

Staveley & District History Society

Journal Summer 2023

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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: SDHS members in Troutbeck – see June Walk on pages 6-7.

The next issue of the *Journal* (No 59 the Winter 2023-24 issue) will be published in mid - December 2023. All contributions (letters, articles, etc.) are welcome at any time but should be with the Editor by mid-November.

In memory of Clare Brockbank - died 9th May 2023, aged 89

As her daughter remarks 'Clare was a feisty lively lady' - confirming what we've long known in SDHS. She was instrumental with Joe Scott in founding the society in 1990. Her President's foreword to the first Journal in Summer 2004, adorned by the photograph here, summarises those early years of accomplishment. She has contributed much since.



Born a Kendalian she had two brothers. Her father came from a long line of Quakers and ran IBIS Engineering in Kendal. She attended Kendal High School then went to Huyton College in Liverpool but couldn't wait to get to the bright lights of London. She hadn't been there long when, aged 21, she married Roger Brockbank, thus moving four miles from Kendal to Staveley.

Their lives were part of the village of Staveley. Roger inherited Staveley Wood Turning when his elder brother Joe was killed in the war. They both embraced village life - helping to organise Staveley Carnivals and getting stuck into all things local. Three children later she didn't settle for domestic bliss. The high spot of her week was her philosophy classes and friends Bess Holloway and Mollie Hargreaves encouraged her to go to Cumbrian Writers Group. She did Meals on Wheels and volunteered at the Family Planning Clinic in Kendal. She gained a BA in General Arts with The Open University which led to a job marking essays for The National Extension College.



Clare was fascinated by local and family history. In addition to her long association with Staveley and District History Society, she was also involved in Kendal Civic Society and Cumbria and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society. She was an active member of The Staveley Players and helped to organise the annual Art Show. She became a Trustee of the Frieda Scott Trust and devoted many unpaid hours to the setting up of The Armitt Library in Ambleside culminating in her receiving an MBE and becoming President of the Friends of the Armitt

Library, acting as its ambassador when she accompanied the Beatrix Potter fungi drawings on tour in the United States. While she was managing the library, Clare was host to Prince Charles as he then was and was there in July 1998 at the official opening by Princess Alexandra. Latterly she became very interested in her Quaker roots and delighted in her Art classes.

We remember her vivacity, learning and friendship with gratitude.

John Hiley

(I am grateful to Cathy, Clare's daughter, and to Maurice George at the Armitt for much of this 'in memoriam')

A stone carving in Kentmere

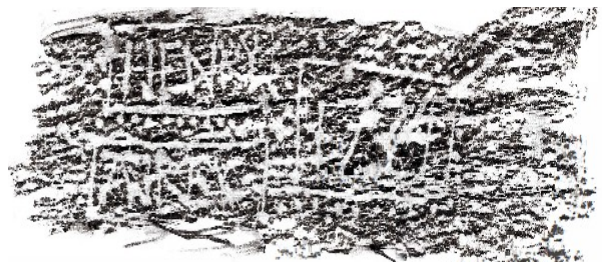
Tucked away in a wall-end in Kentmere is a flat-faced stone with primitive carvings. Apart from some surrounding patterns the principal features are a name and a date. The latter are quite clear but the provenance of this artifact is not. The text is '**Henry Airey 1734**'.

The pictures below show a photograph of the face and a rubbing of the name and date. The face is planar in form though naturally weathered: the rock's joint plane is thus ancient and definitely not a riven face from quarried stone. The stone is some 60 cm long by 8 cm high (2ft x 3in) in a wall-end face. It contains random patterns of lines and shallow 'holes' in addition to the name and date.



Above: Face of stone with pattern of holes and lines (on left), inscription right of centre and further indistinct patterns at far right.

Right: Rubbing of name and date.



The principal visual impression is thus of a crude attempt at an artistic form, as would be typical of someone not an experienced artisan. It would thus seem most probably made by a youth, most likely male in view of the strength needed to create the carvings, but inexperienced in masonry. The appearance is thus what today would probably be called 'graffiti' and begs the question of who created it and when.

