ART. XVII – *A history of the Wray Castle Estate, Claife*
BY JAMIE LUND

"*On the opposite shore is Wray Castle, erected by James Dawson, Esq – A most defensible-looking place for so peaceful a region, but an enviable residence, both from its interior beauty and the views it commands*" [1].

WRAY Castle is situated some three miles to the south of Ambleside, close to the western shore of Windermere at NGR NY 3750 0100, and is located in a parkland estate that spreads across the two Ordnance Survey 1:10000 scale map sheets NY 30 SE and SD 39 NE. (Fig. 1). The castle was built during the 1840s by Dr James Dawson as the centrepiece for his estate that included numerous other buildings along with a home farm at Low Wray. At the time of Dawson's death in 1875 the estate totalled some 830 acres and included a number of farms to the south of the castle, together with areas of broadleaf and conifer woodland. The castle, and a large part of the former estate, is now in the ownership of the National Trust and forms part of the Hawkshead and Claife estate. A great deal of the information presented in this article has resulted from an historic landscape survey of this property carried out during 1998 and 1999, which examined the surrounding farms and farmland along with the castle and its immediate environs.[2]

Early history

It is possible that there may have been a farm at Wray in pre-conquest times, although this is by no means certain as no trace of any early farmstead survives. The name "Wray" derives from the Norse, meaning nook or hollow, and seems to fit well with this area of low lying and gently undulating land.[3] What effect the post-conquest settlement had on established farms in this area is little understood, although existing farming hamlets are likely to have continued to operate while offering rents and other duties to their new Norman lords.

The foundation of Furness Abbey in 1127 may have resulted in further changes for those tenants on monastic land, although given the distance of Claife from the Abbey, everyday life may have continued as it had done before. During the fourteenth century Edward III made two grants giving Furness Abbey a greater degree of autonomy in the management of the Furness Fells. In 1336 the Abbot was granted free warren by the King throughout the demesne lands of Hawkshead, Sawrey and Claife.[4] Two years later the Abbey received royal licence to establish new parks in its woodlands, including those in "Claife and in the Furness Fells generally".

The majority of parks were established within areas of marginal land or on the upland wastes, allowing the Abbey to maximise the economic return on these areas and increase the number of sheep maintained. They were quite unlike the hunting parks established by the Norman nobility. Place-name evidence, together with an

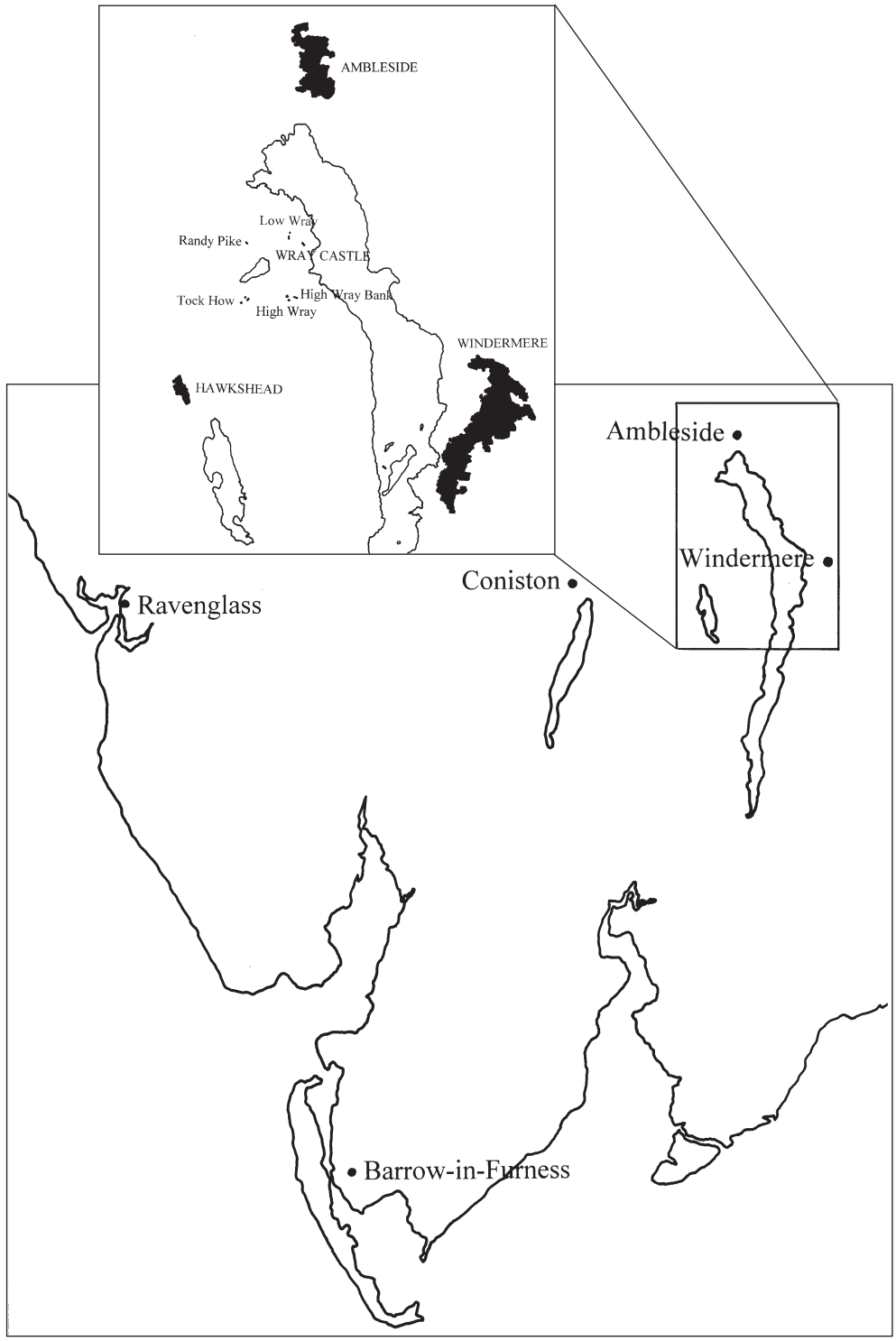

FIG. 1. Location map.

analysis of the local topography and extant boundaries, suggest that a park once existed close to Low Wray, although there is no evidence to suggest when it was established. If a park was in existence at Wray in the fourteenth century the enclosed area was probably restricted to the western side of Blelham Beck given that the farm at Low Wray is likely to have enclosed the majority of land to the east. Certainly the land to the west of Blelham Beck is very different from that surrounding Low Wray Farm, being low-lying and poorly drained.

