

*The History  
of  
Sunnybank Cottages  
Kirkstone Road, AMBLESIDE*



*(and an insight into the life and times of the people of the  
Stock Ghyll Valley)*

*by*

*Jack Whitehead*

*2004*

*With additional research*

*by*

*Richard and Jill Attenborough*

*This edition updated (with the 1911 census details) in 2014*

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## **FOREWORD**

This book has been laid out in a manner to make it possible to dip in and out of, rather than a straight narrative of the history of the cottages themselves. The cottages and their owners are inextricably linked with the life, farming and history of Ambleside and the Stock Ghyll valley. The book, however is arranged into a series of chapters as detailed below. We hope that you find it informative but please be aware that this is a living document – it continues to grow!

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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**Not for publication**

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Not for publication

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# *Acknowledgements*

This booklet is the result of a great deal of hard work by Jack Whitehead, Jill's uncle who, at the age of 86 years, paid his first visit to our cottages in June 2003 and was immediately struck by the age of the dresser in number 4 cottage, Fellside. From this small start, this booklet has developed.

Richard and Jill had already produced a short description of the cottages from the original deeds for Fellside, which had, at that point, never been registered with HM Land Registry and so the original deeds from 1814 were still in the family.

Jack's enquiring mind has been the inspiration for much of the extra research done by Jill and Richard. We are indebted to the many people and organisations who have provided help or information directly or the facilities and documents upon which this history has been researched. Those people and organisations include:

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 Shirley Lawton, Seathwaite High Barn

Not for publication

Paula and Roy Parkinson, Roundhill Farm  
Stuart Ross, Glenthorn, Kirkstone Road  
John Carnie (author of At Lakeland's Heart)  
The Internet – an amazing source of information after just a few keystrokes!

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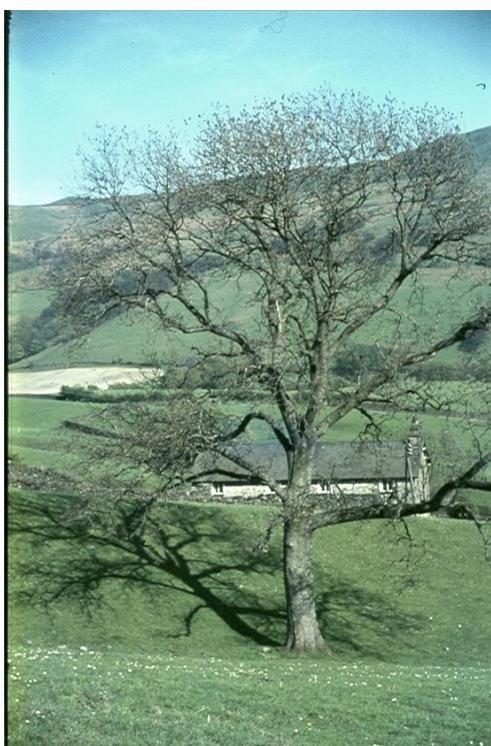
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Many of the above are available at the Armit Museum, Rydal Road, Ambleside, LA22 9BL.

## Sunny Bank Cottages, Ambleside pre 1841

A document dated 24 May, 1814, records that a piece of land called Sheepgates was enfranchised (set free) by the Earl of Lonsdale to Agnes Hutton for £200 of lawful English money. This parcel consisted of several fields and the four cottages we now call Sunny Bank. Thus the cottages were built before 1814, but we do not yet know when. All we can do is to examine the site, some of the leases, and the cottages themselves.



They are built in the lee of the Kirkstone Road, a cold and exposed place in bad weather, and next to a stream. Clearly this stream, or well, was the reason for the exact location of the cottages. The 1913 Ordnance Survey, reproduced much later in this booklet, shows streams as thick, black lines. The cottage well appears to have been one of these brief stream appearances.

The ground sloped steeply from the Kirkstone Road. Sunny Bank cottages were designed to crouch down on the south side of the road to shelter themselves from the north wind, and with magnificent views across the valley, down to Ambleside and Lake Windermere, and across to Wansfell Pike. In winter the cold wind blows over the top of the cottages: in summer they stretch out and bask like a cat on a warm garden bench. Often the clouds are carried by the northwest wind over the cottages so that the rain falls on the opposite side of the valley, leaving the cottages dry.



The builder could have built up the front walls of the cottages from the sloping site until the ground floor level was reached and then put in wooden floors. But these were simple cottages in Lakeland. There would have been no money for all that timber. Like the majority of local cottages, these would have had floors of rammed earth, paved with local slate slabs. Secondly, to have lifted Sunny Bank Cottages on cellar walls would have lifted the houses

above the road and into the north wind. There may have been a third reason which is perhaps explained indirectly by Harriet Martineau writing about building her own house in Ambleside, perhaps forty years after Sunny Bank had been built

(Harriet Martineau at Ambleside, by Barbara Todd, pub. 2002)

Harriet Martineau had become world famous as a writer on social economy and as a spirited journalist. A woman of enormous energy, she wrote a spate of articles, books and stories. She toured America and ever after wrote and protested against slavery. An early feminist, she said things that others were not to pick until half a century later by later pioneers.

After years of unremitting work, she developed a serious, debilitating illness. For five years she kept to her room, unable to suffer strong light, without energy and prescribed opiates. Someone then suggested Mesmerism. A Mesmerist practitioner was found. He banned the opiates and the positive, hopeful jargon, which was part of the treatment, seems to have broken the lethargy. Slowly Harriet Martineau recovered. In this period of convalescence she visited Ambleside, fell in love with the area and built herself a house.

In 1848 she bought a small hillock called The Knoll, further down the valley, on the Rydal Road, and two acres of land below it. On the Knoll she would build her house, with splendid views in every direction, and turn the fields into gardens and shrubberies. It is shown later on the 1913 Ordnance Survey map.

The builder was John Newton 'who received my plan for such a house as I should like and sent in his contract. In October the first sod was turned'. One day, while the house was still building, with the walls up, roofed and the carpentry starting, Harriet Martineau and her maid set out one morning with baskets and trowels to collect daffodil bulbs, wild flower plants, ferns and heathers to clothe the little quarry. They scoured the local hillsides and fields 'to down from the brow clothe the little quarry and other local rocks with plants... 'to lodge there the white and yellow stonecrops, Cheddar pinks and heather of different sorts and make the periwinkle hang down from the brow and lead the trailing honeysuckle to support itself by the roots of the oak growing above.'

(Harriet Martineau', by Barbara Todd, p. 65.)

For, with her new house she had also acquired a new quarry. The house was on the top of the Knoll and the builders had excavated the stone to build it from the field below. This is common Lakeland practice. You build with what is all around you. Susan Denyer says that stone was the natural local building material, surface gathered or quarried. Stones had been cleared from valley bottoms over centuries to provide meadows and arable fields. Stones were piled at field edges as walls and sometimes as stone cairns up to five feet thick. Elsewhere you dug a small quarry. Contracts show that builders were paid for the labour of 'getting' the stone. Nobody paid for the stone itself.

(Traditional Buildings and Life In The Lake District, by Susan Denyer, 1991)

These little quarries lie raw in the landscape as scars, for they take years to become softened by vegetation. Even then their shapes can still be made out. The Car Park at The Travellers' Rest, at Grasmere, looks to me very like a quarry. Harriet Martineau was determined to speed the process of naturalising her raw quarry.

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She and her maid planted gifts of plants from neighbours, William Wordsworth planted Stone Pines, the gardener planted trees from neighbours' copses and, as the house progressed, the garden began to take shape.

A Year in Ambleside, by Harriet Martineau (See Barbara Todd.)

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This story may have lessons for us when examining Sunny Bank. The ground had to be excavated and levelled to allow the cottages to shelter below the Kirkstone Road, but what if far more was levelled than the cottages alone needed? Stone may have been extracted right across what is now the garden, right up to the Farm Path and then retaining walls built. This stone, and no doubt some useful boulders rolled down from the fields above, must have provided the building stone for the cottages. Nobody would, or could, have brought it from far away with roads and transport so poor as it was. The slate floor slabs and the roofing slates probably came from slightly further away, but the stones for the walls were merely re-erected where they had lain since the mountains were first formed.



In Seathwaite Cottage, on the other side of the valley, the owners have taken from just below the surface of their steeply sloping garden, numerous stones suitable for wall-building and there is a large hollow nearby without any other reason than providing building stone.

One final detail about the quarrying is of interest. The

garden slopes upwards towards the farm road. It is not level. One does not undercut a mountain side lightly. Either it is the natural slope of the eroded mountain side, or the quarrymen sloped it upwards, leaving a triangular buttressing slope, or berm, to support the Farm Road.

The cottage walls are up to 22 inches (55 cms) thick, with small windows to protect against heat loss, but splayed inside to allow the maximum light into the rooms. Today the windows have large single panes of glass. The originals were small so that window frames blocked out much of the light. The rooms must have been very dark..

Floors were of pounded earth laid with slabs of purple slate, possibly from the Coniston area which yields slate of this colour. Traditionally the slate was covered with straw matting, rag rugs, and later linoleum. These would all have been perpetually damp, wicking up water from the joints in the slate floors.

In each cottage there were two rooms below, with an open fire in each, an L-shaped staircase as there is today, and two bedrooms above. In each bedroom might have been

a water jug and basin for washing, and a chamber pot. There was no running water in the cottage and, of course, no bathroom or lavatory



At the top of the site, at the end of No 4 Cottage garden, is a small slate-roofed building resting against the farm road wall. This used to be the old earth toilets. Positioning the earth closets at the highest point on the site reflects the lack of sanitary knowledge at the start of the nineteenth century, At that time doctors thought disease was carried by the smell, or miasma [Greek for pollution]. They had no idea that diseases like cholera were water borne and some doctors were to reject the idea to the ends of their lives. For years

even Bazalgette, the man who built the London Sewers, thought that he had cured disease by getting rid of the smell. Famously, Doctor Snow had cured the Soho cholera epidemic by taking away the pump handle so that nobody could drink the infected water, but it was only after his death that doctors and sanitary engineers accepted his discovery as true. Therefore it was perfectly natural for the original cottage builders to have put the earth closets at the top of the site, where the strong winds would disperse the smell, and as they thought, the disease

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On August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1815 Agnes Hutton sold the cottages and the land to Ford North Esquire, “ for his quiet enjoyment”. Two years later on April 13<sup>th</sup> 1817 he sold them to William Newton (Spirit merchant). In John Carnie’s book, At Lakeland’s Heart, we learn that Ford North was the head of the Select Vestry (they organised and no doubt paid for the poor house) He is described as the local grandee. There is a suggestion that maybe Sunny Bank may have been the poor house for the village. So, did he buy them as the new poor house for the town, or have them built? If they are the poor houses then why did he sell them? The provision for the poor was a made an act of parliament in 1819 with the Select Vestries having more powers to provide for the poor.

Sunny Bank may have been part of a larger sale as Ford North bought land and The Oaks. He moved into The Oaks in 1813 after selling Rydal Mount to the Le Flemings (who leased it to William Wordsworth). The Le Flemings still own it. In the 1841 census he is 75 years old and living at The Oaks with his son. On Ford North’s death his son, the Rev James North, inherited his estate and gave the new St. Mary’s Church a window commemorating John Kelsick.



The next occupants of the Oaks were the Hopkinsons, owners of a slave-worked plantation on the West Indian island of Demarara. The house has since been converted into the Kirkstone Foot Hotel (see photo, left)

John Kelsick (1699-1723) was a wealthy unmarried man. He had inherited money from his grandparents and

parents and his sister had died. He left his estate to pay off debts and to use the money to build a school near St Anne's Chapel.



The two schools either side of St. Anne's Church. Both are now cottages.

The interest on the money left was to pay for a school master to teach the boys. The most well-known teacher at the school was John Dawes, an ex-pupil who 1811 took over the school and became an inspirational teacher. His pupils included 2 sons of Wordsworth. When he died in 1845, 15 pupils had his body interred in the St. Anne's Chapel.



When the chapel (left) was converted into flats in 1984 a brass plaque was placed on top of the eroded tomb stone. (see right)



The school has been converted into the Kelsick Cottages. A new Grammar School was built on the other

side of the valley near the waterfalls and was called Kelsick Grammar Schools It is now part of the University of Cumbria, but is to be sold imminently (2014) The local children now go to The Lakes School at Troutbeck Bridge. The children living in Sunny Bank had a wide choice of schools. A girl's boarding school was also at Hill Top, which Dora Wordsworth attended. Miss Hellis held a mixed school at Belle View and other private schools near the chapel and at the Green. Free State education began in 1880, so our children may have been taught at home or not at all!

### Life in the Valley

#### The Ambleside Water Mills

The local river was called Stock Ghyll, not a mere river, but the water power which served the whole life of the valley. As early as 1324 there had been a corn mill. In 1494, and probably earlier, there was a fulling mill producing linsey-woolsey cloth.

For centuries the main manufacturing interest in the area had concentrated on cloth. Wool from the sheep and linen from the flax, which grew well in the fertile and damp lakeside fields. The two were often used together to make the hard-wearing worsted cloth called linsey-woolsey. Linen threads in one direction, gave strength and hard-wearing qualities, while woollen ones in the other direction gave warmth. The fulling process removed the grease from the wool. There was also a bark mill, producing the tannin for the local Ambleside tanneries. This mill closes in 1889, no doubt to the relief of some as the smell was appalling. Altogether there were nine mills of different sorts along the Stock Ghyll.

(See *The Mills of Ambleside, the Catalogue of an Exhibition at the Armit Museum, Ambleside, 2003*).

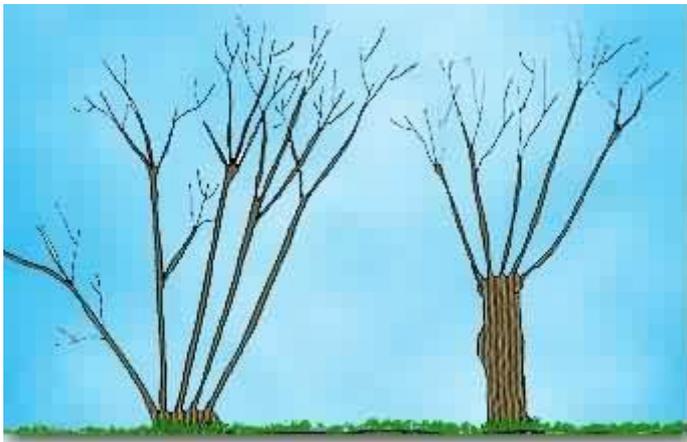


With the rise of the Lancashire cotton industry, the demand for wooden cotton reels rocketed. The Stock Force Bobbin Mill site, in Edinboro', was bought by Joseph Thompson, a bobbin manufacturer in 1810. and in the early years had several owners. In 1824, Charles Horrax came from Sheffield to manage both the Stock Mill and the nearby Waterfall Bobbin Mill. In Sheffield he had been a successful manufacturer of inners for hats. These, and especially bowler hats, required shaped wooden formers. Thus Horrax would have had knowledge of turned wooden forms before he arrived in Ambleside. Over the years the two mills were to produce, besides bobbins, hats and

sometimes umbrellas, tool handles, and a variety of other turned goods (including yoyos) over the years.

### **Coppicing**

Ambleside was particularly favoured for the turning of bobbin reels as it had water to drive the lathes and trees which could be coppiced to produce the small, quickly grown timber that was needed. There was a time, according to Harriet Martineau, when squirrels could travel to Kendal, a distance of thirteen miles, entirely on the tops of trees. By the end of the eighteenth century much of this timber had been felled and lots more was coppiced. Instead of allowing the trees to grow to full size, they were felled every fifteen years or so. From each stump sprang numbers of long straight shoots, each striving to reach the light. These poles were the coppicings. In fifteen years an acre of forest could produce 10,000 poles, worth up to £18 uncut. Thus plantations were harvested like corn every fifteen years or so.



The roots and stumps of coppiced trees are unmistakable, covering the ground like tangled chicken feet. These matted roots can still be seen beside Stock Ghyll and elsewhere. They make for treacherous going for men and animals. Many horses have stumbled over them, pitching their riders into

eternity. In forests frequented by horsemen, such as Epping Forest, north of London, trees were coppiced at shoulder height, so that their roots grow normally and are not a hazard. It was important too, to keep grazing animals from the newly coppiced stumps or they would eat the new shoots, so the outer edges of plantations and road sides were planted closely and coppiced at shoulder height, to produce a dense, yet productive hedge. Beech, alder, and birch were suitable for bobbins. Oak was too hard.

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The fortunes of the bobbin mill and of the Horrax family will be followed in the course of this short history. Its subject is the History of Sunny Bank Cottages, but the Horrax family affected the history of the valley and they were also intimately connected to the cottages themselves, owning them and even living in one. The tales of the cottages and of the Horrax family will be found to inter-link

## To Return to the History...

Charles Horrax married Julia Dean and they had a son, Richard, born in 1827. Julia died and Charles Horrax later re-married. He married Dorothy Dickinson (1816-1877) but the dates of Julia's death and Horrax's two marriages are not known.



Presumably they were living at the Bobbin Mill cottage, as Horrax was there in 1851.

William Newton, who owned Sunny Bank, had died and, on 30th August 1838, his executors, James Newton and George Law Newton transferred the property from William Newton (Spirit merchant of Ambleside) to his widow, Mary Newton.

A few months later, on 4th December 1838, Mary Newton transferred the property to her son.

