

Staveley & District History Society

Journal Summer 2009

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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.

Cover photo – The footpath alongside the river opposite the Mill Yard

The next issue of the Journal (the winter issue) will be published on the 8th December 2009. Any contributions (letters, articles, etc.) should be with the Editor no later than the meeting on the 10th November.

From our President

I apologise once again that family loyalties meant that I was not at the AGM this year but I promise try to do better next year. Those of you who, like me, were not at the AGM, missed hearing about many activities outside the lecture and walks programme that the Society has been involved in.



Much work behind the scenes had gone on in ensuring a new home for the Tyson Memorial from the old Wesleyan Church thanks to the efforts of Martin Crossley Evans, David Hooson and Peter Noble. The memorial was formally ‘accepted’ into its new home in St. James’ Church on 19th April. Another achievement was the naming of the footbridge off Windermere Road as ‘Three Townships Bridge’ and the installation of a plaque to mark the boundary of the ancient Townships. Part of the finance for this was provided by the Parish Council.

Former Committee member Peter Colley designed a ‘bobbin’ feature to be placed in the garden facing the War memorial with the circular inscription ‘Staveley made Bobbins made Staveley...’ for which the Society provided a grant; and following the walk on 12th May Chairman Iain Johnston presented a mounted ‘Short History’ of the Eagle & Child Inn to the Landlord, Richard Coleman. This was derived from the very comprehensive Occasional Paper written by John Berry and launched at the AGM. Thanks here also to Morrison Harding who prepared a pen drawing of the old inn to illustrate the paper and to John’s brother Tony who drew all the plans of the Inn. Morrison you may remember provided many of the pen drawings for *A Lakeland Valley Through Time* all those years ago.

Our new ‘Events’ Secretary, Don Morris, who was kind enough to volunteer for the job after the last AGM has prepared an interesting programme of lectures for the coming season so please give him your support. Also, I note that we still have two vacancies on the committee – surely from over 150 members we can find a couple more volunteers? The next Committee meeting is on 6th September so give John Berry a ring if you would like to attend and find out what goes on.

I look forward to seeing you all again in October.

Clare Brockbank

Programme cards

Members living within reach of Staveley should find enclosed a Programme Card for the winter session. Anyone who needs an extra copy should contact the Treasurer when renewing their subscription.

Projects 2008/9

Right – the Tyson Memorial in its new home on the north wall of St. James’ Church. Below the memorial is a small plaque regarding the memorial’s origin and the involvement of the Society.



Left – the plaque and stone mount commemorating the boundary of the ancient Townships and the end of the separate Parish Councils in 2004.

Right – Chairman Iain Johnston presents landlord Richard Coleman with an illustrated short history of the Eagle & Child Inn.



Left – Peter Colley with supporters at the new bobbin feature (sundial) at Fir Tree corner.

Tales from the tapes

As promised in the Spring 2009 Issue 15 of the Journal the following is the first of a series of articles taken from our tape transcriptions. The interviewer in each case is represented in italics. At the time of this recording - 12th Nov. 1993 - Chris Huck had lived at 2 Bank Terrace for 81 years. He worked at Staveley Railway Station from 1941 to 1971.

Chris Huck interviewed by Mike Houston

How many people were there here at Staveley employed on the railway?

There was five and two at the crossings, seven was all the staff.

Do you remember their names?

Mr. McLennan, station master and Raymond Dixon booking clerk, Jack Lord, porter signalman, George Carruthers, porter, myself porter and then at the crossings there was Bert Whittam and a young chap, I can't think of his name, from Troutbeck. They had two turns you see there.

There was freight as well as passengers wasn't there at that time?

Yes we'd three freight trains every day that stopped here, there was four but the fourth one didn't stop here at night, it was through from Windermere to Kendal. We had one at half past nine from Kendal to Windermere, we'd one from Windermere to Kendal at quarter past twelve and one Kendal to Windermere at half past one and that was all picking up manufacturing stuff from Staveley Woodturning, Kentmere Ltd, Paxtons and Rawes Mill yard.

And what about farms Chris?

