

There have been many changes in the names of roads in the town centre and in this summary we travel westwards along the spine of Cockermouth, noting the side roads as we pass.

'Sanct Elyns Gaitt' appeared in 1540 (Capella Sancte Elene as early as 1342) and by 1578 we have St. Helen Street. 'Butts Fold' on the south of St. Helen's Street (Fig. 45) possibly owes its name to the time when crossbow practice was compulsory on holy days, but may mean an awkward and unploughable bit of land, from 'butt', the old word for such a piece. The Butts Fold public path was closed by the UDC in 1922 because it was in a bad state and there was no money for its repair, but it has recently been reopened and linked with a new right of way by the old rope walk into Kirkgate square.

'Kirkgatestreete', the 'church road', derived from the Norse 'kirkja' and 'gata'. 'Kirkgate' was once the name not only of the present road but applied also to Skinner Street, Scarwell Brow and the road to Little Mill, the land beyond being Kirkgate Common. Eastwards from Holly Square at the top of the present Kirkgate ran Long Croft, now Windmill Lane, connecting with Waste Lane, Bellbrigg and the very ancient road to Embleton.

'Ye Merket Place' of 1578 was sometimes referred to as 'High Street' [1] Castlegate was 'Castle Street' in 1737 and other early references. All this area of the town was also known as 'Above Bridge'. Park Lane above the castle, derived from Cockermouth Parks, was changed to Isel Road fairly recently.

'Below Bridge' became 'Main Street'. The yards off Main Street, Market Place and St. Helen's Street were usually named after their owners, Birbeck Went originated from Joseph Birbeck and Strickett's Court from Joseph Strickett, and Wilson's Court, Bank's Court and Irving Court are similar examples. A change of owner sometimes led to a change of name. Denton's Court derived from Charles Denton about 1800, but later became Herbert's Court until changed to Allerdale Court some twenty years ago.

Examples still remain of development in the industrial revolution of the late 18th. and early 19th. centuries when several owners of the large Main Street houses built a row of workers' dwellings down their long burgage plots. Some remain almost unaltered, e.g. Banks Court; others have been developed, such as Cockton's Yard and the Old King's Arms Lane; yet others have been demolished, as Lindsay's Court.

The modern Challoner Street was Chandler Lane in 1775, Globe Went in 1800 and Chaloner Lane or Kitty Went in 1832. 'Kitty' was slang for the lock-up or goal, 'went' Middle English for a passageway or path. At the end of Challoner Street was Back Lane or Cross Went, now South Street, the southern limit of the town. This provided a route from the Long Croft area to the west, by-passing the town centre. (Fig. 40).

The bank of the Derwent was for long known as 'The Sands', open land at one time also extending 'above Cocker foot' along the bank of the Cocker. [2] Waterloo Street was still referred to as 'on t'Sand' in 1912. [3] By 1775 development along Sand Went (High Sand Lane) had begun to spread round the corner and by 1832 both sides of Waterloo Street were built up. Property on the south side was often at the foot of the Main Street gardens and in some cases property in the two streets still has the same owner. Wood has on his 1832 map Sand Went, High Sand (Waterloo Street) and Sullard Sand Went (Low Sand Lane, once a way to Graves Mill from Main Street). In 1737 it was Sullerd Sand, in 1785 Sulloth Sand and in 1811 Sulwath Sand Went. [4] The second syllable probably derives from 'vao', a ford, presumably the crossing of the beck from the Fairfield tarn which crossed Main Street to enter the Derwent here.

On the other side of the main road Sullart (earlier Sullert and Sulwarth) Went led to Back Lane. [5] Sullart Street is shown as Gallowbarrow on a map of 1800. The name appears as 'Gallabargh' in 1578, from the OE 'be(o)rg' for hill, later modified to 'barrow'. [6] The way to the gallows on the hill was past the present Highways Depot to Lamplugh Road, Gallowbarrow Brae on the 1863 OS map.

Unfortunately the OS map of 1900 marked this as Sullart Street, from Main Street to the railway, with Gallowbarrow passing Fairfield Schools, since when there has been confusion of the two names. Originally Below Bridge (1775). Street below the Bridge (1840) and Main Street (1832) covered the length from Cocker Bridge to Derwent Bridge, but Crown Street had appeared as the name of the western section by 1863. Crown Street was once known as 'Scratgate'. [7]

### *Roads and bridges within the town*

Station Street is a comparatively recent thoroughfare, not opened through until the 1860s and developed by the New Street Company as an approach to the new station. It was originally blocked by buildings along Back Lane (including the General Sunday School). (Fig. 49). In 1875 the editor of the West Cumberland Times was enthusiastic about the noble auction marts, the elegant shops and the new public hall then being built. He gave his opinion that when completed Station Street would be "one of the prettiest streets to be found in any country town", marred only by an old barn used as a warehouse still standing at the top end. [8] Not all would agree with a later editor's view of W. H. Smith's new shop (in 1979 Cumberland House) when due to be opened in 1927 -

"It is in the Elizabethan style of architecture which is peculiarly appropriate to an old town like Cockermouth. It is in distinct contrast to the other premises in Station Street, which are of the severe Victorian order." [9]

When Earl of Egremont, George O'Brien gave land for the New Road to link the top of Castlegate with the tollbar at St. Helen's. [10] There was an earlier track along this line, from the castle to the bridleway from the top of St. Helen's Street over Watch Hill to Isel. In 1866 Askew commented

"The new road from the top of Castle Street to St. Helen's gate is the chief promenade, being fully three-quarters of a mile in length."

Still known as the New Road in 1912, it is now Castlegate Drive and 'New Road' has passed to that which runs from Station Road by the West Cumberland Farmers depot to the Cocker - and formerly to Rubby Banks mill.

Main Street once had an appreciable slope, the natural fall of the land towards the Derwent. The footpaths were raised and widened in 1925 and until the 1960s there were stepped kerbs along the wide portion by the Mayo monument. There is a pavement two feet below the present level of the yard behind No. 72 on the north side, [11] showing that the building and paving level has been raised appreciably over the years.

The roadway used to be surfaced with stones from the Derwent, worked down by the cart wheels. In 1874 the local press stressed the need for the footpaths to be flagged, commenting that they were "roomy but gainfully rugged". The inevitable objection of cost arose - it would cost £96 to flag from Station Street to the statue and rates were already excessive at 2s-2d. However, a start was made on this portion late in 1874.

There were other obstructions in Main Street besides the hiring fairs. The editor of the 'Times' wrote in 1874 -

"At Cockermouth the corners of our most crowded thoroughfares may be blocked all day long by groups of gaping idlers, without fear of molestation from the guardians of order, while the pavements of Cockermouth are diligently kept free of little girls with skipping ropes. I think our police might properly transfer some of their attention from the little innocents at their harmless play to the lazy loungers at Station Street corner...- [he then digresses to point out that as skipping uses all muscles, produces symmetry of form and buoyant healthfulness it should be encouraged.] ... But I can find no possible excuse for the idle groups who habitually block our street corners. They are not, artistically speaking, ornamental objects, and am sure the quoins of that excellent hostelry, the Brown Cow, are firm enough without any support of theirs."

This was the West Cumberland Time's first year and it was apparently being taken seriously, for a fortnight after the above comments were written four men were in court for obstructing the Main Street footpath at Sullart Street corner and forcing churchgoers on to the road! [12]

Waste Lane and Bellbrigg Lonning, mentioned above, formed a route from the eastern end of the town to Embleton and Lorton. (Fig. 67). Now covered by housing estates, it is difficult to imagine it some 70 years ago when Bolton wrote

"The present footpath from the Waste Lane to the Windmill Lane goes in just over the beck and winds along the brow overlooking the beck and the orchards, and it strikes the Butts Fold path at right angles. There is no prettier little bit around Cockermouth than this footpath along Bitter Beck when the fruit trees are in blossom and the old hawthorn hedges full of may, but it is terribly neglected by the town's authorities!" [13]

Waste Lane and Windmill Lane were improved in the 1850s and the latter widened when the new Lorton Road was made. The rockery at the Kirkgate corner was made in 1938 on the site of a demolished building. Also on this side of the town, there was dispute about the maintenance of Simonscales Lane (or Papermill Road) and at an enquiry in 1844 one witness referred to a turning

### *Roads and bridges within the town*

from this road which led steeply down to Simonscales Wath across the Cocker, a route used by carts and pedestrians and across which he had brought lime from Eaglesfield. [14] It required the construction of the A66 to take the macadam surface another third of the way along Simonscales Lane.

The road to the south-west from the town was once Kittyson Lane, now between two sections of the auction mart, which was marked 'Road to Egremont' on the 1775 map. There were considerable alterations to the road pattern in this area when the railway was built.

In the first half of the 19th. century 15 of the town's 17 streets and lanes were passable by carriages. A system of street cleaning began as a town concern when the Lord of the Manor appointed a scavenger, possibly in the 17th century, an appointment which was linked with the lease of Little Mill. The task was considerable when sheep, cattle and horses stood in the streets for sale. The dung and refuse was the property of the lord. The scavenger was responsible for the scraping of the streets and the refuse thus collected was left in heaps, sometimes for days, until collected for the lord. Similarly house ordure was sold to farmers and, until rules were laid down for its collection, might lie in the streets for a day or more.

From an early date owners and occupiers had to repair their frontages. In 1689 the Court Leet ruled

"that every freeholder, tenant and inhabitant within Cockermouth from Cocker Bridge to the head of the town shall before Michaelmas next sufficiently mend their fronts before every one of their doors and so to the middle of the street - one adjoining another by paving of the same, and we do appoint Mr. Rich. Lowry and Mr. Tolson to begin to pave and repair their said fronts accordingly before 21st. March next, and that they the next adjoining shall so pave mend and repair their said fronts accordingly within that time under a penalty of £1-19s-11½d."

This was a very clear instruction, with a definite time limit, and the highest penalty that the court could impose and recover. Having begun with the east of the town an order was made in 1692 for the rest, so that the whole was completed in 1693. This was followed up the next year by a Court Leet byelaw

"That all the pavement within the borough that hath been lately paved be weekly by every owner thereof and particularly on Saturday nights be made clean sub poena 1s."

It was a continuous problem to keep the streets free of rubbish and obstruction -

1677 "It is put in pain that Phillipp Standley remove his stones from the head of Kitty Went sub poena 6s-8d" [According to the church cess list Standley was a freeholder of substance]

1689 We order that H. Curwen, Esq., and Mr. Lowther or their farmers or tenants do keep clean and weekly cleanse the lane between the King's highway & the stone bridge at the foot of Church stairs."

1691 "It is put in pain that Thomas France shall not lie any manure in Gallowbarrow sub poena 6s-8d."

1692 "It is put in pain that no butcher or tanner or any other p'son doe lye any beast or sheep skins or any noysome thing which brings dirt or filth thereto under the Town Moote Hall or Stairs sub poena 3s-4d."

This was not only a problem of the 17th. century. A vestry of 7th August 1856 resolved

"that a Committee to consist of 12 persons be appointed the Nuisance Removal Committee for Cockermouth to carry into execution the powers of the Nuisance Removal and disease Prevention Acts." Also "that John Adams be appointed the Sanitary Inspector at a salary of 5 shillings per week from this day for the space of two months, and that he be directed to purchase Lime and whitewash brushes to lend to poor persons to whitewash their houses."

