

Staveley & District History Society

Journal Summer 2006

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

The next issue of the Journal (the winter issue) will be published on the 12th December 2006. Any contributions (letters, articles, etc.) should be with the Editor no later than the meeting on the 14th November.

From our President

From the picture on the front cover you may wonder why the Committee is looking so smug and self-satisfied - read on!



The History Exhibition of course was the subject of our pleasure and the Committee would like to thank all members for their support, acting as stewards and bringing their friends and relations to see it. We had over 600 visitors, quite amazing. Not only that but the whole of Staveley School paid us a visit (not all at once!), visitors came from all parts of the country and as far away as Canada. I am sure we were the envy of some of the Local History Societies who came to see it.

That success is in very great part due to the planning and execution by our chairman John Berry. His skills and wizardry with his computer generated all the large easy to read boards. He is a real professional and the committee are most grateful to him for the easy way in which he organised everything down to the last detail. We were also very fortunate to have so many knowledgeable members and friends who brought their own expertise to the exhibition. A wonderful album of the history of one house and its many wallpapers was one among many interesting artefacts brought for everyone to see. The showing of the Videos was a great success as was an opportunity for people to see how much we had published over the years and I believe we sold a great many occasional papers. I think this was a landmark occasion in the history of our Society and celebrated our 15th anniversary in the manner in which we set up the Society, i.e. by mutual help and involvement. I am sure Joe Scott will have been smiling benignly down on us

Our thanks go to the Committee of the Roundhouse for the great help they gave us and to David Brockbank for transporting the boards from Dallam Park and back again. Thanks to everyone in the village who helped to promote the Exhibition by allowing us to put up posters. We also thank last, but not least, the spouses and partners of all the helpers who are the unseen support of so many of these activities.

More Staveley Memories - The Fidler Family

My family moved to Staveley in 1929, from Manchester, to join my Father, Samuel, who was widening the road from Ings to Windermere for a Kendal firm, P.A. Baines. At that time, my sister Edith, age 10, and my brothers Arthur, age 8, and Frank, age 6, attended Staveley School, where J.C. Robinson was Headmaster. My brother Samuel started at the School in 1930/31.

Edith left in the October of 1934, by special permission, and started work as a clerk at Kentmere Ltd. This was the year that I was born, J.C. Robinson's wife, who was also the Midwife, delivering me at No. 10 Danes Road. She became my Godmother. J.C. could not understand why Arthur did not pass his Scholarship, and so made special

arrangements for him to attend a Kendal School. On leaving, he worked as a Compositor at Kentmere Ltd.

Both Frank and Samuel passed their Scholarships and attended Windermere Grammar School. Frank was an all-round sportsman, represented not only the School, but the County as well. After serving with the Guards Armoured Division during the war, he became a professional footballer with Wrexham, Leeds United, Bournemouth, Yeovil and Hereford.

Dad took a keen interest in the Sports at the School as well as Village activities. He does, I understand, feature on some photographs, now held at Kendal Archives. He presented a "Belt" for Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling, to be contested for annually.

My father formed his own Company, S. Fidler & Sons, Public Works Contractors, and did a lot of work locally, such as building 2 houses and refurbishing several others, including the Vicarage, for Rev E. W. McConnell. He also worked extensively on the School in the summer of 1935, being paid by instalments after completion of the work. According to my reckoning from his Ledger, he is still owed the last instalment of £26 - 12 - 11½. Unfortunately, like many others at that time, the business collapsed when people could not pay for the work done, and no new work was available. Dad consequently travelled all over the country to find work, which is why, in 1939, we left the lovely abode that was my birthplace to settle in Cheshire, just as war broke out.

My sister and brothers are still alive (except for Sam, who passed away just over 12 months ago) and we often reminisce about our time in Staveley. The oil lamps lighting the table we played cards on, the smell of the Hornby Train Set in the attic, the fish in the Gowan in the field opposite, the winter trains juddering in the snow while failing to climb the incline to get to Windermere; sledging down the hill below the Scar, rushing to the gate to see the rare sight of a motor car, or even a charabanc going past, full of holidaymakers. Walking to Ings Church every Sunday after a fall-out with Rev. McConnell who had apparently been rather rude about one of Dad's sons! Listening to the wireless, and talk of the ice-skating on a frozen-over Lake Windermere.

