

Lorton &

Derwent Fells Local History Society

Brackenthwaite Buttermere Embleton Loweswater Mockerkin Pardshaw Wythop

www.derwentfells.com



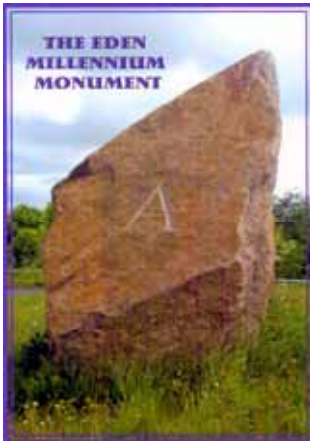
This somewhat faded photo of the Lorton yew came from Ted Petty, but we don't know who the people are, what the occasion was and when it was! Can anyone help please?

Editorial

A few weeks after this Newsletter is out, the book *Wordsworth and the famous Lorton yew tree* should be published. This is a book about the tree itself and the Wordsworth connection comes in because it will be 200 years ago in September that William and his sister Dorothy visited the tree which led to the famous poem. The editors of the book are Derek Denman and Michael Baron and Michael has carried out a lot of research into the Wordsworth side of the story, helped by the Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere. Derek has investigated the history of the tree - following up on Ron George's previous work - and, at the recent AGM in June, they both gave a presentation of some of their findings. Michael suggested to me that the results of his research could be printed in the Newsletter and, now that my arm has recovered, I'm pleased to say that the first part starts in this issue, written in Michael's entertaining and personal style.



And so we say farewell (do you remember those James A Fitzpatrick [was it?] travelogues at the cinema?) to Mockerkin School, or rather I should say that we have the last part of Walter Head's article on the school, along with a very sad picture of the old school building as it is today.



I've had information sent to me about the Eden Millennium Monument which was dedicated by the Bishop of Penrith at Eamont Bridge, near Mayburgh Henge. Alpha and omega, in capitals, and a cross with the date 2000 have been engraved on it and, quoting the leaflet, "It will take its place ... as possibly the largest of the Standing Stones of Cumbria".

After Ian Saunders' talk to us in May about early maps of north west England, he told me that someone had asked about his future talks and he said he would look them up but, unfortunately, couldn't contact that person afterwards. So for her and anyone else interested, Ian will be talking about old maps on 3 January 2005 in Kendal and on 18 March in Carlisle.

I could mention that there's an exhibition on at Tullie House in Carlisle entitled "Into the Hands of the Shades: Roman Death in Cumbria" which explores the Roman way of death and the beliefs and rituals associated with it. It's free once you're in the museum and it is on until 31 October.

I'm sorry there's no room this time for the **Future events** section but it is always worthwhile getting leaflets from Higham Hall (017687 76276) and Lancaster University (01524 593770).

Finally some housekeeping - at the AGM in June, the Committee changed membership a little. Danny Leck and Alan Norris stepped down due to other commitments and I do want to thank them for their help and support; and welcome to Sandra Shaw from Pardshaw who was elected on to the Committee. Since then John Hudson from Loweswater has been co-opted on to the Committee and we welcome him too.

Michael Grieve

Dr John Todd, Honorary member

Over the years, the Society has appointed a small number of Honorary members, for example Dr Angus Winchester, our President and Ron George, the founder of the Society in 1993. It's with great pleasure that I can let you know that Dr John Todd has recently accepted our invitation to become an Honorary member - he has talked to us on several occasions and he led the successful outing to medieval churches around Lanercost earlier this year. John gained his doctorate studying the medieval and ecclesiastical history of Gilsland and Lanercost Priory and is an inspirational person for local historians. He promotes local history with talks, leaflets and lecturing and he plays a key role in the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society. I'm sure that all members warmly welcome him.

The five township maps - now six!

A map of The Township of Whinfell has now been produced to join the five that featured in our anniversary celebrations last year. We plan to reorder the half size maps (approx 40in wide by 24 to 30in high) and we are able to hold last year's price of £19.50 including a cardboard tube so if anyone would like to order any, please fill in the form in this Newsletter and the closing date will be 20 September. As a reminder, the maps are based on the tithe maps of around 1840 and the 1841 census information has been added; also included are pictures of all the dwellings on the tithe maps which still exist today, even as ruins.

