

Christianity probably first came to Cumberland through members of the Roman army, but it is not until the 7th century that references to the faith occur. At the end of this century the Derwent was adopted as the northern boundary of the great Archdeaconry of Richmond in the Diocese of York and when in 1133 Henry I made Carlisle a see, it became the division between Carlisle and York; then in the 16th century between Carlisle and Chester until Carlisle was extended southwards in 1856. Thus for a long time Bridekirk with Papcastle was in one diocese and Brigham and its chapelry of Cockermouth in another, with little Setmurthv claiming the distinction of being the most northerly chapel in the Chester diocese.

By the early 1200s there were at least 11 monasteries and nunneries in Cumbria, whose story must be sought elsewhere. In 1233 the Dominican or Black Friars settled in Carlisle and there is a tradition that they founded in Cockermouth the hospice of St. Leonard about 1285, hence the reference "add caput ville versus capella sancti Leonardi." [1]. A hospice was a rest house and place of prayer for travellers, especially before undertaking a dangerous part of a journey. The small building in Spittal Ings referred to as 'the hospice' was in fact an early 19th century industrial building, but it may indicate that the hospice was close by, especially as just south of this site a beck was once crossed by 'Black Friars Bridge' (Fig. 63). A hospice here would be near the crossing of the Derwent or, if the Derwent did once flow through the site of Walker's factory, would be between crossings of the Derwent and Cocker. The old station site was called St. Leonard's and the name is perpetuated in St. Leonard's Close east of the Gate.

At the other end of the town was St. Helen's chapel. This chapel may have been in an early isolated settlement judging from a reference in 1437 to "unius grangie & j claus iuxta calellam see Elene". [2]

There were a number of holy wells in the district, including one at St. Helen's, St. Anthony's well by the Derwent upstream from the town and the Nun's Well referred to by Wordsworth, on the A66 side of Brigham vicarage. St Ringan's (Ninian's) Well on Fangs Brow, now a drinking trough, was a medicinal spring.

Cockermouth has nothing to show in ancient crosses or grave slabs, but the mother church at Brigham has several examples, as have the churches at Bridekirk, Clifton, Dean, Dearham, Lamplugh etc. The Brigham remains show that there was a church there long before the "Chauunterie of Seynte Michell within the parische church of Brigham" was founded by Thomas de Burgh in the early 14th century. The parish extended from the Marron to Bassenthwaite Lake and from the Derwent to Honister; in the 12th and 13th centuries chapels of ease were built in Cockermouth, Buttermere, Embleton, Lorton, Mosser, Setmurthy and Wythop. Lord Lonsdale eventually became patron of Brigham and of all the chapels in the parish. Just outside the mother parish, Isel Church possessed the famous triskele stone, dating from before, possibly well before 900AD. This unique stone, relating to the beginning of Christianity in West Cumbria, was stolen from the church in 1986. The Percy papers mention in 1508 a settlement at Rannerdale, with a chapel dedicated to the Blessed Mary Magdalene, but settlement and chapel have disappeared. [3] Even after the new chapels were erected, burials had to be at the mother church - hence the 'corpse roads' skirting the fells.

COCKERMOUTH'S EARLY CHURCHES

A survey of church possessions ordered in 1552 by Edward VI to check unauthorised spoilation since the survey of Henry VIII makes no mention of Cockermouth, although Brigham and Embleton are included. There is a tradition however, that a church was built by Waldeof contemporary with the castle and it has been suggested that William de Fortibus enlarged or rebuilt it about 1220. It was certainly rebuilt in the reign of Edward III (1327-77), but whether this was the second or third on the site is not known. When in 1395 Henry Percy endowed a chantry in the chapel of All Saints the dedication had already been changed from the earlier one of St. Mary. [1] The 14th century building was reputed to have been "the most ancient and beautiful specimen of Gothic architecture in the North of England". [2]

THE 1711 CHURCH

The Gothic building was demolished in 1711 except for the tower, which was incorporated in a new church which, judging from prints of the time was very unattractive. One hundred feet long [131m] (the present church is 122 feet) it had a gallery round three sides. Enlargement was already being considered in 1749. A clock and chimes and a new peal of bells were installed in 1777 and interior alterations were made before the end of the century to accommodate the children of the Charity and Sunday Schools. [3]

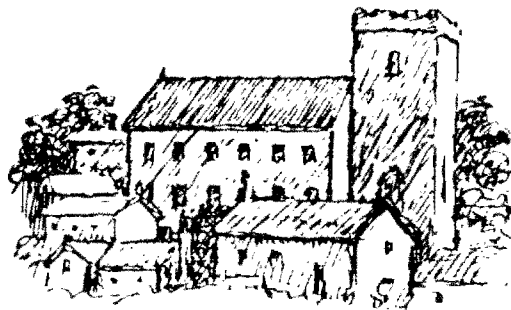


Fig. 47. The 1711-1850 church (reproduced from an old print).

A subscription was raised in 1817 for a "Gallery to be erected above the Communion Table upon which an Organ be placed and for the better accommodation of the Singers". [4] This may have been a barrel organ similar to one in Bridekirk Old Church which played 14 hymns and psalms, or may have been a proper pipe organ. The sittings were increased to about a thousand.

There are frequent references in the vestry minutes to the maintenance of the fabric - roughcasting outside, whitewashing inside, and in 1831 an order to the churchwardens that they "cause the church to be thoroughly cleansed, and use such other means as they may consider to be most advisable for curing the dry rot and stopping the growth of fungus". In 1793 the wardens were told "to procure Iron pipes to be put at the bottom of the present Lead ones on the sides of the Church at a sufficient height to prevent the Lead from being cut away and wasted", so lead was valuable then. About the same time references were made to repairing the 'stairs' leading to the church from the north side.

THE 1850 FIRE

Then in 1850 disaster struck. To quote from the 'Pacquet' [5] -

"On the morning of Friday, the 15th day of November, 1850, the Church at Cockermouth was destroyed by Fire. About half-past one in the morning Police Officer Chapman whilst passing over Cocker Bridge discovered sparks issuing from the Church and he immediately called up several persons and an alarm was instantly spread throughout the town. In a short time an immense concourse of people had assembled round the scene of the conflagration but the fire at that time had attained such a height as to bid defiance to all human exertions.

It is thought the Fire originated in the Steeple End, and from the immense quantity of wood the flames spread with frightful rapidity demolishing the peal of six Bells, the Organ, Church Clock, Chimes, Chandeliers, galleries, pulpit, pews, paintings near the altar, Marble Monuments, everything in short but the bare walls, and these were much injured.

Several of the officials, at great personal risk, rushed into the Church and secured the Register and other books, and these together with the surplices, gown, Pulpit and Reading desk cushions, Church Prayer Book

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and Bible, and a few private cushions and books were the only articles snatched from the devouring elements. A public meeting of the Inhabitants was held the same evening. . . . a Community of Investigation was appointed . . . to inquire into the origin of the Fire and to co-operate with the Churchwardens in taking steps most likely to raise funds for building another Church."

Services were transferred to the General Sunday School, as shown by the record -

"Jonathan Denwood, labourer, and Sarah Kelly of Workington. Banns published for the third time on Sunday, November 17th., in the General Sunday School, the Church having been destroyed by fire the Friday previous." [6]

Fortunately the church plate was saved, for the verger, grandfather of the late Mr. Joseph Mounsey (the grocer at 72 Main Street), was in the habit of taking it home for safety. In Mr. Mounsey's words

"It was underneath my grandfather's bed in a baize-lined box. He used to have to be verger and sexton and different things for the church, being a very keen churchman. When the church silver was needed for communion it was carried up there, used, brought back, cleaned and stored."

With one exception the marble monuments were destroyed, including two recording donations to the poor and seven memorial tablets.

REBUILDING

Although the town lost little time in considering rebuilding, in the event the task led to a great deal of dissension. The building committee selected six designs from the many submitted and asked a York architect to make the final choice. Commenting in a full report on size, cost, appearance, etc., he selected one by Hay of Liverpool, not one of the committee's six. There was immediately trouble because a Mr. Wood on the committee favoured a design submitted by his cousin. The final choice was of a plan by Joseph Clarke of London, with one dissenter - Mr. Wood.

The whole affair seems to have been very acrimonious, probably arising from the need to disturb graves. In 1851 Edward Waugh produced a 26-page printed statement 'To the Ratepayers of Cockermouth' defending himself as secretary of the committee against attacks made on him and stating his and the committee's aims to be a beautiful church, with good accommodation and minimum disturbance of graves and expense. Feeling must have run very high, for he wrote -

"They talk about desecration of graves - can that be an excuse for their conduct, when by lawless proceedings - followed by a lawless mob - they committed on Thursday last, acts of desecration, compared with which the removal of 100 graves would be mildness itself, and then there was George Cape, brawling for an hour in the graveyard, offering vulgar bets to gentlemen, as if he were on a race course." [7]

There were further complaints after building of incompleting work, reduction of sittings, etc., which went in 1857 before Chancellor Burton as the 'Cockermouth Church Case'.

THE PRESENT CHURCH

The foundation stone of the present Early English church was laid by Archdeacon Headlam on 28th February 1852 and the completed building consecrated by the Bishop of Chester, Dr. Graham, on 15 June 1854. The church had sittings for 750 and cost £7,143-12s-7d including £300 for the organ, £600 for the bells and £240 for the clock and chimes. With a total length of 122 feet, it has a nave roof 60 feet high and a spire of about 90 feet surmounting a tower of the same height. The pulpit and font are of Caen stone. The side walls have corbels for the possible addition of galleries.

The east window, inserted in 1853 at a cost of £300 is a Wordsworth memorial, the west window a memorial to Edward Waugh, MP 1880-85. There are other memorial windows and a number of wall tablets and brasses, including those to Mitchells, Thomas Wilson, Andrew Green Thompson and General Sir Henry Wyndham, this last giving a detailed account of his career. A painted board on the NE pier records the town's gratitude to the Earl of Lonsdale for appointing an Assistant Curate. A tablet on the north wall lists charities.

The Lady Chapel dates from 1925, with 1937 alterations. The nails used in 1850-2 to fix the roofing slates having corroded, extensive repairs were carried out in 1979.

THE BELLS AND CLOCK

Originally there were two bells and when a third was added they became known as the great,

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middle and little bells. The church records for 1672 have "For mending of the great bell and for beare (beer) for yem that tooke it downe 7s-7d."

