Chapter 14 Life in the early town

Life in the simple dwellings in the shadow of the castle was geared to the land and must have often been hard, depending greatly on the demands of the lord of the manor and on the vagaries of the weather. Even as early as the 13th century compulsory service was being changed to paid work in some parts of the country, the latter being more satisfactory than work done grudgingly under compulsion, but it is unlikely that any change came to Cockermouth until much later.

Customary tenants were hard hit by the death of either lord or tenant. On the death of a tenant the lord was entitled to take the family's best beast. He was also entitled to the 'heriot', a 'fine' enabling the heir to assume the tenancy, usually the payment of an extra year's rent. A similar payment had to be made by tenants on the death of the lord, often bearing no relationship to the annual rent. In 1826 Nathaniel Nicholson, agent to George O'Brien, Earl of Egremont, notified Joseph Smith that, at the Court of Dimissions, he had

> "assessed upon you as only Son and Heir of Richard Smith Hatter deceased a Descent Fine of Ten Pounds for and in Respect of a Parcel of Land called the Garth with a small Cottage Barn and Smith's Shop lately built thereon of the Rent of three Pence". [1]

On 27th December 1836 the earl's steward informed Thomas Mackreth that he had been assessed

> "as only Son and Heir at Law of John Mackreth deceased a Descent Fine of £24-7s-0d for and in respect of a Parcel of a Messuage and Garden in Kirkgate of the Rent of 2d. . . . now consisting of one Dwelling House in Front of the Square and three Cottages adjoining and behind the same. . . . And I do hereby give you further Notice that a Descent Fine of £20 due to the said Earl upon the admittance of the said John Mackreth to the said premises upon the death of Margaret the Wife of Thomas Mackreth to whom he was Heir at Law is also still in arrear and unpaid." [2]

These two fines date from as recently as the 19th century.

A further example of the lord's control over life was the 'merchet', a fine payable to him for a marriage.

After the Black Death in 1348/9 labour was in demand and peasants realised their worth, but authority clamped down on them and for the next 200 years wages, work and clothes were strictly controlled by a succession of laws. Edward III, having freed the serfs for the advantage of the nobility, ordered a national scale of wage rates- master carpenters, thatchers, plasterers and wallers each 3d. a day, freemasons 4d. a day and all labourers 1½d. a day. A mower was to receive 5d. for an acre of meadow. Idleness was punishable by a temporary return to slavery, by branding and perpetual slavery for a second offence and by the halter for further offences. No wages were to be paid for festival days. To prevent movement of labour, payment was made yearly, later half-yearly in Cockermouth. Hours of work were dawn to dusk from September to March and from before 5 a.m. to after 7 p.m. in the summer, with an hour to eat, except that in the months of June and July, when days were long, 30 minutes was allowed for breakfast and 90 minutes at midday, so that a rest could be taken. [3]

Clothing was controlled to denote class and, later, to help the woollen industry. Servants, carters, ploughmen, etc., were to wear cloth costing 1s [5p] or less per yard, while yeomen, tradesmen and artificers, the middle class, could go up to ls-6d. The kerchiefs of wives and maidens might not be more than 12d. [5p] in value. [4] Even the length was regulated - jackets, coats and gowns might only just cover the buttocks in the lower classes, while on craftsmen and merchants they could reach to the knee. Lords, churchmen and graduates might wear them as long as they wished, and actors were exempt from control.[5]

Gradually people in and around Cockermouth became grouped into three classes - the yeomen, who might be middle class countrymen, small farmers or servants and retainers working for the upper classes; farm labourers without any land of their own, working on others' farms; or town workers, earning a living either in domestic industry or in the small workshops which developed. The town dweller might still have his bit of land or keep a cow on the common, but there was a tendency for him to rely more and more on the wage he was paid for his work.

Until arable and stock farming learned new methods in the 18th and 19th centuries the majority of people lived very near starvation level. Vegetables such as peas and beans and coarse barley, rye and oats, with home-brewed ale, were the chief items of food, with very occasionally cheese and meat, usually pork.

Labouring people ate rye bread and oaten bread in large thin cakes baked on iron plates called

"girgles". The few 18th century visitors to the Lake District complained about the blackness and coarseness of the bread, although there were some favourable comments on 'oat clap bread'.[6]

Every source of food had to be used, as shown by a Court Leet ruling of 1640 -.

> 'That none of the inhabitants or dwellers in Cockermouth shall suffer anie of theire children or servants to gather anié heads amongst anie man's stooks till such time as the corn be housed upon pain 6s-8d."[7]

Fruit and eggs were sold to the upper classes and according to a manuscript of 1460 even they might eat meat only once a week - beef, mutton or pork. The cattle put on the harvested fields or the common pasture were small and thin, most being slaughtered at Martinmas and salted for winter use.

The poverty of the county is reflected in the tax returns. In 1693 a national tax of 4d. in the pound brought payments averaging 7s-2¼d. from England and Wales as a whole. Bedfordshire paid the highest, with 11s ½d., while at the other end of the scale Cumberland paid only 11.375d [4.7p]. Even Westmorland paid over 2s. [8]

Men of all classes poached, not only the workers for whom it was an essential part of family maintenance, but the gentry and clergy. Carrying nets at night to catch a hare or rabbit for the poacher's hungry family carried a penalty of transportation and only in the latter part of the 19th century did a more humane attitude develop. [9]

The cost of living in 1700 was four times that in 1600. Wages at this time are recorded in the day books of Humphrey Senhouse when managing his aunt's estates at Millom Castle. In 1700 and the years immediately following a man earned 4d. a day for haymaking or digging peat in summer, 3d. a day in winter for hedging, manuring and threshing. Making a new hedge could earn 6d. a day, mowing hay and shearing corn 6d. a day for men and 4d. for women. A boy driving a plough was paid 1d. a day. Masons, carpenters, etc., earned 8d. and a carter using his own horse and cart could claim up to 1s. a day. Men living in on a farm were paid £2 to £4 a year, a cook £1-15s. [10]

There was an appreciable change in money values and consequently in wages during the 18th century. A government enquiry into agricultural wages was made in 1790 and again in 1804, the later figures being roughly 50% greater than the earlier in Cockermouth. [11]

The returns for the town in 1790 were:-

> Day labourer in winter 1s-6d., in summer 1s-8d., in harvest 2s
> Threshing wheat per quarter 1s-8d. and barley per 1s-3d.
> Reaping wheat per acre 7s.
> Mowing barley per acre 5s.
> Blacksmith's work - wheeltire 8d., plough work and chains 4½d. and shoeing 1s-8d.
> Carpenter, mason and thatcher by the day, each 2s.
> Collar maker's work 2s-8d.
> Poor rates and other town charges in the pound 1s. (Up to 3s-8d. in 1804.)

About the same time (1811) the Earl, George O'Brien, paid 3s-6d. a day to a journeyman carpenter and 2s. a day to his apprentice for work at the castle.[12]

This was a particularly hard time because of the war with France, reflected in the almost fourfold increase in the poor rate shown above in a period of 14 years. In 1813 over £7 million was spent on poor relief in England, compared with a total of £1½ million from local taxes for all other purposes. Wheat, 43s. [£2.15] a quarter in 1792, had trebled to 126s [£6.30] some 20 years later.[13]

Then the war ended and was followed in 1816 by a particularly bad year. Corn prices collapsed and thousands of farmers were ruined, as we have noted. Handloom weavers were hard hit by the new machinery and by 1818 were more likely to earn 8s. a week than the 23s. of a few years before. To add to suffering the winter of 1816 was unusually bitter. The corn laws did not solve the problems of the next 30 years. Bad harvests, industrial booms and collapses, made conditions in the country as a whole very bad. In the early 1840s the agricultural wage was about 10s. a week and a skilled worker in the town could earn only some 18s. Then trade improved. British exports in 1872 were four times as great as in 1850. Food prices rose by 60% in the same period, but wages rose considerably more. [14] The standard of living improved. But while industry thrived farming entered a decline which was to last until 1914, a decline sparked off by a series of bad harvests in the late 1870s aided by foreign grain imports. While Cockermouth prospered as an industrial town, it continued its role of market town to an agricultural community which was less happily placed.

To return to the earlier period, the enclosure acts provided a certain amount of work at a time when it was greatly needed. The new fields required labour, including women for weeding, and men

were required for the actual process of enclosure- draining land, hedging new fields and making roads. The number of men without work may indeed have been a stimulus to enclosure. At a vestry meeting in Cockermouth in 1817

> "It was Resolved that the Overseers and Surveyors should have power to undertake the making of the New Roads and Footpaths, and to treat with the Commissioners appointed by the Inclosure Act for carrying the work into execution without delay. And that they employ such of the persons as are now receiving relief from the Town to work upon the said roads and footpaths as they may think proper and necessary." [15]

Relationships between employer and employed have been comparatively good in Cockermouth. The widespread outbreaks of violence in the 14th century did not affect Cumberland. One factor in a better feeling between the upper and lower classes was the ever-present threat from the north. [16]

With the disappearance of servile labour (which persisted much longer on the continent) necessary communal tasks might be undertaken with a certain dignity. Of the latter part of the 14th century Trevelyan said

> "For purposes of war and police, and for town-works of all sorts like digging a town ditch or drain, repairing the town bridge, helping in the harvest in the town fields, very occasionally cleaning or mending the street in front of his own house, a man might be called upon for personal service by the civic authorities. Such work in the common cause was not regarded as 'servile', like work on the lord's demesne." [17]

Dignity came too in each man having a share in the affairs of the town. The lord of the manor was still chairman and a great influence in the manor-court or leet-court, but in such an open court each man might take a part, as he did in regulating use of the common fields. However poor the townsman might be, there were matters in which he had the right to make his voice heard.

Work in field, home or workshop was hard and long. Workers and their families (of whom all but the very youngest were workers too) must have looked forward to Sundays and the holidays of saints' days, when rest was enforced under penalty of fines by church courts - a beneficial ruling. The church and other groups organised festivities, either outdoors or in the nave of the church. [18] During the 15th century there began 'church ales' arranged by the clergy to raise funds for the church fabric or some other good cause, when ale was sold and drunk in the churchyard or in the church itself. We can see here the beginning of the church tea or bazaar.

Long hours, hard work, often no food to spare - but over all a sense of community in a small town which still had not reached 3,000 people by 1800.

Chapter 15

Local Government before 1863

We have already referred to the meetings to manage the common fields and the manorial court, through which the inhabitants of Cockermouth took their share in the affairs of the town. An early reference to the responsibilities of the town reads .

> "Cockermouth 1292. In the 20th. Edward I, the same privileges (a view of frank-pledge, with infangthef, gallows, pillory. assise of bread and beer) were claimed for the borough of Cockermouth." [1]

The lord of the manor was empowered to hold a manorial court or court leet (the origin of the word is unknown), usually summoned twice a year by the lord's steward issuing an order to the bailiff for the burgesses to attend. On the appointed day they had to answer their names as being present. The autumn court, held within a month of Michaelmas, swore in a jury of twelve men for Cockermouth.

A similar court was held in Cockermouth at Easter for the 'five towns' and Derwent Fells, at which reports were received from the 'turnsmen' of Blindbothel, Branthwaite, Great Clifton, Dean, Eaglesfield, Greysouthen, Pardshaw, Stainburn, Ullock and Deanscales, and Whinfell. These medieval townships or vills were the basic unit of local administration and had

> "to perform various administrative duties - to deliver evidence at inquests, to catch and watch thieves, to mend roads, to contribute in keeping up bridges and walls, to assess and levy taxes, to witness transactions, etc."

It was laid down in an old survey book belonging to the castle .

> "And ther ys ailso to be remembred that the Burgefses or Borough Men of Cockermouth aforesaide being chozen upon the Lord's Enquest and sworne at the great Courte holden ther about the Feaste of St. Michaell th'arch angell do elect & yearlie chose a Baylife or Grave, who upon his Election is to be charged with the Gatheringe and collectings of all Rents and Amercyments ther due and payable for the Year followinge and therof to be accomptable, to his Lord's Use accordinglie." [2]

The duties of this town officer eventually included such tasks as being registering officer for elections and clerk of the market. The castle records include a list of 109 bailiffs who served from 1640 to 1756 (Appendix 4).

The court also appointed a considerable number of other officials. Two constables were chosen for the year. They wore three-cornered hats as a symbol of their authority, with long coats, short knee-breeches and rough hose.

A town crier or bellman was appointed and there is a reference in vestry book records of the 1770s to the "public posts in the town" at which he 'cried'. [3]

Four assessors were needed to value houses and land for dues payable to the lord of the manor, for the poor rate (later the responsibility of the overseers), for the church cess, etc. [4] Also four assessors of distraint who seized goods for non-payment of rents, etc.

Two assessors of bread and ale looked after these important items. Most inns had their own brew-house and the assessors had to ensure that the ale produced was not too weak - there was no upper limit, but it must not be below a certain strength. Fortunately the inn-keepers did not all brew on the same day. Tasting was not, however, the only method of testing strength - ale was considered to have sufficient body if, when the assessor poured some on to a wooden bench and sat on it in leather breeches, he found it difficult to stand up! The same men were responsible for the weight, quality and price of bread being satisfactory.

Two mill lookers ensured that the tenants, forced to take their grain to the lord's mills, were not taken advantage of. They checked that stones and equipment were working efficiently, without undue wastage; saw that the miller took his correct proportion (multure or mooter) of corn for doing the job; and settled disputes about priority of batches. Three market lookers inspected and regulated the markets. Two pinfold lookers were responsible for the pound where stray animals were taken, its position at the upper end of St. Helen's Street being perpetuated in 'Pinfold Close'. Four hedge lookers checked boundary fences, two leather searchers were busy in the tanneries and two swine ringers would be concerned with the identification of pigs turned out to find pannage.

None of these tasks, designed to protect the townspeople, was an easy undertaking and their performance often brought unpopularity. In fairness to all they were reconsidered each year and shared out and passed round amongst the inhabitants

The court where this was done would be held in the Moot Hall after its erection in the Market

Place and this same court gave its support to the assessors in their work, as when in 1677 the court leet fined Nicholas Plaskett 3s-4d [16½p] for not allowing his swine to be ringed.

While the officers of the borough administered the town, the townspeople themselves had a parallel involvement in what, at least as far back as the late 16th century, became known as the vestry meeting. The church played a major part in the life of the people, not only in providing religious services but in arranging festivities, running the free grammar school, etc. The church vestry was the natural place in which to meet to discuss such matters, although at times the 'Vestry' did meet elsewhere. Though mainly concerned with church fabric and other church affairs, this meeting gave people a voice in some more general town activities.

The Vestry elected its representatives, the churchwardens, who did not have to be members of the established church. With the vicar's warden they were responsible for much church administration. Meetings were usually called to discuss some specific issue and were open to all.

