

# Lorton & Derwent Fells

## Local History Society

A big weekend for the village - and the Society

**BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND**

**25 - 27 MAY 1996**

# THE LORTON FESTIVAL



IN THE CHURCH:

**FLOWER FESTIVAL**

**EMBROIDERY EXHIBITION**

IN THE YEW TREE HALL - ENTRY £1:

**ART EXHIBITION**

**LOCAL HISTORY EXHIBITION**



**OPEN FROM 10 AM UNTIL 8 PM**

**SATURDAY, SUNDAY & MONDAY**



**ALL DAY REFRESHMENTS IN THE YEW TREE HALL**

ALL PROCEEDS TO THE ST CUTHBERT'S CHURCH APPEAL FUND. THIS NOTICE WILL BE REMOVED ON 28 MAY 1996

Please contact any committee member if you have any papers, deeds, photographs, maps etc which you feel could go into our Exhibition!

## Secretary's letter



We're getting quite close to the Lorton Festival which is being held over the late May Bank Holiday weekend (25-27 May) and I hope many of you bring items along to our meeting on 9 May. Here, we hope to finalise the exhibits for the local history part of the exhibition in the Yew Tree Hall. It will be nice if we can get everything settled on 9 May, because it would give Ron George and me a bit of time to prepare the exhibition catalogue. We hope that this will be worth the £1 we propose to charge for it because, for example, Ron has written a short commentary to supplement a dozen or so of the exhibits. I understand that we're still looking for a few more helpers for the Festival weekend - Stewards in the Yew Tree Hall and helping with the car parking - so please contact Ron if you can help.

In my last letter, I mentioned that the Yew Tree Hall can now be blacked out for slide shows but what I didn't mention was that we still have the problem of the light from the overhead radiant heaters. In the cold weather, this is a real problem; either all the heaters are switched off and everyone freezes or some are left on and some people freeze! Maybe with this design of heater there is no answer, but anyone's thoughts and suggestions would be welcome.

I recently visited a fascinating map shop which opened only this January. It is called "Maps of Old Cumberland" in Caldbeck and it got a good write-up in the January "Cumbria" magazine. The owner, Edward King, spent twenty years finding and buying a complete set of the original circa 1860, 6" to the mile, Ordnance Survey maps of Cumberland. There are 87 of them! He now offers copies of these on high quality paper and in different formats. A recent development is that he can now offer copies from other counties (especially Westmorland) and from the 25" to the mile maps. For anyone interested, he has an advert on page 52 of the April "Cumbria" and he will offer Society members a 25% discount. However, a word of warning to map enthusiasts - if you go, you will probably come out having ordered a map!!

Our Treasurer, Daphne, tells me that most subscriptions were paid in good time this year but that a few took a longer time to come in! With only a couple of queries, our membership this year is 62 (four down on last year) which is still very healthy. Thank you everyone.

At irregular intervals, over many years, I see the mountain Grasmoor spelt Grassmoor and a few weeks ago I read an article where the author made the same point. However, he went on to ask why should people do this when you never see Grasmere spelt Grassmere! Answers not to me please!

And finally a call for articles and/or pictures for the next, and subsequent, Newsletters. There's nothing in the "kitty" now so please put your thinking caps on and either jot something down or suggest a quote from an old book or whatever .....thanks! And it would be even better on a 3½" PC or Amiga floppy disk!

## Chairman's notes

In our last Newsletter, I referred to the forthcoming Local History Exhibition and asked for help. The response, so far, has been modest, but very useful; nevertheless, there is



still room for more help, both with Exhibition material and physical help. The insurers now insist on the building's being occupied all the time - so if any of you are night-owls, now we can offer you a fine opportunity to get some undisturbed peace in which to catch up with your writing/reading and local history!! Please do help out if you possibly can with this, or daytime stewarding, or in other ways.

Well, the day is nearly upon us. We are hoping, nay expecting, crowds of visitors, so let us show them what a successful local history society really can do when it puts its mind to it.

Currently, no talks have yet been arranged for next year - is there really no one amongst the members who can give us a talk on their own pet (historical) theme?

I look forward to meeting all of you at our Exhibition and, by the way, the Art Exhibition in the hall and the Flower Festival in the Church will both be worth a visit too, even if it does cost £1 entrance fee to the hall.

## Remembrance

by Heather Thompson

In the first year of my marriage, I put my red poppy on the Cenotaph memorial at County Corner in Keswick and said aloud that if I should have a son, I would name him Derwent.

Derwent Milburn was born on 9 December 1895 at Derwent Terrace, Keswick, to Eliza Elizabeth and Joseph Milburn. He was wounded on 26 November 1917 near Passchendaele and died on 27 November on the French/Belgium border. I seem to have always been interested in war, especially the First World War, and I have often thought about Derwent Milburn's short life.

