HOW ARNSIDE BECAME A PIONEER OF ECO-TOURISM

From 'Westmorland's Port' to a 'Pretty Little Resort Nestling on the Kent Estuary'.

STEPHEN CAUNCE & DENNIS BRADBURY

THE ORIGINS OF TOURISM

Travelling simply as a leisure activity is now a defining feature of contemporary life for most British people. In 2015, 2.6 million people worked in tourism. £54 billion was estimated to have been spent by day visitors within the UK in that year, and a further £24.3 billion was spent by domestic tourists staying away from home. In addition, 36 million foreign tourists also visited this country. Until the late nineteenth century, however, ordinary people mostly stayed within their own native locality for their whole lives.

Some specialised craftsmen had traditionally covered long distances on foot when seeking work, simply because they had to, and limited travelling had occurred even in medieval Europe among the upper class, especially those who owned scattered estates. Medieval rulers were almost constantly moving from place to place to show themselves off, provide justice, deal with rebellions and so on, but even for them such journeys were difficult, expensive and dangerous. Hardly anyone toured around simply for entertainment as modern 'tourists' do, though Chaucer has provided a vivid account of an imaginary pilgrimage to Canterbury, which is probably the nearest equivalent.

It is all the more surprising, therefore, that scholars now believe that Arnside Tower seems to have been a rare, precocious medieval example of a sort of tourism, and it is true that it has never made sense either as a fortification or as a dwelling.[1] In particular, local small defensive structures such as pele towers and bastles devoted the ground floor to accommodation for livestock, not living quarters as here. Rather, it seems most likely to have been a late medieval equivalent of a private theme park, where elite families could gather by invitation in a deliberately old-fashioned setting to hunt animals for pleasure over the extensive marshy and largely uncultivated lands surrounding it. They could then act out for a short time the romantic lifestyle they thought their ancestors had had, and we should note that it was at this time that interest in Arthurian legends was spreading widely among noble families.

Barden Tower, near Bolton Abbey, certainly had a similar history not far away, since it 'dates back to the 15th century when Henry, 10th Lord Clifford, remodelled the hunting lodge into the large tower house. Henry preferred spending his time at Barden, more so than his main seat of power in nearby Skipton Castle. Barden Tower was not built for defence but rather as a lavish residence.'[2] However, when this sort of hunting lost its attractions, our tower was largely left forlorn and useless, and its purpose was forgotten as it passed from the de Beetham family to the Earls of Derby. It caught fire in 1602, and partly fell down in 1884. Tower Farm was built near to it, providing a practical symbol of the emergence of a more intense and profitable engagement with real business of producing food and raw materials hereabouts. The Dallam estate bought it and surrounding lands in 1815, and is the owner today.

By 1724 times had changed, for Daniel Defoe's publication of his *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* heralded a new era. It broke new ground in giving readers detailed, realistic accounts of a long tour round the newly-formed United Kingdom, and in accurately describing communities of real people as well as scenery and legends. It not only sold very well, but for two centuries it was endlessly republished, either under the original title or in pirated versions. By the early nineteenth century we can see in the books of Jane Austen that gentry families then routinely

---

[1] Dr Caron Newman, Newcastle University, talk to 'All About Arnside event, 2016.

[2] https//great castles.com/barden.php

visited each other for long stays as a vital part of maintaining their kinship and friendship networks, which were generally based within counties. Doubtless, Dallam Tower and Levens Hall were involved in this kind of activity, but the impact in Arnside would now have been minimal.

The urge to actually roam the country as Defoe did, for its own sake, could only spread slowly down through British society once acts of Parliament established turnpike trusts which steadily improved the main trunk road network. This then allowed stage coaching to connect most towns after 1786, when mail coaches first ran. *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens was the literary swan song of this pioneering 'tourist' era built around road transportation, and its popularity was clear as it also sold in unprecedented numbers.

The rich began to use this new-found mobility to 'resort' regularly to purpose-built spas on health grounds, real or imaginary. The most successful developed into centres of general entertainment, like Scarborough, Harrogate and Bath, since families who mostly lived in a fairly isolated manner when resident in their country houses could not resist their appeal. Morecambe was not really part of this early trend, and Arnside again remained completely untouched. However, the title of Morecambe's newspaper, *The Visitor*, does still recall the atmosphere of these places since such publications were intended not to retail national or local news, but to tell new arrivals not only what there was to do, and also to list those you could aspire to be seen with during your stay so as to increase your status. This ancient form of 'networking' for social advantages is beautifully detailed in Austen's *Persuasion*.

The crucial change in upper-class 'tourism' occurred during the long wars with France between 1792 and 1815, when rich families ceased to be able to send their young men on 'Grand Tours' around Europe. Many turned to the Lake District as an apparently exotic but safe and accessible alternative (which was also much cheaper).

People often approached the area via the main road north through Beetham, and though today it seems odd, its spectacular waterfall was noted as a very striking and pleasant first stop marking your arrival in the scenic area. Thus, the Mannex Directory of 1851 said that, 'Beetham Parish … is a large mountainous and romantic district, on the south western extremity of [Westmorland] intersected by the rivers Kent and Belo.' The modern road bypass has, of course, since moved ordinary travellers away from the falls, which are also now masked by a large and ugly paper factory, but it is becoming a minor tourist attraction again thanks to the renovation of the ancient corn mill. It does seem, however, that early tourists then headed for the lakes themselves, bypassing Arnside, just as many still do.

By 1850, the practice of travelling had received a greater boost than anyone could have anticipated. Railways were being linked into an unprecedentedly intensive and accessible network. They shrank distances and reduced costs as never before. Over the next century, the vast majority of people in the UK became at least occasional tourists of some sort, and by 1960 most managed overnight stays away from home in summer. Meeting their ever-growing aspirations had created a whole new sector in the economy. Very few people went abroad till the 1970s, however, so spending on leisure travel stimulated vast investment around this country, including Arnside.

There followed a period requiring rapid re-orientation due to the invention of packaged foreign holidays, which soared in popularity. It was partly cushioned by tourists from other countries coming in increasing numbers, but for our purposes we should also note that this shift actually turned out to be favourable to Arnside's type of low-key, nature-based tourism as short breaks within the UK became ever more popular. The evolution of the Arnside of today should thus be seen an integral but quirky and individual part of a national and even international process, which it helped in a small way to make much more complex than is generally thought.

The actual coming of the railway to Arnside in 1858 was thus the key event which unleashed it here. This account focusses in detail on how Arnside's distinctive kind of tourism developed here, setting it apart most definitely from becoming just a miniature copy of Morecambe, say, or even

Grange-over-Sands. Its growth was, of course, just as driven by a sense of seizing the new opportunities to earn a living out of making life easier and pleasanter for 'tourists', but the approaches which ultimately paid off best have relied on protecting and publicising its amazing countryside, and its estuary, rather than concentrating on the use of the beach that lay between them.

TOURISM COMES TO ARNSIDE

Arnside had always been recognised as a beautiful place by those who knew it, but before 1850 only Saltcotes Farm can be shown to have to have actively offered lodgings for tourists. The 1841 census shows it was always a working farm as well, and it had been there since at least 1679 according to a datestone, so this was diversification rather than a new investment. The production and sale of salt, hence its name, had provided a substantial extra income for its occupants, the Sauls, a leading local family. However, that was ended by competition from Warrington and Cheshire in the late eighteenth century and presumably the urge to maintain the old standard of living spurred them on to find a new source of non-agricultural income.

People came in much larger numbers as the decades passed, of course, but even in the Edwardian era it would have been easy to dismiss the village as a resort which had more or less 'missed the boat' if crowds were the main criterion. Instead, Arnside's history is all the more fascinating because regular episodes of apparent 'failure' actually reinforced an orientation towards exploiting its scenic setting without destroying it in the process. In particular, there was no phase where the rapid building of a solid mass of hotels and boarding houses, or entertainment facilities, directly facing the estuary simultaneously 'made' the resort, and obliterated its natural beauty. Its accommodation was always varied, eclectic and mostly (though not always) small-scale, and even where it is the dominant feature, it as generally been classed as attractive in appearance. This allowed it to avoid the dreadful social problems synonymous over the past few decades with big resorts struggling to fill a mass of rooms in large, out-dated hotels and guest houses. It even avoided the shabbiness that descended upon Grange in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Arnside was able to adapt and sail quite serenely on into our present, and, hopefully, the future.

