

Lorton as it was 200 years ago

[Text of a talk, with later corrections, given by Derek Denman at Lorton on 10th November 2011, for L&DFLHS. Copyright, Derek Denman 2011]

S1

Good evening. I hope you do not mind that I have used an image of my old house for the title. We lived there from 1993 to 2002, and that house to the interest in the history of Lorton. And so this evening the history is going to be very local, including the very spot where we meet, but the theme will be one of change. I am going to focus the talk on the year 1811, but of course I will need to go backwards and forwards in time a little.

Lorton township 200 years ago would be easily recognised by us today, we could find our way around it with no trouble. But life and work in Lorton was very different. We would find Lorton very cluttered and messy, noisy, untidy, smelly and full of rustic children.

S2

The talk has been arranged to commemorate the lecture given by John Bolton in 1891, on Lorton as it was 80 years ago, or in 1811. John Bolton, of Cockermouth, was master at Lorton School between 1877 and 1882 and lodged in Kent Cottage, but when he married he acquired a grandmother-in-law who had what John Bolton called 'a storehouse of old world recollections', which formed the basis of his talk. She was born Dinah Iredale at Low Hollins in 1802 and became Mrs Lancaster. John Bolton's talk in 1891 was given at Lorton School, at a meeting chaired by William Lancaster Alexander, the squire of Oak Hill, and was mainly addressed to the new Victorian middle class which had developed in Lorton since the old days which he described.

S3

We could call John Bolton Lorton's first Local Historian, and now I must acknowledge the work of Lorton's main Local Historian 100 years later, who was of course Ron George of White Ash, the founder and the first chair of this society. He of course wrote 'A Cumberland Valley' which is a history of the parochial chapelry of Lorton, rather than the township, and this book has of course been a source for me for this talk. Copies are available to purchase.

S4

Content of talk

John Bolton discussed every house in the village and its occupants from 1811, but it would not be practical or useful for me to repeat that, and of course you can read his lecture for yourselves. I propose to give a more general view of life and work in Lorton, and then to concentrate on some of the properties and people and their place in Lorton.

- Firstly we will need to define Lorton and what was meant by Lorton Township
- Secondly, I need to speak about the recent developments in the half century before 1811, which affected Lorton
- Thirdly a few words about 1811 itself and the current issues which occupied the inhabitants
- Lastly, a tour of some of the properties from the ancient grandeur of Lorton Hall to the hovels up Tenters, the new church, the mills, the farms and the cottages, in each case observing the inhabitants. I have prepared more than we will have time for, and so we may have to select.

S5

What is Lorton?

The scope of this talk is Lorton Township, which is the civil entity which was the ancestor of Lorton parish council. Most of the Township boundary was fixed by the twelfth century.

S6

Here is a map of Lorton Township in 1822, with Lorton unchanged from 1811. Lorton was wholly on the East side of the River Cocker, and the enclosed land was bounded by other townships, Embleton, Brackenthwaite and Buttermere. One important thing to note is that in 1811 the commons in Lorton township were unenclosed and the stock roamed freely. The enclosed land was fenced from the commons and of course all the roads were gated at the commons boundary – no cattle grids. I will show you the township in more detail later.

S7

I spoke earlier about Ron George covering the parochial chapelry of Lorton, the responsibility of St Cuthberts. This map shows that it also covered Brackenthwaite, Buttermere, and Wythop, and also much of Whinfell. This is the ancestor of Lorton parochial church council, and is not my subject area.

The last area of administration was the manor, and this is a problem area because the Township of Lorton was split three ways.

S8

In 1100, all of Lorton was in the manor of Derwentfells, within the honour of Cockermouth. Derwentfells contained all the land between the Cocker and the Derwent. Both High and Low Lorton villages were granted, or subinfeudated to use the technical term, out of the manor of Derwentfells. The village of High Lorton, with its land was given to the Priory Church at Carlisle by 1158 After the dissolution it came to the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle Cathedral, and stayed that way until the 20th century. The village of Low Lorton was also granted to a freeholder in the 12th Century, but we first know of it in 1230. The parts of this manor were gradually sold to the tenants and became normal freeholds. The division between High and Low Lorton was of real importance, and you can see that Church Lane or Crossgates lane was established by 1158 as the division of High and Low Lorton. The parts of Lorton which developed outside of these two grants, remained in the Manor of Derwentfells.