My sister still talks of Muriel Walker, Kathy Hodgson, sadly deceased, and Mary Grindley, whose mother I used to call "Mrs Parkin" because of the wonderful cake she used to make, as well as others whose names escape me. Frank remembers his teachers at the School, in particular Miss Barnes and Tom Bailey, he also remembers cycling to Ambleside to take part in 6-a-side football.

Should anyone reading this remember us from those days, I trust they will get in touch via the Chairman or a member of the committee.

Jack Fidler, Frodsham

Hiring Fairs in Westmorland and Cumberland.

In 1931 the Bishop of Barrow-in-Furness, who was then Vicar of Aldingham, where the Staveley Scouts used to camp every year, made an enquiry about conditions of hiring and so forth. The following is a copy of the late J.C Robinson's contribution on that occasion.

In dealing with the question of farm-servants and Hiring Fairs I am writing only of that part of the Diocese of which I can lay claim to some knowledge, that is the Penrith and Eden Valley Districts. This is a typical farming district where the fairly substantial type of farmer is the rule. Large farms are common and places where two male, and possibly two female servants are kept are not out of the ordinary.

In regard to the actual agreement reached at the time of hiring it is usual for the young boy or girl, hiring for the first time, to be accompanied by a parent - generally the father in case of boys, and the mother where it is a girl. If bargaining is to be done the arrangement is between this parent and the prospective employer. In a general way, therefore, there is little in my opinion to which exception can be taken, in this arrangement, as most parents of the class from which farm - labourers spring know what their requirements are and are equally as good at driving a bargain as the farmer. For it is they who stand to lose. Most parents insist that at least the first two half-years wages should be handed over to them less a deduction for pocket money. So that, in general, if a bad bargain (from the point of view of the boy or girl) is struck, parents have only themselves to blame. Moreover, the good and bad employers are known for miles around, and news travels with extraordinary speed amongst farm servants at the Hirings. The standard rate of wages at present in existence forms a guide both to employer and employed. So there should be no excuse, on either side for bad bargains.

Nature of Employment.

It is true that the employment on most farms in both halves of the year is pretty strenuous, but none of it, speaking generally, more than can be borne by the average lad or lass who goes to farm-service at 14 or 15 years of age. His hours are long, and maybe, irregular, but, in my experience, the growing boy or girl who hires benefits considerably from the substantial and unstinted food which is the general rule in a farm-house in the Eden Valley and Penrith districts. There I may point out that servants on both weekdays and Sunday live exactly as their employers, and **with** them, whether there are visitors present or not. In farm-service, I believe that the quantity and quality of food given, together with the open-air life and comparative regularity, help to lay a really sound, physical foundation just the time in the boy's or girl's life when it is required. Under some other system this would scarcely obtain. Indeed I know of several parents who, wishing their boys to enter the Police Force or the Services have sent their boys to work at a good farm for a couple of years as a preliminary, with wonderful results physically.

Leisure Time.

Of leisure time there is a fair amount in winter and less in a summer, and this seems to be where the great difficulty lies. How can these boys and girls be helped to make right use of their spare time? In many of our larger villages there are Reading Rooms and Institutes, but, in my experience, it is exceptional to find farm-lads making regular use of these. In many cases farms are remote from these meeting places; in other cases boys cannot afford bicycles to go to the village and are too tired to walk. Or it may be their work has been such that they prefer to spend their leisure time on the homestead. Can we altogether blame them for wanting to loaf? Most boys are so tired after their days labour that all they want is bed. Which after all, is not a bad thing when they have to rise early.

Perhaps the greatest moral dangers in regard to farm-servants arise where there is a mixed staff on a farm. It is then almost inevitable that unless strict supervision is exercised by the master and mistress trouble is likely to, and does result. But the majority of farmers and farmer's wives in this part of the world are more than jealous of their good name, and a strict look-out is kept. In cases like these the influence of a good farmer's wife at the head of affairs is possibly as good, or better, than that which is exercised at home. (I mean the homes from which the boys or girls are drawn) I know many farms where both boy and girl servants are treated with as much consideration as the farmers own sons and daughters. In one case within my knowledge, the farmer had three sons and a daughter, and two men-servants lived on the farm. The farmer's sons received no payment for their work, save an occasional tip for expenses when they attended the auction-mart, and, what is more, they were always called upon to do what might be called the "dirty work". If a cow was due to calve during the night, it was the sons who must sit up with her, not the servants. If there was a nasty outside job to be done in snow or rain the sons were called upon. This, I know, is an exceptional case, but it serves to illustrate the point, that I believe servants are treated with a good deal of consideration by farmers in these days.

