

Staveley & District History Society

Journal Summer 2005

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The next issue of the Journal (the winter issue) will be published on the 13th December 2005. Any contributions (letters, articles, etc.) should be with the Editor no later than the meeting on the 8th November.

From our President

I am amazed at the speed with which the Seasons come around. It seems only a moment since I wrote the Introduction to last year's events.



This year's programme is packed full of interesting talks. My mother used to talk about the Yellow Earl and how exciting it was to see him in Ambleside when she was a girl, and I am sure Rob David's talk will be fascinating, I don't think many people know of exploits in the Arctic. Then - Railways, Abbeys, Paper Houses, Fire fighters and Lady Ann Clifford – there could not be a more enticing series of talks for the winter months.

Your Committee puts in a great deal of time and effort into organising the programme and their hard work shows in the varied programme set before us. Enjoy!

If you (or someone you know) felt inclined to transcribe an oral history tape or two it would be much appreciated. Please speak Mike Houston and he will be only too happy to explain the technology to you (very simple).

Clare Brockbank

Staveley School 250th Anniversary book

At the School fete on May 21st residents reminisced about their school days and retold stories from their family's days at school. Many of the photographs reproduced in the book were missing from the school archives and have been retrieved from attics and old photograph albums. I have been almost swamped with pictures from 1934. Does anyone know any reason for this?

Visits to Kendal Record Office were frequent to examine the school logbooks and an early visit to the Local Collection at Kendal Library involved searching through old newspaper clippings. Also at the Library was an undated photograph entitled "Staveley Scholars (sic) – Visit to Hund Howe Near Kendal". This showed a large group of children arranged in front of the property.

On checking through logbook entries I discovered that this visit took place in September 1905 to visit Mrs Harrison and inspect the trophies collected by Col Harrison in Africa. Armed with this information I returned to the library to take a closer look at the picture and there next to the children, draped over a wall is a zebra skin! (The local collection now has a note of the date and logbook entry to accompany this picture!)

On a personal note I was delighted to read in the logbooks that Miss Winifred Park (my great-aunt) taught at the school in 1927.

Zoë Atkinson

Staveley and District Peace Celebrations

Sixty years ago VJ day had only just happened, so deciding when to celebrate both VE and VJ days presented a problem. With winter fast approaching and many servicemen and women being still abroad, Staveley residents wisely decided to celebrate in June 1946, giving time for such celebrations to be properly organised, and for those still abroad to come home and be ‘demobbed’.

Staveley celebrated on 15th June 1946, starting with a service at St. James and laying of wreaths. Then followed presentations of the ‘King’s Certificate’ to Staveley School children and judging of the various classes and fancy dress for the afternoon’s procession. The procession itself started at the Ayland and processed via Main Street, Windermere Road, Brow Lane, Silver Street, Station Road, The Banks and Gowan Terrace. At 2pm, back at the Ayland, came the crowning of the ‘Victory Queen’.



Some of the fancy dress prizewinners on the Ayland

Marjorie Lavender, who was crowned Victory Queen, remembers that day very well. “Dr Wight – he was our Staveley Doctor – loaned us his house for the day and we all got ready, all dressed up. We went in procession right round the village and then on to the Ayland which was the recreation ground now and we went visiting all the people and then we had a ceremony and I was crowned Victory Queen by Dr. Wight’s wife – and I gave a speech. I can remember the speech very well. It went something like this:

Ladies and Gentlemen, I feel honoured that the people of Staveley should have chosen me for their Victory Queen for this occasion of rejoicing and thankfulness. In the midst of our joy our hearts will go out to those whose loved ones did not return. But we trust they would share this day with me, proud in the knowledge that their loss has made this day possible. The strain of the past six years has been heavy on all of us. The future presents many problems, but today as Victory Queen, I summon you to throw off dull care and join in our revelry. My committee have done their best to offer you a full and varied programme. It is our wish that you enjoy it.”



Marjorie Lavender

“For attendants I had Yolande Swidenbank who became Mrs. Nicholson and I’m afraid she is now deceased and we had Elizabeth Gibson and she was a farmer’s daughter – they lived at Barley Bridge. I lived on Danes Row at that time and



Do any of these 'wartime nurses' recognise themselves?

