THE HERMIT TINKER OF ALLITHWAITE or 'THE ALLITHWAITE HERMIT'

(taken from Westmorland Gazette article 14 March 1922)

George Rhodes died in March 1922 in the Ulverston workhouse hospital aged 60 years. He had lived many years at Humphrey Head and at an abandoned building in Allithwaite quarry making his living as a tinker by going from house to house in the area and was known as a skilled craftsman. Once a year he would tramp to Leeds and back with his wheelbarrow for supplies of tin, stating that the Yorkshire brand was superior to anything he could get elsewhere.

George was born in Leeds and emigrated with his brother to America at an early age becoming a mechanic and then a journeyman tinker and was about to start up a business with his brother when his brother died. George then did some lumbering before returning to England by paying his passage home on a cattle boat.

He appeared in Allithwaite about 1900 and first lived in the cave at Humphrey Head and many strange stories were circulated about the mysterious stranger who had adopted this unusual way of life. Although his appearance was unkempt and uncouth he was a harmless and inoffensive with a cheerful demeanour and was especially a favourite with children.

Encroaching tides made his home uninhabitable so he moved into the half ruined building of Holywell house at the bottom of Humphrey Head. He was again driven from there by the sea and moved to the dilapidated building in the quarry at Allithwaite. There was no chimney so George removed some slates to allow the smoke to escape, his bed was an old mattress set on some scaffolding and the rest of the room was filled with stacks of old tin for his business. If he made 1s 3d per day he said he could live comfortably and he would not accept charity. He was steady and industrious, a reliable and conscientious worker who was useful to farmers and the local population.

In February 1922 he was seen to be in failing health and collapsed in a field at Templand after completing a job there. He was carried home and after a visit by the vicar he was taken to Ulverston hospital where he died of pneumonia a few days later. He was interred in Ulverston cemetery which the residents of Allithwaite regretted as they would have borne the costs of his removal to Allithwaite.

George Rhodes, Allithwaite Tinker at his home at Humphrey Head

Picture taken by Mr Wood of the Wyke farm, permission from David Wood

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