

FIG. 1.—Millom in 1860.
 The map is based on the Ordnance Survey 6-inch series of 1860-61.
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ART. XXVII.—*Millom : a Victorian new town.* By ALAN HARRIS, M.A., Ph.D.

Read at Kendal, April 2nd, 1966.

DURING the second half of the 19th century the mining districts of Cumberland and north Lancashire passed through a phase of rapid change. The winning of iron ore, in some places already an old and well established local activity, grew rapidly in importance with the rise of the Bessemer steel industry in Sheffield, South Wales, and elsewhere. At the same time the production of pig iron was greatly expanded on the West Coast, and a number of places which became the sites of ironworks were swiftly transformed into industrial settlements. These changes were hastened, and in some cases made possible, by the construction of new lines of railway in districts which hitherto had been served, often inadequately, by costly systems of land transport and by coastal shipping. Among the places affected by these developments was Millom, in south Cumberland. It is appropriate that this phase of Millom's history should now be recalled, for it was in 1866 that the first houses of a "model town" were built there, as part of an ambitious scheme to create on the shores of the Duddon a "little capital of a little mining Kingdom".¹

Only a few years earlier, the likelihood of any urban development occurring at Millom probably would have been discounted. In 1861 the townships of Millom Above, Millom Below and Chapel Sucken, which formed the southern extremity of the vast ecclesiastical parish of Millom, together contained only 1,183 inhabitants.²

¹ *Whitehaven Herald*, 10 March 1866; *Whitehaven News*, 3 May 1866.

² Enumeration Returns (1861), Public Record Office, R.G.9/3955. The figure given in this return differs from that of the published census volume for 1861, but the difference is slight.

About half of these lived in the villages of Holborn Hill, Haverigg, Kirksanton and The Hill, whilst the remainder occupied outlying farmsteads which lay along the flanks of the high ground known as Millom Park, and on the strip of land nearby which bordered the Duddon estuary. Three of the villages each housed 100 or more persons in 1861 but even Holborn Hill, the largest, then contained only 163 inhabitants and consisted of no more than a double row of farmsteads and cottages by the side of the road that linked the Duddon crossings (and the Oversands route across Morecambe Bay) with the west coast route through Bootle (Fig. 1).

Two-thirds of the occupied males in the three southern townships of Millom worked on the land, either as farmers or agricultural labourers, whilst a small but important minority found employment as wallers, blacksmiths and wheelwrights.³ Despite the proximity of the sea, in 1861 fewer than a dozen individuals, male and female, were engaged in fishing, cockling and the local coasting trade, although some of these activities may also have been pursued on a part-time basis.

Second only to agriculture as a source of employment was mining, in which 34 persons were engaged in 1861. Most of these lived at The Hill, in Millom Above, and were occupied in winning pyrites, from which sulphur was extracted for use in the chemical industry.⁴ The miners, most of whom had been born within a dozen miles of Millom, apparently formed a settled community. There were very few lodgers in The Hill in 1861 and most of the miners then had families living with them.⁵

Many of these men must have witnessed the growth of the industry in which they were then employed. Although iron ore had been won intermittently in Millom Above probably since the 17th century, a marked

³ Enumeration Returns (1861).

⁴ T. Bulmer & Co., *History, Topography and Directory of West Cumberland* (1883), 163.

⁵ Enumeration Returns (1861).

revival of mining activity had occurred following the discovery of iron ore on the High Brow estate, at The Hill, in 1848.⁶ As the *Ulverston Advertiser* predicted at the time, this event had stimulated a search for other bodies of ore, and throughout the 1850s exploratory work was in progress in the Coniston Limestone rocks below Millom Park.⁷ This resulted in new finds of ore, though the workings in these apparently were never very extensive. In 1858 the largest mine employed only 30 men.⁸

A second, and less important, centre of mining activity lay close to the shores of the Duddon, on the Hodbarrow estate of the Earls of Lonsdale. In 1860, according to a contemporary report, the efforts of the Hodbarrow Mining Company to exploit a discovery of iron ore near Hodbarrow Point were "in a fair way of being crowned with success".⁹ The Hodbarrow company's interest in this area dated from 1855, when the Earl of Lonsdale, the owner of the mineral royalty, granted its founders a take note, or licence, to search for minerals.¹⁰ In the following year iron ore was discovered within the Carboniferous Limestone rocks, close to the Point, where veins of haematite, some of which outcropped at the surface, had been worked at intervals since about 1840.¹¹

This discovery, in part of what later became the most productive haematite mine in the British Isles, was largely due to the enterprise and skill of two Cornishmen, John Barratt and his nephew William. Earlier in the century, John had been employed first at the Grassington

⁶ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 28 September 1848. References to early mining in Millom are summarized in Bernard Smith, *Special Reports on the Mineral Resources of Great Britain*, viii, Iron Ores: *Haematites of West Cumberland, Lancashire and the Lake District* (1924), 3-4.

⁷ *Cumberland Pacquet*, 16 December 1856; 13 January, 2 June 1857; 5 October 1858.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 October 1858.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 22 May 1860.

¹⁰ *Trans. Inst. of Mining Engineers*, xvii, 1898-9 (1900), 313.

