Lorton &

Derwent Fells Local History Society

Brackenthwaite

Buttermere

Embleton

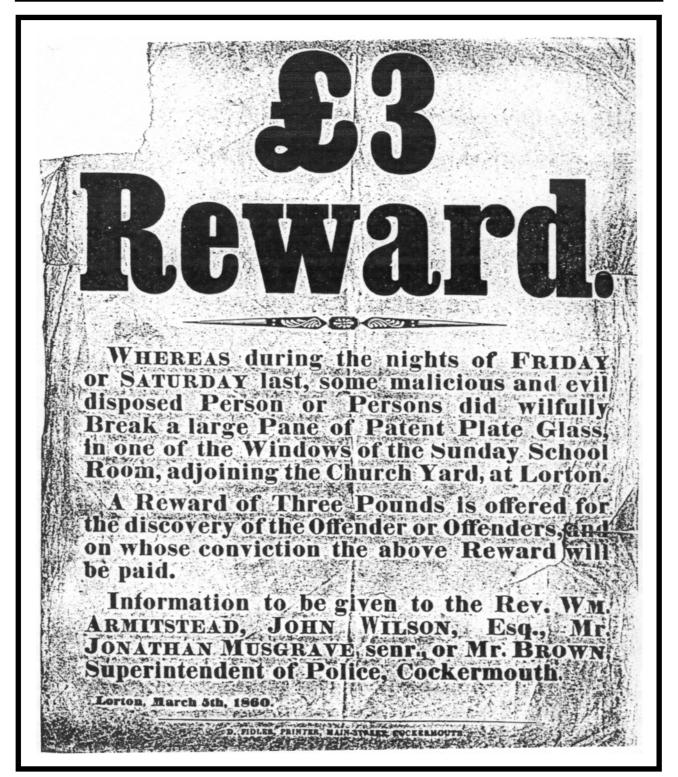
Loweswater

Mockerkin

Pardshaw

Wythop

Late news: we regret that our next meeting, which was to have been given by Angus Winchester on 10 May, has been cancelled due to the local cases of foot & mouth disease



SECRETARY'S LETTER

At the time of writing, all around is the sadness and worry of foot & mouth. We're all affected to some degree and so I hope this Newsletter will provide a little distraction to what is going on around us. In this issue, there is news of a new web site that is being developed (yes, ours!) and articles that include local sheep markings, roadside drinking troughs and the start of a two-part article which compares the development of two market towns, Cockermouth and Keswick, from 1850 to 1950. Please read on!

As I'm sure you know, we're running some 'activities' this year in those months between our talks and on 11 October we're trying a panel 'question and answer' evening. Walter Head will be organising it and a number of people who know the area well will be there to answer lots of interesting questions. Now, there's the point - we want to put together an interesting and worthwhile set of questions and one source of these is the Newsletter readership. So, **please put your thinking caps on** and jot down some questions to which you would like the answers and send them to me. This would really help us to make that evening one to remember.

Now, briefly, a topic we all prefer to forget (except our Treasurer Hetty Baron!), that of subscriptions. Up to now, we have relied on collecting subscriptions at our meetings and in some years this has meant that we didn't get them all in until late in the year (due, I should add, to a variety of mainly good reasons) and this does make life difficult for Hetty and me. So two things - for this year, if you haven't paid your sub yet, please will you consider sending it (£6 per person) to Hetty or me and secondly, for the future we will try to bring in a system which makes it easy for members to send their subs in which will avoid the hassle at the start of our November and January meetings. In this way, we can get rid of 'the weakest link' [loud fanfare!].

Finally, <u>notice of a Special General Meeting to be held in the Yew Tree Hall on 14 June at 7.30pm.</u> May I draw your attention to the proposed new Constitution which is enclosed with this Newsletter. It includes the existing Constitution, the reasons for the changes and the proposition which the Committee has put forward for consideration at a short SGM to precede the AGM - with a presentation to end the evening!

WHY NOT JOIN THE COMMITTEE?

