

Newsletter

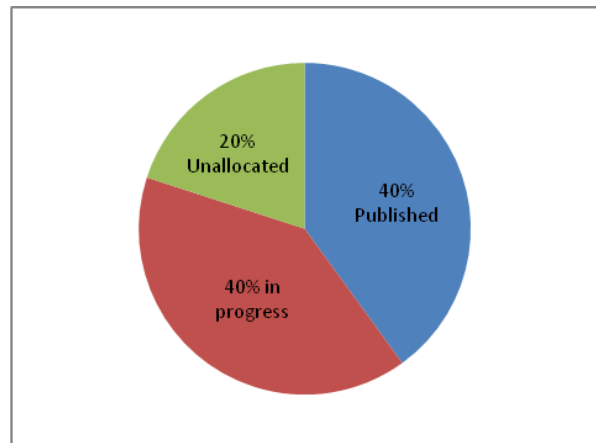
No. 6

August 2012

Welcome to the sixth CCHT e-newsletter intended to keep you up-to-date with the VCH Cumbria project. This issue contains contributions from VCH volunteers, detailing some of the activities they have been involved with. There is a report by Jane Penman on her experience of the IHR Local History Summer School in June, and a piece on calendaring Cumberland Quarter Session Petitions by Adrian Allan.

JD Progress Update

We are pleased to report that as of 1st August, 135 Jubilee Digests have been published on the CCHT website, with another 135 in progress. This means we are well on the way to achieving our target of producing Digests for all 340 places in Cumbria!



If anyone has completed a Digest and has not submitted it, please do so as soon as you can. An updated list of unallocated places can be found on the CCHT website. Many of these are small, rural townships and will not take long to produce Digests for. Please help us to allocate these as soon as possible!

Work has also begun to add online links, images and other resources relevant to each Digest entry. If you would like to submit a photograph, or know of a good local history website, please contact Sarah Rose: s.rose2@lancaster.ac.uk

We would also like to include a bibliography of secondary source material for each place. Some volunteers were involved in this task in 2011, but we need more bibliographies to be submitted. If you have completed a digest for your township/parish and would like to help us with this task, please get in touch.

Exploring Cumbria in London

IHR Local History Summer School, June 2012

I learnt of this summer school through the CCHT. It fell just at the right moment, when I had already done some original research on my VCH township and was becoming fascinated by the work but at the same time increasingly conscious of the gaps in my historical knowledge. So that these should be not quite bottomless chasms, I signed up. It cost £170.

It was a three day course, organised by the Institute of Historical Research (IHR) at University College, London. There were six talks per day, the majority concerning sources, but some more discursive, for example those on 'Locality and Religion', on 'The Market Town', and on palaeography (a practical lesson). I liked the wide spread of the topics, because these formed my introduction to the subject of local history as a whole and alerted me to sources I hadn't thought of, such as the British Film Library, and to interesting academic ideas such as the religion of place.

On the second evening a guided walk around Bloomsbury encouraged detailed interaction with the immediate environment. Elizabeth Williamson from VCH Central Office led us and taught us to compare visible building patterns with bomb maps and to trace the original layout of aristocratic mansions and gardens in the present landscape. There was other entertainment, too, outside class time. On the first evening we were offered free admission to the Fitch lecture at IHR. The subject was a consideration of why the 20th century British monarchy matters, delivered by the mischievous and erudite David Starkey, on sparkling form.

Opportunities to talk to the course lecturers and to network with other students were a valuable part of the experience. There were forty-six of us, only four of whom were VCH volunteer researchers, although the VCH was a central theme of the course and many of the speakers were VCH historians. Of the other students, a large number were following OU courses, some were attached to institutions and some engaged in their own private research. Simon Trafford, the course director, held it all together and tirelessly answered questions, sensible or otherwise. I came away loaded with information, contacts and ideas.

This year's summer school in local history was apparently the first of its kind at IHR. It was felt to be very successful and we can expect it to run in other years. I would certainly recommend it if you can manage the dates (late June). I was non-residential, but students who had booked university accommodation seemed happy with it.

Jane Penman, Martindale

David Starkey lecture at Rheged, 6th November

Tickets for this event are selling briskly and members are advised to order soon (cheque for £25 per ticket, payable to Cumbria County History Trust, to Richard Brockington, Highland Hall, Renwick, Penrith, CA10 1JL).

'Common Stories' History Workshop

A new 1-year project, entitled 'Building Commons Knowledge', based at the Universities of Lancaster and Newcastle aims to help communities to research and record the history of common land in their local area. Historians Professor Angus Winchester and Dr Eleanor Straughton will be providing a free online 'Commons History Toolkit' to get people started, and will be holding a small number of research workshops in autumn 2012.