*“---The said Mary Newton, being desirous to make provision for the present advantage and benefit of her son, the said James Newton, and so to provide his comfort in life has proposed to convey to him ---- it is witnessed that in consideration of the natural love and affection which the said Mary Newton had and bore toward her son, the said James Newton, and for divers good causes and considerations, her thereunto moving and also in consideration of ten shillings of lawful English money in hand paid by the said James Newton.”.*

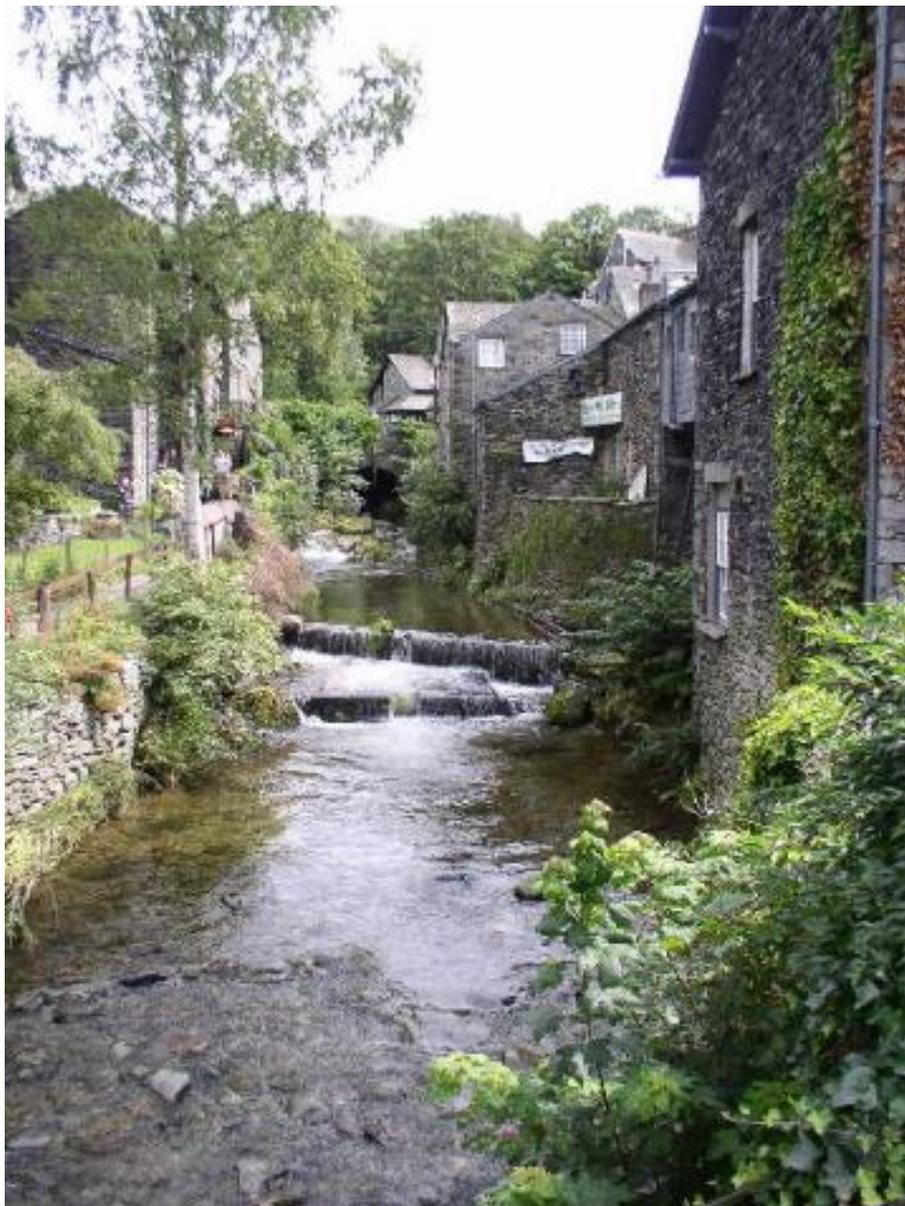
This ten shillings was the slightest of peppercorns.

It is not clear whether Mary Newton was moving in or out and there is no census with names to help us.

In this document the land is referred to being “in **Ambleside Above Stock**”. This is the name of the old parish, which was the part of Ambleside which lay to the North of Stock Ghyll, whereas all the rest of Ambleside was in the parish of **Ambleside Below Stock**.

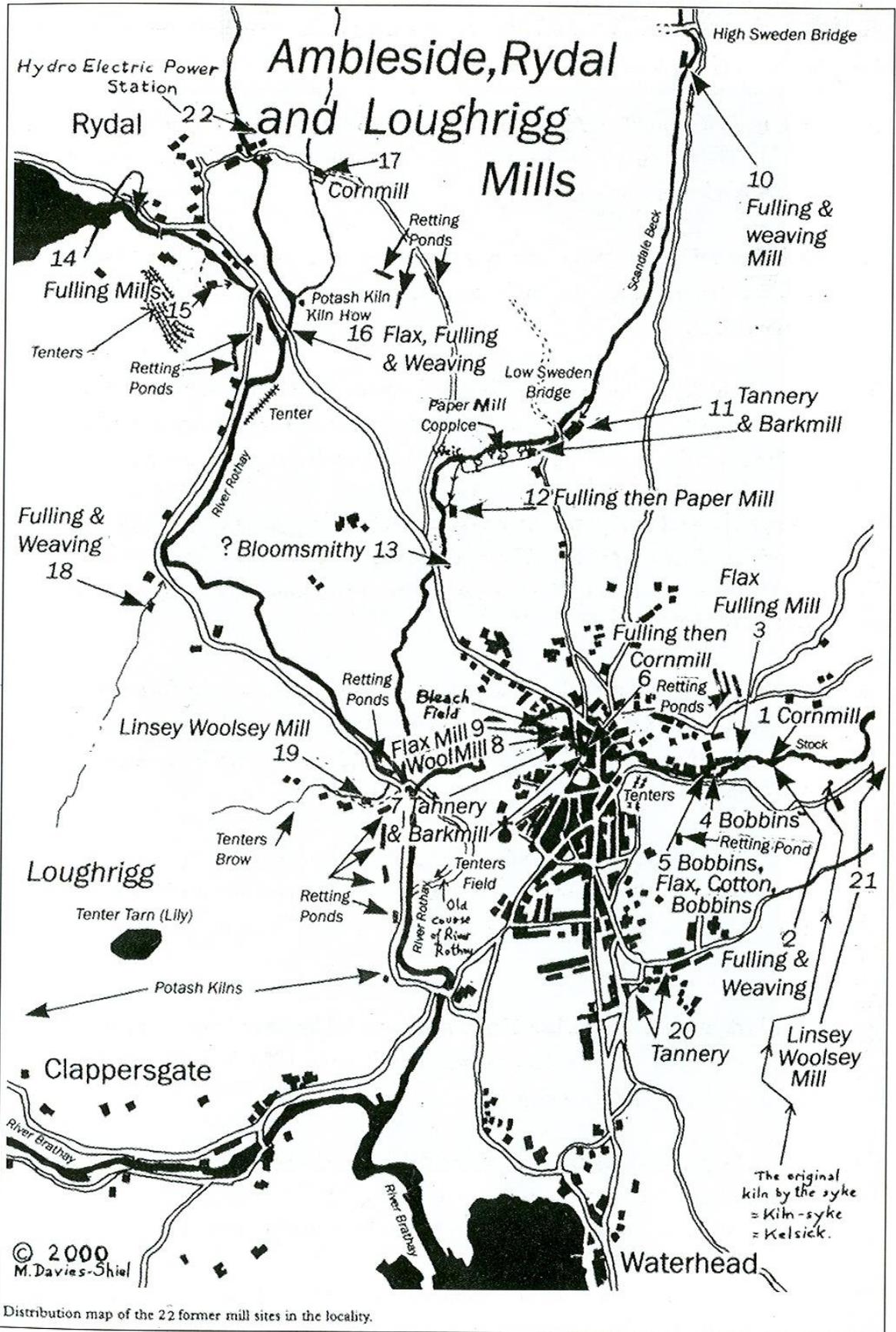


This parish boundary marker can still be seen on the bridge opposite the Bridge House in Rydal Road.



The view from the same spot looking up Stock Ghyll towards the mills

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Grateful thanks to Mike Davies-Shiel and John Carnie for permission to reproduce this map.

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### **A Brief History of The Mills in Ambleside**

(see plan on the previous page for number reference)

1	The first known mill in Ambleside, recorded in 1324, was used for grinding corn and was situated near to the waterfall. By 1494 it was being run by the Braithwaite family. The mill was known as 'Long Coats.'
2	A fulling mill called 'Mill Doors' was also run by the Braithwaites from 1494-1643 and later by the Mackereth family to produce linsey-woolsey cloth. It worked until around 1813.
3	Another fulling mill known as 'Gill Close' was owned by the Braithwaites and later the Mackereths and also the King family. Recorded in a drawing by W Collingwood in 1841, it halted production in 1839 and has since largely disappeared.
4	Ambleside's first bobbin mill known as 'Stock Force' was built in 1810, enlarged by Charles Horrax in 1839 before being destroyed by fire in 1865. Money collected across the country enabled it to be usefully converted into a kiln, coppice drying shed and cottages.
5	The second bobbin mill 'Waterfall' was built in 1822 and was initially a cotton mill. It flourished after the fire in Stock Force Mill when the subscriptions raised in support of Charles Horrax enabled it to have 50 lathes and employ over 70 workers. It closed in 1964 and was converted into holiday flats in 1966.
6	The 'New Mill' built by the Braithwaites and largely used for grinding corn, remains one of the most photographed views of the town. It ceased as a working mill in 1930. It was turned into a pottery by George Cook and in 1975 became the Waterwheel Shop.
7	The bark mill built in the late 17th century was fed by water from the corn mill. It supplied bark for the Ambleside tanneries. It closed in 1880. Today it is used as a wood turning workshop and shop.
8	This fulling mill dating from the late middle ages was converted into a wool mill in 1795 and was run by the Cooper family and latterly the Partridges. It is now home to the Glass House Restaurant. The waterwheel was rebuilt in 1999.
9	The Cooper family ran a flax mill extension to the woolen mill. It was converted into cottages in 1838. The large car park next door was originally their bleach field.



Ambleside in the 1830's was a bustling place with not only the local population, but also a steady stream of visitors passing through (see the Beggars Book section). The photo above from the Armitt Trust Collection shows the Market Square at the time of a fair. The market cross is still to be found outside the tourist information office. The buildings however, have changed a great deal but the general layout today bears resemblance to the photo above.



This photo is a little more recent and shows the same area with some buildings being much the same as they are today. The three storey building beyond the coach has

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Tyson's shoe shop today, whilst the row of cottages beyond were once occupied by Brown's taxis and coaches but now house (in addition) Tesco on the site of the former the post office.

## **Sunny Bank Cottages, Ambleside from 1841-60**

### **The Census**

The Census can provide some valuable information about the cottages. It was instituted in 1801 as a way of taking stock of the country at the start of a new millennium. Britain and France were in perpetual War. The Battle of Trafalgar would happen in five years' time. America had broken from of Britain in 1776, the first of its colonies to gain independence, and the country had reeled from the shock. This, followed by the French Revolution, faced Britain with the prospect of unending war, Britain needed to take stock. The Census was to be a huge checking of the books. In 1801 Britain sent in the accountants.

From the start the Census was merely a case of counting the population and dividing them into four categories:- Profession; Trade (which means owning a business) Employment; and Independent Means. The people who collected the facts were enumerators (numberers), not namers. These figures were compiled each decade by every parish and the results were published as Parliamentary papers. The original documents were then destroyed.

One of the objects was to prevent engineers and other skilled people, from emigrating to America, where they might set up industries to rival British ones. While America was still a colony, it had been seen as a source of raw materials, to be carried in British boats and manufactured into saleable goods in British factories. These were then exported exclusively in British boats. When America gained its independence, in 1776, it became a trade rival, to be hindered in every way. Britain was intent on keeping its lead in industrial know-how. Whitney, the founder of the great American farm machine company and the partner in Pratt and Whitney, had to emigrate to America in an agricultural smock, with a shepherd's crook in his hand.

(See 'Give Us The Tools' by L.T.C. Rolt, David & Charles.)

In **1841**, for the first time, the names, addresses, ages, sex, and occupations were collected. Slowly, census by census, more questions were asked. At last, the Census returns began to become of use to local historians but, under the privacy regulations, everything had to be kept secret for 100 years. No census would be published while the people on it were still alive. Therefore it was not until January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1942 that the first census returns with names, were opened to public view. At that time we were in the middle of the Second World War and nobody noticed. Today, with a series of census returns available (1841-2001 to date) they are an invaluable source of information. What future historians will make of the ticked boxes in modern computer census forms we cannot guess. They will be and are a frustrating nightmare. Even the "where were you born?" question is so vague as to be useless.

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The identification of particular houses in the 1841 Census is difficult, as the Post Office had not yet imposed house numbering. Properties were not necessarily set down in order along the road and it is often difficult to work out which end of the road comes first. Some houses have names, which may have persisted up to today, but in 1841 Sunny Bank is not shown.

### 1851 Census Details

No.	Name	Relationship	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
1	William Johnson	Head	32	Coachman	Ravenglass
1	Sarah Johnson	Wife	30		Little Broughton
1	Elizabeth Johnson	Daughter	9	Scholar	Ravenglass
1	Thomas Johnson	Son	7	Scholar	
1	William Johnson	Son	5	Scholar	
1	Benjamin Johnson	Son	3		Ambleside
1	Sarah Jane Johnson	Daughter	9m		Ambleside
2	James Atkinson	Head	39	General labourer	Crosthwaite
2	Dorothy Atkinson	Wife	39	Washer woman	Crook
2	Hannah Atkinson	Daughter	13		Applethwaite
2	Agnes Atkinson	Daughter	10	Scholar	Hawkshead
2	Alice Atkinson	Daughter	8	Scholar	Ambleside
	Rebecca Lindsay	Head	31	Parochial Relief – deserted by husband	Crook
2	Mary Lindsay	Daughter	10	Scholar	Ambleside
2	Hannah Lindsay	Daughter	7	Scholar	Rusland
2	Robert Lindsay	Son	2		Ambleside
3	Robert McVity	Head	34	General labourer	Carlisle
3	Betsy McVity	Wife	34		Langdale
3	William McVity	Son	8	Scholar	Loughrigg
3	Joseph McVity	Son	5	Scholar	Coniston
3	Jane Parker	Head	32	Parochial Relief	Coniston
3	Hannah Parker	Daughter	10	Scholar	Langdale
3	Mary A. Parker	Daughter	5	Scholar	Westmorland – Arndel
3	Roger Parker	Son	1		Cleator
3	Agnes Taylor	Daughter	12	Scholar	Cleator
3	William Taylor	Father	62	Parochial Relief - Waller	Ambleside
3	Sarah J. Birkett	Niece	5		Coniston
4	John Gibson	Head	45	Joiner Journeyman	Penrith
4	Ann Gibson	Wife	42	Lodging House Transfer	Tilberthwaite
4	William Gibson	Son	18	Agricultural labourer	Ambleside
4	John Gibson	Son	13	Scholar	Ambleside
4	Hannah Gibson	Daughter	10	Scholar	Ambleside
4	Richard Gibson	Son	8	Scholar	Ambleside
4	Tobias Gibson	Son	5	Scholar	Ambleside

In the 1851 Census however, schedule 157 shows that John Gibson, a journeyman joiner, was living in Sunnybank (one word). Ten years earlier, in 1841, John Gibson, age 35 and also a joiner, was living in Kirkstone Road, so this **may** be the same family and the house **may** be one of the Sunny Bank cottages but we cannot be sure.

The next entry is Town Field, clearly some distance away, so this is the last Sunny Bank entry and Gibson was probably living in No.4 cottage. Moving backwards from this

we can find the other cottages. One property on page 12 was unoccupied in 1841, so one of the Sunny Bank cottages may have been empty.

On the census schedule, the end of a house entry is shown by a double slash (//). If more than one household live in the same house, they are separated by a single slash (/). To sort out the possible Sunny Bank cottages, only the first households are listed below. Thus the Heads of Household may have been :-

EITHER	OR	
One Unoccupied	Thomas Jackson,	Agricultural labourer
William Sproat	William Sproat	Shoemaker
John Pall	John Pall	Hooper
John Gibson	John Gibson	Joiner.

Thomas Jackson was a 60 Year old agricultural labourer, married to Mary, who was the same age. They had two children, aged 20 and 15. Their employment is not listed.

William Sproat was a shoemaker who may, or may not, have worked at home.

John Pall was a Hooper. Coppiced poles were split into two or four pieces and trimmed with a draw-knife. They were then bent in a bending machine and nailed to form barrel hoops to hold the staves of barrels tight. Hoops were sold for £9-10 per thousand. The trade could be carried out at home or in factories. The Bobbin mill made hoops, so John Pall could have worked there, or at home, buying an area of coppice, cutting it, making the hoops and selling them. This is Thomas Hardy country.

John Gibson was a joiner. There was room for a workshop by the side of Cottage No 4 but, with the steepness of the Kirkstone Road and the difficulty of access, it seems likely that he worked for others, or had a small workshop in the village.

There is a suggestion in *The Heart of Lakeland* (page 251) that Sunny Bank may have been Ambleside's Poor House. We have no details for 1801-1841, but in the 1851 Census there are signs that this may be true as some of the cottagers were on poor relief. However, the nearby hamlet of Edinboro' had as many in the same position.

In Sunny Bank Cottage No. 1 were William Johnson aged 32 and his wife Sarah, who was 30. He was a coachman and they had 5 young children from 9 years to 9 months. Nothing unusual there.

In Cottage No. 2 lived James Atkinson aged 39 and his wife Dorothy. He was a General Labourer and she was a washerwoman. They had three children aged from 13 to 8.

In the same cottage were Rebecca Lindsay and her three young children, living on parochial relief. She had been deserted by her husband, who was a bobbin turner.

In Cottage No. 3 were Robert McVity, a general labourer, aged 34 and his wife Betsy, who was the same age. They had two children at school.

In the same cottage lived Jane Parker, a widow, with three young children, her father, William Taylor, aged 62, a Waller, and a niece aged 5. They were all on Parochial Relief.

In Cottage No 4 John Gibson, journeyman joiner, aged 45 and his wife aged 42. They had seven children aged from eighteen to one year old. The oldest son was at work as an agricultural labourer, but all the rest were dependent. There is a note saying 'Lodging house Transfer', so presumably they had been in some sort of temporary accommodation and the parish had powers to put them in Sunny Bank. Living with them as a lodger was Elizabeth Hermon, a hawker.

Thus there were seven households and thirty people in the four cottages. Three households were on parish relief for various reasons – widowed – deserted – old or perhaps injured – eleven were charges on the parish.

Before considering Parochial Relief, one must say a word about hawkers. They played a vital part in the local economy which was too small and scattered to justify many shops. Harriet Martineau describes a hawker who arrived with her son, in her cart, just as Harriet and her maid were going out. Harriet's journey had to wait for the visitor must seen at once. Mother Stewart, the hawker, weather-beaten and only removing her pipe from her mouth to speak, had collected orders some time before for the crockery - table, kitchen and bedroom - for Harriet's new house, travelled into Staffordshire to buy it and had now arrived, driving slowly all the way back so as not to break it. Now they had returned and there was a great unpacking and selection and clearing up. Some pieces were accepted and some refused, for Harriet Martineau, used to fashionable London houses, thought some of Mother Stewart's purchases too old-fashioned for her taste. The whole article is written as a piece of romantic, Wordsworthian nostalgia.

Harriet Martineau at Ambleside, p. 65.

No doubt Elizabeth Hermon, the Sunny Bank hawker, was trading on a far more local level and on a smaller scale than Mother Stewart, but was equally important in supplying the day to day needs of Ambleside. No doubt too, out on the road every day, she was equally weather beaten



A picture of a hawker visiting a local house taken from an old postcard.