> "Notice is hereby given that a Vestry meeting will be holden on Wednesday next at two o'clock in the afternoon at the Ring of the Bell to consider some method for Recovering of the £100 lent by the Town to the late Mrs. Elizabeth Fletcher, decd., July 3 1st. 1791."

In the vestry book the decision of the meeting was signed first by the churchwardens and then by all present.

We have referred to early methods of collecting taxes hearth tax, lay subsidies, etc. The lay subsidy list for Cockermouth in 1333 [5] contains 34 names, beginning .

COKERMOUTH HAS IN GOODS:	£	s	d.
Henry, son of Richard	2	1	8
Robert Musey		12	0
William le Barker		15	0

Only three had goods valued at over £3, another four between £2 and £3. The total value was £42-16s-10d., the tax yield being a fifteenth, viz. £2-17s-1d.

By the end of the 17th century the wardens were responsible for collecting the church cess or church tax, used for a variety of purposes in the early days. They were elected at the Easter vestry meeting, at which time an estimate of expenditure for the next year was made and the church cess settled accordingly. The wardens had to tread carefully, for they were held responsible for any overspending during their year of office.

The court leet reported in 1709

> "Whereas a complaint hath been made to us of several abuses by persons sessing and collecting of sesses within this Burrow. We order for the future no sess to be sessed and collected until first entered in a book kept by the Bailiff for that purpose, and for his reward we order that one penny in the pound be allowed him for every pound so sessed under ten pounds, and for every pound higher one farthing. And any person collecting any sess before it be entered and signed by the Bailiff for every default we put in pain 6s-8d."

The first churchwardens' account book is for 1668-1702, in effect an early ratepayer's list for Cockermouth, but earlier books have existed. The title page reads:-

> "A Booke of accounts of the Parish of Cockermouth. Wherein is contained the Bookes, Recordes, Writinges and other Utensals belonging to the Church and Free Grammar Schoole there: To be delivered from Churchwardens to Churchwardens successively.
>
> Made by Christopher Peile, John Peile of the Swan, Anthony Plaskett, Peter Allanby, Anthony Fisher, Churchwardens, in the year of our redemption, 1668" [6]

The fifth warden, Anthony Fisher, came from Setmurthy, a chapelry of Cockermouth having right of representation.

When there was a publican amongst the wardens it was customary in many parishes to hold meetings in his inn instead of the church vestry and during John Peile's term of office this happened in Cockermouth, the back parlour of the Swan in Kirkgate being the venue.

Expenditure of cess outside the actual church includes an entry in 1691 for "mending 2 Church bridges", one of which crossed Bitter Beck in Kirkgate and the other the same stream in Church Lane, (Market Street) at the bottom of the 'church stairs' - both footbridges.

Burgesses claimed expenses from the cess, as in 1693 "paid George Pearson for going about town 4d." In 1748 a meeting was arranged to talk about the sliping of the grammar school roof and ls-

8d. was entered as "spent in drink at the meeting called to consider the matter". In the same year someone was paid for "correcting ye boys for breaking Church Windows 6d." The Vestry decided in 1789

> "That the salary allowed to the person appointed to ring the School Bell in the morning and the Supper Bell in the evening and to take care of the Clock and Chimes is not belonging to or part of the Salary of Parish Clerk of this Parish, but ... these duties are separate and distinct from the Office of Parish Clerk, and that a Majority of the Inhabitants in Vestry assembled have a Right to appoint proper persons to perform the said Offices..."

To the appointment of churchwardens, overseers, sidesmen, bellringers and parish clerk was added before 1840 that of highways surveyors; and in 1832 an appointment was made of a collector of the various rates, with accommodation provided:-

> "It was resolved that Nicholas Williamson, of Cockermouth, be appointed such assistant overseer and surveyor with a salary of £35 a year. It was resolved that the said Nicholas Williamson shall reside in the workhouse, in that part thereof which will be set apart for his use, with board and washing; and that he devotes the whole of his time to the services of the town; and that he shall collect the poor rates, highways rates, and lamp rates; and that he shall give a bond with one sufficient surety for the faithful performance of his office."

Interest in local government increased from the late 18th century onwards. John Bolton reports that at the beginning of the 19th century Cockermouth was the second most important town in Cumberland, with a good reputation for managing its affairs. He mentions health, the poor, care of the sick and orphans, dispensaries and schools of industry. Government of the town was becoming a more specialised task, as instanced by the appointment of a special rates collector. Just before this, in 1829, towns had been given power to appoint Select Vestries to undertake certain duties. At the beginning of the following year Cockermouth appointed such a vestry (Appendix 5). This select vestry often, with the vicar, churchwardens and overseers of the poor, became responsible for local government.

A public vestry was still held, open to all whatever their politics or church allegiance, and still with some power, such as the fixing of certain rates. At this time the poor rate was about 6d. in the pound, the county rate 1d. and the police rate ¼d. The church rate, kept separate and varying according to what needed to be spent on All Saints, the churchyard and the grammar school, was decided from year to year, as when on 14 May 1840 the Vestry resolved

> "to lay a rate for the neeessary repairs of the Church. three-half-pence in the pound be laid."

It had been as high as 4d. in 1832.

A report issued about 1832 regarding proposed changes in the boundary of the Borough of Cockermouth said

> "The Town has not many houses of a better sort, and little seems to have been done towards its improvement. The streets are narrow in many places, with a want of foot-pavement everywhere; and though the lower orders of people seem to be better off than in many other Towns which we have visited, yet there seems generally to be very little about the place tending to improvement." [7]

Fifteen years later, in 1847, a bill was promoted known as the Cockermouth Improvement Act. This followed a Vestry meeting held at the beginning of the year "for the purpose of taking into consideration the necessity of having a Local Act for Paving, Lighting, Watching, Cleansing and Improving the Town and Township of Cockermouth".

The suggested bill caused deep dissension within the town. Two commissioners, John Job Rawlinson, a barrister of the Inner Temple, and William Hosking of Adelphi Terrace, London, Official Referee of Metropolitan Buildings, heard evidence for and against. Present at the preliminary enquiry at the Globe Inn were the promoters of the bill- Rev. Edward Fawcett, Abraham Robinson, Jonathan Cooper, Edward Bowes Steel, Joseph Brown, John Richardson jnr., Thomas Wilson, Richard Bell, John Steel, John Tyson, Joseph Banks and Thomas Bailey jnr., and the opponents - Jonathan Wood, John Sancton, Isaac Atkinson, William Bragg for Lieutenant-General Wyndham and for himself, George Sanderson, Jonathan Ashley and William Ponsonby Senhouse. After examining witnesses the commissioners prepared an 8-page report to lay before Parliament which is so revealing of conditions in the town in the middle of last century that it is worth quoting at length:-

> "The Bill does not Profess to have for its object the improvement of the drainage or sewerage of the town;... we have to report that there is at present nothing which can rightly be denominated a sewer in the town, and

> consequently there are no drains to carry off the refuse and ordure from the houses, into common sewers. There are drains to carry off the surface water from the streets, into one or other of the rivers Cocker and Derwent, and some of them are laid in such a manner as to preclude the escape of water from them during freshets or floods in the rivers. The descent in the river Cocker is rapid, and it would be easy to carry a stream of water from it commencing at some point above the town, through the whole of the town west of that river, and to give it an outfall into the Derwent, below the town, so as to act at all times as a sewer, and to be at the same time a certain easement for the surface water."

The report went on to say that the promoters had no intention of improving sewerage and draining, the main object being the provision of street lighting. The opposition stated that there were already sufficient powers to repair streets, keep drains in order and provide lighting. A special act for Cockermouth would be expensive and was also unnecessary, as the opponents expected

> "a general measure for the paving, cleansing, lighting and sewering of towns will be passed into a law and that they would be willing to avail themselves of the provision of such a general enactment."

The report continued.

> "We are of opinion, that the Promoters of the Bill have shown no special reasons why such a Bill as they are soliciting should be passed into law. It is true that the footways of the town of Cockermouth are roughly paved and ill kept; - that the streets are often in a dirty state from the duties of the scavenger being ill performed; - that the police is either insufficient in force or inefficient as to powers; - that the town is wholely unsewered except by the rivers, and by the becks or mountain torrents, which latter are greatly diminished, and sometimes wholly fail in the summer season; but we are unable to discover any security in the provisions of the Bill for these defects to be remedied.
>
> Mr. Hosking perambulated the town, attended by some of the inhabitants....
>
> Having just arrived from Sunderland, Mr. Hosking did not find anything peculiar in the dirtiness of Cockermouth; but it was remarked to him... the scavenger had been more than usually active in removing the dirt from the streets within a day or two preceding our arrival at Cockermouth. Some public middensteads, which Mr. Hosking was required to observe in the narrow and winding alleys north-west of the Market-place, and immediately under the walls of the Castle, ...were brimming with their filthy contents; and a cluster of privies for the common service of some houses at a place called Camperdown ..were found to be as revoltingly offensive in their exposure as in their foulness..., such conveniences as those at Camperdown are not commonly to be found at Cockermouth, ...and he could not fail to observe that wherever houses are upon one of the rivers or upon one of the becks, the margins of the stream are covered with human excrement, which falls from privates jutting out from the houses and overhanging the beds of the watercourses ...in summer, when the streams are low, the accumulations must be great, inasmuch as on a wet winter day the margins of all streams in and through the town were much befouled."

The opponents of the Cockermouth Bill approached the promoters to await the expected general act and they agreed to do so, without lessening their determination to see the bill through if necessary. However, the bill was finally dropped, perhaps because of the discouraging report of the commissioners.

It is clear that expense was the main ground of objection, at a time when in the country as a whole one child in six died in its first year and one in three before the age of five; when typhoid, tuberculosis, diptheria, etc. were rife; and when cholera epidemics occurred far too often. [8] General Wyndham submitted his own 'humble petition' to 'the Honourable the Commons', informing them

> "That your petitioner is Lord of the Honour and Manor of Cockermouth and the owner of considerable property within the town and neighbourhood of Cockermouth and his rights and interests will be seriously affected by the passing of the said Bill as it now stands inasmuch as the cost of passing the said Bill and the rates to be levied under the authority therof will impose a serious burden on your petitioner and other Inhabitants of the said town and neighbourhood. .the said Bill is wholly unnecessary and uncalled for and that it is being pressed forward without the sanction of the Inhabitants and rate payers of the Town and Township of Cockermouth between 200 and 300 of whom at the meeting held for the purpose of considering the proposed application to Parliament dissented therefrom while 9 only assented thereto." [9]

Then came the 'Health of Towns Act, 1848'. Instead of being "willing to avail themselves of the provisions of such general enactment" as stated in the commissioners report, the people of Cockermouth appear to have ignored it.

Meanwhile frequent Vestry meetings were held, one of which, in November 1847, did resolve by a two-thirds majority of the ratepayers present that from an act of the 1830s the part relating to lighting should be adopted and that eleven inspectors should be appointed to carry out the proposals at

a cost of £200. At this time the poor, county and police rates amounted to 1s in the pound (1848 figures).

Eventually the 1848 Act was superseded by the 'Local Government Act, 1858'. Cockermouth was one of the few towns in Cumberland that had to make several attempts to adopt it. It was announced in December 1858 that "a meeting will be holden for the purpose of considering a resolution for the adoption of the Local Government Act 1858...".[10] There was a majority vote against it. Another attempt in April 1862 failed. Then an outbreak of fever in Whitehaven revived interest and in September a stormy meeting was held in the Free Grammar School. A poll was held and a decision to adopt the Act finally taken, voting being 388 to 292. The opponents of the Act still refused to accept defeat and petitioned the Local Government Board that the working of the Act in Cockermouth would be very expensive, but its adoption by the town was nevertheless gazetted by the Board to take effect on 25th December 1863.

Thus, after a long struggle, much of the responsibility for the town passed to the Local Board of Health, although there were still some aspects of local government which were the concern of other bodies.

Chapter 16

Local government - the Local Board and Urban District

The first meeting of the Cockermouth Local Board of Health was held on Saturday, 30th September 1864. Elected members had to possess the financial qualifications of being rated for the poor at a minimum of £15 or of having property worth at least £500.[1] There had been 35 candidates at the election (Appendix 6). Joseph Brown was the first chairman of the 12 members and the manager of the City and District Bank was made treasurer in a bond of £2000. Henry Faithfull was appointed as the first clerk according to Bolton, but by the time the Board published its bye-laws (dated 1864) Joseph Hayton was listed as clerk. [2] Mr. Wyndham offered the use of an office and this was accepted as temporary headquarters. Included in the business at the first meeting were salaries, a request for the inspectors to submit reports on the highways and the gas supply and a request to the Cockermouth, Keswick and Penrith Railway to repair the new road from the town to Gallowbarrow. [3]

The 1864 booklet "Cockermouth Local Board. Bye-laws, etc." has some 70 pages, printed by Daniel Fidler, 70 Main Street. The first part is concerned with routine matters - committees and the duties of the clerk, surveyor, treasurer, inspector of nuisances and collector. Numerous building regulations are given, relating to the structure and size of walls, beams, fireplaces, chimneys, etc., and to ventilation and the amount of space round a building. Plans for new buildings had henceforth to be submitted for approval. The conduct and registration of slaughterhouses, always liable to become a public nuisance, are ruled upon, including an order that no animal must be confined in a slaughterhouse while the whole or part of a carcase lies there.

There are regulations for the cleansing of streets and for the width of new ones.

> "Every occupier of premises shall keep clean and free from snow, filth, dust, ashes and rubbish, the footway and pavement adjoining..."

....Streets must not be obstructed and arrangements are made for dealing with traffic during processions and public rejoicings. To prevent "disagreeable or hurtful effects" deodorizers must be used when privies. cesspools and ashpits are emptied and night-soil, etc., must be covered up when it is being carried, anything spilt on the roadway to be cleared up by the carrier between midnight and 8a.m. Carts collecting sewage, etc., must stand in any place only while loading.

Stray cattle are to be taken to the common pound. The owner may claim his beast on payment of up to 40s. [£2] plus expenses incurred, but if this is not done within three days the pound-keeper can advertise the animal for sale, giving seven days' notice at the owner's house if he is known; proceeds from sales to go to the Local Board. Any attempt to save the 40s. by stealthily removing an animal from the pound may bring three months' imprisonment.

The list of nuisances which can be dealt with by the inspector is varied and interesting. They include holding sales, exhibitions or shows in public streets; repairing a cart in the street unless it is essential to carry out repairs on the spot; lack of control when driving; parking of carriages, etc.; obstructing footways with goods; hanging clothes across the street; ferocious dogs; prostitution; profanity; drunkenness; firing guns; throwing; unsafe window boxes; no standing on upper window-sills to clean or paint; having an open cellar area; having places for bull-baiting, cock-fighting, etc.; and victuallers harbouring a constable while he is on duty. A conscientious inspector of nuisances must have led a busy life!

