, when the vestry was officially made responsible, subject to approval by the Justices.

The first recorded mention of a constable for Brackenthwaite was of John Key in April 1744. It appears that constables were appointed for each township within the manor, but the records consulted only show these appointments spasmodically. John Fisher of Brackenthwaite was apparently appointed in 1843 "for Brackenthwaite", in spite of the nation wide abolition of this post the previous year.

The situation for Lorton appears more complex. In 1688 Anthony Bankes was made constable for "Hyer Lorton" and in 1688 Peter Peile of Kirkgate for Low Lorton. These two are found recorded spasmodically. A second appointment, in 1693, of William Robinson for Low Lorton suggests that Henry Peirson must have died or become ineffective. But the burial registers show that Henry Peirson of Low Lorton was buried in November 1723, although Henry Peirson of Upper Lorton was buried in February 1711. So it seems Henry the constable must have become ill during 1693 and his name does not occur for subsequent appointments. Here too, in 1843, Jonathan Musgrave was appointed after the Act of Parliament abolishing the post of constable.

In 1791 and again in 1793, John Fisher was constable for Wythop as was John Harvey in 1805, with Henry Fisher Junior performing this duty in 1834 and 1840. The year 1769 saw Thomas Burnyeat of Swinside made constable for Buttermere; but it is not obvious why no other appointments for constable are recorded for Buttermere.

Nations have gone to war over the rights for water, so it is not surprising to find neighbours arguing about water on their land. This may not have happened very often, we find only four recorded cases in an eighty year period, but no doubt there would have been minor differences of opinion, not taken to the Manorial Court but settled more or less amicably. In October 1692, John Peil of Buttermire and farmer of

Michell Todds land, was fined 6s 8d for "taking the toft-water of High House Spring from Anthony Wilson and John Fletcher, and another 6s 8d for every default thereafter".

In May 1715 Gawen Wilson of Wythop was fined 3s 4d for "taking water out of John Watson's lane into Birk how, whereas it should run in its Ancient course into Dickamost Daywork close. What a host of wonderful mental pictures can be conjured up by that name!

Isaac Sibson was presented in October 1768 "for taking water from Whitbeck to water his cattle, and permitting the said water to run down the highway called Stockbridge Lane to the great detriment of the said highway and all the King's subjects who travel the same".

On 16th October 1744 the Turnman for Brackenthwaite presented Daniell Birket of Hobbeck "for turning the water out of its Ancient Course to the predgiss of sevrall of his neighbours". Was Daniell an itinerant husbandman? He, or another Daniell Birtkett, appears at Swinerigg Mire with a holding of 1 and half acres in 1761, rent 3d. We note that there were no Daniel Birketts baptised at Lorton, although the Birkett name appears before and after these dates.

On a purely personal note, in 1772, Ann Bell of Wythop complained bitterly that William Greenop had diverted a water course from the west to the east side of Cow Close at Routenbeck "to her damage", for which act he was fined 6s 8d.

An interesting case before the Court, showing the inter-dependence of neighbouring farmers, occurred in May 1715 regarding "a Well now in difference between James Wilson of Withop and John Watson of Lowthwaite-side". The Court found that the Well was in Watson's ground and although Wilson and his predecessors had used it at times, he had water upon his own ground. "Therefore we exclude him from watring any sort of Cattell there, except it be upon Leave, only we do allow him liberty to fetch meat & water". Furthermore the Court said "Also we find that Watson has right to use of a Well in Wilson's ground called Bent Well which right granted to Watson's predecessors by Wilson's predecessors, upon consideration that the latter might get stones in Watson's "Bottoms" close in order to build a barne".

Public complaints of noise are not new either, though the name of the problem has become modernised to "pollution". In 1785 John Clark was presented "for erecting a grindstone adjoyning his garden at Rilton Beck as a common nuisance to the Publick". After consideration of the evidence, the court agreed that the grindstone had a right to stand where John Clark had put it.

Although there is very little evidence in quarter sessions of trouble between neighbours within this valley, there were occasional grounds for complaint in the Manorial Courts between neighbours. As we have seen above, water was one reason for dispute and so, occasionally, were rights of way. October 1692 saw Peter Fisher complaining in the manorial court that John Peil of Highside had blocked his way through Lery How to Twenty Riggs and on to the [? illegible] Stones. John Peil was fined 3s 4d for this unfriendly act. At Buttermire in 1677, widdow Myrehouse was fined 6s 8d penalty for "driving and hounding Henry Peils goods", which we must suppose were his sheep or cattle. Also, in 1692, Mark Williamson was presented for "stopping Mathew Iredale on his way from Long-howe parrack through Mark's 'gate-flats' and so into the Great Close Inge.

At least one dispute got to the court of common Pleas, Richard Crosthwaite on 16th November 1753 (8). Adam accused Richard, not only of committing several trespasses in his closes at Lorton, but of what was much more important "of carrying away great quantity of the manure compost and ashes laid there" by Adam for his use in husbandry. He went on to complain of the delay in having his case settled at the first hearing by the annual Assize at Carlisle, because several of the material witnesses to call in his favour were very old and infirm and might well be unable to travel the twenty miles to the next Assize Court, which would greatly weaken his case if the freehold should come into question. Regrettably we do not know the outcome of this case.

Impeded passage on a fair track or highway, as opposed to deliberate blockage, was also an ongoing cause for concern and "presentation" by Turnmen at the manorial Courts. In April 1684, William Williamson and John Bell were "to repair as formerly upon paine of 20s by St. Mark's day a piece of way in the King's High Street at Cross in Lorton" and a quite serious situation arose in 1704 which caused John Pearson of Shatton to be fined 39s 11d, the maximum the court could impose. According to the record "for letting water go out forcibly out of Shaton bec head water course being in John Dodsons Newlands at the west end adjoyining to the high way being unsufficient doth abuse the high way that no man can pass". This same stretch of road was in trouble again a few years later. John Fisher of Armaside was given five months to repair the highway adjacent to his close "Butts" (Tithe Map 13) at Armaside, as well as another piece of highway by Cass How (Tithe Map 70), or face a fine of 6s 8d if not completed by 25th March next, 1715 (the first day of the new year).

Poor surfaces were not the only problem on the roads. The Leet Court Jury had occasion in April of 1688 to "set a paine of twenty shillings (a not inconsiderable amount) to be levied on any person of the Inhabitors of both Lortons who put in and keep any horses, or mares, or Catell in the lanes or high waies to grase or feed there or suffer or allows them to goe there"

A dry passage on the King's Highway through Over Lorton in 1697 was demanded of John Fletcher, Junior and John Marshall, Junior, both of whom were ordered to dress and cleanse the runner called "Sevy Syke", which was to be cause for complaint again in 1744. Even the lonnings, which were no more than occupation roads, were subject to criticism and censure of adjacent landowners for lack of upkeep. John Whiteside complained in 1810 that the township of Lorton was not keeping in sufficient repair the road from the Turnpike road to Highside. In October 1734 William Sumpton of Brackenthwaite complained that Henry Wood and John Head had not kept the highway between their two grounds in repair, whilst at the same time the Turnman presented William, together with Jane Fisher and Jonathan Head, for not repairing their own section of the same highway. All were to make the necessary work within 20 days or be fined 6s 8d.

Similar problems occurred at Wythop. Joseph Proctor was responsible for the lane between Burthwait Wood and Oldscale and he let it get out of repair in 1751. He was fined 6s 8d in April, and not having repaired it fined 13s 4d in October. He must have had a reasonable excuse for the delay because the assessors reduced the fine to 6s 8d again. Two years later Joseph was in trouble again, John Fletcher presenting him "for Gregg Lane being out of repair". We do not know if this was the same piece of lane, but the fine was again 13s 4d if not repaired within 20 days.

Good access to land was important. Great Close Lonning, formerly the beginning of the footpath from the north end of Low Lorton towards Stanger was, and still is, an occupation lonning. In 1743 and again in 1749, Isaac Sibson and others were charged with its repair and, if not repaired in 40 days and "such as refuse to repaire their respective shares within the time limit, shall have the fine levied by distress". That was local talk for "and we'll have no nonsense about this and confiscate goods to that value". In 1762 Henry Pearson with 10 others was charged with the same lonning being out of repair and fined 10s each.

Similarly, bridges had to be kept in repair. Stockbridge on the road from the village of Holbeck (Hope Beck) to Cockermouth was said to be "shaken and dangerous to His Majesty's subjects and ought to be repaired by the inhabitants of Lorton according to custom and tenure of these lands". Peter Bell of Hopebeck came to the rescue here in August 1628 and saved the inhabitants at large a significant amount of cash by a very useful bequest in his Will. "6s 9d to build a stone bridge at Over Lorton Milne and £3 3s 3d to pave and mend Stockbridge" He must have known the shilly-shallying that would go on about how and when to do this work as he imposed a time limit for the work to be completed. (9)

At the same time, the principal roads were gated. There was a gate on the Buttermere to Cockermouth road at Brackenthwaite and William Sumpton of Cornhow drew the wrath of John Key of Brackenthwaite for letting the gate get out of repair in 1756. Cattle, sheep, and horses had to be kept in the fields and off the highway, so maintenance of gates was important and under the watchful eye of the turnman. In May 1715 the Leet Court was presented with Hudson Middlefell of Buttermere for "a gate out of repair, called Peile's gate" and another called Chapel Gate belonging to Henry Peill, John Watson, John Clerke and Robert and John Fisher. The respective owners were given one month to effect repairs to the satisfaction of the Turnman, or be fined 6s 8d. There was a "Common Gate" on Holemire lonning called "Holemire Gate" (10).

Away from the village, the turnmen kept a watchful eye on what was going on in the fields and on the fells. The court Leet of May 1715, charged Charles Fletcher of Wythop Mill together with Daniell and William Stubb, John Fletcher and Robert Height, all of Wythop Mill and fined them 3s 4d each for cutting "turf for fewel to the prejudice of sheep-heathes and of getting flax for the repair of houses". The assessors evidently regarded this as a much lesser crime against the community and were much more lenient, reducing the fine to a mere 3d each. This comment is also interesting because it is one of a very few direct references to the construction of houses.

The assessors, or "sessors" as they were often labelled, were also appointed annually by the Manorial Court to review the fines imposed by that court. Although the fines were sometimes allowed unaltered, more often than not, the fine was modified by the "sessors", one half being quite common as a compromise. One such Sessor was John Fletcher, for the years 1689, 1693 and 1705. Between those times, in 1691, he served as constable for "one tenement in Low Lorton". (Was this always the same John? In 1705 he was listed as "shoemaker") John Marshell, Senior, was appointed "sessor" in October 1697 and his son John in 1700. Unusually, Joseph Wilkinson was recorded as Tyther/assessor for the year in October 1727.

Very occasionally, neighbours fell out more personally. At court in October 1719, Mr John Fletcher of Wythop Hall presented Leonard Fletcher "for scandelous words spoken against him", the latter being fined 6s 8d by the court. What a pity we were not told what those scandalous words were, but these official records are all terribly impersonal and leave much to the imagination. Earlier, John Iredell was fined 3s 4d "for battery", though again, more details are not given. There was an earlier case of slander, probably also at Wythop, in 1677, when Christopher Rudd was fined 10s for slandering William Borranskaile. Both families were long established in the parish, and such an occasion must have set the village tongues wagging and taking sides.

How the daily lives of the community inter-acted with each other is, perhaps, best seen from an analysis of the multitudinous items recorded in the probate inventories. These give a vivid indication of the extent to which families, friends and neighbours depended on one another for financial and material help. The old popular impression of wholesale barter, if ever true, has long since gone by the time these inventories were introduced by legal requirement. Help in the fields and with the home were generally given financial values, and there was a huge network of small, not so small and some quite large loans binding the community members together. In general, the legacies show what a wide range of family relationships existed throughout the valley community, to which was added a further widespread sprinkling of friendship connections and business contacts. Surprisingly, estates often consisted of more in cash debits and credits than in goods and chattels (See Chapter "Life and Death"). The very interesting Inventory of Peter Peel, made on 23rd November, 1586, which gives an insight into the inter-action and inter-dependence of the farmers, is given in Appendix 9.1. It breaks down into: Stock, £20 8s; Crops, £11 14s; furniture and household goods together, £3 10s; clothing, a paltry 10s; cash owing to him £2 13s 4d and money owing by him a whacking £47 19s; leaving an estate in the red to the tune of over £14 which is much in excess of all his crops just after harvest.

One of the things that becomes very apparent in reading through the probate inventories is the very small value of clothing. It did not figure much in the lives of these hard working agricultural workers, and very little of it is described by them. Thomas Watson wanted linen clothing for his daughter in 1614; and Elizabeth Peirson of Over Lorton ordered the distribution of her better clothing in 1647 (11) :-

To Thomas Bowe wife a broad clothe goune and cloake
To Annas Pearson a broad clothe petty coate and a west coate belonging to it
To Margaret Bowe a read (sic) coate with broade clothe sleeves
To Catteren Scott a read(sic) broadclothe coate with a green west coate
To Annas Scott the best cover cloth and a pair of limspets (?), a green searge goune and under coast belonging to it.
Clearly the better-off ladies could look very colourfully elegant when they chose, but this example is the exception within our records.

We have looked at various aspects of the lives of the folk of the valley community, but who were they? What were their names? What did they do as individuals? Where did they come from and where did they go to? These questions are examined in the Chapters "Population" and "Migration".

One who did not come far was Robert Moffat, who came from Brigham before 1841 and before he had reached the age of 24, bringing his wife Christina and baby Mary to set up as the landlord at the Rising Sun. We do not know why he moved, perhaps it was connected with the death of his first born, but less than ten years later, he was established with a growing family at Hollingbury Hall, now as a shoemaker. If the pile of stones, that is all that remains of his home, is anything to go by, they must have had a very tight fit, with little room for furniture, leather and a last. But Robert must have been a good man. He got his children educated and son John later became the Parish Clerk, and earned the esteem of the village and the title 'Mr'. When he retired after thirty two years in this post in January 1895, he was presented with a 'Purse of Money' and a beautiful illuminated address ".....and now that you have resigned the Position owing to ill-health, it is felt by Parishioners and Friends that some acknowledgement is due to the faithful way in which you have fulfilled the duties of the Office". This was signed by the Vicar, W. Cockett, and eight other prominent parishioners 'on behalf of the subscribers' (7). Shortly after the end of the First World War, on a fine Monday just before Christmas, a young American wrote home to his grandfather from Mrs Eland's Temperance Hotel in Cockermouth: "Refusing a lift in a Ford motorcar ('Yes', he wrote, 'they do have Ford motor cars here') because I wanted to enjoy the walk, I reached Lorton where, as you know, the real beauty does not begin until you reach High Lorton". On the road between Low and High Lorton he asked at "a little stone house" where he might get something to eat and was given "one of the swellist lil' lunches this side of Lorton, Virginia for two bobs" (Was this Oak Lodge?). He went on to investigate the 'ancient brewery' and Wordsworth's yew tree, and walked off with a small souvenir piece of each; and goes on to say he met a widow and two daughters called Moffat and had a 'mouth-watering tea' of bacon and eggs with them, for which they would accept no payment. The writer was Douglas Mandale Springman and his grandfather Joseph Plaskett of Tenters, had been a neighbour of the Moffat family, and emigrated to America in 1853 with his wife Dinah Mandale of Kelswick, Wythop with their children (12). Although listed in the census as an agricultural labourer, Joseph also had the position of village surveyor at a salary of £3 pa for the years 1850 - 1853 (13). The last of John Moffat's grand-children, Anne, was born in 1894 and lived just long enough to receive her congratulatory message from the Queen for her 100th birthday, so it was she that Douglas Springman met. She is believed to have lived all her life in the cottage on the corner of Tenters in High Lorton, now named Corner Cottage and had I known in time to tell her, she would have been 'tickled pink' to know that she had got into print in America.

It has been fairly clear from all the foregoing that in this 'parish', agriculture, woodland and associated activities such as milling, smithying and tanning had been the backbone, almost the entire economic activity, of the valley from "time out of mind". But this did change slowly, and the pace of change increased not, as one might first imagine, due to the nationwide so-called Industrial Revolution, but due to the personal intervention of the Jennings family and their Lorton brewery in 1809 (see Chapter "Buildings") and to a lesser extent the ever increasing use of quarried stone and slate for building and walling from about 1660. Certainly, as countrywide industrialisation and international shipping grew and the 'nouveau riche' came into Lakeland with their big new houses, the face of our village economy underwent an ever-increasing change in character, which due to the economic circumstances of the

20th and 21st centuries, continues to this day. The trappings of 'polite society' as well as their 'polite' style mansions (14) changed the look of the countryside. The evidence for this appears in detail for the first time in the 1841 census, but is increased and improved in later censuses. A breakdown of Lorton in 1851 is given in Table 5.1 which was compiled, together with a table for 1881 for comparison, in 1985 by a Lorton WEA study group which included this author.

Most of the workers in the thread mill were 'imported' labour, many from the mills at Cockermouth and some from as far away as Newcastle and Ireland. The village population went up accordingly with these lodgers squeezing in and boosting the local economy, though both the mill and brewery had effectively disappeared by 1891. It is an interesting fact that none of the 11 living-in servants in the 'gentry's Victorian houses in 1881 were Lorton 'parish' born. Were there no suitable people available in the valley to fill these not so demanding jobs? Was everybody above school age employed on the land? Or were the locals not good enough for these gentry? These comments need qualifying – earlier censuses show that locals were employed in the 'big' houses, the rot seems to have begun with the Bridge/Bragg family of Lorton Hall in about 1860. The population was further swelled temporarily by the presence of a small army of surveyors who appear in the 1861 census. There were six lodging in 'huts' at Buttermere and another with his wife lodging in High Lorton.

The comparison of Table 5.1 with the same area in 1991 is quite dramatic. Of the 24 main headings in that Table, the only ones still present in Lorton in 1991 are one inn, the school (of which none of the staff live in Lorton) and one shopkeeper-cum-postmistress. Such domestic help as is used is part time and comes to Lorton – just a handful of domestic helpers and one or two jobbing gardeners. From 1851 to the present, a similar pattern of change is found in the other 'quarters' of the 'parish', Wythop, Brackenthwaite and Buttermere. We cannot yet get access to the 1901 census, {since writing, that census has since become available}but from other sources, which are touched on in other chapters, it is apparent that the Victorian gentry took over as leaders and arbiters of the religious and social life of the community whilst the valley returned to its erstwhile farming economy. But for an equivalent analysis of the population of today (the end of the twentieth century) you will have to wait until the last chapter of this book

The character of the valley community changed with the increasing commercialisation of the non-agricultural assets. But it was the period round the end of the 19th century that saw the initiation of the major changes in the character in the valley, as usual following in the wake of those that had already made an impact in more southern areas of the country. The villages of Buttermere and Lorton were changed by the building of large Victorian houses, whilst Wythop, Brackenthwaite and Loweswater largely escaped. With the coming of railways and better roads, the industrial magnates from the north-west were able to build and use their mansions in many of the most beautiful sites in Lakeland and this valley, Lorton in particular, was subject to this invasion. Not only did the village get four new mansions, but it also acquired a large schoolhouse, a vicarage and a new squire who was building up a large holding in High Lorton; and their sophistications were reflected in the services to be developed in the community. . These aspects of community life are discussed in later chapters, but the tables that follow, taken from

the census, illustrate these changes, in particular in Lorton, much less so higher up the valley in Brackenthwaite and Buttermere.

As we get to the end of the 19th century and into the 20th century, we find the population having more time for leisure, becoming better educated and undertaking a whole range of new activities. However, there were earlier occasions when the people of the valley were entertained by visiting artists. At an unknown date, probably about 1810, Lorton was visited by Mrs. Charlotte Deans and her company. They were treated to a number of items which, a week earlier, had received "encouragement of the ladies and gentlemen of Keswick . . . . with no merit to claim it except in Mr. R. Hobson's comic singing and Miss Longstaff's 'Mary the Beauty of Buttermire' – a new song – which was unprecedented, from the singular event that occurred in the immediate neighbourhood and with which every paper in the Kingdom was filled . . . ." (15). The series of concerts held in the church from the 1980s were anticipated by nearly a hundred years. There was a concert there in January 1895 by the choir; the Misses Burrows and Burns sang duets and Messrs Thompson and Pearson played a violin and concertina duet, followed by an organ solo by Mr Musgrave (16). Village lads played in the Lorton Brass Band and on one occasion raised the quite magnificent sum of £7 for their sick fellow player, Mark Borthwaite (17). Not to be outdone, fifteen ladies, members of the Lorton Technical Committee, decided to establish an ambulance class (18).

Like Cockermouth and the neighbouring villages of Lamplugh and Braithwaite, Lorton had dances, attended by the teenagers who cycled from the various adjacent villages to enjoy themselves from 10 pm until the early hours (19). The Second World War put an end to these inter-communal evenings, as it did to the increasing tourist trade, and after the war, whilst the dances never came back in the same form, tourism later took off in a major way.

1925 saw the founding of the Lorton Tennis Club with 25 members. Supper dances, whist drives, and fancy dress ball raised funds to pay for rent and running expenses. A £10,000 all-weather court built in 1986 gave the club three courts and the basic needs to host the Volkswagen Ratings Tournament. A second all-weather court substituted one of the grass courts in 1997 and the addition of a fine sports pavilion, shared with the school, completed the facilities.

Table 5.1
ANALYSIS OF TRADES, CRAFTS AND LABOUR, LORTON CENSUS

			1851	1881	1891
Blacksmiths and apprentices			6		3
Inns (including Scawgill)			5	2	
Cornmills, including Low Mill on the Cocker)			2		-
Thread and Flax Mill			1	1	1
employing -	spinners - female		6	1	1
	reelers - female		2	1	1
	twisters - female		1	2	
	finishers - male		2	-	
	dressers - male		2	1	
	dyers	- female	1	-	
		- male		1	1
	tenter	- male	1	-	
	part time/scholars, male/female		3	-	
	threadmill hands - female		-	2	
	foreman		-	1	
	engine man		-	1	
	factory girls		-	3	
Brewery			1	1	
employing -	brewer		1	1	
	maltster		1	-	
	drayman		1	-	
	cellar-man		-	1	
Saw-mill			1	1	-
Stonemasons, quarrymen				4	3
Joiners and apprentices			-	5	7
Baker			-	1	-
Draper			1	-	-
Tailors, dressmakers, knitters			4	6	7
Shoemaker			1	3	2
Cordwainer			1	1	-
Grocers, full or part time			3	1	3
Schoolmaster/mistress/cleaner			1	3	3
Rural postman			-	1	1
Cooks, housemaids and house servants in the new 'gentry' houses			-	11	11
Gardeners				1	3
Laundresses				1	3
Coachmen/grooms				4	6
Gamekeepers					1
Charwomen					2
Road man (lengthman)					1
Carter				1	-

Table 5.2
ANALYSIS OF TRADES, CRAFTS AND LABOUR, BRACKENTHWAITE CENSUS

	1851	1891
Blacksmiths and apprentices	-	-
Inns	1	1
Cornmills,	2	-
Stonemasons, quarrymen	2	-
Joiners and apprentices	-	1
Baker	-	1
Tailors, dressmakers, knitters	2	1
Shoemaker	-	1
Cordwainer/ Forrester	2	1
Grocers, full or part time	1	-
Cooks, housemaids and house servants in the new 'gentry' houses	-	3

Table 5.3
ANALYSIS OF TRADES, CRAFTS AND LABOUR, BUTTERMERE CENSUS

	1851	1891
Inns	2	3
Stonemasons, quarrymen	2	1
Joiners and apprentices	-	2
Baker	-	1
Tailors, dressmakers, knitters	-	1
Shoemaker	-	1
Cordwainer/ Forrester	2	1
Grocers, full or part time	1	-
Schoolmaster/mistress	-	1
Postmistress	-	1
Gardeners	-	3

The Vicar, the Revd Dixon, gave musical soirées at his home, Lorton Hall, during the 1960s and '70s before he left to take up a post at Tenerife and his place was taken by Mr and Mrs Huws-Jones who gave musical evenings on gramophone records in their more modest home at Lambfold, until they too left the valley for York. During the 1980s and 1990s, there have been many other activities centred on Lorton village. A series of concerts held in the church, involving quartets, quintets and similar groupings, many given by members of the Northern Sinfonia Orchestra, and at the time of writing the valley community and surrounding areas enjoy an annual Dr and Mrs Gordon and Doreen Winn Celebrity Concert, sponsored and paid for by a Trust set up by Doreen, widow of Gordon Winn, who lived for some years at High Rogerscale. For those with different, or possibly parallel tastes, there are: a thriving Yew Tree Club, which provides a monthly social meeting place with talks by invited speakers; occasional WEA evening classes; a weekly indoor bowling club; and a thriving local history society. The Women's Institute follows its customary way, with monthly meetings. Elsewhere in the valley at Buttermere or Loweswater, folks

are equally busy with keep fit classes, amateur dramatics, painting classes, tap dancing classes, rug making, as well as other concerts in the respective churches and village halls. Nor should we forget the gardens that are periodically opened to the public for charity. Palace How, Rannerdale Cottage and Armaside are three that immediately spring to mind. The valley is a busy place; folks have much to occupy themselves, quite independently of farming activities, which are still the economic mainstay for those who work in the valley. The culmination of the farming year is the Loweswater Show, which began in 1872. Here the exhibitors from far and wide in the north country gather together with the rest of the community and visitors, many of the latter coming back each year just for the show, for a 'crack', to catch up with the local news and to meet old friends, likely not seen since the same time last year. The show, the third Thursday in September, together with the Harvest Festival Supper lavishly supplied with tattie-pots by the farmer's wives, make a fine end to the farming year. The Harvest Supper is wound up by the Vicar auctioning the offerings from the church, for which he obtains outrageously high bids, with the total raised going to charity.

Chapter 5 References

(1) George, R. Chapter 6.
(2) Bishop Gastrell's "Noticia", Ch RO EDA
(3) Bishop Porteus' amendment to the "Noticia", Ch RO EDA 3/3
(4) CRO PR.28/2
(5) Letter in private collection of author, from Mrs. Annabelle Fleming, dated 19th June 1995
(6) Produced here from the book of family memoirs belonging to Mrs. Marguerite Horlacher, daughter of Nellie Milburn and aunt to Margaret Wise, then aged 12
(7) Document in LDFLHS archive
(8) CRO Compleas, un-numbered document
(9) RCG. W.029
(10) CRO D/Lec/85 u/n bundle verdicts 2 April 1766 and again 2 Oct 1773
(11) RCG W.041
(12) Extracts from "Memories of a Plain Family" by Susan Annie Plaskett, pub privately, Washington DC 1936
(13) Vestry Minutes, copy in LDFLHS archive
(14) Brunskill, p 15
(15) Deans. P.49
(16) West Cumberland Times, 5th Jan 1895
(17) West Cumberland Times, 10th August 1895
(18) West Cumberland Times, 18th September 1895
(19) Cumbrian Women Remember, p 60; June Thistlethwaite; Ellenbank Press, Maryport, 1995

Chapter 6: THE FOLK OF LORTON 'PARISH' AND THEIR CHURCHES

"When through the woods and forest glades I wander,
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze,
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee."

Translation of a German hymn – 1745

Throughout our recorded history the Living at Lorton has, until very recent legislation became a great leveller, been a poor one. So perhaps we should not be surprised to learn that the earliest known mention of a churchman at Lorton was a record of his debts to the treasury. Michael, chaplain at Lorton, certainly between 1198 and 1200, owed two Marks in 1198. A Mark was 13s 4d. After paying some of his "tax" still owed 16s 8d in 1200, after which he disappears from the record. In 1267, John de Lorton, described as "Clerk" (almost certainly a churchman or priest), was killed by Simon de Crostwik during a politically motivated brawl at Keswick (1). After an inquisition hearing before Richard de Middleton, Simon was adjudged to have killed in self-defence, in which case John can hardly be judged to be as saintly as he should have been (2).

Values of livings, extracted for the modern diocese of Carlisle, as assessed for Pope Nicholas IV's crusading tenth in 1291, compared with Thomas Cromwell's valuation of 1535, show that the average value dropped by 20% over that period, and that Brigham is highlighted as the most important of those, in financial terms if no other, at least in early medieval times (3). See Appendix 6.4.

We hear no more of any other churchman until 1524 when Lorton enjoyed the presence of a Curate, Alan Peyll, helped by no less than three chaplains, Henry Wylson, Peter Hudson and Alan Crakplace. These were almost certainly local men, which was generally normal at that time, and strength is given to this supposition when Mabel Wylson left a legacy to Antoni Borranskill, the Curate at Lorton in 1586, and possibly the father of John Borranskill who was Curate of Loweswater, apparently for the unusual length of some 75 years from 1600. Whilst Lorton enjoyed the presence of those four clerics, Loweswater only had the occasional use of one of St Bees' two chaplains, whilst Lamplugh had the benefit of no less than a rector, Curate and two chaplains. Loweswater's situation should have improved, as by 1548, St Bees then had six chaplains (4), but the record of the Visitation in 1571 says "they have no servyce but as they provide themselves". This situation must have continued until they acquired John Borranskill.

As the population of Coupland grew so did the need for new churches and chapels. Distances to existing churches increased to the point where attendance became impossible in practical terms. So new chapels were built to serve the new villages; land was not a problem, but a chapel could not be licensed unless there was a stipend endowment to go with it. In medieval and early Tudor times we must remember people were very religiously inclined, so in many cases villagers agreed to pay so much annually as a charge on their holdings, and once agreed these charges

became legally binding on the property, not on the individual. This must be the origin of the payments made to their early clerics by villagers of both Wythop and Buttermere. It is also a major reason for the Curates having such poor wages, as the agreed stipends were not increased in spite of the progressive loss of the value of money. In 1523/24, more than half the chaplains in this diocese received £2 pa or less, whilst the average of all the incumbents was £13.

Brigham, of which Lorton was a parochial chapelry, was originally one of twenty one parishes in Coupland Deanery, within the Archdeaconry of Richmond, and the See of York. With the formation of the Diocese of Chester in 1541, those parts of Cumberland and Westmorland that were within the Archdeaconry of Richmond were transferred into it. Much later, in 1856, Bishop Percy of Carlisle died and then those same areas of the Diocese of Chester were transferred to the Diocese of Carlisle, a move which had been opposed by Bishop Percy for some years.

The only physical contact between the Archbishop of York and his flock in the deaneries of Westmorland and Cumberland between 1215-1315 was a passage through them lasting two weeks during 1281 and one night in Kendal in 1294. Even as late as 1789, the Curate of Dean could complain "during forty years constant residence and due attendance on our annual visitation of the commissary of our archdeacon of Richmond we have not once been favoured with the presence of that our ecclesiastical officer and but deputies and sub-deputies have only sometimes supplied his place".

The Bishop of Whithorn was licensed to dedicate the chapel at Loweswater in 1281 (5), so the chapel which was given to the priory of St. Bees in 1125 by Ranulp de Lindsey, along with two bovates of land, must have been significantly repaired or rebuilt about 1281. (A bovate is as much land as one ox could plough in a year and could vary by as much as 10 to 18 acres, depending on circumstances.)

Right up to the 18th century we find men entering holy orders to serve in either their own or adjacent communities. Joseph Burnyeat of Lorton, who was baptised in 1756, became Curate of Embleton after ordination in 1779 and was followed there by Oswald Head of Lorton the following year. There are some others, also with local names, described as "Clerke". This is confusing because the Parish Clerk was also so described, but in these few instances it seems "Clerke Minister", as Borranskill was described, is intended. A list of incumbents at Lorton, Buttermere and Wythop such as can be determined from wills and registers is given in Appendices 6.1 to 6.3. At the time of writing, we have come full circle as the present Vicar, Canon Michael Braithwaite is a local son.

In medieval times, burials were only allowed in the mother church, hence the existence of the so-called "corpse roads", such as that from Loweswater, through Holme Wood and on to St. Bees. But there were burials at Lorton from the beginning of our parish records in 1538 and since Lorton was a parochial chapelry, may well have had burials there since it acquired that status. Tales also exist of "Corpse Roads" over the fells between Wythop and Lorton and the latest repetition was published in 1993 (6). Certainly "Widow Hause" appears on the modern O.S. maps but this is a misrepresentation of 'Withy (or Witty) Howe' which was repeated on the enclosure map of 1832. (7) The 1998 issue of the O.S map also shows a "Corpse Road" on Ling Fell at Wythop, but the mapmakers have seen fit to change this from the 'Copse Road' on the earlier editions. Have they bowed to local folk law as recently published? But by no reasonable stretch of the imagination could flooding

of Lorton churchyard be a reason for wanting to be buried at Embleton, as suggested. Our earliest Will extant, that of Alan Holstock in 1570 says "to be buried in the churchyard of Lorton". Most of the earliest gravestones now in Lorton churchyard date from the mid-1700s; but the earliest of all is that of Edward Thompson, which reads " who died February 16th 1641/2 ", the only known case of the double dating of old and new calendars in our parish records. Burials from Buttermere have always been, and still are, at Lorton.

The mental turmoil caused by the many and significant changes in religion and their resultant effects on social and economic life gave rise to the "Pilgrimage of Grace", which began in October 1536. The insurgents took the "Oath of the Honourable Men":

"Ye shall not enter this our Pilgrimage of Grace for the Commonwealth but only for the love that ye do bear unto Almighty God his faith, and to Holy Church militant and the maintenance thereof to the preservation of the King's person and his issue ....." and so on. Members of the great houses, earls, barons and knights participated as well as the common man, but the Earl of Cumberland, not much loved in his own county, did not. As well as the religious motivation to try and get rid of heretics and the restitution of the monasteries, there was an agrarian motive. Landlords had become more independent of their traditional source of income from the land-working population due to land enclosure and an increase in sheep farming. They were in a position to demand ever increasing fines when these became due on transfer of tenements. Without going into details of the uprising, some 15,000 converged on Cockermouth, where after negotiations, the King's pardon was read on 19th December. However a second uprising occurred without the 'gentry', starting at Kirkby Stephen from where it spread to Cockermouth. This was now a purely economic movement, but was disorganised and leaderless, ending in disaster. Sixty six men were condemned to death, their bodies left hanging in chains for everybody to see. Among those unfortunates were: Cockermouth 2; Brigham 1; Embleton 1; Eaglesfield 1; Pardshaw 1 and Wythop 1 (8).

The bishops had long been complaining of the lack of clergy and the quality of those they had in these northern parishes. We do not have specific references to Lorton though we know that there was one Curate with three assistants in 1524 but only one Clerke in 1570. In comparison, Cockermouth, then also like Lorton a chapelry of Brigham, had 5 clerics in 1524 but was reduced to 1 by 1554.

In 1599 Bishop Robinson of Carlisle wrote that he did have a few very commendable clergy, but others would be better for devoting to their duties the same enthusiasm they had for vain pleasures and worldly cares, whilst the greater numbers were both unlearned and illiterate (9). We have no reason to suppose that the River Derwent was a boundary to similar conditions in the northern extremity of the Diocese of Chester. In this regard though not related to this Diocese, there is on record the supposedly true story of the parson who, after a late night of drinking and card playing, fell asleep briefly in the pulpit during his sermon. He awoke with a start, shouting "Clubs is trumps".

For many years and certainly until the early 18th Century, the Chapels of Ease at Wythop and Buttermere were served each by their own reader, the Curate of Lorton coming to preach in each place three or four times a year. For example, Anthony Bank, the Reader at Wythop chapel was buried in March, 1606. At this time the Curate held divine service twice each Sunday at St Cuthbert's, with a sermon and

gave Holy Communion three times a year (10). An early Reader at Buttermere was Robert Walker of Seathwaite, who served Buttermere for a few years up to 1736. For his service there, he received the magnificent sum of £1 pa, and the customary "Whittlegate" (residence with a local family for a short time before moving to another) (11). For the three ceremonies of wedding, baptism and burial however, the people of all the outlying districts, including Brackenthwaite and also, but inconsistently, parts of Whinfell, all came to Lorton. This arrangement changed when in 1801 Buttermere conducted its own baptisms, and since 1866, also weddings. As elsewhere throughout the country, ecclesiastical activities and the parishioners' relationship with the church were firmly prescribed and controlled by the church hierarchy from Westminster, down through the bishops to the Curate and his churchwardens. As well as being responsible for the physical well-being and maintenance of the church building and the behaviour of the congregation within it, the latter had the unenviable task of reporting on their neighbours through the annual "presentment" at the Bishop's visitation. One of the few such entries in Lorton records is found in the presentment for 1706: "we know of no parishioner guilty of the breach of this Article, except one Ann Bell, widow, who is reported to have committed fornication with one George, Turnerhow manservant". It is a pity that the documents which come down to us are in the form of answers to a set of standard questions, not all of which are made clear to us by their respective answers. These too vary from the verbose to a curt "yes" or "no" reply, no doubt depending on the humour of the scribe at the time. They are variously signed by the Curate and wardens, or wardens alone. A typical presentment for Lorton is that for 1690, the earliest extant, from which the following is extracted (12):

Titule 1:-
1. Our Church is in Repairing. (Meaning in a good state of repair)
2. none refuse to pay their proportion assessed on them for Ecclesistical Concerns. (This was not always true as only the year before, Anna Mayson and George Pattinson had been presented for refusal to pay their church-rates).
6. We have A booke of parchm[en]t where be Registered all Christenings, Marriages & burialls,(13) A strong Chist w[i]th two Locks and A Table of degrees prohibited in Marriage set forth in ye year 1563. (These three items were specified requirements in accordance with Archbishop Cranmer's Cannon, so this answer is no more than confirmation that the legal requirement had been met). There are no houses belonging to our Minister. We have no gleabe belonging to our Minister nor any other thing in our p[ar]ish Inquired after in ye 7th, 8th or 9th Article.

Titule 2:- Our Minister being of an honest and Chast life, and wearing decent Apparell according to his Ability doth not (according to ye best of our knowledge) make any Clandestine Marriages, Reads the Common prayer, buryes ye dead, and wears the surplice whiles he performes those and other offices p[re]scribed in ye Common prayer Book, diligently Catechises ye youth in our p[ar]ish, preaches A sermon Every Sunday or p[ro]cures one to be preached, and doth according to his power and Ability w[ha]tsoever is enquired of Concerning him under this Titule.
Titule 3:-

1. None of our p[ar]ishioners or their serv[an]ts occupy themselves in servile work upon Sunday, no Inkeeper Receives any to wast time . . . (illeg) in time of Divine Service.
2. Our parishioners in time of Divine Service and sermon behave themselves Reverently, giving due attention, and none disturbing holy dutyes
3. None w[i]thin our p[ar]ish (to ye best of our knowledge) have been married without Banns third asked or Lawfull licence obtained.

Titule 4:-

1. Our p[ar]ish Clerk being of honest life and Conversation diligently doth his duty
2. Our schoolmaster is (as we believe) allowed of by the Ordinary, but not rightly and duely elected according to ye Ancient custome of ye p[ar]ish. Our Churchwardens are chosen according to Custome, and will make their accounts (as we believe) in due time, and either have done or will doe w[ha]tsoever is Enquired after Concerning them in ye 4th, 5th and 6 Article.

Signed by the Churchwardens John Fawcett, Tho. Pearson, Peter Henry Peill, Rob. Fisher. (who each represented one of the four areas served by St Cuthberts – Wythop, Buttermere, Brackenthwaite and Lorton).

The reference to the schoolmaster is a little puzzling. In 1706 "Our Curate [author's note – Patricious Curwen] is Scool Master & Licensed by the Bishop", but there are several mentions which suggest the schoolmaster is other than the Curate himself (See Chapter 7, "Schooling and Education"). He certainly was in 1744 as reported below. There appears to have been a short interregnum during 1700 as we read in the presentment for that year, possibly written by the Parish Clark, William Bowe, himself:

"our Minister of Late left our Church, and we have the Curate of Embleton every Sunday either in the forenoone or afternoone, but he hath not Received Lycense from the Bishop for being Curate as yet, the Patron, being a Membr in Parliament is not willing to dispose of it till his return in the Country (sic), w[hi]ch wilbe soon as he hath signifyed" .

This same document provides us with a small insight into the person of William Bowe:

"our p[ar]ish Clark is aged 40 yrs at ye least, is honest in his life and conversation, can reade, write and sing and tends upon the Minister in all Divine service. He keeps the Church cleane & decent & Rings the bells before divine service". We have a strange statement in 1711 that suggests William's duties were subsequently reduced as " the Sexton was diligent in his duties of keeping the Church clean", yet in the following year the presentment states specifically "we have no Sexton, the Parish Clark takes care to lock the Church doors and keep it clean". Evidently Lorton at that time had fears about light-fingered gentlemen making off with church goods, just as we do today. It was also likely a measure to keep livestock out. The difference is probably that in 1712 nobody would dare to profane the church fabric whereas today we know from bitter experience thieves will smash any door that stands in the way of their intended robbery.

After the death of William Bowe, a petition by 76 inhabitants dated 30th July 1744 requested that "Mr. Whitelock, our School-master have the Clerk's place".

Whether or not Whitelock accepted, or was even asked, we do not know, but shortly afterwards the Curate was asking the Bishop to licence his choice of Richard Crosthwaite of Lorton, a mason, as Chapel Clerk (14).

In death as well as in life, the churchwarden needed to keep abreast of events in the village: "There are none in our parish living as Man and wife who are within the degrees prohibited", and again, "There is not any person in our parish that liveth under a common fame or suspician of Adultery, fornication, & Neither are there any common Drunkards in our parish or common swearers etc."; and yet again ".....there are no Wills of Testators dead in our parish not yet proved".

Life out of doors was not free of scrutiny by churchwardens either. In 1689, Richard Allison of Buttermere was admonished "for blaspheming the Sabbath in hounding his neighbour's sheep on Whitsunday" (15).

After the Reformation the custom, indeed the obligation, to abstain from eating flesh during Lent and on other specified days was reintroduced. Tate suggests this was more of an economic move than a religious one, in order to boost maritime activity and thus create a greater reserve of seamen for national defence (16). Whatever the truth of this suggestion, it is unlikely that the population of this valley would have made any difference to the nation's fishing fleet as they must have largely used fish caught in the lakes and river Cocker. Dispensations, on a sliding scale of fees, depending on the status of the applicant, could be obtained on health grounds. The dispensation had to be recorded in the Church Register, but none have been found in the Lorton registers. This should not be interpreted either way as the record may itself be deficient in these details, as such notes are seldom found anywhere. One example is that in 1632, Lady Stidolf who lived in the Parish of Mickleham, Surrey was given a dispensation for 8 days renewable for a further 8 days, had another dispensation, together with others for her husband and son the following year, and yet again more for them all in 1635 (17). Successive royal decrees after the Restoration caused such a demand for these concessions on condition of giving alms to the poor that the system fell into disrepute and died (18).

Comparison with parishes much further south clearly demonstrates how much poorer, in financial terms, were the majority of northern parishes. St. Cuthbert's was no exception. We will see in another chapter how meagre were the alter furnishings and vestments. A fair picture of the incumbency about this period emerges from the Terrier of the "Curacy of Lorton, 1728", given in full in Appendix 6.5, Addendum 1 (12).

We do not know the immediate outcome of the petition contained in the submission of that Terrier. Perhaps, because it was buried in an official document intended for other purposes, it was completely overlooked, and lost (author's note: I found no evidence for this in the Bishop's Register). Perhaps the Improprietor persuaded the bishop he was being fair. Either way, the figure was still a total of seven pounds in 1749, although it had risen to twelve pounds by 1766. Perhaps justice was just slow in coming, but he was not alone. In 1760, of 80 livings in this part of the Diocese, 56 were worth £10 or less (19). In 1800 only 400 out of 10,000 clerics in England received less than £150 pa (20), so when William Sewell was appointed in 1821 with his stipend of £35 plus surplice fees (21), he was still at the bottom of the clerical heap. Even these miserly amounts were as manna from heaven compared with those in the two chapels of ease at Wythop and Buttermere

which, as late as 1799, were £2 4s and £2 respectively, part of which was actually paid by the villagers themselves (22). A table of relative values of the livings for this area is given in Appendix 6.4.

It also appears that the poor Curate of Lorton, and probably elsewhere, had difficulty in receiving even these pitifully small and paltry stipends. In May 1627, 100 years earlier than the Terrier quoted, the Bishop ordered that the profits of Brigham be sequestered until the £19 arrears due to Martin Hudson be paid (23).

One of the duties of the minister was to send annually a copy of the Parish Register to the bishop. These Bishops Transcripts as they are called are, for many parishes, a valuable source of information when the parish original, and any subsequent copy which would have remained in varying states of decay in the parish chest, have been lost. At Lorton we have been relatively fortunate.

In the first place, our marriage registers start at the earliest possible date, 1538, and the others by the turn of the century. Secondly, in 1600 the Curate, John Bell made, or rather, had the four churchwardens make, a fair copy of the registers to date and in 1800, Thomas Gibson took over as Curate and promptly set about making another faithful copy of all the registers extant. Thirdly, apart from the usual gap found in the registers of virtually all parishes during the Reign of Queen Anne, the Registers for St Cuthberts have only a few regrettable but, for the most part, not very large gaps. Lastly, some of the original vellum entries from 1538 have been saved, and with the other records are now in the Cumbria Record Office at Carlisle. So in spite of the gaps before 1700, most of our records have been preserved in their original, and sometimes idiosyncratic form, thus filling in unsuspected omissions in the Bishops Transcripts. It is a fact of life that these latter were not always the "true and faithful copy" of the Parish Register as stated at their head. The opposite is also regrettably true. In spite of the attested "true and faithful copies", there are a few entries in the Bishops Transcripts that do not appear in the Gibson copy. It is from correlation of these two sets of records that our Lorton statistics and family histories have been compiled.

It is also much regretted that our past Curates and Vicars have been men of few words. There are almost no auxiliary remarks or comments to illuminate the bare record and throw a little light on the social background to the events recorded in the registers and the very few comments they did see fit to make were not copied into the Transcripts. The records are also mostly silent about those ministering to the people of Lorton, but a partial list has been constructed from the registers and other sources. It is given in Appendix 6.1.

The periodic submission of a Terrier was required, as it still is today. This was drawn up by the incumbent and countersigned by his churchwardens. Only five of the early ones survive amongst the Bishops Transcripts at the Cumbria Record Office, and a search has failed to find more in the archives at Chester. The dates are 1728, 1749, 1755, 1783, and 1789; they are reproduced in Appendix 6.5. In comparison with the Terriers of so many parishes round the country, these show how desperately poor Lorton was – their contents are almost entirely negative. That of 1728 is barely more than a plea for more income and appears to have been written in a fit of pique and despair at the continued poverty of the benefice. The last named, 1789, was quite definitely not written by the Curate himself, Thomas Fisher, who had been in a poor state of health since at least 1784, which was reflected in his

deteriorating keeping of the Registers. From 1786 or even earlier, he had a succession of assistants, who are listed in Appendix 6.1. These latter received a benefaction of up to £20 pa from "The Kendal Charity". Thomas Fisher who suffered a paralytic stroke in or before 1792, but was still managing an almost illegible signature in 1793 died in January 1800, at the age of 85 (24).

John Wesley found West Cumbria fairly fertile ground for his preaching and made three visits to Lorton between May 1752 and April 1784. Until quite late in his life, he travelled on horseback and on one occasion got lost in the mountains. As he was not travelling by the coastal route this was probably on the Whinlatter Pass. He described Lorton as "a little village lying in a green fruitful valley, surrounded by high mountains, the sides of which are covered with grass and woods and the bottom watered by two small rivers". He preached here in May 1752, reputedly under the now famous yew tree in the village and found "a very large and serious congregation".

In his diary for 1759 he wrote "I rode over to Lorton. Many came from a considerable distance and I believe did not repent of their labours for they found God to be a God both of the hills and the valleys, and nowhere more present than in the mountains of Cumberland". Wesley's diary entry thus reflects the 1745 quotation at this chapter head, I wonder if he knew of it? The year 1769 saw people in the district form a Wesleyan Methodist Society in the village. It is quite likely that Lorton School remained a free school instead of becoming a Church of England School because several non-conformists in the village defeated the proposal in a vote by four to three in 1879. John Jennings was a Methodist preacher, Trustee of the Lorton School and one of the family owners of the Thread Mill in the village, a major employer.

