

As the centre of large estates and a seat of local government Cockermouth naturally became the location of a number of courts. These were held first in the castle, then later in the Moot Hall, the Court House, Grecian Villa (from 1954) but moved to Workington Magistrates Court (from 1979).

The exception was the Court of Audit, formed by the lords steward and the commissioners responsible for the management of the various manors, which remained in the castle. Its area of jurisdiction and purpose were described thus in 1777:-

“...the barony of Cockermouth, and the several manors of the five towns, Derwent Fells, Braithwaite, Coldale, Westdale, Aspatric, Bolton and Westward. And all leases are there granted of all demesne lands, mills, mines, profits of fairs and markets; and all rents, fines, profits are paid in there by the bailiffs and tenants of the respective manors.” [1]

The ‘fines’ mentioned above, payable when property changed hands, have already been explained. Two instances from nine in the first nine months of 1898 [2] show how varied the amounts could be:-

	PERCY MANORS	WHARTON MANORS
Manor	Braithwaite & Coledale	Great Broughton
Names of Tenant Admitted	Jno. Wm. Postlethwaite	Thomas Dobie
On what Event Admitted	Death of Wm. Postlethwaite	Surr. of Robert Beattie
Amount of Fine Assessed	£15-0s-0d	1s 8d.

Cases of trespass, recovery of debts of up to 40s. and some grievances of tenants were the concern of the Court Baron, still to this day never officially abolished but in effect superseded by the County Court Act of 1867. This court, with a jury summoned by the steward and bailiff of the Borough, met every three weeks. In 1829 it was being held in the Buck Inn, [3] but this may have been an interim arrangement between the demolition of the Moot Hall and the opening of the Court House, for it was in the Court House soon after this date. There were, however, earlier occasions when an inn was used, as in this sample case from the Court Baron records:-

“Holden at the House of John Mackreth Innholder of Cockermouth in and for the said Borough on Wednesday the Nineteenth Day of December in the Year of our Lord 1792. . .

Daniel Satterthwaite Complains of John Thompson in a plea of Trespafs on the Case upon Promises To the Plaintiffs Damage of 39-11” [4]

The castle archives contain the records of such cases from 1678 to 1857.

The Court Leet or Manor Court, active until the Summary Jurisdiction Act of 1848, dealt with minor criminal offences, administering royal jurisdiction through delegation to the lord of the manor. We have given elsewhere examples of this court’s work in appointing town officers and in drawing up byelaws, [5] and give here a selection from the many hundreds of criminal cases recorded.

At a court in 1664-

“We amerce Antho Plaskett for drawing blood upon the Borough Bailiff 6s. 8d. We amerce Antho Plaskett for calling the Bailiff a robber and that he robbed him of seven shillings 21s. We amerce Antho Plaskett for speaking falsely and undecently of Leonard Scott 20s.” [6]

Pollution of becks and streets brought frequent prosecutions, as

“We amerce John Peile, fellmonger, for lying skins in Bitter Beck contrary to payne 6s-8d.” [7]

“Jurators presentent James Busby and his wife for disturbing Thomas Plaskett Scavenger in ye Execution of his office and for taking (?) his Dunghill to lye in ye Queens high street contrary to paine and amcie him 0:6:8.” (£0-6s-8d) [8]

The work of the various searchers brought many to court –

“On the Information of Joseph France Leather Searcher and Leather Sealer, we Amercie Francis Fisher the Elder, Francis Fisher the Younger, Miles Sawrey, John Gasgarth, Joseph Thompson, and Henry Wood all Tanners in the sum of six Shillings & eight Pence severally for selling Leather unsearched and unsealed - and for refusing the Leather Searchers to do their office.”

Three further examples to show the range of affairs dealt with –

“We do continue Michael Todd and Wm. Lancaster surveyors of the highways for this ensuing year since

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they have acted nothing in the former year.”

“We amerce Hy. Atkinson for having a house office at his garth end in Bitter Beck to the greate annoyance of his neighbours 6s-8d.”

We amerce Mary Towerson for beating the Constables 3s-4d.”

As there was no ‘Towerson’ in the cess list at this time Bolton suggests that the irate woman may have been a visitor to the town.

Local lords and gentry were first given judicial powers in 1361 and their powers increased over the years until they were concerned with all crimes except treason and had wide administrative powers (wages, licensing, roads, vagrants, etc.) which eventually passed to Poor Law Guardians, Police Watch Committees, etc. - bodies largely formed of the same lords and gentry! Later much administration passed to local and central government, but their work in the courts remained, except in large cities having professional stipendary magistrates. Justices are now selected from differing occupations and have some training for the task.

In the 17th century the inhabitants of Cockermouth successively petitioned that “assizes and sessions might be held at Cockermouth” The earliest surviving record of Cumberland Quarter Sessions is a minute book for 1668-95, in which period they were held in Penrith at Michaelmas, Cockermouth in January and Carlisle at Easter and Midsummer.

The ‘Pacquet’ of 22 January 1782 recorded the cases just dealt with at Cockermouth Sessions - oaths taken by various officials of Whitehaven and Harrington ports, certifying the prices of grain, a young man charged with embezzling sacks of flour (given two months hard labour in Cockermouth House of Correction) and a great number of appeals for inheritance by bastards.

In 1858 a monthly county court was being held alternately in Cockermouth and Workington. Having jurisdiction in bankruptcy the bailiffs appointed (14 of them by 1910) were auctioneers, house agents or debt collector. [9] This court covered the area from Arkleby to Loweswater and from Keswick to the coast.

The Cockermouth Petty Sessional Division covered a much smaller area, from Plumbland to Buttermere and Wythop to Broughton Moor. [10] This was a magistrates’ court dealing with minor charges, meeting every Monday. The last Petty Sessions held in Grecian Villa were on 29 January 1979; the following week the court moved to the new court house in Workington, Cockermouth cases being heard by Cockermouth magistrates although away from the town. Three or four of the ten JPs sit at any one time (Appendix 13).

The press announcement still appearing early in the 20th century [11]

“ that The Court Leet and view of Frankpledge of our Sovereign Lord the King with the Court Baron of the Rt. Hon. Charles Henry, Baron Leconfield, Lord of the Honour of Cockermouth, etc. , will be held”

on a certain day takes organisation for keeping good order back to Anglo-Saxon times. Under the Norman system of frankpledge the heads of a group of families bound together for the good conduct of each other, a system which led to the Leet or Jury system. The Anglo-Saxon equivalent of frankpledge was frith-bonds. under which the members had to answer a summons to appear at a time set by the lord to witness for and against those accused of crimes against life and property or neglect of duties. [12]

Then followed the system of juries elected by the Court Leet. The list of jurors was read at the Michaelmas and Easter courts. In 1691 we read

“Terrewestell Peile for not answering his name at the court amerced 6d.”

He was an important Cockermouth burgess and lived in property out of which the Cocoa House in Kirkgate (No. 22) was built. [13] The juries from outside the town were sworn in from the ‘turnsmen’ of each village. In 1705 there were fourteen villages or groups of villages making appointments of 1 to 5 jurors, the list beginning –

“3 Lorton Johos Wilkinson Jur

Josephus Peile egr. Jur

Thomas Peile Jur

(Jur represented jura, signifying they had been sworn) [14]

Quakers refused to swear oaths and we find the following in the list for October 1711-

“Blindbothel James Dickinson Quaker

& John Gill Jur

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Eaglesfield Thom Hudson Quaker" [15]

If a juror failed to attend a fine was levied on his village.

The crimes with which these courts had to deal might have a different emphasis from today, although few have disappeared completely. Ill-treatment of horses was very common at one time, as were press notices advertising for news of apprentices who had run away or warning the public against pickpockets on market days. It is interesting to find vandalism 100 years ago - a band of young farm men going about breaking into larders and senselessly stripping washing off clothes-lines and scattering it around (1877), 20 panes of glass broken in empty property (1876), damage to trees in the cemetery (1876), breaking of street lamps by catapult, one lamp having a new glass every day for a week (1877). [16] Two interesting press items from the same period - a prosecution for failing to report an outbreak of foot and mouth disease, [17] and a comment that the profanity of young children playing in Cockermouth was worse than anything one would hear in the army or Billingsgate. [18] In 1843 John Parker of Papcastle thought up an unusual offence when he threw a cabbage down William Massey's chimney - "a most disgraceful act" which cost him 11s." (55p) [19]

Going back another 100 years, we find in the early numbers of the 'Pacquet' - several carts and a beached boat thrown into Whitehaven harbour and windows and doors in houses broken (1776); a reward offered for a piece of cloth 52 yards by 3 yards stolen from the bleach green in Bridekirk (1783); Mary Wilson, who kept a house of ill-fame in Workington, sent to the Cockermouth House of Correction for falsely claiming money for children expected, with a note that others would be joining her (1783); and an advertisement seeking to trace a Scot, Jane Kennedy, believed to be the mother of a three-month old girl found deserted in a Cockermouth street (1779). [20] In 1912 John Bolton was incensed by

"those who not only smash the lamps and windows in our streets, but disfigure painted and cemented walls in such a disgraceful manner with chalk,... The striking of matches on newly-painted shop doors is nothing to the disfigurement of the town by the idiotic chalking now so common." [21]

(Some things never change )

If punishment was by fine the amount was less than £2, for the Court Leet was not allowed to recover through the bailiff this amount or more, so penalties of £1-19s-11d. were common. Physical punishment was also used. We have travelled a long way since the ordeals of the 12th century - by combat for knights, fire for freemen and water for serfs - but comparatively recently punishment could be barbaric. In 1756 a horse-thief was sentenced by Quarter Sessions

'to be publickly whipped until his body be bloody at the post in the publick market in Cockermouth',

so Cockermouth had a whipping post as well as stocks, of which a ruling in 1679 says

"it is put in paine that ye Constables shall put ye stocks in good repair before they goe out of office sub poena 6s-8d."

The last person to sit in the Cockermouth stocks was a plasterer named Corrie, a Scot. who was fined 5s. or a spell in the 'bilboes'. He chose the latter for a day and as he sat there occasionally placed half-a-crown in each eye to show that he sat there because he refused to pay the fine and not because of poverty. [22]

Cockermouth also had liberty of pillory and liberty of tumbrell, probably the cucking stool used for ducking women offenders.

If the culprit went to gaol it might be to the cells of the police station or to the house of correction. The first police station in the town was in the present Challoner Street, earlier known as Globe Lane and Chandler Went and also as Kitty Went, 'kitty' being the slang term for the local lock-up. But at the same time there was in existence the House of Correction on the bank of Bitter Beck, opposite the Bowling Green Inn in St. Helen's Street. This was possibly built because the accommodation in Kitty Went was too small. The house had iron doors and iron-lined ceilings, with rings used to shackle prisoners by the ankles. They slept on a concrete slope near the fireplace. [23] The County Treasurer's accounts for 1741 include a payment to Thomas Holloway, "Master of the House of Correction at Cockermouth his salary £2-10-0", so this was a county responsibility.

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For a period the House of Correction was known as 'Billy Macbeth's Parlour', after the keeper, who lived on the upper floor. The building was recently demolished.

In 1854-6 a new police station was built on the bank of the Cocker behind the Court House. It

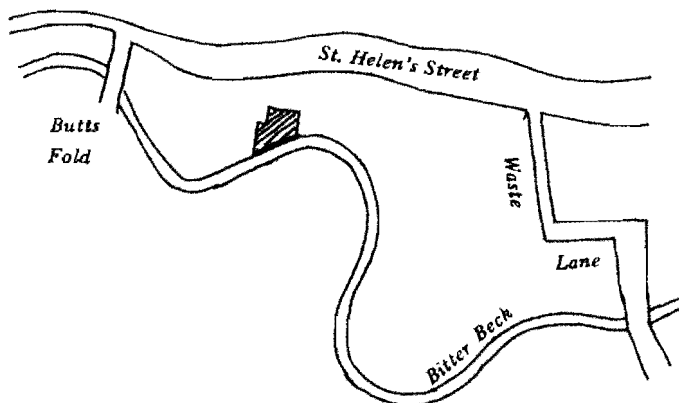


Fig. 45. *The site of the House of Correction.*

incorporated a new 'house of correction' - five good cells, a charge room and an exercise yard, [24] and one feature was direct access by a ramp to a door in the rear of the Court House which opened into the court room.

In 1894 came a further move, to the present building on the site of the Horse and Harness Inn and occupied the site of 'Hunters' yard to the rear, which contained several cottages and workshops. In common with other towns, hangings took place in Cockermouth. Over 200 offences carried the death penalty and 400 more meant transportation to Australia until 1823, when Peel removed 180 crimes from the capital offences list. The situation had arisen where a humane jury would sometimes refuse to convict rather than hang a man for a petty offence. Hangings were public until the middle of the 19th century. Two raiders of a house at Cleety Bank "were taken to the top of Gallowbarrow Field, as was the custom of the time, to within sight of the place where the crime was committed. There, on a gallows or gibbet, they were hanged. . . . The exact spot where this execution took place is opposite the road leading to Brigham on the site now occupied by the reservoir of the new waterworks. From this circumstance the place obtained the name of Gallows Barrow, by time changed to Gallowbarrow." [25]

To be 'within sight of the place where the crime was committed' the gallows may have been erected at different places along this stretch of road, which would account for differing traditions of the exact location.

For centuries people lived in fear of violence and theft and we have seen that steps were taken to make life more secure and orderly. For a long time the only policing in Cockermouth was done by the two constables appointed annually by the Court Leet. But the populace was expected to help them –

'Every tenant refusing to raise hue and cry' after a felon the same shall be amerced for every default 6s-8d"  
[26]

In 1820 the town had one constable, helped occasionally by the poorhouse master. [27]

Peel's London force was formed in 1829 and a series of acts in the following 30 years extended the police powers and responsibilities of local councils, with the help of government grants. In 1847 the Challoner Street station had a superintendent and three men, covering Cockermouth, Keswick, Maryport and the villages, [28] and when a select committee enquired in 1852-3 there were still only four men in this Derwent Division.

The chief constable complained that with three men he had insufficient for a night patrol. Justices were empowered to form county police forces in 1839 and they became compulsory in 1856, jointly under local and national control in administration, discipline and finance.

