

# Staveley & District History Society

## Journal Spring 2016

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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 (by DT Reed): 'Ingsmere' - the view from Ings Hall to the A591 at 3.30pm on 5<sup>th</sup> Dec 2015*

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The next issue of the *Journal* (No 37, the Summer 2016 issue) will be published about the 12<sup>th</sup> August 2016. All contributions (letters, articles, etc.) are welcome at any time but should be with the Editor by early July.

## From the Chair

As I write, the clean-up from the floods of 5<sup>th</sup> December 2015 is still ongoing, indeed much is still to be started. In particular, the badly damaged Eagle and Child bridge is still closed so that the main access to Staveley is from the West via Danes Road. The events of that day are likely to be long remembered. At least the Watermill Inn in Ings has re-opened for normal business having been closed for over two months.



You will see from this Journal that we have made some effort to record the events of that day. Arthur Capstick, chair of Staveley and Ings Parish Council, has provided notes which give an idea of the extent of the flooding and damage. Alan Lord's weather reports, first published in the Parish magazine in January and February, are also included. Thanks are also due to Dave Plumb who did a tour of the village with his camera on the afternoon of 5<sup>th</sup> December. Some of his pictures are included in this Journal; the rest are archived for future reference.

Which brings me to the committee's old 'mantra' to ask you please to record 'history' at the time it is being made, to your own building, to your favourite view, to the water lapping at your front door...not forgetting oral history! It has never been easier to do this using electronic capture and storage. This becomes our history soon enough, and it avoids doubt, when 400 years later, we wonder what really happened. You can judge this for yourself as you read extracts from Joe Scott's Occasional Paper about flooding in the 1580s which are included in this Journal.

The Society has had another year of fascinating Summer Walks and Winter Talks thanks to our Events Secretary, Don Morris, to whom the Committee is particularly grateful. Last Summer's three Walks took us to the Armitt Library in Ambleside, around Dent with Patricia Hovey, and finally to the Unitarian Church in Kendal. Our Winter Talks included, before Christmas, histories of South Lakeland Woodlands, of Bowness and finally Kendal Hospitals, then since on South Cumbria's part in the slave trade, on the Lancaster Canal, and in March, on being a local history detective.

Our Treasurer notes that the membership has decreased over the last couple of years, though with around 100 members the society continues to thrive. Attendance was down too at some of our meetings, but we suspect the weather played its part. The committee also published an incorrect date for our December meeting, and duly offer apologies to those who missed that talk. Nonetheless, we should perhaps review our membership and talks strategy for the future and would welcome your suggestions.

Finally, an apology for an error of my own. The picture in Journal 35 of the bus shelter being opened was not in Ings but at Danes Road, Staveley. I misinterpreted two pieces of 'evidence': the Gazette reference to a bus shelter *near* Staveley and the fact that the boundary of Hugill Parish Council lay well beyond the boundary of Ings. Stan Simpson has kindly shown me the invoice for the construction of the Ings Bus Shelter in 1968. It cost £350. As I write, it remains demolished!

*John Hiley*

## Staveley Weather – 2015 review and Storm Desmond

The year 2015 has been the wettest year of my records which go back to 1973. There have only been seven occasions when the annual rainfall has reached 2000mm, that is two metres or 6ft7ins. The previous wettest was the year 2000 with a total of 2066.8mm. This year's total is 5% greater at 2178.7mm and 41% of that fell during November and December. Only twice previously has November exceeded 300mm. In November 2009 the rainfall was a massive 462.7mm, up to then our highest of any monthly total. This year it was 348mm which is the second highest for November. Then came December with 550.4mm, our wettest of any month since at least 1973 and 19% higher than that previous highest of November 2009.

Whatever the cause may be, there seems no doubt that our climate is changing. Of those seven years when the total for the year was 2000mm or more, five of them have



The River Kent from Barley Bridge 2pm 5<sup>th</sup> December

occurred in the past eight years, since 2008, but only twice in the previous 35 years.

January was a wild wet month with eight nights below zero and two of them down to minus 4.1°C then struggling to recover during the day at around 3°C maximum on six days. It snowed a little on five days to give a total of 70mm.

High pressure gave us a dry ten days at the beginning of February, but it was mostly wet for the rest of the month

with a little more snow and nine nights below zero. March started windy with rain and sleet then 15mm of snow to end the day. The second week was something of an improvement, then a sunny few days before rain set in again making it the third month with above average rainfall. It was rather cloudy on the 20th, but we managed a glimpse of the eclipse. The temperature was sub zero on seven nights with 50mm of snow to end the month. April was drier, which it usually is, and 2°C above average, getting up to almost 20°C on the 10th, but four frosty nights.

