

As turnpike roads improved, the increase in speeds of the traffic using them was spectacular. The time of the Carlisle-London coach journey was reduced from nine days to three in the 40 years from 1734. The present A1 remained the popular route to the south and Cockermouth travellers went via Penrith and Brough.

At the end of the century three coaches a day left the Bull and Mouth in Aldersgate Street, London, for Cockermouth - 7 a.m., 1 p.m. and 7 p.m., presumably going on to Whitehaven. [1] Some hotels, notably the Globe and the Sun, became coaching inns .

“At the Globe Hotel - the hotel for setting down passengers and changing horses - the ostlers are waiting with four slender horses in harness. ...Presently the coach is seen coming over the bridge and down the street at the rate of ten miles an hour, the guard meanwhile playing on his bugle the air of “The Girl I left behind me.” [2]

Denwood records that as the coaches came into the town via St. Helen’s street, they at one time picked up an old man near the tannery who sat by the driver blowing a horn as warning of danger and arrival. [3] On a winter’s evening one may stand in the dimness of St. Helen’s Street and imagine the clatter of hooves and the strident note of the horn, the Sun becoming a hive of activity as porters and stable boys rushed out.

There were a number of coach services to or through Cockermouth in the latter half of the 18th century. A six-seater coach did the journey from Whitehaven in three hours, the return fare being 3s. 6d., quite high considering money values 200 years ago. There was “commodious and expeditious travelling” between Whitehaven and Penrith by diligence (a French-type public coach), halting at the Sun. In 1811 Cockermouth was served by the ‘Good Intent’ light post-coach (coaches were named, as were railway engines in later times) running between Kendal and Whitehaven three times a week and the ‘Volunteer’ between Penrith and Whitehaven also on three days, both services using the Globe. In 1822 a Keswick tanner began a Keswick-Cockermouth service via Whinlatter. [4]

A number of gigs (light two-wheeled carriages) left Cockermouth for neighbouring towns, including Carlisle and Whitehaven. [5] The town’s commercial links with the port were very strong and the provision of so many services between the two is evidence of this.

In 1849 there was a daily coach from Windermere station to Keswick, Cockermouth, etc. By this time transport could be hired, Riggs of Windermere charging £1 a day for a single horse vehicle, plus 6d. an hour or 5s. a day for the driver. In Cockermouth horses and carriages could be obtained at the Globe and the Sun. [6]

Stage coach travel was expensive. Coaches were heavily taxed, usually by a scale based on the number of passengers, but for one ten-year period on the number of horses. In the 1830s a coach carrying 9 to 12 people paid duty of 2½d. per mile and companies were paying additional costs of as much as 11s 6d. a month for every mile of their services. [7] There were additional taxes on hired vehicles. Rival proprietors undercut one another until unprofitable fares forced them to seek agreement. Competition in reducing journey times led to serious accidents, until safety in itself became a means of attracting custom, so that we find a Lancaster owner advertising “Superior traveling... by the following Mails and Newly-Invented Safety Coaches” - the 11 routes listed including the ‘Royal Telegraph’ to Whitehaven by Cockermouth. [8]

This advertisement referred to ‘mails’. A complex system of carrying letters developed, the post office contracting with stage coach proprietors. Innkeepers were responsible for changes of horses and often also for the provision of branch coach services from the main routes in their area. Mail coaches were in demand by passengers because of their greater speed. The first regular mail coach service from Whitehaven via Cockermouth and Dunmail Raise to Kendal started in 1822, [9] but there had been similar services elsewhere in the country for nearly 100 years, increasing in speed as wheel restrictions were removed and lighter frames and narrower wheels cut the time of journeys.

Although mail coaches were exempt from turnpike tolls they were taxed more heavily than stage coaches and the cost of sending letters was very high. In 1840 (the year in which Rowland Hill began his penny post) a single sheet letter sent from Carlisle to Glasgow, Manchester, York or Edinburgh cost 9d., to London 1s-1d.(5½p) [10] and the charge from Cockermouth would be similar. Consequently many illegally used the carrier service, much slower but cheaper. Figures for

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Cockermouth are not available, but it was estimated that in the middle of last century only one out of every six letters leaving Manchester was sent by legitimate means, while from Glasgow the proportion was as low as one in ten.

Another development as the condition of the highways improved was the increase in the number of private carriages, which at the beginning of the 19th century were still sufficiently rare in Cumbria for Dorothy Wordsworth to write "Today a chaise passed".

Coach proprietors greatly resented the uneven taxation, especially when the competition of railways was added to that of coastal steamers and canal packets. In 1837 the duty per passenger per mile was by water nil, by rail 0.125d., by stage coach 0.25d. and by mail coach 0.75d. Cockermouth people would take advantage of the coastal sailings (steam was introduced in 1826/7) between Liverpool and Glasgow, calling at Whitehaven, Harrington, Workington, Maryport, Port Carlisle, Annan, Dumfries, etc. Ships were often quicker than coaches, especially to places across the Solway, and in good weather more comfortable. In 1843 the Liverpool-Glasgow service carried 60,000 passengers. [11]

A price war developed between coaches and steamers. Whitehaven to Liverpool by sea was 15s first class (75p) and 10s-6d. (52½p) second class in 1821, which forced coach fares down to 17s (85p) inside and 13s (65p) outside from 24s (£1.20) and 17s (85p). Cockermouth people had the additional cost of the journey to the coast for sea travel. It is interesting to note that even after the introduction of rail travel, Black's Lake District Guide recommended the sea route from Liverpool as being quicker, and by the mid-1850s it cost only 6s with a cabin or 3s (15p) on deck as far as Whitehaven. There were also weekly sailings from this port to Douglas, Ramsey, Dublin and Belfast. [12]

Inland water travel was also a possibility. A Cockermouth man wishing to visit Lancashire might take the coach to Kendal and then transfer to the packet service on the Kendal-Lancaster-Preston Canal, for this daily service cost only 4s by cabin and 6s by fore cabin from Kendal to Preston, exactly half the outside and inside coach fares. The journey of 14 hours was eventually reduced to 7, comparable with the coach time, and refreshments were available on board. The packet continued until 1849. [13]

The extension of the railway northwards from Lancaster to Carlisle in 1846 would have as little effect on Cockermouth as the first Cumbrian line, the Carlisle-Newcastle of 1838. But in 1846 these lines were linked to the area by the completion of the Carlisle-Maryport route, soon extended southwards by the Whitehaven Junction Railway. The complex network which developed in West Cumberland is a study in itself and we will consider only the Cockermouth area.

In December 1844 a prospectus for a line from Cockermouth to Workington was adopted, to link the town not only with the Cumbrian ports but by existing lines with the rest of the country.

"Another object, and the one from which the principal Revenue is expected, is to open out more extensively the Valuable Lime and Coal Fields through which the Railway will pass. These Minerals are already worked to a considerable extent...and it is confidently expected ... the present consumption, especially for Shipment, will be materially increased."

A yearly revenue of £10,000 from freight and mineral traffic, with 100% increase in coal and lime exports, and £1000 from passenger traffic was forecast. [14]

An easy line to build, the task was completed in 20 months and the opening took place on 28th April 1847. Various connections were made from mines and quarries, including a tramway from Brigham limestone quarries, and in 1863 a link was opened from Derwent Junction in Workington to the harbour. At the Cockermouth end the line terminated west of the town at what became known as the Low Station or St. Leonard's. The rails have gone and the site became used by industry, but some of the station buildings and the loading bays for coal carts remained until about 1990. The coal and iron industries of West Cumberland needed a link with other parts of the country, especially County Durham, shorter than the detours via Carlisle or Barrow. Thus we find a suggestion for linking the Cockermouth line with the rail system further east, a scheme whose supporters included the Stockton and Darlington Railway and the north-east steel interests.

On 3rd August 1846, before the Cockermouth-Workington line was completed, royal assent was

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given for such a link to be built within five years. The act stated that the "Cockermouth and Workington Extension Railway"

"shall commence by a junction with the Cockermouth and Workington Railway, in the township of Cockermouth, and shall pass thence, from, in, through or into ...Papcastle, Brigham, Bridekirk, Dovenby, Hames Hill, Setmurthy, Isell, Isell Old Park, Bassenthwaite, Underskiddaw, Crosthwaite and Keswick, or some of them.

