

ART. XXIII.—*The Coopers of Beckfoot, Ulpha*. By the
Rev. G. M. COOPER. Transcribed and edited by
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THE paper immediately preceding this one has shown that William Cooper of "Whoase" in Millom, who died in 1677, had a son named Leonard, whose tuition (and that of his sister Elizabeth) was granted on 14 September 1678 to three Millom yeomen — John Carter, Miles Wenington and Anthony Benson.

Leonard Cooper's great-great-grandson, the Rev. George Miles Cooper, compiled about 1870 an interesting account of Leonard and his descendants, who lived for several generations at Beckfoot, Ulpha. A copy of Mr Cooper's MS. account is in the Jackson Library at Tullie House, numbered B01, and Mr Kenneth Smith, F.L.A., kindly made it accessible to me, and I am indebted to Carlisle Corporation Libraries Committee for permission to print the greater part of the MS.

The Rev. G. M. Cooper was son of the Rev. Miles Cooper, master of the Grammar School at Watlingbury in Kent, who was baptized at Broughton-in-Furness in 1762 and died in 1805.

The Rev. G. M. Cooper had a distinguished career at Cambridge. He was admitted a sizar at St John's College on 27 May 1815, matriculated at Michaelmas 1815, was a scholar and prizeman, and in 1819 was 2nd Wrangler. In the year following the Bishop of Chester ordained him, and the greater part of his life was spent as vicar of Wilmington, Sussex (1835-75) and rector of West Dean (1839-75). He died at Eastbourne on 17 August 1875.

His account follows:

In the year 1704 (2 Q. Anne) Mr Leonard Cooper, my great-great-grandfather, bought — tradition says for one hundred

pounds — a small mountain farm called Beckfoot, in the parish of Millum, of one Barrington Crowdson — or Crewdson — of Greenslack, a small estate near the mouth of the Duddon and on its Cumberland side.

The family of Crewdson still own or occupy Greenslack, but Beckfoot has passed into other hands. The house which was built upon this little farm stood, as the name implies, on a mountain torrent, in the low ground near its junction with the river. A simple stone bridge of one arch used in my memory to cross the "beck", and connect the lands lying upon the opposite sides of the streamlet. I well remember the childish pleasure with which I watched the trout disporting themselves in its clear waters.

From the small amount of the purchase-money, if correctly stated, the farm must have originally been little more than a tract of waste land shelving down from the high ground of Ulpha Park, situate immediately above it; and this is confirmed by the fact that the late Mr John Nicholson Cooper¹ was accustomed to point out a few nice meadows on the Cumberland bank of the Duddon, as having been enclosed and laid down by himself in his earlier days — say about A.D. 1780. His father also, my grandfather Miles,¹ is said to have much improved the farm after it came into his possession.

This gentleman entered into the woollen manufacture, in which he was joined by his eldest and fourth sons, out of a numerous family of fourteen children; but they were unfortunate, in the convulsions which befell trade and commerce during the commencement of the present century. Beckfoot was then sold, in consequence, to a Mr Towers, or to a predecessor, "Attorney Robinson", noted in his day for a sharp practitioner in those parts; but of the particulars of the transaction I am not informed.² It became now incorporated with the larger property of Duddon Grove or Hall, and afterwards passed to the Rev. William Millers³ of Peterborough, with whom Mr John Cooper of the Oaks, Penwortham, entered into some negotiations for the repurchase of the property to the old name, together with the estate of Duddon Grove (about 1845-9), but without result; as Mr Millers resolved it should go to the Rawlinsons, through whose relatives the Towers it had come to him: so it now belongs to a Major Rawlinson.

Among the mountains above Beckfoot is the Chapelry of

¹ See the pedigree.

² See ante, p. 341.

³ See ante, p. 341.

Ulpha — locally pronounced "Oōfa" — in the parish of Millum, where was an ancient Park, long since thrown open, despoiled of its deer, and appropriated to agricultural purposes in connexion with the Duddon Grove estate. The present Chapel of Ulpha contains a bell, upon which the following inscription has recently been discovered:

"Leonard Cooper, Churchwarden, 1718 Wigton".

Upon a comparison of dates there seems little doubt that the Leonard Cooper here referred to was the original purchaser from Barrington Crewdson; that he had the distinguished honour of being at this time a church-, or more properly, chapelwarden; and that he had his bell cast or re-cast in Wigton, a flourishing town a few miles farther to the north.

