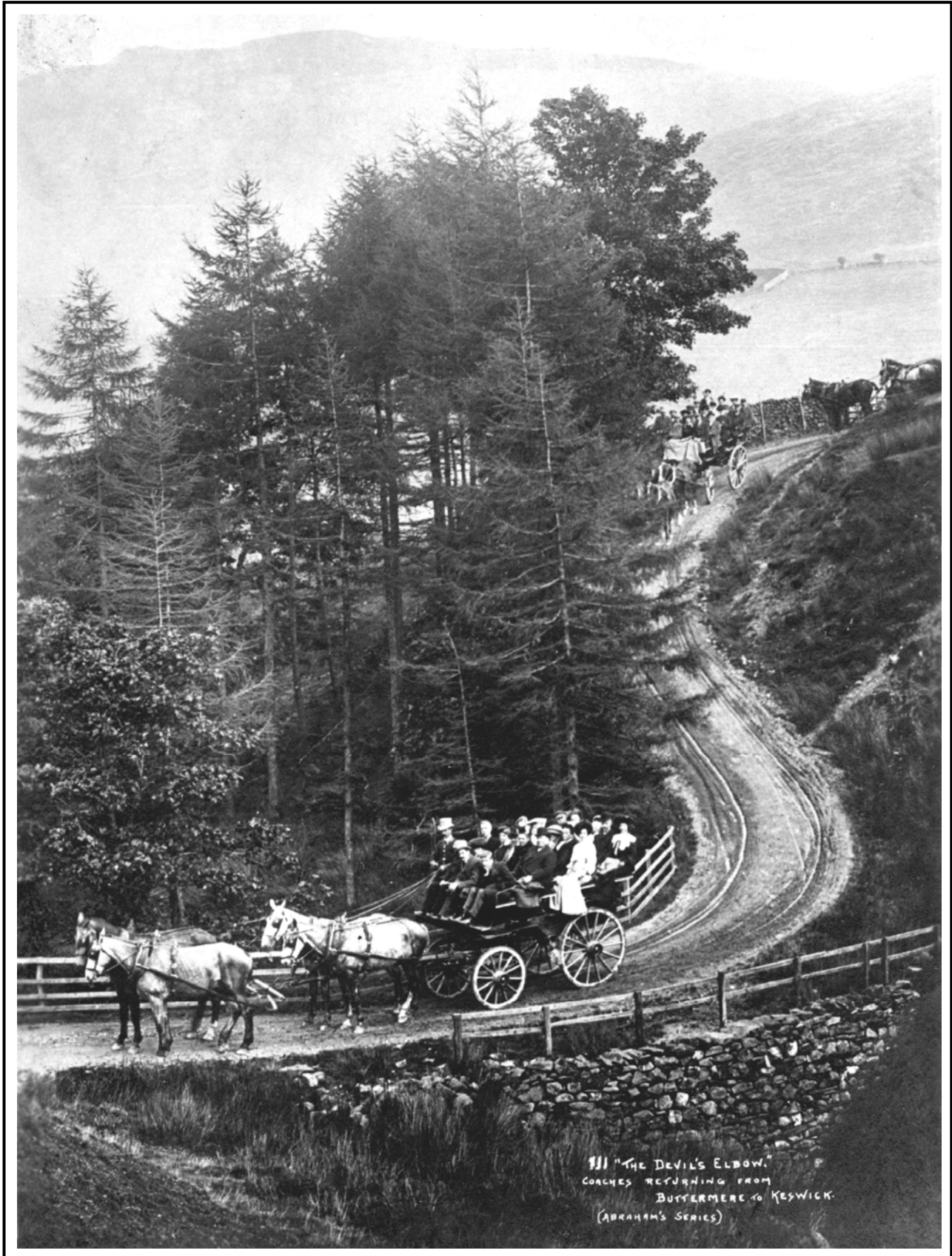


Lorton &
Derwent Fells Local History Society

Brackenthwaite Buttermere Embleton Loweswater Mockerkin Pardshaw Wythop

www.derwentfells.com



A superb Abraham photograph of three coaches on the Newlands road
Notice a missing house?

