

ST. CUTHBERT'S CHURCH

LORTON



A short History of the Church, the Clergy
and those involved with it.

This pamphlet contains extracts from

"A History of Lorton Valley"

in course of research and preparation.

It is dedicated to the memory of past Parishioners for many of whom through the years St. Cuthbert's was the focus of their village life; and to those, both past and present, who have cared for their church so lovingly.

Ron George,
White Ash,
High Lorton.

November 1995

St. Cuthbert's Church, Lorton

St. Cuthbert's Church, Lorton

Abbreviations

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Rev. Michael Braithwaite
Bishop Ian of Carlisle
Ron George, Churchwarden
Dr. Cliff McGilvray, Lay Reader

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Very little is known of the early years of our Church at Lorton, dedicated to St. Cuthbert. The story regarding the building of various churches so dedicated is fairly well known but nothing is known to show that there was a Christian community this far into the valleys as early as the ninth Century. Let us look at what evidence we do have about the early years of our church at Lorton.

The most striking thing that a first time visitor notices is its strange position, stuck in the middle of valuable prime farm land that would have been in short supply at the time of its building. Why? you may well ask and the answer is, we do not know; but it is interesting, and invites speculation. It is often held that churches are customarily built on high ground, or hills, so that the worshippers may be nearer to God. Whether or not this is so, there is no shortage of high ground round Lorton on which the church could originally have been built. Instead, they chose to build it in the middle of their best and most valuable agricultural land. It lies midway between the twin villages of High and Low Lorton, set in the middle of the half mile of fields which separates the two. It is reached by footpaths to each of the villages, and by the ancient Crossgates Lane, which itself was the boundary between the two principal estates as far back as the twelfth Century and possibly much earlier. The path through the church yard originally went from the extreme eastern corner along the opposite side of the church to that at present in use, to the western gate as now.

As was quite common, the original churchyard was circular, or at least approximately so. There are traces of the original churchyard boundary just discernable to the inquisitive eye. In 1869 John Lucock Bragg of Lorton Hall sold just over one quarter of an acre to augment the churchyard, thus squaring it into the rectangular plot on the eastern side of the central gravel path, which was consecrated in April of that year⁽¹⁾. The churchyard was virtually doubled in size again when Anthony Steele Dixon ceded all that part to the north of the gravel path in exchange for a family burial plot, which he himself occupied in March 1909. This addition was consecrated in July 1903⁽²⁾.

One cannot but wonder whether there might originally have been one village centred on the church, or chapel, and Crossgates Lane, which subsequently became forcibly, or gradually, separated into the two parts we know today. There is incontrovertible evidence that the village was in two distinct parts by the twelfth Century.

Brigham, of which Lorton was a parochial chapelry, was originally one of twenty-one parishes in Coupland Deanery, within the Archdeaconry of

Richmond, and the See of York. With the formation of the Diocese of Chester in 1541, those parts of the Cumberland and Westmorland that were within the Archdeaconry of Richmond were transferred into the new Diocese. Much later, in 1856, Bishop Percy of Carlisle died, and then those same areas of the Diocese of Chester were transferred to the Diocese of Carlisle, a move which had been opposed by Bishop Percy for some years⁽³⁾.

The only physical contact between the Archbishop of York and his flock in the deaneries of Westmorland and Cumberland between 1215-1315 was a passage through them lasting two weeks during 1281 and one night in Kendal in 1294.

Perhaps the next important fact is that as the Parish of Brigham was the northern-most parish of the Diocese of Chester until 1883, the fairly obvious result was that the parish very rarely saw its Bishop. We cannot be sure that Bishop Barnes of Chester came in person in 1578 although in the Visitation report in his Register he wrote "the Chancel at Lorton is in very great decay". He also wrote "this was also true of Brigham and hath been these twenty years"⁽⁴⁾. Even as late as 1789, the Curate of Dean could complain "during forty years constant residence and due attendance on our annual visitation of the commissary of our Archdeacon of Richmond we have not once been favoured with the presence of that our ecclesiastical officer and but deputies and sub-deputies have only sometimes supplied his place"⁽⁵⁾.

Throughout our recorded history the Living at Lorton has, until very recent legislation became a great leveller, been a poor one. So perhaps we should not be surprised to learn that the earliest known mention of a churchman at Lorton was a record of his debts to the treasury. Michael, Chaplain at Lorton, certainly between 1198 and 1200, owed two Marks in 1198 and after paying some of his "tax", still owed 16s 8d in 1200, after which he disappears from the record⁽⁶⁾. In 1267 one John de Lorton, described as "Clerk" (almost certainly a churchman or Priest) was killed by Simon de Crostwik during a politically motivated brawl at Keswick⁽⁷⁾. After an inquisition hearing before one Richard de Middleton, Simon was adjudged to have killed in self-defence, in which case John can hardly be judged to be as saintly as he should have been⁽⁸⁾.

