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Society News

Message from the Chair

There's a lot being offered to Members during the next six months, as will be seen from the programme set out on page 2. There are two new developments to which I draw particular attention. Adam and Mary Baker have kindly stepped forward to establish a House History Group (see page 4), and steps are also now under way to proceed with the establishment of an Oral History project. In addition, Derek Denman is making excellent further progress with developing the Society's Digital Archive of Historical Sources -

please see the Society's website for full information about this important resource.

While there's much to celebrate in this, the 30th year of the Society, which currently boasts a record number of members, I must sound an important note of caution. Like many small organisations the Society depends on people volunteering to help in various ways - as indeed they do - but it also depends on people taking responsibility for leading and coordinating the running of the Society. The present committee, despite being under strength, has managed to put together a very full programme for Members in 2023, but more help is needed in the future if the Society is to remain viable.

At a 'special' committee meeting that took place in early March members attempted to take as objective a view as possible about the Society's future. This was partly prompted by a recognition that several people in key positions on the Committee will be stepping down from their respective roles in a year's time. So, replacing them in 2024 (including myself, by then having been in the role for ten years if elected Chair in June this year) is becoming an urgent issue for the Society. Indeed, the current prospects need to change during 2023 if the Society's future is not to be seriously compromised in 2024.

One of the decisions made at the meeting was to circulate to Members a Questionnaire for completion prior to the AGM in June. The object is to find out what Members wish to get out of membership and what they can offer to help take things forward. Please find the Questionnaire accompanying this edition of the Wanderer. I hope that a large...p.3

... from p.1. number of Members will complete it since that will greatly assist the committee to decide on how best to take things forward into the Society's fourth decade.

Finally, I draw to Members' attention that there will be a social event at Armaside House on the afternoon of 20 August. So please make a note of the date in your diaries. Further details will be circulated in due course.

Historical Walk in Allonby. Thursday 6 July 2023

Many of you will be familiar with the village of Allonby, its splendid views across the Solway Firth, sandy beaches and spectacular sunsets. But how much do you know about Allonby's history and heritage?

Would you like to hear about its fishing fleet, smoking houses and sea-water Baths visited by the great and the good of Cumberland? The Quaker philanthropists who built almshouses and a Reading Room? Among the eminent people associated with this small village were the scientist and inventor Captain Joseph Huddart FRS, the village shoemaker Joseph J. Heskett, who was also a writer and

photographer, the artists Percy Kelly and Sheila Fell.

If you would like to join us and enjoy a guided walk with **Pam Jones of the Allonby Heritage Group**, please book a place by emailing Lena Stanley-Clamp at Lstanley.clamp@gmail.com, tel. 01900 336542.

Please indicate whether you would like to book a place for lunch. There are also picnic tables on the seafront path. Please note that numbers are limited, reservations will be on a first come, first served basis.

Fishing Boats at Allonby by William Henry Bartlett, circa 1830-50



Postcard of the Reading Room at Allonby



Programme

10.25 Meeting in the seafront car park at North Lodge, at the far end of the village.

10.30 Start of the walk.

12.00 Lunch at the **Tea Room and Café** on the Square. The menu includes vegetarian and gluten-free options.

13.00 Optional visit to Christ Church at the south end of the village.

Lena Stanley-Clamp

House History Group 2023

As some of you may remember, the Society used to have a group looking specifically at house and property histories. A new House History Group (HHG23) is being established with the aim of helping members learn about traditional buildings and to research their own house or a property of particular local interest. It may be that the structure and architectural design is of interest or perhaps the families and people that lived there, or indeed both. HHG23 will provide regular updates to the Committee and to members of the Society.

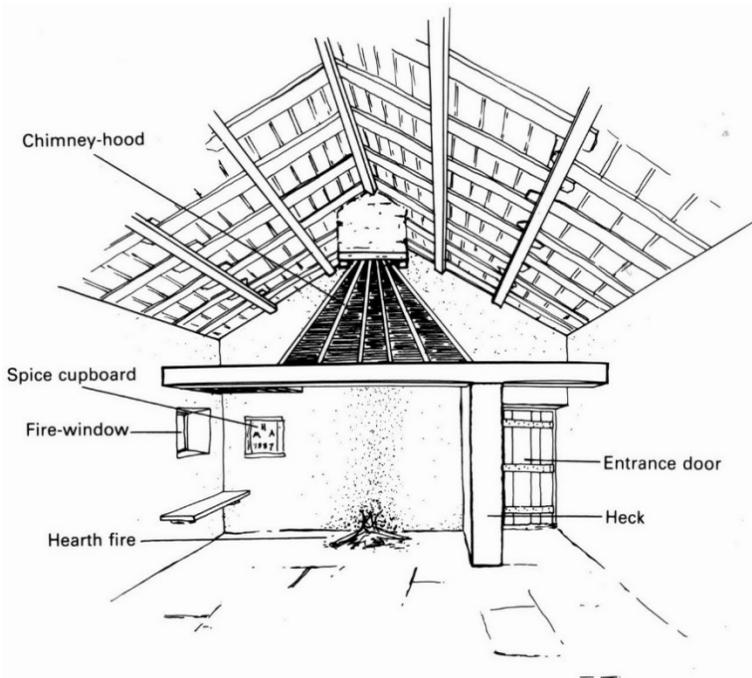
Members may recall the open day last August at Woodlands, Rogerscale, to celebrate the bicentenary of 'The Painting House'. Adam and Mary Baker hosted the event after having researched the history of Woodlands. There was a write up in the Wanderer and it also featured in the Bernard Bradbury Memorial Lecture, Cumbrian Artists: Fells, Mists and Waterfalls by Dr David Cross. A picture

even made it into the Evening News & Star (courtesy of Lena Stanley-Clamp)!

Adam and Mary Baker will be leading HHG23 and will have access to the Society's local records and be able to assist members with the location of research material. Meetings will take place from time to time and will be informal, social occasions where information sharing can take place.

The inaugural meeting will take place on a date to be arranged. Communication methods can be discussed and agreed upon from thereon in. HHG23 would also be looking to hold specialist events - perhaps an outing with a traditional or period building expert to an old farmhouse somewhere for example.

If you are interested in the history of your house or just generally interested, please do get in touch with Adam and Mary via adambaker993@gmail.com or 07771 977482, in the next couple of weeks, they'd be delighted to hear from you.



**A typical
inglenook of
the
seventeenth
century;
burning wood
and peat,
and smoking
meat.
From
*Traditional
buildings and
life in the Lake
District*, by
Susan Denyer.**

Historical Walk at Pardshaw Hall and Mosser

Plans are under way to repeat a walk last offered in August 2007. It follows footpaths, some of which can be extremely muddy, crosses styles, some of which call for a substantial step up and includes some rather steep gradients. We will take it steadily to allow time for everyone to enjoy. Parking in Pardshaw Hall is limited and car-sharing would help.

We will meet in the hamlet of Pardshaw Hall and make our way past the oldest property, now called The Old Hall, which gave its name to the hamlet. As we get going, a glance back will allow a glimpse of a lime kiln up on the limestone crags above the hamlet. We will head on footpaths across the fields and the moss, which gives Mosser its name, and cross the boundary of Black Beck heading for Mosser. Black Beck now marks the boundary of the Lake District National Park and has historically been the

St Michael's chapel at Mosser, photo Sandra Shaw.

boundary between the townships of Pardshaw in Dean Parish and Mosser now in Blindbothe Civil Parish.

We will then pass Underwood, home of the diarist Isaac Fletcher, whose diaries from 1756 to 1781 have been transcribed and edited by our president, Angus Winchester. Isaac Fletcher was active in the Quaker movement on a national scale and highly involved in his local community, preparing legal documents for his neighbours, which can still be seen today. Next, we make our way steeply uphill to the fell church of St Michael's, built in 1773, upgraded in 1925, but still without any utilities. We return by road, through Mosser Mains and Gill Brow, before pulling steadily back up to Pardshaw Hall, enjoying roadside features, such as gate stoups and a dry bridge.

When we get back to Pardshaw Hall, refreshments will be served in the Meeting House and there will be a chance for anyone who has not done so, to appreciate this listed building and the carriage house opposite.
Sandra Shaw



The Bernard Bradbury Memorial Event 2023

Landscape and Memory – the Cocker Valley revisited in words, music and pictures. 30 September 7.30pm, Kirkgate Centre

Four former Cocker mouth school friends with a lifelong love of the Cocker Valley, its lakes and fells, present a unique personal exploration of this special corner of the Lake District.

Historian Angus Winchester, musician/composer David Ashworth and photographer Rupert Ashmore reunited recently to walk from the confluence of the Cocker and Derwent rivers in Cocker mouth town centre up the Lorton Valley to the source of the Cocker in the fells beyond Buttermere.

The friends present the photography and original music (live and recorded) inspired by their journey, with readings by Angus Winchester from his 2019 book *The Language of the Landscape – a Journey into Lake District History*. They are joined in conversation, exploring their memories and reflections, by their former classmate, journalist and broadcaster Marion Bowman.

For many, not just these four, the valley is their 'special place'. Even people who have never lived there have a strong sense of belonging. Why does it mean so much to them?

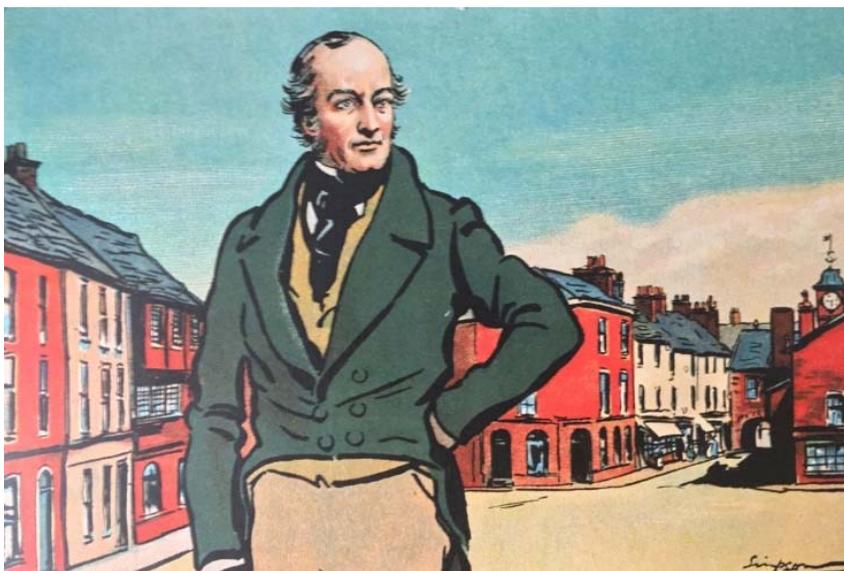
This special event in memory of Bernard Bradbury Memorial is hosted by Cocker mouth and District Civic Trust and supported by the Society. A booklet is included in the ticket price of £7.50.

Meeting Reports

Talk: 'The Cumberland Bard: Robert Anderson of Carlisle' 12 January

Dr Sue Allan gave a virtuoso performance to an unfortunately small live audience (there were several more watching online) on a very windy evening at the first meeting of 2023. Her book on Robert Anderson was published at the beginning of the Covid pandemic (copies were available), and she illustrated it for us not only with a professional array of slides but also by singing some of Anderson's songs and accompanying herself on the

Robert Anderson by Simpson



concertina. Sue Allan, who was born and raised in Cumbria, is no stranger to the Society, having addressed us on 'D'ye Ken John Peel' three years ago.

Robert Anderson was a contemporary of William Wordsworth, who possessed a couple of his books and was influenced by him. He and his family lived in Carlisle, and he like them worked in the textile industry; as a 'pattern cutter', he exhibited manual skills, as well as his creative and vocal talents. Sue Allan told us that the lady next door used to sing Scots ballads, and Anderson was much influenced by the work of Robert Burns, whom he hero-worshipped. His first poems were not in dialect, but in 1801 he turned to Cumberland dialect poems, at a time when there was a considerable fashion for dialect poetry, and his best poems were written between 1801 and 1808. For a couple of years at that time he lived in London, and his songs were among those performed in Vauxhall Gardens, a popular resort for people of all classes, where there was a particular fashion in 'Scotch songs' - meaning songs from any part of northern Britain. Anderson moved to Belfast during the two years 1808-10, at a period when the textile industry was relatively stronger there. Generally, though, his base was Carlisle, where he mixed in a wide range of society. But in his later life he became depressed as a result of drinking heavily, and his work is less good.

The poems and songs of Robert Anderson were widely published and circulated. 37 of them are included in a contemporary edition of 500 'songs in dialect'. A two-volume subscription edition of his poems appeared in 1820, a quarter of them dialect ballads. 'Chap-books' of his compositions, cheap paper editions with an illustrated cover, were popular, using woodcuts by the well-known artist Thomas Bewick of Northumberland. His works figure in the 'Universal Songster', a popular compendium circulating in the early 1800s. He was known in particular as a chronicler of rural sports and festivities, such as Rosley Fair, and the 'clay daubin'

of newly-weds' houses as part of their welcome to society. Sue Allan spoke especially of Anderson's 'Bleckell Murry Neet', on the Merry Night celebrations held at the White Ox at Blackwell in Carlisle. She also showed us some of the musical scores written by Anderson, who was a composer as well as a writer of poems.

Interest in Anderson's work did not end with his death in 1833. There was for example a revival of general interest in folk songs in the early 1900s, and Ralph Vaughan Williams made a collection of folk songs from Carlisle in 1906 - most are by Anderson. The 'Cummerlan Neets' went on into the 1950s, and 'Bleckell Murry Neet' would have been performed. A Lakeland Dialect Society was launched in 1939. Anderson's 'Sally Gray' is among the tracks on a recent disc of a performance by Steve Wharton of Lake District songs and poems in my collection. The Cumberland Bard lives on, and we are very grateful to Sue Allan for bringing him into sharper focus for us, in so dramatic and personal a way.

Mark Elliott

Talk: 'Lake District Landscape and Geology' 9 March

I would not call myself even an amateur geologist, but I am very interested in the subject, although, living where we do, who isn't? Knowing a bit of geology is a great way to get the most out of fell walks and entice you onto old fells by new routes with fresh views.

Although the Lake District seems to be overflowing with very knowledgeable retired professional geologists, there's perhaps no one better than Dr Ian Francis to cover this subject, as not only is he a professional geologist, but he was also born in Thackthwaite, Loweswater. You may remember his name from the November 2022 issue of *The Wanderer* when Michael Barron reviewed his recent co-authored book of the same title as this talk.



Aerial view from above Haystacks looking north-west over Buttermere and Crummock Water. Photo: Stuart Holmes.

Perhaps wisely for a short talk, Ian chose not to describe in detail the sequence of geological processes that formed the Lake District, but focussed on how the landscape has been moulded by the most recent Ice Age (100,000 to 12,000 years ago). The talk was illustrated by superb photos (like the one above) taken by Stuart Holmes of glacial features such as U-shaped valleys, tarns, hanging valleys, waterfalls, erratics and roches Moutonnees. Re-sculpting continued, and still continues, as eroded materials were re-deposited and rock slopes failed. The growth and then loss of trees has led to poor, thin soils and rapid run-off of water, the adverse effects of which we have sadly experienced several times already this century.

