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WARTON CRAG: RE-APPRAISING AN 'IRON AGE' HILL FORT: PART II

Kevin Grice, with contributions by Louise Martin

In Part I of this closely argued account of the Hill Fort on Warton Crag, Kevin Grice first gave a general description of the monument; explored 18th, 19th, and 20th Century sources about it; and discussed finds from on or near it. He then recounted the traditional view of the date and function of what was most commonly described as an Iron Age Hill Fort. Part I concluded with an account of the connections between Iron Age sites and earlier Bronze Age Sites.

In Part II Kevin Grice places the fort on Warton Crag in the context of other forts along the north side of Morecambe Bay and their bearing on its dating. He then interprets the 2016 LIDAR survey and more recent field investigations and ends with an exploration of different dating hypotheses.

Footnotes in italics seek to capture some of the details from Part I of this account, and to reference others. Part I appears in the ***MLHS magazine 2019, No 1 Issue 25.*** *This is available, either from the editor or from the treasurer. It can be accessed online at* ***www.mourholme.co.uk*** *where a full list of references can also be found.*

Associating the fort at Skelmore Heads with the fort on Warton Crag

In the last 50 years or so the Iron Age dating of the monument on Warton Crag has come under scrutiny. In 1962 Clare Fell opined that Warton Crag Hill Fort might be contemporary with

the final phase of the development at Skelmore Heads[1]. Almost thirty years later, Denise Kenyon[2], also associates Warton Crag with Skelmore Heads, placing both in the line of forts that, on the north side of Morecambe Bay, stretches from Millom in Cumbria to Castlestede (Hornby) in Lancashire (see figure 1, below). Kenyon points out that these forts are located at the upland-lowland interface to provide optimum access to lowland arable soils and upland pastures; and that, at Warton, shellfish and sea fish would have supplemented the diet. She also observes that all the forts are situated on the east (or lee) side of the peninsula to afford protection from westerly gales.

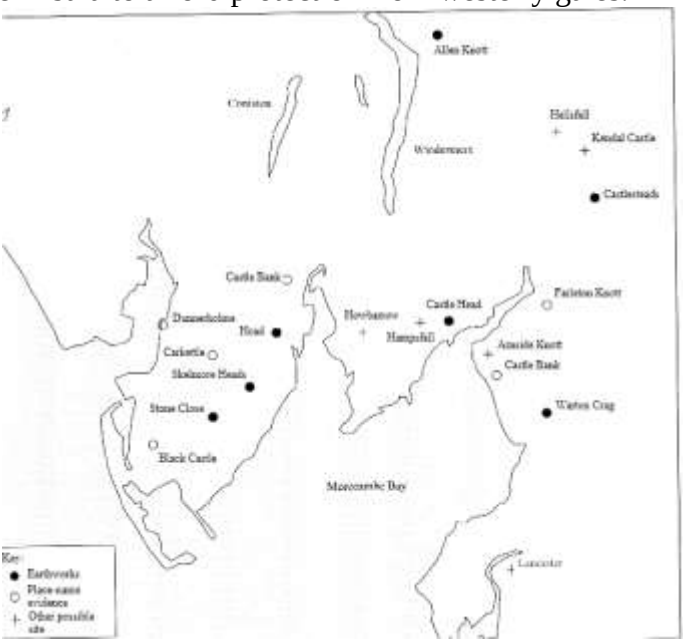


Figure 1:
The line of hill forts around Morecambe Bay (© Dan Elsworth)

[1] Sometimes known as Great Urswick Fort; it is situated near Ulverston
[2] Kenyon (1991)

An earlier date for Skelmore Heads and its bearing on the date of the fort on Warton Crag.

As long ago as 1902, at Skelmore Heads, six bronze axe heads were found in a crevice. One is now in Lancaster City Museum. The other five were photographed and later identified as Early Iron Age Sompting-type socketed axes of 800-600 BC.[3] Further, a Late Bronze Age hoard, including three gold lock rings, was recently found in a hollow covered with a large stone just below the hill fort at Skelmore Heads. The Bronze Age dating of these finds seems to be of some significance.

Skelmore Heads was the subject of a small-scale excavation in the 1950s revealing the remains of a palisaded hilltop settlement succeeded by a hill fort whose northern limits are marked by a defensive ditch and bank with perhaps some timber revetment to secure it [4]. In Kenyon's argument, the siting of the forts may have been related to the trade routes for Langdale stone axes and their transmission along the Irish Sea littoral to the Ribble estuary. These axes were extensively traded by 2,500 BC and this could make Warton Crag a place of high significance, at least as a look-out, even in the Neolithic, as well as throughout the Bronze Age.[5] By the Late Bronze Age, say 750 BC, the climate had deteriorated, storms would have been more frequent and the need to stay in sight of the shore therefore, all the greater. Sea levels will have been correspondingly a little higher also,

[3] One of these is in the Dock Museum in Barrow-in-Furness; an account of re-discovery of two of the other four is to be found in British Archaeology (2015).

[4] Powell 1963

[5] Andy Denwood writing in 2014 is similarly receptive to the possibility that the fort at Warton Crag could be Neolithic or Bronze Age in origin.

thus putting the Crag itself nearer to the trade route than at present.

Writing in 2004 D W Harding, Evans, and Hoaen and Loney all separately adopt a Bronze Age date for Skelmore Heads. Extrapolating from this earlier dating of Skelmore Heads, and noting its relationship to Castle Head (near Lindale), and Warton Crag, D W Harding places all three in the same era. Dan Elsworth, writing in 2014, also notes the inter-relationship of the sites around Morecambe Bay owing to their inter-visibility and the domination by Ingleborough of the eastern view from many of them, including Warton Crag. He thus similarly concludes that most of them have earlier origins than previously supposed.