Geoffrey Wilson was one of the neighbours, so I decided it would be nice to have a little page boy. He carried the cushion with the crown on which was loaned to us by Somervell Bros. and they also loaned us the cape – that was beautiful, it was red velvet and the dresses were made by Barbara Coupland and they were made out of butter muslin because we had to have coupons to buy anything in those days, but it

looked very nice and she made a very good job of them. I was in white and the other two girls were in pale pink and of course we had lovely flowers.”

“The Vicar was there and of course nearly all Staveley was there and I should imagine one or two villages had come in as well. We had a big procession and I didn’t see my husband at all that day – we’d just been married a few months and I think he’d disappeared and he was working at Short’s. When the day was over, we ended up with a dance and of course it was lovely having different partners because I loved dancing. And when the dance was finished my husband came. First time I’d seen him that day and he said I’m going to take you for a swing and he took me on to the swings in my long flowing dress; it was almost dark and it was wonderful.”

The official programme for the day (printed by Kentmere Limited and priced sixpence) reveals that after the crowning of the Victory Queen there was a baby show, sports on the recreation ground – all with prizes ranging from 1/6 to 25 shillings and including a fell race – and a tea party for children in the Village Hall. The evening’s entertainment in the Hall had not only dancing but also several Cabaret acts and a Silver Band. The route of the procession was not forgotten in the prize giving, as there were sections for the best-decorated house and shop, each with a first prize of £1.10.0. They certainly knew how to celebrate in those days.



The guard of honour leads the Victory Queen into Station Road

(Editor’s note – the picture of the crowning of the Victory Queen appears on page 115 of ‘A Lakeland Valley Through Time’ and is incorrectly dated as June 1945. The information in this article is taken from an Oral History Group transcript and from a copy of the original programme.)

Mid 19th Century Staveley (Part 3)

Part 1 of J.C. Robinson's paper appeared in Journal No.1 and part 2 in Journal No.3. This third extract describes the setting up of St. James' Church.

The Church: On October 23rd 1868 the Reverend William Chaplin B.D. "read himself in". He had been curate of Kendal Parish Church for eight years the congregation of which made him a present of a purse containing 120 sovereigns and a silver coffee and tea pot "to testify the congregation's esteem of his character and their appreciation of his services as curate at the Kendal Parish Church for a period of eight years."

On Wednesday, 2nd January 1869 he was married by the Vicar of Kendal in the Parish Church to Jane Anne, second daughter of the late Lieut. Thomas Wiggins Moffett R.N. of this town.

Mr. Chaplin's thoughts and activities early turned to either the restoration of St Margaret's or a new church in a different situation. The *Westmorland Gazette* correspondent puts the situation clearly thus: "The present church at Staveley is a homely structure built in years gone by when the good folks of Westmorland seemed to have cared more for the solidity of the outside wall than for comfort, or beauty within" It seems that the church was paved unevenly with stone, the pews were awkwardly placed, and, with the emphasis on the preaching of the Word, so that only half of the congregation could face the minister. The windows were irregular in size and pattern. The rough walls, we are told, streamed with damp all pointing to a time when hermit's cells, uncomfortable positions and bodily penances were believed to be eminently conducive to inward piety."

The new Vicar had energetically set about raising subscriptions to re-model the building and in the first days of 1863 had got sufficient money and promises to warrant him starting a scheme of improvements.

An enthusiastic body of parishioners wishing to help along the good work suggested a tea-party to be held on Shrove Tuesday. Several ladies "promised trays" and so the Shrovetide party, which still continues, came into being. At the end of January 1863 there was a subscription of £60 from Messrs. Chadwick and Co. Manufacturers of Bolton (who owned one of the three bobbin mills in Staveley) for the Restoration Fund. The fund had now reached something over £500 when events took a further turn. In March 1863 the *Gazette* records the beginnings of a more ambitious adventure, for Mr. W.R. Buckley, who had recently succeeded to the estates of Mr. J.H. Wilson, in Staveley (he died early in 1863) made a conditional offer which completely altered the complexion of the situation, Reasoning that no improvements to the walls could be effective on the site of St. Margaret's as it was because of the very damp and low situation (being on a peninsula between the Kent and the Gowan and subject to flooding after a moderate rain) any structural alterations meant

throwing good money away. Mr. Buckley, therefore refused with great forthrightness, to subscribe to such a scheme of improvements as had been canvassed, but, alternatively, offered a site for a church and churchyard with a contribution of £60 towards its erection.

