

Staveley & District History Society

Journal Winter 2009/10

CONTENTS

- 2 **Old & New**
Pat Ball recalls lost members and looks forward to more contributions to our 'Journal' and 'Occasional Papers'
- 3 **Tales from the Tapes**
Our Oral History transcriptions continue with the first part of a recording of the late John Williams
- 8 **Staveley Post Offices**
With the re-location of the Post Office to its fifth site on Main Street, John Berry looks back over the various moves
- 10 **CLHF Annual Convention 2009**
A report on this year's Convention
- 11 **More Family History discoveries**
John Berry explains how some family history research has helped to identify people on an old photograph

The views expressed in articles in this Journal are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the Society.

Cover photo – The Post Office and Bank at 75/77 Main Street

The next issue of the *Journal* (the Spring issue) will be published on the 13th April 2010. Any contributions (letters, articles, etc.) should be with the Editor no later than the meeting on the 9th March.

Old and New

Old and New is my theme for this issue of the Journal. You will see in this issue in our *Tales from The Tapes* series the transcripts of Mike Houston's sound archives of conversations with our late member John Williams. John was a great "character" full of charm and memories of Kentmere and the quarries where he worked as one of the last men to do so before the quarries closed in 1956. This tape is a memorable record of John.



Older members may recall June Tutin who recently passed away. June was one of our early members and worked on early history of the Kentmere Valley with this Society and also with the Search Archaeological Group. June fought a long and brave battle with her illness but never gave up her physical activity and was a regular sight on the fells, running, cycling, and mountain walking to the end.

Sadly, I have also to record the death of Mike Davies-Shiel, a prominent local historian who was a member of this society for a short time and also a lecturer to us and many other societies. His work may be accessed at Cumbria Archives, Kendal.

Now to matters new. We will shortly have available our latest Occasional Paper. This is *A Prehistoric and Romano British Field Survey of Kentmere*. Compiled by our member Robert Ridley this sets a high standard of research and covers sites and monuments, old and new, around the Kentmere Valley. Some of us are familiar with certain prehistoric and undated sites in the valley, but, as well as these, Robert introduces us to lesser known and new possibilities.

This, and other, Occasional Papers are fine examples of what can be achieved by our members. I do appeal to all to consider publication of their interests; no matter how dull it may sound to you it may be of great interest to the rest of us. There are two avenues of publication open to all - an article in our Journal or an Occasional Paper. Both are produced by our General Secretary and Editor, John Berry.

I am proud to be a member of such a Society as this with such a wide variety of interests from Prehistoric Man to Hydro-Electric Man (I don't know which category I come into!)

Pat Ball

Would you like to edit the *Journal*?

Our Editor, John Berry, has indicated that he would like someone else to take on this job in 2011. John has edited every edition since the start in 2004, and feels that someone with new ideas is needed. This is being 'advertised' early so that a new volunteer can work with John during 2010 and 'learn the ropes'.

Tales from the Tapes – John Williams

In the Summer 2009 Journal, Christopher Gregory paid tribute to John Williams of Kentmere. Some of the longer-standing members will recall the evening of 18th October 1998 when John and Clara Black shared with us some of the secrets of the Kentmere Valley as they knew it over the years. Clara will appear in a future 'Tales from the Tapes' but the following concentrates on John's contribution to the evening.

I thought the thing to do would be for me to wander round the valley, round the various homesteads and farmsteads and so on, and give what reminiscences I dare of the people who lived there, and we'll see how it goes from there.

We'll start at Millriggs which I know isn't actually in the parish, it's certainly in the valley and then we'll move across the river to the claypits and then from there on move up Longhouses and round, Kentmere Hall up this drive, up to the top to the Quarry and then back down again.

Well, first of all, why are we so proud of Kentmere? Well I don't know but there is something about it. I'm afraid it breeds a certain amount of arrogance, if you come from Kentmere, you count for something, at least in your own opinion. We do feel that Kentmere has got something that's going for it. Sixty five years ago, which is about when my memory starts, we didn't have any tourists - nobody wanted to come. We've unfortunately changed that now, there's far too many people want to come. Not that they aren't very welcome but they do get in the way. I mean, you can't move for them on a Saturday and Sunday. Now, the first - I reckon the main fault of that is a man called Wainwright, but people argue with me over that.

