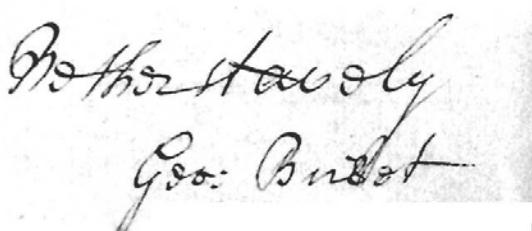


THE EAGLE AND CHILD

John Berry

Early days

The building of the original ‘Eagle & Child’ is somewhat difficult to date. It definitely existed in 1742 and was therefore constructed before the time of the Kendal to Ambleside Turnpike road in 1761. It could have been earlier than 1742 as the bridge over the Gowan was a key crossing point for almost a century before the turnpike. All we know is that in 1742 the licensee was George Birket.¹



The one surviving 18c record of licensees in Nether Staveley dated 1742.

The second reference is in 1771 when the Trustees of the Turnpike road tendered for construction of a road from the Eagle & Child ‘home stone’ – thought to refer to a mounting stone outside the inn – to the newly constructed toll bar.² There are then several references at the start of the 19th century when the owner was Robert Braithwaite of Scroggs Mill.³ (Owner in this context was that of a tenancy of Customary Freehold, where the tenant held ‘according to the customs of the Manor’, with a rent payable to the Lord of the Manor – in this case the Lowthers).

Almost certainly, the references to an inn at Staveley in Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal of October 1802⁴ refer to the Eagle. She wrote:

I am always glad to see Stavel(e)y; it is a place I dearly love to think of – the first mountain village that I came to with William when we first began our pilgrimage together. Here we drank a Bason of milk at a Publick house, and I washed my feet in the Brook and put on a pair of silk stockings by William’s advice.

The steps that led from the inn to the side of the Gowan are now affectionately known locally as the ‘Dorothy Wordsworth’ steps.



The ‘Dorothy Wordsworth’ steps, still in situ some 200 years later.

In 1804, Thomas Philipson was appointed innkeeper.⁵ In 1821 the ownership passed to Robert Braithwaite Junior, who, according to his father’s will,⁶ was already living in the cottage adjoining the inn, and carrying on his trade as a sickle-maker in the adjacent workshop.

Under Braithwaite Junior, the land and buildings were sub-let firstly to Joseph Swainson in 1825, and then to Thomas Newby in 1831. It was during this period that John⁷ and then George⁸ Thexton were landlords.

Robert then sold out to his cousin James Braithwaite of Ings, who in turn sub-let to John Brocklebank, a carpenter. These two appear in the 1836 Corn Rent listings.⁹ Brocklebank took on an apprentice, Charles Carter, from Kendal, who later went on to make his name out in New Zealand and had the town of Carterton named after him.¹⁰

Carter also wrote his memoirs¹¹ which give us an insight into the goings on at the Eagle under John Brocklebank. He writes:

I was, on the 8th June 1837, bound apprentice, for seven years, to Mr John Brocklebank, (whom my father used formerly to supply with timber) of Staveley, a little village four miles from Kendal. My mother paid him a premium, which was raised by mortgaging my “Lords Rents” of 15 pounds and I was taken into the house to board. The

house I found to be a village inn, where the coaches used to stop, was called the "Eagle and Child".

My master's building business turned out to be a mixture of wheelwrighting, joinering, and carpentering; but not a great deal of any one of them. He sometimes worked himself, and kept one or two workmen, but as he was fonder of the inn and its liquors, than of his workshops, he was much more with the former than the latter.

I did not much relish my new position: I had to bring from the field and milk a cow, night and morning, which, for the first time I learnt was considered a part of the duties of a country apprentice: on one occasion I was lent out to make hay at Knowles' Farm. My new master, as before hinted, liked drinking, often to excess, and set me to keeping his inn accounts; and in the evening, sometimes to waiting on the customers. I had plenty of good wholesome food, though very different to what I had been used to: for breakfast they gave me milk-porridge and oatmeal-cake; at dinner I had abundance of meat and vegetables; but the tea, which they called "Drinking" was too much for me; it consisted of oat-cake, hard skimmed milk cheese, and small beer – I could not manage the latter. My mistress, who was kindly disposed, saw this and indulged me for the future with milk or tea, taking care to tell me it was quite against the custom. My master was an intelligent, kind-hearted man, and a good workman; and he and his wife treated me very well. I was not partial to hard work in the shop, but would willingly undertake a long journey on foot to transact business for them. They sometimes called me careless, but I was generally obedient, and in their confidence, and was trusted with anything; but I soon saw that his circumstances were not good, and that my premium of 15 pounds had helped to keep him going a little longer; but his pecuniary difficulties were fast increasing.

