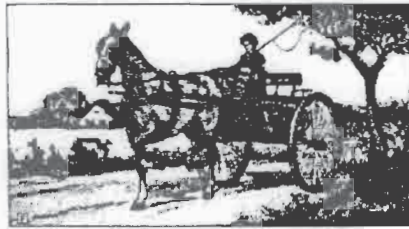


Lorton & Derwent Fells

Local history Society



A selection of early Lake District tour and guide books



- 1770 - "A six months tour through the North of England" by Arthur Young
- 1774 - "An excursion to the Lakes in Westmoreland and Cumberland ..." by William Hutchinson
- 1778 - "A Guide to the Lakes" by Thomas West
- 1787 - "A survey of the Lakes of Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire ..." by James Clarke
- 1788 - "A tour in England and Scotland, in 1785" by Thomas Newte
- 1788 - "A tour in 1787 ... including excursions to the Lakes of Westmorland and Cumberland ..." by Stebbing Shaw
- 1792 - "A Tour from London to the Lakes ... made in the Summer of 1791" by Adam Walker
- 1792 - "A fortnight's ramble to the Lakes in Westmoreland, Lancashire and Cumberland" by Joseph Budworth
- 1795 - "Three Successive Tours in the North of England" by Henry Skrine
- 1799 - "A companion, and useful guideto the Lakes of Westmoreland, Cumberland and Lancashire" by Sarah Aust
- 1800 - "A descriptive tour, and guide to the Lakes, Caves and Mountains ..." by John Housman

..... and they're currently coming out at many per year.

Distilled from the superb reference book "The picturesque scenery of the Lake District" by Peter Bicknell, 1990

Secretary's letter

We had our second AGM in June - how the time has flown - and all the outgoing Committee members were re-elected. Surprise, surprise! However, there was one change in that Mrs Findlay was elected as Deputy Chairman; it was made clear by our Chairman that his deputy would only have to chair one of our meetings in the unlikely situation where he couldn't attend himself. Under "Suggestions for the future programme", some interesting ideas were put forward for which I, for one, was very pleased. They were a visit to Isel Hall, census returns, archeological techniques, recording family history, the history of land ownership in the area and carrying out some case histories. One member suggested that there should be a listing of members' interests so that people would know who was interested in what - it was agreed that a questionnaire would be circulated and this has been done as a flier in this Newsletter, so please fill it in and either let a Committee member have it or bring it to our next meeting on 14 September. What else was there? Oh yes, the Treasurer reported that we were not broke and that the subscriptions next year should not have to go up! One of our country members, Douglas Huntington, is now selling his book "The Solway Plainsmen" and there is a special section on this further on.

The AGM started with our Chairman, Ron George, giving his review of the past year as follows.

Chairman's review

"A whole twelve months has passed since our first AGM, a good year, one which I hope all members will consider to have been a successful and rewarding year from their individual point of view, whatever that may be.

Our regular bi-monthly meetings have given us a wide range of topics - an overview of vernacular buildings, a more intimate view of past life styles in this area, the history of the valley water supply, of farming in this immediate area over the ages, history hidden in unusual settings in fields and local religious non-conformity. I hope these have not only given us all food for thought, but inspired and stimulated you the members to something positive, physically active even, when possible, to further the investigation of our local history - AND justify your being here tonight!!



Now this is a point I have laboured in the past, more than once, and will do so again and again. All of us are interested - you come in force to all our meetings - why not extend your interest into a research project? "Research" is only an up-market shorthand word for "controlled inquisitiveness with the results written down". I know a few, too few, of you have taken on a project but I challenge you all to go away today and start being inquisitive recorders - I can provide a whole range of ideas for you to follow up.

And following that line of thought - a group of us met at Winder Hall (ex Lorton Hall) on 25 March for Susan Denyer to give us a more detailed analysis of vernacular architecture than had been possible last July; and to make a field visit to an old and unmodified cottage at Scales to put our new knowledge into practice. The building in question was featured on the front cover of Newsletter No 5. This was a very useful whole day exercise, much appreciated by those who took part. If those who wanted to do so, but could not, or others who would like to take part in a similar field day, perhaps we can arrange one next year. I will be seeking your ideas shortly.

I must also refer back to our Social Evening dinner/dance, held last October. We danced to records of the forties and fifties by Joe Loss, Duke Ellington, Xavier Cugat amongst others, all ably managed by our disc jockey, Mike Grieve. This was a joyous evening for the rather too few who participated, and speaking for myself and others, would like to see this repeated annually, but only if more members are willing to come and "shake a leg".