We hear no more of church or any other churchman until 1524 when Lorton enjoyed the presence of a Curate, Alan Peyll, helped by no less than three Chaplains, Henry Wylson, Peter Hudson, and Alan Crakplace⁽⁹⁾. Would that our Vicar in 1995, also a Michael, the first Lorton priest to bear that name since 1198, should be so lucky! These were almost certainly local men, which was generally normal at that time, and strength is given to this supposition when we read in the record of the Visitation of 1571 that "they have no servyce but as they provide themselves". This situation may have

continued until they acquired John Bell in 1598, the first to carry the designation 'Curate' in our records since Alan Peyll. But he too was a local man, with land at Scales. Prior to John Bell the priests were either labelled as Chaplain or 'Clerke'. The latter is very confusing since it was used concurrently for the Parish Clerk, and one is left with the feeling that sometimes they may have been one and the same person. Mabel Wylson left a legacy⁽¹⁰⁾ of a wether to Antoni Borranskill in 1586, and he designated himself 'Clerke Minister', and was possibly the father of John Borranskill who was Curate of Loweswater for about 75 years from 1600.

Right up to the 18th Century we find men entering holy orders to serve in either their own or adjacent communities. Joseph Burnyeat of Lorton, baptised 1756, became Curate of Embleton after ordination in 1779, and was followed there by Oswald Head of Lorton the following year. There are some others, also with local names, described as 'Clerke'. This is confusing because the Parish Clerk was also so described, but in these few instances it seems 'Clerke Minister', as Borranskill was described, is intended. A list of incumbents at Lorton such as can be determined from Wills and Registers is given in the Appendix. At the time of writing we have come full circle as the present Vicar, the Rev. Michael Braithwaite, is a local son.

The early Clerk/Curates were not only local men, but like the majority of their parishioners, farmers and school teachers too. As the latter they were licensed by the Bishop; and by both these two additions to their ecclesiastical duties they augmented their very meagre official incomes. They were necessarily very busy people. Unlike our 20th century custom, they did not hold Communion Services every Sunday, but three times a year⁽¹¹⁾. Their maintenance of the parish registers after 1538 leaves something to be desired, but to two of them - John Bell in 1600 and John Sibson in about 1800 - we have a great debt of gratitude. On top of all their other duties and the jobs ensuring their livelihood on the farm, they laboriously sat down and copied out the old decaying registers. Until 1712 they also had the task of educating the children, although we do not know just what they taught. Until there was a school building, dedicated solely to that purpose, the schooling was undertaken in the church, where the children must have been very uncomfortable in the winter months. John Bell appears again in this guise, when in January 1598 he was left the 8 shillings owing "to the school teacher" by John Fisher in his Will⁽¹²⁾.

Because, like a number of other northern parishes, the parish of Brigham was so large, Lorton was designated a 'Parochial Chapelry', under the mother church at Brigham, and for all practical purposes behaved like a parish church. As the population grew so did the need for new churches and chapels. Distances to existing churches increased to the point where attendance became impractical. So new chapels were built to serve the developing more distant villages; land was not a problem, but a chapel

could not be licenced unless there was a stipend endowment to go with it. During a deposition in a case about tythes, John Fisher said in 1601 *"....there is a Church there called Lorton Church and is commonly called the parishe Church of Lorton. That ther is tow Chappels within the parishe of Lorton called by the names of Buttermire and Wideope and the Inhabitants within the said tow Chappelries come to the parishe Church of Lorton when they have occasion to burie, christen or to come to receive the holy Communion haveinge their health"*⁽¹³⁾.

The dates of consecration of our chapels, which were then still in the Diocese of Chester, were: Lorton 1198⁽¹⁴⁾, Buttermere 1507⁽¹⁵⁾, Wythop 1552⁽¹⁶⁾.

In Medieval and early Tudor times we must remember people were very religiously inclined, so in many cases villagers agreed as a charge on their holdings to pay so much annually, and once agreed these charges became legally binding on the property, not on the individual. This must be the origin of the payments made to their early clerics by villagers of both Wideope and Buttermire. It is also a major reason for the Curates having such poor wages, as the agreed stipends were not increased in spite of the progressive loss of the value of money. In 1523/24, more than half the chaplains in this diocese received £2 per annum or less, whilst the average of all the incumbents was £13.

Lorton entered the Diocese of Carlisle in 1883. Originally this Diocese was centred on the Priory church of St. Mary and stretched southwards to the River Derwent as its boundary. The Priory was dissolved on 9th January 1540 and on 8th May 1541 (just four months later - both dates on the old calender) it became the Cathedral Church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity. Lorton did become a Parish in its own right in 1883. Wythop became part of the Parish of Embleton, and Buttermere a separate Parish in 1884.

The first mention of a "church" at Lorton is as a chapel of the Parish of Brigham in the Pipe Rolls of 1198. The site of that chapel is not known, but Michael was the Chaplain. The earliest known dedication of our church to St. Cuthbert is 1416, which leads to the hypothesis that the church at Lorton (and that at Embleton, also dedicated to St. Cuthbert) can not be directly associated with the monk's wanderings with St. Cuthbert's remains in the 9th Century⁽¹⁷⁾.