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The castle records contain actions for distraint, usually by the bailiff on behalf of the earl for rent arrears. Sometimes the matter was settled by selling stock, as in two cases [29] on 15 August 1766 when Thomas Green, bailiff to George, Earl of Egremont, seized three geldings and three cows from Hugh Cowperthwaite of Cockermonth, tanner, and George Beeby, also of Cockermonth, a leather dresser, they being given five days to pay rent and costs before the stock was sold. Some cases of distraint are more pathetic reading. Joseph Harrison's is a good example. On 27th September 1792

"An Inventory of all and Singular the Goods Chattels and Cattle Seized and Distrained ... By George Ramsay Bailiff of the Right Hon'ble George O'Brien Earl of Egremont for the Sum of Eight Hundred and Sixty ffour Pounds and Nineteen Shillings being Rent due and in Arrears...for certain Mefsuages Lands and Tenements Situate at and near Park House in the Parish of Cockermonth." . [30]

There follows a long and detailed list of all stock, field by field, some 473 animals. Then comes the inventory of the house, missing nothing:

"In the Dwelling House [living room].One Clock and Case, two Dining Tables with some Knives and fforks in the Drawer One Stand Table, One Arm Chair - Six Small Chairs - One Snap Table, One Drefser on the same Six Pewter Plates - Three Pewter Dishes, Three Delf Dishes - Six Glafsed Pictures - two Other Pictures - on the Chimney Piece three Iron Candle Sticks One brafts Candlestick two Tea Canisters one Pair of Tongs and Poker - In the Clofsett Eighteen Delf Plates - One Gun hanging in the House - one ffender - one Weather Glafs - one Pair of Toasting Prickers. Upon the Shelves Twenty Cheeses." [31]

This continued throughout the house, room by room. The outside premises were then examined - the swine hull (two young swine) and all the equipment, carts, etc. in the stackyard, the barn, the garden, the fold, the stable, the byre and "Six Hundred and ffifteen Stooks of Oats Cut, Eighteen Stooks of Barley Cut" in Whinney Park.

There followed the concluding statement that unless arrears were paid within five days goods would be sold.

The castle records also contain the verdicts of inquests in the Liberties of Cockermonth and Egremont. The life and service of each person in a manor having once been regarded as the property of the lord, inquests and inquiries into death by misadventure or violence were a matter for the lord's courts. The first is dated 4 May 1610, when Thomas Watson had hanged himself, and after a few more occasional records they become complete for the period 1693 to 1875. The right to appoint coroners in the two liberties can be traced back to 1292, the time of Isabella de Fortibus and Thomas de Lucy. The coroner for both was then the constable of Cockermonth Castle, appointed by Thomas, with Isabella's steward as his assessor. [32] (Appendix 14) The Great Survey of 1578 stated that the coroner must

"doe and execute all and whatsoever to the said office belongeth for and concerninge all attachements of the Crowne and likewise of all felonies burglaries theftes murders manslaughteres robberies and of all felonies whatsoever . . ." [33]

The duties of a coroner were thus wider than the conducting of inquests. The Liberty of Cockermonth included the Borough and Manor, the Lordship of Derwentfells and the Lordship of the Five Towns. There are records [34] of many drownings in the Derwent, Cocker and Tom Rudd, even in a horse trough, and often the victims were drunk, though one was crossing the Derwent on an illegal fishing expedition. Causes of death which recur include excessive drinking, being run over by a cart, falling downstairs, house fires, suicides by cutting one's throat or taking arsenic (sometimes when pregnant), fits and the killing of infants. Many verdicts reflect the industries of the time. Subtle changes occur, such as the replacement of the description of 'lunatic' by 'unsound mind', and in the 1850s 'no violence' is added to some verdicts and in the 1860s 'temporary insanity' appears for the first time.

A few of the great number of verdicts are given here because they reflect aspects of life in earlier times –

"1702 5 Dec.	Infant daughter of Margaret Lindell. Thrown into river.
1727 1 Sept.	Thomas Hodgson. Drowned by falling from High Dam Bridge.
1729 17 Dec.	Lancelot Hudson. Drowned by falling from Cocker Bridge while intoxicated. This gave Richard Baynes, the coroner, the opportunity to comment on the state of the bridge.
1750 18 Feb.	John Gash, infant. Accidentally smothered in bed. The bedding which had caused the death was confiscated for the deadand.

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1777 4 June Joseph Dickson. Drowned in cistern at dyehouse.  
1811 1 Aug. George Wrangham. Drowned in milldam, River Derwent.  
1828 28 March Thomas Beeby. Drowned himself in water pit at tanyard.  
1832 5 March James Smith 8 and Joseph Banks 9 : Killed by falling wall  
in school in Back Lane, the opening day of the General Sunday School. [35]  
1836 9 Nov. John Mitchell. Found in hayrick at the Woolpack with bruises.  
1840 2 Dec. Fletcher Wilson 41 . Hanged himself in the House of Correction.  
1840 24 Sept. Isabella Casson 22. Caught in carding machine at Rubby Banks Woollen Mill.  
1842 14 April John McAdam. Natural death at workhouse. Criticism of Loweswater  
overseers for allowing him to go about semi-naked.  
1856 5 July William John Maxwell 30. Injured at the railway station.  
1864 15 July John Winder 2. Drowned at Paper Mill. No violence.  
1870 7 April Margaret Craig 82. Burnt by clothes catching fire in bed when  
lighting her pipe.”

As a borough Cockermouth was in 1295 given the right to send two representatives to Parliament. Supporting an MP was expensive and, after the first pair, the town failed to send any more members until 1640 in the time of Charles I, so that for three and a half centuries it was unrepresented. From that date until 1867 two members were again returned.

Cockermouth not only sent its own MPs but was the centre for the election of county representatives until 1832, an indication of the town's importance. Until the reforms of that year Cumberland had a total of six members - 2 for the county itself, 2 for Carlisle and 2 for Cockermouth, another indication of the town's status.

The Reform Act of 1832 extended the franchise. At the same time boroughs with a population of less than 2000 lost both their members and those between 2000 and 4000 were allowed only one. In an effort to retain two MPs Cockermouth made successful representations in 1832 to bring Brigham, Bridekirk, Papcastle and Eaglesfield into the division, thus increasing the electorate from 166 to 356.

Similar reforms were made in the Second Act of 1867, the voting qualification being lowered and boroughs of up to 10,000 now losing one representative. Cockermouth was one of the towns affected and from now on had only one MP. The process was continued in the Acts of 1884 and 1885 which gave all house-holders the vote and merged towns of less than 10,000 into county divisions. Cockermouth was no longer a division. It became first part of the Cockermouth and Workington Division, then Penrith and Cockermouth and in 1950 was placed in the new Workington Division (Appendix 15).

By the 18th century a parliamentary seat was eagerly sought and candidates would go to almost any lengths of bribery, corruption and expense to be elected. Burgages were bought as a means of obtaining the votes of the tenants. In 1756 Sir James Lowther bought 134 burgages in Cockermouth for £58,060, at prices ranging from £300 to £650, a large sum for those days. [1] A private memorandum book of the steward of Cockermouth Castle recorded that

"A majority of the burghers of Cockermouth having sold their burgages in the year 1756 to Sir James Lowther by means thereof Sir John Mordaunt and Charles Jenkinson, Esq. , [Lowther's nominees] were returned members of Parliament for Cockermouth April 3rd. 1761". [2]

Elections were no twelve hour event. In the county election of 1768, for example, which cost the four candidates between £80,000 and £100,000, voting began in Cockermouth on 30th March and ended on 20th April, nineteen polling days later. [3] For this period the county was in a state of acrimonious uproar. There had been trouble between James Lowther and the Duke of Portland about the Forest of Inglewood and the dispute was taken to Parliament who ruled in favour of Lowther. [4] Almost immediately afterwards Parliament was dissolved. Both Lowther and the Duke put up candidates. The result was disputed on technical grounds of qualification to vote and finally a compromise was reached that in future the seats would be shared between the two factions, an arrangement which lasted for 63 years. [5]

Writing of Cockermouth, the Universal British Directory said in 1790

"the right hon. the Earl of Lonsdale, now being in possession of the majority of the borough votes, having purchased the greater part of the houses in the borough at a most enormous price, is careful that they are tenanted by such only as will obey his recommendations as implicitly as the fourteen hundred colliers he caused to be made in one day freemen of Carlisle."

The secret ballot was not introduced until 1872 and a voter was completely in the power of his landlord, for details were published after each election, as in this list for Cockermouth (on this occasion including the voting qualification):-

"in the year 1737 ... one Burgess to serve in Parliament in the place of Sr. Willfrd. Lawson Deced. the Candidates being

Richard Davenport Esqr	Eldred Curwen Esqr.
1. Mr. Rob. Tubman. A Stable in Kirkgate.	Mr. Wm. Tate, Posson. of Joss Simpson Butcher.
5. Tho. France. The House he lives in.	John Fletcher Esqr. A Mill in the River Coker. Posson. of Bayliffe."

(and so on to 130 names in the first column and 149 in the second.) [6]

The Lowthers (Lonsdales) were not the only family to buy their way into power. There are records of the Earl of Egremont's expenses, such as "Paid Expenses in Solliciting the Votes and

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entertaining the Freeholders of Great and Little Broughton £23s-6d.”, one of a number of entries in 1767. [7] James Lowther controlled nine parliamentary seats - 2 for Westmorland County, 1 for Cumberland County, 2 for Cockermouth, 1 for Appleby, 1 for Carlisle and 2 for Haslemere in Surrey which he had purchased from a London attorney. These MPs. were known in Parliament as “Jemmy’s ninepins”. On one occasion a Cockermouth member made an extravagant speech in the House of Commons, which brought a sarcastic reply from Mr. Burke, followed by loud and continued cheers. At this moment Mr. Fox entered the House and on asking what the noise was about was told “Oh nothing of consequence, only Burke has knocked down one of Lord Lonsdale’s ninepins.” [8]

Lowther was quite an active member. In 1775 and again in 1776 he put forward unsuccessful resolutions condemning the use of foreign troops in the dominions without the consent of Parliament and in 1781 was again unsuccessful in two attempts to end the war with America, [9] a matter which affected him personally, for Whitehaven lost half of its 200 ships in the conflict.

Bribery, coercion and violence remained a feature of elections well into the 19th century. One vote was considered so vital that a man might be offered the wiping out of his rent arrears or promised to be made comfortable for life if only he would vote for the right candidate. [10] In 1852 a man was made drunk and taken to Hassness to be hidden until the election was over and another was conveyed to Scotland, pursued by the rival party. [11] On occasion fighting broke out for the actual bodily possession of a voter!

All this was in contrast to the undertaking given by the bailiff that he would accept no reward or gratuity but would return “such Person as shall . . . appear to have the majority of legal votes”. It was his duty to call the burgesses together to elect Cockermouth’s representative, as by the following proclamation:

“On Saturday the twenty-seventh day of this instant December at the Moothall in the said Borough at ten of the clock in the forenoon of the same day, then and there to elect one Burgess to Represent the said Borough of Cockermouth in his Majesty’s said Parliament in the Room of Percy Wyndham O’Brien Esq. appointed to a government office . God save the King.” 23rd. Decr. 1755 - at three of the clock in the afternoon the above proclamation was made by the above named John Jackson at the Moothall Stairs in Cockermouth afd.” [12]

In more recent times election results were proclaimed in the Public Hall in Station Street and shown nearby on slides in the upper windows of the West Cumberland Times - office at No. 29. [13]

In the twentieth century Cockermouth has been represented by three long-serving Labour members - Tom Cape (born at the Spread Eagle Inn) from 1918 to 1945 in the Cockermouth and Penrith Division and Fred Peart in that and the new Workington Division from 1945 to 1976. Fred Peart served twice as the Minister for Agriculture, then as Lord President of the Council, as Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons and later as Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords. [14] Dale Campbell-Savours, was elected in 1979, and is now a life peer after his retirement in 2001.

In the 12th and 13th centuries there was a variety of taxes to provide money for the king. Sometimes these were for a particular purpose, such as the crusades or the marriage of Henry III’s sister in 1235. [15] Noutgeld or cornage rent, originally paid in cattle, exempted the payer from military service abroad, while scutage was a payment in lieu of military service. Carucage (or hidage) and tailage were forms of land taxation. Money was also gained from fines and penalties for favours granted, for assistance in law and as penalties for offences. Another source was the farming out by escheators of lands which had been forfeited or had reverted to the Crown. In all these forms of taxation the more important families in and around Cockermouth would be involved, and the less important too as the lord of the manor recouped some of his losses from his tenants. The earliest record of tax payments made to national funds is the Pipe Rolls or Great Rolls of the Exchequer, annual compilations which registered the revenue passing through the Treasury. The earliest Pipe Roll for Cumberland and Westmorland was for about AD 1130. There was then a gap until 1160, since when the records have been almost unbroken.

In 1332 records of the ‘lay subsidies, as the national taxes became known, show 33 inhabitants of Cockermouth as paying a total of £42-16s-10d., the two highest being £3-13s-9d. by Alan Wythehoures and £3-1s-9d. by Michael de Eilton. 16 people in Papcastle paid altogether £75, £15 of this being from Alan son of Scot. [16] The average tax over Cumberland, which then had a population of between twenty and thirty thousand, was about 3s. a year. [17] The tax was calculated on the value of movable goods - possessions of all kinds, including crops, usually assessed when the harvest was



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just in and stocks at their highest. There were some excepted items armour, riding horses, jewellery, knights' robes, etc. The tax settled after a time at one fifteenth of the value of such goods from people living in the country and one tenth from town dwellers. [18] Begun in 1188 to help with Palestine campaigns, it lasted until 1623 and at its Peak in the 14th century brought the exchequer about £100,000 a year. The method of assessment was that the two or more knights or chief assessors appointed for each county by the king summoned the most capable men in each 'hundred' or subdivision of the shire and from them chose twelve, who were sworn in to their task. These twelve then took four men and the reeve or recognised leader from each township and visited every house to assess the value of the goods. [19] There were many other forms of taxation at various times. [20] To name a few - an export tax on wool, first ½ mark in 1266 but during the Hundred Years' War this ½ mark plus 40s. on every sack; the hearth tax at 2s. a hearth from 1662-89, with tradesmen and the poor exempted; the window tax first introduced in 1662 to replace the damaged coinage and abolished in 1851; a stamp tax on legal documents, newspapers, etc.; duties on horses - 10s. in 1784 with £2-2s. added if used for racing; taxes on carriers and coach proprietors; and taxes on industry, such as the hat tax of 3d. to 2s. on hats sold and a licence of 5s. a year for those who sold them. Added to these were, and still are, a variety of customs and excise duties, inland revenue and income taxes, purchase and value added taxes, licences for many things and activities, etc. In all of these Cockermonth people were involved and we shall have reason to refer to some of them in greater detail.

