

Staveley & District History Society

Journal Summer 2022

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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: July's walk in Windermere and Upper Bowness passed the former site of Atkinson's 'cake-works'.

The next issue of the *Journal* (No 56, the Winter 2022-23 issue) will be published about the 12th December 2022. All contributions (letters, articles, etc.) are welcome at any time but should be with the Editor by mid-November.

Staveley Old Hall – a site survey

Introduction: In 2021 the Lake District Archaeology Volunteer Network was asked to work with the Staveley and District History Society to take forward the Society's research into the existence and location of Staveley Old Hall. Historical research undertaken by members of the Society shows that there was a hall somewhere in the area. The Rev Thomas Machell, writing in the 1690s, recorded:

"Staveley Hall in Over Staveley, a quarter of a mile North of the chapel, has been called the manor house of Upper Staveley, which is now fallen, nothing being standing but the wall which belongs to Mr Will Birkett, being on his tenement and in that part which belongs to the Crown".

This is the only direct reference to the hall which has been encountered so far. However, during the research, Society members accessed the Kendal Corn Rent map of 1836. This records the lane running north from Barley Bridge as Hall Lane, the wood immediately to the west of the lane as Hall Wood, the beck which skirts the west of the wood as Hall Beck, the field to the north of the trackway to Scroggs Farm as Hall Head and the field to the south of the trackway as Hall Field, all suggestive of the existence of a hall in the vicinity.

In 1992 a walk over survey by members of the Society identified two possible sites for the hall in or close to Hall Wood. The results of the survey were written up in the Society's Occasional Paper No 3, *Staveley Hall/Mill*. A further survey of the area was carried out for the Society by A.A. Lord in 2006 to enlarge on the information obtained in the 1992 survey and was written up in Occasional Paper No 21, *Staveley Hall/Mill*. This identified a rectangular platform 17m x 6m in Hall Head field immediately to the south of Hall Wood. The location of the platform was plotted on a plan which formed part of Occasional

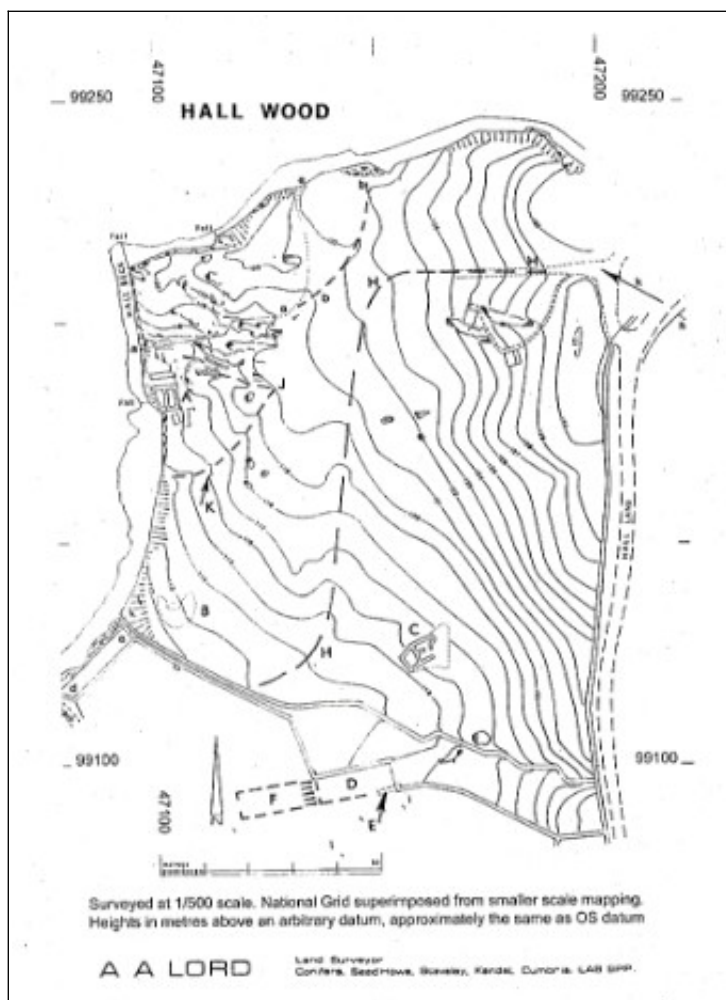


Fig 1: Survey plan by A.A. Lord from Occasional Paper 21, showing rectangular platform marked D