The first documentary reference to a farm at Wray appears in a list of monastic tenants drawn up on the surrender of Furness Abbey, which lists seven tenants at Wray for the year 1538-9.[5] The term Wray is used here to refer to the local area, rather than a particular hamlet. The seven tenants may have occupied three or four separate farms in the area. The list also records the existence of a freshwater fishery at Wray; this refers to Blelham Tarn situated to the south-west of the present Low Wray Farm.

The first named tenant of Low Wray is Edward Braithwaite who died there in 1609;[6] the Braithwaite family may have been resident at Low Wray for some time by this date. The farm descended with the Braithwaite family throughout the first half of the seventeenth century before being sold by William Braithwaite to William Bankes in 1673.[7] It changed hands again, before being sold to Thomas Strickland in around 1740,[8] and remained in the hands of the Strickland family until it was sold for £5,000 in 1824 to their sitting tenant, John Marr.[9]

A survey of Low Wray Farm was made in 1757 while it was in the ownership of the Strickland family (Fig. 2).[10] This document is useful in highlighting the compartmentalised agricultural landscape that once existed at Low Wray and is essential in helping to understand later change. The survey depicts the farm at the centre of the holding, surrounded by a patchwork of small irregular shaped fields maintained as either arable, meadow or pasture, together with a few small enclosed woodlands.

The 1757 survey bears the legend that, "All the Ring fence between Mr Gawen Braithwaite and LoWray Land is undivided and made at an equal Expense". Mr Braithwaite is shown to own land to the north-west of Low Wray Farm, suggesting the "Ring fence" to be the wall running along the edge of Old Park and Peathouse Close, which formed part of the landholding of Low Wray Farm. This boundary is likely to have been set up to sub-divide the former park, perhaps as a joint effort amongst those tenants who were adding additional land to their holdings.

Other local field names, such as Lady Park and Renny Park Coppice, that appear on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1850 suggest that the park had once occupied a large area to the west of Low Wray. The park may even have once included the five fields shown as Brathey Pasture, Batchow, Moss Intake, Archers New Intake and Yew Intake marked on the survey of 1757. It is interesting to note that a map of sale from 1836 differentiates between the land belonging to Low Wray Farm as freehold and that held by customary right.[11] The area around the farm was held as freehold, while the fields to the west of Blelham Beck were held with the payment of a customary rent. This suggests that these fields had not formed part of the early landholding of Low Wray Farm and had been acquired separately, presumably after the park had fallen out of use and had been subdivided.

The Stricklands lived at Low Wray for only a short time and leased the farm to a

FIG. 2. Redrawn copy of the 1757 survey of Low Wray.

tenant. A survey of the property was made in the early part of the nineteenth century while the farm was let to John Marr. This survey lists the majority of fields depicted in 1757, as well as describing the surrounding coppice woods which were at that time four, eight and fourteen years old. The whole of the Low Wray Estate was valued at £5,796.[12] In 1829 Marr is listed in a local trade directory as a "yeoman farmer", showing that he had by this time bought the farm outright.[13] Marr appears to have remained at Low Wray until 1834 when he sold the farm to Andrew Henry Thompson of Belle Field, Windermere for £6,000.[14]

Just two years later Low Wray was sold to James Dawson; a redrawn copy of the sale map is reproduced below (Fig. 3).[15] The only significant change to the landscape depicted almost eighty years previously was the addition after 1770 of a road linking Low Wray to the main road between Hawkshead and Ambleside. Otherwise there had been little change in the pattern of enclosure; the differences in the size and shape of fields on either side of Blelham Beck remained intact. Where there had been eighteen fields to the east of Blelham Beck and eight to the west in 1757, there were now twenty-one to the east and eleven to the west. This total also includes the purchase of one additional parcel of land to the west of Blelham Beck.

Other changes included modifications to the pattern of land drainage and the course of Blelham Beck. The winding course of the beck between Blelham Tarn and Blelham Bridge depicted in 1757 is shown as straightened by 1836, probably in an attempt to increase the flow of water off the land into Windermere. A new feature marked as "open drain" is also shown in 1836 and is later marked as "Old Park Cut" on the 1850 Ordnance Survey map. This cut appears to have taken water from Hog House Beck along a new route through the Old Park, discharging it into Blelham Beck south of Bee Holme. The cumulative effect of this programme of drainage is likely to have caused a profound reduction in the acreage of wet ground and peat mosses, maximising the available meadow land.

The building of Wray Castle

In June 1836 Dr James Dawson, a retired surgeon from Liverpool, acquired Low Wray for the sum of £6,500.[16] This was Dawson's second purchase in the area, as the sale map highlights his existing ownership of a parcel of adjoining land. It is not known when this purchase was made. The sale included Low Wray Farm and its farmland along with The Wray, a late-eighteenth or early-nineteenth century building now known as the Dower House. Little is known of its origins, it is possible that it was built and occupied by some previous owner of Low Wray while the farm was let to a tenant.

James Dawson and his wife Margaret appear to have lived at the Dower House until the completion of building work on Wray Castle. An often repeated quotation from Beatrix Potter's journal, written during her time staying at Wray Castle in 1882, records how a storm blew a slate from the roof of the Dower House and as a result Dr Dawson "vowed he would build a house that could stand the weather".[17] This story is surely anecdotal, and it is unlikely that James Dawson did not have the creation of a grand residence in mind when he purchased Low Wray Farm in 1836. After work on the castle was completed the Dower House was used to provide quarters for domestic staff.[18]