Barrowclough, too, writing in 2008 and 2010, rejects the default Iron Age dating of sites such as Warton Crag, citing the analyses of metalwork distributions from the Late Bronze Age (920-750 BC) and Early Iron Age (750-510 BC) in the area. Hodgson and Brennand writing in 2006 state that '…few hilltop sites can be securely dated to the Iron Age in the northern part of the region' neatly encapsulate the prevailing early 21st century view.

The 2016 LiDAR survey, field investigations, and findings

The appearance of Warton Crag has changed dramatically since the early 20th century and, following a decline in grazing in the 1950s, the site has quickly become colonised by a thick vegetation canopy. Over recent years the vegetation at the site has increased significantly and this is why the site has been placed on the Historic England Heritage At Risk Register. This dense vegetation has thwarted Historic England's[6] attempts (as

[6] Previously English Heritage

part of the National Archaeological Identification Survey Upland Pilot Project) to provide useable data from either ground or from traditional aerial photography.

Accordingly, during the development of Morecambe Bay's Landscape Partnership Scheme, Headlands to Headspace (H2H), professionals identified the site at Warton Crag as one that might well benefit from the application of LiDAR[7] [8] (Light Detection and Ranging). Available LiDAR data collected at 2 metre intervals by The Environment Agency, whilst adequate for work such as flood modelling and tracking changing coastlines, was not able to show the Warton Crag site with sufficient clarity.

In 2014, Morecambe Bay Partnership was awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £1.9million to deliver the H2H Scheme. Part of this was to investigate, record and conserve some of the most significant heritage sites around the Bay. Key amongst these was Warton Crag, the primary objective there being to help improve current understanding and management of the site. In February 2016, a very detailed LiDAR survey was taken at 25cm intervals[9].

The LiDAR data for Warton was received in March 2016 and the various teams busily started to process the data, including both a Digital Surface Model, or DSM, which includes

[7] An aircraft mounted laser used to record landscapes in 3D. This data can be processed to remove surface features such as trees and vegetation to enable archaeologists to discover and record hitherto hidden archaeological features.

[8] See MLHS magazine 2016 No.1, issue 69 p19. Accessed online at www.mourholme.co.uk

[9] This was funded by the H2H Scheme, with a significant contribution from Historic England.

vegetation, and a Digital Terrain Model, or DTM, where the vegetation is removed giving, it was commented, 'the clearest view of the monument yet, with the survey clearly revealing the enclosure, defined by three circuits of [ramparts]' (see figure 2 page 7 and see www.mourholme.co.uk for the original colour image). This data was viewed alongside historic aerial photographs and maps of the site (see figure 3 page 8 for one of these historic maps). Data from an important earlier survey consisting of photographic evidence, coupled with co-ordinates of features (c.5m accuracy) and feature descriptions[10] was also made available.

The LiDAR survey revealed an enigmatic hollow in the middle of the enclosure whose date and function remain unknown.[11] It may have had a part to play in securing fresh water for those inhabiting the enclosure, as one of its more noteworthy features is the absence of any natural spring or other source of fresh water on the Crag itself. Traces of more recent activity were also identified by the team, including medieval or post medieval stock enclosures and extensive limestone quarrying. Together the data collected is contributing to the knowledge, understanding and management of this important site; however, there is still much more to discover about the features hidden beneath the trees.

Warton Crag was also targeted for follow-on ground investigation by Historic England Historic Places Investigation

[10] This extensive Level 1 survey was taken between 2014 and 2016 by the voluntary White Cross Archaeology Group, led by archaeologist John Trippier (https://hillforts.arch.ox.ac.uk/)

[11] [11] *This hollow can be clearly seen in Hutchinson's 1789 sketch, Figure 4 page 13; and in Part I page 4 in MLHS magazine 2019, no1, issue 75.*

Team[12] using the LiDAR data to guide a walkover survey and field assessment of the monument. The LiDAR survey was used to locate and follow archaeological features, often obscured by dense vegetation, with reasonable confidence.