The following year were recorded:

"Ffor taking the Greater Bell out of the earth and removing the old bell into its frame	5s-0d.
To George Jeffrey for a new gudgeon for the old bell and for a locke to the quire doore and other things	8s-7d
To John Atkinson for making ye clock strike on the old bell	2s-0d
To Richard Peirson Geo Peirson and Jo Hudson for drinks and for their ringing 29th. May and 5th. Nov.	3s-6d"

In 1691 victory celebrations were rung –

" Paid ringers at ye taking of Athlone	3s-0d
Paid ringers at ye taking of Limerick	4s-0d
Paid at ye news of Happy return of ye King to England	3s-0d"

The existing tower being incorporated in the 1711 building the same bells presumably continued in use until the new peal of 1777. In 1817 "two of the Bells (the second and third) having some time ago been cracked or received such injury as entirely to spoil their tone and render them useless", the vestry directed the churchwardens to use money from the church rate to "get them replaced by two other bells of proper tone and dimensions".

The wardens were also told to

"engage a set of proper persons ... to undertake the office of Ringers and who shall ring the bells upon all usual occasions and be paid a yearly salary out of the Ch. rate and that six handbells be procured by the Chwardens to be used in instructing the ringers."

The six 1777 bells were destroyed in the fire and the new church has eight. At one time they played well-known tunes every three hours. [8] Early in the 19th century it was written that when approaching the town "on the right the old church stands high above the river, with its barn-like walls and square tower, from which come the sweet tones of chimes ringing the air of 'Home, Sweet Home'" [9]. There is a story told of Betty Waif [10] who became lost after dark on Slate Fell. Sitting down to rest she heard the church bells and by their help found her way back to the town. As a thanksgiving and to help others who might get lost she left a legacy to provide £2 a year to have the bell rung from 7.00 to 7.05 pm. in the darkest quarter of the year, Hallowe'en November 1st to Candlemas February 2nd. When this began is not known, but the evening bell was being rung when Askew wrote in 1866 and still in Bulmer's time of 1883. The eight ringers took a week each. Another tradition is that it was a man who was lost, but Betty is perpetuated in Betty Waif's's Stone, a large boulder on which she was sitting when the bells began to ring. Askew is precise in his location of it - over the stile at the first gate on the right before coming to St. Helen's Tollgate, a good road over the Annfield estate leads to the stone, which is 26 paces from the gate in the west hedge of a field.

Going back some two hundred years before Betty Waif, the first payment in the churchwardens' book which relates to the 1676 grammar school appears in 1679 -

"Paid to Rd. Peirson for morning bell and for glazening £1-12s."

The morning bell was rung to call the scholars and by 1690 was known as the scholar bell, for in that year was

"paid Richard Pearson for ringing the Scholar Bell for a year £ 1-0s-0d."

In 1804 we read –

"Directions for the Clerk.

The Church Clock never to be altered but on Sunday mornings and notice of the alteration given to the congregation before the sermon.

Directions for the Ringers.

A bell to ring at 8 o'clock every Sunday morning by the sexton.

At Ten o'clock the large Bell to call the ringers who are to ring the Bells from a Quarter after Ten for Half an Hour, when there are to be Chimes until the service commences, then each ringer is to stay Church.

No extraordinary ringing on any occasion without leave from me in writing, and the Clerk and Sexton being the only persons who have Keys of the Churchyard to be answerable for any breach of this Order."

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The instruction regarding altering the clock shows that it played an important part in the town's time-keeping. It was last restored in 1974 in memory of Gilbert James, a churchwarden from 1951 to 1965.

THE CHURCH SILVER

The church silver, saved from the fire, consists of the following:-

- 1) A chalice inscribed "This Chalice was ye free gift of Luke Pirry to the Church of Cockermouth. Anno Domini 1639." (Pevsner says it was remade in the 18th. century.) [11]
- 2) A small vessel with a lid "Given for the use of the poor sick Communicants in Cockermouth in Cumberland 1734"
- 3) A jug or flagon inscribed "The Revd Mr. Thos. Jefferon Minister. Mr. Thos. Potter, Mr. Jn Jackfon, Mr. Ed. Pearfon, Mr. Rid Layburn, Church Wardens for the Burrough of Cockermouth. 1740"
- 4) A paten or dish with "The Revd Mr. Thomas Jefferson Minister. Jos Jackson, Robt. Stainton, John Dunn, John Meals, Church Wardens 1740"
- 5) A chalice with the same inscription as item 4.
- 6) A paten inscribed "Thomas Jefferson Minis: Robert Farish : William Shepherd : George Muray : Richard Smith : Church Wardens 1747"
- 7) A christening basin "The Gift of Mrs. Ann Peele Midwife to the Church of Cockermouth For the use of Baptizing. May 23rd. 1772"

The two early patens have a stem, similar to a cake stand. To them has been added a flat one inscribed "Presented by the Revd Canon Parker to All Saints Church August 1932."

THE LIVING AND FEES

The Earl of Lonsdale, the impropiator of the living, appointed a vicar or perpetual curate to undertake the church duties. Eventually tithes helped to maintain the priest, but at times clergy had to live by whittlegate - "the valuable privilege of using his knife for a week at any table in the parish". Whether Cockermouth clergy needed to move round the parish we do not know, certainly some in the surrounding villages did so, but on the other hand the living was not sufficient to attract the type who advertised for a living with good hunting and light duties! About 1800 the income was £26-13s-4d. paid by Sir James Lowther as impropiator and £8 from fees. [12]. In 1979 the diocese paid £3500, of which in All Saints parish £1000 came from endowments. All fees are now paid into diocesan funds by the incumbent.

The vestry book recorded the following fees for minister, clerk and sexton respectively in 1792 -

For marriage by license	2s.	1s.	-
by Banns	1s.	6d.	-
Publishing Banns	6d.	3d.	-
Churching of Women	8d.	4d.	-
Burial of an Adult	10d.	7d.	8d.
for an Infant	6d.	5d.	6d.

The records of 100 years earlier indicate higher fees for burial in the church than in the churchyard. In 1668 we have

"Received of Mrs. Swinburn for Interring of a child in the Chancel	6s-8d
Received of Mrs. Raines for the burieing of her husband in the Church	3s-4d.

In 1979 the total marriage fees (banns, service and certificate) were £19.50. Funerals ranged from £7.00 for a cemetery burial without a service to £15.00 with a church service. The organist charged £5.00 for a wedding and £3.00 for a funeral. By 1995 these had increased to £124.50 for the wedding and £55.00 for the funeral of any type, while the organist's fee was £20.00 for a wedding and £15.00 for a funeral.

INCUMBENTS

There were from time to time difficulties in the church either because there was no incumbent or because he was inefficient. Thus in 1793 we find that although prayers were followed by a sermon on

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Sunday morning this was not so in the afternoon. The parishioners felt that “the usual service of the Church has of late been neglected” and asked the churchwardens to enquire into the matter, but it was not until 1840 that Lord Lonsdale appointed an Evening Lecturer or Assistant Curate.

In 1865 Herbert B. L. Puxley was licensed to the ‘perpetual curacy’ of Cockermouth and he was followed in 1873 by Eldred Green. instituted to the ‘vicarage’ of All Saints. It was presumably between these two dates that Cockermouth ceased to be a chapelry of Brigham, probably when Christ Church was opened (1865). (Appendix 17)

CHURCH RATE AND VESTRY DECISIONS

Under an ordinance of 1647 all residents and property owners in a parish had to subscribe

“sums of money for and towards the reparation and maintenance [of the parish church and for] providing books for the said Church or Chappel, and of Bread and Wine to be used at the administration of the Sacrament there, and for repairing the walls and inclosures of the Churchyards or burying places thereunto belonging.”

We have referred several times to this ‘cess’. which varied according to the needs - 4d. for example in Cockermouth in 1832, occasionally as high as 8d. but in 1840 only 1½d. The fixing of the rate could be a lengthy business - the meeting lasted eight hours in 1842! In 1668 payments by individuals ranged from 2d. to £1-17s-6d. [13]

The churchwardens’ book tells how the money was spent and the following are typical items for 1668:- [14]

Paid	to Lanclot Fforth of Kendal for Souther [solder] and Workmanship	£8-0s-0d
	to Richard Rainicock for Lead for ye Church	£9-0s-0d
	for Two loads of Limestone	11d
	for repairing one of the bells	1s-0d
	to William Haggard for a Roope	2s-6d
	to John Atkinson for mending ye clock	1s-6d
	for Peates	10s-0d
	to Richard Peirson for mending ye Church Windows	7s- 9d
	to George Jefferey for making a sneck	6d

In the same year the following running expenses were recorded: -

Paid	for this booke and other paper	6s-0
	for writing Articles and Sesse bills and other things	3s-6d
	to Mrs. Rickarby for washing ye surplas for a year	2-0d

There were also payments for travelling expenses and fees. The 1668 payments include help to people

Paid	to a portugal stranger	2s-0d
	more to a distressed stranger	1s-0d
	more to a stranger	2s-6d

An entry in the churchwardens book in 1670 lists the possessions of the parish, in addition to the actual fabric of the church and school:-

“Delivered over to the New Churchwardens -

The Records Book, one Church Bible with other utinsalls belonging to the ffree Gramer Schoole of cockermouth.

Imprimis.	4 Servis bookes
	1 ould book called Erasmus parafrase.
	2 Rentall Bookes belonging to the ffree Gramr Schoole.
	1 pulpit cloth and Quisson. (cushion)
	2 Surplases one Linem Cloth
	2 Silver cups with Covers
	1 large puther fflagon.

A copy of a deed for the payment of five pounds yearly from Mr. (Lancelot) Fletcher of Tallentire to the Schoole (and other deeds).

One spade, a shuffle and a hack. 1 New Reidgester Book, Tow ould Reidgester Bookes ... One handbell, One booke of articles, One book of Canons. One paper Booke with a list of the Stalls in the Church, One chist and two keys.

2 Dixonaries given by Mr. Pecter Murthwaite for ye use of the Gramer Schoole.”

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The transfer to the new churchwardens in 1673 added to the list

“the 39 articles of ye Church of England – new ... One linen table-cloth with silke fringe and bosses. . One new Coffen and Hearsecloth for public use of ye parish. . . 4 boxes for gathering Collections.”

The parish now had a publicly owned coffin for the use of poor families.

Throughout the years there are many entries of repairs and replacements (e.g. a new coffin and hearsecloth in 1773-4). An interesting entry in 1673-4 is of “charges for bringing forth John Bouch the old clarke and for his winding sheete, 6s-6d.” Bolton notes the frequent use of ‘bringing forth’ in the records of the Carlisle guilds in bidding members to a funeral.

The responsibility for some articles later passed to the sexton or parish clerk, elected at the Easter Vestry. On retirement he had to hand over to his successor “the public shroud, the public coffin and two shuffles”.

The Vestry took care to ensure that the affairs of the town and church were managed in good order. The churchwardens had to render their annual accounts within four days of the Easter vestry, under penalty of 40s, each, the fines to go to the relief of the poor. On 21st June 1764 the following orders were minuted:-

“That the bread be bought by the Churchwardens for the communicants.
That the Churchwardens do take care and get the surplisses washed and mended.
That all the wine for the communicants be bought at one house where the Chwardens can get it the best and the cheapest.
That no wine be given to any clergyman to carry home.”