It was thought that the eastern side of Bassenthwaite Lake would provide more traffic than the west. [15]

The act went into great detail, with the rates for carrying a wide variety of merchandise. The three classes of passenger would pay 3d., 2d. or 1d. per mile and their luggage limits were to be 150, 100 and 60 pounds. The share capital was fixed at £200,000. Although there were some well known names amongst the directors, the line was never started. A petition sent to Parliament by General Wyndham argued that a route via Embleton would be shorter and cheaper, that the proposed route would destroy much beauty and injure many landowners, and that

"by following the line along the Derwent would pass under the Walls of your Petitioner's sd. Residence at Cockerm. Castle being distt. from the Walls of his sd. Castle no more than 500 yards and thby. by the Noise and Smoke render the same totally unfit for his Occupation". [16]

On 1st August 1861 the Cockermouth, Keswick and Penrith Railway was granted powers to build its line. [17] The existing Cockermouth station was to become a joint holding, but it was finally decided to build a new passenger station nearer the town centre (Plate 27), the old one becoming a goods station. The 1 in 70 gradient joining the two was carried over the Workington road by 12 arches and an iron girder bridge (rebuilt in the late 1930s and demolished at the end of 1982). Three high stone and brick arches spanned the Cocker, rebuilt in the present rectangular and concrete form when repairs in the mid-1940s revealed that the original brickwork was in a very dangerous state. The railway necessitated changes in Fairfield and the road pattern. The cost of the 31 miles was about £270,000 and after 2¼ years' work (picks, shovels and barrows) the line opened for freight on 4th November 1864 and for passengers on 2nd January 1865. Ten years later the track was relaid with steel rails, new block system signalling was introduced and subways were constructed in Cockermouth and Keswick stations. [18]

The CKP was always primarily a mineral line, carrying pig-iron to County Durham and bringing furnace coke, which could not be satisfactorily produced from local coal. Thus the depression in the West Cumberland iron trade of 1873/4, when nearly half the furnaces were out of blast, reduced receipts from £23,000 to £19,000. The line was dependent on a short length of the Lancaster-Carlisle near Penrith for its connection with the Eden Valley line of the North Eastern. The London and North Western obtained control of the L.-C. and when the CKP was short of capital the LNWR and the NE gained control by each investing £25,000, the LNWR taking over passenger traffic and the NE controlling freight. The LNWR took a perpetual lease of the Cockermouth-Workington and the Workington Junction companies in 1866, paying a fixed dividend of 10%. [19]

The CKP carried a variety of freight - lime from Brigham and Flusco for steel, stone from Embleton and Threlkeld, slate from Honister, cattle from Cockermouth and Troutbeck, both of which had extensive cattle pens at the station. There were a number of sidings, for example at Embleton quarry and eventually to the oil depots near Cockermouth station. Three coke trains a day ran in each direction, until a method of mixing Cumberland and Durham coal for coke reduced this traffic by half. When better coke ovens were built at Lowca and Whitehaven the trade slumped further until the last

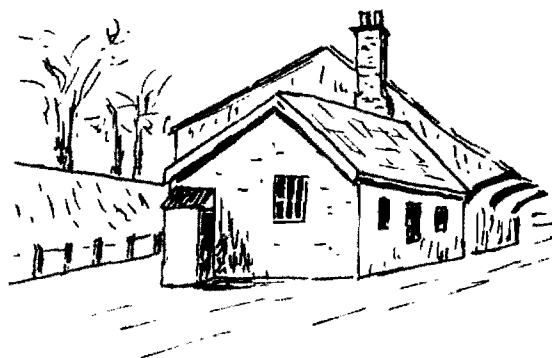


Fig. 68. *The Low Station buildings, the connecting line to CKP climbing on the left.*

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coke train ran in 1925.

The Marron Valley line, opened mainly for ore in 1866, had to some extent affected Cockermouth, but the opening in the following year of the Derwent Branch of the Maryport-Carlisle

Railway had a greater impact on the town. This branch ran from Brigham to Bulgill, one of its features being a private station for the Dykes family of Dovenby Hall, and provided rail access from Cockermouth to Maryport, with reversals at both Brigham and Bulgill. An embankment indicates the former river crossing at Brigham. An advertisement of 1912 stated "The Maryport and Carlisle Railway forms the Best and Most Direct Route from Scotland and North-Eastern England to Cockermouth" and extolled

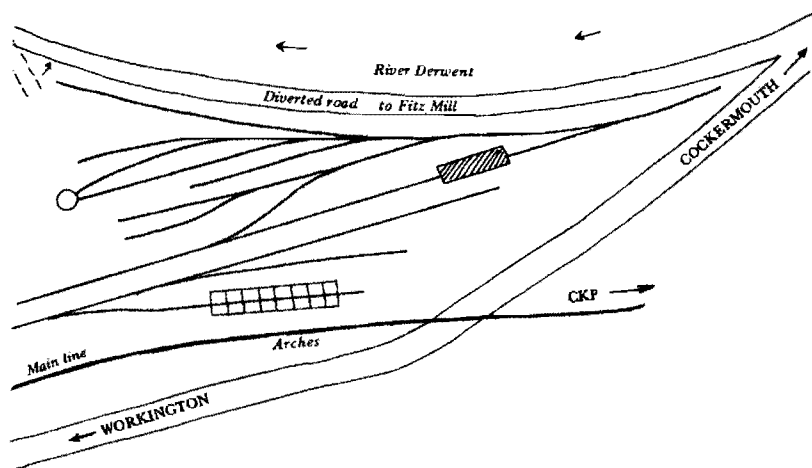


Fig. 69. An approximate sketch of the goods station layout.

the benefits of using this line to reach the Lake District in general. The Maryport-Carlisle was granted running rights over the C.-W. track from Brigham to Cockermouth, where the Bulgill trains used the loop line beyond the island platform, and from Brigham to the station at Marron Junction.

After 20 years running, when a pattern would have been established, there were five passenger trains westwards from Cockermouth, with two on Sunday, and the CKP opened with three each way, rising to eight by 1939. A memorable London link was the summer-time Lakes Express from West Cumberland to Euston, which combined with a Windermere section at Oxenholme. In 1955 its times were 8.59 from Cockermouth, arriving Euston at 17.05, and 11.50 from Euston reaching the town at 20.02. The CKP carried an average of 70,000 passengers a year in its first six years, rising to a peak of 482,000 in 1913. [20] It still ran eight trains in the early 1960s, about half continuing from Penrith to Carlisle. Cockermouth received about six Derwent Branch trains a day, some of which ran through from Carlisle. Passenger traffic was boosted by special trains for hiring days, when two or three extra

booking offices were opened at the station and provision made for the trunks of workers seeking a change of farm; [21] by school and workhouse outings; and by excursion fares. On a summer Saturday after the first war one could go to Keswick on the 1.55 pm. for 2s. [10p] return. Sunday evening excursions from Whitehaven, Workington and Cockermouth to Bassenthwaite Lake and Keswick were certainly popular, for on 5th August 1934 seven trains were required to carry the passengers! [22]

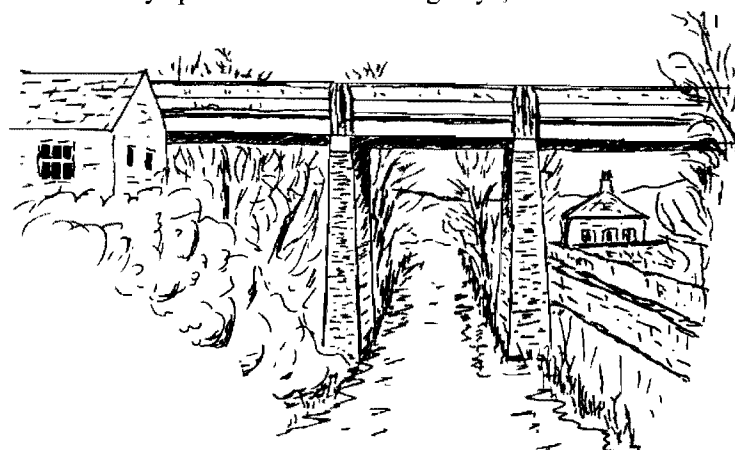


Fig. 70. The second railway viaduct with part of the tweed mill on the left and the waterworks pumping station on the right.

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Another popular outing was to take the train out and walk back, and the Cockermouth road is said to have sometimes been black with people on a Sunday evening who had paid 3d. [1½p] on the train to Embleton or 5d. [2p] to Bassenthwaite Lake. [23] This line eastwards was never as prosperous as the western link. The C-W. dividend was 6½% in the mid-1860s, then the fixed 10% under the LNWR, while CKP paid 3¾% in 1870-3. This was very low compared with 12¾% by the Maryport-Carlisle. The CKP had high running costs, with two steep gradients (one in Embleton) and dividend was down to 2½% in 1921 and 1½% the following year. [24] Then in the 1923 grouping all the lines in this area were placed in the LMS and it was this company which provided from Crewe the special light engines of the 1940s known as 'Cauliflowers', from the distant appearance of Britannia painted on them.