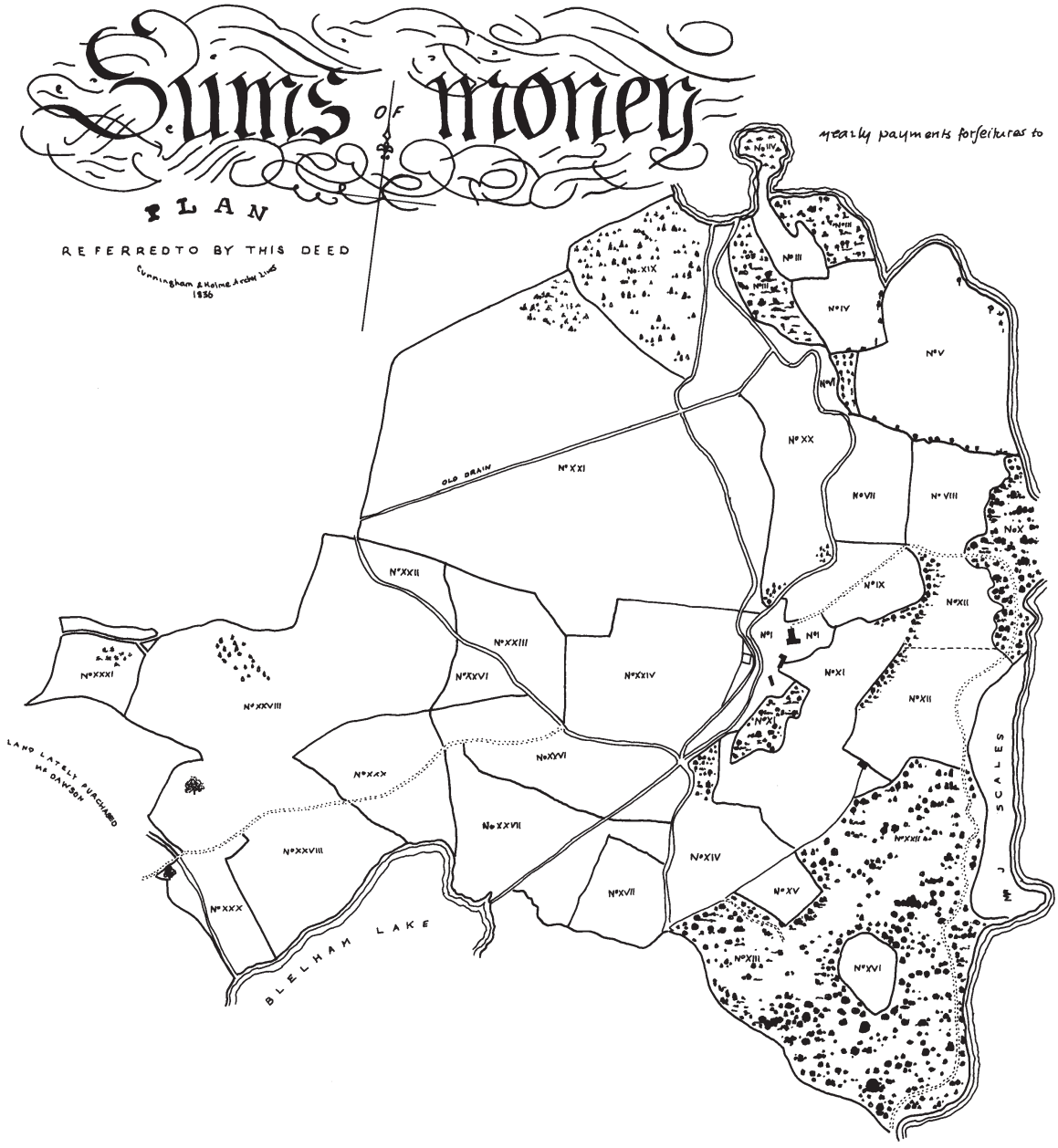

FIG. 3. Redrawn copy of the map of sale for Low Wray, 1836.

The start and completion dates for the construction of Wray Castle are somewhat unclear. The majority of secondary sources suggest that work began in 1840 and took seven years to complete.[19] It is possible that this suggestion resulted from the depiction of the castle on the first edition Ordnance Survey map surveyed during 1847-8, rather than any firm documentary evidence. Some secondary sources put the completion date of the castle as early as 1842,[20] although it seems remarkable that work could have been completed in just two years. In 1882 Beatrix Potter wrote that Wray Castle was "built by Mr Dawson in 1845" although it is not clear what source she was using.[21] The later sale particulars for the estate indicate only that the castle was built during the 1840s.[22]

The diary of Beatrix Potter records that the castle cost around £60,000 to build over a period of seven years.[23] Another account suggests that the costs exceeded this amount, and that Dr Dawson "reputedly abandoned account keeping once he had spent £60,000".[24] Beatrix Potter continues to say that the castle was built with his wife's money: "her father Robert Preston made gin; that was where the money came from".

Building work on the castle appears to have been both expensive and difficult. Beatrix Potter records how the unfortunate architect, "Mr Lightfoot killed himself with drinking before the house was finished".[25] John Jackson Lightfoot, who died at the age of 48 in 1843, was not an architect by trade, but an accountant based in Liverpool who was encouraged to pursue his keen amateur interest in architecture.[26] Lightfoot appears to have been responsible for overseeing building work while following the designs of H. P. Horner, although there is little evidence to explore the detail of this. Lightfoot may also have been responsible for providing a new frontage for the Dower House in around 1842 although the circumstances of this are also far from clear.

The castle is typical of the Gothic Revival architectural style of the mid-nineteenth century and includes castellated towers, corner towers with narrow iron rimmed arrow slits and even a portcullis. It is built from the local dark grey slate, although some dressed limestone is also used. Beatrix Potter's diaries note that the stone used to build the castle had been brought across the lake. Once landed the stone was dragged up on a kind of tramway ready for use.[27] A later account suggests that the stone was carted across the frozen surface of Windermere by a Mr Henry Topham, although no record of this event appears elsewhere.[28] The Dawson coat of arms is carved in sandstone above the porte-cochère, while another carving displays the monogram of James and Margaret Dawson. Perhaps the most remarkable aspects of the interior are the ornate woodwork and wall panelling, along with the impressive plasterwork and ceiling mouldings. The main hall contains a particularly impressive pattern of Minton tiles, some of which are monogrammed. A marble starburst pattern in the reception hall is equally well executed.

The castle environs

Two mock ruins or follies were erected close to the castle, one opposite the porte-cochère and another attached to the retaining wall a short distance to the north-east. The first structure comprised two heavy castellated turrets each containing a single room; the structure was attached to a curtain wall which gave the impression that

the tumbled ruin had once been more extensive. The second had a single large angled turret. It is not clear if the ruins had been added by the time of the Ordnance Surveyors' visit in 1847-8, although it is likely that these features were erected either concurrently or soon after work on Wray Castle had been completed.[29] One source suggests that they were added in 1848, just a year after work on the castle is thought to have been finished.[30]

The ruins are described in the 1920 sale particulars as being "erected principally of stone brought from Furness Abbey, before such removals were prohibited". However, a later survey noted only a single arch of red sandstone, the remainder being local stone.[31] The National Trust reported in 1969[32] that the ruins were unsafe and they were dismantled in 1970.[33] The arch of sandstone was offered by the Trust to the then Ministry of Works so it could be returned to the Abbey. It is not known what happened to the stones after this.

