

Chapter Eight

Joe Bowman at the Mardale Hunt

The writer's (W.G. Skelton) first introduction to Joe Bowman was at the annual shepherd's meet at Mardale many years ago, when Mr. Walter Baldry was the proprietor of the "Dun Bull", that snug little farm, which, so 'tis said, never sees the sun from Maretinmas to Candlemas. It was a great gathering on that occasion. To several of us it was the first of many subsequent associations with "Hunty" and his staunch henchmen, Kitty Farrer and Will Milcrest; with those departed landmarks, Willie Greenhow, Thomas Fishwick, Noble Ewbank, and "Spinner;" with Thomas Edmondson, and many others living who doubtless equally well recollect this auspicious occasion. Joe had killed a brace of foxes in Riggindale, and one, drawn out of Hugh Holmes' (the outlaw's) cave, was hanging up on the crook in the oak-raftered kitchen. It was a merry party. Willie Greenhow sang that fragrant old Scotch melody, "Tarry "Woo":

*"How happy is a shepherd's life,
Far frae courts and free of strife,
While the gimmers bleat and bae,
And the lambkins answer nae;
No such music to his ear!
Of thief or fox he has no fear;
Sturdy Kent and collie too,
Well defend the tarry woo."*

The attempt to vamp to the ancient melody on an equally ancient piano brought forth from Willie the quaint remark that he preferred it pure - the song not the whiskey. After several annual rehearsals, however, the two hit the song off very well together, and it was generally regarded as the "piece de resistance" at the shepherds' smoking concert at night. Since then, and in the same parlour, many a song and toast have been given upstanding, with dogs yelping in chorus beneath the table, and will continue to be given, probably after the Dun Bull hostelry had been transported to the summit of Nan Bield, and the waters of Manchester's new reservoir are swirling among the turrets of Mardale's pretty little church. We were walking back with the hounds the following Monday over Kidstye Pike to Patterdale. Joe and the writer had shouldered some distance ahead of the rest of the company, when a voice rang through the startled air, "Ye'er gaan wrang; we're taken a short cut, cum this way." "Thee stick wi' me lad," said Joe. "if yon auld divel can larn me a short cut frae Mardale to Grisedale, it's aboot time Hunty gev up hunting." We stuck together, and landed down at Hartsop a clear half hour before the "short cutters."

Skelton. 1921

About 20 years ago Mardale was plagued by one of the worst storms whichever visited Westmorland. A number of visitors were prevented from getting home for days owing to the snow being level with the wall tops. Bowman, however, read the weather signs rightly and essayed to journey over High Street in time, but at some cost to his physique and his heartstrings, because his affection for dogs is well known. Although Hunty had turned the half-century he was in the prime of life, as hard as nails and as fir as a fiddle. It was one of those blinding, stinging, benumbing storms, which would strike terror into any south-countryman and many a north countryman younger than Joe - on of those fearful days which one finds sandwiching their grim tragedies between otherwise lyrical pages of the history of our fells. Leaving hounds to find their way back to the kennels with that hardiness of nature and weather instinct which is the endowment of a foxhound, Joe took the little terriers in his arms, and brought them along as best he could. So benumbed did the huntsman eventually become that he was compelled to drop one of the little animals in order to save the other and incidentally himself. Half frozen to death Joe and his surviving companion reached Patterdale and quickly recovered, but many a lingering thought and sigh have since been associated with that sad spot where the other tiny companion was picked up some days after.

Skelton 1921

A former vicar of Mardale was once preaching to a congregation composed largely of hunters, it being the "Shepherd's Meet" weekend. By archaeological evidence he was proving that the beautiful rocks of Mardale were amongst the oldest in the world. Suddenly recollecting the scarlet-coated guest of the weekend just sitting below his pulpit, he added, with a pleasant smile at Joe, "And I ought to add there are some very old and rugged rocks at Patterdale." Joe nudged me, and whispered "Ah thowt t'auld lad would hev to bring Hunty in somehow," and the reverend archaeologist proceeded with his deductions, and

*"The service now ended-all slip from the pews
And gather round Joe under Mardale's old yews,
Where they laugh at his fun as he spins them a tale,
For they're all very proud to have Joe in the dale.
The parson, all smiles, giving our hero a dig
Sets him back to the inn as far as the brig."*

Skelton. 1921.

Isaac Hinchcliffe heard Bowman sing a hunting song after 2 am and be out with his hounds "fresh as paint before nine."

In 1924 Joe Bowman retired, he was presented with a silver horn, inscribed.

THE HORN OF MARDALE

*May he who windes this silver horn
Ayes wake the echoes of the morn
And heavenwards wher e'er he wend
The spirit of Auld Joe attend*

Chapter Nine

Mardale Hunting Stories'

Parochial records disclose how remuneration was at one time paid out of a church fund for the slaughter of foxes and other pests. In Bowman's early days it ran to 5s. for every fox head, 2s. 6d. for a mart, and sometimes 2s. for a raven, and so on. The sums evidently varied according to circumstances and districts; for in Askham Church register an entry appears in 1737 "for a fox head 3s. 4d., for a raven's head 4d." Joe remembers how on one occasion a fox was caught in Riggindale. One of the hunters proposed, "Let's tak it wick across t'beck, we'll got anudder hoof-croon for it." This was done, and the fox was taken over the beck into Mardale parish, and killed behind the "Dun Bull." The extra Half-crown was paid, and doubtless the occurrence, was celebrated in the usual convivial way. This payment of "blood money" no doubt led to the old custom of "drinking the fox's head." The fox was always hung up, drinks were called for with the money paid for it, the pint or quart mugs were held to the dripping mask, and the "fox broth" was the baptism of many a lifelong hunter.