While on this topic, we have found an error on four of the township maps produced last year - Brackenthwaite, Buttermere, Embleton and Lorton - where the Lord of the Manor is given as the Earl of Lonsdale. It was actually the Earl of Egremont and we apologise for the mistake.

Yew Tree Day, 16th October

The events for the Lorton yew tree and the bicentenary of the Wordsworths' visit have been moved from the provisional date of 2nd October to 16th October, to give more time for the arrangements. We were surprised and delighted recently to receive grants of £2385 from the lottery-based Awards for All, and £250 from the Cockermouth Neighbourhood Forum in support of the printing of the book and the other community events planned. These grants have enabled us to proceed with the following.

The Book. *Wordsworth and the famous Lorton yew tree*, commemorating the visit bicentenary, is now with the printers, Titus Wilson. We have received about 100 subscription orders, which is very encouraging, and these will be delivered around the end of September, the time of the bicentenary. But with the funding, we are now able to reduce the retail price to £7.95 and to retrospectively reduce the subscription price to £6.50, though the subscription offer is now closed. The book, produced, published and distributed by the Society, will be launched for public sale at the event on 16th October.

The Poetry Competition. We have now been able to launch the poetry competition, although later than hoped. Entries are invited in three age groups for a poem with a Cumbrian association; there will be prizes of £50 for the adult section, and book tokens for younger winners. Entry is **free to all**, including non-members, and you will find an entry form and a copy of the rules inserted in this issue. **The closing date is 25th September.** Winners will be invited to the 16th October event for the prize-giving. Entries need not have any historical, Wordsworthian or yewful connection: a "Cumbrian association" is as broad as you would like it to be. Something of the flavour of Cumbria, perhaps its scenery, people or buildings; anything from an autumn leaf to the A66, from a pebble on the beach to your feelings about living in this lovely county ~ it's entirely up to you. Why not give it a go? The judges are local poets Jeremy and Marita Over, and they look forward to reading your entries.

Planting the Yewling. The funding also allows for the young millennium yew to be planted out in some style. You will recall that it was the initiative of our founding chairman, Ron George, that caused those cuttings to be taken. So October 16th should see the fulfilment of his project. The current intention is that the yewling, a daughter tree, should be planted near Crossgates, the ancient crossing point between High and Low Lorton. This 'yewling' project is being handled by Lorton Parish Council, who have been keen to be involved in the bicentenary and who are also progressing the design and installation of an interpretation board for the senior yew, though probably for 2005. Any excess funds may contribute to this board.

Lorton School. The funding will enable the children of Lorton School to undertake a project for display on 16th October, though, as it is currently the summer holiday, it is not possible to say what form this might take.

The programme for Yew Tree Day is not yet fixed, but the events will probably be grouped around late morning and early afternoon, with some refreshment organised by the Lorton WI. But it will be open to all, and all will be welcome. Watch for posters, the Link and Times and Star for details. And there is now an opportunity for someone to be the organiser of Yew Tree Day itself, to arrange the programme, publicise and coordinate the events – though not to organise the individual events. Please contact Derek Denman if you would like to do this, or to help on the day.

Mockerkin Endowed School - by Walter Head; Part 3

Following the closure in 1899, the school stood forlorn and abandoned and the original endowment of £232 13s 8d, the school and the fittings were in the hands of the Charity Commission. The 22 acres of land in Mosedale were let to John Bell of Latterhead, Loweswater for £5 pa and the school allotment, adjacent to the school, let for £1 10s pa.

On 12 October 1914, a meeting of the Mockerkin School Trust was held with John Williamson as Chairman and on 4 June 1915 the Mockerkin Educational Foundation (now Charity No 1007640) was set up with the above endowment, the Mosedale and allotment rents and cash in hand of £198 14s 1d. The first authorised payment was for 10/- to Mr J Beck of Loweswater for services rendered. In September 1915, the school was valued at £61 (the original value was £1) and £200 was invested in War Loan Stock 4½% yielding £6 16s 5d interest. Ownership of the 3 acre school allotment passed from the Charity Commission to the Loweswater Parish Council. A letter from the Board of Education described how these 3 acres of land were allocated as a recreation ground for the inhabitants of the parish and the neighbourhood.

Just after the first world war, the building was still in good repair and I remember family members talking of cycling from Low Hollins in Brackenthwaite to dances in the school. In 1919 and 1920, the possibility of re-opening the school was investigated and the school was offered to the County Council as a council school but this was not progressed and again the school stood empty.