¹¹ *VCH Cumberland* ii (1905) 397; Samuel Taylor, *The Story of Millom Old Church* (5th edition, no date [circa 1957]), 23.

lead mines of the Duke of Devonshire and later at the Coniston copper mines, of which he eventually became chief proprietor.¹² William Barratt, who was to assume responsibility for much of the underground development in the new mine, was also associated with the Coniston enterprise.¹³

Until his death in 1866, John Barratt was the principal shareholder in the Hodbarrow Company. In May 1863 this partnership consisted of John Barratt; Nathaniel Caine, a Liverpool iron merchant; Thomas Woodburne, a solicitor, of Ulverston; William Barratt; James Barratt; John Bewley; William Sproston Caine and Robert Turner Bywater.¹⁴ The senior partners were John Barratt, Nathaniel Caine and Thomas Woodburne, who together held 88 of the 100 shares in the concern and were its first directors.¹⁵

Although full of promise, the new mine at first had little effect on Millom. Until 1861 the Hodbarrow company was concerned principally with exploratory boring and the sinking of shafts, neither of which operations required a substantial labour force.¹⁶ These were, however, years of essential if undramatic preparation. In 1856 John Barratt had acquired the Steel Green estate which adjoined the Hodbarrow property on the west.¹⁷

¹² I am indebted to Dr A. Raistrick for information on John Barratt's activities at Grassington, and to Mr J. W. B. Hext, of Holywath, Coniston, for allowing me to see a letter-book containing correspondence between Barratt and John Taylor, a mining engineer and chief mineral agent to the Dukes of Devonshire. Further information on John Barratt is contained in W. G. Collingwood, *The Book of Coniston* (3rd edition, 1906), 60-61, 80; Alexander Craig Gibson, *The Old Man; or Ravings and Ramblings Round Coniston* (3rd edition, no date [circa 1865]), 108; *The Times*, 30, 31 January 1885.

¹³ British Parliamentary Papers (1864) XXIV, QQ.13347-9, 13457, 13515; *Barrow Times*, 14 May 1881.

¹⁴ Hodbarrow records, *Minute Book no. 1*, 6 May 1863. I am greatly indebted to Mr R. B. Davis for permission to inspect the records at Hodbarrow, and for much other assistance during the preparation of this paper.

¹⁵ Hodbarrow records, *Minute Book no. 1*, 6 May, 12 September 1863.

¹⁶ Hodbarrow records, *Boring Book no. 1*; book containing newspaper cuttings, 93. Ordnance Survey 6-inch sheet, Cumberland XC, surveyed 1860-1 (1867).

¹⁷ Hodbarrow records, "History of the Mines and suggestions with reference to the construction of an Embankment on the Foreshore", undated document [circa 1882]. The Steel Green estate became the property of the company in 1870, when it was purchased from the Barratt family.

Although the mineral rights on this farm, like those elsewhere in Millom, were reserved to the Earls of Lonsdale, the purchase gave the Hodbarrow Company, through the Barratt family, a valuable freehold interest in Millom, which was later consolidated and enlarged. More important still, by 1861 the partners had secured a long lease over the minerals lying within the area of their take note. This lease, which ran for 21 years from 30 April 1860, was granted to John Barratt and Nathaniel Caine at an annual dead rent of £50 and a royalty payment of one shilling on every ton of ore raised.¹⁸

Another event which was to influence Millom profoundly had taken place some years earlier. This was the opening in November 1850 of the last section of the Whitehaven & Furness Junction Railway.¹⁹ The completion of the line between Bootle and Broughton (Foxfield) meant that through communication by rail was established between the developing industrial areas of west Cumberland and north Lancashire. Holborn Hill was one of the places selected as the site of a station along the new line of railway.²⁰ However, the advantages of the railway to Millom were not immediately obvious. Indeed, an early effect was a decline in the local coasting trade in coal, iron and slate. Until the railway captured much of this traffic, the small harbour of Borwick Rails, the creek of Haverigg and the beaches off Hodbarrow Point had experienced a lively traffic in these commodities.²¹ Like other aspects of the local economy, however, the fortunes of the Duddon coasting trade were to change after 1860.

¹⁸ Hodbarrow records, original lease, Rt Hon. William, Earl of Lonsdale, to Barratt and Caine, 12 February 1861.

¹⁹ British Transport Historical Records, London, *Proprietors' Minute Book* (WFJ1/1), Whitehaven & Furness Junction Railway; *Cumberland Pacquet* 1, 5 November 1850.

²⁰ Passenger trains also stopped nearby, at Green Road and Underhill, but services were withdrawn from the latter place in 1859.

²¹ Mannix and Whellan, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Cumberland* (1847), 344; "Millom Foreshore, papers relating to claim by lessees of the Crown to work Iron Ore under foreshore at Haverigg Bay, 1863-4" (D/Lons., Record Office, Carlisle).

The initial impetus to change came from Hodbarrow, where the work of developing the mine was so far advanced by the summer of 1862 that the Hodbarrow Mining Company was able to fulfil orders from South Wales and from the Brymbo ironworks, near Wrexham.²² Many of the early deliveries of ore were trial cargoes. As these were found to be satisfactory, and as the company's product became better known, the circle of customers steadily widened, and by 1864 ironworks in south Lancashire, the Black Country, Shropshire, Scotland and west Cumberland, as well as Wales, were receiving Hodbarrow ore.²³ The scale of operations at the mine changed from month to month, but always in the direction of greater output. In May 1864, 120 men were employed in the workings, which were yielding about 1,500 tons of ore weekly.²⁴ A vigorous drive to explore the concession and extend the mine had raised the labour force to 186 and the weekly output to 1,800 tons by the end of the same year.²⁵ In December 1866, by which time at least five shafts were in use, the company was employing 265 men underground and was obtaining a weekly output of about 2,300 tons.²⁶

Iron ore moved from Millom both by rail and sea. Ore sidings had been provided by the railway company at Holborn Hill when it became apparent that the mines were likely to prove successful, and eventually a short branch-line was extended to Hodbarrow.²⁷ But most of the ore was sent away by coastal shipping, either to ports in the consuming districts or else to the company's depôts at Ellesmere Port and Saltney, from which customers in North Wales and the Midlands were

²² Hodbarrow records, *Letter Book no. 1*, 22, 31 May, 7 June 1862.

²³ Hodbarrow records, *Minute Book no. 1*, 30 September 1864.

²⁴ Hodbarrow records, *Minute Book no. 1*, 27 May 1864.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 30 December 1864.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 29 December 1866, 1 May 1867.