May was wet again with over double the average rainfall. At 184mm it was similar to our winter months, a cold wet month generally with a north wind much of the time and 2°C below average. June was better with 17 dry days and 20°C or above on nine days. It reached almost 25°C on the 12th, but some cooler days brought the overall temperature down to a degree below average. It was already 25°C at 9am on the first of July and got up to 30.5°C with thunder later and again on the third. August was a

mix of sun and cloud with rain nearly every day. In September, on the other hand, at 72mm we had less than half our usual rain with twenty dry days, calm at last, and carrying on into October with 18 dry days and again only half our usual rainfall.

In early December, we were warned about an approaching storm from the Atlantic which the Met Office had named alphabetically as Desmond. It was a name that sounded agreeable enough, but then there aren't many male names with an initial D sufficiently aggressive to do justice to the storm that hit us on Saturday the 5th of December. From a couple of wet and windy days to start the month, the rain increased to give us 28.5mm on Thursday 3rd, a hefty 57.5mm on Friday driven on by a southwest gale and a really massive 101.2mm on Saturday 5th with an even stronger gale lashing it against the windows. There was serious flooding in several areas of the village with both rivers in full spate. The rainfall total by the 5th was 201mm, rather more than we normally expect for the whole of December.

Looking through my 40 year records, this is only the fifth time the daily total has exceeded 70mm. They are 3Jan82 with 70.9mm, 5Jan99 with 79.9mm, 7Jan05 with 75.8mm, 25Oct08 with 78.2mm and 5 Dec 2015 with 101.2mm, 27% above our previous highest. We should perhaps be grateful to have been spared the worst of it. Glenridding got over 400mm in 36 hours, Pooley Bridge has gone and the road washed away beyond Dunmail.

After the deluge, Sunday dawned calm with some cloud and sunny periods later in the day which enabled the fortunate ones amongst us to emerge and view the damage. At Scroggs Bridge much of the upstream parapet wall had gone which probably helped to save the bridge as the water poured over the top of it. Barley Bridge had been overwhelmed, the arches unable to take the torrent with water a foot deep on the road. In Abbey Square the Gowan had scoured out a length of the verge to undermine the railings. Whilst initially the bridge appeared safe, on a subsequent inspection it was thought there could be problems below water level and the bridge was closed for a while - now re-opened.

The worst damage was to the bridge at the Eagle & Child which being on the bend of the river had received the full force of the water against the upstream side of the central buttress causing severe damage to the whole structure, so that bridge was also closed. By the Sunday the rivers had gone down to nearer normal levels offering some relief for those unfortunate people still trying to clear the debris from their flooded homes. Getting about in the village is still possible on foot, but by car it can involve a detour via the bypass. All very difficult, but no defences could have withstood such a storm and they are likely to become more frequent unless we make a serious effort to control global warming.

*Alan Lord*

## Flooding Review - Staveley with Ings Parish Council – January 2016

- One family out of their home in Staveley and three persons from Meadowcroft Cottages, Ings. One further Staveley resident living with friends in Kendal following flooding.
- Three holiday properties that have been flooded would have needed re-housing if they had been occupied
- Problem of access to at least one holiday home during the floods
- Over 50 properties and businesses affected in some way; not all with water ingress - a few because of serious access issues (road, access route destroyed) or damage to retaining walls. Over 30 properties, including 7 businesses, had some water ingress.
- Damage to retaining walls occurred both at Abbey Square and further up-stream.
- Damage to river bank and footbridge at Gowan Close
- Holes in 'Miles without Stiles' path reported to LDNP – now repaired, although the stability of the large slate blocks may need to be examined
- Large hole in wall of Gowan underneath footpath and just before it crosses Ings main street.
- Damaged bridges – Station Road bridge now back in use; Scroggs Bridge wall badly damaged; Eagle and Child bridge in need of major repair – no information on timescale.
- Broken culvert under access road to Caldrigg Fold
- Gowan river bank badly damaged at Abbey Square
- Signage from A591 to direct traffic due to village being 'cut in half' and to highlight that Staveley is OPEN for business



Scroggs Bridge - 6<sup>th</sup> December 2015

### Summary from householders, Parish Council Survey:

**Main Street:** Water depth about 6 inches; water also entered from higher back door. Water was clean but evidence of sewage outside. Flood doors at front and back partially successful but water entered from neighbouring property. Some carpet damage but furniture raised up prevented damage. Pump worked well. Property tanked with flag floor.



