

LAKELAND SPORT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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by Ian Ward.

Ian Ward

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Abstract

There were two main threads in the development of Lakeland sport in the nineteenth century. The first was the growth of rustic sports into a larger rural pattern, and including the sports which remained unique to Lakeland - the hound trailing and the fox hunting on foot. There were also regattas on a number of the lakes, frequently part of larger sporting ventures. There were also those sports which spread from the Lake District such as the Cumberland and Westmorland style of wrestling which was practiced in a number of major cities in Great Britain and eventually in New Zealand. Whilst this sport eventually faded in areas away from the Lake District there were certain athletic events, such as pole vaulting and hurdling, which might well have started in the Lake District before spreading to much of the rest of the world.

The second main thread in the development was resultant from improved communication and in particular from the coming of the railways. The gentry had brought cricket to the area during the third decade of the century, and this was to spread both geographically and socially. Then came football which increasingly took root with the growing urbanisation of the peripheral towns of the area. The railways also brought middle-class residents and an increasing number of holiday visitors. Some walked, some climbed and many were catered for in an increasing hotel industry which influenced such sports as tennis and the pattern of the regattas. Many visitors came to watch Grasmere sports, a meeting which became eminently fashionable and eventually a critical point of conflict in the national arguments over amateurism and professionalism.

It is suggested that the English Lake District contributed considerably to the development of certain aspects of English sport, particularly during the first half of the nineteenth century. Part of the contribution had national and international influences, but there were also those sports which remain indigenous to the Lake District.

CONTENTS

Page	
1	Chapter 1 Organisation, Definitions and Constraints.
15	Chapter 2 The Economic and Social Background in 1800.
29	Chapter 3 The Early Sporting Scene
30	(a) Rustic Sports
55	(b) Sports for the Gentry
68	(c) Cricket : the early days
74	(d) Sports and Regattas, 1800 - 1840
107	Chapter 4 1840 - a Widening World
115	(a) 1840 - 1870 : Sport for the Gentry?
125	(b) And Beyond the Gentry
133	(c) Cricket and Bowls
157	(d) Sports and Regattas
196	Chapter 5 The Inter-Play between National and Local Influences
210	Chapter 6 Continuing Themes, and the Sophistication of Change
211	(a) Shooting, Coursing, Hunting and Racing.
219	(b) Sports and Regattas
255	(c) Cricket for All? And some other Sports
282	(d) Football and Hockey
303	Chapter 7 Some Reflections and Conclusions
305	(a) The Volunteer Movement
316	(b) The Schools
327	(c) Water and Ice
346	(d) Climbing and Rambling
353	(e) 1900 - A Changing Scene
357	Suggestions for further work
358	Appendices (a) Agricultural Wages
359	(b) Regattas and Sports - themes with approximate dates.
360	Bibliography.

Illustrations

Page	
	Map: The Lake District and its Environs
86	Winandermere Regatta, 1810
87	Ferry House Regatta, c. 1818
108	Map: The Coming of the Railways
114	Kendal Races
137	Cricket at Edenside
162	Bridkyrke Fair, 1845
230	Grasmere Sports, 1878
230	Grasmere Sports, c. 1890
315	Cock pit, Heversham Grammar School old site
343	Sport on Ice

SOURCES

The major primary sources were the following newspapers:

Carlisle Journal	published, with one brief change of title, throughout the nineteenth century.
Cumberland Paquet	published throughout the century. Copies of these newspapers were checked at the Records Office for Cumbria, the Castle, Carlisle.
Westmorland Advertiser and Kendal Chronicle	published during the period 1811 to 1834, and available in the Kendal public library.
Kendal Mercury and Northern Advertiser	published from 1841 until 1880 when the title was changed to Kendal Mercury and Times.
Westmorland Gazette and Kendal Advertiser	this was first published in 1818 and thereafter throughout the century, although the title was eventually reduced to Westmorland Gazette. Copies of these newspapers were checked in the offices of the Westmorland Gazette.
Soulby's Ulverston Advertiser	this eventually became the Ulverston Mirror and Furness Reflector. Copies of these papers for the period 1848 - 1880 were checked in the Furness collection of the Barrow-in-Furness public library.
Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle	This eventually become Sporting Life in 1886. Copies were checked in the Colindale library of the British Museum.

Some 18,000 newspapers were read and almost 3,000 references taken.

Some information came in the form of personal communications from individuals with strong Lakeland connections and from the secretaries of a number of Lakeland sports societies and clubs, although very few club minutes from the nineteenth century were available.

Other sources checked with regard to the development of sport were a number of local sports histories, the majority of which represented single sports in a particular area: and a number of local histories which included sport as part of a much wider scene.

The general social and economic background of the Lake District was noted from a number of sources, the major of which were

Bouch, G.M.L. and Jones, J.P. A short economic and social history of the Lake Counties, 1500 - 1830. Manchester U.P. 1961.

Hughes, E. North Country Life in the Nineteenth Century. Oxford U.P., 1965.

Marshall, J.D. and Walton, J.K. The Lake Counties from 1830 to the mid-twentieth century. Manchester U.P. 1981.

Marshall, J.D. and Davies-Shiel, M. The Lake District at Work. David and Charles, 1971.

Rollinson, W. A history of man in the Lake District. J.M. Dent and Sons, 1967.

Rollinson, W. Life and Tradition in the Lake District. J.M. Dent and Sons, 1974.

Scott, D. Bygone Cumberland and Westmorland. William Andrews and Co., 1908.

Wilson, J. (ed.) The Victoria History of the County of Cumberland. Archibald Constable and Co., 1905.

The general background to sport in the nineteenth century was noted from a range of books dealing with sports history (often related to particular sports) and from numerous books in

The Badminton Series Longmans Green & Co., published
between 1887 and 1894 under a
number of different titles.

Information obtained from the governing bodies of sport was provided by only two governing bodies of sport.

The major sources for the general background to nineteenth century recreation were:

Bailey, P. Leisure and Class in Victorian England. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.

Malcolmson, W. Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700 - 1850, Cambridge U.P., 1973.

The major sources for the general background to nineteenth century society were:

Kitson-Clark, G. The Making of Victorian England, Methuen, 1962.

Petrie, Sir C. The Victorians, Billing and Sons Ltd., 1960.

Reader, W.J. Life in Victorian England, B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1963.

Ryder, J. and Silver, H. Modern English Society. Methuen and Co., 1970.

Abbreviations

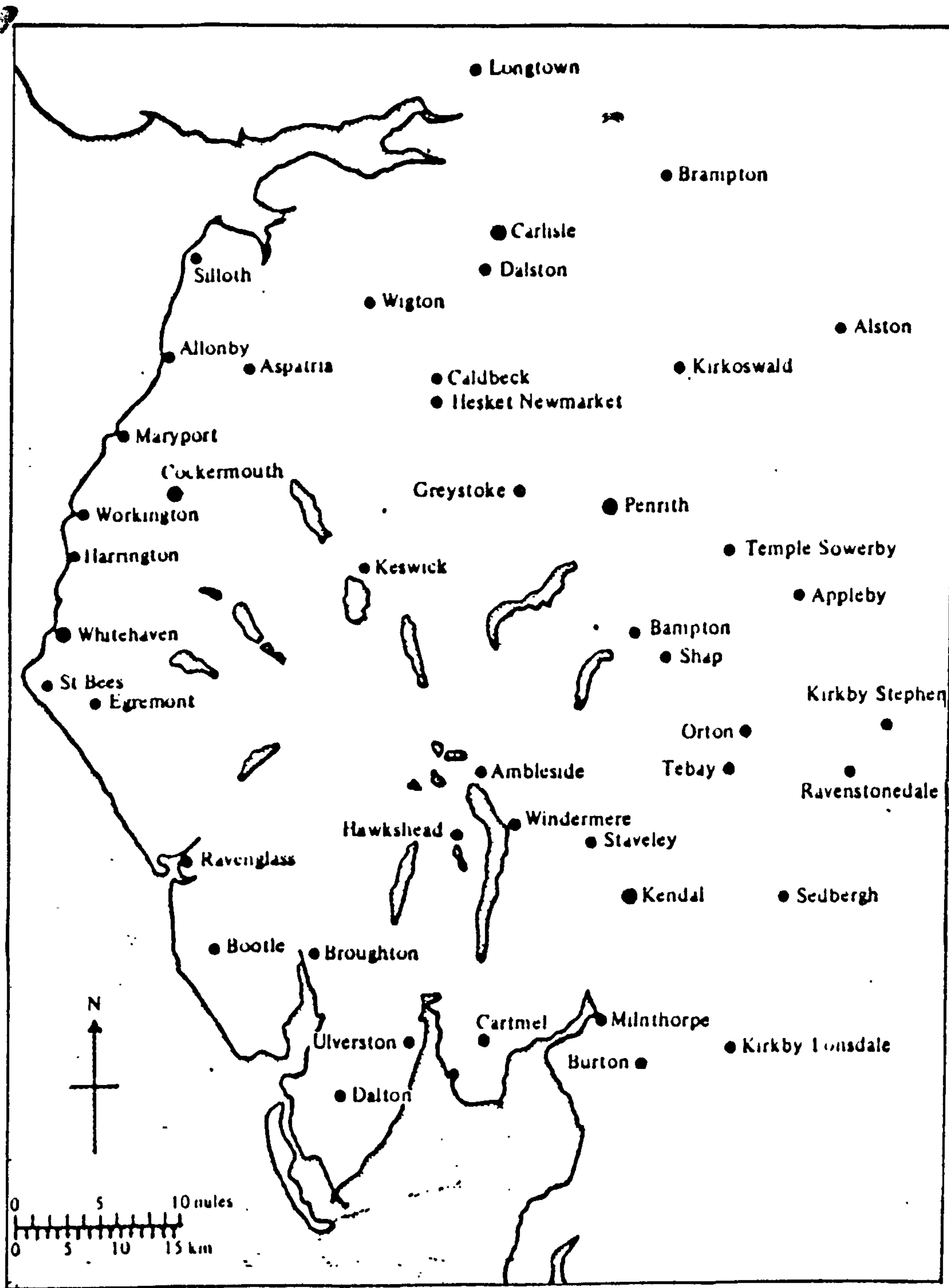
BL	Bell's Life
CJ	Carlisle Journal
CP	Cumberland Paquet
KWC	Kendal Weekly Courant
KM and NA	Kendal Mercury and Northern Advertiser
KM and T	Kendal Mercury and Times
PO	Penrith Observer
SUA	Soulby's Ulverston Advertiser
UM	Ulverston Mirror
WA and KC	Westmorland Advertiser and Kendal Chronicle
WG	Westmorland Gazette
WG and KA	Westmorland Gazette and Kendal Advertiser.

References

Of the Latin terminology, 'Ibid' is used, meaning "In the same passage": the terms loc. cit. and op. cit. are not used. Where there is reference to a particular piece of work, i.e.

Hughes, E. North Country Life in the Nineteenth Century,
Oxford U.P., 1965, p. 42

then a later reference to the same book is listed as:



The Lake District and its Environs

Chapter 1

Organisation, Definitions and Constraints

Organisation

The development of sport is viewed in relation to contemporary society. From the latter part of the eighteenth century until the end of the nineteenth century there were, for many individuals, considerable changes in patterns of life. There were a number of reasons for these changes, but two inter-related factors were dominant. The first was that of communication, with the improvement of the roads, the coming of the canals and then the railways: the second was the Industrial Revolution which was dependent upon and partly responsible for the improved communication: and which changed England to being primarily industrial rather than agricultural in terms of economy. This brought an increasing fluidity to society with a middle class becoming established in what had previously been almost a dichotomous social situation of peasants and gentry. The improved communication between London and the distant rural communities would inevitably have some effect, and part of this was in the field of sport. The fashions of the gentry would be copied by the middle classes when opportunity arose, and these would often include participation in particular sports. However the gentry would see rustic sports and at times take them to London where regional sports would be formalised under particular sets of rules and then often spread to other parts of the country to be pursued at rural and urban levels by many who had seen the sport brought to their area by the gentry. Cricket being taken to London and then being spread would be one example of this, and part of Lakeland's athletics might well prove to be another. The starting point for this study, therefore, is a brief consideration of English society at the beginning of the nineteenth century, followed by a consideration of Lakeland society and the pattern of

sport within that society.

It seems advantageous to try to work within approximate time scales. Whilst these cannot be precise - because changes occurred slowly in the more isolated communities - three major periods can be identified. The period 1800 - 1840 represented the essence of the old Lakeland, but one in which the rustic sports grew in some ways into being part of a larger scene whilst some occasions (such as the brideswains) faded completely. This was a period in which the gentry introduced cricket and the peasants did not yet play cricket - the peasants participated in their athletics and wrestling almost (but not quite) to the exclusion of the gentry: but it was also a period in which a small number of the gentry began to support and attend some of those activities which had previously almost been the prerogative of the farming communities.

The period 1840 - 1870 saw the coming of the railways with subsequent increases in attendance at many of the sports meetings, including those individuals who at times travelled from as far as London to watch the major contests in Cumberland and Westmorland style wrestling. An increasing number of people came to see the beauty of the Lake District, and many of the London gentry came to spend part of their summer at various halls owned by the local gentry. Often they played cricket as part of the hall team, and often they would watch sports meetings. In addition there was the spread of cricket downwards through society with a number of the villages forming their own teams. The local gentry were copied in another way, with their hare coursing being copied by the rabbit coursing of some members of the lower classes. It was probably during this period

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that the Cumberland and Westmorland style of wrestling was at its peak and when hound trailing and fox-hunting became increasingly established.

The final thirty years of the century saw an increasing number of tourists coming to the Lake District and more of the middle class industrialists coming to Windermere and its environs in order to establish residences. As the number of 'offcomers' (a Lakeland word meaning 'people not born in the area') increased, so there was a change in the pattern of the regattas. The Windermere Yacht Club was granted the title 'Royal' and became extremely fashionable, and a number of other regattas came to increasingly cater for the tourists. An industry, based on the hotel trade, was growing. The guides (generally shepherds) led tourists walking in the hills, and then climbing grew as a middle-class sport. A number of the hotels established tennis tournaments. Grasmere Sports became the height of the summer sporting season, a meeting point for local people and for the local gentry and their guests. With the growth of amateurism Grasmere Sports became a battle ground in the amateur/professional conflict, with the governing bodies of sport endeavouring to control athletics throughout the country. During this period, too, cricket continued to expand. The period 1870 saw the late but massive arrival of football, firstly established as rugby with the Association game to follow. With these team games came working class teams, crowds and eventually professionalism. The rugby code split into Rugby Union and Northern Union, which eventually came to be known as Rugby League. During this period, too, there was a considerable increase in the sport of bowls. Tennis clubs were established as was hockey and golf, reflecting an interesting social cleavage which had almost completely been bridged in the case of cricket and football.

The final section of the study relates to particular reflections with certain themes being examined separate from the main body of work. The schools were of interest because they both reflected the immediate society to which they belonged and also came in some measure to introduce new sports to the area as a probable result of Public School influences. Rugby Football is a clear example of this.

The essence of Lake District sport lies within the lakes and the mountains with their limitations on life styles and their possibilities for sport. The use of the lakes for regattas is noted within the temporal sequence of the study. However the occasional bitterly cold winters presented an extremely interesting picture of the changing social participation in sport with regard to sport on ice. In 1838 it was the gentry who skated, whereas by 1895 skaters came to Windermere in their thousands. The years 1879 - 1881 also saw very cold winters, and the development of sport on ice during the period 1838 - 1895 presents a picture of change which is often in part concealed when change is gradual. Additionally, the mountains of the Lake District would seem to be critical with regard to the development of climbing in Britain. Guide books to the Lake District were written towards the end of the eighteenth century, and a small number of tourists were already coming to the Lake District early in the nineteenth century. There were those who walked, and there was the extremely influential group within the Wordsworths' circle. Then came the summer campers and the climbers, and a new sport was born.

The role of the Volunteer Movement in the development of sport in Britain has received little attention. The contribution of this Movement is dealt with at some length, for it is deemed to be of

considerable importance. The Volunteer Movement was inaugurated in 1859 for military defence - with much of the Army away from Britain in the developing Empire, there was the threat from France and the Volunteer Movement was formed in order to deal with this threat. The social and sporting significance was that the Movement represented a meeting point between the middle class and the artisans and which soon came to promote a number of social events. It provided an organisational basis which was able to provide a lead which had previously been essentially the prerogative of the gentry.

The conclusion of the study represents a brief attempt to summarise the considerable developments in Lakeland sports during the nineteenth century, and to analyse the reasons for those developments. There was the hound trailing and the fox hunting on foot which seemed to have remained indigenous to Lakeland and the Cumberland and Westmorland style wrestling which spread but died when away from the Lake District. There were those athletic events which might have spread from the Penrith-Ullswater area to the rest of the world: and there were the national sports which came to the Lake District with the improvements in nineteenth century transport. The pattern at the end of the nineteenth century represented a balance of that which was local and that which was national and in some cases eventually to become international.

Definitions and Constraints

It is suggested that sport reflects the society of which it is part, and that as society changes so do patterns of leisure. Major changes in sport have come during the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries, for these have been periods of rapid change in English society. In England in 1800 the population was essentially rural. Pawson notes that

"Out of an agricultural economy, with small scale craft industries and a few basic services, emerged a new structure dominated by mass-industry and overseas trade."¹

Kitson-Clark commenting with regard to the middle of the nineteenth century states that

"Before 1851 it has been calculated that the majority of the population, even of England, lived in what could be called rural conditions, and the census of 1851 shows that even then one of the largest single sections of the working population was the agricultural labourers."²

The Industrial Revolution brought massive changes to much of English society and some changes to all sections of society. For many people there was the move from rural to urban society with inevitable social upheavals. There was the accompanying improvement in systems of transport to support these industrial changes, with economic developments serving to accelerate the possibility of social mobility. There came an emergent middle-class and there came a new class of industrialists with some of the Lancashire industrialists setting up homes in the Lake District. Their presence would inevitably have some slight influence upon the Lakeland farming community who would observe parts of a pattern of life previously unknown to them. And coincidental with the Industrial Revolution was the expansion of the

¹Pawson, E. The Early Industrial Revolution. Batsford, London, 1979, p. 13.

²Kitson-Clark, G. The Making of Victorian England, Methuen, 1962, p. 69.

British Empire with booming trade, increasing travel and the growth of social gatherings and cultural activities. Sport mirrored the enthusiasm of the age and developed accordingly. Whilst the Lake District possessed an established pattern of sport during the later years of the eighteenth century, this grew and further developed during the early part of the nineteenth century in a form which was peculiarly suited to the gatherings and interests of a farming community. Then came the national fashions from London and whilst these barely impinged upon the indigenous sports they did produce a parallel and often inter-twining sporting culture. The main threads of the study, therefore, are

- (1) The development and consolidation of sports peculiar to the Lake District.
- (2) The addition of national sports, coupled with a changing social scene and itself resultant from communication.

The study is not seen to be comparative except in a very minor sense, with some note being taken of developments in London, of the Scottish Highland Games and of the Potteries and Worcestershire.

The Concept of 'Sport'

The semantic of defining the word 'sport' represents a considerable exercise in its own right and is not pursued at length in this study. Loy tells us that

"Sport is a highly ambiguous term having different meanings for various people."¹

and it is probable that the Lakeland fell farmer of 1800 would be unlikely to give any thought to the definition of sport. To him it would probably be, quite simply, 'play', a proving point for skill and strength set within the scene of a day of rural festivities.

Huizinga starts from the basis of 'play' which he describes as

"...a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' as being 'not serious' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly."²

Loy lists what he considers to be the elements included in the concept of sport: he lists playfulness and separateness, suggesting that play has spatial and temporal limitations. He also lists freedom (i.e. play as a voluntary activity) and suggests that within the play concept sport is uncertain, unproductive, governed by rules, is competitive and involves such qualities as skill, strategy, change and physical prowess. He saw sport as an institutional game, as a social situation and as a social institution.³ An all-embracing definition would seem to be almost impossible. 'Sport' presents an unusual facet of human activity in that the rules often create particular problems, for

"The attitude of the games player must be an element in games playing because there has to be an explanation of

¹Loy, J.W., *The Nature of Sport: a definitional effort.* Quest. Monograph X, Spring 1968.

²Huizinga, J., *Homo Ludens - a study of the play element in culture.* Beacon Press, 1955, p. 13.

³Loy, J.W., 1968.

that curious state of affairs wherein one adopts rules which require him to employ worse rather than better means for reaching an end."¹

Writers in the field of sport have generally either ignored any attempts to define 'sport' or have alternatively done as Loy did - to suggest the constituent elements and acknowledge the definitional problems without attempting to arrive at a definition. However Coackley has made a relatively recent attempt to define the term, stating that

"Sport is an institutionalised competitive activity that involves vigorous physical exertion or the use of relatively complex skills by individuals whose participation is motivated by a combination of the intrinsic satisfaction associated with the activity itself and the external rewards earned through participation."²

This appears to be a brave but rather clumsy attempt to define the word 'sport', and seems to pose as many questions as it purports to answer. In the present study it would seem impudent to suggest a precise definition, and no attempt is made to do so. The assumption is made that the word 'sport', at a basic level, can be readily conceptualised. The essence is that sport is part of a social situation, and that "Sport permeates any number of levels of contemporary society."³ It is suggested here that sport increasingly permeated parts of English life during the nineteenth century, and it

¹Suits, B. and Osterhuddt, R.G. The Elements of Sport : in The Philosophy of Sport. Charles C. Thomas, 1973, p. 53.

²Coakey, C.J. Sport in Society - issues and controversies. C.V. Mosby Co., 1978, p. 12.

³Boyle, R.H. Sport - a mirror of American life. Little Brown, 1963, p. 3.

is the purpose of this study to examine its role in Lakeland society during those years. If there is a rationale for the study it can be exemplified by marginally changing the phrasing of Anthony's approach to world sport:

"World sport is an integral part of world culture; its forms can serve to develop aesthetic tastes and can satisfy the need for artistic expression. It has its own history, its own science, its own cultural reservoir."¹

and the primary purpose of this study is to examine the cultural-historical element in sport in the Lake District during the nineteenth century. The essence of the study is seen in part to lie in those sports which were unique to the area - the traditional wrestling, the hound trailing and the fox-hunting on foot. To this must be added the sports and the regattas, initially of the Lake District but which changed in character with the growth of national influence. Additionally, too, were the blood sports which in part changed in type with the coming of those laws which eventually made such activities as bull and badger baiting, and eventually cock-fighting, illegal. To these themes must be added the later sports which came as part of the national scene, often being brought by the gentry but in many cases eventually spreading downwards through society.

There are deliberate omissions relating to the number of sports considered in this study, and this is because some sports but marginally affected the development of the main theme of Lakeland sport. Billiards and chess were but little reported, pugilism was virtually non-existent in the Lake District and baseball, which came

¹Anthony, D.W.J. A Strategy for British Sport. C. Hurst & Co., 1980, p. 5.

briefly to the port of Workington, is not considered. The shooting of game birds did occur to a very limited extent as did the shooting of deer, but these are deemed to be of minimal importance in the development of Lakeland sport as was fishing on the rivers Greta and Eden. Reports are scarce, and the overt impingement upon the sporting scene seems to have been surprisingly small, and are noted briefly. On the other hand the growth of tennis, golf, hockey and croquet towards the end of the century does seem to represent a significant social aspect, partly in relation to the emancipation of women and partly with regard to certain sports becoming more socially exclusive. These sports are included in this study, as is bowls which grew considerably towards the end of the century.

The Time Scale

Whilst the study is focussed upon the period 1800 - 1900 A.D., there is inevitable reference to that period at the end of the eighteenth century. Change was gradual and there was an established pattern of rural sports in existence in 1800 A.D. The Cumberland and Westmorland style of wrestling was already in evidence, foxes were hunted, cock-fighting was strong and there were often traditional sports in connection with the brideswains (bidden weddings). Whilst these latter two features eventually faded it would seem that they both exercised an influence upon what was to follow.

A division of the time scale places the century in three parts, noting that there was some overlap in developments in separate sports. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a dichotomy between the gentry and the peasants, with, in the main,

separate sports. The peasant sports were essentially rustic and local but with the improvement in the turnpike roads there came to be less insularity; and the roads brought the early tourists. These relatively early years of the Industrial Revolution also contributed to the decline of the cottage industries and the growth of the towns. By 1840 many of the sporting competitions were rural rather than rustic and competitors were travelling greater distances in order to compete, often for increased financial reward. The sports and regattas were becoming more sophisticated, and with the coming of the railways the township of Windermere was beginning to increasingly cater for both holidaymakers and richer residents. Significantly, too, the game of cricket was spreading both in terms of where it was played and in terms of social participation. By 1870 the game of football (i.e. Rugby football) had reached the Lake District and the concept of nationally organised sport was becoming to be of increasing importance. During the final 30 years of the century there came to be more sports teams and many of the sports ventures attracted a considerable number of spectators. Grasmere Sports became fashionable with the landed gentry taking their London guests to a number of the sports meetings. There came, too, the rift between amateurism and professionalism: and whilst this emanated from the national governing bodies of sport it also affected local sport. As sport spread downwards through society so social selectiveness became evident in other ways - through the amateur/professional conflict, and through the type of sports deemed to be exclusive to particular sections of society. The approximate time scales, with some limitations with regard to particular activities are:

1800 - 1840

1840 - 1870

1870 - 1900 A.D.

The Geographical Area

The study is primarily concerned with the central area of the Lake District, with the lakes and the fells. There was a unique character to some of the sports and they were products of a particular type of geographical area. However the study inevitably involves the market towns such as Appleby, Kendal and Penrith which served the rural area. There are a number of references to the city of Carlisle which represented a focal urban point for much of northern Lakeland. There were major racing and wrestling meetings in Carlisle and many of the sporting occasions were supported by the Earls of Lonsdale whose main residence was at Lowther Castle, near Penrith. The towns of Barrow, Whitehaven and Workington occur as aspects of Lakeland sports history to a certain extent inasmuch as they reflect the character of Lakeland sport. However it must be noted that Barrow-in-Furness was essentially a product of the Industrial Revolution, and that the towns of Whitehaven and Workington changed to a considerable extent with the development of industry. The study aims to be inclusive in terms of the essence of rural Lakeland sport rather than exclusive purely in terms of county boundaries.

Chapter 2

The Economical and Social Background in 1800

The Economic and Social Background in 1800 : England

Whilst the Lake District has a number of features which make it different from much of the remainder of England, with continuing effects upon its economy, it is inevitable that the area cannot be seen in isolation from the remainder of the country. And whilst it is probable that the inner area of the Lake District changed but slowly as a result of the Industrial Revolution there were obvious changes in the increasingly busy market towns such as Kendal with its supply of bobbins to the cotton industry, to the ports of Workington and Whitehaven with increasing imports from the U.S.A. and to the 'new' town of Barrow-in-Furness with its ship-building industry developed by the utilisation of Cort's puddling process for iron. The general changes in England are noted by Trevelyan:

"At the time of George III's accession (1760) there had been no canals: few hard roads; practically no cotton industry; no factory system; little smelting of iron by coal...and though there had been much enclosures of land, there had not yet been a wholesale sweeping of small farms into big."¹

The manufacturing demands of the Industrial Revolution brought about needs for improved transport with subsequent developments in the road systems of the country: then came the canals and the railways. There was, too, an increasing population with Ryder and Silver noting that

"Between 1801 and 1851 the population of Great Britain doubled, to attain nearly 21 million."²

¹ Trevelyan, G.M. British History of the Nineteenth Century and after (1782 - 1919). Longmans Green & Co., 1944, p. 2.

² Ryder, J. and Silver, H. Modern English Society, Methuen and Co., 1970, p. 24.

This increase continued throughout the century with the population of England and Wales being noted as being marginally under 23 million in 1871 and some 29 million by 1891.¹

The significance of the increasing population was in the growth of the industrial towns. Kendal, with some industry was still essentially a farming town, with its population growing from 7978 in 1801 to 10225², a growth of slightly more than 25%: during the same period the population of the industrial city of Manchester grew from 75,000 to 235,000, an increase of approximately 313%³. The effect upon the new industrial towns of England would be obvious. Whilst there might well be the possibility of greater social mobility, for many it would represent a move from a relatively settled rural community with its accepted social order to an initially alien urban world. There would also be an effect upon the village communities with the eventual decline of the rural crafts and rural self-sufficiency:

"The village was becoming more purely agricultural; it was ceasing to manufacture goods for the general market, and, moreover was manufacturing fewer goods for itself."⁴

The improvements of the road system inevitably improved the speed of communication and ease of transport. With this came greater

¹ Cook, C. and Keith, B. British Historical Facts, 1830 - 1890, MacMillan Press, 1975.

² Steel, J. Steel's Guide to the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway James Steel, Carlisle, 1846, p. 17.

³ Reports of the Censuses.

⁴ Trevelyan, G.M., 1944, p. 475.

contacts and travel in a wider world. For some this would be travel in an expanding Empire and many other countries and, via the Army and Navy, not just for the gentry. There was also increasing travel within the country with a number of the attractive country areas being visited by more and more members of the urban population. This would increasingly reduce the insularity of country areas and coupled with the spread of literacy and newspapers would slowly affect the rural areas of the country.

The Economic and Social Background in 1800 : the Lake District

The economic limitations of Lakeland and life in the eighteenth century were essentially related to geography and transport. Much of the land was poor and the farming economy was handicapped by the lack of transport. Even where produce could be grown, transport to the markets would be extremely difficult. The net result was that communities were poor and virtually self-sufficient. The essence of life was survival:

"It is, of course, too easy to over-romanticise the life of a Cumbrian dalesman a hundred years ago; we should not forget that 'making ends meet' was often a struggle, that life-expectancy was short, that standards of living and comfort were far from what we should now consider to be adequate."¹

and this pattern had been apparent for many years.

Few Lakelanders lived in the towns, and such towns as there

¹Rollinson, W. Life and Tradition in the Lake District.
J. M. Dent and Sons, 1974, p. 44.

were were extremely small by present standards. We are told that of the population of Westmorland

"...in 1811 nearly one-fifth of the population was to be found in Kendal, and over 29% in that town and three others, Appleby, Kirkby Stephen and Kirby Lonsdale."¹

Whilst life was certainly harsh in and around 1800, it had previously been even harder but in a different sense, for there had been threats of marauding raids by the Scots. Indeed the border raids gave rise to a type of yeoman farmer known as a 'Statesman'.

"The statesman emerged as a rural middle class in the late medieval period when they had the right at death to hand on their estates to their next of kin, although they themselves were tenants of a lord."²

McBride and Cooper explain the position of these yeomen farmers when they state that

(These) "...country farms were held on condition of providing men to take the field against the Scots for a limit of 40 days in the year."³

Rollinson dates this growth of the Statesmen as under

"...the second half of the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth century saw the emergence of a

¹Bouch, C.M.L. and Jones, G.P. A short economic and social history of the Lake Counties, 1500 - 1830. Manchester University Press, 1961, p. 271.

²Millward, R. and Robinson, A. The Lake District, Eyre & Spottiswood 1970, p. 180.

³McBride, M. and Cooper, H.A. Wild Lakeland. A. and G. Black, 1922, p. 83.

powerful rural middle class sometimes called the Statesmen, but more accurately termed yeomen farmers. Although tenants of the lords of the manor, these yeomen farmers because of their obligation to military service on the Border, enjoyed certain rights and privileges which, in effect, transferred their tenure into something akin to freehold."¹

In all probability the seventeenth century was the period of greatest ascendancy for the Statesmen. Their rights had been confirmed in the Court of the Star Chamber in 1625², but their obligations would be on the wane as times became more settled. Eventually, by 1800 their position had declined. It is probable that a number of features contributed to this decline: the coming of the turnpike roads, growing industry and growth in the size of many of the farms. Early mechanisation, too would result in less labour being required in certain situations, and there was at this time the temptation of the towns for the more adventurous souls. But they were certainly still noted in Losh's Diaries as late as 1820 when in recording a sale he noted that

"The lots being small, the bidders were mostly what are called 'Statesmen' (yeomen farmers possessed of small landed estates) and I was much amused with their uncouth appearances and the odd mixture of cunning and simplicity in their conduct and manners."³

Thereafter they seem to have faded from the scene as an indentifiable

¹Rollinson, W. A History of Westmorland and Cumberland Phillimore and Co., 1978, p. 58.

²Hughes, E. North Country Life in the Eighteenth Century. Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 383.

³Hughes, E. The Diaries and Correspondence of James Losh, Volume 1, 1811 - 1823, Surtees Society, 1956, p. 140.

group, although the term was in occasional use in the second half of the century. As the need went, so the status was forgotten: they were simply farmers, and the system of tenure seems to have fallen into abeyance.

The diet would be limited, with almost all (if not all) food being local. The farms brewed their own beer, and Rollinson tells us that

"Almost all Cumbrian farms brewed their own ale, and this was drunk with every meal."¹

Imported tea and coffee would be relatively expensive and probably beyond the reach of the lower paid members of the community. The tradition of beer brewing continued until well into the nineteenth century, fading with improved transport and eventually with the Licensing laws. But certainly in the middle of the century in the quiet Kentmere valley there were still two farms brewing their own beer. They were 'The George and Dragon' and the still indentifiable Lowbridge Inn, both of which ran sports meetings.

Little wheat can be grown in Lakeland and oats formed part of the staple diet. Firstly there was clap bread and secondly there was a dish known as 'hasty pudding' which was

"...a kind of porridge made with oatmeal and water and generally eaten with butter, milk and treacle. This formed the basis of both morning and evening meals."²

¹Rollinson, W. 1974, p. 51.

²Rollinson, W. 1974, p. 49.

Seasonally, there would be fruit but other than this the basic diet would be supplemented from the livestock. Losh's diary succinctly captures the pattern of life of a determined greyhound courser, describing him as

"...breakfasting upon cold 'Hasty Pudding', dining (if he dine at all) very frequently on cold bacon and drinking any kind of bad spirits which he might happen to meet with, getting drunk also regularly one market day at least every week".¹

Other than pigs there would, on the lower Lakeland areas, be cattle. On the fells there would be sheep. There would also be surreptitiously taken game birds, in spite of the punitive Game Laws. It must be remembered, too, that the Agricultural Revolution - like the Industrial Revolution - came late to the Lake District. The introduction of fodder crops came later, and at the turn of the nineteenth century the traditional curing of meat for winter use was an important part of the farming pattern. A meagre and limited diet, and it is no surprise that the final consumption of this fare came to be a cause for celebration, for

"Collop Monday was the Monday preceding Lent when the remaining 'collops' of salted and dried meat were eaten."²

Collop Monday was celebrated in some of the schools. It was a traditional day for cock-fighting, and when this sport had officially been banned, a day for a crude game of 'football'.

¹ Hughes, E. 1965, p. 383.

² Rollinson, W., 1974, p. 52.

As with food, so with clothes and footwear. Most parishes would have a cobbler, producing wooden soled clogs: indeed in the town of Kendal clog making was at one time a small industry. Clothes were initially made from the wool of the sheep, hence the 'hodden gray' mixture of wool so characteristic of Lakeland. Additionally there would be visits from itinerant tailors. Rollinson tells us that

"These craftsmen were usually paid 10d. to 1s. per day with board and lodgings, often remaining a week or more until the new wardrobe for the family had been completed."¹

The slow process of agricultural development and the coming of the turnpike roads seem to have brought about some advancement to the harsh life on the fell folks during the period around 1800. The various Acts relating to the Enclosure of land (1774, 1801, 1836, 1845) clearly facilitated the improvement of stock. As Riley states

"There was one sort of improvement that farmers did take seriously and that was the selective breeding of sheep and cattle."²

As stock improved so there was a growing interest in the different breeds of sheep and cattle. This was mainly responsible for the growth of the sheep fairs, not just to buy but also to exhibit and view. To the sheep fairs at times were added sports. Roberts relates these shows (not, it is suggested, with complete accuracy) to the exchanges of stray sheep telling us that

¹Rollinson, W. 1974, p. 56.

²Riley, P.W.J., *A Social and Economic History of England*, G. Bell and Sons, 1967, p. 114.

"Victorian shepherds met to exchange strayed sheep, and perhaps brought prize lambs and rams with them for neighbours to admire. An independent judge was imported, and a show was born."¹

An important economic development was the introduction of fodder crops, ensuring the availability of fresh meat throughout the year and, of course, improving sales possibilities. During the early part of the nineteenth century, too, there were improvements to the land. Tile drainage was of considerable help in land improvement, and lime was used to help improve the quality of an acidic soil. Then came nitrates, phosphates and guano to further improve the quality of the land. Additionally, too came considerable improvements in the previously primitive agricultural implements.

At the turn of the century various rural celebrations were related to the farming year. There were the sheep dippings, the sheep clippings and the shepherds meets in late Autumn to exchange the stray sheep. These were generally followed by celebrations. There were, too, the "Auld Wives' Hakes" so termed because the farmers' wives would gather to gossip - but the menfolk would not be too far distant, and would be enjoying themselves separate from the womenfolk. Occasionally, too, there were the 'Merry Neets', which term needs no explanation. Both of these were essentially winter celebrations, well removed from the important economic periods of the sheep farming cycle. At larger centres such as Dalton, Broughton-in-Furness, Kendal and Penrith the Whitsuntide and Martinmas hirings would take place as a focal point of the farming community. These were an economic ritual and necessity, but also provided for important social occasions.

¹Roberts, J. Border Wrestling A Shepherd's Sport, *Country Life*, 9.11.1967.

Both men and women were hired at these fairs by the farmers for a 6 months period. Those who were hired would live in at the farms and would receive a wage and board. There are still those alive who can recall being hired, a process they did not relish: "I felt that I was being bought like a bullock."¹ The hirings were the highspot of the farming year as far as social contacts were concerned. They were a meeting point for those who rarely met, a festive occasion. Garnett tells us that

"The holiday week in Kendal was described by an anonymous writer - 'In short, we have had a glorious week, the fair, the races, the wrestling, cockfighting, clubs, processions, singing, dancing and fiddling!'"²

Garnett also lists the half yearly wages at the hirings throughout much of the century, and these are listed in the Appendices. They form an interesting point of reference in relation to the value of prizes offered at the various sports meetings.

There also existed in Lakeland in 1800 a series of craft industries. The crafts were, in the main, connected with the woodlands of Southern Lakeland or with the woollen trade. There was the making of spelk or swill baskets. There was a cooperage, hoop making, bark peeling and the making of wooden soled clogs. There were the woodland industries of charcoal burning and gunpowder making. The woodland of south Lakeland produced wood which was suitable for the production of charcoal. As Rollinson states

"During the pre-industrial period the importance of charcoal to the iron industry cannot be overestimated, for this was

¹Johnson, J. *Personal communication.*

²Garnett, F.W. *Westmorland Agriculture, 1800 - 1900.* Titus Wilson, 1912, p 26.

the only effective fuel which could be used in the smelting process of the time."¹

A hard life, with the workers living in primitive huts during the burning period. The importance of the industry to the district is illustrated by the fact that 'Ashburner' is a local surname. The manufacture of gunpowder effectively commenced with the opening of the mill at Sedgewick in 1764. Again the wooded area of southern Lakeland was suited to this industry, for there was water power, there was coppice wood, silver birch and elder and the very important element of savin charcoal made from the juniper shrub.² Other industries included brush making and bobbin making.

In addition to the woodland crafts and industries of the southern area, there was also industry based upon wool. Sheep farming was the essence of Lakeland life.

"Environmental limitations to farming have always dominated the agricultural scene in Cumberland and Westmorland; the high rainfall and corresponding high incidence of cloud shortened the growing season and this, together with a thin, acid soil dictated that the central fells should be concerned with rearing sheep, and on the coarse, hairy wool from these stony windswept hillsides the prosperity of the Kendal woollen cloth industry was firmly based."³

Of course the woollen industry was firmly established in Lakeland well before the Industrial Revolution. In the seventeenth century Kendal was a busy and thriving woollen town, with pack-horse bales of cloth being taken as far as Bristol, London, Southampton and York.⁴ The

¹Rollinson, W., 1974, p. 120.

²Rollinson, W., 1978, p. 115.

³Rollinson, W., 1978, p. 52.

⁴Rollinson, W., 1978, p. 56.

spinning of wool was initially a home based industry. The rural spinning galleries produced the spun wool which was taken to Kendal, and thence to the larger population centres. Some of the older spinning galleries still exist, and one at Yew Tree Farm, High Yewdale, is a "...most impressive reminder of the Kendal woollen trade."¹ However this trade was to slowly die. Cotton was easily imported to the Cumberland coast, and Hughes reports a letter written by Richard Radcliffe (a draper in Cockermouth) who commented on Arkwright's invention

"This extension of Arkwright's patent to Cockermouth was not previously known. Six weeks later the local press reported a 'great fall' in wool prices which had ruined some farmers."²

This invention meant that, for a while, cotton would predominate and would adversely affect the woollen trade. Yet as the woollen trade declined in one sense, there were adaptations: the woollen carpet industry of Kendal grew, and bobbins were manufactured (using Lakeland wood and water power) for the growing cotton industry. Progress necessitated change and Lakeland adapted. This is perhaps typical of Lakeland industry. It was never a major part of the economy, but it was always present. The resultant effect was to ensure that, in general, change came to the Lake District less rapidly and with less immediate impact than was the case, for instance, in industrial areas of Lancashire. Because industry was never dominant there were not the massive social upheavals of many other areas. Lakeland maintained a basic economy which was dominated

¹ Marshall, J.D. and Davies-Shiel, M. The Lake District at Work. David and Charles, 1971, p. 15.

² Hughes, E., 1965, p. 357

by a basic agriculture. The development of sport must be seen against, in national terms, a background of relative stability.

Chapter 3

The Early Sporting Scene

Introduction: the social scene

Lakeland society during the closing years of the eighteenth century was, in the main, divided into the great landowners on the one hand and the occupiers of the small farms on the other hand, with this latter group being equated with many of the inhabitants of the villages and small towns. Amongst the great landowners would be the Earls of Lonsdale from Lowther Castle, the Earls of Carlisle from Brampton, the Howards of Greystoke Castle and the Cavendish family living at Holker Hall. This distinctive group of the aristocracy and gentry would live in a quite different social world from that of the working classes and would have their own separate life style. In many cases the sport would be part of the pattern of that social life-style with, for instance, race meetings lasting for up to four days and including the dinners and the balls for evening entertainment. With the difficulties of travel these occasions would represent extremely important events in the social calendar. The gentry, too were avid supporters of cock-fighting and the gentlemen of one area would often pit their cocks to fight a main against those of another area or county for substantial sums of money. Cock-fighting also took place at a lower level of society, although it is unlikely that there was a meeting point for the gentry with the peasants.

The farmers and the farm workers would travel but little during the eighteenth century. The focal point of their lives would be the farm, the church and the inn, with many of the inns being worked farms. Their points of meeting would be mainly for the occasions of sheep sales, sheep sorting, weddings and funerals: there would also for the valley communities be 'Merry Neets' and 'Auld Wives' Hakes'. A number of these occasions would additionally be concerned with sport following the conclusion of business.

(a) The Rustic Sports

The term 'sport' in connection with the totality of the thesis is used in the generic sense. In the sections relating to sports and regattas, however, the term is used in a rather more precise sense relating to 'sports days'. In the Lake District at the beginning of the nineteenth century these sports tended to include far more than athletics, often involving a multitude of events. In all probability they simply followed on from the rustic sports of the previous century. There were sports at 'Kirkland in Kendal' in 1732, and an advertisement in the local paper indicated competitions as under

"Also a purse of two guineas is to be run for by Footmen, the usual course betwixt the May-Pole and Gate-Settings, the first is entitled to One Guinea and a half, the second to have a half a Guinea. Also a Hat, value 6s.6d is to be run for by Boys under 16 years of age, the same course to be run twice over."¹

This would almost certainly be part of a regular rural festivity and it is probable that celebrations of this type were widespread throughout the Lake District. In 1787 Clark wrote that

"Upon Stone Carr there have been held, time out of mind, races and other sports; such as wrestling, leaping, tracing with dogs...

For the horses
For the first, a bridle,
For the second, a pair of Spurs

¹KWC, 8.7.1732.

For the wrestlers, a Leather Belt,
For the leapers, A Pair of Gloves,
For the foot racers, a Handkerchief,
For the Dog Courses, a Pewter quart Pot."¹

These were the common prizes of the day, and the custom continued well into the nineteenth century. These sports would be very much local occasions, taking place before the coming of the turnpike roads in the days when a stranger was a rarity: they were in existence before the Lakes were 'discovered' by the tourists. They were rustic sports, serving small communities. The sports at Stone Carr would be farming sports, but sports also took place on a number of estates owned by the aristocracy. Writing in 1870 - at the age of 77 - James Stockdale tells us that on the property of Sir Thomas Lowther of Cartmel

"On this piece of ground, according to tradition, village sports and races were at one time held annually."²

However the rural sports of the early nineteenth century were not particularly well documented. They preceded the universality of the newspaper. In any case the majority of individuals would not be able to read, and the distribution of newspapers would be extremely difficult. Secondly, the rustic occasions might well have been somewhat beneath the dignity of the literate gentry and therefore but little recorded. The class structure of the times allowed for little fluidity, and the class barriers, particularly in the rural areas, would be extremely difficult to bridge. The gentry had their own set of customs and values: and the peasants knew their place. The groups

¹ Clark, J., A Survey of the Lakes. London, 1787, p. 51.

² Stockdale, Annals of Cartmel, Scholar Press, Ilkley, 1978, p. 404.

were quite discrete, but this did not prevent each from having an opinion about the other. An interesting example of this comes from part of the town of Kendal, where the population in 1801 was just under 8,000¹. The town was administered under two areas, one of which was known locally as 'Doodleshire'. This area seems to have possessed a corporate spirit amongst the working class as well as having a separate boundary. In the late Autumn of each year there was a day of celebrations known as the Dicky Doodle Races. Included was the election of a 'Mayor'. This was in no sense a formal political or administrative appointment, but part of a day of jollity. Yet in the election of the 'Mayor' there was an element of mockery, a mocking of the established order of society, a mocking of that to which the peasants could not aspire.

"Such ceremonies functioned as a burlesque on the character of the social hierarchy as seen from below. By slighting authority roles, by indicating that these roles should not be taken too seriously, the people were displaying a regulated disdain for the dominant powers and dominant values. The pretentiousness of the upper ranks could be parodied, their claim to superiority deprecated."²

It is almost certain that the role of 'mayor' would be filled by a 'good fellow', a person well thought of by his peers, but almost certainly from the lower echelons of society: he would be the

"...common man (who) was king for the day and the world was turned upside down".³

¹ Steel, J., *Steel's Guide to the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway*. J. Steel, 1846, p. 17.

² Malcolmson, W. *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700 - 1850*. Cambridge University Press, 1973, p. 89.

³ Bailey, P. *Leisure and Class in Victorian England*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 3.

The popularity of the Dicky Doodle Races was reported with considerable enthusiasm during the 1820's and 1830's.

"...the annual sports, called Dicky Doodle Races, took place at Far Cross Bank. We did not hear who had the honour of filling the (mock) Mayor's chair; but the fame of the sports drew together a good assembly of the 'little vulgar'. Several hats were given to be run for...There was some good wrestling for a belt...the evening concluded with the usual drinking, smoking, fiddling and 'fratching' and the numberless sore heads next morning testified to the spirit with which Dicky's anniversary was kept up."¹

This reference is indicative of the essentially rural origins of Dicky Doodle Races: hats and belts as prizes: and the comment on the 'little vulgar' emphasises the social position of the sports. Yet ventures of this type were due to change. Kendal's old May-Pole had been removed in 1792, for it was an obstacle to the increasing traffic on the turn-pike roads. And with the coming of communication there also came a changing pattern of sports; that which had been rustic became rural, and in some cases, urban. The year 1827 was stated to be

"...the last occasion on which the full ceremony of Mayor Making was held in Doodleshire."²

Yet the meeting continued, although it is probable that the improvements made to the roads made it a 'day out' for people from a rather greater catchment area, with that which had been very local becoming more of a celebration for people for some miles around. The sports were still popular in 1837 and

¹WG and KA, 7.10.1826.

²O'Connor, J., 1962, p. 224.

"...were more numerously attended than has been known for a number of years. They commenced with a dog trail... wrestling then commenced in two separate fields...after the wrestling running in sacks and the usual sports came off peaceably. Cookson's 'fine ale' and Bellingham's 'stout' put a few home in high humour."¹

Dicky Doodle's Races were eventually doomed by the growth of more sophisticated sports meetings, and in any case Doodleshire had become less identifiable. Growing communication and trade had brought their toll upon Dicky Doodle.

Bidden Weddings, Bidden Funerals

In rural Lakeland in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century there were few opportunities for social gatherings. Marriages and deaths were clearly times for meeting with relatives and neighbours, and the ceremony at the church would be succeeded by a meeting at the home. This would often involve some form of sports, and at times there might even be a race to the home from the church. The 'bidden' weddings involved an invitation to attend: people were 'bid' to come to the wedding. Often the notice was posted in the newspaper as an invitation to friends and acquaintances to attend. Quite delightfully, the invitation was often in the form of a poem.

"Then come one and all. - to the wedding repair; -
The neighbouring youth bade the bridegroom declare,
That with running and wrestling, and leaping they'll strive,
To create and keep mirth and good humour alive.
Here's a galloping match for two bridles, - and then
A beat for six dogs, - and a foot race for men;

¹WG and KA, 6.10.1837.

One bridle to trot for, - a race run in sacks,
And a beat for six lasses with lads on their backs;
For a belt some will wrestle, - and some leap for gloves,
Whilst innocence each rural gambol approves.
Then come one and all; to the wedding repair: -
Your cheer will be good, - and the sports most rare".¹

This notice appeared just before the end of the eighteenth century, and it is clear that the bidden weddings had an extremely important place in the life of the times. Rollinson describes the situation appositely:

"BIDDEN WEDDINGS. In the closely knit societies such as existed in the fells, 'bidden weddings' afforded an opportunity for social contact, for generally the entire dale was 'lated' or invited to the wedding... after the ceremony a race on foot or horseback to the bridal house followed, the victor receiving a ribbon from the bride. Wrestling and leaping contests followed, as well as foot faces, in which the women guests also participated - were the accepted part of a lakeland wedding celebration."²

The bidden weddings continued into the early years of the nineteenth century. In 1807 at the wedding of Joseph Rawling and Mary Dixon there was the customary invitation and

"One saddle to be run for, two bridles to be trotted for, two belts to be wrestled for, gloves to be leapt for, a Pair of Couples to be run for by harriers."³

As late as 1825 there was a wedding with the traditional event of a race for a ribbon⁴. Rather more surprising there was a suggestion

¹CP, 4.7.1797.

²Rollinson, W., 1974, p. 57.

³CP, 12,3.1807.

⁴WA and KC, 26.11.1825.

that there were at times sports in connection with funerals.

"It used to be customary to 'bid' neighbours to funerals; cockfights, wrestling, quoits and 'spell and knur' were enjoyed."¹

although there does not seem to be supporting evidence for this statement. It would seem that the brideswains were beginning to fade even at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Transport was improving, and sport was being catered for elsewhere. The gradual demise of the bidden weddings was coincidental with the growth of larger sports meetings.

Rushbearing

Much of sport, in a variety of settings, developed in connection with religious or quasi-religious functions. Meetings of a serious nature were often followed by festivities. Sports at times occurred in connection with rush-bearing which, in northern districts, was an annual ceremony of carrying rushes and garlands to the church and then strewing the floor with rushes or decorating the walls with flowers. For many years there had been rush-bearing at St. Oswald's Church, Grasmere and writing as late as 1967 Rice commented that

"...a survival of the ancient 'Rush-bearing' still takes place on the Saturday nearest to August 5th".²

Sports in connection with rush-bearing seem to have been an example

¹Westmorland Fed. of W.I.'s, 1957, p. 127.

²Rice, H.A.L., 1967, p. 19.

of an existing function having sports added to it. Pride of place in connection with sports of this type must go to the village of Warcop, some 5 miles from Appleby, where the rush-bearing became quite a splendid affair. In 1835

"The annual rush-bearing took place at Warcop on Monday se'nnight...an immense galaxy of fashion and beauty assembled to enjoy the sports."¹

It would seem that at Warcop the rush-bearing was the height of the social season, with the ceremony and the sports being followed by a ball at the inn. In the case of Warcop the custom continued throughout the century although the original custom was modified: later in the century it was noted that

"The ceremony now takes the form of what is practically a flower service, for instead of rushes being borne to the church the children convey floral grows."²

At Ambleside, too there were "...impromptu sports in connection with the Rushbearing"³ although this does not seem to be quite the sporting affair that existed at Warcop. Sports in connection with rush-bearing would seem to have been mainly of the first half of the century. Thereafter they faded somewhat: the rush-bearing in many areas would continue, but the sports would have been supplanted by rather more ambitious sports meetings. They were probably at their peak in the 1830's, but it is worth (somewhat out of temporal context) noting that at least two of them continued throughout the century.

¹WG and KA, 11.7.1835.

²WG, 4.7.1885.

³Ambleside Sports Association, 1980, no page numbers.

That at Grasmere was certainly still functioning in 1896¹, although the timing of them indicates that they were by that time quite a small affair: they were held within two weeks of the massive Grasmere Sports. And those at Warcop also continued, but, it seems, without rivalry: it remained Warcop's main celebration. What seems to be apparent in this context is that there were certain rustic occasions related to sport which continued in much the same setting throughout the whole of the nineteenth century with the original purpose of the meeting still being seen as preceding the sporting and social significance of what happened later in the day - the Warcop Rushbearing would be one such annual event, the Orton Pot Fair would be another - whilst other celebrations such as the sports at the bidden weddings simply faded as communication improved and older customs died.

Fox Hunting

This sport, with the huntsmen on foot, was a Lakeland sport 'par excellence'.

In 1800 few predators remained in the Lake District. The Golden Eagles had almost certainly disappeared, wolves had been extinct for some centuries and there were but few polecats and wildcats. Yet there were many foxes. The terrain is in their favour, and they seemed to survive with ease. The fell farmers saw the fox as a natural enemy, but one for whom they had respect. Whilst they gloried in hunting the fox, there was a respect for the fox which escapes or provides an exciting chase. If any one hunting sport was

¹WG, 15.8.1896.

typical of the Lakeland spirit, it was fox-hunting. It was a farming sport, and an economic necessity. It was a sport of the hills and was not viewed with the criticism which eventually came with regard to cock-fighting.

"The fox-hunters of the Lake District do not try to justify fox-hunting. It is so much part of their lives."¹

Of course, fox-hunting was not the only way of dealing with foxes. Walkers on the fells might at times come across the remnants of a goose-bield. This was a device for trapping foxes, but one which took considerable time and effort to construct. It was rather like a truncated igloo but without an entrance. The fox was tempted to walk along a plank which was balanced to extend part way to the centre - the temptation being a dead goose. As the plank tilted, so the fox fell into the bield without the possibility of escaping. One suspects that some of the foxes caught in this fashion might have eventually been used as 'bag foxes', i.e. foxes released just before a hunt was about to take place. Certainly the passion of hunting demanded that foxes should be available, for as far as nineteenth century sport is concerned

"Hunting has never held first place, being a necessity as well as a sport, for the fells hold many impregnable strongholds for foxes."²

For the fell farmer, fox hunting also fulfilled a social need. It

¹Mitchell, W.R., Men of Lakeland. J.M. Dent and Sons, 1966, p. 26.

²Westmorland Federation of Womens' Institutes, Some Westmorland Villages. Titus Wilson and Co., 1957, p. 53.

represented a meeting point for the hill folk and there is no doubt that many of the unsuccessful fox hunts nevertheless represented a 'good day out': the sense of purpose, the conviviality and the farming talk ensured that. At times the hunt would end with a 'Merry Neet', of talk, banter and singing - for "Foxhunting...has its own folk heroes, its songs and its legends".¹ Fox hunting was a vital part of Lakeland life. It was part of the economy and of the life style. It might well be that Nicholson overstates the case when he tells us that: "Most of the Dalesmen love hunting better than marriage".² However the statement is symptomatic of the passion that the sport attracted. Some of the huntsmen were virtually legends in their lifetime: there was Joe Bowman, Master of the Ullswater Foxhounds for some 40 years. And there was John Peel

"D'ye ken John Peel with his coat so gray?
D'ye ken John Peel at the break of day?
D'ye ken John Peel when he's far, far away,
With his hounds and his horn in the morning?"³

The 'coat so gray' would be hodden gray (i.e., a mixture of light and dark wool) of nineteenth century Lakeland wool: the immaculate red coats of the upper class hunts of the South were not for the farmers of the Lake District. Neither, in central Lakeland, were the horses. In general, the Lakeland hunting was on foot. There were exceptions to this. In the softer countryside just to the south of Newby Bridge - the Cartmel Fells - there were horses in the hunt. At one such meeting in the mid-century the hounds threw off at Bigland and

¹ Rollinson, W., 1974, p. 152.

