

Staveley & District History Society

Journal Spring 2006

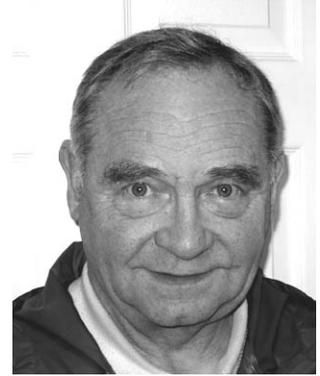
CONTENTS

- 2 **Chairman's Report**
Mike Houston gives his report on the year
- 3 **Wartime Evacuees**
Temporary residents in Staveley during the 39-45 war tell their tale
- 8 **Motoring before the Great War**
Christopher Gregory finds some local information in 'Motor Ways in Lakeland'
- 9 **Littlewood Firing Range**
Where the Volunteers practised
- 11 **The Gilpins – some additional information**
Some additions to Occasional Paper No. 12
- 12 **Financial Accounts 2005**
David Hooson gives a summary report on the Society's finances

The next issue of the Journal (the summer issue) will be published about the 12th August 2006. Any contributions (letters, articles, etc.) should be with the Editor no later than the 30th June.

Chairman's Report

I make no excuses for starting this report by paying tribute, on your behalf, to the work carried out by your officers and committee members over the past year. The *Journal* is now established thanks to our editor, John Berry's limitless energies. We hope that members will continue to submit items to John for inclusion in future issues. Too late to mention in last year's report, John has transferred the Oral History Group's 1995 tape presentation, *The Living Past* on to a CD, and last year completed transcribing the census returns for Nether Staveley with a surname search facility. He has his sights on completing Over Staveley this year, and as I write he is drawing up a detailed plan with topics for display at our 15th Anniversary Exhibition in the Roundhouse at Easter.



John however would be the first to admit that the smooth running of both his activities and those of the Society as a whole, owed and continues to owe, a great deal to our Secretary, Pat Ball. Pat has already organised our summer walks and our talks programme for 2006/7. Arrangements for our meetings in the school, where we all turn up on Tuesday evenings, have all been made well beforehand with every need attended to and all necessary organisation carried out. In September 2005 Pat and I were invited to the AGM of the Cumbria Local History Federation to present the Joe Scott Memorial History Prizes awarded for the best pieces of historical writing on any topic in Cumbrian Local History. It was both revealing and rewarding to realise that everyone had not only known Joe Scott, but also knew Pat Ball. I was certainly made aware that our local society was highly regarded by others.

One of Joe's many legacies to this society was the Staveley School History Prize now known as the Joe Scott History Prize. We commented on the success of this in detail in issue 5 of the *Journal*. We were indeed fortunate to co-opt Iain Johnston on to our committee and he was able to give his valuable experience and assistance in judging the competition. Iain is able to forge even stronger links with Staveley School, the Roundhouse, and of course, Kentmere.

Education has featured prominently in 2005 which saw the 250th anniversary of Staveley School marked by an open day and launch of a book on the history of the school on May 21st. The success of the celebrations was due in great measure to the enthusiasm and hard work of Zoë Atkinson who edited the book. Zoë is an invaluable addition to our committee bringing fresh ideas. The Post Office window display on the Society in September was largely Zoë's work, with some help from John Berry, and was widely acclaimed by both locals and visitors.

All would be of little avail, however, were our finances in less able hands. David Hooson not only keeps immaculate accounts with up to date figures when required, but he and Marjorie kindly allow us to hold our committee meetings in their home.

Moreover Marjorie also keeps our library books and items for sale. Many is the wet winter evening when we have all departed home, and David and Marjorie, along with Pat, are the last to leave the school as everything is packed into the car, ready for the next time.

