

William Field's Log Book

Background

In 2013 the Cartmel Peninsula Local History Society acquired a handwritten book that records events in the area between 1754 and the 1890s. It was started by William Field, the elder and was then copied by William Field the younger who added to it for many years. After his death other members of the Field Family of Cartmel continued adding to it until the early 1890s. They were a very prominent family in the life of the Village as they ran several shops. William Field (the elder) was born in 1741 and died in 1810. His son, also William (the younger) was born in 1769 and died aged 90 in 1860. James Stockdale in his book *Annals of Cartmel* paid tribute to William following his death in 1860 and described him as the 'father of Cartmel'. Amongst his many roles according to Stockdale

'He was grocer, ironmonger, tallow chandler, high constable, bridge master, post master, stamp distributor, savings bank clerk and treasurer, manager of the parish charities, vestry clerk, clerk and writer at all sales, will maker, lease and agreement maker, general arbitrator, trustee under numerous wills, and agent for five of the principal owners of estates in the parish. He was an excellent antiquarian and numismatist, and so to him we owe the preservation of what remains of the ancient Headless Cross and several of the other still remaining antiquities of the parish.'

The condition of the book was assessed by the Conservation Officer for Cumbria Archives and we received advice about its future conservation. The interior of the book is in good condition but the binding is poor. Pat Rowland, Barbara Copeland, Margaret Brandon and Sue Jones transcribed the book and Pat and Barbara researched some of the many interesting entries in the book.

Description of the contents

The book's title is 'A Copy of the Late William Fields Log Book'. The initial entries are one line per year from 1754 to 1780; between 1780-1788 the entries expand to 2 lines; 1788-1810 there are several entries per month. In 1810 the handwriting changes and the style of the entries change.

1810 June 13 My Father W^m Field Departed this life at half
Past 3 o'clock in The morning Wednesday
15 buried at 5 o'clock in the evening 1810
Born February 1738
Aged 72 years

The entries become more narrative but do not record events month by month. However by 1824 they return to factual, concise entries for several dates per month. Events are recorded on a more regular basis and included some marriages and deaths, alterations to properties, journeys undertaken by the writer, results of sales of estates, weather events such as strong gales and thunderstorms and news items about the area. Most deaths record the age of the deceased and some of them also record the time of death. There is a mixture of information about when the death occurred or when the person was buried and in some cases both events are recorded. Some years have more entries than others. From 1858-1869 there are very few entries. Somebody records Mr W Field's death in 1860 and in 1864 the death of Abigail Field, his wife, is also recorded. The next entry, in a different handwriting, is for 1869. Unfortunately the writing is much scruffier and more difficult to read than the early parts of the book. The book contains a few newspaper cuttings for 1879, the 1880s and 1890s.

Another writer began recording information in September 1870 when a near daily diary was begun. The writer of this section is Ann, wife of James Field who lived at Tower House in Cartmel Square. A few early entries may have been written by her youngest son Willie.

James's father was related to William Field the younger and following the death of James's parents when he was a young

child he had joined the William Field household in Cartmel. James married Ann Barrow in 1843 when he was 27. Due to the early deaths of all of William's sons James took over the shop and business on William's death in 1860. Ann's father ran a shop in Barngarth, Cartmel.

James died on 18 Jan 1877 aged 62 and Ann was 86 when she died on March 10 1904. Both are buried in Cartmel Churchyard.

The content of the later diary does include a lot of local births, marriages and deaths but there is much interesting detail about visitors, family matters and outings. For example a holiday in Scotland listed the places visited and means of transport which was probably written by one of Anne's sons. Ann wrote about visits to Manchester where two of her sons were working and a visit to Harrogate and the surrounding area. When some visitors come to stay they were taken on a tour of the gardens at Holker Hall, on the lake from Lakeside, visits to Barrow, Grange and Kents Bank and long walks around the village. Prayers were said for fine weather at the end of 1872 and into 1873. The first Cartmel Agricultural Show was recorded in 1873. Ann appears to be obsessed with the hearse usage and records meticulously each time it is used from 1874 when it changed ownership. Weather reports also feature extensively. No emotion or comments are expressed in the entries, they are purely factual.

I have researched about 140 entries.

Some examples of researched topics include details of an unusual burial of an ex soldier; criminal acts, the trials and sentences; local shipwrecks; beached whales; drownings on the Sands.

Pat Rowland
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