ART. XXIII.—*The diary and farm accounts of William Fisher, a Low Furness yeoman farmer, 1811-1859.* By WILLIAM ROLLINSON, M.A.

Read at Carlisle, April 3rd, 1965.

Introduction.

WILLIAM FISHER was a Low Furness yeoman farmer, one of the "statesmen" of Furness commemorated by Wordsworth. He was born in June 1775 and died in 1861; Margaret, his wife, was a member of the Cock family of Kendal, and was born on 8 January 1784. Throughout his long and active working life William Fisher kept a diary of local happenings in Low Furness — the births, marriages, and deaths, the seed-time and the harvest, the catastrophes and the commonplace, and in addition he kept detailed accounts of his farming transactions which illuminate the contemporary agricultural scene. Other similar records of Furness farms exist, the Hawkfield and Whinfield Account Books,[1] and the careful records of W. B. Kendall relating to the hamlet of Salthouse are examples, but the Fisher records are unique in that they refer to a farm actually within the hamlet of Barrow. Both the diary and the farm accounts are privately owned, but, thanks to the kindness of Mr R. Rowlandson of Ulverston, it is now possible to publish details of their contents.

The period covered by these records is an exciting one; within these forty-eight years the hamlet grew from a small agricultural community on the shores of Barrow Channel to a young and vigorous industrial town founded on the wealth of the rich Furness haematite ore. William Fisher's diary provides a fascinating glimpse of this community during this dynamic phase of its development but at the same time the diary records the passing of the

yeomanry in Low Furness. Fisher stemmed from a long line of yeoman farmers, but at the time of his death in 1861 the numbers of these "statesmen" had sadly declined, indeed, Professor G. P. Jones has calculated that in 1829 in the parish of Dalton, which included Barrow, the yeomen amounted to 23.4 per cent of the farmers whereas in 1849 the percentage in the same parish had fallen to 13 per cent.[2]

The Environment.

In 1780 Barrow village consisted of five farm-houses on the shores of Barrow Channel about four miles from Dalton. By 1801 the number of dwellings in the village had increased to eleven and the population was estimated to be approximately 65; in 1805 Dr. William Close was able to speak of

> . . . the hamlet of Barrow, a small sea port, situated about three miles to the south-west of Furness Abbey, is . . . a place to which invalids often repair to bathe in the summer season. It contains two commodious Inns, and is the first sea-port in Furness for the exportation of iron ore, oats, malt and barley.[3]

By 1822 the number of houses had increased to twenty, and a blacksmith, butcher and shoe-maker were resident in the hamlet. Although iron ore was exported from Barrow in 1745, it was not until 1782 that it was shipped in any quantity. In that year the Newland Iron Company constructed a quay to facilitate loading operations, and eight years later a pier was built. The foresight of the Newland Company was sufficient to initiate a period of growth; in 1833 a second jetty was constructed and followed in 1839 and 1842 by two more piers. Clearly, then, the early decades of the 19th century were years in which the pattern of industrial activity was taking shape and it is against this background that the Fisher diary is set. However, the diary is essentially a log-book of a yeoman farmer, recording the main events in the farming year together with comments on the weather,

the cost of hired labour, and the price of grain. From such data it is possible to piece together a picture of the economic geography of this Low Furness hamlet.

Furness Agriculture in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Furness agricultural development undoubtedly suffered from the isolation of the area; in 1772, when farmers in the south and midlands were rapidly improving agricultural methods, Thomas Pennant was able to comment that

> . . . the inhabitants of these parts have but recently applied themselves to husbandry. Among the manures, sea-sand and live mussels are frequently used; but till within these twenty years the use of dung was scarcely known to them.[4]†

However, Pennant noted that one of the main crops at this period was beans, which were exported to Liverpool "for the food of the poor enslaved negroes in the Guinea trade". Thomas West, writing in 1774, was similarly unenthusiastic over the state of Furness agriculture and complained that

> One general obstacle to improvement and the advancement of agriculture, in Furness, is the mixed lands or township fields . . .[5]

Moreover, W. B. Kendall, the 19th-century Furness antiquary and naturalist, claimed that until the mid-18th century the land was "neither drained, cleared, or manured".[6]

By the late 18th century improved techniques were being introduced; Holt, writing in 1795, classed Low Furness with the Fylde and the lower Lune valley as the three main wheat-producing areas of Lancashire,[7] and by the first decade of the 19th century William Close was able to express the opinion that Walney Island was

† Pennant makes the mistaken assumption that Furness agriculture had always been backward; under the Cistercian monks of Furness the monastic granges, of which Barrow was one, had produced quantities of wheat, oats, barley and other produce, and the dung or "worthings" from the Abbey stables had been used as a manure.

