

The Leisure Identities of Rural Youth:  
Tradition, Change and Sense of Place in  
Lakeland, 1930 – early 1950s.

R. Andrew

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The Leisure Identities of Rural Youth:  
Tradition, Change and Sense of Place in  
Lakeland, 1930 – early 1950s.

Rebecca Claire Andrew

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## **Abstract**

Rural young people have received scant attention in the existing historiography of youth, leisure and the countryside and this thesis redresses such neglect, by examining the leisure experiences of young workers in the rural locality of Lakeland, a region in the south-eastern corner of the Lake District, between 1930 and the early 1950s. The thesis challenges the urban emphases of existing historical studies of youth and focuses on a period which is also relatively overlooked in historical work, particularly in relation to the 1940s and early 1950s. It uses the leisure experiences of young countrymen and women across these years to explore the interplay between tradition and change, highlighting the extent to which young people's leisure in the region was shaped by a lack of commercialism and a striking level of adult supervision. It identifies the complex ways in which young people in Lakeland mediated or even rejected the influence of popular culture and negotiated adult intervention in their leisure. It also reveals the central part that young people played in the maintenance of 'traditional' leisure activities, which has been overlooked and under-estimated, yet which played an important part in connecting young people to a strong sense of place identity throughout the period. The thesis uses oral history testimony to explore how locally born people described their engagement with the region's leisure culture when young, to highlight how these experiences were shaped by a strong sense of tradition and an awareness of the Lakeland landscape. It is argued that such testimony is suggestive of a broader 'moral geography' of the countryside which not only helped to shape ideas of Lakeland and local leisure habits as healthy, tough and 'authentic', but which also excluded outsiders who did not conform to this image. This sense of insiders and outsiders was particularly pertinent in a region which was so popular with tourists; the presence of outsiders and their effect on young people's leisure habits is an important theme, which is examined in relation to growing self-consciousness about how the region's place identity was presented to external audiences. The thesis also explores how local communities in Lakeland responded to 'modernizing' attempts to introduce new leisure structures which were devised according to a national agenda, as in the case of the youth service. Overall, the thesis gives new insights into rural life and identity, whilst offering a broader commentary on the significance of youth and leisure within rural communities during a period of growing anxiety about the homogenizing effects of commercial leisure culture on national identity.

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## **Contents**

<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter One      Research Methods and Historiography</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Chapter Two      Social Dancing</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>Chapter Three    Annual Community Events</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Chapter Four     Sports and Outdoor Pursuits</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>Chapter Five     Voluntary Organizations and a Rural Youth Service</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>286</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>298</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>308</b>

## **Abbreviations**

AOHG	Ambleside Oral History Group
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
DYC	District Youth Councils
GFS	Girls' Friendly Society
HLL	Home Listening League
KAC	Kendal Archive Centre
NA	National Archives
NFC	National Fitness Council
NFYFC	National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs
POW	Prisoner of War
RA	Royal Academy
RASC	Royal Army Service Corps
RCA	Royal College of Art
YFC	Young Farmers' Clubs
YHA	Youth Hostels Association

## **Introduction**

### The Scope of the Study

This thesis analyses the leisure experiences of rural young people in Lakeland between 1930 and the early 1950s and in doing so, explores the interplay between tradition and change within these experiences, highlighting the extent to which young people's leisure in the region was shaped by a lack of commercialism and a striking level of adult supervision. It also reveals the central part that young people played in the maintenance of 'traditional' leisure activities, during a period when the leisure habits of young urban workers were routinely characterised as synonymous with modern and often ephemeral crazes (such as dance styles, music and fashion). It is argued here that this dimension of rural experiences played an important part in fostering a strong sense of place and identity in local young people throughout the period. The thesis therefore contributes fresh insights into rural life and identity, whilst providing a broader commentary on the significance of youth and leisure within rural communities during a period of growing anxiety about the homogenizing effects of commercial leisure culture on both a local and national level. Its aim is to redress the neglect of young countrymen and women in the existing historiography of youth, leisure and the countryside and challenge the urban emphases of existing historical studies.

Despite the array of historical studies that have examined young people and the countryside separately in the years between 1930 and 1950, few have considered the links between the two either in any depth or outside of agricultural developments, although there are interesting connections between how the countryside was discussed

during this period and debates about the state of contemporary youth.<sup>1</sup> Much of the discourse which emerged in relation to the countryside and youth, focussed on the use of leisure. This theme provides the context for the thesis, which examines the changing leisure identities of rural youth in Lakeland between the 1930s and early 1950s, focussing particularly on ideas of modernity, tradition and sense of place and explores how these fed into wider debates regarding the use of leisure, tradition and the countryside.<sup>2</sup>

Lakeland was chosen as an appropriate survey area in which to base this study of rural youth for a number of reasons. An initial but thorough literature search on the current historiography of young people and leisure highlighted a wealth of material on urban youth and their leisure culture but little to nothing on their rural contemporaries. Most existing studies concentrate on large urban and industrialized areas.<sup>3</sup> Mitterauer is

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<sup>1</sup> For accounts of agricultural and rural history, see J. Lowerson, 'Battles for the Countryside', in F. Groversmith, Class, Culture and Social Change: A New View of the 1930s (Brighton: Harvester, 1980); B.A. Holderness, British Agriculture Since 1945 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985); H. Newby, Green and Pleasant Land? Social Change in Rural England (London: Hutchinson, 1979); H. Newby, Country Life. A Social History of the English Countryside (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1987); G.E. Mingay, The Rural Idyll (London: Routledge, 1989); G.E. Mingay, A Social History of the English Countryside (London: Routledge, 1990); A. Howkins, Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1850-1925 (London: Routledge, 1991); G.E. Mingay The Death of Rural England: A Social History of the Countryside Since 1900 (London: Routledge, 2003), which have examined agricultural developments and the social history of the countryside, but not young people in any depth. Studies by J. Springhall, Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998); C. Langhamer, Women's Leisure in England, 1920-60 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); D. Fowler, The First Teenagers: The Lifestyle of Young Wage-Earners in Inter-War Britain (London: Woburn Press, 1995); A. Davies, Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working-Class Culture in Salford and Manchester (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992), among others, have analysed young people in detail but only in an urban setting. More recently David Fowler in his examination of Irish youth, gives some consideration to experiences in rural districts: Youth Culture in Modern Britain, c.1920-1970 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), Ch. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Young people are for the purposes of this thesis, categorized as those aged between school leaving age and 24. This is the age-range adopted by Selina Todd, who points out that the average age of marriage for young women did not fall below 25 before 1939: S. Todd, 'Young Women, Work, Leisure in Inter-War England', The Historical Journal, 48, 3 (2005), pp. 789-809; p. 791. From the 1930s, school leaving age denoted the start of paid employment for young members of the working-class and a substantial increase in their access to commercialized leisure. Available Census data also suggests that most young people in Lakeland certainly married later than 21.

<sup>3</sup> Manchester and London especially have attracted the most attention from historical studies of young workers' leisure. See for example, A. Davies, Leisure, Gender and Poverty; Fowler, The First Teenagers;



one of the few academics to consider rural young people from an historical perspective, yet his study is limited in some ways, as its broad geographical range, which spans a wide time period, provides only an overview of the development of a youth culture.<sup>4</sup> A secondary survey of agricultural and rural historical writing in relation to Britain, suggested that although the social history of the countryside was growing as an area of enquiry, young people received scant attention. This is an omission in the leisure history of youth which both Claire Langhamer, in her study of Women's Leisure in England, and Selina Todd in her work on young countrywomen's employment, hinted at.<sup>5</sup> Once the rural focus of the thesis was established, it was decided to concentrate on the former county of Westmorland, because of its predominantly rural character and identity as a north-western upland region. As such, it provides a useful contrast to much of the existing history of rural areas, which have largely focussed on lowland southern areas of England.<sup>6</sup> The initial intention of this study was to focus on the southern half of Westmorland but this was later narrowed specifically to Lakeland. There were several reasons for this. Lakeland had a distinctive identity quite separate from that of Westmorland and was recognized by contemporary surveys and guide books, which reflected how its distinctiveness was apparent to outsiders, as well as local inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> A predominantly rural and upland area, Lakeland was (and still is) somewhat

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C. Langhamer, Women's Leisure in England; S. Todd, Young Women, Work, and Family in England 1918-1950 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> M. Mitteraurer, A History of Youth (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986; 1993).

<sup>5</sup> See Langhamer, Women's Leisure in England, pp. 190-1, where she notes that 'we urgently need to address the leisure patterns of rural women', an assertion which can be extended to rural young people. Selina Todd examined young women's work in the countryside and suggested that in the same way the rural labour market differed from that in towns and cities, young rural workers' leisure experiences were also qualified by their locality: 'Young Women, Work and Family in Inter-War Rural England', The Agricultural History Review, 52, 1 (2004), pp. 83-98.

<sup>6</sup> See for instance, S. Wade Martins & T. Williamson, The Countryside of East Anglia: Changing Landscapes, 1870-1950 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008) and P. Brassley, J. Burchardt & L. Thompson (eds.), The English Countryside Between the Wars: Regeneration or Decline? (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), which concentrates on South Devon. Research carried out on southern upland areas, such as the moorlands of south Devon, largely ignored the region's youth population.

<sup>7</sup> C. O'Neill, Visions of Lakeland: Tourism, Preservation and the Development of the Lake District, 1919-1939 (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Lancaster, 2000), examines this issue in depth.

disconnected from nearby towns and cities.<sup>8</sup> This isolation was exacerbated by the distance between many local villages and the nearest train station at Windermere and the closest mainline station at Oxenholme.<sup>9</sup> The region's detachment from urban centres of cultural production, as we shall see, undoubtedly helped to shape local leisure culture and provides an alternative view to earlier studies which suggested that rural young people tended to use their nearest market town for entertainment.<sup>10</sup> This distance from large urban centres was one of the reasons for Lakeland's popularity with tourists throughout the period under review (and indeed, the twentieth century as a whole).

During the research for this thesis, it became apparent that the Lakeland villages of Ambleside and Grasmere were particularly significant to local leisure experiences. These locations often featured in the recollections of oral history respondents but also had an important role in the region's leisure culture more generally. Young people living in rather isolated areas were often drawn to locations such as Ambleside and Grasmere, where larger or more frequent leisure activities took place. Both villages regularly held social occasions in communal venues, which could accommodate several hundred people at a time. They were also the focal point for a number of annual community events, which celebrated local leisure traditions and played an important role in the construction of Lakeland's sense of place. Crowds of residents and visitors

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<sup>8</sup> If we take Grasmere as the centre of the region, it stood approximately 20 miles from Kendal and 13 from Keswick, (the nearest market towns) and c. 50 miles from Lancaster and c. 40 miles from Barrow-in-Furness.

<sup>9</sup> Mick Wallis suggested that villagers in Devon felt isolated when they lived only 3 miles from the nearest rail station. M. Wallis, 'Unlocking the Secret Soul: Mary Kelly, Pioneer of Village Theatre' *New Theatre Quarterly*, 64, (2000), p. 347.

<sup>10</sup> In the Mass Observation study of Exmoor (Devon) for example, emphasis was placed on young people's abandonment of community-based leisure in the survey villages, for that in nearby market towns: W.J. Turner, *Exmoor Village: A General Account Based on Factual Information from Mass Observation* (London: Harrap, 1947). This view was also expressed in C.S. Orwin, (University of Oxford Agricultural Economics Research Institute) *Country Planning: A Study of Rural Problems* (London: Oxford University Press, 1944); D. Edwards-Rees, *A Rural Youth Service: Suggestions for Youth Work in the Countryside* (Wallington: The Religious Education Press, Ltd., 1944).

were attracted to both villages for such occasions, and as the thesis will demonstrate, this too helped to reinforce their role in shaping Lakeland's place identity. The local press reflected their prominence in this respect, often running features about these events.

It is important to note, however, that the central themes and leisure habits identified within this study were not limited to these two villages; experiences there were also typical in other parts of Lakeland.<sup>11</sup> Neither should it be assumed that local traditions were absent elsewhere in the region. Distinctive events and activities, such as dialect plays and sports shows, also took place in other villages.<sup>12</sup> These were, however, usually organized on a smaller scale or with less regularity; they also tended to receive less coverage in the local press. Although general trends within young people's leisure habits were visible across the region, both Ambleside and Grasmere offer some of the most concentrated and consistent examples of Lakeland's leisure culture and traditions during the period examined here, and as such, their significance is reflected within the thesis.

A key purpose of the thesis is to analyse how young people's leisure developed in a rural area such as this, where tourism was an increasingly significant aspect of the local economy. Again, this is a subject which has been rarely addressed. When attention has been paid to tourism in Lakeland, the emphasis has largely been on issues

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<sup>11</sup> Each week, for example, village-by-village summaries of organized leisure activities were recorded in the local press. In addition, the paper listed forthcoming events in the region, which demonstrated that villages across Lakeland also held activities including dances, whist drives, and voluntary group meetings. Sports teams and inter-village matches of football, cricket and tennis, were also common in the region throughout the period examined here. Records of both voluntary organizations and the county's youth service, provided evidence that activities organized for young people and supervised by adults were evident in other villages.

<sup>12</sup> For more on these activities, see Chapter Three.

of rural planning and preservation. From the nineteenth century to the present day, the region has been the focus of much academic writing on the protection of its natural amenities.<sup>13</sup> This preoccupation has tended to dominate popular debates on Lakeland at the expense of local inhabitants, and was certainly true of the period between 1930 and the early 1950s, on which this thesis concentrates. There are several reasons why these particular years have been selected for analysis. The period is bound at either end by significant developments in the history of leisure and youth. As we shall see, the 1930s were a decade associated with the expansion of commercial leisure opportunities at the same time as considerable concern was being expressed over the loss of rural traditions and an older way of life, whilst elements of popular culture and technological change, spread further into the countryside than had previously been the case.<sup>14</sup> It also seemed particularly appropriate to begin an examination of rural youth and leisure during a decade when considerable tensions arose over the use of leisure and most especially young people's use of leisure. The study ends shortly before the emergence of rock 'n' roll in the mid-1950s and the first appearance in England of the 'Teddy Boy' subculture in 1953, which represented the beginning of a different era in the history of youth and leisure. The years surveyed here also include the Second World War, because many earlier studies have tended to focus on the years either side of the war, with no real consideration of the ways in which wartime shaped young people's leisure

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<sup>13</sup> Friends of the Lake District, Make the Lake District a National Park (Ambleside: 1935); G. Berry & G. Bear, The Lake District: A Century of Conservation (Edinburgh: J. Bartholomew, 1980); J.K. Walton & J.D. Marshall, The Lake Counties From 1830 to the mid-Twentieth Century: A Study in Regional Change (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), Chs. 8 & 9; B. Luckin, Questions of Power: Electricity and Environment in Inter-War Britain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); C. O'Neill, 'Windermere in the 1920s', Local Historian, 24, (1994), pp. 217-24; C. O'Neill & J. Walton, 'Tourism and the Lake District: Social and Cultural Histories', in D.W.G. Hind & J.P. Mitchell, Sustainable Tourism and the English Lake District (Sunderland: Business Education Publishers, 2004); K. Hanley & J.K. Walton, Constructing Cultural Tourism: John Ruskin and the Tourist Gaze (Bristol: Channel View, 2010).

<sup>14</sup> On the development of a commercial leisure industry in the inter-war years, see Fowler's debate about the emergence of the teenager in relation to access to commercialized leisure: Fowler, The First Teenagers.

experiences.<sup>15</sup> It is argued here that wartime did, in fact, have an important influence on the leisure habits of young countrymen and women, most especially as a result of the prolonged evacuation of urban people to the countryside, which exposed rural communities more extensively than in the 1930s, to the leisure habits of outsiders.

How young people in twentieth century England spent their spare time has been a subject of considerable interest to academics within the sphere of youth and leisure history, and numerous studies have examined young people's culture and leisure habits.<sup>16</sup> Class-based analyses have formed the basis for many of these historical studies of youth, with working-class young people attracting the most interest from historians, and only a small number of investigations dealing with middle- and upper-

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<sup>15</sup> A. Davies, Leisure, Gender and Poverty (Buckingham, Open University Press, 1992); Fowler, The First Teenagers; A. Horn, Juke Box Britain: Americanisation and Youth Culture 1945-60 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009); A. McRobbie, Feminism and Youth Culture: From Jackie to Just Seventeen (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991); B. Osgerby, Youth in Britain Since 1945 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998). Neither Langhamer's study of Women's Leisure in England or David Fowler's Youth Culture in Modern Britain provide any detailed consideration of wartime and its impact on young people's leisure. When research has focussed on wartime, the emphasis has largely been placed on documenting the experiences of evacuees. See for instance, J. Gardiner, The Children's War: The Second World War Through the Eyes of the Children of Britain (London: Portrait, in Association with the Imperial War Museum, 2005); R. Inglis, The Children's War: Evacuation 1939-1945 (London: Collins, 1989); M. Parsons, 'I'll Take That One': Dispelling Myths of Civilian Evacuation, 1939-1945 (Peterborough: Becket Karlson, 1998), all of which focus on the experiences of those removed to the countryside, rather than how this affected the communities which received them. A further weakness in this area of research is the almost sole concentration on children, to the exclusion of those in their teens and early twenties, who were also evacuated to the countryside.

<sup>16</sup> R. Kenneth, Leisure (Harlow: Longman, 1970); H. Cunningham, Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c. 1780-c. 1880 (London: Croom Helm, 1980); J. Walvin, Leisure and Society, 1830-1950 (London: Longman, 1978); R. Rosenzweig, Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City 1870-1920 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); J.K. Walton, & J. Walvin, Leisure in Britain 1780-1939 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); M. Brake, Comparative Youth Cultures in America, Britain and Canada (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985); P. Bailey, 'Leisure, Culture and the Historian: Reviewing the First Generation of Leisure Historiography in Britain' Leisure Studies 8, 2 (May 1989), pp. 107-127; G.S. Cross, Worktowners at Blackpool: Mass-Observation and Popular Leisure in the 1930s (London: Routledge, 1990); G.S. Cross, A Social History of Leisure Since 1600 (State College, PA: Venture Publications, 1990); R. Koshar, Histories of Leisure (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2002); P. Borsay, A History of Leisure: The British Experience Since 1500 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); H. Pussard & E. Kennedy, (eds.) Defining the Field: 30 Years of the Leisure Studies Association (Eastbourne: Leisure Studies Association, 2006); J. Savage, Teenage: The Creation of Youth, 1875-1945 (London: Chatto & Windus, 2007).

class youth between the late Victorian period and mid-twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> This body of literature provides a wide range of insights into the growing commercialization of leisure in the twentieth century, as well as gender inequality and generational differences in how and when spare time was spent.<sup>18</sup> This study follows in the footsteps of some of the most interesting and important historical work on youth leisure which concentrates on the working-class, by taking as its focus young workers in Lakeland, who were employed in either manual or unskilled jobs and came from working-class families.<sup>19</sup>

The early history of youth and leisure exhibited an inherent predisposition by academics towards documenting the male experience; an emphasis which stemmed in part, from the definition by psychologists at the turn of the nineteenth century of the terms ‘adolescent’ and ‘juvenile’ as young, working-class men.<sup>20</sup> Pioneering studies by Hendrick, Springhall and Gillis, which provide useful insights into the leisure lives of young male workers between the late 1800s and the eve of the Second World War, all conformed to this masculinist emphasis.<sup>21</sup> Second-wave feminism in the 1970s,

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<sup>17</sup> C. Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981); C. Benninghaus, B. Sølund & J. Maynes, (eds.) Secret Gardens, Satanic Mills: Placing Girls in European History, 1750-1960 (Indiana: Indiana University Press: 2004); D. Fowler, Youth Culture in Modern Britain c.1920-1970 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> S.G. Jones, Workers at Play: A Social and Economic History of Leisure, 1918-1939 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986); E. Green, Women's Leisure. What Leisure? (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1990); S. Todd, ‘Poverty and Aspiration: Young Women’s Entry to Employment in Inter-War England’, Twentieth Century British History, 15, 2 (2004), pp. 119-42; S. Todd, ‘Young Women, Work and Leisure in Inter-War England’, The Historical Journal, 48, 3 (2005), pp. 789-809; M. Tebbutt, Being Boys: Youth, Leisure and Identity in the Inter-War Years (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> The Lakeland labour market is addressed in more detail below.

<sup>20</sup> G.S. Hall, Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime and Religion (1904).

<sup>21</sup> H. Hendrick, Images of Youth: Age, Class, and the Male Youth Problem, 1880-1920 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990); J. Springhall, Coming of Age: Adolescence in Britain, 1860-1960 (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1986); J. Springhall, Youth, Empire, and Society: A Social History of British Youth Movements, 1883-1940 (London: Croom Helm, 1977); J. Springhall, Sure & Steadfast: A History of the Boys' Brigade, 1883-1983 (London: Collins, 1983); J. Springhall, Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta Rap, 1830-1997 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998); J. Gillis, Youth

however, led to new directions in the history of youth, as the need to document leisure experiences of young women, prompted historians to look at different ways of approaching youth and leisure. Langhamer, for instance, suggested that in order to fully engage with the leisure history of young women, it was necessary to use a different conceptual framework, such as that of the 'lifecycle'. She has stressed the need to provide alternative definitions of leisure in order to engage with experiences across the life-cycle.<sup>22</sup> This is largely because a woman's access to leisure was dependent on her marital status. As mothers of young children, leisure activities merged with domestic responsibilities within the home, with the result that their habits were often 'hidden' from existing accounts.<sup>23</sup> The years before marriage (especially for women) were seen as a 'special' period in the life-cycle, where opportunities for leisure time were at their greatest and were not restricted to the home, as was often the case in later life. These approaches underpin this study's evaluation of the distinctions in the leisure experiences of young women and young men. Leisure, in the case of the young unmarried people examined here, is defined as the time spent away from work, in opposition to paid labour, although it is argued that while traditional gender roles persisted in Lakeland throughout the 1930s, 1940s and even into the early 1950s, they were not always so pronounced in leisure activities as in towns and cities during the same period. The analysis of young people and their leisure habits must be placed in context, and set against the demographic, economic and social conditions of Lakeland. The discussion now turns to provide some contextual background about this northern upland region of England.

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and History: Tradition and Change In European Age Relations, 1770 Present (London: Academic Press, 1981). See also, G. Pearson, Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears (London: Macmillan, 1983).

<sup>22</sup> Langhamer, Women's Leisure in England.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. For example, women could listen to the wireless (a leisure activity) whilst carrying out 'work' based tasks, such as darning, cleaning or cooking.

## Lakeland in context

Lakeland lies in the south-eastern corner of the Lake District, formerly in the county of Westmorland, which now constitutes part of present-day Cumbria.<sup>24</sup> In the first half of the twentieth century, Lakeland was a predominantly rural region whose main industry was agriculture. The region's economy was largely based on upland farming, mainly of sheep, such as the Herdwick and Swaledale breeds. The dominance of agriculture in the region is documented in the 1931 census, which records that it was the largest employer of young men in the region.<sup>25</sup> Hiring fairs for farm workers remained commonplace in Lakeland throughout the 1940s and even as late as the 1950s, young men were still hired on an annual or bi-annual basis for 'living in' positions.<sup>26</sup> They were also employed by wealthy local residents, in roles such as butlers, gardeners and general maintenance. Domestic service was the largest occupation for young women in the region throughout the period. Alun Howkins suggested that in counties such as Westmorland, large numbers of servants working full or part-time at local farms were responsible for the persistence of this occupation.<sup>27</sup> It is argued here, however, that a more accurate explanation lies in the growing tourist industry in Lakeland. At a time when domestic service had shrunk considerably in urban areas, in Lakeland it continued to be the main occupation for young working-class women.<sup>28</sup> The growing numbers of

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<sup>24</sup> Cumbria was a new county created in 1974, under the Local Government Act (1972). The term is therefore not used in this study, as it is somewhat anachronistic. Although the thesis focuses on Lakeland which formed only part of the old county of Westmorland, the sources used here were sometimes created at a county level and in these instances, it has been necessary to refer to Westmorland rather than specifically Lakeland.

<sup>25</sup> See the Census Occupation Tables in Appendix II.

<sup>26</sup> M.R.M. Bolton, From Clogs and Wellies to Shiny Shoes: A Windermere Lad's Memories of South Lakeland.

<sup>27</sup> Howkins, The Death of Rural England, p. 90. It seems more plausible that Howkin's explanation of farm servants in the figures would be applicable to the less-well known regions of Westmorland more generally, which tourists normally did not visit in the inter-war years.

<sup>28</sup> David Fowler provides detailed statistics regarding the changing nature of young workers' occupations during the inter-war years in Fowler, The First Teenagers. For a revisionist account of the development



guest houses and hotels throughout the region played a considerable part in this survival; as did the large numbers of affluent families who moved into the region from the late nineteenth century, as improved railway links allowed men who worked in Manchester (or even Liverpool) to commute from their Lakeland homes. Many of those who worked in domestic service only lived a short distance from their families, as local villages in Lakeland often contained a number of larger residences. There were exceptions and some young women went away to find work in large houses and anecdotal evidence suggests that this was arranged through a contact already known to the family. Although domestic servants and farm labourers were often able to remain close to their home villages when 'living in', opportunities to see their families were limited, due to the long hours of work and few holidays. The outbreak of war brought difficulties for this industry in Lakeland, as many larger residences were requisitioned by the army for war purposes, or simply became too expensive to run.<sup>29</sup> As the oral history material suggested, with many former servants engaged in war work, running a large household became problematic.

The growing influence of tourism as an industry was visible in the local job market when, for example, the former Gunpowder Works in Elterwater was converted into a holiday camp in 1934.<sup>30</sup> Both young men and women found job opportunities through the tourist industry and seasonal work such as gardening, transport, or in shops, cafes and tearooms which catered for both local residents and the growing visitor trade. As with other forms of employment, however, this work involved long hours and few holidays. Employment of this nature tended to be temporary, season-driven and

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of domestic service in the first half of the twentieth century, see S. Todd, 'Domestic Service and Class Relations in Britain, 1900-1950', *Past and Present*, 203, 1 (2009), pp. 181-204. Statistical information on the domestic service industry in Lakeland is provided in the Census Occupation Tables in Appendix II.

<sup>29</sup> See for example, interview with AOHG Respondent HU.

<sup>30</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 25 May 1935

sporadic, although oral evidence suggests that few respondents were out of work for more than a few days at a time whilst in-between jobs, and points to the extent to which this type of employment increasingly characterized the Lakeland labour market. Much of the work available to young people was outdoors in nature. This was particularly the case for young men, who were employed in gardening, road maintenance and forestry, aside from agriculture. More stable work was also available in the region and employers such as the Bobbin Mill and Laundry (both in Ambleside) as well as the local Gasworks, provided a small number of residents with regular work between the 1930s and early 1950s. Wartime brought increased employment opportunities, such as those supplied by the military aircraft factory built on the shore of Lake Windermere. Evacuation also meant that many Lakeland hotels and boarding houses were fully occupied for the duration of the war. A few young people found work outside the immediate vicinity of local villages; one woman for example secured a job as a school-leaver at the 'K Shoes' headquarters in Kendal. For the vast majority of young people in the region, however, employment was found in and around local villages, to which they walked or cycled and therefore avoided the transport costs involved in working in a nearby market town.

Workers across the region found a number of limitations placed on their opportunities for leisure, the foremost of which were the long hours of work many endured throughout the 1930s and 1940s and into the 1950s. Not only did farm labourers work for most of the day, particularly in the summer months when the evenings were lighter, but domestic servants routinely worked 17 hour days.<sup>31</sup>

Understandably, this left little time for leisure, particularly if young people did not

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<sup>31</sup> Lakeland was not isolated in this, as Selina Todd highlighted, in the 1940s domestic servants in their teens worked 'in excess of twelve hours per day' and in Devon some worked 'between fifty and ninety hours per week', (Todd, 'Domestic Service and Class Relations', p. 184).

finish work until ten o'clock in the evening. In addition, few holidays were permitted, especially in the 1930s, when it appears that domestic servants were typically allowed one half day off, every other Sunday. This time was often used to visit family, rather than for some specific leisure activity. Other women found their employer's authority further limited their ability to spend their spare time as they wished. One female employer for instance, checked to see that on their Sunday morning off, her employees attended church services; an occurrence which points to the nature of control by employers in rural areas more generally. Deferential relationships between the working-class inhabitants of villages and the local 'gentry' (which is how less well-off locals tended to describe the upper- and middle-class,) were present both in the everyday leisure of young workers, as well as being a central doctrine of voluntary organizations during the period under study.<sup>32</sup> The social structure of local villages was such that different classes lived in close proximity to one another and, as will be demonstrated, much of the leisure available in local villages was organized (and supervised) by middle- and upper-class residents.<sup>33</sup> Much of the evidence points to the persistence of working-class deference in Lakeland into the 1950s, to the extent that in the post-war period, adult men continued to doff their caps to the 'gentry' in the street and young people were taught to speak to their social 'betters' only when spoken to first, although that is not to say, however, that these submissive expectations were always accepted. Indeed, as this thesis will demonstrate, young workers in Lakeland

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<sup>32</sup> This view contrasts that of an earlier study, which suggests that where the landscape of southern lowland areas may have reflected the highly deferential nature of class relations, the rugged, upland landscapes such as those found in Lakeland were more suggestive of a lack of deference. See for example, J. Burchardt, *Paradise Lost*, p. 101. For analysis of rural deference in East Anglia, see H. Newby, *The Deferential Worker* (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

<sup>33</sup> Another area of research upon which this thesis draws is concerned with class control and notions of rational recreation: G. Stedman Jones, 'Class Expression versus Social Control? A Critique of Recent Trends in the Social History of 'Leisure'', *History Workshop Journal*, 4 (1977), pp. 162-170; P. Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

were capable of both resisting the authority of their social superiors and of exploiting such relationships when necessary.

In common with many other rural regions across England, the population of Cumberland and Westmorland in combination, declined between the late nineteenth century and the inter-war years, and according to Marshall and Walton, the population of the two counties was ‘less in 1939 than in 1891’.<sup>34</sup> Much of this, it seems, was caused by the out-migration of locals (including young people) looking for work, as many of the heavy industries on Cumberland’s west coast fell into a decline. Lakeland’s population was buoyed to an extent by both the seasonal residence of tourists and the permanent settlement of retirees and commuters in the first half of the twentieth century. Lakeland helped to retain perhaps more of its young people through employment opportunities in the tourist trade. It was not until the outbreak of war in 1939, however, that the region’s population saw a dramatic increase, from the large scale evacuation of schoolchildren to the local area. Whole schools from large urban areas in the north east and Liverpool, were relocated to Lakeland and although some returned to their respective cities after only a few months, many stayed for almost the entire length of the conflict. Older students also sought refuge in the peace of the Lakeland countryside and in 1940, the Royal College of Art (RCA) removed itself from London to Ambleside and remained there until 1945. This evacuation also included families and individuals who chose to evacuate themselves privately. In addition, the army maintained a presence in the region and requisitioned large houses or hotels as their headquarters and the rugged mountainous terrain was used as a training ground. A Prisoner of War camp was established at Grizedale Hall, near Ambleside and Grasmere

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<sup>34</sup> Marshall & Walton, The Lake Counties, p. 222.

(see map in Appendix I) which held captured German Officers and the British soldiers who guarded them. The arrival of people from towns and cities on a large scale undoubtedly made a lasting impression on local communities. Students of the RCA as well as a considerable proportion of the soldiers billeted in Lakeland between 1939 and 1945 were young people, under the age of 24, who enjoyed socializing and who also brought their urban leisure habits with them. Both groups, for example, held regular dances and socials throughout their time in the region. As this thesis will demonstrate, the leisure habits, mannerisms and dress of young wartime incomers not only caused a stir amongst the local youth population but also provided them with an alternative view of what youth and leisure constituted during the 1940s.<sup>35</sup> At the same time that large numbers of young outsiders entered Lakeland, other young people who had grown up in the region, left. The Armed Forces, Women's Land Army and other forms of war work, all called upon local young people to leave their villages.<sup>36</sup> The departure of young men in local communities was particularly noticeable to their female contemporaries, who missed their dance partners. The large-scale relocation of urban young people to Lakeland, however, helped to broaden the knowledge and experiences of young workers who were left behind, with regard to popular culture and contemporary meanings of youth. After the war, those who had left to fight, returned to their home villages, and other families from outside the region settled in Lakeland, yet figures from the 1951 census, indicate only a small increase in population from that in 1931. In summary then, there was both change and continuity in Lakeland's population between 1930 and the early 1950s and, as the chapters which follow will highlight, both of these factors

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<sup>35</sup> For more on how the dynamic between insiders, outsiders and rural youth will be used in this study, see the discussion of Michael Leyshon's work in the next chapter.

<sup>36</sup> Although agriculture was a reserved occupation in wartime, this only applied to young men over the age of 21.

had a distinct impact on the leisure experiences of the region's young people, albeit in different ways.

### Young People and the Countryside

To understand the debates which took place over rural youth and their leisure experiences in the years covered by this thesis, it is necessary to understand the part which the countryside and particular regional landscapes played in ideas of national identity. From the turn of the nineteenth century, war had brought both the countryside and the nation's youth to the forefront of national consciousness. The need to improve the physical and mental welfare of young working-class men, prompted by the poor health of soldiers in both the Boer and First World Wars, coincided with growing awareness in academic circles of adolescence as a 'special' period in the life cycle, when young workers especially, were thought to require guidance in order to navigate potentially corrupting moral dangers on the path to adulthood. These concerns in the late-Victorian and Edwardian period rested largely on young working-class men and how their spare time was spent, although by the inter-war years, working-class girls were coming under increased scrutiny, most especially in relation to their sexuality and femininity, themes which continued into the post-war period.<sup>37</sup> This scrutiny was expressed largely in class terms, as middle- and upper-class philanthropists established

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<sup>37</sup> See for instance a series of articles by Penny Tinkler, which examine the threat that young working-class women were thought to present to society in the first half of the twentieth century. P. Tinkler, 'An All-Round Education: the Board of Education's Policy for the Leisure-Time Training of Girls, 1939-1950', History of Education, 23, 4 (1994), pp. 385-403; P. Tinkler, 'Sexuality & Citizenship: the State & Girls' Leisure Provision in England, 1939-1950', Women's History Review, 4, 2 (1995), pp. 193-217; P. Tinkler, 'At Your Service: The Nation's Girlhood and the Call to Service in England, 1939-50', European Journal of Women's Studies, 4, 3 (1997), pp. 353-377; P. Tinkler, 'English Girls and the International Dimensions of British Citizenship in the 1940s', European Journal of Women's Studies, 8, 1 (2001), pp. 103-126; P. Tinkler, 'Youth's Opportunity? The 1944 Education Act and Proposals for Part-Time Continuation Education', History of Education, 30, 1 (2001), pp. 77-94; P. Tinkler, 'Cause For Concern: Young Women and Leisure, 1930-50', Women's History Review, 12, 2 (2003), pp. 233-262.

clubs and societies which aimed to ‘rescue’ or guide young workers into spending their leisure constructively. Such impulses were very clear in the voluntary organizations which emerged in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods, which aimed to provide working-class youth with a rational and productive focus in their leisure.<sup>38</sup> Many of these groups enjoyed considerable success during the first quarter of the twentieth century, particularly the Boys Scouts and Girl Guides, which ‘became nationally and internationally recognized symbols of youth’.<sup>39</sup> Their subscriptions grew rapidly in the UK during the inter-war years, and rose from a combined membership of 234,681 in 1917, to 968,731 in 1937.<sup>40</sup> The 1930s saw this fascination with the younger generation reach new heights. The commercial leisure industry bore much of the responsibility for this, as it allowed young workers in towns and cities greater levels of autonomy and independence in their free time than before the First World War. Under its influence, young people became more visible in society generally, through new trends in hair styles and clothing (copied from films at the cinema) which helped to mark them out visually from their parents’ generation. As David Fowler has shown, the commercialized leisure industry of the inter-war years, and particularly the 1930s, created a consumer culture which was more tailored to those in their teens and early twenties than had been the case in the Edwardian period. The growth of both the cinema and dance halls during this period, led to particular concerns over their effects

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<sup>38</sup> For instance, the Boys’ Brigade and Girls’ Friendly Society were established in the late 19th century and were among a range of organizations which aimed to provide young working-class men and women respectively with moral guidance and an alternative to commercialized leisure forms. Other individuals (for example Octavia Hill and C.E.B. Russell) attempted to meet the same need via club work. In the Edwardian period, Robert Baden-Powell founded his uniformed Scouts and Guides movements, to provide young members with character training.

<sup>39</sup> T. Proctor, *On My Honour: Guides and Scouts in Inter-War Britain*, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 93, 2, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2002), p. 33; J. Springhall, *Youth, Empire, and Society*; T. Proctor, ‘(Uni)forming Youth: Girl Guides and Boy Scouts in Inter-War Britain, 1908-1939’ *History Workshop Journal*, 45 (Spring, 1998), pp. 103-134.

<sup>40</sup> T. Proctor, *On My Honour*, p. 35. In 1931 worldwide Scout membership stood at over 2 million. Source: The Scout Association Website, <http://scouts.org.uk/documents/About/history/fs295306.pdf> (accessed February 2012).

on young workers and their moral welfare.<sup>41</sup> As a result, a considerable number of surveys, investigations and reports were carried out between the 1920s and 1950s, which sought to quantify, analyse and explain these new leisure experiences although, again, much of this work focussed on developments in towns and cities.<sup>42</sup> Whilst a great deal of attention concentrated on young people and their leisure, there was growing interest in the English countryside, which was also being shaped by its increasing use as a leisure space.

These trends were not, of course, unique to the inter-war years and romantic images of rural vistas, including rolling hills and pastoral scenery, had been a potent source of ‘patriotic emotion’ since the Victorian period.<sup>43</sup> Rural England was, however, viewed by a growing number of people in the post-1918 era as an idealized alternative to the violence and destruction which many had experienced during wartime.<sup>44</sup> Young men who had survived the conflict, for example, were described as seeking out the countryside for solitary walks in their spare time, or as a place in which to settle.<sup>45</sup> More generally, a growing number of people living in towns and cities were coming to view the countryside as a space in which they could escape the ‘stresses (and

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<sup>41</sup> Fowler, *The First Teenagers*, pp. 99-108.

<sup>42</sup> These included C.D. Burns, *Leisure in the Modern World* (Washington: McGrath, 1932); M. Roof, *A Survey of Girls Leisure in England and Wales* (Edinburgh: T. & A. Constable, 1935); H. James, & F. Moore, ‘Adolescent Leisure in a Working-Class District’ *Occupational Psychology*, 14, 2 (1940); A.E. Morgan, *Young Citizen* (Middlesex: Harmondsworth, 1943); Holwell B. Read, *Eighty Thousand Adolescents: A Study of Young People in the City of Birmingham by the Staff and Students of Westhill Training College for the Edward Cadbury Charitable Trust* (George, Allen & Unwin, 1950); P. Jephcott, *Some Young People: A Study. Sponsored by King George's Jubilee Trust of Adolescent Boys and Girls in Three Areas, with Special Reference to Their Membership Of Youth Groups* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954), although focus was largely concentrated on developments in towns and cities.

<sup>43</sup> Burchardt, *Paradise Lost*, p. 99.

<sup>44</sup> R. Moore-Colyer, ‘From Great Wen to Toad Hall: Aspects of the Urban-Rural Divide in Inter-War Britain’ in *Rural History*, 10 (1999), pp. 105-124.

<sup>45</sup> M. Tebbutt, ‘Rambling and Manly Identity in Derbyshire’s Dark Peak, 1880s–1920s’, *The Historical Journal*, 49, 4 (2006), pp. 1125-1153; J. Burchardt, *Paradise Lost*, p. 143.



mundanities) of urban life'.<sup>46</sup> For some middle-class men, commuting from their village homes to the workplace now became a viable option, due to the increased availability of motorized transport; others bought picturesque village properties as second homes. The majority of visitors to the inter-war countryside, however, arrived on a short-term basis and growing numbers of working-class excursionists were transported to and from rural areas via trains and coaches.<sup>47</sup> This increased presence in the countryside caused tensions between visitors and residents as, for example, when litter from picnics was left behind, and the behaviour of urban tourists more generally was a frequent source of criticism.<sup>48</sup> Young people were often the cause of these tensions, particularly those who arrived not only with litter but gramophones, the noise from which became another frequent source of complaint, for blaring incongruously across the peaceful countryside.<sup>49</sup>

As the visibility of urban visitors in rural areas increased, so the commercialism of towns and cities followed them, with roadside cafes, the ribbon building of housing and large advertising hoardings, all of which were blamed for cluttering formerly

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<sup>46</sup> M. Tebbutt, "'Men of the Hills" and Street Corner Boys', Northern Uplands and the Urban Imagination: Derbyshire's Dark Peak 1880-1914', in Rural and Urban Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Regional Perspectives (CORAL: Conference of Regional and Local Historians, 2004), pp. 59-77. Although this view of the countryside as a recreational space was not new in the twentieth century, it did grow in popularity during the inter-war years.

<sup>47</sup> R. Moore-Colyer, 'From Great Wen'; C. Brace, 'A Pleasure Ground for the Noisy Herds? Incompatible Encounters with the Cotswolds and England, 1900-1950', Rural History, 11 (2000), pp. 75-94.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. See also; H. Batsford, How to See the Countryside (London: Batsford, 1940); H.J. Massingham, Wold Without End (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1935); J.B. Priestley, English Journey: Being a Rambling but Truthful Account of What One Man Saw and Heard and Felt and Thought During a Journey through England During the Autumn of the Year 1933 (London: Heinemann, 1934); C. Williams Ellis, (ed.) Britain and the Beast (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1937).

<sup>49</sup> C.E.M. Joad, The Book Of Joad: A Belligerent Autobiography, Under the Fifth Rib (London: Faber & Faber, 1935), p. 192; H.V. Morton, In Search of England (London: Methuen, 1927; 1934), p. 191. Although as Priestley noted, this behaviour was not always restricted to working-class young people. For an historical perspective on the 'right way' to see the countryside, see Brace, 'A Pleasure Ground for the Noisy Herds?'

peaceful and isolated vistas.<sup>50</sup> These much-disliked advertisements symbolized the concerns which many voiced over rural modernization and an associated erosion of both an older way of life and country traditions. This, in turn, led to the publication of a considerable quantity of literature which not only criticized this perceived modernization but also turned again to the notion of a romanticized past centred on an 'imagined village'.<sup>51</sup> Such views, which constructed rural life through heavily rose-tinted glasses, conveniently overlooked poverty, poor job prospects and inadequate housing which characterized the lives of many in the countryside.<sup>52</sup> The 'rural idyll' which so many of these writers sought to preserve, was an impractical proposition for the actual inhabitants of such beauty spots, many of whom were largely without the modern amenities taken for granted by those living in towns and cities until the 1950s.<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, the idea that the countryside should be available as a preserved, unchanging space remained a powerful and persistent one. Such landscapes were expected to inspire physical exercise and intellectual development, drawing in people from towns and cities, who could spend time engaging in the increasingly popular activities of hiking, rambling and camping.

The links between the countryside, Englishness and national identity, apparent since the nineteenth century, were strengthened in the 1930s as a result of this increased

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<sup>50</sup> Joad recorded that the 80 mile stretch of road between Manchester and Windermere, was home to 755 large advertising boards, C.E.M. Joad, The Untutored Townsman's Invasion of the Country (London: Faber & Faber, 1946), pp. 203-4, quoted in Moore-Colyer, 'From Great Wen to Toad Hall', p. 119.

<sup>51</sup> Morton, In Search of England; C.E.M. Joad, A Charter for Ramblers (London: Hutchinson, 1934); Priestley, English Journey; J.B. Priestley *et al.*, The Beauty of Britain: A Pictorial Survey (London: Batsford, 1935); Williams Ellis, Britain and the Beast; H.J. Massingham (ed.), The English Countryside: A Survey of its Chief Features (London: Batsford, 1939); C.E.M. Joad, The Untutored Townsman's.

<sup>52</sup> P. Mandler, 'Against "Englishness": English Culture and the Limits to Rural Nostalgia, 1860-1940', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 7, 7 (1997), pp. 165-175.

<sup>53</sup> Large parts of Lakeland for instance, were without electricity until the 1950s, as was the case in many other rural areas of England. For more on the lack of basic amenities in rural areas before the mid-1950s, see J. Saville, Rural Depopulation in England and Wales 1851-1951 (London, 1957); S. Ward, War in the Countryside, 1939-45 (London, David & Charles, 1988).

access to the countryside and to areas of outstanding beauty, such as Lakeland, which came to be seen as ‘national property’.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, as O’Neill demonstrated, Lakeland was central to ideas and images of the countryside, national identity and rural communities in the inter-war years.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, although academics from a range of disciplines have highlighted the links between ruralism and Englishness in the first half of the twentieth century, little work has been carried out on the links between the countryside and identity for those who lived in such areas during this period of transforming leisure habits.<sup>56</sup> The vast majority of accounts have also overlooked more localized ideas of identity, which continued to exist within rural communities themselves.<sup>57</sup> A key aim of this thesis has consequently been to address this neglect by arguing, as Jeremy Burchardt has suggested, that to those living in rural communities, regional and local identities were far more powerful and pervasive than nationalism throughout this period.<sup>58</sup> As was suggested earlier, the intention is to demonstrate how strongly rural identities were represented through local leisure habits and how closely discourses on rural leisure between 1930 and the early 1950s were interwoven with debates about young people, which often centred on education for life, to develop them as responsible members of society. Within these national discourses, rural citizenship was constructed in terms of halting the drift from the land and learning to appreciate ‘simple pleasures’, in contrast to the ‘inauthentic’ commercial entertainments which

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<sup>54</sup> N. Birkett, ‘The Lakes’, in C.E.M. Joad (ed.), *The English Counties* (London: Odhams Press Ltd, 1948), p. 483; W.J. Darby, *Landscape and Identity: Geographies of Nation and Class in England* (Oxford: Berg, 2000), p. 147.

<sup>55</sup> O’Neill, *Visions of Lakeland*.

<sup>56</sup> See for instance, C. Brace, ‘Finding England Everywhere: Regional Identity and the Construction of National Identity 1890- 1940’, *Ecumene*, 6 (1999), pp. 90-109; A. Howkins, ‘The Discovery of Rural England’, in R. Colls & P. Dodd, *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 66-88; D. Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, (London: Reaktion Books, 1998); R. Samuel, (ed.) *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of National Identity Volume 3: National Fictions* (London: Routledge, 1989).

<sup>57</sup> For a discussion of the development of rural history, see the following chapter.

<sup>58</sup> J. Burchardt, ‘Agricultural History, Rural History or Countryside History?’, *The Historical Journal*, 50, 2 (2007), pp. 465-481.

were growing in towns and cities; something which many urban visitors and tourists also sought.

Although historians have been slow to connect the histories of young people and the countryside, a number of contemporary studies appeared in the early decades of the twentieth century which, for the first time, asked questions about how young countrymen and women spent their leisure time. Beginning in the 1920s, individuals like Henry Morris, as well as the State, investigated the provision of agricultural education in the countryside and considered the ways in which this could be developed to meet the particular needs of rural young people.<sup>59</sup> It has already been suggested that a key motivation for such inquiries was concern over how to keep young countrymen and women on the land, an issue which was inextricably linked to the question of how to ‘train’ them for rural life. These concerns merged perhaps most pointedly in the Young Farmers’ Clubs (YFC). Established in the 1920s on a model imported from rural America, these voluntary clubs were aimed almost exclusively at young countrymen and women. The YFC movement encouraged their members towards self-government and independence, combining urban rhetoric on citizenship responsibilities with discourse on agricultural education and the leisure of rural young people. These connections between young people and the countryside became even more resonant during the Second World War when, as in the First World War, images of the countryside were central to patriotic ideas of what was being fought for; young people were perceived as central to ideas of national stability and peacetime reconstruction,

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<sup>59</sup> H. Morris, The Village College. Being a Memorandum on the Provision of Educations and Social Facilities For the Countryside, With Special Reference to Cambridgeshire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924); Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, The Practical Education of Women for Rural Life Report of the Sub-Committee of the Interdepartmental Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture and Board of Education (London: HMSO, 1929). This contrasted with the treatment of urban youth during the same period, who largely solicited concern over their leisure habits.

because they were seen as comprising the next generation of citizens. It was widely agreed during the war that young people (more than ever) required education for the responsibilities of citizenship, in order to protect the democratic stability of the nation, once the conflict was over.<sup>60</sup> From the early 1940s, surveys of the countryside focussed on village social life and the extension of rural education for young people, and informed plans for the post-war period which recognized that areas of the countryside (such as Lakeland) would require at least a degree of modernization and centralization.<sup>61</sup> As this thesis suggests, however, attempts to introduce progressive ideas in relation to rural social life and the use of leisure could provoke considerable conflict with older and well-established organizational structures in rural communities, and give rise to tensions of the sort which are explored in later chapters.<sup>62</sup>

It has been suggested that much of the public discourse on the changing character of rural areas in this period concentrated on the use of leisure, whether that of outsiders or in relation to local young people. Between 1930 and the early 1950s, young people and their leisure time were often viewed at a national level as an indicator of change and the ‘new modern age’, unlike the imagery of rural life which more frequently represented the countryside as an unchanging, natural space and the embodiment of a romanticized past. Rural youth and their leisure habits consequently held something of an incongruous position within these two strands of national discourse. As a social category whose significance was increasingly recognized as key to the nation’s future, young people signified change, independence and the growing encroachment of popular culture in contemporary debates. As members of rural

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<sup>60</sup> This was in essence, the founding principle of the statutory Youth Service, which was established shortly after the outbreak of war in 1939.

<sup>61</sup> Orwin, Country Planning; Edwards-Rees, A Rural Youth Service.

<sup>62</sup> In particular, see Chapter Five of this thesis.

communities, however, they were part of a broader narrative of the unchanging and traditional rural idyll, which continued to play an important part in the popular imagination.

### Tradition, Change and a Sense of Place

As the inhabitants of a region with a long-established reputation as a tourist destination, young workers in Lakeland spent much of their time being watched by outsiders; both in their work (in shops, cafes, or as domestic servants in hotels and guest houses) and in their leisure, at large annual public gatherings as well as on a more regular, informal basis during the summer season. Academics from a range of disciplines have provided interesting insights into how observation by external groups (usually tourists), can shape the way local residents think about themselves and their localities.<sup>63</sup> In drawing on such studies, this thesis is, therefore, not only about the ways in which rural young people spent their leisure, and its distinctiveness from many urban experiences; it is also concerned with the meanings which were attached to these leisure forms and how living in a tourist destination as popular as Lakeland, influenced both the way in which young people spent their spare time, and their sense of place.

A central purpose of this study is, indeed, to highlight the ways in which young people's leisure experiences in Lakeland helped to create or reinforce a localized sense

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<sup>63</sup> A. Hanson, 'The Making of the Maori: Culture Invention and Its Logic', *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 91, 4 (December, 1989), pp. 890-902; J.S. Linnekin, 'Defining Tradition: Variations on the Hawaiian Identity', *American Ethnologist*, 10, 2 (May, 1983), pp. 241-252; S. McCabe, 'The Making of Community Identity through Historic Festive Practice: The Case of Ashbourne Royal Shrovetide Football', in D. Picard & M. Robinson, *Festivals, Tourism and Social Change. Remaking Worlds*, (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2006), pp. 99-118.; E. Carnegie & S. McCabe, 'Re-enactment Events and Tourism: Meaning, Authenticity and Identity', *Current Issues in Tourism*, 11, 4 (2008), pp. 349-368. For more on this point, see the historiographical discussion in the next chapter.

of place between the 1930s and early 1950s. The notion of a sense of place has received significant attention in the academic literature, although largely from scholars in other disciplines. By addressing how young countrymen and women's sense of place and identity was created and maintained in a rural upland locality such as Lakeland, the thesis makes a valuable addition to our understanding of tradition and change in the countryside during the first half of the twentieth century. It is pertinent at this point, therefore, to define and explore what is meant by the term 'sense of place'. Academics have, since the 1970s, been concerned with exploring and documenting the ways in which people use space and place in their everyday lives. 'Humanistic' geographers, in particular, have been central to the development of this area of enquiry.<sup>64</sup> These studies suggest that in its simplest form, a sense of place is about the relationship between people and a specific location. It is both a useful and important concept for historians to engage with when attempting to understand the complexities of rural life and the connections countrymen and women can have to their surroundings (such as village spaces or the local landscape, for example). For the purposes of this study, then, a sense of place is defined as, 'a feeling that a community is a special place, distinct from anywhere else. Such special places have strong identities and characters that are deeply felt by residents and many visitors. These special places also contribute to the personal identity of those who grow up in them.'<sup>65</sup> As we can see, sense of place imbues a particular location with meaning, and provides people living there with a sense of shared identity. It can also provide outsiders with a feeling of 'what it is like to 'be

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<sup>64</sup> See for instance, A. Buttimer & D. Seamon (eds.), The Human Experience of Space and Place (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980); T. Cresswell, In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); E. Relph, Place and Placelessness (London: Pion, 1976); G. Rose, Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge (Cambridge: Polity, 1993); Y. Tuan, Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1974); Y. Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1977).

<sup>65</sup> W. Michaels, The Making of St. Petersburg (Charleston: The History Press, 2012), p .12.

there”’.<sup>66</sup> A sense of place is often closely connected to a place’s heritage and, for example, can be evoked through ‘traditional’ activities which are rooted in the past, such as re-enactments, festivals and parades, or the use of local dialect. When we explore how geographers have theorised this concept, it is clear that they view a sense of place as being able to provide ‘security of identity in the middle of all the movement and change’, which offers ‘rootedness... stability and a source of unproblematic identity.’<sup>67</sup> This is particularly relevant to this thesis, given the concerns repeatedly voiced between the 1930s and early 1950s, regarding the loss of a traditional way of life, as modernized and urbanized leisure culture was widely perceived to be eroding older patterns in the countryside. Scholars from other disciplines have helped to develop the concept and many have taken an interdisciplinary approach, examining place and identity in both urban and rural localities.<sup>68</sup> It is largely adults who have been the focus of such work, however, and only relatively recently have young people begun to feature in these investigations. A particularly interesting study is that by Pretty *et al.*, who examined the generational dimensions of place identity in two rural Australian communities, by specifically addressing adolescents’ sense of place.<sup>69</sup> Their work suggests that this bias towards adult residents of rural communities may be because a common conclusion of earlier studies is that the people who have lived in a particular

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<sup>66</sup> T. Cresswell, Place: A Short Introduction (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 7-8.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>68</sup> See for example, R. Derrett, ‘Making Sense of How Festivals Demonstrate a Community's Sense of Place’, Event Management, 8, 1 (2003), pp. 49-58; S. Kianicka, M. Buchecker, M. Hunziker & U. Müller-Böker, ‘Locals' and Tourists' Sense of Place’, Mountain Research and Development, 26, 1 (2006), pp. 55-63; S. Mazumdar, S. Mazumdar, F. Docuyanán & C.M. McLaughlin ‘Creating a Sense of Place: The Vietnamese-Americans and Little Saigon’, Journal of Environmental Psychology 20, 4 (December, 2000), pp. 319–333; K.C. Ryden, Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and the Sense of Place (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993); S. Shamai, ‘Sense of Place: an Empirical Measurement’, Geoforum, 22, 3 (1991), pp. 347-358; C.L. Twigger-Ross & D.L. Uzzell, ‘Place and Identity Processes’, Journal of Environmental Psychology, 16 (1996), pp. 205-220; E. Waterton, ‘Whose Sense of Place? Reconciling Archaeological Perspectives with Community Values: Cultural Landscapes in England’, International Journal of Heritage Studies, 11, 4 (2005), pp. 309-325.

<sup>69</sup> G.H. Pretty, H.M. Chipuer & P. Bramston, ‘Sense of Place amongst Adolescents and Adults in Two Rural Australian Towns: The Discriminating Features of Place Attachment, Sense of Community and Place Dependence in Relation to Place Identity’, Journal of Environmental Psychology 23, 3 (September, 2003), pp. 273-287.



place for the longest time, exhibit the strongest connections to their surroundings. This thesis will demonstrate that precisely because young people in Lakeland engaged in traditional activities during their leisure time from childhood, their sense of place and identity was fostered from an early age, so that by the time they left school in their teens, their connection to the region was already strongly developed. This involvement meant that local young people played an integral role in the survival of older leisure forms in Lakeland. By using oral history, discussed in more detail in the next chapter, the thesis is able to explore young people's experiences at a very personal level and in the process, reveal how their leisure habits were a core feature in the creation and maintenance of a sense of place throughout the period examined here. A sense of place can also, however, be fostered by a particular landscape. It is clear from studies of what actually constitutes a sense of place, that it is often strongly informed by the natural environment. This is perhaps especially so for a region such as Lakeland, which is known internationally for its picturesque vistas and rugged mountainous scenery. As the chapters that follow will show, Lakeland's landscape often featured heavily in young people's experiences and was an important component in how they formed their sense of place and identity.

Several scholars have explored the relationship between the local landscape and the identity of Lakeland people. In an article which examined regional identity in the Lake Counties, Angus Winchester, for example, described how the rugged scenery which dominated much of Lakeland, helped locals to construct an identity centred on a sturdy and independent character, resistant to change and interference from external

bodies; a theme also frequently visible in the local press.<sup>70</sup> In an extension of this idea, Burchardt has suggested that Lakeland's 'literary landscape' also reinforced perceptions of similarities between the region's scenery and its inhabitants, 'Wordsworth's The Prelude, for example, repeatedly linked the grandeur of the Cumbrian mountains with the independence and dignity of those who lived and worked among them'.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, locally born people were routinely 'perceived, both in the academic literature and in the popular imagination, as possessing a strong regional identity'.<sup>72</sup> As Winchester has pointed out, much modern writing on Lakeland, 'is pervaded by a sense of regional distinctiveness... [and] a resistance to change fostered by remoteness and isolation'.<sup>73</sup> In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, Lakeland was feared for its dramatic and rugged vistas. Wordsworth and his contemporaries subsequently provided people with a new way of viewing the region's landscape through art, poetry and prose.<sup>74</sup> At the same time, developments such as the railways allowed greater numbers of people to reach the Lakes, and to encounter what many had already experienced through literary imaginings.<sup>75</sup> By 1931, the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) owned four premises in

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<sup>70</sup> A. Winchester, 'Regional Identity in the Lake Counties: Land Tenure and the Cumbrian Landscape', Northern History, 42, 1 (2005), p. 30.

<sup>71</sup> Burchardt, Paradise Lost, p. 102.

<sup>72</sup> Winchester, 'Regional Identity', p. 29.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ruskin, Coleridge and Wordsworth all helped to romanticize the Lakeland landscape, which was once feared for its dramatic vistas and rugged mountainous scenery. For more on this changing view of Lakeland and the region's literary connections, see: N. Nicholson, The Lakers: The Adventures of the First Tourists (Milnthorpe: Cicerone, 1995; first published in hardback, 1955); G. Lindop, Literary Guide to the Lake District (Wilmslow: Sigma Press, 2005; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.).

<sup>75</sup> For an explanation of the development of the tourist trade in Lakeland from the nineteenth century see, J.K. Walton & P.R. McGloin, 'The Tourist Trade in Victorian Lakeland', Northern History, 17 (1981), pp. 153-82; J.K. Walton, 'The Windermere Tourist trade in the Age of the Railway, 1847-1912', in O.M. Westall, (ed.), Windermere in the Nineteenth Century (Lancaster: Centre for North-West Regional Studies, 1991); O.M. Westall, 'The Retreat to Arcadia: Windermere as a Select Residential Resort in the Late Nineteenth Century', in Westall, Windermere in the Nineteenth Century. This rise in visitors and holidaymakers should not be over-emphasized, however. As O'Neill pointed out, in comparison to Blackpool, tourist figures for Lakeland were miniscule. The 1921 Census was taken in June and whilst not representative of high season visitor figures, it does provide a limited indication of numbers, as well as a point of comparison with other resorts. Enumeration for 1921 for instance, reveals that Windermere had 1286 visitors and Ambleside 578, yet Blackpool could claim 25,807. The local press in Lakeland often estimated a 'seasonal total' which in 1930, stood at 38,000 excursionists, whilst Blackpool's figure was 500,000. Taken from C. O'Neill, "'The Most Magical Corner of England": Tourism, Preservation

Lakeland, a sign that the region's position as a holiday destination was growing in the first half of the twentieth century, when the relatively low cost of accommodation offered by the hostels helped to democratize access to the region and attract increasing numbers of young walkers and holidaymakers.<sup>76</sup> This popularity continued in wartime when, although leisure travel was discouraged due to petrol rationing, the volume of evacuees in the region meant that large crowds of outsiders continued to be present at local public events and celebrations, the popularity of which continued into the post-war period.

So, what does the sense of place which this thesis explores, and which was so central to young people's leisure experiences, actually consist of? It is clear that it was composed of a number of layers, which often heavily drew on the region's leisure culture and included traditional activities, such as rushbearing and sports, Lakeland's natural landscape, and the 'character' of local inhabitants. Locally born people were commonly described as sturdy, independent and hardy, words which also clearly fed into a more generalized sense of northern identity.<sup>77</sup> A further layer to this sense of place came from literary and artistic figures who were connected with Lakeland's heritage. Notable examples included the poet William Wordsworth, writer John Ruskin

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and the Development of the Lake District, 1919-39' in J.K. Walton, (ed.) Histories of Tourism, Representation, Identity and Conflict (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2005), p. 229. For more on the 1921 Census, see J.K. Walton & C. O'Neill, 'Numbering the Holidaymakers: The Problems and Possibilities of the June Census of 1921 for Historians of Resorts', in Local Historian, 23, 4 (1993), pp. 205-16.

<sup>76</sup> C. O'Neill, "'The Most Magical Corner of England'", p. 232. Between the early 1930s and the close of the decade, the number of overnight stays in these hostels rose from 12,000 to 72,640, and represented a considerable increase in the number of largely younger visitors who were now able to venture into the more remote areas of the region (such as Grasmere and the Langdales) rather than lingering around the rail terminus at Windermere. Statistical information taken from O'Neill, Visions of Lakeland, pp. 94-6. For academic work on the growth of the outdoor movement in the inter-war years, see H. Walker, 'The Popularisation of the Outdoor Movement, 1900-1940', The International Journal of the History of Sport, 2, 2 (1985), pp. 140-153; R. Snape, 'The Co-operative Holidays Association and the Cultural Formation of Countryside Leisure Practice' in Leisure Studies, 23, 2 (April 2004), pp. 143-158.

<sup>77</sup> See D. Russell, Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination (Manchester: MUP, 2004).

and H.D. Rawnsley, who co-founded the National Trust. In the inter-war years, these writers also included authors such as Arthur Ransome, who did much to reinforce the popular sense of Lakeland's place identity as being closely connected to its landscape.<sup>78</sup>

Lakeland's reputation as a tourist destination meant that the leisure experiences of local young people in Lakeland were not necessarily discrete, but also often included the presence of such outsiders. The sense of place which was often encapsulated by the leisure habits of young workers between 1930 and the early 1950s, was consequently fostered by three central characteristics which distinguished their leisure experiences from those of their counterparts in large towns and cities. Firstly, much of their leisure was un-commercialized. While this was also true of some of the leisure activities of urban youth, young people living in towns and cities were far more exposed to the influence of commercial forms of leisure than those in the countryside. Throughout the 1930s, for example, millions of young people in towns and cities regularly visited the cinema and dance halls each week.<sup>79</sup> The remote nature of many Lakeland villages meant that this type of commercial leisure industry had made only small inroads into the region by the end of the period examined here. While young people certainly did attend dances and watch films, these leisure activities were more likely to be held in communal venues and organized from within local communities, where although entrance fees were charged, most, if not all, of the profits were donated to charity.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> A. Ransome, *Swallows and Amazons*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1930).

<sup>79</sup> Jeffrey Richards, for example, records that by 1939, it was estimated that average weekly admissions for British cinemas were 23 million, J. Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1984; 2010), p. 11.

<sup>80</sup> Young urban workers also visited church halls and other communal venues for dances and social evenings, yet the dominant representation of experiences in towns and cities is of the dance halls and grand cinemas run by large chains such as Mecca and Odeon.

The second distinctive element of young people's leisure in Lakeland was its intergenerational nature. Largely because there were few commercial alternatives in the region, locals of all ages routinely spent their leisure in the same venue or engaged in the same activity. Adults played a prominent role in the organization of young people's leisure and as a result, much of their spare time remained heavily supervised by adult authority figures. This involvement by adults meant that there was a greater tendency for young people's leisure activities in Lakeland to maintain continuity with the past and perpetuate sense of local distinctiveness, rather than conform to 'modern crazes', such as those which informed popular music and the dance fashions in many commercial dance halls. As we shall see, elements of older leisure habits persisted in the experiences of young people in Lakeland throughout the 1930s and 1940s, during a phase when urban leisure was more often associated with a 'new modern age'. This tendency to 'celebrate' the past which forms the third distinguishing feature of the local leisure habits described here, was also connected to broader concerns within rural communities about the extent to which many rural traditions were being eroded by the advance of modernization.<sup>81</sup>

As should have become clear, this thesis argues that young workers played an important part in the maintenance of older leisure traditions and local distinctiveness in Lakeland between the 1930s and early 1950s, although this role has been largely neglected in previous studies. A number of key questions are addressed, which include how did young people living in a relatively isolated rural locality such as this spend their spare time, when largely distanced from urbanized centres of popular culture? Given that this very remoteness was what so often attracted visitors to Lakeland, how

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<sup>81</sup> A. Hanson, 'The Making of the Maori'; M.K. Porter, 'The Bauer County Fair: Community Celebration as Context for Youth Experiences of Learning and Belonging' Journal of Research in Rural Education, 11, 3 (Winter 1995), pp. 139-156.

did living in a tourist resort influence the ways local young people thought about their leisure? In what ways were these locally-based identities expressed through leisure choices and in the later-life narratives of oral history testimony? In specific relation to the war years, to what extent were these local leisure habits changed as a result of the large influx of outsiders into Lakeland? Finally, what changes and continuities can be mapped across the period, in the ways that young people spent their leisure time?

Chapter One establishes the conceptual framework of this research, with a review of the sources on which this thesis is based and an assessment of the existing historiography, with the aim of assessing gaps in the existing knowledge and suggesting how this study seeks to fill them. Chapter Two considers social dancing, which other studies of youth and leisure have characterized as a core feature of urban youth culture from the inter-war period onwards. This chapter assesses how the lack of a commercialized dance industry in rural Lakeland shaped the kinds of dances which young people attended and counters the myth that rural youth routinely sought out urban venues for leisure activities such as dancing. It also furthers the theme of youth and the development of a sense of place, by reflecting on how the organization of local dances helped perpetuate a sense of Lakeland's distinctiveness, illustrating the ways in which such dancing tended to celebrate the past, rather than modern trends and fashions.