One time he was going to give a grand ball to recruit his funds; but as, in his immediate vicinity, his credit was worthless, and as up to the time "the Assembly" or ball was to take place, he could get no wines or spirits for the evening's entertainment; so he bethought himself to send me, about noon of the very day on which the ball was to be held, to a spirit merchant's a good distance from Staveley, across Windermere Lake, to a place called Sawrey. Accordingly, a little before noon on a wet day, the 26th of the cold month of December, 1838, I started with horse

and cart. Not being accustomed to driving, the horse ran away, down a wrong road, the one to Ambleside, I believe: however, I recovered it, and arrived at the margin of the Lake, and after shouting and waiting some time in the rain for the ferryman stationed on the opposite side, he came at last, and I crossed the Lake in a storm of wind and rain, cold and drenched to the skin.

I arrived with my horse and cart at the spirit merchant's, got the wines and spirits in kegs, on credit, recrossed the lake, and at about seven o'clock in the evening I arrived at the "Eagle and Child" just as the guests were assembling to drink and dance.

Brocklebank's efforts to raise money proved insufficient, and in 1839 he was forced to give up the Eagle and take work as a journeyman carpenter on the Lonsdale estate.

The 1841 census records that John Birkett was now the innkeeper, and this fact is duly recorded after James Braithwaite's death in 1842 by the book of reference to the Kendal & Windermere Railway (1844).¹² When James Braithwaite died, William Wilson, a Kendal merchant, took over. Wilson was Braithwaite's son in law, married to his daughter Hannah. The provisions of Braithwaite's will¹³ were such that although the

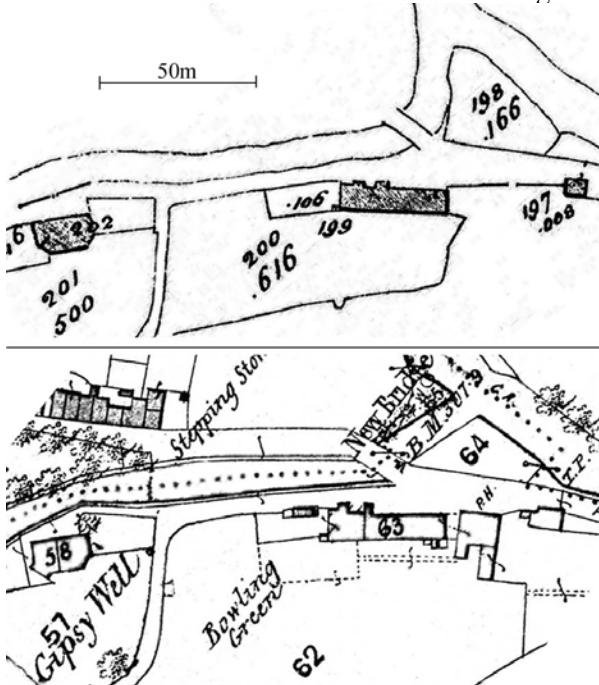


Fig 1: Two plans of the Eagle; the upper one taken from the survey prior to the 1816 Enclosure Act and the lower one, showing old and new inns, from the 1859 Ordnance Survey.

old Eagle & Child was left to Hannah and her husband, it was only in trust, and on their death it was to support their three daughters - via the trustees - until they reached the age of 21. Daughter Hannah had in fact pre-deceased James, and his wife Hannah died in 1845.¹⁴

The Old Inn buildings

Early maps¹⁵ show that the buildings were divided into three sections, (there is a line through the figure 63 on the 1859 map) and from the descriptions we can presume that one was the inn, one a cottage, and the third the workshop. Despite extensive searches it has proved impossible to find either a painting or early photograph of the buildings.

However, further along the turnpike road, at Troutbeck Bridge, there was a similar inn for which both photographs and a painting dated 1790 still exist. From these, together with the maps in Fig.1 it is possible to sketch what the inn might have looked like. (see below).