To return to the start, then, after 1800 Arnside began to find a niche as a desirable place to come to when wealthy urban families began to spend much of the summer in picturesque, remote countryside to avoid the diseases which spread rapidly in hot weather in towns. This trend increased as time went by, for industry and commerce were booming, and northern English towns became much more densely populated. J. Anthony Barnes has left a fascinating record of this early development stage in his *All Round Arnside* of 1903, culled from conversations with survivors passing on memories from much earlier times.[3] He noted that 'new settlers began to arrive in Arnside. At first they came chiefly from Kendal, prosperous men of business who bought land and built themselves country houses, being kept in touch with town affairs by a "bus which ran several times a week" until *Kendal Tommy* (the railway branch line service) started up in 1876.' [4]

He also wrote that, 'bye and bye, visitors from the Yorkshire and Lancashire towns began to find their way here also, chiefly of the sort who came to settle permanently or to pay long summer visits, and who could appreciate the charm of country life without artificial attractions, and even without many of the conveniences of civilization'.[5] We know that some Liverpool merchant families built summer residences around Morecambe Bay for their families to retreat to, having learned how attractive it was through commerce. Locally, Parson and White's directory of 1829 noted that 'at the foot of Arnside Knot is *Ash Meadow*, the modern seat of William Berry esq., commanding an extensive view of the sandy bay, covered one hour with ships, and another with carriages and pedestrians.' Berry had bought it in 1815, and enlarged and greatly changed it.[6] In contrast, in

---

[3] J. Anthony Barnes, *All Round Arnside,* Wilson, Kendal, 1903, republished Barnes Charitable Trust, 2014.
[4] *All Round Arnside,* p.15.
[5] *All Round Arnside,* p.16.
[6] D, Bradbury, *Arnside: A Guide and Community History*, 2nd edn, 2002 p. 50.

Silverdale most houses, including those built in the nineteenth century for outsiders, stood well back inland, something worth bearing in mind as we seek to understand the differing patterns of development in these two places which are generally seen as a pair despite straddling the county boundary.

Bulmer's Directory of 1905 could say that by then, 'the village [had become] a pretty little resort, nestling on the south bank of he Kent estuary…. The landscape around is everywhere beautiful, and groves of larch, spruce, fir, plantations of hazel coppice, and shady nooks, wearing their rich growth of ferns, add their verdant charms. Half a century ago Arnside was an unknown hamlet of almost impossible access, but the advent of the locomotive opened out the attractions of the place to the admiring eyes of strangers. … Altogether it is [now] considered quite an eligible watering place, especially for those who dislike the noise and bustle of those resorts crowded with daily excursionists. The air is invigorating, the sands well adapted for bathing, and when dry afford a spacious playground for the indulgence of cricket, tennis, and every other game which the youthful imagination can conjure up. For the accommodation of visitors there are two good hotels and a number of neatly-fitted up lodging houses.' The census of 1841 records a population of only 140, living in 25 dwellings across Arnside and Far Arnside, which rose to 600 in 105 dwellings in 1891. By 2011 the totals were 2,334 and 1,100.[7]

The slow start Arnside had made as a resort was partly due to its earlier, now largely overlooked, role as a port which, from Tudor times, served the increasingly important industries of Kendal and the rest of Westmorland. By the eighteenth century, this produced a steadily rising flow of sailors, merchants and business travellers spending hours or days here while their ships loaded and unloaded at various places, and then waited for the right winds to leave again[8]. Dennis Bradbury's lectures to the Local History Society showed that Ashmeadow and Beachwood, and other similar old buildings up and down the estuary shore, had actually started life as inns serving this trade. The coastal shipping which predominated provided no crew accommodation, so everyone preferred to get ashore every night to use such places to eat and sleep if they could. However, wealthy tourists would not have wanted to be part of that kind of life unless they had to! It is also worth noting that there was no road between Sandside and the modern Promenade until one was constructed by the railway as an afterthought, which is why the rail bridge over this road, by the station, lacks the height it would normally have had. Previously anyone going in this direction either went along the shore at low tide, or used what is now Black Dyke Road before going well inland.

We now realise that the Irish Sea coast was increasingly busy in the eighteenth century. Inland transport routes were poor and indirect, and the north-western economy was developing rapidly after a very slow start due to border turmoil and isolation. Ireland increasingly imported a lot of goods from England, especially coal from Cumberland. The Isle of Man acted as a trading and smuggling clearing-house throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries due to its semi-independent status, though again smugglers do not seem to have left any legacy, in fact or popular romance, hereabouts. All this scattered commercial activity has been largely forgotten today, however, because sailing craft simply came up the estuary on the tide and settled on the sands in any of the many suitable spots for carts to come out to them after the water ran away.

In Cornwall especially, in contrast, rocky cliffs forced people to live in villages and to build quays and sturdy protective harbours, all of which Victorian tourists found very attractive. On Morecambe Bay, such building only occurred at Ulverston, so there is a lack of physical remains along the Kent, apart from a few crude and now badly-decayed crude stone wharves such as the local one at Blackstone Point, and the built up area at Dixies in Sandside. There is also an old warehouse hidden away on what is now a back lane behind the Ship Inn, which has been recently restored near here. This lack of focus and infrastructure also explains why there was then no concentration of population within the core area of modern-day Arnside.

---

7 D. Bradbury, 'Celebration of 100 Years of Arnside Parish Council.' It is not clear how many visitors were included.

8 L. Smith, *Kendal's Port: A Maritime History of The Creek of Milnthorpe*, Lensden, Arnside, 2009.

There were a few long-distance voyages from the Kent, but as with most such ports, local traders concentrated increasingly on feeding goods into and out of the big international 'gateways'. They passed goods to and from Liverpool, as that town became a mercantile success able to rival London in the early nineteenth century. Arnside's official role as the local customs base shows that the scattered trade had become significant in total, and the Customs House remains in use as the Sailing Club. It seems likely that this area was chosen because of a rocky protrusion out into the sands here, which had led on to a ford. It was more or less destroyed by the changes made to the river channel by the railway project, though Barnes said he had used it with difficulty on occasion.[9] The Greenwood and Bush families who we will meet again both thrived in Arnside as agents within this style of working, and became modestly wealthy on trading in exporting gunpowder and importing coal. They owned the waterfront cluster of warehouses which was built where the public toilets now stand.

It may also be surprising that there is no sign of any fishing settlement within modern Arnside, which again might have become a magnet for tourists as in Cornwall and many other places. The handful of families then living in today's Far Arnside may have participated in such activity, closer to the sea, but it was too isolated to attract visitors, other than the occasional person such as the author Elizabeth Gaskell who enjoyed writing in a nearby and similarly cut off part of Silverdale. In any case, fishing could never develop seriously here as there was no big market that could be reached with a catch until trains started to speed through the countryside. However, Crossfields' boat building yard, originally located near the Fighting Cocks, did provide a visible, everyday connection to maritime life after the family made it their base in the 1840s after moving from the other side of the estuary. Its activity may therefore have helped initiate what would now be called a 'visitor experience'. Certainly the graceful craft they turned out for over a century had many admirers, and increasing numbers of 'prawners' were actually built for sailing for pleasure.[10] They themselves proved to be very adaptable in identifying and pursuing the opportunities to create a new economy hereabouts, and played a key role in several ways.

CREATING A RESORT

The railway had an unusually complex impact here, for it was actually negative initially. The promised opening segment in the railway viaduct was never created, so access upriver was greatly restricted. The coasting trade therefore rapidly died away in the 1860s, when ships were in any case becoming too large for the upper estuary. However the Furness Railway Company soon realised that if it wanted a substantial passenger trade to complement its very limited, though lucrative, original role of moving iron ore and coal to the coast at Barrow for further shipment by water, it would have to create one. Clearly, no commuter traffic would ever develop spontaneously where towns were so few and small, so targeting potential holiday-makers interested in seeing Lakeland was really the only prospect of building up passengers. The growing numbers of visitors made it seem worth the effort, and Barnes remarked that the company became 'one of the most enterprising in the Kingdom in the facilities it offers to tourists, whether cyclists or pedestrians.' [11]

However, not everyone was satisfied with the way things developed. In 1875, the Rev L. Sanderson attended the A.G.M. of the company and doggedly insisted on putting a case that 'a source of income … was being overlooked by the directors. He alluded to the local passenger traffic…. The local traffic was disregarded and absolutely crushed…. Several lovely watering places on the line which ought to be reached easily, … [were] almost impossible to reach conveniently. With the prosperity of places like Morecambe in view, they should not allow the advantages of a pleasant resort like Arnside to be lost to the public. Every effort should be made to encourage and develop a passenger traffic to these places …. But since the opening of the Barrow Docks, the train service had been decidedly inconvenient.' While on holiday in Arnside with friends, 'he found that in the

---

[9] Barnes, *All Round Arnside*, p. 12.
[10] Smith, *Kendal's Port*, chap 7; Arnside Archive project.
[11] *All Round Arnside*, p.19.

morning a great deal of time and trouble had to be expended in reaching Lancaster, and on the way back in the afternoon they had to stay in that most beautiful of places, Carnforth station…. Train after train left for Barrow that would surely pass the station where they were anxious to be put down. The Carnforth station … was not a comfortable place for Furness passengers to be left in.'[12]

Another complainant appeared in the *Lancaster Gazette* of 1874 when it 'drew attention to the neglected condition of the whole district as to railway accommodation, which in the first instance promised to open out these unrivalled resorts to the surrounding world, but has lately operated to the superior aggrandisement of certain places on the shore of the bay at the apparent expense of the rest'.[13] This was clearly aimed at Grange.