Reports on our summer walks were documented in issue 4 of the *Journal* and the attendance at our winter talks has been remarkable. We are hoping that our recently formed 'Buildings' group under Peter Colley will attract interest and support from members during 2006. This group will be responsible for keeping records of all our historic buildings and providing a 'quick response team' to record any information which suddenly appears as a result of building operations or major re-decorating. We are also hoping to resurrect the Photographic group this year and are looking for someone interested in photography to act as leader. Herein lies a united plea from the members of your committee. Invariably when someone from the membership gives a talk or organises a project it arouses universal interest. There comes to mind Jack Castling's talk on his experiences as an evacuee, Alan Lord's continuing survey of Hall Wood, the Oral History group's recording of Marjorie Lavender (*Journal* issue 5) and Tom Bland's talk on Firefighting. When Joe Scott and others first set up the Society, it was with the hope that it would encourage those living in Staveley, Kentmere and Ings to carry out individual research into some topic or topics of their local area. We owe it to those early pioneers to carry out those wishes and we look forward to suggestions from you, our members. Do not let those early pioneers down.

Mike Houston

Wartime Evacuees

During the 1939-45 war a number of children from Newcastle upon Tyne and Liverpool came to live in Staveley. Some have written to us with their recollections.

Brian Border from Lemington in Newcastle wrote to us as follows:

'I was one of those Newcastle evacuees that came to Staveley in September 1939 and learned to love the area that has stayed with me in the sixty-one years since then.

My two brothers and I were at first billeted with the Wilsons at Stockbridge Farm. After a few months we split up, young brother Neville went to Mrs. Clark at Gowan Terrace, my elder brother, Derek, went to the headmaster's (J.C. Robinson's) house; I went to the Misses Muschamp and there on to the Wallings household. I enjoyed every moment and the friendly welcome from all the villagers. Passing the scholarship meant that I had to return to Newcastle to the Technical School. My brothers stayed on for another three years and are also great Lakeland lovers. I am still in touch with one or two people that I met in those days, but of course most are now deceased.

"Old Mac" as we called him, was quite a feared character when I was a choirboy for a year. My schooling took place mainly in the Village Hall. Strong memories of the

nearby grocers Threlfalls where we spent our pocket money and exercised juvenile fantasies involving Yolande Swidenbank who worked there some times. Happy memories too of riding on the milk round with Betty Wilson as we delivered milk – no bottles of course, we measured it into peoples jugs or containers from the churns loaded in the cart – the horse knew exactly which houses had to be called at on the round.’

The Pedlar family from Liverpool moved to Staveley lock, stock and barrel at the outset of the blitz. Mother of the family, Ann, who died in 1987, described the arrival thus:



‘Before arriving in Staveley, the Pedlars had been staying in two rooms of Benson’s Farm in Skelwith, Ambleside. After one short period at a Bull’s Close cottage and fruitless visits to Estate Agents and much worry we, by great fortune, got the tenancy of 16 Danes Road. All our furniture had to come from our Liverpool home. Never was there such a disorderly move and just before Christmas 1940. After 50 years my memories are dim on detail. But some happenings remain clear. Firstly, the anxiety of the removal men to dump our furniture haphazardly and hurry back to Liverpool. They had travelled up early morning following an air raid. En route they looked back and could see fires still burning and were eager to get back to see that their families and homes were safe. So I had no heart to delay them though I was keen to get the house in some sort of order for family Christmas celebrations.

Another never to be forgotten memory in my domesticated mind is this: the farmer Benson had killed a pig for their own table shortly before we left. “Send someone back on Christmas Eve and we will give you a joint” he said. So John and Gill took the long bus ride to Ambleside and walked the several miles to Skelwith. They found the promise forgotten and the farmer out! They returned with a small parcel of liver and pig’s trotters. The village butcher was not charitable either when I presented our ration books. She said, “All I have is sausages!” We sat down to a Xmas dinner with lots of vegetables, stuffing but no turkey, although across the road in a field was a large gaggle gobbling away - a turkey farm. Maybe in relief, they appreciated being alive unlike many of their fellows. During that afternoon we all climbed the Scar that rose steeply behind our new home and at the top, its tarn and vast panorama of fells spread out before us. It thrilled us and compensated for the discomforts and disruption till then. It continued to do so for the remaining five years of war. Moreover, Staveley was a holiday refuge for numerous friends and relations.