Whitewashing was not done solely for appearance but to eliminate pests and infection, and incidentally to increase light in houses crowded in narrow courts and yards.

1813 saw a new measure introduced, the "letting to repair the Streets belonging to the Township of Cockermouth for the term of seven years". Eleven years later the Vestry considered appointing a surveyor and John Benson, the largest landowner in the town and a man with practical knowledge of draining and roadmaking, agreed to be assistant surveyor for a few months without salary. Then in 1826 an assistant surveyor was appointed at a salary of 15s. per week. [15] Road maintenance became more and more important during last century as reflected in the costs of the county council for road and bridge repairs - £465,000 for the whole of the period 1839-75, but up to £29,000 for one year in 1890. [16] By this time the first cars were appearing, some with iron studded wheels to prevent skidding, a device which tore up the surfaces. [17] Council minutes of the early 1900s record three

### *Roads and bridges within the town*

claims by motorists for damage done to their vehicles by tar spraying in Castlegate and in 1912 eight council workmen were paid 5s. each to replace their clogs destroyed in tarring roads. [18]

At the turn of the century more roads were being paved - High Sand Lane and Market Street at about 6d. per yard; Fitz Road, indicating housing development; and in 1925 Main Street reconstructed. Gravel for road work early last century came from Brewery Field, now Kirkbank. The period 1930-5 was one of major road activity, including a consideration of Rubby Banks in 1932, one of a number of occasions when its adoption as a town road has been turned down.

On 28th March 1887 a meeting was held at the Globe to consider planting trees in the town centre. Subscriptions totalling £71-16s. were received and Peter Burn, a nurseryman, was appointed to supply and plant 100 lime trees, to provide soil and manure, and to renew the pavement and fix guards for £45, the iron guards for the young trees to be supplied by W. Robinson of Fairfield ironworks for £32-10s. [19] They were planted early in November that year. Complaints were made in 1909 that they were over-pruned and from 1920 onwards pruning was left to the discretion of the cemetery curator, at that time Mr. Kirkbride. [20] Cockermouth was very incensed when in 1987 Allerdale D.C. drastically pruned the trees in Main Street, choosing a half-term holiday when the town was full of visitors.

About 1979 the last three of some twelve trees in Station Street were felled, being considered an obstruction to traffic. Recently parking bays have been made and a limited number of trees planted.

The first street lighting was by oil. Then eleven men were appointed as inspectors and in 1834

“It was resolved that the Inspectors shall be authorised to light the Town with Gas for the next three years for an expense not to exceed the sum of Eighty-four pounds in each year. And that the number of lights shall be not less in number than at present and continue as long lighted.”

At a meeting three years later to consider the amount allowed the inspectors it was

“resolved that the Town shall be lighted, and that the Gas Company be paid the sum of one hundred and thirty pounds for 62 lamps to be kept lighted until the hour of four o'clock in the morning for the next three years to commence from this day.” [21]

In 1845 it was decided

“that henceforth during the remainder of the contracts with the Gas Company the Lamps be kept lighted until daylight except during moonlight, and that the rate of fourpence in the pound upon houses and of one penny upon land be now agreed to upon the above conditions.”

The next year they reverted to dusk until four o'clock. [22]

For many years there had been talk of a by-pass for Cockermouth. The main road through the town was taken over as a trunk road, the A66 being extended westwards from Penrith to Workington. This was a help to ratepayers as the increasing volume of industrial traffic passing through the town to and from West Cumberland made maintenance heavy. Trunk road status did not however solve the problem of congestion, especially that of the Castlegate bottleneck where lorries cannot pass one another. The first by-pass scheme was for a route north of the town and we have seen that the position of Walker's factory was determined by the suggested road line. Largely on economic grounds, especially the cost of overcoming the steep rise east of the Derwent, a southern route was decided upon. A detailed line was fixed by the beginning of 1971. [23] There were objections to the upgrading of a road through the National Park and arguments were put forward for the development of a route using the Carlisle road and passing through Sebergham. A public enquiry was held and the scheme for the present route upheld.

The Cockermouth section, by Tarmac Ltd., was opened without ceremony on 25th June 1976, the length on the Workington side of Fitz Cottage the following spring and the portion eastwards to Braithwaite a little later in June 1977. [24] The route of the old CKP Railway was used for much of the way.

The construction was quite an event in the life of the town. For a time traffic problems were made worse by convoys of lorries passing along Main Street carrying slag from the steel works at Workington to road building east of Cockermouth. Some 400,000 tonnes of material were brought from this source and from quarries and a very much larger quantity moved along the length of the road from cuttings to embankments. [25] The building of the three-span bridge over the Cocker aroused much interest. A caravan village arose on the Lamplugh road and its residents will be remembered by

### *Roads and bridges within the town*

many for the bonfire and firework display to which the town was invited on 5th November 1975, held on the beginnings of the approach to the Cocker bridge on the new road.

The 35 miles of A66 improvement from near Workington to near Penrith were estimated to cost £30 million. It is interesting to note that in 1931 a by-pass scheme for Keswick was shelved, a road which would then have cost £26,000.

The new roadway has not only benefited West Cumbrian industry and relieved Cockermouth and Keswick of congestion which was reaching breaking point, but it has made Cockermouth accessible to an increasing number of visitors by linking the town by a fast route to the M6 motorway.

A further road development is the Papcastle diversion, built to relieve the congestion at the Derwent Bridge corner, the wear and tear of heavy loads on the bridge and to avoid Gote Brow by connecting the A66 at the Fitz Cottage junction west of the town via a new bridge over the Derwent and a road west of Papcastle and north of Belle Vue to the Carlisle road by the entrance to Wood Hall. Begun in December 1989 it was completed in June 1991.

In spite of the by-pass and the link road traffic in the town centre remains heavy. Some alleviation has been provided by the recent making of a mini-roundabout at the Sullart Street corner by Wordsworth House, thus considerably reducing queues in Sullart Street of traffic wishing to enter Main Street or Crown Street. Further changes occurred arising from the arrival of Sainsbury's supermarket in 2002. The scheme included Station St one-way southwards, traffic lights at the junction of Station St and Lorton Road, and at the top of Gallowbarrow, traffic-calming humps in Gallowbarrow/Sullart St., three pedestrian crossings in Main Street. Initially there were problems especially for delivery lorries finding themselves directed up Lorton St and then trying to come down Kirkgate - damage to the properties exiting onto Market Place occurred on several occasions. There is also now a weight restriction for the town, which means that loaded HGV should not be passing through it unless delivering in town. Disc parking was introduced in September 1991, and in 2004, traffic wardens - appeared under the control of Allerdale Borough Council. Their strict application of the rules with an automatic £30 fine has led to much disgruntlement and many a visitor saying he will never return to the town.

The town has coped well with some Main Street upheavals. The main sewers were laid about 1866. Investigation showed that they were worn out and now needed to be of much greater capacity. They were renewed in 1987-9 and a system of sinking shafts connected by underground tunnels (complete with railways!) ensured minimum interference with surface traffic, The cost was about £2 million. The sewage works were extended in 1986-7 at a further cost of £1.5 million. Another unusual interference with normal town centre life was the filming in 1991 of Melvyn Bragg's 'A Time to Dance', centred on the Midland Bank and the clock-tower former Savings Bank building opposite. In addition to the confusion of visitors when 'Midland' occasionally disappeared and became the 'Cumbria Bank', the town was concerned that Main Street was emptied for filming, with the result that in the final product Cockermouth appeared deserted.

Fitz cottage, demolished when the new A66 was constructed, was the toll house west of the town. Another turnpike cottage also demolished was at the foot of Gote Brow. East of the town the gate at Town Head in St. Helen's Street was later moved out to the junction of the Higham and Embleton roads and became St. Helen's Gate, while that which stood in Kirkgate by the Friends' Meeting House was moved out to just on the town side of Rose Lane on the Lorton road, retaining the name Kirkgate.

At a town meeting in October 1975 [26] twenty footpaths within the town boundary were listed. Some fifteen additions to the definitive footpath map of routes regularly used by the public were suggested. Concern was expressed about the loss of use of three former rights of way. Until the building of Fairfield Junior School there had been three gates into and two paths across the Fairfield. The right of the Urban District Council to have sold the land was challenged -

"It was never theirs to sell. It was always used as a public drying place and as a playing field. There were gates at each end of the path, which were never locked and it was used by the public as their right for as long as anyone can remember. " [27]

The gates had been locked at one time. In 1905 the gate on to Kittyson Lonning was opened and locked by the park keeper as he went to and from the park and another gate into the field was locked at 5.30 on weekdays and 1.00 on Saturday. [28] One Fairfield path is about to be restored, from the car

### *Roads and bridges within the town*

park through the school grounds on to Sullart Street.

A second loss was the right of way from Twædnuill Lane past the remaining buildings of the tweed mill and under the railway bridge to link with the riverside path. There are varying theories as to when this path was closed. As far back as 1901 the UDC decided there was no right of way and when seven years later an approach was made to them by the Cockermouth Visitors' Association they upheld that decision. [29]

Thirdly, it was once possible to walk along much of the town bank of the Derwent, a bank much widened now by gravel from dredging. This new land has been appropriated and fenced by some property owners. The possibility of reopening this path is being investigated.

Another lost right of way went from Quaker Bridge below Croft Mill to the archway under the Midland Bank. The bank erected a gate which they sometimes locked, then it remained locked and the route was permanently closed. [30]

In the 1970s the Civic Trust considered the opening of a right-of-way along the former railway track from the eastern end of the cemetery to Fitz Cottage (now the junction of Low Road and the Papcastle link road), where there was a triangle of land by the river suitable for a picnic area. Unfortunately the Trust failed to make any progress with British Rail. Responsibility for road bridges over the track was a major problem. Then in 1990 came hope when the projected path appeared in the South Allerdale Plan. With the involvement of the authorities came power, money and expertise. The West Cumbria Groundwork Trust was asked to make a feasibility study and following this, with their own staff and the help of volunteers, they had by 1994 produced the Cockermouth Greenway. This is a high-grade walkway and cycleway, with several access points and provision for wheelchairs and prams. An outstanding feature is the railway viaduct over the Cocker, the views up and down the river now opened up, where before the bridge walls were too high to see over, and with two mosaics depicting life in Cockermouth. Unfortunately the development of Lloyds Motors on the Low Road curtailed the western end, but the existing length is much used, both for pleasure and for shorter and traffic-free access to the town from surrounding housing estates.

As we turn to a consideration of the bridges in the town we may note first two very simple ones on the approaches to the church. Skitter Beck (so named from the Old Norse for filth, 'skit', and later renamed Bitter Beck) was still an open stream in 1775. [31] Until early last century the beck was forded at the lower end of Kirkgate, the road being very narrow and much lower than at present. Pedestrians used a wooden footbridge continued as a raised causeway as far as the church gate. [32] This was repairable by the Vestry, as witness a minute of 1744

"We, the Surveyors of the Highways and vestry now present, do agree that the street called the Causeway and Kirkgate be paved."

