

## **Victoria County History of Cumbria Project. Draft parish/township histories**

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Parish/township: FAWCETT FOREST

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# **FAWCETT FOREST<sup>1</sup>**

## **LANDSCAPE, SETTLEMENT AND BUILDINGS**

Fawcett Forest was a thinly-populated, rural, upland township six miles north of Kendal of 6,470 a. (2618 ha.). From its lowest point (c.145 m.) – at the confluence of the Ashstead Beck and Bannisdale Beck in the south-east corner of the township – the land rises to Harrop Pike (637 m.) at its north-west tip. The topography has no obvious geographical unity but includes parts of three roughly parallel valleys, divided by ridges of high land, orientated on a south-east to north-west axis together with part of a north-south orientated valley. The township thus included most of Bannisdale, the head of Borrowdale, all of Crookdale and the western side of the valley formed by the Ashstead Beck.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Lenore Knowles, Romola Stringer, Geoff Brambles, Bridget Machell, Sylvia Kelly at Kendal Library and Max Clark at Kendal Archives for their assistance when researching this article.

<sup>2</sup> The head of the valley of the River Mint and might be called Mintdale but has never been described as such.

The name Fawcett was first written as Faxside in the 13th century and is believed to describe a ‘variegated hillside.’<sup>3</sup> There are 13th century references to the forest of Bannisdale<sup>4</sup> but ‘Fawcett Forest’ is not recorded until 1539 when it was described as the manor and lordship of Fawcett alias Fawcett Forest.<sup>5</sup> Later descriptions sometimes refer to ‘Bannisdale and Fawcett Forest’ implying that they were previously separate entities.<sup>6</sup> The name Bannisdale<sup>7</sup> is thought to be Scandinavian in origin and has been interpreted as ‘Bannand’s valley.’<sup>8</sup>

### **Boundaries**

From Harrop Pike the southern boundary follows the high ground between Bannisdale and Longsleddale before descending to and then following the Bannisdale Beck. The eastern boundary tracks the Ashstead Beck northwards and then crosses the watershed to the Borrow Beck. It turns briefly downstream before ascending to higher ground over Crookdale Crag and Red Crag and then goes westwards via Little and Great Yarlside to return to Harrop. The high moorland boundaries favour the rather indeterminate ridges but are identifiable as they nearly always follow fences or drystone walls of unknown age. These boundaries may be the same as those described in the 12th and 13th centuries<sup>9</sup> but could relate to the later Bellingham manor.<sup>10</sup> Several of the named places, including the starting point for early

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<sup>3</sup> *PNW*, I, 137. 13th century variants include Fakside, Fauxsyd and Fausyde.

<sup>4</sup> *Rec. Kend*, I, 231.

<sup>5</sup> *Rec. Kend*, I, 235, 236. The earliest Kendal parish register entry is for November 1575. Later entries often abbreviate to ‘the Forest.’ Saxton (1579) and some subsequent mapmakers write ‘Fawcetwood’ but this name does not occur in the parish registers.

<sup>6</sup> See Landownership below.

<sup>7</sup> Usually pronounced ‘Bannis–dll’ by nearby native-born residents.

<sup>8</sup> D. Whaley, *Dict. LDPN*, 17.

<sup>9</sup> See Landownership below.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

perambulations, the Arnestein<sup>11</sup> – a rock on the boundary of Fawcett Forest and Whinfell – cannot now be definitely identified.<sup>12</sup>

The township of Fawcett Forest straddled the Borrow Beck – traditionally considered to be the boundary between the Baronies of Kendal and Westmorland although the Kendal Barony's influence seems to have once extended well into the Bottom of Westmorland.<sup>13</sup> The ancient parish boundaries and the pre-1856 division between the dioceses of Carlisle and Chester also followed the Borrow Beck. The township was further subdivided as the parishes of Orton and Shap were separated by the Crookdale Beck. In consequence, a large part of the area of the township – although only a handful of habitations – was in Orton or Shap parish rather than Kendal parish and for part of its history in the East or West Ward rather than the Kendal Ward of Westmorland.

The new 1894 civil parish boundaries adopted the ecclesiastical parish boundaries thereby creating a reduced modern Fawcett Forest parish of 3,935 a. (1,592 ha.) within South Westmorland Rural District. These boundaries were amended in 1935<sup>14</sup> when 366 a. (148 ha.) were taken from Shap, Orton and Whinfell parishes and Fawcett Forest expanded to 4,301 a. (1,740 ha.). The only occupied houses within the large area previously removed from the township – High Borrow Bridge, Hause Foot and High House – then rejoined Fawcett Forest.<sup>15</sup> Nearly all of Fawcett Forest was included in the Lake District National Park boundaries of 1951 and the remainder was added by the 2016 extension.

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<sup>11</sup> Eagle rock. Also Arnestan(e) or Ernestan, *Rec. Kend.* I., 223, 231, 388-90.

<sup>12</sup> Possibly the rock on the earlier township boundary at NY552037 that overlooks Borrowdale and Crookdale.

<sup>13</sup> Rev. J Hodgson, *A Topographical and Historical Description of Westmorland*, (London, 1810), 3.

<sup>14</sup> Westmorland Review Order, (1934).

<sup>15</sup> Descriptions within this article assume township boundaries as they were before 1894.