Paper No 21 and is shown marked 'D' (Fig 1). The 2006 survey noted two right-angled bends in the field wall on two sides of the platform along with a short stretch (4m) of well-constructed foundation. Adjoining and to the west of the platform, and at a slightly lower level, was another level terraced area of similar size marked F.

In late 2021 a meeting was held between members of the Society and Jackie Fay and Jeremy Rowan Robinson of the Archaeology Volunteer Network to discuss the prospects for further historical research. Further archival references were identified by Jackie Fay and some of these were followed up by members of the Society over the next few months, although the results were inconclusive.

The geophysical survey: On 25th May 2022 a geophysical survey was undertaken of the platform and the adjoining terrace using a resistivity meter. The meter passes electric current into the ground via two metal probes. Stonework has a high resistance to electric current and it was hoped that the survey might reveal stonework under the surface, particularly hidden foundations, from any structure which had existed on the site. The survey was led by Martin Railton of Eden

Heritage Archaeological and Heritage Services assisted by volunteers from the Society and the Network.

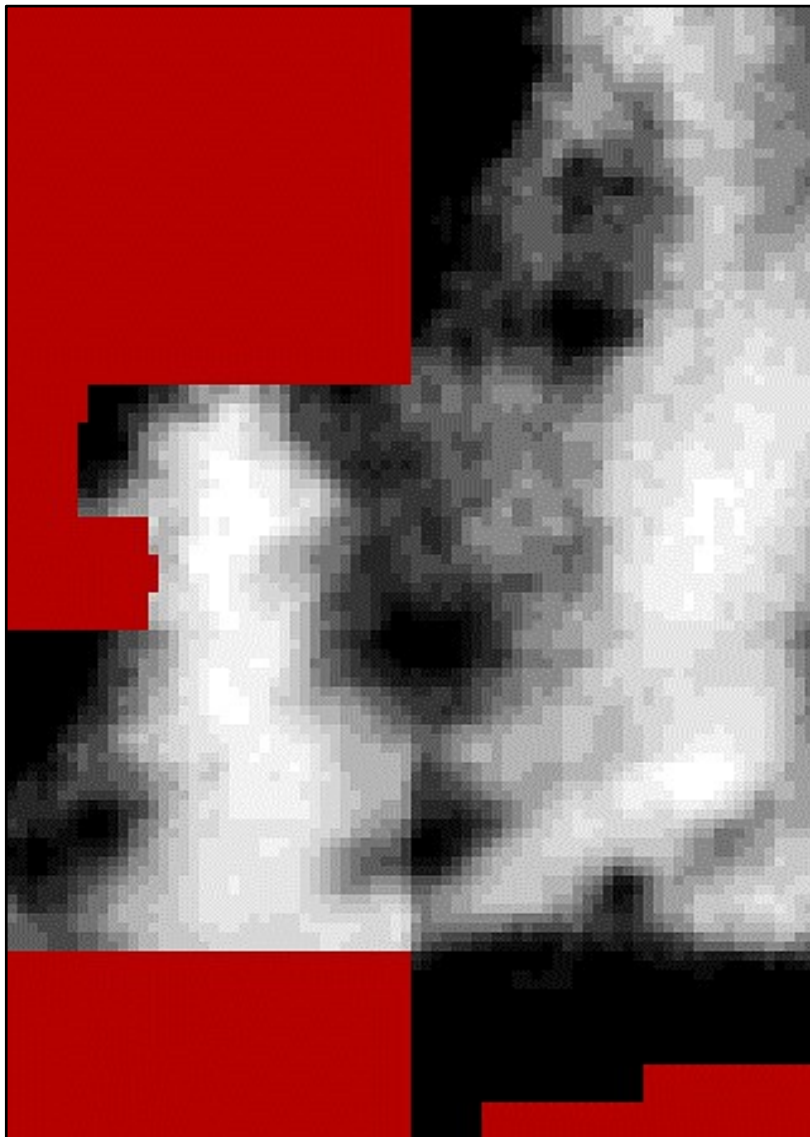
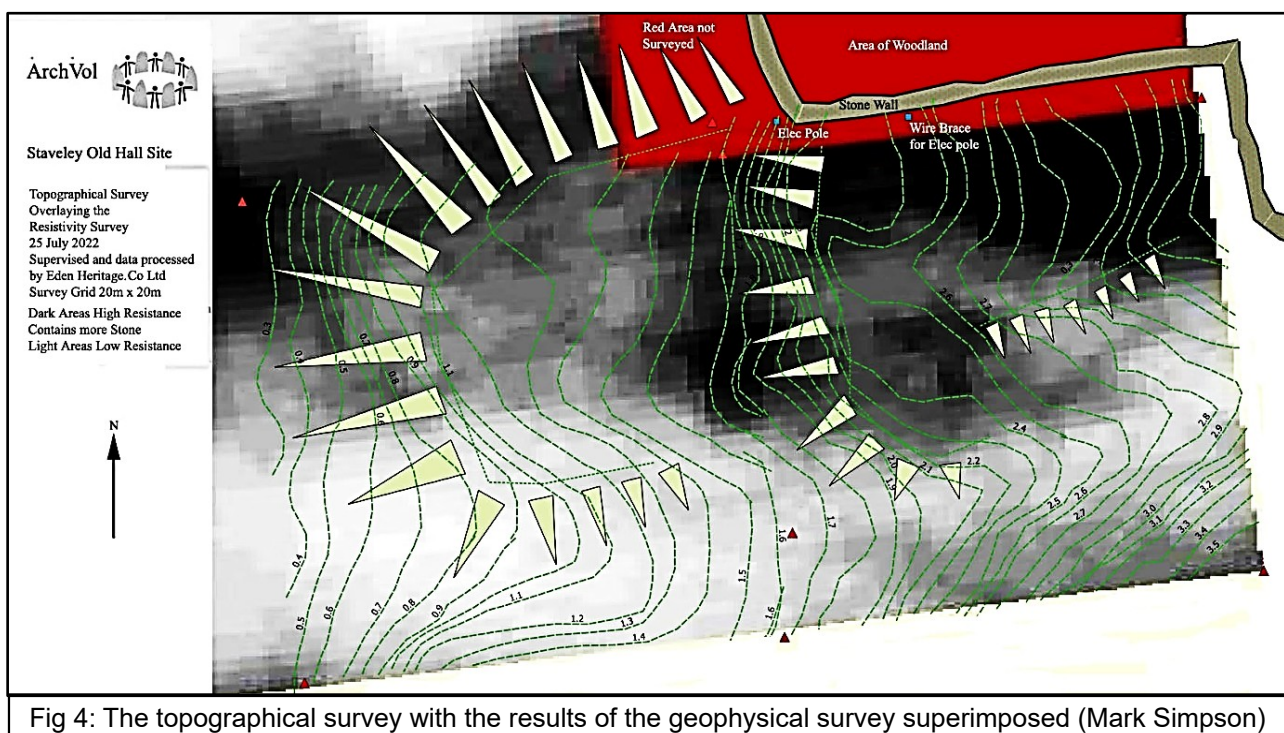
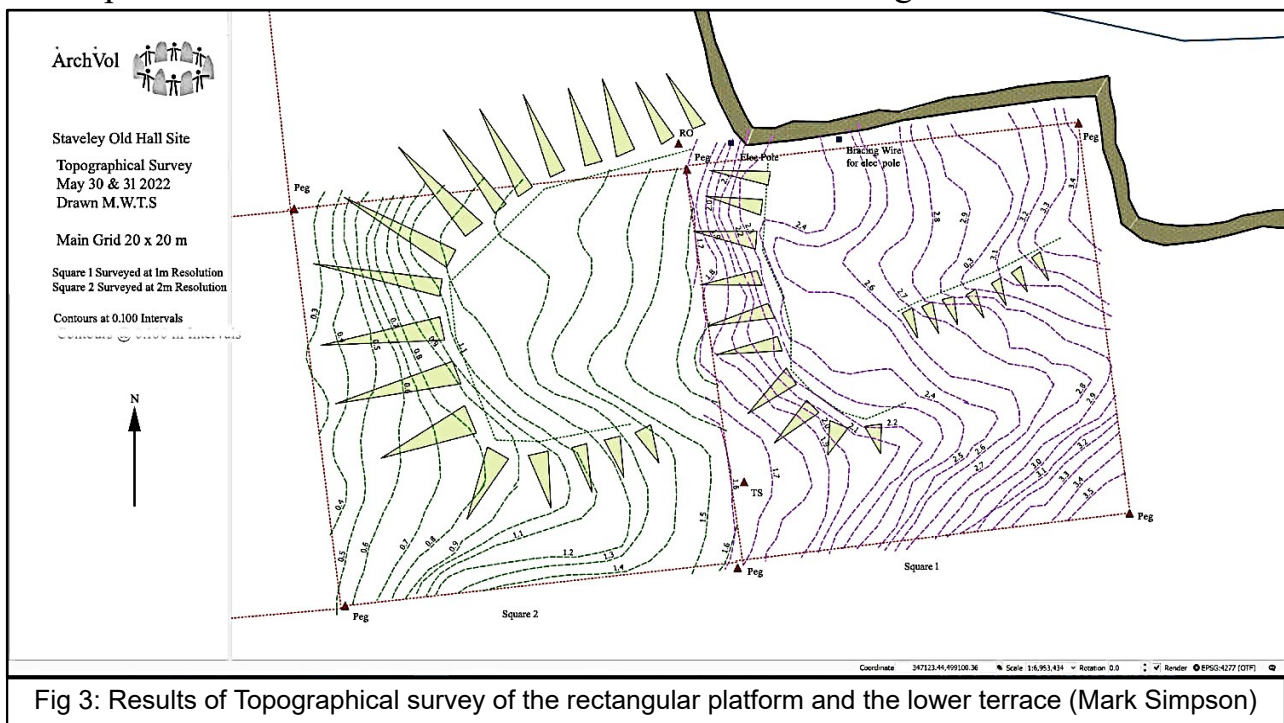