The other crossing of the beck which led to the church was a footbridge at the bottom of the Church Steps, later buried beneath Church Brow. Market Street, leading to the Brow, was sometimes known as Church Street. Both crossings were frequently referred to in vestry minutes.

Not until 1879 did Cumberland appoint its first road surveyor. In 1881 he took over the county bridge roads (the 100 yard stretches) and by 1887 had also taken responsibility for most of the bridges, so that highways and bridges at last came under one control.

The 1832 map shows the Kirkgate end of the length of beck from here to the Cocker culverted and by the tithe map of 1840 it was covered all the way to the river. Responsibility for bridges was increasingly taken over by the county, roads and minor bridges being left with the towns and parishes. In 1665 the county had 32, including Derwent, Cocker, Ouse, Isel, Deepe (Scale Hill) and Lorton in this area. The number rose to 141 public bridges by 1753 [33] The 'undertaker', later the bridgemaster, was responsible for the bridge and 100 yards of roadway on each side. As wheeled traffic increased their maintenance became more important and the King's Bench Court ruled in 1795 that they should be made wide enough for carriages to use them.

Cocker Bridge was rebuilt in 1828, at a cost of £2,600 which included the expense of removing houses to widen the approaches. The old bridge was about 15 feet wide with low parapets and so steeply humped that it was possible to build the present one underneath it. When ready for completion by the insertion of the key stone the Cocker rose and brought down the new masonry, but after a further attempt the bridge was completed and the old one on top blown up to remove it.

### *Roads and bridges within the town*

“Samuel Fletcher, landlord of the White Ox, father to the present Mrs. Rowlands, of the Spur Inn, was the last foot passenger.” [34]

John Bolton relates that his father had seen the mail coach cross the Cocker at Cass Bay, the



**Fig. 78.** *An outline sketch of Cocker Bridge looking east, based on an old print.*

wath at the foot of Cocker Went or Cass Bay Brow where Quaker Bridge was later erected. It may have been during the rebuilding of Cocker Bridge that the mail used this route. ‘Cass Bay’ is a term applied to the whole of this stretch of river, which possibly originated in the widening at the ford by the water extending up the slopes, especially into South Street.

The footbridge which replaced this crossing, known variously as Cocker Lane Footbridge, Jubilee Footbridge, but usually now as Quaker Bridge, was opened on 21st June 1887, Jubilee Day, less than three weeks after the laying of the foundation stone on 2nd June. The cost was £129-6s-3d. [35] - Josiah Hall, one of the Quakers largely responsible for the bridge, opened it immediately after the laying of the foundation stone of Victoria Bridge, pointing out that the Local Board had turned down the plans two years earlier but had since changed that decision. The bridge was replaced by the existing new one in 1984.

The ford at this point was only closed in the 1930s. When the council first proposed this there was some opposition, but a request from 12 residents in nearby property that it be closed for safety resulted in it being fenced off. [36]

The Victoria Jubilee Bridge just mentioned provided a much needed access to the station and the auction mart from across the river without having to use the narrow lower end of Kirkgate and the congested area of Market Place and Cocker Bridge, although traders in those areas objected to the opening up of the new route. [37] A public meeting in the Court House, resulting from a letter in the West Cumberland Times, decided to proceed with the scheme at an estimated cost of £1,130. The actual cost was higher than this figure. The foundation stone was laid by Mrs. Waugh, using the customary silver trowel, and Jubilee coins of 2s-6d., 1s. and 6d. were placed in a cavity. [38] The bridge was built by Lister, McCartney and Lister of Cockermouth.

Still further up the Cocker, a footbridge crossed the river from Rubby Banks Mill. This was a private bridge which gave access to the mill’s tenter field. It was also used by golfers going to the course which existed on the eastern side of the river before the Embleton course was opened.

On 29th March 1973 Councillor Roy Potts, chairman of the UDC, opened Double Mills footbridge, [39] a graceful and much-used link between the two sides of the Cocker. The UDC had considered a bridge in the neighbourhood of Rubby Banks in 1946 and the Cockermouth and District

### *Roads and bridges within the town*

Angling Association asked for one as far back as 1922. This £20,000 structure carries water, power and sewerage services to the new estates, gives access to the housing developments east of the river, enables those on the west to use the riverside path to Lorton and links the two sections of Harris Park.

At the foot of the Cocker the first Waterloo Bridge was opened on 18th June 1887, the 72nd anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo. Early maps show roads leading down to the river on both sides at this point, so there was presumably a wath or ford. This structure, costing £288, most of which was subscribed by the Castle Brewery, was strong and plain, a utilitarian erection enabling commerce to cross from one side to the other - barrels from the cooper in High Sand Lane to the brewery (hence the popular name 'Barrel Bridge') and later the buses from the County Garage on the Castle side to and from their loading points in Main Street. Lister, McCartney and Lister again did the masonry and W. and J. Herbert, whose foundry adjoined the site, the ironwork. The bridge was opened by Mrs. Mitchell from a carriage standing in the middle of the bridge. This new link, one of three Cocker bridges started or completed in 1887, was a help to trade in this area and a benefit to many of the 70 men who worked on the castle side of the river. [40] The stanchions of the bridge had brewery barrels in relief on them. In 1896 the bridge was severely damaged by floods, but the brewery paid for repairs and strengthening done by Herberts. [41] In 1918 floods brought down a tree which broke the brewery end and repairs took a year. During floods at August Bank Holiday weekend in 1938 a tree lodged against the centre support of the bridge and debris and flood water built up until most of it was carried away. The remains of the central support may be seen when the river is low. The tender of Dorman Long of Middlesborough to demolish the remains and erect a new bridge for £2325 was accepted in August 1939, [42] but the outbreak of war prevented rebuilding. After a long interval the present narrower footbridge was opened by the head boy of Derwent School in April 1963. The Cumberland Engineering Company of Whitehaven cleared the old remains, put in new stone abutments and erected the bridge. This was completed on a Friday. During the weekend the Cocker washed the supports away. Consequently the stonework on each side was raised another 18 inches and the bridge, retrieved from the river, re-erected at a higher level. [43]

Travelling down the Derwent, a metal footbridge of two arches covering 195 feet, opened in 1875, was solely for the use of Harris's employees, but it became a route much used by the general public. It was renewed in 1981. Lastly, Derwent Bridge is one of the two oldest in the town. Preceded probably by a Roman bridge below Papcastle, it is not known how many have been built on this site; possibly four, for there was one in the 14th. century. The immediate predecessor of the present bridge was only some 10 or 12 feet wide. [44] Probably there was an earlier one of pack horse type, too narrow for wheeled vehicles. When the river is very low old foundations and wooden stakes may be seen. In about 1822 the two-arch bridge was erected at a cost of £3,000 [45] and when the river was cleared of gravel in 1936 to lessen the risk of flooding in the Gote area the chance was taken to increase the flow under the bridge by building three square arches to take flood water at the north end. Ironically the town had a serious flood two years later, but conditions in the Gote were better than they would have been before 1936. [46]

Two aspects of traffic control in the town persist. The town now has pedestrian crossings (first considered by the UDC in 1934 and deferred) - usually very well observed by motorists, and traffic lights. Complaints are heard regarding parking difficulties and car park charges, but 60 years ago, when there were no car parks, it was suggested that there should be no street parking at all, that Fairfield should be used and that a charge be made of 1s (5p). There was immediate reaction - Market days only, short stops to be allowed in the streets, etc. [47]

A feature of the town plan prepared by Johnston and Wright was the construction of a relief road within the town to run southwards from Derwent Bridge and curve round using the old railway line to the top of Station Road, thence by the existing Lorton Street and Victoria Road to the top of Kirkgate from where a new road would follow a route behind the Quaker Meeting House and across St. Helen's Street to some way up Castlegate Drive. Main Street would be closed to traffic near its western end and Castlegate would become a pedestrian way. Nothing has been done to implement this plan.



Until the national census began in 1801 reliable population figures are impossible to ascertain. We know that there were some 160 names in Cockermouth in 1215, and that the population rose during the 12th, 13th and 15th centuries, with declines in the mid-14th and 16th centuries. [1] Fluctuations were caused by economic factors, by outbreaks of plague, etc.

In 1641 Cockermouth had 256 adult males, from which we can estimate a population of just under a thousand. There were 235 houses in the town in 1714, but an estimate of the population cannot be made from this figure as houses frequently held more than one family, as in 1801 when 690 families lived in 417 houses. [2] By 1785 the population had risen to 2652 in 663 families.

From 1801 figures are more definite:-

1801- 2865	1851- 5775	1901- 5355	1951- 5203
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The doubling of population in the first half of last century followed a national trend. Recent figures show greater growth in Cockermouth than in Cumberland:

	Cockermouth change	County change
1951 - 5203		
1956 - 5310	+2.1%	+1.2%
1961 - 5810	+9.4%	+2.2%
1966 - 6140	+5.7%	+1.5%
1971 - 6350	+3.4%	-2.2%
2003 - 8270	+30.2%	

The change in the Rural District around Cockermouth has been very drastic, 19,530 in 1950 falling by almost half to 10,866 in 1962, partly because of boundary changes. [3]

The drift from the area is no new development. Over 100,000 people left the county in the period 1841-91, partly offset by Irish immigrants, and in 1877 the press commented that over 100 born and bred in Cockermouth left every year to work elsewhere. [4]

The registers of Cockermouth began in 1632, those of Lorton in 1538, Brigham 1563 and Embleton 1625. At times entries included a man's trade or his status - bachelor, gentleman, yeoman, etc., and are thus a useful source of information, and fairly reliable conclusions may also be drawn from the figures for baptisms, etc.

The following figures [5] give some idea of the growth in population:-

1636-46	414 baptisms	121 marriages	272 burials
1781-91	685	175	663
1842	143	32	128

Added to these must be an estimate of the number of dissenters who did not use the church and in doing so account must be taken of the dates of dissenting movements. Quakerism, for example, would affect the second and third lines above but not the first. It is estimated that about 1800 there were 30 Quaker families in the town and some 120 other dissenting families, so that the register figures are about 25% too low. [6]

The average number of baptisms for the period 1783 to 1802 was 69 per year, which, applying the correcting factor of 25%, gives a birth rate of about 30 per 1000. The sex ratio was 106 males to every 100 females. This may be compared with the 1968 figure for Cockermouth of 16.6 (ratio 104 to 100) and for Cumberland of 15.1, the lowest ever recorded for the county. [7]

Illegitimate births appear to have always been high in Cumberland. Over the years 1842 to 1872 they hovered round 11%, while the figure for England fell from 6.7% in 1842 to 5.9% in 1872. There was then a drop for the ten years 1879-89, about 8% for the county compared with about 5% for the country, [8] but this trend did not continue. Even in earlier times there was little difficulty in ascertaining illegitimacy figures, as illustrated by a register of deaths entry of 27th March 1800 –

‘James, a bastard of old Murgatroyd’s, 1 year.’