In 1925, repairs to the school by Mr Mirehouse of Ullock cost £1 8s 4d and by Mr Joseph Green £1 3s. Posts for the school fence from Mr Armstrong cost £2 15s. In 1927, a new door with locks and painted was fitted by Mr Mirehouse for £1 7s (who charged 1/6 per hour). In 1927/28, the Foundation paid £18 pa to Mr Watson to convey Mockerkin children to Dean School by motor and in 1933, it started the tradition of giving money to children leaving school to help buy work clothes etc, for example by giving £2 to a Mockerkin girl going into service.

I remember as a young boy in the 1950s walking from Dean to Loweswater one summer evening and looking through the boarded up school windows and seeing the long school desks still in situ. (In 1888, the desks cost £1 3s with 4/7 carriage, writing slates cost 5d each and coals cost 16/6 per cart load).

In July 1956, the foundation unanimously agreed that the school building was derelict and of no further use to the community. In March 1957, it was stated that the building had not been used for any purpose whatsoever for over 30 years and as a school for a much longer period and the Foundation first considered selling the building. Also in 1957, £500 was given by the Mockerkin Foundation to the Loweswater Village Hall to help in converting it into an amenity for all. In January 1958, the Ministry of Education agreed to the sale of the school building to the Parish Council, but this was not proceeded with.

In 1962, the cost of insuring the school with the Liverpool & London Globe Insurance Company was 7/6. In May 1968, Moorclose School in Workington enquired into the possibility of converting the property into an educational pursuits centre. In 1971, the Foundation instructed Mitchell's to sell the school and field; however, the field did not belong to the Foundation but to the Loweswater Parish Council. In March 1974, this field was sold by the Council to the Foundation. At this time, consent was granted for the conversion of the school into a dwelling house but this was allowed to lapse.



The remains of the school today

In the mid-1980s, the slates were stolen from the roof thus allowing water to penetrate the walls and interior and this signalled the end for the school.

In 1979, the recreational allotment of the school was removed from the register of village greens. In 1980, a renewed application for planning permission was refused and, in the mid-1980s, the memorial stone was removed from above the old fireplace and put into safe storage. In June 1989, the 22 acre Mosedale allotment was sold to Mr R Bell for £600 and in July the old school building and playing field were offered for sale by the Foundation.

In February 1991, the memorial stone was erected on Mockerkin village green at a cost of £118 by Richardson Brothers. In the autumn, the Mockerkin Educational Foundation was reconstituted to help the educational needs of people under 25 years of age. In October 1991, the school and land were sold for £3000 less legal fees of £348.09. The school building has continued to deteriorate and the old oak beams were removed from the site and used in renovation work in a local village.

The Mockerkin Educational Foundation is still in existence and helping the educational needs of young people in its catchment area. The stone on Mockerkin Green is now the responsibility of Loweswater Parish Council who propose to have the lettering recut to make it more legible.

Sources. CRO Ref YDS 26/1 and others too numerous to list here, but special thanks to the Mockerkin boys of the 50s and 60s; also to those people who allowed me access to family documents and to Mrs A Burrige for the use of the photograph in Part 2.

A response to Walter Head's articles about Mockerkin School

I read Walter Head's articles about Mockerkin Endowed School with interest. I have been researching the history of where I live; my interest initially being to discover who had been living in our house in years gone by. However it didn't take long to discover that until about the 1960s there was no way of telling one house from another so my research has expanded to take in the hamlets of Pardshaw Hall and Kirby.

The list of Masters and Mistresses in Part two caught my eye, as a couple of names seemed familiar. On checking my records, I found two definite matches and a possible third:

Peter Fisher [at the school 1845 to 1869]

Peter Fisher appeared in the census for 1851, living in Pardshaw Hall, described as a teacher of mathematics. He was lodging with the Brown family; John Brown a tailor, his wife, Elizabeth and their six children aged 5 months to 14 years. There was also a 16 year old apprentice. Peter Fisher was unmarried, gave his age as 51 and his place of birth as Arlecdon. Ten years later, he was still living in Pardshaw Hall, but independently - all other details are consistent with the earlier entry. I don't know anything more about him except that we can now deduce that he was approaching 70 when he finished teaching at Mockerkin. Incidentally the Brown family can be traced in Pardshaw Hall from 1841 to 1881.

