

The Published Topographical Work of John Housman, from 1793 to 1800, and its Relevance to Cumbrian Identities

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The agriculturist and topographical writer, John Housman, made important contributions on the north west of England and the English Lakes during the last decade of the eighteenth century. This article identifies and discusses his work, disclosing his important role as the national investigator for Frederick Eden's *State of the poor*.¹ Housman's observations and ideas of a typology of the 'original' and contemporary inhabitants of Cumberland and the north-west of England, are considered in the context of the identification and creation of Cumbrian identities.

JOHN Housman, of Corby near Carlisle, supplied the notes on soil and agriculture for William Hutchinson's *History of the county of Cumberland*, first published by Francis Jollie of Carlisle in four parts for subscribers from 1793 to 1796.² Housman wrote two books, both published by Jollie in 1800. His *Descriptive tour and guide* covered the English Lakes and parts of north west England.³ His *Topographical description* included the tour within a more comprehensive topographical work, including his observations on the local inhabitants.⁴

This article places Housman's better known works in the context of his full known contribution to published discourse. This includes his previously unrecorded role as the investigator employed by Sir Frederick Eden to gather parochial information for *The state of the poor*, published in 1797. Secondly, Housman's geographically defined statements on the 'manners of the inhabitants' of Cumberland, the 'Cumbrians' in his writing, provide the principal source and a starting point for academic studies of the typology of those inhabitants. In particular, Winchester has demonstrated a correlation between the pattern of early-modern personal names and localities within Housman's social territories.⁵ This article will establish Housman's writing and its development, will analyse his typology of the inhabitants of the counties of north-west England, and will consider the relevance of his work to Cumbrian identities.

The chronology of Housman's published work

Housman's biographical details are unfortunately inaccurately stated in Bicknell's generally excellent *Picturesque Bibliography* ... :-

John Housman 1764-1802 ... was the son of Henry Howard's gardener at Corby Castle, Cumwhitton, near Carlisle. The success of ... the notes for Hutchinson's *History ... of Cumberland* (28) led to Housman accompanying a gentleman (possibly Henry Howard) on a 'Tour through England' in 1797-8. While making the tour he sent a narrative to the *Monthly Magazine* which published it serially as 'Tour through England' in 1797-8. On his return to Cumwhitton he wrote his *Descriptive Tour*. ...⁶

It will be shown that Housman toured alone in 1796, on behalf of Sir Frederick Eden, and that Housman's journal was subsequently published from 1796-99.

Housman was recorded as an enclosure commissioner for Marton Park, Brampton, Westmorland, awarded in 1804.⁷ In 1808 he married Miss Wilson, of Bigland near Wigton, at Carlisle, his address being Lopham Park.⁸ Jollie included Housman in the 'List of eminent men, natives of the county of Cumberland' in his *Cumberland directory and guide* of 1811:-

Houseman John, of Lopham Park, Norfolk, a native of this county, – author of a Topographical Description of the Northern Counties, published in 1800. ... the whole impression was sold in the course of a few months; and that portion of it which related to the Tour of the Lakes has gone through three large editions. ...⁹

Lopham Park was the 900 acre estate of the Duke of Norfolk in Norfolk, suggesting that by 1808 Housman had gained a position from Charles Howard, until at least 1811. One John Housman was the Duke's steward at his Sheffield estate from 1813 to 1819, but a firm connection has not been made.¹⁰

Housman's tour of Cumberland, for Hutchinson and Jollie, was probably completed in 1793 -

Mr Housman, who has furnished the agricultural notes for this work, is a native of the county, was brought up in country employments, in which he has gained much experience, and was engaged by the Editors to visit every parish, and there make his observations; and, by a sufficient residency in each place, to obtain the fullest information.¹¹

While Hutchinson and Jollie made their livings from publications, Housman was presumably paid for his work of researching the notes on soil, agriculture, and occasionally the manners of the inhabitants, which were included under his name. This well-respected work demonstrated the knowledge and abilities that would earn him further employment as an agriculturist. Hutchinson re-used the extensive notes from Housman on the state of agriculture in Carlisle in his further venture with Jollie in 1796, *The history and antiquities of the city of Carlisle* ...¹²