The reason for the county’s high rate cannot have been farm service, for Devon with similar arrangements had a very low rate. Nor did the system of indoor service appear to be the cause, for Norfolk with no living-in custom had a high illegitimacy rate. Mixed working in houses and fields may have been an important factor. Figures dropped when the railways opened and people left hiring fairs earlier to catch the last trains. [9]

## *Population*

Turning from birth to death, in spite of the conditions at the time of the Cockerhouth Improvement Bill and in spite of outbreaks of typhoid, etc., we seem to have fared well compared with other parts of the country. Mannix and Whellan supported their comment of 1847 that

“Although this town is in a low situation, and at the confluence of two rivers, it is, nevertheless, exceedingly healthy, as is evident from the bills of mortality” [10]

with the fact that of the 114 districts into which the country was divided for record purposes the lowest mortality rates were in Anglesey, Cockerhouth and the Isle of Wight. [11]

Nevertheless infant deaths were very high by present standards. In the early years of the 18th century one in four died before the age of two, some years being abnormally high, e.g. 61 infants in 1731 compared with 96 adults and 48 in 1736 compared with 82, [12] probably reflecting epidemics. In the years 1874-5-6 26.1% of the total deaths in the district of the Cockerhouth Union Rural Sanitary Authority were of children under one year old, compared with 24% for England and Wales for the period 1861-70. In the same periods 41.9% died under five compared with the national 41.1%. On the other hand, having survived childhood some people lived reasonably long lives - in 1811, 1 in 10 of those dying and 1 in 62 of the population were over 90. [13]

In the late 1700s and early 1800s it was usual to give the cause of death in the register entry and these throw some light on life at the time. In the middle 20 years of the 18th century, for example, ‘poverty’ was a very frequent cause, but as the mills were built and industry developed in the later years of the century this entry almost disappeared, for more work meant more food.

The causes of death in 1770 have been researched [14] and compared with 1970, as in the following table:-

	1770	1970
Degenerative Diseases (Chronic heart, lung and kidney disease, etc.)	43%	63%
Disease due to infections	39%	4%
Malignant Disease	?	18%
Accidental Death	2%	4%

Malignant diseases were not recognised as such at the earlier date and many who died from this cause would be placed in other categories. In 1770 the maternal mortality rate was about 10 per 1000 births, compared with the figure for today of between 0.1 and 0.2. [15]

Overall the death rate has been more than halved in two hundred years. The rate for the period 1784-1802 was 27.2 per 1000. In 1970 it was 12.6 for Cockerhouth and 12.4 for the county.

The most dreaded killer was plague in its various forms. Black Death is estimated to have killed 1½ of the country’s 4 million people in 1349. Of these 2,500 were in Kendal [16] and, with plague so near, it is unlikely that Cockerhouth escaped. A few years later, in 1361, there was an outbreak in the Carlisle area which was probably the Black Death and plague ravaged Cumberland in 1598. [18] There would almost certainly be other epidemics of which we have no record.

The outbreak about which we really have some knowledge is that which broke out in Cockerhouth in 1647, although it is not known whether it was bubonic plague, spotted fever or enteric. 191 of the population of about 2,000 died in that year of what Rev. Robert Rickerby called “the visitation”.

The burial figures for this period are [19] –

1640	38	1644	20
1641	36	1645	23
1642	20	1646	26
1643	20	1647	191 from plague, 8 other causes.

The entries read

“The Visitation began in Cockerhouth July 3rd. 1647 whereof and in wch tyme these dyed:-

- (1) Isabell ye wife of Xtopher Fletcher was buried July 3rd. day.
- (2) Thomas Bolton July 6th. day.
- (3) Katherine ye wife of Vaile July 11th. day.
- (4) Michael Bunt(e)inge July 18th. day.”

For the remaining 187 there are no dates, just names and relationships, such as:-

Numbers 81-87 Frances Benson, Lucy his wife, Margarett Benson, John Addison, Willm. Biggrigge, Jane Benson their servants.

Numbers 163-168 John Dalton, Agnes his wife, Henry, Willm., Isabell and Anne his children.

## *Population*

Three or four deaths in a family were common and seven families were completely wiped out. The pressure of events at times prevented the keeping of proper records. The Rev. R. Rickerby wrote

“By reason of the Sickness and the Seige diverse baptisms were neglected to be registered in due course but as many as gave in their children’s names are set down ....”

It is difficult for us to realise the atmosphere in the town in a time of plague. Defoe described the conditions in London during an outbreak and the weeping and depression in Cockermonth would be similar. Life in the town would be more or less at a standstill. The dead would be collected and buried uncoffined in a pit. When produce had to be bought from outside the town it and the money would be exchanged on open land, the coins being placed in water by the purchasers to be picked up by the sellers. There are traditions that the burial place was somewhere on the river bank or in a field at Round Close Hill. [20]

Askew records an outbreak in 1659 when 197 died in four months, but this may be a confusion of the 1647 outbreak with the date in the carving on the lintel of God’s Providence House. There were later epidemics in the town in 1731 and 1736-7.

Three or four hundred years ago there was no one name characteristic of the town, as in some of the villages [22] but from the town’s registers Davies-Shiel has extracted some interesting figures. In 1634 and 1635 there were no new names recorded, but there were 38 in 1636 and 18 or 19 in each of the following three years. By the 1660s they had fallen to 1 or 2 a year. These new entrants often came from far afield - Cornwall, East Anglia, London, the Midlands, etc. The numbers would presumably be greater than those given, for a name would only appear in the register for a birth, marriage or death and not all newcomers would immediately appear for one of these reasons. This influx coincides with the development of mining activities in the surrounding area.

Surnames were often associated with the place of residence of a family. The Bassenthwaites of Bassenthwaite became extinct in Edward II’s reign, the Dovenbys of Dovenby in Henry III’s. The Hughthwaites of Hughthwaite and the Tallentires of Tallentire had died out by 1500. The Eaglesfields of Eaglesfield had gone by about the mid-16th century, the elder of the heiresses marrying Humphrey Senhouse of Netherhall. [23]

A surprising number of men and women born in or near to Cockermouth have achieved fame in a wide variety of fields. In the space available it is impossible to do more than mention briefly some of these, leaving the reader to refer to full biographies of the better known.

### **William Wordsworth (1770-1850)**

On entering the town we are greeted by the sign 'Cockermouth : Birthplace of William and Dorothy Wordsworth' and the poet is the first to come to mind when thinking of Cockermouth's famous sons. [1] On the death of his mother when he was eight William was sent to Hawkshead School and it was here that he wrote his first verses as a school task. Of Hawkshead he said "One of the ushers taught me more Latin in a fortnight than I had learnt the two preceding years at Cockermouth." In 1787 he entered St. John's College, Cambridge, graduating four years later. An enthusiastic republican, he toured France about the time of the revolution, returning home in 1792 and leaving behind Annette Vallon to have their daughter Caroline. There is strong evidence that he would have brought Annette to England but for the outbreak of war with France.

He lived in the Isle of Wight, with little money, and in order to become independent of his relatives' charity decided to study law and meanwhile to keep himself by writing political articles for the press. However, his friend Raisley Calvert died in 1795 and left him £900 to cultivate his poetical talents, whereupon William gave up law and went to live with his sister Dorothy in Somerset. It was here that he began his friendship with Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Together they produced 'Lyrical Ballads' in 1798, which was not a financial success. He also wrote 'The Prelude' about this time, an autobiographical work which contains many of his references to Cockermouth but was not published until after his death. After touring Germany he and Dorothy moved to Grasmere in the last year of the century. In his successive homes of Dove Cottage, Grasmere Rectory, Allan Bank and Rydal Mount, William continued to write, becoming increasingly involved in the group of poets known as the Lakes School. His struggles against poverty and adverse criticism were helped by his appointment in 1813 as distributor of stamps for Westmorland at £500 a year and by an increasing recognition of and demand for his work. He had, in 1802, married Mary Hutchinson of Penrith and they had five children in the next eight years. Dorothy continued to live with the family. Increasing recognition brought financial rewards - an annuity of £100 from Sir George Beaumont to pay for a yearly tour and £800 from Lord Lonsdale to enable him to buy a small estate at Patterdale. Durham and Oxford made him an honorary D.C.L. in 1838 and 1839; he became poet laureate in 1843 when Southey died, an appointment which carried a pension of £300 for life; and about this time he resigned his post as stamp distributor in favour of his son. William died on 23rd April 1850 and is buried, with other members of his family, in Grasmere churchyard.

The eldest son, John, became vicar of Brigham in 1834 and his son, another John, followed him there. The local press reported that the younger John was fined £1 in 1874 for correcting a Sunday School boy for misbehaviour with the aid of an umbrella. [2] During his life William continued to visit Cockermouth, especially while his son was at Brigham, and in a letter of 1807 Dorothy wrote

"W and M. have just returned. They were at Cockermouth our native place you know, and the terraced walk - that you have heard me speak of many a time, with the privet hedge, is still full of roses as it was thirty years ago."

He still visited the house where he was born and took an active interest in the affairs of the town, such as an unsuccessful scheme to provide a new church in 1836. Several of his writings express his affection for Cockermouth.

".....what benefit I owed  
To thee and those domains of rural peace,  
Where to the sense of beauty first my heart  
Was opened,..."

### **Earl Mayo (1822-1872)**

Standing prominently in the middle of Main Street is the statue of Richard Southwell Bourke, the sixth Earl of Mayo, but known for most of his life (until his father died in 1867) by the courtesy title of Lord Naas. [3] He was the eldest of ten in a Protestant family, born on 21st February 1822, and said to be descended from William Fitzadelm de Borgo who governed Ireland in 1066.

### *Famous individuals*

He was an accomplished rider, a clever shot and a good swimmer. In politics a moderate conservative, he served in Parliament for 20 years - 1847-52 for Kildare, 1852-7 for Coleraine and 1857-68 for Cockermouth, following here Henry Wyndham who transferred to be MP for the western area of the county.

Lord Mayo held office in the Derby and Disraeli governments, being Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1852, 1858-9 and 1866-8. His policies were conciliatory, especially in Ireland, and Queen Victoria spoke highly of him and his work when he died in 1872. He was very active in relieving the Irish famine of 1847.

His representation of Cockermouth resulted from the link he formed when on 31st October 1849 he married Blanche Julia Wyndham, the third surviving daughter of the first Lord Leconfield. They had seven children.

In 1869 Mayo was appointed Viceroy and Governor-General of India, a governorship which was soon brought to an abrupt end by assassination. On 8th February 1872 he inspected the convict prison near Port Blair in the Andaman Islands. He had been heavily guarded all day, but leaving after dark he was stabbed when on the pier and fell into the water. On being helped out he remarked "I don't think I am much hurt", but died shortly afterwards. His assassin, Shere Ali, was a native of the Kyber Pass area, serving a sentence for murder, and said God had ordered him to kill the enemy of his country. The Indian Government paid an annual pension of £1000 to the Countess, to which the British Parliament added another annual £1000, and India awarded £20,000 to the children.

The statue is reputed to be a good representation of the Earl in his viceroy's robes. The figure is nine feet high, carved from a solid block of Sicilian marble by W. & T. Wills of London, and the pedestal on which it stands is twelve feet. The cost of £800 was raised by public subscription.