Chapter Three examines large 'community events', in which young people often played a central role. This chapter highlights how these events, which often focussed on 'traditional' aspects of the region's leisure culture, helped to create a sense of identity within Lakeland communities. It turns to the role of tourists as spectators at such events, arguing that the participants in these communal celebrations were often

very sensitive to the presence of outsiders, whose attendance gave Lakeland communities opportunities to 'project' a particular image or sense of place to them, as well as to audiences further afield. These occasions had long been important to village communities in Lakeland for both celebrating aspects of their past, but for also appealing to tourists who visited the area. Local young people did, however, play a particular part in them, at a time when their involvement was seen as vital to the survival of 'authentic' rural traditions in an age which seemed increasingly preoccupied with 'modern' pastimes.

The focus of Chapter Four are the sports and outdoor pursuits popular with young workers in Lakeland between 1930 and the early 1950s. This chapter proposes that even within modernized, codified sports such as cricket, a sense of place and links to the past were becoming progressively more important to young people in Lakeland, especially as they came into greater contact with the outsiders who visited the region. This analysis demonstrates that although sports were increasingly expensive pastimes, young Lakeland workers often found ways to negotiate these costs and create free (or at least cheaper) versions of these activities, the negotiation of which also provided them with ways of rejecting the 'modernization' of some sports and outdoor activities. Chapter Four also explores the nature of young people's connection to the Lakeland landscape, particularly as this was expressed through their leisure choices, and examines the ways in which access to transport (whether motorized or otherwise) helped to shape the leisure opportunities of local youth. The chapter examines the role which walking, running and hiking across the region's mountains and hills played in the leisure lives of young people. It reflects on the profound effect that such activities often had on those who spent their leisure time in this way, and the role which these activities played in

heightening a sense of place and locality. It also argues that the physical quality of these connections with the landscape prompted a sense of ownership among young people over the local countryside, which was expressed in often fierce opposition to the commercialism of outdoor activities.

Chapter Five addresses the role of voluntary and statutory leisure provision in the experiences of young workers, suggesting that the structure of nationally-based leisure organizations in a rural locality such as Lakeland, reveals broader insights regarding the arrangement of leisure activities within village communities. Precisely because the nation's moral well-being was thought of as closely tied to both young people and the countryside during this period, rural areas were often the site of voluntary organizations' efforts to mould young workers into morally upright citizens.<sup>82</sup> This chapter places the leisure of rural young people in the context of these wider national debates and considers the intersection between youth, citizenship and the countryside across the period. Its themes contribute to existing work on national voluntary bodies such as the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and Young Farmers Clubs, by exploring the extent to which the leadership of these groups in rural communities often reflected local agendas, rather than national doctrines and expectations. The chapter draws on official records kept by these groups, as well as on the personal experiences of ex-members, revealed in the oral history testimony, to highlight the distinctive concerns which young countrymen and women elicited from policy makers, commentators and youth workers. This chapter's analysis and explanation of the youth service in a purely rural, rather than urban, setting makes its own distinctive contribution to the existing literature, since this theme has to date been almost exclusively neglected in historical

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<sup>82</sup> For example, the Guides and Scouts placed outdoor activities such as camping and hiking at the centre of their programmes and regular visits to the countryside were organized.



discussions. The tensions caused by the arrival of outsiders, who introduced progressive ways of approaching young people and their leisure time are also assessed, for, as we shall see, the professional youth service presented a particular challenge to traditional ways of organizing young people's leisure in Lakeland.

## **Chapter One**

### **Research Methods and Historiography**

#### Research Methods and Sources

This first part of the chapter outlines the range of primary sources which have been drawn on during the research for this thesis, ranging from archival material to oral history testimony. As the introductory chapter of this thesis suggested, the leisure experiences of rural youth in the inter-war years have been largely neglected in comparison to the attention paid to the popular culture of urban youth. Much of the research on rural youth which does exist, is from the point of view of organized groups and national organizations. The sources used here, however, have been exploited to reveal a more localized perspective. They include local newspapers, the national press, parliamentary papers, records of various voluntary organizations, contemporary surveys, reports and pamphlets, guidebooks, inter-war rural non-fiction and autobiographies. Local newspapers hold a wealth of information regarding the leisure calendar in Lakeland and the range of events which took place between 1930 and the early 1950s. In particular, the Westmorland Gazette is examined in detail.<sup>83</sup> This material provided insights into how village venues were used by different groups

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<sup>83</sup> This was the dominant newspaper in the region throughout the period and even absorbed several smaller local papers in the post-war period. Rather than sampling the newspaper, the output for every year of this study has been examined fully. The Westmorland's Gazette's own history had long-established links with the region's cultural heritage. Established in 1818, the paper boasted a number of connections with well-known literary figures in Lakeland. Thomas De Quincy, for example, was an early editor, as well as a friend of William Wordsworth. Wordsworth's letters of protest over the railway often featured in the paper during the 1830s. In the twentieth century, the newspaper printed Alfred Wainwright's internationally celebrated series for walkers, *A Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells*, often seen as the definitive guide to the region's landscape. The paper also boasted links with John Ruskin and Beatrix Potter.

throughout the period, as well as the meetings of voluntary organizations, sports teams and local societies. Each week, the paper included a village-by-village summary of leisure activities or events which had taken place. This supplemented larger reports and the regular 'Coming Events' column, which ran until the mid-1940s and advertised dances and socials to be held in village halls and other communal venues in Lakeland. The type of dance steps popular and the bands that played at local dances were often recorded in these reports and along with oral evidence, helped to construct a picture of continuity and change in the dancing habits of the region's young people. This information has proved invaluable in constructing a rounded picture of leisure in the region and also served to reinforce the oral history evidence.

The central themes of this thesis were reflected in much of what was reported; local leisure traditions, activities for young people and the growing tourist industry. The letters and comments pages also helped to indicate how young people were thought about in this rural region, especially in comparison to their treatment in the national press. Debates surrounding dance licences, the influence of soldiers on the local youth population in wartime, and drunkenness associated with dancing, all featured during the period. The tensions between Lakeland communities and the growing numbers of tourists frequenting the region were also areas of contention between the 1930s and early 1950s. Questions over planning, preservation, the provision of modern amenities, the use of Lakeland by outsiders and the sheer numbers of tourists 'invading' the region on a seasonal basis, all offer illumination as to how locals viewed themselves and outsiders, as well as providing context to the atmosphere in which local young people grew up.

Alongside the many benefits of using newspapers as historical source material, there are limitations to consider. Issues include subjectivity, both ‘intentional and unintentional, stated, unstated and hidden’, as well as questions over the ability of the press to offer a representative picture of a particular community’s concerns and attitudes.<sup>84</sup> Whilst audience reaction to a newspaper can be difficult to ascertain, letters pages offer a space for at least some readers to express their opinions. Caution should be employed when approaching such contributions, however, as they are also subject to the same selection and editorial considerations as the rest of the newspaper.

A number of studies have explored local newspapers and ‘their intersection with concepts of identity and place’.<sup>85</sup> Earlier work has also examined the ways in which newspapers can foster feelings of ‘both attachment and involvement’ in their readers.<sup>86</sup> Local newspapers not only recorded news and events; they could both reflect and shape public opinion, acting as ‘potential formers as well as reporters of local identity.’<sup>87</sup> This was particularly important in a region popular with tourists, where the reports of local cultural events, and the picturesque images which often accompanied accounts of larger

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<sup>84</sup> Higher Education Academy, Historical Insights: Focus on Research: Newspapers (Coventry: History at the HEA, University of Warwick, May, 2011), p. 8; A. Jackson, ‘Provincial Newspapers and the Development of Local Communities: The Creation of a Seaside Resort Newspaper for Ilfracombe, Devon 1860–1’, Family & Community History, 13, 2 (November 2010), pp. 101-113; p.109.

<sup>85</sup> A. McAllister, & A. Hobbs, ‘Local and Regional Newspapers: Introduction’, International Journal of Regional and Local Studies, 5, 1 (2009), p. 11. See also, H. Berry, ‘Promoting Taste in the Provincial Press: National and Local Culture in Eighteenth-Century Newcastle upon Tyne’, Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies 25, 1 (2002), pp. 1-17; L. Brake, B. Bell & D. Finkelstein (eds.) Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000); A. Hobbs, Reading the Local Paper: Social and Cultural Functions of the Local Press in Preston, Lancashire, 1855-1900 (PhD Thesis, University of Central Lancashire, 2010); Jackson, ‘Provincial Newspapers and the Development of Local Communities’; M. Lester, ‘Local Newspapers and the Shaping of Local Identity in North-East London c.1885–1915’, International Journal of Regional and Local Studies, 5, 1 (2009) pp. 44–62.

<sup>86</sup> E. Rothenbuhler, L. Mullen, R. DeLaurell & C. Ryu, ‘Communication, Community Attachment, and Involvement’, Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, 73, 2 (1996), pp. 445-466; p. 445; Lester, Local newspapers and the Shaping of Local Identity, p. 45. See also, H. Barker, Newspapers. Politics and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); B. Beavan, ‘The Provincial Press, Civic Ceremony and the Citizen-Soldier During the Boer War, 1899–1902: A Study of Local Patriotism’, The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 37, 2 (2009), pp. 207-228.

<sup>87</sup> Lester, ‘Local Newspapers and the Shaping of Local Identity’, p. 45; Jackson, ‘Provincial Newspapers and the Development of Local Communities’, p. 111.

gatherings, reinforced Lakeland's place identity, both to local communities and external audiences.<sup>88</sup> The thesis draws on this earlier work to contextualize the use of the local press, and suggests that as a cumulative body of material, the Westmorland Gazette presented a particular sense of place regarding which issues were reported and considered as important.<sup>89</sup>

Parliamentary papers proved to be another useful source in assessing the ways in which rural young people were viewed at a national level between the late 1930s and the early 1950s. Records of the youth service for example, have been used to provide indications of policy developments nationally, where the 'problem' of youth was approached on a broad scale, for few historical studies have considered rural youth and its relation to national policy in anywhere near the same level of detail given to young people in towns and cities. These documents have been complemented by the records of the Westmorland County Youth Service, which included Lakeland in its remit. This under-utilized archive shed light on how national policies were translated in a rural context and the problems encountered when dealing with a rather disparate youth population. It is important to remember, however, that these documents were created by adults, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or feelings of the young people they worked with. Linked to this are documents left behind by local branches of voluntary organizations, many of which came under the umbrella of the youth service in 1939 and which have provided further examples of the ways in which broad policy initiatives were interpreted on a local scale. The young members of these organizations often created their own log books, which despite largely portraying the mundane nature of the

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<sup>88</sup> Jackson, 'Provincial Newspapers', p.106.

<sup>89</sup> Johnes and Mellor have also suggested the links between the press and the construction of identity. M. Johnes & G. Mellor, 'The 1953 FA Cup Final: Modernity and Tradition in British Culture', Contemporary British History, 20, 2 (June, 2006), pp. 263-280.

day-to-day running of such groups, offer occasional flashes of personal insight, which are particularly valuable evidence of young people expressing themselves in their own words. Autobiographies have been helpful in tracing the individual experiences of young workers in the region as well as substantiating a number of the themes which were apparent in the oral history material (such as a lack of commercialism). The plethora of reports, surveys, investigations and questionnaires produced between 1930 and the early 1950s, which examined either young people or the countryside (or in some cases, young people *in* the countryside) have provided a rich contextual background for the rest of the study. In particular, these publications not only pinpointed the particular concerns attached to young people and rural areas across the period; they also presented in-depth evidence of how young people and the countryside were viewed by external groups and the way they fitted into broader debates regarding each of these categories.

News film reel from the British Pathé archive has also been used where appropriate, in order to demonstrate how young people and rural areas were portrayed to external groups, as ‘moving imagery became increasingly powerful... in its capacity to shape how we tell stories about ourselves and the world we inhabit.’<sup>90</sup> Such sources were particularly useful in relation to some of the larger events held in Lakeland between 1930 and the early 1950s, which were captured on film by Pathé.<sup>91</sup> Much of this footage is only a few minutes in length but it is valuable in revealing how the region was presented to outsiders and the extent to which Lakeland’s identity often centred on the grandeur of its scenery, the region’s literary connections and the supposedly ‘hardy’ nature of local inhabitants. These film snapshots are therefore evidence of the powerful

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<sup>90</sup> H. Norris Nicholson (ed.), *Screening Culture: Constructing Image and Identity* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2003), p. 1.

<sup>91</sup> The British Pathé archive is now online and contains over 90,000 ‘historical clips’ which can be viewed at <http://www.britishpathe.com/>.

and particular ways in which Lakeland was presented to outsiders. The presence of a Pathé cameraman at such public events would undoubtedly have made locals aware of the growing external audience which was interested in their region. The work of historians who theorize the moving image has provided a contextual background to the use of Pathé film reel. In particular, Heather Norris Nicholson, has drawn links between ‘identity, image and culture’ as presented on film and stressed the potential of ‘archival film imagery’ to further our understanding of ‘visual representations’ in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>92</sup> As she points out, archival film holds great significance, as it can provide opportunities ‘to view traditional practice as carried out by earlier generations in front of someone else.’<sup>93</sup>

In employing such a variety of sources, the aim has been to build a rounded and nuanced picture of the leisure experiences of rural young people, which have largely been inaccessible to (or ignored by) historians. There have, however, also been some frustrating gaps in the evidence on which the thesis draws. The minute books of village hall committees in Lakeland, for example, proved impossible to source. Similarly, despite much searching, it proved impossible to locate personal diaries of those adult authority figures who were responsible for organizing much of the leisure available to young people across the period, and which would have been invaluable in more fully assessing the motivations of such individuals in their work with young people.

The absence of such written evidence is just as acute in the case of young people themselves, whose voices are notoriously difficult to hear in the historical record. For this reason, oral history testimony has also played an important part in this thesis,

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<sup>92</sup> Norris Nicholson, *Screening Culture*, p. 97.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

supplementing the range of written primary sources outlined above, and offering its own insights. Oral history has, of course, been central to detailing the leisure habits of young workers in towns and cities, as the work of Roberts, Langhamer and Davies demonstrate.<sup>94</sup> More recently, Todd and Horn have provided examples of the need for oral history techniques to investigate the experiences of young people in the post-war period, from their own points of view.<sup>95</sup> The thesis draws on this body of work in order to contextualize the experiences of young people living remote parts of Lakeland, who were culturally distanced from the lives examined in these urban studies. Oral history testimony has played a particularly important part in unearthing the informal 'hidden' experiences of Lakeland youth, and their relationship to sense of place and belonging. This is true to the traditions of oral history work, where much of that carried out over the past 40 years, has helped to 'recover' history 'from below' for groups such as the working-class, which had 'traditionally been disregarded by conventional histories'.<sup>96</sup> A wide array of further publications based on oral history testimony, have analysed memories of war.<sup>97</sup> Other academic studies have demonstrated that aside from class, oral history can also be used to access complex issues surrounding gender, race and sexuality.<sup>98</sup> The experiences of people living in rather isolated rural communities have,

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<sup>94</sup> E. Roberts, A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women, 1890-1940 (Oxford, Blackwell, 1984); C. Langhamer, Women's Leisure in England, 1920-1960 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); A. Davies, Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working-Class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900-1939 (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992).

<sup>95</sup> S. Todd, & H. Young, 'Babyboomers to Beanstalkers: Making the Modern Teenager in Post-War Britain' in Cultural and Social History, 9, 3 (September, 2012), pp. 451-467; A. Horn, Juke Box Britain: Americanisation and Youth Culture, 1945-60 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

<sup>96</sup> L. Abrams, Oral History Theory (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 5.

<sup>97</sup> Special Issue on 'War and Peace', Oral History, 25, 2 (1997); M. Evans & K. Lunn, War and Memory in the Twentieth Century (New York: Berg, 1997); H. Greenspan, On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History (Westport: Praeger, 1998); P. Summerfield, Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); A. Portelli, The Order Has Been Carried Out: History, Memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); T. Ashplant, G. Dawson & M. Roper, Commemorating War: The Politics of Memory (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004).

<sup>98</sup> J. Liddington & J. Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement, (London: Virago Press, 1978); P. Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); 'Women's History' Special Issue, Oral History, 5, 2 (1977); 'Ethnicity and



since the 1950s, also been explored through oral history.<sup>99</sup> Yet historians in the growing discipline of social and cultural rural history have, however, been slow to capitalize on these techniques, tending to favour documentary evidence.<sup>100</sup> More recently, international historians have often utilized this resource to great effect in their examination of rural areas and farming communities, although many of these studies commonly focus on gender, class or race relations rather than the meanings of leisure.<sup>101</sup> In the context of academic work on Lakeland, oral testimony has commonly been used to document the experiences of tourists and incomers to the region.<sup>102</sup>

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National Identity' Special Issue, *Oral History*, 21, 1 (1993); E. Roberts, *Women's Work 1840-1940* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); S. Rowbotham, *Hidden From History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and The Fight Against It* (London: Pluto Press, 1973).

<sup>99</sup> G. Ewart Evans, *Ask The Fellows Who Cut The Hay* (London: Faber, 1956); G. Ewart Evans, *Where Beards Wag All: The Relevance of the Oral Tradition* (London: Faber, 1970); R. Blythe, *Akenfield: Portrait of an English Village* (1969), were the earliest studies in this field. Evans is now widely viewed as the founder of oral history in England.

<sup>100</sup> Where scholars have used oral history evidence to explore issues in rural history, the results have been both interesting and varied. M. Sutton, 'The Problems, Difficulties and Advantages of Women's Oral History in Rural Society', *Rural History*, 5, 2 (1994), pp. 211-216; A. Davis, 'So It Wasn't A Brilliant Education, Not Really I Don't Think': Class, Gender and Locality. Women's Accounts of School in Rural Oxfordshire, c.1930-1960', *History of Education Researcher*, 78 (2006), pp. 72-83; R. Samuel, *Village Life and Labour* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975); M.J. Winstanley, 'The Rural Publican and His Business in East Kent Before 1914', *Oral History*, 4, 2 (1976), pp. 63-78. Selina Todd drew extensively on existing oral history archives in order to access the experiences of young female workers in the countryside. S. Todd, 'Young Women, Work and Family in Inter-War Rural England', *The Agricultural History Review*, 52, 1 (2004), pp. 83-98; S. Todd, 'Domestic Service and Class Relations in Britain, 1900-1950', *Past and Present*, 203, 1 (2009), pp. 181-204.

<sup>101</sup> This is particularly the case for examinations of rural America. See for instance, W. Fitzhugh Brundage (ed.), *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); M. Walker, 'Narrative Themes in Oral Histories of Farming Folk', *Agricultural History*, 74, 2 (Spring, 2000), pp. 340-351; M. Walker, (ed.), *Country Women Cope With Hard Times: A Collection of Oral Histories* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004); M. Walker, *Southern Farmers and Their Stories: Memory and Meaning in Oral History* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2006); D. Anderson, "'Down memory Lane: Nostalgia for the Old South in Post-Civil War Plantation Reminiscences,'" *Journal of Southern History*, 71 (2005), pp. 104-36. With regard to New Zealand and Australia, oral history has been used to examine rural leisure, see: B. Brookes, E. Olssen & E. Beer 'Spare Time? Leisure, Gender and Modernity', in B. Brookes, A. Cooper & R. Law (eds.) *Sites of Gender: Women, Men and Modernity in Southern Dunedin, 1890-1939* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003), Ch. 6; E. Dewson, "'Off to the Dance': Romance in Rural New Zealand Communities, 1880s-1920s', *History Australia*, 2, 1 (2004), no page numbers; M. Tomsic, 'Women's Memories of Cinema-Going: More Than 'The Only Thing Left To Do' in Victoria's Western District', in *History Australia*, 2, 1 (2004), no page numbers.

<sup>102</sup> See C. O'Neill, "'The Most Magical Corner of England": Tourism, Preservation and the Development of the Lake District, 1919-39', in J.K. Walton, (ed.), *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity, Conflict* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2005), Ch.13, where O'Neill uses archive material from the Ambleside Oral History Group (AOHG) collection to illustrate the experiences of tourists to the region during the inter-war period. The exception to this trend was Murfin, who used material from the AOHG archive when it was in its infancy to illustrate the leisure habits of local people.

Earlier theorizing on the value of oral history has been very useful in this thesis's analysis of a substantial oral history archive which has been established by Ambleside Oral History Group (hereafter AOHG).<sup>103</sup> This on-going project, conducted within Lakeland, was established with the aim of memorializing the region's past after a century of considerable change. Both interviewers and informants were aware that the interviews would form part of a public archive, which was designed for a public audience. The archive's informants are regularly invited to events organized by the AOHG, which update them on work recently carried out by the group and celebrate the contribution of local people to the project. In addition, a number of articles have appeared in the local press, which use extracts from the interviews.<sup>104</sup> The public nature of this collection reflects the reputation of the locality in which it was created; Lakeland is a region where the presence of outsiders is a constant, and the recollections of oral history interviewees are not only 'affected by the subjectivity of the speaker' but also 'the audience for the story.'<sup>105</sup> Its provenance and content have presented interesting opportunities and challenges, for this research. Linda Shopes has demonstrated the validity of extant oral history collections, and has suggested that existing collections can be especially helpful in the study of communities; an idea capitalized upon here by the use of the AOHG interviews.<sup>106</sup> She also suggested that when attempting 'secondary

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<sup>103</sup> The AOHG archive is comprised of more than 300 interviews with residents of Lakeland (both past and present) which have been gathered from 1976 to the present day. The interviews are available at Ambleside Local Studies Library, as well as online at [www.aohg.org.uk](http://www.aohg.org.uk) where the collection is searchable by keyword and categorized by subject; a tool which proved to be of great assistance when selecting which interviews to use for analysis in this thesis. The collection covers all aspects of leisure in the region and includes interviews with residents who spent at least part of their youth in Lakeland, between 1930 and the early 1950s, a fact which allowed for a useful comparison over the period of this study. The interviews chosen for examination were done so on the basis of content, class, age and where they lived during their teens and early twenties. A biographic breakdown of each respondent is provided in Appendix V.

<sup>104</sup> 'The Way We Were' series based on the AOHG archive appeared in weekly instalments in the *Westmorland Gazette* in 1987. The series is now available online at <http://www.aohg.org.uk/>.

<sup>105</sup> R. Perks & A. Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader, Second Edition* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 211.

<sup>106</sup> Shopes urges users of existing collections to consider their provenance and ask questions such as '[w]ho conducted them, when, for what purpose, under what circumstances? What broad assumptions

analysis' of interviews gathered by third parties, researchers should recognize the limitations of such material.<sup>107</sup>

There were a number of challenges in regard to this study, which emerged from the use of an existing oral history collection. As Joanna Bornat suggested, one 'problem which secondary analysis raises is the different scope of the original data and the secondary research questions.'<sup>108</sup> Indeed, subsequent users of archived oral histories are likely to approach such material with very different questions to those who worked on the original project.<sup>109</sup> Using existing oral testimony could at times lead to frustrating moments in the research process. Potentially fruitful avenues of investigation for this thesis were not necessarily pursued by AOHG interviewers, precisely because their research agenda was not shaped by the aims of this study. Similarly, in the course of some interviews, issues with clear relevance for this thesis were touched upon by AOHG respondents but the discussion moved on before any detail was offered; in many instances, such snippets of potential insight were never revisited before the conclusion of the interview. Furthermore, there were also silences and absences in the AOHG testimony, which required consideration and these are addressed in more detail below.

Notwithstanding such difficulties, the use of extant oral history evidence has its strengths, offering the researcher an opportunity to ask new questions of the material

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and specific questions informed the inquiry?' Only by '[p]lacing extant interviews in the intellectual and social context of their generation', will researchers be able to read these interviews 'more astutely, to understand how the context unavoidably shaped the inquiry.' Taken from L. Shopes, 'Oral History and the Study of Communities: Problems, Paradoxes, and Possibilities', in R. Perks & A. Thomson, (eds.) The Oral History Reader, Second Edition (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 263.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, pp. 261-270.

<sup>108</sup> J. Bornat, 'A Second Take: Revisiting Interviews with a Different Purpose', Oral History 31, 1, The Interview Process (Spring, 2003), pp. 47-53; p. 49.

<sup>109</sup> See for example, R. Elliot, 'Growing up and giving up: smoking in Paul Thompson's 100 Families', Oral History, 29, 1 (2001), pp. 73-84.

itself, and allowing for fresh interpretations to be drawn from archived sources.<sup>110</sup> In this way, the AOHG material presented a novel opportunity to examine a set of oral history interviews which were conducted by and among people who were familiar with ‘the gaze of outsiders’, and where the interviewees were aware that external groups might form the audience for their memories.<sup>111</sup> These interviews provided much more than a set of recollections about leisure as spent in youth. Careful reading of these narratives generated insights into how small rural communities viewed and view outsiders and how this outlook could shape a sense of place and identity. As such, the collection offered a detailed picture of the ways in which rural communities negotiated change and reacted to living in a destination popular with tourists. The numbers of visitors in Lakeland has, however, increased considerably since the early 1950s. This is a development which in itself, has arguably influenced what was important enough for AOHG informants to remember and share with the interviewer.<sup>112</sup>

Sources of tension and difference inevitably permeated respondents’ memories and descriptions of everyday life, including their leisure experiences.<sup>113</sup> These were, however, frustrations that they could share with an interviewer who, as another ‘insider’ living in the local area, was likely to be able to understand ‘common conceptions of space, community, boundary, property, history, hierarchy and culture, both on the broad

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<sup>110</sup> J. Bornat, ‘Crossing Boundaries with Secondary Analysis: Implications for Archived Oral History Data’, Paper given at the ESRC National Council for Research Methods Network for Methodological Innovation, 2008, Theory, Methods and Ethics across Disciplines, Seminar 2 ‘Ethics and Archives’, University of Essex (19 September 2008), p. 2. For more on the secondary analysis of oral history material, see P. Thompson, ‘Re-using qualitative research data: a personal account’, *Qualitative Social Research*, 1, 3 (2000) <http://qualitative-research.net/fqs>, no page numbers.

<sup>111</sup> Norris Nicholson, *Screening Culture*, p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> In 2007 for example, in excess of eight million people visited Lakeland. Source: Lake District National Park Website, <http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/learning/helpwithprojects/factstourism>, (accessed March 2012).

<sup>113</sup> These ranged from the number of cars which jam the region’s roads during the summer holiday season, to the proliferation of shops targeted at tourists (outdoor clothing companies, cafes) which had opened, whilst more practical shops for the local community (such as butchers, greengrocers and banks) had closed.

level... and on a local level'.<sup>114</sup> The relationship dynamic suggested here has been a rewarding aspect of this evidence, as the 'local origins' of interviewers 'allow a particular type of interview to emerge' which is 'rich in local detail' and 'allows us to 'overhear' interactions.'<sup>115</sup> The inter-subjectivity between respondents and interviewer is well-recognized as providing a particularly useful way of exploring the connections between memory and identity. Thomson, for example, has described 'remembering' as a 'social process' where we 'draw upon the language and meanings of our culture in order to articulate our experience and seek social 'recognition' and affirmation of our memory stories from family, peers, community or nation.'<sup>116</sup> By utilizing a set of interviews conducted from within a community, one of the aims of the thesis has been to offer a fresh contribution to our knowledge of rural communities and how they construct their sense of place.

As has been suggested, however, the use of such material has both strengths and limitations. An example of this lies in what was *not* said by the AOHG respondents, whose leisure narratives reflected little on cinema-going. Why should this have been the case, given the centrality which the cinema plays in the existing historiography of young people's leisure? Both Langhamer and Fowler's use of oral history and contemporary surveys have stressed the supremacy of the cinema as a leisure activity among young urban wage-earners between the 1930s and post-war period.<sup>117</sup> Jeffrey

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<sup>114</sup> B. Bozzoli, 'Interviewing the Women of Phokeng', in Perks & Thomson, The Oral History Reader, p. 159; S. Trower (ed.), Place, Writing, and Voice in Oral History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

<sup>115</sup> B. Bozzoli, 'Interviewing the Women', p. 159.

<sup>116</sup> Perks & Thomson, The Oral History Reader, pp. 212-3.

<sup>117</sup> Langhamer for example, is one of a number of historians who stressed the centrality of the cinema to many young women's leisure experiences between the 1930s and 1950s and revealed that '84 per cent of the girls surveyed' by Olive Morgan went to the cinema 'twice or more every week.' A later survey by Pearl Jephcott in 1942 noted, 'It is not unusual to find a girl of fourteen who goes to the pictures nearly every night.' As late as 1955, Langhamer revealed that 'a Manchester Evening News survey asserted that 98 per cent of Manchester's working boys and girls attended the cinema one or more times a week', Langhamer, Women's Leisure in England, p. 59.

Richards described ‘cinema-going as indisputably the most popular form of commercial recreation’.<sup>118</sup> As a commercial venue, the cinema influenced young people’s leisure and spending throughout the period on which this thesis focuses. Young people spent money on the magazines, hairstyles, clothing, and music, which often reflected what was shown on the ‘silver screen’.<sup>119</sup> These off-shoots from the cinema exemplified the growing commercialism in the leisure habits of young workers, yet the dominance of this activity is largely absent from the recollections of Lakeland oral history respondents, despite the presence of film screenings in local villages.

Access to films was, in fact, limited and when opportunities were available, they were not provided in a setting conducive to the purchasing of goods and services, as was the case in towns and cities. There were certainly several cinemas in Kendal by the early 1930s, but the town’s distance from many Lakeland villages precluded the attendance of young people who lived more than a few miles away. Ambleside was home to a cinema of a more part-time nature. The Assembly Rooms had temporary seating used for the screening of films which could be removed for other entertainment purposes, such as a dance or social evening. A number of interviewees, who lived in Ambleside between the 1930s and early 1950s, recalled visiting this ‘cinema’ in their youth; further anecdotal evidence suggested that it was popular with residents throughout these years. Young workers, who did not live in Ambleside or the surrounding area, however, had substantially reduced opportunities to visit this cinema, and went infrequently, if at all.<sup>120</sup> In Windermere, the public hall functioned as a cinema. Although a mobile projectionist travelled the region’s villages in the 1930s, it

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<sup>118</sup> J. Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1984; 2010) p. 564.

<sup>119</sup> Fowler, *The First Teenagers*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>120</sup> As Chapter Four will show, it was only when young people became owners of bicycles that their chances to watch films in Ambleside increased.

is clear that these village venues in Lakeland lacked the sophistication available in towns and cities and that the ‘experience’ of watching films differed aesthetically from that of an urban ‘dream palace’.<sup>121</sup> In Grasmere for instance, films were shown at the village hall once a week on a portable projector screen and the audience sat on hard wooden benches. This contrasted with the ‘glamour’ and escapism that permeated larger cinemas which young urban workers could frequent, particularly at weekends. In terms of ambience, it is reasonable to suggest that watching a film in a Lakeland village venue provided an experience more comparable to the low cost cinemas in urban working-class neighbourhoods which provided a ‘no frills’ atmosphere. This suggestion is echoed in studies of cinema-going in rural Australia. Kate Bowles, for example, described how ‘for many rural Australians the experience of going to the pictures had little to do with glamour and escapism but was rather a matter of getting along to the local hall and sitting through the programme on a hard wooden bench’.<sup>122</sup> Clearly, as Adrian Horn has suggested of the post-war years, regional influences played an important part in how commercialized and Americanized leisure opportunities were mediated.<sup>123</sup> As a largely rural area, Lakeland was not able to offer the large-scale commercial leisure experiences which developed in towns and cities during the inter-war years, and which were often within walking distance of young urban workers’ homes. Young people in Lakeland had limited opportunities to visit the cinema, particularly in the years preceding 1945. This aspect of popular culture therefore, was not central to the construction of young people’s leisure identities in Lakeland during

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<sup>121</sup> According Jeffrey Richards, in the 1930s, ‘people went regularly in order to be taken out of themselves and their lives for an hour or two. In palatial, sumptuously appointed buildings, they could for no more than a few coppers purchase ready-made dreams’ (Richards, The Age of the Dream Palace, p. 1).

<sup>122</sup> K. Bowles, ‘‘All the Evidence is That Cobargo’s Slipping’: An Ecological Approach to Rural Cinema-Going’, in Film Studies, 10, (Spring 2007), pp. 87-96. For more on the role of the cinema in rural communities, see D. Walker, Rural Cinema Audiences in South Australia in the 1930s, in Studies in Australasian Cinema, 1, 3 (December, 2007), pp. 353-376; M. Tomsic, ‘Women’s Memories of Cinema-Going’.

<sup>123</sup> Horn, Juke Box Britain.

the period of this study. In this sense, Lakeland experiences of the cinema shared similarities with international oral history studies of rural communities during the same period. In rural inter-war Australia, for example, ‘cinema-going’ has been described as ‘an irregular rather than a routine cultural experience’.<sup>124</sup>

The limited role of cinema-going in Lakeland oral history testimony can further be explained by reflecting on the nature and provenance of the AOHG collection. For many of these respondents, the oral history interview provided a chance, as Lyn Abrams has put it, ‘to shape and present a sense of self’ which was specifically created ‘to be put on show and recorded’.<sup>125</sup> Such self-shaping does not invalidate its use in this thesis. Rather, as will be demonstrated, the distinctive ‘sense of self’ which AOHG respondents presented, was closely associated with the past and local distinctiveness. As we have seen, the Ambleside Oral History Group was established to record the region’s past and to reflect on a century of change. The project was designed as a way to express a loss of distinctiveness locally and to document the effects which tourism and modernization had had on the lives of local residents. In reflecting on their life stories over the course of an interview, a sense of change was likely to be central in shaping how respondents thought about their past, although as we have seen, the gaps and omissions in their testimony also suggest the particular qualities of their leisure experiences. It is clear that within the dimensions of the AOHG interview, the cinema was not the central element to informants’ leisure identities that it was for urban-based interviewees of earlier studies. What featured far more strongly were detailed recollections of public community-based events, which were frequently linked to a strong sense of place. In this context, the cinema signified a new direction in leisure

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<sup>124</sup> Bowles, ‘All the Evidence’, p. 88.

<sup>125</sup> Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 131; p. 60.



habits, and perhaps interviewers were not as interested in exploring this development in comparison with memories which were more distinctive to Lakeland. Nevertheless, the youthful memories of these respondents, albeit shaped and re-shaped over time, provide useful insights into how those who grew up in Lakeland between the 1930s and 1950s have presented their sense of self in relation to the region's landscape and traditions. The 'moral geography' of the countryside which this thesis also identified may well have limited which aspects of their youth informants were willing to share with interviewers, for other experiences largely missing from this oral history collection include sexual relationships and drinking, although newspaper reports suggest that young people undoubtedly did engage to some extent in such these activities.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, it may also have been the case that in combination with adult surveillance, the close atmosphere of Lakeland villages limited opportunities to engage in drinking or promiscuous behaviour with the opposite sex.<sup>127</sup>

As well as recognizing the strengths and limitations in the content of this oral history material, it is also important to be aware of the challenges which the transcript can pose. The AOHG collection, as used here, is transcribed testimony, and Raphael Samuel warned of the 'perils of the transcript' many years ago, when oral history was in its infancy as an academic discipline.<sup>128</sup> The methodology used by oral historians has advanced considerably in the intervening years, however, and the transcription of taped interviews now tends to follow conventions established by professional authorities, such

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<sup>126</sup> The concept of a moral geography is explored below.

<sup>127</sup> As Michael Leyshon discovered in his contemporary survey of rural youth, they found it difficult to locate a 'space beyond adult surveillance in which to be intimate with a member of the opposite sex or indeed the problems of finding a girl/boyfriend amongst the limited pool of people available to them in their village', M. Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being a Rural Youth: Inclusive and Exclusive Lifestyles', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 9, 1 (February 2008), p. 11.

<sup>128</sup> R. Samuel, 'The Perils of the Transcript' in *Oral History*, 1, 2 (1972), pp. 19-22.

as the Oral History Society.<sup>129</sup> As a result, few transcriptions now attempt to ‘box’ the spoken word into ‘the categories of written prose’ which can remove much of the meaning and texture from speech.<sup>130</sup> In line with current conventions, the transcripts of AOHG transcripts include the gaps and pauses in speech, along with dialect and colloquialisms used by interviewees.

The reliability and subjectivity of memory have also been issues of contention regarding the validity of oral sources, although as historians such as Portelli, Passerini and Grele have argued, the ‘the subjective, textual quality of oral testimony’ provides academics with ‘unique opportunities’ rather than ‘obstacles to historical objectivity’.<sup>131</sup> The use of other documentary sources in the course of research for this thesis, occasionally highlighted the inaccuracy of informants’ memories (this tended to centre on factual information such as the dates or places at which certain events took place) yet this did not detract from the value or meaning of their narratives.<sup>132</sup> The view adopted

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<sup>129</sup> The Society offers training and advice in the ‘collection, preservation and use’ of taped interviews, for both individuals and groups: <http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/>.

<sup>130</sup> R. Samuel, ‘The Perils of the Transcript’, p. 19.

<sup>131</sup> D. James, ‘Listening in the Cold: The Practice of Oral History in an Argentine Meatpacking Community’ in Perks, & Thomson, The Oral History Reader, p. 86; R. Grele, ‘Listen to Their Voices: Two Case Studies in the Interpretation of Oral History Interviews’, Oral History, 7, 1 (1979), pp. 33-42; L. Passerini, Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); A. Portelli, The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1991). See also, R. Samuel & P. Thompson, (eds.) The Myths We Live By (London: Routledge, 1990); I. Hofmeyer, We Spend Our Years As a Tale That is Told: Oral Historical Narrative in South African Chiefdom (London: James Currey, 1993); J. Jeffrey & G. Edwall, (eds.) Memory and History: Essays on Recalling and Interpreting Experience (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994); L. Abrams, Oral History Theory.

<sup>132</sup> P. Thompson, The Voice of the Past: Oral History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); R. Jensen, ‘Oral History, Quantification and the New Social History’, Oral History Review, 9 (1981) pp. 13-25; T. Lummis, Listening to History: The Authenticity of Oral Evidence (London: Hutchinson, 1987); M.F. Chanfrault-Duchet, ‘Narrative Structures, Social Models and Symbolic Representation in the Life Story’, in S.B. Gluck & D. Patai, (eds.) Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History (London: Routledge, 1991); S. Featherstone, ‘Jack Hill’s Horse: Narrative Form and Oral History’, Oral History, 19, 2 (1991), pp. 59-62; E. Tonkin, Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); S. Radstone & K. Hodgkin, (eds.) Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory (London: Routledge, 2003); M. Chamberlain & P. Thompson, (eds.) Narrative and Genre (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004).

here is that proposed by Abrams and other oral historians, such as Portelli and Lummis.

That is,

one can check to see if a respondent remembered certain ‘facts’ such as dates and names correctly, but this is probably about as far as one can and should go, for memory, as Trevor Lummis observed, ‘is a complex phenomenon which cannot be tested for truth by the application of a set of rules.’<sup>133</sup>

Rather than the accuracy of historical fact, the ways in which respondents constructed their leisure identities through their leisure choices is given primacy in the chapters which follow.

### The Historiography of Rural Youth and Leisure

In the same way that women’s historical experiences were once subordinate to those of men, the leisure experiences of rural young people, as we have seen, have largely been subordinated to those of urban youth.<sup>134</sup> With this in mind, the thesis has looked to other disciplines to help develop a conceptual framework ‘for understanding rural youth’, and in this respect, work undertaken by Michael Leyshon proved particularly fruitful.<sup>135</sup> Leyshon is a social and cultural geographer whose research on twenty-first century youth provides a set of ideas which can be usefully applied to young countrymen and women between 1930 and the early 1950s. The application of

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<sup>133</sup> Abrams, Oral History Theory, p.80; Lummis, Listening to History; Portelli, The Death of Luigi Trastulli.

<sup>134</sup> Indeed, examinations of rural young people from an English perspective have mainly come from social scientists. See for example, T. Skelton & G. Valentine (eds.), Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures, (London: Routledge, 1998); S. Aitkin, Geographies of Young People: The Morally Contested Spaces of Identity, (London: Routledge, 2001); R. Panelli, K. Nairn & J. McCormack, ‘We Make Our Own Fun’: Reading The Politics of Youth With(in) Community’, Sociologia Ruralis, 42 (2002), pp. 15-39; A. Glendinning *et al.*, ‘Rural Communities and Well Being: A Good Place to Grow Up?’, The Sociological Review, 51, 1 (2003), pp. 129-156; B. Jentsch & M. Schucksmith, (eds.), Young People in Rural Areas of Europe, (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2004); C. Fabiansson, ‘Being Young in Rural Settings: Young People’s Everyday Community Affiliations and Trepidations’, Rural Society, 16, 1 (2006), pp. 47-60; J.F. Rye, ‘Rural Youths’ Images of the Rural’, Journal of Rural Studies, 22 (2006), pp. 409-421.

<sup>135</sup> Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, p. 2.

Leyshon's framework to an examination of rural youth in an historical sense, allows for fresh insights into not only their lives but also the meanings of their leisure experiences. Leyshon has highlighted gaps in existing research, highlighting that 'little is known of rural youth's construction of, and identification with, the countryside, which aspects of countryside living they draw upon to form their identity and, importantly, which processes lead to them becoming embedded or indeed disembedded in the countryside.'<sup>136</sup> Leyshon's emphasis on the need for greater attention to be paid to rural youth is, as we have seen, extremely pertinent to this thesis. Leyshon's work has served as a useful tool to support analysis of oral history testimony and has also helped to interpret young people's leisure participation in both organized and more informal leisure activities, between the 1930s and the 1950s.

Leyshon's research into the ways in which contemporary young people 'imagine, define and create discourses of the countryside' proposes that previous explanations of rural youth have been simplistic and patronizing.<sup>137</sup> As a counter to this deficiency, he argues that the 'reality of their lives is far more complex'. By recognizing and understanding this complexity, he proposes that it is possible to generate 'new insights into rural society and identity.'<sup>138</sup> As the thesis will demonstrate in the chapters that follow, understanding the leisure habits of rural youth and their identity as young countrymen and women in Lakeland, reveals a much more nuanced and ambivalent situation. Throughout the period which forms the subject of this research, young people were subject to adult authority and control but also capable of defying it; they participated in leisure organized by urban outsiders but could also reject urban trends and commercialism in other leisure activities. In line with Leyshon's

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, p. 1.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

rejection of simplistic explanations of youth in the countryside, it is suggested here that although rural young people are routinely assumed to have simply followed trends found in large urban centres, not only were they capable of rejecting these types of leisure, but the ways in which they actually spent their leisure time signified both a strong sense of place and a deep connection with the surrounding landscape. Oral history testimony such as that provided by the AOHG collection gives many examples of how young people's sense of place, when growing up in Lakeland, was constructed in village spaces similar to those which Leyshon describes in his study, which were 'revered by local youth as the key site in the mediation and production of rural identity. Leyshon suggests that '[i]n this sense, rural youth seem to buy into the village... framed by the 'natural' beauty of the countryside'.<sup>139</sup> His observations paralleled in Lakeland between the 1930s and 1950s, where the village was a key site of leisure for local young people and was where a large part of their identity, often centred on local distinctiveness, was shaped. Leyshon also suggests that the young people he encountered in the course of his research, 'showed that they valued their difference'.<sup>140</sup> Similar trends are also visible in the AOHG interviews. Obviously, these interviews unlike Leyshon's contemporary collection, are to an extent tinged by nostalgia. It is, however, clear from analysis of these recollections that until at least the outbreak of war in 1939 and even into the post-war period, many young people in Lakeland took pride in their difference. This was expressed through their leisure choices, which were often compared and contrasted positively, in opposition to urban popular culture, or in connection with the region's landscape.

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<sup>139</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 9.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

The idea of a distinct place identity as shaped by living in a rural community is a strong feature of Leyshon's work on contemporary rural youth which, he has argued, is closely linked to the way that young people in the countryside think about themselves and in relation to outsiders. Leyshon suggests that it is an individual's locality rather than their nationality which most heavily influences the construction of their identity, particularly in the countryside.<sup>141</sup> In his words, he emphasizes 'the role of the local as a means of understanding how collective cultural meanings are inscribed and embedded in young people's sense of place and belonging.'<sup>142</sup> One way in which this sense of collective identity and regional distinctiveness within rural communities is reinforced, is by constructing cities and their inhabitants as 'an imagined deviant other through which their identity is written in opposition'.<sup>143</sup> Such tendencies are clear in the work of ruralist writers in the 1930s and 1940s and are also visible to an extent in the AOHG material.<sup>144</sup> Linked to these ideas are those of David Matless, as well as a number of other cultural geographers and historians, who have surveyed the idea of a 'moral geography of the countryside'.<sup>145</sup> Leyshon suggests that moral geography 'is about the exclusion and eschewing of outward signs of modernity and the urban world, it is about 'border' maintenance.'<sup>146</sup> Such approaches have helped shape the argument of this thesis, which suggests that a moral geography of the countryside was not only central to the ways in which young people in Lakeland constructed their sense of place, but was

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<sup>141</sup> This issue will be addressed in more detail below.

<sup>142</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 6.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

<sup>144</sup> C. Brace, 'Envisioning England: The Visual in Countryside Writing in the 1930s and 1940s', Landscape Research, 28, 4 (2003), pp. 365-382.

<sup>145</sup> See for example, F. Driver, 'Moral Geographies: Social Science and the Urban Environment in mid-19th Century England', Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 13 (1998), pp. 275-287; D. Matless, 'Moral Geographies of English Landscape', Landscape Research, 22, 2 (1997), pp. 141-155; D. Matless, Landscape and Englishness (London: Reaktion Books, 1998); Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 15.

<sup>146</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 13. This idea has also been identified in anthropological and social science studies of rural communities in the late twentieth century, such as C. Butler Flora *et al.*, Rural Communities: Legacy and Change (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 70-72.

also more broadly connected to what external groups thought the countryside should consist of. As was suggested in the Introduction to this thesis, there was a perceived need in the 1930s and 1940s for the countryside, as a ‘moral’ place, to remain a traditional, unsophisticated space, where people could seek refuge from the pressures of modern life. Somewhat ironically, this led to a growth in urban visitors to the countryside, which also helped to spread elements of modern, popular culture into spaces which represented their idea of the unchanging ‘rural idyll’. By contrast, the concerns of many people who lived in such areas, as exemplified in this research, often rested on slowing the spread of modern leisure habits and ‘maintaining their borders’ by rejecting or implicitly criticizing the leisure habits of outsiders.

Although Leyshon’s study informs the approach of this thesis, there are also some significant divergences between his findings and those here. As might be expected, there are differences between a contemporary examination of rural youth and one based largely on the period between the 1930s and early 1950s. A central theme of this research for example, has been the often striking lack of independence which young people in Lakeland experienced. In most although not all of their leisure activities during the period, local young people were subject to considerable adult involvement and scrutiny. By contrast, the young people whom Leyshon interviewed had considerably more autonomy and agency in their leisure choices, although they continued to face ‘problems of finding a space beyond adult surveillance’.<sup>147</sup> It has been argued elsewhere, that this is because adults often ‘order’ or control spaces within villages.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, p. 11.

<sup>148</sup> O. Jones, ‘Melting Geography: Purity, Disorder, Childhood and Space’, in S. Holloway & G. Valentine (eds.) Children’s Geographies: Playing, Living, Learning (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 32.

A further point of divergence between Leyshon's analysis and the findings of this thesis is that the group of young people to whom he spoke did not reject all aspects of urban leisure culture, since 'television, video, DVD, computers, stereos, trainers, skateboards, mountain bikes etc.' were all 'accepted parts of young people's cultural world' within the villages on which he focussed.<sup>149</sup> By contrast, in Lakeland between the 1930s and 1950s, many of the leisure experiences which AOHG interviewees recalled, arguably had their basis in a rejection of homogenized urban leisure. Elements of popular culture were often only accepted if they helped to promote older leisure forms. Leyshon also suggested in his critique of earlier work on youth in the countryside, that rural young people miss out on 'a somehow more authentic urban youth culture'.<sup>150</sup> During the 1930s-1950s, however, the commercial elements of urban culture were widely viewed as far less authentic than the cultural forms found in villages across the country. As a result, it was not only writers of rural non-fiction but also the inhabitants of rural communities such as those in Lakeland, who prided themselves on maintaining and ensuring the survival of leisure traditions which were distinctive to their region. While this might be seen as an adult tendency, it was also visible in some of the leisure activities in which young people engaged, when away from adult supervision or the immediate sphere of the village, as the later chapter on sports and outdoor pursuits demonstrates.

There is a considerable inter-disciplinary body of literature which analyses the ways in which both individuals and groups use 'tradition', both historically and in the present day. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger were among the first historians to reveal the ways in which rituals and symbols presented as traditional and unchanging,

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<sup>149</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 13.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid, p. 2.



are in reality subject to continual processes of change.<sup>151</sup> This process is commonly referred to as the '(re)invention of tradition' and as Alan Hanson points out, "culture" and "tradition" are anything but stable realities handed down intact from generation to generation.<sup>152</sup> Within the scholarly work on tradition, rural communities have attracted attention from academics across a range of disciplines, who have highlighted the way in which the maintenance of cultural traditions can act as a tool that 'people use in the construction of their identity'.<sup>153</sup> This body of work has also made an important contribution to this thesis, which has utilized it in two ways. Firstly, the research recognizes that many of the rituals and symbols present at traditional events in Lakeland between 1930 and the early 1950s were, in fact, modified each year, in order to suit the current organizer's tastes, as well as the practical needs of the village. Secondly and more relevantly to this study it unpicks the reasons why local communities in Lakeland felt it necessary to continue such 'traditions' which 'established their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition' each year.<sup>154</sup> The approach taken here (whilst recognizing the flux inherent in every aspect of these celebrations) has been to explore why such traditions 'designed to serve contemporary purposes' were so important to local rural communities in Lakeland.<sup>155</sup> Bob Bushaway has demonstrated the applicability of such approaches to 'popular custom in rural society' in the eighteenth and nineteenth

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<sup>151</sup> E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger, (eds.) The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; 2003).

<sup>152</sup> Hanson, 'The Making of the Maori', p. 890.

<sup>153</sup> J.S. Linnekin, 'Defining Tradition: Variations on the Hawaiian Identity', American Ethnologist, 10, 2 (May, 1983), p. 241. See also, A.P. Cohen (ed.), Belonging: Identity and Social Organisation in British Rural Cultures (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1982), p. 65; Butler Flora *et al.*, Rural Communities, p. 282; E. Carnegie & S. McCabe, 'Re-enactment Events and Tourism: Meaning, Authenticity and Identity', Current Issues in Tourism, 11, 4 (2008), pp. 349-368; M. O'Brien Backhouse, 'Re-enacting the Wars of the Roses: History and Identity', in People and Their Pasts: Public History Today (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), Ch. 6.

<sup>154</sup> Hobsbawm & Ranger, The Invention of Tradition, p. 2.

<sup>155</sup> Hanson, 'The Making of the Maori', p. 890.

centuries.<sup>156</sup> As in the case of twentieth century rural communities, where tradition and rituals served to bring local people together, Bushaway asserts that in the 1800s, while many ‘of these calendar rituals might appear to serve no other purpose than that of providing an opportunity for merriment and festivity... their deeper significance can be discovered in the context of an attempt to enforce a view of corporate society.’<sup>157</sup> In the case of Lakeland between the 1930s and the 1950s, the practice and value of leisure traditions was increasingly important as a response to what was perceived as a new modern age. Participating in these communal leisure events allowed village inhabitants to present a ‘corporate’ identity of a cohesive community both to themselves and outside groups. What is often absent from these studies of rural traditions is, however, a full and careful analysis of the role that younger generations play in their survival, which is an important theme in the chapters which follow. This thesis demonstrates the extent to which many leisure opportunities between 1930 and the early 1950s were shaped by the ‘contemporary need’, to protect and project a distinctive Lakeland identity, based on local traditions. Hobsbawm and Ranger explained how it ‘is the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant, that makes the ‘invention of tradition’ so interesting for historians of the past two centuries.’<sup>158</sup> McCabe’s study of the annual Shrovetide football match at Ashbourne in Derbyshire, explores the changed meanings of this ritual to a twenty-first century rural community and demonstrates how such events promote the ‘making of community

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<sup>156</sup> B. Bushaway, *By Rite. Custom, Ceremony and Community in England, 1700-1880* (London: Junction Books Ltd., 1982), p. 1.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid*, p. 149.

<sup>158</sup> Hobsbawm & Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, p. 2.

identity through historic festive practice'.<sup>159</sup> As with Hobsbawm and Ranger's findings, McCabe's study highlights that although the event is presented to both locals and tourists as 'traditional', it is in fact subject to constant change and revision. McCabe identifies the link between upholding rural 'traditions' in popular tourist areas where local communities are very much aware of the presence of outsiders.<sup>160</sup> Case studies such as this are useful in demonstrating the extent to which local and regional identities rely heavily on 'tradition' and a celebration of the past. This is particularly so in localities which depend to a great extent on tourists for their economic survival, as in the case of Ashbourne, where the football match is a considerable attraction to outsiders and has even received coverage in the international press.

Another scholar whose work has informed the conceptual approach of this thesis is M.K. Porter, whose analysis of rural communities is based on an annual event, the Bauer County Fair in rural America. Porter has suggested that such occasions are designed as 'celebrations of belonging', which 'incorporate members of the younger generations into community networks' and transmit 'from generation to generation' the 'traditional cultural values, skills and relationships' which bond local communities together.<sup>161</sup> The young countrymen and women who attended the fair she analysed are seen as celebrating their regional identity by being shown those aspects of their culture which make them distinct from other regions. In order to understand fully the importance of this community event in maintaining local bonds in disparate rural communities, Porter carried out a series of 'Expressive Autobiographic Interviews' with

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<sup>159</sup> S. McCabe, 'The Making of Community Identity through Historic Festive Practice: The Case of Ashbourne Royal Shrovetide Football', in D. Picard & M. Robinson, Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2006), pp. 99-118.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> M.K. Porter, 'The Bauer County Fair: Community Celebration as Context for Youth Experiences of Learning and Belonging' Journal of Research in Rural Education, 11, 3 (Winter, 1995), p. 145; 139.

older fairgoers, which allowed her to map change and continuity in the event across their lifetimes.<sup>162</sup> Her work pays ‘special attention to the interaction of people from several generations’. It has been informative with respect to the intergenerational nature of rural communities, whereby ‘people from several generations’ interact within the same leisure space and older members of the community use the leisure activities which take place in them as opportunities to teach the younger generation about local traditions. This thesis shares a similar approach, in that a central theme is the way in which adult involvement from within Lakeland villages not only shaped young people’s leisure opportunities but also enabled the transmission of local leisure traditions to a younger generation through such activities.<sup>163</sup> In common with Leyshon, Porter’s research into rural youth and the communities in which they live, emphasizes the ‘multilayered’ nature of their experiences.<sup>164</sup> Work such as Porter’s has been useful in highlighting the idea that large celebrations and events (such as an annual fair) allows rural communities to set ‘aside time, at least temporarily, to suspend the influence of the mass public culture and to concentrate on what makes the people of this county distinctive. Focus turns inward. Especially for groups that feel threatened by accelerating changes to their traditional lifestyles, this time to take stock and reflect is particularly valuable.’<sup>165</sup> By analysing large communal activities, it is possible to unpick the ways in which they contribute ‘to a critical understanding of themselves and their communities.’<sup>166</sup> This approach has been particularly useful in Chapter Three, which explores the meanings of large annual events in the leisure experiences of Lakeland youth and considers the important role which younger members of these rural

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid, p. 145.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. Engaging young people in the distinctive elements of a rural community’s culture as they grow up also provides them with a stronger sense of identity and solidarity, Butler Flora, Rural Communities, p. 66.

<sup>164</sup> Porter, ‘The Bauer County Fair’, p. 139.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid, pp. 141-2.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, p. 139.

communities often played in the survival of older leisure traditions, which were often closely connected with a localized sense of place. The existing historiography argues that the use of tradition in leisure not only serves to counter unwanted intrusion by urban culture often represented by tourists and in wartime Lakeland, by evacuees, but also reaffirms the local and cultural identities of rural communities. This thesis extends this approach by arguing that by frequently repeating traditional leisure activities, rural young people in Lakeland began to rehearse their cultural identities at an early age in their lives, which went some way towards securing the maintenance of these traditions for the next generation.

As we have seen, many of these contemporary studies connect the survival of regionally distinctive leisure habits with the presence of outsiders and especially tourists. The emergent discipline of tourism history has consequently played an important part in this research, although investigations into tourism and the expansion of tourist resorts have largely been left to academics from other disciplines including sociology and geography; historians have not ‘actively engaged’ with this subject in the twentieth century, with the result that the subject has been ‘very present-minded’, rather than ‘historically grounded’.<sup>167</sup> As a discipline in its own right, tourism history has gained momentum over the past 15 years, with John Walton at the forefront of this development, from his early work on the Lake Counties, which in part analyses the region’s development as a tourist resort from the mid-nineteenth century, to more recent comprehensive studies, which focus solidly on theorizing this new field of enquiry.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> J.K. Walton, The British Seaside. Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century (Manchester: MUP, 2000), p. 14.

<sup>168</sup> J.D. Marshall & J.K. Walton, The Lake Counties, from 1830 to the Mid-Twentieth Century (Manchester: MUP, 1981). John Walton has published prolifically on an array of issues in tourism history. Those most relevant to this study or the development of the discipline are included here: ‘The Windermere Tourist Trade in the Age of the Railway, 1847-1912’, in O.M. Westall (ed.), Windermere in

Earlier interdisciplinary work does, however, provide an important framework from which to approach the history of tourism. John Urry for instance, constructed ‘a distinctive sociology of tourism’ by extending a concept of Foucault’s, to produce what he described as ‘the tourist gaze’, a theory which provides historians with the tools to analyse the development of rural tourism.<sup>169</sup> Tourism history, although still in its infancy, has already provided some interesting case studies.<sup>170</sup> Much of this recent work highlights the wider context of tourism, especially in relation to social change, which has helped to negate earlier assumptions regarding the ‘triviality’ of the subject

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the Nineteenth Century (Lancaster: Centre for North-West Regional Studies, 1976), pp. 19-38; J.K. Walton, The Blackpool Landlady: A Social History, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978); J.K. Walton, ‘Railways and Resort Development in Victorian England: the Case of Sillioth’, Northern History, 15, (1979), pp. 191-209; J.K. Walton, The English Seaside Resort: A Social History 1750-1914, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983); J.K. Walton, ‘The Blackpool Landlady Revisited’, Manchester Region History Review, 8 (1994), pp. 23-31; J.K. Walton, ‘Leisure Towns in Wartime: the Impact of the First World War in Blackpool and San Sebastián’, Journal of Contemporary History, 31 (1996), pp. 603-618; J.K. Walton, Blackpool, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998); J.K. Walton, ‘Canon Rawnsley and the English Lake District’, Armitt Library Journal 1 (1998), pp. 1-17; J.K. Walton, ‘Tradition and Tourism: Representing Basque identities in Guipúzcoa and San Sebastián, 1848-1936’, in N. Kirk (ed.), Northern Identities, (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 2000), pp. 87-108; J.K. Walton, The British Seaside. Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century (Manchester: MUP, 2000); J.K. Walton, ‘Consuming the Beach: Seaside Resorts and Cultures of Tourism in England and Spain from the 1840s to the 1930s’, in E. Furlough and S. Baranowski (eds.), Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture and Identity in Modern Europe and North America (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001), pp. 272-98; J.K. Walton, ‘British Tourism Between Industrialisation and Globalisation: An Overview’, in H. Berghoff, Barbara Korte, Ralf Schneider and Christopher Harvie (eds.), The Making of Modern Tourism: the Cultural History of the British Experience, 1600-2000 (London: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 109-31; J.K. Walton & C. O’Neill, ‘Tourism and the Lake District: Social and Cultural Histories’, in D.W.G. Hind and J.P. Mitchell (eds.), Sustainable Tourism in the English Lake District (Sunderland: Business Education Publishers, 2004), pp. 19-47; J.K. Walton, ‘Popular Playgrounds: Blackpool and Coney Island, c. 1880-1970’, Manchester Region History Review 17, (2004), pp. 51-61; J.K. Walton, (ed.) Histories of Tourism. Representation, Identity and Conflict (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2005); J.K. Walton, with G. Cross, The Playful Crowd: Pleasure Places in the Twentieth Century, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); J.K. Walton, ‘Tourism and Holidays in Britain between the Wars: Approaches and Opportunities’, in H. Pussard and R. Snape (eds.), Recording Leisure Lives: Histories, Archives and Memories of Leisure in Twentieth-Century Britain (Brighton: Leisure Studies Association, 2009), pp. 3-20; J.K. Walton, ‘Prospects in Tourism History: Evolution, State of Play and Future Developments’, Tourism Management 30 (2009), pp. 783-93; J.K. Walton & K. Hanley, Constructing Cultural Tourism: John Ruskin and the Tourist Gaze, (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2010). Walton also founded (and is editor of) the Journal of Tourism History, (London: Taylor and Francis, 2009 to present).

<sup>169</sup> Foucault developed the initial idea of a ‘gaze’ in relation to the medical profession, in M. Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic (London: Tavistock, 1976). In relation to the tourist gaze, see J. Urry, The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies (London: Sage Publications, 1990; 1996).

<sup>170</sup> For example, J. Rowbotham, ‘Sand and Foam’: the Changing Identity of Lebanese Tourism’, Journal of Tourism History, 2, 1 (2010), pp. 39-53 & J. Greenwood, ‘Driving Through History: The Car, The Open Road, and the Making of History Tourism in Australia, 1920–1940’ Journal of Tourism History, 3, 1 (2011), pp. 21-37.

as an area of historical enquiry.<sup>171</sup> The word ‘resort’, for example, tends to conjure up images of coastal locations such as Blackpool, Scarborough or Brighton and much of the extant literature explores the development of such areas. Yet a number of other studies are beginning to examine inland tourist destinations, such as Lakeland, demonstrating that the term can equally apply to inland (and even upland) areas popular with tourists. A central problem remains in much of this literature, however, that despite furthering our understanding of holidaymaking, it often places greater importance on the visitors to these destinations than the ordinary inhabitants.<sup>172</sup>

Another common approach to tourism and the countryside has been to analyse the conflicts and tensions which preservationist agendas cause in relation to natural beauty spots.<sup>173</sup> In addition to exploring the development of tourism in Lakeland, for example, Clifford O’Neill has also assessed the impact which preservationist attitudes have had on local communities.<sup>174</sup> O’Neill’s study is relevant to this research in that it analyses the impact of tourism on Lakeland resorts such as Windermere, although his work concentrates on the local economy, planning and housing levels, rather than on the leisure culture of these communities. A useful complement to O’Neill’s more recent research has consequently been Murfin’s insightful account of Popular Leisure in the Lake Counties, which provides an examination of Lakeland communities and their leisure habits and also assesses their wider meanings. Murfin makes use of the Ambleside Oral History Group’s archive, though her analysis of this material is limited,

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<sup>171</sup> J.K. Walton, ‘Taking the History of Tourism Seriously’, European History Quarterly, 27 (1997), pp. 573-81. For analysis which demonstrates the wider significance of this subject, see Journal of Tourism History ‘Special Issue: Travel as a Force of Historical Change’, 3, 2 (2011).

<sup>172</sup> A deficit which is also explored in relation to rural history later in this chapter.

<sup>173</sup> D.W.G. Hind & J.P. Mitchell (eds.), Sustainable Tourism in the English Lake District. (Sunderland: Business Education Publishers, 2004).

<sup>174</sup> See C. O’Neill, ‘Windermere in the 1920s’, Local Historian, 24 (1994), pp. 217-24; O’Neill, Visions of Lakeland; O’Neill “‘The Most Magical Corner of England’”, pp. 228-244.

as the group was in its infancy at the time when she was writing. Nevertheless, her book has provided a useful basis for this thesis, which has in turn, extended some of her most interesting ideas by testing them in the purely rural setting of Lakeland. Murfin's analysis of the region's 'high days and holidays' during the inter-war period pointed to the impact which living in a tourist resort could have upon local leisure practices. In particular, she suggested that the presence of tourists 'provided an audience for such displays' at annual community events which allowed them to develop 'into a celebration of the specialness of the villages concerned.'<sup>175</sup> This notion of the 'social functions' of popular festivals, as a way for villages to celebrate 'the community itself' and highlight their 'solidarity' (particularly as a counter to outsiders) is something which Peter Burke has also demonstrated in his analysis of early modern Europe.<sup>176</sup> This thesis similarly proposes that the influence of external groups (especially tourists) in Lakeland produced a self-consciousness among local inhabitants, which was visible in most (if not all) of the leisure activities in which local young people engaged between the 1930s and early 1950s.

Despite the utility of Murfin's work, there are, however, several omissions which this research has gone some way towards addressing. Firstly, although Murfin attempts to make available 'information on a large, remote, semi-rural area, to further the wider [leisure history] debate',<sup>177</sup> as she points out, there are 'obvious differences between urban and rural life, and the experience of Cumbrians in Carlisle, Whitehaven or Barrow, which differed in many ways from that of those who lived in the region's remote rural areas.'<sup>178</sup> Although she does take account of villages such as Ambleside

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<sup>175</sup> L. Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, p. 59.

<sup>176</sup> P. Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978), pp. 199-200.

<sup>177</sup> Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, p. 1.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.



and Grasmere in her survey area, it is towns including Kendal, Whitehaven and Carlisle, together with industrialized areas such as Barrow-in-Furness, which take up much of her analysis. As a result, despite Murfin's valuable contribution, a purely rural study of this region's leisure culture in the twentieth century has been lacking, an omission which this research has also intended to remedy.

Secondly, Murfin argues that between the mid-Victorian period and 1939, communal leisure activities in the region became more child-centred and therefore excluded both the young people and older generations who had previously played a central role in them. Although this assertion is (to a degree at least) accurate, Murfin tends to group children and 'juveniles' together in her analysis, which leaves little room for a detailed investigation of the leisure habits of those in their teens and early twenties, at a time when a considerable amount of attention was being devoted to this stage of the life cycle and to adolescents' use of free time.<sup>179</sup> Because Murfin considers the leisure experiences of all age groups during the same time period, her conclusions simplify what was, in fact, a far more complex situation. By concentrating on more rural and insular localities than those chosen by Murfin, this research has aimed to shed light on how such activities were, in fact, often orientated towards the inclusion of adolescents. The chapters which follow demonstrate that a more nuanced explanation of the intergenerational aspects of leisure in Lakeland is necessary to counter the homogenizing tendencies of earlier studies such as these.

Thirdly and finally, Murfin's chosen periodization stops short of the Second World War; something which is also true of Walton and Marshall in The Lake

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<sup>179</sup> See for example, Murfin's conclusions in Popular Leisure, p. 226.