Oh we did a lot you know, I always remember my first do I had was a farmer from Middleton, up in the north east way somewhere, they called the farmer Mr. Iceton and he came to Millriggs. I forget how many wagons; there was nearly about fifteen or sixteen. But farm removal sale, it was thrilling to me; I'd never had dealings with all these animals before. The only thing that marred the day was they lost their best sheepdog. An engine went through when we were all loading and it whistled and that dog had never heard one of these and it bolted and we lost it. I said to Mr. Iceton "don't worry, I finish at about quarter to three, I'll get my Dad and we'll go and look for it." I always remember my Dad put some meat in his pocket and we went to look for it. I spotted it on Lily Fell and my Dad kept walking round and getting nearer and talking quietly to it and he threw it a piece of meat and eventually he caught it and so after my tea I walked to Kentmere with it and they were highly delighted when they got their sheepdog back. They came to see my mother and father nearly every week after that and we were friends for years, but Mr. Iceton had a brother didn't care for living in Kentmere so he went back what he called home.

What about other things?

We used to send quite a lot of horses and we had loads of pigs used to come into Staveley. I remember one day we were unloading pigs and a light engine went through and we just got them out and somebody had left bottom gate open off't cattle dock and they bolted out and they went all over the place. We had to run after them with a stiff brush to push them into a crate and that's how we got 'em all back again.

Then I had another experience, the farmer at Fairbank bought twenty Ayshire cows in Scotland and they came by rail to Staveley and they brought twenty men and they heltered these cows out of the wagons and walked them down into the yard and the same thing happened again, a blooming light engine went through and they went all over. This gentleman farmer said well we'll have to get 'em back somehow, what do you think? I said best way is to get hold of Barnes and Phizackleas cattle removers and get them to come up with a wagon and the last one we picked up was in Crook. I can't remember where they was all caught 'cos there was twenty, but I know the last three we picked up, one was on Lily Fell, one was at Crook and one was at Ashes farmyard.

What about people Chris, were there any important visitors came to Staveley?

No nobody as I know of. The frightening thing I had to do was collecting tickets off



The original platform buildings at Staveley Station (H. Bowtell)

the train and the station master finished at quarter to nine and the booking clerk finished at twelve o'clock you see, and then they changed over. This particular night this return was on my turn and he said to me: "You'll have a prisoner of war train coming, make sure you collect the warrants off, whatever you do." So I stepped aboard this train when it come in, it was full of German prisoners. Soldiers with fixed bayonets barred my path. It was shocking, those chaps standing there with their fixed bayonets. I said "I'm awfully sorry but I want the officer who has the warrants for this regiment." I saw the soldiers like, I didn't know they was prisoners of war, I knew after like, and he told another chap to go and bring him and he brought him and he handed me warrants over. I was alright but it was a bit frightening when he stepped in front of me with his fixed bayonet.

What about evacuation, Chris, did that....?

Oh yes, aye, when I was on late turn, oh it was awful, on the late turn you know you got to work at two o'clock in the afternoon and many a time it was three and four

o'clock when I was coming home next morning with evacuating people from London. You had to wait for these trains, till they come and collect all the tickets off 'em. I'll always remember once there was an old lady, I bet she was about eighty and she had a bird cage on her knee and she had a dog round t'other side of her and a cat in a cat box on the other side and she was crying, I always remember that.

In the wartime Chris, what happened, were the trains blacked out?

Yes, station lamps were half blacked out, the top half was painted black. There was only a small glimmer to see on the platform - that's all - testing getting on or off the train.

One of the things you mentioned earlier on was Staveley Woodturning; what else other than bobbins used to go out of Staveley?

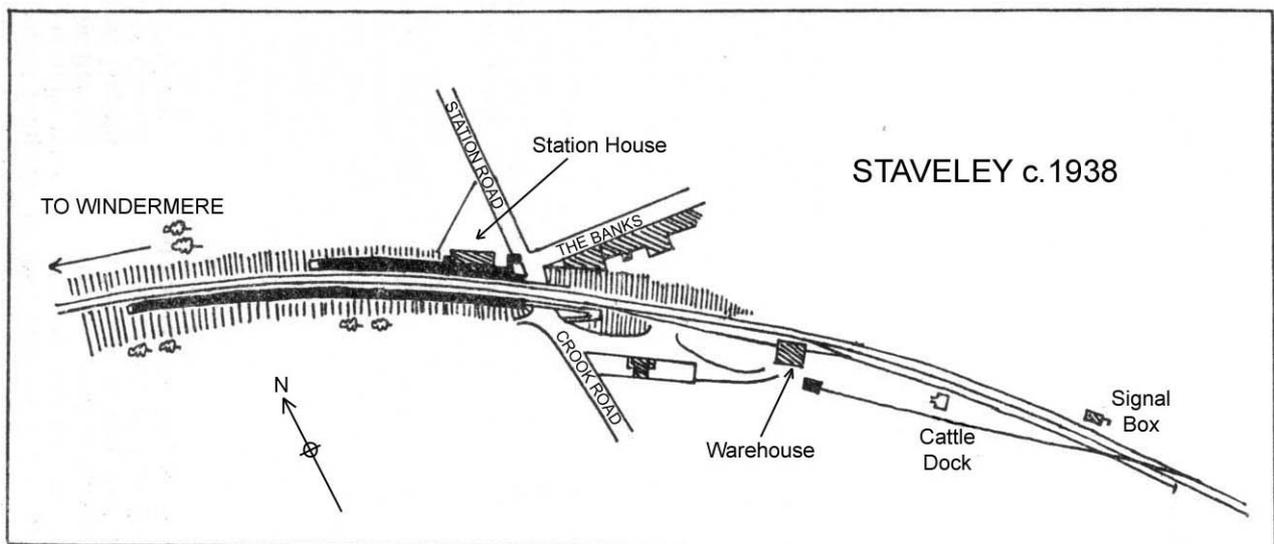
Well at Staveley Woodturning they sent thousands of shunt poles for British Rail to Derby, about ten thousand a month I think would go off hand. Five thousand in a wagon and bobbins, there were sacks and sacks loads of bobbins went to Leek. You never hear tell of bobbins these days, it's all plastic. Then there were pick handles for the miners in the mines - there were hundreds and hundreds of pick handles went all over.