A great deal of landscaping work on the surrounding estate appears to have taken place concurrently with work on the castle. It is perhaps likely that the fernery or conservatory, along with other items of garden furniture depicted in 1888, may have been erected during the initial phase of estate design. The sale brochure from 1920 describes the garden buildings as consisting of a greenhouse, stove house and a lofty conservatory with a potting shed beneath. Only the building described as the fernery or conservatory survives today; fragments of the system of pipes that once heated the buildings can still be seen leading from the former stove house.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1850 shows the arboretum area already enclosed and containing numerous specimen trees. In her journal, Beatrix Potter records a conversation with the gardener at the castle in 1882, in which he recalled the day he planted the Douglas Pine in the arboretum, carefully breaking off the pot that held the specimen tree that was no more than a foot in height. Her diary also suggests that the present collection of trees had been planted by many different people, rather than being the result of a single episode of planting and also makes reference to a mulberry bush planted by William Wordsworth in 1845.

The map of sale for the estate from 1898 offers a detailed depiction of the arboretum, showing a mixed planting of conifer and broadleaf trees. A survey of the arboretum made in 1987 recorded seventeen different species; among them Ginkgo, Giant Redwood, Chile Pine, Eagle Claw Maple, Beech, Yew and Fir.[34] The survey also revealed that while some trees appear to have been grown from pots as specimen trees, others appear to have been grafted onto the stumps of trees of a different species.

A series of edged footpaths recorded within the arboretum appears to have provided a promenade around the individual specimen trees whilst also linking to other constructed garden features. These pathways are clearly marked on the sale map from 1898 and are likely to form part of Dawson's own designs. Other constructed garden features include a square decorative cobbled area, perhaps once part of a formal seating area, and two upright slabs which appear to have formed part of a slate bench. More puzzling are two artificial piles of rocks separated by a path adjacent to a large circular hollow, perhaps a fernery or rockery for alpine plants. It is possible that some features may be the product of garden design after the death of James Dawson in 1875.

Near to the arboretum stands an orchard almost certainly established along with

the walled garden and kitchen garden in the first decade of Dawson's ownership of the estate. At the time of the sale in 1920 the orchard contained more than seventy fruit trees of many different varieties including apples, pears, plums, damsons and filberts (Fig. 4).

The walled garden to the south of the castle, and the smaller kitchen garden situated to the north, were both established as part of the early phase of estate design. Detailed depictions show the larger walled garden to have been divided into two by a row of trees or shrubs; the southern half is further sub-divided by a short pathway to allow access to planting beds. The sale particulars of 1920 reveal the garden had "high walls clothed with choice fruit trees". A system of hooks, nails and wires that would have supported the fruit trees can still be seen on the walls. Parts of the wall have tumbled revealing a brick and stone built cavity wall that would have been heated at certain times of the year.

It is likely that the small building attached to the walled garden was built as part of the original design rather than being added later. While it is not clear if the building had been erected by 1850, it is clearly depicted in 1888. The 1920 sale brochure describes the building as a "brick and slated Gardener's Bothy, originally a Coach House and Stable, but now used for storage purposes".

Other buildings on the estate

Set apart from the castle on what was then the western edge of the Wray Castle estate stands Randy Pike (not National Trust property), a small outlier of the estate picturesquely sited in a cleft between two crags in what had been known as Archers New Intake. Randy Pike is typical of the Garden Pavilion style of architecture popular during the first half of the nineteenth century and is almost certainly the first building completed by Dawson, perhaps to be enjoyed while the castle was still under construction.[35] The internal organisation of the house with its large fireplace and open hall, along with a kitchen in the basement suggest it had been designed for use as a banqueting room and was perhaps used for entertaining guests after a day's shooting on the estate.

The location of Randy Pike appears to have been carefully chosen to present a scene very different from that offered from other parts of the estate, with memorable views from the front of the house towards the Langdale Pikes. This concern to capture a different aspect from the castle can be seen as an indication of its planned use as an ancillary building to a larger residence. Its location just a short distance off the road linking Hawkshead and Ambleside would have ensured that the house, with its distinctive architectural style, caught the attention of passers-by, as well as marking the western edge of the estate (Fig. 5).

At some point Randy Pike appears to have been remodelled and partitioned to make it suitable as a dwelling. The census of 1851 records that a waller, perhaps employed by the estate, lived in the property. Later the house was occupied by Margaret Dawson, sister to James, who lived there until her death in 1880, after which time the house was occupied by Mr and Mrs Renton.[36] The 1920 sale particulars describe the estate as being a "Comfortable Bungalow Residence" which also possessed a small "pleasure garden and a capital kitchen garden", features presumably developed after the building had been converted into a dwelling house.

Eight years later the sale particulars highlight the excellent prospect of using Randy Pike as part of a "sporting estate", and suggest that acquisition of Low Wray Farm would offer "a very useful mixed shoot", as well as access to Blelham Tarn. Mrs Renton is still listed at the property in the sale particulars of 1928, at which time she was able to purchase it.

A number of buildings on the estate share the same architectural style and materials as Wray Castle, but are absent from the Ordnance Survey map of 1850 and thus must have been built in the succeeding years. Work on the gatehouse located at the end of the driveway leading to Wray Castle is likely to have begun prior to 1850, although there are no descriptions of it until 1888. One author has suggested that the gatehouse, along with St Margaret's church, had been erected on the former site of Low Wray Farm,[37] although this seems very unlikely and no evidence to support this came to light during recent fieldwork. In 1912 the estate coachman George Duckley was listed as living at the lodge, suggesting that it may have latterly provided accommodation for employees.[38]

The boathouse located in Low Wray Bay appears to have also been completed around this time. The natural shelter afforded by a rocky promontory makes the bay an ideal landing spot and was later adopted into the design of the boathouse and wet dock. Three other small boathouses were built between 1847-8 and 1888. The first in Calf Parrock Coppice is visible only from the lake, while two others are located on opposite sides of High Wray Bay. No boathouses appear to have been set up on Blelham Tarn, although the tarn must have been regularly fished.