Notice the large suitcase / trunk used to carry the wares around the district. The wide strap running from the near end of the trunk and around the back of the trunk (nearest the hawker himself) would have made the thing easier to carry without too much digging in on the shoulders!

This must have been the forerunner of Betterware salesmen and the mobile shop!

Not for publication

Census day in 1841 was 6<sup>th</sup>. June. This document, dated exactly a year later, presented the summaries of all the details collected in the census, ready to be published as a government Blue Book. Up to this time the original census forms had been thrown away. In 1841, for the first time, they were stored away for a hundred years and now we can study them

### **Parish Relief**

This problem of Parish Relief is a little difficult to grasp in our own period when unemployment pay, social service grants and other support is all government-controlled. In 1851 everything devolved on the local parish. The parishioners had to pay a Poor Tax and the individual recipients of relief were their neighbours. People they had known from childhood, had played and worked with, now would become the subject of gossip over every local pub counter and weaving loom in the valley.

In 1851 the Ambleside Poor Rate was set at one shilling in the pound and designed to raise a total of £128. 6 shillings. This poor rate was made on 17<sup>th</sup>.May, 1851, by William Pitt and Brian Mason, both of whom were also church wardens. Overseers were local officials who were paid at least their expenses and, since all charity was in the hands of the parish and the rector was always deeply involved, it was perhaps natural for church wardens to become overseers, or vice-versa.

The following documents and diary extracts give the atmosphere.

### **The 1851 Assessment Document.**

In 1851 Seathwaite Farm was rated at £19.18 shillings and 3 pence, and the farmer, Daniel Donaldson, had to pay 19 shillings and 11 pence, a penny less than a pound. Sunny Bank Cottages were assessed at £1. 6 shillings and 8 pence each and so paid 1 shilling and 4 pence each. That year Sunny Bank Cottages were occupied by William Johnson, James Atkinson, John Gibson and Widow Parker. When the accounts were made up the first two had paid, but John Gibson and Widow Parker were in arrears.. .

On 28<sup>th</sup>. October 1851 the same overseers confirmed their Assessment for the Relief of the Poor of one shilling in the pound. By this time everyone in Sunny Bank had paid for 1851

The following year, 1852, the rate was halved to sixpence in the pound. Sunny Bank cottages were assessed at eight pence each but by 5<sup>th</sup>.March 1852, John Atkinson and Widow Parker had not paid.

## The Diary of a Village Shopkeeper, 1754-1765

The great difference from our time is that everything was very local. Local people were administering to their own neighbours, who they would have known all their lives and grown up with. They were not impersonal people at the end of a phone line. Perhaps the best way to sample this situation, so different from our own experience, is to dip into The Diary of a Village Shopkeeper, 1754 – 1765, by Thomas Turner. To those who have not come across this diary, it is a wonderful Christmas pudding of a book, full of good things. With a third of a million words, only a selections have ever been published, which may be just as well since much of it is repetitive, detailing each dinner he ate for years and years, but between the meals there are wonderfully revealing morsels.

Thomas Turner was a shopkeeper in the small village of East Hoathley, in Sussex, about eight miles north east of Lewes. Besides being a shopkeeper, dealing in anything and everything, he was a brewer, a teacher, an overseer of the poor, a surveyor in charge of road repairs (another the responsibility of the parish), a collector of window tax and poor tax, a busy neighbour, a man of good sense, a drinker who made repeated promises of reform and repeatedly failed, an indignant moralist and a good-hearted fellow. The diary gives a vivid picture of life in a small village in the period. Ambleside was must have been very similar, with the same problems and similar solutions. Everything devolved on the village, had to be paid for by the villagers and solved by them. These extracts give some of the atmosphere:-

*Took the accounts as overseer of the poor of East Hoathley for the preceding year to have them passed and signed by Justices of the Peace sitting in Special Session.*

*Land tax books made up.*

*Wrote out the Window Tax books*

*I paid Mr Porter 8 shillings for one year's tithes.*

*22<sup>nd</sup>.December 1759. This day the Poor of the Parish go about asking for charity for Christmas. Gave 30 of them a penny each and a draught of beer.*

*2<sup>nd</sup>.June. In the morning rode about to several places to collect in some land tax, but could not succeed.*

*3<sup>rd</sup>. June Did the same, equally fruitlessly.*

*5<sup>th</sup>. June Delivered a total of £121, 17 shillings 6 pence in various coins, including 6 thirty-six shilling pieces, 4 midores, 83 guineas, 25 half-guineas, 4 eighteen-shilling pieces and 2 nine-shilling pieces (the last two were pistols, which were Spanish coins). A real mixed bag, more like a hoard from a pirate ship.*

*3<sup>rd</sup>. December. ---- Burrage, who some two years ago absconded and left his wife and six small children to this parish, has been heard of again, and [] advised the parish officers to go and get him home.*

*11<sup>th</sup>.December. this day was brought home by two men (who our parish had sent on purpose). Will Burrage, who had absconded above 5 years go and left a wife and 6 small children as a burden to the parish, Now the affair makes a great noise and confusion in the place and the inhabitants seem much divided in their opinion about the treatment he deserves to meet with ----. Some say he should be sent to the House of Correction. [The family] have been an expense to the parish of upwards of £50 and the poor woman become a lunatic through grief,----. The rest of the people are all desirous he should escape without further punishment. The first mentioned men [who were angry about the £50] were the ones to reduce the price of day . labour by bringing*

into the parish certificate-men for that purpose ----Thomas Turner lays out the pros and cons but comes to no conclusion about what the parish should do,

31<sup>st</sup>.December. Walked out get some land taxes but did not succeed.

The parish poor rate was supplemented by rate of 4 shillings laid on the parish by the Justices as amounted a county rate.

18<sup>th</sup>. February,1762, We made a poor rate of 6 pence in the pound

A person had left £100 in his will to the parish so that the interest could be given each year to poor people. In 1763 the interest amounted to £4 which was distributed among 27 people;

23<sup>rd</sup>.February. Went to Lewes to take out a warrant to bring Catherine Jenner before a magistrate to swear the father of a bastard child.

The next day she was taken to Lewes and swore the father to be a man of over 70 years of age. The man had to give a note of hand of £40 or enter a bond to indemnify the parish for all expenses that might attend the child while in the care of the parish of Tilehurst

The man did so on 6<sup>th</sup>. April.

24<sup>th</sup>. February Meeting of the vestry in which the Poor Rate was discussed The rate was based on the rents paid. House owners had raised, 'racked' the rents, but tried to hide this, paying the poor rate on only the earlier, lower, rent. At the same time they resented being called dishonest. Thomas Turner rails at people who ---

'pretend the justness of an equal taxation was their desire [yet] the cankerworm of self-interest ---- sullied the outward beauty of their would-be honesty'.

7<sup>th</sup>. April. Continued as overseer for another year.

17<sup>th</sup>. April, . Sunday. Delivered a man called James Marchant to his parish of Tilehurst [the parish in which the man had been born].

The man to whom he delivered James Marchant was an overseer of the poor, like himself, who happened to be a glover. Turner does not say why Marchant was removed but presumably he was old and unemployable and had become a charge on the parish. His care was now the responsibility of the parish where he had been born, even if he had moved away years before.

Once again Turner bemoans his inability to withstand drink, repents, promises reform and will fail as he has done so often before. The diary reads like Pepys and pretty women.

2<sup>nd</sup>.May. [On this day the parish was in the opposite situation about a parishioner].

William Bristow, Fanny his wife, and two children brought home by the order of two Justices of the Peace by the overseer of the poor of the parish of Heathfield to their own parish.

The parish later appealed against this decision, but with little hope of success. This is only one of a number of cases where the parish tried to move paupers out of the parish and others where they tried to resist them being moved in.

17<sup>th</sup>. April. Made a poor rate of 4 shillings in the pound.{There is no indication why this is so different from the sixpenny rate of a few years earlier}.

18<sup>th</sup>. April. Mr John Vine now a prisoner in his house for debt His goods were valued at £60. In the non-payment of rates or taxes an overseer could distrain on a person's goods. Turner later sold, with others, Vine's goods and shared the money out among the creditors.

21<sup>st</sup>. December. Relieved 40 poor with 1 penny each and a draught of beer.

9<sup>th</sup>. February. I dined on a sausage batter pudding baked (which is a little flour and milk beaten up into a batter with an egg and some salt and a few sausages cut in pieces and then baked.

16<sup>th</sup>. Saturday. ---- This affair of Stone's bill makes me very uneasy lest the whole of his bills should be returned, which amounts to £103. 3 shillings and sixpence. My brother went to Mr Stone's to talk but he was not in.---

17<sup>th</sup>. In the morn my brother went again to Mr Stone. ---- He will call on me tomorrow.

18<sup>th</sup>. Today received of Mr Stone the following bill for ----. The matter seems to have been settled.

*4<sup>th</sup>. March. Walked with my brother round the parish to 'collect a brief' for the loss by a hailstorm in Sussex, 19<sup>th</sup>. August 1763, (This appears to have been a general appeal). Collected £1-6-4 but could not complete it as some people out.*

*In the end 55 people gave £1. 12 shillings, including 5 shillings from the rector.*

*24<sup>th</sup>. May. The parish warned to be out on the roads to mend them. Carts from 3 people and 6 labourers (some representing others and presumably paid by them). Thomas Turner was the surveyor in charge of the work. He continued on the roads, on and off, to the end of the month.*

*19<sup>th</sup>. June. Married to Mary Hicks, servant to Luke Spence Esq. of South Malling.*

*Was ill for about 14 days with tertian ague, or rather an intermitting fever (presumably malaria).*

*Eventually the couple were to have 7 children*

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This would have been the sort of situation in Ambleside too when the census was first taken in 1801, but the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act changed things dramatically. It was designed to be far more punitive, making unemployment and old age the fault of the poor, not their misfortunes. A large, central Workhouse was opened in Kendal in 1836. These large, impersonal institutions were built all over the country and were to persist as places of horror to all decent, respectable people for a century.

The poor, whether unemployed, old, or sick, were to be taken to the central workhouse at Kendal, a place where husbands and wives would be separated and made to work, as far as they were able, on uncongenial tasks, sometimes pointless and degrading. Thus the poor thought hated the workhouse, feeling it an attack on their dignity and self-respect. Indeed this was one of its purposes. The more the poor hated the workhouse, the fewer people would ask for help and the less it would cost. The same arguments we hear today about the cost of social security were honed in the early nineteenth century. Victorian morality, with its sanctimonious vapourings, and our present debate about asylum seekers and its lurid headlines, both are about money.

Thus the 1834 Act transferred some of the local parochial responsibilities to Kendal, but some were dealt with locally. In 1851 Rebecca Lindsay and her three young children were living on parochial relief, deserted by her husband, . Here was a situation which did not warrant the workhouse solution If the children had been orphaned they would have been sent to the workhouse like Oliver Twist. As it was, with their mother living, the situation might be recovered. Next door lived Jane Parker, widowed with three young children, her father, William and a niece aged 5. They were all on poor relief. In this case the unemployed father may have been ill and temporarily unemployed. Certainly it had not reached the position of his being sent to the workhouse and no doubt his daughter would have tried to keep him at home. He does not appear on the 1861 census with his daughter, so perhaps he had died.

The 1834 Act had reduced the duties of the local but there was still plenty to do. The Armitt Library hold a Beggars' Entry Book, written by The Town Constable, John Longmire. He had to oversee the 'care' of vagrants and those on parish relief. Locally Mr Longmire was responsible for offering lodgings to vagrants walking through Ambleside and making sure that they moved on swiftly. The lodgings house was run by a Mr Huddlestone who lived in Rattle Ghyll. He and his wife took in the homeless until about 1850, when Mr Longmire decided that Mr Huddlestone was unsuitable A charge may have been brought against Mr Huddlestone.

It is possible that Sunny Bank was brought into use as a temporary poor house when Mr Huddleston's establishment was closed down. In 1851 the Gibson family were listed as a Lodging House transfer, so close examination of the Beggars' Book might yield some interesting facts. Money was given to lodgings housekeepers on a very short term basis, until the vagrant moved out of the area, so there may be a number of entries instead of our meagre census ones. There are no mentions of people on parochial relief in the later Sunny Bank census returns. Any link would have been short and the house at Rattle Ghyll, Ambleside continued to be used by tramps and vagrants until the 1930s.

In 1844 the Bobbin Mill began a fairly large hat business. Horrax's had been making inners for hats, so it was a natural way to expand. The hat business yielded £35. 5 shillings in August 1844, out of the entire mill sales of £1500, so this puts it in proportion. At this time, bobbin turners, working on piecework, earned 4 pence for a gross (144) of bobbins.

By 1851 Charles Horrax was 44 years old, married to Dorothy and with four children aged from 10 to eighteen months. The family lived in the Bobbin Mill. Cottage. There were three servants, but of these the two men are listed as bobbin manufacturers, so presumably they merely lodged in the Mill Cottage.

### Changes of Fortune ?

The following extracts from the 1851 and 1861 census returns show some change in fortune. Jane Parker and Rebecca Lindsay, who had both been on parochial relief in 1851, were living in Ellerigg in 1861 and employed as charwomen. This is very sparse information about them, but of interest. It also hints that Sunny Bank may have ceased to be a parochial Poor House.

#### 1851 Census Details for Sunnybank

No.	Name	Relationship	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
2	Rebecca Lindsay	Head	31	Parochial Relief – deserted by husband	Crook
2	Mary Lindsay	Daughter	10	Scholar	Ambleside
2	Hannah Lindsay	Daughter	7	Scholar	Rusland
2	Robert Lindsay	Son	2		Ambleside
3	Jane Parker	Head	32	Parochial Relief	Coniston
3	Hannah Parker	Daughter	10	Scholar	Langdale
3	Mary A. Parker	Daughter	5	Scholar	Westmorland – Arndel
3	Roger Parker	Son	1		Cleator
3	Agnes Taylor	Daughter	12	Scholar	Cleator
3	William Taylor	Father	62	Parochial Relief - Waller	Ambleside
3	Sarah J. Birkett	Niece	5		Coniston

#### 1861 Census Details for Ellerigg

	Rebecca Lindsay	Head	41	Charwoman	Crook
	Robert Lindsay	Son	12	Scholar	Ambleside
	Margaret Lindsay	Daughter	6	Scholar	Ambleside

Jane Parker	Head	42	Charwoman	Coniston
Agnes Taylor	Daughter	22	Seamstress	Ambleside
Robert John Parker	Son	11	Scholar	Cleator
John Sharp	Lodger	35	Waller	Kentmere

Even though the two families had moved across to Ellerigg, they still lived as near neighbours and both women were now employed as charwomen and “off” parochial relief.

## The Beggars Book for Ambleside, 1848

In 2004, Ambleside has thousands of visitors each year, many of whom are looking for accommodation for one or more nights.

In 1848, there were also people passing through the area looking for accommodation – they were a collection of vagrants, beggars and some who were simply walking long distances to other towns in search of work. Upon arrival, they were either spotted by, or they searched out the constable of the town whose job it was to either give them a “ticket”<sup>1</sup> for the night or to see that they left the town quickly. The following are extracts taken from the book, which is now in the care of the Armit Library. They are written by the constable for Ambleside at that time – John Longmire.

In the extracts, references are made to H and BH Esquire. H refers to Matthew Huddleston who ran the tramps lodging house (see footnote). BH Esquire was Benson Harrison who was the local magistrate.

*February 11 1848*

*I went in the forenoon to examine the window that Isaiah Green had broken. About 1 o'clock he was brot [brought] before BH Esqre. After examination he was committed to Kendal House of Correction to await his trial at the midsummer assizes to be held at Appleby, fore part of July – He had soiled himself in the night time & stunk very much. After examination Matthew H sent me to his own house to fetch a pair of his old trousers. I fetched them & then took Isaiah up into Stock Gill & made him strip off his old dirty trousers, & go into the stream & wash himself & then put on the good trousers and a pair of socks. I then went per Mail with him to Birthwaite [Windermere], then to Kendal & delivered him safe at the house of Correction Kendal.*

*March 5 1848*

<sup>1</sup> A piece of paper giving them access to the tramps lodging house. This house was located in Rattle Gill, behind the tourist office as it is today. The present day use of the tramps lodging house is the “Waterwheel Guest House”, owned and run by Mrs. Maureen Dunlop (with whom my parents had a long lasting friendship).

*In the evening Tramps appg. [appealing] for tickets, 3 young men, one man & sister, one man all 6 in all Irish and young people sent them out of the Lodging house in the morning – the young man and woman said that they had walked from Ulverston today and I asked where he was working at last. He said Bootle. Now he said he was going to Whitehaven. The reason he did not go from Ulverston & on past Bootle and [on towards] Whitehaven, because he had been that way lately and they would refuse him relief so he was going round by Ambleside. On Sunday morning he & his sister took off towards Kendal so he had told me nothing but Lies. – Enquire if I can take those vagrants who deceive me so?*

*March 11<sup>th</sup> 1848 (Saturday)*

*There was a silly daft young woman who had been in Mr. Jas. Green's out house all night so they sent for me. I took her 1d. cheese and 1d. bun for her to eat. Then I walked beyond Low Wood Inn to be clear of her. Her name was Jane Wilson aged 26 years & from Lincolnshire.*

*March 26<sup>th</sup> 1848 (Sunday)*

*At Huddleston's this morning – the two men were not got up when I went there, told Mrs. H to call them up. She did so but only one came down. The young man who wanted to be poorly was unwilling to come but I told Mrs. H – he must get up and go forward. He came down. The men had nothing for their breakfast so Mrs. H gave the poorly man a cup of coffee and two slices of bread. They went forward towards Keswick.*

*About 11 o'clock I saw the young Irish woman that I had before BH Esqre for being often at Ambleside and having no means for making a livelihood. It was 3 March that I had her before BH Esqre. I then saw her out of the town. Now saw at a little before 11 of the clock, she was going towards Keswick and I watched her past Capt. Robinson's – At half past 11 o'clock I was in the Market Place and saw her coming back, I ordered her to leave the town, that if I found her here again I would put her in the lockup. I went to H's at 2 o'clock pm. H was sitting in first place. On entering his door, asked his wife if that Irish girl was there. She replied that she was in there last night but did not know if she was in there [now].*

*I went into the house past some folks there, said she was gone, some said they did not know. I told Mrs. Huddleston to fetch her down because I had seen her go up since I came. So H's wife went up and brot [brought] her down.*

*I told Eliza Armstrong (the girl's name) of the lie so had told me this morning – I ordered her to go forward to Grasmere (the way she says she is to go) – she refuses says it is such a wet day. it is Sunday – I said that she must either go forward or I would take her to the lockup. She refused to go. her man, for she has a man who calls himself her husband, says he is a shoemaker yet he does not look as if he has wrought any lately. He is very saucy and insolent. On March 3<sup>rd</sup> she told BH that this same man was her*

*cousin. He says that if I saw her begging, why did I not take her up; that they will stay as long as they please so long as they pay their way; that I have nothing to do with them taunts me with being an overbearing man with the poor; dares me to meddle with Eliza Armstrong – his wife now; that they may get work in the town tomorrow. Says they can stay several weeks in Kendal without being molested – that I must not think of doing as I like with them!*

*March 27, 1848*

*There were this man and Ellen Armstrong at the lodging house this morning – she called herself Eliza before – the man and her were both saucy, but particularly the man. I remained about the lodging house until they set forward towards Keswick, then they turned at Stye Gate lane towards Kendal. I followed in sight then they turned past Mrs. Newton's and then went on to Borrans lane & stopped on Rothay Bridge & stayed there; then took forwards towards Clappersgate, I followed in sight, they went through Cte and on towards Skelwith Bridge. I fold, they sat down on the waste ground between the road and the River Brathay & the wood-bridge. I remained beside Jas. Cooksons a long time – they watched me from a turn of the road. I walked forward and they were sitting on the ground near the wood-bridge. I watched until 11 o'clock am, and I learned by a person that came in that direction that they were going on the road beside Jas. Cookson's Barn so I left watching. I went to H's about 8 o'clock, but I did not see them there – I intended to have them taken into custody in the morning.*

*March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1848*

*This morning Sally and her tatty husband, a dirty old man of 60 years of age. An old bear-headed man from Patterdale was going out into the country to beg. I told him that he was only allowed to stay here one night – a lad at H's about 9 years old, rather daft, belongs [to] a woman. H's wife told me the woman had gone out early in this morning – should go tonight and get to see her; if she begs, she must go forward. There were only two tramps tonight – rope makers.*

From these extracts it is clear that the Constable Longmire's powers of English and spelling were limited but he was more than a match for any vagrant or beggar who chanced a visit to Ambleside!

