

Staveley & District History Society

Journal Spring 2023

CONTENTS

2. The Chairman's review of the past year
John Hiley's annual review for the AGM
- 3 The Stones of Cragwood
Don Morris's account of the carved rock features in the old quarry at Ecclerigg Crag
- 7 Occasional Paper 28: "When was Kentmere hall built? An hypothesis in the absence of facts"
An 'advertisement' for Robert Courtier's new Occasional Paper
- 8 Book Review: The Kendal & Windermere Railway by Dick Smith
A short critique of the new book by John Hiley
- 9 Tales from the Tapes: Mike Houston's Oral History Part 2
An interview by John Hiley recorded in Mike's home in Bowston 23rd February 2021

The views expressed in articles in this Journal are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the Society.

Cover photo: One of the Stones of Cragwood – see article on pages 3-7.

The next issue of the *Journal* (No 58, the Summer 2023 issue) will be published in mid-August 2023. All contributions (letters, articles, etc.) are welcome at any time but should be with the Editor by mid-July.

The Chairman's review of the past year.

Attendances have been good throughout this season and we have recruited a number of new members. There has also been an increase in the number of visitors at our talks. Many have stayed afterwards to enjoy tea and biscuits, making our evenings more sociable. St. Anne's Church, Ings has continued to prove a comfortable venue. Some of the more softly spoken speakers haven't been easy to hear in the large space's resonant acoustic. Efforts are under way to try and resolve the issue.



David Telford Reed, our Events Secretary, has been responsible once again for arranging our Summer Walks and Winter Talks. Jean Scott-Smith escorted us around Shap last May. June's day out was to Carnforth Station Heritage Centre which concluded with a visit to the Brief Encounter refreshment room. In July, we had a walk around upper Bowness with John Campbell. Meeting in Ellerthwaite Square, Windermere, we walked leisurely downhill, taking in such historic locations as Windermere Grammar School and the Baddeley Clock, eventually reaching the Royalty Cinema. Summer activities also included a site survey of Staveley Old Hall in late May. The report of that endeavour is in the Summer 2022 Journal.

The six talks have been delightfully varied and educational and included, before Christmas, "*Lancaster Castle as C19th prison*" with Mike Winstanley, and "*Turnpike Roads*" with Jean Turnbull. In January, Andy Lowe spoke on "*Woodland crafts and industries*". Ian Gee's talk in February was particularly topical. He was instrumental



in the re-creation and successful flying from Lake Windermere in September 2022 of a replica of *Waterbird*, the first seaplane to fly with a stepped float, dating from 1911. In March, we had Dick Smith's fascinating account of "*Two unusual aspects of the history of the Kendal and Windermere Railway*", the proposals to extend the railway beyond Windermere, and the railway's connections with Cropper's paper mills. As I write, we await our April talk on *Whaling from Whitehaven in C18th & C19th* with Rob David.

Thanks are due to the SDHS committee. Whilst all have agreed to continue their efforts on our behalf, we would be very grateful to any member who is willing to join the committee and/or help tidy up after meetings, make an Oral History recording or write for our Journal. Particular thanks are due to Martin Slader who stepped into the post of Treasurer when Roger Collinge passed away last October. I am delighted that Andy Lowe has agreed to join Mike Houston as a Vice-President of the Society and we look forward to his input. Our President Clare Brockbank remains in a care home near Grange.

John Hiley

The stones of Cragwood

Ecclerigg quarry is just to the south of Cragwood Hotel. It was mostly worked out by the early part of the nineteenth century. A possible clue to its early use comes from this extract from David Glover's 2014 book *The Quarries of Lakeland*: "Henry Williamson was a boatman in the mid-C18th and a voucher dated 9th January 1756 shows that he was paid £1 10s 0d per ton for taking six loads of slate from Ecclerigg to Waterfoot." Incidentally a few years later, stone was quarried there to build the Round House on Belle Isle called Windermere Isle at that time. The House was built for Thomas English in 1773 and 828 tons were shipped over by Williamson and two other boatmen with barges of carrying capacities of either 6 or 9 tons.