The AGM will be upon us in June and, if the new Constitution is agreed, there will be at least two vacant places on the Committee to fill. The Committee meets three times per year on a Thursday avaning to manage the activities of the Society and mambage of the



vacant places on the Committee to fill. The Committee meets three times per year on a Thursday evening to manage the activities of the Society and members of the Committee are also involved in organising some of the activities and looking after particular subject areas. We are now a fairly large (100 members) and busy Society and would welcome some new Committee members, particularly with interests in the more peripheral parts of our area. There is no necessity for great knowledge of local history. An interest in the subject and willingness to get involved in activities is all that is required. To learn more, or to suggest someone, please speak to me on 01900 85551 or to any other Committee member.

Derek Denman

INTRODUCING 'www.derwentfells.com' by DEREK DENMAN

Yes, the name derwentfells.com has been registered for a web site for the Society. This will open many new avenues, a few of which I will list below, but before I do I must make it very clear is that that **there is no intention to change the way in which the Society currently works**. Members will be able to completely ignore the website and still participate fully in all the activities as now. So if you do not have, or do not wish to have, a computer, don't worry at all.

That said, the site will be developed over the next few months (the webmaster is really still at the apprentice stage) and those with internet access can watch it develop by accessing www.derwentfells.com and can give constructive criticism and suggestions. Of course a web site can be accessed by anyone, so it will be a shop window for the Society which up to now we have not had. Just a few of the things we should be able to do in time are:

- List and describe the Society's programme in some detail, with up to date information and reports.
- Improve the participation of country members.
- Give current news about the Society and its members.
- Provide a means of communicating with the Society by email.
- Provide a route for non-members to find out about the Society and join.
- List the current archive contents and papers available, and display a gallery of photographs and documents.
- Provide information on members' projects and relevant information sought.

- Publish articles by members and others (the Newsletter will not change because of the web site).
- Provide links to other societies and related organisations.

Comments and suggestions from members will be welcome. Please telephone me on 01900 85551 or, of course, email to derek@derwentfells.com anytime.

FUTURE TALKS & ACTIVITIES

Subject to foot & mouth, our next talks and activities will be as follows:

10 May	Talk by Angus Winchester has been CANCELLED.	
18 May	Visit to Isel Hall, 2pm - this is full but contact Michael Baron on 01900 85289 for late places.	
14 June	SGM and AGM followed by a presentation on "Lorton Township's old trees and their histories" by Derek Denman and Charlie Allison.	YTH
12 July	Talk by Brenda Callaghan, history lecturer and tutor, on "Courtship, marriage and births in Cumbria, 1500 to 1900".	LVH
9 August	7.30pm "Historic Lorton", a guided walk around the village. Numbers limited, contact Derek Denman on 01900 85551.	
16 August	7.30pm "Farm history, a walk around Waterend Farm, Loweswater" for those who missed this interesting outing before. Numbers limited, contact Michael Grieve on 01900 85259.	
13 September	Talk by Mike Davies-Shiel, geography and geology teacher, author and local history enthusiast, on "The flax industry in Cumbria".	LVH

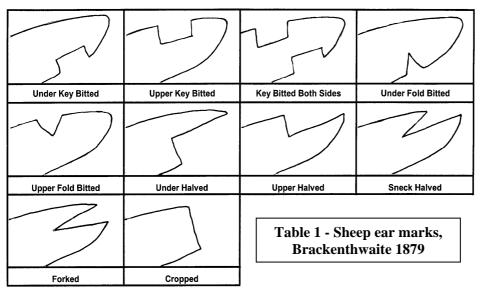
SHEEP MARKINGS AND OTHER MATTERS by WALTER HEAD

In 1835, the Enclosure Act was implemented in the Brackenthwaite area, but the fells remained mostly unenclosed and each farm had an allocation of sheep which it could put on to the upper fells to graze.