²⁷ WFJ 1/3, 3 November 1863, 21 March 1864, 21 August 1865; Forster MSS., N. of England Inst. Mining Engineers, Newcastle upon Tyne, vol. 7, letter Barratt to Forster, 12 June 1870; Plans and Sections, 1874 (DUP 8, Record Office, Carlisle).

supplied.²⁸ These cargoes left Millom from the company's pier at Crab Marsh Point,²⁹ which was linked by tramway with the mine.³⁰ Despite the vagaries of the Duddon channel, which were a source of almost endless inconvenience to company and ships' masters alike, almost 600 vessels used the harbour of Borwick Rails in 1864.³¹ Two years later the volume of traffic was sufficiently great to warrant the use of three steam tugs to assist vessels in entering and clearing the Duddon.³²

By that time the Cumberland Iron Mining and Smelting Company Ltd. had arrived in Millom. Although the financial backing for this firm came largely from a group of Liverpool merchants and bankers,³³ its foundation and early success owed much to the practical advice of two Whitehaven men, Thomas Massicks and Isaac Armstrong.³⁴ Massicks, who was in turn Secretary, General Manager and Managing Director of the new company, was an iron merchant.³⁵ Armstrong had joined the company as Works Manager from the Cleator Moor ironworks.³⁶

After investigating a number of promising sites along the coast of Cumberland and north Lancashire, Massicks advised the company to build its works at Millom.³⁷ Land was subsequently leased at Borwick Rails from

²⁸ Hodbarrow records, *Minute Book no. 1*, 30 September 1864 *et alii*. Later in the century the company also stocked ore at Connah's Quay, further down the Dee estuary than Saltney.

²⁹ Hodbarrow records, *Letter Book no. 1*, 19, 22 May 1862.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 22 May 1862; *Whitehaven Herald*, 10 March 1866.

³¹ *Barrow Herald*, 18 March 1865.

³² *Ulverston Advertiser*, 3 May 1866.

³³ P.R.O. BT.31/1125/2266c, Memorandum of Association, Cumberland Iron Mining and Smelting Co. Ltd. (1865).

³⁴ *Carlisle Journal*, 20 June 1865; *Whitehaven Herald*, 10 March 1866.

³⁵ Thomas Massicks (who later assumed the name of Barlow-Massicks) was Inspector of Cargoes, Whitehaven, 1857. He subsequently acquired an interest in haematite mines within west Cumberland, and through these became involved in the local iron trade. Shortly after the formation of the Cumberland company, he moved from Whitehaven to Millom, where he lived for a time at Duddon Villa, which now stands almost within the precincts of the Millom ironworks. Massicks, who was politically active as a Conservative, became J.P. and County Councillor. He died in 1908 (*Cumberland Pacquet*, 10 March 1857; *Whitehaven News*, 23 April 1908).

³⁶ *Carlisle Journal*, 20 June 1865.

³⁷ *Whitehaven News*, 3 May 1866.

Lord Lonsdale, who also leased to the company the Red-hills limestone quarry nearby.³⁸ With the success of the Hodbarrow partnership already apparent, the company also obtained from the Earl a licence to seek iron ore on the periphery of the Hodbarrow lease.³⁹ The new company evidently hoped for a close business relationship with Hodbarrow, for in August 1865, only two months after its incorporation, Massicks was negotiating on behalf of the Cumberland company for the entire output of the mine.⁴⁰ The ironworks was under construction throughout much of 1866 and 1867, and was finally brought into use in September of the latter year.⁴¹ In its original form it consisted of two blast furnaces and ancillary equipment, but later additions increased the number of furnaces to six.⁴² The company also had the use of a shipping pier close to the one erected earlier by the Hodbarrow proprietors.⁴³

Long before the new works came into operation, Millom had attracted large numbers of immigrants. Of the inhabitants of Millom Above in 1861, 71 per cent had been born in Cumberland and 25 per cent in Lancashire, mostly within the Furness district. The comparable figures for Millom Below were 71 per cent and 20 per cent; Chapel Sucken had an even higher percentage of native-born Cumbrians.⁴⁴ During 1865 however, immigrants streamed into the parish, and by the summer of 1866 there were living in Millom between 800 and 1,000 persons "above the ordinary population of the neighbourhood".⁴⁵ Some were engaged in building

³⁸ These details are from schedules of deeds in the possession of Messrs Hart Jackson & Sons, Solicitors, Ulverston. I am indebted to Mr F. B. Hart Jackson for permission to see and make use of these.

³⁹ Mineral leases, Lonsdale to others, 1871-78 (D/Lons., Box 47, Record Office, Carlisle).

⁴⁰ Hodbarrow records, *Minute Book no. 1*, 7 August 1865. The negotiations were not successful, for the Hodbarrow Company wisely pursued a policy of "encouraging all Markets" (*ibid.*, 28 December 1866).

⁴¹ *Barrow Herald*, 7, 14 September 1867.

⁴² *Engineering*, 11 September 1874, 200.

⁴³ Schedules of deeds, 25 September 1868 (Messrs Hart Jackson & Sons).

⁴⁴ These figures have been calculated from the 1861 Enumeration Returns.

⁴⁵ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 12 July 1866; *Whitehaven News*, 12 July 1866.



Photo by courtesy of F. Strike, Barrow.

PLATE I.—Aerial view of Millom, looking north-west over the new town towards Holborn Hill.
The old market square may be seen to the left of the gasworks. Slag bank and part
of ironworks' reservoir in foreground.