The first hypothesis must resolve whether the name and date are of a real person living at a real date, or just a random 'hack at a bit of stone'. It is suggested that the likelihood of these bits of carving not reflecting a real person at a real point in time is very small indeed – random names and dates are **not** things that get recorded as they have no significance to anyone and certainly not worthy of the effort of carving in stone: at the very least this carving is saying something like 'I was here'. The question moves therefore to whether there was anyone of that name alive, or recently deceased, at that time. The answer is yes. There is but one entry for a Henry Airey recorded in the Church Register between 1610 and 1812 - baptized in 1720 - so 14 or 15 in 1734 when the date was carved. Whilst this does not prove this youth was the carver, it is difficult to find an alternative from the community of Kentmere in the

absence of other persons with the same name in the same period of time and same likely age.

The age of this Henry Airey is compatible with the style of the carving - it is also at a height that would be expected for a youth (although it may well not actually be in the location it was originally carved at, notwithstanding there is some evidence that a building such as an outhouse wall may have existed where it is today, as appears on 1858 O.S. mapping). It is without practiced skill, but formed with a determination to make a 'mark', typical of a youth maybe somewhat disenchanted, or perhaps more likely, celebratory in some way in view of the additions of patterns to the name and date. It appears significant that the stone is at a general location where blacksmith's tools, particularly hammers, were accessible. Henry Airey might very well have been the 'bellows boy' of Charles Birkett, the blacksmith, who owned the house where this stone lies nearby, and who after his death in 1752 was followed by his son Matthew as the village blacksmith at this location.

Can we get closer to this Henry from other data? Again we can say yes. A Henry Airey is recorded in 1768 as a freeholder in the Westmorland electoral register for Kentmere, one of three Aireys. A death in 1783 is also recorded in Probate documents and, although not in the Kentmere Church Register, the last abode is noted as being Fold Howe, in Hallowbank. This is entirely compatible with other information about Aireys at this time. It is known that Hallowbank and Brockstones were enfranchised in 1749 by the Airey family and Fold Howe by William Gilpin of Hallowbank in 1770. William Gilpin died in 1781 (at Pout Howe) and it is consistent he sold Fold Howe to Henry Airey sometime earlier.

The Church Register for Kentmere appears to hold vital clues. Henry is recorded as the son of George Airey who married Anne Holm in 1719 and appears to be their first child born in 1720. It also appears that George had been married before but was widowed in 1709. As the Register doesn't go back before 1701, this has not yet been proven. George and Anne had four children, with the Church Register recording Anne buried in March 1724. There are two later baptisms after this death recorded of children born to George and Anne. Probate documents confirm these as Henry's siblings. No more is recorded in the Church Register until *George Airey of Hallowbank* was buried in 1734. This is too much of a coincidence not to be the reason behind the stone – Henry Airey had lost his mother at around aged 4 and now was an orphan at 14 with three younger siblings. He had no clear means of support and would have been in a very dark frame of mind. There is no headstone in the Church graveyard and this wall stone appears to be Henry's own attempt at a memorial. Besides grief, it shows determination consistent with rising above this calamity, as he did, to become later a freeholder of Fold Howe, in Hallowbank. It appears from the probate documents that there were no off-spring, and he bequeathed his farm to his brother George in Troutbeck.

Jim Stilling

May Walk – The Stones of Cragwood with Don Morris



Don is to be congratulated for raising awareness of the Stones of Cragwood in his Spring 2023 Journal article where the background to our May walk is comprehensively described. A party of fifteen met at the bus shelter on the roadside at Brockhole and meandered through the Cragwood Hotel car-park and gardens to the site on the shores of Lake Windermere. The stones have been there since the mid-nineteenth century when they were carved by John Longmire after Ecclerigg quarry had been worked out.

Of the stones that have been reported to exist, we were only able to find four, though there may be some we didn't find since it is very overgrown and others may be under the lake! It's clear that those that remain are suffering from years of exposure to rain and frost, and are slowly getting buried in soil and leaf litter. For example, the complete text on the stone depicted above reads 'NATIONAL DEBT, L800,000,000, O SAVE MY COUNTRY, HEAVEN! You'll see there is a date on the stone – 1837. Thanks to the internet, I was able to check that the National Debt was indeed £790.9 million in 1837 so Mr Longmire was clearly very well informed!