The unveiling was planned for the first week in June 1875, but there was a long controversy regarding the site. One plan was to place it at the corner of Station Street and Main Street, narrowing the footpaths on the corner to allow more room round the statue. There was a suggestion to place it on the old bowling green at the castle, but this was not seriously considered. A position in the widest part of Main Street was finally chosen, £30 being spent on making it wider still by curving the footpath parallel to the houses on the south side. [4]

In May it was reported that the statue was finished and ready for erection and that lifting gear would be brought to the site in mid-August. Then early on a Thursday morning in July word passed round the town that the statue was up. Crowds flocked to Main Street from all over the town to discover a white image of George III surmounting the granite pedestal - an old ship's figurehead borrowed from a Cockermouth garden! The true Mayo arrived by rail on 13 August, was hoisted up on the 16th and unveiled by Lord Napier and Ettrick on the 19th. [5] (Plate 18).

The unveiling was made the occasion of a town celebration, [6] beginning with a procession from the Market Place. Lord Napier was supported by other dignitaries, who with subscribers to the fund occupied stands erected in the street, and by several thousand townspeople. A public lunch in the Agricultural Hall was presided over by the Earl of Lonsdale. Later in the day there was tea for 1300 children on the Castle Lands at 5 p.m. and dancing on the bowling green from 4 p.m., with Chinese lanterns lending a festive air. To ensure that everything proceeded smoothly, 30 extra police were drafted into the town for the day!

'Mayo' was run into a number of times over the years, but never so violently as early one morning in 1964 when two tankers were racing through the town and one hit the statue. Mayo fell to the ground and broke into several pieces and every block of masonry except the lowest was displaced by the force of the impact. The statue was put together and re-erected, but not without the odd voice that now was the chance to remove a traffic hazard to some other site. Miraculously, the tanker driver lived. (Plate 19).

#### **John Dalton (1766-1844)**

As Deborah Dalton lay in a humble Eaglesfield cottage giving birth to a son [7] in 1766 she little thought that 78 years later 40,000 people would file past his coffin. Deborah came to Eaglesfield from Caldbeck when she married (at Pardshaw) Joseph Dalton, whose grandparents had been first generation Quakers.

Joseph came of yeoman stock and was a home weaver; Deborah, a woman of character and

### *Famous individuals*

energy, augmented the income by selling paper, ink and quills in the porch of the cottage. They had six children, three of whom reached maturity.

The boys received their first education from their father, John later going to John Fletcher's school in Pardshaw meeting house premises. When Fletcher discontinued his school Dalton opened one in Eaglesfield when twelve or thirteen years old, first in a barn, then in his home and finally in the Eaglesfield meeting house. The weekly school pence brought him about 5s. a week and he augmented this by selling paper, etc. John attracted the attention of an able Eaglesfield Quaker Elihu Robinson, who gave him further lessons in mathematics and instilled in him a life-long interest in meteorology. A cousin had a school in Kendal, in which he was helped by John's older brother Jonathan. John gave up his school after about two years and turned to farming, but when the cousin died and Jonathan took over the Kendal school he left farming to become assistant to his brother. He was now about 16. In Kendal he formed a close friendship with John Gough, a blind Quaker scholar immortalised by Wordsworth in 'The Excursion', a man versed in Greek, Latin, French, mathematics, chemistry, medicine and philosophy. In addition to teaching in the school, Dalton gave public lectures on natural philosophy, kept meteorological records, contributed articles to magazines and carried out observations on his own body. He thought of training in medicine to earn more money, but while hesitating because of the length of the Edinburgh course he successfully answered an advertisement for a teacher of mathematics and philosophy at the Manchester New College. He moved in 1792, now aged 26, and lived at first in rooms over the college library. Six years later he left the college staff to undertake research in chemistry, supporting himself by private teaching. He made many friendships with leading scientists and was offered several tempting and lucrative posts, but these he always refused in order to pursue his own work. He gave numerous lectures [8] including 116 papers to the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, of which he was secretary, vice-president and, for the last 27 years of his life, president.

It was to this Society that he made the first communications of his atomic theory, for which he is best remembered. To the same Society he related his researches into his own colour blindness, a disease for long known as 'Daltonism'. His eyes, which he left for research, are among the Dalton relics of Dalton College, founded by Quakers as a hall of residence in Manchester University.

Dalton never married, although he was chivalrous to women and formed a number of warm friendships. He always retained his Cumberland accent, had a deep gruff voice, was blunt and outspoken but kind and helpful, lived very simply and never forgot his friends of early years. He enjoyed nature and music. He climbed Helvellyn over 30 times, the last time when he was 70, making observations and collecting samples of air at different heights. In 1844 the Lit. and Phil. made him a presentation for his zeal and perseverance in making over 200,000 meteorological observations in some 52 years. He was now in failing health and died eight days later.

Manchester Quakers made efforts to give Dalton the simple funeral he would have liked, but the city insisted on a public one. 40,000 people filed past his body as it lay in Manchester Town Hall, where there is a mural painting of him collecting marsh gas and his statue is in the main entrance. The funeral procession of a hundred carriages stretched for a mile.

Many anecdotes could be told of this very colourful character. One typical of his honesty and kindness relates to a student who had missed one lecture of a course but asked for a certificate of full attendance. John refused to issue it, but added "if thou wilt come tomorrow I will go over the lecture thou hast missed".

He refused a knighthood because he would not bow to any man, even the king, but he did accept honorary degrees from England and the continent and was a Fellow of the Royal Society, which granted him its gold medal. William IV awarded him a pension of £150, increased in 1836 to £300 a year. When presented to William IV he wore his scarlet doctor's gown instead of court dress and sword (but it would not appear scarlet to John, more a bottle green). Visiting Eaglesfield some time after this presentation (he often returned to Cumberland, as the plaque outside the Globe Hotel testifies) John Fletcher asked him about his visit to St. James's.

John told him that the King had said "Ah! Dr. Dalton, how are you getting on in Manchester?", a reference to the Battle of Peterloo; to which he replied "Well, I don't know, just middlin' I think". A horrified Fletcher said "Why, John, thou hardly showed court manners in addressing the king in such common parlance". "Mebbe sae" replied John, "but what can ye sae to sichlike fowk?".

## *Famous individuals*

### **Fletcher Christian (1764 - c.1794?)**

Fletcher Christian [9] was born on 25th September 1764 and travelled to Brigham School by pony before entering the Free Grammar School at Cockermonth. His birthplace, Moorland Close, is more than 300 years old, the house and farm buildings enclosed within a wall for defence and entered through an arched gateway which once had strong folding doors.

Fletcher went to sea when quite young and at the end of 1787 was appointed chief mate on the *Bounty*, under its captain William Bligh, a man of similar age. The ship was fitted out by the British government to go to Tahiti to collect bread fruit trees and take them to the West Indian colonies. Arriving at Tahiti in October 1788 they were ready to leave six months later with 1015 plants, but the crew had become demoralised by the long stay in such a luxurious island and angered by Bligh's treatment of them. Christian suffered most abusive insults from the captain one day and determined to leave the ship by raft during the night, trusting to be carried to land. He was unable to put his plan into effect and the following day, 28th April 1789, when 24 days out from Tahiti, a quarter of the crew mutinied. This was a quick decision of minutes only and Bligh and 18 of the crew were set adrift in the ship's launch, in which they travelled 3,600 miles before landing at Timor on 14th June.

The mutineers returned to Tahiti where most wished to stay, but Christian was anxious to leave to avoid punishment by the government. Eventually Christian and some of the men and their Tahitian wives settled on Pitcairn, a small island  $2\frac{1}{2}$  by  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles.

Meanwhile 14 of the mutineers who had stayed initially on Tahiti when the others left for Pitcairn were arrested by the navy after Bligh had reported the events on his return to England, but only three were executed as the rest escaped. Bligh led a further expedition for bread fruit trees, this time successfully, and in 1806 became Governor of New South Wales, where his continued tyranny resulted in him being deposed and arrested two years later.

What did happen to Christian? One theory is that he was killed with others after four years on the island. Another that he was seen in Devonport and visited his family in Cumberland about 1808, but this is very doubtful. What is certain is that descendants of the mutineers visit Moorland Close today, anxious to see the leader's birthplace.

### **Fearon Fallows (1788 – 1831)**

A cottage in Low Sand Lane, facing the side of Wordsworth House, has a tablet which reads -

"In this house, in the year 1788, was born Fearon Fallows, MA., F.R.S., late fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge. H. M. Astronomer. Died at the Cape of Good Hope, 25th. July 1831." [10]

In this cottage father John Fallows wove shalloons for a living. When Fearon was only five he astounded his father by his powers of calculation. After attending school in Brigham he worked at home, helping in the family weaving, until at 19 or 20 he became assistant master at Plumbland School.

Fearon's ability, especially in algebra, attracted the attention of clergy and gentry in the neighbourhood and they subscribed to enable him to matriculate and enter St. John's in 1808. Here he was a contemporary of Palmerston, Herschel and Playfair. He obtained his B.A. when 24, being third wrangler, following Herschel as first and Peacock, later Dean of Ely, as second. For two years he had a mathematics lectureship in Corpus Christi College. He was a Fellow of St. John's and in 1818 became Moderator (the principal examiner in mathematics) in the University.

Fearon was appointed director of an observatory to be built at the Cape of Good Hope and set sail in May 1821 with his wife, Mary Ann Hervey, the eldest daughter of the vicar of Bridekirk. He directed the building of the observatory and incorporated a small chapel where he held a service each Sunday. He suffered from sunstroke, scarlatina and dropsy and latterly was carried in a blanket from his bed into the observatory.

In spite of his early death Fallows made a considerable contribution to astronomy, cataloguing the principal fixed stars seen from the Cape and listing 142 new ones. In Askew's opinion,

"As a mathematician and general scholar, Fallows was the greatest man Cockermonth has produced. His knowledge of algebra approached the marvellous." [11]

## *Famous individuals*

### **Dr. John Walker (1759-1830)**

Approximately on the site of the Conservative Club in Main Street there was at one time a blacksmith's shop where, on 31 July 1759, was born John Walker. [12] After attending the Free Grammar School he helped in his father's smithy for five years, then went to Dublin. He had become interested in engraving and in the period 1780-3 did several plates for the Hibernian Magazine. Part of his time in Dublin was spent in running a school, but he also travelled widely to prepare a geography and universal gazetteer. This was published before John was thirty and ran through six editions in twenty years. He accompanied Sir Ralph Abercromby on his Egyptian expedition.

Walker moved to London before the end of the century because it was cheaper to print books there, and now the whole pattern of his life changed. In 1799 he qualified as a doctor at Guy's Hospital and became interested in vaccination. For the rest of his life he was a keen supporter of Jenner's campaign. Admitted to the College of Physicians, Walker was for 17 years Director of the National Vaccine Board, of which Jenner was president, and with a colleague introduced vaccination in the near east.

A simple, earnest man, direct in his thought and with liberal ideas, he associated with the Quakers and adopted Quaker dress; but he never officially joined Friends because he was not certain that his faith was sound. He was one of the pioneers against slavery and worked also to arouse public opinion against the Indian practice of sacrificing widows on their husbands' funeral pyres.

