

A MAP  
of the  
**LAKES**  
in  
Cumberland, Westmorland  
and  
Lancashire.

The Roads as directed in the Guide  
are marked thus —————  
Other Roads thus —————

Scale of Miles.  
1 2 3 4 5

PART OF MAP IN A GUIDE TO THE LAKES IN CUMBERLAND, WESTMORLAND AND LANCASHIRE  
(WEST) 1796

## THE OVERSANDS ROUTE BETWEEN LANCASTER AND ULVERSTON.

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THE County Palatine of Lancaster is divided into six Hundreds. The most northerly, Lonsdale, is split by Morecambe Bay into Lonsdale north of the Sands, and Lonsdale south of the Sands. This nomenclature is strange, for Lonsdale is evidently Lune's Dale, i.e. the dale, or valley of the Lune, and while that quite correctly describes the half of the Hundred south of the Sands, the northerly division is separated from the valley of the Lune by a good-sized piece of Westmorland and the estuary of the Kent.

Morecambe Bay, with its vast area of sand, which is only covered by the sea for a very few hours of the twenty-four, lies between two very early centres of civilisation, Lancaster and Ulverston.

William Camden, about 1696, describes the view of Morecambe Bay from Lancaster thus :

"From the top of this hill I looked round to see the mouth of the Lone (which empties itself not much lower). I saw Foreness, and the other part of the coast to the west, which is almost severed from this part by the sea, for whereas the shore lay out a great way westward into the ocean, the sea (as if enraged at it) ceased not to lash and mangle it. Nay it has swallowed the shore quite up at some boisterous tide or other, and thereby has made three large bays, namely Kent sand, which receives the River Ken, Leven sand, and Duddon sand."

Both Furness and Cartmel are full of evidences of ancient populations, British remains, Roman works, abbeys, priories and castles. From the numerous finds



of prehistoric implements at places round the coast of Lonsdale north of the Sands. Professor R. G. Collingwood thinks it is more than likely that there was intercourse between this part of the county and Lonsdale south of the Sands in very early times, but he doubts very much whether the Roman soldiers would take the risk of using it.

On the other hand, John Fell, writing in 1884, says :

“ It may be that when Agricola commenced his march from Lancaster, for the conquest of north-west Britain, a portion of his forces advancing by the coast line was guided . . . over . . . Morecambe Bay, by natives accustomed to its tides and fords.”

Till about 1820, as I will show later, the land route between Ulverston and Lancaster was by Newby Bridge and Kendal.

The first mention we have of the regular appointment of guides, is when the Priory of Cartmel and the Priory of Conishead were founded. In 1188 William Mareshall the Elder, Baron of Cartmel, and later created Earl of Pembroke, by Richard I in 1199, founded at Cartmel a Priory of Canons Regular of St. Augustine, and endowed it with the manor and all the lands in the district called Cartmel. He inserted a barring clause that the priory should never be erected into an abbey. Part of the buildings still survive, and are used as the parish church. Now for Conishead. About 1172 Gabriel de Pennington, with the consent of William de Taillebois, Baron of Kendal, built a hospital for the relief of “ poor, decrepit, and indigent persons, and lepers, in the environs of Ulverston, and gave the charge thereof to the Canons Regularo of the Order of St. Augustine,” but it was not long before it was erected into a priory.

The road between Furness Abbey and Conishead Priory continued the only great road through Low Furness till the dissolution of the monasteries, when hospitality, ceasing at the Priory of Conishead and the Abbey of

Furness, houses of entertainment for the traveller were opened at Ulverston, and a road from thence to the Sands laid out, and the ancient route through Low Furness abandoned. Both these priories were dissolved by Henry VIII.

In 1796 the site of Conishead Priory was occupied by the residence of Wilson Braddyll. In 1821 Thomas Richmond Gale Braddyll began to rebuild the "mansion in a state of great expense and splendour," which Edward Baines says in 1828 was not more than half completed.<sup>1</sup>

Let us imagine the scene in mediæval times. A group of travellers coming from the great abbey of Furness is gathered together at the white thorn (*spina alba*), where the road at Conishead descends to the Sands. It is shortly after flood-tide, and the route lies across the estuary of the Leven, passing close to a small island which belonged to Conishead Priory and had either a chapel or, more probably, an oratory upon it. In this building services were held daily, and prayers said for those crossing the sands. This island was known as Harlesyde Island in 1593. The present name of Chapel Island is mentioned by Mrs. Radcliffe in her *Tour of the Lakes* in 1795. Father West, writing in 1774, mentions that at that time there was a shell of a chapel standing.

Wordsworth's description in 1794, is worth recalling :

. . . Over the smooth sands  
Of Leven's ample estuary lay  
My journey, and beneath a genial sun,  
With distant prospect among gleams of sky  
And clouds, and intermingling mountain tops,  
In one inseparable glory clad. . . .  
As I advanced, all that I saw or felt  
Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small  
And rocky island near, a fragment stood  
(Itself like a sea rock) the low remains  
(With shells incrusting, dark with briny weeds)

<sup>1</sup> Edw. Baines, *Companion to the Lakes*, p. 233.



Of a dilapidated structure, once  
 A Romish chapel, where the vested priest  
 Said matins at the hour that suited those  
 Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide.  
 Not far from that still ruin all the plain  
 Lay spotted with a variegated crowd  
 Of vehicles and travellers, horse and foot  
 Wading beneath the conduct of their guide  
 In loose procession through the shallow stream  
 Of inland waters; the great sea meanwhile  
 Heaved at safe distance, far retired. I paused  
 Longing for skill to paint a scene so bright  
 And cheerful. . . .