Although termed a "Board of Health" it is obvious that 'health' was considered a wide enough term to include anything affecting the well-being of the townspeople. When the "West Cumberland Times" began publication, ten years after the formation of the Board, the regular reports of the medical officer, Dr. Fox, show conditions at the time - typhus caused by insanitary conditions and semi-starvation; schools closed because of epidemics; filter beds allowing vegetable matter and frog spawn to get through to the taps. The Public Health Act of 1875 made infectious diseases notifiable; ruled on drainage, sewage disposal and water supplies; and ordered polluted food to be destroyed. Even these items, so taken for granted today, were opposed by some MPs as interfering with liberty.

Other issues before the Board in these early years were the need for baths and washhouses; street lighting being extinguished at 7pm on fair day, in accordance with the Board's contract with the Gas Company; the nuisance of slaughterhouses scattered about the town; the keeping of pigs;

the fact that in the 1876 Board elections (total cost £13-9s-7d.) 191 electors, one out of every

five, were unable to sign their names. [4]

Refuse and dust were perpetual nuisances. In 1876 a rubbish site was being sought, one Board member's solution being "Throw it in the river!" [5] There were difficulties too because the refuse men collected only ashes. It was reported that the "tradesmen of the town - had more goods wasted by the dust than would pay their share of the rates". [6]. The Board decided to hire a horse and watering cart to replace 'the old apparatus' which needed skilled men to operate it.

At this time official meetings - the Local Board, the Guardians, etc. - were held in the Court House. The room used, on the first floor front at the river side, still had the wall seats round it until incorporated into one of the flats formed in the building in 1975. Thomas Wilson, the owner of Cockermouth's largest hat factory. had died in 1857 and in 1874 John Birkbeck Wilson offered the factory to the Local Board. [7] It stood on the Cocker between Bitter Beck and the bridge end of the Market Place (Plate 15*)*. Suggestions for the use of the building were many - baths and washhouses with drying closets, and if these were provided John Wilson offered also the large steam boiler still in the building; a large Board room which could also be used for lectures; offices for the Board's clerk and surveyor; a restaurant; public reading rooms; a covered corn market; a fire engine station; rooms for friendly societies, etc.; lock-up shops on the street frontage; a public urinal at the bridge end; etc. The development was envisaged as involving both public and private enterprise. However, no action was taken at the time - the rates were just going up from ls-6d. to ls-9d. in the pound. Then in March 1875 the first positive move was made when part of the property was sold to Mr. Rydiard for his boot and shoe business. [8] Soon afterwards the Board began to meet "in the cock loft", approached by a yard off Cocker Bridge, and the council offices were to remain in the old hat factory for over 50 years.

A further increase in the general district rate, bringing it up to 2s. [10p] in the pound, was recommended in 1876. The estimates for six-month periods ending in September 1876 and 1889 doubled from £1369 to £2565. It is of interest to see how these were made up, as in the table below

	1876	**1889**	
Interest on borrowed money	£420	£674	
Repayment of same	142		
Sewers	20	87	
Water supply	50	106	
Highways	200	192	
Fire brigade	10	4	
Public lighting	155	160	
Salaries	62	125	
Special charges	35		
Other expenditure	60		
Law charges	200		
Election	15		
Sinking Fund		388	
Scavenging	*	60	
Watering	*	12	
Markets		87	
Establishment		40	
Gas supply		630	
TOTALS	**£1369**	**£2565**	(* Possibly included in highways)

Over 40% went in loan interest and repayments in 1876!

There were at this time four bodies responsible for local government in and around the town - the Cockermouth Local Board of Health, the Board of Guardians, the Cockermouth School Board and the Cockermouth Union Rural Sanitary Authority. Then in 1894 came the Local Government Act establishing urban and rural district councils and Cockermouth town became the Cockermouth Urban District, with the surrounding villages forming Cockermouth Rural District, these also having parish councils with fairly limited powers. For the first time some women were able to vote and to seek election. Cockermouth U.D.C. had 12 members, who met every fourth Wednesday in the Cocker Bridge office and worked through a town clerk (John Fearon at this time), treasurer, medical officer of health, surveyor and sanitary inspector, gas manager and rates collector.

Some tasks were undertaken by the county council - major roads, some education, etc.- but there was plenty left to occupy the UDC.

Some services provided will be considered separately, but we way note here a few of the very varied concerns appearing in the minutes of the Council and of its General Purposes Committee. Many

recur time after time - licensing of knackers and bone-boilers, of cowkeepers, of slaughterhouses and of common lodging houses; inspection of premises and cases of overcrowding; nuisances arising from sewers, offensive trades, stable smells; pollution of Bitter Beck; provision of public lavatories (a chapter might be written on the lengthy search for sites for such conveniences). Surprisingly as long ago as 1920 the Council dealt with house extensions and even controlled the erection of greenhouses and garden sheds, which were sometimes forbidden. Eventually telegraph lines, aerials and the war memorial became council business.

The Council horses are one feature of town administration which has disappeared. In 1914 the surveyor was looking for a home with a farmer for an old horse Tommy, replaced by a new one costing £45, and there are other records which show concern for horses which had fallen lame or were too old to work. [9]

Both day and night presented problems. In 1898 tallow chandlers were reminded of a request some years earlier [10] that they should render their tallow only between 11pm. and 6am. and in 1925 the Council considered a request that All Saints bells and chimes should not ring between 10pm. and 6am. [14]

While some concerns were, even comparatively recently, very different from those of today, others persist. In 1930 the Council proposed to ban street parking throughout the town and the 'Cockermouth Advertiser' commented

> "We feel sure that no broadminded citizen will object to paying the trifling charge of 1s. which the Council proposes to levy for parking space for one vehicle for a full day or part of a day on Fairfield." [11]

The county districts were reviewed in 1932 and the County Council suggested that Cockermouth might become part of a rural district. A post-card poll of electors showed 87% in favour of remaining an urban district, so Cockermouth remained a very small urban island - only 2390 acres of land and 35 of water. About the same time (1935) Cockermouth wished to incorporate Papeastle, but only the Gote, Hames Hall and Derwent Mills area came into the town, Papcastle village remaining outside. [12]

It was also at this time that the Council sought to draw attention to the town by setting up a publicity department and the first town guide made its appearance in 1937.

In 1939 plans were prepared to accommodate in Cockermouth 2,800 evacuee children from the South Shields area and the town found itself involved with Air Raid Precautions, the Home Guard, Civil Defence, shelters, rationing, a British Restaurant, etc.

In some ways the Council was progressive for a small country town. As early as 1910 a week's holiday with full pay was awarded to the Council's workmen with more than a year's service [13] and the next year they supported the demand for Women's Suffrage and the Daylight Saving Bill. On the other hand they refused for some reason to adopt the 1907 Notification of Births Act.

Cockermouth was, and still is, a registration district with the Superintendent Registrar formerly at Grecian Villa and now in Station Road. Cockermouth, Keswick, Maryport and Workington are sub-districts for registration.

On 1 April 1974 began a nation-wide reorganisation of local government. Cockermouth became part of Cumbria, a new county comprising six separate entities - Cumberland, Westmorland, the Furness district of Lancashire, the Sedbergh area of the West Riding of Yorkshire, the previously separate borough of Barrow-in-Furness and the city of Carlisle. Urban and rural districts disappeared and Cockermouth UD with Keswick and Maryport UDs, Workington Borough and Cockermouth and Wigton RDs formed a new district council, one of six in Cumbria, reviving the name 'Allerdale'. 'Allerdale' was chosen because as a one-word name it was preferable to the possible alternative of 'Solway and Derwent'.

Within Allerdale District, Cockermouth itself acquired parish council status, although preferring the title 'town council'. The functions of the new Cockermouth Council are very limited but it has a valuable role to play liaising between the townspeople and the district and county councils, which share between them most functions of local government.The Town Hall was purchased by the UDC for £325 in 1933.

After the 1974 re-organisation it passed to the new ADC and most of it was occupied by the Planning Department until it was relocated in the new "Allerdale House", built on the Cloffocks in Workington. During Allerdale's occupation the Town Council had scant accommodation for its

meetings and a small office, but since the building was converted to the Tourist Information Office, it has a council chamber and other rooms. For 40 years the building played an important part in the life of the town, the basement being used for brownies, first aiders, children's dancing classes, jumble sales etc

The Town Council has had 12 members ever since 1894, until 1978 always elected by all the electors in the town, and from 1974 the whole town chose its four representatives on Allerdale District Council. In 1979 this was changed, Cockermouth being split into two wards, Castle and All Saints, divided by the Cocker down to Cocker Bridge and then by a line up the centre of Castlegate and Castlegate Drive. Each ward now elects six members of the Town Council and two of Allerdale D.C. Allerdale District Council became Allerdale Borough Council on the 26th July, 1992.

Chapter 17

Cockermouth Poor Law Union & the workhouse

For centuries the poor could find food and perhaps a 'dole' of money at the gate of a monastery and in giving such relief the monasteries were helped by the church and the merchant and craft guilds, who felt this an obligation laid upon them. By Tudor times the numbers needing help had become too great to be assisted in this way and gradually a proper system of poor relief, based upon compulsory rates, was evolved - the first such system in Europe.

There were a number of stages in this development. A compulsory poor rate was first introduced in 1572 and acts of 1598 and 1601 ordered the appointment by Justices of the Peace of overseers of the poor in every parish. They had to provide work for the poor and have "a convenient stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron and other stuff to set the poor to work". Various measures during the 17th century were not very effective and in 1691 control was given to vestries and J.P.s, appointed overseers being empowered in 1723 to establish workhouses and to contract for the employment of the inmates, outdoor relief being prohibited. [1]

In consequence of this statute, we find the Cockermouth ministers and churchwardens meeting in 1746 to select a site for a workhouse, eventually choosing'

> "a certain house and dy houses of the property of Joseph Wain, Elizabeth Wain and Ann Wain, Widdow,. .. The premises to be conveyed to the minister, overseers, and Churchwardens, and their successors in trust."[2]

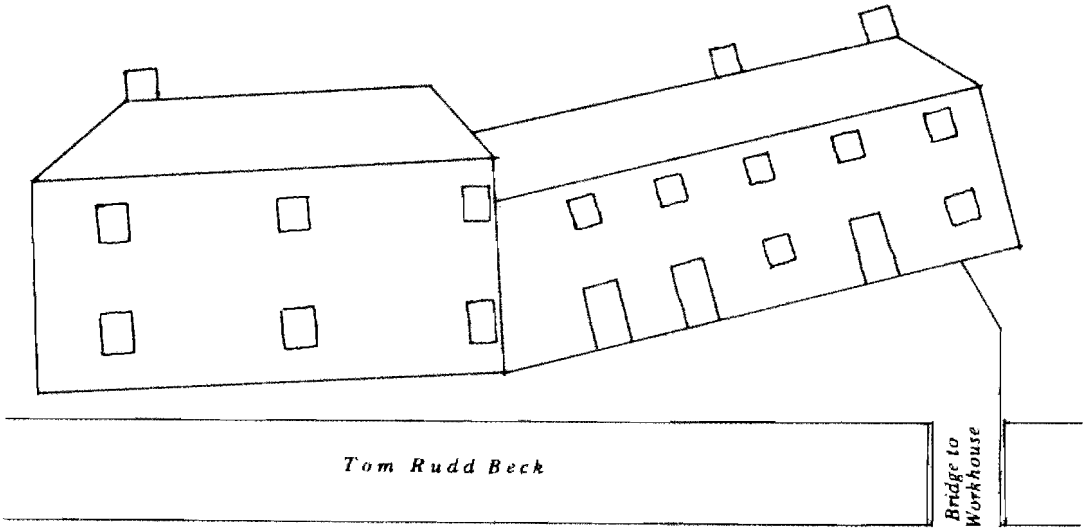

Fig. 41. *Front elevation of the 18th-century poor house (based on an early 19th-century drawing).*

This property was in Skinner Street, on the bank of Tom Rudd Beck, and the workhouse became known as 'Three Brigs Hall' from the three bridges close by. It was demolished in the early 1970s (Fig. 41).

In 1794 articles of agreement [3] were convenanted between John Simpson, Joseph Birkbeck and Thomas Hodgson, churchwardens, and Joseph Bowman, James Williamson and Isaac Whitelock, overseers of the poor, on the one hand, and Joseph Smithson, weaver, Jno. Stoddart, manufacturer, and Robert Smithson, waller, all of Cockermouth, on the other, under which the last three should provide from the money allowed them for the maintenance of the poor in the poorhouse

> "sufficient meat drink washing, lodging, clean and wholesome clothes and wearing apparel, bed and bedding, Physick Medicine" and should "employ an experienced surgeon and apothecary" when necessary.

The agreement ran to eight large pages. The weekly amount allowed per person for all the above was ls-8d. [8p] The job of poor house master was no easy task. One Vestry minute declares

> "Hugh Cowperthwaite master of Poorhouse vindicated of a great many scandalous expressions thrown out against him."

In 1800 the Vestry was again called to consider

> "the very alarming and enormous expense of the poor and to fix on some plan for meleorating the condition of the poor as well as lessening the expense thereof. . . . .It is therefore resolved to discontinue all house rents, all out pensioners and none allowed again unless by three directors. To take account of the workhouse master and to discontinue him. To find the paupers work and not to let them wander about the Town as heretofore...."

The condition of the poor was very bad following the Napoleonic Wars, especially in farming communities, so prominent in the life of Cockermouth. There was increasingly frequent reference to the increase in the cost of looking after them. On 24 July 1816

> "At a Vestry held this day for taking into consideration the relief of the numerous poor making application for relief owing to the reduced price of wages, it was resolved that a meetng be held in the Moot Hall to hear applications by those persons seeking relief."

Earlier, in 1795, the Vestry had stopped assisting wages, but the practice had apparently developed again. We have already seen how enclosures and new road works provided some work and relief at this time.

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 divided the country's 15,000 parishes into about 600 unions with elected boards of guardians. the whole under three Poor Law Commissioners. Cumberland was divided into nine unions - Alston, Bootle, Brampton, Carlisle, Cockermouth, Longtown, Penrith, Whitehaven and Wigton.[4] The Cockermouth Union, containing 50 townships, had four sub-districts - Cockermouth, Keswick, Maryport and Workington - and its boundaries were similar to those of the later rural district. The Board of Guardians, elected by the ratepayers, replaced the Justices of the Peace in affairs relating to the poor. The Act aimed to reduce the number of persistent paupers living on relief and at the same time to diminish the burden of the rates, and it did in effect reduce the national poor rate by a half.