In October 1793 Housman applied to Arthur Young, suggesting that he might 'be useful to the Board of Agriculture, either in this country or elsewhere'.¹³ Young was then Secretary of the Board of Agriculture, though Sir John Sinclair took an executive role as President. With his letter, Housman included a copy of his views on the potential for improvement of agriculture in Cumberland which 'appeared last week in the Cumberland Packet'.¹⁴ Housman was either unsuccessful or too late in applying for a role in the county reports, but his observations and proposals, particularly on improving the commons, predicted those to be presented by Bailey and Culley in their report on Cumberland of 1794.¹⁵ Young's publication of Housman's letter and his views on Cumberland's agriculture, in the *Annals of Agriculture* for 1793, advertised his services to a wider audience.

Housman's journal of his tour of most of England and a part of Wales, starting and finishing in Corby, was published in 26 parts in the new *Monthly Magazine and British Register*, from December 1796 to July 1799.¹⁶ His letter to the editor, dated 25 November 1796, confirmed that the tour was complete. 'Having in the course of a particular engagement, had occasion to visit almost every district in the kingdom, I kept a Journal of my progress, and noted down every remarkable fact, relative

to AGRICULTURE, COMMERCE, IMPROVEMENTS, and MANNERS'.¹⁷ According to the published journal of the tour he started at Corby on 31 March 1796 and returned on 16 December. In the last part he added that 'I afterwards spent a few months in visiting different parts of Cumberland, Northumberland, Durham and the West Riding of Yorkshire on the same business, but kept no regular journal'.¹⁸

The completion of the tour in 1796, rather than 1799, is consistent with the necessary timing of the parochial survey for Sir Frederick Eden's *State of the poor*, published in 1797. Winch notes that 'this ambitious privately financed enquiry was begun during the period of acute grain scarcity in 1794-95, and was a pioneering piece of social investigation based on a set of "queries" posed by the author and pursued by himself with the help of "a few respectable clergymen" and an investigator who spent a year visiting parishes throughout England'.¹⁹ This pioneering research in England followed the extensive survey recorded in the 21 volumes of the *Statistical account of Scotland*, compiled by Sir John Sinclair for the Church of Scotland in 1791-92. Eden acknowledged Sinclair's work in Scotland and sought to use the English survey to inform decisions on the most effective method of supporting the poor.²⁰ He also complimented his un-named investigator; 'To other parishes and districts, not thus accessible to me, I sent a remarkably faithful and intelligent person; who has spent more than a year travelling from place to place, for the express purpose of obtaining exact information, agreeably to a set of queries I furnished him'.²¹ Housman's tour journal excluded the information that he had collected for Eden. However, the regular preamble from January 1797 made Housman's role obvious to the reader. 'Mr JOHN HOUSEMAN ... was engaged to make the Tour by a gentleman of distinction, for the purpose of collecting authentic information, relative to the state of the poor'.²² Perhaps in recognition of Housman's role, the *Monthly Magazine* printed a proposal from him in August 1797 for a plan to consolidate friendly societies.²³

The completed parochial reports were included, and dated, in *The state of the poor*. While they were unattributed and of standardised content, the coincidence of dates on some parochial reports with the date of the visit in Housman's journal removes any doubt of his role. At each place, Housman was required to obtain the following information:-

Parish of _____

Extent of population?

Number of houses that pay the house or window-tax, distinguishing double tenements?

+ Number of houses exempted?

Occupation of parishioners, whether in agriculture, commerce or manufactures?

What manufactures?

Price of Provisions?

Wages of labour?

Rents of land, and land-tax on the net rental?

What sects of religion?

Tithes, how taken?

Number of Inns or ale-houses?

Farms large or small? What is the most useful [usual?] tenure? Principal articles of cultivation?

Commons and waste-lands?

Number of acres inclosed, (if easily obtainable,) in any of the last forty years?

How are the poor maintained; by farming them; in houses of industry; or otherwise?

Houses of industry, (if any,) their state, numbers therein; annual mortality; diet; expences, and profit, since their establishment?