Editorial

I told a little story in the 10th anniversary Newsletter and I'm repeating here for a reason which will become obvious! I well remember, 11½ years ago in Ron George's sitting room in White Ash, discussing - with a group of interested people - forming a local history society. There was great enthusiasm, with one exception, when a Secretary was needed! In the end, I offered to do it "for a while" and so the society went ahead to evolve into what it is now, very successful with currently 136 members. This success has been due to having two Chairmen, Ron George and Derek Denman, both of whom being deeply interested in local history and had the vision to push things ahead. After all the developments, I'm still here but time has marched on and at the AGM in June, I am stepping down as Secretary and from the Committee. The reason for repeating this little history is to show how "a job" which was taken on with slight misgivings, turned out to be so interesting! Over the years, I've talked to many interesting people, seen and done many things (including struggling in the early days to get out 40 Newsletters!) which have enriched my life in a way I never foresaw. I say this for two clear reasons - one is to let you know that I have thoroughly enjoyed being Secretary of the Society and to thank everyone for their support when it was needed and the other is to draw your attention to the advert in this Newsletter (I hope it's there!) for my successor or successors - maybe the job could usefully be split. If you can use a word processor and a computer and have only a slight inclination to find out more about the job, please don't hesitate because you wouldn't regret it. Now, please look for the advert!

In connection with the Manorial Documents Project, there's an amusing piece from Walter Head and an interesting 'reason to do it' from Nigel Mills in this Newsletter. You might be enthused also!

Manorial Records by Walter Head

The following extracts from the West Cumberland Times may be of interest to those who attended Dr Angus Winchester's recent talk on Manorial records.

Saturday, 30th May 1874, Loweswater. "Saturday was Miss Skelton's rent day. The tenants met at Kirkstyle and after being relieved of their rents by Mr Waugh, they sat down to a substantial dinner provided by Mrs Pearson. After dinner, the Court Leet or Lord's Court was held, when the fines due on the death of the late Mr M Marshall were assessed. Another court will be held on 27th June when all fines are to be paid.

After dinner the tenants drew up till't fire and t'crack and t'jokes went round under the cheering influence of Mrs Pearson's potential liqueurs."

The follow-up meeting was duly held and reported as follows. "Yesterday was Mr Marshall's rent day which was held at Mr Faulder's Scale Hill Hotel. The rents were received by Mr W Parker, Carleton Hill Penrith. At the dinner which followed Mr E Nelson presided and Mr Faulder occupied the vice chair. The after proceedings were of the usual harmonious character."

Obviously, these meetings were a mixture of business with pleasure.

A signpost mystery

This is a bit of up-to-date local history. On the road from Lorton to Paddle School, I noticed a few weeks ago a new-looking metal post, painted in primer, lying on the verge opposite to the turn off to Brandlingill. Later, I saw it being erected and still didn't take much notice at the time. Later still, after it had been painted, it looked very smart in black and white. It was only then that I saw the lettering down the post which said "Cumberland County Council".

A little later, an arm was added and the resulting signpost looks very smart as I hope the photograph shows. The whole process took many weeks to complete.

Now here's the mystery - what organisation put up what seems like a valid sign with a council name on it that (legally) disappeared many years ago? I haven't made any enquiries, but has anyone any information on this rather attractive addition to our countryside?

Michael Grieve



An excerpt from Frank Carruthers' weekly column in the Evening News and Star, 22 April 1977

“WHEN THE WELL-INFORMED CUMBRIANS TOOK TO DRINK

A walk up the River Cocker from Stanger farm brings you to a small, square, stone-built structure. This is Stanger Well which in its hey-day gained rather more than a local repute as a health resort. Inside the building there are stone shelves to hold the bottles, jugs or whatever was taken to contain the water, and the spring bubbles out into a square hole. The water, it must be said, does not look at all attractive because the last time I saw it, it had stained most of its surroundings a rich, rusty colour, and looked like what we used to call ‘canker’ water, which was usually taken or pumped out of the sumps of old mines.