Almost adjacent to the lodge stands St Margaret's church, built in 1856 for what was described as "the spiritual benefit of Dr Dawson's family, retainers and estate workers, servants and friends".[39] Some sources suggest the church was erected as early as 1845,[40] although this is clearly impossible as neither the church nor the vicarage are depicted on the Ordnance Survey map of 1850. The choice of St Margaret as patron is likely to have been to honour James Dawson's wife and sister who both shared the name. The church was consecrated in 1861 by the Bishop of Carlisle when it was assigned parochial boundaries. For whatever reason the church appears to have undergone some restoration in 1873 costing £1,000. In 1882 St Margaret's was in the incumbency of the Revd Hardwick Rawnsley, who resided at the vicarage a short distance from the church close to Ben Hessel Coppice.[41]

Low Wray Farm

The existing buildings that make up Low Wray Farm can be divided into two separate groups on the basis of date and architectural style. The T-shaped cluster of buildings at the north of the hamlet appear to be the earliest surviving buildings and are likely to date from the eighteenth or late-seventeenth century. To the south of this group is the collection of buildings now known as Low Wray Farm, which includes two houses and numerous agricultural buildings that are arranged to form a courtyard. It is this latter group of buildings which were rebuilt as a home farm during the 1840s, although it is possible that the designs may have incorporated parts of an earlier building.[42]

Low Wray Farm was described in 1733 as "two messuages, four barns, two cow-

PLATE 1. The view of the castle from the end of the drive outside the Dower House.

PLATE 2. The monk ruins that once stood overlooking the parkland to the north of the castle.

houses, one outhouse 'commonly called Barmcastle', a dursehouse (middenstead) and four orchards".[43] These are likely to be the farm buildings depicted in 1757, although none of the buildings shown can be associated with existing buildings and their depiction may have been partly schematic (Fig. 2). The buildings are again shown on the 1836 sale plan for Low Wray, which depicts three separate structures. The barn adjoining the original farmhouse range is now marked to create the existing T-shaped arrangement (Fig. 3). To the south of this group two buildings are depicted on the survey of 1836, both of which are likely to have been used either as barns or cow houses. Both appear similar in size and alignment to those shown on the 1757 map.

The remodelling of the farmhouse and outbuildings at Low Wray appears to have been completed soon after its acquisition by James Dawson in 1836. Building work on the new farm and existing buildings was certainly completed by 1847-8. While the group of buildings in the north were retained and remodelled as part of the home farm, the two buildings to the south depicted in 1838 appear to have been demolished.[44] It is not clear if Rose Cottage, an extension to the two storey farmhouse, had been added by this time, although given the architectural style it is likely to have been added concurrently with the construction of the home farm.

The architectural style of Wray Castle was also adopted for the farm buildings at Low Wray, including the use of rough hood moulds, broad eaves, gothic windows and ball finials. The new farm, including two bank barns above shippons, feed stores, a stable block and hayloft and a coach house, was clearly intended to encourage advanced farming practices while also conforming to mid-nineteenth century tastes in design and style. The larger bank barn even included a water turbine used for processing animal fodder, chopping turnips and perhaps threshing, and later for running a saw bench. Although this turbine may have been an original feature of the new farm, the pond that supplies water to power it is not depicted in 1850. The turbine may have been installed in the barn at a later date, or may have been installed from the outset with the pond and launder being added after the area around the farm had been surveyed.

The most decorative part of the remodelled farm of the 1840s is the large stable block. The external treatment is somewhat richer than the adjacent buildings and it is possible that it originally housed the horses belonging to the estate, rather than being part of the working farm. The ground floor contained a panelled harness room, while the first floor included a large hayloft and a stableman's room. In 1920 the estate is listed as having "roomy stabling for ten horses", which appear to have still been in use. After the sale and break-up of the estate the stable block seems to have been adapted for livestock, leading to some loss of the original fittings. A small smithy shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1850 a short distance to the south of the stables was identified during the survey. The building has since been converted into a hog house and no trace of any metal working equipment remains.

This collection of buildings contrasts with the traditional vernacular architecture so characteristic of the Lake District. Planned farmsteads are usually a product of larger farming estates owned by landowners, with progressive ideas on estate management, who were familiar with the latest fashions in farming, and who also possessed the necessary capital to realise their ideas. The new building work at Low Wray can be seen to be influenced by the rise of "High Farming", an approach to

mixed farming based on high input to yield maximum output, popular during the early and mid-nineteenth century.

The next phase of building work is difficult to date, but was completed during the second half of the nineteenth century, sometime prior to 1888.[45] The new farmhouse or cottage at Low Wray was enlarged to the south, substantially increasing the domestic accommodation, and a wash house was built abutting it sometime afterwards. Three new buildings were also constructed within the courtyard, greatly reducing the available space. Two of these single storey buildings appear to have been used as shippons, the third building was designed for use as a covered midden. A loose box and trap house were also added onto the stable block a short distance to the south.

While something of the architectural style used in the earlier buildings is carried over into this later phase, the erection of these buildings detracts from the visually impressive stable block. Those buildings located in the former farmyard are perhaps most damaging to the overall appearance of the farm, almost filling the open area and blocking off the views of the impressively styled range at the back of the yard. These later alterations and additions appear to reflect a new concern with making the farm more effective as a working unit, and may have been agreed at the insistence of the tenant who possibly found the original group of building unsuitable for practical farming.

The parkland estate and woodlands

In the years after 1836 the surrounding pattern of fields and boundaries was thoroughly reworked to create a series of unbroken views over the parkland towards the edges of the estate. The majority of boundaries removed are likely to have been hedgerows, although some fences or walls may also have been demolished. The Ordnance Survey map of 1850 shows the lines of former hedgerows as lines of mature trees that had become established within hedgerows, and had been subsequently incorporated into the parkland landscape. Where boundaries were essential, hedgerows appear to have been replaced with iron railings that were more in keeping with open parkland dotted with ancient oaks and new exotic plantings.[46]

As hedgerows were being removed, formal planting was introducing new tree species in the landscape. Some of the earliest planting undertaken by James Dawson appears to have been in the Old Park just to the north-west of the Old Park Cut, where a band of conifers in front of the existing semi-natural broadleaf woodland is shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1850. The positioning of these conifers on the margins of the existing woodland may have introduced a variety of colours, while the established trees would have added depth to the young conifers as they became established. By 1888 those conifers depicted in 1850 had almost been cleared and the remaining few were felled before 1898.[47] The semi-natural broadleaf woodland beyond the conifers had also largely disappeared by 1888 leaving just a handful of veteran oak and beech trees that were incorporated into the parkland design. However, rather than being left treeless, the north-western edge of the estate appears to have been restocked with conifers along to the northern boundary wall of the estate. These trees were likely to have been felled during the early part of the twentieth century. The remains of a saw bench and engine stand were found in the Old Park.[48]

Adjacent to the Old Park woodland sits Peathouse Wood, a small, enclosed wood that would have almost certainly contained standing coppice when James Dawson acquired it in 1836. In 1850 it was depicted as dense mixed broadleaf woodland which was then thinned during the second half of the nineteenth century and interspersed with conifers and other exotics. These trees are shown as well established on the 1888 Ordnance Survey map and must have been planted during the mid-nineteenth century. This planting no doubt introduced some variety to the existing canopy, perhaps ensuring that a burst of green could be seen all year round. The pattern of planting in this area remained unchanged until after 1928.