S9

This is a good time to mention the peripheral farms, which you can see were developed after the High Lorton Manor was established in 1158, and were outside of it. New House is a more recent development. John Bolton did not cover the peripheral farms in Lorton, and so I do not propose to do so today, except for the settlement at Scales.

S10

Development

If we go back to, say, 1750, then Lorton was an agricultural township, with a number of small farmsteads supported by the usual village trades, the corn mill, the fulling mill, blacksmith, carpenter, weaver, innkeeper etc. but not the tanner, which was at High Swinside which was in Buttermere. Lorton and say Loweswater would be very similar except in layout, in that Lorton had retained the two rows of farmsteads in High and Low Lorton. By 1850 Loweswater was still agricultural and had lost its mills, but Lorton had developed a flax mill and a brewery, had retained its corn mill, and its farmers had mostly moved out of High Lorton – which became like an extension of Cockermouth, trades and residences.

You will see on this slide that Lorton's population increase took off in the 1770s, and it in fact reached a peak by our date of 1811. I would like to briefly say why this was so.

S11

This is the first detailed county map surveyed in 1770, and it shows the recently completed Whinlatter turnpike road. [show] This placed Lorton on the route between Keswick and Cockermouth, and it also improved the important direct route between Keswick and Whitehaven [show]. In fact it was the people of Keswick in the 1740s who insisted on this route for the turnpike. This road changed Lorton, especially High Lorton. I have shown the old route into Lorton going through Scales and along Lorton Street.

S12

Here you see where the new turnpike joined the old road. In particular, coming in to High Lorton from Cockermouth, the turnpike is a clear diversion to a new route. And here is the New Bridge which made the route practical for wheeled vehicles. Lorton must have had one of the first bypasses in 1770.

S13

I will take the opportunity now to cover the two Inns that were built because of the Turnpike in the 1770s, that at Scogill, later called the Lamb, which has now gone, and the Rising Sun.

S14

The land at Scogill was already owned by Thomas Burnyeat of High Swinside, but he built the farmstead to serve the passing trade, and later sold it off. John and Sarah Bough owned and worked it in 1811. They had been farmers in Whinfell, but they bought Scogill as their own place, and must have had to work hard. In this photo the main house has gone. Bolton notes that 'This Inn was not the quiet little inn it is now with its primitive sign, but a very good trade was done with the coal and lime carters who came over Whinlatter to Greysouthern then for coal and to Brigham for lime'. So not the top end of the market, then.

S15

The Rising Sun was more successful and developed into a small settlement. It was also built to take advantage of the road and was the stopping point for Lorton. It was built by Wilson Pearson of Bridekirk who owned Holm Farm, and the Pearson lands in the manor of High Lorton. Bolton quotes Mrs Lancaster 'I have seen as many as twenty carts standing there at One time, and the Mail Coach horses used to bait there sometimes meal and water. We – used to go on to Whinlatter to see the coaches pass. My brother and I went to the dancing school at the Rising sun and we danced in a room upstairs'. That was presumably some kind of cruel old punishment for children.

S16

The other development which brought people through Lorton from 1770 was tourism. And again it was the Whinlatter turnpike which brought that traffic, but on its way to Loweswater and Buttermere. Particularly to the Scale Hill Hotel, which was the destination of the carriage trade, and really at the top of the market. Much of this traffic would go by Swinside and the only reason for a tourist to go through Lorton would be to see the famous yew tree.

S17

It was famous well before Wordsworth published his poem in 1815.

S18

Next I would like to set the general scene for 1811, at the start of the Regency period. The most important factor was the war with France, which had been going on for 18 years. The risk of invasion had passed, but the pressure on food production was great. Corn prices were very high, rents were high, agricultural wages were high, and landowners were encouraged to improve land, say by drainage, and to increase production. In Cockermouth and Embleton the moors were being enclosed for corn, but the commons of Lorton were not suitable and were unenclosed and used for grazing.

The problems started in 1816 with the recession and depression after the war, when the price of corn fell and rents went down. Some of those who had recently invested in land improvement and borrowed money found themselves in negative equity and had to sell.

S19

But in 1811 the local economy was booming and population and prosperity were at at peak. This chart shows Lorton's population through the nineteenth century, and you can see that population grew by 30% from 300 to 400 in the decade up to 1811, and in the recession after 1815 the population fell. That growth was not all through the birth rate. Much of it was due to inward migration. Notice that the population was 58% female in 1811, and young women move location to find work and to create families. These would be happy times, and the only problem would be the lack of housing in Lorton, and consequent overcrowding. John Bolton chose a good time in Lorton's history.