Returning to more down to earth matters, we have started a pilot project with Lorton School children to gather family and farm history. The object, which has the backing of the school, is a treble one: to interest the children in a sense of history; to give them an enhanced feeling of the family background; and to provide this Society with a lot more archive material. This has got off to a slow, but promising, start. If any members have children, or grandchildren, at Lorton School, perhaps they would contact me about this project, so that it might be given a little push.

We continue to look for material from you, the members, for the Newsletter and thank those who have already produced articles. It is now also a suitable moment to ask you to seek out material for the Members' Evening in September. Last year, it was very successful - let us repeat that again this year - different material, of course.

Finally my very sincere thanks to all the Committee Members for their sterling efforts to keep things running so smoothly during the past year."

I'll finish with another, but quite different, annual report and it is a quote from the current Lake District National Park Annual Report 1994/95 under the heading "Preserving the Past".

"Contrary to popular belief, the Lake District's landscape is far from 'natural' and is largely a product of six thousand years of human activity stretching from initial clearance work of forest cover in the Neolithic and early Bronze Age to more obvious effects of industrial development in the last two or three centuries. The Park has many archaeological remains from this long period which help to tell the story of the Lake District's development and add greatly to the special quality of the area. The NPA recognises the importance of protecting and conserving these remains and is committed to fostering knowledge of them and carrying out practical conservation where necessary. Important groundwork for the protection of some of the Lake District's varied archaeological sites was completed this year by the NPA archaeologist."

The article then goes on to mention the various sites with a few words about each. Although I am a Voluntary Warden for the National Park, I didn't know that we had our own archaeologist; it is, perhaps, useful information to remember because he is, presumably, accessible for queries at the NPA's headquarters in Kendal. Incidentally, the Annual Report - which has as its main title "Review of the Year's Activities" - is a nicely produced A4 booklet with (usually) some interesting articles and photographs. In this particular issue, there's a stunning and different photograph of The Screes in Wasdale. These NPA Reviews are usually available from NPA information centres.



The Muster Roll for Lorton township 1535

By Angus J L Winchester

Lists of inhabitants of local communities are rare before the Hearth Tax returns of the 1660s. For Lorton, we have partial lists in two fine estate surveys (the Percy Survey of 1578 and the survey of High Lorton in 1649) but it is only in records such as that transcribed below that we are able to gain some indication of the township community earlier in the 16th century. Muster rolls were compiled by central government in times of national crisis in an attempt to gain some idea of the fighting strength of each county before the days of a standing army. They survive for many counties for 1535 (and several other years between then and the early 17th century) and consist of lists of men aged between 15 or 16 and 60 together with details of the weapons they could provide.

The roll for Lorton, reproduced below, lists 20 men. Like others from this part of Cumberland, it shows a minority of men able to come out as mounted bowmen, possessing horse and bow. Most were 'byllmen', that is foot soldiers armed with a blade mounted on a wooden handle. Their armour consisted of 'sallets', which were light armed headpieces, and 'jakes' which were sleeveless tunics.

Although it is a bald and in some respects not very informative list, the muster allows us to ask some questions about the social structure of the community at Lorton in the early 16th century. For example, we can begin to ask questions about comparative levels of wealth. The seven men listed as able to produce a horse (five bowmen and two billmen) were presumably the wealthier members of the community. It is striking that the list begins with a member of the Winder family of Lorton Hall, who were almost certainly the largest resident landowners in the township at that time. Who were the other bowmen? Most of the surnames in the list are familiar from the later estate surveys and the parish register: **would anyone like to offer identifications of other individuals in this list?**

For further information on the survival of muster rolls, see Alan Dell and Jeremy Gibson, *Tudor and Stuart Muster Rolls* (Federation of Family History Societies, 1989).

Here is the full text of the roll for Lorton:

"Townschyp of Lorton in the parychyn of Bregham

Ryc' Wynder
John Peylle
John Wyllmson
Peter Belle
Alan Gylle

All thes be Bowmen havyng horssys jakes & sallets

Antony Hudson hors
Wyllm Steylle hors
Thomas Watson

Roberte Person
 John Belle
 Thomas Watson
 Peter Wyllkynson
 Thomas Wyllmson
 John Wynder

Alle thes be Byllmen havyng jakes & sallets

Nycolle Belle
 Nycolle Scynner
 Henry Stube
 John Peylle
 Robert Wyllson
 John Peylle

Thes ar all Byllmen havyng jakes & sallets"

Transcribed from the original in Public Record Office, E101/549/13, f. 43.