Counties.<sup>180</sup> This thesis argues that rather than overlooking wartime, as do many historians of leisure, the years between 1939 and 1945 contribute an interesting and important dimension to the history of the leisure culture of rural regions. Upheavals such as the mass evacuation of schools to Lakeland during the war years, for a prolonged period of time, and the call-up of local people to either the armed forces or for war work, meant that older leisure patterns were inevitably disrupted and shaped afresh by these external influences.

In the field of rural history, Jeremy Burchardt has recently argued that because much of the existing work follows the ‘orthodox’ approach to the countryside as a site of production, there is an urgent need for ‘a cultural history of rural society and a social history of the rural idyll’.<sup>181</sup> Even Alun Howkins, who has considered more closely the social history of rural areas, continues to use a framework where agriculture forms the ‘master narrative’.<sup>182</sup> There is, however, an increasing body of work which examines the countryside outside of the realm of agriculture and instead approaches it from a social perspective.<sup>183</sup> This re-focussing of the historian’s gaze from agriculture to the social and cultural life of the countryside has helped to move the periodization of these

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<sup>180</sup> See Walton and Marshall, The Lake Counties.

<sup>181</sup> J. Burchardt, ‘Agricultural History, Rural History or Countryside History?’, The Historical Journal, 50, 2 (2007), p. 466.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p.474; p.469. See for instance, A. Howkins, Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1850-1925 (London: Routledge, 1992, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition); A. Howkins, The Death of Rural England: A Social History of the Countryside Since 1900 (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>183</sup> K. Grieves, ‘Common Meeting Places and the Brightening of Rural Life: Local Debates on Village Halls in Sussex After the First World War’, in Rural History, 10 (1999), pp. 171-192; M. Wallis, ‘Unlocking the Secret Soul: Mary Kelly, Pioneer of Village Theatre’ New Theatre Quarterly, 64 (2000), pp. 347-58; M. Tebbutt, ‘“Men of the Hills” and Street Corner Boys’, Northern Uplands and the Urban Imagination: Derbyshire’s Dark Peak 1880-1914’, in Rural and Urban Encounters in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Regional Perspectives (CORAL: Conference of Regional and Local Historians, 2004), pp. 59-77; P. Brassley, J. Burchardt & L. Thompson, The English Countryside Between the Wars: Regeneration or Decline? (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 60-61; B. Anderson, ‘A Liberal Countryside? The Manchester Ramblers’ Federation and the ‘Social Readjustment’ of Urban Citizens, 1929-1936’, Urban History, 38, 1 (2011), pp. 84-102

studies into the twentieth century and especially the inter-war years.<sup>184</sup> The tensions which were provoked by the arrival of a growing number of urban visitors in the countryside during the inter-war period, has proved to be a fruitful area of investigation.<sup>185</sup> The experiences of holidaymakers, hikers, and ramblers have received extensive consideration from historians.<sup>186</sup> A great deal of current research, however, tends only to consider how modernization allowed urban people to engage more easily with the ‘rural idyll’ and overlooks, as has been suggested, the ways in which the people who lived in such areas responded to these changes. Other historical studies of rural communities have tended either to ignore young people entirely or focus their attention on the role of external bodies in shaping village leisure. In the process, they have also perhaps neglected the agency which these communities could exert over their leisure activities.<sup>187</sup> It is, in fact, arguable that much of the current rural historiography is exclusionist in its approach to leisure practices in the countryside, in that it overwhelmingly highlights how outsiders used the countryside as a recreational space, whilst neglecting the actual inhabitants of such areas. In Paradise Lost for instance, Burchardt devotes a chapter to the inter-war hobby of rambling.<sup>188</sup> Nevertheless, his

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<sup>184</sup> The work of the Inter-War Rural History Research Group (IRHRG) has been central in this development.

<sup>185</sup> For instance, D.N. Jeans, ‘Planning and the Myth of the English Countryside, in the Inter-War Period’ Rural History, 1, 2 (1990), pp. 249-264; R.J. Moore-Colyer, ‘From Great Wen to Toad Hall: Aspects of the Urban-Rural Divide in Inter-War Britain’, in Rural History, 10, (1999), pp. 105-124; C. Brace, ‘A Pleasure Ground for the Noisy Herds? Incompatible Encounters with the Cotswolds and England, 1900–1950’, Rural History, 11 (2000), pp. 75-94.

<sup>186</sup> H. Walker, ‘The Popularisation of the Outdoor Movement, 1900–1940’, The International Journal of the History of Sport 2, 2 (1985), pp. 140-153; R. Snape, ‘The Co-operative Holidays Association and the Cultural Formation of Countryside Leisure Practice’ in Leisure Studies, 23, 2 (April 2004), pp. 143-158.

<sup>187</sup> In particular, Jeremy Burchardt has written several articles on the role of Rural Community Councils in village social life during the inter-war period, yet perhaps due to the nature of the source material, little attention is given to leisure organized without the involvement of external agencies. J. Burchardt, ‘Reconstructing the Rural Community: Village Halls and the National Council of Social Service, 1919–39’, Rural History, 10, 2 (October, 1999), pp. 193-216; J. Burchardt, ‘Rethinking the Rural Idyll: The English Rural Community Movement 1913–26’, Cultural and Social History, 8, 1 (2011), pp. 73-94; J. Burchardt, ‘State and Society in the English Countryside: The Rural Community Movement 1918–39’, Rural History, 23, 1 (2012), pp. 81-106.

<sup>188</sup> J. Burchardt, Paradise Lost: Rural Idyll and Social Change in England Since 1800 (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp.121-130.

discussion, as is also the case with many studies of rural tourist resorts and beauty spots, is neglectful of the young people who lived in areas like Lakeland or the Peak District and who also regularly used the countryside for leisure purposes.

Over the past decade or so, historians have become more interested in northern upland areas and the meanings attached to northern landscapes and culture.<sup>189</sup> Young people do feature in some of these accounts, though often only briefly. Both new and older studies of the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass of 1932 (which largely involved young men under the age of 21) for example, are largely written from the conventional perspective of urban young people who travelled to the countryside to ramble or hike.<sup>190</sup> This body of work also provides useful evidence of the tensions which existed between urban incomers and rural inhabitants and which were often reflected in the leisure habits of village communities (such as Lakeland). As has been suggested, a key aspect of this research into Lakeland leisure patterns was the extent to which the leisure culture of local people, and particularly local youth, rejected modern urban leisure trends. In this sense, the thesis provides a novel contribution to the existing field of rural history (and especially to the growing sub-discipline of rural social history), by highlighting distinctive aspects of the leisure habits of young countrymen and women, which also give broader insights into village communities themselves. An edited collection on The English Countryside Between the Wars offered a revisionist account of the inter-war period as a time of regeneration and renewal in the English countryside, which was in

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<sup>189</sup> D. Russell, Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination (Manchester: MUP, 2004); M. Tebbutt, 'Gendering an Upland Landscape: Masculinity and Place Identity in the Peak District, 1880s–1920s', in I.D. Whyte & A.J.L. Winchester (eds.), Society, Landscape and Environment in Upland Britain (Society for Landscape Studies, Supplementary Series 2, 2004), Ch. 12 & M. Tebbutt, 'Rambling and Manly Identity in Derbyshire's Dark Peak, 1880s-1920s', The Historical Journal, 49, (2006), pp. 1125-1153.

<sup>190</sup> B. Rothman, 1932 Kinder Trespass: Personal View of the Kinder Scout Mass Trespass (Timperley: Willow Publishing, 1982); H. Taylor, A Claim on the Countryside: A History of the British Outdoor Movement (Keele: Keele University Press, 1997); D. Hey, 'Kinder Scout and the Legend of the Mass Trespass', Agricultural History Review, 59, 2 (2011), pp. 199-216.

part due to an influx of outsiders who had the leadership skills necessary to provide a focal point for village life.<sup>191</sup> The thesis is in agreement with this collection regarding the vibrancy of social life in rural communities during the inter-war period. Its findings, however, present a slightly different picture, in that the arrival of outsiders who were willing to take on organizational roles within rural communities in northern upland region such as Lakeland, largely did not take place until rather later, in the post-war years.

Notions of national identity have dominated the narrative of what the countryside meant to people in the first half of the twentieth century, although Burchardt has argued that historians often over-emphasize ‘the centrality of the countryside to English national identity’.<sup>192</sup> This thesis tests such a view and proposes that by examining the leisure identities of local communities in a rural area such as Lakeland, the centrality of local and regional identities becomes much clearer. This study does not suggest that Lakeland was unique but rather makes connections between this northern, upland region and other areas of England. By studying everyday leisure habits as well as larger, annual events, the study also moves away from earlier generalizations regarding the relationship between national identity and the English countryside which have been ‘based almost entirely on high culture’.<sup>193</sup>

In addition to the extant studies which have overlooked regional identity in favour of broader conclusions about national identity, there are others which assume that ‘anything important about the English relationship to the countryside must be uniquely English’ and thereby fail to understand the international dimensions of rural

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<sup>191</sup> Brassley *et al.*, *The English Countryside Between the Wars*.

<sup>192</sup> Burchardt, ‘Agricultural History, Rural History’, p. 475.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 466.

history.<sup>194</sup> This thesis has accordingly utilized several international studies in order to demonstrate considerable similarities between their findings about the leisure of rural youth in other countries and that of an English rural region such as Lakeland.<sup>195</sup> Griffiths' study of rural society in inter-war New Zealand for instance, revealed that young people in such communities were subject to high levels of control and authority at local dances, a finding with which this thesis draws a parallel.<sup>196</sup> Other work on New Zealand, includes an edited collection by Brookes, et.al., which assesses the interaction of modernity and 'traditional' leisure practices during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>197</sup> Dewson similarly provides insight into the intergenerational relationships in New Zealand rural communities and highlights the levels of control to which young women especially, were subject.<sup>198</sup> She also suggests how events that drew together large numbers of people from disparate rural areas, reinforced and 'strengthened community ties'. All of these examples have provided a useful comparative dimension for this study, which has expanded on their findings in order to apply them to other leisure activities and to construct a picture of how the relationships between adult authority figures and rural young people shaped leisure experiences more generally.

Although this thesis is primarily concerned with examining the leisure experiences of rural young people, it has proved impossible to carry out such analysis without also discussing the communities in which they lived. This was particularly true for an isolated, upland region such as Lakeland, where, as subsequent chapters of this

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid, p. 475.

<sup>195</sup> For example, research on rural areas in New Zealand, Australia, America and Hawaii, (among others,) are used to provide wider connections between the English experience and that of rural communities around the world.

<sup>196</sup> J. Griffiths, 'Popular Culture and Modernity: Dancing in New Zealand Society, 1920–1945', *Journal of Social History* 41, 3 (Spring 2008), pp. 611-632.

<sup>197</sup> B. Brookes, E. Olssen & E. Beer, 'Spare Time? Leisure, Gender and Modernity', in B. Brookes, A. Cooper, & R. Law (eds.), *Sites of Gender, Women, Men and Modernity in Southern Dunedin 1890-1939* (Auckland: Auckland University Press), p.187.

<sup>198</sup> E. Dewson, 'Off to the Dance'.

thesis will demonstrate, young people spent a considerable amount of their spare time in and around village spaces, engaged in a range of leisure activities which were organized by local adults. The leisure experiences of rural young people in Lakeland are consequently addressed throughout the thesis in relation to the wider communities in which they took place. It is useful, therefore, to explore in more detail what is actually meant by the term 'community' and the ways in which earlier academic studies of rural communities in particular, have provided a contextual background for this thesis. From an interdisciplinary perspective, there is a significant scholarship on rural communities in Britain yet, as the preceding historiographical review has shown, much of the existing work on the English countryside tends to overlook the experiences of the people who actually lived and worked in rural areas and tourist destinations.<sup>199</sup> This scholarship on rural communities began in the 1930s and marked the start of a growing sociological and anthropological interest, which provides a useful contextual background for this thesis.<sup>200</sup>

In the years immediately following the Second World War, a number of rural community studies were undertaken across Britain, which often focussed on upland regions. Several of these were in northern England, including Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter's study of Yorkshire, and Birch's work on the High Peak in Derbyshire.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> C. Bell & H. Newby, Community Studies (London: Unwin, 1971); A.P. Cohen, The Symbolic Construction of Community (Chichester: Ellis Horwood, 1985); A.P. Cohen, Whalsay: Symbol, Segment and Boundary in a Shetland Island Community (Manchester: MUP, 1987); J.L. Durand-Drouhin & L.M. Szwengrub (eds.), Rural Community Studies in Europe (Oxford: OUP, 1981); A. Everitt, Landscape and Community in England (London: The Hambledon Press, 1985) G.A. Hillery, 'Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement', Rural Sociology, 20 (1955), pp. 134-147; G.J. Lewis, Rural Communities: A Social Geography (London: David & Charles, 1979); H. Newby, 'Locality and Rurality: the Restructuring of Rural Social Relations', Regional Studies, 20 (1986), pp. 209-215.

<sup>200</sup> See C. Arensberg & S. Kimball, Family and Community in Ireland (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1940), widely acknowledged as the first study of rural communities in Britain.

<sup>201</sup> N. Dennis, F. Henriques & C. Slaughter, Coal is Our Life: An Analysis of a Yorkshire Mining Community (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956); A.H. Birch, Small Town Politics (Oxford: OUP, 1959).

Both these and a range of other influential studies conducted during the same period have provided many useful insights, not only into the dynamics of community life but also into the idea of ‘community’. This is especially the case in relation to how people living within such places conceptualise and make sense of where they live and identify themselves. Frankenberg’s work on north-east Wales in Village on the Border, although not an upland survey offered, along with his subsequent work, Communities in Britain, new ways of understanding community more generally; the latter examined this concept in both urban and rural settings.<sup>202</sup> For historians, these works provide detailed first-hand accounts of village communities and the dynamics of rural life. Alwyn Rees’s exploration of a Welsh community, for instance, highlighted the changes which outsiders brought to the region.<sup>203</sup> One of Rees’s students at Aberystwyth University, W.M. Williams, went on to conduct studies of rural communities in the years after the Second World War.<sup>204</sup> His exploration of the upland Cumberland village of Gosforth considered both village life and outlying farming families and provided some useful points of comparison for this thesis. Williams analysed aspects of social life and leisure, the local class structure and also devoted some of his analysis to young people’s role in village community life. Williams, as is the case with this thesis, highlighted the distinctiveness of young people’s experiences, both in their leisure opportunities and generational relationships. More recently, geographers and anthropologists have devoted a considerable amount of time to analysing and exploring rural communities in

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<sup>202</sup> R. Frankenberg, Village on the Border. A Social Study of Religion, Politics and Football in a North Wales Community (London: Cohen & West, 1957); R. Frankenberg, Communities in Britain: Social Life in Town and Country (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966).

<sup>203</sup> A. Rees, Life in a Welsh Countryside (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1950).

<sup>204</sup> W.M. Williams, The Sociology of an English Village: Gosforth (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956); W.M. Williams, A West Country Village: Ashworthy. Family, Kinship and Land (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).



Britain.<sup>205</sup> Although much of this research is largely contemporary in its approach, a notable piece of work written from an historical perspective is an edited collection by Brian Short.<sup>206</sup> This interdisciplinary study examines English rural communities over a broad periodization and is, therefore, able to make more insightful conclusions regarding change and development in the countryside than some of the earlier, ahistorical accounts described above. Short's collection explores images associated with the idea of rural communities and, in common with Leyshon, suggests that although the notion of a rural community has predominantly positive and cohesive connotations in the national imagination, it can also involve tensions and exclusion.<sup>207</sup> Community has been defined in a variety of ways by academics, but for the purpose of this study, it is described as a group of people sharing 'a territorial space for residence' (such as a village), offering a 'sense of belonging, the face-to-face association with people well known.'<sup>208</sup>

Studies of rural communities have often highlighted the central role which women play in the social life of villages, and the sense of belonging and identity which their efforts can help to foster.<sup>209</sup> The thesis explores this finding, which demonstrates how women's role in organizing village leisure activities shaped young people's experiences into a form acceptable to local adults. The thesis builds on the findings of earlier examinations of rural society and leisure, to demonstrate the ways in which largely male-dominated sporting activities also provided opportunities for women to

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<sup>205</sup> See for instance, T. Bradley & P. Lowe (eds.), Locality and Rurality: Economy and Society in Rural Regions (Norwich: Geo Books, 1984); G.J. Lewis, Rural Communities: A Social Geography (London: David & Charles, 1979).

<sup>206</sup> B. Short (ed.), The English Rural Community: Image and Analysis (Cambridge, CUP, 2002).

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>208</sup> Lewis, Rural Communities, p. 29.

<sup>209</sup> M. Stacey, Tradition and Change: A Study of Banbury, (Oxford: OUP, 1960); L. Davidoff, J. L'Esperance & H. Newby, 'Landscape with Figures: Home and Community in English Society', in J. Mitchell & A. Oakley (eds.), The Rights and Wrongs of Women (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977); M. Strathern, 'The Social Meanings of Localism', in Bradley & Lowe, Locality and Rurality, pp. 187-8.

organize related fundraising events and social occasions, such as dances, thereby extending their influence over local leisure habits. In this way, the thesis helps to illuminate the role which several middle-class women played in the organization of leisure within Lakeland villages. Their involvement not only influenced the distinctiveness of many young people's leisure opportunities, but also helped to maintain traditional aspects of the region's leisure culture, such as the annual rushbearing ceremony and dialect plays.

One woman, who was central to the organization of leisure in Grasmere village, for example, was Mrs Eleanor Rawnsley, who had grown up there. She was responsible for organizing the majority of the social occasions for young people in Grasmere throughout the period under review, as well as many of the leisure activities in the village more generally. She did much to support and preserve the leisure traditions of Lakeland and helped to establish the Wordsworth Trust and Dove Cottage archive in Grasmere, which became a repository for various aspects of Lakeland cultural heritage and holds original copies of dialect scripts written by her.<sup>210</sup> To understand her significance in supporting and maintaining distinctive leisure traditions, it is necessary to provide some brief biographical information. Mrs Rawnsley was the second wife of Canon Hardwicke Drummond Rawnsley, a key figure in Lakeland society and in the rural preservation movement, who was also notable for co-founding the National Trust. After the death of his first wife, he moved to Grasmere village from nearby Crosthwaite and purchased Allan Bank, a large property formerly occupied by William Wordsworth and his family in the early 1800s. Canon Rawnsley was part of an influential social circle, which included John Ruskin and Octavia Hill, who shared his passion for the

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<sup>210</sup> More will be said about these dialect scripts in chapter three.

need to protect the Lake District from development. In addition to his conservation activities, Rawnsley was a prolific author of poetry and prose, which almost exclusively centred on aspects of life and leisure traditions in Lakeland before the First World War. Mrs Rawnsley, who had been friends with her future husband for many years before their marriage, could be said to have carried on his preservationist work in her attempts to preserve the leisure traditions of Lakeland rather than the landscape, by celebrating and emphasizing continuity with the past wherever possible, including the leisure activities of local young people. Upon Rawnsley's death in 1920, Allan Bank was bequeathed to the National Trust. Eleanor, as his widow, was permitted to reside there until her death in the late 1950s. It is within the broader context of her connections to local culture, preservation of the Lake District's landscape and rather impressive social connections, that we should view Eleanor Rawnsley's involvement in the leisure habits of young workers and village life more generally.

In addition to highlighting the role of women in village social life and community, some of the more recent academic studies of rural communities, including that of Allendale, an upland area in Northumberland, have highlighted the links between landscape and a sense of place for those living within regions which are particularly popular with tourists.<sup>211</sup> Studies, such as that of Allendale, have argued that a sense of place 'provides both the symbol and framework of community.'<sup>212</sup> The work of anthropologists such as Anthony Cohen, who emphasize connections between community and belonging in rural localities, has also played an important part in this

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<sup>211</sup> B. Quayle, 'Images of Place in a Northumbrian Dale', in Bradley & Lowe, *Locality and Rurality*, p 225.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

thesis.<sup>213</sup> A sense of place can provide countrymen and women with a feeling of belonging. It can also, however, exclude people who do not ‘belong’ and contribute to a sense of their ‘otherness’ in relation to the moral geography outlined above. This thesis further develops these more recent works, as well as those conducted between the 1930s-1950s, in a number of ways. Firstly, it offers an historical account of change and continuity within rural communities and village social life and clearly highlights how change slowly infiltrated rural communities in Lakeland, as with the arrival of outsiders during the Second World War. It also provides a useful generational dimension to existing debates by addressing these changes in relation to the way in which young people spent their spare time. Secondly, it deals with a number of criticisms which have previously been levelled at community studies and can also be said to be true of the work of historians. These have tended to ignore the people they have studied and how they talk about and ‘imagine their own society’: ‘We do not catch the sound of their voices.’<sup>214</sup> Geographers such as Riley and Harvey, for example, have argued that oral history is particularly valuable for academics attempting to understand rural communities and their sense of place.<sup>215</sup> This thesis helps fill a gap in our knowledge, in examining how both young people and rural communities in Lakeland constructed and maintained a specific sense of place, by drawing on the oral history testimony of the AOHG collection. In order to explore the implications of some of the issues raised in this chapter, we now turn to a detailed consideration of the character of social dancing in Lakeland. The analysis considers the extent to which this activity differed from the

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<sup>213</sup> A. Cohen (ed.), *Belonging: Identity and Social Organisation in British Rural Cultures* (Manchester: MUP, 1982). See also, M. Strathern, *Kinship at the Core: An Anthropology of Elmdon, Essex*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

<sup>214</sup> S. Wright, ‘Image and Analysis: New Directions in Community Studies’, in Short, *The English Rural Community*, p. 211.

<sup>215</sup> M. Riley & D. Harvey, ‘Talking Geography: On Oral History and the Practice of Geography’, *Social and Cultural Geography*, 8, 3 (2007), pp. 345-51.

forms which were popular in urban areas and assesses how these experiences were connected to broader discussions of contemporary rural life.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Social Dancing**<sup>216</sup>

This chapter examines young people's experiences of dancing in Lakeland between 1930 and the early 1950s. Much of the existing historical work on social dancing has focussed on mainstream urban dance culture.<sup>217</sup> There has been little research into the dancing experiences of young people in rural areas, aside from a few international studies, which provide an important point of comparison here.<sup>218</sup> The chapter explores the distinctiveness of the social dancing experience in Lakeland, concentrating on several key elements of social dancing, which include the organization of dances, the venues in which they were held, as well as popular music and dance styles. It also highlights how the largely un-commercialized nature of social dancing in Lakeland shaped the dancing experiences of local young people between the 1930s and early 1950s. The role of incomers and changes in adult involvement locally are mapped across the period. The chapter illustrates the influence of adults in local communities and their tendency to celebrate the past via older leisure habits, as a way of sustaining a distinctive sense of place (particularly in contrast to popular dance culture). Young

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<sup>216</sup> Social dancing is defined here as the popular couples dancing, which developed rapidly across England during the 1920s and 1930s.

<sup>217</sup> The urban dance hall in particular has received considerable attention in historical research. For example: A. Davies, Leisure, Gender and Poverty. Working Class Cultures in Salford and Manchester, 1900-1939 (Buckingham: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 89-94; pp. 117-118 & p. 140; D. Fowler, The First Teenagers. The Lifestyle of Young Wage-Earners in Inter-War Britain (London: Woburn Press, 1995); C. Langhamer, Women's Leisure in England, 1920-60 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 63-70; R. McBee, Dance Hall Days: Intimacy and Leisure and Working-Class Immigrants in the United States (New York: New York University Press, 2000); R. McKibbin, Classes and Culture: England, 1918-1951 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); J. Nott, Music For the People: Popular Music and Dance in Inter-War Britain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); A. Abra, On With the Dance: Nation, Culture, and Popular Dancing in Britain, 1918-1945, (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2009).

<sup>218</sup> E. Dewson, "'Off to the Dance", Romance in Rural New Zealand Communities, 1880s-1920s', History Australia, 2, (December, 2004); J. Griffiths, 'Popular Culture and Modernity: Dancing in New Zealand Society 1920-1945', Journal of Social History, 41 (Spring 2008), pp. 611-632.

workers' dancing experiences were characterized by significant intergenerational trends, although it is not suggested that young people were uniformly deferential and obedient to their elders. There is also a focus on young people's agency and their attempts to undermine and negotiate adult authority at dances. The discussion examines how dancing patterns which were common in the 1930s, were disrupted in wartime, and traces the influence of young urban outsiders whose arrival in the region during the war years, helped expose local youth to more contemporary forms of dance culture. The chapter ends with an assessment of the ways in which local dancing habits changed again in the post-war years and an evaluation of the long-term impact of wartime shifts on young worker's social dancing experiences.

### The urban experience

In order to draw out contrasts between the mainstream dancing experiences of young urban workers and those of young countrymen and women in rural Lakeland, a brief explanation of urban dance culture is necessary. During the inter-war years, social couples dancing, and the commercialized dance culture which evolved alongside it, became identified with a new 'modern' age across the towns and cities of Britain. Social dancing's popularity grew rapidly after the First World War, when it coincided with the arrival of Jazz from America, reaching its peak in the 1930s. The Hammersmith Palais opened as England's first commercial dance hall in 1919, after which similar establishments opened across the country.<sup>219</sup> The growth of large chains of dance halls, most noticeably during the 1930s, meant that for young people, the experience of 'going dancing' became increasingly standardized and homogenized, as

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<sup>219</sup> Many inter-war dance halls were purpose built, whilst others were converted from older entertainment venues, including former roller skating rinks.

they gradually came to recognize ‘what to expect from an evening at the “palais.”’<sup>220</sup> By the 1930s, dancing had become ‘all the rage’ among young urban workers, who enjoyed increasing levels of disposable income throughout the decade.<sup>221</sup> These relatively affluent young people were able to attend many different types of dances by this time, not only in large commercial dance halls, but also those organized by church groups, youth groups, local societies and clubs, as well as private tea dances.<sup>222</sup> Andrew Davies for example, described how teenagers in inter-war Manchester and Salford, ‘went to dances in parks, as an alternative to attending the commercial dance halls’.<sup>223</sup> Nevertheless, by the 1930s the growing significance of commercial dance halls in towns and cities helped create a distinctive consumer culture that was clearly identified with a youth market and included fashion trends in hairstyles, music, and dance steps. These commercial dance halls were often ornately decorated, exuding the kind of glamour and sophistication that attracted young wage earners in large numbers. The better halls often employed several dance-bands in matching outfits, on a stage or raised dais, which played non-stop in rotation for several hours; additional features included sprung floors, soft lighting and refreshment areas.<sup>224</sup> New dance styles were an important feature of the 1930s social dancing experience and the larger halls often employed professional dancers to teach patrons the latest craze. The frequency with which dance trends changed proved profitable to dance halls and record companies alike. The foxtrot, quickstep and waltz were among the ‘fresh’ ballroom dances which remained popular throughout the 1930s,<sup>225</sup> although towards the end of the decade,

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<sup>220</sup> Abra, On With the Dance, p. 128.

<sup>221</sup> For a discussion of rising wages for young workers during the 1930s, see Fowler, The First Teenagers.

<sup>222</sup> For the wide range of venues which held dances, see Nott, Music For the People, p. 40.

<sup>223</sup> Davies, Leisure, Gender and Poverty p. 140. See also, Langhamer, Women’s Leisure in England, p. 67.

<sup>224</sup> For a more detailed description of the interior of an average urban dance hall, see Nott, Music for the People, pp. 172-3.

<sup>225</sup> For more on this, see Abra, On with the Dance.



novelty or group dances such as the Lambeth Walk, swept across dance floors up and down the country.<sup>226</sup> The social dancing experience for young people in urban areas during the inter-war period was very much dependent on disposable income. Expenditure linked to a night's dancing could range from travel to and from the venue, hall entrance fees and refreshments, to the purchase of appropriate clothing, fashionable shoes and hairstyles, cosmetics and beauty products (for women), gramophone records of the latest 'hit', dance music magazines, and even formal dancing lessons. These costs could certainly mount up and were particularly prohibitive to the young unemployed, who were excluded from many dance halls through lack of income.<sup>227</sup> Even those in employment could struggle with attending the more expensive halls. One man who grew up in a poor part of Bradford, Manchester, recalled a dance hall which his friend used to visit: 'it was beyond my means at 2/- entrance fee. It was only 1/- or 1/6d at most other places'.<sup>228</sup> Nevertheless, most young urban workers managed at least one night at the local palais on a fairly regular basis.

Urban dance halls provided their young working-class patrons with a sense of escapism and freedom, and some historians have described them as a 'youth only' space, where young people could exert growing autonomy over their leisure time.<sup>229</sup> This was particularly the case at commercial dance venues, which were often some distance away from local urban neighbourhoods, in city centres or seaside resorts. Young workers from northern towns such as Bolton, for example, regularly caught

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<sup>226</sup> Novelty dances such as the Lambeth Walk were created by teachers who were employed by larger dance hall chains such as Mecca. Their widespread popularity demonstrates the influence such chains exerted over their patrons.

<sup>227</sup> Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England*, p. 66.

<sup>228</sup> F. Pritchard, *Dance Band Days Around Manchester* (No Place of Publication, Neil Richardson, 1988), p. 12.

<sup>229</sup> Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, p. 89; Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England*, pp. 49–112.

‘dance trains’ to Blackpool’s large ballrooms.<sup>230</sup> Their popularity among young people in their teens and early twenties meant that commercial dance venues took great care to safeguard their reputation and respectability in order to avoid losing their licences. Relations between the sexes on the dance floor were carefully policed by dance hall staff, although young people often experienced much greater freedom for social and sexual encounters away from the floor, in other ‘dark corners’ of these venues.<sup>231</sup> Opportunities such as these tended to reinforce adult anxieties about the moral welfare of young dancers and the consequences of unsupervised mixing.<sup>232</sup> The new styles of dance which came over from America during the inter-war years also helped to fuel such concerns and attracted condemnation for being too sexually suggestive, due to the close physical contact they involved between male and female partners.<sup>233</sup>

Young people’s subversion of the strict regulations of many urban dance halls also accentuated worries about moral standards. The ‘pass out’ system, which was a common practice in 1930s urban dance halls, for example, allowed young men to leave the dance during the interval in order to nip out for a quick drink, from which they often returned intoxicated.<sup>234</sup> In inter-war Manchester, the system provided young men with ‘the happiness of a quick couple of pints across the road’, whilst the young women were left behind.<sup>235</sup> This habit was also present at dances held in rural New Zealand during the same period, as Griffiths has identified. Griffiths’s study showed that young people from nearby towns and cities often took alcohol to small village hops and used their cars

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<sup>230</sup> Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, p. 90.

<sup>231</sup> Mass-Observation File Report 11A, ‘Jazz and Dancing’ (November 1939). See also G. Cross, *Worktowners at Blackpool: Mass-Observation and Popular Leisure in the 1930s* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 169.

<sup>232</sup> E. Oliver, *Liberation or Limitation? A Study of Women’s Leisure in Bolton, 1919–1939* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Lancaster University, 1997); Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, pp. 89–90.

<sup>233</sup> A. Horn, *Juke Box Britain: Americanisation and Youth Culture 1945-60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 14-15.

<sup>234</sup> See Oliver, *Liberation or Limitation?*, p. 244; Pritchard, *Dance Band Days*, p. 11.

<sup>235</sup> Pritchard, *Dance Band Days*, p. 11.

‘to stash liquor at the country venue’. They would then get a ‘pass out’ and ‘visit their cars whilst dances were in progress’ for a quick drink.<sup>236</sup> In wartime, American soldiers were blamed for the presence of alcohol at such rural hops.<sup>237</sup> In both cases, Griffiths highlighted how the decline in behaviour which ensued was blamed squarely on the influence of outsiders.<sup>238</sup> There is some evidence to suggest that by the war years, young dancers in Kendal had also adopted this system. One man recalled that despite being unable to go in and out of the dance venue due to a broken ankle, every time his friends went ‘out for a drink, they brought me a bottle back. By the time the dance finished... I was stewed.’<sup>239</sup> As the interviewee indicates, not only did young men frequently leave the dance for a quick drink, they also smuggled alcohol back into the dance itself, practices which only increased generational anxiety over ‘dance mad’ youth. It was consequently not unusual for parents to ban their children from frequenting commercial dance venues. As Robert Roberts recalled in his autobiography of growing up in inter-war Salford:

Hearing of my intention of learning the art of dancing, he [his father] promptly forbade it. One ‘hopper’ [Janie –his sister] in the family, he said, was more than enough. ‘Coming in at all hours! –eleven o’clock! This is a respectable household!’ No decent person could be found in the streets after the beerhouses closed. Dancing rooms, anyhow, held the scum of the nation... Saturday nights you go to the pictures or theatre and nowhere else, understand?’ Nevertheless, choosing a ‘den’ well away from home, I joined the dancing millions of the time.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Griffiths, ‘Popular Culture and Modernity’, p. 621.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid, p. 622.

<sup>238</sup> In his study of dancing in rural New Zealand, John Griffiths also highlights this system and the associated problems of promiscuity it brought with it, Griffiths, ‘Popular Culture and Modernity’, pp. 620-625.

<sup>239</sup> Male, born 1921, quoted in J. Thistlethwaite, Cumbria the War Years: Lake District Life During the 1940s (Kendal: Thyme Press, 1997; 2000), p. 35.

<sup>240</sup> R. Roberts, A Ragged Schooling: Growing Up in the Classic Slum (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971; 1976), p. 205.

As we can see in this extract, young people who were forbidden from visiting dance halls often found ways around such restrictions, which demonstrated their growing agency in leisure choices.

The popularity of social dancing in Britain continued throughout the 1930s and was only halted (albeit temporarily) by the outbreak of war in 1939, when all commercial dance venues were closed. To help boost morale however, they were subsequently re-opened, allowing dances in towns and cities to continue in much the same way as they had in the inter-war years. Their escapist glamour was renewed by the arrival of American GIs in 1942, who introduced and popularized new dance trends, such as the Jive and the Jitterbug.<sup>241</sup> This escapism was most typified by ‘Rainbow Corner’, which was a social venue and dance hall in central London, set up for American servicemen on leave in the Capital.<sup>242</sup> Young people now danced to forget the tensions of war and escape the long hours and drudgery of much war work. In the post-war period, social dancing remained a popular leisure pursuit among young urban workers, who continued to visit commercial dance venues, as their parents had done during the 1930s. New trends in dance styles and music also continued to dictate fashion but were now linked to the ‘discovery’ of the teenager.<sup>243</sup> There were clearly a wide range of venues where dances were held in towns and cities across the period, but the dominant and defining experience of social dancing among urban working-class youth between 1930 and the early 1950s remained the commercial dance hall. As this brief discussion has suggested, commercial dance halls allowed adolescent workers to break away from the scrutiny of relatives and neighbours into a social space largely

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<sup>241</sup> Horn, *Juke Box Britain*, p. 24.

<sup>242</sup> Rainbow Corner was run by the American Red Cross between 1942 and 1946. Open 24 hours a day, it provided GIs with recreation and food. Footage of the venue is available at: <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/the-rainbow-ends/query/rainbow+corner> (accessed March 2012).

<sup>243</sup> M. Abrams, *The Teenage Consumer* (London: London Press Exchange, 1959).

dominated by the young, whose access to the burgeoning consumerism which surrounded dancing was enabled by rising wages and shorter working days.

### Dancing and the countryside

Criticism of the new dance culture of the inter-war years was not only levelled at the commercial venues in towns and cities. The importation of modern dance music to the countryside was also a point of vexation amongst rural commentators. Joad, for example, described with some irritation the ‘gramophones and portable wireless sets’ which were in use at Camber Beach.<sup>244</sup> Some of the most vehement expressions of disgust came from writers who encountered elements of modern dance culture in Lakeland itself.<sup>245</sup> In the mid-1930s, Joad again wrote with horror of rural campsites where ‘the atmosphere vibrates to the strains of negroid music. Girls with men are jazzing to gramophones in meadows... [a]ssuredly has the Lake District changed’.<sup>246</sup> It is clear from these extracts that the presence of urban leisure habits in the countryside and in particular Lakeland (often held up as one of the most perfect examples of the English countryside during the inter-war years) clashed with perceptions of the region as a ‘timeless’ retreat. The gramophone, as a tangible representation of modern leisure and urban youth culture, jarred with ideas about the ‘right use of leisure’ in ‘iconic’ rural regions such as Lakeland.

Joad was not alone in his condemnation. A piece appeared in the Daily Mirror in 1939, which strongly criticized urban dance culture as being responsible for the

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<sup>244</sup> C.E.M. Joad, Book of Joad: A Belligerent Autobiography (London: Faber & Faber, 1935), p. 192, quoted in C. Brace, ‘A Pleasure Ground for the Noisy Herds? Incompatible Encounters with the Cotswolds and England, 1900–1950’, Rural History, 11 (2000), p. 81.

<sup>245</sup> H.V. Morton, In Search of England (London: Methuen, 1927; 1934), p. 191.

<sup>246</sup> C.E.M. Joad, A Charter for Ramblers, (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1934), p. 171.

erosion of simpler, rural traditions. Under the headline ‘She Calls it Wicked’, the article focussed on Mary, an 18-year-old Carlisle factory worker, who condemned ‘London’s evil influence on dancing’, which had enabled the spread of commercial dance culture into local villages. Mary condemned the modern ‘swing evil’ for decimating older and traditional forms of dance in the English countryside. ‘Go to a dance in the provinces now’ she complained, ‘[e]ven a small village dance. The first thing you’ll notice is that the band is called either “Rhythm Boys” or “So and so and his Swingers”’. In her opinion, these groups produced a ‘noise’ which could ‘hardly be called music and certainly cannot be danced to’. The article suggested that the arrival of a homogenized dance culture in rural areas had caught young countrymen and women up in ‘London fever’ which induced them to dance ‘the most intricate and unsightly steps, more suitable for a Zulu village than a country dance hall’. In Mary’s opinion, the ‘old country dances were the best. The waltz and the fox-trot, the valeta and the polka’. She described London as ‘corrupting our country traditions and making them obsolete’, with the result that ‘North Country dances are gradually being ousted.’<sup>247</sup>

If we unpick this piece, it is clear that it was not only a general critique of urban adolescent leisure habits, ostensibly delivered by a young worker, but can also be viewed as a wider comment on the erosion of rural traditions and an older way of life. In this context, villages were places where jazz should never be heard and where village halls were inappropriate venues for the ‘swing mad’ fashions of the day. As with much criticism of modern leisure during this period, the countryside was being portrayed as a sanctuary from urban commercialism. If this argument is extended to include young people living in ‘rural idylls’ such as Lakeland, it is clear that they too, were expected to

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<sup>247</sup> The Daily Mirror, 16 February 1939, p. 18.

reject anything in their leisure habits which was out of place with their pastoral surroundings. Whereas young urban workers were criticized in the 1930s and 1940s for their participation in modern dance culture, seen as inconsistent with national interests in relation to good citizenship, young people in the countryside were implicitly criticized for their leisure choices as a result of the environment in which they lived. Precisely because the countryside was seen as a 'moral' space, it was commonly suggested that the types of leisure activities which took place there needed to be consistent with this morality. As O'Neill observed, Lakeland was central to ideas about the countryside during the 1930s and 1940s, which could account for why criticism of modern music and dance styles as inappropriate for 'traditional' and 'moral' landscapes including Lakeland, was often so vehemently expressed. As the analysis which follows will show, maintaining distinctiveness from urban homogenized leisure was central to young people's leisure experiences in Lakeland, which tended to focus instead on fostering a sense of place. It is perhaps rather unsurprising, therefore, that experiences of social dancing in the region during this period were markedly different from mainstream urban dance culture, which centred on the commercial dance hall. As we shall see, dances organized within Lakeland communities followed broader tendencies to celebrate the rural past through leisure and to reject modern influences.

### Social dancing in 1930s Lakeland

As the commercial influences outlined above became more apparent in urbanized centres during the 1930s, social dancing in Lakeland developed a rather different function. Rather than mirroring urban experiences, it had a much stronger tendency to reinforce both older leisure patterns and existing social structures. This makes Lakeland

a particularly useful case study, as so little is known about how, where and when young people danced in villages in the inter-war years. The explanation that young workers went to the nearest town to dance is too simplistic, as in rural areas such as Lakeland (certainly before the Second World War) they were commonly prevented from travelling for their leisure by a number of limiting factors. The peace, tranquillity and disconnection from urban cultural influences, one of Lakeland's main attractions to tourists, had very different implications for the young people who grew up there.<sup>248</sup> Although in Kendal, there was a habit for young people from the town 'going to Morecambe for the Saturday night dancing and returning on midnight trains', those who lived some distance from a train station were likely to find such journeys too difficult.<sup>249</sup> That is not to say that young people did not attend dances in neighbouring villages; their ability to do so was however, severely limited by poor transport links and limited spending power, with the result that much of their leisure time was spent with older adults. Young people's leisure in Lakeland villages consequently had a far more intergenerational, community focus than was the case for many adolescent urban workers during the 1930s. Older forms of leisure and social organization continued to influence the spare time of young people in Lakeland for longer than in urban districts. Such trends are echoed in international studies of young people's leisure in rural communities, where social dancing (particularly in rural localities) has been recognized as playing an important part in helping to build a sense of community.<sup>250</sup> The older forms of dancing which persisted in Lakeland signified more than a 'time-lag' between

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<sup>248</sup> With the exception of a day's walking or cycling for pleasure, most young people spent their spare time in and around their local village. Kendal (the nearest market town) was a considerable distance from many Lakeland villages and a trip there still constituted a special occasion. Journeys were usually only made for a specific practical purpose, for example, to purchase new clothing. The cost and time involved in travelling to Kendal generally placed it out of reach for many young workers, and none of the AOHG respondents recalled having travelled there to dance during the 1930s.

<sup>249</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 04 January 1947, p. 5

<sup>250</sup> See Dewson, "Off to the Dance". For more on the links between dancing and maintaining a sense of community, see C.A. Shoupe, 'Scottish Social Dancing and the Formation of Community', *Western Folklore*, 60, 2/3 (Spring 2001), pp. 125-147.



town and country leisure practices; the older styles in music and steps which remained popular at local dances played an important part in sustaining a sense of place. Young people's dancing experiences largely took place in village settings, which were a key site for the mediation of their identities. Dancing in such village venues not only rejected commercialism but helped reinforce connections with the past, although there is evidence that elements of urban leisure culture, especially modern music and dance trends, were slowly spreading into villages across Lakeland by the end of the 1930s.<sup>251</sup>

It is clear from 1930s trade directories that Lakeland lacked sole-purpose premises for dancing, to the extent that by the end of the decade, the region was still without a single commercially run dance hall, something confirmed both by oral testimony and local newspaper evidence.<sup>252</sup> This lack of sole purpose premises meant that dances were held in a variety of venues, including village halls, private members' clubs and reading rooms. AOHG respondents recalled a variety of opportunities for social dancing in their youth, which ranged from modest weekly 'hops' held in the evening and lasting several hours, to dancing at the end of local fairs and shows.<sup>253</sup> There were also grander occasions, such as hunt balls, large dances and annual balls, which were regularly advertised in the local press and were frequently recalled in oral history interviews.<sup>254</sup> These events took place several times a year, often in connection with local charities. Both grander dances and small village hops charged entrance fees,

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<sup>251</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being a Rural Youth: Inclusive and Exclusive Lifestyles', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 9, 1 (February 2008), p. 9.

<sup>252</sup> *Kelly's Directory for Cumberland and Westmorland* (London: Kelly's Directories, 1934 & 1938).

<sup>253</sup> For example, both the Langdale Gala and the Rushbearing sports events, closed with an hour's dancing on a nearby field. For more information on these sporting events, see Chapter Four.

<sup>254</sup> A keyword search of the online British Newspaper Archive revealed that between 1930 and 1939, Hunt balls were also common in Devon and often reported in the *Western Times*. Mention of such occasions also appeared (although to a lesser extent) in the *Tamworth Herald* and the *Nottingham Evening Post*: [www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/) (accessed February 2012).

although profits were usually donated to the club or charity which hosted the event.<sup>255</sup> Many dances held in 1930s Lakeland were in support of local organizations, and these charitable associations played an important part in helping young people to maintain a sense of connection with the wider community and vice versa. They also gave social dancing an air of respectability which was missing from many urban dance halls. Both oral history testimony and the local press suggested that in 1930s Lakeland, young people generally began to attend dances at the later age of sixteen, whereas their urban counterparts were more likely to begin dancing upon entering the workplace at 14; an age difference which may point to stricter parental control in Lakeland.

Village halls have been identified by Jeremy Burchardt as an important focus for rural communities in the inter-war years, although he proposed that they encouraged the urbanization of rural leisure.<sup>256</sup> Adrian Horn has similarly suggested that the ‘spread of American popular culture was facilitated by small municipal venues that were regularly hired out for dances’.<sup>257</sup> In contrast, it is argued here that village halls in Lakeland served a rather different function by helping many local leisure traditions to survive. The organization and supervision of dances in such venues kept young people within the local sphere of the village, a key site in the creation of their identity during adolescence.<sup>258</sup> The practical difficulties which young workers in Lakeland experienced in reaching commercial leisure venues located in towns and cities, meant that their opportunities for dancing were often limited to venues used by the whole community

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<sup>255</sup> Admission ranged from approximately 6d – 1/6d for a small hop. Modest refreshments, such as a bun and a cup of tea in the interval were usually included in the price. The grander events charged around 3/6d, although this included supper and the cost of a larger band. If the profits did not go to the group or society hosting the event, they were donated to another local good cause or charity.

<sup>256</sup> J. Burchardt, ‘Reconstructing the Rural Community: Village Halls and the National Council of Social Service, 1919 to 1939’, *Rural History*, 10 (1999), p. 211.

<sup>257</sup> Horn, *Juke Box Britain*, p. 20.

<sup>258</sup> Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, p. 9.

for a variety of purposes. This was the case in Ambleside, where the Assembly Rooms and Conservative club accommodated a range of different functions. Both buildings served as important centres for different social activities. The Conservative club, known locally as the ‘Con club’, was the smaller of the two and catered for wedding receptions and birthday parties. The Assembly Rooms, opened in 1894, were much larger and split across three floors. Their size and popularity also meant that other leisure activities aimed at adults were often held at the same time as dances, although usually on a different floor:

...the Assembly Rooms as I first knew them: the big dances were, the bigger balls they were about three-and-six... and you got a cup of tea and biscuits and some... just went to the whist drive in the basement, it was absolutely packed, and then they could come upstairs for a bun<sup>259</sup>

As we can see from this extract, it was common for dances in Lakeland venues to be held at the same time as whist drives. This is also apparent from a sample of the ‘Coming Events’ listed in the Westmorland Gazette for one month in 1939, where approximately one third of all the dances advertised included a whist drive.<sup>260</sup> This illustrates the extent to which the leisure activities of young workers tended to complement and coincide with the leisure of older adults.<sup>261</sup> Such overlaps were a distinctive element of the local dancing experience and contrasted with the associations of urban dance halls as spaces where young urban workers had greater freedom to assert their independence from adult authority. The interior space of dance venues in Lakeland was a further divergence from the urban dancing experience. As was suggested earlier, commercial dance halls in towns and cities were often ornately

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<sup>259</sup> Respondent CG, born 1919

<sup>260</sup> Westmorland Gazette, February 1939. This sample is representative of each year throughout the 1930s.

<sup>261</sup> This also highlights the seasonal nature of leisure in Lakeland. The sample month was taken in winter, which was both a quieter time in the farming calendar, allowing for more leisure time. It was also the season when less outdoor leisure was available.

decorated, with sprung floors, a bandstand, soft lighting and refreshment areas. In contrast, dance venues in Lakeland tended to be decorated only for special occasions or grand events, such as a ball. Even then, this appears to have been far more modest in character than the average urban palais. One respondent, for example, recalled ‘special’ decorations which included paper lanterns. The absence of the type of consumer culture which was so closely associated with social dancing in large urban centres extended to the clothing worn for village hops. A new dress or outfit was sometimes purchased or made at home for a large occasion such as an annual ball but for smaller evening gatherings, everyday clothes were worn. Young farm labourers for example, attended Saturday night hops wearing their hob nailed boots.<sup>262</sup>

Dances for young people in Grasmere were structured on similar lines to those in Ambleside. The village’s main social centre was its ‘New Hall’, built in 1903 and used for lectures, socials and theatrical productions, as well for as the village’s annual New Year’s Eve Ball, which attracted several hundred (mainly young) people from in and around Grasmere. There were also mid-week village ‘hops’ after so-called ‘Citizens’ Socials’, which were monthly events consisting of a lecture, followed by refreshments and a musical interlude.<sup>263</sup> These were further occasions for young people where dancing was incorporated into a wider event for older members of the community. Local social hierarchies were maintained at many of the dances held locally, especially at large social events.

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<sup>262</sup> K. Holland, *From Cotton Mills to Lakeland Hills: Holiday Cottage in Lake District 1930s* (Kendal: Helm Press, 2005), p. 41.

<sup>263</sup> These so-called ‘Citizen’s Socials’ are representative of the 1930s preoccupation with citizenship, and the idea of the ‘good’ citizen. It was thought that by providing people with educational activities in their spare time as an alternative to modern ‘passive’ forms of leisure, a future generation of responsible citizens could be moulded. For a detailed discussion of this issue and how it related to young people and their leisure during our period, see Chapter Five.

Despite their relative expense, the grander dances held in the Ambleside Assembly Rooms tended to attract a broad range of local young people, not only from wealthy local families but also girls from the Ambleside laundry, a well-known local employer. These different social groups took care however, to distance themselves both inside and outside the dance hall. The ways in which the dance floor was negotiated at such functions, as Murfin has suggested, did much to preserve class distinctions.<sup>264</sup> One respondent who recalled such dances at the Assembly Rooms for instance, described how:

...there was three classes of people at these dances, there was probably the Redmaynes, [a wealthy local family] ... all at the very top against the orchestra, then there was ... farmers and such like, then down at the very bottom... was what they called the laundry clique... and they always had the bottom of the [dance] floor. They always called them the laundry clique because they always stuck together down there.<sup>265</sup>

The inclination for different classes (as well as different age groups) to patronize the same venue also distinguished social dancing in Lakeland from that in urban dance halls, which tended to be more obviously segregated by class.<sup>266</sup>

This intergenerational trend in social dancing was part of a wider pattern, evident in the region's broader leisure habits throughout the 1930s. It was also characteristic of how other rural communities organized social events during the inter-war years. As Dewson noted in her work on rural communities in New Zealand during the same period, '[s]haring leisure created bonds of mutuality that strengthened rural

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<sup>264</sup> Murfin, *Popular Leisure in the Lake Counties* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 196-7.

<sup>265</sup> Respondent W, born 1895.

<sup>266</sup> That is, it was uncommon for a middle-class person to patronize a working-class dance hall. Working-class dancers attended commercial dance halls, whereas middle-class young people were more likely to frequent dances attached to a church or voluntary organization and the upper-class would patronize high class hotels and restaurants which often incorporated a small dance floor.

communities.<sup>267</sup> By organizing leisure activities which included a broad section of the local population, older adults maintained ties with the younger generation, whilst also ensuring that they could keep a watchful eye over their conduct at dances. More particularly, adults from Lakeland village communities provided an organizational element and leadership that was missing from many other rural communities during the same period. A lack of leadership in the countryside, for example, was cited as being responsible for the dearth of leisure activities available in rural communities throughout the inter-war years.<sup>268</sup> The opposite appears to have been true of 1930s Lakeland however, where, as one Ambleside respondent typically recalled, ‘quite a few adults and people like that kept things going.’<sup>269</sup>

This leadership also extended to inside the venue itself, where besides organizing young people’s dances, adults also supervised them. Local newspapers and oral evidence suggest that a male MC was in attendance at most village dances in 1930s Lakeland, who often imposed strict standards of behaviour, as a respondent who grew up in Ambleside recalled:

...a lot of MCs were terribly strict: they wouldn’t allow anyone to take drink in or anything; they used to search some of the people and if anybody was a bit unsteady they used to turn ‘em out, and anybody they found out had got passed [sic] ‘em, they just went out the same!<sup>270</sup>

Other adults often in regular attendance at local hops included a number of influential individuals who were known for the particular interest they took in young people’s leisure activities. One local woman in Grasmere, for example, had something of a

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<sup>267</sup> Dewson, ““Off to the dance””.

<sup>268</sup> See C.S. Orwin, (University of Oxford Agricultural Economics Research Institute) Country Planning: A Study of Rural Problems (London: Oxford University Press, 1944); D. Edwards -Rees, A Rural Youth Service (London: J.K. Whitehead, 1944).

<sup>269</sup> Respondent HY, born 1919.

<sup>270</sup> Respondent CG, born 1919.

formidable reputation among many villagers and provided a level of supervision at some local dances which several interviewees vividly recalled. As one observed:

Mrs. Rawnsley used to keep her eye on us because in the Lancers, [dance step] you all gather in the middle in one of the things and the boys used to swing us off our feet – well, she wouldn't have that, she used to come and she used to stand there and they stopped. She never said anything but you knew exactly you hadn't to do it anymore. She used to keep order but we really enjoyed them.<sup>271</sup>

As this description demonstrates, supervision within these village venues could even extend to *how* young people danced and is indicative of the 'ordering' of village spaces by adults which has been identified in contemporary studies of rural youth.<sup>272</sup> The adult authority in evidence at local dances also ensured that the smaller, regular hops held on a Saturday evening, ended before midnight in order to preserve the Sabbath:

I think they were sixpence. Up to 12 o'clock. They were on a Saturday, weren't they? ... You couldn't stay after midnight, I know that... because it was Sunday after midnight and that was it.<sup>273</sup>

Young people's deference to adults reflected broader social relations within these communities, but traditional gender expectations also shaped this surveillance.<sup>274</sup>

Young women, for example, often found further restrictions placed on their attendance at even small village hops, with some parents insisting that other family members act as chaperones. One Grasmere woman and her friend were only able to access local dances if accompanied by adult relatives: 'we weren't allowed to go unless [her friend's] sister... and her husband – if they were going, we could go but we weren't allowed to

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<sup>271</sup> Respondent GN, born 1914.

<sup>272</sup> O. Jones, 'Melting Geography: Purity, Disorder, Childhood and Space', in S. Holloway & G. Valentine (eds.) *Children's Geographies: Playing, Living, Learning* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 32.

<sup>273</sup> Respondent ID, born 1924.

<sup>274</sup> Mrs Rawnsley's authority also extended to older villagers, including working men with families of their own, who continued to display a considerable level of respect and deference to her, even into the post-war period. See for instance interview with AOHG Respondent HP.

go unless they were there'.<sup>275</sup> Other evidence from the AOHG archive suggests that it was not only parents who exerted control over young women's access to local dances. Local employers controlled (or at least attempted to control) the dancing habits of their female employees, as a woman who worked as a domestic servant in the inter-war years recalled:

*What about dances?*

Oh well. She [her employer] wouldn't allow you, no. But we did go. We went when they were in bed.

*So you'd be going out to the dance at about nine o'clock or something?*

After ten.

*After ten.*

The cook used to let us in, you see. Come and open the door for us...

*Where were the dances, in the Village Hall?*

In Grasmere, yes. And they used to go on till three o'clock in the morning, special big dances, didn't they? You know... and lovely music...

*How often did they have the dances?*

Not very often, perhaps three times a year, but in between they had a social evening; she did let us go to that because it was only seven o'clock till nine sort of thing, quite respectable hours. So we did go there [e]very month.<sup>276</sup>

This woman eventually met her future husband at a dance, despite her employer's efforts to curb her attendance at such events, possibly to prevent her from mixing with members of the opposite sex. Another young woman, who worked as a parlour maid in Ambleside between 1936 and 1939, described her lack of social life, given that her job permitted little time to herself. Her comments suggest both the centrality of dancing to young people's leisure at this time and a deep sense of exclusion from the leisure culture of youth. She was expected to work until ten o'clock in the evening, so could never get to dances 'because ten o'clock was [the] deadline, wasn't it? So, you couldn't go to dances. I missed out on my teen years because I've never learned to dance'.<sup>277</sup>

These levels of supervision for young women are, again, echoed in international studies

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<sup>275</sup> Respondent GN, born 1914.

<sup>276</sup> Respondent IP, born 1908.

<sup>277</sup> Respondent MH, born 1922.



of rural dancing during the inter-war years.<sup>278</sup> Emma Dewson, for example, illustrated the intense scrutiny and supervision to which young women in New Zealand rural communities were subjected by family members at local dances.<sup>279</sup> Although several female AOHG respondents recalled the restrictions which were often placed on their spare time, there are no examples of the same limitations in the case of young men.

Young men, who ‘lived in’ as farm workers in Lakeland could, however, also feel pressure to behave in a particular way during their spare time. Even as late as the 1950s, ‘a farm worker, if he was single, would live in with his employer’s family. That meant that you were not only answerable to the boss in working hours, but also for the rest of the time you were on the farm premises.’<sup>280</sup> What this recollection demonstrates, however, is that this young worker was only expected to moderate his behaviour whilst on the farm itself; once away from their workplace, young male farm labourers appear to have enjoyed considerable freedom. Providing that late nights did not affect their ability to rise early the next morning, they were far freer than their female counterparts to socialize into the early hours. Many village venues were, for example, a considerable distance from where young people lived and worked and attendance at village dances often entailed a considerable walk, especially for those living on more remote farms:

A lot of the farm chaps that used to go to these dances that finished, as I say, around half two, maybe three o’clock, but usually around two, somewhere in that region, they’d go back and get changed and have an hour on their bed and then get up and start milking at about five!<sup>281</sup>

Where young men often managed to combine the long days and hard physical work of a farm labouring job with attendance at the larger local dances, girls and young women

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<sup>278</sup> See both Dewson, ““Off to the dance”” and Griffiths, ‘Popular Culture and Modernity’.

<sup>279</sup> Dewson, ““Off to the dance””.

<sup>280</sup> Bolton, *From Clogs and Wellies*, p. 39.

<sup>281</sup> Respondent ID, born 1924.

were likely to find this much more difficult, not only because of long hours of work but also through the interference of their employers. As we have seen, some young women resorted to sneaking out of the house to attend even small village dances. The difficulties which young workers often experienced in finding a space of their own where they could express themselves, was very evident in oral testimony. The group of young people whom Leyshon interviewed described how frustrating ‘the burden of onerous supervision and surveillance’ could be when it came to enjoying themselves with friends in village locations, and similar sentiments were expressed by Lakeland interviewees.<sup>282</sup>

We’d walk back from the social and there was a letter in the [Westmorland] Gazette one week about the rowdy – if he’d lived long enough he’d have found out what rowdyism was, wouldn’t he? All we were doing was singing, walking in a line all singing together coming back along Rydal Road, so of course when he put this letter in the Gazette we used to stand outside and sing louder than ever! And all we did was sing<sup>283</sup>

As this domestic servant found, living in a small community meant that even the smallest transgressions were likely to be noted, with adult disapproval and in this case were expressed in the very public arena of the local press. Living in this ‘landscape of surveillance’ clearly required young people to behave themselves in a particular way and in the words of Leyshon’s interviewees, to be ‘careful not to upset anyone’.<sup>284</sup>

The styles of music and dance steps popular at local hops further distinguished them from urban dance culture and helped create a sense of place which differentiated Lakeland from urban areas. As was suggested earlier, a lack of sole-purpose dance halls in Lakeland throughout the 1930s allowed older adults, who were largely out of touch

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<sup>282</sup> Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, p. 11.

<sup>283</sup> Respondent MH, born 1922.

<sup>284</sup> Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, p. 10.

with modern trends, to organize dances according to their own preferences, which often referred back to the local leisure patterns of an earlier era. New dance steps were a common feature of large commercialized halls in the 1930s where fashions changed frequently but in rural Lakeland, styles from an earlier era found far more favour. As Griffiths has suggested, an ‘indication of being modern in the 1920s and 1930s was the type of dances being performed’, accordingly dances ‘in rural areas retained “traditional” qualities and older styles of dance were largely favoured’.<sup>285</sup> In Lakeland for instance, the most common dance step which many AOHG respondents remembered dancing in the 1930s was, the Lancers.<sup>286</sup> As one recalled, ‘we did the Lancers and the Six Reel and all old fashioned things like that’.<sup>287</sup> The survival of such ‘traditional’ dance steps points once again to the influence of adults. It is probable that at least some of those who organized dances in Lakeland had been taught these steps in their own youth at the ‘quadrille classes’ which were popular in the region before the First World War.<sup>288</sup> These ‘old fashioned’ dances remained popular throughout the inter-war years, although they were becoming ‘sufficiently unusual’ in urban dance halls ‘to provoke comment’ when included in dance programmes, and were more likely to be danced by older patrons at novelty or ‘old time’ evenings.<sup>289</sup> A Mass Observation report on social dancing in the late 1930s suggested that older styles of dancing were only popular with

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<sup>285</sup> Griffiths, ‘Popular Culture and Modernity’, p. 613; p. 616.

<sup>286</sup> Group dances such as quadrilles and the Lancers, (a type of quadrille) were fashionable in the nineteenth century. According to Oliver, it was only at ‘Old Time’ nights (usually patronized by older people) that older dances such as the Valeta and the Schottische were in demand, Oliver, Liberation or Limitation, pp. 242; p. 255. Similar evidence can be found in the national press at this time. In the 1930s, the Lancers were described by national newspapers as ‘what we were dancing in 1910’ The Daily Mirror, 03 May 1939; Frank Rust tells us that by the 1930s, ‘The lancers had had their day and since 1918 had been confined to ‘Old Time’ dances.’ F. Rust, Dance in Society: An Analysis of the Relationship Between the Social Dance and Society in England From the Middle Ages to the Present Day (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 76.

<sup>287</sup> Respondent GN, born 1914.

<sup>288</sup> Murfin, Popular Leisure, p. 195.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid*, p. 196; J.F & T.M. Flett, Traditional Step Dancing in Lakeland (London: English Folk Dance Society, 1979). According to the Western Times, these steps also appear to have been common at village dances and larger balls in Devon during the 1930s, as revealed by a further keyword search of the online British Newspaper Archive.

people who could not ‘adjust themselves to modern modes of entertainment.’<sup>290</sup> In small rural communities, however, it is likely that the endurance of older steps and communal dances, including the Lancers, was also due to moral considerations, such as the fewer possibilities they provided for close physical contact between the sexes. The more suggestive dances fashionable at many commercial dance halls in the late 1930s caused considerable concern, most notably in the contemporary press. The steps taught to and danced by young workers in Lakeland during this decade can, therefore, be viewed as another way in which adults attempted to impose their own moral geography onto the leisure habits of the younger generation.

Local newspapers expressed their own reservations regarding the spread of modern dance habits in Lakeland. Criticism of the ‘modern passion for change and variety’, as expressed in dance culture, first appeared in the Kendal Parish magazine and was subsequently reprinted in the Westmorland Gazette.<sup>291</sup> The author, a Reverend Bowers, did not condemn dancing itself, since there was ‘nothing to object to’. What he disliked was the ‘peculiar quality’ of modern dancing, which ‘achieved something as near motion without meaning as civilised man has yet discovered’. In particular, his objection to contemporary dance culture was that he believed it to be ‘indicative of a deep-seated modern instinct’, a phrase which resonates with broader inter-war discourses on the demise of the English countryside and rural traditions and the rise of a homogenized national leisure culture. Dance steps were used in Lakeland not only as a way of rejecting modern developments; dance styles from an earlier period were also used to further mark the region out as distinctive. It has been argued here that maintaining a distinctive sense of place was a central characteristic of much of the

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<sup>290</sup> Mass Observation Archive, File Report, TC 38/1/E, Peckham Pavilion, 27 May 1939, quoted in Abra, ‘On with the Dance’, p. 87.

<sup>291</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 10 July 1937.

region's leisure culture between 1930 and the early 1950s. In this context, teaching young people older, less sexually suggestive dance styles also helped local people to sustain a sense of disconnection with centres of cultural production, and thereby perpetuate the myth of the countryside as an 'unchanging idyll'.

Such distinctions also extended to the type of music favoured at dances in Lakeland during the 1930s, which differed markedly from that which was popular in urban dance settings. Murfin highlighted the way in which jazz and Americanized forms of music and dance began to spread across the Lake Counties by the 1930s, thanks largely to the cinema, wireless and gramophone. She has also described how, in response to these trends, many dance bands sprang up in the region to accommodate new tastes.<sup>292</sup> The patterns Murfin identified are, however, less discernible in rural Lakeland, where only one AOHG respondent recalled any popular dance music from the 1930s at local hops, and no one remembered jazz played for dancing before the outbreak of the Second World War.<sup>293</sup> Oral evidence supports the idea that local young people generally had limited access to newer genres of music and instead of jazz, traditional hunting tunes such as 'John Peel' remained popular at many local dances before 1939.

Gramophones had certainly become cheaper by the 1930s but were still out of reach for most working-class households in Lakeland.<sup>294</sup> The wireless was more common, but adults in the home tended to control what was listened to and when. One woman recalled of the household in which she grew up that they 'had an old-fashioned

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<sup>292</sup> Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>293</sup> Lakeland was not alone in this, as contemporary surveys of rural New Zealand noted the lack of jazz in rural areas. Griffiths, 'Popular Culture and Modernity', p. 613.

<sup>294</sup> James Nott provides an examination of the role of the gramophone in daily life in 1930s Britain, Nott, *Music for the People*, Ch. 2. See also, Horn, *Juke Box Britain*, p. 14-20.

wireless at that time which run by battery. As the battery only lasted so long, the wireless was only allowed on for the news, *ITMA (It's That Man Again)* and Wilfred Pickles in *Have a Go*. Oh, and Dad liked his boxing, so he'd listen to any boxing matches.<sup>295</sup> Not only did parental preference for certain programmes dictate what was selected, the practicalities of wireless ownership (which included refilling the batteries, at a cost) also limited young people's access to modern music via this medium. When the wireless was used, it was often for family-friendly programmes, which demonstrates that the intergenerational nature of leisure in Lakeland could also extend into the home, although this was also probably true of urban households.<sup>296</sup> Other young workers in the region did find ways to access contemporary dance culture through new technology. Domestic servants, for example, sometimes illicitly used their employer's wireless or gramophone to listen to 'modern' dance music.

A number of the people interviewed by AOHG recalled adults' musical involvement at local hops, where they provided music for dancing at local institutes or village halls, often in quite a basic way, playing the piano or the drums, as an accompaniment to gramophone records:

*What music did you have for dancing?*

Oh just somebody out of the village who played the piano. Nothing spectacular, but quite enough.<sup>297</sup>

Such testimony further illustrates the unsophisticated nature of local dances, especially in comparison to the music provided at the average urban palais. It was also common for village or brass bands to play at hops in Lakeland, where parents or relatives of the

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<sup>295</sup> Female, born 1936, in Longsleddale, quoted in J. Thistlethwaite, *Cumbria the War Years: Lake District Life During the 1940s*, (Kendal: Thyme Press, 1997; 2000), p. 157.