In Medieval times, burials were only allowed in the mother church, hence the existence of the so-called "corpse roads", such as that from Loweswater, through Holme Wood, and on to St. Bees. But there were burials at Lorton from beginning of our parish records, 1538, and since Lorton was a parochial chapelry, may well have had burials there since it

acquired that status. Tales also exist of "Corpse Roads" over the fells between Wythop and Lorton, and the latest repetition appeared in 1993⁽¹⁸⁾. Certainly both "Copse Road" and "Widow Hause" appear on the Ordnance Survey map, but by no reasonable stretch of the imagination could flooding of Lorton churchyard be a reason for wanting to be buried at Embleton, which is another folk saying recorded in the same book. Our earliest Will extant, that of Alan Holstock in 1570⁽¹⁹⁾ says "to be buried in the churchyard of Lorton". No Will seen so far that stipulates a place of burial does the testator ask to be buried elsewhere than in the Lorton churchyard. Most of the earliest gravestones now in Lorton churchyard date from the mid-1700s; but the earliest of all is that of Edward Thompson, which reads "who died February 16th 164½", the only known case of the double dating of old and new calendars in our parish records⁽²⁰⁾. There is no known record of a burial within the church. Burials from Buttermere have always been, and still are, at Lorton.

Whilst we are still in the churchyard, there are two other headstones worthy of a visit. Beside the path to the church is the tombstone of Peter Robinson, which carries one of the very few eulogies to be found in the churchyard. Peter was born here in 1780, preached locally for nearly 58 years, and died in 1868. The second stone is to be found some twelve yards north of the seat by the Yew tree. It is raised to the family of Edward Nelson of Gatesgarth. Edward was a shepherd, and at the top of the headstone is carved a ewe with two lambs. This was an early work of the now internationally renowned sculptress Josephina de Vasconcellos, who was a friend of the Nelson and related Burns family of Wood House, Buttermere, whose tombstones are nearby.

For many years and certainly until the early 18th Century, the Chapels of Ease at Withop and Buttermere were served each by their own Reader, the Curate of Lorton coming to preach in each place three or four times a year. For example, Anthony Bank, the Reader at Withop chapel was buried in March, 1606. At this time the Curate held divine service twice each Sunday at St. Cuthberts, with a sermon, and gave Holy Communion three times a year⁽¹¹⁾. An early Reader at Buttermere was Robert Walker of Seathwaite, who served Buttermere for a few years up to 1736. For his service there, he received the magnificent sum of £1 per annum and the customary "Whittlegate" (residence with a local family for a short time before moving to another)⁽²¹⁾. For the three ceremonies of Wedding, Baptism and Burial, however, the people of all the outlying districts, including Brackenthwaite and also, but inconsistently, parts of Whinfell, all came to Lorton. This arrangement changed when, in 1801, Buttermere conducted its own baptisms, and its weddings since 1866.

The earliest known date of Wythop chapel is 1552⁽¹⁶⁾ and that of Buttermere is possibly the chapel of "Blessed Mary Magdalene" at

Rannerdale, mentioned in 1506⁽¹⁵⁾. The Lorton registers suggest and Fisher's deposition of 1601, quoted above, confirms that the offices of baptisms and burials of the inhabitants of those two localities took place almost exclusively at Lorton. So too were at least some of those relating to the localities of Brackenthwaite, Littlethwaite, Rogerscale and Whinfell, though these were in other sub-divisions of the Parish of Brigham; or of Loweswater, which was itself a parochial chapelry of St. Bees until 1893. If John Fisher's testimony is to be taken literally, the marriages at that time were performed in the local Chapel of Ease, either at Withop or Buttermere, presumably by the Curate from Lorton since it was not until 1866 that the Curate of Buttermere was licensed to celebrate marriages, and the Buttermere marriage register dates from then. On the other hand, some at least of these marriages were being performed at Lorton in the early 1700s, even when both bride and groom came from Withop (1708) and from Buttermere (1712). Before 1707 no addresses were recorded at all.

In 1552, King Edward VI had good cause to demand a thorough inventory of church goods. Following the Dissolution, there was much unauthorised personal plundering of church property, and Edward wanted this in the Royal treasury rather than in private hands. The resultant inventory⁽²²⁾ for Lorton Church included "*two chalessez of silv; vj vestements; one cope; one surp clothe; ij prche [parish] belles; lytill belles; ij candilstiks of brasse; cross of brasse; ij alterclothes*": whilst the chapel of Wedope had "*one chales of silv; one vestment; one bel; and one alter clothe*". As much superior church furniture was known to have existed in 1348, it is believed that inventories were falsified, either by hiding the ornaments or with the connivance of the commissioners.

There are a number of instances of bequests to "the church". Amongst the earlier ones, in his Will of 1597⁽²³⁾ Christopher Hodgson left 12 pence" to buy a Table Clothe at Lorton Church, and in 1607, John Bell of Scales asked to be buried "in the church or churchyard of Lorton"⁽²⁴⁾ whilst in 1598 Cuthbert Fisher of Withop left a debt of 20 shillings to the Church at Lorton as well as 6 shillings to the "Chapell of Withope"⁽²⁵⁾.