Another prominent villager in the Methodist fold was Peter Robinson, born in November, 1780 who became a convert and preached locally for nearly 58 years. He died after a stroke in 1868, is buried in Lorton churchyard and enjoys one of the very few eulogies in our churchyard on his gravestone:

> "of no distemper by no blast he died
> but fell like Autumn fruit that mellowed long
> even wondered at because he dropped no sooner
> he seemed to be wound up for four score years
> yet freely ran he on eight winters more
> till like a clock worn out with rating time
> the weary wheels of life at last stood still
> he died as he had lived a holy happy man"

Wesley may not have evoked a large following in this valley, but he must have provoked a degree of religious discussion amongst local families because Oswald, son of Richard Head of Lorton, born in 1757, was nominated to the Curacy of Embleton in 1780; and he was soon followed by Joseph, son of Thomas Burnyeat, who was born three years before Wesley's last visit to Lorton, offered himself for ordination whilst still in his early twenties and was ordained deacon on 8th August 1779 and followed Oswald as Curate of Embleton in 1779. He, in turn, was followed by Isaac Fearon of Lorton, who was born to Joseph Fearon of Lamplugh in 1760, becoming Curate in Embleton in 1784.

George Fox is similarly supposed to have preached beneath the yew tree to a multitude, some of whom were Cromwellian soldiers, but there is little evidence to support this (25).

We see in Chapter 11, "St Cuthbert's Church", that when the church was to be rebuilt in 1809, the pews were to be allocated to those parishioners who were willing to subscribe to the cost of making them. This leaves us to wonder how many of the congregation would normally be seated and how many left to stand or sit on the rush-strewn floor. The presentments do not offer much help other than to confirm that there were "seats" in 1695 and subsequently. The earlier seats may well have been placed along the side wall, which was a common arrangement for those who were to weak to stand through the services; hence the phrase "the weak go to the wall".

In 1779, only about 25% of the adult population attended Easter communion service. Of the rest, there were 4 Presbyterian families, 2 Quakers, and 8 Methodists (26), who presumably went their own independent way, the latter to the unlicensed Methodist Meeting House. The site of this is not known, the present Methodist Chapel not having been built till 1840, but it may well have been the house of Peter Robinson. It is interesting to note that whilst none of the bishops ever came to Lorton for their Visitation, preferring instead to hold sessions in the large towns, in 1717 the Worshipful Peregrine Gastrell, Commissary of the Archdeaconry of Richmond, held his Visitation at Whitehaven on May 2nd, which at that time was a major town and second largest port in England.

Bouch found very few mentions of confirmation. Outside the big towns it is difficult to see how those from the more remote places, especially in Coupland, can ever have got to the bishop and there is nothing to suggest the bishop ever stayed anywhere en route for this purpose during his Visitations (27). How the Bishop of Chester administered these deaneries we do not know. It is not until 1821 that any regular mention of confirmation occurs in the visitation records. Progressively during Bishop Goodwin's episcopate, the frequency of communion increased. In 1872 only 10 churches out of a total of 275 celebrated communion weekly whilst 246 celebrated monthly or less. By 1890 the former had increased to 57 and all the rest celebrated at least monthly plus Great Festivals (28). Lorton's position within these statistics has not yet been researched. A table of confirmations actually taking place in the valley in recent years is given in Appendix 6.6.

That "on account of distance and the rigours of winter", the banns of marriage were never published, nor public baptism of infants always performed in the chapel at Buttermere, was at least true about the turn of the 19th century. Other services were also curtailed, normally prayers were read twice a Sunday, though the evening service was cut out in the depth of winter. At that time Buttermere had between eleven and fifteen communicants, celebrated twice yearly (29). Even today, late twentieth century practice is for the Sunday Evensong to be brought forward to 3.30 in the winter months instead of six pm as it is in the summer.

The Religious Census of 1851 is generally considered to be of dubious value for statistical and historical research, but it is often the only evidence we have for churchgoing at that time. Extracted details from that census, taken on 30th March that year, are given in Appendix 6.7. The good folk of Wythop were having an unhappy time and church attendance there had dropped to almost zero but was delightfully described by church-warden Daniel Mandale in his report: "grown

small by degrees and beautifully less till it has reached the number stated". Judgement was slow in coming, but in 1857 Bishop Villiers, who was a strong disciplinarian with evangelical leanings to match, suspended the incumbent of Wythop for inadequate performance of his duties. This appears to have been a direct result of the parish being incorporated into the Diocese of Carlisle the previous year, after the death of Bishop Percy who had opposed this Diocesan change for some years. Mr Woodmason must have been re-instated since a Buttermere church pamphlet shows he was there until 1873.

We do not need to speculate why folks from Buttermere and Wythop did not find it opportune to come to Lorton or Loweswater, they find it inconvenient enough even in these days of motor cars and personal transport and that census day 30th March, 1851, was very wet and miserable all over England. But it is interesting to speculate as to why the census day congregations at both Lorton places of worship were significantly down on the suggested average attendance, especially so as those at Loweswater were some 40% above the normal winter month average. Was it lambing that preoccupied the still essentially farming community? Did they have a very special preacher at Loweswater who attracted folk from Lorton? The return from Buttermere is unhelpful too. Why was there no service on the day of the census? We can only interpret these figures as indicating an unhappy time for the people of Buttermere as well as those at Wythop during the incumbency of Mr Woodmason. And possibly these are all demonstrations of the unreliability of this census.

On 3rd September, 1896 the ladies of Lorton mounted an ambitious "Sale of Work" in Lorton School to raise sufficient funds to finish paying for the recently acquired Liszt Organ, and to complete furnishing and decoration of the church. A number of stalls were run by ladies representing Lorton, Kirkfell and the "Churchworkers", whilst Messrs Dixon, Pearson and Bragg operated another on behalf of the farmers. This special event was under the guiding hands of the two senior ladies of the village, Miss Harbord of Lorton Park and Mrs Dixon of Lorton Hall whilst Mr George Oglethorpe, the village schoolteacher, was in charge of the Art Exhibition. No information regarding the outcome of the day has come to hand and the Vestry Minute Book appears not to have survived. It would be interesting to know what pictures were on sale and if any of them are still in the village today, though a request for information in the Parish Magazine elicited no response in 1993. The organisers arranged for wagonette carriages from the Globe Hotel in Cockermouth to encourage the good people of that town to come and help the good folk of Lorton to spend their money. That organ was retired and replaced by an electronic instrument as a gift from Mr R Rougetel-White in the 1970s; this in turn was retired and replaced by a state-of-the-art electronic instrument in 1992, the sum of over £8,000 being raised by public subscription. After the comparatively recent effort by the parishioners to raise some £25,000 for the restoration of the church itself, this was a splendid effort indeed, and in no small way influenced by the character, enthusiasm and encouragement of the Vicar, Michael Braithwaite.

Other, traditional, church based activities took place too. The Lorton Mother's Union held its regular meetings with an annual Tea in January in the Sunday School and in 1895 had the additional pleasure of a lantern slide show. That same week the leading ladies of the village, the Vicar's wife and Mrs Dixon organized a supper for the "25 churchworkers" meaning the churchwardens, sidesmen, choir and teachers.

The report in the West Cumberland Times makes it appear as a typically Victorian event – the gentry being graciously condescending to the lesser mortals of the community.

Between 1991 and 1995, a group of 32 ladies from the whole valley, with Loweswater and including a number of non-churchgoers, put in more than 4,000 hours of work in embroidering a complete set of new kneelers and cushions for the communion rail. All the kneelers, each of 3.5 metres length, were designed by members of the group and the communion cushions were similarly designed to pick up the design in the coloured windows. The whole project cost well over £2,000 which was raised by the group and the Lorton congregation.

A book that has survived the years is the churchwarden's account book covering part of the 18th century, though the notes in it, considering the timescale, are few and rather sketchy and appear not to add up (30). No doubt prodded to generosity by the Parish Clerk, the Churchwardens and their consciences, the congregation in Lorton church put their hands both frequently and deeply into their pockets to help those in distress elsewhere in the country. A brief and incomplete selection for 1701 to 1704 must suffice as an example:

22nd March, 1701	2s for Leeminster Church, for loss by fire
April, 1702	1s.8d for John and Mary Wilkinson of Broughton, Bleecher of Cloth, due to loss of £25 by robbery
10th May, 1702	3s.10d for William Wilson of Nubystones, Westmorland, loss by fire £250
13th September 1702	1s.8d for relief of Hornsea in Yorkshire, for fire damage
11th October, 1702	2s.11½d for relief of Rolleston, Staffordshire, for fire damage
November, 1702	1s.9½d for relief of Ely St Mary's church in Ely, for fire damage
February, 1703	20s.4d for the distressed Protestants in the Principality of Orange forced by ye French King's order to quit their Native Country and their Estates and all that they had for their Religion being in number three thousand
20th May, 1703	2s.2d for Robert Ward, tape Weaver, loss of £80
December, 1704	5s.8d (collected in the parish of Lorton) towards the relief of several widows and their children whose husbands and fathers being seamen and mariners lost their lives by a dread storm and tempest which happened on ye 26th and 27th daies of November AD 1703

Those donations to charity contrast with the wills still extant, of which only a very small minority mentions bequests to the church or the poor.

Earlier mention has been made of the local men who entered the priesthood and served their own or neighbouring parishes. William Armistead, Curate of Lorton for almost forty years up to 1864, was another such. He was the second of 12 children born to Rev Richard Armistead of Whitehaven, who was himself of yeoman stock from north Yorkshire. William had strong local connections as his sister, the last born, married William Alexander who was responsible for the building of Oakhill in High Lorton (31).

The Sunday School was formerly instituted in 1813 almost as a business under the presidency of the Curate John Sibson, with vice President Rev John Stainton,

whilst Joseph Woodhouse was Treasurer and Secretary. Under them were a committee and a panel of "Visitors". All these worthy people subjected themselves to a rigorous set of Rules and Regulations and paid a subscription of five shillings yearly for the privilege.

The children, from 6 years of age upwards, were also subject to what in today's environment would be called excessive discipline. Sunday School started with a roll call at 9 o'clock. They attended again at 1.30 pm until service time and yet again afterwards until 5 pm. "They shall be required to come clean and neat, and be obedient". "Instances of absence without just cause shall be reported to the Visitors who for the first and second offence shall reprimand the delinquent, and for the third expel them, provided they appear to be incorrigible"; presumably their spiritual well-being thus being considered beyond redemption. And again "if any of the children be guilty of .....talking in an improper manner, or otherwise misbehaving themselves, they shall suffer such penalty as the Superintendent or Visitor shall think proper; and if after frequent reproof they are not reformed they shall be expelled, and their names stuck up as a warning to others". No doubt these lost souls would join their friends who had been a little less than enthusiastic in their attendance in their own little hell.

A few pages of the Sunday School minutes and memoranda for 1857 and 1858 survive. One is an incomplete list of the students on May 16th 1857, the 44th anniversary of the opening of the school. Thirty boys are named and seven girls, this last being incomplete. All of them are children from High or Low Lorton or the immediate area, which in view of parents' work loads, commitments to attending their own chapels and the distances involved, seems quite reasonable. Did Wythop, Brackenthwaite and Buttermere have their own Sunday Schools? (Budworth reported the chapel to be also used as a school in 1792, though at that time there was only a lay reader). In August 1858, James Dixon and Robert Atkinson were disbanded from the school; James for "Swearing and raging against Mr Musgrave in Church" and Robert for "bullying strangers and day School scholars by threatening to fight them on the highway and for <u>irregular</u> attendance". James was aged 13 and Robert just 11. The following week, four children of Robert Moffat of Hollinbury Hall, the village shoemaker, (aged 16, 11, 9, and 7, of whom the eldest two were already working as shoemaker and tailor) were expelled for irregular attendance and George Atkinson, who was 14 and probably already working as a farm labourer all week at Hollins, walked out saying "I would rather go for my walk than come to School" and thereby offended his elders' Victorian authoritarian sense of discipline, so he lost his "good conduct" gift of a Bible.

One of the big events of the year which attracts a large congregation, even in modern times, is the Harvest Festival, after which it has become the custom to either donate the offerings to the very elderly and infirm of the village, or more recently to auction the offerings at a Village Harvest Festival Supper. The farmers' wives produce their own individual recipes of "tatty-pot", other villagers provide the remaining goodies to round off the meal. After supper, the Harvest offerings are auctioned with great hilarity and generosity and the proceeds given to one of the national or international charities. It is interesting to note that Harvest Festivals, which had been effectively prohibited by bishop Waldegrave, were given the blessing by bishop Goodwin in 1875 (32).

Appendix 6.1 – LIST OF LORTON CLERGY AND CLERKS

1198-1200	Michael	Chaplain	Pipe Rolls 1198, 1200
1307	John de Lorton	Clerk	Cal. I.P.M.
1524	Alan Peyll	Curate	Subsidy Roll 1524
1524	Henry Wylson	Chaplain	"
1524	Peter Hudson	Chaplain	"
1524	Alan Crakplace	Chaplain	"
1544-70	Richard Nycholson	Clerk	Wills of Richard Winder, 16 April 1544 and of Alan Holstock, 27 Feb 1570
1579	William Borranskyll	lerk	Will of John Banks of Wythop, 1579
1586-1596	Anthonie Borranskill	Clerke	Minister, buried October 1596
1596-1608	John Bell	Curate	Buried here 21 July, 1608
1586	Peter Peel	Clerk	Inventory Peter Peel, elder, 23 Nov 1586
1597-98	Henry Stubb	Clerke (village. Clerk ?)	Will of Christopher Hodgson, Aug 1597 and Will of Hellin Peile, 1598
1593-1602	Thomas Peile	Clerke	Buried here 2 July 1602
1602	John Wilkinson	Clerke (vill. clerk)	Inventory of Richard Wilkinson, Nov 1602
1608	John Bell	Curate	Buried here 21 July 1608
1614-1664	Martin Hudson	Curate	Will of Ellen Wilkinson, 14 Feb 1614
1646	Thomas Watson	Minister	"The Ejected", letter 10 Sep 1646
1662	Robert Mason	Clerke/Sexton	Letter of Admin of Leonard Fisher, 24 Jan 1662
1665-1675	Robert Rickerby	Minister	Inventory John Fisher, 6 Oct 1675
1684-1689	William Sanderson	Curate	Inventory of Thomas Peill, 6 May 1684
1692-1700	Thomas Pearson	Curate	Parish Register
1697	Richard Fletcher	Parish Clerk	Buried here 28 Feb. 1697
1698-1744	William Bow	Parish Clerk	Quarter sessions 1698; buried 1744
1700-1707	Patricius Curwen	Curate	Parish Registers. Died Aug 1707
1708-1728	William Lancaster	Curate	Parish Registers
1720-1740	James Clarke	Curate	Buried here 8 Jul 1740
1741-1800	Thomas Fisher	Perpetual Curate	Buried here 26 Jan 1800
1742	Wilkinson	?	
1744-1756	Richard Crosthwaite	Parish Clerk	
1786	Peter Nelson	Assistant Curate	
1791	James Bell	Assistant Curate	From Embleton
1791-1792	Thomas Brownrigg	Assistant Curate	Also of Embleton: stip. £30*
1793-1796	William Wright	Assistant Curate	Also of Embleton: stip. £25*
1796-1800	Osburn Littledale	Assistant Curate	Also of Embleton: stip. £20*
1800-1820	John Sibson	Perpetual Curate	Also Perpetual Curate of Mosser, died 1823
1820-1821	Jonathan Stainton	Assistant Curate	
1820-1821	John Messenger	Assistant Curate	From Embleton
1821-1824	William Sewell	Curate	Also Curate of Wythop: stip. £35
1824	Fletcher Fleming	Perpetual Curate	Licensed 6 Oct 1823
1825-1864	William Armistead	Curate	

Appendix 6.1 – LIST OF LORTON CLERGY AND CLERKS (contd.)

1862-1895	John Moffat	Parish Clerk	
1864-1872	A Reginald Perring	Curate	Also Curate of Embleton
1872-1891	William Samson Davis	Curate	and Vicar From 1891
1891-1901	W Henry Cockett	Vicar	
1901-1904	William Copeland	Vicar	
1904-1915	George Pallister	Vicar	
1915-1940	William Lewis	Vicar	
1940-1947	Arthur Baillie Service	Vicar	
1947-1954	William Warwick Farrer	Vicar	Honorary Canon of Carlisle Cathedral
1954-1958	Arthur William Johnston	Vicar	
1958-1980	James A W-Dixon	Vicar	
1980-1981		Interregnum	
1981-1987	David Edwards	Vicar	
1988-1999	Michael Braithwaite	Rural Dean	Honorary Canon of Carlisle Cathedral
1999-2003	David Ella	Vicar	Buried Loweswater 10th March 2003

* ref Ch RO EDA 1/9

Appendix 6.2 – PARTIAL LIST OF WYTHOP CLERGY

16 Oct 1752	Joseph Wilkinson, lic.	EDA 1/6
17 June 1754	Joseph Sim, Curate; lic. to augmented chapel on nomination of inhabitants	EDA 1/6
21 Sep 1756	John Hodgson, Deacon, lic. as Curate on resignation Joseph Sim	EDA 1/6
27 June 1757	John Dixon, lic. to augmented chapel on nomination of inhabitants	EDA 1/6
25 Sep 1758	Edward Hislop, lic. to augmented chapel on nomination of inhabitants	EDA 1/6
23 Sep 1759	William Hodgson, ordained deacon (at Stanhope); lic. to Withop	EDA 1/6
22 Sep 1760	John Boucher, at nomination of Chapelry	EDA 1/7
25 June 1763	Henry Westray, lic. at nomination of proprietors and inhabitants	EDA 1/7
9 July 1764	Robert Walker, lic. at nomination of proprietors and inhabitants	EDA 1/7
3 June 1765	William Mayson, lic. at nomination of proprietors and inhabitants	EDA 1/7
20 Sep 1767	John Jackson, lic. at nomination of land-owners	EDA 1/7
30 July 1769	Wilfred Wilson, lic. to augmented chapel at nomination inhabitants	EDA 1/7
1 July 1770	William Garnett, lic. on resignation W. Wilson; at nomination of patron	EDA 1/7
8 Aug 1773	George Ion, lic. on resignation of W Garnett; at nomination of patrons	EDA 1/7
8 Aug 1779	Joseph Fisher, lic. "Void by cession of late incumbent"; nominated. by the inhabitants.	EDA 1/8
17 Feb 1785	Joseph Fisher, resigned	EDA 1/8
17 July 1785	Peter Wilson, ordained Deacon at Chester	EDA 1/8
17 Sep 1791	Peter Wilson, Perpetual Curate, resigned	EDA 1/9
8 Aug 1792	William Sewell, lic. to Perpetual Curate	EDA 1/9
7 Oct 1821	Joseph Tomlinson, Assistant Curate (also of Setmurthy), nom W Sewell; stipend £35 + surplice fees	EDA 1/10
23 Dec 1822	Henry Hodgson, ditto	

Appendix 6.3 – LIST OF BUTTERMERE CLERGY

1634-	William Cowper	Will of Elizabeth Rudd
1670-1674	Patricius Curwen	Will of John Norman (Later at Lorton)
1749-	John Steble	Buttermere Church Pamphlet
1753-	John Simpson	Curate on nomination of inhabitants; Ch RO 1/6
1753-	William Wilson	Curate on nomination of inhabitants – resigned; Ch RO 1/6
1756-	W. Lancaster	Curate on nomination of inhabitants (Previously at Lorton)
1760-	C Gaskarth	Deacon, licensed 1st June
1761-	Wyvel Blennerhassett	Lic. to augmented chapel 6th Sept *
1763-	R Brockbank	" " " 3rd Dec, resigned *
1765-	Anthony Birket	" " " 3rd June
1767-	Joseph Messenger	" " " 20th Sept moved to Dumfries and married Mary Fearon of Lorton Jan 1771
1768-	John Atkinson	Lic. to augmented chapel 25th Sept *
1769-	Joseph Henderson	" " " 24th Sept *
1772-	Peter Wilson	Clerk, lic. 2nd Aug *
1774-	T Atkinson	Buttermere Church Pamphlet "
1776-	J Bacon	"
1778-1780	John Wood	Lic. 13 Sept. 1778; resigned 13 May 1780 **
1780-	John Clarke	Perp Curate lic 5 Aug 1781 resig 20 Mar 1784 **
1784-	Joseph Jackson	" " " 10 Apl 1784 resig 11 Aug 1787 **
1787-1789	Joseph Wilkinson	" " " 21 Sep 1788 resig 17 Aug 1789 **
1789-	W Hutchinson	"
1799-	Jonathan Wood	" died 1802; Ch RO EDA 1/9
1802-	Thomas Westmorland	Perpetual Curate, lic. 3 Jul
1804-	Osborn Littledale	Lic. to Clerk 10 Jan 1804. Also of Embleton
1839-	James Bush	License to Clerk.
1843	J M Woodmason	"
1873-	Arthur M Williams	"
1882-	Simmonds Attlee	"
1892-	Henry R Dunlop	"
1897-	George A B Chamberlain	"
1898-	William Copeland	"
1902-	Alfred John Knight	"
1909-	Jeremiah Irwin	"
1926-	George A K Hervey	"
1931-	Geoffrey N Orme	"
1935-	John T Pedder	"
1948-	Geoffrey Howard White	"
1974-	Robert Lindsay	"
1981	David Edwards	"

* ref Ch RO EDA 1/7
** ref Ch RO EDA 1/8

Buttermere became part of the "United Benefice of Lorton and Loweswater with Buttermere" in 1981, with the Vicar of all three parishes, Rev David Edwards, living in the Loweswater Vicarage.

Appendix 6.4 – INFORMATION ABOUT THE LIVINGS FOR THIS AREA

Comparison of local livings in 1291 and 1535:

	1291	1535
£0 - 5 pa	4	0
£5 - 10	9	10
£10 - 20	9	8
£20 - 30	4	4
£30 - 40	2	2
£40 - 50	2	0
£50 - 60	1	0
plus Brigham	£80	no data
Average	£23.3s.0d	£18.9s.0d

Relative values of the local livings (Bouch Appendix XIII):

	1291	1318	1535	18th C	1835
Brigham	£80	20	20.15s.11d	44	190
Dean	£22.13s.4d	5	19.3s.1d	74	318
Lamplugh	£23.6s.8d	3.6s.8d	10.4s.6d	71	256

Relative values in chapelries within Archdeaconry of Richmond:

	Ancient stipend	18th C	1835
Buttermere	£1	1	56
Cockermouth	-	34.13s.4d	132
Embleton	£5.6s.0d	8.5s.0d	54
Lorton	£5	7	49
Loweswater	-	4.11s.0d	76
Setmurthy	£2	2	54
Wythop	£2.2s.0d	2.7s.0d	51

Appendix 6.5 – FIVE EARLY TERRIERS (from the Bishops Transcripts in a the CRO)

Addendum 1 Terrier of the "Curacy of Lorton, 1728"

Firstly, No dwelling houses, outhouses, Barns etc belong to our Curacy.
2nd. No Glebe lands belong to our Curate.
3rd. No lands or Estates.
4th. The Tithes of our parish are Sett and Lett to Farmers by the Improprietor and we do not well know the Customs.
5th. The Tithes of our parish belong to the Improprietor and are supposed to be worth 40 pounds p.a. and the Improprietor pays to our poor Curacy only seven pounds p.a. We are informed by some of our Ancient Neighbours that formerly there belonged to our Curacy ten pounds pa and five pounds of it were lost by a false step made by a Curate here 50 or 60 years ago who rather than he would lose the living he would take five pounds instead of ten from the Improprietor.
Therefore if ever the psallery belonging to our Curacy hath been put into the Bishop's Registry at ten pounds p.a. we humbly crave your Lordship's assistance in the matter that for the future we may have what is our due.
Our Curate hath no more than seven pounds pa for himself and Family to live upon here.
6th. Madam Susan Fletcher formerly the patroness of this place added forty shillings p.a. to our Curacy which made it seven pounds instead of five pounds p.a. This was added about fourteen years since.
Our Curate hath for every Christening one shilling, for every marriage one shilling, for every burial sixpence and every marriage with licence five shillings.

Addendum 2 A Terrier of all ye Rights & Profits belonging to ye Curate of Lorton. (1749)

The Improprietor has all ye great and Small Tythes & Pays out thereof to the Curate ye Sum of £7 at Martinmas yearly in one Whole Sum. There is no houses nor Glebe belonging to ye Chaple. The Curate has ye Accustome'd fees for Marriages Churchings & & Burials Commonly called Surplice fees; & also ye Accustom'd fee for Inventories; that is, the Curate Accustom'd fee for Marriages by Banns Publish'd 1s with a Licence 5s for Churching & Registering 1s for A Burial 6d for an Inventory 2s 6d. this is A true and Perfect Terrier of ye Rights and Profits belonging to ye Chaple of Lorton. As Witness our hands this 6th day of May in ye year of our Lord 1749.

Signed: Tho. Fisher, Curate of Lorton Countersigned: Henry Pearson, John Rud; Churchwardens

Addendum 3 A True and Perfect Terrier of Account of all the Dues & Prolfits (sic) arrising to ye Curacy of (Embleton Lorton – both these words heavily crossed out) Chapel in the County of Cumberland & Diocese of Chester. (1755)

There is no Glebe L and belonging to ye Chapel: The Improprietor has all ye Great & Small Tythes & Pays out thereof to ye Curate ye Sum of Seven Pounds at Martinmas Yearly in one Whole Sum; it is once Augmented with the Queens Bounty. the Curate has ye Accustom'd Dues for Marriages, Churchings and Burials Commonly Call'd ye Surplice Fees, & also ye Accustom'd Fees for Inventories; that is, The Curate's Accustom'd Fee for a Marriage Publish'd by Banns 1s: with a Licence 5s for a Churching & Registring 1s for A Burial 6d for An Inventory 2s 6d: This is a True & Perfect Terrier of the Rights & Profits belonging to ye Chapel of Lorton. As Witness my Hand this 3rd Day of July 1755.

Signed Tho. Fisher Curate of (Embleton Lorton – both erased or crossed)
Countersigned by Charles Norman, Isaac Sibson, Joseph Fisher, Richard Head – Churchwardens

Addendum 4 A true Terrier of the Land, profits and other rights belonging to the Chapel of Lorton in the County of Cumberland in the Diocese of Chester, now in the use of the Rev. Tho[ma]s Fisher Curate thereof made according to the knowledge of the . . . . inhabitants by the appointment of the Right Rev. Father in God Beilby Lord Bishop of Chester and exhibited at the visitation holden by his Lordship at the Visitation Chapel in Whitehaven in the said County the 30th day of July, 1783.
In primis – The Land purchased by the queen's Bounty in Westmorland for £200 at £6 per annum payd out of the Tythes by Sir James Lowther £7 yearly at Martinmas, Four pound Interest of £200 Bounty Money yearly interest, also one Silver Cup weighing 6 ounces, also Two small Bells weighing about 10 Stone, also a new System of Divinity, 5 Volumes, Wheatley, the Comon Prayer, Nelson upon the festivals, as the inhabitants are chargeable with the Church Yard walls also the Minister's fees for Marriage by banns one shilling, by Licence five shillings, Churching one shilling, burial sixpence, Clerk's fees for marriage by Banns sixpence, by Licence one shilling, burial one shilling.
Signed Tho. Fisher, Curate of Lorton
Countersigned by Henry Pearson, Peter Robinson, William Nicholson, Henry Cherry, Thomas Burnyeat, John Bowe. Also countersigned by Henry Pearson, (illeg) Norman, Joseph Grindel, Henry Tyson, Churchwardens.

Adendum 5 The Terrier of the Rights and Profits belonging to the Chapel of Lorton in the County of Cumberland and Diocese of Chester by the Appointment of the Right Reverend Father in God William Lord Bishop of Chester, exhibited at his visitation holden at St. Nicholas in Whitehaven the 14th day of August in the year of our Lord 1789.

1st We have no house of any kind
2nd We have no Glebe nor Land of any sort
3rd We have no Tythes of any kind
4th We have no Pension or Augmentation belonging to the Chapel, Earl of Lonsdale pays £7 at Martinmas yearly out of the Tythes. We have one half part of a Tenemnet in Westmorland purchased with the Queens Bounty which is six pounds, another half part in the same County Purchased with the Queens Bounty which is six

pounds, and the Interest of Two Hundred Pounds which is in the Government hands.

We have no furniture belonging to the Chapel worth mentioning, except one Silver Cup weighing 8 Oz, Books left to the Chapel are a new System of Divinity, Colliers sacred Interpreter, Wheatley on the common Prayer, Churchings one Shilling, Marriages on Shilling, Burials six pence, 10 shillings yearly to the Clerk, no Sexton, there is no more worth your Lordship's Attention.
Signed by Tho. Fisher, Curate of Lorton
Countersigned by Peter Pearson, Willm Nicholson, Henry Pearson, William Dawson, and also countersigned William Jennings, John Bank, Joseph Younghusband, John Clark, Churchwardens

(Note that all signatures appear to be in the hand of those named)

Appendix 6.6 – NUMBERS OF CONFIRMATIONS IN THE VALLEY IN RECENT YEARS

at Lorton	1945: 10	by Bishop of Carlisle at	Loweswater
	1948: 4	"	"
	1952: 8	"	"
	1955: 5	by Bishop of Carlisle at	Lorton
	1957: 5	"	Penrith "
	1962: 17	"	Carlisle "
	1965: 6	"	Carlisle "
	1976: 10	"	Penrith "
	1980: 5	"	Penrith "
	1985: 9	"	Penrith "

In between times, small numbers of valley folk were confirmed at churches as far afield as Whitehaven and Penrith.

Appendix 6.7 – EXTRACTS FROM THE RELIGIOUS CENSUS OF 1851 (33), with author's commentary

Lorton: St Cuthbert's. Although there was space for "234 free sitting and 12 other sitting", these were actually used by a "General congregation of 46 and 45 Sunday School Scholars at morning service", a total of 91; and 26 and 40 respectively, a total of 66, for the afternoon service. Assuming the children attended both morning and afternoon, but the adults one or the other, at very best this is an attendance of 117, just 27% of the total 1851 civil census population of Lorton alone. Over the preceding year the minister, William Armistead, reported an average general congregation of 100 at morning service and 40 in the afternoons, whilst the Sunday School attendance remained constant at 45. If these figures are true, then average Sunday attendance was 32% of the combined Lorton and Whinfell population. Though appreciably higher than Inglis's calculated average for Cumberland, it is still only half his estimate for rural Cumbria (34).

Lorton: Wesleyan Methodist Chapel, which had only been built 11 years previously, had space for "40 free sitting and 84 other sitting". The general congregation on the census day was 34 plus 30 Sunday School pupils in the morning and a general congregation only of 54 in the evening service. Estimated average attendance during the preceding "6th" month" was given as general congregation 40, Sunday school 30 in the mornings and 82 in the evenings. We do not know from how far afield these congregations came, certainly most of them were not from Lorton itself.

Buttermere: The church was erected by the Revd Vaughan Davies, the cost of £300 was defrayed by private benefactors and it was licensed in 1841. There was free sitting for 70. There was no service on census day but the average over the preceding unspecified months was: in the mornings, general congregation 12 and Sunday School 6; in the afternoon services, general congregation 16 plus Sunday School 6.

Wythop: There was free sitting for 80. On the day of the census the attendances were morning – nil, afternoon – nil, evening – nil; and during the previous six months, the average attendance was a mere 3 persons. This apparent indictment of the population of Wythop was accompanied by the following comment, made with remarkable restraint and understatement:

"A misunderstanding having arisen between between the Incumbent and his parishioners may account in some measure for the small numbers of his hearers, and, as is usually the case, there may be faults on both sides. One great cause for complaint is the Minister's irregular attendance, his refusal to Administer the Sacrament, and to read the Communion Service each Sunday, including the Epistle, Gospel etc which he had never once done since he entered the Incumbancy, now some three or four years. Another source of Complaint is his supposed leaning to Puseyism, or rather Romanism. For many years previously to Mr Woodmason's appointment the Congregation ranged from about 30 or 40 to 70 or 80 including many from other districts, since then it has "grown small by degrees and beautifully less till it has reached the number stated".

We never enjoyed more than one Service in the day on one Sunday in the morning, on the next in the afternoon but for many consecutive Sundays Mr.

Woodmason never makes his appearance at the Chapel, and when it does suit him to do so it may be to meet only one solitary hearer, or perhaps none at all.

Mr. Woodmason is Perpetual Curate of Buttermere which is 12 miles from Wythop and which may in some degree account for his irregular attendance at the latter place, where his visits are, and have been for some time, few and far between.

(Signed) Daniel Mandale
Chapel Warden

Chapter 6 References

(1) IPM Misc. Vol 1219 -1307 No.2117: C.I.M. File 12(16)
(2) Cal. Patent Rolls, Henry III 1266 - 1272 Mem. 21 p.213 March 28th 1268
(3) Bouch p.60
(4) Bouch, p.155: ex subsidy rolls for years 1523/4 and 1524/5
(5) Bouch p.141; Surtees Soc. cxiv No.386
(6) Ramshaw and Adams, "The English Lakes", The Amadeus Press Ltd, 1993, p 52
(7) CRO D/Lec/85 Court Leet Verdicts, Sept 1705. See lines 15 - 17
(8) C&W O.S. xiv, 353 - 4
(9) Bouch, 244
(10) Ches. RO EDA 3/3 Bishop Porteus' addendum to Bishop Gastrell's "Noticia", (1779) and also the Visitation Report for 1695, CRO DRC/6/98/1
(11) Pamphlet re St James's Church, Buttermere, pub. 1945
(12) Filed with Bishop's Transcripts, CRO. Copy in LDFLHS Archive Box BT
(13) This book is now in the Carlisle Record Office as PR.28/2, and has been used in the current research. By the manner of its entries it is clearly written up annually from some other notes. This system is susceptible to loss of records, proved here in two ways: there are no entries extant for weddings between 1690 and 1692 nor for burials for the same period, though there are baptisms; secondly we occasionally find entries in the Bishop's Transcripts which do not appear in the Parish Register.
(14) Original CRO refs unrecorded; copy of both letters in LDFLHS Archive, ref L
(15) The Court Call Book - LRO ARR. 15/4
(16) Tate "Parish Chest" p 156
(17) "The Manor of Wistomble"; pp 24; Ronald Shepperd; Pub Westhumble Association, 1982
(18) Tate "Parish Chest" pp 155/156
(19) Widdup p 88
(20) (Widdup p 89
(21) Chester RO EDA 1/10 p 194 v
(22) Chester RO EDA 3/3 p 274
(23) Chester RO EDA 3/1 p 91
(24) Letter from Robert Scott dated 13 March 1784 and churchwardens letter to the bishop, 2nd August 1792. CRO DRC/Embleton & Lorton
(25) Cornish says "Fox preached in the churchyard at Lorton, Cumberland, where people climbed up the ancient yew in order to obtain better advantages for listening". Unless the churchyard has lost an ancient yew (of which there is no trace in the late 20th century) Cornish was muddled about where the tree stood. This error was repeated by Hal Hartzell. When making the 1649 Survey at least one villager complained he could not produce his Certificate of Copyhold because it had been taken by the "soldiers". This lends credence to the story of soldiers listening to Fox. The chronology is about right and 'Who's Who' quotes General Munro as being some 30 miles in the rear at the time of the Battle of Prestonpans
(26) Bishop Porteus additions in 1779 to Bishop Gastrell's "Noticia", Ch RO EDA 3/3
(27) Bouch p 391
(28) Bouch p 439
(29) Bouch p 390
(30) CRO PR 28/4
(31) C&W 1965, pp 379/80
(32) Bouch p 440
(33) PRO HO 129/570
(34) "The Story of Christianity in Cumbria", Henry L Widdup, Titus Wilson & Son, Kendal, 1981

Chapter 7: SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION

The only information we have about education in Lorton before 1850 is sketchy in the extreme and intuitive. Before 1712 whatever schooling was available was given by the Curate under licence from the bishop, and took place in the church (1), so the poor children could not have been very comfortable whilst learning their lessons, which most likely would have been not much more than the catechism. This is just a little strange. The 1578 Visitation record of Bishop Barnes shows schoolmasters, presumably under the jurisdiction of the church, in Lorton and Cockermouth, together with St. Bees and six others, all presumably teaching in church, but were these teachers churchmen? Also, the 1633 Visitation of the Bishop of Carlisle records extreme disapproval of teaching in church and takes various Curates to task for this. Lorton did not suffer this indignity, because Lorton was not included in the Visitation, as at that time it was within the Diocese of Chester. Between 1660 and 1800 there were 19 endowed grammar schools founded within the Diocese of Carlisle, as well as 25 "non-classical" endowed schools, which suggests there must have been many more un-endowed private schools (2) & (3). There is no reason to believe the same did not apply south of the Derwent.

Was it as a result of early promise in his son, developed in Lorton, that John Peel of Beckhouse in Brackenthwaite provided in his will of 1656 (4) £6 pa for his son John to go to the "Gramer Schole", presumably that at Cockermouth (5), (6), (7). It seems that from 1712 there must have been more schooling with the teachers still under licence by the Bishop, but in addition to anything taught by the Curate. There is a dilemma here as we have apparently conflicting statements. In 1722 Curate Lancaster was teaching in the chapel because there was no schoolhouse. (8)

The earliest mention of schooling originating in Lorton is in the Probate inventory of Cuthbert Fisher dated 6th January 1598 in which his debt to John Bell, schoolmaster, is given as 8s. John Bell was the Curate. Five (not six) years later, in June 1604, Thomas Banke of Old Scale, Wythop died owing to the "school wages" three years arrears at 20d pa. Whoever the schoolteacher might have been, he was not making a fortune out of teaching. This state of affairs may well have continued because in 1651 Henry Peirson of Low Lorton left in his Will "to the Schoolle teacher of Lorton fouer pounds", whether in gratitude for services rendered to his own children, or as a measure of his interest in community welfare we are not told. Certainly a little mental arithmetic suggests this could not have been for wages at 20d pa unless he had sent four or five children to school and paid never a penny. In 1696 we read "we have a free school and it is ordered as here enquired of. Our minister is schoolmaster and licensed . . .". The next reference to schooling is in 1706 when Curate Patricius Curwen was schoolmaster licensed by the Bishop, but by 1712 "we have a free school which has been founded in the parish, its revenue ordered as allowed by Law and as appointed by the founders". This was in fact, the interest, then £5, on £100 endowment (9) We have a publick School-Master in our parish, he is Licensed by the Bishop; he is of sober and honest conversation, he doth teach his Scholars the Church Catechism." Later in the same document we have an "insignificant school". It would seem that the teaching passed from the Curate to a publicly appointed schoolmaster with the foundation of the free school in about

1710. Regretfully, these were not named, nor was the "publick school-master" at that time (10) though Mr Whitelock was the schoolmaster in 1744 (11).

Although it can not be entirely relevant because the Jurors at the Cockermouth Court Baron came from a wider area, it is worthy of note that at that Court on 17th April 1750 only 2 of the 22 jurors could not sign their own names, but had to "make a mark", and one of those two was definitely not a Lorton parish man.

In 1777 there was a "small school endowed with interest of £100", the master of which was nominated by four feoffees (12). This would have been the interest on the £100 to which Rev Sewell refers as an endowment of £4 or £5 pa whilst asserting that "an assiduous master could hardly fail to make £12 or £13 more of it" (13). That it was a "small" school does not appear to tie in very well with William Gell's account, when in 1793 he says (14) "passing through Lorton where is perhaps the largest school in the County, if that of St Bees be excepted", though we must note that there had been quite a significant increase in the population during the previous two decades. Where the school might have been we have no indication. The catchment area was as reflected in the second stanza of the poem quoted below and in 1703, Jane Fisher of Hollings in Brackenthwaite left "£10 to the School Stock at Lorton", though probably not as wide an area as that of the bussing scheme of the 1990s, which brings children from Embleton, Wythop and Loweswater. We are indebted to one of the early teachers whose merits provoked one of the exceptionally few comments in the Church registers. Margaret, wife of William Nutchea of High Lorton, was buried on June 25th 1762 and earned the gratitude of the village and posthumous approbation of the Curate who was moved to break his hitherto apparent vow of silence. "She was an excellent Schoolmistress and eminent for Piety and an exemplary Life" is his entry in the Burial Register. Perhaps she was the successor of Mr Whitelock.

At this point there is another long gap in the history of the school until, in 1809, J L Bragg sold a piece of land out of Broomlands close for 5s, rent 1/4d, for a school building (15).

William Soddrel came from Brigham, married Sarah Martin in June 1818 and lived at Birket House, now known as Birkett's Cottage, between 1819 and at least 1834. As well as being the schoolmaster, we must presume he enjoyed children's company as, not only did he administer to them all day, but with his wife had at least six children of his own in that period. It seems that he was replaced by Mr McCombe before 1839. The 1841 census says Mary Borrinscale was schoolmistress in with William Gilbank and William Barnet as schoolmasters, but John Bolton said, in 1891, that she ran a Dame's School. When George Bell married on 2nd February 1848 he was already a Lorton schoolmaster, which did duty did not stop him from doubling as grocer, as he had the help of Fanny Robinson in the school. By then Mary had retired, she was 62 years old in 1841, and was living on a pension in High Lorton. If there were other teachers in 1851, they lived outside Lorton and Whinfell.

Schoolmasters came and went irregularly and we must wonder why they did not stay long, for between 1851 and 1881, there were 13 schoolmasters, Mr Laing staying the longest, from 1869 to 1876. He and his family had stayed long enough to earn the love and esteem of their scholars, Mr Laing being presented with a walnut inkstand and a ten guinea purse when he left. Mrs Laing was sewing mistress, a part time post, and was presented with a plated teapot, whilst the future spiritual

welfare of their daughter Charlotte was encouraged with the present of a small Bible.

During this period of 50 years, the number of pupils had about doubled, being approximately 100 in 1879 when the Government Inspectors made their annual visit. We can get another insight into the school from the census returns. That of 1851 for Lorton listed 58 children as "Scholars", that of Whinfell 10. The Lorton census of 1881 alone listed 88. There was some inconsistency of ages at both ends of the scale, these ranging from some at about 4 years to one at 14, though 5 to 12 seems to have been the norm.

Until August 1860, teaching was from 9 to 12 and 2 to 5 for five days a week plus half a day on alternate Saturdays. Holidays were significantly less than we expect today. The children had an annual examination just before Christmas; in 1851 it was in the afternoon of December 23rd, after which they were free until the first Monday after New Year's Day. They also got a fortnight at harvest time, which really did no more than officially sanction what would otherwise have been wholesale absenteeism. Schooling was all very well, but at the due time, harvest took precedence and it was a case of all hands to work. This was also true to a similar extent at sheep-shearing and haymaking time (16).

Periodic epidemics of illness also took their toll of the schooling. In November 1872, the school nearly closed because of "hooping cough" and it was closed for a month during March and April 1875, remaining very poorly attended on through May because of an outbreak of scarlet fever. Schoolmaster George Bell lost his 8 month old son John, the victim of scarlet fever in September 1851.

Per Quarter :-

Boys		Girls	
Reading	5s.0d	Reading	2d
Writing)		Writing)	
Grammar)	6s. 0d	Grammar)	1d
Elements of History and Geography)			
		Elements of History	
Arithmetic)		and Geography)	
Algebra)		Arithmetic)	
Geometry)	7s	Bookkeeping)	
Land surveying)		Plain sewing)	1d extra
Book-keeping.)		Knitting)	
Bookkeeping)			

Rudiments of Latin, if required 3s. 0d

The School was funded by various means: donations and charitable trusts, already mentioned, sundry special events, grants from the Education Department and fees. Not the least of which must have been the tuition fees, under the head of "Quarter Pence", the charge for various subjects per Quarter of teaching. Unfortunately, none of the accounts has been traced, but we do have details of charges for the years 1847 and 1860 and we find that the boys cost their parents very much more than the girls. However, the huge difference suggests that there has been a historic transcription error in the shillings and pence. In relation to the then

economy, it would seem the charges for the boys being erroneously quoted in shillings instead of pence. But these were quoted in shillings and (zero) pence, so possibly the error is that the girls' charges should have been in shillings too.

Per Quarter:

"When Lorton won the Shield" 1899 (17)

Fling out the flag of victory
upon the wild March gale
And send the glad heart stirring news
Through Lorton's lovely vale
And from the schoolhouse let the cheers
Spread for o'er fell and field
The glorious news proclaiming that
Lorton's won the "Shield".

From Round Close Hill to Picket How
Kirkfell to Rogerscale
The ringing shout of victory was heard
throughout the vale
And rightly to the girls and boys
due credit we must yield
Who nobly strove through storm or shine
to win the "Silver Shield".

Then one cheer more for 'Oak Hill' squire
Whose kindness knows no end
Who through long years has ever proved
Himself the children's friend
Long may the strains re-echo
O'er crinkled fell and field
And down the ringing ages tell
How Lorton won the "Shield".

On their own initiative, the Trustees arranged with the Post Office to set up a "Penny Bank" for the schoolchildren "That they should thus learn the value and importance of saving their money and lay by a store for their future needs without becoming selfish, parsimonious or grasping". What a fine free lesson in acquiring a good community spirit, not that the children would become rich on the proceeds of their prudence at interest rates around 2%.

Adult Education was not overlooked either. The WEA and other evening classes held in the village today are following an old precedence. With the tacit if not over-enthusiastic blessing of the Trustees, the School was used for evening classes, debating societies and lectures. "A very respectable audience" of the Lorton Working Men's Improvement Society", a name which has a good Victorian sonority to it (18), enjoyed "with marked attention" an address by the Rev Canon Battersby of Keswick on the subject of "Russia". It would be interesting to know the tenor of his

"address". The Russians had but recently freed their serfs, Marx had just published his "Das Kapital" and Dostoievsky his "Crime and Punishment", while the Russian government was taking the first steps in its march of conquest and expansion by introducing conscription. It is to a series of WEA sponsored evening classes in 1985 that I owe much information reproduced here, relating to the period 1851 to 1881 (19).

Further research is still needed to try to work out the degree of literacy amongst the population as determined from archive records.

Even less is known of schooling at Buttermere. In recent times, before the Second World War, when they did not walk, it was quite common for children to go to the school there by boat when the weather was fine enough. At that time there was only a handful or so of children and they were taught by Mrs Beattie who lived at Lorton (20).

Appendix 7.1 – SCHOOLTEACHERS AT LORTON SCHOOL, and elsewhere.

At least until 1710	- the schoolteacher was the Curate of Lorton
1744	- Mr Whitelock, schoolmaster
25th June 1762	- Margaret Nutchea, schoolmistress, (burial register)
1818-1834 or later	- William Soddrell, schoolmaster, (parish registers)
6th June 1839	- John McCombe baptised son John, living at Holemire (baptism register)
#In 1847	- Mary Borrinscale, schoolmistress, living at H.L.
Census 1841	- John Rigg, schoolmaster at Buttermere
	- Mary Borrinscale, schoolmistress, aged 60, living at H.L. a (retired before 1851)
	- William Gilbank, schoolmaster, aged 30, living at H.L.
	- William Barnet, schoolmaster, aged 30, living at H.L.
2nd Feb. 1848	- George Bell, schoolmaster, married this day at Lorton
Census 1851	- George Bell, grocer and schoolmaster, aged 25, living at H.L., born Torpenhow
	- Fanny Robinson, schoolmistress, aged 36, born Lorton
26th Dec 1858	- John Charles Dalgleish, master of Lorton day school, acted as superintendent of the Lorton Sunday School (extract of Sunday School diary)
#Census 1861	- Ann Crosthwaite, schoolmistress, living at Holemire, daughter of Daniel C.
Census 1861	- Joseph Freman, teacher at Endowed School, living at Holemire
Census 1871	- James and Martha Laing, schoolmaster/mistress
1877 – 1883	- John Bolton, as implied in his talk of 1891 (21)
Census 1881	- No schoolteachers in Lorton census
In 1883	- F Jones, schoolmaster, (Bulmer Directory)
1996-	- David Bell, headmaster

Both Mary and Ann may have been teachers at the Lorton School as well as teaching at or running the village Dame's school, which Bolton tells us Mary did in what is now "Dale View".