Before the 1870 Act brought compulsory education, academic learning was only for the few. Except for that provided at the old Grammar School the process was largely haphazard, confined to the upper classes and mainly for boys - though not entirely so, for when W. Gell toured the Lakes in 1797 he spent an evening on Crummock Water when

“we rowed two of the village maidens and a friend of theirs whose nicer feelings, for she had been educated in Cockermouth, could neither bear the motion of the boat, or the landing on the new island where the grass was not perfectly free from dew”. [1]

Apparently a Cockermouth education had its disadvantages! The survey of religious houses, etc., which Henry VIII had made in 1546 includes the entry:-

“Cockermouthe. A stipendarye in the parishe there used to kepe and teach a grammar schole there and to pray for the soule of the founder for ever. Rowland Noble, incumbent and master of the said schole, of thage of xxxvj yeres, hath the clere yerely revenue of the same for his salarie . . . Cxvj s. (£5.80)” [2]

In 1676 the free grammar school was built where All Saints Church Rooms now stand, subscribed for by some or all of Philip Lord Wharton, Sir George Fletcher, Sir Richard Graham, Doctor Smith (the Dean but later Bishop of Carlisle), Richard Lowry and Richard Tubman. An inscription over the door of what was an outstandingly good building for the town at that time read:-

“SCHOL : HUJUS FUND:  
JACT : FUERENT XXV DIE  
MENSIS MAIJ AN DOM:  
MDCLXXVI”

viz: “The foundations of this school were laid on 25th day of the month of May 1676 “[3] (Plate 20).

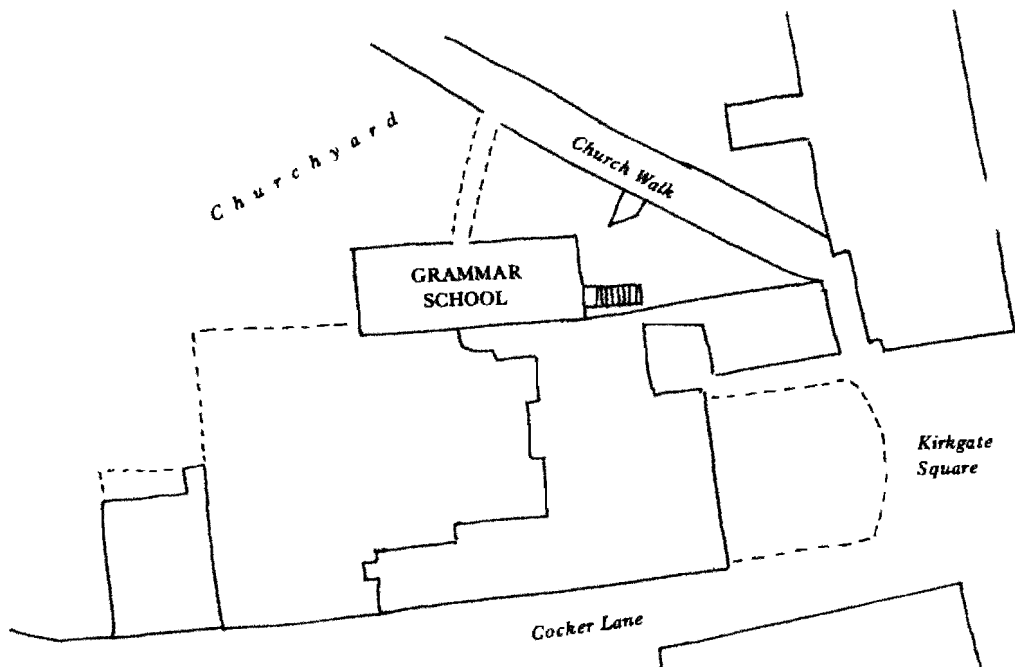


Fig. 46. Position of the 1676 school (based on 1863 OS map).

The Rev. Gaven Noble, assistant master at Appleby, came to Cockermouth as master of this new school, becoming also vicar of All Saints from 1679 to 1691. Part of a tablet in the school, which has been incorporated in the porch of the present church rooms, reads:-

“Has aedes pulchras cum postera viderit aetas  
Et Lowry et Tubman sit grate utrique Richardo,  
Ultima cujus habet superscriptum linen nomen  
Hajus erat prima gymnasiarcha scholae.

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GAVENUS NOBLE, 1676”.

This translates as “When posterity sees this beautiful building give thanks to Lowry, Tubman and Richardo. The first master of the school - Gaven Noble 1676.”

However, there must have been some school between the backward look of “used to keep’ in 1546 and the opening of 1676. As early as 1554 Henry Fletcher, vicar of Towne-Malling and brother of William of Cockermouth Hall, left £80 in his will for a schoolmaster at Cockermouth. [4] A list of church possessions in 1673 has several references to endowments and equipment of the school. In 1672 10s. was paid for “rent of Schoole”, suggesting that it used a hired room or possibly met in the church. This was the opinion of a West Cumberland Times leader - “Before 1676, the year the school was built, there was a free grammar school in Cockermouth, which lacked an appropriate habitation”. [5] In 1717 the income was £26-15s. per year - £10 from Fletcher Vane, impropiator of the living; £5 from Mrs. Fletcher of Tallentire; £5 from the Duke of Somerset; £5 from house rents; 35s. interest. By 1847 the endowments were £24-3s-ld., including 6s-8d. from Embleton, for the school was the Free School of Cockermouth and Embleton. For some years Lord Lonsdale added another £10 to the tithes money which came via him. [6] In 1869 a national Schools Enquiry Commission reported on endowed grammar schools and went into considerable detail on the running and accommodation of the Cockermouth school, and of the difficulties which confronted the newly appointed master.

“The endowment is small. . . . Some small payments are made by the churchwardens to the master . . . which have amounted to about £15 in the last three years. The school had sunk very low when the present master was appointed, and the yard or playground had been appropriated by the inhabitants of the neighbouring cottages. He has, however, begun to raise it in the estimation of the townspeople. . . . few boys . . . but the numbers are increasing. . . . 15s. per quarter for ‘reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, English grammar, and history’ for boys under 12 years of age. For boys above that age instruction in the classics. . . one guinea a quarter. French, music and drawing are ‘extra subjects’. Boys from a distance may be lodged in the town with persons approved by the master. . . . 8s. per week. The master may take boarders, but at present has no house, none being attached to the school. The school buildings are very old and weather-beaten, but are sufficiently comfortable inside. . . . This ought to be a good school . . . A body of trustees should be chosen out of the magistrates and landowners of the neighbourhood . . . .” [7]

The school building was within the church grounds and its whole life very much under church influence, the Bishop of Chester granting “licence and faculty to teach and instruct Children in the Art of Grammar, Writing, Arithmetick, and other lawful and useful learning in the free School in Cockermouth”, the master to teach the catechism every week in Latin or English and to take the children to church every Sunday and Festival Day. [8]

The hopes of the Commission seem to have been realised to some extent, for in 1875 the local press complained that the school’s prize-giving and entertainment held in the large room of the New Auction Company was overcrowded. [9] A press advertisement of the same year stated that the curriculum included preparation for Oxford and Cambridge Local Examinations, Professional and Commercial pursuits and Universities. [10] It was only after two government commissions had reported in the 1860s that the narrow curriculum of all grammar schools began to be broadened, some science, literature and commercial arithmetic gradually being added. In some ways the curriculum of a private girls’ school was more related to life, the study of art, music and literature being regarded as a necessary preparation for marriage. The school did have some old boys who made names for themselves - Wordsworth, Fearon Fallows astronomer royal and Fletcher Christian of the ‘Bounty’ mutiny amongst them. Little seems to have been done to improve the building. As far back as 1828 the Charity Commissioners had described the schoolhouse as “very old and requiring repair”. The 1869 report above describes it as old and weatherbeaten and a few months before the 1875 prize-giving two boys had fallen through the floor when a rotten beam gave way. [11] A vestry meeting was called in April 1875 to discuss rebuilding but five years later it was still described as “a dilapidated apology for a school”. [12] It is significant that about 1880 the town was trying to acquire Wordsworth House from Lord Lonsdale for use as a grammar school. [13] In 1895 the building, already disused and the school apparently ended, was conveyed by the Charity Commissioners to the vicar and churchwardens of All Saints Church, the endowment to be paid to the schoolmaster during his life. There was strong opposition to a suggestion that the endowment be transferred to St. Bees school, as Cockermouth people still hoped that the grammar school might be revived. [14]

The records of the Senhouse family, who in the 1700s sent their children to Cockermouth School (later generations went to Hawkshead and St. Bees), show that, at least for some periods, there

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was provision for girls as well as boys. The family accounts for 1735 include £14-5s. for two years boarding and drugs for Billy; £6-19s-3d. for Joe's boarding, books and shoes; and six guineas for boarding Kitty, Joe and Nanny, including the cost of their inoculation. The basic payment was a guinea a year for teaching, with up to a guinea entrance fee for children of 'respectable parents', "the children of the poor nothing but the cockpenny". The 'cockpenny' was 5s. [25p] for a Senhouse in 1750. [15]

Earlier in the century, Bishop Gastrell wrote that "ye curates who teach school have only twelve pence p. quarter, with the addition of whittlegate (board in parishioners' homes) and 'harden Sark (a coarse shirt), the right to keep sheep on the common and the cockpenny and any other income possible from the schools." Collingwood commented that a schoolmaster in Cumberland had a poor life, possible only to a native! [16]

At the opening of the 19th century there were three types of school - the public schools for the few, giving a classical education and noted for bad discipline; the old endowed grammar schools, such as Cockermouth School, many of which were in a state of decay; and privately run schools catering chiefly for the dissenting middle class, with better discipline and offering a more scientific and more modern education. Also at this time were beginning two systems of schooling which developed side by side throughout the country in the 19th century. The British Schools, run by the free church organisation of the British and Foreign School Society and offering undenominational Bible teaching, were soon followed by the National Schools, developed as a counter-measure by "The National Society for the Education of the Poor according to the Principles of the Church of England" . Cockermouth's British School was in Market Street [17] and, apart from a comment in 1847 that it was well attended, no records appear to exist. The National School began in New Street and this we shall consider presently. As the century progressed an increasing number of private schools opened in the town. Jollie in 1811 mentioned three schoolmasters, Parson and White have nine 'academies' in their directory of 1829 and Mannix and Whellan 11 schools in 1847, including the Grammar, British, National and Union (workhouse) schools. At various times there were a day classical and commercial school in Globe Lane, a ladies' boarding and day school in Castlegate, a ladies' seminary in Moorfield House and Mr. J.S.R. Rodham's high-class school for young gentlemen at Weston Lodge in Brigham Road, with accommodation for a limited number of boarders. Moving into the 20th century, Harford School was in the clinic building in Crown Street, then moved to Norham House and later to St. Helen's School, the girls to be seen walking in formation in the town in their brown uniforms. At first only children of professional people were admitted to Harford, but the owners were forced to widen the intake to include those of tradesmen. Fees were at one time £3 a term, with astronomy and Latin amongst the subjects taught.

Returning to the 19th century, the government first showed an interest in education when it made a grant of £20,000 in 1833 to the British and National Societies, both of which used the cheap monitorial system - each child cost about 16s-6d. a year. Parliamentary grants and interest increased, until the unfavourable report of a commission on education resulted in the Education Act of 1870. This act made education compulsory and also legislated for the setting up of school boards to provide primary education where the efforts of the voluntary societies were found to be insufficient. In the next 20 years attendance was quadrupled, absence being punishable by fine from 1876. The immediate result in Cumberland was that the ratio of 38 children to one teacher in 1851 rose to 53 in 1871,[18] but gradually fell during the next 20 years as more teachers were trained. In spite of compulsion a quarter of the county's children still had no regular education, largely because of the growth of industry and the value to parents of their children's earnings. Many who did attend were over-worked, undernourished, badly clothed and too tired to benefit.

Even before the 1870 Act Cumberland seems to have a good record in education, in spite of some short-comings, to judge from marriage statistics. In 1839-45 forty one per cent of those marrying in England and Wales were unable to sign their names in the register, but Cumberland couples did much better than this with 26%, second only to London. The proportion continued to improve - down to 23.4% in 1861 and 21.6% in 1871. [19]

Under the Act a school board of seven members was elected for Cockermouth. [20]

The School Board rate was 3d. in the pound. The clerk was paid a salary of £15 per year with an additional £15 for his duties as attendance officer. The Board met fortnightly and one of its first decisions was to take over New Street schools, [21] from which the National School had recently

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moved to new premises in Kirkgate. The arrangement was made that the buildings should be used for elementary education from Monday to Friday, for which the Board would pay a nominal rent of 1s a year and do all repairs, and that the Vicar and Churchwardens of Christ Church should use them on Saturday and Sunday. However, the New Street premises with their accommodation for 325 proved too small, as places were needed for 230 girls and for a similar number of boys. Additional accommodation had to be found. There were in March 1874 ten private schools in the town, including four dame schools. [22] These ten were asked to make returns of their facilities, etc., which the dame schools with their unsuitable accommodation and inefficient instruction were understandably reluctant to provide. The most hopeful solution to the problem was to use the schools of Miss Harley and Miss Garnett for 50 and 38 girls respectively and the government inspector was asked to visit them, as a result of which they were approved by the Education Department. Also the Board informed the parents of five to seven-year-olds attending dame schools that they must transfer them to efficient elementary schools, but they relented over this as it would have caused hardship to the four women who earned a living this way. Dame schools had one attraction for children over other schools - crowded round the 'dame' in a small room they kept warmer!

The early days of the Board were not without difficulties. Relationships with All Saints National Schools were very strained. The Board paid All Saints 3d. per child per week. The All Saints fee was 4d., but the Board was legally limited to 3d. At meeting after meeting the question arose of the selection of children by All Saints. If a number arrived for admission they chose the brighter and cleaner ones, sending the others to New Street or Fairfield on the pretext that All Saints was full. They were even accused of expelling dull and dirty children, for the Board schools to take, in order to make room in All Saints for more promising applicants and of simply refusing to admit dirty children when there was room for them.