A similar mixture of managed coppice and scrub woodland existed around Randy Pike until the 1840s. Sometime before 1888 the existing woods appear to have been thinned and planted with conifers, either in blocks or as individual specimens. The pattern of planting is clear on the 1898 sale plan for the estate, with the densest planting established alongside the road between Hawkshead and Ambleside. The plantings may have also had a more utilitarian function in disguising the quarry located a short distance to the west that was opened sometime between 1847 and 1888. It is possible the quarry had originally provided stone for use on the estate, but it was leased out for profit in later years. The quarry was put up for sale in 1928, when it was worked by Lancashire County Council at a "remunerative royalty" for the landowner.[49]

Numerous clumps of conifers were also established on either side of the road linking Low Wray with the road between Hawkshead and Ambleside. As at Randy Pike some plantations are likely to have been established in part to conceal unsightly features such as quarries. The plantings in this area appear to have been in long thin blocks or in small clumps consisting of just a handful of trees. The scale of this planting can be seen in a comparison between the depiction of Low Wray in 1836 and the later sale particulars from 1898.

While a great deal of care was taken to ensure impressive views from Wray Castle over the estate, equal care was taken to create a series of views along the approach to the castle. Travelling south-east from the Hawkshead to Ambleside road towards Low Wray, any view of Low Wray Farm is obscured through a combination of the undulating ground and the tree planting along the western edge of Blelham Beck to the north of Blelham Bridge. This screen of trees saved a view of the farm until the visitor reached Blelham Bridge where it was revealed with the impressive stable block in the foreground.

When approaching the castle gatehouse the right hand side of the road is edged with railings to encourage the visitor to look out over Blelham Tarn and the surrounding woodland to the west. This ensured that visitors gained an impressive view over to the western edge of the estate before arrival. Passing through the gatehouse the main driveway is also flanked with iron railings, facilitating long views over the parkland towards Old Park to the north and Epley Head to the south. Continuing on, the views close in with woodland appearing on both sides of the drive to block off all sight of the castle. A little way on, the tree cover on the north side becomes less dense to give a brief glimpse of the Dower House. Breaking out of the woodlands on either side, the drive turns to the right and presents an immediate view of the castle with its impressive porte-cochère, while to the left the vista opens out to look over the parkland and the lake beyond.

The effect of the extensive programme of planting in the mid-nineteenth century appears to have paid a substantial dividend by the early part of the twentieth century. Included within the valuer's report from the sale of the estate in 1920 was a comprehensive survey of all the standing timber on the property worth a total of £11,792, which the purchaser was obliged to pay for in addition to any bid accepted for the estate itself.

Evidence suggests that James Dawson continued the programme of drainage works on land now part of his estate. The 1836 map of sale shows the northern part of Blelham Beck having a meandering course as it nears its outflow into Windermere. By the time the area was surveyed in 1847-8 a second more direct outflow channel had been added to the west. The Old Park Cut is shown as still in use at this time linking Hog House Beck to the new outflow channel. The 1850 Ordnance Survey map also shows that only a short section of the Old Park Cut remained active. The course of the cut across the Old Park field is not even depicted.

The most significant modifications were made to Hog House Beck, although the changes are difficult to trace. The course depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey is almost identical to that shown on the map of Low Wray from 1757. However, the beck does not appear on the map of sale for Low Wray from 1836, although Blelham Beck and the Old Park Cut are both indicated. This may suggest that at this time a great deal of the water from Hog House Beck was being taken by the Old Park Cut; indeed the creation of the Old Park Cut may have allowed improvements to be made to Hog House Beck. The recent survey revealed that that the sides of the beck were in parts canalised and had been lined with stone flags, perhaps in an effort to increase the outflow of water.

In many of the low-lying plots beside Blelham Beck patterns of closely laid drains can be seen discharging surplus water into the beck. This programme of drainage appears to have had a fundamental effect on land-use. A collection of deeds from the 1830s and 1840s record the sale or abandonment of peat mosses by local individuals, suggesting that this drainage work brought an end to peat cutting in these areas.[50]

The wider landscape

The 1836 sale map for Low Wray shows Dr Dawson as already being in possession of a parcel of land to the north-west of Blelham Tarn. This parcel is depicted as containing a fish-pond on the Ordnance Survey map of 1850. The pond appears to have been established as a starting pond for fish before they were released into Blelham Tarn. Although we cannot be sure that it was constructed by James Dawson, it does seem likely and it may have been established around 1836 while work was under way on nearby Randy Pike. Fishing rights on Blelham Tarn were held by Wray Castle at a customary rent of one shilling payable to the lord of the manor, the Duke of Buccleuch.[51]

After the acquisition of land at Low Wray the estate was enlarged piecemeal over the following two decades with the acquisitions of High Wray Bank (1841), High Wray Farm (1851), Hole Farm (1854), Watbarrow Wood (1856), Low Tock How Farm (1858), and High Tock How Farm with Busk (1870).

PLATE 3. A view of the parkland looking north from the castle with Windermere and Fairfield Horseshoe beyond.

There appear to have been significantly fewer changes to the other agricultural landscapes acquired for the estate.[52] The pattern of hedgerows and woodlands show no obvious changes, although as there are only glimpses of these farms in documents before 1888 it is difficult to assess exactly what changes might have occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century. Low Wray Farm apart, the farmhouses and outbuildings do not appear to have been greatly modified after their acquisition. The buildings at High Wray and Tock How all are representative of vernacular design and function.

What did take place was some redistribution and amalgamation to create fewer, larger farms. This process was already ongoing prior to the creation of the Wray Castle estate; the farm at Busk had been run as part of High Tock How since 1824. This amalgamation seems to have prolonged the viability of the farm that remained privately owned until 1870, while the farms at Low Tock How and Hole were both sold to the estate during the 1850s.[53] These three farms had been reduced to a single working unit by the time they were put up for sale in 1920, with all the land now belonging to High Tock How. The majority of redundant buildings appear to have been used to provide accommodation for the labourers who worked on the estate. Busk remained inhabited until 1871 but does not appear in the census of 1881; only the barn now remains. The foundation stones marking the site of the farmhouse were recorded during the recent survey work close to High Tock How Farm.

