

## **Manufacturing Identities. An Archaeological Approach to Industrialisation and the Formation of Modern Cumbria**

RICHARD NEWMAN

Ideas of identity are core to both people's sense of self and sense of place. Many aspects of culture can influence personal identity. This paper argues that in Cumbria one of the key cultural aspects that helped produce some of today's differences in local identity is industrialisation and specifically past variations in the experience of industrialisation. An archaeological approach is taken by using the evidence of physical change in the landscape and of access to goods.

**I**T is a truism that we all are a sum of our experiences but those experiences, especially shared, collective experiences, and the way they shape our ideas, choices and outlook, are key to understanding cultural identity. Where you live, political or religious allegiances, hobbies and work can all influence a sense of identity. Identity can be seen as an effect of culture<sup>1</sup> therefore whatever influences the predominant culture of an individual will influence their sense of identity. Occupation and work place are major components of an individual's cultural experience. That one's employment is still held to be a significant element of self-identification, amongst at least part of the population, is evidenced by exchanges of introduction between strangers when the first question may be not 'how are you' but 'what do you do'. Undoubtedly an element of this existed in the past as evidenced by the evolution of surnames, many of which relate to an ancestor's occupation. The combination of a sense of place with a specific form of employment activity, which was more prevalent in the past than it is today, was thus a powerful catalyst for the development of both individual and community identity. Non-industrial but distinctive occupation related-cultures existed throughout Cumbria. The Morecambe Bay shell fishery for example evolved specialised fishing practices and customs. Today these give the coastal communities of modern north Lancashire and Cumbria, an element of unity and distinctiveness.<sup>2</sup> The association of place, employment and landscape can also lead to the development of stereotypical images by those outside the community such as the idea of an urban, industrial northern English regional identity.<sup>3</sup>

Identities like landscape character are changeable according to scale, so there can be different identities at a national, regional, county and community level. The smaller scale identities can be seen as sub-sets of the larger ones. The choice of scale is made both by individuals in defining their own identity, varying according to circumstances, and by those seeking to define the identities of others.

### **Contesting Cumbrian identity**

A contemporary belief in the existence of, or at least a need for, a single, distinctive Cumbrian identity is a feature of a number of groups and organisations. A sense of a Cumbria-wide identity can provide a marketing opportunity and an excuse for

a whole series of initiatives. As a consequence the idea of a Cumbrian identity is manipulated, contested and disputed. It provided the opening salvo in the County Council's unsuccessful argument for adopting a single-status local authority in Cumbria.<sup>4</sup> Barrow Borough Council's subsequent refutation of this assertion sheds light on the way ideas of identity can be manipulated.<sup>5</sup>

Cumbria was described by Barrow's council officers as a '*relatively meaningless place*', one that is not homogeneous but has '*a series of quite distinct communities*'. Only 37% of residents are seen as identifying with the County and Cumbria is compared unfavourably with Cornwall which is seen as having a '*traditionally meaningful geography*' and an '*independent identity*'.<sup>6</sup> Barrow Borough Council's statements contain much that would be considered recognisable by most people with regard to modern Cumbrian identities. It also reveals a strong desire on behalf of Barrovians to be considered '*other*' in comparison to the rest of Cumbria, a character trait that, as will be demonstrated later in this paper, seems to have its roots in the later nineteenth century.

Cumbria can be argued to be a recent creation, a product of local authority reorganisation in 1974, yet as Angus Winchester has argued the idea of Cumbria as a cohesive geographical entity has deep historical roots.<sup>7</sup> Indeed this may stretch as far back as the twelfth century when the counties of Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire formed, in an area disputed between the kingdoms of England and Scotland. By the post-medieval period this area is seen by some as having a distinctive identity based upon a strong tradition of customary tenure<sup>8</sup> which is reflected today in Cumbria's landscape character.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the idea that the county of Cumbria has a recognisable and distinctive identity is politically charged and challengeable. County-wide identity in some quarters is linked to the pre-1974 historic counties, as evidenced by the continuing acts of local protest and vandalism leading in the south of the County to the replacement of Cumbria county road signs with home-made Westmorland signs.