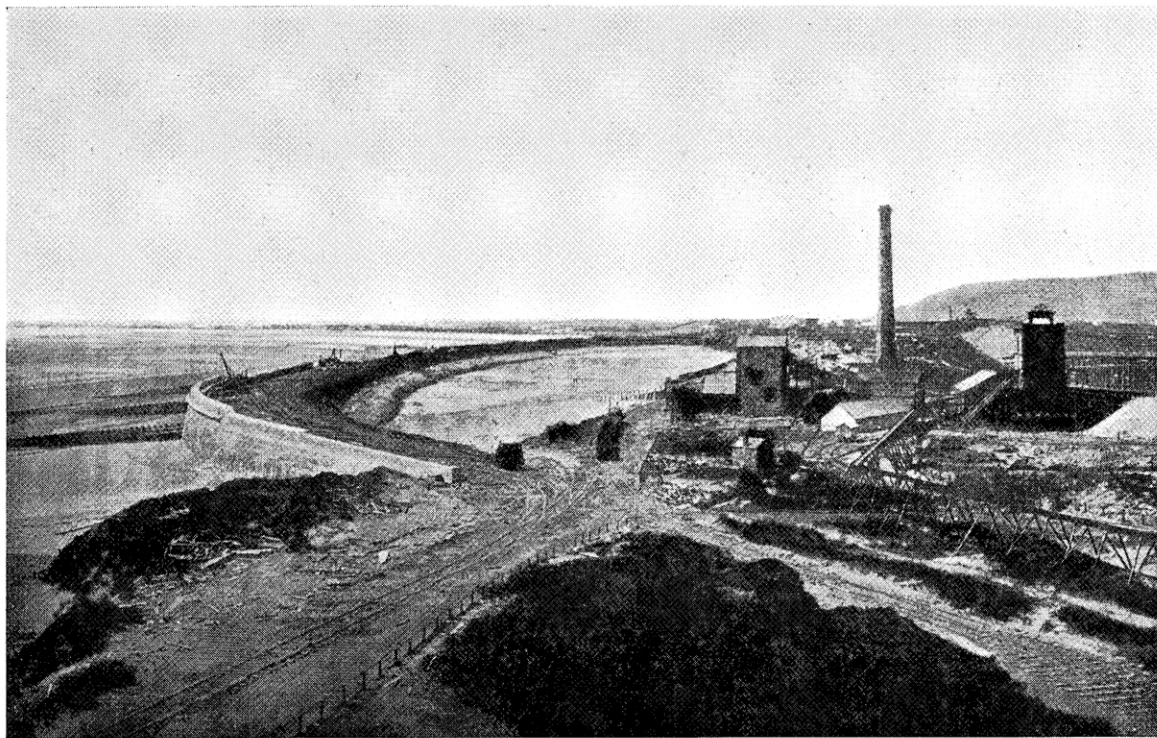


Photo by courtesy of the Institution of Mining Engineers.

PLATE II.—View from the area of the Old Mine, showing the Inner Barrier and the workings of the New Mine at Annie Lowther shaft. The photograph appeared in 1900 in the *Transactions* of the Institution of Mining Engineers, but the condition of the sea-wall suggests that it must have been taken some years earlier.

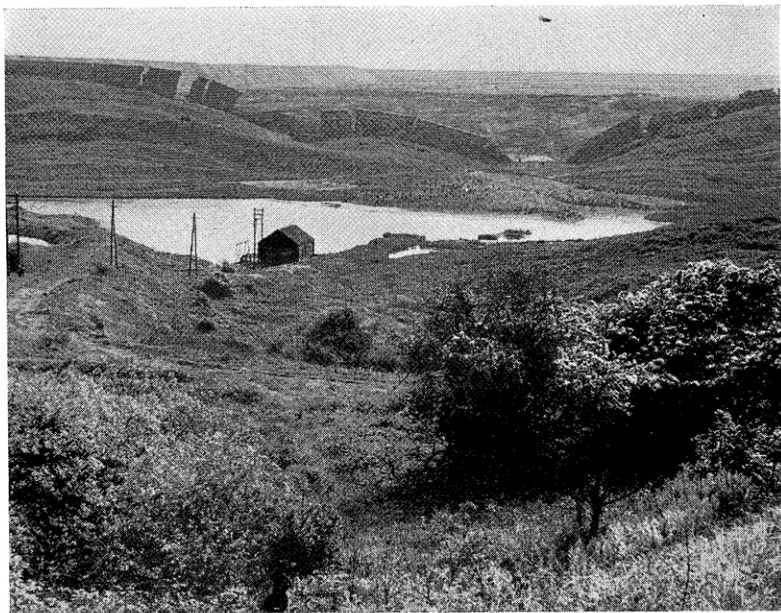


Photo F. Strike

PLATE III.—View over the broken ground of the New Mine, Hodbarrow, looking towards the Outer Barrier. The collapsed wall in the middle distance is the remains of the Inner Barrier.



Photo F. Strike

PLATE IV.—Houses in Nelson Street, Millom, built of local slate.
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PLATE V.—Brick-built houses in Duddon Street, Millom. Slag bank in background.