Peter Thompson [at the school 1879 to 1884]

I only know of Peter Thompson from his will, made on 18 September 1884. In this he is described as a schoolteacher. He died on 10 December, the same year, and clearly his teaching career was cut short by his death. He left an estate valued at just £7 11s 5d to his minor children Fanny and John Jackson Thompson. There is no reference in the will to a wife, so one presumes that she had predeceased him. He appointed his sister Jane Taylor of the delightfully named Dirt Hole, Gosforth as his executrix.

William Graham [at the school 1801 to July 1810]

This is the tentative connection. Someone called William Graham witnessed two local wills around the appropriate time. William and Nancy Graham both witnessed the will of Hannah Barwise in 1807 when she lived at Kirby; and in 1812, William Graham, described as a yeoman of Pardshaw [which makes the match very tenuous] witnessed Peter Head's will. Peter Head [is he possibly related to Walter Head?] and his family have a long local history but are outside my current brief. Hannah Barwise's husband John appears in Isaac Fletcher's diaries and his family can be traced in the immediate area from 1793 to 1865. They are great aunt and uncle of Robinson Mitchell, the Auction Mart founder.

Being able to make connections between disparate pieces of information and seemingly unrelated people is what I find so fascinating in my research. If anyone has any further information I would be glad to receive it.

Sandra Shaw, Pardshaw Hall

Becks and Shilly by Chris Bower

There is nothing permanent about a beck. It may not change noticeably in one human lifetime, but over the centuries a beck can change course or dry up completely or a new one start up suddenly. A beck used to be, and still is in some local areas, the only source of water. People have had to abandon farms due to becks drying up, eg Pottergill in Loweswater Township. In the 1700s, the water source for Hundith Hill Farm failed in the summer, and drinking water had to be collected from Shatton. The cattle were driven twice a day to Cockermonth to be watered (1).



Becks are fascinating. Thackthwaite Beck runs through fields between Thackthwaite village and the River Cocker. There is quite a slope between the village and the river. Over the centuries, shilly (small pebbles), which are deposited in the beck bottom, have to be cleared out. Normally a beck is cleared down to its original bed each time it is cleared, and the shilly piled at the edges forming a heaped bank, or taken away to mend roads and lonnings.

However, the clearance of Thackthwaite Beck was enough to keep the beck flowing, but did not clear down to the bed of the beck. As a result, over many centuries, possibly before medieval times, the beck rose above the surrounding fields running in a levee

(raised banks) about five feet above the surrounding fields (2). Suddenly, one night, the beck burst its bank and, subsequently, the levee crumbled at one point and the beck found a new course to the river. This left the strange feature of a raised dry bank with a channel running along the top of it. The farmer at the time decided to let the beck stay on its new course (2). The photograph shows the old levee with the beck now flowing off the levee to the left.

Some becks were diverted into small ponds or pools to provide a source of water-power to drive agricultural machinery as at Waterend Farm, Loweswater and Whinfell Hall, Whinfell Township. Diverted becks are often called leets. Some were built to take water to bloomeries (early metal smelting sites) or to platforms used for charcoal burning. The remains of a bloomery leet can be seen on the roadside by Crummock Water opposite Fletcher Fields.

On Lanthwaite Green, close to the Romano-British site, is a pond. This is a shilly trap. It was dug out to allow shilly, brought down Gasgale Gill by Liza Beck, to settle, rather than to be carried further downstream, which could cause flooding over surrounding fields. The shilly could then be removed from one point. The age of the trap is not certain, but could easily be over 100 years.

Becks are one natural feature of the landscape that can give a fascinating glimpse into our local history. The Thackthwaite Beck feature, in particular, is most unusual.

Sources: (1) From "An account of the family of Bell of Cockermonth" by Jacob Bell 1787

(2) John Hayton of Brook Farm, Thackthwaite

The Oral History Project by Hetty Baron

Our Society was asked in 1999 to take part in a Cumbrian project in oral history to celebrate the Millennium. Each county local history society was to produce 10 histories of people in their catchment area 'who were prominent and/or interesting characters'. Ron George and I did just that. It became the first of what are now four modules known collectively as the Three Valleys Oral History Project (OHP). We were lent recording equipment and given blank tapes. We were given also an administrative structure for collecting data. The interviews we conducted were transcribed by a professional transcriber. The tapes were eventually stored in the Cumbrian County Archive office for future generations, and so the transcripts were printed on acid free paper. The Archive Service mounted a travelling exhibition which toured Cumbria after the Millennium project was completed.