## SUNNY BANK COTTAGES , Ambleside 1861 -1871

Charles Horrax still lived at Bobbin Mill Cottage and Mill with his wife, Dorothy aged 46. There were two new young children, John aged 10 and Alfred aged 6. Isabella, who was 10 in 1851 is not listed but there is another girl, aged 22 called Fanny. Either Isabella was also known as Fanny (in which case she aged from 10 to 22 years in ten years between the censuses) or this Fanny is a different girl. Neither appears on the 1871 census so we cannot tell which of these theories is correct. Edwin aged 18 months in the 1861 census has become Edward aged 11 years in the 1871 census. A 20year old nephew of Dorothy Horrax (nee Dickinson) called Thomas Dickinson, was a bobbin apprentice and lived with them.

Roundhill farm (below)



At Roundhill Farm (left), the head of the household was Nancy Donaldson, a retired farmer, a widow aged 64 yrs, living with her sister in law Mary Thompson aged 49. The latter was listed as a farmer's wife, but unmarried. Census returns from that era are full of such errors!

Her husband, Daniel Donaldson's grave is in St. Anne's churchyard. (see below ,left)



There were also two servants. Margaret Newton aged 22 from Ambleside. She is listed as 2 years old in 1841 living with her father, John Newton aged 30 a waller in Market place and mother Sarah aged 25. Picture high round hill High Roundhill Farm was occupied by a shepherd, George Hodgson, aged 72 and his wife who was aged 59.

The following page shows a transcript of the 1861 census for Sunnybank and is followed by some observations about the various families.

### 1861 Census Details

No.	Name	Relationship	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
1	James Dixon	Head	84	Former cartwright	Kendal
1	Sarah Dixon	Daughter	33	Domestic Nurse	Ambleside
1	Lucy Alice Rigg	Boarder	7	Child to nurse	Windermere
2	Margaret Clark	Head	30	Gardener's Wife	Kirkby Lonsdale
2	William Clark	Son	5	Scholar	Ambleside
2	Mary Clark	Daughter	3	Infant	Ambleside
2	Samuel Clark	Son	1	Infant	Ambleside
2	Daniel Clement	Lodger	20	Agricultural labourer	Ambleside
3	Robert McVity	Head	44	Agricultural labourer	Carlisle
3	Betsy McVity	Wife	44		Langdale
3	William McVity	Son	18	Agricultural labourer	Loughrigg
3	Joseph McVity	Son	15	Agricultural labourer	Coniston
3	John McVity	Son	9	Scholar	Ambleside
3	Robert McVity	Son	7	Scholar	Ambleside
3	Sarah Jane McVity	Daughter	4	Scholar	Ambleside
4	John Gibson	Head	55	Joiner Journeyman	Penrith
4	Ann Gibson	Wife	52	Lodging House Transfer	Tilberthwaite
4	William Gibson	Son	28	Agricultural labourer	Ambleside
4	Richard Gibson	Son	17	Scholar	Ambleside
4	Tobias Gibson	Son	15	Agricultural labourer	Ambleside
4	Joseph Gibson	Son	11	Scholar	Ambleside
4	Mary Jane Gibson	Daughter	7	Scholar	Ambleside

Cottage No.1 at Sunny Bank was occupied by James Dixon, a widower aged 84 who was formerly a Cartwright, and his daughter Sarah aged 33 who was unmarried. She was a domestic nurse and had a little girl called Lucy Alice Rigg, aged 7, from Windermere living with her. Did the local people believe that the air at Sunny Bank would help the child?

Cottage No.2 at Sunny Bank had Margaret Clark as head of the household. She was 30 years old and the wife of a gardener. She had three young children aged from 5 to 1 year old. In addition, there was a lodger Daniel Clement described as an agricultural labourer aged 20.

In cottage No.3 at Sunny Bank were Robert Mcvity (although the name could have been Mavity), aged 44, his wife, Mary of the same age and their 4 sons aged between 18 and 7 years. William aged 18 and Joseph aged 15 are agricultural workers. They also had a daughter, aged 4 years. She is listed a scholar so obviously the local school took them early.

In cottage No.4 was John Gibson, is still there aged 53 who was a joiner journeyman, married to Ann, one year younger than her husband. They had four sons aged between 28 and 11 years and a daughter aged 7. The two eldest boys were shown as agricultural labourers. Richard, the next younger was aged 17 and still shown as a scholar, so he must have been bright for his parents to keep him on at school well after most boys his age would have left to start work.

See sheet movements around the valley to see where the children moved to.



Rebecca Lindsay and her son, Robert, who had lived at Sunny Bank in 1851 were no longer there in 1861 but had moved to Ellerigg where the 1861 census shows her as a charwoman. The oldest daughter, who would have been 20 by this time no longer lived at home and the other three children were all still at school.

Ellerigg houses - left

Jane Parker, too, no longer lived at Sunnybank, but was also at Ellerigg and working as a charwoman. Her daughter, who would have been 15 yrs, was not on this census return but we do not know why. Roger, aged 1 in 1851 was living with his mother at Ellerigg. According to the census he was now aged 71 – clearly a mistake for age 11 (another example of errors in writing the details into the census return book by hand!) William Taylor, Agnes Parker's father, was not on the census, but Agnes, Ann's niece, is. It is likely that William Taylor had died.

In the 1854 Poor Relief Book Richard Fell Bell is listed as owning 3 cottages up the top of Ratten Row, Sunny Bank and land and a house at Ellerigg. Is this the clue to how the overcrowded families from Sunny Bank were re-housed in Ellerigg. Did Richard help them out or did he build the houses for them?

In the 1881 Census he is listed as living in Church Street aged 63 Iron monger and tinsplate worker. Mary Bell, his wife, was aged 61. They were living with 3 daughters and 2 sons,

who were all listed as assistants. They have 1 domestic servant. The eldest child is 30 and the youngest 19.

This information gives us his age when he bought the cottages, as 31 !

In the 1884 Slater's directory he is listed as owning an iron mongers in the name of Richard Fell Bell and Sons.

In the 1894 Slater's directory the firm is listed as owning 2 sites at Church Road and Lake Road.

Another visitor in the Valley on the night of the census in 1861 was William Wordsworth (1835 –1917)

The William Wordsworth who was a visitor to Seathwaite Rayne (right), just across the fields from Sunnybank, on the night of the 1861 census, was the famous poet's grandson. On the night of the census he was aged 25 years of age and recorded as a "BA Oxford" as his occupation.

He was the third son of John Wordsworth (1803 –1875) the vicar of St.Bridget's Church - Brigham, Cockermouth. (below)





*Internet research has uncovered the following snippets of information*

**It is in the incumbency of the Rev. John Wordsworth, M.A, who resides at the vicarage, a commodious house near the church, erected in 1847 by the Cockermouth and Workington Railway Company, who purchased the site of the old vicarage house.**

The church's main East window is dedicated to the Rev John Wordsworth, son of the poet laureate, who was vicar of Brigham for 40 years.

In the churchyard is the grave of Fletcher Christian, one of the mutineers on The Bounty.

William was only 15 years of age when his grandfather died, so he does not feature in any biographies of the poet. All we know is that the poet William loved playing with his grandchildren. The William who was at Seathwaite lost his mother to malaria in 1848 and his father remarried three times! He might have found relating to a series of stepmothers very difficult to do!

In 1865 there was a tragic fire at the Stock Ghyll Bobbin Mill, located down the road at Edinboro' on the edge of the village of Ambleside. Details of this fire are given on the following pages. A search through the Westmorland Gazette archives at Kendal library finally revealed the report of the fire, reproduced two pages on.

### **The Bobbin Mill Fire in 1865**

Bobbin mills were dangerous places especially early on, before health and safety regulations had been introduced. The air was full of dust, which got into the lungs, causing chest complaints. Machines were unguarded, with people working near moving belts, and lighting was by candle so there was perpetual danger from fire.

On the night of Thursday, 20th January 1865 Stock Force Mill was destroyed by fire. Building and machines were lost and Charles Horrax, as was common with small factory owners working on narrow profits, was uninsured. Seventy people would be unemployed, a devastating burden for the valley, and the local residents would have to support them. There was no national insurance system.

The Westmorland Gazette reported fully and wrote a powerful editorial. A national appeal was launched to rebuild the mill. This was so successful that £1200 was raised nationally

**Not for publication**

and £272 pounds 7 shillings locally. Horrax converted the building into a drying shed for coppiced timber and concentrated production at the nearby Waterfall Mill which he also controlled. By the end he had installed 50 new lathes and the bobbin mill recovered.

The appeal had been so successful that, in addition to rebuilding the business, Horrax was able to build new cottages for his workers in Edinboro'. It would be interesting to know which these were. A local person has told us that these cottages were built with only a stud partition wall between each house (for cheapness of building costs) so the neighbours must have heard all the goings on from next door! A similarly built house in North Road just above the Unicorn Inn has an iron stanchion between adjacent front doors to provide the necessary support in the absence of a full retaining wall. There was intense debate at this period about the building of healthy dwellings for workers. Periodicals were full of new designs, especially after the 1851 Exhibition. but I suspect these would have been very like the traditional Ambleside cottages. A close examination of the various Edinboro' cottages and their deeds might reveal them and show if they differ from earlier designs.

To anticipate history, there was to be another fire at the mill, in 1909, which resulted in the death of Amelia Horrax. Amelia was the wife of Alfred Horrax, Charles Horrax's youngest son. He had managed the mill after his father's death, but died at the early age of 47. His young sons were sent away to school and Amelia ran the mill. One winter night, in very bad weather, there was a fire. Amelia helped to fight the fire dressed only in her night clothes, caught cold which developed into pneumonia and died soon afterwards. In 1916 the mill was still trading under the 'Executors of Alfred Horrax'. When the boys reached 21 they took over the running of the mill.

### **Sale of cottages to Mr Charles Horrax**

On June 6<sup>th</sup> 1867, Sheepgates the "four cottages Above Stock" were transferred from Richard Fell Bell to Mr. Charles Horrax for £375. The very next day, Charles Horrax took out a mortgage from Matthew Wilson and "Another" for £250 to help finance the purchase. On August 16<sup>th</sup> that year, the mortgage was transferred from Mr. M. Wilson to Mr. G.W. Wilson. (Matthew Wilson was a yeoman from Hawkshead) This must have been a mere financial arrangement, as there is not sufficient time for there to have been a death followed by the granting of probate.

The cottages would provide his mill workers with accommodation. The cottages remained in the Horrax family until 1942.

Transcript of the article in the Westmorland Gazette and Kendal Advertiser  
Dated Saturday January 28<sup>th</sup> 1865

#### **ALARMING AND DESTRUCTIVE FIRE AT AMBLESIDE**

About eleven o'clock on Friday night last, an alarming fire broke out in the mill of Mr. Charles Horrax, bobbin manufacturer, situated on Stock Ghyll, Ambleside, and the flames spread so rapidly that in less than twenty minutes the building and its contents were entirely destroyed. An adjoining wood shed containing a large quantity of timber, speedily shared the same fate. The animals in the surrounding stables, cow house, and pig sty, were, with difficulty rescued from the danger which threatened them on all sides. Immediately the alarm was given, every class of the inhabitants turned out to assist in the prevention of the spread of the conflagration, and about two hundred people were soon actively employed in bearing buckets of water, of which there was fortunately a good supply, and protecting the sheds in the immediate vicinity, which would most certainly

## **The Corn Charge Map and Valuation**

### **The tithe map**

.... See page 66 for a copy of the map

Traditionally the Church had the right to levy tithes on land and property, but these rights varied from area to area. For some reason there seems to have been no tithe on animals in Ambleside, which is rather surprising considering the wealth of sheep on the fells. Tithes were levied on arable land only. Today there are no arable fields to be seen, but in the Map of rent Charges in Lieu of Tithes the arable fields are numbered. Un-numbered fields were pasture.

Not for publication

*I, Richard Atkinson-----*

*At Bassinthaite Halls, having been duly appointed as valuer to apportion the total agreed to be paid in the way of Rent Charge in lieu of Tithes among the several lands at the Township of Ambleside above Stock, in the County of Cumberland do HEREBY apportion the Rent Charge as follows:-*

*GROSS RENT CHARGE payable to the Tithe owner in lieu of Tithes for the Township of Ambleside above Stock in the Parish of Grasmere in the County of Westmorland*

*Thirteen Pounds*

<b>Table of prices given below this decision</b>			
Value in Imperial Bushels and decimal parts of an Imperial Bushel of Wheat, Barley and Oats			
	<b>Price per Bushel</b>		<b>Bushels + decimal parts</b>
	(A bushel is a volume 16''x 10'' x 10'')		
	Shillings	Pence	
<b>Wheat</b>	7	0 1 ½	12.34421
<b>Barley</b>	3	11 ½	21.89474
<b>Oats</b>	2	9	31.51515

It is amusing that this bureaucrat gave volumes to five places of decimals. Perhaps this was based on the smallest monetary value, the farthing.

All corn yields would have been small in this hostile climate, and especially wheat. We know that little wheat was grown compared with the other grains. Harriet Martineau says that an old man reported that, as a child, he had once tried to spend his penny on a wheat roll as a treat, but had had to search the whole of Kendal to find one. This would have been before 1800. The climate had not changed by the 1860s, so the crops would have been similar then.

The total value of the Tithe comes as a shock. It shows how the value of money has shrunk. Harriet Martineau had to pay **nine pence** a year as ground rent for her new house, which she says was to all effects - Freehold.

Today a total of thirteen pounds would be hardly worth the price of collection but, the value of money has so changed that it would have bought 37 bushels of wheat, 65 bushels of barley, or 94 bushels of oats.

**Not for publication**

### **Sunny Bank Cottages, Ambleside 1871-80**

By 1871 Charles Horrax had moved into Round Hill Farm and he described himself as a farmer of 200 acres employing 2 men and 1 boy, and also as a bobbin manufacturer employing 25 men and 5 boys. Dorothy, his wife, was 56. Their daughter Dorothy A. Horrax, aged 28, and there is a son aged 6. If the entry were correct, this would have been a very late birth. In fact, Alfred was born in 1855, so he was 16. He was the one who, on Charles's death was to prove the will and take over the factory for a very short time. There was one servant, Dorothy Kirkby, aged 17.

Not for publication

At Sunny Bank, there were no tenants on Parochial Relief, so perhaps any connection of the property with the parish had been broken.

Cottage No. 1 had John Bristow, a bobbin turner, aged 33, who was married to Dinah of the same age. They had a young son and daughter, both at school.

In Cottage 2 was Robert Bath (?) a house painter, aged 24, married to Isabella, aged 31. They had a young boy and an even younger daughter. Both children were born in Ulverston, so the family had moved in only recently.

Cottage No 3 was unoccupied on the night of the census.

Cottage No.4. The Head of Household was William B. Troughton, a bobbin turner, who may have been related to Jane Horrax, wife of Charles Horrax the Younger (1846-1890?) son of the Charles who owned the bobbin mill. Her maiden name was given as Trugton. There could have been a mistake in spelling and the fact that he was a bobbin turner may be another link: Jane Horrax may have arranged an apprenticeship for him.

William Troughton, aged 35 was married to Elizabeth, two years younger. They had five children, aged from 11 years to 8 months and they had moved about. He was born in Kendal and Elizabeth in Nether Stavely. They must have started married life there as the first child was born in Nether Stavely, one in Sawrey, one at Kendal and the last two in Ambleside. This may reflect the chanciness of life as a bobbin turner. This is all speculation at the moment.

At times bobbin turning became a cut-throat business. There were many bobbin mills competing for work, so sometimes bobbin turners had to walk long distances to a mill which had work. Working hours were long so often they went out of the house in the dark, walking direct across valleys, through fields and estates and returned at night in the dark. As a result, some took on an extra activity, poaching. They planned in the morning, set their traps or placed their bird lime, and culled at night, returning with a rabbit or game bird which had never seen a shop.

A transcript of the 1871 census and the 1881 census follows overleaf...