Starting from Staveley we come to Ulthwaite Barn which is no longer there, then we come to the Sissy House which is no longer there, but it used to be haunted, it's the house that you come to after you come past Ulthwaite Barn. Ulthwaite Barn is the big barn with the red doors which isn't there any more! You keep on coming up and there's a pile of rocks on the left hand side, which used to be Sissy House and it used to terrify us when we were coming past on pushbikes, because it was supposed to be haunted and there was an owl lived in which used to hoot and that didn't help, I can assure you. You got a bit further up and at the top of Sissy House hill is a very interesting little item, worth mentioning because it's gone completely now. But there is a bit of a road that goes round the back, somebody may have seen, remember it, but completely overgrown is a little sammel hole - there was a little chap used to sit in there called Jossie Pompom, and he had one of these (hammers) - and he was a stone breaker and his job was breaking stones to fill up the road and he sat there day in day out, week in, week out, hammering away at these stones and farmers used to collect the stones off the fields - in those days they used to collect the stones off the fields because they damaged the machinery. And they used to go and tip these for Jossie to break, he used to break them up into little bits and the Council in their magnificence used to say. *right, we'll have the stones, and we'll give you the road sidings* because

in those days we had a road man who kept the road in the most magnificent state - you couldn't believe it if you saw the Kentmere road side then and compared them with what they are like now. And the road man used to heap up all this stuff into heaps, it was mixed with lime and spread on the fields. Which was rather a good idea, I suppose. But to get back to Jossie Pompom and his hammer. Old Uncle Bill who was a quarryman, he used to tell to me, *you look after yourself at school, lad, otherwise you'll finish up like Jossie Pompom, breaking stones!* Sixty five years later this morning I was breaking stones! I dare say I'll retire from it sooner or later.

Then you get to Philipsons' Well. We go down the dip and there's what was Philipson's Well - it's still there, but it was much better looked after in those days because it was the watering place for all the horses that were going up and down the road. Particularly the horses that were bringing the slate down from the quarry to the Staveley Station. And they used to stop at the Well for a drink.

Another interesting vehicle that stopped there of course was Gordon Gilpin's chariot. Now this was a horse-cab which was a vehicle that was first used to take the children from Kentmere to Staveley, and somehow they got there on time, it kept as good time as Gerard does anyway. And he would always stop at Philipson's Well to water his horse and to keep warm he put straw on the floor in winter and told them to put their feet in that, that'll keep them warm and I suppose the prospect of getting home at all kept them warm. But it went on for several years did this before they decided to put a motor vehicle on to do it. He lived at that time where Clara lives at Bridgestone - and the old chariot was in the yard there for a very long time afterwards.

The next place we come to is really the diatomite works, but first of all, we'll go up to Millriggs because Millriggs used to be farmed by a family called Taylor and Old



Robert Taylor, who is on this photograph here, (but I'd better not point him out for legal reasons as they say) in those days the income tax collector used to come round and collect your taxes, I suppose he still does if you don't watch it, if you've got any to pay. Well, he came to him one day when he was hay timing and he wasn't in the best of moods because farmers are never laughing their

heads off in hay time, you can take my word for that. He got so cross with this man, he threw him in the river and every time he climbed out, he threw him back in again ... and actually he did finish up in court for assault, but the terrible thing was that he still had his tax to pay.

Then of course later to follow that, we had the Icton family, and most of us remember them, particularly the lads of the valley, because they had a charming daughter and also what a spot for food! Dear me, you'd work for nought at Millriggs

for the food. And it really was a wonderful place, the whole valley would be happy if they had chance to go down there. Mr & Mrs Icton and the whole family were grand. In fact, if people say *Do you know James Icton?* and they'd say, *He was a gentleman.* Well he was more than that, he was a gentle man. We all miss him greatly.

The next place we get to is the clay pits. Now when I say 'clay pits' I mean what you might mean by the Hepworths, well, anyway that used to be the clay pits They used to be called that because that's where we got the clay for the quarrymen to stick on the wall and put their candles in. it did other things as well, it was run by a firm called Kensert Products and they produced all sorts of things which was industrial filler, face powder, filling for chocolate, anything, doesn't matter what it was you fill it with diatomite.



