

INTRODUCTION

Don't suppose you can remember where you were at 10am on Monday 13th June 2011, to be honest I'd be surprised if you could? In life there are moments in time when you remember every detail, in my case Kennedy's assassination, moon landing and finally the twin towers. Little was I to know the above date and time would join them.

For three or four years I had had a slight tremor in my left hand, finally saw a guy at the local hospital who told me it was a non essential benign intermittent tremor, gave me some meds and said not too worry, so I didn't, head in the sand job. However it got worse. This explains the significance of the date for that was the day I went to the Outpatients Department of Walton Neurological Centre Liverpool.

It took the consultant less than five minutes to come to a diagnosis, "you have early Parkinson's Disease" he said, my world collapsed, you can't drive, fall over, memory loss He must have been through this all before as he said "don't worry" (as if!) "There is a new tablet which will slow the disease down and I will start you on it." True, to his word he did but one of the side effects for me at least is an inability to sleep, the book your about to read is the product of my insomnia, it is to the best of my knowledge the only book ever written about The Mardale Hunt, it will have errors all books do and if so I apologise, but my good friends the two Jeans from the Shap Local History Society (collectors of all things Mardale, and a big collection too) didn't find too many. The book will be a FREE download over the next few months, it's been my friend through the long dark nights and owe's me nothing.

Ron Black
05.26hrs
5th October 2011

"They were such plain and simple folk with no evil in them, they would be so naive and innocent in their own little valley and annihilated by the folk from the big city who robbed them of their peace, tranquillity and innocence."

Trudie Greenhow.

The Mardale Hunt

For Joseph William Greenhow 1901-1953
A man of Mardale who followed the hounds



Not forgotten by his descendents especially Trudie who cared.

Introduction.

The Mardale Shepherds Meet is probably the best known of all the “meets” of the Lakeland Fell Packs, yet there does not appear to have been a book written about it before. “Older than the memory of man” it carries on albeit at a different venue to this day. Using material written at the time this book sets out to try to put the hunt and its impact on the small valley and its occupants into some kind of perspective. All pictures are copyrighted by someone, and I have credited those I know.

Acknowledgements.

To Trudie Greenhow who gave me the idea, Jean Gidman who commented on the text and pictures. Wendy Fraser who designed the front cover and Tim Bonner who supplied the picture. Also thanks to David Hall who supplied the picture for the back cover. Jackie Faye, and the staff of Kendal Library for their help, and finally Anne Thompson for her patience.

Memories

We stood high on the fell side, the cold was bitter. A covering of snow lay on the very tops of the fells surrounding the valley. Below us hounds were working out a “cold drag” where the fox had been “peedling” (wandering around) during the long night, before setting his mask towards his laying up point for the short, cold November day ahead.

I don't recall the year but it was sometime in the mid to late 1960's, for some reason the Coniston Foxhounds had not been accessible and my dad had a lift offered to Mardale, not the Shepherd's Meet I write of, of course, but one held lower down the valley replacing the “drowned one”. Several of us climbed into the back of the old van with the obligatory cargo of terriers and sticks –and off we went.

We always tried to get on the tops before the hounds lowsied (loosed) and so we had had an early start. Finally the hounds dragged (followed the scent) into the base of a crag and unkenelled the fox which after a short run went out up the cliff face,

leaping and bounding up the ledges and grooves towards the top of the crag, with an odd hound in pursuit, most of the pack preferring to go the easy way round to the top before joining the chase. The "music" echoed off the rock, it was a screaming hunt.

Mardale and its Shepherds Meet have always played a part in our family who were regular attenders in the years before the flooding of the valley by Manchester Corporation. Unlike us who went in a van, my ancestors walked over, my Great Uncle Brait on his way over with a trail hound, actually getting lost on the summit of High Street one year, so bad was the weather. They took their few days holiday and stayed as long as they could find somewhere to sleep or until their money ran out. In the old days the meet was held at the pub known as The Dun Bull, long since demolished and submerged, and many were the stories of nights held in there after the meet. The Ullswater Foxhounds were the pack that attended the meet, and still do to this day albeit from a different venue. The list of huntsmen follows.

Abram (Abe) Pattinson 1872 – 1879
Joe Bowman (Auld Hunty) 1879 – 1911
George Salkeld 1911 – 1915
Joe Bowman 1915 – 1924
Braithwaite (Brait) Wilson 1924 – 1933
Joe Wear 1933 – 1941
Anthony Barker 1941 – 1946
Joe Wear 1946 – 1971
Dennis Barrow 1971 – 1996
John Harrison 1996 – date.

But everywhere was demolished, even the dead exhumed and removed and then the valley was flooded.

I don't think anyone knows when the Shepherds Meet began; as is often said "it is older than the memory of man," it was certainly going on in the 18th century because a man named Dixon who was attending it fell from Blea Water Crag at a place now known as Dixon's Three Leaps.



Blea Water Crag Copyright David Hall

It is likely it began when the local shepherds started to meet to exchange strayed sheep and then became a generalised time for meeting. An old engraving shows that there was horse racing on top of the nearby High Street (also known as Racecourse Hill) range of mountains, and some poor soul (or pony) carried up barrels of beer.

I've often wondered about the joys of drinking ale at 2200 feet on a day in late November the traditional date of the meet, being the nearest Saturday to the 20th November, however it is distinctly possible that in the beginning it was held earlier in the year, (the demands of the Shepherding year would determine the date) Towards the end it centred on the hounds and the evenings in The Dun Bull although the exchange of strayed sheep continued to play a prominent part in the proceedings.