It all depends how you feel about spa water and its possible effects, but Stanger water is much more bitter than some, but far more pleasant to drink than the waters of either Gilsland, Shap or Harrogate. It has no smell. One does not, however, rush to sample the water of Stanger in the hope that it will effect a cure for anything. It is more prudent to take a bottle, fill it, and try the stuff at home ... and then be ready for anything. But please remember that I am not advocating its use at all. The Stanger water is impregnated with salts and iron, and was said to have a sulphurous smell, which I have not been able to detect.

About 80 years ago a Cockermouth doctor regarded Stanger water as more valuable than any of the medicines he normally prescribed, and, in fact, kept a supply in his surgery because, in his words: “Its cleansing qualities were unsurpassable”. One Cockermothian attempted, without success, to form a company to exploit the Stanger well, and it is believed that the present building over the well was erected by him.

Stanger water was an excellent purgative, and anybody who remembers the old doctors will know the importance they placed on the simple matter of keeping the bowels open. It was also said to have excellent curative qualities when applied externally for skin troubles.

A little over a century ago many of the people of Cockermouth made a practice of visiting the well weekly, and several times a year sports were held in the well field, which suggests another throw-back to some ancient festival. There was wrestling and racing, and if the Stanger games were not quite up to Olympic standard, they were entered into with spirit. Apparently some near-Olympic times were set up in sprints from the field to the privacy of the nearest dyke-back as the well water worked its particular magic. The action of the Stanger water was, as an old-timer records,

‘remarkably quick’. It is on record that the mother of one Cockermothian, a seafaring man, insisted on her son taking a bottle of Stanger water with him on every trip abroad, which accords with motherly advice to emigrating sons of the time: “Keep your bowles open”!

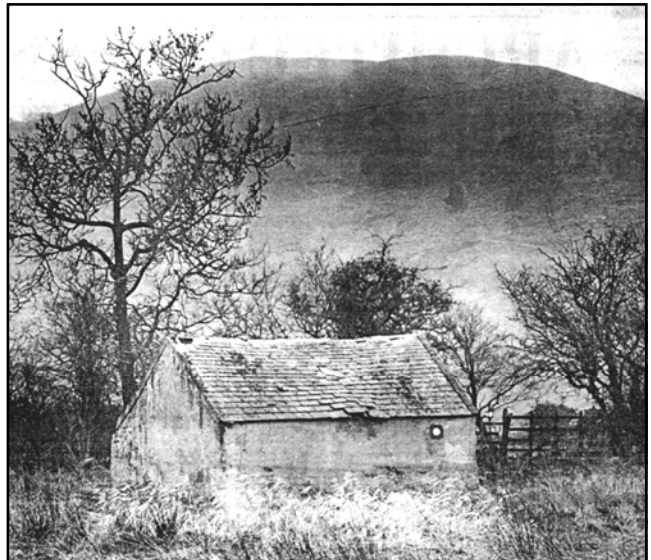
On one visit to Stanger well I met a local farmer who spoke of the miraculous cure achieved by the well water on his dog. The dog, apparently, was under suspended sentence of death because of its frequent fits of hysteria. Then one day it drank some of the well water. It was well and truly purged and never suffered a fit again.

When the Stanger well was open and free to anybody who wished to come and test its curative qualities, it was visited by hundreds of people each year, but then its owner began to charge what canny Cockermothians considered to be an exorbitant fee for a cupful, and the people lost the Stanger habit.

I have never been able to find Cockermouth's other healing well, which is said to be a spring which runs into the Cocker ‘near to the bathing place’. This other Cocker-side well had, according to reports, undoubted healing qualities for sufferers from eye complaints. People who bathed sore eyes in its water were cured almost immediately.

