

ART. XXI.—*An award concerning Sheep-gates, Seathwaite-in-Dummerdale, 1681.* By W. G. COLLINGWOOD, M.A., F.S.A.

*Communicated at Carlisle, September 12th, 1907.*

THE ancient farming life of our district is always interesting, and Seathwaite, the home of "Wonderful" Walker, is so little known to the outside world that a fragment of its history in the seventeenth century need be prefaced by no apology. The document here printed belongs to Mr. Herbert Bownass, honorary curator of the Ruskin Museum at Coniston; he found it among papers inherited from his father, the late Roger Bownass, for some account of whom see *The Book of Coniston*, p. 75. It is a slip of parchment measuring  $16\frac{1}{8}$  by  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches, engrossed in a professional hand. Wonderful Walker (1709-1802) used to act as lawyer for his flock, but he was not born at this time; and the accounts often given of the extremely primitive simplicity of life in this remote nook of the fells make it a little surprising to find a document so business-like as this, concerning a matter apparently so trifling.

Up the beck from Seathwaite Chapel, in the little dale divided by the Tongue from the main valley of the Duddon, there are four ancient sites of farmsteads within the compass of half-a-mile:—Holling House, Long House, Tongue House, and Throng. The little patch of good land surrounding them and under the rough crags which enclose the dale was cut up into a great number of tiny irregular fields, and by the time of Charles II. many more than four families got a living from these fields together with the right of sheep-pasture on the hills around. At Tongue House there are still the traces of four separate

The names of the  
Jury  
William Stainton  
Stephen Pritt  
Mathew Jackson  
Mathew Carter  
Francis Taylor  
Rob Christopherson  
Will Christopherson  
William Gybson  
John Tyson  
Joseph Casson  
Thomas Lowder  
Thomas Casson

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4th day of May in the 33rd yeare of the Raigne of our Sovereigne lord King Charles the second over England Scotland France & Ireland King defender of the faith, in anno Domini 1681 WE THE HEAD JUERY for Dunnerdall and Seatewhate hath been caused [cauled ?] to tounge house in Seatewaite wheareas strife & varience hath beene amongst the tenants at tongue house Concerneing their wayes and priviledges belongueing their tenements first we order and award that Richard Dixson shall sett a paire of Rayles betwixt steell and barne forth of the fould in at the liitle wood gapp WEE ORDER and award that Richard Dixson shall drive his goods up at the said Rayles & Nicholas Walker shall drive his goods up at the same Rayles and John Tyson and William Dawson shall drive their sheepe up at the same Rayles & Carry & Recarry as formerly & likewise we order & award that Richard Dixson & Nicholas Walker shall make up the said Rayles lawfull at or before the 24th day of June upon payne of 6<sup>s</sup> 8<sup>d</sup> every one makeing default LIKEWISE we order and sett downe that John Tyson & Thomas Walker & William Dawson shall watter their goods at yeat how well upon nessesity but not to leave them theare Also we order and set downe that the tenants of tonguehouse shall make up the Rayles in the gapp betwixt the houses of Nicholas Walker and Thomas Walker amongst them Also we order and award that John Tyson and Thomas Walker and Will Dawson shall drive their goods forth at the gapp at backside of John Tyson house and to make up a paire of Rayles amongst them there at or before the 24th day of June upon payne of 6<sup>s</sup> 8<sup>d</sup> every one makeing default Likewise we order and set downe that Richard Dixson & Nicholas Walker shall drive their sheep out at the said backside Rayles as the other doth at the litle wood gapp ALSO WEE ORDER and award that the said Inhabitants of tongue house shall Carry and Recarry in at the Kirgarth gapp and drive their goods as formerly to the buts over the bridge and to make up the gapp amongst them and not to leave their goods till they are over the bridge to the buts upon payne of 6<sup>s</sup> 8<sup>d</sup> every default and likewise we order and sett downe that the watter shall goe its usuall course in the fould as formerly ALLSO we order and sett downe that the tenants of longhouse shall drive their smal goods the same way the drive their great into the tongue upon payne of 12<sup>d</sup> every default ALLSO we order and sett downe that the Tenants of holling house & the tenants of long house and tenants of tongue house and thronghouse in Seathwaite shall bayte noe goods betwixt longhouse gill and tarne foote within the head walle upon payne of 6<sup>s</sup> 8<sup>d</sup> every default in breach of this our award or any matter or thing Contained in it the day and yeare first above written.

[The Award concerning sheep-gates at Seathwaite, 1681.]

dwelling-houses, though now the whole group forms one homestead. With this congestion of population life must have been hard to win, and any encroachment, however trifling, on a neighbour's rights must have been serious. The trespassing of flocks going up to their mountain pastures appears to have been the occasion of the "strife and variance" which the Head Jury of Dunnerdale and Seathwaite Manor were called in to allay. They made provisions for the exact route by which sheep might be driven, through a lane of rails out of the fields beyond the head wall under the crags—the walls now cutting up the fells between Sunny Pike and Dow Crags being allotment inclosures of a later date. They gave directions for the making and upkeep of the rails under definite penalties, for the watering of the sheep, and for the prevention of trespass near the bridge on the way to the Butts.

Local information does not help us at all to identify this bridge; can the Kirkgarth gap be near the chapel, which is more than half-a-mile south of the area to which the award applies? Yeat How, now unknown, may be the hillock immediately to north-east of Tongue House, beyond which is an old gap and stile leading to a sheep-rake up the fell. There is a ruined sheep-fold on the slope of the how (not marked in the 6-inch map), and between it and the barn of Tongue House is a well which may be Yeat How well. Richard Dixon's pair of rails would be set from the barn, past the well and fold to the gap and stile ("steell") in the head wall; a distance of about 500 feet E.N.E. of the house; and all the five farmers of the tiny hamlet would drive their "goods" up this lane on Midsummer Day, "upon pain of 6s. 8d. every one making default."