Very soon the three junior members - Gill, John, and Janet got into the pleasant village programme: catching the 555 school bus at around 8 am to attend the girl’s High School and Grammar School for John: going to the thinly attended Methodist chapel in the village: they joined in Sunday School and other church events, like pumping the air into the organ vigorously and even singing in the choir.’

Each of the Pedlar children had their own memories; Elizabeth, now in Florida, recalls: 'I am grateful for the two years I spent in Staveley. It was a place of refuge, a place of life and beauty and a time of transition for me.



I was 16 & 17 years old, uncertain of my future but full of dreams, and ambitions. I loved the solitude of the tarn and fell above and behind Danes Road. Also the pastoral scene of juniper and holly trees and meadows towards Lilly Fell from the terrace. My sister Delia painted a picture of one of those trees which is forever etched in my memory.

The Brockbanks and Wights had a great influence on me in those years. Mrs. Brockbank was director of the "Staveley Players." Muriel Wight and I performed in two or three productions. One memorable one was "Love from a Stranger," and we actually took the play on the road, and performed in Windermere as well as Staveley. It was a heady feeling to be part of a repertory company however small.

I rode the "555" bus to Kendal High School those two years. The scenery was beautiful and Muriel Wight and I shared a special friendship. There was some kind of service men's hospitality where they stayed for some days in host families. We were asked to be companions for a day of local sight-seeing. We were paired with two New Zealand airmen in spite of our naivety! I don't remember the name of my "date", but I do remember he was a brilliant pianist and played "Tangerine" so soulfully that I was in awe. Muriel also forged a friendship with her "date" and continued to write to him. It was a very sad day when the news came through that he had been killed in action. We wept at our desks in Kendal High inconsolably, so much so that it attracted the attention of the staff. Not much sympathy was shown as we were thought too young for such drama!

I am sure that even to this day if I strolled around Staveley with my brother and sisters it would bring back more memories. I do remember things like cans hanging in conspicuous places to collect certain things for the war effort. I always wondered why they put one for "bones" near the church graveyard. I also remember the clear river and brooks running and the farmyard we walked through with ferocious geese. I remember hearing of the rotund jolly bald headed gentleman of Danes Road dressed in riding habit who was rumoured to dance in the fields at full moon. I never succeeded in glimpsing this but John tells me he did, if not at full moon, and that this gentleman personified Tweedledum himself as he danced along the banks of the Gowan late one summer evening.

The evacuees came in all shapes and sizes but Staveley with its big heart welcomed us all. Our house was a house of music, laughter, and hospitality, and when I returned from London for vacations it was with delight. I was proud to live in the Lake District where we enjoyed also sailing on Windermere and Youth Hostelling. Staveley is more than an unforgettable experience – "Goodness and mercy" continued "to follow us" all those years.'

Janet Pedlar, now in Hobart remembers ‘Mrs Story music teacher in the village, and the Brockbanks at the big house put on painting classes one school holiday in their barn that Gill and I went to. Mr Brockbank had a good voice and took the main parts in all concerts. Drama group and Choral society productions were well attended by all the community, and put on concerts for Wings for Victory week, and other such war efforts. Standing room only at such events, every one joined in those days. The Whittam family were pillars of the Methodist church. They had a large garden and grew raspberries which we remember picking. Mother exchanged a wardrobe for a bath, which she saw in their garden. At 16 Danes Road there was no bathroom or hot water system.



