

ART. X.—*The port of Ravenglass.* By the REV. CÆSAR CAINE.

Read at Penrith, July 7th, 1921.

I HAVE found it a fairly easy task to present, in the form of a public lecture, a continuous memoir of the Ravenglass estuary or creek, in Roman, Scandinavian, and Mediaeval days, from data already published in these *Transactions*. In this paper my purpose is to supply some later details from manorial and other records.

The Elizabethan "Survey of the Estates of the Earl of Northumberland," preserved at Cockermouth Castle, has practically nothing to say about shipping, only naming it in connection with the fisheries. This section reads:— And also Keel-toll, to wit, to have all the tolls of ships, and of all merchandise, sold in all havens of Coupland, and the amendment of the Assize of nets broken* in the waters of Eske, (and)† between Ehen and Calder, the mastes‡ whereof are of lesser breadth than four inches; the fishgarths and fishings at Ravenglass in the River Eske, now in the hands of the lord, rent by the year £3 6s. 8d.

Coming to the 18th century we find harbour dues are still exacted:—

Anchorage:—a ship, 4d.; a ship with a boat, 8d.

In 1757 three shillings were received as dues, indicating the anchorage of nine vessels.

Here are a few forms of receipt:—

Three shillings received for anchorage of ships in Ravenglass Harbour within the Lordship of Egremont, between June, 1761, and June, 1762.

Two shillings received for anchorage of ships in Ravenglass Harbour within the Lordship of Egremont, between the 22nd of June, 1762, and 23rd of June, 1763.

* Broken = opened, set, or laid.

† "and" left out in the original document.

‡ Meshes.

Received for anchorage of ships in Ravenglass Harbour, 22nd November, 1768, to 21st November, 1769, £0 2s. 6d.

Received for anchorage of ships in Ravenglass Harbour, between 19th August, 1765, and 18th November, 1766, £0 4s. 2d.

We must be careful not to estimate the value of the amounts by the depreciated value of money at the present day.

About this time certain persons using the harbour declined to pay their dues. Isaac Cuppage, who acted as harbour-master, thus reports to the agent of the Lord-ship :—

Ravenglass, August 31, 1768.

Mr. John Benson,

Captain C., of the *Peggy and Mally*, now in this harbour. This is the second time of his coming in, and (he) refuses to pay anything, and so you may take your pleasure.

I am, your humble servant,

ISAAC CUPPAGE.

The agent passes the matter on in the following letter :—

Sir. By the above you see the captain of the *Peggy and Mally* refuses to pay anchorage. Mr. John Jackson, of Muncaster, has also refused to pay anchorage for two ships this summer, as also one Isaac Wilson, captain of the *Senhouse*, from Maryport; and two others from Ulverston, Sanderson and Wright. Is anything to be done to force them to pay, or must they pass, and (are we) only (to) take anchorage of those who are good natured enoff (*sic*, enough) to pay quietly? Your advice and instruction on this will much oblige. Your most humble and obedient servant,

JOHN BENSON.

Dues were paid long after this, but there is no doubt that from about this time the harbour laws became more or less neglected.

The "anchorage" included a great buoy, which appears to have caused no end of trouble by breaking loose.

1761.—By an allowance of 6s. and 2d. paid to John Coupland for a stone and crook for fastening the buoy in Ravenglass Harbour, omitted in the former charge on this account, in 1759, but paid since as particular account and receipt.

1762-3.—By an allowance of 9s. and 4d. paid Isaac Cuppage for

re-fixing the buoy in Ravenglass Harbour, which was broken loose by the violence of the tides, as particular accompt.

At a much later date an interesting story is told about this troublesome buoy. A vessel laden with Indian corn sought anchorage on it, but the captain was unable to find it. Being uncertain as to his position, and the "lie" of the harbour, he made for Whitehaven, which he knew well. Leaving his vessel there, he came by road to Ravenglass to investigate matters, and to learn how he might get his vessel anchored there, according to his original plan. To his surprise he found the buoy, which should have guided him and afforded him anchorage, lying high and dry at the top of the village street, whither it had been carried by a storm-driven high tide. The church hall in Ravenglass stands to-day on the site of a garden where the buoy was actually found.