You can't give a talk about Lake District geology without mentioning the name of Jonathon Otley of Keswick. In response to a question, Ian described how he was the first person to bring some order to our understanding of local geology in the early nineteenth century,

broadly dividing the area into the northern Skiddaw slates, the central Borrowdale volcanics and the southern Windermere Supergroup, all framed by carboniferous limestone. How much easier his job would have been if he had been able to see the landscape from above (as we can today using drones), illuminated by slanting light to show the subtle form of rock surfaces and ground undulations.

If you want to learn more about Lakeland geology, the book by Ian and his colleagues is a great place to start, but do think about joining the Geology Group in Cocker mouth U3A (membership only £10 pa) and/or the Geology Course run by Skiddaw U3A. Ian and his co-authors also have a website, <https://www.lakedistrictgeology.co.uk>, which describes the book and gives additional information such as local excursion to sites of interest. Last, but not least, don't forget the Cumbria GeoConservation Group, which is part of the Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre, <http://www.cbdc.org.uk>, which is a mine of geological information and has an interactive map showing you where their 280 sites are located. Happy geologising!
Leslie Webb.

Articles

A History of the Lorton Reading Room 1879 – 1947

by Lena Stanley-Clamp

A modest cottage in Low Lorton was once a hub of social life long before there was a village hall in Lorton. In its heyday, the place combined the functions of a reading room and a village club. In the earliest years of its existence the Reading Room was located in the Lorton School.

The idea of reading rooms as a means of self-improvement for the lower classes became popular from the mid-19th century. Many such institutions were founded throughout the country and continued to exist in the 20th century. The establishment of reading rooms went hand-in-hand with the promotion of temperance among the poor by the clergy

and philanthropists. The reading rooms and free public libraries were intended to provide an alternative to the pub as illustrated in the cartoon below *The Rivals, Which Shall It Be?*

Urban reading rooms tended to be controlled by working men as, for example, the huge Lord Street working men's news room in Carlisle established in 1851. Ten years later Carlisle had six such working-class institutions and between 800-1,000 members.¹ In contrast, rural reading rooms were funded by the clergy or philanthropic landowners, and their members tended to be lower middle-class tradesmen. The patrons were exclusively male as they were in the pubs, the reading rooms were intended to supplant. There were very few exceptions until women began joining reading rooms during World War One. Rural reading rooms gradually declined in the 20th century with the



¹ <https://brewminate.com/reading-places-for-newspapers-and-periodicals-in-victorian-england/>

democratisation of the countryside and wide access to new leisure opportunities.²

The Cumbrian Archives catalogue does not reveal any documentation on the founding or the functioning of a reading room in Lorton. However, the British Newspaper Archive provides interesting, if fragmentary, sources of information from 1879 until 1905. Two oral history interviews document the room's existence from the late 1920s to the late 1940s.

The first mention of a Lorton Reading Room can be found in an announcement in the *West Cumberland Times* of 17 May 1879. It gives a lively picture of the forthcoming annual picnic in aid of the Reading Room to be held in the Yew Tree Field on 23 May 1879. We learn that the Lorton Amateur Brass Band was engaged for the occasion and dancing, sack racing and other sports were also on the programme. Conveyances were due to leave the Old Hall Hotel in Cockermouth for Lorton at 3 pm. It was clearly a big annual event for the village and the town; it also indicates that the Reading Room had been in existence for some years.

In the early 1890s a number of fundraising events took place. A concert was held with great success in February 1890.³ 'The schoolroom was crowded by a thoroughly appreciative audience and the programme gave entire satisfaction.' The report refers to the existence of a committee. At its head was the village squire and major benefactor William Lancaster Alexander (1821-1910). As Mr Alexander had not returned from London in time, it was J. W. Robinson, vice-president of the Reading Room, who took the chair on that occasion. John Wilson Robinson of Whinfell Hall (1853-1907) was a farmer landowner and a celebrated rock climber. His biographer, Michael Waller, mentions in *A Lakeland Climbing Pioneer* that the Reading Room was one of

Robinson's close concerns, which aligned with his support of the Lorton Christian Temperance Society and the Band of Hope.⁴

In March 1891, the historical lecture by John Bolton on 'Lorton and Loweswater Eighty Years Ago' was held in the Lorton school under the auspices of the Lorton Reading Room and the proceeds were handed over to the room's funds.⁵ The lecture was based on recollections of elderly inhabitants, including Mrs Lancaster, who was born Dinah Iredale at Low Hollins in 1802. J. W. Robinson of Whinfell Hall was in the chair. Among the notables present was Mr Dixon of Lorton Hall who seconded the vote of thanks. A few years later, Anthony Joseph Steele Dixon (1862-1909), would play a major role in the future of the Reading Room.

The formation of a new Reading Room at Lorton in 1895

The demise of the old reading room coincided with the construction of the schoolmaster's house and other school buildings in the 1890s.⁶ The *West Cumberland Times* told its readers that 'For many years Lorton possessed a reading room, which, though neither comfortable or modern, yet served its purpose. Situated at the end of the school it has now fallen prey to the builder. Its past career was considerable if chequered; and its fate was accepted without any outward symptoms of regret. For some years it has not been used, owing to a lack of support and comfort.' By October 1895 it was time for action and the head master of Lorton school, George Oglethorpe – 'who had a hand in every movement of village life' – convened a widely attended meeting where an almost unanimous decision was made to form a reading and recreation club.

The club started 'under brightest auspices': J. W. Robinson was appointed

² C. King, 'The Rise and Decline of Village Reading Rooms' in *Rural History* 20 (02), October 2009

³ *English Lakes Visitor*, 15 February 1890

⁴ Michael Waller, *A Lakeland Climbing Pioneer. John Wilson Robinson of Whinfell Hall*, 2007

⁵ *Carlisle Patriot*, 6 March 1891

⁶ Tim Cockerill, 'Cumbrian Lives: William Lancaster Alexander, 1821-1910', *Wanderer*, November 2022.

chairman, Mr W. Thompson, treasurer and Mr Oglethorpe, secretary. Messrs J. Burns, Thomas Clemitson, H. Pearson, T. Pearson, H. Sandwith, and E. Thwaite joined the committee. Subscriptions have been promised by Mrs Lumb, Mrs Whiteside, Miss Harbord, Miss E. Habord, Mr Alexander, Mr Armstrong (Armaside), Rev W. J. Crockett, Mr A.J.S. Dixon, Mr Wilson and Mr Wallace. It was agreed that gambling, smoking and disorders of any kind would be prohibited. It should be noted here that games were an integral part of most reading rooms.⁷

Things progressed at a swift pace: at a meeting held the following week the committee recommended that the subscription be three shillings yearly; that *the West Cumberland Times*, *Whitehaven News*, *Liverpool Weekly Post*, *Weekly Courier*, *Strand Magazine*, *Comic Cuts*, and *Pearson Weekly* be taken; that Mrs Hunter be engaged as cleaner: that Mr Mark Borthwick be added to the committee, since Mr Robinson could not stand 'owing to his duties taking him so much from home'.⁸

In January 1896, a meeting of the members was held in the Sunday School to consider the offer by Mr A.J.S. Dixon of premises in Low Lorton. This two-storey cottage adjoining the Packhorse Inn was then part of the Lorton Hall estate owned by the Dixon family.⁹ After Mr Dixon presented his proposals and conditions (the cottage was to be let to the club at a nominal rent), the offer was unanimously accepted. Mr Oglethorpe, who chaired the meeting, reported on the financial position which was 'eminently satisfactory' from every point of view. It was confirmed that the management of the rooms will be in the hands of the committee consisting of the Rev W.H. Crockett, Mr Dixon, Mr J.D.

Pearson, Mr W. Thompson (treasurer) and Mr Oglethorpe (secretary).¹⁰

A few weeks later, on 10 February 1896, the rooms were formally opened by Mr Dixon with a large company present. The report in the *West Cumberland Times* gave a detailed description: 'There are two spacious rooms, the upper one being used as a reading and bagatelle (a popular board game) room, and the lower as a billiard room. the upper room has been furnished in a style seldom seen in a village room. Mr Dixon has carpeted the room and the Rev W.H. Crockett has supplied pictures and a set of chess men and board. Books were donated by Miss Harbord of Lorton Park and Mr Armstrong of Cheadle, Manchester.'¹¹

The annual subscription was four shillings.¹² On the advice of his wife, Mr Dixon decided there should be no charge for playing billiards or bagatelle, but suggested billiards players should pay an extra shilling a year towards repairs and renovation. The rooms would be open every evening from six to ten, and the reading room was to be open also on Sunday afternoons.

Who frequented the Lorton Reading Room?

The new rooms were provided for the members and generally 'the young persons of the parish', which begs the question as to whether they were frequented by women. There is evidence of female benefactors supporting the institution or subscribing to it, but there is no mention of women frequenting the club. Oral history testimonies recorded by the Ambleside Oral History Group remark that reading rooms were usually the preserve of the working man, and women only went in for special occasions.¹³

⁷ *West Cumberland Times*, 23 October 1895

⁸ WCT, 8 January 1896. Robinson's farm at Whinfall was not doing well; he had to attend to his business as a land agent in Keswick.

⁹ It can be seen on the Survey Map of 1827. It was an outbuilding of the Holme Farm acquired by George Lucock Bragg around 1840 and by Thomas Dixon in 1881.

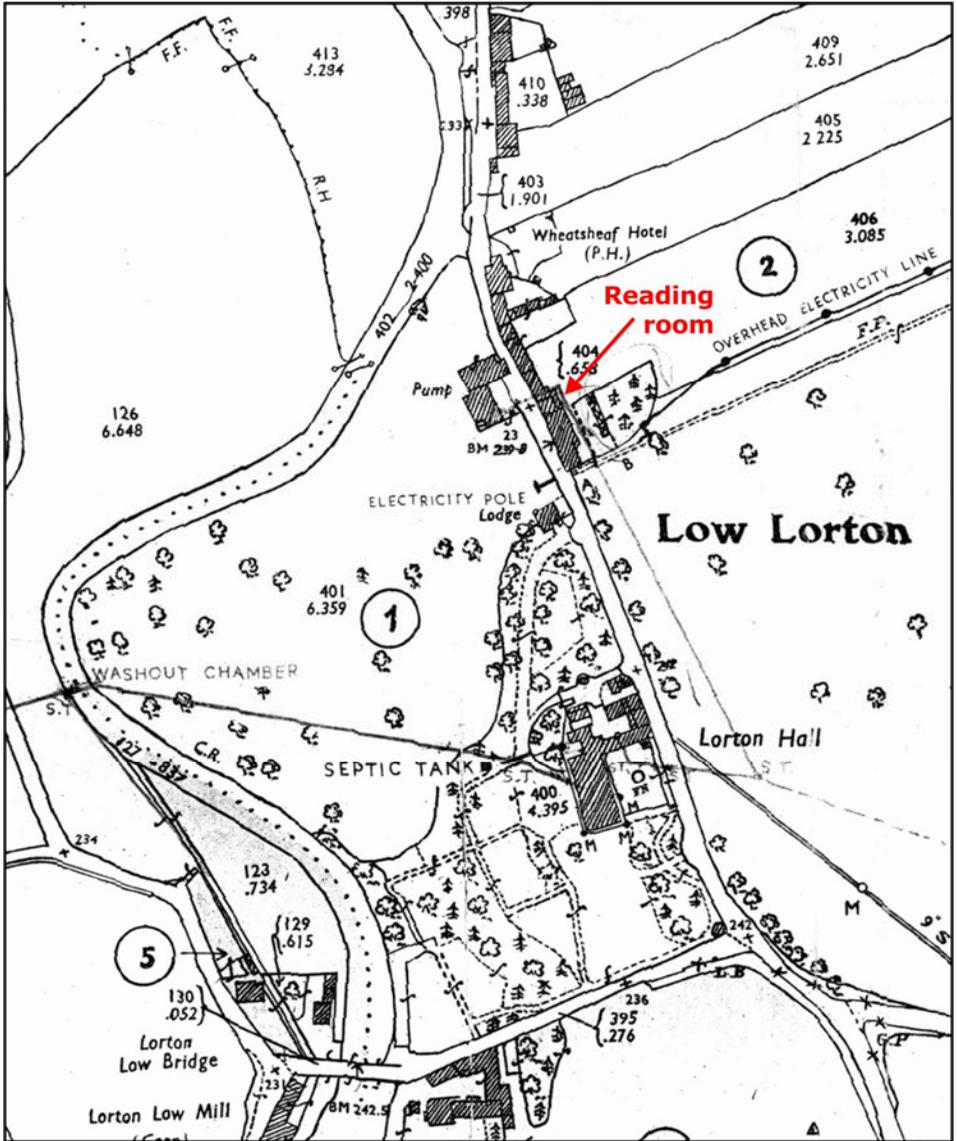
¹⁰ WCT, 15 January 1896

¹¹ WCT, 12 February 1896

¹² The value of 4 shillings in 1900 was £15.63 according to the National Archives currency converter.

¹³ Ambleside Oral History Group, Leisure, Part One,

<http://www.aohg.org.uk/twww/leisure1.html>



Extract from Figure 1 of the particulars of sale for the Lorton Hall Estate, for sale on 22 August 1947, L&DFLHS Archive.

In the years following the formation of the club, the *West Cumberland Times* referred to it as a well-patronized,

flourishing institution where enjoyable evenings were being held. The reports focused on billiard competitions, the prizes that were offered and won. The names of players who took part in competitions between 1896-99 tell us something about the social mix in this club where farmers, agricultural labourers, a master tailor,

masons and joiners rubbed shoulders with the gentry, clergy and the headmaster of Lorton school.

Competition prizes presented by members add some colourful details. On one occasion the first prize was a billiard cue given by Mr Dixon, the second prize was one pound of tea given by W. Young and the third prize was a couple of rabbits from Mr. Dixon. On another occasion prizes included a pipe and its case, two walking sticks and a duck.

Annual fundraising concerts followed by suppers and balls were held to contribute to the funds. The *West Cumberland Times* provided lively reports of these events: 'At the concert on 2 February 1900 the performances were of unusual merit and a Lorton audience, usually cold and unappreciative, has seldom been more enthusiastic. ... Messrs Hardisty¹⁴ and Thompson were Masters of Ceremony and the committee looked after the door and refreshments. Mrs Moffat had charge of the splendid supper and was assisted by her daughter, Mrs Borthwick and Miss A. Hodgson with Messrs G. Oglethorpe and J.D. Pearson carving.' Half of the proceeds were shared by the committee to the appeal for the relief of the sufferers of the Boer War.¹⁵

At a meeting of members in November 1900 plans were made for billiards, dominoes and bagatelle competitions at Christmas. A special committee was appointed 'to handicap and manage generally'. Mr Oglethorpe introduced a discussion on the condition of the place and especially the state of the billiards cloth, the cues and the ceiling which was not at all creditable. He thought some effort should be made 'without calling on Mr Dixon for funds.' It was decided that a special fundraising effort would be made on the occasion of the forthcoming annual concert and ball.