Now this is the old Priestman digger which is digging the clay into the Morris Commercial wagon, and it was then carted down to the mill (was that 1935?) Yes, must have been because they haven't got the ropeway in then. And then it was carted away down, and in the background there you can see the two Longhouses, first one and second one, bit confusing because they were both inhabited by the families called Bland.

Jossie Bland was the last man to farm the Grove as a separate farm, and with him lived Miss Cragg - Miss Cragg was an elderly body, I don't know where she came from - some people might know, whoever she was, my grandmother made the mistake once of referring to her as a seamstress, but she pointed out she was a tailor, she was not a seamstress. Apparently there is a big difference. And I suppose there is. But the thing that strikes most, or I remember most about Miss Cragg, is that when she died, dear body, she was brought up to church in a horse and cart at her own request; and it was Mr Black's horse, Prince, pulling their cart and that brought the coffin from Longhouses to the church - that's the only recollection I've ever had of that sort of funeral.

When you get a bit further up to the Low Bridge, the first house you come to is where the family Fry live now and that used to be my grandfather's and before that it was a family called Hutchinson. I think it was. But it was a Temperance Hotel and it used to have a great big board across the end *Temperance Hotel* - we weren't terribly gone on temperance, in those days. However, if you were, you'd an Hotel to go to. And over the bridge are the ruins of the Low Bridge Inn. Now the first house at Low Bridge where Mrs Bialy now lives was the home in my recollection of Mrs Voss and her husband Thomas. Now Mrs Voss not only kept the Post Office, but she was the

schoolmistress, and a hard body she was too. I don't know whether she had a military upbringing or not, but she instilled a great deal of military discipline into the school kids. Never a day went by but we had military drill and she was very, very keen - she must have been a very patriotic body - because on Empire Day, 24th May, we would all come to school, say prayers, salute the photograph of the King, bow to the photograph of the Queen and then she would exercise her prerogative and send us all home for the day. And we thought that was grand. Pity there weren't more 24ths of May. The next festival was of course the 29th May, where anybody who wore an oak leaf in their lapel was definitely teacher's pet for the day. And if you didn't you got your ear clipped!

Next, further along - oh, Thomas Voss by the way worked at the quarry. He came from Dunster in Somerset or Devon, I forget which it is, where he'd learned his quarrying. And he worked in the Kentmere quarry for a long time - in fact right up to when he retired. And when he retired, he converted the Old Mill which is where my brother Andy lives now, into a house for himself and his wife to retire to, but he did that after his 80th birthday. And it was habitable, still is.

Cross the wall from there was Miss Hetherington, who had once been the school teacher and she had a magnificent orchard, it really was a good one, and it was very tempting. But we did find over the years, that if you took Miss Hetherington a bunch of flowers, she'd say, *Go and help yourself out of the orchard*, which was far better than being chased out when you went without a bunch of flowers. However, be that as it may. I don't know what would happen if you went with a bunch of flowers now

Next place we go to is Kentmere Hall - there is a myth that there is a passageway

from Kentmere Hall to the church. Well it may be so but I think the church that's talking about it would be one that's in Kentmere Hall yard, because one of the buildings there was in fact once a church. There were several very interesting people lived at Kentmere Hall. One was a chap called Joe Stephenson, who came from Liverpool, he was a butcher in Liverpool, he fed and



fattened his animals up here, took them down to Liverpool, butchered them and that was his way of fattening his animals. He didn't, he wasn't here all that long, but the most colourful character from Kentmere Hall seems to have been a man called Kit Wilson, who some people have heard about. He was one of the Wilsons from Rigmaden and quite a happy sort of soul from what one can gather. His motor car was a Maxwell car. The registration number was EC1 - there'd be a reason for that, because there was no cars before him. But it wasn't a good starter and it often had to be towed up and down the Kentmere Hall road by a team of horses to get it to start at