At the beginning of the 19th century there appears to have been some revival in the interests of shipping at Ravenglass. In 1800 the following letter was addressed to Lord Muncaster by his agent :—

Also, as to any dues from Ravenglass port on account of the Earl of Egremont keeping up a sort of beacon : There are few vessels that enter the harbour in course of the year. Besides I do not recollect any beacon. I have sometimes seen a pole set up on the sandhills upon Eskmeals, but I dare say I have no way particularly noticed nor esteemed it to be of much use there, as the ground is too low. If your lordship were to purchase this from the Earl of Egremont, and would go to the expense of building a pillar in the high ground in Muncaster Park for a sea-mark, and would lay out a few hundred pounds deepening the channel of the harbour, it might be advantageous to the trade of this western coast.

By 1823 the proposed tower was erected on Newton Knott, but not by Lord Muncaster, and a chart by James Lawson of Parton, with instructions to sailing masters, was published.

I have failed to find any documents respecting the building of the tower, but local traditions respecting the

matter are fairly unanimous. Fortunately, the inscription on the tower was copied before it was obliterated. The copy reads:—"This beacon was erected by the voluntary subscriptions of the Cumberland shipping interest, for whose accommodation this ground was generously given by Mrs. Dixon, Newtown.—1823."

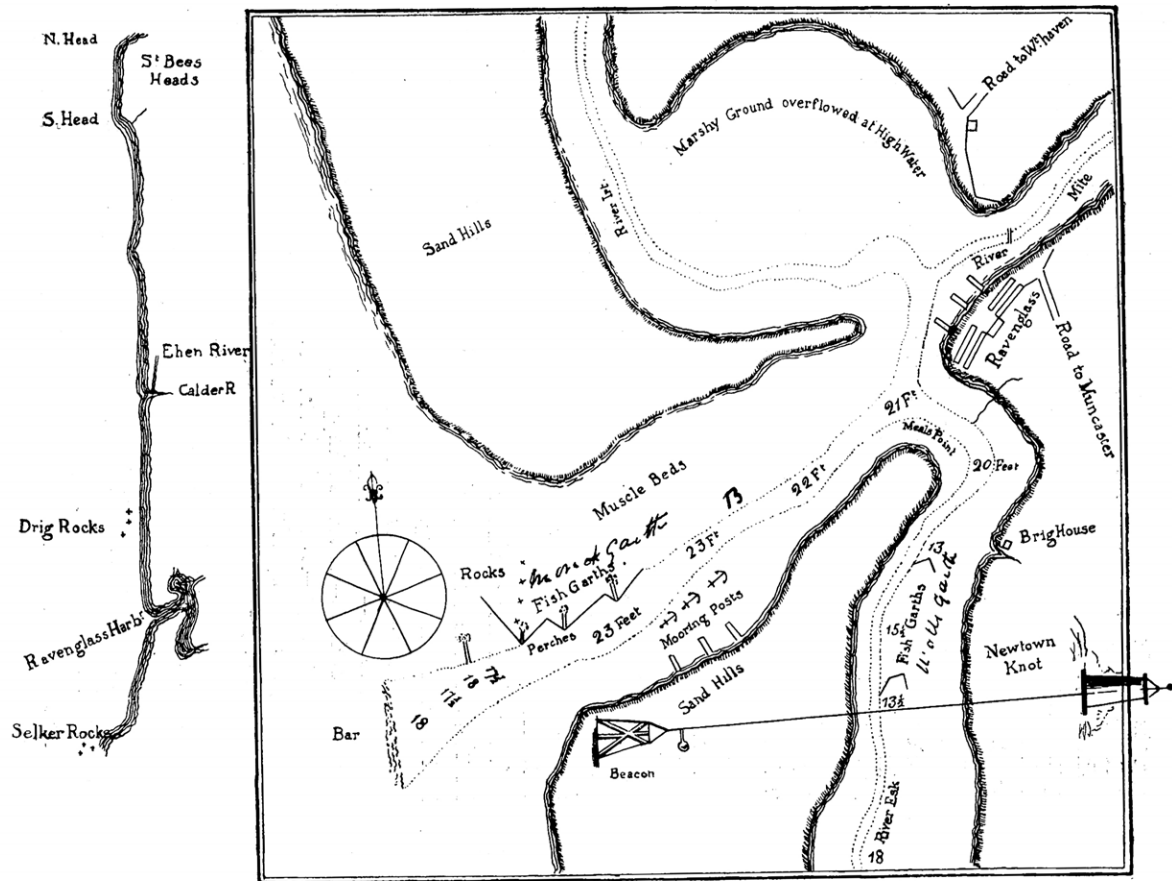
The copy, which was made in 1899, is under a sketch intended to represent the stone in outline, and shows an oval lozenge within a square. The inscription was within the oval.