I have shown below the effect of the subsequent depression on marriages in Lorton parochial Chapelry, down over 30%, and the more than doubling of illegitimate baptisms – which in better times would be marriages.

S20

To pay for the war the Government introduced a temporary tax on income, at 10% above an allowance of £60. This tax was removed after the war, in favour of excise duties, or the sales tax which everyone paid. I was lucky to find this collector's certificate for Lorton in 1810-11 which gave owners and tenants and the amount paid.

S21

And this is page 2. Lorton paid £200 in 1811, which was quite a sum.

S22

I have now covered the general position in 1811, and it is time to look at some properties and families in more detail. This is the list of prepared material. The first four I think are essential, but for the rest we will have to see how time goes. We come back to this slide after the first four.

S23

Because I am talking about 1811, the major changes of the nineteenth century have not yet happened, and it is those changes that John Bolton and his audience were looking back over. The missing properties shown here represent three stories. First the industrialisation that was made practical by the turnpike road, which made Lorton an extension of Cockermouth. The Flax mill and the brewery date to the 1820s and 1830s, and the Methodist Chapel to 1840. Nonconformity, or dissenting, is often associated with industry rather than land based agriculture.

Secondly the commons were enclosed, and divided among the landowners in the 1830s, and Darling How was the only new farm created on the commons allotments

Thirdly, I have shown four large Victorian houses that represent the incoming middle class families of the mid-century. The old arrangement of having one principal country gentleman at the Hall had failed by 1811, with the Lucock-Bragg family. These mostly new families of the new Victorian middle class provided the missing part of the social hierarchy, and took on the role of guiding and improving the rustic inhabitants.

S24

This is the only known image of the old St Cuthberts. By 1811 St Cuthberts had just been rebuilt, though the main change was the replacement of the open bell frame [proper name] by a tower. The Squire, Joshua Lucock Bragg of Lorton Hall, rather meddled in this project, but eventually paid for the tower as promised, or rather his trustees did.

S25

And this is the oldest photograph we have in the archive. Pre-war with the railings. Being a chapelry, Lorton only had a curate, rather than a Vicar or Rector, but St Cuthberts was very fortunate to have John Sibson, from the Whinfell family, as its curate in 1811. 'Mr Sibson was a gay, stout well built man, not so tall, and stepped out well. In all probability he was a St Bees man, and was doubtless possessed of means'.

S26

The land for Lorton School was also bought from Joshua Lucock Bragg of Lorton Hall, and again lay between High and Low Lorton, serving both. The original part had its gable to the road. It's floor was paved with cobbles. Bolton reports that 'the fire place was in the other gable – and there were two windows in each of the side walls ... There were forms on each side of the school for the lesser end who were only readers. There were tables or rather desks set across the school. One was for the counters, and one was for the writers.'

S27 **Lorton Hall**

Now I come to Lorton Hall and the sad story of the Lucock Braggs. Joshua Lucock was the grandson and heir of Joshua Lucock of Cockermouth, who built, or rather rebuilt, Wordsworth House. He bought the Lorton Hall estate in 1800, and moved into the hall as squire and JP for Lorton. He had the estate surveyed and drawn in 1803, and a copy is on display.

I need to say something about the hall itself to separate fact from mythology, some of which was deliberately created by an unusually imaginative clergyman.

The house was named Lorton Hall only on the 18th Century, by owners wishing give it and themselves a greater status. In 1803 you can see that it had a C shape and opened directly to the road. The carriage drive was a creation of the 1840s extensions, and the wall around came in the 1890s.

S28

This was the view from the road in 1811. The façade of 1663 was created by John Winder, though the door has now gone. The right wing is the stables and the wing on the left was demolished by the Dixons. The small cottage on the right, which is now the basis of Stables Cottage, was the home of Stephen Martin, the well known auctioneer.

You may think the something is missing? the medieval pele tower perhaps? and that is because there never was one. The Winders did own a third of the town from at least 1398, but the present building has Tudor origins. No medieval pele tower, no chapel before the 1960s and no visits from Queen Margaret of Scotland. All inventions.

S29

So what is that pele tower in the photographs from the 1880s, with presumably a Dixon sitting on the field wall having just bought it. The tower has no windows. The answer is that it was a folly tower built by George Lucock Bragg around 1840, and then converted by the Dixons.

