

THE GROWTH OF STAVELEY VILLAGE 1300 TO 1997

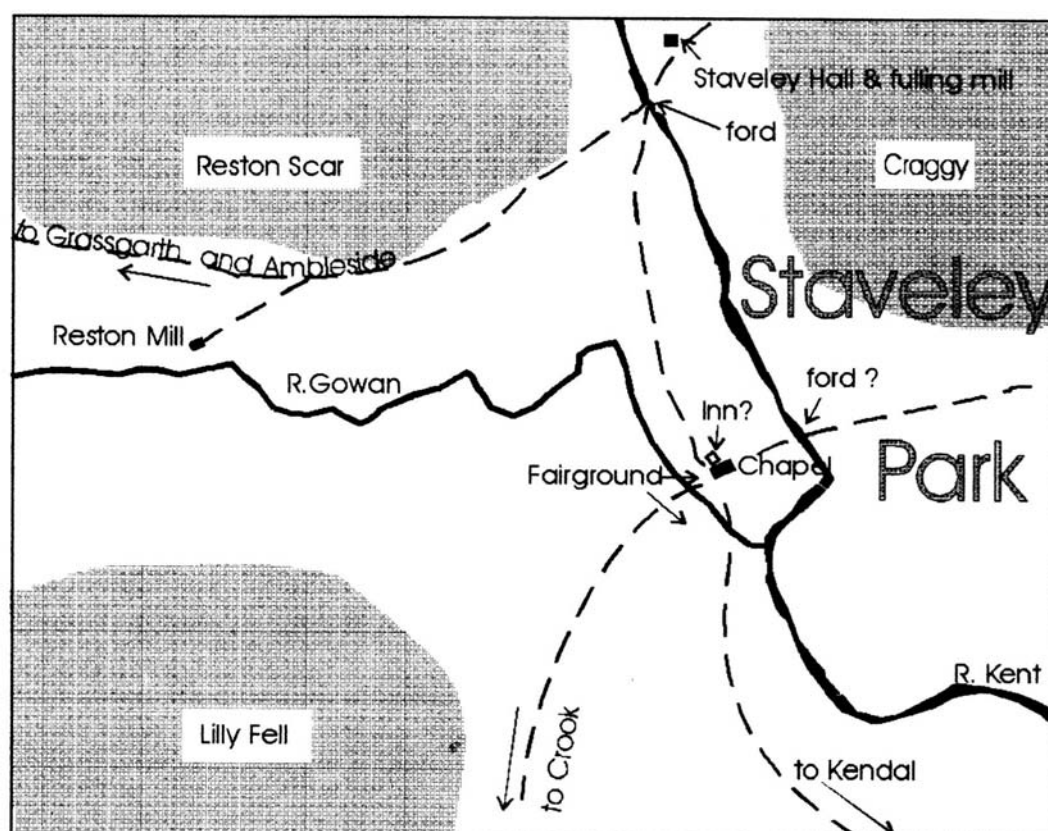
As far as we can tell nobody lived where Staveley village now stands until the thirteenth century, though there had been English and Scandinavian settlers in the area from about 700 AD onwards. But the valley bottom where the Gowan joins the Kent was then heavily wooded and often flooded and these early settlers farmed and lived on higher, less heavily wooded and more easily drained areas where you can still see traces of their open fields.¹

The Beginnings of the Village c. 1300

The 11th -13th centuries saw climate in Britain improving and population rising, and sheep farming and cloth production became important in the Kent valley. So by the 13th century Staveley and Hugill people needed a mill to grind their corn, fulling mills to process their cloth, a convenient spot where they could meet with people from Kentmere or Mardale or others from Ambleside or Langdale or from Kendal to buy and sell, and a nearer place of worship than the parish church four miles away at Kendal. By 1274 there was a corn mill at Reston,² and by 1323 the Lord of the manor, William Thweng, had a park at Staveley, a hall (off Hall Lane) and a fulling mill³ nearby.