## Landscape

The western parts of Fawcett Forest consist of hills covered with rough grasses and the partially drained blanket bogs<sup>16</sup> that merge at the head of Bannisdale, Borrowdale and Crookdale. The higher ground is nearly treeless, as is the Crookdale valley and even on the north-eastern edge, where the A6 has been cut into the slopes below Crookdale Crag and tracked by two lines of pylons, the area appears almost empty. In most seasons, the greener pastures beside the winding streams in the valley bottoms contrast with the darker areas above the fell walls where grasses dominate but there are also swathes of bracken, bilberry and heather and areas of exposed rock, usually on valley shoulders.

This is upland country of character but too bleak to attract numerous admirers or walkers.

The 1769 description of the Shap Fells as, ‘not only barren but destitute of every picturesque beauty,’<sup>17</sup> is not very different from the response of the 20th century Lake District enthusiast, Alfred Wainwright, who described a ridge route around Crookdale, as ‘very lonely territory’ where ‘the desolation is profound’ and ‘not Lakeland.’<sup>18</sup>

The south-eastern part of the township is of a different character – a softer, rolling landscape of fields and woods sloping down to the Ashstead Beck. Bannisdale is less bleak and more wooded than the other valleys but has only a single-track access road. In 1844 it was proposed as the site of two reservoirs to maintain water supplies to local mills during dry

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<sup>16</sup> Drainage grips were cut in the 20th century but between 2012 and 2017 work was undertaken in bunding and peat reprofiling, See: [https://restorerivers.eu/wiki/index.php?title=Case\\_study%3ASource\\_to\\_Sea\\_Programme\\_-\\_5.\\_Borrowdale\\_Moss,\\_Peatland\\_Restoration](https://restorerivers.eu/wiki/index.php?title=Case_study%3ASource_to_Sea_Programme_-_5._Borrowdale_Moss,_Peatland_Restoration) (Accessed June 16, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland*, (London, 1769), 278.

<sup>18</sup> A. Wainwright, *The Far Eastern Fells, A Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells, Book Two*, (Kendal, 1957), Grey Crag 6.

periods and in 1962 there was a Manchester Corporation scheme to build a large dam to abstract water. The Bannisdale part of the earlier scheme<sup>19</sup> was not implemented and the later one defeated in the House of Lords<sup>20</sup> and it remains ‘the most secluded of Westmorland’s valleys.’<sup>21</sup>

Named hills within the township include: White Howe, Long Crag, High House Bank, Robin Hood and Lord’s Seat. In addition, the Fawcett Forest boundaries traverse Capplebarrow, Ancrow Brow, Crookdale Crag, Red Crag, Great and Little Yarlside and Harrop Pike. Only Harrop exceeds 600; the other hills range from 420-600 metres above sea level.

### *Geology, Soils, Relief*

The north-west edge of Fawcett Forest is underlain by the older rocks of the Borrowdale Volcanic Group, but the bedrock of most of the area is composed of the predominantly sandstone Coniston Group and the overlying siltstones and mudstones of the Bannisdale Formation.<sup>22</sup> The rock sequence is contorted by the major east-north-eastwards trending downfold known as the Bannisdale syncline that crosses the area.<sup>23</sup>

The high ground has extensive areas of peat such as Borrowdale Moss and some areas are permanently wet and others hagged. Soils are often shallow on upper slopes with exposures of rock but the lower slopes and valley floors have considerable depths of glacial till. This

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<sup>19</sup> An Act for Making and Maintaining Reservoirs in the Parish of Kendal in the County of Westmorland 1845.

<sup>20</sup> Manchester Corporation Bill, 1961.

<sup>21</sup> A. Wainwright, *Three Westmorland Rivers*, (Kendal, 1979), 1, Bannisdale.

<sup>22</sup> B.G.S., *Geology of the Kendal District*, (NERC 2010), Sheet 39: Kendal Bedrock (2007) & Bedrock and Superficial Deposits (2008).

<sup>23</sup> The Shap Fell roadside cuttings and rocky exposures of Crookdale Crag (NY 555054) are listed as an SSSI because of the geological interest of the exposure of the syncline at this site.

forms fine loamy or silty soils that drain well but are usually moist because of the high rainfall. The rivers in these glacial, upland valleys all flow to the south but, whereas the Crookdale and Borrow Becks are part of the Lune catchment, the Bannisdale Beck and Ashstead Beck join to become the River Mint that drains to the Kent.

## **Communications**

### ***Roads and bridges***

The early medieval grants to Byland Abbey refer to a road from Kendal to Westmorland through the area.<sup>24</sup> This is likely to have taken the same route through the gap between Nab End and Ashstead Fell, along Crookdale and up Shap Fell that was later followed by the turnpike road. The ‘Horse House’ probably referring to Hause House or Hause Foot,<sup>25</sup> appears on a 1675 London to Carlisle road map.<sup>26</sup> The Jacobite and pursuing government armies struggled along this route in 1745 and in 1753 the Heronsyke and Eamont Bridge turnpike trust was founded to improve it.<sup>27</sup> Between 1819 and 1827<sup>28</sup> most of this section of road was realigned on gentler gradients and new bridges built over the rivers, but it remained a difficult stretch on an important road.

The only other roads are the single-track access roads to Hause Foot and Bannisdale Head, the minor road to Whinfell and a short loop that follows the earlier alignment at Bannisdale Bridge. Approximately three-quarters of Fawcett Forest was classified as Access Land by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The Crookdale and Bannisdale Horseshoes are

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<sup>24</sup> *Rec. Kend.* I, 388, 389, 390.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Hause’ from Old Norse ‘hals’ = neck or pass: D. Whaley, *Dict. LDPN*.

<sup>26</sup> John Ogilby, *Britannia*, (London, 1675), London to Carlisle road map, plate 38.