Eagle and Child bridge - 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016

**Main Street:** Water to depth of 2 to 3 inches from front and back doors. Carpets, fabrics and equipment ruined.

**Main Street:** 2 inches of clean water (not from river) in kitchen and bathroom – came from height of water table. Damage to carpet and floor tiles.

**Main Street:** 8 inches in living room; ponded in back yard, entered by back door. Initially entered from road and then upwards through the

floors, then via walls from neighbouring properties and from rear. Water was clean.

**Station Road:** Water from Beck Nook flooded across road and down drive. Drains unable to cope; water in the porch.

**The Green:** Water depth: 8 inches; Most of water was foul coming up from drains. All of downstairs equipment and fittings have been removed.

**The Green:** Slight ingress through kitchen door; kept at bay by regular change of towels.

**Gowan Terrace:** Water up to door threshold; pumped back out into garden/road.

**Rock Cottage:** Damage to Gowan river bank leaving footbridge very unstable.



Church View, Ings – 12 noon, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2015  
Meadowcroft Guest House and Meadowcroft Cottages suffered water ingress to several inches. Four residents are still housed elsewhere.

**Fellfoot:** Water to depth of 15 inches to house, garage and office. All items not moved affected. Also internal doors and woodwork. Water 'smelly' from septic tank?

*Arthur Capstick*



## Was there a Staveley Flood about 1580?

*(The following are extracts from Occasional Paper 13 written by Joe Scott in 2000)*

*'In the stonework of St Margarets' Tower, to the left of the ancient doorway is the bench mark cut there by the ordnance surveyors in the 1850s. It marks the height of 311.5 feet above sea level. 17 inches above it is another more roughly cut arrow pointing to the right. Who put it there and what does it mark? One possibility is that it marks the water level of a notable flood. The old churchyard was not far above river level – "In wet weather, water stood in the graves." (Bulmer's Directory 1885) But there is evidence that things were a great deal worse in 1588. On 30<sup>th</sup> June 1588, 48 Staveley men signed the following petition asking the Bishop to allow marriages, baptisms and burials to take place at Staveley Chapel on the grounds that the journey to the Parish Church in Kendal was often so difficult.'*



Tower doorway – Feb 2016

“...The waters of Reston [the Gowan] coming forth of ..Hugill.... doth at a place called Ings at divers seasons flowe and runne soe forcible that no traveller can passe without great danger and also at another place called Staveley Green but most especially between Staveley Church and Kendall when the saide waters crossing the waye to Kendall and meeting the river called Kente many tymes overflowing the bankes thereof and rysing so abundantlie that men dwelling on both sides of the hie waye purposing to take their naturale rest in bedd hath been in greate danger of drowning, in so much that if the speedy helpe of good neighbours had not been, 11 men women and children had perished. Whereof some for refuge was carried into the Chapell there of Staveley as can testify the same Gabriel Noble, John Baitman Geo. Birkhead and others more. This water will divers tymes be so monstous that the force thereof hath carried awaye greate logges of tymber lying in the waye side. And at the place called Noble Yeate [*near Stockbridge*] burst upp the hiewaye of great deepness that the inhabitants thereabouts were constrayned to bestowe great labour and 2 charges to repaire the same before any could pass there. ...Also the inhabitants of Kentmire and another part of Overstaveley by reason of the overflowing of Kent bursting down the bridge called New Bridge hath been divers tymes constreyened to carry the dead bodies out of the hie waye through men's fields to the greate dismaye of the owners.. ....”

We the foresaide inhabitants have sett our handes. Made the xxxth of June 1588.

Henry Feeld, Henry Stavlay, Robert Dawson, Christopher Shephard

*'It seems reasonably likely that someone made the mark on the tower to remind people of this event. Of course he would make it after the waters had gone down and might well exaggerate their height. The mark could also have been put there after one of the many other floods that must have taken place in the six centuries that the tower has stood there.'*

## “Lakeland’s Oldest Clergyman”



This 1910 Christmas postcard from Ings vicarage sent by Lydia Reade shows George at Ings. The tricycle was a leaving present from the Milnthorpe churchwardens. The Westmorland Gazette reported that it was: 'a Humber fitted with a free wheel and two-speed gear that only weighed 45lbs.'

George Reade, Vicar of Ings between 1910 and 1919, has been mentioned in recent editions of this journal in connection with the former vicarage and road diversions at Ings.