By January 1905, a *West Cumberland Times* report was headed 'Lorton Reading Room and Church Institute' which suggests they were by then somehow combined under the chairmanship of the Vicar, Geoffrey Pallister. However, in the absence of the chairman, it was Mr Oglethorpe who presided and it was business as usual. Oglethorpe commented with pleasure on the general good conduct of the younger members. He referred to the extra expense entailed in re-opening the room after paying all the [refurbishment] expenses and thanked the caretakers Mr and Mrs Walker for their care. The balance sheet was unanimously adopted and a committee consisting of Mr G. Oglethorpe, M. Borthwick, J. Allison, D. Brown and J. Jackson was elected. Thanks were offered to Mr and Mrs Dixon for the use of the rooms and 'their liberality in other directions.'¹⁶

Memories of the Reading Room in the inter-war years

From then on reports of the Lorton Reading Room disappear from the Cumbrian newspapers but we know it continued to exist for the benefit of the community until 1947. In an interview conducted in 2000 for the oral history project Spirit of Cumbria, Charlie Allison (1922-2012), a retired forestry contractor and a founder member of the Lorton & Derwent Fells Local History Society, shared his recollections of life in the village. Charlie was born at Holme Cottage, a service cottage for Lorton Hall owned by the Dixon family and later bought by his father Joseph Allison.¹⁷ Holme Cottage is located across the road from what was then known as the Men's Club.

'The Men's Club across the road was donated by Lorton Hall; it was a splendid club with a downstairs and an upstairs

¹⁴ See Derek Denman, 'Joseph William Hardisty 1874-1966, Joiner of Low Lorton', *Wanderer*, February 2021 on Hardisty's life and family history.

¹⁵ WCT, 7 February 1900

¹⁶ WCT, 14 January 1905

¹⁷ Derek Denman, 'A History of Lorton Hall, the Estate and its Owners', *L&DFLHS Journal* 59, February 2017.



Low Lorton street opposite Holme Cottage, looking south. The shop and house had replaced the reading room/men's club. Beyond that is Packhorse Cottage and its barn, now demolished.

room, downstairs billiards and snooker, full-size table; upstairs there was dominoes, backgammon, cards. Some wonderful characters used to go to that place. I'll mention one now - Bill Pearson. Bill was not quite all there but not far off. He was a man who always wore clogs and his trousers never met at the waist. There

was a piece of string connecting two buttons together and he didn't wash very, very often. He used to sit by a "Tortoise" stove in that upstairs room, getting smellier and smellier as the evening went on. Incidentally, in that upstairs room, Lorton Hall used to furnish them with all sorts of reading material which consisted of *The Tatler*, *Punch*, *London Life*, stuff like that.' He added that a newspaper was also provided, and the periodicals were read by all. Mr Allison remembered that he was playing billiards in the Men's Club

when the war broke out on 1st September 1939.¹⁸

The biggest change in Lorton that Charlie Allison had seen in his lifetime was brought by tourism. He remembered Lorton of his childhood as a working village with a sawmill and tradesmen's workshops: joiners, blacksmiths, and a shoemaker.

An interview with Eunice Norman née Lennox (1920-2007) rounds off the picture of the Reading Room in the inter-war years. From 1927, Eunice spent her childhood in the family home at the Wheatsheaf Inn when her parents took over the inn. Eunice and her husband took over the running of the inn from about 1939.¹⁹

'The next building was the village club and billiard room. A favourite haunt of the local farm workers and villagers of all ages on winter evenings. Always a competent team, taking part in the billiard league and doing very well, I believe. A meeting room above accessed by wooden steps outside was also used for Christmas domino competitions etc. My outstanding memory of the billiard room was being sent to fetch my father who was needed at home, when on opening the door, seeing these ghostly figures, in a haze of cigarette and tobacco smoke, mixed with belching smoke from the solid fuel stove which always seemed to blow in the wrong direction.'²⁰

Eunice Norman had many happy recollections of children's games, young people's parties and concerts at the Yew Tree Hall. In 1996, she concluded: 'We are now a village of mainly senior citizens. The small cottages which used to house local young families, along with the majority of the small farms in the area have been put to other uses.'²¹

The Reading Room & Recreational Club came to an end in 1947 with the sale

by auction of the Lorton Hall Estate. Lot 2 included the cottage that had housed the Reading Room for over 50 years. The sale particulars confirm the nominal annual rent for the cottage was one shilling.²² Lot 2 was bought by Joe Kennon, a builder from Cocker mouth who converted it to living accommodation and installed a village shop on the ground floor.²³ In 'A walk through High and Low Lorton in the 1950s', Walter Head recalled that there was still a billiards club upstairs in the barn adjacent to the Wheatsheaf.²⁴

Conclusion

From its beginnings in c.1870, the Reading Room housed in the Lorton School was a popular institution judging by the scale of fundraising events held in its support. In 1896, a new Reading Room and Recreational Club was established in premises in Low Lorton provided by the Dixon family who also made available the newspapers and other periodicals. At the turn of the century the Reading Room and Club was a social hub where men from different backgrounds shared their leisure time. In the later decades of 20th century, the changes in Lorton's economy and population, and new leisure opportunities altered the character of the club and the profile of its members.

A further change came with the establishment of a village hall in the Jennings malthouse at the end of 1910. The Yew Tree Hall became the centre of community life where a wide range of activities would take place that included the participation of women. Many reading rooms became community halls, some were converted to a different use but often retained the name keeping their former existence in the collective memory.

¹⁸ L&DFLHS oral history transcript, 'Spirit of Cumbria', 24 June 2000, L&DFLHS Archives

¹⁹ The 1939 Register via *Findmypast.co.uk*

²⁰ Eunice Norman's recollections of Lorton, 'Spirit of Cumbria', 11 May 2000, L&DFLHS Archives

²¹ Eunice Norman's recollections in 1996, L&DFLHS Archives

²² Sale Particulars of Lorton Hall, L&DFLHS Archives

²³ Fiona Lambrick, 'A History of the Shop in Low Lorton', *Wanderer*, February 2022

²⁴ L&DFLHS *Journal* 47, February 2011

The Manor and Mills of Branthwaite, parish of Dean

by Roger Asquith

Introduction

After centuries at the heart of Branthwaite village life, corn and sawmilling petered out in the 1970s, long after most such mills had disappeared without trace. Keith and Carol Thomas rescued it from further decline and dereliction in 1984 and 'Branthwaite Mill Garage' was established. Also rescued from a bonfire of history was a stack of documents and ledgers. To a well-known authority on Cumbrian water mills it merited few words, simply 'a mid-19th C corn mill'.¹ No hint of historic interest or inspiration, which is why this investigation only developed as a last resort, Covid-lockdown project! Now, in 2023, there is no confusion about which mill is Branthwaite Mill. Back in the mid-nineteenth century it was known as 'Branthwaite High Mill (corn)', to distinguish it from 'Low Mill (corn)'. At different times 'mill in Branthwaite' could also have referred to one of two fulling mills, a woollen mill, a sawmill, a paper mill, an iron forge/smithy or a colliery (Figure 1). Although the primary focus of this article is Branthwaite Mill, or 'High Mill (corn)', it attempts to put that mill, the manor and the other Branthwaite mills into context.

The ancient parish of Dean comprised the manors of Dean and Branthwaite, the former manor included the townships of Dean, and Ullock/Pardshaw/Deanscales. The parish church, St Oswalds, has served the two manors since the twelfth century. Ullock mill and Branthwaite mill were the manorial mills to which customary tenants were tied.² It appears that Dean (parish and manor) was an ancient, pre-conquest,

entity. When territory was assigned at the start of Norman rule in around 1100, Branthwaite Manor was created from part of Dean, the Lord thereof taking the name de Branthwaite. As a key asset, enabling the lord to extract income from his tenants, there will have been a corn mill on the banks of the Marron since soon after the foundation of the manor, eight to nine hundred years ago. A simple structure in early times, it will have been rebuilt and enhanced on a regular basis, in all probability on or near to its present site.

Part 1. The Skeltons' Manor of Branthwaite

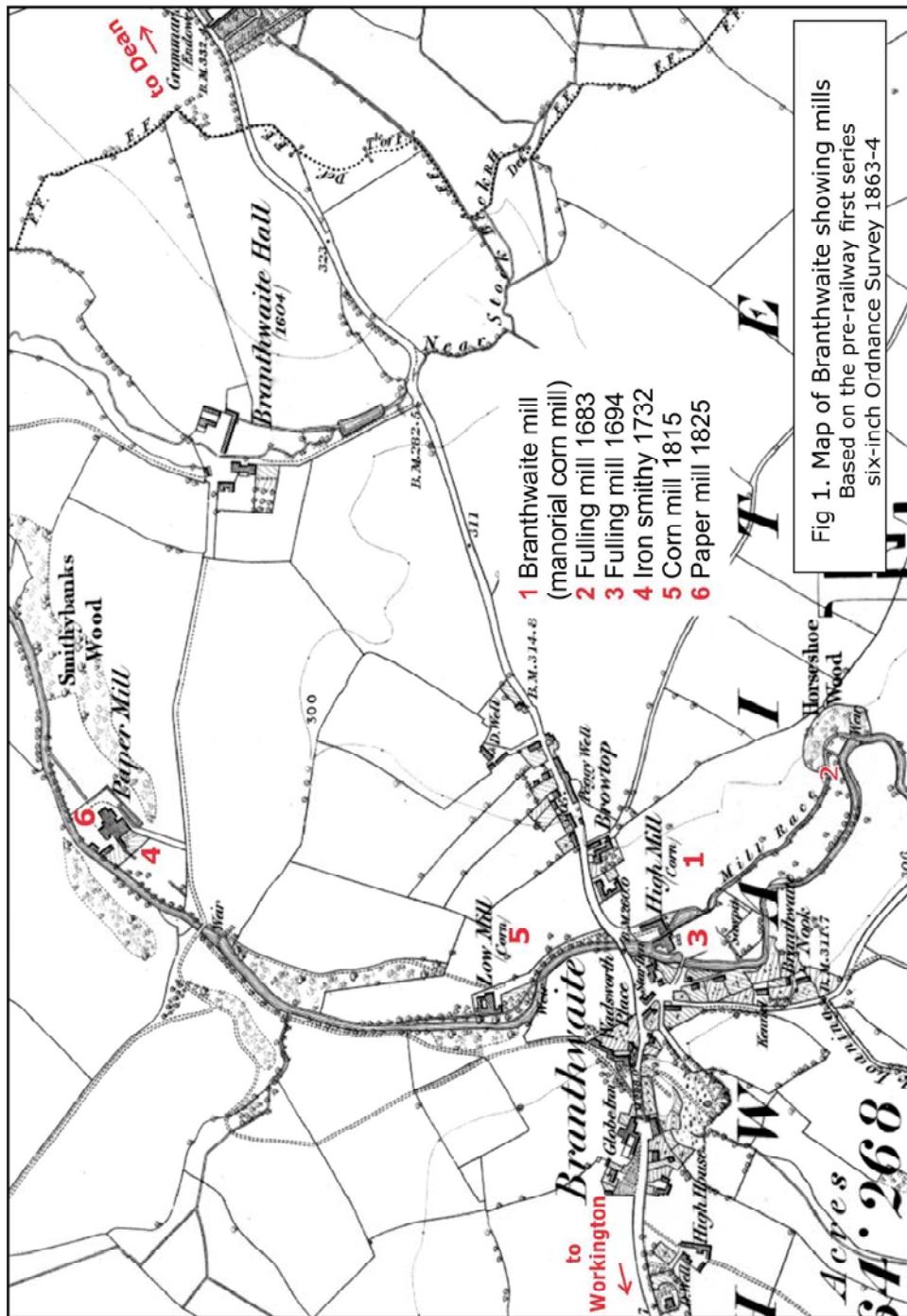
The Skeltons at Branthwaite Hall (mid-fifteenth century until 1702).

Branthwaite Hall, with a pele tower dating to the mid-fifteenth century and additions in the early seventeenth century, was the home of the lords of the manor, the Skelton family (Figure 2), until the start of eighteenth century. Wills and other documents provide an insight into the lives of the Skeltons and their customary tenants during a period of change after 1680. Until 1700 the Lords were resident and farming their own land, as well as benefitting from '30 messuages, 10 cottages, one water corn mill, one fulling mill, one dovecote, 200 acres [arable], 300 acres meadow, 200 acres pasture, 20 acres woodland, 200 acres moorland, £10 rent and all services and work of the tenants'.³ Perhaps in part due to the falling value of rental income in real terms, the Skelton wills (1667-1696) show debts and legacies exceeding the inventory of farming stock, household goods, and cash assets. Each succeeding lord struggled to settle the debts of his predecessor. In April 1686 thirty-seven named tenants who held their messuages, tenements, and

¹ J.D. Marshall & M. Davies-Shiel, *Industrial Archaeology of the Lake Counties*, 2nd Edition, Micheal Moon, p. 239.

² The mill of Dean manor in Ullock village and known as 'Ullock mill' was in a detached portion (no. 10) of Dean Township.

³ TNA/PRO/CP25/2/773/2JACII Easter, Henry Skelton release to Richard Patrickson and Ewan Christian the Manor of Branthwaite.



- 1 Branthwaite mill (manorial corn mill)
- 2 Fulling mill 1683
- 3 Fulling mill 1694
- 4 Iron smithy 1732
- 5 Corn mill 1815
- 6 Paper mill 1825

Fig 1. Map of Branthwaite showing mills
Based on the pre-railway first series
six-inch Ordnance Survey 1863-4

and cottages according to the customs of the manor agreed to pay £1000, or about 80 years rent, to Henry Skelton, lord of Branthwaite manor, to be released from 'rent, fines, boone service or work daies, the service of making and repaireing gates, warr services, warr money, walke mill silver, toll souken, mulcture, dry mulcture, mill and kill dues whatsoever, greenhue or greenhue silver'.⁴ The tenants thereafter were at liberty to sell their holdings without the lord's involvement, cut wood, use stone from their own land and use other corn and fulling mills.

At about the same time another agreement, dated Easter 1686, between Henry Skelton and Richard Patrickson of Calder Abbey, the father of Henry's wife Bridget, for the sale of Branthwaite manor for £500, was not implemented.⁵ Henry's will of 1689 showed the £500 to be unpaid, by which time 23 years old Bridget and two infant children had died of smallpox, and brother John Skelton was the new lord. Younger brother Francis, who succeeded to the manor in 1696, would appear to have been the last resident Skelton at Branthwaite Hall, in 1702. His will/inventory of 1704 shows no farming activity and that he was living in Workington. His wife, Mary Skelton, nee Senhouse of Netherhall, was to receive income from the manor for her natural life – once the significant debts had been paid off.⁶ The nominated trustees of the will, overseeing Branthwaite manor, were Richard Lamplugh of Ribton and Charles Orfeur of Netherhall and Plumbland Hall, Mary's maternal grandfather and stepfather respectively.⁷

Branthwaite Manor and the 1715 Jacobite Rebellion.

The Skelton family were, partly at least, of the Catholic faith. In 1678 a warrant to search the houses of 'Popish Recusants' included the name of Thomas Skelton of Branthwaite Hall.⁸ About 1710 Mary Skelton, widow, nee Senhouse, became Mary Butler, wife of Richard Butler of Rawcliffe Hall in Lancashire. He fought at the Battle of Preston in 1715 on the Jacobite side, was taken prisoner, tried and condemned to death.⁹ Held in the notorious Newgate Prison he died in November 1716 before the sentence could be carried out. Fortunately for the other eight Lancashire Catholics sentenced with him they were later pardoned and released.