² Nicholson, N. Portrait of the Lakes. Robert Hale and Co., 1972, p. 150.

³ Graves, J.W. D'ye ken John Peel? (traditional song).

"As was anticipated, this favourite meet caused a numerous field of both horsemen and pedestrians. The run from point to point was not less than 14 miles, and the grounds which the hounds passed over cannot be computed at less than 20 miles."¹

Bigland is on the edge of the Lake District, and close to Holker Hall. This particular hunt would represent an interesting balance between the style of the meetings at the fashionable meetings such as the Quorn Hunt (an essentially upper class function) and the more rustic hunts of the rugged fells of Lakeland. In those fells, much of the terrain would be too difficult for horses. But in any case, many of the huntsmen would not in any case own horses. As one who came to the area and was captivated by it, Canon Rawsley tells us that "The luxury of horses, too, is unknown. The field are all running huntsmen."² The area around Bigland is, in Lakeland terms, relatively gentle country. The fells slope gently, and the rocky terrain only problematic on a small number of outcrops. Rawsley's comments were particularly applicable to central Lakeland.

It is probable that the early days of fox-hunting would be relatively informal. They would be likely to occur when the foxes became a nuisance to the farmers, and were taking the poultry and possibly the lambs. Of course much of the criticism of foxes taking lambs is exaggerated: many farmers did not see them to be a nuisance, and saw fox hunting primarily as a pleasure. However the pleasure of fox-hunting might well have created a 'necessity'.

Organised fox hunts seem to have been reported from the middle

¹*SUA*, 13.2.1851.

²*Rawsley, H.D. North Country Portraits. James Maclehouse and Sons, 1903, p. 193.*

of the eighteenth century, and

"One of the earliest reports of organised fox-hunting comes from the parish of Watermillock in 1759."¹

The lack of sophistication in these early days was exemplified in two ways. Firstly, it seems that there was not a formal 'Master of the Hunt', and that organisation took place at a relatively informal level. Secondly, the hounds were not kept in one set of kennels, for this would necessitate financial organisation. Hounds were boarded out separately, being brought together as required for the hunts. Both of these points are illustrated when we consider how the pack known as the Ullswater Foxhounds came to be formed, for this pack was

"...the outcome of an amalgamation of the Bald How (Matterdale) and Patterdale Foxhounds. These packs date back to trencher fed days, when each farm kept a hound or two and the appointed huntsman for the day would, when occasion required, with a blast of his horn, summon the pack to the green and depart in search of the varmist."²

Reports of fox-hunting were noted throughout the whole of the nineteenth century. In the early days they were reported as 'chases', e.g. "Fox chase at Throddlecrook"³. This was in 1814, and probably occurred before the formation of permanent packs. At a date soon after this the heading was still 'The Chase', but with organised

¹ Rollinson, W., 1974, p. 151.

² Skelton, W.C. Reminiscences of Joe Bowman and the Ullswater Foxhounds. Atkinson and Pollitt, 1923, p. 11.

³ WA and KC, 2.4.1814.

packs:

"The Kendal Hounds will be thrown off on Monday next, at Burneside; on Wednesday at Rotherheath: and on Friday at Grayrigg at 8 o'clock each morning."¹.

This programme was followed in four subsequent copies of the same newspaper with announcements for three chases each week. The period for hunting, noted as being Martinmas to early Spring was the low point of work for the farmers. At the beginning of the fox-hunting season there would be the Shepherds' meets for the sorting out of stray sheep, with these meets often being associated with sports and a fox hunt. The end of the fox-hunting season would be during the period preceding lambing time which, in the Lake District, was relatively late. What seems to have been significant about the development of fox-hunting during the period to 1840 is in its growing importance as a social occasion. That which had commenced as an economic necessity - but which also provided pleasure - seems to have developed into an organised sport which eventually acquired its own calendar.

Hound trailing

Three Lakeland sports were unique to the area. The first was the fox-hunting, the second Cumberland and Westmorland style wrestling and the third hound trailing. This latter sport was, it seems, functioning before the end of the eighteenth century. Whilst Wilson suggests that

¹WA and KC, 22, 11, 1817.

"Hound dog trails do not, as far as we are able to judge, date back to the earlier times of wrestling. Litt, in his 'Wrestliana' does not mention the subject."¹

Of course Litt may not have sought to mention this particular sport, and his omission does not mean that the sport was not practised. It would seem that the hound trailing was, in fact, practised long before Litt wrote in 1823, for in Clark's book in 1787 there were references to "...tracing with dogs" and "Dog courses",² and it is probably that these were similar to what was eventually termed as 'hound trailing'. The development of the name of sport is indicative of the fact that, whilst it was taking place at the turn of the century, it was not a well established sport. Following upon Clark's terminology there were such terms as 'scent races', 'dog races', 'dog trails' and, eventually, the commonly accepted term of 'hound trail'. Mitchell suggests that the sport

"...began in the area of Ambleside, Grasmere and Coniston with the help of foxhounds from Patterdale."³

and the reason for the local success of the sport lay in the unsuitability of the terrain for coursing. This would seem to be a likely explanation, for the two sports were in ascendance at much the same time.

Hound trailing is a race in which a dog follows a scented trail,

¹Wilson, J., 1905, p. 457.

²Clark, J., 1787, p. 51.

³Mitchell, W.R., 1977, p. 37.

a type of cross country race for dogs. Betting was an accepted part of the sport, and it follows that any possibility of cheating would be exploited! Thus the dogs were identified and marked at the start (by the starter) before being 'slipped'. The trail was laid by two men. They started from a mid position on the course, with each man dragging a sack which included a mixture containing aniseed. One would walk back to the starting point, laying a trail whilst the other would walk back to the finish - normally situated in close proximity to the start. Thus was the trail laid. When the hounds were slipped they would follow the trail, and when they came to the finish they would make for their owners who would be shooting or whistling for them. The reward for the hound from his owner would be some delicacy - perhaps a piece of beef. The reward for the owner might be fair winnings on the betting.

Hound trails did not occupy a great deal of time, and it would not be possible to lay more than one trail from the one venue. Because of this, the sport rarely occurred separately and generally functioned as part of a larger venture. Whilst there was at times hound trailing in connection with race meetings, the hound trailing eventually came to be a regular part of the Lakeland sports meetings. The hound trailing was an exciting sport and very much part of a rural way of life. It allowed for a rare relationship between man and dog, and, as with the wrestling, did not result in pain. It was a unique sport which soon came, along with wrestling, to be a feature of the typical Lakeland sports.

Cumberland and Westmorland Style Wrestling

Mitchell¹ suggests that the Cumberland and Westmorland style wrestling originated from a form of wrestling introduced by the Norse settlers of over 1,000 years ago. It is a form of wrestling full of esoteric terms: to 'tak hod' (take hold), the hype, the inside click, the buttock. The latter throw is attributed to the Reverend Abraham Brown, a one time Anglican rector of Egremont, of whom it was said "...that he wrestled with bodies during the week and with souls on Sundays".² The wrestlers are allowed 3 minutes to take hold of each other. When this has been done (which each wrestler trying to take a hold is to his own advantage): wrestling commences on the referee's word. The objective is to throw the opponent: if the hold is broken then the wrestler breaking the hold loses the fall. The hold itself seems to be unique to this particular style of wrestling:

"Each man places his chin on his opponents right shoulder and grasps him round the back. The left arm is over the opponent's right and the right arm under the opponent's left arm."³

The wrestling seems to have become organised in the second half of the eighteenth century. It was essentially a farming sport, occurring and surviving in fell country. The famed villages of supposed origin are noted by Nicholson

"...the first organised meetings seem to have been Melmerby Rounds on Midsummer Day, and at Langwathby Rounds on New Year's Day, both of which were well established by the end of the eighteenth century."⁴

¹Mitchell, W.R., *Lake District Sports*, Dalesman Books, 1977, p. 45.

²Mitchell, W.R., 1977, p. 47.

³*Ibid*

⁴Nicholson, N. 1972, p. 157.

Both of the villages are within some 7 miles of Penrith and close to the Cumberland-Westmorland border. Reasonably close at hand, too, is Greystoke which achieved some fame in the field of athletics. Might it be that this small area was in some measure responsible for the development of a pattern of sports which was to almost dominate Lakeland recreation by the mid-1850's? It has already been noted that wrestling would often occur in connection with the brideswains. In all probability there would also be wrestling in connection with a number of the fairs and markets. Commenting with regard to Greystoke Castle the owner, Stafford Howard, noted the gatherings at Greystoke Castle

"There was, a very long time ago, a market here. There was also, within living memory, a small 'show' of cattle and sheep, and probably horses."¹

Cumberland and Westmorland style wrestling might well have grown in the Lake District with the coming of the turn-pike roads. This would make it easier to travel to the fairs, the hiring and the markets, with sport being an appendage to necessary economic functions. Yet the sport which was developing at the beginning of the nineteenth century retained much of its rustic character throughout the century. Certainly there are still those who remember the lads from one farm going to wrestle against the lads from another farm 'of a summer evening'². The origins of the sport, and the continuing functioning of the sport seem to have been inextricably linked with the economy of the shepherd's life which involved meetings which were both essential to livelihood and which also allowed for the possibility of sport.

¹ Stafford, H., *Personal communication.*

² Davies, M., *Personal communication.*

Blood Sports Other Than Hunting

Many of the medieval sports were connected with food, ritual, war or with cruelty to animals. Those connected with war changed in character with the coming of gunpowder, and the others succumbed to a growing public opinion which objected to them, and which made this opinion felt in Parliament. Bull baiting was in decline in the eighteenth century, but certainly continued in the Lake District into the early years of the nineteenth century. With regard to Appleby, Holdgate tells us that

"The bull ring and rope for tethering the animal were maintained by the Corporation, and the ring is still to be seen let into a stone in the Market Place. The custom was maintained until 1812, in which year a large and ferocious red roan bull snapped the rope and careered around the town with an equally ferocious bull mastiff gripping firmly to its nose."¹

Badger baiting was different in form from bull baiting. Savage notes that several methods were used in the Furness district². The commonest method was to have the badger placed in a barrel whilst the dogs were introduced at the open end to try to get hold of the badger and draw it out. A second method, and one which provided better viewing, was to build a wooden crate with bars along the top for the spectators to see. An even more sophisticated method was to dig an 'L' shaped pit with the badger placed on the shorter side and the dog introduced at the longer side. The size of the pit was such that the dog could not get around the back of the badger, and this was deemed to ensure a 'fair' contest.

¹ Holdgate, M., A History of Appleby. J. Whitehead and Sons, 1970, p. 56.

² Savage, M., The Development of Sport in Furness, 1830 - 1840. Unpublished dissertation, Madeley College, 1970.

Bull and badger baiting were prohibited by law in 1835 but they were, in any case, in decline. Cock fighting, on the other hand, continued in popularity for some time: indeed there are those who are of the opinion that it continues still, in spite of the fact that it was made illegal more than 130 years ago.

"Cockfighting was rendered illegal by law in certain circumstances in 1835, but was not completely outlawed until the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1849."¹

Yet at one stage cock-fighting was probably the most important of the Lakeland sports. It appealed to the gentry, was inexpensive enough to be followed by the poor and it allowed for betting. The clergy were involved, and it was a popular sport for schoolboys. Many Lakeland villages retain evidence of the old cock pits. The sport is held in high esteem:

"It was widely and sincerely believed that the courage of the fighting cock was a valuable example to the true born Englishmen".²

Indeed many phrases of our language owe their origin to cockfighting. To be 'game' implies the courage of a fighting cock: Pierce, the famous pugilist, was known as 'The Game Chicken': 'fit as a fighting cock' implies a certain physical condition.

In 1732 there was cockfighting in the forenoon on the occasion of the Penrith Horse meeting.³ The popularity was considerable.

¹ Humber, R.D., *The Story of a Westmorland Village and School*, p. 44.

² Longrigg, R., *The English Squire & His Sport*. Dorstal Press, Harlow, 1977, p. 173.

³ KWC, 15.3.1732.

Indeed Rollinson places cock fighting as being of greater popularity than fox-hunting, telling us that

"Although foxhunting had many adherents in the Lake Counties, the most popular blood sport was cock-fighting."¹

For the fighting, the cocks wore spurs with which to inflict wounds. There were individual fights, but the gentry tended to be concerned with 'Mains of Cocks', and often for large sums of money. The bet on one fight would at times be in excess of a labourer's wages for a 6 monthly hiring period, and the wager for the Main would be considerable. One advertised in the fading days of cock-fighting was for

"A Long Main of Cocks to be Fought for at Penrith on the 22nd, 23rd and 24th days of April, 1819, between the Gentlemen of The County of Cumberland and the Gentlemen of the County of Lancashire: for Ten guineas a battle and One Hundred Guineas the Main."²

This venture would have taken at least a week, for the Lancastrians would be travelling by the turn-pike roads and would, no doubt, see the occasion in quite the same social terms that they would see horse racing. As late as 1828 there were still major meetings for cock-fighting, and with considerable amounts of money still being involved as under:

"A main of cocks will be fought during the races between the Gentlemen of Westmorland and the Gentlemen of

¹Rollinson, W., 1974, p. 141.

²WA and KC, 27.3.1819.

Lancashire...for £10 a battle and for £200 the main."¹

Cocks were bred for fighting: hence the fame, for instance, of the 'Caldbeck Cocker'. However the feelings among some were turning against the sport. Longrigg tells us that "From perhaps 1790 a humanitarian uneasiness with the sport was beginning to be voiced."² Wilson suggests that it was in 1828 that the last Main of Cocks, was fought in Ulverston: a 3 day match between the Gentlemen of Lancashire and the Gentlemen of Cumberland.³ Certainly the attitude towards the sport was markedly changing. Direct criticism came in the local paper in 1839, where cock-fighting was reported from "Oxen Park, where an assemblage of idle fellows met on Easter Sunday".⁴ Some two years later it was noted that "Preparations are now going on at Endmoor for this cruel and wicked practice."⁵ By 1849 the sport had been made illegal. But tradition died hard, and the sport continued. Reports of cock-fighting continued, and the area to the North West of Kendal seems to have been popular for matches. Indeed, in 1856 there had been a glowing report extolling the virtue of cock-fighting, describing it as a 'noble sport', and decrying the necessity of under-cover competitions.⁶ These certainly existed, for one had been reported in 1855:

¹WG and KA, 7.6.1828.

²Longrigg, R., 1977, p. 173.

³Wilson, J., 1905, p. 470.

⁴WG and KA, 13.4.1839.

⁵WG and KA, 29.5.1841.

⁶WG and KA, 29.3.1856.

"Cock-fighting. - This ancient but cruel sport has lately been revived in the neighbourhood with much spirit; but we are glad to learn that, through the exertions of police constable Atkinson, half a dozen of the principal performers will be brought before the magistrates on Monday."¹

Illegal cock-fighting was reported throughout the remainder of the century. There was "Disgraceful cock-fighting at Crosthwaite"² in 1865. Indeed cock-fighting was seen by Clarke as being a hindrance to the development of football in Kendal, suggesting that when the game came to the district many of the possible players had other interests - "...on the quiet' many wended their way back to the scene of some well-backed cock-fight."³ In 1875 cock-fighting was reported in precisely the same terms in both the Ulverston Mirror and the Westmorland Gazette, almost certainly by the same reporter.

"Scattering cock fighters - Last Saturday morning the charming hills between Hawkshead and Langdale were polluted by a large gathering of cock-fighters. It would seem that this once great national sport is now carried on by its present admirers at most unlikely hours, for long before daylight conveyances were rattling along and footmen wending their way from a wide district round to the neighbourhood of Hawkshead... In the snug retreat on the lowly uplands between Hill Fell and Iron Kell, and near the famous Girt Will Water Fall, hundreds of people had congregated at the first dawn of light. Unfortunately the applause at the achievement of some favourite bird rang as a note of warning to somebody near, and in a short time three policemen entered the magic circle. If three Bengal tigers had bounded into the arena the consternation could not have been greater. Instantly scales, weights, cocks, bags etc. were left to the tender mercies of the peacemakers. All the spectators of the sports were off like 'greased lightning'."⁴

¹ *WG and KA*, 5.5.1855.

² *WG and KA*, 29.4.1865

³ *Clarke, J. History of Football in Kendal, Thompson Brothers, 1908, p. 6.*

⁴ *WG*, 22.5.1875.

In 1880 there was a hint of cock-fighting at Ulpha with some 80 individuals present. The cocks had been brought, but the police had wind of the gathering and appeared to the consternation of the would-be audience.¹ Near Cartmel, and close to the Lancashire-Westmorland border there exists what might possibly have been a cock-pit. The site is a hollow in the hills, and from a nearby rise it is possible to view the approaches from a a mile in any direction. This might well have been a site for illegal cock-fighting, which was reported from the district in 1885.²

Cock-fighting has an unusual place in Lakeland sport history, being practiced at the beginning of the nineteenth century by both the gentry at one end of the social scale and the working classes at the other social extreme. The significance of the enforced decline of cock fighting might well be seen in the growth and popularity of fox-hunting during the middle years of the century, and the coincidental growth of hare coursing during the same period.

¹UM, 2.5.1880.

²WG, 21.3.1885.

(b) Sports for the Gentry : Horse Racing

Horse racing was probably the first of the organised sports in the Lake District. Traditionally the 'Sport of Kings' the regal and military background of national development was in some considerable measure based on the utilisation of the horse. Horses had been used in the military operations of attack and defence, in the subjugation and control of peoples and, of course, as a means of transport. And those who had conquered and settled - and the aristocracy who had supported them, continued to keep horses for utilitarian purposes. Yet much of that which originates in utility often develops into sport. Archery would be one example, rifle shooting another. Thus horse racing, and competitions of skill involving the use of horses was, and still is, part of many cultures. The fact that the Western culture placed less and less value upon the use of the horse for work did not diminish the place of the horse in sport: but it did make the sport more selective, changing it into fewer meetings but with the remaining meetings growing in importance.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the horse still had an extremely important part to play in Lakeland culture as a means of individual transport, as a means of group transport (for the turnpike roads had arrived, and with them the clear improvement in communication): and as an agricultural animal. Even in this latter context there was 'sport'. Ploughing matches were an interesting facet of Lakeland history but deemed to be marginally outside the brief of this study. By the end of the century the transport role of the horse was, except in the relatively rural areas, considerably diminished by the coming of the railways. For shorter Lakeland journeys, however, the horse

was still in great use for local transport as the many descriptions of Grasmere sports towards the end of the century indicate. The railway was prevented from coming to the innermost parts of Lakeland. But then the incursion of the railway had been strenuously resisted by such stalwarts as William Wordsworth, who was so incensed with proposals to extend the railways that he wrote "Is there no nook of English ground secure from rash assault?"¹ Wordsworth's stand was later taken up by the influential Cannon Rawnsley² and, indeed, achieved some measure of success. In terms of transport the horse retained considerable practical value: it was also an object of pride, and was a vehicle for much sport.

With reference to the late eighteenth century, Longrigg tells us that

"When almost every town had a racecourse, the race week attracted all the gentry, and the balls and assemblies were the social high time of the year."³

Certainly the scene for horse racing was set well before the beginning of the nineteenth century and it would be presumptive to suggest that this was the case for any other of the sports that continued throughout the century. For obvious reasons the venues tended to be near the 'major' (very much a relative term in the thinly populated Lake Counties) population centres and on flattish terrains. Race meetings tended to be of two or three days duration,

¹Wordsworth, W. Sonnet written at Rydal Mount.

²Rice, H.A.L., Lake Country Portraits, Harvill Press, 1967, p. 129.

³Longrigg, R., 1977, p. 113.

although at the beginning of the century those at Maryport (on the edge of the Lake District) continued for 4 days.¹ There would seem to have been two major reasons for this. Firstly the aristocracy would have an adequacy of time for the meetings, which were also important social occasions within a brief calendar: and secondly the time taken for guests to travel would be considerable. Vamplew tells us that

"Horse racing in 1800 was much the same as it had been for the past 50 years or more."²

The early meetings noted in the briefly produced Kendal Weekly Courant refer to a 3 day meeting at Kirkby Lonsdale in 1731³ and to the Penrith Horse meeting being a 4 day meeting with "...cock fighting in the forenoon".⁴ It is noted, too, that the problems of communication were such that considerable notice (i.e. some 6 weeks) was given for each of these meetings.

Horse racing in the sense in which we know it was the preserve of the aristocracy and the landed gentry. Thus Stockdale's book, 'Annals of Cartmel' refers to the fact that "Sir Thomas Lowther was a sportsman, and fond of horse racing".⁵ The position of horse racing as a sport at the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth century was pre-eminent. Not only was it a meeting

¹CP, 17.6.1800.

²Vamplew, W., Cashman, R. and McKerman (eds.) in Sport in History University of Queensland Press, p. 307.

³KWC, 26.2.1731.

⁴KWC, 13.5.1731.

⁵Stockdale, J., 1978, p. 404.

point for sport: it was a meeting point for society. Transport was difficult and meeting points for the gentry were few. The Race Ball subsequent to Kendal Races at the turn of the century was referred to as being a "sumptuous feast".¹

The major race meetings at the beginning of the century were at Carlisle, Kendal and Penrith. However there were also meetings on the West Cumberland coast (Maryport, Whitehaven, Workington, etc.) in the Furness district at Ulverston, and more central to Lakeland at Keswick and Bassenthwaite. These would be accommodated in the category that we describe as race meetings. However there were many other occasions in which racing was involved, although not always as the prime attraction. The sports at the turn of the century at Stone Carr and Cold Fell would more properly be considered to be rural sports meetings, and the horse racing would be with horses probably kept, for utilitarian purposes and not solely for racing.

In the early years of the century there would often be cock-fighting at the races. Thus at Egremont in 1810 the races also had a 3 day main of cocks between Cumberland and Lancashire². There was cock-fighting too, at the Penrith Races, although these were generally referred to as 'Inglewood Hunt and Penrith Races'. In 1811 this was still a four day meeting with races on the Wednesday and Friday and a stag hunt on the Thursday and Saturday. The stag hunting was not casual: it was a stag which was "turned loose" for the

¹O'Conner, J. Memories of Old Kendal. *Westmorland Gazette*, 1962, p. 105.

²CP, 4.6.1810.

occasion¹ .

The first thirty years of the nineteenth century seems to have been a boom period for horse racing. There was little competition from other sports, the turn-pike roads had eased problems of travel and there was a growing desire to meet and communicate. But it would be wrong, too, to think that the race meetings were solely for the aristocracy. Whilst they existed as major functions because of the aristocracy and gentry, they were also gatherings for lesser mortals. This growth period was probably in part due to the spread of sport downwards through society. At the Keswick Races and Regatta in 1811 it was noted that the venue was a "New Race Ground"². A new stand was built at the Kendal Race Course in 1829³. It might well be that the well-attended meetings at Appleby and at the Inglewood Hunt and Penrith Races were due in part to the support of the Lowthers of Lowther Castle, close to Penrith. Certainly the Earls of Lonsdale (i.e., Lowthers) patronised the race meetings to a considerable extent, with frequent reference to their presence at the much larger Carlisle Races. At the Inglewood Hunt and Penrith Races in 1822 there had been reported some 10,000 people present⁴ : the combined population of Cumberland and Westmorland in 1821 was only 207,000⁵ and there was the Ball in the evening which, presumably would be exclusive. Large crowds, too, were reported from the

¹CP, 4.9.1811.

²CP, 20.8.1811.

³WG and KA, 24.8.1829.

⁴CP, 14.10.1822

⁵Mitchell, B.R. and Deane, P., Abstract of British Historical Statistics, Cambridge University Press, 1971, p. 20.

Furness Yeomanry Cavalry Races, it being noted in 1830 that there was a "...large assemblage of spectators"¹

With some limited exceptions it seems that the majority of race meetings thrived throughout the first 40 years of the nineteenth century, although during this period there were changes in the patterns of the meetings. At the beginning of the century a meeting such as the 4 day meetings at Maryport was only noted in the press as being horse racing², but during the second decade of the century it appears that wrestling was often a second attraction at the races. What seems to have happened at the race meetings is that they were initially for the gentry. However spectator interest grew, and with the coming of the improved road system it became increasingly easy to travel to the meetings. Then came other sports which were attached to the meeting, with wrestling having a particular attraction: in 1824

"Wrestling at Carlisle Races on the 28th instant is expected to be better attended than upon any former occasion. Among the subscribers for the prizes are the Earl of Lonsdale, Lord and Colonel Lowther..."³

By 1835 at Appleby where "...the number of persons present was immense"⁴, there was horse racing, wrestling, hound trailing and a number of athletics events. It appears that the horse racing for the gentry eventually became a vehicle for other sports, and that there was support from the gentry in the majority of instances. With

¹CP, 1.6.1830.

²CP, 17.6.1800.

³WA and KC, 18.9.1824.

⁴WG and KA, 30.5.1835.

regard to the races and wrestling at Carlisle in 1825 it had been noted that the wrestling

"...was attended, as usual, by myriads of county people, for whom this manly amusement appears to have charms quite unknown to the degenerate race pent up within the walls of smoky and enervating towns."¹

During that same year there had been no wrestling at the Kendal Races, a point which was taken up by a leader article in the Kendal newspaper.

"We have heard several persons express great surprise that the gentlemen who take so active a part in the promotion of our turf sports should not endeavour to raise a purse to wrestle for during the Kendal Races."²

Eventually wrestling was added to the programme, and what seems to be of significance is that the race meetings were, during the first 40 years of the nineteenth century, becoming larger ventures with the racing fraternity approving and supporting other sports. Many of these sports were eventually to break away from the race meetings, the smaller of which faded and died.

Deer Hunting

Although the term 'deer hunting' is in common use, it seems to have been used interchangeably with the term 'stag hunting'. Deer hunting represents a contrast with the fox hunting during the early

¹WA and KC, 8.10.1825.

²WA and KC, 26.8.1826.

years of the nineteenth century. The fox hunting in the hill country was essentially for the farming community and was on foot, whilst the deer hunting was for the gentry and was equestrian. Perhaps the social position of the deer hunting in the community is best illustrated by the following reference from 1812:

"On Saturday last, his Grace the Duke of Norfolk entertained a large party at Gowbarrow Park on the banks of Ullswater. Deer hunting, shooting and ¹ sailing formed part of the amusements of the day."

In addition to the aristocracy entertaining their guests there were regular hunts in connection with the race meeting at Appleby and Penrith during the first forty years of the century.^{2,3,4,5} At the Inglewood Hunt and Penrith Races in 1811 there was racing on the Wednesday and Friday and stag hunting on the Thursday and Saturday. The stag hunting had little chance of uncertainty about it, for stags were kept for the purpose of being hunted, for the notice relating to the above meeting in 1811 stated: "A stag to be turned out"⁶. Deer hunting also took place upon occasion at Kendal but does not seem to have received the support that the sport had in Appleby and Penrith. At one stage the hunt in the Kendal area seems to have fallen into abeyance. It was revived in 1815⁷ after a lapse of some years, and

¹ WA and KC, 19.9.1812.

² WA and KC, 31.12.1813.

³ WA and KC, 8.11.1817.

⁴ WG and KA, 19.10.1822.

⁵ CP, 20.9.1807.

⁶ CP, 3.9.1811.

⁷ WA and KC, 25.11.1815.

references to this particular hunt are scarce. It might well be that the Penrith and Appleby area, with its many country seats and clearly the social centre for a number of upper class families successfully supported the sport because of aristocratic influence.

The Hunting of Other Animals

During the early years of the nineteenth century a limited amount of hare hunting seemed to have occurred in the Lake District. It was noted in 1815 that the Orton pack of hounds hunted hares, and that these hounds were also used for foxhunting¹. However it is difficult to assess the position of the hunters within the social stratum. Those who hunted from Orton would probably be fell farmers, but a rather different social pattern might well have been evident at Ulverston, where there was an animal Hunt Ball during the 1830's².

The hunting of otters occurred. There would be otters on the north flowing River Eden and the south flowing Lune, for both were salmon rivers. There would also be otters on the rivers Kent and Greta. Wilson states that

"In the first half of the nineteenth century otter hounds were kept in different parts of the county (i.e. Cumberland) and used for hunting both otters and foulmarts. About 1830 hounds were kept at Isel Vicarage near Cockermouth, and hunted by the vicar, the Reverend Hilton Wybergh."³

¹WA and KC, 14.10.1815.

²CP, 11.11.1834.

³Wilson, J., 1905, p. 461.

In spite of this statement by Wilson, otter hunting during the first forty years of the century does not seem to have been particularly common. Otter hunting was noted at Keswick in 1837, when the Flimby Otter Hounds were in action on the River Greta¹, but there are very few reports relating to the sport.

The hunting of badgers, foulmarts (polecats) and goats was but rarely noted and does not seem to warrant consideration within the main theme of hunting.

Hare Coursing

The coursing of hares was a sport for the gentry. It is the hunting, by sight, of one hare by two greyhounds which may not catch the hare. Whilst the term 'coursing' is noted from the sixteenth century the sport was but little recorded in the Lake District before 1830, possibly because of the strength of the sport of cock fighting. As cock-fighting waned so it would seem that a number of the gentry developed an increasing interest in hare coursing. One of the earliest coursing meetings in the Lake District was that noted on the Lowther Estates near Penrith in 1828². Thereafter there were an increasing number of reports on coursing, with the Westmorland Gazette newspaper reporting 3 meetings in the Shap area in 1829.^{3,4,5}

¹CP, 23.5.1837.

²WG and KA, 23.2.1828.

³WG and KA, 24.1.1829.

⁴WG and KA, 21.11.1829.

⁵WG and KA, 12.12.1829.

As the sport grew so it became more formalised and in 1832 there was the award of the Underley Cup¹, whilst in 1833 a new Coursing meeting was established on the Bendrigg Estates², which meeting had its own Cup value £32 (approximately twice the annual wage of a farm labourer) by 1837³. As the sport of coursing became more popular so did the extent of the reporting, with twelve column inches of comments in the Cumberland Paquet newspaper concerning the meeting at Calderbridge⁴. The reports also became more complimentary as the sport became more fashionable. At a two day meeting at Shap in 1837 it was noted that "Finer running, even on Knipe Scar was never witnessed"⁵. This particular meeting was followed by a dinner at the Greyhound Inn, Shap. By the late 1830's the sport was well established on the outer fell area of the Lake District.

Shooting

At the beginning of the nineteenth century horse racing was almost (but not absolutely) the prerogative of the gentry. The same was true of shooting. In relative terms, guns would be expensive and quite beyond the financial reach of all but the gentry. The gentry would have a seasonal pattern of life which would accommodate

¹ *WG and KA, 28.1.1832.*

² *WG and KA, 16.11.1833.*

³ *CP, 28.11.1837.*

⁴ *CP, 14.11.1837.*

⁵ *CP, 7.3.1837.*

their racing, hunting and shooting. The privileged position of the great landowners (and their guests) was upheld by the severity of the Game Laws, and backed by the possibility of transportation. Shooting was seasonal and there were reminders in the press relating to the opening and closing of the season:

"Partridge Shooting - it may not be amiss to remind our Sporting readers that the season for Partridge shooting expired on Thursday last."¹

This note, coming at the end of January, would be a fact with which the shooting fraternity would be well acquainted. The poaching fraternity would hardly care, and in any case in 1816 might not be literate.

The 'Shoots' were essentially national in character and participated in by the aristocracy and the gentry. What seems to be of some significance, however were the occasional shooting matches. Initially these involved only the gentry, but as the century progressed an increasing percentage of the Lakeland population became involved in various types of shooting competitions. One of the earliest reports was that relating to a venture at Penruddock in 1815 when there was a "...shooting match for a silver medal by eleven gentlemen with rifles"². By the 1830's a second form of shooting was coming into fashion, that of shooting pigeons released from a box. One of the earlier reports of this sport related to pigeon shooting

¹ *WA and KC, 31.1.1816.*

² *WG and KA, 25.11.1815.*

in conjunction with the Lowther Coursing meeting¹, and from the sparse number of references available during the first forty years of the nineteenth century it seems almost certain that it was only the gentry who took part.

¹*WG and KA, . 9.2.1833.*

(c) Cricket : The Early Days

Cricket is a game of southern origins, and it is the Hambledon Club in Hampshire that is generally accepted as having been the birthplace of the sport. Cricket seems to have been the first sport in the century to have formalised rules.- presumably a necessary step before a sport could spread effectively. The codification of the rules of cricket occurred during the early years of the Industrial Revolution, and certainly before the economic changes of the Industrial Revolution had any wide spread effects upon the Lake District. Cricket represents an interesting example of the growth of a particular rustic sport in one locality being taken to London, where rules were then formalised by the gentry. Many of the aristocracy and gentry of the late eighteenth century seem to have involved in both the social scene of Georgian England in the setting of their London residences and in the more limited environments of their country seats. What is almost certain is that the customs of the capital were taken to the country seats, and that a number of these customs would eventually spread downwards through the country society. In the case of cricket

"The earliest laws of the game, or at least the earliest which have reached us, are of the year 1774. A committee of noblemen and gentlemen (including Sir Horace, Mann, the Duke of Dorset, and Lord Tankerville) drew them up at the 'Star and Garter' in Pall Mall."¹

The significance of the inaugural laws lay in part in the personages involved in their formulation, for the 'noblemen and gentlemen' were

¹Steel, A.G. and Lyttleton, R.H. Cricket. Longmans Green and Co., 1893, p. 12.

now involved in what had previously been a rural sport. This pattern was to continue, and was eventually to affect sport in much of the world. With the growth of the British Empire, and as sport became of increasing importance in the Public Schools, so cricket was taken to much of the world: to the Empire, to the U.S.A. and, indeed to the court circle of the Czar of Russia.

The spread of cricket to the Lake District probably occurred as a result of the interest of members of the aristocracy. Pre-eminent amongst the Lakeland aristocracy at the beginning of the second quarter of the nineteenth century was the Earl of Lonsdale whose sporting connections were extremely strong. He was friendly with the Marquis of Queensberry who visited the North of England at times, and who had attended Carlisle Races in 1811¹. The Earl of Lonsdale was strongly connected with the court circles of Europe: indeed the German Emperor was a guest of the Earl's descendants at Lowther Castle towards the end of the century.

In 1827 there was a cricket club in Carlisle, entertaining the Derwentside Cricket Club to a fixture.² The return fixture was noted at some length in the newspaper, and clearly portrayed the place of the game in the Lakeland society of that time:

"The Carlisle players set out on Wednesday afternoon, in a coach horsed for the purpose, and arrived in Cockermouth the same night. At an early hour on Thursday morning the tents (including a handsome marquee presented to the Derwentside Club by Henry Howard, Esq., of Greystoke) were in readiness; the

¹CP, 8.10.1811.

²CP, 19.6.1827.

flags of the respective clubs waved in the breeze... The scene, therefore, was a charming one, and never were the beauty and fashion of the Vale of Derwent more fascinatingly evident."¹

At the fixture between the two clubs some two years later the fixture was played at Brayton Hall, the residence of Mr. Lawton². The social scene of cricket at the time was clearly one of wealth and fashion, with considerable support from the gentry. Matches were played when it suited the upper classes, and it is unlikely that any but the rich played cricket during these early years. The working class would have neither the time to play nor the money to buy what would be relatively expensive equipment. As Hurst notes,

"Those were the days when men of leisure played cricket largely for pleasure but also for money stakes, with a good deal of side betting."³

The late 1820's saw the spread of cricket in the northern parts of the Lake District. Clubs were formed as under Carlisle and Cockermouth in 1827, Penrith in 1828, Armathwaite in 1829 and Greystoke in 1830⁴. The Kendal Union C.C. was formed in the same year, it being noted that

"Cricket Club. - This manly exercise, and one of the noblest of English games is now begun to be adopted here - as a Club has been formed, and the parties meet twice a week -

¹CP, 3.7.1827.

²CP, 18.7.1829.

³Hurst, J.L., A Century of Penrith Cricket, 1866 - 1966. Penrith C.C., 1967. p. 7.

⁴Buckley, G.B., Fresh Light on Pre-Victorian Cricket, Catterell and Co., 1937, p. 155.

with every prospect of its being kept up, and continued with spirit and success. The ardour and activity of all the athletes engaged in this genteel and healthy exercise, are sufficient to ensure permanence and prosperity to the Club."¹

Bell's Life notes with regard to this same year of 1829 that:

"Two or three years ago the game was scarcely known in Cumberland: now there are eight strong clubs."²

Whilst cricket seems to have taken root extremely effectively in northern Lakeland by 1830, the same was not true with regard to the game in Kendal. In the mid-October of 1830 the Kendal Union Cricket Club members met on their ground when "...on Thursday last, to play a match in commemoration of the close of the season."³ Surprisingly the club seems to have faded. Reports ceased and it seems that some 15 years elapsed before the game was firmly re-established in the town. On the other hand the game seems to have continued to spread in the northern parts of the Lake District. In 1833

"Carlisle (Club and Garrison) beat Greystoke and Appleby Clubs by 31 runs. At first public opinion was in favour of the country gentlemen, as most of them had been considered professors of the science at Eton and Harrow."⁴

The phrasing of this particular statement again indicates the social class of the participants, and it is further noted that Sir Wilfred Lawton was playing for the Greystoke and Appleby team.

¹WG and KA, 16.5.1829.

²BL, 9.8.1829.

³WG and KA, 19.10.1830.

⁴CP, 10.8.1833.

Temple Sowerby was fielding a team by 1836¹ and in Western Cumberland in 1837 the support of the aristocracy was noted in that

"We understand that the Earl of Lonsdale has very kindly complied with the request of the Whitehaven Club, to grant a suitable piece of ground for play...this is a very gracious act on the part of his Lordship."²

In that year the Whitehaven Club played against Cockermouth³, with the game by this time being well established in a number of the towns and in many of those rural areas which boasted a member of the upper class. However it would be unwise to think of the cricket of the 1830's as being similar to the cricket of today, for the pitches would generally be of much poorer quality and there would at times be somewhat unusual arbitrary rules and competitions. At Askham in 1837 a rather unusual match was reported:

"On the 23rd of September, W. Rose of Newton with Neptune his Newfoundland dog which had been in training all summer, beat two of the A eleven at single wicket."⁴

In all probability, Mr. Rose would be rich and important enough to be allowed this eccentricity!

It seems evident that during the late 1820's and 1830's the game of cricket came to the Lake District via the gentry, and that

¹CJ, 16.7.1836.

²CP, 19.9.1837.

³BL, 5.11.1837.

⁴BL, 1.10.1837.

clubs were formed in areas where there were an adequacy of the gentry to play. At this stage the downward diffusion of the game through society had yet to begin in the Lake District.

(d) Sports and Regattas, 1800 - 1840

Such sports as occurred during the early years of the nineteenth century were almost always rustic and local, taking place within relatively closed communities. The small number of regattas which had occurred were rare and irregular, at times extravaganza organised by the gentry. Wrestling had spread beyond the Langwathby and Melmerby Rounds, but there is no evidence of individuals travelling to any great extent to participate in competitions. Road conditions were still poor and travel was difficult, and there was no great incentive for as Murray tells us "A belt is the usual prize."¹ In effect the prize was status within the community, and there would be no pecuniary considerations with regard to the early days of wrestling.

With the improvement in the road systems there would be more travel, larger gatherings at sporting ventures and eventually the gentry would take a greater interest in watching the developing rural sports. Probably the greatest influence during the early years of the nineteenth century was John Wilson:

"Wilson came to the Lake Country in 1807 from Paisley where he was born 22 years previously. He had recently buried his father, from whom he had inherited some £40,000. The property he purchased, and retained till his decease in 1854, was a small farmhouse and its lands, known as Elleray."²

John Wilson quickly settled in the Lake District - indeed he would be one of the early 'off-comers' - and within a short space of time he

¹Murray, J. A Guide to the English Lakes. John Murray, London, 1899, p. 28.

²Sessions, F., 1905, p. 132.

had become part of the local sporting scene. His involvement in sport was wide ranging. Firstly he supported cock-fighting which was, by the first decade of the nineteenth century, increasingly criticised and slowly waning. It is suggested that as far as game cocks were concerned he "...never seemed to have kept fewer than 50".¹ His daughter, Mrs. Gordon, writing in 1879 notes that a friend of her father's, James Newby "...recollects a main of cocks being fought in the drawing room at Elleray".² This would not be quite as simple as one might first suppose. Cock-fighting needs a base that offers some purchase, and a smooth floor would offer problems. Wilson solved the problem by providing a suitable surface for the cock-fighting: Mitchell tells us that

"John Wilson of Elleray was so keen on cock-fighting that he once sodded the floor of his drawing room and fought a main there."³

A second interest of Wilson's was that of athletics. As an Oxford undergraduate he would have been acquainted with the sport at University, and Shearman in 'Athletics and Football' notes that

"The Professor of Moral Philosophy had so distinguished a reputation as an athlete that his name should not be omitted from a chapter on athletic history. Hone has an anecdote of his 'taking down' a brother private in the militia at Kendal. The latter boasted that he had never been beaten in a jumping competition, and Wilson according challenged him to jump for a guinea. The unbeaten champion could cover only 15 feet, Wilson jumping 21 feet, to his opponents amazement."⁴

¹*Sessions, F., 1905.*

²*Gordon, Mrs., Christopher, North, a memoir of John Wilson. Thomas C. Jack, 1879, p. 102.*

³*Mitchell, W.R., 1977, p. 12.*

⁴*Shearman, M., 1894, p. 47.*

In considering the worth of this performance it should be noted that Wilson was probably jumping from grass and also landing on grass which means that he would not have been able to achieve the advantageous 'leg shoot' of later jumpers leaping into sandpits.

The reports of Wilson's athletics performances seem at times to have been somewhat embellished as the years progressed, but his interest is noted in the earlier book by Shearman. Referring to M. J. Brooks 6'2½" high jump in 1876, Shearman states that "Probably 'Christopher North' would have found it as hard to believe that Mr. J. Brooks...6'2½"."¹ an acknowledgement of Wilson's writing under the pen name of 'Christopher North'. However it seems that Wilson's main sporting interest whilst he was in the Lake District was not concerned with athletics. The more overt interests seem to have been cock-fighting, wrestling and boating. It might well be that his greatest field of patronage was in the field of wrestling, and he was probably instrumental in the gentry's growing support for the sport. He had sponsored wrestling within a very short time of coming to the Lake District and again some three years later, his daughter noting that:

"During my father's residence at Elleray, and long after he became Professor, he steadily patronised this manly amusement."²

One of Wilson's friends was Will Ritson of Wasdale. Ritson was from farming stock, but eventually became landlord of the Huntsman's Inn, Wasdale (later to be renamed the Wastwater Hotel). In many ways he

¹Shearman, M. 1887, p. 51.

²Gordon, Mrs., 1879, p. 102.

seems to have been similar to Wilson - a strong interest in sport (winning a number of the wrestling matches in and around 1830), a 'character', and an ability to move easily in a range of social circles. Yet, in one sense, he had come from 'the other end of society' during an era in which social mobility was rare. In speaking of Wilson

"...he found his friend was a verra bad un to lick. He did not lick him at jumping though he once threw the professor twice out of three falls at wrestling."¹

Ritson, however, was considered to be a great 'teller of tales' and is deemed to have been the model for the competition that has latterly developed into the election of the 'World's Greatest Liar', held annually at the Wastwater Hotel. It might well be that Ritson did compete against Wilson but there was considerable discrepancy in their ages: Wilson was born in 1785 and Ritson in 1808. When Ritson was wrestling with some success in 1830 Wilson would be some 45 years of age: any competitive meeting point would be likely to have been at a very informal level. Perhaps the point is academic: certainly Wilson wrestled and, in addition, wrote about wrestling. At Oxford he had won the Newdigate Prize², and continued to write both prose and poetry. He was in part responsible for the recording of the history of the early days of wrestling, commenting in Blackwood's Magazine in 1823 with regard to the development of wrestling

"We take a leap...into the ring of Langwathby Mill,
A.D. 1878. That village on Christmas, or New Year's

¹Mitchell, W.R., 1977, p. 62.

²Sessions, F., 1905, p. 133.

Day, and Melmerby on Midsummer's Day were the scenes of two distinguished annual contests.¹

Wilson was a man of some literary ability and who moved easily amongst the Lakes Poets, providing the bridge between them and the world of Lakeland sport. He was acquainted with the Wordsworths, with De Quincey, with Southey

"It was at Mr. Wordsworth's house that I first became acquainted with Professor (then Mr.) Wilson of Elleray...and it is sufficiently known that he divided his time and the utmost sincerity of his love between literature, and the stormiest pleasure of real life. Cock-fighting, wrestling, pugilistic contests, boat racing, all enjoyed Mr. Wilson's patronage; all were occasionally honoured by his personal participation."²

Wilson was a man around whom legends grew, and the legends were stretched with the passage of time. Writing of Wilson, Rice tells us that

"He remained as ready as ever to 'Sail a boat', or jump a long jump, or fight a cock, or write a stanza as any man in the country."³

And Palmer had told us that

"Christopher North (Professor John Wilson of Elleray) was a might rambler, climber, angler, wrestler and waterman."⁴

¹ *Blackwood's Magazine*, December 1823.

² *De Quincey, T. Reminiscences of the English Lake Poets*, J. M. Dent, 1961, p. 313.

³ *Rice, H.A.L.*, 1967, p. 54.

⁴ *Palmer, W.T., More Odd Corners in English Lakeland*, Sheffington and Sons, 1937, p. 125.

One of the problems about the romanticising of the Lake District and its nineteenth century traditions is the tendency to over-exaggerate that which has a certain appeal, and this certainly happened in the case of John Wilson. A publication of 1870 tells us

"The Windermere locals took to John - all six foot of him. After all, in spite of his intellect, he was still 'one of the boys'. He sailed with them, wrestled at the Grasmere sports, and fished from his boat Emma with a local character, Billy Balmer; Cock-fighting had now become an obsession with him, and he held Mains in his own dining room".¹

The expression 'one of the boys' is, perhaps, a little out of context in relation to the first quarter of the nineteenth century: it pre-supposes a familiarity which was not of its age. Meeting points and similar interests there would be: excessive familiarity, probably not. In any case Wilson certainly did not wrestle at Grasmere Sports, for they did not commence until some six or seven years before his death at the age of 68 years. However, a number of the points made are correct, a significant one being Wilson's interest in boating. Certainly Wilson was concerned to some considerable extent with the development of the regattas on Windermere, keeping his own sailing boats. His contribution is obliquely acknowledged by Harriet Martineau's writing in 1855 in one of the early classical guides to the Lakes:

"This is Storrs: and at this pier did the guests embark when Scott went to meet Canning at Mr. Bolton's, and the first regatta took place (under the direction of Christopher North)".²

¹ Bell, D. and Patterson, E., Curious Characters of English Lakeland, Oriel Press, 1971, p. 125.

² Martineau, H., Guide to the English Lakes, Longmans and Co., 1855, p. 47.

Wilson kept his own boats, and Sessions¹ notes that he was dubbed "High Admiral of Windermere".

Wilson's initial contribution had been his support for the wrestling, and it is probable that Machell's assessment that "The famous wrestling at Ambleside owed its foundation to 'the girt Perfessor of Elleray...'"² represented a significant change in the tradition of the sport by virtue of the interest of a gentleman. Litt writing in 1823 in his book 'Wrestlina' notes:

"...that previous to the year 1807, the best display of wrestling in this part of the kingdom was at Melmerby and Langwathby; two villages in Cumberland but contiguous to Westmorland; where a silver cup was sometimes the reward of the victor. In that year a considerable prize was given at Ambleside than had previously been known for some length of time...But in that year an advertisement containing the offer of five guineas and a silver mounted belt, to the victor, could not fail to excite an additional interest in the neighbourhood. This wrestling at Ambleside was chiefly patronised by J. Wilson, Esquire, of Ellerway."³

The offer of a 5 guinea prize in addition to the silver mounted belt might well have been catalytic, for Garnett notes that in 1830 the half yearly hirings for 'best men' to live in and work on the farms was £7.⁴ There was the tradition of living in and working on farms, hopefully saving to buy their own small farm, and the sums of 5 guineas would be quite considerable to them. Of the early winners noted at the Ferry, Windermere and at Ambleside were noted: Miles Dixon and

¹Sessions, F., 1905, p. 134.

²Machell, H.W., 1908, p. 14.

³Litt, W., Wrestliana, R. Gibson, 1823, p. 25.

⁴Garnett, F.W., 1912, p. 93.

James Dixon (champion wrestler at The Ferry in 1811, both of whom were wallers, i.e. the builders of dry stone walls): John Long, who won at Ambleside in 1811 and who was a wood cutter and sheep shearer: and Rowan Long who won at the Ferry in 1812. Rowan Long eventually moved from Hawkshead to become a vegetable gardener and nurseryman, and it might well be that his winnings from wrestling enabled him to make this move¹. Yet in spite of the fact that wrestling was primarily a farming sport, it does seem that a small number of educated people participated. Litt, the author is generally thought to have competed, and Scott writing towards the end of the nineteenth century states that "Clergymen have often been included amongst the best wrestlers of their time."² Wilson, too wrestled but at more select functions than the 'open' wrestling and sheep fairs of the age. In 1818 at a dinner at Windermere

"At the public dinner there were several gentlemen of weight and consideration of both political parties in the late political contest...there were the usual diversions: in the wrestling we understand that a young man named John Wilson, and his cousin."³

This would almost certainly be the same John Wilson, but the term 'young man' is, perhaps, somewhat flattering. According to Sessions he would at that time have been 33 years of age!⁴ It is probable that Wilson did more to develop early Lakeland sport than any other individual. Even after his appointment to the University of Edinburgh

¹ Cowper, H.S., *Hawkshead: history, archeology, industries, folklore, dialect.* Bemrose and Sons, London 1899, p. 214.

² Scott, W., *Bygone Cumberland and Westmorland,* William Andrews and Co., 1899, p. 189.

³ WG and KC, 18.7.1818.

⁴ Sessions, F., 1905, p. 132.

he returned on many occasions, some of his visits being recorded in the local press: he certainly visited Windermere Regatta in 1844. His contributions were also recognised in the yachting world, with Forwood noting that

"...in 1824 there seems to have been an awakening in the local interest in boating matters and we can, I think, trace it to the personal enthusiasm of Professor Wilson who lived in Elleray Cottage, and who appears to have taken great interest in aquatic pursuits."¹

Forwood notes that on this particular occasion there were more than 60 craft, with races for fishermen's boats, Innkeepers boats and a Gentlemen's Race. It would almost certainly be that this latter race would be of interest to Forwood because it might well have been the feature which eventually came to cause the separation of the races for the gentry (and thence to cause separate regattas) from those of the working population.

The critical feature of Wilson's contributions to sport in Southern Lakeland in that he had encouraged wrestling

"...by subscribing liberally, and taking a personal interest in so conducting the sports as to render them worthy of the patronage of the neighbouring gentry."²

and that he had spread this interest to other sports. Sports eventually became fashionable and increasingly supported by the gentry,

¹Forwood, W.B., Windermere and the Royal Yacht Club. Publisher not noted: no date, no page number.

²Gilpin, S. and Robinson, J. Wrestling and Wrestlers, Bemrose and Sons, London 1893, p. 104.

and it is against this background that the subsequent development of Lakeland sport should be viewed. Professor Wilson died in 1854 and in the following year a letter to the local paper suggested that a memorial should be erected in his memory¹. Sadly, this does not seem to have been done.

The main theme in the development of sports and regattas during the period 1800 - 1840 was one of growth. The period saw an improvement in communication and this would assist people to travel greater distances in order to compete in and watch the various sports meetings. As the sports became more fashionable so the crowds grew and at a number of the sports meetings the gentry subscribed money for the various prizes. In many cases, too, the early wrestling and then the athletics which had been an appendage to the horse racing meetings came to be separate sporting ventures in their own right. At a rural level there seemed to be an increasing number of sheep fairs coupled with sports meetings. There were, too, an increasing number of sporting ventures promoted by the various inns. Finally it seems that visitors were coming to the Lake District in increasing numbers, and that some of these visitors would be spectators at the sports. The increase in this social communication would be one of the main reasons for the spread of some of the Lakeland sports to different parts of Britain and eventually to different parts of the world.

To think of 'sports' and 'regattas' as being quite separate occasions would often be erroneous, for many of the sports near the lakes would include both land and water sports on the same day. A

¹WG and KA, 12.5.1855.

regatta had been contemplated on Lake Windermere in 1775¹, but it seems that this was cancelled in view of the American War of Independence. It seems that Bassenthwaite was the first of the lakes to hold a regatta and that this was on the 24th August 1780². Some two years later the fashion was taken up at Derwentwater, and this was clearly an occasion for the gentry. Mr. Pocklington was the owner of Derwentwater Island, and he had built a number of follies on the island. The entertainment was to arrange a sham attack on the island, and this was clearly an example of the indulgence of a person of some wealth. It is perhaps significant to note that this coincided with the early days of the Industrial Revolution. After the attack Mr. Pocklington and his guests moved off to Keswick where they enjoyed a display of fireworks followed by a dance³. This was obviously an example of the gentry besporting themselves and was quite removed from the mores of the farming community of the Lake District.

The second type of Lakeland regatta were the sailing competitions of the gentry. These were rare at the beginning of the nineteenth century but grew in number and importance as the century progressed. One such meeting took place on Lake Windermere in 1803, and was recorded in a letter from Joshua Mullock to J.C. Curwen, the owner of Belle Inland on Lake Windermere:

"My dear Sir,

I was much pleased and highly delighted with your particular account and description of the Regatta and

¹Hughes, E., 1965, p. 384.

²Nicholson, N., 'The Lake District: An Anthology', Robert Hale, 1977, p. 250.

³Hughes, E., 1965, p. 384.

the honourable part which the Barton bore in the contest. I was always convinced that her construction would ensure her the Palm even though opposed by more powerful competitors."¹

This was an interesting example of the early days of the gentry competing in sailing matches on Lake Windermere. The pleasure yacht had been invented many years previously in Holland ², with its introduction as a Lakeland sport coming much later.

The early rural ventures were probably quite large meetings which included the older type of farming sports and the boat racing for the gentry. The most notable meetings of this type seem to have been held at the Ferry House on the West side of Lake Windermere. This was, but is no longer, an inn. In 1810 there were rowing matches for men and women, a sailing match and prizes of

"One guinea to the best runner, distance two miles. A gown to be run for by women, one mile: a hat to the best runner (man or woman, blindfolded, for one hundred yards). One Guinea to the best leaper, one guinea to the best wrestler. John Wilson of Elleray, Steward."³

This particular meeting is of particular interest. It seems that eventually the women's races faded somewhat towards the middle of the century and with the increasing note given to the Puritancial ethic: certainly a mile race for women would have been most unusual in the latter years of the century. Secondly there was a 'fun' event, very

¹Curwen, M.S.S., letter of 15.8.1803.

²Longrigg, R., 1977, p. 177.

³Rollinson, W., 1974, p. 167.

WINANDERMERE REGATTA.



WINANDERMERE REGATTA,

Will take Place at the Ferry House,

On Wednesday the 25th July, 1810,

WHEN THE FOLLOWING

MATCHES,

WILL BE SAILED FOR.

1. Mr. Bolton's Schooner, the *FICTORY*.
Mr. Wilson's Schooner, the *ENDEAVOUR*.
Mr. Pedder's Schooner, the *EXPERIMENT*.
To start at eleven o'Clock.

2. Mr. Pedder's Schooner, *ROVER*.
Mr. Wilson's Cutter, *ELIZA*.
Mr. Wilson's Latine Sailed Vessel, *PALFOX*.

3. Mr. William Jernett's, *LIVERPOOLIAN*.
Mr. Smith's, *KITTY*.

ROWING MATCHES.

1. Mr. Francis Astley's Wherry, *MARY*.
Mr. Wilson's Wherry, *SWIFT*.
2. A Prize of one Guinea, to the best *Fishing Boat* on the Lake.
3. A Prize of one Guinea, to the best *Boat* kept by an Innkeeper.
4. A Gown to be rowed for by *Women*.
5. A Prize of two Guineas, for the best *Boat* on the Lake;
Wherries excepted.

RUNNING.

1. One Guinea to the best *Runner*, distance two Miles.
2. A Gown to be run for by *Women*, distance one Mile.
3. A Hat to the best *Runner*, (*Man or Woman*) blindfolded,
distance one hundred Yards.