Chapter 7 References

(1) Ch RO EDA 6/7/70, dated 1722
(2) Bouch, page 344
(3) Schools Inquiry Commission, Vol XIX, Northern Division, 159-293 and 295-465
(4) RCG W.150
(5) Bouch, p.190
(6) VCH II 55: Henry VIII religious survey of 1546 quotes a Cockermouth chantry priest as "teache a grammer schole there". Is this the "grammar school" referred to in John Peel's will?
(7) Bernard Bradbury "History of Cockermouth" – a new dedicated grammar school was built in 1676
(8) Ch.R.O. EDA. 6/7/70 1722
(9) Ch.R.O. EDA. 6/3/49 c.1717
(10) Note: Presentment at Bishop's Visitation 1712
(11) CRO DRC.37/10 Acc.2255
(12) Nicholson and Burn, 1777, II, p 62
(13) CRO DRC.37/10 Acc.2255
(14) "A Tour in the Lakes Made in 1797" by William Gell Ed. Wm. Rollinson 1968, p 20
(15) Letter from Mr J L Bragg to Dean & Chapter, dated 6th March 1809. Ref RCG/018
(16) The School Log Book for 17th June 1873 says "numbers less today owing to the sheep shearings and hay harvest"
(17) Poem "When Lorton Won the Shield" is taken from the book of Memoirs of Mrs Marguerite Horlacher of Cockermouth, granddaughter of Margaret and George Wise of the Horse Shoe Inn, and reproduced by her kind permission. Regrettably, details of exactly what the "Silver Shield" was, and from whom it was won, are not known.
(18) As reported by the Whitehaven News, March 14th, 1872
(19) Unpublished WEA evening class paper "Victorian Lorton", 1985 by Lorton residents; LDFLHS archive
(20) "Cumbrian Women Remember", June Thistlethwaite, Thyme Press, 1995, p 52
(21) Talk by John Bolton, published by Cumbria Family History Society, undated, c. 1996. Listed as 'sometime' schoolmaster at Lorton school in 1946 booklet "Lorton and its Church"

Chapter 8: PAUPERS, THE POOR AND THE POOR LAW

There are very few references to beggars and the poor throughout the Lorton registers, though there are many more such references in those of, for example, Crosthwaite. More so than today, the high passes between the Borrowdale and Lorton valleys acted as a barrier, especially for the weak and feeble itinerant beggars and wandering poor. Before looking at those unfortunates – and in the country as a whole, many were truly no more than the unfortunate playthings of fate over which they had no control – who looked to the good folks of this valley for help and succour, it is useful to résumé the now infamous "Poor Laws" which explain much of the actions to be described. In terms of what was considered "poor", in the 17th century, Gregory King estimated in 1688 that at least 50% of the population were barely able to sustain themselves (1). Consideration of the surviving Wills and probate documents for this valley leads to the conviction that most, if not all, of the folk in the Lorton Valley did not fall within those 50%. They were blessed with life in a fertile, prosperous area. We have seen in Chapter 4 how the wealth of yeomen farmers in Cumberland grew during the 17th and 18th centuries.

The Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 made the parish, with its overseers and the churchwardens responsible for applying the poor rate, a tax levied on people of the parish. Allowances went to the 'deserving poor'; able-bodied were to be put to 'useful' work for which materials were supplied (called the 'parish stock'). Begging was illegal and beggars were to be whipped and returned to the parish of their birth. In 1662 the Act of Settlement and Removal defined who could claim relief and the concept of 'settlement' and removal. Anyone becoming 'chargeable to the parish' could be removed. The 1722 Workhouse Act forced paupers into the workhouse or go without relief. Gilbert's Act of 1782 allowed for 'outdoor relief' for the able-bodied, thus leaving the workhouse for the elderly, sick and children. In 1834, the Poor Law Amendment Act established Poor Law Unions with their workhouses, and Boards of Governors, and remained in force until 1929. Within the poor law framework, illegitimacy was a constant thorn in the side of the overseers, as we shall see. Cockermouth built a brand new workhouse to serve all its four districts in 1840 to house 300 persons, at a cost of £3,000 (2) and had 218 inmates in 1851, 181 in 1871 and 139 in 1891 plus 160 male children at the Flimby Industrial School which was part of the workhouse system. At least in 1871 and 1891, none of them was from the Lorton valley.

We have no direct evidence of their numbers and quite possibly there were not many to worry about. Our earliest record of bequests to the poor comes from Anthonye Pearson of Over Lorton who left "to the poore twentye yearde of belter and twentye yeards of gardon" at the discretion of his Executors. In 1607, John Bell, who was a member of a well-established local family and Curate of Lorton, left "to everie poore householder within Lorton 12 pence a piece". Regrettably the next two lines of his Will are illegible due folding of the parchment, but it continues "12 pence apiece which are noe householders, nor none of the family of the saide poor householders". He also left "to everie poor householder within Withopp, Brackenthwaite and Buttermore, four pence a piece". What a shame we do not know the cost of this to his estate. It is to John Bell that we are indebted for the first copy of the earliest register. As well as carrying out his clerical duties and copying the

many entries of births, deaths and marriages, he lived all his life and farmed, worked would be a better word, a small parcel of meadowland at Scales. He had four brothers and a sister, all of whom, with their children and all his godchildren, he remembered in his Will. This was quite extensive with useful information and contrasts with that of the later Curate, Patricius Curwen, who made a brief and simple statement leaving 12 pence each to his five children and the residue to his wife. Neither of these gentlemen mention books in their Wills though Curwen appears to have been comparatively learned and had a bookbinding press. He was probably a member of a junior branch of the important Curwen family of Workington.

Nearly another 70 years were to pass before we have another record of charity. Henry Atkinson of Smiddy Green, Wythop, who seems to have been apprenticed to the tanner John Fisher of the same address, in 1676 left "to poor Folkes, £2 piece". If that meant £2 to each and every one and not a total of £2 to be distributed, then he was being very generous and as the breadth of his generosity was not defined, we can only wonder what it removed from the residue of his estate which he left to his uncle George Peill and "Couzen Anas Bolton". When Henry died he was still single and, being apprenticed, could not have been very old, but left specific requests totalling £16, together with a "sut of clofe", "my Great Bibell" and "my best Cotte", so he was fairly well connected and presumably literate. He may also have been courting, as two "daughters" are included in his bequests. When Thomas Wilkinson of Low Lorton left "Alms for the poor" in 1692, he was more judicious as they were to be paid "according to my Ability". The only other example of charity came from Isaac Allason in 1716. He was of a Quaker family living at Whinfell Hall, and left "for the poor Parsow (Pardshaw) meeting 40 shillings".

John Threlkeld was a vagrant who was in Lorton and giving trouble in 1691. The good people of Lorton requested that the relief order for John should be cancelled on the basis that he was "an idle and dissolute young man who has now recovered and is enjoying living at their expense" and in addition asked for him to be "punished for his temerity". A summons was issued against John, but we do not know the final outcome (3). Later that same year Ann Pearson of Wythop, who was a spinster, sought a bastardy order against John Tickell for the daughter born whilst she was a servant at Wythop, as a result of which John Tickell was committed until he give a good bond to pay her 6d a week (4).

Henry Fletcher of Setmurthy, who was lame, petitioned in 1693 for continuation of his 12d per week relief from Lorton. The result is not known (5). At same time, Mathew Rothery of Embleton was complaining that though he was the only "poor" in that township, their charity was "cold". Perhaps this is evidence, though weak, that there was not a lot of poverty and folk on poor relief in this area at the time.

The parishioners of Lorton had another complaint in 1697. John Bowman "privilly crept into the parish" and then fathered a bastard child born at Applethwaite, and that Crosthwaite "presumed to place that Bastard Child in Lorton parish" as the father had fled there, where he unlawfully resides amongst the petitioners, who were now requesting his removal, he being "poor". The magistrates ordered that Bowman and the child should be sent back to Crosthwaite and to stay there (6).

There was a 1715 petition of Ann, wife of John Ho..... {believed to be Holme} late of Lorton for poor relief. Her husband long since deserted her and "kept and Cohabited with other lewd Woman", then returned, sold up all his wife's possessions, and last Michaelmas "Enlisted himself at Cockermouth with some Recruiting officer"; also Ann has saved £4, and lent it to her kinsman Cuthbert Fisher, "a miller at Over Lorton Miln", expecting to have it back with interest in due time, they being related, but he now refuses to repay her, so that she "Will be Starved in the Parish". (Ordered that the evidence of Peter Wilson of Armaside and John Pearson, a Quaker, of Far S..... , be taken as to Cuthbert Fisher. Then ordered that Fisher pay the £4 to the Overseers of Lorton, to allow her 1s 0d a week) (7).

The year 1719 saw a removal order against William Frear and his wife to be removed from Eaglesfield to Lorton (8). His wife, Esther, was buried at Lorton two years later, William then being described as a 'pensioner'. Settled in the parish of Lorton, he claimed he was blind, lame and approaching seventy four years of age and incapable of any work to help himself, and was lacking clothing. He claimed that the overseers paid him two shillings a week for several years as contracted, but for the last three years had withheld 6d but had not provided the clothing in lieu as agreed and requested the Bench to order relief from his deplorable condition (9).

Mary Fisher went and lived "as a parishioner" in Cockermouth where, according to the churchwardens and overseers of Cockermouth, she had no legal settlement. She became a charge on their Poor Relief and therefore complained at Quarter Sessions. She was adjudged to be last lawfully settled at Wythop and the officers of Cockermouth were ordered to take her to Wythop whose officers were ordered to receive her as a lawfully settled inhabitant, and no doubt provide for her out of their poor rates (10). Similarly, Mary Fletcher who had "intruded herself" as a parishioner at Crosscanonby was sent back to Lorton (11).

Yet another sad story, in 1731, is that of Jane Fisher of Wythop, asking for poor relief. She was nearly seventy years old and reported to be nearly blind. Some 50 years previously she had lived about fifteen years at Wythop as a servant, latterly to John Fisher. She then went south to the Fens where she married an Irishman who only lived four years. Jane seems to have compounded her ill-luck by then marrying a soldier from Kent who stayed only eight weeks before going off to the wars, from which he returned some years later and promptly died. So Jane returned to Wythop and served as servant to John Watson for a year. During the eight years previous to this petition, she had been living in a small house in poverty because the officers of Wythop rejected her as a burden on their poor rates, though they had given her 20s the previous year. She was claiming relief as she was too infirm and too nearly blind to go round begging. The Bench took pity on her and ordered her to be paid 1s a week (12). Her last resting place was not in Lorton churchyard.

Pauper Mary Hunter was a bastard child of Jane Hunter of Borrowdale. The child was born at Wythop Mill, which was one of those strange extra-parochial areas and paid no poor rates and had no overseer. The question arose as to Mary's settlement – should she follow that of her mother because otherwise Mary would have none? Neighbouring magistrates refused a removal order on the grounds that she had no settlement. In August 1836, John Jackson and Richard Bell were the overseers for Loweswater, where the mother Jane then was, and were asking the question. The outcome was that the child could not follow the settlement of the mother, so both were classed as casual poor (13).

A meeting of the Board of Governors of the Cockermouth Poor Union on 4th December, 1838, agreed that the existing system of parochial medical relief should be continued and that a committee should work towards adapting the Union Workhouse to the classified accommodation of paupers. The Cockermouth Union catered, though that is hardly the right word for the conditions that existed therein, for five districts. The Cockermouth district itself included the various townships within the Lorton parish and Loweswater, for which the overseers re-appointed were: Brackenthwaite, John Fisher; Buttermere, Robert Benson; Lorton, Daniel Hodgson; Wythop, Henry Fisher; and Loweswater, Isaac Dodgson. The total cost of running the Union in 1840 was £6,958 of which Brackenthwaite had to find £56; Buttermere £62; Lorton £99; Wythop £89; Loweswater with Mockerkin £111 and Whinfell £30 (14).

On 26th November, 1840 the Lorton overseer wrote to the Union, complaining that a bastard male child of a few months had been "afflicted" on James Atkinson since August. James, who was then living as a servant to his uncle Bryan Atkinson, had recalled some small money loans and withdrawn his small savings from the Savings Bank in Cockermouth, but was now summoned for maintenance, but because of his relationship was not paid wages, and the parish was unable to provide maintenance for the child. Unfortunately, the outcome of this case is not found.

What behind the scenes dealings went on for the March, 1841 election of Guardians of the Cockermouth Union we can only guess at. Thomas Ewart, farmer and Isaac Dodgson, gentleman, were apparently elected without quibble for Lorton and Loweswater, but John Wilson Fletcher, coal owner was defeated for Wythop in favour of Joshua Robinson, a farmer.

The workhouse dietary table for which the March 1839 sheet serves as an example, makes very dismal reading. Our domestic pets get a far better diet in the 20th century. Every day of the week breakfast consisted of one pint of oatmeal porridge and half a pint of milk. Every evening, supper was one pint of broth or oatmeal porridge and half a pint of milk. To vary this electrifying diet, lunch was something special. Broth or potato soup with five ounces of bread, twice a week with four ounces of beef, twice with one pound of potatoes, whilst Saturday was a red letter day with two ounces of peas and vegetables and Wednesday was blessed with one and a half ounces of bacon. For those who managed to reach the age of 60, this diet was supplemented, with discretion, by one ounce of tea, five of butter and seven of sugar per week in lieu of porridge for breakfast. The meat was defined as rounds and flanks and children's meals were at the discretion of the master and subject to approval of the medical attendant. No wonder folks fought off the evil day of going to the workhouse.

We cannot tell what vagrancy or pauperism there may have been before 1598 as that is the date at which details over and beyond the persons name were included in the register. The first mention of vagrants in Lorton registers occurs in 17th June 1606 when Issabell Granger "a poor woman's child" was buried. There are no other parish references to a family called Granger. Again, on 8th February 1605, Helline More "daughter of a poor man" was buried. These and some 25 cases of poor, paupers or vagrants buried between 1606 and 1865 are given in Appendix 8.1 from which it is seen that this valley was not entirely without its own poor, nor was Wythop. A rare touch of local humour is recorded by the burial of another 'poor

widow' of Upper Lorton, "Grizle Grayson", buried 7th July 1728. Jonathan Taylor of Gilbrea had the dubious distinction of being branded 'a pauper' when he was buried on 16th May 1729, only eleven days after his son, also Jonathan, was buried. Anne, either his wife or daughter, who was recorded as a boarder at Gilbrea, was buried in February 1732. In February 1774/5 Katherine Bowe, pauper, was buried. Or was it Ruth Bows? The register and bishop's transcript do not agree, but as the record refers to a pauper presumably it does not matter! And although Bowe was a much-respected name in Lorton, the address is not given, so we do not know exactly who was buried in ignominy.

Did not the official 'Poor' have offspring? Only two are recorded; the first was almost certainly a non-parishioner; the second may have been. Frances, daughter of 'a poor man', James Mackye was baptised in November 1597; and Jennet, daughter of 'a poor man' Edmund Wood, in January 1623/4. Is it significant that both these isolated cases coincide with the dates of two supposed "crises de subsistance" as did the burials of Anne Rothery and Mabel Bows? See Appendix 8.1.

In reviewing these data, we must not forget that there are insignificant records for the years 1647 to 1692 and several short breaks in the burial records before 1621. Nevertheless, there appears to be a greater incidence of pauperism in the 18th century than in the 17th, and this is a reflection of the increasing hardship felt nationally by the labouring class during the latter period.

Appendix 8.1 – EXTRACTS FROM THE LORTON BURIAL REGISTER

8th February 1605	Helline More "daughter of a poor man" was buried
17th June 1606	Issabell Granger "a poor woman's child" was buried
30th May 1608	Jennet Clark "a poor woman" of Over Lorton was buried
10th July 1615	John Key was buried as "a poor man".
14th June 1635	Richard Hall "a poor man's son" was buried
29th August 1722	Anne Rothery "a poor widow"
17th November 1724	Mabel Bows of Gilbrea poor widow
7th July, 1728	"Grizle Grayson", 'poor widow' of Upper Lorton, buried
December 1728	Elinor Rudd of Lowthwaite Side, poor widow, was buried at Lorton
16th May 1729	Jonathan Taylor of Gilbrea 'a pauper' was buried
27th May 1729	Jonathan Taylor, son of Jonathan, lately deceased
Sept 1730	Mabel Peil, a poor widow of Low Swinside
January 1731	Barbara Curwen, a poor widow of High Side
April 1731	Ellinor Dent, a poor widow of Upper Lorton
May 1732	William Greenop, a poor man of Wythop
February 1732	Anne Taylor, either the wife or daughter of Jonathan
Taylor, Dec 1729	A boarder at Gilbrea, was buried in February 1732
November 1733	Ann Fisher, a poor widow of Wythop
January 1734	Margaret Bell, a poor widow of Upper Lorton
March 1737	Elinor Fletcher, a poor widow, address not quoted
January 1745	Thomas Rudd, pauper, address not quoted
March 1745	Thomas Holmes, pauper of Scales
February 1774/5	Katherine Bowe, or was it Ruth Bows? (see above)
December 1783	Sarah Fearon, a pauper of Tenters
February 1784	Thomas Fisher of Wythop
February 1794	Richard Kellett, 'a traveller', was buried at Lorton

Chapter 8 References

(1) K Wrightson "English Society 1580 -1680, p 148; from "Population and Resources", Hutchinson 1982
(2) R Thompson PhD thesis, 1976 for Newcastle upon Tyne University, "The New Poor Law in Cumberland and Westmorland 1834 - 1871"
(3) CRO Q/11 1691/2 Epiphany Petitions, no 11
(4) CRO Q/11 1691/2 Midsummer Petitions no 35
(5) CRO Q/11 1693/4 Epiphany petitions, no 7
(6) CRO Q/11 1697/8 Epiphany Petitions no 6
(7) Quarter Session 1715/16 Christmas petitions; CRO Q/11 no 22
(8) CRO Q/11 1719/20 Christmas Petitions no 3
(9) CRO Q/11 1728/9 Christmas petitions no 4
(10) CRO Q/11 Quarter Sessions Easter 1731
(11) CRO Q/11 Quarter Sessions 8th Feb 1730
(12) CRO Q/11 Christmas Petitions 1731/2
(13) PRO NH.12/1624 f.2739B
(14) CRO, Poor Law, Cockermouth, f.62

Chapter 9: LIFE AND DEATH

For convenience, the contents of this chapter will be divided into three sections, based loosely on Wills, probate inventories and famine, ie consideration of the question "did the peasants starve"?

Wills

We have some 220 Wills that cover the period 1579 to 1804 relating to the study area but excluding Loweswater. No doubt there are others to be discovered for a later period, that may exist in the Probate Search Room, 42 High Holborn, London, which has replaced Somerset House, as well as more to be discovered in the PPC and PPY for the period up to 1858, when safe-keeping of Wills passed to High Holborn. These latter have not yet been explored because of the scale of the task. As far as one can judge from those studied, they have survived randomly. They include the wealthier yeoman farmers, their widows, single men and women, a small selection of trades-people or craftsmen and folks at the poorest end of the scale. There are also Wills of three clerics. We cannot assume, however, that Wills were made randomly. Some families clearly believed in making them, whereas other families are not represented at all. Nevertheless, I find no reason to assume our collection does not give a fairly representative picture of life and social conditions over those two centuries.

Most Wills, certainly those written down by the Curate, commence with one of the customary forms of religious preamble. Typical is the following, dated 1720:
"In the name of God Amen. I Luke Peill of Kirkgate in Lorton in the p[ari]sh of Lorton & County of Cumberland, yeoman, Being weak in body but of sound and perfect mind & memory (praise be given to Almighty God for ye Same) Do make this my last Will and Testament in forme & Manner following, (that is to say)
"Imprimis, I Commend my soul into the Hands of Almighty God my heavenly father, hopeing through the merits of Jesus Christ my Lord & only Saviour to Receive the pardon of all my Sins & to obtaine Everlasting life And my body I commit to the ground to be decently Buryed att the discretion of my Executor hereafter named – and as for my temporal Estate....."

A few, notably the Nuncupative Wills, that is those written (or more probably dictated to a scribe) by one or more witnesses as the spoken wishes of the dying testator, without benefit of scribe before death, plunge straight into the list of legacies. Such was:
"The Nuncupative Will of William Fearon of Withmorecrane in the Parish of Lorton and County of Cumberland, yeoman, Declared to be his Will ye 19th day of Aprill Ano Domini 1709 Before Robert Fisher of Cornhow & Jane his wife & Thomas Bank of Low Hollings made in manner & form following, (viz) The s[ai]d William Declared and s[ai]d I give to my daughter Jane (the wife of Isaac Pearson) & her Children thirty shillings having given her what I could afford before; And all the Remainder of what I have I give to Sarah my wife. The said William Fearon Did send for us on purpose to declare his Will before the day above before us, and desired we might be Wittnesses to hear what he declared; and what he said as above said was his Will and was Sound in Memory". William was buried on 20th April.

William Fearon was not quite so poor as the above might give to understand. His tenement at Withmorecrane (the earlier name of the present Palace How at Brackenthwaite), left personal goods and chattels which totalled £18.13s.0d on the probate inventory dated the day after the Will. This included "kine and heiffers" £5.13s.4d, one mare £2.2s.6d which at that valuation must have been quite a good one, and an unspecified number of sheep £2.16s.0d. With wool 12s.6d, seed and ploughing £1.0s.0d, and corn and oatmeal £2.11s.0d, there remained only £4.17s.8d to account for his husbandry and household goods, furniture and clothing. But this was not atypical. William and his family lead a rather hard life with little creature comforts. No other family details of William have been found.

In general the legacies show what a wide range of family relationships existed throughout the valley community, to which was added a further widespread sprinkling of friendship connections and business contacts.

Whilst the Wills throw much light on family and social relationships up and down the valley and beyond, there are frustrating gaps which prevent useful compilation of family trees and derivation of patterns of family movement. Also, but not surprisingly, there is very little mention of land and houses since, commonly, these passed automatically to the eldest son as of right. The transfer of land from parent to child, and from one holder to another can be traced in some detail through the many and various Manorial records. We have seen, in an earlier chapter, the farmers' concern for their land through the mind of John Iredell of Armaside, who died in June 1710 (1) and made provision for that land and the animals it supported to continue in the family. John was quite a wealthy man by the local standards of the time and lived more comfortably than many of his fellow yeomen. Not mentioned in his Will, but appearing in the probate inventory which totalled £185, was a "Clock" valued at £3. In the same year, Peter Fisher of Highside made similar detailed arrangements for his wife Anne to hold and maintain the closes of Twenty Riggs and Leary Howe (the land above the modern cottages of "Fernwood", above Holemire) during the minorities of their three sons, and for alternatives in subsequent succession to the land, depending on later circumstances. When she died in 1586, Mabel Wylson, who had been left a widow with an un-named holding, in her own turn left the tenement to her daughter Jenat because her only son John was still a minor; Jenat was also charged "to provide young John" with meat, drynke and clothing sufficiently until such time as he come to full Age". For a widow, Mabel must have been fairly well off because she left to her other two daughters, Margaret and Elizabeth £26.13s.4d and £20 respectively.

The Winder family could almost warrant a chapter of its own. As it is the earliest family of which we have many records, and as the various members were present in the valley for 370 years, they provide a cross section of the aspects of life and death in the valley during that time, though we are sadly deficient in records of the earlier period. There has been a very extensive branch of the Winder family in north Lancashire since at least 1370 and it is a family tradition that they came south from Cumberland (2), but when this occurred is not known. Mr F A Winder of Portsmouth was only concerned in that typical Victorian interest of status, so he only chronicled the lives of those which, in the 20th century, we refer to as "upwardly mobile"; and they did go far – from being humble husbandman and yeoman – economically and geographically. Their story is contained in Chapter 10.

Today, at the end of the 20th century, when sudden death by accident, or wanton criminal action and political terrorism are so common, we are still surprised and angered by its occurrence. But in reading these old Wills we cannot but become aware of the testators constant awareness of the possibility, even the likelihood, of proximate death. Not of their own; most of the Wills were written or dictated from the deathbed to the testators' own sure knowledge, but for members of their family. Many make alternative provisos in the case of the death of one or more of their minor children, as well as the normal provision for them. "If they come to full age" is a common expression in the Wills. Many fathers died young, head of active hard working families, leaving one or more small children, sometimes without a mother who, as like as not died in childbirth. Death was a frequent factor in the common round. Even more poignant is the death of a young husband making provisions for the baby expected within the current gestation period and in our small sample there are several such cases. The Will of John Mirehouse of High House, Buttermere, dated 4th April 1677, is one such that embraces all the points just mentioned (3):
"to my daughter Agnes Three gimmer sheep, the same to be taken by her own choice out of my flock; and the bible which was her Mother's; and if she continue heir to my lands, I give her Five shillings more in liew of a childe portion. Unto such of my children as do come to inherit my lands and Tenements as heir apparent to me One Cupbord, one Table, and the frame in the house side, all standing and being in my dwelling house called High house near to the Chappell together with the Timber wood squared and made ready, in liew for to pay and discharge the Chapelstock (being Thirty two shillings and two pence) and the yearly Rent for the same. to my daughter Sarah one Cow or else a Heifer to be taken at her own choice amongst my Cattell; to my Godson John Cowper one gimmer-hogg; to my Godson Joseph Clarke one gimmer-hog; to my God-daughter Elizabeth Fisher one gimmer-hogg; to my sister Issabell Cowper one gimmer-hogg; to my servant John Hudson one shilling; to Margret my loving wife Twenty pounds and likewise my great bible and the rest of my bookes. If it so please god that my said wife to be conceived and bear a son who shall hereafter (according to the law) become mine heir aparent, then I apoint and devise unto my said daughter Agnes Thirty eight pounds; and if it happen the said son to die before he shall attaine and come to the full age of one and Twenty yeares, that then she shall Render and pay back againe the said Thirty eight pounds to my Executores hereafter named, or so many of them as shall be then living, to be equally divided amongst them. Finally all the rest I do give to Margret my loveing wife, and to Sarah, Mary, and Elizabeth my Three daughters borne of her. And if it so please God my wife to be conceived and bear a daughter more to me, I Will that the said daughter so to be borne lawfully, shall have her equall portion and share with the said three daughters and Mother in all the said goods herein before not given....." This Cowper family was that of the late Curate, William Cowper.

Similarly, on 23rd February 1695, Thomas Barne of Upper Lorton (probably Armaside) included the passage "and if my said wife shall bring forth a Child before 3rd December next, my Will is that the said Child with the three above mentioned be full and joint Executor....." (4). His son John was baptized at Lorton on 8th September.

One last example Will underlines the point (5). Peter Fisher, who held 'Peills Tenement' at Highside in 1710, died aged about 45, leaving his wife Anne "all my

land and Tenements" towards bringing up his sons Peter, Thomas and Jonathan until Peter came of age, when he would automatically assume management of the farm and responsibility for the rest of the family. Peter, the father, went on in his Will to make provision "if my wife shall die before my children come of Lawfull yeares then I do charge John Pearson of Bridgend to be Tutor and Guardian over my children during the residue of their minorities". He went on, "if my son Peter shall die without issue before he comes of age....." and continues, "if my son Thomas shall die..... my son John shall have the estate which I left to Thomas....." He made John, the youngest, Executor, presumably because he had the expectation of living longest.

These few sad paragraphs lend credence to the statement that not only was life hard, but all too short too. We will examine what statistics are available to us to see if they support this view in Chapter 13, "Population".

Probate Inventories – 1576 to 1727

It is generally held that the probate inventories of the 16th and 17th centuries give a valuable insight into life of those times. We have still extant for our area of study 183 inventories dated for the century and a half between 1576 and 1727. Not withstanding a range of net values from £908 at the upper end to an indebtedness of £96 at the lower end, at first sight they tend to give an impression of unexciting uniformity. Scanning them one is tempted to dismiss succeeding inventories as "just another typical local yeoman" and to a large extent this is true. But this simplistic approach hides a wide variety of standards within the overall picture. The subjects of these documents represent a broad section of the inhabitants of Wythop, Buttermere, Brackenthwaite, Lorton and Whinfell.

Do these inventories represent a self-selected or random sample of the population? In theory, by law, between 1529 and 1750, the executors had to make an inventory of the personal goods of everyone when they died. Were inventories, in practice, made for only those who had significant personal goods? The answer is "we do not know". It is the surviving inventories that we are using. They include many relating to the largest section of the community – the yeomen and husbandmen – but there are also representatives of tradesmen, Curates, poor widows, bachelors and spinsters and, questionably, moneylenders. Not included are shopkeepers, because there were none such specifically so engaged in this study period, nor are there any "Gentlemen", because none has so far come to light to this researcher, pending investigation of some known to be in the PPC.

The inventories appear to have survived randomly, but were not made randomly. It does seem that some families were more wont to make Wills than others, but the inventory was a legal requirement. Amongst the surviving inventories, we have examples of tiny values but these represent the elderly widower or widow whose belongings have probably all been given to the family with whom he or she was passing the last years of life. This is particularly brought out by the Will and inventory of Peter Pearson of Bridgend (6). Peter had owned and run one of the biggest farms in the valley and passed it on to his son in his latter years. He then lived on the premises, very simply and frugally, if his inventory is taken literally, but he probably lived in the bosom of his family, and in the style to which he had grown accustomed.

Regrettably only 130 of the inventories are accompanied by the corresponding Wills. Another cause for regret is that those sober-minded and respected neighbours of the late deceased, who made the inventories of his personal effects, were usually too busy to count and enumerate the numbers of livestock or the volume of crops in the barn or pieces of furniture. They were too hurried and inconsiderate of future historians' needs to list what was in which room, or even mention rooms, barns or other details at all. Like the Curates who were equally reticent, we can only lament like Sir Robert Armstrong speaking in 1777 on a rather different subject, "that they were economical with the truth".

One thing that does emerge is that by and large the Lorton valley community was a comparatively poor one in relation to similar communities in, say, the midlands. For example, a 16th and 17th century survey of the manor of Haywood in Staffordshire, with Stone and Lichfield as its market towns and on the edge of Cannock Chase, provides 93 inventories covering a similar selection of husbandmen, yeomen, widows and tradesmen with an average inventory value of £74 (7) compared with an average of £66 for the same period 1576 to1700 in this valley. Unfortunately, the Haywood inventories as published make no mention of debts owing by the deceased, and if these are taken into account for Lorton the net inventory comes down to £54. So at the very least there is a differential of 12%, and possibly 30%. However, looking again at the range of values, we note that those of Haywood spread from £349 at the top end to £3 at the bottom, whereas in Lorton we have an enormous range of gross values before debts, from £908 to minus £96. Even if we take out the exceptional, even unique, case of Henry Pearson who died in 1651 with goods valued at £381 and credits owing to him of £527, the range becomes £295 to Minus £96, and the average drops from £66 to £63.

Although the population did vary, there was no overall growth between 1550 and 1750, but if the data of Table 9.1 can be trusted to tell us anything, it shows that the growth and decline in net estate values of the deceased correspond with a similar pattern in the population between 1550 and 1650, (see Chapter 13 "Population") but why this should be so is not apparent. Marshall's analysis of 100 inventories of roughly comparative areas in rural Copeland shows gross values rising from average £73 to £100 (37% increase) over the period 1661 to 1750 (8). In Lorton parish over roughly the same period, 114 inventories show a 14% decrease in net values. Nevertheless, we do find 14% growth over the whole period 1576 to 1727. For that period, net values of the 172 inventories rise from £36 to £41. The net average for 1626 to 1660 is increased dramatically by the unique credit of £547 in 1651; discounting this credit, the average net for the period, £76.68, is reasonable in relation to those for the adjacent periods. The fall-off from this figure can most reasonably be explained by the number of large debts due to new building. The level of investment in Lorton parish, measured by debt, over the same full period of 150 years varied considerably, doubling from an average £13 to £25; Marshall's figures for Copeland (1660 to 1750) show a drop from £13 to £10, possibly because south Cumberland's wave of building was tailing off.

Table 9.2 compares 'Lorton' with Marshall's findings, and although essentially analysed under similar headings there have necessarily been small differences. Table 9.2 relates to 172 inventories – all those extant except a few that are not relevant; 'miscellaneous' includes all household goods, clothing, trade tools and stock, as well

as cash where this has been small or assumed, since it was mentioned very rarely. Specified large values of 'ready cash and/or bonds' have been included with credits.

Apart from the rather surprising growth and decline in the net values recorded, several interesting things show up. Firstly there appears to have been no steady upward growth in the value of farm stock and crops. Secondly, whilst there has been a growth in the standard of living as represented by the 'miscellaneous' figure, this average standard of living is still very modest, and although not apparent from this table, within the working community it does not vary very much from the very well off yeoman to the poorer husbandman or the working widow. Generally, the level of debt is equal to or greater than the contents of the home and for the most part the outstanding credits are equal to or larger than the outstanding debt. However, these are averages and the credits and debits do not necessarily relate to the same individuals and can thus only be thought of as "community" values. There were several particularly large debts – £180 in 1680 at Over Lorton; £140 in 1698 at Buttermere; £168 in 1704 at Turnerhow; £178 in 1710 at Highside; £140 in 1717 at Cornhow. The reason for these is not given, but it is likely they are connected with new building.

Marshall showed the increasing wealth of the Cumbrian population by further analysis of the distribution of inventory values. This present 'Lorton' study has too few inventories to give a similar exercise more than a 'finger-in-the-wind' result, but nevertheless is shown in Table 9.2 with Marshall's figures in parenthesis where the dates correspond. These analyses have terminated at 1720 because after that date only a meagre handful of relevant inventories have been discovered. In this respect we have been unlucky not to be able to fully compare with the data of other researchers.

Possibly the most interesting, certainly one of the most detailed, is the inventory of Peter Peell, dated 23rd November 1586 (9). Why he finished his life in debt to the tune of £48 it is not possible to say; he had what appears to be perfectly normal, though smallish, husbandman's goods and chattels, people owed him for monetary loans and for work done and he had roughly comparable amounts of grains and cattle, but with only some 30 sheep, his gross estate was reduced to minus £14 by 33 small debts. In as far as he had four pigs, he was different from most. However his inventory is valuable for the detailed list of house contents and money dealings. It is reproduced in full in Appendix 9.1. Like those we looked at previously, Peter lived with but little homely comfort. His bed and clothing together were only worth 20s but he had two chairs to go with his table and benches, and had more than a minimum quantity of kitchen and cooking equipment. This includes the only known reference to 'catles' which, in the context of brass pots and pewter 'dublers', can only mean kettles. Against this he owed for loans, for work done, for renting 'Stirton' ground and church dues. Most importantly we owe the appraisers of Peter Peill's estate for the comments on thatching a house and a barn which John Hudson of Bowterbeck should have "caused to be thacked", but evidently did not, to the detriment of Peter's corn. Peter was almost certainly quite elderly with fully-grown sons and owed for all or more of the sheep which he had at the end of his life. He was buying in much of the goods to meet his other needs as well, "one quarter of beyfe 4s", "one peck of ote meile 8d", "one bushele of bige 3s.8d", one bushel of malt 8s.0d, shoes 3s.10d. He was also paying others to work his land, "Thomas Stub for land harrowing in Lorton Head 2s.4d", "Nicholas Threlket for land plowinge 6s 8d";

also Anthony Pearson for ploughing and something called "teathe ledinge", William Peyson and Christopher Fysher for ploughing 2s.8d so he had more than a small parcel of in-field, to which he added by renting a parcel of meadow from John Steile for 5s.0d and another from Thomas Wylkinson for 3s.4d. Peter also paid his son Thomas to teach his younger brother Peter 'his occupation', but what this was we do not know.

Our very earliest set of probate documents comprises both Will and inventory, the latter dated 19th January 1576. They are notable for their brevity and content. Alan Hoolstorke, alias Norman, born illegitimately, was presumably elderly and probably living with one of the Rud families at Picket Howe or Turnerhowe to whom he left his possessions, and made John Rud of Picket Howe one of his executors. The possessions listed in his inventory were 27 young and old sheep valued at £4.1s.0d, one Arke and one pan[ier?] with his clothes at 4s.0d, with £4 in ready cash, a grand total of £8.5s.0d. Incidentally, it is to this Will that we have our earliest local record of a village Curate, Rychard Nycholson, present in 1570 when the Will was made. From this we deduce that Alan was ill and in fear of his life in 1570, from which he recovered and lived for another six years.

We have to wait 10 years before we find the next inventory, that of Anthonye Pearson of Over Lorton. One is tempted to think he may have run a village "store" as, in February, 1586, he still had £10 of corn, meal and groats, 20 bushels of bigge valued at £3.13s.4d, 32 bushels of oats at 7s.6d the bushel, 3 quarters of meat valued at 5s.0d and 50 trusses of hay. In spite of the apparent excellent state of affairs in his barns, he lived frugally, even for that period. Anthonye was a widower and left his best arke and all the husbandry, plough and iron gear to his eldest son who would automatically come into the copyhold property. There was an interesting exception. This is the earliest of a number of instances in which a gavelock, stipulated as iron in this case, has been singled out for special mention. It is a long metal crowbar, and no doubt a useful tool, but why it should often have separate identification seems strange, except in this case one was Willed to the younger son. Marshall associates this tool with quarrying or building and if this is so, then in this case it is almost certainly quarrying (10). The average value of his 13 beasts was £1.18s.0d, though as they were not specified, this is not too helpful, and sheep still average 3s.0d each for his flock of 122. To his unmarried daughter Jenat, Anthonye Willed £26.13s.4d and his best "Chist" as her "Childe portion". We saw in an earlier chapter that he left a quantity of cloth for the poor, and he repaid the physical and spiritual help of the Curate, Anthonye Borranskell, who witnessed and probably wrote his Will, with a gift of a wether. In general this inventory is typical of many that follow, though at a net value of £85 it is appreciably the highest we have for the 16th century.

The spring of 1588/89 saw the deaths of two widows of unknown age, Margaret Banke of Wythop (11) and Helline Peile of Buttermere (12). Their inventories were very similar. Both were still working their land, though with or without help is not known. Each had about 30 sheep, each a small number of cattle, though Margaret had the lesser of the two and shared a cow. As her half share of cow was worth more than her two other cows, at 5s.0d, the latter must have been old and not of much use. Both ladies had a modest and unspecified wardrobe and sparse household items. Both had modest sums in debts owing to and from them and both left net estates between £15 and £18. One quite important and unexplained difference is that whereas Anthony Pearson's bigge was valued at 3s.8d in February

1586, and that of Helline Peile at 3s.2d in April 1589, that of Margaret Banke only three weeks earlier in April 1589 was valued at only 1s.8d, all for equal volumes. The reason is not apparent.

The Curate Anthony Boranskyll, whose name is variously spelled, died in October 1596. According to the 'prizers' of his goods and chattels, he had two sheep, value 4s.0d, presumably not including the wether left him by Anthony Pearson. We know very little about Anthony Boranskyll, though he was almost certainly connected with the local yeoman family at Wythop. He must have lived very frugally and possibly existed on the basis of whittlegate (the system by which the Curate lived for a time as a guest with a parishioner and then went on for a similar time with another and so on), as he had only his clothing valued at £2.16s.10d, two chests and a bedstead and one arke in which he kept his books and all other possessions. He was a long-suffering man, obviously liked by his flock. Anthony Pearson's was not the only recorded gift of a sheep, but at his death the Curate was still owed 46s.0d in wages, outstanding since St. Mark's day, 25th April, and a further 6s.0d from the executors of Thomas Norman, though the latter's probate inventory admitted this debt as only 4s.4d, and 20d by Richard Watson. Of his estate only £5.7s.10d was in physical goods and chattels. It is interesting to compare Anthony's inventory with that of his successor, John Bell who died in 1608, which by good luck we also have.

That John Bell, who we have already met, was a busy man is very evident. On his land at Scales he had two cows, brood sheep and one nag, and since these were all valued at £8, he would have had something of the order of 20 to 30 sheep. It is a pity that we have no indication of the layout or size of the house, but at home he was modestly comfortable with beds, bedding, covercloths, bolsters, and within this context, pots must surely be an almost unique reference to a "night vase" or chamber pot, all valued at £3.2s.4d, whilst in the fire-house were chairs, cushions, towels, wooden and pewter vessels, pots and pans. Listed with these items were poultry and cheeses and "other insignificant things". In the storeroom there were over £4 of meal, malt, bigge and oats with a chest and Almery. The house had a spinning wheel and cards, and with it there was an 18s.0d roll of cloth. We are indebted to John for the early copy of the church registers. Previously, the records, introduced in 1538, had been on individual pieces of parchment but these were now to be transcribed into large bound books and this John laboriously did. I suspect the reference to the churchwardens 'copying' in the book refers to 'confirming the copy as accurate'.

But, perhaps even more interestingly, of John Bell's estate of £127, no less than £90 was owing to him in debts and there is a very useful list of these which range from loans and deeds within the family for £16 and £10 to two debts by the Hudson family, £6.13s.4d by Peter and £5 by Mr John Hudson, £10 by John, Robert and Ellen Wilkinson, down to 8d by Richard Westray's wife. We can only let our imagination run on what might have given rise to these debts.

Famine

Although there have been suggestions, a documented theory even, that at certain times the peasants of England starved to death (13), this has more recently been adequately refuted, though it is still believed that there were occasional 'crises de subsistances' – periods when food was dangerously low and people at the economic

margin suffered terribly from bad harvests and, in rare cases, deaths occurred. In this area, the one place in which this almost certainly was true is the village of Greystoke in 1623. I set out to try and discover if any such phenomenon had ever occurred in the Lorton valley. If famine had occurred, we would expect to find a series of winter and spring inventories deficient in grain. No such series is found, partially because of the very small number of inventories. What evidence they do provide tends to indicate the absence of shortages. Furthermore, evidence of famine can be deduced from the relations between Marriage, conception and burials taken from the parish registers. (14) Nothing to substantiate a hypothesis for famine was found in the Lorton registers. The conclusion is that it was very unlikely to have happened in Lorton with the possible exception of 1623 or just thereafter. One might argue that the poorer section of the population starved whilst the rest had full larders, but in a community with so much inbreeding and close family connections, it seems outside the realms of reasonable behaviour that this would happen. However, critics claim that in times of extreme stress, individuals will tend to overlook such ties in favour of caring first for themselves (15).

Having diverted to consider briefly the likelihood of famine in the valley, let us return to the inventories which, in spite of their obvious and not so obvious deficiencies, do give us an insight into the social and economic conditions of the valley community during the alleged famine periods of 1587/88, 1597 and 1623.

Thus, except for the 19 inventories dated between 1586 to 1598, during which period the crude average valuation of a sheep rose from 3s.0d to 3s.9d, ie by 25%, we are unable to deduce even crude average values for sheep, oxen, crops or anything else. It seems that by 1650, the value of sheep had risen further to 5s.0d and the general impression that emerges is one where the average price of livestock had increased by the order of 65% to 70%. These figures agree quite well with Brown and Hopkins index of retail prices between 1450 and the mid-20th century (16).

If we look at the net inventory values of all the 181 estates over the whole 150 years, we get an average figure of £54.16s.0d, but this hides some very wide variations. There is probably little merit in trying to analyse this comparatively small number of values, but there is a tendency for the value to decrease on either side of a high in the second half of the 17th century. The figures are given below. Whilst considering these inventory values, it occurred to me that because the early writers made such a point of saying, regarding High Lorton, "the lord [of the Manor] never dies" we might find that the average inventories for High Lorton would be higher than for the surrounding parts of the parish because the inhabitants of High Lorton would have less onerous fines to pay throughout their lives. Analysis of the net values by geographical position confounded this theory. It showed what common sense would suggest; that the wealthier people lived in the valley bottom. That this result is strengthened by the presence in the valley bottom, between Brackenthwaite and Low Lorton, of the two or three really large probate estates, only adds further to the weight of the argument. The average for that area was £70 against a figure approximating to £45 for all the rest, whether Wythop, Buttermere, High Lorton or fell side farms like High Side and Brow.

There is another aspect to the wide range of probate values. Throughout the period, but more so in the second half of the 17th century, a small number of the population managed to depart this life in debt. The prize for poor management, or excessive dependence on the trusting nature of his neighbours, or just bad luck, was

Thomas Watson of Buttermere, who died in July 1698 (17). Amongst his personal belongings he had the not inconsequential bedding worth £5.7s.6d to go with his three bedsteads, together with clothing, household and kitchen ware to the value of £19.12s.0d. Out on his land he had stock to the value of over £53 and £11 of growing corn. His chief creditor Hugh Wren of Gatesgarth got the job of collecting the £1 owing to Thomas to begin to offset his enormous debt of £140. His other creditors named in the letter of administration were the Curate of Lorton, Thomas Pearson and Charles Steel. At the other extreme of the scale, in 1611, John Pearson of Brigend in Over Lorton (sic), who lived rather comfortably for the times, left a net estate of £286 of which just half was in cash and ready money (18). But by far the largest estate was £449 left by Robert Fisher of Cornhow when he died in November 1719 (19). We do not know how this was obtained. He had a roughly similar total of household goods and stock to John Pearson, totalling £49 in all. On top of which he had cash in the house and money owing to him to the colossal sum of £400.

Breaking down the general average into major areas, we find livestock and horses account for £21.16s.0d, crops £9.10s.2d, all furniture and all household items at £4 .9s.4d and £2.12s.2d respectively. These are crude averages and those for stock and crops take no account of season, though they probably average out over the year. It makes an interesting comparison with our own lives to consider how many of us could equate our total personal assets, that is, excluding livestock and crops, to the value of approximately a dozen or so sheep. Today, in this area, with a heavily depressed market, an average market price for a sheep might be about £10 to £14; five years ago perhaps £60. Going back to the IRP quoted above, we find 4s.0d in 1600 would be of the order of £15 in the 1990s, so it appears the biggest change over the centuries is the hugely greater variation in the modern market economy.

The average net estate value of about £54 hides a wide disparity of individual values. We might pick out for closer examination a few of those representing the two extremes, the highest and lowest values together with two with large negative values. Outstanding by far as the wealthiest (among those whose inventories we have traced) was Henry Peirson of Low Lorton, whose probate inventory was made on 9th April, 1651 and which totalled £908.8s.7d, and was made not more than nine days after he made his Will (20). Henry had property at Thackthwaite, possibly by reason of his marriage to his second wife Margary, widow of Christopher Hudson (died 1618) and leased what he called a "lease-garth" from Peter Peill at Skailles. He also had land at Kirkgate which he rented out, and on which £20 was owing at his death. He had a flock of 156 sheep and a herd of 12 cows, 2 heifers, 4 oxen and 5 steers. With these he also ploughed for his neighbours and died being owed £1 for this work. In his barns, he had still left at the end of the winter months, 24 bushels of threshed bigge and 20 more still waiting to be threshed. Bigge (21) was the local name for a kind of coarse barley. His barns were also bulging with 40 bushels of oats on top of the 19 bushels recently sown, together with the remaining hay and straw. Henry must have done a lot of leather working as well as he also had room in his barns for 52 sides and 6 dakers of leather, valued at £59 with £6 of bark. According to the inventory, he also had 3 "nags" but one of these he esteemed enough to leave as, "my little gray meare" to his wife. In his house, which we must assume was Bridgend, he lived very comfortably indeed by the then current standards. His clothing and riding gear, with no details given, was not exceptional at £8.2s.0d, but with his family he had 5 beds and bedsteads, 11 pairs of sheets, 4

covercloths and four blankets as well as a quantity of other unspecified "bedding". This degree of comfort was enhanced by 4 silver spoons amongst his quite ample stock of pewter, wooden and iron table and kitchenware, all valued at £17. Surprisingly, although he seems to have had a sufficiency of chests for storage, the only other solid furniture mentioned was one table and frame, that is, trestles and board, with 5 chairs and cushions. Henry's larder was well stocked with £21.7s.0d of meal, malt and groats, £2.15s.0d of beef, bacon and butter and eggs from his few chickens. Out in his fields, he had timber valued at £28.10s.0d. It is doubtful if Henry was truly able to read and write, no books are mentioned, but he did initial his Will with a fairly robust "H P". We have seen elsewhere of his bequests to the school and charity. We have been given no direct indication of who or why Henry had creditors to the total of £527.8s.11d and can only surmise that this quite exceptional sum stems from his tanning and husbandry.

In apparent contrast to Henry Pearson is the situation of Peter Pearson of Bridgend when he died in March 1712, leaving a net estate of exactly £1. Peter was a respected and elderly senior citizen in the earlier sense of the word. He had passed on most of his possessions in recent years and some 14 months before he died, made his Will leaving most of his very modest remaining wealth to his children and grandchildren. Living with his son Thomas, he had kept for his own use a little clothing, a bed and bedstead, a few chests in which to keep his things and a few brass and pewter household items. The total value of all these was only £5. But he still had his sheep, possibly as many as 100 as they were valued at £23.10s.0d and a mare on which to get about. His cash legacies totalled £7.10s.0d, his funeral expenses £3, which means his final journey was rather more expensive than that of most of his contemporaries and he left other debts of £18.10s.0d.

