

REMEMBERING THE SOLWAY

VOLUME 2



A project to collect, share and celebrate memories
of life and landscape on the Solway Coast





Getting into the spirit of the 1950's



Local history talk on the Railways



Christmas Solway Social

introduction

2015 saw the culmination of Remembering the Solway, one of 29 projects within the Solway Wetlands Landscape Partnership, a Heritage Lottery supported scheme to restore, protect and celebrate the landscape of the Solway Plain in North Cumbria. Remembering the Solway aimed to interview and record people living on the Solway throughout the last 100 years, to find out what life was like here in the past, within living memory, and to what extent it has changed over time.

The group focused on the central, northern section of the Solway Plain and Coast, encompassing the villages of Newton Arlosh, Kirkbride, Bowness-on-Solway, Port Carlisle, Drumburgh and Burgh-by-Sands. This is a quiet tranquil part of the Solway Coast, less well known, where local traditions endure and is a landscape where one can easily feel connected to the past.

The Project was hugely successful, with 46 interviews carried out, capturing the memories of 53 people, creating a unique database of people's voices and

memories that will be preserved for the future in the Cumbria Archive Service. The project was entirely run by volunteers, under the guidance of oral history practitioner Susan Child and support from staff from the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). A booklet and short film were produced and a final celebration event held, attracting over 160 people who had spent their lives on the Solway and came together at the White Heather Hotel in Kirkbride to share memories and rekindle old connections. A visit from Kirkbride Primary School ensured that the next generation were able to talk to the interviewees and hear those stories from the past for themselves.

The volunteers were keen to carry on with the project, so in 2016 funding was obtained, thanks to Allerdale Borough Council, for a second phase. This time, the group decided to concentrate on some new themes, choosing to focus on the community and social aspects of life on the Solway

over the past 100 years. The group felt strongly that the project had invigorated community life so much that they wanted to run regular Solway Socials- community events celebrating local history and encouraging people to get together. The group subsequently ran a series of hugely successful and well attended events, including a day of Christmas traditions, an illustrated talk on Solway railways and even a 1950s village fete!

Despite this second phase being interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, there were a total of 29 interviews carried out, recording a range of memories for the book. There are also some relevant stories from phase one included in the book.



Garage, Kirkbride

Material from the project can be accessed on the Solway Coast AONB website at www.solwaycoastaonb.org.uk

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to all the people on the Solway Plain who helped to shape this project. This involves both the local residents of the area who kindly agreed to share their memories and the group members who volunteered their time to carry out the interviews and develop the way forward. Thanks is also due to Susan Child who co-ordinated the project, and Kathleen Brough who encouraged us to use the Port Carlisle Chapel for our meetings and events. Special thanks to Margaret Sharples of Kirkbride who was always ready to give a steer to the project team when it was needed, and to Brian Wills and the Cumberland & Westmorland Wrestling Association for sharing their photograph archives with us.

preface

by the Remembering the Solway Group

In 2015 the Remembering the Solway Oral History Group, aided by the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), collected oral history recordings and created a book to give future generations a glimpse of Cumbrian life in the 20th century on the Solway Plain.

The recordings and book proved to be a great success and the celebratory event held at the White Heather Hotel, Kirkbride, was so popular that enthusiastic people sat reminiscing long after the event ended.

Other Solway Socials highlighting the Carlisle to Silloth steam trains, Vintage Vicarage Garden Fete and Yesterdays' Christmas, continued to captivate. Such genuine interest is an indication of the true value of precious memories. These fragments of the past have given enjoyment and satisfaction to interviewees, the Remembering the Solway Oral History Group and readers of our book.

Creating a second book has again been a joy, this time giving



The Remembering the Solway group at the White Heather

more emphasis to community and social life, including natural health remedies and local traditions. The rich material gathered for this edition enhances the importance of the Remembering the Solway community history project, as it gives an insight into life on the Solway Plain which otherwise may be forgotten.

Whilst compiling this book, sadly a number of interviewees have passed away. We have included extracts enabling their memories to live on in print; a fitting tribute to such treasured lives.

Fleeting memories neglected in time

*Forgotten gems scattered as
fragments of yesterday*

Harvested with a passion

By remembering the Solway

SHOPS & SUPPLIES

A self-sufficient way of life was essential for rural communities on the Solway Plain as transport to the bigger towns could be difficult; there were very few cars on the road and a limited bus and train service.

Village shops, including the local post office, would sell a broad range of everyday essentials. Most villages also had a butcher's shop and a blacksmith. Other supplies such as milk and groceries would be delivered in travelling vans.



“Robert Bewsher... when you went in you would think you could get anything here from a pin to an elephant, from looking at it. Oh, my goodness, you name it, he had it. And his wife used to serve in the shop sometimes. She always wore a hat, his wife. And, if he didn't have it he would get it, you know. He was very helpful, really. He sold everything but he was the only one of the shops that sold paraffin and you needed paraffin for paraffin lamps. So I regularly was sent to get a can full... it would be a gallon I suppose, can of paraffin. And that was one of my Saturday jobs, to go to Bewsher's to get paraffin for the lamps.” (*Bunty Bell*)

“Picton Warlow's shop [was] at the bottom of the village. You could get most things at Pictons but what I remember especially, when we were quite small, was going along the shore and collecting lemonade bottles that the Sunday trippers had



