

## Nonconformists in Cartmel Fell

*By Jennifer Forsyth*

The Quaker Meeting House at Height was built on land bequeathed in 1676 by Lawrence Newton, at whose house meetings had previously been held.\* A marriage was performed there in 1660. The date on the Meeting House is 1677, before the Act of Toleration, and accounts for its building still exist. Opposite is the burial ground, walled and gated with a protective porch. It is believed that a much smaller burial ground exists on the ground which belonged to Lawrence Newton, the porch and wall having fallen around 2005. (*I would love to have this explored and confirmed.*)

George Fox visited the area on more than one occasion and had a profound influence. He preached from a stone, now listed, on the borders of Cartmel Fell, Witherslack and Crosthwaite parishes at Pool Bank. The conversions he made there lasted in the Pearson family until the twentieth century, but in Lindale they threw him in the horse trough.

Pockets of Friends flourished in various parts of Cartmel Fell, from Spooner Close down by the Lake, Hare Hill below the Meeting House, Tar n Green on the lower road, to Birket Houses and the Wood. These last two estates were owned by the Birket family, some of whom became Quakers, spreading the message of the Religious Society of Friends to Antigua and Barbados, where they traded from Lancaster.

Examination of local wills at this period seem to show no animosity among families or individuals who diverged from the Church of England, despite the antagonism of the Church leaders and major land owners. Many were witness to wills other than their own religion, or were writing letters in amiable terms.

A chest of papers was found at the end of the twentieth century at the site of Height, i.e. Lawrence Newton's house, but in a nineteenth century Webster rebuild. Among the items was a diary of the caretaker of the Meeting House, Jonathan Wilson, 1693-1780, containing records of all visiting Friends. These were from as far afield as New England, but others from all over Britain. Copies of all these are in K.R.O.

\* Copy of the conveyance in KRO.