That was the second of Angus' two pieces he sent us, for which I'm very grateful.

The Solway Plainsmen

This is the title of a new book just out and written by one of our country members, Douglas Huntington, and these are excerpts from the leaflet and ordering form:



"Members of the Huntington family migrated north to Cumberland in the 12th century, settling and multiplying on the Solway plain.

This story sets out to describe the kinds of threats which the Huntingtons, and all other settlers in Cumberland, had to combat: famine, disease, invasion, oppression and exploitation, land enclosure and loss of livelihoods resulting from the agricultural and industrial revolutions.

Most people are interested in history..... This is a story of Cumberland's past, written round the Huntington families - Cumbrians since the Norman Conquest. It is aimed to be essentially a "History without tears", to be entertaining."

If anyone is interested, I have copies of the form - the book has about 180 pages and is well illustrated. From bookshops it is £6.99 and I've seen it on sale in several bookshops in the area; alternatively you, as a Society member, can order a copy from Douglas for £5.99 post paid, using the form.

Local History Night Classes



I have a leaflet which is advertising local history night classes on Tuesdays from 6-9pm at the West Cumbria College, Whitehaven. It says "You choose the subject to study. Fully qualified Historian will help you". That seems a good offer - the telephone numbers given are 01946 692261 or 01900 64331.

Previous meetings

On 11 May, our President, Angus Winchester, talked to us on "Pardshaw Quakers: the history of a local meeting". A very full audience of members and visitors enjoyed a detailed, very comprehensive and entrancing talk which gave not only the early history of the movement but also the reasons why the movement became so strong in certain areas. His talk was followed by a long question session from an audience that was clearly very interested in the history of the Quaker movement in this area.

After the AGM on 8 June, Ron George completed the evening with a talk entitled "Off-comers and Out-goers" in which he sought, with the aid of specific figures and graphs, to explode the commonly held view that it was only in comparatively recent years that in Lorton, as a typical example, the local-born population had suffered from an influx of "off-comers". Similarly, he showed that the oft-held view that rural communities had remained in situ for very long periods of time was far from true - rural Cumberland had long been subject to migration.

We had some rock climbing history at our meeting on 13 July when Alan Hankinson, the Keswick author, gave us an interesting insight into the start of rock climbing proper in the Lake District towards the end of the last century. Most of the participants were academics but there were some locals, including a famous one, John Robinson from Lorton. We heard how ropes were not used at first and, considering the primitive equipment and lack of knowledge of the mountains, it is surprising that there were no fatalities for about the first twenty years. Alan showed many photographs taken by the Abraham brothers of Keswick and these were remarkable, particularly considering that the camera and tripod were so large and heavy.

The first Lake District travel guide

It was at this point that I realised that **I had no more material to use** - I had no other articles or correspondence or anything except the information that I extract from the Cumbria Local History Federation publications (when it arrives!). Luckily, I had just been having another look at what I believe to be the first real travel guide to the Lake District. It is "A Guide to the Lakes" by Thomas West and the first edition came out in 1778; my copy is the 11th Edition dated 1821 which came out after his death. He includes a wonderful description of the Lorton valley. Father West is taking you on a round trip from Keswick, over Newlands to Buttermere, Crummock Water and Loweswater. At this point, back at Crummock Water, I'll let him take over.

"When the roads to Ennerdale and Wastwater are improved, they may be taken in this morning ride.

From the bridge at the foot of the lake, ascend the hill to Brackenithwaite. At the ale-house, Scalehill, take a guide to the top of the rock, above Mr. Bertie's woods, and have an entirely new view of Cromack-water. The river Cocker is seen winding through a beautiful and rich cultivated vale, spreading far to the north, variegated with woods, groves, and hanging grounds, in every pleasing variety. The most singular object in this vale of Lorton and Brackenithwaite, is a high-crowned topt rock that divides the vale, and raises a broken craggy head over hanging woods, that skirt the sloping sides, which are cut into waving inclosures and varied with groves and patches of coppice wood. To the

west a part of Lowes-water is seen, under a fringe of trees at High-cross. Behind you, awful Grasmire (the Skiddaw of the vale) frowns in all the majesty of furrowed rock, cut almost perpendicularly to the centre by the water-falls of ages. The swell of a cataract is here heard, but entirely concealed within the gloomy recess of a rocky dell, formed by the rival mountains, Grasmire and Whiteside. At their feet, lie the mighty ruins, brought down from the mountains, by the memorable water-spout, that deluged all the vale, in September, 1760.