Strange that Cockermouth never really tried to cash in on its two spa wells! With those, a pair of salmon rivers, and access to the Lakes, Cockermouth has more than its share of amenities of the sort to attract visitors in days gone by. But Cockermouth managed to get by on its reputation as a market town. It is still a market town; its spa wells are all but forgotten.”

About ten years ago, I was involved in stabilising what was left of the walls of Stanger well, which is actually in Embleton - and the roof had completely gone by that time. Looking into the square hole, the thought of drinking any of what we could see in there was absolutely out of the question! Michael Grieve



An excerpt from an interview

“She was called Anne Moffat and she was young, soft spoken and gentle mannered, and for years she cycled and walked in the beautiful Vale of Lorton, near Cockermouth, delivering letters and parcels on her beloved Swift bicycle. She braved winter storms, snowdrifts and long treks to lonely farms in the wilds around Buttermere and Crummock Water. She loved her job and was much liked by the fell community she served. It all happened before the First World War when her parents kept High Lorton post office and her mother baked teacakes three times a week to help pay their way.

I started delivering letters on my bike about 1899 or 1900. It was a long way. I wouldn't know how far it was. Sometimes you'd feel: Well, I won't push my bike down that spot, 'cause you'd to bring it back. And you'd maybe walk that bit.

Delivering in snow was bad. Had to wear your clogs mostly. I used to have to cut the roads with a shovel to get through. And sometimes couldn't get letters up to the houses by the fells. Too steep for a bicycle, and too slippery. But come summer and I even went on a ride to Silloth. Not post office business. Went to see the pierrots, you know. Two others went, too, those with a bike. We were terrible late back and father was worried.

We didn't wear a uniform doing letters, but eventually we had a brown badge to put on our arm with GPO. Didn't wear mine. Sometimes the inspector used to go round with you, just to see that we took the time we said we did. But he didn't go to all the houses. If you hadn't a letter for one he'd say: 'Oh, well, we'll not go down there. That'll be ten minutes or so.' He had a watch to time you and a list of all the houses.

We had some awful do's. We used to have a postman over from Loweswater to call at the shop for our mail. We had a letterbox in the window. We used to fasten up a canvas bag and seal it with some wax and give it to this postman. Joe. He got drunk one day after Loweswater Show, oh, and he didn't come to collect the letters. You know he was gifted with getting drunk. He was rather bad tempered. We rung Loweswater and said: 'Has Joe come?' She says: 'Well, yes — oh, he is drunk. There's a man riding down with him.'

We were having the house painted and I says to the painter: 'Do you think Joe will be drunk?' And he says: 'Yes, he's sure to be.' And I says: 'Oh dear, I don't know what to do.'

So I rung Cockermouth and a woman says: 'What time should he be there?' And I says: 'Quarter past four.' She says: 'It's nearly quarter past five! What's happened?' I says: 'We think he's had an accident.'

Then Joe came after a bit. He got out of his trap and could hardly stand. I says: 'Oh, you are late. They're asking about you at Cockermouth.' And he says: 'What did you say?' I said you hadn't come.'

Then the phone rung and it was Mr Riley. I says: 'Mr Riley says are you all right? Wants to know if you are drunk.' And Joe says: 'Nooo, tell him I's not drunk!' So Mr Riley says: 'Is he drunk?' And I says: 'He says he isn't.'