The Association of British Counties on their website state that the historic counties of Great Britain '*are fundamental to our culture*' and that they '*are sources of identity and affection to many people*'.<sup>10</sup> Yet multi-disciplinary studies have shown that even historic counties along with all other types of regional sub-divisions have a weak association with popular perceptions of identity, which are more closely linked at one scale to nationality and sometimes regionality and at another to locality.<sup>11</sup>

These arguments indicate that much that is written about identity, especially in relation to place, should be regarded with suspicion. It is generally not free of a variety of agendas. The theme of cultural identity, local or otherwise, can become a filter through which to view the past. It can transform the historical narrative to reflect current perceptions, to justify present conditions, and to provide a context for new identity creation. Identity is malleable and is constantly being remade. By taking an archaeological approach to Cumbrian identities, observations about identity can be firmly fixed in people's experiences of their changing physical world. Through this means an exploration can be formulated of how past identities may have evolved and been distributed across Cumbria.

### Archaeology and identity

People's experience of their environment, their landscape, their possessions, their homes and their places of work, helped to shape their perceptions of themselves and others with whom they interacted. Through these catalysts they developed their sense of self, place and identity, their affiliations to particular groups and a network of allegiances. Such perceptions were not fixed solely on an experience of place, however, and were transformed by other personal factors such as age, gender and class and occasionally race.

The issue of historical cultural identity is one that has engaged many disciplines for a long time. Sociologists, geographers and anthropologists and even populist writers and broadcasters have all dined out on the subject<sup>12</sup> whereas archaeologists are frankly newcomers to the feast. So what does archaeology bring to the table?

Archaeologists study the past through the medium of its material remains. Just as today, people in the past were shaped by their experiences and on a daily basis they experienced the physical world around them. They moved through landscapes, coped with the natural environment, consumed goods, utilised technology and inhabited and laboured within buildings. It is common in the western world to associate cultural identity with man-made objects and human influenced landscapes. For example the cultural identity of the Blue Grass region of Kentucky is considered to be characterised by its historic landscape features and man-made structures such as tobacco barns.<sup>13</sup> Hence archaeology has a part to play in interpreting the creation and development of identities.

Beyond engaging with material culture, modern archaeologists and other heritage practitioners have used heritage to manipulate concepts of identity to reflect modern societal concerns and viewpoints.<sup>14</sup> They have tackled the issue of a sense of place and indeed much of the work of English Heritage in recent years has been based on appreciation of the power of a sense of place for creating and maintaining identity and promoting social cohesion. Heritage professionals have examined the connection between landscapes, our largest and most comprehensive physical artefact, and the idea of belonging.<sup>15</sup> They have criticised the use by local historians of ideas such as the *genius loci* or the French concept of the *pays*,<sup>16</sup> admiring their holistic qualities but questioning their ambiguity and lack of clarity. Archaeologists do deal with the concepts of identity but their strength is in their background of quantifying, classifying and interpreting physical objects, from fragments of pottery to entire landscapes. From these, networks of contacts and allegiances can be inferred and people's past experiences can be partially recreated, all of which allows an analysis of personal and group motivations and even perceptions.

A recent study of the industrial archaeology of Carlisle for example<sup>17</sup> applied an approach that has become known as the 'Manchester methodology', after the Manchester-based archaeologists who originally developed it to examine the impact of industrialisation in the borough of Tameside.<sup>18</sup> A simplified explanation of this methodology is that the number of new monuments associated with industry that appear in the landscape over a given time frame are counted and plotted. This allows

the ‘take off’ point of towns to be recognised with regard to industrialisation. It also provides a graphic illustration of how these changes may have impacted on an individual’s experience of their environment. It suggests that for the inhabitants of Carlisle and its surrounding hinterland, the late eighteenth century growth in the number of industrial monument types was revolutionary in terms of the environment as well as socially with regard to employment and lifestyles. A similar revolution would have been experienced later in the nineteenth century with the coming of the railway to Carlisle. These were not experiences shared with all or even most of contemporary Cumbria.