The ruins (?) now to be seen, a high gabled wall pierced by three lancets, with an opening above, were erected by Colonel Braddyll in 1823. The tide ebbs very rapidly, and very soon only a comparatively narrow channel has to be negotiated. Sometimes it lies one side of the island and sometimes the other. As they cross the stream they see before them the peninsula of Cartmel, terminating in the bold outline of Humphrey Head. Here it was, tradition states, that the last wolf in England was slain. The route leaves the sand at Sandgate, and avoiding Flookburg (at one time a place of no little importance, as in 1278 it obtained a charter to hold a market) we proceed through Cark.

From here the road did not lead right to Cartmel Priory, but to what is now known as "Headless Cross," which is a little nearer the shore. Here, tradition states, the Cartmel Guide met them, and prayers for their safe crossing were made. At Kents Bank the road again takes to the sands. The first ford is the channel of the Kent and Winster, which usually have one channel, and about three miles farther the small but treacherous River Keer, which flows out by Carnforth, has to be crossed, and the shore is left at Hest Bank. About three miles from here the Lune is crossed by the old bridge, now demolished, and up to Covell Cross, where prayers were

made and thanks returned. This spot would be known by some other name than as Thomas Covell was only born in 1561. He must have had great tenacity of purpose, for an old writer tells us " He was six times Mayor of this towne " (mayors were then paid), forty-eight years Keeper of the Castle and forty-six years one of the coroners of the County Palatine of Lancaster!!! He died August 1 1639, aged 78 years. As parish registers only began in Elizabeth's reign, it is difficult to obtain documentary evidence of early fatalities in the sands. One Sir Michael le Fleming, whose descendants still reside at Rydal, was drowned in the Leven in the reign of Henry III, and tradition states he was crossing the sands.

The evidence given by the contemporary writer of the *Lanercost Chronicle* that Robert Bruce's terrible invasion of England in 1322 marched south by this way is conclusive. I will quote Sir Herbert Maxwell's translation :

" The King (Edward) mustered an army in order to approach Scotland about the feast of St. Peter ad Vincula (August 1), hearing which Robert de Brus invaded England with an army by way of Carlisle, in the octave before the nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 17), and burnt the bishop's manor at Rose and Allerdale and plundered the monastery of Holme Cultrum, notwithstanding his father's body was buried there, and then proceeded to waste and plunder Copeland and so beyond the sands of Duddon to Furness. But the Abbot of Furness went to meet him, and paid ransom for the district of Furness that it should not be again burnt or plundered, and took him to Furness Abbey. Notwithstanding, the Scots set fire to various places, and lifted spoil. Also they went further beyond the sands of Leven to Cartmel, and burnt the lands round the Priory of the Black Canons, taking away cattle and spoil. And so they crossed the Sands of Kent, as far as the town of Lancaster, which they burnt, except for the priory of the Black Monks, and the house of Preaching Friars."

Here we will leave them, but they got fifteen miles south of Preston before they turned. It is thought that the



Westmorland saying, "There's nowt good t' comes round t' Black Combe," which is still quoted, is derived from the memories of this terrible invasion.

Before the dissolution in 1535, one Edward Barbour brought a petition in the Duchy Chamber against the Prior of Cartmel, claiming a tenement (house) and ten acres of land in Cartmel, and an office called "Carter Office upon Kent Sands in Cartmel," but there is no evidence extant of the result of this action.

When Henry VIII dissolved the religious houses, a record was kept of their assets in Spiritualities and Temporalities. This book is known as the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, and the following is a translation of the Temporalities of Conishead and Cartmel:

PRIORY of CONYGSLED. . . . Reprises. Fees, namely in the Fee of John Hartley, baliff and guide of the whole people of the lord the King by the sands of the sea called Kent Saunds of the foundation of the founder 66s. 8d.

PRIORY of CARTMEL . . . Reprises . . . Fees, viz. in the Fee to William Gate, baliff and guide of the whole people of the lord the King by the sands of the sea called Cartmel-sands, of the foundation of the founder £6.

In the *Valor* the duties of the two priories are evidently confused. The safe conduct of the King's lieges over the Kent sands clearly belongs to Cartmel, and over Leven sands to Conishead.

We will consider Leven sands first.

An undated petition in the Record Office addressed to Sir William Fitzwilliam, Chancellor of the Duchy, 1529 to 1537, by John Harteley, the holder of the office of Carter of Levensands, praying to be continued in his office, recites that he received wages from the monastery of Conishead amounting to five marks yearly, he also had a house, three little garthings, and an acre and a half for his horses because he was "ever bound by the same to find two good horses."

Evidently he continued in office, as the *Valor* mentions him as Carter. He received from the Prior of Conishead as already mentioned, three acres of ground, and fifteen marks per annum, besides perquisites from travellers. Henry VIII, on the dissolution of the Priory, charged himself, and his successors, with the payment of these guides.

On the 29th of January 1548, the first patent was issued by the King and Council of the Duchy of Lancaster, and ran :

“ Office of le Carter’s Office of Levensands near Conyshedd Lancashire . . . by these presents do give and grant John Harteley of Conyshead, in the County of Lancaster yeoman the office of Keeper conductor and governor of our sands near Conyshead aforesaid, otherwise commonly called the Carter’s Office of Levensands in Conyshead in Furness.”

He was to have, occupy, enjoy and exercise the aforesaid office by himself, or sufficient deputy or deputies for the fee or wage of ten marks per annum. You will notice that there is no mention of any land, and Henry seems to have reduced the cash payment from fifteen marks to ten marks per annum. A renewed patent to John Harteley was granted on January 22, 2nd of Edward VI. Later the guide seems to have had a house and three acres of land at Saltcotes. In 1810, the Duchy authorised a special payment of £10 to “ The assistant of Thomas Cooper, the guide over Leving Sands, in the execution of his office in the course of last winter.”

In addition to the land referred to above, the guide has had since 1820, £22 per annum from the Duchy of Lancaster revenues. The Ulverston and Lancaster Railway Act of 1851 provides that the sum of £20 shall be paid annually for the benefit of Levensands guide. This was to compensate him for the loss of gratuities from passengers and vehicles, for he seldom conducted anyone



over the sands without some pecuniary acknowledgment of his services.