Skelton. 1921.

A man walked over the pass from Kentmere to play the piano at each shepherds meet. He wore a fancy waistcoat with pockets. After two days of playing the piano, he ran out of money he'd earned for his efforts, so on the third morning he set off to walk home again. When he reached the top of the Nan Bield pass, he sat down to have a smoke, feeling in his waistcoat pocket for tobacco, he found half a sovereign, so he returned to the Dun Bull for another two days.

Jack Taylor

Mr John Swainson who lived in Ulverston was a keen follower of hounds, there is a story that when aged between 70 and 80 he started from a friends house in Ambleside to walk to the shepherds meet at Mardale, as he was traversing High Street a blizzard blotted out every landmark. Wet, and buffeted by the strong wind, and exceedingly tired with wandering he realised he was lost. Fortunately a hunter from Ambleside, bound for the same destination that knew every inch of the way, and had an almost uncanny sense of direction found him and helped him down to Mardale. The kindly ministrations of a farmer's wife and a nights rest put him in "fettle" for the hunt. Timely intervention saved his life. A few years later, feeling a twinge of rheumatism in his leg, he said "I'll give it a thirteen mile walk; that will cure it." Apparently it did! ANONYMOUS

On two occasions have I known a trail hound which had accompanied a party "lost" on High Street the previous day win the Mardale hound trail at the Shepherds Meet. The hounds referred to were L. Bowe's Gambler and Brait Black's Trimmer. RED SCREES

2nd March 1938

One afternoon a hunt came racing down the fellside above the village school, the teacher (Miss Simpson) and all the children abandoned the classroom and rushed outside to follow the hounds, missing two lessons. Miss Simpson later was heard to say "we put it down to a natural history lesson"

One hunt supporter, returning to the hotel on Sunday morning said: "I've been sleeping with Mother Green." He had in fact spent the night on the hotel lawn.

Anon.

There is a story in Clarke's Survey of 1789, which might here be included, as it refers to country now hunted by the Ullswater. There had been a shepherd's meeting at the top of High Street, and such meetings were invariably accompanied by sports and hunts. During the particular hunt in question a man named Dixon fell from Blea Water Crag, about 300 feet high, and miraculously broke no bones, although terribly bruised, for he struck several times against the rock and so checked his fall. When he came to the ground he scrambled on to his knees, cried out "Lads, t'fox is gane out at hee end; lig t' dogs on and I'll come syn" and then fell down insensible.

Skelton, 1921.

. The reference to the first production of the Mardale Hunt Song recalls a gathering of some of the very best musical talent in Lancashire who were at Mardale for a weekend. They enjoyed a good hunt and done of the most curious finishes imaginable. Hounds had driven reynard to earth in Branstree. Terriers had been sent in and effected a worry, but were loath to leave the fox, and the greatest difficulty was experienced in drawing both terriers and fox. Braithwaite Black, a keen local hunter who is said to have drawn more foxes than probably any amateur hunter in the Border counties, was absolutely out of sight in the borran. Another hunter had hold of his legs and he too was practically out of sight, whilst a third in turn had hold of the latter's legs. Braithwaite could be heard "arguing the toss," with the little terrier (Turk I believe.) After a bit, seemingly from the bowels of the mountain, could be heard "Noo pull lads," and we pulled and out came the procession with a terrier at the end. On the second venture the process was repeated, and Braithwaite emerged with the fox in triumph, and the usual adjournment to the "Dunny" followed.

Skelton. 1921.

In "A BACKWATER IN LAKELAND" (1923) Hinchcliffe recounts a hunt, the song it inspired was certainly sung in the Dun Bull. The "grey fox" he refers to may have been one of the old now extinct type known as the "greyhound fox."

"The throw off was at Castle Crag. Presently the fox bolted and was away across the screes to Flake Howe Crag, then through the meadows below Riggindale House, across the beck and up the other side, the grey fox in front, a long line of dogs in Indian file following, until they were lost in the bracken below Heron Crag. We waited a long time and thought reynard had gone over Nan Bield or Harter Fell, in which case we should have seen no more. Then suddenly we heard a great shout from Chapel Hill, and there he was trotting calmly down the meadow towards Riggindale Beck. He crossed the beck and went through the Crag, plantation, crossed the road and passed right in front of us towards Mardale Beck, apparently with the idea of taking to Mardale Banks. Just then, however, the first of the dogs appeared, hot on the scent, and reynard turned and went straight down the dale to Whelter Beck. He then turned up the beck side and went to earth in Whelter Crag. With the exception of the time between loosing the dogs in the bracken under Heron Crag to the appearance of the fox at Chapel Hill the whole hunt was in sight, and we were in the dress circle. We followed to Whelter and when the fox was finally killed his brush was found to be so mangled by the terriers in trying to bolt him that it was useless, so Joe gave me the mask. I wrote a hunting song fully describing the run to the tune of "The Mardale Hunt," which was sung at the next Mardale meet. Here is the last verse.

*The mask now hangs in Tonman Street,
Away! Away!
Where the Mardalians oft do meet
Away! My lads away,
So here's to Bowman and his hounds,
When next he hunts old Mardale's bounds
We'll be there when his horn resounds,
Away! Away, my lads away.*

Hinchcliffe then comments "of course one does not expect poetry in a hunting song. Passable rhyme and a rousing chorus are of much more importance." Enough said.

The Dun Bull.

"So enclosed is this part of the dale that from Michaelmas to Candlemas no gleam of sunshine reaches the Dun Bull, but in the days to come the sun will shine on the waters above where the Dun Bull used to be."