The immediate effect of this lead was that several gentlemen of the neighbourhood on hearing of the new suggestion increased their subscription and a neat and commodious new church was decided upon, on the site so kindly offered in Abba Field. The plans, drawn up by Mr. Crowther, Architect, were passed by the Kendal Branch of the Diocesan Society, whose members gave themselves a month to think over what contributions should be made by the Society, and Mr. Chaplin was empowered to get estimates, in the meantime. Mr. Buckley added to his previous offer of a site and a monetary contribution by promising to build a fence round the churchyard, enfranchise the land and pay all expenses of conveyance.

By August 1863 the Architect, Mr. S. Crowther of Kendal, had staked out the land for the new church and churchyard, and the first sod was cut in the presence of a few members of the Committee. The excavation and walling were contracted for by Messrs Davis and Bowness of Staveley, and, adds the *Gazette* "from the known character of the men we have no doubt the work will be well done."

£900 was soon subscribed and others came forward with noble generosity and offers of sums of money if the Committee could raise an equal amount. Then came the laying of the foundation-stone by General Upton, acting for the Hon. Mrs. Howard, the Lady of the Manor, on September 24th 1863. The school children, upwards of two hundred of them were present after having coffee and buns in the school. The service on the new site was read by the Rev. W. Chaplin, the choir intoning the psalms for the occasion. The evening service in the old church had a large and generous congregation, for the collection after the sermon amounted to £28-10-8.

There is a hint in December 1863 that the work is not proceeding so rapidly. The weather, it appears, hindered not only the wallers but the freestone getters at Hutton (Hutton Roof near Kirkby Lonsdale) But the *Gazette* correspondent writes that as the work rises in height it becomes evident that it will become an ornament to the neighbourhood. "The site chosen", he continues, "is a hilly field at the foot of Raven Scar and between the Kendal and Ambleside road; it allows the building to be seen from many points, and commands a pleasant view southwards, over a portion of the Kent valley, the eye resting on Benson Knott and Scout Scar in the distance".

At this time, whilst work was proceeding, the approaches to the school were made wider and the unsightly Black Hole - a lock-up (the name amply described it) was pulled down, and out of its materials a porch was added to the school. This porch was pulled down when the school was improved in 1928. It was at this time also that the inscribed stone which stood in the face of the old school in the village near St Margaret's had been brought out of its hiding place in some old barn in the

neighbourhood, and placed in front of the present building with another tablet to show its history. When the 1928 improvements were made these stones, which previously had been in the porch were, under the supervision of the Rev. E.W.J. McConnel, Vicar and Correspondent of the School, placed in the wall of the main room, where they are today. Later he touched up the lettering with paint to make the inscription stand out and be more easily read.

In April 1864 we read of the “Rearing Dinner” when the workmen engaged on the church assembled in the National School to enjoy a substantial dinner provided for them in place of the customary rearing supper. Then the indefatigable Mr. Chaplin had the idea that it was a pity “to spoil the ship for a ’haporth of tar” and decided to add a spirelet to give the church a finish. Only seats had been contracted for so the “interior appointments” like choir stalls and reading desk and pulpit are required. So he asked for another £200, in addition to that already promised, with these objects in view, adding that “What was commenced in fair faith has gone forward in hope” and we read that the Duke of Devonshire had remitted to Mr. Matthew Gibson, of New Hall, the churchwarden, a cheque for £10, as a subscription to the funds for building the new church.

The Consecration:

So the church moved towards its consecration which was fixed for Monday April 24th 1865 (provided the day of issue of the *Gazette* at that time was Saturday; if it was Friday, the date of the consecration was April 25th) A church holding nearly 300 people had been built at a cost of £1500 and



present to consecrate it was the Lord Bishop of Carlisle. The Bishop was accompanied by the Chancellor of the Diocese, Archdeacon Cooper, then Vicar of Kendal, and the Bishop’s Chaplain. The deed of consecration was read by the Chancellor, and the service by Rev, W Chaplin, the lessons by Rev. Thomas Fenton of Ings “from a neat lectern of that gentleman” (This, presumably means that the lectern was lent for the occasion by Mr. Fenton, the new church not having yet been provided with one) The Bishop preached from Exodus 20 v.24 and concluded with an appeal to the congregation towards liquidating the debt of £180. The collection reached the total of £44-10-6. The burial ground was now consecrated. Psalm 39 was sung effectively by the choir. An interesting sight; the Bishop and clergy grouped

together and the congregation forming a large semi-circle on the ground and terrace in front of the church. The hymn in the open air had a beautiful effect and appropriate collects and the Episcopal blessing brought the service to a conclusion.