Photo F. Strike

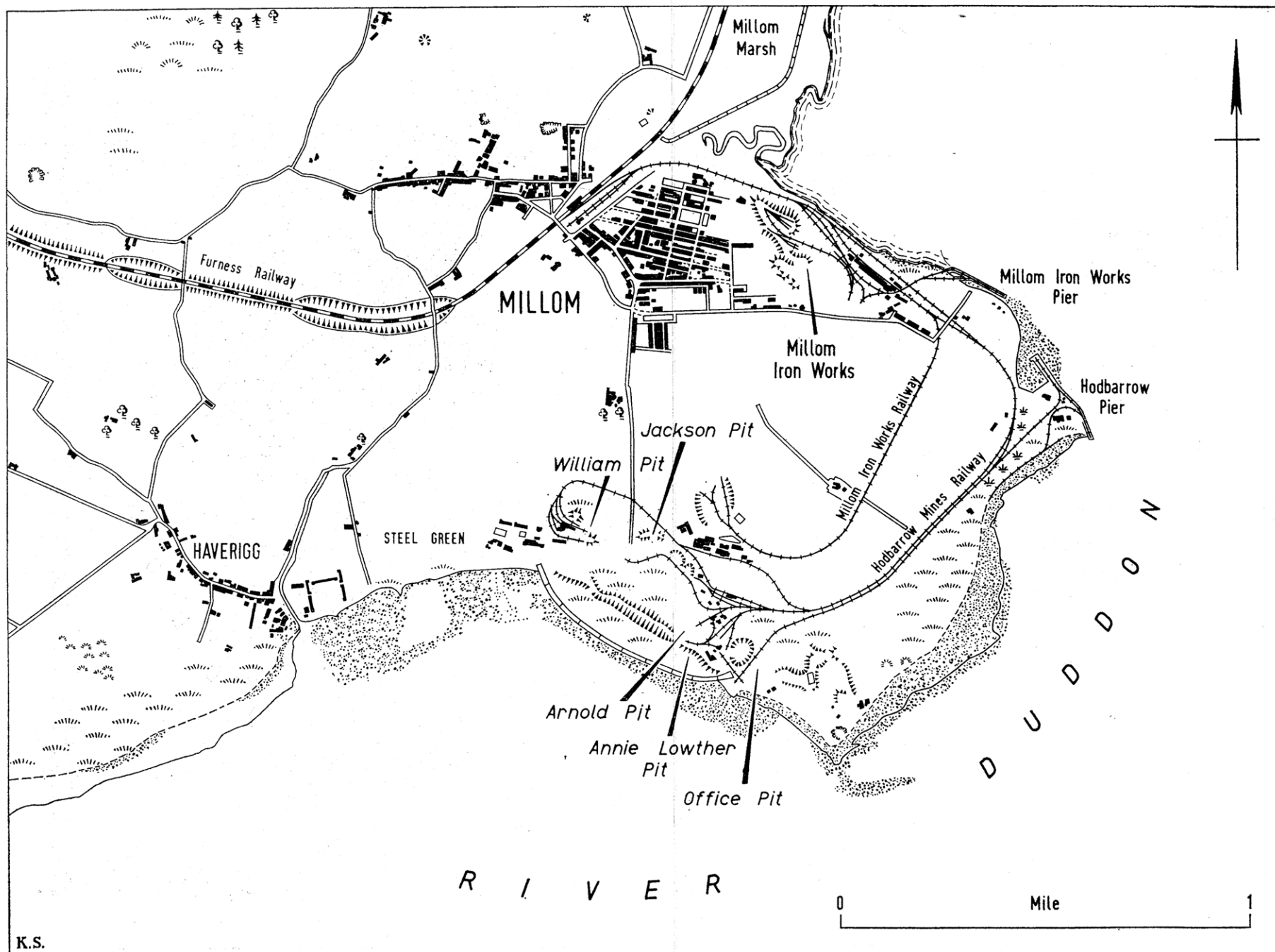


FIG. 2.—Millom in 1897.
 The map is based on the Ordnance Survey 6-inch series of 1897.
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the ironworks, whilst others were extending the local railway and shipping facilities. A brickworks, recently opened close to Holborn Hill station, also contributed to the quickening pace of economic activity.⁴⁶ And by the summer of 1866 gangs of men were also at work on the site of Millom Newtown.

The newcomers were a motley crowd. "Hunter's navvies" at the ironworks were mostly Englishmen from the northern counties,⁴⁷ but the mines had attracted a substantial and occasionally turbulent Irish community.⁴⁸ The English element at Hodbarrow included a number of Cornishmen.⁴⁹ So great was the influx of strangers, that by the end of the decade Millom was inhabited by "people gathered from all parts of the United Kingdom".⁵⁰

Soon "every house was full of lodgers".⁵¹ "Buildings of all sizes have risen up extensively within a radius of three miles from the Hodbarrow Company's Works," the *Ulverston Advertiser* noted in February 1866, "and yet there is so great a want of accommodation that temporary huts are thrown up, in which men are stowed away as on ship-board." For a time building was confined to Holborn Hill, which soon lost its rural character. By the early months of 1866 a Railway Hotel had appeared there, close to the station and brickworks, and the village was growing rapidly both by lateral extension and by a process of infilling between the existing houses.⁵² It was not long, however, before building activity spread to Borwick Rails, in the vicinity of the ironworks, and to Haverigg and Mainsgate, near the Hodbarrow work-

⁴⁶ *Whitehaven Herald*, 14 July 1866.

⁴⁷ *Whitehaven News*, 12 July 1866. The navvies derived their name from a Barrow contractor.

⁴⁸ *Carlisle Patriot*, 13 July 1866.

⁴⁹ *Minute Book (1870-72)*, 443. Bootle Board of Guardians (Record Office, Carlisle).

⁵⁰ *Barrow, Furness and North-Western Daily Times*, 2 October 1871.

⁵¹ *Barrow Times*, 1 September 1866.

⁵² *Barrow Herald*, 6 August 1864; *Ulverston Advertiser*, 2 November 1865, 22 February, 19 April 1866.

ings.⁵³ Two building societies had been formed locally as early as 1865, and had received support from the iron companies.⁵⁴ But development proceeded on a piecemeal basis and apparently failed to meet the demand for accommodation. That there was an opportunity for achieving something more ambitious had not escaped notice however.

Plans for building a new town at Millom were reported in 1865.⁵⁵ Thereafter events moved quickly, and by February 1866 surveys had been made, the lines of new streets determined and a number of building plots sold.⁵⁶ In April of the same year the new town was formally inaugurated and named Millom.⁵⁷ By the autumn nearly 100 houses were under construction and others were already occupied.⁵⁸

The scheme was promoted by a company in which Ulverston capital was prominent.⁵⁹ This concern purchased the land on which the town was to be built, and in due course sold it off in building plots. The firm of Wadham & Turner, civil engineers and surveyors, of Barrow, was commissioned to prepare a plan of the town and to supervise some of the work on the site. Between 500 and 600 houses were to be erected, there was to be a spacious main street, and provision was to be made for a market. Although modified in detail, Wadham & Turner's plan is reflected in the form of the present town (Fig. 2, Plate I).⁶⁰

In the early stages of its growth, Edward Wadham

⁵³ Hodbarrow records, Memorandum of Agreement, Woodburne to Emmott (3 April 1866); *Barrow Herald*, 27 January, 21 April 1866; *Ulverston Advertiser*, 22 February 1866.