LEAPING.

One Guinea to the best *Leaper*.

WRESTLING.

One Guinea to the best *Wrestler*.

A Variety of other Amusements will take place.

Dinner on the Table at four o'Clock.

*There will be a BALL, at the Salutation Inn, Ambleside,
on Thursday the 26th.*

JOHN WILSON, Esq. of Elleray, Steward.



FERRY HOUSE, REGATTA; WINDERMERE LAKE.

Ferry House Regatta, c.1818

much part of the rustic tradition but one which was to come under criticism later in the century with the growing sophistication of sport. Thirdly the prizes fell between goods and money. The early sports prizes of gowns, hats, ribbons, gloves seemed to fade somewhat as the century progressed. The leather belts for the wrestlers continued, but these came to be increasingly supplement^{ed} with money prizes. Fourthly and significantly there was the involvement of John Wilson.

This meeting in 1810 seems to have established the regatta on Lake Windermere. In 1812 it was

"...very respectably attended on Wednesday last, and the company appeared much gratified with the amusements of the day."

¹ WA and KC, 1.8.1812.

The meeting in the following year saw the usage of the fading term, 'Windandermere' in the advertisement for the regatta to be held

"...at the Ferry House on Wednesday the 28th of July 1813. A variety of Sailing Matches will take place, and the following Prizes will be given:- Two guineas to the best four-oared boat; two ditto to the the best two oared Boat, Fishing Boats and Wherries excepted. One ditto to the best Boat (bona fide) the property of an Inn-keeper; - Boats to start at Eleven o'clock. Two guineas and a Belt to the best Wrestler; one ditto to the best Leaper; one ditto to the best Runner."¹

This would seem to be a more ambitious meeting than that of three years previously, and it is noted that the prizes had increased in value. These meetings continued throughout the decade and seem to have grown. In 1814 were added 'Ass Races and Sack Races'², and it might be significant to note that in the following year there were advertised in Windermere for sale "Schooner-rigged Pleasure Boats".³ This clearly was aimed at the increasing number of the gentry who would be moving to Windermere and to the increasing fashion of sailing as a sport.

During this same second decade of the century there were also regattas on other lakes. One was recorded at Ullswater in 1812⁴, and at Keswick in 1818 in connection with Keswick Races where the prizes were noted as being:

¹ WA and KC, 10.7.1813.

² WA and KC, 2.7.1814.

³ WA and KC, 1.7.1815.

⁴ WA and KC, 19.9.1812.

"Purse of gold to row for by boats belonging to the Lake of Derwentwater; 3 guineas to wrestle for and a foot race for one guinea."¹

The subsequent report of this meeting indicated that "Keswick Regatta and Races were numerously attended...and afforded great amusement."²

The 1820's saw the continuation of the regatta run from the Ferry House, Windermere, but with an increasing element of rural humour. It was noted that

"A very handsome belt and fifteen shillings will be given to the Master Wrestler. A pig to be turned loose, and to be the property of him who takes it. A handsome bonnet to be run for by women. A hat to be got from the top of a pole."³

In all probability John Wilson would no longer be the steward for the Windermere Regatta, and it might well be that the character of the meeting had modified to some extent. Certainly the 'fun' events would provoke some interest. The pig 'to be turned loose' would undoubtedly have been well greased, as would the pole to be climbed in order to attain the hat!

In 1820 there seems to have been a drop in the prize money for the wrestling. By 1824, however, the wrestling was for a belt and five guineas. There were races for Fishermen's Boats, Innkeeper's

¹ *CJ*, 1.8.1818.

² *WA and KC*, 5.8.1818.

³ *WG and KA*, 5.8.1820.

Boats and Gentlemen's Boats. The jumping competitions included a hop step and leap, and it is probable that this was a relatively early reference to what was to become an Olympic event: other jumping competitions included the 3 standing leaps and the high leap¹. In this same year the report from the Ullswater Regatta indicated that there were gentry present, and that there was racing, leaping and wrestling - a significant change from the entertainment offered by the Duke of Norfolk to his guests some twelve years before, and a possible indication of the fact that whilst the gentry were certainly present there were other classes involved in the meeting.²

Towards the end of the first quarter of the century there continued sports in the older tradition of prizes rather than money. At the Cold Fell Races in 1822 there was a

"...BELT to be wrestled for, HAT to be run for by men,
A Whip to be run for by hounds - And a pair of gloves
to be leapt for."³

but this tradition seems to have been on the wane. With increasing travel and spectator interest there were at times quite considerable prizes, the value of which in relation to wages can be checked by reference to Garnett (Appendix 1). At the Keswick Regatta and Races in 1826, a three day meeting, there was a prize of £50 for each horse race, £20 total for wrestling and

¹WG and KA, 31.7.1824.

²WA and KC, 14.8.1824.

³CP, 22.7.1822.

"2 sovereigns for boats, in extreme length not exceeding 20 feet, 2 men; and one sovereign for blindfold boat race, one man."¹

It is difficult to assess the relative importance of the various sports at these larger ventures and there do seem to be differences between different areas: this, however, might in part be in relation to very localised traditions and to the interest of particular individuals. Certainly other functions were being attached to the race meetings. In 1826 the Kirkby Stephen races included wrestling with "THE BELT (with pecuniary additions) to be wrestled for",² and at the Carlisle Races in 1828 the Earl of Lonsdale offered a total of 20 guineas of prize money for the wrestling with 8 guineas of that sum going to the winner³. Certainly the wrestling was growing, possibly at the expense of some of the horse racing. Later in the century a number of the smaller race meetings were to be abandoned, or, more properly, to be taken over by other functions. It might well be that one of the earlier signs of change occurred at Bassenthwaite in 1826 where

"The races and sports...were attended by a vast concourse of people. The wrestling on the first day was admirable... little or no interest was excited by the horse races."⁴

There was also a foot race and a dog trail and, perhaps of festive significance, the Keswick Union Band was present. This latter trend became more noticeable as the century continued.

¹CP, 22.8.1826.

²WA and KC, 22.4.1826.

³CP, 16.9.1828.

⁴CP, 26.9.1826.

The regattas on Windermere seemed to excite increasing interest towards the end of the third decade of the century, and this might in part have been the result of the increasing attraction of the Lake District as a place to visit with Windermere being the most accessible lake for the majority of visitors. In 1827 it was noted

"The Lakes - The people residing on the banks of Winandermere, the Queen of the Lakes, are all animation and bustle, preparing to receive company during the summer months...the miniature navy is afloat."¹

More significantly in the following year there was a second regatta on Lake Windermere. The initial regatta had been held at the Ferry House which was an inn but also the landing point for the ferry from Bowness: it would almost certainly have been used for the traffic from Hawkshead to Bowness and vice versa. However it is probable that at this time the tourist trade was slowly growing, and this might well have influenced the development of a second regatta on Lake Windermere. The site for this new regatta was at the Low Wood on the eastern side of the lake which was, by appearance, built in part for the tourist trade. The announcement was

"Regatta - We are given to understand that a Regatta will be held sometime in the month of August next, at the Low Wood Inn, Mr. Thomas Jackson's, on the most extensive, splendid and liberal scale. The whole of the miniature navy on both sides of the Lake, from Newby Bridge to Brathay Hall, will be pressed into service. It is already patronised by all the first resident gentlemen; a large subscription is expected to be raised and distributed in prizes, for sailing matches, wrestling, leaping and other athletic amusements."²

¹ *WG and KA, 9.5.1827.*

² *WG and KA, 14.6.1828.*

The other amusements included hound trailing and a firework display in the evening, and it was noted in the report of the regatta that there were 78 competitors in the wrestling and that there were approximately 1,000 spectators¹. This regatta was held in August, and in the following month the local paper gave a long account of the meeting at the Ferry House, indicating its size and importance and noting that a number of the gentry were present.²

It is probable that the meeting at the Low Wood Inn, one which clearly catered for the growing number of middle class residents and visitors resulted in the formation of a sailing club in the district, for in 1829 there was reported a second annual gala for the 'Windermere Sailing Club'³, and it might well be that this was the gradual beginning of a separation of the two (eventually) distinctive types of regattas. What is clear is that by 1830 there were at least four regattas firmly established in the Lake District, being the two on Windermere, one on Derwentwater and one on Ullswater.

Sports also continued to develop away from the lakes. As the brideswains faded, coincidental with improvement in the road system, so there came to be an increasing number of fairs with attendant sports. Netherwasdale fair and sports was briefly reported in 1809⁴, but sports in association with fairs do not seem to have been considered to be of great importance during the early years of the century. They seemed to grow with the development of the regattas,

¹*WG and KA, 30.8.1828.*

²*WG and KA, 13.9.1828.*

³*CP, 22.8.1829.*

⁴*CP, 22.8.1809.*

for fashions of sport seem to spread in various settings, and within many of the Lakeland valleys being some distance from the actual lakes it was probable that the running, leaping, wrestling and hound trailing competitions would occur to an increasing extent at those fairs which were held in the valleys and outlying areas of the Lake District. By the early 1820's there were a number of sports functioning, many of them connected with the fairs. At Parton Easter Sports the events had included wrestling, guzzling hot porridge and grinning with an "...elastic countenance, singularly called gurning, for tobacco."¹ This was known as "gurnin' through a braffin", with the prize going to the person who pulled the ugliest face through a horse collar. The sport is continued at Egremont Crab Fair, at which meeting in 1822 there were foot races, leaping for 5 shillings and

"Immediately after this a ring was formed for the wrestlers, who well tried the strength of their arms and brawny shoulders, and pulled one another about most manfully. Bateman of Oatenfews, near Calderbridge, who lately won the prize at Wasdale fair, forcibly secured the best prize here, also throwing Ford, the person who threw Weightman at Carlisle."²

Indications as to the social class of participants in the sports meetings of the 1820's seems to have been noted on rare occasions, but one (deliberately humorous?) note relating to the above meeting records that:

"In the evening the sports commenced; there were several good foot races. Richard Pitt, shoemaker, Egremont, run off with the best prize."⁵⁷

¹ CP, 15.4.1822.

² WG and KA, 28.9.1822.

At the Netherwasdale Fair there had been the showing of sheep in the morning, sports in the afternoon and a dance in the evening.¹ What is of interest is the connection between the various meetings in terms of who attended them. Whilst Egremont is probably no further than 10 miles from Wasdale, the connection with the rather more distant Carlisle is indicative of the extent to which wrestlers were travelling in order to compete. By the end of the 1820's the fairs seem to have been well established and increasingly reported. The Eskdale Fair and sports in 1829 was noted in the Kendal paper as having

"...an abundant show of sheep, which were in good demand for grazing...The sports in the afternoon were good. The prize for the leaping was won by Tolson of Egremont; the dog race by a celebrated animal belonging to Mr. Rogers of Brothelkeld; the foot race by W. Vickers; and the chief prize for the wrestling was carried away by W. Ritson of Wasdale Head."²

The Cumberland Paquet noted that there were 64 competitors in the wrestling, and that

"The sports in the afternoon were excellent, and appeared to give much satisfaction to the immense concourse of spectators."³

During the same period towards the end of the 1820's John Wilson (by now Professor Wilson of Edinburgh University) returned to the Lake District upon occasion and continued to support ventures that he had in part or wholly inaugurated. One such visit in 1828 he had again patronised wrestling at Ambleside, where

¹ *Ibid.*

² *WG and KA, 26.8.1829.*

³ *CP, 22.9.1829.*

"The head prizes, a belt and a sovereign given by Professor Wilson, was won by Thomas Robinson, schoolmaster of Patterdale."¹

By this time the wrestling matches as sole ventures seem to have faded somewhat, but they were later to return as very large spectator sports. The point of particular interest about the Ambleside wrestling in 1828 is the profession of the winner, Thomas Robinson, schoolmaster. Whilst a number of comments exist in relation to occasional wrestling by the gentry and members of the Church, it seems difficult to identify them with precision as the winners of, or participants in, meetings before the 1841 census returns.

By the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century the regattas on Lake Windermere were well established, and their place in the social calendar was one of some importance. They were noted in the local press with approval:

"...every station on the bank was occupied with smiling faces...regatta...under the auspices of John Bolton, Storrs Hall."²

The Keswick regatta, too, was continuing in popularity, and it is probable that an increasing number of Lakeland visitors were witnessing the regattas. Marshall and Walton noted that

"By the 1830's, the tourist trade was well established in the three main urban centres (Bowness, Ambleside and Keswick), and its expansion was accelerating as turnpike improvements, faster and safer coaching and postal services, and steamers to Whitehaven and Bardsea

¹*WG and KA, 14.6.1828.*

²*CP, 19.9.1828.*

made the approaches easier; and the reduced cost, in time as well as money, enabled the growing professional and commercial middle classes to participate increasingly."¹

The increasing tourist trade would eventually modify the pattern of the regattas. Savage noted, with regard to the rowing and sailing that

"There has always been great rivalry between the neighbouring villages of Ambleside and Bowness-on-Windermere, probably originating from the keen competition for water trade along the lake."²

What seems apparent is that the regattas became increasingly sophisticated and that, as the century progressed they were modified in relation to the interests of the visitors. The regatta at Windermere in 1830 was reported to some extent in relation to the sailing and wrestling, but the running (if indeed there was running) was ignored.³

During the 1830's the newspaper reporting increased considerably, and this might well be an indication of the growing importance of the regattas. In 1831 there were skiff races, races for fishing boats, for pleasure boats and a sailing match for larger boats: there was a trail hunt, wrestling and a Regatta Ball in the evening.⁴ This was at the Windermere Regatta, and seems to indicate an increasing interest on the part of the gentry. Savage notes that

"The local gentry often organised and took part in the regattas, their contribution being the provision of prize

¹*Marshall, J.D. and Walton, J.K., 1981, p. 179.*

²*Savage, M., 1970, p. 21.*

³*WG and KA, 11.9.1830.*

⁴*WG and KA, 30.7.1831.*

money and the cold buffet lunch. The climax of the day for the ordinary folk was the race between the big pleasure yachts of the gentry...the regattas were usually followed by wrestling contests which were popular with the country people and which the upper and middle classes were beginning to find interesting."¹

By 1831 there were two annual regattas on Lake Windermere based, it seems at the Low Wood hotel and at the Ferry Inn: the Keswick Races and regatta continued with a limited amount of rowing, with wrestling, horse races and foot races.² The Keswick Regatta of 1833 was enthusiastically reported as a two day meeting involving foot racing, wrestling, a dog trail and boating races for skiffs, wherries and pleasure boats, but there was no report relating to horse racing³. It appears that by the 1830's the horse racing at some of the smaller meetings was beginning to be abandoned. In the same year there were again two regattas on Lake Windermere, one of which was noted as being "...under the direction of the Gentlemen of the Windermere Yacht Club."⁴ There was also wrestling for a belt and £6 at this meeting, and it seems that whilst the gentry were supporting the wrestling there was the beginning of what was eventually to become a yachting regatta, an occasion somewhat divorced from the more rustic occasions at the Ferry House earlier in the century. During this same year there was a regatta at Ullswater with boating, hound trailing and wrestling⁵, and this pattern of two annual regattas on Windermere, one on Derwentwater and one at the Pooley Bridge end of Ullswater seems to

¹ *Savage, M., 1970, p. 22.*

² *WG and KA, 27.8.1831.*

³ *WG and KA, 19.10.1833.*

⁴ *WG and KA, 20.7.1833.*

⁵ *WG and KA, 31.8.1833.*

have become well established.

In 1834 there were two regattas on Windermere, but with the growing sophistication there was some criticism of the 'rustic' nature of some of the events. Whilst there were long and complimentary reports on the boating and the wrestling there was also a disparaging comment:

"Of the gridders, hasty pudding eater, sack runners and blindfold wheelbarrow racers, we take no account."¹

This does not seem to be a typical comment, for the 'fun' events did continue. Comment has already been made with regard to the gridding: the 'hasty pudding eaters' were required to eat hot hasty pudding as quickly as possible using the fingers to scoop the contents from the plate. The wrestling continued to retain a place of considerable importance at the regattas. In 1836 at the Low Wood Hotel regatta it was noted that there were 46 competitors in the light-weight wrestling and 94 in the heavyweight competition². However there eventually came to be a separation of the yachting from those regattas which also included a range of other activities. Hall³ notes the formation of the Windermere Sailing Club as being dated at 1860, but it does seem that this was preceded by a less formal organisation connected with yachting. Certainly in 1839 there was "The yacht race for the Windermere Cup"⁴, which event consisted of a series of races.⁵

¹WG and KA, 30.8.1834.

²WG and KA, 27.8.1836.

³Hall, B. (ed.), *The R.W.Y.C., 1860-1960*, John Sherratt and Son, Altrincham 1960, p. 13.

⁴WG and KA, 1.6.1839.

⁵WG and KA, 28.8.1839.

What is apparent is that by 1840 the early type of regattas were continuing and that they included a number of activities and attracted tourists: and that there was a parallel growth in yachting by the gentry, eventually to develop into a relatively exclusive club.

It is difficult to draw comparisons with other relatively rural areas, but in one instance it is possible to note that the development of the Lakeland regattas occurred well before similar developments in Worcester. Davis notes the establishment of the Ariel Boat Club at Worcester on 1st May, 1841 but notes that "...organisational development was almost certainly preceded by recreational boating and occasional wager matches"¹. What is certain is that by 1840 regattas were an important part of the sporting scene in the Lake District, and that the importance of the regattas was to grow throughout the remainder of the century.

With regard to the Scottish Highland Games, Webster tells us that

"By the 1820's there were Highland Games, on almost identical lines to those of today, extensively organised throughout the country."²

The same could not be said of the Lake District. Whilst there were a number of rural sports there was no generally established pattern, and the eventually famous Grasmere sports had not yet come into existence. With the coming of visitors and the improvement in

¹ Davis, R.J., Boating in Worcester in the Nineteenth Century. Russell Printers, Worcester, p. 4.

² Webster, D., Scottish Highland Games. Edinburgh, Reprographia, 1973, p. 11.

transport the pattern was to change, but in 1830 the position was essentially rural and possibly still rustic:

"Whitsuntide - We have around us a week of mirth and fun, for the amusement of our hard peasantry who toil through the year in the field. Rural races have been abundant, and each village or hamlet has resounded with shouts and noise; pony races for bridles, wrestling for belts, running for hats by men and shifts by women; leaping for gloves, trail hunts for sovereigns."¹

This situation was to change. Whilst many of the village sports continued, there came developments in the towns and townships which increasingly attracted attention. One such meeting was inaugurated in Southern Lakeland, and came to be of considerable sporting importance. In 1834 there was

"...Pigeon shooting, wrestling, at Flan, near Ulverston. These sports took place on Saturday September 6th and went off with great spirit. They are intended to be held annually about the same time, and the prizes in future will present increased attraction."²

In the following year there was pigeon shooting, wrestling and hound trailing at Flan Sports, and these sports continued to grow in popularity for many years. Some five years later it would seem that they were firmly established as part of a developing and sporting scene:

"On Friday morning, at early hours, Ulverston and its vicinity began to show that something more than ordinary was about to take place...gigs, carts, shandy carts rattling into the town, whilst equestrians and pedestrians were pouring in by every avenue in countless numbers."³

¹WG and KA, 5.6.1830.

²WG and KA, 13.9.1834.

³CJ, 25.7.1839.

The sports at The Flan were a little unusual in that they do not seem to have been connected with a previous function. Many of the other sports meetings seem to have developed from previously organised functions. Ennerdale Sports, developing from a sheep fair, grew throughout the fourth decade of the century. It was noted in 1837 that

"The day was favourable and the crops being nearly all secured, the attendance of young persons, some from a considerable distance, was unprecedented."¹

During the 1830's this would be one of the typical scenes of Lakeland sports - an established occasion to which sports became attached, with (in many cases) the possibility of the original purpose being forgotten. An interesting example of this was the growth of wrestling: the report of the Penrith Hunt and Races in the same year stresses the sport of wrestling, with the actual horse racing being barely mentioned - a change that had come within a space of some 10-20 years². Some two years later it seems that the wrestling had become predominant at Penrith, for the autumn meeting simply gave a long report on the one sport, noting 108 entries and an £8 prize for the winner.³ Some two weeks later in Penrith there were again sports for

"Martinmas being a holiday with the mechanics and other tradespeople, in the afternoon they have wrestling and other rust amusements."³

¹CP, 3.10.1837.

²CP, 17.10, 1837.

³WG and KA, 16.11.1839.

Interestingly there was a foot race, a hurdle race for men (over 4 hurdles) and wrestling. There is, perhaps, some significance in the 'hurdle race'. This would be run over sheep hurdles, i.e. the hurdles which were used to contain the sheep at the sheep fairs. At this time there would be no formal distance for hurdle races, no formal height for the hurdles and no set spacing between the hurdles: the hurdle events were formalised much later. The suggestions that hurdling started as an event in the second half of the nineteenth century at the older universities are quite erroneous. What might well have occurred is that a number of the rural sports were seen by the gentry, practised by the gentry at the universities with the rules being formalised as part of this process. The same might well be true of pole vaulting, for at Greystoke Races (i.e., at Greystoke Castle near Penrith in 1839

"There followed the catgallows with poles...the prize was won by Alcock who cleared the bar at the astonishing height of nearly nine feet, and who also won the hurdle race for men."¹

The sport of high jumping was at times referred to as 'Leaping a Catgallows' and the catgallows with poles would be what we refer to as pole vaulting. It is interesting to note that both hurdling and competitive pole vaulting might well have started in the vicinity of Penrith: and certainly these events were due to spread to world athletics. In the same year at Appleby there was

"...climbing greasy pole, foot race, grinning through a collar, wrestling for a belt, 'the noble art of supping porridge, scalding hot, fingers only' and a match upon stilts."²

¹*WG and KA, 14.9.1839.*

²*WG and KA, 6.7.1839.*

By 1840 the sports meetings had taken bases in the Lake District. Whilst the village sports seem to have continued, the larger meetings were growing and were clearly fashionable. At the Dan Hill Sports near Stavely in 1840

"The licensed vituallers and jerry shops in Stavely were completely eaten out of house and harbour...The Grand Stand was crowded to excess with the gentry and ladies from all parts of the neighbourhood."

There were upwards of 2,000 spectators at the two day meeting and, most interestingly, there was a steeplechase for men over a distance of two miles: this might well be the first reference to the distance of the steeplechase event, a distance which was to become formalised at a much later date.¹

Whilst sports grew in connection with the regattas, as developing village celebrations and in connection with Easter, Whitsuntide and Martinmas gatherings, they also grew in relation to activities organised by the inns. At a national level this was noted by Malcolmson:

"The other principal social support for popular recreations was the publican and the public house. Indeed, for the exercise of many recreations the participation of publicans was often very useful and sometimes even essential. Aside from the family household, the public house was the foremost everyday meeting place for off-work social gatherings; it was one of the fundamental social centres of the community (the only others of importance were the market place, the village green, and perhaps the churchyard), and because of this it came to serve as a major focal point around which recreations were developed and cultivated. It was a natural recreation centre, for

¹WG and KA, 29.8.1840.

men were in the habit of visiting the public house during their free time for refreshment, and conversation, and conviviality."¹

This was true of the Lake District. One of the earlier references was in some ways critical in that it associated the inn sports with the lower classes and, indeed, with a certain ignorance. In 1824 the Westmorland Advertiser noted a 'pub notice' -

"Punctuation and c. - The following specimen of orthography and punctuation is copied from a manuscript, posted near the Bridge Inn, Beathwaite Green:-

'Bridge Inn Anual Races Will Take place on Whiston Monday 7th June 1823 When the following prizes will be Run for A Saddle to Gallop for, a Bridle to Trott for 2/6 for Jack Asses----- Mans Hatt to run for 1 lb Bacco to be run for in Sacks, A Belt to wristle for --- with Dog Trails and Several Other Divirsons Incident to the Day'."²

Perhaps the criticism was rather unfair, for there would be many at that time who had not been able to take advantage of the possibilities of school education. Yet it does indicate that there were Inn sports, and that they were essentially rural. What seems clear is that publicans would be astute enough to promote such functions as would be beneficial to their trade. In 1835 there were

"Rural Sports - Plough Inn. At this season rural sports are held at the various country public houses: and those ³ at the Plough Inn, Selside, were held on Wednesday last."

The sports included trotting, hound trailing and wrestling.

¹ Malcolmson, W., *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850*, C.U.P. 1973, p. 71.

² WA and KC, 22.5.1824.

³ WG and KA, 13.6.1835.

By 1840 the inn sports were assuming a greater importance. In 1840 it was noted that "...the usual rural sports took place at Sun Inn, Crook, and were numerous attended"¹. There was trotting and wrestling, and a dance in the evening. During the same week there was a similar function at the Plough Inn, with the hound trailing being noted as a "...scent race"². Two weeks later there was a similar type of sports further south -

"Scotch Jean's Sports. - These sports took place at the Black Horse Inn, in Killington, on Tuesday evening last, and consisted of a trotting match, foot races and wrestling."³

By 1840 much of the pattern of Lakeland sport had been formalised: that which had been rustic had become rural, and in some cases urban. Whilst the horse racing had started to fade, the regattas and the sports (including wrestling) had become firmly established. Cricket had been introduced to the district by the gentry as part of a national scene: but indigenous sports were growing, some to remain permanently in the Lake District, some to be exported to a growing world of sport.

¹ *WG and KA, 13.6.1840.*

² *WG and KA, 13.6.1840.*

³ *WG and KA, 27.6.1840.*

Chapter 4

1840 - A Widening World

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The Lake District in 1800 was relatively isolated and dominated by a rural economy. There was only one 'large' town/city, Carlisle, with a population of some 9,000: the population of the whole of Westmorland and Cumberland in 1801 was noted as being 158,000.¹ The Industrial Revolution had but little impinged upon the Lake District, and the pattern of life was based almost entirely upon an agricultural economy. What Malcolmson says of rural England generally was probably true of the Lake District:

"It was a world of face-to-face contacts, depriving its unifying forces from the common experience of the daily (not yearly) routine and a shared oral culture. The people's social relationships stemmed mostly from the ties of family, the ties of neighbourhood (a village, a hamlet, one end of the town), and the ties which were formed in the course of their work. The range of their social encounters were fairly limited, in most rural areas, aside from the market towns, they would have relatively infrequent contact with total strangers."²

Travel was not easy, and in any case was but little needed. As far as the fell farmer was concerned

"...few items of his diet were imported, and similarly most of his clothes were made from the wool of his own sheep."³

It was an insular life, and within this framework recreation was locally based: sport was rustic.

¹*Mitchell, B.A. and Deane, P., 1971, p. 20.*

²*Malcolmson, W., 1972, p. 52.*

³*Rollinson, W., 1974, p. 56.*

By 1840 the scene was changing and the Lake District was slowly becoming acquainted with a wider world. In 1800 there were few visitors to the Lake District, but by 1840 the Lakes were being increasingly visited in relation to tourism and to a small number of 'offcomers' wishing to live in the beauty of the area. The Lakeland poets represented part of a new and influential fashion. The gentry were to an increasing extent bringing their London friends to their Lakeland hills. The cottage industries were fading and the Industrial Revolution was evident in the towns. There was bobbin making and carpet weaving in and around Kendal, an increasing amount of quarrying and mining in the area and the growth of a port such as Whitehaven in relation to the trade with the U.S.A. There was a movement to the towns with attendant health problems - indeed there had been cholera in Kendal in 1832 and the resultant postponement of the Low Wood Inn regatta¹. The growth of industries created a different pattern of life for those who had moved away from farming areas. Other new industries came such as the manufacture of gunpowder and eventually the building of iron ships with the resultant development of Barrow-in-Furness. Industry, too, meant that transport had to be improved. Road and sea transport were improving, and the canal had been brought to Kendal in 1819. Hadfield and Biddle noting that

"On 18.6.1819 a grand opening ceremony was held with the canal flotilla of boats, procession through Kendal and dinner and ball at the Town Hall."²

Of far greater significance was the coming of the railway. Commenting

¹WG and KA, 28.7.1832.

²Hadfield, C. and Biddle, G., The Canals of North West England, David and Charles 1970, p. 193.

on the opening of the Carlisle to Newcastle railway the Carlisle Journal of the 16th July 1836 had noted that "The whole of the Lake District is crowded with much fashionable company."¹ This was eventually to affect such occasions as the Newcastle Easter sports, with the Cumberland and Westmorland style of wrestling being taken there and with wrestlers from Carlisle and the northern parts of the Lake District going to compete in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. During the following fifteen years the railway system of the Lake District was to extend considerably. The line from Lancaster to Kendal was opened in 1844 and extended to Windermere in 1847. The middle years of the 1840's also saw the Penrith to Keswick line opened and the Lancaster to Carlisle line in operation. The railways had some considerable effect, and with regard to Windermere resulted in an increasing number of residents and long stay visitors, holiday makers and working class excursionists.² With the decline of some of the cottage based industries, too, there might well have been increasing financial dependence upon visitors coming to the Lake District, it being noted that

"As its woollen industry declined into extinction, Keswick became increasingly dependent upon its tourists."³

Transport, however, meant more than industry and local communication, for it also facilitated the spread of ideas. It brought newspapers and an increasing interest in education: and it brought the ideas and

¹*CJ*, 16.7.1836.

²*Marshall, J.D. and Walton, J.K., 1981, p. 182.*

³*Marshall, J.D. and Walton, J.K., 1981, p. 188.*

attitudes of a wider world and in some measure a modified attitude towards leisure. The middle years of the century saw slow but significant national changes:

"In the years around the mid-century the Victorians entered a new leisure world. The Ten Hours Act of 1847 and the Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851 were both symbolic pivots of this change whereby leisure in its modern form became progressively more plentiful, more visible, more sought after and more controversial."¹

These changes would probably be somewhat slow in coming to the Lake District, and it might well be that Bailey's comments were rather more related to the suburban middle class than to the residents of the Lake District, particularly those who were still primarily concerned with a rural economy. But there would be some effects. With regard to Windermere, Marshall and Walton note that the newer residents would have some effect in that

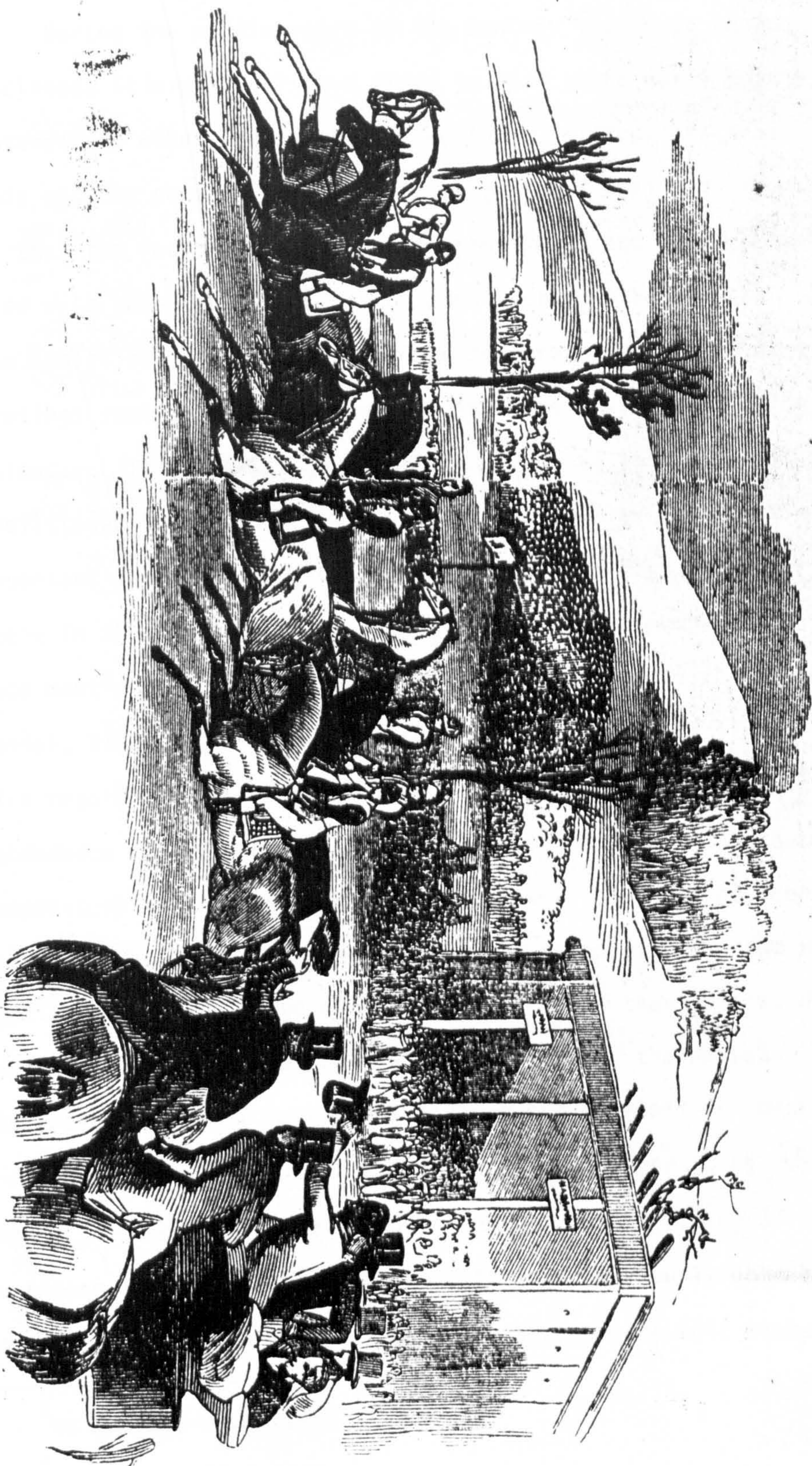
"...their recreational pursuits added to the resort's attractions, as the regular regattas of the Windermere Yacht Club entertained the less opulent with spectacular display."²

It is probable that in the Lake District the effects of the improved communications would be three-fold. The local sports, in general, grew and thrived with an increasing number of spectators. The national sport of cricket grew and spread downwards through the social strata of society: and in a number of the sports and regattas there were some modifications in relation to attitudes and an increasing

¹*Bailey, P., 1978, p. 56.*

²*Marshall, J.D. and Walton, J.K., 1981, p. 182.*

semi-professionalism, with competitors travelling greater distances in order to participate. During the early years of the century sport had been seen primarily against a local background but with some national influences. During the period 1840 - 1870 it came to a rather greater extent to be seen against limited national influences, although the change in Lakeland would be far less than that evident in more industrial areas.



KENDAL STEEPLE CHASE. — THE START.

KENDAL STEEPLE CHASE.

We have been favoured by the publisher of the *Pictorial Times* with a cast of the engraving of the Kendal Steeple Chase, which appeared in that journal last week from a sketch made on the ground by Mr. H. Pitt, of Kendal. The engraving would have appeared in our paper of last week but for an accidental delay in receiving the cast. We insert it this week at the request of several subscribers, although it appears somewhat behind time.

(a) 1840 - 1870 : Sport for the Gentry?

During the middle years of the century the horse racing declined; it might well have faded in that there was a developing interest in other sports, but it would be difficult to prove that this was the case on the part of the gentry. What does seem apparent is that the races at Ambleside, Bassenthwaite and Keswick eventually died with these occasions being taken over by other sports - with the athletics, the hound trails and the wrestling. The larger meetings seem to have continued as important dates within the social calendar. It might well be that the coming of the railways facilitated the travel of the gentry to a smaller number of more important meetings, and that the rich would in part see their social scene in the racing world as being an increasing number of visits to race meetings in the London area, rather than visits to Appleby, Kendal, Kirby Stephen and Penrith. Certainly in 1842 it was noted with regard to Penrith Races that "...the number of people in attendance was but few."¹ However it must be noted that there were 64 competitors in the wrestling. It might well be that the scene had changed in that the wrestling, initially an addition to the race meeting, had grown to be of greater importance than the racing itself. Reports from Kendal are somewhat contradictory: the Annual Steeplechase in 1846 noted that "This event came off on Tuesday last, and proved a very brilliant affair"² and was deemed to be important enough in terms of reporting for a copy of the engraving of the start to appear in the local newspaper³. This was obviously an event unconnected with the Kendal Races, for a report in 1848 states that:

¹WG and KA, 15.10.1842.

²WG and KA, 28.3.1846.

³WG and KA, 11.4.1846.

"It is now fourteen years since the Kendal Races, after being carried on for eleven years, were discontinued... an effort was made this year to re-establish them, and the first day's sport came off on Thursday last."¹

In the same year there was reported the 'Penrith Hunt and Inglewood Races', but with no mention of the wrestling²: by this time the wrestling was flourishing away from its previous connections with the horse racing: in the following year the same meeting was reported, with wrestling but with a note of concern for the relatively low number of entries in the latter sport³. Wrestling had developed far more strongly in connections away from racing, and what had simply been an addendum to the race meetings had developed into a major event in its own right away from the racing. At the Inglewood Hunt in 1851 it was noted that there was wrestling, pole leaping and a running high leap but "There were no horse races this year."⁴ Carlisle races continued to be a major event and were still, in the 1860's, connected with the wrestling. In all probability there was a continuing interest on the part of the incumbents of Lowther Castle, who seem to have supported the Carlisle Races throughout the century. During this same decade the racing at Kendal seems to have revived with a strong connection with the wrestling, for a note of 1864 indicates that

"Kendal Races and Wrestling. - We understand that the Committees of Kendal have amalgamated, and that both sports will be held on the Racecourse, on Whitsun Week, and that there will be two days races instead

¹WG and KA, 17.6.1848.

²WG and KA, 14.10.1848.

³WG and KA, 6.4.1849.

⁴WG and KA, 18.10.1851.

of one, the wrestling taking place in the early part of the day."¹

The general pattern would seem to be one of the slow decline of horse racing as far as the smaller meetings were concerned: but the major meeting of the area - at 'The Swifts', near Carlisle, seemed to have flourished.

During this same period there was a growth in hare coursing. Whilst the hunting of stags did continue to some extent, it is probable that the fading of cock-fighting had some effect upon the development of another 'blood sport'. In 1841 there was a long report on the Whitehaven Spring Coursing meeting, perhaps indicative of the increasing interest in the sport². Some two years later it was noted that

"The Lowther Coursing Meeting, which has long ranked as the first in the North, is this year intended to be on a much more extensive scale than usual."³

It was, in fact, extended to a 3 day meeting. The Bendrigg Coursing Club meeting in the same year warranted a long newspaper report and it is clear from the report that this was also a festive and somewhat formal occasion: the sport had developed its own formalised structure.⁴ There came some four years later an interesting report relating to

¹WG and KA, 2.4.1864.

²WG and KA, 6.3.1841.

³WG and KA, 19.8.1843.

⁴WG and KA, 21.10.1843.

both the growth of the sport of coursing and to the continuing development of the railway system: after the Clapham Common Coursing meeting it was noted that the 'navvies' were dining off jugged hare.¹ Coursing continued to be reported to a considerable extent for many years, with the clear support of the gentry. The Martin's Coursing meeting in 1857 was noted as having taken place in grounds belonging to the Earl of Lonsdale², and in the same year a rather different unusual event took place on the island in Windermere owned by the Curwen family:

"Hare Hunting on Belle Isle, Windermere. - Of all the fun and frolic, pleasures and pastimes, sports and sprees, rustic play and recreation, commend us to a hare hunt on Belle Isle."³

Hares had been imported for the occasion to the 30 acre island, and there were "...scores of dogs and hundreds of hunters."⁴ The popularity of hare coursing was particularly evident during the later years of the 1850's and during the 1860's. In 1859 it was noted that there were 113 entries for the Brougham and Whinfell Coursing meeting⁵, and it was noted that the Brougham Cup awarded on that occasion was valued at £336.⁶ Running in parallel with the coursing of hares was the hunting of hares, and this was also becoming more fashionable. At the Stavely Hunt in 1860 3 hares were caught and the evening concluded with "...an excellent dinner!"⁷. In the

¹ *WG and KA*, 4.12.1847.

² *WG and KA*, 14.2.1857.

³ *WG and KA*, 14.11.1857.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *WG and KA*, 30.7.1859.

⁶ *WG and KA*, 29.10.1859.

⁷ *WG and KA*, 17.11.1860.

following year this occasion was noted as being the 'Mayor Hunt', lasting for some 5 hours with 3 hares being caught: "...one of the merriest days sport ever known in this sporting district"¹. Newspaper reports continued to be glowing throughout the remainder of the decade, with hare hunting and coursing being seen to be occasions warranting some respect. Hare hunting was deemed to warrant the appointment of a 'Mayor' - a fellow of good local standing - to take charge of the occasion. At the Crosthwaite Annual Mayor Hunt in 1866 it was noted that 5 hares had been killed², and the apparent respectability of the Brougham and Whinfell Open Coursing meeting in 1869 is encapsulated in the report that

"In conclusion, I have only to reiterate that the Brougham meeting has been the means of affording the best couple of days coursing witnessed in either Cumberland or Westmorland for many a long day."³

The reports on hunting seemed to have declined to some extent during the period 1840 - 1870: there were an increasing number of other sporting activities to report, but it might well also be that the gentry hunted to a lesser extent: the railways brought more rapid communication with London, and it might well be that the sporting interests of the aristocracy were tending to centre more upon the capital city. At the same time there was a downward spread of sport through society, a slow but continuing process. Those sports supported by the gentry came increasingly, in many instances, to be the concern of the middle classes and indeed the lower classes of

¹WG and KA, 16.11.1861.

²WG and KA, 3.11.1866.

³CJ, 19.10.1869.

society. The lack of support by the gentry for Penrith's major sporting venture was noted in 1852:

"The only thing lacking to bring back Inglewood Hunt and Penrith Races to their former importance is, as was before said, patronage, support and good management."¹.

The report noted the occasion as being in decline, and commented upon horse racing, wrestling and a foot race². Later in the year the position changed in that - as had happened and would eventually happen on a number of sporting occasions - the promotion of the meeting was eventually assisted by a landlord. It was obviously in the interests of landlords to promote their trade, and the growth of sport was proving to be valuable in this respect. Later in the same year there was a Stag Hunt, it being noted that

"As Inglewood Hunt and Penrith Races have become defunct, Mr. Robert Taylor, White Hart Inn, in order to afford his friends and the lovers of stag hunting in the town and neighbourhood a day's sport...applied to S. Marshall of Patterdale Hall for a stag."

One was procured: there was a big turnout of spectators for the event which was followed by an evening dinner³. This would seem to represent an interesting example of a number of changes: the modifying pattern of support of the local gentry for what had been particularly important social occasions in their lives, the increasing interest of the innkeepers to promote particular ventures, and the

¹*WG and KA, 3.4.1852.*

²*Ibid.*

³*WG and KA, 13.11.1852.*

spread of some sports (previously the preserve of the gentry) to the lower echelons of society. What has been noted with regard to stag hunting was far more apparent with regard to coursing, with the hare coursing of the gentry being copied to some extent (and not always with success) by the rabbit coursing of some of those of less standing in the community. At the Easter Games in Kendal in 1853 there was rabbit coursing, but dissatisfaction was expressed, it being noted that

"...we would recommend, in another year, of one of the good old English games of wrestling or foot-ball playing, or both."¹

The wrestling was the well-established Cumberland and Westmorland style, and it is probable that the foot-ball referred to the crude town games of the time, for the 'Association' game and the 'Rugby' game had at this time not appeared in the Lake District. However an entirely different attitude towards rabbit coursing came in the same year from the eastern part of the Lake District:

"Rabbit Coursing. - Mr. Wm. Lupton, of the Golden Lion Inn, Sedbergh, introduced this new popular sport into Sedbergh...After the coursing a ring was formed and some superior wrestling took place."

The coursing was for curs, shepherd's dogs and terriers, and clearly some distance removed from the hare coursing by the greyhounds of the gentry². Rabbit coursing was again reported in 1859, with the spread of a range of sports in relation to the involvement of the inns being

¹WG and KA, 2.4.1853.

²WG and KA, 12.3.1853.

noted

"...again at the Eagle and Child on Wednesday - shooting and a wrestling match and...on the same day there was rabbit coursing at Mr. E. Borwick's Abbey Hotel."¹

As the hare coursing of the gentry had been the subject of considerable interest in the 1840's and 1850's, so the rabbit coursing at the level of organised inn sports for others came to be increasingly noted, with newspaper comments often being extremely favourable. The position of the sport in the mid-1860's was noted in the venture run by a publican at Bothecerby at which the coursing meeting was stated to be "...one of the most famous meetings of its kind in the North of England"². The sport continued to thrive for some years, and it might well be that the eventual decline in reporting the sport was in part related to the development of other sports resultant from the changing interests of the sporting community, and in particular to the growth of national sports.

During the middle years of the century the gentry continued to shoot and there were occasional reports relating to the shooting of stags. In 1859 there had been noted deer stalking on Martindale Fell with "Mr. Richard Musgrave, of Edenhall, accompanied by Jackson, the keeper..."³ shooting a red deer which was eventually stuffed. This, however, would seem to be an untypical report. The shooting by the gentry was primarily competitive, and it would seem that, as with the coursing, this sport was eventually to be taken up by other than the gentry.

¹WG and KA, 31.12.1859.

²CJ, 6.1.1865.

³CJ, 13.10.1859.

Shooting

Margetson noted that

"Shooting was the exclusive privilege of the rich landowners and their invited guests, a fact which, combined with the antiquated game laws of the land, caused great bitterness in the country and led to the terrible poaching wars of the 1820's."¹

Margetson's reference was to the shooting of game; however at the beginning of the century the gentry also shot at a number of organised competitions. Longrigg notes that

"The trap shooting of live birds was a sufficiently popular and gentlemanly sport also to require mention. It began about 1790".²

The phraseology of this statement is of interest in that it indicates the respectability of shooting as a sport in its own right and as one which might well have been seen to be somewhat separate from the fashionable 'Shoots' occurring in conjunction with major social occasions on the estates owned by the gentry. Inevitably this fashion seems to have moved downwards through society: at Natland in 1839 there had been pigeon shooting "...for a fat pig"³. although there is no indication as to the social class of the participants. The respectability and popularity of the sport was noted in 1847 when there were 18 competitors in "A shooting match which excited great interest among the sportsmen of Kendal"⁴.

¹ Margetson, S., *Leisure and Pleasure in the Nineteenth Century*, Cassell, London, 1969, p. 52.

² Longrigg, R., 1977, p. 264.

³ WG and KA, 27.7.1839.

⁴ WG and KA, 12.10.1847.

During the 1850's the sport of shooting pigeons released from traps grew to a considerable extent: however there were variations on this theme, one of which was noted as being 'Pigeon and Rabbit shooting' in which a pigeon and a rabbit were released from a trap at the same time, the objective being to shoot both with two shots from a double barrelled gun¹. At Sawrey in 1856 there was sparrow shooting for a silver snuff box², and it would seem from the nature of the prize that it would be the gentry who were competing. Sparrow shooting in the Lake District was but rarely reported and does not seem to have occurred to the extent that it did in Worcestershire³.

There is relatively little information relating to shooting as a club activity, although it was noted that there was an Ulverston Rifle Club in 1853⁴. The gentry would shoot game birds on their estates, and it was noted on one occasion that, at the beginning of one shooting season,

"Very little has been done in this neighbourhood in the way of partridge shooting, on account of the fields not being cleared yet of grain."⁵

¹WG and KA, 24.5.1851.

²WG and KA, 1.3.1856.

³Davis, R.J., personal communication.

⁴SUA, 31.5.1853.

⁵WG and KA, 6.9.1856.

(b) And Beyond the Gentry

Increasingly, and almost certainly at a lower level of society, shooting came to be organised by the innkeepers. With regard to the period 1830 onwards, Marshall and Walton noted that

"It will be noted that much of the Cumbrian folk-culture devolved on the ale-house, inn or public house, although connections with the church and church festivals remained. Sports, too, were held at or near drinking places throughout the nineteenth century, especially the lesser wrestling meetings or bowls tournaments, and this was a feature of local recreation that did not change with the coming of heavy industry."¹

The shooting at the inn sports would be related in part to the attitude of the inn keeper, with the inn sports developing in relation to the competition from other interests and the ability of the inn keeper to make his hostelry attractive as a social centre and therefore more profitable. A tradition which seems to have developed with some strength during the second half of the nineteenth century was that of a 'cellar opening', when the new landlord at an inn would organise sports in order to celebrate his occupancy of the inn and to establish himself with customers. When the occupancy of the Burgh House Inn, Ulverston, changed in 1853 there was pigeon shooting and rabbit coursing²: but cellar openings took various forms, for there was often wrestling, athletics and, indeed, fox hunting for at the Railway Inn, Staveley in 1859 the landlord organised a hunt "...in order to raise some merriment at his opening."³ At the cellar opening at

¹ *Marshall, J.D. and Walton, J.K., 1981, p. 161.*

² *SUA, 1.2.1853.*

³ *WG and KA, 1.1.1859.*

Ravenstonedale in 1864 there was pigeon shooting, a hound trail and "...wrestling for a purse of gold"¹ and this would not be untypical of the cellar openings.

Whilst the cellar opening would be a rather special occasion there were, of course, regular shooting competitions at a number of the inns. In Staveley (near Kendal) in 1859 the Railway Tavern, the Eagle and Child and the Lamb Inn were all noted as having annual sports, with the prize at the latter inn being a shoulder of mutton². Prizes were generally for mutton, for a pig or for a goose. The annual competition at the White Lion, Inn, Langdale was connected with the 'Auld Wife Hake': in 1864 it was noted that

"White shooting. - Mr. Miles Coward, of the White Lion Inn, gave a fat goose for the first prize, and four shillings for the second prize, shot for on Saturday last."³

The 'White shooting' was shooting at a standing white marker. The distance of the shooting was rarely noted, although on one occasion in Staveley it had been recorded as being over a distance of 35 yards⁴. The shooting at the inns generally seems to have taken place in the New Year period, and the connection seems to have been the most common form of shooting competition until the coming of the Volunteer Movement. However as interest grew in the sport other types of competitions were organised: in 1867 there was

¹WG and KA, 30.6.1864.

²WG and KA, 31.12.1859.

³WG and KA, 2.1.1864.

⁴WG and KA, 1.1.1859.

"Pigeon shooting for £25 - conditions: nine pigeons each, 1½ oz shot, 21 yards, 60 yards fall...the match caused a great deal of excitement, and heavy bets were made on the result."¹

The amount of money involved would indicate the importance of the event, but there is no indication of the social class of the participants. It is probable, however, that the shooting of released pigeons (noting the problem of obtaining the pigeons or having a dovecote) was rather more connected with the middle classes than was the 'white shooting' at the village inns. What is clear is that by 1870 shooting was much more firmly established with a greater population than had been the case in 1840.

Hare and Foxhunting

Whilst the hunting of deer the hunting of otters and more rarely the hunting of foulmarts continued during the period 1840 - 1870 it was the hunting of hares and foxes which grew greatly in popularity and became increasingly reported. On the outskirts of the Lake District at such places as Cartmel, Kirby Lonsdale and Milnthorpe there would be the upper classes with their horses, accompanied to some extent by many on foot: thus at Milnthorpe in 1854 there was: fox hunting with George Woodburn's fox hounds and

"There was a large number of sportsmen to accompany him; eighteen mounted in good style, and a large number of pedestrians".²

¹ *KM and NA, 12.1.1867.*

² *WG and KA, 25.11.1854*

Similarly at Borrowes Green near Kendal there were a

"...great many equestrians present...besides the equestrians the field was literally crammed with pedestrians anxiously waiting for their first tally-ho."¹

It was noted on this occasion that this was a 'Bag fox'. Whilst there might well have been a necessity in fox hunting in relation to the killing of geese and possibly lambs, fox hunting as a sport demanded that a fox be available. When foxes were caught by, for instance gamekeepers - and the most common instance would be the taking of fox cubs from a sett - then the cubs would often be kept until they were almost fully grown. One or two of them would then be taken to a proposed hunt and released from their bag some 15-30 minutes before the hounds were released to follow the scent. This practice certainly continued throughout the nineteenth century, and probably still occurs².

During the middle years of the century the organisation of the sports of fox hunting (and, indeed, hare hunting) gradually became more formalised, and the 'Master of Hounds' came to be a much respected position: in the wilder fell areas the incumbent was often from farming stock, but in some areas the master would seem to have been one of the gentry, as was noted at Bowness in 1847:

"Grand Hunt at the Crown Hotel, Bowness. - We understand that this grand annual event is to come off on Tuesday the 12th inst. The two noted packs of J.G. Machell Esq.,

¹*WG and KA, 26.8.1843.*

²*Oglandby, J., personal communication.*

of Coniston Waterhead and Henry Rauthmell Esq., of Hutton Bridge End, will be in attendance, and the throw off will take place at ten o'clock. Two fine foxes have been provided for the occasion, and a large field is expected at the meet."¹

The second stage of formality seems to have been the appointment of a 'mayor' for a period of time. Generally the 'mayor' would be a 'good fellow', respected by his peers: presumably he would preside over meetings and play a leading role in the organisation of social functions connected with the hunting. The Grizebeck Mayor Hunt in 1852 was presided over by "Mr. William Williamson, Mayor, Schoolmaster"² and there were also 'Mayor Hunts' at Hawkshead³ and Crosthwaite, where on one occasion in 1866 it was recorded that 5 hares had been killed.⁴

During the 1850's there appeared some criticisms of otter and stag hunting. In 1862⁵ there was a long and glowing account of fox-hunting on Coniston Old Man, but the newspaper of the following week criticised stag hunting showing sympathy with the stag - "When the tame stag is quietly uncarterd"⁶. This indicates releasing the stag from the cart: after the pleasures of the hunt the stag would again be carted until once again required for the hunt. Fox hunting, however, was justified and eulogised. During the late 1850's and 1860's it seems that the Westmorland Gazette hunting correspondent was a particularly keen follower of the chase. The Fox Chase at Wythburn

¹WG and KA, 9.1.1847.

²SUA, 18.11.1852.

³WG and KA, 26.11.1859.

⁴WG and KA, 3.11.1866.

⁵WG and KA, 22.3.1862.

⁶WG and KA, 29.3.1862.

in 1859 was reported as being 'gallant' with

"...the fox evidently making for Bleabarrow Crag, perhaps the strongest 'keep' in England...How much short of 25 miles was this run? Gamer dogs I never saw in the field, nor kindlier ones in the house."¹

It is more than likely that it was the same reporter some two years later who commented on a

"Splendid Fox Chase; - Sir Reynard during the late severe weather woefully thinned the ranks of fowls in the farmsteads of Furness Fells, the sons of Nimrod in the locality determined to bring the offender to justice by the fair laws of hunting, a fair start and an open race, save himself if he can...From the first to the last the hounds had a desperate game to play, and they played it brilliantly, bringing to a death one of the finest foxes that ever tossed his brush in the wild woods of the Furness Fells."²

There was, too, a respect for the fox which was almost an admiration of an enemy. A note in the same newspaper of one month later noted

"Foxes. - They who take an interest in that genius of the animal race, which is vulgarly classed among vermin, but which is certainly king of the *ferae naturae*, will be glad to know that foxes were never more numerous than at present...The prospects for next season are brilliant. In the meantime the poultry must look out for their own safety."³

Not all of the hunts for foxes were successful, and it seems that there were a number of occasions when the fox escaped. In 1853 there was an example of a fox swimming across Ullswater Lake to

¹WG and KA, 15.1.1859.

²WG and KA, 2.2.1861.

³WG and KA, 3.2.1861.

escape¹, and in 1856 at a fox hunt there was an instance of the dogs scenting a stag whilst on chase and then catching it². By this time the newspaper accounts were increasing in length, and one note of 1868 was some 11 column inches in length, commenting on a 4 hour run and the catching of a dog fox weighing 16½ lbs: "The above run is the best that has been witnessed for a long period"³. The lengths of some of the runs were considered to be points of honour, and much commented upon. The mastership of the Blencathra Hounds had been taken by Mr. Crozier in the early 1840's, and Wilson notes the longest hunt as being when

"...a fox started on Skiddaw, and after attempting to elude his pursuers by travelling in a ring but finding it of no avail was forced to take a line through Portinscale, Borrowdale and over the mountains into Westmorland, and under cover of darkness got away towards Broughton-in-Furness in Lancashire. The dogs were found the next morning lying asleep near Coniston Crag. The distance they had travelled in a straight line being about 35 miles, but at least another 15 would be added by the many deviations, thus making a run of 50 miles."⁴

In a similar vein Skelton noted that

"Mardale saw the start and finish of a 60 mile hunt which occupied eight hours and was minutely recorded by Mr. Aaron Nelson."⁵

During the period 1840 - 1870 the reporting of hare and, to a greater extent, fox hunting was indicative of the growth of popularity

¹WG and KA, 26.2.1853.