[a table of weekly diet in the poor-house, and births & deaths]

[a table of baptisms, marriages and deaths, poor rates and net sums expended]

Number and state of friendly societies?

How many of them have had their Rules confirmed by Magistrates?

Usual diet of labourers?

Earnings and expences of a labourer's family for a year: distinguishing the number and ages of the family; and the price and quantity of their articles of consumption?

Miscellaneous observations.²⁴

The itinerary and timing of the published tour appear to have been adjusted. On the 25 November 1796 Housman wrote to the editor of the *Monthly Magazine* from Corby; then on 26 November he apparently travelled from Chester to High Walton, on his tour.²⁵ Comparing the dated parochial reports in *The state of the poor* and Housman's published tour journal, shows that the outward leg of his tour was started March 1796, roughly as claimed, but that part of the return leg, through Wales and Lancashire, had been undertaken in 1795. The Northumberland reports were from 1795, confirming that what was claimed to be done in 1797, after the tour, was done before it. The dates of the Cumberland and Westmorland reports are given in Table 1. The early, isolated report of October 1793, about the parish of Bromfield on the Solway Plain, was not by Housman but by Jonathan Boucher, who had contributed to Hutchinson's *History* the entry on that parish, incorporating Housman's notes in his work, and on

TABLE 1: Parochial reports on Cumberland and Westmorland in *The state of the poor*

Cumberland (Volume 2)			Westmorland (Volume 3)		
Bromfield*	pp.47-9	Oct. 1793	Kirkby Lonsdale	pp.771-76	Mar. 1795
Ainstable	pp.45-6	Dec. 1794	Orton	pp.776-78	Apr. 1795
Caldbeck	pp.49-52	Dec. 1794	Underbarrow	pp.778-81	Apr. 1795
Castle Carrock	pp.65-6	Dec. 1794	Kendal	pp.750-71	Apr. 1795 & Jun. 1796
Croglin	pp.67-8	Dec. 1794			
Cumrew	pp.68-70	Dec. 1794			
Kirkoswald	pp.83-7	Dec. 1794			
Sebergham	pp.89-91	Dec. 1794			
Gilcrux	pp.76-7	Jan. 1795			
Harrington	pp.78-80	Jan. 1795			
Hesket	pp.80-3	Jan. 1795			
Warwick	pp.92-3	Jan. 1795			
Cumberland Ag. Lab.	pp.104-7	Jan. 1795			
Carlisle	pp.52-64	Feb. 1795			
Nent Head	pp.87-9	Mar. 1796			
Workington	pp.100-4	Mar. 1796			
Cumwhitton	pp.70-6	Apr. 1796			
Wetheral	pp.93-100	Apr. 1796			

*The work of Jonathan Boucher, not Housman

Sebergham and Caldbeck.²⁶ Boucher, who was clearly supplying information to Eden in the creative or preliminary stages of the project, may have recommended Housman to Eden. The reports of Cumberland, chiefly in the Eden valley, were dated December 1794 and January 1795. Housman's employment probably lasted from late 1794 to mid-1796, which is consistent with Eden's statement of 'over a year', and with the period that Eden would have needed between data collection and completing the text, in December 1796.²⁷

The analysis of the domestic economy of a typical Cumberland agricultural labourer was dated January 1795, allowing Boucher's and Housman's native Cumberland to be presented as the model of frugality and low poor-rates; 'a labouring man in the county of Cumberland can, and does, earn nearly as much ... as one ... in Hertfordshire; whilst his expenditure ... is comparatively insignificant. From his superior economical skill and care The peasant of the North is as intelligent, as ingenious as virtuous and as useful a man, as his less provident neighbours; ... probably far more contented and happy, than the South-country labourer, who is for ever receiving, and for ever wanting, assistance and charity.'²⁸

The Monthly Magazine and British Register was a new periodical in 1796, which included a broad range of articles and information suitable for the professional man, without a classical education, who, like Housman, did not have independent means of support. By his contribution as tour writer for this publication and the association with Eden, Housman succeeded in establishing himself as a topographical writer on agriculture and commerce. He was engaged by the *Monthly Magazine* to provide a shorter tour of Scotland, where his *Journal* dates were 21-27 July 1798, published in five parts from July 1800 to February 1801.²⁹ His own substantial *Descriptive tour* and his *Topographical description*, with its dedicatory address to Mrs Howard of Corby, were published by Jollie in 1800. Those two publications went through seven editions by 1817.