Around this time William was granted the right to hold a market and an annual fair at Staveley⁴ and in 1338 he gave land for the building and endowment of St Margaret's Chapel.⁵ When he died in 1340 he had tenants in Staveley, Sadgill, Hugill and Reston paying him £8 a year, a park at Staveley worth £2.13.4 a year for the summer grazing, a fulling mill worth 10/- a year and a meadow and water mill at Reston worth £2.19.0.⁶ There must have been tracks between the chapel, the hall, the fairground and the mill, as well as river crossings, presumably fords rather than bridges, and tracks probably up what we call Hall Lane to Kentmere, over the shoulder of Ravenscar to Reston, and over Ratherheath to Kendal. No doubt some of the valley bottom lands had by now been cleared of timber (there were 7 acres of meadow at Reston)⁷ and there must have been an open space for the fair near the Chapel, stretching perhaps across the Gowan where the fair was held until 1921. There may have been one or two buildings - maybe an ale-house near the Chapel - built like the first Chapel itself probably of the plentiful timber and with thatched roofs. The present stone tower of St Margaret's was probably added in the later 14th Century.⁸

Staveley Village about 1350

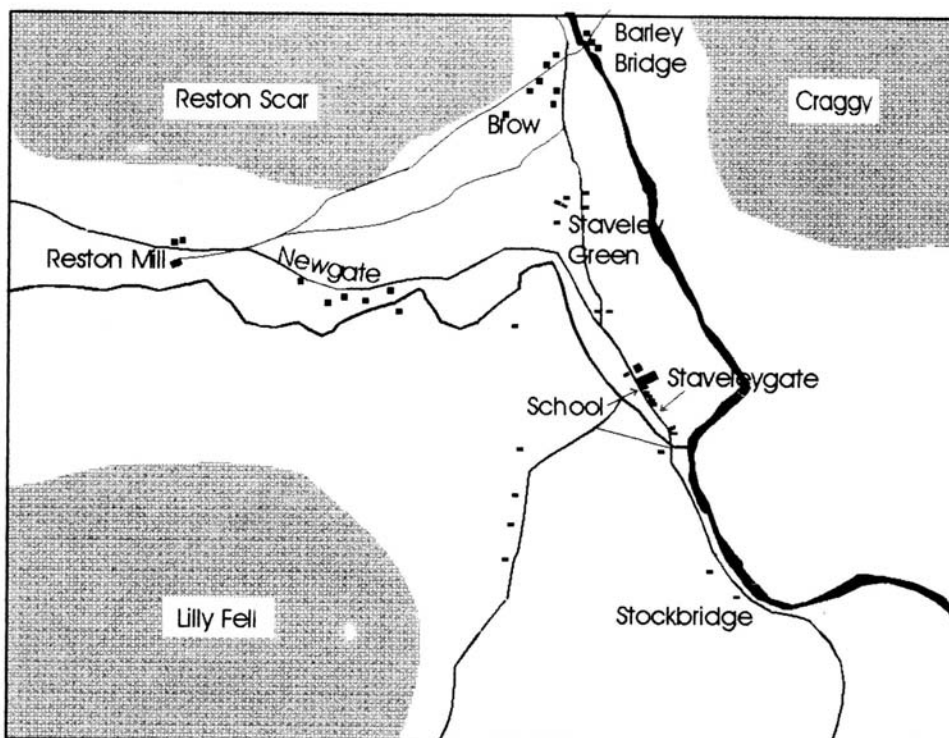


The Village about 1700

William Thweng's plan for a market at Staveley never came off, but during the next 400 years the area round his new chapel grew gradually into a village. It probably grew fastest in the 16th century when the Kendal cloth trade boomed, and the roads through our valleys became more important. By this time a good deal of the lower lands had been cleared for farming, and the increased traffic made it worth building bridges. Barley Bridge first appears in Leland's itinerary of the 1530s and was known as "the new bridge" over the Kent in a document of 1588 "The inhabitants of Kentmere and a... part of Over Staveley by reason of the water of Kent bursting down ye bridge called new bridge have been constrained to carry their dead... [for burial at Kendal] through men's fields"⁹ By 1675¹⁰ there were stone bridges over the Gowan at Ings and near its confluence with the Kent and a new road "Newgate" - our Windermere Road - linked Staveley Green to Reston. Clearly the old track over the shoulder of Reston Scar to Grassgarth and points west had now been superseded, and what later became the A591 ran through "Staveley Gate," as Main Street was then called, and today's road pattern was more or less established.