A writer of the early 19th century says of Cockermouth -

> "I would rather travel about and ask here and there for a penny, and lead a life of liberty, and breathe the fresh air of Heaven, than trust to the tender mercies of the master of the workhouse. It would be to me a far greater trial to be cooped up in a poor, miserable dwelling like Darwinside (his name for Cockermouth) workhouse, in that narrow, dirty street, than to go about and ask alms." [5]

A Vestry meeting in 1828, before the new act, considered selling the workhouse and field and erecting a new one on land belonging to the town on Kirkgate Common near The Towers", which had been recently built. George Cape was to prepare the plan and specification and a committee was formed to sell the old building and ascertain the cost of the new one. The formation of the Cockermouth Union resulted in the building of the new workhouse in Gallowbarrow in 1840-3, with the first part opened in June 1841. The basic cost was £4,000 but a further £500 was spent on improvements and £600 on an east wing and fever hospital addition in 1847. [6] The total number of indoor and outdoor paupers given relief in the quarter ending March 1846 was 1475, excluding 826 children whose parents claimed. Most of the outdoor relief would be to the aged or infirm, in accordance with the new act.

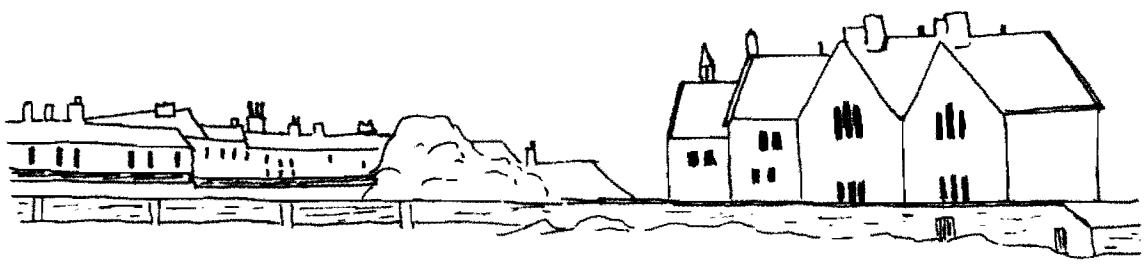

Fig. 42. *The 19th-century workhouse and Fairfield School from Fairfield (from a photograph in* Cousin Charley's Magazine, *November 1899).*

The average number of inmates during 1846-7 was about 230 and Mannix and Whellan wrote

> "The classification of paupers here is admirable, and it is one of the most complete and best conducted workhouses in the north of England."

Numbers rose to 260 by 1883 - 72 men, 70 women and 118 children, but fell to 139 in 1891. Of poorhouses in general G. E. Mingay writes -

"The union workhouse was a grim establishment, where the comfort and diet were of the sparsest and the discipline of the harshest. Strict rules, enforced by the ex-sergeant-majors who were often appointed to the post of workhouse master, prohibited the mixing of the sexes and enjoined silence at meal times. Families entering the workhouse were broken up, and the men put to the hard, dusty and humiliating work of breaking stones for the roads or crushing bones to make bone meal for the farmers. The prime object was to discourage pauperism."

Mingay goes on to say that it was difficult to make life in the workhouse worse than in the lowest paid work outside and many guardians were too humane or too afraid of the consequences to enforce very bad conditions. A side effect in rural areas was that farmers tried to take on extra men to keep them out of the workhouse and so prevent rates increases. Outdoor relief persisted in help with rent or fuel to widows, even when otherwise banned. Towards the middle of the century the railway boom was a help, first in employing an average of 100,000 over the country for 20 years in laying track and then in providing more permanent employment as railway staff 65,000 in 1851, rising to 174,000 by 1881.[7] Cockermouth's railways opened in 1847 and 1865 and there were several lines built to the west of the town in the latter half of the century. Economy appears to have been a matter of pride in Cockermouth. We have mentioned some meetings concerned with expenses and further objections about the cost of the poor in the town led to another one in 1835 for the purpose of

"deciding on the propriety of reducing the expenses of the workhouse establishment by appointing another person in the room of the present assistant-overseer with a less salary and who may have a less family. It is resolved that the present assistant-overseer shall retain his situation at his present salary."

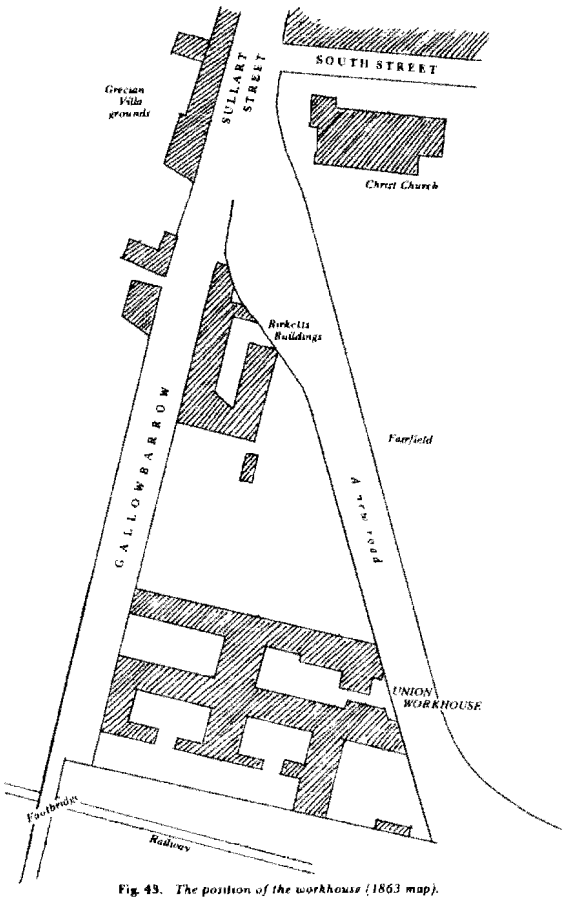

Fig. 43. *The position of the workhouse (1863 map).*

Another attempt to save money was made by the overseers when in 1839 they decided to collect the rates themselves. The effort was not a success and after a year they agreed to revert to the previous method and appointed Archibald Brown as assistant overseer to collect the rates, at an annual salary of £25 plus all reasonable expenses when called away from home on the business of the town. [8]

Money was saved in the actual running costs of the workhouse. After the West Cumberland Times first appeared in 1874 it becomes easy to follow the workhouse numbers and expenses and one can sense a feeling of satisfaction that Cockermouth's expenditure was low compared with most of the county. In the half year ending 25th March 1875 Cockermouth's weekly average of 3s-2¼d, [16p] per person was less than any other union in the district except Whitehaven, which managed on 2s-5d. Wigton spent 4s-1d. and Bootle was as high as 4s-8d. - still low compared with the 5s 11¼d. of Saddleworth on the Lancashire-Yorkshire border. Cockermouth's figure was made up of 2s-2¼d. per person on provisions, 4½d. on clothing and 7¼d. on coals, soap, cleaning materials, etc. The total was 3d. less than for the same period in the previous year. [9]

The average cost of relief given both indoor and outdoor at Cockermouth was in 1876 2s-6¼d., the lowest of the seven unions in the county, which averaged 2s-10d. with 3s-7d. the highest figure. [10]

The salaries at this time of the workhouse master and matron, husband and wife appointments, were £70 and £40 per year and those of the schoolmaster and schoolmistress £35 and £20, towards which the government granted £30-2s. and £12 respectively. A new porter and tailor was appointed in 1874 at a yearly salary of £25. [11]

Cockermouth Poor Law Union & the workhouse

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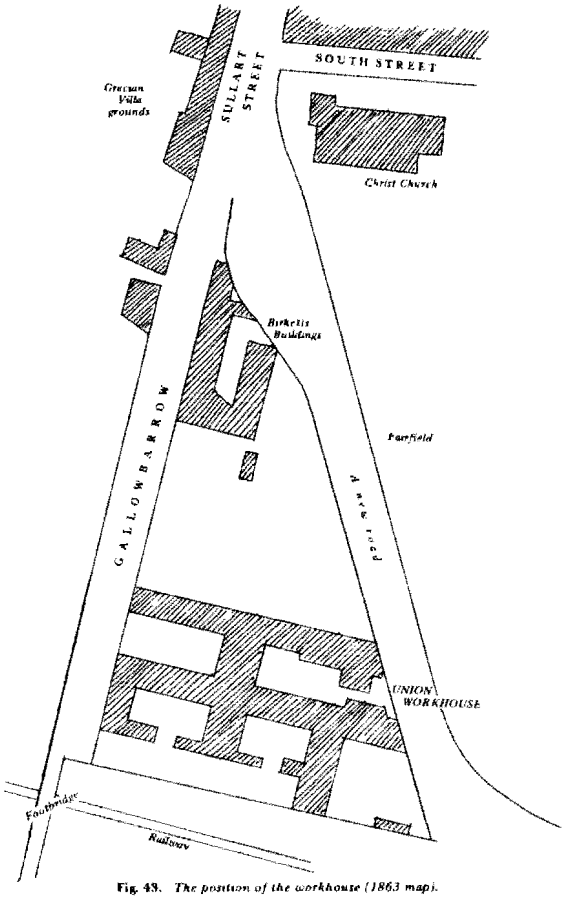

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The nation-wide attitude to workhouse children was to get rid of them as soon as possible, by placing them in apprenticeship, sending them to the colonies (often without the parents' consent), etc. Cockermouth boys would sail to a new life from Whitehaven. In some areas waifs and strays were put out to tender, to find work in weaving sheds, etc., sometimes when as young as six years. The articles of agreement mentioned above, dated 1794, enjoined the three men responsible to ensure that

> "the Poor Children which shall be in the sd. Poorhouse are taught to read English and their Catechism as far as their capacities will admit and to Work as far as their Ability will Extend in a Sufft. Manner for their Instruction and Benefit.... And in case any of the sd. Poor Children shall be put or placed out Apprentices by the sd. Churchwardens and Overseers or their successors during the sd. Term that the sd. Jos. Smithson, Jno. Stoddart and Robt. Smithson or some or one of them . . shall and will at his or their own Expense give to each of such Children such Change of Clothes as has usually been given or allowed on such occasion."[12]

In March 1887 the workhouse schools at Flimby were opened for 80 boys and girls and the schoolmaster and schoolmistress moved there with the children.[13] This may account for the fall in numbers in Cockermouth workhouse between 1883 and 1891. Later Petworth House, nos 1 and 3 Henry Street, was bought as a children's home, replacing the use of Flimby for boys in 1929.[14] Some children were boarded out and one report to the Board of Guardians on 21 such children stated

> "The children were found in a satisfactory condition. The foster parents were much attached to the children, and none of the children were willing to return to the workhouse, nor were their foster parents willing to part with them."[15]

The medical officer's report in 1874 deplored the fact that there was no accommodation for sick children separate from the adults and that the only nursing care given to the sick was provided by other inmates, mostly aged or infirm. In reply the chairman of the Board of Guardians said he had never seen the necessity of having paid nurses in this department and their medical officer always reported insufficient nurses. One Board member rudely added that men who were well paid and had nothing to do always liked to make some suggestion, after which the subject was dropped! The medical officer did gain something by his persistent efforts, for it was decided to convert two rooms of the fever ward in the workhouse into accommodation for sick children at a cost of £5 for the necessary alterations, but he made no progress regarding the nursing. [17] In 1903 a Local Government Inspector reported on what he found in Cockermouth. One nurse had to cope with 62 patients in the sick wards by day and one by night. The next worst authority was West Derby with 1 to 29 and the best provided 1 to 7. Ideally Cockermouth should have had a superintendent nurse and four assistant nurses. He did not blame the new master and matron, who were doing their best, but he told the Guardians that 'Cockermouth stands absolutely alone" and accused them of being morally and legally responsible for patients dying earlier than they need. One point in favour of the Board was their reaction to a suggestion in 1874 by the Wycombe Guardians that a petition be submitted to Parliament for it to be made compulsory for workhouse children of 10 to 12 years to do farm work during the day and in the evening attend school "under a properly certificated teacher and subject to the same compulsory clauses as day scholars". This the Board refused to support, maintaining that agricultural work was hard and such a scheme would be too much for the children. [18]

The town felt a responsibility towards the workhouse people and organised events to raise money for outings and Christmas treats and groups gave entertainments in the workhouse itself. To take two examples from 120 years ago, - in June 1875 the annual trip to Maryport took place, organised by the Popular Entertainment Society. The workhouse people were given dinner in the Maryport market hall; spent the afternoon on the shore, the pier and inspecting the lifeboat; and finished with tea and dancing in Netherhall Park. The same society visited the workhouse to entertain the residents and gave them delicacies, tobacco and snuff. The second example - a trip to Workington of 12 boys, 10 girls and a teacher to the band contest. These are not isolated instances, a number of treats and outings taking place each year. The press report of the Christmas of 1877 reads:

> "The inmates of the workhouse had their customary Christmas dinner of roast beef and plum pudding. Mrs. Watson, of the City and District Bank, also treated the old women lodged in the sick wards to a quarter of a pound of tea and a pound of sugar each; and Miss Benson, of St. Helens, sent tea and sugar to all the other old women who are inmates of the house. The Rev. W. Williams, vicar of Christ Church, who is chaplain to the workhouse, gave snuff and tobacco to those of the old inmates who use these articles. To the children he also presented oranges, and Mr. J. B. Banks furnished them with a supply of marbles." [19]

To take one later example, in 1927 the Huntsman Lodge of the Rechabites, with the help of voluntary gifts, took 60 aged residents to Silloth, where they were given tea and each a shilling to spend. [20]

Workhouse statistics reflected events - decreasing outdoor relief signalled the approach of summer and outdoor relief figures for the Union of £34,000, £84,000 and £46,000 in successive years resulted from the coal strike of the mid-1920s.

Towards the end of the Union's existence the change in meetings from fortnightly to monthly showed its work was less needed. Old age pensions were introduced in 1908, a first step towards reducing the number of elderly people in the workhouses. As far back as 1909 a commission suggested the end of the Poor Law system and of workhouses, replacing them with unemployment insurance, a social services system and a national health scheme. Unemployment benefits and health insurance came in 1911, but Poor relief continued alongside these and later developments. Then in 1929 Poor Law Unions and Boards of Guardians were abolished, Cockermouth's responsibilities passing to the County Council. The 'overseers of the poor' officially vanished after more than 300 years. The National Health Service Act came in 1946 and in 1948 the National Assistance Act removed the last traces of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act.