### **Industrialisation and rural society**

Angus Winchester has advanced the thesis that the distinctive character of Cumbria’s landscape, which he sees as having a pivotal role in ideas of regional identity, can only be understood in the context of a distinctive pattern of Cumbrian land tenure and the nature of rural society.<sup>19</sup> This is exemplified by one of the most commonly perceived distinctive features of post-medieval Cumbrian society which is the strength of customary tenure and the relative scarcity of a controlling ruling class of aristocrats and major gentry landowners.<sup>20</sup> How much of an impact this landscape and social organisation did have on local identity is still a matter for debate, but there can be no doubt that this agrarian society was very different in its landscape character and social organisation from industrial areas such as Carlisle, and thus very likely to have a different and distinct sense of identity.

Winchester points out that improved farms in Cumbria were specks amongst swathes of unimproved customary farming landscape.<sup>21</sup> It was the same few gentry landlords that did invest in agrarian improvement, such as the Lowthers and Curwens, who also invested in industrial and urban development. Their actions were instrumental in creating new identities. The industrialised areas of Cumbria, for the most part, experienced a quicker pace of environmental change than the primarily agrarian areas. They had different housing, different densities of population, different ways of organising the landscape and to an extent a different material culture.

### **Industrialisation and the world of goods**

Amongst archaeologists in Cumbria a common, half-joking, response to the question when did the Middle Ages end, is 1745. This is not only because then the Scots were finally prevented from periodically occupying by force parts of the region, but also relates to material culture. There is often hardly any distinguishable difference between some sites’ late medieval material culture and that of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Throughout this period for example, many rural sites in Cumbria, such as the excavated customary tenanted farmstead at Powsons in the Tebay Gorge,<sup>22</sup> appear to be almost aceramic and to have depended on an organic material culture that in most site conditions leaves few or only very fragmentary archaeological traces. Industrialisation fundamentally altered this situation. Mechanisation, factorisation and product standardisation allowed an increase not only in pottery availability but also in a wide range of other inorganic goods. In the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries the increase in artefact types as well as quantities was phenomenal.<sup>23</sup> Even the poorest and most remote communities experienced an increase in possessions, as demonstrated by the artefactual detritus from any Cumbrian archaeological site which experienced prolonged occupation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The greater availability of material goods, however, was constrained by other factors such as the ability to supply. Goods would have been less frequently available, and thus comparatively more expensive, in remote upland communities supplied by pedlars than in coastal ports with markets and shops. Thus there would have been increased disparities between Cumbrian communities with regard to their access to the plethora of manufactured goods. This may have caused not only differences in patterns of consumption but may also have influenced the values placed upon objects and the uses made of them. In this way local cultural distinctions may have been exacerbated at times by the differences in the distribution and availability of manufactured goods. In general, however, it is considered by many archaeologists that the products of industrialisation helped to perpetrate a uniform British culture at the expense of distinctive local identities.<sup>24</sup>

Certainly, a greater quantity and wider variety of goods were distributed more widely in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries than ever before. At the medieval entrepot of Meols in the Wirral it has been shown that the inorganic merchandise consisted of an essentially regionally produced assemblage of artefacts.<sup>25</sup> Contrast this with the range of goods and materials that were entering Cumbria through Whitehaven in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, where despite a strong coastal trade within the North West, a huge range of artefacts from across Britain and more widely were being imported.<sup>26</sup> Clearly industrialisation brought a radically new consumer experience for many Cumbrians, though there would have been geographical inequalities in this experience. Far more research on markets, trade and artefact assemblages in Cumbria is required, however, before these musings can be based on more than speculation. In the USA where such research has been undertaken, it has been suggested that the evidence for possession and use of artefacts shows a blurring of class distinctions within industrial towns with similar cultural traits and patterns of behaviour between the employed working class and middle class.<sup>27</sup>

### **Industrialisation and globalisation**

One of the causes and by-products of industrialisation was an increasingly globalised international trade. Industrial-era British ceramics for example, such as those produced in Whitehaven, have been found on archaeological sites in Iceland, around the Mediterranean, in north and south America, Australasia, India, the Falkland Islands and in various parts of Africa.<sup>28</sup> Whilst it has been argued by critics of some concepts of cultural imperialism that it is unwise to attribute deep cultural impacts to the presence of goods,<sup>29</sup> the possession of objects does infer a network of links and contacts. Even if similar possessions do not correspond with shared ideas and values they at least imply some access to knowledge of these. Moreover, a large difference between the nature and quantity of goods possessed is a real difference in material culture and implies some difference in cultural identity.