<sup>296</sup> For more on this see Murfin's, chapter on 'Domestic and Family Leisure' in *Popular Leisure*, pp. 7-31.

<sup>297</sup> Respondent DL2, born 1910.

dancers frequently featured among the musicians. As a woman, who spent her youth in Grasmere, recalled of one ‘little Monday night “hop”’:

...they were grand, you know; they didn’t last very long, two or three hours and that was it. You got it for about 1/6d. and the Village Band played... I know my father was in, Marjorie’s dad would be in... My father was in - he used to play the euphonium.<sup>298</sup>

This presence was in addition to the MC and several other adults in attendance at village dances, who were likely to be well-known to the young dancers, another example of the way in which the ‘parental gaze’ was extended over local leisure spaces. Murfin has suggested that brass bands were ‘past their hey day’ by the 1930s, yet they continued to be popular in Lakeland villages where they played at a variety of events and venues, including village halls, sports days and annual festivals.<sup>299</sup> Nevertheless, there is evidence of newer trends emerging towards the end of the decade, as a growing number of modern dance bands began to take the place of older groups at local dances. Some of the AOHG informants, who were members of a brass band before the Second World War, recalled the increasingly uphill struggle to find new, younger members who were willing to put in the necessary time and effort required to learn an instrument. An older man recalled the difficulty of encouraging people to join old-style bands during the 1930s:

*Were you influenced by jazz at all?*

Not very much. No, we didn't play that.

*And what about the thirties with the big band boom?*

Oh it encouraged... The thirties, yes, of course it gradually got worse, getting people to give the time up to learn to play an instrument that’s the trouble, like<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> Respondent GC, born 1913.

<sup>299</sup> For a detailed examination of brass banding in rural communities during the inter-war years, see J. Whiteoak, ‘Pity the Bandless Towns’: Brass Banding in Australian Rural Communities before World War Two’, *Rural Society*, Special Edition: Arts and Culture in Rural, Regional and Remote Australia, 13 (2003), pp. 287-311.

<sup>300</sup> Respondent L, born 1898.

Young men, who might previously have joined a local brass band, could now choose to form dance bands in response to growing local demand.<sup>301</sup> This change is recorded in the notices of forthcoming dances in the Westmorland Gazette, where by 1939, even the small Saturday night hops in Grasmere were entertained by groups such as the ‘Santa Marina Band’ and the ‘Jubilee Dance Band’.<sup>302</sup> It was not only young men who joined these local dance bands. Arnold Baron’s Dance Band (popular in Lakeland throughout the period under review) for example, was composed of older married men with families.<sup>303</sup> Clearly, this would have further helped to spread modern music to both village hops and grander occasions such as hunt balls, given that older men were more likely to be able to afford the necessary instruments and uniforms. It also demonstrates that not all local adults were united in their attempts to preserve Lakeland traditions. One man who played with Arnold Baron’s band during the 1930s, for instance, also established ‘Old Time’ Dancing Clubs at Windermere and Ambleside. Neither were dance bands in Lakeland limited to only playing modern songs for dancing, as the local press records that hunting tunes were still among their repertoire; a fact which highlights the inconsistent spread of modern leisure culture in the region in the years before the outbreak of war in 1939. Adrian Horn suggested that the spread of Americanized cultural influences were mediated into a recognizable form for local audiences in Britain and the same appears to have been true of popular dance music in Lakeland during the 1930s.<sup>304</sup>

As this chapter has suggested, adult involvement in young people’s leisure not only provided dances in Lakeland with an air of respectability, but close association

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<sup>301</sup> In rural Lakeland, this change occurred in the mid- to late 1930s, rather than earlier in the decade, as Murfin suggested.

<sup>302</sup> See Westmorland Gazette, 01 April 1939, for instance.

<sup>303</sup> Bolton, From Clogs and Wellies, p. 31.

<sup>304</sup> Horn, Juke Box Britain, p. 17.



with charities and ‘good causes’ gave them an unthreatening, community atmosphere, different from that of many commercial dance halls in large towns and cities. The close adult supervision at local dances no doubt made it difficult for young people in Lakeland to experience the more salacious aspects of urban dance culture, but it should not be assumed that they were uniformly deferential to adult involvement in their leisure. Both the local press and oral history testimony suggest, for example, how these intense levels of adult control were negotiated at times. Reports in the Westmorland Gazette support the idea that drinking was more common amongst local young people (and particularly young men) than the AOHG interviews alone might suggest. In July 1931, for instance, it was reported how a group of local young people had successfully managed to hold dances without any adult supervision. Their scheme was uncovered when police were called to an event at the parish hall, only to find that the ‘committee was not present and the whole conduct of the dance broke down.’ An officer remarked that people at the dance, ‘were going about the grounds, men were using places outside the hall as latrines, a fight had taken place, and the general conduct of the place was disgraceful.’<sup>305</sup> A total absence of adults, the presence of alcohol and the resultant ‘break down’ in behaviour, caused the Chief Constable to suggest that applications for future dance licences should be made by a committee of local adults, who were also expected to be present at the dance.<sup>306</sup> This extra adult involvement extended the already considerable supervision exerted over many local dances in Lakeland. The Constable added that he had no objection to the granting of licences when the purpose of the dance was for ‘a charitable and praiseworthy object’, a comment which implicitly distinguished between the moral purpose and leisure function of such dances. It is also indicative of local attitudes towards any hint of a divergence from established

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<sup>305</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 25 July 1931, p. 9.

<sup>306</sup> The policing of rural dances for young people via a committee of adults, was also common in rural Ireland. See Fowler, Youth Culture, p. 89.

organizational patterns in leisure and to the spread of urban dance habits. Despite the Constable's best efforts, this example was not unique. Towards the end of the decade, for instance, the press highlighted a case of 'Rowdyism at a Shap Dance', where two men were charged with being drunk and disorderly during an event in the village's Memorial Hall and another was accused of assaulting the police officer called to deal with the 'disturbance'. The report followed a similar pattern to the 1931 incident. When the officer arrived, the dance was in 'uproar'; one 'young lady' was 'struck and knocked down', while another had 'fainted, and had had to be carried out in a state of collapse.'<sup>307</sup> As this discussion has already demonstrated, small numbers of young people chose to drink before village dances and some even attempted to smuggle alcohol into the venue itself. Such examples suggest how, on occasion, young rural workers were able to assert agency in their leisure choices in order to break free from adult constraints. They also remind us that young people's leisure in a rural setting was complex and nuanced. The lack of anonymity and general disapproval regarding alcohol in local communities made it harder for young people (especially young women) in Lakeland to experiment than their urban counterparts.<sup>308</sup> Generally, leisure experiences were more likely to be shaped by considerable adult involvement and limited independence, which helped to provide a sense of 'border maintenance' between local rural communities and urban leisure habits.

### Dancing in Wartime

Wartime in Lakeland saw continuities as well as a number of changes in young people's experiences of social dancing. The upheavals of war, most notably the departure of

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<sup>307</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 28 February 1939.

<sup>308</sup> Leyshon identified the difficulties rural young people faced when attempting to find a space of their own, away from parents and other village residents. Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 11.

large numbers of young men (due to recruitment into the armed forces), at the same time as the arrival of large groups of evacuees and various regiments of the Army, meant that some disruption to established patterns of local life and leisure was inevitable.<sup>309</sup> Despite wartime restrictions, however, the wide variety of opportunities for dancing which were available to young people in the region continued. Incomers opened up new venues for dancing and provided spaces away from the adult supervision of village locations. For many young women, left behind on the home front during the war, the lack of their male counterparts was perhaps most noticeable when they attended local dances. In their absence, local girls often went to dances together and partnered each other on the dance floor. As a woman who spent the war in Ambleside remembered:

...all the lads went,[to war] you see they were my [school] year that went so that was a big difference for us really... [she and her friends]... we used to go [to dances] together. During the war you see, it was girls only, you know there weren't boys there.<sup>310</sup>

Agriculture was a reserved occupation, so some of the young men who worked as farm labourers remained in Lakeland for the duration of the war, but this was not enough to plug the hole they left behind. Indeed, due to the scarcity of young male

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<sup>309</sup> Several thousand young women from around the region were called up and dispersed around England, both in wings of the armed services and also as part of the Women's Land Army, which also sent a number of its recruits to Scotland. The Westmorland Gazette estimated in autumn 1939 that approximately 10,000 evacuees from schools alone, had been received in the area since the beginning of September. This included entire schools, such as the Dame Allen School for Girls from Newcastle. In addition, the Royal College of Art (RCA), private individuals and families also evacuated themselves to the region. Further to this considerable volume of people, the Army stationed troops in Lakeland throughout the war, for two purposes. Firstly, the local fells were used as a suitable training ground for large numbers of troops and secondly, to man the POW camp for captured German officers at Grizedale Hall, near Ambleside. Although officially a 'top secret location', it was widely known of in local villages and was often referred to by locals as 'Hush Hush Hall' or the 'U Boat Hotel'. See for example, AOHG interviews with respondents AD, BS, and EU. See also, 'I was a prison guard at the 'U-boat hotel'', North West Evening Mail, 24 June 2009, available at: [http://www.nwemail.co.uk/news/i\\_was\\_a\\_prison\\_guard\\_at\\_the\\_u\\_boat\\_hotel\\_1\\_572384?referrerPath=home](http://www.nwemail.co.uk/news/i_was_a_prison_guard_at_the_u_boat_hotel_1_572384?referrerPath=home).

<sup>310</sup> Respondent MB, born 1922.

partners, when some local men returned home on leave, they found themselves in high demand at village hops:

*So how were partners chosen? Did you just sit...?*

They'd just come and ask you for a dance, yes. Mind during the war there were so many people away that - you know, there might be one boy on leave or two on leave and he'd have to share round with about a dozen of you <sup>311</sup>

The arrival of soldiers stationed in Lakeland for training or as guards at the nearby POW camp meant that local dances were not wholly deprived of a male presence. The Royal Army Service Corps (RASC), for example, not only hosted dances but also patronized those held in nearby villages: 'during the war there were dances all the time and the soldiers used to come down from Grasmere and round about to the dances there.'<sup>312</sup> A woman who worked in the kitchen of a Grasmere hotel requisitioned by the army recalled:

Then of course when the war was on there was a lot of soldiers here. The Prince of Wales [Hotel] was taken over by the soldiers and there was a hutted camp... and they used to have about five dances a week... and the dances we had either in the New Hall or the Prince of Wales<sup>313</sup>

This trend was only intensified when the Royal College of Art (RCA) was evacuated from London to Ambleside in late 1940, bringing with it a large group of young students who were creative, modern and even 'daring' in their tastes and outlook.<sup>314</sup> One AOHG respondent described them as 'wild', a 'wildness' which was, of course, relative to the experiences of young countrymen and women, whose lives in small Lakeland communities were far more isolated. These 'bohemian' students spent a

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<sup>311</sup> Respondent EV, born 1922.

<sup>312</sup> Respondent MB, born 1922.

<sup>313</sup> Respondent GN, born 1914.

<sup>314</sup> Approximately 150 students and their tutors were evacuated to Ambleside and remained there until the end of the war. The College made use of several Ambleside Hotels, as well as various lofts, barns and any other suitable rooms as studio space for its pupils to work in. Information taken from 'Bohemians in Exile: The RCA in Ambleside 1940-1945', Exhibition at the Armitage Museum Ambleside, (18th April-29th October 2011) and L. Duxbury, Bohemians in Exile: The Royal College of Art in Ambleside 1940-1945, (The Estate of Leslie Duxbury, 2008).

number of years in Ambleside and appear to have left quite an impression on the local youth population. It was remarked that they brought ‘quite a spark’ and some ‘life’ to the village:

I suppose ‘life’ as people live it today, they were living it then, you know, I mean they really lived up... they were eccentric alright... But they never bothered anybody, I mean they had the Salutation [Hotel], they had The Queen’s Hotel, and I suppose in a way they brought something to the village at the time you know.<sup>315</sup>

As this recollection demonstrates, urban evacuees provided local young people with a new view of what it meant to be young and how to spend their leisure time. Their more unusual leisure habits included regularly frequenting local pubs, and midnight walks on the fells. They also tended to dress differently to local young people. This included the beards which many of the male students sported and which became increasingly popular with local young men, who also started to grow them, an instance of the ways in which urban trends directly influenced Lakeland youth as a result of sustained social mixing during the war.<sup>316</sup>

The College was initially accommodated in two local hotels, the Salutation and the Queen’s (both in the centre of Ambleside), although this accommodation was remembered by former students as providing something of a stark and, especially in winter, cold existence. To brighten their rather drab living conditions, the art students often held dances in the Hotels, which provided some locals in their teens and early twenties with further unsupervised opportunities for dancing:

*And these dances went on all during the war?*

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<sup>315</sup> Respondent EV, born 1922.

<sup>316</sup> As a result, this led one of the College Professors (who had concerns over the assimilation of the college into the local community) to comment ‘Is your beard really necessary?’ a phrase adapted from the wartime fuel-saving caveat of ‘Is your journey really necessary?’, Duxbury, *Bohemians in Exile*, p. 19.

Yes there were dances all during the war because we had the art students here then.

*Did they actually join in with [these] sort of things?*

...they used to have their dances in the Queens [Hotel]. And I was very lucky because... [one of her friends] he was about the same age as me, and I got one or two invites to there through him!<sup>317</sup>

These wartime dances were less of an intergenerational activity than the hops of the 1930s, largely because they were organized by young people, for young people. The large influx of urban youth into Lakeland villages during the war meant that, for the first time, alternative venues became available for dancing, in spaces away from local authority figures and family members. This was a new direction in the organization of social dancing in Lakeland, allowing young people to attend dances which were held in unsupervised, often private venues. Yet this development should not be overstated. As the recollections above suggest, not all young workers in Lakeland were invited to the dances held by these outside groups who had moved into the region. In other villages, young male farm workers found themselves actively excluded from the socials held each Saturday night for troops who were stationed locally.<sup>318</sup>

Furthermore, young workers who remained on the home front were faced with new restrictions placed on their attendance at dances which were considered to lack sufficient adult control:

...it was strange really, there were soldiers stationed in Grasmere. We used to go to dances at the Prince of Wales [Hotel] then, yes, we had quite a good time. But then when Grizedale Camp came they used to have dances up there for soldiers and I went once and my mother - I was never to go there again... I don't know what she thought was going... [respondent tails off]. They weren't the Germans that were dancing with us but they were there in the building so! You didn't go – so that was a bit – you didn't go there with the soldiers. I had

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<sup>317</sup> Respondent EV, born 1922.

<sup>318</sup> Male, born 1919 Whitbeck, quoted in Thistlethwaite, *Cumbria the War Years*, p. 185.

quite a strict up-bringing really. I knew what I could and couldn't do – but mostly I did it! But that's another story.<sup>319</sup>

Once again, we see how young women were subject to greater limitations on their attendance at dances. As this interviewee's final comment hints, however, even young women were capable of disobeying their parents' authority. It seems likely that her mother's concern was directed equally at the unsupervised nature of dances which were hosted by soldiers from outside the region, as at the presence of the German prisoners.<sup>320</sup> After all, many of these soldiers were unknown in local villages and therefore not subject to the same scrutiny as their contemporaries who lived in the surrounding area. If we turn to another example provided by the same woman, regarding the soldiers who were stationed in and around local villages, her mother's concerns become more apparent: 'they brought some soldiers into the village there were some Royal Engineers who were manning this post... and they went to dances and had things. Mostly they used to look for the married women!'<sup>321</sup> The potential threat of promiscuity explains (at least in part) the reluctance of local parents in allowing their children to attend dances which were not organized in the usual way or by people who were well-known in local communities. This interviewee suggests that married women were the target for soldiers, but such worries were probably also intensified as far as young single women were concerned. As other studies have shown, anxieties over young women becoming 'smitten' with British soldiers, and later American GIs, were widespread during the war.<sup>322</sup> A report made in 1942, indicated that soldiers stationed in Lakeland were in the habit of turning up at Saturday night dances 'after ten o'clock,

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<sup>319</sup> Respondent MB, born 1922.

<sup>320</sup> Oral history testimony also indicates that local girls in the region were 'keen' on Italian POWs who worked on a farm near Kendal during the war; a fact which aggravated the young men left behind on the Home Front. See, Thistlethwaite, *Cumbria The War Years*, p. 146.

<sup>321</sup> Respondent MB, born 1922.

<sup>322</sup> Horn, *Juke Box Britain*, p. 23. A. Howkins, 'A Country at War: Mass-Observation and Rural England, 1939-45', *Rural History*, 9, 1 (1998), p. 83; McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, p. 395-6.

when the public-houses close' and was an example of broader wartime concerns about the disruption of 'normal' patterns of behaviour.<sup>323</sup>

In Lakeland, wartime incomers constituted a threat on two levels to local communities; not only were they outsiders, they were largely (it can be assumed for the most part) from urban areas. Groups of young people such as the undergraduates from the art college, embodied a way of life and culture unfamiliar to rural communities in Lakeland. For instance, the types of music played at dances organized by the art students included jazz, blues, boogie-woogie and be-bop.<sup>324</sup> This was perhaps one reason why, initially at least, members of the College were greeted with 'suspicion and hostility' from 'locals'.<sup>325</sup> In 1943, an article appeared in the Picture Post which featured the evacuated college in Ambleside and included photographs of the students' 'new' life in the countryside. One of these images captured a group of young female art students in their 'studio', listening to music on a gramophone, surrounded by records.<sup>326</sup> Clearly, not only did these young urban incomers to Lakeland bring modern styles of music and dance steps with them, they also created their own autonomous spaces within local villages, something which, as the oral history testimony suggests, did not go unnoticed by local youth. In a limited way, local young people (especially women) who remained on the home front could attend dances outside the control of adults, where the music was provided by sources other than their relatives and they could experiment with dance steps different from those practised by their parents before the First World War.

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<sup>323</sup> NA ED 124/46 (2 of 2) Westmorland County Youth Committee, Report of Interviewing Panel on Registration and Interviewing, (October 1942).

<sup>324</sup> Duxbury, Bohemians in Exile, Ch. 10.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>326</sup> Picture Post July 1943, pp. 19-22. The caption for the image reads: '3rd July 1943: Pupils of the Royal College of Art listening to records during a break from their studies.' These photographs can now be viewed at the Getty Images online archive: <http://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/3066463/Hulton-Archive> (accessed May 2011).



Even if they did not directly engage in these events, local young people were provided with a visible representation of popular urban culture and leisure habits. The same woman who was reported in the local press for being ‘rowdy’ as she walked home singing, moved to Kendal from the countryside at the start of the war, at the age of 17. She recalled that this move presented her with new opportunities in her leisure time, describing how she ‘went wild... that was the time when I had freedom, but I must admit I didn’t know what to do with it to start with.’<sup>327</sup> In this case, she linked her ‘freedom’ from the confines of her home village, where leisure spaces were ‘ordered’ by adults, to the presence of soldiers (outsiders), who were ‘stationed across the road’ from where she now lived and worked. It was only in this more urbanized environment, populated by strangers, that this young woman found opportunities to meet boyfriends; something she had found impossible as a domestic servant in Ambleside.

The wartime workplace provided further opportunities for young people to experience ‘modern’ leisure habits. A military aircraft factory was built on the shore of Lake Windermere and provided local workers with employment throughout the war. Many of these workers were young women, who would normally have gone into domestic service after leaving school. In their lunch hours, employees at the factory were often supplied with standardized entertainments, which included ENSA and ‘Workers’ Playtime’.<sup>328</sup> Again, this helped to spread the music and popular culture which young dancers in towns and cities had enjoyed for over a decade into Lakeland villages. One young woman, who was later transferred with several of her co-workers from the Windermere factory to Manchester, as part of the war effort, described her leisure experiences there as ‘a total change’. The city’s transport system allowed her to

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<sup>327</sup> Respondent MH, born 1922.

<sup>328</sup> ENSA or ‘Entertainments National Service Association’ was an organization which provided entertainment for the armed forces and those engaged in war service during the Second World War.

just ‘pop to Manchester and spend weekends in Bellevue’, where they used to go to the ‘two big dance halls at night’ to hear ‘the big bands’.<sup>329</sup> Unsupervised access to mass commercialized leisure was clearly a considerable change for this group of young workers, again highlighting the somewhat sheltered nature of leisure in Lakeland villages.

However, despite this woman’s opportunity to access urban leisure culture in a relatively anonymous environment, the outbreak of war did not signal a break with adult control and supervision in young people’s leisure time in Lakeland. As we have seen through the oral testimony of AOHG respondents, even if they did experience new freedoms, it was often in a limited way, subject to parental disapproval and even prohibition. Alongside occasions organized by outsiders, smaller hops continued to take place in village halls and reading rooms for charitable purposes during the war, when profits were donated to good causes which related to the war effort, such as the ‘Soldiers Comforts Fund’ and later, ‘Welcome Home Funds’. Undoubtedly, parents and other local adults retained their control over their dancing habits, which was certainly a point of continuity with the experiences of young people in the 1930s. This was also true in regard to communal venues in the region during the war, which continued to provide opportunities for dancing which were subject to adult involvement and supervision. In December 1940, for example, Windermere Home Guards held a dance that was attended by 450 people. There were four ‘spot dances’, with ‘competitions, one for half-a-dozen of the now rare silk stockings ... and another for a handbag.’<sup>330</sup> Prizes such as these were designed to attract young women who lived

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<sup>329</sup> Female, born in Staveley, quoted in Thistlethwaite, *Cumbria the War Years*, p. 168.

<sup>330</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 14 December 1940.

locally, although the presence of MCs, who included platoon commanders and sergeants, indicates the persistent presence of authority figures at dances.

There were a number of other continuities during the war. Although the ‘popular stuff, music of the day’ was now commonplace at local hops, whist drives still featured regularly on the same programme as a dance.<sup>331</sup> Less sophisticated ways of providing music for dancing were also evident in the 1940s. One woman who spent her late teens and early twenties in Ambleside during the war, for instance, recalled that at dances she attended in the village:

We had [a local lad] and his music which was canned music and he used to play the drums, accompanying Victor Sylvester! It all sounds probably very corny now but they were good – they were social events in the village. So a lot of those were held in the Conservative Club.<sup>332</sup>

In this case, a gramophone provided music for dancing whilst a young man played along, echoing the simple character of dances in Lakeland villages during the inter-war years. Older dances such as the Lancers, survived at local hops into the 1940s, although the wartime recollections of this same Ambleside woman, suggest that they were now more commonly mixed with newer novelty dances, such as the Lambeth Walk, which had first swept urban dance halls in the late 1930s:

...it was all ballroom dancing and novelty dances that they used to have then – the Hokey Cokey, the Lambeth Walk and we used to have the old dances – the Lancers... as well as the modern ones so it was a good mixture really.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Male, born 1923 in Natland, quoted in Thistlethwaite, *Cumbria the War Years*, p. 115. This interviewee recalls that nearly all the socials he played for in the 1940s, featured a whist drive as well as a dance.

<sup>332</sup> Respondent MB, born 1922. Victor Sylvester was the dance band leader of the ‘Ballroom Orchestra’ from the 1930s which was known nationally. He produced a vast collection of records, as well as books on the subject of ballroom dancing.

<sup>333</sup> Respondent MB, born 1922.

By the end of the war, older dances which had been the standard at village hops throughout the 1930s were slowly diluted with novelty dances of commercialized dance culture. The introduction of these innovative dance styles was, however, mediated by the survival of older, pre-First World War styles. In order to assess the longer-term impact of wartime change, the discussion now moves to consider dancing experiences in Lakeland after 1945.

### Post-war Lakeland

Although many people view 1945 as a watershed in the history of youth, as Bill Osgerby suggested, in reality there are few ‘consummate breaks in history’.<sup>334</sup> This was certainly the case in post-war Lakeland. The extent to which dancing habits in the region were altered by wartime disruptions is questionable. Indeed, as we have seen, despite the many private dances held by groups of urban evacuees in wartime, local young people were not always invited. As the war came to a close, evacuees who had remained in Lakeland ‘for the duration’, returned home, their departure coinciding with the return of young men and women from the armed forces or war service.<sup>335</sup> Whilst a number of significant changes were evident at dances which took place in wartime Lakeland, these were largely due to the influence of outsiders. The social dancing experience for young workers in the region from 1945 into the early 1950s, was largely one of continuity, demonstrating trends which were visible in the late 1930s. Dances which had been held in village halls and communal buildings in the 1930s, often with an accompanying whist drive, once again provided the predominant opportunities for dancing, as both oral testimony and a comparable sample of the dances advertised in the

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<sup>334</sup> B. Osgerby, *Youth in Britain Since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 5.

<sup>335</sup> The Royal College of Art for instance, left the region in 1945.

‘Coming Events’ column of the Westmorland Gazette, confirm.<sup>336</sup> Larger occasions for dancing such as Hunt balls still regularly took place and were well attended. Charitable connections at these dances continued to provide a tie between young people’s leisure and local communities in the post-war period. Sports clubs held larger dances or fancy dress balls for example, as did voluntary organizations such as the Primrose League. The Grasmere Citizens’ Association meetings carried on in much the same way as those held in the 1930s, with a lecture followed by a dance for the village’s young people. What followed the refreshments was far less of a high cultural occasion, and more of a popular one, with dancing which attracted many local young workers.

Then after we’d had the lantern show, (a villager) played (the piano) while we had our cup of tea and a biscuit or something and then we had dancing. But all the upper echelons of society went when the dancing started except Mrs. Rawnsley. She always stayed. We always behaved ourselves, we didn’t get out of hand... And so they used to last to about 11 o’clock at night, so you went from about 7 to 11. So that was the Citizens’ Social.<sup>337</sup>

As this recollection indicates, Mrs Rawnsley’s presence at these gatherings was a further thread of continuity with pre-war habits. It also suggests how the supervision of young dancers by adult authority figures endured, ensuring that the young dancers ‘always behaved’. In the 1930s, class distinctions at grander events had been preserved on the dance floor itself. In the post-war period, older social hierarchies were maintained at such occasions, whereby the ‘upper echelons’ of society left before the dancing for young workers began. This helped to perpetuate local class relations through self-imposed segregation. Increased mobility allowed some local (usually male) workers to attend dances at villages further afield, but towns and cities appear to have largely remained out of reach, even for those with motorbikes.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> In comparison to the sample taken in February 1939.

<sup>337</sup> Respondent HU, born 1934.

<sup>338</sup> See Chapter Four for more on the increased mobility of young workers in the post-war period.

For other young people, who had spent at least part of the war in large urban centres or mixing with people from such areas, returning to the narrower confines of Lakeland villages, and the leisure time supervision that accompanied it, proved to be a period of often difficult adjustment. The young female worker at the Windermere aircraft factory who relocated to Manchester, for instance, recalled that ‘it took a bit of getting used to, coming back. Things weren’t just on hand and we’d had freedom. Lovely freedom.’<sup>339</sup> As her memories suggest, not only was leisure time on her return to Lakeland characterized by reduced independence, commercial leisure opportunities were no longer ‘just on hand’. The limitations of the region’s geographical position and transport infrastructure ‘took a bit of getting used to’ for those who returned from towns and cities in the post-war period. Alun Howkins revealed in his use of Mass Observation diaries, that this was a common problem for young countrywomen elsewhere in England, something which demonstrated the ‘betweenness’ of rural youth’s position in the countryside.<sup>340</sup>

As a counter to the relatively stifling social atmosphere to which young workers returned in peacetime, incomers to the region, such as the new Headmaster of Grasmere village school, took an active role in the organization of leisure activities and social occasions. The Headmaster, one of a number of outsiders who settled in Lakeland in the years immediately after the war, was representative of a new style of leadership in rural communities, where an emphasis was placed on widening young people’s horizons through their leisure time.<sup>341</sup> Local attitudes to the arrival of such incomers were reflected in the subject matter of lectures and slideshows at the village socials which preceded dances during the late 1940s. One such talk at a Citizens’ Social in February

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<sup>339</sup> Female, born in Staveley, quoted in Thistlethwaite, *Cumbria the War Years*, p. 170.

<sup>340</sup> Howkins, ‘A Country at War’, p. 90; Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, p. 6; p. 10.

<sup>341</sup> For more on post-war adult leadership in local leisure, see Chapters Three and Five of this thesis.

1947, for instance, was entitled ‘Aspects of the Countryside’ and offered suggestions on ‘how newcomers from towns should acclimatise themselves for participation in rural activities’.<sup>342</sup> Such themes indicate not only local communities’ awareness of incomers but also the perceived need to educate them in country life and values and to maintain and promote local ‘traditions’ over urbanized commercial leisure culture.

A further point of connection with the inter-war years was provided by the music for dancing, which often remained fairly simplistic in nature. Music at the Grasmere Citizens’ Socials, for example, was supplied by a villager who played the piano. The unsophisticated character of village hops was recalled by a farm worker from Windermere, who attended Saturday night dances at a village church hall near to his place of employment during the early 1950s, where ‘a rather stout elderly little lady started off a gramophone player’ before the dancing began.<sup>343</sup> The examination of social dancing experiences in the 1930s, suggested that the spread of a homogenized dance culture in Lakeland was patchy and this continued to be the case into the early 1950s, despite the numerous dance bands which played at social occasions. A common feature of local dances continued to be the mixing of older dance steps with newer styles and oral evidence indicates that the Lancers survived (at least at small village hops) into the post-war period. The dilution of older dance forms meant that ‘Old Time’ dances became a much more frequent feature of the ‘Coming Events’ column in the Westmorland Gazette. Yet even here, this loss was mediated in a regionally recognizable form through the continuing use of communal venues, charitable connections and the presence of adults.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 22 February 1947, p. 3.

<sup>343</sup> Bolton, From Clogs and Wellies, p. 58.

<sup>344</sup> Horn, Juke Box Britain, pp. 16-17.

One change which certainly became more noticeable in the late 1940s and early 1950s, relates to the way the local press increasingly began to link dances with instances of drunkenness and vandalism. Close analysis of the Westmorland Gazette in the post-war years reveals a subtle change in tone from the familiar, communal atmosphere which pervaded reports of dances and whist drives in the 1930s, although this change was again tempered with continuity in the levels of authority to which young workers and especially young women, were subject. Reports in the local press in the years after the war suggested that in at least some Lakeland villages, particularly those nearest to the market town of Kendal, young people's habits at local dances were changing, as incidences (or perhaps the reporting) of drunkenness at village events increased. In Burneside, for instance, dances were a source of particular contention, as 'the police had received many complaints regarding the behaviour of young people walking home' at the end of the evening.<sup>345</sup> The district was described as having been "'in uproar" through the conduct of offenders', who included two seventeen year old apprentices, fined for using 'indecent language'. One local resident claimed that 'unruly behaviour by people returning from dances' had been common for the previous two years. When analysed more carefully, however, this disapproval appears to have centred on the actions of dance-goers walking *away from* the village, back towards Kendal, rather than those who actually lived in Burneside. The 'scandalous' and 'indecent' language used by the young apprentices was marked out for comment and punishment. In the process, an opposing 'sense of decency' was created, through which the rural community could define itself in terms of its own respectability. This is similar to Griffiths's finding in

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<sup>345</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 13 August 1947, p. 7.



his study of dances in rural New Zealand, where it was ‘city based dance-goers’ who were blamed for introducing ‘immoral’ behaviour to rural venues.<sup>346</sup>

Other reports appeared in the press following this particular incident, which connected drunkenness or poor conduct to young people and dancing. In the late 1940s, it was reported that a farmer’s son was apprehended by the police, whilst driving his father’s lorry on the way home from a dance at Shap. Despite pleading with the Officer to be ‘a sport’ and let him and his friend ‘off this time’, the driver was fined £9, for a number of offences, which included only holding a provisional licence.<sup>347</sup> His friend (an apprentice mechanic) who was in the passenger seat when they were pulled over was fined an additional sum. Another similar account recorded how three men in their early twenties took a car ‘to a dance at Ambleside’ without the owner’s consent. They crashed the vehicle in a ditch and ‘ran away across the fields after the accident’. They too were caught and appeared in front of local Magistrates.<sup>348</sup> Another report of a young man who attempted to steal a car whilst intoxicated, also referred to a dance his girlfriend had attended the same night, despite the fact that it had no bearing on the case.<sup>349</sup> Although individually these accounts provide only fragmented insights into the broader character of young people and dancing in post-war Lakeland, in combination, they echo Fowler’s suggestion that the popularity of dancing among rural young people meant that it was often sensationalized or reported in a negative light. In Fowler’s survey area of rural Ireland, for example, dances were repeatedly linked with death, despite no-one actually having died whilst at a dance or as a result of attending one.<sup>350</sup>

In Lakeland, when dancing in the post-war years was associated with drunkenness or

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<sup>346</sup> Griffiths, ‘Popular Culture and Modernity’, p. 621.

<sup>347</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 26 February 1949, p. 5.

<sup>348</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 20 October 1951, p. 7.

<sup>349</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 01 August 1953, p. 7.

<sup>350</sup> Fowler, Youth Culture, pp. 87-8.

bad behaviour and press reports always ended with the offenders being apprehended by the police and their subsequent appearance in court. The fact that it was young men who featured almost exclusively in such accounts, reflects that not only were young women still expected to adhere to traditional moral standards, but they were more limited in their leisure choices and conduct, due to parental authority and traditional gender expectations. The young woman, who returned home to Staveley village after spending part of the war in Manchester, recalled her father's reaction at her visiting a local pub with a friend:

I was back at Staveley for VJ Day and got into trouble. I went with another woman into the Duke of Cumberland pub for a drink and my dad played hell. I was twenty-one years old, but women didn't go into pubs round here at that time.<sup>351</sup>

The authority of parents over their daughters clearly continued into the post-war period and helps to explain the absence of young women in reports of drunkenness associated with dancing. This recollection also demonstrates the persistence of older gender relations which precluded women from public houses (and therefore drinking alcohol). Claire Langhamer recorded that in the post-war period working-class women were increasingly visible (and accepted) in urban public houses. Even middle-class women revealed that they 'might go to a country pub on a holiday or walking tour'.<sup>352</sup> This trend was not uniform, however, and 'some areas clearly did not exhibit an increase in female drinking. Mass Observation, for example, reported that in rural districts the position was 'very much as it was before the war.'<sup>353</sup> Young women in Lakeland continued to find that their presence in public houses was objected to. Oral testimony revealed that after the war, some young women who wished to 'go for a drink' locally,

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<sup>351</sup> Female, from Staveley, quoted in Thistlethwaite, *Cumbria the War Years*, p. 169.

<sup>352</sup> Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England*, p. 71.

<sup>353</sup> C. Langhamer, 'A Public House is For All Classes, Men and Women Alike': Women, Leisure and Drink in Second World War England', *Women's History Review*, 12, 3 (2003), p. 430.

had to remain outside the pub and have their drinks brought to them by a male companion, one respondent recalling how this was the case, even on her wedding day.

It has been argued here that the social dancing experience in post-war Lakeland was rooted in continuity with trends which had been visible before the war. The changes apparent at dances in Lakeland after 1945 were mediated by the persistence of older patterns of organizing dances which had been common in the 1930s. Clear connections to the past which had characterized local hops and balls in the inter-war years, were now diluted by elements of popular dance culture. Modern steps and music either replaced or (at the very least) sat alongside older steps and tunes, which were increasingly confined to 'old time' nights. Such descriptions, which clearly marked a change in their place at local dances, mirrored urban trends from the inter-war period, when old fashioned styles had only been danced as part of a novelty programme. Yet despite a loss of the earlier styles which had provided a sense of distinctiveness from mainstream dance culture in the 1930s, some elements survived into the 1950s. The associations between dances for young people and charity, for instance, continued to provide both a *raison d'être* for dances to be held, as well as a strong connection to the wider community, supporting Griffiths's contention that the dances held in the rural areas he examined, 'continued to function as rituals which tended to promote community.'<sup>354</sup> The use of communal venues and adult supervision at such events in post-war Lakeland also helped to maintain intergenerational ties in local villages. Indeed, young people in the post-war years were subject to levels of supervision at local dances which were often as intense as they had been in the 1930s. Dances were still organized and held within communal venues, which allowed them to resist 'the rampant

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<sup>354</sup> Griffiths, 'Popular Culture and Modernity', p. 612.

commercialization associated with larger populations'.<sup>355</sup> Although 'music and dance were a means of challenging traditional values', for many young workers during the years of this study, the situation in Lakeland was characterized by much greater ambivalence, in the sense that such activities were also used to reinforce both a sense of community and a connection to an earlier leisure culture, which eschewed notions of modernity and homogeneity.<sup>356</sup> As the chapters which follow will demonstrate, these were key characteristics of young people's leisure in Lakeland.

### Conclusion

Although dancing was arguably as popular in rural Lakeland as in any town or city during the same period, it manifested itself in many different ways and symbolized the wider concerns of an older generation. Social dancing in Lakeland between 1930 and the early 1950s was far less identifiable with urban dance culture, which was often associated with expressing 'youthful independence'. At a time when young workers in urban areas were able to claim greater autonomy in their leisure time than ever before, young people in Lakeland were governed by considerable levels of supervision and control. This helped to make their leisure more familiar to adults, at a time when change was a central characteristic of leisure in towns and cities. The highly influential role which local adults played in the organization of social dancing in Lakeland did much to provide young people with an experience distinctive from that of millions of their contemporaries. Traditional class relationships were maintained at local dances, whether at a basic hop in a village hall or at larger events in the Ambleside Assembly Rooms. An absence of commercial dance halls in the region meant that at least until the

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid, p. 616.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid, p. 615.

1940s, dances generally related back to an earlier era. This was reflected in the levels of supervision, as well as the older styles of music and dance steps which were prevalent at hops throughout the 1930s and, to a lesser extent, the 1940s. When young people did manage to exert some autonomy over their leisure choices, the dances they attended took on characteristics which had more in common with those held in the commercial venues of large urban centres. This was particularly the case with regard to drinking alcohol and unsupervised contact with the opposite sex. These occurrences were infrequent, however and tended to involve relatively small numbers of young people. Experiences for the majority of young workers in Lakeland throughout the period were clearly distinctive from dominant accounts of dancing, to the extent that by the late 1930s, the social dancing experience in Lakeland was much the same as it had been at the start of the decade. The influence of popular culture was inconsistent in Lakeland throughout the 1930s. Although modern trends were beginning to find their way into smaller village hops by the start of the war, these were often mediated through the persistence of older habits. The older-style village bands that once dominated village hops were slowly replaced by dance groups and reflected wider developments in contemporary leisure, albeit it at a slower pace. In wartime, there were clear continuities with the 1930s; the intergenerational nature of dances organized by adults remained, older steps were still in use and less sophisticated ways of providing music were also noticeable. The arrival of large numbers of urban young people, from a variety of backgrounds, provided at least some local youth with new, 'modern' experiences of dancing. As the dances organized by evacuees were largely private however, local hops remained largely un-commercialized with a continued absence of sole-purpose dance halls. As the oral testimony reveals, not all local young people were invited to events organized by outsiders and opportunities to attend these dances were

also limited through other factors, such as parental authority and long hours of work. In a number of ways then, the inter-war arrangement of dances continued throughout wartime. Many of the changes introduced by urban outsiders during the war were lost upon their departure, which was largely due to the fact that, as in the 1930s, local young people were not responsible for the organization of the dances they attended. When these outsider groups departed, therefore, local young people returned once again to the pattern of dances arranged by adults within local communities.

In the post-war years, other changes were evident and reports in the Westmorland Gazette demonstrate that by the late 1940s, a number of young workers attending village dances had access to drink either before or during a dance on a regular basis. Drinking alcohol and the unruly behaviour which often accompanied it was, at least in the local press, linked to dancing and highlights concerns locally regarding change. These incidents were, however, often in villages nearer to Kendal and such bad behaviour at village hops was often blamed exclusively on young people from the town. The increased number of reports featuring drunkenness which appeared in the Lakeland press in the late 1940s and early 1950s suggest a number of changes. The very fact that groups of drunken young men were more visible during these years, points to a loosening of the older generation's grip on young people in their leisure time. As a result, more of the urbanized habits associated with social dancing became apparent at local hops, which indicates (to a degree at least), a decline in the deferential culture of Lakeland. These incidents were only reported in a small number of villages and could suggest that such habits only crept into those where local authority figures were no longer responsible for organizing local leisure opportunities. Notwithstanding these elements of change in at least some young people's dancing experiences, it is clear that

there was no definitive break in Lakeland's dance culture during the 1940s and 1950s. A considerable level of continuity was visible in the organization of dances locally and was indicative of the extent to which village communities in Lakeland fostered a sense of distinctiveness through their leisure habits. This is something which the next chapter on Annual Community Events in the region, examines in detail.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Annual Community Events**

This chapter focuses on some of the annual events which punctuated the Lakeland leisure calendar between the 1930s and early 1950s. Specifically, the chapter examines the annual rushbearing ceremonies, Grasmere dialect plays, and large sports shows. Of course, these were not the only events of this nature in the region, but were arguably the most popular (and well known) during the period, drawing considerable crowds. They were frequently reported in local newspapers at the time and were commonly recalled by oral history respondents as enjoyable and significant aspects of their leisure. These ‘high points’ in the local leisure calendar were repeatedly written about in guidebooks, the national press and promotional literature on the Lake District. Accordingly, it is argued here that community events are useful examples through which to examine rural young people’s leisure and the interplay between tradition, change and a sense of place. Given the growing number of studies over the past decade which have linked recreational events and festivals within rural areas to a sense of community and identity, it is timely to explore this theme with regard to Lakeland and its relation to both young people’s leisure experiences and their identity as participants.

Much of the existing work on celebrations and festivals in rural localities has been written at an international level, largely by sociologists and anthropologists.<sup>357</sup> A

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<sup>357</sup> A. Hanson, ‘The Making of the Maori: Culture Invention and Its Logic’, American Anthropologist, New Series, 91, 4 (December 1989), pp. 890-902; J.S. Linnekin, ‘Defining Tradition: Variations on the Hawaiian Identity’, American Ethnologist, 10, 2 (May 1983), pp. 241-252; M.K. Porter, ‘The Bauer County Fair: Community Celebration as Context for Youth Experiences of Learning and Belonging’ Journal of Research in Rural Education, 11, 3 (Winter 1995), pp. 143-146; K. De Bres & J. Davis, ‘Celebrating Group and Place Identity: A Case Study of A New Regional Festival’, Tourism



common conclusion drawn by these studies is that large gatherings and events are central to both a sense of cohesion and place identity within small rural communities. They also highlight the presence of tourists at these ‘celebratory events’ and more recently this has been connected to the rise of cultural tourism.<sup>358</sup> A discussion of these activities also allows for an examination of the interplay between rural communities and tourists more directly, given that visitors were routinely present at many of these events. Taking part in these celebrations from an early age, shaped young people’s view of the place in which they lived, as well as their relationship with outsiders.<sup>359</sup>

In common with many other leisure activities in Lakeland between the 1930s and the early 1950s, these events were largely organized from within local villages. Accordingly, there was a strong intergenerational theme to these events, which maintained local links with the past and provided a clear alternative to the growing commercialization that was present in much of urban leisure at the same time. Indeed, such localized gatherings often symbolized the antithesis of modern leisure habits and self-consciously celebrated the past, as a way of rehearsing and reaffirming regional place identity through leisure. As Porter suggested of rural fairs:

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Geographies, 3, 3 (2001), pp. 326-337; R. Eversole & J. Martin, ‘Attending ‘Sheepvention’: Culture, Identity and Rural Events’, Rural Society, 15, 2 (2005), pp. 148-164; S. McCabe, ‘The Making of Community Identity through the Historic Sporting Event: The Case of Ashbourne Royal Shrovetide Football’, in D. Picard & M. Robinson, (eds.) Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds, (Clevedon: Channel View, 2006), pp. 99-118. Murfin also traced the development and decline of the rushbearing festival in the Lake District from the nineteenth century until the late 1930s. However, her analysis did not consider specifically the role of young people in these village events: L. Murfin, Popular Leisure in the Lake Counties (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

<sup>358</sup> See for instance, P. Hubbard & K. Lilley, ‘Selling the Past: Heritage Tourism and Place Identity in Stratford-upon-Avon’, Geography, 85, 3 (2000), pp. 221-232; R. MacDonald & L. Jolliffe, ‘Cultural Rural Tourism. Evidence from Canada’, Annals of Tourism Research, 30, 2, (2003), pp. 307-322; M. O’Brien Backhouse, ‘Re-enacting the Wars of the Roses: History and Identity’ in H. Keane & P. Ashton, People and Their Pasts: Public History Today (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 113-130.

<sup>359</sup> ‘M. Strathern, ‘The Village as an Idea: Constructs of Village-ness in Elmdon, Essex’, p. 248 & S.S. Larsen, ‘The Glorious Twelfth: A Ritual Expression of Collective Identity’, p. 282, both in A.P. Cohen (ed.), Belonging: Identity and Social Organisation in British Rural Cultures (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982).

The gathering aspect of festival integrates the individual, if only for a short time, into a larger collectivity that transcends both the individual and the era. By joining in the annual festival, the young person can be part of something that his or her parents and peers may also have experienced and remember.<sup>360</sup>

These were occasions in which whole communities could participate in the same place and at the same time. They attracted large numbers of Lakeland residents of all ages and classes, as well as those who had moved away from the region and returned in order to catch up with kith and kin. These events were, therefore, important in maintaining a sense of connection for both communities within the region, as well as those who had left the immediate area. Annual events also helped to promote a specific image of Lakeland to both residents and outsiders (such as tourists in the summer months). By the 1930s, community events in the region were commonly referred to as ‘traditional’ although this was a very fluid concept. Changes were frequently made to these events, yet they were presented as significant leisure traditions within local communities and to outsiders. The discussion begins with an examination of the rushbearing festival across the period, followed by an assessment of dialect plays popular locally in the 1930s. The chapter ends with an analysis of large sporting events held in Lakeland and their role in creating a sense of place.

### Rushbearing

The ritual of rushbearing began as a religious ceremony, which involved the annual ‘carrying [of] rushes to the parish church on the anniversary of its dedication’.<sup>361</sup> This

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<sup>360</sup> M.K. Porter, ‘The Bauer County Fair’, p. 143.

<sup>361</sup> B. Bushaway, By Rite. Custom, Ceremony and Community in England 1700-1880 (London: Junction Books Ltd, 1982), pp. 76-7. Church records in Grasmere document this ceremony for the past 300 years. In Ambleside, Wordsworth took part in the procession, which had become custom by this time and indicates at least 200 years of continuity. See E.F. Rawnsley, The Rushbearing in Grasmere and Ambleside (Kendal: Titus Wilson, 1953); Murfin, Popular Leisure, pp. 53-55; D. George, ‘Rushbearing:

custom also served a practical purpose; the sweet-smelling rushes were used to cover the earth floor of the church and provide warmth for the worshippers. In the nineteenth century, when church floors were flagged or tiled, rushbearing died out in many areas.<sup>362</sup> Lakeland was one of the few places to continue this practice, which evolved into more of a formal procession and involved the whole village. During the 1820s, William Wordsworth participated in local ceremonies and made the ritual perhaps somewhat more widely known to those from outside the region.<sup>363</sup> In the inter-war years, the involvement of the famous poet provided locals with a clear connection to the past and was a source of pride in both villages.<sup>364</sup> By 1930, only four villages in Lakeland still maintained the tradition, including Ambleside and Grasmere.<sup>365</sup> It is the rushbearing held annually in these two villages with which this discussion is concerned. As the analysis which follows will demonstrate, these ceremonies were important to the communities which maintained them year after year, as a way of preserving distinctly localized aspects of leisure culture. This was particularly significant during a decade that saw unprecedented levels of homogenization in leisure patterns nationally, together with an associated erosion of regionalized leisure habits. Poole's examination of

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A Forgotten British Custom' in W. Husken & A. Johnston (eds.), English Parish Drama (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V. Editions, 1996), pp. 17-30; W.R. Mitchell, Life in the Lake District: Pictorial Memories of a Bygone Age (Clapham: Dalesman, 1980), pp. 26-7.

<sup>362</sup> In Lancashire, the rushbearing also continued after the practical need had ceased. In this county, rushbearing was incorporated into the annual wakes festivals and the rushes were displayed on a cart, rather than carried by individuals, as was the practice in Lakeland. In Lancashire, the custom was taken over by young people and developed from a church-based festival to a focus for young men and violence, as described in R. Poole, 'Samuel Bamford and Middleton Rushbearing' Manchester Region History Review, 8, (1994), pp. 14-22. See also A. Burton, Rushbearing (Manchester, 1890); R. Poole, 'Oldham Wakes' in J.K. Walton & J. Walvin, (eds.) Leisure in Britain (Manchester: MUP, 1983); For 19<sup>th</sup> century accounts of the ceremony in Lancashire, see S. Bamford, Early Days (First published 1849; reprinted Frank Cass, London, 1968).

<sup>363</sup> What is now commonly known as 'Dora's Field' was formerly called 'the Rashfield', where rushes were gathered for the annual ceremony, as described in W.R. Mitchell, Life in the Lake District. Wordsworth commemorated the ceremony in his sonnet Rural Ceremony, No. 32 of the Ecclesiastical Sonnets (1822).

<sup>364</sup> Guide books and oral testimony supports this; few descriptions of the rushbearing fail to mention Wordsworth's involvement.

<sup>365</sup> Rushbearing also took place in the villages of Warcop and Musgrave, which are out of the geographical limits of this study. For a discussion of the ceremonies there, see Murfin, Popular Leisure, pp. 56-59.

rushbearing in nineteenth century Lancashire, suggested that the ceremony was ‘the physical representation of the pride, cohesion, prosperity, skill and sheer strength of the whole community. Male and female, young and old, participated’.<sup>366</sup>

It is argued throughout this chapter (and the thesis more generally) that in Lakeland, local communities retained a sense of identity through their leisure habits and this was particularly the case with regard to community events. In a recent article which looked at the contribution which community events can make to a sense of belonging in rural Australia for example, Schwarz and Tait suggested that ‘a sense of community is most significantly developed from... smaller events, art and cultural productions, specialized festivals, and recreational offerings’.<sup>367</sup> By the 1930s, the annual rushbearing had become a high point in the Lakeland leisure calendar, as one woman who spent her youth in Grasmere recalled, ‘Rushbearing was a huge thing for us’.<sup>368</sup> During this decade, local young people played an integral part in the ceremonies.<sup>369</sup> They decorated and carried many of the ornate bearings along the route of the procession.<sup>370</sup> Held in the summer, the rushbearing in both Ambleside and Grasmere was accompanied by a local brass band, followed by a tea for those who had carried the bearings.<sup>371</sup> In Ambleside the event was rounded off with ‘rushbearing sports’ held in a nearby field, on the Monday following the event, and an hour’s dancing on the sports

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<sup>366</sup> Poole, ‘Samuel Bamford and Middleton Rushbearing’, p. 15.

<sup>367</sup> E.C. Schwarz, ‘Recreation, Arts Events and Festivals: Their Contribution to a Sense of Community in the Colac-Otway Shire of County Victoria’, *Rural Society*, 17, 2 (2007), p. 129.

<sup>368</sup> Respondent MB, born 1922.

<sup>369</sup> Young people had always been associated with this ceremony. In the eighteenth century, it was largely young women or ‘rush maidens’ who carried the bearings to the church. In nineteenth century Lancashire, young men claimed the ceremony as their own.

<sup>370</sup> The bearings were tall poles decorated with rushes and flowers, which usually depicted a religious symbol, such as crosses, a Harp, ‘The Serpent on the Pole’, and in Grasmere, ‘The White Hand of St. Oswald’.

<sup>371</sup> Everyone who walked in the procession also received a piece of gingerbread made to a secret recipe only known within the village. This ritual of receiving a localized treat as ‘payment’ for participating in the rushbearing, reinforced a sense of continuity with the past for those who took part.

field closed the festivities.<sup>372</sup> In Grasmere, although villagers of all ages carried the bearings, the ‘Rushbearing Sheet’ which headed the procession, could only be carried by girls who attended the village school. Other young girls, who lived in the village but attended a school outside of Grasmere, were barred from this part of the event:

I was never a Rush Girl... well you see, when you went to the Grammar school you went at eleven, well those on the Rush Sheet were always fourteen at Grasmere school. They never let anyone from the Grammar school be on the Rush Sheet... so I was never on it.<sup>373</sup>

This exclusion can be read as a conscious attempt to ensure that at its heart, the ceremony remained the property of the village and maintained strong connections with the past.<sup>374</sup> Yet it also serves to illustrate that for those who live within them, rural communities can be exclusionary as well as inclusive, as young women and girls who lived in Grasmere but ventured out of the village for educational purposes, were precluded from this central feature of the ceremony.<sup>375</sup>

In addition to walking in the procession each year, young people in Grasmere and Ambleside participated in this event in a number of other ways. As spectators, who watched the procession make its way around the village, but also in support roles, which included serving refreshments as part of the ‘rushbearing tea’ after the ceremony,

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<sup>372</sup> These sports often included those distinctive to (or strongly associated with) Lakeland, such as fell running.

<sup>373</sup> Respondent GN, born 1914.

<sup>374</sup> Murfin highlights that in Grasmere, the custom’s survival was threatened when the church floor was flagged in 1840. In 1839, only nine villagers took part. In response to this, a local man (who, incidentally, lived in Allan Bank before Mrs Rawnsley), prevented the custom from dying out by giving each rushbearer 6d. He continued this practice the following year, when 50 villagers made an appearance. Although his patronage ended in the 1880s, his intervention helped to ensure the continuance of rushbearing in the village. Subsequently a children’s tea was provided in place of the sixpences. See Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, pp. 54-5.

<sup>375</sup> A.P. Cohen (ed.), *Belonging: Identity and Social Organisation in British Rural Cultures* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982); Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, p. 22.

...and I remember being called in by my parents to help with the Rushbearing Tea many times, which I used to do. There was special crockery, which we had to get all out and wash and then get it done and washed again. It was great fun really. People used to come to the tea. It was quite hard work but anything that you did like that was for the village and it was quite fun and it was social, you met people.<sup>376</sup>

Clearly, for the women involved in these ceremonies, work and leisure intermingled and reinforced traditional expectations of gender. The ‘hard work’ of belonging to the village community was justified through the social life and ‘fun’ it could offer. The ‘special’ crockery used for this tea included ‘enamel mugs with “Grasmere Rushbearing” on them’.<sup>377</sup> These items not only commemorated the ceremony but also added a further sense of ownership to the event. By using these almost ‘branded’ items for the celebration tea, the village reinforced ties between itself and the ceremony.<sup>378</sup>

As with many other aspects of leisure in Lakeland during this period, rushbearing was not a commercialized event and the only aspect of the ceremony which involved the exchange of money, was fundraising for the afternoon tea and the brass band’s expenses. In the lead up to the rushbearing, young people often spent their spare time calling from house to house with collecting tins. In Grasmere, young women worked on a stall set up in aid of the ceremony, which sold items unavailable locally.<sup>379</sup> This lack of commercialism was another way in which the ceremony allowed local communities to distance themselves from urban leisure habits. Commercialism in the form of a stall was acceptable, however, if it supported a local tradition. In essence, the

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<sup>376</sup> Respondent GN, born 1914.

<sup>377</sup> Respondent GN, born 1914.

<sup>378</sup> It is interesting that this is something often found in tourist resorts, where glasses, plates and cups can be bought bearing the name of a town or resort and further reflects a growing self-consciousness among local communities surrounding this tradition and its connection to a local sense of place.

<sup>379</sup> The items sold were ‘trinkets’ which included pencils and rubbers, notebooks and toys, which, according to one respondent, the village children were not usually able to buy, as they ‘didn’t go into Ambleside to shop’, Respondent IN, born 1920. Another informant who worked on this stall recalled that Mrs Rawnsley travelled to London with her sisters to buy these items.

festival was about celebrating ‘simple’ aspects of rural life which related back to an earlier time; as one informant suggested, the rushbearing was ‘a ritual and they loved it. It was so simple and yet everybody loved it.’<sup>380</sup> Continuity with the past here included the procession itself, which followed a similar route walked by earlier village inhabitants for centuries and the ‘bearings’, carried in the procession, which depicted old religious symbols. Every ‘bearer’ was responsible for creating their own bearing each year and decorating it with flowers, rushes and greenery. This provided the young people who took part with some creative freedom to design and decorate their own symbols for display. It was stipulated, however, that the bearings had to be made from local wild flowers and fauna and the adults who organized the event were known to get ‘extremely annoyed’, if anything other than wild flowers were used for this purpose.<sup>381</sup> The inclusion of wild flowers reinforced not only the specifically rural nature of this leisure activity but a sense of place which was also suggested in the finer details, such as the use of highly localized elements, such as flowers. This was also extended to the music which accompanied the procession. In Ambleside and Grasmere, the ‘Rushbearing Hymn’ was sung each year and one man interviewed by the AOHG recalled how ‘[w]e were taught to sing the rushbearing hymn as soon as we could learn to read and write’.<sup>382</sup> Such examples suggest that local people were taught from a young age what made their region distinctive and special and this was a sense which many of the AOHG respondents carried with them into adulthood.

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<sup>380</sup> Respondent HQ, born 1923.

<sup>381</sup> Respondent IN, born 1920.

<sup>382</sup> Respondent IZ1, born 1910. The Rushbearing Hymn, was composed by Owen Lloyd, a local curate. A copy of the Hymn, and other music composed especially for the ceremonies in the two villages, can be found in E.F. Rawnsley, The Rushbearing in Grasmere and Ambleside (Kendal: Titus Wilson, 1953), pp. 20-25.

The local press also helped to support both the rushbearing's links with the past, as well as its highly localized connections. A description of the Grasmere rushbearing in 1937, claimed for instance, that if 'there had been no St. Oswald there would have been no Wordsworth'.<sup>383</sup> Clearly, this was an overstatement, yet the emphasis placed on the connection between this Lakeland village and the famous poet, demonstrates the continued efforts which were made locally to maintain and promote links with the region's past and importantly, older leisure practices. Descriptions of the 'simple' leisure activities they enjoyed in their youth were often central to the narratives of oral history interviewees and the way in which these events were reported in the local press. Phrases frequently used to describe the ritual in the 1930s included 'charming', 'traditional', 'rustic' and 'simple'. This language was often employed by AOHG respondents to frame their experiences of rushbearing and was also evident in the interviews Leyshon conducted with rural young people which he concluded, helped them with 'border maintenance' against an 'imagined [urban] other' which did not conform to these constructions of the 'rural idyll'.<sup>384</sup> As other chapters of this thesis demonstrate, the language used by Lakelanders with regard to their leisure habits, reveal strong connections to their sense of place and local character.

Despite the importance of continuity with the past to local inhabitants, oral testimony often highlights the frequent adjustments which were made to the rushbearing in both villages throughout the period. Recollections of AOHG respondents for example, reveal changes regarding the route taken by the procession, the order in which events took place, the date on which the rushbearing was held each year and the time of

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<sup>383</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 14 August 1937, p. 3.

<sup>384</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', pp. 13-14.



day the parade began.<sup>385</sup> To spectators from outside the region, however, this ceremony was presented as ‘ancient’ and untouched from year to year and therefore helped to shape their idea of the countryside during this period. As the existing literature on leisure traditions, such as that by Hobsbawm and Ranger, has demonstrated, contradictions within events commonly referred to as ‘traditional’, are symptomatic of festivals in rural communities, as they are often subject to frequent change and adjustment.<sup>386</sup> As we have seen, the 1930s saw representations of the countryside which were heavily reliant on nostalgia, which in the case of Lakeland, can be described as the ‘object of the romantic [tourist] gaze’.<sup>387</sup> The annual rushbearing was an important way for local communities to reaffirm their Lakeland identity, whilst presenting an idealized version of life in the countryside. Murfin suggested that during the annual festival, villages were ‘on display; to the visitors who are economically important, but culturally rather threatening; to the people from neighbouring towns and villages, between whom friendly rivalry always existed; and to each other, every family competitively displaying its well-dressed children and the rushbearings which had taken so much time and trouble.’<sup>388</sup>

It is the ways in which local identity and a sense of place were rehearsed and presented to both insiders and outsiders that the discussion now turns. More recent work has demonstrated the role that tourism can play in how a rural community not only views itself but also the way in which it wishes to be viewed by outsiders, through

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<sup>385</sup> In fact, these alterations appear so frequently in the oral history respondents’ recollections, that it is possible to group their memories into particular chronological groups during the period under review, according to their memories of the rushbearing ceremony.

<sup>386</sup> E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); E. Carnegie & S. McCabe, ‘Re-enactment Events and Tourism: Meaning, Authenticity and Identity’, *Current Issues in Tourism*, 11, 4 (2008), pp. 349-368; S. McCabe, ‘The Making of Community Identity’, pp. 99-118; M.K. Porter, ‘The Bauer County Fair’, pp. 139-156

<sup>387</sup> J. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990; 1996), p. 104.

<sup>388</sup> Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, p. 56.

leisure practices.<sup>389</sup> The preceding discussion showed how, by annually ‘recreating’ traditions in their leisure, young participants had already established a strong sense of place by the time they began working. Involvement as a spectator also meant that rehearsal of a local identity strongly associated with tradition, was initiated from an early age and continued into the teen years. Young people were central to the survival of leisure traditions such as the rushbearing and therefore the distinctiveness of local identity. The importance of this particular event to these villages was immortalized in paintings by locally based artists, upon which the ceremonies in Grasmere and Ambleside respectively, clearly left an impression. An art work by Frank Bramley R.A. in 1905, for example, was purchased by village subscription and hung in Grasmere village hall in 1913, after being displayed at the Royal Academy. In 1944, Gordon Ransom, who studied with the Royal College of Art, painted a mural of the rushbearing in Ambleside, on a wall in St Mary’s Church.<sup>390</sup> In both cases, local people of all ages posed for the artists and were included in the finished piece. This not only endowed the paintings with an increased sense of authenticity but also created a personal link between the villagers and art works, which were displayed with pride in their respective villages. A number of young people were included in the Ransome painting and AOHG respondents expressed how they valued their involvement if they (or even a friend) had been included in the scenes.

These paintings provided a further physical link of continuity between the ceremony and their lives. This inclusion could also create a sense of ownership between locals and the ceremony, as one respondent said of the Ambleside rushbearing,

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<sup>389</sup> Hanson, ‘The Making of the Maori’; Linnekin, ‘Defining Tradition’.

<sup>390</sup> Frank Bramley lived locally and Gordon Ransome was evacuated to Ambleside in 1940, along with the rest of the Royal College of Art for the duration of the war. W.R. Mitchell, Life in the Lake District, p. 26.

‘it belonged to the town’.<sup>391</sup> These rituals were not only a way of rehearsing local identity within local communities themselves. As a tourist destination, such events also allowed villages to present a specific and, as Urry suggested, an ‘apparently authentic’ sense of place to outsiders.<sup>392</sup> The ‘traditional’ place identity of Lakeland was also projected year after year to the large numbers of international tourists who were increasingly present at both the Grasmere and Ambleside ceremonies, as reported in the local paper:

Hundreds of holiday-makers swelled the ranks of the villagers, who left their homes en masse to line the route of the procession, and in the midst of such a typically English scene, it was strange to hear sentences in German, Dutch and French from interested foreign onlookers. The nasal tones of Americans from across the Atlantic were no less evident.<sup>393</sup>

From the late 1930s, the influence of visitors and tourists was increasingly visible in the ceremony, in subtle ways (at least initially). One respondent, for example, recalled that it was visitors, rather than locals, who were asked to judge the ‘best’ bearings each year, ‘[t]here was a section for prize-giving for children who had made their own [bearings] out of wild flowers. They all got books and they were judged by visitors who came’.<sup>394</sup> Although who exactly these visitors were and where they came from is unclear, the above extract demonstrates that bearings were produced by children and young people with the judgement of outsiders in mind. This also suggests that the ceremony was modified during the inter-war years to include outsiders, thereby presenting a more ‘tourist friendly’ event. Another informant, who in her teens lived in 1930s Ambleside,

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<sup>391</sup> Respondent HY, born 1919.

<sup>392</sup> Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, p. 104.

<sup>393</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 14 August 1937.

<sup>394</sup> Respondent MB, born 1922. This phenomenon continued into the post-war period, where the customary stop in the Market Square to sing the Rushbearing Hymn, became a photo opportunity for spectators. In 1949 for example, it was reported that the ‘bearings were raised shoulder high’ at which point ‘a whole battery of cameras was set a-clicking’. *Westmorland Gazette*, 30 July 1949, p. 3. Bearers were no longer only on display for the duration of the procession; they were now instrumental in providing a snapshot of Lakeland life for tourists to take away with them.

recalled that a growing trend was for the tourists who watched the processions to bring cameras with them, a development which began to alter the way in which the bearings were carried by young people in the procession:

...the band used to start up and they sang the Rushbearing hymn in Market Square, ... and then as all the cameras started appearing, they used to hold them up, the bearings up, you know, and all the bearings were held high as a spectacle for the cameras, you see. And that's grown stronger and stronger.<sup>395</sup>

In subsequent years, the Market Square in Ambleside became the main focal point for the use of modern technology to document this traditional rural celebration. The raising of bearings specifically for photo opportunities became something of a ritual in itself for Ambleside. Tourism clearly began to affect the way in which these 'ancient' processions developed during the period and as a result, those taking part in the rushbearing, became 'increasingly self-conscious tradition-bearers.'<sup>396</sup> The growing numbers of visitors who watched the rushbearing also points to the development of cultural tourism, the increasingly visual culture of the period and the growing importance of photography to tourists.<sup>397</sup> Other modern influences were also visible in Lakeland during the 1930s, when, for example, the rushbearing procession in Ambleside was filmed and shown in the region's cinemas, 'which was a matter for great local pride, and doubtless a boost to the tourist trade.'<sup>398</sup> In 1943, the rushbearing was filmed for inclusion in a British Pathé newsreel. The bearers were lined up for the camera to create a picturesque 'scene' and this too, undoubtedly increased the self-

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<sup>395</sup> Respondent HY, born 1919.

<sup>396</sup> Poole, 'Samuel Bamford and Middleton Rushbearing', p. 18.

<sup>397</sup> J. Watts, 'Picture Taking in Paradise: Los Angeles and the Creation of Regional Identity, 1880-1920', in V.R. Schwartz & M. Przyblyski (eds.), *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader*, Ch. 25; D.A. Brown, 'The Modern Romance of Mountaineering: Photography, Aesthetics and Embodiment', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24, 1 (2007), pp. 1-34.