Before turning to the last days of the Gallowbarrow building there is one further aspect of life there to be considered - the insane. To quote a report of one of the Commissioners in Lunacy who visited the workhouse on 18 February 1874 -

> "The males and females respectively on the insane list are now thirteen and ten, altogether 23. These I have spoken to. They are in charge of paupers who receive extra rations. The imbeciles are tolerably clean and fairly well dressed. Elizabeth Ritson, referred to by my colleague at last visit, has been discharged. His recommendation as to the removal of partitions in the dormitories has been complied with and these rooms are now more commodious. The beds also are now supplied with two sheets, but they are not changed it seems more often than once in three weeks. I think they should be changed more frequently. Some improvements have been effected in the women's bathroom, . . . but blinds are wanting at the windows. All sleep on straw and have straw pillows. . . . Means of amusement were most scanty in the day rooms. A few do domestic work, pick oakum, and beat sand, and one makes himself useful as a shoemaker." [21]

A month later it was reported to the Guardians that the blind was fixed; sheets were to be changed once a fortnight; and a draughtboard and other small games had been supplied. [22] Two months later it was mentioned that there were illustrated weekly papers and dominoes provided and the Guardians agreed to the inmates having caged birds and to normal residents being allowed to talk to the insane members.[23]

A visit at the end of the next year (December 1875) showed that the lot of the 11 insane men and 11 women at that time could still be improved. The men's clothes were reported as worn and ragged, although the women's were better, and several residents were pale and thin, to remedy which malt liquor was suggested. Beds and rooms were in a proper state, but one man was in a stone-floored cell because of his dirty habits and the matron promised to look into his case. They were all bathed once a week, but the same water was used for four or five and it was suggested that it be changed more often. All the cases were quiet and not likely to benefit by asylum treatment, though some were dirty and destructive - and there was no paid nurse. [24]

We have travelled a long way to the present methods of general hospital psychiatric departments and of Dovenby Hall, bought for conversion to a mental hospital in 1930. Developments regarding the workhouse building followed the formation by the County Council of the Mid-Cumberland Area Guardian Committee, an area including Workington Borough, Cockermouth, Maryport and Keswick Urban Districts, and Cockermouth and Wigton Rural Districts.[25] In May 1933 the Committee proposed selling the Cockermouth workhouse or Poor Law Institution, to give it the proper title. There were objections from Cockermouth and Keswick Councils that there was no other institution near, but it was closed and advertised for sale in August 1935, and again advertised unsuccessfully 14 months later. [26]

During the war the still vacant building was used by the Royal Army Service Corps and then in the late summer of 1949 demolition of the unwanted premises began. The Institution Bell, which came from the forecastle of the wooden frigate 'Lord Eldon of Sunderland', grounded at Allonby after a fire, found a home in the Council Hall in Grecian Villa, and is now in Wordsworth House. [27] The orchard had by now been plundered and the lead on the buildings had gone, but the timber was reported in excellent condition by the demolition contractor, J. B. Mossop of Whitehaven. Some of the

walls were found to be almost a yard thick. Still in good condition in the entrance and dining hall were mural paintings, presumed to have been done by a resident, of Cockermouth Castle, Cockermouth Viaduct, Cockermouth Castle Gateway, Friar's Crag, etc.[28]

So disappeared, with few regrets, a feature which had been part of the Cockermouth landscape and the town's life for over a hundred years.

"Concerning a market.

Our Lord the King has granted to William de Fortibus Earl of Albemarle that he should have a market at his manor of Cockermu each week for Saturday until the coming of age of our Lord the King unless that market etc. [i.e: be to the detriment of neighbouring markets] and the Sheriff of Cumberland is commanded to allow him to have that market. Witness as above." (i.e: Hubert de Burgh our justiciar at Westminster 19th. day of May.) [1]

So runs an entry in the Close Roll (Chancery) of 5 Henry III (1221) and Cockermouth received a market charter - a system of licensing markets possibly dating from the time of Alfred in the late 9th century and inaugurated as a method of raising money for the king. It was probably a recognition of trading already existing and was one of the earliest Cumbrian charters, the first being Kendal in 1189. [2] Henry was at this time only about 14, hence the reference to 'coming of age'.

About a year later a similar charter changed the day to Monday and on Monday it has remained until now, over 700 years, although early last century there was also some selling in the Market Place on Saturday mornings and evenings.[3] It has been suggested that the reason for the change was the difficulty in cleaning up the streets after a Saturday market in time for Sunday, but this is conjecture.

By the end of the 17th century the number of market towns in Cumberland had risen to 16, giving a system of markets approximately 15 miles apart, so that people did not need to travel more than about eight miles.

At one time the church service on a saint's day, which would be a holiday, was followed by a fair and market with sports. etc., in the churchyard. The market aspect spread to Sundays and in about 1306 Cockermouth sent a petition to Parliament complaining of the injury to its market caused by the bartering which took place at Crosthwaite Church on Sundays and saints' days.[5] Corn, flour, peas, beans, meat, fish, linen and other cloth, etc., changed hands after the service instead of being brought to Cockermouth market and the Cockermouth people were complaining that they were losing business and unable to pay their rent. It is not clear how this petition relates to a date given [6] for the granting of Keswick's market charter, namely 1276, 30 years before the complaint. If the people of Keswick had to travel 13 miles to Cockermouth, further from east of the town, they too had cause for complaint. The system of church bartering was fairly widespread and there is a record that at Wigton the butchers hung their carcasses in the church porch and that when people began buying before the service and hanging their purchases over the backs of the seats the vicar stepped in to stop the practice!

In early days there was variation in weights and measures over the country. Even in one market confusion could arise. A reference to Cockermouth in the Holm Cultram papers shows a varying equality between gallons and bushels (Bz) according to the commodity being measured.

"And in Cockermouth Market wth.in the said County of Cumberland there is and haith bene lyke uncertame and untrewe mesers for buying and selling corne and graine, viz.- for benes, peses, wheat, rye and salt about 12 gallons and for bige [barley], oits and malte a Bz of 22 gallands or thereabouts. . . '[7]

A bushel finally settled down as a dry measure for grain, fruit, etc., equivalent to eight gallons. There were other variations, which were the concern of the market lookers appointed by the court leet. In 1684 a court record reads

"We do amerce Thomas Harrison, of Crosscanonby, for his wife keeping unlawful weights and selling by them 3s-4d." [8]

and in 1688 was recorded

"We amerce John Peile, fellmonger, for keeping false weights 3s-4d. Robert Lancton, Bailiff."

Justice was such that John Peile, a fellmonger (wool-buyer), churchwarden and burgess, obviously an important man in the town, was fined the same amount as an outsider coming in to use the town market.

Some standards were more difficult to enforce and regulations had to be made such as this one from the court in 1714 –

"We do put in pain that no person or persons shall sell any linen yarn within the Borough of Cockermouth but what shall be three quarters and a half reel, and six score threads to each cut and twelve cuts to each hank upon pain of 6s-8d. for each default."

One regulation of 1679 was designed to make conditions of buying and selling fair for all, enabling those who lived in the surrounding villages to reach market in time to have an equal chance with the townspeople and not when the best goods had already been sold.

> "It is put in pain that no butter shall be sold or carried out of ye markett before ye hour of 11 o'clock and at that time ye skavander shall give notice by the bell belonging to his Grace, and in default sub-poena 6s-8d."

The skavander or scavenger was in charge of some aspects of the market on behalf of the lord of the manor and under the direction of the bailiff, and one of his duties was to give a signal for the opening of the market by ringing the bell, known as the market, badger or butter bell, or at one time as his Grace's bell (after Charles Seymour, the 'Proud Duke of Somerset'). The bell hangs in a niche on No. 9 on the south side of the Market Place, on the wall of the former Greyhound Inn. Stolen in June 1977 when scaffolding was erected against this property, it has been recovered and re-hung. It was last used in February 1910. [9]

Not only could the public be fined for not obeying the bell, but the bell-ringer himself could be penalised for not doing his job efficiently.

> "It is put in pain that the scavenger shall from this day forward every market day ring the market bell exactly at 12 o'clock sub-poena 6s-8d."

ruled the court of 1685.

There were regulations also to ensure that all business was done in the market area, with no buying and selling elsewhere in the town or on its approaches in order to avoid paying market tolls. Thus the court leet ruling of 1685

> "It is put in pain that nobody shall buy any butter in any house or shop to sell again or transport unless in open markett, sub poena 6s-8d."

This is an early mention of shops. In 1715 the court stated

> "Whereas great abuses have been done by the Butchers of this place buying sheep and calves, etc. , out of the usual markett place, we put in pain for every default 6s. 8d., viz. they are to buy between ye East end of Cocker Bridge and the Hall Gates" (probably near the market bell).

Butchers were the subject of many rules and regulations.
Tolls payable early in the 19th century included:

> "One penny per head for all cattle sold in the Market between Michaelmas and May Day. Four pence per head for all Horses sold on Gallowbarrow on Michaelmas Fair. Two pense per head for all Horses exchanged at the Fair on the same day in the Market for Sale. If a person has more than one sack of potatoes no more than one half penny is paid. One halfpenny for every Stall or Stand erected or placed in the Market. Persons having Settlements in the Township of Cockermouth pay no Stallage for any thing they set down in the Market for sale..... But if the Person is merely resident in the Town without a Settlement he pays the Stallage for whatever he sets down in the Market for sale whether the article is grown within the Township or not at the Rates above mentioned." [10]

There was sometimes difficulty in collecting tolls from traders coming in from neighbouring villages –

> "Memo. that on the 29 Jan. 1759 Jeremyah Stephenson the farmer of the Small Tolls at Cockermouth Demanded of Grace Head Spinster the Dam. of John Head of Pardshaw one half penny for a sack of potatoes standing in Cockermouth Market for sale, being the customary paymt. due for the same, wch. she refused to pay and that on the 19th Jan. 1759 the like Demand was made & refusal of paymt. Witnefs my John Stamper." [11]

In 1830 a meeting was held in the Court House to consider grievances regarding the taking of toll on grain, when it was stated "that the Toll of Corn is One Handful out of each Sack sold in the Market, and no more." [12]

The castle records of about 1800 include evidence of a further abuse -

> "A Practice has gained ground of late years for the owners of Houses in different parts of the Market to receive yearly Rent from persons placing their Stalls in the front of their Shops and Houses ... in addition to the half penny paid each Monday to Lord Egremont's lefsee - This should certainly be prevented...."

It was a natural consequence of Cockermouth's position that it should be a market not only for domestic needs but also for sheep and cattle. In addition to the Monday market for provisions and grain there were in the 17th century horse and cattle fairs held on the unenclosed land along the Derwent. This was the Sands or Sulwith Sand, stretching from the river to the backs of the Main Street

property, now occupied by Waterloo Street. The right to hold this cattle market was granted by Charles I to Algernon, Earl of Northumberland, and his heirs in 1638 –

> "he may keep a fair in his towne of Cockermouth every Wednesday from the first week of May till Michaelmas". [13]

The cattlemarket seems to have gradually moved into Main Street. Bishop Nicholson wrote in 1685 of

> "two streets, one above the river Cocker in which is the Moot Hall, Market House, Corn Market and Shambles; and in the other below is the Beast Market."

In 1790 the Universal British Directory reported the cattle fair in the spacious street below the bridge, with the horse fair now on common land adjoining Gallowbarrow.[14] The eastern end of Main Street, opposite the Globe Hotel, is traditionally the site for cattle until the present marts were built.

Before considering the growth of the cattle market, we may note two developments in the Market Place area - the Moot Hall and the Market Hall (Fig. 44). There is considerable difficulty in determining what is meant in early references to the moot hall, the tolbooth and the town hall. The Minister's Accounts mention the tolbooth, where markets tolls were paid, in 1437, 1453 and 1478. There were rents paid for 4 shops subtus le Tolboth. The same accounts in 1437/8 refer to le Motehall being decayed and in the lord's hands. In view of this, could the moot hall and the tolbooth be the same building? Then in 1547 a court book refers to opellae and pentes (pent house or lean to) subtus Moythaill and to workshops under the tollbooth. There are the accounts "for the building of the Towne Hall aft Cockermouthe begone in 1690 [15] giving details of payments for the carting and supply of lime, sand, slate, timber, etc., and of the wages paid - 10d. a day to wallers and carpenters and 6d. to labourers who helped the wallers. A reasonable conclusion would be that this was a rebuilding of the moot hall, but the difficulty is that the accounts refer not only to the building of the town hall but to new windows being provided in the moot hall. What we can be certain of, from old drawings, is that the moot hall was similar to that still standing in Keswick - an open-sided covered market slightly above street level and, supported on stone pillars and approached by steps at one end, an upper room which was the moot or assembly place where meetings and courts were held. (Plate 9)

In front of a number of the Market Place premises were the wooden fish shambles and an 18th century reference to one house describes

> "Fish Shambles or Fish Stones & the piece or pcel. of grod. whereon the same now stands.. within the Market Place of Cockermouth afsd. in front of the house of the said Jno. Muncaster ... with the liberty of selling and erectg. Fish Shambles or conveniences for exposg. fish to sale...yearly custry. rent of 14d. & subject to the payment of other dues exposing fish for sale.". . [16]

The hall stood here until 1829 when it was demolished and the stone used in building a new court house.

> " The Moot Hall and wooden Shambles, being a great nuisance to the place, were taken down in 1829".

Traces of the foundations have been found from time to time when the roadway has been dug up to lay services. This demolition was a serious loss to the market. Activities which had been concentrated there became spread over a wider area and the scattered butchers' stalls were particularly undesirable, The following letter was sent by a future M.P. for the town to Lord Egremont's bailiff –

> "Dear Sir, The increasing trade and population of Cockermouth have long caused a good Butcher Market out of the Main Street to be much wished for, not only to increase the space in the Main Street appropriated for the Sale of Corn Potatoes etc., but as a place to which the various Stalls and Shambles set up by Butchers in many parts of the Town and are a nuisance to the Market might be removed. – We are about to sell a considerable property situated in the Centre of the Market Place above the Bridge which is exceedingly well calculated for a new Butchers' Market and near to which most of the Slaughter Houses are situate. - I am inclined to think that many persons would be glad to join in the purchase of this property chiefly for the purpose of making a good Market upon the Site, but this would be in vain without the countenance and support of Lord Egremont as owner of the market. – If his Lordship would interest himself in the matter and prevent Butchers from setting up Stalls in the Public Streets by which they would be forced into the new market, the scheme of improvement would not only be beneficial to the Town generally, but to the Subscribers . . . I am Dear Sir, Yours very truly, John Steel. Cockermouth. 16th. April 1836."[17]

In November the owner sold for £1300, the indenture mentioning George O'Brien Earl of Egremont and Baron of Cockermouth, Abraham Robinson wine and spirit merchant, Thomas Wilson hatter, Jonathan Wood wine and spirit merchant, George Cape builder, John Sancton woollen manufacturer, Jos. Steel and Wm. Bragg gentlemen and H. T. Thompson of Bridekirk. [18] The hall was designed by John Dent, a native of Cockermouth, on the lines of St. John's Market in Liverpool, and built by a Cockermouth brickmaker and builder, John Mackreth. The money was raised by 106 shares at £25 and £2000 from the Earl of Egremont and the total just cleared the cost. Lord Egremont directed that the interest on his shares should be used "to aid decayed tradesmen in the decline of life" in Cockermouth. [19] The hall, one of the largest in Cumberland, was opened in 1837 and Askew's description of it in 1866 contrasts strangely with its use until recently as the headquarters of refuse collection. –

> "Monday is the chief market day. The market is abundantly stocked with every description of native produce, and to the stranger or tourist is especially worth a visit. From about 10 o'clock in the morning to 12 at noon, the spacious Markethouse is filled with a dense crowd of townspeople, butchers, farmers, portly farmers wives and blooming dairy-maids, all eager to make a profitable exchange of their several commodities. Whilst greengrocers, milliners, dyers, Cheap Johns, and other miscellaneous dealers put forth to the utmost their keenest trading abilities towards turning an honest penny during the short busy harvest."

