

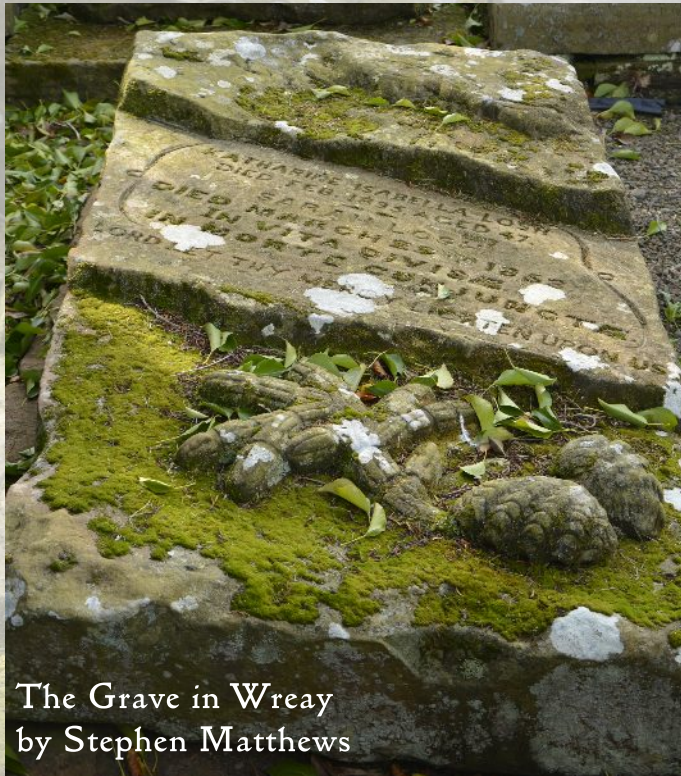
PINE CONE

The Newsletter of The Friends of St Mary's Church, Wreay

Issue No24 May 2022



More thoughts on the portrait of Sarah Losh
Grave News
A Sonnet: The Grave in Wreay



The Grave in Wreay
by Stephen Matthews

The heavy block of quarried, rough-hewn stone
You laid upon your silent sister's grave
Won't grant the shaded quietness you crave;
Nor her name, cut with your own hand, atone
For loneliness when art brings no relief;
Nor will the lichen's sympathy postpone
The slow accumulating years of grief;
Nor can your faith's simplicity condone
The theft of her; nor can the autumn leaf,
That withered on her muted stone, have known
How life is sad and beautiful, but brief:
In death's eternity we are alone.
In life divided, you wait your last breath
For you to be united in your death.

DEAR FRIENDS,



The Friends of St Mary's Church, Wreay

c/o Wreay Syke Fold, Wreay CA4 0RJ

Website: www.stmaryswreay.org.uk

Chairman: Raymond Whittaker 016974 73687

Secretary: Janet Madden

Treasurer: Mike Jones 016974 73744



He who rejects change is the architect of decay. The only human institution which rejects progress is the cemetery. Harold Wilson

Whilst I would wholeheartedly agree with our past Prime Minister's initial remark, recent events in Wreay Cemetery and St Mary's Churchyard would prove his second statement to be incorrect. In the places where our ancestors have been laid to rest rather surprisingly there has been much activity and progress - from digital mapping to creating wildlife habitats, from uncovering lost headstones to planting native bulbs.

Patrick Horton is not one to give up a quest easily and ever since Pinecone 21 promoted the thesis that the subject of the 'Sarah Losh' portrait is actually her cousin, Sarah Spencer Losh, he has tenaciously researched the archives. His conclusion is fascinating and gives a radical new chapter to the *Sarah Portrait Mystery*.

As the COVID19 restrictions are relaxed and we 'learn to live with the virus', I am delighted to announce a return to a live Friends Open Day this September. The topic is the 1st Afghan War which involved our local hero, Major William Thain. The military historian, Stuart Eastwood, will be our guest speaker and we will be entertained with appropriate military brass band music.

Pinecone 24 starts and also finishes in the churchyard with Stephen Matthews' sonnet, *The Grave in Wreay*.