Housman's development as a writer and agriculturist

When Housman wrote the *Descriptive tour* and the *Topographical description*, at the end of the 1790s, he was more knowledgeable and experienced than when collecting material for Hutchinson, and he had established a reputation as a topographical writer. Housman was 'a native of the county ... brought up in county employments', and not an educated gentleman with an establishment position and values.³⁰ The work for Eden gave Housman a deeper understanding of the economic basis of parishes, and the problems of supporting the poor. He also developed a methodical and comparative approach, with which he could consider the territories in his later work, using the experience of his investigative tours through most of Britain. His observations and views of Cumberland were made from the viewpoint of a knowledgeable insider and were carefully reasoned and structured to give useful and reliable information.

Housman's tours gave him the opportunity to discuss his enquiries with well-informed people. He stayed 'two or three days' in July 1796 with Jonathan Boucher, then the rector of Epsom, 'whose moral character, and literary abilities are too well known to

need any comment, and I am proud to call him my countryman, but whose absence from his native soil, I have to lament in common with the rest of the inhabitants of Cumberland'.³¹ Boucher had presumably provided the detailed eighteen-page parochial report on Epsom, Surrey, dated January 1796, for *The state of the poor*.³² Housman positioned himself with increasing confidence as a mediator between his superiors and his inferiors, the country people who were a subject of his published discourse:-

To be ignorant of the manners and customs of the fashionable world, is wholly inexcusable in those who have an opportunity of acquiring such knowledge; but to be ignorant of low life, is a mark of imprudence, or of the meanest sort of pride, in the gentleman, and almost of criminality in the statesman, the legislator, and the magistrate.³³

Under the patronage of the Howards and as an agricultural improver, it is not surprising that Housman's politics, though never explicitly stated, can be interpreted as Whig reformist. He was in tune with Hutchinson and Jollie, who had extended the boundaries of Cumberland to embrace Brougham Hall.³⁴ The territory of the Lowthers features little in reports undertaken for Eden, in which the territory of the improving Curwens at Workington represented the west coast, rather than Whitehaven. In the first part of his *Tour of England* in 1796, having noted 'Brougham-Hall on a gentle eminence', Housman, at his most boldly political:-

entered Lord Lonsdale's extensive demense ... Lowther-Hall ... not in view ... being hid by extensive plantations. A great number of cottages ... most of them unfinished ... tenanted by jackdaws and other birds. Some ... occupied by his Lordship's labourers, who ... work for 1s. per day. Those erected near SHAP, ... intended to increase the number of freeholders in the county. To a traveller, ... this tract would seem in a state of ruin, wholly deserted by its inhabitants, and left to herds of different animals who were grown old in the possession.³⁵

Housman's commitment to agricultural improvement was maintained throughout the 1790s. While Lord Lonsdale was criticised in the context of improvement, so was the war policy in 1796, which had exacerbated the grain shortage and the problem of the poor. 'On a large common, about three miles from Southampton, 14,000 men were encamped; most ... to be sent to the West-Indies. ... My plain understanding would, however, have felt much more gratified in seeing such able-bodied men with spades in their hands cultivating the common they now uselessly occupy'.³⁶ The over-riding interest in improvement continued into his *Topographical description*, in which Cumberland was not a special case to be excluded from improvement for the sake of picturesque scenery and rusticity:-

No! ... let us not stop until every acre of land is made to produce annually as much as it is capable of yielding; till our hills wave with woods, and our plains resemble gardens; till every yard of boggy land is drained that will admit of such improvement, and every rivulet and brook turned to the purpose of irrigation.

...