The boom in cloth production brought new fulling mills and craftsmen's and cloth-workers' cottages as well as roads and bridges. The inn beside the

The village about 1700



chapel, known as the "White House"¹¹ in 1740, no doubt did increasing business, and there would certainly be a blacksmith's shop. There was a fulling mill at Newgate in 1612,¹² and there were other fulling mills at Barley Bridge and at Staveley Park as well as others further from the village. The map shows the approximate position of all houses in the village paying "chapel salary" to the curate in 1733. There were 39 of them, and though some of these may at that time have been abandoned sites on which the payment was still due, the list would be unlikely to omit many occupied houses. It gives a clear impression of the village as a very open scatter of houses, most of them no doubt with gardens or paddocks, with clusters near the chapel, at the Green and near Barley Bridge. It also shows the school, built beside the chapel in 1740-55, and a house (now the design shop??) built for himself in 1736 by Thomas Garnett, curate and schoolmaster.¹³

The Village about 1850

The period 1750-1850 saw many rapid changes. In 1761 the main road became a turnpike, with a tollgate near the Eagle and Child,¹⁴ and over a period of years the road was surfaced so as to carry wheeled vehicles instead of trains of pack-horses, and the growth of traffic brought work for black-smiths — by 1851 there were five in the village¹⁵ — and innkeepers --there were three inns and one beerhouse, not counting the Railway Tavern or the Abbey Hotel. Beside the railway, opened in 1847, was a new terrace of houses on

the Banks obviously built, like the inn, to serve the railway.¹⁶ At some date later than 1770¹⁷ the bridge over the Gowan near the Abbey had been built, and in the 1850s there was a cluster of cottages by this bridge as well as two superior houses one on either side of Station Road.

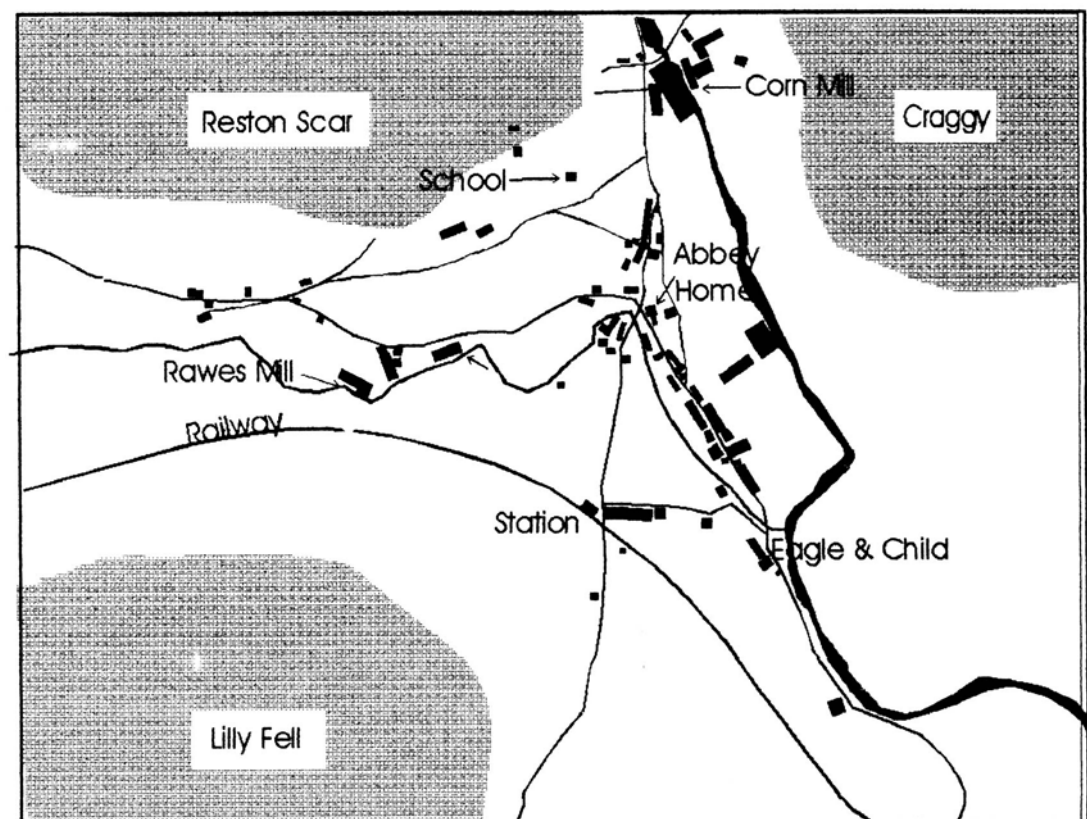
One of these was Gowan Lodge (now Gowan Cottage), and there lived Rowland Suart, Bobbin Manufacturer. It was the growth of the bobbin mills that had caused the most rapid period of change in the village, the years 1820-1850. In the 1780s the five-storey mill at Barley Bridge had been built as a cotton mill, and beside it a row of terrace houses for the workpeople. It turned over to wool in 1810, and in 1817 another large woollen mill, later Rawes Mill was built on the Gowan, but wool spinning was not very successful in Staveley and in 1851 there were only 25 workers in wool, mostly living at Barley Bridge. In contrast, there were 187 bobbin workers in the Staveley area, and well over 100 in the village itself where there were bobbin mills in what had been Rawes Mill, in the old fulling mill at Newgate (Gatefoot today), in part of Barley Bridge mill and at Chadwicks, (later the SWTC).