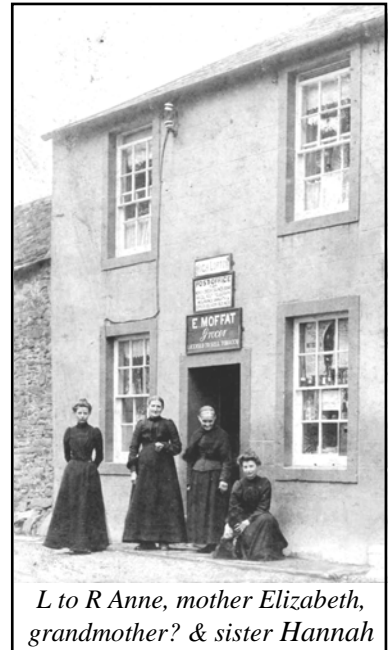
Anyway I said I'd go along on me bike with him and Mr Riley said that was all right. So off we set. Oh, he was in a pickle. Joe knew the boxes but couldn't get the keys into them to open up, and I said: 'If you give me the keys I'll open up and give you all that's in. Will that do?'

'Oh, aye, that'll do', he says, and we worked like that all the way to Cockermouth. Anyway, Joe went to the post office in Cockermouth and was going to hit the postmaster. Oh, there was such a do! He was nearly retired, but the schoolmaster got a petition up, and in the end he got his job back and kept his pension.

It was good being a post-lady. Everyone was friendly. If it was a wet morning they give you a cup of tea. One old lady, when she was well, always had a teacake and a piece of cheese for me. I wasn't hungry but I had to take it. Christmas was worst when they said: 'Come in, and have your pie.' And you had to eat it. It wouldn't be so bad if you could put it in your bag and take it home, but sitting down and having this and ginger wine with it. You nearly had to be walking out through the doorpost.

You got sixpence [2½p] for your Christmas box. And you knew where you'd get sixpence, and there were two places where you got a shilling [5p]. You got mince pies till you grew tired; but you'd to sit and eat them and talk, and you'd your letters to get on with! Aeey. But they were never wasted. Mince pies! I hid 'em inside my blouse, even when they were hot, and brought them home; you had them warmed up again for your dinner instead of pudding, you know."

For the remainder of Anne's story and photographs, see 'Lakeland Yesterday, Volume 1' by Irvine Hunt©



L to R Anne, mother Elizabeth, grandmother? & sister Hannah

Anne lived in the post office - which became Corner House - for 100 years, until 1983. She became the first Secretary of the Lorton WI (which then included Loweswater and Buttermere) in 1921 and was a key person in community activities throughout her life. She was well known to a number of our members.

Why Pounds and Pinfolds? by Nigel Mills

Well I had to start somewhere. I'm not an academic, I'm not an historian, I'm not that knowledgeable so when asked what I find interesting about pounds and pinfolds and why I want to find out more I have to think hard before answering.

I am still not sure but I think the main reason may be that no one else seemed interested in researching these architecturally modest relics of the past (Loweswater being a welcome exception).

When I moved to live in a small rural hamlet, with a village pound, just inside the Lake District National Park I realised that Cumbria was full of historic vernacular buildings. I found it pleasant and stimulating to puzzle out the age of farmhouses and barns by looking at window styles, chimneys, crow foot gables and other features and by pretending I had not noticed the date stone!

I found that you can learn about most things from books and talks by local experts but trying to find any specific mention about pounds and pinfolds was a challenge.

As a novice I started with a local pound and asked around. The consensus was that pounds and pinfolds were built prior to the enclosure of land to impound animals that had strayed from their owners' fields or fell land and that they would be released only on payment of a fine. The Lord of the Manor was often the owner of the pound and he appointed a Pinder to care for the animals and collect the fines. These structures may also have been used to "impound" animals as a result of a court order for debt.

As I started to look at maps, visit Record Offices, examine the Listed Buildings Register, talk to Archaeologists, write to local parish councils and search in libraries I realised that I would need to carry out a more disciplined approach if I was to make progress.