all. But he was very keen on horses because his job was to acquire re-mounts for the Army. In those days the Army worked on horses, I mean the cavalry obviously bred their own, but even the infantry and other ranches they mounted their officers and they had to have re-mounts so Kit Wilson's job was to acquire re-mounts. And that seemed to keep him going for part of the time but he was also a very keen hound trailer. He had two trail hounds, one was called Coldstream and the other Sweeten Lass, and Bob Battie who lived up here used to walk them, look after them and he used to go and win, they won a lot, but still he rather fancied his position in the world did Kit Wilson and they were coming back from a hound trail up Patterdale way one day when Bob Battie - he'd had a drop or two to drink - and he said, *By gum, we've done well today. Kit.* And he said *Who do you think you're talking to, Battie, get out!* So he put him at the top of Kirkstone and told him to walk home. Actually he was home long before them because they'd to call at the Queen's and the Eagle and Child and so in perhaps his own interest he was put out.

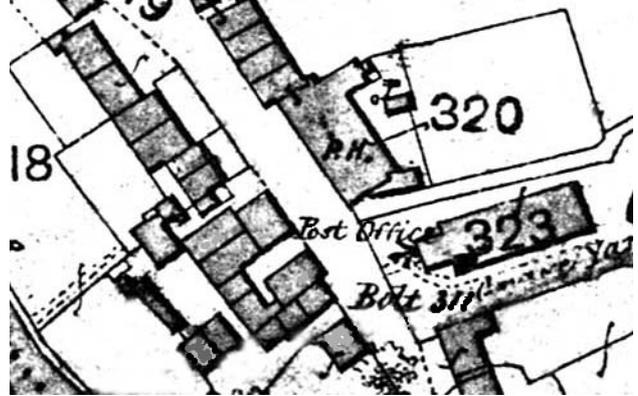
Coming back up the lane, we come to Kentmere School. Now when I started at Kentmere School, there were 16 people there, that was including the teacher. But then things deteriorated and when I left there were only 11 pupils. But Mrs Voss was really hard and she worked us hard and even before I went to school I heard about how hard it was going to be and also I learned that it had been arranged between my mother and Mrs Voss that Gladys Banks from up top end - Gladys Mitchell now - she was instructed she would collect me from home and make sure I got to school and at 5 years old, you don't like that sort of thing, you don't believe in women taking you to school, even if they are only a year older than you. Anyway that didn't last very long. Another thing quite worthy of mention. In those days the whole school turned out if an aeroplane went over, every one of us, all 11 of us would troop outside to see if we could see this aeroplane, and it became rather a good dodge, if we were doing anything in school that we didn't like *Please Ma'am there's an aeroplane going over* and everyone would traipse outside and by the time we got back inside she'd forgotten what she was cross about. She turned the school out for weddings and funerals. If it was a wedding we were allowed to come up to the top here, and if we could get hold of any confetti we could distribute it. But for funerals we would stand in the school yard in a very doleful manner, respectful and watch the funeral go by. And I remember the first one that happened to, it was old Bob Battie from up here and I can't have been more than 5 or 6 and they said we were turning out for this funeral so we were all a bit puzzled about it, and we turned out and we were all supposed to be standing there with our heads bent. And when we got peeking up, we could see, and somebody said *God damme he's in a box, si tha, By that's a good idea!*

However, that was the logic of our local kids. Mrs Voss was followed by Miss Wilkinson who was an excellent body, she was here for, well, she was there when I left and she was there for a year or two after. But she was one of the few teachers you could say that you really loved. She was a wonderful body.

(to be continued)

Staveley Post Offices

The recent move of the village Post Office to No 22 Main Street represents the fifth location for this facility. There could have been even a sixth location, as in 1841 the lady who was Staveley's first Postmistress lived in a cottage approximately where No. 32 Main Street now stands, and the Post Office opened sometime between 1841 and 1851. However, the 1859 Ordnance Survey map (opposite) shows the Post Office in what is now No. 36 Main Street, now a private residence, but with obvious signs of having once been a shop. In fact, in living memory, the late Ken Booth ran his plumbing business from there. The Postmistress was a Lydia Stainton, who also ran a grocers shop. Lydia continued in these roles until 1871; she was 68 years old in 1871 so it is probable that a successor was found soon after.



