

ART. XXIII.—*The Townfields of Coniston.* By R. E. PORTER, F.S.I.

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THE sketch herewith has been prepared by our President, from an old map in possession of Stanley H. le Fleming, Esq. of Rydal Hall. It must date from about or after the middle of last century, to which the persons mentioned as occupiers of dales can be referred. The original contains a note of the plots of ground numbered 1 to 14 under the heading of "Townfield"; nos. 2, 4 and 9 are attributed to Wm. Bowness of Coniston; nos. 3 and 11 to Wm. Gould of Stramongate, Kendal; nos. 5, 13 and 14 to the Rev. Samuel Thomas Clarke, Colton (where he was vicar 1848-66); nos. 6 and 12 to Roger Barrow, Outrake, Coniston; nos. 7 and 8 to John Spedding, Bowmanstead, Coniston; no. 10 to James Fisher, Bowness; but no. 1 has no name attached. The areas of the plots are given, ranging from 3 perches (No. 9) to 5 acres and 15 perches (No. 6); and a comparison with the Ordnance Map will show that, though inaccurate in its laying out, this map represents the main features, omitting the houses along the road at Bowmanstead and Haws Bank but showing details still to be recognised. Much of nos. 2, 3 and 5, and Storth are marked in the O.M. as peat moss and the greater part of no. 8 is marked as gravel.

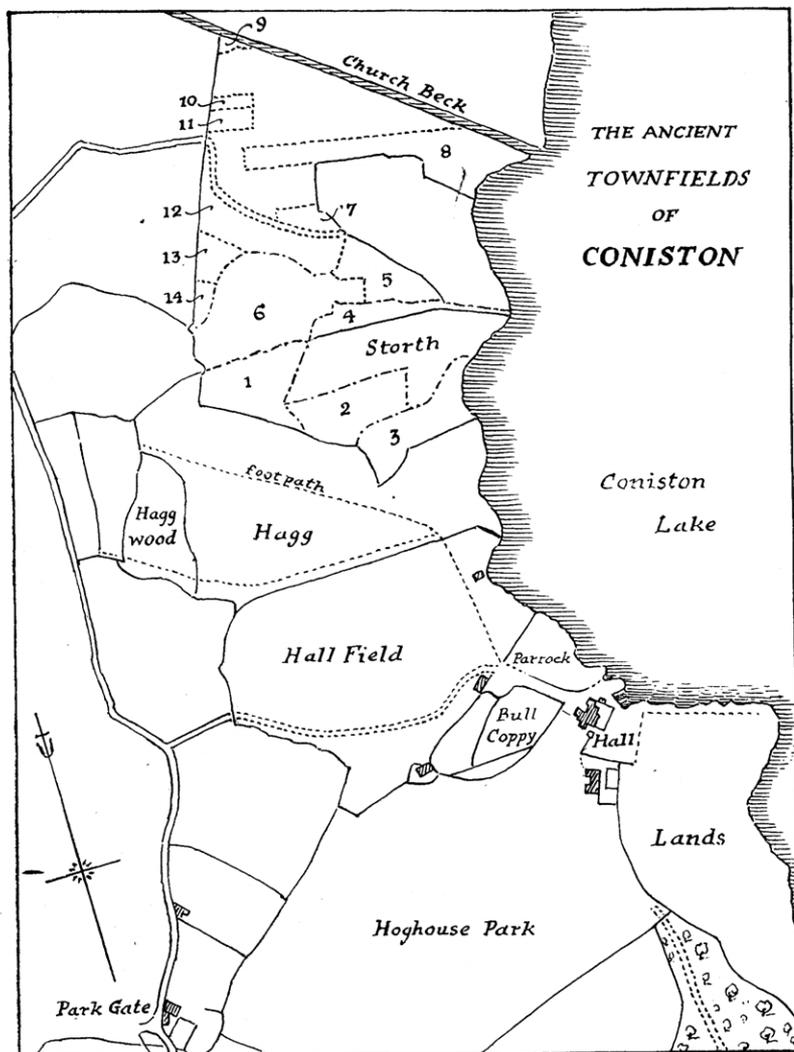
A fortunate find among the Rydal Hall papers gives something of interest about this gravel patch. On May 15, 1620, an award was made by Reginald Walker, Edward Mackreth, Roger Dodgeson, Henry Kirkbie, Christopher Rigge and Christopher Holme, arbitrators in a dispute between John Fleming of Coniston, esq. with