Isaac Hinchcliffe 1925



The Dun Bull 1920

The Dun Bull, an inn cum farmhouse stood where the road up the dale gave way to a walled track which led to the high passes of Nan Beild (for Kentmere) or Gatesgarth (into Longsleddale) when it obtained a sign is not recorded, for many years most farms in the district brewed their own ale and lakeland hospitality decreed no traveller would be turned away thirsty or hungry. Mardale head had an inn when visited by the writer Edward Baines in 1834 who referred to it as the White Bull

The first mention of the Dun Bull appears to have been made by Jonathon Otley a guidebook writer in 1837, however those with experience of the place tended to hurry on to reach the Bampton Inn's by dusk. The Dun Bull came into its own because of it's situation at the end of the road, and was a meeting place for shepherds, farmers and the increasing number of tourists later in the century. In 1840 a party drank punch and toasted Lord Lonsdale followed by much singing including a popular item called the Blind Fiddler.

Harriet Martineau (c1865) reported that the Mardale Green Inn had a hostess who made her guests comfortable. She found the food was "homily", and the beds clean. The host would, if called upon act as a guide to the passes.

The story goes that one couple that kept The Dun Bull would each diddle the customers if they could get away with it. Some lads collared a Herdwick tup and put it in the cellar. When the hostess went down to draw more beer she saw gleaming eyes and tossing horns. Believing it to be the Devil himself, she cried at her husband.

"Eh Billy, he's cum't for us at last, me for me froth pints and thee for thy double chalk marks."

A visiting policeman Pc. T. Barbour recalls, "an item in the entrance which had never failed to arouse attention was a large basket containing Blue Persian kittens (for sale at ten shillings each). He was curious to know how the continuity of supply was maintained because the basket was seldom empty. One day Mr. Daffurn took him to a large loft, divided into breeding pens for a number of captive Blue Persians.

My Great Uncle Braithwaite Black a regular attender at Mardale Shepherds meet in the 1920s and 30s commented on these cats but I don't think he ever found out where they came from.

The officer commented to Mr. Daffurn how much better trade seemed to be now that news of the drowning of Mardale was widespread. Daffurn took his visitor to the front door and pointed to those sitting outside the inn commenting in a loud voice "Look at them! They come in here and buy a penny postcard, use the toilets, then sit on my seats eating their sandwiches." **A sentiment the writer has heard expressed on more than one occasion elsewhere in Lakeland!**

Guests at the Dun Bull (which was extended with the purchase of a large house adjoining) were attended by a moderately large staff of two waitresses, a cook, two housemaids and a handyman plus the family.



Rear of The Dun Bull Hotel

For the annual Shepherd's Meet, everything in the main rooms was hidden, except for the chairs. Beer was served buckets, some people came for the day but it might be 10 days before they were sober enough to leave for home.

Tom Edmondson of Penrith, played cards or dominoes until closing time and continued the games in a stable using a kist (wooden chest) as a table.

Many were the stories of "sessions" in the "Dunny," I rather liked the following; I'm told it is based on a true story.

A poem composed by a gentleman named Bainbridge who was hired at Thornthwaite Hall as a shepherd at the same time as Tom (Tot) Greenhow.

*This shepherd lived at Naddle Cot,
A pleasant place no doubt for Tot,
It was a pleasure for him his sheep to tend,
As round Harter Fell top old Meg did send.*

*Old Meg sometimes vexed poor Tot
Then he would roar out something a little bit hot!
His melodious voice rang round Walla Crag,
As old Swaledales through Guerness did often lag.*

*Now the day being well spent and quite hot,
Says Tot to himself "I could just down a pot",
So away to the "Dunny" went his steps fair and square,
But alas poor Tot got more than his share.*

*Now the folks at the "Dunny" were worried that Tot,
Would never make it himself all the way to his cot,
The use of a bike was of no use of course,
So sent tot on his way on the back of his horse.*

*He said, "this old pony, she really can sail",
But as he went past Measand he was facing its tail,
And he remarked to himself he passed the lakeshore,
"I've never come arse first from the 'Dunny' before!".*

Chapter Ten

More Hunting Reports.

MARDALE SHEPHERDS MEET

LORD LONSDALE PAYS A VISIT

A DISSPPOINTING DAY

*Stormy weather marred the Mardale shepherds meet on Saturday.
The meet, which is one of the oldest in the country, was held as usual in the Dun Bull Hotel. This year's event lacked some of the attractions of previous gatherings owing to the abandonment of the hound trails, sheep dog trials and clay pigeon shoot-it was more a "business" meeting.*

The programme this year consisted solely of the identification of the sheep and a fox hunt by the Ullswater pack. So wet was the weather, however that the hunt had to be abandoned. The morning was very stormy and it was decided not to cast off at the advertised time. As the day wore on however, the rain still poured down and when at last the downpour ceased in the afternoon it was too late to begin hunting. The hunt was therefore postponed until Monday and another deluge on that day caused it to be abandoned.

Very few stray sheep were forward, less than a score in fact - and all were claimed "Tot" Greenhow, the Naddle shepherd had charge of the fold, the veteran flockmaster, Tommy Edmondson, who has carried out this duty for many years not being present.

The attendance of the public was considerably below that of recent years. Among those present was the Earl of Lonsdale, who arrived by car, but did not remain long.

This is the first time since the war that his Lordship has attended the meet. The shepherds gave him a rousing welcome, and he chatted with a number of them. To one dalesman he remarked, "Well, Kit, we both have had a good run, and look like being in at the death."