Would you say there was more went out than came in by rail because Staveley Woodturning and Kentmere Ltd. would get stuff in as well as send it out?

Oh yes, Kentmere Ltd. got cardboard in, now that all comes by road, they got tons and tons of cardboard and photographic paper, big reels and reels of photographic paper came in special containers for it, Kentmere Ltd.

Did you have special machines to offload these things as they would be heavy?

No, you just, you knew a certain part of the yard was level with their wagon. You



could just, I should say these rolls of photographic paper weighed up to two hundredweight, you could just roll them off onto their wagon. And same with Woodturning, when all the rough squares came in they sent a man in with their own wagon driver and unloaded them then they went out finished, polished up, you wouldn't believe it when you saw them going out.

There would be coal come in as well did it?

Oh yes, J.J. Coupland, he was the main coal dealer, but the Wigan Iron Company had an agent in the station yard, old Mr. Crowe used to do it. Then the train came in from

Kendal, if you had coal wagons, you used to unhook off the train, against the warehouse and let them run down into that, what we called cattle dock siding. Then when the train came back at dinner time, you let 'em run down onto the train and he pushed them up what we called the coal road, so that Mr. Coupland could get to them and unload them, that's how it worked out. If there was something for Kentmere Ltd., well you took them up onto the platform, unhooked off there and you'd run them into the warehouse road as we called it, so that you knew where the level was so that their wagon could just come up to it and roll them off.

You would know the train timetable virtually in your head did you?

Oh aye, at anywhere by train, south and going to Windermere. I knew every train, never had to look in any timetable at all. One experience I had, I was walking down Blackpool Prom with my wife and I heard somebody shouting my name at the top of their voice and I looked across the road and I said to Joyce, "Oh it's some teenage girls from Kentmere Ltd." So we went across to them and they asked us what time was the trains back to Staveley from Blackpool. They had only enquired one way - it was very funny to me was that. I was able to tell them all the different trains and times, what train to come back on.

In those days I could tell you the 8 o'clock train from Windermere in a morning went to Manchester and it left Windermere at 8.05 and it was into Manchester Exchange Station at 10.30 I think it was and same train left at 5.10 at night and it was back in Windermere at 7.25 and the same for Liverpool, the 8.05 out of Windermere, the 8.10 it was - I forget now - but it had three coaches on for Liverpool and they came off at Preston and they went to Liverpool and that was 5.10 back out of Liverpool to Windermere.

The mail Chris, did they have a sorting office for the mail in Staveley?

When I first started, Mr. Lowis was the postman for Staveley but he did mostly right from Danes Road and the Fell farms and Ings and all up there and he brought the letters at night for the 10 to 6 train — perhaps have two mailbags every night.

We've talked about the warehouse building, but there was also the station house?

Yes, the ganger lived in that. I've heard my mother saying away back in about 1912



One of the few pictures existing of the Station Masters House

that Mr. Parrington used to live in there, the station master for Staveley, he lived in that house underneath the station, but while I was on the railway it was the ganger always lived in it. I can remember Mr. Hewitt living in it, he was a ganger and then I can remember Mr. Lambert living in it and he was a ganger on the railway for Staveley. And then Mr. Bownass, those were the three I can remember.

Did they have one of those little manual gadabout truck things?

Yes, a platelayer's trolley.

