‘The quiet Conservative state of the county’

AT 1.00 pm on Saturday 21 February 1880, the recently completed St George’s Hall in Kendal held an expectant throng, variously estimated at between 1,400 and 2,000. They had been admitted by ticket only. Many had come long distances by train to be part of the inaugural meeting of the Westmorland Conservative Association, ‘necessitated’, as Colonel Richard Burn of Orton Hall pointed out from the Chair, ‘by the attack which has been made by the Liberal Party on the quiet Conservative state of the county’.

Beside him on the platform sat Westmorland’s two Members of Parliament. The senior was William Lowther, whose sturdy build, piercing blue eyes and mane of sandy hair belied a naturally shy and distant manner. Sociable but sharp-tongued, he had been in diplomatic service in Berlin, Naples and St Petersburg before entering the House of Commons unopposed at a by-election in January 1868. He succeeded his father, the ‘Silent Colonel’ Henry Lowther, younger son of the 1st Earl of Lonsdale, a military man brief of speech and short of temper, who had held the seat since 1812. Though hardly more inclined to public speaking himself, whether in the House of Commons or from a platform, William Lowther rose to this occasion. Having bluntly informed his Kendal audience, ‘It is not my intention to answer any questions whatever’, the M.P. spoke for an hour.

Addressing first the ticklish issue of his unimpressive record of parliamentary attendance, he pointed out that the length of the walk from Westminster to his house in Kensington Gore and the scarcity of cabs made late night sessions difficult; but ‘there has been no question of importance in the House of Commons on which I have not voted’. Insisting that, ‘in many visits I have paid to my constituents I have found that Westmorland electors are even greater Tories than I am myself’, he raised laughter with sardonic shafts against Liberals in general and Gladstone in particular, and praised the achievements of the Conservative government without making any mention of his leader, Beaconsfield.

Twenty-two years Lowther’s junior, full-bearded and balding, Thomas Taylour, Earl of Bective and heir to the Marquessate of Headfort, had also followed his father as Member for Westmorland, elected unopposed in 1871. An oarsman at Eton and later a Captain in the Yeomanry, he was generally reckoned a benign landlord, chiefly interested in stockbreeding and freemasonry. Though he had been seen in the House even less frequently than Lowther, he assured the audience of his devotion to the well-being of the county, and for half an hour commended the government’s achievements in foreign policy and fiscal responsibility. It was a dull speech, but ‘A Westmorland
Farmer’ reportedly enthused, ‘Ah knaws this much aboot Lord Bective: he’s a fair, square and above-board man’.12

Other speakers followed. James Lowther, the M.P.’s eldest son, had not wanted to come, because ‘I have a suspicion that the Meeting is a badly organised affair, & likely to be interrupted & end in a row’.13 Forty years later James would claim that he agreed to speak because ‘neither Lord Bective nor my father was very powerful in oratory’.14 A distinct coup for the Conservatives was an address by the flamboyant Henry Schneider of Windermere, financier, industrialist and erstwhile Liberal M.P.15 Summing up, Lowther insisted that he and Bective stood for ‘the maintenance of the Crown and the maintenance of the Established Church’; many Westmerians were not Anglicans but he reminded them of the implications of Disestablishment for any kind of property ownership. After more applause and cheering, the audience made its way into the gathering gloom of a winter’s evening; the meeting had lasted four hours.

These people knew they were moving into uncharted waters. Only a handful of them had ever cast a vote. Since December 1832 every election in the two-member Westmorland county seat had produced an unopposed return, a record of political inertia matched only by West Cornwall. The one-member Kendal borough had seen little more excitement: in 47 years the electors had voted only twice. The mid-century growth of mass involvement in the political process,16 apparent not only in urban constituencies but in, for example, rural Lincolnshire,17 largely passed Westmorland by; the establishment of the county’s Conservative Association in 1880 was preceded by more than 900 others in Britain,18 and local Liberals took even longer to organise themselves.

These political slumbers could hardly have been foreseen. In 1818, 1820 and 1826 Viscount and Colonel Lowther had to defend their tenure of the Westmorland seats against the fierce challenge of the colourful Radical Whig Henry Brougham, pitting their money – they spent a total of £76,000 on the three campaigns19 – and their organisation against their opponent’s brilliant oratory.20 Yellow, the dominant hue in the Lowther escutcheon, was the colour of Tory favours, while Whigs wore blue. From Appleby on the eve of the 1826 poll it was reported that, ‘The yellows have almost all the public houses and the greater part of the beds of the town. They also outnumber the blues in musicians, all dressed in yellow uniform . . . The bands of music marched up and down and imparted unusual life and gaiety to the dingy old town’.21 Brougham had come closest in 1820, only 63 votes behind Colonel Lowther. He enjoyed the support of the Tuftons of Appleby Castle, who, in an uneasy but durable deal with the Lownthers, also nominated one of the two members in the invariably uncontested elections for the ‘rotten borough’ of Appleby itself.22

The Great Reform Bill of 1832 disenfranchised Appleby and absorbed it into the county, while Kendal, with a population exceeding 10,000, though only a few hundred qualified to vote, became a one-member parliamentary borough. With industry and nonconformity powerful forces in the town, it was considered safe for the Whig-Liberal Blues. Not until 1843 did the Tories fight the seat, in the person of George Bentinck,23
whose family, one-time rivals of the Lowthers, was now related by marriage to them; and Bentinck lost decisively enough to deter a further Yellow venture until 1874.

But in December 1832 the county seat had seen another energetic election in which J. F. Barham, related to the Tuftons by marriage and with the family resources behind him, was seen off by Lowther money and manpower. He polled 1,611 votes to 1,948 and 2,052 for the Lowthers, and the Whigs had little doubt as to why their man lost.

"'Twas faggot votes drove him away;
'Twas gold alone that won."24

In 1834 James Brougham, brother to Henry, who was now Lord Chancellor, died and Barham replaced him as M.P. for Kendal, consigning contested Westmorland elections to history. In the General Elections of 1835, 1837 and 1841 the Lowther brothers were unopposed.

When the Viscount became a peer in his own right later in 1841, the by-election saw the uncontested return of Kendal-born William Thompson, a successful businessman and experienced M.P.25 He and Colonel Lowther faced no opposition in the General Elections of 1847 and 1852. Thompson had married his daughter to the Earl of Bective, settling the couple in his recently-purchased Underley estate, near Kirkby Lonsdale. When Thompson died in 1854 his son-in-law took over as M.P. without a challenge. The pairing of Lowther and Bective cantered through the General Elections of 1857, 1859, 1865, 1868 and 1874, though death and inheritance respectively saw fathers replaced by sons; such, in the complacent words of the Westmorland Gazette, was ‘the eternal fitness of things’.26

Change but No Change

Yet Westmorland was not insulated from change. Though livestock farming remained the economic staple, and methods and personnel in 1880 were largely recognisable from 50 years earlier,27 industry had spread beyond the confines of Kendal: Shap had its granite works, Low Wood its gunpowder factory. But the development that contemporaries were most likely to identify as transforming the county had been the coming of the railway. By 1880, Westmorland was home to two Anglo-Scottish routes, as well as several link and branch lines, with over 30 manned stations. As well as being a major employer, particularly in Tebay, and transporting agricultural and industrial produce, the railway carried people in and out of the county permanently as well as temporarily. While the largely rural population of the East and West Wards fell after 1860, Bowness, Windermere and Ambleside were growing in wealth and importance as Lancashire business families set up second and retirement homes there.28