Before the railways (Lancaster and Carlisle, and Ulverston and Lancaster) were opened, the sands were largely used, especially on the market day at Ulverston. About 1884, the house at Saltcotes was sold, as, in addition to dilapidation, owing to railways and iron works being built between it and the sands, it became unsuitable.

The slag-banks obstructed the view of the Sands, and the exchange was duly authorised in November 1884.

In 1885 a new house was built at Sandside, Hammerside Hill, close to the water-side. Where the ancient way from Ulverston to South Ulverston terminates at the ford, an almost illegible notice informs those who desire to make use of this ancient passage that they must apply to the guide, Mr. Frank Benson.

The guide over Leven Sands in 1897 was John Procter. In 1907 he was succeeded by Peter Butler of Flookboro', and in 1922 the present guide was appointed.

The first patent of the Duchy of Lancaster appointing a guide for Kent sands, is dated January 29 1548. It states that

. . . "by these presents do give and grant to Thomas Hogeson of Kents Bank in Cartmel, in the county of Lancaster, yeoman, the office of keeper, conductor and governor of the aforesaid sands . . . also give and grant to the said Thomas one tenement in Kentsbank in Cartmel aforesaid called the Cart House with three closes of land, also a fee or wage of £5 per annum."

By a patent of 2nd Edward VI (1549) he was re-appointed guide of the Kent sands, but for how long I cannot say, as a footnote in the Report of the Charity Commissioners says "he seems to have been a drunkard and a gambler, and to have been indicted for allowing travellers to drown before his eyes." The only bequest to augment the remuneration of the guides that I have come across is recorded on a mural tablet in Cartmel

Priory. It is in memory of George Robinson, who died on June 9 1677, aet. 28. Among other bequests is: Also 20*l*; . . . the interest of which is to be given yearly to the Guide of Lancaster Sands."

In 1715, John Carter, who then held the office, petitioned the Duchy of Lancaster for an increase of his annual £5. He first relates the dangers of his occupation, and referring to his salary says :

" which by the alteration in the value of money, from what it was when the salary was established, is now become very unequal to the expense and trouble attending that business."

He states that his father, whom he succeeded, had been allowed to sell ale in his house, excise free !

" But he being about twenty years ago drowned, endeavouring to save the lives of two persons crossing the sands, the petitioner, who was unacquainted with them, succeeded in the employ."

He goes on to say that

" He has to keep two horses, summer and winter (these are not their names) and being necessitated to attend the 'EDY,' four miles upon the sands, 12 hours in the 24, his horses thereby, and by often passing the waters, are starved with cold and often thrown into distempers . . . and the petitioner undergoes great hardships, by his being exposed to the winds and cold upon the plain sands, and he by seeking out new fords, every variation of the edy, and upon happening of fogs and mists, is often put in danger of his life."

Another trouble is that

" In fact for two years and upwards, the officers had refused to admit his exemption from paying duty on the ale, insisting that there was no law to support it."

His prayer was heard and the salary raised to £12. Another John Carter held the post in 1775, possibly his son, for in an old manuscript book at the Lancaster Reference Library, headed " Payments annually out of the Revenue of the City of Lancaster," on page 1, which



has no date, is "Carter of Kent Sands . . . 2/6," and later, 1775, October 10, "Paid to Mr. John Carter, guide over the Sands, as usual, 2s. 6d."

The salary in 1820 was again raised to £32 per annum, but it was conditional on the payment by him of £10 to an assistant at the crossing of the Keer. Coaching would be about at its height at this date and this route very much used.

The guide appointed in 1867 was not a teetotaller, and having appeared several times before the local magistrates, led Mr. Childers, the Chancellor, in 1872, to ask Mr. Fell, a local magistrate, to undertake an enquiry, not only into his fitness for the office, but whether any, and what, change in the constitution of the office, its tenure and emoluments might be advantageously made so as the better to fulfil the object for which it was instituted.

The enquiry was held at Grange-over-Sands on April 25 1873. It was pointed out "That it must not be overlooked that any serious accident to the viaducts of the railway might at any time compel the temporary resuscitation of his duties." It was decided to retain the guides with their old emoluments. A local committee of Ulverston Petty Sessional Magistrates to superintend and regulate the guides was set up, and a report from the guides was submitted from time to time to this committee and communicated to the Duchy Office. In June 1877, the control of the ancient charity was handed over to the Charity Commissioners, Colonel Taylor, as Chancellor to the Duchy, being Official Trustee. Finally, Mr. Bright, when Chancellor in 1883, decided to substitute three local trustees, in whom the management of the office and its emoluments is vested, subject to the controlling authority of the Charity Commissioners. The Duchy retain the power of appointing guides.

In 1873 George Sedgwick was guide over Kent Sand.

The present guide, John Burrow, was appointed in 1919, and he tells me that he is under no obligation, and does not appoint an assistant to attend the ford of the Keer ; when this ceased I have not been able to ascertain. He as guide occupies the residence known as "The Cart House," and farms the three closes of land, although changes in some other lands have been made, some being sold to the Lancaster and Ulverston Railway when that was made.

Having dealt with the appointment and remuneration of the guides, it may be interesting to see just what their duties were. The Levensands guide had only a comparatively short passage from shore to shore, and generally only one channel to ford. The Carter of Kents Bank, on the other hand, with his assistant at the Keer ford, had at least seven miles of sands and two, possibly three channels to cross, so that the chance of accidents was naturally much greater in crossing the Lancaster Sands than the estuary of the Leven.