The gas lighting was only down stairs, we had candles up. Mother had the power put on, although we were only renting the place at the time. There was a turkey farmer across the road. Our Morris Oxford 16 saw the end of its days in his shed as a hen house. A little further up the road was an evacuee family living in little more than a shed, they seem to pack or may even have made cheap cosmetics, the girls, a little older than us, brought powder and lipstick for us to play with in secret. John remembers playing in their derelict Mill buildings. There were Italian prisoners of war, working in the fields around that we used to wave to.

There was no street lighting so walking home from music lessons in the village was very scary. Why did we not have torches? I thought a prisoner might jump out at me!

Our neighbour Miss Martindale an elderly lady had two evacuee girls, I think also from Liverpool, or some big town. As they had not lived in the country before, perhaps, or were homesick they were unhappy. They objected to being sent to bed so early. We talked to them through the Danes Road attic room skylight, and I seem to remember visiting them across the roof. Their stay was very short, big relief all round I would think.’

Finally, John Pedlar wrote to us: ‘As a teenage boy in Staveley the joy of the great outdoors was sewn in my heart and this I have transmitted to my sons and hundreds of soldiers I trained whilst Adventure Training in the Lakes. In those war times before motorways, tourists were relatively sparse. I remember walking on my own up Scafell in swirling clouds and meeting no one, hardly likely today. Map & compass were mastered in my Staveley days.



At Kendal Grammar I learnt my Rugby Football, an important part of my PE Teacher's career. I remember huge classes and a teacher who rapped you with a ruler. Three of my sisters went to Kendal High. We travelled every day

on the "555." It was often packed standing room only. Amazingly after 65 years the "555" still covers the same route. Some things never change!

Mother and Mrs. Whittam (Chapel Secretary) were great friends. Anne kept in touch over the years with many other Staveley friends including Doctor Wight whose walking habit ensured him a long life. Mrs. Whittam, also had a large family, a lovely lady of vast size who would "float" with great dignity around the chapel as she took the collection. My personal contribution was limited to pumping the organ. At one service, I forget who was playing, possibly Mrs Storey the Piano teacher, when half asleep, I added an awful hideous moan to an introduction to a hymn. The annual carol singing outing by a large church group was memorable - the jolly chatter as we walked the lanes in pitch-blackness. Mrs Storey would knock her tuning fork and thereby give us the right pitch for the carols at each country house. Christmas refreshments and equally generous giving, no doubt, followed this. Joyful customs sadly never experienced again.

Mr. Whittam was a master fly fisherman. He kindly attempted to teach father the art in front of his sceptical family. The river Kent needed the height of this skill for success. Father's craze, as we suspected, did not last long.

Like the majority of working fathers, war service made Dad an infrequent visitor so it was Mum who led the pack. Were it not for Mum we would probably never have spent the war years in Staveley. The saga of our flight from the falling bombs of Liverpool is another story of courage by Mum and drama for all five children.

On a memorable day on one of our regular family walking outings, we were told by Mum, "We are going to help Janet learn to swim." This was to the pool below Scroggs Bridge. The icy cold water was hardly conducive. I remember: wading along the Gowan searching for Crayfish, the unsettling "goback goback" cry of the grouse as we trekked through the heather to Skeggles Water, also the cry of the Curlew and Lapwings, all part of the "music of the fells". The walk to, and a dip in, the Borwick Reservoir was a popular walk. Equally enjoyed was the long and "big dipper" cycle ride to swim at Millerground, Windermere.

I loved helping with the harvesting at the farm nearby. I doubt the farmer would be so pleased if he knew I had enticed Peter, his terrier, to such an extent that Peter would, in school holidays, sit patiently every morning at the back gate of 16 Danes Road till John took him rabbit catching on Reston Scar. Boy and dog bonded by the same joy, the thrill of the chase. So much so, boy was whisked off, like Christopher Robin, to a more academic life at a distant boarding school where his wilder instinct might be softened.'

(This is an edited version of the stories related. If you have a story to tell, then get in touch with us, you can write, e-mail or record an oral tape – Ed)

Motoring before the Great War

George D Abraham, of Keswick, was a notable mountaineer and author of books on climbing in the Lake District and the Alps. He was also an enthusiastic motorist since the pioneer days, and in 1913 published 'Motor Ways in Lakeland' from which this extract is taken.