Fig 2: Results of geophysical survey of possible site of Staveley Old Hall (Eden Heritage Archaeological and Heritage Services)

The results of the survey are shown in Figure 2. Areas of low resistance are shown in white or light grey and those of high resistance in black or dark grey. Martin Railton noted that the image shows that the rectangular platform clearly contains more stone than the surrounding area. However, the image does not show any clearly defined footings of stone walls which could mean that any structure has been demolished to its foundations and/ or rubble is present across the area. The black area on the periphery of the image on the north side of the platform probably relates to the drystone wall foundations at the edge of the woodland but there is also a considerable amount of

stonework or rubble roughly at the point where the rectangular platform drops down to the adjoining terrace. The image also reveals an unexplained feature in the shape of a substantial 'T' on the south side of the platform.

The topographical survey: On 30th and 31st May 2022, Mark Simpson from the Network led a topographical survey of the site assisted by volunteers from the Society and the Network. The purpose of the survey was to provide clearer definition of the platform and the terrace. The results are shown in Fig 3.



It reveals that the rectangular platform drops down to the east about half way across. There is no obvious explanation for this but there is some limited evidence, simply from observation, to indicate that the eastern half of the platform may once have extended northwards for a short distance into the woodland. If this is correct, then it could be that the original structure ran in a north-south direction rather than east-west

and the drop down may indicate the footings of part of the gable wall. This, of course, is no more than conjecture and it could equally be that the structure was 'L' shaped or that the structure developed over time into an 'L' shape or into an east-west direction. It would be useful to clear the undergrowth at the edge of the woodland once it is safe to do so to try and clarify the position.