In 1784 the £415 in hand was to be invested in public concerns - £280 to the Widows Hospital, £35 to the Grammar School, and seven years later in 1791 it was decided to take proceedings to recover £100 which had been lent to Thomas Rudd from parish funds.

In all these affairs the control of premises, churchyard, bells, books, registers, money, etc., was in the hands of the people of the town, either directly through the Vestry meeting which they were entitled to attend or through the churchwardens whom they elected and who were answerable to the vestry, All inhabitants paid the church rate and all had a right to a seat in the church and to the services of burial, etc., which it provided.

SEATING

Although deeds to property in the town often contained a clause “together with the pew in All Saints numbered” this did not grant ownership. The Chancellor of the Diocese emphasised in 1877 the equal right of all to a seat without distinction and the duty of the churchwardens to show no favour, except for a few exceptional claims to certain pews as occupiers and not proprietors. [15]

Seating often presented trouble - people installing seats, selling seats for their own profit or claim and counterclaim, as when Edward Waugh brought a case to the Consistory Court in 1858 that John Rowland, a Cockermouth publican, had intruded himself into pew 39 and removed and torn up cushions, footstools and carpet belonging to Waugh.

SETMURTHY

The people of Setmurthy had eight seats in Cockermouth church and the right to burial in the churchyard. Their portion was near the old grammar school. We have seen that Setmurthy elected a churchwarden in addition to Cockermouth’s four and contributed to the maintenance of the church. They objected however to helping to maintain the church bridges and causeway and in 1836 withdrew. The churchwardens accepted back from them seats 28-31 and 44-47 for re-letting.

BURIALS AND THE CHURCHYARD

Burials were difficult when Robert Rickerby was reinstated in the living after the Commonwealth period. He refused interment to some parishioners, although it was illegal for him to do so. We learn that in June 1669

“That eminent brother and servant of the [Congregational] Church, Thomas Blethwaite, of Cockermouth, departed this life; the which day he was buried with great solemnity at the burying place belonging to the Quakers in Eaglesfield, he being denied burial by Robert Rickerby in the common burying place at

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Cockermouth, contrary to law.” [16]

The following month, for the same reason, Henry Birkett was buried in his own garden at Gilgarren.

[17] In December the land now known as Sepulchre Close at Town Head was given to the

Independent or Congregational Church, but it was not used until 1671. [18]

The churchyard was originally unfenced, but on 24 September 1800 the Vestry was

“unanimously and decidedly of opinion that it ought to be forthwith enclosed and made close on account of the very great abuses and various depredations which are Committed in the said Churchyard from time to time and at all times, besides the very shameful and nameless practices carried on in the very entrances of this sacred place.”

With enclosure the grass grew. In 1829 we find a Vestry minute

“It was unanimously agreed that the churchyard should be farmed by the Churchwardens for the sum of four pounds per annum. And they are hereby empowered to let the same to cut for hay, and whatever sum is deficient to be paid out of the Church Rate. It is the decided opinion of this meeting that no horses, cattle or sheep shall on any account be allowed to pasture in the Churchyard.”

More care was obviously being taken of the churchyard. The fenced pathway dates from the rebuilding of the 1850s.

In April 1874 the Vestry decided to spend £20 on trees and shrubs for the churchyard and the reasons given during the discussion include not only that they would “assist in maintaining the sacred character” and be of practical use because the place was so windy that one “cannot put an umbrella up”, but the interesting observation of one member that “their roots hasten the process of decay and their leaves absorb the noxious exhalations that arise from the decaying humanity”. [19]

Later in the same year it was decided to discontinue Sunday funerals, except when infection required urgent burial. [20] While it was realised that Sunday funerals were economically desirable, as mourners did not need to miss their work, the decision was taken because the crowds who were free to attend on Sundays were doing considerable damage to the shrubs and flowers.

Many of the gravestones commemorate people important in the history of the town, although some inscriptions are badly weathered. [21] The grave of Wordsworth’s father is near the south-east corner of the church.

When repairing the Kirkgate churchyard entrance, at the beginning of this century, a mass grave was discovered. The victims of the plague in the earlier centuries are reputed to be buried near Hundith Hill crossroads, but there were outbreaks of cholera in the town in 1832 and 1848. It is recorded that victims of the earlier outbreak were buried in a row in the churchyard. Was this the grave discovered?

HOLY WATER STOUP

In August 1937 when alterations were being made to Wild’s garage in Crown Street an interesting stone block was found built into a wall. [22] Roughly rectangular in shape, carved from grey sandstone with a 12 inch base and a height of 8½ inches, it was possibly a holy water stoup, a possibility supported by a small incised cross below the brim on the inside, a feature common on altar slabs. The absence of a drainage hole suggests that it was not a font and as there is no sign of attachment to a wall it probably stood on a pillar. It may be 14th century, but its origin is uncertain. It is now in the church.

REGISTERS

From 1538 all parishes were required to keep registers of baptisms, marriages and deaths, but government records did not begin until 1837. All Saints registers are complete from 1632. The first entry was a baptism in September of that year -

“Margaret, the daughter of Swinburn of Hewthwaite Hall.”

The first marriage recorded was in October -

“Hugh, the sonne of John Gibfon with Barbara (?) the daughter of John Dalton.”

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CHURCH ROOMS

The church rooms across the fenced pathway replaced the old grammar school, being built in 1896-7 at a cost of four to five hundred pounds. [23] The large hall upstairs seats 300 and there is a series of smaller rooms on the ground floor.

A tablet on the outside of the building reads

“On this site stood the Grammar School which William Wordsworth, Poet Laureate, attended as a boy. To this school also came Fletcher Christian, Leader of the Mutiny on the Bounty, April 28th. 1788.”

CHRIST CHURCH

Not until 1863-5 was a second Anglican church built in the town, some 30 years after it was first suggested. The foundation stone of Christ Church was laid by Percy Wyndham on 29th July 1863 and the building, designed by Mr. Bruce of Whitehaven was consecrated and opened by Samuel Waldegrave Bishop of Carlisle, on 13th June 1865. A plaque on the chancel wall reads

“AD 1865. This Church was erected chiefly by the means and entirely by the exertions of the Revd. H. B. L. Puxley, MA., assistant curate of Cocker mouth.”

Puxley was expected to be the first vicar and had much public support, but the appointment went to William Williams, chosen by the bishop and other trustees, to whom - the Earl of Lonsdale had given the patronage. Rev. Puxley's disappointment was lessened when he was appointed to the living of All Saints later in the year. [24]

The church, which cost £4,000 and seats some 800, serves a parish carved out of Brigham (Cockermouth west of the Cocker) and Bridekirk (the Gote area) parishes, it has a number of typical 19th century features - three galleries on iron pillars, long windows in the nave and a plain tower with corner pinnacles. Changes were made in 1873 when the reredos was added and further considerable alterations, including a new doorway, were made in 1933. In 1960, an attractive small side chapel was constructed, as a memorial to those killed in the two world wars. The Christ Church vicarage was 'Lane Head', at the top of Double Mills Lane, built in 1972. It became a private dwelling when the livings were joined.

The east window of "Christ healing the sick" by Heaton Butler and Bayne,

“was erected by public subscription in affectionate memory of the later Henry Dodgson MD of this town who died July 10th 1882 aged 49 years.”

Henry Dodgson has a second memorial at the end of the south gallery, a wall tablet erected by members of the Cocker mouth Rifle Corps to their Hon. Major. There are a number of other memorial windows and tablets.

Christ Church living was worth £180 in 1883, rose gradually to £380 in 1919 and is now similar to All Saints. The church rooms next to the church were erected in 1880 for £1000, the large hall seating 200 and there being a number of classrooms. [25]

That churchwardens need not be members of the Anglican church is illustrated by the appointment of a Mr. Straughton as a warden of Christ Church in 1876. He was not only an advocate of disestablishment but a Congregationalist and Superintendent of the Congregational Sunday School. Furthermore he was appointed by the casting vote of an Anglican clergyman! [26]

It is interesting to note that in 1938, the population served by the newer parish was considerably greater than that of the older one - 3252 compared with All Saints' 1815. This has since been evened up by the new housing estates east of the Cocker.

UNITED BENEFICE AND TEAM MINISTRY

The two parishes were eventually joined in a 'united benefice' under one vicar usually assisted by a curate. This had been proposed in 1939. Then in 1977, a further development linked All Saints, Christ Church, St Cuthbert's at Embleton and St Margaret's at Wythop under one team ministry. The team at present comprises two priests-in-charge and an honorary curate. A second vicarage was bought - No.1 Fern Bank, Cocker mouth, replaced by a modern house, 14 Harrot Hill in 1987. A new rectory was built in the grounds of the former one in Lorton Road in the early 1980's. In 2005, Bridekirk Church also became a member of the team ministry.

INDEPENDENT/CONGREGATIONAL/UNITED REFORMED

The Independent Church was formed in Cockermouth in 1651, with George Larkham as its first pastor, a post he held for 49 years.

In 1651 just after the end of the Civil War, Robert Rickerby (or Ricardby) was expelled from his living as vicar of All Saints and went to teach at the free school in Crosthwaite. [1] Larkham, still a student at Oxford (and earlier Cambridge) and only 21 years old, was appointed in his place by the Northern Commissioner of the Commonwealth.

On 17 December, 1651 the church-book recorded

“We first brake bread in the Public Meeting Place [All Saints Church] at Cockermouth,”

the service being conducted by Thomas Larkham, father of George. George was ordained in 1652 and at the end of his first Year married Dorothy Fletcher of Tallentire Hall, great-great-granddaughter of Henry Fletcher of Mary Queen of Scots fame. Membership increased rapidly and a second church was soon formed in Broughton.

With the end of the Protectorate in 1659 and the restoration of the monarchy, Larkham was in turn ejected from All Saints “by the violence of Sir George Fletcher” and Rickerby reinstated. [2] Larkham moved about with his family and spent a time imprisoned for his Puritan principles in York Castle, but the Independent Church continued. Its members met secretly in members’ houses, as meetings of more than five persons were forbidden by law except when using the Anglican Prayer Book. They gathered at night, usually at Sister Hutton’s Hemshill or at Tallentire Hall. The Declaration of Indulgence in 1672 enabled Hemshill to be registered as a church, but meetings ceased to be held there when Sister Hutton died in 1682 and were then usually held in a house at Tallentire which George Larkham had bought in 1669. There were still periods of persecution, but membership nevertheless increased.

In 1687 the Independents opened their first meeting place in Cockermouth since their ejection from All Saints. This was a converted dwelling house on the Sands which was leased to the church. In 1719 a chapel was erected and this was followed in 1735 by the building which later served as schoolroom and church hall.