<sup>398</sup> Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, p. 56. Wilfred Pickles broadcast with the BBC from Grasmere Hall in the 1930s, when the village brass band played for his show. The band was requested to play traditional songs and hunting tunes, which presented a particular image of Lakeland to listeners. This was a further example of technological developments in popular culture infiltrating older leisure habits.

consciousness of locals regarding the ‘gaze’ of outsiders and the meaning of the festival.<sup>399</sup>

It would appear then, that this traditionally inward-looking ceremony became more conscious of external influences and judgements during this decade, on a number of levels. An increasingly public image of Lakeland was constructed in the process. MacDonald and Jolliffe’s survey of cultural rural tourism in Canada, concluded that local communities ‘have pride in their ancestry and want to preserve it for the future. They also want to share it with others through a variety of offerings’.<sup>400</sup> In Lakeland, these cultural ‘offerings’ were annual community events, which acted as ‘the hook for tourists to visit the area.’

Towards the end of the decade, concerns were raised regarding the decline of young people’s involvement in this event and this was used as a tool for wider criticism of ‘sophisticated modern’ leisure. An awareness of and reactions to the spread of modern popular culture in the inter-war period manifested itself in Lakeland in a number of ways. By the late 1930s, the traditional rushbearing ceremony became a vehicle through which to voice concerns regarding the increasing commercialization of young people’s leisure habits more generally. Despite the fact that 150 young people and children ‘from the perambulator to the “long trousers” stage’ took part in Grasmere’s rushbearing in 1937, it was noted that local adults ‘could be heard declaring that “the procession is not what it was –the young people imagine that they are too big for that sort of thing”’.<sup>401</sup> In the same year, an apparently contradictory report appeared

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<sup>399</sup> <http://www.britishpathe.com/results.php?search=rushbearing> (accessed November 2011).

<sup>400</sup> R. MacDonald & L. Jolliffe, ‘Cultural Rural Tourism. Evidence from Canada’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30, 2 (2003), p. 319.

<sup>401</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 14 August 1937.

and suggested that ‘the simple rural appeal of an ancient custom had lost little of its attraction’ to local young people ‘in spite of the more sophisticated modern pleasures which few of them fail to experience.’<sup>402</sup> Whilst ostensibly celebrating the continued involvement of young people in the ‘ancient custom’, this last remark can also be read as a reference to concerns prevalent in England throughout the 1930s, that modern commercialized leisure was eroding rural traditions.<sup>403</sup> It could be argued that developments in modern technology, such as cameras, were welcome at the festival when they enhanced local traditions. When the ‘neon attractions’ of the town competed for the leisure time of young people, however, they were criticized and used to reinforce the differences between ‘simple rural’ attractions and ‘more sophisticated [urban] pleasures’.<sup>404</sup> Such examples also indicate a growing concern within local communities in Lakeland regarding the potential of homogenized leisure to draw young people away from village spaces. As we shall see, these concerns were not totally unfounded, as local young people in their teens gradually became less involved in rushbearing over the course of the war. This decline is also considered in relation to the prolonged presence of outsiders in the region during wartime.

Rather than limiting the role of urban incomers during the war to that of spectator, many evacuees were actively involved and walked in the processions alongside local people. By incorporating young people from outside the region, distinctive elements of Lakeland identity were maintained despite the mass influx of urban outsiders, who brought their own leisure habits and culture with them. The first rushbearing festival to take place in Ambleside after the outbreak of war for instance, included ‘children from Newcastle secondary and elementary schools, a girls’ school

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<sup>402</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 14 August 1937.

<sup>403</sup> The Daily Mirror, 16 February 1939, p. 18.

<sup>404</sup> F.G. Thomas, The Changing Village, (London: Thomas Nelson, 1939), p. 54.

from Liverpool, and boys' schools from Winchester and Filey', who were 'invited to take part in the festival which has been observed for over a century.'<sup>405</sup> The following summer, the Westmorland Gazette reported that '[h]undreds of visitors and evacuees joined in with the local residents in singing the ancient Rushbearing hymn'.<sup>406</sup> That same year, there were over 300 bearings in the procession, a number of which were created 'by high school and elementary school children from the North-East Coast.'<sup>407</sup> This involvement of school children, evacuated to the region in the early 1940s, also appears to have marked a change in the composition of the bearers, and from then until the end of the period under review, younger children seemed to have taken centre stage. This boost in numbers from school children certainly accounted (at least in part) for the survival of the rushbearing festivals in both Grasmere and Ambleside, at a time when other community events in the region lapsed.<sup>408</sup> This act of inclusion can, however, also be viewed as a conscious effort to control the flow of modern cultural influences, which young urban incomers represented. In a wartime context, 'border maintenance' moved from a straightforward demonstration of local distinctiveness to outsiders, towards including them directly in the festival. The engagement of outsiders in community events, educated them in traditional Lakeland leisure practices and helped to protect the future of such events, at a time when new concerns were voiced regarding the effect of urban incomers on local people and traditions.<sup>409</sup> Robert Poole noted that rushbearing

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<sup>405</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 20 July 1940, p. 4.

<sup>406</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 03 August 1941.

<sup>407</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 03 August 1941.

<sup>408</sup> As the next section of this chapter will demonstrate for example, the annual Grasmere Sports were abandoned for the duration of the war. This could also be due to the considerable involvement of older women and children in the rushbearing; two groups who were not involved in war work or the national call up. The male-dominated Grasmere Sports would have struggled to maintain pre-war attendance and competitor figures in the face of such upheaval and population movement.

<sup>409</sup> In Lakeland, anxiety over the influence of outsiders on local traditions, was expressed through reports of local dialect being eroded by that of incomers. See for example, several small reports on the infiltration of other dialects and accents in Lakeland, which appeared in the Westmorland Gazette during the early years of the war: 'Dialect War', 30 September 1939, p. 5; 'A New Dialect', 13 April 1940, p. 4; 'Where Were We?', 19 October 1940, p. 5, and 'County of Many Tongues', 04 January 1941, p. 5.

in the 1800s, had continued ‘to adapt to changing circumstances as [it] had always done’ and this was a finding was echoed in Lakeland during the war, where disruptions were negotiated through the inclusion of outsiders; something which undoubtedly helped the ceremony in both villages to survive into the post-war period.<sup>410</sup> Wartime saw a distancing of local young people from the event, however and after 1945, rushbearing’s place primarily as an occasion for children was consolidated.<sup>411</sup> The involvement of outsiders (particularly evacuees) appears to have coincided with (and perhaps even prompted), the declining participation of young people, something which the analysis of rushbearing in the post-war period addresses in more detail.

As Chapter Two demonstrated, the young people who returned home to Lakeland after the war, had experienced different types of leisure through mixing with urban outsiders and it is likely that this also affected their view of these simple, rustic activities. Although the popularity of the ceremony persisted into the 1950s, local young people played a reduced role in the proceedings, possibly because their tastes were becoming more sophisticated and possibly as a result of their greater access to leisure outside of their villages in the post-war period.<sup>412</sup> Oral testimony revealed that in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it became harder to interest those in their teens and early twenties in events such as this, as one woman observed:

When they were small they loved it but of course, as they grew older, they used to think – oh no, we don't want to. It began to be like that, which we hadn't really experienced. We never thought of it when we were teenagers, it was a thing we just always did.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> R. Poole, ‘Samuel Bamford and Middleton Rushbearing’, p. 1

<sup>411</sup> This was a trend identified by Murfin as taking place in the 1930s, yet it is clear from the oral history testimony, that children were not the predominant focus of the ceremony before 1939.

<sup>412</sup> See Chapter Four for a full discussion of this development.

<sup>413</sup> Respondent IN, born 1920.



Perhaps in response to this change, the ceremony was used as a vehicle to criticize modern leisure habits, whilst celebrating the survival of this tradition in the face of homogenized and ‘mechanized’ pastimes, as this excerpt from the Westmorland Gazette in 1949 demonstrated:

Who says the mechanical-mindedness of the present day has stifled all romance and love of ancient history? Saturday night’s commemoration was a definite refutation of such a contention. It shows in Lakeland there still exists a very solid affection for the love and tradition of the countryside and an appreciation of the beautiful flowers, and rushes green, which adorn the summer landscape.<sup>414</sup>

This ‘mechanical-mindedness’ is clearly as much a reference to technological developments in leisure, such as the cinema and wireless, as it is to the labour-saving devices of the day, and points to a persistent tension between ‘sophisticated’, urban leisure and the ‘simple’ rural habits embodied in Lakeland’s annual community events.

Descriptions of the lifelong links between some local residents and rushbearing were characteristic of accounts which appeared in the Westmorland Gazette from the late 1940s onwards; something rarely alluded to in the newspaper during the 1930s. One such commentary recorded that there were ‘not a few’ local people, ‘who have been connected with the rushbearing for the greater part of their life.’<sup>415</sup> The intergenerational nature of the ceremony, whereby ‘generations of local families’ and ‘young and old’ alike participated, continued to mark the event out as distinctive. These links were, however, increasingly discussed in the local press after the war and reports drew on these connections in relation to Lakeland’s more famous former residents, as descriptions increasingly stressed the intergenerational element of the celebrations:

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<sup>414</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 30 July 1949, p. 3.

<sup>415</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 30 July 1949, p. 3.

Mention of the wishing gate [which one bearing took the form of that year] reminds one that Wordsworth and the rest of the family must have seen the festival frequently in those days. Of recent years I have seen a grandson watching and a great grandson and great great grandchildren taking part, also a grandson and great grandchildren of “Christopher North”.<sup>416</sup>

In this way, a further layer of ‘authenticity’ was added to the event, and as tourist numbers increased in region, this helped to reinforce a sense of continuity with the past in the post-war period.<sup>417</sup> Such statements also perhaps reflect a growing nostalgia over the loss of those in their teens and early twenties from the proceedings, as this change was more noticeable in the years immediately after the war. In addition to school children playing a more prominent role as bearers, it became common for mothers to walk in the procession whilst pushing their babies in prams decorated with flowers. In the same way that the smaller, local events described in Chapter Two reflected an awareness of incomers to the region immediately after the war, the presence of outsiders appears also to have had an effect on the tone of these reports. As we have seen, there was an increasing self-consciousness in 1930s Lakeland, over the interest which these events attracted from tourists and other external groups. These trends intensified in the post-war years, and the composition of audiences at these displays was often recorded in reports of the ceremonies. In 1950, spectators were described as a ‘cosmopolitan crowd’, which included ‘Americans, Danes, Norwegians, French, Belgian and Indian visitors’, who witnessed the ‘time-honoured procession for the first-time.’<sup>418</sup>

Descriptions such as these in the local press indicate that the spectators, who watched

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<sup>416</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 06 August 1949, p. 3. Christopher North was the alias of John Wilson, a Scottish essayist, critic and poet, who was friends with Wordsworth and lived locally in the early decades of the eighteenth century.

<sup>417</sup> Urry, The Tourist Gaze, p. 104. For more on the links between nostalgia and war, see R. Hemmings, Modern Nostalgia: Siegfried Sassoon, Trauma and the Second World War (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

<sup>418</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 12 August 1950, p. 3.

this ‘rustic village pageant’, were almost as important as the locals who participated in the ceremony and the local press was quick to note any drop in visitor numbers.<sup>419</sup>

The rushbearing survived the spread of homogenized leisure habits in the first half of the twentieth century and as we saw, the use of photographic equipment was a growing occurrence at ceremonies in the 1930s. By the early 1950s, the use of the Market Square in Ambleside as a ritual photo opportunity had become an integral part of the display. As the Westmorland Gazette reported, ‘[w]ith the words of command, “Raise your bearings,” about 350 Ambleside children lifted their emblems, made of wood and decorated with all types of flowers, and turned Ambleside’s Market Square into a blaze of colour on Saturday afternoon’.<sup>420</sup> This development also influenced the Grasmere procession, where the ‘children, with their bearings, stood on the churchyard wall from 4-30 p.m. until 5 p.m. while parents and visitors were busy taking photographs.’<sup>421</sup> Notably in Grasmere, it was only the children who were included in ‘snapshots’ of the event, something which other studies have highlighted as a common occurrence in the ways tourists choose to construct visual souvenirs of places they visit.<sup>422</sup> One of these photos was included on the front page of the Westmorland Gazette; the first time the rushbearing was featured so prominently. These photos also helped to spread the image of Lakeland as a traditional and unchanging rural idyll and the use of modern culture, however, was only acceptable if it helped to promote (or commemorate) this localized festival. Where it threatened or challenged the existence of older leisure forms, especially in regard to young people, it was criticized. By the

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<sup>419</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 30 July 1949, p. 3.

<sup>420</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 04 August 1951, p. 3.

<sup>421</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 15 August 1953, p. 3.

<sup>422</sup> P. Menezes ‘Tourists’ Photographic Gaze: The Case of Rio de Janeiro Favelas’, in R. Sharpley & P.R. Stone (eds.) Tourist Experience: Contemporary Perspectives, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 99; M. Robinson & D. Picard (eds.), The Framed World: Tourism, Tourists and Photography, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

early 1950s it is clear that very young children played a significant part in the ceremony and this continued therefore to impart a particular sense of place in local people from an early age. As the discussion in next section of the chapter will demonstrate, the image and sense of place conveyed by community events such as rushbearing, were also visible in other aspects of young people's leisure in Lakeland.

### The Grasmere Dialect Plays

This part of the discussion deals with dialect plays, which 'proved popular with amateur dramatic groups in the inter-war period' and were a significant aspect of leisure for a number of young people in Lakeland.<sup>423</sup> The analysis engages with the earlier works of Dave Russell and Mick Wallis, who have examined the development of dialect writing and rural drama respectively, during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>424</sup> It is argued here that these productions were an important part of the leisure calendar in Lakeland during the 1930s. Held annually, they drew audiences from considerable distances and involved villagers of all ages. The plays are worth analysis for several reasons; young people were engaged in their production in a number of different ways, which ranged from acting, to more creative roles, such as making the scenery. Dave Russell's study highlighted how a 'live performance' in dialect 'exerted an important and distinctive influence on popular perceptions' of regional identity.<sup>425</sup> Examination of these plays also helps to provide further insights into both the leisure experiences of young Lakelanders during this period, as well as the rural communities in which they

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<sup>423</sup> D. Russell, Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 119.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid; M. Wallis, 'Drama in the Villages: Three Pioneers', in The English Countryside Between Wars: Regeneration or Decline?, Ch. 7 & M. Wallis, 'Unlocking the Secret Soul: Mary Kelly, Pioneer of Village Theatre' New Theatre Quarterly, 64 (2000), pp. 347-58.

<sup>425</sup> D. Russell, Looking North, p. 147.

lived. These productions were not simply amateur dramatics in a village setting; they were distinctly localized events and celebrated an element of leisure culture specific to Lakeland, the region's dialect. Russell suggested that, 'it was dialect that gave the added dimension, binding groups together in a knowing conspiracy forged by the exclusion of outsiders and the straightforward pleasure of seeing the world made sense of in their own tongue'.<sup>426</sup> This phenomenon was not confined to Lakeland, however, and throughout the inter-war years (and beyond) dialect plays were written and produced in Somerset, Cumberland, Manchester and Scotland.<sup>427</sup> Other villages in Lakeland also staged dialect plays in the 1930s, including Burneside,<sup>428</sup> Staveley, Yealand, Crook and Natland.<sup>429</sup> These appear to have been one-off or infrequent performances, however, rather than the annual production held in Grasmere. It is for this reason that the following discussion largely centres on the plays staged in Grasmere, where they originated at the turn of the nineteenth century, and were written and produced by the daughter of the village Rector. After the Rector's family left the area in the early 1900s, Mrs Rawnsley (at that time Miss Simpson) continued these plays from the scripts left by her predecessor. Over time, she began to write her own scripts in the local tongue, based on 'village life'. The involvement of these women in

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<sup>426</sup> Ibid, p. 126.

<sup>427</sup> J. Mackie, Dialect Poems and a Play, Somerset Folk Series No. 23, (London: Folk Press, 1925); J. Cockburn, Country Love: A Scottish Play. Also, Verses and Poems Mostly in the Scottish Dialect, (Sands & Co.: London, 1930); E. Harrison, Countryside Crack, A Play in the Cumberland Dialect (Keswick: Thomas Bakewell, c.1930); J. Mackie, The Wooing of the Widow Wallington: A One-Act Dialect Play Written in the Dialect of South-East Somerset (London: Folk Press, 1933); S. Britsow Sykes, The Organ Fund: A Dialect Play, White House Community Dramas No. 5 (Manchester: Abel Heywood & Son, 1946).

<sup>428</sup> Evidence from the local press revealed that another local woman from a wealthy family, Margaret Cropper, wrote the dialect plays used in other Lakeland villages during the 1930s. A minor author and poet, she took a keen interest in cultivating and maintaining the region's dialect through playwriting. Miss Cropper was another middle-class woman who took great interest in the life of the village in which she lived (Burneside). Her family owned the local paper mill, which employed many local residents. It is likely that her social class and family position in Burneside village, provided her with a similar level of authority to Mrs Rawnsley in Grasmere.

<sup>429</sup> The last mention of dialect plays being staged in other villages is July 1937, when Natland Women's Institute performed a dialect play 'transposed from Suffolk to Westmorland dialect and conditions' and Staveley Players performed a dialect play at the Morecambe and Heysham Drama Festival. Westmorland Gazette, 30 July 1937, p. 3.

dialect writing followed the growth of middle-class and female dialect writers in the twentieth century, identified by Russell.<sup>430</sup> These plays were frequently described by AOHG respondents in terms of their simplicity and connections to everyday life in Lakeland. One interviewee remembered that the scripts were ‘very simple, but they had fabulous settings, really beautiful settings... they were written about local characters, local situations, in local dialect.’<sup>431</sup> In common with rushbearing, the plays were another community event which celebrated distinctly rural elements of local life and drew on both the past and a simplified view of rural life for inspiration. As a result, these ‘dialect dramas’ were sited in direct opposition to the more sophisticated and commercialized urban leisure attractions of the 1930s.<sup>432</sup> Profits from ticket sales were donated to local charities or contributed towards the upkeep of Grasmere Hall and other village leisure facilities.<sup>433</sup> The un-commercialized dimension of these events provided a further contrast to the commercial, profit-orientated nature of much urban leisure during the same period.

Mick Wallis is one of the few academics to have analysed village-based drama in the English countryside from an historical perspective.<sup>434</sup> Specifically, he examined developments which took place across the inter-war period, organized under the Village Drama section of the British Drama League, although his evidence was largely drawn from southern England and therefore diverges somewhat from the situation in Lakeland.

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<sup>430</sup> Russell, Looking North, p. 122.

<sup>431</sup> Extract taken from ‘The Way We Were: Leisure Part Two’, which was featured in the Westmorland Gazette in 1987, as part of a series in weekly instalments, based on the AOHG archive. The series is now available online at <http://www.aohg.org.uk/> (accessed October 2011).

<sup>432</sup> A sense of the past was evoked not only through the use of ‘traditional’ Lakeland dialect but also by the nineteenth century period costumes worn by the actors, (as photos from the Westmorland Gazette demonstrate), which were borrowed annually from farmers and other village inhabitants.

<sup>433</sup> Thomas noted that this was a common practice for village drama groups in the inter-war years. See Thomas, The Changing Village, p. 59

<sup>434</sup> See Wallis, ‘Drama in the Villages’ & Wallis, ‘Unlocking the Secret Soul’, pp. 347-58. For contemporary inter-war accounts, see: N. Ratcliff, Rude Mechanicals: A Review of Village Drama (London: Thomas Nelson, 1938) & M. Kelly, Village Theatre (London: Thomas Nelson, 1939).

Wallis's study focussed on the 'competitive festivals' which were held in counties across England during the 1930s, which he described as 'celebrations of village life and culture, taken to a principal venue in the country or other large town'.<sup>435</sup> Rural drama in the context of an organized, nationwide body became an extension of adult education in the countryside and as Wallis observed, by '1939 nearly every county in England had some kind of rural drama committee'.<sup>436</sup> In many of the counties he surveyed, the staging of plays was more concerned with the regeneration of village social life than was the case in Lakeland, although both in this region and Wallis's survey area, drama was used as a vehicle to promote village life and culture to people living in towns and cities. In the rural areas analysed by Wallis, however, village groups travelled to towns and performed nationally-known plays in an urban setting. In contrast, the Grasmere dialect plays required that people travelled *from* urban areas *to* the countryside for their taste of rural drama. The staging of an annual dramatic production in the village was, therefore, used as a way to promote (and preserve) local identity and pride. The plays were performed in winter, a quieter time for the local farming community who were often integral to these village drama displays. Indeed, they appear to have been so important that several of the AOHG respondents indicated that Mrs Rawnsley was known to financially compensate the farm workers who acted in the plays. Despite the fact that profits were donated to charity, she paid their lost wages for the week over which the play was staged.<sup>437</sup> Class dynamics evidently played an important part in these relationships. The middle-class Mrs Rawnsley, for instance, 'employed' the working-class participants to act in the performances, whilst she exerted a considerable

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<sup>435</sup> Wallis, 'Drama in the Villages', p. 105.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid, pp. 104-5. Westmorland also followed this trend and on occasion, a dialect play was performed by villagers in a competition.

<sup>437</sup> Respondent GC, born 1913.

amount of control over them, including six weeks of evening rehearsals in the run up to the opening night.<sup>438</sup>

Young people were involved in the dialect plays in a number of ways. They not only acted, but sold tickets, painted scenery, helped with the costumes and organized refreshments at the intervals. Although one respondents' father acted in the plays for many years, she recalled finding other ways to participate, aside from acting:

...my father was always the farmer in those [dialect plays]. He used to take the leading man – he'd a great memory, oh he could learn the parts, you know... I didn't like being in the play at all. I didn't mind selling the programmes and showing people to seats because all the seats were numbered you know, but oh no! It didn't appeal to me at all.<sup>439</sup>

In this case, the young woman spent her free time engaged in the same activity as her father and the participation of young workers in these plays, in whatever capacity, further demonstrates the intergenerational aspect to leisure in Lakeland during the 1930s. These activities also served to further exemplify how the leisure experiences of young workers within local villages were often dominated by adult control and supervision.

Although young people appear to have enjoyed taking part in various ways, they had little say in the way things were run, thanks largely to the domineering Mrs Rawnsley. This control was also extended to any romantic relationships portrayed in the plays, where a close eye was kept on relations between young men and women. As

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<sup>438</sup> Even as a young woman, Mrs Rawnsley was authoritative in her approach to the plays and the commitment she required from the actors. See H. D. Rawnsley, *Months at the Lakes* (1906), pp. 11-12, where he describes both her rigorous rehearsal schedule and the authority she held over local farmers as a young woman.

<sup>439</sup> Respondent GN, born 1914.



one informant suggested, ‘with Mrs. Rawnsley’s plays there was never any kissing or nothing sexual or nothing... you know; you could hold hands and that was all’.<sup>440</sup> The relationships portrayed in these productions reinforced the sense of simplicity which was central to these plays more generally, and reflected broader ideas of rural life in the inter-war years. In particular, by emphasizing the innocence of relationships between young men and women within the dialect scripts, a ‘moral geography’ of the countryside was conveyed to audiences, which implied that rural spaces were less corrupt than towns and cities.<sup>441</sup>

As in the case of rushbearing, dialect plays were important in the way they presented the village to outsiders. As for example, they often received a brief mention in the Times.<sup>442</sup> This helped to project a particular image of the region, to external groups, some of whom experienced the plays first hand. A group from the Manchester-based ‘Rock and Fell’ climbing club on several occasions, for instance, arranged their walking holidays to coincide with the plays. This reflected broader trends in the 1930s, for those who lived in towns and cities to explore the countryside in their leisure, often romanticising rural life in the process:

*Did a lot of people go to the plays then?*

They did, there were full houses and the Rock & Fell [Club]... used to come every year from Manchester and they used to come... and people from all over the country used to come, you know, and stay in the hotels because it was on all week and two Saturdays. Yes, it was very popular. I don’t know whether everybody understood this dialect, ‘cos it’s a bit peculiar isn’t it, if you don’t know what the words mean, but anyway it wasn’t a sort of deep plot or anything I mean you didn’t really have to know what they were talking about because it

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<sup>440</sup> Respondent GC, born 1913.

<sup>441</sup> D. Matless, ‘Moral Geographies of English Landscape’, Landscape Research, 22, 2 (1997), pp. 141-155 & D. Matless, Landscape and Englishness, (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), pp. 40-43; Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, pp. 13-20.

<sup>442</sup> Earlier in the century, they had even received a mention in the American Press. ‘The Grasmere Dialect Play: A Novel Entertainment Seen in an English Village’, The New York Times, 05 February 1911.

was all very simple.<sup>443</sup>

These productions clearly provided outsiders with a rather idyllic view of what living in the countryside entailed; attractive pastoral scenery was created each year as a backdrop to the straightforward tales of village life.<sup>444</sup> In this leisure activity, as with many others in Lakeland particularly during the 1930s, it is clear that a somewhat idealized past (and one perceived to be disappearing) was a central influence, perhaps at least in part because a long-established way of life was thought to be under threat. In this respect, leisure in Lakeland was more concerned with continuity and providing a distinct sense of place, demonstrated by the ‘many references’ to rushbearing which appeared in the Grasmere dialect plays.<sup>445</sup> The inclusion of a traditional and very much localized event in these plays, further conveyed a particular picture of rural life to external audiences.

Due to Mrs Rawnsley’s ill health, the final dialect performance was held in 1937. Her withdrawal from village life was symptomatic of broader changes affecting her generation. As the Westmorland Gazette noted a few years later, the increasing number of deaths among the older generation locally, led to a decline in village social life.<sup>446</sup> The local press was astute in identifying the loss of this organizing generation as a potential threat to local leisure habits. It was adults after all, who helped to structure many other aspects of local social life, such as brass bands, choirs, local sports teams,

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<sup>443</sup> Respondent GN, female, born 1914.

<sup>444</sup> It is unlikely that any of the members of this climbing club fully understood the dialect used in the plays but their attendance at a play which they could not understand is perhaps symbolic of both the urban enthusiasm for the English countryside (albeit an idealized version) during the inter-war years and the concern over its disappearance. Perhaps for the walking group from Manchester, the dialect plays represented the same celebration of rural life and survival of older ‘traditions’ as it did for the region’s inhabitants.

<sup>445</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 06 August 1949, p. 3.

<sup>446</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 16 October 1943, p. 3.

shows, social evenings and dances. The advent of war in 1939 heralded further disruption to older patterns and after this point, it has proved impossible to find a single reference to dialect plays being held in Lakeland. The dialect plays were one Lakeland tradition which did not survive the war and is suggestive not only of the social changes outlined above, but also the arrival of outsiders in the region's villages immediately following the war, who had a significant effect on the development of local leisure activities in the post-war years.

It was the arrivals of these outsiders in post-war Grasmere, who were instrumental in re-establishing amateur dramatics in the village, although in a somewhat modified and modernized form. The Grasmere Players amateur dramatic group was formed in 1949 and shortly after, productions were once again staged in the village hall.<sup>447</sup> Yet the plays performed by the group did not, however, include the pre-war dialect scripts, as Mrs Rawnsley refused to lend the group copies of her plays; a refusal which prolonged the disruption to this localized leisure tradition. Although the occasional dialect script was made available to the Players through other channels, it was not until after Mrs Rawnsley's death in the late 1950s, when a full set of the dialect plays were bequeathed to the Wordsworth Trust archive at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, that the group had access to them. For someone so passionate about keeping local traditions alive, it seems a little strange that Mrs Rawnsley did not allow a younger generation (in the form of the new amateur dramatics group) to stage the plays after the war, which could perhaps have ensured their survival.<sup>448</sup> This refusal might be explained by an unwillingness to relinquish her grasp on a leisure activity over which

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<sup>447</sup> The Ambleside Players were established in 1932 and continued to thrive during the 1940s and 1950s. Young people were involved in these productions in various ways, although the plays staged annually tended to be written by a well-known author or playwright, such as J.B. Priestley.

<sup>448</sup> Indeed, the task of preserving the Lakeland dialect locally was left to the Lakeland Dialect Society, established in 1939: Westmorland Gazette, 30 September 1939, p. 5.

she had previously had so much control. A further factor in her reluctance to hand over the scripts was, perhaps, that some of the people who founded the new group were from outside the region. It is possible that because the plays represented, ‘a shared sense of local and regional identity’, the idea of incomers having unsupervised access to this, made her sensitive to how they might be used, as author of several scripts Mrs Rawnsley would undoubtedly have felt a sense of ownership over them.<sup>449</sup>

The new Grasmere Players were formed under a less restrictive organizational structure than that of the inter-war years and accordingly, they formed a committee which established a more democratic way of running things.<sup>450</sup> In spite of these democratic beginnings, the young villagers who took part in the plays continued to have little say over the running of the new group. Oral evidence suggests that it was largely married couples in the village who were involved in the running of the group and once again, younger members held a more subsidiary role.<sup>451</sup> Mrs Rawnsley’s refusal to distribute the dialect plays also meant that although amateur productions were once again staged annually in Grasmere, they inevitably lost the distinctiveness of the inter-war years. As with many other village drama societies at this time, plays by well-known writers became the standard texts, which worked against a revival of the dialect plays. Local theatrical groups continued to provide young people with village-based leisure activities, although these were now more outward-looking, contemporary productions. This change of focus from regional to national, also reinforced broader changes which were taking place in Lakeland society and leisure habits. Although the Grasmere Players were successful in the production of such plays, perhaps because they

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<sup>449</sup> Russell, *Looking North*, p. 126.

<sup>450</sup> Once suggestion at the first meeting of the Grasmere Players, for example, was that each play should have a different director.

<sup>451</sup> Respondent HP, moved to Grasmere in 1946.

did not conform to the older way of doing things in Lakeland, their dealings with the Grasmere Hall Committee could also be awkward and give rise to generational tensions:

Relations with the Grasmere Hall were very difficult in those days. They again met once a year on Boxing Day and the meetings were all cut and dried beforehand. When... [the new Headmaster of Grasmere School and a founder-member of the Players] went as a representative they said, when he wanted to speak he was told he couldn't, he wasn't allowed to speak, he could just go as an observer. And the caretaker-cum-secretary was... a horrid man and you could not argue with him at all and he was just as awkward as he could be, it was very difficult getting anything done at all because they would just come down and say, no, you can't do that, no, you can't do that.<sup>452</sup>

Aside from generational strains, this extract also alludes to the conflicts which took place between locals and incomers in the post-war period; evidently, there was a particular way of doing things in the village, as was made clear to outsiders at these meetings.

Despite these initial difficulties, however, the Grasmere Players eventually managed to reach a compromise with the Committee and succeeded in pushing through a considerable modernization programme. This included the installation of electric lighting, including footlights, curtains for the stage, and the replacement of the old-fashioned 'forms' (hard wooden benches with no backs), with chairs from an old cinema. It would seem that by the 1950s, much of the 'simplicity' of village life embodied within the dialect plays had been lost, not only in the nature of the plays themselves, but also in the people who organized and performed them, and even the venue in which they were staged. In the 1940s and early 1950s, amateur dramatics in the region were very popular, although the plays contained few (if any) references to the locality in which they took place. Indeed by this time, the use of dialect in an

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<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

entertainment context had become confined to ‘dialect readings’ at social evenings. To young villagers, the interactive and creative element of this Lakeland tradition was therefore lost. Young people instead found other opportunities for amateur drama through membership of voluntary organizations such as the Young Farmers’ Clubs or Boy Scouts. These groups participated in the ‘youth section’ of the county-wide drama festivals which were popular in the region.<sup>453</sup> This also reflected the broader trends in rural drama identified by Wallis, where village drama groups travelled to towns to perform in a competitive setting.<sup>454</sup>

Distinctive elements of local leisure habits such as their intergenerational character, where young people spent considerable amounts of their leisure time engaged in activities organized and supervised by adults, continued. The sense of place and tradition cultivated within the dialect dramas was certainly absent from the post-war plays staged in Lakeland villages, however. This marked a change in the use of communal village spaces from hosting locally distinctive and traditional events, to the inclusion of more standardized entertainments. In 1949 for example, Wilfred Pickles (a BBC personality) recorded several shows from Staveley Village Hall for his programme, *Have a Go*.<sup>455</sup> These events attracted large numbers of local residents and on at least one occasion, the audience which had crowded into the village hall, was said to represent ‘20 per cent of the population of the immediate neighbourhood’.<sup>456</sup> After the recording had concluded for the evening, the ‘personalities’ who had taken part in

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<sup>453</sup> See for example, Westmorland Gazette, 10 March 1951, p. 8.

<sup>454</sup> Wallis, ‘Drama in the Villages’.

<sup>455</sup> In August 1949, it was reported that Staveley village had ‘featured prominently in B.B.C. broadcasts in the last few months’, Westmorland Gazette, 20 August 1949, p. 5.

<sup>456</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 20 August 1949, p. 5.

the show, ‘were besieged by autograph hunters’ who included ‘holidaymakers and cyclists on their way to the Lakes’.<sup>457</sup>

It would be an overstatement to claim that these shows represented a total change in the events held in Lakeland village halls towards the end of our period. It is interesting to note, however, that in contrast to localized events such as the inter-war dialect plays, it was the presence of well-known, contemporary broadcasters who could draw tourists and visitors to these venues after 1945. Developments such as this, without being all-encompassing, were symptomatic of the encroachment of modernized forms of leisure into post-war Lakeland and remind us of Burchardt’s assertion that village halls could facilitate the flow of modern leisure into rural areas.<sup>458</sup> It is clear, however, that this trend took longer to manifest itself in Lakeland, as it only really began to appear after 1945. Such examples also highlight that local young people were able to experience modern forms of leisure culture within their own villages. Whilst not posing a total threat to their leisure identities and sense of place, such developments did reflect how, in the post-war period, young people in Lakeland were increasingly exposed to different elements of popular culture within village spaces. The next part of the discussion will demonstrate how other community events in Lakeland, which were based on traditional elements of local leisure culture, were in fact bolstered by the introduction of modern technology.

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<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> J. Burchardt, ‘Reconstructing the Rural Community: Village Halls and the National Council of Social Service, 1919 to 1939’, *Rural History*, 10 (1999), p. 211.

## Sports shows and Galas<sup>459</sup>

Jeff Hill is one of a number of academics who have highlighted the interplay between sporting events, identity and a sense of community.<sup>460</sup> Mike Huggins shed light on the connection within the ‘traditional’ Lakeland sport of wrestling and a localized identity.<sup>461</sup> Little has been written, however, about the way in which both a sense of place and young people’s connection to the Lakeland region were constructed through these events. The following and final part of the discussion in this chapter, therefore, considers this theme in relation to the large annual sporting events held in Lakeland between 1930 and the early 1950s. This discussion is contextualized by reference to how localized narratives of sporting events and identity were also visible nationally during the same period. As with other community events held locally, young people were involved in a variety of ways in sports shows and galas. This discussion extends the themes addressed in the preceding parts of the chapter, particularly in relation to the growing consciousness of outsiders at such occasions. Consideration is given to how sports shows and celebrations were represented in the local press and contributed to the construction of particular kinds of local identity, something which has also been addressed by sports historians.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> This discussion has been placed in this chapter rather than Chapter Four, which is devoted to sports and outdoor pursuits, as these shows were large, annually held community events, and it is the development and nature of the event itself, with which this discussion is concerned. Analysis of specific sports which featured on the programmes of these events is, however, included in the Chapter Four.

<sup>460</sup> J. Hill, ‘Rite of Spring: Cup Finals and Community in the North of England’, in J. Hill & J. Williams (eds.), Sport and Identity in the North of England, (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), Ch. 5; T. Mason, Sport in Britain (London: Faber & Faber, 1988), p. 118; M. Johnes & G. Mellor, ‘The 1953 FA Cup Final: Modernity and Tradition in British Culture’, Contemporary British History, 20, 2 (June, 2006), pp. 263-280.

<sup>461</sup> M. Huggins, ‘The Regular Re-Invention of Sporting Tradition and Identity: Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling c.1800-2001’, The Sports Historian, 21, 1 (2001). pp. 35-53.

<sup>462</sup> Hill, ‘Rite of Spring’; Johnes & Mellor, ‘The 1953 FA Cup Final’.



The analysis begins with the Grasmere sports and other smaller events in the 1930s and then turns to assess other shows and galas which were revived or established during the war or the post-war period. As the earlier discussion of rushbearing suggested, some form of traditional local sports often followed the ceremony, and it is likely that the large sports shows in the region grew from these humble beginnings to become events in their own right, building 'on the traditions of sports at fairs and festivals'<sup>463</sup> By the twentieth century, sports shows were an established part of the Lakeland leisure calendar and between 1930 and the early 1950s, the region was home to a considerable number of shows and galas of various sizes and of differing levels of success.<sup>464</sup> These shows were community events on a much grander scale than those already discussed in this chapter and particularly those held in Ambleside and Grasmere, which often attracted in excess of 10,000 visitors. They provided a competitive space for older localized sports, which had been increasingly replaced during the early decades of the twentieth century by modern, codified sports such as football. Roots in the nineteenth century provided local sports days with a strong link to the past and the region's sporting heritage and traditional Lakeland sports, such as Cumberland and Westmorland style wrestling, fell racing,<sup>465</sup> pole leaping and hound trailing were all represented.<sup>466</sup> There was an absence of commercialized spectator sports such as football and rugby, which had become increasingly popular with the working-class in towns and cities during the inter-war period.<sup>467</sup> As in the case of rushbearing, sports events were another type of community activity which helped shape

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<sup>463</sup> T. Collins, J. Martin & W. Vamplew (eds.), Encyclopaedia of Traditional British Rural Sports (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 140; L. Martin, 'Sport in Cumbria c. 1870-1939', British Society of Sports History Bulletin, 9 (1989), pp. 51-62.

<sup>464</sup> These events were sometimes referred to as the 'Highland Games of the Lake District'. See for instance, The Official Guide to Grasmere (Grasmere Publicity Association, c.1959), p. 9.

<sup>465</sup> Although fell racing was not a sport confined to Lakeland, it was perhaps most closely associated in a competitive sense with Grasmere Sports.

<sup>466</sup> Collins *et al.*, Encyclopaedia of Traditional British Rural Sports, p. 140.

<sup>467</sup> Huggins, 'The Regular Re-invention', p. 37.

a distinct sense of place and presented Lakeland in a particular light to outsiders and as the discussion will show, this became an increasingly important dimension of local sporting events.

Sports shows were another community event where young people's presence was encouraged from an early age and if those living in the village could not afford the entrance fee, gate attendants often let them through the turnstiles for free. Young people also went to these shows as part of a family day out, which reinforced the intergenerational nature of local leisure habits. Young men, however, could also participate actively in the programme of sporting events, which brought them 'identity and solidarity' as well as 'a form of resistance to the cultural dominance of wider British society'.<sup>468</sup> The distinctiveness of these events were further underlined by the intergenerational element apparent amongst the sportsmen, where older contestants participated alongside young men and fathers sometimes competed in the same class as their sons. As Huggins identified, '[t]op wrestlers, unlike other elite sportsmen, could often compete effectively until their late 40s'.<sup>469</sup> This meant that previous generations of competitors (and importantly, winners) could be traced for years within the same family, providing not only a further point of continuity with past, but also a source of pride. The Westmorland Gazette suggested that '[w]hole generations have combined to establish family names in the genealogy of the sports'.<sup>470</sup> As Huggins's study of Cumberland and Westmorland wrestling suggested, 'Wrestling brought prestige, rank and status to participants and up to the Second World War was a means of limited upward mobility in terms of income'.<sup>471</sup> Although other community events in the

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

<sup>470</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 21 August 1937, p. 9.

<sup>471</sup> Huggins, 'The Regular Re-invention', p. 37.

region were largely un-commercialized or had charitable connections, young men who competed (and won) in the programme of sports, could supplement their income with prize money.<sup>472</sup> In addition to this monetary incentive, these traditional sporting events also helped to foster a distinctive sense of place and pride in competitors and spectators alike. As Huggins identified, these community events were not only about projecting a specific identity, they also served a competitive function between villages, celebrating ‘the community itself, displaying its ability to put on a good show... whole villages were sometimes on display, not only to each other, but to people from rival villages, and even to visitors who were increasingly important as the tourist industry expanded.’<sup>473</sup> In the 1930s, this annual event was frequently captured on film and this too, reinforced a particular image of Lakeland to outside groups. In the same way that new developments in technology were a growing presence at local rushbearing festivals, the Grasmere Sports featured in British Pathé newsreels throughout the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>474</sup> These films also helped to reinforce a moral geography of Lakeland as tough, straightforward and closely connected to the local landscape. The commentary which accompanied footage of the 1937 sports for instance, described how ‘nowadays when sports include such dangerous pastimes as shove-ha’penny and pintables, it’s grand to be among the freedom of the Lakeland mountains and watch tough men playing tough games.’<sup>475</sup> The language used in these newsreels, clearly reflects the image of such events in Lakeland (in this case, traditional, strong, and rugged) and also indicates how

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<sup>472</sup> The winner of the Lightweight wrestling competition in 1930 for example, received a ‘Silver teapot and £15’. The runner-up was presented with £6. At Grasmere Sports in 1949, the total prize money stood at £300.

<sup>473</sup> Huggins, *The Victorians and Sport*, p. 93.

<sup>474</sup> The British Pathé online collection holds clips of the Grasmere Sports which are relevant to this study, for the years 1935-39 (inclusive) and 1946. These can be viewed at: <http://www.britishpathe.com/results.php?search=grasmere+sports> (accessed November 2011).

<sup>475</sup> British Pathé online archive: <http://www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=13886> (accessed November 2011).

widely the sports were known by the 1930s.<sup>476</sup> In common with rushbearing, local people were conscious of the way their region was being projected to a broader public, indicated by the presence of a cameraman at the sports. Reflecting the coverage of rushbearing in the press, this localized community event was used to contrast the urban ‘sports’ of ‘shove-ha’penny and pintables’, with the tough, outdoor activities pursued by the ‘dalesmen’. Descriptions of sports which appeared in the press and on film, often referred to the region’s distinctive landscape as a ‘stunning’ or ‘beautiful’ setting for the sports and provided further contrast between the annual sports in Lakeland and a spectator sport such as football match held in a town or city.

Grasmere Sports in particular received more press coverage than other events of a similar nature in the region, largely because of their royal patronage. From the 1870s, the local gentry, especially the ‘famous Yellow Earl, Lord Lonsdale’, supported the event.<sup>477</sup> As Collins *et al.* suggested, ‘in inviting Northern dignitaries, politicians, Bishops, and even Royalty, to the Sports, [Lonsdale] had much to do with their success around the turn of the twentieth century.’<sup>478</sup> His support continued to popularize Grasmere sports in the inter-war years, when he regularly brought a ‘distinguished house party’ with him.<sup>479</sup> In 1930, the sports were referred to as ‘Royal Grasmere’ due to a visit by Princess Mary.<sup>480</sup> In the same way that the presence of the wealthy local elite at large dances held in 1930s Lakeland resulted in visible class distinctions, the

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<sup>476</sup> Huggins identified Grasmere sports as receiving coverage in The Times from the 1890s. This ‘world-renowned’ reputation continued into the post-war period when, for example, the BBC published a short piece on ‘The Unique Charm of Lakeland Sports’ in 1949, London Calling, 18 August 1949, p. 11. Such descriptions of sporting activity also played to a particular type of northern identity more generally, see Russell, Looking North, pp. 240-262.

<sup>477</sup> Huggins, ‘The Regular Re-Invention’, pp. 47-8. His presence was in addition to other wealthy local families, such as the Sandy and Machell families.

<sup>478</sup> Collins *et al.*, Encyclopaedia of Traditional British Rural Sports

<sup>479</sup> The Official Guide to Grasmere, p. 10.

<sup>480</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 23 August 1930.

same was true of the Grasmere Sports, despite their ostensibly inclusive atmosphere.

One woman interviewed by AOHG recalled of the sports in the 1930s,

They had the ordinary stand, they had the members' stand and they had Lord Lonsdale's stand and my uncle that lived next door, he used to always be on the members' stand... Lord Lonsdale, he used to bring all sorts of people. I remember when he brought Princess Mary... and there used to be all sorts of titled people and that he used to bring in. He used to bring his own tents where they had champagne lunches, you know, with all his butlers and whatever, all in their fancy dress and their knee breeches and things and all these yellow cars, you know. He was a right show-off you know, a big cigar and a big buttonhole but yes, I suppose he did quite a lot of good to the sports... [b]ut he had his own stand.<sup>481</sup>

In contrast to the rather grand refreshments available to wealthy patrons at the sports, this young woman provided her uncle with a homemade packed-lunch. As this excerpt demonstrates, Lord Lonsdale's wealth (and difference) was denoted to local people through his transport, clothing, food and the presence of servants. The separation of the spaces occupied by the different classes within the sports arena (in this case the various stands) was something on which this respondent dwelt on in recalling the event. This contradicts the image portrayed in the Westmorland Gazette, which asserted that Grasmere sports had 'always been democratic –not in the narrow, political sense of the word, because the sports rise above party politics. Dukes have shouldered company with drivers, duchesses with dairymaids, peers with ploughboys, bishops with builders' labourers –on the common ground of sport'.<sup>482</sup> How adults recalled the events, indicates their awareness of class distinctions in their youth which were carried with them into later life. This also reveals the role of the local press in helping to create a particular image of such events which were, it claimed, not only intergenerational but also bridged class distinctions. Although local people of all classes attended some of

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<sup>481</sup> Respondent GN, born 1914.

<sup>482</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 20 July 1946, p. 3.

the same leisure activities and events in Lakeland villages between 1930 and the early 1950s, it is clear that even within a sports field, spaces within these events were negotiated in a similar way to the dance floors of village venues, in order to maintain existing social hierarchies.

In Langdale, the annual sports ‘gala’ was also a high point in the leisure calendar. This event was far smaller and more localized than the Grasmere Sports, although the resident organizers in this remote valley nevertheless attempted to endow the event with a similar sense of occasion. In the early 1930s for example, the ‘village and approaches to the field were bedecked with flags and bunting, and the panorama from the sports view was greatly appreciated by the large number of visitors.’<sup>483</sup> These decorations provided a visual spectacle for locals and visitors alike. The event again exemplified the intergenerational nature of Lakeland leisure and the parade, which included residents of all ages, was something of an ‘opening ceremony’ for the gala. Emphasis here was also placed on traditional sports.<sup>484</sup> Although the gala ended in 1939 due to the outbreak of war (and was not revived until the 1970s), it too played a smaller part in strengthening local identity.

Wartime in Lakeland brought setbacks and disruption to the organization of community events; in Grasmere, the event was suspended for the duration of the conflict. This was in large part due to the call up to the armed forces of many men who annually competed at this event. A further setback came when the wooden grandstand was requisitioned by the army. Unlike the organization of rushbearing, which was sustained during the war due to the involvement of evacuee children, women played

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<sup>483</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 06 June 1931, p. 11.

<sup>484</sup> Respondent X, born 1922.

only a minor role in the sports, so it is perhaps unsurprising, that this male-dominated activity was unable to continue under wartime conditions. By contrast, the sports in Ambleside, which had not been held since the late 1890s, were revived during the war by the local Home Guard, as one of the AOHG respondents recalled:

the revival of the Sports which started in about 1944... with the old Home Guard as it was and they wished to revive the Sports so it was held somewhere up at the base of Kirkstone in one of... the field[s] up there. Cornholme field actually is the name of the field where it was held and then at Rydal farm, I think... with the permission of the Rydal Estates which it belongs to and Squire le Fleming was very interested in Sports that it started it there, as I say the Victory Sports in 1946. I think the entry was 2 and 6 pence in those days.<sup>485</sup>

The revival of these community sports began quite informally, organized by a few men, in a field owned by the local gentry. The event gathered momentum and in 1946 was temporarily re-named the ‘Victory Sports’, in-keeping with the celebratory atmosphere which followed VE Day. Although community events such as this were often used as a way of highlighting local distinctiveness, wartime allowed external groups to participate in the survival (and revival) of traditional localized events, as a way of reinforcing a sense of community which was also an important part of wartime propaganda.

The years after 1945 saw a further revival of community events discontinued under wartime conditions and a number of reports appeared in the local press, indicating that both Ambleside and Grasmere hoped to re-establish their respective events on a permanent basis.<sup>486</sup> Subsequently, the Ambleside sports were officially revived and a committee was formed to organize and run the event on an annual basis. In 1949, Cumberland and Westmorland-style wrestling was re-introduced. In subsequent years, visitors to the sports were not confined to people from the Lakeland region, as ‘coach

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<sup>485</sup> Respondent GH1, born 1925.

<sup>486</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 26 January 1946; 02 February 1946, p. 5.

parties from as far away as Barnsley, Newcastle and Liverpool’ began to visit local sports shows. Total attendance for Grasmere sports in 1953, was estimated at 14,000.<sup>487</sup> This indicates a growth in domestic tourism to Lakeland in the post-war period. The need to display ‘a good show’ to their audience was true of both the Grasmere and Ambleside sports shows and a notable development after the war, was the increased importance placed on the visual representation of the sports (mirrored at the rushbearing). The formerly colourful scene which the wrestling ring had offered during the 1930s, was absent, as the effect of sustained rationing meant that ‘the events lacked colour’, and there was ‘a deplorable shortage of “tights,” and consequently colour, amongst the wrestlers, due largely to coupon and material austerity.’<sup>488</sup> These costumes were a relatively recent ‘invention’, introduced to Grasmere in the nineteenth century, prompted by the recognition of the ‘better visual impact this made on spectators’.<sup>489</sup>

As well as attracting spectators from across the country these large, day-long sports events also brought communities together. AOHG respondents recalled ex-residents who returned from other areas of the country to catch up with those left behind:

the first Grasmere Sports after the [Second World] war... my uncle... he came back and we all met up at Grasmere Sports because that’s what it used to be – it used to be all the people that had moved out of Grasmere always came back for the Grasmere Sports day and families got together, it was like a big family gathering. Our family always came back for Grasmere Sports day<sup>490</sup>

This sporting event was clearly an opportunity for Lakeland residents to socialize and importantly, to maintain connections with friends and family who lived outside the

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<sup>487</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 22 August 1953, p. 7.

<sup>488</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 21 August 1948, p. 5.

<sup>489</sup> Huggins, ‘The Regular Re-Invention’, p. 49.

<sup>490</sup> Respondent HU, born 1934.



region. The above example also indicates that these were intergenerational occasions, young workers often visiting the sports as part of a family afternoon out and competitions between fathers and sons remained a feature of the sports.<sup>491</sup> Local people in their teens and early twenties regularly attended the growing range of shows held in the region after the war and the numbers of competitors also increased during this period.<sup>492</sup>

There was a further competitive element between different shows themselves and a degree of rivalry existed between the Grasmere and Ambleside events, although this appears to have largely come from Ambleside, as the ‘junior’ of the two shows. Perhaps as the secondary, younger event, Ambleside sports felt a greater need to provide novelty elements to the proceedings and therefore introduced a ‘Sports Queen’ competition, the results of which were announced in the days leading up to the event itself. Notwithstanding some of the more modern elements which were introduced to such events during the years after 1945, it is evident that local and regional identity continued to play a central role in the leisure experiences of young workers in Lakeland, something also identified by Adrian Horn.<sup>493</sup> In the post-war years, traditional sporting events in the region continued to act as a focal point for local communities and young workers to assert their distinctiveness, although the presence of visitors increasingly influenced the self-consciousness of the spectacle presented to external groups.

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<sup>491</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, ‘Father and Sons in Middleweight Classes’, 25 August 1951, p. 7.

<sup>492</sup> For example, shows and galas were either revived or established in Troutbeck, Ullswater, Keswick and Kendal in the years immediately following 1945. These community events provided many competitors with a ‘warm-up’ to Grasmere Sports, which maintained its position as the region’s premier sporting occasion of this nature.

<sup>493</sup> A. Horn, *Juke Box Britain: Americanisation and Youth Culture 1945-1960* (Manchester: MUP, 2009), pp. 186-194.

## Conclusion

Walton and Marshall surmised that in the years preceding 1939, ‘there was an increasing tendency [in Lakeland] to display regional cultural self-awareness through the publication of dialect poems, or to portray local traditions and ceremonies which were peculiar to an area.’<sup>494</sup> This self-awareness was clearly visible in the community events examined in this chapter. Annual gatherings in Lakeland were important aspects of the region’s leisure calendar and helped to maintain community ties. Young people were often integral to the survival of occasions which helped to create a sense of place from an early age. By celebrating the past in their leisure choices, local communities could suspend the influence of mass public culture and concentrate on what made them distinctive.<sup>495</sup> In Lakeland, observing distinctiveness during an age of increasing homogenization in leisure was a clear theme in the leisure experiences of young people. Although Murfin argued that events such as rushbearing became more child-focused during the 1930s, it is evident from this study that ‘high days and holidays’ remained important to those in their teens, as well as older generations throughout this decade, where young people continued to play a central role in these events. Their participation, however, was always supervised by parents, relatives or other adult authority figures, with the result that they were offered no distinct leisure space of their own. Community events instead concentrated on providing a space for local communities more generally and this helped to maintain a sense of place identity and belonging, which centred on a shared past. The commemoration of these events in art, poetry and song added to a sense of ownership in local communities and the ‘specialness’ of these events remained with the interviewees into old age. In wartime, the involvement of external groups

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<sup>494</sup> Walton & Marshall, *The Lake Counties*, p. 16.

<sup>495</sup> Porter, ‘The Bauer County Fair’, p. 141.

(somewhat ironically), ensured the survival of localized traditions into the post-war period. These events were strengthened through their active participation and as spectators, which facilitated 'image building' and encouraged 'the creation of regional identity' for outside audiences, as well as locals.<sup>496</sup> After the war, changes in rushbearing, such as the reduced role of young people seemed at least partially attributable to the presence of tourists in the region, who demanded that 'the culture as well as the scenery of the lakes be made available, suitably embellished where necessary, for the entertainment of visitors.'<sup>497</sup> From the early 1930s, rushbearing, dialect plays and sports shows were capable of attracting considerable audiences from outside the region, as well as the attention of wider groups, through newsreels and the national press. Formerly inward-looking events in the region became increasingly concerned with how external groups viewed them. This was encouraged by the growing use of technological equipment to document the region on film. Culturally threatening elements of popular culture (such as the cinema) were deemed acceptable through their promotion of local traditions and a sense of place to wider audiences. Chapter Four moves on to consider sports which featured on the programmes of large events at Grasmere and Ambleside, as well as those that took place in a more informal, everyday setting.

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<sup>496</sup> R. Bachleitner & A.H. Zins, 'Cultural Tourism in Rural Communities: The Residents' Perspective', Journal of Business Research, 44, 3 (March 1999), p. 207.

<sup>497</sup> Murfin, The Lake Counties, p. 106.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Sports and Outdoor Pursuits**

When historians of youth and leisure have examined leisure activities specifically located in the countryside (such as rambling or hiking) they have chosen to analyse the experiences of people living in towns and cities who travelled to these locations. This oversight may have stemmed from the preoccupation of ruralist writers of the 1930s and 1940s with documenting and criticizing how young urban workers used the countryside for leisure.<sup>498</sup> Even historians who have examined rural pursuits, such as Jeremy Burchardt, suggest that there is little ‘which is specifically rural... about playing football on a village football pitch. Such activities have little significance in terms of understanding the evolution of attitudes to the countryside in the second half of the twentieth century.’<sup>499</sup> This chapter, however, proposes that if we turn our attention to attitudes *within* the countryside, rather than *towards* it, it is possible to expose the ways in which rural young people constructed their leisure identities, even within seemingly ‘un-rural’, codified sports such as football. The discussion which follows, therefore, suggests that even in ‘modern’ sports, older patterns of leisure evident in the region still provided the basic framework for young worker’s experiences. The intergenerational aspect of their leisure in Lakeland, for instance, was apparent in sports such as bowls, fishing and tennis. The largely un-commercialized nature of leisure in the region was also predominant in many outdoors activities, where young people often negotiated cost restrictions to suit their more limited spending power. The chapter draws out the links

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<sup>498</sup> C.E.M. Joad, A Charter For Ramblers, (London: Hutchinson, 1934); H.V. Morton, In Search of England (London: Methuen, 1934); J.B. Priestley, English Journey (London: 1934).

<sup>499</sup> J. Burchardt, Paradise Lost: Rural Idyll and Social Change Since 1800 (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p. 178.

between sports and a sense of place which were visible in regionally distinctive sports, such as wrestling and fell running, as well as team sports. In outdoor activities which made use of the region's landscape, such as walking, a strong sense of connection was apparent, which revolved around the straightforward nature of such activities and the imagined 'ownership' of such practices. This can be seen as a response to the increasing commercialization of formerly simplistic outdoor activities such as rambling and hiking in the inter-war years.

Lakeland enjoyed a varied sports and outdoor pursuits culture throughout the 1930s. Ambleside for example, boasted a golf club, various sports teams including football, rugby, and cricket clubs, and fishing was also popular locally. Grasmere had its own set of tennis courts (although during the war, they fell into a state of disrepair), a bowling green, a village football team and cricket club, and was also home to displays of traditional Lakeland sports at the annual Grasmere Sports show. There were healthy inter-village leagues across the region throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The distance of many Lakeland villages from towns and cities with national league teams, meant that at least before 1939, sports such as football differed to an extent from those in urban areas, where local amateur games remained the predominant experience. Unsurprisingly, many of the sports and outdoor activities available in the region were connected to natural water sources. AOHG interviewees recalled enjoying water-based sports such as boating, swimming, fishing and even ice-skating on the frozen water in winter. Indeed, the sports and outdoor pursuits enjoyed by the region's young people were very much seasonal in nature. Yet this gave them regular access to a variety of sporting activities, according to the time of year. The geography of Lakeland with its natural resources, such as hills and lakes, allowed young people unparalleled access to outdoor

activities in comparison to their urban counterparts. This is one of the few examples in youth leisure during the 1930s and 1940s where rural youth enjoyed better ‘facilities’, in the form of the surrounding countryside, than those living in urban areas and it is to the outdoor pursuits which used these resources that the discussion now turns.

### Walking, Hiking and Climbing

In 1934, Cyril Joad noted how the ‘eyes of the young people of this generation have been opened’, to the activity of rambling, particularly in the north of England.<sup>500</sup> He described the ‘crowds’ of young ramblers at Manchester’s Central railway station on a Sunday morning, ‘complete with rucksacks, shorts, and hob-nailed boots, waiting for the early trains’ to the moors of the Peak District. The growing popularity of rambling among the working-class in the inter-war years politicized the issue of access to the countryside. In April 1932, young workers had travelled to Kinder Scout in Derbyshire and demanded a ‘right to roam’ as a protest against wealthy private landowners, who sought to protect their property from walkers. The rights of those using the countryside as a leisure space became highly contentious in the years which followed and the Peak District was eventually designated England’s first National Park in 1951, shortly followed by the Lake District. This consolidated Lakeland’s place (as part of the Lake District National Park) as a tourist destination.<sup>501</sup> Accordingly, much of the existing historical work on walking and climbing has concentrated on the way in which the countryside was used by those living in towns and cities for leisure, with the result that the relationship between country dwellers and the landscape has been largely

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<sup>500</sup> Joad, *A Charter For Ramblers*, p. 12.

<sup>501</sup> D. Russell, *Looking North: Northern England and the National Imagination* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 54.

overlooked.<sup>502</sup> In contrast, this thesis suggests that examining how young countrymen and women experienced the local landscape in their leisure time, reveals wider insights into popular culture at a national level, as well as attitudes to the countryside and tensions between urban visitors and rural communities.

Oral evidence indicates that walking and climbing remained a minority activity for young workers in Lakeland throughout the period but that a strong connection to the region's landscape was instilled or strengthened in those who engaged in this pastime. Indeed, young workers in the region more commonly walked out of necessity to and from leisure venues, for dances, socials or club meetings. This too, involved spending prolonged periods of time in the local countryside, if only as a way of getting 'from A to B'. Both types of walking helped to reinforce a sense of place and belonging among young workers in Lakeland. This included characterizing themselves as 'hardy' or physically fit, in regard to the distances they covered. As with much of the leisure young workers engaged in throughout the period, walking and climbing were more central to an expression of a localized place identity than any sense of connection to the 'nation'.<sup>503</sup>

Young workers in Lakeland, who walked or climbed on the fells as specific leisure activities, did so with enthusiasm and often escaped the costs which could

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<sup>502</sup> D. Prynne, 'The Clarion Clubs, Rambling and the Holiday Associations in Britain Since the 1890s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 11 (1976), pp. 65-77; R. Holt, 'Hikers and Ramblers', *International Journal of Sports History*, (May 1987); B. Rothman, *1932 Kinder Trespass: Personal View of The Kinder Scout Mass Trespass* (Timperley: Willow, 1982); Walker, H., 'The Popularisation of the Outdoor Movement 1900-1940', *British Journal of Sports History*, 2, 2 (September 1985), pp. 140-153; H. Taylor, *A Claim on the Countryside: A History of the British Outdoor Movement* (Keele: Keele University Press, 1997); Burchardt, *Paradise Lost*, Ch. 10; B. Snape, 'The Co-operative Holidays Association and the Cultural Formation of Countryside Leisure Practice', *Leisure Studies*, 23, 2 (April 2004), pp. 143-158.

<sup>503</sup> D. Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), Ch. 2. Precisely because so much of the extant work on walking and the use of outdoor spaces for leisure has focussed on urban experiences, the links to national identity have been over-stated in regard to rural young people and how they draw upon the countryside in the construction of their identity.

prohibit their urban contemporaries from participating in similar activities. Langhamer found that the expense of travelling to the countryside was limiting for young townspeople and ‘few of [her] working-class respondents had the spends to devote such an undertaking’.<sup>504</sup> For the young women she interviewed, walking trips ‘were enjoyed within stricter geographical parameters directed by the cost of travel.’<sup>505</sup> This was confirmed by the Social Survey of Merseyside, which concluded that ‘among the poorer workers the institution of rambling in the country is virtually unknown.’<sup>506</sup> Travel to the countryside was a cost easily avoided by even the poorest of walkers in Lakeland and allowed those with an interest in walking and climbing, greater access to these activities in their leisure time, although some of these young people chose to cycle to the more remote areas of the region before embarking on a walk or climb. The expenditure associated with these activities was also kept to a minimum by young walkers in regard to clothing and descriptions by AOHG respondents contrasted with the urban Rambler’s ‘uniform’ of shorts, rucksacks and hob-nailed boots, described by Joad, or images of more ‘professionally’ kitted out (often middle-class) urban walkers.<sup>507</sup> This distinction was often highlighted in the oral history testimony and appears to have been a source of tension between rural Lakeland communities and urban incomers during this period. The Westmorland Gazette, for instance, mocked the ‘peculiar’ dress of urban tourists in a column regarding the ‘Easter Invasion’ of day-trippers to Lakeland in 1930.<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>504</sup> Langhamer, Women’s Leisure in England, p. 77. Rowntree’s survey of York produced similar findings, where only more well-off members of the working-class could afford weekly rambles in Yorkshire countryside, B.S. Rowntree, Poverty and Progress: A Second Social Survey of York (London: Longmans, 1941), p. 397.

<sup>505</sup> C. Langhamer, Women’s Leisure in England 1920-60 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 77.

<sup>506</sup> D. Caradog Jones (ed.), The Social Survey of Merseyside Vol. 3 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1934), p. 295. Quoted in Langhamer, Women’s Leisure in England, p. 77.

<sup>507</sup> Joad, A Charter For Ramblers, p. 99; 167; R. Holt, Sport and the British: A Modern History, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990; 1992), p. 200.

<sup>508</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 26 April 1930, p. 9.



The lampooning of urban (and largely middle-class) incomers kitted out in specialist (and expensive) clothing or equipment, continued as a theme in the local press throughout the 1930s and 1940s. This attitude was further demonstrated by the language which AOHG interviewees repeatedly used to describe their walking experiences. Their recollections suggest the need to convey a sense of authenticity to their experiences, which was perceived as lacking from those of urban walkers. By stressing both the immediacy of their connection to the landscape, walking straight out onto the fells from their villages, and their simpler approach, hiking or climbing in ‘everyday’ clothes, informants took ‘ownership’ of both the land and the activities which took place there, ‘Oh we didn't bother about kit in those days, just ordinary boots that a lad, that we went to school in.’<sup>509</sup> This also allowed respondents to distance themselves from the urban experience of outdoor pursuits, which were ‘mediated’ by the consumer culture that surrounded their use of the countryside for leisure.<sup>510</sup> When reminiscing about their experiences, AOHG respondents referred to their use of second hand, ‘make do’ clothing, which enabled them to represent their experiences as simple and uncomplicated,

...unless you were well off there was none of this fancy clothing which you have now. You climbed in old clothes. I had one or two friends, and I had brothers too, who saved their old Plus Fours and flannels for me to wear climbing... You had a rope, you'd a pair of plimsolls, galoshes, they cost 1/11d... And the only thing you needed was an old rucksack or anything like that, stuff whatever you had in your pocket and off you went<sup>511</sup>

This suggests negative attitudes towards the commercialization of ‘simple’ leisure pursuits and their potential erosion through urban consumerism.<sup>512</sup> Such feelings were

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<sup>509</sup> Respondent HF, born 1913.

<sup>510</sup> Burchardt, *Paradise Lost*, p. 125.

<sup>511</sup> Respondent AV1, born 1913.

<sup>512</sup> It is important to remember that this was happening at the same time as the mass commercialization and homogenization of the leisure industry in England, to the detriment of regionalized leisure culture;

understandable. After all, as town dwellers increasingly explored the countryside in the inter-war years in search of a ‘rural idyll’, they prompted the commercialization of walking and climbing, via a new consumer market for clothing, equipment and guide books. In the same way that visitors to Lakeland increasingly sought to capture the region’s culture on film, walkers also introduced technology to outdoor pursuits, in order to provide a personalized memory to take home with them.<sup>513</sup>

Tensions were also evident between different classes and generations of local walkers. When one AOHG informant and his friends began climbing in the inter-war years, they were ‘looked on with great suspicion when we came on the scene’ because, he surmised, ‘we were youngsters’.<sup>514</sup> It seems likely that the cause for such suspicion was not only the age of the young men but also their social class, which would have been evident from their second hand clothing; concerns which echoed broader anxieties about groups of working-class youths ‘hanging around’ on the streets in urban areas.<sup>515</sup> Nevertheless, these young men in Lakeland persevered with their hobby. Some devoted considerable amounts of their spare time to climbing and walking. Another informant recalled how at weekends and during holidays, as ‘really keen walkers’, he and four or five of his friends frequently used to go off ‘on our bikes and do a circle, probably up to 20 miles and then cycle back home again.’<sup>516</sup> Evidently, bicycle ownership was often the key to more ambitious trips around the region and some young male walkers and climbers developed the practice of cycling through the countryside to the start of a

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something that did not (as previous chapters of this thesis have demonstrated), go un-noticed by local communities in Lakeland.