One also gets a good impression of Longmire's political persuasion. One stone simply says '1688' – perhaps he approved of the 'Glorious Revolution'? – and another 'A SLAVE LANDING ON THE BRITISH STRAND BECOMES FREE'. In reference to that, I discovered that the UK Parliament passed the 'Slave Compensation Act' in 1837 so several of these engravings may well be related to that. The act authorised the Commissioners for the Reduction of the National Debt to compensate slave owners (not the liberated people) in the British colonies of the Caribbean, Mauritius, and the Cape of Good Hope, to the tune of about £20 million (£2.8 billion today) for freed slaves. This sum apparently constituted 40% of the Treasury's tax receipts that year. Some of the payments were converted into government annuities which lasted until 2015. One also gets an impression of Longmire's admiration of the folk whose names he so laboriously carved such as GENERAL LAFAYETTE, NELSON, WATT, NEWTON, DR JENNER etc.

The site of the stones is also very close to the white cross, just visible through the shrubbery, which gives White Cross Bay its present name. We were informed that it used to be called Craam's Bay - a craam being a long-handled rake used to gather the freshwater mussels that were prevalent in the bay.



The white cross is a memorial to two young men Thomas Woodcock and Ralph Thicknesse who drowned in a boating accident here in September 1853. The cross bears their names and the inscription: 'WATCH THEREFORE FOR YE KNOW NEITHER THE DAY NOR THE HOUR'. Woodcock (aged 20) and Thicknesse (19) were cousins holidaying with their respective families from Wigan. Thicknesse's father was MP for Wigan, Woodcock's father a banker. Apparently, the boys had been lent a skiff which was long but narrow and whilst it could cut through the water at speed, its stability might be problematic for non-experts. It seems that they hit rocks in shallows near Ecclerigg Point and sank. Their bodies were subsequently recovered and laid to rest in the family vaults in All Saints Church, Wigan, where there is a memorial stone to them at the back of the church.

John Hiley

June Walk – Upper Troutbeck with Andy Lowe



On a hot, sunny day, fourteen of us gathered at Church Bridge, Troutbeck to explore the northern part of Troutbeck Village, a companion piece to the walk around lower Troutbeck led by Andy Lowe in May 2021. Andy began by showing a map of the village, revealing how the houses were strung out along the west side of the valley to obtain maximum benefit from the sun. We set off up Green Gate towards the

T-junction by Troutbeck Institute, pausing to look at the Old Vicarage with its sandstone lintels. The arrival of the railway at Windermere in 1847 meant building materials could be imported from further afield. Just below the junction, we paused to admire Granary Cottage, with its oriel window also serving as a shelter for the porch below.

Turning right, we arrived at Brow Head with a shield on the wall bearing the date 1692 and initials TBM (Thomas and Margaret Braithwaite). A fire window (now blocked up) would have allowed light into the fireplace. Next to it, there is a C19th bank barn, with threshing window, one of several in the village. At High Fold, we find a 16th century house extended 20 years ago, totally in keeping with the original, an example of respecting the past without copying it. Then on to Meadowcroft, one of a very attractive grouping of houses of differing ages, which has a fine example of a crow stepped gable which, by projecting above the roof line, protects the roof slates from winds which might otherwise dislodge them.

At Longmire Yeat, there is a group of three houses from different centuries, including 19th century South View, its quoins and larger windows contrasting with its earlier neighbours. On the opposite side of the road, there are three wells named after members of the Dawson family – John, James and Margaret. We were fortunate to be able to see inside Lane Foot barn, with its ancient cruck frame truss, then we dropped down to the Mortal Man. A timber showing the date 1689 and initials IC is now unfortunately hidden behind a sign on the wall. Also unfortunately, time did not allow for a viewing of the interior of the premises!



Dropping a little further, we viewed the houses and barns at High Green, then turned to descend a track which became a footpath, with good views back to the village. The path descended very pleasantly to meet a virtually dry feeder stream of Trout Beck and led to Jesus Church, one of only two or three churches in the country to be so named. Through the outer door, a further glass door frames the magnificent East Window, best seen when the morning sun streams through. Sir Edward Burne-Jones was commissioned to design the window in the 1870s, with details by William Morris and Ford Madox Brown who, the story goes, had joined Burne-Jones on a fishing holiday nearby: a fitting finale to a most enjoyable and instructive walk.