He was an interesting and energetic clergyman who first came to Westmorland as the vicar of Skelsmergh in 1872 then became vicar of Milnthorpe before taking over at Ings - and was still taking occasional services in Sawrey at the age of 90 in the 1930s. George Edwin Pearsall Reade<sup>1</sup> was born at Northampton in 1841 and would appear to have had relatively humble origins - both his father and grandfather were listed as plumbers in the census of the same year. However, they must also have been literate and ambitious because by 1851 grandfather George had changed from plumber to librarian at Althorp, Earl Spencer's stately home, while his father (also called George) had become an Inland Revenue Officer. Soon after, young George was sent away to be educated at Paisley Grammar School in Scotland and later at Trinity College, Dublin.

He was ordained in 1865 and, after serving as a curate in Chester and Durham, was appointed first vicar of the newly created ecclesiastical parish of Skelsmergh that also included Scalthwaiterigg and Patton. Four years before, in 1868, he had married Lydia Theed Dearden, the daughter of a Manchester merchant, on the Isle of Man. Their marriage lasted for 66 years and they had six children but the early years of their marriage must have been difficult. Gertrude, their first daughter, died in Durham aged two and there is a small grave by the Skelsmergh church door for Frederick, their second child, who died at the same age. According to family tradition, Lydia noticed that the children started to fall ill as soon as they were weaned onto cow's milk and switched to goat's milk with her subsequent children, all of whom survived.

<sup>1</sup> 'George' hereafter - he seems to have been 'Edwin' to his wife but signed himself as Geo. E. P. Reade.



George already knew something of Westmorland – his father had made another career shift and by 1871 had rented Low Swinklebank, a 300-acre farm in Longsleddale. The new Skelsmergh church had been built the same year and George was appointed vicar in March 1872. The vicarage next to the church was not completed until 1875 so the family lived at Mint House then Haven Cottage in Garth Row while it was being constructed. The income was £192 by 1895 and enough to support two living-in servants – the expectations and status of a Church of England vicar at this time would have been somewhat greater than today. He had a brand new church and vicarage and the opportunity to make his mark in townships that had not had an established church presence since the Reformation.



Lydia Theed Reade

George seems to have relished the challenge. He was an active improver and had the reputation of being a good parish priest. Over

the next few years a new pathway was built from the Shap Road, an organ and organ chamber were added to the church and the chancel extended. George himself painted biblical inscriptions around the tops of the walls. His sermons were carefully prepared and written out. He walked everywhere in the parish. He was also particularly active in educational matters. Horrified by the threat of a local authority school after the 1871 Education Act was passed, he was responsible for building a new church school at Garth Row and also took over the Mealbank school in 1886. He combined religious with secular leadership roles, chairing the Skelsmergh parish council for thirteen years and attending the 1873 inaugural meeting of the Westmorland Conservatives.

He was a person of wide interests. He painted watercolours, enjoyed gardening and kept bees. In Skelsmergh church there is small framed illuminated page that was his work - an attractive example of Victorian medievalism.<sup>2</sup> He was a member of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society from 1890 until his death and contributed an article on the Ings registers to *Transactions* in 1915. He also published a thirty page booklet on the history of '*The Chapelry of Hugil or Ings in the Ancient Parish of Kendal*' in 1916. The clergyman-naturalist is a well-

<sup>2</sup> there is also an element of Reade family handiwork in Ings church – the board listing the names of incumbents was presented by Lydia in 1915 and the lettering was the work of one of the Reade daughters. The board itself is of wood from an oak tree grown on the Middle Fairbank estate. It was made and carved at Ings Saw Mill.



known figure. Probably George's interests in this direction were limited but he had a letter published in *The Zoologist* in 1892 recording that he saw, "a large rat taking the berries off a gooseberry bush with his mouth and dropping them to other rats below."

In 1895 George moved to Milnthorpe. The church, the population and the value of the living were larger but he was stepping into a minefield. It was a time of dispute between the Dallam Tower estate and local people over footpaths and common rights. Unlike his long established predecessor at Milnthorpe, George was a high churchman and when a brass cross that was a gift of Sir Henry Bromley from Dallam Tower was placed in the church on Easter Sunday 1897 it disappeared. The police searched the premises while the congregation was assembled and the cross was eventually found in a churchwarden's pew. Distrust and division were

dramatically revealed at the Easter vestry meeting soon after when some of those present demanded the removal of the cross. One claimed, 'We are on the way to Popery,' and another stated, 'Away with your Virgin Maryism ... these things may do for Skelsmergh but you're not among a few Skelsmerghites here.' George was defended by the Dallam Agent but the meeting broke up without a vote of thanks to Reade in the Chair amid shouts of, 'We will not worship the images which thou hast set up.'