<sup>27</sup> Turnpike Act, 26 Geo. II, 1753.

<sup>28</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 24 July 1819; *Westmorland Advertiser*, Nov 10, 1821; *Rec. Kend.* III, 132.

well-known ridge walks<sup>29</sup> but are not marked as footpaths on Ordnance Survey maps and are only intermittently present on the ground.

The bridges known as High Borrow Bridge,<sup>30</sup> Bannisdale High Bridge,<sup>31</sup> Crookdale Bridge,<sup>32</sup> Crookdale Low Bridge,<sup>33</sup> Dry Howe Bridge<sup>34</sup> and Borrowdale Head Bridge<sup>35</sup> are all stone rubble, single-arched bridges with structures thought to be of essentially 17th or 18th century date modified by later repairs and widening. The single arched stone bridges at Huck's Bridge,<sup>36</sup> Kits Howe Bridge<sup>37</sup> and Bannisdale Low Bridge<sup>38</sup> were built in the 1820s to Francis Webster's designs when John McAdam was the surveyor for the turnpike road, although they were subsequently widened.

### ***Post, carriers, buses and telecommunications***

With improved gradients, stage coaches began to run on the 'North Road' from 1753 and continued until the Lancaster to Carlisle railway was completed in 1846. These were through-routes and it was only during the middle years of the 20th century that there were local bus services. There have been no bus routes serving the area since c.1986.

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<sup>29</sup> e.g. 'Bannisdale Horseshoe' generated 1700 results on a Google search, June 11 2017.

<sup>30</sup> NHL No 1137653 Grade II, HER 17077. First recorded in 1647 will of Thomas Lickbarrow. Also known as Huck's Bridge before construction of a new turnpike route but this name later migrated to newer bridge.

<sup>31</sup> NHL No. 1086906, Grade II, HER 17091. First recorded in 1575. Before the construction of new turnpike route known as Bannisdale Bridge or Bannisdale Low Bridge but later usually Bannisdale High Bridge.

<sup>32</sup> NHL No. 1335937, Grade II, HER 17069. First mentioned in 1651 *PNW*, I.139.

<sup>33</sup> NHL No. 1312197, Grade II, HER 60532.

<sup>34</sup> HER 17093. Formerly known as Bannisdale High Bridge and probably near the lost High Bridge House tenement that was first mentioned in 1632.

<sup>35</sup> NHL No. 1086908 Grade II.

<sup>36</sup> NHL No. 1312241. Grade II. HER 17078.

<sup>37</sup> Also known as Kidshowe.

<sup>38</sup> NHL No. 1137606. Grade II. HER 17090.

The pylons of the electric transmission network for the National Grid were installed over Shap in the 1930s but it was not until 1962 that all houses in Fawcett Forest were connected to electricity. Erratic internet services were superseded in 2019 when nearly all properties in Fawcett Forest were connected to ultrafast fibre broadband by the ‘B4RN for the Mint and Sprint’ community initiative.

### **Population and Settlement**

The earliest evidence of people in the township is the settlement of Iron Age to Romano-British date below Lamb Pasture in Bannisdale where traces of stone-based huts inside a circular enclosure have been identified.<sup>39</sup> This valley is also the site of a number of other platforms and enclosures of unknown date.<sup>40</sup>

The 12th century grants of Fawcett Forest refer only to natural features but 14th century references to pastures, agistment of livestock and tenements in Bannisdale<sup>41</sup> suggest a sparse settlement distribution in the early medieval period not dissimilar to that of later better documented periods.

In 1543 there were ten messuages, six cottages and two watermills in Fawcett Forest.<sup>42</sup> The 1674/5 Hearth Tax listed sixteen houses.<sup>43</sup> 18th century Land Tax assessments give the slightly smaller number of twelve or thirteen occupied properties.<sup>44</sup> These records might suggest a population in the range of 50-90 in the early modern period. In 1841 there were

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<sup>39</sup> Scheduled Ancient Monument. NHL1007277, HER 1935.

<sup>40</sup> HER 4001, 4002, 4003, 4004.

<sup>41</sup> *Rec. Kend*, I, 233, 234.

<sup>42</sup> *Rec. Kend*, I, 236.

<sup>43</sup> *Westmorland Hearth Tax*, Ed. Phillips, Ferguson and Wareham, (British Record Society and CWAAS, 2008), 222.

<sup>44</sup> CAS (K), WQ/RLT/Kendal/8, 1773, 1793.



twelve occupied properties and eighty-six people. This was probably a high point – subsequent censuses showed a steady fall in the population to forty-seven in 1911, a trajectory that continued as family size and agricultural employment declined. In 2017 there were fifteen properties, but one was empty and five were second homes and there were only twenty-five permanent residents.<sup>45</sup>

Bannisdale Head, High House, Knott<sup>46</sup> and Borrowdale Head were dispersed farm sites in valley bottoms. The farms at Forest Hall, Dowdy Rigg, Scalegill and Mart Close were on the more sheltered eastern edge of the township not far from the road. Bridge House,<sup>47</sup> Hause Foot, Hollowgate, High Borrow Bridge, the two tollhouses and the Jungle Café were also built on this edge but next to or because of this road.

### **Built Character**

Forest Hall is a substantial, two-storey, unlisted building of possible 17th century date<sup>48</sup> that was divided into two rented properties in 2002. Bannisdale Head, Borrowdale Head and Hollowgate are believed to be rubble-walled, 17th century farmhouses.<sup>49</sup> Other houses are of later date but are constructed predominantly from local Bannisdale Slate.