A further persistent problem was attendance, some scholars being very irregular. Monday was the worst day. Mr. Black, headmaster of New Street, reported 62 absences on a June Monday in 1874 - they were helping to herd sheep and cattle at the market. Other factors working against regular attendance were the demands of the farms on which many of the children lived and the lack of boots and decent clothing of the poorer pupils. In July 1876 there were in the town 879 children aged from 5 to 13 and another 438 under five, 658 were boys and 659 girls. The returns showed that 112 were attending All Saints, 211 New Street, 87 Fairfield, 31 Miss Harleys and 27 Miss Garnett's. The efficient private schools of Mr. Haughton, Mr. Rodham, Miss Shaw, Miss Naisbit, Miss Wise and Miss Herd had another 79, while the dame schools of Mrs. Brough, Mrs. Shearman, Miss Wilson and Miss Fletcher had a total of 94. Only 21 children over five were not at school, but against this apparently satisfactory state must be remembered the poor attendance of many who were registered.

These were the days of payment by results and 149 children at New Street were presented for examination in 1875, of whom 133 passed in reading, 90 in writing and 113 in arithmetic. Grants due totalled £161-6s-1d. The inspector's remarks on the mixed school (above infant age) included:

"...numbers largely increased...great improvement...evidently been conducted with vigour and ability...improvement in arithmetic very marked...spelling still weak in the second and in lower part of the third standard...handwriting of the lower standards too small...Great care should be taken to induce children to come to school with clean hands and faces...The pupil teachers have done their papers well, and are efficient in their school duties.." [23]

There were also suggestions about improvements to the premises and equipment. At one time this examination of pupils decided whether they could leave at 11 or had to remain until 12 years old, a matter of interest to parents who needed their earnings.

When faced with the problem of accommodation the School Board considered in March 1874 the site of Wilson's hat factory, recently offered to the Local Board of Health, but it was rejected because of the noise of the nearby street and market. Attention was turned to the Fair Field, but the Local Board at first refused to sell as there was doubt about the legality of such a sale. However, a quarter of an acre was sold for a school site for £400, with another £300 being paid for land adjoining for a schoolmistress's house.

The purpose of the latter was that her presence would reduce broken windows and other damage, but the house was finally omitted from the scheme on grounds of economy.

The girls' school was erected at a cost of £1800 in 1875 and formerly opened in April 1876 as "Fairfield Girls Board School" with a fee of 3d. per week including books and apparatus. There were

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seven applicants for the position of mistress, which carried a salary of £90 per year. There was also an assistant mistress, and a sewing mistress was appointed to teach for 1½ hours on each of three days a week for £13 a year.

The boys needed more room and a boys' school was opened on the Fairfield site in 1884, the cost being about £3,300. The boys left New Street and by the end of the year plans had been submitted by the Primitive Methodists for converting the building to a chapel.

The accommodation on the Fairfield site was now 465, but the girls were still short of classroom space in their building and had to sit so near the fires that it was necessary to rotate round the rooms. A public meeting in the Court House on 24 March 1887 decided to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee by buying 550 square yards of land to enlarge the playground of the girls and infants, to enlarge two classrooms and to possibly build a caretaker's house with a cookery room in the basement. [24] A voluntary rate was agreed, but there were difficulties in collecting it so the scheme was passed to the School Board. The house was not built, but the playground and sanitary accommodation were improved, the smaller classroom enlarged and the seating rearranged in the larger one, the extension bearing the words

"This school was enlarged in the Jubilee Year of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria. 1887."

The reference to rearranging seating implies that the seats were fixed and tiered as they were also in the infants school - the ground floor of the 1884 block, of which the boys occupied the upper floor. The buildings had accommodation for 700 children - 250 boys upstairs, 200 infants downstairs and 250 girls in the single-storey block. Average attendances at the turn of the century were 220 boys, 200 girls and 180 infants. [25] (Plate 21).

The area of Fairfield has been gradually nibbled away by the auction mart, school buildings, a car park and a small office block and in 1970 the juniors from Fairfield School began to move into a new building which occupied the remaining area of the once public field, this new school for 320 being completed in February 1971. This development was disputed as it took common land and blocked rights of way, one of which through the school grounds has been restored. Most of the original buildings were taken over by the infants school, with accommodation given as 181. Not until 1977 did the infants acquire indoor toilets. The boys and girls of junior age have for long been joined in one school, but the infants still remain separate under their own headmistress.

Meanwhile the National School of All Saints continued. The New Street schools had been built in the 1840s largely through the efforts of Rev. Charles Southey, son of the poet laureate. At first only partly filled, numbers had increased until a new building became necessary and the Kirkgate school was erected in 1869 for about £2000 on land given by Lord Leconfield. Additional rooms were added on this site, but in 1973 the school moved again, to a new building at the end of Slatefell Drive.

St. Joseph's Roman Catholic School began in premises adjacent to the church in Crown Street in 1877. The first page of the log book reads

"1877 May 4th. This school was opened on Monday April 30th. by Annie Couleham (3rd. class) The school apparatus provided at that time consisted of Two sets of Reading Books, Copy Books, Dictation Books, Grammar and Geography Books for Standards II, III, IV, with slates, pencils, pens, maps, Reading Sheets, and Form, Colour and Animal Sheets for Infants. About fifty-four children presented themselves for Admission the first morning." [26]

The school moved to new premises on The Level in 1967 and now has accommodation for about 112 pupils. Until 1959 girls from all schools in the area attended cookery classes in the Fairfield building and the boys had woodwork in a hut on the small plot of ground opposite what was formerly "the gun shop" by Jubilee Bridge. The numbers taking part in the 1887 Jubilee procession [27] and tea show the various school sizes :-

Industrial School for boys	120
Workhouse School Flimby	90
Dovenby and Bridekirk	200
St. Josephs	100
All Saints National	350
Fairfield Board	700
Private schools of Miss Harley, Mr. Rodham, etc.	100

As far back as 1785 a Vestry meeting record referred to seats in church for children from the

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Charity and Sunday Schools and in 1809 a school of industry was established to provide education for 30 poor girls. [28] For boys the Cumberland County Industrial School was opened in 1881 by the Home Secretary, Sir William Harcourt. [29] This stood in Grayson Close at the corner of Lorton Road and Strawberry How Road (and still stands as the Cocker-mouth Grammar School); in 1891 staff and boys totalled 173. The cost of the building and part of the maintenance grants came from county rates, there being a government grant towards maintenance. Management was by a committee of county councillors, the school being under a superintendent and matron (a husband and wife appointment) and education under a schoolmaster. In addition to general education the boys, sent there by the courts for vagrancy or crime, were taught a trade - tailoring, carpentry, boot and shoe repairing, etc. The school's band was well known. The upper floor consisted of long dormitories in the front portion and the two wings, with small rooms for staff strategically placed. On the ground floor were the craft rooms, later converted to school laboratories, etc., the laundry for example becoming part of the art room. The number of Cumberland children in the school decreased and it was closed at the end of March in 1921. The various suggestions for the future use of the premises will be mentioned shortly. Meanwhile developments had been taking place in the country's educational system which affected Cocker-mouth. In 1902 School Boards were abolished and education passed to council control. Aid was given to old grammar schools and to Anglican and Catholic elementary schools to improve their standards. The leaving age was gradually raised.

### **Secondary Education**

We have seen that the town was reluctant to lose its grammar school at the end of the 19th century. In 1918 a secondary school was proposed as a memorial to E. L. Waugh, for at that time any pupil wishing for more than elementary education had to travel to either Keswick or Workington. The decision regarding the Waugh Fund was that the £1550 raised should be invested in War Bonds, bringing an income of £77-10s. a year to be used to provide scholarships for Cocker-mouth children to attend Workington Grammar School. [31]

When the Industrial School closed in 1921 there were a number of suggestions for the use of the premises. The Cumberland Education Committee said that a teachers' training college was needed in the county. [32] Dr. Morrison, medical officer, had a scheme to use them as an institution for children mentally and physically handicapped; [33] a home for delicate children was required and Cocker-mouth parents and the staffs of local schools wanted a secondary school, emphasizing that although this would need a penny rate there would be a great saving on fares paid for children attending Workington and Keswick Schools. [34] These schemes were discussed for some years, then finally in 1926 Lord Eustace Percy, President of the Board of Education, approved of conversion to a secondary school and visited the building himself. [35] The County Council postponed conversion because of lack of funds, but in February 1929 approved expenditure of £4000 for adaptation. [36] It was opened later the same year as Cocker-mouth Secondary School by Canon A. Sutton. with a board of 14 governors and Mr. Macintosh as headmaster.

In its first session the school was awarded five out of the six County Minor Scholarships granted to pupils already attending secondary schools. [37] It opened with 38 pupils, rising to 78 the next year, 250 in 1938 and reaching a peak of about 550 in the 1960s. It served Maryport as well as the Cocker-mouth area until reorganization in Maryport, in 1967, after which there were no further Maryport admissions and the existing Maryport scholars gradually worked out at the top of the school.

Fees in state schools were ended in 1944, the 11+ system of selection for grammar, technical or modern schools came in, and the first comprehensive schools appeared in the late 1940s.

From 1958 secondary education in the town was concentrated in two schools - Derwent School and the Grammar School, although some children travelled to St. Joseph's Roman Catholic School in Workington.

Consequently Fairfield, All Saints and St. Joseph's became primary schools, losing their older age groups and each, except Fairfield Infants, acquiring new buildings in 1970, 1973 and 1967 respectively. The Derwent School was opened as a secondary modern school in 1958 with 510 places, soon greatly increased by extensions and portable buildings. [30] From 1968 all children transferred from the primary schools to Derwent School at eleven. Those who wished to went to the Grammar School at 13+, parental choice being helped by staff guidance. In 1984 the two schools joined to form one comprehensive school, 'Cocker-mouth School', It functioned on the two sites while an extensive

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building programme increased accommodation on Castlegate Drive, opened by Richard Wordsworth on 23rd April 1991. The Strawberry How site finally closed in July 1991. After several further building developments, Cockermonth School in 2006 has some 1400 pupils on roll, with more than 260 in the Sixth Form; it has a very high standing in the country's league tables.

In 2003 the school was awarded Specialist Status in Maths and Computing. This resulted in an additional £700k from the Department for Education and Skills being available for the school over the next four years.

In 2006 the Eco Centre was completed. The 550 sq m building is an exemplar of sustainable design, using a wide variety of recycled materials in its construction and created a teaching facility that is incredibly advanced with 10 teaching pods supported by ICT facilities. In addition, there are four Biomes where it will be possible to replicate various types of ecosystems including arid, alpine and wet climates. This facility will be used not only by the school, but the wider community thanks to a multifunctional teaching space/auditorium with a capacity for 250 people, where it will be possible to stage events such as plays and meetings for larger community groups.

### **Continuing Education**

The industrial revolution brought a desire for literacy and knowledge of science. The Cockermonth Literary and Scientific Society was founded in 1871 to promote the study of literature and science by means of communication, papers and discussions. [38] It held meetings in the Court House. In 1877 art classes were being held on Saturday afternoons in a room of the YMCA, attended by artisans, pupil teachers, etc. [39]

The 1880s saw the formation of the Cockermonth Lecture Society [40] and about the same time (in 1882) the Wordsworth Literary and Scientific Society (known as the Wordsworth Institute) began. In premises later used as a betting office behind 60 Main Street it arranged lectures and provided classes in elocution, languages and shorthand. later moving about 1921 to Christ Church Rooms. The Institute was run in connection with the South Kensington Museum of Science and Art. [41]

The Cockermonth branch of the Workers' Educational Association [42] was formed in 1923 and in 1939 found a permanent home in the upstairs back room of Regent House in Main Street, formally opened by the Cumberland Director of Education. G.E. Brown, on 2nd December. Classes were held here until the move to the Derwent Centre. The WEA has always sought to provide courses of a serious nature - philosophy, politics, economics, comparative religion etc. - as well as more popular study of topics such as local history and nature.

**Higham Hall** is a residential adult college (since 1975) and is situated in a beautifully restored 19th century Gothic mansion with well tended gardens and spectacular views of Skiddaw and the Northern Fells. Owned and run by Cumbria County Council as a non-profit making organisation, it receives no subsidy and thus is self-financing. Approximately 3000 people enrol each year on 250 courses from one-day Study Sundays and intensive weekends, to week long summer schools. Higham was originally built by railway pioneer, Thomas Hoskins in 1828 as a grand county house but has also seen service as a youth hostel and a girls boarding school.

### **University of the Third Age (U3A)**

A nation-wide development, the Third Age Trust was formed in the UK in 1982; this came from beginnings in France in 1972. The purpose of U3A is to encourage lifelong learning for those no longer in full-time gainful employment. Contrary to popular belief, it does not receive any support from the universities themselves. Members have skills to organise and teach on their own autonomous learning groups - no qualifications are required and none given.

Local groups have formed throughout the country - by February 2006, 574 groups with a total of 153,443 members. In addition to groups pursuing learning topics under their own steam, U3A groups generally have monthly meetings with speaker input, coffee morning meetings and visits to places of interest. The Cockermonth group formed in 1998, and in 2006 had over 450 members with at least 26 activity groups operating.

**All Saints' Learning Centre** started life as a community development centre (CDC) under the Cumbria CREDITS initiative. This is a network of centres across the county aiding community



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development by providing, initially, training in IT. The original CDC was set up in the front of All Saints' Primary School. From 1997 to 2003, hundreds of learners passed through the Centre developing new skills. In 2003, the Centre moved into a new purpose-built building just across the other side of the car park from the school. The new facility boasts state of the art equipment in an environment that promotes learning. The architect designed exterior of the building may have raised a few eyebrows but the peace and calm of the interior has earned the admiration of everyone who has been in the place. The new facility has a multi-purpose teaching room with a Dolby Digital sound system and room for up to 24 people in a conference setting, a video conferencing facility and, of course, a comprehensive I.T. Training Room with provision for 12 learners. There is also a mini cyber-cafe in the reception area and these PCs can be hired on an hour by hour basis. The whole Centre uses 'broadband' technology to access the internet. The new building and equipment was financed by the government via its UK Online initiative.

**Adult Education:** Cockermouth School houses The Derwent Centre for further education, one of the first (1959) of a considerable number of such centres developed in the county when Gordon S. Bessey was Director of Education. A very wide range of classes and activities is provided by the Centre and many of the societies in the town - choirs, Workers Educational Association, Young Farmers' clubs, etc., etc. - meet there and make use of its facilities. There is also a Youth Club in a separate building. The whole of this community school is normally under the direction of the head teacher, but in practice the running of the Centre is delegated to the Adult Education Tutor and of the Youth Club to the Leader.

Examples of other organisations currently providing lecture series during the winter months are

- the Cockermouth Civic Trust, [43] - these usually being on subjects of particular local interest,
- the Cumberland Nature Club which at one time used the Bridge Street Rooms,
- the West Cumbria Group of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB).