The railway transported news and ideas, too. With multiple daily postal deliveries, Victorians communicated as never before by letter, card and telegraph wire: in 1880 a telegram sent from Kendal at 11.11 a.m. was being read in Hackthorpe 19 minutes later.29 And increasingly they read newspapers, freed from the last of the Stamp Duties after 1861. Westmorland’s social elite could read the London Press
on the day of publication, but the majority preferred their weekly local papers – the two Kendal titles and, for the north of the county, three produced in Penrith. Along with lovingly detailed local and – if sufficiently lurid – national crimes, accidents and suicides, agricultural news and advertisements for patent medicines, came abundant politics. Indeed, newspapers were largely defined by their politics and religion. The *Westmorland Gazette* gave generous coverage to the Conservatives and the Church of England; it had been launched with Lowther money in 1818 to counteract the radical nonconformist sympathies of the *Kendal Chronicle*, later the *Kendal Mercury*, which in 1880 merged with the also Liberal *Kendal Times*. From 1861 there were similarly partisan Penrith journals: the Conservative *Penrith Observer*, the Liberal *Cumberland & Westmorland Herald*; and the *Cumberland & Westmorland Advertiser*, ‘organ of the Wesleyans’.

By the 1870s a recurrent name in the columns of the Kendal and Penrith press, revered or execrated, was that of Gladstone, most paradoxical of politicians: a privileged intellectual who became ‘The People’s William’, a High Churchman who came to embody the nonconformist conscience. To some he was anathema: Henry Schneider, still avowing his Liberalism a few weeks before appearing on a Conservative platform, insisted, ‘I belong to the Palmerston school, and cannot have any sympathy with Gladstone and his views’. Local Conservatives were nonetheless uneasy at Gladstone’s mass appeal and the pernicious influence of Radical journals that men read until they were ‘blue all over’. It worried William Lowther that ‘young farmers are getting confused by all these blue papers which are selling for a penny’.

Still Westmorland remained ‘a piece of ice in the centre of a glowing fire’. With a succession of bankers and merchants comfortably holding Kendal for the Liberals, why was Conservative occupation of the county seats unchallenged? In part the answer is to be found in the lack of the kind of aristocratic lead given to Liberalism by the Howards in Cumberland. Broughams permanently and Tuftons temporarily had withdrawn from political activity. Henry, 11th Earl of Thanet and former M.P. for Appleby, died childless in 1849, leaving his estates to his nearest blood-relative Richard Tufton, illegitimate son of the 9th Earl, who had been born, raised and married in France. Securing in 1851 his inheritance, naturalization and a baronetcy, Tufton brought his family back to England, but spent his time at his Kentish estate in Hothfield, leaving the running of Appleby Castle and some 16,000 Eden Valley acres to their old local associates, the Heelis family.

There were Liberal gentry who would have been credible candidates, men like William Crackanthorpe of Newbiggin Hall, or William Wakefield of Sedgwick House. The key to their reluctance to come forward is perhaps to be found in the evidence furnished by the Lowther Archive of an efficient and expensive political machine designed to make the Yellow candidates unbeatable. Of critical importance was the electoral register ‘which the Earl of Lonsdale thinks to be as vitally important to his own interests as the looking after his own property’. Lowther solicitors routinely scrutinised lists of men in each parish qualified to vote by virtue of freehold property or substantial tenancy, challenging some claims and advancing others. Hand-in-glove with this task was that of compiling canvass returns on the basis of personal visits.
usually carried out by local partisans like the Markhams of Morland. As Westmorland’s greatest landowners, the Lowthers could count on promises of support from their tenants; and though most voters were freeholders, who might need to be cajoled, they too were aware of the potential advantages in pledging their votes. When the clergymen of Murton-cum-Hilton wrote to his M.P. asking for money for the village school, Lowther dropped a note to his agent: ‘do you know anything of him . . . he says he votes yellow’.40

Whenever a Dissolution of Parliament loomed, the Lowther machine swung into action.41 Local committees were set up to organise canvassing. Wood was ordered to set up platforms in villages when the candidates appeared, coaches and Chair Bearers42 engaged, ready for action if required. To make sure they were not, Ticket Rooms were set up at which voters marked favourable in the poll books could apply for their free ticket, exchangeable at local inns. The going rate in 1847 seems to have been about 8s. per ticket, for which a man could eat and drink very heartily. In the uncontested 1841 Westmorland Election Lowther agents settled bills to the sum of £476 13s. 7d. in Appleby, one of five places in the county at which votes could be cast, of which £353 19s. 1d. was for ‘Entertainment of Voters’. In 1854 Mary Winter, landlady of the ‘King’s Head’, who was a tenant of the Lowthers, presented an election bill for £78 11s. 0d., most of which had been spent on drink. It seems unlikely that policy issues were uppermost in the minds of voters applying for their tickets, and, in any case, the candidates told them little. In 1857 the Earl of Bective’s poster informed voters: ‘My political opinions are so well known to you all, as to render a detailed statement of them unnecessary’. His son’s 1874 election address said exactly the same.43

In that year a contest had seemed so certain at the end of January that circulars were printed to be sent to prominent supporters all over the county asking them to use their influence in the neighbourhood in favour of the Conservative candidates, and then to form a committee of the most influential Conservatives, and make an active canvass of the voters. Food and drink tickets were no more,44 but favourable voters could fill in a form for a railway pass for travel to and from the polling station. They were never used. On 2 February J. P. Shepherd, Appleby solicitor and Lowther agent, penned a laconic note to Mrs Kilvington of the Castle Inn, Brough: ‘Mr Wakefield declines to contest Westmorland. I therefore withdraw the reservation of your Horses and Carriages. What do I owe you?’45 Despite a petition of 200 signatures got up in Appleby, W. H. Wakefield would not allow his name to go forward at the nomination meeting in the Shire Hall on 5 February, contenting himself with a vague promise to put himself at the electors’ service on a future occasion.46 He was after all part of the county elite, appointed by Lonsdale to the Quarter Sessions Bench and sitting on the same committees as Richard Burn; and even had he felt inclined to rock the boat of county society by forcing a poll, he may well have concluded that he could not possibly win. When Wakefield died 15 years later, his obituarists would briefly observe that he was never really a party man before passing on to his sporting, business, agricultural and charitable achievements.47


Tufton redux: ‘the old Blue feeling’

But by 1874 the Tuftons were back in contention. Henry Tufton, after four years at Eton, where he won the Prince Consort’s Prize for French, and a year at Christ Church, Oxford, had in 1865 been appointed a Westmorland magistrate, and was to be seen more often at Appleby Castle. In 1871 he inherited the baronetcy, rebuilt the ‘Crown and Mitre’ in Appleby Market Square as the ‘Tufton Arms’ in 1873, and in 1874 was appointed High Sheriff of the county. True to the family Liberal tradition he had stood three times in East Kent, without success; now his sights were trained on Westmorland. This ‘tall and pleasant looking gentleman’, who wore a moustache but neither beard nor whiskers, a man of refined artistic taste who also enjoyed four-in-hand driving and grouse shooting, became a familiar figure to his many Eden Valley tenants and in Appleby itself. To encourage the formation of a local fire brigade he donated to the Sanitary Authority in 1879 ‘a steam fire engine of the best and most modern design’.