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his tenants Myles Fleming, Richard Harrison, William Towers, William and Henry Sawrey, Adam Walker, William Tomlinson, John Parke and George Rigge "upon thone partie" and Daniel Heckstetter of Keswick, "one of his Ma[jes]ties Miners, upon thother partie, for and concerninge such grounds both Meadowe and Cornelande as is decayed and wasted . . . . by Reasone of the Stamp-howse and brayinge of the Coper vre (i.e. ore) and other Rubbishe at the saide Stamphowse and then the severinge of the same doth so Muddie and Corrupte the watter w<sup>ch</sup> overflowinge the aforesaide grounde leaveth such Corruptione upon them, there is utterlie decayed and wasted of the haie . . . . and the aftergrasse of the same Meadowe in this laste yeare by paste (1619)"—that, to summarize a long story, out of 217½ trusses of hay which used to be got off these lands 145 trusses had been lost, or about two-thirds. The lands named were Fallesteads, Ackers (apparently "acres" or arable), Daniell Wray, Long Ridding, Loynes and Abbotts holle, through which last the watercourse ran. That is to say the lands lay beside the Church Beck more or less in the position of the Townfields shown on the map.

Incidentally there is a name of considerable interest given in a further complaint about "a fishinge in Saincte Martine Beck adioynninge to a watter called Thurstone watter where he [Mr. Fleming] and his tenantes formerly useth to have greate store of ffishe in. We fynde by such wittnesses as came unto us that the saide ffishinge is utterlie destroyed and banished in the saide Becke or River onlie by Reasone of the Corruptione w<sup>ch</sup> cometh downe the watter from the saide Stamphowse but to what value the saide ffishinge was worthe we cannot tell."

St Martin's Beck cannot be other than the Church Beck, and it looks as though the chapel, built in 1586, and, as a chapel of ease, probably not dedicated, was known in 1620 as St. Martin's. Mr. W. G. Collingwood remembers that



in 1891 when the restored church was re-dedicated by Bishop Goodwin, every enquiry was made as to any possible original dedication but in vain; and as St. Andrew's day was the nearest to the actual day of the ceremony, St. Andrew was adopted as the patron saint of Coniston.

The award of 1620 concludes with an order to Daniel Heckstetter to make "Recompense Restitutione and paymente" and to regulate the course of the beck, for "yf theire be not a new watter Race made it will in shorte tyme utterlye decaye and waste to the Channell all the meadowe in the falle steades Ackers Daniell Wraye Longe Riddinge and all other places where the Watter overfloweth w<sup>ch</sup> overflowe of watter before the errectione of the saide Stamphowse did the saide Meadowes noe hurte but much good." This gives us the date of the stamp-house as a little before 1619, and of the straightened course of the Church Beck, a little later; and it shows that the gravel we have noticed was already invading the townfields.

Of the old names of the townfields, Daniel Wray survived until 1823, when the Land Survey of Coniston mentions Robert Tubman, Mr. Bownas and Mr. James Gelderd as occupying small dales in Daniel Wray; and under the heading of Coniston Hall, "Daniel Wray, dales in ditto of people who do not get anything but with syth or sickle, 1 acre 2 roods 8 perches, value £1 8s. 10½d." There is a house called Wraysdale Cottage, built by a Fleming of Coniston, on the road a little to the west of the area shown in our map, which may possibly suggest the whereabouts of the site. In any case the dales from which tenants took only what they could get with scythe or sickle extended anciently much beyond the limits of the plots marked 1 to 14. In the Survey of 1823 dales are named as in the Town Field, Storth, Daniel Wray, Heathwaite Hoghouse close, Heathwaite Field, Little

Arrow Field, Great Field and Butcher Parrock, and indicate a widespread use of the townfield system in ancient Coniston. It is interesting to note that dales exist to-day in the Town Field from which the occupiers take what they can get with "scythe or sickle" leaving the winter eatage to the lord of the Manor.

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