However, whatever else was alleged, while most other railway companies steadily merged into big, impersonal units, the Furness remained independent until 1923 and retained a close focus on its own backyard.[14] It always took a very active view of its role of developing the whole economy of its area, because of the direct and obvious boost to its own revenue. It was hard to strike a balance along its existing rail links, for the mining and other industrial activities through Arnside and also around Lakeside and Coniston conflicted with tourism, yet paradoxically it was freight carriage which made the service tourists wanted economically viable. New lines aimed solely at tourists invariably proved financially impossible to justify. The Ravenglass and Eskdale might seem to be an exception, but it only became a tourist line very late in the day after rebuilding to a very small gauge.

By making it possible for visitors to come to Arnside safely, speedily and fairly cheaply, some enterprising local people, including the Crossfields, Greenwood and Bush, could see from the start that the gains could be made much greater than the losses by meeting the expectations of visitors enthusiastically, as they did. This story is therefore not all about outsiders and chance, for this complementary local vision proved essential as well. Arnside, in fact, was not even allocated a station at all until local pressure was applied in the first year, while trains ran past without pausing.[15] One generally unrecognised relic of such stirrings are the substantial stone Fairy Terrace (originally Fairy Mount) houses, built near the station on Black Dyke Road in 1895, which were specifically built near the station to let to visitors rather than commuters or local residents, and which were probably given their evocative name in this spirit.[16]

On its side, the railway lent a hand periodically in building up what was turning from a dispersed scatter of houses into a proper village by the shore, consciously or unconsciously. Their most obvious contribution came in 1865, when they built the stone pier. It was originally intended for cargo boats, though hardly any used it. They also later helped to create the sea wall and the promenade which it protected from all but the highest tides. Even the Royal train stopped in Arnside on occasion, and the Arnside Archive have a picture of the present queen on the platform.

One activity that was unlikely to start spontaneously in such a small place was the production and distribution of publicity materials. Publications which were very striking and fulsome were also commissioned, notably the lavish *Illustrated Guide to the Holiday Resorts on the Furness Railway, illustrating and describing the districts adjoining*, of 1900. Very professional posters were produced, and a distinctively atmospheric series of postcards by the noted local artist William Heaton Cooper includes one of Arnside seen from the estuary. All this clearly demonstrated their commitment, which filled a real gap since local government barely existed when this process started. The railway's arrival did not alter the fact that Arnside remained for decades simply a hamlet within the township of Haverbrack, which itself was part of the Parish of Beetham. In the twentieth century, as the railways lost their local focus, it was able gradually to take over this role to

---

12 *The Lancaster Gazette, and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmorland, Yorkshire, &c.,* May 09, 1874.

13 *Lancaster Gazette.*

14 M. Andrews, *The Furness Railway: A History*, Barrai Books, Barrow in Furness, 2012, see esp. chap 11.

15 S. Caunce, 'A Social History of Arnside Station', parts 1 &2, *Keer to Kent*, no. 86 pp. 7-8 & no. 88 pp. 15-16, 2014.

16 Bradbury, *Arnside*, p. 70.

some extent, but not to match it. Small booklets such as the *Official Guide to Kendal and South Westmorland*, published c1970, were the typical result.[17] Though much more modest, they contain a lot of fascinating material and illustrations to interest the historian, and the Arnside Archive holds many copies of such items, as well as a collection of images relating to tourism through the years.

In assessing how Arnside developed as a resort, we must always remember not only that the village faces north, but also how far the nature of the Kent estuary at Arnside was from the mass tourism ideal. During prolonged good weather, when tides are moderate and clean, the foreshore can seem to offer a casual visitor an ideal combination of salt-water, turf and sands. But the sand isn't really seaside sand, readily becoming more like clinging mud after rain. Far worse, the ever-changing quicksands are unpredictable and have taken lives regularly, even very close to rocky outcrops. Bathing is also rarely a sensible option with the dangerous and fast-flowing tides, even though the chance to watch the bore sweeping up from the sea became, and remains, a trademark of the village.

Parson and White's Directory of 1829 had thus been very optimistic in saying even that 'the sands here are well adapted for bathing, and though there is only water sufficient for this healthy recreation during three or four of the highest tides in each fortnight, many visitors come hither in summer, the air being remarkably salubrious, and the scenery in the neighbourhood beautifully diversified and picturesque. There are three public houses on the shore, with *Ferry-boats* for conveying passengers to that part of the parish lying on the opposite side of the sands'.

In fact, one newspaper report from 1874 quoted directly contrary evidence from Captain Matthew Nutter, who 'had resided at Arnside for a period of about two years. He knew the sands thereabouts well, and had crossed them many scores of times, but he had hardly ever seen any visitors walking on them. There was one bathing machine at Arnside, but it was very seldom used. Visitors at Arnside did not walk on the sands, because they were not safe.... He had seen shrimps for sale at Arnside, but he believed they came from about Morecambe. A small steamboat, drawing about four feet of water, came over in the summer time to Grange, but could not get any higher up, the channel was so small. The sands were so dangerous that he, familiar as he was with them, would not venture to cross them after dark.'[18]

Further evidence comes from another report, from 1863, headed 'A Gallant Rescue.' It recorded that '"Lammas Flood" generally brings a crowd of people from Kendal and the inland parts of the county to the Sandside. Last Sunday was fine, and hundreds came to Milnthorpe and Arnside. The visitors scattered themselves about the upper part of the bay. The tide flowed full and deep about noon, and numbers were quickly disporting themselves along the shore in its briny waves. When the ebb had set in, a middle aged man named Christopher Braithwaite, from the Fell Side, Kendal, entered the water and swam out some distance. On returning, (when about 100 yards from shore) he was seen to plunge wildly, and cried for help which could not for some time be given to him. A man who was swimming ventured towards him but did not assist him. Braithwaite had become exhausted, and the returning tide was fast carrying him seaward, when one of his townsmen named Anthony Salmon came up, rapidly undressed, swam to the drowning man and brought him to the shore, apparently as dead as a stone. Mr Evison, surgeon, was sent for to Milnthorpe, and after about half an hour went to where the man was lying on the shore. He at once said he was dead; but the bystanders, who had been using friction from the time of getting him out, began to roll the body, and shortly after he gave signs of life. They quickened their efforts, which were at last rewarded by a return of consciousness to the before inanimate body. Stimulants were given and the man recovered, with no worse result than a sore body from the vigorous rubbing of his preservers.'[19]

Walton has shown that the yacht club did on Windermere was very influential in drawing in wealthy families, but Barnes said that 'Arnside cannot be considered an ideal place for rowing and sailing. Both are to be had, but the conditions are only favourable for an hour or two at high water. If one

---

[17] *Official Guide to Kendal and South Westmorland*, published c1970 (in author's possession).

[18] *Lancaster Gazette.*

[19] *The Westmorland Gazette*, 8,8,1863.

tries to row at low water the boat is apt to stick on hidden shallows…. When the tide is running strongly it is difficult to make headway against it. A novice should not try to shoot the bridge on a strong current or he might easily crash into a pillar…. There used to be an annual regatta at Arnside, with races for yachts and rowing boats and swimmers. I remember once seeing the swimmers plunge in at high tide opposite the Crown Hotel. The regatta lapsed some years ago, but there are few high tides during summer on which one or more private yachts do not flit to and fro, and sometimes a fleet of brown-sailed Morecambe trawlers adds animation to the scene.[20] Indeed, for many years' the prow of the old boat [which] projects from the wall [of Ashmeadow]', reminded visitors both of the dangers of Morecambe Bay and of the uses to which wrecks can be turned. This was a relic of the ferocious storm of 1907 which breached flood defences up and down the estuary.