Throughout history the sea has been seen as linking rather than separating areas. This is a theme explored by the noted prehistorian Barry Cunliffe in *Facing the Ocean: the Atlantic and its Peoples*. He considered that in the Middle Ages the intensity of maritime trade brought Atlantic coastal communities together more strongly than ever before.<sup>30</sup> They shared common interests and to a large extent a common culture. The maritime regions of western Europe collectively created a dynamic commercial zone across which goods, ideas and philosophies were exchanged.<sup>31</sup> This became even stronger in the post-medieval period as the European Atlantic coast ceased to be the frontier of the known world and became the embarkation point for exploring, colonising and trading with a new world. The dependence of Atlantic coastal communities on the sea is seen as creating a sense of identity that was distinct from inland regions. Whilst it is reasonable to consider all of Britain as sharing in a sense of separateness from inland continental Europe, within Britain itself distinctions can be seen between coastal and inland communities. In Cumbria, the difficulties of the terrain ensured a separation of the Cumbrian west coast from much of the remainder of the region. Poor communications slowed and dissipated the spread of goods and ideas from coastal communities.

The Cumbrian west coast in the post-medieval period formed part of an Irish Sea zone. Shared experiences and a common cause linked the area with its principal trading partners in the coastal communities of southern Scotland, the Isle of Man, Ireland (especially Ulster) along with Lancashire and the Wirral. It emphatically did not share such an outlook with the North East of England, with which both sea and overland connections were poor. Until the late seventeenth century, however, Cumbria's maritime activity, other than fishing, was very limited preventing it from sharing fully in both contacts across the Irish Sea and more expansively across the Atlantic. The late seventeenth century expansion in maritime trade experienced throughout Britain, and facilitated in Cumbria by the development of the port of Whitehaven, is often regarded as part of a 'commercial revolution' that preceded industrialisation.<sup>32</sup> More recent gradualist ideas concerning the 'industrial revolution' posit different models for the timing of the development of industrialisation which certainly include the early development of ports.<sup>33</sup> In Cumbria the connection between port development and industrialisation is clear and explicit. Ports such as Whitehaven and later Parton, Maryport and Harrington were developed to facilitate an expansion of the coal trade of local landowners such as the Lowthers, Fletchers, Senhouses and Curwens. Though coal provided the initial impetus, the opportunities provided by the new ports to engage in wider trade were embraced. This is especially so in Whitehaven where in the later seventeenth century, the landowner and principal developer Sir John Lowther also developed his business connections with the American colonies, especially with Maryland and Virginia with whom Whitehaven had a trade in manufactured goods in exchange for tobacco.<sup>34</sup>

Manufacturaries, such as the delftware potteries at Liverpool, Lancaster and Whitehaven, were established to export goods directly to the Caribbean and the Americas or to West Africa to purchase slaves for transportation to the colonies. Consequently, industrialisation both stimulated and was stimulated by global trade and inevitably altered the outlook of those in the ports and their hinterlands, even of



people who were not directly involved with maritime trade. In general globalisation, especially in the present-day, is seen as a process that erodes local cultural identity but in Cumbria in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it seems likely to have exacerbated difference between maritime and inland communities adding a fresh layer to local identity.

### **Industrialisation and the decline of the vernacular**

Globalisation is the most striking aspect of the increased connectivity between places that was brought about by industrialisation. One of the most frequently cited ways in which this is seen as changing eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain is in the decline of vernacular building traditions. The availability of pattern books, industrially produced mouldings, and the widespread distribution of non-local building materials facilitated by first canals and then railways, all undoubtedly contributed to the decline in local vernacular building traditions. Even so, as late as the nineteenth century, forces for local distinctiveness were still in play. These included variations in access to materials, and the legacy of the past and continuing traditions influencing fashions and local consumer choice.