The aim is to recapture something of the unwritten history of common land in England and Wales in the 20th century, to chronicle how commons were used and managed, to chart the changes which have taken place in living memory, and to record cultural events (sports, fairs etc) linked to common land. Local historians and commoners themselves are invited to work together to record oral testimonies and explore the documentary and landscape history of their commons. Findings submitted to the project will be posted online in a 'Resource Bank' accessible to all.

We are particularly interested in gathering commons histories from around Cumbria, and will be holding a free research workshop on the evening of **Monday 10 September 2012, 7-9pm, at the Conference Centre at Newton Rigg, near Penrith**, for commoners and local historians in Cumbria.

If you are interested in attending the Cumbria workshop, or would like to know more about the project, then please get in touch with Eleanor Straughton, History Department, Lancaster University, LA1 4YT; email: e.straughton@lancaster.ac.uk

Appeal for Information

VCH Volunteer Alastair Robertson is seeking information about John Smeaton - the first civil engineer. He is trying to find out about his thirteen years as one of the two Receivers for the Greenwich Hospital in the north. If you can help with this, please contact Alastair at alastair.f.robertson@googlemail.com

NEW! Lowther & Askham History & Archaeology Society

Lowther & Askham History & Archaeology Society (LAHAS) was founded in March 2012 with the support of the Lowther Castle & Gardens Trust and the encouragement of CCHT. It is based in the picturesque and thriving village of Askham, where a large village hall provides facilities for our meetings. The starting membership is 34. Meetings are held on the third Monday of the month and visitors are welcome at a small charge. We have already had talks on a range of subjects including 'Wordsworth and Lowther: a tangled relationship', 'The Westmorland Dialect' and 'The Roman Invasion of Britain'. So far we have focused on local history, but our scope includes all historical and archaeological subjects that might appeal to members.

Not all meetings are lecture evenings. In July we held a 'show and tell' evening at which members brought along their own items of historic interest to identify and discuss, and on Monday 20th August we shall be making a visit to Yanwath Hall, by kind permission of Mr David Altham. A highlight of our first year will be a talk by food historian Ivan Day and a dinner, prepared under his instruction, in imitation of a menu from the great days of Lowther Castle.

The Society is distinctive for its commitment to archaeology and under the guidance of its chairman, Mr Joseph Jackson, a group is learning practical archaeology through a series of field trips. The first of these investigated the prehistoric landscape on the fell at Crosby Ravensworth and in August we shall be sieving molehills on Askham moor in search of flints or other artefacts. Mr Jackson has also given the archaeology group a highly instructive talk on aerial photography as an archaeological tool.

Lowther Castle can be seen as the Society's local 'stately home', and we have a close working relationship with the Lowther Castle & Gardens Trust, which opened the restored gardens and parts of the castle buildings to the public in spring 2012. At the Trust's invitation, a group of LAHAS members is mounting a series of displays about life at Lowther in the 'old days', using material contributed by the families of former employees at the Castle. You can see this unique exhibition of photographs, letters, diary entries and similar documents in the Old Stables at Lowther Castle from early August (admission free). The first display is on 'Work and Service at Lowther'.

Please support this new and enthusiastic history society. Wherever you live in Cumbria, if you would like to become a member, attend a meeting as a visitor, suggest a talk or activity, or if you have material to contribute to the Lowther Castle displays, please contact the LAHAS secretary Mrs Lyn Cole on 01931 712448, or through info@hallinbank.co.uk

VCH Commemorative Publication

The VCH has produced a Jubilee commemorative publication, which includes new research by Professor John Beckett, former VCH Director, into how the VCH was founded and how the original dedication came about. The special character and research of VCH counties is highlighted, in order to spread the word about present activities as well as past achievements. The publication is available to purchase via the School of Advanced Study and an e-book version is available at <http://events.sas.ac.uk/support-research/publications/944>

Lecture on Cockermouth

CWAAS will be hosting a lecture by Professor Angus Winchester at the Kirkgate Centre, Cockermouth on 16th November 2012 at 7.30pm. The lecture is on 'Writing the History of Cockermouth and its area'. Admission is free; tickets are available from Rob David, 16 Green Rd., Kendal, LA9 4QR (with sae please).

During the lecture two books recently published by the Society will be launched: *The Cockermouth Congregational Church Book (1651-c1765)*, edited by R. B. Wordsworth and *Cockermouth, Cumbria: Archaeological Investigation of Three Burgage Plots in Main Street*, edited by Roger Leech and Richard Gregory.