John Walker died on 23rd June 1830, a "great apostle and martyr in the cause of vaccination".

### **Abraham Fletcher (1714 - 1792)**

In 1714 was born Abraham Fletcher, [13] one of seven children of a Little Broughton pipe-maker. His education was short - three weeks, when he was very young - and he became a pipe-maker like his father. Becoming dissatisfied with pipe-making he began to educate himself, retiring in the evening to a tiny room above the porch of the house. He married when young and both his wife and his family were very opposed to Abraham's interest in learning. This was not because his family suffered, for he never neglected his manual work, and indeed his wife Mary, a woman who talked a lot, thought little and smoked a clay pipe, changed her attitude when she realised there might be more money in teaching than in pipe-making.

Abraham first mastered reading and writing, then turned his attention to arithmetic. He progressed so well that he became the village schoolmaster when 30. His studies included the writings of herbalists and his knowledge of botany made him the village doctor, with a fame far beyond Broughton for the power of his remedies, kept in bowls and bottles or hanging from the beams of his home. From botany he went on to astrology and acquired a further reputation for telling the future by studying the stars.

It was, however, in mathematics that Fletcher really made his mark. In 1753 his "Universal Measurer: the Theory of Measuring in all its various uses, whether artificers' works, gauging, surveying or mining" was printed in Whitehaven. This 600 page volume was described by another mathematician, John Howard, as "the largest and best collection of mathematical knowledge ... that has hitherto appeared in the English language". Nine years later followed "The Universal Measurer and Mechanic, a work equally useful to the Gentleman, Tradesman, and Mechanic, with copperplates".

Fletcher died when 78, having achieved wide fame as a mathematician and renown in his own county as 'doctor' and astrologer. He was buried in the Baptist burial ground in the village where he had been born, leaving savings of £4000, a very large sum for those days.

### **Edward Waugh and Neddy**

Edward Waugh was Cockermouth's last member of Parliament while the town remained a separate constituency. He is remembered less for his parliamentary work than for 'Neddy', the clock erected in his honour at the junction of Main Street and Station Street.

The Waugh Memorial Fund was opened to honour the town's solicitor and last M.P. and in January 1893 purchased land west of the Congregational Church, extending from Main Street to the Derwent, for £450 and it was hoped the council would erect a library here. The library did not materialise until the turn of the century, and meanwhile a scheme was put forward for a memorial



### ***Famous individuals***

clock. [14] There were delays because of arguments about the site - should it be placed in the Market Place or at Station Street corner, where the council were concerned that it might interfere with the town sewer ! In April the committee decided to go ahead with the clock scheme although the site was not yet fixed, ordering from W Potts and Sons of Leeds a 40 feet high column [12 m], the clock to have faces 4 feet by 3 feet [1.2 m x 0.9m] and a two-hundredweight bell to strike the hours, the whole to be in iron, bronze and gold. A wooden structure was erected on the Main Street site to give some idea of the project. Eventually the memorial was erected here and 'Neddy' became one of Cocker-mouth's most prominent features.

However, as the motor age advanced Neddy became a traffic hazard, especially as it was not centrally placed in Main Street which made it more difficult: for cars to get round it.

In May 1932 the Council decided the clock must come down and two months later suggested a new public clock. [15] By late August Neddy had gone, the dials and movement sold to a Leeds man for a mere £4 10s. The Council decided to fix the explanatory plaque from the clock to the front of the Court House and to place the bell and a large photograph of Neddy in the library.

### **James Duffield (1835 - )**

A man who found his way to this area as owner of Tallentire Hall was born at Tipton in 1835, one of the fifteen children of a poor banksman who earned 3s. or 3s-6d. [18p] a day at a colliery near Dudley. James Duffield [16] had no schooling, working in the coal pits or ironstone mines of the Earl of Dudley until he was 16, starting when seven as door-boy diverting the air in the mines. He had several accidents, sometimes being insensible for days at a time, and in a period of nine months his father and four older brothers were all killed at work, leaving James the eldest of the family. When 20 he married, signed the pledge, and began to educate himself by attending Mechanics Institute classes. After several years in Staffordshire and Sheffield Duffield became a puddler at Cammell and Co.'s new forge, rising to night foreman when only 26 years of age, and five years later to day manager in the armour plate mills and puddling forge. After a further five years, now 36, he was chosen from 40 as manager of the new Dronfield Steelworks which achieved a reputation for Bessemer steel rails. He decided on Workington as a suitable site for the firm with its access to ore, harbour and railways and transferred the whole undertaking from Yorkshire.

Duffield was a well-respected and much-loved man in the fifteen years he spent at Tallentire, serving on the Workington Town Council, as County Councillor and as Chief Magistrate

### **The Denwood Family**

The first member of the Denwood family [17] to settle in Cocker-mouth is reputed to have come in 1745 from Charles Edward's rebel army. The first written record is of John Denwood, Dainwood or Danewood being buried at All Saints on 27th April 1786. The well known members of the family have been John (1845-1890), Jonathan M. (1869-1933), John (1871-1917) and Ernest R. Denwood. (d. 1950s).

The first John had a chequered career. Born in a two-roomed cottage in Skinner Street, since replaced, he was an only son. For a time he played leads in Shakespeare, etc., with a group of strolling players in northern England and southern Scotland, but the company was unsuccessful and John returned to Cocker-mouth to work as a tailor. He was a generous man and soon got through his money. In the early 1870s he went to Barrow, hoping to find work in the growing shipbuilding town, and later tried London, Bradford, etc. Very poor, he tramped back to Cocker-mouth ill-shod and ill-fed (a threepenny loaf lasted him three days) with only a few coppers in his pocket.

He was seriously ill, but recovered sufficiently to try to find work in Texas in the early 1880s with his friend John Conkey, but work was hard to come by and he was often unwell so eventually returned home again. Then improvement came. He found work in Burnley, where he was happy and decided to take his family. However, returning to Cocker-mouth he died from paralysis of the spine and was buried near Tom Rudd Beck in the cemetery.

John left behind a number of writings - in 1869 his 'Poems on various subjects', printed by Isaac Evening of 59 Main Street and sold for 1s.; 'Boggle Willy's Adventures between Cocker-mouth and Lorton' in 1877; 'The Cumbrian Brothers or How we raise the Revenue' in 1885; and 'Cumbrian Carols and other poems'. Many local places and characters featured in his poems, especially the first

### *Famous individuals*

volume from which some verses from 'Kirkgate Brow Boggle' are given:-

"Twas on a stormy night,  
(True is the tale I tell),  
Young Bella got a dreadful fright  
While going to Scarr Well.

O'er Kirkgate Brow she had to pass, -  
All, save the storm, was still, -  
And, Oh! she got a fright, poor lass,  
When just on Kirkgate Hill."

*The next few verses tell of her fear, of her flight home and of her father's dash from the house armed with cobble stones to deal with the cause of her terror.*

"In vain he list'ning search'd around;  
But soon the tempest's howl  
Arous'd a horrid whistling sound  
That shook his very soul.

Awhile he silent, trembling stood,  
Then, desp'rate, made a rush;  
The' quaking terror chill'd his blood,  
He grasped the thorny bush.

He thought the noise came from the dike,  
Or bushes on the wall;  
His courage fail'd, and, coward-like,  
He let the cobbles fall.

And with the bush he grasp'd the host,  
But oh! it made him roar;  
He nigh his right hand fingers lost,  
And smeared himself with gore.

His flesh, now shudd'ring, crept with fear,  
For oh! he thought of death;  
And dreading that the ghost would hear,  
He scarce durst draw his breath.

For he a broken bottle snatch'd,  
That lay across a bough;  
The gusty winds the neck hole atch'd,  
And loudly whistled through."

Memoirs of this John Denwood were published by his son E. R. Denwood as 'The Cumbrian Caroller' in 1936.

Jonathan is remembered for the novel 'Red Ike' written in collaboration with S. Fowler Wright. It brought him fame when he was suffering a long illness after a hard life. The second John wrote dialect poems and the Cumbrian dialect was the chief interest of Ernest R. Denwood.

### **Joseph Faulder (1730 – 1816) and the Cockermouth School of Portrait Painters**

Joseph Faulder, who was to become the 'father' of the Cockermouth School of Portrait Painters, [18] was born in a house adjoining the King's Arms Inn. He was described as

"a man of much local celebrity as a portrait painter, mathematician and philosopher; his remarkable attainments being all self-acquired. He is stated to have been a most excellent person both socially and morally; but on the mysteries of a future state and the immortality of the soul, he was strangely sceptical" [19]

Faulder's nephew Joseph Sutton was born 32 years later in the same house as his uncle, who taught him to paint and encouraged him to go to London and study at the Royal Academy. This he did, and on his return and after his marriage, moved to Rogerscale where he built himself a painting-house in a delightful situation on the banks of the Cocker. He became a member of the Royal Academy and one of his best known studies is 'The Blind Beggar of Bethnal Green and his Daughter'. So great was the demand for portraits by him that at one time he employed six apprentices - George Sheffield, Robert Taylor, Robert Hird, Thomas Scarrow, John Lewthwaite and Mr. Askew. Two of these exhibited at the Royal Academy and George Sheffield studied in its school.

The Cockermouth School was an unusual development in such an isolated situation. It existed from about 1760 to 1840 and included in its group Faulder (1730-1816), Sutton (1762-1843), Taylor (about 1811-1870), Lewthwaite (active 1830-1866), Scarrow (active 1831-3) and Sheffield (1800-1852).

Surprising is the fact that most of the group were Quakers, at a time when painting and other arts were frowned upon in the Society of Friends. The births of Joseph Sutton's parents are in the Quaker records, also their marriage at Cockermouth and Joseph Faulder's birth. One of Sutton's portraits was of George Fox, founder of the Friends, but as Fox died in 1690 this cannot have been from life.