I was first made aware of the Cragwood Stones when I purchased, about a dozen years ago, a copy of Charles Mackay's book *The Scenery and Poetry of the English Lakes* published in 1846. Mackay was Scottish and a prolific writer. His best known book has the snazzy title *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*.

There is a public footpath to the lake between Cragwood and Brockhole. This was a popular walk with my late wife and our water loving dogs. A little way before the water there is a path across a field on the left (probably a trespass) and this leads to Ecclerigg Crag and the stones. The stones were known as Ecclerigg Stones originally, presumably because Cragwood House had yet to be built (1910). I was less than impressed by the stones but was fascinated by them.



Mackay was being taken down the lake by a hired boatman who pointed them out to the author. On inspection he found that the remnants of the quarry were inscribed in large letters with the names of famous people; mostly British men, a few foreigners and only one woman. There were also sentences such as "A Slave Landing on the British Strand, Becomes Free" and "Money is the Sinew of War". When the boatman was asked who made these inscriptions he pointed out to a stone which read 'John Longmire, Engraver'. He was told that Longmire had spent many years in all sorts of weather working here and implied that he may have been deranged. Mackay said nothing but his book seems to suggest he disagreed.

Grevel Lindop in his *Literary Guide to the Lake District* (1993) writes that it was on the bucket list for some Victorians. Strangely though, I have been unable to find a reference to these stones in any other C19th Lake District guide book. If anyone is

aware of such a reference I would be pleased to hear from them. And there the matter rested for a little while. A few weeks later I decided to find out if the Cragwood Hotel personnel knew anything about the Stones. They were very helpful. In 1951 Blake Tyson investigated the Stones, and with help from the Kendal Record Office (KRO) submitted a substantial paper to the *Transactions of the Ancient Monument Society*. The hotel very kindly gave me a copy of his paper. It was mostly concerned with names on the Stones rather than an examination of their genesis. I freely admit to plagiarising much of this paper with some of my own additions. Most of the paper was concerned with explorers, politicians, military people, scientists, some writers, and people who had an effect on this area in different ways. Tyson's investigations were not comprehensive and, among others, the following names, present on the stones, were ignored: Bulwer, Dryden, Burns, Burdett, Garrick, Kean, Milton, Brougham, William IV, President Jackson, Louis Philippe, Cook and Rodney.

When I presented this topic in a talk to the Ings Bateman Club recently, I covered each person with a brief discussion, which are often known as gobbets. In Alan Bennett's play *The History Boys* this was a snippet of interesting information designed to wet the appetite of a jaded examination marker and so possibly obtain a better mark. For instance, George III was the first Hanoverian monarch to have English as his first tongue. This is what I attempted to do with my mini-biographies and so, with mixed success, keep my audience awake! Being lazy I just looked at the twenty-nine that Tyson had investigated:

1 Rear Admiral Sir John Ross	1777-1846	15 Richard Luther Watson	1811-1875
2 Richard Lemon Lander	1804-1834	16 Sir Humphrey Davey Bt	1778-1836
3 Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson	1758-1805	17 Matthew Piper	1730-1820
4 Lord Gordon Byron FRS	1788-1854	18 General Lafayette	1757-1834
5 Richard Watson	1737-1816	19 Robin Hood	
6 Professor John Wilson		20 John Bolton	1756-1837
(Christopher North)	1785-1854	21 Corporal John Shaw	1789-1815
7 James Watt FRS	1736-1819	22 James Branker	1790-1852
8 Isaac Newton PRS	1642-1727	23 George Warden	pre 1830-post 1859
9 James Hogg	1770-1835	24 Giles Redmayne	1793-1857
10 Captain Edward Parry	1790-1855	25 Captain George Greaves	1797-1869
11 Edward Jenner	1749-1823	26 Mrs Lydia Freeman	1750-1837
12 John Loudon McAdam	1756-1836	27 George III	1738-1820
13 Sir Walter Scott Bt	1771-1832	28 William Pitt	1759-1806
14 William Wordsworth	1770-1850	29 Field Marshal Arthur Wellesley,	
		Duke of Wellington	1769-1852