More restricted in membership were ventures such as the reading room opened in 1874 in a Crown Street house for the employees of Derwent Mills. [44] Also back in the 19th century we may note a series of 12 cookery lessons provided in the Public Hall in the spring of 1878. [45]

No survey of continuing education would be complete without considering the outstanding contribution of the Cockermouth Mechanics' Institute. The first such institute, aiming to teach science to working men by means of lectures, was opened in London in 1823 and had 900 at its first lecture - a good illustration of the thirst for knowledge! By mid-century there were 700 such institutes.

The Cockermouth MI was formed in November 1845 and the following year published a booklet [46] containing 50 rules for the running of the Institute and a list of books and periodicals in the library. The library we shall consider in the next chapter, but some of the rules are of interest.

"Rule 1. That the Society be called the Cockermouth Mechanics' Institution, the objects of which shall be the diffusion of useful knowledge, in Literature, Science and the Arts, by means of a Library, a Reading Room, meetings for Discussions on subjects interesting to the members, at which Essays and Original Papers will be read, Lectures, the formation of Classes for studying any useful Science, and whatsoever other means the Society for the time being may deem desirable."

The annual subscription was 5s.(25p) with 3s.(15p) for ladies and young members, life membership £5 or a gift of property equivalent. Of the 17 officers and committee, ten had to be from the working class. There were rules for the conduct of discussions (no purely theological or political subjects) and lectures, and for the running of the reading room. If six members wanted a class on a particular subject they had to seek the approval of the committee and then select and pay the teacher.

The Institute met in two spacious rooms in the rear of the Savings Bank building (next to the Court House). Robert Benson of St. Helen's, an Attorney, was the first president, until his death in 1858, and is commemorated by a framed memorial of 1860 which is in Cockermouth Library. This also commemorates General Richard Benson, of India and Hassness, who had bequeathed to the Institute his library of over 1000 volumes and a legacy of £100. Joseph William Harris of Broughton, who became president, donated his collection of stuffed birds. Other possessions of the Institute included portraits, maps, a barometer and a timepiece. [47] General Wyndham offered to do anything in his power to further the interests of the Institute and in acknowledgement it was agreed

## ***Education***

“That General Wyndham be solicited to become a ‘Life Member’ of the Cockermouth Mechanics’ Institute and to preside at the approaching anniversary.” [48]

The first anniversary, in 1847, was celebrated by a tea in the British School Room, attended by 500 people (surely in relays!). The band played, flowers were given and prints loaned to decorate the room, and the M.P. (E. Horsman) and other local gentry (Dykes, Steel, etc.) were present. The report of activities in the first Year listed lectures on the magnetic telegraph, philosophy, history, political economy, the British constitution and the influence of literature on the mind. [49]

By 1858 the membership of the Institute was over 240. Regular classes were being held in French, arithmetic, writing, etc., as well as all the activities mentioned above. The liveliness of the society is shown by the financial returns for that year - receipts of just over £80 and an expenditure of about £83. [50] By the end of the century membership had reached 300.

**Playgroups:** In 1980 there were three, held in All Saints Rooms, the Methodist Church premises and the Friends’ Meeting House, this last now hosting intensive training courses for playgroup staff. There were six groups in the town in 1995.

### **Formal Further Education**

Further education for formal qualifications is centred at the Lakes College West Cumbria at Lillyhall - the original “technical” colleges in Whitehaven and Workington closed in 1999 and 2001 respectively as the West Cumbria College moved to new buildings in 2001 and restyled itself.

### **Universities**

The Universities of Northumbria, Lancaster (via St. Martin’s College) and Central Lancashire (UCLAN) have all made inroads into providing university education in Cumbria. UCLAN opened a Lakeland Learning Centre as a training provision for rural businesses at the Lakeland Agricultural Centre [Mitchell’s Auction Mart site] in 2003 being an off-shoot of its Newton Rigg Campus at Penrith. Cumbria is now to have its own university based on the Cumbria Institute of the Arts and St. Martin’s College which has campuses in Carlisle, Ambleside and Lancaster. The campuses of UCLAN (the University of Central Lancashire) at Newton Rigg for land-based industries and at Carlisle (originally Northumbria University) for the Carlisle Business School will also transfer to the new university which will operate a network in conjunction with the four FE colleges of the county, the Open University and Lancaster University. The University of Cumbria is planned to be in operation in 2007.

Cockermouth people have been able to borrow books for two hundred years. The first library we know of was housed in the old Grammar School building, founded in 1762 by the associates of the late Dr. Thomas Bray and later augmented by Dr. Kenne, Bishop of Chester. Managed by trustees appointed by the Bishop, it began with 343 volumes, and was described as

“intended to be a Lending Library for the Use and Benefit of such Clergymen as shall be nominated thereto by the Trustees”.

The value of books borrowed had to be deposited with the librarian. Those of octavo or quarto size might be kept for three months, folio volumes for six. [1]

The Bray Library was restricted in its membership, but the Cockermouth Book Club founded a little later in 1785 was open to all. There were strict rules - over twenty listed in the 1819 catalogue. [2] The annual subscription was 10s-6d. [52½p], with an admission fee of 2s-6d. [12½p], and all subscribers who did not live in the country had to attend a monthly meeting in the Globe Hotel - absence carried a fine of 6d! Any member present might propose the purchase of a book and lots were drawn to determine the first readers of newly acquired volumes. The time allowed for reading was determined by the value of the book - from two days for one worth 6d. or less, to three weeks for one valued at over 8s. Town readers were allowed only one book at a time, but country members might take two and keep them for two weeks if valued less than 6s [30p] or three weeks if more expensive. A catalogue of 1819 listed about 450 volumes with a further list of 60 missing, for which subscribers were urged to search in their private libraries! The librarian, at that time Jacob Hilton, was paid 1s [5p] a year for each member. Sometime before 1847 the Book Club changed its name to the Cockermouth Library. [3] Time for reading was now based on date of purchase (new works four days in the town, seven in the country, doubled after the first demands had been met) and a fine of one old penny a day introduced for books overdue. The catalogue listed nearly 600 volumes, and periodicals such as the Edinburgh Review, Blackwood's and Tait's magazines, etc. were available. Thomas Bailey and Son, printers at 73 Main Street, housed the library and were paid 2s. per annum out of each subscription. This was possibly the subscription library of 65 members mentioned as being at Bailey's in 1829. [4]

Jollie records the old library at Jacob Hilton's and the new library at Thomas Bailey's as both existing in 1811, so possibly the two merged some time early in the century.

Control of the library passed to the town council who in December 1898 met trustees of the Savings Bank regarding the hire of two rooms for a public library. The council allocated £30 for the purchase of books in 1901 and in 1902 were negotiating for the present site. [5] The Carnegie Library opened in 1904, on the site of single storey cottages and part of Messrs. Walker's yard. Gifts from donors, to whom the minutes periodically recorded the committee's gratitude, brought the stock to 3,000 volumes. The bell from the dismantled Waugh clock and other mementoes found their way there. [6] Evening classes were held in the premises and during the war the lower room was an ARP post. In both buildings the town library only opened twice a week in its early days, but it was well used. Until 1932 books were asked for at the counter, but in that year open access was introduced.

The library remained in the control of the UDC and did not become a branch of the County Library, as did most of the Cumberland town libraries. By modern standards it was small and out-of-date, restricted to the upper floor. The building was extended in the early 1970s and in the local government reorganisation of 1974 the library entered the western division of the County Library.

The Mechanics Institute had a subscription newsroom where the London and provincial papers and the chief periodicals could be seen. In 1858 there was a newsroom in the Court House, subscription a guinea a year, and there appear to have been others in the town, on which the records are confused. The Institute also had a library with both reference and circulating sections. It began with some 500 books but had grown to 2,300 in 1858, the year in which General Benson made his bequest. There were in 1874 - “4000 volumes of standard works, carefully chosen, on scientific and general literature”, but “no work on politics of the day or any subject of polemical divinity”. From the beginning the library and reading room were open six evenings a week and the latter also on Sundays from 1 to 9.30 p.m. [5] There were a number of circulating libraries run by booksellers and printers. A bookselling and stationery business, with a circulating library, situated in the Market Place changed hands in 1784. Books could be ordered for purchase from London.

W. Banks, a printer and bookseller also in the Market Place, forbade borrowers from his library to lend them to others - in the interests of his business. Daniel Fidler, printer at 70 Main Street, had the

## *Libraries and Newspapers*

Religious Lending Library of the Cockermouth Religious Tract Society and acted as librarian. The 1839 catalogue listed about 300 volumes. More recently W.H. Smith had a subscription library in Station Street.

Cockermouth for many years depended for its news, as did the rest of Britain, on manuscript newsheets written in London and distributed throughout the country. By the mid-18th century these had been replaced by printed newspapers, having a large proportion of parliamentary news and taxed at 2d. or 3d. a copy by the government in an effort to prevent the circulation of radical newsheets.

The invention of the steam-driven press in 1814 gave a great impetus to newspaper production. The tax rose to 4d, but then fell when new industry needed the advertising, to be abolished completely by Gladstone. The tax on an advertisement, which had been as much as 4s-6d, disappeared completely in 1853. Although papers became more plentiful, Cockermouth's reading rooms continued and increased, one of the new ones at 16 Main Street continuing into the 20th century. [9]

In addition to the national papers Cockermouth was served by a number of local publications. The first of these was 'The Cumberland Pacquet and Ware's Whitehaven Advertiser', established in 1774 and printed by John Ware in Whitehaven. At first it carried much national and foreign news, including official government notices, and local news was scarce. Gradually local news increased and a copy of 'The Pacquet' gives a good picture of life and interests in the late 18th century. The American War features prominently, with lists of prisoners, details of Whitehaven ships lost, notices of deserters and advertisements for naval recruits. One could find enclosure acts, shipping news, coach time-tables, toll gate lettings, sales of timber, apprentices, strayed horses, shares in ships, but above all patent medicines for all possible complaints. From its inception it was available in the London coffee houses where merchants met to do business.

There were a number of short-lived ventures more germane to Cockermouth. 'The Cockermouth Miscellany' was first published (by T. Bailey and Son) on 11 March 1843 for 2d., selling 1100 copies of the first number. [10] It appeared monthly, was characterised by verbosity and long involved sentences, had letters to the editor, but was probably killed after only 12 issues by the duty on paper and the stamp tax, in spite of the price having risen to 2½d. While it lasted it was truly miscellaneous in its news and items.

In 1854 appeared 'The Cockermouth Miscellany and General Advertiser', this time produced by J. Naisbit, a printer at 53 Market Place. Available for 1d. on the first day of each month it did not last long. The following year there was extant the 'Weekly Spectator and Cockermouth Advertiser', published by Daniel Fidler. In 1857 came 'The Cockermouth Magazine and Advertiser' from W.H. Moss, printer and bookseller of 59 Main Street, again a penny and monthly but a step forward on its predecessors as it illustrated the stories.' 'The Cockermouth Free Press', produced in Station Street and delivered free to all houses,[11] lasted from 1899 to 1918. 'The Cockermouth Daily Press' began on 31 August 1914 and was probably an early war casualty. 'The Maryport News' described itself as including 'The Cockermouth Chronicle' and was first issued in 1885, surviving the war until 1919. The second war was spanned by 'The Cockermouth and District Advertiser', which suspended publication on 24 December 1940 and reappeared on 7 March 1946, but not for long.

Meanwhile a twice-weekly area paper, 'The Whitehaven News', began about 1853 and ten years later had a circulation of over 5000. It claimed to serve not only Cockermouth but the whole of Cumberland from Millom to Carlisle with readers in Dublin, Belfast, Cardiff, etc. It survives to this day, but is now a Whitehaven district paper little read in Cockermouth.

Another survivor, closely linked with Cockermouth, is 'The West Cumberland Times and Star', a title taken after an amalgamation in 1967, when 'Star' was added. 'The West Cumberland Times' first appeared on 21 March 1874, eight pages for one penny, and was described in the first editorial as

"specially devoted to the interests of the district of which Cockermouth is the natural centre and which comprises on the one hand the important maritime and manufacturing towns of Maryport and Workington, and on the other the tourist-haunted and classical region of Keswick."

It was published by Brash Brothers and printed first in an office raised on the ruins of Mr. McQuhae's workshop in Challoner Street, then later in a building in South Street immediately behind the Tithebarn Hotel.

In 1876 the firm bought a house and shop at 29 Station Street with direct access to the printing works behind. The shop, office and editorial rooms which this provided were retained until 1976.

### *Libraries and Newspapers*

Since the amalgamation the editorial work has been done in Workington - the printing had already been moved from the town - and all that remains locally is a small office off Crown Street, although the 'Times and Star' continues to play an important role in Cocker-mouth life.

In its early days 'The Times' came out on Saturday in time for dispatch by the earliest trains and an extra market edition with the latest reports was published at noon on Mondays. Then for a considerable time there were two weekly editions on Wednesday and Saturday, but for some years it has again appeared once a week on Friday.

For a long time the paper carried a serial story which would last many weeks, that starting in No. 1 being 'Mayhew the Mill-Spinner, or The Stolen Will'. The well-known 'Betty Wilson's Cumber-land Teals' first appeared in the Times. There was a certain amount of national news as well as that of local interest and its early numbers had weekly features such as 'District News', 'Local Gossip', 'Local Notes', 'Agricultural Jottings' and of course advertisements and local court cases, with national murder trials in very great detail, uninhibited by modern restrictions on the press. From its first year the paper included letters from correspondents.

A related publication was 'Cousin Charley's Magazine'. The editor of 'The Times' around the turn of the century was Mr. Bleasdale, who included in the paper a children's section written by him using the name 'Cousin Charley'. The magazine was quite a bold venture, with stories, puzzles, jokes, anecdotes, how-to-make items, poems, etc., and was well illustrated with photographs of local children, festival queens, etc. Five shilling books were awarded as prizes for various types of contribution. In its Santa Claus Scheme the magazine made a positive effort to help poor children, organising collections of money and clothing to give Christmas parcels to poor and deserving children throughout West Cumberland, from Egremont to Wigton - new stockings, apple, orange, sweets, a Christmas card, to some a complete outfit of clothes. Cousin Charley arranged an annual concert in the Congregational Schoolroom after which the names of the children were called and they received their parcels. In 1900 over 830 pairs of stockings and more than 1000 articles of clothing were distributed, and also in this year tea was provided for 380 poor children in Workington, 260 in Cocker-mouth, 118 in Maryport and 140 in Whitehaven. [12]

The magazine first appeared in April 1899 and unfortunately had a short life. It cost little (a penny a month for 16 pages) and the regular feature 'Cousin Charley's Chat' dealt continually with the magazine's financial difficulties and small sales. Incentives were offered to those who gained new readers, but to no avail. Without increased sales it was not viable and to its producer's great regret it finally disappeared with the issue of December 1901.