It seems that the woodwork of the church was done by Mr. Harrison of Windermere. The seating is described as “plain open benches, stained and burnished”. At the time of the Consecration the spirelet on the West gable had not been completed, for, presumably, lack of funds, though “a solid freestone base had been prepared for its foundations”. A further comment by the *Gazette* correspondent - “Standing on a terrace, surrounded with wooded hills on the North and East, and the village to the South, it will, when completed, be one of the most picturesque churches in the Diocese.”

J.C. Robinson

150 Years ago

On Tuesday an inquest was held before R. Wilson Esq. at the Railway Tavern, Staveley, on the body of Wm. Bewsher, who met with his death in the following melancholy manner:

Deceased was a wagon driver for Mr. Wm. Philipson, bobbin manufacturer, Hugill. On the day in question, according to evidence, he was driving his team to the station with wood, when the leaders took fright at some bed-curtains or articles of a similar description, which were hanging upon the rails connected with the platform of the station. The horse lashed round and dragged the shaft-horse after it and the deceased was thrown down and jammed between the horses and the wagon, the hind wheels passing over his body. The injuries were of the most fearful description, his ribs being broken from the back-bone, and the unfortunate man scarcely survived half an hour. He has left a wife and four children to deplore his loss. A verdict was returned of ‘accidental death’.

Westmorland Gazette May 19, 1855

160 years ago

Inn of beauty

The elegant hotel, the New Inn at Staveley, now in process of building, is fast approaching completion. The fitting up, and the general accommodations of the establishment, will, we understand fully harmonise with its beautiful exterior. The inn will, no doubt, as much conduce to the convenience of tourists and the public generally as it will unquestionably be to the ornament of the thriving village of Staveley.

Westmorland Gazette August 16, 1845

(Editors note – the ‘New Inn’ referred to here is today’s ‘Eagle and Child’ which replaced the old ‘Eagle and Child’ on Gowan Terrace when it was completed.)

Correspondence

Through our web site, a lady in Kent e-mailed us about her family history:

‘George Robinson came from Barton Westmorland, near Penrith. Three generations of his forebears were yeomen. I am pretty sure he was in Barton in Jan 1799 as he attended the Westmorland Q Sessions in Appleby with his brother who was accused of fathering a bastard child. The papers are still at the police station in Kendal! George married in Staveley in 1801 so we can pinpoint his arrival fairly accurately.

At first they lived at Cragg End (still there) and in 1829 *Parson's Directory* he is of Kiln, Reston. I can't find Kiln on the old maps I have seen. (*Editors note: we found Kiln for her on the 1836 Corn Rent map*) I found his will which described his property at High Gate Foot including his sawpit & various other buildings. From what we could see by comparing old and new maps I think it was where the council estate is now though you may know more about this. His son William was also a joiner and lived in Newgate cottages which I think have also disappeared. He was perhaps not as successful as his father as they ended up in the almshouses in Grassgarth. They moved there around 1864 and were there until about 1883 I think.

My great grandfather, another George died after the explosion 22nd October 1871. It was at the New Sedgwick Gunpowder works, the one which is now a caravan park. Is that the one you visited? (*Yes it was – Ed*) Unfortunately he was the one who actually caused the explosion while repairing a roof. I found the report in the *Westmorland Gazette*. If you want me to send you a copy I will. I don't know whether there was any official report on that one, if so I haven't found it. We were allowed to go round the site but it must have been interesting to go round with the archaeologist.

I don't know whether the society are interested in individual family histories but if you are, when I have finished it, I could send you an edited copy on disc with just a short summary of the Robinsons in Barton and then more detail in the Staveley/Kendal part. I guess that if you got enough family histories it would build up quite a picture of life in Staveley and Hugill.’ (*We have said yes please – Ed*)

Hall Wood

To the west of Hall Lane and about 500m NNE of Barley Bridge lies Hall Wood, coppice woodland, which was heavily overgrown when the Field Walking Group looked over the area in 1992 (Occasional Paper No.3).