<sup>513</sup> See D.A. Brown, ‘The Modern Romance of Mountaineering: Photography, Aesthetics and Embodiment’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24, 1 (2007), pp. 1-34; J. Watts, ‘Picture Taking in Paradise: Los Angeles and the Creation of Regional Identity, 1880-1920’, in V.R. Schwartz & M. Przyblyski (eds.), *The Nineteenth Century Visual Culture Reader* (London: Routledge, 2004), Ch. 25

<sup>514</sup> Respondent AV1, born 1913.

<sup>515</sup> A. Warren, ‘Sport, Youth and Gender in Britain, 1880-1940’, in J.C. Binfield & J. Stevenson (eds.), *Sport, Culture and Politics* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983), p. 49.

<sup>516</sup> Respondent HF, born 1913.

particular walk or mountain, which would otherwise have taken several hours to reach on foot. For young urban workers, the commercialism of Sunday-morning trains, run especially for young walkers, also offered opportunities to explore the countryside and further afield.<sup>517</sup> In the same way, the mass consumerism of inter-war bicycle ownership, allowed young workers in Lakeland to indulge in simple pastimes which resonated with their identities as rural youth.<sup>518</sup> AOHG respondents who were avid walkers, climbers or hikers across the period framed their recollections in relation to problems or campaigns regarding access to the region's landscape, in the same way as their urban contemporaries. Their overriding concern, however, was less about improving the access of outsiders to the countryside and more focussed on protecting the rights of those who already lived there. In local communities, it was often suggested that 'what they ought to form was a Society for the Preservation of Local Inhabitants'; an opinion which was also vehemently voiced in the letters pages of the Westmorland Gazette.<sup>519</sup>

Many of the Ambleside interviewees took pride in the distances they covered on foot, when they described walking in their youth. This was particularly true of those who regularly rambled or hiked for pleasure but also applied to those who tended only to walk for more practical purposes, in order to attend a specific social occasion, such as a dance for instance, which as Fowler suggested, was also a sign of financial hardships

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<sup>517</sup> Burchardt, Paradise Lost, p. 125.

<sup>518</sup> M. Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being a Rural Youth: Inclusive and Exclusive Lifestyles', Social and Cultural Geography, 9, 1 (2008), p. 14.

<sup>519</sup> Respondent HT, born 1923. For debate in the local press, see the following in the Westmorland Gazette, 26 February 1949, p. 4; 05 March 1949, p. 4; 26 March 1949, pp. 4-5.

amongst young workers in rural areas.<sup>520</sup> One woman described how she and four or five friends regularly walked in their spare time:

Well, we used to go up Loughrigg and walk over the tops, and you know

*Mostly walk?*

Yes. Oh we always walked. We'd no other means of transport you know, we used to walk for miles. Yes. We'd walk to Langdale and go up the Pikes and then walk back again, never thought a thing about it, of course we were young.<sup>521</sup>

For this woman and her friends, walking served a dual function, as their only means of transport and as a pleasurable activity in their spare time, perhaps as a result of little money available for leisure activities. A male respondent also recalled that he 'used to do quite a lot of walking and that sort of thing at weekends, holiday times', with a group of male friends.<sup>522</sup>

Other young people joined informal mixed-sex local climbing groups. Although in the 1930s, it was a rather 'unusual' practice for women to actually lead a climb, one AOHG respondent described with some pride, that she was 'the first lady to lead what was then the hardest climb in the Lake District - Central Buttress on Scafell.'

Notwithstanding this leadership role, when the group 'stopped at a pub on the way home to have a glass of beer', she was not permitted inside the pub, but 'had to sit outside'.<sup>523</sup> When out on the fells, gender distinctions were overlooked by the young male climbers, yet traditional roles were resumed once the group returned to the village. These roles were also reinforced through the clothing women were expected to wear for outdoor activities, 'people looked at you in those days if you were walking round in

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<sup>520</sup> D. Fowler, *Youth Culture in Modern Britain, c.1920-1970* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 87.

<sup>521</sup> Respondent AB, born 1914.

<sup>522</sup> Respondent HF, born 1913.

<sup>523</sup> Respondent ET, born 1911.

shorts. I mean - well you wouldn't do it; I mean you just wouldn't do it.<sup>524</sup> Yet such restrictions could be negotiated; this young woman, along with some of her female contemporaries, often set off for a walk or cycle wearing skirts. Once they were a safe distance away from their homes, however, they would take them off to reveal more suitable clothing, such as shorts or trousers, underneath. For these young women, then, participating in outdoor activities could offer temporary freedom from the social conventions of local villages.

In wartime, walking was used as a way for young couples to spend time alone together, with the quiet of the fells providing an escape from the realities of war. One woman recalled how she and her boyfriend 'always spent his leaves walking because he was [stationed] down in Lincolnshire which was very flat', a reminder that for some of those who grew up in the region, the visual contrast with Lakeland and other rural areas of the English countryside was considerable.<sup>525</sup> A number of interviewees expressed, in rather romantic terms, the way in which the distinctive skyline drew them back to Lakeland whenever possible. This evidence also suggests the important purpose which the region's landscape served, in allowing young people something of a release from the highly supervised atmosphere of local villages. It was on the surrounding fells that groups of friends or courting couples were able to spend leisure time together away from the 'parental gaze'. In the post-war period, groups of local young people would rise early on a Sunday morning, in order to watch the sun come up from a particular hill or mountainside. Such groups of young workers, usually in their late teens and early twenties, were rather a small minority of the youth population of Lakeland as a whole. Nevertheless, these practices signaled changes in the leisure habits of young workers in

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<sup>524</sup> Respondent ET, born 1911.

<sup>525</sup> Respondent GN, born 1914.

a number of ways. By the late 1940s, walking and climbing groups were often composed of both young men and young women, whose activities were unsupervised by adults. In this sense they were to an extent able to control this aspect of their leisure. It also suggests that by the latter stages of the period, young women were being afforded greater freedom to explore the local countryside, away from the controlled atmosphere of the village.

### Cycling

Cycling was another gendered activity through which young workers in Lakeland could acquire a level of freedom. Richard Holt ascribed to the bicycle ‘a special place in the history of private life’.<sup>526</sup> Although in Lakeland, as elsewhere, comments by AOHG respondents such as ‘all the lads used push bikes’, reflected that ownership was more common among boys than among girls in the 1930s, and did not begin to rise among their female counterparts until after the Second World War.<sup>527</sup> Ownership appears to have been low among their female counterparts before the Second World War. The growth in personal transport during the inter-war years opened up new leisure opportunities to attend dances further away than normally have been possible on foot and venture further afield in exploring the region’s countryside. Despite the initial financial outlay to purchase a bike, cycling was a relatively cheap hobby. Few informants discussed purchasing a bike themselves, the most likely reason being that by

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<sup>526</sup> R. Holt, Sport and the British: A Modern History (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 198. For further discussion of the popularity of cycling, see D. Rubinstein, ‘Cycling in the 1890s’, Victorian Studies, 21, 1 (Autumn 1977), pp. 47-72; J. Mackenzie (ed.), Cycling (1981); H. Walker, ‘The Popularisation of the Outdoor Movement’; F. Kinsey, ‘Stamina, Speed and Adventure: Australian Women and Competitive Cycling in the 1890s’, The International Journal of the History of Sport, 28, 10 (2011), pp. 1375-1387; C. Simpson, ‘Respectable Identities: New Zealand Nineteenth-Century ‘New Women’ –on Bicycles!’, The International Journal of the History of Sport, 18, 2 (2001), pp. 54-77.

<sup>527</sup> Respondent IG, born 1926.

the 1930s young men often expected one before they left school.<sup>528</sup> Receiving a ‘big bike’ has been described as ‘a rite of passage’ for young working-class men during the 1930s, although what they were given was not necessarily the most glamorous or pristine of items, ‘then it were all handed down and you accepted that, like... I would be about thirteen before I ever got a bike and even that had no damn seat on it.’<sup>529</sup> For young men who had not received a bike by the time they left school at 14, a visit to the local tip often allowed them to piece one together from scrap parts. The extent to which young people or their parents used credit to buy bicycles remains unclear. One man recalled that his mother dipped into the money allocated for living expenses to buy him a bike. No AOHG respondent discussed the use of hire purchase as a means of acquiring a bicycle or any other leisure commodity.<sup>530</sup>

As the owner of a bike (with or without a seat), young workers were able to explore new parts of the region’s countryside. Some used to cycle as far as the west coast of Cumberland for a daytrip and others found that they now had time to visit the nearest cinema when they had only a few hours to spare. The freedom cycling afforded young people did not go un-noticed by local adults. One woman interviewed by Murfin, for example, recalled that she was denied a bike as a teen in the 1930s because it was thought that ‘it would take me too far from home.’<sup>531</sup> Indeed, oral history testimony also supports the idea that young women were often denied this pleasure enjoyed by their brothers and it was not until the late 1930s that bicycle ownership

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<sup>528</sup> R. Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, (Frome: Pelican, 1958; 1959), p. 273.

<sup>529</sup> Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 198. Respondent JM, born 1925.

<sup>530</sup> Although hire purchase was an increasingly affordable way for the working-class to participate in the new consumer culture of the inter-war period. See for example, P. Scott, ‘The Twilight World of Interwar British Hire Purchase’, *Past and Present*, 177, 1 (2002), pp. 195-225. This absence could also indicate an uneven acceptance of hire purchase amongst the working-class, which was still often associated with a lack of respectability, something which could have been particularly pertinent in more conservative rural communities.

<sup>531</sup> L. Murfin, *Popular Leisure in the Lake Counties* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 123.

among young women became more common in Lakeland. The reasons for this remain unclear. Certainly Murfin's study indicated that the freedom associated with bicycle ownership meant it was not always thought suitable for a woman. The tendency for young men to build themselves a bike if their parents were not forthcoming with one could also provide an answer for higher ownership rates among young men in the region. While young men foraged around on local rubbish tips for scrap parts, their sisters engaged in more domesticated activities such as sewing and household chores. Despite these limitations, cycling was an important leisure activity for both young men and women in the region. It allowed young people unsupervised time to socialize with their peers and to mix with the opposite sex. One female interviewee for instance, met her future husband in the mid-1930s, whilst cycling with friends in the Langdale valley. Their subsequent four year courtship was sustained via their bicycles, as they both lived and worked in different parts of Lakeland. Other women enjoyed the novelty of travelling at speed around the local area. One described the pleasure in the physical exercise and freedom which a bicycle provided:

...went to Grange... we went and had a look around at the ponds and the ducks and what have you and we had half an hour or so and we said "Right, come on, let's be getting back" and we came all the way back again to Grasmere. And then at night, we got on the bikes again and we went back to Ambleside pictures and back again. So we did a few miles on push bikes. After going to Grange and back, we went to Ambleside pictures!<sup>532</sup>

This woman acquired her bike in the early 1940s and cycled with a male companion. Ownership of a bicycle played an important part in allowing young people to balance contemporary rhetoric on 'the right use of leisure', exploring the region's countryside and physical exercise, with accessing modern forms of entertainment, such as the cinema.

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<sup>532</sup> Respondent IG, born 1926.



When ownership of bicycles did become more common among young women in the 1940s, young men increasingly looked to motorbikes as personal transport.<sup>533</sup> A minority of AOHG interviewees owned motor bikes during the 1930s but ownership became far more common in the late 1940s, and it is likely that the fuel shortages and social change in wartime stunted this development from growing sooner. Across the country, young working-class men ‘would lovingly strip down and reassemble’ a BSA or AJS ‘in garden sheds or at kerb-sides before taking off for a spin with the girl-friend clinging on’.<sup>534</sup> Young men in Lakeland progressed from piecing together bicycles from odd parts to piecing together their own motorbikes. A respondent who grew up in Ambleside, for example, gradually built one with his brother by going ‘from scrap heap to scrap heap to find bits and pieces till you got one to put together’.<sup>535</sup> Another, who spent his youth in 1940s Rydal, ‘had a funny little ‘put-put’ bike to begin with, a two-stroke thing, I think they were called auto-cycles, weren't they’. He subsequently bought ‘a BSA Bantam and thought I'd hit, you know, the roof of the world.’<sup>536</sup> This was clearly an important acquisition, which allowed him greater opportunities to socialize, despite living in a small village. This man found that as an owner of motorized transport, he could now attend choir practices in Hawkshead one evening a week, as well as church services there on a Sunday morning.<sup>537</sup> He later also joined the Hawkshead amateur dramatic society. In common with a number of the male AOHG respondents who owned motorbikes in the 1930s and 1950s, this young man used his increased mobility to participate in the social life of other local villages, rather than visiting larger towns or cities for leisure. This disinclination to travel to large towns and

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<sup>533</sup> See J. Stevenson, *British Society 1914-45* (London: Penguin, 1984), Ch. 14, for an outline of motor-cycling during the period.

<sup>534</sup> Holt, *Sport and the British*, pp. 198-199.

<sup>535</sup> Respondent FM1, born 1913.

<sup>536</sup> Respondent KI, born 1930.

<sup>537</sup> Hawkshead was approximately seven miles from Rydal village.

cities in their leisure time, may also point to another dimension of border maintenance through which young people's identities were reaffirmed. That is, by remaining within the limits of Lakeland villages, rather than spending time in urban spaces, they created a level of 'stability' which was 'spatially bounded in the countryside' and integral to their sense of belonging.<sup>538</sup> A particular attraction for the young single man, was the chance to meet potential partners from outside the 'limited pool of people available to them in their village'.<sup>539</sup>

Young women's only access to this form of personal transport, however, was to ride pillion with a male driver. Several respondents recalled picking up girlfriends on their motorbikes from other villages around the region in their youth, something which did not always please the parents of these young women. One former 'biker' described how his future mother-in-law 'used to play war about [her daughter] coming with me on the back of this bike'.<sup>540</sup> For parents, anxieties stemmed from two key issues. Firstly, there were the obvious safety concerns, which surrounded riding at speeds of up to 70 mph without any safety helmets but instead, for instance, a 'flat cap' worn by the male driver and 'a headscarf' by his female passenger. Clearly, the speed, power and danger which a motorbike signified, allowed young men to build on a masculine identity of 'hardiness', just as northern upland walkers did. Secondly, the motorbike represented youthful independence and a mobility which allowed courting couples to travel considerable distances unsupervised. At least some of these adult concerns were justified, it would seem, if we return to the informant who picked girls up on his bike:

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<sup>538</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 12; p. 15. See also, J.M. Glass, Shattered Selves: Multiple Personality in a Postmodern World, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993).

<sup>539</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 11.

<sup>540</sup> Respondent HN, male, born 1922.

Well I got out about country side for quite a bit yan [one] way and another, motorbikes, pushbikes, and such like, went here there and everywhere. Picked up a bird here and picked yan [one] up there, and dropped them here and dropped ‘em there.

*Off the back of the bike you mean?*

Aye, sort of. You can say that like. But we eventually met up in Ambleside, and clattered about a bit, and there came a time when it was a case of getting wed! See! You can jump to your own conclusions! So we got wed in February 1934.<sup>541</sup>

Not only did motorbikes create an alternative from the more controlled and ordered leisure environment in Lakeland villages, they also represented ‘progress’ in recreation.<sup>542</sup> Just as bicycles had provided young workers with greater personal mobility, far longer journeys were possible on a motorbike and autobiographical evidence suggests that by the early 1950s, young men were visiting Kendal and even Preston for leisure purposes.<sup>543</sup> This ‘drift’ was likely to have had an unbalancing effect on the social life of local villages (as Chapter Three noted in regard to rushbearing) and marked, on a small scale, a move away from the intergenerational nature of much leisure before this time. The effects of such changes in personal transport during the period should not, however, be overestimated. Analysis of the oral evidence indicates that many of the working-class men who owned motorbikes, in addition to many other young people, continued to spend leisure time in their own villages. It would be reasonable to suggest that the availability of bicycles or motorbikes seemed to supplement existing leisure opportunities but did not (at least until the early 1950s) totally erode earlier patterns of leisure, which continued to centre on the village.

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<sup>541</sup> Respondent DX1, male, born 1910.

<sup>542</sup> Holt, *Sport and the British*, p. 199.

<sup>543</sup> M.R.M. Bolton, *From Clogs and Wellies to Shiny Shoes: A Windermere Lad’s Memories of South Lakeland*, (Kirkby Stephen: Hayloft, 2002), pp. 64-68.

## Fishing

Another outdoor activity popular with young working-class men in Lakeland between the 1930 and the early 1950s, was fishing.<sup>544</sup> As Jeremy Burchardt suggested, natural water sources such as reservoirs or lakes not only served as a water supply but ‘could also be used for fishing, sailing... and other water-related leisure activities.’<sup>545</sup> This was certainly the case in Lakeland, where young men made great use of the region’s natural water resources for fishing during their leisure time. AOHG informants recalled fishing on Lake Windermere during the 1930s, where some engaged in Char fishing, a type of fishing which was particular to the Lake.<sup>546</sup> Fishing was a male-dominated hobby and an outdoor pursuit that did not rely on group or team participation and therefore proved to be a suitable option for young people men who lived in small Lakeland villages or hamlets which lacked a sufficiently large youth population for team games. Some went fishing with a couple of friends; others, in line with the intergenerational leisure trend of Lakeland, accompanied an older (male) relative, such as an uncle or grandfather.

In common with other sports and activities, fishing could also be adapted to suit the modest pockets of local young people. A lack of team mates in his village for other sports, prompted one young man from Rydal to take up the activity. In his early teen years, he and a few friends used ‘a line and a hook and a worm’. Because they had no fishing rods with which to ‘cast out’ their line into the lake, they devised a way of catching Perch with only one 12 foot long piece of line. Another man, who grew up in a large and particularly poor family from Ambleside, suggests the considerable degree

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<sup>544</sup> For discussion of the history of fishing as a leisure activity, see D. Sahrhage & J. Lundbeck, A History of Fishing (Germany: Springer-Verlag, 1992).

<sup>545</sup> Burchardt, Paradise Lost, p. 181.

<sup>546</sup> Char is one of the rarest freshwater fish in Britain and only found in deep, glacial lakes.

of inventiveness that young people demonstrated when there was no money at all for sporting equipment. He described how he and his brothers caught fish in a local river with their bare hands, therefore totally negating the need for a rod or line. On other occasions when he could afford a length of line, he improvised a rod with just 'a stick that we'd cut off and about four or five foot of line with a hook on, no reels or anything on, and you just kind of - you know, the whole family from the young ones to the older ones... but that's where we would learn to catch the fish. And it was quite an exciting do, you see'.<sup>547</sup> As this evidence illustrates, older children taught their younger siblings how to fish; a useful skill which not only filled leisure time with an 'exciting' (and free) activity but undoubtedly also provided a welcome supplement to the diets of larger working-class families. This was a leisure activity in which young and old children could take part, for little or no financial outlay. Poverty also induced this respondent to develop a bare-handed technique, which involved no equipment at all, 'if you had to fish for something to eat, I says, you'd learn how to catch fish like this!'<sup>548</sup> For young people from poorer families, innovation in outdoor leisure activities such as fishing served an important practical purpose which also blurred the line between leisure and work.

Other young men found ways to subsidize this leisure activity with cash earned from capitalizing on both the growth in car ownership and the local tourist trade,

...the most popular pastime was fishing, we used to fish in Rydal for perch and pike and on Pelter Bridge at Rydal... and there used to be a gate on Pelter Bridge and on Saturday and Sunday in the summer all three about my age used to spend most of Saturday and Sunday on the bridge waiting for cars to come and we'd open the gate and we got a penny or tuppence and by two or three

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<sup>547</sup> Respondent DQ, born 1921.

<sup>548</sup> Respondent DQ, born 1921.

hours on the Saturday afternoon and the Sunday afternoon we used to get about three shillings each which we took to Ambleside to spend at Mr Squire's.<sup>549</sup>

By almost extorting adults who passed through their villages and the surrounding areas on a regular basis during the summer months, young men earned enough money to afford basic pieces of fishing *accoutrement*, such as bait and line. This recollection also sheds light on the relations between locals and tourists during this period, for in spite of the un-commercialized nature of young people's leisure in Lakeland, outsiders were considered to be acceptable targets for money making. Further examples of this entrepreneurial attitude towards incomers were evident during the war when, for the young men of Rydal village, fishing took on even more of a business edge, after a school from Liverpool was evacuated to Rydal Hall:

...food was getting a bit scarce, so some-one said "Why don't you take the pike up there [to Rydal Hall]?" We said "They'll never eat them up there, surely?" Anyway, they were pleased to see them... so they had those about once a week, all the local lads trying to catch as many pike as they could to supply Huyton Hill school<sup>550</sup>

Although this respondent did not say whether or not they were paid for supplying the school with Pike, it seems more than probable, given the fact that 'all the local lads' were trying to catch 'as many pike as they could'. If not, it would have at least provided their fishing with an added competitive element. Once again, young men found that through their leisure activities they could earn money from incomers to the region.

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<sup>549</sup> Respondent HS1, born 1925. Mr Squire was the owner of an angling supply shop in Ambleside, where these young men spent a considerable amount of their spare time, examining all the equipment, discussing the pros and cons of different bait with the owner and generally 'hanging around' the shop. This also afforded young men with another free and informal way to spend their spare time.

<sup>550</sup> Respondent HS2, born 1925.

From the late 1940s and into the early 1950s, living near large water sources in an area which catered for tourists, could provide further leisure opportunities for local young men. Numerous boathouses on Lake Windermere hired rowing boats to tourists during the day. At night, one such place on the lake near Waterhead was known not to secure its boats. Young men were permitted to take them out on the lake at night, ‘if we put half a crown with our name on it in an envelope, popped it through the letterbox of the boathouse, their office, you could take a boat out... you could stay out as long as you liked’.<sup>551</sup> Young men from their late teens took boats out on the lake at night, usually done in pairs, for safety reasons. This casual and trusting approach on the part of the boat owners, offered great opportunities for dusk or night-time fishing.

### Swimming and Ice-Skating

Aside from fishing, the region’s natural water resources were also used for other water-based sports, which had a regionally distinctive flavour. Lakeland’s natural amenities meant that rural young people enjoyed superior (and crucially, free) access to swimming pools and ice-rinks to that of young people living in towns and cities. Swimming was an activity popular with both men and women across the country during the inter-war years, over which period 191 new swimming pools were opened across England and Wales.<sup>552</sup> Swimming grew to such an extent in towns and cities that by the mid-1930s,

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<sup>551</sup> Respondent HS2, born 1925.

<sup>552</sup> S.G. Jones, Workers at Play (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), p. 93. For more detailed discussion of the history of swimming, see D. Bowker, ‘Parks and Baths: Sport, Recreation and Municipal Government in Ashton-under-Lyne Between the Wars’, in R. Holt (ed.), Sport and the Working Class in Modern Britain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990); C. Love, A Social History of Swimming in England 1800-1918: Splashing in the Serpentine (London: Routledge, 2007); C. Love, ‘Social Class and the Swimming World: Amateurs and Professionals’, The International Journal of the History of Sport, 24, 5 (2007), pp. 603-619; C. Love, ‘An Overview of the Development of Swimming in England, c.1750–1918’, The International Journal of the History of Sport, 24, 5 (2007), pp. 568-585; C. Love, ‘Holborn, Lambeth and Manchester: Three Case Studies in Municipal Swimming Pool Provision’, The International Journal of the History of Sport, 24, 5 (2007), pp. 630-642; C. Love, ‘Local

Rooff claimed its progress was only hindered by ‘a lack of places to swim.’<sup>553</sup> In Lakeland, swimming was equally popular, although young people chose to use the region’s natural water sources rather than visit commercial baths. Many villages in Lakeland had their own natural water source, which meant that many young swimmers never had to leave their village.<sup>554</sup> Indeed, the only real necessity was some kind of costume for the water, although no AOHG respondents discussed the clothing for swimming or how they acquired their costumes. Given that Lake Windermere alone was over ten miles long, it provided young people from local communities with a distinctive experience which was within easy walking distance of their homes.<sup>555</sup> During the war, some of the young men employed at Short’s Factory, which built ‘Sunderland Flying Boats’, even found opportunities for swimming near to their workplace.<sup>556</sup> The factory was located on the shore of Lake Windermere and young men would ‘swim out to one of the Sunderlands to dive off the main planes into the lake, that was a favourite sport of a lot of us youngsters’.<sup>557</sup> Such recollections not only provide examples of the free water-based activities many local young people enjoyed, they also illustrate that in Lakeland, swimming continued as a predominantly outdoor activity into the 1940s and reinforced the centrality of the region’s landscape to their

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Aquatic Empires: The Municipal Provision of Swimming Pools in England, 1828–1918’, The International Journal of the History of Sport, 24, 5 (2007), pp. 620-629; C. Love, ‘Swimming and Gender in the Victorian World’, The International Journal of the History of Sport, (2007) 24, 5, pp. 586-602; C. Love, ‘Swimming, Service to the Empire and Baden-Powell’s Youth Movements’, The International Journal of the History of Sport, 24, 5 (2007), pp.682-692; J. Wiltse, *Contested Waters: A Social History of Swimming Pools in America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); C. Parker, ‘Swimming: The ‘Ideal’ Sport for Nineteenth-century British Women’, The International Journal of the History of Sport, 27, 4 (2010), pp. 675-689.

<sup>553</sup> M. Rooff, Youth and Leisure: A Survey of Girls’ Organisations in England and Wales (Edinburgh, 1935).

<sup>554</sup> Aside from Lake Windermere, Rydal Water, Grasmere Lake, and numerous other naturally forming pools or ‘tarns’ on the local hills provided young people with places to swim.

<sup>555</sup> The nearest local authority swimming pool in Lakeland was Kendal. As a comparative with rates in towns and cities, Langhamer described how in 1930s Ashton under Lyne, entrance fees to pools ranged from ‘the concessionary rate of one penny to sixpence, depending on age and facilities’, Langhamer, Women’s Leisure, pp. 79-80.

<sup>556</sup> Sunderland Flying Boats were type of aircraft developed for the Royal Air Force in the 1930s and used during the Second World War.

<sup>557</sup> Respondent J, born 1920.



experiences. Aside from the large expanses of water such as Windermere, swimming in tarns and smaller lakes scattered across the region, provided a picturesque setting for water-based sports, in contrast to the rather less visually appealing commercial indoor pools.

Conditions for swimming in the region's lakes, however, could be 'chilly' at best, even in the summer. Memories of swimming in unheated natural pools were framed by respondents to fit in with their strong sense of place, which valorized 'hardiness' as a core element of Lakeland identity, '[we] must have been hardy in those days 'cos the lake was always cold.'<sup>558</sup> Comments such as these, however, are helpful in shedding light on the ways in which people in these rural communities viewed themselves. As the earlier discussion of walking and climbing suggested, young people's sense of place was closely linked to the simple, un-commercialized nature of much of their leisure, together with an emphasis on the self-sufficiency which also comes through in many of their recollections.

Swimming, in common with other sports, revealed class distinctions. Near Waterhead on Lake Windermere, there were bathing huts (one male and one female) which oral testimony suggested were only for use by the more wealthy residents of the region. The less well-off swimmers were provided with 'poles' where they could change and presumably where swimmers could hang their clothes whilst in the water. It is unclear at what age most young people in Lakeland learned to swim. Several AOHG respondents swam in the region's lakes throughout their childhood, yet others were still unable to swim when they reached their early teens. Learning to swim during the 1930s

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<sup>558</sup> Respondent J, male, born 1920.

appears to have been an *ad hoc* affair. From the late 1940s, the Headmaster of Grasmere School took the older children down to the village lake in summer and taught them how to swim; an example which sheds further light on the involvement of outsiders in young people's leisure habits during the post-war period.

Both reports in the local press and oral evidence confirmed that in winter the region's lakes and pools commonly froze over, the most prolonged example of this being the hard winter of 1947. This helped to make ice-skating a popular activity among young workers throughout the period. Many of the AOHG respondents remembered ice-skating in their youth, often from childhood, even into adulthood. Once again, un-commercialized opportunities such as these, allowed local young people to enjoy outdoor activities for free and to transcend many of the financial barriers to leisure that their urban working-class counterparts experienced.<sup>559</sup> The New Survey of London Life and Labour for instance, suggested that the expense of skating prohibited all but the middle and upper classes from indulging in the activity, where indoor commercial rinks catered for this trend.<sup>560</sup> Langhamer highlighted that it was largely young people in urban areas who engaged in ice-skating. She also proposed that it was often promoted as an ideal sport for women because it fitted the mould of 'dominant constructions of femininity' in that it was 'graceful, non-aggressive and non-competitive'.<sup>561</sup> In Lakeland, the activity was as popular with young men as with their

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<sup>559</sup> Undoubtedly, of course, a similar situation would have been possible for young people living in other rural localities across the country throughout the same period. The argument proposed here, however, is that the region's natural water sources allowed young working class people living in the countryside, (unusually) to have greater access than their urban contemporaries (although on a seasonal basis) to some of the leisure activities popular during the period.

<sup>560</sup> H. Llewellyn Smith, (ed.), The New Survey of London Life and Labour Vol. 9 (London: P.S. King & Son, 1935), pp. 65-6. For a discussion of the social history of ice-skating, see, M.L. Adams, 'The Manly History of a 'Girls' Sport': Gender, Class and the Development of Nineteenth-Century Figure Skating', The International Journal of the History of Sport, 24, 7 (2007), pp. 872-893.

<sup>561</sup> Langhamer, Women's Leisure in England, p. 80, see for example, an editorial in the Manchester Evening News, 16 January 1930, p. 3.

female counterparts, although undoubtedly it provided young women with an acceptable form of outdoor physical activity to engage in, when, as we shall see, their access to both team and traditional sports was severely limited.

In common with other outdoor activities discussed in this chapter, young people in Lakeland also found ways to negotiate the costs involved in purchasing or hiring equipment such as ice skates. As with walking, everyday shoes were often used instead which saved young workers in Lakeland from expenditure often incurred at commercial ice rinks in towns and cities, where additional fees for skate hire, in addition to the cost of entrance were routinely levied.<sup>562</sup> The inventiveness displayed by a number of young people was recalled by one respondent:

...they used to fix all sorts of things up to skate with... I think people who were better off skated but the rest of them just went and slid on the ice, you know, walked on the ice. I mean I walked on Rydal but I'd no skates on but I think a lot of them... the people who couldn't afford skates but that didn't deter them from going on. I mean the ones without skates just went on and slid, took a sledge on, took a chair on and slid with the chair in front of you to learn to skate.<sup>563</sup>

This outdoor activity was an informal affair, as one AOHG interviewee observed; you 'just messed about on it [the ice]', an attitude which extended to the unprofessional equipment many local people used, including safety equipment. One respondent recalled several 'glorious' experiences of ice-skating during one particularly harsh winter in the 1940s, when the whole of Derwentwater froze. The only safety precautions were, 'long ladders' which were pushed out onto the ice if someone fell through and then retracted, dragging the unfortunate person back to safety. A similar self-conscious sense of local character was revealed in other narratives of sports and

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<sup>562</sup> Langhamer suggests that this could cost as much as two shillings for skate hire, on top of the same charge for entrance to the rink. Langhamer, *Women's Leisure in England*, p. 80.

<sup>563</sup> Respondent HU, born 1934.

outdoor pursuits, which frequently made a point of the simple, un-commercialized nature of these activities. By choosing to highlight these aspects of their leisure experiences, in this case, the lack of health and safety precautions on the ice, respondents again implied the ‘tough’ nature which was considered to be an essential aspect of the Lakeland character, reflecting the region’s reputation as a rugged, untamed space.<sup>564</sup> Home-made or free sports activities also allowed AOHG informants to demonstrate the ways in which they overcame the challenge of living in rural areas and characterized themselves as innovators.<sup>565</sup>

Skating in the evening was a favourite winter pastime of local residents, young and old, as one respondent who entered his teens in the late 1940s recalled:

I can well remember that it was a really popular area for people to skate in those days and I can remember seeing people skating up there in the moonlight, which is absolutely wonderful, really. I particularly remember an old couple who were really superb skaters; they had a wind-up gramophone which played the Skaters’ Waltz<sup>566</sup>

Once again, we can see a familiar lack of a generational divide within this activity. The use of a gramophone whilst skating, however, highlights the spread of popular culture to even simple outdoor activities during this period, although as with social dancing in the region, newer elements of leisure culture were mixed with the old, as in the case of the gramophone being used to play the ‘Skaters’ Waltz’, a piece of classical music composed in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>564</sup> A number of studies have explored ideas regarding a sense of place in relation to northern upland landscapes and the north of England in the construction of regional identity. See, N. Kirk (ed.), Northern Identities: Historical Interpretations of ‘the North’ and ‘Northernness’ (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); M. Tebbutt, ‘Gendering an Upland Landscape: Masculinity and Place Identity in the Peak District, 1880s–1920s’, in I.D. Whyte & A. Winchester (eds.), Society, Landscape and Environment in Upland Britain Supplementary Series 2 (2004); M. Tebbutt, ‘Rambling and Manly Identity in Derbyshire’s Dark Peak, 1880s–1920’, The Historical Journal, 49, 4 (2006), pp. 125–1153.

<sup>565</sup> Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, p. 14.

<sup>566</sup> Respondent IM, born 1936.

## Fell Running

Despite the slow spread of commercialism, many sports in Lakeland continued to allow local people to maintain an unmediated relationship with the Lakeland countryside. One such activity of this nature was fell running, which as with ice-skating, relied heavily on the region's landscape.<sup>567</sup> This connection with the landscape was explained vividly by those AOHG respondents who participated in fell running between the 1930s and early 1950s. One such man, for example, described how his passion for fell running took hold at an early age and grew from 'walking the parish bounds' to the regular trips he and a friend had made around the region as young men. On one particular occasion, they cycled to Kentmere and then walked and ran their way around a 12 mile stretch of hills. The Lakeland landscape had a considerable affect on this man from an early age and stayed with him throughout his life, as he put it: 'There's summat about the fells, you never see them twice alike. You can live in them, and yet each morning you can look at that view and see summat different... the challenge of the high fells has been with me ever since I could walk.'<sup>568</sup> He went on to describe how during the war, presumably as a result of mixing with other servicemen, 'new horizons' were opened up for him through 'meeting all these lads who really loved the sport. Who didn't run for brass, but run for't love of it. For sheer pleasure that teareth the lungs apart, and nowt at end on it.'<sup>569</sup> Clearly, an important element of this man's participation in the sport was the way it helped him to connect so strongly to the local landscape. The personal significance of this was symbolized through his rejection of the idea of running for cash reward, or 'brass'. His love of this sport and the sense of

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<sup>567</sup> B. Smith, Stud Marks on the Summits: A History of Amateur Fell Racing: 1861-1983 (Preston: SKG Publishing, 1985); R. Askwith, Feet in the Clouds (London: Aurum Press, 2004).

<sup>568</sup> Respondent H2, born 1921.

<sup>569</sup> Respondent H2, born 1921.

place it provided him with, required no payment; an idea which his fellow fell runners appear to have shared.

The broader cultural resonance of this relationship between the Lakeland landscape and the ‘character’ of local men, is visible in a British Pathé newsreel, which filmed a fell running race at the first Grasmere Sports show of the post-war period. The commentator described how ‘20 of the North’s toughest dalesmen’ tussled their way up the 900ft hillside, during one of the ‘hardest endurance tests’ any sport can provide. At the finish line, a 27 year old farm labourer was awarded the ‘coveted title’ after a ‘final dash down the mountainside’.<sup>570</sup> This short piece of footage formed part of Pathé’s weekly international news bulletin and is useful evidence of the way in which a distinctive sense of place was projected to outsiders. The language used in the commentary conveyed the links which were frequently made between northern people and the upland landscape. It also illustrates how this identity was communicated to external groups, ‘in a form more calculated to appeal to spectators’.<sup>571</sup> Fell running was an overwhelmingly male sport and women were excluded from the competitive element of this sport until the late twentieth century, although girls and young women could be included on a more informal basis. One female respondent recalled, for instance, how her older brother who enjoyed fell running took her with him:

Oh yes, we wandered for miles, yes... the older brother, was very keen on fell running and he would take my younger brother... and I up Latterbarrow [a steep hill near Hawkshead village] ...he would give us so much start and off we would go down across the fields and up the fellside and he would pass us half way up, and he would pass us not very much further up, coming down again. We weren’t as energetic as he was but we roamed all round there.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> British Pathé online archive: <http://www.britishpathe.com/record.php?id=26557> 21 August 1946. (accessed October 2011).

<sup>571</sup> Huggins, ‘The Regular Re-Invention of Sporting Tradition and Identity: Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling c. 1800-2000’, *Sports Historian*, 21, 1 (2001), p. 51.

<sup>572</sup> Respondent FO, born 1911.

In the same way that older brothers taught younger siblings how to fish, these younger siblings, by being able to participate in sports and outdoor activities usually reserved for men, also had increased opportunities to explore the local countryside. Once again, young people's physical fitness features strongly in the oral history testimony, an illustration of how rural respondents tended to 'define themselves and exclude others' by dwelling on their health and fitness as a 'gesture' towards their greater 'purity'.<sup>573</sup>

### Wrestling

Traditional 'Cumberland and Westmorland style' wrestling was a sport in which young men engaged both competitively and informally. AOHG informants, who went on to wrestle competitively in their teens and early twenties, had often begun at an early age. An interviewee born in the early 1920s recalled that he had wrestled 'just as a boy at school', whereas others wrestled in connection with village boy's clubs.<sup>574</sup> None of the AOHG respondents directly mentioned being taught to wrestle by teachers, however. As Huggins observed, wrestling was 'rarely taught in schools, usually only when a particular teacher was very enthusiastic'.<sup>575</sup> Aside from these informal sessions, by the 1930s, the sport had largely been confined to large 'traditional' sports shows. Indeed, from the turn of the nineteenth century, the sport had suffered a decline, a trend which was confirmed by the few references to this distinctive style of wrestling as a leisure activity in the AOHG collection.<sup>576</sup> It is likely that with the growth in popularity of modern sports, such as football and cricket, young men turned away from wrestling on

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<sup>573</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 15.

<sup>574</sup> Respondent HN, born 1922; Murfin, Popular Leisure, p. 109.

<sup>575</sup> Huggins, 'The Regular Re-Invention of Sporting Tradition and Identity: Cumberland and Westmorland Wrestling, c. 1800-2000', Sports Historian, 21, 1 (2000), p. 38.

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38.

the village green, in favour of a 'kick about' in the street. This idea was somewhat endorsed by Rollinson, who suggested that footballers took the place of wrestlers as popular heroes.<sup>577</sup> The sport continued, however, to hold significance for local communities and the young men who competed. Wrestling was one of the central activities around which sporting events such as Grasmere Sports were arranged. As less of an everyday activity and more of a 'special' occasion, wrestling not only became a focal point for local communities, it also offered tourists and visitors a traditional spectacle through which Lakeland's sense of place could be conveyed.

Wrestling's distinctive style in Lakeland was closely linked to the annual Grasmere Sports show, which took place in the village every August.<sup>578</sup> It was another sport which largely excluded women and at larger competitive events, the only role available to them was that of spectator. There was one exception to this rule, however, which allowed them to compete in an activity linked to wrestling but in a form socially acceptable for their gender. This was by making the costumes worn by the male

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<sup>577</sup> W. Rollinson, Life and Tradition in the Lake District (London: Dalesman, 1974), p. 191, quoted Murfin, Popular Leisure, p.109. Murfin also suggested that the spread of boxing to the region in the early part of the twentieth century was also partly responsible for the decline in wrestling. Adrian Bingham identified the beginning of a celebrity culture in the inter-war years, through the popular press, centred on film stars and sportsmen. A. Bingham, Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); A. Bingham, Family Newspapers? Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press 1918-1978 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>578</sup> By the 1930s, Lakeland was one of only a handful of areas in England, which practised the sport. A regionalised style of wrestling also survived in other upland tourist destinations such as Devon and Cornwall. See T. Collins, J. Martin & W. Vamplew, Encyclopaedia of British Rural Sports Tradition, (London: Routledge, 2005). William Palmer, in his description of the distinctive style of wrestling provides an accurate image of the sport: 'The Lakeland style of wrestling is known the world over under the name of 'Cumberland Westmorland', and its rules are so simple that a child can understand and practise them. The two competitors station themselves near the centre of the arena, and prepare to take hold. The arms are passed round the body of the opponent, left underneath and right arm over the shoulders, and when both have a fair grip, the bout commences. Neither party must break the hold now, however unsatisfactory it may become, and the one who first touches the ground with any part of his body other than his feet is adjudged the loser. Should both come down at the same moment, as often happens, the fall is abortive, and conclusions have to be tried again' quoted in W.T. Palmer, Odd Corners in English Lakeland. Rambles, Scrambles, Climbs and Sports (London: Skeffington & Son, 1937:1946), p. 98.



wrestlers in the distinctive and ‘traditional’ local style, which involved elaborate embroidery:

*Was there as much competition between the dressmakers as there was between the wrestlers?*

Oh yes, that’s right. Well, that was where the ladies come in, you see. The dressmakers or girlfriends, mothers or whatever and that was a competition outside the ring that went on in the ring, you see what I mean, to win through costume. Because it was a great honour to win the best dressed wrestler in Grasmere.<sup>579</sup>

The costumes were judged by dressmakers and on occasion, as a respondent put it, by ‘high fallutin’ people’ (presumably the local gentry). A prize was awarded for ‘best costume’ which undoubtedly brought increased prestige to the women whose creations won. Despite the ‘prestige’ and ‘honour’ bestowed upon those whose costumes won, their efforts do not appear to have warranted a cash prize. The gender distinctions evident within traditional Lakeland sports remained, with women being awarded a trophy, a symbolic reward, rather than a cash prize which their male counterparts received. Their differences suggest that their labours in a domestic task, were judged as less valuable or legitimate, as opposed to the wage-earning status associated with young men.

The wrestlers’ ‘uniform’, which was readily identifiable with this regional style of wrestling, gave the sport added symbolism, to both competitors and spectators, yet the costumes were a relatively recent tradition, only ‘introduced in the mid-Victorian period’, previously, ‘wrestlers would simply discard their outer garments for the match.’<sup>580</sup> The addition of costumes indicated a perceived need to increase visible links with the region’s past at such events and to present a visually appealing scene to

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<sup>579</sup> Respondent JE, born 1931.

<sup>580</sup> Collins *et al.*, *Encyclopaedia of British Rural Sports Tradition*, p. 286; Huggins, ‘The Regular Re-Invention’, pp.48-9.

audiences, as tourism in Lakeland rose during the nineteenth century.<sup>581</sup> By the 1930s, wearing such costumes had become a ‘traditional’ part of the wrestling ‘spectacle’, although it seems unlikely that many of the young men at the time had any idea of what a relatively recent innovation this was. Certainly no AOHG interviewee mentioned the introduction of these garments, even though several could recount the history of the sport in some detail.

Attempts to reinforce wrestling’s strong connections to Lakeland’s past were becoming visible from at least the early 1900s. In 1906 for example, Canon Rawnsley wrote that ‘Wrestling is the sport of the fells. It has come down through ancient families of stalwart dalesmen, and as each generation made a loving study of the sport it is hardly to be marvelled at that it has become almost a fine art.’<sup>582</sup> In common with other leisure activities in Lakeland between 1930 and the early 1950s, Cumberland and Westmorland-style wrestling provided local communities with opportunities to take pride in their own sense of place and belonging, while promoting a distinctive regional identity to outsiders. As the Pathé newsreel (and Chapter Three) highlighted, large sporting events, such as that held in Grasmere, focussed international attention on this isolated region of the country. Over the period of this study, traditional wrestling in Lakeland ‘became increasingly linked to the maintenance and promotion’ of a specific regional identity and ‘cultural heritage within those communities where it survived best’.<sup>583</sup> In the same way that rushbearers began to pose for onlookers to take photographs, by the late 1940s, ‘a growing regional consciousness’ meant that ‘wrestling brought both identity and solidarity, a form of resistance to the cultural

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<sup>581</sup> Huggins, ‘The Regular Re-Invention’.

<sup>582</sup> H.D. Rawnsley, *Months at the Lakes* (Glasgow: James MacLehose & Sons, 1906).

<sup>583</sup> Huggins, ‘The Regular Re-Invention’, p. 37.

dominance of wider British society'.<sup>584</sup> For the young men who took part competitively and the young women who created the heavily decorated 'costumes', this activity was another way in which to define themselves as distinct from external influences and a homogenized leisure culture.

Wrestling also had a more pragmatic motivation and in the case of some young men, played an important role in supplementing their income. As Chapter Three demonstrated, the winners of wrestling matches at local sports shows were awarded often generous sums of cash as prize money. In the post-war period, the expansion of personal transport, identified above, allowed young men to increase the number of contests they could attend. One man, who began wrestling at school at around seven years old, explained how once in his teens, he travelled from one tournament to another:

*Now let's go back to you starting. Here you are, starting as a schoolboy, when did you get into real competitions? What age would you move on?*  
Oh, it'd be teens because travelling was a difficulty for us, you see, travelling around and it wasn't until we got a motor cycle of our own that we travelled away for competitions, you see... my brother was one of the top wrestlers as well at the time and I can remember coming to Grasmere Sports on the old motor cycle and various other places<sup>585</sup>

As we have seen, young men gained a certain level of freedom and autonomy through motorcycle ownership. In this instance, it allowed this man and his brother to travel around the region to compete at larger shows, supplemented by any prize money won. This recollection also reinforces the idea that in the post-war period, young men often chose to remain within more familiar rural spaces.

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<sup>584</sup> Huggins, 'The Regular Re-Invention', p. 37.

<sup>585</sup> Respondent JE, born 1931. This man lived in west Cumberland in his youth. Ownership of motorbike allowed him to travel the 30 miles from his home village to Grasmere sports.

## Tennis

Writing in the 1940s, Desiree Edwards-Rees suggested that the ‘most natural social ambition of village girls’ was ‘to learn to play tennis well.’<sup>586</sup> Although this was likely to have been an overstatement for the majority of young working-class women living in Lakeland villages, tennis was commonly played by both men and women in the region throughout the period of this study. Reports in the local press also highlighted the popularity of the sport.<sup>587</sup> Many local villages had their own courts, built from donations and bequests by wealthy local families, which was undoubtedly one reason for such popularity. An AOHG respondent, who spent her youth in Grasmere, remarked how one local family ‘were very generous in a lot of ways’. They donated a piece of land known as Broadgate Meadow to the village, ‘to be held in trust... to maintain and improve for the benefit of the village’, which was ‘kitted out’ with swings, three tennis courts and a bowling green.<sup>588</sup>

With free access to tennis courts, the social class connotations of tennis were avoided by local working-class residents, which is a modification to Murfin’s conclusion that in the Lake Counties, ‘tennis clubs were select places’ where the ‘game’s cost reinforced the exclusivity’ of the sport.<sup>589</sup> It is unclear as to whether village courts also provided balls and racquets but this is certainly likely, given that several working-class respondents recalled regularly playing tennis in their villages, where there was more of the social mixing evident in other leisure activities.<sup>590</sup>

However, although access to local tennis courts may have been democratized, even

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<sup>586</sup> D. Rees, *A Rural Youth Service* (London: J.K. Whitehead, 1944), p. 42.

<sup>587</sup> See *Westmorland Gazette*, 15 August 1931, for example.

<sup>588</sup> Respondent HU, born 1934.

<sup>589</sup> Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, pp. 120-121.

<sup>590</sup> Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, p. 120.

without the prohibitive costs of an entrance fee, sports such as tennis could give rise to class tensions within villages, as was revealed by AOHG interviewees, several of whom recalled the way in which an awareness of social structures prevented their participation in informal, village-based sports. One woman discussed how the village tennis club ‘was all for people that weren't like us, weren't domestic servants; you didn't feel comfortable. I would have loved to have played tennis but I never did.’<sup>591</sup> As we saw in Chapter Two, an Ambleside parlourmaid missed out on learning to dance due to her hours of work, this young domestic servant missed out on playing sports because of the constraints she felt were attached to her social class.<sup>592</sup> It was not only servants who observed the class distinctions surrounding this particular sport in local villages. An older woman who moved to Grasmere in the immediate post-war period, described the snobbery which still existed in the village and recalled how the Rector’s mother had told one young woman that she should not play tennis ‘with those people’, referring to working-class villagers.<sup>593</sup>

In the late 1940s the village courts (which had been neglected and unused during the war) were renewed and a new village tennis club was established, with the help of existing villagers and newcomers, who as we have seen, played an important part in the immediate post-war period, in helping to revive activities which had lapsed since the 1930s,

...we formed a tennis club, another thing we did. [The new Headmaster of Grasmere School] was chairman... and we made three grass courts and we raised money and fenced them round... and then we raised money because we wanted a hard court... and we raised an enormous amount of money and we laid

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<sup>591</sup> Respondent IP, born 1908.

<sup>592</sup> See Chapter Two for further discussion of the limits young people’s employment could place on their access to dances. See also, R.J. Lake, ‘Social Class, Etiquette and Behavioural Restraint in British Lawn Tennis, 1870–1939’, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28, 6 (2011), pp. 876-894.

<sup>593</sup> Respondent HP, moved to Grasmere 1946.

this hard court and we fenced it round and we built a pavilion and we had matches, great fun, we used to play Hawkshead and Windermere, Staveley, and Keswick and Patterdale.<sup>594</sup>

In the case of Grasmere's tennis club, it was a local man who approached the village's newly-arrived Headmaster to form a club, which also suggests how external authority figures who settled in the region after 1945, assumed leadership roles within local communities. This example also highlights the popularity of tennis in Lakeland in after the war and points to how even smaller places (such as Staveley) had access to a tennis court, in order for their members to be of a high enough standard to play against other villages. The extent to which young people participated in these post-war club matches is unclear. Although a number of AOHG respondents discussed playing tennis in the post-war period, no-one mentioned belonging to a club, or playing inter-village matches. Their recollections may suggest that young people's experiences of playing tennis were largely in relation to informal games, played on the village courts in the evenings or at weekends, with friends and family members.

### Bowls

With bowls, we turn to another sporting activity which accommodated the intergenerational character common to leisure in the region. Although more commonly associated with older people, locals of all ages enjoyed playing the game in Lakeland and several respondents remembered playing with their parents and siblings on a regular basis. It was also a sport where young women (as well as older married women) were accepted. In its popularity among the working-class, Lakeland followed a national

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<sup>594</sup> Ibid.

trend. In 1930, for instance, there were 53 bowling greens in Liverpool.<sup>595</sup> Bowling greens in towns and cities charged approximately 2d an hour, so this was another sporting activity where young workers in Lakeland enjoyed greater opportunities than their contemporaries in towns and cities. As with village tennis courts, bowling greens were free to use, as many had been built as a result of upper-class patronage. A number of villages in the region had their own greens, including Langdale, Grasmere and Ambleside, although the latter village's bowling facilities, however, were provided by the local authority as a tourist attraction; an example of the positive impact of tourism on local communities. These facilities were valued by the villagers, at least with the hindsight of their loss during the late twentieth century. In Grasmere, for example, the village bowling green was eventually cleared to make way for a car park. Several AOHG informants described their green as 'beautiful'. As one woman who enjoyed playing bowls in her teens recalled, 'it was a Crown Green bowling green and it was beautiful turf on it, it wasn't a 2 ½d. effort'.<sup>596</sup> Reports in the local press tell us that during the inter-war years, both 'Ambleside and District' and 'Lake District' bowling leagues were established. In each league, there were a considerable number of inter-village matches. Again, many of the village teams featured in local newspaper round-ups of weekly sports suggesting that even the smaller, more isolated villages in Lakeland had their own team, presumably with their own equipment and a place to practice.

The frequency with which such sports facilities were the result of patronage from wealthy families in the area is a reminder of the extent to which local families

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<sup>595</sup> Jones, *Workers at Play*, p. 95.

<sup>596</sup> Respondent HU, born 1934.

depended upon the good favour of the upper-class in the 1930s and 1940s. As one Grasmere respondent born in 1934 put it,

...we were dependent upon them for our jobs, our houses, our schooling – whether we went on to Grammar School really, because they were the ones who decided who got the scholarships, so everything was really dependent upon them.<sup>597</sup>

That is not to say, however, that village communities in Lakeland were incapable of helping themselves. Sports facilities such as a village bowling green and the associated maintenance, were also paid for by charitable events which were held by residents. In Grasmere for instance, a proportion of the proceeds from a dialect play were used to provide facilities such as a bowling green, on land donated to the village by a local wealthy family.<sup>598</sup> If repairs were needed to a court or green, a specific fund-raising event was held. It should be remembered, however, that although such efforts by local inhabitants to maintain village sports facilities demonstrated a level of agency, it was still an event organized by a middle-class ‘leader’ which helped to raise the necessary funds, and land donated by upper-class patrons, which provided a space for this to happen.

By the early 1950s, these spaces were also used out of season by young people but for a different purpose than initially intended. As one informant recalled, some of the young people in his village used to ‘do a little... courting in the porch of the bowling hut in the winter time.’<sup>599</sup> In the years after 1945, young people were able to create spaces for socializing with friends, or for courtship, in an unsupervised environment without necessarily leaving the village. It is clear, however, that when

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<sup>597</sup> Ibid.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid. The Grasmere Dialect Plays donated money on at least one occasion to the sports field. Another year, money was donated towards the upkeep of the village green.

<sup>599</sup> Respondent MP, born 1940.



sports such as bowls were played in local villages, they continued to be intergenerational in nature. The provision of recreational facilities by the upper-class may have helped to stop the incursion of more commercializing tendencies in the years between 1930 and the early 1950s. In this way, older class relations allowed the more distinctive elements of local leisure habits to flourish for longer than was the case in other villages where the gentry were no longer active members of local life.

### Football

Football, as with bowls, was played both by organized teams and more informally. It was a sport that had existed in a number of (usually regionally distinctive) forms for hundreds of years in England but by the inter-war period it was the codified, modernized and essentially urban form of the game, which was popular in Lakeland and throughout the country more widely.<sup>600</sup> The popularity of football in the region has been attributed to the decline in a number of other traditional Lakeland sports throughout the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>601</sup> Unlike many towns and cities, where football ‘was a large-scale financial under-taking in the 1920s and 1930s which attracted millions of spectators each year’, it was not the popular spectator sport in Lakeland that it was in towns and cities.<sup>602</sup> Young men in Lakeland were more likely to participate in a football match on a Saturday afternoon on a nearby playing field, than they were to travel to a town to watch other men play. If young men were spectators at

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<sup>600</sup> For more information on older, regionalized versions of football, see H. Hornby, Uppies and Downies: The Extraordinary Football Games of Britain (London: English Heritage, 2008); S. McCabe, ‘The Making of Community Identity Through the Historic Sporting Event: The Case of Ashbourne Royal Shrovetide Football’, in D. Picard & M. Robinson (eds.), Festivals, Tourism and Social Change: Remaking Worlds, (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2006), pp. 99-118.

<sup>601</sup> Rollinson, Life and Tradition, p. 191.

<sup>602</sup> Jones, Workers at Play, p. 38. According to Jones, admission to football matches during the period, ranged from 6d to 2s, Workers at Play, p. 14.

football matches, it was generally at local games and although the larger teams in urban areas drew large crowds throughout the 1930s, ‘soccer did not become primarily a spectator sport in this region before the Second World War.’<sup>603</sup> As Murfin suggests, local football ‘to some extent, continued to flourish because there was no famous team on hand to vastly outshine local amateur efforts.’<sup>604</sup> Voluntary organizations such as the Boy Scouts and the YMCA had their own sides.<sup>605</sup> Even some of the more remote villages in Lakeland, such as Little Langdale, managed to establish and maintain two football teams; one attached to the village boy’s club and a ‘proper’ team for the adult men.<sup>606</sup> In common with other leisure activities addressed in this thesis, young men in Lakeland found limitations placed on their ability to play in organized matches against other villages, both through their employment (often having to work on a Saturday morning, when many local games took place) and through the physical distances involved in travelling to matches around the region, after work, ‘it had to be local because they didn’t have much time you see. They always worked Saturday morning, and then depending where they were they had to get home.’<sup>607</sup> As with many other young people living in the region between 1930 and the early 1950s, leisure opportunities often involved a considerable walk on foot (and later in the period, a bicycle ride). A respondent from Langdale for example, discussed how, at the age of nineteen, he and a few friends ‘went to play for Grasmere’ and would walk there on a match day, or if the game ‘was away we used to meet at the bus at Ambleside.’<sup>608</sup>

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<sup>603</sup> Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, p. 115.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>605</sup> Evidence from the local press suggests that Scout teams tended to play each other in ‘friendly’ matches, whilst the YMCA clubs were part of the Westmorland League, *Westmorland Gazette*, 22 February 1930, p. 15.

<sup>606</sup> Respondent DE, born 1911, Borrowdale; Respondent AS/AT, born 1910.

<sup>607</sup> Respondent DT2, born 1911.

<sup>608</sup> Respondent AS/AT, born 1910.

Informal street ‘kick abouts’ were also popular among young men in inter-war Lakeland, although oral evidence suggests that this was mainly an activity enjoyed by schoolboys and those in their early teens. In the same way that youths in towns and cities, used a ‘tied up cap or newspaper’ as a makeshift football, young men in Lakeland also improvised with whatever they could find if they did not own a real ball.<sup>609</sup> Even here, however, awareness of Lakeland’s distinctive literary identity occasionally intrudes, as in the recollection of an interviewee who described playing football under a street lamp outside ‘Wordsworth’s old house’, Dove Cottage. The way in which this respondent frames his story, focussing on the poet’s name, rather than on the name of the building, subtly asserts a sense of ownership and everydayness over an aspect of Lakeland’s literary culture which was more usually associated with tourists.

Informal street-based games such as the ones he describes, relied on the relative lack of motor vehicles in Lakeland during the 1930s. Young men and boys were able to play in the streets because with the exception of the village’s wealthier inhabitants and one man, who ran a taxi business, few people in Grasmere village owned a car. With the increase in tourism to the village and the region more generally, in the post-war period, these informal street games became less and less possible. This man’s recollections were consequently also shaped by the subsequent expansion of the tourist industry. Remembering the associations of being able to play football so close to a hallowed tourist spot helped to reinforce a nostalgic image of Lakeland as a ‘rural idyll’, which was no longer available to local residents in the same way, as cars now jammed local roads and former leisure spaces, such as bowling greens, were displaced by car parks.

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<sup>609</sup> Jones, *Workers at Play*, p. 80.

It is clear that by the inter-war years, modern sports provided young people with many supplementary opportunities for leisure and socializing. Team sports such as football were no exception. Murfin for example, suggested that by the inter-war years, football had replaced the social life which older sports, such as hunting and cockfighting once created for local communities.<sup>610</sup> As Chapter Two highlighted, local sports teams tended to hold annual dances or balls, as a fundraising exercise. In Grasmere, the village football club hosted a New Year's Eve dance every year, which was regularly attended by several hundred people; no mean feat for a village hall in an area of Northern England isolated from large centres of population.<sup>611</sup> Aside from attending these dances, young women were also heavily involved in the planning and organization of such fund-raising socials for local teams.<sup>612</sup> Although unable to participate in team sports directly, by involving themselves in leisure activities associated with local teams and clubs, they found other opportunities for leisure, although admittedly, in a form acceptable to their gender.

There is no evidence in either the local press or the oral testimony, to suggest that gender distinctions of this sort were diluted during the war, despite the decline or abandonment of at least some village teams across the region, as young men were called up to fight. In partial response to this, workplace teams were increasingly established in the region.<sup>613</sup> In the post-war period, however, it appears that at least some women were accepted onto these teams. A woman, who worked for the Ambleside laundry in

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<sup>610</sup> Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, p. 117.

<sup>611</sup> The *Westmorland Gazette* reported each January between 1930 and the start of the 1950s, the success of annual New Year's Eve dances, held by the village football club. It also noted that attendees were drawn generally from villages around Grasmere, indicating that these events also provided those living in smaller villages and on farms with increased opportunities for socializing.

<sup>612</sup> Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, p. 117; *Westmorland Gazette*, 15 February 1930.

<sup>613</sup> For more detailed analysis of work-place sports see, A. Smith, 'Cars, Cricket, and Alf Smith: The Place of Works-Based Sports and Social Clubs in the Life of Mid-Twentieth-Century Coventry', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 19, 1 (2002), pp. 137-150.

the late 1940s, discussed having ‘some great games of football’ at lunchtimes, with men who worked at the local bobbin mill.<sup>614</sup> It was as a result of such informal matches that this woman met her husband, who played for the opposing team. Her participation in these games suggests a change in attitude towards the involvement of women in team sports in Lakeland, although this should not be generalized. One woman, who played informally during her lunch breaks, does not indicate the inclusion of women at a more formalized, competitive level. This is something which reports in the local press reinforce throughout the 1940s and until the end of the period addressed here.

Reflecting national trends, no other female informants mentioned playing football in their leisure.<sup>615</sup> As we have seen, young women’s involvement in team sports, such as football, was largely confined to socializing and organizing off the pitch, rather than any active participation. Notwithstanding the occasional challenge, such as that by the Ambleside laundry girl, young women continued to be sidelined into traditional gender roles, a trend echoed in other studies, such as that of Richard Holt, who argued that in the first half of the twentieth century, ‘animals were more readily accepted than women as the objects of sporting admiration’.<sup>616</sup>

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<sup>614</sup> Respondent HE, born 1934.

<sup>615</sup> Women’s football was a thriving sport until 1921 when the FA banned women from the sport, ostensibly because of an issue to do with gate receipts at a charity match. In reality, the ban was designed to protect the social standing of the men’s game. As a result, women’s football went into a steep decline in the 1920s and was not revived until the late twentieth century. For more on this, see J. Williams, A Game for Rough Girls?: A History of Women’s Football in Britain: The History of Women’s Football in Britain (London: Routledge, 2003); S. Lopez, Women on the Ball: A Guide to Women’s Football (London: Scarlet Press, 1997); D.J. Williamson, Belles of the Ball: Early History of Women’s Football (Devon: R&D Associates, 1991).

<sup>616</sup> R. Holt, ‘Heroes of the North: Sport and the Shaping of Regional Identity’, in J. Hill & J. Williamson (eds.), Sport and Identity in the North of England, (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), p. 139.

## Cricket

Cricket was another team sport which very few (if any) young women played in Lakeland. As with football, village cricket teams often held a large dance during the winter months to raise funds for the coming season. Again, this provided women with additional opportunities to socialize and organize. In one village, the cricket team held a fancy dress ball each year. Social gatherings such as these provided young people living in nearby villages with further occasions for leisure, outside of the club's sporting activities and therefore formed an important supplement to the local leisure calendar. The fundraising aspect of such events also meant that socials and dances were acceptable to adults in local communities. Many of the sports examined in this chapter therefore, can be seen as serving a dual leisure purpose for many Lakeland villages, in that not only did they provide weekly sporting activities for their members, they also created, although somewhat infrequently, other leisure opportunities and should therefore be seen as an important aspect of local young people's leisure experiences in these small rural communities during the 1930s and 1940s.

Although cricket was originally a middle-class sport, by the 1930s it had been taken up by the working class in urban as well as rural areas. Young people in particular, played the game on neighbourhood streets, with improvised equipment. In Lakeland, 'cricket had become a genuinely popular village game' by the early twentieth century, and it continued to be popular in the region throughout the 1930s and into the 1950s.<sup>617</sup> Most villages had their own team, which regularly played each other; the local press provides evidence of at least three separate regional leagues during the

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<sup>617</sup> Murfin, Popular Leisure, p. 118.

1930s.<sup>618</sup> Aside from the more official league games, club matches were also played, which is presumably where local teams played each other in a less formalized way. One informant recalled that in his teens, he played night time matches against villages including Langdale and Patterdale.<sup>619</sup> This could have been a solution to the problems identified earlier, which were faced by some workers on a Saturday morning, when many team matches took place.

In Lakeland, as in urban areas, cricket had very middle-class roots. For those who lived in Ambleside, families from ‘the big houses’ were responsible for establishing the village’s cricket club and pavilion. Oral evidence suggests that before the First World War, it was common in more isolated villages, such as those in the Langdale valley, for members of wealthy families to ‘coach’ village cricket teams and provide transport to matches in nearby villages in the form of ‘horse-drawn wagonettes’, although this practice appears to have died out by 1918. Langdale’s cricket team was not revived until the early 1930s, when a member of a well-off local family was called upon to help re-establish the club.<sup>620</sup> This is indicative of how important strong leadership within rural communities was to the survival of local leisure culture and again also points to the persistence of older social relationships, where working-class villagers naturally looked towards middle- and upper-class residents to fill such roles.

In common with other male team sports in the region, the Second World War also affected the fortunes of local cricket teams. Oral history testimony indicates that

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<sup>618</sup> These were, the Westmorland League, the Lancaster and District League and the north Lancashire League, all of which suggests there was some degree of travelling involved for local teams, to and from away matches.

<sup>619</sup> Respondent FW, born 1918.

<sup>620</sup> Respondent BZ, born 1916.

the game was still played by men who were left behind on the Home Front in Lakeland, although on a reduced scale to that of the inter-war years. Other clubs were suspended for the duration of the war and were subsequently revived in 1946 or 1947. Young women continued, however, to be excluded from this team game.

An argument put forward throughout this chapter has been that sports in Lakeland were linked to a sense of place, in ways similar to other leisure activities discussed in the thesis. Dave Russell noted that in team sports, ‘it is usually possible to find at least one member who displays the characteristics demanded by local mythology.’<sup>621</sup> Grasmere’s cricket club for example, counted among its members a direct descendant of William Wordsworth, who carried the famous surname and who was always picked for away games but ‘never got a home match’.<sup>622</sup> It is an interesting example, which suggests that not only were the young players very aware of their local heritage, but that they sought to capitalize on it, by using the Wordsworth name to intimidate their opponents. As both Chapters Two and Three argued, a common function of leisure in Lakeland was to create and present an identity which defined the region as distinctive. However, this desire to express a connection to the region’s past was not limited to traditional sporting activities and was evidently also present in a modern, codified sport. In this way, local people found ways to evoke a sense of place whilst away from their villages and in the process, maintain a ‘border’ between themselves and outsiders.

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<sup>621</sup> D. Russell, *Looking North*, pp. 241.

<sup>622</sup> Respondent HP, born 1909.



## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that a number of key themes surrounding rural life and young people between the 1930s and early 1950s are visible through analysis of their participation in sports and outdoor activities. Exploring the region's countryside, by walking, climbing and cycling, held social and cultural significance for local young people. It provided them with a space away from the everyday supervision imposed on much of their leisure by affording them time away from the immediate vicinity of the village. Outdoor pursuits also instilled in young walkers and climbers a connection to the Lakeland landscape which persisted into adulthood. Gender distinctions were sometimes less evident in these types of pursuits than in other sports as they were activities which could be enjoyed alone and outside the social conventions of local villages. These types of activities also allowed young workers the freedom to socialize with the opposite sex or to begin romantic relationships away from the parental gaze. Familiar themes within this thesis are also visible in the sports which young men played. The growing popularity of modern, codified team sports had, by the 1930s, resulted in the relegation of traditional Lakeland sports largely to annual shows and fairs, yet despite a reduced role in local leisure culture, the young men who competed in traditional activities did so with pride for their regional sporting heritage, despite the near total exclusion of women. The intergenerational element of local leisure habits was present in a number of activities including fishing, bowls and traditional sports.