Did they often have to renew the rails and that?

No, I can remember them putting some new lines in; it was only from about the warehouse down to the crossings when I was on. I had an experience when I went to work one morning and I saw this car inside station yard. I didn't bother, I thought it's some friends of Mr. Snow 'cos he lived in the cottage in the station yard. He was a platelayer and when I went home for my breakfast and I came back again, it was still there. I thought oh aye, it's nothing to do with me it will be somebody staying with Mr. Snow. It was after Mr. McLennan and the other staff finished there was only two of us working on Staveley station then, one early, one late. And I thought by jove, I better be polishing my lamps on the platform and I was polishing my lamps and a goods train guard had rung up to see if we wanted them to stop. I said no, you're alright, stop when you're coming back. Then I thought, it's funny, that engine is whistling, it's queer is that, whistling like mad he was, coming towards cattle dock like from Stockbridge. And he came into the station and stopped and he said, "I've just cut a man's head off and he was shaking like a leaf and he was as white as a ghost. So I said well don't move until I come back and I went straight across into the office and we were under Windermere then you see, and I rang Windermere and I told 'em and they thought I was leg pulling. No, I said, I know I'm a beggar for leg pulling, but I'm honest, I want our boss here as soon as possible. The top man for this area lived at St. Annes on Sea and the week before they'd taken what we called the national phone out of our office, we just had the railway phone. Before that we had the national one so I couldn't ring the ambulance and police, so Windermere did it for me. And they all came - ambulance, police and the Sergeant of police said "You don't leave them phones, you stand there to answer any phone calls", and I did so. And this young man had come from somewhere down Nelson way or Accrington or somewhere like that and it wasn't nobody stopping at Mr. Snow's at all. He had come and committed suicide and what annoyed me was, the boss over our section, this north-west section, he never came till half past twelve and this happened at half past nine. And when he come I said "By jove I'm disappointed at you being so slow in coming". "Ooh, he said, nothing to worry about at all, you're doing a marvellous job, I couldn't have done it any better than you have done.

Have you any more stories then Chris?

Well one day we had to send three horses to Penrith to a horse sale and we notified the farmers that there were just three stalls in the horse box. They came with them and the first two went in grand, but the third one, this farmer was rough with horses. I didn't like his idea at all and he annoyed me because he was hitting it to make it go in. The stationmaster was looking at his watch 'cos we had to put it on back of the 3.32 train to Oxenholme & we were getting short of time. So I said to him, you stop hitting that horse, leave it alone and let me have hold of it. So I took it off the cattle dock and I walked it down the yard to where there was some grass and I fed it and I patted it on the neck and rubbed it and talked to it quietly and I turned round and I walked back right up the cattle dock and right into the horse box. Then the other two farmers said to him "By gum it's a bit of a laddie when a railway man has to show you up!" *(Of course we have to bear in mind that these were not just little ponies or hunting horses - these were great big shire horses. – Mike Houston)*

Another Martindale

A member of Levens History Society, researching the botanical career of our Staveley headmaster, J.A. Martindale, came across this piece from the Lancaster Guardian. Does anyone know who the Staveley couple were?

The boy in the picture is Thomas Martindale from Penrith. The caption on the original photo described how nine-year-old Thomas was lost on the fells for four days and four nights in July 1907.

Thomas lived with his parents but was on holiday in Bampton when he went missing.

He had gone on to the fells with another boy called Vickers to search for a missing pony. They separated but agreed to stay within earshot of one another. Vickers found the pony dead an hour later and called for Thomas but received no reply.



He thought Thomas must have made his way home so returned there but when there was no sign of Thomas a search party went out. Police joined them and as the search continued, hope faded that Thomas, wearing only thin summer clothes, would be found alive. But on the fourth day, a telegram arrived from Staveley to say that Thomas was alive and well, being cared for by a couple.

Thomas told of his adventures when his dad came to collect him. He had lost Vickers and was directed home but became tired as night closed in so found a hole in a rock which he crept inside to sleep. The next day he wandered around in a thick mist without any food, completely lost. He spent another night in the rock but this time a lamb crept inside too and they kept each other warm. On the second day he wandered round with only water to sustain him and spent that night in a deserted shepherd's hut. It was two days later before he met a servant who took him to a place of safety and his parents were contacted.

Because of his adventures, Thomas became something of a local hero. When walking home towards Penrith a party of tourists heard of his ordeal and he became the centre of attention. He posed for photos and was given rewards for his courage. And on returning to his home town he was given a hero's welcome and that was when the picture was taken.