To set up this project, the Archivists turned for guidance to the long established Ambleside Oral History Group (AOHG). AOHG is devoted to collecting oral testimony in and around Ambleside and South Lakeland, and is based in the Ambleside Public Library. The library is equipped with a dedicated computer and program enabling anyone to access oral history material. The Ambleside method of recording was adopted for the Millennium project. And we in LDFLHS have been using the AOHG documentary format ever since.

This was how it all started 4 years ago. Ten interviews as a module we named after the Millennium project 'Spirit of Cumbria'. Afterwards the tape recorder had to be returned but the LDFLHS acceded to my plea to continue the project further. A tape recorder was donated and blank tapes purchased. We were in business and embarked on the second OHP module, being the life stories of the over-70s, mainly local Cumbrians. Applying successfully for a grant from a North of England charity, for the cost of professional transcriptions using the same Ambleside transcriber, the project continued. We now have 4 modules. Apart from the Spirit of Cumbria and the life stories, the new ones were challenging. For the third we had to find and interview a cross-section of people affected by foot-and-mouth disease in the farming and tourist industries. For the fourth we covered 'Movers and Shakers', people who are influential in our community which was in a way an addition to those 'prominent characters' interviewed in 1999/2000. Then we tackled the controversial subject of fox hunting, recording arguments for, against, and neutral. Clearly there is more to be recorded of our local ongoing history - today's happenings are tomorrow's history.

There were 32 interviews neatly stored in acid free boxes behind my living-room sofa before the money ran out. An urgent question arose - how to make those interviews accessible to researchers, writers, and the curious public? I suggested a solution to the Committee of the LDFLHS - offer our archive to the AOHG as an addition to their extensive collection so it, too, would be in a public library, accessible to all.

This is now happening. The AOHG were the obvious choice for a home for our modest archive and we are more than grateful to them for accepting the LDFLHS as new partner in the enterprise. With the help of a grant from the Sustainability Fund of the National Park Authority, we have started the process of digitising to CD the tapes of the 32 interviews. Adapting the paperwork for the requirements of the AOHG was fiddly but necessary. The digitising will be done by a BBC engineer in Bristol who is engaged also in digitising the 300 plus Ambleside interviews.

We keep here a copy of everything, but in Ambleside Public Library the records are truly safe for the foreseeable future. The identity of an interviewee is protected by a code number being substituted for a name. Moreover, no record searcher may copy more than a quarter of a recorded interview. Library staff are trained to handle enquiries and provide a link to members of AOHG for advice. AOHG deals with e-mail enquiries, national and international. When we are up and running with the AOHG computer next year, there will be an up-dated report with information about how LDFLHS members may access the collection.



Meanwhile we are funded for at least another 8 interviews to complete a turn-of-the-century archive of our community. In the pipeline for 2005 are two mini modules. One from adolescent/young adults on what it is to live in the three valleys and how they see their future. The other from 'off-comers', the newly arrived permanent residents, with their hopes and expectations. Whilst at the onset of the project we concentrated on Cumbrians by birth for the life stories of the over-70s, we do need to acknowledge the contributions of those who come here and choose Cumbria as their new home.

I conclude this account by appealing for those of you who would like to contribute (or know of someone outside the membership who has a contribution to make) to the valley's personal narratives of the early 21st century. Have we got it right? What or who has been missed out? Are we representing this community properly? I would really like your views. Please call me at 01900 85 289.

Wordsworth, Nature, the 'Famous' Lorton Yew Tree, the Poem - Part 1 by Michael Baron

The Oxford Book of Quotations has 31 entries under the heading 'tree' or 'trees'. The Bible and Shakespeare are the leaders in number; but no quote from William Wordsworth although his 39 entries show, if quotes are any guide, the place his poetry has in the nation's literary canon. Next, in order of merit is an unknown Alfred Joyce Kilmer. He wrote a poem called - of course 'Trees' - for the aged amongst us made unforgettable by Paul Robeson, as set to music on a 78 rpm record, heard in the nursery on a wind-up gramophone ... 'I think that I shall never see/A poem lovely as a tree', ending in that never-forgotten rich bass 'Poems are made by fools like me/But only God can make a tree'.