In this Journal article, I shall only mention people where there is a reasonable Cumbrian interest:

5 WATSON: A Westmerian from Heversham, and the owner of the quarry just before the time of this activity. He studied at Trinity college Cambridge, with a scholarship endowed by Edward Wilson of Dallam Tower, and despite knowing no chemistry was appointed to a Professorship in that subject in 1764. In 1771 he became a Professor of Divinity. Just after this he married the daughter of Wilson. Perhaps he did know something about divinity because he was offered the sinecure of Bishop of Landalff despite seldom residing there. His

good fortune continued because, in 1786, a friend John Luther of Essex died and left him an estate in Sussex. The following year he sold this estate for £23,000 and purchased Calgarth Park estate which included Ecclerigg quarry. Although he died in 1816 his wife stayed at Calgarth until her demise in 1831. The estate then passed to her grandson 15 RICHARD LUTHER WATSON: who had been living in Dover. He moved from there the following year to newly built Ecclerigg Cottage about a mile north of the quarry. I have been to the KRO to try to discover its location. (In 1951 it was called Ecclerigg Close but that was no help). The cottage is on the 1846 Troutbeck Valuation map and appears to be immediately north of where Brockhole (1898) is now. It is certainly south of Briery Close. I also examined his extremely long will. In this he admits to letting the Calgarth Estate become ruinous. However, it also showed that he had an amazingly extensive portfolio of both land and property, including a house in Harley St, London.

6 WILSON: was an off-comer from Scotland and was perhaps better known at the time by his nom-de-plume Christopher North, writing especially for the then popular *Blackwood's Magazine*. He was a larger than life character who was well known in the Cumbrian traditional sports of wrestling and sailing. In 1807, he bought a cottage at Elleray which became known as Christopher North's Cottage. It is still standing and is situated on the path to St Catherine's near the junior part of Windermere School. Eight years later he married an Ambleside girl. Her uncle managed to fritter away North's inheritance by injudicious investments. Wilson was nearly bankrupted and, in 1816, returned to Edinburgh though retaining his cottage. Whilst north of the border, he managed to become Professor of Moral Philosophy as well as honing his writing skills. He eventually returned to Windermere, but was only an infrequent visitor after his wife's death in 1837. He was involved in the early opposition to the extension of the railway from Windermere to Ambleside. He sold Elleray in 1850. He is the great, great, great, grandfather of Ludovic Kennedy.

It is convenient to consider 17 PIPER and the better known 20 BOLTON together. They form an interesting contrast. The similarity is that both endowed a school in Westmorland; Bolton, from Ulverston, one in Bowness which was the forerunner of Windermere Grammar School, and Piper a school on Beastbanks in Kendal. Both schools were designed by Webster. But there the similarity ends. Bolton's wealth was derived from his notorious slave-trading whereas Piper, a Quaker from Whitehaven, was likely involved in the tobacco trade between Virginia and Whitehaven. He endowed three schools, one a Marine School in his home town. The foundation stone in Kendal was laid in 1817 and the school opened two years later. In 1974 it became an annex for Vicarage Park school after which, in 1985, it was converted into a housing complex. As the school was being built, Piper's ashes were interred in a vault there. The laying of the Bowness school foundation stone was a very grand affair. Bolton was dying and he asked his 'sincere friend' Wordsworth to preside in his place. Most of the arrangements for the day were organised by 25 GREAVES who had moved to Briery Close about 1830. It's probable that the only reason Longmire included his name on the stones was Greaves' involvement that day. He had left the area by 1840 and was buried near Venice in 1869. The proceedings on the day were well documented. They were delayed by rain but the party did eventually leave Mrs Ullock's White Lion Hotel - renamed Royal Hotel in 1840 after Queen Adelaide had stayed there, and now the site of Costa Coffee in Bowness. When the party returned to Mrs Ullock's there was a banquet followed by a ball in the Assembly Rooms. I have yet to discover the location of these rooms - again, any information would be welcome.