Some farmers' wives kept the household largely on the profits made here on poultry and milk.[20] The Market Company's purchase included some property and land in Church Lane (later Market Street), of which the Shoulder of Mutton Inn was part, stretching from the Market Place to the church footbridge at the foot of the 'Stairs'. The new development included the market hall with slaughter houses below it, a fish market lower down than the hall entrance (kept separate from the main market because of the smell), a cottage for the collector of market tolls near the present lavatory site, and three houses and shops in Market Street from the corner to the Plough Inn, which replaced the Shoulder of Mutton. [21]

The market hall opened on 11th December 1837 and the 12 rules drawn up for its management included a charge of ls-6d. per stall per week; a charge of 1d. for each basket brought or 2d. per yard of bench occupied; gas lighting to be provided until 9pm. on Monday and Saturday; with 6am. opening in summer, 7am. in winter. [22] When the Local Board of Health was formed, it bought from the private Market Company the 'new market house', cottage, fish house, slaughter house, etc., and the market rights, which had been handed over to the Company's trustees by Lord Egremont.

The right to hold a market had been granted, as was customary, to the lord of the manor and he was entitled to the payments made for setting up stalls and for pickage (a toll paid for breaking the ground to erect a stall or tent), to the tolls on the sale of produce and cattle, and to the manure and sweepings from the streets.[23] It was these 'rights' which Lord Egremont gave to the Company and which passed to the Board, then to the Urban District Council and to Allerdale Council. The money received from the market rights has been a considerable relief to the rates of the town.

The Local Board stated that the Market Hall and Market Hill (Church Brow) were

> "to be appropriated as a market for the sale therein and thereon of butchers' meat, bacon, pork, cheese, eggs, butter, poultry, geese, pigeons, rabbits, fruit, vegetables, seeds, flower roots, plants, shrubs, provisions, grocery, drapery, glass and earthenware, ironmongery, woodware, boots and shoes, pastry, spices, confectionery, and other marketable commodities."

Tables were measured off and nobody had a prior claim to any particular position, but farm produce must be given preference. The toll for a basket, etc., not occupying more than half a yard of table or ground was 1d. per day. A innkeeper's tent erected in the cattle market on Fairfield or on the streets was taxed 5s. a day. No badger (a buyer of corn or other commodities to sell elsewhere), batcher (the same?), higgler (itinerant dealer), haggler or hawker was allowed to buy until a certain time, when it was considered that the needs of the townspeople had been supplied. The overflow from the hall lasted into the 20th century, for we read of

> "the butter and general produce market being held on the brow and in the old Market Hall on the left, half way up the hill".[24]

The hall was filled by stallholders until rationing in the 1939-45 war finally killed marketing in the building and the Ministry of Food used it for storing extra rations, the weight of which brought down a bay so that strengthening buttresses had to be erected.

From about 1965 the Urban District Council used it as a garage for refuse-collection vehicles, having bought it for £1800. The following year young boys set fire to salvaged paper stored inside and the hall was burned down, only the walls remaining. It was rebuilt in the present unfortunate style, when, before the clearing of old property and the opening up of the area as a car park, it was less conspicuous (Fig. 76).

It passed from the Urban District Council to Allerdale District in the 1974 changes. The refuse department ceased to use the building in the early 1990's and the Town Council leased it in 1995 from Allerdale Borough Council, the present owners. Its future use has not yet been decided. Many Cockermouthians favour its demolition, opening up the view to the churchyard. The weekly Monday domestic market continues in the Market Place. Stalls are few in winter, but increase in the summer

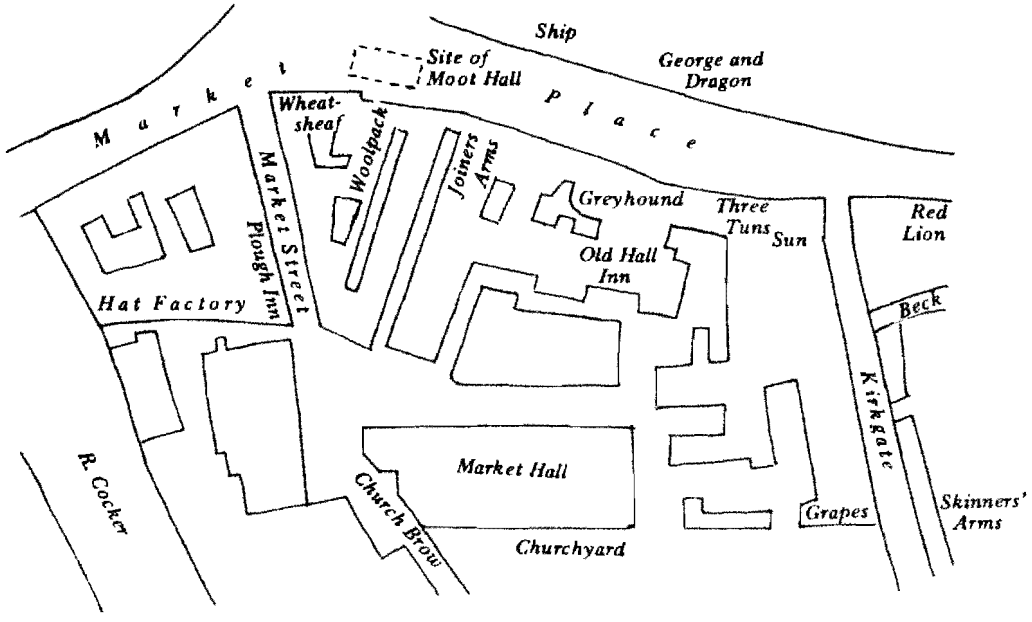

Fig. 44. *Moot Hall, Market Hall and the Market Place inns (based on 1863 OS map).*

months. There was a period in the early 1970s when it was feared the market might die out, partly because the major industrial concern in the town shortened its dinner break and many employees who had visited the market were no longer able to do so, but in recent years there has been some recovery.

There has been talk in recent years of moving the market to another site, but no definite plan has materialised. In 1994 a meeting of all interested parties was held to consider ways of upgrading the Market Place property and activities. Since 1992 it has been closed to traffic on Monday (market day) between 9am. and 4pm. Half day closing for Cockermouth shops was officially ended by the District Council in March 1991, but a few still close at mid-day on Thursdays.

For many years it was the practice for market people to leave their baskets in the barn of the Sun Inn at the lower end of Kirkgate. [25] The barn has been demolished, but it had a useful life not only as a basket store but as a mortuary until a special building was erected in Fairfield and as the venue for Roman Catholic mass before the building of St. Joseph's Church.

The new mortuary building was on the left corner of the entrance to Fairfield from South Street until its demolition in 1982.

Reference has been made to the start of cattle markets and their move to Main Street. The various branches developed in definite areas. The corn market was in the Market Place, based on Walker's grain shop. The hay market was in South Street, on the south side and well into the 20th century the whole length of the street would be filled by carts of corn, hay and straw, the horses from which were stabled at the Appletree (now the Wordsworth), Bush, Huntsman, etc. All these inns had market rooms. Hay was bought by grocers and other shopkeepers and by Jennings Brewery for cart and delivery horses. [26] On Main Street, pigs were sold near the Police Station, with the fellmongers opposite. Cattle stood from Station Street corner as far as the site of Cleeland's shop, with sheep

opposite them in the area of Boots. A Saturday night market was held for vegetables, etc., from Station Street corner to the Black Bull.[27] There was a public weighing machine here, a short distance east of Station Street.

The sale of horses moved from Main Street to Fairfield in the late 18th. century –

> "Mr. Wordsworth, the bailiff of Cockermouth, formed some useful regulations respecting the public market there, by which the dangerous practice of showing stallions in the street will in future be prevented, and many nuisances lately complained of (particularly that of suffering swine to go in the streets) will be entirely removed."[28]

In 1790 there is a reference [29] to Cockermouth's only horse fair being at Michaelmas, but they increased in number. By 1866 there were three, in February, April and October and more in later years. 50 or more animals were frequently advertised and in 1878 the catalogue listed 158. The number of cattle sales also increased over the years and a definite calendar evolved, with sales every Monday and often on Wednesdays when Mitchell's new mart opened.

A feature of market life which disappeared between the wars was the sale of Irish geese, landed at Silloth or Whitehaven after harvest time. They were driven through melted tar and then sand to prevent sore feet during their long marches. This 'shoeing' was done in Cockermouth at the foot of Gote Brow, near the entrance to 'Senhouse Park'.[30] They were sold as they passed through villages or to and those intended for the Cockermouth market on Monday usually reached the town on Saturday to be rested in Deer Orchard or the field where the hospital now stands.

The trade lasted for about six weeks. They sold at about 4s-6d. to 7s. and some people kept their purchases in the back yard, fattening them on scraps. The better-off families had their first goose on Martinmas Sunday and another at Christmas, with a third on Candlemas Sunday if they could afford.[31]

At the bottom end of Fairfield, long the site of horse sales, developed the first auction company.[32] Robinson Mitchell, the founder of the present business, was born in Ullock and, after being apprenticed to his father as a boot and shoe maker, travelled as a journeyman shoemaker. Trade being poor and his heart not really in the job, he joined his brother in his bacon curing business in Cockermouth, but when this too met hard times he collected some of the debts owing to him from his journeyman days and was fortunate in being able to fulfill his ambition to become an auctioneer when John Thwaite, the conductor of country sales in the area, was prevented by ill health from continuing. He issued his first handbill in 1849, which read:

> Auctioneer and Appraiser
> Robinson Mitchell Respectively informs Statesmen, Farmers, and the
> Public in general, that he has taken out a Licence for
> the above profession, and he hopes that by diligence,
> perserverance, and integrity for those who may
> employ him, to meet with a fair share of support.
> Cockermouth, November 23rd., 1849.
> T. Bailey and Son, Printers, Cockermouth.

Auctions of houses and furniture were held in various inns in the town - at the end of the 18th century in the Globe, the Sign of the Buck, the Sign of the Sun, the Sign of the Ship, etc. Sometimes sales took place in the street. Robinson Mitchell began in the same way. His first sale. when he was 28, was of old furniture and was conducted in the street. Then he sold some timber in Wythop Woods and his first farming stock sale was at Mosser for William Green. He noticed that stock sales often dragged on from 10am. to 8 or 9 p.m., with much private bargaining, and that a man might take his beast home having wasted the whole day trying to sell it. Often a complete day was spent 'higgling and piggling' over half-a-crown in a £5 sale. He decided to start selling at 72 Main Street where he lived, later J. W. Mounsey's grocery shop. The cattle stood in the garden and yard, which were covered with a four-inch layer of clinker; the horses stood where the warehouse now is and temporary pens were erected on the street.[33]

Mitchell moved to Fairfield on the first Monday in March 1860, using similar pens and then a wooden shed, and on Michaelmas Day 1865 he opened the Agricultural Hall on the west side of Station Street, probably the first auction mart in Cumberland. The firm, which became Mitchell, Bowe and Mitchell, progressed well, both in the Fairfield mart and in selling property, for which the Sun Inn and the Globe Hotel were used.

Then came opposition from a new concern, the Cockermouth Auctioneering and Estate Agency Co. Ltd., which erected a mart with a sale ring, stalls for 50 cattle and sheep pens at the top of Station Street, on the opposite side to Mitchell's, and like it conveniently placed for the station, an important factor when many animals were moved by rail. The company, formed in 1873 with a capital of £5000 raised in 1,000 - £5 shares, had an office at 80 Main Street and began Monday auctions in the new mart on 1st June 1874. [34]

The older concern was worried by this development and on legal advice turned itself, in 1873, into a limited company, Mitchell's Auction Co. Ltd., charging a commission of 4d. in the pound and guaranteeing a 4% dividend for the first three years.

Robinson Mitchell kept the outside work separate from the new company - real estate, furniture and farming stock. This section remained a purely family concern for three generations until bought by the company in 1947. Activities were varied. There is, for example, a press report of a sale in 1877 which dealt with bank, railway, auction mart and factory shares.[35] The true auctioneer was a professional, consulted about buying and selling, valuing for probate, the procedure on retirement or in bankruptcy, as well as the routine cattle sales. An earlier take-over had been the purchase in 1921 of the rival concern, which had become Hall's Farmers' Auction.

Mitchell's thus came to own not only the two marts, but the present sites of the Grand Theatre, the County Garage, the Methodist Church, the Preston Farmers and the Rampant Bull, all of which except the auction buildings were sold during the 60 years up to 1970.

Fairfield House had been built as a family residence in 1868 (three Mitchell brothers born there married three Peacock sisters from the Globe Hotel), and this too was sold - to the Council, who used it as a food rationing office during the 1939-45 war. The Company bought it back in 1964 to convert into offices and a flat.

Since 1950 considerable work has been done on the Company's premises - new penning, concreting, extending, etc. New developments have been the abattoir (1963) and the Fairfield Restaurant (1964). The last amalgamation brought in the Whitehaven and West Cumberland Auctioneering Company in 1960. To mark the centenary of a company which has played a big part in the life of Cockermouth the share capital was increased from £60,000 to £90,000.

Some numbers of animals passing through Mitchell's mart are given below – there would also have been sales of poultry, straw, hay, implements, etc.

	Cattle	Sheep	Pigs	Horses
1876 [36]	11,537	61,042	284	1,316
1978	12,000 store 450 dairy 3,250 fat 7,500 calves	24,000 store 63,500 fat	 1,350 fat	
1994	13,000 prime	21,000 store 75,000 prime 11,600 lambs		

(The law forbids dealing in fat and store pigs on the same day, and the small numbers involved do not justify dealing in the latter.)

Some indication of prices in 1874 and 1978

1874 Michaelmas fair [37]	Bullocks £20	Heifers £16	Irish cattle £4 to £7	Agricultural horses £20-£50	Good draught horses £40-£80	Ponies £15-£20
1978 (average)	Fat cattle £344 per animal 68.5p/kg		Fat sheep £28 per animal (140p/kg)		Fat pigs £46 per animal (65.5p/kg)	

In the 1875 Christmas sale a fat sheep would fetch about £5 7s. 6d , so that in real money terms a sheep is now worth considerably less than 100 years ago. In 1995 the market tolls are 1p per sheep, 2p per pig and 5p for one prime beast. These are collected by the auctioneer for payment to Allerdale Borough Council, the payment being simplified by taking an average block figure for the year. [38] The 1995 calendar was a market every Monday for sale of butchers' cattle; every Wednesday (recently increased from fortnightly sale) cast cows, prime bulls and light weight lambs for European market, also One Friday per month - store cattle. The firm found it necessary to move to another site when

European Union directives made the South Street site unviable. After much delay, due to negotiations with potential supermarket interests and then the Foot and Mouth crisis in 2001, the company moved in 2002 to a site off the A66 roundabout at Oakhurst, now known as the Lakeland Agricultural Centre.