. . . as productive of wheat, oats, and barley as to deserve the appellation of the Granary of Furness.[8]

The first indication of improved agriculture was the enclosure of the open fields; most of the township fields were enclosed at the end of the 18th century, but in many cases the exact date of enclosure cannot be given for the fields were enclosed piecemeal by private agreement and not by Act of Parliament.† However, by 1810 Close noted that Low Furness was "divided into large enclosures by verdant hedges".[9]

By the early decades of the 19th century the pattern of mixed farming which characterized Furness agriculture in this century had crystallized out; R. W. Dickson, writing in 1815, records that Low Furness was suited to most varieties of arable crops, "but wheat, barley, oats and a few of the pulse kinds are at present principally raised".[10] Although a few farms, such as Gleaston Castle farm and Holebeck farm, exceeded 200 acres, most Low Furness farms were small; an analysis of the Tithe Commutation Schedule for Dalton-in-Furness (1842) has shown that Fisher's farm consisted of slightly more than 85 acres, and a similar study of the Cragg tenements in Biggar township, Walney Island, shows that this farm was approximately 58 acres at the same time.

Unfortunately the Fisher diary does not chronicle the major improvements in agricultural practice, but Kendall's assiduous study of the neighbouring township of Salthouse enables a detailed picture to be drawn.[11] Wheat cultivation was stimulated by the high prices during the American War at the end of the 18th century and was further encouraged by the Napoleonic Wars; however, oats grew well and Kendall asserts that some

† The first Low Furness village to enclose its township fields was Hawcoat; by 1731 most of the fields had been divided. Salthouse followed in 1734, then Cocken, 1741, Newbarns in 1750 and Biggar and Northscale on Walney Island by 1778. There is no record of the enclosure of the Barrow township fields although the field-name "reins" is evidence for their existence. W. Rollinson, *The Rural Landscape of Low Furness*, unpublished M.A. thesis, Manchester, 1961.

fields grew this crop perpetually. Oats, together with smaller amounts of wheat, barley, and malt, entered into the export trade of Low Furness. Potatoes were not widely grown at Salthouse, but Fisher records planting potatoes in 1821 (4 June) and turnips were sown broadcast until about 1815 when they were abandoned, to come in again as a field crop about 1840, although Cragg continued to grow turnips at Biggar until 1817.[12] Clover was grown on the Cragg tenements in 1808 and vetches in 1813, and about this period grass seeds were improved by experiment. In 1817 Fisher was experimenting with "Early Poland corn", "Winchester ryegrass" and red clover. In the early decades of the 19th century, seaweed or "tangle" was used as a manure, and guano was first used in Salthouse in 1850. Subsoil drainage which had revolutionized the farming in parts of south Lancashire, was introduced into the district in 1842.

In Barrow, agricultural development clearly followed the pattern outlined by Kendall for Salthouse. From the entries in Fisher's diary it is obvious that the farm at Barrow was organized as a mixed farm; wheat, barley and oats were sown, a hay crop was taken from the meadow in July, and the seed-grass was mown in June. Potatoes were a common crop after 1821 and beans and peas were grown, and in 1818 a crop of clover was mown. Dairy cattle were kept, and the farm accounts indicate that the sale of butter and cheese was an important item in the farm economy.

During the early decades of the 19th century the Napoleonic Wars, and later the Corn Laws kept the price of wheat high and encouraged its growth, but at the same time the high price of food gave rise to considerable hardship among the Furness peasantry. William Fleming of The Row, Pennington, records in his diary[13] for 1812 that the price of oats was 22 shillings per bushel, barley 31 shillings per bushel, and wheat 72 shillings per load, and comments on the general unrest among

the working classes. Although Fisher does not mention this dissatisfaction in Furness at this time, his farm accounts record that in 1812 he was selling wheat at 85 shillings per load and barley at 26 shillings per bushel. Table A gives the prices of wheat sold in Barrow, compiled from the Fisher accounts; from this it appears that in the period 1810-1828 the price of wheat was highest between 1810 and 1813. Although wheat continued to be grown in Barrow, after the early decades it never again regained its former position. A series of wet summers in the 1830's resulted in a succession of poor harvests, and, in August 1834, Fisher complained that

> . . . wheat this year is a faling crop particularly in the Island of Walney and many other places it was quite washed of in winter and obliged to be sown with oats in the spring and from the wetness of the weather of late wheat will be sadly sprouted . . .*

Table A.

Approximate price of wheat per load at Barrow.

Year.	*Price Range per Load.*					
	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
1810	2	8	0	to	3	12	0
1811	2	12	6	to	2	15	0
1812	3	9	0	to	4	5	0
1813	2	4	0	to	3	10	0
1814	1	18	0	to	2	15	0
1815	1	13	0	to	2	17	0
1816	2	10	0				
1817	1	14	0	to	2	7	6
1818	1	19	0	to	2	12	0
1819	1	10	0	to	2	0	0
1820	1	5	0	to	2	6	0
1821	1	5	0	to	1	18	0
1822	1	3	6	to	2	2	0
1823	1	5	0	to	2	2	0
1824	1	16	0	to	2	7	0
1825	1	17	0	to	2	6	0
1826	1	19	0	to	2	1	6
1827	1	12	0	to	2	2	0
1828	1	14	0	to	2	6	0

* Fisher's spelling has been retained in the extracts.

