

ART. IX – *Some new light on the Websters of Kendal*

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SINCE the publication in 2004 of *The Websters of Kendal*¹ some further discoveries have enabled me to amplify the family history, to correct some errors, and to widen the Websters' connections. I am principally concerned with two of the children of Robert Webster (1726-99), Francis Webster's father, and with his will, although other members of the family will appear.

Robert was born in Kendal, where he was baptised on 1 June 1726, as son of Thomas Webster. He became a mason and moved to Cartmel where he married Ann Crosfield on 7 July 1754.² His first three children were baptised between 1755 and 1761 from Cark Hall, but from 1763³ the family lived at Quarry Flat on the Holker estate, hard by the freestone which he worked.

Robert's eldest son Thomas (bap. 6 August 1755) was also a mason. He married Mary Kemp at Windermere on 8 September 1777.⁴ They moved to Low Furness where Thomas lived and worked at the quarry at Hawcoat which belonged to his father and which was mentioned in Robert's will of 1793.⁵ Thomas and Mary had eight children (one was still-born in 1788) between 1778 and 1791, all baptised in Dalton-in-Furness.

Of Nancy (bap. 10 May 1778), Mary (bap. 9 October 1779) and Jonathan (bap. 27 November 1791) nothing is known. Sarah (bap. 2 September 1781) married William Bailiff, another mason, at Cartmel on 30 June 1799. In *The Websters of Kendal* (p.54) Sarah is wrongly identified as the sister of Thomas and his more famous brother Francis, not as Thomas's daughter; in view of what follows about Thomas and Francis's sister Sarah that is clearly an error. The Bailiffs baptised three children at Cartmel, 1799-1809. William died at Quarry Flat in June 1809, a few days before the baptism of his youngest child, another Sarah, who died, aged about four weeks, in July. On 22 February 1812 Sarah Bailiff was married again, to Joseph Dixon, a miller at Cark, by whom she had a further four children, 1812-22. Thomas Webster's daughter Elizabeth (bap. 25 October 1783) married a sailor, Robert Wright, and they baptised three children at Cartmel, 1809-16.

Thomas and Mary's eldest son, Robert Webster was baptised on 10 November 1785. He married Elizabeth Duke (bap. 5 March 1786 at Dalton) on 27 July 1809 at Cartmel. In *The Websters of Kendal*⁶ he was wrongly identified as the son of Robert Webster (1757-1805), but although he was the grandson of Robert (1726-99) his father was undoubtedly Thomas. Robert (1757-1805) was his uncle.

Robert and Elizabeth had eight children, 1809-28, all baptised at Cartmel, of whom the eldest, Thomas (bap. 24 December 1809) became a mason,⁷ but none of the other three sons seem to have been. From their families came a long line of fishermen and labourers, all identified by Dr Blake Tyson who has further work in progress. They may, if he thought of these relations at all, have been a source of some embarrassment to George Webster in his mansion at Eller How.

This Robert Webster lived at Quarry Flat, at least from the baptism of Thomas in 1809, but probably earlier, working at first with his grandfather Robert (1726-99)

and then with his uncle Robert (1757-1805), who lived in Flookburgh. In his father's will uncle Robert was left the quarry tools "for his own use", but he died in 1805 and was buried as Robert Webster of Flookburgh, mason, at Cartmel on 1 May. His widow, the former Eleanor (Ellen) Harrison (bap. 27 August 1758 at Cartmel), who he married on 18 September 1783, was married again on 17 January 1811 to John Strickland of Flookburgh. He was buried on 28 October 1819, aged 68. She was listed at Flookburgh in 1829⁸ and was buried at Cartmel on 11 August 1833, aged 75. Despite her second marriage she appears as Robert's widow on his tombstone at Cartmel. Robert and Ellen had three children. Agnes (bap. 1 May 1784), married Thomas Bigland, mariner, on 5 February 1805. Ann (Nancy; bap. 11 August 1786), married George Wibberley, hosier of Liverpool, on 25 October 1807.⁹ John (bap. 7 July 1792), became manager of the Webster showroom in Liverpool and died there in 1843.¹⁰