But the greatest bar in the way of improvement is the unconquerable prejudice of the farmers in favour of old-established systems, and their aversion to experiments ...³⁷

However, Housman understood the difficulty and risk that small owners in Cumberland found in improving their holdings, constrained by 'disagreeable' customary tenure and the residual 'ridiculous and disagreeable burdens' of customary tenure and of some 'worse' Cumberland leases.³⁸

These ambitions were not read by the majority who purchased the *Descriptive tour*. While presented as an alternative for those who would avoid the bulk or expense of the full work, in reality the *Descriptive tour* was the main work. It was published first and provided an updated and unified alternative to the seventh edition of West's *Guide to the lakes*, with its text from 1778 supported by an accretion of notes and appendices.³⁹ The *Topographical description* added the topography, structured as a text book, taking the four counties in alphabetical order after a general geographical introduction, and then using headings:- general appearance, mountains, caves, rivers, lakes, navigable rivers and canals, soils, roads, mines and minerals, stone, buildings, market towns, commerce, manufactures, agriculture, antiquities, manners and customs of the inhabitants. By providing two publications, and by making the educative, improving topography optional, Jollie and Housman matched their publications to the market. They had learned from the earlier publishing mistake of James Clarke, the Penrith surveyor, inn proprietor and radical freemason, whose single text promoting improvement of land and people, in his *Survey of the Lakes* of 1787, was at odds with the needs and sensibilities of the picturesque tourists whom he sought as customers.⁴⁰

Cumbrian identity and the manners and customs of the inhabitants

Housman's base for comparisons on his tours was usually Cumberland, and he presented himself as a Cumbrian, meaning a native of Cumberland. He used the term 'Cumberland and Westmoreland' when discussing shared features; 'the compting-houses are much supplied with country lads from Cumberland and Westmoreland'; or occasionally he used the term 'Westmoreland and Cumberland' if those features were unbecoming; 'it will probably be a very long time before that judicious practice finds its way to Westmoreland and Cumberland'.⁴¹ Housman's Cumbrian identity and sympathies were not in doubt.

Housman did not write of a place called 'Cumbria'. His *Topographical description* covered all of Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire, and a part of the West Riding of Yorkshire extending through Skipton to Sheffield, the entry point for his *Descriptive tour*. That tour was focussed on the English Lakes and was subtitled 'a descriptive tour or guide to the lakes', but it began with the caves of Yorkshire, and finished at Lancaster. Housman, in his *Topographical description*, had a strong appreciation of the special character of the district that others called the English Lakes; 'The district here alluded to lies partly in Lancashire, partly in Westmorland, and partly in Cumberland, and may cover about 200 square miles [compared with Cumberland given as 1516 square miles, and the modern national park of about 885 square miles], containing eleven large lakes and about as many smaller ones, ...'.⁴²

Housman's writing on the manners and customs of the inhabitants appeared only in the *Topographical description* and was addressed by county. It was not read by the majority who purchased the *Descriptive tour*. The relevance of his writing on Cumbrian identities will be considered firstly from the viewpoint of the existential insiders, such as those Loweswater rustics who, in Housman's notes for Hutchinson, 'had seldom travelled beyond their sheep-heafs, had seen no people but their neighbours, and no country but their vales and surrounding mountains'.⁴³ For such inhabitants identity

must be rooted in the culture of their communities, which in turn, for agricultural communities, must include the relationship with the land and a sense of territory and cultural horizons. Housman gave a ten-page exposition of the ‘CUSTOMS rather peculiar to Cumberland’ which included farm service and half-year hirings, the inclusive farm household which particularly enabled strong female participation in farming, hiring fairs and courtship, night courting and illegitimacy, marriage and bidden weddings, christenings, feasting, and diet.⁴⁴ For Housman those shared customs were a unifying component of identity for farming communities of the north western counties of England, because in Westmorland, ‘As the customs of this county are nearly similar to those of Cumberland, already noticed, any repetition would be unnecessary’ and the same applied in Lancashire outside of the manufacturing districts.⁴⁵

Housman’s social typology of the inhabitants of Cumberland, through their perceived manners, was overlaid on the shared customs, but were made from the viewpoint of the external observer, for example the gentry tourist who might observe the inhabitants, or the subscribers to the *Monthly Magazine* who, in 1800, would wish to improve themselves through reading, or might travel in the imagination. A substantial quotation is needed to illustrate Housman’s full purpose:-

The Cumbrians may be divided into three classes, or sorts of people: those towards the borders of Scotland, those inhabiting the plains about the middle of the county; and those occupying the mountainous districts: to which, indeed, may be added a fourth, as much or more distinct than the rest – the inhabitants of Aldstone Moor.