They were needed because of the danger of subsidence caused by old mine workings between Cockermouth and Workington. [25]

In a bid to retain diminishing passenger traffic, occasioned by the greater convenience of bus stops and the increase in private transport, steam was replaced by multiple-unit diesels on the Penrith-Workington line on 3rd January 1955. Nevertheless the section from Workington to Keswick closed to passenger traffic in April 1966, after just over 100 years, the remainder of the line east of Keswick struggling on until 1972. Goods traffic had ceased in June 1965. Steam traction had been retained for freight and for the Lakes Express, diesel engines presumably being too heavy for the line.

The last train was signalled out of Cockermouth by Signalman J. C. Carruthers, 47 years with the CKP (more than half in the Cockermouth box, and never absent or late for duty). In his later years there he had dealt with a daily traffic of some six passenger trains in each direction, with an additional six or seven westwards to Bulgill, plus the regular mineral and freight trains. Between these he had to fit in the pick-up goods train making a leisurely journey from station to station and on market days cattle trains from the CKP, from the Furness Railway area and from the Maryport and Carlisle.

In the 1850s the coach proprietors tried to prevent a Cockermouth-Keswick rail link by reducing the coach fare to 1s 0d. [5p] below the expected rail fare. Failing in this they came to supplement the railway by serving the valleys from Troutbeck, Keswick and Cockermouth. In Cockermouth transport was provided from the station to the Appletree and Globe Hotels and until the railway closed the Cockermouth-Buttermere bus service made a detour to the station.

Railways reduced prices- Brampton coal was 1s-6d. [7½p] a ton in Carlisle after the Newcastle line opened, a drop from 8s 0d [40p] [26] Then with the improvement of road transport the process was reversed and it became more convenient and cheaper to move people, cattle and goods by road. Bus services replaced rail. The Whitehaven Motor Services Co. ran its first service in 1912 and in 1921, having become the Cumberland Motor Services Ltd., introduced a daily service from Cockermouth to Dearham and Maryport, much quicker than the roundabout rail service with its two reversals. [27] Against this competition the Derwent Branch struggled on until 1935. The same company provided a service to Keswick from July of that year, but it finished, presumably for the winter, at the end of September.

In August 1921 the Workington Motor Service Co. (which used Smith Bros. in Market Place as its Cockermouth station) advertised Sunday charabanc excursions from Workington and Cockermouth to Bowness, at 10s. 6d. return from Cockermouth - quite a sum in those days. [28]

In November a third company, C. Matthews of Cockermouth, began an hourly service to Workington in the Little Green Bus. [29] It was not until the Marron Valley line closed to passengers

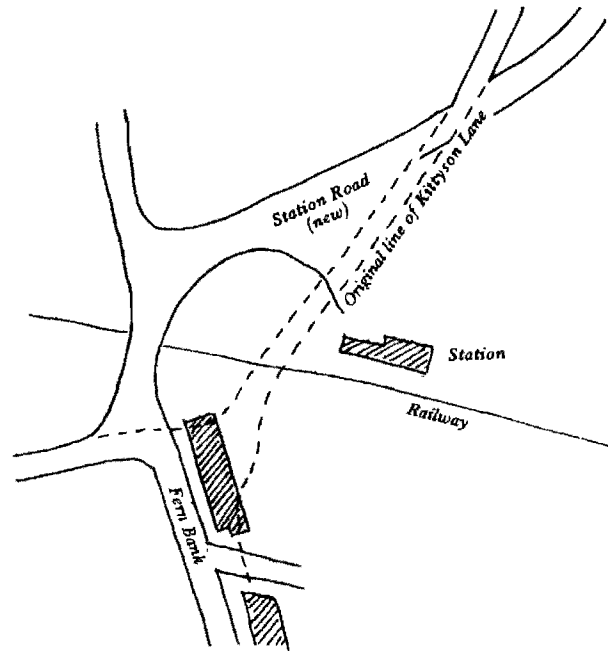


Fig. 71. Road changes when the station was built.

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in 1931 (mineral traffic continued until 1954) that a Cockermouth-Lamplugh bus was introduced.

In 1980 the one bus company in the area (CMS) faced difficulties similar to those of the railways 50 years ago and many services were only maintained with the help of subsidies. There were eight services from the town. Two of these provided an hourly service on the Workington-Keswick route and another an hourly service to Maryport. The remainder were less frequent, even to the extent of only three days a week on one service and Monday market buses only on another.

In 1930 the question of a bus station for the town arose and was still being debated in 1979. In that year the Council asked the CMS to erect a station, but they refused, claiming that traffic was

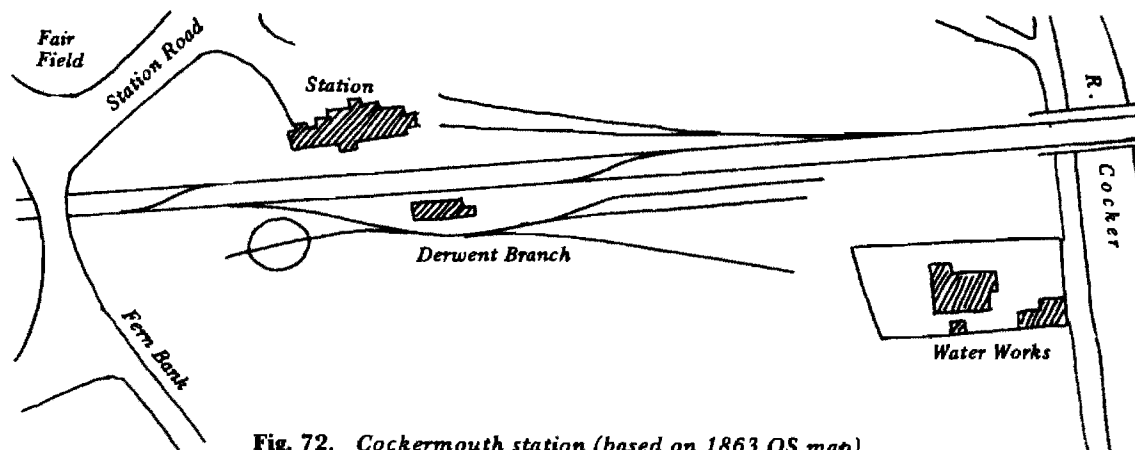


Fig. 72. *Cockermouth station (based on 1863 OS map).*

insufficient. [30] In the 1930s the town learned that Wordsworth House had been purchased by the CMS to be replaced by a bus station. In 1936 the UDC had considered a scheme for a bus station in Lorton Street. [31] The final plan was for a station in the Main Street / Sullart Street corner, but the cost was not justified and the idea was abandoned in 1977. The restriction to bus parking of areas on both sides of the widest part of Main Street has proved adequate. Regrettably the town lost its waiting room and parcels office at 51 Main Street near the Mayo statue in the early 1970s.

Over a number of years there was a deterioration in bus services but the last few years have seen improvements, Two are of particular interest. As a result of the efforts of the then chairman of the Civic Trust, T.C.Hughes, the X5 through service from Workington to Penrith, with some buses going on to Langwathby to connect with the Carlisle-Settle railway, has run for the last two years. In the town itself Cumberland Motor Services have introduced a service every hour to four different areas on the outskirts. Several villages are now connected to the town by private companies, some only once a week, but a few have no public transport.

For centuries Cocker-mouth's only stone building was the castle. Other homes were built on a wooden frame, the walls of wattle and daub, clay or turf and the roofs of turf, rushes or heather. Gradually cobbles taken from the rivers and fields replaced other walling materials and these are often revealed when cottages are modernised, but thatching persisted. As late as 1820 Main Street had a row of low thatched cottages from the Railway Hotel to the King's Arms Inn and the Appletree Inn was a thatched tavern. [1]

As roads were improved, especially that westwards from the town, it became easier to obtain quarried stone which hitherto had been used only for window and door surrounds. There was much rebuilding and new building in the 18th century and many of the details are of interest. When 72 Kirkgate was recently restored it was found beneath the rendering that this house of 1729 had been erected on a foundation of large boulders. The curving outwards of the base of an otherwise vertical wall indicates other examples of this type of construction in Kirkgate.

Before the industrial development of the town there was plenty of space as this typical advertisement from a 'Pacquet' of 1783 indicates:-

"To be sold ... at the House of Mr. Jonathan Wood, the Sign of the George and Dragon, Cocker-mouth... A house and Shop, well situate for Business, in the Market-place, at the lower End of Castle Street, and in good Repair, now in the Possession of Mr. Wise, Surgeon; with a Stable, Hay-loft, and Wash-house, near Derwent Side. Also at the same Time will be Sold a Garden, pleasantly situate upon the Edge of the River Derwent, on which is built a handsome Summer House, commanding a very pleasing and extensive Prospect up and down the River, and the Country about." [2]

Advertisements of this period indicate the attractiveness of houses in this area, with gardens on the Derwent or the Cocker, and sometimes with a pew in the church. The rent payable to the Earl was about one or two shillings, with a 999 years lease.

