

Rear of Long House - Early 1900's



1983



Long House - After the Storm 1983



Long House

This building, though now several separate dwellings, still known collectively as Long House, was erected in the 1400's and is probably one of the oldest standing buildings in Cumbria.

It has quite an interesting history. Originally it stood on a deep water quay. It was known as The Grey Hound Inn and was immortalised by Sir Walter Scott in his 'Red Gauntlet', as the scene of a meeting of Jacobites when Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, surreptitiously landed in the Solway. Having a deep water quay at which vessels could discharge their cargo, it was a most likely resort of smugglers. Sir Walter carved his name on one of the quay stones and this was still visible until after a storm badly damaged the quay in 1967.

Its one last glimpse of glory was when its quay was used to embark the local levies for the Crimea War. There is a plaque in Carlisle Cathedral in memory of an officer killed whilst embarking from the quay at Long House.

In his book, 'Cumberland Scrap Book', 1948, by W.B. Redmayne, it is stated he remembered seeing a newspaper advert published "about 100 years ago" (would be about 1848, pre-Silloth days), giving dates and times of a regular steamship service between Skinburness (could only have been Long House) and Whitehaven.

In 1933 plans were passed by Holme Cultram Urban District Council for Mr Jos. Wood to convert Long House into four separate dwellings.

Long House has suffered badly from all the worst storms through the years; the last, in February 1983, badly damaged the most western house (the sea went in through the front bedroom window and out the back), but repairs were made and it is still habitable.

The Towers, Skinburness

Around 1880, next to the Skinburness Hotel, was built a 'commodious' house, owned by the Banks family of Wigton, known as Chichester House. From about 1910 to at least 1938, renamed 'Skinburness Tower', it was owned and occupied by Joseph Edmund Carter-Wood, who considerably extended the house.

In 1946 the 'Towers' was a private hotel, 'Skinburness Towers Hotel' run by a Miss Robinson and a Mrs Rigg who purchased the property from a Mrs Helen McCann of Dalston. The property, comprising the house and 3.6 acres, was purchased from Miss Mabel Mary Robinson and Mrs Florence Ethel Rigg, in May 1957, by Cumberland County Council for a residential old peoples home, at a price assessed by the District Valuer of £4800 (being £1450 for land and £3350 for buildings), and the County Council spent about £2500 in adaptations and £3000 in furnishing and equipping the premises. The building was opened as a short-stay or holiday home for the elderly on 2 August 1958. It can accommodate 31 people and all the permanent residents are from Allerdale District, but short stay residents come from all over Cumbria.

Cumberland and Westmorland Convalescent Institution

The Convalescent Home

Because of the "unequaled salubrity" of the climate in Silloth, it was chosen for the erection of the Sanatorium for the counties of Cumberland and Westmorland. The building was erected in 1862 and was so arranged that all wards were on the ground floor. By 1883 it had been enlarged twice to contain 60 beds and a children's ward was added in 1882.

The object of this institution was to give poor persons who had been stricken with fever an opportunity of recruiting their health after the disappearance of the malady. It was supported by contributions and donations and legacies of benefactors (eg. there is a plaque in the dining room of the Home to the memory of a Captain Fawcett Johnston who bequeathed £3000 to them on his death on 28 August 1890). The patient was also charged a small sum per week for board.

In 1882, 454 patients were admitted; by 1901 an average of 800 - 1000 persons were admitted annually - the maximum term of residence being one month.

Today (1982) the Home can cater for 52 residents at one time and still admits 800 - 1000 people each year. The usual length of stay is 2 weeks, but longer stays can be arranged. They now have two 11 bed, two 10 bed wards and some single and double rooms, therefore being able to cater for married couples. The childrens ward has been split into several smaller rooms and though the home does admit patients from 14 years upwards, their patients tend to be usually middle-aged or elderly.

The Home supplies convalescence and recuperative holidays for people from a large area of the North of England and Southern Scotland, taking patients from as far afield as Harrogate and Lancaster, and from Manchester, Liverpool and London.

The Convalescent is an independant Home (one of the very few left in this country), registered with the Custodians of Charities, and is a non-profit making concern being run by a voluntary committee. Today there is a staff of 27 (part-time and full-time) trained and auxilliary nurses and domestics; an SRN being on duty at all times, with a Medical Officer on call who also has a surgery twice a week in the Home. They also employ one man as a handyman/gardener.

After some lean years the Home has of late been able to use some excess of funds, after expenses, for a modest modernising program, ie. bringing fire precautions up to date, carpeting rooms, providing headboards and footboards for beds to get away from the hospital bed look, lowering ceilings and modernising the kitchen.

The Home is now funded by payment of fees by the Area Health Authority who send patients, private patients who pay for themselves or are sponsored by organisations such as the Round Table, local fund raising and Covenants and donations.

The last building addition was the concert room instituted by Sibyl Mounsey-Heysham. It is a light spacious room with a stage and an electric organ, if performers could be found, it could be used.

Silloth Convalescent Home

When the Trains brought Patients



1982