Up one glides from the smoky hollow of Kendal, the towny dwellings that flank the steepness of the House of Correction Hill echoing with the song of the gear and the hum of the pulling engine. Yet to the modern motor it is a mild incline, and one is soon atop in the higher, purer air. ... Two miles of steady uplifting bring the upper levels under wheel, and a sharp turn to the right demands careful selection. Those who take the obvious and more promising-looking way to the left, as so many have done to their cost, especially at night-time, travel to Bowness on Windermere by Crook. It is a crooked way indeed for any who darkly stray on this hilly by-way!

The highway fully justifies its name when the lofty slope of Rather Heath is surmounted, and mountains, great and small, fill in the forward horizon. Kentmere Vale, with the tardy-flowing Kent winding its richly wooded way through the open vale, is pleasing to the eye despite the almost shapeless bareness of its surrounding fells. Then the road swings downwards; lofty banks of brown and golden gorse on the one hand and a larchy coppice on the other confine the prospect. The mountain air sweeps past one temptingly and the 'straights' call for speed. Yet discretion must not be cast to the winds. A sudden turn reveals the railway crossing, and its steely defences are stubborn facts that far too often bid one discourse with the leisurely gateman.

The village of Staveley... is not a pretty place, and less so to the motorist by reason of the 10-mile speed-limit standards which obtrude on the view. The Staveley bobbin-mill industry has also a practical interest for the road traveller, for cumbersome timber-wagons are encountered heavily laden with huge trees that frequently project to rearwards thirty or forty feet, or even farther. In a deceptive evening light these are a real danger... for their side-swing in cornering is far-reaching. Not very long ago the occupants of a covered car found themselves roughly robbed of their shelter; most of the hood and its fittings went swinging away loftily on the end of the swaying wagon. They were extremely fortunate to escape personal damage. The quietness of the modern car makes it extremely dangerous to attempt to overtake this traffic without certainty that the men in charge [of the horses] are aware of the car's presence.