We do not know whether or not any of our church treasures finished up in the Royal treasure chest but from the "Visitation" records of 1690 to 1711, some 140 years later, and probably after numerous bequests by parishioners in their Wills, or gifts during their lifetimes, we learn that the church was modestly but "decently" furnished with a stone font and cover, Communion Table with rails before it and a fair linen cloth, a reading desk, and a "pulpit with a cushion and a covering fit thereto". This latter presumably refers to what has since been termed a "Triple Decker". For administration of the Sacraments there was a "flaggon of pewter and a decent Bason". The assembled congregation, which would have been everybody except the sick-in-bed heard the lessons and prayers from a King

James version of the Bible and a "Common Prayer book of the largest volume". This same congregation had their names recorded in the parchment Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages which with sundry other papers and tracts was kept in a "strong Chest with two locks". To call the population to Church, "two bells hung in an open Bell-case", and we must presume these were the same bells that were listed in 1552.

These same two bells, which weighed but 10 stone⁽²⁶⁾, were to continue to call the villagers to their devotions, certainly until 1809, when the church building underwent a major reconstruction, and almost certainly until 1870. The two bells then, so far unexplainedly, disappeared and were replaced by the single bell that hangs in the tower today, on a beam incised "Hung 1870". The inscriptions on the bell, now hanging at Lorton, read:-

"H. A. Hervey - Vicar"; "Seaton Co. fecit 1804";
" 4 " 0 " 6 "

This was acquired second hand from Bridekirk, which had itself just finished a complete rebuilding between 1868 - 1870, with a new peal of bells in 1870 under the guidance of H. A. Hervey who was Vicar of Bridekirk from 1795 to 1844⁽²⁷⁾.

In 1698 the "Visitation" records⁽²⁶⁾ the Chappel roof, windows, floor, and ceiling to be in a good state of repair, but the next year the Churchwardens reported the chapel to be "not in so good repair as it ought, but hope it will be shortly". The church was maintained then, as now, at the expense of the parishioners. Then it was done by way of a "rate" assessment. We learn from the court Call Book, 1689⁽²⁸⁾ that for failing to pay "their assessments to the repair of the Church", at Lorton, Anna Mayson of Buttermere was fined six pence, and George Pattinson, possibly of Highside, three pence. It might be supposed that Anna and George were Quakers, who did refuse to pay tithes and church taxes, but no Mayson appears in the local Quaker records, though the Pattinson family of Waterend, Loweswater does in 1684.

There is at this time no mention of pews but of an unspecified number of "seats" which were then commonly fairly roughly made benches, presumably, as was then customary, arranged round the walls and used by those who were frail. (Hence the common expression "the weak go to the wall"). With the comfort expected in our churches today, it is hard to visualise many of the congregation standing or kneeling in little groups, holding their coarse woollen cloaks and shawls tightly around themselves in an unheated, stone-walled and stone-flagged building.

Any lack of maintenance apparent in 1699 had, presumably, been put right by 1711 when the Churchwardens reported the Church to be "in good

and sufficient repair within and without, flag'd plain and even, the Churchyard sufficient fenced and decently kept, and no-one has encroached on it". The Churchwardens were sufficiently satisfied with the internal conditions of their church in 1726 to pay Mr. Salathel, a Court painter, the quite large sum, for them, of twelve shillings and six pence, followed by a further six pence, for "writing sentences in the Church"⁽²⁹⁾. There is now no trace of this work which was, presumably, covered by subsequent rendering of the walls.

The churchwardens' accounts should be a fruitful source of information about the building but there is only one book extant, that for the 18th Century, which is sketchy in the extreme. Apart from details leading up to the rebuilding of the church in 1809, discussed below, it can only tell us that four small sums totalling 6s 7d were paid out, possibly in 1730, to the repair of the churchyard wall⁽³⁰⁾.

Comparison with parishes much further south clearly demonstrates how much poorer, in financial terms, were the majority of northern parishes. St. Cuthbert's was no exception. We have already seen how meagre were the altar furnishings and vestments. A fair picture of the Incumbancy about this period emerges from the Terrier of the "Curacy of Lorton, 1728". It says, quite bluntly "*No dwelling houses, outhouses, Barns etc belong to our Curacy: No Glebe lands belong to our Curate. No lands or Estates*". Furthermore, it continues "*The Tithes of our parish are Sett and Lett to Farmers by the Improrietor and we do not well know the Customs*". It went on to complain "*The Tithes of our parish belong to the Improrietor and are supposed to be worth 40 pounds p.a. and the Improrietor pays to our poor Curacy only seven pounds p.a. We are informed by some of our Ancient Neighbours that formerly there belonged to our Curacy ten pounds p.a. and five pounds of it were lost by a false step made by a Curate here 50 or 60 years ago who rather than he would lose the living he would take five pounds instead of ten from the Improrietor. Therefore if ever the psallery belonging to our Curacy hath been put into the Bishop's Registry at ten pounds p.a. we humbly crave your Lordship's assistance in the matter that for the future we may have what is our due. Our Curate hath no more than seven pounds p.a. for himself and Family to live upon here*". This state of affairs was ameliorated by "*Madam Susan Fletcher formerly the patroness of this place added forty shillings p.a. to our Curacy which made it seven pounds instead of five pounds p.a. This was added about fourteen years since. Our Curate hath for every Christening one shilling, for every marriage one shilling, for every burial sixpence and every marriage with licence five shillings.*"⁽³¹⁾.