Crozier's shop, Kirkbride

left behind and you used to get, I think it was maybe thruppence. You certainly got something back when you took them to the shop so we used to rinse all these bottles out if they were sandy and take them back... We used to make a bit of pocket money that way. It was almost recycling when you look at it that way... Well, the Sunday buses in summer on nice days, they used to be full of people coming down to spend the day on the shore.” (*Evelyn Aston*)

“In the 1950’s, Drumburgh Post Office was the hub of Drumburgh itself... and as soon as you walked into the post office, Billy the budgerigar would hear you... ‘ten Woodbines and a box of matches,

Billy Coulthard, Drumburgh Post Office Burgh-by-Sands, 1-2, 1-2’ and he did this whenever anyone walked into the post office... As you stood waiting, you were well aware of this beautiful mahogany glass case... and it was... a treasure trove of sweets... There would be spaceships filled with sherbet, lucky bags, spearmint, spearmint sticks, liquorice sticks, Mars bars, Milky Ways, chews of all descriptions... and in your hand was a sticky two pennies to spend... Mrs Coulthard might say, ‘...shall we try and decide?’ and she’d put it in a little white paper bag... So she’d swizzle the bag round, pop it in your hand and you’d scamper down the stairs to get the school bus.” (*Jean Graham*)

“Aye, ’62, ’63 we were snowed in, couldn’t get into school... from Cardurnock ‘cos of the snow... the school bus couldn’t get through along the bit of marsh ‘cos of drifts... Milk couldn’t get out, I remember, aye, Hodgsons couldn’t get the milk man to do the milk round. They had to pick up in the snow and there were pennies on the roadside... in the snow. It was only sort of twos and pennies, nowt bigger than that in them days... Aye, no, it was hellish.”
(*Ian Reay*)



Getting supplies through the snow, Wolsty

“...Solway House... Well it was a very big house and it had fifteen rooms... And... outside the back door there was a big bell... and the kids used to fight who had to go and ring the bell when the dinner was ready... and you could hear it all over the farm... There was eight of us and... at least one hired girl as well, probably two, and at least two or three hired men, always, because there was no tractors or anything. It was all

just horsepower, you know... There was no electric, no, there was no electric at all. But it had been like a gentleman’s farm really... it was a marvellous house.”
(*Johnny Bainbridge*)

“...there was a guy called Jack, Jack Jackson and there was a lady called Ann who lived at Orton and... they worked in the bakehouse. Now they used to make like the tea cakes, the bread, cakes, pies all that kind of stuff and my dad used to sell those on the vans ‘cos there was him and Ted, Ted Little, who had like travelling vans and they used to go around all the big farms and come into villages and sell all like sweets and all that kind of stuff; provisions. And that went on for a long, long time, well, into the sort of late ’70s, ’80s... It was when Jack actually retired that my mam went into the bakehouse and she used to make... everything like, you know, that Jack made... but the catering, it was a hobby to start with... and then it just got bigger and bigger and bigger and they had to... have three catering vans that they used to take all the stuff to the dos...” (Sheila Johnstone)

“...one thing we did every year, we used to breed our own pigs and twice a year the butcher man, Mr Rudd from Little Bampton would come round... to kill the pig and my mother used to make her own



sausages, black puddings. She would cure the bacon, the hams which would hang from hooks in the kitchen ceiling all the year and so we always had plenty of bacon. We had our own geese, ducks, chickens so we always had plenty of eggs. During the war, rationing didn't really hit us very much apart from the sweets..."

(Betty Humes)

"Newton Marsh. There used to be a big gullery on there. There used to be lots of eggs. We used to go and collect eggs and it'd be the '50s. And then they started flying... jets and they used to come in from a different approach and they used to come over the marsh. And my dad always believed that it was the jets that stopped the gullery and the gullery packed in. Birds just deserted it... We still got geese and that on the marsh now... there's no gullery... There are no sort of nests, no eggs... They always blamed the jets, the whine of the jet's engine that did it." *(Norman Glaister)*

"We'd sometimes be allowed, well I'd be, to gather tern eggs up. Now this is totally inappropriate now but it wasn't seen as wrong then. You'd find a tern's nest and there would be hundreds and hundreds of them and you'd find one that had perhaps four eggs in, and you'd take one egg. You didn't disturb the rest, you'd just take one of them, move on, take another and you'd gather up enough to take



Harry Graham with pigs

home... Absolutely lovely things but, aye, I can remember eating them. I doubt if I'd ever eat one of those again. I think it'd be very wrong if I did but those are the things that you know, it seemed ok to do at the time. As I say, we'd never used to empty nests out, we'd always take one at a time." *(Stephen Sowerby)*

"Everybody knows Burgh Marsh is famous, or was, for its mushrooms. People used to come from far and near and they used to come very early morning. We could look out of our bedroom window up towards the Point and you could see lamps, flashlights going round about four o'clock in the morning." *(Mary Beattie)*



Bus to Carlisle

“Uncle Jack always, if he had time and the tide was right, he fished, haaf net, haaf net fishing and of course, occasionally, he’d do quite well... Occasionally, I would get asked to take a salmon, a salmon to McGlassons. McGlassons was the fishmongers near the Town Hall in Carlisle and I’d be sitting there [on the bus]... and the fish would be in what you would call a bass, yes, and of course if it was a good one, it... had a tail poking out one end and a nose poking out the other... When I got to Carlisle, they’d let me off, of course in those days, by the Town Hall and I’d go into McGlassons... and then I would walk back through what were really, ‘The Lanes’, not what we’ve got now, through the alleyways back to the bus station and sit in the bus and wait to come back again.” *(Mary Winter)*