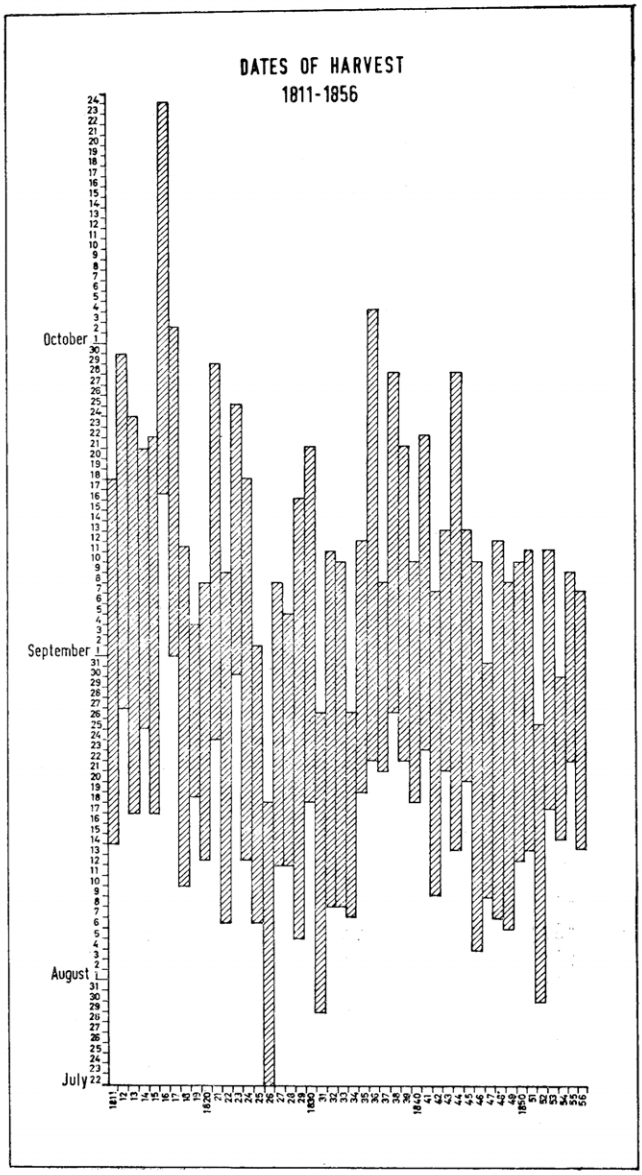


FIG. 1.

Between 1811 and 1856 Fisher carefully recorded the dates when he began to shear his grain and the dates when the harvest terminated. This information may be plotted as a graph (Fig. 1) from which certain deductions may be made. Broadly speaking, it may be seen that the harvest in Low Furness occurred between the first week in August and the last week in September. However, it should be appreciated that in High Furness the harvest was generally later, a fact partly explained by the greater rainfall and higher incidence of cloud cover. This discrepancy between the harvests resulted in a migration of itinerant reapers from Low Furness to High Furness as the harvest progressed, but in 1834, Fisher recorded

> . . . shearers 4/- and 3/6 per day owing to so many being wanted the Harvest comenced in all parts of the Country at the same time . . .*

A closer examination of Fig. 1 reveals certain anomalies, for example, the extremely late harvest of 1816, the early harvest of 1826, and the generally late harvests of the early Victorian period; in order to explain these, it is necessary to examine past climatic records. In November 1816 William Fleming commented on the inclement summer of that year:

> *Friday, 8 November 1816.*
> It is a circumstance remarkable and to be remembered and handed down to Posterity that owing to unseasonable and Winterlike Summer this Harvest has been later than has ever been remembered: there is at this Time much Grain particularly Oats out in the Fields. It is very uncommon to see Fields of Grain some uncut and some standing in the shock or stook, covered with snow and frozen together, but it is the Case this Year.

and Fisher recorded on 11 November 1816 that

* William Fleming recorded on 17 August 1806 that "this day being the first of the season, great numbers of Irish came over to reap, who caused the prices to be lower than usual . . ."

. . . a snow fell in the morning near a foot thick there was also some barley out and 60 or 70 stouks of wheat out at Denderon which was completely covered with snow there was also some beans to shear and a deal unhoused . . .

These reports have been confirmed by the work of Professor Gordon Manley who has used early climatological observations to compile a table of monthly mean temperatures for the Lancashire plain between 1753 and 1945.[14] From this table, which may be used for the Low Furness area, it can be seen that the mean summer temperatures in 1816 are generally lower than in preceding or succeeding years.