We do not know the immediate outcome of this petition. Perhaps, because it was buried in an official document intended for other purposes, it was completely overlooked. Perhaps the Improrietor persuaded the Bishop

he was being fair. Either way, the figure was still a total of seven pounds in 1749, but had risen to twelve pounds by 1766. Perhaps justice was just slow in coming.

By the time of the Visitation held on 14th August 1789, we have a few further details to our picture of our Church life. The Queen's Bounty of twelve pounds had purchased two half tenements in Westmorland, and there was now the interest of two hundred pounds which sum was in the hands of the Governor (of the Queens Bounty). The record adds "We have no furniture belonging to the Chapel worth mentioning except one silver cup weighing 8 ounces". There was no Sexton, and the Clerk was paid ten shillings yearly.

It is not clear from the ecclesiastical records why the church at Lorton should be in rapid decline at this time, but it must surely have been so because in 1805, the building itself was said to be unsafe. The Curate wrote to the Bishop⁽³²⁾ "*the villagers take their life in their hands by entering the building*", and proposed to use a local farmhouse for services pending an improvement in the situation. The Bishop of Chester would have none of this laxity in the approach to worship. He replied testily "*the parishioners would better honour the day following their Minister to a neighbouring Church*". Such as Embleton or Mosser!!

This remonstrance must have fallen on deaf ears and tired legs because the registers show no significant drop in the use of Lorton Church for baptisms, weddings and burials. In fact there was something of a mini rush of weddings and baptisms during the years 1805 - 1808, although the numbers of these fell off during 1808 and 1809. There was much heart searching about this time, as what best to do, about the church fabric. Church attendance was already in decline, though we have to wait till the church census of 1851 for real evidence of this. But unlike the situation in 1986 when the decision was essentially "do we allow our church to decay completely and eventually reduce the valley to having two, and then one, instead of three churches?"; in 1806 the question was to rebuild or substantially repair?

"*the said Chapel is in a ruinous State and in many parts thereof very ill and irregularly pewed and that your Petitioners being the principal and major part of the Inhabitants and Parishioners are desirous to pull down remove and take away the present old Chapel and in the place or as near thereto as may be to cause to be erected and built a new Chapel with a Steeple at the west End thereof and in the Body of such new Chapel to erect new Seats or Pews in a regular and uniform manner with a Pulpit, Reading Desk, Clerks Pew, Font, and Communion Table that such Pews may be awarded and allotted and assigned by Joshua Lucock Bragg Esq., the Rev. William Sewell, Minishter of Wythop, and The Rev. John*

Sibson, Minister of Lorton, to such of your Petioners and other Inhabitants..... as shall make application for the same and subscribe and contribute to the Expense thereof."⁽³³⁾.

This petition was signed by Bragg, Sewell, Sibson and 56 parishioners. In passing we note that all but eight of them signed their own name. It seems reasonable to draw the conclusion from this that the new building of 1809 would be built adjacent to rather than on top of the earlier foundations.

However, whilst the positions of older gravestones suggest this could not have been so, there is written proof that complete rebuilding was never intended in which case the building was perhaps not quite so ruinous as Curate Gibson made it out to be. It is recorded that one couple from the neighbouring parish of Embleton, which church was, in 1806, "at foundation level" chose to be married at Lorton rather than elsewhere⁽³⁴⁾. At the Vestry meeting of 25th June 1806, 19 senior members of the parish voted "to have it (i.e. the Chapel at Lorton) completely repaired"⁽³⁵⁾, and a restructuring of the existing building was made, services continuing in it meanwhile. However, there is a single reference in the Registers of adjacent parishes. On 5th July, 1807, Loweswater marriage register records that "Joseph Dixon, the parish clerk of Crosthwaite and Elizabeth Lancaster of the parish of Lorton were married in this Church owing to Lorton church being under repair". This work which was completed in 1809 may have been mostly accomplished between June 1807 and June 1808 during which period there were no weddings - the one service which might have been determined by the state of the building, but baptisms and burials were spread evenly throughout the period. No record of the work is known to exist⁽³⁶⁾ but a possible hint of their extent became apparent in 1988-89. A form of damp mould appeared on the surface of the internal rendering in the nave, and took the pattern of the underlying stone work showing a distinct cut-off line horizontally six feet from the floor, sloping upwards to the top of the wall by the chancel arch. It was particularly noticeable on the South side. We do not know what this marking represented but it seems possible it could be the dividing line between the older and the 1809 rebuilding - see photograph Nr. 2. Our own St. Cuthbert's was one of the 15 that were rebuilt during that first decade of the 19th century, which was as nothing to the numbers progressively increasing to the massive total of 855 rebuilt and 2335 newly built in England by 1870⁽³⁷⁾.