“Aye, well the springs came in at Penny Hill and we don’t know yet where the current still goes and where it comes from or where it starts from... and it’s amazing that spring, it’s the nicest water... nice cool water like... but they used to rate it, you know... the local authority would come and test it now and then and if there’s anything wrong... they would fast tell you... and it was graded as class one water... And... just outside the house door, there was a big deep well... we put a rope with a line on it and it went down twenty five feet before it hit the water and that would be pumped up... and that would be another supply of water.” *(Frederick McDonald)*

HEALTH & MEDICINE

Living in isolated communities on the Solway very often meant that you were a fair distance from any health care provision and the only contact would be the district nurse arriving on her bike or going to the doctor's surgery several miles away.

Not many people had access to a phone or transport either so any remedies and treatments were often home based, tried and tested cures passed down through the ages.



Traditional remedies

“I had this very sore throat and it was so bad I was in bed because it was really, really bad and auntie Mary had kept some cures for remedies that used to be printed in the parish magazine and... there was one for quinsy and it was burnt toast in vinegar wrapped round your neck and a doctor would come. I don't know whether he left me tablets to take or what he would do but he came back... the end of the week to see how I was and he said, 'oh my goodness it's working, it's much better isn't it, oh yes, yes' and auntie Mary said, 'nothing to do with you, it's my stuff, burnt toast and vinegar'... but she was right, it was what she put on it that worked, burnt toast and vinegar.” (Bunty Bell)

“Well, I know my sister... she was always chesty, eh and we'd [put a] bit of clooter round her neck. We'd have a bit of bacon rind and goose

grease, it stunk, rubbed on her chest and that. And honey was a good thing, eh for coughs and that, eh. It used to be, it was always underneath our bed.”
(Margaret Thompson)

“My mother sent one of my brothers out. He was covered in warts and she said the cure that she remembered was a snail, rubbing snails over it. At that time, we were all a bit dubious of the snails but he went out and he came back with the carrier bag quite full of snails... Well, I think just once he shut his eyes and rubbed them over them but warts still came back.” *(Linda Armstrong)*

“...as a kid I got ringworm quite badly ‘cos I used to feed the calves and you’d go to the doctors and get cream but it didn’t work very well so my mum had a recipe for nettle beer and

that was supposed to clean your blood and stop the itching and it’s actually really, really very nice to drink is nettle beer. It’s fizzy, it’s nice. You can’t make it quickly, it has to sit and ferment but we used lots of old recipes like that... It did [cure it] yes, and actually, when I met Steve... his grandma was alive then, and she used to make nettle beer. I mean, I don’t know anyone else that used to make it and I think probably people do because people go gathering all sorts out of the hedgerows, you know, wild horseradish and all sorts, wild garlic and things like that but it was quite strange that she used to make nettle beer as well.” *(Pauline Hinks)*

“...we moved as a family to Lock House, Beaumont when I’d be about three and a half... I had



Digging through the snow c1947

an unfortunate accident just after my fourth birthday. The house wasn't fully complete and me mam used to use a little paraffin stove to heat water on and I'd clambered into a wheelchair and tipped it over and it caught a pan of water which was on the stove which scalded me and I carry the scars to this day. And I still remember that quite clearly in spite of my young age at the time and me mam being in a terrible panic, wrapping me up in a blanket and taking me upstairs. I think she covered me in butter, contrary to modern practice, but she smothered me in butter, wrapped me in a blanket and left me on the bed because not having a telephone, she didn't know what to do, so she went out until she found somebody and then I was taken to the Infirmary at Carlisle and I can remember there, being visited by my mum and dad, aye..."

(Stephen Sowerby)

"I think I was seven when I had scarlet fever and had to go into hospital. It was on a farm so you couldn't have scarlet fever at home. I had to go in an ambulance with red blankets. I did wish I could have those blankets. And I was in this ward, it was the fever ward... My mother used to talk to me through the window. Nobody could come in because of course you were infectious. And one night the nurses said... there'd been a mock air raid. And I think probably the mock air raid was to try to evacuate people. But nobody tried to evacuate us. I suppose we'd have



half-killed everybody 'cause there were people with diphtheria and all sorts of things... I came home from that unscathed..."

(Margaret Parkinson)

"Mum... was brought up on a farm just outside Port Carlisle called Brackenrigg... She was, unfortunately, she was ill in the winter of '47 which by all accounts was a very, very, extremely bad winter and... she took appendicitis and it was so severe they had to send for the surgeon from Carlisle hospital... The men from Drumburgh and Glasson... made a pathway through the snow for him and carried his equipment for him. Meanwhile, her mum and the people around the farm scrubbed the kitchen table and took it upstairs because they needed it to operate on when he eventually got there... By the time the surgeon came, it had turned to peritonitis and was very, very serious... They got him there eventually... and he needed hot water... and all of the taps in the buildings and in the house were all frozen solid. At the time they had two... hired lads and so they stood at the only dripping tap, stood all night to get enough water to boil to perform the operation. Fortunately it all turned out quite well for mam and she recovered from that."

(Irene Harrington)

TRADITIONS

The Solway landscape has had a big impact on the way of life for local communities and many of the customs and practices are based on skills and traditions passed down through the generations.