The town that most clearly reflects a break with the local vernacular is Whitehaven. Laid out as a planned town in accordance with classical concepts of town planning, its Baroque architecture reflected its classicism. As a major port it had access to materials but also ideas and influences from centres of classical architecture like Liverpool. Whitehaven is strikingly different from other eighteenth century townscapes in Cumbria. It is more fashionable and national, whereas even neighbouring Cocker-mouth, a town now celebrated for its Georgian architecture, seems quaintly parochial in comparison. In 1802 it was stated of Whitehaven that ‘the effects of trade, industry, and enterprise, have scarcely ever been so strikingly exemplified, as in the rise, progress, and increasing importance, of this rich and flourishing town’.<sup>35</sup> Its architecture is the clearest manifestation of this.

From Whitehaven forward in time to Maryport and Harrington and later still at Barrow and Millom, industrial growth encouraged by good port facilities led to the need to house industrial workers. By the nineteenth century, the template so successfully followed in Lancashire of two-up two-down terraced houses was repeated in Cumbria’s industrial towns, most notably in Barrow, Carlisle and Workington. These provided a domestic experience very different from that of an agricultural worker in the Lake District or even a miner in the Pennines.

Not every newly laid out town in Cumbria shared in this type of development. In the Longtown vicinity of Eskdale in the early eighteenth century the houses of the majority were very similar to contemporary houses in southern Scotland and typical of the vernacular tradition that had dominated everywhere in Cumbria north of Penrith a century earlier. The antiquarian William Stukeley’s description of Eskdale in 1725 states:

as for the houses of the cottagers, they are mean beyond imagination; made of mud, and thatched with turf, without windows, only one storey: the people almost naked. We returned through

Longton, a market town, whose streets are wholly composed of such kind of structure: the piles of turf for firing are generally as large and as handsome as the houses.<sup>36</sup>

When in 1757 the Rev Robert Graham inherited the Netherby estate, within which Longtown was included, he set about improving his inheritance in the best traditions of an Enlightenment landlord. He introduced the use of lime and drained a thousand acres of mossland, made enclosures and plantations and built roads. He reorganised the settlement structure of his estate, some existing settlements disappeared and new hamlets of eight to ten houses were created.<sup>37</sup> In tandem with these improvements he laid out a gridiron-based town at Longtown. Hand-loom weaving was encouraged there to support the woollen manufacturers in Carlisle, so that when John Wesley visited in 1770 he could describe Stukeley's urban backwater as 'the last town in England; and one of the best built in it; for all the houses are new, from one end to the other'.<sup>38</sup> Yet these new houses took a variety of forms and despite now having windows and being built of imported materials, some reflected a continuing local tradition of single-storey building. Throughout the district to the north and east of Carlisle single-storey houses of eighteenth and nineteenth century date remain common. These have particular local features such as iron fittings for external shutters. Today this is an area, like southern Scotland, where the bungalow is still king.

### **Industrialisation and landscape**

Changes in housing distribution and type were some of the ways in which people experienced industrialisation through changes in their environment, but it was not the only impact industrialisation had on the landscape. In the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries industrialisation remoulded the environment in which most Cumbrians lived and worked. The impact was not uniform. Variations in intensity exaggerated the distinctiveness in the landscape character of some districts within Cumbria, most notably in Low Furness, parts of Copeland and Allerdale, around Carlisle and on Alston Moor.

The Cumbria Historic Landscape Characterisation project, which has been recently completed, clearly reveals those areas that have altered most significantly since the late eighteenth century.<sup>39</sup> It can also quantify to an extent the degree of change. Parts of west Cumbria have changed most dramatically with extensive areas of urbanisation, widespread extractive industries, railways, new roads and large industrial plants, especially ironworks. Many of these attributes are now relict or reused features within the present-day landscape. Comparisons between the late eighteenth century county maps and the late nineteenth century Ordnance Survey maps reveal the full impact of industrialisation on the landscape. One area in which this influenced people's perceptions of their sense of place and identity is in Low Furness.