### **1871 census details**

No.	Name	Relationship	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
1	John Bristow	Head	33	Bobbin turner	Keswick
1	Dinah Bristow	Wife	33		Keswick
1	Mary Bristow	Daughter	7	Scholar	Keswick
1	Thomas Bristow	Son	4	Scholar	Keswick
2	Robert Beetham	Head	24	Painter	Ambleside
2	Isabella Beetham	Wife	31		Flookburgh
2	James Beetham	Son	6	Scholar	Ulverston
2	Margaret Beetham	Daughter	2		Ulverston

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3	UNOCCUPIED				
4	William Troughton	Head	35	Bobbin Turner	Kendal
4	Elizabeth Troughton	Wife	33		Nether Staveley
4	Mary A. W. Troughton	Daughter	11	Scholar	Nether Staveley
4	Eleanor A. Troughton	Daughter	9	Scholar	Sawrey
4	Sarah E. Troughton	Daughter	6	Scholar	Kendal
4	Charles F. Troughton	Son	3		Ambleside
4	William Troughton	Son	8m		Ambleside

## **Sunny Bank Cottages, Ambleside 1881-90** **The 1881 Census**

### **1881 census details**

No.	Name	Relationship	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
1	Joseph Reay	Head	45	Bobbin turner	Newcastle upon Tyne
1	Elizabeth Reay	Wife	50		Troutbeck
1	John Reay	Son	14	Scholar	Skelwith Bridge
2	Thomas Jackson	Head	30	Labourer	Ambleside
2	Sarah Jackson	Wife	32		Troutbeck
2	Simon Jackson	Son	10	Scholar	Troutbeck
2	James Jackson	Son	5	Scholar	Troutback
2	Jane A. Jackson	Daughter	1		Ambleside
3	Joseph Braithwaite	Head	61	Bobbin turner	Kendal
3	John Braithwaite	Son	30	Bobbin turner	Troutbeck Bridge
3	Agnes Braithwaite	Daughter	23	Dressmaker	Troutbeck Bridge
4	George Clark	Head	72	Builder	Ambleside
4	Mary Clark	Wife	68		Troutbeck
4	John W. Clark	Grandson	9	Scholar	Ambleside

At Round Hill Farm, Charles Horrax, 74, has been widowed. Fanny and Dorothy A. and Alfred were all unmarried and lived at home. Alfred had caught up and was now 28, a bobbin maker.

Sunny Bank was fully occupied at this time.

In Cottage No 1 were Joseph Reay, a bobbin turner; his wife Elizabeth and their son aged 14 who was still at school.

Cottage No 2. held Thomas Jackson, a labourer, and his wife Sarah. They had three children aged from ten to one years

In Cottage No 3 were Joseph Braithwaite, a bobbin turner, who was a widower of 61, a son who was also a bobbin turner and a daughter who was dressmaker.

In Cottage No 4 were George Clark, a builder of 72, and his wife Mary aged 68. Their grandson. aged nine, was in the house on the census night. Whether he lived there permanently, or whether he was on a visit, we do not know.

Charles Horrax (Senior) Will

Not for publication

Charles Horrax made his last will and testament in the census year, on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1881, leaving all but certain bequests to his sons Richard and Alfred Horrax. Two fifths or parts went to Richard Horrax absolutely and three fifths or parts to Alfred Horrax (Richard's half-brother) absolutely..

Presumably the small bequests were to his daughters. He was a typical Victorian father, concerned that the bobbin business should continue. He said that if the girls protested at their meagre bequests they should get nothing.

Richard Horrax, Alfred Horrax, and James Lowndes were appointed as executors.

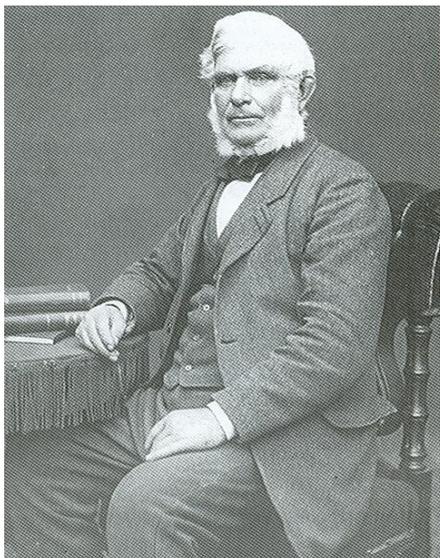
Charles Horrax died in February, 1889. Richard and Alfred had agreed that the estate should be divided 2/5 and 3/5 as laid out in the will. Richard Horrax had renounced probate so it was proved by Alfred Horrax alone on 5 June 1889 and under the seal of James Lowndes,

As the executor of Charles Horrax, his son Alfred transferred the four cottages to his stepbrother Richard on 5<sup>th</sup>. June 1889 as part of the settlement. £250 was still owed to Agnes Shuttleworth, but all interest had been paid. Agnes Shuttleworth acknowledged that Richard Horrax had requested her to accept payment of the principal sum, which she had done. Richard Horrax had paid £250. Charles had owned the cottages and received the rents for a number of years, but had not paid off the capital. Now Richard had to settle, but had to take out a mortgage in his turn to finance it. We know this because, in 1897, eight years later, the cottages were once again returned to him by Mrs Shuttleworth.

Under the will the girls had been left very little and their father had reportedly said that if they did not like it, they should get nothing. Perhaps as a result of this rebuff, Sheona decided to strike out for herself and started a laundry to serve the local hotels. This was to become provided a high quality of service and very successful.

Sheona is NOT on the family tree of the Horrax family. The question remains as to whether it was a pet name for Fanny or Dorothy or does it refer to another daughter not listed? The name Sheona comes from a comment in the book "In the Heart of Lakeland" by Carnie.

### **Sunny Bank Cottages, 1891**



According to the 1891 census (see transcript on next page), Jane Horrax, wife of the second Charles Horrax (1846-1899) as living in No.1 cottage with her three children, Fanny, ages 21, Edwin H. aged 19, who was a carter, and Ernest, aged 9. Charles Horrax was not shown on the census and it seems likely that the couple had separated by that time.

When Jane died in 1893, Charles emigrated to New Zealand,. It is not known at present if he took the family with him. He died in 1899 and is buried in Karori Cemetery, Wellington.

Charles Horrax

Fanny married a man called Oldcorn. Unfortunately Edwin committed suicide in 1908 and Ernest did the same in 1926.

In Cottage No. 2 were David Longhorn and his wife Kate, both 24 years old and their daughter Minnie, a year old. He was a slate river.<sup>2</sup>

In No. 3 were John Braithwaite, aged 41, and his sister aged 32. He was a bobbin turner and she was a dressmaker. Braithwaite is a well-known name in Ambleside.

In Cottage No. 4 were Edward Robinson, aged 33, another bobbin turner, and his wife Jane, aged 32. They had one son, William, who was at school. The father had been born in Millom, Cumberland and his wife and child at Skelwith Bridge, Westmorland.

The older Charles Horrax, born 1806, had died in 1889 and the business was continued by his sons Alfred and Richard, who were step-brothers. Charles had re-married after the death of his first wife Dorothy and Richard was a child of that earlier marriage.

Alfred had three older brothers, Charles, Edwin and John. John emigrated to New Zealand, from Round Hill Farm, in 1882. Edwin is thought to have emigrated to USA at some time.

Today there are Horrax families in both places.

### **1891 census details**

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<sup>2</sup> A person who splits slates into thinner slabs

No.	Name	Relationship	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
1	Jane Horrax	Head	48		Ambleside
1	Fanny Horrax	Daughter	21		Ambleside
1	Edwin H. Horrax	Son	19	Carter	Ambleside
1	Ernest D. Horrax	Son	9		Ambleside
2	David Longhorn	Head	24	Slate river	Aspatia
2	Kate Longhorn	Wife	24		Ambleside
2	Minnie M. Longhorn	Daughter	1		Ambleside
3	John Braithwaite	Head	41	Bobbin turner	Rydal
3	Agnes Braithwaite	Sister	32	Dressmaker	Troutbeck Bridge
4	Edward Robinson	Head	33	Bobbin turner	Millom
4	Jane Robinson	Wife	32		Skelwith Bridge
4	William Robinson	Son	12	Scholar	Skelwith Bridge

Details from several records show that changes in tenancy were taking place at various times:

1897	The cottages were occupied by:- William Troughton John Coward George Wright Thomas Wright	They were formerly occupied by:- Frederick Watson Arthur Taggart Julia Braithwaite Mary Ann Robinson
------	---	--

We do not know the full story but, on 4 June, 1897, the Dwelling Houses were re-conveyed from Mrs Shuttleworth to Richard Horrax (now a retired bobbin manufacturer). He must have re-mortgaged then for some reason. Horrax was a businessman

The following day, 5 June 1897, Richard Horrax sold 'several cottages situate at Sunny Brow, Ambleside', to his daughter Margaret Horrax, for £250. Apparently it was her money which paid off Mrs Shuttleworth in the end

Charles and Richard Horrax were businessman and owning the cottages seems to have been at first a mere investment. They had bought the cottages on mortgage and drew the rents. They paid the interest on the money borrowed but not the capital. Only years after the family connection began did a Horrax live in any of the cottages.

There is one more puzzle. The cottages had been owned by William Davies and were part of a 'freehold close' called Sheep Gates (two words) and formerly belonging to James Newton (deceased). Who William Davies was and where he came into the story, nobody knows. Solicitors clerks copy in all sorts of oddments from earlier documents, so Horrax, father or son, may have sold off the cottages to finance some other deal and the papers are missing.

The document dated 5 June, 1897 says that the cottages and garden land were in the occupations of Frederick Watson, Arthur Taggart, John Braithwaite, and Mary Robinson. In the 1901 Census, both John Braithwaite and Mary Ann Robinson were still in residence. By then he was a retired bobbin turner and she a retired domestic servant.

2 December, 1883

There is an indenture between Matthew William Shuttleworth, wife of Ephraim Wilson, daughter of Matthew Wilson.

5 June, 1889

A mortgage was taken out by Richard Horrax and Matthew Wilson - Yeoman of Hawkshead and Another but the purpose is unknown. The cottages now had two names, 'Sunny Brow' and 'Cobble Hall'.

In 1889 the transfer document for the cottages from Alfred Horrax to Richard Horrax calls the cottages Sunny Brow

## EARLY SIGNS OF TOURISM

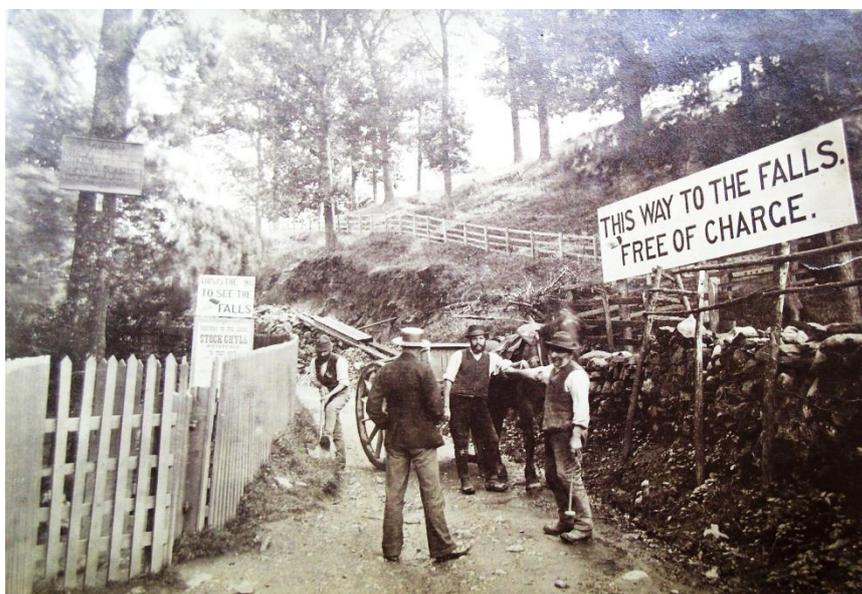


Photo – Armitt Trust Collection

The Stock Ghyll falls, used as a power source by the mill owners such as Charles Horrax, also provided an attraction for visitors, keen to see the wild waters as they

dropped down the valley. The road behind the Salutation Inn remains the main way of reaching the falls and until recently, the old revolving gates at the top end of the park gave a clue that the falls were once a tourist attraction.



Photo – Armitt Trust Collection

Some intrepid tourists arrived by horseless carriage! Unfortunately, as the photo above shows, they did not always arrive in one piece. The Westmorland Gazette of the 1800's and early 1900's often

reported “mishaps” such as this one. Some included accidents to cyclists whose poor brakes must have contributed to their demise!

Over the years there have been numerous other incidents on Kirkstone Road. In 2003, a coach load of ladies on a trip from the North East made the mistake of descending from Kirkstone by way of the Struggle. The coach passed Sunny Bank with its breaks billowing smoke and a couple of minutes later it lay on its side in a garden just below Edinboro and prompted the biggest rescue operation in Cumbria since the Lockerbie bombing of Pan Am flight 103. The owner/driver of the coach was subsequently jailed for falsifying maintenance records!

## Sunny Bank 1901-1920s

### The 1901 Census

No.	Name	Relationship	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
1	William Creighton	Head	34	Slate quarryman	Ambleside
1	Richard Creighton	Brother	38	Jobbing gardener	Ambleside
1	Lucy Creighton	Sister	24	House keeper	Ambleside
1	Alfred Creighton	Nephew	8m		Ambleside
2	Thomas Tyson	Head	30	Slate quarryman	Osmotherly
2	Ann Tyson	Wife	23		Great Billing (Northants)
3	John Braithwaite	Head	51	Bobbin turner	Rydal
3	Agnes Dawson	Sister	42		Troutbeck
3	Thomas Dawson	Brother in law	41	Slate quarryman	Tilberthwaite
4	Mary Ann Robinson	Head	59	Retired servant	Bowness on Windermere

In Sunny Bank Cottage No. 1 William Creighton, aged 34, a quarryman, had been widowed. His unmarried brother and sister had moved in with a nephew of 8 months. The brother was a jobbing gardener and the sister was housekeeper. All four were born in Ambleside, so it is a very local story, but because they are all Creightons, it is difficult to sort out the story.

In Cottage No 2 Thomas Tyson, aged 30, and his wife Ann, aged 23.

In Cottage No 3 John Braithwaite, the bobbin turner, was still single, but his sister Agnes had married and was now Mrs Dawson. Mr Dawson, was a slate quarryman rock hand. He and his wife live with Mr Braithwaite in No 3.

In Cottage No 4, Mary Ann Robinson, a retired domestic servant, aged 59, lived by herself

The census returns for the years from 1911 are still secret as some of the people on them are still alive. They will be revealed in time, but the census cannot help any more in telling the story of Sunny Bank at present. The rest must rely on deeds and memories. (This paragraph was written by Jack in 2004 – time has moved on and the 1911 census is shown now on page 51)

The Horrax family were beginning to realise that the future of wooden bobbins was looking somewhat precarious so they diversified their industry and opened up a steam

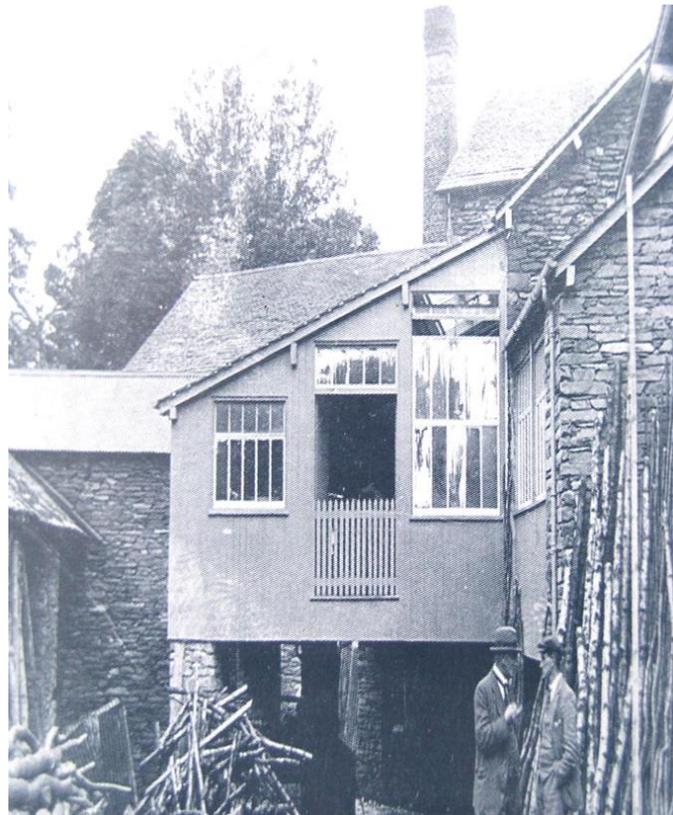
Not for publication

laundry in part of the mill. This provided much needed employment for the women of the village.



Laundry Staff c. 1930s postcard in the Armit Trust Collection.

The laundry flourished and no doubt benefited from the steady growth of tourism in the area, since hotels and boarding houses would have a regular turnover of guests and, therefore, bed linen and towels.



The picture above shows the end of the laundry with its open door and protective fence. It must have been very hot and steamy inside and the door would allow some through draft. The picture also shows quite clearly the coppiced poles awaiting use in the actual bobbin mill.

Alfred Horrax, the youngest son of Charles Horrax died in 1902, when he was only 47. He left a widow and three young sons. His widow Amelia then ran the mill. One night in November 1909, in bitter winter weather, there was a second disastrous fire at the mill. Mrs Horrax, still in her night-dress, caught a cold which soon turned to pneumonia while fighting the fire and died shortly after. The reports of the fire and her untimely death from the local papers are shown on the next pages.

The boys were sent away to school and in 1916, the firm was still trading as executors of Alfred Horrax, with Mr T. Dixon as manager. When the boys, Clifford, Bernard and Charles, came of age, they took over the firm.

## *THE DEATH OF MR. ALFRED HORRAX*

(REPRINTED FROM THE WESTMORLAND GAZETTE)

The death of Mr. Alfred Horrax, who was 47 years of age, took place on Saturday night (September 17<sup>th</sup> 1902) after a lingering illness, and the announcement was received with deep expressions of regret. Mr. Horrax commenced to be ill about last Christmas, and later on went away in the hope of recovering his accustomed health. Unfortunately, however, he grew worse, and for the last three months was unable to take part in any business matters. He gradually sank until all hope of improvement was abandoned and he died as above mentioned, leaving a widow and three young children to mourn his loss. Mr. Horrax was born at Ambleside, and, although he never sought prominent public positions, he was always deeply interested in the welfare of the town, giving his support where he considered that end was most likely to be attained.

For a number of years he belonged to the local lodge of Oddfellows, he had been a member of the Ambleside and District Conservative Club since its establishment, and served its interests as a committee man; he was also a member of the Association for the Prosecution of Felons. Mr. Horrax was at one time a prominent volunteer. For a number of years, and up to the time of his death, he belonged to the Freemasons, being a past Master of the Windermere lodge, and one of the founders of the Ambleside lodge, which was established recently. The loss of Mr. Horrax as a man of business will be keenly felt for in addition to continuing the business of his father (the late Mr. Charles Horrax) as a bobbin manufacturer, he was the founder of the Stock Ghyll Laundry which finds employment for a considerable number of work people. The Stock Ghyll Bobbin Mill has been in the hands of the family for about sixty years. The turning of bobbins had been established in Ambleside in a very small way for some time, but when Mr. Charles Horrax took the premises in 1842 they were standing empty. He and his son (Mr. Charles Horrax) came with a previous experience of the business, and were not long in working up a considerable trade in the manufacture of bobbins and hat block making. At that time the work was all done by hand, but it was not until 1851 that machinery was introduced. In addition to a large home trade, a foreign business of no small proportions was got together, the chief shipments being to Bombay. The business was developed until employment was found for between 40 and 50 hands. In 1865 the mill was destroyed by fire, but work was re-commenced towards the end of the same year, and one building after another was added to meet the requirements of the business. Mr. Charles Horrax died in 1889, since when Mr. Alfred Horrax has had the responsibility of the head of the firm, and whilst the manufacture of bobbins has been discontinued at other places in the neighbourhood, work has gone on at Stock Ghyll Mill.