The New Inn

The building of a new inn, on a site between the old one and the turnpike toll house, is also difficult to date. It appears on the 1836 Corn Rent maps, but there is no reference to it in the accompanying schedules. It could have been added later as the maps were working documents until replaced by the 1859 Ordnance survey. It may have been started earlier, but William Wilson, we suspect, was instrumental in

completing the inn in 1846, possibly as a means of increasing the income of his daughters.

Fig 2: Advertisement which appeared in the Kendal Mercury in January 1847

DESIRABLE INN TO LET

TO BE LET

BY TICKET,

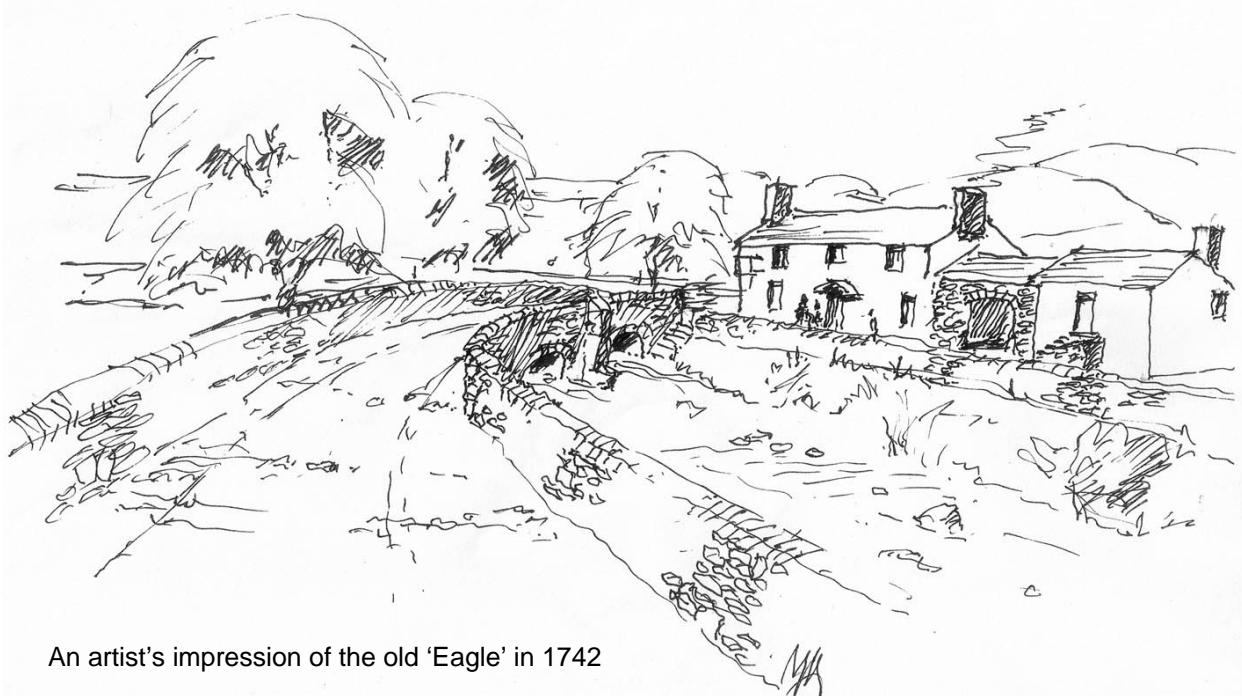
For a Term of Three, Five or Seven Years, to Enter upon at Whitsuntide next,

ALL that Newly-erected and Well-accustomed INN or PUBLIC HOUSE, called or known by the name of the EAGLE AND CHILD, situate at the south-east end of Staveley, adjoining the Toll Bar, together with Stables, Barn, and about FOUR ACRES of excellent LAND, part of which is cultivated as a Garden, with excellent Fruit Trees.

The Kendal and Windermere Railway, now in course of formation, passes through a corner of the Land, and probably the Staveley Station will be built close by. The Kentmere Reservoir, already commenced, will, when completed, give an impetus to the trade of Staveley.

Proposals for the same will be received until the 30th January, 1847, addressed to WM. WILSON, Canal Head, the owner, and the Tenant will be declared within a week after.

Kendal, December 30th, 1846.



Wilson did not live long enough to see the fruits of his investment. He died in 1848, and the inn became the responsibility of the trustees, John Collinson, George Browne the younger*, and George Kirby. They appointed a new landlord, Martin Tyson Dixon, and this arrangement continued until 1855, when Wilson's youngest daughter Mary Agnes reached 21.