The first class are the descendants of those fierce borderers who for many ages were in the habit of robbing and plundering their neighbours, and from which practice no laws nor punishments could force them to desist; and, [despite deportations] it was some time after the Union before the marauding spirit of this people could be wholly subdued. The present generation, though quite civilised, still retain that resolution, that sort of savage courage in enterprise or any dangerous undertaking ... [Hardy qualities, independence, an officer of justice feels apprehension, a stranger dares not quarrel]. We must, however, acknowledge, that at present no part of the King’s dominion is more free from robberies, thefts, or murders, than this district; ... [horse trading].

[Smuggling] The manners of this people are rough; yet, when at home, they are very kind and hospitable to strangers.

The second class, occupying a more kindly soil, and in an open country, intersected with the principal roads, which afford them more intercourse with the rest of the kingdom, have acquired habits less coarse than those above described; but that hospitality which is found among the borderers is not prevalent in an equal degree here.

The third class, inhabiting those peaceful dales which are shut up among mountains, being generally employed in the innocent occupation of tending their bleating flocks upon these hills, and having little intercourse with the rest of mankind, till their delightful retreats being discovered, became the objects of admiration to the curious traveller, are modest, unassuming, and civil to strangers. These happy people, among whom luxury has scarcely set her foot, and Discord is held in contempt, have few wants, and these are moderate and easily supplied.⁴⁶

By specifying ‘the plains about the middle of the county’ Housman did not address the coastal plains. But his full purpose was not just to characterise all the different types and to partition them geographically, but also to demonstrate continuity in some localities and change in others. His thesis was stated in the first paragraph of his *Topographical description*, where in the north of England, ‘It is, also, among the rural

inhabitants of these peaceful and sequestered dales, that *human nature* may frequently be found in her *original* dress, neither *ornamented* by the refining hand of *art*, nor contaminated with the vices of the world'.⁴⁷ There was some commonality between the borderers and the mountain dwellers, or the third class, who both retained aspects of the manners of their ancestors, while those of the central plains, 'intersected with the principal roads,' were joining the more socially heterogeneous modern England. Housman was building on the work of Isaac Ritson, whom he named, quoting Hutchinson, as, 'that extraordinary genius who wrote the Introduction to Clarke's Survey of the Lakes'.⁴⁸ Isaac Ritson, the schoolmaster born at Eamont Bridge, saw the differences in circumstance acting over a period of time as an important driver in the observed differences in manners between peoples such as the borderers and the mountain dwellers.⁴⁹ He considered that 'the almost uniform train of circumstances which affected these countries from their border situation, ... strongly induces me to believe, that the Northern people were little altered in manners from very remote times, to those immediately preceding the reign of Queen Elizabeth'.⁵⁰ Housman might match Ritson in intelligent observation and analysis, but not in education, and Ritson appears to have provided both a mid-sixteenth century starting point for Housman's 'original' people and a theory of the drivers of the social change which Housman illustrated.

Housman described, in Cumberland, two districts of 'original' people separated by a socially-modern central plain, but in practice the three districts were more of a patchwork. Winchester has demonstrated through a study of personal names that the conditions for the persistence of such original communities existed in some early-modern parishes both in the borders and among the mountains. He has demonstrated a third in the Solway plain, though he considers Housman's characterisation of the Cumberland lowlands 'over-simplistic'.⁵¹ Housman had himself illustrated this eighteenth-century patchwork of the central plain in his earlier notes for Hutchinson, presenting the inhabitants of Cumwhitton, south of Corby, in the following terms:-