Quite often houses possessed stables, cart-houses, barns or brew-houses. A group of houses with malshouses and other premises in Kitty Went (Challoner Street) was offered in 1779. Round the corner in Back Lane there was a farm on the Derby Terrace area, [3] with open land around it on this southern limit of the town.

When more housing became necessary the smaller dwellings erected were sometimes of the 'back-to-back' type, outward facing houses having a common rear wall with no back windows and no rear access. Some of these were demolished when the end of Sullart Street was widened in 1965, and the 1863 OS map shows others in the town (Fig. 75).

With the growth of industry a profusion of small dwellings grew up behind the houses facing on to Main Street, Market Place, St. Helen's Street and Kirkgate. Many of these 'yards' were named after the owners of the houses. Several have been demolished or incorporated into other buildings, but a number illustrating varying types of development remain - the long garden development of Banks's Court (Fig. 51), the grouping round a central yard or more open development as behind the eastern side of Kirkgate square. Such houses often had poor light and poor sanitation, with a communal pump and privies in the yard, probably no damp course and walls only one brick thick.

There had been, however, some very pleasing development in the town just prior to the industrial period. Many of the most attractive houses date from the 18th century, built largely of freestone but often incorporating cobbles. Kirkgate provides examples of good Georgian building - large houses for the affluent on the eastern side of the square, smaller dwellings on the west. Attractive domestic architecture of this period may be seen in St., Helen's Street, Challoner Street, etc., with the typical plain rectangular windows (an occasional bow window) and interesting doorways. One may enter an unpretentious house with a narrow frontage, in say St. Helen's Street, to be surprised by a spacious arched hall and a curving staircase.

Other groups of larger houses occur in the Market Place, especially on the north side, and in Castlegate, said to be the favourite place for people of fortune, in spite of its gradient and containing many genteel houses. (Plates 22, 24). The town was described in 1790 as being irregular but having many modern and well-built houses. [4] These were now spreading westwards towards Derwent Bridge.

The Mackreths and others introduced brick for building, at first for surrounds in place of stone, but soon for complete structures. Like cobbled walls, brickwork was frequently rendered,

Houses and public buildings

a practice still followed today. One feature which has remained constant during the growth of the town is the building line fixed by the first burgage buildings. The holders of these plots of land, who enjoyed full municipal rights within the borough, could sell or subdivide their burgages. The castle records list many sales in the 1700s, such as:-

A Barn and Stable near the Wash at Town Head. 31 January 1752. £151.

A Barn in Kittywent. 10 November 1753. £100

The Malt Kiln and Great Garden at Cockerside formerly Relfes.

New Market House on back of town.

A Shop at the West End of Cocker Bridge.

A House at the Townend below Bridge.

A yearly rent was payable by the owner of the burgage (Appendix 19).

Court roll entries show how burgages were divided and re-divided as they were bequeathed to descendants, e.g.:-

1522 ¼ of a burgage in the west part of Cockermouth lies in decay.

1524 A jury found that James Chaloner formerly a chaloner of Cockermouth has willed to Henry Chaloner his son half a burgage there lying in a street called Ketywent. [Later to become Challoner Street.]

The burgage plots usually comprised a house on the street with a garden or garth behind. Outhouses and workshops were often built behind the house, with byres and stables at the end of the plot, many of these extra buildings converted to dwellings in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The burgage plans in the castle records are usually difficult to locate today because their position is given only by naming the owners of neighbouring properties.

More recent terraced development than the Georgian rows of Kirkgate and St. Helen's Street includes the New Street estate, built in 1856-7 twenty five years after the land had been acquired by the Cockermouth and West Cumberland Benefit Building Society for £530. [5] Details show that this was once an attractive area, and recent deterioration of the houses has been reversed. It was popular with Irish workers at Harris's mill and, partly because of its situation at the low end of the town and the smell from the adjacent gasworks, acquired a bad reputation. Residents objected to comments frequently made at council meetings and critics were successfully quietened when at a meeting in 1916 a councillor pointed out that a greater proportion of men called up for the army from this estate passed medically as A1 than from any other area of the town. [6]

Housing in the Moor and Lamplugh Road area was a gradual development. [7] The 1863 OS map shows part of Mountain View, Cromwell Terrace on Fitz Road, Derwent View (Harrot House) and Evening Hill Farm. Fern Bank dates from the 1860s and parts of Brigham Road, Mayo Street and Henry Street (named after Henry Norman who owned the land) were developed before the end of the century. The UDC, through the North Eastern Housing Association, built in the 1930s, clearing some old parts of the town. Parkside Avenue was completed in the early 1950s.

At the other end of the town, the ribbon development of Castlegate Drive took place in the 1920s. Wordsworth Terrace and Fell View terraces were the first development off the top of Kirkgate, in about 1900. The council built the Windmill Lane estate, as far as Waste Lane in the late 1930s; the Slate Fell section followed after the second war, the Highfield estate in the 1970s and the Gable Avenue estate in 1980s and 1990s.

A 1900 map shows a few houses in Victoria Road, but no Sunnyside. Lorton Street's terrace Ash Grove came in 1889, soon after the opening of the bridge, and Sunnyside and more of Victoria Road were probably built about the same time. A Burnley firm built the Kirkbank houses in 1921 for £716 each. [8]

Since the war the town has spread appreciably by private housing estates on the outskirts - Park Lane (the old name for Isel Road), Rose Lane, Evening Hill, Towers Lane, Riverdale and the A66 end of Brigham Road, a large development, Marvejols Park, south-west of the town, Tweedmill, Parklands, Derwentside and Laithwaite Close. Very little land scheduled for housing now remains within the town and restoration and infilling in the town centre is being undertaken.

There have been small in-fill developments in recent years in the Windmill Lane, and St. Helen's Street areas and Bridge St areas. In the western part of the town several blocks of flats have been built - Wordsworth Court, the Fallows, Fletcher Close, Derwent Court, Horsman Court. The main building of Derwent Mill has also been converted to flats,

Houses and public buildings

Included in a number of changes along Main Street are the demolition of Teetotal Lane and its replacement by the Irene Court flats in 1989; the restoration of Cockton's Yard, which gained a national Civic Trust award and was opened by Lord Montague of Beaulieu, chairman of English Heritage, on 5th March 1987; the development of Victoria Court accommodation for the elderly, a Council scheme on disused burgage plots dating from 1983.

In 1985 the New Street estate became Cockermouth's first general improvement area, with the aim of removing industry and upgrading the housing. At one time last century almost 6000 people were crowded into the central area, bounded approximately by South Street and the Derwent.

There was no development in the Gote except in the immediate neighbourhood of High and Low Gote Mills when the 1727 map was prepared. but 100 years later Wood shows housing along both sides of the road. He also includes 'Derwent Place on Sale', a row of houses on Sandair which never materialised. Since the last war the Wakefield Road estate has increased the size of the Gote community.

In 1972 there were 689 local authority houses (excluding those sold) and 1674 private houses, a total of 2363 of which 1211 were pre-war. The council's property included 62 elderly people's bungalows and flats. 233 houses in the town were sub-standard, 106 of them unoccupied. There was a waiting list of 187 residents and 94 non-residents.

The authorities have for some time attempted to restrict the size of the town, a very difficult policy to enforce when it has so much attraction for the retired and for workers in West Cumbrian industry willing to commute. This has led to the infilling of vacant plots and the erection of flats. Eight blocks of flats have been built at the western end of the town in the last few years, adding to the Victoria Court development of 1983 and other early developments. Smaller schemes have been the restoration of property in such places as Cockton's Yard in 1986/7 and Banks Court in the early 1980s.