John Wilkinson of Cross in Lorton escaped registry in the Lorton burial register, but we do have his Will and probate inventory. He died on about 10th October, 1709, having made his Will on the previous 11th June. To his loving wife Elizabeth he left one young cow, one of his two cows which, together with his horse, were valued at £3. She also inherited one bedstead "that came from the low end of Towne" – a phrase that has not yet been adequately interpreted, but possibly refers to the northern end of Low Lorton – one feather bed and the other bedding that went with it, quite a luxury this and one of very few mentioned in all the Will to hand, "one long Chest, one little table with the long table that stands upon the Loft". With these few items went also "one half of the pewter and brass vessells and one half of the wooden vessels, one Arke with one plaine chair, one grate that stands in the high House, one half of the Corne that is sowne and one half of the Oat meall". To his son Joseph, who must have been quite young, he left 2s.6d. Everything else he left to his daughter Ellinor who he made Executor. This probate inventory with the Will seems rather strange since the totality of possessions is so little yet there is the hint of some comfort and standing. He had no sheep and only £2 of corn and hay in October. Doubt must be cast on the accuracy of the inventory since he left his wife a feather bed with other bedding which the inventory values at only £1. The gross total of assets is given as £9.5s.0d, against which are set unspecified debts of £3.10s.0d, funeral expenses of £1.17s.6d and the sole cash legacy of 2s.6d to his son. The net result is a mere £3.15s.0d.

As an example of a tradesman, we have Edward Tyson of Upper Lorton whose inventory was made on 16th July, 1720 (22). The net total was a substantial

£184.14s.0d before paying for larger than normal funeral expenses of £5. Edward, who was a weaver by trade, had been ill for some time as his Will was made in April the year before. In spite of his comparatively sound financial position, he lived simply though he must have cut a good-looking figure in the village with his clothing and purse valued together at £4. He had one of the more substantial houses in the village, with parlour and loft room above it. The body-stead of the house – the main living room – also had a loft over it. Each of these four rooms had unspecified goods to about £3. Goods in the buttery were valued at 15s.0d and husbandry gear, wherever that was to be found, another £2, whilst on his land he had cows and a mare, together worth £9; oats and bigge still to be harvested worth £10, a meadow field worth £2 and some bees valued at 16s.0d. But far outweighing all these goods were moneys owing to him at £143.18s.0d. He left £15 to his son Joseph on the understanding that he paid off his father's debts and did not let his mother pay them. These debts were not mentioned in the inventory. There were other monetary bequests totalling about £90. We do not know exactly because the number of grandchildren to whom he left 5s each is not given. To his wife Ellinor he left £40, out those £90, "with a chest for her clothes with her name upon it, and the larger Iron pott". To his son John he left £35 and all the "gears and implements of my trade of weaving". He must have had quite a flourishing little business because his son Joseph, as executor and residual legatee with his mother, signed the papers of administration as a weaver.

Another tradesman, Edward Grayson, was a slater, who died about 20th May, 1707 (23). His clothing was valued at only 10s.0d. Although he must have been kept busy with the wave of new solid building that was going on at the turn of the century, his was a lowly trade and both his goods and chattels reflected this. He still had a small stake on the land, with one cow and one heifer, which with his horse we valued at fifty shillings. As the inventory was countersigned by the Curate, Patricius Curwen, we must assume the values were reasonable, though they do look remarkably low. He had in his home in Over Lorton one pair of bed-stocks with bedding 5s.0d, two chests and one ark 12s.0d, one table and frame at 3s.6d, chairs and forms 1s.6d, a spinning wheel 8d and all other household items of wood, pewter and iron £2.5s.6d, plus "husbandry stuff" 5s 6d. He owed £5.4s.8d and was owed £2. In his Will he left, to his two daughters Ann Susan and Beth Elizabeth, twelve pence apiece and, to his son, John six pence. His wife Priscilla got the residue.

From Buttermere we have the interesting Will and inventory of John Peile. He made his Will on the 8th October 1648 and died about a month later. John Peile lived with his wife Margret at High House and carried out a number of various activities. His Will is worth quoting (24):

"to my sonn Peter Peile . . six pounds, two Arkes, my best Cloake, all my parte of the Loweswater boate, Nett, and Roopes, provided alwaies and upon condicon that my wife Margaret have the occupacion and possesson of the one of the said Arkes whether as shee pleaaseth and likewise of the Boate, Nett and Roopes during her Naturall life".

"to my grandchild Janet Cowper one gimmer hogge"

"to my now wife Margret Peile Fortye shillings over and above her third parte"

"to my grandchild Agnes Norman, one gimmer hogge"

"all residue to my daughter Dorothy Norman whom I make sole executrix".

As well as his share of the boat on Loweswater and fishing interests, John had his finger in several other pies. He had "fower scoore and three sheepe" to a value of £20.10s.0d, [ie average just under 5s.0d each] from which he had in store eight stones of wool, value £3.13s.0d [i.e 9s.1½d a stone] with five kyne and three heifers. And one hen. He owned ploughs, ladders, harrows and one "raile carte". Although no horse is mentioned, which is strange, he also had both riding and pack-saddles, with bridles and girths. It seems that he was engaged either directly or indirectly in the movement of slates down from Honister. At home he was fairly comfortable. What might be classed together as household and husbandry were not listed separately, but his pots, pans, wooden and iron vessels, crooks, tongs, girdle and brandreth added up to £5.3s.4d. His apparel was modestly extensive at £4.13s.0d, whilst he had arkes and chests valued at £4, quite substantial for the time. Missing however is any reference to tables or furniture other than his bedding and "bedd-stockes" £2.2s.0d. He had £10 of corn and hay in the barn for himself and the animals to add to the £2.9s.10d of oatmeal, groats and "flesh" for the family, not to mention the substantial quantity of cheese, worth 9s.0d. Debtors owed him 33s.4d. On the other hand he owed others, regrettably not listed, £30. One must wonder why? And did he owe for much of the goods or animals listed in his inventory?

Peter Robinson was a "showmaker" of Over Lorton whose Will was made in June 1699 and whose inventory was accepted in probate the following March (25). Amongst his rather meagre possessions and bequests, he left to his cousin John Robinson of Thackthwaite his Book of Common Prayer, to his cousin Curwen a bible and to cousin Isaac Robinson a silver seal. Peter was quite literate, as he signed his Will. None of these items appear in the inventory which is in some contrast to that of John Peile. Peter Robinson's clothing and riding furniture came to only 10s.0d, his bedding and bedsteads to a mere £1.3s.4d, but unlike John, Peter had chairs and forms, a screen and stools, cupboard and frame, the latter being the table top. They were not worth very much at £2.5s.0d, but he did have them. There was in his fire-house, a small amount of the usual items, but it did include at least some brass. His larder was very modest indeed, apparently only oatmeal and cheese valued at 10s.0d though he did have corn, hay and straw together worth £4.2s.6d. He kept a horse and two or three other beasts and one swine. With nothing owing to him and unspecified debts of £16.7s.6d, there was only a net estate of £2.3s.10d with which to pay his funeral expenses and his few tiny bequests. All this makes Peter look a poor man, but he was probably fairly old, with five children and may well have already given them much of his possessions, but there is no indication of this in his Will.

There were a number of tanners in the community. Thomas Allason of Whinfell was one such. A Quaker, he made his Will on the thirteenth of the seventh month called September, less than two weeks before he died and his inventory is dated 24th September 1661 (26). The inventory is unusual for this area, the trade items having pride of place. Leather and bark together came to £39, his apparel and one "sadell" £3.15s.0d. His mare was a good beast, valued at no less than £3. He had rather meagre bedding of £1.15s.0d with two beds and two chests valued together at only £1 and beside them were two Bibles and two "little books", which at 13s.0d were worth nearly as much as his furniture. Presumably in the fire-house, were one Arke, one counter, one bushel, one "petcke"[?], two chairs, two stools – £1, one pair of "studele" with other gear belonging to the trade and a small quantity of the usual iron and wooden vessels, one winding cloth and three sacks. In addition he had

debts owing to him from seven listed people from as far afield as Workington and Wythop, the largest debt being for £9.10s.0d by Peter Burnyeat. His total assets were £69.1s.7d.

Was that Peter Burnyeat a relation of Thomas Burnyeat of Swinside who was buried on 29th May 1705? In his Will made three months earlier on 4th March 1704 (27), he described himself as a yeoman, but the makers of his inventory, one of whom was his son, taken two weeks after his funeral described him as a tanner without listing his stock in trade which was valued at £50.5s.0d. The items listed in the inventory, that today we would call general household, are rather similar to those given above for Thomas Allason, though of rather higher value. Thomas had no books, but to substantiate his claim to be a yeoman he had sheep valued at £20, with £12 of unspecified "beasts", and a good horse £2.10s.0d. With a comparatively small figure of £2.7s.6d for seed growing, he did not have much ground under the plough, and no plough was listed. With debts owing to him of £14 and by him £5, his estate was valued at £171.7s.3d and his funeral expenses came to £2.10s.0d.

Another tanner was Robert Bell of Routenbeck in Wythop (28). Robert was also well turned out in his dress, which with riding gear was valued at £6. By 1700 he had a sturdy house as his household effects were only listed, rather unusually for this area, by room: "all the goods in the low chamber" £10, "in the body-stead of the house" £12, "all the goods below the stairs and above" £12, in the barn he had corn and hay to value of £5 and in the fields he had "horses and beasts" to the quite large sum of £48 and sheep to £20. At £6 his husbandry gear was more than average, as were his collection of sacks and poakes at £2. Although no ploughs or harrows are mentioned, he had a considerable area under the plough and the crop sown was valued at £35. But Robert called himself a tanner by trade and in spite of all his husbandry, the biggest item on his quite considerable estate was £70 for "leather and his stock in trade". For this, at his death, he was owed £9.10s.0d, but he left very considerable debts totalling £105.10s.0d, though we are not told what for. The net value when he died on about 16th May 1700 was £130. From this, apart from four bequests of one shilling each to his two brothers and two sisters, he left three major bequests. Ten pounds went to his mother Garnett (sic) Bell of Lorton and all the rest of his worldly goods to his wife Ann after "the heire of my own body which is yet unborn. I bequeath to the said child the sum of twenty seven pounds ten shillings" which was to be paid when the child reached the age of 21 years. Baby Robert was baptised on 28th August and carried on the business of his father as soon as he became old enough and he married Anne Grigg on 10th May 1726. We do not know who carried on the business while he grew up, but it might well have been one of Robert's uncles.

Finally, of the four tanners for whom we have full records, we go back to Anthony Fisher of Wythop, whose Will was possibly the shortest and simplest of all (29). After the customary religious statement at the beginning of his Will, he finished with the unusual expression for this area "to be buried in Comane buriall". He left his riding gear to his son John, three legacies of £1 each to people of unspecified relationship and the rest, which was quite large, to his wife Anne. Like those listed immediately above, his household goods and fittings were simple but above average for his contemporary parishioners. For furniture he had a table and frame with chairs and stools and a cupboard. These were valued at £3 and in the cupboard we know, by juxtaposition on the inventory, he kept with his butter and

cheese, some "books". Like his fellow tanners he had, on 6th March 1673/4, £12 of threshed and unthreshed hay and corn, with another £5.10s.0d of bigge and oats threshed with malt, £29 worth of "cattill" (cattle), £10.15s.0d of horses and sheep, husbandry gear, ploughs, carts and "other things" to a total of £3. Not unusual was a composite entry of wood, sacks, yarn and winding cloth, £2. The last item creates a poser. Sometimes "winding", sometimes "winnowing", so exactly what are these for? And why are they itemised when so much is not? Anthony had no debts of his own, but £45.12s.4d owing to him, of which about one sixth was in bills. But again, like his fellow tanners of later years, by far the biggest item on his net inventory of £149 was "leather tanned and untanned and bark" worth £44.

What can we make of these records? Perhaps not very much, there are too few. But it does seem that whilst slaters and fishermen and odd job craftsmen may not have done as well as their yeomen neighbours, the weavers and tanners did, on the whole, considerably better. It is interesting to note for contrast that in her book "The Changing English Village", Miss Ashby found that "craftsmen are less well off than those who follow agriculture: most of them lived in small houses, little improved". She was talking about the latter part of the 17th century, in the Gloucestershire village of Bledington and quotes a weaver who in 1659 had recently built a cottage consisting of one room down, one room above, with a hovel behind for domestic purposes (30).

Table 9.1 ANALYSIS OF 181 'LORTON' INVENTORIES, 1576 - 1727

	1576 -1599	1600 -1649	1650 -1699	1700 -1727	Total	Overall average
No of inventories	21	32	88	40	181	
No of inventories with debts	16	15	51	22	104	57.5%
Mean value of debts (£)	10.76	4.43	20.17	19.88		16.31
Mean value of inventory before debts paid (£)	42.95	79.84	76.30	74.10		
Net inventory value (£)*	32.19	67.03	55.82	53.43		All: 52.12 17th C: 59.00
Range of gross inventories	2-107	2-286	9-908	8-295		
Range of debts	1-53	1-93	1-283	1-179	88	All: 29.0 17th C: 33.9
Range of net inventorie	-16/85	-15/286	-96/908	-126/185		
Standard deviation of Gross inventories	31.95	60.73	102.34	72.97		

* Net values are before deductions for funeral expenses, which often were not quoted.

Bouch reflected on the social scene in the 17th century, noting that after Westmorland, Cumberland was the poorest county in England in 1659/60 and that an assessment for tax in 1657 showed that the whole of Cumberland had to provide a sum equal to that of the city of Exeter, £92. He offers a statistical analysis of the 28 inventories found under the letter H, but apart from not being an inadequate number for a serious statistical analysis, he does not say to which area they refer,

except that being found in Carlisle we know they do not include our area of immediate interest. For what it is worth, he shows that about two thirds are under £40 excluding credits. Similarly, his quotations for farm stock are of no value here because they vary considerably and give no date and again do not refer to this area.

Table 9.2
ANALYSIS OF THE APPARENT DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH IN THE PAROCHIAL CHAPELRY OF LORTON, 1576 - 1720#

Marshall's values given in brackets

	1576-1599	600-1624	1625-1659	1660-1690	1691-1720
< £40	75%	42%	40%	57% (46%)	57% (35%)
£40 - £99	20%	37%	36%	27% (37%)	28% (29%)
> £100	5%	21%	24%	16% (17%)	15% (36%)
No of inventories	20	19	25	49 (775)	65 (797)

The time intervals in this table differ from those of Table 9.1 in order to match with those of Marshall.

Table 9.2 does reaffirm the position found above, namely, that 'Lorton' parish appears to have enjoyed a mini-boom period of relative prosperity in the first half of the seventeenth century, rather earlier it would seem than 'Cumbria' (ie Cumberland and that part of Westmorland now in modern Cumbria) as a whole. A more detailed breakdown shows more emphatically that there was a distinct polarisation between the under £40 and £70-£90 brackets in the earliest period, progressively moving towards a more even spread across the intermediate values between the concentrations at £0-£20 and over £100 in the last two periods. This was in spite of the rather high percentage of widows and retired yeomen inventories in the last period, which reduced the values to those shown in the table; values lower than would have been seen had the deceased been active farmers.

On the other hand J D Marshall takes a much larger sample of inventories, gives dates, and works out significant comparisons, but regretfully, again they do not refer to this part of Cumberland, being almost exclusively taken from southern Lakeland and Westmorland. He agrees with Wordsworth that spinning was a family activity, and found that there was a marked concentration of spinning wheels in the Furness area, where one third of inventories mentioned a wheel. In the Lorton valley the percentage is 10% and the number that mention yarn is almost exactly the same, but not all that mention wheels mention yarn, and vice versa. A similar though smaller number mention cloth, or bracket cloth and yarn together. Geographically there is no distinction to be made as to who did or did not have wheels, whose quoted values vary quite widely from 1s.6d to 10s.8d independently of time during the hundred years covered by the inventories. Only one household, that of John Rudd of Beckhouse, Brackenthwaite, in 1657 had two wheels at six shillings the two. There is slight evidence that widows, more than others, tended to spin and have cloth made. Only one inventory has survived for a weaver and that one is strange because it

contains no mention of wheel, loom, yarn or cloth and precious little else, so we must assume he was retired. Perhaps we should assume, from this source, that there was none in the valley; but we know from other sources that, at different times at least, there were weavers. Marshall also found hill yeomen who had either cattle or sheep but not both. Taken literally, there was none in this category in the Lorton valley.

Appendix 9.1 – PETER PEELL'S INVENTORY OF 1586 (LDFLHS Ref. W..219)

The following is a line-by-line transcription of the original.

This is the WHOLE INVENTORY of all the goods & Cattles
Of Peter Peell eld[e]r of Lorton Late deceased, prysed by
Anthonye Pearson, Peter Watson, Peter Wylkinson & Peter
Pearson beinge sworne upon a booke the xxiij th day of November

{lost by damage - Ano Dom?} 1586			
{lost by damage - }		xxxiij s	iiij d
{lost by damage - }	iij li	vis	iij d
{lost by damage It. -s}eaven younge beastes and one calfe	v li	vj s	viij d
It. xxj olde sheepe	iij li	x s	
It. w[i]th sheepe hogs		x j s	viij d
It. Corne and strawe	viij li	x s	
It. fortye trusses or lodes of hay		xliij s	viij d
It. One olde swyne & a halfe & thre piges		xiiij s	
It. bedinge & his apparel		xx s	
It. one arke, one amerrye, one olde chist, w[i]th bords, formes, & tristes		xxj s	
It. plowe geare, and Iron geare, w[i]th one pare of wheiles & ...?		viij s	
It. two axes, one Iron waige and one (brewrecruke?)		ij s	
It. six geise one Cocke and six hens		v s	iiij d
It. one quarter of beyfe and thre olde sackes		v s	iiij d
It. two chaires, one kirset, one pare of tonges & one Iron Wheitell		ijs	viij d
It. two brasse potts, two olde catles, two panes, three satts, six puther dublers, two stands w[i]th othere implements of husolde		xxxv s	
It. the executours of Peter hudson for sheepe grasse		xv s	
It. the said executours for hirdinge & keepinge of sheepe		v s	
It. the said executours for one borde, & for meat & drinke which his servants had		ij s	viij d
It. the said executours t[ha]t George hudson was owinge unto my wife			xviij d
It. John hudson of bowterbecke for thacke & thackinge of one house {lost by damage - Jo}hn hudson w[hic]h I paid for hym to Andrew Walker		v s	viij d
It. {lost by damage - Jo}hn hudson is owinge unto me, for the leise of my {lost by damage - ?co}rne w[hic]h was left in one barne, the w[hi]ch barne the said John hudson shoulde have caused to have beine thacked			
It. John mysone eld[e]r of Lent money		xj s	
It. John Towson of brackentwhat (sic) of the lowe house of lent mony		vij s	vij d
It. Robert Towson for one sceyne			xiiij d
It. Thomas Peell of overlorton of lent money		viij s	
It. Rychard Pearson of Soothat of lent money			xij d
The totall summe	xxxiij li	xv s	xj d

---

debtes owinge by the said Peter Peell

Imprimis to John hudson for the occupation of ?Stirton? ground pledge Rychard Wylson			v li
It. to the parrysheners of lorton, of the Churche goods there		vj li	iij s x d
It. to Thomas Fletcher of Cockermouth of lent monye pledge Thomas Peell			
It. to John Rude, Robart Stub, Wyll[ia]m Pearson & Robart Fysher of lent monye, pledge for the same Thomas Rud			

Appendix 9.1 – PETER PEELL'S INVENTORY OF 1586 (LDFLHS Ref. W..219)
(CONTD)

It. John Wyll[ia]mson of babburthe of Lent monye
pledge for the same Rychard Watson & Robart Fletcher
{lost by damage -}therrye of lent monye pledge John Bolton xx s
It.
{lost by damage - ?Ag}nes Wyll[ia]mson layte of Rychard Wyll[ia]mson xxiij s
It. to Rychard Wynder for sheepe xviij s ij d
It. to John Hudson of buttermyere for sheepe & othere ?Ragcimge? xxxvij s
It. to the executours of Sr. Peter Peel of his wages iiij li x s
It. to Thomas Peell of buttermyere for sheepe xij s viij d
It. to Martyn Wylkinson of lent monye & for one pecke of ote meile iij s vj d
It. to Cuthbert Peell of lorton for sheepe xiij s iiij d
It. to Rychard Bell for medowe as is recorded in our byll xl s
It. to Helene Bell of lent money ij s
It. to Cuthbert Watson for one quarter of beyfe iiij s
It. to Thoms Stub for land harrowinge in lorton head ij s iiij d
It. to John Steill in lent money iij s
It. to the said John Steile one parshele of medowe grounde ground or else v s
It. to Nicolas threlket for land plowinge vj s viij d
It. to the said Nicolas threlket for one pecke of ote meile xviij d
It. to Will[ia]m Wylkinson for one bushele of bige iij s viij d
It. to Will[ia]m Pearson for one busshele (sic) of malt iij s iiij d
It. to Jenet lardle, widowe, for malt viij s
It. to Peter Wylkinson sonne of Martyn Wylkinson of lent money ij s iiij d
{lost by damage} Wynder for shoes iij s x d
{lost by damage} Mathewson received of Anthonye Allenson xvj d
It. to George Wylkinson for one sheepe iij s ij d
It. to John Blatwhat for sheepe v s
It. to Anthonye Pearson for fourtine Weathers xxxvj s
It. to the said Anthonye Pearson of lent money xx s
It. to the said Anthonye Pearson for land plowinge & teathe ledinge v s iiij d
It. to Thomas Wylkinson of lent money xx s
It. to the said Thomas one parsshele of medowe or else iiij s iiij d
It. to John Peell his sonne lent monye
It. to the said John one hepser or ...ye (heffeer or wheye?) w[hi]ch his grande mother
did gyve unto hym the said John or else in money xx s
It. to the said John Peell for ploghe xix d
It. to John hall for haye & for meate & drynke iij s viij d
It. to Anthonye bencon for sheepe viij s
It. to George Fearhone pledge Charles Rud & Anthonye Benson xij s vj d
It. to Wyll[ia]m lardle for one cowe and for ploughe xv s vij d
It. to Peter Bell of lent money v s
{line lost}
It. to Thomas Peell my sonne of lent money v s
It. to the said Thomas Peell for teachynge his brother Peter Peell his occupation xx s
It. to Will[ia]m Peyson & Xpher Fysher for land plowinge ij s viij d
It. to Rychard Allenson ij s iiij d

The totall summe xlvij li xix s

The debytory more than the inventory by xiiij li iij s j d

Chapter 9 References

(1) LRO WRW C; RCG W.001: see Chapter 4, "Land"
(2) Family tree and correspondence from Dr Jacqueline Woolcock in LDFLHS archive
(3) LRO WRW C; RCG W.042
(4) RCG W.053
(5) RCG W.005
(6) RCG W.074, 1711
(7) A True and Perfect Inventory, Pub The Haywoods Society, Staffordshire, 1993
(8) Table 9.1 extracted from Marshall, Agrarian Wealth, Table 1
(9) RCG W.219
(10) J D Marshall, p 210
(11) RCG W. 1540
(12) RCG W.008
(13) Appleby, p 1
(14) See Appleby , Chapters 7 & 8: Laslett Chapter 6)
(15) George "A Short Population History of the Parochial Chapelry of Lorton" Ch 6
(16) Seven centuries of the prices of consumables, compared with builders' wage-rates". E H Brown and S V Hopkins. Economica 23 (1956), 296-313
(17) RCG W.210
(18) RCG W.180
(19) RCG W.002
(20) RCG W.009
(21) An old Danish word for barley, "The Vikings" Johannes Brondsted, Pelican, 1960; p 54
(22) RCG W.058
(23) RCG W.083
(24) RCG W.91
(25) RCG W.142
(26) RCG W.056
(27) RCG W.050
(28) RCG W.048
(29) RCG W.132
(30) Ashby, p 139

Chapter 10: THE FAMOUS AND NEARLY-FAMOUS SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF THE VALE OF LORTON

Truth to tell, there are no really famous folk of Lorton, if, by famous, we mean born here and becoming well known nationally and internationally. Some have made their mark in a more restricted sense or by association and some have a degree of connection through family ties or by other accident.

I suppose one might normally give pride of place to Wordsworth but I shall exercise the author's privilege and put **Doreen Wallace** first. Born on 18th June, 1897, Queen Victoria's diamond Jubilee year, in the house called "Broomlands", she was baptised Dora Eileen on 30th July, daughter of Robert Bruce Agnew Wallace, gentleman, and his wife Mary Elizabeth. Both were members of a junior branch of aristocratic Scottish families, one of whom was responsible for the famous "Wallace Collection" of art treasures. Under her pen-name Doreen, she went on to write a number of fiction books including some set in the Lorton area and some non-fiction, in particular "English Lakeland", published in 1940. I had the privilege of talking to her only a year before she died at Diss in Norfolk, aged 92, where she had spent all her later years. She shared some of her early memories with me, admitting that her great enthusiasm for Lorton, expressed as "the loveliest village in the loveliest valley in England" (1) had been borne of memories of her youthful enthusiasm during the fifteen years of childhood she had spent here. After her parents left Broomlands, they had a brief sojourn in Scotland, but returned for a period to live at Kirkfell House. In spite of her advanced years, Doreen laughed happily as she recounted to me how, as a child, she had gleefully diverted the Mellbreak huntsmen and hounds up the fell side whilst she hid the poor persecuted fox in the greenhouse at Kirkfell House, into which it had run in its terror. Nevertheless her hatred of hunting the fox did not stop her joining the otter hunt up the valley because, as she explained, the hunt never seemed "to get beyond the jolly old Kirk Stile pub".

If there is one Lorton born individual who did command international acclaim, it must be **John Wilson Robinson** who, to be precise, was born not in Lorton but across the river in the township of Whinfell. Born at Whinfell Hall, to Quakers John Wilson Robinson, Senior and his wife in 1853, he took over the running of Whinfell Hall Farm after finishing his schooling. Like his father, he was an avid fell walker and obtained a unique knowledge of the fells, vales, and the rocks and ravines. He took an active interest in local government, sitting on the board of the Rural District Council and the Board of Governors of Cockermouth Union Workhouse. In 1900 he let the farm and started a business career in Keswick as an estate agent. But his fame rested on an altogether different activity. He began climbing seriously in the 1880s and became a pioneer in the sport which, although starting in the Wasdale and Ennerdale area in the 1820s, was still a young, developing and dangerous sport. He it was who introduced the concept of using a rope for rock climbing in these fells and led literally hundreds of first ascents on many of the now famous crags and rock climbs. His skills and friendliness in helping others to climb, brought famous climbers from all over Europe. In 1907 he was made Senior Vice-President of the newly formed "Fell and Rock Climbing Club of the English Lake District", but died at the early age of 54 very soon afterwards. He was buried at the Friends Pardshaw Cemetery on August 20th 1907.

In June 1908 many of his friends carried up to a knoll at the end of the high level track overlooking Pillar Rock, a heavy bronze plaque to his memory in such atrocious weather that they had to return days later to fix it and erect a cairn to his memory.
"For Remembrance of John Wilson Robinson of Whinfell Hall, in Lorton, who died 1907 at Brigham, one hundred of his comrades and friends raised this.
He knew and loved as none other these his native crags and fells,
whence he drew simplicity, strength and charm" (2). See photograph 4.

In spite of Doreen's writing with Lorton connections, I suppose if anyone put Lorton on the map it must be **William Wordsworth** who, though he never lived here, did often visit his school chum William Musgrave. This William lived with his parents in the house now called "Graceholme", but was then the "Cedars". They used to play round the Yew Tree that William Wordsworth was later to make famous, but one day he fell into the beck and had to go back home to Cockermouth in borrowed clothes (3). Can we not assume Wordsworth's thoughts around that yew tree date from this period? **Wordsworth's Yew Tree** must also figure in this list of the 'nearly famous'. For some time it appeared to me that between publishing that poem in 1815 and his death in 1850, the villagers of Lorton presented Wordsworth with a very handsome carved chair fashioned from a piece of the yew tree that had fallen. Subsequent research regarding this supposed event and the later history of the chair, lead me to an alternative solution to the mystery. At least as far back as 1966 it has been the seat of the Chairman of the Cockermouth Town Council, though when I sought it out, no one on the staff seemed to know of its famous connections, or even of its existence. I am indebted to Mr and Mrs Baxter, now of Cockermouth but previously in what were the grounds of Boon Beck Farm (prior to the sale of the land), for drawing my attention to newspaper reports that partially clarify the mystery. A beautiful chair, fashioned from the Lorton yew [but not the 'Wordsworth' chair, and more intricately carved], was exhibited at the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition and auctioned with other items belonging to Rheda Mansion (4). Previously to 1940, the "Wordsworth" chair was in the possession of the Waugh family at their home at Papcastle. After the death of Miss Waugh, the chair was sold for £50 to the Eland family, proprietors of the Lakes Hotel [now the "Trout"]. In October 1966, the owners of the "Trout" presented a chair, described as "a Wordsworth family chair" to the Cockermouth Urban Council. Furthermore, Isaac Hodgson, believed to be a joiner from a Lorton family, said he remembered his elders talking about ornamental furniture being made from wood from the Lorton yew (5). It is significant that Rheda had also been the home of the Dixon family of Lorton Hall during this period. According to Askew, part of the tree blew down "about fourteen years ago" which would be about 1851 or 1852, that is, about the time or just after Wordsworth's death, but it is possible that the fourteen years is an underestimate, and it is also possible the chair was presented to another member of the Wordsworth family (6). Nevertheless, neither the members of the Wordsworth family nor the Wordsworth Trust have any knowledge of such a chair ever having been in Wordsworth's possession (7). Thus it seems entirely possible that this chair was one of a pair made, along with other items from the Lorton yew, "Wordsworth's Yew", and circulated amongst local gentry until it came to the Council as explained above. It is also significant that the brass plaque affixed to the chair states quite

simply "Wordsworth's Yew Tree, Lorton" – no mention of presentation in spite of the statement by the owners of the 'Trout' in 1866. There is one other strand of detail that lends itself to this theory. In June 1879, Mary Hodgson married Joseph Burns who made a desk for Lorton school, which is also believed to be made from the same tree (8). That the tree had become famous is not in doubt. Often overseas visitors to Lorton would ask as to its whereabouts so that they could go and see it. A severe storm in November 1999 caused another major disaster to the much visited tree, breaking off a major limb and leaving the tree looking very one sided and sad. So it said goodbye to the Millenium and quite possibly celebrated its own millenium at the same time: but it is probably good for another few centuries. So there is now yet another source of yew for furniture to perplex local historians. Jan Tyson, daughter of John Tyson who acquired the land from the Baxter family, and had been a staunch support and summer aid in our White House Barn tea shop, had a small plaque made from the fallen branch, polished and engraved with an outline of White Ash which she presented to us before we left Lorton. It is one of our prized possessions. Whilst considering the fate of this Yew, it should be recorded that to commemorate the new millennium, within a national scheme to propagate from historic yews, a number of cuttings were taken from this "Wordworth's" Yew (before its 1999 accident) and twelve baby second generation "Wordsworth" yews were planted in local gardens. See Photograph 5.

George Fox is reputed to have preached in Lorton Steeple House and under the yew tree in 1652. He wrote in his diary that the tree was so full of people he was afraid it would break. Tradition has it that order was kept by a dozen Cromwellian soldiers, who were presumably stationed in the village, though I have seen no documented evidence of this.

Tradition also has it that **John Wesley** preached under the tree on May 28th 1752, but in his own diary for 1759, he only says "I rode over to Lorton..... many came from a considerable distance and I believe did not repent of their labours for they found God to be a God both of the hills and the valleys, and nowhere more present than in the mountains of Cumberland."

A local preacher of some moment in his lifetime was Lorton born **Peter Robinson** who has already been mentioned in Chapter 6. The blank verse lines on his tombstone were probably penned by his son, also Peter, who was himself well known under the pen-name of Jim Sargisson, for the "Joe Swap" stories published in 1881.

Returning to the literary trail, we come to **E R Denwood**, who was for a time schoolmaster at Lorton. He wrote of Cumberland customs and his writings included scenes and poems relating to Lorton, including an alternative to Wordsworth's about the Lorton yew tree which, whatever one thinks of the quality of the verse, is more relevant to the subject and its environment and is worth quoting the first three stanzas:

"Here by the stream it stands alone,
As verdant and as hale
As when the Britons bows were drawn
To guard the lively Vale.

It stands, the pride of Lorton, still,
Although its glory's done:
For centuries it's seen yon hill
Reflect the ev'ning sun.

By archers sought in bygone days
To furnish trusty bows,
When Lorton men in bloody frays
Defeated Scottish foes.

et seq

Another **Denwood, John,** also wrote poems of Lorton which were very popular in their day, "Nell of Lorton Vale", and "The Maid of Ghyll-Brier", which seems to have been inspired by the story of the "Beauty of Buttermere", and that brings us neatly to Mary.

Mary Robinson was daughter of the landlord of "The Char" at Buttermere and earned the name "Beauty of Buttermere" from the tourists who visited her father's inn. After rather a whirlwind courtship, she married the man who had gone to Buttermere to "fish" and styled himself the Honourable Alexander Augustus Hope, Member of Parliament for Dumfries, Lt-Colonel in the 14th Regiment of Foot, and brother to the Earl of Hopetoun. They were married by Licence at St Cuthbert's Church, Lorton on 2nd October, 1802. The Honourable Alexander lived like a Lord both before and after the wedding and ran up large debts. Amongst his pretensions, he franked his own letters with a personal seal, which acts also sealed his fate. It is ironic that in an undated love letter sent to Mary from Keswick, he wrote "I have a deceitful face you tell me....." (9). He overplayed his hand, was discovered to be an undischarged and fugitive bankrupt and confidence trickster named John Hatfield, as well as being a bigamist. He was arrested and hanged at Carlisle for the offence of forgery, related to having his own frank for letters, moral justice thus being done for all the misery he had caused. In reporting the wedding before the truth came out, the "Sun", in its edition for 11th October 1802, was very unflattering of poor Mary. "To beauty, in the strict sense of the word, she has small pretensions, for she is rather gap-toothed and somewhat pock-fretten. But her face is very expressive, and her figure and movements are graceful to a miracle. She ought to have been called the "Grace of Buttemere". The article goes on to list and admire her other qualities, though the paper's correspondent says her parents kept a "poor little pot-house", for which Mary used to write the bills in "an uncommonly fine Italian hand", though I would say that was just a little generous if her signature on the wedding certificate can be used to judge. Mary's parents capitalised from the affair as many people came to Buttermere to see and admire for themselves. Eventually Mary married a farmer from Caldbeck, settled down and brought up a family, some of whose descendents live there still.

In the late 1900s, the congregations in Lorton Vale churches were privileged to have **Rev Professor John Marsh CBE** living amongst them, first at Rannerdale, then at Dale View, High Lorton, and preaching. Though born at Brighton, he retired to

this valley, his wife's home. He had a distinguished career – professor of Theology at Nottingham University and took Mansfield College, of which he became Minister and Principal, into the embrace of Oxford University. He was an authority on St John's Gospel. His book "St John" published by Pelican in 1968 went through 8 reprints. John served on the BBC Advisory Committee for Religious Affairs and published several other books. He was a soft-spoken, self-effacing gentle gentleman and in spite of having been lame all his life due to poliomyelitis as a child, he walked the fells and had been a rowing coach at Oxford. He went back to his beloved Oxford and died there on 26th January 1994, aged 89 (11).

The **Winder** family first appeared in the Lorton records holding one third of the Vil of Lorton in 1398 and at some later time built Lorton Hall as the family seat. John, who died in 1609, became a nephew of Edmund Grindal, Archbishop of Canterbury when he married the latter's niece Mabel Grindal. In the fullness of time, two of the Lorton branches of the family produced London city merchants, both of whom went on to become British Consul for Barcelona in the mid-18th century, whilst another non-Lorton branch of the family produced Lt-Colonel John Winder who became a JP in Maryland, USA at the end of the 18th century, whose grandson became Governor of that State (12). More details of this pre-eminent family are given in Appendix 10.1.

Joseph Sutton was born in 1762 in Cockermouth, but after his marriage, lived in his house now called "Woodlands" at High Rogerscale. This was long known as the "painting-house" because Joseph became a very well known artist. He became so popular that he employed six apprentices under articles, and was admitted as a Member of the Royal Academy. He died at Rogerscale in his 81st year, 1843, but was not buried at Lorton.

The Winder family was not the only one with Lorton connections to make a mark in the New World. **Joseph Plasket** came of an old and humble Cumberland family, and with his brother John was born at Braithwaite. Joseph came to Lorton about 1837, having earlier married Dinah Mandale of Wythop. Joseph was classified, or perhaps he classified himself, as an agricultural labourer. Nevertheless, for at least two years he was appointed surveyor for the township with a salary of £3 pa. Less than two years after they appeared in the 1851 census, Joseph then aged 36 and Dinah, some four years younger, decided to emigrate to America. Taking with them his mother and their eight children, they journeyed via Cockermouth to Liverpool, where they embarked on an old sailing vessel called "Tanawanda". After a difficult crossing lasting six weeks the ship arrived at Philadelphia on Easter Sunday 27th March 1853, but not before one passenger lost his wife and all but one son at sea due to illness. As an interesting little comment on the times, one of the few possessions Joseph took, that he had not sold, was a handsaw, marked John Banks, Cumberland. – a hardware shop still in business in Market Place, Cockermouth.

Joseph and his family bought a run-down farm in Virginia and thrived. They set up a post office and general store and called the spot "Lorton Valley". The post office closed in 1911, after thirty six years served by three generations of the family. Its eventual demise was brought about by the railroad which was driven close by in

1870. Another member of the family opened a new store near the railway station and became the postmaster there. Originally the locality was named "Springman", but was later changed to "Lorton", which township, together with that of "Lorton Valley" founded by the Plasket family, is their claim to fame in this history (13).

I would like to include **John Dalton**, of Atomic Theory of Elements fame, in our list of those with Lorton family connections. He was born only five miles away at Eaglesfield in 1766, but I have been unable to make a definite connection with the John Dalton who bought half of "White Ash" in 1714.

Famous in a rather different way was **Annie Burns** of Woodhouse, Buttermere. She was a much loved character in the valley and particularly in Buttermere who died in October 1991. She had spent all of her 88 years in Buttermere and had an infectious enthusiasm for Buttermere church in which she had worshipped for 80 years and in which she had been organist for 52 years. Not only did she make church visitors feel very welcome, but also at her bed and breakfast establishment at Wood House, where, over the years since 1922, thousands of visitors found peace and spiritual refreshment. Many came back year after year to Annie's special charm (14). Annie bequeathed Woodhouse to the National Trust, which is now continuing as a guest house.

Doreen Winn came with her husband, Gordon, to live at High Rogerscale in 1967. Doreen was somewhat ahead of her times, gaining First Class Honours in Chemistry at Liverpool University. Gordon, a Doctor of Chemistry, was not normally a churchgoer but before he died he told Doreen he loved to hear good music in church, so after he died, Doreen funded the annual concert by top artists in Lorton church, which had already been running for several years. At her own death in November 1996, Doreen willed £10,000 to Lorton church "in the hope that it would continue to finance annual concerts". The first of these Celebrity Concerts "in memory of Dr and Mrs A G Winn" was held in 1998.

J W Conkey is the only Lortonian (though born at Irton in Eskdale in 1914) to have taken part and excelled in the Grasmere Sports. He won the junior guides race in 1930 and competed in the senior races from 1932, always coming home in the first four places: 2nd in 1932 and 1933, 4th in 1934, 3rd in 1936, 1937 and 1939, He won in 1935, setting the second fastest time on record and won again in 1938 only one second slower, after which he retired with honour. He was the first fell runner to win both the junior and senior races (15).

W L Alexander died in 1910 aged 90 and was buried in Lorton churchyard. He was the son of wealthy Liverpool shipping underwriters and inherited Shatton and Esps farms. At the age of 37 he married Frances Armistead aged 42, who was the sister of Lorton's Vicar William Armistead and later moved into Oak Hill. From this house where he lived until his death, he acted very much as the squire and Lord of the Manor, dispensing charity, largess to many, especially the children, good works and patronage in a very Victorian manner as befitting his position. He was very much involved with Lorton, Wythop and Embleton schools, as well as Fairfield school in Cockermouth. He gave up farming in 1877 (16).

Appendix 10.1: THE WINDER FAMILY

Of the various family names that one might associate automatically with Lorton – Bowe, Peil, Peirson, Rudd and Winder – the most pre-eminent is the last. We do not yet know the origin of the family, various branches of which lived in or around Lorton for at least 300 years. Geographically, the Winders moved far and wide, although it appears to be here that the name is first recorded. We do know quite a lot about the various Wynder families after 1398; they were not only 'upwardly mobile' but positively power seeking, which, according to John Winder makes them unique amongst the Winder tribe.

John Winder, living at Brougham, near Penrith in 1998 is quite certain in his own mind about the very early years of the family. Of Norse extraction, the Vinnadr family came with Ingesmund from Ireland around 915 AD at the behest of "the King of England" (Edward the Elder?), to aid him in his troubles. Their name became anglicised (more probably 'Normanised') as they settled in the region of the lake which came to be called "Windandermere", the lake of the Windanders. Over time both names became contracted to Windermere and Winder. John says the Winders kept themselves to themselves, acquired fell farmland and stayed on their land, not getting involved with politics or the church. Eldest sons inherited the land, the others went away to seek their own livelihoods and many went overseas. He maintains that all the Winders came from this original stock in Westmorland and has agreed this with all those Winders he has met over the years. The Lorton Winders he suggests are unique in as far as they branched out westwards into the lower valleys, then becoming merchants, taking up government posts overseas and entering politics in the New Colonies. So says Mr John Winder of Penrith, but he has produced to me no documentary evidence to this effect (17). The English Place Name Society does not wholly agree. Certainly there is general acceptance of the derivation of Windermere, but the earliest recorded names of Winder, the places in both Westmorland (Winder-in-Haile) and Cumberland (Winder-in-Lamplugh) appear as early as 1170-80 as Winderg[e], as do High and Low Winder in Barton, all derived from the Old Swedish meaning 'windy sheiling'. Another theory supposes that the family originated in Westmorland at a place called Wynder where, in 1278, one William, son of Adam of Wynder, held a free Tenement (18). All of which makes it much more likely that the family name derived from the place Winder (Wynder), rather than the other way round, and we meet a case in point in Lorton. But there is a gap of some three hundred years between John Winder's claim and the EPNS account of the derivation, so the former cannot be ruled out, but still requires documented confirmation.

This is all very intriguing. Certainly by the time we get parish records, there are a large number of Winder families in central Westmorland. On the other hand, in medieval times, the Vill of Lorton (ie Low Lorton) was held in equal portions by three families. Two of these portions, held by Robert of Goseford and Robert of Plumbland, were charged rent of 3s 4d in 1305. Margaret de Wyndare is recorded as holding 1/3 Lorton inferior for 3s 4d cornage in 1398 having acquired the holding formerly of Robert of Plumbland (19). Of the third portion, it is known that by 1385 it was further sub-divided, one sixth of the Manor being held by one Margaret Elston at a rent of 20 pence (20). The next Lorton mention of Winder is in 1502/3 – "William Winder for lands in Lorton – rent 12s 6d" (21). One Richard Winder, not

specifically dignified by the description 'gent' as were some others, is found in the 1526 list of those "gentlemen called on for Border Service" in conjunction with other names that relate to this area (22). By 1547, the two one third segments of Lorton were held by William Sandes and Peter Wynder, still each at a rent of 3s 4d and Peter had now also acquired the tenement called Gilbanke at the nominal, but by no means cheap, rent of 1 lb of pepper (23). Peter, or his son Peter, was still in residence at Lorton Hall in 1570 (24), though by 1578, according to the Manor records, John appears to be head of the family (25). We next hear of John in a court case regarding a dispute over 'tythes' in 1601 in which both his wife Mabel and son John gave evidence (26). John the father died in 1609.

The first parish register reference to the Wynder family, which was to grow and whose branches were to remain in the village for another 218 years or more, occurs when Elizabeth Wynder married John Dickson on 24th November 1544. Over a long period of time, all families tend to produce some branches which grow in stature whilst others move down the social scale and the Wynder family was no exception. When Lorton parish records start, the Winder family, as they subsequently wrote their name, was already established in the Vale of Lorton, though the scanty details make it very difficult to determine their exact relationship, or indeed where they were dwelling. Elizabeth's wedding was followed shortly by that of Jenatt Winder to John Gill in 1545 and that of Ellen Winder to Myles Fisher in 1547. It is here we meet the first frustrating break in the registers which state very bluntly "No records were kept during the bloody reign of Mary" (1553 - 1558). We then have a little help from the Crosthwaite parish registers. Richard Winder of Lorton married Janet Yowdall of Waidenleth (ie Watendlath) on 4th December 1586; on 11th July 1591, John Winder of Lorton married Janet Wilson of Waidenleth and on March 11th 1596, Gawin and John's son was baptised at Crosthwaite. The register says John and Janet of Waidenleth, so it looks as though John married and migrated to his wife's and his father-in-law's, whereupon the beaten path between the two valleys seems to have ceased, at least in as far as events for church registration were involved. When social contact was so very restricted, it would be interesting to know how Lorton folk became romantically involved with folk in such an isolated place as Watendlath. Of course, the union may not have been a 'romantic' one as understood in the twentieth century and, furthermore, there were Yowdalls at Rogerscale and Wilsons in the Lorton valley, so there may already have been family connections with Watendlath. This explanation is reinforced by the next Lorton reference to the Winders when William, son of John Winder of Rogerskell, was baptized on 23rd November 1597, very soon after the commencement of the Lorton baptism register. The first recorded death in the family is of John Winder, Gentleman, who was buried at Lorton on 21st November, 1609. He was married to Mabel, daughter of Robert Grindal of St. Bees and niece of Edmond, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1575 - 1583 (27). We next pick up the record of the main branch of the family when Peter Winder, Gentleman, of Lorton, and probably great-grandson of the Peter we first met in 1544, together with his wife Dorothie, witnessed the will of Peter Richardson of Nether Lorton on 2nd March 1613 (28). Peter's marriage to Dorothie has not been traced; she died childless and was buried on 1st November 1623. Peter's subsequent marriage to Anne (possibly Musgrave) is also untraced but their son John was baptised at Lorton on 8th January 1627. This later Peter was the starting point for the family research carried out by a much later member of the family. This gentleman, F. A. Winder of

Portsmouth, was only concerned in that typical Victorian interest of status, as he only chronicled the lives of those which, in the 20th century, we refer to as "upwardly mobile", and they did go far from being humble husbandmen and yeomen.

John, who was baptized in 1627, spent his last years at Cockermouth and died there in 1696. The family home, which later became known as Lorton Hall was sold to Captain Dalston in 1699 John Winder's wife Mary, who died at Cockermouth in 1708 had at least ten children, some of whom, once discovered by his Victorian descendent, were allowed to lapse back into obscurity. Of the others, Dorothy, who was the Executor of her mother's will in 1709, married a priest, Thomas Jefferson. Three sons of John, John Junior, Jonathan and Samuel, moved to London and prospered mightily. No more the small village countryman for them. Jonathan became an agent for the Honorable India Company in Calcutta. In his will of 1717, he left an estate in excess of £5,300 together with a 28 acre farm in Boreham Wood, Hertfordshire and a large house nearby at Aldenham called "Newberries". Less is known of Samuel, who became a merchant, and in 1696 purchased from his brother John, in partnership with a Mathew Humberstone, extensive properties in Hoffe and Drybecke, Appleby, and Ashby in Westmorland, in which superior manner he returned, nominally at least, to his origins. The timing seems not to be right, but could this be the origin of the Westmorland branches of the family? Or was Samuel going to join relations? John Junior became a barrister of Gray's Inn, London. All three brothers were buried in Allhallows Churchyard, Barking, where a cenotaph was erected to their memory under the terms of Jonathan's will.