By the later eighteenth century Low Furness was noted for the iron mines in the Ulverston vicinity,<sup>40</sup> but these were seen as an interesting novelty within a rural landscape and not a dominating characteristic feature of the area.<sup>41</sup> For the Furness antiquarian Thomas West writing in 1774, the dominant feature of an essentially agricultural landscape was the intermixed unenclosed strips of the still functioning



townfields.<sup>42</sup> The inhabitants of the area did not look towards the sea, but inland towards the Furness Fells. There was no separation from the Lake District – it formed part of their local area. It was in well-wooded High Furness that the charcoal-fueled iron works were located that converted the ore from Ulverston's mines into higher value products. Even by the later nineteenth century, following the development of the new town of Barrow, the traditional links between Low Furness and Coniston and Windermere were still strong. Today it seems surprising that the first two aquatint illustrations in Richardson's 1882 history of Barrow are of Wray Castle, Windermere and Coniston Water. To the author it made perfect sense, the fells and lakes were not only Barrow's hinterland but its geographical and historical context. As he put it, Furness when viewed from Carnforth should form a recognised part of the Lake District.<sup>43</sup> These views are echoed in near contemporary trade directories for Furness.<sup>44</sup> Clearly before the twentieth century Barrow had not turned its back on its fells and lakes.

Though Barrow reached its zenith of industrial success as early as 1882,<sup>45</sup> as time passed so its traditional links with the Lake District were forgotten and the connections established through its industrial growth came to dominate. Born of railways and the iron industry it looked east towards Yorkshire and south towards Liverpool and Manchester especially. As a port it was particularly connected to the major Irish Sea ports of Belfast, Liverpool and Glasgow. The Liverpool connection was further enhanced through the town's principal founder, James Ramsden, who was a Liverpool-based engineer with family connections with the Wirral. Barrow's twentieth century history and its involvement with shipbuilding and the links with the Liverpool firm of Camell Laird and the defence industries of Lancashire have all contributed to a southern-centric view of Barrovian identity.

In the nineteenth century Alston Moor was regarded by sometime resident Thomas Sopwith as part of a moorland mining community encompassing Weardale and Teesdale and utterly distinct from other parts of Cumbria.<sup>46</sup> Sopwith was an engineer and surveyor and a student of mining, geology and landscape. He saw the area as distinct not only in terms of its landscape but also socially and to an extent technologically. Whilst its technologies were shared with other mining regions such as Derbyshire and Cornwall, the mining region of Alston Moor, Weardale and Teesdale was regarded as highly advanced in terms of their application. It was characterised socially by many miners also being smallholding farmers and this produced a distinctive settlement pattern. These facets of the area are recognised and celebrated today in its status as a UNESCO European and Global Geopark.

### **Industrialisation and the transfer of technology**

Industrial technologies in Britain do not appear to be regional or distinctly English, Scottish and Welsh. Indeed it has been argued that industrialisation acted as a force for establishing a British identity through a shared technological experience.<sup>47</sup> Certainly, technologies were shared throughout Britain and further afield. Furthermore, industrialists such as the major ironmasters like the Hanburys had interests in more than one region. Yet the use of technology could assist in the formation of local

identities through both vernacular technological traditions and more widely shared technologies which could assist in the development of both group and local identity.

The role of local vernacular technological traditions in Cumbria is most obviously highlighted by the iron smelting industry. The use of peat as a fuel, most notably at Leighton Beck on the current Lancashire/Cumbria border, is one example of a local vernacular industrial tradition. Another is the long-lived use of charcoal as a fuel at Backbarrow furnace for decades after the practice had ceased elsewhere. The practice was maintained at Backbarrow in response to the needs of a niche market. The continued requirement for charcoal well in to the nineteenth century was one of the factors in the continuing importance of woodland craft industries in south Cumbria. The local frequency of surnames such as Ashburner in the area has been previously noted.<sup>48</sup> Whilst woodland craft industries occurred within and shared practices with other wooded districts outside Cumbria, their occurrence within some districts in the region and not in others would have fostered inter-district distinctiveness. Moreover, in the nineteenth century, the continued maintenance of extensive coppice woodlands in south Cumbria and the nearby presence of large-scale textile industries led to the development of a nationally significant bobbin-making industry. Indeed it is thought that by the mid-nineteenth century 50 per cent of all the bobbins in Britain were made in south Cumbria and the Lake District.<sup>49</sup>