Meanwhile Larkham had died in 1700, aged 70, and been succeeded by John Atkinson under whom the church flourished. Some 400 people came to hear him, drawn from a wide area to this the first Congregational church in Cumberland. Atkinson at first apparently lived in a manse tucked away in a back street, for after the first ten years of his 32 years ministry the church spent £78 on “a front house for him to live in”.

Later in the century difficulties arose. A new minister introduced Unitarian teaching which split the congregation, some forming a group further up the town known as the High Meeting, those remaining in the 1735 building becoming known as the Low Meeting. [3] ‘Low Meeting’ stuck even after the two congregations came together again in 1782 and Bolton used it as recently as 1912. Unfortunately the reunion did not last. Then a very strict minister reduced the membership to 29 (in 1833), but the church later recovered to such an extent that by September 1850 the congregation was able to erect the present Gothic style building in front of the old one. Seating 500 it cost some £2200 and was designed by a Maryport man, Charles Eaglesfield. The business committee concerned with the new Congregational Chapel presented General Wyndham with a lithograph “as a small acknowledgement of their gratitude for his handsome gift of ground and cottages in furtherance of this object”. [4]

Special trains ran for the opening and 1600 attended, of whom 700 enjoyed a Cumberland tea. [5] Two weeks later the old church behind was converted into a Sunday School, which at one time had nearly 300 scholars. Thomas Armstrong of the timber firm was at this time a deacon and superintendent of the Sunday School. He died soon after the opening, in 1853, and is commemorated by a plaque in the church.

The manse in Brigham Road was bought in the mid-1940s, recently replaced by a modern house in Laithwaite Close. Extensive repairs to the church were necessary in the mid-1970s, and plans to remodel the interior were postponed because of the high cost.

In 1972, following the union of most of the Congregational churches in the country with the Presbyterian Church, the Cockermouth church became the United Reformed Church.

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In 1990/91 the 1850 church was radically altered. The building was divided horizontally. Upstairs became the church; downstairs are the John Marsh Hall (named after a leading Congregational minister and scholar, whose son was architect for the transformed building), a small chapel, kitchen and toilets, This freed the earlier building behind, which was converted into 'bed-sit' accommodation for some ten people who came from Dovenby Hospital, to live in the community.

Rickerby refused interment of non-conformists in the churchyard. In 1671 Mrs. Lowry gave a "piece of fair land near to Cockermouth town end" to the Independent Church for a 'burying place' [6] and on May 18th of that year

"Sister Margaret Bowes of Cockermouth, being very aged, departed this life, and was buried the next day in the new burial-ground given to the Church at the upper end of the town of Cockermouth. She was the first that was laid there, we not having the liberty, though we have the right, to lay her body in the common burying-place belonging to the Town." [7]

This plot of ground, near the top end of St. Helen's Street, became known as 'Sepulchre Close' and was later used as allotments.

BAPTIST

A Baptist congregation was founded in Cockermouth by Cromwell's soldiers and met in a building in Waterloo Street behind the present United Reformed Church, later used as a garage. [8] The nearest Baptist church is now that in Little Broughton.

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)

The first Quaker meeting in the area was held in the open on Pardshaw Crag during the summer months, dividing into four groups to meet in cottages in nearby villages in winter. George Fox visited Pardshaw twice when he was beginning the Quaker movement by drawing together the many groups of 'Seekers' who had broken away from the Orthodox Church.

Fox first came to Cockermouth in 1653, having travelled from the Furness area. [9] He had sent James Lancaster ahead to arrange a meeting at one of John Wilkinson's steeplehouses near Cockermouth. (Fox reserved 'church' for the people, hence 'steeplehouse' for the building.) He arrived to find James Lancaster preaching under a yew tree and was himself persuaded to go into the church to speak. He records that

"when I came the pulpit and the house were so full of people that I had much ado to get in; and they that could not get in stood about the walls." [10]

Larkham was one of his listeners. Fox states that a dozen soldiers were present from Carlisle, but they are more likely to have been from the Cockermouth garrison.

"The soldiers were convinced and their wives, and continued with me till the First-day [Sunday]. On the First-day I went to Cockermouth steeplehouse in the forenoon ... and when the priest had done I began to speak and the people began to be rude, but the soldiers told them we had broken no law and they were quiet.... And when I had done I passed away about two miles to Brigham to another great steeplehouse of Wilkinson's". [11]

After a period of imprisonment in Carlisle Castle Fox returned to Brigham in 1653 and spent a whole day arguing with Wilkinson.

Most of Wilkinson's congregation joined the Quakers and Fox wrote that in 1657

"he had not past half a dozen left; they still forsook him and came off to Friends. And at last he had so few left that he would come to Pardshaw Crag where Friends had a meeting of several hundreds of people who were all come to sit under the Lord Jesus Christ's teaching; and I went to this Pardshaw Crag meeting, and there he was, and three or four of his followers that were yet left behind came to the meeting, and they were all thoroughly convinced, and after the meeting was done Priest Wilkinson asked me two or three questions and I satisfied him. And from that time he came among Friends to their meetings, and became an able minister and freely preached the Gospel and turned many to Christ's free teaching." [12]

Fox's second visit to Pardshaw was in 1663, on his way from Carlisle to Keswick. He "had a large General Meeting and all was quiet and peaceable, and the glorious, powerful presence of the everlasting God was with us", [13] the men paid by the magistrates to stir up trouble having gone to the Quarter Sessions to claim their wages!

'Fox's Pulpit' is formed of two blocks of limestone on the outcrop of the crags facing north. In

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1672 the first meeting house was built, a lean-to against an outcrop somewhere above the present building of 1729. It was as an overflow from this Pardshaw meeting that the first meeting house in Cockermouth was erected in Kirkgate.

“It pleased ye Lord to add to ye number of his people at ye meeting of Pardshaw that it became very large so yt for ye Accommodation & more conveniency of several ffrinds there unto belonging: There was a meeting house provided in Cockermouth in the year 1688 and a meeting settled there in ye 10 mo: of ye same....” [14]

The Congregational Church Book records expulsions from membership of those who joined the Quakers at this time, including John Wilkinson who departed “to his great shame and infamy”. [15]

The first Kirkgate building was a simple structure with a long burial ground behind, followed in 1781 by a larger building which occupied the full width of the site. Then in 1883 the following minute appeared in the records of the business meeting for the area:-

“We are informed by our Cockermouth representatives that their meeting house is in such a state that they have decided to bring before the Quarterly Meeting [a gathering of all Cumberland] the desirability of building a new one.”[16]

A new one was completed in 1884, costing £1190 with furnishings. Two main rooms seated 100 in each and had a feature common to many Quaker meeting houses - a movable Partition between the two rooms, in this case the upper half rising into the roof loft counterpoised by the lower half sinking below the floor, leaving a division some three feet high.

In 1971/2, following the discovery of dry’ rot, the opportunity was taken to modernise and remodel the premises, at a total cost of £10,000. When panelling was removed areas of 1884 brickwork were found inserted amongst 1781 stonework.

METHODIST

The first Wesleyan Society in Cockermouth was formed in 1763 with 19 members, in the Haworth Round of Yorkshire under Wm. Grimshaw of Haworth as superintendent. Six years later it became part of Whitehaven Circuit, which extended from Penrith to Ulverston and the Isle of Man. [17]

The present Victoria Hall in High Sand Lane was the first Methodist chapel in the town. In 1796 the buildings called the Maltkins in Sandwent, with a garden and yard, were assigned to George Robinson, a Cockermouth cooper. The following year Robinson assigned to Matthew Smith, gentleman of Cockermouth, and other trustees, a newly erected building for worship by the Methodists. [18]

John Wesley (1703-1791), one of the founders of the Methodist Church, is reputed to have preached here, but the dates show that it must have been elsewhere in the town. He records in his journal 19 visits in the period 1751-88, usually on his way to Whitehaven, [19] and wrote of one visit

“About eight I began preaching in the market house at Cockermouth. I was surprised to find several of those that are called ‘the best of the town’ there, and they were all serious and attentive; so we had a solemn parting.”

The Methodists left Sandwent in 1841 for a new building which is now the Town Hall, of a design common to Methodist churches of that period – square, with a gallery round the four sides, the front portion containing the choir and organ, and with a schoolroom below the church. It had seating for 850 and cost £1800. [20] The gallery was later converted into an upper floor by the UDC. The vacated building in High Sand Lane was purchased by the Town Council and opened as the Victoria Hall in 1984, providing a much-needed and well used venue for small gatherings. It is still used by religious groups on Sundays.

In 1810 the Methodist Church split into the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists and it was the Wesleyans who built this chapel. A comment towards the end of the century was

“There cannot be much said in favour of the present Chapel, though it is better than the one in Sand Lane; but the principal objection to the one now worshipped in is that the school under it is dark, cheerless, and difficult to ventilate.” [21]

This view gained increasing support resulting in the opening of the Lorton Street church in 1932. This was the year of Methodist union, when the Wesleyan and Primitive Churches, together with a smaller body of United Methodists (not having a branch in Cockermouth), became the Methodist

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Church. 'Lorton Street' seats 450 and has a hall accommodating 300, with a wing of smaller rooms added later. The interior of the church was redesigned in the late 1980s.

When the Wesleyans left High Sand Lane in 1840/1 the Primitive Methodists bought it for £95 worshipping there until they acquired the National School in New Street in 1885. Here, for a total cost of £1300, they had much more room - 400 seats and a Sunday School. [22] 'New Street' remained open after union until shortly after the war, although the churches in the Cocker mouth area formed one Methodist circuit in 1937. After its closure the building was used for a time by Millers shoe factory as a training centre for machinists, then in 1982/3 it was converted into six small houses.

The Primitive Methodists for much of their history held annual 'camp meetings', great open air gatherings. In the 1870s such meetings were held next to the auction mart, but they moved later to Harris Park.

ROMAN CATHOLIC

Roman Catholic services were held during the earlier part of last century at the Sun Barn in the yard of the Sun Inn at the lower end of Kirkgate. The building was Cocker mouth's theatre in the 16th and 17th centuries. A priest came from Wigton once a month to say mass here. When Prince de Joinville and his family, exiled from Orleans, were staying in Keswick in 1846 it was to this room that they came to hear mass. [23]

In 1856 the present Gothic building in Crown Street, St. Joseph's, was opened. Accommodating 500, it was designed by Thomas Gibson of Newcastle and church and presbytery cost £ 1400. [24] The day school used the adjoining building until the opening of the new one on the Level in 1967, when the older premises came fully into use as a church hall. They were renovated in the early 1990s.

OTHER GROUPS

The High Sand Lane chapel, now the Victoria Hall, has been variously used - by the Salvation Army, as the Victoria Gospel Hall and by the Exclusive Brethren. In 1979 the Plymouth Brethren met in Brougham House in St. Helen's Street and Jehovah's Witnesses at one time used a building in the yard of the former All Saints School in Kirkgate. There was, a few years ago, a gospel meeting in Irvings Court, off Main Street.

