

## John and Isabella Losh 1757-1814 and 1766-1799

John and [his younger brother] James were pupils of Mr Dawson of Sedbergh, the famed mathematician, . . . On leaving Sedbergh, they entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where they had the benefit of listening to the chemical lectures of Dr Richard Watson, afterwards Bishop of Llandaff. These lectures made a deep impression on the young Cumbrians, and helped to develop in them a love of science . . .

John Losh, after much travelling on the Continent, sought a wife in Miss Isabella Bonner, daughter of Mr Thomas Bonner of Callerton Hall, seven miles north-west of Newcastle-on-Tyne, about the year 1785. In conformity with the wish of his father, who retired to his Carlisle residence, John and his bride took up their abode at Woodside. The young squire improved his mansion and property, and gained the credit of making everything smile around him. He became a prominent agriculturist, and had the credit of introducing Italian ryegrass into Cumberland; he also rivalled his worthy neighbour, Mr Philip Howard of Corby Castle, in planting larches . . . Possessing the family love of arborescent forms, especially the oak, John Losh planted largely, . . . possibly too much, as the Woodside estate of to-day might be singled out, field by field, on account of the oaks alone.

The inheritor of considerable property and the representative of a meritorious family, liberal in politics and strong in his advocacy of religious liberty, Mr Losh naturally sought friendly relations with his kind neighbours the Catholic Howards of Corby Castle, and Mr Charles Howard, afterwards Earl of Surrey and Duke of Norfolk. . . . Standing firmly by the blue or Whig colours of the county, and taking an active part in the city elections, brought him in contact with John Christian Curwen and other leading politicians in Cumberland and Westmoreland. Woodside was oft the rendezvous of both town and county politicians preparing for a contested election. . . .

Handsome in person and highly generous, fond of the beautiful in woman as well as in art and nature, studious to please everybody, and as ready to entertain a peasant as a peer, Mr Losh was fit company for every grade—indeed cock of the walk, and one of the most popular of men. In county life and all its associations around "merrie Carlisle," Mr Losh was a leading participator, and oft the guiding spirit. He was noted for his horsemanship on a big black mare as famous as his father's black nag, and quite as untractable to all but the master-hand. . . . Horse-racing, fox-hunting, wrestling, cock-fighting, and all the sports and pastimes refreshing to the bucolic mind of "canny Cumberland" eighty years ago, found a hearty patron in Mr Losh, who was everywhere recognised as a fine specimen of the country squire living as a lord of the soil amid hosts of approving friends. When appointed High Sheriff of Cumberland, . . . a hundred of the neighbouring gentry and yeomanry on horseback assembled in Woodside park and escorted him right showingly to the assizes at Carlisle. . . .

Mr Losh joined the volunteer force so admirably organised by Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Howard of Corby Castle, and stood next to him in rank in the Cumberland Rangers during the perilous days of Napoleon's menace to England. He worked in various grooves for the public good: to-day aiding the management of a charitable institution, to-morrow acting as Master of the Carlisle Masonic Lodge, and ever ready to co-operate both in social and political undertakings. . . .

Prompted by his love of agriculture and forestry, Mr Losh visited Scotland and sought the acquaintance of the Duke of Athole and Sir John Sinclair; and probably there met, about the year 1784, with Archibald the ninth Earl of Dundonald, the author of a treatise on the intimate connection between chemistry and agriculture. . . . (John Losh) was fond of natural history, and had given some attention to mineralogy—nay, looked upon as an authority on the subject by the editors of Hutchinson's "History of Cumberland."

Lord Dundonald and Mr Losh practised their chemical arts at Woodside, where furnaces, explosions, and bad smells seemed to the bucolic neighbours "uncanny wark" for lords and gentlemen; . . . The part taken by Mr Losh, in concert with Lord Dundonald, in establishing alkali works near Newcastle, was more of a moneyed interest that sought to encourage an industrial scheme than any personal action in the business itself. It is probable that Losh had the largest pecuniary share; and after Dundonald's retirement from the copartnership, the Walker Alkali Works became exclusively his; which on his decease in 1814, his daughter, Sarah Losh, inherited.

Mrs Losh died in 1799, in the thirty-fourth year of her age. Mr Losh survived his wife fifteen years, and died in 1814, in his fifty-ninth year. Their issue was —Joseph, whose judgment was not equal to the higher duties of life; Sarah, born in 1785, who inherited the Woodside property; and Katherine Isabella, born in 1788.'

Henry Lonsdale, *The Worthies of Cumberland*, 1873