The "Office of the Carter" was, as soon as the tide ebbed sufficiently, to go on his white horse (white, the better to be seen in mist or semi-darkness) to the channel, blazing his trail with branches of trees stuck in the sand. This method is still used by the local fishermen who go out with a cart to gather cockles. It is called "brodding" or "brobbing." Arrived at the channel with the pole he carried, he tested the depth and firmness of the bottom, and having found a fordable place, blew a blast upon the horn he carried. Here he remained until the flood tide commenced to make, when he again sounded his horn and withdrew. There is a suggestion that the title "The Carter" was given on account of the guide having a cart at the ford, to save pedestrians getting wet, as generally the water would reach up to the horse's girths, and in the winter, with blocks of ice, would certainly be hazardous and trying for the female sex. It was



customary for the guide to have a piece of tarpaulin to cover the loins of his horse, and foot passengers frequently availed themselves of this seat to avoid getting wet. Fell is of the opinion that during the monastic era, and probably earlier, the guide did provide a cart, and probably the descendants of Thos. Hodgeson took the name of Carter. In the registers at Cartmel are numerous entries relating to various members of the Carter family of Cart House in Cart Lane, which makes this seem probable. As would be expected, the registers of the various parishes round this part of the coast record deaths by drowning from those using this route. Sometimes these were strangers whose names were unknown, as an entry at Cartmel under the date September 12, 1576, "One young man which was drowned in the broad waters," and in August a year later, "One little man, roundfaced, which was drowned at Grange."

George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends, better known as Quakers, in 1660, was arrested at Swarthmoor and taken to Ulverston, where he was watched all night by an alarmed and superstitious guard, "for fear he should have gone up the chimney," and next day was led on horseback sixteen miles across the sands to Lancaster, by a troop of horse.

In the "Household account book of Sarah Fell," of Swarthmoor Hall, the name which occurs most often is John Higgins, the carrier who plied between the Hall and Lancaster across the sands, with "letters, iron ore, hoppers, red-herrings, books, sugar, vinegar, meat, paper, oysters, phisicall things and chocoletta." In 1664 "Mother's account was debited 4*d.* by money paid for assisting Ellin Denton over the Sands." What happened subsequently I cannot say, but ten years later, our friend John Higgins the carrier received 4*d.* for bringing some nails and Ellin Denton's "close" from Lancaster. The Judge (Fell) also used this route, and "Lawrence Ander-

ton, Miles Dodding's groom," was paid, for "Staying father's white gelding, when he was going to the Sands." Another Friend, William Stout of Lancaster, in his autobiography, under the date 1687, writes :

" . . . Sometime this year Christopher Harrys, a draper and grocer in Cartmell, of Great business, but very penurious . . . who frequented our market at Lancaster, and usually to save the charge of carriage, brought one or more horses to carry his goods, but in crossing the sands some horse faltered and cast his loading, which he endeavoured to put to rights, was so long that the flood came, and he was drowned, notwithstanding several came by and saw him, but he would not call for assistance, otherwise might have saved his goods and life."

Lucas, schoolmaster of Warton, writing about 1720, refers to the sands in these words :

" The large River Ken or Kent, coming out of Westmorland through Kendale, runs down the Sands with an incredible swiftness, and is always muddy and where fordable is of great breadth. What chiefly occasions the danger of passing this river is the uncertainty of its bottom. For one day where there is a fair ford, is perhaps the next day deep and impassable, and to all appearances it may be safely rid, there frequently happen deep places which are always dangerous and sometimes fatal to passengers. . . . But all the danger does not lie in the depth, rapidity, uncertainty, etc., of this great river, for there is another called Kere, which though far less, is often more dangerous, because of the Quicksands with which it abounds, which has occasioned the common local proverb ' Kent and Keer have parted many a good man from his mare.' There are several little ' Pooos ' as they call them, or rivulets of the sands . . . especially Quicksand Poo. These Quicksands may be known by their bright shining colour, so that few who are acquainted with the sands fall into them, except through inadvertency, or hard riding . . . which almost everyone is tempted to by the evenness of the sand, insomuch that it is a common saying, ' He who rides over the sands and does not gallop, forfeits his horse to the King.' . . . The course of the river never remains long in one place . . . and the water which remains in the old channel till it is sanded up is called ' Lyring.' At other times it removes more gradually, when the stream by inclining to one side . . .



(and) undermining the sand it falls down into the river in great flakes, with a hideous noise."

He then goes on to relate "a pretty remarkable instance, which happened about 1699."

"Some persons being on the opposite side of the river observed in the bank after the fall of one of these flakes of sand, a man on horseback with his hand lifted up, and his whip in it, as it were ready to strike his horse."

Coming down to more recent times, John Wesley in his *Journal*, May 1759, gives an account of how he crossed the Sands on horse-back. Mrs. Hemans, who visited Rydal in 1830, in one of her letters says,

"I must not omit to tell you that Mr. Wordsworth not only admired our exploit in crossing the Ulverston Sands as a deed of 'derring do,' but as a decided proof of taste, the Lake scenery he says is never seen to such advantage as after the passage of what he calls its 'majestic barrier.'"

I have already referred to the absence of roads till comparatively recent times. Fell in 1884, says:

"The grandmother of the present Mr. Machell, of Penny Bridge Hall, when visiting London, in 1737, was compelled to ride (on horseback) to Kendal, to join the carriage in which she and her friends proceeded to Whitchurch, which was the nearest place at which post horses could be obtained."

Between Lancaster and Kendal districts there would no doubt be routes of communication at a very early period. The Lune at Lancaster is fordable at low water, and the two small rivers Keer and Bela, and larger Kent, could easily be negotiated, and there are no steep gradients, and no swamps, as it is chiefly limestone with a gravelly surface. If Levens Bridge be the point taken to turn westward, the large tract of peat moss encircling the base of Whitbarrow Scar would be a formidable barrier, and the similar nature of the Winster Valley would necessitate a wide detour north.