²WG and KA, 22.3.1856.

³WG and KA, 4.1.1868.

⁴Wilson, J., 1905, p. 425.

⁵Skelton, J.C., 1923, p. 17.

of the sports. There was an obvious enthusiasm for the sport, and it seems that there was a certain social esteem connected with this type of hunting. It seems to have transcended class barriers by virtue of its different forms: it allowed for recognition through the positions of 'master' and 'mayor': and it could be argued that it fulfilled a valuable economical role. By 1870 it was practiced to a considerable extent and the comment on the hunt at Blawith in 1870 seems appropriate: "...the manly old English sport of the chase loses none of its charms of repetition"¹.

¹UM, 2.4.1870.

(c) Cricket and Bowls - general trends during the period 1840 - 1870

Cricket and bowls were played to only a limited extent in the Lake District in 1840: by 1870 they were practiced to a considerable extent, and by an increasing number and social range of the population. The spread of cricket was somewhat uneven, for in the early days it was only the gentry who played. With small numbers involved a loss of interest on the part of one or two enthusiasts might well cause a club to fade, and in some cases the revival of a club might not take place until there was an interest from another section of society. Hurst, writing about the Penrith Club, noted that:

"By 1849 the gentlemen's club in Penrith had become defunct and a 'Penrith Tradesmen's C.C.' was formed in 1851 with patrons including Sir George Musgave and the Rev. B. Porteous."¹

There is a disagreement with this date in that the 1854 reference in the local paper stated that:

"The gentlemen's cricket club at Penrith has become entirely defunct. The young trademen, however, held a meeting the other day in the British schoolroom and their club has been revived."²

In all probability it is the latter reference which is correct, being taken from the local newspaper. However what is apparent is that the middle of the century witnessed a spread of the sport both in terms of the class of individuals playing and in the number of the

¹Hurst, J.L., 1967, p. 8.

²WG and KA, 20.5.1854.

participants.

The sport of bowls would seem to date back to the early days of the nineteenth century in Lakeland sport: however early reports are rare. This might indicate that the sport was but little practiced, or alternatively that the sport was seen to be a pastime hardly worthy of report. In 1817 it was noted that:

"Monday last, the Ladies and Gentlemen from the neighbourhood of Windermere Lake, 83 in number partook of a public breakfast at the Low Wood Inn; after which the company passed a few hours in dancing on the bowling green."¹

The 'dancing on the bowling green' is indicative of the relative unimportance of the condition of the green for the sport of bowling, and it is probable that the sport was not at this stage seen to be of any great importance. Rather more attention was noted some twenty years later in Kendal:

"Bowling Green. A meeting of the subscribers and friends to this athletic and healthy amusement took place on Tuesday evening last, at the Black Horse and Rainbow, in this town."²

This would seem to represent the early days of the organisation of the sport in the district, and it was noted some 3 weeks later that:

"The Bowling Green. The subscription to the Kendal Bowling Green are now respectably filled up, and as the weather is improving, we expect it will soon be

¹WA and KC, 27.9.1817.

²WG and KA, 29.4.1837.

opened to furnish a pleasant source of amusement to the members."¹

The tone of the reports represents approval, the implication being that bowls, like cricket, was part of a growing fashion and one that was of social significance.

Cricket - A Developing Sport

The reference to cricket in the early 1840's indicates approval of the sport. One reference to Colonel Lowther referred to him as being

"...a keen and excellent Cricketer: as a member of the Marleybone Cricket Club he had lately been engaged in several well-contested matches."²

The formation of the new cricket clubs was also seen to be an occasion for approving comment in the local press. When a club was formed in Kirby Lonsdale in 1841 the social class of the participants was noted as under:

"Cricket. - We are happy to see that the young gentlemen of this town have formed themselves into a club for the purpose of following this manly and truly English sport."³

From 1845 onwards there were increasing reports on both cricket and bowls, but it would appear that throughout the 1840's cricket was

¹WG and KA, 29.4.1837.

²WG and KA, 21.3.1840.

³WG and KA, 29.5.1841.

essentially the prerogative of the middle classes: it would seem, too, that bowls would fall into the same category. Both sports are commented upon in one issue of the Kendal newspaper in 1845:

"Cricket Club. - We are glad to find that a cricket club has just been established in this town, which comprises nearly 30 members, and gives promise of considerable increase. This club will supply a great desideratum in furnishing an innocent, healthy and manly occupation".¹

The social class of the players was apparent from the trip which occurred in the middle of the season when:

"On Wednesday morning a party of members of the Cricket Club proceeded to Arnside Marshes, to hold a field day, and pitched the marquee and wickets on a plot of short grass bordered with hard sand, and which afforded a capital sight for the game."²

A venture of this type could only have been undertaken by those with an adequacy of time to spare. Arnside Marshes are some 10 miles distant from Kendal, road travel would be relatively slow and the occasion would have necessitated a full day out. Members of the farming community would have been fully occupied with agricultural work in late July, and it seems clear that the participants must have been from the small group of Kendal people who possessed both time for leisure and the money to buy equipment and presumably hire a marquee for the event.

It is clear that during the mid 1840's many of the small towns

¹WG and KA, 26.4.1845.

²WG and KA, 2.8.1845.

on the edges of the Lake District had their cricket teams. Cricket had come originally to Carlisle, then to Cockermouth and to the Cumberland-Westmorland border in the region of Penrith with a club in that town and clubs in those major villages possessing influential local gentry. Clubs also came to be formed in Appleby, Kirby Lonsdale, Sedbergh and Settle. The conditions for play were not always good, for it is probable that the preparation of pitches for the matches would never have been considered. In 1845

"The match between the gentlemen of the Sedbergh and Settle clubs came off in a field near the Swan Inn, in Middleton, near Kirby Lonsdale, on Saturday last."¹



Cricket at Edenside, c. 1850

¹WG and KA, 4.10.1845.

This match would seem to have some significance in indicating the state of the game at the time. Firstly the site for the game was simply noted as being a field, as opposed to being a 'cricket pitch': secondly it was not a home area for either of the teams - in all probability it was a convenient mid-way meeting point: and thirdly the condition of the playing area might well be gleaned from the scores. Sedbergh scored 22 and 43 runs in their two innings whilst Settle had scored 30 and 32 runs. With two innings completed by each team in the one day it would seem that the batsmen were playing under some difficulty, and in all probability playing on an unprepared wicket.

Club reports continued throughout the decade with similarly low scores, with continuing interest and approval and with the growth of both club membership and the inauguration of new clubs. When Kendal Cricket Club opened their season in 1849 it was noted that:

"We are glad to find that preparations are being made to commence the ensuing season of this fine, healthy and manly game with increased energy and spirit."¹

In one of Kendal's matches towards the end of the season the state of the 'pitch' is again indicated in the match against Kirkby Lonsdale when Kendal scored 21 and 44 runs against the 25 and 48 runs of the Kirkby Lonsdale team. Whilst this is probably indicative of the state of the wicket, the state of the outfield can be gleaned from the statement that

¹*WG and KA, 7.4.1849.*

"Fenton...scored a 3, which would have been a 6 but for the proviso of the umpires that a lost ball should count only 3".¹

The growth of club membership is apparent from a number of reports. The end of season game played at the Kirkby Lonsdale Club in 1849 reported that there were enough members for a match to be played between the married and single men of the club: it is interesting, too, to note that this report was published on the 20th of October, indicating the length of the season². During the middle years of the nineteenth century cricket would be the only organised team sport - there would be no competition from rugby football or the association game, and cricket would continue until the weather deemed otherwise: in general the season seems to have commenced in mid or late March and continued until mid-October. The conclusion of the same 1849 season in Kendal was noted as being between W. Atkinson's Eleven and W. Willison's Eleven³, again an indication of the growth in the number of individuals playing the game. In addition to the growth of the game at club level there was interest on the part of the schools. In 1848 in Appleby there had been "...a very spirited game... between the young gentlemen of the Grammar School, Appleby, and the town"⁴, and in 1850 at Sedbergh School there was a match between present and past scholars⁵. In this same year there was a match which was indicative of the changing scene of Lakeland cricket, a match between the junior members of Kendal Cricket Club and Burneside⁶. It

¹WG and KA, 8.9.1849.

²WG and KA, 20.10.1849.

³WG and KA, 29.9.1849.

⁴WG and KA, 10.6.1848.

⁵WG and KA, 22.6.1850.

⁶WG and KA, 20.7.1850.

is not stated as to whether or not 'junior' was related to age: if it were then it would be indicative of an awareness of older members of the club of the importance of catering for younger members. What is equally (and possibly more) significant is the fact that the village of Burneside was fielding a team. Burneside village is close to Kendal and one of the two major occupations of the village was the production of bobbins for the cotton industry. The 'middle-class' population would be relatively small, and in order to field a team it is almost certain that some of the players would be from the artisan class: in all probability it is indicative of the downward spread of the game of cricket through the rural society. Indications of this appeared later in the same year when there was a match between the Tailors Club of Kendal and a Kendal 11, and notes the Carpet Weavers raising a team¹.

The early 1850's saw considerable growth in the game of cricket. In 1851 there were squabbles in Ulverston resultant from the formation of a second cricket club. At this time the population of Ulverston was noted as being 6.760², and the Ulverston Cricket Club had in 1849 played, with permission, on the field of a Mr. Robert Robinson. By 1851 with the formation of the Gill Cricket Club there was considerable argument about which of the two clubs should use Mr. Robinson's field, with the local paper recording that

"It is with much regret that I see so much squabbling between the members of the two cricket clubs in the town."³

¹WG and KA, 14.9.1850.

²SUA, 10.4.1851 (reporting on the Census returns)

³SUA, 8.5.1851.

By the following year, however, it seems that the differences were patched up and the two clubs united¹, although further cricket did develop shortly afterwards in the same district.

The growth in the game continued to take a number of forms. It was increasingly played in the schools with inter-school matches in Ulverston as early as 1851² and an unusual school match in Kendal in the same year between

"...eight of the Kendal National School Cricket Club and sixteen of the Kendal Friends' (Mr. Marshall's) School Cricket Club"³.

This latter club later in the season played against another local Kendal club, Maude's Meadow Club⁴, this field at a later stage being used for early rugby football in the district. In this same year, too, the Kendal Mechanics Club played against the Kendal 2nd team⁵. What is of equal interest is that during this phase of the expansion and development of the game there was still continuing interest on the part of the gentry. In the same year of 1851 Kirkby Lonsdale played against a new club, Middleton and

"After the game the parties retired to the residence of T. H. Whittaker, Esq., where they partook of a substantial dinner given by that worthy gentleman."⁶

¹ *SUA*, 14.2.1852.

² *SUA*, 2.9.1851.

³ *WG and KA*, 13.9.1851.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *WG and KA*, 20.9.1851.

⁶ *WG and KA*, 12.7.1851.

and in the same year at Kirkby Lonsdale it was noted that "Among the numerous spectators we observed the High Sheriff"¹.

The years 1850 - 1852 saw significant growth in the number of participants in the major clubs, the formation of new clubs in the towns with a wider range of the populace being involved, the development of inter-school cricket and the continuing interest in the sport by the gentry even though the game was no longer their prerogative. It also saw the coming of the professional, for as the game grew in popularity there would, no doubt, be an increasing desire to be seen to play the game well. With regard to the Kendal Club in 1851 a professional from the south of England was employed for a period of 3 weeks:

"Arrangements have been made to obtain the services of a professional player to instruct the members of the club in all branches of the noble game."²

It being noted too that "The game has made a vast advance in popularity within the last year or two"³. The popularity continued to be noted in a number of different ways during the 1850's. Firstly there was the formation of new clubs in a whole range of Lakeland villages. In 1851 in Orton "...a meeting was convened...for the purpose of establishing a cricket club"⁴ and the club was duly formed. In the following year in Keswick was noted

¹WG and KA, 4.10.1851.

²WG and KA, 15.3.1851.

³Ibid.

⁴WG and KA, 10.5.1851.

"Establishment of a Cricket Club in Keswick. On Monday last a meeting of the more respectable young men of the town was held in the new Courtroom, for the purpose of forming a cricket club...It was arranged that bat and balls be sent for immediately."¹

In 1853 there were matches involving Grimehill, Ingemere, Cartmel and Tirrel, all being villages of relatively small population^{2,3,4}, and in 1858

"Saturday last witnessed the dawn of cricket among the hills. It is probably known to most of our readers that within the last few months clubs for the pursuit of this noble and truly English pastime have been formed at Ambleside and Grasmere."⁵

In the same year was reported the formation of a new club in Staveley⁶, and it is interesting to note that in the census returns of 3 years later (i.e. 1861) the occupations of 5 of the early players can be identified: a tailor, a woollen weaver, a husbandman, a bobbin maker and a shoemaker⁷. With a number of the smaller villages forming teams - such as Sparkbridge, who played against Ulverston 2nd team in 1860⁸ it seems obvious that by this time the game of cricket had spread to a far greater range of the population than had been the case in 1840.

¹WG and KA, 17.4.1852.

²WG and KA, 17.9.1853.

³WG and KA, 27.8.1853.

⁴WG and KA, 24.9.1853.

⁵WG and KA, 4.9.1858.

⁶WG and KA, 28.8.1858.

⁷Census returns, 1861.

⁸UM, 25.8.1860.

Support for, and the popularity of the sport was evident in a number of other ways. The gentry continued to be associated with the game both as players and as spectators. When Kendal played against Cartmel in 1852 the Cartmel team included Lord Cavendish and the Earl of Burlington¹. It is unlikely, however that Lord Cavendish and the Earl of Burlington were regular players for the Cartmel team: during the middle part of the century there seemed to have developed a pattern whereby the gentry came from London to the country residences during the summer, bringing guests with them and often participating in cricket matches. At times there were festive celebrations with events for the gentry and for the farm workers - sometimes separately, but with some occasions being participated in by the various sections of society. On the occasion of Lord Cavendish's majority at Holker Hall in 1854, Holker Hall played at cricket against Cartmel with the former team including the Lords Burlington and Cavendish and three Cavendish sons bearing the title 'Honourable'. The cricket on this occasion seems to have been the preserve of the gentry, but the other sports, designated as being 'Rustic Sports' included climbing a greasy pole, a pig race (clearly for the locals); however the foot race seems to have been for both the locals and the gentry and was won by a guest². In the cricket match between Penrith and Kendal in 1856 there was a Brougham playing for the Penrith team, and "Among the spectators on the field were Lord and Lady Brougham"³, and when Temple Sowerby fielded a team in 1857 the team included

¹WG and KA, 7.8.1852.

²SUA, 27.7.1854.

³WG and KA, 23.8.1856.

Colonel Lowther and another member of the Lowther family: the Reverend Markham and another member of the Markham family: and a Bentinck, one of another of the major land owning families of the district. What is clear is that during the 1850's the game of cricket was of some social importance and had considerable support. In his gift of appreciation regarding the pleasures enjoyed on a visit to Grasmere

"The Prince of Wales has presented a box containing a full set of implements for the noble game of cricket to Grasmere School and the young people of Grasmere."¹

The recognition and acceptance of the game within local society meant that the game took on an increasing social significance. In 1853² there was a reference to the Kendal Cricketers' Ball, and the phrasing of the report indicates that this was an event of importance. Some two years later in the same town there was at the White Horse Inn the "First Annual Ball of the... 'Victoria Cricket Club'"³ and in 1857 it was noted of the Kendal Cricket Club ball that it "...fully maintained its character as the best and most animated and enjoyable ball of the neighbourhood"⁴. What is apparent from these and other reports is that the sport introduced to the district by the gentry had been taken up by an emergent middle class and that in addition to being a sport was increasingly coming to be seen as a vehicle for social identification: the simple farming gatherings

¹ *CJ*, 29.8.1857.

² *WG and KA*, 26.11.1853.

³ *WG and KA*, 29.12.1855.

⁴ *WG and KA*, 24.1.1857.

and the sports associated therewith had been, in a rather more urban setting, overtaken socially by the cricket.

During the 1850's too there was a continuing spread of cricket within the school system. Whilst there were grammar schools of long standing there also came to be 'proprietary schools', which term was later modified to preparatory schools. Two such schools existed in Ulverston in 1852, and these played cricket against each other¹ and increasingly played against members of the town teams. In Sedbergh in 1854 the scholars of the school played against the gentlemen of the town². In some cases the school teams were extremely strong. In 1857 the Heversham G.S. team played against the gentlemen of Heversham³, and in the same year the Windermere College 2nd XV played against the Windermere Village team⁴. During this period the larger schools were travelling further afield to play their matches. Certainly by 1856⁵ the Windermere College team was travelling as far as Carlisle in order to play against the High School, presumably travelling by train, and Kirby Lonsdale G.S. travelled to play against Heversham G.S., the social setting for the occasion being noted by the fact that after the match they were entertained to tea by the vicar of Heversham⁶. The Windermere College team at this time seems to have been exceptionally strong. A select team from the Kendal Club, Mr. Harrison's Eleven narrowly beat the

¹ *SUA*, 2.8.1852.

² *WG and KA*, 16.9.1854.

³ *WG and KA*, 5.9.1857.

⁴ *WG and KA*, 10.10.1857.

⁵ *WG and KA*, 24.5.1856.

⁶ *Ibid.*

College team but

"...the fielding of the young Collegians was really a treat for all admirers of the game of cricket."¹

In the following year Mr. Taylor's Eleven played against the Windermere College team, and it was noted that this team was comprised of "...gentlemen from Oxford and Cambridge"². What does seem to be apparent with regard to the development of the game in the schools during this period is the encouragement that came from within and without the developing secondary school system; and it might well be that this represented part of the growing influence of the Public School image and the emergent middle-class.

The growth of cricket during the 1850's saw, particularly at the level of the larger clubs, an increasing use of the professional coach who also played for the team. By 1852 there were professional players with the Kendal and Ulverston clubs, and in 1853 was noted one match "Cartmel (with J. Berry) v Dalton (with T. Buttery)"³ the named players being professionals. In all probability the professional players for the Dalton, Kendal and Ulverston clubs were paid by the clubs themselves (although it might well be that the local gentry did help to some extent): however in the case of the sparsely populated Cartmel it is quite possible that the professional would be paid by the local aristocracy, for the Cavendish's were major landowners in the district. By the mid 1850's it seems that the professional player was relatively well established as a visitor for part of the cricket

¹WG and KA, 30.5.1857.

²WG and KA, 28.8.1858.

³SUA, 11.8.1853.

season. In 1851 the Kendal C.C. had engaged a player for some 3 weeks of instruction, but by 1856 this period of coaching had been extended, for

"Among other points we find that a clever professional player, Mr. Bachelor, is to be engaged for six weeks to instruct junior members of the club."¹

In addition to the growth of professional assistance there was also an increasing tendency to invite clubs from outside the Lake District to play matches in the area. At one such game at Cartmel in 1851 there was a match between "Bradford v 22 of Kendal, Dalton, Ulverston (with Barlow) and Cartmel"². Matches of this type eventually became more common. It would seem that Lakeland cricket was not of an exceptionally high standard, and the matches between the more skilled visitors (playing with a smaller number of cricketers) against larger local teams became rather more common in the 1860's and 1870's. What is significant is that visiting cricketers came to the district, and it might well be that the 1850's saw the beginning of the sporting tours, initially through cricket but later to spread to other sports in the Lake District. Cricket was developing both as a sport and as part of the social framework, although at times there were uneven patches in that development, possibly due to conflicting interests: the Kendal Cricket Club Ball in 1860 noted a "...considerable falling off in attendance"³. In all probability this was untypical, for the major cricket club in a town would almost certainly provide one of the bases for respectable gatherings. What would be more common in reporting was that in

¹*WG and KA, 15.3.1856.*

²*SUA, 14.10.1851.*

³*WG and KA, 14.1.1860.*

connection with the Penrith Club in 1869 when at the annual dinner at the Crown Hotel the "Speeches were divided by many excellent songs, and the meeting passed off most satisfactorily"¹. In general, whether it were for the annual ball (with the ladies present) or for the annual club dinner (without the ladies), the occasions seem to have been important facets of the growing urban society on the edges of the Lake District. They might well have been seen as being the social equivalent of the 'Auld Wife Hakes' and 'Merry Neets' of the fell farming communities of inner Lakeland. Certainly the Ulverston Cricket Club was holding social ventures, and the concert in 1860 was reported as being a very successful function. However there was a criticism of the performance of a Mr. Gallop², a criticism to which Mr. Gallop took umbrage, for there followed some weeks of acrimonious correspondence in the local press!

The popularity of cricket and the spread of the sport during the 1860's was illustrated in a number of ways. The existing clubs seem to have grown in size. In 1861 the relatively new Kendal Mechanics' Institute Cricket Club had enough members to have an internal fixture on their own ground³ and were also organised to the point of being able to have a concert in aid of their funds⁴. In the same year the Windermere and Ambleside clubs were able to field second teams against each other⁵, and internal matches at the beginning and end of season within the clubs were becoming increasingly common. More individuals

¹*CJ*, 26.10.1869.

²*UM*, 27.10.1860.

³*WG and KA*, 22.6.1861.

⁴*WG and KA*, 14.9.1861.

⁵*WG and KA*, 24.8.1861.

were playing within the clubs, in addition to which more clubs were being formed. Newer clubs appeared, in the main, as one of two types. Firstly there were the smaller villages which in 1860 did not have a cricket club: one such village at Hawkeshead; with a club being formed in 1864

"Cricket Club at Hawkshead. - A numerously attended and enthusiastic meeting of all interested in the formation of a cricket club took place in the Assembly Room on Tuesday evening."¹

and a cricket club was duly formed. Attention was drawn to the growth of cricket in the local paper, it being commented in 1864

"The noble game of cricket has now become thoroughly planted in Westmorland. Ten or twelve years ago the county only had two clubs; now we believe there are no less than thirteen."²

Whilst the statement is indicative of the growth of cricket it is not strictly accurate, for there had been at least five clubs in Westmorland in 1850 - Kendal, Appleby, Burneside, the Tailors Club and the Mechanics Institute: and there were certainly more than thirteen clubs in 1864. However the point was made correctly in relative terms, for there had been a considerable growth. Certainly by the mid 1860's the activities of many small local clubs (although not all in Westmorland) came to be reported in the Carlisle and Kendal newspapers, and in many cases these clubs were from relatively small villages. By 1865 there were clubs in such places as Bowness, Brathay, Caton, Galgate, Holme and Tebay: further north in the Carlisle area

¹WG and KA, 26.3.1864.

²WG and KA, 17.9.1864.

Blennerhasset and Birkby were fielding teams. In 1869 there was a match between Grange-over-Sands and Cartmel in the South of the Lake District, and it was noted that "...the Grangeites being about to form a club"¹. This might well have been one of the early signs of newer residents, brought by rail to the district, becoming involved in local sport.

In addition to the formation of new clubs in the villages there came to be an increasing number of clubs in the towns. In some cases there were clubs without obvious trade connections, but in many cases the newer clubs came from organisations with particular social, religious or trade connections. In 1864 in Kendal it was reported that

"An interesting match at cricket came off on Thursday last, in Soldier Field, between a scratch eleven picked from among the young members of the Kendal Mechanics' Institute C.C. and the first eleven of the Christian and Literary C.C., and which is principally composed of novices in the noble game."²

This latter team continued with a separate identity, but upon occasion seems to have co-operated with the K.M.I. C.C. for some fixtures: in 1865 the two clubs combined to play against the relatively strong Heversham Grammar School³, which by this time was running a second team. At this stage in the development of the K.M.I. C.C. there was an acceptance of non-members of the Institute into the cricket club, a situation which seems to have later spread to other 'closed' clubs

¹WG and KA, 12.6.1869.

²WG and KA, 9.7.1864.

³WG and KA, 23.9.1865.

and to other sports; at a meeting of the club in 1865 it was agreed that the fees should be: "...members of the Institute 4s 6d, non-members 6s., annually".¹ Works teams came to be formed to an increasing extent during the period from 1865 onwards. In that year Braithwaite and Co. team played against Cropper and Co.'s team, the match being reported with an element of 'journalese', viz "If the 'Factory Lads' showed great tenacity, the 'Paper Makers' exhibited no less"². The team fielded by Braithwaite and Co., seems to have gone from strength to strength, with reports over a number of years. Certainly in 1867 they were playing club cricket at a reasonable standard^{3,4}, although the 'Cropper and Co.' team seems to have faded from the newspaper reports. There were a number of other works teams functioning towards the end of the 1860's, one with the rather striking title of 'Sedgewick Gunpowder Company Cricket Club'⁵. Certainly as far as employers were concerned it would be circumspect to encourage teams playing on a regular basis in order to develop a sense of corporate identity for the working unit and also to discourage the participation in the old seasonal festivities of summer, a participation not based on the industrial working week and one which would almost certainly militate against regular factory hours.

With the continuing development of cricket at club level it seems that some of the clubs were establishing permanent pitches and indeed improving the state of their grounds. With regard to the Kendal C.C.

¹*KM*, 4.4.1865.

²*KM*, 22.7.1865.

³*WG and KA*, 31.8.1867.

⁴*WG and KA*, 14.9.1867.

⁵*KM and NA*, 31.7.1869.

in 1864 it was recorded that seven new members had been admitted to the club and that

"From the good state of the funds as well as of the ground - a new crease having been laid down - the members of the club anticipate a good season. Let us hope it will be as successful as last."¹

Later in the season the Kendal Club entertained an All-England team, with the Eleven of England playing against the twenty two of Kendal². This pattern of visits by 'All England' elevens to the Lake District was to continue. In the following year there was an All England match against Carlisle, with an advertisement in the Kendal paper for rail travel to the match on the Lancashire and North-Western railway line³. However it would be inaccurate to suggest that the development of cricket was a steady process. When a club faded it might not have been reported in the press, but when it was re-formed then there was appropriate coverage. At one stage the Kirkby Lonsdale Club had faded away, but it seems to have been successfully revived in 1863⁴: in Appleby too, the once strong club had lapsed in the early 1860's to be revived in 1867 when we are told

"...it is anticipated that, with a little practice, Appleby will again become a formidable opponent to the adjoining counties."⁵

Throughout the 1860's the major clubs - certainly Carlisle and Kendal -

¹WG and KA, 26.3.1864.

²WG and KA, 17.9.1864.

³WG and KA, 2.9.1865.

⁴WG and KA, 28.3.1863.

⁵WG and KA, 10.8.1867.

seem to have continued to employ professional players. In the case of Kendal this seems to have been for an increasing period of time. Initially it had been for a period of 3 weeks: then it came to be for a period of 6 weeks. By the end of the decade the length of the professional employment had been increased: in 1869 it was stated that

"Mr. William Slinn, the Sheffield bowler, is engaged for 3 months, and it is anticipated that the club, under his tuition, will be more successful in its matches than was the case last year."¹

This seems to have been the beginning of the period in which there came to be quite critical comments on the quality of the professional players: whilst ostensibly they were engaged to instruct, it is apparent that they were also expected to perform successfully in the matches for the club: the demands for success were clearly increasing.

Whilst the comments on club cricket increased to some considerable extent during the 1850 - 1870 period, the gentry continued to play although they no longer were as dominant in the practice of the game. The major halls often had their own teams (at times enhanced by summer visitors), and a number of the gentry continued to play with the local teams. However with the spread of cricket the gentry no longer enjoyed their former eminence, and Hurst sees the end of the 1860's as the decline of a sporting era for the gentry, commenting that:

"...these were social as well as sporting affairs, spiced with a colour and character which faded away with the stately homes of England. When Lowther were played on the

¹WG and KA, 3.4.1869.

South front of the Castle in 1869, spectators included the Earl of Lonsdale, Mr. Justice Brett, Mr. G.C. Bentinck M.P. and Mr. W. Lowther, N.P.M. One of the umpires was Lord Ranelagh, an Irish Peer.

The entire party was entertained at luncheon in the grounds of the Castle - we need scarcely add upon a scale of liberality with which the name of Lowther is inseparably associated."¹

Bowls

The sport of bowls continued to develop during this period, but it was not reported to the same extent as cricket. There was reference to the Penrith Bowling Green in 1853² and in the following year a report from Kendal indicated an increasingly serious attitude towards the sport in that the greens and their condition were seen to be of increasing importance:

"Kendal Suscription Bowling Green. - the beautiful green of this club was opened for the season on Easter Monday, and from the accession of members the season promises to be a very successful one."³

Trescatheric notes that

"...the public house was often the focal point of much Victorian social history and sport was no exception."⁴

and that

¹Hurst, J.L., 1967, p. 16.

²WG and KA, 25.6.1853.

³WG and KA, 22.4.1854.

⁴Trescatheric, B., Sport and Leisure in Victorian Barrow, Hougensai Press, Barrow-in-Furness, 1983, p. 3.

"Specially built BOWLING GREENS began to appear in Barrow in the 1860's, one of the first of course being opposite the Bowling Green Hotel. By 1870 the Derby Arms, the Washington Hotel and the Bankfield Hotel on Walney were among other public houses with attendant greens."¹

It should be noted that this development occurred rather later than did similar developments in other parts of Lakeland, for Barrow itself was a relatively late product of the Industrial Revolution, a relatively new town developed in the main for the ship-building industry. The game was well established in a number of other areas on the edge of Lakeland well before this time, with a number of 'open' tournaments as well as matches between teams. In 1861 in Kendal there had been a knock-out competition "A rather exciting game at bowls"² and at a tournament in Penrith it was noted that there were 107 competitors³. There were clubs in Carlisle and Cockermouth⁴ and clubs were tending to travel further for their fixtures: in 1865 Penrith travelled as far as Lancaster in order to play⁵. The development of bowls was clearly established.

¹*Trescahieric*, 1983, p. 27.

²*WG and KA*, 3.8.1861.

³*WG and KA*, 8.8.1868.

⁴*CJ*, 22.8.1868.

⁵*WG and KA*, 14.10.1865.

(d) 1840 - 1870 : Sports and Regattas : growth but uneven development

By 1840 many of the sports and regattas were well established, growing in their appeal to both locals and visitors and apparently becoming part of a regular pattern of Lakeland sport. This, however, is a generalisation and was not true of all the sports and regattas. Whilst the trend was a clear increase in the number of sports and regattas, and an increase in the number of people attending these events, there were problems in their development. The growth of particular meetings involved organisational difficulties and there were times at which particular sports meetings (and, to a greater extent, regattas) faded, often to be resuscitated with the adjustment of local organisation relating to a changing social scene. The least affected were the smaller sports meetings, whilst the greatest effect was upon a number of the regattas which (particularly during the 1840's) seem to have lacked individuals who could cope with the changes necessitated by the growth and travel. It is probable that the type of regatta organised on Windermere by the charismatic Professor Wilson, initially faded somewhat with the coming of the railway system which took many of the gentry to pleasures in London: but they were later to be revived in and around the 1850's when the railway system brought an increasing number of visitors to the Lake District. It seems appropriate at this stage to examine, in various forms, the continuation of rural sports coupled with the growth of sports meetings in rather larger urban areas such as Ulverston and Kendal, and then to consider the different position of the regattas, affected to varying degrees by an increasing tourist trade.

Sports: a range of influences

The most significant growth in sports in the early 1840's might well have been in Southern Lakeland. The meetings at Flan, Ulverston in 1840 was deemed to be worthy of report in Bell's Life, which noted that there was "...a vast concourse of spectators...about 4,000 persons congregated to watch wrestling"¹. The sports at the Flan, Ulverston continued with their successful development. In 1841

"The bustling and animated appearance of the neat little town of Ulverston on the afternoon previous, gave evident indication of the interest excited by the coming meeting: numerous parties continuing to arrive from all parts of Cumberland, Westmorland, from the borders of Scotland, and the neighbouring parts of Northumberland and Durham; a considerable number arriving too from Liverpool and the Southern parts of Lancashire. All the inns were crowded to excess."²

At this particular meeting there were 160 competitors in the 'Open' wrestling³. The meeting had clearly become an important part of the social calendar and the stature of Flan Sports attracted considerable interest throughout the North of England. In relative terms the prizes for the wrestling were considerable with a £20-10s. prize for the winner of the wrestling in 1843 (and a sum total of £40 in prizes for the wrestling)⁴. It is interesting to note that Flan Sports was generally reported at some length in the Carlisle newspapers, and the importance of the meeting was such that it was at times reported in Bell's Life. In 1846 "The arrival of carriage, gigs, carts, equestrians

¹BL, 1.8.1840.

²KM and NA, 7.8.1841.

³WG and KA, 7.8.1841.

⁴CJ, 12.8.1843.

and pedestrians...was almost incessant"¹, the importance of the wrestling at the meeting in the previous year having been acknowledged in that "...nearly every wrestler of note in the three Counties of Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancaster, were present."² It was not only the wrestlers who travelled to the sports, for numerous examples of individuals coming relatively long distances in order to compete continued to occur throughout the decade, with, for instance, Bell's Life noting in 1849 that the pole leaping had been won by Robert Wilson of Greystoke³. About this time, too, were noted horse races, an interesting exception to the general trend shown in Lakeland meetings where in a number of instances sports had become attached to, and eventually replaced the existing horse race meetings. In the case of Flan sports there does not seem to be any reports relating to horse racing in the early years (1834 - 1840) of the meeting, although there had been other reports relating to horse racing in the district. In 1848, however, it was noted that in addition to the wrestling and athletic sports there was the prize of a silver mounted whip for horses that had been on duty at Ulverston with the Furness Troop of Yeomanry Cavalry, and the same prize was offered in the following year when the importance of the celebration was recorded as

"This celebrated meeting, which has been a paramount subject of conversation and remark, among the lovers of athletic games, in Ulverston, near where it takes place, and for miles in the surrounding districts, was held on Friday and Saturday last."⁴

¹*CP*, 11.8.1846.

²*KM and NA*, 16.8.1845.

³*BL*, 12.8.1849.

⁴*SUA*, 9.8.1848.

During the 1840's the Flan Sports (eventually known as 'The Great Northern Meeting') were clearly the most popular in the Lake District, occupying a position of prominence to be followed some 30 years later by Grasmere Sports. There is no evidence to indicate the existence of Grasmere Sports before 1845, and in all probability the only other large meetings were those which took place in Appleby. These seem to have grown from somewhat rustic origins, presumably from annual festivities in a small market town, and similar in some ways to the old 'Dicky Doodle' races that had faded from Kendal in the 1830's. A principal area in Appleby was known as 'Scattergate', and at the sports there in 1843 there was an ass race, a foot race, leaping for gloves, a hurdle race, grinning through a collar, a race for females for 1 lb of tea, and wrestling. The events in themselves indicate the origins of the sports, and the background is further confirmed by the fact that

"The sports were conducted with the greatest regularity, the company having in the first instance elected a mayor and a recorder, (vide Dicky Dowdley)...harmless amusements so peculiar to the northern counties."¹

Some two years later there was still evidence, in terms of the prizes, of the character of the sports, for the wrestling was for a purse of gold and the trotting was for a bridle². There were in fact two annual sports in Appleby, both of which were connected with the religious celebrations of Easter and Whitsuntide. In 1847 "Appleby Easter Sports. - These sports came off according to annual custom on Easter Monday", the events noted being wrestling, quoiting, running

¹WG and KA, 10.6.1843.

²WG and KA, 3.5.1845.

high leap, long leap (one of the earliest references to the event), foot racing and a hurdle race¹. In 1849 these same sports "...came off in a field adjoining the King's Arms, Battleborough, Appleby", it being noted that the events included quiting, wrestling, high, long and pole leaping: the tone of the report indicates that the sports were still rural in character, and that there were fewer competitors than at the Newcastle Easter Sports². Some six weeks later there was a report on the Whitsuntide sports in the town:

"Appleby:- Scattergate Sports. - These sports were this year celebrated on the large open green facing the Gardeners' Arms Inn, Scattergate, on Wednesday last. Although but few known wrestling dons were present, yet these sports are rapidly assuming an important position among the numerous lovers of the game in the neighbourhood, and the event was looked forward to with much interest. The long leap was won by Christopher Walton, Appleby... length of run 45'8"...pole leap 9'3" (Thomas Parkin of Appleby), running high leap John Ruddom of Appleby."³

Of particular interest, and indicative of the continuing unsophisticated nature of the sports was the meagre attendance of the 'wrestling dons'. One of the developments in the sport of wrestling during the 1840's was the emergence of a growing number of competitors who travelled from meeting to meeting, and who would presumably go to those meetings at which there would be the greatest likelihood of financial reward. It would seem that this trend had been developing slowly for some years, and that the older type of meeting with the smaller prizes would not be favoured by those wrestlers who saw the sport as an important source of revenue. The essentially local meetings of the

¹WG and KA, 10.6.1843.

²WG and KA, 14.4.1849.

³WG and KA, 2.6.1849.

BRIDKYRKE FAIR!

May 12 & 13, 1845.

WRESTLING MATCHES!

A Wrestling Match	-	-	for	£1	0	0
Ditto	-	-	for	0	10	0
Ditto	-	-	for	0	5	0

**GRINNING THROUGH A HORSE'S COLLAR
FOR A NEW SMOCK.**

Jumping for Rolls and Treacle!

THE ART OF SINGLE STICK,

A Single Stick Match	-	-	for	£1	0	0
Ditto	-	-	for	0	10	0
Ditto	-	-	for	0	5	0

SCRAMBLE FOR BROWNS

AN EXTRAORDINARY

Chace AND Jingling Match

BLINDFOLDED!

FOR ONE POUND OF TOBACCO.

With many other novel and interesting Diversions—to conclude with

**Climping the Greasy Pole for a Leg of Mutton
AND JUMPING IN SACKS FOR A NEW HAT.**

An Ordinary at the Lowther Arms in the Parish of **Bridkyrke.**

£ All disputes to be settled by Mr. THOMAS WILKINSON, Bailiff to
RICHARD HENRY TOLSON, Lord of the Manor of Bridkyrke.
Barnes, Printer, Stones' End.

eighteenth century and early nineteenth century were in some cases being superseded by competitions of a larger type, offering greater prizes and attracting more competitors. It would seem that Appleby in the later years of the 1840's was not offering lucrative prizes and was probably not attracting competitors from far afield. However, even by the mid 1840's it was clear that wrestlers were travelling to some considerable extent in order to compete. In 1844 George Donaldson of Patterdale competed at the Dan Hill meeting on the Monday and Tuesday and at Patterdale on the Wednesday and Thursday of the same week, it being noted of the Patterdale Sports that "This place is now become noted for the annual assembling of the best wrestlers in the two counties"¹. During the following week Donaldson competed on the Monday and Tuesday at Threlkeld and at Carlisle on the next two days²: Donaldson was noted in the census returns of 1841 as being a labourer³, and it must be assumed that his skill in wrestling would be bringing him far greater rewards than would his normal work.

Of the many other smaller meetings of the 1840's there were those that continued to be associated with the inns such as the Plough Inn at Selside⁴, the Crosthwaite Sports at the Punch Bowl Inn⁵, the White Swan at Middleton with foot racing, trotting, wrestling, quoiting and leaping⁶ and the Three-Mile House annual sports at Killington at which there was a steeplechase (for men), trail hunting and wrestling⁷. It

¹ *KM and NA, 19.10.1844.*

² *KM and NA, 26.10.1844.*

³ *Census return, 1841.*

⁴ *WG and KA, 5.6.1841.*

⁵ *WG and KA, 13.8.1842.*

⁶ *WG and KA, 21.6.1845.*

⁷ *WG and KA, 24.5.1845.*

seems that the inn sports were mainly patronised by locals, and it is probable, from both the extent of the reporting and the names of the winners that these sports did not attract competitors from a wide field.

A number of other sports meetings were those that had come to be connected with annual celebrations, especially those of a religious nature. One such was the Rushbearing - in 1843 at Warcop there was wrestling, leaping, trotting, quoiting, foot racing and a hound trail but that Warcop was unusual in continuing the ceremony:

"The custom is fast failing away, except in one or two places. Of these the village of Warcop stands prominent for its adherence to the customs of our ancestors."¹

Some of the sports were connected with Easter celebrations with traditional Easter sports noted at Appleby and Newcastle: Parton, too, had its annual Easter meeting of "These ancient and annual sports"², and included hound trailing, wrestling and youth wrestling, this being one of the earlier references to events for youths, and being dated as 1844. The sports at Martindale had similar connections, it being noted that "These sports came off on Easter Monday, at the House of Mr. Thomas Allinson, the Star Inn"³. The connection between 'Easter' and the inn probably indicates that the innkeeper had simply taken over the management of the sports, for it seems that in a number of cases the decline of a particular sports meeting could be arrested

¹*CJ*, 8.7.1843.

²*CP*, 9.4.1844.

³*WG and KA*, 10.4.1847.

by someone else taking over the running of the sports, and in many cases it was the local innkeeper who would be aware of the fact that a successful sporting venture was likely to be to the benefit of his trade.

Sports meetings held at Whitsuntide were more common than the Easter competitions. In all probability the weather would be better, but in any case the meetings came in a number of cases to be connected with the Whit-hirings. The sports held at Crooklands¹, Upperby, Lamonby² and Arkholme³ were some of the many Whit meetings. Other regular sports were noted as being connected with particular celebrations: at Watermillock in 1846 it was noted that

"These sports were celebrated according to old established custom, on Thursday last, the 18th inst., being the Thursday before Midsummer Day, at the Clark Gate Inn"⁴.

and one of the older type of sports was referred to as "Old Nut Monday sports came off at the house of Mrs. Park on the Fell-Side"⁵, at which sports there was a scent race for otter hounds, wrestling, porridge eating (with fingers, hot), foot race for a hat and a climbing match up a greasy pole for a hat⁶. Many of the other meetings took place at a set time in connection with a particular celebration,

¹WG and KA, 5.6.1841.

²CJ, 8.6.1849.

³KM and NA, 13.6.1846.

⁴WG and KA, 13.6.1846.

⁵WG and KA, 23.9.1843.

⁶Ibid.

but the occasion was not always noted. One interesting meeting took place at Bretherdale near Orton in 1841, with the details being published as a grammatical exercise for readers of the local paper:

"...a fut rase Forten shillings by Karte Horses...
a pund to be wursled for...leaping...a ball in the,
evening N.B. Jhonny Stainton wull pla the fiddle."¹

During the 1840's the number of sports meetings reported showed some considerable increase. In the main it seems to have been assumed that these were continuing meetings: it might well have been that they did in fact also take place during the previous decade but were not reported, although it is evident that some meetings (one of which was that at the Flan) commenced without any apparent historical connections. At this meeting in 1851 there were some 128 wrestlers in the heavy-weight division: from Troutbeck on Windermere there were seven wrestlers including three from the Longmire family including the famous Thomas Longmire who won there in 1843, 1847 and 1850. By this time notes were being made of the measureable performance in a number of the events: the running high leap was won at 5'2", the running leap (i.e. long jump) was won at 17'4" and the pole leap (for £2-10s) at 9'6", it being commented that

"It is a matter of astonishment to those not acquainted with pole leaping how such a height can be cleared at one bound from the bare sod."²

In the following year the measurements were even more precise with the running high leap being measured at 5'3 and one-eighth; on this

¹*WG and KA, 22.5.1841.*

²*SUA, 19.6.1851.*

occasion the pole high leap was won at the height of 10'¹.

In the same area of Southern Lakeland there were a number of other sports meetings: sports at Penny Bridge Fair (known as 'Pennybridge Hay-Seed Saturday') in 1849 were noted as including "A variety of sports, for which this fair has long been noted"², and the nearby Greenodd Races and Sports in 1850 were clearly extremely popular:

"Greenodd Races and Sports. - For a long series of years no place in the whole of our district has been more celebrated for its annual gathering than Arrad Foot...³ immense assemblage...Ulverston drained of population."

These meetings continued with success for a number of years, and Ulverston came to be recognised as a centre for both wrestling and athletic competitions. Surprisingly the connection between the races and the athletic sports continued for a number of years, and the sports were noted in 1860 as continuing to be the 'Ulverston Races and Great Northern Meeting'. The local press comment was that

"The vicinity of these sports presented a gay and animated appearance, the districts round Ulverston contributing a large number of visitors."⁴

This seems to have been a change from the traditional sports of late May/early June, but the change seems to have been successful for a number of years. In 1862 there was still the horse racing, foot racing,

¹WG and KA, 12.6.1852.

²SUA, 31.5.1849.

³SUA, 30.5.1850.

⁴UM, 4.8.1860.

a sack race and wrestling: and

"There were also roars of laughter over the pig races, it being considered excellent fun to see eight or nine stout fellows chasing one small pig."¹

Thereafter the Flan Sports seem to have faded somewhat. The decline was temporary, for the district eventually became famous in relation to the production of the best pole vaulters in the country in the 1870's and 1880's. However in 1867 the decline of the previous 5 years was noted:

"Flan Sports. - These sports, which formerly ranked amongst the first in the county and were known far and wide, have, within the past few years, almost entirely faded away."²

They were resuscitated by two landlords - the occupants of the Coach and Horses and the Old Friends' Inn: the meeting again lasted for some 2 days and there were some £20 of prizes³. The situation represented another example of the problems of not having a formalised structure of administration for a particular function: the larger sports meetings and regattas thrived inasmuch as one particular individual or group of individuals supported and organised them.

Smaller Sports

It is more difficult to comment specifically upon the pattern of

¹WG and KA, 30.8.1862.

²WG and KA, 24.8.1867.

³Ibid.

the smaller sports. It might well be that in the first half of the nineteenth century the smaller meetings were but little reported because they were only in receipt of local interest and acknowledgement: it might well be that they were so 'local', and of so little general interest, that they were not deemed worthy of report. However by the middle of the century the pattern had changed in that they were reported. Some were well established meetings, whilst some were acknowledged as being new ventures. Of the sports at Threlkeld in 1850 it was noted that the two day meeting included hound trailing, pigeon shooting, a standing high leap, running high leap, pole leap, trotting, wrestling and that the sports

"...were more numerously attended than on any former occasion, there being not less than 2,000 people present, including many of the fair sex."¹

The meeting in Threlkeld in 1853 was again reported at considerable length, and implied (but did not specifically state) that there had been wrestling there some three-quarters of a century previously: if, indeed there had been a sports meeting there in the 1770's then it would have been one of the earliest meetings in the Lake District².

In the smaller towns and larger villages the established sports meetings seem to have continued with success, although there were times when particular meetings faded to be later revived. Of particular interest is the fact that during the 1840's and 1850's a number of the sports meetings came to be reported in Bell's Life -

¹WG and KA, 12.10.1850.

²WG and KA, 1.10.1853.

a practice which later faded, possibly due to the eventual growth of larger meetings at other venues. This in itself would seem to indicate the initial importance of organised sport in the Lake District in relation to the spread of sport. The report on the Easter Sports of 1851 noted that there was quoiting, wrestling and a variety of jumping competitions: there was obviously no horse racing, for Bell's Life would have certainly reported racing¹. Local reports seemed to indicate a partial decline in both Appleby and Penrith sports² in the following year, but the Appleby Whitsuntide meeting in 1854 was noted to include foot racing, leaping competitions and wrestling and

"...seems to be gaining strength. The company assembled on Wednesday was greater, and the sports generally much better, than for many years back."³

Appleby seems to have been a major venue for athletic sports. In addition to the old Easter and Whitsuntide meetings there were occasional reports of Martinmas competitions and of competitions at other times. One such sports was that held at the 'Crown and Cushion' hotel in 1859 and which included the traditional jumping, running and wrestling events, and is indicative of the strength of sports meetings in this area. On this eastern side of the Lake District, too, there were annual sports at Orton in connection with the Pot Fair. In all probability the origins of the sports would relate to the annual visit of itinerant potters selling their wares, but with increasing ease of transport this would fade and simply be an annual festivity. In 1854 it was noted that

¹BL, 4.5.1851.

²WG and KA, 17.4.1852.

³WG and KA, 10.6.1854.

"This fair, which was originally set aside for the sale of crockery, and other articles, was held on Friday."¹

In addition to the sports there was a ball in the evening, and the Pot Fair was apparently the highlight of the social season. In 1858 it was commented that "This fair has of late years become one of considerable importance"². By 1863 the meeting was reported as being a "Fancy Fair and Sports"³, presumably because the sale of pottery was by this time simply part of a larger occasion. The equivalent situation would almost certainly pertain in relation to the various rushbearing ceremonies, the most famous of which continued at Warcop. In connection with the annual rushbearing, presumably, the gathering of local people would lead to social intercourse after the religious ceremony. In time there would come to be sports, and often the original title of the gathering would remain but the original function of the gathering would have passed by. With the setting of flag floors as opposed to the original earthen floors the rushbearing would no longer be necessary. In some places, such as Ambleside and Grasmere the original bearing of rushes would no longer take place but flowers might be taken to the church: when this occurred at St. Oswald's church, Grasmere in 1870 it was wrestling which followed the ceremony⁴. Reported in the same year was the Warcop Annual Rushbearing and Sports which "...for time immemorial has been held on St. Peter's Day" and which in 1870 added a bicycle race to the

¹WG and KA, 24.6.1854.

²WG and KA, 12.6.1858.

³WG and KA, 13.6.1863.

⁴WG and KA, 30.7.1870.

programme, representing an addition of national influences to traditional local events¹.

Whilst other townships continued with their traditional sports - that at Armathwaite in 1859 was noted as being "...according to the custom for the last 40 years"², and that at the "...ancient little town of Great Asby (had) liberal prizes for wrestling, leaping, running and shooting"³ in the following year. Much of the significant development during the 1850 - 1870 period was particularly apparent in the villages (with a number of the sports organised by the inns) and in a series of lesser meetings organised by inns in the towns, and often being additional to major meetings in the area. These would almost always include wrestling and would generally include hound trailing: often there would be jumping competitions and, terrain permitting, foot racing. At Winster (on the back road from Kendal to Windermere) in 1850 there was hound trailing, wrestling and pigeon shooting when

"These sports came off at Mr. R. Wood's The Bay Horse, on Friday last. The gathering of sporting characters was numerous, and although the prizes were small they were contended for with great ardour".³

Foot races would be unlikely to occur at Winster for (unless the road was used) there was not an even area of adequate length for foot racing: the same would be true of a number of the sports held at the country inns. At Temple Sowerby in the following year the annual

¹WG and KA, 2.7.1870.

²CJ, 17.6.1859.

³WG and KA, 26.10.1850.

sports were noted as having been organised by the landlord of the Black Swan Inn, and, with a convenient field, the sports included a foot race, wrestling and jumping competitions, quoiting, the 'fun' event of a blindfold wheelbarrow race: there was a reference to the discontinuance of horse racing some years previously, a situation not uncommon during the 1840's¹.

The Growth of the Inn Sports and the Support of the Gentry

During the 1850's there seems to have been a growth in the number of sports which were held at Whitsuntide and were connected with the inns. One issue of the Kendal newspaper noted sports being held at the Cross Keys Inn (near Tebay), the Greyhound Inn (Kendal), the Plough Inn (Selside) and the Three Mile House (Killington), with two of these sports meetings being followed by a ball in the evening². During the following week there was the Golden Rule Inn sports at Ambleside³ and this pattern was to continue for many years. At times there was specific acknowledgement of the part played by the innkeeper: in 1860 at the Lowick Bridge Sports "Mr. Hudson, of the Red Lion Inn, gave a number of prizes to be contested for in different athletic games"⁴. These included hound trailing, pigeon shooting and wrestling, and this was noted as being the third annual sports held at the Inn⁵.

¹WG and KA, 2.9.1851.

²WG and KA, 5.6.1852.

³WG and KA, 12.6.1852.

⁴WG and KA, 14.9.1860.

⁵UM, 15.9.1860.

Numerous inns sports continue to have been reported during this period. In many cases they became annual sports, but there were at times specific ventures in connection with the arrival of a new landlord. Often the incoming landlord would pay for prizes and organise what was known as a 'cellar opening'. One such meeting was noted as involving foot racing, a trotting match for a bridle, pigeon shooting, occurring at "The opening of the Brown Horse Inn, Winster, recently taken by Mr. Bownass"¹ and at a cellar opening at the Duke of Cumberland Inn, Orton in 1869 there were foot races for girls, for boys and for men: there was wrestling and "A handsome riding saddle was given to trot for"². It is difficult to identify consistency in the development of the inn sports. Whilst there were many villages sports operating outside the orbit of the inns - even the valley of Long Sleddale had its sports³: Askham, too had its traditional sports when in 1852 there was

"1 lb of tobacco to be run for by married men. Won easily by William Egglestone (the flying clogger). Cat gallows leaping, 5s. Won by Tindale, clearing about six feet."⁴

this report on the height cleared in the 'cat gallows leaping' to be viewed with some suspicion! In a number of cases, too the reports on particular sports do not always indicate the connection with an inn. The sports in Kentmere were often noted as being in connection with either the Lowbridge Inn or the George and Dragon Inn, but the report on the Martinmas meeting in 1868, obviously of the

¹WG and KA, 1.4.1865.

²WG and KA, 18.9.1869.

³WG and KA, 16.1.1850.

⁴WG and KA, 4.6.1852.

traditional type, does not refer to either of the village inns. One of the interesting events at this meeting was a 'bell race', at times called a 'jingling match'. This would involve a number of blindfold competitors in the wrestling ring trying to catch one individual who was moving around in the wrestling area and ringing a bell. This event at Kentmere, and the wrestling and foxhunting are indicative of the traditional style of the meeting¹. In general the inn sports endeavoured to provide that which would eventually prove profitable to their trade, but in certain instances the inn sports were supported by the gentry. With the coming of the railways there came an increasing number of visitors, and at times the local gentry would support the sports - be they 'ordinary' sports or inn sports - in order to entertain their visitors. One example of this comes from Killington. A number of sports had been reported from the Three Mile House at Killington^{2,3}, but in 1857 a series of sports meetings were reported from Killington. These were referred to as Scotch Jean's Sports and took place at the Black Horse Inn. The origin of the name 'Scotch Jean' is not clear, but it might well be some connection with the management of the inn. At New Year 1857 there was a sports held under the auspices of G.U. Smith of Ingemire Hall "...by whom the principal portion of the funds contended for was contributed"⁴. In early May another meeting was held at relatively short notice, it being noted that G.U. Smith was about to depart to his Bristol residence: there was wrestling, a foot race

¹WG and KA, 21.11.1868.

²WG and KA, 1.6.1850.

³WG and KA, 5.6.1852.

⁴WG and KA, 3.1.1857.

and a donkey race and it was deemed to be "Such a gathering took place as has not been witnessed before in that district"¹. Later in the same year it was announced that sports would again be held:

"At the Black Horse Inn on Tuesday, November 24th, 1857 to commence with a hurdle race. First prize 15s; second prize 5s; third prize 2s 6d. A Foot Race of 600 yards, along the Turnpike Road, first prize 10s; second prize 5s; third prize 2s 6d. A Sack Race of 60 yards. First prize 5s; second prize 2s 6d. A Short Foot Race, 150 yards, along the Turnpike Road. First prize 7s 6; second prize 2s 6d. A Donkey Race. First prize 5s; second prize 2s 6d. A Walking Match of half a mile. First prize 10s; second prize 5s. Wrestling - the sum of 10 l will also be given to wrestle for. Names of competitors to be entered before twelve o'clock."²

The subsequent report was extremely complimentary and clearly indicative of the social importance attached to the occasion. The sports were noted as being:

"...under the liberal patronage of G.U. Smyth Esq. and a party of gentlemen of the right sort who are adjourning with him at Ingemire Hall. In point of number such a gathering never took place in the Vale of Lune, or hardly at the renowned Flan or Newcastle."³

These sports do not seem to have any consistency: it might well be that there were smaller ventures when the financial backing of the gentry was not available. However in 1869 there was

"...a revival of its once famous sports...the attendance was exceedingly numerous...Amongst the gentlemen who

¹WG and KA, 16.5.1857.

²WG and KA, 14.11.1857.

³WG and KA, 28.11.1857.

patronised the sport by their presence we observed Sir Greville Smyth, Bart, an ardent lover of good old English sports".¹

By this time a knighthood has been attained: the fashion of the aspirant middle class, the new industrial rich might well have been reflected in the support for popular sport, a support which was becoming increasingly evident. Local support for sport had also been noted from Dallam Towers and Holker Hall, and in the same area of southern Lakeland there was an annual meeting at Levens Hall. In 1869 there had been the 'Milnthorpe Fair' Dinner and Radish Feast at the Cross Keys Hotel, and then "The company broke up at about half-past three to adjourn to the gardens at Levens"², with the sports including leaping competitions, foot racing and wrestling.