My thanks go to Peter Ratcliffe of Camping Pods UK Ltd for his generous sponsorship of this edition of Pinecone.

I do hope that you enjoy this latest edition and I look forward to seeing you in September.

Raymond Whittaker

GRAVE NEWS by Raymond Whittaker

It seems incongruous to be talking of cutting edge technology, development plans and new discoveries in the context of ancient graveyards. These are not words normally associated with places of burial dating back centuries. Yet I can report that in St Mary's Churchyard and Wreay Cemetery there is much activity.

To begin in the Cemetery. In 1832 there was much concern over crowded graves polluting water supplies and causing epidemics and so an Act was passed to encourage public cemeteries. Sarah Losh was concerned about the state of the graveyard around the old Chapel and, with the benefit of the act, she donated an area of land a short distance to the north to be used as a cemetery for the village, 'available to all denominations of persons - a free gift to the public'. An example of her liberal and generous nature. The area was walled around and provided with the Chapel of Rest, one of Sarah's first architectural ventures and a sexton's cottage. This graveyard is still open and the Chapel now houses the Sarah Losh Heritage Centre.

Canon Abraham Richard Hall, Honorary Canon of Carlisle and Vicar of Wreay from 1893 to 1940, prepared a *List of Burials recorded in the Parish Register as buried in the Cemetery* in 1908 and charted the location of burials on a plan across a number of pages in his notebook in his own meticulous but idiosyncratic way - his many talents did not extend to that of draughtsman.

In March 2021, amidst the restrictions of lockdown, Lois and I updated this record and produced an electronic version of the list together with photographs of all remaining headstones and an updated plan locating burial plots. These documents make this record more accessible to those interested in family and local history and can be viewed on the St Mary's Church website under the Sarah Losh Heritage Centre Archives tab.

It now appears that we were ahead of the game as at the end of the following August the Church of England announced a seven year laser scanning project of the 19,000 churchyards in England. Funding for this programme has come from Historic England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Caring for God's Acre, a charity which helps care for burial grounds, and genealogy research websites. This gargantuan nationwide task is being undertaken by a Penrith based firm of surveyors, Atlantic Geomatics, using bespoke software. Up to 10 sites a day can be surveyed with backpack-mounted laser scanning



equipment, GPS and cameras. Taking tens of thousands measurements every second, the surveyors can then process the data to create accurate maps of each churchyard.

The National Burial Grounds Survey was commenced in November 2021 and Wreay Cemetery was one of the first to be surveyed on 15th December. The project includes not only surveying and mapping but photographing memorials and scanning and indexing parish registers. When everything has been completed in a diocese each parish will be given free, read only secure access to the churchyard map where we will be able to click on a memorial to see who is interred and view a photograph of the memorial. Members of the public will be able to view a general map of the churchyard locations and select a church to view the detailed map. They will then be able to search by name and see where in the churchyard a person is interred. To conduct detailed searches, view photographs of memorials or images of registers and get complete details the public will be required to pay a fee.

The closed graveyard that is within the curtilage of St Mary's Church pre-dates Sarah Losh's cemetery. It was in 1739 that Sir George Fleming, bishop of Carlisle, consecrated both Wreay chapel and its 'Chapel yard or burying place for the bodies of all present inhabitants and their successors of the Chapelry, Village or District of Wreay or Wrey'. The surviving registers of burials commence in 1813 and one of the last burials recorded is that of the wife of the Vicar of Wreay, the Revd A R Hall, Mary Hall, who died in 1928.

In 1961 the headstones in the closed graveyard around St Mary's Church in Wreay were removed as part of a 'tidying exercise' of the overgrown churchyard. Shrubs were removed, the ground leveled and seeded so that the upkeep of the area was more manageable with modern day machinery. Ninety-eight headstones and memorials were removed and unfortunately not placed around the inner wall in the northern portion of the churchyard as detailed in the faculty approval but broken up and disposed of in a quarry and local gardens. Today's visitor to St Mary's will see only the memorials within the Losh family area surrounded by a low stone wall with its simple rounded arches that are a hallmark of Sarah's work. The rest appears to be an open area of grass and trees.