On the opposite side of the picture I know of one case where a boy of 14 was hired to a farmstead in a lonely dale in the Shap district. The farm was stocked with several hundreds of sheep; the master was constantly on the fell, the mistress had to attend to all the immediate necessary duties round about the byres. She could scarcely be expected to look after household affairs and cooking. The boy was fed on porridge and milk three times a day for the whole of the first week; whilst he was going about doing the none too light farm work. He received a hot dinner, with mutton, on the Sunday. His parents complained that he had lost weight, and was not receiving enough meat. Thereafter the good wife sent him out to snare rabbits, and for the next weeks he had stewed rabbit set before him at each meal, until his soul loathed the smell of it. Not, I think, greed on the part of the farmer's wife, but sheer lack of imagination! So things went on...porridge varied with rabbit, until the lad was obliged to take to poaching pheasants and partridge in sheer self-defence. Cases like this are, I am sure, very rare.

Taking all things into consideration, I believe that though there may be much to be said economically against the system of hiring as it obtains at present, yet I am satisfied that so far as the present generation of farmers is concerned the system is one for which it would be difficult to find a good substitute.

J.C. Robinson

Early days at t'mill

Until quite recently, the history of Staveley Wood Turning's mill was thought to start with an entry in the 1849 Trade directory for Benjamin Turton, Bobbin Manufacturer. Benjamin's existence was confirmed by his inclusion in the 1841 census, and even earlier, in the 1836 Corn Rent map schedules.

We know from the census that Benjamin was born about 1805 in Horbury, near Wakefield, and that he came to the area around 1830; his wife was from Whinfall Parish and his daughter Elizabeth was born in Staveley around 1833.

However, in the 1829 Trade Directory, Benjamin is not listed. Instead, the only Bobbin Manufacturer in the village is listed as Thomas Taylor. From the records of wills in the Lancashire Record Office at Preston, we now know that Thomas Taylor died in 1832, but in his will there is no mention of Benjamin Turton. Thomas Taylor's estate was placed in the hands of trustees, to provide support for his wife and children.

Connecting Thomas Taylor with Benjamin Turton has still to be proved conclusively, but from the lists of ownership and occupancy made for the 1844 railway bill, we know that Benjamin Turton was the occupier of land on Staveley Banks, owned by the trustees of the late Thomas Taylor. It therefore seems highly probable that Turton was recruited by Taylor to manage the mill, and like the Brockbanks a century later, eventually became the owner.



The mill in 1836

The 1836 corn rent map is also of interest in that there appear two buildings; one clearly connected to a water wheel, and the other standing where the current office block still stands. It could well be that part of the office block dates back to these early days.

To get the full picture, more research is required, and any member who would like to take this on should contact the Chairman.

John Berry

A Lakeland traveller in the reigns of George IV, William IV and Queen Victoria

The early nineteenth century, before the dawn of the age of railway, was one of great pedestrian feats which were the subject of considerable interest and frenzied betting. The best known walker of the age was Captain Robert Barclay Allardice (1779-1854) of Ury, a famous agriculturalist, but better-known as “the great pedestrian”, who on one occasion walked 72 miles between breakfast and dinner, and on another walked for three days and two nights without sleep, covering 130 miles.

The feats of the subject of this paper, Mr Dewing, were much more modest but still considerable. During his ninth tour (April to December 1825) when he was in his mid 50s, his travel journals record that he generally walked between 11 and 20 miles a day depending upon the terrain, and rested on the Sabbath. Although in the early years he kept a detailed breakdown of the miles which he travelled, his interest was not the mileage, but the countryside and towns visited. The distances covered were significant. Dewing estimated that during his seventh tour, which began at Bath on 1st May 1823 and ended at Elmham, in September or October, he travelled 1,596 miles, 393 accomplished by coach and horse, 397 by steam packet and canal boat, and 806 on foot. In his ninth tour between April and December 1825 he estimated that he had travelled some 2,359 miles, 337 by coach, 503 by boat (including steam packet) and 1,519 on foot.