Not only did local young people tailor the growing commercialism of many sports to suit their pockets, they could also actively reject this aspect of national leisure culture, when it challenged their sense of place. This leads to the third trend discernable

here; the celebration of Lakeland's distinctiveness. Oral evidence demonstrated that young people valued difference in their leisure experiences. For those who competed in traditional localized sports, there was an element of self-consciousness regarding how Lakeland was presented to external audiences. Respondents also constructed a moral geography of Lakeland as healthy, tough and straightforward, which allowed them to exclude others and present themselves as wholesome.<sup>623</sup> Increased access to personal transport throughout the period was a development which gradually took those in their teens and early twenties away from their villages for leisure. Importantly, however, this new-found freedom to visit towns and cities did not mean that all bike owners necessarily chose to do so. The frequency with which young men used their motorbikes to attend traditional sporting events or to participate in the social life of other Lakeland villages, for instance, provides a balance to simplistic explanations that rural young people looked to the towns for leisure whenever possible; clearly their relationship to both local communities and their leisure culture was more complex.

In summary, young countrymen and women had access to a considerable variety of sports and outdoor activities throughout the period, many of which were available for little or no cost. Class and gender distinctions remained, however, in many of these activities; something which many young workers were only too aware of. Many villages in Lakeland benefited considerably from the donations of wealthy local families, which undoubtedly reinforced older social hierarchies in the region, although this meant that in turn, young villagers enjoyed access to amenities out of reach for many of their urban counterparts. Patronage therefore allowed young workers in Lakeland (somewhat ironically) to circumnavigate class barriers in sports such as tennis

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<sup>623</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 14.

and cricket, which were often more keenly felt by young urban workers. Importantly, it also provided additional village spaces where distinctive elements of local leisure culture, specifically its intergenerational and un-commercialized nature, could persist into the 1950s.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Voluntary Organizations and a Rural Youth Service**

This final chapter analyses the intersection between rural young people's leisure habits and the work of voluntary and statutory youth organizations between 1930 and the early 1950s. Within existing historical investigations which explore the work of voluntary youth organizations in the 1930s, a number have discussed the importance that such groups placed on the countryside for achieving their objectives.<sup>624</sup> In common with leisure history more generally, however, these studies have focussed on how the countryside was used by young people from large urban areas, for character building exercises such as camping. Once again, few historians have gone far enough in their examination of the ways in which voluntary groups operated in the countryside in terms of their work with rural youth. A small number of studies briefly discuss the role of rural organizations, such as the burgeoning Young Farmers' Clubs (established in the inter-war years), but there is little in-depth analysis of their work with young countrymen and women in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>625</sup> There is a similar dearth of historical work in relation to the State's involvement in young people's

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<sup>624</sup> J. Springhall, Youth, Empire and Society: British Youth Movements, 1883-1940, (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p. 108; D. Fowler, Youth Culture in Modern Britain c.1920-1970 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), Ch. 2; D. Fowler, The First Teenagers: The Lifestyle of Young Wage-Earners in Inter-War Britain (London: Woburn Press, 1995) p. 145; D. Matless, Landscape and Englishness (London: Reaktion Books, 1998) pp. 90-95; T. Proctor, '(Uni)forming Youth: Girl Guides and Boy Scouts in Inter-War Britain, 1908-1939' History Workshop Journal, 45 (Spring 1998), pp. 103-134.

<sup>625</sup> See for example, J. Leigh, Young People and Leisure (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 55-56; H. Bracey, English Rural Life: Village Activities, Organisations, and Institutions (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959; 2002), pp. 228-231; L. Thompson 'Agricultural Education in the Inter-War Years', in P. Brassley, J. Burchardt & L. Thompson (eds.), The English Countryside Between the Wars: Regeneration or Decline? (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 60-61.

leisure.<sup>626</sup> With this in mind, both the work of the National Fitness Council (NFC), established in 1937 and the statutory youth service (established in wartime) are also explored. The way in which local communities in Lakeland responded to the involvement of an external organization in young people's leisure is assessed and the discussion explores the tensions which could arise from such intervention. Some of the key themes which have emerged from this thesis's examination of young people's leisure habits and identity are drawn out in the course of the analysis. In particular, this chapter explores topics which include leadership and adult authority, generational tensions, leisure identities and the survival of 'traditional' rural social life in Lakeland. In doing so, the analysis sheds new light on the ways in which young countrymen and women were thought about and written about, not only in the 1930s, but also during the turbulence of the Second World War and its aftermath.<sup>627</sup> How definitions of citizenship changed over the period, especially in relation to how young people spent their leisure time, are also analysed. In so-doing, it is demonstrated that the idea of what 'good citizenship' was, was a flexible concept, which could change according to locality. Building on the argument in preceding chapters, it is argued that in small rural communities such as those in Lakeland, citizenship was constituted in a highly localized form, in terms of upholding leisure traditions and a distinctive sense of place. This was in contrast to citizenship at a national level during the same period, which often concentrated on the maintenance of a broader agenda frequently linked to international interests.

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<sup>626</sup> T. Jeffs, Young People and the Youth Service (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul); P. Tinkler, 'An All-Round Education: The Board of Education's Policy for the Leisure-Time Training of Girls', History of Education, 23, 4 (1994), pp. 385-403; P. Tinkler, 'Sexuality & Citizenship: The State & Girls' Leisure Provision in England, 1939-1950', Women's History Review, 4, 2 (1995), pp. 193-217; P. Tinkler, 'At Your Service: The Nation's Girlhood and the Call to Service in England, 1939-50', European Journal of Women's Studies, 4, 3 (1997), pp. 353-377; B. Davis, A History of the Youth Service (Leicester: Youth Work Press, 1999).

<sup>627</sup> For analysis of the youth service in wartime, see Tinkler, 'An All-Round Education', pp. 385-403; Tinkler, 'Sexuality & Citizenship', pp. 193-217; Tinkler, 'At Your Service', pp. 353-377.

The examination which follows pays particular attention to what were the four largest voluntary youth organizations in the region throughout the period: the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, the Girls' Friendly Society (GFS) and the Young Farmers' Clubs (YFC).<sup>628</sup> Official documents, including minute books, pamphlets, annual reports, accounts in the local press and oral testimony, are all used to construct a picture of the extent to which youth work influenced the leisure identities of young workers in the region. The experiences of local young people as members of such organizations illuminate the discussion and help to draw out some of the themes which have been explored in the thesis's earlier chapters.

The discussion begins with an analysis of the voluntary provision for young people in 1930s Lakeland, which argues that although these groups were established at a national level, they actually served to reinforce the local leisure patterns identified in earlier chapters. Gillis has suggested that such groups were 'intended to restore adult authority' to the relationship between young people and adults and it is clear that the class dynamics inherent in many voluntary youth groups during the 1930s fed into the more traditional, deferential social structure in Lakeland villages.<sup>629</sup> In common with many of the other leisure activities examined by this study, membership of voluntary movements also involved young people spending their spare time under the supervision of an adult authority figure, which offers further evidence of the problems rural youth encountered, in finding leisure spaces beyond adult surveillance.<sup>630</sup> This supervision did of course, also extend to members of voluntary associations in urban areas but it is

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<sup>628</sup> M. Roof, A Survey of Girls Leisure in England and Wales (Edinburgh: T. & A. Constable, 1935); KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Report on Youth Work in Westmorland, (July 1946 – March 1947).

<sup>629</sup> John Gillis quoted in C. Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 120. See also, Springhall, Youth, Empire and Society, pp. 124-126.

<sup>630</sup> M. Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being a Rural Youth: Inclusive and Exclusive Lifestyles', Social and Cultural Geography, 9, 1 (2008), p. 11.

argued that in Lakeland, these organizations often served to reinforce the intergenerational nature of young people's leisure in village communities.

### Before State Intervention: 1930s Voluntary Youth Organizations

Character training was a central preoccupation for many of the voluntary youth movements that originated in the late nineteenth century and early 1900s, and which offered an alternative to commercialized and 'passive' leisure activities such as the cinema or gambling, popular among young workers.<sup>631</sup> Character training involved both the body, through physical outdoors activities and the mind, via education in morality, rights and responsibilities and was intended to teach young people how to be better citizens.<sup>632</sup> Early historical work on the origins of voluntary organizations which targeted young workers emphasized their militaristic and imperialistic agenda, especially in relation to those led by Baden-Powell.<sup>633</sup> More recent research has demonstrated how this changed in the inter-war years, when ideas of good citizenship were more often related to concerns over the use of leisure, especially in the case of working-class youth.<sup>634</sup> As David Fowler argued, the 'inter-war years were significant ones in the history of the British youth movements. A reorientation of youth work was instituted during these years which was less a matter of design than a hurried response to the increasing affluence of young wage-earners and the new leisure opportunities becoming available to them.'<sup>635</sup> This certainly helps to explain the proliferation of such

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<sup>631</sup> Fowler, The First Teenagers, p. 138.

<sup>632</sup> See for example, A. E. Morgan, Young Citizen, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1943), p. 122.

<sup>633</sup> S. Hynes, The Edwardian Turn of Mind (London: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 17; J. Springhall, 'The Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism in Relation to British Youth Movements, 1908-1930', International Review of Social History, 16 (1971), pp. 126; p. 136; J. Gillis, 'Conformity and Rebellion: Contrasting Styles of English and German Youth, 1900-1933', History of Education Quarterly, 13, 2 (1973), pp. 249-60.

<sup>634</sup> Proctor, '(Uni)forming Youth'; Fowler, The First Teenagers, Ch. 6.

<sup>635</sup> Fowler, The First Teenagers, p. 159.

organizations in the inter-war period.<sup>636</sup> These movements also contributed to contemporary discourse on the importance of cultivating a healthy body and mind through the right use of leisure. In this respect, they helped support a moral geography of the countryside which centred on disciplining the body through physical activities, hiking, climbing, camping and, in the process, the character.<sup>637</sup> From the mid-1930s, the threat of right wing regimes in Europe and their associated youth movements prompted a change of focus in England, which led to greater attention being placed on the physical fitness of the nation and especially young workers. The following section, therefore, considers the role of voluntary organizations in the leisure experiences of young people in 1930s Lakeland and explores the ways in which membership of such groups informed a distinctive sense of place.

The Girls' Friendly Society had a number of branches in Lakeland during the 1930s, including both Ambleside and Grasmere. The GFS was an Anglican society, established in 1874, to protect and guide young country girls who left home to enter domestic service in towns and cities. The leadership structure of the society had been established in the nineteenth century but remained in place throughout the inter-war years, which helped to reinforce traditional class hierarchies and gender roles, both nationally and at a local level.<sup>638</sup> As we shall see, oral history testimony suggests that the young members of such voluntary groups were very aware of these class dynamics.

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<sup>636</sup> A. Warren, 'Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900-1920', *English Historical Review*, 101, 399 (1986), pp. 376-398.

<sup>637</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, pp. 90-92.

<sup>638</sup> One of the original membership requirements for working-class girls was chastity. An 'indiscretion' meant immediate expulsion from the group. In 1936, however, this condition of membership was abated and Morgan noted that 'respectability' was now the moral requirement, Morgan, *Young Citizen*, p. 124. Although there were branches in rural as well as urban areas, membership was largely drawn from domestic servants, even in the 1930s, as it never managed to shake off 'its servant image', see B. Harrison, 'For Church, Queen and Family: The Girls Friendly Society 1874-1920', *Past and Present*, 61 (1973), pp. 107-138; p. 117. Aside from Harrison, there are few historians who have chosen to examine the GFS in any depth, see C. Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian Britain* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 107-114.



In the GFS, ‘lady associates’ (who were typically upper-class) provided activities for the young women, who met once a week, usually in the associate’s home. A ‘semi-maternal relationship’ between the upper-class Anglican associates and the working-class girl members, was central to the structure of the GFS.<sup>639</sup> AOHG evidence confirms that members of village branches in Lakeland were often drawn from the society’s traditional base of domestic servants.<sup>640</sup>

In Grasmere, the more traditional and deferential social structure of Lakeland villages was maintained between the women associates, who owned large houses, and the servants they employed. In this village, the GFS leader (perhaps unsurprisingly) was Mrs Rawnsley who, assisted by her spinster sisters, arranged activities for the girls and taught them housecraft skills at her home, Allan Bank. AOHG respondents, who had belonged to the GFS, framed their recollections in relation to an experience of visiting one of the ‘big houses’ in their village. As this thesis has demonstrated, the traditional class relationships of Lakeland village communities were often strengthened in the leisure sphere and the young domestic servants who, for an hour a week, spent time in comparatively grand surroundings for GFS meetings, were certainly sensitive to underlying class distinctions,

She [Mrs Rawnsley] used to invite us for tea, I suppose it was the G.F.S. and we used to have tea in the drawing room and we had brown bread which we didn’t have at home, we only had white bread at home but we had brown bread there and you know, cakes and scones and things and waited on. We’d think we were ever so posh.<sup>641</sup>

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<sup>639</sup> B. Harrison, ‘For Church, Queen and Family’, p. 109.

<sup>640</sup> See for instance, M. Roof, *A Survey of Girls’ Leisure*, p. 9; C. Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*; Harrison, ‘For Church, Queen and Family’.

<sup>641</sup> Respondent GN, born 1914.

Memories such as these evoke the more traditional approach which adults in Lakeland communities had towards young people's leisure in the 1930s, as has been identified in earlier chapters.<sup>642</sup> The style of leadership within such groups was often authoritarian and left little room for young people to express their autonomy. As a result, the work of voluntary organizations like the GFS in Lakeland, tended to conform to a particularly localized agenda throughout the 1930s, which reflected and reinforced the intergenerational nature of young people's leisure experiences there. Tammy Proctor argued that for working-class members, movements such as these often represented 'a betrayal of community mores, political principles, and family life', but to young people in small rural communities such as those in Lakeland, membership could actually reinforce existing social relationships and reaffirm the centrality of adults (and village spaces) to the leisure habits of young workers.<sup>643</sup>

It is evident from oral history testimony that young women who belonged to the GFS spent their time engaged in activities which were organized by adult authority figures, as was common across the country. A.E. Morgan for example, noted in his survey of voluntary youth groups, that the Girls' Friendly Society consisted mainly of adults.<sup>644</sup> This undoubtedly affected the nature of the activities on offer, as was particularly evident in the AOHG material, where informants tended to describe GFS meetings as 'sewing classes'. The type of activities on offer through the GFS did not reflect 1930s physical fitness discourse, which placed a growing emphasis on training

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<sup>642</sup> Harrison also found that young working-class members of the GFS often attended events in lavish surroundings, which served to underline the class distinctions between themselves and the upper-class associates, Harrison, 'For Church, Queen and Family', p. 114.

<sup>643</sup> Proctor, '(Uni)forming Youth', p. 103.

<sup>644</sup> Morgan, Young Citizen, p. 120.

the body, as well as the mind.<sup>645</sup> GFS policy reflected an older, Victorian morality, which rejected modern methods of educating young people in favour of traditionally gendered symbols and ideas of women's ultimate destiny as wives and mothers.<sup>646</sup> Even meetings of GFS groups tended to be located within the more feminine sphere of the home, rather than in a modern hall or meeting room.

For many of the domestic servants who joined the GFS, these activities clearly 'had practical benefits for girls leaving home or seeking work'.<sup>647</sup> Murfin highlighted how gendered activities were typical in the GFS throughout the Lake Counties in the years leading up to the Second World War. In Lakeland, the young women usually spent an hour or so each week engaged in some kind of handicraft, such as embroidery, while their hosts read to them:

We used to go up there [Allan Bank] for the GFS (that's the Girls' Friendly Society). We used to go up for meetings up there... and her sister, Gertrude Simpson, used to show us all sorts of embroidery. Lots of cross stitch and hem stitch and all sorts of fancy stitches and while we were sewing, Mrs Rawnsley used to read to us like Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm or some old book like that and it was lovely listening to her. We used to go up there on a Sunday afternoon to Bible class as well<sup>648</sup>

In this case 'character training' was provided by the lady associates, who offered moral guidance and an education in traditional values, as the young women practised domesticated crafts.<sup>649</sup>

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<sup>645</sup> D. Matless, Landscape and Englishness (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), pp. 90-95; Proctor, '(Uni)Forming Youth', pp. 103-134; J. Matthews, 'They Had Such A Lot Of Fun: The Women's League of Health and Beauty Between the Wars', History Workshop Journal, 30 (Autumn 1990), pp. 22-54; M. Tebbutt, Being Boys: Youth, Leisure and Identity in the Inter-War Years, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), Ch. 2.

<sup>646</sup> Something identified by historians in other voluntary organizations more generally. See Dyhouse, Girls Growing Up; L. Murfin, Popular Leisure in the Lake Counties 1880-1939, (Manchester: MUP, 1990), pp. 156-7.

<sup>647</sup> Murfin, Popular Leisure, p. 154.

<sup>648</sup> Respondent GN, born 1914.

<sup>649</sup> M. Rooff, A Survey of Girls' Leisure, p. 8.

For young women living in relatively isolated villages, however, joining the society offered an additional evening's entertainment and sociability; oral history testimony from the AOHG archive suggests that it was the need for social company and friendship, rather than an organization's lofty aims which attracted young workers. Murfin also discovered from her interviewees that those who attended Girls' Friendly Society meetings in the 1930s largely did so because 'it was a night out'.<sup>650</sup> After a long day of (often physical) work, the girls valued the opportunity to sit in a warm house and chat with their peers, rather than pursuing more vigorous outdoor or physical leisure occupations. One woman recalled how after a long day at work, [as a domestic servant] she would fall asleep during GFS meetings,

...when it was our day off and it would be about three o'clock when I'd finished [work] and I used to go to the Girls' Friendly Society that was run by a Miss Routledge: she was an old character in Ambleside. I automatically used to fall asleep and it was a big joke amongst the girls! I always went to sleep, 'cos I was tired.<sup>651</sup>

Indeed, many of the young servants who were members of the GFS were 'glad to spend a considerable part of their leisure in restful and sedentary pursuits.'<sup>652</sup> Such groups provided young countrywomen who worked long hours with important opportunities for socializing, whilst reinforcing the involvement of adults which characterized the leisure experiences more generally of young people in Lakeland.

The centrality of the village to the leisure experiences of young women in Lakeland is also very clear, although membership of such voluntary organizations did not totally preclude opportunities for spending time beyond this environment. Murfin, for instance, uncovered 'a very wide range' of other creative and social activities which

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<sup>650</sup> Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, p. 154.

<sup>651</sup> Respondent CF, born 1910.

<sup>652</sup> Morgan, *Young Citizen*, p. 120.

the GFS offered in the Lake Counties, including performing plays and giving concerts.<sup>653</sup> Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, however, it was the more domesticated activities which provided young women with unexpected chances for travel. One woman recalled that several members from her local GFS group visited London as part of a sewing competition where, ‘they did some embroidery and went up to London to the Albert Hall and I think it was Princess Mary that presented them with a certificate... three of them went up to London for the presentation and I think that would be the Girls’ Friendly Society.’<sup>654</sup> As this description indicates, the chance to travel outside of the region was tempered by restrictions associated with traditional expectations of gender; young women could compete on a national stage, but as with many of the sporting activities discussed in Chapter Four, their competition was limited to ‘typically’ feminine pursuits, such as embroidery. Class dynamics were evident here, too, as the girls’ work was judged by a member of the Royal family. In this way, the society’s ‘hostility to feminism and its encouragement of deference’ were maintained, even outside the village.<sup>655</sup> There were other occasions in the 1930s which allowed the girls to visit different parts of the country in their leisure time. Several AOHG respondents described another trip to London, for a GFS singing competition, which involved first winning several local stages:

Then when I was eighteen... I used to do all the singing for socials... Well we went in for a competition for GFS... and I won at Windermere and I won at Barrow and I got up to London. And I had to sing in the Church Hall at the back of the Albert Hall.<sup>656</sup>

Although this young woman did not win the London leg of the competition, her earlier successes led her to enter another contest run by a national newspaper, which also

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<sup>653</sup> Murfin, *Popular Leisure*, p. 154.

<sup>654</sup> Respondent GN, born 1914.

<sup>655</sup> Harrison, ‘For Church, Queen and Family’, p. 124.

<sup>656</sup> Respondent AU, born 1912.

involved travelling around the region to other competitive events. Her GFS membership had elements of both freedom and limitation, providing her with the possibility of spending time in cities such as London, which exposed her and other young women, to the prospect of travel and leisure time away from the limits of local villages. At the same time, these opportunities continued to be shaped by the involvement of adults, whether accompanying the young women on such visits or judging their work at competitions.

When girls did leave the confines of the village to travel to other parts of the country, the GFS attempted to ensure that a strong moral code, seen as a sign of good character, remained at the forefront of young women's minds. This emanated from the Victorian mores on which the Society was based, and indicates a self-consciousness within the GFS of the importance of maintaining what were perceived as specifically rural values. One AOHG informant, for example, described a GFS poster which was displayed at a local train station,

...there was a general waiting room and a ladies waiting room... that was nicely furnished with horse-hair sort of sofas round the walls, a large table in the middle with one or two periodicals on it and a bible and on the walls there were fascinating bits of information, advising people to stay at the G.F.S. - the Girls' Friendly Society - Hostel if you were going to London and to be very careful if you were going to the city that you didn't catch venereal diseases; now this was very interesting to us but we'd no idea what it meant.<sup>657</sup>

By the 1930s, many studies had been published which suggested 'that urban living produced physical and moral degeneracy amongst city dwellers', a criticism often levelled at young people in particular.<sup>658</sup> Ascribing different qualities to the characters and behaviour of urban and rural youth was not new to the inter-war years, however. In

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<sup>657</sup> Respondent GI, born 1915.

<sup>658</sup> D. Pomfret, *Young People and the European City: Age Relations in Nottingham and Saint-Etienne* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 199.

the late 1870s, a senior figure in the GFS had claimed that ‘chastity could not be guaranteed in urban members’; the implication being that the morality of rural GFS members was less questionable.<sup>659</sup> The interviewee’s comments indicate how a moral geography of the countryside was reinforced by the suggestion that ‘bad conduct’ emanated ‘from the interior of the city.’<sup>660</sup> The poster’s implicit criticism of the city helped to reinforce a sense of border maintenance between rural and urban areas, as the anonymity of the city, a potential source of danger, was contrasted with safe and ‘authentic’ village spaces, where everyone knew each other.<sup>661</sup> The power of this moral geography remained strong in this respondent’s recollections of the countryside as a safer and more moral location than the city, and combined with a professed sexual innocence, which was an integral part of a girl’s identity as a member of a rural community.<sup>662</sup> Membership of voluntary organizations in Lakeland also reinforced the centrality of the village to this identity, to the extent that even when young women left their villages behind, they still found themselves in places shaped by adult surveillance and contemporary notions of respectability.<sup>663</sup>

This view of the countryside as a moral space permeated the work of other youth movements in the 1930s, including the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, many of whose activities were crafted around outdoors activities and the annual camp, which was usually held in some picturesque location, either on the coast or further inland. The countryside offered not only an aesthetic release from urban industrial landscapes but

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<sup>659</sup> Harrison, ‘For Church, Queen and Family’, p. 118.

<sup>660</sup> Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, p. 13; Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 68.

<sup>661</sup> Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, pp. 19-20. Harrison, ‘For Church, Queen and Family’, p. 119.

<sup>662</sup> Adverts such as this were common in the inter-war years and working-class women in urban as well as rural areas, were often ignorant of such matters. It is the notion that, despite similar levels of ignorance, rural young women were (whether accurately or not), perceived as more innocent than those in towns and cities, that is interesting.

<sup>663</sup> Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, p. 9.

also provided a fitting arena for activities such as camping and tracking, which were thought to be useful for training the character and the body. John Springhall's work on voluntary youth movements in the early decades of the twentieth century, for example, described how 'camping provided a pastoral frame of moral reference for British youth movements.'<sup>664</sup> Such emphases complemented a wider discourse in the 1930s, which centred on 'the art of right living', whereby outdoors activities, such as 'hiking, camping and map-reading could help to create a nation which was intellectually, morally, physically and spiritually healthy.'<sup>665</sup> It was thought that such activities, set within an 'authentic' rural landscape, would help young workers to become good citizens and a 'powerful drive to remove adolescents... from central city areas was made manifest in organized holiday and school camps... and clubs offering outdoor activities in this period'.<sup>666</sup> For the Scouting and Guiding movements, these were intended to mould generations of citizens in not only the right use of leisure but skills such as initiative, fortitude and teamwork. The 'discovery of the countryside' which the Scouts and Guides encouraged, was meant to teach young workers how to behave, as a 'kind of counter-offensive against those who threatened controls upon access to, and behaviour in, the countryside'.<sup>667</sup> In Lakeland, such ideas reinforced not only the moral geography attached to the countryside but the centrality of the local landscape to the formation of young people's leisure identities.

Early historians of voluntary youth movements, such as John Springhall, highlighted that the motivation of many voluntary youth movements was to ensure the

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<sup>664</sup> J. Springhall, *Youth, Empire and Society*, p. 108.

<sup>665</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 62. For more on this in relation to specific outdoor pursuits, see Chapter Four.

<sup>666</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 91; Pomfret, *Young People and the European City*, p. 199.

<sup>667</sup> A. Coutrot, 'Youth Movements in France in the 1930s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 5, 23 (1970), pp. 23-35; p. 10; Pomfret, *Young People and the European City*, p. 238.



survival of the existing social order within an imperialistic agenda.<sup>668</sup> Although this view has been modified by subsequent studies, in 1930s Lakeland, movements such as the Scouts and Guides, in addition to the GFS, certainly continued to reinforce both existing class relationships and the intergenerational nature of young people's leisure within local villages. Authority figures, such as Sunday school teachers, generally acted as leaders of village troops and companies.<sup>669</sup> The style of leadership evident in local branches and clubs was another way in which young people's leisure was largely confined to spaces defined by adults. A more middle-class membership has often been ascribed to both the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, but records from 1930s Lakeland highlight the similar backgrounds which many of the members shared with young women from the GFS.<sup>670</sup> The Ambleside District Ranger Company, for instance, counted a parlourmaid, a dairymaid and a shop assistant among its members, clearly not girls who had remained in school after the age of fourteen.<sup>671</sup>

It is also evident that several young women in the Ambleside Company had relatively long service records in the movement and had been Guides before moving on into the older Rangers group. This contrasts with urban accounts of Guiding in the 1930s, which frequently recorded the difficulties such groups faced once members left school because of competition from commercialized entertainments, such as the cinema and dance hall.<sup>672</sup> As interest in the opposite sex grew during the mid-teen years, it became harder and harder in towns and cities to attract young workers of this age to

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<sup>668</sup> Springhall, Youth, Empire and Society; Springhall, 'The Boy Scouts, Class and Militarism', p.126; 136. See also, J. S. Hynes, The Edwardian Turn of Mind, p. 17; J. Gillis, 'Conformity and Rebellion', pp. 249-60.

<sup>669</sup> C.S. Orwin, (University of Oxford Agricultural Economics Research Institute) Country Planning: A Study of Rural Problems (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), pp. 164-5.

<sup>670</sup> This also supports Tammy Proctor's findings that the membership of these organizations may have been more diverse than once thought.

<sup>671</sup> KAC WDSO42/16/3, Ambleside District Rangers, 1935-37, no page numbers.

<sup>672</sup> Morgan, Young Citizen, p. 115; p. 123; Fowler, The First Teenagers, p. 138; p. 142; Langhamer, Women's Leisure, p. 76.

clubs and organizations which had a single-sex policy. In Lakeland, however, working-class girls of this age remained linked to the Guides after many of their urban contemporaries had left such groups behind. A likely explanation is the social opportunities they provided in the absence of commercial leisure alternatives, which as we have seen, helped to maintain the village's role as a key site for such activities of these groups. These activities also provided an important point of social contact for young people who lived in more remote areas of the region.<sup>673</sup> Despite the fact that many young female workers remained loyal to these groups into their mid-teens, the whole purpose of the Guiding movements was clearly lost on some members. The activity log for 1935, for example, recorded one meeting when 'Miss Greenwood [the District Commissioner] gave a lecture on Guiding which was very interesting indeed. She asked us what we came to Guides for, we said fun but Miss Greenwood said, We come to Guides, to be good citizens and have a Good Character.'<sup>674</sup>

Unlike the generally home-centred pursuits of the GFS, Girl Guiding activities often took place in the open air, part of the move 'towards happy citizenship, through natural rather than through artificial means.'<sup>675</sup> The Guides, like the Scouts, rejected homogenized commercial leisure habits and promoted a return to outdoor pursuits, which included 'singing round the camp fire and learning to love the freedom and the wonder of the "out of doors"'.<sup>676</sup> Spending time in the countryside, it was postulated, had 'an effect both physical and mental which is not like anything else.'<sup>677</sup> Again, we

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<sup>673</sup> J. Thistlethwaite, Cumbrian Women Remember: Lake District Life in the Early 1900s, (Kendal: Thyme Press, 1995; 2000), p. 24.

<sup>674</sup> KAC WDSO 42/16/3, Natland Girl Guides Log Book 1935-7, 14 November 1935. For more on this, see S. Todd, 'Flappers and Factory Lads: Youth and Youth Culture in Interwar Britain', History Compass, 4, 4 (2006), p. 719; Proctor, '(Uni)forming Youth', pp. 103-43.

<sup>675</sup> KAC WDSO 42/16/3, What Are Guides? (c.1933), p. 3.

<sup>676</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>677</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

can see a moral geography of rural spaces, which was intended to aid young people on the road to good citizenship.

Membership of uniformed youth organizations in Lakeland provided rural young people with a further connection to the landscape, although the ‘adventure’ element of such outdoor activities had rather different connotations for rural members. A central attraction of Guide and Scout groups in towns and cities, for instance, was the possibility of travelling to the countryside to camp and hike in unfamiliar places.<sup>678</sup> Urban Scout troops often travelled long distances to attend their annual camp, opportunities that provided ‘the potential of excitement and adventure’, and which were pleasant contrasts with the ‘noise and dirt of urban existence, the unimaginativeness and urban squalor’ in which many of them lived and worked.<sup>679</sup> Not all Guides and Scouts made long journeys to some distant beauty spot, however. In towns and cities such as Huddersfield, which were close to the countryside for example, Scout troops ‘went camping on nearby Lindley Moor, rather than travelling to Scotland or even to other parts of Yorkshire’.<sup>680</sup> Several AOHG respondents recalled the geographical restrictions of their activities in the 1930s, when many (if not all) local Guide and Scout groups never tracked, hiked or camped more than a few miles away from where they lived. Local Guide companies in Lakeland, for instance, tended to camp close to their homes in Crook and Windermere.<sup>681</sup> One female informant recalled that her brother, as a member of the Grasmere Scout troop, ‘never left the village’ before 1945.<sup>682</sup> Perhaps this is something of an overstatement, yet it underlines the idea that these movements,

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<sup>678</sup> Springhall, *Youth Empire and Society*, p. 98.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid.

<sup>680</sup> Proctor, ‘(Uni)forming Youth’, p. 110. Lindley Moor stands approximately three miles North West of Huddersfield town centre.

<sup>681</sup> Crook is a village between Windermere and Kendal.

<sup>682</sup> Respondent HU, born 1934.

in Lakeland at least, offered only a limited sense of adventure and freedom. Although Scouts in northern industrial centres such as Sheffield and Huddersfield also used the surrounding countryside as a setting for many of their activities, there was a much clearer contrast to the other commercialized activities on offer within the towns themselves. In rural Lakeland, it was the cumulative effect of remaining within and around the limited area of the village that helped to produce a distinctive leisure identity and sense of place for young workers.

As a sister organization to the Boy Scouts, Guiding offered its young female members a number of outdoor activities, and Guide companies in Lakeland regularly organized activities such as camping and evening hikes.<sup>683</sup> A central reason why Girl Guides were encouraged to take part in outdoor activities was to ensure that they were physically healthy by ‘promoting their physical development; making them capable of keeping good homes and bringing up good children’.<sup>684</sup> A Hiking Log Book for a Guide troop in nearby Hawkshead, for example, recorded the range of outdoor pursuits which the girls enjoyed throughout the 1930s.<sup>685</sup> Entries reflect the importance which the surrounding landscape played in providing the young women with a space in which to cycle, walk and practice making camp fires:

Captain and the Guides and I went for a hike up in the fields behind Colthouse. We did not go for very long as the weather did not look very promising. We lighted two fires and we roasted potatoes in the ashes and cooked an egg in an orange some turned out allright [sic] and some were not as good as they might have been but we hope the next we cook will be better.<sup>686</sup>

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<sup>683</sup> KAC, WDSO 42/16/3, Hawkshead District Hiking Log Book, no page numbers.

<sup>684</sup> Morgan, Young Citizen, p. 122.

<sup>685</sup> Although the log book is dated 1932, the entries continued to 1937.

<sup>686</sup> KAC, WDSO 42/16/3, Hawkshead District Hiking Log Book.

As we can see from this extract, even if they were able to spend time in and around the local countryside, young women in Lakeland were also supervised to a degree, which again highlights the importance of adults in young people's leisure. As an organization which offered leisure activities that to an extent, branched away from traditional gendered roles, the approach of the Girl Guides was somewhat paradoxical, allowing 'girls to break free from the constraints of prescribed behaviour' whilst reinforcing their place in society.<sup>687</sup>

On Thursday July 14<sup>th</sup> Captain Dorothy and I met at Esthwaite Hall Bridge at 2 o'clock on our bicycles [sic]. We cycled to Graythwaite then we went over Green hose it was a rough road. We had not gone far down the other side when we decided we should have tea, so we went through a gate on the left. We lighted [sic] a fire and soon had the billy boiling, we cooked eggs in oranges which were lovely as soon as tea was over we cleared away and cycled round by Dale Park and back home after enjoying our first hike on our Bikes.<sup>688</sup>

These more masculine, outdoors activities were tempered in a number of other ways.

Cooking was an integral part of any activities which took place outdoors and at the end of a hike or during a camp, a fire was inevitably lit and the girls practised their improvised cooking skills.

The uniform designed for camping also expressed gender distinctions:

*Did they wear skirts? They never wore trousers, presumably?*

R2. Oh no... Didn't even have shorts.

R. No, we didn't even have shorts then. For going to camp, you had the camp overall.

R2. ...which was a perfectly plain, short sleeved dress in sort of cotton, blue cotton, which was sort of more or less straight up and down.

R. With a guide belt round.

R2. The only shape it gave was when you put your belt on, you see, and that gave it the shape.<sup>689</sup>

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<sup>687</sup> T. Proctor, *On My Honour*, p. 108.

<sup>688</sup> KAC, WDSO 42/16/3, *Hawkshead District Hiking Log Book*.

<sup>689</sup> Respondent IV, born 1919.

This recollection illustrates the tensions which existed between young women's femininity and modern ideas about the body during the inter-war years, especially, perhaps, in more conservative rural communities, such as those in Lakeland. The uniforms worn by members of the Scouts and Guides have been cited as great levellers in terms of class and gender but clear distinctions remained, particularly for girls, and the gender-specific uniforms 'also marked the separate sex structure' of the movements.<sup>690</sup> Girls were not permitted to wear shorts even for practical purposes when camping or hiking, which as Proctor argued, pointed to 'the important role of uniform in maintaining the gender distinctions vital to Scouting and Guiding ideologies.'<sup>691</sup> It is interesting that rather than attempting to challenge the differences signified by their uniforms, the girls chose instead to accentuate their femininity by using a belt to emphasize their bodies underneath the shapeless overalls. Physical fitness and disciplining the body were central features of character training philosophy in the inter-war years. Scholars such as Matthews, however, have highlighted the dichotomy this presented in regard to 'scantily-clad female bodies' on display within organizations which promoted 'desexualised fun'.<sup>692</sup> Although the camp overalls were far from scanty, young women were paying more attention to their figures and showing them off, as this young woman's desire to modify her uniform indicates.

The conflict between a modern programme of activities and traditional gender roles was further evidenced in the range of badges to which Girl Guides could work. Although they were able to earn badges for fire-lighting and semaphore, other badges

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<sup>690</sup> Proctor, '(Uni)forming Youth', p. 52; p. 118 & p. 120. See also, G. McCracken, Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp. 60-61.

<sup>691</sup> Proctor, '(Uni)forming Youth', p. 122.

<sup>692</sup> Matthews, "'They Had Such a Lot of Fun": The Women's League of Health and Beauty Between the Wars', History Workshop Journal, 30 (1990), p. 33.

reinforced their primary position in society as mothers and homemakers by focussing on more gender-specific activities. Indeed, the badges available to Guides were ‘in many cases for the same accomplishments for which the Girls Friendly Society awarded prizes; piano-playing, thrift, cookery and so on’, and in local villages, badges for stalking and tracking were worked towards alongside those for making clothes for dolls, care giving (sick nurse and child nurse) and domestic skills including homecraft, embroidery and cooking.<sup>693</sup>

As a younger organization founded in the inter-war years, the Young Farmers’ Club (YFC) movement offered a more progressive outlook than the other groups examined in this chapter, which had been established in the late-Victorian and Edwardian periods.<sup>694</sup> These clubs were distinct from many other contemporary youth organizations during the 1930s, for a number of reasons. They were mixed-sex clubs, whose membership extended from ten to 25 years of age, rather than the more standard range of 14-21. More than any other voluntary youth group during this period, the YFC was specifically aimed at young countrymen and women, and reflected contemporary concerns about the drift from the land and the stagnation of rural social life, which were central preoccupations of a range of academics, social commentators and the State throughout the inter-war years.<sup>695</sup> If ‘traditional’ rural life was to survive ‘modern mechanized civilization’, it was believed that young countrymen and women needed to

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<sup>693</sup> Murfin, Popular Leisure, pp. 156-7; KAC WDSO 42/16/3, Natland Girl Guides Log Book 1935-7.

<sup>694</sup> The first club was formed in Devon 1920, influenced by the ‘4H’ clubs in Canada and America. See H.E. Bracey, English Rural Life, (London: Routledge, 1959; 2002), pp. 228-9; Brassley *et al.*, The English Countryside, p. 70.

<sup>695</sup> H. Morris, The Village College. Being a Memorandum on the Provision of Educations and Social Facilities For the Countryside. With Special Reference to Cambridgeshire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924); Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, The Practical Education of Women for Rural Life Report of the Sub-Committee of the Interdepartmental Committee of the Ministry of Agriculture and Board of Education (London: HMSO, 1929).

be educated for and encouraged towards, a life on the land.<sup>696</sup> At the core of the Young Farmers' movement was a 'vocational element' that combined with recreational interests to create something rather 'unique in juvenile organizations' of the 1930s.<sup>697</sup> The organization was intended to give future generations of rural citizens practical knowledge and an improved social life. Rural citizenship in this sense focussed on keeping young people in the countryside through extended education in country life, something which also resonated with wider debates in the 1930s regarding the need for character training and citizenship.

YFC policies encouraged young people to exercise a greater degree of independence than was the case with the other youth movements described here.<sup>698</sup> Members were afforded some autonomy and self-government, both through the YFC's organizational structure and its promotion of animal husbandry. As Madeline Roofff observed of the movement in the mid-1930s:

A feature of the club development is its training in self-government. The young members elect their chairman, secretary, and treasurer, and conduct their own meetings. Both boys and girls share in these duties, a girl commonly acting as secretary and quite often as chairman of the club. An adult acts as club leader, and there is also a small adult advisory committee, usually consisting of representatives of local landowners, farmers, and other interested persons.<sup>699</sup>

The YFC combined an emphasis on character training with a strong sense of community. Animal husbandry, for example, was intended to promote 'a concern for animal welfare', which 'would be transferred to a concern for the community, whilst the sacrifice of spare time could be transmuted into creative and rewarding endeavour.'<sup>700</sup>

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<sup>696</sup> Morgan *Young Citizen*, p. 129. See also, *The Practical Education of Women*.

<sup>697</sup> Morgan, *Young Citizen*, p. 129.

<sup>698</sup> *Ibid*, p. 126.

<sup>699</sup> Roofff, *A Survey of Girls' Leisure*, p. 22.

<sup>700</sup> Thompson, 'Agricultural Education', in Brassley et al. *The English Countryside*, p. 60.



As the findings of Roof's survey indicated, however, whilst young members were afforded some independence, they were still supervised by suitable adults who gave 'support by advice and encouragement'.<sup>701</sup> Perhaps because outdoor activities such as animal husbandry and raising crops could entail a considerable amount of physical exertion in themselves, the YFC placed little emphasis on developing the physical fitness of its members.

In common with youth groups in Lakeland, YFCs helped to sustain the intergenerational nature of young people's leisure in the region. It is also evident from Roof's study that young women and girls had a more active and equal role than was the case in other youth movements. As a mixed-sex organization, Young Farmers' Clubs encouraged young women to participate in the same activities as male members.

Footage from the British Pathé archive of an event early in history of the YFC highlights this dimension of the organization. In one newsreel, for example, young women can be seen parading cattle for inspection at a show in Devon, alongside their male counterparts.<sup>702</sup> Whilst, in some ways, this was clearly an advertisement for the YFC in its early years, it was nevertheless indicative of the progressive and distinctive policy which the organization pursued, as becomes evident if the details of the footage are examined more closely. The young women featured, for example, can be seen to be wearing trousers; a clear contrast with the Girl Guides, who (even when camping) were required to adhere to traditional notions of female respectability in uniform and dress. As Tinkler observed, the mixed-sex membership of such organizations not only signified a modern attitude to youth but importantly, allowed adults to supervise (and to

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<sup>701</sup> Morgan, *Young Citizen*, p. 128.

<sup>702</sup> British Pathé Online Archive, 'United Dairies Limited Young Farmers Club', at Hemyock, Devon, (1922): <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/englands-first-calf-club/query/young+farmers+club>, (accessed April 2012).

an extent, control) heterosexual relationships at a time when many more opportunities to mix were opening up in commercialized venues.<sup>703</sup>

Although the focus of YFCs was predominantly rural, clubs were not confined to the countryside and during the 1930s a number sprang up in towns and cities across the country, including Bolton and London.<sup>704</sup> Bee-keeping, for example, proved popular in towns, as clearly husbandry of larger farm animals was an impractical proposition in most urban settings. In common with a small number of the sporting activities examined in Chapter Four, the YFC was one of the few examples of a youth organization in which young workers in towns and cities adopted leisure habits specifically associated with life in the countryside. As such, it was an unusual (albeit small-scale) instance of a two way cultural exchange between rural and urban youth.<sup>705</sup>

As this examination has illustrated, in 1930s Lakeland, voluntary youth organizations served to reinforce a number of distinctive elements in the leisure experiences of young workers, which largely stemmed from the involvement of adults within local branches of such groups and the older, late-Victorian and Edwardian ethos under which they had been established. The village continued to play a central role in the leisure identities of young workers, and the activities which these groups offered reinforced a moral geography of rural spaces. In common with many sporting activities

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<sup>703</sup> Tinkler, 'Cause For Concern', p. 249; p. 252.

<sup>704</sup> Roof, A Survey of Girls' Leisure, p. 22; Morgan, Young Citizen, p. 128; D. Edwards-Rees, A Rural Youth Service. Suggestions for Youth Work in the Countryside, (London: J.K. Whitehead, 1944), p. 77.

<sup>705</sup> The significance of the YFC movement to young workers in 1930s Lakeland is, however, is questionable. The organization was in its infancy, with a total of three clubs in the whole of Westmorland, only one of which was in Lakeland. No AOHG respondents discussed their membership of the YFC in the 1930s and the lack of archival documentation left behind relating to the inter-war years also raises questions about the influence of this group in Lakeland during the years before 1939. This group has, however, been included for examination within the 1930s discussion, in order to contextualize the analysis of the movement from wartime onwards. As we shall see, local youth service records indicate that the clubs flourished in Lakeland after 1939.

in the region, young women's participation in outdoor pursuits, such as camping and hiking, were limited by gendered expectations, including appropriate dress and close supervision. Towards the end of the 1930s, the National Fitness Council (NFC) a new external organization, attempted to involve itself in the leisure habits of young workers in the region, as the physical fitness of the nation (and especially young people) became a growing concern of the State, rather than just voluntary bodies. The next part of the discussion, therefore, moves on to trace the establishment and development of statutory involvement in youth work from the mid-1930s, with specific reference to how national policy was received in this primarily rural county.

#### The National Fitness Campaign: A Move towards Statutory Provision in Youth Work

The first signs of a move towards a cohesive, state-led programme of work with young people began to emerge in the 1930s, when this new direction signalled a change in the rather *ad hoc* nature of voluntary provision in the inter-war period. As the analysis so far has shown, the involvement of authority figures in youth work in 1930s Lakeland meant that young people's experiences as members of these groups often mirrored established leisure patterns within these communities. The gradual involvement of the state in such matters from the mid-1930s, however, led to much greater professionalism in the general approach to leisure-based work with young people. The NFC, created with the passing of the Physical Training and Recreation Act in 1937, aimed 'to improve the physical and mental health of the community through physical recreation.'<sup>706</sup> Its policies, aimed in particular at the young, resonated with the 1930s

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<sup>706</sup> NA ED 113/61, Central Council for Recreative and Physical Training Report, 1936-1937, p. 36.

fashion for cultivating a healthy body and a healthy mind and to mould good citizens.<sup>707</sup> Its success was limited, however, not least because of its short-lived nature.<sup>708</sup> A small but growing number of studies have considered the work of the NFC and its wider relationship to citizenship discourse.<sup>709</sup> Others have examined the organization from the perspective of a moral geography of the countryside during the inter-war period.<sup>710</sup> Charlotte MacDonald, in an international study of national fitness campaigns in New Zealand, Canada, Australia and Great Britain, argued that analysis of the NFC can reveal interesting insights into ‘being modern’ in the mid-century decades.<sup>711</sup> Both Matless’ analysis of the NFC in relation to representations of the countryside and Charlotte Macdonald’s examination, set in the context of youth, leisure and modernity, therefore provide interesting starting points for the study of policy implementation in a rural locality such as Lakeland.<sup>712</sup> Examining the reception of the NFC in Lakeland provides an insight into how social change and modern ideas of leisure were viewed in rural communities in the years leading up to the Second World War. As this thesis has argued, young people’s leisure experiences in Lakeland played a part in maintaining connections with the past and a sense of local distinctiveness. In contrast, the National Fitness Council’s policy offered new meanings for what young people’s leisure could

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<sup>707</sup> D. Matless, ‘Moral Geographies of English Landscape’, *Landscape Research*, 22, 2 (1997), p. 149; A. Warren, ‘Sport Youth and Gender in Britain, 1880-1940’, in J.C. Binfield & J. Stevenson, *Sport Culture and Politics*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), p. 67.

<sup>708</sup> See for example, Official Report of a House of Commons Debate, National Fitness Committee, HC Deb vol. 347, 25 May 1939, cc. 2492-3,

<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1939/may/25/national-fitness-council>; National Fitness Council HC Deb., vol. 356, 18 January 1940, cc. 214-5,

[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1940/jan/18/national-fitness-council#S5CV0356P0\\_19400118\\_HOC\\_165](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1940/jan/18/national-fitness-council#S5CV0356P0_19400118_HOC_165); Board of Education HC Deb, vol. 357, 07 February 1940, cc. 325-37, [http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1940/feb/07/board-of-education#S5CV0357P0\\_19400207\\_HOC\\_510](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1940/feb/07/board-of-education#S5CV0357P0_19400207_HOC_510), (all accessed March 2012); Jeffs, *Young People*, p. 22.

<sup>709</sup> I. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Managing the Body: Beauty, Health, and Fitness in Britain 1880-1939*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); C. MacDonald, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern: National Fitness in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, 1935-1960*, (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books Limited, 2011); Tebbutt, *Being Boys*, p. 92.

<sup>710</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, pp. 90-95.

<sup>711</sup> Macdonald, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern*, p. 11.

<sup>712</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*; D. Matless, ‘Moral Geographies of English Landscape’, *Landscape Research*, 22, 2 (1997), pp. 141-155; C. MacDonald, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern*.

represent, addressing a national agenda rather than specifically localized issues which, in the deteriorating international climate of the late 1930s, was constituted in terms of citizenship and modern ideas about the body.

Large organized displays of physical exercises were a core activity of the NFC throughout the late 1930s, as young people and their bodies were put on show, in minimal clothing whilst performing set movements to music or instruction.<sup>713</sup> The NFC also used the cinema as propaganda to publicize large groups of young people being active in a 'modern' way, which reflected the growing visual culture of the 1930s.<sup>714</sup> Pathé found these displays very visually appealing and captured this aspect of popular leisure culture as it began to develop via the NFC. Footage of one physical activity display, for example, featured Oliver Stanley (MP for Westmorland and President of the Board of Education) and the Minister for Health, looking on as bare-chested young men from Battersea demonstrated their fitness and therefore their good characters, with a series of somersaults, star jumps and vaults.<sup>715</sup> These exercises took place in a gymnasium, a 'modern site for modern bodies'.<sup>716</sup> As with other inter-war youth movements, this national fitness campaign emphasized service to the community. The commentary on the Battersea boys' film reel intimated how citizenship was at the heart of the new fitness movement, which in urban areas involved practising new types of movement in modern leisure spaces. Matless's examination of the inter-war fitness campaign has shown how national fitness was closely connected to rural spaces and a

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<sup>713</sup> Vinyl records were produced by HMV which allowed listeners to learn and practice exercises in the comfort of their own home, Macdonald, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern*, p. 12.

<sup>714</sup> NA ED 113/61, *Central Council for Recreative and Physical Training Report*, (1936-7).

<sup>715</sup> British Pathé Online Archive: 'Physical Fitness' (1936), <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/physical-fitness/query/keep+fit> (accessed April 2012). See also, Macdonald, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern*, p. 40. Pathé also filmed the Fitness Council's 'Daily Dozen Exercises' for young women, which again featured lithe young bodies, in minimal clothing. See also, NA ED 113/61, *Central Council for Recreative and Physical Training Report*, (1936-1937).

<sup>716</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, p. 91.

moral geography of the countryside.<sup>717</sup> It was perhaps natural that the national fitness movement's emphasis on good citizenship should be tied to the countryside, as much of the 1930s craze for physical activities was based in the countryside and centred on hiking, camping and cycling. The 'outdoor citizen' in national discourse was set against the 'anti-citizen', and was seen to correlate directly to the health of the nation.<sup>718</sup> In the same way that voluntary youth movements such as the Boys Scouts used outdoor activities in the 1930s to promote the health of both the character and body, the state-led fitness campaign also drew on the countryside as a key site in which to develop the citizenship skills of young people.

Given the frequent references to the countryside as a space in which to express one's citizenship, how was NFC policy translated into rural communities themselves? As an organization with statutory powers, the NFC not only suggested a different approach to the spare time of young workers, at the local level it also provided an important challenge to established patterns of leadership and the organization of leisure in Lakeland, which inevitably created friction with the inhabitants of local village communities. As we shall see, the concerns created by the establishment of an NFC Committee in the region also related to wider anxieties during the 1930s regarding the homogenization of leisure in the countryside and the erosion of rural traditions.

The 1937 Act provided for the establishment of county-based National Fitness 'Area Committees', which were expected to work with existing voluntary groups in an advisory capacity, helping to co-ordinate, improve and extend facilities for physical

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<sup>717</sup> Ibid, pp. 90-95.

<sup>718</sup> Ibid, p. 91.

training, largely through grant aid.<sup>719</sup> A Liaison Officer was appointed to the Westmorland Area Committee, whose role was to make visits at regular intervals and report back to the NFC on its progress. Tensions quickly came to the fore between the Committee, composed of local residents and the Liaison Officer, who often recorded not only the lack of progress with the task in hand but also the negative attitude of the Committee towards National Fitness Council objectives. Exasperation at their behaviour frequently characterized his descriptions. The first report he made, for example, noted that the Committee seemed to ‘consist very largely of elderly people disinclined to initiate any vigorous policy’.<sup>720</sup> When a new Chairman was appointed, his ‘principal comment was that the members of the Committee were too old’ and he agreed with the Liaison Officer that ‘some younger people’ should be nominated if any vacancies opened.<sup>721</sup> These reports illustrate how conservative and cautious committee members were in their approach to change. Their aversion to decision making (and therefore progress) proved particularly frustrating to NFC officials, who criticized their ‘innate suspicion of new ideas’. Such resistance was a consistent theme in the local committee’s work in Lakeland (and Westmorland more generally), throughout the late 1930s, and was expressed by the NFC Officer in distinctly generational terms. It was also manifested in other ways which indicated the wider tensions which surrounded border maintenance in rural localities.<sup>722</sup>

As part of the NFC’s programme, it commissioned a nationwide survey into the existing provision of leisure facilities. Returns were sent to local Area Committees,

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<sup>719</sup> Lakeland was covered by a joint committee for the counties of Cumberland and Westmorland, NA ED 113/61, The Central Council of Recreative Physical Training Annual Report 1936-37, p. 36; C.S. Orwin, County Planning, p. 162; Jeffs, Young People.

<sup>720</sup> NA ED 113/2, Cumberland and Westmorland Area Committee Report, 12 January 1938.

<sup>721</sup> NA ED 113/2, Cumberland and Westmorland Area Committee Report, 28 July 1939.

<sup>722</sup> Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, p. 13.

which forwarded them to the NFC, to provide a map of the nation's access to leisure amenities. In Lakeland, the rate of response to the questionnaire was said, generally, to be good. The tone of the replies, however, indicated that local attitudes towards both state involvement in leisure and new ideas about exercise were not always welcoming. As one reply from a Westmorland parish suggested, '[w]e keep fit hear [sic] in the old fashioned way that is hardwork [sic]. But I am sorry to say that few do the same.'<sup>723</sup> Rather than listing the facilities available in the area, this respondent chose instead to make a wider comment on the leisure identity of local people, subtly contrasting it with the habits of outsiders. Once again, it is possible to see how a moral geography of the countryside, in this case, 'old fashioned hardwork' was constructed in opposition to those who were different.

Chapters Three and Four argued that it was important for local communities in 1930s Lakeland to assert a connection to the past through their leisure habits. They also tended to stress the ways in which the character of local people reflected the local landscape, as was clear when the NFC wished to stage a 'Fitness Display' at the annual Grasmere Sports and it proved 'impossible to obtain a team' not only to give the display but to do 'anything else on behalf of the Area Committee'. The NFC Officer blamed the rural nature of the county, its poor communication links and 'the weakness of the county organizations... where they exist'.<sup>724</sup> This lack of support can, however, also be read in terms of the themes outlined above, which as we have seen, were concentrated in the very essence of the Grasmere Sports. The Liaison Officer, as an outsider, appears to have viewed this event purely as a sports show and therefore missed its importance in constructing a local sense of place, which was perhaps not surprising, given that many

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<sup>723</sup> NA ED 113/2, Cumberland and Westmorland National Fitness Area Committee Report, 06 November 1938.

<sup>724</sup> NA ED 113/2, Cumberland and Westmorland National Fitness Area Committee Report, 28 July 1939.



other public events in the inter-war years ‘invariably featured displays of ‘mass physical culture’.<sup>725</sup>

As previous chapters have suggested, such events and the sports included in their programmes, were so inextricably linked in Lakeland to local identity, it is unlikely that an attempt to introduce modern aspects of physical culture into such an atmosphere would have been met with much enthusiasm. Earlier attempts at organizing demonstrations were also met with little interest; a report for January 1938 recorded, ‘again I raised the question of organizing demonstrations this summer. The Committee decided to consider doing something about it at the autumn games. Even so, I was taken to task afterwards for “trying to rush things”’.<sup>726</sup> Here we can see further resistance to external involvement in young people’s leisure activities and to the external organization of leisure in the region more generally. It was also indicative of the difficulties outsiders faced when attempting to introduce modern ideas about young people’s leisure in rural communities. As has been made clear, an older generation in Lakeland was accustomed to organizing and controlling young workers’ leisure in accordance with their own ideas and free from the interference of external bodies. The NFC’s policy, to an extent, therefore threatened established leisure identities and social relationships in Lakeland. By the end of the 1930s, members of the Westmorland Area Committee had been successful in frustrating the implementation of a new direction in young people’s leisure. Nevertheless, at a national level, the establishment of the National Fitness Council, marked the beginning of a more focussed approach to the leisure time of young workers, which would be developed more comprehensively by the Government in the years after 1939.

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<sup>725</sup> Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, pp. 90-94.

<sup>726</sup> NA ED 113/2, *Cumberland and Westmorland National Fitness Area Committee Report*, 12 January 1938.

The Youth Service: A 'Union of Voluntary and Statutory Effort'<sup>727</sup>

Earlier studies on the policy and practice of the wartime youth service have largely been ignored by historians.<sup>728</sup> The most insightful research on this subject has been carried out by Penny Tinkler, who explored the establishment and development of the youth service in England.<sup>729</sup> In particular, she investigated how this state-led initiative shaped the leisure time of young women, predominantly within urban localities. She highlighted the service aspect of the state's intervention in young women's leisure and the way in which this was carried out in distinctly gendered forms. Yet her research not only omitted the experiences of young men, it also provided an almost wholly urbanized account of youth work in wartime and beyond. The discussion which follows, therefore, concentrates on the development of the youth service in a rural setting and analyses its impact on the leisure experiences of both young men and women in Lakeland during the war. Addressing this subject from a specifically rural perspective allows new light to be shed on how young countrymen and women were written and thought about during a turbulent period in the nation's history. The difficulties which the youth service encountered in the countryside and especially in an isolated upland area such as Lakeland, are highlighted and particular attention is devoted to how the County's youth service devised innovations to overcome such obstacles. By continuing the role of the National Fitness Council as an external organizing body, it is argued that the youth service provided a challenge both to the meanings attached to young people's

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<sup>727</sup> H.E. Bracey, Social Provision in Rural Wiltshire, (London: Methuen, 1952), p. 74.

<sup>728</sup> Instead, it is often academics from more of a sociological background who have written the most comprehensive work on this subject. Perhaps because, as Chapter One identified, so many historians of youth omit the war years in their periodization, the youth service has been relatively neglected in the current historiography.

<sup>729</sup> Tinkler, 'An All-Round Education', pp. 385-403; Tinkler, 'Sexuality & Citizenship', pp. 193-217; Tinkler, 'At Your Service', pp. 353-377; Tinkler, 'Youth's Opportunity?', pp. 77-94; Tinkler, 'Cause For Concern', pp. 233-262.

leisure and to existing organizational patterns in the region. The introduction of a professional and centralized leadership style to Lakeland during the war is explored, as the youth service developed new ways of working with young people in their spare time. The tensions caused by these changes are also considered.

Following the outbreak of war, the potentially destabilizing effects of another conflict on the younger generation of citizens prompted the Board of Education to establish a statutory youth service for England and Wales in late 1939.<sup>730</sup> The central purpose of the youth service mirrored that of existing voluntary organizations, in that it saw young workers as in need of guidance and informal education in their leisure time, to ensure their development as rounded future citizens. Accordingly, the Government issued Circular 1486 in which it assumed ‘a direct responsibility’ for ‘the social, physical, and recreative welfare of those boys and girls between the ages of 14 and 20 who have ceased whole-time education’.<sup>731</sup> Under this directive, Local Authorities across England and Wales were charged with forming their own county-wide branches of the youth service. The youth service’s primary role was to co-operate with and co-ordinate the work of existing voluntary organizations.

Wartime signalled a new direction in the meanings of citizenship discourse at a national level, as definitions moved away from ideas which placed the body and

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<sup>730</sup> Tinkler, ‘Sexuality & Citizenship’, pp. 194-6; p. 253. The youth service was run on a county by county basis. Lakeland was, therefore, covered by the wider Westmorland Youth Service. It is possible, however, to extract useful information and figures specifically for the Lakeland region, as documents produced at a county level were usually broken down into specific regions of Westmorland and each village discussed individually.

<sup>731</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box1, Memo on Board of Education Circular 1486 The Service of Youth, 08 January 1940, p. 1; Orwin, Country Planning, p. 163.

exercise at its centre.<sup>732</sup> Instead, older notions of service (in a variety of forms) came to play a central role in what constituted good citizenship and the individual's duty to the nation. In order to meet wartime needs, citizenship rhetoric focussed on service to the nation, the war effort and local communities.<sup>733</sup> Official policy determined that membership of either voluntary organizations, or the youth service itself, would allow young workers to fulfil their service requirements. Young people's place in this redefined concept of service and citizenship often centred on work-related rather than purely leisure-based activities. During the war, service to the community was expressed through war work and generalized tasks, such as gardening and the collection of rubbish and voluntary 'war work' formed a central part of youth service activities.<sup>734</sup> The service component of official policy was certainly evident in the recollections of AOHG respondents, although they tended to discuss their wartime experiences of youth work in terms of the individual organizations to which they belonged, such as the Girl Guides and the Boy Scouts, rather than the youth service itself. In fact, the only AOHG respondent to mention the youth service specifically was an evacuee from a Newcastle Secondary School. Although an outsider in Lakeland, her memory of this period does provide an insight into the extent to which service formed the core aim of state policy in the early years of the war. Her impression of the youth service was largely in relation to unpaid war work, such as collecting salvage or waste paper, as she recalled, '[i]t was called Youth Service because we were supposed to 'do things' to help the war effort'.<sup>735</sup> To this young woman, the youth service was principally a body which helped young people to serve both their local community and the national war effort.

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<sup>732</sup> For more on changing definitions of citizenship in the first half of the twentieth century, see B. Beavan & J. Griffiths, 'The Changing Notion of Citizenship in Britain 1870-1939', *Contemporary British History*, 22, 2 (June 2008), pp. 203-255.

<sup>733</sup> Tinkler, 'Sexuality and Citizenship', pp. 206-211.

<sup>734</sup> NA ED 126/89, A Scheme For A 'Youth Service' in Westmorland, December 1940.

<sup>735</sup> Respondent EH, born 1926.

It is clear from this oral history testimony that, as some youth workers and contemporary commentators feared, the state's approach could more accurately be described as a service *for* youth rather than a service *by* youth.<sup>736</sup> Unsurprisingly then, given the national emphasis, service was a central theme in Westmorland's Scheme for Youth.<sup>737</sup> The idea of service by young people was evident in the programme of activities it proposed and is reinforced by oral history testimony which indicated that unpaid war work was central to activities locally. Types of service were grouped into categories and included 'Service to the district', which included 'beautification of villages...collection of litter, particularly from streams and fells', and 'Service to individuals', such as 'Organization of help for farmers... Clearing snow from paths to houses and cottages'.<sup>738</sup> As this list indicates, service in Lakeland was expressed in specifically rural terms, in this case maintaining village aesthetics. Even leisure organized within this external agency continued to underline young people's connection to rural spaces. Such activities were 'framed by' and helped to maintain the "'natural' beauty of the countryside', which Leyshon identified as central to the construction of young people's identity.<sup>739</sup> Other types of outdoor activities, such as working on local allotments, were also encouraged by the youth service, for example, some young people, 'used to go out and collect nettles which I understand were used medically... [a]nd we also used to go and collect conkers in sacks, and they were used for pig food'.<sup>740</sup> This work could be demanding; one group of young people was tasked for instance, with 'woodfelling, trimming and sawing',

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<sup>736</sup> See O. Wheeler, 'The Service of Youth', Occupational Psychology, 13, 2 (June 1943), pp. 69-73; Tinkler, 'Sexuality and Citizenship', pp. 204-205.

<sup>737</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1 Scheme For a Youth Service For Westmorland, (1940).

<sup>738</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>739</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 9.

<sup>740</sup> Respondent EH, born 1926.

Roughly 400 trees felled, trimmed, graded and sawn ready for selling. We have been asked by various people to supply rustic to replace iron railings which have been taken down by the Government. All members have given up their weekends and nights to help in these acts of service.<sup>741</sup>

The way in which the youth service discussed these efforts could be patronizing, however, and accentuated existing gender distinctions within war work. As one youth worker in Lakeland noted, '[t]he Salvage Campaign is getting on handsomely – no wonder, what with so many pretty girls to carry it on.'<sup>742</sup> This attitude shared similarities with common reactions to the large numbers of young women who moved into the more masculine field of physical labour and agricultural work in wartime, '[w]hether seen in posed shots or snapshots the land girl is almost always long-haired and recognizably feminine'.<sup>743</sup> Similarities between the attitude to land girls and the young female members of the local salvage squad in Lakeland are clear. Wartime 'disrupted gender relations and gendered identities', by 'threatening... dominant models of masculinity, in which women still belonged - ideologically at least - in the home.'<sup>744</sup> If young women could be strong and physically fit like their male counterparts, then their difference was marked out in other ways, such as their appearance. This was a point of continuity with inter-war voluntary organizations such as the Girl Guides which, as we saw earlier, used clothing and appearance to reinforce distinctions between young men and women.

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<sup>741</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1 Youth Work in Westmorland -1<sup>st</sup> Annual Report of the Youth Registration Officer (1942-1943), p. 2.

<sup>742</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, The Torch –Windermere Youth Service Review, No. 1 (February 1942), p. 4.

<sup>743</sup> Matless, Landscape and Englishness, p. 177.

<sup>744</sup> L. Noakes, 'Demobilising the Military Woman: Constructions of Class and Gender in Britain after the First World War', Gender and History, 19, 1 (April 2007), p. 159; P. Summerfield, Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); Tinkler, 'Sexuality and Citizenship', p. 194; P. Summerfield & P. Tinkler (eds.), 'Women's Sexualities: Contest and Control', Women's History Review, Special Issue, 1 (1992).

The wartime focus on service which helped to strengthen the significance of the countryside in young workers' leisure was also evident in the types of activities in which members of existing voluntary organizations in Lakeland were now engaged. Local Scout troops, for example, provided a messenger service to the Home Guard and 'acted as sort of runners... if anything happened at all, anything untoward, like parachutists landing or whatever, we had communications done by the Scouts.'<sup>745</sup> Other Boy Scouts were given more time consuming roles which, again, resonated with the older Baden-Powell ethos of discipline, outdoor activities and service. Some spent weeks at a time camping overnight engaged in 'look out' duty on a rota basis, whilst still maintaining a full time job:

In each of these places, you used to do a week or so. Well, this was all very well, so the following week, you'd get a move to somewhere else, you see, a couple of you. I never slept in my bed for months and me mother used to get fed up with this and there was two or three of us, we were in our teens and we were working then and we were still in the Scouts.<sup>746</sup>

Once more, we see how forms of work and service crossed over into leisure and that the young men involved spent increasing amounts of their spare time in and round the Lakeland countryside. It is also apparent that in the 1930s, young workers in the region continued as members of youth organizations into their mid-teens; longer than was often the case in urban areas.<sup>747</sup>

The national preoccupation with citizenship and service during the war meant that the distinctiveness which still existed in the leisure habits of rural regions such as Lakeland was largely overlooked. This concentration on service as an expression of 'good citizenship', can also be read, therefore, as a further challenge to the leisure

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<sup>745</sup> Respondent ID, born 1924.