S30

Let us get back to the Lucock-Braggs. John Bolton alludes to their sad history but says nothing, and perhaps did not need to. Today there are no memories of the mad inmates of the hall. Only the ghost stories survive from a plot which is much more improbable than that of Bleak House, but not of course as silly as Downton Abbey. There were no happy endings at Lorton Hall.

First I should explain that the name Bragg was added in 1805, so that Joshua Lucock could inherit a large legacy from his rich uncle Joseph in Liverpool. The family were all really Lucocks. I do not have time for their full history, but this basic tree shows how Joshua Lucock married his cousin, Rebecca Lucock Wilkinson, and had a family of nine, three in Cockermonth and five in Lorton Hall. When Joshua Lucock Bragg died in 1809, Rebecca was left with six children. In time, four of these became lunatics through sudden mental collapses, though in 1811 this had not yet happened. Raisbeck, John and Joshua all went to university, but became lunatics in the hall in 1816, 1819 and 1823. Sarah was spared until 1828, but she and John lived on in the hall until 1875 in the care of attendants. The twins George and Elizabeth did not become lunatics, though they must have expected it at any time, and neither had children. Elizabeth married an old widower from Weymouth, where they built Lorton House.

S31

Very little of this comes through Bolton's lecture, and he looks forward to the Dixon era. He recognises the sad history and the change from the old hall. [I will let you read these quotes] He describes the family in church after the death of the father in 1809, and they were certainly a gentry family with the tall feathers. Bolton hints at George being in charge, though in 1811 the mental breakdowns had not happened.

There are suggestions here and elsewhere that Joshua Lucock Bragg was rather mad and bad himself. His trustees accounts show that when he died they found £4686-6-6 in the house, a huge sum. But at the same time he had borrowed money and had not paid his bills. The sale of his effects suggest that he had between ten and fifteen horses when he died, and he had a pointer dog, a Phaeton carriage and a pack of hounds kept in kennels where the Low Lorton notice board now is.

But I must stop here on the Lucock Braggs and have a look at some of his subjects.

When we consider the other people in Lorton, they were rather less colourful than the Lucock Braggs.

S32

▣ **[Are we half way? What shall we cover?]**

S33

Lorton Cross

We are moving into Low Lorton and looking for Cross Nook at Lorton Cross

S34

I am now using the detailed survey made in 1827 for the enclosure of the commons. This shows all the properties. Bolton asks 'How many of you could tell a stranger the position of Lorton Cross? Lorton Cross was the block of buildings at the corner of Burtrees road.' Today we have the same problem with Burtrees Road as well. Burtrees road was the name for the short road down to the bridge, and Lorton Cross was at the Low Lorton crossroads, behind the wall which now encircles Lorton Hall. Where the notice board and curious bus shelter is now there was once Joshua Lucock Bragg's kennels and then a cartwrights shop.

When the Winders held a third of the vil of Lorton it included the tenements based on those farmsteads, but the land became rolled up with Lorton Hall and by 1811 the farmstead on the left became in part the home of Bartholomew Stagg, who farmed Lorton Hall's estate. Cross

Nook was right on the corner and was general housing, with 23 people living at Lorton Cross in 1841. Over the road on Pippin Mould, there was in the eighteenth century 'an old house formerly a smith's shop'.

S35

Lorton Low Mill

I am going to stray briefly into Whinfell to include Lorton Low Mill, which had been attached to Lorton Hall from the sixteenth century. First I would like to point out Ivy Cottage above the river, and the two bridges. The Lorton Hall grounds had been extended across the river by a small bridge to a pond. And in 1803 the main bridge had two arches, as it had up till recently. This picture of the mill came from the WI scrapbook, and it looks much better today as a fine home.

The mill was rented by Thomas Thompson in 1811, but Robert Burgess was employed as a miller.

S36

John Bolton does not dwell on the nasty parts of 1811, and I have taken some occurrences from the church registers which tell other stories. Richard and Rebecca Burgess lived at Cross for some time. They came with a family and lost one son aged 13 on 9th July. Then in November Rebecca had twins, which was always risky. First one died and then the other. Although they had three more children, such events in half a year seem particularly difficult. Women's lives were tough, even when you consider the very different positions of Rebecca Burgess and Rebecca Lucock Bragg. Would you change places with either of them?