Some of the celebrations at the Halls came to be annual events until the fashion faded, whilst others - such as the coming-of-age celebration at Holker Hall in 1854 were for particular happenings. One of the most noteworthy celebrations of the latter type took place at Underley Hall in 1865 when Lord Kenlis inherited the estate and considered it appropriate to promote sports as part of his social duties. The importance of the venture lies in part in the increasing acceptance of sport in that at the beginning of the century the gentry would probably have had a private occasion in that they would be further removed from their tenants and workers: but by the mid 1860's there had at times come an opulence in display for the world to see.

¹WG and KA, 13.3.1869.

²WG and KA, 15.5.1869.

"Festivities at Underley Hall. - Lord Kenlis, who as our readers are aware, has recently come into possession of his large estates, gave a magnificent entertainment to his tenants and friends at Underley Hall on Tuesday last. The wrestling drew a large attendance and some capital contests took place."¹

The sports included pole climbing, a 100 yards foot race, a blindfold wheelbarrow race, running high leap, pole leaping, hammer throwing, jingling, a donkey race, a race for women over 50 years of age and 'foot-ball'. There was an extremely impressive list of visitors with dinner in the hall for the guests and dinner in a 90' long marquee for the tenants. This was an interesting indication of the social niceties of the celebration: dinner for the visitors in the hall and for the tenants in a marquee. The labourers of the estate were, apparently, treated in the following week but that occasion was not deemed to be worthy of report. The festivities for the gentry and the tenants included fireworks and then dancing and

"It is estimated that about 1,100 had tea and luncheon in the marquee, and that there were between 4,000 and 5,000 people assembled in the Park for the fireworks."²

The splendour of this celebration might well be seen to represent a certain ostentation, but the life-style and wealth of the gentry were in many cases representative of an age of expansion: an age of continuing wealth for the rich land-owners, many of whom had found rapid increases in their wealth by virtue of minerals on their lands; and an age of new found wealth for many of those profiting from industry.

¹WG and KA, 30.9.1865.

²Ibid.

Support for sport on the part of the gentry seems to have been common during the middle years of the century, although it was rarely as ostentatious as the functions supported by Sir Greville Smyth at Killington or the inheritance at Underley Hall. Less overt support occurred in the occasional 'putting up' of money for rowing races on Derwentwater and Windermere, for occasional foot races and for wrestling. In this context it is appropriate to consider the case of the Carlisle Races. Whilst many of the smaller race meetings had faded away during the third quarter of the century, that at 'The Swifts', Carlisle continued as a major venture. This might well be typical of a national trend, with a number of the small local meetings dying and, with increasing ease of transport, the major meetings growing in splendour. The Penrith-Carlisle area was resplendent with the residences of a number of the rich gentry and the Carlisle Races, supported by the Earls of Carlisle and the Lowthers continued with great success. The wrestling there had been supported by the gentry from the first decade of the century, and it is apparent that this support continued well past the middle years of the century. Carlisle Races continued to be reported for many years as including a wider range of events than just the horse racing. In 1857 there were 128 wrestlers competing, with wrestlers coming from the whole of the Lake District and from Newcastle¹. Of the four coming from Loweswater it was possible to identify three of them in the 1861 Census returns: John Graham was an agricultural labourer, William Graham was noted as being a farmer's son and John Beck was a joiner². Carlisle Races included pole leaping in 1868³, and it was

¹*CJ*, 21.10.1857.

²*Census returns*, 1861.

³*WG and KA*, 11.7.1868.

noted in the following year that there was a prize of 10s. for the neatest wrestling costume¹.

The earliest days of wrestling had been reported from the villages of Langwathby and Melmerby, and it is interesting to note that in an era of growing sophistication the sports at Langwathby in 1869 continued, as in a number of the smaller villages, to retain a rustic nature. The meeting in 1869 included wrestling, foot racing, a wheelbarrow race, a smoking competition, gurning and concluded with a ball². Of significance, too, is the fact that this remained a traditional New Year's Day gathering. In spite of the many developments in sport there remained continuing evidence of the origins of many of the sports.

Sports and an Economy Based on Sheep

The economy of the Lakeland Fells was primarily based on sheep farming. With the various Acts of Enclosure there would be increasingly selective breeding of sheep and the sheep sales would become of increasing interest with identifiable breeds of sheep fetching different prices at the sales. There would be shows of sheep, and in many cases the sheep fairs would be a 'day out' for the farming community. By the middle of the century it had become common to hold sports in connection with a number of the fairs: at times there would be horse racing, but much more common would be the

¹*CJ*, 9.7.1869.

²*CJ*, 5.1.1869.

times when wrestling, leaping and foot racing competitions were held.

At Aspatria in the middle year of the century the occasion was noted as being the "Aspatria Races and Sheep Fair"¹ and the meeting at Ravenglass in 1850 was described as the 'Fair and Races', in which year there was wrestling, quoiting, and a foot race for a hat: it was recorded that some 500 train passengers were at the fair and that there was a "Good show of sheep"². These fairs occurred in late July and August, but obviously represented only one part of the shepherd's season. Spring would be a hard time for the shepherds with the long days and nights of lambing time, often in rain and snow. There would be no time for sport. There would, however, be sports in connection with the Whitsuntide and Martinmas hirings in towns such as Appleby and Kendal: there would at times be sports in connection with the sheep washing and sheep clipping, and in many cases there would be sports at the end of the season, when the sorting of stray sheep took place. This latter occasion would just involve the shepherds who would once a year walk over the fells with any stray sheep that they had acquired during the year, and return those sheep to their rightful owners. The ownership of the sheep would be identified by markings on the sheep. Once sheep had been returned to their rightful owners there would be wrestling, possibly foot racing and leaping competitions and almost certainly fox hunting. The evening would finish with a 'Merry Neet' of drinking and singing and would be held at a country inn such as the Kirkstone Pass Inn or the Dun Bull at Mardale.

¹*CJ*, 28.8.1849.

²*CP*, 6.8.1850.

The fairs grew in importance during the middle years of the century. At Langdale in 1862

"The first fair was held here, according to announcement, on Friday the 19th instant. There was a great number of people from all parts of the district. The supply of sheep was numerous, consisting of nearly twenty pens."¹

Sheep, cattle and horses were sold in the morning and there were sports in the afternoon. There was foot racing, a pony race, a sack race and hound trailing. The prizes indicate the rural nature of the meeting with the older type of prizes: there was a horse race for a bridle and the wrestling was for a "...handsome belt and £3"², with over 80 wrestlers competing for the prize. In the following year the very small community at Torver had their cattle and sheep show, with trotting, quoits and wrestling being the sporting events³. In 1867 'Fair and Sports' at Coniston and Langdale - both small communities and not too distant from each other - were reported in one issue of the local paper, and indication of the proliferation of these sports in the 1860's.

The sheep dippings and sheep clippings were of particular interest because they were working occasions and not primarily intended as sports. In all probability the only competitors would be those who were there to work. In 1857 there was the

"Forrest Hall Sheep Clipping and Wrestling...on Wednesday last, at High House, where 3,000 sheep were clipped,

¹WG and KA, 27.9.1862.

²Ibid.

³WG and KA, 19.9.1863.

upwards of seventy men being hard at work."¹

The prizes were fleeces, and in addition to the wrestling there was a steeplechase which involved the competitors going over walls and through a river.

At some stage of the summer, and preceding the sheep clippings there would be the sheep dippings. The purpose of this would be two fold: firstly the dipping would kill pests, and secondly the cleaner wool would fetch a higher price on the market. The scene is revealingly described in connection with an event in 1860:

"Sheepwashing near Lowther. - One of those annual social gatherings of dalesmen and farmers for which the county of Westmorland and the sister county have long been celebrated took place on Saturday last, at the High Garden's Bridge, near Lowther, where the farmers of the surrounding district with their friends, servants, etc. assembled to wash their 'fleecy flocks'; and the necessary ablutions having been performed, a profuse and substantial spread of huge veal pies, cum multis aliis of the creature comforts, was made on the green sward, to which ample and summary justice was done, and, which, from time to time, was washed down with copious libations of Mr. Duke's XX and Nicholson's best Geneva. As usual on such occasions, prizes were announced to be contested for in Running, Wrestling and Leaping."²

Sports in connection with the sheep dippings and sheep clippings continued throughout the century. They represented an interesting connection between the economy and indigenous sports and were rural in setting and character, preceding the eventual sophistication of some of the events involved.

¹WG and KA, 28.9.1857.

²WG and KA, 12.5.1860.

Regattas

The regattas suffered varying fortunes during the middle years of the century. Those at Derwentwater and Windermere faded during the early 1840's, possibly due to the lack of organisation. It might well be that they had outgrown their somewhat rustic origins and that a different type of structure was needed to promote them. However both of these regattas were to be successfully revived and seem to have been functioning effectively by the end of the decade. That at Ullswater continued to thrive during the 1840's, but by 1860 had declined. Certainly the middle years of the century saw decline, then revival and growth in a number of the regattas, and change which was to be accelerated by the increasing tourist trade. However there is no general pattern of change for all of the regattas, and it seems advisable to consider them separately.

Ullswater

The 1840's saw a period of growth for this meeting, and during the decade. In 1847 the gentry were reported as being present¹, and in the following year it was noted that the events included rowing, hound trailing, a donkey race, wrestling, pole leaping, catgallows leaping, a lengthwise leap and the prize of a shawl for females "...awarded to Mary Robinson of Pooley, who outstripped six other lish lasses"^{2,3}. In the following year it was noted that

¹WG and KA, 14.8.1847.

²WG and KA, 15.8.1848.

³'lish' was a local expression meaning 'lithe'.

"This regatta is yearly increasing in importance, which may be attributed to the interest and working example of Captain Salmond and his assistant, Mr. R. Bewsher, the worthy host of the Crown Hotel, Pooley Bridge. The races were all most gallantly and strenuously contested, and the arrangements throughout gave general satisfaction. The company on former occasions has been more numerous, but never more respectable. Among them were Lord Andover and two sons; Lord Monteagle and lady; etc."

"Events: four oared boat race: single handed boat race: double-handed boat race: hound trail: donkey race for two sovereigns: pole leap (9'2") for one sovereign: ladies race for a gown and ribbon: hen race...

'Twenty seven young men and lads, with their hands tied behind them, contended in catching a fine hen in their mouths. Numerous were the ups and downs, and the proceedings gave rise to much fun and laughter, especially to Lord Andover and other distinguished visitors, who had never seen such a sport before' "

By 1860, however, the regatta at Ullswater was noted as having 'dwindled to a low ebb'². However the meeting was again reported in 1863³ and it seems probable that the meeting did continue: it was certainly functioning at the end of the century.

Keswick

It seems that the Keswick regatta had faded in the late 1830's and that it was later revived. This might in part have been influenced by the increasing number of visitors coming to the district, although it was noted⁴ that William Dacre, a Cambridge graduate with strong local connections was influential in this revival. It was noted that

¹WG and KA, 18.8.1849.

²WG and KA, 17.8.1860.

³WG and KA, 15.8.1863.

⁴SUA, 6.9.1849.

"These celebrated sports which, after lying for a while in abeyance, came off in a spirited manner on Thursday, Friday and Saturday last".¹

In 1857 the event was described as a 'Rural Fete' with a foot race, boat races and wrestling² and by 1869 it was a 'Gala Day' with foot racing, boat racing, wrestling and the new sport of cycle racing³. By this time the occasion was well established.

Windermere

The regattas on Windermere, like those on Derwentwater, seem to have faded but were recommenced in 1844 when

"The revival of the 'Regatta' at Windermere, this year, promised to afford a rich treat to such as take a pleasure in aquatic entertainments".⁴

It was noted that there was rowing and wrestling, that there was a band adding to the festive nature of the occasion, and that Professor Wilson was a distinguished visitor. However this revival was short-lived, for there were no regattas at the Ferry Inn for another 4 years. In 1848 there was a two day meeting with rowing matches for skiffs (2 classes, races for pleasure boats, single handed and double handed; and, of course, wrestling. On this occasion it was noted that

¹WG and KA, 8.9.1849.

²WG and KA, 27.7.1857.

³WG and KA, 22.5.1869.

⁴KM and NA, 3.8.1844.

"...it has long been a matter of surprise that a scene so fitted in every respect for the gay and graceful pastime should remain unhonoured with the annual celebration"¹.

Nevertheless there was no guarantee that there would be a regatta in the following year. Basically it would appear that no one was coming forward to organise such a venture. Early in the following year a letter to the editor of the local newspaper queried

"Can you tell me how year after year we have a faint promise of a regatta on a grand scale to come off on this 'Queen of the English Lakes', and yet it all ends in nothing? What are our slumbering aquatic squires about?"²

The letter prompted an appropriate comment and indeed a letter in reply: the letter suggested what should be done -

"Were a committee formed of half a dozen of the young squirearchy and leading men in the neighbourhood - were they to open a subscription and bring it before the numerous parties interested - the railway companies, the hotel keepers, the steam boat proprietors, the yacht and boating clubs, etc., etc., I'll warrant they raise a sufficient sum to do the thing handsomely, and to treat us to something deserving of the name 'national'.

Yours etc.,
Paddle Box."³

In the same issue of the newspaper there was immediate comment:

¹WG and KA, 12.8.1848.

²WG and KA, 16.6.1849.

³WG and KA, 23.6.1849.

"We are glad to hear a rumour that regatta and boating matches of the old stamp have not altogether disappeared from the noble waters of Lake Windermere. We hear that a vigorous effort is being made this season by several distinguished residents on the shores of the lake to have an aquatic celebration on a scale more appropriate to the beauty and aptitude of the locality than have been witnessed for some years."¹

The 'distinguished residents' might well have included newcomers to the district, for by this time the environs of Windermere were becoming increasingly occupied by the new gentry - probably those who were profiting to some considerable extent from the Industrial Revolution - and brought to Windermere by the railway with the station having been opened in 1847. Certainly the 1849 regatta was a success, for

"On Thursday the principal regatta day, numerous boats were out, many of them freighted with a large proportion of elegantly dressed females".²

with this description indicating the place of the regatta within the society of the time. It might well be that the growth in the number of visitors attending the regatta were keen to see the wrestling, for the 1850's seem to have been a period of extreme popularity for the sport. In 1856 it was noted that in the traditional two day meeting there were many entries for the wrestling, but that "The boat race seemed to excite but trifling interest compared with the wrestling"³, and in the following year an even more condemning comment was that

"...we indeed think that, another year, the stewards would

¹ *Ibid.*

² *SUA*, 5.9.1849.

³ *WG and KA*, 13.9.1856.

be wise to omit the boat races from the programme, unless they can be better got up."¹

This in fact did not happen and there was a revival. The regatta in 1859 was reported in most glowing terms to the extent of 30 column-inches in the local paper.

"These sports come round with the revolving year, and on an ancient festival of Windermere, and are still an important and increasing occasion for in point of numbers at the muster, the present far outshone any former year, and the number of wrestlers of more or less note, was greater than on any previous occasion. The excitement which prevails at such a meeting baffles all description, and those who are north country bred alone can enter into, or enjoy, the pleasures of the day."²

There was heavy and light weight wrestling and a further wrestling competition for 32 picked men: four oared boat races, pair oared boat races, a single handed race and skiff races on both days: pole leaping and high leaping. The two day meeting seems to have caused great interest and the final comment is probably inaccurate: it is almost certain that the meeting would have been attended by visitors who would enjoy the meeting as much as (but possibly in a different way to) the locals.

Thereafter, and without any logical explanation, the meetings at the Ferry seem to have declined. There were other regattas on the lake and there eventually grew one at Bowness which might well have been seen to be a change of venue for the Ferry regatta. In 1865 the meeting at Bowness was noted as having races for Old Sail Boats, Double Skulls, Boys' Race in Skiffs, Punt Race, Pleasure Boat Race,

¹WG and KA, 1.8.1857.

²WG and KA, 20.8.1859.

Carriage Boat Race, race for four-oared Wherries¹. This seems to have been a water based regatta and there was no reference to wrestling (which had in some cases been removed from the contexts of the regattas). This might well have been the forerunner of the regattas which were soon to develop as aquatic sports which aimed to cater for the interests of the increasing number of tourists. The rustic element had declined, the sailing had been in the main removed to a more genteel environment and the concept of a sporting spectacle was to develop.

Talkin Tarn

On the northern edge of the Lake District, near Carlisle at Talkin Tarn there developed a regatta of some considerable interest. It was patronised by the Earl of Carlisle and a number of other gentry. In 1855 it was noted as being Talkin Tarn Amateur Regatta and Wrestling. There was a race for gigs or cutters with four cups for prizes, value £20 each, a considerable value at the time. There was also hound trailing, pole leaping and wrestling². The use of the term 'Amateur' is of considerable interest indicating the beginnings of what was to become a formalised social cleavage in sport. In all probability the phraseology allowed for money prizes in activities other than the sailing. The report on the meeting was complimentary: "Undoubtedly the best meeting that has yet been held"³. The meeting continued to be reported for many years: it was clearly strong in

¹*WG and KA, 5.8.1865.*

²*CJ, 10.8.1855.*

³*CJ, 24.8.1855.*

1859¹ and at the meeting in 1865 there was hound trailing, wrestling, a hurdle race round the wrestling ring, sailing and a swimming race, this being one of the earliest reports of swimming races at larger sports ventures in the Lake District. It was noted that

"Side swimming was the style generally adopted, with an occasional change to front swimming for relief."²

Other Regattas

The middle years of the century saw the development of regattas other than those on Derwentwater, Ullswater and Windermere. There seems to have been a growing interest in sport, and there were increasing numbers of visitors to the area. In 1849 at Grasmere there was

"The first Regatta which has taken place in the beautiful and secluded vale of Grasmere...including...double handed skiffs, single handed pleasure boats belonging to Grasmere, single handed skiffs, single handed pleasure boats, wrestling, foot race, donkey race, sack race, hound trail, standing high leap."³

At the southern extremity of the Lake District sailing was reported from Arnside in 1852⁴, 1859⁵ and 1860 when it was noted that 5 boats competed in the regatta organised by the Arnside Yacht Club⁶.

¹*CJ*, 23.8.1859.

²*KM*, 2.9.1865.

³*WG and KA*, 25.8.1849.

⁴*WG and KA*, 9.10.1852.

⁵*WG and KA*, 9.7.1859.

⁶*UM*, 24.11.1860.

South of the Lake District in Northern Lancashire in 1851 there was a regatta which was similar in many ways to the older type of meetings at the Ferry, Windermere, where there was also "A woman's race for a dress piece, being won by a little Scotchwoman"¹. During the same period there were continuing regattas at Sandside (near Arnside) with the promotion of the meeting being the responsibility of the landlord of the Ship Inn. The pattern of the meeting again reflected those held on Windermere, for there was sailing, a hound dog trail, trotting, wrestling and a ball in the evening². The sports at Arnside and Sandside probably represented a change primarily resultant from the increasing number of visitors and middle-class residents, and the meetings indicated a balance between Lakeland traditions and the influence of national trends, with the latter influence eventually becoming dominant.

In all probability the quiet period for the regattas was the temporary fading of these functions on Derwentwater and Windermere around the year 1840. The revival, and the development of similar events coincided with the increasing number of Lakeland visitors, and the fashion of regattas came to prevail.

The Windermere Yacht Club

During the 1840's there were continuing reports on the Windermere Yacht Races, and it is clear that there were by this time exclusive ventures. As increasing numbers of the gentry came to reside in the

¹*SUA*, 19.5.1851.

²*WG and KA*, 28.8.1852.

district, so the yachting developed a certain sophistication. There came to be a series of races normally spread over July and August, and a growing formalisation with regard to the yachts. By 1849 it was noted that

"Preparations are already being made in the Lake District for sailing matches, which are expected to come off during the ensuing summer...Two new yachts, on a smaller scale, are to be laid down for gentlemen in the neighbourhood. They are both to be strictly on the Wave principle, and the same dimensions."¹

Thereafter the yachting thrived as a sport and the Yacht Club, based at the Old England hotel, became a meeting point for many of the relatively rich newcomers to the district. It was noted in 1851 that:

"The annual cup match came off on Wednesday last, and attracted a numerous and fashionable company to this renowned lake."²

It might well be that a number of the 'fashionable company' were residents, and that a number were visitors, for the attractions of the Lake District in summer were such that an increasing number of visiting gentry came to stay in the district for part of the summer holidays. Bell's Life in 1851 noted that the boats sailing in the Windermere regatta were not of standard length, and that "Two and a half minutes were allowed for each foot for differences of length on the water line"³. The meeting continued to be reported. In 1854 it was noted as being the "Annual Sailing Match for Mr. Astley's Cup"⁴.

¹WG and KA, 17.2.1849.

²BL, 3.8.1851.

³BL, 10.8.1851.

⁴WG and KA, 2.9.1854.

This particular competition occurred at the end of August, but it seems that thereafter the races took place during the period early July until early August. The season became more formally limited in its placing in the calendar, and continued to grow steadily. With this growth, too, came a greater sophistication. In 1856 there was a race for a second subscription cup, it being noted that "...only boats of the larger class were allowed to compete"¹. In the following year practices were noted² some 2 weeks before the first of the sailing matches for the Subscription Cup³, and it is clear that the regatta was attracting increasing interest. At the beginning of the 1859 season it was written of Bowness that "The engrossing topics here at present are the yachting matches which commence here on the 18th instant"⁴. Some two weeks later on the 23rd of July there was a long and glowing report on what was by now a 4 day meeting of considerable social importance⁵. Interest in the regatta continued to grow during the 1860's: in 1864 with the second set of results there was a complaint that the report in the newspaper had not specified the length of the boats⁶ and some two weeks later (making a formal racing season of some 3 weeks after the earlier practices) the popularity of the competition was noted in that:

"The Windermere Sailing Club. - The last prize for this year's matches was run off on Wednesday last, having to be run for in heats."⁷

¹WG and KA, 19.7.1856.

²WG and KA, 4.7.1857.

³WG and KA, 18.7.1857.

⁴WG and KA, 9.7.1859.

⁵WG and KA, 16.7.1859.

⁶WG and KA, 30.7.1864.

⁷WG and KA, 6.8.1864.

By this time the meeting had become larger, more formalised and well established in the local sporting calendar: it fulfilled a need and an interest for many of the aspirant middle classes.

Chapter 5

The Inter-play between National and Local Influences

It seems appropriate at this stage to consider the extent to which Lakeland sports in 1870 had been affected by the national scene as well as the extent to which Lakeland sport had been taken beyond the Lake District. By 1870 the game of cricket was well established in Cumberland and Westmorland, but the two football codes had made but little impact. Significantly, pugilism as a spectator sport made no impression on the Lake District, possibly because of the popularity of the Cumberland and Westmorland style wrestling. There was some pedestrianism, but this did not occur to the extent that pedestrianism occurred in the south of England, and which was widely reported in Bell's Life. Some Lakeland comments were relatively critical, noting in 1817 as being "The rage for pedestrianism of late"¹. It might well be that the interest in running was relatively well catered for by the local sports meetings, but there did come a brief fashion of challenge matches and wagers, a fashion which coincided to some extent with the rapid growth of local sports in the 1840's. In 1841 at Lowther there was

"Racing Extraordinary. - On Wednesday se'nnight² a match for £5 took place at Great Strickland between Mr. Joseph Stevenson of the New Inn, and Mr. William Lancaster, shoemaker. The conditions of the match were, that Mr. Stevenson would run 100 yards in less time than Mr. Lancaster could run 50 yards, carrying on his back Mr. Thomas Hodgson, of Little Strickland, an old sporting gentleman weighing twelve stones. The match was cleverly won by Mr. L., owing, it is said, principally to the scientific jockeyship displayed by his rider, Mr. Hodgson".³

There were a number of odd challenge matches of this type, but these

¹WA and KC, 25.10.1817.

²'se'nnight' means seven nights: 'Wednesday se'nnight' means 'a week ago on Wednesday'.

³WG and KA, 10.4.1841.

seem to have been essentially local and often connected with inns, with one individual simply challenging another to a particular contest. Over and above this, however, there were a small number of matches between pedestrians. In 1847 it was announced that

"A match will take place at the BEE HIVE, STAINTON, on Monday the 21st June at 4 o'clock p.m. to run one mile (half a mile out and half a mile in) for 25 l a-side between Joseph Fawcett, the Hutton Buck, and James Ward, the Firbank Ling Bird."¹

It seems that this was the era of flattering titles for the athletes, for in 1849 there was a foot race between

"Mr. Daniel Dobson, the Birbeck Fells Moor Cock and Mr. Richard Metcalfe, the Ravenstonedale Buck."²

What seems to be significant is that the growth of sports in the Lake District did not result in any great growth of pedestrianism in the area. In one issue of Bell's Life³ in 1847 there was a list of some 53 pedestrian matches, none of which was in the Lake District. Pedestrian matches in the Lake District were a rarity, but a number of odd competitions were reported, including one in which a well-known professional runner participated:

"A match of a very peculiar kind came off on the Cummersdale Holme on Tuesday. Gavin Tait, the pedestrian, had backed himself to catch 3 rabbits in half an hour. The conditions were that the animals were to be let off with 30 yards start before another was released. There were several

¹WG and KA, 12.6.1847.

²WG and KA, 3.11.1849.

³BL, 21.3.1847.

hundred persons present. One of the rabbits on being released made for a hedge, but Tait caught it before it got there. The whole 3 were caught in 11½ minutes."¹

It might well be that the novelty of the event attracted the relatively large number of spectators, but what is far more significant is that reports on pedestrianism thereafter seem to have faded: it might well be that the growth in the value of cash prizes at major Lakeland sports, and the number of these sports militated against the growth of pedestrianism as a separate spectator sport. In any case the growth of football during the final quarter of the century would accommodate many of those who wished to watch sport.

The extent to which Lakeland sport affected national and then international sport might well be seen as a matter for conjecture. What does seem to be clear is that the hound trailing and the fox-hunting on foot of the Lakeland sports did not seem to have spread to other parts of the country. What is abundantly clear is that many of the suggestions reported in Shearman's 'Athletics and Football',² and subsequently inferred in a number of athletic publications (e.g. Quertacini, 1964)³ would seem to be inaccurate: pole vaulting, hurdling and steeplechasing were reported from the Lake District in the late 1830's and early 1840's, well before they were reported from Exeter College in 1850^{4,5}. Certainly events

¹WG and KA, 14.3.1861.

²Shearman, M., 'Athletics and Football', Longmans Green and Co., London, 1887.

³Quertacini, R.L., 'A World History of Track and Field Athletics, 1864-1964', OUP 1964, p. 229.

⁴Ward, I., 'Pole Vaulting - The Early Days', Sports History No. 4, 1984.

⁵Ward, I., 'Hurdling and Steeplechasing - Lakeland Origins?' Sports History No. 5, 1984.

such as hurdling and steeplechasing would be unlikely to have developed away from the sheep farming communities where there were hurdles.

Whilst athletics became a sport of national and then international standing, Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling did not. Initially the sport grew and spread, but eventually, in competition with other sports ceased to function effectively away from the Lake District.

In 1800 wrestling was a Lakeland sport. Certainly there was wrestling in Cornwall, with its Breton connections: but it was the Cumberland and Westmorland style of wrestling which was to become dominant. This occurred in two major ways. The first was the activities of the Cumberland and Westmorland Society in London. The Society was a district association of those from the Lakes who had settled in London (for these were the early days of travel, with an increasing 'emigration' to the capital), and it would essentially be a middle-class organisation, taking with it the tradition of the district from which it originated. And with wrestling as the 'growth' sport of the era, it was inevitable that it would be taken to London. By the 1820's it seems to have been well established in the capital, occurring as an Easter meeting. In 1827 there were some 170 wrestlers at the meeting at the Eyre Arms Tavern, St. John's Wood¹ and some two years later it was noted that there were more than 3,000 spectators when:

"On Good Friday the annual wrestling and leaping matches for ten distinct prizes, raised by subscription, and only

¹CP, 27.4.1827.

allowed to be played for by natives of Westmorland and Cumberland, took place at the Eyre Arms Tavern, St. John's Wood, in the presence of an immense assemblage of spectators, whom the fineness of the morning and the usual superiority of the sports had attracted to the grounds."¹

There were nearly 200 competitors in the wrestling, the main prize for which was a silver cup, value £20, a considerable sum of money in those days. This warrants an interesting comparison with the reluctance of the gentry in Kendal to raise a subscription for wrestling at the Kendal Races only some 3 years previously - but the probability is that the Society in London was in essence formed from those who had travelled to the capital and achieved financial success: such success being augmented by a desire to preserve the distant identity of the Lake District.

By 1834 the wrestling seems to have settled for some years at the Chalk Farm Tavern, Hampstead². In the following year the Silver cup for the wrestling was valued at £30³. The growth of the popularity of the sport was such that by 1837

"The assemblage was more numerous than we ever remember; upon a moderate calculation, there could not be less than 6,000 or 7,000 persons congregated".⁴

By 1840 the Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling meeting in London had been in existence for approximately 20 years⁵. However

¹WG and KA, 26.4.1829.

²WG and KA, 5.4.1834.

³WG and KA, 25.4.1835.

⁴WG and KA, 1.4.1837.

⁵WG and KA, 17.4.1840.

there were problems. It might well be that betting was involved. As far as the metropolis was concerned, gone were the days of wrestling for a belt, for by this time the prize value for the wrestling was twice as much as a hired farm labourer would be paid in one year. There were newspaper comments on "...disrepute"¹, and a reply to the Editor of the Westmorland Gazette and Kendal Advertiser which agreed with the criticism, but stated that reorganisation was afoot and that "...the SCAMPS will be kicked clean out"². About this time the gathering moved to Highbury Barn Tavern and it was noted that "Donaldson of Patterdale, Westmorland, came up to town expressly to attend"³. This was the beginning of sporting travel by train. At this time (1843) the Kendal rail link was not in operation, but the line from Carlisle to Lancaster to London was functioning.

By 1849 the venue had changed to Copenhagen House, with the wrestling being held on the Fives court⁴. In 1870 the venue was the Agricultural Hall, Islington⁵, but by this time the sports were beginning to fade. In 1873 the London Easter Wrestling "...was in some respects less successful"⁶, and in 1875 the performances were deemed to be "...very moderate"⁷. Reporting therefore faded - one certainly appeared as late as 1884⁸ but the great days of the London

¹WG and KA, 7.3.1840.

²WG and KA, 21.3.1840.

³WG and KA, 22.4.1843.

⁴WG and KA, 11.4.1849.

⁵WG and KA, 23.1.1870.

⁶CJ, 7.4.1874

⁷WG, 3.4.1875.

⁸WG, 26.4.1884.

Easter wrestling were past by the final quarter of the century.

Wrestling occurred at a number of other venues away from the Lake District. By 1828 there was wrestling at Haigh Park, Leeds¹. The sport continued to spread. In the 1830's and 1840's it was taken to Preston, Liverpool, Manchester, Edinburgh and a number of other venues, where, in the absence of any other plebian spectator sports, it thrived. There are many reports, and the period represents the effective beginning of a professional attitude to the sport, which attitude had existed previously in a smaller scale in the Lake District. The sport, too, was taken to New Zealand² and was reported from there in 1879. The rapid spread of the sport, however, was ephemeral, and wrestling quickly faded in the areas away from the Lake District in the 1870's. It had been supplanted by football. The sport had thrived for many years in Newcastle - even to the point at which, in the middle of the century, there had been special trains from Carlisle to Newcastle: the railway companies were eager for business, and even in the opening year of the train service in 1836

"The Newcastle and Carlisle railway having announced a cheap train, a larger number than usual of the inhabitants of the west availed themselves of the opportunity of witnessing their favourite sport."³

This pattern continued for a number of years. However the coming of the railways was, in part, a reason for the decline of wrestling, for

¹CP, 15.4.1828.

²WG, 8.2.1879.

³WG and KA, 16.7.1836.

the railways brought national fashions and other sports, and the export of wrestling had almost ceased by the middle of the century.

Wrestling, like boxing, was open to challenge. In 1836 one Joseph Bampton advertised that he "...will wrestle any man in England for twenty sovereigns a side, best of seven falls"¹. Some 5 years later John Sisson of Water Crook, near Kendal, offered to wrestle any man from the village of Orton for £1². One senses a certain animosity towards the natives of Orton in this challenge: and the newspapers of the time do not indicate whether or not the challenge was taken up! The peak of the individual bouts in terms of challenge matches occurred in the 1850's and before the coming of football as a spectator sport. In the famous match between Atkinson and Jackson in 1851 it was noted as being:

"The Great Wrestling match for the Championship of England and £300 at Ulverston. Robert Atkinson aged 28 a native of Sleagill near Shap (a factor of hams and butter, etc.) and Wm. Jackson - Kenneyside near Ennerdale Lake - Descended from the highly esteemed class known as 'STATESMEN' - shepherd to his father's sheep."³

It is interesting to note the occupations of the wrestlers, and to note that the term 'STATESMEN' was still in use. When the match occurred Atkinson won by 3 falls to 1, and it was recorded that there were upwards of 7,000 spectators. Many arrived on trains from Whitehaven, Newcastle and Carlisle: there was a special train from Windermere and a steamer: and "The Londoners came to Ulverston

¹ *Ibid.*

² *WG and KA, 3.7.1841.*

³ *CJ, 29.8.1851.*

the night before"¹. What is clear is that at this time the Cumberland and Westmorland style of wrestling was a major spectator sport in London and much of the North of England, and that from subsequent comments it is equally clear that Atkinson and Jackson held each other in high esteem. General comments at the time, with few exceptions, seem to indicate the concept of 'fair play' and of a respect for the manliness of the sport².

As the sport had grown, so then came to be the formation of wrestling societies. Following that at Carlisle³ in 1837, the Kendal Wrestling Union Society was formed in 1840⁴, that at Kirby Lonsdale in 1842, it being noted that there were 45 entries when "...the first annual meeting of the Kirby Lonsdale Wrestling Association took place"⁵. A similar society was formed in Penrith in 1845⁶. The Wrestling Societies ran meetings, indicative of the growing tendency of established wrestling bodies to concern themselves with, and promote, other sports. In this latter meeting there were also foot races and jumping competitions, and it was estimated that there were upward of 2,000 people present. The period 1830 to 1870 represented the boom time for wrestling. At the Carlisle meeting in 1865 it was referred to as "The great annual gathering of the Cumberland and Westmorland Association held in connection with the races"⁷, and there were many

¹*CJ*, 10.10.1851.

²*WG and KA*, 18.10.1851.

³*CP*, 4.4.1837.

⁴*WG and KA*, 10.10.1840.

⁵*WG and KA*, 19.11.1842.

⁶*WG and KA*, 25.10.1845.

⁷*CJ*, 7.7.1865.

competitors with £120 in prize money..

With the coming of other sports it would have been thought that there would be a demise in the formation of wrestling societies. In general, it seems, they quietly faded. However one such new association was inaugurated as late as 1898 at Ambleside when

"A meeting of wrestlers took place at Ambleside on Saturday, and was styled the first meeting of the Ambleside Westmorland and Cumberland wrestling Association"¹.

The phrasing of the title is of interest: for many years in the Lake District and in London, the placing of the county names 'Cumberland' and 'Westmorland' had been a point of issue: it was generally a dormant issue, awakened but rarely. But the Westmerians had again raised it at this juncture.

During the period of increasing popularity of the sport of wrestling in the middle years of the nineteenth century the prize money increased considerably. Considerable sums of money were involved, and training for wrestling became quite a serious business. Dr. Robson, who is currently in charge of the Wrestling Club in Carlisle, writes "What is certain is that from 1850 onwards, top wrestlers had trainers"². The clubs of the nineteenth century often took the title of 'Academies'. In effect they were groups of people who trained together under the guidance of a coach. Such academies were in existence in Carlisle, Kendal, Millom, Gilsland

¹WG, 10.9.1898.

²Robson, R., *personal communication*.

amongst other places, a number of which were outside the periphery of the Lake District. They seem to have been particularly strong during the period 1850-1890, but their strength is difficult to ascertain. The training was not well-documented whereas the competitions were almost invariably noted in the press. The Academies seem to have come and gone in exactly the same way that, in other parts of the country, the 'Boxing Schools' came and went at the turn of the century. They were essentially dependent upon the expertise and charisma of one man, and were hardly structured for permanency.

Wrestling was effectively born at the Langwathby and Melmerby Rounds: it was fostered by John Wilson, by the Earls of Lowther and other gentry, and was written about by William Litt as an early book on sport. It grew from shepherd origins, blossomed at the Sheep Fairs and featured at the athletic sports and regattas. It was fostered, too, by the inns. Its place as an inn sport seems to have been at a peak during the period 1850-1880: at the Green Dragon, Town End in 1875 there was the unusual offer of "Wrestling for Boys for three large meat pies"¹, and in the same year the Oxenholme Inn Sports also included running, spell and knurr. The wrestling was the essence of Lakeland's sporting scene and spread nationally. But then came the competition of football and the retreat to the fells. Wrestling, a Lakeland sport, never took root in the cities; but amidst fells of Lakeland it continued to thrive.

¹WG, 22.5.1875.

Costumes

Presumably the early wrestlers would wear their normal clothes. However as the sport grew, so there came to be conformity of dress. In a sense, this would be necessary, for normal clothing might provide both advantages and disadvantages with regard to the gripping to one's opponent. The type of dress which evolved was of a white, tight fitting one piece garment of the 'Long John' variety. Over the top of this the wrestler could wear a pair of trunks. Almost like a pair of velvet swimming trunks. With pride in the sport came pride in the appearance of the competitors: mothers and wives would embroider the uniform. Eventually there came to be a competition relating to the costume: "10s. prize for the neatest costume"¹, and this tradition continued. Such was the importance of the wrestling in the latter part of the nineteenth century that it was primarily the wrestlers who were photographed with the visiting gentry. For formal photographs the wrestlers would be photographed in their costume, but additionally wearing a favourite prize belt. The 'neatest costume' came to the fore in some strength during the last thirty years of the century, although it had existed before then. It filled a gap for the womenfolk, and became a source of family pride. The importance of the wrestling was noted at the end of the century when there was some 40 column inches of reporting in the Westmorland Gazette concerning the death of Thomas Longmire, the former wrestling champion of All-England. Longmire had been born in Troutbeck in 1823 and eventually became a bobbin turner before becoming the landlord of the 'Hole in the Wall' inn at Bowness. The

¹CJ, 22.6.1869.

peak of Longmire's wrestling career was in the late 1840's and early 1850's when the sport of Cumberland and Westmorland style wrestling was the main spectator sport in the Lake District and of considerable importance at a number of other cities or towns, and it is significant to note that in 1899 his previous achievements were recalled.¹

¹WG, 17.2.1899.

CHAPTER 6

1870 - 1900

Continuing Themes : and the sophistication of change

(a) Shooting, Coursing, Hunting and Racing

Shooting

The gentry and their guests continued to shoot on the estates, with shoots at Eden Hall¹, Underley Hall² and Holker Hall where in 1892 it was recorded that nearly 2,000 birds, mostly pheasants, had been shot at one meet³. Whilst this was a continuing theme throughout the final 30 years of the century it was relatively unchanging and little reported, for it was outside the mainstream of the interests of the now literate lower classes. Other forms of shooting occurred in three major ways. Firstly there were the competitions held under the auspices of the Volunteer Movement, by far the most important section of the sport of shooting, and to be reported at length under a separate heading. The second were those organised by the various gun or shooting clubs with one such meeting taking place at Lupton in 1873 when at

"Lupton Gun Club. - The annual pigeon shooting of this club came off at the Plough Inn, Cow Brow."⁴

Whilst a number of the Gun Club competitions took place at inns it is also probable that some of the inns organised their own shooting competitions, with two being reported on successive weeks in the vicinity of Kendal in 1880 at the Hare and Hounds, Beathwaite Green

¹WG and KA, 3.12.1870.

²WG and KA, 23.11.1872.

³WG, 6.2.1892.

⁴WG, 16.8.1873.

and at the Duke William Inn, Staveley in the same year^{1,2}. The pattern of shooting competitions continued with a number of ventures being reported and upon occasion including valuable prizes: in 1884 at the pigeon shooting

"A very handsome silver jug of the value of 25 guineas has been won by Mr. Thomas Rauthmel of Holme...killing eight out of nine birds".³

Coursing

Reports on rabbit coursing faded considerably towards the end of the century, but this might well be because of a changing interest of those who had been involved in the sport in earlier years. Rabbit coursing had been for the working classes and imitative of the hare coursing of the gentry, the latter sport continuing with the 1871 Holker Coursing meeting being indicative of the social scene, for

"This meeting took place on Wednesday last, upon the well-stocked preserves, and by kind permission of the Duke of Devonshire."⁴

In all probability this sport was for the landed gentry, and reports (but fewer in number) seem to have continued.

¹*KM and NA, 9.1.1880.*

²*KM and NA, 16.1.1880.*

³*WG, 21.6.1884.*

⁴*WG and KA, 11.2.1871.*

Hunting

The hunting of deer was in some ways parallel to the coursing of hares and was rarely reported. At times this was the hunting of stray stags, but often it was the hunting of carted stags which were at times known with a certain familiarity: "The deer 'Mabêl' was hunted, caught, and boxed for later pleasure"¹. This was in 1892 and at the turn of the century there was an

"Exciting Hunt at Windermere: a stag swam the Lake... when caught was left...in a comfortable loose box, to await the arrival of the deer van on the following day."²

Hare Hunting

In addition to what seemed to be a continuing pattern of deer hunting there was also the hunting of hares, but this was in Lakeland rather than national tradition. In 1882 the meeting at Bowness on St. Luke's Day (a Mayor Hunt) was held with the comment that

"It would appear that this annual gathering dates from a charter granted by Queen Elizabeth to the people of Bowness some 300 years ago."³

An interesting venture took place in the following year when, with the

¹WG, 5.3.1892.

²WG, 27.10.1900.

³WG, 21.10.1882.

growth of cross-country running the Darlington Foot Harriers stayed at the King's Arms in Caldbeck Village in order to follow the hare hunting¹. Foot racing as a hobby was growing, and this venture by the Darlington Foot Harriers obviously followed the development of Guides' Races in the Lake District but preceded the cross-country clubs later to be formed in such places as Kendal in 1894² and Netherfield in 1897³. At the Windermere Harriers hare hunting in 1884 the traditional sports of quoiting, hound trailing, pole leaping for boys under 16 years of age and a Guides race also took place⁴. The hare hunting continued in popularity throughout the remainder of the century. After the hunting at Troutbeck in 1886,

"A pleasant and enjoyable evening was spent, the chair being taken by that well-known and veteran hunter, Adam Walker, the 'major' for the past Year."⁵

and in 1897 the equivalent function was again reported with enthusiasm, and it is clear that there was hare hunting, at times with appropriate festivities, until the end of the century.⁶

Otter Hunting

Otter Hunting increased on the outer edges of the Lake District

¹WG, 6.10.1883.

²WG, 27.10.1894.

³KM and T, 5.3.1897.

⁴WG, 11.10.1884.

⁵WG, 27.2.1886.

⁶KM and T, 12.11.1897.

towards the end of the century. The Carlisle Pack hunted on the Lune in 1871¹, travelling some distance to do so. This pack would not have needed to come in 1882, for by this year the Kendal Otter Hounds had been formed as a club:

"It would be interesting to lovers of sport in the neighbourhood to learn that otter hunting has become a permanent institution in the county..."²

with the Master of the Club being Mr. H.E. Wilson of Dallam Tower, an indication of the social standing of the sport³. This pack was eventually (1897) based at Dallam Tower and under the control of the new Squire of Dallam Tower, Mr. Henry Bromley⁴.

Fox Hunting

This sport continued as Lakeland's major hunting activity. Whilst there were at times changes in the grouping of packs - at times amalgamations, at times the formation of new packs - these events were a rarity. By the latter part of the century the days of the 'trencher-fed' dogs - i.e. those who lived on separate farms, had virtually finished and the packs were permanent with a 'Master of Hounds'. The packs hunted in season on a regular basis and the meetings were listed. One edition of the Westmorland Gazette in 1884 lists the immediate

¹WG and KA, 18.11.1871.

²WG, 13.5.1882.

³WG, 28.7.1883.

⁴KM and T, 2.4.1897.

future meetings of the Windermere, Lowther, Vale of Lune, Oxenholme, Coniston, Greystoke, Ullswater and Cumberland packs¹. In the following issue of the same paper there was a euphoric account of a day with the Ullswater pack when they caught "...a fine old dog fox, fierce as a tiger"². The social setting of the sport was noted later in the year:

"That Westmorland farmers have a keen liking for hunting was shown at the annual dinner given at Milnthorpe, on Friday, by the Oxenholme Hunt, to the tenant farmers over whose land the pack normally hunted."³

These references from 1884 are indicative of the place of fox hunting in the Lake District towards the end of the century and of the fact that the sport was extremely well established. It was deemed to be a necessity but there is no doubt that it belonged to a farming community, many of whom derived great pleasure from the seasonal sport. Reports continued throughout the remainder of the century, and were generally flattering. In 1896 particular credit was given to one pack:

"When we consider the environment of the Ullswater Foxhounds there is little wonder that they should be one of the keenest and most vigorous packs in England. Their kennels in Patterdale are situated in the very navel of the mountains."⁴

The master of this pack was Joe Bowman, famed in relation to a number of hunts over many years. There was a strong connection between this

¹WG, 19.1.1884.

²WG, 26.1.1884.

³WG, 8.3.1884.

⁴KM and T, 23.2.1896.

pack and the Shepherds' meets at the Kirkstone Pass Inn and the Dun Ball, Mardale, so aptly recalled by Skelton¹. Fox hunting continued to thrive but was never part of the changes brought about by wider national influences.

Horse Racing

The middle and later years of the century showed a considerable decline in the number of horse racing meetings, and this seems to have been part of a national trend: maps of many parts of England bear a place of identification, 'site of old racecourse' where the racecourse cannot be remembered by any inhabitants. In the Lake District the general tendency was for meetings to fade in number and in importance. The Penrith Races in 1895 were very briefly reported, and there was no reference to either deer hunting or wrestling in connection with the races². By this time there was a host of other sporting attractions and the tendency for horse racing to take place at a small number of major centres. The race meetings at Cartmel and Penrith were exceptions to this, leaving only one major meeting, that at Carlisle. With the increasing ease of transport, and with the continuing support of the gentry and with Carlisle being by far the largest population centre in the Lake District area it was this city which came to be the area's centre for horse racing.

One type of meeting held at Carlisle was of particular interest and occurred when a Lowther inherited their considerable estates in

¹*Skelton, W.C., 1923.*

²*CJ, 11.10.1895.*

the vicinity of Penrith and acquired Lowther Castle and the title of Earl of Lonsdale. On the occasion in 1877

"Yesterday, the accession of St. George Henry, Earl of Lonsdale, to the title and privileges of Lord of the Barony of Burgh, was celebrated by races on Burgh Marsh, in accordance with the ancient custom which prescribes that when a Lord of the Barony dies his successor shall give a cup to be raced for by the free and customary tenants of the Barony...From east and west and south and north excursionists by rail to the scene of the day's amusements; and Carlisle sent its thousands by road and rail...The Earl of Lonsdale, with a brilliant party, including the Duke and Duchess of Montrose, the Earl and Countess of Bective, Lord Manchester, Lord and Lady A. Hill etc. The forenoon had been devoted to wrestling, and even at that early part of the day nearly 4,000 paid for admission to the enclosure."¹

Sadly the reign of St. George Henry was relatively brief because the Burgh Barony Races took place again in 1883. The arrangements were deemed to be

"...on a royal scale, thousands of persons being present, and enormous number of them as guests of his Lordship. Wrestling formed an important part of the proceedings during the two days, but the central item was the race for the cup."²

The racing at Carlisle continued in considerable strength throughout the century as one of the sports and occasions which did not change considerably during the final thirty years of the nineteenth century.

¹*CJ*, 1.5.1877.

²*Scott, D.*, 1899.

(b) Sports and Regattas

In 1870 the Lakeland sports and regattas were well established, but were part of a changing scene. Cumberland and Westmorland style wrestling was thriving, and cricket had taken firm roots. The game of football - eventually to massively affect the sporting scene - was just arriving. The year 1870 was, perhaps, a milestone in the development of Lakeland sport and the significance of the changes in sport can only be seen against the Lakeland and the national economy.

In 1870 the British Empire was in ascendance, and industry, in both economical and emotive senses, was in dominance. This would inevitably have some considerable effect on the Lake District, for the ease of transport and communication (in particular, the spread of the newspapers) would have its effect upon the area. There was a demand for literacy, and the Education Act (the 'Forster Act') was passed in 1870. It was to effect changes in the concepts of physical fitness and sport, for schooling became a requirement. This meant that the schools disseminated ideas and attitudes which were national rather than local, and the growing questioning of the long hours of factory labour meant that there was increasing time for leisure. The Ten-hour Act had some effect, but Petrie tells us that "A great stimulus was given to holiday making in 1871 by the Act which established Bank Holidays"¹. With Puritanism and industry many of the old holidays had died: a new and regular pattern of holidays and free time was developing. John Lubbock's campaign for Bank Holidays had been successful, and soon spread to populations well beyond the banks.

¹ Petrie, C., The Victorians. Billing and Sons, 1960, p. 160.

"...when the Queen died in 1901, Bank Holidays had become a national institution"¹. Inevitably this was to affect Lakeland sport. Gone was the insularity of the Lake District, for the wider national influences could not be ignored. One appropriate note relates to John Ruskin, and whilst it is a comment on the home spinning industry it does draw attention to a changing situation. Ruskin, having visited the Lake District during his childhood and his days as a student at Christ Church, Oxford, bought a Coniston property in 1871

"By the time Ruskin came to settle in the Lakes this ancient rural industry had largely fallen into decay, the cheap products of the Yorkshire and Lancashire mills having brought about its demise. Ruskin hated all to do with the Industrial Revolution - its dark satanic mills, its pauperisation of the peasantry and its virtual destruction of their cottage crafts".²

The most immediate and noticeable effect upon Lakeland industry had been the coming of the railways. Other changes were, in the main, gradual. The railways were immediate and evident. They brought people and they brought changing attitudes. They were virtually completed by the mid 1860's: the last major incursion was the 'Ratty', the narrow gauge line from Ravenglass to Boot in 1875. The major effect of the railways was felt most strongly in the vicinity of Lake Windermere. It was easy of access to industrial Lancashire, and the effects of the railway to Windermere in 1847 was to be increasingly felt in the period 1869 to 1880.

"The railway brought four main changes to Windermere. It attracted commuters and summer residents and stimulated

¹Phillips, J. and Phillips, F., Victorians at Home and Away, Croom Helm, 1978, p. 118.

²Rice, H.A.L., 1967, p. 119.

the building of villas for them: it created a new settlement and shopping centre around its terminal: it brought increasing numbers of the traditional kind of long stay visitor, and made the resort more accessible to the less prosperous sections of the middle-class".¹

The commuters who came were very much middle class residents, and their influence would be not inconsiderable. Their life style was often that of the nouveau-riche, and they probably exerted an influence far in excess of their numbers. They would tend to take over existing institutions, with a disproportionate influence upon the previous customs which had developed but slowly. And those who came for holidays would be catered for by the developing tourist industry. That which the visitors required would be provided, and this would tend at times to reflect national rather than local activities in the field of sport. The southeast of old Lakeland was, in part, becoming socially immersed by the flood of 'off-comers'. The situation was particularly evident during the summer season. During the winters around 1870 little had changed, but eventually it was to do so. The age could well be described as belonging to the middle classes, for it was the values which they had created which became dominant in the latter years of the century. But the world for the Lakeland labourer, too, had changed and his horizons broadened. His literacy and schooling would have made him more aware of the world at large and he would be much more aware of the opportunities in life away from Lakeland. He might, too have served in the Army with its inculcation of middle class values. He was aware, too, of the summer tourists

¹Walton, J.D., *The Windermere Tourist Trade in the Age of the Railway*. Centre for North West Regional Studies. Occasional Paper I. Lancaster University, 1976, p. 22.

brought by the railways. Whilst they came in large numbers to such centres as Ambleside, Bowness, Grasmere, Keswick and Windermere they came also to the remote valleys. There went the walkers and the climbers, with the shepherds at times acting as 'Guides' for the tourists.

It could be implied that the influence of communication and the new residents who dominated particular areas might have completely changed the social scene in Lakeland. But the effect was not as great as that in the industrial towns. The Lakeland economy with its strong agricultural base was a factor militating against rapid change. It could, too, be implied that the sports controlled from London, from national organisation strongly influenced by the older universities would have radically changed the scene of Lakeland sport. However it is better to think that it simply added to much of Lakeland sport. The traditional sports, in the main, continued with their own identity, and the newer sports were part of an expansion.

Girsmer Sports - The Focal Point of a Changing Scene

"Everybody goes to 'Girsmer' on Sports Day"¹. So wrote Canon Rawnsley in 1903. Canon Rawnsley followed in the tradition of the Lakeland poets: he loved the Lakes and was involved in the early days of the National Trust. And whilst his literary abilities paled somewhat in relation to those of the Lakeland poets, he was able to capture the essence of the Lakeland sporting culture. Grasmere Sports were unique. They were the essence of Lakeland with the

¹*Rawnsley, H.D., 1903, p. 74.*

traditional sports being dominant. The hound trailing, the Guides race and the wrestling were of Lakeland and confined to Lakeland. But some events which were taken to the wider world have at Grasmere, retained their local identity. The high jumping and pole leaping were devoid of artificial landing areas. To have pole leapt 11'6" would not at first sight seem to be a particularly splendid achievement, but to do it in the final quarter of the nineteenth century with an ash pole and without a box to slide the pole into - and with only the grass to land on - was a considerable skill. It is interesting to note that when, in the 1880's the Ulverston pole leaper Tom Ray won at Grasmere he went on to the United States to compete for the championship¹. Nothing else needed to be said. It was for the championship of the world, for it is almost certain that before 1890 pole vaulting was the prerogative of Britain and the eastern seaboard of the U.S.A. In all probability the athletic events of the English Lake District had a profound effect upon the development of the world athletics. Ray used a technique which involved pole climbing, and the Americans objected. Thereafter was introduced a rule which prevented the lower hand being put above the top hand during the actual vault.

Grasmere Sports had started in a humble way, in the late 1840's. In 1852 they had taken place at Hudson's Field, adjoining the Red Lion Inn². In origin they were part of a sheep fair

¹Shearman, M., Athletics and Football. Longmans, Green and Co., 1887, p. 177.

²Woods, R., Grasmere's Giants of Today. Spur Publications, 1975, p. 12.

"As was the case with many other fairs, sports were added as an attraction and from the sports attached to this fair the famous Grasmere Sports emerged. The first occasion when they were separated from the fair was 1870."¹

In this year the sports moved from Hudson's Field to Pavement End, and the timing of the sports was changed from April to August. This would certainly accommodate the summer visitors and the sports became a rapidly growing attraction. They were to become a fashion, almost a cult. They were a meeting point for the aristocracy and the gentry, and for the guests who came up from London for Lakeland's summer season. They were also the meeting point for the local farming community, for Grasmere Sports had originated from their work and were part of their pattern of life. The veneration for the Sports continued throughout the century

"The Grasmere Sports

Bid by the day they wait for all the year,
Shepherd and swain their gayest colours don,
For race and sinewy wrestling meet upon,
The tourney ground beside the shining mere".²

By 1870 it was referred to as an annual sports, with hound trailing, a swimming match, a flat race (i.e. a running race), a running high leap, a pole high leap, a flat race for boys and a "Guides race round the summit of Silver Howe and back"³. The dating of this particular reference, the 27th of August set what was to become a fixture with the sports always being held on a Thursday in

¹Garnett, F.W., 1912, p. 135.

²Rawnsley, H.D., Sonnets of the English Lakes, Longmans and Green, 1882.

³WG and KA, 27.8.1870.

the second half of August. The Guides Race was originally for the guides who took Lakeland visitors walking into the fells and at times on gentle climbs. The ascent was a long and painful looking struggle to the summit, but the descent was extremely rapid with the athletes almost bounding down. We are told that:

"The title 'Guides Race' probably originated from one of two sources; the use of flags placed along a course to guide the runners or the more popular belief that it was a race for the guides, which were employed in the early nineteenth century to take visitors on guided tours of the local fells".¹

Gradually the sports assumed a pattern which was to become relatively settled. At one stage there was a swimming race, but this was dropped. The wrestling, the hound trailing, the guides race, the running (with certain modifications) and the leaping competitions continued, and the popularity of the sports grew apace. By 1871 they were referred to as: "These now far-famed games"². This was perhaps an early judgement, but it is clear that the sports continued to attract attention. In 1873 the setting of the sports was noted as under: "A more exquisite sport for the purpose than Grasmere could not be found in all England"³. By this time it was important to go to the Grasmere Sports not just to watch, not just to meet old friends but also to be seen. In 1877 it was recorded that "The Earl of Bective drove from Storrs Hall...with his visitors from London"⁴. Some two

¹ Miller, M. and Bland, W., See the Conquering Hero Comes. Terence Howarth, 1973, no page nos.