	J.	F.	M.	A.	M.	J.	Jul.	A.	S.	O.	N.	D.
1814	25.6	34.6	37.5	48.7	47.5	53.2	59.5	57.4	54.7	45.4	39.9	38.1
1815	32.5	42.9	43.6	45.4	53.4	56.6	58.1	58.1	55.1	50.1	37.4	35.0
1816	36.6	36.1	38.4	43.3	49.2	54.1	55.3	56.9	52.1	49.8	38.8	36.8
1817	39.8	42.6	41.2	47.0	47.2	57.7	56.3	55.4	54.9	42.6	47.6	35.1
1818	38.9	36.6	38.6	42.6	52.4	60.1	63.1	57.8	54.8	53.2	48.5	38.9

Professor Manley has suggested that this dismal summer of 1816 may owe its origin to a series of violent volcanic eruptions in the East Indies;[15] such explosions cause a high-level dust screen which may reduce incoming solar radiation, particularly during the summer months.† Certainly the disastrous weather of 1816 was not confined to Cumbria; in Dumfriesshire the cutting of barley, usually the first grain to ripen, did not begin until 20 September.[16]

The harvest of 1826 was early (Fig. 1) and it is possible to attempt a correlation with the higher mean temperature in June, July and August:

	J.	F.	M.	A.	M.	J.	Jul.	A.	S.	O.	N.	D.
1824	40.0	40.3	40.0	45.3	51.2	56.2	60.0	58.2	55.7	47.7	42.8	39.5
1825	37.7	38.5	40.9	47.1	52.5	56.5	61.8	60.6	58.6	50.8	40.2	39.7
1826	32.0	42.9	43.1	47.0	52.7	62.9	63.1	62.1	56.0	51.0	39.2	41.7
1827	35.1	33.6	41.7	47.7	53.1	57.3	60.8	57.8	56.1	52.8	43.5	43.6
1828	40.3	40.7	43.4	46.0	53.6	58.9	59.7	59.4	57.0	49.5	44.7	45.0

* The July mean temperature for 1816 [55.3] is the coldest on record in Lancashire.

† Manley suggests that the cold summers of 1784, possibly 1845, 1860 and 1884, and 1902 and 1912 may be products of similar volcanic eruptions.

Unfortunately no rainfall figures for Low Furness exist for this period, but in Kendal during this year only 43·5 in. of rain fell and forty-two years later 1826 was still spoken of as "the dry summer".[17]

The lateness of the harvest period between 1835 and 1841 follows a pattern which was repeated throughout Great Britain; the resulting poor harvests brought hardship to thousands. Even after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, the price of grain and foodstuffs remained high. Fisher records that in April 1847,

> . . . potatoes sold in Ulverstone Market at 2/2 p. stone and eggs at 2d per egg.

There appears to have been no sudden decline in the amount of arable land in Furness after 1847 and, indeed, Garnett in 1849 was able to claim that

> . . . Furness seems to be the redeeming feature in Lancashire farming. In the soil, the class of farmers, and their general management this district would not suffer comparison with other more favourable and accessible parts of England.[18]

After 1850 the improvement of communications with the rest of Lancashire further stimulated Furness agriculture; J. D. Marshall[19] points out that the establishment of a regular steamship service from Roa and Barrow to Fleetwood enabled the produce of Furness farms to reach the industrial markets of Preston and south Lancashire. After 1857, when the Ulverston-Lancaster line was completed, the same produce could be transported by rail.

The Fisher diary affords certain other information concerning the weather in north Lancashire during the early decades of the 19th century. For example, it appears that 1831 was a favourable year, and certainly the harvest was early (Fig. 1) and Fisher reports that "the greatest part of the grain was secured by the end of August . . .", and adds that the seed-time was "a very dry season". A similar fine seed-time occurred in 1825 when Fisher wrote: ". . . a very fine season never