Cumbria has long been associated with the importation of industrial technologies starting in the sixteenth century with the employment of German miners and their techniques by the Mines Royal Company in the silver mines of Caldbeck. German know-how was again involved in the early eighteenth century when the Deulicher Brothers introduced factorisation to woollen cloth making in Carlisle.<sup>50</sup> In the 1750s sugar refining in Whitehaven was managed by a master refiner from Hamburg.<sup>51</sup> Earlier when Sir John Lowther first attempted to develop manufacturing industries in Whitehaven, he turned to Ireland for both labour and expertise.<sup>52</sup> The Lowther family's attempts to develop a west Cumbrian pottery industry in the mid-eighteenth century saw them import expertise from Staffordshire, including members of the Wedgewood family.<sup>53</sup> In the nineteenth century at Carnforth, close to the then Westmorland border, the settlement of Millhead was originally called Dudley because it had been established to house ironworkers attracted from the recession hit west Midlands.<sup>54</sup> Whether any of these attempts to germinate new industries in Cumbria fostered links with other regions and hence influenced the cultural identities of parts of Cumbria is debatable, but there is one industry in which inter-regional contacts and influence on identity is indisputable. The west Cumberland coal industry had close links to the coal industry of north-east England. In the later eighteenth century miners were poached from Newcastle and Cumberland men also went to the Newcastle area to work in mines there before returning home to mines in west Cumbria.<sup>55</sup> In an effort to improve techniques in the nineteenth century the colliery owners adopted practices from the Newcastle area, employing consultant mining engineers from Newcastle and adopting north-eastern working methods.<sup>56</sup> The legacy of this interaction is still recognisable in a shared industrial dialect.<sup>57</sup>

### **Industrialisation and immigration**

The importation of technological specialists from elsewhere in Britain and abroad was a tiny part of another process initiated by industrialisation, mass immigration. These specialists were representative of a wide range of immigrants who helped to bring necessary industrial expertise and unskilled labour into Cumbria to feed industrial expansion. This of course was a process that happened elsewhere too, and recently in Lancashire the study of the nineteenth century homes that housed industrial workers, mainly, though not exclusively, within expanding industrial towns, has been referred to as an archaeology of immigration.<sup>58</sup> The particular nature of this immigration is distinctive between one region and another, however, as a consequence of different industrial needs, different immigrant origins and differences in the local industrial, social and cultural experiences of the immigrants as they integrated.

In the eighteenth century much of the manufacturing expansion in Cumbria was located within or stimulated by the new towns established by coal owning landlords on the west coast. These new towns of the eighteenth century could not simply absorb population from the surrounding countryside but needed to attract immigrants. Comparisons have been drawn between these towns and the contemporary process of urbanisation in England's American colonies.<sup>59</sup> The economically under-developed and little urbanised far north-west of England is seen as having similar conditions of need and opportunity for the establishment of new towns, populated with new immigrant town dwellers. Both north America and west Cumbria can be viewed as pioneering areas for urban development. Indeed in eighteenth century Cumberland the new planned town of Maryport was termed a colony.<sup>60</sup> These Cumbrian colonials came from a number of areas but the maritime connections inevitably attracted settlers from Ireland, the Isle of Man and southern Scotland. In Carlisle, Irish and especially Scottish weavers were attracted into the city's burgeoning hand-loom weaving industry.<sup>61</sup> Coal mining as well as attracting immigrants from Newcastle also attracted miners from Scotland and Lancashire.<sup>62</sup>

In the nineteenth century Irish immigration came to dominate in Cumbria, even before the mid-nineteenth century famine. In 1841 the Irish-born population of Whitehaven totalled 800.<sup>63</sup> These new Cumbrians brought new cultural practices from their homelands and their concentration in a few urban areas further divorced those areas from distant rural hinterlands where the impact of immigration was largely unknown. For contemporaries it was the industrial inspired growth of towns that fuelled population growth in Cumbria. In 1816 Daniel and Samuel Lysons wrote,

many thousands have been added to the population of the county . . . by the growth of the now flourishing towns of Whitehaven, Maryport and Workington, and the great increase of inhabitants caused by the flourishing state of the manufactories of Carlisle.<sup>64</sup>