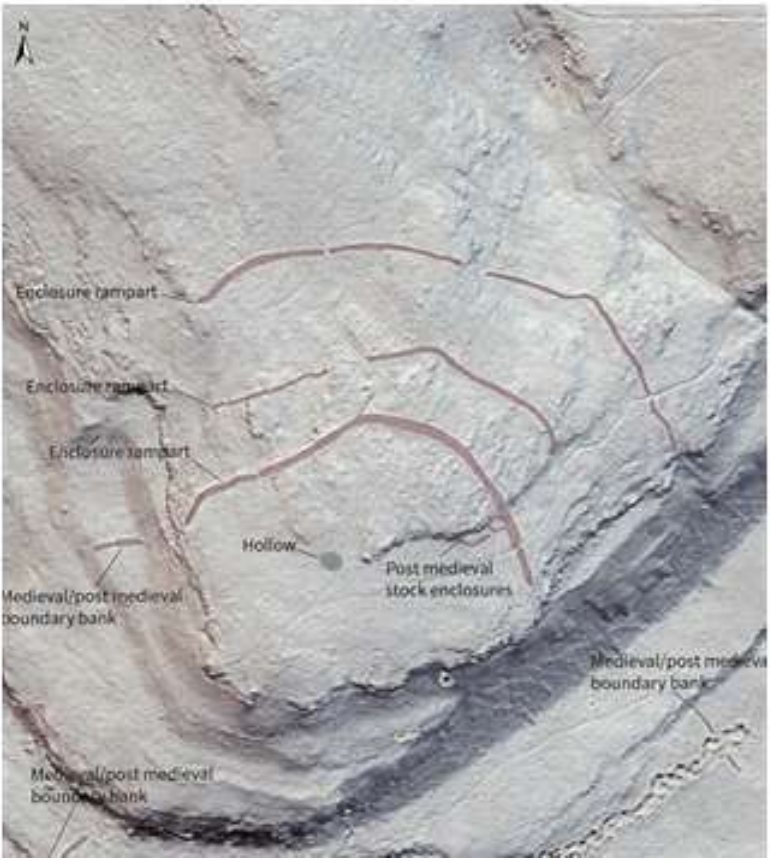
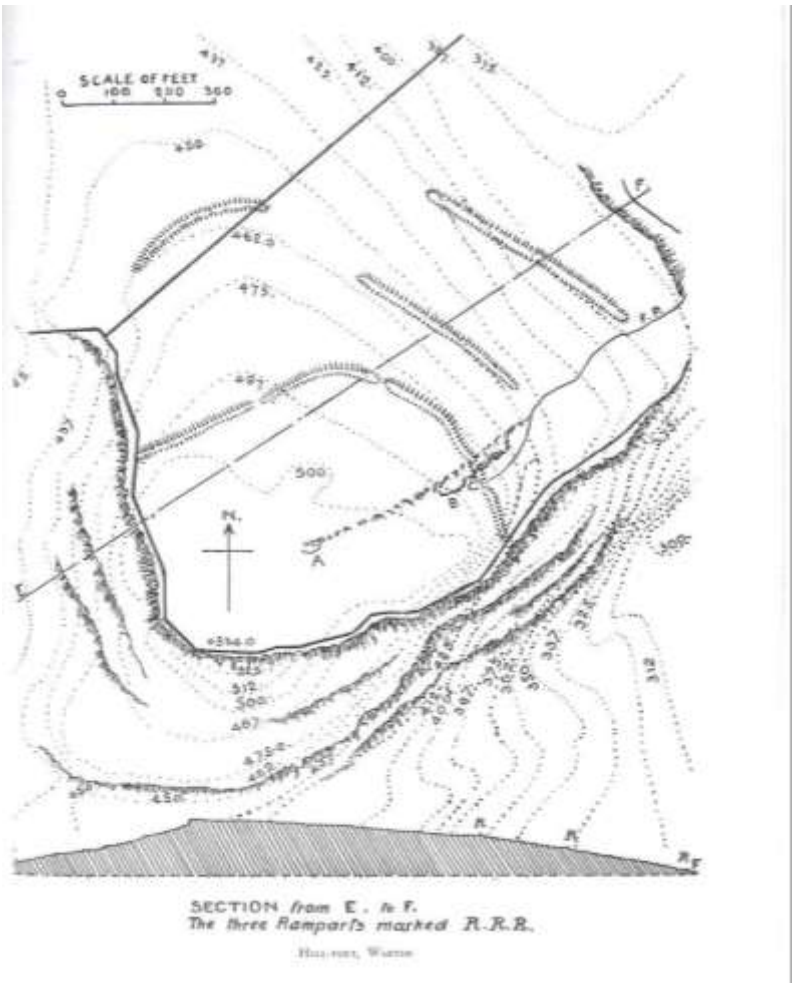


Figure 2:
LiDAR image 2016, showing all three ramparts.
(© Historic England)

[12] Evans, Jecock & Oakey 2017



Farrer, W. and J. Brownbill, 1908,
Victoria County History of Lancashire, 2. London

Figure 3:
An early sketch map.
Note the incomplete outer and middle ramparts.

Features identified in the LiDAR survey were mapped with a Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) device, which located features, identified to between 1-5m accuracy. The subsequent Report produced by this team combines the aerial survey, LiDAR and field survey data as well as a consideration of the historic evidence. It concludes that it is clear that Warton Crag is not an Iron Age hill fort at all, and was not, as previously thought, an enclosure constructed with defensibility as its main consideration. The authors consider it is far more credible that it was a kind of meeting place for local communities, probably constructed and used in the final centuries of the second millennium BC.

An alternative dating hypothesis

Might both of the above lines of argument as to the date of Warton Crag Hill Fort be correct? There was clearly extensive use of the area surrounding Warton Crag in the Neolithic and particularly the Bronze Age, as evidenced by the finds detailed above together with the Neolithic artefacts found at nearby Yealand Storrs, and the purported Bronze Age stone circle and kerbed cairn on Summerhouse Hill[13] (1.7km to the north-east from Warton Crag). Indeed if there is a stone circle there, it will almost certainly date from the Early Bronze Age (3000 – 2000 BC). Summerhouse (or Barrow) Hill was clearly a site of considerable spiritual importance in the Bronze Age and so will Warton Crag have been, particularly if the findings of Hutchinson[14] (detailed in Part 1) are accepted; I believe there is

[13] cf LMHS magazine 2016 No.1, issue 69 p19

[14] *In 1785 Hutchinson was shown two burial urns found separately in circular, conical cairns on the monument on Warton Crag. These remains have been lost but the cairns have been interpreted as Bronze Age and were possibly part of a barrow cemetery. See Part I* pp 3&4. *Hutchinson included one of the urns in his sketch, see Figure 4 page 13.*

no reason at present not to do so in view of his accuracy over other matters.

The height above sea level of Warton Crag (163m) is significantly greater than either Skelmore Heads (105m) or, in particular, Castle Head (20m) but it has some similarities with each in terms of size etc., particularly if the smaller area enclosed, for example, by only the middle rampart is considered. It is however much nearer sea level and smaller than Ingleborough or Carrock Fell, so their presence as large but seasonal inland tribal centres would enable them to be so distinguished. It seems unlikely that Warton Crag was not occupied as a defensive enclosure in the Bronze Age when other less suitable places were so developed. Kenyon, Barrowclough and others are probably right in finding its origins in this period, whether the axe trade route or metalwork distribution argument is preferred.