Few farmers; most of the people own their own estates; all of customary tenure, ... These estates have passed, for some centuries, in a regular line of descent in the same families, whence there is a great familiarity of character and sameness of disposition in the people. – No manufactory – nor any public road, but for colliers – The market town affords them, now and then, intercourse with the rest of mankind. – Politics and foreign occurrences never disturb their thoughts; and not till this year, 1792, has a newspaper entered this parish, and now one solitary Cumberland packet has been introduced. – No taste for science or polite literature; books are regarded as puerile amusements. – They are strictly honest, credulous and superstitious, delight in athletic exercises and are tenacious of old customs. ... The people in general, exhibit a striking resemblance of the most ancient inhabitants, in their blunt honesty, fierce humour, and rusticity of manners.⁵²

That assessment is close to Joseph Budworth's description of the inhabitants of Buttermere, from his pedestrian tour of 1791.⁵³ But only three miles away from Cumwhitton, the modern world had corrupted the inhabitants of Castle Carrock, who 'From their intercourse with colliers, lime-burners, and carters, have shaken off that simplicity of manners which marks the husbandman, and they have contracted a familiar roughness and austerity, together with a low subtlety, which too often borders on fraud and deceit; esteemed an accomplishment'.⁵⁴

The border contained a difference between higher and lower lands. In the last part of

the *History* Hutchinson had corrected an earlier pejorative description of the people of remote upland Bewcastle, blaming a correspondent.⁵⁵ William Lauder, minister of the important Knowe Presbyterian church in Bewcastle, complained that ‘we have a natural right to a candid report, and ought not to be dragged half a century back, and have our *ancient* instead of our *modern character* made the subject of review’.⁵⁶ This improvement in manners was carefully included in Housman’s description of the borderers above. Bewcastle was a customary manor of Sir James Graham of Netherby, but in Kirkandrews-on-Esk itself the Netherby estate was held freehold and was improved.⁵⁷ Housman noted, in Hutchinson’s *History*, that in Kirkandrews-on-Esk an enforced change of tenure to leasehold, in the seventeenth century, correlated with compliant farmer-inhabitants:-

... their uniform dependence on the same person, and uncertainty of their continuance in the same place, produces a similarity of manners, very opposite to the unbending spirit so remarkable in those parishes, where almost every little farm is occupied by its owner, in whose family it hath continued for, perhaps, several centuries. Here the people affect to have all one mind, and to act with subserviency to their superiors in every circumstance. On the other hand, they seem to live in peace and harmony: no wrangling, or law-suits about their land-marks; no disputes about rights of passing over another’s ground; all belongs to the same person, and he may settle these matters as he pleases: in short, content appears here to have as much footing as in most other parishes in the county, though perhaps from different causes.⁵⁸

The change from the spatial patchwork of the borders and the Cumberland central plain of Housman’s notes in the *History* to the broader geographical divisions of the *Topographical description* is perhaps due to two factors. Firstly, the structure required the manners of the inhabitants to be considered at the level of the county, rather than at the level of the parish. Secondly, his distinction between original and modern communities was linked with the degree of ‘intercourse with the rest of the kingdom’, which placed the Cumberland central plain as the focus of social change. In Westmorland a tendency to map the manners of the inhabitants according to a theory of the vectors of change, rather than empirical investigation, was rather more in evidence in its three classes:-

first the manufacturers of Kendal and its vicinity; secondly, those residing in the neighbourhood of the river Eden, and the occupiers of open districts through which any great road leads; and, thirdly, the inhabitants of the numerous dales or narrow valleys, which wind in silence and repose among the lofty and craggy mountains.