More recently 'The Cocker-mouth Post' appeared in September 1984 and after early difficulties, was taken over by Mrs Mary Macdonald in 1986. Since then it has been published regularly and distributed free, becoming a valued source of information and comment in the town. By 2006, the quality of production had been much improved and the paper was produced by Mr. Michael Craine.

On the wall of All Saints Church we may read -

A List of Donations and Bequests to the Poor of Cockermouth

Charities	By whom given	When given A.D.	For what Purpose
L.S.D. 20 .	Terrywastel Piele	1693	The Interest to be paid to the School master of the Free School Cockermouth
10 .	William Wrial	Do	
5 .	not known	Do	
7	Terrywastel Piele	Do	All for the purpose of paying the Interest thereof to the Poor of Cockermouth
25	not known	Do	
45	Lancelot Stockdale	Do	
50	Barbara Relph	1725	
50	Thomas Littledate	1730	
50	Sir Thomas Pangley	1727	
100	Mary Winder	1789	
94	Deborah Ritson	not known	
100	Mrs. Fletcher	not known	
2.10 yearly	Mr. Glaister		
50	Barbara Relph	1725	The Interest to be distributed in Bread every Sunday, to Poor Persons frequenting the Church
100	Richard Baynes	1771	
50	Miss Hudson	1842	
50	Ditto	1849	
A Dwelling House in Kirkgate Cockermouth	Rev. Thomas Leathes	1760	For Six Poor Widows or other unmarried Poor Women above 60 years of Age, who may be in want, to live in. The Interest to be divided amongst the Six Poor Women, and for Repairing the House
100	Ditto	Do	
50	Elizabeth Winder	1775	
100	Elizabeth Leathes	1851	

The above Sums are all invested in Government Stock, three per cent consols, except Miss Winders Charity of £50, which is Secured on the Tolls Authorized to be collected in repairing the Road between Cockermouth and Workington.

This Tablet placed in the Church as a Record of the Charities to the Poor of Cockermouth, was Erected and Presented to the Church-wardens by Joseph Fleming, December 24, 1862

Joseph Bowerbank,  
John Hird  
Richard Bateman  
Joseph Fleming  
Churchwardens

Such legacies as those listed above must have brought comfort to many during the last 200 years. There was not the provision and organisation for living through bad times which we now have. A bad summer, a failed harvest or a great frost which stopped the waterwheels turning meant for many

### *Charities, friendly societies and medical provision*

no work, no fire and little food. It was then that such gifts as the 'Castle money' came to the rescue, the interest on the £2000 which Lord Egremont invested in the new market hall. The way in which this £100 or so was distributed varied from year to year. In 1839 one recipient had £10, six others £5 each and twenty six £2. [1] In 1866 fifty people were given £1 each. In a particularly bad winter some 100 years ago 2000 received Christmas dinner soup from the fund. During his lifetime General Wyndham distributed the money at the castle, with cake and wine. In 1866 it was being taken to homes a few days before Christmas. Later responsibility for the charity passed to the vicars and wardens of All Saints and Christ Church.

Another noticeable charity was the Widow's Hospital. The Rev. Thomas Leathes, rector of Plumblund left the house adjoining the Swan in Kirkgate, at the corner of Mackreth Row, as a residence for six poor widows or unmarried women over 60 years of age. (Fig. 65). As shown above he also bequeathed £100. His daughter Elizabeth Winder added £50 (with first claim for the repair of the premises) and another descendant, Elizabeth Leathes, a further £100 nearly a century later. To these was added on enclosure a small allotment of rather poor land. [2]

Unfortunately the house proved too small to accommodate six women and three had to live elsewhere but benefited financially from the legacy. [3] The house was probably occupied in this way into the 20th century. but was then let, and in 1912 an old man lived there for 2s-6d. per week rent, which was paid into the widows' charity. [4]

In addition to the four 'bread money' charities listed there were another two which brought in £10-8s interest, enabling 4 shillings [20p] to be spent each Sunday for poor widows who were at the service, viz. Elizabeth Todd's gift of £30 and Mary English's £20. [5] Another example of conditions attached was that the income from Richard Baynes's £100 should go to poor people who not only attended service but were not in receipt of parish relief. [6]

The 50 shillings [£2.50p] a year from Joseph Glaister was the income from a Maryport Harbour ticket of £200 which he left in his will in 1773, the money being distributed about Christmas time [7] in amounts of not less than 5s [25p].

Early gifts not on the church list include: [8]

Hugh Potter	1669	£52	Unknown	1669	£50
Sir Orlando Gee	1691	.. £50	Thomas Littledale	1729	£50
John Mounsey and small legacies	1766	£100.			

There seems to have been quite early grouping of charities for investment. A Charity Commission enquiry stated –

"In 1784 the whole of the stock belonging to the poor was £427-12s-7d. That sum was then laid out, with other charity money, in the funds and now forms part of a sum of £1335-6s-11½d. stock 3% consols. [9] A further regrouping of Cocker-mouth charities has been made recently and the interest is distributed at Christmas."

A charity of a different nature was that of Lord Wharton -

"The Minister of Cocker-mouth receives annually, from trustees of Lord Wharton's Charity, 30 Bibles and a proportionate number of expositions of the catechism, and reward books; and he distributes them according to the directions of the donor, amongst poor persons at Cocker-mouth." [10]

In addition to income from legacies left by individuals there have been a number of organisations providing help in kind for the poorer members of the community. These have existed for varying periods, according to the needs of the time. The Infant Clothing Society was formed in 1818; the Samaritan Society in 1825 (this by the Methodists to distribute money - £15-18s-7d. amongst 60 poor people in 1827); and the Blanket Society and Dorcas Society both in 1826. In 1875 the 'West Cumberland Times' mentioned both the Cocker-mouth and Papcastle Soup and Coal Fund and the Cocker-mouth and Papcastle Provident and Clothing Society. The latter was in effect a savings club, ladies collecting weekly in their allotted districts and at the end of the year supplying the depositors with clothing or blankets or returning the money to them. The savings gained interest in the Savings Bank and the advantage was that clothing and blankets cost less through the Society - in 1875, 1414 were ordered from the Cocker-mouth Tweed Company which went to the members at 20 shillings [£1] a pair. [12]

### *Charities, friendly societies and medical provision*

Sometimes help in kind came from an individual, and sometimes it was abused. 'The Pacquet' carried this report in 1783 -

"Last week, Mr. Wilson, hat manufacturer, in Cockermouth, distributed a large quantity of hats amongst the poor of that place; and while exercised in this laudable munificence, had a number of stuff hats stolen from him by some of the objects who were waiting to receive his bounty." [13]

In 1878 the Children's Aid Society provided breakfast in the Public Hall for 100 of the most destitute and gave stockings and clogs to those needing them. In the same year the Good Templars were also providing breakfasts for poor children. Three years later a Free Breakfast Committee was formed to arrange Sunday breakfasts. [14] After the first world war a Clog and Stocking Fund was established, which in 1925 supplied 170 pairs of clogs and 177 pairs of stockings at a cost of £58-1s-5d., rising to a total of 1169 pairs in 1930, the tenth year of its existence. [15]

Those in a position to help obviously supported such organisations and in times of disaster from storm or flood the whole town co-operated in relief funds. [16] Accident, illness or death in a poor family could also mean disaster. There is no doubt that on such occasions help was often given quietly by doctor, parson or a better-off neighbour, but gradually the idea grew of wage-earners joining together in a 'friendly society' designed to help those of its members in temporary need. The most common form of help was in illness or with funeral expenses. Some of these societies were temperance organisations.

In 1829 Cockermouth had four friendly societies and more started before the end of the century. The Oddfellows' Cocker Lodge, for example, opened in 1857. Just 20 years later it had 75 married and 40 single members, who had contributed over £113 in the previous year, making a total well above £2000 in contributions to that date. The 1877 capital was £591-16s-4d and members received 3% interest in addition to sick and funeral benefits. In 1883 the Lodge was meeting in the Public Hall on every fourth Saturday. [17]

In this year there were also meeting the Freemasons, in their own Masonic Lodge Room in Station Street; the Derwent Lodge of Mechanics in the Bush Inn; and the Forresters in the Joiners' Arms Inn, all monthly; while the Sir Wilfrid Lawson Lodge of Good Templars were to be found every Wednesday in the Public Hall. [18] There were at various periods Druids, Rechabites and a second lodge of Oddfellows. The Cockermouth Good Intent Sick and Funeral Benefit Society began in 1856. [19] A Temperance Sick and Benefit Society is recorded in the Kelly's directory of 1897 and there was by then a branch in the town of the British Women's Temperance Association. A great day for the temperance friendly societies was the annual temperance demonstration and rally at Brayton Hall, the home of Sir Wilfred Lawson. 16,000 were there in 1875, including three 'tents' of the Order of Rechabites and fifty lodges of Good Templars. Many travelled by special trains, some of which needed two engines, not only from Cockermouth and Cumberland but from all over southern Scotland and northern England. [20]

A more local affair was a great temperance rally held on Pardshaw Crag on 17 June 1857 at which about 14,000 people were present. Askew says that many slept there, refreshments were available, and several times additional supplies of liquid refreshment had to be sent from Cockermouth brewery to the nearby Bee Hive Inn. [21] A year later a procession of Rechabites, Good Templars and Bands of Hope walked from Cockermouth to the Eaglesfield Quaker Meeting House, where 400 had tea. [22]

A new charity, Cockermouth and Papcastle Recreation Charity, was formed in 1994 to utilise the proceeds from the sale of the Drill Hall to the Territorial Army. This money had sat with the Official Custodian of Charities since 1922 and the original trustees had neglected to apply for a scheme to make use of it. The new Charities Act of 1992 obliged the Official Custodian to cease to look after this money and so the funds passed to the new charity, for which there are eight trustees. The charity makes grants twice a year from income, towards the provision of facilities for recreation or other leisure time occupation for the benefit of the inhabitants of Cockermouth and Papcastle. In its first ten years, some £31,000 had been distributed by 101 grants.

An association of townspeople serving a rather different purpose than sick benefit, etc., was the Cockermouth Borough and District Benefit Building Society, established in 1858 to raise, by the subscriptions of members, a fund enabling members to build or purchase houses. Shares were of £30, each obtainable by paying 1s (5p) a fortnight. Subscriptions were payable at the monthly meeting in



### *Charities, friendly societies and medical provision*

the Society's office on Cocker Bridge. This was on the second Monday and payments had to be made by 9 pm. otherwise fines were imposed, 1d. per share the first time. 2d. for a second offence, 4d. for a third, 8d. for a fourth, 1s-4d, for a fifth. This progression did not continue indefinitely, for a fortnight's warning was then given that the interest accrued (5s. per cent per year) would be offered for sale. [23]

There is also record of a Cockermouth Permanent Building Society, founded in 1864, with an office in the Court House buildings. [24] By 2006, such societies cover a larger area and there have been many amalgamations. Some have become banks (Bradford and Bingley, Northern Rock, Halifax, with its agency in Station Street), leaving the Cumberland Building Society as the only true mutual society in the town. Relative to property, in 1858 there were 17 insurance companies with agents in the town - the Atlas, General Life and Fire, Imperial Fire, Liverpool and London, Minerva, Mutual Life, National Life Stock, Norwich Union Life, Pelican Life, Rock, Royal Farmers', Royal Life and Fire, Royal Insurance, Sun Fire and Life, Union, Unity Fire and Life and Western Life. [25] Unfortunately none of the distinctive plaques of these companies are to be seen on Cockermouth buildings.

Another venture was the Cockermouth Co-operative Society, which after only nine years of existence collapsed at the end of 1875, its initial assets of £600 having dwindled to liabilities of £400. [26]

The friendly societies provided financial help in sickness, but there were in the town very interesting movements to give actual medical care. Before these communal efforts, the people of Cockermouth and the surrounding villages relied upon the apothecary's drugs or traditional herbal remedies and upon the bleeding bandaging and bone-setting of a surgeon who had grown into the job through apprenticeship. The apothecary was probably also a grocer, the surgeon likely to be a barber. In 1858, when the Medical Register was established, only a third of British practitioners were qualified. An apothecary's shop in Market Place was offered for sale in 'The Pacquet' in 1779 and in June of that year the same paper carried an announcement that John Steele, surgeon, apothecary and man-midwife had settled in Cockermouth at a shop below the bridge, and that he had a good assortment of medicines which were entirely fresh. [27] The first provision of an 'official' medical service was the appointment of a midwife by the church in the 18th century. A memorial in All Saints dated 1772 referred to the "midwife to the Church of Cockermouth". One of her duties was to encourage baptism of the infants she helped to deliver. Then in 1780 came the Amicable Society, whose 22-page booklet of Rules and Regulations', 1810 edition, begins

"Health, Peace, & Friendship.

As it hath pleased our Omnipotent Creator to afflict us, his Creatures, with divers Diseases and bodily Infirmities, that may incapacitate us to endeavour for or obtain necessary Subsistence; we whose Names are hereunto subscribed, conscious of our Duty to that Supreme Being and his Sacred Laws, do hereby firmly unite ourselves for the mutual Help and Assistance of each other, well knowing the uncertainty of health, and the prudent Necessity of using every Means to alleviate those Troubles and Evils we are incident to, do sincerely resolve to raise a FUND, which shall be applied to the Relief of the Members of this Society..."

Meetings were held monthly "at the house of John Richardson, Innholder, known by the sign of the Ship, in Cockermouth".

"Every member that does not appear between the hours of seven and nine by the town clock of Cockermouth, or send his club [2d.] and box money, shall, for the first offence, forfeit two pence, for the second night fourpence, and for the third night be excluded from the society."

No sleeping members here! There were fines too for not being quiet when silence was called by the president, these again on an escalating scale for repeated offences, and members were fined for disorderly behaviour. At the general meeting on the last Wednesday in June all paid 1s-4d [7p] for dinner, 6d [2½] to the box and 6d for ale, distant members being excused attendance for 1s-6d. Any member living in Cockermouth and receiving benefit at the time of the dinner was not forgotten - he "shall have a sufficient dinner and one quart of ale carried to him".