THE ECOLOGICAL OPTION EMERGES

In compensation, Arnside has one distinctive and superb feature beloved of tourists, which is the ability to get up high for astounding views. As Barnes said, 'it is the Knott that makes Arnside – what would Morecambe, Southport and Blackpool give for this great boss of limestone, 522 feet high, with its close fitting cap of larches, and the flowing drapery of copse-wood which clothes its sides and spreads in great folds over all the country round'.[21] The Knott is close to the shore, easy to climb, stands higher than Blackpool Tower, and there is no entry fee. The *Lancaster Gazette* correspondent commented wryly that 'it is not unusually thrown in the teeth of Englishmen by Germans and Americans that they can never behold a hill without making a demonstration in climbing to the top', so it was an ideal gift from nature.[22]

The *Westmorland Gazette* had been even more fulsome in 1841, in some 'notes on a tour in these parts': 'We ascend the steep side of Arnside Knott, from the summit of which we have the most extensive and interesting view imaginable. Here the eye is lost in delightful bewilderment. The varied aspect of the country on every side, extends to an inconceivable distance, including all that is magnificent, grand, and beautiful in rural and mountain scenery, and the elevation on which we stand gives to the whole a complete panoramic appearance. On the one side the great Bay of Morecambe, offering at one hour secure footing for droves of cattle and strings of carriers' carts, &c; the next hour we see it spread with water, rolling its giant waves, bearing on their crests large coasting vessels of one hundred tons each, many miles up the bay…. On the other side one vast amphitheatre fills up the space to the extremity of the powers of vision; - first the richly cultivated plain, thickly covered with waving crops, the food of man and beast, in which the upper parts of the Bay, here reduced to a mile or two in width, serpentines its way for five or seven miles further north, beyond which rise the mountains, their bases thickly clothed with timber or coppice wood, while their summits give a starving existence to a scanty vegetation, or present the naked peaks in eternal sterility to the clouds.'[23] Arnside therefore offered its strongest attraction to nature lovers, appealing even to quite passive ones compared to those intent on scaling Lakeland mountains.

It also differed from many of Britain's most popular small resorts in the lack of a nearby big town or city whose inhabitants could use it as a day trip destination on a large enough scale to make investing in infrastructure worthwhile. Even the Sandside rescue quoted above shows a moderate number of people simply taking advantage of an attractive nearby place at a traditional time when the weather was good, no more than that. It provided occasional trade for the pubs, but did not justify building any special structures or entertainments, not even temporary ones. It was no basis for the growth of another Morecambe or Southport, much less a Blackpool – though the possibility should never be dismissed without thought as they all also began as isolated minuscule settlements with even less previous history – it offered a different route as an alternative.

Visiting could, of course, take a more organised form once trains ran, but even this did not

[20] *All Round Arnside*, p 25.
[21] *All Round Arnside*, p. 28
[22] *Lancaster Gazette.*
[23] *Westmorland Gazette*, 6/6/1841

necessarily lead to predictable peaks of demand. In 1860, to take an instance only months after trains began stopping at Arnside, Fellside Sunday Schools from Kendal organised a special Nut Monday railway excursion for 376 teachers, scholars and friends. Starting at 7.15 for Silverdale, they walked to Gibraltar Farm for coffee and buns before inspecting either the Cowsmouth or the Channel. They reunited at Arnside Tower for midday dinner, then went 'nutting in a wood provided for the purpose…. All partook of tea and then took the train at Arnside Station, arriving back at Kendal at 9.55, expressing the opinion that it was one of the happiest days they ever had'. The group included '36 workhouse boys and girls treated to the trip by some of their kind friends'.[24]

A similar trip was reported decades later, at Whitsuntide 1920, when over a hundred children from the Morecambe Baptist School came to Arnside. By then motor coaches were competing for this sort of custom, but this made visiting easier still. The same newspaper noted that Arnside 'is given the name of "Lilylands", and this is just the season when the name seems appropriate. The woods in the district are full of beautiful specimens and thousands of bunches have already been gathered,'which must also have generated an influx of visitors.[25]

In April 1871 a less obvious aspect of Arnside's isolation led to 'a considerable number of men arriving at Arnside Railway Station, bringing with them … two athletes, namely, John Todd of Dalton, and Edward Proctor of Barrow. They proceeded to Milnthorpe Marsh', where the level, grassy ground made a good racecourse. Friends had 'arranged for them to run a race of one mile for £5 a side.', and after a very close contest, Proctor won with a final sprint. A lot of money doubtless changed hands through bets on the result.[26]

Grange had many physical similarities, even down to the high ground behind it, but it lacked the eye-catching and accessible eminence of the Knott. Being south facing, though, helped conventional beach use, and having a tract of low-lying marshy shore which could be reclaimed as a park and lake, it attracted far more investment. The amazing personal financial commitment of Colonel Porritt was also crucial here, especially in developing the enormous and substantial promenade which tipped the balance in giving it genuine resort character. It was consequently able to aim at higher class tourists who valued a 'select' atmosphere, hence the almost complete lack of pubs.[27]

Arnside could be said to have missed out, but there probably was only room for one Grange, and in the long term, it benefited by finding a different, and successful, path of its own. We certainly should not see this apparent 'rivalry' as a threat to Arnside, because it built up the numbers visiting the whole area. The connecting railway let them function in some ways as one resort, since a journey on the regular trains only took a few minutes and provided spectacular views that could not be observed in any other way. Indeed, the missed opportunity which has been rued regularly ever since was the failure to build a pedestrian footway over the estuary next to the railway, as at Ravenglass. The *Lancaster Gazette* article previously cited had noted that 'another grievance which Arnside has long felt is the absence of a foot-road side by side with the railway on the Kent viaduct, which often provokes the eyes of pedestrians anxious to visit the other bank of the Kent, and yet begrudging both the railway fare and the circuitous walk via Heversham.'[28] This may be amended soon as serious plans now exist to rectify the early oversight.

For a time, small steamers did bring some visitors from Morecambe up to the pier and Bingham records that in 1853 shilling trips to Silverdale and Arnside in the *Myrtle* were advertised.[29] However, Barnes also confirmed how short lived this was, due to the silting of the channel and the shortness of periods of high tide during which such ships could try to serve both Arnside and

[24]Caunce, 'Arnside Station', p.7,
[25]*Lancaster Gazette.*
[26]*Westmorland Gazette,* 8/4/1871.
[27]History of Grange over Sands website, https://grangeoversandshistory.weebly.com/history-grange-over-sands.html
[28]*Lancaster Gazette,*
[29]R.K. Bingham, *Lost Resort? The Flow and Ebb of Morecambe*, Cicerone, 1990, p.55.

Grange, as we have already seen.[30] In 1865 the *Arbutus* stuck fast on a sandbank off Arnside for fourteen hours.[31] By 1876 the *Lancaster Gazette* noted that it was regarded as impossible to run such a service beyond Grange.[32]

Though a digression, a local connection means it is worth commenting here on how important piers originally were for shipping in quite large numbers of tourists in many places, especially down the Clyde and along the north Wales coast, even until the 1950s. This was, in fact the driving force behind the construction of most early long piers, allowing people to get off a large boat easily, and to walk to the shore without getting wet. Interestingly, the classic pier design using tubular metal stilts was initiated by James Brunlees, who had developing this novel construction method for the Leven and Arnside railway viaducts. He built the first such iron pier down the coast at Southport in 1860 and went on to build another at Southend in 1887-9 at a cost of almost £70,000. This last was so successful that an extension was opened in 1898, making it the longest in Britain, and it is still in use.

Arnside pier itself obviously looked nothing like that, but the prototype viaduct, with its crossing trains, made the view from the stone pier all the more interesting. Without any lasting commercial usage, it thus helped to pioneer the modern use of piers as places to stroll, sit, and admire the splendid views up and down river, despite its miniature character. Its lasting centrality to village tourism was shown by the determination to reconstruct it after the disastrous storm of 1983, as recorded for public viewing on a commemorative plaque.