The second Post Office opened across the road in what we now know as part of the Martins Bank premises. The first record, in 1881 is of John Blamire as the sub-



postmaster. In the 1871 census both he and his son Roger were listed as Shoe Makers, but by 1881 Roger was listed as a school attendance officer and Book Keeper/Bank Manager – probably for the newly opened branch of the Kendal Bank. Our cover picture shows the Post Office and Bank in its original form. The roof was later replaced, and the small dormer windows added as we can see in the photo alongside. One interesting item from comparing the photos, and from examination of the dividing wall between the Post Office and the adjacent cottage is that the Post Office pre-dates the cottages – the dividing wall was once an end wall.

By 1891, John Blamire had passed away, and son Roger was the sub postmaster. In 1893, the Kendal Bank was acquired by the Bank of Liverpool and Roger is listed in the 1897 trade directory as both Bank Agent and Sub-postmaster. The photo on the page opposite shows the bank frontage under the Bank of Liverpool.

In 1901 Roger Blamire is listed as Sub Postmaster & Bank Agent, but also his two daughters are listed as *Assistant in Post Office*; next door is Jane Beetham, *Sub Postmaster & Bank Agent*. Clearly business was booming with 3 extra staff, even if

part time. It is worth mentioning that the Bank was only open from 10am to 3pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, whereas the Post Office was open six days a week. Staveley did have another limited bank facility, run by the Manchester & Liverpool District Bank Co. Ltd., which opened on Fridays from 10.30am to 2pm probably in the Institute 'Bank Room'.

The Bank of Liverpool remained in the 75/77 Main Street premises through the amalgamation with Martins (Bank of Liverpool & Martins 1918; Martins Bank Ltd 1928) until closure soon after the Barclays take over of Martins in 1964.



Post Office and Bank of Liverpool



The Post Office at 49 Main Street

By 1910 the Post Office had moved up the road again to 49 Main Street (the premises recently vacated by Colophon) under Harold Blakey as Sub-Postmaster. The photo alongside, dated 1906, shows the Post Office in its third location.



Post Office at 42/44 Main Street

It did not stay there for long, as the 1921 directory shows the Sub-Postmaster as Thomas Beetham, operating from Nos. 42/44 Main Street where it was to remain until February 2009. Beetham also sold cakes from the premises. It is said that Edwin Brockbank and Mr. Somervell from Kentmere Ltd. used to have their lunch at the Post Office and then a nap before they went back to work. Mrs. Beetham cooked vast pies etc. for the Brockbanks at Craggy and for the Barnes who had Ivythorpe. She also cooked Christmas turkeys for those whose ovens were not big enough. The Beethams were still there in 1930.

In the mid 1930s, Frank Curtis was both Sub-Postmaster and Confectioner until the outbreak of war. After the war, John Smith is listed as Postmaster in 1953, and Mr. Hardman was the Postmaster in the second half of the 1950s. He was a photographer but was not the more famous Kendal one.

Subsequently the business directories show Reginald Cave as Postmaster in both 1963 and 1965/6. It then passed to a David Ollier who is shown as the Postmaster in both 1974 and 1980.

Tom & Rita Barron shared the Post Office duties from about 1983 to 2000. Tom was the last Postmaster to do local deliveries from the Post Office.

The final owners of the Post Office at 42/44 Main Street were sisters Gill and



The George V postbox from 42 Main Street being removed on 9th August 2009

Adrienne Ford who took over from Tom and Rita. They finally closed the doors to No.44 at the end of February 2009. The Post Box however remained at No.42 until unceremoniously removed on the morning of 9th August when a new one was erected outside No. 22.

John Berry

For those interested in the Martins Bank history I can recommend the two volume history by George Chandler (Batsford Press) 'Four Centuries of Banking' a copy of which is available to view in the Local Studies section of Kendal Library.

This takes the history from the scores of private banks such as Crewdsons (Kendal) existing pre-1800 through the various amalgamations up to 1928.

CLHF Annual Convention 2009

The annual convention of the Cumbria Local History Federation took place on Saturday 26th September in the Newton Rigg Campus of the University of Cumbria. It was a very interesting event. Many of the usual features were there including exhibitions from local history societies like ours and we must be grateful to John Berry for mounting another eye-catching display. It is always good to walk around looking at the work of other societies and gleaning some hints and ideas from them as well as learning more and more about the areas around us.