Equally however it also seems reasonably likely that the site was used as a look-out, at least by the Brigantes in the first century AD, in view of the finding of the sword and scabbard which is now in the British Museum. The finding of Samian ware and other items from the same period in nearby caves forming part of the same outcrop appears to support this proposition[15]. Warton Crag would have formed a perfect place from which initially to monitor commercial and other activity in the area, including the sea route for trade to the north. In addition, the absence of specifically Roman finds suggests the Brigantes would have been the occupiers, rather than the Romans themselves. Pedley's theory[16] that the bronze scales were the

[15] *For details of these finds see pp 6-8 in Part I of this article*
[16] Pedley 1939 p527; *see Part I p9*

product of a raid by the tribe on a nearby Roman settlement is an attractive one in those circumstances. When hostilities commenced in this area between the Brigantes and the Romans after AD 70, the same site could equally fulfil a defensive purpose if sufficiently robust.

Comparison of Castlesteads Hill Fort with the Warton Crag Site

The above analysis of the development of the site over centuries is consistent with the interpretation of Castlesteads Hill Fort, on the summit of The Helm near Oxenholme, by Tom Mace and Dan Elsworth of Greenlane Archaeology. This is only about 11 miles as the crow flies from Warton Crag but shares with it the similarity of being atop the prominent geological feature of its area, unlike those around the northern shore of Morecambe Bay itself, particularly Castle Head. The authors (following detailed measured survey but without excavation) hypothesize a sequence of development at Castlesteads beginning with a timber palisade of Bronze Age or earlier origin followed by construction of outer ramparts on the north side in the Early Iron Age (although these ramparts may not have been constructed in a single event). These features combined with the naturally steep slopes of The Helm to the east, west and south would have formed a roughly oval enclosure on the summit. In the Late Iron Age or Romano-British period smaller earthworks were built inside this original enclosure with possible small hut circles then added further within.

At Warton Crag the underlying limestone pavement would have made erection of a timber palisade difficult if not impossible so I believe a simple, modest stone structure was initially raised, perhaps along the line of the present middle rampart, which is clearly less substantial than those inside and outside it. This was

then developed, used and re-used with incorporation of the other, more extensive, ramparts in a similar sequence to Castlesteads, with occupation similarly finally concluding in the Romano-British period of the first century AD. However dating the Warton Crag structure based upon other structures elsewhere cannot be definitive. The above is based upon examples where no, or only limited, excavation has taken place and without the benefit of modern expertise and dating techniques.

Conclusion

The Historic England Report [17]concludes: 'The date of the monument will only finally be determined (if at all) by excavation.' This, together with core sampling may yet provide a final answer but until then the debate as to its date and function will continue. What is clear is that a comparison of Hutchinson's 1789 drawing with the recent LiDAR data requires his findings to be taken more seriously than has hitherto been the case, as can be seen in Figure 4, page 13.

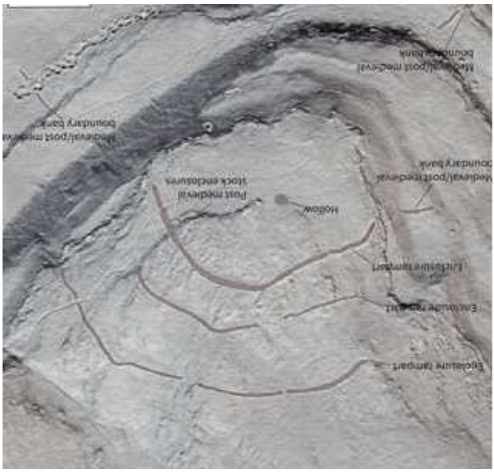
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks are due to all at Morecambe Bay Partnership and the Heritage Lottery Fund for giving the community the opportunity to carry out and help with this research. Morecambe Bay Partnership itself would also like to thank the landowners and tenants - Leighton Hall, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and the RSPB - for allowing the aerial survey to take place. The assistance and contribution of Arnside & Silverdale AONB Partnership, Historic England, the White Cross Archaeology Group, Dan Elsworth, Bill Shannon and David Ratledge is also gratefully acknowledged.

Editor's Note: A full set of references is at the end of this edition.

[17] Evans, Jecock & Oakey 2017 p43

Hutchinson's 1785 sketch



LiDAR image (inverted for comparison) 2016

Figure 4

Time to take Hutchinson seriously

BUMS ON PEWS IN THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

Andy Denwood and Awena Carter

Worries about church attendance are not new: in the Lancashire village of Warton more than 300 years ago the new vicar quickly learned that many parishioners had better things to do on Sunday than attend St Oswald's. Others showed a level of disrespect for church property which is shocking even today. The lamentable state of affairs that confronted the Rev Thomas Lawson on his appointment in 1681 is recorded in John Lucas's *'A History of Warton Parish'*.[1]

'It hath ever been…a beastly custom of unclean and irreverent persons, writes Lucas, *to pollute and bedaube the walls (and sometimes the very doors) of the place where Almighty God is to be worshipped, with piss or other more nasty excrements; an irreverence travellers tell us not to be seen, or so much as heard of in any of the eastern nation.'*

He continues,
'It was here … a scandalous practice or custom, for those who despised or did not know or consider the great benefits and advantage of the public service of our Church, to loiter away their time in the fields, in the church-yard, or in an ale house perhaps, till the greatest part of it was over and then to come into the church. And Sunday afternoons were generally (by the younger sort especially) spent in idle sports and pastimes.'