An evangelical group was formed in 1979, known as the King's Church. Having no premises of its own it is at present worshipping on Sunday afternoons, in the United Reformed Church and also holds frequent gatherings in members' homes. In May 1995, the group opened a Christian bookshop in Main Street, which also acts as a drop-in centre for its members.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS

The churches ran Sunday Schools, sometimes very efficiently, providing not only religious instruction but in their early days lessons in reading and writing. The Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School was a good example. In 1845 it published a printed eight-page booklet of rules and regulations dealing with all aspects of the School, superintendents, secretaries, teachers, children, and also the visitors responsible for visiting in each of the six areas into which the town was divided for this purpose. The school committee was appointed annually and the school had to be visited each Sunday by one member of the committee. It opened at 9.05 am.

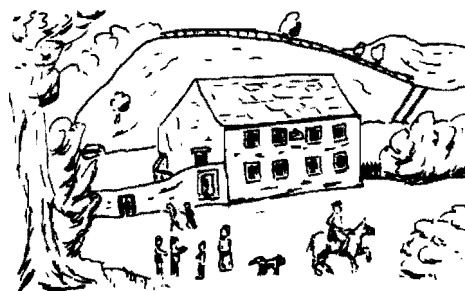


Fig 48. *The General Sunday School*
(from a sketch on the front of the 1833 report.)

and 2.05 p.m with singing and prayer, not more than four verses of any one hymn being allowed to be sung. Each child arriving on time received a small ticket, 12 of which were worth a penny and every quarter a reward book to the value of the tickets was given. This meant a maximum of 2d. per quarter, but we must remember that this was 1845! There were other Sunday Schools from an early date. Bolton referred in 1912 to the 'centenary' of the Independent Sunday School as having

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been 'long ago' and the Anglican school was also quite old. The latter met on the ground floor of the old grammar school and like the others, taught reading and writing. [25] The first Sunday School in the country is attributed to Robert Raikes, who opened one in Gloucester in 1780.

On 14 August 1795 the Vestry in Cockermouth ruled that the collection taken after the Sacrament should be used only for the poor and not towards the costs of the Sunday school and that "the said school from this day discontinues unless the inhabitants think proper to subscribe what is sufficient for the support of the School". This was only 15 years after Raikes started, so that Bolton's statement that Sunday schools existed in Cockermouth long before they were general in England may be correct. The Church Sunday School pupils had to attend a public catechising in All Saints Church, filing in from the school through the west tower doorway (the pre-1850 church), with the churchwardens and sidesmen leading, the bells ringing, and the children suitably dressed - "the Charity girls with snowy mob caps and shoulder kerchiefs." [26]

Wordsworth wrote of this event

"From Little down to Least, in due degree,
Around the Pastor, each in new-wrought vest,
Each with a vernal posy at his breast,
We stood, a trembling, earnest company!
With low soft murmur, like a distant bee,
Some spake, by thought-perplexing fears betrayed;
And some a bold unerring answer made." [27]

'We stood' because Wordsworth himself said the catechism in this way when he was a boy in the town.

Perhaps the most interesting Sunday School in Cockermouth was the General Sunday School, opened in 1832. It stood in Back Lane (South Street) partly across what is now Station Street, near the Tithe Barn Inn, being demolished to make way for the auction mart and to permit the continuation of Station Street into Station Road. This very commodious building had room for 400 children. Unfortunately tragedy struck on the opening day when the upper floor gave way and brought down part of the staircase wall, killing two scholars. [28]

In 1833 the General Sunday School published a 26-page booklet - its balance sheet and report for the first year. The cover carried a sketch, presumably of the school, and the following appeal to the townspeople -

"Some of the Friends or Teachers of the General Sunday School beg to say, that they intend waiting upon the Inhabitants of this Town and Neighbourhood in the course of a few days, when they most respectfully and earnestly solicit the patronage and support of all who are disposed to favour the Institution."

It was largely through the efforts of the brewer John Richardson that the school was started and he was Superintendent for about 30 years. The committee of 29 members included Rev. E. Fawcett and Rev. J. Lowther and many names well-known in the political and industrial life of the town.

At the end of the first Year the school had three conductors (presumably assistant superintendents), 53 teachers, 4 monitors, 237 boys and 219 girls. £339-0s-7d. was spent in the first year, £160-15s-4d, received, hence the appeal to the town to clear the deficit. The building had cost over £299 and as this first report stated

"Through the signal interposition of a gracious Providence, which they will ever devoutly acknowledge, and by His blessing on your liberality, the Teachers and Children are now accommodated with a spacious and suitable building, in a pleasant, dry and healthy situation, in every way admirably adapted to the purpose of its appropriation."

The report also included the appeal:-

"Pious and steady Teachers, either male or female, who are disposed to assist the children of the poor, by instructing them on the Lord's day, will be welcomed in this school."

Such instruction would be in writing and reading with a bias towards Bible reading.

The Sunday School was certainly a live and active institution. It met at 9.00 and 2.00 and it was stressed that no one need be absent for want of proper clothes. At 6 pm. on Sunday a religious service

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was held for children, parents and friends, and a service for older children and teachers at 8 p.m. on Thursday. There was singing practice on Wednesday evening, a writing class on Thursday, and attendance on Sundays brought the privilege of attending on three evenings a week for general instruction. Pens, ink, paper. etc.. were provided by friends of the school and the 'Society for the support and encouragement of Sunday Schools throughout the British Dominions' gave class books for reading and other instruction. Library books, gifts to the school, might be borrowed for two weeks. Another fringe activity was the formation of sick and funeral societies, which in the first seven years acquired over 80 members.

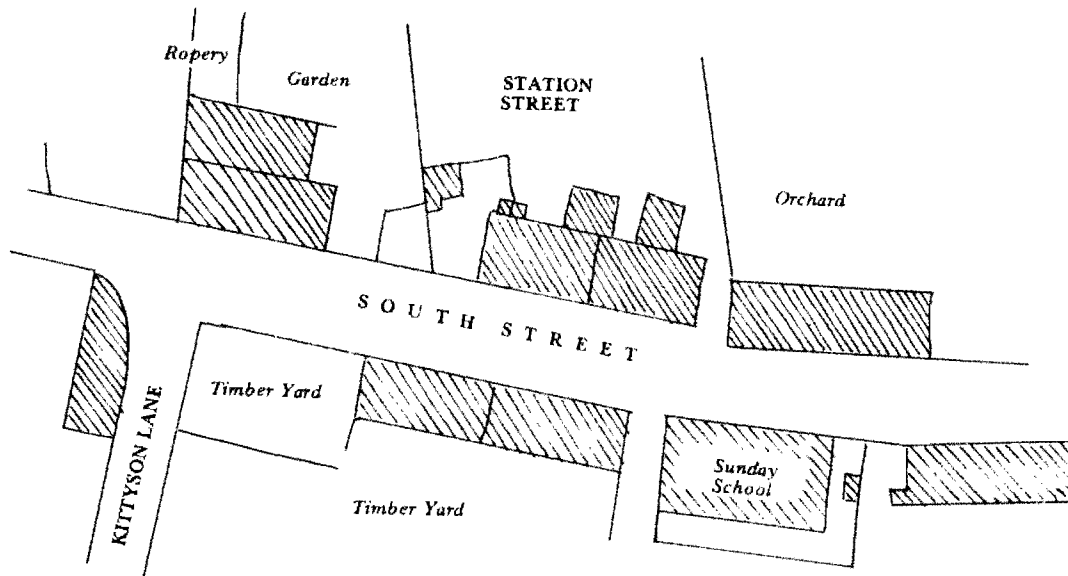


Fig. 49. Position of the General Sunday School and upper end of Station Street before opening up (based on 1863 OS map).

ADULT SCHOOLS

The Quaker meeting ran an adult school, associated with the nation-wide Adult School movement, and possibly other churches had similar groups for worship and discussion, such as 'Pleasant Sunday Afternoon' gatherings which were popular at one time.

A major factor in the development of industry in Cockermouth was an abundance of water power. Mannix and Whellan put it briefly in their 1847 directory -

“Besides being intersected by the Derwent and Cocker rivers, the town is also refreshed by two smaller streams which rise a few miles east, and are a great convenience to the manufacturers of Cockermouth and neighbourhood.” [1]

Water driven mills were built not only along the banks of the Derwent and Cocker, but also on those smaller streams of Tom Rudd and Bitter Becks.

The earliest evidence for water wheels in Cockermouth occurs in St. Bees records [2], which mention a fulling mill in the town in the latter half of the 12th century, and a little later a charter of William de Fortibus refers to fulling mills at Cockermouth and Dearham in the mid-13th century. [3] Davies-Shiel [4] lists 51 such mills in the Lake District by 1328, the first two at Hugill and Staveley from 1135, the third at Cockermouth from 1156, and the last of the 51 at Embleton from 1327. Probably there were corn mills using water at a much earlier date.

Wind power was harnessed in England in the 12th century. The first mills were of the post type, the mill revolving; then came the stationary body with a revolving cap; and finally the brick tower of up to five floors as seen in Cockermouth. [5] Cockermouth with plentiful water, probably had only two.

The use of water has often given rise to difficulties and controversy - the conflicting claims of adjacent mills, as at Rubby Banks; [6] the re-use of water below a mill, perhaps by an industry needing a pure supply; obstruction to navigation by mill dams and the loss of depth below weirs; and interference with long-established irrigation schemes, as in Bassenthwaite in the early 1950s when a beck at the head of the valley was tapped for the Wigton supply. These problems escalated with the industrial development of the 19th century.

Cockermouth's position as a market town has given its industry a bias towards the animal products of wool and leather, although cotton and linen later became important. We have referred to an early fulling mill, and only woollen cloth is 'fulled'. By 1453 there were two such mills, one at least on the Cocker. [7]

The town's industrial development received a boost with the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536-40. They had extensive holdings in Cumbria [8] and upon dissolution the buying and selling of wool, which had been carried on by the monks and their representatives using their own clearing houses, passed to the towns. A dozen Cumbrian religious houses were closed, the nearest to Cockermouth being Calder (in 1536), Holme Cultram and St. Bees (1538), but effects were also felt when houses further away were dispossessed of their lands, for example Fountains of its Borrowdale holdings. There would be a period of readjustment, but the sheep would still be there and shepherds still be needed. It was the more local manufacture and sale of products that brought a new prosperity to places like Cockermouth. The opening up of trading by adventurers such as Raleigh was a further spur to industrial growth. By the end of the 16th century Cockermouth was well established as a market town and its industrial growth had begun.