By setting up the Forfeited Estates Commission, FEC, the government of George I sought to financially weaken the position of the northern Roman Catholic gentry. 'Popish Recusants and Papists' were required to register their names and list their land holdings. To this end Branthwaite Manor 'being part of the estate of Richard Butler of Rawcliffe in Lancashire' was surveyed in October 1716.¹⁰ Following her husband's death Mary Butler was registered and her Branthwaite property was listed.

'The Capital Messuage or Mansion house orchards, gardens and all that demesne called Branthwaite Demesne with the appurtenances.' The occupier was John Wilson, the rent £71 per annum. He also occupied a 'parcel of ground' called Nether Dykes at £8 15s.

Branthwaite mill, 'A water corn mill and two kills [kilns], a house and garth or garden on the backside thereof and a parcel of ground called the Wallet and the

⁴ TNA/PRO/C5/365/3, Fearon v. Skelton, 24 Apr 1686.

⁵ TNA/PRO/CP25/2/773/2JACII Easter, Henry Skelton release to Richard Patrickson and Ewan Christian the Manor of Branthwaite.

⁶ WRW/C/R246B/2, Will of Francis Skelton, 16 Feb 1704.

⁷ John Burke, *A Genealogical & Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 1, p. 217.

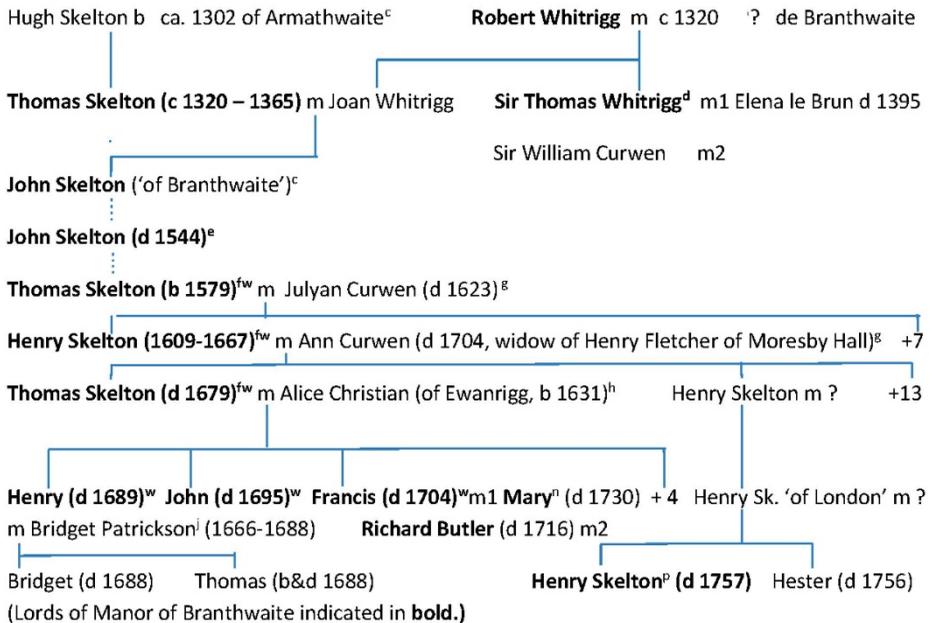
⁸ CASK/WDRY/ 5/2063, Warrant to search houses of popish recusants inc. Thomas Skelton of Branthwaite, 1678.

⁹ B. Gordon Blackwood, *Lancashire Catholics, Protestants and Jacobites During the 1715 Rebellion*, published online by Cambridge University Press, 16 Sep 2015, Note 54.

¹⁰ TNA/PRO/FEC 1/188, Butler, Richard, of Rawcliffe, co. Lancaster, Henry Gibb's survey of the manor of Branthwaite.

Fig 2. Lords of the Manor of Branthwaite.

Lordship descended through de Branthwaite family 12th-14th C^a. Then by marriage c 1320 to Robert Whitrigg of Little Bampton.^b



a. James Wilson, *Register of Priory of St. Bees*, Surtees Society, Vol CXXVI, 1915.

b. Angus J. L. Winchester, Ed., *Cumbria: An Historical Gazetteer*, p.120.

c. F.H.M. Parker, 'The Development of Inglewood and an Account of the Skeltons of Armathwaite' *TCWAAS*, 1912 Vol.12, p. 15.

d. C. Roy Hudleston, *Cumberland Families and Heraldry*, CWAAS, 1978, p.44.

e. TNA/PRO/C142/69/191, IPM John Skelton 35 Hen VIII.

f. Rev. Sherwen, 'The Registers of the Parish of Dean, Cumb.' *TCWAAS* Vol. 4, 1880.

g. W. Jackson, 'The Curwens of Workington Hall & Kindred Families', Pt II., *TCWAAS*, Vol. 5, 1881, p. 342.

h. Alan D Curwen, 'The Christians of Ewanrigg', *TCWAAS*, 1904, vol. 4, p. 216.

i. John Burke, *A Genealogical & Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 1, p. 217.

j. Ralph P. Littledale, 'Some Notes on the Patricksons of Ennerdale', *TCWAAS*, Vol 25 (1925), pp.166/7.

k. B. Gordon Blackwood, *Lancashire Catholics, Protestants and Jacobites During the 1715*

Rebellion, Published Online by Cambridge University Press, 16 Sept. 2015, Note 54.

m. TNA SP 36/159/1/65, 'Richard Butler (of Rawcliffe, Lancashire), prisoner in Newgate to Lord Townshend', petition.

n. Francis Skelton^w married Mary Senhouse^l of Netherhall and was 'of Workington' when he died in 1704. Mary's second marriage c. 1710 was to Richard Butler of Rawcliffe Hall in Lancashire, he fought for the Jacobites at the Battle of Preston 1715^k, taken prisoner and died in Newgate^m.

p. Henry Skelton^w, Lt. General, became lord of Branthwaite Manor after death of Mary Butler 1730. Manor bequeathed to Lt. James Jones (d 1757) and heirs. His son **Arnoldus Jones Skelton** (1750-1795) took name Skelton in 1772. Arnoldus' son **Henry (Jones) Skelton** sold Branthwaite estate to **J.C. Curwen** 1797.

w. **Wills**: Henry Skelton, 1 Oct 1667 WRW/C/R244A/64; Thomas Skelton, 21 Jan 1679 WRW/C/R244A/68; Henry Skelton, 16 Dec 1689 WRW/C/R245B/13; John Skelton, 19 Jun 1696 WRW/C/R245B/14; Francis Skelton, 16 Feb 1704 WRW/C/R246B/2; Henry Skelton, Lt. Gen., 9 April 1757, PROB 11/829/251.

land from the Hall Bank Gate to Stock Beck', was held by John Symon in 1716 at £8 10s per year, followed by Joseph Bowman in 1717.

Jonathon Harrison was paying £10 for Burnyeats Tenement; Joseph Plaskett £5 15s for Marshalls Tenement. Anthony Harrison paid 5s for a fulling mill. Rent for one cottage and three freehold properties, including that of Henry Crakeplace at Crakeplace Hall, brought the total to £104 10s 10d. Of this £35 was payable to one Jonathon Skelton and £1 1s 10¹/₂d to the Lord of the Honour of Cockermonth and the Five Towns. The balance of £68 8s 11¹/₂d per annum, i.e. Mary Butler's share from her first husband, Francis Skelton, was seized by the FEC. Likewise her £100 per annum legacy from second husband Richard Butler's Lancashire estates. Henry Curwen, 'Galloping Harry', the ghost of Workington Hall, 1661-1725, was another Cumberland 'papist' punished by the FEC.¹¹ Rawcliffe Hall and other Lancashire property of Richard Butler was mortgaged to him to the extent of £2500. It would also appear that day-to-day estate matters at Branthwaite had to this point been managed by him through his steward. The Curwen family resented Henry using the family fortunes to support the Jacobite cause; was the motive for his murder in 1725 to put a stop to the FEC seizing the income from the Curwen estates? Mrs Mary Butler of Little Poulton, near Rawcliffe Hall, widow, was buried 27 May 1730. Presumably the FEC would have appointed a steward of Branthwaite manor for the period 1716 to 1730.

Lt. General Henry Skelton, Lord of the Manor 1730 – 1757.

According to his service record, Lieutenant General Henry Skelton was 'of

Branthwaite Hall, Cumberland', though London not Branthwaite was his place of residence when not on campaign with the army. The exact family relationship of this Henry Skelton to Francis Skelton shown in Figure 2, is 'probable', rather than proven, based on the latter's will and a family tree circa 1690's.¹² Henry Skelton had, it would appear, been an infantry ensign in 1708, and so must have been born in about 1690.¹³ This was the time when army commissions were purchased, the implication being that the London branch of the Skelton family had status and means. He was injured in 1710 at the siege of Douai, or Douay, serving under the Duke of Marlborough in the War of the Spanish Succession. He became lord of Branthwaite Manor on the death of Mary Senhouse/Skelton/Butler in 1730, while a Captain in the Third Foot Guards of the British Army. In August 1730 Henry Skelton Esq. of London leased Branthwaite hall and demesne to Jeremiah Head, yeoman, for a yearly rent of £88. Jeremiah was one of eleven signatories to a document of June 1736 – 'this day the Boundary of the Mannour of Branthwaite was rid for Henry Skelton Esq. Lord of the said Mannour and no opposition was made ...'.¹⁴ The boundary markers were recorded in detail. As Colonel of the 12th Foot, he led his regiment in 1745 at the Battle of Fontenay in Flanders, in the War of Austrian Succession, under the Duke of Cumberland, the third son of George II. It was here, 'in the bloodiest battle since Malplaquet in 1709' that 'his life was preserved by his aide-de-camp Capt. James Jones, to whom General Skelton bequeathed the bulk of his property'. At the time of his will in 1756 he was of the parish of St Paul's, Covent Garden and was Lieutenant General of His Majesty's

¹¹ Richard Byers, *The History of Workington from Earliest times to A.D. 1865*, 1999, pp. 44-7.

¹² WRW/C/R246B/2, Will of Francis Skelton, 16 Feb 1704; CASW/DCu/4/304, 'Brief pedigree of Skelton family of Branthwaite', [1690s].

¹³ Army Service Record, Henry Skelton, Lt. Gen., of Branthwaite, Cumberland, accessed through 'findmypast'.

¹⁴ CASW/DCu/4/171, Lease for 7 yrs by Henry Skelton of London Esq. to Jeremiah Head of Branthwaite, yeoman, of Branthwaite Hall and demesne, 27 Aug. 1730; CASW/DCu/4/329. Extent of boundaries of Branthwaite Manor as ridden by Henry Skelton, Lord of the manor, June 1736.

Forces and Colonel of the 12th Regiment of Foot. The two main beneficiaries, his widowed sister, Hester Witt, and James Jones, died just before and after Henry. Jones' son Arnoldus, whose mother was Dutch, took the name and arms of Skelton in accordance with the expressed wishes, and became the new lord.¹⁵

Part 2. Branthwaite's Corn Mills to 1900

Branthwaite High Mill (Corn): The mill, the miller, and his customers.

When Thomas Ladyman was miller of Branthwaite in 1669 around forty customary tenants were obliged to use and depended on his services.¹⁶ A customary fraction of the corn presented for milling was taken in payment, i.e. 'multure'. It could be as much as one eleventh, whereas a freeholder or customer from outside the manor might pay one twenty-fourth. Extra 'dues' would be levied if an assistant to the miller or kiln drying was involved. 'Dry multure' meant there was still a payment in kind where the tenant sold his unmilled grain. So, the miller's reward represented eight to nine per cent of the corn grown in the manor, with the lord maximising his cut. The mill would be leased for a fixed term to the miller offering the best return for the lord. To ensure that he made a living the miller had to ensure the tenants observed the customs of the manor. These customs could also cover maintenance issues; tenants in some manors were obliged to help renew the thatch on the mill roof, clear out the mill leat or replace worn out millstones.

The inventories of the 'goods and chattles' of the deceased tenants of Branthwaite in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries showed their

dependence on oats and barley (or 'bigg') as the chief food crops. For better keeping these were stored in the unthreshed state, so threshing, winnowing to remove the husks, and trips to the mill were year-round activities. The meal ark held enough for a few days. A winnowing cloth was an essential household item. Due to their natural moisture content oats had to be prepared for milling by drying over a fire; a basic kiln in a corner of the barn was a normal feature in oat growing districts. Originally the miller did nothing more than grind what the customers prepared and brought or even just supervised the customer grinding his own corn. The mill had a single pair of stones, the gap being adjusted for each job - oats, barley, malted barley, etc. Wheat as a crop was a later eighteenth-century introduction in this region, before that it was a bought-in luxury food, or for special occasions.¹⁷ As well as oats and barley, Thomas Skelton's inventory of 1679 included wheat to the value of £6 9s. Would this have been entrusted to Thomas Ladyman at Branthwaite mill or hand-milled by the servants at the hall? Probably the latter as grinding wheat to make flour required expensive hard, close set, carefully cut millstones due to the hardness of the grains. A letter of 1761 from John Lucock, the steward of Branthwaite Manor, included the comment that 'the miller is very desirous of having a wheat mill built', indicating that the crop was by then being grown in the locality.¹⁸

Oats being grown in quantity by the resident lord may account for Branthwaite mill having a kiln by the early date of 1686.¹⁹ Kilns tended to be added when the tenants ceased to be tied to the manorial mill – from which time onwards the mill had to compete for their custom. Due to their construction materials early

¹⁵ TNA PROB 11/829/251, Will of Henry Skelton, Lt. Gen., 9 Apr 1757.

¹⁶ CASW/DCu/4/161, Lease for 200 years Thomas Skelton to John Dodgson of house and garth in Branthwaite, May 1669.

¹⁷ Bailey & Culley, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Cumberland*, London, 1794.

¹⁸ CASW/DCu/4/354, Letter from John Lucock, steward of the manor of Branthwaite, 1761.

¹⁹ WRW/C/R244A/68, Will of Thomas Skelton, 21 Jan 1679; TNA/PRO/C5/365/3. Fearon v. Skelton, 24 April 1686.

kilns were a fire hazard and consequently sited away from the mill. After about 1750 the use of perforated iron sheet or ceramic tiles for the drying floor meant the kiln, now much less combustible, could be abutted to the mill building, which made handling easier and amenable to the assistance of hoists and elevators. Unusually Branthwaite Mill had two kilns in 1716, the reason is not apparent. Perhaps one was dilapidated, shortly to be replaced, or one was kept for malting barley. The tenants wanted to be relieved of labour-intensive work at an economic rate. The more the miller was in control of the process the more consistent would be the product, to the benefit of his business.