13 SCOTT and 16 DAVY may also be linked. Scott met his future wife in early December 1797 in Carlisle and on the 28th of the same month married her in a church which eventually became part of the cathedral. Both Scott and Davy were friendly with Southey and Coleridge. In 1805, while Scott was staying with Bishop Watson both he and Davy were

taken up Helvellyn by Wordsworth. It may come as no surprise that, being friends with the two poets, Davy and Scott were not averse to a little drug abuse. Although Davy did not discover nitrous oxide he may have been the first person to meddle with the gas and he also introduced his three friends to its dubious pleasures. Davy's younger brother John moved to Ambleside and built a considerable house, Lesketh How, and died there in 1844. The property is currently being converted by Russell Armor into six separate dwellings.

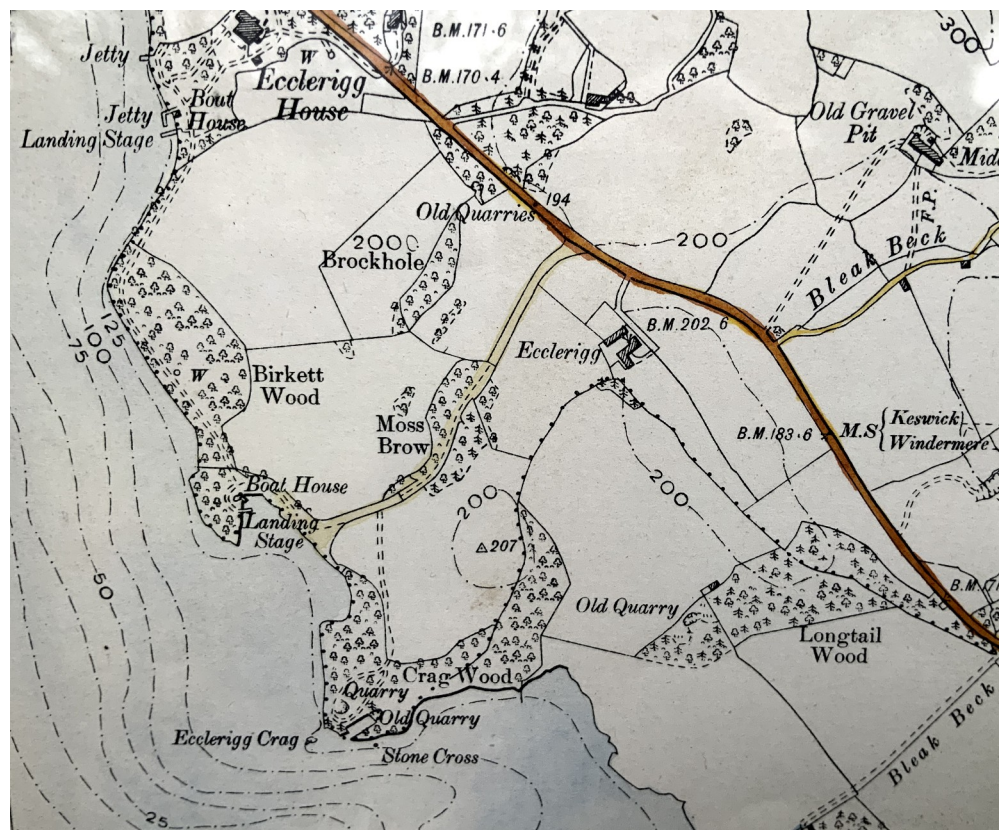
22 BRANKER and 23 WARDEN were both sugar brokers, and so profited from the slave trade from Liverpool. Branker bought part of a farm at Clappersgate, demolished the buildings and built The Croft there by 1830. Now, this is perhaps the most eye-catching building in that area. An avid yachtsman he also altered the course of the Rothay to ease the access from the lake to his boathouse. Warden, a Scot, lived in some splendour at Wansfell Home, which is on the eastern side of the lake before Ambleside.