The chief industries of the town in the period 1640-1700 were listed as woollen weaving and the manufacture of shalloons; hats, many of them probably steeple-crowned; and various types of leather-dressing - breeches, gloves and high-topped boots included. [9] From the end of the 16th century there was a falling off in the Lake District woollen trade and many fulling mills changed to bark, sawing, bobbins and paper. [10]

Cockermouth had by this time become a very important commercial centre, partly owing to the activities of mining and quarrying, of which little was to be found near the town but which often took place on land belonging to the castle. Much of the iron and coal mining of West Cumberland was on 'Egremont' land. Eastwards, mining began in Newlands as early as 1230, was developed by Dutch and German miners in the 15th century and then further encouraged by Henry VIII. A thousand local men worked there, of whom an appreciable number must have been from Cockermouth. Many German miners were eventually in the area and they have left us derivatives of their surnames - Parker, Dodgson, Jenkinson, Stoddart, Dickson. etc. [11] In 1699 the Duke of Somerset quarrelled with the Dutch lead smelters and built his own smelter in Newlands

Metal from the Newlands mines was at first stamped in Keswick, but later at Cockermouth Castle, so the trade came this way by pack-horse [12] and the town was involved in the transport of

Industry – General

lead and copper to the coastal ports. One factor which led the Earl of Northumberland to join in the Rising of the North arose from his mining activities. Any silver and gold mined was the Queen's by law, but he was annoyed when by a ruling of 1567/8 she also claimed the copper.

Near Cockermouth was a small lead mine north of the Embleton road, where the waste may be seen a little west of the Wheatsheaf Inn. Mineral deposits were scattered throughout the region and there are many records of leases granted for their mining, such as that of 1649 by which the Earl of Northumberland leased the lead mines in Derwentfells to Colonel William Beale and London merchants for ten years, the rent to be one-eighth part of the proceeds. [13]

Reference is made in some of the castle leases to quarrying, and this has been an important feature of the Cockermouth district. There has been small scale quarrying for building on neighbouring hills such as Slate Fell, and further afield Honister Quarry (first mentioned in 1643) [14] was one of the three important slate quarries in Cumbria, sending stone over a wide area. The smaller quarries are no longer used, but as recently as 1905 the Hay Quarry was leased to John Wren. The large Close Quarry at Embleton worked a sill or flat intrusive sheet of diorite (a granite-like rock). The Cumberland Granite Co. Ltd., which leased it early in this century, ran into difficulties and the lease was assigned to Evelyn R.C. Kerr as liquidator at the end of 1911. But this was not the end of a quarry which 50 years earlier had contributed stone to the building of the nearby railway, on which it had a siding. In 1931 the Embleton Quarry Co. Ltd. decided to spend £20,000 on developments, tunnelling to a lower level. [15] It continued to provide stone for roads until the diorite ran out and it was closed in the early 1950s, at that time being run by the Keswick Granite Co. who owned the Threlkeld Quarry.

West of the town there has been appreciable quarrying of the limestones and grits of Brigham and Broughton. The limestone from the Brigham quarries was mostly for iron smelting at Workington, for which purpose it was transported by a tramway down to the Workington-Cockermouth Railway. Quarrying in the Broughton area goes back to Roman times. To the north Moota Quarry still produces limestone, as did the neighbouring Clints Quarry until it was recently closed because of its proximity to Blindcrake village. Tendley near Eaglesfield is still a source of limestone and Deanscales was re-opened temporarily in 1975-6 to provide material for the building of the A66.

Another commodity featuring in castle leases is clay. There is a record dated 1755 recording that Jonathan Potts and George Potts, bricklayers, were getting clay on Cockermouth Common for an annual rent of 30s, payable on Lady Day. [16] On 16th December 1779 an agreement [17] was made between Thomas Benson, acting for George O'Brien, Earl of Egremont, and four Cockermouth men Christopher Osmotherley, John Carter, Thomas Mackreth and John Mackreth, giving them

"The Liberty to search for get and raise Clay for making of Bricks and to Burn the Same into Bricks in or upon any Part of the said Earls Commons and Wastes"

except south of a line from Shatton by Jenkin to Piel Wyke. The lease was to run 21 years, the annual rent being £2.

In 1814 a contract was made by John and Thomas Mackreth with Abraham Mackreth and Robert Smithson for the latter to dig clay near the Town Head for £3-10s per annum each. [18] Presumably the Mackreths' lease had been renewed and they were sub-letting.

There are a few general features of industry which we will consider briefly before examining in more detail the different products and the individual sites. Mills were owned by the landowners, in this area the castle family, and leased to merchants or millers who quite frequently sublet. The advertisements for the sale of mills which appeared from quite early times related to the sale of the lease and not of the property. Frequently there was a clause in the contract requiring the lessee to leave the mill at the end of his tenancy in the condition in which he found it. He might wish to change the purpose of a mill when he took possession, as for instance when Little Mill was leased in 1763 to two men who wished to convert it from corn milling to bark crushing for the tanneries. [19] They were bound by the contract to restore the mill to corn at the end of their 21 years' tenancy.

A change in the function of a mill was a fairly common practice and is well illustrated by the account of Rubby Banks Mills in the next chapter. If the demand for a product fell a mill tenant would probably look for something more profitable to make. Consequently we find the changes rung on corn, wool, linen, cotton, thread, leather, hats, paper, bobbins, churns, wood turning, nail making, etc. If it was seen that a new line prospered then other mill-owners in the town would tend to follow,

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introducing competition which could spark off further changes. The need to change suggests that there was a shortage of money to carry a business through a trade recession.

The church registers and the county directories are a mine of information on occupations and indirectly on industrial development. In 1700 are mentioned bleacher, smith, whitesmith, carrier and excise man. Ten years later we have glover, dyer, tailor, dipper, piper, miller, vulcan (smelter). Then a period of mill building is indicated by the number of joiners and builders recorded, followed by an influx of spinners. By about 1740 Cocker mouth was well on the way to being a mill town, as the extended list of occupations shows - millers, tanners, dyers, hatters, glaziers, maltsters, carpenters, blacksmiths, coopers, wheelwrights, two ferrule makers and a pump maker, together with those such as grocers, apothecaries, tobacconists and a barber and wig maker who supplied the needs of the people. In the 1780s the Northern Directory names two firms manufacturing hats (William Johnson and Son and John Robinson and Co.), one flax dressing (Robert Cort and Son), one making thread (Robert Barns), one tanning John Nicholson), one dealing in leather (Hugh Beeby), two mercers and drapers (Richard Radcliffe and John Simpson), merchants and manufacturers (Matthew and Richard Smith), brewers (Miles Ponsonby and Co.), and the supporting grocers, etc. The list is short; only 21 businesses named, and is certainly incomplete.

The Universal British Directory of 1790 gives a much fuller picture of the life and bustle which there must have been in the town at that time. The Directory points out the advantages of Cocker mouth over neighbouring towns - its excellent situation for trade and manufacturing, in a surrounding countryside both populous and fertile, with several coal mines and three sea ports within 15 miles, and with a constant and plentiful supply of water. Tanned leather goods were then bringing an annual profit of £14,000 to the town; hats some £7,000; and shalloons and other coarse woollens about £6,000. Some of the best town houses date from this late 18th century period of prosperity. Judging by the list produced by Parson and White in 1829 the town was now developing rapidly. Space permits only the chief trades to be mentioned:-

Tanners -	George Beeby near Kirkgate. Abraham Hetherington in Castlegate. John Hodgson in Castlegate. John Slack in Castlegate. John Threlkeld near Kirkgate.
Carriers and leather cutters -	Jonathan Biglands in Stoddart's Buildings, Bridge End. George Birkett in St. Helen Street. John Dodd in the Old Hall. Joseph Pearson in St. Helen Street.
Sadlers and trunk makers -	Thomas Coulthard in Main Street. Joseph Fletcher in Market Place. William Grave in Main Street. George Mulcaster at Cocker Bridge End.
Hat manufacturers -	John Hodgson in Kirkgate. Edward Sancton, jnr., in Market Place. Thomas Stretch in the Goat. Thomas Wilson at Cocker Bridge End.
Linen manufacturers -	John Elliott (canvas) in St. Helen Street. William and Jonathan Harris in Main St and Goat Mills.
Cotton manufacturers - (check and gingham)	Joseph and Richard Banks in Market Place. William Black in St. Helen Street. Joseph Elliott in Market Place. William and Jonathan Harris in Main St and Goat Mills. William Stoddart at Cocker Bridge End.
Woollen manufacturers (blanketing, collar checks, horse sheeting, kerseys, sagathies, coloured flannels, saddle surges, etc.)	Joseph Grave in Sand Lane. John Robinson in Main Street. Edward Sancton and Son in Market Place. Richard Smith at Cocker Bridge End.
Dyers -	Thomas Robinson at Cocker Bridge End. Joshua Sim in Main Street.
Flax and tow spinners and sewing thread manufacturers -	William & Jonathan Harris in Main St and Goat Mills. Thomas Robinson at Cocker Bridge. Joshua Wharton in Sand Lane.

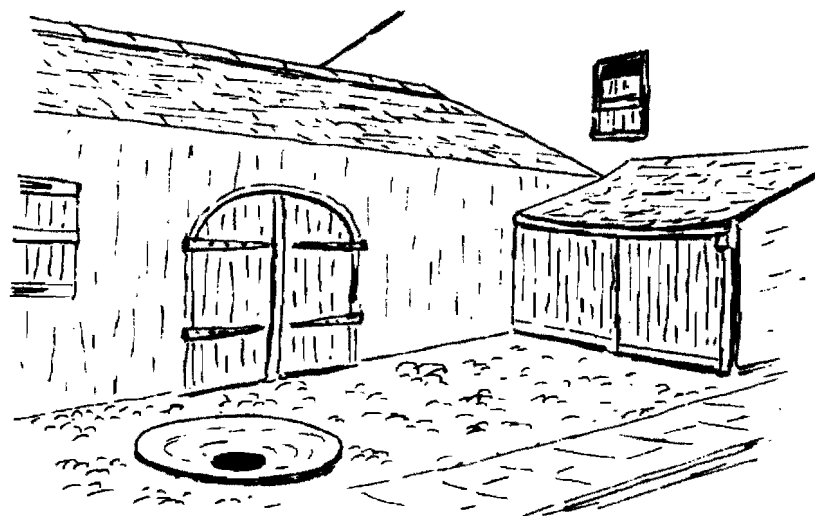


Fig 50. The Old smithy in Crown Street (opposite the 'Kingfisher' public house)

Some of these locations will indicate the nearest road to the factory or possibly an office.

There were also in 1829 - 7 attorneys, 2 auctioneers, 5 bakers and flour dealers, 8 blacksmiths, 13 boot and shoe makers, 3 braziers, plumbers and tinsplate workers, 3 brick and tile makers (Thomas Mackreth of Kirkgate, William Mackreth of St. Helen Street and Rt. Smithson of Sand Lane), 7 coopers, turners and chair makers, 5 corn millers, 2 brewers, 4 maltsters, 5 nail makers, a millwright, and a host of shopkeepers of many kinds, with joiners, horse furnishers. etc.