knew the ground work better", and on 19 July 1825 he recorded

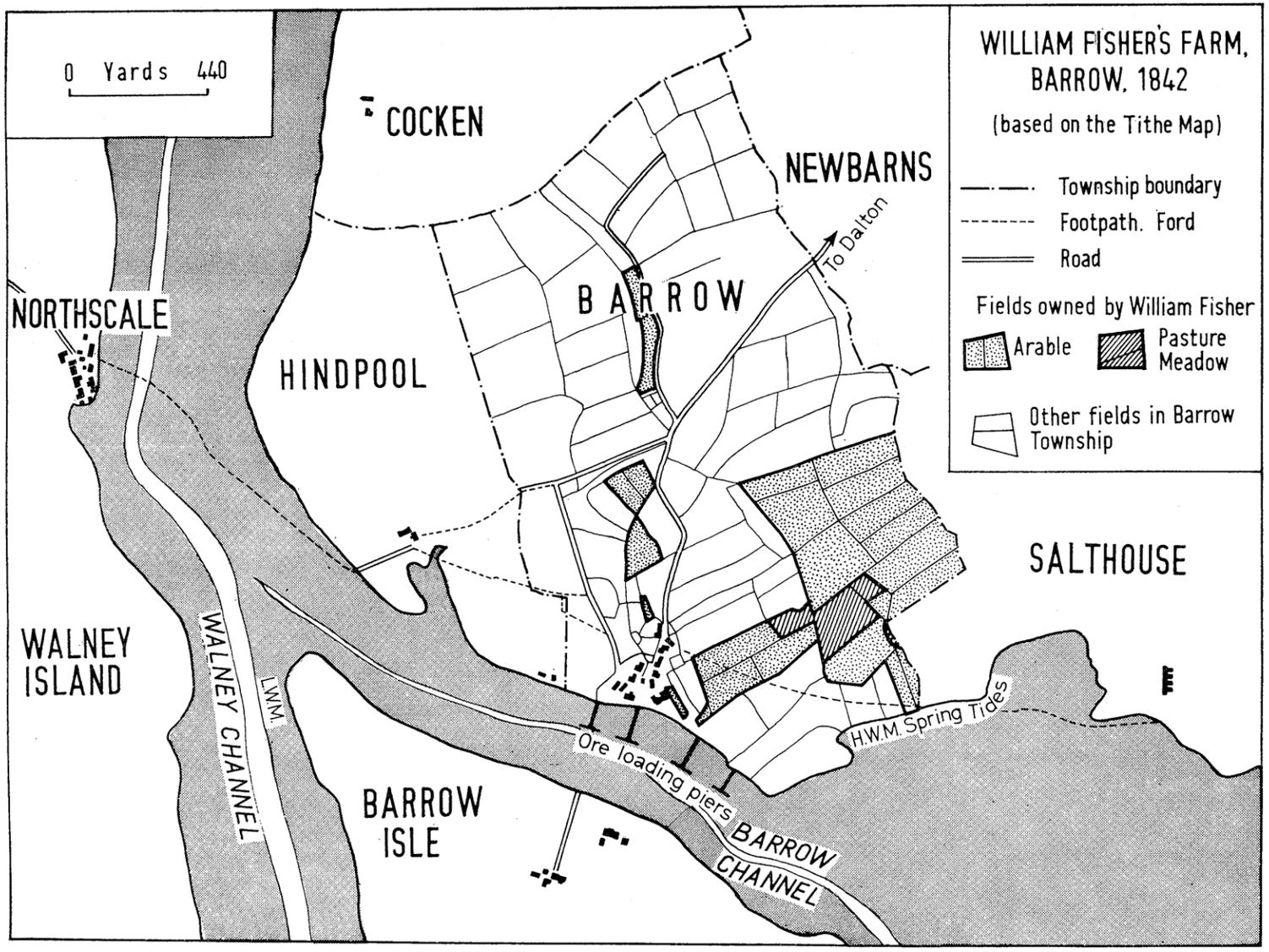
> . . . had got all our Meddow hay the 2 or 3 suckeding days was the Hottest I ever remember we got 72 cart loads of hay.

1845 was another good year for both seed-time and harvest, and during the harvest period from 20 August to 13 September only one quarter of a day was lost because of poor weather. During March 1852 an unusually dry period occurred, and on 30 March Fisher wrote that "the land in verry good order we had very little rain from the latter end of Feby. till this time . . .", and on 1 April ". . . Considered to sow our potato and turnip land with oats Instead of Barley the weather being so fine . . .".

In addition, Fisher recorded the more unusual meteorological phenomena such as the early snow on Black Combe in south Cumberland on 7 October 1829 and the late snowfall which occurred on 9 May 1837. In 1833, storms created havoc with the shipping in Walney Channel; on 11 June 1833 several vessels were blown from their moorings and sunk, and on 31 December there occurred

> . . . a heavy Gale of Wind which drove the Schooner "Frid" (Fris?) of Whitehaven from her moorings and through the high end of the Old Quay till within 10 feet of Joseph Fisher's Gardin wall the same vessel and two others was drove on shore behind the Isle of Walney aboute five weeks before in a simmlar Gale, one of them an Irish Brig and the other a Dutch Galliot the wear all three partly loden with salt and all got off again but most part of the salt was lost . . .

A similar storm blew up in January 1839 when houses were unroofed, haystacks destroyed, and "there was a great loss amongst the shipping and many lives lost . . .". The storm which had most far-reaching effects occurred on 27 December 1852; Fisher records this as a "perfect Hurricane doing great damage all over the country . . .". During this storm the embankment connecting Roa