A visit to St Catherine's House in January of 1987 brought forward a copy of his birth certificate and in February 1987, his death certificate. I knew from the latter that his regimental number was 24003 and that he was a Private. Cause of death was registered as "Death assumed on or since" and, as there was a Casualty Clearing Station at Dozinghem, one may assume that he died of wounds received during fighting.

On 29 October 1992, I was a very clever girl and produced a baby boy of 9lb by section and thereby shared the experience with about eight other people. As I peered round the screen, Andrew said "You've got your Derwent" and I was a Proud Mother. We decided that he should be called Derwent Edwin Thompson Green after Derwent Milburn and my grandfather Edwin Thompson (who also played his part in the First World War).

On 27 November, 1992, without realising the significance of the date, I fulfilled a promise that I had made to myself shortly after my son's birth and took an arrangement of flowers to the gravestone in St John's Churchyard, Keswick that marks the death of Derwent Milburn and said thank you. It was exactly 75 years to the day of Derwent Milburn's death.

I found that I wanted to go and see where Derwent and Grandpa had fought and so, in the spring of 1993, I cajoled Andrew, Megan and Derwent into going to France for a



holiday. It would be exciting I declared, we could see parts of Flanders and the Somme and we may even get around a few of the D-day Beaches. "Only on condition that we spend at least four days near the seaside" insisted Andrew, adding "for the children's sake".

On 27 June, 1993 we visited the Dozinghem Military Cemetery, Westvleteren in Belgium and the grave of 24003 Private Derwent Milburn, 11th Battalion, Border Regiment and showed him our Derwent. The cemetery stands in a clearing of the forest and is planted with willows and Lombardy poplars. It is carefully tended and at the front of each gravestone there are flowers and small shrubs. It is an awesome sight and one can not imagine the conditions in which these men lived, fought and fell.

The 11th Battalion of the Border Regiment was the Lonsdale Battalion, a "Pals" Regiment raised by Lord Lonsdale of Lowther. Near the small village of Authuille, there is a cemetery called the Lonsdale Cemetery. Over the hill is Ovillers Military Cemetery and there lies Captain Arthur Thompson of the Tyneside Irish Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers who died on 1 July, 1916, the first day of the Battle of the Somme when, of the 100,000 men who went over the top that morning, 60,000 became casualties, 20,000 being killed by the end of the day. There were 419,654 British casualties by the time the battle had ended. I had found the area where my Grandpa had searched for three nights in No Man's Land in the hope of finding his brother Arthur and where Derwent may also have fought.

We camped in the village of Authuille that night and at 8.00 pm we rattled our way to the Lonsdale Cemetery. I worried that we did not appear as subdued as we should on approaching that quiet place, but as Megan ran on ahead and the toys jingled in the pram, I thought that a little youthful exuberance wouldn't be minded too much by the local inhabitants. The earth showed clumps of white clay and there were red poppies in the cornfield through which we walked to get to the cemetery. Nearby, we could see Theipval - a huge monument dedicated to the Missing of the Somme. Many Lonsdales have their names carved on the seemingly endless blocks of stone, along with 73,000 other British soldiers with no known grave who died in the Battle of the Somme. This is why "we remember".

"At the end of that tragic day, out of the 28 officers and 800 men of the Lonsdales who had advanced from Authuille Wood that sunny morning, 23 officers and 500 men failed to attend roll-call. They were either killed or wounded and, as the official battalion records show, 'Men could do no more'. The Lonsdales, like all of Kitchener's men, had shown an obedience to duty against all reason".

Colin Bardgett was the inspiration to visit the Lonsdale Cemetery. His book "The Lonsdale Battalion 1914-1918" lists a Roll of Honour of the 11th Battalion. We found two of those listed in that Roll of Honour in the Lonsdale Cemetery:

17492 Lance Corporal John Towers Mounsey (born in Tallentire, enlisted at Great Clifton) was killed in action in France and Flanders on 1 July, 1916. Age 22.

23335 Private William Hogarth (born in Keswick and enlisted in Keswick) was killed in action in France and Flanders on 1 July, 1916. Age 21.

As yet, I haven't discovered the resting place of 16258 Acting Sergeant Joshua Hardisty (born in Buttermere, enlisted at Ambleside) who was killed in action in France and Flanders on 18 November, 1916, having received a Military Medal on 11 November, 1916 as a Corporal.



There is an entry for 17592 Private Robert Moffat who was born and enlisted in Dumfries and was killed in action on 1 July, 1917 in France and Flanders. Is this the same R Moffat who has a gravestone in Lorton which reads "R. Moffat. Killed in Action in France, 1st July, 1916. Lorton's first recruit. Great War 1914. Border Regiment."?