The results of the geophysical survey were superimposed by Mark Simpson onto the topographical plan so that the areas of black or dark grey can be accurately located. The results are shown in Fig 4. They reveal that the unexplained 'T' shape is located at the west end of the short length of drop down in the middle of the rectangular platform and that an area of stonework or rubble is, indeed, located where the rectangular platform drops down to the terrace. This could be useful in the event that the Society decides, with the permission of the farmer, to undertake further work in the form of test pits or excavation at the site.

Conclusions: The geophysical and topographical surveys support the view that the rectangular platform was probably once the site of a structure. It is not possible to say on the information available that it was the site of Staveley Old Hall. This could only be determined beyond doubt by historical record, if such exists. Clearing the undergrowth at the edge of the woodland adjoining the rectangular platform might allow some clarification of the configuration of the structure. Further clarification of the nature and configuration of the structure could only be obtained by disturbance of the site.

Jeremy Rowan Robinson

Lake District Archaeology Volunteer Network - 5th June 2022

May walk: A walk around Shap

We met up with our guide, local resident Jean Scott-Smith who is the Vice-Chair of Shap local history society. Jean is well known to many of us as a speaker and an expert on Westmorland dialect. The sky was blue, the sun shone and spring had truly sprung. Could this be Shap, famed for its ferocious winters and bleak weather? Sunlit fields of verdant green, criss-crossed by drystone walls and dotted with yows and their lambs completed this pastoral idyll (eat your heart out James Rebank!)

Once assembled we strolled south alongside the A6. Though no longer choked with rumbling trucks as in the days before the construction of the M6, there was a steady stream of heavy vehicles. We learned that Shap was originally known as Hep or Heppe which could mean a pile of stones or a derivative of hip, the fruit of the dog rose. The local dialect (derived from Norse) word for rose-hips is shoup or choup. As we were soon to learn, the landscape is strewn with massive granite rocks which once formed a magnificent avenue of standing stones with stone circles, as well as glacial erratics. As the area was once thickly forested, including thorns, this could support the alternative explanation of the placename.

We soon reached the southern limit of the original village, Town Head, beyond which lay another hamlet, Brackenber, and the Greyhound Hotel, now absorbed into Shap. The opening of the railway (1844) and the Shap Granite quarry (1865) followed by the limestone quarry (1930s) and the Hardendale quarry (1963) all contributed to a significant growth of the village. Crossing the A6 we turned back towards the village centre. This has always been a major transport route, first for people and horses, later wagons and stagecoaches. Inns such as the Greyhound and the Kings Arms opened for the passing trade and for supplying fresh horses. We passed the handsome Stuart House where Bonny Prince Charlie stayed on his retreat northwards in the Jacobite rebellion of 1745. The building of the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway was a major factor in the importance Shap village. Steam engines laboured up the steep gradient requiring banking engines. Now almost silent electric expresses glide through the summit cuttings and over the embankments. Shap station is no more, closed in the 1960s.

By now we had a clearer idea of the evolution of Shap. It lay in the lands of the Premonstratensian abbey which was founded in 1199 and which served local churches as well as running a profitable sheep farm. The Abbey was dissolved in 1540, eventually passing into the ownership of the Lowther family to whom the land still belongs. A brief diversion across pastures led us to a massive recumbent granite stone. This is the Barnkeld stone, one of the few surviving rocks of the avenue, which once rivalled Stonehenge and Avebury in its scale and grandeur. A painting of 1774 shows many of the standing stones in situ. The coming of the railway obliterated the stone circle. Religious prejudice and the enclosure movement saw most stones thrown down and smashed. Large blocks can still be seen at the base of the limestone walls bounding the fields.

In 1687-88 Shap was granted a market charter, which it still holds, underlining its importance. A Moot Hall (later the site of the school) and a Market Cross were built. The latter is now the village heritage centre. A Friends Meeting House, a Plymouth



Brethren hall and a Methodist church were built in the last two centuries. All are now closed and have become houses.