Simultaneously, the status of the Lowthers suffered a blow with the loss of the lord-lieutenancy of Westmorland, still ‘a position of real influence and importance’. In 1868 Disraeli in the last days of his first ministry, concerned that the ailing second Earl of Lonsdale would not survive for the duration of the next parliament, had ensured that the incoming Gladstone would have no opportunity to create a Liberal lord-lieutenant by advising Queen Victoria to appoint William Lowther’s elder brother Henry; M.P. for Cumberland since 1847 he was interested in little beyond hunting and the Turf. Inheriting the Lonsdale title in 1872, Henry died four years later, and the earldom and estates passed to his 20-year-old son St George, an eccentric even by Lowther standards. Pondering the destiny of the lord-lieutenancy, Gerard Noel, the Conservative Chief Whip, told Disraeli that even if the new earl were of age, ‘for other reasons . . . I could not recommend him’. Both M.P.s were ruled out, Lowther because he had no property or residence in Westmorland, and Bective because Noel believed him to be unpopular. Noel recommended Sir Richard Musgrave of Edenhall. Though a Conservative, he was at least, as the Liberal press acknowledged, not a Lowther: ‘we have grown tired of seeing men appointed upon the magisterial bench whose only qualification for that post has been that they were the humble servants and toadies of the powerful House of Lowther’.

By contrast, Tufton’s stock was rising. He had not only the pedigree and resources to challenge the sitting members, but also by 1879, the potential support of a swell of popular sentiment. Gladstone, having withdrawn from politics after 1874, had burst back on the scene in 1876 with a ferociously eloquent denunciation of the diplomatic support given by Disraeli’s government to the Turkish Empire in its war with Russia, and the Prime Minister’s refusal to condemn genocide in Turkish-ruled Bulgaria. In autumn 1879 the Grand Old Man, in his 70th year, embarked upon a succession of speeches in Midlothian. ‘As the thunder of Gladstone’s oratory rolled upon unnumbered audiences, its lightning flashes exposed every possible mistake attributable to the government’. Westmorland Liberals caught the mood: ‘the mere suggestion of a contest has acted like a spark falling upon a mass of gunpowder and has inflamed all the old Blue feeling from one end of the county to another’. The electors of Westmorland would no longer ‘like dumb, driven cattle’ be ‘passed from
hand to hand’ by reactionary M.P.s who ‘legislated for England in the interests of Lowther Castle, and without hesitation sacrificed the rights of the people to the assumed interests of an aristocratic caste’.62

On the afternoon of 5 December, with the fells glistening white in a bitter frost, some 2000 Liberals, hundreds of whom had filled special trains from Windermere and Penrith, crammed into Appleby Market Hall for its first ever political meeting, and stood for four hours to hear a succession of speeches from such heavyweights as W. E. Forster and Sir Wilfrid Lawson. Then, to resounding cheers, Sir Henry Tufton, who had taken the Chair, was presented as Westmorland’s Liberal parliamentary candidate.63 ‘Bluster and brag’, sniffed the Conservative Carlisle Patriot,64 and over the next few weeks rumours circulated that Tufton would not stand; but by February 1880, though there was still no formal local Liberal Association, committees to promote the Tufton candidature had been set up in Kendal, Windermere, Bowness and Ambleside. While a guest of the Kendal Liberal James Cropper, Sir Henry visited each one and the Mercury reported: ‘his intercourse with the committees has given great satisfaction to all’.65

Turning out the Yellow vote

Press accounts are almost the only surviving evidence for the Liberal campaign. We know far more about the Conservative response because the principal agent, William Little, a Penrith solicitor, diligently preserved the documents now in the Lowther Archive, and in bundles as his clerks left them. On 30 December 1879 Colonel Burn of Orton Hall posted thousands of circulars to likely activists inviting them to join a new Westmorland Conservative Association to be formed for the specific purpose of meeting a Liberal challenge. Ten days later the colonel was reporting to Little that he had 970 letters of assent, ‘though of course we get refusals and “returned empties”’.66 One King’s Meaburn voter replied, ‘I cannot comply with your request, as I will retain my liberty’.67 By then a preliminary meeting at the King’s Head in Appleby had agreed on the formation of the Association, though secrecy surrounded it. R. H. Greenwood sent a coded telegram to Little: ‘Watchful Attachment Nonsensical Recount Cope Resignations Parting Astound Appleby Medieval Nonchalance Lignified Octavo Thinking Preresolve’. Thus he ensured that no prying telegraph clerk would know that ‘We have not received copy resolutions passed at Appleby meeting nor list of those present’.68 (See Figure 1)

The decision to use the Kendal solicitors Arnold & Greenwood as the main Westmorland agents in the forthcoming campaign had not gone down well in Appleby. On 14 January John Bell jnr, a lawyer in the town, wrote: ‘We shall have difficulty in forming a suitable committee as the most desirable men for the purpose fight shy of any prominent part. I would again suggest that the first opportunity be taken of appeasing Appleby for the loss of the Head Quarters of Electioneering’.69 He was having trouble too with King’s Meaburn where Mr R. J. Addison, local Tory squire, ‘is doing nothing, though he professes to be willing’. Three days later, Bell added, ‘The rumoured activity of the Blues is very much exaggerated’.70 Further up the Eden Valley, Thomas Preston of Kirkby Stephen reported that he was ‘getting on fairly
well with the canvass considering that these districts may be considered almost as the stronghold of the ‘Tufton interest’. On 20 January he dropped a hint to Little ‘to use or not as you think fit’. Masonry repair work was to be done at Wharton Hall and Harrisons of Kirkby Stephen, expected to get the contract, were Liberals. Their rivals Horsfield and Fothergill were ‘lukewarm Conservatives’ who would ‘probably vote right if they have a chance of competing’.

Whether this advice was acted on is unclear; but a letter received by the Earl of Bective certainly produced swift action. A Mr Brown of Penrith wrote to the M.P., naming Joseph Jameson, esq., of Armathwaite, Cumberland, ‘a gentleman I am doing business with regularly’, who ‘wants to buy 3 votes in Westmorland . . . He is a rare old Tory … he has 3 votes in Cumberland and 3 in South Lancashire’. On 24 January Bective sent a copy to Little, asking him to communicate with anyone who might be able to assist, but two days later he telegraphed Little in cipher himself with news from Arnold & Greenwood, which the firm also sent by letter. They knew of ‘a field’ at Underbarrow ‘which can be bought for £300 and would produce a rental of £10 sufficient for 4 votes’. On 30 January Little received a letter from Jameson confirming his intention to buy.