24 REDMAYNE was from Ingleton and had made his fortune from shops in London. In 1830 he bought Brathay Hall from the artist John Harden. One of Harden's many paintings is facing north from the Eagle and Child towards St Margaret's in Staveley. By 1836 Redmayne had paid for Brathay Church to be built and, in the following year, the bell.

Finally, I come to the only lady on the list; 26 LYDIA FREEMAN. She was born in Sheffield and was married to a Vicar in Wakefield. He served there in the late 1700s. They probably retired to Troutbeck and lived at The Howe, Applethwaite, until his death in 1805. Lydia thereafter moved to Clappersgate sometime before 1811. In 1834, she moved to a newly built Howsley Cottage nearby. I note that it was recently valued at £1.4 million. She donated £500 to the building of St Thomas's Church in Kendal, yet another Webster building.

Readers will have noticed that I have not included a section on perhaps Cumbria's most famous person, Wordsworth. I have assumed that most who read this article will be aware of most things about the great man.

After writing this article, the editor summoned me to accompany him on a trip to visit the site of the stones. Alighting the bus at Brockhole, we approached our target using my original route mentioned above. Eventually we arrived at a boat house that seemed to prevent further progress. Certainly Billy Bunter could have gone no



further but we were able to squeeze round the boat house and so continue our search. After a couple of minutes we found our quarry. We only found four stones. On my previous visit I think there had been at least double that number visible. We searched in vain for more but I suspect there are more in the area still. I do recall that in one of the references I consulted there was mention of there being two distinct sites. Eventually we climbed a stile immediately to the south of our site which led to a good path which ended in the car-park at Cragwood.



The Stones are worth a visit but if any members decide to take our advice our return path, if reversed, is much easier to follow. Go round Cragwood from the car park in a clockwise direction and follow the good path until a stile is encountered after about fifteen minutes. The path itself carries on to the right of the stile, but if the stile is taken the stones we saw are now beneath your feet. The location at the stile is confirmed by the sight of a stone cross which is situated about a dozen yards into the lake near the boathouse. The 1899 OS 6" map shows its location. Because Cragwood was built in 1910 it doesn't appear on the map. It is now situated somewhere near to the 207 foot trig point. Another point of interest of the map is the confirmation of the abode of Richard Luther

Watson. Ecclerigg Cottage must have changed its name to Ecclerigg House and is immediately north of Brockhole which is also on the map.

Don Morris

Occasional Paper 28: When was Kentmere hall built? An hypothesis in the absence of facts. By Robert Courtier

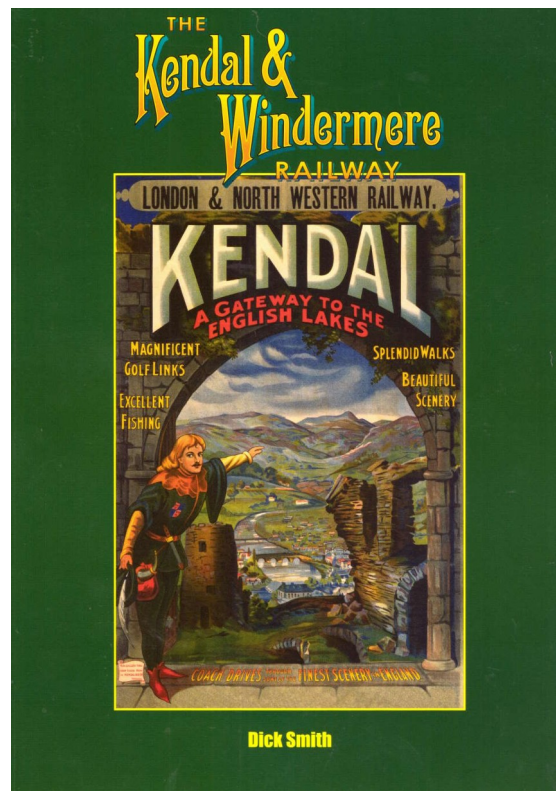
A new Occasional Paper (No 28) has been added to the website this month. Many who have walked in Kentmere will have seen the seemingly out-of-place 'fortified' tower at Kentmere Hall. The paper examines the evidence available in the public domain as to who caused it to be built, why and when. There are no records to give an answer to these questions, so this document will enable you to consider the large amount of peripheral evidence and form your own conclusions, albeit the author offers his. You can download the paper from the website or email: staveleyhistorysociety@gmail.com