Robert, son of Thomas, died on 28 February 1828 when only 42 or 43.¹¹ His widow Elizabeth lived on until she died in Flookburgh in 1869; she was buried at Cartmel on 10 September, aged 84. In 1829 she appears at Quarry Flat as Elizabeth Webster, farmer; the quarry was evidently given up when her husband died.¹²

The last of the children of Thomas Webster of whom anything is known was William (bap. 30 August 1789), who became a tailor, married Isabella Rockliff on 20 May 1812 at Cartmel, and had ten children, 1813-32, the first two baptised at Cartmel, the rest in Ulverston. Thomas Webster himself was buried in Dalton on 3 April 1792. His youngest child, Jonathan, was only a few months old and his family's later appearances at Cartmel would suggest that some at least of the children left Dalton to live with or near their grandparents at Quarry Flat. Thomas's widow may have taken Nancy, Mary, and Jonathan elsewhere, though she could well be the Mary Webster of Grange who was buried at Cartmel on 27 December 1840, aged 83.

In February 1815 Sarah Dixon (formerly Bailiff), Elizabeth Wright, and Robert and William Webster all signed receipts for legacies received under the will of their grandfather Robert (1726-99), Sarah and Robert for £20 each and Elizabeth and William for £5 each.¹³ The will mentions only six of Thomas's seven surviving children, and only Robert and Sarah by name, and there are no receipts from Nancy, Mary, or Jonathan. One child seems to have died before 1793 when the will was drawn up, but there is no burial at either Cartmel or Dalton.

To return to the children of Robert Webster (1726-99). His daughter Sarah (bap. 17 July 1761) and wrongly identified as the wife of William Bailiff,¹⁴ was in fact twice married. Her first husband was James Barrow, maltster of Flookburgh. They were married at Cartmel on 7 February 1789, but James died and was buried on 14 June 1790. Sarah remarried and her new husband brought a new country and a new calling to the Webster family. He was John Harriman¹⁵ "of North Britain" [Scotland] when they were married in Cartmel on 3 October 1792, the marriage being witnessed by her brother Francis, the architect, and by Matthew Harrison. It is Matthew's presence at the wedding which gives the clue as to what John Harriman was doing in Scotland.

Harrison was the manager of the Newland furnace near Ulverston. Born in Ambleside in 1752, the son of Matthew Harrison of Skelgill, he had begun his career as steward to George Knott of Monk Coniston (1743-84), whose wife Catherine was

the elder daughter and co-heiress of William Ford (1728-69), son of Richard Ford (1697-1757), the founder of the Newland Company. A majority interest in the company came to George Knott through his wife and when he died in 1784 he left to Matthew Harrison its "sole management and direction". Harrison came to dominate the Furness iron industry and in 1812 he bought out the Knott family's holding for £34,000. He died in 1824.¹⁶

John Harriman was baptised at Colton on 29 March 1761, the son of William and Ann Harriman of Rusland, and he evidently went into the iron industry, to the furnace at Newland. In 1752-3 the then owners of Newland, Richard Ford & Co., had established a furnace at Bonawe on the shores of Loch Etive in Argyllshire,¹⁷ and in January 1791 John Harriman was sent there to be the company's steward, succeeding another local man, James Longmire. His copy letter books and some original letters survive in the National Library of Scotland.¹⁸

All Harriman's surviving letters are strictly about the business and give no personal details. The only thing which we know about his own life at Bonawe is that in 1806 he caused the workmen there to uproot a near-by standing stone and to re-erect it as a memorial to Lord Nelson, after the admiral's victory and death at Trafalgar.¹⁹ But it is surely certain that Sarah went to live with him there in the manager's house²⁰ until he retired and returned to Furness shortly after 23 April 1812, the date of his last letter, in which he refers to a matter which he wished to be "settled before I leave the country".