According to Lucas, attendance at the Sunday afternoon service had fallen to fewer than 10 adults. This was all clearly unacceptable to the new vicar. And when *'his publick and*

[1] *John Lucas is also cited in this magazine on page 23*

private admonitions' failed to swell the congregation, he chose action, opting for a classic stick and carrot approach. First, he needed some new muscle on the team.

'He took care to have such church wardens and other officers made choice of in the Parish, as he knew to be men of integrity, and who would not look upon their oaths as a thing of course and form, as too many do, but be sensible of the obligation it laid upon them carefully to observe all the particulars contained in their Book of Articles, Warrants, and co…and take care to bring all those to condign punishment who were obstinate in the practice of their irreligious courses.'

Figure 1:
A Parish Officer

It's not clear from Lucas's account precisely what *'condign punishment'* involved in late 17th and early 18th century Warton. Churchwardens were generally responsible for the enforcement of morality in the parish and had the power to take people before the ecclesiastical courts. But the impression given is that their enforcement techniques were more direct and energetic.

'Though at first they did meet with some opposition, and opprobrious language from the patrons of vain sports, yet they presently drave them out of the church-yard (their general randezvouze) and by finding out, and pursuing them to their more distant and private haunts, did frequently break up their unlawful assemblies and brought them in a little time to be more frequent in their attendance.'

The "carrot" meanwhile, came in an unexpected form. Lucas relates that,

'Mr Lawson…also promoted the singing of psalms with notes, himself paying a master for teaching some that were willing and apt to learn…This brought great numbers to the church; some out of devotion, and others out of curiosity.'

Singing in church would have been a novelty at this time - and a contrast with the even more sober alternative attractions being offered by the Quaker meetings which were popular in North Lancashire in the later seventeenth century. Lucas writes that the Rev Mr Lawson's efforts ensured that the Parish was '*brought to that decent order that it was fit to be proposed as a pattern to its neighbours.'*

The *'pious and diligent'* Mr Lawson ministered to his parish for nearly 30 years until his death in 1710. It is interesting to note that the Warton historian John Lucas became a church warden himself after he took a job as schoolmaster at St John's charity school in Leeds.

In the 18th century, on the other side of the Pennines in Haworth, the then Permanent Curate, William Grimshaw, did not rely on Parish officers to fill his Church. He provided the muscle himself, sometimes leaving the Church during the singing of a long Psalm and, taking a horse whip, going down to the many local alehouses to find those who were absent from Church. When the miscreants saw him approaching they would jump out of the windows and hide, if they could, until he had gone.

Figure 2:
A Village Alehouse

However, he combined such unorthodox methods with tender pastoral care of the elderly and sick, and he also oversaw the education of the young. He often preached in broad dialect and blessed, at the communion rail, those whom he knew needed a blessing. These mixed methods obviously succeeded: when he arrived, in 1742, there were about 12 communicants on a Sunday; in 1755 the Church had to be made bigger to accomodate the very large congregations, with 500 or so communicants, who now attended church.

These two village Parsons lived in a more robust age. Although they were separated by 60 or so years, by geography, and by Church tradition, nevertheless they shared a common desire for what they saw as their parishioners' spiritual wellbeing. They also shared unashamedly energetic ways of bringing it about.

References:

https://andydenwood.com/bums-pews-17th-c-warton/
accessed 14/08/2019

Haworth Church website
http://www.haworthchurch.co.uk/history/
accessed 14/08/2019

John Waddington-Feather
https://www.clsg.org/William_Grimshaw_of_Haworth.pdf
Accessed 14/08/2019

COKE OVENS ON THE LANCASTER CANAL

Sheila Jones

Coke ovens are a feature of the northern stretch of the Lancaster Canal, and one which local enthusiasts are striving to rescue from the undergrowth before they entirely disappear. They were used throughout the 19th Century to make coke from coal on a small scale and were situated by the canal to make use of the waterway as cheap transport of coal from the coalfields, and also near roadways and villages to minimise transport to places of use.

Intervention by the volunteers is timely because, although sites at Kendal and Crooklands are known to have existed, all trace has disappeared, and those at Tewitfield, Galgate and Holme are on private land. However, a detailed survey as well as retention work has been done at Holme where the owner is amenable to allowing visits by interested groups, and there is an information board on the opposite bank of the canal. The ovens at Bolton-le-Sands were invisible, but one has now been unearthed; work is beginning at Lancaster by the aqueduct next to the golf course to clear the view of ovens there; and an enormous effort has led to real success in unearthing a series of 5 ovens and a wharf at Carnforth. (See Figure 1 page 20)

What are the advantages of coke over coal that made these ovens proliferate along the canal? The main one is that it is a purified form of carbon without the tars which contaminate products, making it ideal for iron-making and limestone burning. Another is that it is extremely efficient, reaching 2000 degrees centigrade in airless furnaces or kilns. Some of Carnforth's coke was used to heat the greenhouses at Thwaite, and it could be used by blacksmiths; in static steam engines; in road traction engines; or

in small-scale lime burning for agricultural use. It is its reduced smoke and fumes, and its long-lasting and consistent burn, which make it ideal for domestic use.