Let us return to Lorton, where the rebuilding was not completed without a squabble regarding the shape and size of the tower. John Lucock Bragg had promised to build a tower for the newly repaired church, it was to be "three yards square and nine feet above the rigging of the said Chapel". Before the work was completed Bragg ordered the work stopped because the appearance was more "like a chimney". Apparently the

parishioners then asked permission to replace the "tower" with "an open bell-case for two bells, as it was before", which they thought "would tend to frustrate the capricious whims of our village Squire"⁽³⁸⁾. Eventually however, the same meeting decided that "a small tower-steeple twenty yards square, when measured on the outside, and three yards higher than the rigging of the roof, shall be erected at the West end of the said Chapel, at the expense of the Parish"⁽³⁹⁾. And that is what we have today. Some evidence of this episode, though not easily explained, came to light during the repairs to the tower in 1989. See photograph Nr.1 below showing stonework and the obvious subsequent modifications to it. The clock adorning the west face, bare since 1809, was presented by Mrs Dorothy Robinson in 1995 in memory of her late husband Basil of Low Lorton.



Photograph Nr. 1 - A montage showing the baptistry wall with the various modifications made to it, with possible evidence of a stairway, long since removed, into a lower chamber in the tower.

The lower tower was built with a mix of beakstones and slate on both faces with a rough mortar-less infill of stones and rubble making a total thickness of some two feet or more. The outer walls and those within the baptistry were rendered, to cover the very rough stonework. Higher up the tower there are three courses of red sandstone blocks surmounted by poor quality red clay bricks. The nave is presumed to be entirely similarly constructed as

is the base of the tower although the form of damp mould which appeared on the internal rendering took a more regular form, suggesting a pattern of underlying block stonework. This showed a distinct cut-off line which is visible in photograph Nr.2. Notwithstanding all this rebuilding, for which no record of the authorities or costs has been found⁽⁴⁰⁾, a further £120 was spent on the building between 1840 and 1872⁽⁴¹⁾, so the present state of affairs at the end of the 20th century is by no means a new one. Although no direct documentary evidence has been found, we know that the present chancel was a later addition, certainly between 1869 and 1903, most likely in 1880. In 1903 the West window was inserted as a bequest of Steele-Dixon of Lorton Hall. The window was made by Mayer of Munich, and is apparently much liked by parishioners and visitors alike, in spite of the fact that the well known architectural commentator Dr. Nikolaus Pevsner has called it "indefensible", but failed to say why⁽⁴²⁾.

The Vicarage at Lorton was built about 1885, and about this time⁽⁴³⁾ the Glebe lands comprised some 18 Acres of a farm at Firbank in Westmorland, and an Allotment of 3 Acres on Killington Common, together with half an acre field at Lorton and 23 Acres at Blindbothel. Tithe rent charges for the Township amounted to twenty-six pounds per annum and the Earl of Lonsdale in whose hands was now the Right of Presentation paid a further six pounds per annum. To this was added the interest on 2,814 pounds five shillings and five pence payable by the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty.

Among the goods of the Church listed in 1890 were:-

One bell, one Harmonium, sold and replaced by a Lizz American Organ, one brass Alms Dish and two oak Alms boxes. The two Alms boxes are still in regular use today, but what happened to the two bells? did they get into the new tower? After several only partially successful repairs and a long period of idleness, the Lizz Organ was finally removed to storage in 1987. It had been replaced by an electric instrument kindly donated by Dr. Robin Rougetel-White, a brass plaque to acknowledge this gift is found on the north wall of the baptistry. In its turn it was replaced by a fully state-of-the-art electronic organ in 1992.

The year 1911 saw some improvements in the Chancel towards which a Sale of Work raised nearly £46. The altar was replaced as a gift of Mrs Burrows of Broomlands and was carved by Hawtle of Southport. The panelling was executed by James Mirehouse who was then living at Fernwood, whilst in 1912 this was enhanced by the four panels carved by George Pallister, the Vicar. It was by one of those happy coincidences when additional panelling was inserted in 1990 to fill the gap in the panelling when the altar was moved away from the wall, that the work was done by Mr. Bott of Cockermouth. He it was who discovered the plaque with the above information, which had been left in the void, a felicitous

happening for him as he himself was related by marriage to the earlier artisans. This plaque is now beside the door of the church.

In spite of its comparative youth, the building has been giving considerable trouble towards the end of the 20th Century. Coupled with a special Thanks-giving year on the occasion of the 1300th anniversary of the death of St. Cuthbert, in 1987 the PCC launched an appeal for funds. The total sum exceeding £20,000 that was raised by donations, covenants and special events in the village was employed in restoring the building, especially the tower and west end where persistent entry of rain was ruining the structure and rendering. The PCC also decided to improve the amenities for the congregation, so a kitchen and toilet were installed.

This work was done during the period 1987 - 1993. It was during this work that evidence to support the argument regarding the tower in 1809 was uncovered. The main work was completed in February 1991, just three days before a special service of Thanksgiving, presided over by Bishop Ian of Carlisle, on 28th February; see photograph Nr. 4.

One happy result of the several building changes from 1809 is that the present structure has fine acoustics. Since 1983 a number of concerts by top ranking instrumental performers have graced the transept-cum-stage and enthralled capacity audiences. These concerts, inspired by and organized by our organist Pat Williams, have become almost an annual event of note in the district. The new electronic organ was purchased at a cost of some £8,000 which was raised by the community and the fine instrument inaugurated at a concert given by the Carlisle cathedral organist, Ian Hare, on April 28th, 1992.