By 22 October 1814 John Harriman re-emerges as the steward at Levens Hall. Some bundles of letters from the period 1818-19 were indicated by Sheila Macpherson as being missing from Box B in the muniment room there many years ago, but six survive, dating from the autumn and winter of 1814,²¹ together with a notebook of 1814-15 in which he noted instructions given to him by Richard Howard and the actions he had taken.²² The letters deal mainly with the business of settling in as the new steward, repairs, rent-collections, and the problems caused by rabbits in the park. In November 1814 he refers to reducing the herd of deer from about 170 to 140. An entry in the notebook records that no perquisites were to be given to the servants, except that the keeper had the right to sell deer skins.²³

When they first returned from Scotland the Harrimans lived at Underfield in Colton parish.²⁴ That cannot have been convenient, being over fifteen miles from Levens, and on 8 December 1814²⁵ John Harriman wrote to Richard Howard at Ashstead about the conversion of Lawrence House at Levens into two dwellings, one of which was to be for him. "How to alter it with the least expense I cannot yet say, having had but a superficial view of the premises, but I think of getting Mr. Webster my Brother in Law to look at it, and when I meet you at Elford will lay our joint opinions before you. Mrs Dudgeon²⁶ would not willingly leave it before May, at which time I must move from my present House at Underfield, and to trouble her I would not wish".

What had actually happened at Lawrence House is not perfectly clear. Some division of the house was evidently planned before Mr Dudgeon's death, "so that the Present Kitchen & wash house below was to be in common between the two Famelys" [i.e. the Dudgeons and a Richard Woof, who seems to have been a cowman]. Woof "positively refuses to agree . . . and I think with good reason, for I cannot see how two Fameleys can ever agree at the same fireside. So fare as I have

seen of the house, Woof should have the present kitchen to himself & a small place built for a Boiler etc for preparing his Cow drinks & this I find will satisfy him. In the new part allotted for me there is a great deal of room, & had it been properly planed less would have been sufficient for me or any Steward at Levens”.

It looks as though the house had already been extended, though probably not by Francis Webster, as it seems clear that he was to be consulted anew. The house was duly divided, and the southern part, now known as Levens Brow, was the agent’s house for many years. It has at least one fireplace, which probably came from the Webster showroom in Kendal, and, as Francis was involved in the division, Levens Brow may be added to the catalogue of his work. By April 1815 Harriman was fencing and planting there.²⁷

The Harrimans were still at Underfield in February 1815 when they signed the receipt for Sarah’s share of the money from the lands which her father Robert had said were to be sold after the death of his widow. Ann Webster died on 4 November 1814. On 7 December the farm at Mitchelfield, near Storrs, was sold to John Bolton of Storrs Hall for £900.²⁸ The receipts from Sarah Harriman, Ann Ashburner (see below), and Francis Webster, Robert’s children, and from Agnes and Thomas Bigland, Ann (Nancy) and George Wibberley, and John Webster, the daughters and son of Robert’s son Robert (1757-1805), amounted to £848 10s.

The other property bequeathed by Robert Webster in 1793 was not sold immediately after his widow’s death. It consisted of the house and the quarry parrock at Hawcoat/Cocken and a house and barn in the Gill in Ulverston, eventually sold in 1829 for £90. The trustees invested the purchase money which had earned £2 in interest by 17 February 1830 when it was distributed to the trustees of Francis Webster and Sarah Harriman and to Ann Ashburner (see below), who received £23 each, and to Agnes Bigland, Nancy Wibberley, and John Webster, who each got £7 13s. 4d.

Francis Webster’s son George was entrusted with the shares for Nancy Wibberley and John Webster and was charged to get their receipts, but although he had handed over Mrs Wibberley’s by 8 August 1832 he could not produce John’s: “says he has lost it”.