### **LANDOWNERSHIP**

Fawcett Forest may have origins as a baronial forest or peripheral hunting area. It is first recorded as part of the Barony of Kendal and held by the Lancasters. Between 1170 and

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<sup>45</sup> Inf. from Lenore Knowles, former clerk to Fawcett Forest Parish Meeting, 2017.

<sup>46</sup> Abandoned site in Borrowdale.

<sup>47</sup> Site later known as Baldock Cottage.

<sup>48</sup> HER 5144 identifies a medieval house site here. It is presumably the house recorded as having six hearths in 1675, where the Bellinghams had a tenant

<sup>49</sup> Bannisdale Head, NHL No. 1086905, Grade II, Borrowdale Head, NHL No. 1137635, Grade II, Hollow Gate, RCHME, Westmorland, 95-6.

1184 William II of Lancaster gave his part of Borgheredale (Borrowdale) to Byland Abbey.<sup>50</sup> This grant was confirmed in the late 12th or early 13th century by William's heir, Helewise, and by her husband Gilbert. Henry de Redman confirmed further grants made by Hugo and Ralph, sons of Robert, son of Sigge in Bannisdale and at the head of the Mint valley and again in the mid 13th century by Matthew and Richard de Redeman.<sup>51</sup> These grants to Byland refer to land between the Bannisdale and Borrow Becks and the Dautha River<sup>52</sup> and describe it as Faxside or Fausyde.

Nothing is known about Byland's management of the area except that in 1282 the manor was leased to William de Capella, the rector of Lowther church.<sup>53</sup> Byland Abbey was dissolved in 1538 and the manor and lordship of Fawcett Forest was leased to Lord William Parr the following year<sup>54</sup> although the lease noted that it had formerly been in the tenure of Sir Thomas Parr and then his widow so it would seem to have been occupied by the Parrs for some time. The Parr estates were forfeited for treason in 1553 and in 1554 Queen Mary granted Fawcett Forest to Sir Edward Hastings who resold it in the same year to Alan Bellingham of Helsington for £816 13s. 4d.<sup>55</sup>

Bannisdale had a separate history. It was one of several local townships that were referred to as in the vill of Strickland Kettle in the early medieval period.<sup>56</sup> Only part of the valley

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<sup>50</sup> *Rec. Kend*, I, 231, 388-90.

<sup>51</sup> Both classified as fabricated originals or copies by Janet Burton in *Cartulary of Byland Abbey*, (Surtees Society, Vol. 208, 2004), Boydell & Brewer p.116-7.

<sup>52</sup> Various spellings, see *Rec. Kend*, I, pp. 231, 237, 388, 389, 390. Probably earlier name of the Ashstead Beck or the Mint. The nearby farm of Dowdy Rigg may have derived its name from this river.

<sup>53</sup> *Rec. Kend*, I, 231.

<sup>54</sup> *Rec. Kend*, I, 235.

<sup>55</sup> *Rec. Kend*, I, 236.

<sup>56</sup> *Rec. Kend*, I, 234 and 283.

seems to have been included in the Byland grant and, between the 13th and 16th centuries, most of the remainder was held by the Sockbridge branch of the de Lancaster family. They in turn appear to have held it of two chief lords: in 1283, Roger de Lancaster held a moiety of Bannisdale of William de Lindsay<sup>57</sup> (lord of the Richmond Fee), while the ‘hamlet of Bannandesdale ... forest of Bannandesdale’ and ‘land in Bannandesdale-holme’ was held in 1310 of William de Ros (lord of the Marquis fee) by Gilbert de Lancaster, Roger’s son.<sup>58</sup> Gilbert granted his ‘forest’ in Bannisdale to one of his sons, Christopher,<sup>59</sup> while another son, Roger, inherited other lands there. When Roger died,<sup>60</sup> leaving a young son as his heir, it occasioned those lands held of the Richmond fee, and their profits, to taken into the king’s hands, while his widow, Margaret de Ros (dead by 1369), took a moiety of Bannisdale as her dower.<sup>61</sup>

The descent of these lands thereafter is unclear, but by 1411, the lands that had been held by Margret de Lancaster in dower were in the possession of Richard Roose/Rose. In 1543, Thomas Rose died holding a moiety of Bannisdale of the king and another of William, Lord Parr. Thomas’s grandson, also named Thomas, sold his lands there to Alan Bellingham in 1555.<sup>62</sup> Bellingham went on to buy other land in Bannisdale; in 1560 he purchased 200 a. of pasture, moor and heath from Lancelot Lancaster of Sockbridge,<sup>63</sup> the descendant of Christopher de Lancaster, and further land and property there and elsewhere from Edward Rose in 1563.<sup>64</sup> Some of the Bannisdale purchases must have been in that part of the valley

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<sup>57</sup> *Rec. Kend*, I, 231.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> The date of his death is given variously as 1352, 1353 and 1354.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 232-3

<sup>62</sup> *Rec. Kend*, I, 236.

<sup>63</sup> *Rec. Kend*, I, 237. He was MP for Westmorland in 1559.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

that was within the township of Whitwell and Selside not Fawcett Forest but these areas cannot be distinguished.

In 1570 Bellingham acquired land in Borrowdale and Crookdale from Lord Wharton,<sup>65</sup> thereby uniting all the land in the township within a single manor. He was already living there<sup>66</sup> rather than on his other estates and in 1570 described himself as Alan Bellingham of Fawcett Forest. He had been granted the Lumley Fee in 1545, was MP for Westmorland (1571) a Deputy Warden of the Marches (1557) and a member of the Council in the North (1566-1571).<sup>67</sup> This was probably the only period when there was a figure of significance residing in Fawcett Forest. His successors lived elsewhere and by 1660 the demesne was being leased for seven-year terms.<sup>68</sup> Similar leases seem to have been the pattern until the late 20th century when the estate began to employ farm managers.