The apparent hardness and inclination for elevated pastures made the Herdwick the ideal sheep for the Cumbrian fells. The origins of the hardy Herdwick sheep are unclear but tradition has it that approximately 40 small sheep survived a Spanish shipwreck off the Drigg coast and made their way on to the high fells where no other sheep could survive. The Herdwicks survived and thrived in the harsh environment and they were domesticated by the Lakeland farmers. In 1879, according to Edward Nelson of Gatesgarth, Buttermere and John Wilson of Keskadale in the Newlands valley, a good Herdwick had a good coat of long, well-knit broad wool, with a light grey, strong, broad head, an arched nose, wide and open at the muzzle with a deep jaw. The male should have a nice pair of whitish coloured horns rising well out of the back of the head. The ears should be white, sharp and stand up well - and should not droop.

Some sheep known as heath, or heaf, sheep would not stray away from the area in which they had been raised and would return there if moved away. However, with the unenclosed fell land, sheep often wandered far afield in search of good fodder. To allow straying sheep to be returned to their rightful owner and also to identify sheep from a particular farm when in a mixed flock, each farm had its individual markings. Two types of markings were used, ear marks and fleece marks. Ear marks were cut into the ear and were permanent, but could only be seen close up. Fleece markings, which were known as smit marks, were easily recognised from a distance but had the disadvantage that they were removed each time the sheep was sheared. Smit marks were normally red coloured, this colour being obtained by using crushed iron ore. In Borrowdale, use was made of the graphite found there and smit marks were therefore black in colour.

The sheep markings for sheep grazing the open fells in Brackenthwaite in 1879 are shown in the two tables.



Daniel Gate of
Keswick, who sold
agricultural implements,
sheep dip and also
insurance, recognised the
importance of sheep marks
and published the "Gate's
Shepherds' Guide". This
was printed by the Brash
Brothers of Cockermouth
and it listed all the sheep
marks of Cumberland,
Westmorland and
Lancashire.

Table 2 - Sheep smit marks, Brackenthwaite farms 1879

Farm	Markings -	Markings -	Smit marks -	Smit marks -	Smit marks -
Occupier	Near ear (LHS)	Far ear (RHS)	Near side (LHS)	Far side (RHS)	Other
High Swinside		Under key bitted		A stroke down	
J Barwise				far ribs	
Rannerdale	Key bitted				A pop on top
Anthony Coward	both sides				of coupling
Lanthwaite Green	Under fold			A stroke from	
Thomas Rawling	bitted			shoulder to hock	
Lanthwaite Gate	Upper halved	Forked		A stroke down	A pop on
Robert Pearson				far shoulder	tail head
Hope Farm	Cropped	Cropped and upper		A black pop	
Pearson Head		fold bitted		on far hock	
Hopebeck	Cropped	Upper sneck halved	Two strokes		
Joseph Banks		Under fold bitted	down near side		
High Hollins	Forked and	Upper fold bitted	Stroke down near		
John Banks	under key bitted		shoulder		
			B on near side		
Pickett Howe		Cropped	G on near side	A stroke down	
Thomas Gibson				far lisk	
Low Hollins	Cropped	Under fold bitted		S on far side	A short stroke
John Grayson				A stroke from end	over the fillets
				of fillet stroke to	
				the tail head	
Millbeck	Upper halved	Under halved	TB on near side		Pop on
Thomas Bowe					both hocks

* * * *

In 1909, Thomas Head moved to Low Hollins Farm and purchased 189 sheep which came with the farm. The outgoing tenants were George Martin Storr, Henry Storr and Marton Storr. The sheep, all in fair condition, comprised 75 ewes, 1 shearling tup, 43 wedder and gimmer twinters, 19 two and three year old wedders, 1 two shear tup and 50 hoggs under one year old.

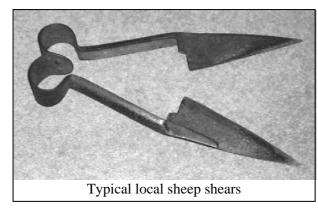
Shearing normally took place in July using spring-handled hand shears. Up to the end of the 1800s, sheep were washed before clipping in a dub or deep pool and the remains of one of these can be seen on Hope Beck above Hope Farm in Brackenthwaite. Following shearing, the sheep were re-smitted. One Herdwick would yield 2 to 3 pounds of wool.