The author, Lynn Dewing, was baptized at Little Dunham, a small Norfolk parish SE of Castle Acre, on 15th June 1773. His parents Augustine Dewing (c.1740 – 1791), gentleman, and Sarah Adams (1746 – 1813) were married at Monks Eleigh, Suffolk, in 1764, and subsequently settled in Stanstead, Suffolk, in 1779, where Lynn spent his early life. Nothing is known of his occupation. He may have been in business in Hadleigh, Suffolk, or in London. He retired in 1817, at the age of 44 or 45, having made sufficient money to live on his investments. Thereafter he is termed either “fund holder” or “gentleman”. For almost 40 years he lived a nomadic existence, spending his winters with members of his extended family in Norfolk. He began his last journey in April 1854, leaving Fakenham for London and reaching Exeter by July. His last journal breaks off abruptly here. Sometime in the late summer or autumn he reached Southampton. He took lodgings at No.15, Oxford Street, where he died on 16th December 1854, aged 82 years, from the effects of old age and its concomitant friend, bronchitis.

His journals are jottings in pocket-sized notebooks, written with a quill pen in an elaborate hand. The general pattern of his peregrinations was established by Dewing taking six months or more away from Norfolk each year between 1817 and 1854, departing from a variety of places. The journals were essentially aides-memoire, intended to be read by family and friends in the winter months around the fireside in Norfolk. They have no literary pretensions, and illustrate the author’s interest in farming, crops and animals. He appears to have been an *omnium gatherum*,

fascinated, like Dickens's Mr Gradgrind, by facts, figures and progress. Had the journals not been disposed of piecemeal, collectively they would have presented a picture of the development of the country from the last years of the reign of George III to the decade which saw the Great Exhibition (1851). What survives give a series of valuable insights by one person into the development of our industrial and mercantile centres such as Liverpool, which he visited on a number of occasions in the intervening years.

It is unlikely that a pedestrian tourist like Dewing had easy access to the numerous guides and illustrations of the Lake District which would have been available to him by the second decade of the 19th Century, works such as Jonathan Otley's hugely popular, *A Concise Description of the English Lakes and Adjacent Mountains; with general directions to tourists*, which was published in Keswick by the author, and reached a 5th edition by 1834. He certainly never mentions them and as he travelled restlessly from place to place he certainly could not have carried them with him on his journeys. Towards the end of Dewing's life his descriptions may owe something to the accounts to be found in published gazetteers, guides and itineraries, as railway travel allowed him to be based in one place, and to carry more luggage.

Dewing's spelling and orthography are uncertain, and he can not have had a classical (Grammar School) education. From the information derived from a common place book kept by Dewing from before August 1809, he does not appear to have had elevated reading tastes, although he quotes Sterne, Benjamin Franklin; *Measure for Measure*; the poet, Dr John Langhorne, friend of the educationalist Hannah More; *Blair's sermons*, which were once much admired; Mrs West's *A Tale of the Times*, and Priestley's *Annotations of the Bible*. Much may have been derived from the popular miscellany and keepsake volumes of the period. He also makes quotations from Mason's *English Garden*. He notes many maxims and moral sayings and delights in graveyard epitaphs, elegies, paradoxes, card tricks; simple scientific experiments such as how to make an artificial rainbow, and how to make writing luminous in the dark. He was interested in the properties of plants; and in the question of the payment of tithes to the clergy.

On 23rd May 1825 he described part of his journey thus:

To Kendal in packet on the Lancaster Canal 10m, one of the most beautiful inland water excursions I ever took in England. I must say I can use no language to express half its beauties!! - but something I must say as an apology for description. The canal winds through a charming vale, very prettily sprinkled with timber &c. and seldom more than half a m. from the river Ken,(sic) sometimes quite close and 60 or 70 feet above it, during these 10m not a lock to impede our progress: on each side a great diversity of scenery indeed! Occasionally the vale opens and then a vast collection of hills are presented to view, also several mountains that I think will rank in the second class: and between the nearest hills rich banks of foliage and the scenery ever changing as

the canal winds. Passed through a tunnel about ¼m under a hill, here the horses taken off and the boat impelled by men pulling ropes fixed to the top of the arch, being Whitsuntide Monday we had lots of the fair passengers. Kendal noticed 4 years since.