Book Review: The Kendal & Windermere Railway by Dick Smith
published by Cumbrian Railways Association 2022 ISBN 979-1-914248-00-9

The first edition of this book was published in 2002. Twenty years later comes a much expanded 2nd edition, having exactly twice as many pages. There is no sense though that the author had any difficulty in filling the extra space. The material is well structured; the text well written, concise and very 'readable'. The illustrations, many in colour, are superb, reflecting, I read in the introduction, the growth in archive material curated by Cumbrian Railways Association. This is £16.50 well spent!

The book is no exercise in nostalgia. Of course, there is some of that – it was nice to be reminded of a misspent youth, trainspotting on Windermere and Oxenholme stations – but, as the author writes, one of his aims was to show how the railway developed as technology improved. Indeed, the book includes a section on the proposed electrification of the line and the preparatory infrastructure changes that took place at Oxenholme in 2016, only for the plans to be ditched. There are also two completely new chapters: one on 'Cropper's branch line' to Burneside, Bowston and Cowan Head and the other on the failed attempts to advance the railway beyond Windermere, to Ambleside and Keswick. The latter makes for interesting reading, not only because of the routes mooted and the resulting conflicts but also in the light of present day traffic congestion and the environmental concerns that exist along more or less the same route.



A diesel excursion near Ings in 1993

powered by sustainably produced energy? Can capacity be increased to permit a half-hourly service? (This would, of course, require the construction of a passing loop somewhere on the line.) And finally, can infrastructure at Windermere Station be developed to cope with more passengers?

John Hiley

Tales from the Tapes: Mike Houston interviewed by John Hiley.
 Recorded in the home of Mike Houston in Bowston 23rd February 2021 **Part 5**

JH: So, you'd met Nancy at a dance. What did Nancy's parents do?

MH: Well. Nancy's parents were separated, I think, as a consequence of the war. I could be wrong in this. When war broke out, there was a mass exodus from Newcastle-on-Tyne 'cos there were all sorts of rumours put about, you know, aircraft bombing and that. When I look back I just can't understand how those people in charge managed to do what they did. How did you organise evacuation? There must have been some remarkable people at that time. Now, Nancy's father was above recruitment age I think, or was he in a wartime occupation? I can't remember. Anyway the long and the short of it was that Newcastle was a target so they were all evacuated as quickly as they could and I know in our little school in the Cheviots we had kids from Newcastle and Wallsend. And Nance and her mother were evacuated but her father....

JH: Oh, he stayed behind, he had to stay to work....

MH: Yes, he lived with his two sisters. I only met Nance's father once but I met her Aunts maybe three or four times. He worked for a firm named Parsons. Have you heard of Parsons?

JH: What, the turbine manufacturers? Electrical engineers.