Wool weights were:

(cl)
(st)
(td)
(wy)
(sk)
(la)

Some old books give 14 sacks to 1 last

also 240 pounds = 1 pack (pk)



My understanding of some of the terms used is as follows:

tup - a male sheep

hogg - a sheep before first shearing

twinter - a sheep which has been sheared twice

wedder - a castrated sheep being raised for meat tail head - top of tail

fillet - third of way from rear to neck hook - area just in front of hock

ewe - a female sheep

shearling - a sheep which has been sheared once gimmer - a yearling ewe selected for breeding top of coupling - on top of back, near rear end lisk - top half of rear leg

hock - top of hip, rear leg

A BRIEF LOOK AT COCKERMOUTH & KESWICK AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT, 1850 TO 1950 (PART 1) by RON GEORGE

In 1976, Marshall suggested that consideration of the development of Cumbrian market towns after 1900 had been neglected (Marshall p128). This article is a token in the direction of redressing the balance.

With the possible exception of Carlisle, Cumberland never had any large towns, and even today as we enter the twenty first century it can claim (within the comparable part of modern Cumbria) only three towns of modest size, Carlisle, Whitehaven and Workington. The remaining towns are, by current standards, better described as village-towns, with populations counted in the 3,000 to 10,000 range. Many are ancient market towns which have, by reason of accidents of history or geography, failed to develop significantly. In spite of their obviously differing circumstances, one from the other, they generally have something in common. Unlike the majority of market towns in much of England, with a radius of sphere of influence about five miles, the market towns of Cumberland tend to be much further apart (Chalkin p276). Two such are the northwest Cumbrian towns of Cockermouth and Keswick. This article seeks to show how these two towns changed and contrasted during the hundred years under review.

Both towns serve as a market centre for a rural area; both lie at approximately the same altitude and are only 12 kilometres apart as the crow flies. However, by even the shortest, and more difficult, of the alternative routes, they were separated by 20 kilometres (13 miles) of narrow twisting road and the Whinlatter Pass, which rises to over 1,000 feet and which, in winter, is sometimes impassable. At the beginning of the period under review, Keswick had only half the population that Cockermouth had (2618 against 5775). Both towns held the traditional hiring fairs, but these seem to have slowly petered out sometime in the first decades of the 19th century. There the similarities cease.

ROADSIDE WATERING TROUGHS

by WALTER HEAD

The recent outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease highlighted the vast distances which livestock now travel on a regular basis. But what of the days before motorised transport became common? Cattle and sheep were "walked" from area to area and also to market. Refuelling wasn't a problem as there was plenty of grass on verges to graze but water was a different matter. Most of the old roads allowed access to rivers and streams where they crossed the road. In certain locations, watering troughs were built into the traditional stone walls and were fed by water from underground drains. There is a good example in Brackenthwaite on the road between Hopebeck and Millbeck. In High Lorton village there is an example just above White Ash and on the Whinlatter Pass road there is one built into the wall on the Keswick side of the forestry cottages.



The watering trough on the Whinlatter road

Cockermouth's population reached a 19th century peak in 1851 of 5,775, at about the end of the Industrial Revolution. The town had always been the focal point of a wide agricultural area, serving the comparatively rich area of mixed lowland farming of the coastal plain and southern end of the Solway lowlands. It was also the natural outlet and market centre for the upland farms of adjacent valleys and the middle reaches of the River Derwent. Keswick, on the other hand, suffered the disadvantage of being situated well within the confines of Borrowdale. Communications from the town were more restricted except towards Penrith 20 miles to the east. The town was surrounded by high fells closely enclosing the restricted arable and pasture land in the valley bottom, and a high percentage of marshy land liable to flood. Keswick was not, as Cockermouth was, on an important drove road, nor were its markets so important. Keswick did have a sheep and corn market several times a year, whereas in comparison and taking a single example in the year 1876, Mitchells Auctions at Cockermouth sold over 11,500 cattle, 61,000 sheep, 1300 horses and 280 pigs (Bradbury p108). To cope with this level of activity, the firm expanded by building a new Agricultural Hall in 1865 and eventually took over the competing Hall's Farmers Auction in 1921, itself a new business in 1874, with stock-yards close by the railway station (Bradbury p108).