Since my visit to France, I have met a Keswick gentleman who had heard of Derwent Milburn from his Auntie. Mayme McCade was engaged to Derwent and she always laid a poppy at the Keswick Cenotaph for her lost love. She died recently. I wish that I had met her.

My son is a Down's Syndrome child. To me, he's just my Derwent and I hope that he has inherited some of the strength and determination that Derwent Milburn and Edwin Thompson most certainly had. I suspect that our visit to France was, in a way, a cathartic experience for me. I can not forget the rows of men who lost their lives and I am grateful that I have been given my son. We hope to return to France and Flanders next year.

Lest we forget.

Essential reading:

"Birdsong" by Sebastian Faulks

"They called it Passchendaele" by Lyn Macdonald

"Somme" by Lyn Macdonald

"The Lonsdale Battalion 1914-1918" by Colin Bardgett



### Can anyone help?

I'm very pleased to say that we have received three queries from Country Members. Two have come from Susan Laville in West Malvern:



1) *I have come across two (and there would obviously be more in existence) deeds which have puzzled me. In both these cases, it seems as though the family of a recently deceased man brings pressure to bear on his widow to renounce all claims on his estate. Was this usual? Would it be (a) because the family felt that she was a thoroughly bad hat and did not deserve to inherit her late husband's property? (b) Would the widow have signed away her rights in return for a home and her keep until she died? (though there was nothing said about any recompense in either of the deeds) (c) Were her husband's relations acting within the law if the widow were childless and they did not want property to go out of the family if she should decide to eventually will it elsewhere?*

2) *In many cases, when a man died, he would leave his widow a share of the family farm for her lifetime, or would stipulate that his children should financially support her until her death. I may have a nasty mind, but in quite a large number of cases, the widow then died rather soon afterwards.....imagine an isolated farmhouse on the fells in the winter, cut off by snow for a few weeks, and mother not appearing again in the spring, supposedly having died of some distemper. This is just a thought. All these widows may have just died of broken hearts.*



The other query is from Joan Borrowscale in Liverpool:

*On the outside wall of St Cuthbert's Church, Embleton, there is a monumental inscription to my Borranskell ancestors. It is set in the wall in its own niche. The inscription is on blue slate. I have enquired locally in Embleton for information as to why it is in that position. It does look as though, at one time, it may have been inside the church. The first date mentioned is 1758.*

*According to the Rev Ian Rumsey, there were two rebuilding programmes, in 1806 and 1884. I wrote to him and had a nice reply, but he was sorry but he could not help.*

*Can anyone advise me where I might look for documentation which may relate to it? Not in the Carlisle Record Office.*

Any answers, suggestions and guesses to Ron George please. And please keep the questions coming.

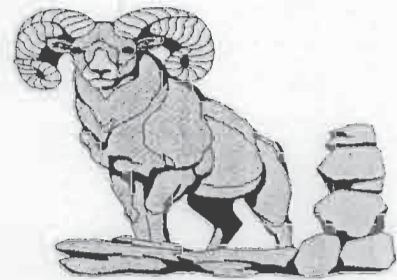


## Sheepscoring numerals

by Walter Head

It is known that there are a number of different ways of counting sheep. My father, who was raised at Low Hollins Farm at Brackenthwaite in the early 1900s, taught us the method shown below.

- |           |                   |
|-----------|-------------------|
| 1 YAN     | 11 YAN A DICK     |
| 2 TYAN    | 12 TYAN A DICK    |
| 3 TETHERA | 13 TETHERA DICK   |
| 4 METHERA | 14 METHERA DICK   |
| 5 PIMP    | 15 BUMFIT         |
| 6 SETHERA | 16 YAN A BUMFIT   |
| 7 LETHERA | 17 TYAN A BUMFIT  |
| 8 HOVERA  | 18 TETHERA BUMFIT |
| 9 DOVERA  | 19 METHERA BUMFIT |
| 10 DICK   | 20 GIGGOT         |



Additional evidence that this method of counting was used in this area was provided by Mr W Browne Esq of Tallentire Hall in 1877. He referred to the above list saying that it was quoted to him in about 1820 by the Ponsonby family who, at that time, lived at Barrow Hall near Borrowdale. No doubt it was in use for a long time prior to that date.

[Secretary] It's nice to see this list again, especially from someone with personal knowledge and with some references; a quick look among my books found Peter Wright's small book called "Cumbrian Chat - how it is spoke". He quotes the Borrowdale version which is very nearly the same as the list here. He goes on to say that they are Celtic numerals which date back "probably over 1,400 years" and "apparently became extinct before the turn of this century". Does anyone know any more about this system and its history?



## Graffiti

by Heather Thompson

Call me old fashioned, but I just can't be doing with windows that don't rattle and moan in the wind and rain of the winter months. Plastic windows? No thank you - hardly the stuff of romance. I want to feel a draft of fresh air throughout the night and not feel as if I have been silently suffocated. And I most certainly don't want the whole window tilting and turning so that I can clean it every week with the greatest of ease.