Conservation areas have been extended to keep the character of the town and due regard has to be given to legislation such as the 1971 Town and Country Planning Act, the 1974 Town and Country Amenities Act and the various local, district and county plans. Buildings throughout the country considered to be of particular value because of their architecture, construction, historical association or contribution to a group of buildings are "Listed" now under the control of English Heritage; this means tight controls on what the owner may do with the building. Listed Buildings are classified in two grades: Grade 1, buildings of outstanding interest, includes only the Castle and Wordsworth House in Cockermouth. Grade 2, buildings of special interest which warrant every effort being made to preserve them, has most of the properties in Castlegate, the Market Place and Kirkgate; considerable sections of St. Helen's Street and Main Street; Grecian Villa, Harford House, Kirkby House and the Trout Hotel in Crown Street; Challoner House and nos. 24, 26 and 28 in South Street; and Hames Hall, South Lodge and Bridge End House. The former Croft Mill and the cottages adjoining are included, as are All Saints Church (with the gate piers of the Kirkgate entrance), Christ Church, the United Reformed Church and School and the Victoria Hall. Industrial buildings include the older part of Derwent Mills, the Hospice, Low Gote Mill and the High Gote Mill complex, and the windmill and adjoining premises at the mouth of the Cocker. The Town Hall, Derwent Bridge and Cocker Bridge are listed. The following inns are included - Globe, former Pack Horse, Black Bull, Brown Cow, Huntsman, Wordsworth and Bush in Main Street; Allerdale Court, Ship and Sun in Market Place; and Swan in Kirkgate. In 2003, the Civic Trust succeeded in getting the old Grammar School Buildings listed in case the developer who had applied for conversion to housing, chose to demolish the buildings. The listing quoted

"An extensive and well-preserved purpose-built industrial school of 1881, one of the most complete survivals of this specialist form of training school, and one of the less well-known aspects of the School Board system of the late C19."

The inns of Cockermouth were for long the centres of trade and commerce, as some names indicate - Packhorse, Weavers' Arms, etc. They provided meeting places for farmers and dealers and were the centres for auctions and sales. The larger became posting and coaching inns, today catering for visitors and touring coach parties. By contrast there were many beer houses where the labourers met, often out of sight off the main streets, perhaps merely converted and unnamed cottages.

Not until 1872 was any control exercised over drinking, when a closing time of midnight was

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imposed in the town and some inns were closed down when it was considered there were too many in close proximity.

An advertisement offering for sale the Swan, in the heart of the Corn Market, is a good example of how extensive a good inn could be - a three-storeyed house, stables, hay chambers, cow house, brewhouse, dove cote, a good pump in the yard and four sittings in a church pew. [9]

As coaching developed so did the facilities of some of the inns. John Younghusband moved in 1777 from the George to the Queen's Head "about the centre of the town" and there provided beds, stabling, a neat post chaise and able horses for hire. By 1790 three inns stood out - the Globe, the Sun and the George and Dragon; and by the middle of the 19th century the Globe, Sun and Appletree were regarded as the most important.

Research [10] into the inns and beer houses of the town undertaken in 1973 listed 28 that had ceased to exist as such. Several others had changed their names.

Beginning in the Market Place area, the Shoulder of Mutton was demolished when the Market Hall was built and replaced by the Plough Inn in Market Street. The Market Hall itself was erected on land belonging to the Albion (formerly the Three Tuns) which was next door to the Sun Inn, still standing at the corner of Kirkgate and once the headquarters of the British Legion. The Greyhound (previously the George) was on the south side, near the market bell, and part of the old hall behind it became the Old Hall Inn. Further along was the Joiners Arms and beyond it the Woolpack Inn next to the Wheatshaf at the corner of Market Street, later Luchini's shop and cafe demolished in 1973. On the north side of the Market Place were the Ship (closed and looking in a sorry state with an uncertain future) and next door the Old Buck (earlier the George and Dragon), and on this side the Allerdale Court Hotel of 1973 must now be added. There were thus about ten inns in the short length of Market Place.

Moving eastwards from Market Place, St. Helen's Street had first the Crown and Mitre (now flats) on the left and the Red Lion two doors up from Kirkgate on the right; then the Grey Goat (earlier the Goat) which is still there, but about to close and far up on the left hand side the Royal Oak with the Bowling Green three doors beyond it, now demolished and replaced by houses.

Travelling up Kirkgate there were the Grapes just on the lower side of the churchyard and opposite to it the Skinners Arms (recently the British Legion Club, then also the headquarters of the town's Rugby Club, and now restored as the 'Bitter End' inn) with the White Hart next door to it. The Golden Lion stood above the church gate, the coffee house a little beyond it, and the Swan past Mackreth Row. In the top corner of the cobbled square, Stag House, with a stag depicted in white cobbles on its frontage, may have been a public house at one time. Up the Lorton road Rose Cottage, almost opposite Strawberry How road, was once an inn.

In the other direction from Market Place were the White Ox at the bottom of Castlegate, the Castle Spirit Vaults and, behind Percy House, the Spread Eagle Inn, birthplace of Thomas Cape who became MP for Cockermonth and Workington.

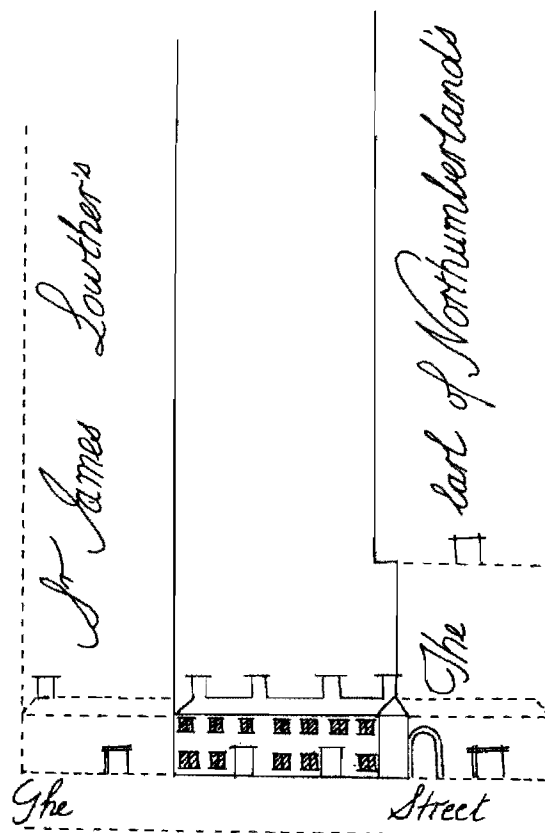


Fig. 73. Part of a burgage document for property in Kirkgate, some of which still stands.

Houses and public buildings

An interesting feature of the Spread Eagle, demolished in 1970, was that the public right-of-way of Brewery Lane cut through one corner of the building.

Moving westwards along the southern side of Main Street we pass the Black Bull and then the Globe Hotel at the corner of Challoner Street, both still active and the latter recently restored, then the former Packhorse adjoining the Globe. The Brown Cow still stands on the corner of Station Street, then Hunters' (until recently the Huntsman, once the Unicorn), the Wordsworth Hotel (until recently the Appletree) and the Bush, all three still in existence. Next came the Spur Inn, the Bluebell (now Cleeland's shop) and the Crown Inn (formerly the Tup or Ram) next to Norham House cottage, all of which have closed. The Wordsworth Tavern (earlier the Hope and Anchor) was demolished when Sullart Street was widened.

Just beyond, Grecian Villa became the Manor Court hotel at the end of 1989 (in 1995 the Old Court Hotel, a reference to the time when the town courts were held in the courtroom behind the main building.) On the other side of Crown Street, near Derwent Bridge, was until 1986 the Railway Inn (now flats), reminding us of the station which was once close by.



Fig. 74. Brewery Lane passing through the corner of the Spread Eagle inn, shortly before demolition.

In the roads off Crown and Main Streets were the Lowther Arms in the Gote (recently converted into houses), and once the Goat Inn opposite it; the Otter Hound was in High Sand Lane next to the passageway to the Victoria Hall; the Lamb in Challoner Street, stood out into the present roadway and was demolished when the Croftside flats were erected, and also in Challoner Street the Anchor Inn. Station Street has the Tythebarn, the last public house to be built in the town and the Rampant Bull which closed in 2002, reappearing with the same name at the Lakeland Agricultural Centre.

On the car park near the Town Hall stood the Hatters, so named from Wilson's hat factory nearby. In low buildings opposite the old Tourist Information Centre (Plate 8), behind the main factory, rabbit fur was treated to make velour and the workmen resorted to the Hatters to clear the dust and fur from their throats.

The majority of the actual buildings of the 28 inns recorded as closed still stand, converted mostly into shops, a few into houses. All the existing inns are in the town centre - there is not one on the several estates which have been built around the old town. There were about three old type coffee houses in the town, [11] including the one at 22 Kirkgate recently rescued from decay and converted into a house. In addition to the inns of Cockermouth there have been a varying number of cafes over the years. In the mid-1980s it was possible to have morning coffee at some 25 locations in the town - inns and cafes.