William Wordsworth was no one's fool but he made poems. With trees, which were all about in the then unspoiled landscape, growing by farms and cottages in churchyards, on the low fells and in the dales, there is no doubt of a special relationship. The richest source of his poetry is in the strength of his attachment to particular, often lonely, places - the 'local habitation' in the words of Cumbrian poet, Norman Nicholson.

Wordsworth was and is the pre-eminent Romantic poet of nature. Certainly before his youthful radicalism gave way, with maturity and in revulsion from the excesses of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic empire, to Establishment respectability, his God, or his gods, were in nature; Pantheism was not far away. His attitude to the theology of conventional Christianity was ambivalent. As he puts it in the greatest of autobiographical poems 'The Prelude' (Book Ten, lines 367-8) .. 'Great God who sendst thyself into this breathing world/through Nature...' In the early years, Coleridge suspected Wordsworth of 'being at least a semi-atheist'. And there is no evidence that as a young adult he attended church regularly. Much later at Rydal Mount, he was very critical of the quality of the Sunday sermon. Nonetheless the idea of God making a tree is not very far away from his own concept of spiritual forces. Then the essential exemplar, Genesis 2.9 .. the tree of life in the midst of the garden....the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Nature in every form was a metaphor for states of mind and experience. Again from 'The Prelude' - 'the earth/And common face of Nature spake to me/Rememberable things ..' (Book First, lines 621-622). Trees and woods are metaphors for joy and melancholy, for witnesses of passage through human and real time, for life and death. In the 'Topographical Description of the Country of the Lakes' published in 1820, with one reference to 'yews among the rocks' Wordsworth writes of woods and single trees which 'impress a feeling of duration, power of resistance and security from change'. They are an integral part of the 'beauteous forms of things' in Nature, his everyday sensitivity where imagination acted upon observation - 'the harvest of a quiet eye/That sleeps and broods on his own heart'.

He had a memory that enhanced the poetic imagination, capable of storing images over years - developing what he called his visionary 'spots of time' - which were then husbanded for future use. Which seems to be how 'Yew Trees' came into being. The poem was not written in 1803 - the date that appears in many, if not all, editions of his Collected Poems. This was the date given by Wordsworth in 1843 when at Rydal Mount he dictated notes on the circumstances of the poems to Isabella Fenwick, sprightly, saintly and intellectual, winter resident of Ambleside.



No one can fix with certainty the date or dates - from the manuscript versions it was obviously re-worked - when the poem was written and completed. The September 1804 visit of brother and sister to High Lorton is only one of the spurs to its creation. Without Dorothy as an inveterate letter writer - the letter of Lady Beaumont of 7 and 12 October 1804 - there would be no known connection between the sighting of the tree and the poem. And one must, too, discount a Lorton anecdote that as a schoolboy visiting a friend in the village, he fell into Whit Beck, looked up at the tree and thought 'Eh, there is a poem in that'.

Wordsworth travelled widely in Britain and Continental Europe. It is difficult to understand why there are no or few references to yew trees or the Lorton and Borrowdale yews in either *The Guide To The Lakes* first published, anonymously, in 1810, as the introduction to Wilkinson's 'Select Views in Cumberland and Westmoreland', or in the *Topographical Description*. It is almost as if the poet, as topographical essayist, reserved a higher place for them in his pantheon of trees, above oak, birch, holly, elm, hazel, hawthorn, the white and black thorns, alder and willow. The yews have starring roles in the 'tree' poetry. Larch, Scotch fir and sycamore earned at worst his positive and spirited dislike, at best the suggestion larches be used sparingly on the upper fells. Not a word about them in any line of verse.

But the yew makes its first appearance in the 1797 poem 'Lines Left Upon A Seat In A Yew Tree which stands near the lake at Esthwaite on a desolate part of the shore, commanding a beautiful prospect'. This is the third poem in the ground-breaking text for Romantic poetry 'The Lyrical Ballads' of Coleridge and Wordsworth, published, anonymously, in September 1798. This tree Wordsworth knew from walks 'in the latter part of my school-time' in Hawkshead - where he may have begun writing 'The Lines'; and finishing it during the West Country sojourn of brother and sister in the late 1790's at Racedown, Nether Stowey and Alfoxden (rented at £23 a year). But by 1812 he reported it as decayed; by 1843 the yew tree

had disappeared. ('Its approximate position was just above the road, on the East side, a few yards south of the signed drive to Broomriggs' - Lindop)