From the preamble to the Act for making a new road,

passed in 1763, it seems pretty clear that the route in use at that time was from Kendal, through Crosthwaite, and over Bowland Bridge in Westmorland, thence over Cartmel Fell to Newby Bridge, and on by Elingarth Brow and Bouth, and over the River Crake at Penny-bridge, by Greenodd, and from thence on the east side of Arrad to Ulverston. It states, also, that this road was in a ruinous condition, and in several places narrow and incommodious. So the new road from Levens Bridge, round the base of Whitbarrow Scar, through Lindale, Newton, Newby Bridge and Greenodd was undertaken, and completed in 1820.

The length of the three routes was: Lancaster to Ulverston oversands—about twenty miles; Lancaster to Ulverston, old road via Kendal—about forty miles; Lancaster to Ulverston by road completed in 1820—thirty-four miles. There was a regular service of coaches between Lancaster and Ulverston oversands, which appear in Cary's road book, and Stockdale, in his *Annals of Cartmel*, says:

“Two long coaches, holding 13 inside passengers, and a heavy load of luggage and passengers on top, passed through Flookburgh every day except Sundays. Lighter coaches were substituted later as these heavy ones frequently got fast in the Quicksands.”

It was said that the quicksands were caused (in some instances) by the schooners which used to bring salt and grain to Milnthorpe, and hematite ore to Backbarrow, settling on the sands for one or two tides.

A diligence or chaise was advertised in the *Cumberland Packet* for September 11 1781, to

“set out from Mr. Stanley Turner's Sun Inn, Lancaster, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, as tide will permit, to Ulverston oversands to Whitehaven. The same diligence will return from the King's Arms, Ulverston, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, fare 5s.”



In the Lancaster and Kendal newspapers of that date, tide tables were printed, showing the times when it was possible to cross.

At the hotel at Hest Bank there is still the room where the lantern was placed, to guide travellers from the ford of the Keer to the point on the coast where the road to Lancaster commenced. The windows of this room have been altered in recent years.

Other reminders of coaching days are the signposts and stones as the post at Silverdale, pointing the way "Across the sands," but it does not say where to!

Mrs. Gaskell often stayed at a farm at Silverdale called Gibraltar, which stands close to the shore. In a letter of May 10 1858, she writes :

"Looking down on the bay with its slow-moving train of crossers, led over the treacherous sands by the Guide, a square man, sitting stern on his white horse, the better to be seen when daylight ebbs. . . . On foggy nights the guide (who has let people drown before now who could not pay his fee) may be heard blowing an old ram's horn trumpet to guide by the sound."

The guide is described by another lady in 1840, thus :

"He was a slight strange-looking figure, with masses of long, unkempt hair, as rough as the old sheep skin that was thrown across the horse he rode. On his head he wore a cap of sheep skin."

Also at the Headless Cross at Cartmel, stones are built into the wall at the roadside. On one is painted "Ulverston 7 miles, Cark, Holker, and Flookburgh." On the other, "Lancaster 15 miles, over sands."

In 1837, George Stephenson had a scheme to build a railway straight across from Poulton (now Morecambe) to Ulverston, and thus enclose all the land between Morecambe and Humphrey Head, about 40,000 acres of land. The capital was not forthcoming, so the project had to be abandoned, although Stephenson said the value

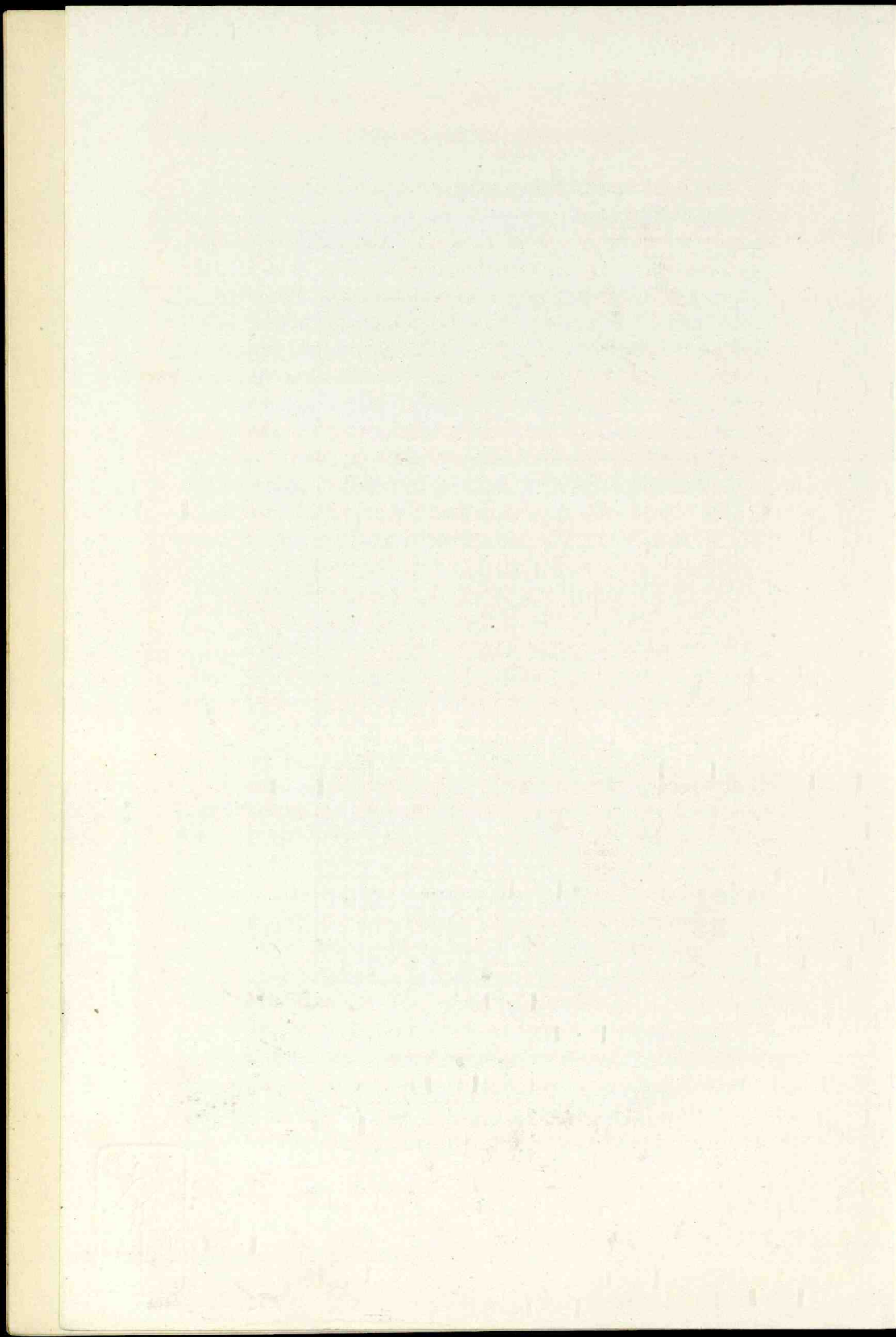
### A TIDE TABLE.