Longstanding traditions are steeped in history and folklore and celebrated annually or seasonally, nurturing and bringing families and communities together, and providing shared experiences and meaningful memories.



Shoeing horses, Kirkbride

“Now, Burgh Marsh has a tradition... because some of the houses had stints attached to them... A stint gave you the right to put, graze a cow throughout the summer on Burgh Marsh... Now, I remember driving day, they called it. Well, committee members set to, to count the stuff on the marsh. It was a kind of hit and miss effort, you know. The men set up in twos and they'd say, ‘how many do you think, cows are in that bunch over there?’ ‘Oh, I would think that would be about twenty...’ and he would agree or disagree, whatever he felt like. So I don't know how the numbers of animals worked out with the number of stints let but all the animals had to have the stint number painted on... And they all had to give the shepherd a form describing their animals... Oh, yes, we had to have a full record of every animal that went



Blacksmiths, Kirkbride

on the marsh... There was one stint for one cow, one stint for three sheep and two stints for a horse..." (Mary Beattie)

"The haaf net season would end on 9 September and a week or two later there'd be a few stake nets out, maybe just 50 or 60 yards and they would catch flounders... Flounders are usually best that time of year and they would fish for flounders 'til just about the end of December. Then all of a sudden they disappear and there's no more. And at that time of



Moving cattle onto Burgh Marsh

year, apparently, they go away to breed. But they're always fittest end of December, first week or so in January... When we started haaf netting again in the spring... there was always a few flounders but they were like envelopes. They were hardly worth keeping..." (Roger Brough)

"I used to go down to the marsh and open the gate for cars... and the motorists threw money out to you. You kept the gate closed to the very last minute to make sure they were going to slow down, open the windows and throw the money out; pennies and halfpennies, old money before decimalisation... There were a host of your school pals... so you scrambled for it. I think it was every man for himself. There was no niceties... so it grew quite rough at times,

fisticuffs and everything and the best days was a wedding. If wedding people were going to pass through, it was sixpences and shillings in those days... rather than coppers, so you always looked forward to a wedding. You were considerably richer after a wedding... but of course in those days there wasn't the traffic that there is now. Cars were few and far between really so you had some long waits..." (Alan Graham)

"I didn't play many games at school, other than marbles... Aye... there was a season, there was a season for different things. We had certain period of time when you played marbles, we played... conkers... aye, we did, played chestnuts... Monty Kitty... you used to have to put your head down and you had to jump as far as you could, yeah... We did all kinds of things... Everything was still commonplace." (George Brown)

"Well, we started by getting them [ponies] off the Silloth Green

for the winter... the ones that used to walk up and down the green. Winter time they weren't on the green and they wanted them let out for the winter and that's how we started. There'd be maybe six or seven I suppose... We probably had those for a couple of years and then we'd be getting adventurous and then we went to Allonby... I mean, the horses, ponies, they knew the route, they just followed each other. They knew when to stop and have a break, when to walk down on the sand, when to walk, they just knew it all, you know, and you got to a certain point and they'd stop. You had a few minutes and they turned round and brought you back... They must have been just doing that day in, day out..." (Anne Hill)

"We went right through Whiteholme and up another bit of lane and across a bit of moss... We'd maybe take two or three horses... [to] reshod... you couldn't go wet time... Aye,

COARSE BRAT

A coarse brat is a coarse sacking apron used over your clothes for dirty jobs around the home or farm.

HARROWING

Harrowing the field is after ploughing and before sowing. First the ground would be ploughed then grubbers (implements with curved spikes) would break up the newly ploughed furrows, then harrows (a diamond shaped metal frame with small spikes) would be dragged across the soil to break down the soil to a fine tilth (fine soil bed) ready for sowing.



Peewits from Mary Little's archive

because they used to get their feet dirty you see... when it was wet... Aye, Pache Brown... [in Kirkbride]... they had... a big fire going. They had to, to heat the shoes... and knock them into shape... We used to take the young ones to, er, Moorhouse. There was blacksmith there... We went there with the young ones like, the young horses... when they were going to be sold... [in] Carlisle... in a wagon. And you had to stand... You were frightened to death of them really 'cause you was just boys like and you had to stand in the wagon with the big, big horse.”
(Harry Hodgson)

“Well, one of the earliest memories I have was of dad sowing oats out of a coarse brat on a ploughed, cultivated, field and in that field, Billy Nelson was working. He was harrowing but he also was moving the

bird nests, the peewits and the curlews and the lapwings out of the way of the harrowing... Billy had the bags set in orderly fashion so he could give dad a routine, a plan on how to walk and keep the lines reasonably straight and Billy would have to move the nests and eventually when dad would finish sowing, Billy would harrow the rest of the field... and I think I'd be sent down to the field with the dinner and the bag the dinner would be in would be bigger than me probably...” (Robbie Wills)

“When Norman was there [Rogersceugh] ...there was curlews, there was oyster catchers, all them... Peewits. Aye, aye but the farmer liked them 'cos they'd chase the crows when you were thinning turnips. The crows would come and pull the turnips out and the peewits



Granny Cartner wearing a coarse brat, Port Carlisle

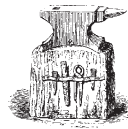


John Brown, farrier, Kirkbride

would get after them and chase them, aye, and oyster catchers was the same. When you were side harrowing for to thin, you always lift harrows up when you knew there was nest, aye, you didn't destroy that nest of peewits. Oyster catchers, farmers love them." (Dorothy Johnston)