The farmland around High Wray appears to have been split between High Wray Farm and High Wray Bank when it was sold to James Dawson. While the land attached to High Wray Bank passed to him with the sale of 1841, a codicil to his will

put High Wray Bank along with 34 acres in trust for Elizabeth, wife of Admiral Claude Buckle. The remainder of the land formerly part of High Wray Bank appears to have afterwards descended with Low Wray Farm.[54] High Wray Bank subsequently served as a gentleman's residence; John Crighton Esq is listed there in 1866,[55] and by 1882 the property is occupied by another gentleman, John Edward Whalley.[56]

The majority of field copses and enclosed woodlands scattered amongst the pattern of farms and fields to the south of the parkland, which existed prior to their acquisition by James Dawson, appear to have been retained. Some were planted with additional conifer trees to add variety to the existing broadleaf canopy. A few groups of conifers were established in the fields to the west of High Wray Farm and also immediately to the east of Low Tock How. These conifers can clearly be seen from the Low Wray road from the north and may have been planted to create some continuity with the parkland and emphasise that the farms and fields were part of a wider designed landscape.

A number of coppice and standard woodlands acquired for the estate had a coniferous element introduced soon after their purchase. Most significant was the acquisition of Watbarrow Point to the immediate east of the castle in 1856.[57] The majority of the small woodlands are located on the western edge of the estate and include Brathey Plantation, Dan Beck's and Dan Beck's Coppice. The past industrial use of many of these woods is highlighted by the relict coppice stools and numerous charcoal burning platforms recorded. The only anomaly seems to be Rough Intake Coppice, which appears to have retained its mixed-broadleaf woodland covering into the twentieth century.

A number of woodlands were established on the southern edge of the estate, on land that had previously been used as rough grazing. The later estate maps depict Waterson Intake, Moss Intake, Katy Intake Plantation and Renny Crags as containing conifers, although in 1850 only Katy Intake Plantation is depicted as having any established woodland. Latterbarrow Coppice is an exception to this and retains its mixed broadleaf woodland throughout. While these plantations on the edge of the estate would have offered some economic return, it seems likely that there was also an aesthetic basis for the work. The blocks of tall conifers act to enclose the Dawsons' landholding, bringing a halt to the views from the castle on the edge of the estate land.

The break up of the estate

After the death of James Dawson in 1875 the estate descended with family members until 1898 when the holdings were acquired wholesale by David Ainsworth, M.P. for Westmorland between 1880-85 and 1892-5. The estate appears to have been maintained at an enormous cost and was mortgaged twice, once before, and once after his death in 1906.[58]

The castle and estate changed hands twice before it was purchased by Owen Gregory of Ashton-on-Mersey in 1921 for just over £38,000. After signing the contract to purchase on 4 January 1921 he immediately raised a mortgage from Sir John Stirling Ainsworth, the brother and trustee of David Ainsworth. Very little of the £16,000 raised appears to have been paid back before Owen Gregory's executors sold the estate at an enormous loss for £16,500 in 1927. The new owner, Samuel

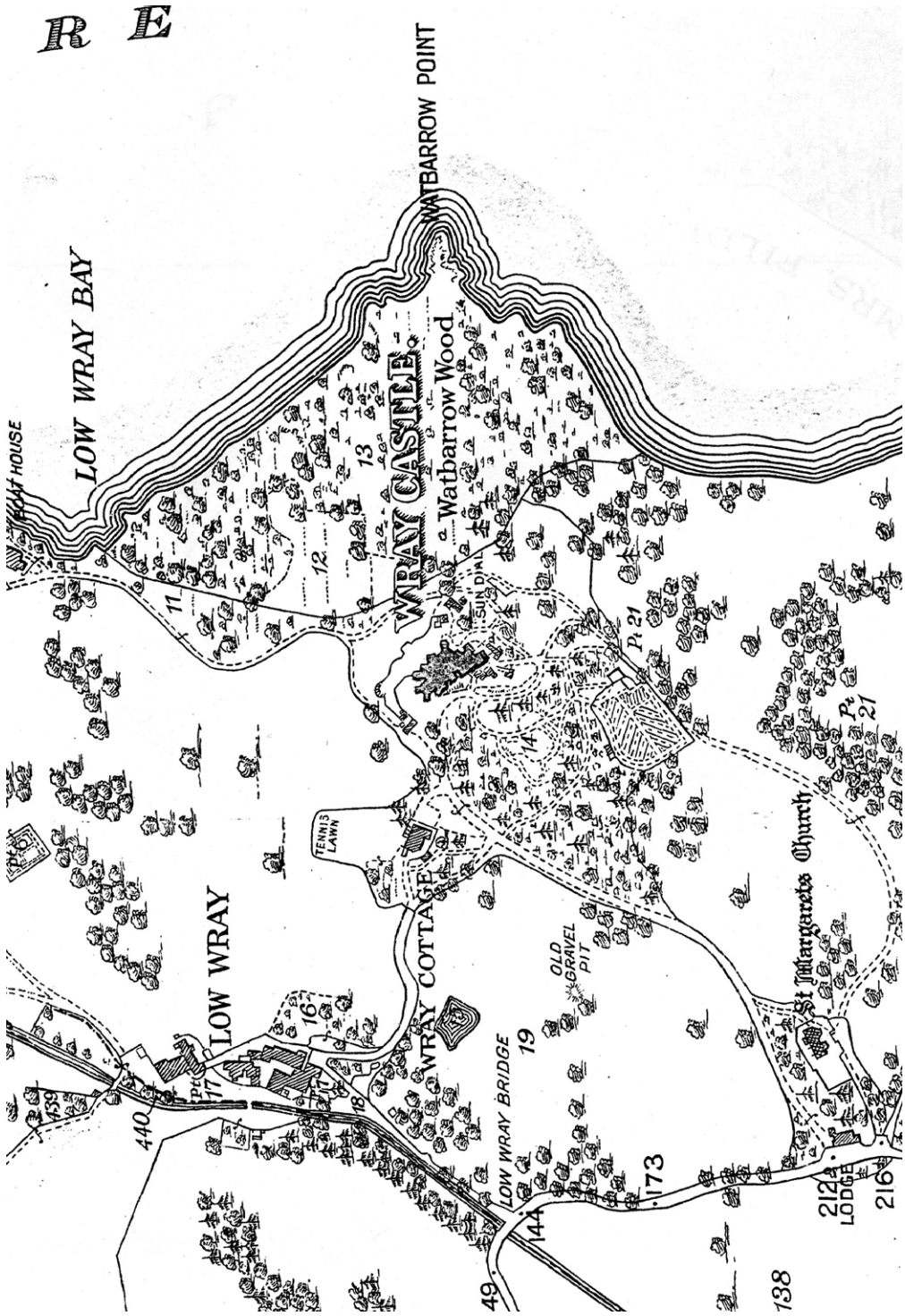

FIG. 4. Wray Castle and its environs as depicted in the 1920 sale particulars.