The Bellingham manor of Fawcett Forest included parts of Whinfell and parts of Whitwell with Selside and descended with the Bellinghams' successors at Levens Hall to the 21st century. Records survive of their manor court at Forest Hall during the 17th and 18th century.

Most of the land was held in demesne but the manor records also usually listed 15-20 customary tenancies.<sup>69</sup> There were sixteen listed for the 1680 general fine following the death

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<sup>65</sup> *Rec. Kend*, I, 238.

<sup>66</sup> He is usually described as of Levens or Helsington. He purchased but never lived at Levens. Helsington was an earlier and alternative residence. CAS (C), D LONS/L1/1/14, letter of 1563 from Alan Bellingham, Fawcett Lodge to Richard Lowther; Lancashire Archives, WRW/K/R405B23, will of Alan Bellingham.

<sup>67</sup> [www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/bellingham-alan-1517-78](http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/bellingham-alan-1517-78) (accessed May 11, 2017).

<sup>68</sup> Levens Hall Archives, Box no. 10, Fawcett Forest, 8,17.

<sup>69</sup> More were usually listed under the Fawcett Forest heading but they included several in Bannisdale outside the township boundary.

of James Bellingham but three individuals held two, nine were for rents of 5s. or less and several were areas of grazing without occupied tenements. By 1746 customary tenancy had been ended and the court listed nineteen ‘free tenants’ and eight who had ‘lately purchased’.<sup>70</sup> Concentration of land ownership increased over time as some farms were absorbed into the Forest Hall estate.<sup>71</sup> The 1910 valuation<sup>72</sup> estimated that Forest Hall was a 4,942 a. (1,999 ha.) estate of which 4,259 a. (1723 ha.) were in Fawcett Forest – over three quarters of the land area of the township.

### **Other Estates**

The only other substantial landholdings in Fawcett Forest were parts of the Fothergills’ neighbouring Lowbridge estate in Selside. In 1875 Richard Fothergill bought the 245 a. (99 ha.) High Borrow Bridge estate<sup>73</sup> and in 1907 Sydney Fothergill purchased the 1,120 a. (453 ha.) Bannisdale Head farm in Fawcett Forest.<sup>74</sup> The former was sold after the 2nd World War but the family retained the Bannisdale Head land, although not the farmhouse, until 2016.

## **ECONOMIC HISTORY**

For all of its known history this has been an overwhelmingly agricultural township with an economy based primarily on sheep farming.

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<sup>70</sup> Higher numbers because of inclusion of Selside properties listed under the Fawcett Forest heading.

<sup>71</sup> Kits How was named separately but included with Forest Hall in 1657 tenancy agreement and thereafter. The 1789 lease of Forest Hall with Kits How also included High House.

<sup>72</sup> CAS (K), WTDV/2/38.

<sup>73</sup> Notebook titled *Fothergill Pedigree Book and History of Lowbridge Estate* by Sydney Roden Fothergill (courtesy of E. Acland, 2017).

<sup>74</sup> CAS (K), WDB 35/1/162.

## **Farming**

### *Agricultural Landscape*

Until the mid-20th century most of the land was unimproved upland grazing with a few areas of woodland on slopes and a mixture of pasture and meadows in the valley bottoms with small arable areas.

In 1704 by an agreement with James Grahme and at the request of ten of his customary tenants,<sup>75</sup> Whatshaw Common<sup>76</sup> and Hazel Bank (in the parish of Shap but within the township of Fawcett Forest) were enclosed and ‘cattlegates’ were allocated proportionate to the value of tenements. By 1870 there were 42 cattlegates on these two stinted commons covering 306 a. (123 ha.) that were held by the owners of four neighbouring properties (Hause Foot, High Borrow Bridge, Scale Gill, Mart Close) and the Lord of the Manor. The enclosed land was divided into five enclosures and allocated between them in that year.<sup>77</sup>

### *Medieval and Early Modern*

Nothing is known about Byland Abbey’s management of the area but its cartulary refers to pasture for sheep, woodland, moorland, turbary, meadow and cultivated land in Borrowdale and the adjacent areas of Wasdale (Westmorland) so a similar focus on sheep perhaps with a grange at Forest Hall would seem probable.

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<sup>75</sup> Levens Hall Archives, Fawcett Forest, Box No. 10, 6.

<sup>76</sup> Also known as Watshaw, Wadshaw or Walshaw.

<sup>77</sup> CAS (K), WQ/RI/90.

The large demesne farm of Forest Hall was leased in 1657<sup>78</sup> with a stock of sheep and cattle that consisted of 600 wethers<sup>79</sup> and ewes, 200 twinters and hogs,<sup>80</sup> six oxen and two steers. The probate inventories of tenement farms between the 16th and 18th centuries suggest that typically they grew very small amounts of oats and bigg (barley) and kept a few higher value cattle but many more sheep.