S37

Low Lorton Farms

Now I would like to look at the three old farmsteads to the north of the Hall, which were nothing to do with the Hall estate before 1800. In Low Lorton the farmsteads and properties straddled the road, the old Holm farm here being the perfect example. Next to Lorton Hall there was an old farmstead called Kirgate End, which is a name going back to 1547 when the Jn Peylle owned Gaytend. Obviously the name comes from the gate to the church footpath, and here was the ancient inn of Lorton, what Bolton calls 'the inn at Kirkstile'. By 1803 that old inn now called the Packhorse had been detached from the farm and was part of the Lorton Hall estate.

S38

This is the Packhorse Inn presumably in the late nineteenth century, and Bolton has many tales of the Packhorse and its entertainments. Though he does not mention general knowledge quizzes. It is interesting that the landladies are featured rather than the landlords, and though the nineteenth century it was the daughter of the Packhorse who found a suitable husband to be the tenant. From Chambers in 1811 it went through daughters to Churnsides and Beattie.

S39

The older of these two might be Mrs Beattie, rather than the attractive barmaid in the corset. According to Bolton, Sally Chambers, Mrs Beattie's grandmother, was 'a gaily jolly body not quite so stout as either Mrs Churnside or Mrs Beattie, but was a real good type of an English hostess.'

S40

If we return to Kirkgate farm or Churchstile farm, we find that today nothing remains except the gate itself and Lorton Hall Lodge built by the Dixons.

S41

The Fletchers purchased from the Peiles in the eighteenth century. At the end of that century it came mostly to John Fletcher, but his sister Isabella Fletcher took part of it, the purple part, as her portion. The remainder of the Kirgate End or Kirkstile or Church Stile farm, as it was variously called, was sold to Joshua Lucock Bragg of Lorton Hall. Or at least he agreed to buy it and his trustees paid the money after his death. However, it was kept as a separate farm called Church Stile and tenanted by John Bank.

John Fletcher's sister, Isabella, aspired to the minor gentry. She was one of those local girls who married a London Merchant, in this case Joseph Woodhouse, and they settled at what they called the Green, next to the Hall and had two boys by 1811. According to John Bolton 'They

were gentlefolks, and Mrs Woodhouse was a terrible fine lady. She was the leading singer at the Church ...'. Mr Woodhouse was a leading light in creating the 1813 Sunday School, being its treasurer and secretary. The children attended twice a day on Sunday, and many poor children received their education entirely at the Sunday school, but it was also intended to discipline the village children, because its constitution required the children to be taught the fear of God.

S42

If we move on to the Holm farm, the buildings of course remain as Holm Cottage, which is a seventeenth century or earlier farmstead. The name is sometimes mistaken for the home farm of Lorton Hall, but it never was, and the name Holm means island – though I cannot find the name before the nineteenth century.

S43

The island in question is now over the River, and sometimes called back'o'water and sometimes holm, but it is in Lorton, which means that the river has moved or been moved.

This farm was owned by the Pearsons of Bridekirk in 1811, and Bolton has the ownership wrong. In 1649 Richard Pierson owned it together with holdings in High Lorton, including the land on which the Rising Sun was built, and the Blue and White Park Cottages.

The land was farmed for 41 years by John and Sally Ewart, who presumably derived from the borders reivers around the Bewcastle area. According to Bolton 'John was a very quiet, decent, respectable man, a good farmer and a quiet neighbour. Sally was a very industrious, active, careful body, perhaps rather too much so but it is a good fault in a woman'. Though John was quiet it is unlikely that the family was quiet with 'six yards o lads and eighteen yards o lasses'. I like to think that they inspired the Woodhouses to set up the Sunday School.

S44

Next we have the farmstead which became the Wheat Sheaf, and its land which became the caravan site.

S45

By 1811 this was a smallholding owned and farmed by Auld Doc Fletcher, who practised as a veterinary. It was common for people to combine a trade of profession with a small amount of farming. As a singer he was 'a great favourite at all the 'clippings' and had a thin quavery voice'.

S46

List of places

The next two items are intended to connect Low Lorton with its ancient commons and village industry, leaving High Lorton until last.

S47

Pearsons and Common

In 1811 there were two farmsteads in Low Lorton owned and farmed by Pearsons. Peter Pearson of Bridge End farmed land to the south, exclusively in Low Lorton. John Pearson of Low Lorton Tenement, now known as Croft House, had limited lands in Low Lorton, but extensive holdings based on Scales, including Hollinberry Hall and Boonbeck House. Note that these in in the yellow, Derwentfells, manor and not in High Lorton manor, which contains Boon Beck Farm.