In the middle of the century, 1847, Mannix and Whellan wrote

“There is a considerable manufactory carried on in hats, which employs about 100 hands; of coarse woollen cloths and shalloons in which about 300 hands are employed; of checks and coarse linens there are about 50 hands; and the leather trade, in various branches, employs about 50 hands. The whole place bears an air of opulence. . . . the Messrs. J. Harris and Sons alone employ upwards of 200, and their factories were greatly enlarged in 1847.”

The average wage for a man at this time was £10 a year, for a woman £4.

The prosperity of the town in the first half of the century is shown by the population figures, which doubled from 2865 in 1801 to 5775 in 1851.

A summary of the locations of trades, etc., listed in 1847 shows a heavy bias still towards the eastern end of the town. Main Street had 135, Market Place 72, St. Helen's Street 45, Kirkgate 27, Castle St. 14, Crown St. 14, Market St. 12, Challoner St. 10, the Gote 9, Skinner Street and Sand Lane each 3, Cocker Lane, New St., Waterloo St., Old Brewery, South St. 2 and Cocker Went, Old Hall, Jackson's Yard and Sullart Street 1. Forty years later, in 1883, [20] there is a decrease in the traditional industries only four tanners (Henry Dodd in Kirkgate, Peter and Joseph Fletcher at the Castle Tannery, the Robertson brothers in St. Helen's Street and Jos. and Thomas Threlkeld also in St. Helen's Street); Fitz Mill and Derwent Mill manufacturing thread; and only two woollen cloth manufacturers, W. Brown and Co. Ltd. at the Tweed Mill and George Tinker in Rubby Banks. This was offset by other developments. There were now three agricultural implement firms - Houghton and Thompson in South Street, William Robinson at the Fairfield implement works and Joseph Herbert in the Derwent Foundry. The rope and twine maker was still in Kirkgate.

Farmers and carriers were served by six blacksmiths, and there was the usual range of craftsmen in the building, joinery and ironmongery trades. Tailors and drapers were up to 31, hairdressers to 6 and milliners to 11. There were 36 inns and hotels and 3 coffee houses, including the Whitehaven Cocoa and Coffee Tavern Co. Ltd. which provided refreshments at the railway station. A confectionery works had also started in the town.

In addition to its own manufacturing activities Cockermonth controlled the trade of a wide area.

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The Court Leet ruled in 1660 -

“That what cattle should be imported at Workington, Whitehaven and Allenfoot, the owners thereof may pay to the officers of our sd. Burrough for every horse 6d for every ox cow and heifer 4d a piece and for every sheep 1d. Similarly for tarr herring (4d a barrell), beefe, lead (6d per hundred) and coales (4d per Tunn).” [21]

In 1781 the trustees for Whitehaven port included the Cocker-mouth MP and John Wordsworth and the officials for Whitehaven and Harrington ports swore their oaths at Cocker-mouth. [22] The statement by Daniel Defoe in his account of a tour of Britain in the 1720s “that vessels of good burthern sailed up to Cocker-mouth” is another instance of a writer being misled by the town’s name. Norman Nicholson doubts whether Defoe ever visited the town and describes him as an accomplished liar with a vivid imagination.

Almost every village had a corn mill, and most a fulling mill, for people must not only be fed but clothed. The making of woollen cloth was one of the earliest of industries and wool itself was of great importance. The ransom paid to Austria for Richard the Lionheart about 1190 was in wool, of which Kendal contributed two sacks. [23] While fulling was done in a mill (as early as 1156 in Cocker-mouth), spinning and weaving were carried on in the homes of the people, the former by women and children, the latter by the men. The ‘fulling of cloth, giving it thickness and ‘body’, was originally achieved by placing it in troughs of soapy water and walking on it with bare feet in a walk or waulk mill, thus converting the loose weaving into a thick felted mass, tightening the weave and making the product warmer and more resistant to water. Later the pounding was done by water-powered hammers. The soap was made in this area from potash, obtained by burning bracken, and this was an organised subsidiary industry. [24]

‘Packmen’ collected fleeces and brought them to the central warehouses of the organising ‘clothiers’, where they were weighed and sorted by ‘fellmongers’, ‘spullars’ and ‘sorters’. Women and children in their homes then carded and spun hanks of thread, about 540 yards in length. The male ‘websters’ or ‘weavers’ produced ‘pieces’ 1 yard by 20 (later 40) yards. The ‘bowchers’ or ‘bowkers’ cleaned the cloth, the ‘dyers’ or ‘dysters’ coloured it, usually blue in the Cocker-mouth area, then following fixing and fulling it was stretched by tenterers’ or ‘listers’ by hanging it on rows of poles in tenter fields. Various processes produced different finishes, before the cloth was sold through the agency of the ‘chapmen’. A clothier would have quite a large work-force, usually at least 100, possibly 1000.

The ‘spinning galleries’ found further south in Cumbria (possibly used for washing and drying rather than spinning) are not a feature of Cocker-mouth, but weavers’ cottages are to be seen. These often have an additional row of windows close to those of the first storey to give additional light to the looms kept on the upper floor. The row known as Teetotal Lane, backing on to the United Reformed Church premises, was considered to have been weavers’ property and other examples occur in the town, often modified when home weaving ceased.

There was a weaving settlement in the Sullart Street area, separate from the main town. The tythe map shows three weaving shops here in 1840.

The change from domestic to mill manufacture was gradual. Carding was the next process after fulling to be centralised, followed by spinning. Eventually almost everything was done in three- or four- storeyed textile mills, although there were still some ‘outworkers’ late in 19th century.

The branches of the woollen industry have given us many surnames and also left their mark in the names of inns in the town such as the Woolpack in Market Place and the Weavers Arms in Main Street, demolished to make Bridge Street.

There was a widespread demand for wool from the northern counties, especially for working-class clothing, and in competing with richer wool-producing areas Cocker-mouth had the advantage of cheap water power. This was supplemented by steam towards the end of the 19th century, but some mills, such as Rubby Banks, remained water driven.

Like most industries, the wool trade had its good and bad periods. In the latter half of the 14th century there was a boom - production of broadcloth in the country trebled and exports went up ninefold. The latter were organised through the ‘staple’ a merchant guild based in Calais (a British possession) which controlled all trade to the continent except to Italy. [25] There was frequent legislation affecting wool. Edward III placed a 33.33% tax on the staple trade to boost home manufacture and to make money.

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Cockermouth (in the wool trade second only to Kendal in Cumbria) and the north as a whole found it difficult to pay the admission fees to the staplers' guild and the staplers, who had a monopoly, would not trouble to come so far north, so in 1618 the northern brokers petitioned the Privy Council for permission to trade with other towns free of the Council's ruling on minimum prices. After a second petition permission was granted the following year for free trading in the three northern counties. [26] Kendal and Cockermouth made some recovery, but many farms suited only to sheep rearing had by then been abandoned and fulling mills vacated or converted to other uses.

Cumbrian wool had a decline in the 16th century. A number of factors were responsible for this—the plague, competition from Spain and competition from the midlands and south of England, where the sheep produced finer wool and there were not the difficulties of collecting fleeces from remote hill farms. Cumbrian wool was described as being suitable only for “frizes [thick, rough woollen garments of lasting quality], cottons [imitation in wool of continental fustians, that is coarse, twilled fabrics woven to give diagonal lines] and coarsest cloth, [27] but there was nevertheless demand for it both at home and abroad. To boost the trade nationally statutes were passed compelling burial in wool (1667) and the wearing of woollen clothes, as that of 1571 which stated

“Every person above the age of six years (except maidens, ladies and gentlewomen; and lords, knights and gentlemen of twenty marks a year) shall wear upon the Sabbath and holiday, upon their head, one cap of woolknit, thicked and dressed in England, on pain of 3s. 4d. a day.”[28]

The prices paid locally in 1730 are found in the records of Humphrey Senhouse's sales. [29] In that year he sold to Joseph Westray, a searge weaver at Cockermouth, 30 stone at 5s-0d per stone (14lbs), of which half “was my own sheep wool, the other half of the bought-in wool”, so Humphrey Senhouse was apparently doing some wool ‘brogging’. He also supplied ‘mug wool’ to Joseph Rothery, a Cockermouth felt maker and to George Sancton, of the Ship Inn, Cockermouth, at 5s-0d. “County wool” was then fetching 3s-6d. a stone.

Linen and cotton manufactures were never domestic industries as was wool, but they played a large part in the working life of Cockermouth as we shall see when we consider individual mills.

The effect of the introduction of more advanced machinery on textile manufacture and the work force is shown by a letter dated 16th November 1781 written by Richard Radcliffe of Cockermouth to his friend Humphrey Senhouse of Netherhall. [30] Radcliffe was a substantial linen-draper, mercier and clothier dealing in woollens, haberdashery and millinery, but obviously becoming interested in cotton, of which Senhouse's brother William, Surveyor-General of Barbados, was shipping ever increasing quantities to England.

“It will give you great pleasure”, wrote Radcliffe, “to hear a new manufactory is establishing here that probably will be of great consequence to the future prosperity of the place - cotton spinning and manufactory on a new plan, that do as much and evener and truer as many hands can do in the same space of time, and in time we hope to have many looms employed. The shuttles have springs to them and weave much quicker than the old method. We have two machines for carding wool that go by water; one of these only cards, the other cards, roves (that is opens the cotton), spins, winds, twists and completes it ready for weaving, and this machine, attended by only two people, will do a great Quantity of work in a day. The first inventor of this great improvement in the Mechanical and manufacturing branch is one Alkright who was a Barber in Manchester fourteen years ago and had not credit for 5s. He is now worth 3 hundred thousand pounds and employs a great many thousand persons of all ages from four years old upwards and I have no doubt annually returns from 2 to 3 hundred thousand pounds [a] year. Mr. Smith, myself and three men from Manchester are at present the partys concerned, butt as in time a very considerable sum of money may be employed wee may take other Partners, of which already we have the offer of many.”

This was only some six years after the invention of Arkwright's spinning jenny, so this feature of the industrial revolution reached Cockermouth quickly. Probably Radcliffe was hoping that Senhouse would join him in this new venture. Possibly he was already financially worried, in spite of his enthusiasm. At the end of 1781 there was a great fall in wool prices, part of a trading recession wider than the wool trade.

On 24th February 1784 the ‘Pacquet’ announced Radcliffe's bankruptcy and in May he wrote to Senhouse

“Last Tuesday I gave up the little I was possessed of and underwent my examination for bankruptcy, having lost upwards of £10,000 sustained in a thirty years' adverse trade and no prospect of better times.”[31]

In July the ‘Pacquet’ carried an announcement from Kirkpatrick and Johnstone, mercers and

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drapers of Cockermouth, that they had taken a house opposite the Appletree to sell Radcliffe's remaining stock at 25% below cost price. [32] Radcliffe told Senhouse that after his affairs were settled he wished to take lodgings in "your rising and much improving town of Maryport."