Up to the mid-19th century, Cockermouth had tended to be more prosperous than Keswick in terms of rural linked activity. The coming of the turnpike toll roads improved transport generally from 1820 on, and Cumberland in particular did rather better than many areas in terms of metalled roads. This was to serve both towns well during the remainder of the century. Cockermouth also became more prosperous because far-seeing townsfolk embraced new technology quickly. Radcliffe, a linen draper established water frames just six years after Arkwright's invention in 1769 (Bradbury p173, who quotes 'spinning jenny' but surely means Arkwright's water frame). Linen became a major business in the early years of the 19th century, as did bobbin production which peaked between 1850 and 1870 (Bradbury p177).

The 1871 Census gives a fair insight into the situation in Cockermouth. The major mills were still functioning, as were the iron foundry and hat manufacture; nail and rope makers were still producing. Skinners and dyers were active (Appendix). There was also a hint of unemployment and in the older parts of town over one third of the houses were uninhabited. These were the slums waiting to be demolished. The small artisan and craftsmen cottagers, with the workers, developed smaller mills and workshops in the converted courtyards, derived from old burgage holdings. Chalkin cites Ashby de la Zouch (Chalkin p281) as a typical small market town of the period; this can be compared with Cockermouth to which it appears very similar (Appendix). His comments regarding the relationship Ashby had with its hinterland would apply in large measure to Cockermouth.

The same factors that caused larger, truly industrialised towns such as Lancaster, to suffer due to the withdrawal of local management and closure of work places as these were transferred to even bigger towns in the industrial heartland, so too did Cockermouth. The scale of activity and lack of adequate local investment caused the progressive closure of the larger mills, foundries, tanneries and dye works. Double Mills, outside the town on the Cocker, which had been in existence before 1478, continued as a corn mill but was disused by 1900 and eventually became a Youth Hostel in 1933 (Bradbury p178). Ambitiously, a mill was built close by Tom Rudd Beck in 1872, at a cost of £36,000. The plan was to produce rugs and blankets but it was not successful. It passed through a number of other uses, including the manufacture in 1913 of cycle-cars; the First World War appears to have killed this project and no examples of these cars are known to survive (Bradbury p188). The mill was demolished in 1918.

Towards the end of the century, in Cockermouth as in many other small towns countrywide, the cottage industries, particularly weaving and the small workshops, slowly disappeared. By 1921 the population had progressively declined to 16% less than it had been in 1851. These few examples are typical of the gradual diminution of Cockermouth's industry after 1850. Nevertheless, two industries did manage to survive. Harris' Derwent Cotton Mill, which had a national and international reputation, had showrooms in London and four more major towns. Harris expanded the mill in 1847 and again in 1855, employing well over 100 and the firm lasted until the 1930s. The other survivor was one of the four breweries, which was eventually incorporated into Jenning's in 1887 when it moved from the nearby village of Lorton; they took over adjoining buildings and is still going strong today. As in the case of Cockermouth, in the study period, Keswick, which had mills along the river Greta, lost virtually all the small industry that it had, with the single exception of the Cumberland Pencil factory which managed to hang on precariously. In their place, Keswick got tourists and those seeking to take advantage of their presence. [To be concluded]

Appendix - Partial analysis of the 1871 Census for Cockermouth

Four sets of enumerators' sheets were studied, covering 2,788 out of a total population of 5,115, or 55%. Of those 2,788, 44% i.e. 1,235 were recorded as in employment. The birthplaces of these 1,235 were divided into four groups: those born in Cockermouth, those originating in a surrounding area taken arbitrarily as bounded loosely by Carlisle, Penrith and Whitehaven, those born elsewhere other than Ireland and, lastly, the Irish. The breakdown was:

Born in Cockermouth 44.0% Born elsewhere 14.5 % Born in the surrounding area 31.7% Born in Ireland 9.8%

It is believed that the large sample detailed above is likely to be approximated in the remainder of the census, which was not available at the time.