COPING WITH THE VISITORS

Once the demand for places to stay became apparent, a constantly changing balance of hotels, guest houses and other types of accommodation can be observed to have evolved. The Fighting Cocks played a key part, as would be expected, and symbolically changed its name to 'the Crown'.[33] It seems likely that the original suggested disreputable origins in a different era. In 1893 it appeared in a solid column of similar, short newspaper advertisements from across the north, with Paul Wagner, the proprietor offering 'every home comfort'.[34] In 1899 it charged 2/- per day for bed and breakfast, and 9/- a day or 59/6d a week for 'pension', or full board.[35] The renovated establishment had been greatly expanded by the addition of a new block next to the old pub, and both survive to show the contrast. Another one was erected behind it to house horses and carriages to help visitors get the most from their stay, and also, naturally, to boost income. Apparently local people never accepted the name change, and it has now, of course, become 'Ye Olde Fighting Cocks'. This is probably intended to seem more characterful to modern people, and fits with the heritage image Arnside now seeks to project.– marketing and branding have a long history, even if of a largely unconscious character![36]

Ronald Bush, a mariner who had come to Arnside originally to be part of the coastal trading operations, developed the Albion, the other partner in what were described by the *Lancaster Gazette* (quoting from an unnamed source) as 'two very neat and inviting hotels' which set the tone of the village for visitors. It had been first built as Greenwood House by his trading partner, Captain Robert Greenwood (1810-1854), also a mariner, and owner of a coastal ship. Bush married his daughter Isabella, and on Greenwood's death, they inherited the house and decided that coastal trading had simply ceased to pay. Barnes remembered Bush's son saying that his grandfather had been a poor man who made 'his money wi' shipping when freightage to Liverpool was £1 a ton …

---

[30] *All Round Arnside.*
[31] Bingham, *Lost Resort?*, p.55.
[32] *Lancaster Gazette*.
[33] *Lancaster Gazette*
[34] *Leeds Mercury*, May 27, 1893.
[35] *Illustrated Guide*
[36] Bradbury, *Arnside*, p. 20.

but when it dropped to three and six there was nowt in it, and then the railway com.' [37]

Greenwood House now became 'Bush's Albion Hotel', something shouted to the world via a huge statement of what it offered on its painted gable. At first it was a 'smaller, plain-fronted Georgian building' than the one we see, for two major extensions were added in the late nineteenth century to provide visitor accommodation. Another land-based passenger transport business also developed here, with horses and vehicles again housed behind the pub in a separate, single-storey building. This now forms the left-hand part of the present Educational Institute, which they then added to in stages as the business prospered. In 1899 it charged 2/- per day for bed and breakfast, and 8/6d a day or 56/- a week for 'pension', or full board.[38]

This high level of demand for hired transport led Elijah Nelson to start another in the 1890s on what is now the corner of the Promenade and Ashleigh Road, in association with his Temperance Hotel and Refreshment Rooms.[39] This indicates the volume and class of visitors who were now arriving. In fact, the Lakes generally maintained a fairly intensive summer stagecoach service for decades after it disappeared elsewhere in England due to the large demand for transportation to the scattered 'picturesque' sites, which could not be met economically in any other way. We have seen that building more railway lines would have been uneconomic and unpopular, and it turned out that people also apparently relished the 'heritage' aspect of riding in a stagecoach as much because of the obvious dangers and lack of comfort as despite them.

The old comments about the extreme isolation of Arnside except by water thus now ceased to apply. Mrs H. Iddon, Inglewood Private Lodging House, made this explicit in 1900 in an advertisement for her lodging house that 'although not so well known perhaps as neighbouring places, Arnside certainly possesses many points of attraction to the visitor, [with] its convenient position on the Furness Railway, six miles from Carnforth junction rendering it a capital head-quarters for tourists desirous of exploring the charming and picturesque objects of interest in the Lake country.'[40]

Whereas working-class tourists largely stayed put while on holiday, visitors with money to spend did use the village as an accessible base for seeing a much wider area. At its pre-Beeching peak the railway not only served all the stations which still exist, making Furness Abbey in particular very accessible, but it also had the branches already mentioned, and therefore direct links to the steamers on Windermere. In 1900 the Furness Railway advertised twenty special circular 'coach and steam yacht' tours around Lakeland, and one, the 'Levens and Heversham Tour' specifically mentions Arnside as a boarding point. Another three could be joined by a short preliminary train journey towards Barrow.[41] Indeed, Barnes stated that 'a splendid series of circular tours through the Lake District is arranged, all of which may be taken from Arnside'.[42]

In addition a photo evidently from the 1920s shows two posters on Arnside station advertising marine day trips, one on the Wyvern, a converted tug, to Fleetwood and Blackpool, and the other to the Isle of Man on the Menevia, about which nothing is known apart from the fact that it does not appear in lists of ships owned by the Isle of Man Steam Packet Company. Unfortunately, the details on the posters cannot be made out.[43]

ENTERTAINMENTS

Barnes clearly enjoyed writing that the village 'holds out no attractions but those of nature and human hospitality. There are no bands or pavilions, no minstrels twanging harps and singing comic

---

[37] *All Round Arnside*, p 11.
[38] *Illustrated Guide*
[39] Bradbury, *Arnside*, p. 19.
[40] *Illustrated Guide*
[41] *Illustrated Guide*
[42] *All Round Arnside*, p.19.
[43] Photo held by Arnside Archive.

songs; grass grows between the stones of its little pier, which no steamer ever approaches; and those who would bathe must find a quiet strip of shore where the drooping branches of the trees may serve them for the bathing van.'[44] He also stated that while, 'there is no angling at Arnside, ... good hauls of salmon are [still] occasionally made with nets.'[45] However, Arnside still had to offer some things for people to do without going far from the places they stayed, and as a minor resort they had to be kept simple.

Some sedate facilities of the conventional holiday kind did therefore come into existence, though they were neither plentiful nor long-lasting. A sort of leisure centre was built above the stables of the Albion, and Elijah Nelson built the Victory Hall as an assembly room and later a cinema on Ashleigh Road.[46] There was an Arnside Brass Band in the 1930s.[47] 'The pasturelands on the lower northern slope of the Knott were, from 1906 to 1914, the site of the nine hole, Arnside Golf Course. The First World War caused it to close, never to re-open'.[48] Plans submitted in 1974 to develop a new course lower down in the area of 'High Close' and Dobshall Wood and Field were turned down by the local planning authority. There were also short trips in small boats from a very modest landing pier whose stumps can still be seen opposite the shops.

It is worth stating again here that coherent, planned provision was quite impossible since we have seen that the Arnside community had no significant collective powers of local government during these early decades of development. Townships and parishes had some powers, but only those needed to meet closely defined local needs, and hamlets had none at all. Thus, no body existed which could have even considered playing an official role in encouraging the creation of things to do. The only exception to this seems to have been the purchase and demolition of the small cluster of redundant warehouses where the toilets now stand, which was undertaken by Westmorland County Council in its role as highways authority since it narrowed the road so severely that it caused constant traffic problems now that this had become the main approach to the village. Apparently, in bad weather it also often formed a very unpleasant wind tunnel for pedestrians.[49] Arnside did get its own parish council in 1897 in recognition of the fact that it had become the dominant place within Beetham parish and had its own church.

An unofficial Arnside Ratepayers and Property Owners Association had existed between 1888 and 1894, but this could do no more than things like a suggestion that members light streets by leaving their own curtains open on their windows, and encouraging traders to work together.[50] A similar organisation called the Arnside Advancement Association started up in 1927 and organised the resiting of the substantial Victorian shelter, which has now been replaced by the new toilet block. Its aim was 'to promote Arnside as a healthy holiday resort, but again it lacked the resources to achieve much.[51]

ACCOMMODATING THE VISITORS

The late 1870s and 80s was a time of 'rapid development as wealthy bankers, solicitors and businessmen, bought up valuable sites along what became the Promenade and on Church Hill. Many were built specifically for use as bed and breakfast establishments to supplement meagre pensions and retirement capital.'[52] The acquisition of a proper promenade is something which fundamentally changed the character of the 'front', and which mattered a great deal to the kind of people Arnsiders wished to attract, but it was very expensive to build and cannot be taken for

---

[44] *All Round Arnside,* p 9.
[45] *All Round Arnside*, p.19.
[46] Bradbury, *Arnside,* p. 19.
[47] Bradbury, *Arnside,* p. 44.
[48] Bradbury, *Arnside,* p. 74.
[49] Bradbury, *Arnside,* p.20.
[50] Bradbury, *Arnside,* p. 33.
[51] Bradbury, *Arnside,* p. 21.
[52] Bradbury, *Celebration*.

granted at all in this situation. Created piecemeal after a start was made in 1897, it was completed from the Crown / Fighting Cocks to the Albion by 1904. However, the first attempt soon had to be widened, and it came too late to determine the character of the buildings in this section, so buildings here show no unity.[53]