The tides will be found to vary considerably from the following table, under the influence of powerful winds: if a strong wind blow *with the tides*, there will be a higher tide, earlier high water, and later crossing; but if, on the contrary, the wind blow *against the tide*, there will be a lower tide, a later high water, and earlier crossing.

DAYS.		HIGH WATER.						Time of beginning to cross Lancaster and Ulverston sands.		Height of the tides.
		Liverpool Lytham, Glasson, Peel, Whitehaven.		Lancaster, Ulverston, Grange, Ravenglass.				H. M.	H. M.	
		MOON.	CELE.	MOON.	CELE.	MOON.	CELE.			
		H. M.	H. M.	H. M.	H. M.	H. M.	H. M.	H. M.	H. M.	
Saturday ...	1	0 28	0 41	0 44	0 55	4 20	4 55	17	1	
Sunday ...	2	0 58	1 13	1 16	1 30	5 12	5 20	17	0	
Monday ...	3	1 31	1 47	1 48	2 3	5 42	6 0	16	0	
Tuesday ...	4	2 6	2 27	2 12	2 14	6 16	6 42	14	9	
Wednesday ...	5	2 47	3 10	3 1	3 28	7 0	7 28	13	0	
Thursday ...	6	3 12	4 16	4 0	4 34	7 57	8 31	11	9	
Friday ...	7	5 0	5 47	5 20	6 6	9 14	10 2	11	3	
Saturday ...	8	6 36	7 22	6 51	7 40	10 47	11 38	11	4	
Sunday ...	9	8 6	8 41	8 24	9 0	0 0	0 20	13	4	
Monday ...	10	9 10	9 34	9 28	9 52	0 55	1 24	15	3	
Tuesday ...	11	10 0	10 20	10 18	10 39	1 48	2 15	18	0	
Wednesday ...	12	10 41	11 2	11 0	11 20	2 34	2 55	19	8	
Thursday ...	13	11 23	11 43	11 41	0 0	3 17	3 37	20	6	
Friday ...	14	0 0	0 0	0 19	0 19	4 15	4 15	20	10	
Saturday ...	15	0 20	0 40	0 39	0 58	4 34	4 55	19	8	
Sunday ...	16	1 0	1 20	1 18	1 39	5 15	5 35	18	0	
Monday ...	17	1 40	2 0	1 58	2 18	5 55	6 16	16	5	
Tuesday ...	18	2 21	2 43	2 40	3 1	6 35	6 58	14	3	
Wednesday ...	19	3 7	3 25	3 26	3 52	7 21	7 50	12	1	
Thursday ...	20	4 8	4 40	4 27	4 58	8 23	8 54	10	4	
Friday ...	21	5 33	6 15	5 51	6 34	9 44	10 29	9	11	
Saturday ...	22	6 55	7 31	7 11	7 49	11 10	11 46	10	4	
Sunday ...	23	8 13	8 40	8 32	8 58	0 0	0 28	11	3	
Monday ...	24	9 5	9 25	9 24	9 43	0 54	1 20	12	9	
Tuesday ...	25	9 44	10 0	10 1	10 19	1 40	2 0	14	0	
Wednesday ...	26	10 17	10 33	10 36	10 51	2 13	2 32	15	3	
Thursday ...	27	10 50	11 3	11 8	11 21	2 47	3 5	16	2	
Friday ...	28	11 19	11 35	11 37	11 53	3 19	3 33	17	2	
Saturday ...	29	11 51	0 0	0 9	0 18	3 50	4 6	17	5	
Sunday ...	30	0 6	0 23	0 25	0 41	4 21	4 38	17	6	
Monday ...	1	0 40	0 57	0 58	1 16	4 55	5 11	16	11	
Tuesday ...	2	1 15	1 36	1 35	1 55	5 32	5 51	16	4	
Wednesday ...	3	1 57	2 20	2 16	2 37	6 12	6 34	14	10	
Thursday ...	4	2 45	3 14	3 1	3 22	7 0	7 35	13	10	
Friday ...	5	3 16	4 21	4 3	4 40	8 0	8 36	12	4	
Saturday ...	6	5 2	5 47	5 20	6 2	9 17	9 0	11	10	

TIDE TABLE FOR MARCH, 1820.  
(From *The Lonsdale Magazine*, Vol. 1)





of this reclaimed land would have more than paid the cost of the undertaking.

Twenty years later, when the Lancaster and Ulverston Railway was made at a point much nearer the shore, chiefly by the Brogden family, several thousand acres were reclaimed from the sea, but the possession of the land by the Brogdens was for some years unsuccessfully disputed in the law courts by the holders of the adjacent manorial rights.

The coaches seem to have continued running till the opening of the Ulverston and Lancaster Railway, in 1857. The fords were used by all classes of travellers—pedestrians, horsemen, coaches, private and public, and carts. I have it from a friend how his mother used to tell him how, when she was crossing the sands in her coach, the coachman, when approaching the fords, used to call out to her. "Put your feet up on the seat, ma'am, we are coming to the water," as the water would rise above the level of the floor of the vehicle.