S48

Bridge End is an ancient freehold farm, held as tenant by William Gill of Bridgend in 1517. So there was a bridge in 1517. Here you see a fine eighteenth century farmhouse indicating prosperity. This illustrates a farmstead which is all one side of the highway, as was the practice in High Lorton. A fold was formed between barns and house where you could manage stock or other operations without public interference.

S49

Here is the other Pearson farmstead, with the house one side of the road and a barn the other side. Again there is a fine Georgian House. This view of the barn is again from the WI scrapbook which notes that the house, Croft View?, has had new picture windows installed.

S50

We go back to this map of the relationship between John Pearson and his holdings in Low Lorton and at Scales, and the purpose is to show that Scales was always the property of Low Lorton farmers. Scales comes from the Norse for huts, which long ago were used by the inhabitants of Low Lorton to manage their stock on the common. The huts turned into farmsteads beyond the manor of High Lorton. I have shown here the route by which stock was taken to and from the commons, and the importance of Crossgates as a marshalling area for stock as they were taken through the arable fields.

The farmers of High Lorton tended to use the common to the north of Whitbeck, as I have shown with a red route up Holemire Lane.

In 1811 Lorton Commons were still unenclosed and were still used in this way.

S51

Tenters

You would think that Tenters was in High Lorton, but that would be wrong because the boundary ran down the road rather than down Whitbeck, and the buildings associated with the Fulling Mill are all in the Manor of Derwentfells. The Fulling Mill, used for finishing woollen cloth, was created in 1478 and was owned by John Peylle of Gaytend in 1547, which is Kirgate End in Low Lorton. This map shows the fulling or walk mill, the tenter riggs, where the cloth was dried in shape, the Fullers house in 1811 and the house of the owner, John Bowe, which was sadly burnt down a few years ago.

The fulling mill was a thriving business which worked in conjunction with the Keswick business, but it was also the last fulling mill in the valley, and so cloth woven on Loweswater, say at Piel, was fulled here.

S52

However, tenters was the least desirable place to live, and with the pressure on housing in the first decade of the nineteenth century, people made do with very basic properties. Of this converted stables or office Bolton said 'The stairs used to be from the outside for people going to bed. Fancy leaving your comfortable fire on a snowy night and coming outside to go to bed'. This property was unchanged in the 1960s photograph, but now forms the centre part of the fine residence on the right.

S53

Opposite the Bowes was in a premises originally used by the Bell family of slaters who worked the quarry at New Bridge. They sold to the Bowes and the house was used by the Hunter family of fullers. Frank and Fanny Hunter had seven children by 1804, and they were perhaps a bit too early for the influence of the Sunday School. There were no marriages by five illegitimate children born to the daughters. The hunter family were right at the bottom of the social structure.

S54

Jennings

The Brewery did not exist in 1811, Just Bill Jennings new premises, now Corner House, and his malt kilns opposite by the beck. Old Bill Jennings is described by Mrs Lancaster as 'a fine looking old man, fresh and full of flesh, and used to wear a bottle green coat, a real swallow tail with bright brass buttons. He wore knee breeches tied with tape but she cannot remember his shoes, whether he wore buckles or not.'

The 'first brewer of the celebrated Lorton Ale' in the b1820s was his son, old John Jennings, and the registers show 1811 as a busy year for John, with a new wife, new daughter and new property. On 10th January he married Ann Wilkinson of Scales, who was now 34. Two months later Mary Anne Jennings was born. Ann had inherited a farm at Scales and what is now Beech Cottage from her father, and that is John Jennings came into property.

John Jennings was a very energetic man and in time purchased the flax mill as well. But he had a reputation and J G Brooker described elsewhere as 'the old goat', who was attracted to servant girls.

S55

Boon Beck

We have come down Tenters and reached this area, and if we go out of the door and over the bridge we are in Boon Beck or above the beck. In 1811 this area was much more open. There were no brewery buildings, including this one, no yew tree view cottages, and the threshing

sheds and water-wheel at the farm were not yet built. Above the bridge the kilns were by the beck, and the woodyard and sawpit were where yew tree view is now. Where we are now was a public place open to the beck, where children played. I have marked on the ford for animals on the route from Low Lorton to the commons, which was kept clear of buildings.