### **Writers and Poets**

In addition to those already mentioned there have been others from the Cockermouth area known for their writings. O.S. Macdonell, who married a member of the Harris family and retired from

### *Famous individuals*

abroad to Papcastle, wrote two novels with local settings- 'Thorston Hall' and 'George Ashbury'. Robert Barnes, born in the town in 1782 and a connection of the Denwood family, published a book of verse. Isaac Wilkinson (1753-1836) was born at the eastern end of South Street. A classmate of Fletcher Christian and a cousin of E. R. Denwood's paternal grandmother, he was also a poet. His birthplace was in a narrow court near the Cocker, approached through a massive wooden door which led to John Pearson's woollen mill. [20] At the former Blue Bell Inn in Main Street was born about 1777 John Whitelock, who became a clergyman and wrote both prose and poetry. [21] John Fell was born in the town in 1735. He rose to become an eminent dissenting minister and wrote on a variety of topics, including English grammar and the idolatry of Greece and Rome. [22] From outside the town came Thomas Tickell (1685-1740), born in Bridekirk Vicarage. He entered Queen's College, Oxford, when 15 and was a fellow at 23. He served under his friend Addison as an under-secretary of state. He also wrote poems. [23] John Hudson, born at Routenbeck in the first house on the right from the Pheasant Inn, entered Queen's at 14, became a classical scholar, author and Doctor of Divinity, and when he died in 1719 aged 57 was principal of St. Mary's Hall. He is buried in the chancel of St. Mary's Church at Oxford. [24]

Born in Wigton in 1795 and dying in Tasmania in 1886, John Woodcock Graves, writer of 'De yer Ken John Peel', was believed to have lived with his uncle, when a young man at the 'The Lamb' in Challoner Street. However, it appears that the 'Lamb' was occupied by the 'Grave' family and not the 'Graves'. In Woodcock Graves own biographical notes, he refers to living in the inn, opposite Joseph Faulder, (of the Cocker mouth School of Painters) and it therefore seems likely that he resided in Main Street. Short visits to the town were paid by William Harrison Ainsworth, who spent a week at the Appletree in 1848, [26] and Hall Caine, who had many holidays in a house opposite the Globe. [27] Robert Louis Stevenson describes his stay at Globe in his 'Essays of Travel'. [28]

### **Industrialists**

Most of the industrial leaders of Cocker mouth have already been mentioned. We may add Isaac Fletcher of Tarn Bank near Greysouthen, much involved in the iron and coal trades, but also an astronomer and historian and finding time to be a Liberal M.P. and to serve as first president of the Cocker mouth Scientific and Literary Society. He wrote in 1876 the first study of industrial archaeology, 'The Archaeology of the West Cumberland Coal Trade'. [29]

Extending the term 'industry' to agriculture, William Dickinson who was born near Mockerkin invented the Cumberland clod-crusher. He was a writer, botanist and geologist. [30]

On the other side of Cocker mouth, Whistling Syke near Broughton was built in 1708 by a potter who was related to Josiah Wedgwood. [31]

### **Miscellaneous**

A number of local men and women travelled far in the early days of Quakerism [32] James Dickinson of Greentrees near Randlecross visited Ireland twelve times, America twice and also Germany and Holland for the Society of Friends. He died in 1749 aged 82 and was buried in Eaglesfield Burial Ground, having been a Quaker 'minister' for 64 years. John Burnyeat, born at Crabtree Beck by Loweswater in 1631, although little educated, travelled in Great Britain, the West Indies, America, and Ireland where he died in 1690. William Graham, a native of Mockerkin, was described by Jonathan Harris as "One of the greatest scholars in England". Educated at St. Bees, he was a mathematician and also mastered eight languages, yet he lived very simply as head of Dean School. [33]

The town and villages had their share of colourful characters, outstanding amongst whom was Salathiel Court, born in Papcastle at the end of the 17th. century and described by Askew as a joker, wastrel, painter and illegal marrier, following a strange and wild career. [34]

Rather outside our area Robert Eaglesfield was born at Allerby, but he enters the story of Cocker mouth as the founder of Queen's College, Oxford, in which several Cocker mouth boys have become students. Eaglesfield Scholarships are granted to students from the county. Robert became rector of Brough and confessor to Queen Phillippa, and it was in her honour that he named the college he founded. [35]

## *Famous individuals*

### **Recent 'Characters'**

In the early part of this century a number of colourful characters travelled round Cockermouth and the villages selling their wares. Such was Mrs. Allan, a "grand old lady well known and respected". She was pure Romany and for a silver coin would tell fortunes, but this was not her real trade. Mrs. Allan was virtually a travelling bazaar, for in a huge basket balanced on a flat cap she took to the villagers ribbons, lace, dusters, towels, tapes, threads, elastic, baking tins, etc. [36]

'Dearham Mary' who lived in the Gote hawked rubbing stone for marking steps and stone floors with fancy designs. [37]

'Freddy Cairns' was well known in West Cumberland. His jingle ran

"Gather up your rags and bones, gather up, gather up,  
For your windmills they will fly,  
Take you up into the sky.  
Gather up, gather up." [38]

The windmills were toy ones given in exchange for rags and bones.

E. R. Denwood recalls a character of an earlier time held up as a warning to children in his childhood that if they misbehaved "Drummer Robin will come". Of 'Robin' the church register records -

"Robert Atkinson, of Lamplugh, late of this place, skinner, who for a period of 40 years or upwards beat a drum about this town, morning and evening, for which he acquired the familiar appellation of Drummer Robin, by which he will long be remembered by the inhabitants, died July 4th. 1800."

He was remembered a hundred years later as a threat to the naughty!

In contrast a great favourite with both boys and girls was Jimmy Millington [39] who would relate his major exploits to an enthralled audience. On one occasion he was asked to play football for a Derwent Street team against one from St. Helen's Street. The match took place in Deer Orchard. Jimmy kicked the ball with such force that it was lost over the Drill Hall. Some time later, according to Jimmy, it was found lodged inside All Saints Clock!

Seeking to update a volume completed in 1979 the author had been amazed at the changes and developments in the following sixteen years, Where possible these had been inserted in the relevant parts of the original text. Some new material however did not fit into the earlier pattern in tourism, twinning, the Civic Trust and the Kirkgate Centre, sport, the town festival, new entertainments and leisure pursuits, etc. These had been grouped in sections in this chapter. This approach has been continued in this 2006 update. Much more could be written about all of them, but economy demands constraint. There is constant change in change on Cockermonth, indicative of a vibrant community.

### **TOURISM AND MUSEUMS**

For many years Cockermonth did not favour the development of tourism, not wishing to have problems of crowding, traffic, etc. experienced by towns nearer the centre of the Lake District. With the loss of employment, such as that provided by Miller's shoe factory for many years, this attitude has changed and since the 1990s great efforts are made to bring people to the town and to provide for them when they get here. Many of these provisions are of course of benefit also to the residents.

In 1985 the Brewery had plans far advanced for a museum of brewing and of the local history of the brewery area of the town, to be housed in Foundry House and the windmill. The plans did not reach fruition as the use of the various buildings was changed. However there are regular guided tours of the brewery. The offices were also moved from the row of former houses which was then demolished. The distribution department of Jennings moved to a new site on the coast, considerably relieving the pressure on this congested area. In 2005, Jennings was bought by Wolverhampton and Dudley Breweries, and despite assurances about the future, worries about the consequences of a takeover were inevitably around.

Nearby in Banks Court a doll museum opened in 1985. It soon left Cockermonth for the south of the country but by then it had been joined in 1986 by Rod Moore's toy museum which continued as the Cumberland Toy and Model Museum, extending from the old warehouse into the former joiner's premises (before that a mineral water factory). In 1995 it received national acclaim with the 'museum on a shoestring award' but sadly closed in 2005 when the proprietor was unable to raise additional funds to cover even running costs. Also nearby is the Castlegate Gallery of contemporary fine art and sculpture, housed in the Georgian Castlegate House opposite the castle entrance, started in 1987 by Mike and Chris Wadsworth. Visitors come from a very wide area to visit the continually changing exhibitions, many not seen at provincial galleries. Also at this end of the town a Heritage Museum for the town is being developed in the new Kirkgate Centre; and the Tourist Office puts on small exhibitions. At the other end of the town is D.R. Winkworth's Printing House Museum opened in 1993 with an outstanding collection of printing presses and related artifacts. In Harford House, the former clinic, Mr and Mrs Creighton had a mineral museum and shop from 1991, but closed it in 2003 to depart for New Zealand.

Allerdale [Borough Council] planners left the town hall in November 1991. The following year the Town Council moved the Tourist Office into the ground floor from the cramped conditions of the former armoury just below on the riverside. In this attractive and spacious centre it is still possible to see the gallery and pillars of the 1841 church.

### **FESTIVALS**

In August 1981 D.R. Winkworth organised a week-long Wordsworth Festival, which continued in following years as a broader literary festival. From 1985 to 1989 organisation passed to the town's Civic Trust and the programme was again broadened, to include (in addition to lectures) music, drama, craft demonstrations, exhibitions, town tours and castle visits. Then Mr. Winkworth again directed the programmes with the help of many individuals and groups in the town and since 1993 the overall planning has been undertaken by the Town Clerk. Attendance at lectures in the early years was disappointingly low. To remedy this various times were tried in July, August and September and a further experiment was to spread the week's events over two weeks. Now it has settled to a July festival with a wide range of events, strong involvement in the events by much of the town and a better response to what is offered. In April 2005, to mark the re-opening of Wordsworth House as a Georgian experience, a Georgian Fair was held in the town in abysmal weather.

Its success nevertheless led to the repeat of this in 2006, when the weather was good; it is

## *Recent years to 2006*

intended to run this as a two-yearly event, out of phase with the highly successful Whitehaven Maritime Festival.

### **SPORT**

There have been a number of improvements and changes in the town's sports facilities in recent years. After much effort the running track at Tarn Close on the Lorton road was opened in 1980. Cockermouth Rugby Union Club moved from their Laithwaite ground to the playing field of the former grammar school, opposite Tarn Close. The swimming pool was opened by Princess Alexandra in May 1978, the climax to the efforts of a group of enthusiasts who raised much of the cost. The sports centre in the nearby drill hall was initiated in 1979, with extensions to the facilities in 1985-7. It now includes a climbing wall opened in 1991 by Chris Bonnington. The Cockermouth Cricket Club leased Sandair from 1823 until 1989, when the club was able to purchase the 5-acre field for £25,000.

Three Cockermouth sports clubs celebrated their centenaries in the mid 1990s - Croft Bowling, Harris Park Bowling and the Golf Club, The Rugby Club was '100' in 1977.

There have been notable achievements recently by individuals living in Cockermouth or strongly associated with the town through their families. In 1983 Adrian and Richard Crane raised about £40,000 for Intermediate Technology by running in the Himalayas. Martin Rush represented his country in the walking event at the Barcelona Olympics. Several swimmers have continued the town's high level of success in competitive events.

Recently instituted communal events include a marathon, from 1981 onwards and included in the national sports league events since 1991. The first quadrathlon was held in 1981, drawing entries from all over Britain.

In 1993 an exchange of land was suggested, freeing the Wakefield Road football ground for building and replacing it with land at the eastern end of the Derwent Mill land. Amid much confusion and misunderstanding as to which land was involved public opinion led to rejection of the idea.

### **INDUSTRY**

At the beginning of this chapter mention was made of changes in the town's industry since 1980. By 1995 the major employers left are James Walker and Co. Ltd., Walker Bros. builders' merchants, Jennings Brewery and Mitchell's Auction Co. Millers (shoe factory) closed in July 1990 dismissing the last of a diminishing workforce, in spite of an order worth £2.73 million from Russia less than a year earlier. The famous Fred Dibnah felled the mill chimney on 7th November 1992, to his regret, but it was not used and nobody wished to pay for its upkeep.

Thomas Armstrong, timber merchants, vacated their large town centre timber yard and the old station site on Low Road in the late 1980s, moving to more spacious accommodation in Flimby.

James Walker continues, with a progressive forward-looking policy. Jennings Brewery also continues to thrive, with structural alterations in 1995. Lilliput Lane, makers of small model houses, etc., based in Penrith, had a branch on the Derwent Mill site from 1986 to 1991, then concentrated their West Cumbria activity in the Workington branch, which itself closed in 2005. JEM Patchworks, a small concern in St. Helen's Street producing embroidery kits, etc., closed at the end of 1982. Alan Dawson took his metalwork business from the Lamplugh Road / A66 junction to the coast to become the renowned Shepley Dawson company, having appreciable business with the middle east. A short distance from the town the Broughton Moor Arms Depot, which drew some of its labour from Cockermouth, has now closed. After much debate, consultation and fight for funding, an ambitious scheme has been adopted for it as the Derwent Forest Park. If the £25 million required can be found, an exciting leisure facility will emerge.