There were now 166 households in the village area which had held 39 in 1733.¹⁸ It is not clear from the census how many actual houses there were, as some were probably in multiple occupation, for instance the two three-storey

houses opposite the old chapel (now the post office and Rook House). Many of the older houses were no doubt rebuilt at this time of rapid expansion with a second storey to provide more room, and the new ones, like the mill cottages at Barley Bridge, or those at Bridgend in Nether Staveley, all had two storeys.

There were many craftsmen and craftswomen and shopkeepers, so there were workshops and shops. It was a pretty solidly “working class” village. Rowland Suart had built himself a superior house, but his elder brother George lived at Gatefoot Mill in a household including 12 bobbin workers. The Suarts were self-made local men, and were only beginning to feel the need for superior living space. Miles Read “surgeon and apothecary” lived next to the Fat Lamb (now Cross House). The only “middle class” houses in the village in 1851 were Gowan Lodge, “Mount Pleasant” across the road from it (now Stanley Bank, then occupied by Thomas German, “annuitant” and his son Edward “Landed proprietor”) and the curate’s house, still known today as “the old Vicarage”. This house is one of the few Staveley houses built in limestone, and so is likely to have been built after the opening of the railway in 1847 made the transport of stone easier. Here in 1851 lived James Ellera y the curate.

The village about 1850



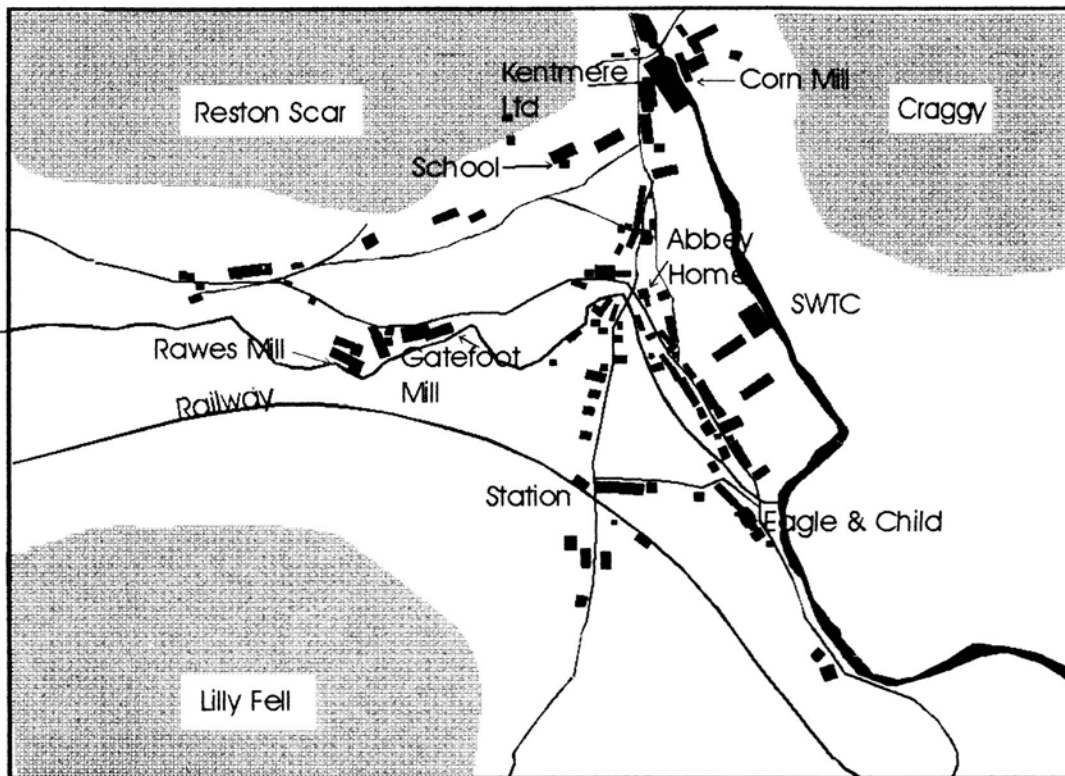
By the 1850s the old school by the chapel had been abandoned and a new one built on the site of the present school. This move was a portent of things to come since the land it was built on was given by JH Wilson a rich man who had bought large tracts of land in Staveley and Hugill, built the Abbey Hotel, and helped to finance the new railway. He and his successors were to contribute to many changes in the next period of the growth of the village.