Dewing stayed at the Union Inn in Kendal until 25th when he departed:

To Troutbeck bridge 10m through Staveley - about 2m from Kendal looking towards the E a broad and rich vale lies spread out, much below the road, chiefly of meadow land, in it are numerous small hills finely undulating and bounded at the distance of about 4m by an apparent semicircle of vast hills and those backed by lofty mountains; during the next 6m large masses of the slate rock formation appear, not much inferior in height but here the vale is narrower and the scenery rather heavy and land not so good. Now for the two last miles descending towards the bridge, to delineate in any tolerable degree is far beyond my cut, it would require the pen of a Coxe or a Warner! Here the Lake of Windermere burst upon the astonished sight in the most sublime manner possible seen sometimes through the openings and then over the most luxuriant hanging woods intersected by meadows of the liveliest green to the water's edge showing many gents seats in delightful spots and on the opposite side of the Lake rise mountains of vast size and height, presenting summits of the grandest outline and forming an astonishingly bold baffle to the N. and West, frowning over lofty green hills.

After resting at the Inn at Troutbeck he walked on to Ambleside. On this tour Dewing returned to the Lake District on his return from Scotland. He left Coniston on 2nd October 1825, and walking via Hawkshead and the ferry to Bowness, where he stayed overnight. He noted that:

Lady Carpenter is building a stylish house here in a beautiful spot, to command even 10 miles of the Lake: and a gent from London is erecting another.

From here he walked to Kendal and travelled to Bath via Lancaster, Liverpool, Parkgate, the Welsh borders, Hereford, Monmouth, Tintern and Chepstow.

In 1832 on his 16th tour, he travelled via Preston, Lancaster and Milnthorpe to Bowness, and from Grayrigg thence to Hawkshead and Ambleside en route to Scotland. On his return journey he returned to the Lakes. On 14th September 1832 he walked from Bampton to Shap and commented on the *many corn and grass fields on the lower slopes of rugged and frowning mountains...*, *this (Shap) a very neat village.* An example of Dewing's narrative style at its best is to be found in his description of the first six of the 18 miles of difficult terrain which he covered on September 1832 when he walked from Shap to Orton en route for Sedbergh.

To Orton 6 m(iles) fo(ot) to the toll-bar on the Kendal r(oad) an open country, viz, no wood, the fields divided by stone fences called dykes: - at the bar this road

turns off to the S.E. and goes over a dark heathery moor, with only a few patches of green pastures to enliven it, in front the horizon bounded by lofty, bulky, and heavy fells, this hilly moor is of vast extent to the l. and r. as far as the eye could ken: - I saw only sheep upon, but the number great, chiefly horned with black legs and faces or nearly so, nothing of the Norfolk in their countenances. In a deep bottom... passed in sight of Shap Wells, where there is a large new inn, built by the Earl of Lonsdale. Leaving the heather at about the 5th mile crossed some fine grass and corn fields, down to the town, which is a poor looking one.

Although Dewing must have been hardy, the Lake District weather occasionally caused him difficulties. On 1st July 1845 travelling between Beck Foot (6½ miles NE of Ravenglass), and Brown Rigg he mentions that he was *caught in a storm of wind and rain from the SW more violent than I think any I ever experienced, it blew great guns, coat and trowsers soaked through, umbrella of little use. (This stage brought on inflammation of the bladder and caused me 3 weeks pain).* In 1847 Dewing travelled from Liverpool to Kendal by rail, noting that he knew of no line *more diversified than the 20m from Lancaster to Kendal.* From here he went by foot to Greyrigg and Borrow Bridge. On 16th July he walked to take the train to Penrith. Of part of this journey he says:

To Shap 6m fo(ot) thro' a wild part of the country 4m of it over Shap Fell, a high cold heathery moor, yet not a drop of water did I see, nor a house within ½m, of the road. This village greatly improved since I first knew it 30 years ago, then only one small inn, now 5 or 6 not small.

Dewing's journals, for all the charm of their narrative style and the revelation of the difficulties faced, and the sustained effort and hardiness required by the pedestrian tourist of the period, reveal nothing of the inns where he broke his travels or sheltered from storms; the conversations he had with the locals and his fellow travellers; the quality of the food he ate or the ale he drank; the pertness or buxom winsomeness of his landladies; and most tantalizing of all, his journals give only a bare sketch of his journeys through Staveley on the 30th September 1821 and 25th May 1825. Although no more than a footnote in the history of travellers and tourists to the Lake District, Dewing, who was drawn from a more humble sphere of life than the more famous literary figures who toured the Lakes at the period, and lacked their culture, education and reading, none the less has an interesting narrative to tell and he tells it well. Let us leave our traveller on the seven mile walk from Maryport to Workington on the 28th September 1825:

...the road still within a few hundred yards of the sea and not unclosed, therefore had the pleasure again of marching upon nature's velvet carpet, 2 or 3 miles of the way over a warren that sloped down to the beach, saw thousands of rabbits feeding at noon and so tame could approach very near them, because they are so much in the daily habit of seeing people passing.