In 1830 James Stockdale, one of Robert’s trustees, noted that the Hawcoat quarry parrock had been sold to Mr Romney²⁹ but that the buyer had refused to proceed because of some fault in the title. The trustees decided to retain it as they could get more in rent than in interest on any sale price. Who bought it in the end is not clear, but it had been sold by 1832 when the trust set up by the will was broken by all the parties involved or by their executors.

John Harriman died at Lawrence House on 4 May 1820 and was buried on 8 May at Ulverston where he has a memorial.³⁰ He left a will, which is referred to in that of his widow, but it appears not to have survived.³¹ Sarah retired to Flookburgh where she made her own will on 12 February 1826,³² but she was living with her nephew George at Eller How at the time of her death. She was buried at Ulverston on 23 February 1829. She was a witness to the codicil of her brother Francis’s will in 1827.³³ The Harrimans evidently had no children. Sarah had left her quarter share of the Hawcoat quarry parrock, where her brother Thomas had lived, to his son, her nephew Robert Webster of Quarry Flat, stonemason, and her share of the Ulverston property to her brother Francis. Eleanor Lowry, who was to marry Francis’s son

George in 1827, got her best set of china. She left her clothes to her sister Ann Ashburner. The residuary estate was divided between the children of her late brothers, Thomas of Hawcoat and Robert of Flookburgh, who shared half, and Francis and Ann's children, who had a quarter each.

Ann Webster, Sarah and Francis's sister, the youngest of the children of Robert Webster (1726-99), was baptised as Agnes on 12 May 1771. On 11 November 1798 she married William Ashburner and they baptised four children at Cartmel, 1801-10. Her husband was a yeoman farmer at Kents Bank and was buried on 22 February 1834, aged 62. She is the "aunt Ashburner" to whom George referred in his letters in 1844, when she died.³⁴

Finally, Francis Webster's son Robert was buried at Cartmel on 15 July 1810, aged 16.³⁵ With him died his father's expectations that he would succeed to the architectural practice. Nevertheless, his brother George, who may have been an unenthusiastic heir, joined his father and made the name of Webster of very considerable significance in the history of architecture in the north-west of England.

Notes and References

- ¹ Angus Taylor, edited by Janet Martin, *The Websters of Kendal* (CWAAS Record Series XVII, 2004).
- ² Did some family problem cause Robert to move to Cartmel? Nothing is known of his brother and sisters except that Lidia (bap. 8 August 1735) was buried on 12 January 1756 as the daughter of Thomas Webster of Kendal workhouse. It is not clear if she or Thomas was in the workhouse. His wife Mary had died in 1745 when her youngest child was only seven. It may be suggestive that Robert chose to perpetuate none of the names of his brother or sisters among his own children, although he did name his eldest son after his father.
- ³ Not 1756 as in *The Websters of Kendal*, 3.
- ⁴ Dr Blake Tyson discovered the marriage. I am grateful to him for that and much other help in the preparation of this article.
- ⁵ Lancashire Record Office (= LRO), WRW/F. It is not known when Robert Webster acquired the quarry. Thomas was said to have lived variously at Cocken Quarry and Hawcoat at the baptisms of his children. Cocken, which has now disappeared under Barrow-in-Furness, roughly occupied the rectangle between Ormsgill Road and its continuation to Hawcoat and Devonshire Road. The cemetery now occupies about half the area. Traces of a quarry still exist just to the south of the oldest part of Hawcoat, but whether this was the one worked by Thomas is open to question. It belonged to George Romney the painter in the 1780s and in 1787 was said to be choked with rubbish, so, as Thomas was already working in the neighbourhood by then, he and his father must have had another quarry, although the places named in the parish register for his children's baptisms do indicate that he must have lived and worked very close to the Romney quarry. For Cocken, see W.B. Kendall, "Cocken. The History of a Furness Village", *Proceedings of Barrow Naturalists' Field Club*, xii (1898), 36-56.
- ⁶ *Loc. cit.*, 3, 4, 5n; there is no reference to him on 153 as in the index.
- ⁷ He married Mary Camm at Cartmel on 10 June 1840.
- ⁸ Parson & White, *Directory of Cumberland and Westmorland* (1829, repr. 1984), 705.
- ⁹ They were the parents of Eleanor Wibberley, for so many years resident at Eller How: *The Websters of Kendal*, 43, 47n, 48n, 306.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.
- ¹¹ The Cartmel register, 29 February 1828, has 42, his tombstone 43.
- ¹² Parson & White, *op. cit.*, 705. James Stockdale, in *Annals of Cartmel* (1872, repr. 1978), 399, said that it had been worked "up to about forty years ago".
- ¹³ The papers relating to the will of Robert Webster (1726-99) are in CRO(B) BD/HJ Box 390. All subsequent references to the disposal of his estate are from this source.
- ¹⁴ *The Websters of Kendal*, 54.