Evidently many assumed that the Secret Ballot, as laid down by law since 1872, would not prove to be all that secret. We can infer what arrangement John Richardson of Temple Sowerby had in mind when he responded to the Conservative letter by explaining that he would have written sooner had not his joiner’s shop and wood...
and tools worth hundreds of pounds, as well as a marquee recently bought for £104 12s., been destroyed by fire. Polling Books recording canvass returns of voters’ stated intentions fairly accurately reflected the predominant local landowner, though there is little evidence of landlord coercion. Thus there was heavy support for Tufton in Milburn and Newbiggin, little in Temple Sowerby and Shap, none at all in Lowther. But even in Yellow villages there were voters who were non-committal or defiant. Though the ‘looking up of votes in Morland [was] proceeding very vigorously under the generalship of Captain Markham’, he had to report that number 3913 T. Kindleysides was a Blue, who must be ‘seen by W.L.’.

Sir Henry Tufton was patron of several Eden Valley parishes and had mustered a collection of parsons in his Appleby platform party; but the Anglican clergymen actively involved in campaigning were usually Yellows, even if it is fair to say that ‘the Lowthers showed characteristic indifference to the Established Church unless it harmed their own pocket or prestige’. A long letter in a neat hand from The Revd W. Pattinson announced his plan to form a Conservative Committee in Hartsop and Patterdale, and added a garrulous account of his efforts thus far. He had canvassed Mr Bownass, but he had fallen out with Lord Lonsdale over fishing rights, and supported Tufton because he would do away with the Game Laws. As for Mark Ellwood Kidd, voter 4518, he was ‘not improbably a Conservative, but would not dare openly to promise his vote to Mr Lowther, as he is much in arrears with his rent to Mr Bownass, the owner of his Inn & all his land . . . His brother-in-law, Mr Bird, a Guardian of the West Ward Union, is an extreme Liberal’. Stephen Whiteside, Vicar of Shap, whose patron was the Earl of Lonsdale, was equally anxious to help the Lowther cause, and felt offended not to be invited to join the newly formed Shap Conservative Committee.

Another Yellow partisan was the Vicar of Crosby Ravensworth, George Weston; but, always a controversial figure, he was embroiled in difficulties with a neighbouring village. The governors of Crosby Ravensworth Grammar School, including Weston himself in the Chair and the Hon. W. Lowther, wanted to take over and close Maulds Meaburn School under the 1878 Endowed Schools Act. So fierce was the local reaction that ‘It is a question of policy whether the voters of Maulds Meaburn who are airing a supposed grievance should be canvassed by anyone connected with Lowther’. Eager to help nonetheless, Weston went to Shap in search of an elusive voter, and triumphantly reported his discovery: there was a Miles Sill in Crosby Ravensworth, and another in Kaber, with land in Cliburn. Not all parsons were so helpful, however. The Revd J. Darling, vicar of the Lowther parish of Bampton, alarmed Colonel Burn with the fatuous, or perhaps facetious, claim that ‘the whole of Bampton will vote in a body against us’; but he was, as a civil servant remarked in another context, ‘a person whose statements are not wholly reliable’.

Significant numbers on the register lived outside Westmorland, qualifying for votes by virtue of property owned, at least nominally, in the constituency. A network of solicitors was employed to locate them: one wrote from Maryport to say that John Smith of Flimby, voter 4022, was a Conservative and would come if he was sent a Railway Pass; ‘but he grumbles about the loss of two or three days pay for himself
& horse & cart’. The Rector of Tenbury regretted he could not come to vote in Shap because there was no convenient train to take him back to vote Conservative again in Shropshire the day after the Westmorland poll: ‘If Shap had been a principal station on the main line there would have been no difficulty’. One out-voter whom the Conservatives probably did not bother to contact was Alfred Charles Tufton of Hothfield Place, Ashford in Kent.

‘What shall I say?’

Among the hundreds of letters that arrived at the offices of William Little and Arnold Greenwood were many from the Members themselves. Lord Bective had a taste for coded telegrams, but William Lowther preferred to write notes with broad nib and black ink in a sprawling and barely-legible hand from such varied addresses as the House of Commons, Lowther Lodge in Kensington Gore, the Carlton Club, the Directors’ Room at Euston Station, Lowther Castle and Westmorland homes like Dallam Towers in Milnthorpe where he was a guest while campaigning. Sometimes he got involved in the minutiae of individual voters, as when he wrote to Little: ‘Nicholson of the Hospital will vote yellow though he will not say so. Carruthers of Clifton Dykes will vote blue’. Often he fretted. How much was all this costing? ‘Mr Greenwood is no doubt a very good man but may not have a head for finance?’ And then there was the Press. Liberal papers sold for a penny, while the Westmorland Gazette was ‘too dear at 2d. & no one reads it. Atkinson & Pollitt will not reduce the price what can we do. If Atkinson & P. are wise they will make that paper 1d but they will not do it. We must fall back on the Observer . . . I would agree to anything you decided upon, if there is a question of paying which there is sure to be’. Indeed there was: the Gazette’s proprietors wanted £500 to halve their cover price, which was not forthcoming. In the end, two extra editions were printed in the fortnight before the poll at price 1d., more than a thousand copies being bought and distributed by the Conservative campaign.

Speeches reported in the papers made uncomfortable reading for Lowther. Though the Gazette reported with satisfaction the disruption of a Liberal meeting at Holme by Conservative infiltrators, it also quoted the words of C. G. Jones, a Liberal supporter: ‘Let us be men, not chattels. Are we content to live under Lowther rule or do we wish to be free men?’ Lowther grumbled to his agent, ‘I am told the run will be against me, as I only represent a family . . . I do not see much in Tufton’s address but a slap at me’. With only one candidate, Liberal tactics were to persuade Blue voters to plump for Tufton alone, and less-than-dyed-in-the-wool Yellows to split, giving Tufton one vote and one to their preferred Conservative, probably Bective.

Lowther’s sense of isolation was perhaps increased by the fact that whereas he, reaching his teenage years before Dr Arnold civilized the public schools, was educated at home before spending a year at Magdalene, Cambridge, the other two candidates had been contemporaries at both school and Oxford. Bective, then with the title Lord Kenlis, joined Tufton at Eton in January 1858. They were not in the same house, and Tufton did not row, but they later acknowledged being ‘old personal friends’. Both went up to Christ Church in January 1863, Kenlis as a nobleman, Tufton a gentleman commoner. Neither took a degree. Seventeen years later, perhaps stung by Tufton’s
reported comment that ‘he was very disappointed at the intellect’ of the two sitting members. Bective told his audience in Appleby Market Hall that he and Tufton might be old schoolfellows, but ‘I do not feel any sympathy for him as a candidate . . . If I was a Blue, I should consider several gentlemen more suitable, as Westmorland men, than Sir Henry James Tufton’. He urged them not to consider splitting their votes.

To Lowther’s worries that split votes would let Tufton in at his expense was added unease about what to say at meetings. By 1880 Conservative and Liberal national organisations of both parties produced a party line on major issues and much platform time was devoted to the Near East, with Conservatives and Liberals indicting each other of being too friendly with Russia and Turkey respectively. Unsurprisingly, both parties favoured lower taxation and accused each other of profligate waste of public money. Agriculture inevitably loomed large. Liberals talked up the Agricultural Depression, though it primarily affected wheat growing areas, and blamed the Conservative government. Conservatives responded by reminding farmers that the last great foot-and-mouth outbreak had been when the Liberals were in power and claimed that their Cattle Diseases Act had prevented its return. But ‘candidates had to be able to look after themselves during the three or four weeks of the election, for they got no help from central office to speak of’. Lowther asked his agent, ‘Can you find out what are the subjects uppermost in the Westmorland electorate?’