The Village about 1914

In the years 1850-1914 the bobbin industry stopped growing and began to decline, so that there were 10% less people in the village in 1914

Primitive Methodist Chapel, the extended school building, the Institute, the gasworks, and the first fire station, all between 1844 and 1887. All this new building meant that it was in this period that the village took on much of its present-day appearance. Two other public buildings new at this time were the Drill Hall on the Ayland and the Temperance Hall in Station Road, both opened in 1887, both with corrugated iron roofs which fitted even less well into local tradition than the decorated Victorian gables of the new houses.

The village about 1912



than there had been in 1850.¹⁹ But growth of a different kind took place. The railway made Staveley a very convenient place to live, and the development of a professional middle class with superior standards in housing led to the building on the edge of the village of houses for vicar, schoolmaster, doctor etc.²⁰ These houses were built to the design of architects, with no local features and using for corner trimmings etc quarried limestone that had come by rail from Kendal. At the same time many of the older houses and shops were rebuilt in these fashionable materials.

Another powerful cause of change in this period was the presence of a wealthy family, the Wilson/Buckley/Johnson dynasty, who either built or patronised and led the building of the Abbey, St James' Church, the Wesleyan Chapel, the

The Village about 2000

In the 20th century bobbin turning finally disappeared, but various new industries have arisen, and tourism and holiday accommodation has grown greatly. At the same time piped water and sewerage made possible greatly improved housing standards, and the coming of motor transport made the village much more accessible and more convenient as a holiday centre and as a place of retirement.

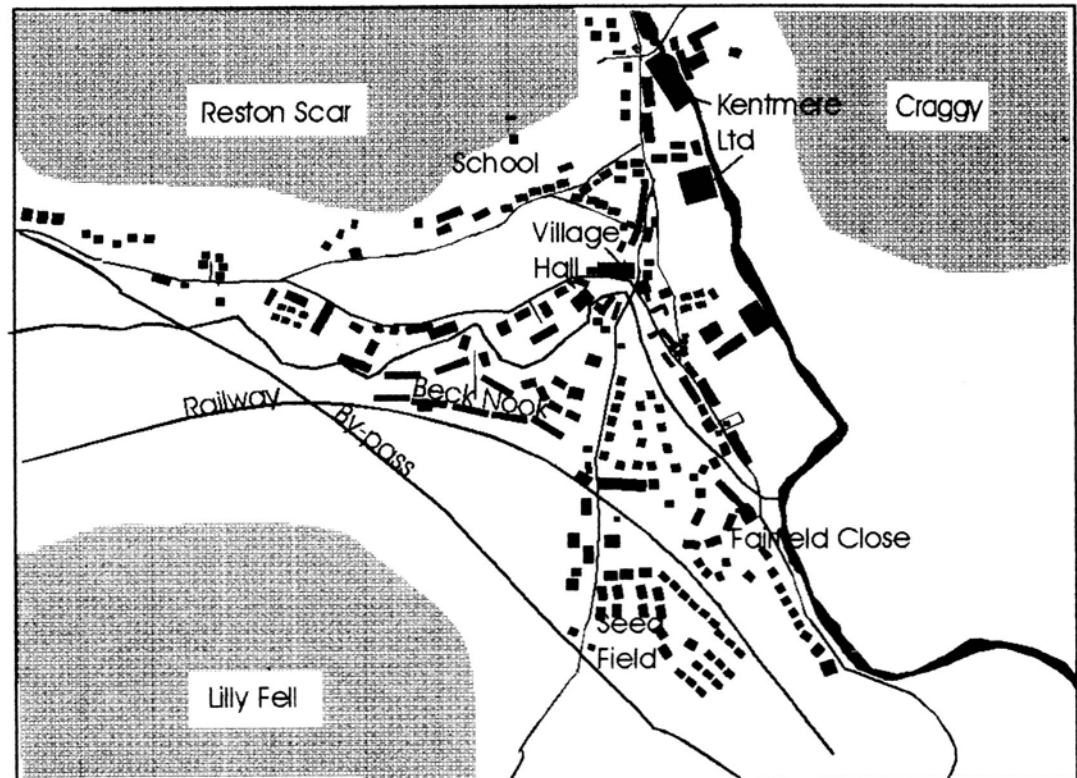
These factors led to a rise in population of 7% combined with a rise in the number of households of 45%.²¹ A very few old houses were demolished, like Alec Row, now the car park, but many new ones were built, all of them in non-local styles and with non local materials, though several old buildings were converted into dwellings, for