Everybody tends to get very excited about graffiti. Nowadays, youths of one sort or another spray walls and bridges at random; some are very talented urban artists and are encouraged by local authorities to liven up bus stops and street corners.

It's the same in Loweswater. Spray cans may not be in evidence and it has not always been the youth of today. But then all those oldies were young once and also somewhat inclined to write a name here and there. What a joy to find that someone's grandad scratched a message on a wall 50 years ago.

If you go down to the Crummock Water boathouse and peer at the walls, you can read quite a few messages and names. Joseph Wood was there in 185- and "P H Neill, Brooks and S Clarke Enjoyed a good lunch 7/7/53". "A E Wilson Sept 18 1955", "AA 1932" and "KR 1932" are also on show. Were they fishing, boating or just sheltering from the rain?

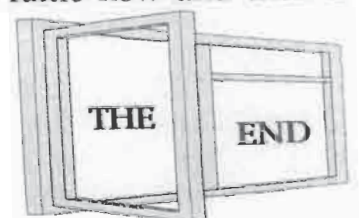
Have you ever visited Barty's Cave in Lanthwaite Woods? "J. Gill, J.F. Burns, Lowca, 18/5/29" obviously did and wrote in a neat hand on the right hand side. It's quite a way from Lowca. Did they travel by car - no car park ticket for them - or did they cycle? Perhaps they were staying in the valley.

At Scale Hill, the guests over the years have written signatures on the dining room windows, more likely than not with diamond rings. In the misty winter mornings, their scratchings stand out as a memorial to those that dined there. Jim Denby, K McNamee, P McCrae, Ian Arthur, Murple, H Maxwell, P Fletcher, W R Steele and L L Steele did the deed in 1928 but RC managed to do it in 1969 before Mr Thompson spotted him.

Perhaps the majority of the dining room signatures were added during Howard Whooster's (sic?) time at Scale Hill. He was the original Red Shadow of "The Desert Song". Some of the crockery in the Lorton village hall has his "crest" on it - even the biscuit plate can hold clues of valley history.

There are also signatures on the windows in what we call the "far lounge" at Scale Hill and some even managed to carve their initials in some of the window surrounds. Clearly AE did in 1863.

So who would want a horrible plastic window? Not I! Thank goodness there are still windows to gaze through that show some signs of past dreamers. Much more exciting and it makes you think. So I suppose you could say that a little rattle now and then is healthier for our bodies and our minds! UPVC? - no thank you!





## Previous meetings

There's little I need say about Brian Martland's "An historical walk around Derwent Water" slide show on 11 January. This combined beautiful slides, all projected in focus, and a sound track of his voice initially, followed by music. A memorable evening on many counts.

Then we had something different and the following is an expanded version of the report in the Link:

On 14 March, we were introduced to the subject of oral history when Dr Sam Forrester, who is a member of the Ambleside Oral History Group, gave us a talk, accompanied by extracts of recordings from their Archive. The subject was "The big house" and we heard various people recalling their lives in those houses in the Windermere and Ambleside areas where there were many servants, both inside the house and outside. They covered the period from the early 1900s through to the virtual disappearance of that way of life in the early 1950s and told some very interesting stories.

For example, children regularly roller skating between Ambleside and Rydal, walking from Ambleside to climb the Langdales and then walking back and, as a servant, working from 6.30am right through to serving dinner at 8pm and clearing up afterwards (mind you, they did have some of the afternoon off, provided they sewed sheets etc!). It was an enjoyable and thought-provoking evening.

The Ambleside Oral History Group was formed in 1976 and has made over 120 recordings covering an enormous range of subjects; its Archive is in the Ambleside Public Library where transcripts of the tapes can be photocopied. When introducing Dr Forrester, Ron George commented that he had long been planning such an exercise and, at the end of the talk, it was clear that there was some interest in setting up a similar group here. Let's hope that it happens soon!

## Cumbria Local History Federation

I have just received the latest Bulletin and May to August Diary from the Cumbria Local History Society. There's no room to précis any of it but I will have a few copies available at our meeting on 9 May for members who would like a copy.



## 1996 meetings

All Thursday at 7.30 pm in the Yew Tree Hall.

**9 May** - Special members' evening and selection for the Lorton Festival

**25-27 May** - "The Lorton Festival": an art and local history exhibition in the Yew Tree Hall and a flower festival and embroidery exhibition in the church (for the church restoration appeal)

**13 June** - AGM plus talk afterwards

**11 July** - "Canals of Cumberland" by Hugh Turner

**12 September** - "So you know your area?" by Mike Davies-Shiel

**14 November** - "Lakeland curiosities" by George Bott