Since the population had increased very significantly between 1821 and 1851, the question must be asked to what extent the increase over that period was due to inward migration, as evidenced in 1871 and to what extent outward migration by Cockermouth born citizens reduced the total to that of 1871? This might prove to be a prohibitively difficult exercise for future study.

Professor Chalkin's findings regarding the similarly sized market town of Ashby de la Zouch from the 1861 census, are very similar to those found from the above analysis of Cockermouth in 1871. Using Chalkin's divisions for the breakdown, for Cockermouth in 1871 we find:

Crafts	138	11%	Professions	21	1.7%
Domestic servants	177	14%	Innkeepers	30	2.5%
Trades	266	22%	Independent	44	3.6%
Agricultural workers	75	6%	Farmers etc.	40	3.5%
Services	142	11%	Clerical workers	18	1.5%
Labourers	57	5%			

Railway workers	12	1.0%	Mariners and military	3	0.25%
Factory & mill workers	197	16%	Paupers	8	0.65%
Miners	7	0.6%	Total	1.235	

Within the "services" were two photographers, hairdressers, a piano tuner and a large number of dressmakers. Tanners and two watchmakers were included under "crafts" while skinners, dyers and tailors are included under "trades", as were the wine merchants.

The conclusion of this article and the bibliography will be in the next (September 2001) Newsletter.



Some copies of Dr Angus Winchester's latest book "The Harvest Of The Hills - Rural Life In Northern England and the Scottish Borders, 1400 - 1700" (194 pages), August 2000 are available for sale from Michael Baron at a discounted price of £15 (bookshop price £19.95) and postage £1.50. This is an illustrated environmental history with a lively text which explores the relationship between the pastoral society in the Lake District, the Pennines and Border hills and the resources of these uplands. Land use, common land management and the transition from mediaeval to early modern farming systems are the main themes. All you want to know about ear marks, smit marks, rakes, heafs, lairing places, herds, staves, dogs and rattles - the culture of communities that may now be on the edge of irreversible change. Also available is 1 copy of "Nature Contested - Environmental History in Scotland and England since 1600" (210 pages), July 2000 by T C Smout at the discounted price of £10.50 (book shop price £14.99) and postage £1.50. It is an illustrated social and cultural history with ecology and geography. Both books are published by Edinburgh University Press. Please ring Michael Baron on 01900 85289.

BOOK BARGAINS

THE LORTON YEW, A CHANCE DISCOVERY by DEREK DENMAN

Historical research is a combination of hard work and happy discoveries, the latter being much more enjoyable. So I was pleased to find, by chance, that the Lorton yew is marked by a picture of a tree and labelled 'Yew' on the parish copy of the Lorton tithe map dated 1840 and now held in the Whitehaven Record Office. It is not marked in the main map showing High and Low Lorton, but on the edge of a tightly rolled map of land south of Whitbeck. A cross check of the poor copy we have of the Tithe Office map, held at Kew, shows an equivalent feature which must also be the yew tree. This is perhaps the historical record of the location of the tree most close in time to Wordsworth's poem, published in 1815 and given a composition date of 1803, but more likely to date from around 1812 according to advice from Michael Baron.

THE HOUSE HISTORY GROUP

The House History Group is now under way, and held its first meeting in February, under Walter Head's leadership.

Christine Craghill, who spoke to the Society in the Autumn, introduced several sources relevant to research in our area and answered individual members' questions. Christine has also allowed us to distribute the bibliography which she uses in her House Detective courses. This, together with the Society's own archives and source list, should give us a good start in tracking down the who, what and when of our houses.