Some six or seven years ago the expensive machinery necessary for running a steam laundry was put down in buildings arranged for the purpose, and now the washing of linen is carried out on a large scale. The internment took place at St. Mary's Church on Wednesday afternoon when there was a very large attendance and the shops closed during the time of service. The coffin, which was borne by relays of workmen, was

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covered with wreaths, and a quantity of floral tributes were carried on poles. Following the chief mourners were between 20 and 30 members of the Ambleside and Windermere lodge of Freemasons, then came the employees of the bobbin mill and steam laundry together with a large number of other towns people and those residents in the surrounding neighbourhood..

## ***FIRE AT THE BOBBIN MILL***

*(From The Westmorland Gazette, Nov.20<sup>th</sup> 1909)*

An outbreak of fire occurred at the Stock Ghyll Bobbin Mill early on Friday morning (Nov.12<sup>th</sup>). Mt.T.Capstick who lives not far from the mill at Edinboro' was the first to notice from his bedroom window that something was wrong. This was about four o'clock. He hurried down to the mill, saw that flames were emitting from the boiler house, and at once woke Mr.T.Benson, who proceeded to the Market place and rang the fire bell. The alarm brought out a large number of villagers. Very soon after the outbreak was discovered, the roof fell in, so that anything that the large number of willing hands could do with buckets etc., was in the direction of limiting the area of the fire. When the fire brigade arrived under Capt. Benson the onlookers were anxious to see the practical value of the new steam fire engine in its maiden trial of actual work. Owing to the particular conditions which alterations at the mill had brought about, its pumping capabilities were put to the sternest test. Up to the present the power to drive the machinery of the mill has been from the water wheel as well as the steam engine, and the wheel has just been removed for the purpose of putting in a turbine. On this account the mill dam was empty and it necessitated drawing the water directly from the stream to feed the engine. Here the services of Messrs L.Bowe and J.Hardisty were most valuable. A good sized dub<sup>3</sup> was located but it required thirty feet of suction hose, placed in a perpendicular position from the engine to reach it. When everything had been got into position it was soon seen by the force with which the large volume of water was directed on the burning building, what an efficient engine the town had acquired.. Over the boiler house was a drying kiln, the floor being of perforated iron and here was stored a more than usually large stock of wood, which had been sawn up and was undergoing the final drying operation prior to being put into the hands of the turner. It was this wood which had formed the chief fuel for the fire; it was all destroyed and that part of the building gutted. The flames were kept from spreading to the shed, built in continuation, where a lot of wood was stored. These erections stand apart from the main mill building which was untouched. The damage done is about £200. The bobbin mill hands, about thirty in number, are thrown off duty temporarily. The work in the laundry, however, has not been interfered with.

The fire recalls a much more disastrous one that occurred about 1865, when the bobbin mill was burned to the ground, and over £900 was raised by subscription, amongst those who contributed being: Miss Martineau, General Hughes le Fleming, The Duke of Devonshire, the Misses Quillinan, Vice-Admiral Wilson, Lady Farquhar, Capt. Ridehalgh and others.

On Sunday, the brigade were called out again, this time to St.Anne's Church. The verger, Mr.William Vity gave the alarm and Mr. Frank Workman ran to ring the fire bell. Flames were issuing from under the roof. Eaves and the fire, fanned by a gentle breeze, was getting a good hold of the exterior woodwork. Buckets were brought into requisition and when the brigade arrived, a hose pipe from a hydrant soon completed

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<sup>3</sup> A dub is the local word for a pool of deeper water within a stream or river.

the work. Very little damage was done. The fire had originated from the chimney, to which is connected the stove which heats the church. There was still another outbreak of fire on Tuesday in the wash-house of the White Lion Hotel. It proved however to be of small dimensions and was extinguished by means of a carriage-washing hosepipe.

## *DEATH OF MRS. ALFRED HORRAX of AMBLESIDE*

*(From The Lakes District Herald, Dec.10<sup>th</sup> 1909)*

Ambleside and neighbourhood was, on Wednesday night, thrown into a state of profound consternation and sorrow by the news of the untimely death of Mrs Alfred Horrax<sup>4</sup>, widow of the late proprietor of The Ambleside Bobbin Mill and Steam Laundry. The news of her serious illness had barely percolated through the parish before the sad notes of the passing bell proclaimed that she was no more. The circumstances of her last days are no the less sad because they were not out of the ordinary. On the morning of the alarming fire at the bobbin mill a few weeks ago Mrs. Horrax caught a cold<sup>5</sup> which she never really cast off. Being of a hard-working and energetic disposition, and of a strong and healthy country family, she probably paid less attention to it than many a woman of a more delicate constitution. So recently as Monday of last week, she was superintending the work of the Steam Laundry, but on the Tuesday influenza intervened and gradually developed an acute attack of pneumonia, which the weakened state of her constitution was unable to resist and she departed this life to the great sorrow of all who knew her on Wednesday evening<sup>6</sup>. The deceased lady was 48 years of age, though she by no means looked her years, being a woman of fine physique and youthful appearance. She was a daughter of the late Michael Benson, farmer of High Green, Troutbeck, whose widow still lives in that vale.

About seventeen years ago she was married to Mr. Alfred Horrax, who also died at a premature age on Sept. 13<sup>th</sup> 1902. There are three young orphan lads of the marriage, with whom the deepest sympathy is felt on all sides. The funeral will take place at 2-45 at St. Mary's Ambleside on Saturday afternoon<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Amelia Horrax

<sup>5</sup> She was reported to have helped fight the fire dressed only in her night clothes.

<sup>6</sup> Wednesday Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> 1909

<sup>7</sup> Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> 1909

## The 1911 Census

No.	Name	Relationship	Age	Occupation	Birthplace
1	William Creighton	Head	44	Slate quarryman	Ambleside
1	Lucy Satterthwaite	Sister	33		Ambleside
1	Alfred Creighton	Son	10	Scholar	Ambleside
1	Annie M Satterthwaite	Daughter	5		Ambleside
1	Edith M Satterthwaite	Daughter	1		Ambleside
2	Charles Clark	Head	43	Wood sawyer (bobbins)	Staveley
2	Annie Clark	Wife	33		Burnley
2	Mary Clark	Daughter	8	Scholar	Ambleside
2	Frank Clark	Son	<1month		Ambleside
3	John Braithwaite	Head	61	Bobbin turner	Rydal
3	Agnes Dawson	Sister	52		Troutbeck
3	Thomas Dawson	Brother in law	51	Slate quarryman	Tilberthwaite
4	Dora Rawes	Head	48	Widow	Dalton in Furness
4	Dora Rawes	Daughter	24	Laundress (steam Laundry)	Ambleside
4	Margaret B. Rawes	Daughter	22	Laundress (steam Laundry)	Ambleside
4	Agnes A. Rawes	Daughter	16	Laundress (steam Laundry)	Ambleside
4	Edward M Case	Boarder	9	Scholar	Manchester

No1 cottage still has William Creighton and his son, Alfred, who were there in 1901 but new arrivals are William's sister Lucy Satterthwaite and her two daughters (although the person filling in the census return has clearly made a mistake in identifying the two girls as the daughters of the Head of the household (unless William had married his own sister! (very very unlikely).

No 2 cottage is newly occupied by the Clark family and the Head of the household, Charles, is obviously employed at Horrax's bobbin mill as a wood sawyer. The date of this census was April 2, 1911 so Frank must have been born since January 3, 1911.

No 3 cottage remains with the same occupants as in 1901 but John Braithwaite has yet to retire as a bobbin turner.

A new family have arrived in No 4 cottage. We do not know if Dora Snr was widowed since she arrived at Sunny Bank or whether she and her children moved here after the death of her husband. What is clear is that the three girls are all employed at the steam laundry which is almost certainly the one owned by the Horrax family at the foot of Peggy Hill in Ambleside. If that is the case then all the cottages except No 1 have a clear link with the Horrax family as employers.

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In No 2 cottage we see that the wife, Annie Clark, was born in Lancashire in the mill town of Burnley and that in No 4 cottage, the child boarder, Edward Case, was from Manchester, whilst in No 4 cottage Dora Snr was from Dalton in Furness. These three people perhaps demonstrate the fact that the working population of Britain was becoming more mobile with the continued growth of the railways and were now able to look for work further away from their birthplace.

## SUNNY BANK AFTER WORLD WAR TWO

Margaret Horrax died on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1941, in Millans Park, Ambleside, which is near the Parish Church. The exact address is not known at present, but if Margaret was living at the same address in 1931 and was at home on the night of the census, all will be revealed in January 2032. There was no census in 1941 as the country was at war, so we shall not be certain even then. She might have moved next door.

On 4 June 1942, all four Sunny Bank cottages were transferred to Betsy Hinde<sup>8</sup> of Oxhey, Herts, under the will of the late Margaret Horrax. Betty Hinde (also known as Betsy) was the niece of Margaret Horrax. Richard Horrax, born 1827, and his wife Betty, had two daughters, Margaret and Julia. Margaret stayed single, while Julia married P. Jackson. They had a daughter called Barbara (Betsy) who married Walter Butterfield Hinde, of Oakbryn, Nancy Downs, Oxhey, Herts. Thus Betsy Hinde was Barbara Horrax's niece and inherited her property.

When Betsy herself died, in 1945, her property was transferred to her husband, Water Butterfield Hinde, also of Oxhey, shipping manager. On 20 November, 1945, he received a large amount of land in and around Ambleside. This included as Item 9, '4 cottages called Sheepgates'.

The other Personal Representative of Betsy after her death was Gladys Hinde (spinster), lecturer at St Hilda College, Durham. Was she their daughter, or perhaps his sister?

Properties owned by Barbara Hinde (Betsy)

1. Low Fold, Nr Ambleside
2. The field Brantfield adjoining Low Field
3. The field Low Close “ “ “
4. “Aboon House Field” “ ” “ including dwelling house etc. “Braeside”
5. Parcel of land called Parrock or Brow (formerly part of a tenement called Drummers at head of Windermere Lake.
6. The pasture land called Low Close (This seems to be a small piece (only 24 sq. yds) part of No 2 above.
7. The parcel of land called Ellermire Woodmere (161 sq. yards.)

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<sup>8</sup> Betsy must have loved the Lakes. She is now resting in St. Mary's church yard.

8. The parcel of land and 2 dwelling uses called Moresby and Barlands
- 9 All 4 cottages known as Sheepgates now in the occupation of Alfred Satterthwaite, William Satterthwaite, Walter Anderson, and James Davitt and formerly belonging to James Newton
- 10 The 5 messuages in Millans Park, Ambleside, known as Fernbank, Lynwood, Hazeldene,  
Thorn Cottage and Oakroyd.

This amounts to 8 parcels of land and a total of 12 cottages and houses. A very substantial estate.

When Walter Butterfield Hinde died, on 24 April, 1947, his will and codicil left the property to his son, Walter Butterfield. Walter and Betsy are now both buried in St.Mary's Church cemetery in Ambleside.

**This conveyance, although out of order, gives some information not available elsewhere.**

Attested copy of the conveyance of a cottage at Sunnybank to Wilfred George Hyslop from the executor of Richard Hinde.

The schedule refers to:-

5 June 1897 Conveyance from Richard Horrax to Margaret Horrax

6 March 1842 probate of the will of the said Margaret Horrax

20 November 1945 Assent by Walter Butterfield Hinde. Gladys Hinde, and Harold Handley in favour of Walter Hinde, their son

2 December 1949 Probate of the will of the said Walter Hinde. {It is clear that Walter Hinde had died, but the date is not known}.

This was accompanied by a plan (not found)

## The Housing Situation in the Nineteen Fifties

After the death of Walter Hinde, son of Walter Butterfield Hinde, his executors began to sell off the Sunny Bank cottages and perhaps other properties elsewhere. The Rent Restrictions Act, which had been imposed during the Second World War, was still in force, so that rents were still at pre-war levels. The new owners must have preferred cash to the problems of owning property in that depressed period. Property was difficult and expensive to maintain, for very little return. One man in Camden Town, London, offered a large old house to the Council for one shilling. His tenants, on fixed rents, were demanding that he should give them proper bathrooms, as was their right under the Health Acts. This he could not afford to do, as the rents were tiny. The Council was fair, valued the house at £400 and bought it. Today, modernised and thoroughly repaired, it is worth nearly Two Million.

In this housing climate, the executors began to sell off the Sunny Bank cottage

On 8 April, 1954, the executors transferred No 3 cottage to Petty Officer W.G.Hyslop. He had been in the Navy and so changed the name from Sunny Bank to Crow's Nest.

On 12 October, 1954, "all those two messuages numbers 1 and 2 Sunny Bank, Ambleside", were transferred to Miss Valentine by Richard Hinde for a total of £380.

On 13<sup>th</sup>. December 1954, Hinde's executors transferred No 4 cottage (Fellside) to Samuel Garside (sign painter) for £200. This was the cottage occupied in 1851- 1861 by John Gibson, Journeyman joiner, and in 1871 so the extra ground beyond the cottages may have held a workshop and store.

Details included in the Sales Documents.

'Margaret Horrax, late of Millans Park, died 16 June, 1941. The property then passed to Barbara (Betsy) Hinde, to her husband, and then to her son.

It was sold for £200. Several searches were made but no problems were found.

On 13<sup>th</sup>. December, 1954, a mortgage for £150 was raised by Samuel Frederick Garside and his wife Mary Garside (the Borrowers) from the Lake District Permanent Building Society. Soon after this the larger building societies began to consume smaller ones, and Hastings and Thanet Building Society took over the assets of Lake District Permanent Building Society, including this mortgage, in 1959.

All four cottages had been disposed of in nine months.

Not only do these precipitate sales reveal the state of the housing market at that time, but the conveyance document of No 4 Sunny Bank also describes the condition of the cottages in the first century and a half of their existence. They were very different from what they are now.

The following conveyance explains a great deal about the way the cottages had been built and how the occupants had lived for over one and a half centuries.

## Conveyance of No 4 Sunny Bank, 1961

The property was once owned by Walter Butterfield Hinde, late of Tretawdy Farm, Llongrove, who died 2 September, 1949.

*The sale is subject to:-*

- 1. The right of cottage No 3 to use the Earth Closet subject to their paying one half of the cost of maintaining it..*
- 2. Subject to the right in favour of the adjoining cottages 1,2,and 3 to use the Well subject to each of the owners paying one quarter of the cost of maintaining same.*
- 3. Subject to all rights and privileges in the nature of light, air way, water, drainage support etc.*

No doubt this paragraph had been copied from lease to lease for years.

Since 1961 there has been a continual process of improvement to bring the cottages to their present level of comfort. These will be detailed as the story progresses..



### The Earth Toilets

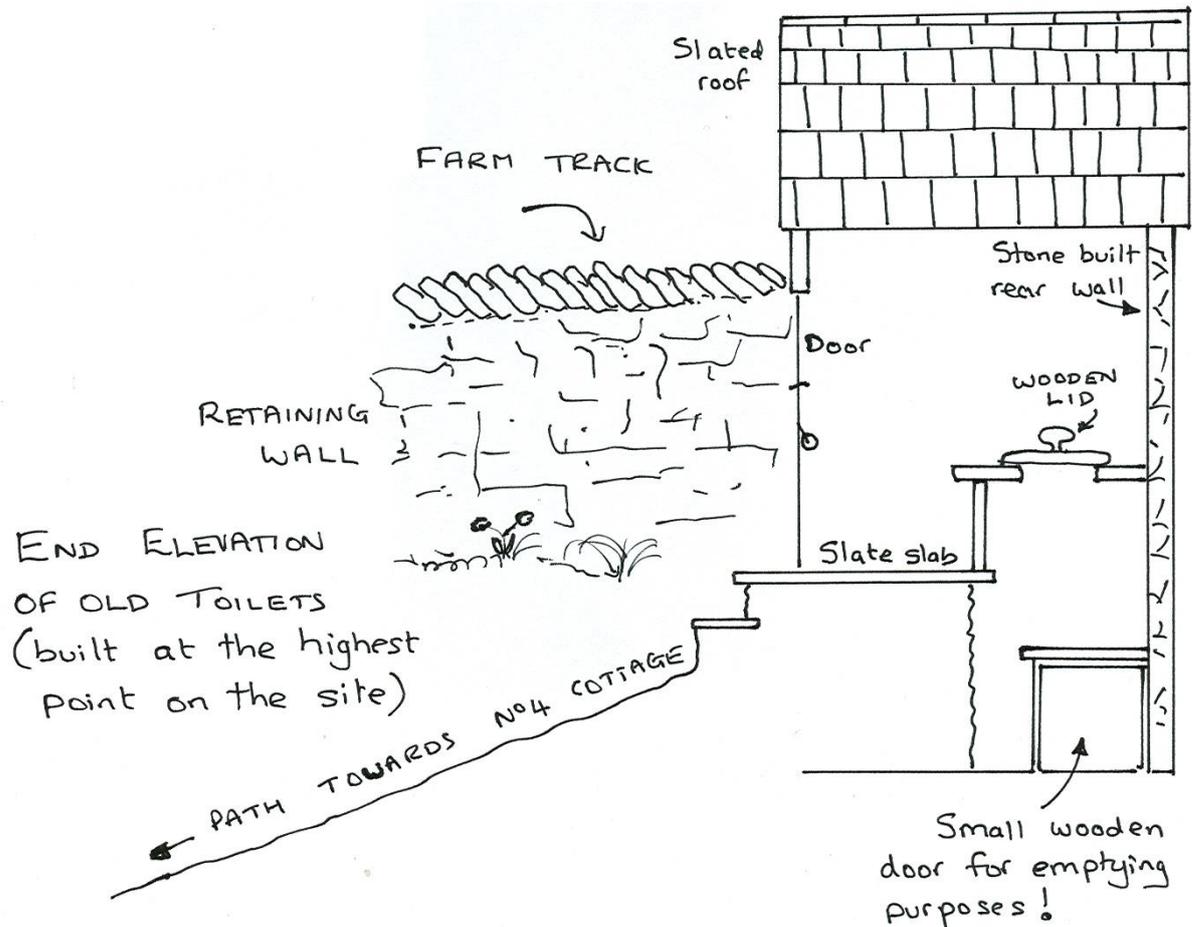
The two small buildings alongside the farm track are the old earth toilets. Cottages 1 & 2 shared the one nearer the track while 3 & 4 shared the other. A wooden bench with a hole served as the seat and the waste dropped into the pit below. Ashes from the fire were thrown down the holes – a risky process in windy weather – and quick lime was also thrown down. About twice a year, two

poor souls from the council had the unenviable job of scooping it all out through the small door at the end furthest from the track, putting it in an old tin bath and carrying to a lorry, Then back for another load. They must have jumped for joy when, years later, a septic tank was built and indoor toilets became possible.