Our little church of St. Cuthbert's is simple and unpretentious, but since 1994 it has one crowning glory, the wonderful set of kneelers and communion rail cushions. These have been designed and worked by a dedicated group of valley ladies, who have spent some 4,600 hours of detailed needlework. A note-book relating the story of the kneelers is kept in church for the benefit of visitors.

Unfortunately, all our hopes that we had finally eliminated the problem of rain getting into the tower have proved premature. At the time of going to press we are again planning a large operation - no less than to rebuild the top section of the tower. For this end funds are again urgently needed; this pamphlet is one of the means of raising money, and it is hoped that readers will feel generous, and help us ensure that this lovely, peaceful little church on an historic site remains available for future generations.



Abbreviations

C&W O.S.	= Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society, Old Series.
CRO	= Carlisle Record Office.
Ch. R. O.	= Chester Record Office.
I.P.M.	= Inquisitions Post Mortem.
LDFLHS	= Lorton and Derwent Fells Local History Society.
LRO	= Lancashire Record Office, Preston.
PRO	= Public Record Office, London.
rcg	= Ron George Archive.
VCH	= Victoria County History.

References

- 1 - Plan of old Lorton churchyard and area added, together with dated consecration document dated 5th April 1869. CRO un-referenced **. Copy in LDFLHS archive.
- 2 - Plan of 1869 Lorton churchyard with addition consecrated 25th July 1903. CRO un-referenced **. Copy in LDFLHS archive.
- 3 - Bouch, C.M. L. "Prelates and People of the Lake Counties - History of the Diocese of Carlisle, 1133-1033; Kendal 1948 p.393.
- 4 - op. cit. p.210.
- 5 - op. cit. p.390.
- 6 - PRO Pipe Rolls 10 Richard Roll 10 M.1 (1198) : 1 John Roll 15 M.1d (1199) and 2 John Roll 17 (1200) : (transcribed in VCH).
- 7 - PRO Calendar Inquisitions Post Mortem. Misc. Vol.1 1219-1307 No. 217.
- 8 - PRO Calendar Patent Rolls, Henry III 1266 -1272 p.213 [Mem.21].
- 9 - PRO Subsidy Rolls 1524 (Class E 179).
- 10 - LRO WRW C / rcg W.012.
- 11 - Ch.RO EDA 3/3 Bishop Porteus' addedendum to Bishop Gastrell's "Noticia" (1779).
- 12 - LRO WRW C / rcg W.007.
- 13 - Exchequer Depositions Cumberland 44 Elizabeth Hillary, Nr.12.
- 14 - Victoria County History, Vol. 1 p.38.
- 15 - Derwent Fells Manor Roll 1506 -7 Roll 12 p.9.
- 16 - C & W O.S. viii 1908.
- 17 - St. Cuthbert and Cumbria. C & W Vol. LXXXIV, 1984, 73.
- 18 - "The English Lakes", Ramshaw and Adams, pub. The Amadeus Press Ltd. 1993; page 52.
- 19 - LRO WRW C / rcg W.156.
- 20 - The head stone is to be found 10 yards north from the church door.



Photograph Nr. 2 - The 8am congregation during repairs, 18th November 1990. Also showing the wall markings referred to on page 10. Left to right - Rev. Michael Braithwaite, Mrs. Lois Gravett, Mrs. Ermine Thom-Postlethwaite, Mr. David Gratton, Mr. Richard Smith, ? , Mrs. Dora Kennon, Mrs. Rosemary Smith, Mrs. Barbara Gratton, Dr. Cliff McGilvray, Mrs. Pat Williams, Mrs. Stella George, Mrs. Eva McGilvray, Mr. Myles Huck.



Photograph Nr. 3 - The Churchyard in Springtime, 1994

- 21 - Pamphlet re St. Jame's Church, Buttermere, pub. 1945.
- 22 - Exchequer Q.R. Church Goods 1/54 6 Edward VI. Transcribed in C&W 1884-5.
- 23 - L R O WRW C / rcg W.022.
- 24 - op. cit. W.016.
- 25 - op. cit W.007.
- 26 - Visitation record. Found with Bishop's transcripts. Copy in LDFLHS archive.
- 27 - Pamphlet of Bridekirk Church - undated, but post 1983.
- 28 - Manor of Lorton Court Call Book, 1689 - now in CRO un-referenced **
- 29 - CRO. PR.28/4. Churchwardens Accounts, from 1701, 25th June 1726.
- 30 - op. cit.
- 31 - Ch.R.O. EDA 3/1 p.91 Miscellaneous Register , 7th May 1627.
- 32 - Copy of letter in LDFLHS archive.
- 33 - Petition by Vicar and 58 parishioners: copy in LDFLHS archive.
- 34 - 20th May 1806: Robert Hetherington and Sarah Fletcher: Lorton marriage register.
- 35 - See note 29.
- 36 - A thorough search of the Bishop of Chester's Register, made in July 1992 by this writer, failed to produce any evidence of faculties for Lorton church (nor for Brigham, Buttermere, Wythop, Embleton; nor Loweswater and Mosser) from early 1500s through to 1820. [This was not due to the Register being in heavily abbreviated semi-legible Latin].
- 37 - Bouch.
- 38 - The original reference for this statement appears to be lost. The quotation here is taken from a pamphlet "Lorton and its Church", possibly written by E. R. Denwood; published in May 1946.
- 39 - CRO.PR.28/2.
- 40 - See note 36.
- 41 - Bouch, Appendix IX.
- 42 - Pevsner, Nikolaus. "The Buildings of England" - Cumberland, Penguin, 1967.
- 43 - See note 26.