He did not want to talk about the Land Question, but this was the most obvious issue separating candidates whose families were the top three landowners in Westmorland. Between them Lowther’s nephew, Lonsdale, Tufton and Bective owned over 60,000 acres but in his election address Tufton pitched for the small farmer’s vote, arguing for changes in land law: easier land transfer, compensation to tenants for unexhausted improvements and tenants’ right to shoot ground game. This was ‘a ready-made subject for Liberal attacks on the monstrous privileges of landlords’, and Lowther was apprehensive: ‘What shall I say about the Game Laws when we have a meeting?’ he asked his agent. Whatever the answer, he chose to say very little. At Appleby, Bective and Lowther naturally insisted that they were the farmers’ best friends, though Bective did venture that there would be problems with too much tenant right.

From early in the campaign the Yellows decided that their most effective tactic would be character assassination of Sir Henry Tufton, ‘a gentleman who has fought three election battles . . . and got soundly beaten every time’. Tufton was vague and imitative, afraid to appear in public without minders: at a ‘remarkable burlesque’ of a meeting in Kendal, amid much ‘languid, makeshift, pumped-up moralising’, ‘the hon. baronet managed to talk a couple of columns of newspaper matter . . . without saying ten words to the point’. Tufton’s steward, Admiral Russell Eliott, was depicted as a tempter whose efforts to woo the sturdy farmers of Westmorland would fail. ‘They knew that the fire engine Sir Henry had given to Appleby didn’t work, and that he was a hypocrite, who for all his talk of tenant right, kept rents high, forbade his own tenants to shoot rabbits or rooks, and planned to evict them and let his farms to ‘Scotchmen’.

Letterwriters to the Press, like ‘Blue Voter of Dufaton’, insisted that Tufton was a better landlord than any Lowther, but the allegations persisted, reinforced by cartoons circulated by Conservative agents along with a bogus address...
printed in Liberal blue from ‘Jacques the tuft hunter’, Voters were constantly reminded that the Liberal candidate was a foreigner, who ‘forgot to tell the audience he has been naturalized a British subject’, not Henry James but Henri Jacques, a ‘parlez-vous’, ‘the Tufton Mounseer’.

No fireworks

Yet, with a week to go, Lowther confided to Little, 'Blues I hear are very confident'. The campaign was now in its endgame. Thousands of yellow polling cards were posted out to those marked as Conservative voters reminding them of when, where and for whom they must vote and instructing them to hand the cards to tellers after they had put their crosses in the right place. Also posted out were forms inviting those who must travel to vote to indicate at what station and by which train they would arrive, so they could be met and escorted to the polling booth. Railway passes, nearly all first class, followed by return, whether the optimistic Pooley Bridge voter who wanted to be provided with a room for the night in the best hotel in Penrith got his wish is not recorded. By 7.00 a.m. on the morning of 8 April a team of Conservative tellers manned each of the 17 polling stations, armed with lists and striking-out cards. Their printed instructions stated, ‘Special attention should be given to unpledged voters, especially those favourably inclined, and every legitimate means used to induce them’. Personation Agents scanned faces, while Conveyance Committees ensured that hired horse-drawn vehicles followed tight schedules to get voters to the poll. For example, Joseph Watson's Close Carriage was to be at Helton by 7.30 a.m. to collect Daniel Hodgson and Robert Sill, thence to Askham to pick up John Bowness and so on to Morland. R. S. Ferguson, the local historian, would take the train from Carlisle to Penrith, whence a carriage would convey him to Pooley Bridge and back. It was, of course, important that only the right people got a ride. ‘Do you consider it advisable to convey doubtful voters to the poll?’ a Kendal agent asked Little. ‘The other side want carriages and are telling their voters to ride to the poll in yellow carriages’.

A few days later Lowther would write to Little reflecting on ‘the Blues conviction they would turn me out. Sir H. J. T. did not doubt it for a moment’. On the morning of 9 April, as the votes began to be counted in the Shire Hall under the gaze of counting agents – one of whom, Captain Markham, would subsequently produce a list of every individual vote cast in Morland – the Yellows had reason to be apprehensive. The borough results had gone badly for the Conservatives; in Kendal John Whitwell had brushed aside the challenge of the Bradford banker Alfred Harris by 1,118 to 541. In the counties they were doing better, but local results were mixed. At the third attempt Sir Richard Musgrave had captured a seat in East Cumberland, but in the former Lowther fastness of West Cumberland, David Ainsworth, like Tufton a Liberal running solo against two Conservative incumbents, had topped the poll, turning out Lord Muncaster. But as the Westmorland votes stacked up the Yellows began to breathe more easily. Lowther jotted down the figures. 4,471 out of 4,930 electors had recorded votes, and 2,438 had voted for Bective and Lowther. 1,729 had plumped for Tufton, and there had been 39 plumpers for Bective and 14 for Lowther. Blue blandishments had induced only a little splitting of votes, 164 for Tufton and Bective, 70 for Tufton and Lowther. The telegrams Lowther had prudently instructed Little to send off to
Fig. 2. 1880 cartoon mocking Tufton's campaign. It alludes to his previous election defeats in East Kent, and to three allegations: the ineffectiveness of his fire engine, his refusal to permit tenants to kill ground game, and a preference for leasing farms to Scots.
various relations only in the event of victory\textsuperscript{130} were despatched, while the fireworks at Appleby Castle stayed unlit.\textsuperscript{131}

Historians have recently debated the significance of the developments of the 1870s on electoral politics. The introduction of the secret ballot, ostensibly a means to protect the voter from bribery or intimidation, has been interpreted instead, when taken in conjunction with the development of national and local party organisations in the same decade, as ‘a taming of popular politics’.\textsuperscript{132} National party organisation determined election issues, and persons without votes no longer had a part to play in rowdy hustings and street parades. How quickly and completely the professionalisation of politics disempowered the people is a matter for disagreement, and one which anyway seems far more relevant to urban politics than to what happened in Westmorland. The Liberal Kendal Times had optimistically described the 1880 county election, which ‘no other contest in the kingdom will be watched with more interest’, as ‘the scene of an experiment’. Elsewhere ‘feudalism’ was no more, but in Westmorland it was still to be decided ‘whether the electors are yet free, or whether they do not remain body and soul an appanage of the House of Lowther’.\textsuperscript{133} The ‘experiment’ failed: even though some of the rules had changed during nearly 50 years of electoral inaction, the game in Westmorland in 1880 was still the same as it had been in 1832, not popular politics but old-fashioned aristocratic status conflict; and so was the result.