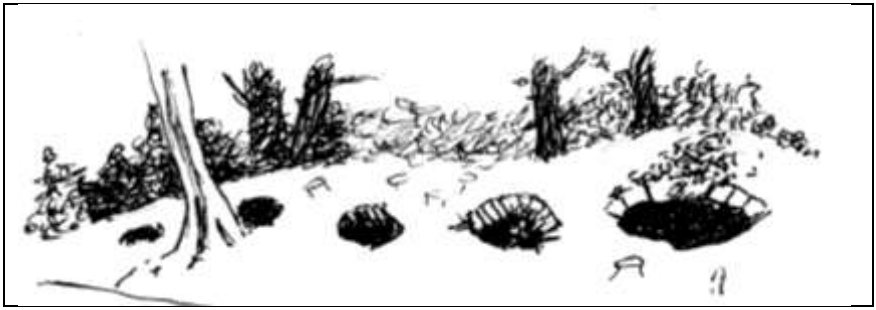


Figure 1:
Carnforth Coke Ovens in their present state of excavation.
(Sketch by Sheila Jones)

The process in the canal-side coke ovens used low-ash, low-sulphur, bituminous coal, and cooked out everything that was non-carbon, such as tar, water, and gas. The local industrial historian Jim Price describes the *'remains of five'* at Lancaster and says that the similarity with the other banks of ovens in our area suggest that *'a common design was being used by the canal company'*.[1] The design, however, was not confined to the canal company but was generally typical of the period.

'Coking' had originally been carried out in inefficient open heaps, sometimes on stone bases. From the mid eighteenth century there were purpose-built ovens, and by the middle of the 1800s these had narrowed into two types: beehive; and long

[1] Price, JWA, 'The Industrial History of the Lune Valley': Lancaster University CNWRS, 1983

oven; which were operationally similar. Near coal mining sites or at iron works they could be built as long banks of as many as ten ovens, sometimes with two banks back to back. The late John Satchell, another local historian, said that a set of just five, suitable for the needs of a community like Carnforth, allowed at least *'one to be being filled, one to be burning, one to be cooling down, and one to be being emptied concurrently. An oven would be filled with coal and lit and the entrance would then be bricked up to restrict air supply. The exhaust gases would escape through a small aperture left in the top of the oven. After about three days the bricks would be removed and any remaining fire extinguished. The oven would be allowed to cool and its contents emptied.'* [2]

John Satchell also quotes an advertisement to let two wharves at Crooklands, *'in one of which the Canal Company will erect ovens for the burning of cinders, if required by taker'* at the wharf *'well situated for the sale of coke and cinders to a large neighbourhood requiring a considerable consumption of both articles*'.[3]

Local particular documentation, however, is scarce. The archives of the Canal and River Trust have only one document known to refer to coke ovens; 'Plans of the Lancaster Canal navigation extending from Preston to Kendal and Glasson branch extending from Lodge Hill or Junction Bridge to Glasson Dock' (1880). The only information about Carnforth's ovens is their location; '6 chains (about 130 yards) south of Thwaite End Bridge No 127'.

[2] Satchell, John, 'Kendal's Canal; History, Industry and People': Kendal Civic Society, 2000
[3] Ibid.

The ovens at Carnforth, close to the first bridge south of the Canal Turn with a track leading to them, give easy access for the local community. It could well be that some coal was sold as it was, and some coked. The bridge, known as Thwaites Bridge, is next to the piece of land known as Springfield, a popular site for activities like Sunday School outings, picnics and 'paste egg' rolling, right up to the middle of the 20th century.

Marion Russell, the author of a number of books about the history of Carnforth, described the appearance of the ovens, which she would see when going to Springfield, as *'five little caves'* which she '*did not go inside to investigate because they were dirty and very smelly',* possibly used by tramps. She also describes a quay, about 50 yards long, hidden by reeds, and a sturdy wall on the canal side of the 'artificial hill' over the ovens.[4] Of this wharf, only a length of the stone 'kerb' going down from the bank to the flat quay has been excavated. Any restoration work can only be undertaken with the consent of the Canals and Rivers Trust which owns the land and the Trust is unsure whether or not this work should be continued in case destabilization occurs. The 'sturdy wall' is there, but not easily seen from the towpath side of the canal, and the ovens themselves, on their side of the canal, appear as five stone eyes at this stage of their restoration.

The once busy little area, well used recreationally and active with bargemen and the keeper of the coke ovens, is very quiet now; and it is rewarding to be reminded of what was once a small, but valuable local industry.

[4] Russell, Marion, 'How Carnforth Grew: A Simple Outline to 1900 A.D.': The Carnforth Bookshop, 1997

EVIDENCE OF THE LOCAL FLAX INDUSTRY MLHS SUMMER TRIP, 17th JULY 2019

Simon Williams and Pat Rowland

An introduction to the local flax industry.

by Simon Williams

The flax industry thrived in the parish of Warton in the 18th century and into the early nineteenth century. In the mid-eighteenth century John Lucas wrote of the local population that there was: '…*scarce one Freeholder, Farmer or Cottager in the whole Parish, but who has a Hempland, as they call it…*' In 1825 the Waithman family of Yealand Conyers set up a small workshop there for combing and spinning flax. Baptismal records for the parish show that weaving was still taking place in every township in the first half of the nineteenth century, and 14 weavers are recorded in Priest Hutton's 1841 census. Soon the industry was to go into a steep decline as cotton replaced linen.

Heron Corn Mill, the focus of a trip last year, is currently examining the industry through a study named The '1220 -2020 Flax Project'. This aims to bring small scale flax growing and fibre production back to the Beetham and Milnthorpe area. The hope is that, with the help of visitors to the Mill, the practice will spread across the UK for the duration of the project and beyond. (*See their website* www.*heronmill*.org *for more*)

A neighbouring local history society has made a study of the industry in their area, and this became the focus of this summer's Mourholme summer trip. On the 17th July Pat Rowland, of Cartmel Peninsula Local History Society, took a group of twenty from Mourholme Local History Society. around High Newton, a village on the A590 close to Lindale, and then around the

surrounding countryside. Our purpose was to look for evidence of the flax industry, which had disappeared at the beginning of the 19th century. It was a warm afternoon but rain threatened.