⁵⁴ *Barrow Herald*, 28 October, 25 November 1865.

⁵⁵ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 2 November 1865.

⁵⁶ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 22 February 1866.

⁵⁷ *Cumberland Packet*, 1 May 1866. *Whitehaven News*, 3 May 1866; *Barrow Times*, 1 September 1866. The names Duddon, Port Lonsdale and Newhaven were also considered. The choice of "Millom" received powerful support from Massicks.

⁵⁸ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 19 September 1867.

⁵⁹ *Whitehaven News*, 3 May 1866; *Barrow Times*, 1 September 1866.

⁶⁰ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 22 February 1866; Hodbarrow records, undated 25-inch plan showing Millom apparently as planned circa 1866.

expressed the hope that Millom would become "a sort of model town".⁶¹ All houses were to be connected with the main sewers and erected "uniform with the rest in the same street". Dwelling-houses were not to be converted into beershops or public-houses.⁶² Wadham himself appears to have foreseen difficulties, however, for after expressing the hope that his firm would be allowed "to make Millom a good town", he pointed out that this would be possible only if landowners were willing to co-operate.⁶³ The promoting company appears to have lost little time in disposing of its land piecemeal,⁶⁴ and after the first flush of enthusiasm had passed no more is heard of a model town. Indeed, in view of what actually happened, it seems unlikely that any serious attempt was made to enforce the sanitary regulations contained in the original scheme.

It was not long before serious problems became apparent. The land on which the town was built lay "on a dead level with the sea . . . thus rendering drainage utterly impossible".⁶⁵ A better-drained site might have been found on rising ground at Holborn Hill, but the Rottington estate, an area of poorly-drained land close to the Duddon, had been available as a single block of land, so there the town was planted.⁶⁶

Complaints about the condition of Millom soon reached the Bootle Guardians, who were responsible for the sanitary regulation of the district. During 1866 the Guardians were informed of outbreaks of typhus, typhoid, dysentery and diarrhoea there, and of gross overcrowding.⁶⁷ They subsequently heard of houses without drainage and without adequate means of access

⁶¹ *Whitehaven Herald*, 14 July 1866.

⁶² *Ulverston Advertiser*, 22 February 1866; *Barrow Times*, 1 September 1866.

⁶³ *Whitehaven Herald*, 14 July 1866.

⁶⁴ *Barrow Times*, 1 September 1866.

⁶⁵ *Barrow Herald*, 27 August 1866.

⁶⁶ *Ulverston Advertiser*, 29 March, 31 May 1866.

⁶⁷ Bootle Guardians, *Minute Book* (1863-67), 504 (Record Office, Carlisle).

to the tiny back yards which contained privy and ashpit, so that "when these places require emptying, the contents had to be carried through the house".⁶⁸ Scarlet fever was abroad in Millom in 1870 and smallpox in 1872.⁶⁹ Conditions in the most crowded parts of the town were described in 1874 as

a reproach and antithesis to even a remotely sanitary state (*sic*) . . . the drainage in many places consisting of sweltering, stagnant puddle-holes in which may be seen floating the decomposing carcases of drowned cats and puppies, . . . some of the streets almost impassable with ruts, mud, filth, and rubbish; the backyard receptacles for house refuse, night soil and ash, unroofed, and some filled to overflowing; pigs and goats roaming . . . , horses going at large, houses rapidly being run up as money speculations, without the least effort at precaution against dampness, or the uprising of subsoil water; no external or basement drainage; every enlightened conception of drainage, every enlightened conception of ventilation ignored.⁷⁰

Nor were foul conditions confined to new Millom. As land values rose, speculation in building plots spread to several of the old villages nearby. "In some parts of Haverigg", it was reported in 1874, "the water-line in the soil was not more than two feet from the surface. When it rained the water ran into the houses . . . Many of the existing drains were choked, and would not act."⁷¹ Town and village alike relied for a supply of water on wells, springs, and rainwater collected in butts.

Although the general standard of building was low, here and there an attempt was made to provide decent accommodation for the swiftly growing population, which by 1871 numbered almost 3,000 in Newtown and Holborn Hill alone. After being advised that houses built for the company were "miserable trash" with "rubble walls . . . not much better than dry stone walls", the

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, *Minute Book* (1870-72), 64-65.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 64-65, 398, 402.

⁷⁰ Letter from W. B. Griffiths, M.O.H., to Bootle Rural Sanitary Authority, printed in *Whitehaven Herald*, 7 March 1874.

⁷¹ *Barrow Daily Times*, 12 December 1874.

Hodbarrow directors refused them.⁷² Instead, they authorized the construction, to careful specification, of a number of houses at Haverigg. These, known as Concrete Square, and built between 1872 and 1875, are still in the company's hands. Houses were also built for this company at Steel Green (1874-1881) and in Oxford and Surrey Streets (1885-1889), again under close supervision.⁷³ But when it was usual for each house to contain at least two families, and when "in scores of houses" the beds were never cold, even the most shoddy and ill-constructed dwelling seldom remained for long unsold.⁷⁴

It was inevitable that the two iron companies should have become deeply involved in Millom's problems. They contributed towards the cost of local chapels and schools and helped to build a parish church for the ecclesiastical district of St George, Millom Below, formed in 1877.⁷⁵ In times of drought they supplied water to the town from their own resources. Most important of all, they supported the agitation which in 1874 led to the formation of a Local Board of Health for Millom.⁷⁶ Company representatives were for many years in a majority on the new Board, and both Massicks and Cedric Vaughan, of Hodbarrow, served it as Chairman.⁷⁷

It was some years before the new Board made its presence felt. A year after its creation, Massicks admitted

⁷² Hodbarrow records, letter, Hornblower to Company (24 July 1872); letter, Wylie to Company (24 July 1872).