After this, the mountains become humble hills, and terminate the sweet vale, that stretches from the feet of Black-crag and Carling-knot, and spreads itself into a country watered by the Cocker.

The ride down this vale is pleasant. All the scenes are smiling, rich, and rural. Every dale-lander appears to be a man of taste, and every village, house, and cot, is placed in the choicest site, and decorated in the neatest manner, and style of natural elegance. Not one formal avenue, or straight-lined hedge, or square fish-pond, offends the eye in all this charming vale. The variety of situation gives diversity of views, and a succession of pleasing objects creates the desire of seeing.

The back view is under a wooded hill, near the fifth mile-post, and is fine. Here return up the great road to Keswick."

Great stuff! Has anyone got a description of, or a reference to, the storm in September 1760? I'd love to put that in the next Newsletter.



No, I'm not referring to Walter Willson, it's that poet with local connections, William Wordsworth, I want to quote. I think that everyone knows that he wrote about the local yew trees but how many of you have actually read the relevant words carefully? Come on, own up! Well, here are the words which describe the yew in Lorton:

Yew-Trees

There is a Yew-Tree, pride of Lorton Vale,
Which to this day stands single, in the midst
Of its own darkness, as it stood of yore:
Not loth to furnish weapons for the bands
Of Umfraville or Percy ere they marched
To Scotland's heaths; or those that crossed the sea
And drew their sounding bows at Azincour,
Perhaps at earlier Crecy, or Poitiers.
Of vast circumference and gloom profound
This solitary Tree! a living thing
Produced too slowly ever to decay;
Of form and aspect too magnificent
To be destroyed.....

Articles etc for the Newsletter

May I come back briefly to my comment on page 6. Wearing my most severe expression (which, of course, you can't see!) I must stress how important it is for you, the members, to send me contributions for the Newsletters, be they short letters or long articles or whatever, **if you want the Newsletters to continue as they have been to date** ie eight pages with, hopefully, something of interest for most readers. I have reached the stage now where the material that I can provide is starting to get a bit thin, so without your help, the Newsletter will inevitably get shorter. So, over to you!



Cumbria Local History Federation

It is the CLHF's Open Day and AGM on Saturday, 23 September 1995 at the Burnside Hotel, Bowness-on-Windermere. The topic is "Printing & Publishing - Old & New" and there will be two talks by Cumbrian booksellers:

"Cheap Books & Popular Culture - the Chapbook [sic] Industry in Cumbria" by Barry McKay of Appleby and "Getting into Print" by Harvey Leeson of Barrow

Reception is at 9.30 am, the AGM at 10.00, the first talk at 11.30 with a buffet lunch from 12.45 to 2.15 pm during which there'll be a table top "Society and Book Bazaar". The second talk is at 2.15 finishing with tea and departure at 4.00 pm. The cost for everything is £10, just the talks coffee and tea £3 and, would you believe, the AGM only is free.

The Caldbeck Local History Society has just brought out a new book entitled "Caldbeck Characters - Tales of Ten Local People 1777 - 1974". It has been written by eight members of the society and "It is a unique first hand account of the industrial and social changes in a tiny but vital Cumbrian community." It has 50 pages and is "about £3" in local bookshops.

Two interesting-looking talks nearby are "Lakeland Walls" by Bill Rollinson on 11 October at the Keswick Historical Society (contact Mrs M Armstrong 017687 74555) and "Cumbrian Smuggling" by Tom Higham at the Solway History Society (Mrs Thornhill 016973 44257).

And, finally, there's another talk by Bill Rollinson (if you haven't been to one of his talks, you've missed out on something!), this time at Higham Hall on Sunday, 19 November from 2 to 8 pm on "Cumbrian High Nights & Holidays".

Future meetings

All Thursday at 7.30 pm in the Yew Tree Hall

14 September 1995	Members' evening
9 November	"A history of the Whitehaven coalfields" by Jean Ward
11 January 1996	"An historical walk around Derwent Water" by Brian Martland
14 March	"The big house" - an example of oral history by Sam Forrester