0 Yards 440
COCKEN
NEWBARNS
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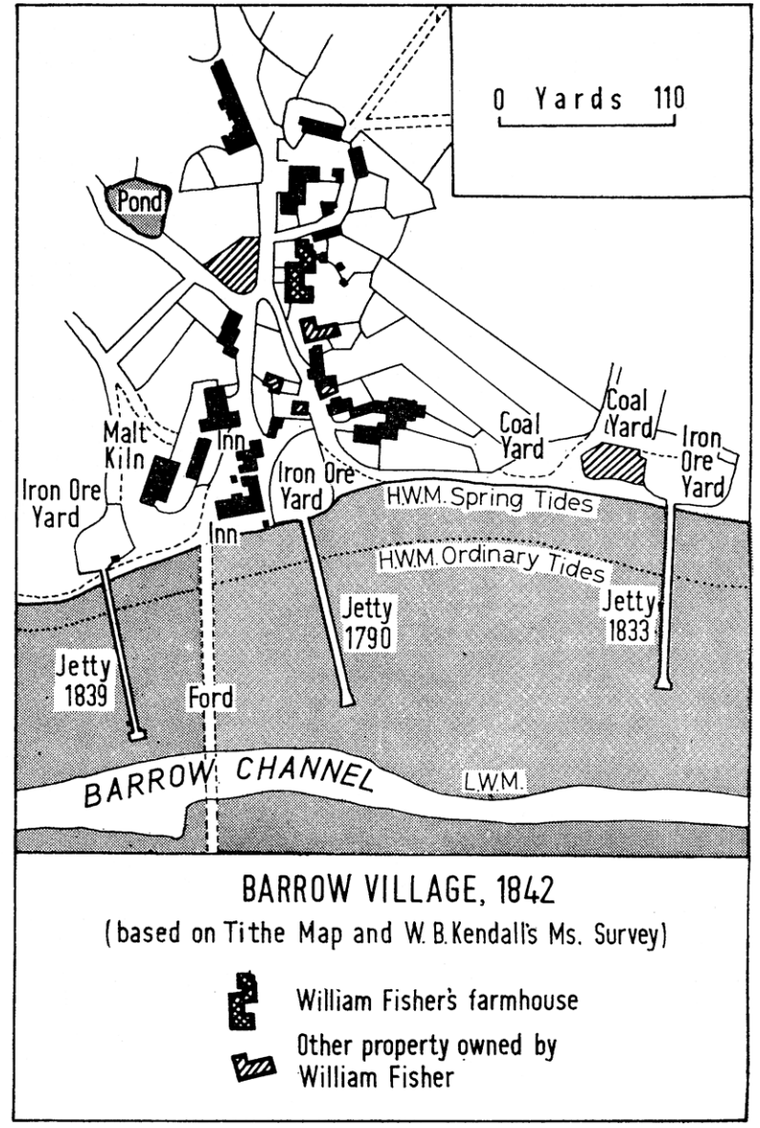
H.W.M. Spring Tides
Ore loading piers
BARROW CHANNEL
BARROW ISLE
WILLIAM FISHER'S FARM, BARROW, 1842
(based on the Tithe Map)
Township boundary
Footpath. Ford
Road
Fields owned by William Fisher
Arable
Pasture Meadow
Other fields in Barrow Township


0 Yards 110
Pond
Malt Kiln
Inn
Iron Ore Yard
Iron Ore Yard
Coal Yard
Coal Yard
Iron Ore Yard
H.W.M. Spring Tides
H.W.M. Ordinary Tides
Inn
Jetty 1790
Jetty 1833
Jetty 1839
Ford
BARROW CHANNEL
L.W.M.
BARROW VILLAGE, 1842
(based on Tithe Map and W. B. Kendall's Ms. Survey)
William Fisher's farmhouse
Other property owned by William Fisher

Island with the mainland was extensively damaged and the island and the embankment were subsequently sold to the Furness Railway Company.[20] * Reports of shipwrecks, particularly on the exposed western shores of Walney Island, are common in the diary (Table B); all manner of ships seemed to founder on this coast, from Manx vessels (18 June 1833; 5 February 1835) to a Portuguese brigantine carrying wool (20 December 1839). Timber salvaged from these wrecks seems to have been auctioned, for Fisher records in his accounts the purchase of such wood. Although not connected with meteorological conditions, one of the most intriguing of the entries in the diary deserves mention — the earthquake of 1835. On 20 August Fisher wrote: "a shock

Table B.

Shipwrecks on the Furness coast recorded in William Fisher's diary.

Date.	*Name and Type of Ship.*	*Port of Origin.*	*Cargo.*
31 Jan. 1825	Sloop "Aurora" 30 tons	Preston	—
6 Nov. 1825	Brig "Sussana"	Whitehaven	in ballast
1 June 1829	Sloop "Vennox" (refloated 3rd June)	Cardigan	iron ore?
11 June 1833	not specified	—	salt
18 June 1833	Fishing boat	Isle of Man	—
23 Nov. 1833	Brig	Ireland	salt
	Galliot	Holland	salt
31 Dec. 1833	Schooner "Frid"	Whitehaven	—
5 Feb. 1835	Smack	Isle of Man	wheat
7 Jan. 1839	4 or 5 vessels driven ashore on Foulney Is.	—	—
20 Jan. 1839	Brig	Whitehaven	300 tons of coal
20 Dec. 1839	Brigantine "Tejo"	Lisbon	wool
31 July 1843	"Fanny"	Fleetwood	slates
9 Feb. 1848	Smack "Friends"	Newquay	corn

* The cost of repairing the embankment following the storm amounted to £1,042. 8s. 2d. See Melville and Hobbs, *op. cit.* During the same storm Walney Island was breached to such an extent that the *Ulverston Advertiser* claimed that it would have been possible to sail a boat from one side of the island to the other.

of an Earthquake was felt here and for 20 Mile distant'' but does not indicate the severity of the shock; the Annual Register for 1835[21] records that the earthquake was felt as far south as Liverpool and was felt with ''considerable violence'' at Ulverston, Kendal, Garstang, Preston and Blackburn.†

Industrial development in the early 19th century.