The parish church of St Michael is hidden at the top a street of terraced housing at right angles to the main road. Standing on a prominent mound it is approached by a grassy ramp, part of a Corpse Road which brought in the dead from outlying

hamlets with no burial licence. The church far pre-dates the Abbey, tracing its foundation to 750 AD. A stone building replaced the earlier wooden structure in 1120. Inside there are fascinating reminders of the evolution of the building – Norman

arches, ancient fonts and a West Gallery. There is much fine woodwork and the site of a box pew which once housed the unfortunate residents of the Workhouse. A splendid Millenium window graces the side chapel depicting in vivid detail the life of the village.

We made our way by another route down to the main street at Town End. Several former shops, including a Post Office, are now closed and converted to housing. We resisted the temptations of Shap's famous chippy and settled instead for a cup of tea and a biscuit in the village heritage centre, generously provided by our host. The meticulously maintained and exhibited archives were a joy to explore and deserved more time than we were able to give. Where else would you find a (donated) collection of Corgi trucks commemorating Shap's place in transport legends? There was a collective agreement that this had been a most stimulating and enlightening tour. We made our way back to the lowlands of Kentdale reflecting on our new-found respect for this fascinating community and its long and important legacy.

David Telford-Reed

June walk: Visit to Carnforth Station Heritage Centre

Carnforth was just a small village until the arrival of the railway after which it quickly developed into a true railway town. The first railway, built by the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway Company, opened in September 1846. A small single platform station named Carnforth and Yealand was erected to serve the trains. The Ulverston and Lancaster Railway was the next arrival in 1857. The resulting junction station was renamed Carnforth. The Furness Railway absorbed the Ulverston and Lancaster Railway in 1862. The station was enlarged during the 1870s to a design by local architects Paley and Austin; William Tite, the Scottish architect, designed the refreshment room. Midland Railway services began to use the station when the south to east direct curve to the Furness and Midland lines was opened. The construction of this curve created a triangular junction at the north west end of the station. The Lancaster and Carlisle Railway was taken over by the London North Western Railway and the station became a joint station with the Furness and Midland.

A major redevelopment of the station, funded by the London Midland and Scottish Railway, took place in 1938 and once completed the station boasted six platforms and the longest single-piece-concrete cantilever roof in Britain, which still stands. The London Midland and Scottish Railway started to build a new state-of-the-art motive power depot on the site of the old Furness Railway shed in 1938 but material shortages during the Second World War halted the build. Work recommenced in 1942 with Italian prisoners of war from the Bela Camp close to Milnthorpe used for labour. The new depot finally opened on 18th December 1944 with an allocation of 46 steam locos and by 1960 a staff of 347 were employed, 250 being drivers and firemen. Carnforth depot eventually closed in 1968. The depot survives as a grade II* listed

building and is used by the West Coast Railway Company as a base for their steam and diesel charter railway operations.



The West Coast Main Line platforms were closed in May 1970, following the withdrawal of local stopping passenger services between Lancaster and Carlisle. The platform walls facing the fast lines were demolished, cut back and fenced off before the commissioning of 25 kV overhead electrification in 1974. This made Carnforth a secondary line station, even though it is situated on the main line, as WCML trains cannot call. After lying in a semi-derelict state for many years, the station buildings were refurbished between 2000 and 2003 and returned to commercial use. An award-winning Heritage Centre including the 'Brief Encounter' refreshment room, several museum rooms and a travel/ticket office occupy the buildings. One of the exhibition rooms tells the story of how in 1945 Carnforth Station was transformed by



David Lean into the fictional 'Milford Junction' where Laura Jesson (Celia Johnson) and Dr. Alec Harvey (Trevor Howard) met and fell in love, all because of a piece of grit in Laura's eye. A small period cinema shows the film 'Brief Encounter' continuously - it is played about 1500 times annually! Another museum room brings to life Carnforth's past as a thriving railway town and a major railway centre, the story of the nation's steam railways in their heyday, the Beeching cuts, and Carnforth at the end of steam in 1968.