S56

You can see that a gap was left between the Yew Tree Hall and Yew Tree View to allow the stock to continue to use that ford.

S57

Here we see Boon Beck farm on the left and on the right the shed and water wheel which was installed while Mrs Lancaster was there, as a child of the farmer, Peter Iredale. They took the farm at a high rent just before prices collapsed at the end of the war. Boonbeck farm was owned by the Stubbs family, since before 1649, but they now let it to farmers. The Yew Tree was on Boon Beck farm land.

S58

High Mill

I will say little about High Mill except that it was there in 1158 to be given to the priory. It was owned by John Pickering then but the house has been rebuilt since. The mill itself, I recall, dates from a rebuild in about 1800. There was another monkey puzzle tree behind Midtown farm.

S59

High Lorton

And now, in as much time as we have left, I would like to take a run through High Lorton Street and its inhabitants as it was in 1811. You should have a copy of the handout which identifies houses, people and John Bolton's descriptions.

High Lorton Street was all in the Manor of Lorton and can be matched to a survey of the manor in 1649. In this slide I give the old names of places and the red lines which were the divisions between the old farmsteads.

By 1811 a lot of people lived here as housing developed, far more than in the 17th Century. The numbers for 1811 would be little different from the numbers we have for 1841, when 163 people lived in this patch, including 53 children but few old people over 60. A child was up to 14. This was before the Victorians invented the idea of childhood.

S60

In High Lorton the farmsteads were generally on one side of the road, and presented the backsides of their barns to the roads. Here you see Fellbarrow and Midtown, but others were the same, and it provided the opportunity to replace the barns and byers with cottages.

S61

This is the numbered plan on the handout, which takes the first plan of 1827 and converts it back to 1811, as close as possible. I will start from the left or south.

S62

There was another 'one up one down' property on Tenters which was home to the Thompsons and their son, thick Ike. This was so poor that it was pulled down, but it has recently been replaced by a fine new residence.

I have covered Corner House, which became the Post Office of the Moffatts, and must go on to what is now Graceholm. Here lived a minor gentry family called Nicholson, who gentrified the farmhouse and established an orchard in the field across the road. William Nicholson lent money as mortgages through the war years, and also bought properties in High Lorton giving the owners a lifetime occupancy, in a sort of equity release. In this way he gained a lot of property, and much of it became part of the Lorton Park estate.

Graceholm is now two properties but much of it retains the period character of William Nicholson's conversion.

S63

This shows the minibarn which remains, reduced in length and height, but still very useful.

S64

This next group, from Yew Tree Cottage at 3, to Beech and Causey Cottage at 11, and including all of Smithy Fold, was all owned by Thomas Peale in 1649, and the old farmstead did not survive long into the eighteenth century. Yew Tree cottage, number 3, and the two mansions, 4 and 5, which were rebuilt as Dale View, were acquired or built by the Crosthwaite family. In 1811 Yew Tree Cottage, number 3, was owned by Old Tom Crosthwaite, who had been a quarryman and was now church warden. He 'was a tallish, slenderish man and was rather lame. A good tempered jolly fellow, but his wife was not good natured, and was snappy rather with the children who used to run over her pavement.'

The two mansions, 4&5, were owned by Jack Crosthwaite who lived at 5, but in number 4 his tenant was Mally Borrowscale, who 'kept a dame's school and taught reading and knitting and sewing'.

Number 6 is now the wooden bungalow and was once Scott's garage, but this photograph shows the old block which was occupied by Martha Payle in 1811, and she kept a public back-house, or an informal ale drinking facility. She also did not like children. Bolton reports that 'The front door was flagged with rammels, and when the lads ran over them old Martha would wait for them with her long-shanked malin.'

Beech Cottage at number 11, came to John Jennings in 1811 as I have already described. According to Bolton this was their home. Its barn later became Causey Cottage.

S65 Just for interest, here is the same view of this area in around 1920 and in 2011. Martha Payles block is the main casualty, now being the bungalow.

S66

Going into Smithy Fold, this strip of buildings developed in the eighteenth century and contained the village trades. The Smithy and public house were owned by Mrs Sargison and husband James. The public house was the Blacksmith's arms, and only later the Horse Shoe.

The rest of the row of workshops, barns and cottages was owned by Peter Robinson, who was the carpenter. In addition he was a fine fiddler and became a dissenting Wesleyan minister, before the chapel was built.