"...there wasn't a crow's nest in the area that was safe. The lad from Kirkbampton, Ronnie Wilson... he would crawl across branches thinner than your arm and get a crow's nest out... We used to go on crow nesting expeditions at night and mam and dad would never know if we... would turn up in one piece or not... Big boys, yeah, but,

you know, we regarded it as great fun... and I was once told that if crows are building their nest high up in the trees, there isn't going to be any storms. If they come down and more protection from the storms, you'll come for stormy weather... Oh, yeah, they know more about weather forecast than we do." (Robbie Wills)



“I started as a beekeeper, some bees I bought at Greenspot off Dick Graham and for the princely sum of £1 but it was all I had... It was a lot easier to keep bees in them days, there weren't the diseases... There was far more natural pollen and nectar to collect because there was a lot more weeds, flowers if you like. Today we've sprayed an awful lot of them out... It can handle vetches and clover and them sort of things but big flashy modern flowers are no good to bees. A bumble bee can handle it but not a honey bee... You make honey, really, roughly from April until July. Well, there's the old country rhyme about swarming bees:



*A swarm in May is worth
a cart load of hay*

*A swarm in June is worth
a silver spoon*

And a swarm in July is sure to die

Your ones in May, they're at boom when there's lots of better weather, hopefully, and any amount of flowers and it's true that." (William Brown)

“...it was my job, when father milked, to take the cows out and most of the time we would take them into land across the railway and I used to really hate it. You'd to drive the cows right to the gate, the first gate, then run across, run by them and open the far gate first, then listen on the line to see if you could hear a train coming in the distance then open the gate... Yeah, and by that time the cows were all over the place and you'd to round them up and... the cows by then had got onto the line but they always expected you, see, the trains. They would stop for you. Well, they had to, yeah... and this particular time there was a train come... What a job we had getting them across

Crooks and sticks, Kirkbride



George Smithson, stick making, Kirkbride

and you were panicking, you know, but yeah, they were good times, yeah.” (*Kenny Birkett*)

“...if I’m making a crook, it has to be big enough to catch a sheep... and they’re the ones which just fit your hand nice and you can use them every day for going to a show or working out in the fields or anything... The art of a lot of stick making is getting your joint right. If you don’t get your joint right you haven’t got your stick right... and then it’s a case of starting to get them

finished off and polished which is a time-consuming job... then you rub your shank down with fine sandpaper and then with steel wool. Once you’ve done that, then you start to varnish them. A lot of people just uses ordinary varnish or some uses yacht varnish. I prefer yacht varnish because it’s more durable and stands the weather better...”
(*George Smithson*)

SPORT

Sport has always been an integral part of village life on the Solway, allowing communities to come together for physical and athletic activities and encouraging people to compete in events.

Tennis, badminton, bowling, cricket, football, wrestling, show jumping and hound trailing are among the more traditional sports that Solway communities have participated in and enjoyed with many of the activities being held on the marsh. Some competitors have gone on to become champions of their chosen sport.

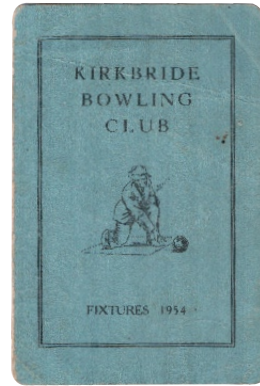


Tennis court pavilion, Port Carlisle

“By 1932 both the docks were finished and the railway was finished [at Port Carlisle]. But the railway lived on, on the tennis court because one of the carriages was made into the tennis court pavilion. And as children we thought that was great ‘cos there was all these doors to open and one door had been made into a kitchen and one was a changing room and then there was a part where there was quite a long way and a trestle table down the middle where you could have your tea at the tennis court opening or if there was a tennis match... Also at the tennis court, there was an old bus that had travelled from Carlisle to Bowness dozens of times and it was the type that the driver sat out in front and they used that as a gents’ changing room... Sadly, the tennis court hasn’t any club house at all now.”
(Daphne Hogg)

“In the late ‘70s, I joined the bowling club after also playing tennis... In the early ‘90s when the green opened and after my father was match secretary... every January we used to do the fixtures for the coming season. I joined in 1976 and was lady president in 1983. I have been to the national final at Leamington Spa, four times in the rinks... Over the years I have spent many happy hours playing or watching bowls... We wore county hats and everything was in white and we had a blazer and I remember at Leamington, one of our team had to have her skirt measured. In those days the skirts from the ground to the hem of the skirt had to be measured.” *(Linda Armstrong)*

“The first game I played [bowling] was with Linda’s dad and I played at Abbeytown pub. They were short of a team one night so... I had one game... I went on to be the president of the club and I was quite successful at bowling... Bowling is a sport for all ages. You



get some... good crack about what’s going on and... the young ones are as interested as the old ones... In fact they’re maybe... more keener than the old. I’ve found out there’s a lot of good young bowlers about now. They used to class it as an old man’s game. It’s no longer an old man’s game.” *(John Armstrong)*