*The George Browne referred to here was the penultimate George Browne of Town End, 1804 - 48

By this time, the trustees had already arranged to take mortgages on the inn to facilitate the marriage of the two elder daughters and these could only be redeemed by the sale of the inn. In addition, only one of the trustees, George Kirby, was still alive and active, and he, assisted by Mr Moser, solicitor of Kendal, put up the inn for sale on Tuesday 3rd April 1855. A copy of the poster for this sale hangs in the Eagle today.

The sale raised £850, sufficient to pay off the mortgages; the new owner was Benson Mackereth of Troutbeck. Under Mackereth the census records a succession of landlords, William Jopson in 1861, George Stubbs in 1871, and Thomas Abba in 1881. This latter year also saw the death of Benson Mackereth, and the inn passed to his daughter Isabella, the wife of William Hartley.

Up to this point, the old 'Eagle' was still *in situ*, having been converted into a cottage – in fact the old 'Eagle' complex was listed in both 1871 and 1881 as housing three families.



The wrap round bar before demolition in 1999

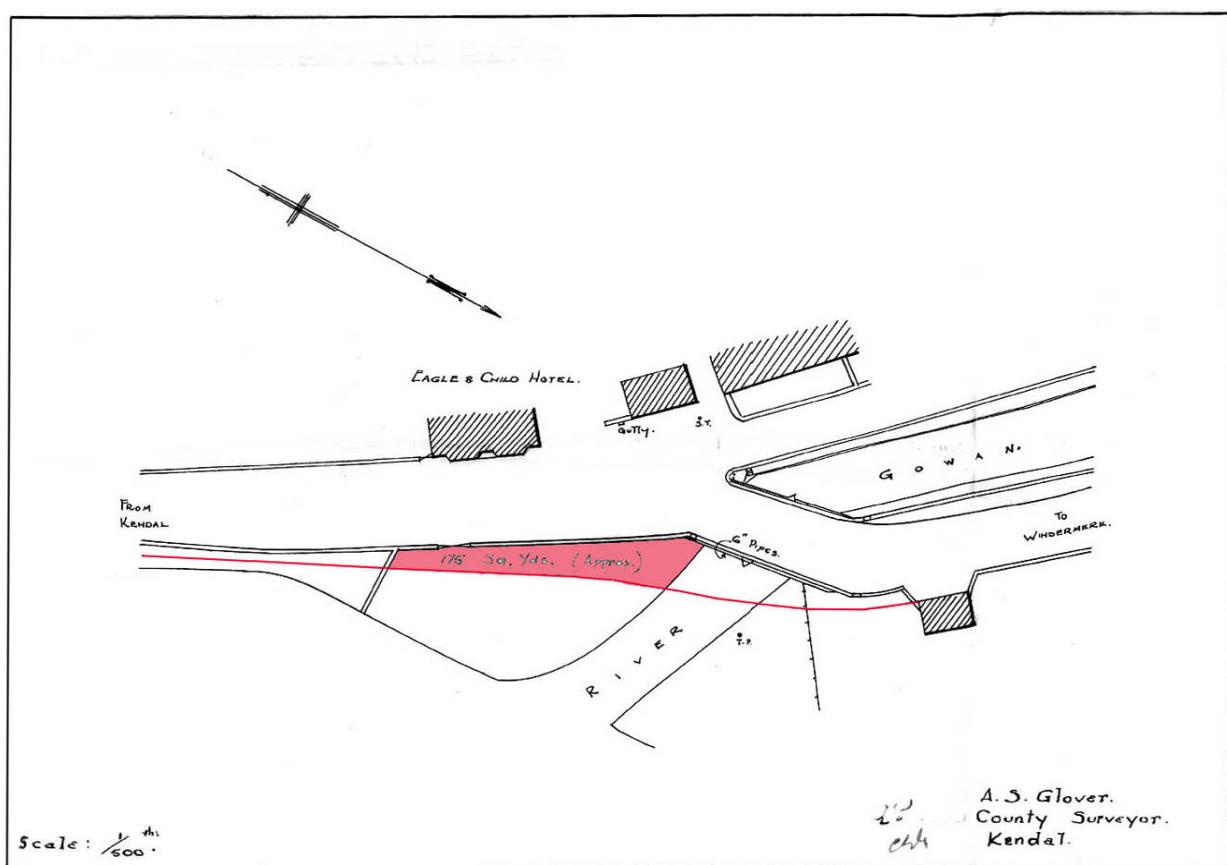
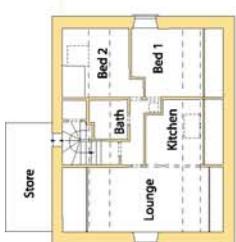
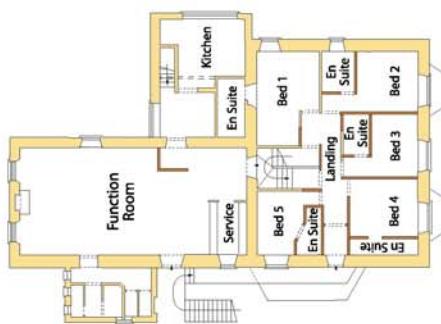