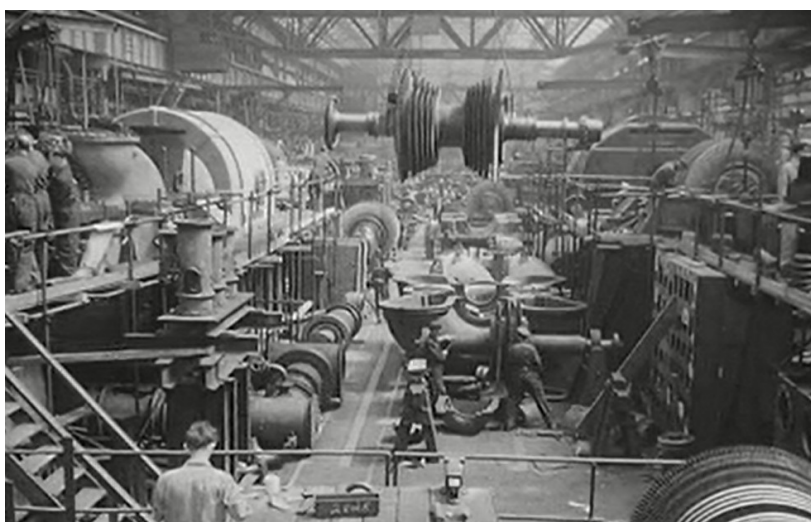
MH: Yes, yes that's who he worked for. Parsons turbines.

JH: Yes. In fact I've even visited the factory. It's probably still going.

MH: So you see, she, Nance's mother, was living up at Seahouses, and I suppose that's what brought the separation about. I don't know really, I never went into any of that.

JH: I can imagine that working for Parsons would be a protected industry wouldn't it?

MH: Yes that's right. Now this was the irony of it, when it came to university you, you sat for your A levels and if



By WW2 Parsons employed more than 2800 people. During the war they manufactured machinery for naval vessels, welded gun cases and produced parts for tanks and weapons.

you were a child from Newcastle your grant to go to university was, I think, exactly double what it was if you were living in the wilds of Northumberland like me. The Northumberland Education Committee was centered down in Gosforth and

Newcastle, but they didn't have money to play about with. Unless you really were very exceptional, I suppose if you were accepted at Oxford or Cambridge or somewhere like that then that was all right, but for someone that did not have any of those choices you had a problem. I know I had to send a lot of letters going back and forwards, but eventually they agreed they would give me a grant 'cos I'd been accepted for Hull University which was an external college of London University at that time. Now I can remember it as clearly as anything. It was one hundred and twenty three pounds in fees which meant your education side was looked after but you had to find your lodgings and live off it and you had to buy your books and everything else.

JH: So money was tight....

MH: Yes, all the way. In agricultural labour, that's all my dad was in. He was the foreman of the group, so in effect he was a little bit better off than some, Of course, you could do all sorts of jobs and get paid more than an agricultural labourer. You could go into the pits but he'd done that as a young lad and he didn't like that.

JH: And did Nancy get a bigger grant because her dad was working in Newcastle?

MH: Yes, working in Newcastle yes, he had a clerical job in Parsons.

JH: Right, now the next stage is, I suppose, university and preparing to go to university. You'd have to take some school exams to get there?

MH: Yes, yes.

JH: So, were these O and A levels still like I was used to?

MH: Yes it was. They were reasonably new-fangled then. In my time, you did your school certificate and then your higher certificate and then I remember being a guinea pig from the eleven plus. Why we had the changes from school certificate and higher to O and A level I don't know. That's the story of politics and everything isn't it? So yes, I think that two years above me would still be school certificate but the year above me was O level. Then you did two years and it was A level. Now what the difference was between the school certificate and higher certificate and O level and A level, I wouldn't know.

JH: Just before I go on, that's reminded me of something I haven't asked you. You referred there to eleven plus, so were you at a grammar school, seperate from a secondary modern school?