The registers at Cartmel alone show that between 1559 and 1880, 141 persons were buried there who had lost their lives on the sands. Gray, who wrote *The Elegy*, tells in his journal how he walked over from Lancaster to Poulton (now Morecambe), and a fisherman mending his nets told him how a cockler driving a little cart, with his two daughters (women grown) in it, and his wife on horseback, following, had, a little while previously, one day set out to pass the seven-mile sands. When about half way across, a fog came down, and as they advanced they found the water much deeper than they expected: the old man was puzzled, he stopped and said he would go a little way to find some mark he was acquainted with. They stayed awhile for him, but in vain; they called aloud, but no reply. At last the young women pressed their mother to think where they were and go on; she would not leave the place, she wandered

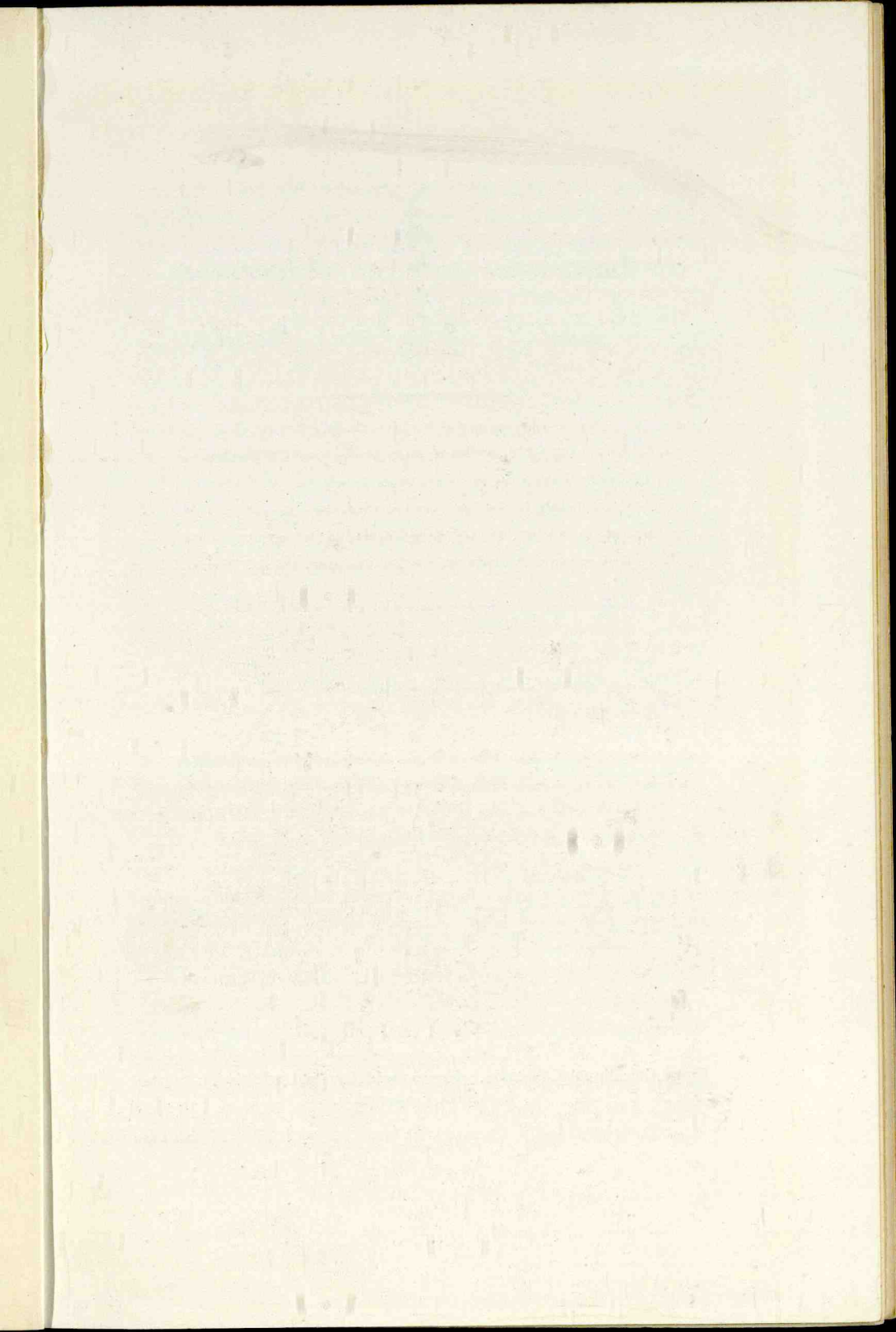


about, forlorn and amazed; she would not quit her horse and get into the cart with them. They determined, after much time wasted, to turn back and give themselves up to the guidance of their horses. The old woman was soon washed off and perished; the poor girls clung close to their cart and the horses, sometimes wading and sometimes swimming, brought them back to land alive, but senseless with terror and distress, and unable for many days to give any account of themselves. The bodies of the parents were found next ebb, that of the father a very few paces distant from the spot where he had left them.

There are many records of coaches and other vehicles swallowed in the sands. An accident related in Walker's *Tour of the Lakes*, published in 1792, has its amusing side. I will give it in his own words:

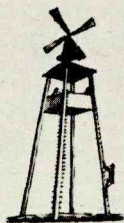
"A gentleman's horse was some time ago drowned in crossing one of the rivers too late. The horse floated and the gentleman stuck to him as a wrecked seaman would to a plank! The man and horse were carried a considerable way inland, and so near the shore that he tried, by the long tail of the horse, if he could touch the bottom. No bottom was to be found. The tide turned and the man and horse began to move towards the main sea. His heart sank within him, though he still swam by the assistance of the horse's tail. Several miles was he carried by this uncouth navigation, when once more he determined to try whether he was within his soundings. Having fastened one hand in the horse's tail, he plunged into the sea, and think what must have been his feelings when he felt the bottom. Providence had placed him on a sandbank. He stood, up to the chin . . . the waves went over him . . . he disengaged himself from his good friend, the dead horse, and waited there until the tide forsook the sands, and got safe home."