We are now planning a second meeting, provisionally fixed for 7 pm on 13th June, at a venue to be decided, when we shall be considering the format and content of future meetings and activities, e.g. meeting in members' houses and discussing any problems encountered in compiling individual house histories. The obvious advantage of meeting in our own houses, and choosing and discussing our own topics, is that there would be no cost involved. It will always be open to us to have a speaker or arrange visits - one of the things to discuss is the question of cost, and keeping it down, the key being the wishes of the members of the group. A number of Society members have old houses - are you one of them, and are you interested in joining us? If so, please 'phone me on 01900-85287. The group is very informal, and should be fun.

If you want to make a start, you might consider this as a plan of action:

- * Draw a plan of the house
- * Write a description of each room, including any special or puzzling features. Take photos.
- * Look at census details and parish records, and tithe maps if appropriate
- * Compile a list of previous occupants and talk to your neighbours and any one else in the village you think might remember who has lived in your house. You might learn some surprising things about your predecessors!

Please contact me if you would like a copy of the booklist or need any more information. John Scrivens

LORTON ROADS IN MARCH 1857 (based on the members' evening on 8 February 2001) by MICHAEL GRIEVE

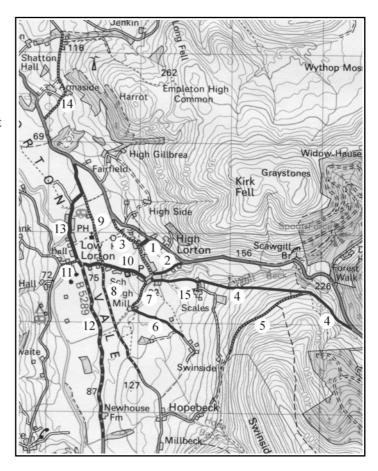
There is, in our archive, a transcription by Ron George from a surveyor's account book dated March 1857. It gives a list of 15 "Public roads in the Township of Lorton" with their names and lengths in roods, as given in columns 2 and 3 of the table. And that's a surprise to me, as I thought that a rood was ¼ acre - and so it was, but it was a unit of length too, but how long was it? Using the first OS map of 1863, I matched up the lengths of the roads as given by the surveyor with lengths that I measured on the map, helped in some of the cases by the given name. It wasn't straightforward, so my choice of roads may not all be right.

Only three of the 15 roads didn't fit well and these were:

No 3: With my assumption of end points, my measurement is 56 yards too large. So where is each end of this road?

No 4: Measuring from Boonbeck Bridge, my measurement is 210 yards too large; I can't account for this.

No 11: I am reasonably certain that Burtrees Lane ran down towards Lorton Low Bridge from Low Lane (the main road through Low Lorton) but my measurement to the beginning of the bridge is so much larger than the surveyor's that it is obvious that my assumption must be wrong in some way.



	Surveyor's description	His measurement:	My measurement: at 7 yards = 1 rood	Comments
1	Wholemire Lane	25	25	
2	Tenters Lane	73	73	
3	Segs Lane, High Lorton Street	120	128	Tenters to turnpike - ★ error 56 yards (= 8 roods)
4	Old road from Boonbeck to turnpike	350	380	From Boonbeck Bridge - * error 210 yards
5	Hawes End Road from guide post to Swinside	185	189	To Lorton boundary near High Swinside
6	Swinside Lane to Mill	104	106	To Lorton boundary near Low Swinside
7	Mill Lane	57	55	
8	Hobeck Lane	204	209	To Lorton boundary on the Hopebeck road
9	Church Lane	128	128	
10	Cross Gates	122	121	Mill Lane to Low Lane (the main road through Low L.)
11	Burtrees Lane	9 and a half	25	Low Lane to Lorton Low Bridge. * HELP!
12	Low Lane from Brackenthwaite to Cross Nook	316	321	Lorton boundary at Hopebeck Bridge to Burtrees Lane
13	Low Lane from Cross Nook to Turnpike road	191	191	
14	Armaside Lane	175	178	
15	Scales Lane	21	18 to 25	Depending to which farmhouse at Scales

Please let me know if you have any views, corrections and additions on this little study because it would be nice to confirm which roads all these names represented and to get it all into the archive. Thanks.