In contrast, the western extension to Ashmeadow was and is the most conventional area in resort terms. It was largely built between 1883 and 1900, and became 'the fashionable place to be seen when visiting this popular seaside resort in the early 1920s', something confirmed by surviving photographs of the period.[54] Ashmeadow effectively blocked continuation any further for many years except on foot along the shore, at first on the sand, and then along 'the slabs of rock which constitute a path'.[55] Barnes talked of a 'new path' past Ashmeadow, but the key to creating a formal footpath seems to have been the covering of a large sewer pipe[56]. After that, 'a narrow, concrete path, beyond [the present coastguard lookout] was laid by Mr Popplewell, of Beachwood House, in 1952.'[57] His orchard now belongs to the council and has become a nature reserve, which now belongs to the council. It is worth noting that the quarry here must have supplied a lot of building stone used in the vicinity and was much later used as part of the Crossfields' boat building operation as there is always enough water here to launch a boat.[58]

The first building between the Albion and Ashmeadow was Sandhurst, built in 1884 as a dwelling and definitely not designed with boarders in mind. Thereafter, however, all the properties do seem to have been intended specifically as guest houses. Even so, they were few in number and none was apparently aimed at the cheapest end of the market. Moreover, the later growth of boarding schools led to several being converted into dormitories, greatly reducing the rooms on offer here to ordinary tourists. Of course, parents and relatives visited the scholars, and often stayed for a while, so they did generate demand elsewhere around the village.

The census shows that the key period in the provision of lodgings (aside from the pubs) seems to be the last decade of the nineteenth century, for in 1891 only Elizabeth Dixon of Leah Mount (near Pier Lane), John Storey of Bankfield, Mary Chakraburthy of Ash Bank, Sarah Mallinson of Norwood (next to Sandhurst), Sarah Bennington of Marine View, and Mary Jackson of 2 West View are listed as lodging house keepers. Alice Parker ran a boarding house at Inglewood, which presumably was seen as different in some way. It should be noted that there is only one man in this list. By 1901, in contrast, we find 24 lodging houses, with only Dixon still operating from ten years before. There were now three men, one of whom was also the tide waiter, a customs official who presumably now had very little to do. Two decades later, in contrast, some 50 or 60 holiday addresses were listed in the local guide, making this the peak of its efforts to emulate larger holiday resorts.

Mrs Iddon, whose advertisement for the characterful Inglewood 'Private Lodging House' was quoted above, described her own establishment in1900 as 'most central and convenient, [with] the spacious house standing in its own well-kept gardens on the Promenade, over-looking beautiful Morecambe Bay, and commanding splendid views of the hills, and Grange on the eastern shore. The house is well-appointed throughout, the apartments being airy and commodious and the arrangements comprising every up-to-date convenience. Excellent cooking and good attendance is the rule, while the very reasonable charges in force, and the scrupulous cleanliness and well-ordered management continue to render Inglewood an ideal establishment for visitors who appreciate the comforts of home-life amidst the most delightful surroundings.'[59]

These were, as expected, essentially family businesses led generally by women, who almost all

---

[53] Bradbury, *Arnside*, p. 18.
[54] Bradbury, *Arnside*, p. 45.
[55] *Lancaster Gazette*
[56] *All Round Arnside*, p.26.
[57] Bradbury, *Arnside*, p. 52.
[58] Bradbury, *Arnside*, p. 55.
[59] *Illustrated Guide.*

originated from other districts. They were presumably attracted by a chance to combine living in a beautiful place with making a living - if the season proved long enough and the weather was good – and many would be in semi-retirement. The generous accommodation of all such establishments in Arnside allowed middle-class visitors to be taken in in the season, while housing a family very comfortably at other times. In 1901 Mrs Milne, of East View, advertised 'Apartments to let; beautifully situated; piano; close to shore and station'. It appeared directly above one for the Queens Hydro, Blackpool, which had 'Turkish and other baths [and] excellent cuisine', and therefore clearly expected to attract a prosperous clientele.[60]

Inglewood's description does read like a sound basis for a prosperous business, but the way that these properties were later bought up and converted to school dormitories suggests it often did not work out. By the later twentieth century, in fact, Willowfield was the sole survivor of this type of accommodation. On its advert in 1970 the owners, Mr. & Mrs. Lumb (a Yorkshire name), had still stressed that they offered excellent views over 'the Bay and Lakeland Mountains', which is certainly not hyperbole. They also said that it was 'comfortably furnished – Hot and Cold in all Bedrooms (10). Pleasant Lounge with fires when required; Colour TV; Good Food; Ample Private Parking; Licensed Bar; Personal Attention of the Proprietors'.[61] It clearly fell then into a class of medium-grade accommodation familiar to those who went on holiday in the 1960s and 70s. Some renewed interest in providing accommodation of this type, adapted to suit changing tastes, was indicated when 'No 43' opened with a twenty-first century 'boutique' format, but there has been nothing since.

The large houses along Church Hill (originally Church Road) show that this was also not originally conceived as a residential development, despite the fact that it has become one today, albeit with quite a few buildings divided into flats. They were mostly built by the enterprising Crossfields between 1880 and 1900, and indeed George Crossfield was living at Broadlands in 1901, describing himself in the census as a 'joiner and builder'. They were determined to let nothing stand in their way, for a lack of a piped water supply before 1906 was overcome by collecting rainwater from the roofs in tanks in the cellars.

Some people wanted a house to themselves, such as the 'Pleasantly-situated Furnished HOUSE on the Front, 2 sitting rooms, 6 beds; for May or longer; bathroom, w.c. - Miss Crossfield, West View.[62] It is interesting that this was run by a member of the Crossfield family, who was unmarried. It should also be noted that the next, never-completed, development up on the rather remote and newlycreated High Knott Road was always intended primarily for elite dwellings, harking back to the earliest incomers. Again, school accommodation complicated the picture here for a while.

The creation of a hotel in Inglemere House on Redhills Road after World War 2 temporarily transformed what Arnside had to offer. It was already the largest building in Arnside following extensions in 1908, and it had been a girls' boarding school between 1911 and 1943. The Llewelyns, who had been the heads of Alwyn College and Inglemere School, converted the latter into an hotel when it closed. Joyce Nicholson and her parents were guests there in June 1943 and decided to buy it, finalising the sale in September. They ran it jointly.

In 1950, an advert in the RAC handbook said: 'Inglemere Hotel Ltd (private). Noted for its comfort and excellent catering. Vi-Spring beds, hot and cold water in all rooms, central heating. Licensed Dining Room. Own riding stables, tennis courts, bowling and putting greens, billiard room, 11 acres of grounds, situated in delightful countryside overlooking the bay and mountains. R.A.C., A.A.***. Special terms to winter residents. F. R. Nicholson, N. N, J.M.N, Resident Directors.

In 1970, another advertisement shows the experiment was now taking a different course, for though it still had AA and RAC registration, and was also 'Ashley Courtenay recommended', the tone was

---

60 *Burnley Express and Clitheroe Division Advertiser*, May 11, 1901.

61 *Official Guide to Kendal*, p. 44.

62 *The Yorkshire Evening Post*, May 02, 1903

radically changed: ‘the friendly atmosphere within the hotel allows you to relax and enjoy the comfortable rooms, the excellent cuisine, complemented by an excellent wine list. The aim of the management and staff is to ensure that your visit is always an enjoyable one. The hotel is fully licensed and open throughout the year to residents and non-residents for: morning coffee 10.30 to 11.30 am; afternoon tea 3.30 to 5.30 pm; dinner 7.30 to 9.30pm. Bar snacks are available in the Lounge Bar until 10.30 pm. Throughout the winter months there is a regular Friday night Discotheque and a Saturday night Dinner Dance which can include special terms for Bed and Breakfast. The New Management will be pleased to assist in providing the facilities you require for any function, large or small, wedding receptions a speciality. All enquiries tel. T.C. SMITH, MCHI, Resident Manager. [63] Its closure very definitely signified the end of a short-lived but glamorous era out of keeping with the village’s general experience.

There was also a variety of much more specialised accommodation, coming and going over the decades. At the opposite end of the comfort spectrum from the Inglewood, walkers have always valued the area's intensive network of interconnected paths, and so the Youth Hostel Association is an organisation whose ethos clearly naturally sat well with the kind of tourism seen here. They first provided accommodation on Church Hill from 1946 at Broadlands, which had forty beds and presumably had been a lodging house before. They then moved in 1977 to Oakwood, the architecturally outstanding but now redundant school building on Redhills Road and converted it into a ‘flagship’ hostel. It still functions as a hostel, despite its recent sale to an independent operator.