⁷³ These details have been obtained from various records at Hodbarrow.

⁷⁴ *Barrow, Furness and North-Western Daily Times*, 15 July 1872; *Barrow Daily Times*, 13 March 1874.

⁷⁵ *Millom Advertiser*, 31 March, 26 May, 2 June 1877.

⁷⁶ *The Barrow Daily Times* carried full reports on Millom and its affairs at this period, including the events which led to the formation of the Board.

⁷⁷ Cedric Vaughan (1841-1911), was for many years one of the outstanding personalities in Millom. After being articled to Messrs Robert Stephenson & Co., locomotive engineers, he became in 1866 Assistant Locomotive Superintendent of the Midland Railway, at Derby. He joined the Hodbarrow Company in 1872, as deputy manager under William Barratt, and eventually became Chairman and Managing Director. A Conservative, he became J.P. and County Councillor. (*Engineering*, 24 February 1911, 258; Hodbarrow records, *Minute Book no. 2*, 14 June 1872; Millom Auction Mart Co., *Year Book for 1902*, 112-113.)

that Millom was still "without water for domestic use, gas, drainage, or properly formed streets".⁷⁸ Meanwhile, the town continued to grow. "Whole streets of houses are being erected with marvellous rapidity", it was reported in 1876, by which time the population had risen to nearly 4,000.⁷⁹

As Millom grew, it acquired a new centre. This evolved during the 'seventies and 'eighties in the vicinity of St George's Road, which was laid out to connect new Millom with the suburb of Holborn Hill. The new road replaced a more direct route which had involved the use of a level-crossing over the railway.⁸⁰ The heart of the "old" town was thus by-passed and, shut off by the railway from direct communication with Holborn Hill, was gradually eclipsed in importance by the newer part of the town that was growing up nearby on the Lapstone estate. The change was emphasized and accelerated by the creation of a new market-place off St George's Road. Here, and close by, were erected a Market Hall, offices for the Local Board, a new hotel, several other public buildings and a number of shops.⁸¹

Rapid growth was sustained by the generally healthy state of Millom's basic industries, which though at times "slack" escaped severe depression.⁸² The annual production of ore from Hodbarrow was consistently above 270,000 tons after 1876, and the output of 343,000 tons recorded for 1880 was much the largest up to that time. Hodbarrow had received a new lease of life following the discovery, in 1868, of the New Mine, a large body of ore close to the original workings (Fig. 2). This proved

⁷⁸ *Millom Advertiser*, 4 March 1876.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 1 July 1876. The population figure quoted is for the new town and Holborn Hill.

⁸⁰ *Millom Advertiser*, 3 June, 8 July 1876.

⁸¹ *Millom Advertiser*, 3 June 1876, 14 February, 25 December 1880; Millom Local Board, *Committee Report Books no. 1*, 3 March 1876. The records of the Millom Local Board are in the custody of the Clerk of Millom Rural District Council. I am indebted to the Clerk and Council for permission to inspect these records and to make extracts from them.

⁸² *Millom Advertiser*, 1 July 1876; *Iron*, 3 March 1877; Hodbarrow records, *Minute Book no. 4*, 16 January 1880.

difficult and costly to develop, but it enabled the company to embark on a second phase of expansion.⁸³

Only towards the end of the 'seventies did physical conditions in the town slowly begin to improve. By 1880 a supply of water had been obtained from the nearby hills and an extensive scheme for draining and sewerage the district was under way. Bye-laws had been made and put into effect and many of the worst nuisances were under control.⁸⁴ But it was 1885 before the Medical Officer commented favourably on the sanitary condition of the district.⁸⁵

Events at the mines for a time threatened to check this progress by depriving Millom of its largest ratepayer. So far had prospects at Hodbarrow changed by 1870 that the company had then surrendered its original lease and had been granted a new one for a term of 21 years, at an annual rent of £15,000 for the first five years and £5,000 thereafter. The company had also agreed to pay a royalty of 1/6d. per ton.⁸⁶

Nearly ten years before this lease was due to expire, the Hodbarrow directors opened negotiations with Lord Lonsdale for its renewal. A sense of urgency arising out of the condition of the mines prompted the company to open negotiations at this time.⁸⁷ By the early 'eighties almost the entire output of ore was coming from the New Mine, which had been slowly extended seawards towards the limit of the company's concession. The practice of working the ore by top-slicing produced extensive surface subsidence in dangerous proximity to a wasting coastline. In order to afford protection for the mine, the company had been compelled to leave a barrier of ore

⁸³ Hodbarrow records, *Minute Book no. 2*, 29 January 1869; Forster MSS., reports on Hodbarrow mine, 1870; Record Office, Carlisle, reports on Lord Lonsdale's mines (1866-71).

⁸⁴ These details have been obtained from local newspapers and the Local Board Minute Books.

⁸⁵ *Millom Advertiser*, 14 February 1885.

⁸⁶ Record Office, Carlisle, mineral leases, Lonsdale to others.

⁸⁷ Unless otherwise stated, the following account has been compiled from the Minute Books at Hodbarrow.

along the seaward edge of the concession, with a view to preserving a strip of firm land between the sea and the broken ground immediately inland. The Earl's mineral agents were concerned to ensure that this barrier remained substantial, whilst the company was anxious to obtain as much ore as possible from within the leased area.⁸⁸ The negotiations for a new lease, which were complicated by disagreement over liability for rates, turned principally on the question of terms that would enable the company to invest capital in coast protection works and drainage, with a reasonable expectation of being able to enjoy the benefits. Little progress was made until an increase in the frequency of sand-flows into the mine warned of impending danger. By 1886 "a large hollow dish-like cavity, the bottom being some 50 ft. below the original surface level", had developed in the mined area close to the shore. The sides of this depression were fissured, and from time to time segments would break off and "slide into the deepest part of the dish".⁸⁹ Protective works on a major scale were clearly needed if the mine was to continue in operation. Having spent more than £11,000 on sea defence works by 1886,⁹⁰ the company then sought permission to construct a sea-wall as a matter of urgency. In 1888 the terms of a new lease were at last agreed and work began almost immediately on the construction of the sea-wall which later became known as the Inner Barrier.⁹¹ This was completed in 1890 (Plate II). The company was thus enabled to extend its workings seawards beyond the limit of the former concession.⁹² Secure in the possession of the new

⁸⁸ Forster MSS., vol. 24, "Hodbarrow Iron Ore Mines" (1886), *passim*.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 8 January 1886.