Jonathan died a bachelor, but John, who still loved his Lorton "home", went to the quite considerable trouble of having his two children, William and Mary, baptized at Lorton. William became a merchant and British Consul at Barcelona for twelve years, eventually returning to family roots by buying property at Dufton in Westmorland, where he was buried in 1766. Of the six children of Samuel, John also became a London Merchant and succeeded his cousin William as Consul at Barcelona between 1734 and 1740, dying in 1766. He too was buried in the family grave at Allhallows. Two of Samuel's other children followed family footsteps by becoming merchants; Samuel Junior in London and Jonathan following his uncle at Calcutta though he died young, pre-deceasing his father.

Meanwhile, at the grass roots, the yeomen Winders were going about their humdrum and much hardier lives round the parish of Lorton. Only a few of their Wills are extant and they contrast starkly with their London cousins. In 1614, Peter Winder, who farmed at Browe in Whinfell, died. His Will left to his oldest son Peter his "meal-Arke" and all his husbandry "geare" together with "his riding furniture", to complete what he should receive as his lawful "child portion". The meal Arke was a chest in which the household store of meal was kept. Additionally, Peter Junior was willed half the growing oak on the Tenement which had been kept for his use on his coming of age. For a further bequest of a table, he had to pay his two uncles, William and John, £10 owed by his father. As daughter Janett got "towe Chists standing within my bower dore" we must visualise a fairly substantial, sub-divided house, though presumably not one of those stone buildings standing at Browe today. Janett and her brother Thomas were each to have a "chiste", that is a sort of storage box, made for them by their uncle, John Winder, who we must therefore presume was a carpenter/joiner, either by trade, or by acquired skills.

Instructions for these chistes were precise. That for Janett was to be large enough to "houlde the measure of towe leade of oates" (29) and be delivered to her on her 21st birthday or "when she come to mantenance" (which is a useful piece of information as we have no record of either Peter's marriage or Janett's birth). The chiste for Thomas was to be "six quarters longe and breadth answerable". Peter, the father, was clearly a careful and thoughtful husbandman as his youngest son John was also to have a chiste, thus all the children in their minorities would have a safe storage for their no doubt quite modest wardrobe and personal belongings. The residue of the estate went to Peter's brothers and sisters.

At Milner Place, now known as Miller Place, Brackenthwaite, John Winder, a single man was living and working with John Fisher. John Winder died in October 1623 leaving his sheep to the young Peter Fisher and twenty pounds to the other two Fisher children, John and Janett. Twenty shillings was given to John, the son of Richard Winder of Harmeesyd.

This Richard was one of two brothers, John being the other, who, through the mid 1600s, farmed some land at Earmisyde, or Harmesyd as it was also written (ie Armaside). Dying in 1641, John Winder left his son John a cupboard, a table, a long chest and a bed in the chamber. Modest as this appears, it represented a reasonable standard of comfort compared with many contemporary neighbours. To his sister Jenat he left £8; to brother Edward £6 and his second best set of clothes; to his brother Peter his "rocket" (sic – what this was I do not know, but possibly a rocking chair) and to brother Richard "one blacke shire about a yeare old and also my best rayment, doublet and breaches". What was left went to his wife Ann and son John (30).

Brother Richard died in 1654, leaving £30 to his son Edward, payable over three years, because this money would have to be raised from funds generated by the land worked by the family. To his son, also named Richard, and daughter Jenatt, he left 10 shillings and five shillings respectively. Richard Senior must have been a widower by this time as his other son, Peter, received "all the reste of my goods and Cattell" (ie chattels, not cattle).

Some thirty years after the reins of family leadership were being passed on at Armaside, brothers and cousins were similarly and sadly engaged at Over Lorton and Bank. Peter Winder, a widower, who apparently lived at Over Lorton but had a half interest in a tenement at Bank in Whinfell for which he paid a rent of 6s 1d to William Christian Esquire, died in July, 1680. This may have been the same Peter who as a child had been living at Armaside. At the time of his death he had two young daughters, Ann and Jeptha, probably in the care of Anne Skinner to whom he left the sum of 20 shillings. If this seems miserly, it represents a large proportion of his apparent assets. Nothing else is mentioned in his will other than 2s 6d to each of his six servants, by which we should probably understand four or five farm labourers and one or two household servants in lieu of a wife. The unspecified residue went to the four Executors for the maintenance of the children.

Another Winder, William, made his will on 20th January 1683, leaving a few paltry specified amounts to close relatives and the remainder to his wife Catherine. To his cousin Margaret Bowe, he left 20s; to Richard at Armaside, presumably the cousin or brother we met before, 1s; to three Wilkinson children twelve pence each; to Thomas Watson and Ann his wife "either a shilling". It was not considered worth specifying such household furniture as there was and it went to the widow. It could

not have been much because Catherine herself died in 1698 leaving several small monetary bequests, one of £5 to her niece Elizabeth Duthet, and four others totalling 8s to neighbours and friends, whilst an unspecified residue went to her nephew Richard Banke. But William also left 5s to John Winder of Highside. This John appears to be yet another branch of the family and possibly the stepson of Ann Fisher. No other records of this John have been traced, other than in 1891 when he was required by the Manor court to 'find a constable for that tenement' (ie as a householder at Highside).

Several later isolated, and as yet unconnected, references to the family occur. On 21st September 1746, John Winder of Dean was married by Licence at Lorton to Mary Harrison, also of Dean, so the family connection with Lorton must still have existed. This was followed by the weddings at Lorton on 17th April 1748 of Jacob Winder, smith, of the parish of Lorton, to Sarah Ullock, widow of Lorton and on 25th April 1772 of Mary Winder to one William Ashbridge of Cockermouth, whose name appears nowhere else in Lorton records.

So ended, as far as we can tell, the Winder family connections with Lorton, though there is a family vault under the chancel of the church, and the name remains a familiar one in West Cumbria.

A branch of the family, centred on Wyresdale in north Lancashire, believe they too originated from north Cumberland, arriving in Wyresdale before 1583 (31).

Why Lorton husbandmen should migrate to Kent remains something of a mystery, notwithstanding the demonstrated fact that Lorton did maintain a steady population by reason of, amongst other factors, migration (32). Yet another branch of the Winder family was established at Lenham in Kent by 1699 and there in 1702, John Winder of Lorton and his wife, Mercy (or more probably 'Mary', due to a misreading of the register) baptised their daughter Sarah; John was probably born in Lorton about 1670, possibly of the family farming at Brow. Mercy (Mary) and Susan disappear from the record, but John married again and from this union, with a second wife named Mary, had four more children. His son and grandson farmed until at least 1850. Initially they prospered and acquired much property, but this was subsequently squandered by a later generation. John's brother Thomas also appears in the Lenham register at the same time. Thomas married Mary Downe at St Mary's, Canterbury in 1698 and their daughter, Mary, eventually married a blacksmith and lived at Yalding. Thereafter, the Winder name in Kent seems to have disappeared (33).

From one or other branch of the family came John Winder, a Commissioned Officer in the Colonial army in America, and a planter. He is recorded as being made a JP in 1665 and Lieutenant-Colonel in 1697. His great-grandson, Levin Winder, became a Governor of the State of Maryland, dying in July 1819 (34). There is a further interesting story regarding this far-flung branch of the Winders. The township of Jug Tavern, yes that is the correct name, in Georgia, USA dates back to 1872, when it was a trade centre for the local farmers and no doubt the name reflected what they did after conclusion of their business. In 1887, the Georgia, Carolina and Northern railroad planned to build a new line passing a few miles from Jug Tavern, connecting that part of the interior to the east coast. Being wise, the good people of Jug Tavern persuaded, with the help of a little cash, the President of the railroad to reroute the line through Jug Tavern and the town prospered. In recognition of their good fortune and the help given by the railroad, they renamed

the town in honour of its General Manager, Winder. And that is the name to be found on modern maps. John H Winder was the son of John C Winder and Octavia and the 7th generation descendent of John Winder the planter (35).

Could this family be descended from Francis Winder of unknown age and origin who emigrated and arrived in Virginia in 1622? None of the other known branches of the family has any 'Francis' amongst them, so, if not, from whence came Francis?

And what of the family of William Winder living at Kelton Mill in the parish of Lamplugh at the turn of the 18th century? This is only three miles from the tiny village of Winder. His daughter Mary was baptised in October 1695, his wife Elizabeth died in November 1703 and he then apparently married Ann Fleeming in 1707; Mary married, at the late age of 39, Daniel Jackson in January 1733. No more is heard of this Winder family in Lamplugh.

In spite of the quite large volume of data about the various branches of the Winder family, it has not yet been possible to show any connection between them, other than the apparent close similarity with the family crests of a bull's head with cherries. Each of the known branches of the Winder family discussed above, claiming or assuming descent from a common origin, suggest different origins of the name and place of origin. It seems clear that Margaret in 1398 was either a widow or unmarried heiress of some substance. It remains, therefore, to attempt to find her husband or father in the 14th century and the proposition that this was from Wynder in Westmorland seems the most likely place to start looking.

Chapter 10 References

(1) Wallace p 30
(2) Notes and photograph 3 in Memoriam from Fell and Rock Climbing Club Journals, Vol 1, Nos 1 & 2 in Keswick Library, Local History section
(3) Undated letter (approx, 1985) to author from Mrs. Alice Hilton, one-time resident of Graceholme
(4) Whitehaven News, c.1952
(5) Evening Mail 13th October, 1966
(6) Guide to Cockermouth, John Askew, p 40
(7) Letter to author, dated October 1990
(8) Evening Mail 13th October, 1966
(9) Copy of letter, now in LDFLHS archive, donated by author by kind permission of family descendents
(11) Parish Magazine, "The Link", March 1994
(12) C&W Transactions, 1891-92 pp 439-457
(13) Details from Susan Annie Plasket's "Memories of a Plain Family, 1836 - 1936"
(14) Parish Magazine "The Link", November, 1991
(15) Details from "See the conquering Hero Comes"; M. Miller and D Bland, 1973
(16) Details from Mick and Jean Jane; Cockermouth Civic Trust, 1997
(17) Letter to author by Mr J A Winder, July 1998 and telephone conversation 4/1/1999
(18) C&W 1891/92 p 441
(19) Cal. I.P.M. Vol XVII No.1247 Maud 22 Richard II; 23 Dec.1398
(20) Note re Winchester - D/Lec/314/16 and 38
(21) CRO D/Lec/314/26 f.3v
(22) C&W Vol III p.213
(23) CRO D/Lec/314/38
(24) PRO E 164/37, f.32, quoted by Winchester in Lecture Notes 1985
(25) CRO D/Lec/314/39
(26) Exchequer Depositions, Cumberland, 44 Elizabeth, Hilary, no 12 [Jan 1602/3] and no 44 [Easter c.20 April 1602/3]; reported in C&W 1891/92 pp 443-444
(27) Data supplied by Mrs Evelyn Reedy of Florida, descendent of Elizabeth Grindal, aunt of Mabel
(28) RCG W.117
(29) Can it be that this enigmatic use of the expression using the term "leade" can be a clue to that other puzzling reference to "teathe leadeing"?
(30) RCG W.036
(31) Family Tree in LDFLHS archive supplied by Dr Jaqueline Woolcock, May, 1994
(32) R George 'Population of the Parochial Chapelry of Lorton, 1538 - 1851', unpub. paper, June 1997
(33) Correspondence with Dr D Slattery, Feb 1998, together with his narrative 'The Winders of Lenham'; in LDFLHS archive
(34) Family Tree in LDFLHS archive, supplied by Dr J Woolcock, May 1994
(35) Details of Winder, GA, USA by email from the Editor, The Eagle, Winder GA, May 1998

Chapter 11: ST CUTHBERT'S CHURCH

Very little is known of the early years of our church at Lorton, dedicated to St Cuthbert. The story regarding the building of various churches so dedicated is told in Chapter 3. Nothing is known to show that there was a Christian community this far into the valleys as early as the ninth century, though Plumbland, only eight miles distant, was the site of one of the Saint's miracles in the 12th century.

The Diocese of Carlisle was centred on the Priory church of St Mary. The Priory was dissolved on 9th January 1540 and on 8th May 1541 (just four months later), it became the Cathedral Church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity. The Diocese stretched to the Derwent and the dates of consecration of our chapels, which were then still in the Diocese of Chester, were: Lorton 1198 (1), Buttermere 1507 (2), Wythop 1552 (becoming a parish before 1850) (3), Embleton 1210, Setmurthy 1225 and Loweswater 1125.

Brigham, of which Lorton was a parochial chapelry, was originally one of twenty one parishes in Coupland Deanery, within the Archdeaconry of Richmond and the See of York. With the formation of the Diocese of Chester in 1541, those parts of Cumberland and Westmorland that were within the Archdeaconry of Richmond were transferred into the new Diocese. Much later, in 1856, Bishop Percy of Carlisle died and then those same areas of the Diocese of Chester were transferred to the Diocese of Carlisle, a move which had been opposed by Bishop Percy for some years.

The first mention of a "church" at Lorton is as a chapel of the Parish of Brigham in the Pipe Rolls of 1198 (4). The site of that chapel is not known, but Michael was the chaplain. It was suggested publicly by a recent incumbent that prior to about 1620, the pre-reformation church was at Lorton Hall, a mortuary chapel being approximately where the present building stands, with the graveyard beside it. Not only is it patently unlikely a church intended to satisfy the needs of the then population could have been housed within Lorton Hall as it then was, but all the documentary evidence proves otherwise. There are a number of instances of bequests to "the church". In his will of 1597, Christopher Hodgson left 12 pence "to buy a Table Clothe at Lorton Church" and in 1607, John Bell of Scales asked to be buried "in the church or churchyard of Lorton", whilst Cuthbert Fisher of Wythop left a debt of 20 shillings to the church at Lorton and another of 6 shillings to the "Chapell of Withope".

In medieval times, burials were only allowed in the mother church, hence the existence of the so-called "corpse roads", such as that from Loweswater, through Holme Wood and on to St. Bees. But there were burials at Lorton from the beginning of our parish records, 1538, and since Lorton was a parochial chapelry, may well have had burials there since it acquired that status. Tales exist of "corpse roads" over the fells between Wythop and Lorton and a recent repetition of this in print appeared in 1993 (5). Certainly "Widow Hause" appears on the modern Ordnance Survey map, but this is a misrepresentation of "Withy Howe" (36) which was repeated on the Enclosure map of 1832 (6). The 1998 issue of the Outdoor Leisure OS map also shows a "Corpse Road" on Ling Fell at Wythop, but the mapmakers have seen fit to change this from "Copse Road" on the earlier editions. Have they bowed to local folk law as recently published? By no reasonable stretch of the

imagination could flooding of Lorton churchyard be a reason for wanting to be buried at Embleton, which is another folk saying recorded in the same book. Our earliest will extant, that of Alan Holstock in 1570 (7), says "to be buried in the churchyard of Lorton". There is no will seen so far that stipulates a place of burial where the testator asks to be buried elsewhere than in the Lorton churchyard. Most of the earliest gravestones now in Lorton churchyard date from the mid-1700s, but the earliest of all is that of Edward Thompson, which reads "who died February 16th 1641/2", the only known case of the double dating of old and new calendars in our parish records (8). There is no known record of a burial within the church. Burials from Buttermere have always been, and still are, at Lorton.

Whilst we are still in the churchyard, there are two other headstones worthy of a visit. Beside the path to the church is the tombstone of Peter Robinson, which carries one of the very few eulogies to be found in the churchyard. Peter was born here in 1780, preached locally for nearly 58 years and died in 1868. The second stone is to be found some twelve yards north of the seat by the yew tree. It is raised to the family of Edward Nelson of Gatesgarth. Edward was a shepherd and at the top of the headstone is carved a ewe with two lambs. This was an early, unsigned, work of the now internationally renowned sculptress Josephina de Vasconcellos, who lived in "The Bield" in Langdale. She was a friend of the Nelson and related Burns families of Wood House, Buttermere, whose tombstones are nearby.

The earliest known dedication of our church to St Cuthbert is 1416, which leads to the hypothesis that the church at Lorton (and that at Embleton, also dedicated to St Cuthbert) cannot be directly associated with the monk's wanderings with St Cuthbert's remains in the 9th Century (5). Finally, to prove the early existence of an independent church building, the register of Bishop Barnes of Chester says with regard to his Visitation in 1578 "the Chancel (at Lorton) is in very great decay". He also wrote of Brigham "this was also true there and hath been these twenty years" (6).

The whole argument becomes redundant by the following deposition of John Fisher in 1601 ". . . . there is a Church there called Lorton Church and is commonly called the p'rishe Church of Lorton. That ther is tow Chappels within the p'ishe of Lorton called by the names of Buttermire and Wideope and the Inhabitants within the said tow Chappelries come to the 'pishe Church of Lorton when they have occasion to burie, christen or to come to receive the holy Communion haveinge their health ....." (7).

Even before that, we have the published results of the inventory in 1552. King Edward VI had good cause to demand a thorough inventory of church goods. Following the dissolution, there was much unauthorised personal plundering of church property and Edward wanted this in the Royal treasury rather than in private hands. The resultant inventory (8) lists "Lorton Church" and "Chaple of Wedope". The former, not unreasonably, possessed more than the latter and also rather more than did the church at Loweswater, see Chapter 6, Appendices 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3. Thus at that time Lorton church appeared to be better endowed than that at Loweswater, but in view of the much superior church furniture known to have existed in 1348, Bouch concludes that these inventories (in general) have been falsified, either by hiding the ornaments or with the connivance of the commissioners. Nevertheless, the stated inventories do appear to represent something more akin to the economic status of the community of this valley.

We do not know whether or not any of the church treasures finished up in the Royal treasure chest but from the "Visitation" records of 1690 to 1711, some 140 years later, and probably after numerous bequests by parishioners in their wills, see Chapter 9, we learn that the church was modestly but "decently" furnished with a stone font and cover, communion table with rails before it and a fair linen cloth, a reading desk, "pulpit with a cushion and a covering fit thereto". This latter presumably refers to what has since been termed a "triple decker". For administration of the Sacraments there was a "flaggon of pewter and a decent Bason". The assembled congregation, which would have been everybody except the sick-in-bed, heard the lessons and prayers from a King James version of the Bible and a "Common Prayer book of the largest volume". This same congregation had their names recorded in the parchment register of births, deaths and marriages which, with sundry other papers and tracts, was kept in a "strong Chest with two locks". To call the population to church, "two bells hung in an open Bell-case" and we must presume these were the same bells that were listed in 1552 (9).

These same two bells, which weighed but 10 stone (10), were to continue to call the villagers to their devotions, certainly until 1809 – when the church building underwent a major reconstruction – and almost certainly until 1870. The two bells then, so far unexplainably, disappeared and were replaced by the single bell that hangs in the tower today, on a beam incised "Hung 1870". This was acquired second hand from Bridekirk, which had itself just finished a complete rebuilding, 1868 - 1870, with a new peal of bells in 1870. The inscriptions on the bell now hanging at Lorton reads:

"H. A. Hervey – Vicar", " Seaton Co. fecit 1804" and " 4 " 0 " 6 "

H. A. Hervey was Vicar of Bridekirk from 1795 to 1844.

The site of the present building is interesting and invites speculation. It is often held that churches are customarily built on high ground, or hills, that the worshippers may be nearer to God. Whether or not this is so, there is no shortage of high ground round Lorton on which the church could originally have been built. Instead, they chose to build it in the middle of their best and most valuable agricultural land. It lies midway between the twin villages of High and Low Lorton, set in the middle of half mile of fields which separate the two. It is reached by footpaths to each of the villages and by the ancient Crossgate Lane, which itself was the boundary between the two principle estates as far back as the twelfth century and possibly much earlier (11). The path through the old circular churchyard went from the extreme eastern corner along the opposite side of the church to that at present in use to the gravel path. The churchyard was augmented up to the gravel path in 1869 and then virtually doubled in size again in 1903 when Anthony Steele Dixon ceded all that part to the north of the gravel path in exchange for a family burial plot, which he himself occupied in March 1909 (12).

One cannot but wonder whether there might originally have been one village centred on the church, or chapel and Crossgates Lane, which subsequently became forcibly, or gradually, separated into the two parts we know today. That in Norman times we have Lorton Inferior and Over Lorton is incontrovertible evidence that the village was in two if not three distinct parts by the twelfth century, as the area known as "Cross" is found in the earliest church records. The precise extent of Cross is not known, but likely between the two crossroads at Low Lorton (B.5289) and High Lorton (Cross Gates) is most probable. Certainly, by the late 19th century,

"Cross" was known as the few cottages round the crossroads on the B.5289, and these were all demolished, and their occupants scattered, by Dixon after he purchased the Hall in 1881. At that time there were no houses around the crossroads in Crossgate Lane.

Be that as it may, St Cuthbert's became a parochial chapelry of the mother church at Brigham, and as such was commonly and often officially referred to as the Parish of Lorton. Additionally, within and pertaining to this parochial chapelry of Lorton, two Chapels of Ease were built, one at Wythop and one at Buttermere. The earliest known date of Wythop chapel is 1552 (3) and that of Buttermere is possibly the chapel of "Blessed Mary Magdalene" at Rannerdale, mentioned in 1506 (2). The Lorton registers suggest, and Fisher's deposition of 1601 quoted above, confirms that the offices of baptisms and burials of the inhabitants of those two localities took place almost exclusively at Lorton. So too were at least some of those relating to the localities of Brackenthwaite, Littlethwaite, Whinfell and Rogerscale, though these were in other sub-divisions of the Parish of Brigham, or of Loweswater, which was itself a parochial chapelry of St Bees until 1893. If John Fisher's testimony is to be taken literally, the marriages at that time were performed in the local Chapel of Ease, either at Wythop or Buttermere, presumably by the Curate from Lorton since it was not until 1866 that the Curate of Buttermere was licensed to celebrate marriages and the Buttermere marriage register dates from then. On the other hand, some at least of these marriages were being performed at Lorton in the early 1700s, even when both bride and groom came from Wythop (1708) and Buttermere (1712). Before 1707, no addresses were recorded at all.

Lorton did become a parish in its own right in 1883. Wythop became part of the parish of Embleton, and Buttermere a separate parish in 1884.

In 1698, the "Visitation" records the chapel roof, windows, floor, and ceiling to be in a good state of repair (13), but the next year the churchwardens reported the chapel to be "not in so good repair as it ought, but hope it will be shortly". The church was maintained then, as now, at the expense of the parishioners. Then it was done by way of a "rate" assessment. At Lorton, for failing to pay "their assessments to the repair of the Church", Anna Mayson of Buttermere was fined sixpence and George Pattinson, possibly of High Side, threepence (14). It might be supposed that Anna and George were Quakers, who did refuse to pay tithes and church taxes, but no Mayson appears in the local Quaker records, though the Pattinson family of Waterend, Loweswater do in 1684.

The record does not specifically say if the windows of the church were glazed, but the Visitation record of 1695 says the windows are in good repair which suggests they must be glazed. The earliest, and only recorded mention of glazing in the village, is for repairing the window of an unspecified building in 1598 (15). There is at this time no mention of pews, but of an unspecified number of "seats" which were then commonly fairly roughly made benches presumably, as was then customary, arranged round the walls and used by those who were frail. With the comfort expected in our churches today, it is hard to visualise many of the congregation standing or kneeling in little groups, holding their coarse woollen cloaks and shawls tightly around themselves in an unheated, stone-walled and stone-flagged building.

A very few surviving wills show that the populace did not forget their church when making their wills. Though they may have been relatively large for the donor, these bequests were of comparatively small amounts, such as 6s.8d by Richard

Braithwaite in 1617 "to be employed to the Buttermire Chappell goods" (16) and 12d left by Christopher Hodgson in 1597 "to buy a Table Clothe at Lorton Church" (17). In 1646, Ellinor Browne left 10s to "the Church of Lorton" (18), but by far the largest bequest was that of Francis Glaister who died in 1634. Glaister is rather an anomaly; this is almost the only reference to him in all the records, so it appears he was a fairly recent "off-comer" to Lorton from Embleton, probably not long before his death, though he asked to be buried at Lorton. He left "to the Church at Lorton 40s, the profitts and increase whereof to the repaireing of the Church yearely" (19). This gives rise to several interesting speculations. Was the church so obviously in need of on-going repair and maintenance in 1634? At most, the interest on 40s would produce a handful of shillings annually, hardly enough for any major work, even if accumulated. Was the capital spent in contradiction to the terms of the bequest and what happened to it? Francis Glaister also left a similar bequest to the church at Embleton.

Any lack of maintenance apparent in 1699 had, presumably, been put right by 1711 when the churchwardens reported the church to be "in good and sufficient repair within and without, flag'd plain and even, the Churchyard sufficient fenced and decently kept, and no-one has encroached on it". The churchwardens were sufficiently satisfied with the internal conditions of their church in 1726 to pay Mr Salathel, a court painter, the quite large sum for them, of twelve shillings and six pence, followed by a further six pence, for "writing sentences in the Church" (20). There is now no trace of this work which was, presumably, covered by subsequent rendering of the walls.

The churchwardens' accounts should be a fruitful source of information about the building but there is only one book extant, and that for the 18th century and it is sketchy in the extreme. Apart from details leading up to the rebuilding of the church in 1809, discussed below, it can only tell us that four small sums totalling 6s.7d were paid out, possibly in 1730 to the repair of the churchyard wall. Comparison with parishes much further south clearly demonstrates how much poorer, in financial terms, were the majority of northern parishes. St Cuthbert's was no exception. We have already seen how meagre were the alter furnishings and vestments. A fair picture of the incumbency about this period also emerges from the Terrier of the "Curacy of Lorton, 1728" which is given in full in Chapter 6, Appendix 6.5, Addendum 1.

A similar Visitation, held on 14th August 1789, adds a few further details to our picture of our church life. The Queen's Bounty of twelve pounds had purchased two half tenements in Westmorland, and there was now the interest of two hundred pounds, which sum was in the hands of the Governor of the Queens Bounty. The record adds "We have no furniture belonging to the Chapel worth mentioning except one silver cup weighing 8 ounces". There was no sexton and the clerk was paid ten shillings yearly.

It is not clear from the ecclesiastical records why the church at Lorton should be in rapid decline at this time, but it must surely have been so because, in 1805, the building itself was said to be unsafe. The Curate wrote to the bishop "the villagers take their life in their hands by entering the building" (21) and proposed to use a local farmhouse for services pending an improvement in the situation. At this time, Brigham was the northernmost Parish in the Diocese of Chester and the Bishop of Chester would have none of this laxity in the approach to worship. He replied testily

"the parishioners would better honour the day following their Minister to a neighbouring Church" – such as Embleton or Mosser! This remonstration must have fallen on deaf ears and tired legs because the registers show no significant drop in the use of Lorton Church for baptisms, weddings and burials during the period of rebuilding. In fact there was something of a mini rush of weddings and baptisms during the years 1805 to 1808, although the numbers of these did fall back to about normal during 1808 and 1809.

There was much heart searching about this time, as what best to do, about the church fabric. Church attendance was already in decline, though we have to wait till the church census of 1851 for real evidence of this; see Chapter 6, Appendix 6.7. But unlike the situation in 1986 when the decision was essentially "do we allow our church to decay completely and eventually reduce the valley to having two and then one, instead of three churches?"; in 1806 the question was still, to rebuild or substantially repair. The decision to "have it completely repaired" was taken at a vestry meeting of 25th June 1806 (22) and the following petition went to the Bishop:
"the said Chapel is in a ruinous State and in many parts thereof very ill and irregularly pewed and that your Petitioners being the principal and major part of the Inhabitants and Parishioners ..... are desirous to pull down remove and take away the present old Chapel and in the place or as near thereto as may be to cause to be erected and built a new Chapel with a Steeple at the west End thereof and in the Body of such new Chapel to erect new Seats or Pews in a regular and uniform manner with a Pulpit, Reading Desk, Clerks Pew, Font, and Communion Table ..... that such Pews may be awarded and allotted and assigned by Joshua Lucock Bragg Esq., the Rev William Sewell, Minister of Wythop, and The Rev. John Sibson, Minister of Lorton, to such of your Petitioners and other Inhabitants..... as shall make application for the same and subscribe and contribute to the Expense thereof ....." (23).

This petition was signed by Bragg, Sewell, Sibson and 56 parishioners. In passing, we note that all but eight of them signed their own name. The rebuilding was not completed until June 1809 (24), but services continued notwithstanding, in which case the building was perhaps not quite so ruinous as Curate Gibson made it out to be. It is recorded that one couple from the neighbouring parish of Embleton, which church was itself, in 1806, "at foundation level", chose to be married at Lorton rather than elsewhere (25). However, there is just one single reference to this affair in the registers of adjacent parishes. On 5th July, 1807, Loweswater marriage register records that "Joseph Dixon, the parish clerk of Crosthwaite and Elizabeth Lancaster of the parish of Lorton were married in this Church owing to Lorton church being under repair". No record of the work is known to exist (26), but a possible hint of the extent became apparent in 1988-89. A form of damp mould appeared on the surface of the internal rendering in the nave and took the pattern of the underlying stonework, showing a distinct cut-off line horizontally six feet from the floor, sloping upwards to the top of the wall by the chancel arch. It was particularly noticeable on the east side. We do not know what this marking represented but it seems possible it could be the dividing line between the older and the 1809 rebuilding. There is another facet to this story which warrants further investigation. Almost simultaneously with the decay and needful repairs of St Cuthbert's at Lorton, we find that similar conditions existed at least three other local churches. St. Cuthbert's at Embleton was rebuilt in 1806, St. Bartholomew's at

Loweswater in 1828 and St Bridget at Bridekirk in 1868. Why was the considerable regional investment of time and money in new private housing over the period 1700 to 1760 not extended to include these, presumably, decaying churches? Whatever the reasons leading to the rebuilding of these four churches, they were not alone. They were part of a nationwide surge of conscience that led to a vast programme of building new churches and rebuilding the old. Our own St Cuthbert's was one of the 15 that were rebuilt during that first decade of the 19th century, which was as nothing to the numbers progressively increasing to the massive total of 855 rebuilt and 2335 newly built by 1870. (27)

A recently discovered and rather poorly drawn sketch of the church, reliably dated to 1803 shows the simple nave with three windows, and open bell case above the door at the west end of the nave very similar to that still to be seen at Lamplugh. The church was set in a rounded churchyard. There was no tower.

Let us return to Lorton, where the rebuilding was not completed without a squabble regarding the shape and size of the tower. John Lucock Bragg had promised to build a tower for the newly repaired church. It was to be "three yards square and nine feet above the rigging of the said Chapel". Before the work was completed, Bragg ordered the work stopped because the appearance was more "like a chimney". Apparently the parishioners then asked permission to replace the "tower" with "an open bell-case for two bells, as it was before", which they thought "would tend to frustrate the capricious whims of our village squire". Eventually however, the same meeting decided that "a small tower-steeple twenty yards square, when measured on the outside and three yards higher then the rigging of the roof, shall be erected at the West end of the said Chapel, at the expense of the Parish" (24). And that is what we have today. Some evidence of this episode, though not easily explained, came to light during the repairs to the tower in 1989. The lower tower was built with a mix of beck stones and slate on both faces with a rough mortar-less infill of stones and rubble making a total thickness of some two feet or more. The outer walls and those within the baptistery were rendered, to cover the very rough stonework. Higher up the tower there are three courses of red sandstone blocks, surmounted by poor quality red clay bricks. The nave is presumed to be entirely similarly constructed as is the base of the tower, although the form of damp mould which appeared on the internal rendering took a more regular form in the form of a cut-off line, suggesting a pattern of underlying block stonework. Notwithstanding all this rebuilding, for which no record of the authorities or costs has been found, a further £120 was spent on the building between 1840 and 1872 (28), so the sad state of affairs and trouble with damp at the end of the 20th century (see below), can be traced back to the decision taken in June 1809. Although no direct documentary evidence has been found, we know that the present chancel was a later addition, certainly between 1869 and 1903, most likely in 1880, and reputedly covers the vault of the Winder family. In 1903, the west window was inserted as a bequest of Steele-Dixon of Lorton Hall. The window was made by Mayer of Munich and is apparently much liked by parishioners and visitors alike, in spite of the fact that the well-known architectural commentator Dr Nikolaus Pevsner has called it "indefensible", but failed to say why (29). The pulpit bears the Arms of St Cuthbert, the Diocese of Candida Casa, the Province of York, the Diocese of Chester and the Diocese of Carlisle.

The vicarage at Lorton was built in about 1885 though it, and the one acre of land containing it, were not added to the Terrier until 1894. The first Terrier relevant to the vicarage appears to be that for 1890. This was not signed by the then Vicar, Rev William Gibson Davies, but by the two churchwardens, John Dover Pearson and Robert Pearson. From this and the next Terrier, we can fill in some details to the earlier records. The glebe lands comprised some 18 acres of a farm at Firbank in Westmorland and an allotment of 3 acres on Killington Common, together with a half-acre field at Lorton and 23 acres at Blindbothel. Tithe rent charges for the township amounted to twenty six pounds pa and the Earl of Lonsdale, in whose hands was now the Right of Presentation, paid a further six pounds pa. To this was added the interest on a sum, altered in 1894 to read 2,814 pounds five shillings and fivepence, payable by the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty.

Among the goods of the church listed in 1890 were one bell, one harmonium since sold and replaced by a Lizt American organ, one brass alms dish and two oak alms boxes. The two alms boxes are still in regular use, but what happened to the two bells? Did they get into the new tower? After several only partially successful repairs and a long period of idleness, the Lizt organ was finally removed to storage in 1987. It had been replaced by an electric instrument kindly donated by Dr Robin Rougetel-White and this was replaced by a fully electronic organ in 1992.

The year 1911 saw some improvements in the chancel towards which a Sale of Work raised nearly £46. The altar was replaced as a gift of Mrs Burrows of Broomlands and was carved by Hawtle of Southport. The panelling was executed by James Mirehouse who was then living at Fernwood, whilst in 1912, this was enhanced by the four panels carved by George Pallister, the Vicar. It was by one of those happy coincidences that, when additional panelling was inserted in 1990 to fill the gap in the panelling when the altar was moved away from the wall, the work was undertaken by Mr Bott of Cockermouth. He it was who discovered the plaque with the above information, which had been left in the void, a felicitous happening for him as he himself was related by marriage to the earlier artisans. This plaque is now hung beside the door of the church.

In spite of its comparative youth, the building has been giving considerable trouble towards the end of the 20th century. Coupled with a special thanksgiving year on the occasion of the 1300th anniversary of the death of St Cuthbert in 1987, the PCC launched an appeal for funds. The total sum, exceeding £20,000, that was raised by donations, covenants and special events in the village, was employed in restoring the building, especially the tower and west end where persistent entry of rain was ruining the structure and rendering. The PCC also decided to improve the amenities for the congregation, so a kitchen and toilet were installed.

This work was done during the period 1978 to 1993. It was during this work that evidence to support the argument regarding the tower in 1809 was uncovered. The main work was completed in February 1991 just three days before a special service of thanksgiving, presided over by bishop Ian of Carlisle on 28th February.

One happy result of the several building changes from 1809 is that the present structure has fine acoustics. Since 1983, a number of concerts by top ranking instrumental performers have graced the transept-cum-stage and enthralled capacity audiences. These concerts, inspired by and organized by organist Pat Williams, have become an annual event of note in the district. A new state-of-the-art electronic

organ was purchased in 1992. The cost of some £8,000 was raised by the community and the fine instrument inaugurated at a concert given by the Carlisle cathedral organist Ian Hare on April 28th, 1992.

Early in January 1994, there were some particularly heavy rainstorms from the south-west and once again to our dismay there was heavy ingress of water into the old vestry. Once again surveyors were called in and the decision was that the failure lay in the cracked rendering on the south wall of the tower. During the spring of that year this was all stripped off, and the underlying stonework exposed. Strangely, this was found to consist of the normal local stonework to the height of the top of the window, above which were three layers of large red sandstone, topped by red brick, now crumbling to the parapet. The whole was given a waterproof coating before being re-rendered. At the same time, the facilities previously planned, a kitchen in the old vestry and a toilet in the lobby, were installed. A sewage tank to cope with these was installed in the adjacent field just beyond the gate, after overcoming some difficulties raised by the owner of the field.

Our little church of St Cuthbert's is simple and unpretentious, but since 1994 it has one crowning glory, the wonderful set of kneelers and communion rail cushions. These have been designed and worked by a dedicated group of valley ladies, who have spent some 4,600 hours of detailed needlework. A notebook relating the story of the kneelers is kept in church for the benefit of visitors.

Unfortunately, all our hopes that we had finally eliminated the problem of rain getting into the tower had proved premature. There were still more consultations with architects, but this churchwarden made the rather daring suggestion that the whole upper section of the tower be removed and a waterproof membrane inserted before rebuilding exactly as before with modern materials. Another special appeal was launched, with great response by the community, local business and charity trusts, which raised a total of £32,000. One of the special events was a splendid Flower Festival, combined with a Local History and Art Exhibition and the production of a special pamphlet of the church's history. The work was completed at the end of 1996 and, at the time of writing, the tower is still dry. That however was not the end of our troubles since, just as we were finishing off the tower, dry rot was discovered in the new kitchen ceiling timbers and door. Remedial work here involved removal of much timber and render round the baptistery and another £8,000 of work. This too was completed by early 1997. In 1997, the church was the grateful receiver of three very generous donations. Between them, the PCC was able to pay for the building works, install a loop system for the hard of hearing, and set up the Winn Trust with a view to finance top rate annual concerts in the church.

All this helps the PCC to ensure that this lovely, peaceful little church on a historic site remains available and in good repair for Christian worship of the community and our many visitors and pleasure of future generations.

Appendix 11.1 – CHURCH INVENTORIES IN 1552 (35)

Lorton Church had:
two chalessez of silvr
vj vestements
one cope
one surpclothe
ij prche [parish] belles
lytill belles
ij canditstiks of brasse
cross of brasse
ij alterclothes

whilst the **"Chaple of Wedope**" had:
one chales of silvr
one vestment
one bell
one alter clothe

By comparison, the church of **Loweswater** had:
one chales of silvr
ij vestments
ij prche belles
iij litill belles
iij alterclothes

Chapter 11 References

(1) VCH Vol 1, p 38
(2) Derwent Fells Manor Roll 1506-7, Roll 12 p 9 PM
(3) C&W OS viii p 198
(4) PRO, 10 Richard I, Roll 10 M1
(5) "St Cuthbert and Cumbria" C&W Vol 1984 p 73
(6) Bouch P&P p 210
(7) Exchequer Depositions Cumberland 44 Elizabeth Hilary, no 12: C&W 1891/2, footnote p 443
(8) Exchequer Q R Church Goods 1/54 6 Edward VI: C&W 1884-5
(9) Copies of the Visitation records extant are filed with the Bishop's Transcripts CRO DRC.6/98/1
(10) Terrier 1783 CRO DRD.6/98/1
(11) Winchester 1 "Landscape and Society", p 146
(12) Plan of Lorton church and churchyard, 1869, with addition consecrated 5th April 1869. CRO n/ref, copy in LDFLHS archive
(13) Plan of Lorton church and churchyard with second area added with consecration document dated 25th July 1903 CRO n/ref. Copy in LDFLHS archive
(14) Court Call Book, 1689 CRO D&C archive EM/5
(15) The Will of Cuthbert Peile dated 17th May 1598. LRO WRW C. RCG W.220
(16) RCG W.21
(17) RCG W.22
(18) RCG W.46
(19) RCG W.79
(20) Churchwarden's Account Book CRO PR.28/4
(21) Note Chester RO EDA.3/1 p.91 - 7 May 1627 - Miscellaneous Register
(22) The original source seems to be lost. This quotation is from the pamphlet "Lorton and its Church", Anon, Pub Whitehaven News 1946
(23) Churchwarden's Account Book CRO PR/28/4
(24) CRO EM/5/ photocopy of undated letter of 1806 in LDFLHS archive
(25) Note in Register PR/28/2
(26) Robert Hetherington and Sarah Fletcher were married at Lorton on 20th May, 1806
(27) A thorough search in the Bishop of Chester's Register, made in July 1992 by this writer, failed to produce any evidence of faculties for Lorton church (nor for Brigham, Buttermere, Wythop, Embleton, Loweswater and Mosser) from the early 1500s to 1820. This is not thought to be due to this author's difficulty in reading the heavily abbreviated, semi-legible, Latin
(28) Bouch Appendix IX
(29) Pevsner, Nicholas, "The Buildings of England - Cumberland" Penguin p 158

Chapter 12: BUILDINGS

It is very unlikely that any house in either High or Low Lorton that was newly built in the vernacular style (1), round about 1700, as were virtually all the older houses, is today just as it was first built. The great wave of rebuilding that swept the country from about 1600 onwards eventually reached Lorton well into the second half of the century, although there is some evidence that a little rebuilding did take place rather earlier; William Peile of Nether Lorton had a "new barne" in 1623 (2). Nevertheless, then as now, the north country tended to lag behind the times relative to the southeast. The yeoman's house such as we find in Lorton, came into being between approximately 1660 and 1760. We do not know just what triggered and encouraged the population to undertake this, for them, considerable building programme but, for yeomen farmers, the latter part of the 17th century was a period of growing economic plenty. Signs of this are evident in the Wills of the period. Clearly a greater degree of affluence and legislation that gave a greater sense of long-term security must have played a large part. No doubt also that the rebuilding of the houses, barns and byres of each farming household would be a gradual effort spread over years. On the other hand, for the wage-earning labourers, this was a time of rising prices and falling wages and times were hard. For them, the time of improving economics came much later, nearer to the end of the 18th century or even later.

Not directly helpful, but perhaps a reasonable guide to the earlier situation in High Lorton, is Henry VIII's 'Valor Eclesiasticus' of 1534 which gives the annual value of the Priory's land and tenements at Lorton as £5.2s.4d (3). It does not quote this as 'rent' but must be so, and is 3s 7d more than the quoted 'ould rente' in the survey of 1649. It corresponds to the possible loss of many houses or a complete holding of some ten acres or more. This runs contrary to the analysis by Winchester for this period, and therefore requires further consideration. However, in the intervening period between those two dates the rents had been augmented by a universal fine of 50% 'for improvements' which raises the 1649 total rent collected to £7 8s 1d.

Reputedly the oldest building in Low Lorton, apart from the early sections of Lorton Hall, is Holme Cottage, believed to date from about 1660, not quite contemporary with the Elizabethan section of Lorton Hall, of which it was the home farm. There is substantial evidence that Smithy Cottage at Low Lorton was built about 1670-1672. Mathew Iredale, a smith by trade, wrote in his Will in October 1672 that he had "been at charge with building", and therefore did not have much cash to pass on to his heirs. He also wrote of "my barne of two lengths of timber" which or may not be the same structure. (4). A cottage at Scales bears the inscription "T P 1668" on a main beam in the "firehouse" and is therefore the "new fire house" mentioned in the Will of Thomas Peile, 10th February 1673 (5). In High Lorton, "Mid-Town Cottage" bears the inscription and date

P W ★ 1678

(almost certainly Peter Wilkinson and the central emblem is a star) over the door into what is now the garden. The position of this and the interior layout suggest that originally this was the front of the house. "Mid-Town" is first mentioned by name in the church registers in 1638, on the occasion of the burial of Ellin, the wife of John

Peile. Other features of High Lorton tend to reinforce the popular but unsubstantiated theory that the road was once on the opposite side of the houses from its present position. It is clear from the 1649 survey (6), that the road bore the same relation to the dwellings then as it does now, but that does not mean that the fronts necessarily faced the road. We must also remember that, for the most part, the dwellings would be so much poorer than anything we are used to today that it might be doubted that they even had a "back" and a "front" as in the modern concept. Yet, the villagers clearly did so. The 1649 survey refers several times to a feature being "on the backside" of the dwelling, and we know from the tithe map that is the Kirk Fell side.

I have spent hours trying to reconcile what is known of the "Mid-Town" area, which is quite a bit more than we know of most other similar groups of buildings, with what we see today. The truth was, in fact, known but not recognised, all the time. Mid-town did not refer to the one building known by that name today, but to the whole area, which was, in 1649, a rather complicated little group of holdings, as shown in Figure 4.1 in Chapter 4. The exact relationship of each to the others may never be known with certainty, but the diagram is sufficiently close for practical purposes. The buildings shown are numbered as they appear in the original document, (see Table 4.1 in Chapter 4) and are shown in nominal positions, each within the related close of ground. These closes are defined in the original text, by relationships to each other and features such as the beck and the highways. Their outlines are again nominal, though some of the 'fences' have carried through time and can still be determined today. The text gives details such as dwelling, barn, byre, ox-house, plum garth, etc for the various holdings, but this diagram makes no effort to show these details as no more is known of them than their stated existence.

Where farm buildings were separate from the dwelling, they were quite likely of even rougher stonework, the animals not requiring the same degree of comfort as the family, however meagre this latter would have been. Meagre and lacking in any comfort by twentieth century criteria they certainly were, as is apparent from study of the Probate Inventories (see Chapter 9, "Life and Death"). There is only indirect evidence of the earliest buildings, as none survives physically. It is commonly believed that before the "great rebuilding" of the late 17th and18th centuries and in spite of the over abundance of stone, in general the houses were small, largely built round a cruck frame, with clay or wattle-and-daub infill with a roof of turf or straw or bracken thatch. Slight evidence for this is found in a probate inventory of 1586 (7) which mentions a debt for thatching, though not whether it was for a dwelling house or outbuilding; and possible evidence of thatch was found by the author under the ruins of the roof of the cottage at Scales, bearing a date 1668 as mentioned above. Even better and far more definitive evidence is one of the rare references to house building and repair found in the Court records. As already noted in the chapter "The Community", as late as 1715, Charles Fletcher, Daniell and William Stubb, John Fletcher and Robert Height, all of Wythop Mill were presented by the village turnman and fined 3s.4d each for cutting "turf for fewel to the prejudice of sheep-heathes and of getting flax for the repair of houses" (8). Yet, we must question this picture as far as Lorton is concerned. The quarry at Scawgill had been in use since early medieval times and the 1649 Survey (6) quite specifically states there is no timber of value for house-boot, that is repair, and, by implication, construction of houses, but on the other hand specifically states there is an adequate supply of

quarry stone and slate for building. It may not be wholly by chance that the first mention of "Slater" in the church registers appears in 1697 (9) and that no other occupations were mentioned until 1719, after which several slaters appear in that record, though the death of another is recorded by his probate inventory in 1708. But this is no proof that slate roofing was just then introduced, as prior to that isolated instance in 1701, the registers did not give details of occupation at all. Yet again in 1598, Cuthbert Peile of Lorton died being owed 14s "for mendinge of glasse windowes" (10). We must not read too much into this, for though it must be doubtful that a daub and wattle hut had glass windows, regrettably their owner was not stated and it could have referred to a substantial Lorton Hall or a large house elsewhere, because Cuthbert had business debts owing from as far afield as Gilcrux and Wasdale Head. At this time, Lorton's houses normally had a single open hearth fireplace in the single all purpose room, commonly known as the "fire-house", though the better houses might have a "bower" loft over one end. Documentary evidence for this is found in the survey of 1649 and the Hearth Tax returns of 1664. Of 38 houses listed in the latter, all but four had only a single hearth. Of those four, three had two hearths, the other, that of John Winder presumably of Lorton Hall, had three. Given that the 19 dwellings of 1649 are present in 1664, together with 6 outlying farms, we should find 13 dwellings in High Lorton. At the end of the 20th century we can see only 7 that might date back that far, so something like six must have disappeared, apparently without physical trace. Until further evidence is uncovered, we will have to assume that the poorer housing in the community was of thatched daub and wattle construction, with cloth hangings over the windows and that by the turn of the 17th century, some of the better off, certainly those that sported a 'loft' as an upper room or 'bower' for storage or sleeping, already had stone-built slate-roofed homes, possibly with glass in their windows.

Certainly the new buildings, when they came, were solidly constructed using various combinations of slate and beck stones. Main walls were massively built with a double skin of stonework 20 to 24 inches thick with a loose rubble infill, the whole erected directly onto the rocky soil with no significant foundation or foot being laid. The slates on the outer skin of the external wall would be slightly slanted down on the outside to allow rain to run off. The result was a dry, weatherproof construction that has stood the test of time and stands sound to this day. These walls would support the weight of a slated roof and the lovely "green" Honister slates were added to give the fine mellow appearance these roofs soon acquire and which blend so well with the environment. This pleasing and traditional result is the bane of the lives of folks who wish to improve their property in the late 20th century. The Lake District Special Planning Board (LDSPB), which has control over development, tends to insist on the use of these slates for new roofs, not withstanding the fact that the Buttermere slate quarry is closed. In fact, second-hand slates are often stipulated and this causes unsuspecting owners to have their roofs removed by unprincipled members of society to meet this demand. Whitewashing the outer walls was not done until much later, but was sufficiently in vogue in the 19th century to earn Wordsworth's ire (11).