News from the Committee

At its last meeting in March, the Committee decided that any of our electronic data in *pdf* or *jpeg* form could be supplied to members (via e-mail) free of charge. This applies to Occasional Papers, Census Listings, Corn Rent Maps and schedules, and to back numbers of our *Journal* (unfortunately not including covers!). Members will need a broadband connection to make best use of this as many of the files are of several megabytes.

Copies of photographs we have in our collection can also be supplied – though with the proviso that only if there is no copyright attached to them. Where copyright exists, it is up to the member to obtain permission and inform the General Secretary of this.

The committee also discussed briefly the 20th anniversary of the Society which will occur in 2011, and agreed in principle that another exhibition, similar to that held in 2006, would be staged. The theme would be “200 years of change” illustrating the history of the Staveley district from 1811 to 2011. Prior to this, the winter 2010/11 edition of the *Journal* will be Issue 20 and it is intended to make this a special edition. Any suggestions as to what to include to the Editor please.

Although 2011 seems a long way off, we would also appreciate any suggestions as to what we should include in the exhibition; in particular, history from the 20th century is less well documented than the 19th and members may be able to suggest things to include from their own experiences or those of neighbours.

For any of the above, please contact the General Secretary in the first place.

CLHF Annual Convention 2009

Members are reminded that the annual convention of CLHF takes place at Newton Rigg, Penrith, on Saturday 26th September. The day starts at 0930am with the AGM and is followed by a conference at 1030 with the key subject the Victoria County History project. There is also a description of the new County Record Office at Carlisle.



In the afternoon there are a number of practical workshops on local history and record keeping. Throughout the day there is an exhibition of research and projects by member societies. The fee for the day is £12 for members. If you want to know more, contact any committee member or the organiser, Derek Denman, on 01900 85551.

Summer Walks

The venue for our May summer walk had to be changed at the last minute as the leader from Levens History Group was unavailable. Mike Houston, who was down to lead the July walk, agreed to swap with Levens so the party of about 15 members set off from the Abbey to walk via the footpaths past Staveley Park and as far as Spring Hag and High Wood. Mike's subject was the old field names from the Corn Rent



Mike addressing the members at the ground vegetable store outside Staveley Park

maps and how they related both to topography and to the uses to which the fields had been put. Peter Noble added some comments about more recent uses.

The walk finished on the road from Littlewood after passing through the corner of the land owned by Friends of the Lake District. After a little prompting from the members Mike finally admitted that the new plantation was now known as 'Mike's Wood' and named after him.

The June walk was to look at Ubarrow (or Yewbarrow) Hall courtesy of Peter Thornton the owner. Another dry sunny evening but one where the midges were definitely in command. After viewing the Hall and the grounds from the hill to the rear, members were invited in to look at the restored Pele tower and discuss various theories as to the alterations that had been carried out over the years. We were then kindly offered coffee in the Hall kitchen – all 26 members and two visitors! Iain Johnston then proposed a vote of thanks to Peter.



Peter Thornton welcomes members to the Hall and explains something of its history.



Levens Secretary Stephen read pointing out buildings of interest along the main street.

The final walk of the season was to Levens, led by Stephen Read, Secretary of the Levens History Society, and assisted for part of the evening by their Treasurer, Allan Steward. Despite having to shelter from showers during the evening, 23 of our members learnt that what we now call Levens was, in the main, originally called Beathwaite Green. Unlike most Lakeland villages, where planning restrictions have limited development, today's Levens sprawls over the edge of the hillside, with old buildings fighting for space

from their modern counterparts. We learnt that many historic buildings had disappeared in the '60s and of those that remained, few were in anything like original condition. Despite this, Stephen's detailed research and the photographs that he had brought along gave us a good picture of what Levens had looked like before the modern expansion.

Our education was further enhanced by learning about the peat moss and its subsequent drainage, and that many small cottages were originally peat cotes – buildings for the storage of peat. After a most informative evening, our Chairman Iain Johnston thanked Stephen for his efforts.

John Williams

Members will be sorry to learn of the death of John Williams, an active member of the Society until mobility problems forced him to move to a care home in Windermere. John was the last man to have worked in the Kentmere head slate quarries; he built the explosives hut which still stands. His family was one of a number forced to move in the early 1900s from the great Bethesda quarries in North Wales, first to Borrowdale and then later to Kentmere when John's grandfather was appointed Quarry Manager.

John spoke to the Society in October 1998 on the topic of *Kentmere Slate and Kentmere People* and was brought out to the quarry only last year to speak to the Cumbria Industrial History Society.

Christopher Gregory