⁹⁰ Forster MSS., vol. 24, 3 August 1886.

⁹¹ Hodbarrow records, original lease, Lonsdale and Lowther to Woodburne and others. The lease ran for 34 years from April 1887; *Minute Book* no. 8, 22 June 1888; book of newspaper cuttings, 56-58.

⁹² In 1888 the Hodbarrow shareholders formed themselves into a limited company with a nominal capital of £650,000 (Board of Trade Company files, reference 26568/Dissolved/). The assets of the old partnership were valued at £500,000.

lease, but threatened with further incursions of sand and water from beyond the barrier, the directors embarked in 1900 on a still more ambitious scheme of reclamation and coastal protection, which culminated five years later in the completion of the Outer Barrier, a second wall on the seaward side of the first (Plate III).⁹³ Protected by the new wall, the company has continued mining operations up to the present time.

It was not only the face of Millom that was again altering swiftly at this period. For many years the iron companies had exercised "a paternal, if somewhat autocratic government" over the growing town.⁹⁴ From the time of the first elections to the Local Board — when, so it was alleged, "everyone voted as they were told"⁹⁵ — until the creation of the Millom Urban District in 1894, the company interest in local government was accepted without serious challenge. Labour candidates were returned in strength to the new council, however, and the *Millom Gazette* was able to exult over the discomfiture of the "old gang".⁹⁶ Organized labour had shown its hand some years earlier in another connection. During 1889 the Cumberland company was involved in a prolonged strike, caused by an attempt on the part of the Blastfurnacemen's Association to extend its membership at the ironworks, and Massicks' determination to continue to employ non-union labour.⁹⁷ From this, the most serious labour dispute that had yet affected the works, the company emerged the victor. But, as was later pointed out, the strike marked the end of an era in which things had generally gone well for the Cumberland company.⁹⁸ Participation in an unsuccessful mining

⁹³ Full technical accounts of this work appear in *Trans. Inst. Mining Engineers*, xvii, 1898-9 (1900), and *Engineering*, 7 April 1905.

⁹⁴ *Whitehaven News*, 11 July 1889.

⁹⁵ *Millom Advertiser*, 23 February 1878.

⁹⁶ *Millom Gazette*, 22 December 1894.

⁹⁷ *Whitehaven News*, 28 February; 7, 14, 21 March; 11 April; 23 May; 27 June; 4, 11 July 1889.

⁹⁸ *Millom Auction Mart, Year Book for 1902*, 9; *Whitehaven News*, 23 April 1908.

venture was a further source of difficulty. In common with other local smelting companies, Millom showed an interest, as occasion offered, in acquiring control of iron ore mines.⁹⁹ When therefore, in 1879, a body of ore up to 80 ft. in thickness was discovered near Kirksanton by the firm of Massicks and Walker, hopes were entertained of a new Hodbarrow in the hands of the smelting company.¹⁰⁰ The discovery was followed by the creation of the Whicham Mining Co. Ltd., in which the Cumberland company held a substantial interest.¹⁰¹ Despite their early promise, however, the Whicham mines proved a failure. After a brief and costly existence, during which it received the benefit of a great Cornish pumping engine of 100-inch cylinder, the venture was shut down in 1895.¹⁰² Not long afterwards, Massicks severed his connection with the ironworks.

Unlike many Cumberland iron towns, Millom has retained direct links with its past. A single shaft near Haverigg produces haematite, though the great days of Hodbarrow, when the annual output of ore exceeded half a million tons, are long past. The ironworks, owned by the Millom Hematite Ore and Iron Company Ltd., has maintained its 19th-century reputation as a producer of pig iron of exceptionally high quality. After leading an independent existence for nearly a century, iron mine and ironworks now form part of a single company. Between mine and works lies the new town, its rows of terraced houses and numerous chapels overlooked on one

⁹⁹ The acquisition of the Askam concern on the other side of the Duddon gave the company an interest in Furness iron mines. After 1900, control was extended to iron mines in Spain and west Cumberland.

¹⁰⁰ *Iron*, 14 June 1879; *Whitehaven News*, 23 April 1908.

¹⁰¹ *Barrow Times*, 26 March 1881; *Iron and Coal Trades Review*, 20 September 1935, 446.

¹⁰² This engine, built by the Cornish firm of Harveys of Hayle, had been put to work in 1854 in Cornwall, at Great Wheal Vor. After being in use there for several years, the engine was next installed at the Hendre Lead Mines, Flintshire, whence it was returned to Cornwall for use at East Wheal Rose. The Cumberland company purchased the engine in 1888 after the closure of East Wheal Rose (H. L. Douch, *East Wheal Rose* (1964), 70, 83). Details of the Whicham mines appear in Bernard Smith, *op. cit.*, 130.

side by the slag banks of the ironworks and bounded on another by the railway. Although some parts of 19th-century Millom have already disappeared and others are likely to be replaced in the near future, the legacy of the Victorian era is still almost everywhere apparent.¹⁰³ (Fig. 3, Plates IV and V.)

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¹⁰³ Under a proposed redevelopment scheme, the slag banks will eventually be removed as they are reworked for their iron content and the oldest houses in Newtown will be demolished (*Whitehaven News*, 30 July 1964).