Fortunately before the stones were removed a list of the decipherable inscriptions together with a plan indicating their position was made and this now resides in the Carlisle Archive Centre. It was this record that formed the basis of the Friends Open Day in September 2019 when six of the village characters were 'brought back to life' through theatrical monologues which celebrated their rich and varied lives and explored everyday life within and around Wreay in the 19th century.

Recently a number of fragments from the memorials have come to light in a local garden and it has been an intriguing project to attempt to relate the few readable words to the record of inscriptions and so ascertain to which graves the stones belong. It has been possible to identify three - the Rev. William Gaskin, perpetual curate of St Mary's from 1783 until his death in 1832 and tutor to two generations of the Losh family, including Sarah; the Rev. Joseph Parker, curate of St Mary's before Gaskin from 1738 to 1783; Thomas Stubbs, road-repairer to the parish who died, aged 70, in 1876. These stone fragments are now on display in the Sarah Losh Heritage Centre with archaeological style reconstructions of the headstones.

Churchyards and burial grounds are not only a great resource for the genealogist but also for the naturalist and two current projects in St Mary's churchyard are encouraging bio diversity. On 20th October last year 1300 native English daffodil bulbs, *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* *Lobularis*, were planted in an area of the churchyard to the east of the church by Year 6 children from Wreay School and other helpers. The bulbs were purchased with money raised on the Open Gardens Day in June. We look forward to seeing them increase in number as they naturalise.

Whilst the churchyard is kept tidy, its northern edge is left to grow more naturally, so creating a wildlife corridor along the edge of the adjoining field. A triangular parcel of land in the northwest corner though had become overgrown and unloved and so a development plan for a wildlife corner has been drawn up by Kath Halfpenny and Pat Geddes. This involves removing litter, dead wood and brambles. The intention is to enhance this wildlife area with the addition of locally grown mixed hedging, wild flowers and bog plants in the wet area. Piles of organic material will remain on the site to improve the habitat of insects and small mammals. This will be an ongoing project and will be entered into 'It's Your Neighbourhood' run by Cumbria in Bloom and judged in July.



Memorial to Rev Gaskin



Daffodil planting



THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S CHURCH, WREAY OPEN DAY 2022
SATURDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER 12.30-5.00PM WREAY VILLAGE HALL & ST MARY'S CHURCH

THE 1st AFGHAN WAR & MAJOR WILLIAM THAIN

GUEST SPEAKER: STUART EASTWOOD, former curator of Cumbria's Museum of Military Life

MUSIC: THE BORDER BAND

TICKETS £15 including lunch & tea

available from Bookends, 56 Castle St., Carlisle or Wreay Syke Fold, Wreay CA4 0RJ

or 016974 73744 or 016974 73687 or email raymondwhittaker53@gmail.com

MORE THOUGHTS ON THE PORTRAIT OF SARAH LOSH by Patrick Horton

Some years ago I used to attend at St Mary's to welcome visitors on Heritage Open Days who came from far and wide and always stopped at the portrait of a young woman which hung at the back of the church, I would explain that it was a portrait of Sarah Losh who built the church and had a hand in the design and execution of almost everything in the church.

In previous issues of *Pinecone* there have been articles about the cleaning and restoration of the portrait which revealed a signature, 'Linssen', although the last letter was indistinct. The (wedding) ring on the sitter's left hand was confirmed by the restorer to be painted consistent in time with the rest of the portrait.

Further articles in *Pinecone* showed that searches by Geoff Gray had discovered information about a portrait artist named Frans Hendrik Linssen who was born in 1805 in Holland, studied art in Antwerp and in 1830, aged 25, moved to Paris where he studied and painted and had work exhibited in the Paris Salons of the 1830's. He remained in Paris until 1843 after which he became Principal of the art academy in his home town in Holland. All this information was very exciting because the artist's name matches the signature on the portrait and the 1830's figure prominently in the story of the Losh family, not so much here in Wreay, but in Paris!