M. J. Crossley Evans

Summer Walks

On a glorious May evening, the first of our walks visited the Old Firing Range at Littlewood Farm (see *Journal* Issue 6). Our guide for the evening was Dave Balch from Kendal who met members at the 800 yard firing point at the top of the hill. The



Dave Balch, second from left, explains the purpose of the range at the 800 yard point.

party then proceeded down to the farm, where we were met by farmer Brian Woodbridge from Frost Hole, who had kindly allowed us to use the private lane opposite Littlewood Farm to access the target areas. After a brief stop at the ruined shooting hut where we were shown an old wooden sledge found nearby, we set off down the lane to cross into Burneside parish where the target was. Dave explained the workings of the target boards, and

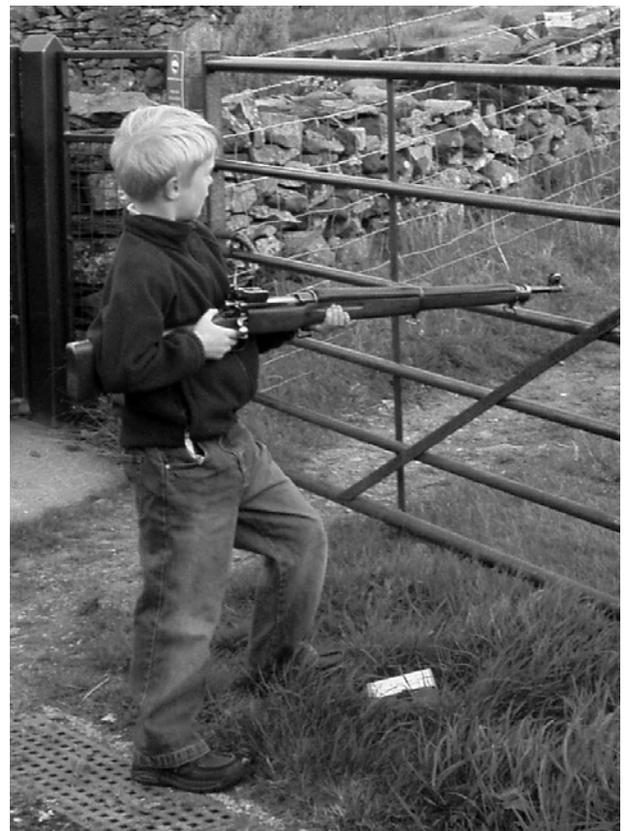
managed to find a .303 bullet in the mound. On the return journey we looked at the short range area where it was felt that this may have been equipped with cast-iron targets. Peter Noble from Littlewood thought that one of them might have been used as a lintel in a nearby drystone wall.

Returning to Littlewood, Dave Balch showed some examples of early rifles, including a .303" Pattern 1914 which was still in full working order. He demonstrated this with a blank, and offered members to have a go. Our member Paul Heap then brought the story right up to date with some guns from his collection.



.303" bullet found at the target

(Right) - Young Robert Atkinson tries his hand with Dave Balch's vintage rifle.



The June walk, on a dry but somewhat cloudy evening, visited Hollin Hall and the old St Catherine's tower at Crook. Our guide for Hollin Hall was member Kath Hayhurst who had lived at Hollin Hall some years ago.

On arrival at Hollin Hall Farm, we were met by David Park who lives in the original part of the Hall. David kindly allowed us in to see the ground floor rooms, including the vaulted roof room in the original pele tower, together with its blanked off stone staircase.

Out in the garden at the rear (or is it front?) members listened to some poems written by Miss Cropper when she was a resident, kindly read to us by Nancy Houston.

Back inside we marvelled at the high ceiling (but low doorways) and the fine fireplace in the lounge. We also looked at the solid oak circular staircase leading from the entrance hall. Throughout the visit various members added their contributions to the discussions on alterations that had taken place over the years.



Above - Members walking up to the tower at Crook
Right – the plaque on the tower

discussion and a final poem about the tower by Miss Cropper was read by Nancy.

The evening sun then broke through and from Hollin Hall we moved on to St Catherine's Tower in Crook. Here Mike Houston took the lead and explained the history as far as it is known. Again members gave their own contributions to the