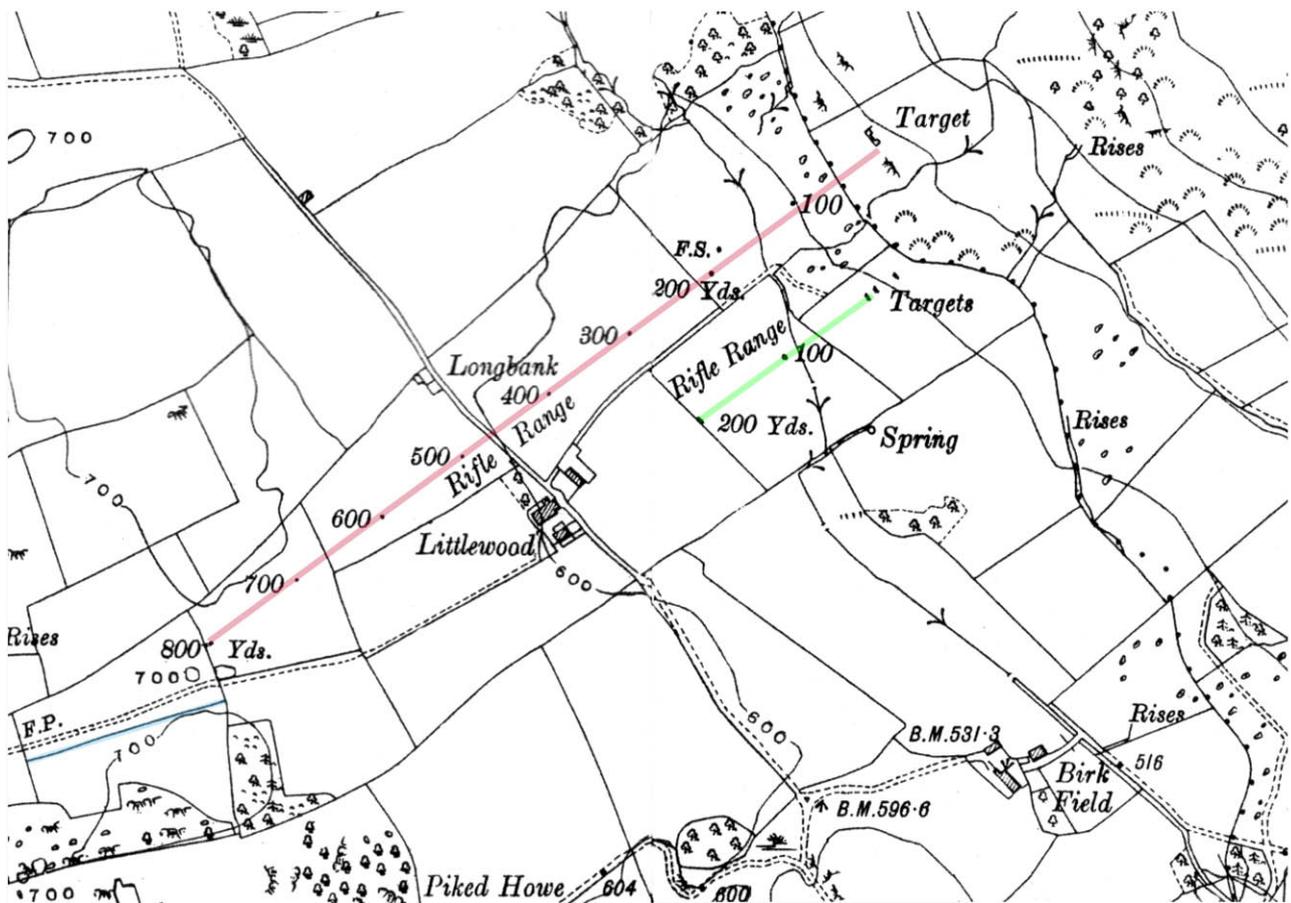
Soon comes the dangerous corner at Ings, with its deserted-looking church on the one side and the busy little inn on the other. Few who travel often that way are without visions of plunging horses and red-faced carters, with tankards in hand, dashing wildly from the open door. Calamities have occurred, and there are nowadays fewer callers at Ings. Thus again the all-conquering motor asserts itself - this time as a temperance advocate.

Christopher Gregory

Littlewood Rifle Range

In *Lakeland Valley Through Time* we learnt about the activities of the Staveley Volunteers founded by Joseph Martindale and the Rev Chaplin. Whilst the Drill Hall and adjacent Ayland sufficed for many of the training activities, it was clearly not practical to fire guns in such close proximity to the village. A rifle range was therefore set up near to Littlewood Farm on the far side of the hill from the village.

At present we don't know the precise starting date for the range and have only the two Ordnance Survey maps, 1899 and 1920, which each show an identical range layout.



Many similar ranges were set up elsewhere with the formation of the local Volunteers and some continued in use for many years, being modified to handle the changes in firearms. The early ones had cast iron targets which were whitewashed before use and thereby showed the bullet strikes as grey lead splashes. These plates were usually two feet wide and six feet tall, bolted together to make a target of the required width. Military plates were usually marked with grooves on their surface to divide the plate up into six inch squares. Those targets for civilian use had various diameters of inscribed circles, sometimes in addition to the squares, which could represent the Bull, Inner etc. These cast iron plate targets worked fine for the soft lead bullets of the .577" Enfield muzzle loading rifle, the .577" Snider breech loader which replaced it and the .577.450 Martini-Henry rifle. However, with the introduction of the .303" Lee-Metford, .303" Lee-Enfield and .303" Enfield-Martini rifles from 1880 onwards they became dangerous. This was because the new bullets