Benefit could not be claimed before a year's membership. If a member died £5 was paid to his widow or heir. If the wife died first, the member himself received £2 "but no member shall receive such sum for more than one wife". When the member in turn died the balance of £3 was paid to his

### *Charities, friendly societies and medical provision*

heir. All members had to attend funerals, but if they were intoxicated on such an occasion they forfeited 1s!

In 1785 the Cockermouth Dispensary was established, providing medical and surgical attendance free to the sick poor of Cockermouth, the Gote and Papcastle. This was made possible by the subscriptions of those better off financially. The 32nd report, in 1817, reveals the serious financial state of the Dispensary and appeals for subscriptions, partly on the grounds of the danger of disease spreading if not dealt with, but also pointing out that

“The opulent, by being removed from the dwellings of the poor, can but very imperfectly conceive the misery and wretchedness of a sick family; but their humanity may very materially mitigate their distress which requires only to be witnessed in order to be relieved.”

The report also notes the

“gradual and remarkable decline in the frequency and malignancy of contagious diseases”

since the foundation of the Dispensary.

The Dispensary was very aware of its success in this field, as the invitation to subscribers to attend the anniversary meeting in 1814 comments:

“Every Subscriber who has made it his business to attend these Annual Meetings has had much pleasure in seeing the beneficial effects produced by this most valuable charity; it has become a means of greatly alleviating the afflictions of the poor, and of making this town and its vicinity, perhaps one of the most healthy in the country.

There is no Poor Person or Family but what may have Medical Advice, Medicine, and Attendance, also Inoculations, and in Midwifery cases a Midwife is provided.” [28]

The affairs of the Dispensary were in the hands of a committee which included physicians, surgeons and governors. A subscriber of ten guineas or more became a perpetual governor and it was the governors who had the power to recommend cases for treatment. A five guinea subscription carried the right to five votes at an election and to have ten patients ‘on the books’; four guineas the right of four votes and eight patients; and so on, down to half a guinea with one patient on the books. Recommendation for treatment was made on a printed form-

“..... is recommended as a proper Object of the Dispensary by .....

To the acting Surgeon of Cockermouth Dispensary.”

To ensure that only “the sick and maimed poor” benefited, domestic servants and industrial apprentices were excluded from the scheme unless the master could not afford to pay for their treatment. On the other hand, trivial cases and vaccination did not require recommendation and in accidents, emergencies and epidemics the limit to the number treated was ignored.

As in present practice, patients were required to attend the acting surgeon if possible, but if not recommendations had to reach him by 10am for a visit the same day. One rule stated that “Every patient, when cured or relieved, must return thanks to the subscriber who recommended him, and also to the acting surgeon.”

The following are the statistics for two years, ending late July 1815 and 1816:

	<b>1815</b>	<b>1816</b>
Patients recommended and registered	194	202
Cured	179	178
Relieved	3	5
Dead	4	13
Irregular	1	-
Remaining on the books	7	6
Midwifery cases	28	24
Vaccinations	86	111
Trivial cases	94	111
Totals	402	448

### *Charities, friendly societies and medical provision*

Subscriptions, etc., received	£45-1s-1½d	£36-9s-0d
Disbursements	£38-0s-0½d	£36-18s-0d
	Profit £7-1s-1d	Loss 9s-0d

As time went by the poor were catered for by the Poor Laws and there was a proposal in 1874 [30] that the Dispensary should become the Cocker-mouth Provident Dispensary, no longer free but with a small weekly charge of 1d. A meeting of the original body, held in the Mechanics' Institute, decided to make the change. The charge for any one family was limited to 4d per week and in 1876 - 115 received medical attention. The Provident Dispensary was serving a need up to the last war and the beginning of the National Health Service. (Appendix 16)

Meanwhile there was another development in the medical field. In 1875 a rival organisation known as the "Cocker-mouth Working Men's Society for the Payment of Doctors' bills" was formed, whose members the doctors of the Provident Society were forbidden to attend. The new body's first annual meeting, held in the Court House in January 1876, reported a membership of 152, of whom 29 were in arrears, so it was obviously a regular subscription society like the new Provident. [31]

The cottage hospital was founded in 1915 and had in 1938 - 14 beds and 2 cots, including 2 private wards. [32] In common with most small hospitals of the time, there was provision for operating. Kelly listed 7 physicians and surgeons as being associated with it in that year. Now it caters chiefly for geriatric patients, with 17 beds.

Before the hospital the town had a nursing home in Harford House, Crown Street,

"a small hospital given to the town by Mr. Thomas Williamson, a retired shipbuilder from Workington." [33]

Straw used to be spread on the roadway to lessen the noise of passing carts. The building later became the school clinic and in addition housed the school dental service, antenatal clinics, chiropody, etc. At one time there was also a tuberculosis dispensary. (Fig. 75)

There was for long concern regarding the poor condition of Harford House and discussion as to whether the clinic should find more suitable accommodation elsewhere in the town. Finally it moved to purpose-built premises adjoining the hospital and opened on this site in 1987. The hospital acquired a dialysis unit for kidney patients in 1982.

The possibility of a medical centre in the town to house the three practices was also voiced from time to time. This was never achieved but in April 1992 the practice in Kirkgate moved to a commodious building which had been part of Derwent Mill, to become 'The Derwent Practice'. The other medical practices in town are in South Street and Fitz Road.

We have seen how the mentally handicapped were treated in the old workhouse. From 1932 there was in Dovenby Hall provision by the county for those with varying degrees of mental illness and in recent years a psychiatric unit existed at the West Cumberland Hospital, Hensingham. Much work has been done in recent years to link the residents at Dovenby with the outside world, equipping them to return to more normal living outside the hospital whenever possible. The policy has led to the establishment of a number of small residential units in the community and Dovenby closed completely in 1997. [See Chapter 29: Industry for its future] In Cocker-mouth itself such a unit was set up in the former URC building in September 1990, with accommodation for a warden and ten residents.

There are in the town a number of day groups for those with learning difficulties, groups for those with problems (e.g. Chest, Heart and Stroke Association); for the elderly or frail who appreciate a day visiting a centre for company and a change, with a meal and transport provided; and Age Concern's drop-in-centre and other activities for the elderly.

In addition to day centres there are a number of residential homes providing a varying degree of independence, but with the benefit of residential wardens: - Abbeyfield, Kirklands, Manor Court, Victoria Court etc.

We regard life a hundred years ago as being more leisurely than today, and so it was if we think of the speed of living. Working hours were, however, longer and a five-day week unheard of, yet we have seen that there was a - considerable amount of time given to further education and various societies. In this chapter we will look further at the ways in which Cockermouth people spent their leisure and sought entertainment, at what has been 'going on' in the town during the last hundred years and at what is happening today.

In addition to the lectures mentioned when considering further education, there have for long been talks connected with church societies in the town. Over 100 years ago Christ Church ran a series of Lent Lectures, presumably of a religious nature, but groups like the Wesley (later Methodist) Guild, the Congregational Christian Endeavour and the Friends' Adult School covered a wider field, as did Toc H which used to meet in the former WEA room in Regent House. The churches provided many societies and activities, and still do - missionary organisations, Bible classes, Band of Hope meetings, Sunday school treats, bell ringers' suppers, choir outings, study groups, prayer groups, etc. Some of these continue to this day: others, such as the Wesleyan Field Club and the Wesleyan Cycling Club, have been superseded.

A number of the more cruel entertainments of earlier days have disappeared. Market Day brought a dancing bear to the town until the 1920s. a huge beer-drinking animal, "all of seven feet", which toured the towns of West Cumberland. [1] The barrel organ monkey was a feature of town life until much later. (Plate 11). Cock-fighting, badger-baiting and bull-baiting were banned by law in 1855, although they lingered on in isolated places. Bull-baiting had a serious purpose in addition to its entertainment value. Baiting was considered to make the beef more tender. Boroughs and market towns were responsible for providing a bull-ring, usually set in a boulder. [2] The Court Leet in 1685 passed the sentence

"We amerce: John Laverauke for slaughtering a bull without baiting 3s. 4d."

and three years later the town was told

"Whereas the Burrow is liable to an amercement for want of a rope and furniture to Bait a Bull withal, we do order and appoint the Bailiff and Bailiffs successively to buy rope rings and what's needful for the same. "[3]

Cockermouth's otter hounds have been disbanded. The pack, formed about 1830, was kept in a small building to the north of the old railway track near Little Mill. Otter hunting was a summer sport. The ten couples of hounds in the Cockermouth pack in 1938 hunted on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays in the Keswick, Bassenthwaite Lake and Cockermouth areas respectively. [4]

The Beagles, which hunted the hare in winter, were kennelled in Well Field near Windmill Lane [5] and they too have been disbanded.

The local fox-hunting pack, the Melbreak, continues to work the Lorton, Buttermere and Loweswater area. They hunt from mid-September until the end of March and are available for call-out during April if young lambs are being taken. [6] During the season the hounds are kept at Miller Place in the Lorton Valley and at other times find homes with people in the area who take responsibility for exercising them.

Horse-racing was once a feature of town life. In 1681 the Court Leet ruled:

"The 3rd. of May we appoint for the running of John Gee, Esq., free gift of a saddle on Harrot ten stone weight". [7]

There was formerly trotting and a press reference in 1876 describes the Cockermouth Steeplechase as an annual event. [8] Hound-trailing, sheep dog trials and an occasional gymkhana are now held in a field east of Derwent School. In the same place the annual agricultural show took place, a longstanding event, but more recently moved to the Fitz. In 1849, a prize of 30s was given at the show for "the farmer's manservant who has lived the greatest number of years in one situation to the perfect satisfaction of his employer". It went to Peter Murray, for 50 years at Ribton, and it spoke well for the farmer, Ostle Mordaunt, that the prize for the longest serving woman also went to Ribton, to Margaret Little with over 27 years. Another prize not awarded today was for "the labourer in husbandry who has brought up the greatest number of legitimate children without parish relief".

The £2 was shared between James Kendal of High Mosser and Matthew Gregg of Gilcrux, who

## *Leisure Activities*

tied with 11 each. [9]

The Cockermouth Agricultural Show is an annual event, while more specialised are the Fur and Feather Society, the Beekeepers' Association, the Gardeners' Society (there was a Flower, Fruit and Vegetable Society back in 1879) and the Anglers' association. Cockermouth residents may fish from Derwent (Gote) Bridge to Double Mills (YHA) at a concession rate of £3 a season.

The pools of the rivers have always been the centres for swimming. Bathing facilities in Harris Park were considered in 1908-9 and 1933 but it was not until 1978 that the town acquired a pool, built on Deer Orchard adjacent to the Drill Hall, now developed as a sports centre. This final success was due to the efforts of a voluntary group, the Swimming Pool Association, which consistently refused to be thwarted by financial difficulties and raised £60,000 towards the total cost of £187,000. Thomas Armstrong Ltd. completed the building in time for Princess Alexandra to open it on 18 May 1978.

The district lends itself to other natural outdoor pursuits such as fell walking and rock climbing. The Cockermouth Mountain Rescue Team was formed in 1953 to cover the Buttermere and Ennerdale valleys. Beginning with very little equipment and unreliable ancient transport, garaged in the Market Hall, the team of some 40 members now has state-of-the art facilities in a new purpose-built building on the Station Road car park adjacent to the new fire station – a move required by the arrival of Sainsbury's supermarket and need for more space. The move in 2002 was substantially funded by Sport England but well supported by local donations. The team now operates with three well-equipped vehicles, radio communication and search dogs. The new building received Cockermouth Civic Trust's Award for development in sympathy with the town as a whole.

The running costs are currently about £25,000 per year (team members are unpaid, but the life of equipment is short) are provided by local councils, organisations and individuals as voluntary gifts. In its first 25 years Cockermouth Mountain Rescue Team was called out 233 times to a variety of incidents, from twisted ankles to fatalities, but the current call-out rate was 47 in 2004 alone (in two incidents the casualty was dead, in 20 cases injured). The tragic deaths of two of its members, Jock Thompson and Mike Stephenson, while on a training exercise near Buttermere in 1969, will long be remembered. [10]

Mockerkin Tarn is the local rendezvous for skating on the rare occasions when it is sufficiently frozen - an event of decreasing frequency. But up to about 1950 there was skating on Brown's Tarn opposite Scales Farm on the Brigham road and early in the century on the frog pond, the clay pits in the trees beyond Wyndham House. In 1885 a very severe frost enabled an ice house to be built in Harris Park with blocks cut from the river.

Of other outdoor activities, cycling became popular and fashionable in the 1890s, for women as well as men, and at the turn of the century there was the Cockermouth Cycling Club, in addition to the Wesleyan Club already mentioned. There have been athletic sports on Fairfield, then on school fields, and now the Amateur Sports Association, a very successful club, has acquired its own purpose-built track on the former town tip at Tarn Close. The Rugby Club celebrated its centenary in 1977-8 and originally playing at Laithwaite, in the western end of the town, now moved to the fields of the old Grammar School, where a modern club-house has also been built.

There has been a variety of soccer clubs, Deer Orchard being the present one, using the Wakefield Road ground; and the Cockermouth Cricket Club at Sandair was founded in 1823 and is the oldest in the old Cumberland County. One could play bowls (and quoits) at a number of inns and the public green at Town Head is recalled by the Bowling Green Inn in St. Helen's Street - (now gone). The castle bowling green was once open to the public. Now one may bowl on the Croftside green or in Harris Park. Tennis courts formerly occupied the site of the Methodist Church and the garage in Lorton Street. Cockermouth Golf Club has a course on the hill-top between the Higham road and Embleton, but at one time golf was played below the new Riverdale Estate, on land recently added to the park. There was a pavilion in the centre of this area and the course could be approached by a footbridge at Rubby Banks Mill. Also out-of-doors were a variety of picnics and works outings. The former involved sports, archery, dancing, bands, etc., and were often held on the Lands with the Earl's permission, perhaps purely a gala day or planned to raise money for some project.

Outings tended to be to the Solway coast. For a short time regattas were held at the northern end of Bassenthwaite Lake, one of the entertainments being to ship horses to the middle of the lake in

## *Leisure Activities*

barges and then leave them to swim for the shore. [11] The first of these shows was in 1780, but they were soon superseded by Joseph Pocklington's great displays on Derwentwater.

The men of the town might spend their spare time in the Volunteers. We have examined in an earlier chapter the methods of raising an army up to the passing of the Militia Act in 1757 which made service compulsory, a subsequent act in 1852 restoring the voluntary basis - hence 'The Volunteers'. They were replaced by the Territorial or Reserve Forces in 1907, by which time the country had a standing army.