Never the same again

Conservative celebration was nevertheless subdued. The county might have been ‘faithful among the many faithless found’\textsuperscript{134} but the Liberals were back in government with a working majority, and Parliamentary Reform extending the borough household franchise to the counties was certain. Four days after the Westmorland declaration, R.A. Tyson of Beacon Hall, Penrith, wrote a long and austere letter to Little, foreseeing that new voters would be heavily influenced by the local press, which he regarded as irredeemably biased, particularly the Herald, rumoured to be paid to be ‘ultra-Radical’. By contrast supposedly Conservative papers gave the party ‘plausible pseudo-support’ with ‘weak and watery leaders’. He urged a buy-out of the Observer and Gazette and the launch of a new journal.\textsuperscript{135} By 1881 a deal had evidently been done. The Lowther Archive contains a copy of an agreement, undated, unsigned and unsealed, whereby ‘Trustees’ will pay the Westmorland Gazette a 1,000 guineas in instalments from 1881 to 1886 ‘on consideration that the paper shall be conducted on true Conservative principles’, with any dispute being referred to the Conservative Whips, and the option of a buy-out should Atkinson and Pollitt wish to sell.\textsuperscript{136} From January 1881 the price of the Gazette was reduced to 1d. (See Figure 3)

‘Your opponents laugh at the idea of you being able to shake their yoke from off your necks, but their supremacy will be still more imperilled at the next contest’, Tufton had told his disappointed supporters on the day of his defeat.\textsuperscript{137} By the spring of 1881, following Musgrave’s death,\textsuperscript{138} Tufton was both Lord-Lieutenant of Westmorland and chairman of its newly formed Liberal Association,\textsuperscript{139} and though his ennoblement later that year as Lord Hothfield meant that he would never again be a candidate, he funded the Association conscientiously. Contested county elections at the next
Subsidy of 1,000 guineas to be paid as follows:
£200 to be paid on 1st January, 1831.
£260 do.: 1832.
£200 do.: 1833.
£160 do.: 1834.
£100 do.: 1835.
£80 do.: 1836.

Subject to the following conditions:

1. That the price of the newspaper be reduced on the 1st January, 1881 to one penny.
2. In consideration of the above payments the paper shall be conducted in accordance with the suggestions and advice tendered by three Trustees from time to time during Mr. Bollitt's lifetime.
3. That the paper shall be conducted on true Conservative principles.
4. That in case of any disagreement under this contract the same shall be referred to the Conservative Whips for the time being whose decision shall be final.
5. That the Trustees have the option in the case of Mr. Bollitt's death, or wishing to dispose of it to purchase the Gazette at a price to be fixed on in the month of January in each year upon the following principles:
   (a) Plant and Machinery at a valuation.
   (b) 3 years' purchase of the average profits of the last preceding three years provided the payments on account of the subsidy shall not form part of the profits.

Fig. 3. A deal between unnamed Trustees and the Westmorland Gazette.
Dissolution of Parliament were regarded as a certainty, though the decisions of the Boundary Commissioners on new single-member constituencies were not finalised until 1885.

Not only would the register and the boundaries be different, so would the rules. By the 1883 Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act, strict limits were placed on candidates’ expenditure, and practices such as supplying railway passes and hiring coaches were outlawed. Two months after the 1880 count R. H. Greenwood had presented the High Sheriff of Westmorland with accounts indicating that the Yellows had spent £7,137 14s. 5d. on the recent election; E. Heelis’s figure for the Blues was £3,242 6s. 9d.140 These figures are certainly too low: there were bills outstanding, and in August the proprietor of the Patterdale Hotel was threatening Little with a County Court summons.141 An estimate of Conservative spending of £10,000142 and perhaps half that by the Liberals is plausible; and that does not include Kendal. In 1885, with the number of voters more than doubled, spending by both parties for two seats, both contested, comprising the whole of the county, amounted to a little over £4,000.143

Because candidates could no longer legally afford solicitors to organise meetings, canvassing and transport, these tasks were gradually taken over by professional agents, who ran campaigns with such volunteers as could be mustered, and for whom meticulous keeping and retention of records was neither practicable nor important.

With characteristic conservatism, the Lowther campaign of 1885144 was still co-ordinated by a solicitor, Thomas Preston of Kirkby Stephen, but the vastly reduced scale of the operation is reflected in the survival of a mere handful of letters and some rough jottings by unpaid polling-station tellers.145 The political process was moving into a new era, and we can discover almost nothing about the minutiae of campaign organisation in Westmorland for any election after 1880. Democracy’s gain has been the historian’s loss.

Acknowledgements

Much of the work for this paper has been done in Carlisle Record Office, and I cannot speak too highly of the knowledge and professionalism of the staff there and at Kendal Record Office. I am also grateful to the staffs of the public libraries at Kendal, Penrith, Carlisle and Appleby, where I have accessed material; likewise to the staffs of the British Library, the National Library of Scotland and the library of Queen’s College, Oxford. Especial thanks are due to Mrs Mary George, who continues to update the Whitehead collection, and who has always made me welcome to trawl through the precious scrapbooks, and to Alice Palmer, whose insights into local history have been invaluable in many impromptu discussions.

Bibliography

This paper is almost entirely based on primary sources. Boxes 1141 to 1173 of the Lowther Archive at the Cumbria County Record Office in Carlisle contain election material from the 18th and 19th century. Most of the materials stored relate to Westmorland, and there is far more material from the north of the county than from the
south. The Lowther catalogue gives a rough indication of which election the contents of each box relate to. Otherwise they are unclassified apart from being arranged in bundles by the solicitors who deposited them. A few of the bundles have been labelled by archivists, but most of the documents accessed for this study since had remained undisturbed until I looked at them.

The other main resource is, of course, the heavily politicised local press. Produced in Penrith, the Penrith Observer, the Cumberland & Westmorland Herald and the Cumberland & Westmorland Advertiser; produced in Kendal, the Westmorland Gazette, and the Kendal Mercury and Kendal Times, which merged in April 1880 on the eve of the election. They not only provide reports of events as they happened, but also full obituaries of prominent figures in the county’s politics. A valuable additional resource is the Whitehead Collection of press cuttings, privately held in Appleby. This is intermittent up to 1878, comprehensive thereafter. John Whitehead, the first compiler, collected all that he deemed relevant to the Appleby area, much of it political. As well as the above journals he occasionally drew on the Northern Echo, North Star, Carlisle Journal and Carlisle Patriot.


For a rounded picture of Britain in 1880 a good up-to-date survey is Theodore K. Hoppen, The Mid-Victorian Generation (2000), in the new Oxford series. The reader is referred to the endnotes for specialised works on such issues as the conduct of elections, popular politics and the development of the parties; as well as to published and unpublished local studies on, for example, politics, religion and agriculture.

Notes and References

1 Located at the intersection of Stramongate and Blackhall Road, and later St George’s Theatre, it is now demolished.
2 Kendal Mercury 27 February 1880 gave the lower figure, exactly reversing the partisan estimates made in respect of the attendance at the Liberal meeting of 5 December 1879, discussed below.
3 Penrith Observer 24 February 1880.
4 Viscount Ullswater, A Speaker’s Commentaries (1925) vol. i, 17-18 gives a filial description of William Lowther’s appearance and character.
5 Westmorland Gazette obituary of William Lowther, 27 January 1912.
6 Cumberland and Westmorland Herald 29 Nov 1879: ‘Colonel Lowther was a very poor public speaker with a saturnine face and a temper to match’. His grandson Viscount Ullswater recalled ‘a tall man with a white beard and a remarkably red face – short of speech and decidedly intimidating’.
Westmorland Gazette 23 February 1880 reported Lowther’s speech verbatim.