² WG and KA, 2.9.1871.

³ WG, 23.8.1873.

⁴ WG, 25.8.1877.

years later were noted again the Earl and Countess of Bective and party, Sir Robert and Lady Farquar etc.¹. In 1883 "...everybody was there...including the Countess of Bective, Colonel and Lady Stanley, Lord and Lady Muncaster etc."². It became increasingly important for it to be noted that particular individuals had attended the Grasmere Sports, and the sports were increasingly patronised by the gentry. In 1885 there was an omission from the list of patrons and it seems that umbrage was taken! An apology appeared in the local newspaper:

"...the name of Honourable William Lowther has been accidentally omitted from the list of patrons on the hills of Grasmere Sports. Mr. Lowther has generally attended these sports and hopes to be present on August 20th".³

In the following year the attendance was estimated to be approximately 7,000 and

"As in former years it included representatives of most of the families in the three counties, and amongst the numbers were many distinguished names. A couple of Bishops looked down on the Games, while the Senate, the stage and literature were all represented in the throng".⁴

One of the features of Grasmere Sports was the service and assistance given freely by past competitors. It was still part of their world, where old friends would meet and reminisce. There was an interesting parallel of meeting on market days, even for the farmers who had retired and would never again buy or sell a sheep; but they went to

¹ *KM and NA*, 22.8.1879.

² *WG*, 25.8.1883.

³ *WG*, 1.8.1885.

⁴ *WG*, 21.8.1886.

talk. Grasmere developed its own tradition and its own characters. One of the most famous of the wrestlers had been Thomas Longmire, and in 1886 he was presented with an inscribed silver salver by Lady Farquar: The inscription read

"Presented to Thomas Longmire, Champion of England, by the Grasmere and Lake District Wrestling Society, in acknowledgement of his services as umpire for the past 20 years".¹

The attendance, in relative terms, was considerable. The area was not particularly fertile and could not support a large farming community. Grasmere was distant from large centres of population. The nearest railhead at Windermere would be some seven miles away and there was, of course, no transport by car. Nevertheless people made considerable efforts to attend, at times covering quite considerable distances. A number of the large halls owned by the gentry would be well in excess of twenty miles, but the attraction of the sports, the setting and the growing nostalgia for Wordsworth's poetic home made it almost imperative for many to attend. In 1891

"From every dale in Westmorland there are contingents arriving every moment in all kinds of conveyances, the coaches of the aristocracy jostling against the shandries of the humblest farmer."²

The scene continued throughout the century. In 1898 Grasmere Sports were noted to be "under distinguished patronage"³, and by this time

¹*Ibid.*

²*WG*, 22.8.1891.

³*KM and T*, 22.7.1898.

the scene was increasingly the subject of record in terms of photography. The wrestlers in their fine array were photographed with the gentry against a background of the stand or the setting of Silver Howe. Grasmere Sports were the highlight of the summer.

The Amateur-Professional Problem

As sport developed in society there came to be a split between amateurs and the professionals. This occurred in a number of sports - in cricket, in sailing, in swimming. It came, too, in athletics. It was a national phenomena, but was of particular significance to Grasmere Sports. The problem occurred throughout all the major Lakeland sports meetings and continually cropped up during the last thirty years of the century. Grasmere, however, was the best example of the battle, for the sports were pre-eminent at a national level before organised amateurism showed any great strength. They were the testing ground. They were quite different in spirit from the Public School tradition and in the Lake District in the middle of the century the concept of cash prizes was in no sense seen to be dishonourable. The rustic sports had started with prizes such as a belt for the wrestling, a hat for a race. Early in the century, however, the gentry were patronising the sports as individuals and later, as the sports grew, by subscription. The result for the Lakeland competitors was that it became pleasant to receive cash prizes for their sporting endeavours. In one sense they were deemed to be entertainers. This concept does not militate against the concept of 'sportsmanship'. But it certainly was a consideration when the living standards of the better competitors could be raised because of their sport skills.

The amateur-professional problem in Lakeland sports was caused, in the main, by the development of the national governing bodies for sport. The concept of the 'gentleman-amateur' was, it seems, a product of the Public Schools and the glory of the officer-gentleman of the Victorian era. When social and class barriers are under threat (and this was the case in the first half of the nineteenth century) then other divisions have to be created. And it was the products of the Public Schools who, in the main, went to the older universities. Many of these individuals had enjoyed sport at both school and university, and it was they who organised the national governing bodies of sport. They did it from an urban and not a rural scene: they set the rules, and the rules were for them. This was not to be critical. Much of what was organised in London for sport during the period 1870-1900 advantageously affected (and still affects) world sport: we exported what was to become part of a world pattern of leisure. However the amateur-professional question was unique in relation to Grasmere Sports. The fame and the importance of the sports were such that they provided the classic setting for the inevitable clash between the traditional scene on the one hand and 'national government' on the other hand. The conflict could almost be seen as a threat to the established Lakeland community, and eventually the threat was repulsed with Lakeland sports retaining their traditional identity.

Grasmere Sports were originally for the farming community, and there were money prizes. The Sports preceded by some 20 years the formation of the Amateur Athletic Club (not Association) in 1866, a club which was London based and essentially of university origins. Its spirit represented a growing disillusionment with pedestrianism

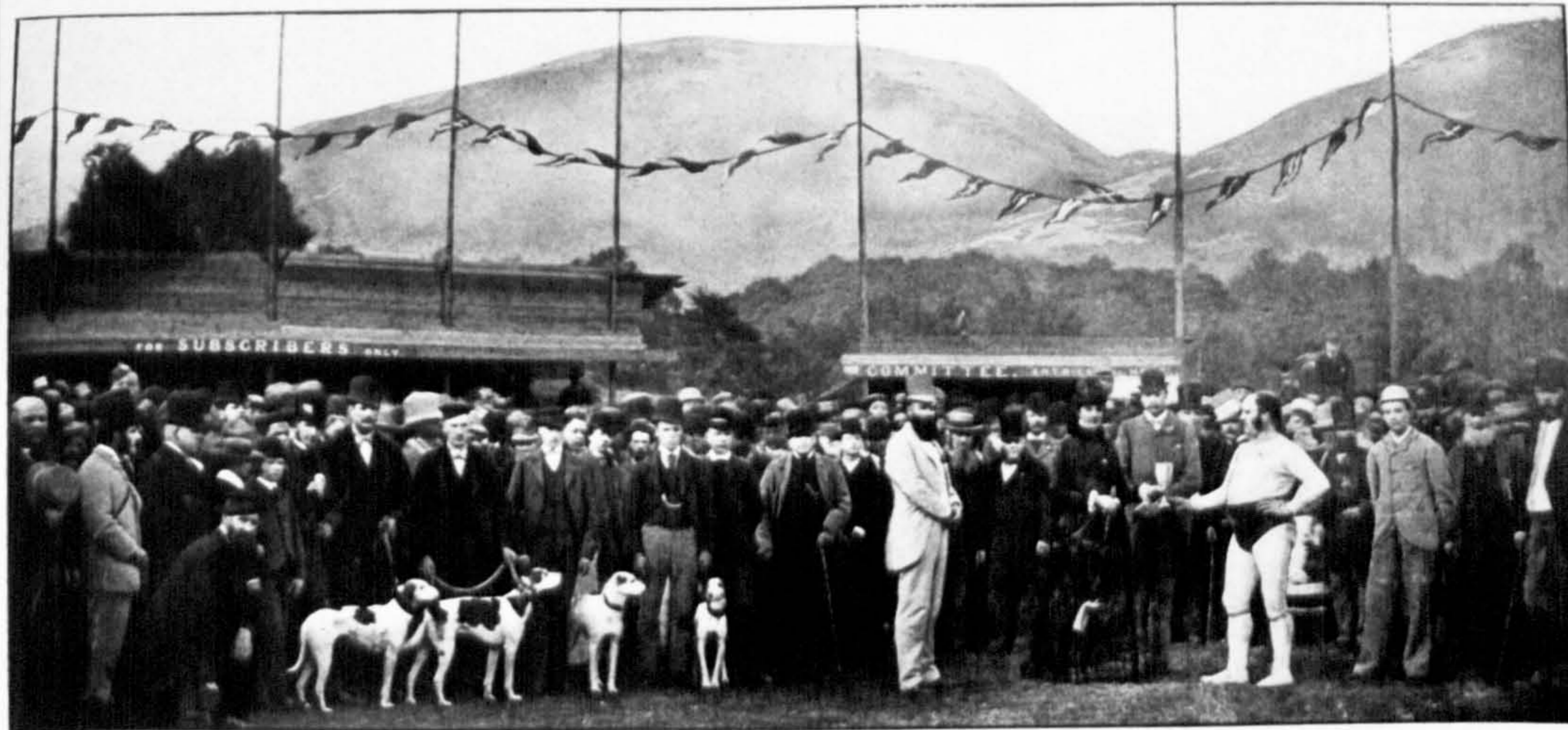


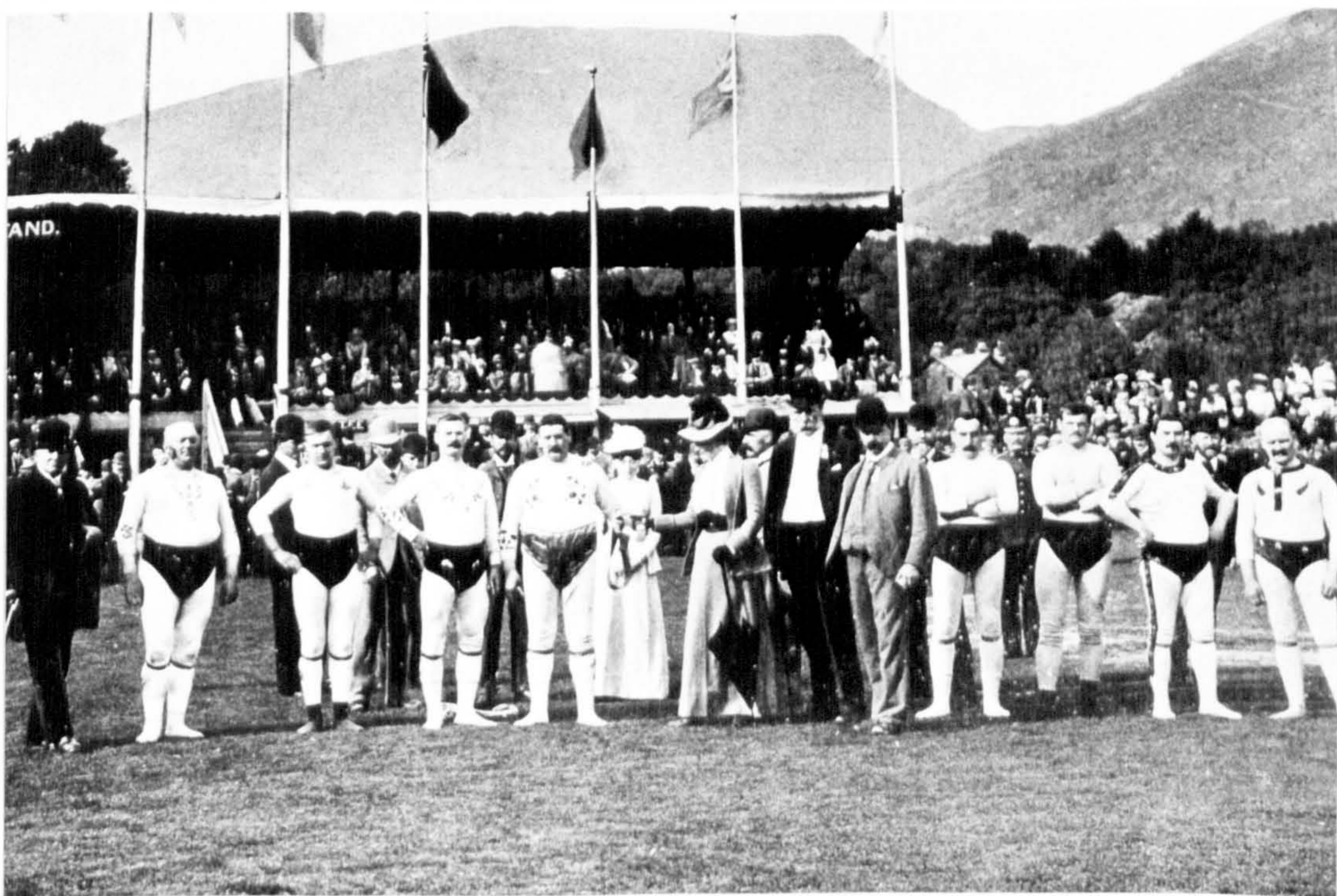
Photo. Baldry.

Sir R. T. Farquhar, Bart. Skelton, "Rattler," Greenop, "Ransom," Tom Chapman, Earl of Lonsdale, S. H. Le Fleming, Esq.
 "Barmald," "Lofty," Earl of Beehive, Countess of Lonsdale, Steadman, (High Sheriff), J. F. Green, Esq.
 Sergt. Taylor, Tom Longmuir, Sergt. Watson.

1878.

COUNTESS OF LONSDALE PRESENTING THE CUP TO STEADMAN.

Grasmere Sports, 1878



Grasmere Sports, c. 1890

and coincided with the spread of the Volunteer Movement and a patriotism that was so vociferously emergent: the attitude might well have come from the middle classes striving for an identification, noting parathetically that the 'identification' for the organising group would be to the exclusion of others. The Amateur Athletic Club was a sign of changing times but was in no sense a national body. The first governing body in the world for the sport of athletics was the Northern Counties Athletic Association, founded in 1879¹. It is interesting to note that the title does not include the word 'amateur'. However the implications were clear: the respectability of the 'gentleman-amateur' with his education. Coupled with this was the implicit assumption of the importance of the relationships of sports meetings to central organisations. The Amateur Athletic Association was formed in 1880, and the N.C.A.C. and the A.A.A. would have loved Grasmere Sports to become an amateur meeting, and they conducted a long political courtship before finally withdrawing to the towns and cities.

The problem was the pre-eminence of Grasmere Sports, with its established traditions, and an unwillingness to 'turn amateur'. In the early days of the amateur movement there was not a clear cut situation, for there were a number of competitions at which both amateurs and professionals competed. In 1881, after the formation of the Amateur Athletic Association, Grasmere Sports offered competitions of both amateurs and professionals². This would almost certainly be a gesture on the part of the organising committee. By 1886

¹ *Illingworth, K., A Short History of the Northern Counties Athletics Association, 1879-1979. Fourcolor Prints Limited, 1979, p. 5.*

² WG, 21.8.1881.

"Pole leaping...was the only one in which the amateurs competed, a special permit having been accorded by the Amateur Athletic Association".¹

By 1890 the problem still existed, although it seems that by this time the relations between Grasmere Sports and the A.A.A. were strained and that the break was imminent.

"For running, high leaping and pole leaping there is 42 apportioned in two classes, amateur and professional, though the former is little better than a farce, on account of the restrictions by the Amateur Athletic Association and the Northern Counties Athletic Associations."²

Grasmere Sports continued as a professional meeting and continued outside the mainstream of national athletics. The gentry in the district were above the problems of amateurism and professionalism in relation to Grasmere Sports. This simply supported the sports, which are by now an established part of their summer season. The developing amateur tradition was essentially a middle class movement and penetrated rapidly into urban areas. In Lakeland, however, the dominant pattern of professionalism in sport continued and the Grasmere Sports survived in a pattern which changed but little.

Some Other Rural Sports

Orton Pot Fair continued to be an interesting example of an existing annual event to which sports eventually became attached, but

¹WG, 21.8.1886.

²KM and T, 22.8.1890.

one in which the original purpose of the gathering was succeeded by changing events. The Pot Fair of the first half of the nineteenth century took place at a time when travel from the village would not be easy: there would not be the weekly trips from the farms to the market at Appleby. But the Pot Fair came to Orton once a year, and the event became somewhat of a celebration. By 1870, with improved roads there was less need for the Pot Fair and "...the show of crockery was very small...the pleasure fair was well attended"¹. In the following year, however, there was a radical change of description very much out of keeping with the old rural sports for it had become "Orton Fancy Fair, Temperance Anniversary and Sports"², no doubt emanating from the influence of Turner and his advocacy of total abstinence. It would, one thinks, have met with some resistance amongst many members of the farming community! Later in the century the sports continued but the association with the Temperance Movement faded. The decline of the original purpose of the fair was again noted somewhat wistfully in 1881 when the sports included trotting, leaping etc., and were followed by a dance on the village green. However it was acknowledged that:

"In olden days the village green was covered with crockery of every kind exposed for sale. Nowadays the 'pots' are only conspicuous by their absence."³

Although the title 'Pot Fair' continued to be used, the sale of crockery faded. Yet Orton retained these sports of a rural character throughout the remainder of the century. In 1891 there was hound trailing, a hurdle race, a race round the town and treacle bun eating. It was

¹WG and KA, 25.6.1870.

²WG and KA, 17.6.1871.

³WG, 25.6.1881.

deemed to be "...a red letter day at Orton, inasmuch as it is the date for the Gala Day and Pot Fair"¹.

Whitsuntide sports continued as part of the pattern of Lakeland life and, like the rush-bearing, part of the institutions of rural life. They were well established in many of the agricultural communities, and came to be taken up in other places. The Whitsuntide Sports at Tebay probably owed much of its popularity to the work there on the railway junction². However the 1860's had seen a number of new meetings established, and the 1870's saw them firmly established. Whilst there might have been some impingement on them by the coming of the factories in the country in general, this would have rather less effect in the Lake District with its essentially farming economy. But even in industrial Kendal in 1877 it was acknowledged that

"Whit-Monday at all events, may now almost be regarded as a national holiday...the large employers of labour throughout the country find it, as a rule, possible to close their factories for the day."³

The Whitsuntide sports came under various guises. By the final quarter of the century some were clearly sporting occasions with but little reference to religion. It was the age of sports and it became the custom in many communities to hold sports meetings at Whitsuntide. The Whit sports at Troutbeck in 1877 followed the rural pattern of wrestling, jumping, a fell race (i.e. the equivalent of a Guides' Race) and a dance on the village green in the evening⁴. The equivalent

¹WG, 6.6.1891.

²WG and KA, 5.6.1852.

³KM and NA, 26.5.1877.

⁴WG, 2.6.1877.

occasion at Kendal some two years later saw running, jumping, wrestling and throwing events. Continuing, too, was the old humour of a jingling match. The throwing was, perhaps, a little out of context. Throwing events were but rarely reported in the Lake District and never achieved the prominence that they achieved in the Scottish Highland Games. One of these attending these sports at Kendal was as delighted with the day out and said "We couldn't hev hed finer wedder if we'd med it oorsels"¹.

The Friendly Societies

These societies were in part a product of the growth of industrialisation and had a growing association with the Whitsuntide sports during the last 30 years of the century. Marshall and Walton tell us that

"These societies represent Victorian voluntary working-class enterprises and associations at their highest peak of achievement, involving skilful planning and organisation."²

There seem to have been a combination of a series of influences: a desire for self-help and protection when little was offered by the State: a desire for corporate activities in an age when people sought to join and affiliate to the new, for the old had been partly destroyed by the growth of the industry. In general, but not always,

¹ *KM and NA, 6.6.1899.*

² *Marshall, J.D. & Walton, J.K., The Lake Counties from 1830 to the Mid Twentieth Century. Manchester University Press, 1981, p. 172.*

they occurred in connection with Whitsuntide festivities, many of which had preceded the formation of the Friendly Societies. They emerged as sports became increasingly urban, but they nevertheless occurred also in quite rural areas of Lakeland. This would be expected because the very thing that members of the working class feared was the loss of the main wage earner for the family: and even in central Lakeland there was much work of a dangerous nature, such as quarrying.

At times the religious significance of the occasion was retained. The association seemed strong in Milnthorpe where the ecclesiastical support was evident. The Reverend Raikes stated that "A good thing... that all working men should join a friendly society"¹. In the following year it was noted that from Milnthorpe there was a march in procession to Dallam Tower followed by a divine service and then sports². By the 1880's the galas of the Friendly Societies were extremely well established: they followed in the mould of the sports meetings generally, but there was the more serious side in addition. They were corporate activities, they were enjoyable, and they raised funds. The religious significance might have faded somewhat into the background as the years went by, but the occasions themselves grew and took on a significant role. At Langdale in 1883

"Langdale Happy Home Mechanics: On Whit-Wednesday the members of the above Lodge assembled at their Lodge room, Chapel Stile, Langdale, to hold their annual club walk and gala, the proceedings being in aid of the Widows' and Orphans' Funds. Dog trail wrestling, foot races were held...the ball in the evening was well

¹ *KM and NA, 14.6.1878.*

² *KM and NA, 6.6.1879.*

patronised. About 160 enjoyed themselves until the small hours of the morning, all passing off pleasantly".¹

At Greenodd in 1885 the Loyal Furness Lodge of Oddfellows held their Whitsuntide sports with the events including both open races and those for amateurs. At the same time the equivalent gala at Hawkshead saw three societies combining to present the gala: the Women's Club, the Amicable Society and the Mechanics' Club². At Urswick in the same year it was the Urswick Working Men's Club³. In 1891 at Coniston the equivalent sports were reported as being the thirteenth annual gala of the Coniston Friendly Society, and at Corthwaite as being the annual gala of the British Protectors of Oddfellows.⁴ In the following year Whit festivals were reported at Hawkshead, Corthwaite, Windermere, Coniston, Shap, Appleby, Dalton (where some 7,000 people were on the field) Troutbeck and Greenodd where "No intoxicating liquor was allowed on the field"⁵, itself indicative of the atmosphere of previous sports days. The pattern of the sports continued to be much of the same with hound trailing, flat races, leaping and wrestling. At times football was included, and at times there were bicycle races. The characteristics of the Whit sports was the growth in the numbers attending and the atmosphere of a 'day out'. And whilst the religious ties became less evident, they remained obvious at some of the very rural gatherings. At Langdale in 1898 there was an assembly at church for a divine service, a procession to Chapel Stile (headed by the Langdale Brass Band), a

¹*KM and T, 25.6.1883.*

²*UM, 30.5.1885.*

³*UM, 6.6.1885.*

⁴*KM and T, 23.5.1891.*

⁵*WG, 11.6.1892.*

dinner at the White Lion Hotel and dancing in the evening¹. At Bowness in the same year the report gave greater emphasis to the events and the prizes², and again in 1898 at Keswick³. But the Friendly Societies were running sports, and the connections between local life and sport were becoming even stronger. It might well be that in some areas there would be more than one sports meeting in a year. Certainly in Kendal there seem to have been sports in connection with a number of ventures. The Friendly Societies Gala in Kendal was held in August. In 1884 it was noted "...cheap trains will run from all parts of the district as hitherto"⁴, and the next issue of the same newspaper reports that

"Interest in the Gala seems to be sustained, and even more widely developed each succeeding year, and it is now looked upon as a preeminently the holiday of Kendal and District... The object of the gala, as is well-known, is a philanthropic and praiseworthy one, being for the benefit of the widows and orphans of the various friendly societies in the town."⁵

However there was also (although at one time it faded and was revived) an existing Whitsuntide sports in Kendal. Presumably the Friendly Societies gala was planned to take place during the second main holiday break of the summer, and, with good rail services to Kendal, probably sought also to attract visitors. This gala continued to be reported for many years.

¹*KM and T*, 10.6.1898.

²*KM and T*, 3.6.1898.

³*CJ*, 2.8.1898.

⁴*WG*, 2.8.1884.

⁵*WG*, 9.8.1884.

Inn Sports

The inn sports were fading somewhat towards the end of the century. In many cases it might be that they had been left behind by the development of other and larger sports meeting. As major sports grew in size they would tend to be taken over by a regular committee. In many cases the local landlord would be concerned (it would be in his interest to be associated with the venture), but as the century progressed the landlords were less likely to promote sports meetings. A number of them were, in any case, sponsoring football teams by the last decade of the century. However there were still some inn sports, mainly in relatively rural areas. One exception to this was in Kendal, where in both 1889 and 1890 sports were organised by Mr. Nathan Dixon of the Duke of Cumberland Inn. In 1890 "The weather was brilliant, there was a large attendance and a brass band helped enliven the proceedings"¹. An oddly timed inn sport was run from the Oddfellows Arms at Caldbeck on New Year's Day², and the village sports at Great Corby as late as 1898 were run by Mr. Henry Bonner of the Queen's Head³: but the major contribution of the inns had been in the middle of the century.

Flower Shows

The combination of flower shows with sports meetings might at first seem to be strange. However much of the development of sport

¹WG, 31.5.1890.

²CJ, 6.1.1874.

³CJ, 21.5.1898.

came from the addition of running, wrestling and occasionally jumping to existing horse racing meetings. Eventually the sports were strong and attractive enough to thrive in their own right. The popularity of the sports during the final quarter of the century was such that they themselves became vehicles for the promulgation of other activities. One of these came to be some of the flower shows. At Burneside in 1885 there was a flower show and gala, although it is difficult to tell which was the more important of the two¹. In 1893 there was a Sports and Flower show at Levens Hall and again one at Burneside, the latter of the two also having sheep dog trails². Ventures of this type also occurred at Staveley and in the Rusland Valley. By 1895 there was quite a day out at Crosby Ravensworth with athletic sports, horticulture, sheep dog trails and musical support in the form of Crosby Ravensworth Brass Band³. This pattern, like the Friendly Societies functions, continued throughout the remainder of the century. That held at Levens Hall⁴, as will be seen, might also have had other implications.

Political Rallies

Politics being about persuasion it was good for political movements to be seen to be attached to that which was successful and popular. Hence came connections between sport and politics. At this time the Primrose League were the Unionists, and they were opposed to

¹WG, 15.8.1885.

²WG, 26.8.1893.

³WG, 28.8.1895.

⁴KM and T, 12.8.1898.

the Radicals. The Primrose League members were, in today's terms, the Conservatives. Thus in 1890 took place

"The second political picnic and demonstration in connection with the Kendal Habitation of the Primrose League at Levens."¹

The political side of the meeting concluded, a small sports took place with foot racing and wrestling. Presumably the sports were the bait for many people to attend the political rally. The Primrose League was also strong in Coniston, with the sixth Annual festival taking place in 1891. The sports included wrestling, tug-of-war, and weight putting². The association of sport and politics continued throughout the remainder of the century. The Primrose League met at Dallam Tower in 1892 when there were speeches, sports and then dancing³: the equivalent Unionist demonstration at Holker Hall in 1895 (for politics was still the preserve of the gentry) was a similar venture⁴. In 1899 the Primrose Demonstration at Levens Hall was addressed by Sir John Gorst, Captain Bagot (the owner) and Mr. Tomlinson, M.P. Again the wrestling and other sports followed the speeches. In his speech

"Captain Bagot said that this country, during the last few years had undoubtedly had a time of great prosperity. He was not going to say this was due to a Conservative Government, but he did say it accompanied Conservative Government. (Applause)"⁵

¹WG, 30.8.1890.

²WG, 29.8.1891.

³WG, 25.6.1892.

⁴WG, 7.9.1895.

⁵WG, 26.8.1899.

The suggestions that sport and politics represents a recent association could seem to be erroneous. During the early years of the nineteenth century there had been some smaller and less overt associations, but it was in the latter years of the century that the connections grew, coincidental with the growth of sport as part of national character.

Other Gatherings

During the final 30 years of the nineteenth century there were still the Martinmas sports, but these were of declining importance. In all probability the rapid rise of football curbed both the cricket and the athletic seasons. Sports meetings were also run by some of the cricket clubs. One such meeting was at Kendal in 1873 when the events included throwing a cricket ball, putting the 18lb weight and, interestingly, a "...race between wickets"¹. Ventures by the cricket clubs were not uncommon: they represented a change, and they probably put funds into the clubs. The one at Cockermouth in 1898 had athletics and cycling and a 120 yard race for "...farm servants"².

Yet other gatherings were the galas, some of which were clearly organised in connection with the tourist trade. These tended to be part sport, part entertainment, not all of it intentional - at the Windermere Gala in 1891 there was throwing the weight and

"This, a new feature of this gala, did not prove a very advisable one, as one Winster man named Dickinson, who

¹WG, 30.8.1873.

²CJ, 21.5.1898.

was looking on, was caught upon the forehead by the weight, which was 131b, and had to be taken from the field seriously hurt".¹

There were also trick cyclists and at one meeting in 1893 there were 'Lady Trick Bicyclists', there was both Association and Rugby Football². Another of the galas that had problems of a humorous nature (but somewhat macabre) was that at Bowness in 1893. This was the concern of one of the professional entertainers.

"At the close of the second round of the heavyweight wrestling, Darby the jumper came into the ring to give a performance. He commenced by jumping over four chairs. He then did a trick of jumping off one brick onto another brick. In performing his third jump - over a horse - there was a mishap. In parting with his dumbbells when jumping over the animal, one of the dumbbells hit his assistant. The man was stunned and blood flowed freely, and he was conveyed from the field."³

In addition to the galas held in those areas which were essentially concerned with the tourists, there were also a number of other ventures. Some simply occurred because sport was fashionable, and because it was thought that the district should hold a sports each year. One such meeting at Kirkby Lonsdale initially thrived, but then faced problems. At the 2 day meeting in 1873 it was noted that

"We must say that the sports on Tuesday were not conducted in the quiet, orderly manner which has distinguished them in former years. Several fights took place during the course of the day, and on one occasion the clerk's table was upset."⁴

¹WG, 23.5.1891.

²WG, 27.5.1893.

³*Ibid.*

⁴WG, 30.8.1873.

A similar meeting at Sedbergh took place in the same year. At this time communities felt that they ought to have sports meetings, and they were duly organised.

"A short time since a number of the leading gentry, tradesmen and farmers residing at Sedbergh and the neighbourhood having conceived the idea of establishing an athletic society and having an annual sports...The first meeting took place on Thursday last".¹

Some of the events were limited to participation by the locals, others were open. There were sheep dog trials, trotting and the usual athletic events. Perhaps the occasion was, in the bucolic sense, too successful: in the following year

"Much dissatisfaction has existed in Sedbergh during the past week in consequence of the bench of magistrates having refused to grant an occasional license to Mr. Edson, the take of the tent in the field in which the sports were held yesterday".²

Nevertheless, the meeting grew, for in 1877 it was described as

"...a red-letter day for the inhabitants of the district... hundreds of foot passengers had tramped many miles from the distant dales."³

This was an April sports meeting. In 1881 it was an August meeting and therefore more dependent upon the crops than upon the sheep. In this year, in early August there were farming problems. Hence, in early August,

¹WG, 18.10.1873.

²WG, 11.4.1874.

³WG, 7.4.1877.

"The Committee of the Sedbergh Sports met at the Red Lion Inn on Wednesday last the 10th inst., and decided to postpone the sports until further notice. This course is necessitated by the lateness of the hay season and the wet weather which have prevented the hay being got off the wet sports field."¹

A delightful touch: the farming necessities outweighed the sport.

Other sports were organised by clubs and societies. One major meeting was organised by the Westmorland Athletic Society. In 1873 it was noted that "The second annual athletic festival of this flourishing society took place on Thursday last".² This was very much of a multi-sports venture. There was a flat race for horses, foot races, pole leaping, putting the weight (won by Steadman, the wrestler), wrestling, hurdling and the by now common wrestling award of a "prize for the neatest costume". Some two years later there was the Kendal Wrestling and Athletic sports, which was in essence a similar venture. This was a two day meeting with a wide range of events, and much enjoyed. Credit was given to the planning, for

"The preliminary arrangements were marked with considerable forethought, and with the exception of a few free fights on the first day, nothing occurred to mar the pleasantness of the gathering."³

Of even greater interest was the venture into athletics of the 'works teams'. This was common in the field of cricket, and was later to become common in football. However the industries of Lakeland

¹WG, 20.8.1871.

²WG, 5.7.1873.

³WG, 22.5.1875.

continued to provide for the possibility of group sporting organisations, and one such was the sports organised by the Gatebeck Gunpowder Works Athletic Club in 1873. This was, even then being noted as being an annual competition¹. This was a rare phase in the development of sport, soon to be replaced by the growing interest in cricket and football as the clubs for the works or the smaller district.

In this same year, too, much greater interest was beginning to be shown in how well the athletes were performing. The age of measurement was arriving, whereas previously the interest had simply been in winning. Many of the earlier measurement, indeed, seem to err of the side of rather higher standards than were likely to have been achieved under the conditions of the time. However the organisers of the Kendal Cricket Club sports - interesting in itself in 1873 were quite meticulous. The 'running Wide Leap' was won with a jump of 18'11", which seems reasonable, as does the cricket ball throw at 99 yards and 4 inches and the putting of the 18lb weight with a distance of 29'3"², and at Elterwater in 1899 there was the first annual sports promoted by the Langdale Brass Band, again indicative of the spread of sports meetings³.

By the end of the century there were sports day in abundance, and they were very much part of the institution of society: indeed they were in themselves. The older religious based institutions were still in evidence, and the connections with sport had grown. To these were added the activities of the various Friendly Societies, the flower

¹WG, 6.5.1873.

²KM and NA, 30.8.1873.

³WG, 19.8.1899.

shows and the political rallies. The sports had often commenced as an appendage to existing institutions, but by the end of the century had come to exert a dominant influence upon community gatherings: they were institutions in themselves.

Shepherds Meets

The foregoing might well be deemed to indicate almost a universality of change. This was not so, because whilst a number of sports meetings grew and changed in character, there were also those which maintained their identity throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. There were the Shepherds' meets in November which retained their characteristics as both essential and celebratory functions, and there was the continuation of the sheep dippings and sheep clippings. These continued to be reported from the valley of Kentmere and from Middleton throughout the remainder of the century. In 1875 at Kentmere there were forty clippers performing the work and

"After dinner, the usual sports, consisting of wrestling and foot racing, took place in front of the hall, and in the evening dancing was kept up with great zeal until long after midnight."¹

A similar function at Middleton Hall in 1890 was similar in the essentials of the clipping, when there were 70 men at work, but by this time the social aspect had modified a little in the celebrations thereafter:

¹WG, 17.7.1875.

"...work completed at 3 o'clock. after partaking of a substantial dinner sports were entered into in an adjoining field...At the conclusion of the sports the company retired into the spacious hall where the young folk amused themselves with dancing, whilst the old folks were entertained by Mr. Bowmass in an adjoining room, the proceedings being enlivened with music, both vocal and instrumental."¹

These were ongoing functions which continued as characteristic working and celebratory gatherings of the communities living on the edge of the fells.

Regattas - the later years

The established regattas fared in quite different ways during the final thirty years of the century. At Keswick the multi-sports venture continued with boat racing, foot racing, high leaping and pole leaping and wrestling. With the coming of the railways it had attracted an increasing number of visitors, but not without some set-backs. In 1877

"The weather was wretched...and the gathering was a complete failure. There were excursion trains from all directions, but some were almost empty."²

Keswick Regatta never attained any degree of stability or consistency and eventually the regatta was dropped and the meeting came to be Keswick Sports with no aquatic events.

At Ullswater, less affected by the tourists, the regatta continued for many years in an almost unchanging mould. In 1890

¹WG, 5.7.1890.

²WG, 25.8.1877.

"The programme was a long and attractive one and included valuable prizes for boat racing, swimming, hound trail, foot racing, leaping and wrestling."¹

The meeting was reported throughout the remainder of the century, and, as with Grasmere Sports, a list of the outstanding persons present was recorded in the press. The rural and essentially local character of the regatta was retained to a far greater extent than was the case on Lake Windermere. Not only were there fewer visitors to Ullswater, but the district never became strongly influenced by the richer middle class who had homes in Southern Lakeland. Ullswater was too far from the factories of south east Lancashire.

The Sandside regatta near Milnthorpe continued with some success. The importance of the regatta is indicated by the fact that in 1886

"...over a thousand persons assembled to witness a regatta and a number of other sports arranged by an enterprising and influential committee, with the High Sheriff of the County at its head."²

There was an open race for lug sail boats with jibs, not exceeding 19 feet on the water line, and a four oared rowing match for in-rigged boats. There was also swimming and running, but no report of wrestling: indeed by this time wrestling was beginning to decline except in inner Lakeland.

There were regattas, too, at Arnside, always a favourite venue for the people of Kendal. These seem to have occurred initially in

¹WG, 30.8.1890.

²WG, 2.10.1886.

the middle of the century but to an increasing extent during the latter years of the century. It seems that there were at least three regattas in 1885¹. That in 1890 was noted to the "Arnside Boating Club Regatta"² and indication of the formality of organisation. There were races for half-decked boats, open boats, there were pair and four-oared rowing matches. There was also a tub race. It is presumed that this was put into the programme as a fun event, for some of them sank!

Windermere was the scene for many of the ventures connected both with richer residents and the growing number of tourists. During the 1880's, in fact, such was the importance attached to the holiday industry that visitors to the district were listed in the local paper, with details of which hotels they were residing in³. One particularly interesting venture was of a philanthropic nature. The 1870's was an age of self improvement and many organisations in the latter part of the century were keen to organise situations in which people could improve themselves and use their spare time purposefully. The Young Men's Christian Association would be one of the most outstanding examples. One of the organisations that flourished briefly and then died was the Windermere Institute.

"The Windermere Institute Fete. - It may be truly asserted that never did Belle Isle, Windermere, the residence of J.R. Bridson Esq., present so pleasing an appearance as on Thursday last, when it was visited by some thousands of persons for the purpose of enjoyment. The occasion was

¹WG, 29.8.1885.

²WG, 6.9.1890.

³KM and T, 6.8.1886.

a grand fete, got up by a number of gentlemen connected with the district in order to obtain funds in aid of the Windermere Institute and Classes."¹

The gentry were present. There were foot races, a running leap, a canoe race, diving, walking, a quarter mile swim race and a duck hunt. The occasion was an outstanding success and was certainly repeated some two years later. The Windermere Institute became a centre for educational improvement. This venture continued briefly but in 1881 it was apparent that the effort had been ephemeral, for a letter to the local newspaper complained that "...the doors of the Windermere Institute were now closed"².

It seems that from 1875 onwards there was always some type of regatta on Lake Windermere that was in part a festive occasion but increasingly part of a scene related to entertainment, and always occurring during the increasingly important holiday period. The changing nature of what had previously been local and rural festivities was noted in relation to the Windermere Athletic and Aquatic Fete in 1881 when the aspect of entertainment was evident because there was at the fete a

"...trapeze put up for the performance of the Transfield family, and Gray's University String Band was engaged. Lord Decies acted as umpire for the sports."³

Whilst a number of the regattas included some sailing, only the Windermere Yacht Club which emerged as a strong club practising just

¹WG, 17.7.1875.

²WG, 1.10.1881.

³WG, 30.7.1881.

sailing. The club was based at the fashionable Old England Hotel, Bowness. The season generally commenced in the second week in July, although there was, of course, sailing well before then. The format was to have a series of regattas, usually over a period of about three weeks. The reports during the 1870's grew in length. This corresponds with the growing popularity of the sport, mainly the result of the influx of richer industrialists to rather expensive homes in the area. One of the leaders of this group was J.R. Bridson, who was instrumental in much of the organisation of the Yacht Club. As the popularity of the sport grew, so professionals became involved. By 1873 there was "A single-handed professional race for a purse of money, divided into three prizes"¹. The regattas, however, were predominantly amateur and certainly not for cash prizes. In 1875 the members competed for a "Silver kettle and stand, value fifty guineas"², a pattern which continued throughout the century. At times the amateurs and professionals competed together, presumably with the expertise of the professional advising the less capable of the gentry. With the growth in the popularity of the sport it would be certain to attract the newly rich, many of whom would have no background whatsoever, in the sport. Thus in 1874 there was

"The second match with professional assistance came off on Tuesday, the 14th inst. A large company assembled at the Ferry Hotel and the point opposite to witness the sport."³

The increase in the popularity of sailing is illustrated by the number

¹WG, 9.8.1873.

²WG, 17.7.1875.

³WG, 18.7.1874.

of boats involved. Whilst this fluctuated, the general tendency was for the number of boats to increase. In 1868 there had been some six boats reported¹, but for the equivalent series in 1890 there were sixteen boats in the first race². The growth of the sport, too, affected local industry, for yachts were built at Bowness. In 1877 it was noted that

"Very active preparations are being made on the banks of Windermere for the approaching yachting season, the sum of money which has been subscribed for prizes affording strong stimulus to yacht building."³

By 1891 there were nineteen yachts in the first race, it being noted that the regattas would be taking place on the Saturdays and Mondays⁴. The matches continued for both amateur and professionals, and the sport was by now becoming more regulated. Gone were the days of ad hoc handicapping based on length. The Royal Windermere Yacht Club was sailing with boats of identical measurements. The start of a race in 1894 is illustrated in Leach's book, and no differences between the boats can be identified⁵. However the sport has always had a continuing history of modifications and improvements and in 1897

"Mr. J. Brockbank, on Saturday, launched from his building yard the first of a new class of yachts for the season of the Royal Windermere Yacht Club."⁶

¹WG and KA, 18.7.1868.

²WG, 5.7.1890.

³WG, 5.5.1877.

⁴WG, 11.7.1891.

⁵Leach G., et al. 1894, Yachting, p. 185.

⁶KM and T, 7.5.1897.

By 1898 there were races for different sizes of yachts¹. The sport by now was extremely strong, but of course, exclusive. It was a retreat for the rich and was a strong social club irrespective of the yachting. The clubhouse at the Old England Hotel boasted a reading room, billiards room and a committee room. In addition to this the sailing course was situated in what must have been one of the country's most delightful settings for sailing. The sport represented a fascinating social aspect of fashionable Lakeland.

¹WG, 7.7.1898.

(c) Cricket For All? And Some Other Sports

Cricket was, in the 1870's continuing to spread. The spread of the game was not uniform and might at one stage - possibly in 1850's and early 1860's - have been affected adversely by the growth of the sports. The situation has arisen in which different sports presented different temptations. As sports spread there was an increasing offer of choice. In Grasmere, for instance, with its increasing commitment to the traditional type of sports, cricket had faded. In 1871 it was noted that

"For the last eight or nine years there has been no cricket club or kindred association to promote innocent amusement and recreation among the young men in Grasmere, except the rifle corps be so considered; but thanks to the energetic efforts of a few gentlemen, who are determined to do good to the place of their generation, a Cricket and Quoiting Club has recently been established, a suitable field for practice obtained, and a capital supply of materials provided for the use of the club."¹

Within a short space of time the 'marrieds' played the 'singles'², and later in the year Grasmere played against Ambleside³.

During the 1870's the spread of the game was noted by the increasing number of small villages that were fielding teams. These were noted in quite small communities: at Grizedale⁴, Holmrook⁵, and

¹WG and KA, 15.4.1871.

²WG and KA, 13.5.1871.

³WG and KA, 1.7.1871.

⁴WG and KA, 8.6.1871.

⁵WG and KA, 29.6.1871.

in Langdale in 1874 between the Volunteers and the Civilians where

"From the nature of the match, and from it being the first one played in Langdale, much interest was created."¹

By 1878 there were clubs at Highgate and Gooseholme² and in the same year the spread was reported as under "Cricket continues to make headway in Westmorland. Even the little village of Sedgewick..."³ Eventually such small communities as Gatebeck and the Crake Valley were fielding teams⁴. The formation of new teams inevitably slowed down towards the end of the century, for almost all the villages had teams by 1890. What did happen was that in some of the towns, such as Kendal and Ulverston, the spread continued by the formation of clubs separate from the original town teams. Certainly by the end of the century the game was extremely well established.

Implicit in the spread of the number of clubs playing cricket was the downward spread of the sport through society. The availability of time was gradually increasing, and the spread of the game meant that by the final thirty years of the century the working classes were playing to a far greater extent. In Milnthorpe in 1872 the local team - many of whom would probably be middle class - played against Twenty-two Dallam Tower Labourers⁵. Whilst this one match in itself might not be

¹WG and KA, 20.6.1874.

²KM and NA, 27.7.1878.

³KM and NA, 29.6.1878.

⁴WG, 13.5.1893.

⁵WG and KA, 23.8.1872.

seen to be of great significance, the social contact was important. Cricket was a meeting point, a communication in an evolving society. The seeking for identity and coherence often came, in part, through sport.

Identity, too, came in other forms within the clubs. The most obvious was the 'marrieds' v 'singles', a frequent designation and one used at the Appleby Eden Club in 1878 as the opening game of the season¹. In the same year the corporate identity of the Cumberland Hunt was retained out of season when they played cricket against Davenby Hall². Cricket was also upon occasion used as a meeting point for other sports. In 1890 the two main football teams in Kendal (Kendal F.C. and Kendal Hornets F.C.) played against each other at cricket³. In 1896 the Windermere Cricketers (presumably eleven of them) played against Fourteen Footballers⁴. But perhaps the most unusual of these matches was that held at Ulverston in 1880 when Ulverston Cricket Club played against 'Eleven Robinsons of the town'⁵. The identity, too, came with the professions. This was often in the form of occasional matches, for in all probability the better players were practising members of relatively good teams. In 1882 the Kendal Solicitors played against the Kendal Bankers⁶, and in the following year these two groups combined to play against the Clergymen "...for the benefit of the 'games fund' of

¹*CJ*, 23.4.1878.

²*UM*, 24.7.1878.

³*WG*, 21.6.1890.

⁴*WG*, 9.5.1896.

⁵*UM*, 10.7.1880.

⁶*WG*, 29.7.1882.

St. Mark's Home, Natland"¹.

Identity was further strengthened by out-of-season corporate ventures. These provided interest and pleasure to members and often assisted in the raising of funds for the club. It was the concerts which raised the funds, the dinners and the balls serving a slightly different purpose. In 1885 at Kendal Cricket Club Concert there was

"A large and demonstrative audience, a popular programme and highly meritorious performances were the principal characteristics of the concert given in St. George's Hall on Thursday evening under the auspices of the Kendal Cricket Club."²

The concerts continued to be presented throughout the remainder of the century: the late Victorian era was a period of live entertainment. In 1898 the Windermere Cricket Club annual concert attracted a "large and fashionable audience"³. Additionally, too, the Balls continued. At Kirby Lonsdale in 1898 over one hundred people were present, and such significance was attached to the occasions that all those who attended the ball had their names listed in the newspaper⁴.

Yet another form of identity came through the Works teams. Whilst they had made their appearance in the middle years of the century it was during the final thirty years of the century that they came more and more to the fore. The spread of the sport meant more teams in the towns and townships and the works teams, would, in general, cater for

¹WG, 11.8.1883.

²WG, 15.12.1885.

³KM and T, 14.1.1898.

⁴KM and T, 25.2.1898.

the players at a slightly lower level than the dominant town team. Teams towards the end of the century included the Kendal Comb Works¹, and the Steel and Wire Works in the same town²: and certainly two firms in Ulverston, the Kennedy Brothers and Messrs. Harrison, Ainslie and Co.³. The works teams represented another interesting crossing of social barriers.

At the other end of society, however, a new scene was developing. This occurred at two distinct levels. This first was that of the Balls, for many of the guests, with their London connections, would come up to the Lake District for the summer season. August was the favourite month for the Lake District, and the highlight of the season would be the Grasmere Sports; the gentlemen would often amuse themselves with cricket matches in the month of those sports. They would play against local club teams, and they would also play against the guests who were staying at the other halls. In 1878 Levens Hall played against Witherslack Hall

"...the players in all cases, we believe being residents or visitors at the respective seats of General the Honourable A. Upton and the Honourable F.A. Stanley."⁴

Levens Hall eventually had its own professional player. This might well have been for the relatively short summer season, as is illustrated by the fact that the professional in 1895 finished at the end of August.

¹WG, 29.7.1876.

²WG, 21.5.1898.

³UM, 18.7.1885.

⁴KM and NA, 31.8.1878.

This would probably be coincidental with the departure of the London guests when

"Mr. Deakin, after a few well-chosen remarks, presented J. Plowright, the professional, with a handsome travelling bag, subscribed for by members of the club."¹

At a slightly lower level were the visitors who came and stayed at the hotels, but who also played cricket. By the final quarter of the century the Lake District was catering for a small number of summer visitors who enjoyed their cricket. In 1882 in Kendal the local team played against Westmorland Wanderers, who were "...principally young gentlemen on their holidays"². In 1883 the equivalent match was deemed to be against the 'Lake Visitors'³. The pattern continued throughout the remainder of the century, with cricket holidays, which in general seem to have been the prerogative of the young gentry: possibly a growing tradition of the older universities. Certainly the press terminology would imply this, as would the timing of some of the matches.

The process was two-fold. There were visiting cricketers to the Lakes, but Lakeland teams were by now travelling further afield for their better fixtures. In 1897 Kendal played Walton (Liverpool), Ambleside played against Aintree and Windermere played against Middlesborough⁴. Trips from the Lakeland cricket teams went even

¹WG, 31.8.1895.

²WG, 2.9.1882.

³WG, 25.8.1883.

⁴KM and T, 11.6.1897.

farther afield, with the main teams from Ulverston and Kendal visiting the Isle of Man^{1,2}.

With the growth of the game came moves towards representative fixtures. As far back as 1849 Carlisle (with Sopp) had played against Northumberland (with Smith)³: this was in no sense a county match, but it was the precursor of such ventures. By 1874 the Gentlemen of Cumberland played against the Gentlemen of Westmorland⁴, but one wonders about the criteria for selection! It would be unreasonable to assume that this was a fully representative county match. A similar fixture occurred in 1880, but the reporting of the match again indicates a selection based, in part, upon social status⁵.

In 1874 the Gentlemen of Cumberland played against the Gentlemen of Northumberland⁶. The movement towards full 'County' fixtures was slow, but it is interesting to note that by 1886, when Cumberland played against Westmorland, the term 'Gentlemen' had been dropped⁷. However the Cumberland team included many players who were identifiable with the upper-middle class: it included a Reverend, a Doctor and a Captain. A return fixture between the two counties was played a month

¹UM, 24.7.1875.

²WG, 15.9.1883.

³CJ, 13.7.1849.

⁴CJ, 14.7.1874.

⁵WG, 31.7.1880.

⁶CJ, 14.7.1874.

⁷CJ, 20.7.1886.

later¹. The era of County cricket had arrived, but the teams from Cumberland and Westmorland were never to rival the county cricket which developed in Lancashire, Yorkshire and the many of the counties further south. County cricket came late to Lakeland, and was never a major part of the sporting scene. The terrain and the population numbers were unlikely to support the game at a high level. It is probably true to say that high standards never developed, and that the imported game of cricket never had the opportunity of attaining the splendour that was achieved in more southern counties. However developments did occur at club level. By the final decade of the nineteenth century Kendal were playing in the North Lancashire League. This was to be expected; the competition would be suitable and rail transport was good. At a lower level, there were reports of a Southern Westmorland Cricket Combination in 1896², and a reference of 1899 indicates that this league had been formed "...some five or six years previously"³. The development of cricket in Lakeland was a distant part of the national scene: and it was a somewhat belated development, and was always of the edge of national developments, as was evident by the rather late development of leagues and 'County' cricket. Professionalism, too, continued and even extended in Lakeland cricket, although this posed financial problems with regard to some of the Lakeland teams. In Kendal in 1878 the club's funds were at a low ebb, and "It was decided unanimously not to have a professional during the forthcoming season"⁴. This, in fact, might

¹ *KM and T*, 18.7.1886.

² *WG*, 8.8.1896.

³ *WG*, 6.9.1899.

⁴ *KM*, 14.12.1878.

well have precipitated the series of concerts that were to follow. One of the problems in Kendal would be the lack of strong support from either the gentry (as at Levens and Holker) or the support of the 'nouveau riche' as at Windermere and Ambleside. At Ambleside in 1884 it was decided that the services of a coach were required and

"The members of this club have secured, for the first time the services of the professional cricketer, Mr. J. Chadderton".¹

This, perhaps, would seem to be unusual for Ambleside which would then be little more than a township. However there would be the influence of the new residents, and if they saw cricket as being socially important it is probable that support would be forthcoming.

Cricket was becoming more measurable. When the professional did not produce the required results he was not re-engaged. In one sense the gentlemanly image was becoming tarnished. Additionally, during the final thirty years of the nineteenth century, the relation of success to failure was being increasingly measured. At the Sedbergh Cricket Club annual dinner in 1874 the Honorary Secretary had

"...produced a series of statistics showing the average of each batsman and bowler during the season."²

One wonders how popular he became as a result of this! But thereafter 'averages' became a fashion. The analysis of Levens in 1895 included

¹WG, 19.7.1884.

²WG and KA, 28.11.1874.

prizes for best averages, best fielding points and best attendance¹. In the following year ecclesiastical dignity was maintained in Kirby Lonsdale when the Reverend J.A. Burrow topped the batting averages².

During the final decade of the century cricket was clearly booming. There was a Lake District League, with such teams as Patterdale and Langdale - quite small communities - participating³. The major Lakeland teams were at times playing games at some distance from their home pitches. There were numerous village teams and works teams - even the N.E.R. Locomotive Depot was running a team⁴. Additionally, too, there were visiting teams, both of holiday makers and major teams. By the end of the nineteenth century the sport was well established in Lakeland. It had become a national game, and was the first of such to secure a firm foothold in the English Lake District.

Archery and Croquet

A wide number of other sports were practiced during the later years of the century. There was a limited amount of archery, which had been noted in Penrith in 1827⁵, and with an archery club having

¹WG, 31.8.1895.

²WG, 19.9.1896.

³WG, 11.6.1892.

⁴KM and T, 6.8.1897.

⁵WG and KA, 18.8.1827.

been formed in Ulverston in 1849¹. Croquet was probably played at some of the major halls of residence and is unlikely to have been reported in the press. However there was one club in southern Lakeland with the secretary of the Leven and Crake Valleys Croquet and Lawn Tennis Club writing that

"We know that the club was formed as a croquet club with the lawn tennis only being added much later on. The date is thought to be around 1870".²

Quoits, Spell and Knurr

Spell and Knurr seems to have been a fading sport towards the end of the nineteenth century. There were relatively few reports, although a small number of the inns organised matches: at the Punch Bowl Inn, Barrow's Green a prize of twelve shillings was offered in 1876³. Quoits, on the other hand, grew as the century progressed and became a club activity. By 1877 there was a club at Appleby⁴, and by the early 1880's this was obviously strong⁵. The club continued to be noticed for many years: in 1886 the major competition was on a 21 yard pitch (for quaiting took place over a number of different distances) and it was for "...a handsome pair of quoits"⁶. The sport continued

¹SUA, 21.6.1849.

²Proctor, P., *personal communication*.

³WG and KA, 22.4.1876.

⁴WG, 7.4.1877.

⁵CJ, 24.8.1886.

⁶CJ, 13.4.1886.

throughout the remainder of the century. It was, always an inn sport, but it also grew as a sport in exactly the same way that bowls grew. Indeed the two sports came together at times: in 1900 we read that

"Concurrent with the bowling handicap at Abbot Hall, Kendal, a quoiting competition has been going on and considerable interest has been evinced in its progress."¹

The history of Lakeland quoiting seems to have begun at the Brideswains in the latter years of the eighteenth century: then followed the quoiting at rural sports, and at the inns. Following upon this, and in the mould of the age, there were wagers and challenge matches: some clubs were formed: and at the end of the century, the sport evoked increasing spectator interest.

Bowls

By 1870 the sport of bowls was thriving with a number of organised clubs and with inter-club matches involving Cockermouth, Keswick, Kendal, Penrith and Ulverston. This was in keeping with the general growth of sport, but almost certainly was catering for the age group which was too old to play football and possibly, in some cases, rather 'long in the tooth' for cricket. Lakeland teams were travelling to the edges of the Lake District and beyond: to Carlisle and to Lancaster, for instance. Bowling had clearly benefitted from the coming of the railways.

¹WG, 21.7.1900.