Just as the Fisher diary illuminates the development of the agricultural landscape in Low Furness, so, too, it contributes to the knowledge of the development of the industrial landscape. During the early decades of the 19th century the industrial wealth of Furness was largely derived from iron ore and slate. Before the construction of the piers at Barrow between 1790 and 1842, iron ore had been shipped from loading-points around the Furness coasts, but these lost importance with the development of the hamlet as an ore shipment centre. However, until the 1840's the production of iron ore from Furness mines was not great; H. W. Schneider suggested that before this date the output from the whole district did not exceed 30,000 tons.[22] The most productive mines during this period were the Whitriggs and Lindal Moor pits, and ore was transported from the pit-head to Barrow in carts. By 1841, exploitation had moved south-westward and ore from Thwaite Flat was being transported to Barrow; Fisher recorded on 1 February that year ''. . . the Harbour Master entered upon his situation at Barrow, also same day the Wet (Thwaite) Flat Iron Ore was first led to Barrow''.

Conditions in the iron ore mines during the early decades of the century were primitive and fatalities were common. Ore was raised by means of a horse gin, and pit drainage was non-existent; mining ceased when the water table was reached, and miners were raised and

† A similar earthquake was recorded at Rampside and Barrow on 15 February 1865. See J. Bolton, *Geological Fragments*, 253-259.

lowered in buckets. The entries in Fisher's diary serve to emphasize the appalling conditions in the Furness mines. On 25 November 1828 two men were

> . . . sufacated by the foul air at Crosgates Iron Ore pit there was two others in at the same time which escaped with dificulty by accending the shaft in the bucket . . .

Similarly, on 26 May 1838, two men were suffocated at Stainton pit when a cabin at the pit-head caught fire and the smoke descended into the shaft. Subsidence and roof-falls were common; in March 1840 two men were killed by subsidence at Lindal mines,

> the were dug out immediately but quite dead several others were upon the same place but all escaped unhurt.

One of the miners killed was over 70 years old. In the following year a miner was killed at Butsbeck mines "by a porishon of the roof comming down upon him tow or three more had a narrow escape", and in February 1854 "five men (were) blocked up in a Iorn Ore Pit at Park near Dalton by the bursting in of a pond of water three was drowned and two taken out alive but one died the fowling day".

In spite of such primitive methods the output of Furness ore increased from 30,000 tons in 1841 to 300,000 tons in 1851;[23] in this year the great Park ore body was discovered, and a few years earlier, in 1846, the Furness Railway had cemented the link between the iron mines near Dalton and the slate quarries near Kirkby, with the shipping piers at Barrow. By 1859 heavy industry had been established on the shores of Barrow Channel — one of the last entries written by Fisher records the opening of the Barrow Iron Works:

> The Iron Furnaces was opened at Hindpool Barrow witnessed by several gentlemen who came by special train on 18 October owners Messrs. Hannah (Hannay) and Schneider. It was a Galla and beautiful day for the season.

Thirteen years earlier Fisher had recorded the opening of the Furness Railway, perhaps without realizing the significance of the event . . .

1846 Railway on 30 April the locomotive engin belonging to the Furness Railway was for the first time driven up to Kirkby Ireleth. After staying for some time she departed for Barrow.

and

24 August. The Railway from Roa to Dalton was opened for passenger.

In 1852 the first ship to be built at Barrow was launched, the forerunner of a long line of passenger, merchant and naval vessels. On 15 September, Fisher recorded that

. . . The first New Ship Built at Barrow 180 tons was Launched the day was beautiful all the vessels had their flags hoisted she was christened by Mrs Roper Snr. the Jane Roper in respect to Mrs. Thos. Roper of Newland House.*

These three events, then, the opening of the Furness Railway, the launching of the first ship, and the firing of the Hindpool iron furnaces, are important landmarks in the industrialization of the Furness area, events which remained significant long after Fisher's death.

As well as describing the opening of the Furness Railway, the diary also illuminates other aspects of the communication pattern in Furness. Until the completion of the Ulverston-Lancaster railway line to Carnforth in 1857, Furness was isolated by the Cumbrian hills, Morecambe Bay and the Duddon estuary.† The Turnpike road around the Kent and Leven estuaries completed in 1820 was an improvement, but the journey to or from Lancaster took several hours, consequently the more direct cross-sands route from Ulverston to Lancaster was much frequented, indeed a regular cross-sands passenger service commenced running in 1781 and remained in operation until 1857. In addition, the journey across the sands was sometimes more pleasant than a journey along the turnpike as William Fleming noted in his diary:[24]

* The *Jane Roper* was registered as a vessel of 94 tons.

† The fact that the Furness Railway locomotives and rolling-stock were brought to Barrow by sea from Fleetwood is an index of this isolation.

The sands were perfectly good but the land roads unpleasant on Account of the Dust which was raised in clouds by the carriages and Carts upon the Roads.

However, many fatalities occurred during crossings of the sands, and Fisher records several such deaths. In January 1841 two young men were drowned on Leven sands "and when found next morning the horse and gig was stuck fast in the channel and one of the two men entangled about the step of the gig the other was found a little below in some fishing nets the wear a long way below the ford". Similarly, in 1846, nine people attempting to cross the sands from Ulverston to Cartmel were drowned, "the wear all in one cart everyone with the horse perished, it was supposed that the weare the wors for licquer" (10 May 1846). Other fatalities on the sands are reported in February 1817 and January 1837. Although Barrow had a postal service from 1847[25] * no details are given in the diary, but the opening of a telegraph system in 1854 is casually reported on 25 July that year. It seems that a robbery had been committed in a Barrow inn and the thief had stolen

. . . a pocket Book containing notes of 50£ also a purse containing 20 soverigns the Telegraph was only finished that morning to transmit the message to Ulverstone He was taken at the Abbey stood his trial at Lan^{t} (Lancaster) on 7 Augt and sent to be imprisoned in the House of Correction 12 months.