The substantial hotel Parkside was operated in a distinctive way as a sort of non-profit-making social service by the Greycourt Fellowship (still in charge now, and with an excellent historical website). Lawrence House Farm and neighbouring Ivy Cottage, which had been converted into the home of Oakfield School, in 1948. George Crowther, the president of Parkside[i] confirmed this as a correction of their website’s account as it stood at the time of writing. It is possible that the project had started elsewhere in 1935 when a businessman who said that somewhere called Grey Court, as he renamed it, ‘should be used to benefit Mid Lancashire women being the wives of the unemployed men’.[64] This was the depth of the depression in industrial Lancashire, and many families were destitute. He involved a wide variety of relevant organisations, and they rapidly converted it to a hotel by ‘furnishing it … not lavishly but sufficient enough to provide accommodation for guests’. It was hugely expanded over coming years, and a bowling green was added at the rear.

A manageress wrote ‘many years ago’ that, ‘Grey Court is a phenomenon, a dream come true, an ideal made manifest. A new and significant development of social service has come into being there, which in a few months has become definite and purposeful in character. A unique combination of holidaymaking and social service is its distinguishing feature, benefiting both those who can afford to provide change and recreation for themselves and those many others who, without help, are denied them’. This idea of mixing paying and non-paying guests seems very unusual.

In recent publicity material, we are told that ‘we are a fellowship because we encourage guests to enrich their holiday by enjoying each other’s company…. We do not seek to make a profit, which is why our prices are so competitive. A Management Committee, elected by members, oversees [activity]. Guests may become members by purchasing £10 worth of shares.’65

The Leeds Poor Children's Holiday Centre was another essentially charitable institution, though in very different buildings, and it lay within Arnside’s boundaries despite being closer to Silverdale’s built-up area. The aim was to raise money in the city to take poor children for a completely different experience, hoping to improve their health and change their aspirations. Keith Waterhouse left a short account of his experiences there in his novel *City Lights*, published in 1994, which was said by one reviewer to tell ‘the story of his childhood and adolescence in soot-blackened, tramcar-

[63] *Official Guide to Kendal*, p. 43
[64] Grey Court Fellowship website: https.www.greycourtholidays.co.uk.our-history.
[65] GCF publicity leaflet, 2016.

rattling Leeds. He describes roaming the cities theatres, variety-halls and teashops', and he certainly did not appreciate being suddenly forced to spend time outdoors, despite the poverty of his parents! We should always remember that individuals can have very different tastes. Partly for that reason, exacerbated by changing expectations and safety standards, it closed in 2016, though the organisation behind it continues.

Enough people did like roughing it for individual and group camping under canvas to have had a long history here. It could be on a large scale, as a photo of an Edwardian St John's Ambulance Brigade camp in the Archive shows. It was apparently modelled on an army camp. Sites for touring caravans and tents maintain this tradition today, but in addition substantial numbers of expensive static caravans now populate extensive sites, some very lavish and with landscaped pitches. It has even led to an excellent swimming pool today at Holgates Holiday Park being open to anyone. There is also an increasing (and unwanted) number of informal stopovers in the main car park and on the Promenade made by motor homes.

A further initiative aiming at caring for people in difficulties, Sandhurst in 1930s became a small private home for those with mental illnesses for a time. Later it reverted to being a private house. On a far greater scale, on the slopes of the Knott the massive and ultimately magnificent Grange and Briarfield convalescent facilities developed out of another private house, Far Close. It was built for Thomas Wilkinson, but he soon auctioned it off, in 1905, and moved to the West Promenade. It became the Briarfield Women's Home in 1906, which was much enlarged in 1928 as it became the Briarfield Convalescent Home. This was later taken over later by 'The Manchester and Salford Saturday Fund Incorporated', which had been founded in 1872 and opened its first convalescent home in 1907. Originally a health insurance scheme, it allowed working people to be treated at certain Manchester hospitals and convalescent homes after paying subscriptions, which could be deducted from wages. The convalescent homes were not open to non-subscribers, and besides Arnside they operated in Llandudno, for men, while children could go to Bollington in Cheshire.

1937 saw another major extension, when a linked facility called Grange View Convalescent Home was built. A second floor was added after the war and was opened by Lord Mayor of Manchester. However, a serious fire in 1977 led to closure for several months, and the complex was clearly in decline by the 1990s, as was general with this sort of facility. The Fund merged with other similar funds twenty years ago and sold its last convalescent home in 2000. Closure was thus inevitable, and though the earlier phases of the building were compared to Morecambe's Midland Hotel for their architectural quality, listing was said to be impossible due to the new floor. Demolition ensued.[66] The replacement building is a block of expensive flats, which probably function mostly as high-end retirement or holiday accommodation.

SHOPPING AND EATING OUT

To serve visitors during the day, facilities have ranged over the years from the high-class dining facilities offered by the Inglemere Hotel down to several tea shops and today's very successful fish and chip shop, plus various places to buy sandwiches and picnic staples. Specialised restaurants never seem to have been attempted, but the pubs filled this niche from an early date. Thus, luncheon at the Crown in 1899 cost 2/-, breakfast or tea 1/- and dinner 3/-. At the Albion luncheon was not on offer, but dinner cost 2/- to 2/6d, with breakfast and tea both 2/- to 2/6d. In more recent times the 'Cottage Bakery and Restaurant (formerly Green Cafe)', which was on Silverdale Road, said in their advertisement (with many capital letters not included here), 'Come, visit us for your home-made bread, cakes and preserves. Cakes for any special occasions to order. Restaurant available for morning coffees, luncheons, afternoon teas and private dinner parties. Outside catering a speciality. Enquiries will be dealt with by I. Davies & M.G. Anderson'.

[66]Website, The Manchester and Salford Saturday Fund Incorporated.

Far more shops also sprang up than the village population could warrant, initially largely due to yet more activities by members of the Crossfield family. The general shop on the Promenade run by James Crossfield in 1900 stocked an enormous range of foodstuffs and other supplies behind 'two long counters'. It even had its own bakery, producing 'a large output of household plain, fancy and Hovis bread, cakes, fancy buns and other pastries'. The shop also stocked stationery and 'a large selection of Photographs, Opalines, Platinotypes, Plush Mounts, &c., by Valentine & Sons, Ltd.' His specialities were listed as: Crossfields' Collotype View Books of Arnside and Vicinity containing 20 views, 1/- Picture Post Cards, Guidebooks, Packets of Views, &c. Fancy China and Earthenware. Walking Sticks, &c. Frank Crosland and James Wilson maintained a friendly rivalry over the production of their own picture postcards, with Wilson's called the 'Lilyland' local series, at the beginning of the twentieth century.[67] Given the immense possibilities here for outdoor photography, this is only to be expected, and it has produced a huge range of local images which are being collected together by the Arnside Archive.

ECOLOGY AND ARNSIDE TOURISM

Today, more than ever, it is clear not only that Arnside draws tourists mainly because of its special qualities of its location, but that this has proved a more durable business model than mass tourism, despite having far less potential for expansion. What emerged across the village as the twentieth century progressed was thus an increasingly broad mixture of modest numbers of relatively prosperous resident visitors accommodated in a variety of ways, plus a role as a destination for fairly unplanned and sedate local day trips by nearby residents and visitors staying elsewhere in the vicinity. Doubtless there were plenty of visiting coach tours in the 1950s and 60s. There had been some Edwardian attempts to create relatively informal annual events, like the Lilylands trips to see the flowers in the woods, and we have already seen that Lammas was a day for local people to visit around August 1st, traditionally a celebration of the end of harvest. Bank holidays doubtless saw a good turnout whenever the weather suited.