Locally we find in the 18th century notice being given in the press for the militia to report for 14 days' training in August. under penalty of £20 fine or six months' imprisonment. [12] The armoury of the local branch of the Cumberland and Westmorland Yeomanry was the small building until recently, used as the Information Centre [Plate 8], from which the men drilled on the neighbouring area now the Riverside Car Park or marched to the Lands below the castle. [13] Then in 1886 came the indoor accommodation of the Drill Hall.

The first records of a theatre in the town are of productions in the Sun Inn barn near the bottom of Kirkgate. Here Thomas Holecroft, famous actor and literary figure and friend of William Hazlitt and Charles Lamb, played in 1775. [14] A century later there was drama in the Freemasons' Hall and in the Apple Tree Hotel. Travelling companies used to erect their own theatres in Fairfield. Early in the 20th century, in a large wooden structure, 'Peg o' the Pavement', 'The Collier's Dying Child', 'Maria Martin' and other tear-jerkers were played to packed houses. [15]

Biddall's cinematograph exhibition visited Fairfield in 1910, the council charging 30s. a week for the two or three weeks it was here. In 1913 the UDC approved a plan for the building of a picture hall in High Sand Lane. This never materialised and the following year they passed the plans of the Grand Theatre and Cinema Co. Ltd. for the Station Road building. [16]

The silent films were accompanied on the piano for many years by Gladys Duffield, remembered by many for her playing at children's dancing classes. (She walked from Keswick to London in 1913 with the National Non-Militant Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage.) The first 'talkie' screened in Cockermouth was the all-talking, singing and dancing 'Fox Movietone Follies of 1929' on 19 May 1930. Later the same month a cow strayed from the auction and climbed the theatre steps. In 1913 Will Fyfe and Harry Lauder appeared on the stage. Films eventually shared the building with Bingo, then there was Bingo only, until even this finished late in 1978. The Grand Theatre was also used for variety shows and other events put on in the town, including for many years the Grammar School prize-giving.

Groups which have brought music into the life of the town and then ceased to exist include the Cockermouth Operatic Society, the Cockermouth Glee Society, the Tonic Solfa Class and the Cockermouth Male Voice Choir. [17] The Cockermouth Harmonic Society, which continues, presented its 66th concert in the Grand Theatre in 1921, which puts its formation in the middle of the 19th century. On this occasion there were 140 in the orchestra and chorus. Numbers are less now, but it is still an active group and after a winter's practising takes part each year in the Cumberland Rural Choirs performance usually in Carlisle.

The Mechanics Band formed in 1875, was revived in the 1970s after a long lapse. By 1978 the membership had risen to 20 senior and 14 junior players and the band has again become a part of the life of Cockermouth. The town could at one time provide three bands - the Mechanics', Borough and Industrial School. Hardly in the same class, but years ago part of Cockermouth's entertainment, were the groups of travelling musicians and, before 1914, the German bands to be heard in the streets. [18] Two other recent developments in the musical life of the town must be mentioned. The Castlegate Singers, a ladies' choir formed in 1976 and based on the Derwent Centre, has won considerable repute in a short time and is in demand for concerts in the district. Also at the Centre instrumental teaching is available and many Cockermouth residents now learn the piano, violin, cello, flute, clarinet, etc. The schools Music Centre brings together younger musicians on a Saturday morning.

The revived Band, the Singers and the instrumentalists, together with the 'Music in All Saints' evenings and the long-standing Harmonic, have brought music to a prominent place in the leisure time activities of Cockermouth.

## *Leisure Activities*

Keep-fit classes are run for both sexes, no new thing, for there were PT classes for young people in the Assembly Rooms before the first war. [19] Sports in different centres in the town include badminton, squash and fencing. Between the wars one could play billiards in the Assembly Rooms, organised by Charnley of Lancaster who had halls in a number of West Cumberland towns. [20]

In 1779 'The Pacquet' announced

"COCKERMOUTH ASSEMBLIES. The Next ASSEMBLY at the SUN INN, Cockermouth, will be on Tuesday the 26th. of JANUARY inst. and the other Three Assemblies which finish the Season, will be on the 2nd. and 30th. of March, and 27th. April, being the Tuesdays nearest the Full Moon; which, it is hoped, will be a convenience to the neighbouring Ladies and Gentlemen, who may choose to honour the Assembly with their Presence. Every Endeavour will be used to render the Meeting perfectly agreeable." [21]

Some activities were restricted in their membership, such as the numerous annual dinners or suppers for employees in mills or shops and the trade associations such as the Grocers' Association. The town's Chamber of Trade was inaugurated at a dinner in 1934. [22] There are clubs of many kinds - British Legion (recently moved from the Skinners Arms in Kirkgate to the Sun in Market Place), Young Farmers, Drivers, etc. Of the political associations, the Conservatives had an office in Station Street and a reading room in Main Street moving to the larger premises at 7 Main Street (formerly a bank and offices) in 1925. The Liberal Association was once based in Market Place and the Labour Party used the former premises of the Boot and Shoe Operatives Union in Lorton Street.

There have been or still are Cubs and Scouts, Brownies and Guides, Boys Brigade and Girls' White Ribbon, and the usual groups found in towns of Rotary etc. One may serve the community of women through the Women's Voluntary Service or by giving time to Oxfam, Save the Children, Age Concern etc. One may serve by joining first-aid classes and associations, as one could as early as 1907 by paying 2s-6d [12½p] for a course taken by Dr. Mitchell.

In the town's large rooms - the Globe Assembly Room, the Freemasons' Hall in Main Street and the Royal Assembly Room, and later the Public Hall - and in a number of smaller centres, there was obviously something to suit all tastes and still is. One could go to a 'penny' reading' of recitations and solos in the schoolroom at Papcastle, listen to the Cockermouth Entertainment Society providing vocal and instrumental entertainment, attend the concerts of the Catch-my-Pal Society in the Bridge Street Rooms, take part in the spelling bees which became popular in the late 1870s, or watch a pantomime. One could help to provide an outing for the workhouse children by attending the Cockermouth Benevolent Society's entertainment. One could from 1883 relax in the Convivial Club or between the wars use one's mind in the League of Nations Union. [23] One may join the Bridge Club or visit the occasional exhibition. In 1936 there was an exhibition of relics and curios in All Saints Rooms [24] and more recently the Civic Trust staged a Wordsworth Exhibition in 1970 and a Bygones Exhibition in 1973 and several times since.

The Civic Trust, formed in 1967 with the aim "to make Cockermouth a better place in which to live, both now and in the future", has a current membership of around 200. In addition to the lecture programme provided each winter, it has a special interest in the character, appearance and development of Cockermouth, working through the councils and the Allerdale Planning Department. Its activities cover a wide field, including the founding of the information office (with the Chamber of Trade) a photographic record of the town, tidying up projects, tree planting and an annual outing for members. It has now taken on the responsibility for updating and publication of the author's books as necessary.

Occasionally a circus would visit Cockermouth - Buffalo Bill's, Bronco Bill's, Smart's, Sanger's have all been. [25] (the last was in 1995). In June 1921 a passing attraction was a visit by Ingham and Little's Aviation Co. who for a few days offered flights from Mr. Elliott's field past the hospital. From 10am until dusk two passengers at a time were taken up for 10s-6d. [52½p] each. [26] Then there were the celebrations - royal events, armistices, etc. - excuses for a town holiday and general enjoyment. 100 years ago there was an annual holiday on the Queen's birthday, but this was a minor event compared with the excitement on 21st June 1887 in honour of her Jubilee.

A committee of ratepayers arranged church services, processions, bands, food and games a concert in the Public Hall and a ball in the Drill Hall. Add to these the firing of a salute, speeches and toasts, bellringing, nuts, Jubilee mugs and medals, bunting and flags and Cockermouth's celebration

### *Leisure Activities*

was complete. [27] Unfortunately the day was sultry and uncomfortable and when late at night thousands assembled in the Castlegate and St. Helen's area to see the fireworks and beacon fires, the latter were hardly visible because of haze and the lightness of a June evening.

Over the signature of Isaac Mitchell, chairman of the committee, a telegram was sent to the Queen

"The inhabitants of Cockermouth, in public meeting assembled, congratulate her Majesty on this day, and wish her long life and happiness."

Also a Jubilee Anthem, set to the tune of the National Anthem, was written by Rev. J. T. Pollock.

More substantial reminders of the occasion are the two bridges opened in that year - the Quaker Footbridge on Jubilee Day and Waterloo Bridge three days earlier, Also on Jubilee Day the foundation of Victoria Jubilee Bridge was laid.

This day set the pattern for similar events in later years - Victoria's Diamond Jubilee [Plate 31], George V's Silver Jubilee (when floodlighting of the town hall, the war memorial and All Saints tower was an added feature and 'Miss Cockermouth' took a hand in the celebrations), [28] coronations, etc.

A country town never finds a shortage of things to celebrate and, in common with the rest of the country, Cockermouth had hiring fairs, Halloween, young folks' days, etc., which we cannot describe here. Some purely local events are however worth noting. In 1937 a pageant of 2,000 years of the town's history was opened by Sir Hugh Walpole and many people still living took part in one or other of the episodes - the Romans, the Normans, Robert Bruce at Cockermouth Castle, the visit of Mary Queen of Scots, Cockermouth Fair and Election in 1831, T'Shepherds' Meet and the concluding Epilogue. [29]

Wordsworth has given the town opportunities to celebrate. On his birthday, 7 April, in 1896 the band, councillors, M.P. and many townspeople gathered in Harris Park on a dull and showery afternoon for the unveiling of the granite drinking fountain surmounted by the bronze figure of a child, a memorial to the poet and his sister Dorothy. [30] (Plate 30)

In 1950 the town celebrated the centenary of the poet's death, then in 1970 came the 200th anniversary of his birth. A gathering in Wordsworth House was followed by the unveiling of a bust of William on a plot of ground facing the house. This was a gift to the town by Rotary, Round Table and the Lions Club and the unveiling was by the poet's great-great-grandson Lt.-Col. J. G. Wordsworth. (In 1986 the Round Table was responsible for landscaping the surrounding area) In the afternoon primary school children walked from Fairfield to the memorial in the park carrying daffodils which they placed at the foot of the statue, as their predecessors had done over 70 years earlier.

The U.D.C. appealed for money to buy 10,000 daffodil bulbs to plant on the approaches to the town as part of the celebration. The response was sufficient to buy 27,000! These were planted by school children and are enjoyed every spring. Unfortunately they were not enjoyed on 7 April 1970, for one of three things that went wrong in the commemoration was that the bulbs flowered about three weeks after the birthday. The following year they bloomed a week before the 7th April! The other mishaps were that the BBC filmed the ceremony in the park but the programme appeared on BBC 2 which could not be received in the town at that time; and the Post Office celebrated the event by a commemorative stamp which carried a picture of Grasmere - for which they apologised.

Each year the town has a carnival. At the beginning of the century this was Cousin Charley's Day. There were queens and sports, and the day was rounded off with evening entertainments in the Drill Hall and the Public Hall. [31] In 1901 an added attraction was a balloon. The place which this carnival held in the life of a Cockermouth child is illustrated by the reply given to a schools inspector who asked which were the principal towns and what they were celebrated for, to receive the reply that Carlisle was noted for its mills, Workington for its ironworks, Whitehaven for its collieries, Cleator Moor for its ore mines and Cockermouth for Cousin Charley's Day. [32]

The present-day carnival begins with a Procession from Fairfield via Lorton Street, Kirkgate and Main Street to the Memorial Gardens (until recently to Sandair) for sports, refreshments, etc.

In the 19th century many Cockermouth people had never been further than ten miles from home, some had never seen the sea. Now this isolation has completely broken down and, with the rest of the country, we holiday near and far. A Cockermouth man, Mr. J. Cook, pioneered the way when in 1905 he arranged the first tour of the Cumberland Travel Association, using the name 'Derwent



## *Leisure Activities*

Allerdale' to avoid confusion with a better known tour operator! He took 35 people from all over the county to Switzerland for a highly successful fortnight's holiday based on Lucerne, so successful that immediately on his return he began planning an autumn tour to the Channel Islands. [33]

Coming to more recent times, the town never misses an opportunity to celebrate. The Wedding of Prince Charles and Diana in July 1981, was an excuse for Main Street dancing, races, etc., and for a bonfire on Skiddaw. Then in the spring of 1989 the town commemorated the bi-centenary of the Mutiny on the Bounty, in which Fletcher Christian, born at nearby Moorland Close, played a leading part. In April 1982 the television programme "It's a Knockout" was staged in the Memorial Gardens and on and in the River Derwent alongside. The European Year of Tourism in 1990 was celebrated by various outdoor events. 'The Carnival continues and since the mid 1980's the Round Table 'Donkey Derby' held on August Bank Holiday Monday has been a regular feature. The Christmas lights have developed from 1985 onwards into a spectacular and much appreciated feature of town life, the 1986 'switch-on' by pop star, David Essex attracting some 10,000 people to Main Street.

Some earlier activities have been revived. Since 1990 there have been occasional visits by a circus. Totally different, the Harmonic Society, founded in 1867, has become active again after a lapse of several years. In 1991 a passion play was staged by local people and is becoming an annual event.

Gatherings which continue include the Agricultural Show, the Gardeners' Society Show, the Fur and Feather Society's Show and Sheep Dog Trials. Amongst societies which continue are Rotary, Round Table and the Lions (with the corresponding ladies' groups), the Soroptomists, Probus and the British Legion. Some of these groups, along with Age Concern, provide outings and entertainments for the elderly and others. Some women belong to Women's Institutes in neighbouring villages.

A number of new societies have been formed in recent years - the Derwent Railway Society (based in Cockermouth), Castlegate Singers, the West Cumberland Lacemakers (based in Cockermouth), a local history group, Cockermouth Music Society, Kirkgate Cinema Club, etc. Outstanding has been the development of the Cockermouth Amateur Dramatics Society (CADS), staging a wide variety of drama winning county trophies. The first event in the new Kirkgate Centre was their performance of "Much Ado About Nothing" in January 1995.

Considered in Chapter 40 is a completely new kind of leisure activity for the town, resulting from its twinning with Marvejols.

### **CYCLING**

More recently there has been a resurgence nationally of cycling and the development of cycleways and cycle routes. Cockermouth is on the national routes developed by Sustrans - the coast to coast routes both directly route pass through the town. The line of the old railway has also been developed as a footpath and cycle route from Low Road to the cemetery and is now called the Greenway.