Mills developed through the eighteenth century. Multiple pairs of stones avoided the need for continual resetting of gaps. Grain could be 'winnowed' as part of the mill process, a wide-set pair of stones took off the husks and a fan box did the job of the wind in 'separating the wheat or oats from the chaff'. The era of small individual batches, with customers waiting in a queue and then for their oatmeal or whatever to emerge, was over. In the interests of mill efficiency and customer needs, the mill had to provide storage, usually in the form of a third floor. All of these innovations, as well as the ravages of time and the elements, made for the regular rebuilding, extending and alteration of a mill such as Branthwaite Mill, which served its community for centuries.

Corn milling in nineteenth century Branthwaite.

Whereas the owners of Branthwaite manorial corn mill are known, stretching back into the mists of time, the names of the millers in early times are harder to find, see Table 1. Peter Head, the last manorial tenant miller of Branthwaite, married Ann Woodall of Ullock in 1781.

Four years later the mill was advertised for sale in the *Cumberland Pacquet*, with 'four parcels of land'.²⁰ Arnoldus Jones Skelton, lord of the manor, was selling the mill, which had been a key part of Branthwaite manor for more than 600 years. Ann's father, John Woodall put up the purchase money of £190. When Peter remarried in 1804, after Ann's death in 1797, he repaid the outstanding loan to John Woodall. The new mortgagee was Christopher Little of Wythmoor Head. Over the years the sum increased to finance repairs and improvements. Peter and Ann had three sons, Woodall, Henry, and John, each of whom became millers. Woodall, from 1821 to 1838, and Henry, from 1838 to 1845, in their turn owned Branthwaite Mill (subject to outstanding mortgages of £466 and £540, respectively). Henry Head sold the mill to the mortgagee, his neighbour William Thompson of Brow Top, Branthwaite, for the outstanding sum.²¹

Newspaper adverts give occasional updates on the status of the mill. In 1828 Woodall Head was looking for a tenant for his 'Dwelling house, water corn mill, kiln, stable, piggeries, &c.'. ²² In 1792 Bailey & Culley observed that 'every farmer fattens one or more [swine] ... on barley or oatmeal, and potatoes'.²³ Pig breeding was traditionally the role of the miller, given the availability of husks, etc. By 1847 the mill had been 'put into thorough repair'. 'To let: Water Corn Mill, dwelling house and 2 acres of land; Mill entirely new fitted up with 3 pairs of stones (a pair of French burrs & 2 pairs of greys), barley mill and dressing mill'. The French burrs were costly and needed for producing wheat flour. 'Mill entirely new' does not indicate extensive rebuilding; rather that the business end had been updated.

John Robinson, son of Henry Robinson of Lorton, took the lease. In the

²⁰ *Cumberland Pacquet*, Wed 30 Nov 1785.

²¹ Indentures dated 1804, 1816, 1819, 1821, 1824, 1838 & 1845 regarding mortgage agreements and transfers of ownership, Peter Head to Woodall Head to Henry Head & finally

to William Thompson, all held in private collection of K. & C. Thomas of Branthwaite Mill.

²² *Cumberland Pacquet*, Tue 2 Dec 1828.

²³ Bailey & Culley, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Cumberland*, London, 1794.

Table 1. Millers and Mill Owners of Branthwaite (High) Mill

Date	Miller	Mill owner
1669	Thomas Ladyman	Thomas Skelton to 1679
		Henry Skelton 1679 – 1689
		John Skelton 1689 – 1695
		Francis Skelton 1695 - 1704
		Mary Skelton (formerly Senhouse) 1704 – c.1710
1716	John Symon	Richard Butler c 1710 - 1716
1717	John Bowman	Mary Butler (formerly Skelton, Senhouse) 1717 - 1730
1720/9	John Symon	ditto
1737/8	William Symon	Henry Skelton (Lt. Gen.) 1730 - 1757
1754	William Richardson	ditto
1774	John Telfair	Arnoldus Jones Skelton 1757 - 1795
1784-6	Peter Head	ditto
1786-1821	ditto	John Woodall of Ullock 1786 - 1804, then P. Head 1804 - 1821
1821-1838	Woodall Head	Woodall Head 1821 - 1838
1838-45/7	Henry Head	Henry Head 1838 - 1845
1847?-1858	John Robinson	William Thompson of Brow Top, Branthwaite 1845 - 1864
1858-63	Wilson Bibby	ditto
1863/66	Thomas? Birkett	Ann Thompson, Brow Top 1864 - 1869
1876-83	William Birkett	Joseph Thompson, Rye Head, Flimby 1869 - 1893
1883-93	Fletcher Norman	ditto, Jane Thompson after June 1893
1893-1953	Wm West b.1866	Wm. West (b 1832) 1893 – 1897; Wm. West (b.1866) 1897-1953
1953-1971	Thomas Woodburn	Annie Woodburn 1953 - 1964 & Thomas Woodburn to 1983
1983-present		Keith & Carol Thomas

1851 census he was a 'Miller and farmer of 35 acres', with his sister Sarah as housekeeper. Thomas Birkett, aged 19, miller, was also in residence. In December of 1851 at Dean church John Robinson married Mary, daughter of the mill's owner, William Thompson.²⁴ In 1855 he was moved to offer a reward of £10 to discover the source of a 'scandalous' report, which 'had not the slightest foundation' to the effect that he was 'adding some spurious admixture to his

to his flour'.²⁵ No prizes for guessing who would gain from such a rumour give that 'Low Mill' was a near neighbour! The outcome of the issue is not known but the Robinsons, now with four children, left the mill in 1858. Whether they went to farm elsewhere, emigrated, or succumbed to some epidemic, is not known, though daughter Anne was with her grandparents at Brow Top in 1861.

In July 1858 Wilson Bibby of Wood End Mill, Egremont, married Ruth Birkett of Crossbarrow and shortly afterwards took

²⁴ *Cumberland Pacquet*, Tue 23 Dec 1851.

²⁵ *Carlisle Journal*, Fri 21 Sep 1855.

over at Branthwaite High Mill.²⁶ Milling tends to run in families and the Bibby family is one of the better known in West Cumbria. Wilson Bibby was brought up at Muncaster where his grandfather was the miller, his brother Joseph was miller between 1851 and 1901. Joseph's son Ned, Wilson's nephew, was the miller at Eskdale Mill at Boot, for 45 years.²⁷ Another member of the Muncaster extended family was Edward Bibby, a second cousin of Wilson and a gamekeeper for the land-owning Harrison's, who lived with his family at Branthwaite Nook for the best part of 50 years. Wilson and Ruth Bibby were not so fortunate. In January of 1863 their 'stock, husbandry equipment and dairy utensils' were auctioned off.²⁸ The fact that Wilson died at the age of 40 in 1867 suggests health rather than financial issues were to blame. The mill was advertised to let in 1866 while 'in the occupation of Mr. Birkett as tenant'.²⁹ From the 1861 census, Ruth's elder brother Thomas Birkett had been working at the mill. Wilson & Ruth's second child, Sarah, was born at Branthwaite in June 1865.³⁰

Improbable as it might seem there appears to be no connection between Thomas Birkett at the mill in the 1850s, Thomas Birkett in the 1860s, and William Birkett who was miller from 1876 until 1883. William leased the mill from the owner, by that time Joseph Thompson of Flimby, after the death of his parents William and Ann Thompson of Brow Top. In 1882 William Birkett, miller, claimed £50 damages from the owner, who had failed to maintain the water wheel in accordance with the lease.³¹ William and Agnes Birkett left a paper trail of nine birth registrations around the county indicating their progress from mill to mill. In succession these were at Kinniside near Cleator, Bootle, Branthwaite (1878, 1883 baptisms) and Cleator. Drigg and Irton

followed without further addition to the family.³²

Peter Norman, miller at Seaton, and wife Hannah must have been longing for a son to assist in the work at his mill. By 1833 they had eight daughters. Then in 1837 son Fletcher arrived when Hannah was 48 if the 1841 census return is believed. Fletcher was brought up, and became miller apprentice, at Broughton mill on the banks of the Derwent, west of Great Broughton. He then worked as carter and miller for his father. After employment on the railway, latterly as a signalman at Little Clifton, he took over Branthwaite corn mill, sometime after William Birkett left in 1883. Joseph Thompson's widow, Jane, of Rye Head at Flimby, advertised the mill for sale in November 1893 as a 'dwelling house, byres, stable, water corn mill, garden and premises thereunto belonging', also with a close of pasture land.³³ The buyer, for £280, was William West of Far Branthwaite Edge farm.

William West and family.

Water mills at this time regularly shifted their focus in an attempt to survive. Either that or they crumbled away, or just ceased to be mills. The new owner from 1893 kept his options open by adding a sawmill to the ancient manorial corn mill. The original Branthwaite Sawmill next door had not operated for a decade or more. William West was the tenant of Far Branthwaite Edge Farm, part of the large estate belonging to Ann Falcon Carter, daughter of the late William Harrison. The old manorial corn mill, in West ownership, remained a focus of village life well into the twentieth century. William West, born 1832, was the son of a Westmorland agricultural labourer who was listed as a pauper, an inmate of Kendal workhouse in the 1851 census. Two of William's six siblings, aged 10 & 14, were also inmates,

²⁶ *Carlisle Journal*, Fri 2 Jul 1858.

²⁷ Dave King, *Eskdale Mill: A Guide to the Mill and its History*.

²⁸ *Whitehaven News*, Thu 22 Jan 1863.

²⁹ *Carlisle Journal*, Tue 6 Nov 1866.

³⁰ Dean Parish Registers.

³¹ *Maryport Advertiser*, Fri 24 Mar 1882.

³² Dean Parish Registers.

³³ *West Cumberland Times*, Sat 18 Nov 1893.

but whether William had spent time there is unknown. By 1861 he was a married agricultural labourer living at Streetgate, Lamplugh. A few questions come to mind regarding how he found work so far from Kendal, and did his progression from workhouse family to agricultural labourer, to successful tenant farmer depend upon a paternalistic employer, such as the Dickinson family at Streetgate? The background of his wife, Ann Dixon, born at Arlecdon to a single mother, does not suggest any advantage or privilege from that direction.

The Wests in Branthwaite seem to have been particularly driven and resourceful, with a determination to stay out of, and away from the workhouse! In his early days as a tenant farmer in 1865 William West took on sixteen years old Elizabeth Black from Cockermouth Workhouse as a domestic servant. Some ten weeks later she 'ran away, back to the workhouse' complaining of physical cruelty and mistreatment. Summoned before the Cockermouth Bench of Magistrates Mr. West was ordered to return the girl's meagre possessions in her box to the workhouse.³⁴ No other sanctions were mentioned but a newspaper reported:

A Practical Exhibition of Feeling at Cockermouth. One day last week the man West called at the workhouse with the box, and while inside the premises it became whispered among the female inmates that he was present. There being snow on the ground the women turned out and on West's appearance to make his exit, he was received with a regular volley of snowballs by the indignant females. Not being content with this they followed him out of the gates, and quickly raised an alarm in Gallowbarrow, which had the effect of

*raising more enemies against the luckless wight, who was rather roughly escorted and handled through the town.*³⁵

'Sad death of a Branthwaite farmer' was the Maryport Advertiser headline on 30 January 1897.³⁶ As Mr West was returning from Whitehaven market, he appeared to have fallen from, and been run over by his own horse and dogcart. The witnesses at the inquest attested to him being in 'full control' as he departed homewards from The Globe in Distington.³⁷ Of his four sons William, the eldest, had latterly become corn and saw miller, and farmer. Thomas, the youngest son, married later in the year and farmed the Stargill tenancy at Winscales that his father had recently taken on. The remaining members of the West family, Robert, John, and their sister Ann, worked for the widowed Ann West, farmer at Far Edge, Branthwaite. By 1911 Thomas West was farming 292 acres at Calva Hall, Dean. As well as Branthwaite Mill, the 1910 Land Valuation Survey for the Parish of Dean shows son William West in possession of seven cottages in Branthwaite, inherited from William West, senior.

Branthwaite Low Mill (Corn).

Low Mill, according to a sale notice of 1847, was held under a 99 years' lease dated 1815, the landowner being John Christian Curwen.³⁸ Spencer Pearson, the miller at Ullock in early 1815, married Mary Atkinson of Calva Hall. Later in 1815 he was living at Calva, and still a 'miller'.³⁹ In 1829 John Grigg, his brother-in-law, was miller at Ullock, and John Pearson was miller at Low Mill.⁴⁰ Low Mill may have been in the hands of Spencer Pearson from 1815, the timing of events fitting that possibility. Spencer Pearson became 'miller and farmer', then, by 1825, just

³⁴ *Whitehaven News*, Thu 2 Feb 1865.

³⁵ *Cumberland & Westmorland Advertiser*, Tue 7 March 1865.

³⁶ *Maryport Advertiser*, Sat 30 Jan 1897.

³⁷ *West Cumberland Times*, Sat 30 Jan 1897.

³⁸ *Cumberland Pacquet*, Tue 17 Aug 1847.

³⁹ Dean Parish Registers.

⁴⁰ Wm. Parson & Wm. White, *History, Directory and Gazetteer of the counties of Cumberland & Westmorland*, 1829.

'farmer'.⁴¹ From the 1841 census, Ann Briscoe age 65, was miller at Low Mill by 1841 with an assistant miller, Thomas Ritson age 20. It is probably a safe assumption that John Briscoe had been the miller sometime after 1829 until his death in 1834. Ann and John's eldest son, William, was 'miller and farmer of 60 acres' in the 1851 & 1861 census returns.

William Briscoe, miller and farmer of Low Mill, was obliged to assign his estate and effects to trustees for the benefit of his creditors in 1861.⁴² On 3 December 1861, his cattle, horses, pigs, hay, wheat and oat stacks, and farming gear were auctioned by Robinson Mitchell.⁴³ It had the appearance of a well-stocked concern, rather than one in terminal decline. Building a second corn mill in Branthwaite seems not to have been the best of ideas for Low Mill or High Mill. Low Mill was apparently an occupied building when the Ordnance Surveys for the six inch and twenty-five inch map surveys were carried out from 1863-7, but it was not listed in the 1871 census. The Marron extension of the Whitehaven, Cleator and Egremont Railway was opened for iron ore traffic in January 1866, leaving Low Mill somewhat marooned between the river and the tracks.

Part 3. Textile, Paper, and Sawmills

The fulling mill.

Going back to the irksome impositions on customary tenants listed in 1686, war services, or the obligation to take up arms against raiders from north of the border, had largely been consigned to history, since James VI of Scotland became James I of England in 1603. The border reivers were suppressed, though 'war money' payment, in lieu of service, will have

persisted. Walking silver, or 'walke mill silver', related to the lord's fulling mill, used for cloth scouring/finishing. The payment absolved tenants from the obligation to use it. Once the payment was established as a custom of the manor the lord had less incentive to maintain his fulling mill, and thereafter the tenants could be paying not to have to use a long-decayed mill.