In 1978 Allerdale Council decided not to renew the Irish cattle licence.[39] Irish cattle were sold at the lower end of Fairfield in pens which belong to the Council, a very flourishing business which was conducted through Cumbrian ports and the extensive cattle pens at Cockermouth station. The trade having now died out, there was no value in bringing up to present standards the feeding and watering facilities in Fairfield, hence the decision not to continue the licence and to demolish the pens. The horse drinking trough which once stood in the north-east corner of Fairfield was moved to Stanwix, whence it originated, about the end of 1985.

The hiring fairs ofWhitsun and Martinmas, great events in the life of Cockermouth and district, began in 1349 when labourers, shepherds and ploughmen were freed from serfdom by Edward III and had to obey the Statutes of Labourers which he introduced to regulate their employment. One statute compelled them to go to the nearest market town twice a year to offer their labour for hire, on penalty of being placed in the stocks.

At first the regulation was largely ineffective but eventually these hiring fairs became firmly established, known in some parts of the country as 'statiz' from the word 'statutes'. The great survey of 1578 records

> "There is in the saide towne of Cockermouth a markett every weeke kept uppon the mondaie and alsoe twoe faires in the yere the one uppon Whitson mundaie and the other uppon the feast of St. Michaell tharchangell."

The hiring at first took place in the castle 'yard' [40], probably the castle green at the top of Castle Street as it was then known; but for most of their existence the hirings were situated in Castlegate and the Cocker Bridge end of Market Place, the women and girls latterly being separated and using the Market Hall. (Plate 10). The numbers appearing for hire dwindled before the 1939-45 war and hiring finally ceased altogether by about 1950. The scene in about 1800 has been described thus –

> "Early this fine May morning the long wide street of Darwinside (Cockermouth) is alive with fair-day folk putting up their stands and booths, hammering and tying up, busy as bees... Now the lads and lasses are congregating in the market-place, and in the narrow street going up to the castle; and here the farmers, with their sturdy wives, go to choose their servants for the half-year. There stand the stout, fresh-looking girls ready to close with the first good offer. There, in another line, stand the youths and young men, each having a piece of straw in his hatband to signify that he is open for an engagement. Now a master comes up to one of the young men, terms are arranged, the piece of straw is pulled out, the master hands a shilling as earnest money, and the bargain is made. So much for the half-year ending at Martinmas, when a new bargain may have to be made or the old one renewed." [41]

Farmers and master craftsmen seeking employees for the next six months were helped in their search by the emblems or tools displayed by those needing work. A carter had a length of whipcord in his hat; a cowherd or dairymaid pinned cow hair to their clothes. A blacksmith had his hammer, a carpenter his saw, etc [42] Two days before the hiring of May 1874 the West Cumberland Times spoke of the degrading process of public scrutiny of the men and women's physical condition. When the Urban District took over the market they issued regulations for the conduct of markets, sales and fairs. The 21 items listed in the 1909 edition included '

> "Fairs shall be held ...Whit Monday and following Monday, Hiring of Servants, Pleasure and Amusement. 11th. November ...and the next following Monday ... (variations when 11th. not a Monday)... Hiring of Servants, Pleasure and Amusement. The Hiring of Servants shall be held in Castlegate."

Pay depended on demand. In 1783, for example, there was the greatest number of servants available for many years and wages were consequently low. 1790 rates averaged £10 a year for men and £4 for women. In 1874 most men could get about £20 for a half year, the better workers perhaps £22, inferior ones only £15 to £18. Lads for team work were paid £10 to £12, women £10 or £1 1, girls £5 to £8. In 1880 wages had dropped appreciably.

Labourers and servants shared the meal table of their employers. As one woman still living (1979) in Cockermouth put it, they looked for 'not so much a wage as getting a good meat shop.' The men usually slept in the house, the girls and women certainly did. Wages improved - the woman quoted earned £3 a week, but a 1979 Cockermouth resident remembered being hired for £7 a half-year, then eventually earning £7 a week.[43] Hours of work were very long, from perhaps 5-30am. to 6-

30pm. and much later at hay-time and harvest. If a man had two hours off on Sunday afternoon he would have to be back in time for milking. Single men had more freedom than married, for they could move at the end of a six-month hiring, while those married were more tied to the job.

The 1909 UDC regulations mentioned pleasure and amusement at the hirings. For many hired men and women, and often for the younger members of farming families, these were the only two occasions in the year when they got away from their village or isolated farm. As transport improved the fairs attracted people from further afield - 9,000 arrived in the town by train alone for the 1874 Whitsun hiring. [44] There was all the fun of the fair - swings, cake-walks, roundabouts, shooting galleries and a host of stalls, with more sophisticated swing-boats, etc., as these were developed. Early this century Biddles Theatre, complete with fairground organ, presented its Ghost Show to packed houses and when Mr. Biddles died he was brought to Cockermouth for burial and was reputed to have the finest headstone in the cemetery. There was dancing all day in the Drill Hall and the Appletree dance room.

Not all the entertainment provided was of this quality and the grotesque played a part, such as the exhibition of an emaciated youth far gone in consumption. The amusements lining Main Street in 1874 Whit hiring were described by the West Cumberland Times [45] as 'ragabash', mostly human monstrosities and curiosities. They were reported no better the following November and this time there was the additional comment that

> "A considerable part of Main Street was lined with stalls Piled up with ginger-bread and other similar delectable substances that had been coated with the dust and mud of twenty market towns." [46]

These occasional visits to the town were accompanied by rowdyism and drunkenness. Cousin Charley wrote in the 'Chat' column of his children's magazine, following the Whitsun fair in 1900:-

> 'Hiring fairs are to me neither edifying or entertaining. The deafening din, the gaudy tinsel, and the jostling crowds have nothing attractive about them whilst drunkenness and rowdyism which are apparently the necessary accompaniments are decidedly objectionable. Of course, I know that some allowance has to be made for the farm servants, who, after being isolated in some quiet country district for six months, wish to make the most of their brief spell of freedom and possibly do not do this in the best or wisest manner." [47]

He goes on to contrast fair days with the better behaviour on the occasion of festivals and patriotic demonstrations. As the isolation of the farm worker lessened and visits to Cockermouth became more frequent the less desirable aspects of 'fair day' diminished.

When the fair was in Main Street traffic was diverted round the town, using the narrow entrance from the Market Place into Kirkgate, Victoria Road, Lorton Street, South Street and the then equally narrow opening of Sullart Street on to Crown Street. There were repeated objections to having it in Main Street because of the noise, smoke, dirt and the disturbance of arrival and erection during Saturday or Sunday night. Yet in 1930 tradesmen in the Cocker Bridge-Market Place area were asking that they might have amusements there as they were 'missing out'. As far back as the 1870s the press was pointing out that the town had bought Fairfield for £2000 and the rates were burdened with £80 a year interest on this sum, yet the caravans were still in Main Street. [48] The Local Board discussed a move in 1876 [49] and doubtless the matter came before the Board many times in the next 80 years.

It was the increasing size of road transport serving the factories of West Cumbria and the difficulty if not impossibility of long lorries and buses negotiating the alternative route through the town which finally drove the stalls and sideshows to the Fairfield car park. This was about 1970 and there was a hope, supported by the Cockermouth Town Council and a majority of the Chamber ofTrade, that it would return to Main Street when the new A66 was opened.[50] This hope did not materialise. The Showmen's Guild is happy - they prefer the Fairfield site [51] - but the town has lost a feature. There was something very appealing in the view of the town centre packed with stalls and massive fairground erections from Kirkgate to Sullart Street, particularly after dark when crowded with lights and life.

(Further examples of market tolls - Appendices 11 and 12)

Chapter 19 **Public Services**

Some of the services provided by local or central government are considered elsewhere - education, libraries, highways, police, etc. In this chapter we look at the remainder, provisions for the life of the town which usually began as private concerns but eventually passed into public control.

WATER

Cockermouth, like the rest of Britain, relied for water on the rivers and the wells, the former also serving as sewers and the latter often close to middens. Outbreaks of disease gradually strengthened the demand for a proper town supply and the first scheme evolved, taking water from the Cocker at a point above the town and its pollution, and pumping it to the old reservoir on the southern corner of Lamplugh Road and Parkside Avenue. Railway Terrace now stands on the site of the former water works, but the pump house remains in the corner of the enclosure, converted into a bungalow. (Figs. 70, 72) In 1874 two schemes were considered. The first was to extend the Cockermouth waterworks to supply Workington and the intermediate villages via a new reservoir near Scales Farm. [1] This £25,000 plan would have given Workington purer water, but it was never implemented, possibly because a bill was about to be considered by Parliament prohibiting the placing of sewage in rivers. (Cockermouth Local Board was granted an extension to find an alternative to its use of the Derwent.) The second and more favoured scheme was for a 'Whinlatter reservoir to supply Cockermouth, Workington, Maryport and the villages with 900,000 gallons per day. [2] This too was finally abandoned in 1876 and the following year the Crummock Water scheme was put forward. Parliament passed the Cockermouth and Workington Bill and water began flowing on 15 May 1880. The old pumping station by the Cocker was advertised for sale. [3] Since then various improvements in the supply have been made. A new reservoir was built on the opposite corner of Parkside Avenue, connected to one above Towers Lane (with a stone tower) which provides pressure for the higher parts of the town. In the 1960s a new pipe line was laid from Crummock and treatment works built downstream from Scalehill.

A handbook of the Local Board shows that in 1867 water charges were 'block' charges for dwellings, shops, inns, etc., in three broad categories of rateable value. By 1911 the block charge was giving way to one based upon rateable value - 2s. [10p] for a house rated up to £4, but beyond this 4d. in the pound. There were additional rates for certain trades - building, car hire, photography, etc. - and for gardens and animals. [4] In 1978, the supply now being part of the North West Water Authority, the domestic rate was 8½p. per pound rateable value, plus a basic charge of £5.50. NW Water now makes sewerage a separate charge, 10p in the pound in 1978. Complaints were made in 1921 of the inadequacy of the sewerage arrangements. An estimate of £20,000 was given for a new works,[5] but in a time of high unemployment such a scheme had an additional attraction and it went ahead, to be completed about four years later. [6] Meanwhile Maryport continued to obtain water from the outskirts of Cockermouth, pumping from a well by the Derwent, next to Low Gote Mill, to a height of 220 feet [67m] at the sand filtering beds at Bridekirk. [7] From there it flowed by gravity to the Hayborough reservoir. Alternative arrangements were made and the pumping station was converted into dwellings in 1974. The outstanding square and stepped chimney was demolished. The station had an attractive interior with decorative columns and a polished floor; also, until it went for scrap in the 1939-45 war, a beam engine. The stone-lined well has been preserved intact and covered in such a way that it may still be examined by the industrial archaeologist. [8] (Fig. 62).

GAS

Elaborate notices appeared in the town over the date October 26th. 1830 which announced "Lighting the Borough of Cockermouth with Gas. Subscriptions are now receiving for lighting this Town with Gas, in 600 Shares of £5 per Share". [9] With the £3000 thus raised a private company built the gas works in 1834. [10] Additional capital was raised later in the century for extensions. The Vestry discussed gas lighting in the streets in 1836 and eventually a contract was agreed with the gas company. In 1847 the lamp rate was 4d. in the pound. There was periodic disagreement between the Vestry and the company and at times the town was in complete darkness.

Negotiations for a take-over by the Local Board of what was now the Cockermouth Gas Light and Coke Company were ended by the arbitration of a firm of London solicitors (after both sides had

submitted bills to Parliament), as a result of which the Board took over the enterprise for £14,644 in 1888. At this time the streets were lit by some 170 lamps. [11] The Cockermouth undertaking passed to Northern Gas on 1 April 1947. In January 1970 the town supply was converted to North Sea natural gas and the Cockermouth works became storage only, the two holders having a capacity of 400,000 cubic feet. 1979 charges were 20.3 pence per therm for the first 52 therms used, then 15.3 pence, about ten times the cost in 1888. [12] Both holders have now been demolished.

ELECTRICITY

Cockermouth was one of the first towns in England to install electric street lighting. Because of dissatisfaction with the gas lighting of the town, the Local Board obtained two tenders from John Whittle and Son of Whitehaven. [13] The first was for 109 gas lamps with wooden posts and house brackets, with lighting and extinguishing for three years, at £275 per year. The second was for six Brush Electric Light System lamps, each of 2000 candle power and the six together estimated to be equivalent to 800 gas lamps. The six were to be placed in Crown Street (Derwent Street corner), Main Street (Sullart Street and Station Street), Market Place, Kirkgate Square and Station Street (South Street). Electric lighting not being economical for the back streets, 25 gas oil lamps would be erected in these. The total estimate, again with lighting and extinguishing, was £270 per year. Both estimates were slightly below the current cost of gas lighting and the second was accepted. Mr. McQuhae, the most enthusiastic supporter of the scheme, said when the tender was accepted "We shall have all the world to see us." [14] Certainly on 1 September 1881 people crowded into the town for the great switch-on. Four thousand came by train alone, a number of special trains being run. [15] The event was given much publicity and attracted attention overseas as well as in this country. A Paris engineer commissioned to light Buenos Aires wrote to the "President of the Municipality of Cockermouth" about the scheme. [16] Mr. McQuhae switched on in a shed built by Palmer Robinson in High Sand Lane to house the 12 HP dynamo. There was a flash and darkness, the second-hand engine not being able to meet the demand. [17] To temper the disappointment of the waiting crowds the supply was restored for two brief periods. A new dynamo was acquired and by 23 September five of the lamps were working. The electric lighting did not last and the town reverted to gas. In 1927 the Urban District Council contracted with the Old Silkstone Quarries Ltd. to supply electricity to the town [18] and electric street lighting gradually spread, but there was still a lamplighter after the last war and the last gas lamp disappeared in the 1970s. The Cockermouth Electric Light Company operated in 1883 . Later we had the Mid-Cumberland Electricity Co. Ltd., which in 1947 became part of the North Western Electricity Board, 'Norweb'. Since deregulation there have been frequent changes of ownership and a multitude of supplier names, e.g. United Utilities, Powergen, etc

FIRE BRIGADE

Cockermouth's first fire engine would be a hand-operated pump, then later came horse-drawn vehicles. At one time the engine was kept in a warehouse on the Sands [19] but there are references to one before the date of the Waterloo Street buildings. Apparently there was dissatisfaction with the fire fighting arrangements in the town, for in 1817, [20] a public meeting of the Proprietors of the Fire Engine and others was called by the Vestry to put matters on a sound basis. Eleven rules were drawn up, including payment for use in the town and in the country and the need for the engine to be used at least once every three months. The engine was owned by the subscribers, but a new move came when in 1847 the Vestry allowed £16 a quarter for its maintenance. It was kept at that time below the market hall and it was here that an old manual engine used in the 1870s and 1880s was crushed when the market hall floor collapsed during the war. [21]

A booklet of 18 'Rules of the Cockermouth Volunteer Fire Brigade' issued in 1864 stipulated the size of the force (20 effective members plus reserves); uniform (helmet, Guernsey shirt and belt for effective members, cap for reserves) to be worn only on duty; regular drills, with fines for absence; etc.