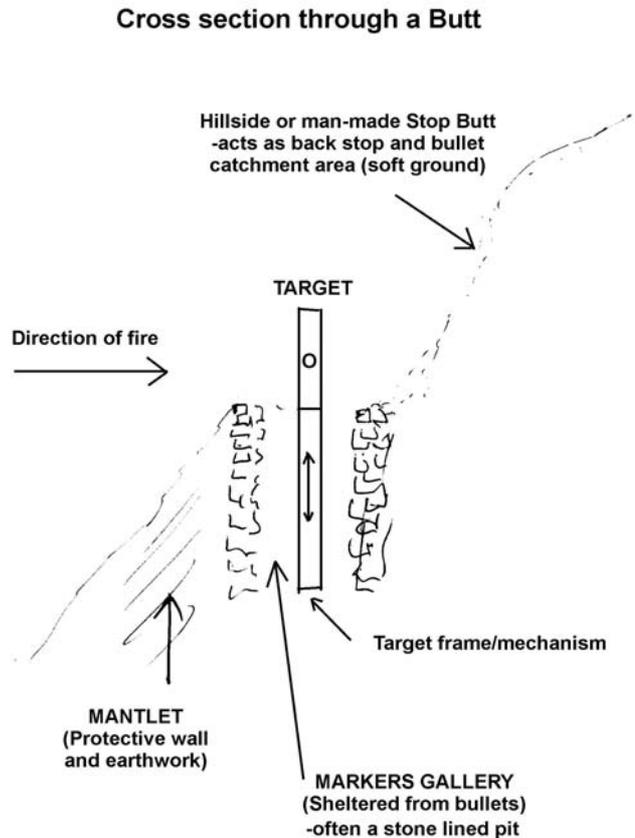
were no longer soft lead but had a cupro-nickel (like our "silver" coins) jacket over the lead core and were fired at a much higher velocity. So the cast iron plates became redundant and were replaced with canvas targets stretched over a timber frame. The bullets now passed through the target and buried themselves into a backstop, sometimes a convenient hillside. These targets were now lifted up and down so the target marker could paste a patch over each bullet hole from the safety of a trench protected by a mantlet of earth between him and the shooters.

Frequently the old target plates were used to form a wall of the mantlet and even overhead protection for the markers. Some were taken away for scrap, some were buried on site to prevent people taking a pot shot at them with a .303". Some were smashed up and the broken pieces buried. Examples of all of these fates of the plates have been found locally.

The site of the range can be traced by following the public footpath from Barley Bridge up the hill towards Littlewood. Almost at the summit of this walk, and just to the left (north) of the footpath's ladder stile was the 800yd firing point. There is a natural slight mound near the wall but no obvious man-made structures. A distinct mound further down the field was probably the 700-yard point. On the road at Littlewood, are the remains of the range hut. This building was originally tongue and groove board over a timber frame but had been clad in corrugated iron later. Peter Noble, who lives at Littlewood Farm, believes that some



Ruins of the Shooting Hut near Littlewood Farm



shooting was done from the stone walls rather than prone, possibly with sandbags on top of the walls. He pointed out that the cams (top stones) of the drystone walls were laid flat in some sections, all of which were on the line of fire though not necessarily at the exact 100 yard spacing. The cams are usually set on edge in this area and the flat ones would be handy to lean on.

The hillside slope leading to Potter Fell was used as a stop butt. The butts for the 800-yard range, were a trench lined with

a stone wall on three sides; entrance was probably from the right hand end. It was small and may have held a single target, which would agree with the map. A second, shorter, rifle range running in parallel to the 800 yard one is shown on the maps but



Shooting Butt at Gilpin Park

all that can be seen in the neighbouring field are two odd looking mounds. This may have been an older range, superseded by the longer one. The 200 yard range could not be extended as Littlewood farmhouse would be in the way so the move sideways would seem logical. It is possible that the two odd looking mounds may be the sites of old target plates, only a metal detector could tell. So far the only fired bullet that has been picked up at Littlewood was a .303" round-nose, either Mark 2 or 6. A metal detector would almost certainly turn up fired cartridge cases on the forward sides of the walls (the .303" rifles tend to toss their empties to the right and forward).

