

ART. IV.—*Sites of Local Beacons. Cumberland and Westmorland* by THE PRESIDENT; *Lancashire north of the Sands* by H. S. COWPER, F.S.A.

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A LIST of Beacons in Cumberland and Westmorland in the fifteenth century is given in *Nicolson and Burn* i. p. xlv. n., and is as follows, but the notes are added by the President.

In Cumberland.

BLACKCOMB, 88. N.W.*—The top of Blackcomb is said to command a more extensive view than any other point in Britain. Fourteen counties of England and Scotland are visible from it; and Ireland has been seen. *Jefferson's History of Allerdale above Derwent*, p. 127. Blackcomb, it may be mentioned, is visible and could signal to Skiddaw.

BOOTLE, 85. S.E.—Called also Butle, Bothill, or Botyll, *Jefferson's History of Allerdale above Derwent*, 124. The beacon is said to be on the hill over the town: a description which might apply to Blackcomb.

MUNCASTER FELL, 82. N.E.—Also mentioned as a beacon by Thomas Denton in his MS. History of Cumberland, 1688.

ST. BEES' HEAD, 67. S.W.—The north head must be meant, on which the present lighthouse stands. Also mentioned as a beacon by Thomas Denton, etc.

WORKINGTON HILL, 53. S.W.—No doubt the beacon was on Workington Chapel Hill (St. Michael's Mount), where is an old tower, which probably was the beacon, *Jefferson's Allerdale above Derwent*, 243. Also mentioned by Thomas Denton.

* The references are to the quarters of the 6 inch Ordnance Survey.

MOOTHAY, 46. N.W.—Moota Hill, on the top of Moota Common. Also mentioned by Thomas Denton.

SKIDDAW, 56. N.W.—During the Jubilee Year when bonfires were lit upon most of the sites of old beacons, it was found that one beacon on Skiddaw would have been of little use; a fire on the summit at the Great Man would not be visible to the south, while one on the Little Man would not show to the north, so that two at least would be necessary, with probably a third on the Dodd, open to the coast.

SANDALE TOP, 37, S.W.—Also mentioned by Thomas Denton.

CARLISLE CASTLE, 23. N.E.—Mentioned by Thomas Denton, as “Carlisle Castle High Tower.”

LINGY CLOSE HEAD, 23. S.W.

BEACON HILL, PENRITH. 59. N.W.—The present beacon tower at Penrith was erected in 1719. *Jefferson's History of Leath Ward*, p. 78. Mentioned by Thomas Denton, as “Penrith he fell.”

DALE RAUGHTON, 40. S.E.—Now Dale Raven on Ordnance map: see John Denton's *Account of Cumberland*, published by the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archæological Society, pp. 122. n. 125. The actual site would probably be the high ground above the farm house of Old Parks, Kirkoswald, 660 feet in altitude, and visible all round for miles.

BRAMPTON MOTE, 18. N.W.

SPADEADAM TOP, 8. S.W.—Now known as Gillalees Beacon.

In Westmorland.

STAINMORE TOP.

ORTON SCAR.—“Upon the highest part of Orton Scar is the beacon which hath been a building about three yards long within and two yards and a half wide. It communicates with the beacons of Penrith, Stainmore, and
Whinfell

Whinfell (in the barony of Kendal). And by means of these beacons, when watches were kept up, intelligence might be conveyed thirty or forty miles in a few minutes." Nicolson and Burn, I. pp. 490-1.

WHINFELL, 28. S.W.

FARLETON KNOTT, 47, N.W.

HARDKNOTT.—Hardknott is in Cumberland, 80. S.W., not in Westmorland, and could pick up signals from the Cumberland coast.

These nineteen beacons form a complete system, giving in most cases alternate lines: thus if fog or other causes hindered Carlisle Castle from picking up a signal from Penrith Beacon, yet it could probably get it from Dale Raughton or Brampton Mote, to which last place it would have been repeated from Penrith Beacon by Dale Raughton. By Brampton Mote the system would connect with Northumberland; by Stainmore Top with Yorkshire; and by Farleton Knott and Blackcomb with Lancashire. It is doubtful whether Skiddaw ever played any great part as a beacon; its height, the difficulty of carrying up fuel, and the want of shelter for watchers would hinder it from being so used except in times of great excitement, such as preceded the arrival of the Great Armada. Nor is it necessary to the completeness of the system: news could travel in every direction by lines of beacons which avoided Skiddaw, and were situated on hills of 600 or 700 feet in altitude, easy of access for horse and cart, and nigh to buildings where the keepers and watchers of the beacons would reside.

The list given above is not exhaustive: from other sources we get the following sites of beacons.

In Cumberland.

BEWCASTLE, 4. S.W.—This is to the north of Spadeadam Top (Gillalees) Beacon, and must have carried signals on to Scotland. Ordnance Survey.

BOTHELL

BOTHELL IN TORPENHOW, 46. N.E.—This beacon commanded the sea coast from Maryport to Bowness, repeating inland. Ordnance Survey.

BEACON HILL IN RAUGHTON AND GATESHILL, 30. S.E.—This is marked Beacon Hill in Ordnance Survey in plain lettering, not in old English, but there is no reason why a beacon should not have been here: it would show to Lingy Close Head, Carlisle Castle, and other beacons. It is mentioned by Thomas Denton, as “Beaconhill by Hiuegill (Ivegill).”

BEACON HILL, ASPATRIA, 36. N.E.—Also in modern lettering in Ordnance Survey.

HARESCEUGH FELL, 41. N.W.—Ordnance Survey, where it is called Daffenside Beacon.

NEWTON KNOTT, 82. S.E.—Ordnance Survey. The Knott is artificially scarped, and must have been a leading mark by which mariners made the harbour of Ravenglass; the Knott probably carried a light at night.

BARROCK FELL, 31. S.W.—Signals by bonfires were made here during the siege of Carlisle in 1644-5, for the benefit of the besieged, but it does not appear to have been a regular beacon.

In Westmorland.

HELTON BEACON.—Nicolson and Burn’s map of Westmorland.

BARBON BEACON.—Nicolson and Burn’s map of Westmorland.

N.B.—Watchhill.—Places of this name abound, but do not seem to have been beacons, or part of the national system of defence, but were rather intended to guard their immediate neighbourhood against raiders, etc., and gave the alarm by blowing horns and ringing bells.

In Lancashire, north of Sands.

Beacons.

BLAWITH (near Beacon Tarn), 7. N.E.

CARTMEL

CARTMEL (i. m. E. of the Priory), 17. N.E.

CONISTON OLD MAN, 4. N.W.

FURNESS ABBEY, 21. N.E.

GLEASTON, 22. N.W.

? HIGH HAUME, near Ireleth? 16. W.

LOWICK, 11. N.E.

PIEL CASTLE, 28. N.W.

RAMPSIDE, 28. N.W.

WALNEY ISLAND (the "Brow"), 21. S.E.

The beacons of Furness Abbey and Piel would be kept up by the Abbot of Furness. At Cartmel by the Prior. That at Gleaston by the Lords of Muchland. These, with Rampside, would transmit signals across Morecambe Bay.

I know of no old list of Lonsdale beacons. Baines (*History of Lancashire*) states Coniston Old Man was a beacon. On High Haume, near Ireleth, is a singular mound ditched round. It seems to have had a building on it. The remainder are marked in Ordnance Survey, in ordinary lettering, "Beacon" or "Beacon hill," these being the popular names.

H.S.C.