MH: Ah yes. You were at your primary school and when you got to ten or eleven years old you sat your eleven plus. If you passed then you didn't have to go but you had a choice, if you wanted to go to secondary education or you could stay on. My sister she left at fourteen but they raised the school age, the leaving age to fifteen soon after. When I was to do the eleven plus, I was very young, my birthday's in June. Had it been July I'd have gone round to another year. As luck would have it or not when I was due to sit the eleven plus I was rushed off to hospital with

appendicitis and at that time you'd burned your chance. But I suppose my primary school teacher said look this lad deserves another chance so I got another chance. I think there must have been a special sitting in November and I got in. Now I'd been a year younger when I was at school but by doing this I was, it put me into the same age as everybody else.

JH: Now, I remember that you and Nancy were both at Grammar School in Alnwick.

MH: Yes, there were two schools in Alnwick itself, it was like a boys grammar school and a girls grammar school, the Dukes School and the Duchesses School. Her school was a lot older than ours, it had been for years and years a special girls school and anybody who has been to Alnwick, the school was just below the castle there, Alnwick castle. Ours was a much more handsome building, a lovely building.

JH: So you would do A levels.

MH: I did A levels, yes.

JH: And you'd do French presumably?

MH: Yes, that's right.

JH: And what else did you do?

MH: I did English and what was the other? Oh History, I failed History at A level! You see there were all sorts of pressures on. There was a superb footballer in one of the local sides, he was just a little bit older than me and he got his calling up papers, had to do his military service and he was sent to Korea, to the Korean war.

JH: Yes that was early 1950s, wasn't it?

MH: I think it must have been 1952, I am not sure John, it was around that time anyway and you see he was injured. He came home on leave and I remember somebody saying Johnny Hoseason has been injured. "Johnny, oh heck" I said "he was a lovely footballer." And do you know it was more serious than I'd thought. I don't know if it was shrapnel or something, but he had been hit in the thigh and as far as football went that was it.

JH: Oh dear.

MH: And all he was doing was his military service. I'm saying all he was doing, he had to do it, we all had. Immediately it set me thinking, I thought "Heck, this is the last thing I want to do!" I quite like Koreans but you began to look at how to avoid this military service business. You see you'd gone through the 2nd World War and I could name about six out of just that bit of north Northumberland that had been wounded, one mentally affected and that was the end of him and I thought I've got to avoid this if I can. And the only way you could avoid military service - you didn't avoid it but you could postpone it - was if you went into further education. I think they were maybe short of teachers, I don't know? I don't think I would have gone and done any A levels otherwise - but this is what you never know. So I then thought

what am I any good at? French homework, I could nearly do it on my bike going down to catch the bus to school in the morning. So, I went on and did A levels and I thought right, yes French that's one I'll do, English and what else? What other subjects do I have? So I thought Geography, yes that's the other thing that I'm quite interested in doing. The school had all sorts of combinations but that one was non-existent, so I thought "Oh well, I'll do history". I wasn't very good at it and of course I didn't pass history at A level, so I just had two. I had applied to various places but they needed all these subjects so I knew that if I wanted to do a degree in French then there was a limited number of universities that would accept the combination that I had. Hull was one. Now it wasn't a university then. It was an external college of London university and I mean I didn't know what that meant. Anyway, I thought that's better than getting shot up in Korea...(parties laugh!)



The Arts Building at University College Hull following completion in 1928

MH: So I thought, "Well this Hull was the place for me. But, what does it mean it's a university college?" So I asked some questions and they said "If you got a degree it would be a London degree, but you need to go through everything, all the studying and exams, just the same" I thought "Well there's worse places". I'd never been there in my life though. They said "Yes, come down for an interview." And do you know they were such lovely people. It was ever so good. You went for three days. It was during their vac I suppose, I can't remember exactly. You stayed in one of their halls of residence. A lovely little separate room I had. "Heck, this is alright," I thought, and so I opted for Hull. At the interview, they said "Yes, you can come here." I said "Three A levels?" They said "Well, what's the subject that you want to do?" I said "French" and they said "We'll see what happens." So I virtually did see what happened! I didn't expect to fail at History but I did. "Oh dear," I thought. So anyway, that's how I went (to Hull) and as it turned out it was just by accident. But I backed a winner really.

To be continued