In the evening the usual social gathering was held in the Dun Bull Hotel, the chair being occupied by Captain Seymour, Liverpool. The toast of "The Fallen" was honoured in silence, while that of "The Shepherds Meet" was received with musical honours, the hymn "While Shepherds watched their flocks by night" being sung. Mr. W. Skelton. Ambleside played the piano accompaniment.

The Herald and East Cumberland and Westmorland News. 29th November 1930

The Ullswater Foxhounds visited Mardale from time to time other than the shepherds meet, this account by nature of time of start and date, suggests the visit was in answer to a call to deal with lamb worrying.

On Thursday the meet was at Dun Bull Hotel, Mardale, in the early morning. The day was fine, but on the fells lay a thick mist. No sooner had the hounds being loosed above the Hotel than a line was taken which led through Branstree to Woodford Ghyll where the fox was roused and made one and a-half hour's good run. The course taken was right into the mist at the top. Turning right handed, reynard continued into Longsleddale, then over Buckbarrow Crag and Hart Main, along the top to Grey Crag and Harrop Pike at the top of Forest Hall Fell. Reynard by this time must have been feeling the effects of his long run. Steering on he now took down Mosedale to the head of Wet Sleddale, through the Forces at Swindale and Black Bells, then over by Selside Brow to his old haunts at Branstree. The stay here was short as hounds were fast gaining ground on their game and drove him along above the Dun Bull Hotel where a fine sight was seen as fifteen hounds crossed Twa Becks close to reynard's brush.

After going a little further he went to earth at Brown Howe borran. Some of the hunters were not long in getting to the place with terriers and the fox bolted only to hole again on Mardale Banks. This time he refused to move and was dispatched and drawn.

The meet on Saturday again was at Mardale. Although the time of starting was 6am there was a good gathering of hunters and one of the best days sport ever seen in Mardale. The morning opened fine and clear with scenting good. Hounds were set at liberty near Castle Crag in Whelter and soon a line was taken which took through Dry Syke and forward to Woodie Crag where a fine racy fox was found. He made a good run through some of the roughest country in the north. Hounds got a good lay and drove their game through Wrangdale, over High Raise and Kidsty Pike to the top of High Street, the fox must now have changed his course as when hounds were next heard from Hartsop they were crossing Thorn Knott Ghyll at Hayeswater. They climbed Lowther Lot and over High Street, entering Mardale at Riggindale. When the hounds were driving the fox through Hause Crag a second one was roused, and this caused the pack to divide, only five sticking to the original one. Reynard ran on down Long Stile by way of Holmes's Cave and on reaching Holmes's Pasture the hunt took over the top and along the breast opposite where the Manchester Corporation are making the new road. Steering on the running took by Blea Water and Small Water becks. Evidently the fox was making for High Holes Borran, a very dangerous place in Harter Fell, but this he was unable to do, being overtaken when half way up the fell. He was lifted by the Master. During this time the other portion of the pack were running the second fox in Riggindale where a good run was witnessed by most of the hunters. This hunt took through the head of the valley by way of Twopenny Crag and Sail Pot, then down the dale past Kidsty Pike. Rough Crag and into Kidsty Howes. Reynard then descended at Green Rake and crossed the valley to Longstile, the forward to Blea Water Crag, where the hunt took out to the top of High Street. By this time the five hounds, which had killed their fox, had joined their companions and forced reynard to descend at Riggindale Straits. After half an hours running at the head of the dale between Kidsty Pike and Longstile the fox was at last driven to ground at Shortstile. Before anyone arrived reynard bolted but only to hole again further down. Hunters were soon at the place with terriers. Judy and Tiny were soon at work and drove reynard into the open amid halloas, which made the valley ring. After another sharp run the fox again went to earth for the third and last time. On this occasion he was drawn and given another chance, but before getting far down the dale was rolled over in the presence of thirty followers. The two foxes were one of each sex.

FUSEDAL

3rd May 1930.

FAMEOUS SHEPHERDS MEETING

LARGE GATHERING AT MARDALE.

The Dun Bull Inn at the head of Haweswater was on Saturday, the gathering ground of flockmasters from a wide area for the annual shepherds meeting and foxhunt. The number of stray sheep was fewer than in recent years yet the "exchange" was the means of restoring over fifty animals to their own heaf's.

The Naddle shepherd "Tot" Greenhow a nephew of the renowned "Willie" of Chapel Hill fame, was again in charge of the fold. It is worthy of note that no charge whatever is made by the "finders" however far the sheep may have strayed from their own flocks which in some instances may be as far as twenty miles. The fell flockmasters and shepherds are anxious to hand over their "finds" without fee or reward.

The toast of the shepherds every year is attended with musical honours by the singing of "While shepherds watched their flocks by night".

Cumberland and Westmorland Herald 28th November 1931

ULLSWATER FOXHOUNDS. GOOD RUN AT MARDALE.

On Saturday, the meet was at Mardale in connection with the shepherds meeting. The weather was not very favourable, there being heavy showers and a covering of snow on the fells. There was a good gathering of shepherds and flockmasters, who had collected over 70 stray sheep from the surrounding dales.

Hounds cast off above the Dun Bull Hotel and on Branstree a line was struck which led through Woodfoot Ghyll, then forward across Gatesgarth to Harter Fell, where a fox was roused. It went through this rough fell and at that noted stronghold High Holes Earth, went to ground and had to be left for another day.