HIGH LORTON

The earliest detailed description of the village is the Parliamentary Survey of 1649 which listed and described each holding individually within the Manor of Lorton and Allerthwaite. In effect this was the village of High Lorton and the Allerthwaite part, which lay near Uldale, is not considered here. This must be the same as was covered by Henry VIII's survey of 1534, though it is now valued at an annual 'old rent' of £4.18s.9d which must surely represent a reduction in the number of dwellings. If this is taken to be true, it represents a reduction of the order of half a dozen 'messuages'. In 1649, there were nine "messuage and tenement" or "dwelling house with a land holding" and six "cottages". Between those dates, in 1578, the Dean and Chapter had 10 messuages or tenements (12) which seems to confirm this progressive reduction. They were set in a not very straight line along the lowest slope of Kirkfell, very much as we see the village today, thus forming a typical example of a "linear village" (13). We might, at this point, question why there is such an abrupt double bend in the road as one enters the village from Cockermouth, subsequently to be known as Conkey's Corner, after the Conkey family who lived at No 1 Wayside Cottages at the beginning of the 20th century. In 1649, there was only one dwelling house on the south side of the street, owned by William Robinson. His croft and cottage were almost opposite Holemire lonning, (lane) so there must subsequently have been another construction on the south side and opposite Richard Peirson's cottage on the north side (that became a Wayside Cottage – see "Wayside Cottages" below). This must surely be the row of little cottages referred to by Bolton (14) as being in place before 1810. Proceeding eastwards, the short lane on the left, now sign-posted to Keswick, was then "the lonning to the common". The road from the Whinlatter Pass continued down Tenters Lane at the further end of the village and was then described as "the highway to the common". All the dwellings and farmsteads were in an approximate line between these two lanes, with the exception of William Robinson's at the north end of the village and another farmstead across the beck, on the site of the present "Boon Beck Farm" at the south end of the village. (Boon Beck means "Above the beck"). See Figure 4.1. There is no written evidence of a bridge at that time ,but there must have been one since there were other stone-built bridges within the village perimeter. If one stands on today's bridge, looking towards the back of the 19th century village hall, one can still see how practical a ford there would have been had it been necessary.

The 1649 Survey Commissioners' report on the Manor is concise and informative (6):

"There is a Courte Barron belonging to the said mannour of Lorton and Allerthwaite heretofore kept, sometimes, in the house of John Wilkinson of Overlorton, sometimes in the house of John Relfe, at Newbigging and sometimes at the Mannour place of Croscanonby.

2. The Customarye Tennants, leases, and freeholders of the said mannour are to performe theire suites and services at the Courte aforesaid.

3. The freeholders which hold of the said Mannour, hould theire lands in Free forrage.

4. The Customary Tennants within the said Mannour hold theire lands and tenements by Copie of Court Rolle according to the custome of the Mannour. The most part paies upon discent or alienacion an arbitrarie fine, yet as it appeareth unto

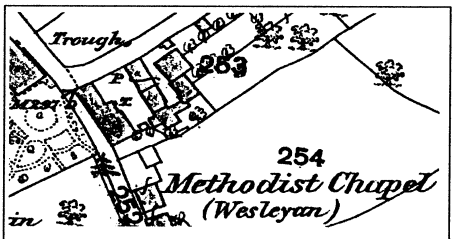
us by severall Records and examinacions None have paied above seaven yeares rent for a fine, and some five some lesse.
5. There are some ..... who pay ..... for a fine two yeares old Rent which are expressed in their due places of this survey Theire Copies manifesting the same. The widdowes volk in the sayde Mannour have by the Custome thereof, Right to the Moyetie of suche customarye estates as their husbands dyed seised of, duringe ther widdowe hoode.
6. There are diverse of the Customary tennants which have not produced theire copies by which they hold theire said lands, it being alledged by them that theire Copies were plundered from them by the Scotts and especially by the souldiers under the Command of George Monroe (15).
7. There is noe groweimg timber of value upon the demeanes, customarie lands, or lands in lease within the said Mannour for boote to repaire the houses and Fences upon the premises…
8. There are noe mynes of Coales wrought or like to be wrought within the said Mannour as yet discovered
9. That the acres expressed in this survey are after sixteene feete and a halfe to the perch according to Statute measure and not after one and twentie feete to the perch according to this Counties Measure which is called Forest Measure (16).
10. There is plentie of quarrie stone for building within the said Mannour, and good Slate upon the Fells adjacent to Lorton, Allerthwaite and Bassenthwaite, which Fells belong to the Earle of Northumberland.

White Ash. As White Ash was the house that led me to write this book, I will start with this old farmhouse, which is reasonably typical of its fellows in the village and discuss both it and its history in some detail: that is to say as far as it can be derived from the various incomplete sources. Its precise history is still conjectural because no documents have yet been found to define the size and shape or contents of the building of that name before the map accompanying the tithe awards of 1840.

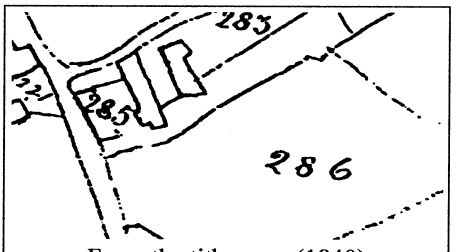
The building seen by the passer-by since 1982 is not the same as that which he would have seen in 1702. Why 1702, when the solid stonewalled building was almost certainly in existence some years earlier? The first documented reference to White Ash by name is found in the register for births as "Thomas, son of Thomas Watson of White Ash, baptized 3rd January, 1701"; in modern terms that is 1702. We also know, from the 1649 Survey, that the Watson family held this farming property as copyhold tenants from the Cathedral Church in Carlisle since some time before 1588, though the property, like all the others mentioned in the same survey, was precisely defined but not named. Round about 1700, there are only two properties in the village mentioned in the registers by name, and the other, Midtown, is dated 1678. It seems that in the absence of other evidence, but with the proviso about the lack of documentation mentioned above, we might reasonably postulate that in 1649 all the houses were wood, or wattle and daub structures, probably with turf or straw thatch roofs; but by 1700 the Curate considered the newly built solid stone-walled houses warranted mention by name. Why wait until 1700 if these houses were built before? A glance at the list of incumbents shows that a new Curate, with at least a smattering of Latin who always signed himself Patricius Curwen, had just arrived on the scene. Perhaps he was more particular about details and recording them. He

it was who also recorded the trade of various folk he buried, though by no means everybody was so honoured.

Whilst considering the probabilities of the date of White Ash, it would be well to also go back to that other original problem of mine. Whence the strange name? I have pondered long and hard over this. If one remembers the Cumbrian speech, a glottal 't' is used before the noun instead of 'the', and occasionally the inversion compound is used, such as "Seat Sandal" instead of "Sandal Seat". Then I suggest that "The Ash Thwaite" would be spoken as "t'thwaite Ash", and then slide into, or be mistakenly quoted as "White Ash". But if Curwen was a Cumbrian, as his name suggests, it is unlikely he could have initiated such a transformation, though he might well have continued the custom. Can this be the explanation of the origin of White Ash? Is it coincidence that there is an Ash tree at the end of the garden? An expert has told me that this theory is linguistically untenable, and that the name probably originated as it now is, and meant just what it says. Well maybe, but I still like my own theory.



From the 1st Edition 25" OS map (1863)



From the tithe map (1840)
Scale & angle adjusted to equal OS map

There is a small and enigmatic clue relevant to the age of the building which, for many years, had been overlooked. There are several rather crude and imperfect carvings of initials on the huge barn doors: a large "T W" and another large "J W" in another style, with below them a much smaller "T W E" in the same style as the "J W". Unfortunately there is no sign of a date although another imperfect incision might be either "XX" or an imperfect "W". So we have Thomas Watson and John Watson, with one of the Thomases married to Ellen, Elizabeth or Eleanor. Unfortunately we have no parish registers for most of the 17th century, so constructing derivation of families and land inheritance has to be by intuition and inspired guesswork. The only Thomas Watson married to 'E' around the right time, is Ellen in the registers for 1610, which is much too early to commemorate a wedding, but could easily have been incised for the building construction many years later. There are three Eleanor Watsons buried between 1692 and 1694, so "T W E" could be a marriage on or before 1694 and since there is no subsequent owner or occupier with a surname "T", this would put the date of the building prior to that year. This is not inconsistent with other dates of similar properties in the village. We also know from the parish registers that Peter Watson, was born in 1622 to Thomas, whose wife was possibly Elizabeth Peirson, the marriage being in 1610. The conclusion is therefore that Thomas and Elizabeth built the barn sometime well after their marriage in 1610 or, that some time in the mid 17th century, Peter Watson married and some time after the Parliamentary survey of 1649, in which he does not figure as a land or householder, he inherited from his father Thomas the property which became the White Ash of the 18th century and the farmland that went with it.

This survey, describes the property as having one dwelling house, one barn and stable, as the working centre of a holding of 27 acres of arable and meadow, together with Commons and Commons of pasture on the adjacent moors. The whole was valued at £12 16s 3d and the annual Old Rent was 13s ld, and New Rent on Improvement 6s 6½d. The sole tenant was Thomas Watson Senior. That leaves us with the interesting question – as Peter did not die until 1700 – why are not his initials on the door as well as those of John and Thomas? Alternatively, does that mean that the above deductions have a flaw?

But the plot thickens. When we consult the deeds relating to White Ash, as they have come down to the mid 20th century, they throw a different light on the copyhold ownership. Rather ambiguously, they quote "White Ash" as "a messuage or tenement or dwelling house, farm buildings and several closes, formerly a moiety of a messuage or tenement called the 'Ash' of customary rent 6s 9d apportioned to 4s 6d apportioned to 3d". Presumably this last sum refers to the building alone, as this was the rent still being paid by Stoddart in 1930s. On the other hand, Manorial documents continue quoting, and the copyholders paying, rent of 6s 9d until at least 1864. This does not square up with the Survey of 1649, not withstanding the latter being quoted in the Deeds.

We next meet this Watson family (there were several others in the village, probably direct relations, including two Thomas Watsons, Senior and Junior) with the baptism mentioned above, in 1701. But in 1714, and again ambiguously, before the Court Leet and Baron, Thomas Watson "surrendered one moiety of a messuage and tenement in Over Lorton of a rent of 13s 6d apportioned to 6s 9d to John Dalton and his heirs according to custom". Rent 6s.9d. None of the various statements tally with each other and doubt must be expressed regarding the accuracy, or more particularly the interpretation, of each original statement. Ambiguities arise because 'formally a moiety' supposes there was another equal part forming "The Ash", of which we have found no record, nor does 6s 9d equal half of 13s 1d. Another ambiguity is the reading of the transfer to Dalton. This could be read as the whole property, formerly held by Watson. But denying this supposition is the fact that from that time on , 1714, both holders of 'White Ash', and the property which came to Dalton and subsequently to his heirs are each paying 6s 9d customary rent.

Presumably some improvement had taken place at Thomas Watson's, and one can only assume that the buildings had been doubled to approximately what we know today. Only approximately, because as we shall see, there have been ongoing changes to the buildings through the centuries. Firm evidence for this improvement does not appear until the first edition of the Ordnance Survey was published in 1863, which shows a combination of buildings forming a rough letter "E" shape owned half and half. However, the much smaller scale Tithe Map of 1840 does indicate what may have happened. This latter map shows two distinct parallel buildings of similar size, and a smaller third alongside and parallel to the Cockermouth road.

Since there is a gap of nearly 150 years between these events we cannot assume the 1840 and 1863 details reflect correctly the improvements made between 1649 and 1714. Some corroboration may be derived from the 1840 Tithe Awards. In 1840, the White Ash tenement still consisted of some 27 acres, whilst the "Dalton" half (still shown as "White Ash" in the 1851 Census) was one of roughly comparable size at about 40 acres, mixed arable and pasture. Both sets of buildings, taken together, were roughly double the "house, barn and byre of 1649" and may reasonably be

assumed to represent, or at least incorporate, the extent of improvements between 1700 and 1714. The third, smaller, of the three buildings was probably added after 1714, otherwise there would have been an imbalance in the division of the rent in 1714. It is known to have been a barn, and was demolished in 1924. The small addition linking the two principal buildings does not show on the 1840 map but is present on the OS 1863 edition. There is one further complication. Both the Tithe Map and OS 1863 map show that the barn of White Ash was a square building, twice the width of that which we know now. One half of it was demolished sometime after 1863, that is obvious, but when was it built and who knocked it down?

By a roundabout route we have arrived at the point where evidence of field and document suggest the two principal buildings of "White Ash" date from about mid 17th to the turn of the 18th century. What of the houses themselves? A twentieth century owner of **"Lambfold**", the name of the "Dalton" half which name appears by 1883, claimed it had been built about 1660. Whilst not impossible, there is no hard evidence to support this: and the oft repeated statement that the old timbers of such buildings were salvaged from then recent shipwrecks is, I understand, discounted as a myth by experts. Undoubtedly the building dates from the period 1660 - 1730. The present "White Ash" also has features, such as the stone flagged staircase that is said to date it to the period about 1700. It is also just possible that "White Ash" is the "improvement" dating back to the Dalton sale. If this is so then Thomas Watson built "White Ash" for himself and moved into it before selling "Lambfold" to John Dalton. That argument can not stand if our hypothesis to account for the incised initials in White Ash barn is correct. It also means that we have to remember that in reading the registers between 1700 and 1883, there are two quite independent homes called "White Ash" in the same way that "Armaside" did not refer to the single house of today but a hamlet of four independent farms. White Ash was in fact a small, but growing, community on the very edge of the village and perhaps for this reason warranted the Curate's specifying it by name in the Registers.

What is indisputable in that the Lord's Rent List for 1749 shows that whilst John Dalton was still paying rent of 6s.9d for his portion of White Ash, the other portion had previously passed to Peter Peall, who was also paying 6s.9d. That entry is somewhat misleading in as far as John Dalton's wife Mary died in 1718, and John himself in 1728. John Dalton's daughter, Sarah, became the wife of Thomas Westray in 1731 whose family thus became the copyhold owner of that half of Lambfold/White Ash. Through successive generations, Joseph, his son Thomas, and grandson James Brown Westray were to farm Lambfold/White Ash firstly through tenant farmers Daniel Hodgson, then by two generations of Jacksons, Joseph and John, until at least 1901. The name Lambfold first appears about 1880. Until 1924 Lambfold had that large barn standing right on the corner where the lane joins the main village street. It was taken down and the stone used to build an extension to Terrace farm. Both White Ash and 'Lambold' families were still paying equal Land Tax, 9s.l0d, in 1767.

Meanwhile, copyhold ownership of White Ash had passed from Peter Peall to his son John. John and his wife Mary were both dead by 1788, so the copyhold went through the latter's daughter Jane, to Thomas Burnyeat, who was admitted as tenant by the Court in 1812. Ownership then passed through John Peile Johnson and others until it was acquired as part of the growing estate of the Harbord family of Lorton Park in 1896, along with many other adjacent properties. After John and Mary died,

the property was farmed through a succession of tenants, Wilson Pearson, William Nicholson, and Isaac Harrison: then from 1829 through to 1869 by William Wigham as tenant farmer, whose descendants are still living in the village today. In turn he was followed by a succession of copyhold owners, including the Harbord family of Lorton Park, tenant farmers and their lodgers. If the preceding paragraphs seem confusing to the reader, then he is not alone. Thomas Clemitson, who had been farming from White Ash around 1901, decided to acquire Lambfold also. On his death Lambfold was sold to Mary Jane Milburn in September 1926. In turn it passed to Leslie Milburn, the village shopkeeper, in 1934 and here is the rub – it was sold with Extinguishment of Manorial Rights for £9 14s 2d and rent 2d and labelled dwelling house, outbuildings, garden and orchard, known as White Ash, formerly Lambfold . That could be a slip of the pen but to make matters worse, or perhaps to confound even more, this author was given a photograph of that property, (now in the LDFLHS archive) supposedly, according to the donor, of White Ash, but actually showing the western aspect of Lambfold.

From then on to the present the situation becomes clearer though no less complicated. Clemitson remained at White Ash as a tenant of the Harbord family, the copyhold owners, and was himself host to a number of lodgers at White Ash where he died in 1928. But in September 1924 George Harbord sold White Ash to Thomas Stoddart. Thus ended the farming activity from this property, as Thomas was a joiner by trade, who had the customary sideline of village undertaker. The erstwhile byre was now a repository for timber and coffins whilst the hard work was done in the wooden joinery workshop Thomas erected in the garden. He made a very good job of it too. Though it could never survive as had the 17th century house to which it belonged, it did require the strength of a large lorry, helped by many willing and enthusiastic hammer wielding hands to pull it down in 1984.

In 1939, after an unhappy exchange of correspondence with the Ministry which threatened him with legal action, Thomas very reluctantly paid up some £33 as the cost of 'Extinguishment of Manorial Incidents' as this piece of bureaucracy was so grandiloquently called. As he complained bitterly, he would much prefer to continue paying his annual rent of 3d.

Thomas could not only use his hands to make good furniture, he was an accomplished piano player. He spent many evenings entertaining his fellows with his music, alas, all too frequently at the Horseshoe, the liquid produce of which was his eventual undoing.

The house, "White Ash," is approximately square and comprises two ample rooms and buttery downstairs. The principle room had a door directly to the narrow outside yard on the south side, whilst on the north side the buttery had a door into the garth now blocked up and discovered during internal replastering. In the passage beside the staircase is a second door to the garth. Upstairs there are four rooms joined by a corridor. These may well have been added piecemeal because they are at three slightly different levels, and the result of a later increase in the elevation to provide an adequate upper storey. If there were any sub-divisions to make separate bedrooms, and the number of inhabitants at different times suggest this must have been highly desirable, they have since disappeared leaving no visible trace. Although it does not conform closely to any of the examples given by Brunskill (17), it is similar to his example 26(i), p61, with a load-bearing wall separating the right-hand main room. See Photograph 6.

The barn, which is in one contiguous construction with the house, has been considerably modified. As described above, both the 1840 and 1863 maps show it to be much wider than it now is, the latter, a better map, puts it at double the present day width of 16 feet, which would have made the original size about 32 feet square. A plan relating to the Harbord estate dated 1886 also shows this (18). There is slight external evidence of stonework removed. Internally there is evidence of a "cross passage" hard up against the wall of the house, though no evidence of this being other than a "right of way between two doors" as there is no sign of a walled division. Here too is a door which appears to have been introduced later to give direct entrance into the downstairs passage in the house. Apart from the two doors mentioned above, there is a pair of large double doors up to the full wall height on the south side and another small door opposite on the north side. Above the latter is a walled up "window", into what would seem to have been a hayloft. The deeds of the property, which go back no further than 1924, but incorporate the 1649 description of the holding, describe the barn as a "byre". Just inside the double doors is a small drain. Outside the small door opposite, in what was the part of the barn since demolished was a large soakaway, with dimensions approximately 2 feet by 3 feet, and three feet deep, with a single slab of slate covering it. When discovered in 1982 it was thought to be a well, but if so, it had been filled in, and the upper walling destroyed.

White Ash was sold again in 1957, and yet four times more before puchase by this writer in 1980. In that time apart from housing one or more families simultaneously, it became a tea shop, twice; a post office; and a second hand and antiquarian bookshop. It became a tea and craft shop with this writer and wife between 1980 and 1989; the bare stone barn that had erstwhile stored the coffins transformed into a warm and colourful place lively with pictures, flowers, the aroma of hot scones, and happy chatter. Afterwards, we retained it as our own craft workshop until yet another sale in 2000.

Although highly sceptical myself, both Mrs. Stoddart and my wife claim, quite independently, to have seen a ghostly male presence in the downstairs corridor, but neither has suggested to whom the ghost belongs.

So the small area on which the two modern houses of White Ash and Lambfold stand has seen itself as the centre of subsistence farming for as far back as history of the village goes, quite possibly one thousand years, a period during which it saw the piecemeal construction, first of lowly, then substantial buildings: that time being followed by a brief period of varied domestic and commercial use over the last eighty. We have followed the story of this particular plot of land, the houses built on it, and people who have used it and lived on it in quite a lot, but by no means the whole available detail. A similar story could almost certainly be built around any other of the older random stone built houses in the valley.

Dale House, formerly known as **Red House**. During 1987, this unprepossessing double fronted house was undergoing repairs which entailed chipping off the external rendering. This revealed a second door which had been filled in adjacent to the door in use, thus confirming the fact that the building had once been two separate cottages, as reported by John Bolton, one time schoolteacher at Lorton, in his Lecture (14) where he says the building had been described as "all those two mansions". Unfortunately the date panel, revealed above the door, was very badly cut or eroded, whether by the latest workmen or earlier ones we do not know. All

that remains visible are a "6" that looks as if part of "16??" and a beautifully incised floral "R" under and to the left of the "6" and, with a stretch of imagination, possibly the main loop of a "C" under the second "?". During the village's industrial period, Red House served as boarding house, and before that had been the venue for Mary Borranskill's Dame's school.

Mid Town Cottage – together with the three cottages, Kent, Causey and Beech. In 1990, a quantity of interesting deeds and other documents relating to this group of properties came to light, a rather rare find, and were made available by the then owner, Mr A Woodward.

From the parish register, we know that "John Peile of Mid-towne" buried his wife in 1638 and that Thomas Peile of Midtown baptised his daughter Ellin in 1647. It is particularly frustrating that the burial register is firstly very deficient and then lacking altogether from 1640 until 1692, so we must make the reasonable assumption that Thomas was John's son and that the family had copyhold of whatever property was involved. The 1649 Survey tells us that Thomas held three separate, small, and contiguous pieces of land here. We must make the next assumption, that each had a different provenance, as they are listed independently. With each, he also had one or more other small closes in the vicinity. Cheek by jowl with the three, on the north, was another small garth containing "a ruinous cottage" owned by Peter Wilkinson which was apparently built against one wall of Thomas Peile's barne. It was the rebuilding of this dwelling that became the farmhouse of Midtown Farm and now provides us with the 20th century house bearing the dated transom "P W 1678" and the name "Mid Town Cottage".

What of the three 20th century cottages? An isolated and independent piece of information comes to us from Bridekirk. On 16th January 1669, Bridekirk "collected 6s 9d towards John Peele of Oud Lorton having his house burnt – losse £80" (19). At some unknown date before 1684, John Peil purchased from Anthony Bouch two "mansion houses", a barn, and byre, with two plum-garths or gardens adjoining with a Toft. In that year, 1684, John "sold" them to Ann Fisher of Thornthwaite for £20, but this must have been to raise a mortgage as he "sold" them again in 1691 to Peter Peil for £25.10s. This time they were described as "Toft, two dwelling houses, barne, byre, and two gardens on the backsides of the houses – rent 3d". This latter deal was on the condition that John and Isabell Bell, who were sharing the cottage (now known as "Beech Cottage"), should continue to have use of it, with the bower, milk-house and garden adjoining Thomas Barne's garden, during their lives. Again at an unknown date, Thomas Peil sold his cottage, of customary rent 1½d, to Jonathan Taylor and at some time Jonathan Taylor acquired the other cottage, together with the barn and byre, turning the latter combination into the third, middle, cottage we see today.

In 1730, Jonathan Taylor sold the single cottage that is **"Beech" cottage** to Jacob Scott, and the other two cottages, again described as "mansion houses", now known as **'Kent' and 'Causey'** cottages, to Richard Crosthwaite. Richard was the Parish Clerk until his death in 1773, at which time Joseph Crosthwaite inherited the copyhold. In 1775, Joseph entered into an agreement with Peter Garnett to sell part of the holding adjacent to the north-west corner of John Wilkinson's house, consisting of an estimated 87 yards for the purpose of building a dwelling house. This appears to suggest that today's "Kent Cottage" was built about that time.

Again, this must have been by way of a mortgage, because the property reverted to Joseph Crosthwaite in 1796. They remained in the hands of the Crosthwaite family and heirs until the turn of the 20th century when, with Beech cottage, all three properties came into the hands of John Musgrave of Wasdale Hall and were all enfranchised under the terms of the Copyhold Act of 1894. They subsequently became independently owned and passed through a number of hands during the 20th century. In the 1990s the three cottages are owner occupied, whilst Mid Town itself, much modified and modernised, is a holiday home.

Wayside Cottages. Much ink has been used and many sleepless evenings taken puzzling over this little group of cottages. One can easily be misled by this attractive little 18th century terrace. 18th century? They are nothing of the sort, in spite of the fact that No 1 contains a dated transom above the fireplace bearing the inscription

P

H A 1700

We will find that, behind the façade of a simple cottage, there lies a very complicated and intricate history of both buildings and family. That we now have difficulty in discovering and understanding the history of these cottages is not surprising. It had already been forgotten by 1891 when John Bolton gave his lecture on Lorton as it had been eighty years earlier. But let us go back and try and find their beginnings.

By implication we can go back to the early 17th century. Immediately behind the site of the present cottages was a close known as Peirson's Boon House Close, from which we deduce there was a dwelling on that site in 1649. We must consider that it did not figure in the Parliamentary Survey of that year because it was sited on Peirson's freehold land as shown in Chapter 4, Sketch Map 1.

On 30th April 1751, John Sewell surrendered to the Dean and Chapter "his messuage or dwelling house, garth or garden, with appurtenances situated in the Manor, of customary rent 1d, to the use of John Grigg and Mary his wife, their heirs ....." etc. There is no evidence in that document of how John Sewell came by the property, but from the parish registers we know that on 30th December 1579 Christopher Skynner married Ellen Casse, and their grandson Martin was baptised in 1623. Rebekah, the daughter of John Skinner of Upper Lorton, was baptised in November 1716 and married John Sewell in December 1747.

We next have an Indenture dated 11th May 1780 which refers to an enlarged property. Joseph Fisher, yeoman, purchased from Wilson Pearson, Esq. of Bridekirk (the different spelling of Pearson is believed not to be significant as spellings were not only idiosyncratic but tended to vary over time) for £62, a dwelling house, byre, garden, and parcel of ground lying on the back side of the dwelling house at the east end of the barn, rent ½d. Fisher also purchased from Pearson the said barn, rent 1/4d, for another £20. The immediate conclusion is that the Skinners were tenants of the Pearsons and not the owners. But when Rebekah married, she was a widow of Isaac Fisher of Wythop whom she had married in November 1743. So who is this Joseph Fisher who has suddenly appeared? The Lorton registers are silent on this, but Joseph was the son of Joseph Fisher of Wythop Hall, a piece of information which does not help very much.

At the request of Joseph Fisher, the whole was sold on to William Nicholson as a Trustee for Joseph Fisher. The documents are not more forthcoming on this point,

but again we must make the assumption that the purchase by Joseph was to put the property into Trust for his son, Joseph. Thus William Nicholson became owner of: "that dwelling house and byre with the garden thereunto adjoining also all that piece of ground on the backside of the house lately enclosed by William Nicholson by a wall from the corner of the kitchen to within one foot of the East side of the Barn door. Also the Dunghillstead at the High end of the field called High Flatts and also a piece of waste ground at the east end of the barn with the liberty of erecting ladders in the field called Boon House".

This description ties in very neatly with the current extent (October 2000) of the three cottages and their gardens taken together. Nicholson was to remain as Trustee during the natural lives of Joseph Fisher and his wife Ann and then to sell by public auction and pay the net proceeds to Mary, wife of George Ritson of Ullock and Sarah Westray of Greysouthen, the widow sisters of Joseph Fisher.

We do not have, in Lorton registers, the burials of either Joseph or Ann, but he property was transferred to George Ritson and his wife Mary for rent 3/4d on 11th August, 1788. William Nicholson remained in occupancy as tenant and was admitted as such by the Manor Court Jury in October 1796. He was also a tenant at the nearby farm of "White Ash", from whence Sarah Dalton had married Thomas Westray of Greysouthen, the latter thereby becoming owner of the 'Lambfold' half of 'White Ash'.

On 5th May 1814, Mary the wife of John Fisher and eldest daughter and heir of George Ritson was admitted as tenant to the above described property, which, we note, at this date was still described as one dwelling, barn and byre.

The next document relates that Jane Wilson, as Devisee of Joseph Fisher, was admitted as tenant to that same property on 20th March 1865, and thereupon surrendered it to Richard Harbord who was then admitted tenant. Who was Jane Wilson? Was she Joseph Fisher's married granddaughter or niece? She has not been found in the Lorton registers.

The subsequent transfers of the property are well documented but present a new and knotty problem, since in 1886 Eleanor Harbord inherits not one but two cottages and a byre. Then in 1924, the property, now worth £310, is sold to Annie Hartley and the deeds of sale are for not two, but three cottages, each with a tenant – Hubert Wells, Miss Braithwaite, and Mrs Thornthwaite. The byre has disappeared, but how, and when?

We now have recourse to another and independent new set of documents – the Tithe Awards and map of 1840. The latter inadequately differentiates between the various parts of the single property numbered 278, apparently a dwelling on the site of No.1 with an attached barn lengthwise along the road in the direction of Cockermouth. There is what appears to be another small construction on the present site of No 3. The whole is enclosed by a wall, corresponding to the present limit of the three properties. At that time, 1840, the owner is given as Joseph Fisher, with 'John Harris and others' as tenants. The close immediately around the house, "Above House" (ie 'Boon House' – the name has not changed since 1649) is now in the ownership of Henry Teshmaker Thompson, and farmed by John Ewart. How Thompson comes into the picture is not yet known, but he also owned 110 acres around the village including Holme Cottage in Low Lorton and he seems to have been a bit of an entrepreneur.

So to complete the story from documented evidence, it seems that between 1865 and 1896, Richard Harbord built a second cottage, and that between 1886 and 1924 George Harbord converted the byre into the third cottage, at the same time making all three similarly faced and matching his two cottages known as Park Cottages across the road; and those two are almost certainly of 17th century origins.

Of the questions that remain to be answered, there is one not previously discussed. Do the deeds representing the property No. 3 truly relate in their entirety to No 3 or, as seems more likely, to the entire plot now occupied by Nos 1 to 3? If the latter, then it is relevant to see what the Deeds of Nos 1 and 2 have to say. In a word, 'they don't'. They only cover the latter since 1861, but it is at this point that physical repairs come to our aid, but without providing convincing proofs.

Some major refurbishment of No 2 was made in February 1999. Stripping out the plaster revealed very roughly made random stone walls which would not have been typical of an original wall for a dwelling. There was evidence of a large window having been placed in the front to the right of the existing window as seen from the road. It also appeared that the rear half was an earlier extension – a definite break in the stonework occurs immediately behind the door between the two downstairs rooms, and a stone staircase also suggests that the upstairs back room is a later addition in place of a 'cat-slide roof '. At the foot of the stairs in No 3 is a timber lintel in the party wall with No.2, much of which wall in between the two front living rooms is of brick. The inevitable conclusion is that cottages Nos 2 and 3 were originally one, (even the stone flagged upstairs corridors on both sides correspond) and were split during the period 1886-1924. In refurbishing cottage No 1, the owner discovered evidence of two small vertical slit windows that suggested it might well have been converted from a barn. Finally, a blocked-up window in the upstairs east wall of the front bedroom was discovered and is now opened.

It remains only to point out that, although often called "Wayside Cottages", they should, strictly speaking, be called "Park Cottages" as that is how they are described in the deeds. This rather lengthy and detailed tale is a good example of how research from a wide variety of documents, backed up by careful study on the ground and aided by the interest of owners and a willingness to study their own properties when under repair, can lead to discovery of hidden history of a property. I am indebted to Sally and John Birch at No 3 and Josh Morgan at No 1 for their help.

Kirkfell House, Fairfield and Oakhill are three rather large and typical Victorian houses, all built to a similar design by members of the Wilson family about 1860. In a letter dated 1985, Maud McDonald, granddaughter of John Wilson who built Fairfield, says this was about 1865. She was just a little out as all three houses are all shown on the 1863 OS, though not on the 1840 tithe map. Fairfield still belongs to the family and is rented out, but Kirkfell House and Oakhill are both occupied by resident owners.

There are perhaps three other substantial 19th century buildings to consider, for their usage or past inhabitants rather than for their architectural merits. These are **Broomlands, Lorton Park and the Vicarage**. The first two are in High Lorton, but the Vicarage is in a sort of no-mans-land, rather like the church from which it is separated by a field now used as the overflow to the caravan site of the Wheatsheaf Inn.

Broomlands stands as the south western sentinel to High Lorton with a fine view up the valley, from which it reaps the benefit of the south west gales. It was built about 1890 by A.J.S. Dixon of Lorton Hall. The house takes its name from the ancient field name for the close of ground on which it was built and is noteworthy as the one-time home of Lorton's only literary authoress, Doreen Wallace (20). See Chapter 10, "The famous and nearly-famous .....". About 1986, "Broomlands" was divorced from its accompanying and traditional style barn, when the latter was converted into the independent residence we see now.

The beginnings of **Lorton Park** are still something of a mystery, although this is now being unravelled in correspondence with the present members of the Harbord family. John Bolton believed it was built by John Dodgson of Low House, and younger brother of Rev. Lancaster Dodgson of Shatton. Also according to John Bolton, (14), early in the 19th century there was a very old farmhouse and outbuildings opposite Holemire Lane and in 1810, Bella Thompson the village baker, lived there. This was approximately the site of the dwelling of Peter Robinson back in 1649. Between it and Conkey's Corner were a number of small dwellings that fell into disuse.

Thanks to Bolton, we know who lived in this range of rather dingy little houses at the turn of the 19th century (14). Next door to Bella, going northwards, apparently where Lorton Park now stands, lived John Martins. Then John and Betty Graft, followed by the two sisters Nanny and Becca Fisher who were dressmakers. They must have been living in "Lorton Park Cottage", then two separate semi-detached dwellings. It is likely that these were built in or about 1700 and provided the design for the Wayside Cottages (as mentioned above) in which we have the fireplace dated 1700.

On the site now occupied by the block comprising the two letting 'flats' belonging to Lorton Park was Robin Hartley with his weaving shop, then John Bell, a waller, with his wife Betty, who was the daughter of Anthony Garnett, and ran a girls' school. Finally, in an almost derelict small house lived the Excise Man. Reputedly he lived there because when sent to perform his duty in the village there was no other building available. At some time between 1860 and 1886, though not before someone thought fit to install coal-burning grates in this block, it ceased to be residential and with the addition of some barns, was turned into a farm unit. It seems that with the exception of the double "Lorton Park Cottage", all the remainder were demolished. In their stead we have Lorton Park and the block of farm buildings which, about 1991, were purchased by the new owner of Lorton Park who converted these latter into a pair of luxury holiday flats. Under this complex runs a rivulet which can still be seen above ground on the opposite, Kirk Fell, side of the road and re-emerges in the fields beyond.

The tithe map of 1840 shows that there was a fairly large house adjacent to and attached to the Lorton Park Cottages and, to the south, a small building, either Bella's cottage or possibly an outhouse of it, separated from the large house by some 20 yards. This latter was owned by widow Hutchinson of Shatton who died in 1852 and left it to Mary Harbord. So, by 1840, Bella's cottage had disappeared and the fine big residence called Lorton House, boasting a new front built on represented now by the transverse roof gable end onto the road, has appeared. The name was later upgraded to the more imposing "Lorton Park" and a formal garden laid out in place of that unidentified small building. Thus Lorton Park as we see it today must have

been built by the Dodgson/Hutchinson/Harbord family between 1810 and 1840 and possibly further upgraded by 1863 when it appears in its present form on the OS map of that date, complete with ornate gardens approached by a long drive appropriate for a gentleman's residence. It is rather strange that there appears to be no evidence of the Harbord family in the census returns of 1841, 1851 1861 or 1871. The Brooksbank family were in residence with four servants in 1881. The long drive was substituted before 1898 by the drive still in use in 1998 and evidence of the old entrance drive is still to be seen some hundred yards to the south of the new 1990s drive entrance. But Bella's house did not completely disappear. Repair and restoring work carried out in 1997/98 revealed an older construction in the kitchen area and three bread ovens. The Harbords may have baked their own bread, but would not have required three ovens. The inevitable conclusion must be that Bella's bakery was the starting point of the new Lorton House.

When **Lorton House** appeared on the scene is another question, but based on the foregoing it must have been between 1810 and 1840. The house and some 20 acres between it and Jennings brewery buildings were then already in the ownership and occupation of Mary Hutchinson, a widow of Shatton. It came to the Harbord family through Mary Hutchinson's Will when she died in September 1852. The Harbord family, who came from Whitehaven, moved to Liverpool and prospered and, like the Hutchinsons with whom they were intermarried, was a wealthy shipping family, who proceeded to buy up much of the surrounding property, as well as enlarging the house. Lorton Park, surrounded by its parkland augmented to some 60 acres, together with adjacent rented farms and cottages, was the result. The family had connections with the Rev Jolly, a Royal Tutor, who was instrumental in an invitation for the Duke of Connaught to visit in May 1863. A tree was planted in the garden to commemorate this event, during which he was, of course, treated royally and encouraged to catch a goldfish from the pond. The tree, now of considerable size, still flourishes and has burst and partially engulfed the plaque which was fastened to it in commemoration of Lorton's one and only royal visitor. (I do not count the myth, circulating in some tourist-oriented books, that Malcolm King of Scotland visited Lorton Hall back in the dark ages). Richard Harbord, a relative of Lord Suffield who was Lord in Waiting to the Prince of Wales, came into the property. Three of the daughters never married and lived in the house until the last of them died in 1924, after which the property was sold off and became reduced to the house and park, much as it is today in the 1990s. In the latter half of the 20th century, the house and grounds changed hands a number of times and underwent considerable renovation, particularly in 1997/8.

The Vicarage is typical of Victorian houses built for that purpose. Substantial, staid and eminently suitable for a country Vicar with a family and, of course, stables for the horses and a coach house. In keeping with local tradition, it was strongly and well built in local stone about 1892, some three hundred yards from the church from which it is separated by a field that now includes the incongruous overflow for the Wheatsheaf caravan site. The accommodation was adequate for the normal country Vicar with a rural and farming congregation, but not over generous. Two living rooms and a study for the Vicar, but there were five bedrooms upstairs. One of these was intended for a servant. The original plan called for a cellar and an attic but these were never included. The house remained in use as the Lorton Vicarage for a comparatively short time. In 1962, the resident Vicar, Rev J Woodhead – Dixon

purchased Lorton Hall and took up residence there. The Vicarage then went slowly downhill, being alternately empty or let. In 1985 it was sold and became a small country house hotel.

This brings to mind that, in 1890, just about the time the Lorton Vicarage was being built, Bishop Godwin's Charge included the following with regard to parsonages:-

"it is rather with respect to their excellence and their beauty, and the expense of living in them implied by these qualities, than to the cases in which they are wanting. Much as one delights in the thought of the clergy being housed in a manner befitting their habits and their recognised social position, I cannot but feel that in some cases a large house, built in an ornamental style, may become a heavy burden upon a slender income. I would wish that in not a few instances the purse of the incumbent, rather than the glory of the architect, had been manifestly the first consideration".

Adjacent to the church is the "**Sunday School**", now a private holiday home. Following the reconstruction of the church itself in 1809, the Sunday School was built to house the flourishing Sunday School classes and bears a memorial plaque to "Robert Bridge, died 20 December, 1857", "The sweet Remembrance of the just, Shall flourish when he sleeps in dust". The classes operated under the strict and vigilant eyes of Mr Jonathan Musgrave who was Superintendent for 44 years. He headed an elaborate regime of committees, rules and regulations that would kill the concept stone dead today. However, it evidently did flourish, for the building we see now is essentially the Sunday School after enlargements in 1863 and again when the alterations warranted yet another memorial plaque "This School was enlarged in the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee, 1887". The building enjoyed yet another small extension and modernization after being sold in 1980 on the understanding it provide a permanent residence for a local family, but it soon was resold to become a holiday home.

The sale of the "Sunday School" represents a sad chapter in the life of the church-going community of Lorton. In the late 1970s, the church was in rather a poor state and more money was required to effect the necessary repairs than was seen to be forthcoming. In desperation, the PCC decided that the "Sunday School House", which was currently unused, should be sold to raise funds. The building had been built by public subscription by the people of Lorton and therefore, so the PCC considered, belonged to the people of Lorton and the PCC. But having taken advice and sold the property, the Church Commissioners demanded the money as belonging to central funds, but magnanimously agreed to pay the PCC the interest earned by it. Be that as it may, many have subsequently come to feel that the sale was ill-advised as, apart from private homes, there is now no suitable place for holding Sunday School instruction, the village hall being too far away. Nor is there any ecclesiastical venue other than the restricted aisle and pews in the church itself, for church-goers and others to meet when attending church matters.

The School. Details of the first school are very scanty, but there is one intriguing record in the manorial documents: "There came the same day (26th October, 1714) Thomas Watson (of White Ash) and John Dalton and surrendered one piece of close and tenement called Flatt Vales (?) situate in Upper Lorton ..... of the yearly rent of 6d (..... illeg .....) for the school house and the said John Peil was admitted tennant

according to custom upon condition of redemption of the payment of 40s at the end of six years" (21). No other reference to Flatt Vales has been found so far. William Robinson held a close of two acres in 1649, and there were three closes near the church on the High Lorton, that is the East side of the road bore the name Flatts in 1840, which coincided with Robinson's Flatts. This is the only likely site with that name, but there is no knowledge of any building ever having been thereon. Moreover, we have seen no record that either Watson or Dalton owned any 'Flatts' in High Lorton, or elsewhere.

Details of schooling are given in Chapter 7, "Schooling and Education". The present school buildings are the result of several changes. The oldest part was erected in 1809. Like "Broomlands", it too was built on a portion of the field known as "Broom", purchased by the inhabitants from Mr Joshua Lucock Bragg for 5 shillings, customary rent one farthing (22). The major addition dates from 1859 when some £227 had been collected from villagers and friends to provide a new Boy's School, at which time the older building became the Girl's School. The accommodation for the children and teachers alike must have been severely simple. Each year the walls had to be cleaned and whitewashed with lime. Though the Trustees paid for this at Christmas 1865, thereafter it was at the expense of the schoolmaster on pain of a fine of seven shillings. The Education Act of 1870 permitted the establishment of a School Board and money to be raised by extra rates to be levied on everybody, but the Trustees successfully cajoled the various landowners and ratepayers to donate the necessary funds to keep the school as a "Voluntary School" right up to 1903. Mr William Alexander of Oak Hill was associated with the school as a leading Trustee for 38 years, during which time he saw many improvements made, urged on, it must be admitted, by various government inspectors.

In 1997, the school underwent some internal modifications to cater for an increasing number of pupils, but the biggest was the addition of a fine new assembly hall/classroom to be shared as a facility with the adjacent tennis club.

The School House. This solid Victorian building was constructed, like other buildings in the open valley, with no windows on the south side from whence came the worst of the winter gales. This means, of course, that not much direct sunlight enters the house which tends to be dark. Originally it carried the name of Alexander House, in honour of Mr Alexander whose association with the school is described above. There is an enigmatic reference to a school house in 1714,(See "The School" above), but is unclear if this was for a School, school house or both.

Lorton High Mill. Records of a mill on this site go back to the earliest records of Over Lorton in 1158, when the Manor of Over Lorton with the mill, the miller and his family were given to the Priory Church in Carlisle by Ranulph de Lindesay. It has been rebuilt several times and has had a mixed history if the few earlier records are to be believed. It stands close by the little bridge on the dead-end road to Low Swinside, a few hundred yards outside the village proper. Presumably a corn-mill in 1158, by 1478 it was being described as "the fulling mill called Overcornemylne" and in a ruinous state. In the intervening three hundred years it must have been rebuilt at least once and suffered a change of use. Latterly, the mill drew its power from a mill-race taking water from Whit Beck immediately above the bridge by Boon Beck Farm I can still be traced running along the East side of Yew Croft (Tithe Map 393). The earliest known reference to the miller by name is John Bell in the 1649 Survey

who apparently inherited from his father Richard Bell and paid an annual rent of 5s.4d to the Dean and Chapter for the Water Corn Mill, who in turn had passed it to his son John or Jonathan by 1664 according to the Court Roll. Thus the mill had reverted to its original use well before 1664 and remained so for Cuthbert Fisher was the miller here in 1715, presumably milling corn (23). By the findings of the Court Leet in 1864, Elizabeth Richardson and John Brown were admitted as tenants as devisees of George Richardson of "all that messuage tenement, dwelling house and newly erected Water Corn Mill at Upper Lorton, rent 5s 4d" (24). George had purchased it for £1050 in 1829 from George Hodgson of Cockermouth, who in turn had acquired it in 1817 from William Wallace of Maryport. This William it was who had completely rebuilt the mill and kiln in 1801. John Stalker of Isel who had acquired ownership in 1859 eventually came to live in Lorton in 1868 and in 1880 went to live in the Mill House. Meanwhile, the active work of milling had been farmed out. In 1841, the miller was Thomas Workman, in 1851 it was James Richardson and in 1881 the Corn Miller was John Hayhurst. By 1883 the mill was no longer in use commercially. The rebuilding in 1801 was almost certainly the last, as the mill was again in ruins in mid 20th century. In 1996, the whole property was converted to a private dwelling, unfortunately yet another holiday home.

The Village Hall and Jenning's Brewery. This is not a very old building, probably dating from between 1840, at which time it is not shown on the tithe award map and 1847 when John Jennings and Co. are listed in the Brigham Directory as Brewers and Maltsters in High Lorton. What is now the village hall was the malthouse. The early days of the brewery are lost in time, but it certainly dated from before 1809, as in that year William Nicholson sold to William Jennings "a Malt Kiln with a small piece of ground known as Green Garth, and two lengths of timber of a Barn at the North end of the Kiln". The purchase price was £105 and the rent 1 shilling to the Lord of the Manor, the Dean and Chapter, Carlisle (25). It must therefore have been on the north side of Tenters, including the site on which Corner House now stands. That this area, close 301 "Low Above House" in the 1840 Tithe map, was in the estate of the Nicholson family, and Grace Green, wife of Thomas, was the daughter and heir of Isaac Jennings, is strong evidence that the Jennings brewery business started on that site, which was already in use for malting, adjacent too the Graceholm barn still standing there. At some time before 1840 the business had grown to include the two buildings with the stone steps to the south of Tenters which today are private homes. The double cottage between them and the bridge is thought to be a later addition to the business, possibly being added at the same time as the malthouse. In 1887, the business removed to Cockermouth, where it still is, but apparently was still in use by Jennings in Lorton in 1899 when the malthouse was the venue for a wedding dance. At the end of 1909, the malthouse came into use as the village hall. An agreement dated 20th June 1910 confirms that the premises already known as the "Yew Tree Hall" was let to Dover Pearson and others for 7 years at an annual rent of £3.10s.0d (26), and was subsequently purchased by the village for £150 in 1920. In it, in spite of its cold stone floor and antiquated toilet and kitchen facilities, were held all the functions one expects to find happening in a country village community, Christmas fair, concerts, talks and lectures by two or more community clubs, art shows, Health Visitor meetings, toddlers groups, Parish Council meetings, Women's Institute, youth club, local history society, and perhaps less usual, the Indoor Bowls Club. In 1988, the building was found to be suffering

from subsidence into the beck behind it and needed expensive shoring and pinning. Starting in 1993, funds were raised to add a new wood floor and improve all the other facilities. These were completed in 1994 with funds most of which was raised by the village, including a "Grand Auction". Jennings Brewery also made a useful donation, the plaque subsequently fixed on the wall being somewhat misleading.

Tenters Flax and Thread Mill. This is now a barely accessible ruin, with very little to show for what was once a thriving industrial hub in Lorton life. The mill, owned by John Jennings, the son of the brewer, was sited on a piece of flat land below the higher reaches of Tenters Lane, drawing power by a mill-race from the fast flowing and fairly consistent Whit Beck. The mill was a substantial building with three floors. Though it was a major factor of life in Lorton for some 60 years or more, there is very little known about it. A local history study group decided from their researches that the flax mill was built about 1837. The 1841 census for Lorton tells us that the mill then employed 8 persons living there; in 1851, owner John Jennings had 18 fulltime employees and three children scholars on half days; all lived in Lorton but only one was Lorton born. The records for 1881 show that there was a peak of employment in the mill about that time, Wilkinson Jennings employing twenty seven people, of whom only nine lived, as he did, in Lorton. Again, only one was Lorton born, and as earlier, the remainder came from as far afield as Newcastle to the east and Ireland to the west. The mill continued in use but went downhill thereafter until later than 1901 but was abandoned and then left to decay. One present day villager (1990) remembers playing in the ruins as a child in about 1920 (27).