The Park of Millum was of much greater size and importance probably than that of Ulpha. Within it stood the castle, a square embattled tower with its defences, of some strength when such fortresses were needed, surrounded with fine timber and plentiful herds of deer; but now it is reduced to the humble condition of a venerable farmhouse, presenting many interesting marks of high antiquity, to testify of the lofty estate from which it has fallen. All the deer were killed off in 1807; the park is still enclosed and let as a separate farm, belonging to the earl of Lonsdale.

Here, about a hundred years ago, was born in this ancient edifice, the Reverend John Ashburner, vicar of Linton in Kent, my father's friend and my own friend, who died some years since at the ripe age of eighty-two, very much beloved and valued by all who know his worth.

This whole peninsula of Millum, which forms the southern extremity of West Cumberland, was, till a comparatively late period, a very wild and romantic district, fitter for rural sports than for the husbandman's occupation — a very "joy of wild asses" indeed, rather even than "a pasture of flocks" — mountainous, barren, sandy and often covered with rocks. Hardknot, Wrynose, and other rugged hills, lift up their heads on high; but towering above all is Blackcombe, widely visible to the N.W. from the opposite coast of Lancashire, and seen from all the region round about.

This peninsula is included between the Irish Sea on the West, and the embouchure of the Duddon on the East. Exposed on all sides to violent winds, it is the less favourable for culture, and much of its surface covered with sand driven from the shore.

Here, to a later date than in most other parts of England

a few old families cherished the simple tastes of their forefathers, pleased to hear the hart bell and the buck bray in their sylvan retreats; whilst, it would seem, they affected to despise the refinements and undervalue the luxuries of the more central and civilized parts of the Kingdom. The Ulf of Saxon times, and after the Conquest, the Latus family — succeeded again, in more modern days, by the Huddlestons, Blencowes, and other — delighted in their remote solitudes, so well suited to their favourite tastes; and maintained, I do not doubt, an ample if somewhat rude style of hospitality with their immediate neighbours . . .

Mountain streams have ever been sources of inspiration to the poet, an ardent lover of nature in all her forms of beauty; and the Duddon, springing from its aery birthplace in the tops of Wrynose Fell, has prompted the muse of Mr Wordsworth to clothe its varied charmes in harmonious verse.⁴ For about twenty-five miles this river serves as the boundary of the counties of Cumberland and Lancashire, until it falls into the Irish Sea, between the Isle of Walney and the Lordship of Millum.

Cloud-born and fed by mists, it trickles down the mountain side in a bright sparkling rill, soon growing devious in its course and broken into ripples and tiny waterfalls, till at last it gains strength and volume to form, with the aid of its tributaries, an estuary of considerable dimensions. At low water there is left exposed a broad expanse of shifting sands, dangerous to unwary wanderers and the frequent cause of fatal accidents.

The communication from Lancaster to this part of Cumberland used to lead over the still wider sands of the Estuary of the Esk river, towards the upper part of Morecambe Bay, which was once a thoroughfare of great importance: a railway-bridge has now, I believe, rendered it much less frequented. I have heard that my grandfather Mr Miles Cooper, trusting too much to his own experience of this treacherous passage, and neglecting the precaution of securing the services of a mounted guide, very nearly lost his life in passing from Lancaster to Ulverstone, one evening when the tide was flowing. After galloping about for a long time in painful uncertainty, he at last fell in with one of those guides, of whom at that time a certain number were appointed by government, and was restored to safety.

In these Cumberland dales dwelt a primitive race of men, about a century ago, whose spiritual interests were entrusted

⁴ Mr Cooper's footnote is: "Sonnets on the River Duddon" by William Wordsworth.

to the care of Pastors as primitive as themselves. One of these, the Rev. Robert Walker, was Incumbent of Seathwaite Chapel, not far from Beckfoot, for the long period of 66 years. He was born in 1709, and buried 28 June 1803, aged 93. His wife, at the age of 93, died five months before him; having brought him nine children of whom the greater part survived their parents . . .

Another branch of the Coopers, curiously styled the "Whose" family, were settled where Duddon Grove or Hall now stands, in the time of my grandfather; who agreed with its then head to altar the orthography of our name from Cow to Coo! In this they exactly reversed the change made by the famous Lord Chancellor Cowper,⁵ whose decision led him in precisely the opposite direction: so much is thought of a name; and such, inevitably, is the diversity of taste!

These two gentlemen acknowledged each other as cousins, and seem by this change of name to have felt a joint interest in the family fame . . .