The strength of local feeling was clearly a shock to George: 'I feel rather as a man walking in the dark puts his foot in a hole which lets him down suddenly,' he commented. In time, respect grew and opposition died away but when he retired in 1910 he was reported as begging 'that his successor ... might be accorded their whole-hearted confidence and support' - a comment that suggests his Milnthorpe experiences had left a mark. He had been ill in 1907 and travelled to Lake Lucerne in Switzerland to convalesce. He retired when he was nearly 70 on the grounds of ill-health but perhaps surprisingly took on what the Vicar of Kendal described as the 'less arduous charge' of Hugill and Ings in the same year. However, George was never likely to opt for an inactive role - in 1914 he was made an honorary canon of Carlisle and in the same year he was elected to represent Hugill on the South Westmorland Rural District Council, a post he occupied until 1928.

In 1919 George retired again, moving from Ings Vicarage to Poplars in Windermere, although he continued to assist local clergy for a number of years. Lydia died in 1934 and was buried in Ings churchyard. She was followed by George who died in 1937 aged 95 when he was described by the Westmorland Gazette as, '*Lakeland's Oldest Clergyman*.' They were not the first or only Reades to be buried there. The adjacent grave is for their daughter Alice who died aged 37 in 1923. She had married a Retford curate called Eric Read in January 1918 and gave birth to a daughter the same year but Eric enlisted as a chaplain and was killed by a shell near Cambrai while helping in an advanced medical aid post a month before the end of the war. He never saw his daughter and Alice died of measles four years later so the child was brought up by her aunt and uncle.<sup>3</sup>

George Reade's death did not terminate the family involvement in the area. Mabel Reade, their eldest daughter, married George Minnikin who with the Windermere chemist Robert Barker had purchased the Mill at Staveley in 1902 and set up the company later known as Kentmere Ltd. to make photographic paper for their customers. They later established a carton factory to make boxes suitable for the photographic paper. Both sides of the business developed alongside each other and although the photographic paper company was sold to Harmans in 2007, the packaging company (Kentmere Packaging) continues as a thriving business and George and Lydia's great grandchildren are still closely connected with the firm.

*Tony Cousins*

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<sup>3</sup> This was a Reade/Read marriage but note that the 'e' at the end of Reade had only been added when George and his father had arrived in Westmorland – perhaps to make it more distinctive?

## **Tales from the Tapes: Slate and slate quarrying. Part 2**

*This is the second instalment of the interview of John Williams of Kentmere by Joe Scott in November 1991*

JW: I don't know if you've ever used it (*gelignite*) but its a very vicious explosive but its what you call a low explosive and needs a detonator to set it off. So its comparatively safe but its completely unusable if its frozen. It was cold up in the quarries in Winter and this bloke was in a hurry to get his gelignite or dynamite as they called it in those days, usable, so he shoved it in a bloody frying pan.

JS: Oh dear, in Kentmere?

JW: Yes, and despite the fact that it should have a detonator, it went off.

JS: Yes, it reminds me of something that happened to me during the war. I was in armoured cars and we had these, in practice, light rounds and they had nitrocellulose in to propel them. They went out and they shot them and one of them fell to pieces

inside my inside my armoured car. They got this sack up of explosive and I knew that if you just put a match to it it would burn, it didn't go boom. So I put it down on a paving stone and put a match to it. It didn't explode but it flared right up and took all my skin off.

JW: Well you see, gunpowder is the same way its completely unstable explosive is gunpowder and it will explode under its own volition if its sufficiently compressed. Again if you put a match to it might burn or it might go bang.

JS: was he killed then?



Steel Rigg Quarry, Kentmere

JW: No he lost an eye.

JS: He was lucky then.

JW: Yes he was, certainly, and he used to wander around with a bit in a pocket to keep it from freezing. I told a story that doesn't always go down very well about when I was very young, still at school, so its told by my father.

JS: This school here?

JW: Yes, and there was a fall in the quarry and they brought this bloke out on the trolley, with a broken leg and a blacksmith, Steven Raeburn, who worked for Roger Brockbank....

JS: Oh I know him, yes.

JW: His grandfather and they always took them to the blacksmiths for repair, as it were. He was patched with strips of hessian and hot pitch and he was back at work next day. But my father always said it was a wooden leg. *(both parties laughing)* But it was the sort of thing, they didn't think much about it at all. If they didn't there was no insurance.

JS: There was no compensation?

JW: Oh no.

*to be continued*