“Cricket, aye... On the marsh down at Kirkbride eh, yes... And I remember one match, it was the first match of the season, we played at Rockcliffe and we had a brand new cricket ball and we used to play with these old balls that were soft... Well, I used to think of myself as a fast bowler in them days. I was maybe fifteen or sixteen, eh and I bowled their first man out, first ball. I bowled him clean out like, eh and then... the lad’s come in and I hit him on the head with



Ladies bowling, Kirkbride



Football team, Bowness

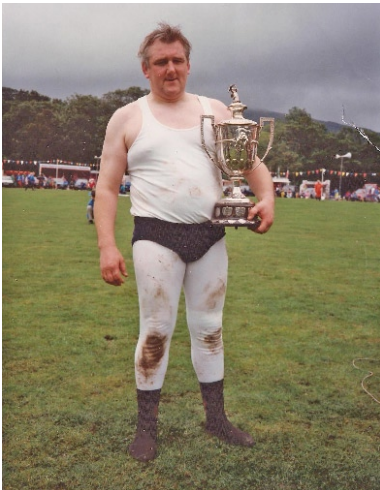
the ball, like. He ducked into it, eh so it went off, aye and Alan Coulthard... he used to be wicket keeper, eh. The next boy missed it and it hit him on the nose and there was blood everywhere, so he went off... Well, there wasn't any helmets or hats in them days like... We still lost the game, I remember that and John, Jobbie Clarke, was captain and he took us off and said I was too dangerous to bowl and I wasn't very pleased about that, eh.”
(Hubert Wilson)

“Well, they were all farm lads, they were tough competitions [football]. Villages used to have them, Kirkbride used to have them, Corby, Mungrisdale, Kirkoswald, used to go to all those, used to get a medal if you won, cup or something.

Dynamos did quite well... I played at Gamblesby... We played six-a-side over there, the lads that I worked with... Aye, I'll always remember I was standing waiting... and the referee says to me, 'shout for the ball'... I suppose I was nervous playing with this fella refereeing. Played at Silloth, won a few cups there at carnival day, used to win about two a year... used to go down on't train, one and six return, and used to call in the pub for a drink before we'd catch half past ten train back at night. This time we weren't quite there... The train left us so I had to get a bus to Abbeystown and then hire a taxi to come to Kirkbride and then had to bike home to Biglands!“
(Percy Bowman)

“It used to be held down on the marsh beside the river [school sports] and Pat Gates and me, we always did the three-legged race and we always won it ‘cos I think Pat had long legs and I think she pulled me along all the way with my little short legs and we always won that but I think that was the only thing I did take part in down there.”
(Margaret Robinson)

“I was nineteen when I started ‘cos I always remember I was too old to wrestle with the boys so was straight in with the men like... We used to travel all over the spot, down to Kendal, over to the North East and that. I think it was May bank holiday in 1979 and I got a win at a place called



Alf Harrington, fourth time all weights World Championship win, Ambleside Sports, 1993 (Linda Scott)



Hound Trailing

Tramwell and that was out of the blue completely... and then a couple of months later I won the heavyweight championship at Cleator Moor... and I brought this great big cup home... to Millrigg, aye... For winning I got £8 and the lad that I beat in the final had travelled from Morpeth and he got £4 for coming second... I started to get wins at the likes of Grasmere... In 1982 I was joint winner of the heavyweight section. They used to keep tally of your wins and me and another lad had same numbers of wins so we got a trophy for most wins in the season in the heavyweights and then I got it on my own for the next fifteen year after that so it just sort of blossomed, yeah.”
(Alf Harrington)

“Well, I started in 1955. We were at a show at Lorton and... we were watching the hounds and we got interested from there. A couple of years later we got an old dog called Lord Long from Aspatria... we got a pup from



Winning hound, Ronan, on the left with runners-up, 1964

Meg... Smithson, from a place at Heskett Newmarket... and it ran in 1958 as a pup... After that we seemed to get a string of good hounds... We were very lucky for years, we won a lot of trails... There was a lot of good finishers. And a lot of bad ones... Well, Hunters Pride was my best and it never won championship, but it won... aye, it won in every area as a pup. It won Grasmere Sports. It won Kendal Show. It won about five shows. It won Loweswater Show, Ennerdale Show, Cockermouth Show and it was second in Ambleside Sports, second at Skelton Show... Yes, it was really good.” (*Harry Reay*)

“Helm Lass [was my first dog] and got it off Bill Cotton...

in '57... [The trails] used to be on Kirkbride Marsh and go round... and across to Anthorn aside the club... and they'd finish down, from club, right down to Water Bridge... I've counted up over 90 people in the Kirkbride area had dogs and went to trails like... Me dad went with Bobby Little to Grasmere to get a pup... And that's how I started... We just didn't know owt else in life really... It does take your life over... It's gone for about 60 year... You can't go on holiday and leave them. You've got to stay with them... You've got to do it for seven days a week... There was no tellies or anything much... It was a different way of life...” (*Alan Blacklock*)

GROUPS & SOCIETIES

Joining a group, a society or a club was often a great way for people to get together, participate in activities and develop a sense of belonging.

For young people, the groups were usually segregated; girls having their groups and the boys having theirs. Some were church based organisations, working to support girls and young women. There was a wide range of activities held, both indoors and outdoors, to help develop skills and independence.