There had been therefore, at some time prior to 1686, a manorial fulling mill in Branthwaite. In 1683 Thomas Fearon of Browhead, now Brow Top, sold for £4 5s 'with the license and consent of the lord' to James Scott 'one walk mill stead of 6 yards long to be built in a parcel of ground called the Holme and one water race which is to be 76 yards in length from the head of the race to the said mill'.⁴⁴ It would appear probable that James Scott's fulling mill occupied the site of an earlier, decayed manorial mill, shown as '2' on Figure 1. The earliest available map of Branthwaite, from 1823 shows a tail race from the main mill race to the river, some 76 yards from the weir, see Figure 3.⁴⁵ Access to James Scott's mill was by a path at the 'west end of my (Thomas Fearon's) new dwelling house at Browhead' through Browhead Croft. Note that 'Browhead' had become 'Brow Top' and 'Browhead Croft' had been shortened to 'Croft'. Another James Scott, of several in Branthwaite in the eighteenth century, sold the mill to Joseph Fox, yeoman of Branthwaite, in 1800.⁴⁶ The heirs of Joseph Fox sold to John Christian Curwen of Workington Hall just 10 years later, after which there is no record of it being in business.⁴⁷ It did not appear on the 1823 map, see Figure 3.

This mill had been offered for sale in 1777.⁴⁸ 'A Fulling Mill, a Dressing or Raising mill, a Stamp and Dye House, Tenter Ground and Tenters, together with all necessary utensils for carrying on or

⁴¹ Dean Parish Registers.

⁴² *Whitehaven News*, Thu 12 Dec 1861.

⁴³ *Cumberland Pacquet*, Tue 26 Nov 1861.

⁴⁴ CASW/DCu/4/295, Conveyance of mill stead and mill race at Branthwaite, Mar 1683.

⁴⁵ CASW/DBT/28/71, Plan of estates of John Harrison at Branthwaite, 1823 – 1833.

⁴⁶ CASW/DCu/4/398, Conveyance of fulling mill, James Scott to Joseph Fox, Apr 1800.

⁴⁷ CASW/DCU/4/404-405, Conveyance by lease & release of premises at Branthwaite, Bridget Fox to J.C. Curwen, Oct 1810.

⁴⁸ *Cumberland Pacquet*, Tue 15 Jul 1777.

executing the above branches of Fulling Raising Stamping and Dyeing. The whole is well accustomed, and the situation is most eligible in respect of markets being distant from Whitehaven 8 miles, from Workington 4, from Maryport 10, and from Cockermouth 5 miles. The stock in trade may likewise be had on reasonable terms.'

The owner at this time was John Marston of Ginnors in Embleton. His son Peter Marston, aged 26, dyer, had married Ruth Smithson at Dean in October 1775. Ruth was buried at Dean in July 1776 and 'Child Marston' at Cockermouth in September. Peter the dyer died at Beckhouse, Embleton in 1811. Was Beckhouse mill a fulling/dyeing mill at that time?

Branthwaite railway station on the Whitehaven Cleator and Egremont Railway opened in 1866, by which time the course of the Marron near Horseshoe Wood, had been diverted, the weir rebuilt, the mill race recut, and any traces of the fulling mill swept away (Figure 1).

In 1694 Lancelot Harrison erected another fulling mill, shown as '3' on Figure 1, 'at his own proper cost and charges with leave and license of and from John Skelton Esq. upon the waste belonging to Branthwaite Hall and adjoining near the water corn mill'.⁴⁹

The agreement was updated in 1703 by Francis Skelton, the original 90 years' lease becoming permanent for a payment of 40s. Lancelot Harrison paid just 5s per year rent for the water to his mill with an obligation to maintain the weir and watercourses, and to give water usage priority to the corn mill. He was granted liberty to take timber or stone for the purpose of maintaining the weir and watercourses, and also to set up racks or tenters anywhere upon the wastes belonging to Francis Skelton. The mill had passed from Lancelot to Anthony and to Lawrence Harrison by 1757.

In 1801 the 'Well accustomed Walk or Fulling mill and dyeing conveniences with tenter privileges thereunto belonging' were offered to let, the 'business having been carried on with uninterrupted success for more than 100 years', with enquiries to Thomas Harrison at Whitehaven Old Brewery.⁵⁰ In 1823 John Harrison commissioned a map of the Harrison estates at Branthwaite, a small section being shown in Figure 3. The 1851 census shows John as a 'Fund and Landholder' living in Kensington with his family and ten servants, some from Branthwaite. This Harrison family's strong links and major interests in Branthwaite continued into the twentieth century, owning what had been the fulling mill until 1924. Whether the Harrison line of descent is continuous back to Lancelot, or unrelated, has not been ascertained.

The woollen mill

By the 1820s the mill shown as '3' in Figure 1, was 'a very complete dye house and walk mill with upright shafts, tumbling shafts, fulling mill and woollen manufactory with the tenters and tenter grounds adjoining'. It was, in 1823, 'late in the occupation of John Robinson of Cockermouth, manufacturer'.⁵¹ The 'upright and tumbling shafts' were heavy wooden stampers either being lifted and dropped vertically, or on swinging arms, in either case operated by cams turned by the water wheel. These impacted upon the cloth in troughs, the former to felt and close up the weave, the latter designed to tumble and scour the cloth to clean it. Dean Parish baptism records for the first quarter of the nineteenth century include resident machine spinners and weavers as well as dyers. Joseph Grave, another

⁴⁹ CASW/DCu/4/312, Copy conveyance of fulling mill at Branthwaite, Francis Skelton to Lancelot Harrison of Branthwaite, fuller & dyer, Feb. 1703.

⁵⁰ *Cumberland Pacquet*, Tue 6 Oct 1801.

⁵¹ *Cumberland Pacquet*, Mon 7 April 1823.

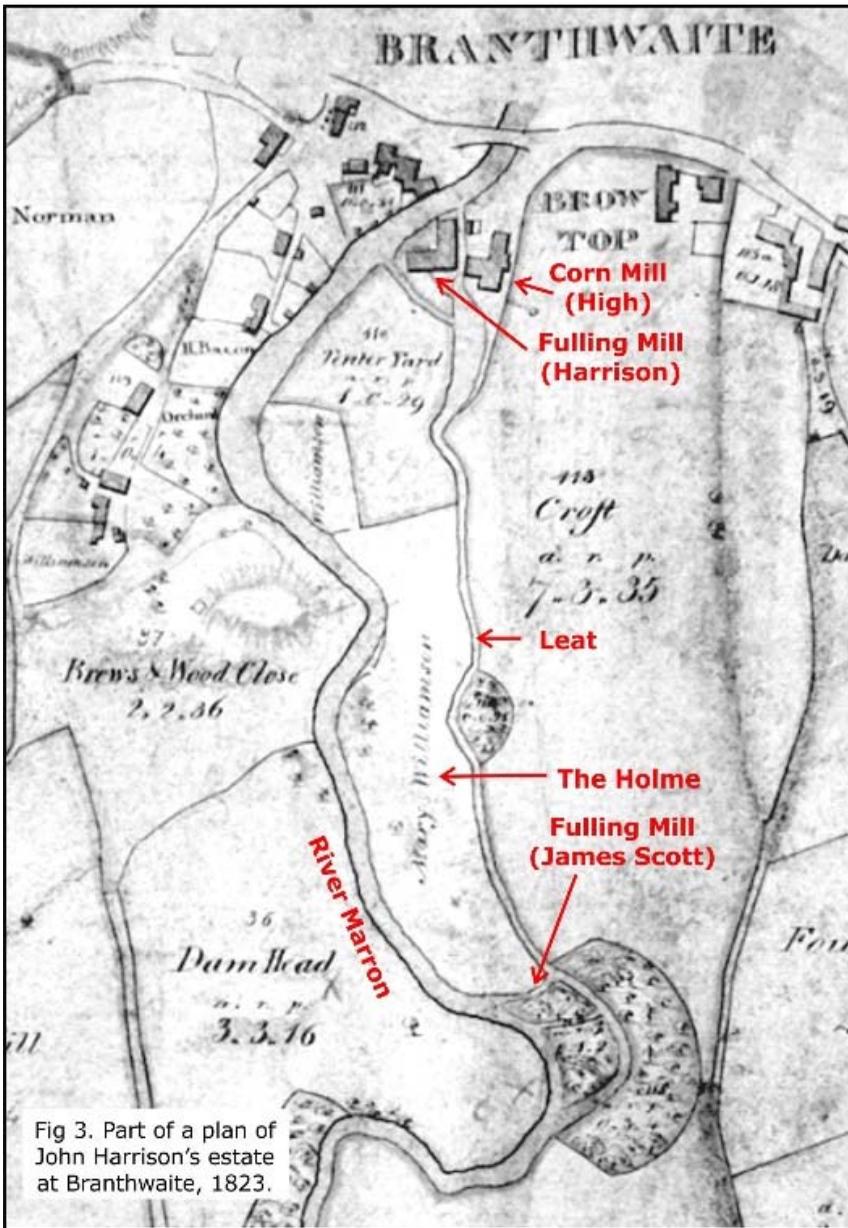


Fig 3. Part of a plan of John Harrison's estate at Branthwaite, 1823.

Above: Part of Harrison's estate map of 1823. James Scott's Fulling Mill (1683) was at the S. end of 'The Holme' i.e. the 'island' bounded by the river Marron and the mill race. The map shows the original,

pre-railway course of the river and a race from the leat to the river where the fulling mill stood. Note the 'Tenter Yard' by Lancelot Harrison's fulling mill.

Cockermouth woollen manufacturer, had taken over some time after 1826, with a trade directory entry in 1829.⁵² Grave's mill on Waterloo Street in Cockermouth was built in the 1820s, Joseph still being in business there in 1861.⁵³ There is no evidence for woollen mill activities in Branthwaite after 1829.

Paper manufacturing

The old fulling mill had been affected by the changing times. Textile industries had outgrown rural riverside locations, which became paper mills, sawmills or in some cases reverted to corn mills. 'Industrial Archaeology of The Lake Counties' describes it as 'a probable eighteenth-century structure used as a paper mill into the nineteenth century, more recently used as a sawmill'.⁵⁴ No evidence of use as a paper mill has been found. William Borrowdale, 'book seller and printer' of Workington, and later of Scenery Hill, Branthwaite, leased from John Christian Curwen in 1825, ground in Smithy Banks Close upon which he erected a paper mill; see Figure 4.⁵⁵ The first stage of the process of making paper from cotton waste involved 'rag stampers'. These broke down and pulverised the immersed cotton fabric, to separate and break down the fibres. Successful use of alternative fibrous materials such as wood pulp was not achieved until the last decades of the nineteenth century.⁵⁶ Redundant fulling mills could readily be adapted for this purpose as the same water-powered stamping action was required. The fulling part of the old mill with its 'upright and tumbling shafts' could, in principle, have been modified as an interim measure while the new mill was being erected. An

1829 trade directory, however, confirms that William Borrowdale was manufacturing paper at 'Marron Mill', at his recently leased Smithy Banks site further down the river.⁵⁷

Paper manufacturing evidently was financially precarious. William Borrowdale was declared bankrupt in 1841.⁵⁸ The sale particulars suggested an out-dated 'hand-made' operation, with individual sheets created using a fine wire mesh tray covered in the pulp water mix by dipping it in the 'vat'.⁵⁹ The papermaking (Fourdrinier) machine, producing continuous rolls by means of a wire mesh endless belt, was the mass-production option to which the industry was moving.⁶⁰

John Jones Dyson 'of Branthwaite Mill, paper manufacturer' (c.1846) failed to pay excise duties on his product and a distress warrant was issued for the recovery of £222.⁶¹

From 1847, under the next occupier, Robert Langton Pearson, the son of a Blackburn paper merchant, Branthwaite Paper Mill was 'fitted up with best and newest machinery without regard to cost, consisting of a paper machinetwo rag engines, 60 ins. calender [glazing roller], etc, the whole of the machinery driven by a large water wheel ... and two superior steam engines of 25 h.p and 10 h.p'.⁶² . Robert Langton Pearson's mill was 'sold' in 1858 by his solicitor, Robert Benson of Cockermouth, without his client's agreement. The Court of Chancery ruling in 1860 set aside the sale, the new 'owner' Samuel Briggs was obliged to move on and built another paper mill in

⁵² Wm. Parson & Wm. White, *History, Directory and Gazetteer of the counties of Cumberland & Westmorland*, 1829.

⁵³ J. Bernard Bradbury, *A History of Cockermouth*, Phillimore & Co. Ltd. 1981.

⁵⁴ J.D. Marshall & M. Davies-Shiel, *Industrial Archaeology of the Lake Counties*, 2nd Edition, Micheal Moon, p.239.

⁵⁵ CASW/DCu/11/3/19, Counterpart lease of ground near Branthwaite Hall for a paper mill, 17 Jan. 1825.

⁵⁶ John Gavin, *Papermaking and Printing In Cumbria 1600 – 1900*, 2012, The British Association of Paper Historians.

⁵⁷ Parson & White, *Directory*, 1829.

⁵⁸ *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, Fri 22 Oct 1841.

⁵⁹ *Cumberland Pacquet*, 9 Aug 1842.

⁶⁰ John Gavin, *Papermaking and Printing in Cumbria 1600 – 1900*, 2012, The British Association of Paper Historians.

⁶¹ *Carlisle Journal*, 13 June 1846.

⁶² *Cumberland Pacquet*, 9 Feb 1858.

Workington.⁶³ Mr. Pearson resumed his business, but bankruptcy proceedings followed in 1866 and the assets were offered for sale.⁶⁴

The next chapter of paper-manufacture in Branthwaite ended in 1875 when Messrs. West, who was no relation of the later corn mill Wests, and Attwood auctioned off 'an extensive assortment of machinery lately used in the manufacture of paper'.⁶⁵ The tone of the sale notice was more 'garage sale' than a factory poised and ready for action, and it would be another twelve years, 1887, before productive activity resumed. The 1891 census listed 23 paper-workers in Branthwaite, including George W. Sweetapple, aged 18, a 'paper mill clerk, born USA'. His grandfather Thomas Sweetapple had been a paper manufacturer at Catteshall Mill, near Godalming, Surrey. George's father, Edward, managed paper works in Oxfordshire, Hampshire and Kent. By 1894 Edward had taken over the mills at Allenwood near Carlisle, Derwent Paper Mills at Workington, Bootle near Liverpool and Marron Bank, Branthwaite. So just maybe Marron Bank Mill could at that point, look forward to a good future, under a management with much experience and a broad view of the industry? In 1901 only James New, retired foreman paper maker, was left at the mill. Sweetapple's United Paper Mills entered voluntary liquidation in 1902.⁶⁶

Sawmill.

Having failed to find a role in papermaking, what was next for the old (Harrison) fulling mill? In the middle years of the nineteenth century it made a living as a water-powered sawmill. Stuart Jameson, previously a Workington sawyer, was proprietor in 1847, and listed as a 'woodmonger' in the 1851 census,

supported by two sons and a cartwright.⁶⁷ The map of 1864 (Figure 1) shows a 'sawpit' in what had been, in fulling mill days, the tenter yard. Mr Jameson announced, in 1856, that he was 'erecting a steam sawmill' in Whitehaven and transferring his business in Branthwaite to son Henry. In 1861(census) he was at Sawmill House, Whitehaven employing 20 men. Fletcher Nicholson, sawyer of Branthwaite, was in court in 1862 accused of illegal fishing in the mill dam by William Harrison, son of the owner. Stuart Jameson, tenant of the mill, (Henry having moved on) considered he had the right to take fish from the dam, not Mr Harrison. Would the court have been convinced by the explanation that the incriminating net was for the purpose of 'washing potatoes'? The case was dismissed.