Radcliffe's bankruptcy was only one of several in Cockermouth around the turn of the century. The reasons were various - loss of trade because of the war with America and its secession in 1782; a woollen trade suffering from the imports of cotton; the unsettling of the economy by the Napoleonic wars; perhaps in Radcliffe's case over-investment in Arkwright's water frame; and the failure of the Lakeland cotton industry to compete with the growing production of Lancashire and Paisley. When peace came in 1815 the many Cumberland weavers were desperate. Southey wrote from Keswick in 1816 that "The whole fabric of social order in this country is in great danger." The average wage for a man was 5s. [25p] a week, with working days of about 14 hours, and in May a strike in Carlisle spread to Cockermouth. The MP for the borough, Curwen, tried to obtain help for weavers to emigrate.

Allied to the manufacture of various textiles was the dying trade, developing to an appreciable extent in Cockermouth in the middle and late 1700s. Different colours were obtained by secret recipes using local plants, tree barks, etc. From about 1820 textile firms tended to have their own dyeworks instead of sending out the cloth to specialist dyers.

Cockermouth's greatest linen firm began in the town in the early 19th century, the hat trade about 100 years earlier, and both will be considered in the next chapter. We may however note here a trade related to hat manufacture, that of rabbit dealing. Humphrey Senhouse, whose wool sales were mentioned above, was also interested in rabbits. He had contracts with Cockermouth, Carlisle and Whitehaven and the family records give details of the trade. In 1729 and 1730 Benjamin Drape of Cockermouth agreed to take "all the rabbits he [Senhouse] shall deliver at 13d, per couple" In 1730 Netherhall sold 863 couple and consumed 80 couple at the hall and, to make up these numbers,

Senhouse received some from his neighbours and some from his son-in-law Christian. There is a record of Joseph Plaskett's wife selling 300 couple at Cockermouth in 1734 and receiving 13s. payment. The rabbits were conveyed in panniers on horses, 40 couple making up a load. Senhouse provided the horses and the carrier was at one time paid ¼d. a couple for the Maryport-Cockermouth journey and ½d. a couple for Maryport-Whitehaven. [33]

A further industry which arose in the town because of its position in the centre of an agricultural area was tanning. As with wool. Cockermouth came second in importance to Kendal for Cumbria. Hides from the district were supplemented by imports from Ireland. In addition to a plentiful supply of water, Cockermouth had ready to hand two other essentials of the industry - lime and bark.

The hides were immersed in quick lime to remove the hairs, then washed and scraped to remove the fat and grease, and re-immersed in baths of dog or hen manure in which the acid counteracted the lime and the sinews began to swell and thicken into leather fibres. These processes caused river pollution and gave rise to complaints from dyers, wool washers, etc., who wished to use the water further downstream. Finally the hides were placed in tanks of tanning juices, preferably solutions of shredded or minced bark from oak, ash, birch or hazel trees, oak being the best. From about 1600 coppicing was used to produce these young barks, the trees being cut on a 15 to 25 year cycle. [34]

A tannery might have as many as 50 pits of bark solution, in varying strengths and of varying age. The tanks were usually cubic of from 4 to 6 ft. The hides went first into the old and mellow solutions, being moved on each fortnight into stronger, and the process finished at different stages for different leathers. That intended for clog soles for example could spend two years travelling through 50 pits. There were many allied trades. Curriers prepared leather for different purposes, slitting or shaving it to produce a product thin enough for clothes, or smoothing it with oil, or using ridged boards to give a grain finish for belts and harness.

Cordwainers used dressed leather to make breeches, gloves, shoes and boots, high-topped boots being a speciality. Saddlers and harness-makers catered for horses. Right at the beginning of leather manufacture, before the tanners, came the skimmers, commemorated for example in Skinner Street.

A notice of sale appeared in the 'Pacquet' in January 1777 and again seven months later for a tan yard at Cockermouth which had 34 pits, 2 dying lofts, rooms below, bark mill, scouring house, beam house and office, with all utensils and a quantity of oak bark if required. "Fairly situated, well watered and nigh the Market Place". [35] This tannery had its own bark mill.

The leather searchers ensured that there was no cheating, checking that poor leather was not made to look like higher quality. A Court Leet record of 1688 stated

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“We amerce Robert Fisher of Beck Wythop 6s-8d. for carrying away tanned leather being not sufficiently tanned according to the statute and after the same was seized by the sworn searchers.” [36]

All tanning in the town has now ceased, although there were tanneries until well into the 20th century, and with the tanning have gone the related trades. There is little demand for harness, and leather clothes and footwear are now factory produced.

Cockermouth early developed a trade in fish, not only for local needs but sending salmon as far as London. The value placed upon fishing rights is shown by the charge for the Derwent fishing in 1437 - 20 marks (£13-6s-8d.), as much as the rent for 340 acres of grassland in Cockermouth Parks. [37]

Iron smelting existed in Roman and pre-Roman times, dependent on the use of charcoal in bloomeries, so named from the Anglo-Saxon word for a lump of iron. Such sites abound in the Lake District, sometimes perpetuated in names such as cinder and scaw referring to slag. There was a bloomery on the shores of Crummock Water, below the aptly named Cinderdale Common, and a Bloomery Beck flows through Isel, while within Cockermouth itself Cockermouth School stands on Cinder Hill. Eventually the small bloomeries gave way to larger concerns where spades, nails, tools and farm machinery were made. Forges and foundries existed in Cockermouth and there was a scheme for considerable development at Double Mills which we will examine in the next chapter. Then blast furnaces were invented and the iron and steel industry of West Cumberland and other places in Britain replaced the forges and foundries of the small towns.

Coppiced trees and full grown trees provided timber for a number of Cockermouth industries, usually after the bark had been removed for the tanners. Bobbins were in great demand, a large textile mill using hundreds of thousands at a time. Timber was needed by the town’s coopers, basket makers, wheelwrights, wood turners, etc. Timber could be used in paper-making, but rags were earlier used for this purpose, not only from the local textile mills but even imported, as the following ‘Pacquet’ advertisement of July 1776 shows -

“To be sold, the Stock in Trade and Utensils belonging to a Press-Paper-Mill, situate near Cockermouth”,

with two glazing machines, dwelling houses at the site for workmen, ground for a cow and commons adjoining. The premises are described as in good repair and a note states that foreign rags may be imported on easy terms. [38]

The domestic system of manufacture has been described in connection with the wool trade. Within the town a practice developed of having large craft shops or mills with workers’ cottages adjacent. An excellent example of this remains intact in Banks’ Court at the foot of Castlegate. What had been the long garden of a large house facing on to Market Place was used for woollen manufacture, a mill being built down one side of the garden and cottages down the other, a small piece of land remaining at the far end for drying cloth. In this court some of the cottages are still occupied. A similar arrangement formerly existed behind Castle Vaults in Castlegate and there were more such yards in the town.

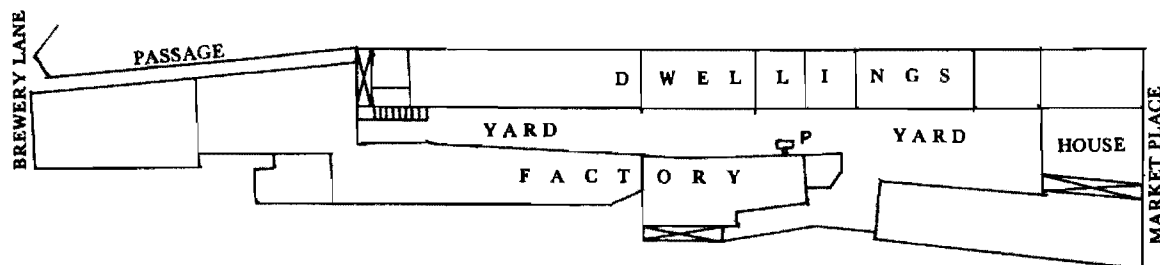


Fig. 51. Banks Court development in long garden of a Market Place house (based on 1863 OS map).

Radcliffe mentioned four-year-old children working in the mills. They helped in home industry as soon as they were able, but their employment became a vital feature of mill organisation. There is not space to examine this in detail, but we may note that Davies-Shiel and Marshall describe child labour as being particularly bad in the bobbin mills where there were many pauper ‘apprentices’, underfed, underclothed, overworked and untrained. [39] The four factory acts of 1802-1830 related

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only to the cotton industry and then the 1833 act extended provisions to all textile mills except silk. The four inspectors appointed (for the whole country) reported to Parliament and the act consequently ruled that no child under nine should work in a textile factory, those of 9 to 13 not more than 12 hours a day and 48 a week and the 13 to 18 group not more than 12 and 69. No child was to work between 8.30 pm. and 5.30 am.

However, it was difficult to enforce such regulations with only four inspectors and easy to forge a child's age before registrations of births became compulsory in 1837. Cockermonth factories were doubtless as bad as those elsewhere. Conditions gradually improved but it was not until 1891 that the minimum age for factory work was raised to eleven. Not only were the children's hours of work long and of sleep short, but pay was poor and working conditions unhealthy in the extreme.

To conclude this chapter on industry in general: In the late 17th century there was a shortage of small coinage throughout England and many persons of standing, usually manufacturers, issued tokens which had value in a restricted area. Cumberland had fewer of these than any other English county, as the small value Scottish bodies were used. [40] Cockermonth had only three issues, each of them farthing tokens. One in the 1660s came from Anthony Bouch, who owned land adjoining Laithwaite known as Bouch Fields and who was entitled to bear arms. In addition to having his initials and the date the token was inscribed "I am for publique use. Good in Cockermonth." Another bore the name of Leo Scott on one side and "I am for better change" on the other. Leonard Scott's marriage to Cetteryn (Catherine) Cape was registered at All Saints on 10 June 1656. The third had "Thomas Watson 64" on one side and "In : Cockermonth - T.I.W." on the reverse. Thomas Watson appears on a Cockermonth Castle rent roll for the period.

No doubt Cockermonth millworkers were paid partly in goods or in tokens which could be spent only in the Tommy-shops in which the employers had an interest, until the Truck Act of 1831 ruled that artificers were to be paid wholly in coin, a ruling extended in 1887 to all manual workers except domestic servants and farm workers.

There is no guildhall in Cockermonth. That in Carlisle, built in the 14th century and recently restored, was the meeting place of the eight guilds of merchants, weavers, tailors, butchers, shoemakers, skimmers and glovers, tanners and smiths (working in various metals). The regulation and protection of industry provided by the guilds and the restrictive apprenticeship system established as early as the 13th century would presumably be in force in Cockermonth, the commercial centre of a wide area of the county, until a royal statute of 1562 took away many of the guilds' privileges but left the apprenticeship system. [41]