Figure 1:
Outside the Crown, High Newton, Mourholmers gather around Pat Rowland for a pre-walk briefing

An account of the walk around High Newton to look for evidence of the 18th century Flax Industry,
by Pat Rowland

The walk started in High Newton at a water feature, named Steeping Dub on the earliest OS map. Here flax was originally retted (soaked in water) before a ban was imposed on carrying out the process near to houses. We walked past a steeply sloping field where weaving sheds had been located on 3 platforms created on the hillside, and then headed towards Barber Green. En route, there were more retting ponds, one of which is used today to collect run off rainwater from the improved A590.

In Barber Green we followed the engineered water-course that provided the power to the fulling mill, a place where the bleached cloth was beaten to flatten the fibres. The probable site of the mill was pointed out. Then, just outside Barber Green, we looked at the fields where flax was grown, and the amazing 3m wide "consumption wall", created from the process of clearing stones from the fields.

Back in High Newton, we saw Quaker flaxman Benjamin Hall's house, built by him in 1769, and the group were informed briefly about his career and family. Because the threatened rain finally arrived it was decided not to walk to Low Newton but instead to drive to Harry's Cafe at Yew Tree Reclamation Barn for refreshments and discussions. Several people did stop to look at the largest retting pool that is viewable from the roadside, with its platform still visible. but unfortunately we were not able to visit the possible site of another weaving shed and an engineered watercourse.

Figure 2:
Viewing former flax fields

Simon concludes:
Pat also showed pictures of: a stained glass window in Lindale Church with an inscription mentioning hemp; a flax seal that would have been attached to a bunch of imported flax or hemp; and an eighteenth century weaving loom. In addition, she mentioned Hill Mill, a flax mill close to Cartmel, that was leased by Isaac Hall between 1793 and 1813, and she discussed in detail the processes that were necessary to turn plant stems into cloth.

After an extremely interesting, if wet, outing, everybody left with more knowledge of an important industry that was more common in the area than has been realised.

REPORTS OF EVENING MEETINGS
Clive Holden

27th March 2019: Monasteries and their influence in North Lancashire and South Cumbria.

Exploring this fascinating subject, **Alan Crosby** explained that, although we may think of Monastic Houses simply as places of worship, monks also tilled the ground, mined and fished. In contrast Mendicant and Augustinian friars did not live in a community, work at a trade, nor own property, but travelled about preaching and being dependent on the goodwill of their hearers.

While there were many Monastic Houses in the fertile lands of Yorkshire, there were not more than a dozen or so in our area. This was largely because most of the land was owned by the Crown and, what Monasteries there were, were founded by landowners for the good of their souls. The small number of Religious Houses, however, did not necessarily imply poverty. The Cistercian Furness Abbey, in particular, became very wealthy. It was a large landowner and also owned mines so that, by the 15th Century, it was one of the largest and most powerful Cistercian Houses in the North, only outdone by Fountains Abbey.

Although being a monk may have been regarded as a fast track to heaven, not all monks in were virtuous, some few even being regarded as 'incontinent with women'. Many of these appeared to have been sent, as a punishment, from Houses in other areas to Monasteries in the then remote North West. Despite these extra men, the number of monks was surprisingly small: only thirty at Furness Abbey, plus a few non-residents, though the number of servants attending them could be even

more surprisingly large. The amount of money given by the Monastic Houses to charity seemed small, but apparently was more generous than in the south of the country. Another remarkable feature was that the surnames of many of the monks in the North West were of places not too far from their monastic houses.

Catholicism managed to survive in Lancashire longer than elsewhere after the Reformation, but the crushing of the Northern Pilgrimage of Grace and Henry VIII and his Chief Minister, Thomas Cromwell's, determination to destroy the power of the Pope in England, meant that dissolution of the Monasteries quickly became an established fact, resulting in the ruined structures we visit today.

24th April 2019: Any More Fares Please?

After a commendably brief A.GM. committee member **Bill Robinson** took centre stage for the story of the Dallam and Ribble bus companies, with the help of archive film.

The Dallam story started with the purchase by John Fawcett and Sons of Milnthorpe of a couple of surplus military vehicles which they converted into charabancs for occasional use. After seeing more luxurious vehicles at the Wembley exhibition in 1924, they started up their own bus service between Kendal, Milnthorpe and Arnside (at first with a solid-tyre vehicle). In 1927 a new service between Lancaster, Carnforth, Silverdale and Arnside was inaugurated, followed by Hincaster, Sedgwick and Natland and, in 1940, by Kendal to Grange. Some of us may remember the rather antiquated appearance of some of the Dallam fleet which, after competing with the Ribble company on some routes, was taken over by that company in 1950.

The Ribble bus company, founded in Preston in 1919, became a much larger concern than Dallam, spreading its tentacles as far north as Keswick, and absorbing other companies in the process. Those of us with long memories may recall that while Ribble buses went to Silverdale via the Yealands and the dreaded switchback near Leighton Moss (now not nearly so severe), the Dallam buses went by the more leisurely route via Crag Foot.

But I digress. The Ribble company continued to thrive as part of the National Bus Company, despite the growing use of private cars, until 1986, and although we now travel by Stagecoach, Ribble still lives on through the Ribble Enthusiasts' Club and the Ribble Preservation Trust who intend to make its centenary year a memorable one.
Thanks to Bill for reviving memories of those bygone years.

25th September 2019: Lanty Slee – a Smuggler's Life.
Margaret Dickinson told the remarkable story of Lanty (a Cumbrian version of Lancelot) Slee, officially a farmer and quarryman, but unofficially a distiller and smuggler who usually managed to keep one step ahead of the excise men. He was of Irish descent, but lived in Borrowdale and Little Langdale for most of his life, where he was kept busy with his illegal activities. He had illicit stills, well concealed, producing whisky which was sold at ten shillings per gallon, in a variety of locations. This meant he was well acquainted with the packhorse trails over Wrynose and Hardknott passes to Ravenglass, which was well known as a port used by smugglers trading with the Isle of Man. His return journeys would not be profitless either, smuggled tobacco replacing the whisky.