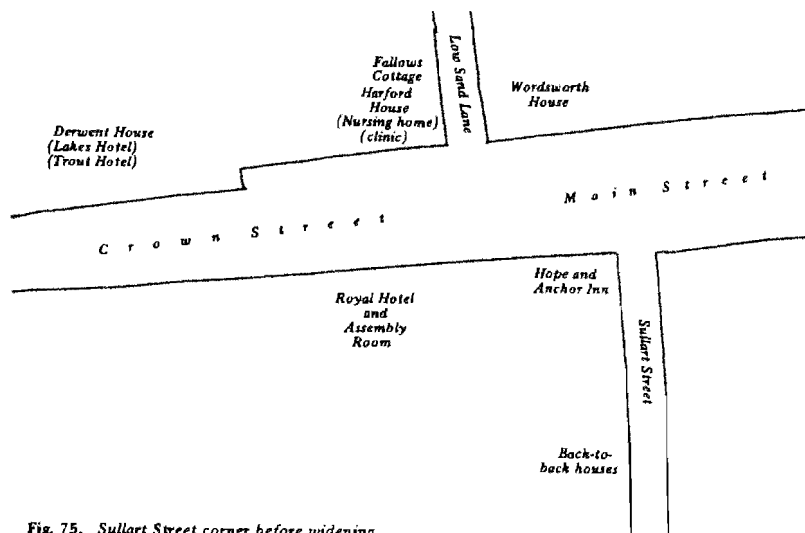


Fig. 75. Sullart Street corner before widening.

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A number of new cafes supplementing existing shops were short-lived, but at least one of the old-established cafes was among the closures. This was the Armstrongs' Central Cafe, originating at the bottom of Castlegate, then opened in Bridge Street about 1920 and near the Mayo Monument from 1933 to 1990. Colin Armstrong remembers as a boy taking twelve loaves every week to All Saints Church for distribution to the poor as one of the charities.

Among new developments may be mentioned 'The Office', a club which occupied for the period 1985-92 the premises in South Street where the West Cumberland Times was printed until its amalgamation in 1976. A number of restaurants have opened in Main Street (including the 'Cheers' Bistro in what were Josiah Hall's grocery premises), 'Riverside' (in the Old Court House), two Indian restaurants (one in the King's Arms Lane development, where is also the 'Poet's Corner', and one replacing the Courtyard Cafe at No.72, which regrettably closed).

Norham House cafe occupies premises, once used as a school. 'Over the Top' in the former grocer's shop in Kirkgate square deserves mention, as does 'Quince and Medlar' at the top of Castlegate. The latter, in the seven years since it was opened, has been Vegetarian Restaurant of the Year in 1989 and 1991 and runner-up for the award in 1988, 1990 and 1992. In 1993 this national prize was discontinued!

We will now consider some of the individual buildings in the town.

The Old Hall

The Hall is not mentioned in a castle roll of Elizabethan times, which suggests that it may have been fairly new at the time of Mary's visit. Nevertheless it was demolished early in the 17th century, possibly because of the growing prosperity of the Fletchers and their desire for a more imposing home. It is thought that the kitchen was the only part of the earlier building to be incorporated in the new, but this did not prevent subsequent visitors being shown the room in which Mary slept! Three rooms on an upper floor were pointed out as the ante-room, reception room and bedroom used by the Queen.

The northern front had an open quadrangle about 60 by 30 feet (18m x 9m), with a bay in the centre. The middle of the building was of three storeys, the wings probably two. (Plate 7). As was customary, the ground floor was low and the principal rooms were on the first floor, approached by steps to an outside entrance. The windows had three or four lights. On the southern or garden side there were no wings and a stair projected instead of a bay, leading to the garden which extended 96 feet across the then open beck to the churchyard wall, across the site of the present car park and 'market hall'. [12] One can imagine this attractive house set in its garden with the stream running through (Plate 6).

This was not to last. The Fletchers left and the Hall was neglected for many years. That it was divided up at an early date is proved by an announcement in 1776 of a sale at the Sign of the Sun of "All those dwelling houses, shops and gardens behind same extending to church yard known by name Old Hall situate in street called St. Hollins", the property of Lyonel Wright Fletcher. [13] It had thus become a medley of shops and dwellings, and eventually an inn, but nevertheless some of the main features survived until demolition - the magnificent stone staircase 5½ feet (1650mm) wide, the carved south doorway and the attractive windows (though some of them bricked up) in walls 7½ feet thick. [14] The Hall became very shut in by the Market Place shops on the north and a clutter of small buildings to the south, so that its presence was unknown to many people.

In 1937 the Council decided to re-house the tenants under a slum clearance scheme and then to demolish it, unless it was converted into a museum. [15] However it lingered on until 1973 when the Bitter Beck scheme cleared away the buildings which had screened the south and many really saw it for the first time. A decision to demolish brought counter efforts to restore it, but it was finally decided to clear the site. The original building had been drastically altered, even floor levels being changed; the SW corner was leaning badly; and much damage had been done during the empty years. Even if the necessary £100,000 had been spent on it, rebuilding would have had to be so thorough that little of the original would have been left. Regretfully, as the town brought out its cameras to record its newly-discovered past glory, Cockermouth lost what might have been one of its greatest architectural assets. [16]

A tablet which was on the north face stands in a plinth on the car park to record that "On the

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17th. May, 1568, there came to this house as a guest of Henry Fletcher, Esq., Mary Queen of Scots, on her journey from Workington to Carlisle”.

The South Side of the Market Place

Although not a single building, this group may be considered as a feature of the Old Hall area. Between 1967 and 1975 the UDC and Allerdale DC bought nos. 9-31, Market Place, for clearance and in 1973 demolished nos. 25-31 on safety grounds. There was a scheme put forward by the town's Chamber of Trade to erect a block of shops and flats on the site. Opposition to the intrusion of a modern building into this area and the contrast it would present to the north side of Market Place led to a public enquiry being held in 1974, opposition aroused by the town's Civic Trust with the support of the Georgian Society and the Victorian Society. The Secretary of State ruled that the group must not be demolished as they were not past restoration and, while not individually outstanding, formed an important part of the town as a whole. [17]

Allerdale Council inherited the problem of how to restore the property. [18] Uniform floor levels behind a preserved facade would have entailed floors cutting across some windows and in any case such drastic clearance of the rear proved impossible because of the rubble construction of the facade. The Council consequently decided to reconstruct a mixture of shops and flats, there being a need for flats in the town centre, hoping at the same time to set an example on the possibilities of restoration of semi-derelict property.

Finance was a problem, but the Department of the Environment made a 50% grant. The final cost of conversion averaged about £10,000 per flat (of which Allerdale paid £6,500), slightly less than equivalent accommodation being newly built elsewhere.

Because of the danger of further deterioration a quick start was made in November 1976, Messrs. Johnston and Wright, chartered architects of Carlisle, and a London engineer being asked for advice and Thomas Armstrong being awarded the contract.

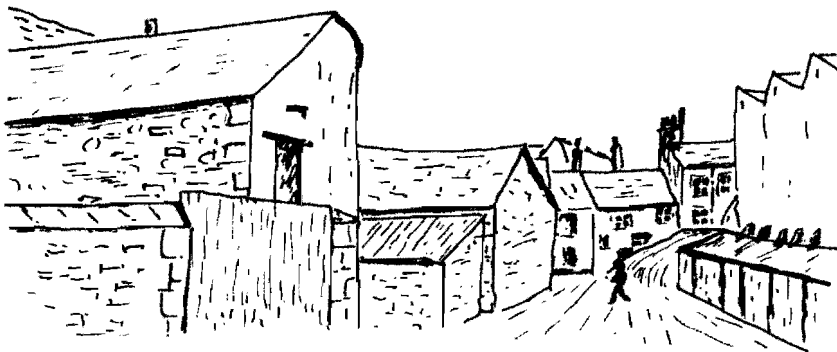


Fig. 76. *The Bitter Beck car park site before clearance (compare Plate 6). Extreme top left, roof of Old Hall; right, rebuilt Market Hall; background, Kirkgate houses with roof of All Saints School beyond.*

The period of discovery which now began cannot be related in detail, but some of the more interesting features may be noted. No 17 was a house of the mid to late 1600s and had originally been exposed on three sides, as proved by windows found in the side walling. Rain had been pouring through the roof into this property for some eight years and the dry rot fungus was so extensive that the planners had great difficulty in finding what was there and deciding how to start. No 15 appeared to have been part of the 15th century hall. No.11 had been detached and this, with Nos 21 and 23, was of the mid-17th century, No 9 up to a hundred years older. The last to be built was No 19 in the late 1700s or early 1800s, nicknamed 'Sparrow Hall'. Windows in the neighbouring side walls show that it was erected in a passageway, having a street frontage of only 8 feet, narrowing backwards to 6 feet width and a spiral staircase. No. 9 was once the Greyhound Inn, no. 17 the White Ox and Joiners Arms, while behind no. 15 was a bacon house with hooks in the ceilings and a winch that swung out to lift the carcasses.