We know that the range remained in use until 1939, and was used by the Home Guard during the war. So far we have

been unable to find any record of use after 1945. The history after 1920 could well turn up from local records of the Territorial Army activities of local rifle clubs. If anyone has any information on the use of the range between the wars we would be pleased to hear from them.

The Society acknowledges gratefully the help provided by Dave Balch of Kendal and Bill Flentje of Macclesfield in preparing this article. Dave and Bill, together with colleague Geoff James, are part of a group of enthusiasts, scattered about the country, who are attempting to find, visit and record every rifle range in the British Isles. Any information from our members will be passed on to them.

The Gilpins – some additional information

In Occasional Paper No. 12, Kentmere Hall and the Gilpins, advice has been given from a member of the Gilpin family that details on page 4 of the published paper may not be entirely correct. As Joe Scott is no longer able to verify this, the committee has decided that the paper itself should not be corrected, but that two additional references set out below should be added to lines 16 and 17 of the second column on page 4.

21. Advice received subsequent to the publication of this paper is that **Nicholson and Burn** recorded the possessions of George Gilpin 1542-1616, in their work of 1777, "The History And Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland.":-

"Kentmere Hall with three hundred acres, plus one fifth of common land at Dalehead, 2 houses with curtilages called les Bankhowses, 3 closes on the east of said houses called les Banckhowse closes and severally called le Brery Close, le Myddestmest close and le Nethermost Close, le Great Springs, le Easeinge, le Ewesbancke, le Lowe Borwance, le High Borwance, and those buildings at Parke Yeate. and 3 closes adjoining said houses called les Parke Yeate Closes.

One forth of the Manor of Staveley. Four messuages (houses) and tenements in Strickland Kettle. several tenements in Strickland Roger. Three cottages in Kendal. Three messuages in Penrith. Eight messuages in Ullthwaite, plus thirty acres there, plus a Grain Mill and a Fulling Mill, plus fishing rights. Nine tenements and messuages in Riston and Newgate."

22. It is now felt that the George referred to here was not the son of George (1539-1617) but the son of William (1578-1626), ie George's grandson (1596-1646). In this case, the list of assets cannot be seen as referring in any way to the decline of the fortunes of Kentmere Hall, but simply as a measure of the young George's personal assets. (Letters from A.J. Gilpin Esq. to the Society November 2005)

Financial Accounts 2005

For members unable to be present at the Annual General Meeting the following notes highlight the significant features of the Society's accounts for the year ended 31st December 2005.

The Statement of Income and Expenditure shows a modest excess of income over expenditure. The main sources of income were: 114 membership subscriptions; sales of the "Lakeland Valley" book and video/dvd; sales of occasional papers; bank interest. Expenditure incurred in hiring the school hall for our meetings, insurance premium, fees/expenses for speakers and providing school history prizes was broadly in line with the previous year. The cost of printing occasional papers was minimal this year and the cost of restoration of the Staveley Parish Register was a "one-off" in the 2004 accounts. Production of the Society's Journal was the main item of expenditure this year.

The Society's Deposit Account has increased slightly. This amount, when added to a satisfactory Current Account Balance shows that the Society's finances are in a healthy state. In my notes last year I suggested that in the future it may be necessary to pass on some of the Journal production costs to members by way of an increase in subscription. However, I am pleased to be able to say that it seems likely the current subscription can be maintained for the 2006/7 membership year, with a probable increase for 2007/8.

Copies of the accounts are available to members on request to the treasurer.

Mr Arthur Lloyd has again checked the recorded entries and found the Society's books to be in order. Our thanks are due to him.

David Hooson (Hon. Treasurer)