Not all his ventures were successful, as he was twice sent to prison, in 1841 and 1853 (when he was betrayed by his business partner William Pattinson), and fined heavily, but not so heavily as to deter him from his way of life. He was known to sell his whisky to local gentry, including a magistrate, who did not enquire too closely as to its origins. Lanty was in his late seventies when he died in 1878, a good age, though not comparable with his son Adam who lived to be a hundred. We were shown photographs of various places associated with Lanty, some of them National Trust properties looking much smarter than they would have in Lanty's time. Among the properties were Arnside and Low Arnside, but do not be deceived, they are near Coniston.

NOTES AND QUERIES

TWO MEMORIES ABOUT THE LIGHT RAILWAY FROM SCOUT CRAG TO CARNFORTH IRON WORKS

Stephen Fawcett

Memories of Carnforth Iron Works slag dumping in Morecambe Bay

My father Ralph Fawcett was born in Warton in 1922 and as a child he remembered the light railway, also known as tramway, that was used to deliver limestone from Scout Quarry to the Carnforth iron works. It was also used to dump the slag along the bank of the Keer and out into the bay. In particular my father described the slag wagons glowing red hot at night, visible far out into the bay. This sight left a lasting impression. He thought he would have seen this from the Crag Road area. This would have been at the end of the life of the iron works when the slag dumping had reached its maximum extent into the bay.

A tunnel puzzle under New Road Warton

I lived at Sand Lane, Warton, as a child in the 50s and used to explore the foreshore of Morecambe Bay. I can remember discovering a tunnel under the coastal New Road. This was located between Sand Lane and Scout Quarry. The entrance was on the shore side, hidden by undergrowth. As I remember it was a small brick lined arched tunnel that passed under the road but was blocked at the end. It could still be there. As a child I guessed it had been for rail wagons to pass to and from the quarry but in retrospect it cannot have been for this purpose. Looking at old OS maps I note mention of a smithy in what seems a similar location to my memory of the tunnel. I guess the tunnel must have had something to do with the smithy. I can't

think of any other reason for it. I assume the smithy would be there to sharpen the tools for the quarrymen.

An Archive film showing a distant view of Carnforth Iron Works.

Stephen has also found some 1901 film footage showing the chimney of Carnforth Iron Works in the distance. This is on a fascinating and amusing film of the prom at Morecambe. The film is in the public domain and is 7 minutes long. Look out for the chimney of the Carnforth Iron Works which, Stephen says, can be seen on the horizon, belching smoke, between 05:18 and 05:45.

The film is very well worth watching even if you miss the smoke from the Iron Works. Here is the link:
https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-panoramic-view-of-the-morecambe-sea-front-1901-1901-online

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Mourholme Local History Society's
LECTURE PROGRAMME 2019-20:
September 2019 – April 2020

25th September 2019 :
Lanty Slee – A Smuggler's Life: Margaret Dickinson
Lancelot 'Lanty' Slee, born 1802, was a legend in his own lifetime, some of which was spent in jail. He operated as a farmer, illegal whisky distiller and smuggler from the beautiful Little Langdale area, where his activities provided for his wife and 10 children.

30th October 2019:
The Northumbrian Kingdom: Dr Fiona Edmunds
The powerful kingdom of Northumbria at its height reached from the Mersey to southwest Scotland, and from the Humber to the Forth. How and why did it expand into our region, and what caused its decline in around 1100? Access to the Irish Sea was certainly important.

27th November 2019
The Pilgrimage of Grace: Dick O'Brien
The Pilgrimage of Grace, 1536-7, was the largest uprising faced by Henry VIII. His changes to English religion and church were a main cause. Cumberland and Westmorland were heavily involved, and the rebellion culminated with a battle outside Carlisle Castle and the summary execution of 74 men.

18th December 2019
The Cumbrian Coast Railway: David Hindle
The construction of the Cumbrian Coast Railway led to a transport revolution, giving ordinary people greater mobility for work, business and pleasure. Excursion trains, steam specials and regular services have enriched the lives of passengers for nearly two centuries. The Cumbrian Coast is one of Britain's great railway journeys.

29th January 2020
The Lancaster Canal: John Acres
The Lancaster Canal celebrated its 200th anniversary in 2019 and this talk will explore the reasons for its development and its contribution to the economy of the region. Today its function as a linear countryside park dominates, but plans to restore the canal to Kendal are more than a pipe dream.

26th February 2020
Sex & Sin in 17th Century Lancashire: Alan Crosby
The 17th century is seen as a time when magistrates and church courts sought to enforce moral behaviour. The reality was rather different. This talk is based on court records, which include plenty of vivid verbatim testimony, and some very colourful language.

25th March 2020
The North-West and Slavery: Dr Nick Radburn
The north-west has deep connections to the transatlantic slave trade. Thousands of men from this region invested in the slave trade, served upon slave ships, or traded for slaves in Africa and the Americas during the eighteenth century.

29th April 2020
A Cumbrian Colony in the South Pacific: David Fellows
Norfolk Island is a small island in the South Pacific with a large history. Discovered by Captain Cook, in time it has been a penal colony, a new home to Cumbria's Fletcher Christian and the Bounty mutineers, a tax haven and a tourist destination. But since 1990 a modern dispute has arisen, a sort of Brexit dilemma!

This talk will be preceded by the Mourholme AGM.