There was some divergence of opinion as to whether the inscription was cut out, or whether the stone bearing the inscription was only turned round. But I am able to state on authority that the wording was not obliterated, nor was the stone reversed. The stone was thrown down and destroyed. Fragments remain, showing the lettering.

The tower was kept in order by the ship-owners of the district. Before the lightship was placed on Selker Rocks, the tower was regularly whitewashed for the purpose of making it more conspicuous. This whitewashing was done for the last time about 36 years ago. The workmen came from Whitehaven or St. Bees, and it is believed acted under the direction of Trinity House. At a subsequent date the Newtown Knott property came into the possession of Lord Muncaster, and is now included in the Muncaster Park.

Lawson's Chart has the following directions for sailing into Ravenglass Harbour:—

The harbour is easily distinguished at sea by a tower lately erected on Newtown Knott, a hill situate about half-a-mile south of Ravenglass. When you make the Tower, endeavour to bring it to bear East, per compass, and standing until you make the Beacon on the Sand Hills also. You should, before you take the Bar, have the two Beacons in one: care should be taken to keep rather to the Southward than the North, as the spring tides are very apt to sweep you to the Northward, where the ground is foul. When you approach the Entrance you will observe four Perches,



situate on the North side of the Channel, which keep on your larboard hand about thirty feet, where you have the best water. When you have passed the uppermost Perch, steer up E.N.E. until you bring the Beacon in Newtown Knot to bear S.E. by East half East per compass. Then let go your anchor, and moor in to the Southward, where there are Posts erected for that purpose, near the Sand Hills, opposite the Anchor Buts.

N.B.—It is High Water at Ravenglass at Full and Change, at 11 o'clock, and the tide off the Bar runs as follows:—the last Half Flood, and the first Half Ebb sets to the Northward at the rate of 4 miles per hour in Spring Tides, and the last Half Ebb and the first Half Flood to the Southward at the same rate. There is a foot of water more on the Bar than given in Holden's Tide Table.

The trade at this time consisted principally of corn, flour, oysters, oatmeal, bacon, iron, lime, potatoes, coal and various kinds of wood, such as spars, hoops, etc.

About the middle of the century, one Walter Scott, (whose descendants still live in the village), rented the harbour mouth fishery, and occupied the post of harbour-master.

There is a list of the vessels which entered the harbour in 1853, made out and signed by him. It reads:—

List of vessels at Ravenglass, 1853:—

Feb. 9—*May*, of Ulverston.
 Feb. 10—*Dotty*, of Fleetwood.
 March 10—*Hero*, of Maryport.
 March 30—*Dotty*, of Fleetwood.
 June 16—*Speakman*, of Preston.
 Sept. 3—*Margaret*, of Glasgow.

(Signed) WALTER SCOTT.

Mr. Martin Ashburner of Gosforth, miller, who died in 1890, used to charter small craft to bring wheat for his mill. The wheat was discharged into country carts, and so brought to Gosforth.

There have been several wrecks in the harbour vicinity. About 1842, Ravenglass owned a sloop of 180 tons, named *The Duchess of Leinster*, sailed by Captain Candlish. This vessel came to grief, but it was recovered by Mr. Richard

Taylor, agent for the Muncaster estates up to and including 1861, and he continued to sail her.

Later, *The Ada*, carrying iron from Dublin to Workington, sank on the south side of The Bar. This happened about forty years ago, and there are people living in the village who took part in the rescue of the crew, and the salvage of the cargo. At low tides a portion of the wreck is to be seen to-day.*

One other circumstance may be noticed, in conclusion, as further depreciating the trade of Ravenglass—the opening of the Furness Railway about 1850. People still living remember coals for local use being brought in by ship. There was a depôt or wharf on the beach at the lower end of the town. Coals, lime, and many other commodities, which were once sea-borne, are now brought in by railway. The last sea-going vessel to enter the harbour was a schooner, bringing a valuable cargo of guano. This was in 1914.

One question has been repeatedly asked respecting this harbour:—"Was there a stone wharf or dock at any time at Ravenglass?" No written evidence on this matter has been produced. I suggest that Ravenglass has never been more than a natural harbour—a spacious creek with special facilities for accommodating shipping.

There was a "hard" for boats at one time. This was erected at the cost of the well-known artist, William Stott of Oldham, who occupied Holly House. His studio still stands in rear of the house.

* There is a fairly full account of this wreck in *The Whitehaven News*, for May 26, 1921.