To the "Whose" branch of the family belonged Dr Myles Cooper — for upon this Christian name also did they ring the changes, between i and y . . .

In early life he was an assistant master, under Mr Cawthorne, at Tunbridge School; a course in which he was followed by several of his Northern confrères — my own father and his kinsman the Rev. Miles Cooper, among the number; the Rev. John Myers⁶ a Cumberland man and a cousin; the Rev. John Ashburner, born in Millum; and probably others.

Among the Vicars of Millum, I find Edmund [*sic*] Nicholson, 1778⁷; this, I suspect — but have no certain knowledge — was a relative of Mrs Miles Cooper, sen^r, whose maiden name was Nicholson, and whose family at that date held a good position in Whitehaven.

In the list of Rectors of Bootle (8 miles from Millum) is mentioned "Miles Wennington, 15th Sept^r 1764", as presented by "William Lewthwaite" of Broadgate, the gentleman who married the only sister (Mary Nicholson) of Mrs Miles Cooper, of Beckfoot.

In the same list occurs also "Thomas Smith, 11th Oct^r 1776, presented by *Miles Cooper*, for this turn": this gentleman was

⁵ Mr Cooper's footnote: see Lord Campbell's *Lives of the Lord Chancellors* iv 259.

⁶ Afterwards vicar of Rye. His father married Miles Cooper's sister, who was therefore his uncle. Rev. G. M. Cooper's footnote.

⁷ Mr Cooper's suspicion does not appear to have been justified. The Rev. Edward Nicholson (not Edmund), who was vicar of Millom 1778-80, was son of the Rev. Thomas Nicholson, and was born at Heversham in 1747.

Mrs Cooper's nephew, being son of her maternal uncle⁸; for whom, probably, a next presentation had been purchased: the ordinary patron being Lord Muncaster.

The recurrence of the names Nicholson, Lewthwaite, Cooper, and (not unfrequently) of the Christian name Myles or Miles, among the incumbents or patrons of Millum and Bootle, seems to indicate relationships between the parties of some standing; and rather points, I think, to a somewhat isolated community; as in fact they were; much dependent upon one another for society and connexion. I have only to add the best genealogical table⁹ I can of the family, from Mr Leonard Cooper, sen^r; including his descendants — so far as I know of them — to the third generation.

The earlier part is scanty — perhaps very imperfect; but as regards the numerous family last born at Beckfoot, it is, I believe, quite complete.

APPENDIX.

Cooper entries from Ulpha. Bishop's Transcripts.

1695. Leonard Couper & Isabell Mowson both of Ulpha were married at Ulpha 25 May.
1701. Jo. the sone of Leo: Couper bap. 7 [or ? 9] Sept.
1706. Elizabeth daughter of Leonard Cooper of Beckfoot bap. 1 Sept.
- 1716/17. Elizabeth the Daughter of Leo: Cowper of Beckfoot baptiz'd January 6th.
- 1731/2. Issabel Cooper widdow buryed January the 27th.
- 1733/4. Leonard son of Will. Cooper of Beckfoot bapt. March the 21st.
1735. Elizebeth Daughter of William Cooper de Beckfoot bap. 19 April.
- 1736/7. Myles son of William Cooper of Beckfoot bap. 5 Feb.
1759. Anne d. of Myles & Thamar Cooper of Beck-foot bap. May 5.
1761. John Nicholson son of Myles Cooper of Beckfoot bapt. Feb. 10.
1767. Joseph son of Myles Cooper of Beckfoot bap. March 29.
1768. Thos. son of Myles Cooper of Beckfoot bap. Feb. 12.
1770. Tamer d. of Myles & Tamer Cooper Beckfoot bap. 5 January.

⁸ Presumably Mr Cooper means that the Rev. Thomas Smith was Mrs Cooper's first cousin. He married in 1779 Ann Wennington and died very suddenly 27 February 1807, aged 61.

⁹ A pedigree based on Mr Cooper's is printed opposite p. 355.

1774. Thomas s. of Myles & Tamer Cooper of Beckfoot bap.
Oct. 12.
1776. Leonard s. of Myles & Tamar Cooper bap. Jan. 27.
1778. George s. of Myles & Tamer Cooper bap. 30 July.
1780. Molly d. of Myles Cooper bap. 27 Aug.
1785. Betty d. of Myles & Tamer Cooper of Beckfoot bap.
Nov. 9.
1793. John Boulton curate of Ulpha & Ann Cooper, spr.
marr. lic. January 12.