So far the following aspects of my research show that I have much more to do:

- Are they pounds, pinfolds, poundfolds or pundfalds?
- What is the difference between these and folds, washfolds, sheepfolds or sheep pens?
- Do the various names indicate different uses?
- Why are some pounds and pinfolds in a village and others miles from the nearest house.
- Are they associated with other "municipal" functions like stocks or blind houses?
- Why are some located near rivers or streams and others near the Manor House.
- Why are they built in all shapes and sizes with some crudely built and others of the best dressed sandstone?
- Who built them and paid for them?
- Why do some areas appear to have had more pounds and pinfolds than others?
- Are there any written records with Parish Councils or Manorial Records?
- What changed that made them obsolete?
- Why have so many disappeared and can those left be maintained?

I have started by identifying the locations of existing pounds and pinfolds and so far I have found over 30 in Cumbria! I have visited most of them, and this might be the real reason as to 'Why Pounds and Pinfolds'; I have explored quiet backwaters, visited many villages and village pubs and tea shops in Cumbria that I would never have seen without "historical research" as the excuse.

I attended the meeting on the Cumbria Manorial Records Project and have now joined the Lorton & Derwent Fells LHS. I would appreciate it if other members could let me know of any reference to pounds, pinfolds or poundfolds they notice in their research. Email: nigelmills@btinternet.com

Wordsworth, Nature, the 'Famous' Lorton Yew Tree, the poem - *Final Part 3* by Michael Baron

Before Cowper, John Milton - his poetry, too, was in the 'grand storehouse'. And here the most convincing example of borrowing, stealing, or acknowledging profound indebtedness (after all 'The Prelude' is in the epic tradition of 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained') which almost certainly adds to the Cowper source for ideas and imagery. It is arguable that it is a prime source.

'Yew Trees' has 12½ lines for Lorton and 17½ for Borrowdale. It is one complete poem (even if conceived in different years), one extended metaphor for the passage of time; if you like, one hymn to yew trees and, while people in High Lorton, flattered by the presence of this ancient, are tempted to link the 1804 visit as the moment of inspiration, we must not forget the remaining 17½ lines on the 'fraternal Four'. What other reading, what recollection of old verses, sense of the huge reach of history, came up from the wells of memory, as Wordsworth sat at his desk with his notebooks at Dove Cottage, Allen Bank or Rydal Mount, or during a daily walk on his 'serviceable legs'?

Book IX of Milton's epic *Paradise Lost* of 1674 (lines 1100-1107) provides the clue, or one of them. Adam and Eve are in the Genesis garden, naked, looking for something to cover their 'middle parts'. In the thickest wood they find the fig-tree - the tree of life. This one, not the fruity sort, but has 'arms/branching so broad and long that in the ground/The bended twigs take root and daughters grow/About the mother tree.' 'a pillared shade/High overarched and echoing walks between'. Dr. Pamela Woof in 'Reading *Paradise Lost*' writes:-

'Wordsworth, wanting a darkened place beneath a "sable roof of boughs" suited to the ghostly celebrations of "Death the Skeleton and Time the Shadow" uses Milton's ecclesiastical phrase, "a pillared shade". Wordsworth's shade was beneath a group of yew trees and it had no feel of growing life; even the floor was grassless with "sheddings from the pining umbrage". Milton's "pillared shade" and "umbrage" brought into Wordsworth's poem the darkness he needed - the spiritual dark of Adam's despair.'

And now to 'Yew Trees' 'Huge trunks Nor uninformed with Phantasy, and looks/That threaten the prophane; - a pillared shade/Upon whose grassless floor.../.'

The Borrowdale section has powerful and deeply felt imagery. It delineates within the four yews the vision of a once sacrificial grove, a ritual enclosure peopled by 'ghostly shapes .. Fear .. Hope .. Silence .. Foresight .. Death Time.' The poet by implication and word-choice is reaching back into a dark and pre-Christian past. To the reader it speaks with force, unscarred by the worthy patriotic pretensions of the Lorton section, notwithstanding the elemental statement of the opening lines. The poet lives in and with the Borrowdale grove - he experiences its mystery. Coleridge was right in his judgement of the poem. Ruskin quoted from the Borrowdale part with approval in 'Modern Painters'. Other than from those two 19th century critics, 'Yew-trees' was not cited at all by three of the four biographies of the last half-century. Hunter Davies in his sound and highly readable account of the poet's life does not mention the poem - but his book was written before he came to summer in Loweswater! But it does not matter. This storm-battered relic of the old giant that dominated High Lorton is near and dear to the inhabitants of the valley as the tree which unites literature with local history.