Martin Slader

July Walk – Industrial Kendal with John Bateson

Twenty-one members of SDHS met beneath the Town Hall clock where John Bateson from the Kendal Civic Society, with two assistants, was waiting to guide a walk through the industrial history of the “auld grey toon”. John described the early history of Kendal, originally named Cherchebi (church village) by the Norse settlers and, after the Norman Conquest, Kirkby Kendal. Successive castles guarded the settlement and chartered market was established. Although Kendal was famed for its



Goodacres carpet factory – now ‘The Factory Tap’

woollen industry, tanning was already thriving and shoemaking survived until very recently. Many businesses and pubs lined both sides of the main street of Stricklandgate, Highgate and Kirkgate. From here narrow burgage plots ran down to the River Kent where the poor lived cheek by jowl with local industry. Open sewers ran down the alleyways. Wells and streams supplied polluted water. Disease and plague was rife. The establishment of the borough of Kendal provided a modicum of law and order and conditions slowly improved. The coming of the canal and the railway in the first half of C19th transformed the fortunes of the town and its citizens.

From the Town Hall we were led down Yard 39 where the tanneries were located. Kendal leather became a sought after product and, in Victorian times, K Shoes was established. Most of this area was cleared in the mid-twentieth century and modern housing built in its place. The production of woollen cloth on a domestic scale became increasingly important. We walked on down to Abbott Hall Park where a footbridge crosses the Kent and saw the Washing Steps, where the wool was cleansed of its dirt and grease.

On the far bank of the river stands the former site of Goodacre’s Carpets (now sadly closed) which used local wool and was powered by the Kent. A short section of the leat which supplied the water is visible. This mill site has been re-purposed for newer industries, including a microbrewery – a further example of Kendal’s resilience. At Canal Head stands Gilkes and Gordon who, since the mid-19th. century, have been leading manufacturers of water turbines.





The completion of the Lancaster and Kendal canal in 1819 further stimulated industrialisation with coal coming into the town and limestone heading out. A derelict reminder of Kendal's once world-renowned snuff industry stands close by. Snuff is still manufactured elsewhere in the town. Plans to re-open the canal, cruelly cut by the M6, remain a distant dream.

We are grateful to our guide, John Bateson for a most informative and stimulating walk. The weather gods smiled and all was well with the world.

David Telford-Reed

Tales from the Tapes: Mike Houston interviewed by John Hiley.
Recorded in the home of Mike Houston in Bowston 23rd February 2021 **Part 6**
(We resume with Mike starting his studies in French at Hull University)

MH: The prof was hopeless – oh, he was awful, but the modern literature chap, Charlton, he was he was great and we had a lecturer in classical French literature, Paul Genestier or Pauool as we used to call him. He couldn't speak English, he only spoke French. His special subject was like the classical period of French literature, you know, the equivalent of doing Shakespeare.

JH: Oh right, so who was represented in that period then?

MH: Who were the authors? Yes, well he did everything of Victor Hugo backwards – and there was Racine.

JH: And Voltaire, where did he come in?

MH: Yes, Voltaire too. I liked Paul Genestier, so that's really why I specialised in these writers. Thinking back, you see most of them were going for modern literature then, and I can understand it. Modern authors were all the rage at the time. The classics were frowned on but I enjoyed the likes of Racine and Corneille.

JH: What about Alphonse Daudet? Was this where you discovered Alphonse Daudet?

MH: Ah Alphonse Daudet, it's funny you should say that John because when I did A level I'd found this *Lettres de mon Moulin* in a book shop and I thought this bloke's quite good and interesting. So I had a word with my French teacher and he said 'Oh yes, Alphonse Daudet, he's good but you won't find him on the syllabus.' So he taught me a bit about him and said 'Just read him for reading French.' I think I still have the copy that he would give me?

JH: As you know Mike, I've got my own copy because you introduced Alphonse Daudet and *Lettres de mon Moulin* to us at Windermere Grammar School. So Mike,

you've told me a little bit about the subjects you did at university and of course, university life is not all about work. I dare say you had some playtime as well. So, what did you do in your time away from the studies?

MH: Well, if you came from the northeast you were sort of brought up in the land of Jacky Milburn, Jacky Charlton and Bobby Charlton and all these and it's still the case, they produced over the years some amazing footballers..

JH: So did you play football at university?

MH: Yes I did. When you went to university, you had to give a curriculum vitae of what you had been involved in. There was like a freshers' two or three days and I remember a member of the students' committee, saying 'Oh, you're a soccer player', we'll see what you're like. Come to a couple of practices.' So I did, and I suppose I started in the third team but I know I wasn't there long. It was during the first term I was there, I got into the first team which was great. Yes it got you about, you see, and you met people.

JH: Now, Nancy went to Hull University as well didn't she?

MH: That's right, yes, she was studying English.