At Nan Bield Pass another drag was struck which led through Piet Crag, over Mardale Ill Bell, through Blea Water Crags, and at Caspel Gate the fox was unkenelled, and made a very fast run from start to finish. Clara and Baldwin being almost in view the whole way. The course taken was down Long Stile, through Holmes Pasture and forwards down Dudderwick to opposite the hotel. Turning left, the hunt went through Riggindale, and on reaching Flake Howe Farm, reynard climbed up to Birk Crag in Whelter. Swinging back to Dry Syke, the fox made a straight line to Castle Crag, where he went to ground. The huntsman was not long getting to the place with terriers, but reynard refused to bolt, so was despatched by the wee dogs. STEEL END.

Cumberland and Westmorland Herald 28th November 1931

MARDALE SHEPHERDS MEET
CHALLENGE TO CRITIC OF LORD LONSDALE.

The age-old shepherds meet was held at Mardale on Saturday when the usual large company assembled to combine business with pleasure at the Dun Bull hotel. The number of stray sheep brought was the smallest on record, there being less than a score to be handed over to their rightful owners. Dipping regulations affecting the movement of sheep was the cause. Messrs. R. Ebdell and G. Bland were in charge of the fold.

*The Ullswater Foxhounds were in attendance as usual and had a couple of foxes on foot but no kill was recorded. The attack on the Earl of Lonsdale (**a major landowner in the area**) with reference to the alleged restrictions on the movement of hikers over his land was discussed, and the following resolution was carried on the motion of Mr. W. Dawson, seconded by Mr. S. Thompson.*

"The Mardale Shepherds view with consternation and dismay the recent attacks made on the Earl of Lonsdale by promoters of hostel intentions, and challenge the public of Great Britain to point out another place where, for generations they have had access so unhindered and uninterrupted as they have enjoyed over the land owned by the Earl.

Cumberland and Westmorland Herald 25th November 1933.

PIPERS PLAY A LAMENT AT MARDALE.

Yeomen of the Cumberland dales danced Highland flings to the skirl of pipes at the time-honoured Shepherds Meet at Mardale on Saturday, when the flockmasters of Lakeland gathered for the exchange of Herdwick strays of the mountains.

The meet was held at the Dun Bull Inn, which will be submerged when Manchester dams Haweswater in the water supply scheme. Saturday's event was somewhat of a revival for in recent years the meet has dwindled with the knowledge that the valley would mostly disappear in the rising waters. But the respite has given the Meet a new lease of life and people attended from many parts of England, one visitor being an Otter Hound master from Suffolk. Mrs. Anthony Lowther was also present.

"We have had brass bands and all kinds of music at Mardale" an attender for forty years remarked to a reporter "but this is the first time for bag pipes" when a piper played the "Mardale Lament" composed by Dr. Eaton, Cleator Moor, on the news that the valley would be submerged. At the dinner the shepherd's toast was honoured by the singing of "While shepherds watched their flocks by night".

Cumberland and Westmorland Herald 24th November 1934.

By 1936 it was all over and the last ever shepherds meet was held at the Dun Bull Hotel, prior to its demolition and the subsequent flooding of the valley. "Red Screens" had his own take on the proceedings at Mardale.

Farewell Mardale, a long farewell to all thy ancient greatness. Mention of "Tipperary" recalls that before The Great War this song was adopted as a sort of Shepherds Lullaby. That genial sportsman and good fellow, the late Noble Walker, of Kentmere introduced it to the Dun Bull. A few more years shall roll and the serenity of Mardale will remain undisturbed for eternity, save for the yip-yapping of Harter Fell foxes, the croak of a Blea Water raven, or the leisurely lapping of the wavelets of Greater Haweswater against the foot of Wallow Crag. After tomorrow the shepherds vigil will be short as the watch that ends the night. No longer will they watch their flocks by night on the bonny bonny banks of Mardale. The Nunc Dimittis of the famous gathering will be sounded tomorrow. The roof is on the new Dun Bull. No longer will Curfey be sounded beneath the rafters of the old "Dunny" or in the palace of the last reigning "King of Mardale". In years to come the only tenants will be the silvery trout exploring the mysterious new waters and soliloquising on the mutability of human affairs and the strange monsters, which used to hold high revelry in these silent corridors and gloomy catacombs of sporting memories.

21st November 1936

Mardale Shepherds Requiem

The Last Meet at the Old "Dun Bull"

With the roof on the New Dun Bull erected at Whiteacre Crag, under Brown Howe Crag, on the east side of Haweswater, which is expected to be open in the spring, it is expected that Saturday will witness the last of the "Farewell Meets" at Mardale.

Whether the shepherds will meet once a year for the exchange of waifs and strays at the New Dun Bull, in the future rests with Manchester Corporation. If they act up to the fine traditions of Manchester sportsmanship, it is quite probable the shepherds may be invited to continue their time-honoured custom.

100 YEARS OLD GATHERING.

The Mardale Shepherds Meet is supposed to date back well over 100 years. It is thought it came into being when an annual shepherds meet used to be held in the 18th century on High Street, the mountain over which the Roman road goes, 2700 feet above sea level. At that meeting there used to be wrestling, horse-racing and other sports. Until just over 40 years ago the Mardale Shepherds Meet was a very quiet little affair of farmers and shepherds from Mardale, Bampton, Swindale, Shap and the adjoining parishes. The visits of Joe Bowman

with the Ullswater foxhounds and, for one period the Windermere Harriers under Anthony Chapman, caused the annual meeting to become very popular inasmuch as sportsmen used to gather there from all parts of England, and as many as 700 have been known to assemble for the Annual hound trail, which used to run entirely round Haweswater Lake. The site of the New Dun Bull Hotel is almost directly opposite the old fort on Castle Crag on the western side of the valley. It is slightly north of the old "Corpse road" from Shap to Mardale. The residential portion will overlook the enlarged lake with uninterrupted views of hills and dales. Wallow Crag will screen the dam and works from view. Until 200 years ago the dead of Mardale were strapped to the backs of horses and taken up the "Corpse Road" hence its name by Mardale common and Swindale for burial at Shap. There is a story that some wicked man had died at Mardale with an undivulged crime on his conscience and as his coffin was being borne to Shap for burial, tied to the back of a strong young horse, a dreadful thunderstorm arose and the horse bolted. For three months it roamed the fells with the coffin on its back evading every attempt at capture. The church, which has already been dismantled, was built towards the end of the 17th century, and the dead were afterwards buried in the little churchyard, from which they have now been exhumed and re-interred elsewhere.