John Hiley

July walk: A walk around upper Bowness

On the evening of a day in May 2016 the society was privileged to be given a magnificent tour of lower Bowness by John Campbell. John is a native of the village and clearly has a deep love of the area. The walk coincided roughly with publication of John's magnum opus "Village by the water, a history of Bowness-on-Windermere from the earliest times to 1963". Any Society member with an interest in the history of the village would do well to acquire a copy of the book which was limited to only 250 copies. Doubtless Kendal Library will have copy. Because this first walk was on a balmy evening well before the school holidays there was a good attendance.



The walk this year was held in July starting at 2pm with the holiday season in full swing. David Telford-Reed and I were concerned that because of the parking difficulties and members' possible holiday commitments the attendance would be low. Just imagine our delight when about 20 members assembled at the library gate on Broad Street in Windermere. We were treated to an exhaustive (and exhausting) essentially linear walk from our meeting place to near The Old Laundry Theatre. The only diversion was the turn up Ellerthwaite Road and onto Lake Road before returning to New Road. Along this first part of the diversion we stopped at Oldfield Bridge where the real start of the walk commenced. This is where Mill Beck which separates Bowness and Windermere went under the bridge.

What did we see and what did we learn? Far too much to tell in this short article. A glance at the comprehensive hand-out with which we were provided showed there were 40 potential stopping points on the route from 'White City' in Heathwaite to Windermere Steam Laundry. Only about a mile but it took us well over 2 hours. Besides the discussions about the buildings we also learned about the reasons for the long standing 'rivalry' between Bowness and the 'upstart' Windermere. A wonderful afternoon, you should have been there.

And why did John's book end in 1963? That was the year that the chestnut tree planted to celebrate the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 was felled.

Don Morris

Tales from the Tapes: Mike Houston interviewed by John Hiley.
Recorded in the home of Mike Houston in Bowston 23rd February 2021 **Part 3**

JH: So this was Primary school, and was that in Beanley?

MH: Well we didn't have a school in Beanley. It was midway between two villages and when I say villages (laughing) - only a few houses really - Beanley was midway between Eglington and a place called Branton. Now my sister was seven years older than me, and my father and mother had lived quite near to Branton and when we came to live at Beanley she just continued there because she would only have about another three or four years left at school. So when it came my turn, I went to Branton school as well. And, of course, I was born in 1934, so as a five/six year old, the second world war was starting. I just don't know how those people in government did it but in that time all of Newcastle was evacuated. Shipbuilding was the target you see, and they moved out into the countryside. Our school suddenly had more evacuees than it had local people and you think, well, could the school cater for for them? It was a church school next to the Presbyterian church, when I say next to it, the school boundary was there and the church wall was the otherside of that boundary. There was as many kids from Newcastle as you had locals.

JH: So this school was both primary and secondary was it?

MH: Well, you didn't really have secondary school (laughing), you went to the same school and you finished at 14 years old. How teachers did it I do not know. You had the little room which you were in from five years old up to two years before you sat your eleven plus so...

JH. So a complete mixture of ages?

MH: Oh yes, that was the little room and in there they taught four different year groups if you like. There weren't many in a year group mind....

JH: And this was one teacher was it?

MH: Yes, one teacher, and in the other, the big room where you went to two years before you did your eleven plus. I was only two years there because I managed to pass the eleven plus but otherwise, like my sister for example, she went on until she was fourteen, when she left school.

JH: So, after this evacuation happened to Brampton, how many pupils were in the school do you imagine?

MH: We had two evacuees you see, I had to walk three miles to school and it was over fields most of it, and we had two evacuees, one stayed a week and the other one stayed five years.

JH: So when you say you had two, in the house? MH: Our house, yes.

JH: And what do you think the school total population would have been? A hundred?

MH: It wouldn't be that many, no, but it would be more than fifty, oh yes it would be maybe about seventy.

JH: So the class sizes would still be relatively small wouldn't they compared with today?

