

Rickerby and Stanwix

This walk follows the career, life (and death) of one of Carlisle's leading citizens of Victorian times – George Head Head [that's right: two Heads!] – with an exploration of what remains of Petriana or Uxelodunum, a once large Roman fort, the base for 1,000 cavalry soldiers. We'll walk along a tree-lined footpath which follows the line of Hadrian's Wall: a way nearly two thousand years' old. We'll also stroll alongside the River Eden and visit a *brand new* stone circle!

George Head Head (1795-1876) was a wealthy Carlisle businessman and banker. He was a director of the Lancaster & Carlisle Railway; the developer of the 1853 County & Station Hotel (now Lakes Court) – his initials can be seen near the roof; and an important banker. Head's Bank was amalgamated with the Cumberland Union Bank; its 1867 building is now a pub in Botchergate, near the station. Head was High Sheriff of Cumberland in 1851 and Deputy Lieutenant in 1852. He was active in the anti-slavery movement: he attended the Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840. In 1832 he bought the manor of Richardby – now Rickerby – which is just across the old Carlisle boundary in Stanwix Rural Parish. He had Rickerby Park laid out and he enlarged Rickerby House. He also created a small model village at Rickerby, building a boys' school in 1835 [girls were taught in another house]. He married twice but had no children. His motto was 'Study quiet' and his arms showed three unicorns!

When he died in 1876 the estate passed to his nephew Miles MacInnes. Miles had once saved the family bank from ruin when uncle George arrived at work but had forgotten the keys. If the bank had failed to open, during a time of economic uncertainty, it could have started panic run of withdrawals. Nephew Miles then ran all the way back to Rickerby, collected the keys, and returned in time for the bank to open properly. When Rickerby House became a school, after Miles's death in 1909, the Eden Key Race, along the same route, was run annually until the school closed in 1993. In 1995 the haulier Eddie Stobart planned to take over the house as his head offices but decided against the idea. In the early 2000s the grounds and lodges were developed as private houses called Rickerby Gardens.

Rickerby Park was bought by Carlisle Citizens League in 1920 as a memorial to those in Carlisle who died in the Great War. The Memorial Bridge, over the Eden, opened in 1922. It links the city to the 1922 War Memorial designed by Sir Robert Lorimer, the architect of the Scottish National War Memorial in Edinburgh Castle. It's not an elegant design: Lorimer wrote that "this cenotaph

business is a teaser". The Eden Bridge was widened in 1932; E P Mawson laid out recently restored gardens next to the bridge. In a corner of the park, close to where Brunstock Beck joins the Eden, is a *new* stone circle, erected in 2011 by the Eden Rivers Trust. There are seven stones using six different types of Cumbrian stone: Kirkstone slate, Shap limestone, Penrith sandstone, millstone grit, Lazonby sandstone and Shap granite. The millstone grit stone seems to be the most weathered already.

North of Rickerby Park, through some field paths, is the line of Hadrian's Wall and its *vallum* earthworks. A tree-lined path runs along the *vallum* alignment, following a way used for nearly 2000 years. It leads to Stanwix churchyard where George Head Head and his wives, Maria (+ 1854) and Sarah (+1876) are buried. Sarah, married in 1858, was the daughter of Samuel Gurney of Upton, Essex, the 'banker's banker'. Near the Heads' tomb is the touching memorial to Dean Tait's five daughters. They died from scarlet fever, within two months in 1856, aged 10, 8, 5, 3 ½ and 1 ½.

Stanwix was the site of an important Roman fort where 1000 cavalry troops were based. Its Roman name was Uxelodunum ("high fort") or Petriana, named after the Prefect of the *ala Petriana* [regimental name], T Pomponius Petra. The fort was founded about AD 70/1 on high ground overlooking the river. By 98AD its soldiers had been awarded a block grant of Roman citizenship for gallantry in action. It housed about 768 men and their horses and stables and its commanding officer was the highest ranked officer on the Wall. Little remains of this once important base although, in 1984, part of the north wall was located in the car park of the Cumbria Park Hotel.

Near The Sands leisure centre is an architectural curiosity: the 1839-40 Turf Inn (extended 1874). Its railed monopitch roof was once the grandstand for the racecourse on the Swifts. ATB 2013