Penrith Observer November 1878 recorded that Lowther had attended 60 out of 278 Commons divisions in the last session, and Bective 40.

A distance of some two and a half miles.

Benjamin Disraeli had been ennobled as Earl of Beaconsfield in 1876. Any esteem William Lowther held for him may have been soured by the issue of the lord-lieutenancy (see below). A distant relative, the outspoken Sir James Lowther M.P. for York, was Beaconsfield’s Chief Secretary for Ireland, but there is no evidence of closeness between William and James.

Kendal Mercury 1 May 1875 reports the consecration of a Bective Lodge in Carlisle; the earl was the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master. He was to die prematurely, and the Observer obituary of 19 December 1893 records an innocuous life.

Westmorland Gazette 23 February 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther [Archive] [box] 1162 James Lowther to William Little 18 February 1880.

Ullswater, Speaker’s Commentaries (1925) vol. i, 136.

Schneider’s entrepreneurial flair earns him a place in the Dictionary of National Biography (2004) vol. xlix, article by Aidan C. Jones, but his political career had been bizarre. He was Liberal M.P. for Norwich 1857-59, and unseated on petition for malpractice. He was elected for Lancaster in 1865 and unseated in 1866 after a Royal Commission enquiry into bribery allegations.


See R. J. Olney, Lincolnshire Politics 1832-1885 (1973) for the intensity of political activity in a region no less rural than Westmorland.

T.O. Lloyd, [The General] Election of 1880 (1968), 68. The number of Conservative Associations in Britain doubled from 1874.


In 1754 the Lowthers and Tuftons spent £44,000 on the Appleby election, and ended up with one member each; there were no further contests. See B. Bonsall, Sir James Lowther and Cumberland & Westmorland Elections 1754-1775 (1960).

This was G. W. F. Bentinck, not to be confused with his relative Lord George Bentinck, leader of the Protectionist revolt against Sir Robert Peel following Corn Law Repeal in 1846.

Cumberland and Westmorland Herald 20 December 1879.

Thompson’s remarkable story is told by Martin Daunton in the DNB (2004), vol liv.

Westmorland Gazette 10 April 1880.

C. E. Searle ‘This Odd Corner of England’ unpublished Ph.D. thesis University of Essex, 1984, held in CRO(C), analyses the social structure of Cumbrian agriculture in the 18th and 19th centuries.


CRO(C) Lowther 1162 telegram from R.H. Greenwood to W. Little, 8 January 1880.


It is so described in CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from R. A. Tyson to W. Little, 13 April 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from H.W. Schneider to W. Little, 17 January 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther 1159 letter from Hugh Holme to W. Little, 6 February 1874.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from W. Lowther to W. Little, 25 February 1880.

Northern Echo 3 December 1879.

I am indebted for this information to the present Lord Hothfield.

See Return of Owners of Land (1874), a copy of which is in CRO(K), 484 ff. for Westmorland.

Whitehead press-cutting, probably from Kendal Mercury June 1854.

CRO(C) Lowther 1152, 1153, 1154, 1158 and 1160 are devoted to the Electoral Register between 1833 and 1880; also various items in 1157 relating to 1841 and 1163 relating to 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from W. Lowther to W. Little, 21 April 1880.

All the examples in this paragraph are from CRO(C) Lowther 1157.

CRO(C) Lowther 1157. Chair Bearers appear in the accounts for the non-elections of 1837, 1841 and
1847; after that there is no mention of them. They would carry candidates in state to the hustings, and perhaps also convey infirm voters to the polling station.

43 CRO(C) Lowther 1159, Bective to the Electors of Westmorland, 26 January 1874.

44 C. Seymour, *Electoral Reform in England and Wales* (1915), 229, 400, 437 discusses the slow demise of treating. It survived longest in certain corrupt boroughs: abuses in Lancaster were so flagrant in the 1865 election, in which Schneider was elected, that the borough was disfranchised.

45 CRO(C) Lowther 1159, J. P. Shepherd to Mrs Kilvington, 2 February 1874.

46 *Cumberland and Westmorland Herald*, 7 February 1874.

47 In *Memory of W. H. Wakefield* (1889), a reverent anthology produced by his son A. M. Wakefield.

48 I am indebted for information about Tufton and Bective’s schooldays to the Eton College archivist, Penny Hatfield. Tufton’s mother was French and he had spent his early years in France.


50 *Northern Echo* 5 December 1879.

51 *Penrith Observer*, obituary, 2 December 1926.

52 *Penrith Observer* 8 April 1879. For the full story of the Appleby fire engine, see Maggie Clowes, *Chariots of Fire*, serialised in the Appleby-in-Westmorland Society Newsletter, no 71 et seq. (2007).

53 *Kendal Mercury* 9 September 1876.

54 Owen, *Lowntier Family*, 393.

55 R. T. Shannon, *[The Age of Disraeli]* (1992), 245. The ‘other reasons’ probably included heavy drinking. For insights into the ‘tragi-comedy’ of St George’s short life (he died in 1882) see D. Sutherland, *The Yellow Earl* (1965).

56 Shannon, *Age of Disraeli*, 246. Noel refers to a ‘recent messy lawsuit’ that has ‘considerably affected’ Bective’s local standing. I have yet to find evidence in the *Kendal Mercury* or *Kendal Times* of any of this; a mutual transfer of several farms between Bective and Lonsdale in 1875 may have upset some tenants.

57 Edenhall is a few miles north of the Cumberland border; but the Musgraves had an earlier history of representing Westmorland with distinction, and two villages in the county bear their name. In 1874 Musgrave was the defeated Conservative candidate in East Cumberland.

58 *Kendal Mercury* 9 September 1876 and 23 September 1876. Musgrave’s appointment also broke up the linking of Cumberland and Westmorland under the same lord-lieutenant.

59 All the Kendal journals gave extensive coverage to the ‘Bulgarian Atrocities’ in the autumn of 1876, and mass meetings of protest, e.g. *Kendal Times* 9 September 1876.

60 E. G. Collieu, *Gladstone* (1968), 44.

61 *Penrith Observer* 25 November 1879, quoting the *Carlisle Journal*.

62 *Northern Echo* 3 December 1879.

63 *Northern Echo* 5 December 1879.

64 *Carlisle Patriot* 5 December 1879.

65 *Kendal Mercury* 13 February 1880.

66 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from R. Burn to W. Little, 9 January 1880.

67 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from J. Birbeck to R. Burn, undated.

68 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 telegram of 8 January 1880.

69 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from John Bell jr. to W. Little 14 January 1880.

70 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from John Bell jr. to W. Little 17 January 1880.

71 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from Thomas H. Preston to W. Little 19 January 1880.

72 South of Kirkby Stephen, Wharton Hall was a Lowther property, part derelict and part occupied by tenants.

73 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from Thomas H. Preston to W. Little, 20 January 1880.