The four-storey end house appears to have had something similar in the large rear opening (now containing a smaller window but with the original size framed) on the top floor.

Original features, in addition to the facade, have been preserved where possible - 17th century roof trusses, stone window frames, ornate plaster ceilings, etc. The tying of the front and rear rubble

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walls presented difficulties in the high end house and steel rods were inserted. A further problem was that the main rooms are at the front and north-facing, so glazed screening has been used to gain sunlight from the rear. The three wings built out from the back provide support for the older structures, as well as additional accommodation. Their design has been varied and enclosing walls give some privacy from the car park. Finally much consideration was given to the colour scheme, an effort being made to keep to Cockermouth tradition and yet to incorporate sufficient variety to provide interest.

Wordsworth House

This fine house was built on the site of two of a row of three cottages by Joshua Lucock when High Sheriff of the county in 1745-6, as recorded in the lintel over the back door. The third cottage still adjoins the house. Pevsner describes it as a “swagger house” for such a town as Cockermouth. [19] (Plate 13).

The three smaller houses had been built about 1670 and later sold to the agent for the Duke of Somerset. In 1761 Sir James Lowther’s agent, John Robinson, bought Lucock’s house, the same Robinson whose rapid political manoeuvring gave rise to the saying “As quick as you can say Jack Robinson”. From him it passed to the Lowthers in 1765. [20]

John Wordsworth came to Cockermouth in 1764 as agent to the Lowthers, living in a house on the north side of Market Place near Castlegate. [21] When he married Anne Cookson of Penrith in 1766 he moved into what was to become ‘Wordsworth House’ and here their four sons and one daughter were born.

A meeting of the Cockermouth Library Authority in October 1937 was concerned that, except for the All Saints window and the park fountain, the town had no memorial to the poet and a public meeting was called to consider the matter. A committee of 30 was appointed from a well-attended gathering and at its first meeting this committee learned that Wordsworth House was for sale and decided to raise money to purchase it. [22] The National Trust agreed to take over the house when Cockermouth had bought it. The response to the appeal for £2000 was at first good, but donations then decreased and were still far short of the target when the committee learned with dismay that Cumberland Motor Services Limited had bought the property in order to demolish it and replace it with a bus station. Reports of the situation on the radio and in the press brought a response from an unknown benefactress which raised the total above the required sum and when the CMS learned how anxious the town was to acquire the house the company generously agreed to resell it. £1625 was paid to the bus company and some £900 spent on repairs before it was handed over to the Trust in October 1938, just a year after the library meeting. On 3rd June 1939 the house was opened as a Wordsworth memorial. [23]

For many years the custodian lived in the house, just part of it being shown to summer visitors. However, interest grew to such an extent that changes were made in 1979. In twelve years visitor numbers increased from 1500 to 15800 in 1978, [24] an impossible number for the tenants to show round their home. (In 1995 the number of visitors has risen to around 20000) The custodian now lives in a flat in one of the remaining cottages and all the rooms in the adjoining house are open to the public. The old harness room has become a ‘National Trust’ shop with a shop front being installed onto Main Street. In 1999, the National Trust decided on a major refit of the House and after four years of planning and eight months work, the house re-opened in 2004 with historic and reproduction furnishings carefully researched, as close as possible to a Georgian manor in the style that Wordsworth would have known in the 1770’s. The refit cost £1 million, funded from Heritage Lottery, Rural Regeneration Cumbria and the European Regional Development Fund.

Although young William was encouraged by his father to read, his mother allowed him to run wild and enjoy his surroundings, which certainly made an impression on him during his first eight years. The large walled garden behind the house leads to a terrace walk beyond which the Derwent flows and from which the castle may be seen. (Plate 14).

“When he had left the mountains and received
On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers
That yet survive, a shattered monument
Of feudal sway, the bright blue river passed
Along the margin of our terraced walk;
A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved.” [25]

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The race on this side of the Derwent which powered the Waterloo Street mills would not be made when William was a child, and he must refer to the Gote Mills race beyond the river when he writes

“Oh, many a time have I, a five years’ child,
In the small mill race severed from his stream,.....
.....Made one long bathing of a summer’s day!” [26]

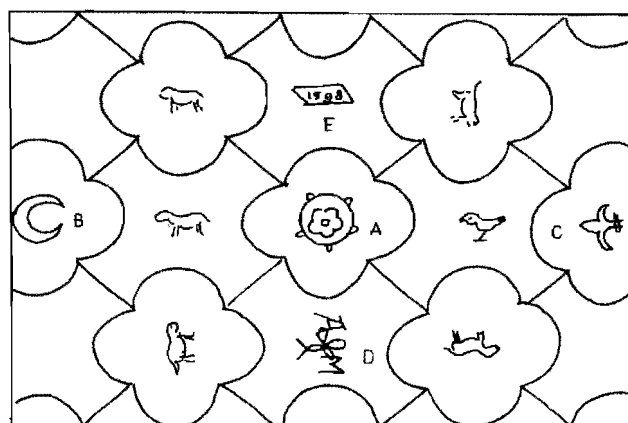
From here could be seen “distant Skiddaw’s lofty height” and beyond the race was the path over Mickle Brow, clearly visible from the terrace, on which the ‘Prelude’ has the lines

“Who doth not love to follow with his eye
The windings of a public way!
.....a disappearing line,
One daily present to my eyes, that crossed
The naked summit of a far off hill
Beyond the limits that my feet had trod,....”

Percy House

Percy House, on the castle side of Cocker bridge, was built by Henry Percy, the ninth earl. [27] This low building, with a modern slated roof, is now divided into two shops and one must view it from the back or from inside to realise its antiquity. It was at one time the home of the Percy bailiff. In an upstairs room is a carved plaster ceiling, with the date 1598 (Fig 77). Above the fireplace are the arms of the earl surrounded by a garter. He had been elected a knight on 23rd April 1593 to a stall vacant through the death of his wife’s step-father, Robert Dudley. [28]

The property has been restored by the present owner, under the guidance of English Heritage, The ceiling which was beginning to fall, has been repaired and stabilised. Whilst the restoration was being carried out a Tudor fireplace was discovered and will be reinstated.



A Tudor Rose B Crescent of the Percys
C Flower-de-Luce, referring to the Lucys
D A, M and lovers' knot E 1598

Fig. 77. The ceiling design in Percy House (after W. Jackson, OS 1879).

Allerdale Court Hotel

Large 18th century houses on the north side of Market Place became the Allerdale Court Hotel in August 1973. The alterations of the house and of Herbert’s Court behind it uncovered interesting features - a magnificent stone fireplace, massive beams and solid oak panelling, but perhaps most interesting of all, the crest of the Fletchers. The house once belonged to the Old Hall family and was the home of Paul Fletcher in the early 1700s. [29]

The Court House

In 1751 John Walker, gentleman, made an indenture granting to John Wallas, tailor, “all that free burgage house and tenement of him John Walker with the appurtenances thereunto belonging situate lying and being at the West End of Cockerbridge....being the yearly free Burgage Rent of three Pence. [30]

The building was a tailor’s shop until Cocker Bridge was rebuilt in 1828, when, to widen the approach road, it was bought and demolished. Not all the site was needed for the roadway. It so happened that at this time there was dissatisfaction with the state of the Moot Hall and Cockermouth saw a use for the vacant land. The land was surveyed and valued and a town meeting agreed to offer the county £100 for the vacant plot.

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“And that if the consent of the Earl of Egremont ... could be obtained for the removal and taking away of his Court which stands in the middle of the main street of Cockermouth aforesaid above the Bridge in which he holds his Courts Baron and other Courts and in which also the Quarter Sessions of the Peace for the County have heretofore been held at Christmas, then it was proposed and agreed to erect a sufficient Court House and other Buildings upon the said Piece of Ground and to all the County the use of such Court House upon all occasions which might be required.”

The Earl did agree, provided he could also hold in the new building the courts of Derwent Fells and the five towns. The Moot Hall was demolished and the materials used in the new “convenient and commodious Court House with Offices and Buildings suitable thereto”, with a frontage of almost 40 feet and stretching backwards for 74 feet. (Plate 25)

£1500 was raised by issuing shares of £25 which were purchased by 36 shareholders, including Thomas Wilson hat manufacturer, John Hodgson tanner, A. Hetherington tanner, Joseph Clementson maltster, John Wharton cooper, Joshua Sim dyer and Thomas Bailey bookseller. The contractors were paid £885, the architect £35, and £56 was spent on interior fittings, the court furniture being made to fit the building.