### *19th century to the present*

At the time the tenancy was advertised in 1820<sup>81</sup> Forest Hall was being farmed with High House and Bannisdale Head and consisted of 4-5,000 a. (1600-2000 ha.). The probate inventory<sup>82</sup> of the previous tenant listed 18 horses, 89 cattle, 2,043 sheep and 9 pigs and £97 worth of hay and corn in sheaf. In 1841 this farm employed eight living-in agricultural labourers and a female servant but there were only four workers living-in by 1939. In 1941 four horses, 61 cattle, 4,242 sheep and 8 a. (3 ha.) of oats were recorded for the farm<sup>83</sup> and in 2017 there were around 2,300 sheep – nearly all Swaledales – and a small number of cattle at Forest Hall that was then over 5,000 a. (2000 ha.).<sup>84</sup>

The small farms of Dowdy Rigg, Scale Gill, Hobson's Tenement and Derby Tenement had been absorbed by neighbouring farms by 1836<sup>85</sup> when there were only seven farms remaining. There were still seven farms in 1940 of which two were owner occupied. None

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<sup>78</sup> Levens Hall Archives, Box No. 10, Fawcett Forest, 8.

<sup>79</sup> Castrated male sheep.

<sup>80</sup> Two and one-year-old sheep.

<sup>81</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 8 Jan. 1820, p.1.

<sup>82</sup> Lancashire Archives, W/RW/K/R515/52, Inventory of John Frankland taken January 1820.

<sup>83</sup> TNA, MAF 32/197/42.

<sup>84</sup> Inf. from Farm Manager at Forest Hall, 2017.

<sup>85</sup> CAS (K), WQ/RC/4, 1836 Corn Rent map and WDRC8/15, 1840 Bretherdale Tithe map and apportionment.

had mains water, electricity or tractors at this time. Mart Close, Bannisdale Head,<sup>86</sup> Hollowgate and Borrowdale Head disappeared as separate entities during the twentieth century and only Forest Hall and High Borrow Bridge<sup>87</sup> remained as working farms based within the township in 2017.

During the second half of the 20th century arable and dairying were abandoned. Farm-related employment was still important in 2017 with half of the occupied properties containing someone working in the agricultural sector.

The High Borrow Bridge Agricultural Society was set up in 1848 and organised an annual agricultural show and fair based at the inn.<sup>88</sup> This was for Fawcett Forest and the surrounding areas of Bretherdale, the Birkbeck Fells, Borrowdale, Longsleddale, Whinfell and the township of Whitwell and Selside. In 1857 it became the Selside, Grayrigg and Mountain District Agriculture Society<sup>89</sup> and the associated show moved between venues, eventually settling in Grayrigg where it was still running in 2017.

### **Woodland and Forestry**

Hunting and shooting activities have often had an obvious presence in the area. The Levens estate employed a resident gamekeeper throughout the 19th century and early 20th century. The Fothergill estate had shooting rights over much of Bannisdale after 1892. Some grouse shooting and deer stalking still continued in the early 21st century.

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<sup>86</sup> This had regained its separate status by 1836 – see Corn Rent award.

<sup>87</sup> c. 900 a. or 364 ha. in 2017, inf. from owners, 2017.

<sup>88</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 29 July 1848, p.3.

<sup>89</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 26 Sep 1857, p. 9.



In 1836 there were only about 120 a. (48 ha.) of woodland, mainly at Black Crag in Bannisdale, and around Forest Hall where there were approximately 60 a. (24 ha.) at Wolf Howe, Kits Howe and Muddy Brow. There were fewer trees below Forest Hall by 2017 but the other Forest Hall woods remained. There was significant 19th century replanting in Bannisdale and Borrowdale by the Lowbridge and Levens estates for timber, game and amenity purposes. Most of these plantations survive but in some instances fences have not been maintained and they have become wood pastures without an understorey.

## **Industry**

### *Mills*

Two mills were recorded in 1543. One was a corn mill linked to the Forest Hall estate and was mentioned in 1657 and 1667.<sup>90</sup> This was probably just below Forest Hall. A mill and house near Bannisdale Bridge was built or rebuilt by the estate in 1780<sup>91</sup> and it is probable that there was a fulling mill higher up the Bannisdale Beck near the enclosure named Mill Field.

There was a small slate quarry above Bannisdale Head that probably operated in the 18th or early 19th century.<sup>92</sup> The remains of five roadside quarries can be identified beside the A6 that met the requirement for stone for local road and bridge building and maintenance between the 18th and 20th centuries.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Levens Hall Archives, Box No. 10, Fawcett Forest, 8: 1657 and 1667 rental agreements.

<sup>91</sup> Levens Hall Archives, Box No.10, Fawcett Forest, 14.

<sup>92</sup> Marked but apparently already disused on first edition O.S. maps.

<sup>93</sup> Quarries at Hollowgate and below Wolf Howe were labelled as old on OS first edition maps of 1858; Huck's Brow Quarry was still in use in 1919 when there was a fatality during blasting operations, Wolf Howe Quarry was in use at the end of the 19th century and Muddy Brow in the early 20th century.

## Crafts and Services

The township has never had any retail traders of its own. The community instead relied on those at Kendal, the nearest market town.

### *Transport Services and Visitor Economy*

The only significant source of local non-agricultural employment between the 18th and 20th centuries was related to the road. There was an inn on the old road near High Borrow Bridge that was probably later re-sited by Huck's Bridge on the new road.<sup>94</sup> It served as a coaching stop after the introduction of the 'Flying Machine' in 1763. The tollgate on the turnpike was originally also at High Borrow Bridge<sup>95</sup> but was replaced by one near Bannisdale Bridge. This led to the building of a tollhouse<sup>96</sup> and then a replacement<sup>97</sup> when the road was realigned and a new bridge built. Passing trade declined with competition from the railways, the road was de-turnpiked in 1882 and in the same year the inn lost its license.