The lectures had a central theme which is looking towards the work on the *Victoria County History*. Professor John Beckett, who is the director, was the keynote speaker during the morning and he outlined his ideas for re-initiating the work on this project which although started at the end of the nineteenth century never covered Westmorland. The project will be based at Lancaster University and will be partly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and there has been a significant contribution made by CWAAS. It will be a fascinating undertaking and it is hoped that local societies like ours might be used to contribute historical information.

The second speaker was an archivist from the Carlisle Record Office who described the new purpose-built accommodation at Petheril Bank House which will provide superb facilities for members of the public to access the records, many of which have been stored in secure places but unavailable for research.

During the afternoon there was a new venture for CLHF in that delegates were able to choose from several practical sessions giving 'hands-on' experience including research using newspapers, maintaining digital records, the study of palaeography, heraldry and further information on *Victoria County History*. Around eighty delegates from history societies throughout Cumbria were attracted to the event and first reports of their opinions are very positive.

Iain Johnston

More Family History discoveries

Although we are not a Family History Society we do help others who are carrying out research in our area. This often results in some interesting stories about local life which we are able to publish from time to time.

Hanging in the office of Staveley Mill Yard (and also appearing on page 34 of *A Lakeland Valley Through Time*) is a photograph of the workforce at Staveley Wood Turning (former Chadwicks) at about the time the Wood Turning Company was first set up. Just to the right of centre is a group of men and boys who appear to be related, in that several have their hands on the shoulders of those in front. Our member Wayne Shepherd has now identified them as his ancestors, and after comparing later family photos with the workforce photo has positively identified five of the eight members of the group.

The Shepherd family were living at the Old Vicarage on Main Street – the parents plus 11 children (four girls and seven boys) in 1891. From the photo we can see that all seven boys had jobs at the Wood Mill, though by 1901 the elder two had moved to Burneside to take up jobs in Croppers Paper Mill.

The subsequent history of the family is also of interest, as it could well be typical of many in the early years of the 20th century. All four daughters married Kendal men, and whilst two remained in Kendal, the other two decided to seek a better life in the

'New World', emigrating to New York and settling in Massachusetts. The first (the youngest daughter Sarah) emigrated in 1913 and her sister Agnes, along with the youngest brother Edward and his family, in 1920.

William, who had deserted the Wood Mill to work at Burneside, returned to Staveley to become a Coal Agent for the Wigan Iron & Coal Company, based in the railway sidings near Staveley Station. His son Arthur William, like many of his age, joined the British Army just as soon as he was 17 and was sent out not to the European front but to India in 1915.

Of the families living in the USA, the youngest daughter Sarah died there in 1927 aged only 43. Her elder sister Agnes decided that the States were not for her and returned to the UK in 1932. Young Edward however, remained in Massachusetts and his grandson (another Edward) still lives in the same town. Remarkably, Edward took with him to the States a large (24" x 16") photograph of his parents standing outside the Old Vicarage on Main Street, probably taken around 1905 as his mother died in 1907. This still survives, and we are trying to obtain a copy. He also took with him a Scouts gold tie-pin which had been presented to him by no lesser person than Baden Powell himself. We are trying to find out what the occasion was. If we find out more it will appear in a subsequent issue of the Journal.



Key to the photograph above:

| | | |
|---|------------|--------|
| A | James | b 1849 |
| B | Joseph (?) | b 1878 |
| C | Tom (?) | b 1880 |
| D | Bryan | b 1882 |
| E | Edward | b 1888 |
| F | George | b 1886 |
| G | William | b 1873 |
| H | James (?) | b 1875 |

John Berry

Heritage Open Days 2010

We understand that English Heritage has agreed to the continuation of Heritage Open Days in 2010 despite the collapse of the Civic Trust, who were the main driving force.

At the time of going to press the precise dates are not yet confirmed but we would appreciate any ideas from members as to how the Society could best be involved. In previous years in addition to ensuring that the churches were open, we have had a small exhibition in the Brewery Beer Hall and run history tours of the village. Are there any other suggestions? Or are there members who own buildings of historic interest who would like to open them up to visitors during the weekend or subsequent days? Let us know your thoughts.