From previous articles in *Pinecone* it was shown that Sarah (architect) Losh could not have been the sitter for the portrait painted by Linssen sometime between 1830 and 1843 for the following reasons. It was thought that, from the youthful appearance of the sitter she would be aged 20 to 30 but Sarah would have been 44 in 1830. Also if Sarah had sat for a portrait when she was aged 20 to 30 she would have been wearing an earlier style of dress and an earlier hair style. Finally she would not have been wearing a wedding ring and, in any case, there is no evidence that she was in Paris at this time.

In 1815 George Losh, Sarah's uncle, had moved with his family to Rouen, not far from Paris, to further his interests in the ironwork industry. His large family included, in particular, three daughters named Mary Alice, Sarah Spencer and Georgina Cecilia Thomasina. It came about that these three daughters were all married at the British Embassy in Paris, Mary Alice in 1817 aged 19, Sarah Spencer in 1831 aged 26 (disputed, could be younger) and Georgina Cecilia Thomasina in 1834 aged 21. So could the portrait sitter be one of these daughters of George Losh?

Mary Alice lived in Paris after her marriage in 1817, certainly up to 1840 when her husband died and probably for long after that and she later moved to Wreay. In 1830, when Linssen first arrived in Paris, she would have been 32. Allowing for the fact that Linssen would have needed some years to 'get into his stride' for painting portraits professionally I think Mary Alice would have been too old to be the portrait sitter.

Sarah Spencer left Paris not many days after her marriage on 21st May 1831 and lived in Newcastle. This is known because a letter dated 18th June 1831 from Elisabeth Stevenson (later Mrs Gaskell) to a friend mentioned that she had received a letter which described a recent visit by a Mrs Ramsay to 'the French bride Mrs Wm Losh' (see *The Pinecone*, by Jenny Uglow, pages 158 & 304). So Sarah left Paris for Newcastle sometime between late May and early June 1831 which probably rules out Sarah Spencer as the sitter for the portrait, there not being sufficient time for a portrait to be completed between mid May and early June of the same year.

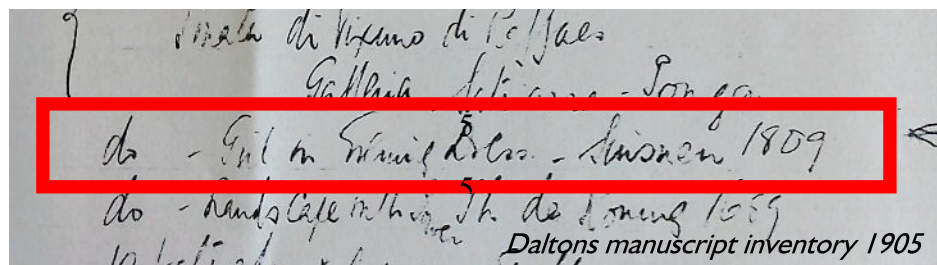
Georgina Cecilia Thomasina lived in Le Havre, not far from Paris, after her marriage in 1834 to Thomas Cussan Snr., a man 40 odd years older than herself (surely a good story there). She was young, fitted the presumed age of the sitter, would have worn the right dress style for the period and have the right hair style and she would wear a wedding ring. So she becomes my favourite contender for the portrait sitter.



Georgina's husband, Thomas Cussans Snr, was from a wealthy family owning Jamaican sugar plantations. Le Havre was one of the 'triangle' ports having ships going to Africa, then carrying slaves to Jamaica, then carrying cargo back to Le Havre. Thomas Cussans Snr. had a son, Thomas Cussans Jnr. from a previous marriage, who was an artist and a soldier, an album of his watercolours is in the British Library. Thomas Jnr. married Matilda Ann Goodman Southwood and they had three daughters (more of that later). There is a portrait of Matilda in the National Trust Nymans Collections. Previous to his marriage (to Georgina) Thomas Cussans Snr. had sold some of the family artwork including old masters. So, a wealthy family with connections in the art world.

I wanted to know how and when the portrait arrived in the Church. I was advised to contact Patricia Harrison of Wreay Hall. Fortunately Patricia recollected that her husband, Tony, acquired two portraits from the sale of the contents of Scalesceugh Hall in 1962. The portraits were put in storage until the Harrisons moved into Wreay Hall in 1971 at which point they were taken out of storage. One portrait was of a James Losh and now hangs in Wreay Hall, the other, at that time assumed to be of Sarah (architect) Losh, was gifted by the Harrisons to St Mary's Church.