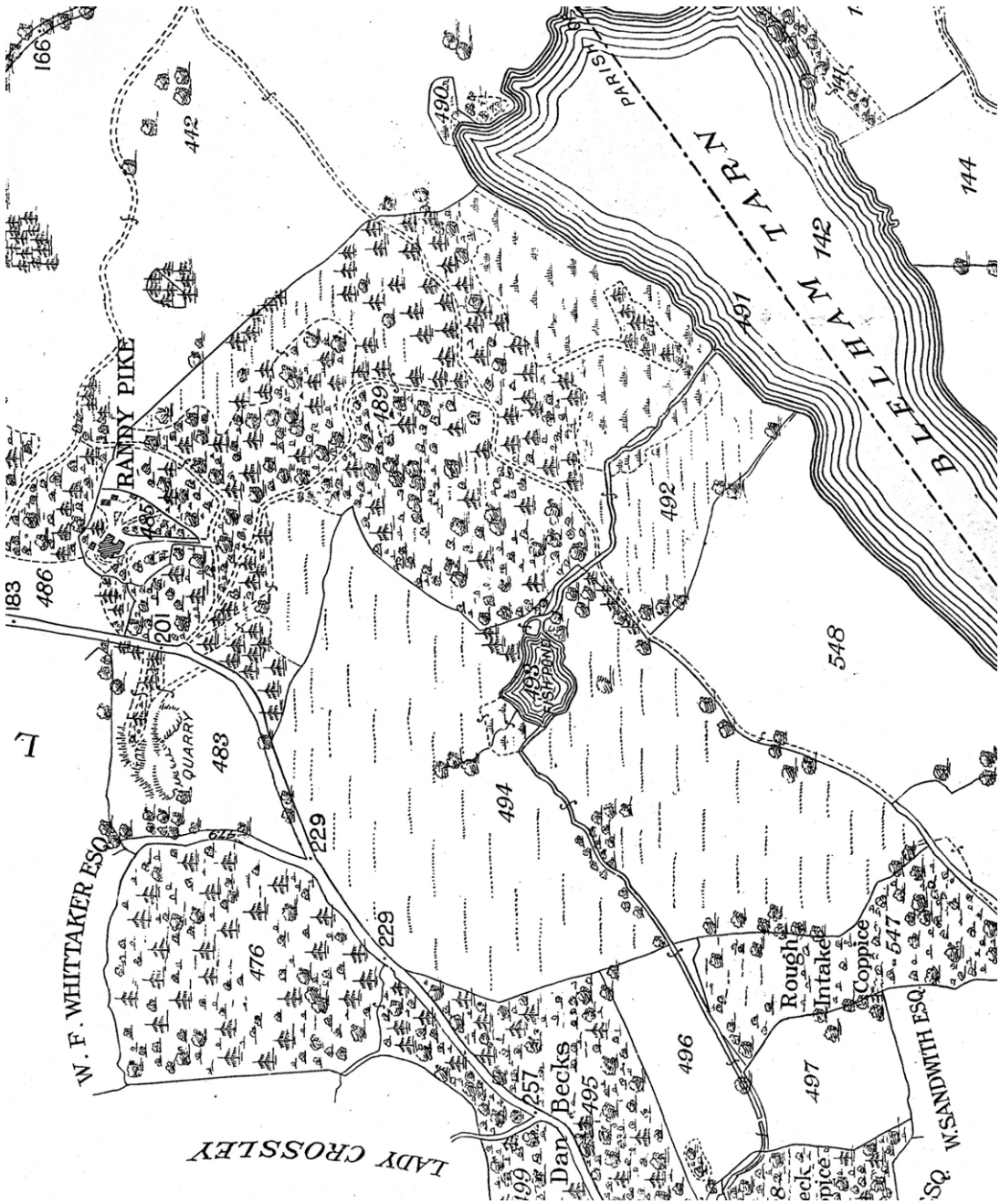

FIG. 5. Randy Pike and Blelham Tarn depicted in the 1920 sale particulars.

Longshaw of Oldham, broke up the estate and sold it to various parties the following year.[59]

Wray Castle and the Dower House, along with the surrounding 64 acres were given to the National Trust by Sir Noton and Lady Barclay in 1929. The correspondence from the time suggests that the bequest was accepted by the National Trust, not because of the castle, which was seen to be of little historic value, but on the merit of the surrounding parkland. The use of the parkland as a camping ground by the Boy Scout Association was written into the deed of gift by the Barclays. This link is likely to have been established by the longest serving and last vicar of St Margaret's church, the Revd H. Kemble, who held that position between 1895 and 1925, and who was also the District Commissioner and camp advisor for the Scouts for many years. It was perhaps through his influence that Wray Castle became one of the earliest official Scout camp-sites. A photograph taken in 1969 from the north-facing oriel window in the mock ruin to the north-east of the castle shows a line of tents located to the west of Low Wray Bay.[60] An area to the south of the walled garden is marked as a camping site on the 1977 edition 1:10,000 Ordnance Survey map of the area, and was presumably still in use by the Scouts.

After its transfer to the National Trust the castle was used as the headquarters of the Freshwater Biological Association before they moved a short way south to Ferry House, and after 1958 as a training school for Merchant Navy radio officers. The castle is at present in use by a company providing Information Technology and Technology Training.

Low Wray Farm descended with Wray Castle until the estate was broken up in 1928. The farm was bought by W. C. Halliday of Fairfield Hall, Lancaster, who sold

PLATE 4. The remodelled Low Wray Farm, erected soon after the purchase of Low Wray in 1836.

it to the National Trust in 1948. The farm buildings and land remain let as a working farm, although part of the farmland is now occupied by a campsite. High Wray Farm, together with the group of farm holdings at Tock How had been bought by William Heelis, husband of Beatrix Potter, in 1928 and passed to the National Trust after his death in 1945.[61] Both High Wray and High Tock How farms continue to be let as working farms.

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