Much, much earlier at some unknown date, there must have been flax and wool working along this stretch of Whit Beck – why else would the lonning from "tyme out of mynde" be known as "Tenters"? and of course, we have much though sometimes enigmatic, sometimes teasingly insufficient information to satisfay our curiosity. The earliest reference to this name found so far is in the probate inventory of John Peil of Tenters, who was a fuller there in 1593 (28), and his son John was there at the "Wakemill" when he baptised his son Thomas in 1598: but it is thought by Dr Winchester to have been built originally about 1480 (29). All early references to the mill are intriguing and somewhat enigmatic. In 1569 John Peele of Lowe Lorton held a fulling mill and two cottages for a rent of 2s 8d. (30). The "Percy Survey" of 1578 improved on the details. John Peile then held a tenement house called a Walk Mill, a barn, as well as other buildings, a garth and a little close adjoining the mill in an area of 1 acre 3 roods at rent of the same 2s 8d. It is a moot point whether the house was called "Walk Mill" and therefore the predecessor of the modern "Tenters", or whether the name Walk Mill embraced the mill, whole tenement and the house. In addition he then had a close called Longhill subdivided into seven parts of arable, meadow and pasture at a further rent of 12d. This enlarged parcel passed down through the Peile family until daughter Margaret Mirehouse inherited it in 1686 for the same 3s 8d rent (31), The year 1701 saw the walkmill and tenters, with "the house under the yew tree, called 'the workhouse' and both footpath and cart track access thereto sold by John and Margaret Mirehouse to Ann Park. The agreed sale price was £6 and the annual rent to the lord was 6d. Ann Park was a Mirehouse, and a widow at the time but married John Bouch who was a 'walker' at the mill on 17th June that same year. Although we have found no records of the activities and output of the mill we do know subsequent

ownership, which makes an interesting story. John and Anne had their first child the next February 8th, and their son Thomas in April two years later. John acted as guardian for Thomas after Anne's death in 1712, and remarried with Anne Robinson of Cockermouth on 2nd March 1713, and following this Ann's death remarried for the second time in March 1734 to widdow Elizabeth Tyson of Buttermire. At some time young Thomas must have died, although his burial does not appear in the parish register, as in 1733 John Bouch was admitted in his own right to the fulling mill, rent 6d. (32). John Waite, a mariner, comes on the scene in 1739 and buys out John Bouch. (33). Did his investment have any connection with his sea-going needs? Whatever the answer, the connection did not last long as Waite sold to John Bowe in 1741 for the now much larger sum of £40. This was for the same parcel for which Ann Park paid only £6 forty years earlier. At some unrecorded date in the early 1700s John Mirehouse had petitioned for abatement of the fine on his fulling mill "which was decayed". His petition had the backing of 16 other signatories, but there is no known record of the response, but when John Waite sold to John Bowe in 1741 the agreed price had risen to £40.(34) Although this was a period of increasing wealth generally, it is not reasonable to think that an increase in the 'cost of living', which was not a current concept, or inflation, was responsible for such a large increase. The nationwide rebuilding pattern had long since reached into Cumberland, and it is therefore probable that both the 20th century building known as "Tenters", and an enlarged and improved mill were both built before the 1741 sale, probably by Bouch. John Bowe had married in 1737 so the increase was not due to him building a new home on or after that happy event, unless the whole increase in value was due to a new mill between 1733 and 1741. The mill and whole adjacent estate remained in the Bowe family for one hundred years passing to Arthur Dover when Arthur Bowe died in 1844. Dover sold it to John Jennings, Junior, who was already the tenant thereof for £1905 in 1872. It passed to H. Mawson of High Swinside in 1906 after which the business went downhill until the mill premises were abandoned to the weather. Search for evidence of either input or output to and from the Mill in the probate inventories produced no significant evidence of its use. There is but one reference to flax, one or two to linen articles, which might well have been purchased elsewhere, and a handful of cases of hemp among the items inventoried. Latterly the mill was a thread mill in which the materials were brought in for spinning. No evidence has been seen suggesting bobbins were turned there, so they too must have been brought in from the bobbin mills in the south of the County. So, along with the transfer of the nearby brewery to Cockermouth, ended the industrial era of Lorton, that had endured for four hundred years, and blossomed and flourished during the last century.

Apparently unrelated pieces of evidence are that one Thomas Peele inherited a tenement and walkmill in Lorton on Lady Day 1659, rent 2s.6d (35); in 1697 Robert Christian was admitted to a fulling mill, at rent 2s.6d apportioned to 1s 3d following the death of Ewen Christian in 1695, and just three years later Thomas Bow was similarly admitted to a fulling mill on the surrender of William Bow, but in this case the rent was 1s.4d (36). But predating those is the document, provisionally dated to 1547 by the Carlisle Record Office, in which we find John Peylle of Lorton "Heigtend" holding half a close called "Heighowe" and a fulling mill. He paid 6d rent for the close and 2s for the mill. (37) These records must relate to a second and otherwise unknown mill, which thereafter disappears from the record. If it was

indeed in Lorton as seems incontestable, the only realistic likely site is that of the first walkmill discussed above, so the inevitable conclusion is that there were two mills side by side before and during the 16th and 17th centuries.

LOW LORTON

Lorton Low Mill. It is really in the Township of Whinfell, but for practical purposes has always been a part of Low Lorton. Its early history is lost in the mists of time but Mathew Fearon, a Quaker, was the miller there until he died in 1660. It was last used as a mill at about the end of the 19th century, since when it was derelict or used for various purposes, including a joiner's shop and a store for a Cockermouth scrap merchant. In the mid-1960s, it was converted to a private residence. The last family of millers there was Mary and Henry Braithwaite, certainly between 1858 and 1865, possibly until 1875. They are ancestors of the 20th century Vicar of Lorton, Michael Braithwaite.

Bridgend. Immediately across the River Cocker from Low Mill, Bridgend House was for many years the home of a senior branch of the Pearson family and the wealthiest yeoman farmers, with the possible exception of the gentlemen farmers of Lorton Hall itself. The complex of buildings seen today represents the culmination of a series of piecemeal changes that have broken up the old Bridgend Farm, where farming ceased in 1935. Furthest from the river, end on to the road, is one of the old barns, now converted to the private use of one resident family. Alongside the road is another barn, now a workshop-cum-garage used by the resident owners of the farm house conversion immediately across the courtyard from this barn. The adjacent cottage is a 1990 luxury conversion, befitting the status of the historical beginnings of what was formally a pair of cottages, the oldest parts of the Bridgend Farm. The reason for the conversion, and most recent division of the property, was the serious illness of the lady owner who expected sooner rather than later not to be able to get around the varying levels of the main house which was built in 1722 and contiguous with the 17th century cottages. Together they became the real Bridgend Farm. The main house, now comfortably modernised but keeping much of the original features, is in the ownership of a third family.

Lorton Hall. The origins of Lorton Hall are not on record, but the earliest known reference to it by that name is in the register in June 1702 on the occasion of the burial of Margaret, daughter of Captain Dalston, who had acquired it from the Winders in 1699. Jonathan Wilkinson sold the Hall and estate of 80 acres at auction on 12th January 1759 to Richardson of Graystoke parish for £1820 (38). The name of Lorton Hall does not reappear in the registers until April 1769, when Rebeckah, daughter of Thomas Peile-Barnes was baptised. In earlier centuries, the Hall was the seat of the Winder family. The earliest reference to this family is of Margaret de Wyndere who held 1/3rd of the township of Lorton in 1399 (39). Whether or not there was a substantial building on this site as far back as that time is speculative; the three 1/3rd parcels of the township had been rent-charged equally at 13/4d since at least 1385 and in 1578, two of them each contained six messuages, which suggests they were essentially equal in substance and, by inference, no substantial "Lorton Hall". Nor do we know if Margaret actually lived in Lorton. There is a fireplace in an upstairs room inscribed "PW 1630 AW", although this is believed not to be the

original site of the stone with the inscription, which was more probably over the fireplace in the main hall. The initials "P W" also appeared over a farm building doorway (40). The statement found in certain guide books and commentaries that King Malcolm of Scotland and his Queen stayed at Lorton Hall during a tour of his kingdom of Strathclyde in the 11th century is pure fancy. An abbreviated history of the Winder family is found in Appendix 10.1.

At the south end of the building is what was always considered to be the oldest part, the pele tower. There is some confusion about this tower, as at the time of writing some local residents insist that it was built in the 1920s. The truth seemed to be that the remains of the late medieval tower, built possibly in about 1400, were rebuilt and re-incorporated into the main structure of the Hall in 1890, for which date a large emblazoned plaque exists on the outside upper north side of the tower and further remedial work was done in the 1920s. Successive generations of owners have added, removed, and modified piecemeal. The Hall boasts a Gothic-style Victorian pre-1840 addition, facing towards the river, from which point the ground floor is largely hidden by the extensive gardens. The older Restoration period hall range, attached to the pele tower, is dated 1663. The architectural commentator, Nicholas Pevsner has described this part, with its seven mullioned windows, central doorway and pediments, as an "impressive even display" (41). There was a family chapel within the Hall and this was re-dedicated in 1965 to "Our Lady and Saint Margaret of Scotland" by the then owner, Rev J Woodhead – Dixon, Vicar of Lorton, who acquired the property and moved out of the vicarage in 1962.

Following his sale of the property about 1982, it went through several stages of modification, division and modernisation, as a result of which there are now five independent sections in the main complex with four other freehold properties within the outer walls. The two principle sections of the main building are now called Lorton Hall Tower and Winder Hall, the latter now being a country guest house. Once open to the public, this became impossible after the property was left empty in 1980, prior to its sale and break up.

The latest research by a recent owner shows that as the tower did not figure in an Estate Plan dated 1803 the tower must have been built in 1841/3 by George Bragg So much for all the earlier theories. Later, a south wing to the tower was built, but then demolished in 1889. A piece of a frieze, now very weathered, set into the wall beside the gated entrance to the pele residence, is thought to be medieval, showing shields of the Winder, Sands, or possibly Hudleston families.

Between 1863 and 1890, no less than eight dwellings within the Lorton Hall estate, between Pack Horse Cottage and the crossroads, were demolished; popular belief is that this was in the interests of the visual amenities of the Hall. At about the same time, a major accommodation wing on the east side of the pele tower, matching the stables, was also demolished. An early photograph shows that it had two storeys with traditional square windows, but had gone by 1890 The Pack Horse Inn went the same way after 1891.

Holme Cottage. The background of this farmhouse is unclear. In 1810 or thereabouts, the home farm of Lorton Hall was worked by "Bath" Stagg who lived in a little house at Lorton Cross and the Holme Farm, (not to be confused with the home farm of Lorton Hall), was owned by Mrs Thompson of Bridekirk and farmed by John Ewart, with his wife Sally. However, it was purchased from the Lorton Hall estate by the widow of the Hall's resident gardener, Joseph Allison, in 1947, whose

descendents still live there (42). The building is undated, but believed to be more or less concurrent with the 17th century building of Lorton Hall. The present building, like so many others in the region, is the result of various additions and 'gentryfication' and though now comfortably modernised, still retains much of its earlier character. One such extension was the 'gun room', still so used into the early twentieth century during 'shoots' from Lorton Hall; and still so-called, although it has been used as the dining room for many years. Until the middle of the 20th century, there was a very large room upstairs, reached by a vertical ladder and trapdoor for the night time accommodation of the farm hands. Within the barn is a large, independent, upper room, originally entered by stone steps directly from the street; it is known as the Band Room, being the place used for practice sessions of the Lorton Brass Band, which is believed to have existed between 1890 and 1920. The formation of this room by the raising of the roof can be traced on the gable end facing the river. This, with the 'gun room', is dated to 1731, which figure is found on the transom originally over the exit door from the 'gun room' to the garden, which door was subsequently made into a window, the transom being re-sited over the new door in the adjacent rear hallway.

Smithy Cottage. It would be reasonable to assume that the smithy was associated with the pub and the Lorton Kirkstyle hostelry, dating back to the 17th century or earlier, but this is not the case. The cottage and associated barn are undoubtedly old and, with the adjacent outbuildings on the south side now converted to separate residences, probably do date back to the late 17th century. The earliest deed extant dates from 1738 and describes the property as a cottage, barn, byar (sic) and garden in the ownership of John Wilkinson, a butcher of South Cove in the County of Yorkshire (was he a Lorton migrant?) who sold it to Thomas Watson of Loweswater Park, though it was farmed by one John Thompson. Thomas must have taken personal possession because in his Will he left the property to his wife and three daughters, Martha, Ann and Grace, on the understanding that each could only live in it if they did not marry. Nor did they, though Grace moved to New House, Lorton. Martha died in 1779 and Ann left the property to her nephew Richard Wilson, tailor, of Lorton in 1786. But in May 1826 Richard sold the property to Jonathan Hetherington for £150, the latter then mortgaging the property back to Richard for £120. The deed of sale was for "a dwelling house, barn (now converted into a smith's shop), byer and garden". Jonathan was the son of John, who was himself a blacksmith, so the smithy, as such, dates from sometime around 1815, the date at which we first find the Hetheringtons in the church register for the baptism of Ann.

Notwithstanding all that, Mathew Iredale, smith of Low Lorton, died in 1672 having recently "been at charge with building" and "my barne being two lengths of timber" (43). Can this be the same? It seems likely, but where was Mathew's earlier smithy? ; and is it mere coincidence that John Wilkinson was a witness to Matthew's Will? The answer is found in an indenture dated 1797 which refers to an old house in the close called Pippin Mould, formerly a smith's shop. Just where one might expect to find a smithy, at the crossroads, at Lorton Cross; this also was swept away by Dixon's new broom.

INNS AND PUBS

Whilst Lorton had a fair share of inns, there appear to have been none at Buttermere until the advent of the **Char**, subsequently renamed the **Fish;** and the **Bridge** Hotels. At Wythop, the **Globe Inn** was still functioning in 1901 and the farmhouse at Peilewyke became the Pheasant Inn early in the 19th century. That Lorton should have been well served by hostelries is partly accounted for by its location on the Whinlatter Pass route to Borrowdale and beyond and when this became a turnpike road about 1763, there would have been an increased demand for all the services a coaching inn could offer. Not that those in Lorton were large establishments; as far as records can tell us, they must have been very modest indeed in comparison with national standards. There were two, at Scawgill the Lamb and at Holemire in High Lorton the Rising Sun. Close by the church in Low Lorton was the "Pack Horse" which served parties coming from afar for weddings, baptisms and funerals as well as travellers up and down the valley. This trade is still served by the one remaining inn, the Wheatsheaf at Low Lorton, since the Horseshoe at High Lorton was sold and converted to private uses in 1990.

The Rising Sun at Holemire has an interesting history. It was built as an entrepreneurial effort to take advantage of the coming of the turnpike road through Lorton, probably about 1761. It certainly dates from earlier than 1787. In that year, Mr. Wilson Pearson of Bridekirk, who may have been responsible for "the dwelling house which hath lately been built", sold it to Jonathan Peile for £4.8s.6d who mortgaged it to James Reed, a Wine Merchant of Cockermouth, Peile becoming the tenant. The property was not named Rising Sun in the deeds until 1846, but already, long before 1804 when Jonathan Peile defaulted on the bills for "goods sold and delivered", it was quite clearly in use as an inn. In 1807, Peile sold the "dwelling house and garden" to Isaac Harrison, Innkeeper of Upper Lorton for £240 and in 1813 Harrison sold to Robert Wren, a yeoman of Borrowdale, "all houses, barns, byers, stables gardens (etc)" for £600. Between 1807 and 1813, the village inn had become a coaching inn. Back in 1787, the property, as described, had been built on part of a meadow field, fronting on the turnpike road and stretching back 29 yards to the house of Christopher Hudson. From the 1813 document, it becomes apparent that the cottage now known as No 1 Holemire Cottages was built in the garden of the inn sometime during the previous six years. John Moffat, as tenant of Anne Wren, was mine host in 1840 and 1841 (44). Furthermore, it seems that Harrison must also have acquired one or more of the other cottages, Hudson's (No 2 Holemire Cottages) and No 3 because, 46 years on, The Rising Sun, with stable and garden, was sold to Dinah Birkett, wife of Thomas Birkett, a waller from Cockermouth, for £200. The inn later passed through the ownership of John Simon and John Rothery, the Birkett family remaining as tenants, but after John Birkett died in 1893, the inn ceased to function as such. Between 1822 and 1873, the inn served as the venue for the Courts Leet and Baron and for a period around 1938 and during the war years reverted, at least in purpose if not in style, to a boarding house called "Mountain View" under the direction of Miss Catherine Steel. Today after a period in which it was split into two private houses called "Mountain View" ,it is again in the sole use of, strangely, a Birkett family, though not known to be related. Modest in size, it possesses one very large room on the upper floor. Though it did not have a long life

as an active inn and nowhere is the name now seen, to this day the name Rising Sun continues in use by older local folk to describe this part of High Lorton.

The Horseshoe certainly dates from later than 1649 as it does not figure in the survey of that year. Naturally, there was a smithy attached to the inn and we know that Joseph Lennox was the smith in 1841. The Horseshoe was a favourite venue of villagers until it changed hands in the 1970s, after which it went into a steady decline. The owners, Jennings Brewery of Cockermouth, sold it for private use in 1990, in spite of vehement protests and petitions from the villagers. Until that time, the interior of the inn still retained much of its original character.

The Lamb at Scawgill today is nothing but a small line of fallen stones outlining part of what was the farm building and hostelry. On the direct route from Keswick into the Lorton valley, the Lamb was a welcome sight and stop for travellers, pack-horse trains and later, when the road was opened as a turnpike, for coaches. These pitiful reminders of what once was home to a farming family can be seen over the gate in the first field on the right after ascending the steep incline above Scawgill Bridge. The last record of the Lamb is with Philip Abbott as 'mine host' in 1894 though he was still farming there as late as 1910.

The Wheatsheaf, the last inn to appear in Lorton and the last remaining licensed establishment in Lorton, is in Low Lorton on the principal road along the valley. Rendered and whitened, it somehow does not look very old and only appears in the record as an inn in the 1861 census. In line with late 20th century pubs, the Wheatsheaf offers liquid refreshment and good meals with the traditional pub games to keep up flagging interest. In a tidy, well-managed, green site behind the pub is the Wheatsheaf's caravan site, accepted and authorised by the Lake District Special Planning Board – another nod in the direction of the 20th century in an otherwise fairly static environment.

One hundred yards along the road towards Lorton Hall and just opposite the beautifully kept and ancient Holme Cottage is the small Packhorse Cottage, a name which gives away its origin as all that remains of **The Packhorse Inn.** Over the door is an initialled and dated lintel

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possibly of John Bowe and Martha (neé Skinner), who married that year, although the house that he built at Tenters bears the same date. Most of the Pack Horse Inn has been demolished. It stood in the space now used as a car parking area in front of the modern bungalow. The remaining cottage has been converted and modernised into a very comfortable home, which still retains features which do nothing to hide its earlier status as a typical small lakeland cottage. Rather like the Rising Sun, it is difficult, now, to picture such a house doubling as an inn.

Between the Wheatsheaf and Pack Horse Cottage is a private house bearing a date mark just below the eaves, 1948 between the initials JK and LK. This building was originally part of the Kirk Stile, became part of the Lorton Hall estate and through the benevolence of the squire, was given to the village as a reading room supplied with all the current 'enlightening' literature and magazines, no doubt with the intention of the villagers' improvement. In 1947, it finished this worthy cause and was converted into a general store. This eventually became uneconomic and closed in 1986. The initials are those of Joe and Lillian Kennon who converted the

reading room into the shop. After retiring from behind the counter of his shop, Joe built and retired to the bungalow Fell View behind Pack Horse Cottage.

The Pack Horse was the inn associated with the Lorton "Kirk Style", that is, the stabling accommodation or stalls for those attending church who arrived on horseback. Whilst the Kirk Stile Inn at Loweswater has survived and retained its original functions, albeit it now provides parking for cars instead of stabling for horses, the equivalent "Kirk Stall" at Lorton has disappeared, though the name was still in use in 1871 when John Hastings, farmer of 211 acres, was resident at 'Church Style', Low Lorton (45). Robert and Ann Churnsides were running the Pack Horse Inn at least between 1841 and 1851 and were the 'in' place to be if seeking a bed for the night in Low Lorton. According to the census "The Wheatsheaf" came into being between 1871 and 1881, Henry Fletcher still describing himself as a farmer, but the Brigham Parish Directory for 1847 quotes Henry Fletcher as the victualler at the Wheatsheaf. By 1881 the Churnsides had been replaced by their wodowed daughter, Sarah Beattie, and Henry at the Wheatsheaf had come into his own. Analysis of the records shows that originally the Church Style, or Kirk Style name, referred to both the farm on the east side of the road and the associated Inn and stabling on the west side. Later the name was changed to Pack Horse for the Inn, the stabling being removed later still. The use of Church Style as well as Pack Horse for two separate entries in the tithe award means that there is no case for the argument that the former became changed to the latter. The relationship between Kirk Style and Kirkgate, where Luke Peil was the yeoman farmer until he died in 1720 is not known, but it is possible that they are one and the same.

OUTLYING FARMS

Armaside. One tends to think of Armaside as the single large house visible from the road, but in reality 'Hearmundsyde' was a very early settlement and certainly by late medieval times consisted of four farmsteads, at least one of which was home to two Winder brothers in the 17th century. In the 1841 census, one of the four houses comprising the hamlet was uninhabited. Mary Hetherington, of independent means, lived in the big house; widow Jane Brown with her two children and one hired hand farmed one holding, whilst Allen Watson and his family farmed another. There is a discrepancy between the census and the Tithe list (46) of the previous year which shows that there had been changes in the short interval between their respective recording. Then Ann Wilson, not Allen Watson, was farming 50 acres at High Armaside, the property of Thomas Irwin; Joseph Rennicks was renting the big house and 77 acres from Richard Pearson and John Brown (who probably came from Bridekirk) was the tenant of Joseph Robinson at the other farm of 59 acres.

By 1871, the Armaside hamlet has been reduced to two inhabited buildings – a retired Indian Army officer in the big house and John Clark still farming 404 acres from the other. Twenty years later, the Indian Army had given way to a civil engineer, William Mackereth, who was farming and a shepherd with his family had reoccupied one of the other houses.

The main house has been much modified and 'gentryfied' during the 20th century, but detailed written records of its history are not known. Less specific records, derived from Wills and estate records, relating to earlier centuries and

anticipate the above detailed records are found in the Winders history. Appendix 10.1.

Swinerigg Mires. An amusing insight into the difficulty experienced by tithe assessors when talking to farmers in 1840, is produced by the recording of this site on the tithe map as "Swan Egg Mire". There were two farmhouses for these very late quarter acre holdings carved out of Armaside tenements. They are shown as "Swan Egg Mire" and "Freeman's Cottage" on the tithe map, but in the late 20th century, neither building is visible above ground. In 1841, they were occupied by agricultural labourers and their families, John Eland in the former and John and Martha Pattinson in the latter. By 1851, Pete Burnyeat had taken over Swinerigg Mire and was farming 157 acres with the help of his two eldest sons. By 1861, the two homes had reverted to cottages for farm labourers, the Pattinsons being still there. In 1871, only one house is occupied, by Mary Burnyeat now a widow, who has returned to her earlier home and is working as a farm labourer. There is no record of any subsequent habitation.

Scales. Always named as a separate entity, just as High and Low Lorton have been, for practical purposes Scales has always been a part of the valley community with St. Cuthbert's and Lorton school as its social focus. Originating as an upland 'scali', as we saw earlier, the name embraced three or four farms, just as did Armaside. One of the old farmhouses, uninhabited since before the Second World War and thoroughly derelict in 1995, came in for some renewal of its fortunes. It is of typical, though very rough, stone construction measuring approximately 36 x 28 feet overall. At some stage, probably after the initial building, an upper story was added with access by rather rough slate steps in the standard manner. An original open hearth is still in place, into which an iron range has been fitted and provided with a brick built chimney inside the original. There is still evidence of an oven and inglenook window. The storey above the space round the chimney breast has been separated by a part stone wall which sits on the main oak beam below and is topped with wooden shuttering. In the space behind, were found a few handfuls of ancient material that could have been thatch, though the cross section of the material appeared round, rather than flat. A main beam in the centre of the "fire-house" bears the dated initials "T 1668 P". Unfortunately this date falls in the middle of a large lacuna in the parish records. The only possible candidate for these initials discovered so far is Thomas Peale. In the adjacent "parlour", a stone fireplace, lightly worked, bears the weakly incised initials "R G" and the date "18??", possibly 1814 or 1857 or 1867. The later dates come within the period covered by the censuses, so maybe the initials are of a member of the Graham family. Though the census shows Mrs Graham as married, her husband was not present, and none of the other residents listed as present has the initial "R". A brand new farmhouse was added in 1998.

Additionally, Scales also included ambitiously named Hollingberry Hall. Very little is known of this building, which is, today, nothing but a small jumble of stones hidden over the wall which separates the narrow point in the lane from the tiny beck tumbling down to join Whitbeck. At the turn of the 19th century it was a pleasant place, albeit even then described as an ivy covered old house with lead lights, inhabited by the large family of Peter and Martha Fletcher. (47) Sometime between 1841 and 1851 it became home to Robert Moffat, a shoemaker, his wife and 5 children aged between 9 years and 9 months, at the census date. Nothing more is

known about it except that in 1881 it was home to a widow on relief, Mary Walker, her scholar grand-daughter aged 12, and two women workers from the threadmill. Judging from the size of the pile of stones, inside must always have been a very tight squeeze.

THE VALLEY

The great majority of the properties in the valley are old and each has its own history. They are not included here because of the strictures of available time. But perhaps a few comments will not come amiss. Palace How at Brackenthwaite was earlier known as Withmorecraine, or variations of this, the earliest known reference to Palace How is in the Lorton baptisms register for 1779. In the same book, the earliest reference to Darling How, which farm was a very latecomer, is 1836. Away off the dead-end road to Low Swinside, along a private track is Birkett Cottage, which was at one time a dependency of High Swinside, itself part of the 19th/20th century Lorton Hall estate. Surrounded by closes and woods bearing the name "Birkett" since at least mid 17th century, in the mid-20th century this cottage, whose origins are lost, was a ruin with trees growing out of the middle of it. On Greenwood's map of 1822 it is shown as "Vernal Cottage", though this name has not been seen in any other reference. Now rebuilt, it remains a permanent home. Yet another home of, as yet, unknown origins is Mill Beck. With such items as old mill wheels and evidence of a diversion of the beck to pass the house, and the name, we are inevitably led to the proposition that this house and adjacent barn is the site of a forgotten mill. However, although Mill Beck appears as the home of yeoman farmer Jonathan Hodgson in the Mannix and Whelan Directory of 1847, there appears to be no earlier reference to it. It is not shown on Hodskinson and Donald's map, surveyed 1770/71, nor on Greenwood's map of 1822, although near-neighbours Hope, Hope Beck, New House and Miller Place are all shown. Land Tax lists of the late 1700s and the census of 1841 all show three families at Miller Place, several hundred yards distant. Miller Place has been the home of the Melbreak Hounds. Mill Beck is now a listed Grade 2 Georgian house. Can it be that it used to be part of the Miller Place property, becoming independent and 'gentryfied' between 1822 and 1847?

Chapter 12 References

(1) Defined by Brunskill (p 15) as "the products of local craftsmen meeting simplefunctional requirements according to traditional plans and procedures and with the aid of local building material and constructional methods"
(2) LRO WRW C/ RCG W.26
(3) Valor Eclesiasticus, Vol V p 275
(4) LRO WRW C/ RCG W.65
(5) LRO WRW C/ RCG W.88
(6) Parliamentary Survey of the Manor of Lorton and Allerthwaite, belonging to the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral Church of Carlisle. CRO EM 5/1 ff 98/100
(7) The probate inventory of Peter Peill the elder of Lorton dated 23rd November 1586; ref LRO WRW C RCG W.219 "John Hudson of bowterbeck [Buttermere] for thacke and thackinge of one house ....." also ".....[?c]orne which was left in one barne, the which barne the said John Hudson shoulde have caused to have beine thacked."
(8) Court Leet, May, 1715, Hearth Tax Return, 1663
(9) William Bell and John Iredale, Lorton baptism register, May 1697. In April 1701 John Bell, slater, died. He was a Lorton man, born at Brackenthwaite in 1637 and may well have been a slater for some time before his death (RCG W.49)
(10) RCG W.220
(11) Wordsworth "Guide to the Lakes", Section Third, "Colouring of Houses"
(12) D/LEC/314/39 f.23v
(13) "Village Plans", Brian K. Roberts
(14) Talk by John Bolton "Lecture on Lorton 1891 as it was 80 years ago", p 9, reproduced in "Cockermouth Miscellanea", pub c.1987
(15) Sir George Munro or Monro. According to Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion", iii, 242, Monro, was at the time Colonel commanding two hundred foot and one thousand Westmorland, Cumberland and Northumberland ("Dictionary of National Biography"). Overall, he appears to have had a somewhat chequered career.
(16) CRO EM/5/1 ff 99
(17) Brunskill, R W, 'Vernacular Architecture of the Lake Counties', Faber 1978
(18) CRO EM 5a plans with admittance, Wm Sampson Davis, 17/3/1886
(19) CRO EM Churchwarden's Notebook
(20) Wallace "English Lakeland"
(21) CRO EM 5.5
(22) Letter from J L Bragg to Dean and Chapter dated 6/3/1809; CRO EM.5
(23) Quarter Sessions 1715//16, Christmas Pettions CRO Q/11 No 22; see Chapter 8 p 55
(24) Court Leet, 9th November, 1864 Ref RCG/014/4
(25) CRO EM 5/6 Letter from Wm Nicholson dated 12 Feb 1809 to D& C; RCG W.019
(26) LDFLHS Newsletter No 13, Jan 1998 quoting document in private hands Mrs J Hope
(27) Paper by the Lorton WEA Study Group; LDFLHS archive

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(31) D/Lec/314
(32) D/Lec/314/15 f.22
(33) D/Lec/314/15
(34) D/Lec/Box 265
(35) CRO D/Lec 314/7
(36) CRO D/Lec/314/46
(37) D/Lec/314/38 f.33v (CRO dated this as 1547 in line with similar docs in same bundle)
(38) Winchester, "Diary of Isaac Fletcher" pp 58/59
(39) Cal IPM Vol 17/1247
(40) Footnote on family tree published in C&W, 1891/2
(41) Pevsner, N, "Buildings of England", p 158
(42) Details provided by Mr C Allison of Holme Cottage
(43) Will of Matthew Iredale, 11th October 1672. LRO WRW C RCG W.65
(44) Tithe Returns and 1841 Census
(45) 1871 census
(46) CRO DRC 8/118 dated 12 Nov 1840
(47) Undated pamphlet (probably 1996) by Cumbria Family History Society. John Bolton's talk, p.10

Chapter 13: POPULATION

Perhaps it is too obvious to say we can consider the population collectively and study its actions statistically, or as a group of individuals and look at their several circumstances and actions. Before the 1841 census, for a given locality there were no detailed records of individuals, their families, place of residence, employment and, from 1851, place of birth; we have to rely on a variety of records gathered for a variety of reasons not directly concerned with the study of population. These we have used throughout this book. With the advent of the national census, we can study the community in much greater detail, as well as follow the lives of individuals in much greater detail, but only from 1841 until the last census released to public scrutiny, that for 1901; the census is subject to the one hundred years rule. In 1700, Richard Gough wrote his "History of Myddle", a small Shropshire village, giving family histories of all the villagers, taking them in the order in which they sat in church. It has been said to be the best local history ever written, but Richard did not have to worry about the laws of libel. So any discussion of individuals in the population of Lorton parish after 1901 will need to be wary and circumspect, or filed for one hundred years. What follows in this chapter is a résumé of the parochial chapelry of Lorton, compared with the national scene (1) and a brief résumé of the 1990s population – with due regard for libel.

Everywhere, in all countries, before the 19th century, land was the common denominator in the lives of the population. Its productivity and the weather which controlled the size of the harvest, determined, either directly or indirectly, the growth or decline of the whole population. There were, however, other vitally important factors controlling the size of the population. It was certainly true of England where sickness and migration, the age of marriage, and the proportion of the population remaining single, all played an important role. The latter two collected together under the heading of the 'nuptiality' of the community, were a function of social conscience. Of all these, in the country as a whole, and equally true of the Lorton valley, the greatest influence was exercised by the age of marriage, particularly that of women (2). Harvests and sickness played their part in the Lorton valley too, though in this valley bad harvests seem not to have had the devastating effect which they had elsewhere.

What can we discern from the Lorton registers and manorial records? How do Lorton's figures compare with those of the country as a whole? It is generally accepted that the population of England grew from about two million in 1100 to about five million by 1300, when plague, sickness and malnutrition due to over-population knocked the total back to about two million in fifty years; and that it did not recover and begin to increase from this level until the 16th century. In the late 1550s famine-induced disease and virulent influenza reduced the national population by about 10%, but there was an overall and general increase from 1560 to 1650, although a series of bad harvests in the 1590s slowed down that increase. The total population peaked at 5.25 million in 1651, fell below 5 million and then expanded again from 1711, taking off strongly from 1730 onwards, moving in exponential progression as the industrial revolution took effect, 6 million in 1741; 8.9 million in 1801, 17.9 million in 1851, to approach 31 million by 1901 and is now in excess of 42 millions. We have no direct, and precious little indirect, evidence for the

size and variation in the size of the Lorton population prior to the introduction of the parish registers in 1538, but superficial study of the Lorton registers suggests and subsequent research shows, that corresponding increases did not happen in the Parochial Chapelry of Lorton (1). Neither have we a truly satisfactory basis for calculating either the population of this valley, nor for the incidence of disease before the introduction of those registers.

We might reasonably assume that Lorton valley population would follow a similar, but not necessarily identical, pattern to the national one. Surprisingly, the casual inspection of the registers which suggests the population did not grow, turns out to be true. We find a build-up from about 400 in 1500 to a maximum of the order of 700 - 800 round about 1600. For some reason that is not clear, possibly due to dearth and poor harvests, particularly around 1623, possibly due a series of years of more than normal sickness, possibly due to migration, but most likely a combination of all these factors, it then fell abruptly and quite dramatically to 400 or less around 1625. A new increase to around 500 souls around 1650, coinciding with the national peak, was followed by a long drift downwards, again in sympathy with the national trend, until a steady rise from 1750 to 1801, when the newly implemented national census showed a population of 645. Thereafter we have the census figures, again reaching a peak of 786 in 1851, dropping back to 704 in 1891. In 1779, Bishop Porteus' amendment to Bishops Gastrell's 'Noticia' says there were 100 families, which is not inconsistent with the parish records. These figures, estimates and official census returns, confirm our original hypothesis that the population in the parochial chapelry of Lorton did not move in line with the national trend. This begs the question "Why not?" (1). The corresponding figure for 1991 cannot be easily found or computed. There have been many changes to both parish and parish boundaries, which make it impractical to calculate. However, it is almost certain that the trend downward for the whole area continued and therefore a figure of about 650 would seem a reasonable estimate for the same original area. The answer is complex and the conclusion indefinite. The geography, harvests, manorial and social custom all had an influence. Put simply, they conspired together to cause enough migration to maintain the inherent balance of what the valley economy could support. But this is to over-simplify. The enclosed valley did offer considerable restraint on movement before the advent of the toll roads, but not enough restraint to hinder social interchange in the search for marriage partners, nor to a lesser extent, the hiring of labour. The net reduction was the result of migration between adjacent and nearby parishes in both directions and of emigration to the developing urban conurbations on the west coast and further afield, as well as the New World. Needless to say, we have no direct records of these movements and have to resort to analysis of the registers of other parishes and a large amount of intuition.

The periods of dearth elsewhere in the north seem to have had little or no influence in this valley, with the possible exception of the period 1622/1623, when it is known that there were deaths by starvation, not so far away in Greystoke. In Lorton, those years were followed by an unexplained serious drop in population through the decade centred on 1630. As before, there are no direct records of cause of death, nor indeed for that period do we have a parish register of the burials, which we suspect might have been much higher than usual. So again, in the absence of those records or any other contemporary commentary on the subject, analysis and intuition are needed to make a judgement on what may have happened. Bubonic

plague had disappeared from England after 1667 but its place was taken by other potentially lethal diseases, notably smallpox and typhus. Nothing has been seen to suggest that either were present in Lorton around 1630.

Nationally, between 1560 and 1589, the population increase was approximately 1% annually, and the life expectancy for those born in the quinquennium centred on 1581 was 41.68 years. Life expectancy did not reach a peak until the late 19th century. But during the period 1656 - 1701, life expectancy dropped to the low 30s and reached a minimum of 28.47 years for quinquennium centred on 1681. In the late 1600s, perhaps 25% of the population never married and it is well documented that it was common practice for the sons to remain single until there was a house and land available. In practice this often meant that they did not marry until the death of the father, or his retirement from running the land due to ill health. Late age of marriage would also be caused by difficult times in farming the land. All these factors cause a reduced birth rate and were prime factors affecting the long-term growth of the population.

The years between 1600 and 1750 saw a growing population by some 50% nationwide. This was the dominant factor in the changing economic background to our study of the Lorton valley. However, the population of the Lorton parish dropped by some 50% between 1600 and 1625 then built up to around 500 persons until 1650 at which level it remained until 1750. Only then did it rise steadily to around 780 persons by 1851, the level which it had attained in 1600. The fluctuations in the population of the Lorton Parish (or its later equivalent) are shown in Figure 13.1. The population prior to 1801 is based on assorted estimates (1), subsequently the crude census figures have been used.

Before considering what happened in the Lorton 'parish', let us look at the wider scene. The following three paragraphs are based on data from Sharpe (3) and Wrigley and Schofield (4).

On the evidence of 12 parishes, the mean age at marriage was:

1600 - 1649 -	28 years for men and	26.0	for women
1650 - 1699 -	27.8	26.5	
1700 - 1759 -	26.4	26.2	

In rough terms, 15% of the children died within their first year and a further 10% before their 10th birthday, whilst adults reaching 30 years of age could expect a further 30 years of life. These figures obscure the fact that many marriages ended by the death of one partner in their prime, as a result of which second and even third marriages were common. In the 17th century, approximately 25% those marrying had been married before. Many, if not most, children never knew their grandparents.

Bridal pregnancy varied considerably. At Clayworth in Nottinghamshire it was 13% of brides between 1650 and 1750. At Colyton, Devon, it amounted to approximately 50% over the period 1538 to 1799. The estimate for the whole country is that approximately 20% of brides during the 16th and 17th century, and perhaps 33% in the 18th century, were pregnant at the time of their wedding. In these earlier times, a public act of betrothal was taken as the point at which sexual intercourse was acceptable, de facto, if not de jure, before the church.

Having looked briefly at the wider statistics, let us now see how Lorton folk compare, bearing in mind that we have a very restricted range of data from which to try and draw conclusions. Perhaps the biggest divergence between what happened in the Lorton chapelry and elsewhere is in the incidence of death. The commonly held beliefs that huge percentages of children died in infancy and nobody lived to a good old age are only partially true. We have looked at individual wills, probate inventories and famine in other chapters, so here let us look at what did happen in this valley community as a whole. We cannot be sure, but careful analysis suggests that deaths were random; normally associated with old age, the normal winter complaints from which we still suffer today but more so in days gone by due to poorer living conditions, and occasional cases of larger numbers than usual brought on by bouts of typhus and similar endemic diseases. Life for the common man was hard and usually very short, but in more recent times, Lorton people have acquired something of a reputation for longevity of life. Our earliest registers give no age at death and do not do so consistently until 1800, but there is one noteworthy earlier record. Jane Wood of Buttermire was buried March 1778 aged 100. When ages are given, for those infants passing the age of five years, the average age for males in the two decades 1801-1820 is 57.7, whilst that for women, who had the additional handicap of child bearing in conditions of poor hygiene, shows surprisingly the higher average of 60.4. The total of 78 each male and female is a small number on which to base any theories, but with similar absolute numbers over the century, the findings are reasonably consistent and shown in Table 13.1.

Table 13.1
AVERAGE AGE AT DEATH IN THE 19th CENTURY FOR THE PAROCHIAL CHAPELRY OF LORTON

	1801-1820	1821-1840	1841-1860	1861-1880	1881-1900
Male	57.7	59.6	52.2	59.5	56.9
Female	60.4	57.7	59.7	58.4	65.3
% infants aged 0-5 yr died	25%	28.9%	27.5%	20.7%	17.1%

By way of comparison, the number of all Lorton's recorded deaths for the years 1961-1980 were 57 male and 66 female, with an average age of death of 68.7 and 77.9 respectively.

However, from the 19th century totals, the burials of infants up to and including age five years have been removed because there was a very sad, high incidence of infant deaths. These are also shown in Table 13.1. These figures for infant deaths compare with 0.08% for the two decades 1961-1980.

In the late 1830s, the national average expectancy of life at birth for rural areas was 51.5, falling to 47.5 in 1880s (5). Expectation of life at birth is not the same as average age at death and examples of the latter are very hard to come by, but do not the above lend weight to the folklore of the longevity of Lorton folk?

As regards marriage and those activities which normally follow, and quite often precede it, Lorton parish boys and girls, or more precisely, men and women, behaved in much the same way as did their compatriots around the country. But

there were some quite interesting small but significant differences. Whilst age at first marriage tended to drop over the 17th to 19th centuries nationally, the reverse, over the same age range, was happening in Lorton. In what other ways were the people of Lorton different? Very little really. In the 16th century, in common with other western pastoral areas, Lorton's most favoured time for weddings was after lambing, peaking in July, whereas on the national scene it was October/November. In later centuries, May/June shared the honours with November, coinciding with the traditional hiring fairs at Pentecost and Martinmas and only from the 19th century did November become the more favoured month for marriages in Lorton (see Figure 13.2). It follows that over those centuries, peak time for baptisms moved from February to the spring months, evening out over the year. Perhaps to us at the end of the 20th century, bemoaning the apparent increase in sexual promiscuity, it will come as a surprise to learn that in the 17th and 18th centuries, for which we have been able to find enough data, some 30% or more of Lorton brides were pregnant at the time of their wedding (see Figure 13.3). Furthermore, in this they were no more unusual than brides elsewhere in the country as a whole. Although we have found no definitive proof, this is taken as being evidence of the continuation of the old custom of "Handfast" marriage – whereby, for practical purposes, the betrothal was taken as the time from which consummation of the marriage was tolerated. Whether on either the assumption that eventual life long marriage was intended, or a year and a day trial, is not at all clear. Since there was concurrently quite a high proportion of baptisms of illegitimate babies, perhaps both alternatives were in use.

So, at what age did Lorton chapelry folks get married for the first time and did this affect the population growth? Although the numbers that can be traced through the registers are comparatively small and arguably not valid statistically, the trend is consistent between 1623 and 1850 and surprisingly goes in reverse to the national average trend. See Table 13.2 :

Table 13.2
AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE

Date of Marriage	Lorton		National	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1623 – 1650	27.5	22.44	28.0	26.0
1718 – 1740	29.7	25.73	27.5	26.2
1750 – 1799	28.56	n/a	26.4	24.9
1800 – 1851	31.00	29.17	25.3	23.4

Given that a woman's ages of fecundity range from marriage at say 18 to 35/40, the table offers one very good reason why parochial Lorton's population did not grow as did the national population. Equally, the same table shows one good reason why the national population did grow so fast over the same period. If progressive economic improvement resulted in a national reduction in age of marriage for men, as has been suggested (3), then increasing age at marriage in the Lorton chapelry suggests, but does not prove, worsening economic conditions there. In the absence of other indicators, we presume the same reason applies to the age of first marriage of

women. The same phenomenon might also be caused, but only in the 19th century, for the Tenters flax mill and brewery, by the import of factory labour of older single persons, who subsequently settled and married. The 1851 census disproves this conjecture, but does show that the mid 1800s was a period of change in the chapelry.

The traditional belief is that until quite recent times, communities, especially rural ones, remained fixed and immobile. As far as this valley is concerned we can only partially compute movements before the advent of the 1851 census. Thereafter, the "where from" is given for us, but even today the "where to" is largely a secret taken with them by those who move away, a secret perhaps shared with their immediate friends. Neither history, nor official records, give these details in any rational and retrievable form. Such pieces of information as we have come by chance and rarely. During the years of research for this history, this researcher has kept a request for such information in the visitors' book at St Cuthbert's in Lorton and this has produced a small number of leads to local families from the past.

To this day, we are told the same family has lived in the same house for many hundreds of years. However, a moments' thought will remind us that with few exceptions, these are 'great houses'; we are in fact talking about a very small section at the upper end of society. Contrary to the accepted wisdom, William Harrison's "fourth and last sort of people" were very mobile (6). In 1613, the Roll Call of the Dean and Chapter's Manor of Lorton contained the names of 13 separate families, though some shared the same surname and were different branches of the same family. In 1664, the corresponding list was of 19 families of which 5 were new ones. Only five years later, only seven of the names from 1613 survived and two more new names had appeared. This represents a change of 54% in a period of 56 years. We do not know from whence came these new families, but analysis of records of adjacent parishes might prove what is also generally accepted, that they had not moved very far. We have no suitable listing for the 16th century, but elsewhere in England, migration was common, including a movement of apprentices to the bigger towns and it is known that a large number went from Cumberland to York, between which two places there were close trading connections. At that time, Cumberland was considered to be over-populated and, if those originating in Cumberland followed the pattern, they would mostly be the younger sons of husbandmen. Over the longer period, the population of Cumberland had increased from an estimated 60,000 in 1688 to 117,000 in the 1801 census to 170,000 in the 1831 census.

Let us go back yet again to look at our Lorton valley citizens and the earliest registers. We are not surprised to find that there is frequent remarriage of both widows and widowers. Again, the earlier records indicate remarriage of widows but not widowers and strangely three of the first five wedding entries were of the remarriage of widows. Stranger still, and I suggest accounted for by lassitude on the part of the Curate, only one more mention of civil status occurs at all in the next 62 entries which takes us to 1552, when there is a complete loss of the register for seven years during the reign of Bloody Mary. Over that first 14-year period, there was an average of about 5 weddings each year. All this goes to confirm the oft-repeated complaint that the registers are not wholly to be relied on. When Lancellot Fysher married Elsabeth in 1563, she was not dignified with a surname, but was still more respected than the lady who married John Threlkeld in 1549 who was denied any name at all.

The parish registers, therefore, though they may be considered by some to be a very comprehensive set when compared with many other parishes, are not as useful as we could hope for when it comes to continuity and analysis of their contents.

Migration into and out of the community was a major, and together with age of first marriage, possibly the most important, factor that maintained the numerical stability of the population. It is dealt with in Chapter "Migration".

The 1851 census listed 449 people in the parish of Lorton. 198, or 44.1%, were born in Lorton, 217 or 48.3% elsewhere in Cumberland and 34 or 7.6% elsewhere than in Cumberland. There were no overseas immigrants apart from 7 Irish in the flax mill. The greater proportion of the 34 were brought into the village because of their special skills related to the thread mill and brewery. We might think that the group of 217 would move randomly to reach Lorton. However, this is not so. Examining the origins of birth, but not necessarily the last place of residence before Lorton, all but 11 came from a distance not greater than some 12 mile radius from Lorton. More significantly, very nearly all the rest came from within a crescent of West Cumberland coastal lowlands and the Solway plain between Ravenglass in the south to Carlisle in the north. There can be little doubt but that the Cockermouth hiring fairs at Whitsun and Michaelmas had a considerable influence in this respect. But we do not have to wait until the 1851 census, for the Lorton records can give a good idea of when and how many new folks came into the community and, in the later records, where they came from.