Finally, this from Jonathan Wordsworth on the poet. "Trees had clearly a permanence for Wordsworth that was not wholly rational". A man of the trees - an early environmentalist - the 'green' poet? A closing observation from James Lovelock with his holistic philosophy to save the planet in 'Gaia'. William would have agreed with him that 'the Earth might in certain ways be alive - not as the ancients saw her, an ancient goddess with purpose and foresight - more like a tree. A tree that exists, never moving except to sway in the wind, yet endlessly conversing with the sunlight and the soil'.

But now forget what biographer, critic, diarist, scholar - the whole gang of them do and do not say - read the poem, cherish the 'Famous yew', standing, shorn of one side, in its enclosure outside the window of the Yew Tree Hall, High Lorton. Which is part, perhaps, the starting point but not, by any means, the only source of inspiration, the exercise of imagination on natural fact, for 'Yew Trees'.

Acknowledgments - for shameless quoting, copying, paraphrasing, plagiarising, brain picking, borrowing, thieving to - Pamela Woof, Robert Woof, Jonathan Wordsworth, Grevel Lindop, Geoffrey Hartmann, Mary Moorman, Molly Lefebure, Stephen Gill, Kenneth Johnston, Juliet Barker, Hunter Davies, David McCracken, Richard Williamson, James Lovelock ... and to Roger Ascham, John Milton, William Cowper, William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Henry Crabb, Robinson, Rev R.P.Graves, A.J.Kilmer, Sir James Frazer, T.S.Eliot, Norman Nicholson ... and the Book of Genesis.

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The Cumbria Manorial Documents Project

Society Projects - by Derek Denman

On 22 March, Society members heard a presentation from our President, Dr Angus Winchester, and from Catherine Clark, the assistant county archivist at the Whitehaven Record Office. The project, funded by the Heritage Lottery, aims to provide an online index to the Manorial Documents Register. The partners are Lancaster University, the Cumbria Archive Service and the National Archive. A researcher, Dr Eleanor Straughton, has been appointed to undertaking the work.

The purpose of the Society meeting was to discuss particular 'user projects that could be undertaken by Society members to demonstrate the use of the material'. We hope to have some projects presentable next spring, in parallel with the promotion of the online records.

Following the meeting, there are four projects which are being included, at present with one person who will take the lead on the project. Other members with an interest in the project, or in using manorial documents generally, are invited to contact me about being involved in these projects, which will be supported by the partners mentioned. We expect to get underway within May. The projects are currently:

Cumbrian pinfolds, looking at their locations and survivals; their history and management through the manorial records.

Nigel Mills

Pardshaw Hall and Kirby, intending to find the history of this hamlet, its lands and people.

Sandra Shaw

The Borrowscale family, of Wythop, Setmurthy and Embleton, hoping to find family tenement holdings in the early modern and late medieval periods.

Joan Borrowscale

The Lorton 'Tenters' threadmill and walk mill, charting the history and ownership of Lorton's 'industrial estate'.

Derek Denman

Additionally, there may be a project to examine the history of watercourses feeding Bassenthwaite Lake, in conjunction with the Environment Agency's proposed restoration project.

If you would like to be involved or have questions or contributions, then please get in touch:

Tel: 01900 85551 derek@derwentfells.freemove.co.uk

World War II experiences in West Cumbria

Walter Head 'chaired' a panel session on 10 February in the Yew Tree Hall which dealt with the experiences of the four panel members during World War II in this area. Left to right in the photograph are Jeannie Hope, Eunice Norman, Walter Head, Charlie Allison and Joe Benn. Their stories and experiences were interesting and, although the questions were led by Walter, many questions came from the audience once things got going! It was a good evening and thanks are due to all the panel for taking part.