** Documents originally held in the Dean and Chapter of Carlisle archive were under the class reference EM.5. They are now in the CRO but not yet catalogued.

Appendix - List of Lorton Clergy and Clerks *

1198-1200	Michael	Chaplain	Pipe Rolls 1198, 1200
1307	John de Lorton	Clerk	Cal. I.P.M.
1524	Alan Peyll	Curate	Subsidy Roll 1524
1524	Henry Wylson	Chaplain	Subsidy Roll 1524
1524	Peter Hudson	Chaplain	Subsidy Roll 1524
1524	Alan Crakplace	Chaplain	Subsidy Roll 1524
1570	Richard Nycholson	Clerk	Will of Alan Holstock 27 Feb 1570
1579	William Borranskyll	Clerk	Will of John Banks of Withop 1579
1586-1596	Anthonie Borranskill	Clerk Minister	Buried October 1596
1596-1608	John Bell	Curate	Buried here 21 July 1608
1586			Inventory Peter Peel elder 23 November 1586
1597			Will of Christopher Hodgson 1597
1598	Peter Peel	Clerk	
	Henry Stubb	Clerke (Village Clerk)	
	Henry Stubb	Clerke (Village Clerk)	
	Thomas Feile	Clerke (Village Clerk)	
	John Wilkinson	Clerke (Village Clerk)	
1593-1602			Buried here 2 July 1602
1602			Inventory Richard Wilkinson Nov 1602
1614-1664	Martin Hudson	Curate	Will of Ellen Wilkinson 14 Feb 1614
1646	Thomas Watson	Minister	B Nighthingale "The Ejected of 1662", Man. 1911
1662			Letter of Adm'n of Leonard Fisher 24 Jan 1662
1665-1675	Robert Rickerby	Minister	Inventory John Fisher 6 Oct 1675
1684-1689	William Sanderson	Curate	Inventory Thomas Peile 6 May 1684, Parish Reg 1689
1692-1700	Thomas Pearson	Curate	Parish Register
1697			Buried here 28 Feb 1697
1698-1744	Richard Fletcher	Parish Clerk	Quarter Sessions 1698; buried 1744
1700-1707	William Bow	Parish Clerk	Registers; died Aug 1707
1708-1728	Patricius Curwin	Curate	Registers; later Curate of Buttermere; buried Dec 1758
1729-1740	William Lancaster	Curate	Buried here 8 Jul 1740
1741-1800	James Clarke	Curate	Buried here 26 Jan 1800
1744-1756	Thomas Fisher	Perp Curate	
	Richard Crosthwaite	Parish Clerk	

Appendix - List of Lorton Clergy and Clerks (continued)

1786	Peter Nelson	Ass Curate	From Embleton
1791	James Bell	Ass Curate	Also of Embleton; stipend £38**
1791-1792	Thomas Brownrigg	Ass Curate	Also of Embleton; stipend £25**
1793-1796	William Wright	Ass Curate	Also of Embleton; stipend £20**
1796-1800	Osburn Littledale	Ass Curate	Also Perpetual Curate of Mosser; died 1823
1800-1820	John Sibson	Perp Curate	
1820-1821	Jonathan Stainton	Ass Curate	From Emblrton
1820-1821	John Messenger	Ass Curate	Also Curate of Withop; stipend £35**
1821-1824	William Sewell	Curate	Licensed 6 Oct 1823
1824	Fletcher Fleming	Perp Curate	
1825-1864	William Armistead	Curate	Parish Clerk
1862-1895	John Moffat	Curate	Also Curate of Embleton
1864-1872	A Reginald Perring	Curate and	
1872-1891	William Samson Davis	Vicar from 1891	
1891-1901	W Henry Cockett	Vicar	
1901-1904	William Copeland	Vicar	
1904-1915	George Fallister	Vicar	
1915-1940	William Lewis	Vicar	
1940-1947	Arthur Baillie Service	Vicar	
1947-1954	William Warwick Farrer	Vicar	
1954-1958	Arthur William Johnston	Vicar	
1958-1980	James A Woodhead-Keith-Dixon	Vicar	And Honorary Canon of Carlisle Cathedral
1980-1981	Interregnum		
1981-1987	David Edwards	Vicar	
1988-	Michael Braithwaite	Rural Dean	And Honorary Canon of Carlisle Cathedral

* "Clerk[er]s" have been shown as either "clergy" or Parish Clerk as far as can be determined from the context within the references cited.

** Details from Ch.R.O. EDA 1/9



Photograph Nr. 4 - At St. Cuthbert's Restoration Thanksgiving Service, 1991. Left to right - Myles Huck, Acting Churchwarden
Rev. Michael Braithwaite
Bishop Ian of Carlisle
Ron George, Churchwarden
Dr. Cliff McGilvray, Lay Reader