Between the 1920s and 1970 the A6 became a major route for commercial traffic. A well-known 24-hour transport stop with accommodation called the Jungle Café operated during this period,<sup>98</sup> only closing the year after the opening of the M6 in 1970. The narrow road climbing Shap Fell, with a steep drop on one side, gradients that were challenging to heavy vehicles of the time and weather exposure that could be severe at the 1,397 feet (425 m.)

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<sup>94</sup> Known, at different times, as the Half Way House, High Borrow Bridge Inn, Bay Horse or 'Hucks'.

<sup>95</sup> *Cumberland Paquet*, June 1, 1779, Turnpike tolls were £62 5s at High Burrow Bridge Gate (sic).

<sup>96</sup> First known as Bannisdale Tollbar, later Old Tollbar, High Jock Scar, Gamekeeper's Cottage then Thorn Cottage.

<sup>97</sup> Called Bannisdale Tollbar or New Gate but later Toll Bar Cottage.

<sup>98</sup> 1934 Planning Permission books for South Westmorland RDC, CAS (K), RD/SW/399/14/903 – permission for transport café and sleeping quarters although café had been operating for some years.

summit made this section of road notorious. Serious accidents were not infrequent,<sup>99</sup> snow sometimes left lorry drivers stranded for several days and there were regular references in regional and national media to Huck's Brow, the Jungle Café and the roadside landmark of the Leyland Clock above Hollowgate. For some years there was a small yard for road maintenance in Bannisdale and roadmen, AA and police patrols were based on this section of road.<sup>100</sup> Its unusual significance is indicated by a memorial, in the lay-by just outside the northern boundary of Fawcett Forest, that commemorates the 'drivers and crews of vehicles that made possible the social and commercial links between north and south... before the opening of the M6 motorway' and 'those who built and maintained the road and the generations of local people who gave freely of food and shelter to stranded travellers in bad weather.' In 1988 'Kendal Caravans,' a business selling holiday lodges and caravans, opened on the Jungle Café site and was still operating in 2017.

## **SOCIAL HISTORY**

### **Social Character**

Apart from a brief period in the 16th century there was no resident lord in Fawcett Forest. Thereafter the manorial lord was a powerful but usually indirect influence. As the tenancy of Forest Hall was often held for twenty to thirty years the tenant was an important local figure. The Levens Estate owned several other houses in the township and a sizable part of the small population worked for the tenant as shepherds, gamekeepers or agricultural labourers. Forest Hall was also the only large house - it had five hearths in 1674 when all but one of the remaining fifteen properties had only one and it was also the site of the manor court.

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<sup>99</sup> One of the best known was the August 23, 1963 accident when a coach went into the valley and seven people were killed.

<sup>100</sup> Shap Local History Society, *The Shap Fell Story*, (3rd Edition, 2015), 35-8.

Often of equal significance within the small local community were a few longstanding farming families of whom the Hucks stand out. From the 17th to the 21st century members of this family lived variously at Hause Foot, High Borrow Bridge, Mart Close, Dowdy Rigg, Borrowdale Head and Hollowgate. Their identification with the area was such that by 1825 the bridge over the Borrow Beck on the new road was known as Huck's Bridge, the adjacent hill as Huck's Hill or Huck's Brow and sometimes the inn at High Borrow Bridge was known as 'Hucks'. These names came to have more than local currency because of the regional significance of the road.

Although more than half of the households in the parish still had farming links in 2017, a small and declining population, the lack of local facilities and presence of several holiday lets or second homes in an area where homes are widely scattered and inhabitants are reliant on their own transport has reduced local interaction and probably impacted on the sense of local identity.

### **Communal Life**

Fawcett Forest had too small a population to support a village hall or separate organisations and the only potential centre for social activities within the township was the inn at High Borrow Bridge that is recorded between 1780 and 1882. A branch of the Women's Institute for Fawcett Forest and Selside was set up in the 1930s that met at Forest Hall. This group raised money for a meeting room that was constructed in 1939 at a central point for the two parishes, later rebuilt as the Selside Memorial Hall and still a meeting place for the Selside W. I. in 2017.

### ***Amateur Sport***

There are regular references in 19th and early 20th century newspapers to the activities of hunting packs such as the Ullswater Foxhounds and Kendal Harriers in the area and there was an annual High Borrow Bridge Hunt in the 19th century that was followed by dinner at the inn.<sup>101</sup> Other activities recorded there included pigeon shooting competitions, hound coursing and in 1839 a prizefight that was claimed to have attracted over 700.<sup>102</sup>

The shepherding that was central to the area generated a round of gathering, gelding, dipping and clipping and attendance at fairs, shows and auctions that could bring neighbours together. Up until the middle years of the twentieth century shearing in particular was an annual social occasion that assembled the local community – the 1932 clipping at Forest Hall involved forty-two men, eighteen women and five children.<sup>103</sup> Around 2000 sheep were sheared by the men while the women produced meals. In the evening there was more food and drink and in the early part of the 20th century, dancing. This gathering probably had its origins in customary manorial obligations and was still described as a boon clipping.

## **Education**

There are no records of schools in Fawcett Forest. After 1730 some children went to the school that began in that year in Selside. Distance and the local climate made attending difficult for some families and, even after the introduction of compulsory education, attendance was intermittent. In 1909 the Westmorland Education Committee noted that only one of the ten children at High Borrow Bridge was receiving elementary education and opted

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<sup>101</sup> *Westmorland Gazette* reports in 1837, 1841, 1844 and 1856.

<sup>102</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 22 June 1839, p. 2-3; *Kendal Mercury*, 22 June 1839, p. 3; *Cumberland Pacquet*, 25 June 1839, p. 3.