Fig. 3. The Westmorland County Council plan from 1932 showing the line of the proposed road widening

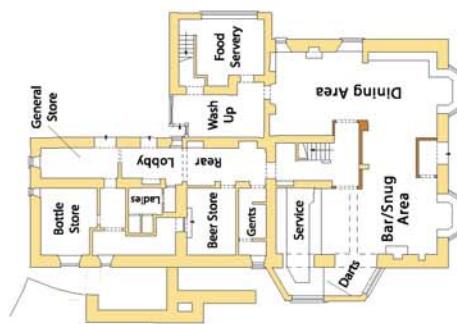
Second Floor



First Floor



Ground Floor



2000

1955 / 31

1928 / 31

1883

1846

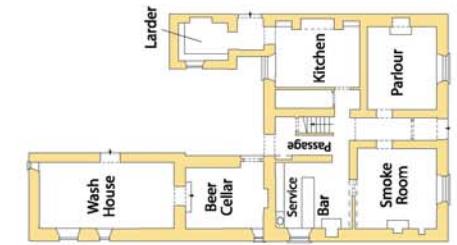
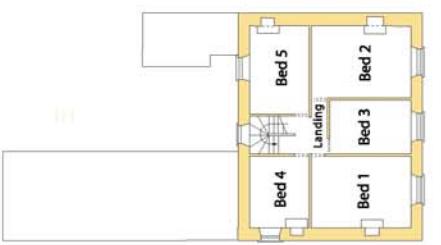
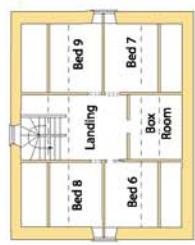
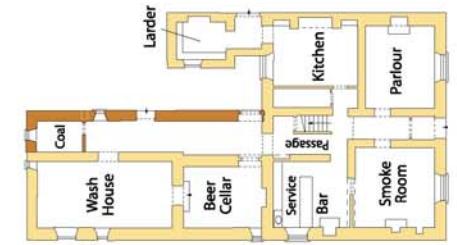
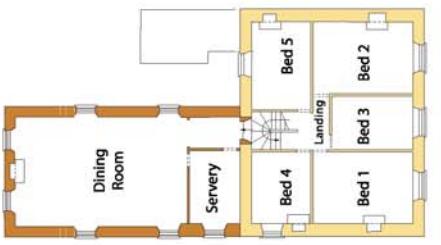
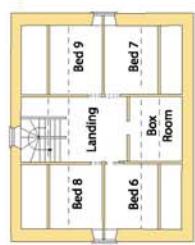
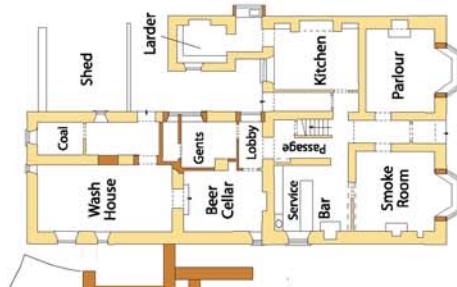
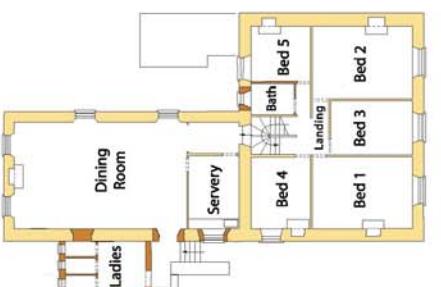
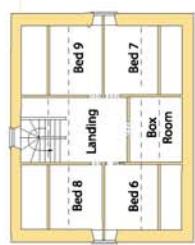
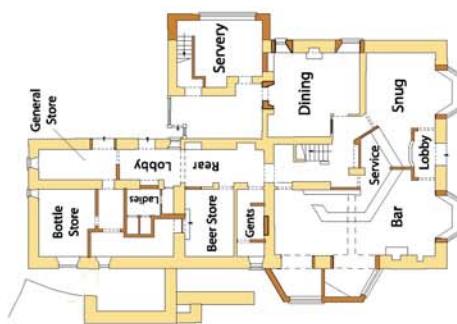
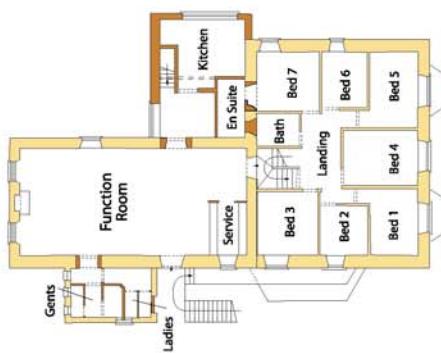
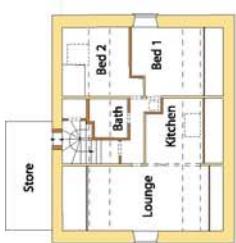