By the 1870's it was common for clubs to organise competitions for prizes. At Phizakerley's Bowling Green in Ulverston in 1875 there were 49 entries for the competition, and £7-7-0 in prizes¹. This possibly allows for a setting of the sport in the social scene, being a move from prizes for honour to prizes for cash. However there does not seem to be enough evidence to justify a definitive judgement on this point. In the case of the Kendal Subscription Bowling in 1871 there were competitions for prizes - a fitch of bacon, a cruet stand, etcetera². Cash prizes, of course, were somewhat controversial, and posed a dilemma for the middle-classes. The working classes often saw money as a means of financial advancement, for their wages were low. But there was, too, the growing concept of the 'Gentleman-amateur' and in many circles the acceptance of money for skill in sport was deemed to be 'not quite nice'. By the 1870's, however, bowls had probably come to be played by a greater range of the community, and at the level of working class participants cash prizes would be common. In 1875 at the King's Head Inn, Ulverston, there was a match for £10³.

By the 1880's bowls was even stronger, and was occurring in the more formalised setting of structured clubs. The growing popularity of the game saw to it that interested publicans would promote teams: it was good for trade. However it was coming to be the age of clubs with committees: at what might well have been an inaugural meeting of the Appleby Lawn Tennis and Bowling Club 1882

¹UM, 21.8.1875.

²WG and KA, 14.10.1871.

³WG, 7.9.1875.

"A committee of management was also appointed and rules were formulated for submission to a general meeting, of the members it was reported that the club had secured about half an acre of ground".¹

Towards the end of the century the game was even more popular with many teams and many matches reported. 1890, for instance, saw a number of teams at the inns of Penrith: the Penrith Two Lions, the Penrith Friars, etc.² It is no coincidence that a number of twentieth century car parks at public houses are the same shape as, but slightly larger than, a bowling green. And, of course, a number of inns are called 'The Bowling Green'. In 1890, too, there was the first match between Penrith Friars and the attractively set Fitz Park Club, Keswick³. At an equally impressive venue, Abbott Hall, Kendal, a number of tournaments occurred and were particularly popular during the last 15 years or so of the century. The competition in 1889 was considerably reported, and was obviously a prestige event in the local bowls world⁴, and the meeting continued to be popular throughout the century, being reported on almost a weekly basis throughout the summer of 1900: "There has been a large number of spectators each evening"⁵.

Another interesting trend was the connection between the game of bowls and the political parties. Indeed the concept of 'sport and politics' was, in terms of local politics, quite strong towards the end of the nineteenth century. By 1890 there were both Conservative and Liberal Bowling Clubs, and when the Kendal Conservative Club played

¹*CJ*, 7.5.1882.

²*CJ*, 22.7.1890.

³*CJ*, 8.4.1890.

⁴*KM and T*, 19.8.1889.

⁵*WG*, 30.6.1900.

against Milnthorpe it was noted in 1891 "The above Clubs, on the invitation of Mr. Bagot, assembled in the beautiful grounds of Levens Hall"¹.

Bowls was in ascendancy during the period 1890 - 1900: it might well be that it was at its peak. There were numerous clubs, and they were obviously unifying influences in the community: they were something that people could join. There were political affiliations and there were professional implications. There was, for instance, a match between the 'Professions' and the 'Tradesmen'² certainly indicative of a changing social scene. At the end of the nineteenth century bowls was very much part of the sporting ethos of the time, and this influence from the national scene was evident in Lakeland sport. Additionally, the sport had become organised to the point at which, in Cumberland, there was a Cumberland County team championship. The popularity of the game was extremely high.

Lawn Tennis

"But lawn tennis is a new game. Viewed as an institution, that is, as a creature controlled by laws, based upon proceedings, and protected by associations, it is barely in its teens".³

So wrote C.G. Heathcote in 1890. Lawn tennis was a game of later Victorian origins, a game born of a restless age, an age when people

¹WG, 22.8.1891.

²WG, 20.6.1896.

³Heathcote, J.M. et al. Tennis, Lawn Tennis, Rackets, Fives, Longmans Green and Co., 1890, p. 128.

wanted to try something new. Lawn tennis was in many ways unusual. It cannot be traced from medieval origins, as can many sports. And it does not seem to have been an adaption of an existing sport, moving through stages of modification. It was an invented game, undoubtedly

"...due to Major Wingfield, who in the year 1874 patented a game to which he gave the name of Sphairisticke".¹

This, in effect, was lawn tennis. It quickly became a fashion and soon spread throughout the country. A club was formed at Appleby in 1882² and by the mid 1880's had become popular. By 1885 tennis equipment was being advertised in Kendal³, and in 1885 there was a tournament on the grounds of Burton and Home Cricket Club in Dalton Park⁴. However not everyone viewed with favour the coming of tennis at cricket clubs. At the A.G.M. of the Penrith Club in 1890

"A suggestion that Lawn tennis might be introduced on the cricket field did not meet with favour".⁵

The popularity of the game came very quickly. In 1886 there were 150 members at the Cockermouth club⁶, and the clubs quickly organised themselves into teams: in that same year, for instance, Cockermouth played against Carlisle⁷ and the Windermere and District Club played

¹ *Ibid.*

² *CJ*, 7.4.1882.

³ *WG*, 27.6.1885.

⁴ *WG*, 25.7.1885.

⁵ *CJ*, 4.3.1890.

⁶ *CJ*, 28.5.1886.

⁷ *CJ*, 17.8.1886.

against Preston¹. Lawn tennis, like cycling, was a middle class game, often played on home based courts and very much of a gracious social occasion in its early days. It came, too, to be a spectator sport in the manner of many other sports, for it represented competition in a competitive age. As sports developed, so spectator interest grew. Within the first decade of the sport coming to the Lake District we read of one tournament that

"The contest took place on Tuesday in the presence of a large gathering of spectators who were rewarded by some excellent play."²

The spectators would certainly not have been of the working class, for the tournament took place on a Tuesday and certainly not at the time of a Public Holiday. The events included Ladies Singles, Ladies Doubles, Mixed Doubles, Gentlemens Singles and Gentlemens Doubles. This pattern of matches had been quickly established, but the scoring system had not settled into that later formalised: it was still possible to win a game 6-5. On this particular occasion it was interesting to note that the prizes were presented by Mr. W. Atkinson of Lancaster, who owned sports shops in both Lancaster and Kendal!

Tennis was rarely noted as an inn sport, and it is a little surprising to note that in 1890 a tennis lawn was laid out at the 'Mortal Man Inn', Troutbeck³. However lawn tennis was practised at the hotels. The holiday industry was by this time of considerable

¹WG, 19.6.1886.

²WG, 14.8.1886.

³WG, 15.3.1890.

importance, and provision was made for the recreations of the visitors. Tournaments, too, were run from the hotels with one held at the Rothay Hotel towards the end of the holiday season in 1892¹. However the sport was taking a more serious trend. A comment on the tournament at the Rothay Hotel tournament in 1892 says

"People are saying lawn tennis is not what it was, and they are right. Not long ago it was a garden party amusement; it is now one of the most arduous and difficult of games."²

However at the country houses it almost certainly continued to be a genteel and happy game. The delightfully set private court at Kentmere - with a tree almost on the edge of the court, and with a slight slope at one end - would ensure continuing light heartedness of play! Clubs continued to be formed, and matches continued to be played throughout the remainder of the century. In 1897³ when Kendal played against Barrow there were four pairs of men on each team, each pair playing against all of the pairs from the other team. The present system of scoring had still not been adopted, and there was simply a 15 game total for each match with the winning team decided on a cumulative score.

As the game grew in popularity, so it seems that it was beginning to move slightly down the social scale. In Windermere the established club was conducting successful tournaments in the middle of the last decade of the century⁴. However there was at this time a growth in

¹WG, 6.9.1890.

²WG, 3.9.1892.

³KM and T, 23.7.1897.

⁴WG, 24.7.1898.

the number of public parks and recreation grounds, and this assisted the spread of the game. Originally the game would have been played on private courts: the second stage would be for the formation of clubs which bought land for club use. However with the coming of recreation grounds there was a move to use public land for the purpose of the game: at Windermere in 1898

"Lawn Tennis. - Yesterday week, a meeting which had been called at very short notice was held at Mr. Raine's buildings, Windermere, for the purpose of forming a lawn tennis club in connection with the Recreation Ground."¹

Lakeland tennis was resultant from national fashions, and was essentially a middle class game. However it was largely taken up by Lakeland society, was influenced by the summer visitors and was thriving at the end of the century.

Golf

Commenting on the introduction of golf to the Furness area, Trescaheric notes that: "The first local Golf Club was the Furness Golf Club, founded in 1872"². This seems to have been late in relation to the formation of the St. Andrews Club in 1754 in Scotland, and the subsequent formation of the Blackheath Club in England. It might well be that the spread of cricket to the edges of the Lake District might have come to the Carlisle area before 1872, but what is

¹*KM and T, 15.7.1898.*

²*Trescaheric, B., 1983, p. 17.*

clear is that the spread of golf to Lakeland was late. Golf was established in Kendal in 1891, for in the following year it was noted that

"This Club was established just 12 months ago, and the first match was played on the Links, at the Racecourse, on 7th May 1891. There are now upwards of 50 members."¹

The game must have been quickly taken up in the district, for within two years a match was reported between the Kendal and Windermere clubs², and in the following year there was a match between the Kendal and Penrith clubs³. In 1894, too, we read of a 'New Golf Club for Kendal'⁴. Astoundingly the new course was played on within 3 weeks of having decided to form the club⁵. In this same year a club was formed at Appleby, for the secretary's records indicate that

"It was resolved that the Green should be formally opened at 1.30 p.m. on Thursday the 8th instant."⁶

and that

"...it being desirable to have a shelter on the course, the Committee be empowered to spend a sum not exceeding £20. in the erection of a club house".⁷

¹WG, 7.5.1892.

²WG, 1.7.1892.

³WG, 19.7.1894.

⁴WG, 7.7.1894.

⁵WG, 21.7.1894.

⁶Appleby Golf Club secretarial records.

⁷Ibid.

The game grew quickly in popularity and by 1895 there were monthly medal tournaments at Windermere and Appleby¹. Golf was in fashion, and was yet another sport for those of the middle class with time and money to play. In the nineteenth century it had not commenced to move down the social scale in England. And as the fashion grew, so did the desire to excel, for sporting achievement was becoming a focus of increasing adulation in the later Victorian era. In 1896 the celebrated professionals, Sayers and Vardon came to play exhibition matches.

"The above professional match for a purse of money contributed by some members of the club, was played on Tuesday...from Windermere these professionals came to Kendal."²

Harry Vardon returned later in the year and won the season's major tournament at Windermere³. The success of golf in this part of Lakeland would in part be due to the ease of access from the industrial area of Lancashire. For many of the richer residents golf would be their major sport. In a community such as Windermere golf was certain to succeed. The desire to do well had been achieved on business, it would seem, by many of the golfers, and it is no surprise that in 1898 the local paper was publishing a series of articles on golf⁴ - clearly the image of 'Improve your Golf' had arrived'.

The end of the century saw the beginnings in golf of the internecine

¹WG, 17.4.1895.

²WG, 14.3.1896.

³KM and T, 17.6.1896.

⁴WG, 24.12.1898.

battles at committee level. By 1898 there were two well established clubs in Kendal, one at the Racecourse (the Cunswick Club, playing on a flat and probably unattractive course) and the Serpentine Club, playing at a rather better venue and an 18 hole rather than a 9 hole course¹. There was a proposal that the clubs should amalgamate², but the proposal was initially defeated at committee level. Eventually they did come to terms and did amalgamate. The Serpentine Club (which eventually came to be known as the Kendal Golf Club) possessed the better links and was progressive. It is interesting to note that by 1899 it was organising competitions for boys³. The club celebrated the turn of the century with a gesture which had become typical of the late Victorial era, and attitude of nationalistic pride verging upon jingoism, for

"On Thursday the Serpentine Club celebrated the anniversary of Her Majesty's birthday and the relief of Mafeking by sending a team to Sedbergh."⁴

Towards the end of the century a course was laid near Keswick and by this time it seems that more care and thought was in evidence with regard to the preparation of courses, for with regard to Arnside it was stated that "...the situation is excellent and the site very suitable for making good links"⁵. This particular report on golf was some 9 column inches in length, itself an indication of the

¹ *KM and T*, 12.1.1897.

² *WG*, 24.12.1898.

³ *WG*, 29.4.1899.

⁴ *WG*, 26.5.1900.

⁵ *WG*, 28.4.1900.

strength of the sport at the turn of the century.

Cycling

"Cycling is by far the most recent of all the sports treated in the Badminton Library, there is none which has developed more rapidly in the last few years, nor is there any which has assumed a more assured position in popular favour."¹

so wrote Viscount Bury and G. Lay Hillier in 1891, for cycling was a new sport, the product of an age of mechanical invention and a desire to try new activities and pleasures. Beatrix Potter on a sojourn in Sawrey noted in her diary that on one occasion

"Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of two Friends from Kendal, a lady and a gentleman, on bicycles."²

The early bicycles were known as 'velocipedes' and seem to have appeared in the Lake District in about 1869³. They were soon to appear in sports meetings, and there was a bicycle race at the Orton sports in 1877⁴. Shortly after this the term 'bicycle' replaced 'velocipede', and bicycle races occurred at many sports meetings throughout the remainder of the century. There was a bicycle race at the Kendal Friendly Societies Gala in 1879⁵, and at one sports meeting in 1882

¹Bury, K.M.G.C. & Hillier, G.L., Cycling. Longmans Green and Co., 1891, p. 1.

²Linder, L., The Journal of Beatrix Potter for 1881-1897. Frederick Warne and Co., London, 1966, p. 420.

³CJ, 13.4.1869.

⁴WG, 9.6.1877.

⁵WG, 7.6.1879.

there was a 'dismounting race' in which the competitors had to dismount at one stage of the race, lift the bicycle over a pole, then remount and continue the race¹. In these, the early days of cycling, the skill level was not particularly high: at the Windermere Gala in 1891 "Cuthbert Pearson of Troutbeck fell off, which destroyed his chance"². In 1895 the growing move for emancipation was acknowledged at Ullswater when

"A great deal of excitement was caused in local athletic circles when the committee announced their intention of arranging a bicycle race for ladies."³

The race duly took place, but there were only two competitors, one of whom had only been cycling for a few weeks!

By the 1880's there were cycling clubs. In addition to encouraging the sport they provided a social organisation to which people could become attracted: the era was that the clubs, and the late Victorians were great 'joiners'. The clubs did far more than simply cater for cycling: they provided a respectable identity. Thus in Kendal 1881

"Bicycle Club Concert in Kendal - A number of young men in the town, terming themselves the Amateur Bicycle Club, gave a varied and high class concert on Monday evening in St. George's Hall, Kendal. The object, after paying the necessary expenses, was in aid of the Memorial Hospital."⁴

¹ *CJ*, 14.4.1882.

² *WG*, 23.5.1891.

³ *PO*, 3.9.1895.

⁴ *WG*, 3.5.1881.

Of course this was a middle class identity, for cycling was only for those who were relatively well off. The ordinary working class person would not be able to afford a cycle, noting that Braitwaite Brothers in Kendal were advertising cycles from £11.10s. upwards¹, a considerable sum of money in those days. By 1884 the Kendal Amateur Bicycle Club was well established. True to the fashion of the times they were now having an annual dinner, with some 20 members present². The club was obviously well organised, and in the same year presented an interesting reflection of the discipline and militarism of the times. Cycling clubs were almost an epitome of the character of the nation's ideals:

"At the weekly run 14 riders assembled, the course chosen being to Staveley. Tolson Hall had been passed by some hundred yards when the 'dismount' was sounded, and the order given to 'pile'. The Captain then briefly stated that he had a very pleasant duty to perform, mainly to present a silver plated buglet, with four turns, to the Club, given by a friend who wished the Kendal Amateur Bicycle Club every success."³

By the middle of the decade cycling was firmly established and very much part of the social scene in Lakeland towns. There was a pride, too, in appearance. There were also tricycles by this time, and the rather delightful formality of the time is noted in 1886 when some 28 members attended the A.G.M. of the Kendal Club and

"An alteration as regards dress was made to suit the requirements of the tricyclists. It was enacted that the uniform consist of blue suit and badge on the left breast, breeches or huntsman's cap being optional."⁴

¹*KM and T*, 6.8.1897.

²*WG*, 22.3.1884.

³*WG*, 21.6.1884.

⁴*WG*, 6.2.1886.

Cycling had commenced on an individual basis, with the small number who possessed bicycles being able to compete in local sports meetings, or indeed use their bicycles for recreation. This was followed by the formation of cycling clubs: via the clubs came organisation competitions. In 1890 the Kendal Club organised a 15 mile handicap race for novices¹. We read of an annual road race to Grange and back². This organisation by the clubs, however, did not militate against the sports meetings where bicycle races had come to be a regular part of many of the annual sports. These races were on grass tracks and racing on grass came to be an increasing part of the cycling world. This was in part forced upon them. The Kendal Club had laid down a track which was just as well because in 1895

"Owing to police restrictions the Kendal A.B.C. were, perforce, compelled to resort to the Fowl Ing grass track for the annual race."³

The 1890's - with the invention of the pneumatic tyre - saw continuing growth of cycling. In 1896 a bicycle club had been formed in a village as small as King's Meaburn, and a cycle track laid down⁴. The sale of sports equipment, too, was booming, and the firm of Abbatts of Kendal advertising cycling gloves, cycling corsets, cycling skirts and costumes⁵.

¹WG, 21.6.1890.

²WG, 22.4.1893.

³WG, 6.7.1895.

⁴WG, 22.8.1896.

⁵WG, 6.7.1895.

In addition to being a sport cycling was also a recreation. The club runs continued to develop during the closing years of the century and the respectability of the sport was evident from some of those runs. A rather proud note in a local newspaper indicate to members that

"By invitation of Lord Henry and Lady Bentinck the Kendal Cycling Club intend (weather permitting) to spend Good Friday at Underley Hall. Start at 10.00 as from headquarters, Dolphin Hotel, lamps".¹

Cycling reflected the spirit of its time. It was middle-class, it allowed for communication, it possessed the virtues of respectability, loyalty and organisation. Cycling was one of the reflections of the changing identifications of the late nineteenth century, and the peculiar character of cycling's image at the time might well be noted in the comment that:

"The run was to Natland, and the club, to show their loyalty, and in keeping with the year, sang a verse of 'God Save the Queen', on Natland Village Green, much to the amusement of the villagers".²

¹*KM and T, 15.4.1896.*

²*KM and T, 7.5.1897.*

(d) Football and Hockey

The term 'football' at the beginning of the nineteenth century referred to extremely crude games played in various parts of the country. The only common characteristics of these games was that a ball was used, that the objective was to get the ball to some sort of goal (which was usually another part of the town), and that the game might well be rough. These games were often part of Shrove Tuesday celebrations. The most famous at a national level was that at Ashbourne, Derbyshire, but a similar game of considerable importance was that held on the edge of the Lake District, at Workington. This game, which still survives, was between the 'Uppeys' and the 'Downies', identifying different ends of the town. Each team was required to provide a leather ball (presumably in case one was lost), which was in four sections, hand sewn with a horse hair filling. Neither team knew who was making the ball for the other team¹. Scott tells us that there were "No rules except cunning, skill and brute force"². This game continued to be extremely popular throughout the century. In 1886 there were reported to be 10,000 people present, with the ball generally in the river and "with many following it"³. Marshall and Walton suggest that the Workington game might well have been between different occupational groups⁴.

The Workington Easter football was outside the mainstream of the

¹ *Burton, R., personal communication.*

² *Scott, D., Bygone Cumberland and Westmorland. William Andrews and Co., 1899, p. 200.*

³ *CJ, 30.4.1886.*

⁴ *Marshall, J.D. and Walton, J.K., 1981, p. 162.*

development of the game. Crude games continued to be played in many of the schools as an annual celebrations, and often replacing the officially discredited cock-fighting. However there came increasing organisation following the development of football in a number of the Public Schools. Different types of games developed: they were related to local conditions, for

"The different schools, in adopting as a pastime the national game of football in which any and every method of getting the ball through the goal was allowed, included only such parts of the game as were suitable to their ground".¹

Gradually, from the whole host of different games, two types emerged:

"The Association or 'kicking' game came before the world from Eton, Harrow, Westminster, Charterhouse".²

And the Rugby Union game came from Rugby School. It is the latter which came first to the Lake District as an organised game. In 1868 there was a match between Heversham Grammar School and Lancaster Grammar School, and the debutance of this sport was noted as being "...rather a novelty in this district"³. This was a 15 a-side game and, like most of the organised football games in the Lake District during the period 1868-1890 was based on the Rugby rules. At a national level, the development of national rules was critical, for as sports spread, so there was a need for national rules. The increased

¹ *Shearman, M., 1894, p. 297.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *WG and KA, 21.3.1868.*

communication resultant from the coming of the railways necessitated agreements, and the decisive year for Association Football was in 1863 when the Football Association was formed: one of the reasons for this was that until that date different rules had existed in Cambridge, London and Sheffield¹. The codification for what was to become Rugby Union came at a later date, although it is almost certain that it was this form of football which came first to the Lake District.

"In 1871, after some preliminary negotiations between the Richmond and Blackheath Clubs, the principal London clubs were summoned together, and in the early part of that year the Rugby Football Union was formed".²

The uncertainty concerning the rules was evident in a number of ways. The traditional 'Collop Monday' at Bowness Grammar School in 1877 included football, and

"The game as now played is widely different from the old Westmorland one, the Rugby rules being observed."³

By this time the Rugby rules would be generally played, for communication was such that uniformity would come very quickly. Schools played against clubs, and clubs were travelling some considerable distances for their matches. However there were some problems. In 1878 a disputed tie was noted in the match between Kendal and Lancaster⁴. The game was changing in its character. When Ulverston Grasshoppers played against

¹Harris, M.A., Sport in Britain - its Origins and Development. Stanley Paul, 1975, p. 108.

²Shearman, M., 1887. p. 303. Note: Shearman's Athletics and Football 1894 was a fourth edition and on a different size of paper to the 1887 edition.

³WG, 17.2.1877.

⁴KM, 20.11.1878.

Askham in 1880 the game was reported to the extent of some nine column inches, and there were complaints about "...coarse language"¹. More seriously in 1890 when Kendal played against Warrington in 1890 a disputed try was declared to be legal

"...whereas the Warrington captain who had previously exhibited not altogether a cool temper, marched off the field, his team following, amidst the hoots and jeers of the crowd."²

Perhaps the gentlemanly spirit of the game had faded somewhat with the spread of the game to the lower classes! By now, however, football was an identifiable release and the game was arousing emotions unthought of in the early days of football. Towards the end of the century, in the local derby between Staveley and Ambleside the referee had a particularly unhappy afternoon, because

"Before he completed his duties he felt it necessary to order Arthur Dixon off the field, a fact which the spectators remembered, for before he left for home the referee had a black eye."³

Bailey suggests that

"The referee was an immediate ritual scapegoat in the working class game, a symbolic proxy for the rent collector or schoolboard man who suffered frequent abuse and assault."⁴

¹UM, 17.1.1880.

²WG, 15.3.1890.

³WG, 19.2.1898.

⁴Bailey, P., 1978, p. 144.

Certainly the development of football, and its spread to the lower echelons of society came to be a fascinating focus upon changes in Victorian society: sport represented an expression of changing moods, and a questioning of ascribed authority.

Football would seem to have come to the Lake District through the schools. Certainly it was seen as a means of occupying the growing boy in the Public School, and the influence of Dr. Arnold, through his pupils (many of whom went on to university and some of whom went into teaching) was considerable. Dr. Arnold, too, had strong Lakeland connections. Football occupied the restlessness of growing youth, and encapsulated the growing organisation of a changing social scene. And, even in its unsophisticated state, it came to be relatively disciplined. It fitted in with the growth of the middle class (who often sent their boys to the Public Schools) and with the problems of controlling and organising the boys during their spare time in these schools. During the 1860's

"Football was predominantly a popular pastime: the sport was encouraged at some of the public schools (where gentlemanly conduct was often loosely construed), and occasionally at Cambridge University..."¹

At this stage the game had hardly spread to the working populace of the towns, who worked for long hours. Football was essentially a game of the Public Schools, the grammar schools and the universities. Malcolmson's comment is apposite

"Organised games were the privilege of the public schools and the middle classes, not the people below them, who

¹Malcolmson, W., 1973, p. 40.

were not expected to let off steam except on public holidays."¹

It would seem that football came into the Lake District via the grammar schools, which were undoubtedly influenced by headmasters who had associations with the older universities. Penrith Grammar School played against Appleby Grammar School in 1870², and the game rapidly spread to adult organisations. In the following year there was a match between Kendal and Windermere College, "...which resulted in favour of the college team, by two goals and one touch-down to one touch-down"³, and in Ambleside by 1873:

"This day, Saturday, we are informed that the Kendal Football Club meet Ambleside for a friendly game, to be played on the ground of the latter."⁴

In the same year when Kendal played against Heversham

"The crowd have interrupted the game very much in pushing over the touchline when they might just as well have stood against the wall, where they would have seen far more of the game".⁵

The game was exciting spectator interest but was also, during this decade, seen to be eminently respectable. It was still associated with the gentry. When Kendal played against Carnforth in 1877 it was noted to be the first year in which Carnforth fielded a football

¹*Margetson, S., 1969, p. 178.*

²*WG and KA, 19.3.1870.*

³*WG and KA, 2.12.1871.*

⁴*KM, 29.3.1873.*

⁵*WG, 1.3.1873.*

team¹, and in the return fixture at Carnforth a week later "There was a large attendance of spectators, among whom were a number of the local gentry"². Cricket had come to the Lake District before the arrival of the railways. Football was the first game, it seems, to come after the advent of railway communication, and might well be one of the reasons why the game spread so quickly. By 1874 Kendal were travelling as far as Preston to play Preston Grasshoppers³, and there was obviously rail travel for football within the Lake District. Another attraction of football might well have been the relatively brief duration of the game as compared with cricket, and, of course, the possibility of both excitement and identification. Sport was moving into an era in which individuals and groups identified with teams, a critical development. The game spread in Lakeland with rapidity - firstly, but briefly, as a middle-class development. However the game was relatively cheap and the working class had an increasing amount of time in which to play: they could now play on Saturday afternoons. As Bailey tells us

"The popular expansion of the new sports in the 1870's and 1880's derived a great deal of its impetus from below; workingmen generated their own encouragement..."⁴

The game spread quickly during the 1870's and with increasing rapidity during the following decade. In Kendal there were at least three clubs - Kendal, Kendal Excelsior and Kendal Hornets. Nearby there

¹WG, 1.12.1877.

²WG, 8.12.1877.

³WG and KA, 5.12.1874.

⁴Bailey, P., 1978, p. 138.

were clubs at Ambleside, Hesfell and Windermere. In 1883 Kendal Excelsiors played against the appropriately named Ulverston Grapplers and Grasmere played against Staveley when "These two newly formed clubs met for the first time"¹. Clubs by now were being formed in quite small villages, for it was an age of clubs, of joining and of sport as being part of the social scene. By 1890 even villages of quite small populations such as Crookland and Troutbeck had their teams. The game took firm roots extremely quickly. During its growth period it was seen to be socially acceptable, presenting no problems to the upper echelons of society. What happened in football was later to occur in many other team games, and spread of the sport throughout the whole of society. The ethos of the final quarter of the century was true of the Empire, of industry and sport. The old pattern of society with its rare social mobility had given way to an era of opportunity and of striving. There was travel, there was organised emigration and there was education. This broadening of horizons inevitably affected sport. The magnetism of the metropolis, too, meant that London fashions (in a wide sense) would be noted and copied. And football was essentially of the industrial era, for it was a break from work at the level of both participants and spectator. It was also a unifying agency for individuals, some of whom would have come recently from the protection and stability of a rural background and into the new communities of industry. This affected Lakeland in two senses: the first was simply a changing fashion which was eagerly taken up, and the second was that within the Lake District there had been a growth in industry with its attendant movements of population. The game continued to spread. In 1884 the Ambleside Choirboys played

¹WG, 27.10.1883.

against Windermere 3rd XV, and Kendal Green Rovers played against Staveley Eagles¹. This latter team was based on the Eagle and Child Inn, Staveley, and represented a changing pattern of inn support for sports. The inn support for sports, for wrestling and shooting was in a number of cases being replaced by support for football. Malcolmson interpreted the spread of football as having the support of the mill and factory owners, for "...habits of leisure had to be brought into line with the requirements of efficient and orderly production"². The traditional recreations of the previous century had been primarily related to a farming economy and the farming season. The relaxations were infrequent, not regular on a weekly basis and certainly ill-fitted for the demands of an increasingly industrial economy. Football fitted in with the new image. It also, away from the football field, allowed for the growing expression of groups in terms of their organisation, and their corporate identity. When Kendal Hornets played against Carnforth in 1879, after the game there was a tea, there were speeches and then "The evening was enlivened by a number of songs until near train time"³. The use of the train became increasingly significant. Teams from Ambleside and Windermere were travelling as far as Ulverston, Barrow and Whitehaven. The stronger Kendal teams (Kendal and Kendal Hornets) were travelling as far as Cheshire and industrial Yorkshire. With this remarkable expansion came organisation.

Such was the interest and support for football (i.e. at this time

¹*WG*, 29.4.1884.

²*Malcolmson, S.*, 1973.

³*KM and NA*, 14.11.1879.

Rugby Union) that leagues came to be formed. Such was the general respect for the game that in 1891 a Challenge Cup, value between 60 and 70 guineas was given for competition:

"There are eight clubs in the district to which Mr. Smith's handsome gift is intended to apply, viz. Askham, Barrow, Millom, Kendal, Kendal Hornets, Ulverston, Morecambe and Lancaster. It was resolved to play on the League system, and that the eight clubs named constitute the league".¹

The league seems to have been an instant success. In the following year it was noted at the Kendal Hornets A.G.M. that

"With regard to the North West League, your committee consider it beneficial to those clubs connected with it, and recommend that the Hornets Club continue as members for another season. There is no doubt that it has created a great deal of interest."²

Tournaments of various descriptions had actually preceded the much more important growth of leagues. These were the equivalent of the later seven-a-side competitions, and were played with six-a-side competitions. There had been one 'Football Picnic' at Kendal in 1881 with a six-a-side competition, handicap races and a kicking competition. This pattern clearly followed the strength and pattern of the athletic sports³. At Haverigg in 1885 there were prizes of silver medals for the winning team, travelling bags for the runners up and a silver medal for the best free kick. The prizes were given by the landlord of the Star and Garter⁴. This would seem to be one of

¹WG, 22.8.1891.

²WG, 4.6.1892.

³WG, 21.5.1881.

⁴WG, 24.5.1885.

the first occasions in which a landlord was seen to be supporting football in this way, and was another example of the position of the inn-keeper in influencing sport. In the same year there was a similar competition at Askham in which there were 16 teams and a silver cup value £7. for the first prize.

"The scoring was ruled as follows - a goal was to count 6 points, a try 4 points, and minor points 1 each. Each team was represented by a full back, two three-quarter backs, a half back and two forwards. The winning team were raised shoulder height and carried round the field by their admirers."¹

There was similar adulation in Kendal following the six-a-side tournament at Barrow-in-Furness in 1886. This tournament had attracted teams from as far afield as Swinton and Bingley. The tournament was won by Kendal, and

"Upon their return to Kendal at about half-past eleven the team were met by some hundreds of their friends, who kept up a thunder of cheers from the railway to the centre of the town."²

The spectator support which had been accorded to wrestling in the 1850's and 1860's was by now being transferred - with even greater adulation - to football. Crowds were identifying with teams, and this was soon to create problems.

The tendency was for sport to develop locally, for some sports to spread nationally and to then be controlled at national level. At

¹WG, 19.12.1885.

²CJ, 1.6.1886.

a later stage district associations united in terms of representative fixtures. The beginnings of county rugby came late to the Lake District. In 1886 there was a

"County Football Trail Match at Kendal: - An important football contest took place on the ground of the Kendal Hornets Club at Mint's Feet, Kendal, on Thursday afternoons, to decide the fifteen that are to represent the county of Westmorland in the matches that have been arranged with the other counties."¹

Thereafter county matches occurred regularly with the equivalent county organisations in the North of England.

Whilst football in the grammar schools seem to have been the beginning of the sport in Lakeland, for those who had not come through the grammar school system there was a gap between leaving the elementary school and being mature enough to play club football at adult level. Eventually this gap was bridged. In 1880 there was a match between Kelswick School and the Windermere Apprentices². By 1885 there were six-a-side matches for juniors, one such tournament being for youths under 14 years of age³. Eventually, in the early 1890's junior leagues came to be formed. Football quickly became popular. In addition to the players there were considerable crowds, for the early curiosity of the 1870's soon gave way to audience support and a demand for results. The growth of spectatorism came to be identified fairly soon. In 1880 when Ambleside played against

¹WG, 6.11.1886.

²WG, 15.3.1880.

³WG, 9.5.1885.

Ulverston there was "...a dense crowd of spectators"¹. How many this would be is a matter for conjecture: probably a few hundred. But the crowds were following the teams, when Kendal Hornets played against Kendal Excelsiors in 1884 there were some 700 - 800 spectators, and the spirit engendered is indicated in the statement that "The feeling existed between the two clubs was anything but of a friendly character"². Support for the game was growing, and teams were travelling farther afield. The Easter tour became fashionable, with Kendal Hornets going to play against teams at Dewsbury, Brighouse, Salthebble and Hunslet³. In the same year there was the first mention of money. An innocent note reported that the railway expenses of the Kendal Hornets team for that year were £82-9-7½⁴. Money would be provided, in some cases, by patrons. However as the game became more popular it would be increasingly provided by spectators paying to watch. This was to have enormous consequences for the game.

Spectators paid to watch the sport, but once they identified with a team there was a desire to see that team win. Support was particularly strong for winning teams who therefore wished to attract promising players. The problem in football was essentially one of 'broken time' in which players who lost time away from their work wanted to have their loss of pay made up. However the situation quickly moved beyond this, and this resulted in some skilled players wanting to be paid in order to play. The problem came to the industrial areas before it came to Lakeland, but the effect was eventually felt in

¹WG, 12.11.1880.

²WG, 1.3.1884.

³KM and T, 17.5.1890.

⁴Ibid.

the Lake District. It was the Lancashire Rugby Football Union who were concerned with the problem before it was to affect Lakeland teams. By 1890 it was evident that there were financial problems in connection with Rugby Union and these were initially noted in relation to players being injured and then losing pay from their place of work. At the Kendal Hornets A.G.M. in 1890 the minutes included the note that:

"We deemed it advisable to insure the first team and three substitutes at a cost of £6.15s. so that in future no member would be left unprovided for, whilst away from work."¹

The problem, however was more serious than this in that there were suggestions of professionalism. In the same year

"Mr. Fawcett, accompanied by Mr. Beard, captain of the Hornets Club, attended a meeting of the Lancashire Rugby Football Union last Friday evening, in Manchester, to prefer a charge of professionalism against William Berry. Fawcett argued that William Berry, 'like the notorious Buff Berry, left Kendal when in full employment, both returned when the football season was over, and both left again when the football season commenced at Tyldsley, and this, in his opinion, proved that there must be some inducement of a pecuniary character to lead to this migration!'"²

The result was that Berry was suspended, "...pending his furnishing a satisfactory explanation"³. Berry's family were from a working class background (the returns of the census in 1881 note his father as being a 'contractor' and his stepbrother as being a

¹WG, 17.5.1890.

²WG, 27.9.1890.

³*Ibid.*

'tobacco cutter': William Berry in 1881 was still a schoolboy)¹. He obviously supplied an explanation for his sojourn in Lancashire, for his name did appear in fixtures in the following season. However in 1892 the Kendal Hornets Rugby Club was suspended for professionalism², eventually to be re-instated. Eventually there came to be a separation of amateurs from professionals and the two codes:

"The great split in the Rugby Union world came in 1895 which saw 22 of the northern clubs breaking away and forming the Northern Rugby Football Union."³

This came to be known simply as the 'Northern Union', eventually to become the Rugby League. But it was essentially a sport of the industrial towns. In the early days of the split no teams from Cumberland and Westmorland were involved, but some eventually came to change their status. In 1898 there was a notice to the effect

"A meeting of the Committee of the Whitehaven Town Club will be held tonight to decide whether or not the club should go over to the professional body."⁴

They did, and during the same season the Penrith United Club debated the same issue and there was a "...decision to remain loyal to the Rugby Union"⁵. This seems to have settled the matter in Lakeland. Inner Lakeland, and the agricultural towns stayed with the amateur

¹ *Census returns, 1881.*

² *WG, 12.11.1892.*

³ *Howes, D., and Huxley, J., Encyclopaedia of Rugby League Football, R. Hale, 1980, p. 103.*

⁴ *CJ, 18.10.1898.*

⁵ *CJ, 1.10.1898.*

code, whilst some of the teams in the industrial towns of Lakeland's fringes changed codes to the professional game.

The Association Game

The Rugby Football game had spread with great rapidity in the Lake District during the 1870's and continued to do so for some years. However, by the 1880's there was an increasing challenge from the Association game, and in some cases the soccer code supplanted the Union game. As with the game of Rugby Union Football, the soccer game came in part through the schools. As early as 1880 Urswick Grammar School were playing the game of Association Football¹, and there was a representative match between Cumberland and Furness in 1886². By 1890 there were, in fact, Cumberland Cups for both of the football codes³. There had been support for the game well before its successful establishment, but some of this support was really a criticism of the game of rugby. As enthusiasm for rugby had grown, so had the rough play, and a newspaper comment as early as 1882 had suggested

"Of the football contests we can only express a strong hope that the 'savage' rugby game will speedily be given up for the less dangerous pastime governed by the 'Association' rules."⁴

¹UM, 10.1.1880.

²CJ, 13.4.1886.

³CJ, 18.3.1890.

⁴WG, 12.8.1882.

The Association game seems to have developed rather more rapidly in some of the areas of Furness and Cumberland before they did so in Westmorland. It was not until 1892 that the Kendal Association Club was formed¹, and thereafter the game grew rapidly in the district. By 1893 it was noted that

"The Association Club in Kendal can now be said to be in fairly smooth water. The first season has been a success."²

By 1894 the Kendal team were playing against Preston North End³, but this is unlikely to have been against the first team of the 'Invincibles'. Certainly it was noted in 1896 that the match against Preston North End was of Kendal playing Preston's second team in front of 1,000 spectators⁴. In 1895 it was noted that the Kendal Thursday team were playing against Kendal Grammar School - the school had obviously transferred its allegiance to the Association game⁵. In some areas both games flourished, at times with one club playing both of these codes⁶. However many villages and small townships could not support both games, and it was the Association game which generally gained ascendancy. At certain functions they took place together. At the Burton Club Walk and Gala in 1894 there were six-a-side competitions for both codes⁷. As the game grew, so did

¹Clarke, J., 1908, p. 46.

²WG, 22.4.1893.

³WG, 17.11.1894.

⁴WG, 4.4.1896.

⁵WG, 6.4.1895.

⁶KM and T, 17.12.1897.

⁷WG, 19.5.1894.

the associations and then the leagues. There were some 7 clubs in Cumberland in 1886, and 4 of these were affiliated to the Cumberland Football Association¹. Some 10 years later, well after the league had been established, a Junior league was formed².

As football of both types (and later the third type) grew, so there was increased reporting in the local press. With the growing popularity of the game so there developed 'specialist' reporters. The Westmorland Gazette reporter in the 1890's was known as 'Half-Way'. Sports journalism had arrived in the Lake District, and with it the beginnings of journalese. Gone were the days of simple, factual reporting, viz. "The elements were unkind to the 'dribblers and handlers' last Saturday"³, and "Heywood was successful in getting the leather into the net"⁴. The extent of the reporting increased during the final 30 years of the century, with a changing relationship during the last decade between the amount of space devoted to the two codes. As the Association game grew, and with the marginal decline of the rugby code, so the proportional reporting changed. Two random checks on the column inches of reporting, covering a period of 4 years and the rapid expansion of the Association game indicate

	1895 ⁵	1899 ⁶
Rugby Football	24 ci	9 ci
Association Football	7 ci	19 ci

¹Wilson, J., 1905, p. 492.

²Ibid.

³WG, 23.11.1895.

⁴KM and T, 29.10.1897.

⁵WG, 5.1.1895.

⁶WG, 8.4.1899.

Whilst not too much should be read into these figures, they do seem to be typically indicative of the changing trends of participation in the two games. Certainly the Association game went from strength to strength throughout the final decade of the century. Its popularity was such that, it followed the trend of some of the sports meetings and was at times used as a fund raising venture for the Friendly Societies. This indicates that the number of spectators must have justified the event as early as 1893

"Association. The Tebay Club. - On Saturday a match was played for the benefit of the widows' and Orphans' Fund of the Amalgamated Society Railway Servants. The game ended in a draw, one goal each. The collection, which was made during the game, resulted in a substantial find being handed over to the funds of the society".¹

By the end of the century football was by far the most popular of the sports of late Autumn, Winter and early Spring in Lakeland. Three codes were established and there were many players and clubs. Football was very much part of the fabric of society.

Hockey

The game of hockey came late to Lakeland. Whilst there were a number of references relating to the nascent sport of ice hockey, the game that we now know as hockey came at the end of the century.

Hockey was reported in 1898 as under:

¹WG, 29.4.1893.

"Hockey: A game new to these parts was introduced last Saturday at Heversham - hockey - generally reserved for the ice, but nevertheless a game which is fast coming to the fore on land."¹

Lawn tennis was seen to be a game in which ladies could participate, and it might well be that the development of hockey was in part related to the sport for ladies being seen to be the equivalent of the football for men. It was a possible growth in women's sport of the move towards emancipation. The Kendal Ladies Hockey Club was founded in 1898, the primness of the late Victorian era was noted in the clubs inaugural rules, number 11 of which stated "That skirts must be 6" from the ground all round"². Socially it seems that hockey provided a bridge between the enthusiasm of women to participate in sport and the willingness of men to cooperate. However there was also mixed hockey, with Cumberland playing against Westmorland in 1899³. The Ladies' hockey, it seems, was social rather than serious, and the men were primarily interested in football during the winter. At the turn of the century after the Kendal Ladies versus Carlisle Ladies match there was a criticism of the Westmorland team:

"Kendal would have a much better ladies' team if members would only turn up to practice when possible; it is only fair to their captain that they should endeavour to do so."⁴

Hockey, it seems, came in as a relatively gentle social game. It might possibly have been resultant from the desire of women to

¹WG, 29.1.1898.

²Secretarial notes, Kendal Ladies Hockey Club.

³WG, 15.4.1899.

⁴WG, 24.11.1900.

participate: it might well have been due to some disillusionment with football (i.e. Association Football) having become a working class sport. By 1899 hockey clubs were established in Bowness and Ambleside¹, and in 1900 there were teams in such relatively small places as Grange-over-Sands and Greenodd². The social significance of these teams would be in that in three of the above four settings they were in middle class settings. Ambleside and Bowness were strongly influenced by the concept of dormitory towns, and Grange-over-Sands was by this time virtually a spa. Greenodd did possess some industry, but it was also a meeting point for the better class residents of the Crake and Levens Valleys. It also possessed a field suitable for hockey! Hockey was essentially a middle-class sport, thriving on the edges of Lakeland. In many ways, it seems, it came to be the winter sport for a number of the cricketers. It was a game for gentlemen, and it was an opportunity for the ladies to become increasingly involved in sport.

¹WG, 1.4.1899.

²WG, 24.11.1900.

CHAPTER 7

Some Reflections : and Conclusions.

Some Reflections

Certain movements, institutions and activities during the nineteenth century contribute to the clarification of developmental trends in Lakeland sports. It is difficult to adequately identify sequential developments, which at times varied in relation to different parts of the Lake District, with national influences tending to affect Carlisle and Kendal before they were apparent in the country areas: but some aspects outside the temporal divisions indicate four themes of particular interest. The first of these was the Volunteer Movement which, it is suggested, represented a significance during the period 1860-1900 that has rarely been acknowledged in social history. The second theme relates to the schools, which initially reflected rural sports but which increasingly became influenced by the national trends of fitness by virtue of drill and gymnastics and by sport as a reflection of the growing Public School ethos. The remaining two themes are related to the lakes and mountains. There was rowing on, and swimming in the lakes but of far greater interest is the concept of sport on ice. Reports relating to ice skating and kindred sports occurred during the cold winters and proved to indicate interesting changes in the pattern of recreation because they were intermittent. The mountains, too, are of interest in that they were initially visited by the well-to-do tourists who travelled and the 'Romantics' who often stayed for longish periods of time. Firstly they walked, and then some of them climbed the fells with a sense of adventure quite out of proportion to the challenge involved. Then some climbed the mountains, developing a new sport which was initially centred in one small part of Lakeland but which eventually spread to other areas in Britain. These four themes are suggested as offering an additional perspective to the balance between local and national influences in the development of Lakeland sport.

(a) The Volunteer Movement

The nineteenth century was a period of expansion for Britain with the growth of the British Empire and the desire to protect newly acquired lands and to exploit them. However the military reserves of the nation were stretched, for expansion and consolidation abroad left Britain weak at home. In the middle years of the century too many of the country's fighting men were away, and the memory of Napoleon was not too distant. This situation was succinctly explained by Lt. Colonel May, the curator of the Regimental Museum of the Border Regiment and King's Own Royal Border Regiment in Carlisle.

"In 1859, in a forgotten episode of history Napoleon III and the so-called French Colonels' threatened to invade this country. With a Regular Army distributed throughout the Empire, and a moribund Militia, the country was virtually undefended. On 12th May 1859 the Secretary of State for War authorised Lord Lieutenants of Counties to raise a Volunteer Corps. Further, these Volunteers were to be trained in the rifle, and to become the Volunteer Rifles."¹

The Volunteer Movement grew rapidly, it being estimated that "...in November and December 1859 there were 700 recruits daily"². By 1861 there were in Britain some 161,239 members and by 1901 288,476 members³. Of local significance is that there came to be some 17 corps in the English Lake counties of Cumberland and Westmorland⁴ with the small

¹May, R.K., *personal communication*.

²Beckett, I.W.F., *Rifleman Form, Ogilby Trusts, Aldershot, 1982, p. 31.*

³Beckett, I.W.F., 1982, p. 104.

⁴Beckett, I.W.F., 1982, pp. 288, 304.

township of Keswick having some 89 members in 1883¹, and with larger towns having far more members.

The significance of the early membership was that whilst the Volunteer Movement was inaugurated to fulfil a military need there were social implications. It provided an organisation which men could join in an age in which some social barriers were still strong. The Movement was instantly successful and

"Most townships raised their Volunteers without any difficulty. It was an Army that the middle class and tradesmen could join."²

This was probably in part related to the width of the population that could be attracted into membership, Bailey noting that the Volunteer Movement was "...a patently respectable movement that was soon drawing a surprising number of recruits from the working class"³.

In order to be accepted a Corps required a safe range of 200 yards (these were often on land owned by the local gentry), a place of custody for arms, approved rules and a uniform approved by the Lord Lieutenant⁴. Initially they were only supported to the extent of 50% by the government, and had to raise money to buy uniforms. The Brampton Corps, for example, held annual plays and concerts in order to raise their funds; in addition to funds this would provide a social coherence to the Corps⁵. This pattern continued at a number of the

¹ *Nominal Rolls, War Office Form 1613.*

² *May, R.K., personal communication.*

³ *Bailey, P., 1978, p. 34.*

⁴ *Beckett, I.W.F., 1982, p. 24.*

⁵ *May, R.K., personal communication.*

Corps for some years, and the Volunteer Dramatic Entertainment in Ulverston in 1875 was reported as a relatively important social event¹. The Volunteer Movement was deemed to be respectable and became one of the focal points in a society which came increasingly to join and to be associated with the process of identification through organised groups. The farming communities at the beginning of the century possessed a stability which was lacking in the days of urban growth, and there was an increasing search for identity.

Shooting

The *raison d'etre* of the Volunteer Movement lay in its military importance, and the practice of shooting was a necessity. Shooting was normally over a 200 yard range, sometimes over 400 yards, 500 yards and occasionally over 600 yards. In 1861 when the 5th Westmorland Rifle Volunteers assembled it was noted that "The range is now extended to 600 yards, through the kindness and liberality of Lady de Fleming"². The fact that Lady de Fleming was supportive represented one of the early indications of the interest afforded to the shooting competitions. In the same year there was near Kendal shooting for a cup presented by Colonel Gandy³ and the gentry were eventually involved to the point of offering a considerable number of prizes for the shooting. At the Christmas Shooting in Kendal in 1877 the gentry offered prizes to 44 competitors, with a tea and coffee

¹UM, 9.1.1875.

²WG and KA, 2.2.1861.

³WG and KA, 26.10.1861.

service and a challenge cup as the first prize¹. Some two years later at the Windermere Volunteers prize shooting there was a list of winners, prizes and donors with the prizes including 'one ton of coal', china and tea service, newspapers for the year, etc.². In 1880 at the same New Year meeting there were 217 prizes³. These were examples of what had come to be annual New Year competitions, but there were also rather more formal competitions which seemed to be the major ones of the year. The major competition of the Westmorland Rifle Volunteers in 1878 near Kendal in the Autumn of 1878 was for

"...the plate and money prizes presented by Major Rideshalgh, came off on Thursday afternoon at the Helsfell Range, Kendal. The distances were 200, 500 and 600 yards, seven shots at each, - one sighting being allowed at each range; Wimbledon targets and scoring."⁴

By the 1880's it had become common for the local gentry and, additionally, the tradesmen to present prizes for the shooting. There were 65 competitors in the Volunteer shooting at Greenodd in 1880, and all were awarded prizes. The winner received a sheep and the second prize was 18 gallons of ale: 20th prize was a live goose, and the 60th placed competitor received a 11b of coffee⁵. In a smaller venture at Grasmere in the following year the first prize was 13 s. and 6d, the second prize 5 stones of flour and the 16th prize a cow's head, it being noted that "...prizes given by the ladies, gentlemen and

¹WG, 22.12.1877.

²KM and NA, 4.1.1879.

³KM and NA, 2.1.1880.

⁴KM and NA, 5.10.1878.

⁵UM, 3.1.1880.

tradespeople of Langdale, Elterwater and Skelwith Bridge"¹. The major shooting championships and competitions continued throughout the century with it again being noted in 1897 that at the Windermere Volunteers New Year shooting the prizes had been given by locals². However in addition to the major meetings there grew a number of competitions which were of both sporting and social character. A number of these were matches between different groups: in 1881 there was a match between the Ambleside Volunteers and the Staveley Volunteers³: in 1891 the Manchester Volunteers came up to the Lake District for matches against their equivalents in Kendal and Ambleside⁴, and in 1897 the Kendal Sergeants entertained the Carlisle Sergeants⁵. There were also matches within many of the different groups. With regard to the First Westmorland Volunteer Corps in 1869 "...the privates of the above corps challenged the non-commissioned officers to a match...for a supper"⁶, and this pattern of matches between different groups - with 'marrieds' v 'singles' being popular - continued throughout the century.

Gymnastics

Militarism has an essential concern with fitness, and it is probable that much of the 'drill' and gymnastics tradition developed in England during the nineteenth century in part owed its origin to the

¹WG, 15.10.1881.

²KM and T, 1.1.1897.

³WG, 15.10.1881.

⁴WG, 4.4.1891.

⁵KM and T, 3.9.1897.

⁶WG and KA, 28.8.1869.

Volunteer Movement. During the middle years of the century there was a growing concern for public health, and Rees suggests that much of the impetus for this came from the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, and was in part effected by the Volunteer Movement¹. Rees noted a letter of 1863 to the Liverpool Mercury

"The great advantage of the Volunteer Movement may be seen by anyone who compares the carriage and erect bearing of young men generally with what it was in times past..."²

The Kendal Rifle Volunteers were involved in the organisation of a gymnastics exhibition in Kendal in 1864³: this was well attended and might well have resulted in the formation of the Kendal Gymnastics Club which in the following year

"...gave an assault-at-arms in the hall of the Mechanics' Institute, on Wednesday last, when the members exhibited a continued advance in proficiency and skill".⁴

In 1867 the Kendal Rifle Volunteers Athletic Club (a significant title, for by this time clubs were being formed within the Volunteer Movement) gave an assault-at-arms which included broadsword, boxing, fencing, horizontal bars, high leap, suspended rings, ropes and trapeze⁵. During this same period there were similar ventures in Milnthorpe⁶ and

¹Rees, R., P.E. *Teacher Training in Liverpool in the Nineteenth Century*, in *History of Education Society Bulletin* No. 19, Spring 1977.

²*Liverpool Mercury*, 13.4.1863.

³WG and KA, 16.1.1864.

⁴WG and KA, 29.4.1865.

⁵WG and KA, 1.12.1867.

⁶WG and KA, 21.4.1866.

Ulverston¹. Reports of this type seemed to fade, although there was a gymnastics competition organised by the Carlisle Volunteers Fire Brigade in 1878 involving a whole range of gymnastic events². It might well be that the provision of facilities did not necessarily lead to the success of a particular sporting activity, in part because there was no individual to offer continuing guidance. This position was rectified in Kendal in 1888 when the following was announced:

"Opening of the Gymnasium at Kendal. - When the Volunteer Drill Hall was about to be built one of the promises in the appeal for funds was that it should be used as a gymnasium...The fitting up of the gymnasium has been done by a sub-committee. Among the appliances are horizontal bars, trapeze, ropes and rings, climbing ladder, 'horse', a full complement of mattresses and co., foils, single sticks and gloves. The committee have secured the services of George Beckett, a capital gymnast, who held a responsible position in one of the line regiments".³

However the venture does not seem to have been a success. There had been a number of attempts to establish functioning gymnasia on the edges of the Lake District, and none seems to have succeeded as a permanancy. Whilst shooting was seen to be in some considerable measure an acceptable part of Lakeland life, gymnastics did not.

The Volunteers in Lakeland Society

There seems to have been general and considerable approval for the Volunteer Movement which in many ways came to play an important role in

¹*KM and NA, 26.8.1867.*

²*CJ, 8.1.1878.*

³*WG, 21.1.1888.*

society. As early as 1862 the 3rd Westmorland Rifle Volunteers were having an annual ball, and various functions in connection with the Volunteers came to be noted throughout the remainder of the century. There came to be increasing connections with sport, it being noted that the frequent and regular gatherings of a number of individuals would give rise to the possibility of a number of other functions. The position of the Volunteers was in part acknowledged in 1886 at the Annual meeting and supper of the Kendal Cricket Club which was reported as being an important and fashionable occasion:

"There was a large attendance of members...The Chairman gave the toast 'The Queen': then 'The Prince and Princess of Wales and the rest of the Royal Family: then 'The Army, Navy and Reserve Forces, coupling with it the names of Captains Watson and Braithwaite'. Captain Watson, in response, apologised for rising before Mr. Clarence Roe, whose name he begged to add to the toast, for he had seen service at the cannon's mouth (Applause)...he was certain that if they were called out the Volunteers would discharge themselves as Britons always have done (Applause)."¹

What is important is that in terms of both their place in society and the organisational structure that they were able to use they were influential in sport: they

"...contributed to direction and impetus in middle-class recreation; the local corps promoted the cause of physical fitness and the sports meetings which enlivened the drills often became the basis for the formation of permanent athletic clubs."²

Sporting recognition had arrived early in the days of the Volunteer Movement. In 1860 one section of the wrestling at Kendal Sports was

¹WG, 23.1.1886.

²Bailey, P., 1978, p. 61.

restricted to members of the 'Westmorland Volunteers'¹, and in 1865 it was the local Volunteers Band who played at the Oddfellows Gala in Cockermouth². Beckett stressed the importance of the Volunteer Movement in popularising sports, particularly athletics and suggested that

"The Volunteer Force...opened up tremendous opportunities of recreation and companionship for the lower and middle-class artisan elements."³

Certainly, by the late 1870's the Volunteers were organising sports days, with that under the auspices of the Penrith Rifle Volunteers in 1878 having become an annual occasion⁴. Some two years later there was an Ulverston Volunteers Athletic Festival with the "...attendance of spectators very large"⁵. The sports included running, jumping and bicycle races, and the hurdle race over 440 yards included only 8 hurdles for each competitor. There was also at this meeting a Rugby Union match between Ulverston and Barrow with the prizes being presented by the Reverend C.W. Bardsley who was a prominent supporter of local sport. In the following year the Kendal Rifle Volunteers organised a meeting with their own band being present, and with one of the competitions being the kicking of a rugby ball for distance⁶. In 1886 the Volunteers in Keswick were noted as having organised a sports, and in local

¹*WG and KA*, 2.6.1860.

²*CJ*, 15.8.1865.

³*Beckett, I.W.F.*, 1982, p. 117.

⁴*CJ*, 23.7.1878.

⁵*UM*, 7.8.1880.

