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# LANCRIGG

EASEDALE - GRASMERE

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## History of Lancrigg

The name 'Lancrigg' is from the Norse meaning 'Long Crag'. There has probably been a dwelling on this site since ancient times, positioned as it is above the marshy valley floor and sheltered by the side of the mountain. The oldest part of Lancrigg as it is today dates back to the 1600's when it was a modest sized farmhouse. In 1840, Elizabeth Fletcher asked her friend William Wordsworth to find her a house for her "summer refreshment". Lancrigg fulfilled the criteria and Wordsworth arranged the transaction. Wordsworth was also instrumental in the renovation and enlargement of the house, and he was careful to retain many traditional features, in particular the round chimneys.

Elizabeth Fletcher and her husband, a well connected Edinburgh attorney, had a wealth of friends prominent in the intellectual, artistic and political life of the 19th Century. She was particularly interested in prison reform, education, women's welfare and the emancipation of slaves. She had a real passion for revolution and was a close friend and benefactor of Giuseppe Mazzani, the Italian revolutionary who played an even more prominent role than Garibaldi in the creation of modern Italy. She also supported Byron's revolutionary activities in Greece, the American, French and Hungarian Revolutions. Elizabeth was a close friend of Sir Walter Scott, Tennyson and Robert Southey. She was also a friend of both the elder and younger Coleridge and of Humphry Davey - the inventor of Davey's miners lamps. Everyone who met Elizabeth Fletcher talked about her charm and beauty. Her autobiography gives a fascinating account of the famous Literati visiting Lancrigg and enjoying the surrounding valleys and mountains. Her son Angus was a great friend of Charles Dickens who stayed here on his visits north. Charles Dickens, Angus Fletcher (who Dickens referred to as "Mr Kindheart") and Wilkie Collins went on holidays together in Southern Scotland and seemed to spend most of their time together playing practical jokes on one another. Mary Fletcher, Elizabeth's daughter, married Sir John Richardson and they moved into Lancrigg after Elizabeth's death in the 1860's.

Sir John grew up with the Scottish poet Robert Burns, also a frequent visitor to the house. He instructed Sir John in literature, poetry and recitation. Sir John Richardson was a surgeon and in 1819 set off with Lt. John Franklin on the first of two expeditions to the Arctic, to discover the North West passage. The story of the expedition has been told many times - how, frozen and starving, they were forced to eat their spare leather boots and how two of the team mysteriously disappeared, Richardson had to shoot a third member after he was suspected of handing round human flesh for consumption! With other close encounters with death, Richardson led his party to safety and on their return both he and Franklin were greeted as national heroes. John Franklin, before his ill-fated trip to the Arctic, came to Lancrigg to get a clean bill of health from Richardson. Franklin never returned from the Arctic and it was not for five years that Richardson was able to organise a party to find out Franklin's fate, though he was unsuccessful.

Richardson was a best friend of Charles Darwin and sent him samples and specimens from all over the world. Some trees and plants in Britain today were first introduced by him, and he spent much time laying out and planting the woodland and gardens at Lancrigg. Sir John became Chief Medical Officer of Naval Hospitals and it was in this capacity that he became close friends with, and subsequently a patron of Florence Nightingale. After Sir John Richardson's death in 1865, Lancrigg was occupied by Mary Fletcher's brother Henry, the Rector of Grasmere. Later, Henry Roby (a classics professor) lived here for forty years from 1905. A screen around the altar in the church is to his memory.

Between Henry Fletcher and Henry Roby, Mrs Aitchison lived here. However, other than her name we know little about her. After Roby, Sir and Lady Chance moved in. In 1972 Lancrigg was turned into a nursing home. The Whittington family took this over in 1985 and after renovations they opened Lancrigg as a country house hotel in the same year. In 2016, after the Whittingtons retired, it was taken over by the Wright family who have since used their skills in engineering and landscaping to continue the restoration and renovation of the house and barn.

The artist William Heaton Cooper described Lancrigg as "a perfect example of a gracious country house in precisely the right place". Hopefully during your stay here you will experience the spiritual atmosphere created by the visits of so many artists, scientists and poets - a magical aura of peace and timelessness which will leave you relaxed and ready to return home inspired and rejuvenated.