Fig 4 – Plans of the 1846 'Eagle' showing development through to 2000

THE STORY OF THE EAGLE AND CHILD

An Eagle and Child became part of the Lathom family after a miraculous ‘delivery’. The story goes like this; the Sir Thomas Lathom, who lived in the time of Edward the third, longed for a son and heir, but his wife had only given birth to girls. Perhaps, to console himself, the knight made love to a village girl, who eventually gave birth to a baby boy. Sir Thomas was overjoyed, but still had the delicate problem of introducing the child into his family with his wife’s approval. He succeeded by having it left under a tree at Lathom Park, and allowing his wife to discover it on her daily walk. When he explained that the infant must have been dropped by the eagle that nested in the tree, as a gift from heaven. Lady Lathom accepted the story, and adopted the child. So the story goes.

William Hartley decided to capitalise on his new acquisition, and to build new cottages to replace the old ‘Eagle’. Starting at the Banks end of his land in 1883, he built the block now known as Gowan Terrace. It has been suggested that building may have stopped for a while after number 8, as the subsequent cottages could not be constructed until the old complex had been demolished and the tenants re-housed. The Hartley family continued as owners through the death of William in 1907, and Isabella in 1912. Their son, also William, then became the owner until 1928 when he sold the Inn and its adjoining lands to George E Cannon (Grandfather George), the landlord of the Fat Lamb on Main Street. The cottages however, remained in the Hartley family ownership until William junior died in 1958, and his wife Esther in 1961.¹⁶ Strangely enough, despite having sold the inn to the Cannons, William Hartley still expected (and received) free accommodation at the Eagle whenever he came to Staveley to collect rents from the cottages.

The Cannon era

Hartley insisted that the inn was sold to Grandfather George despite the fact that it was George E. Cannon junior (Father George) who it was intended should run the inn. Hartley apparently was unwilling to sell directly to George junior. Father George retired in 1965 and the third George took over until he also retired in 1990. The inn then continued as a leased ‘free house’ but still in the Cannon family ownership until the present day.

The 1846 Building

As originally constructed, the inn was of three floors, the ground floor with bar, smoke room kitchen and parlour; though the last two were probably for the landlords own use. In addition, as far as can be ascertained, there was no provision of toilets in the new building – presumably those in need used the old facilities at the rear of the former inn. Upstairs on the first floor were five bedrooms, and a further four bedrooms plus a



An early postcard of the Eagle around 1900

store room were located on the second floor. At the rear of the inn there were two single story buildings, a small ‘larder’ store adjoining the kitchen, and a long building housing the beer store and a wash house.

When William Hartley took over he added an upper floor dining room at the rear of the inn; this required removal of one of the original landing windows and its conversion into a doorway. He replaced the old stables with a new two storey stable block in the side yard. Finally on the site of the old inn a toilet block was constructed, and can just be seen in the postcard view above.