But how did the portrait arrive in Scalesceugh Hall? In 1912 there was a grand sale of the contents of Woodside. The sale took place in Carlisle and was spread over several days. The first day was for rare coins and small antiques, the second day was for paintings, the third day for furniture and porcelain and the concluding day was for 8,000 books!! There were 500 paintings and etchings in the second day sale. I have searched high and low to find a printed catalogue of the paintings but without success. However I did find in Carlisle Library a small archive of documents relating to Woodside including a manuscript inventory, dated 1905, of the contents of Woodside prepared by Daltons Auctioneers and to my surprise and delight on one page there was an entry 'Oil Painting - Girl in Evening Dress - Linsnen 1809'. I assume it is the Linssen portrait and can only think that the name is misspelt. As regards the date I have no explanation. Is it possible that there may have been an indistinct date, now lost? Could it have been 1839 and misnumbered as 1809? I assume that the owners of Scalesceugh Hall acquired the portrait at the 1912 grand sale of the 500 Woodside paintings. But how did the portrait arrive in Woodside from where it was painted in Paris?



I now think that the portrait is of Georgina Cecilia Thomasina Cussans painted by Linssen in 1839. When Georgina died in Le Havre in 1857 the portrait would have been included in her bequest of 'all my Paintings, Engravings and Books to my Sister, Sarah Spencer Losh' who at that time was living in Wreay. When Sarah Spencer Losh died in 1883 her property would then be owned by her husband, William Septimus Losh, and when he died in 1888 he left all his property to his son James Arlosh who, at that time, had become the owner of Woodside. When James died in 1904 he left all his property for the benefit of

the Unitarian Church Body (see *The Pinecone*, by Jenny Uglow, page 280). His executors dealt with the disposal of the various lands, buildings and contents (having a total value of several million pounds in today's money!)

Georgina's will made provision for the well being of the three daughters of Thomas Cussans Jnr., they each received substantial bequests to be invested and paid out to them at age 21. An unusual provision of the will related to her husband's bedroom furniture reading 'I will and direct that the Furniture in the Bedroom of my husband Thomas Cussans Esquire deceased, be burnt after my decease'. How strange!! All other household furniture was to be sold and a part of the proceeds was to provide for the wellbeing of her servant boy and another part for the well being of a 'child placed in the Protestant institution at Orleans' (another story there, surely).

Going back to Frans Hendrik (Henri) Linssen. I wanted to know more about his work exhibited in the Paris Salons. I contacted Melanie Gardner of Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery and she directed me to a website from which I learnt that Henri had 3 portraits accepted for the 1834, 1836 and 1840 Salons but there was no description as to gender or name of the sitters (his work shown in the 1839 Salon was landscape). In further searches I found a website showing information for all the Paris Salons, this being the work of a Professor John S Hallam. I contacted Professor Hallam and found that Linssen was in exalted company because the likes of Delacroix and Corot also had paintings in the 1834, 1836 and 1840 Salons. Professor Hallam very generously provided details of the 3 Linssen portraits. I was hoping and praying that one of them would be of a young lady named Georgina, but it was not to be - two males and an infant! It was, of course, a lot too much to hope for.

It has been a fascinating and interesting journey around the Losh and Cussans families and you never know, on my next visit to London you may find me in the British Library pouring over *The Cussans of Jamaica and England*, a typescript by Geoffrey Meade in 5 volumes!

However, to give someone else a fair chance of finding a more suitable candidate for the sitter, how about Catherine Kemmis (birthdate unknown)? She was the daughter of Mary Alice Losh and James Kemmis who married in Paris in 1817 and lived there until at least 1840 when James died. Assuming that Catherine was born in 1818 she would have been 25 in 1843 when Linssen left Paris, so if she was married before 1843 she could have been the sitter. James Kemmis was from Dublin, he owned property in Ireland. Mary Alice died in 1875 in Wreay and left all her property etc to the three children of her late daughter Catherine Blanche, so she was married, but was it before 1843? I will leave it to someone else to research.