JH: Was this collusion or coincidence?

MH: It was collusion, that's right. We'd met about Christmas time in the sixth form I think. I would, from diaries, be able to spot exactly when it was but I can't be sure. But that was it, yes, we went together as it were.

JH: And you would have good friends at university as well, other than Nancy of course.

MH: Yes, and still have them. I have quite a few that were soccer players as well that are still around and we used to have an annual old boys match. We used to go back and play the students. I haven't done that for years of course so I don't know what happened to that. It was great, you see we weren't a big university, I don't know, I think maybe about seven hundred of us when it was that external London college but you used to get to places and play some good sides.

JH: Were they local town sides or what?

MH: We were in the local town league - mid-week you see, Wednesday, you had a university game.

JH: Oh against another university?

MH: Against another university yes. We were in like the Northern Section so we would play the likes of Leeds, we'd play Durham obviously against people there that I knew. We used to play Kings College at Newcastle. We played all the Northern ones, Liverpool we used to play, Manchester and Leeds.

JH: I remember when I was playing cricket at Manchester University there was something called the British University Sports Federation and you were in regions. If you were champion of your region you got to play against the champion of another region.

MH: I think it was probably the same John. Did you ever play cricket at Hull?

JH: No.

MH: Ah, did you not, 'cos I must say it was a perfect, beautiful cricket pitch.

JH: And you took part in athletics as well?

MH: Yes, a bit but I was a lot better as a footballer than as I was a cricketer. Hockey we played as well.

JH: So Mike, now you are approaching the end of university life and graduating so what was the next stage. At some point you ended up in Windermere.

(both parties laughing)

MH: Well you got your degree first then you did your education..

JH: Oh that's right you'd have to do a year of teacher training. Was that at Hull as well?

MH: Yes it was at Hull but you had to go out to a school, you know and do a term in a school. There was a lot of secondary schools in the city itself and roundabout but there was a joke that once in every four or five years a student would have to go to Caistor in Lincolnshire. I remember us being in this gathering to be told which schools we were going to for this teaching practice, and my name was read out I was going to Caistor! Well, I thought this is a prank and the students have talked to one of the tutors....but it was true, it was Caistor! It's difficult to explain where Caistor is but if you think of the city of Lincoln itself and then a coastal town like Cleethorpes and you went in a straight line from one to the other about halfway that's where you are in Caistor. You think of Lincolnshire as being flat but this is the Lincolnshire Wolds and it's quite hilly, and I learned to ski there! It was a very bad winter and, as I say, I learned to ski in Lincolnshire. *(much jollity)*

JH: So this must be the mid to late-fifties that we've arrived at?

MH: Yes, it would be John. Yes, I went up to university in fifty two-three and it would be fifty-six-seven, roundabout that time. Yes I'll tell you when it was I was at Caistor, when that terrible Manchester United air-crash happened.

JH: Oh, the Munich aircrash. (*Ed: It was in Feb 1958*)

MH: I was exactly halfway through my teaching practice when that happened.

JH: So how had this myth about Caistor arisen? Was it a poor town or....?

MH: I don't know. I think, well, it was provincial....

JH: Nothing to do there?

MH: That's right, but, do you know, it was one of the best things that ever happened to me. I had a good landlady and everything. The staff were wonderful, and as for the French teacher, he said 'Look, I think you're good enough to take this group yourself but if you've got any problems I'll be in.' And do you know that was the best thing that ever happened.

JH: And they'd be country lads like yourself then?

MH: Yes they were but mind they weren't backward in coming forward by gum! People think of Lincolnshire as being sleepy but by heck they were sharp, and it was a soccer playing school as well, not a rugby school so everything was very good at Caistor. I liked it.

JH: Now presumably you hadn't organised Nancy to come and do teaching practice in Caistor as well? (*laughing*)

MH: Now, where was Nancy. Oh gosh John I should have thought this out before, so where did she go?

JH: She would be doing teacher training the same year? And I do recall that you ended up at Windermere Grammar School - your first appointment after your year in Caistor, wasn't it?

MH: That's right.

JH:and Nancy was still teaching somewhere. Wasn't she in Lincoln itself?

MH: Lincoln city, that's where she was. There were two big schools in Lincoln and she was at Southpark High School for girls. Yes, that was her first job, she would be there two years and she would be there when I was first at Windermere.

To be continued – next time Windermere Grammar School.