- ¹⁵ His name was incorrectly rendered as Harrison when the Cartmel bishops' transcript for 1792 was copied out. That error was understandably repeated in R. Barlow's T/S edition of the transcripts for 1771-1837 (2004), 199. The correct name appears in the original register. Their marriage bond is in LRO, ARR11.
- ¹⁶ For Matthew Harrison, see T. W. Thompson, *Wordsworth's Hawkshead* (1970), 29, 30, 165, 216-7, and A. Fell, *The Early Iron Industry of Furness and District* (1908, repr. 1968), 274-5.
- ¹⁷ G. P. Stell and G. D. Hay, *Bonawe Iron Furnace* (Historic Scotland, 1984).
- ¹⁸ National Library of Scotland, MSS 993, 995. Longmire's copy letter book, MS 994, ends on 18 January 1791 when he speaks of leaving the country. I am most grateful to Dr Murray Simpson of the National Library for sending me details of the letter books.
- ¹⁹ Fell, *op. cit.*, 412-3 and illus.
- ²⁰ Dorothy Wordsworth, who visited Bonawe with her brother William in 1803, called it "an ugly yellow-daubed building, staring this way and that": Thompson, *op. cit.*, 22. It is illustrated in Stell and Hay, *op. cit.*, 29.
- ²¹ Levens Hall, Box F/7. I am grateful to Mr C. H. Bagot for permission to consult the Levens archives.
- ²² *Ibid.*, Box 18P.
- ²³ One of Harriman's letters, 22 October 1814, records a great storm, which damaged trees and almost demolished a house. In Box B are bundles of vouchers from his day. He was responsible for the payment of all the estate bills.
- ²⁴ Underfield lies north of the present A590, off the by-road to Spark Bridge.
- ²⁵ Levens Hall, Box F/7.
- ²⁶ The widow of the former tenant who had recently died.
- ²⁷ Levens Hall, Box B.
- ²⁸ This property was described in the will as a "messuage and tenement or farm . . . called Mitchelfield at Stores, Undermillbeck, Windermere", and the description is repeated throughout the probate papers. On p.4 of *The Websters of Kendal* it was incorrectly identified as Mitchelland, but that is in Crook township. Mitchelfield was apparently subsumed into what later became The Yews. Unfortunately only Mitchelland appears in A. H. Smith, *Place-names of Westmorland* (1967), i, 180 and Parson & White, *op. cit.*, 670; and to add to the confusion Mannex & Co, *Directory of Westmorland and Lonsdale* (1851, repr. 1978), 339, lists an occupant of "Michael Land" in Undermillbeck.
- ²⁹ The painter's son, the Revd John Romney, who was still the owner of the house at High Cocken which his grandfather had built.
- ³⁰ R. and F. Dickinson, *Monumental Inscriptions at Ulverston, Lancashire* (CWAAS Tract Series xix, 1973), 44.
- ³¹ Enquiries at PCC, York, and LRO have failed to discover it. He probably had money in the Newland Company. There is an entry for "Knott & Harrimans, Quay" at Greenodd in 1829, though both men were by then dead: Parson and White, *op. cit.*, 730.
- ³² LRO, WRW/F.
- ³³ *Ibid.*
- ³⁴ *The Websters of Kendal*, 84, 85. "R. Ashburner" on p. 85 is her son Robert (b. 1807) and therefore n.11 on p. 88 is incorrect. It is not known where she was buried, but she was perhaps living with Robert when she died.
- ³⁵ I much regret that this was not discovered before the publication of *The Websters of Kendal*; n. 38 on p. 13 needs to be amended.