The rules carefully laid down the duties of officers and brigade members - who gave orders, positions on the hose, clearing up after a fire, etc., all in great detail.

There were procedures for entering buildings. Instructions were given for maintaining the engine and for care of the hoses, which at this time were of leather, woven canvas and india-rubber, certain oils for their preservation being prescribed.

These hopeful plans were not observed for long, for in April 1876 there was a complaint that the brigade had not had either a call-out or a practice for four years, the last being the burning of Mr. McQuhae's workshop in Challoner Street. [22] This accusation was denied, but it was accepted that few men turned up for drills. Whether there were any drills to attend is doubtful, judging from an experience just after Christmas in the same year which cannot be described in better words than those of 'Whiteoak' in the West Cumberland Times. [23] A barn fire occurred in the night at Greysouthen and, while the villagers did their best with buckets,

> "somebody was sent to Cockermouth to summon the Fire Brigade and Tom Weatherstone was chosen because his horse was the fastest in Greysouthen. He rode to Cockermouth at a furious pace and roused Superintendent Taylor, who roused Mr. John Cook, and among them they alerted the Fire Brigade men..... . they were told by word of mouth because when Superintendent Taylor tried to ring the fire bell the rope broke at the second tug. However, the men were collected at the engine house, but when they got inside they found the engine hidden under a heap of old tools and broken wheelbarrows which had to be shifted first. And then "Heave, heave!" . But the engine wouldn't budge. One of the wheel bearings had seized up in solid rust, and somebody had to fetch an oil can to try and work it loose. Working with commendable energy, the firemen decided that if one wheel had rusted up the others also needed oiling, so the engine was given a service while somebody, who had discovered another urgent requirement for the occasion, went to roust out the horseman at the Globe Hotel and borrow a couple of horses to haul the engine to Greysouthen. To make sure his horses were well treated the Globe ostler came along to drive them and all went well, once the nags were harnessed up, as the fire engine, well loaded with firemen, sped along Main Street to the cheers of those of the populace who had bothered to get up. . . . at the Bread and Beer House, near Brigham,. . . a wheel flew off the engine and its crew were pitched head over heels into the dyke. ... A lynch pin had come out of the axle, so another was found and fitted, but a few hundred yards on the wheel came off again. . . Once on the spot . . . with three men on each handle of the manual pump, the Fire Brigade sprung into action. The men holding the nozzle of the hose waited in vain for water to appear, and then a shriek from the now unemployed Greysouthen firefighters told them where their water had gone. The hose had a hole in it, and was spraying the crowd."

This experience apparently provoked the town into action, for a year later uniforms were newly bought for the Volunteer Brigade and we find the Council taking a greater part. The services of the brigade still had to be paid for in the 1920s and subscribers and non subscribers to the brigades funds paid by the hour at different rates. In 1923, for example, there was the following table of charges:- [24]

Town Fires

	First hour	Each additional hour
Captain	7s	5s
Lieutenant	6s	4s
Firemen	3s 6d	2s 6d

Country Fires

	First hour		Each additional hour	
	Subs	Non-subs	Subs	Non-subs
Captain	8s	10s	6s	7s
Lieutenant	7s	9s	5s	6s
Firemen	5s	6s	3½s	4s

Basic charge for subscribers £3-10s-0. [£3.50]
Basic charge for non-subscribers £6

In 1921 there were 14 members of the brigade and they received drill allowances of 3s. per hour for not more than nine drills a year. [25] The Cockermouth Brigade became part of the National Fire Service during the war. The Cumberland Fire Service was formed in 1948 and on local government reorganisation on 1 April 1974 was absorbed into the Cumbria Fire Service, the second largest territorially in the country.

The establishment of the Cockermouth brigade in 1979 was 12. It was a retained brigade, (i.e. part-time). In 1979 [26] the fee payable to firemen was £341 per year, in addition to which a man received £2.50 for attending a fire and £1.36 for reporting to the station in response to an emergency call.

In 1995 there are two categories of firemen, those undertaking to attend 100% of call-outs, paid £1440 rising to £1575 after three years' service, and those attending 75% with £1080 rising to £1185. Attendance at a fire earns £10.67 plus £4.75 per hour and for responding to an emergency call the

payment is £5.80. Personnel attend the station two hours a week for training and maintenance of equipment, for which they are paid. There is no charge for the services of the brigade in attending fires or other incidents involving human life, but a charge is made for help in other ways, such as filling a swimming pool. Cockermouth has a water tender carrying 400 gallons but no longer possesses the 35ft. [10.7m] ladder which it had in 1979, its needs being supplemented by appliances from neighbouring towns.

The county fire service moved from Carlisle to Grecian Villa in 1955, occupying three first-floor rooms and sharing with other tenants such as Weights and Measures and the Court, It eventually took over the whole of the building. Then in 1986 what was now the Cumbria HQ moved to purpose-built premises on the former station site which were opened by Princess Anne on 30 March 1987. From here are controlled 5 full-time and 33 retained brigades, having over 700 full and part-time staff. The total of calls per year around 1980 was some 5000, of which 109 were answered by the Cockermouth brigade, now risen to 9,000 turn-outs for all reasons in 1994/5, 171 by Cockermouth. A new fire station for the town adjacent to the county headquarters was built in 2002. [In 2006, no use has been agreed for the old site.] Cumbria Fire Service is one of the most efficient in the country, making good use of modern technology. This is a far cry from the time, not so long ago, when the men had to look for horses when the alarm sounded. The present range of efficient appliances is also a far cry from the engines provided by public subscription, even into the 20th century. A handbill issued in 1922 under the heading 'Fire Brigade, Cockermouth' read:

> "Dear Sir or Madam, In order to protect you from the terrible consequences of Fire, it is proposed to purchase for Cockermouth and District, one of the New Stanley Motor Fire Engines, at a cost of about £500. . . . We propose to raise the money amongst property owners of the district." [27]

The handbill describes the engine and appeals to each to contribute their fair share, pointing out that Lord Leconfield had given £35. This new engine was housed in Fairfield, but in 1948 the Lorton Street station was built. The siren was on the station roof until July 1972 when radio alerters were issued to firemen.

PARKS

In June 1893 a public meeting was held in the Court House to consider how the town might commemorate the marriage of the Duke of York to Princess Mary. [28] The provision of a public park was the proposal most favoured and the next year the Local Board suggested an area on Rubby Banks, with Deer Orchard as a possible alternative. The estimated cost was £1500 with annual expenses of £120. Within a few months Mrs. Eliza J. Harris, who had been considering how she could commemorate the life of her husband Joseph, offered the town £2000 to purchase land for a park in his memory. [29] Hence 'Harris Park' of some 13 acres on Rubby Banks. A Public Park Committee was formed, but management was soon taken over by the Council. In the early 1970s, when the Riverdale Estate was built, land on the east bank of the Cocker below the 150 feet contour was added to the park. In August 1987 two members of the Harris family came from the south of the country to open a new 'bower' or clubhouse for the Harris Park Bowling Club. In three years in the early 1980s, peace trees were planted near the terrace walk to mark the anniversary of Hiroshima. Arranged by the Cockermouth Peace Group, in 1981 trees were planted by Dale Campbell-Saviours (local MP) and John Crawley,Rector of Cockermouth. In addition to the Wordsworth memorial fountain and a drinking fountain near the tool shed (moved from a site near the railway station in 1920), the park once had a gun, the base for which remains with the words 'Taken in 1857 and placed here to commemorate completion of the Water Works March 1877'. In 1933 a scheme was put forward for constructing bathing and paddling pools at the bottom of the park, principally to provide employment, but this was never started.

Another scheme which never reached fruition was the development of land in High Sand Lane as Coronation Gardens. In 1937 the Council asked Messrs. Jennings for the land and the brewery gave it to the town, the Council to be responsible for clearing and fencing it.

There are a few open spaces in the town for which the Council is responsible. The land for the Memorial Gardens on the north bank of the Derwent was bought in 1946 and opened as a war memorial by Lt. Col. Chicken on 11 August 1956. The gardens were recently extended eastwards along the bank of the river. To celebrate the 1990 European Year for the Disabled, a Euro-trail for the

disabled, suitable for wheelchairs, was made here in July 1991, much of the work being done by fourteen members of an International Voluntary Work Camp drawn from nine countries. Since then a similar track has been laid in the original Memorial Gardens, sponsored by Rotary and a number of local firms. Small play areas have been provided on the Slate Fell estate, the Riverdale estate and on Isel Road, and more are being asked for. The Council also maintains small areas of flowers in the Gote, at the Derwent Bridge corner, in the rockery at the top of Kirkgate, round the war memorial and, most notable of all, along the centre of Main Street.

BURIAL GROUNDS AND THE CEMETERY

Burial was originally in the churchyard, but interments also took place in Sepulchre Close in St. Helen's Street, [30] behind the Friends' Meeting House and, judging from the gravestones, behind the United Reformed Church and in front of the Town Hall (formerly the Wesleyan Methodist Church), on these two sites. The last two were small areas; the Quaker burial ground is still used occasionally. The churchyard naturally became overcrowded and in 1854 a meeting

> "resolved that a new Burial Ground be provided by the Ratepayers of the Township of Cockermouth".

Nine ratepayers were elected to form the Burial Board. Later the same year the Board was given authority to purchase part of Cockermouth Common for a Burial Ground. [31]

In summer 1855 the Board bought the Parsonage Field of five acres from General Wyndham. Charles Eaglesfield was the architect of the buildings –

> "The Churchmen's Chapel, on the right, will be joined to the Dissenters' Chapel, on the left, by a beautiful tower rising over the entrance, which will cause the chapels and gateway to have the solemn appearance of an ecclesiastical structure."

The total cost of land, landscaping, chapels and curator's house was £2,800. [32] The cemetery had been enlarged three times already by 1912 and by 1938 the original five acres had grown to almost 20. A further post-war extension was made eastwards along the railway line. The valley of Tom Rudd makes it a most attractive area, especially when spring bulbs are in flower in the older portions.

When the cemetery was first opened in 1856, being consecrated by the Bishop of Carlisle on 12 September of that year, the approach from the town was down Skinner Street and up Scarwell Brow. A funeral procession was preceded by the verger, carrying a prayer book and indicating by his dress the status of the deceased. He was given black crepe to fix round his hat for a man's funeral, a pair of white gloves to carry for a spinster, etc. At one time this official was the Mr. Mounsey who saved the church silver and when the railway was newly opened he was on one occasion nearly run down by the funeral horses, startled by a shunting engine puffing steam over the bridge. [33] For almost the whole of the twentieth century the cemetery has been in the care of two families J.D. and then William Percy Kirkbride, followed by Harry and then Norman Pitts. The curator in 1995 was R. Deacon.

THE POSTAL SERVICE

We consider elsewhere the post-coach connections between Cockermouth and other parts of the country and the 1761 attempts to improve these connections by new "cross road branches."[34] An early post office in the town was a room on the Kitty Went side of the Globe. [35] There was a wall letter-box here until 1882. William Wood was postmaster. Cockermouth was a halt on a through post route, for mail from London, Lancashire and the south arrived at 8am. and at the same time there was a dispatch to Workington; mail arrived from Workington at 5 pm. and at the same time there was a dispatch southwards. In 1829 the town had a horse post to and from Maryport at 8-10 am. and 4 p.m., and a foot Post on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings to Bridekirk, Tallentire, Gilcrux and Aspatria, with an incoming mail later the same days. [36] William Wood was followed by his son Jonathan who moved the office across Main Street into Smails Yard, where he combined it with a wine and spirit business.

In 1847 the London morning mail arrived by rail from Carlisle - this was Cockermouth's first year with a rail link to Workington. The 'evening' mail coach arrived at 1.26am from Windermere Station, bringing also Kendal, Ambleside and Keswick bags. Outgoing letters went by rail to Carlisle at 5-50 pm. [37]

In 1874 the post office opened from 12-45 to 1-45 on Sunday for delivery of mail to callers. The office was at William Bell's in Station Street by 1883. Postal business could be done from 7 am.

to 8 pm., 8 to 10 am. on Sundays, money order and savings bank from 9 to 5 and telegraph from 8 to 8. [38]

There was initially no country delivery. Farmers' mail [39] was left 'at their quarters' in the town, each having a fixed place, such as a particular inn, where he would call on each visit. The Earl of Lonsdale was mainly responsible for starting country deliveries when he was Postmaster General. In 1889 a rural postman, William Barwise, was provided with a pony and trap. [40] Some used bicycles, others walked. One took the 7 am. train to Bassenthwaite Lake and walked back via Bewaldeth and Isel. [41] In 1905 the Cockermouth area included Greysouthen, Arlecdon, Lamplugh, Buttermere, Bassenthwaite Lake, Tallentire and Broughton. [42]

Gradually the times of inward and outward mails [43] extended, e.g. 6-30 am. to 7-20 pm. in 1905, the 7-20 being a "supplementary night mail despatch (by Apparatus)", but since the second war there has been a contraction in the number of collections from boxes and in the opening hours of the offices. There is now only one sub-office in the town, in Windmill Lane, and the Station Street office ceased to be a crown office in 1970. It has moved very frequently – Station Street, 18 Main Street in the early 1990's, then into Walter Willson's Supermarket in Lowther Went and now into the Co-op Supermarket further up on Station Street.

TELEPHONE SERVICES

The National Telephone Company applied to the Local Board for permission to extend its exchange in 1885, [44] so Cockermouth had the telephone by then. The first exchange had been opened in London in 1878. The first Cockermouth exchange and call office' was at Joseph P. Douglas's hairdressers at 82 Main Street (now R Relph's butchers shop) and then at Miss Ede's baby linen & ladies underclothing shop, on the corner of Bridge Street (94 Main Street). Miss Ede moved with it to the post office when the Company was nationalised in 1912. A modern automatic exchange is situated behind Norham House.

Broadband access to the Internet arrived in 2004 for the town although some of the outlying villages are still too far from the exchanges to have the full benefit of this.