On the positive side English Estates opened the Lakeland Business Park on the Lamplugh road in 1987, providing small units for high tech businesses. The former grammar school became the Strawberry How Business Park in 1992 but has since become a housing development mainly using the existing buildings, and the Derwent Business Park near the Derwent Mill followed in 1994.

M-Sport: Dovenby Hall and all its grounds were purchased in 1998 by Malcolm Wilson, a local man who had been the 1994 British Rally champion. The run-down buildings were restored and new engineering facilities developed for the company, M-Sport to run its business of preparing rally cars

### *Recent years to 2006*

for the Ford Motor Company for world-wide rallying. With a work-force approaching 200 and a turnover into tens of millions, this company is now a major employer in the area as well as having rescued the estate from decline. The venture received a Civic Trust award for development in sympathy with the area in 2001.

Two final items related to industry. The cottage once connected with the windmill which stood in Windmill Lane was controversially demolished in 1992 to open up the entrance to a housing estate and, more recently, the Job Centre crossed Station Street to new premises next to Mitchell's furniture sale rooms.

### **SHOPPING**

Changes in the occupancy of shops are frequent. Many tenancies are short-lived. Occasionally an old-established firm disappears, such as Rydiards shoe shop, now moved by its new owners to a nearby site in Main Street. Huddarts newsagents, forced to move next door by the 1938 flood, has now crossed the road to the former Rydiard premises. Even the post office moved in 1994 from Station Street to opposite the Globe Hotel. The post office has had four locations in the last eleven years [see Chapter 19]. (Cockermouth lost its own postmark in 1990 with much complaint, to be included in "Cumbria, Dumfries and Galloway".)

There have been several new developments in recent years. In 1986 "Limelighting" adapted much of the Grand Theatre for the sale of lights and related fittings and happily retained in the conversion features of the former theatre. "Luchini's Lane" became the Old King's Arms Lane in 1987, an attractive two-storey shopping development. On the south side of Main Street the closing of Armstrong's timber yard left the way open for a further development - Lowther Went, a shopping precinct approached through the former Bush Hotel yard, with Walter Wilson's super-market and car park, opened in 1988. Both the Old Kings Arms Lane and Lowther Went developments were given awards by Cockermouth Civic Trust for buildings in sympathy with the town as a whole and a number of new shop fronts have received similar recognition, including Lindsay in Station Street, Fellside Sports near Cocker Bridge, Opus III and Heal's opticians.

In January 1995 a public enquiry was held into four applications for super-market developments on four sites either vacant or likely to become vacant - the old station site (Armstrong's) on Low Road, the Rugby Union field, the County Highways yard and Mitchell's cattle auction buildings. Eventually no doubt helped by a massive (8000) petition, the verdict went in favour of Sainsbury's but progress had to await Mitchell's vacating the site (a decision deferred yet again by worries over the impact of the foot-and-mouth crisis of 2001). The old buildings were demolished, the materials were re-used to keep something of the original character, and the new store opened in March 2002. After this, Walter Willson's declined and was taken over by the Co-op; subsequently these premises were opened by Wilkinsons (hardware and general goods). Another supermarket, Aldi, opened in 1998 on the site vacated by Thomas Armstrong's D-I-Y operation which moved down the road to re-open as the Lakes Home Centre, later sold to Lister's of Workington.

No.35 Market Place, near Cocker Bridge, was until 1953 Ellwood's 'filling station'. The petrol delivery arm swung out from the shop front to the car parked on the narrow roadway. The repairs garage was hidden away near the brewery. In 1991-2 the business moved to the spacious Fairfield Service Station in Station Road. It is no longer owned by the original family.

The Sheep and Wool Centre, built at the A66 Oakhurst roundabout to act as a gateway for visitors to the Western Lake District, has exhibitions, accommodation, café and shop.

On Wakefield Road the old MAFF buildings were vacated and redeveloped as the Millfield Veterinary Clinic.

### **THE CIVIC TRUST AND THE KIRKGATE CENTRE**

The Civic Trust has continued its programme of lectures, interest in planning and town affairs, coach outings, exhibitions (bygone and others).

Pre-Easter litter sweeps continued until 1988 but when Allerdale Council increased its street cleaning these were no longer necessary, so such activity has been in specific areas - tidying up the Double Mills area in Environment Week 1992 to enable features on the site to be seen and 'cleaning' the Greenway in 1995. Other recent practical activities have included rebuilding a collapsed stone wall at the confluence of the rivers and clearing brambles, etc., in National Environment Week 1991.

### *Recent years to 2006*

Allerdale Council responded to the Trust's request to repair the fence at the brewery end of the site, going further by tipping soil to level this end of the area and then grassing it. In the following year, 1992, with the help of a grant and work by the Groundwork Trust, Venture Scouts and others, the wall of the old rope walk opposite the Kirkgate Centre was repaired and the Council contributed by upgrading the footpath to Butts Fold, erecting lights and planting trees.

The Trust's outstanding contribution to the life of the town is the Kirkgate Centre. In 1990 Allerdale Council announced plans to demolish the former All Saints School, virtually unused since 1973. The Trust, with other groups in the town, had for long been concerned at the lack of a hall larger than the Victoria Hall and saw this building as a possible solution. Peter J. Colley, a member of The Trust's executive with much experience in planning, produced plans for converting the premises, a conversion which he was later to supervise. A crowded public meeting in 1990 was enthusiastic in support. Negotiations dragged on but after many difficulties between the Trust and the Councils, recourse to the Town and Country Planning Act of 1971 and narrow avoidance of a public enquiry, the Trust bought the building for just £5. The enthusiastic Trust secretary, Barbara Colley, obtained gifts, grants from local and national sources, sponsorship, etc. The first grant was for £30,000, followed before the end of 1994 by an additional £170,000.

A group to run the Centre was formed, holding its first meeting as the Kirkgate Centre Trust on 14 September 1992. The Civic Trust, on whose monthly agenda 'All Saints' seemed to have featured for a very long time, handed over the building in March 1993 - again for £5! As mentioned elsewhere, the first event on the premises was "Much Ado About Nowt" presented by the CADS in January 1995, since when the building has housed a wide variety of activities. The upper floor of the Jennings Hall, seating 160, is completed, with lift access for the disabled. The lower floor in 1995 still needs money for display cabinets and other museum fittings, as well as material illustrating the history of the town.

### **TWINNING**

In 1983 Cockermouth twinned with Marvejols in the Lozere region of southern France, the agreement being signed on 27 October of that year. This date is celebrated by alternating visits by town officials and others to Marvejols and Cockermouth. The twinning scheme has been a great success, due largely to the enthusiasm of the town clerk, A.D. Bertram. In spite of the great distance between the two towns, in the twenty-plus years since twinning began there have been over 9,000 interchange visits. Some of these have been individuals on holiday, others have travelled in groups - October anniversary, choirs, sports teams, schools, cyclists (sponsored Cockermouth to Marvejols in 1992), etc. There are about ten group exchanges each year. Students have found jobs in Marvejols, the French have planted trees and bulbs in Cockermouth and contributed items to Cockermouth Festival. A Cockermouth Corner was opened in Marvejols in October 1993. In Cockermouth a new housing estate to the south-west of the town has been named Marvejols Park.

In 1991 the town was awarded a European Diploma by the Council of Europe and also received a Commemorative Certificate under the Royal Mail International's Twin Town Award Scheme. In the following year, 1992, the town was given a Flag of Honour. On 24 August 1995 representatives of the Council of Europe visited Cockermouth to award a Plaque of Honour in recognition of its efforts for European Unity. Only ten such plaques had been awarded in the rest of Europe and Cockermouth's was the only one in England. The only higher award is the Europe Prize, just one a year, and indeed in 2000, Cockermouth won this Europe Prize. Awarded since 1955, only three British areas have won it - Coventry in 1955, Devon in 1976 and Leamington Spa in 1984.

We may note here the great increase over the last few years in the number of overseas visitors to the town, many of them attracted by Wordsworth House.



What of the future? Certain trends in the likely development of Cockermouth in the next few decades may be discerned.

The first is a great awareness of the town's history - the quality of many of its buildings and the attractiveness of its position and general plan. The formation of the Civic Trust (as the Civic Society) in 1967 was an indication of this, as was the decision of the Urban District Council in May 1972 to seek the help of experts "in determining appropriate planning policies for the future, whether in the form of improvement, redevelopment or clearance" in the central area of the town. Messrs. Johnston and Wright, chartered architects of Carlisle, produced a full report on the area which, with its photographs, plans, charts and imaginary drawings of development, repays study in detail. One of the outstanding changes which resulted from this report was the rejuvenation of the Waterloo Street area instead of its total demolition. The awareness of the town's value is seen also in the formation of conservation and special conservation areas covering most of Cockermouth except the new estates.

Secondly, the town's future is viewed in a larger context. It is influenced by the National Park Plan, recently published, since the Park borders on the town, but is more fully involved in the structure plans for West Cumbria and for Cumbria. There is growing opinion that the town should not extend indefinitely- that housing should be limited to infilling, restoration and the development of a few sites within its present boundaries and that industrial development should be limited and 'light'. These plans are outlined in the draft Cockermouth District Plan issued by Allerdale District Council in March 1978.

Thirdly, tourism is a growing feature of the life of Cockermouth to be provided for and welcomed, but not allowed to get out of control. The completion of the A66 link to the M6 motorway has brought an appreciable increase in the number of visitors to the town. In 1978 the Information Centre had 10,000 enquirers, in 1994 there were 21,231.

The ever-present problem is to preserve as much as possible of a town with a history as interesting and exciting as that we have been considering while at the same time providing for the needs of those living in the present.

In 2006, the Cockermouth Partnership, a local group seeking to improve the economic, social and cultural well-being of the area, sees great potential in what has been called the "Market Place Area". This is under "The Market Towns Initiative" and the regeneration process is managed by a Project Manager. The Partnership have prioritised the area's improvement through a range of consultation events and focus groups over recent years from 2000 and aim to build on the existing character and strengths to increase the cultural, leisure and shopping appeal, attract more visitors and local people and add value to the local environment and economy. This will be achieved through a variety of as-yet unconfirmed projects, from business support to building developments, public art, improved public realm and signage.

Currently at the planning stage, over £1 million of investment has been earmarked for this project and over half of that total has been pledged by the North West Regional Development Agency for 2007-08. It will therefore have a significant impact. There have been many opportunities for local people to engage with the planning of future development.

The vision for the Market Place area is one of economic prosperity, a vibrant social and cultural scene and an enhanced aesthetic aspect. Developments will involve local businesses and residents, consider existing assets and respect the traditional and rural values of the population, but adapt them so as to enhance social, environmental and economic wellbeing. The regenerated area should play an integral role in Cockermouth's development as a successful commercial and tourist centre.