The sawmill, house, and nearby quarry were leased to Harrison Hodgson, railway contractor, while the construction work was carried out, and offered 'to let' in 1866 upon completion.⁶⁸ 'The mill and machinery are carried by water-power and capable of doing a large business'. The last suggestion of this sawmill working is from 1879, when it was 'late in the occupation of Joseph Blackburn', a Workington timber merchant.⁶⁹ Sawmill House, Branthwaite, was, by the time of the 1891 census, occupied by the family of Robert Cruddace, colliery manager at Dean Moor, his sons also being employed at the colliery rather than in sawmill activities. The Cruddace family had come from Cockfield in Co. Durham, at the time when W. Summerson of Cockfield bought the colliery, in 1885.⁷⁰

⁶³ *Carlisle Journal*, 10 Feb 1860; *Westmorland Gazette*, Sat 14 Sep 1861.

⁶⁴ *Cumberland Packet*, Tue 7 May 1867.

⁶⁵ *West Cumberland Times*, Sat 1 May 1875.

⁶⁶ John Gavin, *Papermaking and Printing in Cumbria 1600 – 1900*, 2012, The British Association of Paper Historians.

⁶⁷ Mannix & Whellan, *History, Gazetteer & Directory of Cumberland*, 1847.

⁶⁸ *Whitehaven News*, Thur 29 Nov 1866.

⁶⁹ *West Cumberland Times*, 10 May 1879.

⁷⁰ 'Dean Moor Colliery', Durham Mining Museum, dmm.org.uk/colliery/d010.

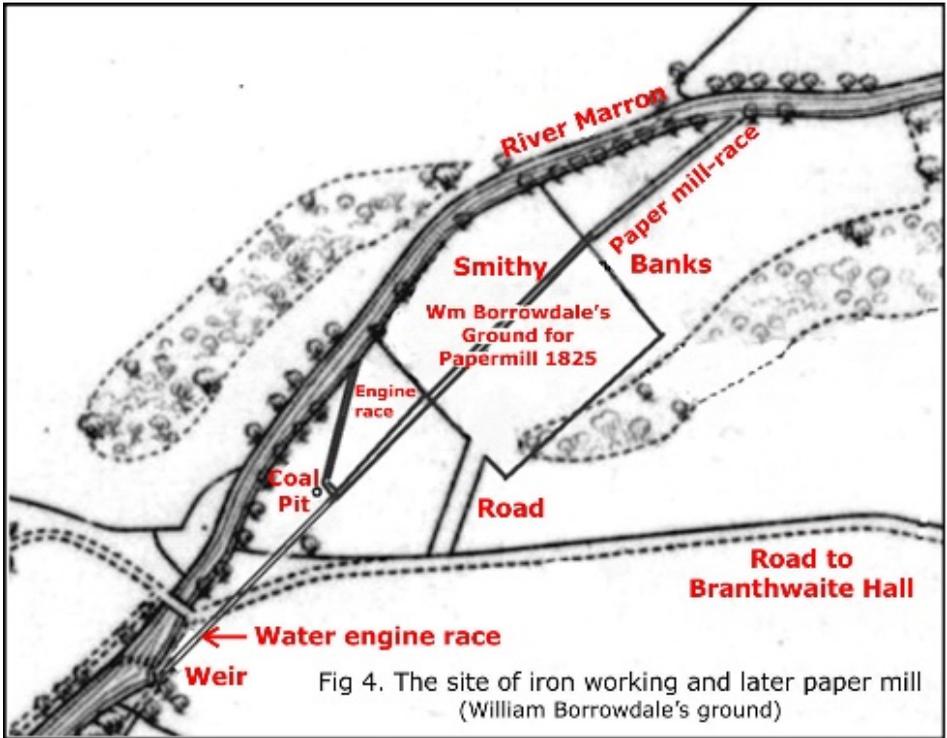


Fig 4. The site of iron working and later paper mill (William Borrowdale's ground)

Part 4. Iron and Coal

Branthwaite iron working.

Going back to 1732, Anthony Harrison and John Simon, or Symon, of the two adjacent mills, made an agreement that Joseph Bowes of Clifton Furnace, Cookson & Partners, could 'cut sluices and make a passage for the water out of the dam to any engine that shall be erected by the said Joseph Bowes and Partners at their iron mine at Branthwaite'. For £2 10s per year the latter could use the water between 6.00 p.m. and 6.00 a.m. each day.⁷¹ From 1723 until 1771 Cookson & Partners operated the first coke fired blast furnace in Cumberland at Little Clifton, the neighbouring township further down the Marron. Coke was produced by controlled

burning of coal from Cookson's nearby mine, largely as charcoal would be produced from wood. Iron ore was carried by packhorses from Frizington. 'Catscalps', nodules of ferrous carbonate, used as flux came from Branthwaite, presumably from 'their iron mine'.⁷² It was several years, 1739, before John Tiffin, the steward, caught up with Anthony Harrison, who did not own the water rights, and a new agreement was drawn up.⁷³ The revised wording was along the lines that Joseph Bowes had use of the mill race for the stated hours with free liberty to turn and divert the water to any 'engine'. The new sum, £5 per year, was payable to John Tiffin, an arrangement

⁷¹ CASW/DCu/4/327, Copy agreement regarding mill race at Branthwaite, April 1732.

⁷² J.Y. Lancaster & D.R. Wattleworth, *The Iron & Steel Industry of West Cumberland: an*

Historical Survey, British Steel Corporation, 1977, p. 19-20.

⁷³ CASW/DCu/4/332, Copy agreement regarding mill race at Branthwaite, Feb 1740.

keenly resented by Anthony Harrison. It might be surmised that water from the fulling/corn mill race was directed along a new half-mile leat on the east bank of the Marron, the route that the railway would later follow.

Figure 4 is based on a plan of 1825, showing 'Smithy Banks', a 'water engine race', and a coal pit named Branthwaite Pit in the associated document.⁷⁴ The name 'smithy' can refer to a place where metal was refined, as well as forged into implements. R.R. Angerstein described Clifton Furnace in the 1750s with some observations that could be referring to Smithy Banks.⁷⁵ 'The iron made here [at Clifton] is used for castings either direct from the furnace or later on, after remelting in a reverberatory furnace located nearby, for pots and other small items.' There was also 'a forge where bar iron was made from pig iron smelted with coke.' It is known that operations at the Little Clifton site were restricted by the available waterpower. It seems plausible that 'Smithy Banks' was so named from these eighteenth-century operations, rather than from some long forgotten bloomery.

The 'water engines' could perhaps have been for pumping out the pit, or for driving bellows and hammers. A 1755 inquisition into the death of Joseph Bowes the younger, assistant to his father in management of the Clifton furnace, found that 'he was making an alteration to the weights at the end of one of the levers which raises and works the furnace bellows, when he was crushed by the said lever raising up to the top of a wood floor'.⁷⁶ The 'coal pit', about 300 yards from Branthwaite Hall, could have been the source of the iron carbonate flux, or 'catscalps', this ore being typically found in association with clay in coal measures.

The inventories of all four wills of Skeltons of Branthwaite Hall, between 1667 and 1696, list 'coals upon the bank' and 'colliery gear' to a value of typically 30s, so presumably the coal was for their own home use. There have been, in the past, several other coal workings close to Branthwaite village, all it seems west of the river. Just the one in Figure 4 is on the same east side as the corn/fulling mill race, which tends to support the foregoing suppositions. The topography of Branthwaite would appear to rule out other possibilities.

Branthwaite Colliery

William West and brothers became proprietors of Branthwaite Colliery Co. with a 20 years' lease from the Curwen estates, dated January 1900.⁷⁷ The colliery was inspected on behalf of Mr A.D. Curwen, in January 1916.⁷⁸ 'The mining operations at this colliery are very primitive and restricted in extent'. An average section of the seam was quoted as 1ft 9 ins. coal, 3 ft. of good quality fireclay and 7ft. of ganister. The two latter materials, which commonly underlie coal seams, were in demand for producing fire bricks and furnace linings for the steel industry. In 1901 Branthwaite Colliery, by means of 'short drift drives in the outcrop of the seam', produced 910 tons of coal and 324 tons of fireclay.⁷⁹ The number of workers varied, presumably as access to profitable workings fluctuated. It peaked at 9 underground and 3 surface workers in 1910. The only other year, besides 1901, for which figures are available was 1909, when coal sales were £321 and fireclay and ganister together £1105. Water was a particular issue; the operation employed 'a 6 ins. three-ram pump driven by an

⁷⁴ CASW/DCu/11/3/19, Counterpart lease of ground near Branthwaite Hall for a paper mill, 17 Jan 1825.

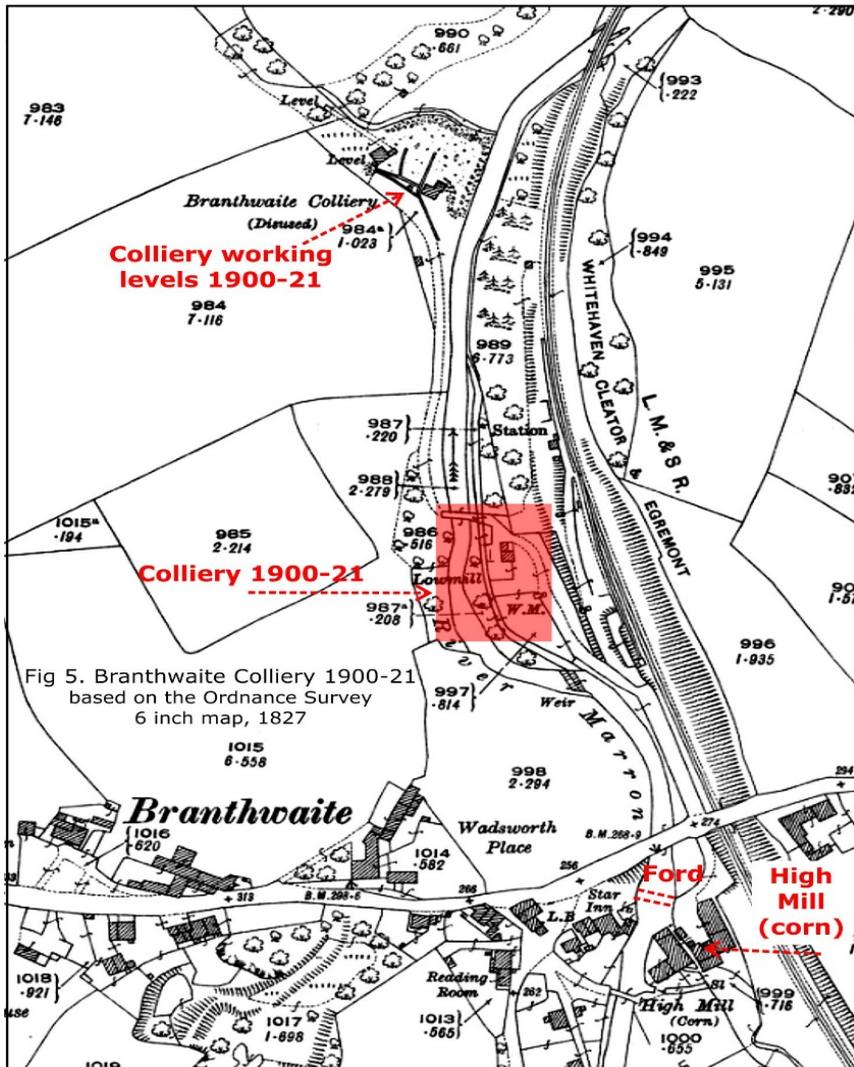
⁷⁵ R.R. Angerstein's *Illustrated Travel Diary 1753 – 1755*, Science Museum, 2001.

⁷⁶ CASW/DCu/6/4/64/1, Formal Inquest into the death of Joseph Bowes of Clifton, 8 Jul 1755.

⁷⁷ CASW/DCu/3/158, Lease of Branthwaite Colliery.

⁷⁸ CASW/DCu/6/57, Correspondence re. Branthwaite Colliery.

⁷⁹ 'Branthwaite Coal & fireclay Royalty 1901', 1909, in private collection of K. & C. Thomas of Branthwaite. Also Durham Mining Museum, Branthwaite Colliery, dmm.org.uk/colliery



Part 5. Branthwaite Mill in the twentieth century.

Figure 6. Branthwaite Mill in 2023.



At a glance Branthwaite Mill, i.e. 'High Mill', on the left hand side of the photo in Figure 6, in 2023 is much as it was in the early years of the twentieth century – though the redundant and dilapidated kiln with its lightweight drying floor was beyond redemption and demolished in the 1980s. Fire insurance policy documents from 1904 and 1935, include the floor plan in Figure 7, and show what went on in the various parts of the buildings.⁸¹ In 1924 William West bought the old fulling/woollen/sawmill from Mrs A F Carter, nee Harrison, the heir of William Harrison. This included 'Sawmill House', which is why the 1935 insurance covered both mills.⁸²

The mill race directed water through the gap between the corn mill on the left and the old fulling/woollen/sawmill on the

right, towards the camera, re-joining the Marron through the culvert right of centre, dark but visible. The corn-mill wheel would formerly have been visible in this gap, the fulling-mill wheel(s) being internal. The kiln was beyond the tree, where the right-hand car is parked. The 'weir effect' in the foreground indicates the edge of the former ford across the river leading into the mill yard; its position is indicated on Figure 5.

Referring to the plan in Figure 7:-

1. Between 1893 and 1897 the original 'corn mill', 2 – 5 on the plan, became William West's corn and sawmill. He may well have called upon the services of John Stubbs, millwright and landlord of the nearby Star Inn. The extension to the mill, 1 on the plan, housed two circular saws and joiner's benches in 1904; it was shown on the revised second series

⁸¹ Norwich Union Fire Insurance documents relating to W. West's corn & sawmills at Branthwaite, 1904 & 1935, Private collection of K. & C. Thomas.

⁸² Conveyance, Mrs. Ann Falcon Carter & others to William West, dwelling house, sawmill and land at Branthwaite, 1924. Private collection of K. & C. Thomas.

Ordnance Survey maps of 1898. By 1935 a band saw, a planing machine, a drilling machine, and two lathes had been added.

2. A three-storey building housed the water mill driving gear, three pairs of stones, the ancillary equipment and grain/meal/flour storage. The corn and sawmill machinery in 1&2 was water-powered.

3. The 'kiln house' comprised the kiln hole, where the fire was lit, on the ground floor and the perforated-tile drying-floor above. An insurance claim was narrowly avoided in February 1900. 'Fire at Branthwaite', the West Cumberland Times reported, 'While Mr. West was drying some corn on Saturday evening the kiln took fire. A quantity of water was thrown on just in time to obviate serious damage.'

4. William West's dwelling house.

4a. Joiner's shop, also serving as a clog sole cutter's shop in 1904.

5. 'Stable and cow house' for livestock, implements, husbandry utensils, and produce. The loft above was for storing feed.

6,7&8. The old fulling/woollen/sawmill. In 1935 6&8 served as stores and a workshop, housing two circular saws and a planing machine. Sawmill House, 7, was let to separate occupants.

9. Before 1935, and possibly as early as 1924, the leat had been partly culverted and a 16 horsepower Tangye Oil Engine installed at '9' on the plan, to power the woodworking machinery in 6&8.