APPENDIX

Some further additions and corrections to *The Websters of Kendal*

- p.98 Burton-in-Kendal (W), *Burton House*: the plan was returned from Wellington in 2004 and deposited in the CRO(K). It is of a later date.
- p.99 Cartmel (L), *Longlands*: Langdale Sunderland M.D. died 30 April 1821, aged 51, and was buried 3 May at Cartmel where he has a monument. His widow Elizabeth was buried 26 July 1826, aged 52.

- p.100 Cleator (C), *The Flosk*: now the Ennerdale Country House Hotel.
- p.108 Grange-over-Sands (L), *Merlewood*: the drawing room was reconstructed c.1880 with a shallow moulded plaster ceiling and a large carved wooded overmantel and fireplace with decorative tiles with figures.
- p.109 Grasmere (W), *Moss Head Lodge*: additional reference should be made to A. Wilson, *The History and Saving of the Rothay Hotel* (1995).
- p.110 Haverthwaite (L); the late Ian Goodall of English Heritage suggested that additions to *Birkdault* may be by George Webster; the house certainly has Webster fireplaces.
- p.110 Hawkshead (L), *Esthwaite Lodge*: add to n.1, H. S. Cowper, *Hawkshead* (1899), 379: [T. A. Beck] “having become, owing to a spinal complaint, partly crippled [the grounds] were specially laid out with easy gradients for his invalid chair”.
- p.115 Kirkby Lonsdale (W), *Underley Hall*: additional reference should be made to J. D. Buttle (ed.), *Underley Hall*, c.1965, although the house is there attributed to Francis Webster.
- p.119 Mansergh (W), *Rigmaden Park*: additional reference should be made to J. M. Robinson, “Rigmaden Park”, *CL*, 10 June 2004.
- p.126 Sedgwick (W), *Sedgwick House*: line 4, for Austen read Austin.
- p.129 Troutbeck (W), *St Catherine's*: this entry should have appeared under Windermere (p.136) as it was in Applethwaite township; n.1 (p.130) should read Boumphrey and Hudleston, 51, 223.
- p.145: Additional entry: Skipton (YWR): alterations to pews in Holy Trinity church, 1835, by George Webster: Borthwick Institute, University of York, faculty 1835/2.
- p.157: Additional entry: Skipton (YWR): *Workhouse*, 1839, by George Webster: advertisement for tenders, *Leeds Intelligencer*, 22 June 1835. I am indebted to Christopher Webster of Leeds for this and the item on p.145 above.
- p.169: Lord Inglewood suggests that the monument to Sir Francis Vane (d.1840) at Hutton-in-the-Forest (C), St James, may have come from the Websters' workshop. It is very like the contemporary Musgrave monuments at Edenhall.
- p.229, plate 98, *Penwortham Priory*: the photograph is by Robert Pateson (1827-1910) and dates from 1861. I am grateful to John Beckett for drawing my attention to the catalogue of an exhibition of Pateson's photographs at the Harris Museum, Preston (2004).
- p.260, plate 150: wrongly identified as *Aikrigg End*. It is *Junction Cottage*, further along the Burneside road, which may also be by Webster or Thompson. *Aikrigg End* is rather nearer to Kendal and now converted into flats.