Girls Friendly Society badge

“Sylvia Thompson, Miss Thompson... used to run the, what was called the Girls Friendly Society and she organised all sorts of things for us... We used to put plays on in the hall, Christmas especially. She had a Christmas party for us, she organised trips in the summer... She did a lot more than at the time we appreciated, I think, really. She took us climbing. We went up Helvellyn and Sty Head Pass with her... She was quite, I suppose, foolhardy in a way, taking all these young children in just their summer dresses and their sandals up these places but we all got back safely...”
(Evelyn Aston)

“There was a group for girls and it was connected to the church, the Girls’ Friendly Society [GFS], and we were told that GFS stood for God first, friends second and self last.



Young Wives Group, Bowness

And Miss Thompson, who was organist at the church, she took that group and... I went to that. And that was about the only group there was... So I think by the time we were eight we would at least be enrolled and you had to make your promises in church... that we would do our best to behave and lead a Christian life... and we got a badge, a white badge with... GFS candidate... on the badge. And we were a candidate from we were eight until we would be maybe ten or eleven... We learnt to play together and do games and we learnt how to read the prayer book... We'd to go to church quite regularly..."
(Daphne Hogg)

"We learnt to knit [at GFS] and there was competitions once a year and there'd be different age groups... And when you got to eleven you were an apprentice and you were expected to do more perhaps in the life of the church and we used to collect and we used to give concerts and dance... By the time we were maybe sixteen, we were starting to get interested in the opposite sex and they used to come and help us dance... And once we all went to Greystoke although we were a bit older then and we won the competitions and, my goodness, we did think we were good and had done well... As you got older you were into the Townsend Fellowship which still



Drama group, Lindow Hall

continues today although sadly the GFS at Bowness and the Townsend Fellowship is finished..." (*Daphne Hogg*)

"I was in WI up at Rowkes, yes, aye... up at Holme St. Cuthberts... And, well, I was President for, well, it'll be nearly twenty year and nobody wanted the job and then... folk were getting older and it was sad like. It closed, it finished. But I'm in Westnewton now... Well, we used to do bits of concerts when we asked other institutes and that, eh, and speakers. You used to get a lot of interesting speakers you know... It was quite good but I haven't... committed myself to owt now. I'm just there because they think you, you've done your bit, aye."
(*Margaret Thompson*)

"...after I left school I just came home, as I think most of the farmers' daughters did then... and helped on the farm and then got involved in Young Farmers' clubs... Field days, all the girls just did the industrial things then; handicrafts and cookery and all sorts of things... drama, yeah. We won the drama competition one year... I played hockey for Wigton Ladies... I was quite interested in sport and various things... [I baked] sandwich cakes and rock buns and teacakes and bread, anything... just what was on the schedule... I was a member at Kirkbride [WI]... and there were a lot of young ones there. And it was a really big, big WI but there's not as many now. But Bowness WI now, it's the oldest in the county... Started in 1919,



Townsend Fellowship badge

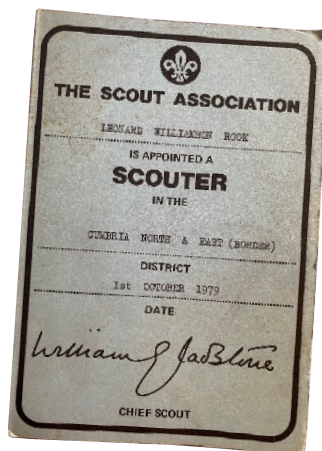
Bowness... but we're struggling now for to keep going. We don't seem to get any younger ones... But we did, we've had some good entertainments and good things, yeah..." (Margaret Wills)

"...when I was about ten, Jean Poachin... started Guides in Burgh. And this was absolutely marvellous for me. And... once a month we had to get in our Guide uniforms and march to church along with the Home Guard. It must have been quite... comical... Guides was great fun. We got up to all sorts of things... We used to do and all sorts of badges we had to work for and making promises and... the commissioner came and you were made a Guide... You'd salute the flag and make your promise... But you had to keep your badge polished and you had to be fairly smart and even at wartime you could get hold of a uniform and we went camping at... Brampton and the lakes, near Watermillock and I remember going to the Isle of Man later on and to Cornwall... I learnt an awful lot at Guides. It was quite different... just a lot of girls together, doing a

bit more adventurous things than you could think of on our own." (Margaret Parkinson)

"...1962, let's think... When I were twelve year old, I was the biggest at the boys club and... well, that was at the vicarage at Bowness... and we used to play table tennis, darts and that like. Used to go on a bike in those days like, one bus a week on a Saturday morning..." (Ian Reay)

"The first time other than school trips that we really got anywhere was when we started going to the boy scouts or girl guides or whatever. I was in a group of four of us... and the parents would take us down on Friday nights to Wigton Road and the scout troop there was the 18th Carlisle Wigton Road troop and it was wonderful. We were separated from the girls



Scouting certificate



Local bus trip out

obviously... and we'd just be allowed to, in a structured way, burn off some energy... On occasion we'd be allowed out; we'd go for walks... We even went on proper sponsored walks. We did a forty mile walk on one occasion. We went camping... I was always in good stead when we went out camping because I was used to chopping things. I was used at an early age to chopping kindling and getting



firewood and things like that, so I was handy to have in any particular team because I could work away with an axe or a penknife and things like that... It was really good." (Stephen Sowerby)

SOCIALISING

Socialising in rural communities on the Solway was very much locally based. Village halls, clubs, pubs and reading rooms were often the hub of the community and provided a meeting place for activities and entertainment. Dancing, darts and dominoes were among popular pastimes.