MH: Yes, but teachers came with these evacuees and they were in the church. They were actually taught in the church. They had their own separate teachers. I think there were three teachers came with them originally, but you know a lot of the children went straight home. They were only there a short time but they didn't like living in the country. They didn't like the dark you see, those sorts of reasons why they went off back home, and homesick obviously, and I suppose their parents wouldn't put up a big fight. They'd soon have them back, and you don't know what sort of stories went back. Of our two evacuees, one went home after a week and the other one stayed with us for five years. And she is still alive and I am still in touch with her. Yes, she lives now just north of Alnwick. She's virtually bedfast now and has been for quite a few years but yes she is very happy there.

JH: Now there's one or two things I don't want to miss here, because I know you were a very proficient footballer when you came to Windermere, Mike, so presumably you developed your footballing skills at this school did you?

MH: Yes, I did. It was just with tennis balls. We didn't have proper footballs on the schoolyard. But, right from going to school - I didn't really know what football was - you'd go there and kick the ball. You'd pick two sides of course. At that time it was generally the evacuees versus the locals you see.

JH: And this was playground activity?

MH: Playground with a tennis ball or some sort of ball. They were like gold, you had to be so careful. There were only about maybe two or three that had a tennis ball. They didn't want to bring it, but people knew they had one and they said you've got to bring it. There was a concrete playground and there was a lawn surrounded by trees and whatnot and the girls played dolls houses or whatever among these trees but we had the concrete yard for the football, yes!

JH: And was there a school team?

MH: Not at that stage, but before I went to the secondary school we had about three different primary schools that we used to play against. Now, how that was organised I don't know, and that was with a proper football. I think I was probably better with a little tennis ball than I was with a proper football - at that stage anyway .

JH: And they would be heavy, those proper footballs.

MH: Yes they were, that's right. I find it sad now because if I go home and I think of these little villages, Hedgley had a football team, Glanton had a football team, Whittinghame had a football team, Bolton had a football team. I am talking about places not much bigger than here (*ed: Bowston*) you know, and they don't anymore. Of course, the Mecca, the centre of the football world, was Ashington. I don't know if you've heard of Ashington have you?

JH: Well I know the Charlton brothers came from Ashington - and also a famous cricketer, Colin Milburn.

MH: Yes, Colin Milburn, that's right, he was a good cricketer. Jackie Milburn, the footballer, was our idol of course. I had an uncle who used to take me on his motorbike down Newcastle just every now and again. We think of him as a centre forward but he couldn't get his place then 'cos Charlie Wayman was Newcastle's centre forward. Jackie Milburn was on the right wing for about three or four years before Charlie Wayman transferred to Southampton and Milburn came into his own.

JH: So that's when, still during the war?

MH: No, we are into post war time now.

JH: Before we get you leaving school, what about cricket, was there any cricket?



Statue of Jackie Milburn in Ashington

MH: Yes, at our little primary school there was a lad called Jimmy Givens, he's still alive. He eventually became the chief ranger for Northumberland National Park and he is still very much involved. He is two years older than I am and yes he was good at cricket and other games as well. Now, I can't remember how that bit started?

JH: I was just asking you about your sporting prowess (both laughing)! Now, I am intrigued to know how a gamekeeper's lad got an interest in French. (Mike laughing) What were you good at at school?

MH: Well, towards the end of the war there were a lot of German prisoners of war and they they were quite near to Wooler which was their main depot...

JH: So you were about ten or eleven were you?

MH: I would be yes, and the estate for which my father worked took on a gang of six or seven prisoners of war and they came every day in a wagon from Wooler and they worked on the estate during the day. I got friendly with a lot of these German prisoners and still am. You've met one, well the daughter of one anyway. I learned one or two just little bits of German, not much you know. I didn't have any text books, it was just conversation. Just a minute (Mike then recites in German) - I had one or two little phrases like this and I thought this will stand me in good stead when I get to school 'cos I'll have a start on some of these others you see. I went to school but of course I didn't do German. It was French and I never had any trouble I suppose. Do you know, I can't remember much about how I used to teach French?

JH: Oh, I remember very well (John laughing), but this is your story not mine!

MH: We used to talk in sort of pidgin English and French among ourselves as kids. I dunno if kids still do or whether you did at that age. I know we used to do it because I suppose it would be another legacy of the war that you didn't realize.

To be continued