When the Cannons took over they had already made plans to improve the inn. The conveyance is recorded as taking place on the 17th November 1928 but a plan to provide inside toilets and add a new bathroom was submitted to South Westmorland RDC in George's name by architect Malcolm G. Shaw of Kendal in October, a month earlier.¹⁷

The Cannons continued with improvements by adding bay windows to the inn during the winter of 1931/2¹⁸ but despite gaining planning approval from South Westmorland District Council they ran foul of the County Council as the land at the front of the inn on which the new bays had been constructed was technically part of the highway. However, at the time the County Council were planning to widen

the bridge over the Gowan and in exchange for allowing the bay windows to remain, obtained rights of way over a section of the paddock opposite the inn. The new boundary of the paddock was provided with a wall and metal railings at the County Council's expense. The plan on page 4 shows clearly the County Council's line for the widened road. However, for various reasons, this plan never went ahead. The railings survived the Second World War; they were not requisitioned as it was deemed too risky to remove them for fear of inn customers, worse for drink, falling into the river.

The old toilet block had become a store after the inside toilets were completed and the conversion of this into a lock up shop took place in 1934.¹⁹

Father George added an upstairs floor to the kitchen in the 1950s but otherwise the inn remained unchanged until two years before his son, the next George, took over in 1965. In the cold winter of 1963, major alterations were carried out by this George. The most obvious

change was the move of the bar to a central position such that it could also serve into the former 'parlour' room. (See photo on page 4) The second floor accommodation was transformed into a self contained flat and two further bedrooms were constructed on the first floor by partitioning off part of the two largest bedrooms. One bedroom was made into an en-suite room by building into the first floor kitchen space. The



A British Legion dinner in the function room in the 1930s. In the mirror can just be seen the curved top of the stairway window.

function room was improved by including a false ceiling with inset lighting. This made the room much easier to heat. The upstairs ladies toilets, which previously were accessed from an external coin operated door, were connected through to the lounge and altered to provide for both sexes. A new ladies toilet was provided on the ground floor by partitioning off part of the beer store. Finally, the last of the landing windows (that between the first and second floors) was removed to give access to a store over the bar/servery in the function room.

The Millennium scheme

By 1999 the arrangement of rooms had become unsuitable for the requirements of modern visitors. Whilst in the days of the commercial traveller, rooms without any facilities were the norm, visitors now expected en-suite facilities throughout. Accordingly, in 2000 the two extra bedrooms on the first floor were done away with, and the first floor reverted to five bedrooms, all en-suite.

In the function room, the old false ceiling was removed, and a new one installed in a higher position. This allowed part of the roof timbers to be visible, giving a little of the ‘old world charm’ which visitors now expect in a building of this age.

The reversion to what had been there previously also applied to the ground floor; the bar was moved back to its original position, but reflecting the changed requirements for food service, the whole of the front ground floor was opened out into a single dining and bar area. Many of the original dividing walls were removed and where they were structural, replaced by overhead beams.

The adjoining lands

Under Robert Braithwaite, the ownership of the inn also included some 4 acres of land. To the side of the inn was Great Field (later to become Fair Field) of just over 2 acres and at the rear of the inn was Bowling Green meadow – just over half an acre. There were then two small paddocks, one adjacent to the stable block and one on the opposite site of the road adjacent to the river. This paddock was sometimes used to store cattle en route to market and it is said that many cattle deals were agreed between farmers sitting by the inn windows. Braithwaite also owned an acre of allotments at the rear of Hill Cottage.

Benson Mackereth added to the land holding by purchasing the field to the south of Great Field, called Fell Close (later Sand Field) and William Hartley bought a small triangle of land, formerly part of Fell Close, but cut off by the railway in 1847. These two purchases added almost 3 acres to the land holding associated with the inn.

Under the Cannons eight plots of land fronting the highway were sold or let off for housing from 1932 onwards. The final pre-war application for outline planning approval in 1939²⁰ also included two houses at the entrance to Fair Field with the statement added that it was not intended to build more than two houses on this field. Fair Field was also used to graze the Cannon’s pony, Nancy, who, harnessed to a trap, was used to transport visitors around the area.

All was to change some 50 years later when the current George sold off the whole of Fair Field for development, and had a retirement home built for himself on part of Sand Field.

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Acknowledgments

Valuable assistance in the compilation of this paper has been given by the current owner, George Cannon, and his wife Dorothy; the current landlord, Richard Coleman, and by SDHS member Pat Brocklebank in New Zealand.

The plans on page 5 have been prepared by my brother, Tony, and the artist’s impression on page 3 by SDHS member Morrison Harding, with advice from Andy Lowe.