On August 21 1825, the coach from Lancaster to Ulverston was blown over in mid-channel on the sands. The passengers were all saved, but one horse was drowned. On August 30 1828, the Oversands coach from Lancaster to Ulverston suddenly sank in the sands. The passengers





*Lancaster*



*Ulverston*

*and*

*Sands.*

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**M**ANY TRAVELLERS having lately been lost on the *Lancaster* and *Ulverston Sands*, it has occurred to many Persons that LAND MARKS, or PLACES of REFUGE ought to be erected in suitable Situations, at a moderate Expense, which would, in future, be the Means of preventing these distressing Occurrences, and would render the Passage comparatively free from Danger.

In order to carry this humane and laudable Purpose into Effect, Subscriptions are respectfully solicited, and will be received at Mr. *Charles Seward's*, Market Street, Lancaster; at Messrs. *Petty and Co's*, Ulverston; and at Mr. *William Field's*, Cartmel, at which places MODELS may be seen, corresponding with the above Plan.

It consists of Four Wooden Pillars supporting a Platform above High Water Mark, accessible by Steps of Iron, and a *Bell* will be placed at the Top which will be Rang either by Wind or Tide, as a guide to all Travellers who may unfortunately be placed in that distressed Situation.

As soon as a sufficient Number of Subscriptions are obtained, a Committee of Management will be appointed from amongst the Subscribers, for carrying this benevolent and humane Purpose into Effect.

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JACKSON, PRINTER, LANCASTER.

From the Binns' Collection. Reproduced by kind permission of the  
Liverpool Corporation.

[Facing page 19

escaped, but Mr. Meadows, a comedian, who had been performing at Lancaster, after he had reached land, ventured back to try and save his luggage, when he sank to the armpits, and was rescued with much difficulty.

Cory says, in his history of Lancashire :

“ When a coach or other vehicle sinks into a quicksand, it is usual to set up some mark on the spot and send a flat-bottomed boat with the next tide, to raise the carriage, or it will soon be swallowed up. When raised, it is towed to a spot with a firmer bottom, and on the ebb of the tide it is drawn ashore by horses, and ”—he quaintly adds—“ the accident talked of as little as possible ” !

On March 30 1850, during a terrific gale, a coach belonging to Mr. Thomas Burton, of Hest Bank, whilst returning from Silverdale across the Sands, was blown over several times, and got so broken that the driver was obliged to leave it on the sands.

I will conclude with one more from the long list of accidents. In 1857, seven young men, farm servants, set off in a cart to cross the Kent sands to Lancaster, to attend the hiring fair, to be held there next day. They started from Kents Bank ; no one ever knew what happened, but the next day their bodies were found on the sands.

These accidents evidently aroused public opinion, for in the Binns' Collection, in the Reference Library, Liverpool, is an undated pamphlet, suggesting the erection of Refuges on the Sands, with an illustration of them, but as far as I can find out nothing was ever done.

Although the new road from Levens Bridge to Greenodd had diminished the number of carriages and coaches, it was also found out that the immersion in the salt water injured their axles and springs.

The market day at Ulverston was the rendezvous of a large district, and caused a lot of traffic over the sands. But when the Lancaster and Carlisle, and Ulverston and



Lancaster Railways were opened, it, according to the later guide books, practically ceased.

During the Great War, on one occasion at least, this route was used by fifty cavalry, in preference to the longer way by road.

The Town Clerk of Ulverston (Mr. E. W. Hargreaves), who is also Clerk to "The Guides for the Kent and Leven Sands Charity," and to whom I am indebted for a number of the statements contained in this paper, also sent me the following copy of the report submitted by the guides.

"The guide over the Leven Sands, in his report of the crossing of these sands for the half-year ending December 31 1934, states :

"The channel is running from the viaduct, around the shore to Hammerside Scar, and then south, half-way to the priory, where it turns east, by the south end of Chapel Island, then south again for about three-quarters of a mile, where it turns west to Wadhead Scar, then south-east out into the deeps.

The total number of crossings last year was 273, made up as follows : Horses and carts, 64 ; saddle horses, 23 ; on foot, 111 ; by boat, 75. The best ford at present is just above Wadhead Scar. There is also one at Chapel Island, but owing to the channel moving so fast, it is not always safe owing to Quicksands."

The guide over the Grange (Kent) Sands reports that the course of the channel, after leaving Arnside shore opposite Blackstone Point, passes close to Holme Island, keeping close to Grange shore to Kents Bank, then running down the middle of the sands out beyond Morecambe. The crossings of this portion of the sands during the year totalled 171, the number making the journey on foot being 70 ; horses and carts, 20 ; saddle-horses, 40 ; and by boat, 41. "The nature of the report clearly indicates that the presence of the Guides is absolutely necessary if a safe crossing of either portion of the route is desired."

It is gratifying to know that so many people avail

themselves of the guides' services, and that there seems no fear of this ancient " Passage of the Sands " passing into oblivion, after having been used for so many centuries, as the recognized route between what the natives call " Lile Ooston " and Lancaster.



The first mention of the County of Middlesex is found in the Domesday Book, which was compiled in 1086. At that time, the County was divided into several parishes, and the names of many of these are still to be seen on the maps of the County. The Domesday Book also gives a list of the landowners of the County at that time, and the names of some of these are still to be seen in the names of the parishes of the County.

The County of Middlesex was one of the four counties which were created by Henry II in 1154. The other three counties were the County of Surrey, the County of Kent, and the County of Essex. The County of Middlesex was one of the smallest counties in England at that time, and it remained so until the late 18th century, when it was enlarged by the addition of the parishes of the County of Surrey.

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