I sat in the big room of The Dun Bull and had my sandwiches and a flask; it seemed eerie sitting there in a room full of ghosts (well in the few feet of silt and dirt covered wall remaining). It was 1976 and a severe drought had uncovered the remains of the pub and quite a few of the foundations of the houses and farm buildings. A clapper bridge (held up by its own weight) was revealed. Auld Hunty and his friends were long gone but it didn't take much imagination to hear the songs and the laughter, this is their story.

Chapter One.

Mardale

"Once you went past the Dun Bull you were in wild country"

Sid Wear

BEFORE THE FLOOD.

Mardale was an unspoilt and beautiful valley before the building of the dam. Starting at Bampton, a narrow, twisting road approached the valley, with the slopes of Burnbanks rising gently on the right and across the valley the steep mountainside of the Naddle Forest dotted with small crags.

The pastoral shore of the natural lake Hawes Water, lay just ahead, with stepping-stones at its outflow. In total the lake was 2.5 miles long. Almost divided into two parts by a delta, formed over the millennia by the Measand Beck. The smaller in size eastern end of the lake was known as Low Water and the western end, which lay beyond Measand, High Water. The narrow isthmus was known as The Straights.



Measand Mardale valley

One of the many secluded bays along the lakeshore.

The road ran on the western side of the lake and followed the curving shoreline, from the road; there were lovely views across the lake to Mardale Head and the impressive mountains at the head of the dale. On the side of the road were blackthorn, hawthorn, mountain ash, willow, gorse and broom, wild raspberries and bramble. On the wayside banks grew violets, bluebells and meadowsweet and primroses, with foxgloves and wild roses.

Upon reaching Measand, the road cut across the peninsula, on it's right stood Measand Hall, which stood amongst great sycamore trees, near it across a bridge



Measand Bridge Mardale

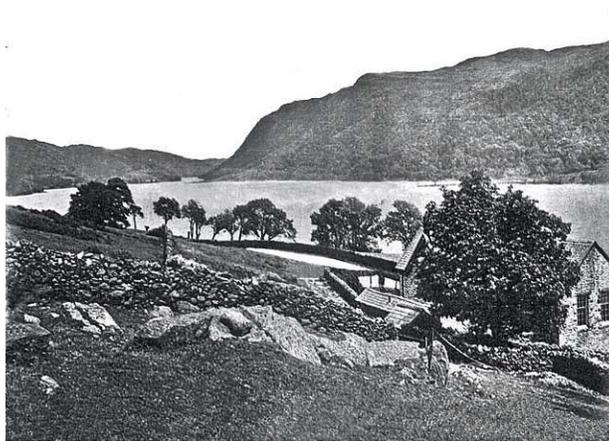
Seen crossing Measand beck, this bridge has never been seen since the flooding of the valley.

Were Sandhill and other buildings. Meadows contained within dry stone walls, sloped down to the waters edge and inspired the writer and artist Heaton Cooper to write of a visit (to Measand) in his book *THE LAKES*, "*I don't know*

whether it was the knowledge that in a few years time, this valley would be under water, that gave our stay at Measand a poignancy that can still affect me forty years later."

A little further up the dale before the head of the lake was reached and where the track went off to Low and High Whelter, stood the school. The school was founded in 1712 and situated at the north side of the Measand delta by the road to Mardale and was known as Measand Grammar School. When the new school opened further along the road it became a dwelling house and was rebuilt up the road from Burnbanks to Bampton.

The school situated by the road at the point where the track left for Low and High Whelter was the "national" School opened around 1883 and was known just as Measand School.



The public school in Mardale also known as Whelter School.



Mardale Church and its Yew trees

About a mile up the valley at Mardale Green, beyond Riggindale was the Church, with it's tower of only 29 and a half feet high, with six yew trees which had

grown higher than the church, to the left of the road and opposite a cluster of buildings on a little eminence known as Chapel Hill, lying close under the steep wooded side of the Rigg. Now wholly wooded the Rigg is the peninsula, which stretches into the waters of the reservoir. Behind the church rose a conical hill called Wood Howe, its crest covered in tree's, today an island.



Looking up the "old road" towards Chapel Hill

The road continued up the dale, ahead were the farms of *Goosemire* and *Grove Brae* near the foot of the steep slope over which the *Hopgill Beck* tumbled down the rocks. *Chapel Bridge* crossed the *Mardale Beck* and then bearing right a few hundred yards later the road arrived at the *Dun Bull Inn*. From the *Inn* a walled track continued which led over the *Nan Bield Pass* to *Kentmere* or turning left, over the *Gatesgarth Pass* into *Longsleddale*.

Harter Fell dominates the top end of the valley and just beyond the cairn on the top, there is a slit in the precipitous face of the fell which falls almost straight down to the bottom of *Great Scarth Pass*, about 1500 feet below. On the old Ordinance map it is called *Black John Hole*, but the inhabitants of *Mardale* knew it as *High Holes Earth*, the reason being that hunted foxes often go to earth there. *Daffurn (The Dun Bull)* told us that every hunting season one or more hounds get into a position in this ravine from which they cannot return until death overtakes them. It is one of those places *Wordsworth* speaks of "*that keeps til June, December's snow.*" According to *Hinchcliffe*.

TO BE CONTINUED