The yew of Esthwaite is 'lonely' and 'stands far from all human dwelling'. Note the words 'lonely' and 'stands'.... 'taught to bend its arms in circling shade'. It is a melancholy tribute to a Reverend Braithwaite - 'these gloomy boughs had charms for him' and there 'he loved to sit' and brood on his 'unfruitful life' and contemplate the view. Note 'the gloomy boughs'. These are intimations of the poet's imagination at work on the object of his experience. In the same volume, a rhyming ballad poem 'The Thorn' has a first line whose direct speech and precise description resonates with our poem, 'Yew Trees': 'There is a thorn, it looks so old'. And this one the poet has measured - pity he did not have a tape in September 1804 - 'I've measured it from side to side:/Tis three feet long, and two feet wide'. The aged thorn 'wretched' and 'forlorn' is mute witness to the sufferings of an abandoned woman in a scarlet cloak, Martha Gray, who hanged her baby on the tree. These are trees as metaphors for sadness, solitude and death, the observant bystanders of human tragedy.

Outside Wordsworth's bedroom at Hawkshead, where he boarded with Anne Tyson, there was 'a tall ash'. At Cambridge he admired another ash 'with sinuous trunk, boughs exquisitely wreathed'. In the poem 'Michael' Grasmere Vale has a 'Clipping Tree' living on after the shepherd and his wife Isabel have long since gone; Rydal has a 'time-dismantled Oak, Penrith a Harts-horn Tree, Ullswater a Joyful Tree, and in the 1797 'The Ruined Cottage' he enthuses 'how lovely are these elms ... verdant leaves ... myriad veins' contrasting this with an 'huge oak' of 'aged branches' making 'A twilight of their own'. Much later in the part of the Prelude on his crossing of the Simplon Pass, there is the paradox of 'woods decaying, never to be decay'd'. And so it goes - 'mouldered tree' 'leafless Oak' 'lofty elms' and 'the earth's diurnal course/With rocks and stones and trees'.

At Dove Cottage, where the family of William and Mary, Dorothy and three children lived hugging-mugger from 1799 to 1808, Dorothy records, in her journal for 22 June 1800, planting a honeysuckle 'round the yew tree.' Drawings of the cottage a few years later show a yew tree, roof high in the front garden which would have cast a shadow, some gloom on dark days over the matrimonial bedroom. A yew tree stands there in 2004.

Wordsworth is our wisest and noblest man of the trees. The Rev R .P. Graves, Vicar of Bowness in the 1830s and a good friend, recalls in his Memoirs, 'Mr Wordsworth saying that, at a particular stage of his mental progress, he used to be frequently so rapt into an unreal transcendental world of ideas that the external world seemed no longer to exist in relation to him, and he had to reconvince himself of its existence by clasping a tree'. Not only a man of the trees but England's first recorded tree-hugger. Also tree-planter and self proclaimed landscape designer, planting eight yews in Grasmere churchyard. The poet was in the long tradition of tree worship, which according to anthropologist Sir James Frazer in 'The Golden Bough' (1922) 'is well attested for all the great European families of Aryan stock.' Pagan Lithuanians before conversion in the 12th century were tree-worshippers.

Part 2 brings us to the visit to Lorton and the drafts of the poem.

Future talks and activities

9 September	Talk by Ben Edwards "The Vikings in North West England"
16 October (Saturday)	Celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Wordsworths' visit to the Lorton yew and launch of the book <i>Wordsworth and the famous Lorton yew tree</i> in the YTH. Please watch for announcements about the "Yew Tree Day" for details
11 November	Talk by Dr David Shotter "Rome's Northern Frontier"
13 January 05	Talk by Mary Burkett "Some Lakeland Artists and their work, 17th to early 20th century"
10 February	Panel session led by Walter Head "World War - the West Cumberland experience"
10 March	Talk by Dr John Todd "Celts in the North-West"
23 April	Visit and guided Society tour to Mirehouse
12 May	Talk by Barbara Todd "Harriet Martineau at Ambleside"
9 June	AGM

The talks start at 7.30pm, normally on Thursdays in the Yew Tree Hall, High Lorton, but please check in the press and adverts in case of late changes. Details will be available on our website www.derwentfells.com