The higher orders of tradesmen in Kendal are a truly respectable body of gentleman ... However the generality of the lower orders of manufacturers are perhaps no less improvident, intemperate, and licentious, than those of ... other large manufacturing towns ...⁵⁹

In the farming districts of Westmorland, irrespective of the terrain, the ‘great roads’ were presented as causing the loss of the ancient manners of the people. The concerns of an agriculturist about the social consequences of the growth of manufacturing, not addressed in Cumberland, caused Housman to place Kendal with the manufacturing towns of Lancashire. The manufactures of all Lancashire merited a page of description while its agriculture required thirteen.⁶⁰

When the borderers, the Alston miners, and the Kendal manufacturers were set aside, Housman delineated a territory comprising the adjoining mountains of Cumberland and Westmorland plus Furness and its vicinity, where the inhabitants

did not 'differ much from those described as residing among the interior mountains of Westmoreland'.⁶¹ This territory contained most of those inhabitants in which 'human nature may frequently be found in her *original* dress, ...'.⁶² However, it was bounded by communities which had lost their ancient manners through intercourse with people such as the 'colliers, lime-burners and carters' who travelled the great roads.⁶³ For Housman those 'original' communities 'inhabiting those peaceful dales which are shut up among mountains ... having little intercourse with the rest of mankind' were protected from change by their economic marginality and their physical environment.⁶⁴

In Westmorland, Housman addressed the qualities and roots of the property owning mountain-dwellers. They were the 'descendants of several generations ... successive occupiers ... tenacious of old customs ... generally possess a small property ... and ... patrimonial estates are generally passed to the eldest son'.⁶⁵ Through this Housman confirmed the nature and customs of land tenure as a factor in the retention of early-modern forms of community and in the inability or unwillingness to adopt agricultural improvements, rather than following James Clarke, who equated isolation and lack of change, in Borrowdale, with ignorance.⁶⁶ In Surrey in 1796, Housman had noted of 'our Cumberland rustics ... that much more general knowledge may be found among the latter than ... in these southern counties'.⁶⁷ In Westmorland he noted the 'school in almost every village, where the children of the villagers are taught at a very trifling expence, many of the younger sons are educated for clergymen, excisemen, clerks in counting houses, &c'.⁶⁸ The agricultural mountain communities had stabilised their numbers at or near subsistence level by educating and exporting their sons rather than importing sons-in-law, thereby also retaining surnames.

Marshall considers that Housman 'gave an intelligent account of Cumbrian society, economy and agriculture which at the same time managed to maintain the romantic conventions; and he linked this romantic fashion with *statesman*', or owner-occupiers of small farms.⁶⁹ This article has shown how Housman reconciled the interests of the agricultural reformers, such as the reporters for the Board of Agriculture, and the picturesque travellers and artists who followed West and Gilpin, and how his publications were tuned to their needs.⁷⁰ His work for Eden has been added to his previously known work to show an additional contribution to the socio-political debate on the poor, by presenting the positive aspects of the domestic economy of the Cumberland labourer. His authored work, though well known in its time, was eclipsed by better writers using more durable forms. Marshall states that Wordsworth's letter to Charles James Fox, of 14 January 1801, promoting the statesmen and enclosing the newly printed second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* 'follows too closely on the writings of Pringle, Bailey and Culley, and Housman to be totally unconnected with them ...'.⁷¹ This is valid for Housman's notes in Hutchinson's *History*, but Housman's *Topographical description*, completed on 30 October 1800, was at the printers at the same time as Wordsworth's poems. The more likely influence would be on the 1810 text of what became Wordsworth's *Guide to the lakes*, where Simpson has noted that 'Housman (1800) celebrates the well-being and civic virtues of some of the tenants and/or freeholders in the remoter regions in terms very close to Wordsworth's'.⁷² Wordsworth credited the poet, Thomas Gray, whose tour letters, published in 1775, were an influence on all such writing.⁷³

In the development of modern Cumbrian identities, the external view has increasing valorised the lakes and mountains and the tradition of its inhabitants, to the extent that the present county is often equated with the Lake District. Housman's contribution underpins that cultural creation. While previous guides defined just the physical geography of the English Lakes through the customary tours, Housman first defined the social boundaries, and with a defensible methodology. From his time, the valorisation of the inhabitants and their relationship with the land became an important component of a cultural landscape, rather than simply of a natural landscape with picturesque inhabitants. Furthermore, Housman's pre-Wordsworth assertion that the communities, in 1800, retained the essence of English early-modern rural society, spoke to the requirement of tourism and heritage to observe and preserve both distinctiveness and the memory of approved earlier ways of life in cultural landscape.

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