The positioning of the earth closets reflects the lack of sanitary knowledge at the start of the nineteenth century, Putting them at the top of the site would have been unthinkable by the end of the century. When the cottages were built doctors thought that disease was carried by the smell, or miasma. They had no idea that diseases like cholera were water borne and some eminent sanitary reformers were to reject the idea to the ends of their lives. Doctor Snow had cured the Soho cholera outbreak by famously removing the pump handle, so that people could no longer drink the infected water, but still the die-hards refused to

accept his findings. For years even Bazalgette, the man who built the London Sewers, thought that he had cured disease by getting rid of the smell. Therefore it was perfectly natural for the original cottage builders to have put the earth closets at the top of the site, where the strong winds would disperse the smell. By the end of the nineteenth century it would have become natural to build the earth toilets below the cottages and the water source.

(For further discussion on this see *The Growth of St Marylebone & Paddington*, by Jack Whitehead. (The creation of the London Fever Hospital now the Royal Free)).



## The Well

The water supply still came from the well, but instead of collecting it in a bucket, as the first dwellers must have done, there was a semi-rotary pump located on the side wall of the kitchen. It was red and had a wooden handle which one had to move backwards and forwards from the 10 o'clock position to the 2 o'clock position. The outlet was a one inch copper pipe which went around the sink and bent over the sink from the back wall (where the window overlooking the bird table now is). If the cottage had been empty for a week or so, it was necessary to prime the pump first. This involved removing a small screw plug from the front of the pump body at the 12 o'clock position and pouring in about  $\frac{1}{4}$  pint of water, replacing the screw plug and pumping like mad for about a minute.



Photo of a semi-rotary pump

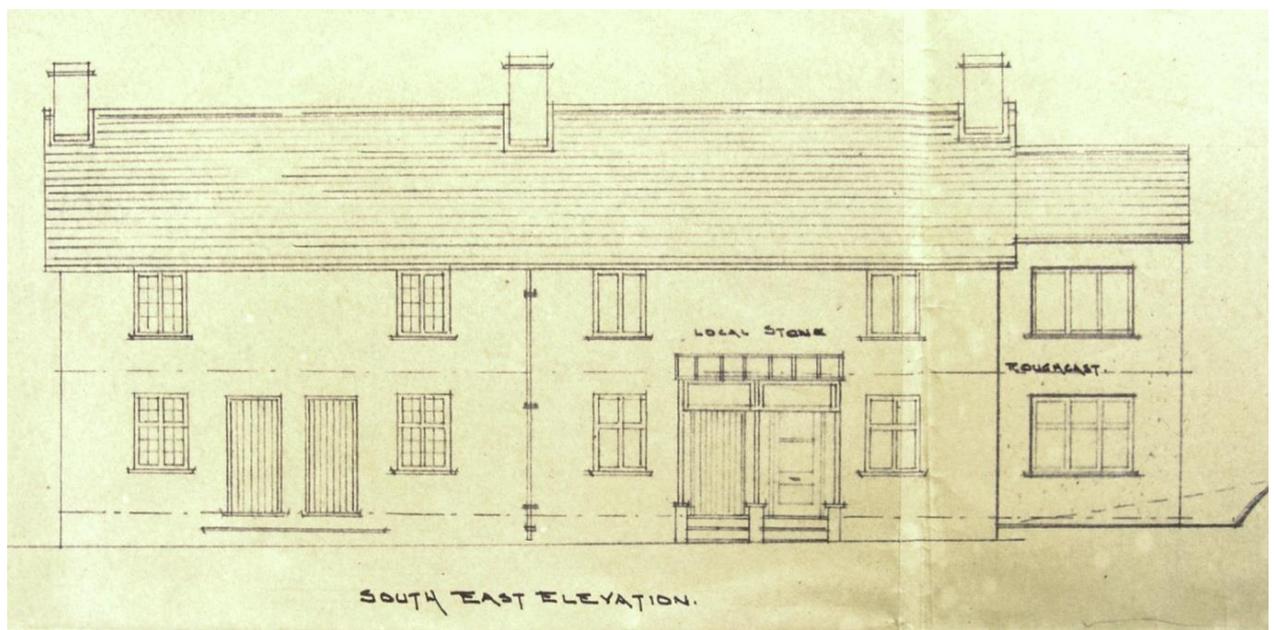
## Slate floors

The slate floors were removed and replaced with asphalt in the 1960s. The slates from No 4 cottage were laid as pavings along the side wall and by the side of the garden chalet and behind the chalet where they made it easier to sweep up the thousands of leaves which fall there each year. The floors of the other cottages were replaced at about the same time and laid as stepping stones and paving in the gardens.

On 17<sup>th</sup>. December, 1959, No 3 Cottage (then Crow's Nest and now Cobbleholes) was transferred from W.G.Hyslop to Mrs A. Tomlinson, wife of a dentist from Edinburgh for £800. The cottage had risen in price by 400% in five years.

On 31<sup>st</sup> January 1961, No. 4 Cottage was sold by Sam Garside to Miss Ethel Veitch (spinster and retired college lecturer from Bristol) for £1,250

Miss Veitch immediately planned improvements to No. 4 cottage. An architect designed an extension into the garden to give a new kitchen and larder leading off the ground floor room. The old ground floor would be converted into one large sitting room with windows at each end. A porch was to be built from the garden leading to the new kitchen, with an inside fuel store alongside. Above would be a third bedroom and a bathroom



Planned New Extension

Miss Veitch also had problems with parking. She wanted to build a garage on her garden, where there was plenty of space, but there was no way to get her car through to it. The architect suggested that she should approach the other owners for permission to demolish their hedges, build a wider road in front of the cottages and so bring her car through. Naturally she received a dusty answer. Miss Veitch gave up and sold No 4 cottage to Mr. and Mrs. Attenborough.

On 9<sup>th</sup>. September 1961, No 4 Cottage was sold by Ethel Veitch of 4 Sunny Bank Cottages to Frederick Richard Attenborough and Kathleen Mary Attenborough (his wife) both of 95 John Street, Biddulph, Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire (the Purchasers) for £1,400. So Mrs Veitch held the property for only 8 months and made £150, which will hardly have covered her legal and architect's fees. It must have been very frustrating for her.

The price was 7 times the 1954 price.

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On 9<sup>th</sup>.September, 1961, Mr and Mrs K. Attenborough took out a mortgage of £850 from the Halifax Building Society. At the same time Ethel Veitch acknowledged that she has received £300 from Mr and Mrs Attenborough.

#### **No. 4 Cottage soon after Mr and Mrs Attenborough bought it**



Photograph of May Barnett, a friend of Kathleen Attenborough, in Fellside garden in the late 60s.

There were the old windows with four panes in the lounge. One section was hinged but Richard had never seen it open due to multiple layers of paint. There are no garden gates, and the earlier porch had no doors.



This picture, which was taken in the 1960's (possibly 1963 with its snowy winter) clearly shows the absence of porches for cottages 1 and 2, the unsubstantial fence between gardens 2 and 3

### **The Hidden Underground Stream**

When Fred and Kathleen Attenborough bought No. 4 cottage, the garden was reminiscent of the First World War trenches. The Garside boys (Norman and Martin) knew that there was water running under the garden as a culvert. When the cottages were first built the stream had been dug out behind the cottages and lined with stone to form a pool. From there the water disappeared into the ground, one of the hundreds of streams surrounding the valley and supplying Stock Ghyll. The boys were determined to find it. By the time they left here was no grass in the garden whatever - just holes about three to five feet deep where they had searched and failed. Into these holes the family had thrown copious amounts of rubbish over the years. Oddments still rise to the surface each year with the frosts and once a complete brass bedstead appeared when the mounds were removed and thrown back into the holes. Ironically Fred Attenborough found the culvert near the wall, at the corner of the chalet. He pushed some alkathene pipe up the culvert and created the pond

### **Car Parking**

Car parking continued to be a problem. No cars could be parked on the narrow Kirkstone Road or on the farm road at the rear of the cottages, yet more and more people had cars. In the end, on 22 January, 1962, part of the original garden of No 1 Cottage was sold by Mrs Gregory to Mrs A. Tomlinson for £50, as a car parking space. This amounted to 110 square yards and was a bargain.

On 18<sup>th</sup>. January 1963, No 3 Cottage - now known as Cobbleholes - was transferred from Mrs A. Tomlinson to Mr and Mrs Sutton for £1750.

Joinery in Cottages No. 1 & 2.

These doors, hand made by the owner, Bob Jones (who was clerk of works to Liverpool Corporation Water Board), show the care with which he made them. Notice the way in which the diagonal cross bracing pieces are notched into the horizontal bracings to prevent the door from going out of shape due to its weight.



## The Construction of the Septic Tank

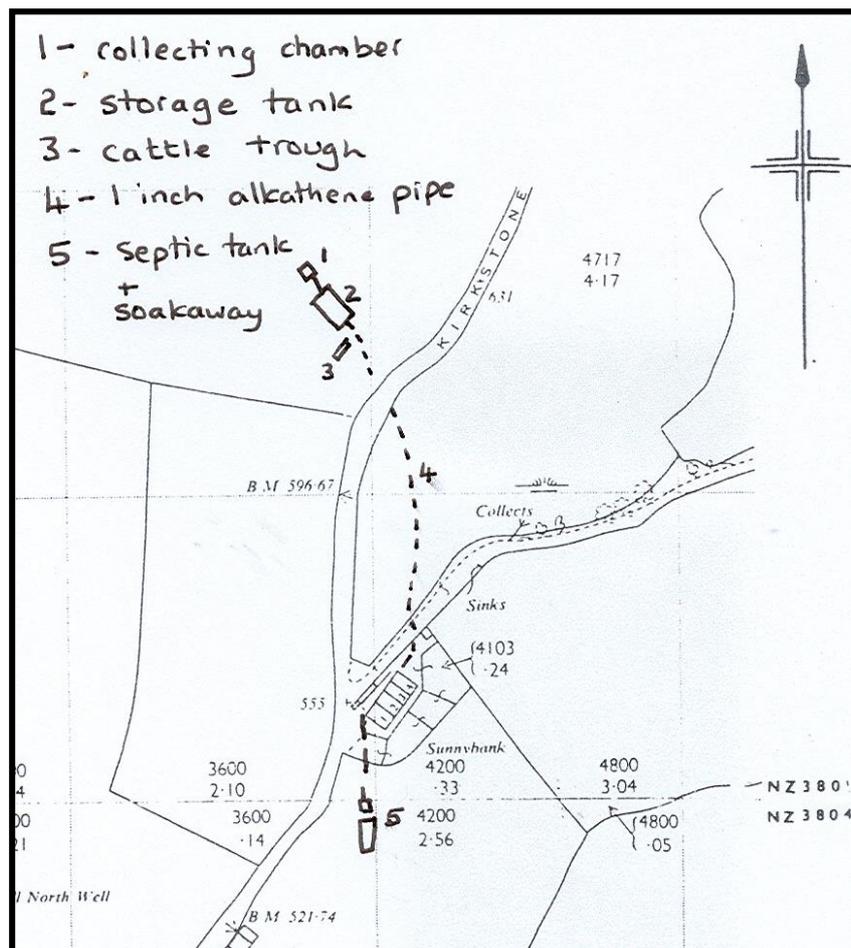
The primitive sanitation was a serious problem. Four cottages still had to use the two outside earth closets, away from the cottages, dark, cold, and smelly. The owners decided that a modern sewage system must be installed so that they could build modern bathrooms and lavatories inside the cottages, instead of using the earth closets, as had been the habit since before 1815. This required a septic tank, but there was no room for one within the area of the cottages. Instead they approached the owners of Glenthorn next door.

On 2<sup>nd</sup>. December 1968, a Deed was drawn between

'Dennis Dodd and Margaret Anita Dodd, his wife, both of Glenthorn, Kirkstone Road, Ambleside, (hereinafter called 'The Grantors' and Samuel Claude Cameron of Alvanley Rd, West Derby, Liverpool, Robert Stanley Jones of 24 Battlefield Ave., West Derby, Alan George Sutton and Ada Sutton, his wife, of Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, and Frederick Richard Attenborough and Kathleen his wife, of 95 John Street, Biddulph, Stoke on Trent (hereinafter called 'The Grantees'

'The Grantees are desirous of constructing a septic tank in the field belonging to the Grantors. In consideration of £200 the Grantors give permission etc.---'

This was accompanied by the map shown below..



Not for publication

Kathleen Attenborough having died in December 1983, and her husband Frederick Attenborough in March, 1992, No 4 Sunny Bank Cottages, Ambleside Above Stock was transferred to Richard and Jillian Attenborough on 16<sup>th</sup>. December, 1992

### **The Modern Water Supply**

The modern water supply uses water from a spring in the fell-side up the road. The old well behind cottage No. 4 has long been out of use. In the serious drought of 1995 the ground became so dry that cracks appeared. When heavy rains fell in the autumn the water below became contaminated and, when the next sample of water was taken for analysis in October, it failed. It was not considered safe for drinking.

A meeting of the cottage owners was held and agreed that the only practical solution was for each cottage to install an ultra violet filter as the water entered the cottage. These consist of a long quartz sleeve and an outer opaque casing. The water flows between the two as it enters the cottage plumbing system.

Down the central hole is a 15 inch long ultra violet bulb (30 inches in the case of cottage no.4). The whole thing is rather like a huge polo mint packet with the bulb down the central hole. The bulbs are permanently on and are replaced every six to nine months at a cost of about £20 per bulb. The ultra violet light destroys all bugs in the water most effectively, but would be blinding if looked at with the naked eye. This explains the necessity for the opaque outer casing. Ever since the system was installed the water has passed the test without fail.



Picture of an Ultra Violet Unit

### **Relining the Chimney of No. 4 Cottage**

In October 1999 the chimney of No. 4 cottage was relined. Two workmen removed stones from the gable end of No.4 to ascertain where the flue actually was. They lowered a 9 inch rubber tube down the chimney, inflated it, made sure it was not touching the sides of the old flue (about 12 by 15 inches) by chocking it through the holes they had made with pieces of spare stone and then pumped a mixture of cement and pumice stone down from the top. Every time it reached the next of their inspection holes they pushed in rags to prevent the mix from running out of the gable and then carried on.

Not for publication

Twenty four hours later, when the mixture was set, the tube was de-flated and pulled out, the rags removed from the gable and the stones cemented back in place.

### **Yet More Sales**

On 8<sup>th</sup>.November 1996, No 3 Sunny Bank - Cobbleholes - and its parking space, was transferred from Mr and Mrs Sutton to Alan Bowman for £83,500.

In July 2002, Nos. 1 and 3 Sunny Bank were offered to Richard, Jill and Keith Robinson by Alan and Glenda Bowman of Watermillock, Ullswater.

On 10<sup>th</sup>. January, 2003, a date convenient to all parties, No 3 - Cobbleholes - plus parking apace and the small garden plot in the car park area - were transferred to Richard and Jill Attenborough.

On the same date, No.1 Sunny Bank was transferred to Keith Robinson As the whole terrace is called Sunny Bank Cottages and the owners of No. 2 also call their cottage 'Sunnybank', No. 1 Cottage is now called Sheepgates (a name which is associated with the cottages as far back as 1814).

In 2012 a new family arrived at High Barn, the previous home of Shirley Lawton (just below the cottages across the field. The family have moved from their previous home under Loughrigg and they have young children. So for the first time in quite a while we can hear local children playing from the cottages! This is a sign that new life is coming to the Stock Ghyll valley.

**This brings the history of Sunny Bank Cottages to a temporary halt, but no doubt it will be enlarged and improved as more facts are revealed and time brings more changes to the cottages and to the valley itself.**

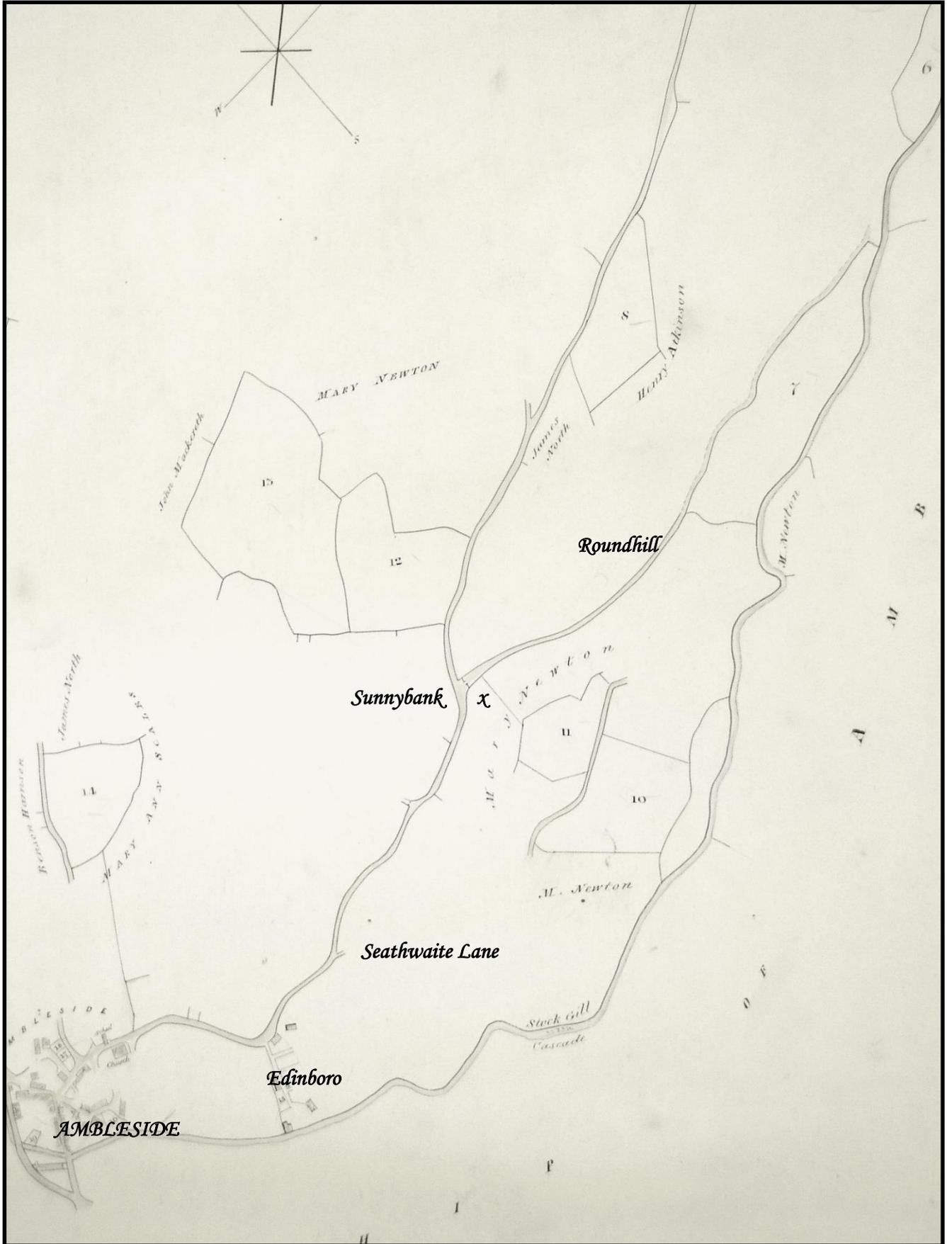
# APPENDICES...