instance Gatefoot Mill drying shed in Windermere Road, and the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Main Street. A little of the new building, like the ribbon development of Kendal Road, took place in the 1930's in the era before planning controls, but most of it came after 1950 in planned groups of houses such as the council estates at Beck Nook, Scroggs Close and Brow Lane, or the private estates at Seed Field, Seed Howe, Ravenscar or Fairfield Close.

New public buildings in this period include the village hall, a new fire station, new school buildings, the pavilion on the Recreation Ground, and the Roundhouse Theatre, converted in the 1990s from the old gas-holder.

The by-pass, opened in 1988, made an enormous difference to the amenity of the village, but has had little effect on its buildings.

The village in 1997



Notes

1 Kendal Corn Rent Map 1838 Kendal Record Office (KRO), Over Staveley and Hugill sections, and see map in [A Lakeland Valley Through Time](#) p. 18

2 Farrer [Records of Kendale](#) Ip.318

3 Farrer Ip.319 and see [Occasional paper no 2](#) for map and discussion

4 Farrer Ip. 318 gives the date of this as 1281, but as William Thweng did not inherit Staveley until the death of his father in 1323 (Farrer Ip,3 19), this must be a mis-reading

5 Farrer Ip. 320-323

6 Farrer Ip.323

7 Farrer Ip.323

8 Pevsner, [Buildings of England](#) - Cumberland and Westmorland p.292

9 Kendal Corporation MSS Folder A1, KRO.

10 Corporation of Kendal MSS Folder A1. KRO. Petition of the inhabitants of Staveley 1588, and Ogilby's map 1675

11 List of contributors to Chapel fund 1740 KRO WPR/68 "William Hodgson, victualler for the White House"

12 Court Rolls 1612, Levens MSS via KRO, and Inventory of Robert Robinson of Brow 1690

13 Cross House deeds WDX/572 KRO

14 In existence by 1749 Cross House deeds WDX1572 KRO conveyance 2/2/1749 from Robert Philipson "Innkeeper at the Eagle and Child" but in Staveley Park documents 31/2/1780 John Cook Innkeeper mortgages "The White Lion Nether Staveley"

15 1851 census

16 1858 OS map

17 Jeffrey map 1770

18 1851 census

19 Over Staveley in 1851 census 732, but in 1911 661, a fall of 10%. Though the farm population fell too, the village probably declined more.

20 Eg. Bulmer's Directory 1906 "Fell Close J Cannon retired sanitary inspector; Common Head Joseph Bintley architect, Stanley Bank M Dick, Doctor; Danes Rd, J.Martindale, retired. Schoolmaster; Vicarage Wm Chaplin."

21 1901 census 1439 people in 311 houses - 1991 1536 people in 698 houses - figures for the three civil parishes, and some of this change was not in the village itself, but the general proportions apply. Persons per household in 1901 4.62 in 1991 2.20.

This paper is based on the talk given to the Society by Morrison Harding and Joe Scott 11th Feb 1997