

## Woodworking in Lindale

The Lindale joiners Haines and Lowrie retired in 2014 after 50 years of service at Smithy Hill Works, Lindale, working wood, although recently installing PVC double glazed windows.

Lindale has always been a village of crafts people, working in wood and stone. **Coppicing** and wood working have been important occupations, possibly since Neolithic times. Local woodlands were managed, mainly by coppicing, to produce a wide range of woodland products, such as charcoal, swill baskets, bobbins and hurdles<sup>i</sup>. The Barker family are current timber merchants in Lindale.

**'Barker'** is a woodland surname. A barker is someone who removes oak bark for use in tanning. In late spring to early summer bark was stripped from young oak trees, and after drying the bark was sent to a tannery (as for example in Rusland). Oak bark is rich in tannic acid, and is used to preserve animal hides. Coppice oak bark is still used to produce specialised leather for bookbinding and saddles.

No Barkers are listed in 1829 or 1866 **directories**, and the Barkers recorded in the 1851 and 1866 Mannex directories are a different family. Bulmer's 1914 directory clearly records Henry Barker, Senior and Junior as timber merchants in Lindale.

1851 <b>Directory</b>	Barker, Robert	victualler	Coach and Horses, High Newton
	Barker William	Farmer and owner	Low Green
	Barker Maria	Farmer and owner	Sunny Green
1881 Mannex directory	Barker, William		Wilson House
1914 Bulmer	Barker, Henry Senior	Timber merchant	Brockholes
	Barker, Henry, Junior	Timber merchant	Bell Hill
<b>Grange Red Books</b> 1932-37	Barker HJ		Lindale House
1938- 1954	Barker, Mrs ME (Marjorie Ethel, nee Nicholson)		Rose Cottage Tel 302
1947 - 1950	Barker, F		The Glebe Tel 177
1956/7	<b>Barker H</b>	Timber Merchants	Tel 3177
	Barker, Mrs ME		Rose Cottage, Tel 3020

**Brian Barker** is the current Lindale timber merchant. His father Frank, and both grandfathers, Henry Barker & Jack Nicholson, were woodmen so 'I didn't have much choice'<sup>ii</sup>. His Dad was originally at Bell Hill, and Brian was brought up at Glebe House in Lindale. His father and grandfather kept **heavy horses**, to take timber out of the woods. David Birch also recalls that a lot of people in Lindale had heavy horses. People would hire extra horses in Lindale to drag goods up the hill. Hauliers and horse and cart people started

when the railway station was built in Grange (in 1857), carrying stuff to and from Grange station<sup>iii</sup>.



A photo, taken by Frank Barker around 1900, shows haulage of a large oak tree to Grange station. There are five horses, a lead horse and two pairs, with four men (Tom McClure, Bill Redman, Bill Martindale and Harry Barker (uncle) on the tree), and the tree on a cart. It is pictured on the lower road to Grange near Lyndean; the gate to the track to Brocka Farm is seen behind the horses. Brian Barker is doubtful about many loads being dragged up Lindale Hill. Pre-railway little was moved far. The Barkers used horse and cart to drag timber out of the wood. It was invariably taken to Grange station. The nearest saw mill was in Allithwaite. When transporting timber they would use multiple horses and trailers. When tackling the hill, they would use all the horses to haul one trailer up, then repeat for the other loads. It was not achieved in a hurry.



A second photo shows the Barker family in spring 1914 in the family horse and cart. The people are, from left to right, Grandfather, grandmother, father Frank Barker, Aunt Elsie, Uncle Harry, and Aunt Dorothy. The family moved to Bell Hill Farm when it was formerly a

farm, and kept usually round about six horses up there. They had previously lived at Brocka Farm, before Brocka House was built<sup>iv</sup>.



A 1930s photo shows a young Frank Barker, probably about 20 years old, with his horse, pulling timber. The family had a steam driven saw mill near the limestone cave at Brocka (formerly known as Brockholes), but it isn't there now.

Later they used steam traction engines for a time, to get up and down Lindale Hill before it was tarmacked. When soft tyres came in it was quicker to put timber on a wagon and take it straight to Barrow. All the best timber went to Barrow, probably for shipbuilding, but it may just have gone to Allithwaite saw mill. Brian's father was in the Home Guard in the last war. A photo below shows the Barker wagon at Wilson's garage in the war.



Following the December 2015 floods, Brian and his son Richard Barker featured in an article<sup>v</sup> about their work to remove two massive oak trees which had fallen across the river Bela near Milnthorpe, using a 1974 tractor and crane. Richard relates (9 April 2015) that work is now much more local, with hardly any in woods at all, as large machinery does most of that work. Theirs is mostly small scale contract work, locally, cutting down large trees in gardens: felling large trees in confined spaces is Brian's speciality. The work is very varied; carving mushrooms, providing small ash logs for carving, some oak for a rustic gate, poles, pea sticks and preparing and delivering logs for the many wood burning stoves on the area. There is hardly any need to go far afield. The furthest they travel for work is to Bowness & Windermere, to Kendal and Meathop<sup>vi</sup>.

The 1829 directory mentions George Barrow and Arthur Metcalf as **oak basket makers** in Lindale. Bulmer's 1914 directory records 3 joiners, a wheelwright and undertaker and John Graham, Broomhill House as an oak basket maker in Lindale. The last oak basket maker in Lindale was **Simpson at Broomhill Farm** on Lindale Hill below the top House. The workshop at the front was formerly a **swilling shop**, where oak baskets were made. Originally there was a boiler to soften the hazel, and then it was bent over a wood working horse, a 'mare', to make swill baskets<sup>vii</sup>.

*Sylvia Woodhead* Feb 2015

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<sup>i</sup> *Bill Hogarth MBE Coppice Merchant* (2001) ed Alan Sharples. Wood Education Programme Trust

<sup>ii</sup> Interview with B Barker 14 March 2008

<sup>iii</sup> Interview with David Birch March 2008

<sup>iv</sup> Interview with B Barker 25 July 2013

<sup>v</sup> *Tractors and Farming Heritage*, May 2016 @The Surgeon's instruments, P6-12

<sup>vi</sup> Interview with Richard Barker 9 April 2015

<sup>vii</sup> Interview with Mrs Simpson Nov 2013