From 1800 to 1851, we have 194 weddings and 808 baptisms, superficially 4.16 children per family and therefore 6.16 persons per family. However, only 35 grooms could be identified with their baptism dates: 28 could not be so identified, and there were 3 widowers. 23 grooms came from other parishes, married girls domiciled in Lorton and remained to live, at least for several years, in Lorton. The consideration of 'domiciled' is important. There were four cases where both parties came from other parishes. The remainder, 94 grooms, came from other parishes, married Lorton domiciled girls and took them away, but many of these grooms bore names familiar to Lorton parish and may well have had continuing family connections there. 7 others were not identified (8). The net result is a nominal loss of growth equal to 71 families over 50 years, or 7.4 persons pa.

Undertaking the same exercise for the brides, we find, between 1566 and 1741 (with a gap of 50 years), 52 Lorton domiciled brides married men from other parishes, nine of these being from 12 to 30 miles distant. Only four of the 52 can be traced as having remained in the Lorton parish, so 2.5 persons each year were lost to the population. From 1800 to 1851 another 65 can be identified with their baptism and wedding dates and are all shown as domiciled in Lorton. Ten brides came from other parishes to marry Lorton men. However, 89 others, registered as 'of Lorton parish', had no previous family connections in the parish and are clearly recent in-comers. This reduces the parish's net population loss to 6.2 pa. Lorton girls seem to have been more popular than the men as marriage partners, but it is more likely that women were less able to travel than the men to seek social contacts.

Perhaps the best comparison we can have at the end of our period comes from comparing the 1840 Lorton tithe award with the 1841 Census. No less than twelve persons out of 49 listed as "occupying ..... a (numbered) house" in the tithe award do not appear in the census. It is also apparent that until the end of 18th century and the initial impact of the new turnpike roads (9), the communications remained poor

and the fells still formed a tremendous barrier to movement for wage earners, although perhaps less so for social intercourse of the normally resident population, as can be seen from the range covered by marriage partners. But this changed rapidly in the period 1800 to 1850.

Bringing together our divers hypotheses and the collection of data from a wide variety of sources over the period 1530 - 1891, our estimate of the total population of the Parochial Chapelry is shown in Figure 13.1.

Taking a much broader view of the whole of the 19th century, we find there were 1451 baptisms, 1061 burials and an increase in the resident population of just 79. Thus there was an apparent exodus of 311 persons from Lorton parish, as recorded in the church registers. Not very much can be gathered from this because in the meantime, both Buttermere and Wythop became independent and have become separated from the Lorton church, which makes the computation of overall movement unrealistically difficult. However, those changes happened towards the end of the century, so it does not alter the fact that there was a significant, though indeterminate, exodus which is in line with what was happening over all of Cumberland and Westmorland.

As we approach the modern period, the later census returns and the marriage registers both show an increase in inter-parish movements. We also find the beginning of yet another cause for movement – one that at the end of the twentieth century periodically gives cause for complaint by traditional local families – the influx of off-comers on retirement from the southern counties and of others building or buying up existing properties to use as second or holiday homes. This causes the gradual increase in the cost of property, pushing it outside the reach of young local families, an increase in the average age of the population and reducing number of children to keep the school viable, and coupled with increased affluence and the motor car, there is the loss of public transport to the detriment of the elderly and non-driver; this is all well known. What is not so well known is that this retirement phenomenon is not new to the latter half of the twentieth century. People have been retiring in Lorton and the surrounding area for a very long time, in fact since at least 1840, since when wealthy industrialists from the midlands have bought up land and built mansions for their holiday pleasure. The whole Lake District is full of mansions built in the late 1800s and the Lorton valley is no exception, though it has perhaps escaped the worst excesses of uncontrolled development. In Lorton alone we have the examples of the Dixons of Lorton Hall, the Wilsons and Alexanders of Oak Hill, Fairfield and Kirkfell House and the Harbords of Lorton Park from Liverpool. (See Chapter 12, 'Buildings').

Further down the scale, widow Jackson and her family from Durham retired to Lorton in the 1840s, widow annuitant Elizabeth Losh retired to Lorton from Workington before 1851 and another to retire into Lorton, although probably not owning her own home, was Hannah Norman, a spinster of 63, a domestic servant, born in Gilgarren near Whitehaven. Captain Thomas Richmond, HM Indian Army, retired to Armaside and Richard Whiteside went to Kirkfell house, both in the 1850s, and in the 1880s Henry Peel retired to a small cottage in High Lorton from his job as postman – but he only came from Uldale.

At the end of the twentieth century, 50% of the houses in High and Low Lorton are either holiday homes occupied briefly during the year, or holiday lets, perhaps occupied much of the year, but by short term transient occupiers.

Figure 13.1 Population of the Parochial Chapelry of Lorton

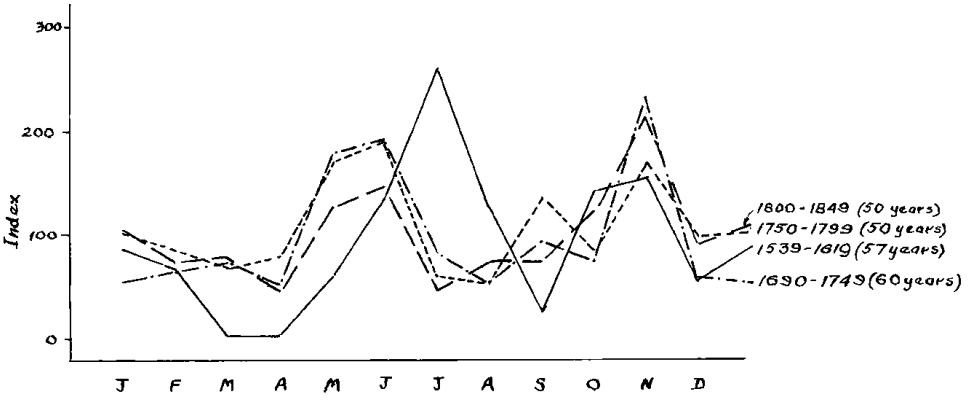

Figure 13.2 Seasonality of Weddings

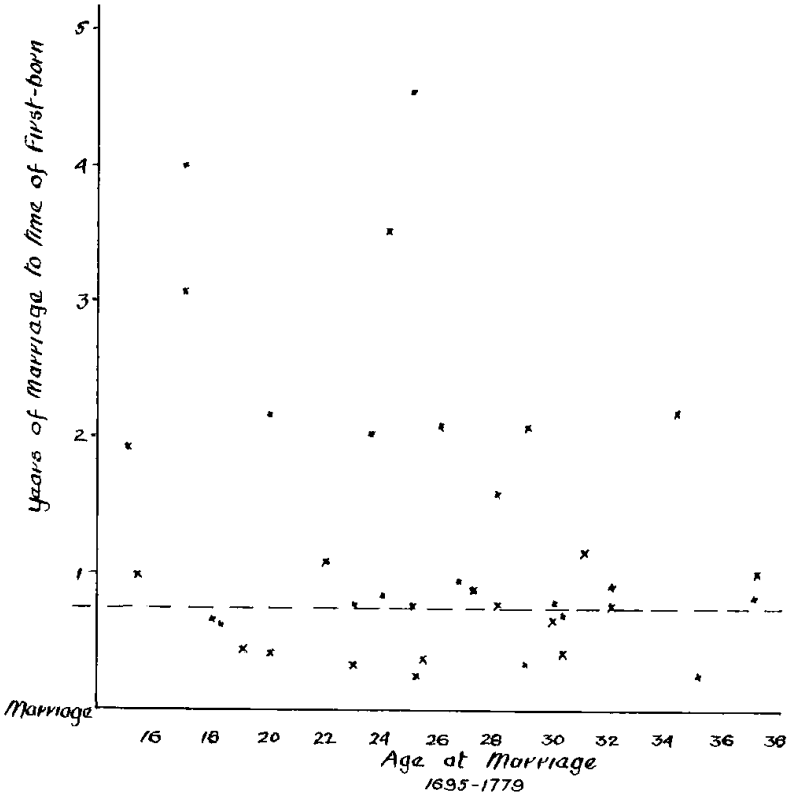

Figure 13.3 Analysis of Marriage and Bridal Pregnancy

Chapter 13 References

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(5) R Lawton & C G Pooley, "Britain, An Historical Geography, 1740 - 1950"
(6) William Harrison, "The Description of England" Ed G Edelen (1968)
(8) "Not domiciled are those with no earlier family connections in Lorton and no subsequent baptisms there; but this list would probably include a small number who continued in Lorton but remained childless"
(9) The turnpike through Lorton appeared about 1760 and either directly or indirectly gave rise to three Inns or hostelries, the "Lamb", on the Whinlatter Pass; the "Rising Sun" in High Lorton and the "Wheatsheaf" in Low Lorton. Only the last of these is still in existence as such, and although all may have caused a small increase in the population, only the "Rising Sun" gave rise to new building and consequently new families

Chapter 14: MIGRATION

The four northernmost English counties of Cumberland, Westmorland, Northumberland and County Durham were defined as "Northern England" for purposes of the census in 1851 and remained so for a century. Of the four, the first two have always been at the bottom of the table, whether measured in terms of absolute wealth, input into the national income, harvest yields or population. Moving further south, Yorkshire and Lancashire fared somewhat better and in the mid 18th century, they above all other counties of England suffered a considerable change.

At the beginning of the 18th century, some 60% of the national population were rural dwellers and in communities that were almost entirely self-supporting. Most people were tied intimately to the soil, working the land, either as yeomen with their own land or as customary, copy-hold or lease-hold tenants of the lords of the manor, or possibly as husbandmen with just a few acres, held under similar tenancies. Most of the rest were engaged in associated trades and even these would normally have held a little land, with a few beasts and crops for augmenting the family larder. The traditional wisdom has been that such communities were very static, with little movement of people in and out of the villages. If this was ever true, certainly it no longer applied from the beginning of the 19th century.

When the Napoleonic wars were over, there was a serious depression for a few years but in about 1820, the national economy began to pick up and, as the economic corner was turned, more money began to circulate, prosperity was in the air and people began to spend money on their personal comforts. High on the list was clothing and hygiene. The one created a demand for more clothing at just about the time that machinery was beginning to replace the traditional hand crafts of spinning and weaving. The second, together with improved housing, began an unprecedented and never surpassed explosion in the growth of the population.

Although the Newcomen steam engine came in about 1710 and vastly improved working conditions in mines, permitting greater depths and increased output, change came but slowly. Successive engineering improvements led to stationery "factory" engines and thence, eventually, to George Stephenson's locomotives for moving the output from the mines, though the first passenger railway, from Stockton to Darlington, did not open till 1825. The bulk of the railway system that was to prove so effective in moving vast numbers of people did not even really start until after the so-called Industrial Revolution had passed its peak. Long before that, however, there was an active interplay between inventions improving the extraction of coal greatly increasing output, in blast furnaces for smelting iron and making steel and progressive improvements in the textile industries such as the flying shuttle, the spinning Jenny and the introduction of water, then steam power, to drive these new textile machines. This led to the exodus of the rural cottage-based spinners and weavers from their traditional homes with their traditional skills and life-styles. Depopulation of the rural areas resulted, or so some would have us believe.

In reality, throughout this period but particularly from about 1780 to 1820, there was an enormous growth in the total national population and this social aspect played its own part in the interaction of the forces driving the Industrial Revolution. This is a brief background to the phenomenon of the drift of people from country to

town that became a tidal wave and created the huge urban slums of the large industrial towns such as we find, especially across much of the north midlands, Cheshire, Lancashire and West Yorkshire. By the end of the period under review, 50% of the vastly increased national population were living in urban areas, but the numbers living in rural areas had not yet materially reduced, though the incidence of those with roots there and the required skills had reduced.

So where did these migrants to the urban centres come from, where did they go and how did they get there? In broad terms as late as 1750, the country was still peppered with hamlets, villages and small towns, with a concentration in the London area and central midlands, thinning out as one moved further westwards, northwards and into East Anglia. It is extremely difficult to simplify what was a very complex set of circumstances without losing accuracy but, as we have already shown, the great majority lived from the land and many eked out their simple living by spinning and weaving. As the so-called Industrial Revolution got under way from about 1780 and textile machinery became machine driven, hand crafts became too expensive and people moved to newly built factories. At first, many were beside suitable streams for water power, so there grew up village factories, particularly in the Dales of Yorkshire and Lancashire, though similar and parallel activities occurred elsewhere where water power was available, for example, towns like Stroud, the valleys of Devon and Cornwall, Cumberland, Westmorland and Northumberland. In turn these succumbed to the pull of the larger towns where coal became ever more available to fire steam engines. This has been seen as a stepped, or 'wave', of migration and there is evidence to confirm it. These latter towns were near the mining centres, or river mouths, and the developing canal system. Here there was more ready venture capital to build bigger factories and pay higher wages; not that they were high in absolute terms. Pay and working conditions were, for the most part, poor to bad. Other towns and factories grew up round the ports through which raw materials, such as cotton, were imported, in particular in Lancashire. Elsewhere, such as round Newcastle and its hinterland and the west coast of Cumberland, with improved mining techniques, urban areas grew to house the mining communities (Newcastle had, since Elizabeth's day, been a major coal port, but its population too increased enormously during this period and for the same reasons). Included in west Cumberland are villages like Cleator on the west Cumberland moors and the sea ports of Whitehaven and Maryport, both of which were built as planned towns to cater for the export of coal and iron ore by sea from local mines. To a lesser extent, Workington, between those latter two towns, also grew as an export point during the same period.

London had always been an exception. It grew willy-nilly, having only itself as the attraction. As the centre of government, the centre for the social life of the Court and the nobility, as the centre for the arts and with its large foreign communities of diplomats and artisans, it was a magnet for many who felt displaced, especially the artisans.

We must not make the assumption, however, that all rural communities suffered the loss of their traditional populations as a result of the processes described above. Within the central upland of Cumberland, there are a number of valley communities which, for most practical purposes, were until the twentieth century, effectively cut off from one another by the high fells which separated them. One such is the Lorton and Buttermere valley, largely orientated northwards from the central fells.

During the period 1550 to 1850, the population varied between the approximate limits of 400 and 800 whilst that of the rest of the country was ever increasing. Overseas emigration from England to the New World has been estimated at 300,000 in the second half of the sixteenth century. Most of these were young men and some may have come from Lorton parish. A trawl through the maritime records might quantify this. In the seventeenth century, the numbers reduced appreciably as slaves were introduced into the American colonies. Recorded emigration from Lorton from about 1800 onwards was minimal in its overall effect on the parish, but individual Lortonians include Joseph Plasket and his family who went to Virginia in 1853, where he founded Lorton Valley; later, William Watson and his wife, Elizabeth neé Lancaster, emigrated to New Zealand in 1859. Much nearer to the date of writing, Albert Johnson and his wife Elsie, of Smithy Cottage, Low Lorton emigrated to Australia 1951 with their four Lorton born children; Albert was the last smith to use the Low Lorton smithy and Elsie had been organist at St Cuthbert's for some years. Elsie died there in 1991(1).

Tracking down Lorton's "migrant marriages" is not completely successful as there is no consistency or contemporaneousness of the registers still extant for the various parishes. However it is evident that, over some 250 years (1568 - 1812), on average one marriage of Lorton folk every two years involved a partner from another parish. Registers from other Cumberland parishes show similar patterns of movement in the search for marriage partners. Jones found that during the 18th century in two Cumberland parishes, some 50% of names in 1700 to 1719 had gone by 1760 and 75% by 1800. Of the names found in Lorton registers for 1740 to 1759, some 64% had gone by 1800 (2). We might at this point, ask what was it that brought a number of new names into the parish in first decade of the 17th century – Dynacck, Lourghe, Sharpe, Gonson, Huetson amongst others, most of whom married Lorton girls and departed whence they came?

Endeavours to discover population numbers, and changes thereof, are notoriously speculative before the 1801 census. We have complete church registers for Lorton from 1700 onwards. These have been used to calculate an approximation to the variations in the population of these three townships for the period under review. The numbers involved appear to be of the order of 500 to 700 (3). There is a minor complication in as far as the township of Wythop in an adjacent valley also used Lorton church during this period, so that township (but not Loweswater) is included in the Lorton census. The census figures for 1801 to 1891 are shown in Table 14.1.

From the church registers we obtain the following:

A ten-year moving average of the number of births from 1690 to 1730 varies within the band of 14 to 17 live births pa. This creeps up to a maximum of 22 in about 1780, after which it drops back to the previous level in 1800, at which level it remains until the end of the century. It then drops to around 10 throughout the 19th century.

Table 14.1
CENSUS OF POPULATION FOR THE PAROCHIAL CHAPELRIES OF LORTON AND LOWESWATER

	Lorton M/F (total)	Buttermere M/F	Brackenthwaite M/F	Wythop M/F	Lorton 'parish' total	Loweswater M/F
1801	141/157 (298)	35/39	66/70	64/73	= 306/339 = 645	144/150
1811	167/227 (394)	51/58	70/74	59/73	= 347/432 = 779	152/184
1821	(353)	(136)	(140)	(100)	= 729	
1831	198/190 (388)	48/41	67/63	54/67	= 367/361 = 728	222/232
1841	201/193 (394)	44/40	62/54	65/60	= 372/347 = 719	215/221
1851	213/236 (449)	43/35	75/65	69/50	= 400/386 = 786	
1861	216/188 (404)	65/36	61/54	54/45	= 396/323 = 719	188/204
1871	240/211 (451)	54/51	53/54	44/45	= 391/361 = 752	190/182
1881	190/232 (422)	51/51	58/60	56/58	= 355/401 = 756	163/152
1891	167/210 (377)	51/46	61/57	52/60	= 331/373 = 704	155/183

The ten-year moving average of deaths follows a similar pattern throughout the same period. It varies in a narrow band between 12 and 14 deaths pa up to 1730. Thereafter the figure drops to a low of 8 in 1770, when there is a quite natural increase as the number of live births increases. The deaths then build to a high average of 13 in about 1790, after which it falls to a fairly consistent level of between 10 and 12.

The most immediate and important deduction is that the deaths are always less than the live births. Relating the annual average birth rate to the ten-year moving average of weddings gives a crude fertility rate which is 3.2 in 1750, dropping to 2.7 in 1775, rising to 4.0 in 1815 and dropping off slightly to 3.6 in 1850. There is an ongoing difference of some 3 to 5 per annum between the birth and death rate and since the birth rate remains fairly consistent, it follows that the total population is fairly constant. This suggests there is an annual outflow, or migration, of at least three persons pa.

Is this realistic? If migration as described by Lawton was universal, then we should find evidence of Lorton valley folk in the towns which did grow rapidly during the review period. Detailed study of the valley community, over a wider time scale than this present period of investigation, has produced certain knowledge of only a single case of emigration, in 1853. Within living memory, there is also a handful of emigrant families to far corners of the world, as mentioned above.

There are three nearby towns which grew considerably during the review period. Whitehaven is about 18 miles distant and Workington and Maryport are both some 12 miles away from Lorton. There is also Cockermouth, the market town, four miles away. From an industrial point of view, the very important coal port of

Whitehaven is the most important and largest, then the other two, probably in that order. One might expect that if there was migration from the Lorton valley, those are the most likely places to which migrants would gravitate. The market town of Keswick, eight miles from Lorton, is separated from the Lorton valley by high passes at either end. Keswick did receive immigration of German lead miners in the time of Elizabeth, but had no great increase in population until the tourist age began, long after our review period.

In the 1851 census for Workington, 5130 entries produced only 11 persons who had been born in Lorton; this could be taken to mean the parochial chapelry as described above. Two of these were Lorton men married to Workington-born wives; two were men from Bolton and Maryport married to Lorton-born wives and two were elderly widows, one of whom was self-supporting from unearned income. No hint of real 'migration' here, although clearly some evidence of social intercourse between these communities.

The marriage registers which give place of residence are not very satisfactory for attempting to determine place of birth, not even permanent domicile but, in the absence of other listings, may give an indication of movement. Perusal of Whitehaven's three church registers provided the following data:

- At St. James', 700 entries over the ten year period 1802 - 1811 showed that 115 grooms and 86 brides were not domiciled in Workington, but none was from Lorton.

- St. Nicholas produced only one cases of marriage of folk from Brigham parish and one from Loweswater over the years 1737 - 1802.

- Holy Trinity church register for 1715- 1831 showed only three of 'Lorton' folk. Two of these were of Whitehaven men marrying Lorton girls, the third of an Embleton man marrying a Lorton girl. This was possibly a case of migration. There were also 7 other marriages worthy of note. Three were Whitehaven men marrying girls from Brigham chapelries other than Lorton and the remainder were of couples, neither partner of which came from Whitehaven, thus two more possible cases of migration to Whitehaven.

On the other hand, although no detailed count was made, the impression was that at least 25% of the population of Whitehaven in 1851 were of Irish origin and many more were from towns and villages along the coastal plain from Silloth to Millom.

Closer to Lorton, the Cockermouth census for 1851 showed 11 cases of people born in Lorton who might be considered as having migrated, though, as the distance is so short and Cockermouth the natural focal point for the area as well as the centre of the hiring fairs, this is hardly a case of true migration.

To round off the exercise, it is necessary to look at the Loweswater register. From 1725 to 1750, there were fourteen cases of intermarriage between Lorton and Loweswater folk; whilst in the following 82 years to 1832 there were also fourteen, a reduction to one third of the rate of intermarriage. Since both communities are effectively within the same valley system, such interchange had always been normal, and again, can hardly be consider as inter-village migration.

In contrast, the 1801 - 1851 censuses for Lorton tell a very different story. Lorton had a late mini Industrial Revolution of its own. At about the turn of the century, there was a malt kiln on the site known as Tenters, itself obviously the site of an almost forgotten cottage flax and woollen industry. This was sold to William Jennings in 1809 for £105 with 1 shilling annual rent to the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle, the Lord of the Manor. The business thrived and moved down stream into the village in about 1830 (and thrives to this day in Cockermouth). The historic fulling mill site was then developed by the Jennings family as a flax thread-mill, which remained in business until the turn of the 20th century. Before 1851 we can only surmise, but in that year we find the 437 recorded origins of population as given in Table 14.2.

Table 14.2
LORTON CENSUS FOR 1851 – ORIGINS OF POPULATION

Born in Lorton	198	44.1%	
Born elsewhere in Cumberland	217	48.3% *	
Born elsewhere than in Cumberland	34	7.6% *	(7 were Irish, including 3 children)**
	449	100%	

* Deduced from the 1851 census, of these, 19 families had been in Lorton as follows:

30 - 39 years	- 4
20 - 29 years	- 2
10 - 19 years	- 8
3 - 9 years	- 5

** One family of 6, of whom 3 worked in flax mill, 1 as an agricultural labourer and 1 as the family "servant"; they had arrived between 6 and 1 years previously. Also, one single man worked in the flax mill.

Of the last group, (7.6% of the total), 7 were from Ireland, 9 from Lancashire including Barrow-in-Furness, 5 from Westmorland, 4 from Scotland and the remainder from elsewhere in England. Most of these had special skills within the thread mill or brewery.

One might expect that the largest group of 217, comprising 48.3% of the total, would have a random distribution. Not so. All but 11 were born within a 16 mile radius (approx 20 road miles) from Lorton. More significantly, apart from 30 who came from within the valley community, the rest came from within a crescent of West Cumberland coastal lowlands. It is a reasonable supposition that the Cockermouth hiring fair, and the inhibition of the intervening ranges of fells, eliminated those seeking work from east and south. The railways and turnpikes had yet to make their mark here for normal social intercourse.

However, affluence elsewhere and, presumably, the improved travelling conditions did influence events in Lorton, which received its major building

programme since the great rebuilding about 1700. Wealthy businessmen and shipping merchants from Lancashire built at least four large new mansions by 1860, thus further augmenting the population of Lorton, as reflected in the census.

Taking all this evidence, or lack of it, one must come to the conclusion that whilst the major towns in the region did grow considerably during the period 1750 - 1850, largely as a result of the increase in mining in the hinterland, this growth in their populations did not come from the Lorton valley communities, the constituent parts and population numbers of which remained reasonably constant over the period to 1800, after which Lorton was itself undergoing a small revolution, with a 50% increase in population between 1801 and 1851.

Chapter 14 References

(1) The Parish magazine "The Link", Sept. 1991
(2) G P Jones, "Continuity and change in surnames in four northern parishes"; the two Cumberland villages studied were Newton Reigny and Gt Orton; C&W Vol 73, (1973)
(3) Calculated by the method used by Hoskins, but modified using the running averages quoted in the text in this chapter. W G Hoskins "The Population of an English Village, 1086 - 1801" p 20. Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society, 1957

Note. This chapter is a slightly edited version of an essay which was produced for a Lancaster University course. Its title was "The pattern of migration in Northern England from 1750 to 1850, with particular reference to an upland valley community in West Cumberland"

Chapter 15: INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

From time to time throughout the previous chapters, I have brought the present into the picture alongside the historical past, which has provided occasional glimpses of life in the valley during the latter decades of the 20th century. It would be remiss not to attempt to tie more firmly the present to the recent past, just as I have attempted to tie the whole of the past into one coherent story. Similarly it may be instructive to try and project the present into a very uncertain future.

There are several factors making these good intentions difficult. Perhaps the most obvious to current observers is the speed of change during the last fifty years. I am standing too close to events: the passage of time and commentary by others in the future will offer a better perspective of what would otherwise become a personal sociological commentary of the last few years. We have seen how much movement of people has taken place in past time; rather more than had been customarily thought, but this movement has accelerated considerably over the whole country, not less here than elsewhere. Perhaps not quite typical of the locality, the change of ownership of my own property can be taken as indicative of this modern mobility, sometimes enforced by circumstances of death or business moves, sometimes nothing more than a personal urge for change. White Ash was purchased by and used as the village joiner and undertaker's shop by Tom Stoddart between 1924 and 1957. It was then sold again in 1969, 1973 twice, 1974, 1976, and by me in 1980, selling on in 2000. Of the admittedly very low return, only 11%, in a poll taken in 1993 half the respondents had lived in the parish for less than ten years, the other half for over 25 years; only one came in between. In this valley, as within the whole of the Lake District National Park, the advent of that entity in 1951 and the extraordinary building regulations imposed by the Special Planning Board, have gone a very long way to stabilising the housing as it was in 1951. This is a two edged sword. It has preserved the visual amenities, and prohibited virtually all of the housing development that would inevitably have taken place as 20th century affluence grew. To take specific figures, during the last twenty years that I have lived in Lorton, there have been no more than half a dozen new houses built in the parish of Lorton, together with a handful of conversions of barns and house modifications. This compares with just two dozen new houses built in the preceding 80 years, mostly before 1951. These two figures are closely comparable, but with growing affluence we can imagine, in the absence of controls, how a line of imposing houses might have appeared all along the fell side and tops, vying with each other for the best views up the valley. As a result of this control the value of existing housing increased to the point where the younger local born could no longer afford to buy and live locally. During the 1990s the then Vicar and PCC gave strong backing to a project to build a terrace of five small "starter homes" specifically for young local families who would otherwise have to move out of the district.. This terrace of five small houses has come to re-establish a small community in the ancient area of Lorton Cross which had effectively disappeared for many years. For many years during the 20th century, houses did not come onto the open market, but were sold by word of mouth and snapped up immediately the owner decided to move. In the last decade of the century however, the stagnant national market also affected the Lorton valley and houses have been difficult to sell, remaining long on offer on the

open market. Nevertheless, frequent change amongst people living in the valley is now a feature of life, making it very hard to keep it documented. Even the official Register of Electors forms exhibited in the church porch are often out of date before they are posted there.

Of course, after World War 2 the great increase in mechanization of farming required less and less man and woman power. This, coupled with the run down and eventual demise of the west Cumbrian industries of coal and iron mining and woollen and cotton mills, forced young people further afield in search of employment, so the pressure on housing was relieved to some extent. It also meant that the resident population became older and older and more and more affluent, as those retiring, particularly from the more southern counties, sought and could afford to buy the peace of the valley.

In turn this tends to polarize the inhabitants into two groups. Those who still live on and derive their livelihoods from the land are the remnants of the true Cumbrian population, on the one hand; and the retired business and professional folk on the other. In this valley these two groups get on well enough with each other, but there is not a great deal of social intercourse between them. Each group tends to follow different patterns of life, as they had different patterns of work. As the younger generation tend to move away to seek what is considered to be a better life in the towns, we must not forget that the former group, almost irrespective of age, continue to farm their land and have far less time for socializing. Cumbria is no longer isolated from the rest of the country as it once was. Modern telecommunications and national and European legislation all play their part in bringing this area into harmonization with the rest of the country. Although much of the railway system disappeared with Beeching in the mid-20th century, the motorway and good subsidiary roads have taken its place and changed things as the railways never did. Tourism now brings many people into the valley and surrounding area, on bicycles, hikers on foot, day trippers in large air-conditioned coaches barely able to get round corners in the narrow roads and many more in their cars. Except for the coach parties, these have all become a major source of income in this valley as in the rest of Lakeland and many farms now derive a significant part of their individual income from the bed-and-breakfast trade. Yet, notwithstanding all this, Cumbria in general, and northwest Cumbria in particular, is still somewhat isolated from the rest of the country. That seems like a contradiction of the passage above, yet, a traveller from the south via either the M6 or A591will notice the much reduced volume of road traffic, the wilder and more open fellside and farmland, and the space between villages. Another significant part of the income of many farmers comes from farm subsidies under government and European agricultural plans, some have joined the ESA scheme and others find themselves in the unhappy and frustrating situation of having valuable productive land ‘set aside’, producing nothing but possibly a crop of weeds.

The motor car, as elsewhere over the whole country, has played a vital part in reforming the character and tenor of life in the valley. As more residents own their own cars, as more and more of the resident population become retired and stay at home instead of travelling to work, so the valley bus routes disappear. Since the mid 1980s, there has been no bus service for valley folk into Cockermouth. At the same time as the older non-drivers become cut off from the town, an ever increasing number of valley folk use their cars to go shopping in the surrounding towns of

Cockermouth, Keswick, Workington and even Penrith and Carlisle. So the village shops close for lack of custom. By 1990, there was only one shop left in the whole valley between Gatesgarth and Cockermouth. This last shop-cum-post office is at High Lorton and the loss of even this shop is seen as only a matter of time; it has already lost its post office which has now transferred to the nearby village hall but only for one afternoon a week. Nevertheless, we do have a very thoughtful, friendly and helpful community, and no one known to be in need of transport is without help.

A very similar state of affairs has reduced the schools available to the children of the valley to the one junior school, again at High Lorton, which in some ways makes this village something of a centre. Children are brought to it by bus from the length of the valley, from Loweswater and from Embleton. From the age of 12, they have to go by school bus to Cockermouth.

Like the bus and the schools, the pubs and the police have followed. Since 1982 the village policeman is no more and, outside what might be described as normal business hours, Cockermouth has no manned police station either, so the nearest twentieth century equivalent to the 'Constable' and 'turnman' is twelve miles away at Workington. The result is believed to be evident in the increase in local petty crime, house break-ins and car theft. The High Lorton pub, "The Horseshoe", finally closed its door in the mid 1980s, though it must be admitted that, reputedly, this was brought about as much by poor management as lack of potential customers.

Not mentioned so far in relation to the changing population is the increase in holiday homes. In the closing decades of the 20th century, just on 50% of the houses in High Lorton are either holiday homes, or self-catering furnished holiday accommodation. Other parts of the valley are similarly affected and this also is another major cause in the loss of bus, shop and school. A significant number of permanent residents provide bed-and-breakfast accommodation for visitors, many of whom enjoy the area so much they come back year after year. Some of them become good friends. Notwithstanding all the comings and goings, the incidence of transient population and holiday homes, the official resident population of the valley remains approximately in line with its past, that is to say in the 600-800 range.

Meanwhile, life in the valley goes on apace; in fact, it is very common to hear folks say they have never been so busy. The Lorton Working Men's Reading Room, supplied back in the early 20th century with the best of intentions by the squire for the benefit and improvement of the village 'working man', eventually died a natural death and became the site of Dora and Joe Kennon's village shop in Low Lorton, until it too succumbed to the inevitable in the 1980s.

But throughout the 20th century and even before, social activity in the community was not lacking, even if, at the turn of the century, it smacked of condescension of the 'gentry' in improving the lot of the 'peasantry'. We saw at the end of the chapter "The Community", an insight into the activities going on in the village and church at Lorton in 1895. So the busy social and community life at the end of the 20th century is not really new, just a continuation of a healthy community going about its normal business, dressed in modern garb. I wonder what happened to the brass band and the ambulance classes? One factor that would have made a significant difference to the tenor if not the substance of village life was the advent of electricity. There were private generators at some of the larger houses in the 1920s and the Yew Tree Hall was supplied by that at the Tenters in 1926, but the full public

supply did not arrive until the mid 1930s. That other commodity which makes modern life so much easier, the public supply of good mains water, was even later in reaching the wider village community, and even today there are homes with their own well or beck supply. Crummock water has supplied water since 1890s, but for many years the pipeline went through Lorton to supply areas further north, as far as Silloth. Much of High Lorton was supplied from a small reservoir on Kirk Fell above High Side until this was substituted by a larger and higher reservoir on Whin Fell above High Bank early in 1994.

As we have seen in earlier chapters, the brewery malt house became the village hall and moved the social centre from the church and Sunday school to the centre of the village of High Lorton. Indeed, that half of the twin villages seems to have acquired the lion's share of social activity. The Tennis Club, possibly the oldest in West Cumbria, was operating with its 25 founding members in 1925; play was in full swing at an annual subscription of 5 shillings. The ground was rented at 1s pa, at which magnificent sum it remained until 1953. It has had various ups and downs, but in 1985 it acquired a third, all-weather, court, and later a new pavilion to be shared with the school. These facilities carry the Club forward with renewed vigour and growing inter-club activity into the 21st century. So too, the Women's Institute maintains a good membership in spite of following the outdated traditional WI pattern of activities. The WI uses the village hall which also provides the venue for a number of local groups including the bowls club, the local history society, the gardening club and the village social club. This latter club takes its name from the yew tree and provides a wide variety of talks, lectures and outings for those fortunate enough to be able to meet during the afternoon. To cater for the aesthetic musical tastes, the Vicar, Revd Dixon, gave musical 'at home evenings' at Lorton Hall during the 1960s and '70s. After his departure in 1980, Mr and Mrs Huws-Jones took over and offered musical evenings at their more modest home at Lambfold during the 1980s, and strawberry teas to raise funds for charity until they moved to York in 1987. Meanwhile the musical interests of the community continue to be served by an assortment of concerts in Lorton church, not the least of which is the annual Winn Celebrity concert. It was about this time that the indoor bowling club was formed, so the village hall changed its function once more during the regular weekly meetings which attract up to 15 or so of the membership of 30.

So as the Lorton valley folk move into the 21st century, we can only wonder how the present will develop and project itself into the future. What will be the long-term effect of the ESA and 'set aside' schemes on the land? How will that result affect the population, in numbers, in age distribution, and in life style? How will the National Park Authority cope with the increasing wear and tear on the over-used fell footpaths? What are the prospects for the authorities who in 1995 were drawing up schemes to restrict access to the area and control road use? Will many more homes become holiday homes? The percentage seems to have stabilized around fifty percent, at least in the short term, as some holiday homes become occupied by permanent residents whilst other homes join the self-catering or holiday home list. In the last two decades of the 20th century the resident population, particularly of Lorton, has tended to become increasingly orientated towards the wealthier professional. How long will it be before economic and political pressures allow building to join fully the two Lortons? Will the three valley churches survive? And if so on what basis will they be used? Will the village school survive the continued

pressure placed upon it by government legislation and a changing population? So many questions, so few answers, and let us be honest, so little potential for local control on which to plan for the future well-being and continuity of the valley community. That is not to say that no attempts are made at self help; there are. Danny Leck is a farmer in the late 20th Century mould. You might say he brings to the present as his models of action, 'turnip' Townsend, and his contemporary agricultural reformers of the eighteenth century. He is working with the 'Voluntary Action Cumbria' group who are attempting to establish a "Fell Farming Landscapes Project". This has amongst other projects one to help the local sheep breeding societies promote local heritage and landscapes. This forward-looking action depends on a Heritage Lottery Grant, which may or may not be forthcoming.

Above all, this valley, as well as the surrounding area, has always been essentially one given to farming, sometimes arable, sometimes cattle grazing, but always with pastoral complement. Perhaps the most important factor affecting its medium to long-term future will be the effects of the terrible and successive blows by the national decline in the economics of farming, followed in turn by the scourges of mad cow disease and foot and mouth disease in the opening years of the new millennium. On a lighter note, if Global Warming should cause a significant rise in sea level, it will be a long time before the Irish Sea laps at the doors in Low Lorton.

I began this History on a personal note, and will end it the same way. During the 1980s I visited Linda Cranford in Virginia. Linda was a descendent of Joseph Plaskett's family from Lorton, which emigrated in 1853. I met the family and Dora Bubbs who was the family historian. North American families are very keen on tracing and recording their family history. Dora showed my wife and I all the Plaskett/Mandale/Stamper and Cranford sites, churches and graves. By all accounts the area reminded Joseph of his valley home, though in truth there are nothing more than gently rolling hills. The original Lorton site is now no more than a rather scruffy typical U.S. country cross roads, but the modern town of Lorton, not far distant bears no more resemblance to Lorton Cumbria than the shared name. Lorton Virginia is a small bustling typically modern American town, boasting all the expected facilities that its Cumbrian namesake misses. Except, of course, that wonderful rural quiet atmosphere which Lorton in Cumbria still enjoys, and which Joseph would have appreciated when he first went and founded Lorton across the ocean. About the time of my visit an effort was made to encourage pen pals correspondence between the two Lortons, with a view to encouraging more personal visits between the two, but nothing came of that initiative. That is a pity, and it would be a worthwhile exercise to try again.

One of the characteristics that makes an area 'different' is the local pattern of speech and dialect. Cumberland had a rich history in this regard, but in the modern Cumbria this is being fast eroded by the large influx of residents from the south. When I arrived in 1980, the village still enjoyed the services of Peter Hall, who was a Lorton farmer, then in his seventies, who delivered milk to the door daily. I had great difficulty in understanding him, and overcame the problem of weekly payment by holding out a hand full of coins for him to help himself. Peter was not alone in this, my neighbour Sam Edmunds also gave me a problem in understanding. Although I had twenty years in which to accustom myself, the problem really went away on its own. With the passing of his generation, local

speech is becoming increasingly closer to that of the southern 'offcomers', now forming such a large proportion of the valley population.

However, in the sad tale of loss of public facilities, the one bright spot is the daily arrival of the little red van of the postman. Brian is a welcome face at the door, and not averse to stopping for a 'cuppa' and exchange of local news. He and a small number of our farming friends are the remaining representatives of traditional Cumberland families. They, with their continued use of their own Lorton dialect and vocabulary, and the familiar place names that surround the valley and shout their Norse origin, struggle to maintain the Nordic heritage.

The Lorton and Derwent Fells Local History Society began life in 1993. Now, with over a hundred members, some ten percent of whom are spread widely over England but have Lorton interests, the Society is thriving and creating a growing interest in local affairs, past and present. It has its own web site, www.derwentfells.com. As I often reminded members, today's events are tomorrow's history. I have great hopes that present and future members will take this to heart and act on it. But more than this, I earnestly wish that after reading this book, they will be moved to pick up the stated challenges to further research and contest some of the conclusions I have drawn.

EPILOGUE

A long, long time ago, I put pen to paper, or more prosaically, sat down at my computer keyboard, to expound the results of my efforts to discover the background to the property of "White Ash" that Stella and I had but recently acquired; to find out about the people who had lived there, and, by involuntary extension, how the community elsewhere along the valley had lived. I also said that I hoped to discover if the people of Lorton Vale had ever died of starvation in the times of bad harvests, as had been suggested.

Now, some fifteen years later, I look around my small and overcrowded study and I ask myself, "Did I succeed"? "What have I achieved"? "Am I satisfied"? "Will the reader be satisfied"?

To answer the first by saying "Not as much as I had hoped" would be to deny considerable effort and volume of collected material, now deposited in the LDFLHS archive, that will be useful for anyone following my footsteps. In truth, I did discover and record much of the history not only of "White Ash", but of much else of the twin villages of Lorton. What I did not do, was research as much for the rest of the Parochial Chapelry as I did for Lorton, and this is a major regret. Certainly I unearthed less material than I would have liked, there remains so much more to be discovered. For example, I have scarcely touched on life in the valley before 1600, largely because much of that documentation lies in the national archives in London, and I doubt I would have been able to read the medieval Latin, notwithstanding my strenuous efforts to relearn that language: a fact that would have brought tears of joy to my one-time Latin teacher. But along the way, the Local History Society came into being and this has encouraged a number of others into similar interests. We have looked at life in the valley in Stuart times and later, and have documented how people reacted to each other through their own eyes and personal documents, as well as official records of parish, Manor, and Country. We have seen how the yeoman and husbandman used their land; how village officials went about their business irrespective of fellowship ties; how the young and not so young brought up and cared for their families; how village tradesmen fared in their businesses. We have lamented about the Clerks disregard for the needs of future historians, and the state and content of their records. We have discovered much that tells us how the valley we see and enjoy today came to be as we find it.

I believe I have shown that in spite of minor and interesting differences the good folk of this valley behaved and lived much as did their counterparts in other areas of the Kingdom, albeit, rather poorer. Furthermore, I have suggested reasons and data to account for the lack of growth of the community over the centuries when in much of the rest of the country the population was growing exponentially. Should a critic think I have not demonstrated sufficient comparison with the rest of the U.K. when I say, for example, this parish was so much poorer than elsewhere, I can only say that this volume is already big enough: take my word for it, or read through the attached bibliography, as I have done, which will amply repay with the desired comparisons.

As recently as 1968, when humans were beginning to explore outer space, Laslet could say ". . . . .and yet (in spite of all our historical knowledge) we do not know whether all our ancestors had enough to eat".(1) Did people in this Lorton and Buttermere valley die of starvation? I think not, and suggest that I have

demonstrated without reasonable doubt that not only did the regular inhabitants not starve, but enjoyed a reasonable and on the whole healthy diet: although a few vagrant stragglers probably died in Lorton as a result of weakness and illness brought on by severe lack of food elsewhere.

One should never feel satisfied with a perceived task unfinished, so I must admit that I am not fully satisfied, as I realize how much more research can be done; what a wealth of documents there is for which I never reached out; how many more facets and details there are still to study to better understand the way of life in the more recent past as well as the distant past in this beautiful northern valley. I am happy that my efforts have spurred others to follow, and perhaps, to take what I have partially chronicled about this tiny piece of England to a more logical completion. The pages of this volume are replete with question marks; there are many inherent queries hidden within the text. I have opened Pandora's box, it is up to you to see how many loose ends you can put back into that box and improve on this history.

I can only hope that my efforts, built around other men's (and ladies') 'Corne' have been found worthy of the reading. But, with all that reading behind you, if indeed you have read everything this far, you must judge for yourself to what extent I have succeeded in my avowed task of recording my story of "One Village in History".

Epilogue – References

1. Laslet "The World we have lost", p.151

A History of the Parish of Lorton

ABBREVIATIONS

BSE	Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (mad cow disease)
C&W	Trans of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society
CRO	Carlisle Record Office
Ch RO	Chester Record Office
EPNS	English Place Name Society
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area
IPM	Inquisitions Post Mortem
LDFLHS	Lorton and Derwent Fells Local History Society
LFA	Less Favoured Area
LRO	Lancashire Record Office, Preston
OS	Ordnance Survey
PPC	Prerogative Court of Canterbury
PPY	Prerogative Court of York
PRO	Public Record Office, London
RCG	Ron George Archive
VCH	Victoria County History of Cumberland, 2 volumes, edited by J Wilson, 1901 and 1905

Note. Documents originally held in the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle archive were under the class reference EM 5. They are now in the CRO but not yet catalogued.

A History of the Parish of Lorton

GLOSSARY

ambrye, later buttery	larder or pantry
ark	storage chest of plank construction for grain
assarting	Wood or waste land that is cleared and turned into arable
big, bigg, bigge	barley
bodystead	main part of the living quarters of a house
boon days	A day's work of service in kind to lord of the Manor, i.e ploughing or harvesting
bovate	An early measure of land, also known as 'oxgang', equal to half a Yardland (or 'virgate'), and could be equal to anything between 10 and 20 Acres. 1 Yardland was equal to one quarter of a Hide; and 1 Hide (also known as a 'Caracate' or 'Ploughland', was defined as the area necessary to suport a peasant family for one year.
buttery	larder or pantry
cheese-rums and fatts	frames within which cheese was pressed (Denyer p 49)
clapbread	flat unleavened bread made from fine oatmeal – a staple food. Also 'haverbread'
Constable	Officer of the Manor and later the parish. Duties were many and varied over the centuries. Originally a contact between lord and tenants and responsible for law and order and maintenance of manorial customs. Collected taxes. Was unpaid and appointed for a year. Replaced by the establishment of a national police force in the mid-19th century
copyholder tenant	Tenant by reason of right written into Manor Court Rolls of which he was given a copy. On transfer of the property, whether by death and inheritance or sale the property reverted to the lord who held it in fee-simple, and the new tenant was admitted by the Court on payment of a fine. Copyhold was abolished in 1922
crack	Cumberland dialect for a chat
customary tenant	Unlike Copyhold, this was tenancy held by custom, not by the will of the lord, but copyhold was evolved from it. Customary tenancy was abolished in 1922
doubler	a large dish
downhouse	kitchen or brew house
engrossment	Amalgamation of parcels of land
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Area – involving subsidies from the EU
farmed out	rented. In earlier times, to farm meant to permit a second party to undertake an activity in exchange for 'service' or (later) cash. It applied to almost any activity but eventually became a cash

	payment and later especially to renting land. Hence the derivation of 'farmer' – one who rents land and later applied to a person owning and working the land
Fee tail	Land limited in inheritance to a specified individual or group of individuals
feif	a hereditary estate held of a superior lord on condition of homage and service to that lord. Feiffees are those holding such estates
firehouse	main part of the living quarters of a house, the part that was heated
fish-garth	trap, designed to trap principally salmon
harden cloth	made from 'hards' or coarse parts of flax or hemp
heath	technically an allocation of fell or 'waste' by the lord of the manor to a particular tenant for grazing his sheep. The term is often used in the sense that sheep would always stay on, or return to, their own heaf.
house	main part of the living quarters of a house
lonning	local dialect for a 'lane'
moiety	A half – usually found in relation to the division of a property
piggins	small wooden vessels (Denyer p 49)
polite style	description of post-vernacular buildings (Brunskill p 16 on)
rast	from the Latin 'rastrum' – a rake
rood	A unit of length. It varied considerably from place to place – between 5½ to 8 yards Also measure of area, usually taken as ¼ acre
scale also 'shieling'	building on high fell pasture occupied in summer. From Scandinavian 'scali' and old Norse 'saetr'. Lord's Seat is an example (Denyer p 92)
set-aside	a 20th century government initiative to leave land unproductive to prevent overproduction and covered by a subsidy
sieve	a rushlight made from rushes (known locally as sieves), peeled and dipped in mutton fat and held in a grip known as a 'pincer' (Denyer p 47)
prizer	A local abbreviation of "appraiser" – one who evaluated the deceased inventory
sub-infeudated	Land granted by a tenant-in-chief to a sub-tenant
teethe le(a)ding(e)	Meaning unknown – but possible referring to some form of cartage
tenants-at-will	Tenancy held at the will of the lord
tenement	In the context of this book, a' holding' of land, presumed bigger than that of a 'cottager'
tiering	the action of applying lime, sand and hair plaster to the underside of roof slates
transhumance	the seasonal moving of livestock to a different place, in the context of this book, from the valleys to the high fells in summer, accompanied by shepherds who then lived in temporary 'scales', 'sheilings', or 'saetrs'
trenchers	flat wooden plates (Denyer p49)

villein	Unfree tenant on manorial lands who held it by owing agricultural boon service. This tenure fell into disuse when the Black Death altered the supply of labour, giving the villain more bargaining power. Neither he nor his daughter could marry without the lord's permission, and a fine was payable upon his death. Villein status evolved into copyhold
Wang	a hard leathery cheese from skimmed milk, kneaded in hot water, soaked in brine and dried in hanging bags (Denyer p 34)
Waste	A somewhat variable term. Historically the unimproved land outside the fell-dyke that separated arable and pasture from the fells and commons. Within the time span covered by chapter 4 and subsequently in this book, 'waste' is any land not being cultivated, i.e. commons
With(e)(y)	In this context. Of or relating to the Willow tree

A History of the Parish of Lorton

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INDEX

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