"When the scheme is thoroughly complete" writes a correspondent, "it will stop a lot of money going into Mardale. The annual Shepherds Meet used just about to pay the landlords yearly rent. The small agricultural industry carried on in the scattered farmsteads, the pleasant pastures and the high lying intakes of the Haweswater Valley provides a living for the population. In late years, the valley became known to tourists and a constant pilgrimage of motor coaches and touring cars invaded the dale in summer time. Climbers and anglers visited Mardale Green. All this will literally and figuratively be "washed out". That Manchester Corporation may be called upon to pay a proportionate rate to Westmorland County will help to set off the drowned out premises disappear from the assessment.

ANOTHER FINANCIAL ASPECT

Though the completion of the scheme will be a decided gain and asset to Manchester, it will be an aesthetic, romantic and to a certain extent financial loss to Mardale and consequently Westmorland. Look at the loss of income from Wythburn through the Thirlmere scheme. In the case of Mardale it will be more so because not only will the caterers be evacuated by this Manchurian onslaught on the dark, mysterious vale, but the very life spring of the dale itself, the shepherds will be sapped.

21st November 1936.

MARDALE'S LAST MEET AT THE OLD DUN BULL.

VETERAN SHEPHERDS WHO HAVE ATTENDED FOR HALF A CENTURY.

GERMAN AND HUNGARIAN GUESTS DELIGHTED WITH HUNTING SONGS.

The last Shepherds Meet, so far as the existing "Dun Bull" is concerned was held at Mardale on Saturday and the obsequies were observed in a fitting manner, one curtain being finally rung down on a scene of animation and general companionship worthy of the old gathering in its most palmy years.

The Shepherds Meet has been a veritable "diehard". For years it has been impossible to predict with certainty, which was to be the actual farewell meet, owing to the alterations in Manchester Corporations programme from time to time, but with the new Dun Bull Hotel on Whitehead Crag approaching completion, ready for opening in the spring, Saturday was definitely taxed for the final ritual. The day was worthy of the occasion. While the Windermere side of the watershed was bathed in a sea of mist the golden russet of Mardale was aglow with the rich radiance of a November sun.

A representative gathering collected from a wide area. Even so early as the hour for casting off the Ullswater Foxhounds there were nearly 40 cars lined up and this number increased hourly. The mountain pass approach to Mardale all bore evidence of the night's keen frost and there was a spice of danger in places.

MEASAND HALL RUINS.

As the journey was made to Mardale the landscape was white with frost hoar. Here and there the work of demolition bore testimony to the advances of civilisation and the progress of Manchester's engineers. Historic old Measand Hall was a shattered ruin, and the roofs of other buildings had disappeared. The "blondin" crossing the roadway was an interesting feature. The colony of huts has lost their newness, and look almost part of the locality. The dam at Burnbanks had made considerable headway since our last visit to the dale. When completed it will be a magnificent piece of engineering skill. Smoke and steam arose to fade away in the ether above Wallow Crag. The fine old yews, which used to girdle the little church, have gone. The dead, which were interred at their feet, have been exhumed and reburied at Shap. The roof of the church has gone, but the ruins of its walls were still standing. This church was built towards the end of the 17th century. The story of the dale is simple. Hugh Holme, driven out of Yorkshire by King Jon's injustice, sought refuge in a cave in Riggindale, still known as Hugh's Cave, and he was the ancestor of a long line of Mardale Holmes. In the 14th century Rudolphus Holme is stated to have built an oratory. The last of the direct line of Holmes, the two sisters Holme, of Bowness, died within a few days of one another, and were interred at Bowness Cemetery, earth from Mardale churchyard and wood from Mardale being laid on their coffins.

CASTLE CRAG FORT.

In the very old days there was a British fort at Mardale on Castle Crag. This is the crag over which were scattered the ashes of the late Mr. Isaac Hinchcliffe, Manchester, Chairman of the Water Committee and a regular attender at the Mardale Meet.

On Saturday morning there was a rush of memories to all who entered the head of the vale, inspired no doubt by the beauty of the scene, a sky of almost midsummer blue casting a halo round Harter Fell, and all the sharply chiselled crags silhouetted clearly against the skyline, while the foreground was a composite picture of glistening hoar and gorgeous russet. The roofless houses of the old farm buildings at Goosemire was another step towards completion of the scheme, and just round the corner, above the old Corpse Road, the new hotel rears its head. The mention of Corpse Road recalls the fact that the dead of Mardale originally used to be strapped on horseback and conveyed on this road to Shap for burial.

The origin of Mardale Shepherds Meet is supposed to have been the annual meet on Roman High Street, nearly 2700 feet above sea level. At this meeting there used to be horseracing, wrestling and other sports, Incredible as it seems at that altitude. The Dun Bull "Meet" developed considerably during the last 40 years. At the beginning of the century we find only 16 people sat down at the main repast. These included Joe Bowman, the huntsman, "Kitty" Farrer, the secretary of the hunt, the late William Baldry and Johnson Thompson (Grasmere) Hermann Baldry, the late Thomas Fishwick, the then "father" of the Meet, who attended over 60 times; Willie Greenhow, who used to sing "Tarry Woo". Arthur Dixon (Ambleside) and a few friends who helped to build up the gathering. Three or four years later when the late J. D. Blackburn "launched" the new Mardale Hunt song there were present about a score from Manchester including a cathedral soloist.