History of Mining on Alston Moor

Alastair Robertson has recently published a book entitled 'The Foreigners in the Hills', the story of the Vieille Montagne Zinc Mining Company of Belgium on Alston Moor. Copies are available from Alastair at Ashleigh House, Nenthead Road, Alston, Cumbria CA9 3SN, price £10.70 incl. p&p.

Archive News

Cumbria Archive Service now has a twitter account @CumbriaArchives. More details at <http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/archives>

Barrow Archives and Local Studies Centre is now closed on Mondays until further notice. This is due to a reduction in staff.

There have been several additions to the CASCAT catalogue which may interest VCH researchers. These include mining publications and press cuttings c.1930-1968 [DX1326], and railway records 1871-1899 [DX 1286].

A window into the past: calendaring Petitions submitted to Cumberland Quarter Sessions, 1773 – 76

Besides the minute books (1667–1971) and the order books (1696–1889), the less formal records of Cumberland's Quarter Sessions held by the Carlisle Archive Centre include files of petitions dating from 1686–1942. In continuation of an existing calendar up to 1771, as a volunteer, I recently completed a calendar of those 950- odd papers which make up most of the 'petitions' dating from 1773 – 76. The calendar will be made available on CASCAT in due course.

A major part of the JPs' work concerned the operation of the poor law and the petitions are predominantly those of poor persons (including an unemployed weaver who states he fought at the Battle of Culloden in 1746) seeking relief from their parish or (if in gaol) an allowance from the county. In some cases, the petitioner complains about their treatment in the parish Poor House; a blind schoolmaster is bold enough to call for the abolition of the 'inhuman custom of farming out the poor'. But also on the files of 'petitions' are the orders made for the removal of named individuals to their place of legal settlement (usually within Cumberland but in one case at Edinburgh) and the orders of affiliation and maintenance to oblige the parents of 'bastard' children to pay weekly sums to the parish for their maintenance. A few cases of transportation of convicts from the County Gaol, Carlisle are recorded, with a certificate of the receipt by South Potomac, Virginia of a man convicted at the Assizes shipped from Whitehaven. In claiming his fee as Surgeon to the Gaol, Mr Jos. Losh reported on the good health of prisoners, who are listed in the Gaoler's accounts submitted to the justices. A female midwife claims her expenses in delivering a child in the gaol. Repairs to the gaol include those to leg irons and neck yokes. In only one case is a more severe punishment recorded – payment for whipping a man three Tuesdays through Penrith.

The upkeep by parishes of their highways led to parish highway surveyors' requests for an order for a rate of 6d in the pound on occupiers of property to pay for road repairs and the subsequent JP's certificate that such roads were now 'sufficiently' repaired. Meanwhile, the County Bridgemaster submitted a regular report on bridges repaired and requiring repair (including Lanercost Bridge), even rebuilding (Croglin Bridge and Deepa Bridge).

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That such repairs were required is evidenced in some of the poignant verdicts of inquest juries submitted by the Coroners (who claimed fees for riding to and holding inquests very shortly after a death).

A large number of the inquests concern those young and old drowned (crossing bridges and rivers, falling into Whitehaven Harbour, falling into mill races, bathing at Workington and in the River Eden, Carlisle); other fatalities are of an industrial nature: the collapse of coal pits roofs at Arlecdon and Bolton, a wagon way accident at Whitehaven, a water-operated grindstone accident at Egremont. A not insignificant number of 'lunatics', male and female, are recorded as having committed suicide. The death of a man from poddage or hasty pudding he made with oatmeal, which was found to contain white arsenic bought at Richmond, is recorded as leading to the son-in-law's commitment to trial at the Assizes. The transport by ship of salt from Liverpool to Whitehaven is also recorded, the cargo being lost on the sloop being stranded off the quay end of Whitehaven Port.

Nonconformist Meeting Houses were licensed by the JPs (many of them Anglican clergy) and included in the files is a single petition (granted), for a house at Maryport to be licensed as a place of worship for Protestant Dissenters.

The more human details which the petitions provide are generally couched in common forms (e.g. a removal order and the order of affiliation and maintenance) which appear to be closely modelled on those given in *The Justice of the Peace and Parish Officer* by the Revd Dr Richard Burn (1709 – 85), Vicar of Orton, a Westmorland JP. The first such manual to have been published since the early 17th century, the first edition was published in 1754 and the 22nd edition as late as 1869. Better known as joint author with Joseph Nicolson of a history of Westmorland and Cumberland (1777), at present Cumbria County Library does not hold a copy of his *Justice of the Peace*.

Adrian Allan

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