<sup>103</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 16 July 1932, p. 1.

to organize transport by horse drawn float from Borrowdale rather than build a nearer school.<sup>104</sup>

Children living at the isolated Bannisdale Head farm often attended Longsleddale School.<sup>105</sup>

This school was much nearer but there was no road and the walk involved ascending and returning over Capplebarrow (1,683 feet or 512 m.) to attend school. Some of these children were recorded as not attending in the winter months and then being readmitted in April.

Selside primary school was still flourishing in 2017, but since the mid-twentieth century most children of secondary school age in Fawcett Forest have attended Kendal schools.

### **Social Welfare and Poor Relief**

There are no known charities specific to Fawcett Forest. In the early 19th century between £49 and £55 was spent on relief of six or seven adults, several of whom were old and a few children.<sup>106</sup> Need in the small local population seems to have been relatively low as an 1841 Survey of Pauperism reported that 1 in 33 were paupers in Fawcett Forest which was the lowest proportion of all Kendal townships.<sup>107</sup>

### **RELIGIOUS HISTORY**

Most of Fawcett Forest was part of the chapelry of Selside and Whitwell within Kendal parish and residents attended Selside church although burials were at Kendal until 1713. The only indication of an established church presence within the township is a reference to Peter

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<sup>104</sup> This arrangement ended in 1917 and payments to parents for conveying children were substituted.

<sup>105</sup> e.g. children from the Brownrigg (1874), Fishwick (1889), Whitwell (1891), and Blenkinship (1904) families.

<sup>106</sup> Abridgement of Abstract of Answers and Returns relative to Expense and Maintenance of Poor in England and Wales, 1803-4 and 1818.

<sup>107</sup> *Kendal Mercury*, 19 Nov. 1842, p. 3.

Gilpin as curate at Fawcett Forest in 1578.<sup>108</sup> At this time Alan Bellingham was resident and it is probable that Gilpin served at a house chapel.<sup>109</sup> In 1838 Forest Hall had an appropriated pew at Selside church. Concern for his more distant parishioners led Joseph Clarke, a later Selside vicar, (1887- 1924) to bicycle to High Borrow Bridge to take Sunday afternoon services.<sup>110</sup>

High House was in the parish of Shap while Hause Foot, Knott and High Borrow Bridge were in the parish of Orton. Distance and weather must have made regular attendance at these churches difficult, nevertheless, most references to the registration of births, marriages and burials of families at these properties between the 16th and 19th centuries were at the respective churches rather than Selside.

Until 1709 Selside chapel was located within Selside Hall, home to the Catholic Thornburgh family, but apart from a period (1670-1718) when Forest Hall was occupied by the Pickering family and Dowdy Rigg by Edward Holme (1700-1740), there were no known Fawcett Forest Catholics. In 1821 Mart Close, the residence of Thomas Huck, was licensed for worship.<sup>111</sup> It is not known what its affiliation was, whether it was used or for how long.<sup>112</sup>

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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<sup>108</sup> Clergy of the Church of England Database, Visitation Book, Record ID: 88813. Probably the same 'Uter Gilpin' claimed as chaplain of Skelsmergh by Machell who was also recorded as a Kendal cleric in 1554.

<sup>109</sup> In his will, Alan Bellingham referred to 'Sir Utar Gilpin prest' and the inventory mentions a priest chamber.

<sup>110</sup> *Church News: Skelsmergh, Selside, Longsleddale*, November 1982, 'Born at the Foot of Shap Fell'.

<sup>111</sup> *Rec. Kend*, III, 131.

<sup>112</sup> It may have been linked with the Pear Tree Inghamite Chapel in Kendal. Contemporary Huck relatives were members and one was an elder.

## **Manorial Government**

Alan Bellingham kept a manor court at Forest Hall for which records survive from 1622 to 1757.<sup>113</sup> In the 17th century this was both a court leet with view of frankpledge and a court baron that appointed ‘hedge lookers’ and ‘house lookers’ and fined for such as not maintaining fences, letting houses fall into decay, cutting wood or overstocking the common as well as adjudicating on debts and other complaints. After 1682 there are records only of a court baron. This mainly noted the admittance of new tenants although there were occasional fines for failure to keep fences in repair.

## **Township Government**

There are no pre-1896 township records for Fawcett Forest but during the 19<sup>th</sup> century it belonged to the Kendal Union and nominated a Guardian of the Poor, usually a member of the Huck family.

There was an annual Fawcett Forest Parish Meeting from 1896 to 2015 that discussed issues such as road maintenance and gritting, footpaths and planning applications. Although the average attendance was only between five and ten this could represent half the adult population and governance became a family business with Thomas Huck serving for twenty-seven years as chair and clerk followed by his wife Mary for twenty-five years and daughter Lenore for sixteen years. For over sixty years Hollowgate hosted meetings that were also

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<sup>113</sup> Levens Hall Archives, Box No. 10 Fawcett Forest, 9-11 and V12 Court Book, Manor of Fawcett Forest. There were later courts and unlisted records may exist – as late as September 1819 local newspapers advertised a Court Baron for Fawcett Forest to levy a general fine on the death of Richard Howard.



often social evenings.<sup>114</sup> There were no meetings between 2012 and 2016 and the neighbouring parish of Selside proposed a link with Selside Parish Meeting in 2015.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Fawcett Forest Parish Meeting Book 1(1896-1995) and Book 2 (1996-2011). Both held by SLDC at time of writing.

<sup>115</sup> Whitwell and Selside Annual Parish Meeting, Minutes, 12 October 2015.