The most sudden and greatest impact, however, came later at Barrow. The growth of this town between about 1860 and 1880 was a remarkable phenomena even for contemporary Victorians who were used to the mushroom-like expansion of industrial towns. Only Middlesbrough was considered comparable in its rapid growth.<sup>65</sup> Much of this expansion was assisted by Irish immigrants, predominantly from Ulster, and

often by way of Glasgow and Liverpool, two other centres of settler origin.<sup>66</sup> Their influence on local identity, however, is likely to be less reliant on the precise origins of the settlers, than on their general non-local origin, the rapidity of their settlement and their subsequent working experience in large-scale industrial plants. The flood of non-indigenous peoples into Furness to work in industrial plants of previously unknown magnitude within the vicinity is likely to be the main reason that present day Barrow does not associate itself with High Furness and the Lake District. Barrow's origins produced an historical and cultural discontinuity in Furness which in the twentieth century resulted in a change in geographical allegiance.

### **Industrialisation, Romanticism and the creation of local identity**

There is one other way in which industrialisation has influenced identity in Cumbria and this is through a counter-reaction to the process of industrialisation itself. This is most clearly seen in the development of landscape appreciation in the Lake District and a resultant manipulation of the Lake District's history and an associated process of myth making and identity creation. The distinctive agrarian society that so many historians have sought to analyse was recognised first in the Lake District in the later eighteenth century. It was a series of romantically inclined writers such as the poets Thomas Gray and William Wordsworth and the antiquarian topographer Thomas West who first considered this society to be heroic.<sup>67</sup> How much this society was a locally distinctive variant of the more marginal farming pastoral economies existing across upland England is debateable,<sup>68</sup> but certainly Romantic writers lionised its members as standing out for traditional and praiseworthy values. They were a benign contrast to the new forces in the landscape such as developing industries.

During the late-eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century those who came to Cumbria to appreciate the landscape of the Lake District began to bemoan the negative impacts of industrialisation on the rural beauty of the region. This was exemplified in the mid-nineteenth century by Wordsworth and Ruskin's opposition to railways in the Lake District. Wordsworth in particular took an historical view of landscape which saw the hand of man evermore encroaching on and subjugating nature.<sup>69</sup> The Lake District and its inhabitants came to represent a core of resistance to this process. The Romantic Movement and the development of the conservation movement later in the nineteenth century combined to create a mythical identity for the Lake District that still pervades today. It is a landscape identity that features unspoilt wildness and ignores the long tradition of mining, metal working and woodland industries that thrived throughout the Lake District.

The likes of West (1778), Houseman (1802) and others, also created in their guides a regional unity to the area that ignored the historical county boundaries.<sup>70</sup> This unified area came to be called Lakeland or Little Switzerland. From the late eighteenth century onwards it became common to think of the lake counties and to write cohesive descriptions and histories of them. Long before the creation of modern Cumbria it was accepted that Westmorland, Cumberland and Lancashire-over-Sands formed a geographical unity.<sup>71</sup> The Lake District does indeed lie at the core of Cumbria and can be seen to share cultural features throughout its area that help to define it, such as

rounded chimney stacks on vernacular buildings, Herdwick sheep and villas set within ornamental landscapes. Certainly its inhabitants are acutely aware that they live within it, especially since the creation of the national park. Today in county magazines and on programmes like *Countryfile*, the Lake District can often seem synonymous with Cumbria, either subsuming or excluding areas outside it. The process that created the Lake District in part as a mythical refuge from the industrialising world outside its boundaries, has culminated in that creation seeming to consume the rest of the county. This has happened in tandem with an increasing ignorance and even distaste for the county's industrial past. This reaction, along with contemporary disparities in wealth, has probably exacerbated the divisions between the rural core and the industrialised coastal periphery of Cumbria that were initially perpetrated through industrialisation.

Industrialisation in Cumbria, as in many other places in the British Isles, is one of the most potent forces in the historical creation of modern local identities. It defines the outlook of a place's inhabitants and until recently, and certainly within living memory, defined occupation groups as self-identifying communities of shared skills, interests and opportunities. Above all it changed the physical world for everyone, creating distinctive landscapes and corpuses of equipment, tools and manufactured goods. These provided shared experiences for groups that were distinct from those of other groups. It gave birth to allegiances and oppositions, forming mythologies along the way, so that even any consideration of other factors in post-medieval identity creation, such as the nature of local farming and landholding, are coloured by the impacts of industrialisation.

*richard.newman@cumbria.gov.uk*

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