The old sawmill, it would appear, had not worked by waterpower for 40 or 50 years, so presumably that would not have been a viable option.

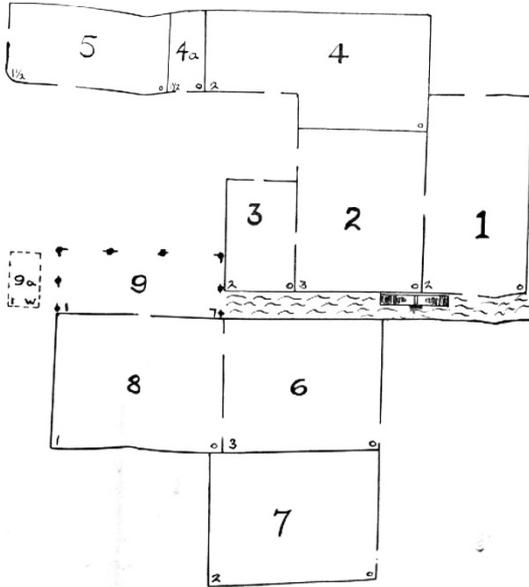


Figure 7. Floor plan of 1935

The 14 ft. breast-shot water wheel was beyond what is now the window, Figure 8, connected to an internal vertical pit wheel. The pit can be seen above but the pit wheel is no longer in position. The large horizontal toothed wheel is both a bevel gear, driven directly by the pit wheel, and a spur gear which turned three pairs of millstones on the upper floor, via stone nuts/axles. Each of three horizontal beams carried a bearing for a millstone axle. A bearing is visible on the nearest beam. The clearance between the millstones was altered by adjusting the height of the beam end within the slot, thereby raising or lowering the bearing. A fork lever, seen on the right-hand side, enabled each stone nut to be moved along its square tapering axle to disengage the drive to the millstone. The small bevel gear transmitted drive via a pulley and belt to the elevator, barley crusher, flour dresser and cockle mill on the floor above, and also through the wall on the left, to the sawmill equipment. The flour dresser



Figure 8. Internal features of Branthwaite corn & sawmill, retained when the corn mill was converted into a holiday cottage in 1988.

effected the segregation of bran, germ, or any husk and produced flour of the required fineness by sifting through bolting cloths. It was donated to Gleaston Mill, near Ulverston, to aid their restoration work in the 1980s. Two 'French Burr' millstones went to Muncaster Mill. The cockle mill separated unwanted seeds and grains from the main crop grain.

Branthwaite Mill's ledgers, from 1937, provide an insight into its range of customers and services. Farmers required fencing, gates, building and implement repairs, in addition to corn milling and supplying with animal feed. At this time wood was extensively used for wheels, carts, and machine components, such as threshers, reaper binders, clod crushers,

providing a steady demand. Muck spreading, carting, or whatever was needed, could be done, e.g. 'one man and two horses mowing 15s' for the day in 1938. The account for William's brother, Thomas West at Calva Hall, for part of 1942, is shown for illustration in Figure 9.

Demand arose also from large and small businesses – J. Wilkinson Wagon Works at Whitehaven needed prepared wood, much of it being oak; Dean Moor colliery used props, sleepers, feed for ponies, and joiner's services; in Workington there was Ferguson Motor Body Works and, at Distington, Lancelot Salkeld, joiner and cartwright. In the early 1900s the joiner's shop was equipped for producing clog soles, though there is no mention in the later ledgers. Local saddlers, such as Lowdon's of Workington and Burnyeat's on South Street in Cockermouth, were regular customers for the shaped wooden saddle crutches, or

		West. Y. Calva Hall		L S £	
		Brought forward No. 111.		32	13
1942	Mar 5	1 Piece P Pine for Corny Side. 3/6	10 ⁰ Flour 20/-	1	3 6
	7	92 Posts 2000. 10/6			10 6
	31	1 Pair Corn Drill Wheels felled		2	10
April	8	2 ⁰ Oatmeal. 4/-	10 ⁰ Flour 20/- 1 ² Semground. 2/3	1	9 3
	29	20 Gate Rails. 15/-	3 Gate Heads. 4/6	1	2 6
	28	2 ⁰ Mixed Nails 3/-	3 Gate Heads 4/6 Board 3/6		13
	30	1 B. Bram 11/-	4 ⁰ Cut Corn. 4/6 4 ⁰ Oatmeal. 14/-	1	12 6
May	14	10 ⁰ Flour. 20/-	2 Turnip Drill Shafts 12/6	1	12 6
	14	12 Boards 6ft x 4ft x 6 x 1. 4/-	1 Piece 11ft x 3 x 2. 1/9		7 9
	14	4 Pieces 9ft x 4 x 3. 8/-	12 Do. 6ft x 3 x 3. 12/-	1	
	14	Windows Rept with new glass	10/-		10
	14	1 Barrow Rept. new Shafts. 12/6			12 6
June	2	10 ⁰ Flour. 20/-	2 ⁰ Oatmeal. 4/-	1	7
	2	2 Doy. 4ft Posts. 9/-	1 Gate Head + 1 Artnew. 2/6		11 6
	12	10 ⁰ Flour. 18/6	3 ² Oatmeal. 13/3	1	10 9
	26	2 Pieces Ash. 15ft x 3 x 2. 9/6			9 6
Paid by Cornha A/c 25/11/1942				49	13 9

saddle trees, which formed the basis of their product. Regarding the corn milling side of the business, most transactions involved the processing of customers' oats largely for animal feed – oats rolled, oats dried, oats ground, oats semi-ground. Occasionally barley was ground; there was no mention of customers bringing wheat to the mill. The acreage of wheat in Cumberland prior to World War II was just 1.3 per cent of that of oats. In the hillier districts it may be was not an economic crop at all. The large industrial roller mills, such as Carr's at Silloth, were processing large quantities of imported wheat. Prior

Figure 9. A Page from Branthwaite Mill's Ledgers, 1942.

to World War II a large quantity of animal feed was imported; an arrangement that could not be sustained by the merchant shipping during the war. So 'the old mills adapted to this wartime need and, in many cases, did not switch back after the war to meal milling, which required more skill and brought less profit'.⁸³ Figure 9 shows that in 1942 Calva Hall, the residence of eight people in 1939, was being supplied with ten stones or more of

⁸³ Enid Gauldie, *The Scottish Country Miller 1700 – 1900*, John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1999, pp. 231-2.



Figure 10. An Ivel Agricultural Motor pulling two reaper binders circa 1910.

flour per month, as well as two stones of oatmeal.⁸⁴ Thomas West, it appears, was the only customer for flour in these 'industrial' quantities. It would be interesting to know the background to this level of consumption! Is it possible that, as one of the district's largest farms at roughly 300 acres, several prisoners of war from the camp at Lamplugh were being put to work?

William West was something of a motoring pioneer, starting with an Ivel Agricultural Motor registered by him in 1910, see Figure 10.⁸⁵ Considered in 1904 as the first commercial tractor at a price of £300, it could replace a pair of shire horses for field work or could power stationary machines via the pulley belt drive, for agricultural, corn or sawmill purposes. Tractors did not seriously start to replace horses for three to four decades after the Agricultural Motor arrived at Branthwaite Mill; there was still adequate

work for the four shire horses in the stable. Documents in the mill's archive show that a Ford Model T was William West's personal transport by 1920, and a 35 horsepower Peerless Lorry was fetching and carrying goods by 1930. By this time, in his late 60s, William would have been considered 'elderly' by some, but that did not stop him acquiring a Rudge motorbike in 1932. Not exactly the safest mode of transport on hilly, probably unmade, country roads!

In 1898 William West married Jane Sharpe, the daughter of a Beckermeth farmer. Their only child, Annie, was born in 1899. Jane's elder brother William, a wood Sawyer at the mill, and his family were living in Branthwaite from about 1905, in one of the West's cottages - a family with 5 children in three rooms!⁸⁶ Thomas Smith, a carter at the mill, and his family occupied another one, while George Thwaites, labourer, was nearby at The Globe Inn (now The Wild Duck), run by his mother Margaret. Richard Holliday, a carter was lodging in the corn mill house.

⁸⁴ 1939 Register accessed through 'findmypast'.

⁸⁵ Motor documents: Register of Motor Cars, 'Ivel' Agricultural Motor, July 1910, etc. Private collection of K. & C. Thomas.

⁸⁶ Family history sources through 'findmypast' and 1910 Land Valuation Book for the Parish of Dean, CASC/TIR/4/49.

There is little to suggest that this picture of life at the mill changed much in the following decades, other than the major disruption of the two wars. Some of the jobs itemised in the ledgers required a craftsman, rather than a sawyer, such as making new doors and window frames or repairing wheels with new naves, fellos, and spokes. Thomas Woodburn will have brought this capability. The 1921 census recorded that he served his apprenticeship with Homer Taggart, a ship carpenter in Harrington. The employer was Richard Williamson & Son who built wooden ships at Harrington in the nineteenth century, then iron/steel ships at Workington until 1938. On the 1939 Register Thomas Woodburn had recently married Annie West, was living at Branthwaite Mill, and working as a 'joiner/ carpenter'. Whether Thomas had continued to work for Williamson & Son after completing his apprenticeship in the 1920s is unclear. If he did, then the impending closure of the shipyard may have prompted the move to Branthwaite.

William and Jane had not seen Thomas as husband material for their daughter, or someone to eventually run the business, and sacked him, hoping to discourage the relationship. Annie, in her late thirties by this time, took to her bed until Thomas was re-instated! Other anecdotes of Tommy's, recalled by the present mill owner, included William West buying up a large quantity of timber from the dismantled Solway Viaduct, and its delivery by rail to Branthwaite station.⁸⁷ Tommy also remembered hauling 70 trees from Friars Crag, Keswick by horse and wagon. At that time the old ford into the mill yard was still in use, the alternative lane being too steep for the horses.⁸⁸ In his later years William still had an eye for acquiring property. In 1942 he added

Branthwaite Nook 'an ancient messuage and tenement', owned in the eighteenth century by John Tellfair of Branthwaite, miller, and Eleanor his wife. It comprised a cottage, stable, barn (with byre underneath), and coach house with loose box underneath.⁸⁹ It is not obvious why he felt the need to acquire it, but by doing so he then owned the land between the Ullock road and the railway, from the mill to the weir. The right to use the water had been held by the corn mill since the Skeltons were lords of the manor. When he bought the old sawmill, for £500 in 1924, he thereby acquired the 'mill pool, mill race, dam, sluices, water gates, weir and bridge over the River Marron'. If waterpower was to have a role in the later twentieth century William had ensured that Branthwaite Mill was positioned to participate in any revival. Likewise, the farming prospects were good – he had bought some 30 acres of land he had occupied as tenant when the opportunity arose, including 'Cliff Closes' and 'Whinney Closes', lying on the west side of the village. The third string to his bow was property in Branthwaite - seven cottages and 'Nook' as well as the two mills, each with a 'dwelling house'.

William West, born 1866, built upon the legacy of his father, William West, born 1832, who started from nothing, his father also William West born 1795, being the 'pauper ag lab' in Kendal Workhouse. What William West, as the latest in the line, failed to ensure was an heir to maintain and build on his legacy. His daughter, Annie, inherited his estate on his death, aged 87, in 1953. Thomas Woodburn maintained, in later life, that William West 'left the place in debt and he, Tommy, got it out of debt'. He saw the mortgages simply as debts, rather than seeing the assets and the income they

⁸⁷ Solway viaduct rail link between Bowness and Annan, closed 1921, dismantling completed 1935.

⁸⁸ The ford, it is presumed, was the ancient river crossing predating, and then serving alongside Branthwaite Bridge, which dates to before 1753, TCWAAS Vol. 15 (1899) pp. 114-

132, and was probably the 'Branthwaite Bridge' repaired in 1703, CASC/Q/11/1/68/11.

⁸⁹ Conveyance of cottage, outbuildings, garden etc. known as 'Branthwaite Nook' and parcels of land situated at Branthwaite. Anne Falcon Carter, deceased, and others to William West dated 26 Nov 1942. Private collection of K. & C. Thomas.

brought. Property was sold by Annie and Tommy, paying off the mortgages, starting with Branthwaite Nook just a few months after William died. Annie herself died in 1964, and Tommy thereafter had no family to provide for. The sawmill related work petered out in the early 1960s, processing oats for animal feed about 1971, and farming (cattle and pigs) ended in 1976. Just the two adjacent mills remained when Tommy was persuaded to sell the old sawmill in 1973. Waterpower may have become outdated, but Gordon Talbot had seen the potential of the weir, the water rights, mill race, dam, sluices, etc. He set about rebuilding the decayed weir and establishing a trout farm, in the process having to overcome issues regarding wild fish protection and the weir fish pass.⁹⁰

After selling the old corn mill in 1984 to Keith and Carol Thomas, who converted the farm buildings into a garage workshop, 'Scutter' Woodburn, as he was known locally, moved to the old post office in Greysouthen, before ending up close to his roots in Salterbeck. When he died in 1993, aged 89, he left assets 'not exceeding £125k'. It is to be hoped he appreciated the contribution of the Wests, father and son, to his generous retirement fund.

Conclusion

When starting to investigate the history of a 'Victorian' corn mill expectations were modest. However, turn over a millstone and there may be surprises lurking underneath! The manor of Branthwaite goes back to the twelfth century. It is probable that Branthwaite mill had been grinding grain for around eight centuries when the wheels stopped turning around 1970. Essentially the same process, serving the same customer base, in the same place, uninterrupted by competition, social, agricultural, or technological change for all that time.

⁹⁰ S. & W. Cumberland Fisheries Advisory Committee, 12 Jan 1976.

Another surprise was the owner of the mill, the lord of the manor, taking part in the 1715 Jacobite rebellion and 'the last battle on English soil', meeting his end in Newgate Prison.

Geography and climate conferred abundant water and waterpower on Branthwaite, the latter by virtue of a well-channelled river having sufficient fall to support several weirs, hence several mills. What would otherwise have been a stable agricultural community was overlaid with rural industries and a section of the village's population that ebbed and flowed with the opportunities.

It is suggested in *A Dictionary of Lake District Place-Names* that 'Branthwaite', may mean 'the clearing where the broom grows'.⁹¹ The Old Norse/Old English word 'brant', meaning 'steep', occurs as a place name element, giving, for example, 'Brantwood' and 'Brantrake'. Anyone who has ridden a bicycle through 'Branthwaite', or contemplated why it was a good place for water mills, would think 'steep clearing' a more apt, and accurate name.

Footnote and Acknowledgement.

Is it possible prisoners of war from the Lamplugh camp were working at Calva Hall in 1942? This has been confirmed - Thomas West's granddaughter, Monica, remembers 'the POW's coming to Calva Hall every day!' Polish and Czech she believes, rather than Germans.

I am very much indebted to Keith and Carol for giving access to their archive, to their mill and for sharing their knowledge of its history. My cars, over the years, have benefitted greatly from their care and technical expertise. A visit to Branthwaite Mill Garage has always been a pleasure.

⁹¹ Diana Whaley, *A Dictionary of Lake District Place-Names*, English Place-Name Society 2006.