Finally, the Fisher diary throws light on the contemporary social scene. Within the isolated farming community on the shores of Barrow channel, Fisher was obviously a man of some importance. He attended church regularly and, in February 1816, paid £19 for a seat in Dalton church and on 26 May 1817 recorded that he had "attended at a metting of the sides men as one for the first time". William and Margaret Fisher had four sons

* On 12 April 1847 James Fisher, aged 17, was appointed as Postmaster. Before this date there was a foot-post between Dalton and Barrow which began in 1836. See Melville and Hobbs, *Furness Travelling, op. cit.*

and two daughters (Table C), all of whom received some kind of formal education. Mary, Margaret, Richard and William James attended Captain Barrow's school in the village,† and Margaret later attended a boarding-school in Ulverston. Even in this small agricultural village, social graces and learning were not entirely neglected; Richard and William James were given dancing lessons, and in 1825 Fisher paid £1. 4s. 0d. for a copy of Edward Baines' *History of Lancashire*. In June 1825 the Fisher household received for the first time a copy of "the newsepaper call[d] the Sunday Times". Entertainments were few; occasionally a dance would be held in the village (2 August 1811), but more often in the Assembly Rooms at Dalton or Ulverston. Cock-fighting was a popular Furness sport, and the accounts show that Fisher sometimes visited the mains; wrestling was another form of entertainment which was well attended. In July 1851 Fisher reports a "great rusling mach at Ulverston Jackson and Atkinson suposed to be 7,000 spectators present".

Table C.

The Fisher Genealogy.

William Fisher = Margaret Cock of Kendal
b. 1775 | b. 8 January 1784
d. 1861 | d. 1866

Margaret b. 1809 d. 1856	= Matthew Denney	Mary = Jas. Bolton b. 1811 d. 1852	Richard = Eliz. Denney b. 1814 d. 1890	Wm. = Eliz. Battersby James b. 1816 m. 1842	John b. 1820	Henry b. 1828 m. 1858

Sources: 1. "Some Furness Pedigrees" — ms. by J. P. Smith, Lancashire Record Office.
2. William Fisher's Diary.

The Barrow community had no resident medical practitioner until the second half of the century; following the death of Dr. William Close in Dalton in 1813,

† Captain James Barrow was a cousin of Sir John Barrow, traveller, writer and founder of the Royal Geographical Society. Capt. Barrow was a pilot in Barrow channel but later opened a school in the village. He died at Ulverston in 1859.

Dr. Allen seems to have attended to the needs of the village but many minor ailments were treated with ancient remedies. In March 1830 Fisher records a death from smallpox in Dalton, but this outbreak does not seem to have caused undue concern, possibly because Dr. Close had introduced vaccination against the disease in 1799.[26] However, four years later, in 1834, an outbreak of cholera resulted in considerable alarm.

Oct. Elizabeth the wife of Nickles Fisher of Little Mill Stile begun in the Cholera on the night of the 7 and died on the 8 her Grand Daughter residing with her begun on the 12 and died on the 13 Nicholas Fisher husband of the above Elizabeth Fisher begun on the 14 and died on the 15 a daughter took it a few days after but recovered again it threw the country in to such an alarm it was thought nessary to prevent its farther spreading to burn every article in the House the Clock alone was saved and it had the desired effect. I write this Dec. 22 and there has not been another case the loss will be mad up by the Parish.

Of the six children of William and Margaret Fisher, the two girls died in early middle age. Margaret (born 1809) married Matthew Denney of Dalton and died on 7 July 1856, aged 47. Mary (born 1811) married James Bolton, an innkeeper of Ulverston, and died on 12 December 1852, aged 41. Richard, the eldest son, was born in 1814 and died in 1890, and William James was born in 1816. The date of his death is unknown. John was born in 1820 and in May 1842 found employment with Mr. Carter, a Liverpool druggist. In August 1844 John sailed from Liverpool to New York and then travelled to Brownsville, Pennsylvania, to the home of his uncle, William Cock. After an absence of twelve years he revisited Barrow (16 December 1856) but returned to the United States in 1857 (2 April). Henry, the youngest son, was born in 1828, and became a partner in the firm of Messrs. Fisher & Coulthard, drapers, of King Street, Whitehaven. Fisher's last entry in the diary is dated 21 November 1859; he died in 1861, aged

85 years, his wife Margaret died five years later, aged 82. In 1874 Richard Fisher sold the farm to Barrow-in-Furness Corporation and the building was demolished.[27] Within ten years the Fisher estate was lost in a rash of red-brick expansion.

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Acknowledgements.

The author wishes to thank the Research Committee of the University of Liverpool for a grant towards the cost of printing the maps, Mr A. G. Hodgkiss for drawing the maps and graph, and Professor Gordon Manley for his helpful comments.