In the 1841 census there were 45 people resident from 3 to 11 with two houses unoccupied that night. There are now 11 residents.

S67

The next old farmstead was Midtown, owned by the Wilkinsons in the seventeenth century, and little changed by 1811. Kent Cottage was another Crosthwaite building on a small piece of land purchased from the Midtown tenement in the late eighteenth century. It was occupied by another old Crosthwaite sibling and her servant, and John Bolton lodged there when master at Lorton School. Midtown itself was the property of Anthony Garnett and his wife Nancy. 'Anthony was reckoned a very clever, knowledgeable man and was a person well thought of.' The kitchen of Midtown Farm was the venue for dissenting meetings before the chapel was built.

Midtown had 34 acres in 1811, but was sold piecemeal by the son, John Garnett in 1837. Thomas Ewart purchased the farmstead and some of the land. The house of 1678 that survives is one of the most original Lorton examples of the great rebuilding, and incorporates some older elements, as we heard from John Hart at an earlier talk.

S68

The eleven acres of land around the next two old farmsteads was farmed in 1811 by Priest Sewell, who combined this with officiating at the chapels of Wythop and Setmurthy. The barn that is now Fellbarrow belonged to him. There were three further cottages in this area which remain little changed, one of which was a holiday home for Captain Russel of Workington.

The main interest is in Spring Garth, which was a shop in 1811, run by John and Mary Turrel, a middle aged couple. 'He was a middle sized man, stoutish and good looking. He was a noted hedger and good at all husbandry.' This suggests that as usual the wife ran the shop, which sold 'tea, coffee, tobacco and snuff, and it was a noted shop for marbles and mint cake'.

S69

The last in the row before Holemire Lane was the old White Ash farm, which Ron George researched thoroughly. It had already been divided into two, White Ash and Wholemire, which became Lamb Fold, and both parts were let to farmers in 1811. John Bolton describes Mirehouse

Keyof Wholemire as a very old man, and used to wear a grey russet wig, bare on the front and looped at the back. He was a tallish man, and used to wear short knee breeches, that just came over the knee, and were fastened with a strap and a little buckle at the side. Mr Mirehouse Key had evidently been an old swell.' You do not think of Cumberland farmers wearing wigs.

S70

The last two sections are all those farms and cottages that became part of Lorton Park and its attachments. You can find the detail in one of my Journal articles. By 1811 the Rev Lancaster Dodgson of Shatton had purchased most of the old Williamson tenement which was where the Lorton Park house was built in the 1820s.

Bolton records 'Opposite Wholemire lonning end where Miss Harbord's house is [that is Lorton Park] there stood a very old house and outbuildings, very likely an old farm. The end of the house came on to the road and the way in was round the left of the gable up a kind of fold. Here lived Bella Thompson, a short roundabout body who kept a bakehouse.' The bakehouse is now the square kitchen of Lorton Park, marked 20.

The bakehouse is interesting because people in the cottages would have made and marked their own bread and taken it to Bella Thompson to bake for them. Bella had sisters who were also bakers, and so this looks like another female enterprise. In 1819, when she was 32, Bella Thompson had an illegitimate daughter, Mary, who probably continued the baking business.

S71

Now we get to the Cockermouth end of High Lorton at Conkey's corner, and all these properties became the cottages and stables of Lorton Park. Numbers 23 to 27 were not previously a farmstead and were eighteenth century cottages and workshops, mostly belonging to the Bells. They were built on land which was the child portion of Elizabeth Garnett – a Midtown daughter who became Elizabeth Bell. These cottages contained a weaver, dressmakers, a waller and the exciseman, who had to take the poor cottage at 26 as the only house available, just before 1811. This demonstrates the great pressure on housing.

Numbers 23 and 27 look like matching eighteenth century workers cottages, but these facades were created much later. The three blue and white Park Cottages were a farmstead built in 1700 on the old Pearson tenement, for Henry and Anne Pearson, from the Low Lorton family. In 1811 this was still a dwelling house, stable, byre and barn.

S72

We have reached the end of the tour, and I apologise if I have missed out any house or family which is important to anyone here.

Choosing 1811 was fortunate for John Bolton because Lorton was at a peak of prosperity and population, and he could point to happy days for the grandparents of his audience. But the large changes of the nineteenth century made life in the olden days as different for his audience then as it is for us today.

S73.

Here I end and thank you for your attention and interest.