FUNERAL OF FORMER HOSTESS

It was a melancholy coincidence, on Saturday that the last meet at the present Dun Bull should be held on the same day that Mrs. R. Daffurn was being laid to rest

At Askham. She was the landlady at this hotel for about 27 years. The present managers of the Dun Bull on behalf of Manchester Corporation are Mr. and Mrs. Hazlehurst. Mrs. Hazlehurst is the granddaughter of the late George Clark of the Crown and Mitre Hotel, Bampton Grange, who in his day was a regular attender at the meet.

The Ullswater Foxhounds were again present in charge of Joe Wear, with Joe Wilkinson whip. The joint masters, Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Lowther and Dr. J. R. K. Thompson, Penrith, were present. The daughter of the Hungarian Minister in London accompanied Mrs. Lowther. Miss Constance de Masircirch, and Count H.

Ch. Scherr-Thoss, on a visit from Germany. Hounds were drawn through Mardale Banks and Branstree and a fox was roused in Harter Fell, which set his mask for Riggindale, with Crowner hard at his brush. In Holmes Pastures Reynard put in some baffling work, and it was by no means good hunting, in fact very catchy at times. The hunt proceeded over Kidsty Pike into the Hartsop side, and hounds were running to a late hour.

Among the veterans present were Mr. John Wilkinson, Howtown (his 51st attendance) ; Mr. Jos Noble, Butterwick (his 50th year). The last named shared With Mr. R. Ebdell. Thrimby, who has attended for 35 years, in the management of the sheep fold where the waifs and strays of the mountains were brought to be identified and restored to their rightful owners. About 100 strays were brought up, mostly the Herdwick-Swaledale cross. The sheep looked far from neglected. Indeed their fleeces were remarkably bright and healthy looking. All were identified by their marking.

FORIGN GUESTS AND HUNTING SONGS

Mrs. Anthony Lowther and her two foreign guests were very anxious ot hear some local hunting songs, and they were not disappointed. Young Anthony Barker, of Hartsop, obliged with the "Mardale Hunt" and "Joe Bowman", and some hearty community singing was indulged in with Mr. W. C. Skelton once more at the piano. A verse of "Sally Grey" was sung by the company in memory of the late Mr. C. R. Farrer, who invariably opened the entertainment with this song, sung in dialect. A verse of Tipperary sung to recall the fact that this song was popular at the Shepherd's Meet before the war.

The usual little ceremony was performed, after Mr. Banks Swinburn (Chairman of Penrith U.D.C and formerly of Gowbarrow Hall) had proposed the health of Mrs. Lowther, which was given with musical honours, Major Bush on behalf of Dr. Thomson, who had not got back off the fells, proposed a toast of "The Shepherd's" honoured by the company standing and singing the hymn "While shepherds watched their flocks by night". To mark the end of the Shepherd's Meet at the old Dun Bull, and as a tribute of respect to the memory of Mrs Daffurn a verse of "O God, our help in ages past" was reverently sung. The rest of the afternoon and evening was given up to sing-songs in every room in the hotel and a very enjoyable time was spent.

TO BE CONTINUED AT NEW DUN BULL?

It was stated that, if Manchester Corporation approved, the gathering may continue at the new Dun Bull, which is expected to open in March. Though Mardale will be a cowless valley, it will still continue to pasture the same number of sheep, the only difference being that they will be driven a little higher up the slopes. Probably Chapel hill Farm will run about 1500, Flake How about 1000, Measand Farm about 400, Whelter about 200 and so on.

It was recalled to mind on Saturday that it was just 12 years since Manchester Corporation took the first practical steps in the promotion of their big water scheme when they placed the river gauges in position to ascertain the feeding capacity of the new reservoir. In this connection it may be mentioned that Mardale has seven becks, all beautiful, and some charming waterfalls and cascades. The water scheme will not interfere with the, on the contrary the new road and bridle path will bring them infinitely nearer. The new hotel above the old Corpse Road will be considerably more accessible. This reference to the Corpse road recalls that the last body to be borne over the fells for burial at Shap was that of John Holme, Brackenhove, on 7th June 1736. The first burial in Mardale churchyard was that of John Turner, Mardale Green in 1279 (this date appears wrong but it is copied from the original newspaper report)

TUNES FROM BLACK FOREST.

Mardale has given birth to several brotherhoods, which nevertheless all merge their individuality in the general camaraderie of the Shepherds Meet, one of the numerous little clubs associated with the gathering is the "Melanics" who were this year represented by their assistant chairman, J. W. Parker, W. J. Milburn (organist), J. J. A. Dias (warden), S. W. Fleming (hon. secretary). Unfortunately Mr. Tom Siddle was unable to attend owing to indisposition. He had been an attender for about half a century. The "Melanics" had travelled the past two days from hunting abroad in the Black Forest, and it was strange that one of the first visitors they should encounter round the inglenook in the Dun Bull should be a German count. We were informed by the "Melanics" leader that Major Bush has presented two hunting terriers to them, two terriers which have hunted with the fell packs and those of the South of Scotland.