74 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from Bective to W. Little quoting Brown’s letter in full, 24 January 1880.

75 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from Arnold & Greenwood to W. Little, 26 January 1880.

76 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from J. Jameson to W. Little, 30 January 1880.

77 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from J. Richardson to R. Burn, 11 January 1880.

78 H. J. Hanham, *Elections and Party Management: Politics in the time of Disraeli and Gladstone* (1959) quotes the Cumberland Liberal Sir Wilfrid Lawson, a veteran opponent of the Lowthers, as stating in his Memoirs that tales of coercion by landlords were usually inventions.
CRO(C) Lowther 1163 contains Poll Books with canvass returns, not all completed.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from John Bell jnr to W. Little, 15 January 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 note from F. Markham, 4 February 1880.

Carlisle Journal 5 December 1879 lists the entire platform party, including seven clergymen.


CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from John Bell jnr to W. Little, 11 February 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther 1159 letter from W. Lowther to W. Little reporting on a canvass in Shap, 3 February 1874.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from Matthew Sarginson to W. Little, 12 March 1880: ‘Mr Whiteside was not suited at not being asked to attend the last meeting held here, to sweeten matters I think it would be advisable to request him to attend on Monday.’

I am indebted for this information to members of Crosby Ravensworth History Society. David Risk has written The Clergy of Crosby Ravensworth (2006); Eileen Risk has transcribed and edited the log-books of the Crosby Ravensworth schools.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 J. P. Shepherd to W. Little, 15 March 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from Reginald Pering to W. Little, 6 April 1880.


CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter to W. Little, 2 April 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from W. Lowther to W. Little, 6 April 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from W. Lowther to W. Little, 7 April 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from W. Lowther to W. Little, 22 February 1880.

CRO(C), Lowther, 1162 letter from W. Lowther to W. Little, 4 February 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from W. Lowther to W. Little, 12 February 1880.

Westmorland Gazette 14 February 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from W. Lowther to W. Little, 10 March 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from John Bell jnr to W. Little, 11 February 1880.

I am indebted for this information to Judith Curthoys, archivist of Christ Church College.

Kendal Mercury 27 March 1880.

Westmorland Gazette 30 March 1880.

Westmorland Gazette 6 April 1880.

Lloyd, Election of 1880, 32.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from W. Lowther to W. Little 12 February 1880.

Return of Owners of Land (1874).

Penrith Observer 10 March 1880.

Lloyd, Election of 1880, 60.

CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from W. Lowther to W. Little, 10 March 1880.

Westmorland Gazette 30 March 1880.

Westmorland Gazette 31 January 1880, reporting W. Crewdson speaking at a Conservative meeting in Kendal.

Westmorland Gazette 27 March 1880.

CRO(C) Lowther 1161 cartoon, ‘The Tempter Refused’. Younger son of a Borders baronet, Elliott (1802-1881) a career naval man who was promoted to admiral in 1869, served the Tuftons for over 30 years, handling tenancies, organising the delivery of the fire engine, distributing free coals to the local poor, sitting on the governing body of Appleby Grammar School and acting as election agent: see Cumberland and Westmorland Herald, 31 December 1881, reporting his death at Appleby Castle. An older brother George was also an Admiral. Neither should be confused with the more celebrated and differently spelled Admiral Sir George Elliot (1819-1901), who appears in DNB.

Westmorland Gazette 14 February 1880, reporting an intervention at a Liberal meeting by G.F. Watson. Also see Penrith Observer, 24 February 1880, quoting William Lowther’s, St George’s Hall speech.

Westmorland Gazette 23 March 1880.

The basis for this charge was that Admiral Elliott had leased the Tufton farm of Howgill Castle in the fellsid parish of Milburn to a Scots tenant. See D. Butterworth, Milburn: a History (1997), 46, which
reproduces a Lowther cartoon.

117 Cumberland and Westmorland Herald 19 March 1880.
118 CRO(C) Lowther 1163 contains these items. An interesting question is where this propaganda, which required careful reading, was displayed. It may have been pasted on walls, on the sides of supporters’ carts and carriages, or in friendly inns and barbers’ shops. James Vernon has remarked in correspondence with me how little we know about the mechanics of rural electioneering.

119 Westmorland Gazette 27 March 1880, quoting Captain C. W. Wilson at a Kendal Conservative meeting.
120 Westmorland Gazette 3 and 6 April 1880.
121 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from W. Lowther to W. Little, 1 April 1880.
122 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 telegram from W. Little to R. H. Greenwood says that instruction cards to voters are ready to be sent. CRO(C) Lowther 1163 contains bundles of cards returned after the poll.
123 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 contains books of railway passes similar to cheque books, with many filled-in stubs and some unissued blanks.
124 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter of 5 April to Mr Gillbanks from Westfield, Bolton. The voter’s name is illegible, but his number on the register is noted: 4506, Pooley Bridge.
125 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 contains printed instructions to agents.
126 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 contains a List of Conveyances for polling day, and details of arrangements for named voters.
127 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from H. Gillman to W. Little, 5 April 1880.
128 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from F. Markham to W. Little, 12 April 1880.
129 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 contains a note of these figures in Lowther’s unmistakable hand.
130 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 undated note from W. Lowther to W. Little: telegrams were to be sent to Miss Lowther, the Duchess of Cleveland, Lady Augustus Noel, Lady Eleanor Clifton and J. W. Lowther.
131 Ullswater, A Speaker’s Commentaries (1925), vol I, 137.
133 Kendal Times 19 March 1880.
134 Westmorland Gazette 10 April 1880.
135 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 letter from R. A. Tyson to W. Little, 13 April 1880.
136 CRO(C) Lowther 1162 contains the copy.
137 Kendal Mercury 9 April 1880.
138 He had been East Cumberland MP for only a few months. In the by-election of February 1881, James Lowther, who had been beaten in York the year before, narrowly lost to George Howard, who regained his seat. Lowther was back in the House later that year, returned for North Lincolnshire.
139 The Westmorland Conservative Association also became a permanency.
140 CRO(C), Lowther, 1162 letter from R. H. Greenwood to W. Little, 9 June 1880.
141 CRO(C), Lowther, 1162 letter from Mrs Kidd to W. Little, 24 August 1880.
142 Westmorland Advertiser 10 November 1885, quoting a speech by the Liberal candidate in the forthcoming North Westmorland parliamentary election, James Whitehead.
143 Cumberland and Westmorland Herald, 9 January 1886. In the December 1885 General Election the two parties between them spent £2,100 in North Westmorland. The figures for South Westmorland cannot have been much different.
144 In 1885 and 1886 Lowther and Bective were returned for North (Appleby) and South (Kendal) Westmorland respectively. Both retired before the 1892 election. For the subsequent political developments in Westmorland see A.N. Connell, ‘Blue Sky over North Westmorland’, CW3, vi, 195-215.
145 CRO(C) Lowther 1172. R. H. Greenwood was still acting for the Conservatives, but there is no mention of William Little, the agent in 1880; he was evidently a Conservative by conviction, however, and was still addressing meetings in 1906: see Connell, ‘Blue Sky’, 206.