There were annual carnivals and events, providing opportunities to bring a village or community together. Occasionally bigger events were organised such as Air or Navy Days, as they were known, that attracted not just locals but people from further afield.



David Hunter, playing the accordion, Bowness-on-Solway

“There was dances in the village hall[s] which my mother used to let me go to when I was very young and I thought she was being really kind but I worked out later in life that it was because my sister had to take me and she had to bring me home... That was me mam’s way of getting my sister back home... We used to go to the village halls for the dances and my sisters went there and there was a band called the Hometowners band and my sister quite liked the accordion, so she bought herself an accordion to play and one of the men in the band was called Arthur Ridley and he came to teach her how to play it and eventually they got married.”
(Betty Humes)



Night out in the local pub

“Aye, Glasson had a reading room which the villagers used to go and play billiards and darts and there was some of them quite good billiard players and after the war there were all a bit of a show between different villages you see. They used to all make... billiard nights where Bowness would come and Port Carlisle would come and they brought Burgh sometimes... And after the war there was a function there when the prisoners of war come back and that was a special do and I can remember them. One of the games was eating jelly with knitting needles. True. And Jimmy Bryson was one of them that come back at the time.”
(David Humes)

“My father worked for the State Management Scheme and he was put into The Highland Laddie to manage the pub and we came to Glasson in 1956... There was no bar like there is today, everything was served from a tap room... but we also had a cellar which was below high water mark... so every time there was high tides the cellar flooded. In the middle of the cellar there was a big sort of well and the pump... worked... on the pressure of the water that got to a certain depth. The only trouble was it was very unreliable and you had to go and give it a kick every now and again. My father had to paddle once in about four foot of water on a winter's night to get it going...” *(Sandra Newton)*

“Well, outside [the Packhorse Inn, Burgh] it was like cobbled yard... there was buildings all the way along the side, you know, and there was a big garden and there was... the kitchen was very tiny and of course it was Calor gas then and the big Belfast sink... There was two [rooms to drink] because the big, the living room... was quite long... and... there was a door and you could go through that door to get through to the next room. So obviously that was used... Well, I presume it was mainly men... they could play dominos in one bit and sumat in the next bit and that...” (*Jean I. Graham*)

“[Lowther Arms]... there was no pumps or anything like that, you just drew from the barrel, just poured from the barrel and you used to go up and down with a glass to get a bit top on. They didn’t always manage to get a top on. Not many people drank the draught beer, they always drank bottled; Carlisle Brown... The Drovers... we’d go there and play darts... once I’d come out of badminton... We’d all be there on a Saturday night playing darts, aye, that was the Saturday night occupation... There were some good nights in there, in The Drovers.” (*Frederick McDonald*)

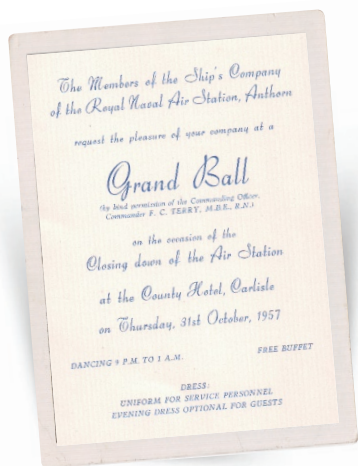
“Lowther House in Drumburgh... we knew when we bought the property that it had once been known as The Lowther Castle Inn... It

was built in 1813 and... it was closed as an inn... in 1917 as part of the beginnings of the State Management scheme... We started removing... paint on the sandstone and to our amazement... we uncovered... some painted wording over the semi arch front door... The words that gradually emerged were, ‘Spirituous Liquors’ and above the... main front door where it says, ‘Spirituous Liquors’, there is on the keystone, WW is chiselled into the stonework with the date 1813... A Mr W... Woods name appeared from under the old paint and he proclaimed from the cottage doorway that he was a purveyor of fine coffees, teas, tobacco and snuff... This was the first direct... evidence that it had functioned... as both... an inn and a shop.” (*Stephen Mitchelhill*)

“Anthorn was a real busy place with the navy. We had nicknames



Outside the Drovers Rest, Monkhill



for things. There was the duck. And this was an amphibious vehicle that used to go along the Wampool. I used to enjoy seeing that, the Queen Mary that transported aircraft parts to places and a tilley. A tilley was a dormobile and that transported the navy from the airfield to the camps. There was two camps, Camp One and Camp Two... The navy included all us local children at the Christmas party

held in the picture house called the Antheum. It was absolutely wonderful and the firework display, well, you couldn't believe the size of the Catherine wheels and such like. And, also, the Navy Day Blair and Palmer buses ran from morning 'til night transporting people. It was a big event." (Kathleen Glendinning)

"When HMS Nuthatch [Anthorn] was in control it was a very vibrant community. Each year on bonfire night they had an amazing display of fireworks and had a huge bonfire which all the community could enjoy. They also had beautiful floral displays and the village always looked neat and colourful... Anthorn was a magnet for many people when an air show was held every year and once the 'new road' was completed, the traffic increased with many people enjoying the scenic route along the shoreline with views of the Lakeland hills." (Freda Feasby)



Social event Camp One, Anthorn

REMEMBERING THE SOLWAY

VOLUME 2

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*Some of the interviewees are no longer with us but they live on
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**Cumberland
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Every effort has been made to confirm ownership of the photographs used.

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