- The tithe map of 1844 a schedule of plots and a copy of the map around the cottages.
- Former resident – William Satterthwaite
- Former resident - Cecil Otway
- Local farming neighbours – the Birketts
- Storm damage over the years
  - The late 1960s
  - January 8<sup>th</sup> 2005

**SCHEDULE OF PLOTS SHOWN ON  
THE TITHE MAP FOR AMBLESIDE (1844)**

<b>No.</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>OCCUPIER</b>	<b>USE</b>	<b>NAME OF FIELD</b>
1	TRUSTEES OF LATE REV JOHN BAMFORD	JOHN GRISEDALE	PASTURE	PETS CLOSE
2	REV WILLIAM SEWELL	HIMSELF	PASTURE	PETS CLOSE
3	ROBINSON CARTMALL	HIMSELF	ARABLE	GREEN GALE HEAD
4	CHARLES ROBINSON	JOHN WILKINSON	ARABLE	PEGGY SHEEP LYERS
5	GEORGE NEWTON	JOHN ROBINSON	PASTURE	PASTURE KNOT
6	ROBINSON CARTMALL TRUSTEE OF LATE GEORGE ELLIS	JOHN ELLIS	ARABLE	MILKIN STEADS
7	RICHARD LUTHER WATSON	JOHN WILKINSON	ARABLE & WOOD	MILKIN STEADS
8	HENRY ATKINSON	JOHN WILKINSON	ARABLE	HIGH SHARP CLOSE
9	JOHN COWARD	JOHN ROBINSON	PASTURE	SCAUDALE CLOSE
10	MARY NEWTON	DANIEL DONALDSON	ARABLE	LONG COATS
11	JAMES NEWTON	DANIEL DONALDSON	ARABLE	WARK HOWE
12	JAMES NORTH	HIMSELF	ARABLE	FRITH
13	MARY ANN SCALES	JOHN ROBINSON	ARABLE	DIMMIDALES
14	JOHN MACKERETH	JOHN WILKINSON	ARABLE	ELLERT RIGG
15	ROBERT HAYSE	HIMSELF	GARDEN	
16	MARY WOODBURN	HERSELF	GARDEN	
17	DR. THOMAS CARR	HIMSELF	GARDEN	
18	MARY PILLING	AGNES THOMPSON	GARDEN	
19	BENJAMIN TOWNSON	HIMSELF	ORCHARD	
20	GEORGE PARKRIDGE	JOHN ROBINSON	MEADOW	STEPS END
21	BENSON HARRISON	HIMSELF	MEADOW	MEADOW
22	CHRISTOPHER WILSON	RICHARD BACKHOUSE	ARABLE	PINCUSHEN HILL
23	AGNES MACKERETH	THOMAS JACKSON	ARABLE	CAROL
24	THOMAS JACKSON SCALES	THOMAS TYSON	PASTURE	THORNEY GRAYSING
25	THOMAS JACKSON	ROBERT HARINER	PASTURE	LOW CLOSE

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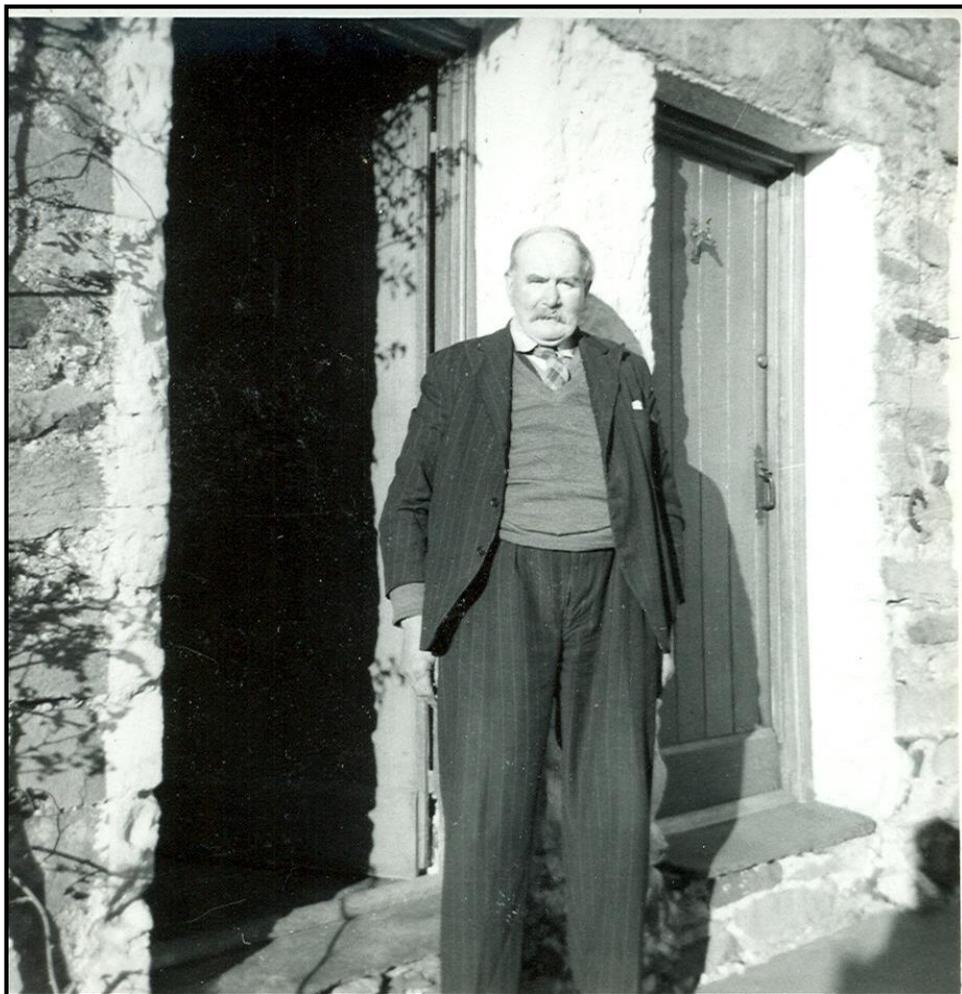
*Salutation*

*Photo of the Tithe Map for Stock Ghyll Valley -1844*  
(with names added to make it easier to follow)

Field 11 is the field facing the cottages which is just beyond the field immediately in front of the cottages. It was an arable field then!

Field 10 is the field just beyond the wall where you see people walking in front of the cottages – arable too!

## **A FORMER RESIDENT**



One of the last two permanent local residents – **William Satterthwaite**  
This picture must have been taken in 1963 to 1964.

Old Satt (as we knew him) had lived here with its old well water, no electricity and earth toilets. He lived at No.1 cottage (now Sheepgates) and his garden was what is now the car park for cottages 1, 2 and three. The short hedge alongside the gable end of the cottages used to

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go right up to the road edge and then down to the tree where the car park now ends.

His garden was purely for food production. He grew rows of vegetables including runner beans and potatoes.

The most memorable thing I remember about “Old Satt” was that he lived by the sun. He got up when it came light and went to bed when it was dark. This meant that in winter he was in bed by early evening. In summer, however, he could be found in his garden at 5am and was up till late in the evening.

He smoked a pipe and his whole house stank of tobacco. He gave us a small set of wooden drawers when he finally moved down to sheltered accommodation in the village. Inside was a pack of playing cards. For twenty years after his death you could smell the tobacco on the cards still!

### **CECIL OTWAY –**

A local character and former Sunnybank resident.



At the age of 95 most of us would take life easy and enjoy retirement. Not so Cecil Otway (or Tickle Otway as he is known in the village).

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Cecil once lived in number 1 cottage (Sheepgates) just after he was married. His wife worked as a cook/housekeeper in a house at Under Loughrigg (beyond Ambleside Park) and for that reason they moved down into the village after about six months at Sunnybank! Both she and Tickle would have faced the prospect of walking back up to Sunnybank every night after work. At that time Tickle worked at the bobbin mill, keeping the machines working and could turn his hand to most jobs, as well as making boots in his spare time. Cecil is still a boot maker and every Saturday he can be found in his workshop, down the alley almost opposite Bell's chemist shop in Lake Road. He showed us how to thread up his machines and he even stitched some leather for us!

Amongst his other jobs, he was responsible for laying out the dead in the village and he was a founder of the local St. John's Ambulance which led eventually to the Langdale and Ambleside Mountain rescue team.

We brought him up to Sunnybank in 2004 and he sat and reminisced about his life there. Apparently, he used the no.1 coal house to store his leather and to cut it out for any shoes or boots he was making. He told us that the lounge fire (as it is now) was then an old fashioned range where all the cooking would have been done.

## **FARMING NEIGHBOURS**

William and Mary Birkett of Roundhill Farm

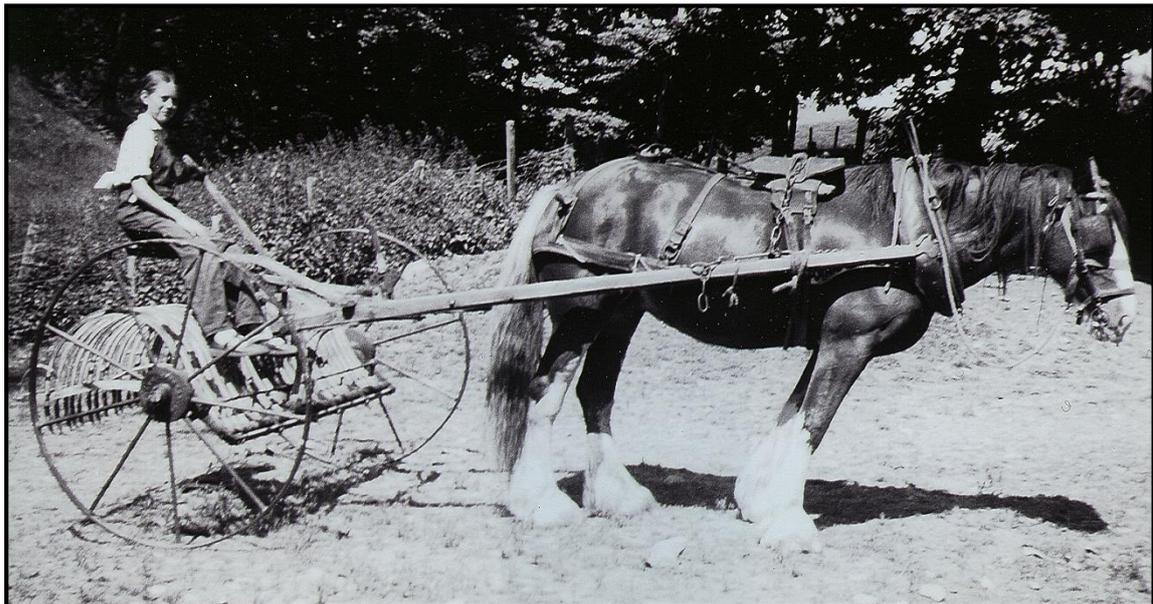


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In 1962 Billy Birkett and his wife were the owners of Roundhill Farm and here you see them on their one and only social visit to Sunnybank around Christmas time 1963 – 1965. Billy was wearing his Sunday best – a golden brown tweed suit.

Billy was a force to be reckoned with and we (as children) believed that he had “*super powers*” which enabled him to detect the moment that you went over into his field to recover a lost ball. He could shout for England and he was matched only by the vocal power of his wife Mary. Mary was not blessed with many teeth and wore her hair in two tight buns over each ear.

The Birketts had a daughter, Mary, who later married Colin Aeson. Two pictures of Mary as a girl are shown on the next page.



Mary, as a girl, on the tedding machine (used to flick over the hay in the field to speed up the drying process). No tractors here!



Another picture of young Mary, this time lending a hand a shearing time, sitting in the doorway of one of the outbuildings in the yard.



Billy Birkett with some of his sheep in the field opposite the cottage.

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Billy and more sheep in the top meadow opposite the cottage. This picture is dated 1958 and the cottages are seen in the distance. Also just to the right of the cottages can be seen the shed which we now call the Chalet in No 4 cottage garden. The shed was made from wood gained from packing cases from Liverpool Docks! The shed still stands today, although it was extended in 2011. The smell of creosote when the timber was disturbed in 2011 is testimony to how much creosote must have been applied.



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The same picture cropped to show the cottages more clearly. The chalet can now be seen. In No 3 cottage garden (seen directly in front of No 4 lounge window there was another shed with a sliding door which Richard remembers playing in when he was here on holiday in 1960.

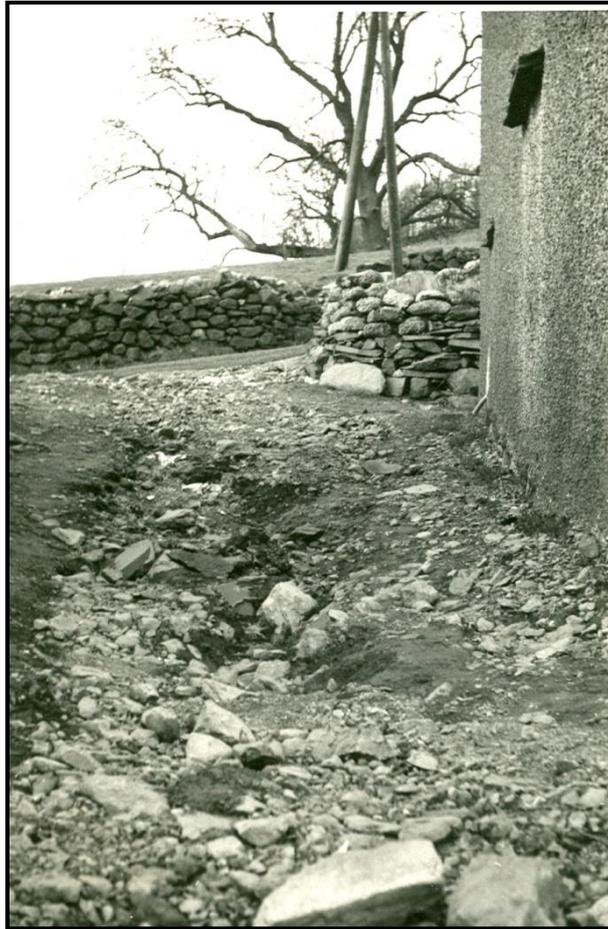
### ***Back to the farming.....***

Colin was later killed by a baling machine in the farm yard. Mary was heartbroken and she and her mother continued to run the farm as her father Billy had now died. Mary then contracted leukaemia and died leaving old mother Birkett back in sole charge of the farm in her advancing years. She had the help of Roy Parkinson and when Mrs.Birkett finally passed away, Roy took over the farm and married his wife Paula and started a family. They had four children Holly, Angus (Gussie). George and young Johnnie. Gussie and George now help run the farm.

Although the ancient residents of Sunnybank may well have worked on the farm, there are no other full time workers on the farm apart from Roy and the lads. He does have occasional part time help from his friend who is also a full time window cleaner in the village.

## **STORM DAMAGE OVER THE YEARS**

### **The late 1960s**



Whilst the original builders had positioned Sunny Bank carefully to gain shelter and the warmth of the sun, living at 600 feet above sea level and on a steep hill does sometimes pose problems!

One problem the cottages have in their position is that they are on a steep road and after heavy rain, the water runs straight off the fields further up the road and then downhill! Our driveway makes a quick exit for such deluges and has been helped in recent years by the council putting in a kerb along the length of the car park. Just above the car park there is an original grid and from there the water travels down a culvert under no. 4 car park, down underneath no. 1 garden to join the main culvert under the field.

In the late 1960s the culvert under the car park became blocked by a fallen stone and on arriving at the cottages for a holiday we were greeted by this sight! The water had burst up through the ground and carted most of the car park to the bottom of no.1 garden! It took some hard work from the whole family to clear the mess, repair the culvert and cart the soil and rocks back up from the garden!

Soon after the above photo was taken and the drive repaired Richard's parents had the drive tarmacked and that tarmac survived until November 2013 when it was finally replaced and a new line of plastic covered drains were laid on our side of the kerb to channel any more flood water away from the driveway and car park and off down the road towards Ambleside. That work cost us around £3000 and two days later it was tested to the full when we had a prolonged period of heavy rain and the floodwater once more swept down the road. The good news is that the double line of drains worked although

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some water did sneak over onto the newly laid chippings on the main car park. To stop that happening in future, Richard found four baulks of heavy hardwood timber and screwed large screws eyes into each end of each piece. Now, if heavy rain is forecast they can be laid end to end along the gutter and lashed together with nylon rope which stops them from disappearing towards Ambleside town centre!

## **JANUARY 8th 2005**

This was the night that Carlisle was flooded, killing three people. Here at Sunny Bank we had our own misfortunes. The oak tree in the garden of Fellside, no. 4, finally gave in as winds estimated at over 100 mph for just a couple of minutes unceremoniously ripped the tree from the ground and threw it over the wall into the field, ending its 45 year life. The root ball was over six feet across and helped to lift half the patio into a vertical position!



The sight at daybreak on Jan 8<sup>th</sup>.



Ten days and one chainsaw later! Ben stands on the edge of the upturned root ball. As we cut away the top parts of the tree to drop into the field beyond, the weight pressing on the wall changed and eventually it gave up the ghost and collapsed.

Time for a rest! (for us **and** the chainsaw! ) The wood (oak) made excellent fire wood but one piece lives on. Bob Musgrave, one of the regular guests from Somerset took a piece of the wood and turned a beautiful squat vase for us.



How to dispose of a stump – the hi-tech way! A stump grinder with diamond coated teeth. In one hour it total annihilated all traces of the oak stump which we had struggled with for months the remove.

The sawdust provided twenty wheelbarrow loads of mulch around the gardens and the lawn was finally re-turfed on February 13<sup>th</sup> 2006!

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