As an evolving business model, it does still seem to work, despite the vast range of other places now seeking to draw visitors, and it does have a firm basis in reality. A famous guide book to *The Coast Line of England and Wales,* stated very plainly that 'the finest scenery around Morecambe Bay was that around Silverdale and Arnside'.[68] The *Lancaster Gazette* had commented similarly in 1876 that 'the coast between Arnside village and the rocky point on Morecambe Bay abounds with interesting and picturesque combinations of scenery. Rough as the foot-path is beneath the irregular and green-clad ridges of limestone, it is still well worth exploring by the tourist'. It goes on to note in a more general way that 'under the Arnside rocks the overhanging boughs have woven many a secluded bower meet for quiet meditation upon the secrets of the deep and many a train of original thought, long since forgotten, has doubtless been evolved beneath these shades by toilers after wisdom, or possibly after money, whom the fatiguing cares of a busy world had driven to seek temporary repose at Arnside'.[69]

Tourists before the age of television were also fascinated by the intertwined trees found on the Knott, whose last recognisable remnants disappeared only a few years ago.[70] There were also apparently 'twenty-five distinct kinds of ferns to be found in the district besides the numerous varieties that each order produces according to circumstances of situation and cultivation. Hart's Tongue is very common… and the local [expert] assured us that at least thirty varieties of this order of fern had been clearly identified in and about Arnside. In fact, Mr Crossfield has carefully cultivated and preserved the characteristic specimens of this beautiful department of vegetation in his rockery, where also may be seen the Osmunda Regalis, or Royal Fern, its perfection, and the lady fern and created ferns, as well as the spleenwort and maidenhair, and some varieties of the

---

[67]Bradbury, *Arnside,* pp. 24-5.

[68] J. A. Steers, *The Coast Line of England and Wales*, Cambridge University Press, 1964, p. 124.

[69]*Lancaster Gazette.*

[70]Bradbury, *Arnside,* p. 73, *All Round Arnside,* p. 33.

tasseled or tufted fern'.[71]

This extra strand of Crossfield ingenuity in pleasing tourists at low cost demonstrates again that nature wasArnside's greatest strength. In 1970 it was still said that 'these woods and the open glades between them are a paradise for all who love flowers. Primroses, violets, bluebells, anemones, cowslips, orchids, lilies-of-the-valley and foxglove grow in profusion. Later the short turf is coloured with thyme and rock-rose, tormentil and trefoil. The golden catkins of March are succeeded by the clustered nuts of September; the pink flowers of the bramble by luscious fruit; the yellow-green freshness of opening leaves by the rich colours of autumn. Small wonder that there are red squirrels in these close-growing woods, or that the dainty roe-deer can sometimes be seen, like a fairy-tale creature, standing motionless in the dappled sunlight or slipping noiselessly away into the shadows…. Almost every seabird and wader on the British List turns up sometime between Arnside and Silverdale. Visiting ornithologists can always hope to see something unusual.'[72]

If interest in such things went back a long way, it had sometimes been more destructive. Large numbers of greylag geese have always wintered here, roosting on the sands by night and feeding by day on nearby pasture, as do wild duck, 'and the Westmorland Wildfowlers' Association take their toll of both'. The duck had also been hunted from punts with special guns 'sometimes from twenty to thirty were killed at a single shot'.[73] Rod fishing still brings a regular stream of visitors to hang equipment into the water, or sometimes, at Sandside, in thin air in anticipation of water still to arrive. The sound of guns is also still heard.

This urge to visit in numbers, and to collect, could also be destructive, of course. The nineteenth-century Lilylands trips to see the flowers in the woods were light-hearted, but sadly as a result, it was said many decades ago that 'Arnside Park Woods used to be noted for their wild flowers, particularly snowdrops and wild daffodils….Relatively few of these blooms remain to be seen in springtime but there can be quite a little display alongside the shoreline path near Far Arnside. It was customary, in days gone by, to pick bunches of lilies of the valley and daffodils having paid the 6d entry dues to the gamekeeper at the gate.'[74]

The nearby modern Leighton Moss RSPB facility shows that attitudes to appreciating nature have changed radically, and if it is just over the boundary in Silverdale, it is still very accessible on foot and by train from Arnside. This has hugely increased this type of tourism, especially after recent intensive coverage on television. Serious naturalists are also still attracted today by the astonishing variety of habitats, from sea cliffs to the unique small lake of Haweswater. Superb limestone pavements are home to more than 400 plant species, many unusual, and botanists and geologists have both found much to study in situ since limestone is unusual this far north. The climate also allows species generally found only further north or south to mix happily together, something very rarely seen elsewhere. In fact, there are now fifteen Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the vicinity, and designation in 1972 as part of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty formalised Arnside's status in this respect.

This evidently can co-exist readily with the kind of low-impact attractions the village now provides. The existence of the Arnside Sailing Club shows that sailing can attract a limited number of participants, and a handful of enthusiasts for modern water sports like windsurfing and canoeing also visit the estuary, especially when an unusually good tidal bore is forecast. The success of recent 'Vintage' events and the publicity for the Morecambe Bay cycle route also shows that the resort is still developing and adapting, not fading away. Saltcotes, of course, continues to welcome visitors, and even Arnside Tower is back in the tourist arena now the farm again offers teas to all comers. The occasional steam train specials draw large crowds of spectators to see them cross the river.

---

[71] *Lancaster Gazette.*
[72] *Official Guide to Kendal*, p. 47
[73] *All Round Arnside*, p. 13.
[74] *Bradbury, Arnside*, p. 75.

Today, therefore, on a bright Saturday or Sunday afternoon a crowded promenade can make Arnside feel like a real tourist destination, and the *Westmorland Gazette* called it in 2015 'Cumbria's secret seaside resort.'[75] However a wet period can give quite the opposite impression, and the lack of obvious waterfront accommodation also tells against a conventional tourist feeling. However, tallying up the numbers of bed spaces in caravans, tents, the hostel and rooms in Parkside gives a surprisingly high total. The *Westmorland Gazette* article just mentioned still stresses the accessibility of the countryside here, saying that 'Arnside offers walkers a footpath for every day of the year', so this simple attraction continues to work. The fact that the operational headquarters of the AONB now occupies the surviving station building sums up neatly the two main themes of this narrative.

Since the 1990s the start point for cross-bay walks has been transferred from its traditional home at Hest Bank. Yet it is appropriate in the sense that it is the focus on a landscape with many contrasting faces which has always drawn people in. This has substantially raised Arnside's profile. Whether the limited trade it brings directly to the village is worth the car parking problems it creates must make this a debatable gain, however. The limited train service still allows easy access for visitors (albeit from a much more restricted set of stations than in the past) and promoting this service would fit with its 'green' image. However, most people do evidently still prefer to bring their cars, creating a huge strain upon the village which seems intractable for such a small place on such rugged terrain. Indeed, for a while as motoring developed the whole foreshore between the pier and the viaduct became an informal car park, but the damage done to a significant and delicate eco-system led to the creation of the present, much smaller dedicated area by the railway, roughly surfaced and cordoned off by large rocks. Certainly, few of the present businesses would survive if outsiders stopped coming. Things continue to evolve and must do so to meet such challenges.

Trade Directories cited (all in Grange library)

Parson and White's Directory, 1829

Mannex Directory, 1851

Bulmer's Directory, 1905

Other Publications used:

D. Bradbury, *Arnside: A Guide and Community History*, 2nd edn, 2002.

D. Bradbury, 'Celebration of 100 Years of Arnside Parish Council', pamphlet.

L. Smith, *Kendal's Port: A Maritime History of The Creek of Milnthorpe*, Lensden, Arnside, 2009.

J. Anthony Barnes, *All Round Arnside*, Wilson, Kendal, 1903, republished Barnes Charitable Trust, 2014.

R. K. Bingham, *Lost Resort? The Flow and Ebb of Morecambe*, Cicerone, 1990.

M. Andrews, The Furness Railway: A History, Barrai Books, Barrow in Furness, 2012.

*S. Caunce, '*A Social History of Arnside Station', parts 1 &2, *Keer to Kent*, no. 86 pp. 7-8 & no. 88 pp. 15-16, 2014.

[75] *Westmorland Gazette*, 13/5/2015.

The Illustrated Guide to the Holiday Resorts on the Furness Railway, illustrating and describing the districts adjoining, 1900 republished, Handstand Press, Ulverston, 2006.

Official Guide to Kendal and South Westmorland, published c1970 (in author's possession).

The Lancaster Gazette, and General Advertiser for Lancashire, Westmorland, Yorkshire, &c., Saturday, May 09, 1874, long article, *"Resorts" on Morecambe Bay, Arnside Village and Tower.*

The Greycourt Fellowship, https.www.greycourtholidays.co.uk.our-history..

Manchester and Salford Hospital Saturday and Convalescent Homes Fund Incorporated, website.

https//great castles.com/barden.php

https://grangeoversandshistory.weebly.com/history-grange-over-sands.html

[i] Information from Norma Platts states that 'Parkside guest house was formed in 1945 after Oakfield school moved to Underly in Kirby Lonsdale. The Greycourt fellowship online entry is incorrect re the date it bought Parkside'. This needs verifying.
Later: 'George Crowther the president of Parkside has confirmed that Parkside was bought by the Greycourt Fellowship from Oakfield school in 1948. He is going to rewrite their page.