⁶*WG*, 21.5.1881.

tradition included a Guides' race¹. In an age of innovation, however, the most unusual event must have been that held at the Egremont Volunteers sports in 1895 when there was a 100 yard bandsmens' race in which the competitors were handicapped in both the distance to be run and by virtue of having to race whilst playing their instrument. The event was won by the drummer, with the double base player second and the euphonium player third².

The sport of cycling also attracted the attention of the Volunteers and in 1891 from Kendal there were the Cyclist Volunteers and

"The first muster of this addition to the Volunteers, in public, took place on Thursday evening, when 15 members assembled with the cycles at 6.30. The cyclists then started a drill run in the country under Lieutenant Illingworth."³

Perhaps the organised nature of group cycling was appropriate to the Volunteers, for it was an opportunity to participate in sport and recreation in a disciplined fashion. What is clear about the Volunteers is that there was considerable participation in sport, and that some of this was organised from within the Volunteer Movement, for the structure of the movement and the contacts that it created between individuals would facilitate various forms of social ventures. It is clear, too, that the sporting interests of the Volunteer Movement continued to be acknowledged throughout the century. A final report was from South Africa in connection with a cricket match being played during the

¹ *CJ*, 13.6.1886.

² *CJ*, 3.9.1895.

³ *WG*, 11.4.1891.



Cock Pit, Heversham Grammar School Old Site

Boer War in 1900: "Cumberland Half v Westmorland Half (Volunteer Company Border Regiment) - played at Serfontein on November 3rd"¹.

¹WG, 8.12.1900.

(b) The Schools

In many ways the schools tended to follow national trends in sport and other activities, generally serving the established pattern of the society to which they belonged. At other times they were innovatory with the introduction of new activities and more particularly with the spread of activities already established in other areas. In general the Lakeland schools at the beginning of the nineteenth century were a reflection of Lakeland society: however as the century progressed so they were increasingly influenced by national trends. One of these was the concern for fitness, reflected in a certain amount of gymnastics in some schools during the second half of the century: the other and by far greater influence was the spread of major games emanating from the Public Schools.

The Rustic Sports

"Clearly the cockpits of Cumbria corresponded to the playing fields of Eton"¹. This statement by Rollinson might at first seem to be an exaggeration, but an examination of a number of local and school histories is indicative of the important place of cock-fighting at the schools at the beginning of the nineteenth century: and there is minimal reporting relating to any other school sport. Curwen notes cockfighting and a crude form of football (almost certainly in the image of the annual town game at Workington) as being a Shrovetide activity in 1812 at Kendal Grammar School². There was also cock

¹Rollinson, W., 1974, p. 142.

²Curwen, J.F., 1900. p. 173.

fighting at Bowness G.S. where the traditional cock-fighting day was 'Collop Monday', at Penrith G.S. for "Scholars at Penrith Grammar School also paid 'cock money' annually"¹. Rollinson suggests that the meagre salary of the schoolmaster was supplemented by the cockpennies paid by the boys to the schoolmaster², this being a continuation of what had been written with regard to money paid to the master at Rydal School in the latter years of the seventeenth century:

"But the authorised cock-fighting, which was held in every school at Shrovetide, brought him in a substantial sum, for it was the custom for each pupil to pay him the tribute of a cock-penny".³

At Heversham G.S. the cock pit can still be seen on the site of the old Grammar School, and on display in the school library is a pair of spurs for cock fighting at the school. These were used by cocks belonging to J. McGowan and were eventually given to the school by his grandson⁴. With regard to the cock-fighting, Humber notes that

"The scholars of Heversham probably paid their official 'cock pennies' at Heversham Head for the last time in the early nineteenth century".⁵

At the beginning of the nineteenth century cock-fighting met with increasing public criticism and the sport faded from the school scene. Crude games of football continued, it being noted in Bowness in 1884 that:

¹Wilson, J., 1905, p. 469.

²Rollinson, W., 1981, p. 106.

³Armitt, M.L., Rydal, Titus Wilson, Kendal, 1916, p. 59.

⁴Worth, J., *personal communication*.

⁵Humber, R.D., Heversham - the story of a Westmorland Village and School. (No publisher noted.) p. 44.

"Shrove or 'Collop Monday' as it is commonly termed, was in olden times the great cock-fighting day at Bowness. During recent years, however, the only visage of this ancient day of games and sports was kept up by the Grammar School having its annual football match of the day."¹

A number of other rustic sporting occasions continued well into the middle of the century. In 1851 Winster Sunday School had a 'Parson's Treat' for Sunday and day scholars, and the sports activities included a sack race, wrestling and 'foot-ball' - no doubt of the original crude form². An equivalent venture in 1858 was "Mrs. Turton's Annual Treat to the Wesleyan Sunday School Scholars, Staveley...included handball and other rustic games"³, and when the new school was opened in Long Sleddale in 1863 a sports competition was included as part of the opening celebrations⁴. In the same year at Langdale there was what is now termed 'cross-country' running when "On Shrove Tuesday afternoon, the boys of the Langdale Endowed School started for their annual run of 'Hare and Hounds'."⁵ Shearman tells us that "The pastime 'hare and hounds', as an amusement for schoolboys, is quite as old as any other England athletic pastime"⁶.

What is apparent is that much of the early school sport in the Lake District was connected with the Shrovetide celebrations, and that during the first half of the nineteenth century there was no regular pattern of weekly sport. This was eventually to come with the growth

¹WG, 1.3.1884.

²WG and KA, 18.8.1851.

³WG and KA, 29.5.1858.

⁴WG and KA, 6.6.1863.

⁵WG and KA, 21.2.1863.

⁶Shearman, M., 1894, p. 46.

and spread of national influences based, in the main, on the Public School system.

Early Gymnastics

The sport of gymnastics made but little impact in Lakeland schools. Whilst there were infrequent reports, it seems that either the activity was not deemed to be worthy of note in either newspapers or school histories or, alternatively, that it had but little impact. Calistenics was reported in 1853 from the Proprietary School, Ulverston when the pupils

"...had a grand field day on Tuesday when they went through the different exercises which they had been taught by Sergeant Major Lawrence."¹

The significance lies in the military overtones of the Sergeant Major instructor and the implication of fitness for the middle class boys in the days of an expanding Empire: however it never developed as a sport in its own right.

Organised Team Games and Sports Days

In all probability the Industrial Revolution had some considerable effect upon the country's system of schooling. The emergent middle-classes required education for their children (particularly the boys) and the general aspects of communication necessitated a literacy that

¹SUA, 24.11.1853.

was to spread to the majority of the population. The impact was initially most evident within the Public School system with a growing number of boarding schools and with the growing development of organised sport, in part seen as a controlling influence within the structure of the schools. McIntosh notes that

"Public school education, referred to by the Clarendon Commission was essentially a nineteenth century development and it coincided with the rise of the middle class to prosperity, privilege and power."¹

Sport occupied part of the time of the boys in the Public Schools and was effectively harnessed in order to effectively occupy the time of the boys in the boarding schools and to promulgate particular ideals. Mangan suggests that

"From 1850 onwards, games were purposefully and deliberately assimilated into the formal curriculum of the public schools: suitable facilities were constructed, headmasters insisted in pupil involvement, staff participation was increasingly expected and the creation of a legitimising rhetoric began."²

The ideals were in part concerned with the image of Britain's role in a growing colonial development, implicit in the role of the potential officer in an era of expansion and military control: McIntosh suggested that

"...games were valued more highly than (physical education) both by boys and masters for the qualities of character that they brought about, and the courage, team spirit and

¹Dixon, J.G., McIntosh, P., Munrow, A.D., and Willets, R.F., Landmarks in the History of P.E. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957, p. 179.

²Mangan, J.A., Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School. OUP 1981, p. 16.

sportsmanship which they demanded than for the mere physical efforts which they had."¹

It is clear that this ethos became increasingly important and the attitude was eulogised by Sir Henry Newbolt:

"There's a breathless hush in the Close tonight
Ten to make and the match to win -
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play and the last man in.
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
or the selfish hope of a season's fame
But his captain's hand on his shoulder smote -
Play up! Play up! And play the game.

The sand of the desert is sodden and red -
Red with the wreck of a square that broke -
The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke,
The river of death has brimmed its banks
and England's far and honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks;
Play up! Play up! And play the game."²

What is also clear is that sport came to be seen to be increasingly important within the Public School system. Once there was a measure of approval, a measure which found increasing favour, then the tendency gained momentum within the grammar schools and in particular in the boarding schools - Mangan comments that "The laurels - the headships - now often went to those with both academic and athletic talent"³. The implications for the Lake District were that cricket came to be increasingly played from the middle of the century with a number of the early games indicating that the school teams were playing at the same level as the town teams⁴; in some ways this was to be expected, because

¹McIntosh, et al. 1957, p. 177.

²Newbolt, H., Vitai Lampada.

³Mangan, J., 1981, p. 114.

⁴WG and KA, 10.6.1848.

school teams might well have had an expertise in coaching that was not available to the neophytic town teams. The game of rugby football came to be played to a greater extent in the schools, and the place of annual 'Athletic Sports' became a fixture in school calendars.

Cricket was the first of the national team games to be established within the school system, for the sport was already played in the district within the laws of the M.C.C. The early game noted above occurred in 1848, and by the early 1850's there was a considerable growth in the number of school cricket matches. In 1852 there was a match in Ulverston when the Reverend G. Pickering's and the New Proprietary School played against the Proprietary School¹. By 1860 school cricket in the Lake District was becoming well-established with matches being played between school teams and with matches between school and club teams. In 1860 Heversham G.S. played against Morecambe and against Burton Cricket Club^{2,3}. Windermere College played matches against Ambleside and Grasmere⁴ and - a development of the growing concept of school loyalty through sport - against their own 'Old Boys'⁵. School cricket grew considerably during the final forty years of the century. Kirby Lonsdale travelled as far as Preston G.S. in 1862⁶, indicating the extent to which teams were travelling. The game grew in importance within the school system to the point at which some of the boarding schools employed professional coaches: in 1877 there was a

¹UM, 2.9.1852.

²WG and KA, 25.8.1860.

³WG and KA, 13.10.1860.

⁴WG and KA, 15.9.1860.

⁵WG and KA, 25.8.1860.

⁶WG and KA, 20.9.1862.

match in which "Eleven of Sedbergh Town and School v Next Twenty Two. This match, which was for the benefit of Mr. Frogatt, the school professional"¹. This seems to have been part of a national pattern in a number of the major boarding schools during the final 30 years of the century. Cricket was well established in the structure of national sport, was clearly a part of the developing sport in many of the Lakeland schools which had pupils in the 11+ age range. It represented one of the influences of national upon Lakeland sport.

Rugby football followed cricket as a sport coming from what was national rather than local. Heversham G.S. had been playing since 1868². In 1871 the already established Kendal team played against Windermere College "...which resulted in favour of the College team, by two goals and one touch down"³. The game seems to have spread quickly in the schools during the 1870's. By 1874 Heversham G.S. was playing against Lancaster⁴ and Kendal⁵, and it is clear that by this time the game of Rugby Union was well established in many of those schools which catered for pupils over the age of 11 years. The pattern was to continue and indeed to increase throughout the remainder of the century, modified only by the eventual incursion of the Association Football game. Urswick G.S. were playing soccer as early as 1880⁶, but in Kendal in 1895 Kendal G.S. had switched from the handling code to the Association

¹WG, 19.7.1877.

²WG and KA, 21.3.1868.

³WG and KA, 2.12.1871.

⁴WG and KA, 7.11.1874.

⁵WG and KA, 28.11.1874.

⁶UM, 10.1.1880.

game, and became involved with the local tradition of playing 'Thursday' teams¹. However the incursions of soccer into the rugby tradition had relatively little effect on the schools during the nineteenth century, and much of the winter sports in the Lakeland schools for the older boys stayed within the Rugby Union orbit.

In addition to the team sports there was a growth, during the latter years of the century, towards the fashion of school 'Sports Days'. Of the various sports it was that at Heversham school which was best documented and which serves as an appropriate example of the patterns of development. The sports in 1867 included running, wrestling and the 'Consolation Stakes' - a blindfold race which reflected the 'fun' aspect of village sports. The sports were deemed to be successful for "...these sports, which although it is the first year of their existence here, went off most successfully"². In 1869 the Heversham G.S. sports included 'putting the stone', but the report failed to indicate the presence of wrestling³: what seems apparent from this and later reports is that the traditional sports of Lakeland were fading from the school's sports programme and that the events which were of a more national character were included. At the meeting in 1882 there appeared the 120 yards hurdle race with 10 flights of hurdles⁴, clearly a part of the national pattern of regulation distances. The sports days at Heversham G.S. developed into being of some prominence, for in 1895 "Among those present were the High Sheriff and Mrs. Walker"⁵. There was also a strong connection between Heversham G.S. and the nearby

¹WG, 26.10.1895.

²WG and KA, 18.5.1867.

³WG and KA, 1.5.1869.

⁴WG, 29.7.1882.

⁵WG, 20.4.1895.

Levens Hall. In the latter part of the nineteenth century and coupled with the emergence of a growing number of rich industrialists there came at times to be competition between the gentry in terms of the scale to which they could entertain. The story is told of G. Wilson of Dallam Tower (sometime Master of the local otter hounds) organising an entertainment of such attraction that a number of guests visited Dallam Tower rather than attend a contemporaneous function at Levens Hall¹. Levens Hall then organised a function which was to become an annual event known as the 'Radish Feast', clearly aimed at being superior to whatever had occurred at Dallam Tower. All the local dignitaries and the senior boys from Heversham G.S. were invited to attend the gathering at which:

"After the repast came the 'Colting' of new visitors. These newcomers were brought into the ring, and 'Haltered' when they were required in turn to stand on one leg and drink what was called a 'Constable', a weighty glass filled with half a pint of 'Morocco'. This had to be emptied at one draft, pledging at the time the ancient house in words - 'Luck to the Levens as long as the Kent flows'.²

Then - "After the colting the whole company adjourned to the Park for the customary sports"³. The whole situation was almost a caricature of the rituals of some of the Public Schools, linking the respectability of the middle class with the esoteric striving for an identification: and sports, being fashionable, were seen to be part of gathering.

The importance of sport in the grammar schools was increasingly

¹ *Humber, R.D., p. 59.*

² *Ibid.*

³ *Curwen, J.F., Historical Description of Levens Hall. Titus Wilson, Kendal, 1893, p. 37.*

recognised. At the Heversham G.S. Speech Day in 1896

"Mr. Wade urged the Governors to have Honours Boards placed in the school, not only for University and school distinctions but also for those old boys who obtained their University blues."¹

Although this does not seem to have been done it was an acknowledgement of the change of attitude towards organised sport. The same was true of Kendal G.S. - whose sports day by the 1890's always included a race for the local policemen² - and whose 1900 issue of 'The Kendalian' had 8 of its 32 pages devoted to sport. In the Headmaster's Speech Day report he stated that

"On the important side of physical development the school games had been carried out with energy and enthusiasm. He alluded to the purchase by the Governors of a field of five acres to the south of the School."³

As adult sport developed in the Lake District, so did sport in the schools, particularly those dealing with older pupils. The change represented a move from the rustic sports of 1800 to the changing demands a century later and in particular to the supposed role of organised games in relation to the development of character.

¹WG, 1.8.1896.

²KM and T, 24.6.1898.

³The Kendalian, 1900. (Magazine of Kendal Grammar School.)

(c) Water and Ice

Rowing

Rowing matches occurred to a limited extent within the Lake District, both on the rivers and on the Lakes. They were noted with regard to a number of the regattas, but never achieved the prominence of those noted by Davis¹ in relation to sport on the river Severn in the Worcester area. There were occasional matches on the river Eden and on Ullswater and Windermere lakes, and a rowing club was formed in Kendal in 1874² functioning on the Lancaster to Kendal canal, and there were four-oared races in that year³. However the sport never gained a strong separate identity, and any general interest in rowing was subsequently contained, in the main, in the increasingly popular regattas held on Lake Windermere.

Swimming

The sport of swimming in the Lake District can be divided into five categories. Firstly there were the challenges and wagers which tended to occur in the middle years of the century: these were in keeping with the pedestrianism of the time. In 1853:

¹ Davis, R.J., *Boating in Worcester in the Nineteenth Century*. Russell Printers (Worcester) Ltd. No date, c. 1982.

² WG and KA, 11.4.1874.

³ WG and KA, 6.6.1874.

"A person of the name of Charles Barling...undertook for a wager to swim from the Frairs Crag, to the Vicars Isle, on Derwentwater, at any time, when the lake shall be at its roughest height."¹

Mr. Barling succeeded in 11 minutes. But it was a fashion which did not spread. He was in some ways part of his era, for it was a wager: but in the sense of swimming he was ahead of his time, for the popularity of swimming was some twenty years later in coming.

Secondly there was the sea bathing noted above which became increasingly popular with the coming of the railways. At Milnthorpe Sandside in 1855 it was noted that there were many strangers present at the sea bathing - clearly indicative of the local acceptance of southern fashions².

Thirdly, towards the end of the century, the fashion of swimming (as opposed to merely bathing) was growing. Captain Webb had swum the English Channel, and the Victorians were eager to acknowledge accomplishments and to indulge in new fashions. In 1875 at the Windermere Institute Fete there was a multi-sports occasion with foot races, diving, canoe races and an exhibition by Captain Boyton, for which he was paid the then magnificent sum of £80³. The equivalent fete in 1877 was even more magnificent with a band, a dance, the usual sports and a swimming exhibition by the redoubtable Captain Webb.

"Captain Webb was engaged for the occasion and contributed towards a large attraction in giving illustrations in the

¹WG and KA, 6.8.1853.

²WG and KA, 4.8.1855.

³WG, 17.7.1875.

lake, of his successful methods of natation."¹

Fourthly, and not vastly different in character from the sports held in connection with the Windermere Institute Fete were the water based sports held in connection with the growing tourist industry. The railways brought many visitors to the Lake District during the final three decades of the century, and the hotels sought to provide appropriate diversions and entertainments for those visitors. These functions seemed to have started in the 1880's. In 1886 there was

"The third annual rowing and swimming contests promoted by the management of the Old England Hotel, and carried out under the superintendance of a committee of visitors staying at the fashionable hostelry was held at Bowness Bay on Wednesday".²

Of interest, too, was the growing emancipation of women, for "The events in which the ladies competed were new and not unwelcome features"³. This fashion was also taken up by the Lakeside Hotel. This was a boom period for the growing hotel trade, and every effort was being made to cater for the visitors. There had to be competition, and there had to be novelty: the hotels were plying for trade and were endeavouring to satisfy the whims of the tourists. At the second Lakeside Hotel sports in 1887

"Mr. E. Blezard and Mr. M. Garnett, the latter a mere youth, gave some exhibition feats, which included the overhead side stroke, the long dive, the dying gladiator, etc."⁴

¹WG, 27.8.1827.

²WG, 14.8.1886.

³*Ibid.*

⁴WG, 14.8.1887.

The fifth thread in the development of swimming was the establishment of Public Baths. One had been mooted for Kendal, for instance, in 1849 but nothing came to pass¹. Even by 1881 there was still no pool in the town, but there was by now considerable public pressure in favour of the facility - possibly because it was known that many other towns did possess pools. A tentative suggestion in the local press pressed the need with

"As a preliminary step, with a view to acquiring a bath may I suggest that a meeting of persons interested in the subject be called, and a Swimming Club be formed."²

By 1884 there was a swimming pool in Kendal³ and, in keeping with the attitude of ratepayers generally there was a complaint to the local press "...it is high time the ratepayers should insist on the management being placed on a fair and straightforward footing"⁴.

With the opening of the swimming baths in Kendal came swimming competitions and it was significant that on the occasion of the first gala the prizes were presented by the local M.P., Mr. James Cropper, who stated that "...the swimming bath, in his opinion, was most satisfactory and advantageous to the town"⁵. The reception that the pool received was one of considerable enthusiasm. A letter in the early days was one of generous approval: :

¹WG and KA, 31.3.1849.

²WG, 30.4.1881.

³WG, 12.4.1884.

⁴WG, 19.4.1884.

⁵WG, 13.9.1884.

"I was very pleased the other day to find that Kendal could boast of such an excellent swimming bath as the one recently opened by the Corporation".¹

With the coming of the swimming pool came competitions. The galas that were held, however, bore little resemblance to the more serious and formalised competitions that were to develop at a later date. In 1886 there were races, but they were not limited to particular strokes, for the obvious reason that the sport of swimming, in its infancy was not concerned with stroke sophistication: there would be no front crawl at the time, and obviously no butterfly stroke. There were just races, and the sports included senior and junior men's races and a race for girls. There were also 'fun' events which later faded from the scene of the swimming galas. One was known as the 'Walking Bowsprit' in which competitors attempted to walk along a narrow beam set above the water. Yet another amusing competition was the 'Wooden Horse' race in which

"...the competitors being mounted in barrels called after well-known political characters, and considerable amusement was caused in consequence of several being unable to manage their steeds."²

The 'fun' events were very much part of the scene in the early days of swimming galas: other such galas included a blindfold race and walking a greasy pole³. Other fun events included diving for pebbles and diving for shillings. There was also 'diving the greatest distance', which eventually came to be known as the 'long plunge'⁴. Swimming, and

¹WG, 20.8.1886.

²WG, 30.10.1886.

³CJ, 19.2.1886.

⁴WG, 13.9.1884.

the Public Baths, provided yet another focal point for the community. The galas were spectator affairs, supported by the local dignitaries and rapidly became a part of the calendar of the town. In 1885 there was

"Swimming entertainment at Kendal. - On Thursday afternoon and evening entertainments were given in the swimming bath of the Corporation, under the management of the committee. The services of Mrs. R. M. Whitehead of the Corporation Baths, Salford, had been secured, and this lady performed a number of feats in ornamental swimming."¹

Within a short space of time swimming clubs were formed at those towns which had Public Baths. In 1890 the Kendal Swimming Club was organising trials for certificates and free season tickets². The A.G.M. of that year was extremely well attended, and the sport was obviously in ascendance.

Quite apart from the four themes of development was the rift between amateurs and professionals, a rift common to many sports. Even before the coming of the Public Baths in the area there had been occasional swimming matches for wagers. One such contest, over a distance of 300 yards, took place on the Ulverston canal³. These were part of the trend of the times and somewhat outside the main stream of the development of swimming. In the official world of swimming one of the forerunners of the Amateur Swimming Association was the Metropolitan Swimming Association, formed in 1869, at which time the concept of the 'gentleman-amateur' was gaining in popularity. Within this concept at

¹WG, 11.4.1885.

²WG, 16.8.1890.

³UM, 20.8.1870.

national level in 1874 there began

"...a series of bitter struggles, lasting over some years, which alienated the sympathies of many of the best supporters of the Association".¹

It was inevitable that this conflict would eventually reach the provinces, for the sporting bodies based in London eventually came to control much of sport. And whilst the people of Lakeland might not be particularly concerned with the problems of amateurism/professionalism, it is almost certain that the fashionable visitors were. And these visitors would exert some influence. At the Aquatic Sports at Bowness in 1886

"In the open swimming race about 100 yards, the competitors were T. Bleasdale, J.K. Smith, C. Speed and James West. The latter three declined to compete with Bleasdale, who was stated to be a professional."²

The sport of swimming in Lakeland took place mainly on the periphery of the district, because it thrived where there were Public Baths. It would seem that in the inner Lake District, swimming was an occasional recreation and, for a brief period of time in the last quarter of the century, a relatively rare competitive sport.

Sport on Ice

The sequential development of sports is often blurred, with the

¹*Sinclair, A. and Henry, W., 1893, p. 309.*

²*WG, 14.8.1886.*

graduality of development at times being obscured by a welter of contiguous information. This problem does not occur with regard to the theme of 'Sport on Ice', for information is essentially limited to the cold winters. However the starting point for the theme of 'Sport on Ice' does not lie solely in historical annals: it lies in part in the wealth of literature emanating from the Lakes.

"And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons: happy time
It was indeed for all of us - for me
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud
The Village clock tolled six, - I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untiring horse
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
The woodland pleasures, - the resounding horn,
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare,
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud:
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away,
Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star
That fled, and flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the grassy plain; and often times,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me - even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion during her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched,
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep".¹

¹Wordsworth, W., *The Prelude, Book First*, p. 345.

This note from 'The Prelude' is clearly indicative of William Wordsworth's love of Lakeland skating. Other references to Wordsworth's interest in sport are difficult to find, and in any case they are at times tenuous. He certainly enjoyed walking and ice-skating as part of his 'communion with nature', but the later views passed on to us tend to be romantic rather than factual. "He was always the first man to be out on skates when the upland tarns began to bear"¹. But perhaps we should view this opinion - written many years after the death of Wordsworth - to be of questionable accuracy.

Whilst there are a number of earlier references to ice-skating in England it does seem that sports and pastimes on ice were becoming popular by the reign of Charles II, for Samuel Pepys records that

"Dec. 1. To my Lord Sandwich's, to Mr. Moore and then over the Parks, where I first in my life, it being a great frost, did see people sliding with their skates, which is a very pretty art".²

In a country where frozen lakes and rivers are but occasional happenings, it is understandable that when extremely cold winters occur the pain of that winter will also be balanced out by the pleasures that skating can offer. Heathcote and Tebbitt, while referring to the historical background of early skating in Holland, tell us that:

"...the 'Illustrations of fairs held on the frozen Thames in 1716 and 1740' proved the popularity of the exercise of skating in our own country".³

¹Palmer, W.T., 1937.

²Pepys, S., Pepys Diary. 1829, p. 126.

³Heathcote, H.M. & Tebbitt, C.G., Skating. Longmans Green and Co., 1894, p. 9.

References to Lakeland skating during the early years of the nineteenth century are infrequent. Newspapers were essentially concerned with major events (often of national import): and when they extended to sport it tended to be that which was competitive, newsworthy and attended by large numbers. An early reference to skating notes that in 1814 a "...young man...drowned in Windermere...whilst skating"¹.

It was the bitterly cold winter of 1838 which saw the effective beginning of the reporting of ice skating and kindred activities. In late January there were reports of almost 400 skaters in action at Knot Hollow Tarn², and it was noted that in this winter there came a partial thaw before the weather again became very cold. This would have the effect of partially melting snow on the turnpike roads, only to freeze it again. Subsequently there was skating in the town of Kendal

"The streets were covered with skaters, who passed up and down in dozens, enjoying the sport with nearly the same zest as if they had been on the Lake."³

In 1838 there was reported a "Cricket match on Bassenthwaite Lake"⁴. It must be noted, of course, that cricket in the first half of the century was quite unsophisticated in relation to the present game, for the bowling was still underhand and presumably slow. Nevertheless the game would no doubt present some difficulties and considerable amusement. The significance of the game was the attempt to make a game

¹WA and KC, 29.1.1814.

²WG and KA, 27.1.1838.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

out of an existing, but still developing sport. It was another example of increasing corporate activity in the area of outdoor sports. In the extremely cold winter of 1855 there was again a

"Cricket match on the Ice in Skates...On the river at Water Crook, near this town between nine gentlemen on one side chosen by Mr. Fenton and nine by Mr. Dixon."¹

Mr. Fenton's team scored but 16 'runs', Mr. Dixon's team 60 'runs'. To have played on the river indicates the severity of the weather: indeed it was so cold that one celebration included the roasting of a sheep on Derwentwater Lake².

By the middle years of the century both the Lake District and the sport of skating were becoming fashionable. Skating was one of the activities which allowed for social intercourse and, in particular, for meeting points between the middle and upper classes of society. Earlier references are indicative of a certain exclusiveness: it might well have been that there were many who could not afford skates and who did not possess an adequacy of free time in which to participate in the pastime. It might well too, have been that there were many who did not see it as their place to participate in the sports which they saw as the preserve of others. In 1841 the inference was one of gentility

"Bowness. - Skating. On Thursday and Friday in last week, the lovers of skating had a treat on Lake Windermere. The front was so intense that the ice was firm from Bowness Bay to Curwen's Island. The great part of the ladies and gentlemen of Bowness and the vicinity were assembled. A chair was fitted up with skates for the

¹WG and KA, 24.2.1855.

²WG and KA, 3.3.1855.

ladies, who, being pushed by the gentlemen, had the means of enjoying the sport".¹

At this stage, it seems the ladies did not participate in an active sense, a scene which was to change within the next 40 years. The scene reported at Kendal in 1879 is ample proof of that change:

"Skating at Kendal. - The distant tarns have been neglected by the skaters from Kendal in consequence of the ice on the canal being so good. It has been frequented by hundreds of skaters of both sexes during the past week. A little over a dozen years ago a lady on skates was about as great a rarity as a black swan, 'but we have changed all that now', and there are nearly as many ladies and little girls as men-folk gliding over the ice on the canal".²

The availability of the canal facilitated skating. The canal had come to Kendal in 1819³ and provided opportunities for more than one sport. More importantly, however, it provided for the possibility of skating where there was a growing population. The desire to skate on the canal was not, however, without its problems: there was a despondent letter in the local newspaper in 1865 when the ice on the canal was broken:

"The freezing over of the canal afforded the lovers of skates and sliding up to Thursday, when the ice boat came through and spoiled their sport."⁴

But then this was the Industrial Revolution, and it is unlikely that

¹*WG and KA, 23.1.1841.*

²*WG and KA, 25.1.1879.*

³*Hadfield, C. and Biddle, G., 1870, p. 193.*

⁴*WG and KA, 28.1.1865.*

the owners of the Lancaster to Kendal canal would wish to see an even temporary freezing of their profits.

It was clear that as the century progressed greater numbers of individuals, from an increasing social range, were enjoying the pleasures of the ice. The skating at Bowness in 1841 was clearly of the gentry, but by 1853 it was clear that many more people were skating:

"Skating on Bassenthwaite Lake. - On Tuesday last, Sir Harry Vane and a few of the neighbouring gentry met on Bassenthwaite Lake to enjoy a day's skating. The day was a remarkably fine one, and there was a large gathering from both Keswick and Cockermouth, and during the afternoon subscriptions were entered into for prizes for skating matches and other amusements. The Keswick Union band was engaged for the occasion, and the ladies present enjoyed a dance on the ice. The amusements terminated with a match of 'scabby', between the Keswickians and the Cockermouthians, which was won by the former in gallant style".¹

This would seem to indicate a limited widening of interest in skating and, of course, in the enjoyment of a day out. This parallels the growth of sports meetings in the summer and of the general increase in social gatherings. No longer was the exclusiveness retained: the gentry were often acting in a benevolent manner in relation to those of lesser social position. It would seem that the ladies were, in some measure, active: that there were competitions and a team game. The 'scabby' referred to was in all probability a crude form of ice hockey. It was an additional identification for the participants and spectators, and evidence of the growth of team activities. Skating was reported from Derwentwater in 1864 and it is interesting to note that there were "...numerous parties in search of recreation"². The inference was of

¹WG and KA, 5.3.1853.

²WG and KA, 5.3.1864.

joint activities, of groups making a definite effort to utilise the ice for sport. The ice provided yet another means whereby social intercourse could take place, and was facilitated by the coming of the railway. There was skating at Derwentwater again in the following year, and it was noted that

"The railway company have very liberally during the frost offered to bring parties from a distance on the new lines at single fares for the double journey in order that they may have an opportunity of skating upon the beautiful sheet of Derwentwater."¹

The railways increasingly contributed to the possibilities of recreation on ice, and by 1870 almost all of the Lakeland rail lines had been constructed. There were a number of cold winters in the latter quarter of the century, and the railway companies clearly profited from this occasional trade. Windermere, because of its accessibility to relatively large population centres (Barrow, Kendal, Ulverston) was more skated upon than other Lakes. In 1895, with regard to the rail line to Lakeside "The Furness Railway Company are issuing cheap return tickets, and hundreds are availing themselves of the opportunity".² They certainly were: Windermere reported some 10,000 to 15,000 visitors during this period³.

The extremely cold winters during the final quarter of the century occurred in 1879, 1880, 1881 and 1895. In 1879 were reported the best skating conditions on Windermere for 20 years, and before the next season started some anticipatory concern was shown with regard to

¹WG and KA, 28.1.1865.

²WG, 16.2.1895.

³WG, 23.2.1895.

the safety of skaters. A letter written before the winter of 1880 to the Westmorland paper stated

"Surely there is no time like the present for anticipating the dangers of the Lake. Hoping something may be done in the right direction for promoting the safe enjoyment of skating on Windermere.

I remain,

Yours truly."¹

What the writer expected to be done is not stated, and there does not seem to have been any action. But what is certain is that 1879 was an exciting year for ice skating. Sport was in rapid ascendance, and recreation was in vogue. In the aftermath of Wordsworth's writings, too, there was an appreciation of the beauty of the Lakes and of the intrinsic pleasures of communion with nature

"Frost - Rydal Water and Esthwaite Lake are strongly frozen and have been thronged by both sexes gliding along in 'the poetry of motion'."²

By this time there seems to have been an increase in the availability of leisure time, and of the spirit of adventure so typical of the age. One of Lakeland's early climbers, G. Seatre, recalls that

"During a prolonged hard frost in February 1899 a small party of us from Penrith skated from Pooley Bridge to Patterdale and back".³

This would be quite an excursion for the distance covered would be at

¹WG and KA, 13.12.1879.

²KM and NA, 11.2.1879.

³Seatre, G., Lakeland Memories. R. Scott, 1923, p. 23.

least twenty miles! The years 1879 to 1881, indeed, show a whole range of activities related to ice. More and more individuals were participating with the growing acknowledged that skating was a 'day out', a display of one's prowess and an entertainment. The trains from Kendal in 1880 "...were very heavily laden. There was a band on the ice this day"¹.

This might well have been an attempt to cater for the many visitors. By this stage of the century there was an increasing number of well-to-do residents in and around Windermere who would enjoy the aesthetics of the skating: they would be some of those skaters who "...glide along its surface - all apparently in the highest spirits - and entirely engrossed in the pursuit of pleasure"². The activities following, too, were of some interest. The Windermere Yacht Club was based at the Old England Hotel, and it was probable that Mr. Herbert Crossley, the proud owner of an ice-yacht, was a member there. Certainly this was an age in which the rich off-comers from the world of industry and commerce spent much time in the district. However Mr. Crossley would be somewhat unhappy about the publicity received in the local press. The value of particular sports was being criticised:

"Here, there and everywhere are a lot of people who vainly endeavour to acclimatise every sort of land pastime to the ice. What down humbug you is that some of them fondly imagine to be 'cricket'. Even the sleigh-yacht is nothing more or less than a 'fish out of water'. Hockey comes nearest to a success."³

The scene in sport had not crystallised, and there was still room for

¹*KM and NA, 30.1.1880.*

²*WG, 22.1.1881.*

³*WG and KA, 1.2.1879.*



Windermere in the Great Freeze-up of 1895. The ten-and-a-half-mile lake was frozen for six weeks and thousands of people flocked to Lakeland for the skating. The ice was reported to be eighteen inches thick. Horse-drawn coaches were driven across, ice-

yachts skimmed from side to side, and skaters went the length of the lake in exciting races. Then the ice sheet settled and ominous cracking was heard on all sides. The ice opened in a long fracture and a man slid in and drowned before help could reach him.

Sport on Ice, 1895

experiment. But with the general growth in popularity of sport came the desire to innovate, but apparently these attempts were not always successful.

The sport of Curling was noted as having take place in 1887¹, when there was a match on Culgaith Tarn between Culgaith and Temple Sowerby. This, presumably, would be based on a knowledge of the game as played in Scotland. There was again Curling during the very cold winter of 1895 - the last bitter winter of the century - this time at Keswick where the Keswick Club played against Harrington².

The skating in 1895 provides an incisive focus upon the changes

¹WG, 19.2.1887.

²CJ, 5.2.1895.

that had come about during the century. The pleasures of the 'Great Ice King' were for the many and were not the preserve of the wealthy. Competition was growing, and the ice allowed for sports developed in other situations, and for competitions based on established practices in other sports. A skating match, for instance, was reported

"...for prizes amounting to 25s. The pick of the skaters in this district entered - about 12 in number - and the race was divided into two heats."¹

Participation in skating had increased as a result of improved travel communication and this participation resulted in social communication. It also provided pleasure following an age when pleasures for the many had been few, and life had been hard: there was joy and exuberance on ice:

"On Thursday last two bicyclists went round the lake on ice. The enthusiastic curlers, the bounding and bouncing hockey players; the scientific and artistic skaters, the dashing youth proud of the speed he attained; all enjoyed themselves to their heart's content."²

Palmer noted the recreative aspect of skating in relation to the scientific changes of the era in the same year, commenting that

"In Bowness Bay we found about a hundred persons skating about in the light of a tall electric standard in front of the Old England Hotel".³

¹WG, 19.1.1895.

²WG, 23.2.1895.

³Palmer, W.T., Lake Country Rambles. Chatto and Windus, 1902, p. 309.

Ice skating was part of one of the growing pleasures of sporting recreation towards the end of the nineteenth century and represented an example of that which was genteel rather than primarily competitive.

(d) Climbing and Rambling

"Try not Ritson's, an old man said,
You'll get a hard fare and a harder bed,
So move a little higher,
Only at Tyson's will you meet,
No food or bed that is not sweet,
So sit beside his fire".¹

The above reference was taken from an entry in the Visitors' Book at Row Farm, Wasdale Head. The early history of Lakeland climbing is inexorably intertwined with the Wasdale Valley, where there were two sources of accommodation. The first was owned by Walter Ritson and was the 'Huntsman's Inn' - an appropriate name in a valley renowned for its wildness and for foxhunting. This hostelry was later renamed the Wastwater Hotel. The other accommodation was at Tyson's Farm, Row Head, and it is from this farm that much of the history of Lakeland climbing is recorded.

The early days of climbing (or mountaineering, as it was termed in the early days) were essentially related to the leisure of the gentry travelling in the Alps in the early days of the nineteenth century. Pollock tells us that

"The recognition of climbing among the forms of active recreation open to civilised men may be dated from the time when persons who ascended Mont Blanc were no longer deemed to have performed an astonishing feat or to write a little book about it."²

¹ Jackson, H. and Jackson, M., Lakeland Pioneer Rock Climbers. Dalesman Books, 1980, p. 11.

² C. Dent et al. Mountaineering. Longmans, Green and Co., 1892, p. 4.

With one exception, the history of Lakeland climbing clearly stemmed from tourism. The tourists came to view the beauty of the Lake District. Eventually they walked in the hills and mountains: and some of them climbed. In 1778 Thomas West of Tytup Hall published the first guide book to the Lakes¹. Thomas Gray was deemed to be the "...first genuine tourist"² commencing his tour in late September 1769³. Thereafter the Lakes became increasingly visited. The turnpike roads had facilitated access to the district, and visits to the Lakes, with accompanying walking, became increasingly fashionable. It might well be that the social peak of the Lakeland visits occurred in the early days of the Lakeland poets. They attracted others, but only the more discerning and determined. The social reverence of the Lakes and its visitors is perhaps encapsulated by Unsworth's reference to Charles Gough walking along, and falling from Striding Edge. Charles Gough

"...was killed by a fall from the ridge in 1803. His faithful dog watched over his body for two months until it was discovered. The story so intrigued the two poets (i.e. Wordsworth and Scott) that they climbed up to Red Tarn where the body had been found. With them went Sir Humphrey Davy, the inventor of the miner's safety lamp and one of the most foremost scientists of his day."⁴

In the year preceding Gough's fatal fall, Charles Lamb had eulogised about walking to the top of Skiddaw:

"We have clambered up to the top of Skiddaw, and I waded up the bed of Lodore. In fine, I have satisfied myself that

¹Rollinson, W., 1967, p. 134.

²Rollinson, W., 1967, p. 133.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Unsworth, W., *The High Fells of Lakeland*, Robert Hale, 1972, p. 193.

there is such a thing as that which tourists call
romantic..."¹

At this time the Lakes became increasingly visited. Of course, in literary circles the Dove Cottage residence of the Wordsworths' Grasmere would be an attraction. William Wordsworth skated, and walked and wrote of these pastimes. More important, he absorbed and wrote about the Lake District. His visitors were distinguished and include Scott, De Quincey and Professor Wilson. And there were many other visitors of literary merit: Keats, Ruskin, Dickens, Hawthorne. Elizabeth Gaskell met Miss Bronte at Fox Howe, the home of Dr. Arnold of Rugby in the middle of the century: the Lakes were in high fashion.

At this same time fell-walking was coming into its own. In 1847 a pedestrian excursion to Langdale was referred to as a "Perilous Adventure"². Some three years later the fashion of walking blossomed. There came

"Mountaineering tourists. On Wednesday last, a remarkably fine day, thirteen different parties availed themselves the opportunity of ascending the far famed Skiddaw. There has never been such a multitudinous invasion of Skiddaw in any one day during the season".³

Many of these early trips were made with the help of a guide. It is probable that the guides were shepherds who earned their living from the fells, and who welcomed fees from the visitors as a supplement to their meagre incomes. But the days of guides were numbered for in 1860 there was an "Ascent of Scawfell Pike. ...by a gentleman...the

¹Nicholson, N., *The Lake District: an Anthology*. Robert Hale, 1977, p. 179. *Letter from Charles Lamb to Thomas Manning*.

²WG and KA, 24.7.1847.

³WG and KA, 7.9.1850.

ascent was made without guide or other companion"¹. Of equal significance, too, is that this was an ascent made in January: previously recorded trips all seem to have been made during the summer season. Some eleven years later was reported 'extraordinary mountain feat': this involved a 23 hour trip taking in a number of peaks. The journey started and finished at Dungeon Ghyll².

Camping

Camping fulfilled a sense of adventure, a communion with nature away from the roads and the railways. And whilst the railways brought the visitors to the Lakes, and allowed for the growth of a new industry, there were those who wished to escape to the remoteness of Lakeland beauty. The final quarter of the century saw the coming of camping, and in 1881 we read that

"Camping out at Hayes Water. - The same party or nearly so, who last year pitched their tents by Sprinkling Tarn, have this year migrated to 'fresh fields and pastures new', and on Monday last betook themselves to Hayes Water by whose side they propose remaining a week. The party, eight in number, contains three artists, three pedestrians, and two others."³

At the time this was considered to be worthy of newspaper comment. Such comments quickly faded from the press for, it seems, camping was soon to become commonplace. The significance would seem to be that the earlier visits of the gentry were followed by those who lived in a

¹WG and KA, 21.1.1860.

²WG and KA, 26.8.1871.

³WG, 11.6.1881.

slightly lower social strata. Included in this strata would seem to have been the younger elements - possibly the undergraduate scene of the older universities.

Climbing

Lakeland climbing commenced in 1826 when

"An Ennerdale shepherd named Atkinson climbed Pillar Rock by the old west route and became one of the pioneers of rock climbing".¹

It is difficult to read any significance into this climb, for it seems to be an event out of context, an action ahead of its time. But Pillar Rock was there: it was to be climbed, a sense of achievement for a lonely peasant shepherd whose name will always rank in the history of Lakeland climbing: the surprising fact is that it was recorded. It was an isolated event, preceding the fashion of climbing. Commenting on Atkinson's climb Abraham tells us that:

"From that year until between 1860 and 1870 scarcely any climbing of importance is recorded, though a select few, principally low shepherds had 'done' the Pillar Rock and explored the easier routes on Scarfell and Great Gable".²

In the 1860's Lakeland climbing, as a sport, was born. Walter Parry Haskett-Smith, an Oxford graduate, visited Wasdale Head: he fell in love with the adventure of climbing.

¹Mitchell, W.R., 1966, p. 166.

²Abraham, G.D., The Complete Mountaineer. Methuen and Co., 1980, p. 127.

"Here for the first time was a young man who sent out day after day with a single objective, to find and master new rock routes."¹

Wasdale Head was the mecca for the early climbers. Many stayed at Tyson's Row Farm, which kept a visitors book from the beginning of September 1876. A very early reference notes that "Mr. Mrs. Hayward, Great Crosby, Liverpool...with five gentlemen...ascended Pillar Rock"². Herein lies an interesting point. During this era of the Industrial Revolution Great Crosby was becoming a respectable residential area for those who worked in expanding Liverpool, and by this time some were in the Lakes climbing. Pillar Rock was the nadir. The Reverend Jackson conquered it in 1875, and was thereafter known as 'The Patriarch of Pillar Rock': writing in 1875 he noted "Yesterday was the last day in May, and a proud day it was for me, for I succeeded in gaining the Summit of Pillar Rock"³. By the 1880's Lakeland climbing had come into fashion. It represented a sense of adventure in keeping with the era. Seatre comments on

"A keenly cherished memory of a brief, early visit in October 1881 is vividly recalled - it was to join my old friends, W. P. Haskett-Smith and the late J.W. Robinson, for the purpose of ascending the Pinnacle Rock."⁴

Towards the end of the century the magnetism of Lakeland climbing was such that many came. Whilst climbing might have begun as an addendum

¹Hankinson, A., The First Tigers. J.M. Dent and Sons, 1972, p. 59.

²Jackson, H. and Jackson, M., 1980, p. 5.

³Jackson, J., A Series of Letters reprinted from the Penrith Observer, R. Scott, 1906.

⁴Seatre, G., 1926, p. 12.

to the Grand Tour of Western Europe it was, by the end of the century, very much a part of the Lakeland scene. A comment from 1895 notes the change

"Mountaineers (he says) rush to Switzerland for perilous climbs. There is no need to go so far. I have climbed one or two Swiss hills, but I have never had any excitement like climbing Harrison's Stickle - the highest of the Langdale Pikes".¹

The comment would seem to be from a respected mountaineer, and it is clearly indicative of a change of attitude within the world of climbing. The final change of the century might well have been the climbing of C.G. Jones. Jones was of Welsh origin, born in London, the son of a carpenter. He was a teacher at the City of London School, possessing a 1st class B.Sc. from the University of London: his background therefore was essentially different from that of Oxbridge climbers. Hankinson sees him as being of a different breed:

"Jones' climbs were more daring and dangerous than those of his predecessors; his writing more personal and detailed and exciting."²

Jones first visited the Lakes in 1892: his excellent book appeared some 8 years later. Jones represented the thin end of the wedge, the extension of climbing to beyond the Oxbridge climbers. The sport was growing.

¹WG, 25.5.1895.

²Hankinson, A., 1972, p. 99.

(a) 1900 - A Changing Scene

In 1800 the Lake District was still in relative isolation. Whilst there was a limited amount of industry, it was hardly enough to affect the predominantly rural pattern of life. Transport was limited to tracks and turnpike roads, and the sight of a stranger was a rarity. Social fluidity was minimal, for to the vast majority there was no wider world. Sport and recreation were essentially local, with horse racing and cock-fighting being predominant. The rustic sports were seasonal except inasmuch as they might also have occurred at Brideswains, and there were the beginnings of wrestling, athletics and hound trailing. But it was sport within a limited setting.

In 1900 the economy was still essentially based on farming, but the quality of that farming had improved. This was in part due to increased knowledge and the improvement of some of the land; and, of course to the various Acts of Enclosure which resulted in improvements in the quality of livestock. Industry was more apparent but not dominant. The cottage industries were virtually dead, and in some cases early industrialisation had flourished and then faded. There was a decline in woollens and cottons, although in Kendal this was in part balanced out by the production of shoes. A number of small industries, particularly in Southern Lakeland, were able to take advantage of water power. The railway system was by now bringing an increasing number of holiday visitors to Lakeland and in itself providing another industry. By 1900 the holiday makers had been coming for many years, and influenced both the economy of the district and the pattern of life of many of the inhabitants.

The general effect was one of communication. By now the population

was, in the main, literate. Transport was faster and simpler, and communication in the wider sense much more apparent. Lakeland insularity had lessened to a considerable extent, and the wider world was increasingly influential. Despite this, however, the essence of Lakeland still remained. The economic changes, and resultant social influences, were far less harsh and destructive than those in many other parts of the country.

In 1900 there was no official cock-fighting. The horse racing had been reduced to a smaller number of meetings. Those sports which had been neophytic in 1800 - the athletics, hound trailing and wrestling - were well established and very much part of the Lakeland scene. Apart from that at Ullswater, the regattas had either faded from their previous glory or been replaced by water sports strongly influenced by the newcomers to the district or by the holiday visitors. This was patently apparent on Windermere where the rustic Ferry regattas had been replaced by galas and fetes. On Windermere, too, the Windermere Royal Yacht Club was firmly entrenched as an upper-middle class sport with its social connotations.

The sports meetings had faded and repulsed the onset of amateurism, settling into a Lakeland character, some, notably Grasmere, had grown into quite splendid affairs. Some of the traditional sports such as quoiting and spell and knurr were almost, but not quite, extinct, but many other sports were firmly established. The newer sports were part of the national scene. The oldest of these, cricket, was firmly established with many town and village clubs, leagues and with county teams. Cricket had taken root to the point of seeming to be almost part of a way of life. Whilst it had spread downwards through society

it continued to be gentlemanly in character, and the cricket pitch was in fact adding character to a number of the villages.

Football was the sport which had the most rapid impact. From but one code, and that but little played, in 1870, there were three codes by the end of the century. The Northern Union game, a professional offshoot was played on the industrial edges of the Lake District. Rugby Union was played to some considerable extent, but had been partly supplanted by the Association game. And whilst the team games were essentially of the towns, many villages also boasted a team. There were school teams, work teams, teams association with various social movements. The net result was that the sport in the teams games of cricket, rugby and association football had become part of the fabric of society. There was a weekly meeting point, there was the accompanying organisation and travel. Additionally, too, there were group loyalties. Sport had for many become part of the pattern of life. In the main it was deemed to be respectable and was supported from above: it provided a corporate identity which for many would replace cloistered and very limited life of a hundred years ago.

By 1900 the sport of golf was established, providing another acceptable pastime for the relatively well-to-do: again it was a world which established its own values and subscribed to a particular pattern of life. At the same social level, too, hockey and tennis had come to be increasingly played. These were middle class games and also catered for the growing emancipation of women. Climbing, too was the product of a new age. At the turn of the century it was still the preserve of the gentry. It appealed to a sense of adventure in part characteristic of the late Victorian era, and represented yet another pattern in the

development of sport.

By 1900 the pattern of sports in the Lake District was well established, and the significance of the development of sport in the nineteenth century can hardly be overestimated. During the final thirty years of the century the scene of many national sports had come to the Lake District but before that time some of the sports developed in Lakeland had been taken to a wider world. Whilst the Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling faded and died when away from Lakeland, some athletic events might well have spread from the district to a much wider world of sport.

The significance of Lakeland sport in 1900 was two fold. Firstly there had been the development of the sports such as wrestling, fox hunting on foot and hound trailing and the quite disparate sports of athletics and climbing. The second was the growth of sports coming from a wider national scene. A number of these settled as part of Lakeland's scene, but they never supplanted the indigenous sports. The terrain of the Lake District dominated the economy, and much of the sport which was in evidence in 1850 still continues.

Suggestions for Further Work

- (1) The contributions made by particular individuals. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century the influences of the Earl of Lowther and of John Wilson (later Professor Wilson): and towards the end of the century the influence of the Reverend C.W. Bardsley in the Ulverston area.
- (2) Comparative studies might well be valuable. Areas of interest would be both industrial towns (such as Bolton or Preston) and the Scottish Highlands. A smaller study in the same latter mould might well compare Grasmere Sports with either the Braemar or Aboyne Highland Games during the second half of the nineteenth century.
- (3) The present theme might well be continued into the twentieth century, examining the reasons for the continuance of those sports traditional to the Lake District.
- (4) It would probably be of value to produce a book covering the development of sport in Britain during the nineteenth century as a contribution to both sports and social history.
- (5) It is suggested that Great Britain had been foremost in the development of a sporting culture that has spread to much of the world: and that a "Museum of Sport" is long overdue.

Appendix I

The value of the prizes at the sports and wrestling matches can best be weighed against the wages paid to the farm labourers, for this was the predominant form of employment. Garnett¹ states that

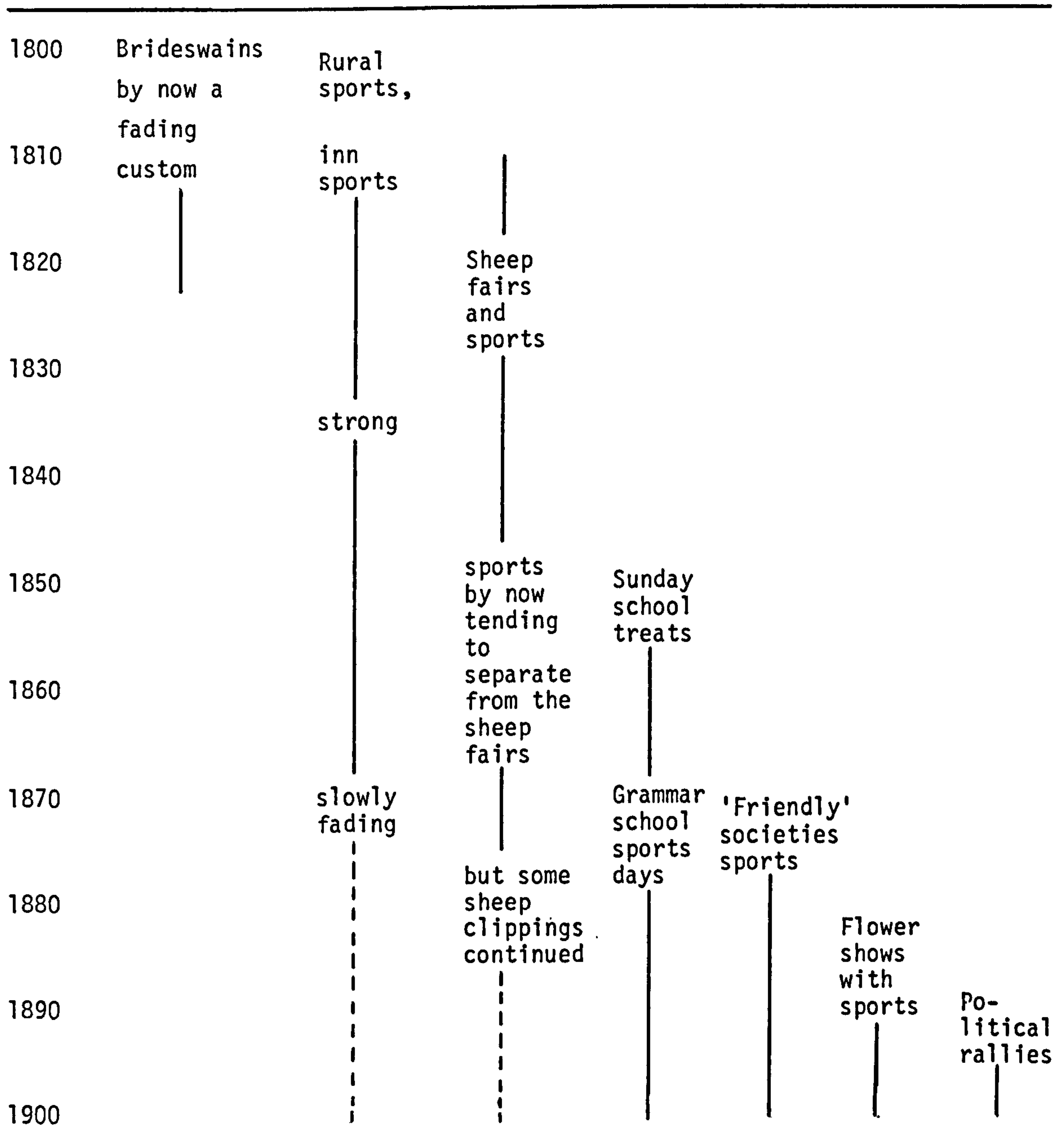
"The half yearly wages at the Whit hirings in addition to board, lodging and washing, were in

	Best men	Women	
1830	£6 - 8	£3.10 - £4	
1840	£7 - 9	£3. - £6	
1850	£4 - 5	£2.10 - £5	
1860	£8 - 12	£6 - £7	
1870	£12 - 13	£6 - £8	
1880	£13 - 14	£10 - 12	
1890	£13 - £15.10	£9 - 13	
1900	£15 - 20	£13 - 18	"

¹Garnett, F.W., Westmorland Agriculture, 1800 - 1900. Titus Wilson, 1912, p. 93.

Appendix II

Regattas and Sports : the main themes - approximate dates



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| Hulme, A. | Hole in the Wall Inn, Bowness (inn once owned by Thomas Longmire, champion wrestler). |
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| May, R. K. (Lt.-Colonel) | Curator, Border Regiment Museum, Carlisle. |
| Newton, P. S. (Colonel) | Army Museums, Ogilby Trust, Aldershot. |
| Oglandy, J. | Gamekeeper (deceased). |
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