Commemoraten t' visit o' Wordsworth t't Lorton Yew - by Dorothy Graves

Ah téan a stroll doon Lorton Vale, a greet old Tree t' view,
 It's stannen théar agéan a beck, it's known as t' Lorton Yew.
 Noo it's stood théar a thooasand éer, or séah it's bin reputed,
 And as Wordsworth mé'ad it famous that's nivver bin refuted.
 He wandered doon t't Lorton tree and léuked it up an' doon,
 An' thowt noo thé'ars a subject t' turn intil a poem.
 When he got hé'am he sat him doon wid paper an' wid pen,
 An' thowt until he'd mé'ad his poem, 200 eer sen.
 What's left of it is stannen prood, but ya bit's raither worn'
 Ya greet limb was brokken off in't ninety nine storm.
 Noo many folk'll cum an' gaa an' eye it ower the' must,
 But t' yew'll still be stannen thé'ar lang efter they've bit t' dust.

This was written in 2004, which was the bicentenary of Wordsworth's visit to the Lorton yew with his sister and I'm grateful to Dorothy for letting me print it here. I'm not used to reading dialect and, initially, I missed the meaning of many of the words. I found that it's worth taking a little time and reading it aloud a few times and it soon falls into place. It worked for me! It's a fitting reminder of last year's celebrations and the publishing by the Society of the book 'Wordsworth and the Famous Lorton Yew Tree'. MG

Photographs in the Society's Archive

Over the last year or two, Jacqui Bower has been 'working on' the photographs in the Society's Archive. Previously, the photos were in envelopes, tucked away in the Archive in Beech Cottage along with a descriptive listing. Jacqui has talked to many people, has obtained many more photos and has made the photo collection much more accessible. Firstly, all the original photos are in the Archive but now backed up on CDROMs and there is an updated listing. Secondly, she has made copies of many of the photos and put these in albums, labelled with any information we have about them. One album containing photos concerning Wythop and Embleton is with Dorothy Graves and two albums relating to Lorton, Buttermere and Loweswater are kept by Maud Vickers. These can be signed out and borrowed. This has been a labour of love for Jacqui and sincere thanks are due to her. Many thanks Jacqui. Michael Grieve

Here's something extra for your diary!

Our President, Dr Angus Winchester, is giving a talk "West Cumbria in the Middle Ages" on 26 May at 7.30pm in the Lamplugh WI Hall to the Lamplugh and District Heritage Society. Visitors welcome!

Walking the Parish Boundaries

There has been some interest in the idea of walking our parish boundaries. The current idea is to start by walking the boundaries of Loweswater parish in stages, each stage being a walk of the Mockerkn Mob. The idea would be to follow the boundary as closely as is practicable, and finding and photographing as many boundary markers as possible. Work will soon commence on contacting landowners to seek permission where necessary. The first stages will probably be walked in July, but watch our website for further details. In the meantime please get in touch with one of us if you are able to offer any help or wish to be involved in the planning of the walks.

Robert Flower on 01900 85619

John Hudson on 01946 861555

Graham Harker on 01946 862758

Remaining Talks and Activities in 2005

12 May	Talk by Barbara Todd "Harriet Martineau at Ambleside"
9 June	AGM followed by an illustrated presentation by John Hudson on John Dalton
14 July	Talk by Dr David Shotter "Rome's Northern Frontier"
7 August, Sunday	Walk led by Derek Denman "Landscape History, Lorton & Brackenthwaite" start Lorton poundfold 2pm, 4 to 5 miles
8 September	Talk by Averil Dawson "A woman's place is in the home - life & times of Victorian women"
October	Visit to the Coledale Mine to be announced
10 November	Talk by Mary Burkett "Some Lakeland Artists and their work, 17th to early 20th century"

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