Later in the afternoon the "Melanics" organist played a number of hunting melodies and folk tunes which he had gathered on the Continent. Writes our informant;

Of all the followers of the Ullswater Pack none will regret that this is the last hunt to be attended at the Dun Bull, Mardale, more than the "Melanics". For more years than we like to attest Stanley Fleming has led the singing in this old hostel. Anno Domini is telling its tale, and although his voice is not so robust as it used to be he still sings the old hunting tunes in his own inimitable style. While on this reminiscent note one could hardly turn round in the hotel or grounds outside without hearing the name of Joe Bowman repeatedly on everybody's lips "if nobbut Auld Joe hed bin here it wud hev put t' reet touch tul it" was an expression heard frequently, and many were the humorous episodes recalled of the meets when Joe was the lodestar, and it took six doctors to keep Mardale's pulse in order. Of these the two Cumbrian's, Dr. W. Stanforth Eaton, of Cleator Moor and Dr. E. P. Haythornthwaite, of Lamplugh were unfortunately unable to be present. Many and many an inspired song has Dr. Eaton written for this Shepherd's Meet and his Mardale Lament is one of the most beautiful bits of tone painting the valley has known.

THE COMPANY.

Among other veterans present were Mr. Smith Hodson of Lowther; Jim Thompson, the intrepid rope man of many an exciting hunt rescue, was present for about his 40th time, from Garnett Bridge, along with his brother Sam. It would be impossible to give all the names of those present but there were among those already mentioned the following: Dr. McFarlane (Brampton, Carlisle), M. Moore (Urmston), F. Thorpe (Stretford) L. G. Wilson and J. Jackson (Penrith),; the following from Barbon; T. Greenhow, W. M. Parker, J. Parker, T. Stainton, E. Willan, G. Bragg, J. Winster, E. Bond; Amos Walton,, the joint hunt secretary (Patterdale), Miss Millican, Miss Routledge, T. Taylor, A. Barker, J. Teasdale, (Patterdale), T. Wilkinson, the Hunt treasurer, and J. Swainson (Howtown), R. Routledge (Canada), Mr. and Mrs. Hardman, Miss Page, Miss Hayton (Kendal), David Johnston (Canada), Jos Swinburn (late of Gowbarrow Hall), O. Baldry (Howtown) L. Johnston (Kendal), J. Hodgson (Heltondale), J. Parkin (Penrith), Alec Parkin, Frank Parkin, Walter Parkin, J. Thompson (Crosby Ravensworth), Mr. and Mrs. T. Rouse and N. Feirn (Manchester) Wilson Ewington (Torrisholme, son of Ambleside's former postmaster), L. Johnson (Wallasey) Philip Atcherley (Mersey Chamber of Commerce, Liverpool), j. Eggleston (Kirby Thore), R. T. Ball and R. P. Gore (Southport), John Magnall (Wigan), J. Parker (Greystoke), A. Wilson (Towcett), W. R. and F. S. Atkinson (Rosgill Head), E. I. Chambers (Grayrigg), Colonel Bates (Penrith), H. Bates (Penrith), Tom Edmondson (Mere Syke, Shap, late of Flake How); the following from Kentmere; George Salkeld (High Bridge Farm, former huntsman of the Ullswater Foxhounds), Mr. and Mrs. R. K. Taylor, J. Fishwick (Hartrigg), Jas Black (High Fold) Colin Cameron and J. Johnson (Burnbanks), Myles Fishwick (Longsleddale), L. Mounsey (Butterwick, a distant connection of one of the old "Kings of Patterdale), R. Dixon (Longsleddale), Jas Groves (Askham), Jos Arnison (Penrith) W. Wilson (Penrith), John Hodgson (Helton), R. Routledge (Carlisle), J. H. Robinson (Carlisle), W. Martin (Rosgill) G. Shaw (Cross Fell), Mr and Mrs. W Skelton (Windermere) Mr and Mrs W. R. Atkinson and twin daughters (nee Edmondson) Rosgill Head; Brait Black, R. Nicholson, B. Birkett, S. Faulkener (Ambleside) Mr and Mrs Astbury and George Astbury (Bampton) B. Martin, J. McCormick, R. Dufton, L. Noble, D. Dargue (Bampton) Pattinson (Kirby Lonsdale) Queency (Dockray), D. Smith (Selside), Mrs. C. Abbot (Helton) J. Hodgson (Helton) J. E. Bailey, J. Collinson, W. Powley (Great Musgrave), D. Todd (Kendal).

A LAMENT.

"Mardale ducit, non sequitur." Such was the motto a Roman Catholic priest gave the gathering with lightening suddenness on hearing an after dinner ? proclaim

"Mardale leads, it never follows." Well, like the Duke of Barataria, who led his regiment into action from behind. Mardale has led its own destiny from behind traditions and history as romantic and unique as any valley-and there are few more beautiful-in the whole of the British Empire.

One day while waiting outside a shop in London, while the better half was inspecting the latest models in something, I heard a fell-head voice like Peel's View Halloo ring like a clarion above the deafening roar of Piccadilly traffic; "Hello Mardale." I have never yet met the "Hero" who yelled, but I got his unuttered message all the same, and on this note I will conclude. May I quote a couple of verses of Dr. Eaton's Lament with which to close.

*"The Dun Bull now lies deep neath thy waters,
No more with wild song will its rafters resound,
No hunters be cheered by Mardale's fair daughters,
For where in the land could such beauty be found.*

*Thy quaint little church beneath the old yew trees.
No longer peeps out from their dark sombre shade,
Where humbly the dalesman looked up to his Maker.
And in their last sleep Kings of Mardale were laid."*

And now, at long last, no longer will the laughter of children awaken the glade and the dark gloomy shadows still lurk in their shade."

W.C. S

28th November 1936.