

## LOOKING BACK TO MY CHILDHOOD - 1920 TO 1930.

by Chris Walker 1993

*This paper, one of Chris Walker's many contributions to the collection of information and ideas for the Society's book "A Lakeland Valley Through Time", is published with the permission of Mrs Walker. Chris was born in 1920 and died in 1997.*

### Our House

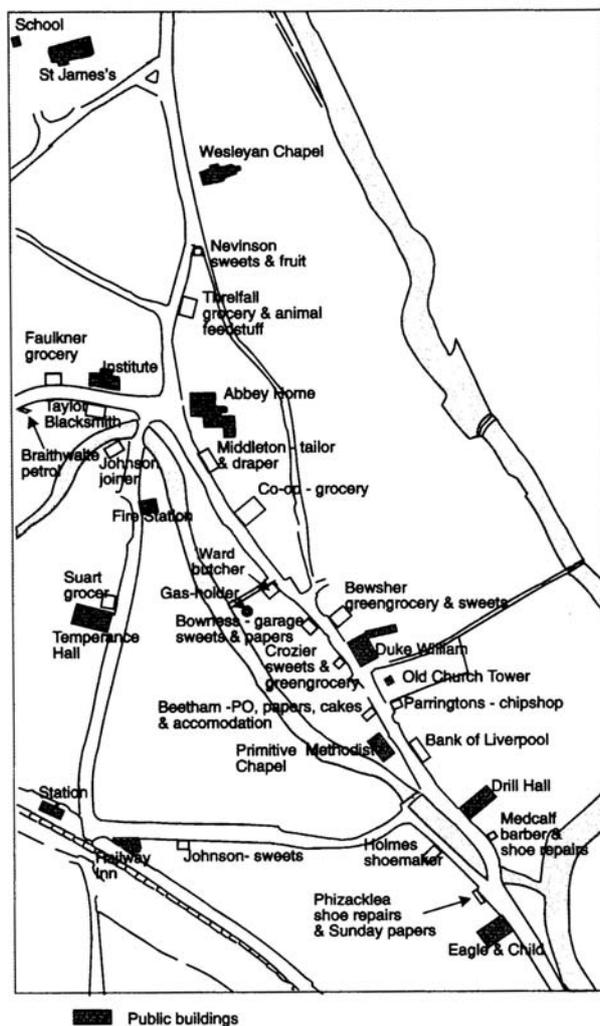
I was the youngest of six children - five boys and one girl, so I had to learn quickly not to be left behind in any way. We lived in a two up, two down (plus a pantry), but not all the boys lived at home. *(The family lived in Church View, on the Kentmere Rd)* The water had to be carried from a pump at the Abbey Square Junction, one hundred and fifty yards away - I remember well going with my brothers with buckets. Bath night was an occasion. The water had to be heated in the wash boiler across the yard - all to be filled, emptied and carried into the house. The only toilets were earth toilets - two families to each, three back to back pairs with the ash pits in between. They were cleaned and emptied twice a year by the Council men. The sewerage works started in 1934 with filter beds down in the Low Fields. We had a coal fire which heated an oven for baking all the bread, pasties and cakes - all home-made in those days. We had bread one day, cakes, pasties etc, another. A stone of flour a time made enough bread for a week. There was a single gas ring and lighting downstairs but candles upstairs.

### Shops

There were many more shops in the village then. Mr R Nevinson sold fruit, veg. and sweets. He went around the village selling sacks of firewood. A real character. He used the empty sacks tied around his waist to keep him dry in the rain. Mr W Threlfall's, provision merchants, was a real going concern. He later introduced a bake house. They employed at least six ladies in the shop and bake house, and three men who visited the outlying areas. I can still remember the "goodies" - tray after tray of all sorts of confectionery. Everything was sold loose - no pre-packs. I often helped in the warehouse. Mr F Suart, Grocer, was in Station Road. James Middleton was Tailor and Draper where the "chippy" is now. Everyone had suits made in those days. Down the road was a little-sweet shop and then came the Staveley Co-op - a very popular store then, with its "divvy". The butcher's shop was owned by Mr Ward. In 1928, I remember Mr & Mrs Bewsher had a fruit

and veg shop where the Spar is now and across the road was Mr W Bowness, the paper shop. I always remember it as the garage. He was a mechanic and employed two men. They had the only petrol pump, and cars could be hired. I mentioned the butcher's but there was also Mr Miles Taylor, Sunny Brow, and Mr G Unsworth, who were local butchers. All the slaughtering was done on the premises and orders taken and delivered around the district. There was also the blacksmith's shop - I loved to watch and I savoured the smell of burnt hooves. Mr Beetham had the Post Office.

*Map showing the shops and public buildings in Staveley in the 1920s; From "A Lakeland Valley Through Time" p.92 The public pumps are indicated by the sign P.*



### **Delivering the Papers**

I had a paper round and was up at 630am at the Station collecting the bundles of papers. Back to sort, then off to deliver tern before school. Always a welcome cup of cocoa before starting down to One Ash. There were no houses between the Eagle and Child and Fell Close. The first one was The Mount built 1932-33. Then on to Main St, Station Rd, up to Bankside, Moss Side, Common Head and Field Close - not only was my name Walker but my nature too. All for 3s 6d a week.

### **School and Church**

I went to the local school from age four to fourteen. There were seven teachers and we were ruled by a rod of iron by Mr J C Robinson and Mr Bailey. I did spend a number of years as a choirboy. My mother and her sister cleaned the Church, polished the brasses and all the hassocks were taken out by me to be beaten with the beater. The Church played a big part in our lives in those days. Parties in the garden of the vicarage were a highlight.

### **Changes in the 1930s**

It all seemed to be happening from 1930 onwards. Road widening, water mains, sewerage and houses in Station Road which used to be fields - a local builder, Mr Ivinson, built these houses with stone carted from Fellfoot Mill. I recall gardens up School Lane and across to the Kentmere road, from Hopefield house to the Wesleyan Chapel, and down to the Kent. We had our allotment there. Three cottages were pulled down to make way for the Village Hall. The lights for the opening, provided by Mr E Brockbank, were on poles and cables from Staveley Wood. G H Pattinson Ltd built the Hall in 1936. Before then all Shrovetide parties, concerts and dances were held in the Drill Hall on the Ayland. It was used by the Territorial Army Fourth Borderers for drill purposes. It was equipped with billiard-table and a magazine for storing rifles. But the villagers wanted a new hall to stage plays and put on operas so that was why the hall was built - Staveley was always renowned for its good singing and acting. The dances were from 10pm to 2am, mainly held on Fridays or if on Saturdays they finished at 12pm.

### **I start work**

Staveley Wood-turning Company and Rawes Mill were the bobbin mills still working. Gatefoot mills (*Where Chris started work in 1934*) were

manufacturing door handles of all kinds with roses, escutcheons and finger-plates but this option ran out when Bakelite was introduced. Workers were on short-time in 1935. That was when I started looking for work elsewhere. I started as a wood-machinist at APs Ltd in Kendal and stayed until the war started. I later rejoined the firm and stayed until I retired.