Evidence suggests that this was most probably the site of Staveley Hall and of a fulling mill held by Marmaduke de Thweng at his death in 1323. The hall was in ruins by the 1690s, but the fulling mill was still working in 1698.

Much of the undergrowth in the wood has now been cleared by the present owners, Mr & Mrs Bibby, revealing an interesting and varied flora. Following a suggestion made at the Society's visit in summer 2004 a new survey of the wood was commenced in the spring of 2005. Unfortunately access to the site was delayed as a result of storm damage and as the trees came into leaf and visibility became more limited, it was not possible to complete the survey. Some of the work has therefore had to be left until later in the year.

Hall Beck flows around two sides of the wood and could provide an adequate source of power for a mill. The earlier report of 1992 gave full details of the remnants of masonry at the probable site of the mill, but lacking a detailed plan or sketch it has not been easy to tell where the features were. There are two possibilities for the mill race and for the position of the mill and more work needs to be done.

The remains of what was probably the hall are much more definite, but some minor excavation work may be needed to determine the extent of the building from its foundations, if any, so as to discount those stones which may have fallen as the building became ruinous.

Other questions arise about the access route to the hall and to the mill. Where would access have been possible on this land? Was access from Hall Lane at that time? Access to where? Barley Bridge had yet to be built, but there may have been a ford upstream of the present bridge.

Close contouring of the site may reveal further information about possible access routes and this will be undertaken when the survey is recommenced in the early autumn.

Alan Lord.

If you would like to help with this field survey work or if you have any information on the site which you feel may be of use, please contact Alan or any member of the committee.

Summer Walks

The 2005 summer walks programme commenced with A look at Bowston led by our Chairman, Mike Houston. The walk commenced at the rear of Mike's house with an open air talk by Mike's neighbour, David Bingham, on the Cowan Head Tramway on which David had at one time worked. Photographs of the tramway and of the now demolished mill at Bowston were passed round, and the walk then commenced with a short visit to the old weir. Mike then introduced us to 'Old Bowston' as we walked down to the river bridge past the site of the old smithy and onwards along the road back towards Staveley. Each of the farmsteads we passed got a mention, as did the

little copse opposite the start of the Potter Fell road, known locally as Chapel le Wood, as we headed along the road as far as Hagg End. Then down to the riverside path for a better look at Cowan Head and the cottages and a description of what life must have been like when the mill was operational. The final part of the walk was along the route of the old tramway back to Bowston.

The second walk – *Sedgwick Gunpowder Works* – was led by archaeologist Chris Dunn of English Heritage and attracted nearly 30 members and visitors. Chris proved to be a wealth of information on the history, and provided us with extracts from EH's detailed paper on the site, including some very useful maps which we were able to follow as we went round. Chris covered the history of the site and its subsequent development, including details of the precautions taken to avoid explosions – not always successfully – and the use of water power to drive the machinery.

The final walk, led by Pat Hovey of Kendal Civic Society, was to explore some lesser known parts of Kendal. Pat took some 15 Society members along the river bank from County Hall as far as the recently uncovered 'washing steps' south of Miller bridge. Then via Dr. Mannings Yard on to Highgate and to Colin Croft. Pat was keen to point out a number of sites which had yet to receive their 'plaque' and to draw our attention to the Civic Society's recently published box of leaflets on Historic Kendal which describes each of the 50 plaques so far planned. (*These will be on sale at our first winter meeting – Ed*)

Library Additions

Resulting from our involvement with English Heritage, the Society has been given copies of the following books for our library:

New Sedgwick Gunpowder Works, Cumbria: an archaeological and architectural survey 2003.

Fixtures and fittings in Dated Houses 1567 – 1763 (Practical handbook in archaeology number 11 – 1994 reprinted 1999)

A bibliography of Vernacular Architecture Volume III (1977 – 1989) and Volume IV (1990 – 1994)

We have also obtained a copy of *Notes on the recording of Vernacular Buildings* which includes advice and standard pro-formas for any member wishing to compile a record of their house.

Programme Cards

As the programme now appears on the rear cover of the Journal (and is updated each issue) as well as on the Web Site we are no longer sending out cards to all our members. However, if anyone has a particular need for a card, then they can either pick one up at the Society's meetings or request one from the Secretary.