When the Savings Bank had been built adjoining it was written that the “convenient Court-House, or Town-Hall, Bank and Newsroom ...form one handsome range of white freestone buildings.” ‘Town Hall’ is a reference to the fact that the ‘council’ of the town met in a first-floor front room. When the court moved to Grecian Villa, although the front of the building continued to be used as offices, the court-room itself deteriorated rapidly. The property was rescued by a private purchaser, Mr. W. Jackson, who renovated it, making a restaurant in the basement and shops and flats in the front portion. The court-room is now used for the display and sale of a variety of antiques.

On the front of the building is the plate from ‘Neddy’, the clock which stood at the junction of Main Street and Station Street. (Plate 26). It reads:-

In memory of Edward Waugh, Esquire, the last representative in Parliament of the ancient Borough of Cockermouth
Erected by subscription 1893.”

A tablet below explains

“The above plate was attached to the Edward Waugh Memorial Clock, removed from Main Street Aug 1932.”

The Savings Bank Building

The first savings bank was established in 1810 by Rev. Dr. Henry Duncan in Ruthwell village across the Solway, where he was minister. The movement spread and the Cockermouth bank was formed in 1818. The Savings Bank building was erected adjoining the Court House in 1846, on the site of a public house. (Plate 25).

A distinctive feature is the clock, made by Christopher Tatham, a clock and watch maker of Main Street, the cost of £70 8s. being met by public subscription. [31] There was disagreement as to whether the new clock should be lit from the lamp rate and at a vestry meeting a poll was demanded. The result was that the clock was lit at the town’s expense until the erection of the Waugh Memorial Clock made this unnecessary. It has had several periods of inactivity, but was restored again a few years ago.

After the Bank left the building for premises further along Main Street the building continued to be used as offices. The Bank had always shared these premises, notably with the Mechanics Institute in earlier days.

Norham House

Norham House is built on land which was sold by John Potter of Workington to his sister in 1724 for £63. [32] The following year the present house was erected by Thomas Potter. He was in the cloth trade (a decoration over a fireplace at the back of the house has his initials and three rams), but he also had interests in the lead and copper mines of Braithwaite. In 1745 the house was sold to John Christian of the Isle of Man, a member of the family of Ewanrigg Hall. Fletcher Christian of ‘Mutiny on the Bounty’ fame was grandson of the Fletchers who lived in Norham. It was sold again in 1766, this time to the Earl of Lonsdale, then to a Mrs. Peill of Islington whose family owned it for a considerable time. In the 1920s it was used as a girls’ school and was eventually bought by the Post

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Office who intended replacing it by a telephone exchange. Fortunately the house was saved and restored, the telephone exchange being built behind it, and now serves as solicitors' offices.

The Fitz

As early as 1620, there is a record [33] of Edward Savile of Howley, Yorkshire, whose stepmother was a Pennington of Muncaster, selling the messuage called 'le Fitt' or 'le Fittes'. 'Le Fitt' was sold again in 1627 to Henry Dalton, whose son, also Henry, married Elizabeth Bromfield of Hames Hill, a house which formerly stood just above Belle Vue roundabout. After her husband's death Elizabeth married Patricius Senhouse, a younger son of John Senhouse of Maryport, and they moved to Hames in 1670-1. Patricius and Humphrey became family names of the Senhouses.

The last owner and tenant of the Fitz, Mr. H. P. Senhouse, wrote: [34]

"Early in the nineteenth century the mortgage of the Fitz was paid off but they lived at Bridge End. Humphrey II (Senhouse) died in 1839 and his son Humphrey III, my great-great-grandfather, at once began work on this house, although, alas, he did not long survive."

The name of the architect is unknown. Hames is supposed to have been demolished to provide materials. The stone is said to have come from near Carlisle and it is not unlike that used for the gateway of Crofton Hall. The design is very simple and has affinities with several other houses, such as Greenhill near Wigton and Ehen Hall, Cleator."

Mr Senhouse sold the house in 1990 and left the area.

God's Providence House

The upper end of Kirkgate, now the rockery corner, was once almost closed by houses and an inn forming 'God's Providence Yard', property demolished in 1860 for the new road towards Lorton. (Fig. 65). On the door-lintel of one house was carved "God's Providence is my Inheritance, 1659". [35]

Traditionally this was the only house in Cockermouth to escape the plague. It was demolished by John Bolton's father when the new Lorton road was made in 1862-4.

The Public Hall

An important building which has disappeared was the Public Hall in Station Street, erected 1874-6. (Plate 26). Built by a limited company, with £3000 in £1 shares, it served the town for lectures, meetings, dances and cinema shows. No intoxicants were allowed to be sold and the hall was used by the Good Templars and other temperance societies. [36]

At first the sale of shares was slow because of the possibility of a town hall being built on the hat factory site, but the Station Street hall did proceed. Besides shops flanking the entrance it was well-equipped with ticket office, stage, kitchen, etc. [37]

The hall was renovated and modernised in 1931 but ceased to be used in the 1950s. It was demolished in 1974 to make way for the new National Westminster Bank building.

Another room in the town suitable for large gatherings was the Royal Assembly Room, behind the Royal Hotel which became Wild's Garage in Crown Street, now converted to Anderson Court offices. Some other inns had smaller 'assembly' rooms.

The "Hospice"

In 1975, Cumbria County Council issued the St Leonards Hospice Compulsory Purchase Order and took over the property for preservation. This small building, 33½ feet by 17 feet, thus became public property. Of two storeys, it is built of rough squared sandstone with dressed quoins and surrounds to the openings. [38] The fact that the 'windows' appear to have been shuttered rather than glazed supports the opinion that it dates from 1810-1820 as a flax drying shed - "an interesting piece of industrial archaeology and relating to the former textile industry of Cockermouth". [39] It was used as a joinery store in 1971 and when taken over was in a very bad condition. The Council partially restored the building and temporarily blocked the openings to ensure preservation. (Fig. 63). In 1985, with the addition of some adjacent land and a better approach, it was converted into St Leonards House.

Houses and public buildings

The Globe Hotel

Probably the Globe (Plate 17) was initially a single-storey thatched building with a smithy adjoining it in Kitty Went. It was rebuilt in 1750. At first 2s. a Year was paid to the Earl of Egremont, but from 1828 dues went to the Earl of Lonsdale. [40] Improvements were carried out over the years, especially in provision for horses and coaches. Once the inn would be crowded with commercial travellers. Horse buses met every train and barrows were sent to the station for the drapers' big skips. The last modernisation was in 1977-8. A plaque on the front of the building reads –

“R. L. Stevenson, poet and novelist, stayed at this hotel on his visit to Cockermouth in 1871. Also John Dalton, 1766-1844, discoverer of the atomic theory, made this hotel his habitat during his frequent visits to Cockermouth.”

Stevenson wrote of his visit, he having just come from Scotland –

“I was lighting my pipe as I stepped out of the inn, and did not raise my head until I was fairly in the street. When I did so it flashed upon me that I was in England; the evening sunlight lit up English houses, English faces, an English conformation of street - as it were, an English atmosphere blew against my face.”

Grecian Villa

Grecian Villa was built about 1847 by Thomas Wilson, the hat manufacturer, who lived there until his death ten years later. In 1910, after being empty for a few years, it was bought by the Board of Guardians and it was they who added the Board Room. The Rural District Council moved there in about 1930 and stayed 20 years. The Inspector of Weights and Measures and the Registrar of Births, etc., were also tenants. The house was then the HQ of the Cumbrian Fire Service until 1986, since when it has been an hotel, first the Grecian Villa but now the Manor Court.

Holmewood and other large houses

Holmewood was built in 1866 by Joseph Brown (who also built nearby Oakhurst), a business man very active in the life of Cockermouth. [41] It continued as a residence until purchased as offices for the Cockermouth Rural District Council which moved here from Grecian Villa and when local government was reorganised in 1974 it became the executive HQ of Allerdale District Council. The RDC had bought Fairfield House to move into, but the war prevented this. (The house was the food office for the duration.) After the war it was considered inadequate, hence the move to Holmewood and the sale of Fairfield House. In 1987 there were ambitious plans to concentrate several of Allerdale's departments at Holmewood, a £4.8 million scheme of building and conversion. There was much controversy regarding this plan and finally the new HQ was developed in Workington, Allerdale vacating Holmewood in 1991. The house was sold the following year for £455,000 to become a privately-run residential home.

There are a number of substantial residences in the town - 18th century dwellings such as Brougham House and Manor House in St. Helen's Street, Challoner House and Tye House at opposite ends of Challoner Street; Hames Hall (early 19th century), Bridge End House and South Lodge (1831); and comparatively recent buildings such as Wyndham House and Elmhurst.