<sup>746</sup> Ibid.

<sup>747</sup> On the trouble retaining older teens see for example, Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, p. 76.

identity of young people and local communities in Lakeland. Distinctive cultural aspects of local life were ignored and instead efforts concentrated on building a centralized approach to young people's leisure. As a result, the tensions between the representatives of external agencies and residents that were apparent in the late 1930s continued into wartime, when the initial establishment of the Westmorland youth service encountered considerable objection. The County Council, for instance, repeatedly blocked funding for the scheme and adamantly refused to pay for a Youth Organizer, who would co-ordinate the work of the youth service across the county.<sup>748</sup> Instead, the Director of Education for Westmorland took on this role, in addition to his existing responsibilities. In this way, the Council attempted to counter the introduction of initiatives aimed at young people's leisure time. This clearly echoed struggles faced by the NFC Area Officer in the late 1930s. The setbacks encountered by the Westmorland youth service in the early years of the war were once more expressed in generational terms, as the following comment illustrates, 'of the sixty members... only one, as far as I can see, is under fifty years of age, and most of them are over seventy and still live in the world of thirty years ago.'<sup>749</sup> This comment also reveals the strains between an external, progressive body and more conservative rural areas, as criticism focussed on the changeless, timeless countryside,<sup>750</sup> or in this case, 'the world of thirty years ago'. Such conflicts help provide understanding of how rural communities could reject 'outward signs of modernity and the urban world' when they encroached on their sense of place.<sup>751</sup>

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<sup>748</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Letter, Trevelyan to Pearson, 10 March 1941. *Westmorland Gazette*, 02 February 1940; 26 October 1940, p. 2.

<sup>749</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1 Letter, Trevelyan to Pearson, 10 March 1941.

<sup>750</sup> Leyshon 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 9.

<sup>751</sup> *Ibid*, p. 13; C. Butler Flora, J.L. Flora & S. Fey, *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 70-72.



Resistance to new ideas in Lakeland could also be found in the lack of support for youth groups in local communities. Throughout the war, the youth service recorded the difficulties of finding leaders for youth groups, particularly in Windermere and Staveley.<sup>752</sup> Little in the way of official youth service work took place in Grasmere, and its history in Ambleside was described as ‘chequered’. Despite the ‘sufficiently large number of young people for several successful organizations’ in the village, there was ‘a lack of co-operation’ from the local youth population.<sup>753</sup> This could be read as another example of border maintenance by local young people, in their disinclination to have their leisure organized by outsiders.

In response to the problems of both encouraging young people to join youth groups, and finding suitable leaders in Ambleside, Miss Routledge was approached for her assistance.<sup>754</sup> Although her response was not recorded, a later youth service report noted the continued lack of leadership in the village which appears to indicate that she declined their request.<sup>755</sup> Of course, problems in finding suitable youth leaders were not unique to wartime Lakeland and Orwin claimed that such difficulties were symptomatic of a general lack of leadership in rural social life, ‘unless a village has a tradition of responsibility for the welfare of its adolescents, a sudden demand for leaders in this delicate business will produce no answer.’<sup>756</sup> Yet, as we have seen throughout this thesis, young people’s leisure in Lakeland was generally characterized by strong adult leaders; something which the youth service recognized when it approached Miss

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<sup>752</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, County Youth Committee and Voluntary Organisation Representatives Conference Report, 26 September 1945.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid, p. 4; KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Westmorland County Education Committee. Minutes of a Meeting, Westmorland Youth Committee, 09 August 1940, p. 1.

<sup>754</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Letter, Trevelyan to Miss Routledge, 27 March 1941.

<sup>755</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, County Youth Committee and Voluntary Organisation Representatives Conference Report, 26 September 1945.

<sup>756</sup> Orwin, Country Planning, p. 163.

Routledge. In this light, such difficulties may have been symptomatic of the resistance within local communities to new initiatives. Precisely because the youth service concluded that the leadership problem in Lakeland was generational, it saw the solution in other young people. A 'Young Pioneers Group' was established, whereby young people aged 18-25, who were either in reserved occupations or medically unfit for active duty assisted in youth activities in the region, by 'hiking or cycling to villages which have no evening transport, to help young people's activities there.'<sup>757</sup> Other young people were also to be approached as potential leaders upon their return from the armed services.<sup>758</sup> In this way, it was intended that not only would floundering youth clubs in the region receive direction but the youth service would also meet another objective, by injecting younger people into the organization of leisure provision who, it was hoped, had somewhat wider outlooks than their elders.

### A Rural Youth Service

The Westmorland youth service recognized that the needs of a youth population scattered over isolated and sometimes remote parts of the county were distinct from those of urban youth and that this therefore necessitated a new methodology. With this in mind, a specifically rural dimension emerged in the work of the youth service in the region. The existing network of Young Farmers' Clubs proved essential to this work.<sup>759</sup> In this way, the centrality of the countryside to young people's lives in Lakeland was

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<sup>757</sup> NA ED 124/43, County Youth Committee Report, Youth Work in Westmorland (October-December 1943), p. 3.

<sup>758</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, County Youth Committee and Voluntary Organisation Representatives Conference Report, 26 September 1945, p. 6.

<sup>759</sup> Edwards-Rees, A Rural Youth Service, p. 80.

recognized and embodied through a more progressive approach, which created a network of clubs run on ‘modern lines adapted to needs of village life’.<sup>760</sup>

YFCs in Lakeland were not, however, run on the ‘strictly practical’ lines common in other parts of the country and it is likely that this strategy was adopted for several reasons.<sup>761</sup> By removing the purely practical function of such clubs in Lakeland, young workers who lacked either the space or the finances to keep an animal were able to join.<sup>762</sup> This also opened up room for other, more social activities at YFC meetings, which may have also attracted a wider membership base. Alongside social entertainments, activities which promoted the youth service’s wider aims were also incorporated within club programmes. These included activities designed to enhance young workers’ understanding of international and domestic matters. A ‘current affairs section’ was organized, for instance, and talks on the society, culture and government of other countries were regularly held, which signified an effort towards internationalism, world peace and understanding.<sup>763</sup> Contests and debates organized by YFCs in Lakeland during wartime aimed to promote the benefits of rural life to young workers in their late teens and early twenties, whilst ‘broadening’ their skills and knowledge. A ‘special discussions series’, designed for the over 16s, encouraged young people to think about the future of rural life, and speeches prepared by young people at one YFC Public Speaking Contest in the region included ‘The rural Britain I would like to see after the war’.<sup>764</sup> Initiatives such as these were clearly designed to address the ‘drift

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<sup>760</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, County Youth Committee and Voluntary Organisation Representative Conference Report, 26 September 1945; Letter from Organizing Secretary National Council of Girls’ Clubs to Director of Education, 09 June 1941.

<sup>761</sup> Orwin, Country Planning, p. 171.

<sup>762</sup> Edwards-Rees, A Rural Youth Service, p. 76.

<sup>763</sup> Tinkler, ‘Cause for Concern’, p. 250. See also, Tinkler, ‘English Girls and the International Dimensions of British Citizenship in the 1940s’, European Journal of Women’s Studies, 8 (February 2001), pp. 103-126.

<sup>764</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, County YFC Committee Annual Report 1944-45

from the land', by giving young workers the chance to express their opinions and think about the rural society of the future.<sup>765</sup> This not only encouraged them to appreciate the rural world in which they lived, but also fed into national discourse regarding citizenship and service, by training young workers to think about the wider political issues that informed their daily lives, including their leisure choices.<sup>766</sup> Increasing emphasis was placed on the interaction between young workers from rural and urban backgrounds, with the aim of creating a greater understanding of each other through events, social activities and talks.<sup>767</sup> Exposing young countrymen and women to wider experiences and opportunities for self-government, was intended to reinvigorate village life among a new generation of locally born people whilst serving a national agenda.<sup>768</sup>

A number of other innovations were designed specifically to tackle the 'different problem' of 'young people neglected in rural areas', who suffered from 'little or nothing in the way of a social or educational link'.<sup>769</sup> The BBC's Regional Director for Northern England was consulted on this matter and the result was the Home Listening League (HLL), which was pioneered in Westmorland and aimed at young people who lived in more isolated areas of Lakeland.<sup>770</sup> The activity of 'listening in' was designed to educate young people, whilst creating a social bond through their engagement in the same activity at the same time.<sup>771</sup> By utilizing new methods of communication, the youth service aimed to supervise young people's leisure from a distance. The basis of the HLL was a promise by members 'to try to listen to at least two of the recommended

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<sup>765</sup> Edwards-Rees, *A Rural Youth Service*, p. 80; Brassley *et al.*, *The English Countryside*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>766</sup> Edwards-Rees, *A Rural Youth Service*, p. 81.

<sup>767</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77; p. 80.

<sup>768</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, *Building A County Youth Service: A Survey of Three Years' Work: June, 1942 – June, 1945*, p. 3.

<sup>769</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, *The Torch, Windermere Youth Service Review*, No. 1 (February, 1942).

<sup>770</sup> NA ED 124/6 *Westmorland Youth Service Report*, (1941). Edwards-Rees, *A Rural Youth Service*, p. 78.

<sup>771</sup> C. Fabiansson, 'Being Young in Rural Settings: Young People's Everyday Community Affiliations and Trepidations', *Rural Society*, 16, 1 (2006), p. 49.

broadcasts each week' and they were asked to send in reports, postcards, and replies to specific questions.<sup>772</sup> Adult supervision of young people's leisure time, as the earlier examination of voluntary provision in 1930s Lakeland demonstrated, was typical of this period. In common with other youth service activities, leisure, listening to the wireless, also became work - writing a report or answering questions on the content of approved programmes - in order to prove they had participated in the 'right way'. This also demonstrated a further change in the approach to young people's leisure during the war. Rather than celebrating older habits, as was common among locally born people, the youth service drew on aspects of national popular culture to reach isolated young countrymen and women, which arguably helped the spread of more modern leisure habits during the war, even if the programmes themselves had a largely educational focus.

The HLL also used competitions to encourage members to join in.<sup>773</sup> Prizes were awarded for the best report, and these ranged from book tokens, to a trip to the BBC's regional headquarters in Manchester.<sup>774</sup> Such occasions revealed the patronizing way in which rural youth was often characterized by outsiders.<sup>775</sup> A visit by three young men from Lakeland to Manchester as part of a weekend educational course, for instance, was described by the youth service as 'a trip to wonderland' for the 'small country boy'.<sup>776</sup> One member of the group, a 'roadman' who left school at 14, was said to have found the contrast between Manchester and his home village 'almost terrifying', particularly when he used the telephone 'for the first time in his life'.<sup>777</sup> As this

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<sup>772</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Report on the Home Listening League, (1942-1943), p. 3.

<sup>773</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>774</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Community of Cressbrook Newsletter (June 1944), p. 1.

<sup>775</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 3.

<sup>776</sup> NA ED 124/6, Westmorland Youth Service Report on Youth Work, p. 5.

<sup>777</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 4-5.

example demonstrates, despite attempts by the youth service to promote a better understanding of urban and rural life amongst young people, popular stereotypes of the countryside as unsophisticated and traditional were pervasive.

Earlier chapters of this thesis have highlighted the way in which young people who lived in more isolated areas of Lakeland often walked considerable distances to reach social events and entertainments. Where local transport links did exist in wartime, there remained a shortage of evening and night-time buses, which complicated the logistics of organizing activities and meetings for young workers, especially during the blackout and winter months. Transport difficulties meant that evening meetings in winter often finished after ‘the last evening bus had departed’.<sup>778</sup> As a result, long walks to and from leisure events and activities continued throughout the war.<sup>779</sup> On one occasion, as ‘there was no return bus from Crook at the hour at which the meeting ended’ a group of young people ‘tramped back home’ under the light of a full moon.<sup>780</sup> This night had been specifically selected because the moonlight allowed young people to navigate their way home across the bleak winter landscape. Not only was leisure in the region seasonal but awareness of the lunar cycle also influenced how and when leisure opportunities were organized.<sup>781</sup> The inconvenience surrounding transportation (or the lack of it) was overcome to an extent by the network of voluntary ‘mobile’ lecturers which the youth service gradually built up over the course of the war, whereby speakers travelled from village to village or club to club, delivering talks to small groups of young people. This scheme eased both the practical and financial

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<sup>778</sup> NA ED 124/6, Westmorland Youth Service Report, (1941).

<sup>779</sup> As Orwin remarked, after a long day of work, ‘it takes an effort of will to travel a distance in the evening’, Orwin, Country Planning, p. 169.

<sup>780</sup> NA ED 124/6, Westmorland Youth Service Report, (1941).

<sup>781</sup> For more on the influence of lunar cycles on the leisure opportunities in rural areas, see K. Bowles, ‘“All the Evidence is that Cobargo is Slipping”: An Ecological Approach to Rural Cinema-Going’, Film Studies, 10 (Spring 2007), pp. 91-2.

complications regarding transportation and may have also ensured a higher attendance at such meetings.

A further solution to challenges posed by Lakeland's remoteness was the youth service's experiments in residential events. Commonly referred to as 'Cressbrook', the idea behind this short weekend course, held at a Kirkby Lonsdale school, was to expose small groups of local young people in their mid-teens and early twenties to the extended education provided by the youth service.<sup>782</sup> The primary aim of the Cressbrook experiment was to broaden the knowledge and outlook of those who attended. A secondary goal was to create a new kind of community among those involved as a new group of young people joined each year. Indeed, the course was often referred to as the 'Community of Cressbrook'. For the young people who participated, referred to as 'Cressbrookians', the community really only existed for one weekend, although the organizers attempted to sustain a deeper sense of connection between the members by encouraging them to listen to specific radio programmes, whereby a 're-union' could take place if each member tuned in at the same time.<sup>783</sup> In the spirit of providing young people with a greater sense of responsibility in their leisure, the future of this experiment was placed on their shoulders:

Whether or not there is a second Cressbrook course... is going to depend largely on whether you can personally enthuse someone to take the opportunity... whether a sufficient body of young people is forthcoming to make the course possible depends now on YOUR missionary [sic] work. You have to convince 20 other people of what Cressbrook meant to you<sup>784</sup>

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<sup>782</sup> Out of one cohort, of 31 students, the 'majority' were recorded as having left school at 14 and were farm workers, Community of Cressbrook Newsletter, (August 1945).

<sup>783</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Community of Cressbrook Newsletter (March 1944), p. 2. For more on rural community cohesion and young people, see C. Fabiansson, 'Being Young in Rural Settings', p. 49.

<sup>784</sup> Emphasis from original text. KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Community of Cressbrook Newsletter (March 1944), p. 1.

In order to encourage ideas of responsibility to a community, citizenship skills were taught at these residential education events. Cressbrookians were provided with a sense of belonging and a chance to mix with their peers, but also had to work on ‘quickenings’ ‘their sense of citizenship rights and responsibilities’.<sup>785</sup> A newsletter was printed and circulated to all those who had attended the course, which not only updated young people with news regarding youth service activities and future courses, but also provided them with a tangible link to their ‘community’ when they were apart. This educational community was intangible and defined by generational limits, as only those between the ages of 16 and 21 were permitted to join. Residential schemes such as this exemplified the new approach of the youth service in its attempts to educate young workers through their leisure habits, and gave ‘a national lead’ in this field.<sup>786</sup> The Cressbrook ‘community’ offered, albeit on a small scale, an alternative to the village spaces that were so central to young people’s leisure experiences and identity in Lakeland.<sup>787</sup>

A further challenge to these spaces, and the adults who controlled them, was posed by the opportunities to exert autonomy in their leisure time which the youth service offered young people. It accurately surmised that young workers in Lakeland had little ‘chance of getting their opinions heard nor of playing any part of the government of their village’.<sup>788</sup> Young countrymen and women were consequently encouraged to sit on committees and organize various events and activities. District Youth Councils (DYC) were created, which gave young people their own form of self-

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<sup>785</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, County YFC Committee Annual Report, 1944-45.

<sup>786</sup> NA ED 126/89, Building a County Youth Service. A Survey of Three Years’ Work: June, 1942 – June, 1945, p. 3.

<sup>787</sup> Leyshon, ‘The Betweenness of Being’, p. 9.

<sup>788</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Westmorland County Youth Committee, Memorandum on The Service of Youth, (1941).



government, whereby they were responsible for the activities organized. The DYC in Burneside village, for example, arranged dances and established hiking and tennis clubs.<sup>789</sup> These social activities were balanced with charitable efforts and war work since the Youth Committee also made tea for Air Raid Wardens and formed a gardening group to care for two allotments, plus a salvage group, while the DYC in Staveley arranged help for farmers at hay time.<sup>790</sup>

In Windermere, a publication specifically for young people was established, which encouraged them to be creative whilst voicing their opinions. The first edition set the tone: ‘This is YOUR paper, and we rely on you all for material. Prose and verse, readers’ letters, essays, etc., we want them all. Do not hesitate’.<sup>791</sup> A few years later, the ‘Community of Cressbrook’ bulletin appealed to readers for their thoughts on ‘The Needs of Youth in Rural Areas’, as young workers in local villages knew ‘better than anyone from the outside’ what this entailed.<sup>792</sup> These outlets were designed to provide young people with a space in which to express themselves, although this was often contextualized in relation to what was seen as their primary role as rural citizens. Although still moderated by adult supervision, the schemes did provide young people with an arena in which to share their ideas and opinions, whilst tying in with a national agenda, by allowing young workers to practice the processes of democratic citizenship on a small scale.

Notwithstanding the innovations which the youth service introduced in the war years, careful analysis of policy and practice in the region reveals that the patterns of

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<sup>789</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, District Youth Council Bulletin, No. 2, (May-June 1941).

<sup>790</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, District Youth Council Bulletin, (21 July 1941).

<sup>791</sup> Emphasis from original text. KAC WC/Y/Box 1, The Torch –Windermere Youth Service Review, No. 1, (February 1942), p. 3.

<sup>792</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Community of Cressbrook Newsletter, (February 1944).

internal organization visible within local communities in the 1930s were also present in the youth service's work. Young workers continued to spend their spare time under the supervision of adults, often within the confines of the village. Existing patterns were also reinforced in voluntary groups by the older adults, who continued to hold authoritative positions. Older middle- and upper-middle class adults who had led such clubs in the inter-war years, continued to do so in wartime. The County Commissioner for the Westmorland Girl Guides, for instance, was Lady O'Dowda, a member of the local 'gentry'. Despite clear changes in the type of youth leader which the youth service introduced to Lakeland, older deferential social structures continued to permeate young people's leisure locally:

We did have a Guide company... the Sunday School teacher... was the Guide Captain. We also had the County Commissioner in the village who was Lady O'Dowda – she used to sometimes come and visit us at Grasmere Guides... that was fun because we used to go out... [a]nd we used to go up Kelbarrow and have camp fires up there. We used to go down to Penny Rock and have camp fires down there, at night time we used to go down there in summer, sit by the lake and cook our suppers and sing camp songs and things and it was lovely, it was lovely.<sup>793</sup>

As this woman highlighted, local social hierarchies were reinforced through both the Sunday school teacher who led the Girl Guide Company on a day-to-day basis, and the County figurehead who was a titled member of the local elite. This extract also illustrates how much of the Guides' time was spent in and around their local villages, as all of the locations discussed in this extract were within the boundaries of Grasmere.

Yet within these older social relationships lay complexities; young workers were subject to adult authority and control but were also capable of defying it. This is

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<sup>793</sup> Respondent HU, born 1934.

evident if we turn to look at another Girl Guide Company, in Ambleside, during the same period,

[the Guide leader] went to a great deal of trouble but she had great difficulties because they just didn't co-operate, they ran rings round her, they gave her hell... They were horrid and [she] just wasn't used to coping with that sort of indiscipline, so the Guides had to be suspended... It [the Guide company] had got rather big which is why it got out of hand... It was a small group that disrupted it and spoiled it for the rest of course. And in the end the rest [of the girls] didn't come because you couldn't carry out a meeting with so much disruption, it was a shame.<sup>794</sup>

The behaviour of some of these young women was so disruptive, that the group was eventually disbanded for a number of years. Another AOHG respondent, who belonged to a local Scout troop in the war, recalled his reaction after being disciplined for bad time keeping:

I was late coming on and Sir General O'Dowda had done a check and asked my mate... "Where's your mate, has he not come in yet?" So he duly reported me to the Scout Master; I thought "well, we've had enough of this lot." The Home Guard used to get a bob or two for a drink or a sandwich or whatever, you see but with being a Scout, you got nothing... So we decided then, two or three of us who were old enough, we volunteered and managed to be accepted into the Home Guard so I think the Scouts went squash after that.<sup>795</sup>

As we can see from this excerpt, the respondent did not speak up at the time of his reprimand, but expressed autonomy and independence by leaving the group and joining the Home Guard where, he reasoned, he would at least receive some kind of remuneration for his trouble. Incidences such as these appear to have been rather infrequent, however, and in common with other elements of young people's leisure in wartime Lakeland, activities arranged by both the youth service and voluntary organizations continued to reflect the dominance of adults in the region's leisure culture more generally.

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<sup>794</sup> Respondent GP born 1916, arrived in Ambleside from Penrith in 1934.

<sup>795</sup> Respondent ID, born 1924.

Nevertheless, if local class hierarchies were largely maintained in existing voluntary provision during the war, work initiated by the youth service began to offer young workers the chance to express themselves in spaces which were designed specifically for their generation, albeit under adult supervision and control. As this discussion has illustrated, there were clear tensions between the older generation in Lakeland and the professional youth workers who entered the region between the mid-1930s and the end of the war. Older members of local communities in both cases were characterized as resistant to change and unable to connect with young people in a 'modern' way. Towards the end of the war, the youth service was claiming that much of the adult leadership in Lakeland was 'ineffective... because it was grounded on an authoritarian approach to youth'.<sup>796</sup> This new generation of professional youth workers promoted different ways of working with young people which aimed at giving them their own voice, for example on the District Youth Councils. In spite of the youth service's more modern attitude towards young workers in Lakeland during the war, however, at its core, it too used adult surveillance and supervision to organize young people in their leisure time.

In the summer of 1945, the Westmorland Youth Service reflected on its progress over the course of the war and could claim some success.<sup>797</sup> A total of 29 new youth groups had been established and the YFC movement had been cultivated to such an extent, that from a pre-war total of three, there were now 18 clubs in the county, with a total of 800 members.<sup>798</sup> The residential community of Cressbrook had made some progress in the difficult task of reaching young people in isolated areas. So, too, had the

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<sup>796</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Building a County Youth Service, p. 6.

<sup>797</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Building a County Youth Service.

<sup>798</sup> Membership for individual clubs ranged from 19 to 100; KAC WC/Y/Box 1, County YFC Committee Annual Report 1944-45.

experiments with technology, in the Home Listening League, through which the Westmorland youth service had introduced and encouraged a progressive element in the leisure time of at least a small number of the region's young people. Once the immediate demands of the war had passed, the policy of the Westmorland youth service was to extend work already begun, such as widening young workers' skills and knowledge, although this approach continued to reinforce the centrality of the countryside to young workers' lives:

...any youth service that is going to be more than a spectacular assembly of young people noisily asserting its Youth, must here have its roots in the soil. With this principle in mind, we have built not so much a vocational YFC movement as a series of country-side youth clubs in which the technical activities and talks on agricultural have had their place, but in which the claims of a wider educational and social experience have had their place also.<sup>799</sup>

'Being rural' retained an important place in the construction of young people's leisure identities in Lakeland after the war, although it is clear that in relation to statutory leisure provision, the meanings attached to the countryside were distinct from those important to locally born people. The youth service's peacetime agenda stressed the importance of understanding and valuing one's rural 'roots' whilst not forgetting the wider 'community' of the nation, '[t]he aim should be to cultivate a real interest in the countryside realizing the importance of good farming in this country's present economic position, at the same time helping Young Farmers Club members to further their education.'<sup>800</sup> This emphasis on encouraging young workers in Lakeland to acquire new skills and experiences that would allow them to become 'good citizens' as well as 'good countrymen' was a further move away from the more insular identity of village communities in the region, which as we have seen, placed greater stress on local identity

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<sup>799</sup> Emphasis from original text. KAC WC/Y/Box 1, County Youth Committee and Voluntary Organisation Representatives Conference Report (26 September 1945), p. 1.

<sup>800</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Winter Programmes. Report on YFC (October 1947), p. 2.

to the near total exclusion of wider ideas about national belonging.<sup>801</sup> This was indicative of the changes which were taking place in the post-war countryside more generally, as the isolation that characterized regions such as Lakeland, was slowly breaking down.<sup>802</sup> At the same time, rural occupations increasingly moved away from agriculture and towards tourism, the service industry and office work.<sup>803</sup>

Both of these developments meant that young workers living in the countryside were increasingly mixing with outsiders; whether they moved into their villages or visited as tourists, as the result of the growth in car ownership. Many of the activities organized and run under the youth service in the late 1940s and early 1950s, consequently focussed on teaching rural young people what we would today categorize as ‘transferable skills’. Training in public speaking continued to hold a prominent place on the programmes of local YFCs and competitive events were held regularly, to allow young people to practise and display new found skills, such as public speaking. The local newspaper reported these events which exemplified the ‘active’ role in leisure which the state saw as desirable for young workers.<sup>804</sup> The emphasis on the importance of ‘good diction’ in order to convey one’s ideas eloquently was a shift from the large events held in 1930s Lakeland, where, for example, in dialect plays, the purpose had been to uphold the distinctiveness of the region’s vernacular. Rural workers in the post-war world were taught to standardize their language and accent, which mirrored the homogenization of leisure culture in a wider sense, that had started to take place across the country in the inter-war years.

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<sup>801</sup> Ibid.

<sup>802</sup> Burchardt, *Paradise Lost: Rural Idyll and Social Change in England Since 1800* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), Ch. 16.

<sup>803</sup> Edwards-Rees, *A Rural Youth Service*, p. 78; Burchardt, *Paradise Lost*, p. 188.

<sup>804</sup> *Westmorland Gazette*, 05 April 1952.

Other noticeable differences during the late 1940s and early 1950s, included greater attempts to bridge the gap between rural and urban youth and increase their understanding of one another. The YFC also organized other large events, such as the ‘North of England Farming and Country Life Exhibition’, which was staged with the aim of interpreting ‘the ways of the country to town dwellers [sic].’<sup>805</sup> In the same spirit, a meeting arranged between the Grasmere District Young Farmers’ Club and the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) was intended to provide the opportunity for ‘a real exchange of views’, in order to establish ‘close co-operation between townsmen and countrymen’.<sup>806</sup> Notwithstanding this aim, older, underlying tensions between the country and the city came to the fore, when it was suggested that visitors to YHA premises across Lakeland ‘were thoughtless and did not realize that the countryside was the countryman’s workshop and not just a recreation ground.’ Once again, differences between incomers and locals, were expressed through a moral geography of the countryside, which set the good rural citizen against the urban ‘anti-citizen’. Chapter Two identified the ways in which village communities in post-war Lakeland reacted to the increasing presence of outsiders by holding talks on how they should acclimatize to the countryside, and the youth service also saw a need to educate urban visitors in behaviour appropriate to rural spaces.<sup>807</sup> As the next generation of rural (and English) citizens, it was considered important that the region’s young people should become accustomed to interacting with a wider range of fellow citizens, further evidence of how the Westmorland youth service recognized the changing needs and demands of the ‘modern’ countryside, although their approach remained set within an older rhetoric regarding good and bad citizenship. Events of this nature also demonstrated the

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<sup>805</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Cressbrook Community File, Community of Cressbrook Newsletter (August 1945).

<sup>806</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 08 December 1951, p. 3.

<sup>807</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 22 February 1947, p. 3.

continued efforts of the youth service in Lakeland to be innovative in its approach to rural youth, as this event was thought to be the ‘first of its kind in the country’.<sup>808</sup>

Opportunities for young workers to express themselves continued to be encouraged as the Community of Cressbrook newsletter became ‘a monthly broadsheet’, which consisted chiefly of extracts from letters written by young workers. Contributors were encouraged to be creative and in one case, a young man had ‘written a one act play entitled The Young Farmers, which, with ‘other original verses’, had earned him a ‘prize in a national essay competition.’<sup>809</sup> The newsletter frequently appealed to the young readers to share their thoughts and ideas on what they had recently read or were talking about with their friends.<sup>810</sup> This is another example which supports Tinkler’s assertion that the provision of mixed-sex clubs, although progressive, allowed adults to supervise young people’s interaction with the opposite sex. These appeals were a channel through which the Westmorland Youth Service could gain insight into how young workers felt about their lives, current affairs and the programme of activities they offered; they also allowed the youth service to monitor the opinions of local young workers, to which they would not otherwise have been privy.<sup>811</sup>

The problem of finding suitable adult leaders for voluntary organizations continued to plague provision in Lakeland after 1945, and led to a number of Girl Guide companies closing down between the mid-1940s and early 1950s, ‘mainly owing to the fact that Guiders cannot be found to take them over’.<sup>812</sup> The Grasmere branch of the

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<sup>808</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 08 December 1951, p. 3.

<sup>809</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Building a County Service, p. 3.

<sup>810</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, County YFC Committee Annual Report 1944-45, p. 2.

<sup>811</sup> Tinkler, ‘Cause For Concern’, p. 249; p. 252.

<sup>812</sup> KAC WDSO/42/1/1, Westmorland Girl Guides County Report, (1950), p. 5; Westmorland Girl Guides County Report, (1951). This situation was undoubtedly exasperated by a new rule introduced at the end



Girl Guides also closed due to ‘a desperate shortage’ of leaders. Although such issues had been a problem for voluntary youth groups across the country more generally since the inter-war years, one reason they became prominent in post-war Lakeland may have been due to continued friction between the youth service and local communities. Relations between the youth service and adults within village communities certainly remained cool after 1945, as the youth service repeatedly criticized local authority figures. This occurrence may also have reflected the general decline of an older generation within Lakeland communities, as evidenced elsewhere in the thesis. Nevertheless, the tenacity of the intergenerational nature of village life and leisure in Lakeland was repeatedly noted in official reports and documents, especially when contrasted with the situation in towns and cities.<sup>813</sup>

A significant change was clear in the post-war period, however, in that although the intergenerational aspect of young people’s leisure persisted, it was now outsiders who had moved to Lakeland after the war who began to fill the gaps left by older members of local communities.<sup>814</sup> The new Headmaster of Grasmere School, for instance, soon took on the role of village Scoutmaster. Originally from the North-East of England and fresh from service in the armed forces, he began to organize activities which took place outside of the immediate vicinity of the village, and it is evident in this respect that AOHG respondents viewed 1945 as a watershed in regard to voluntary groups.<sup>815</sup> By the 1950s, the Scouts, for example, were arranging longer trips, such as

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of the war, which capped the length of service a person could make in any one capacity, including some who had served for over 20 years, KAC WDSO/42/1/1, Westmorland Girl Guides County Report (1945), p. 8.

<sup>813</sup> NA ED 149/91, General Area Survey of Youth Service in Westmorland, (1950), pp. 3-4; p. 11.

<sup>814</sup> The effect of middle-class incomers on rural social life across the country in the post-war period has been documented elsewhere. See Burchardt, Paradise Lost, pp. 191-2 & J. Littlejohn, Westrigg. The Sociology of a Cheviot Parish, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963).

<sup>815</sup> Respondent HU, born 1934.

the annual camp which the 1<sup>st</sup> Grasmere Scout Troop held on the Northumbrian coast.<sup>816</sup> Membership of the YFC movement also offered opportunities to travel outside of the village. In the late 1940s, for instance, a contingent of 51 young farmers from 17 clubs across Westmorland visited London, for the annual meeting of the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs (NFYFC), a trip which included sightseeing, a motor launch on the Thames to Tower Bridge and lunch at a Lyons Corner House, an iconic destination synonymous with 'the ambient spectacle of modern leisure'.<sup>817</sup> The return journey home from London 'was made by a different route in order to cover another section of country', which suggests the importance placed on generating new experiences for young countrymen and women in the years following the war, as young people's leisure identity was reconstructed by external organizations, to include a wider sense of national belonging.<sup>818</sup> Voluntary youth groups in Lakeland after the war were increasingly able to offer young people experiences beyond village life which reinforced the idea of a wider (national) community. The practicalities of rural life in Lakeland were, therefore, balanced during the late 1940s and 1950s with an education in outside interests and topical affairs, as in the case of a walling demonstration, which featured on the same programme as talks by outside speakers and a debate with a Town Club, arranged under the auspices of the BBC in Manchester.<sup>819</sup>

Aside from these activities and events, the most common activity which young people suggested at YFC meetings was dancing. Although members were allowed to

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<sup>816</sup> Westmorland Gazette, 26 May 1951, p. 3.

<sup>817</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Report on Youth Work in Westmorland, May-June 1948, p. 1. F. Fisher, T. Keeble, P. Lara-Betancourt & B. Martin (eds.), Performance, Fashion and the Modern Interior: From the Victorians to Today, (London: Berg, 2011), p. 77. For more on the development of Lyons Corner Houses, see, R. Porter, London: A Social History, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1998; 2001), p. 325.

<sup>818</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, Report on Youth Work in Westmorland, May-June 1948, p. 1.

<sup>819</sup> KAC WC/Y/Box 1, County YFC Committee Annual Report 1944-45, p. 2.

plan events and activities themselves, the difficulty of breaking away from adult surveillance continued to dominate their experiences and opportunities into the early 1950s, as when members of Crook YFC decided to hold a dance, but had to abandon their plans when the adult advisory members got involved and decided against it.<sup>820</sup> The degree of independence afforded young workers within these groups, continued to be closely monitored; when YFC members were allowed to organize social events, they were still overseen by a 'doorman', an MC and various other adults from the local community, who provided refreshments. Although the young members of such groups were afforded some latitude, they continued to spend their leisure time engaged in programmes of activities deemed suitable and supervised by adult authority figures.

As the preceding chapters of this thesis have demonstrated, the period after 1945 saw, in some ways, a loss of distinctiveness in local leisure culture in comparison to the 1930s, and the youth service's work both symbolized and contributed to this change. The general goal of the youth service in these years was to widen the knowledge of young people by introducing them to a variety of experiences and opportunities and to improve social mixing between rural and urban youth. Within local voluntary youth groups, outsiders with perhaps a broader view of what leisure could (or should) entail, also added to this change in perspective. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the emphasis of youth work in the region increasingly concentrated on turning the focus of young workers outward, away from their communities and towards a broader, national agenda.

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<sup>820</sup> KAC WDSO 129/1-7, Crook Young Farmers Club Minute Book, 25 October 1949.

## Conclusion

Several academic studies have pointed out that both voluntary youth movements and the youth service only ever managed to reach a small proportion of young workers across the period which this thesis has examined.<sup>821</sup> As the preceding discussion has established, however, an investigation of these organizations from a rural perspective reveals interesting and important insights into the leisure identities of young countrymen and women, as well as rural society more generally.<sup>822</sup> The chapter has shown how, in the 1930s, young people's membership of voluntary organizations in Lakeland tended to reinforce existing leisure patterns. The resistance of local communities to state-led initiatives was also apparent and reflected the tensions which existed not only between rural and urban populations but also between notions of local and national identity in the 1930s and 1940s. Despite resistance in Lakeland to the involvement of outsiders in the organization of young people's leisure, a number of notable changes were introduced, which helped broaden the experiences and opportunities of at least a small number of young workers in the region. The youth service attempted to create a new community of young people, based on generational limits, which connected young workers to a national agenda. The centrality of village spaces to young people's leisure, prevalent in 1930s Lakeland, was weakened during the 1940s and early 1950s, by the use of new technology and alternative locations, such as Cressbrook. Notwithstanding these efforts to provide leisure activities away from local villages, young workers continued to have difficulty in finding spaces beyond adult control and although the youth service may not have been as authoritarian in tone,

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<sup>821</sup> Langhamer, *Women's Leisure*, p. 75; Tinkler, 'Sexuality and Citizenship', p. 195.

<sup>822</sup> On the ways in which voluntary organizations could inform young people's identities, see E. Latham, 'The Liverpool Boys' Association and the Liverpool Union of Youth Clubs: Youth Organizations and Gender, 1940-1970', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35, 3 (2000), pp. 423-437.

there were clear parallels in the way it organized and supervised young people's leisure in Lakeland.<sup>823</sup>

The centrality of the countryside to the leisure identities of young workers was reinforced throughout the period examined here, although its meanings were nuanced differently by local people who organized general social and leisure events for young people, and professional youth workers. In Lakeland village communities, the centrality of the countryside to local identities was expressed through the distinctiveness of their leisure habits and traditions. In the work of organized youth groups, however, the countryside was tied to ideas about citizenship and physical fitness for the good of the nation, as young citizens worked towards the common goal of a democratic and responsible society. Many examples of this approach were available in the work of the YFC, where the practical activities and knowledge they offered as part of their seasonal programmes were balanced by emphases on good diction, service and knowledge of other countries and cultures. The youth service and Young Farmers' Clubs may have been 'rooted in the soil' of Lakeland but, by the early 1950s, their outlook was firmly towards urban spaces and a national agenda.

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<sup>823</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 6.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this thesis has been to develop a case study of young people's leisure experiences and identities in Lakeland which challenged the urban emphases of existing historical studies of youth and focussed on a period, the 1930s to the early 1950s, which is relatively overlooked in historical work. The thesis has examined both organized and more informal leisure activities, in order better to examine how tradition, change and a sense of place were shaped and defined by local groups and associations, and also to assess how these were connected to broader national trends and developments over the period. The thesis has gone beyond an exploration of the ways in which young countrymen and women spent their leisure time, to provide an account of the meanings they attached to such experiences. In doing so, it has generated new insights into rural life and identity, whilst offering a broader commentary on the significance of leisure within rural communities at a time when there were considerable contemporary anxieties about the homogenizing effects of commercial culture upon national identity. This is an historical study, but it has also looked to other disciplines in order to develop a framework for its analysis of the experiences and identities of young people who lived in the countryside. The ground-breaking work which the cultural geographer, Michael Leyshon, has developed in relation to young people and social exclusion has proved particularly valuable in this respect.<sup>824</sup>

The thesis has contested the idea that by the 1930s, rural youth often routinely gravitated to the nearest urban centre for entertainment. Lakeland was relatively isolated from major population centres, and this thesis has demonstrated the extent to

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<sup>824</sup> M. Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being a Rural Youth: Inclusive and Exclusive Lifestyles', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 9, 1 (2008), p. 1.

which village spaces offered young people a wide array of leisure opportunities, whose content and emphases differed in many ways from those which were available to urban youth. The thesis has, therefore, gone some way towards dispelling a common assumption that trends in towns and cities were the major influence on leisure culture in the countryside during this period.<sup>825</sup> Indeed, the evidence presented here has even offered examples of how rural young people's leisure informed the habits of urban youth. The discussion which follows summarizes the study's key findings and highlights new areas of investigation which might profitably be examined in the future.

#### i. Sense of Place

The leisure experiences and identities of young people in rural Lakeland were strongly linked to a sense of place which was evident not only within activities such as walking and fell running, or annual community events, but also in activities more commonly associated with urban leisure trends. The use of the AOHG oral history material has been invaluable in identifying and understanding the meanings within young people's leisure experiences in Lakeland and has been complemented by the use of other primary source material, such as local newspapers. It has been argued that this sense of place was fostered by three central characteristics, which distinguished young people's leisure experiences from those of their counterparts in large towns and cities.

Firstly, it has been demonstrated that the un-commercialized nature of many of the region's leisure habits allowed local traditions and distinctiveness to persist for

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<sup>825</sup> W.J. Turner, Exmoor Village: A General Account Based on Factual Information from Mass Observation (London: Harrap, 1947). This view was also expressed in C.S. Orwin, (University of Oxford Agricultural Economics Research Institute) Country Planning: A Study of Rural Problems (London: Oxford University Press, 1944); D. Edwards-Rees, A Rural Youth Service: Suggestions for Youth Work in the Countryside (Wallington: The Religious Education Press, Ltd., 1944).

longer than in many other rural localities. This was partly attributable to the central role which communal venues played in Lakeland's leisure culture throughout this period. Activities such as social dancing were used to illustrate Lakeland's connections to the past and its sense of place, which contributed to how young people's leisure identities were constructed as more innocent and unsophisticated than those of townspeople.

Although the relatively cheap entrance fees of commercial urban dance halls helped to democratize leisure in the inter-war years, it is clear that within the communal venues surveyed here, leisure activities such as dancing, often served to reinforce existing class relations. The wider class dynamics of local villages have played an important part in this study. Rather than experiencing leisure on segregated class lines, members of different classes in Lakeland regularly occupied the same venue at the same time, although layers of distinction persisted in how such spaces were negotiated, and young workers throughout the period remained very aware of these. The charitable connections of many social events further removed them from the commercial associations of large dance hall chains in urban areas, all of which helped to make young workers' leisure very familiar to adults in Lakeland villages, at a time when the social relationships of young people's leisure in many towns and cities were becoming much more removed from adult influence. The absence of commercial venues in Lakeland also meant that there was a strong cultural space in which local communities could express their difference by maintaining 'authentic' and traditional leisure habits into the post-war period. This, in turn, allowed adults to continue to play a significant part in the organization of leisure activities.



The intergenerational nature of young workers' leisure in Lakeland was the second characteristic which marked their experiences out as distinctive from those of urban youth. The lack of anonymity within local villages removed much of the agency exhibited by their urban counterparts during the same period, and a deficit of distinct generational spaces for young people made it harder for them to experiment with drinking alcohol, or with the opposite sex. On occasion, young rural workers were able to assert agency in their leisure choices and break free from adult constraints, but these were infrequent occurrences, which involved only small numbers of local young people. As a rule, their leisure experiences were marked by significant adult involvement and limited independence, which helped to sustain a sense of 'border maintenance' between local rural leisure habits and those in urban areas. Nevertheless, within these boundaries, young people were able shape their own sense of rural distinctiveness.

The third element which fostered a sense of place in local leisure habits focussed on Lakeland's connections to the past and the region's distinctive landscape, which proved to be such a potent mix, that many leisure activities continued to project this sense of place into the post-war period. Undoubtedly, its strength was in part due to the presence of tourists in the region, who provided an external audience for events such as rushbearing and sports shows, and helped to generate an element of self-consciousness regarding the way in which Lakeland was presented to outsiders. Tourism shaped these activities in other ways, as traditional celebrations increasingly took account of modern innovations and trends, such as the use of cameras to film or photograph picturesque scenes. In wartime, visitors were included in traditional community events which not only contributed to their survival during this period of upheaval, but also helped to mediate external urban influences on these proceedings. Aside from the activities and

events organized by adults, young workers also found other ways to connect to the region's landscape (such as walking or climbing) which reinforced a sense of place and allowed them to assert a distinctive leisure identity on their own terms.<sup>826</sup>

## ii. Leisure identities

Within the existing historiography, much has been written about how young urban workers were constructed as passive consumers of increasingly standardized and commercialized leisure.<sup>827</sup> In contrast, the preceding chapters have shown that the leisure identities of rural young people during the same period, were subject to very different influences and variables. Oral history testimony has played an important part in uncovering how rural youth constructed their leisure identities, helping to affirm Leyshon's assertion that young people in the countryside are far from passive recipients of urban leisure trends.<sup>828</sup> Instead, they engaged in activities which, although often organized by adults, both rejected and mediated popular leisure trends into forms which fitted in with their identities as young countrymen and women.

This thesis has demonstrated that young workers in Lakeland valued their difference and often constructed their sense of self as distinct from the leisure identities of urban youth, both at the time and through their reflections in later life. The AOHG respondents, for example, presented their leisure habits as relatively unsophisticated, traditional and deeply connected to the local landscape, shaped by a powerful moral

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<sup>826</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 9.

<sup>827</sup> See for example, D. Fowler, The First Teenagers: The Lifestyle of Young Wage-Earners in Inter-War Britain (London: Woburn Press, 1995); C. Langhamer, Women's Leisure in England, 1920-1960 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); A. Horn, Juke Box Britain. Americanisation and Youth Culture 1945-60 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

<sup>828</sup> Leyshon, 'The Betweenness of Being', p. 18.

geography of Lakeland, whose healthy, tough and straightforward images excluded ‘outsiders’ who did not conform to these.<sup>829</sup> The thesis adds to our understanding of rural communities and village life by highlighting the meanings of young people’s leisure in a rural setting, and has argued that to those living in a relatively isolated rural area such as Lakeland, regional and local identities remained far more powerful and pervasive than a national sense of identity throughout this period.<sup>830</sup>

Young workers in Lakeland were innovative in how they dealt with the problems of living in the countryside. The isolation often associated with rural life, for example, was negotiated in a number of ways, such as the long walks often undertaken in order to reach leisure venues and social occasions, which also helped to reinforce young workers’ connection to the local landscape. As we have also seen, in the years after 1945, not all motorbike owners used their new-found freedoms to visit urban centres for leisure and instead, their greater mobility allowed young men to attend traditional sporting events and participate in the social life of other local villages. This provided a further point of contrast to simplistic explanations that rural young people looked to the towns for leisure whenever possible.

In the course of writing this thesis, it became apparent that both local adults and village spaces were so influential in young people’s leisure, their experiences could not be viewed in isolation from the local communities in which they spent the majority of their spare time. This thesis has, therefore, contributed new insights into rural communities and the role which leisure traditions played in creating a cohesive sense of identity among such groups. It has also opened up new areas of investigation for future

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<sup>829</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>830</sup> J. Burchardt, ‘Agricultural History, Rural History or Countryside History?’, *The Historical Journal*, 50, 2 (2007), pp. 465-481.

historical work, by highlighting the tensions often present within rural communities and village spaces, which were accentuated by the arrival of outsiders in the post-war period. The thesis has suggested that such tensions were particularly pervasive in the area of village social life, perhaps because this was a key site for the creation and maintenance of a localised sense of place. Possibly for the same reason, the thesis has demonstrated how rural communities, which are often imagined to be highly cohesive groups, could be exclusive as well as inclusive in their efforts to preserve local leisure traditions. This study has also revealed the key role which women often played in organizing leisure opportunities for young people in Lakeland, and which helped shape the intergenerational nature of much of their leisure across this period. Linked to this, it has also become clear that frequently middle-class authority figures featured heavily in creating a distinctive leisure experience for young workers in Lakeland. This continued into the post-war period, when a number of older authority figures retired from such roles, to be replaced by younger outsiders who had recently moved into the region, and who thereby prolonged both the intergenerational and supervised nature of young workers' leisure habits into the early 1950s.

In uncovering the intricacies of young people's leisure experiences in rural Lakeland, we have seen how young workers were far from uniformly deferential in their attitudes to adult supervision. Although adult authority figures were undoubtedly involved to a considerable extent in their leisure habits, some young people also rejected and undermined adult organization and control by, for example, consuming alcohol before a dance or smuggling drink into a venue. Transgressions such as this, as well as other bad behaviour at village hops, were often blamed exclusively on young

people from the town, which helped to perpetuate a stereotype of rural youth as more innocent than their urban counterparts.

Outdoor pursuits instilled a connection to the Lakeland landscape in many local young walkers and climbers which persisted into adulthood. Exploring the region's countryside (by walking, climbing and cycling) held significance for local young people. It provided them with a space away from the everyday supervision of adults within the confines of local villages and offered the freedom to socialize with the opposite sex or engage in romantic relationships away from the parental gaze. Such connections contributed to a sense of ownership and belonging which young people felt towards the local countryside, which was often expressed in fierce opposition to the commercialism of such local leisure activities.

### iii. Change and Continuity

Alongside a discussion of the themes outlined above, the thesis has mapped changes and continuities in young people's leisure experiences across the period. In the 1930s, there were clear continuities with earlier leisure habits in a range of activities. The infiltration of popular culture into Lakeland was inconsistent throughout this decade. When the influence of modern trends was apparent, it complemented, rather than totally replaced, older styles. Larger annual events remained a means by which local communities could resist the influence of modern leisure culture and focus on what made them distinctive, in an age of what was seen as growing homogenization. The advance of modern visual technology in the inter-war years was exploited to project aspects of local distinctiveness to outsiders. Wartime presented challenges to existing

leisure habits and organizational structures in the region, largely through the presence of outsiders, as external agencies offered local young people a step towards greater autonomy in their leisure time, as well as spaces geared specifically to their own generational cohort. The arrival of large numbers of urban young people from a variety of backgrounds exposed at least some young workers in Lakeland to alternative leisure habits and new, 'modern' experiences, if only temporarily. Events and activities organized by young evacuees were, however, largely private and as a result, the intergenerational and largely un-commercialized nature of local social occasions continued. For young workers who spent the war away from Lakeland, it signified a broadening of their leisure experiences. In the immediate post-war period, however, such freedoms were rarely tolerated within the confines of local villages and young women continued to be excluded from traditionally male dominated spaces and activities.

Gender differences in the leisure experiences of Lakeland youth between 1930 and the early 1950s, were particularly visible in sporting activities. Competitive events were often highly gendered, as young women were only permitted to compete in distinctly feminized activities, a fact which marginalized them until the latter part of the twentieth century. They were also slower to enjoy developments in personal transport and remained dependent on the invitation of men (as their pillion passengers) to experience the freedom which motorbikes offered. This reflected both the persistence of parental concerns over the time young women spent away from the 'safety' of the village and broader national discourses regarding traditional feminine roles and gender boundaries.

Older social hierarchies which had endured throughout the inter-war years were still visible in Lakeland village communities at the end of our period. There were signs, however, that the existing social structure was beginning to weaken, as an older generation retired from local life and gave way to outsiders, who moved into the region after 1945 and took on such leadership roles. Young people were no longer as confined to their villages in their leisure time to the same extent as the inter-war years, which also helped contribute to a noticeable decline in the deferential atmosphere of local villages. Nevertheless, the intergenerational aspect of leisure in Lakeland endured, as many leisure opportunities were still held in communal venues and adults continued to organize and supervise young people. The influence of outsiders in the organization of leisure within local villages meant that, somewhat inevitably, a number of activities were now shaped more strongly by national trends. Elements of popular culture were certainly more apparent in the region after the war, as formerly distinctive and localized activities, such as dialect plays, were replaced by performances of standardized texts. Yet if the growing involvement of external agencies in the region offered new methodologies for working with young people, their approach also reinforced existing patterns of adult organization and supervision, so that much of young worker's leisure in Lakeland in the early 1950s remained un-commercialized and intergenerational in nature.

Clearly, the upland and isolated nature of Lakeland helped to produce more distinctive leisure experiences for local young people and evidently contributed to the survival of older leisure patterns and social hierarchies. F.G. Thomas, in 1939, considered the changing fortunes of rural villages. Thomas compared two villages, one of which was located on the outskirts of a town and the other, while at a similar

distance, was separated from it by a hill. He described the way in which the hill's 'existence' modified how the two villages experienced change during the 1930s, as the less isolated village, which was located in a valley, lost its social life to the town. In contrast, the second village retained its distinctive character for longer, because the barrier of the hill meant that buses ran less frequently there than to the village in the valley. As a result, 'one or two strong personalities' were able to maintain their dominance over village life, and the 'social unity' of the village was 'preserved' for longer.<sup>831</sup> The conditions in relatively isolated Lakeland villages clearly resonate with Thomas's example, for their distance from centres of cultural production certainly influenced the leisure experiences of young workers between 1930 and the early 1950s. Indeed, the geography of the Lakeland landscape not only helped to isolate local villages from more mainstream leisure trends but, together with the strong cultural images associated with the region, allowed local communities to create and maintain a strong sense of place and shared identity. As the preceding chapters have suggested, the region's landscape often played a central part in young people's leisure activities. This examination of a region which was more isolated or 'truly rural' than many other parts of the English countryside offers an important alternative perspective to existing scholarly accounts which have largely focussed on southern or lowland areas.

Of course, no single study can cover every aspect of a subject and this is perhaps especially true in relation to rural youth, as so little historical work has been carried out. It is hoped that this study has not only contributed to existing knowledge in the fields of rural history and leisure studies but has also opened up several new areas of enquiry. The periodization adopted here ends shortly before the mid-1950s, which saw the

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<sup>831</sup> F.G. Thomas, The Changing Village (London: Thomas Nelson, 1939), pp.16-17.



emergence of rock 'n' roll and the first appearance in England of the 'Teddy Boy' subculture. Future studies would, therefore, benefit from addressing how such changes in the leisure patterns of young people at a national level, influenced rural communities. The intergenerational nature of young people's leisure in Lakeland has been an important aspect of this study, and it would be interesting to test whether Richard Hoggart's assertion that by the 1960s, with the arrival of more defined teenage youth culture, generational differences were most pronounced in the provinces and settled communities.<sup>832</sup> Notwithstanding these areas in need of further investigation, it is hoped that this thesis has contributed fresh knowledge and interpretations of rural life, youth and leisure in the countryside, in the years between 1930 and the early 1950s.

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<sup>832</sup> See Fowler, 'From Jukebox Boys to Revolting Students: Richard Hoggart and the Study of British Youth Culture', International Journal of Cultural Studies, 10, 73 (2007), p.81.

## Appendices

### Appendix I: Current map of the Lake District



Source: <http://www.lake-district-guides.co.uk/general/mapoflakes.html> (accessed April 2012)

## Appendix II: Census Population Tables

The statistical information provided in Appendices II and III is taken from several county census reports for Westmorland and addresses population and occupational data respectively. The tables in which they are presented are original, however, as are the calculations of percentage increases and decreases. In order to make sense of the occupation statistics provided in Appendix III, the following tables provide figures for the population of young people living in Westmorland in 1931 and 1951. The 1931 census was based on established administrative boundaries. These changed in the 1930s, when the administrative boundaries of Westmorland were realigned, to create the Lakes Urban District, which encompassed the villages examined by this thesis. The 1951 census was the first carried out since 1931. In order to take account of these boundary realignments, it produced a table of figures for the Lakes Urban District, based on the 1931 census statistics, to allow for a comparison with the new 1951 figures. These figures, which offer a more localized picture of the Lakeland population, are in Table 3. The more general figures for Westmorland as a whole have also been included, however, as the occupation statistics, reproduced in Appendix III, continued to be recorded at a county level. Upon the outbreak of war in September 1939, a nationwide population ‘register’ was taken but this was somewhat briefer than the official census, focussing solely on population. This information is provided in Table 4, whose figures also relate to the newly created Lakes Urban District.

**Table 1 – Total population aged 14-29, Westmorland (1931)**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
0 to 4	2339	2337
5 to 9	2542	2535
10 to 14	2380	2345
15 to 19	2580	3083
20 to 24	2598	2974
25 to 29	2543	2697

Source – Census 1931, County Report Cumberland and Westmorland, Part I, Table 14.

**Table 2 – Total population aged 14-29, Westmorland (1951)**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
0 to 4	2704	2506
5 to 9	2350	2115
10 to 14	2288	2154
15 to 19	2007	2106
20 to 24	2170	2301
25 to 29	2259	2278

Source – Census 1951, County Report Cumberland and Westmorland, Part I, Table 21.

**Table 3 - 1931 to 1951 Census Population Comparison**

	<b>1931 Census</b>	<b>1951 Census</b>	<b>Percentage Increase (%)</b>
<b>Ambleside</b>	2,343	2,392	2.09
<b>Grasmere</b>	988	1,043	5.57
<b>Langdales</b>	654	826	26.30
<b>Patterdale</b>	817	782	-4.28
<b>Rydal and Loughrigg</b>	469	526	12.15
<b>Troutbeck</b>	550	527	-4.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,821</b>	<b>6,096</b>	<b>4.72</b>

Source- Census 1951, County Report, Cumberland and Westmorland, Tables 1; 3, p. 6.

**Table 4 - National Register 1939, Population for Lakes Urban District.**

<b>National Register 1939</b>	<b>Persons</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Lakes U.D.	6,966	2,849	4,117

Source - National Register 1939 (London: HMSO, 1944), Table 1, p. 21,

Appendix III: Census Occupation Tables, 1931 and 1951

Source: Census of England and Wales 1931, County Report Part II: Cumberland and Westmorland, Occupation Tables, Tables 16 and 17. (London: HMSO, 1934).

<b>Occupation</b>	<b><u>Westmorland 1931 Census Juveniles</u></b>				
	<b><u>Occupation Table - Males</u></b>				
	<b>Age at Last Birthday</b>				
	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16 &amp; 17</b>	<b>18-20</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Agricultural</b>	117	182	372	592	1263
<b>Mining and Quarrying</b>	53	103	242	357	755
<b>Commerce, Finance and Insurance</b>	20	21	104	113	258
<b>Metal Works (not electro plate or precious metals)</b>	16	21	83	102	222
<b>Transport Workers</b>	43	32	43	67	185
<b>Others and Unskilled Workers</b>	9	18	43	92	162
<b>Workers in Wood and Upholsterers</b>	11	13	33	89	146
<b>Makers of Textile Goods and Articles of Dress</b>	8	14	40	67	129
<b>Clarks, Typists etc.</b>	2	5	36	84	127
<b>Builders, Stone and Slate Workers</b>	2	10	27	68	107
<b>Total Persons of Age Group Living in Westmorland</b>	468	493	1,063	1,553	3577
<b>Unoccupied and Retired</b>	212	143	140	61	556

  

<b>Occupation</b>	<b><u>Westmorland 1931 Census Juveniles</u></b>				
	<b><u>Occupation Table - Females</u></b>				
	<b>Age at Last Birthday</b>				
	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16 &amp; 17</b>	<b>18-20</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Personal Services</b>	109	183	491	793	1576
<b>Commerce, Finance and Insurance</b>	18	22	66	92	198
<b>Makers of Textile Goods and Articles of Dress</b>	3	27	54	99	183
<b>Clarks, Typists etc.</b>	6	12	45	83	146
<b>Textile Workers</b>	6	13	36	55	110
<b>Fishers, Agricultural, Mining, Makers of Bricks, Workers in Chemicals</b>	8	12	33	52	105
<b>Professional Occupations (Exc. Clarks)</b>	0	4	12	57	73
<b>Stationary Engineer Drivers, Dynamo and Motor Attendants, Other and unskilled Workers (Mainly Labourers and Unskilled Workers)</b>	2	11	12	26	51
<b>Warehouseman, Storekeepers and Packers</b>	3	3	15	29	50
<b>Makers of Paper, Cardboard and Stationary</b>	2	4	12	26	44
<b>Total Persons of Age Group Living in Westmorland</b>	481	540	1,212	1,942	4175
<b>Unoccupied and Retired</b>	293	233	380	560	1466

<b><u>Westmorland 1951 Census Juveniles</u></b>					
<b><u>Occupation Table - Males</u></b>					
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Age at Last Birthday</b>				<b>Total</b>
	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18-19</b>	
<b>Agricultural</b>	111	120	131	234	596
<b>Workers in Metal Manufacture, Engineering</b>	53	49	55	83	240
<b>Workers in Wood, Cane and Cork</b>	14	28	34	48	124
<b>Workers in Building and Contracting</b>	13	23	17	25	78
<b>Makers of Products</b>	5	24	28	17	74
<b>Commercial, Finance etc. (Exc. Clerical)</b>	14	24	17	14	69
<b>Persons Employed in Defence Service</b>	0	1	1	58	60
<b>Workers in Unskilled Occupations</b>	10	7	16	11	44
<b>Persons Employed in Transport etc.</b>	7	11	13	8	39
<b>Professional and Technical</b>	1	3	16	19	39
<b>Total Persons of Age Group Living in Westmorland</b>	285	248	373	574	1480
<b>Unoccupied and Retired</b>	154	125	65	69	413

  

<b><u>Westmorland 1951 Census Juveniles</u></b>					
<b><u>Occupation Table - Females</u></b>					
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Age at Last Birthday</b>				<b>Total</b>
	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18-19</b>	
<b>Personal Services</b>	55	65	70	146	336
<b>Clerks, Typists, etc.</b>	30	64	74	150	318
<b>Commercial, Finance, etc. (Exc. Clerical)</b>	34	42	40	81	197
<b>Makers of Food, Drinks and Tobacco</b>	14	19	15	17	65
<b>Professional, Technical (Exc. Clerical)</b>	-	19	12	25	56
<b>Leather Workers, Fur Dressers</b>	8	12	8	26	54
<b>Textile Workers</b>	6	12	7	14	39
<b>Works in Unskilled Occupations</b>	4	4	7	16	31
<b>Workers in Building and Contracting</b>	4	6	5	13	28
<b>Makers of, Workers in, Paper/Printers</b>	1	6	6	10	23
<b>Total Persons of Age Group Living in Westmorland</b>	185	281	251	580	1297
<b>Unoccupied and Retired</b>	131	182	133	233	679

Source: Census of England and Wales 1951 County Report Part II: Cumberland and Westmorland, Tables 26 and 27. (London: HMSO, 1956).

Appendix IV: Available Evacuation Statistics for Westmorland (1939-1942).

The available data omits statistics for a number of additional schools that were evacuated to the County from other areas across the country but the figures that are available provide some indication of levels of incomers in the early years of the war. Also outside of these figures, are the Royal College Art students, and the military presence that was stationed in and around local villages throughout the war. In addition to the schoolchildren who arrived in Lakeland, 2200 private evacuees are recorded arriving in Westmorland for the period June 1941-December 1942.

<b>Date arrived at reception area</b>	<b>Hometown of unaccompanied schoolchildren evacuated</b>	<b>Unaccompanied Evacuated Schoolchildren</b>	<b>Total Remaining in the county by date</b>
Sept 1939	Newcastle and South Shields	6269	2772 (December 1939)
July 1940	Newcastle and South Shields	2560	3448 (December 1940)
May 1941	Barrow	1760	1958 (December 1941)
September 1941	Barrow	1021	1714 (December 1942)
<b>Total number of evacuees received (September 1941)</b>	Newcastle and South Shields and Barrow combined	11, 610	

Source: Figures taken from J.F. and M.A. Brown Dow, A Survey of the Evacuation in Westmorland (Westmorland County Council: 1946) pp. 14-15.

## Appendix V: Biographical Information of AOHG Respondents

Respondent AB,	Female, born 1914, Goole. Moved to Ambleside aged 15. Father's occupation: Smallholder. Respondent worked as housemaid.
Respondent AS/AT	(AS) Male, born 1910, Langdale. Father's occupation: quarryman. Respondent also worked as a quarryman. (AT) Female, born 1911, Langdale. (Wife of AS).
Respondent AV1,	Male, born 1913, Kendal. No occupational information provided for father. Respondent worked as a shoe hand.
Respondent AU,	Female, born 1912, Ambleside. Father's occupation: trained hounds at Brathay Hall. Respondent worked in a café.
Respondent BZ,	Male, born 1916, Elterwater. Father had building firm. Respondent worked as a clerk at Wray Castle.
Respondent CF,	Female, born 1910, Workington, lived in Wigton after birth. Father's occupation: carter. Respondent worked as a live-in nursemaid/cook.
Respondent DQ,	Male, born 1921, Ambleside. Father's occupation: painter and decorator. Respondent worked as tradesman.
Respondent DT2,	Female, born 1911. Father's occupation: builder. No occupational information provided for the respondent.
Respondent DX1,	Male, born 1910, Broughton in Furness, moved to Grizedale aged 9. Father's occupation: gamekeeper. Respondent worked as kennel lad at Grizedale Hall.
Respondent EH	Female, born 1926. Evacuated to Ambleside aged 13, from a Newcastle school.
Respondent EM,	Female, born 1923, Staveley, moved to Sawrey. Father's occupation: Waggoner. Respondent worked as a land girl straight from school.
Respondent ET,	Female, born 1911, Kendal. Father's occupation: unknown. Respondent worked in and ran various public houses after marriage.
Respondent EV,	Female, born 1922, Ambleside. Father's occupation: joiner and cabinet maker. Respondent worked in a local chemist.



- Respondent FC, Female, born 1922, Ambleside. Father's occupation: quarryman. Respondent worked as a packer in a local laundry.
- Respondent FM1, Male, born 1913, Ambleside. Father's occupation: family business of painting, plumbing and gas fitting. Respondent worked in the family business.
- Respondent FW, Male, born 1918, Ambleside. No occupational information provided for father. Respondent worked in local Council Offices.
- Respondent GC, Female, born 1913, Grasmere. No occupational information provided for father. Respondent worked as a farm servant.
- Respondent GH1, Male, born 1925, Low Wray, near Ambleside. Father's occupation: Milkman. Respondent worked as a grocer's assistant.
- Respondent GI, Female, born 1915, Coniston. Father's occupation: quarryman. No occupational information provided for the respondent.
- Respondent GN, Female, born 1914, Grasmere. Father's occupation: Tailor. Worked in a café and shoe shop.
- Respondent GP Female, born 1916, arrived in Ambleside from Penrith in 1934. Helped to run local Guide Companies.
- Respondent H2, Male, born 1921, Ambleside. Father's occupation: ran a family business. Respondent worked in the building trade.
- Respondent HE, Female, born 1934, Ambleside. No occupational information provided on father. Respondent worked helping mother at home as they took in lodgers, then worked at the local laundry.
- Respondent HF Male, born 1913, Waterhead. Father's occupation: grocer. Respondent worked as a Junior Clerk.
- Respondent HN, Male, born 1922, Skelwith Bridge. Father's occupation: haulage business. Respondent worked as gardener.
- Respondent HP, Female, born 1909, Hartlepool, moved to Grasmere in 1946 with her husband (The new Headteacher of Grasmere School).
- Respondent HQ, Female, born 1923, Bowness. Father's occupation: worked at Windermere Council Offices. Respondent worked as an apprentice confectioner.
- Respondent HS1/HS2 Male, Rydal, born 1925. Born in Radcliffe. Manchester, moved to Rydal in the 1930s. Father's occupation: nurseryman. Respondent worked as an apprentice at the village garden centre.

Respondent HT,	Male, born 1923, Grasmere. Rothay Hotel. Father died when Respondent was 4 years old. Respondent worked for family owned taxi company.
Respondent HU,	Female, born 1934, Grasmere. Father's occupation: rent collector. Respondent worked at K shoes in retail accounts.
Respondent HY,	Male, born 1919, Ambleside. Grandfather's occupation: worked at the local Bobbin Mill. No occupational information provided for the respondent.
Respondent ID	Male, born 1924, Grasmere. Father's occupation: labourer. Respondent worked as a builder and joiner's apprentice from age 14.
Respondent IG	Female, born 1926, Grasmere. Father's occupation: worked on construction of the Haweswater Reservoir. Respondent from farming family, ran the domestic side, also worked in small hotels as waitress.
Respondent IM,	Male, born 1936, Liverpool, moved to Grasmere aged 8. Mother took in overnight guests, Father's occupation: confectioner. Respondent became an artist.
Respondent IN,	Female, born 1920, Kelbarrow (Summer Visitor to Grasmere, where she stayed with relatives in the village).
Respondent IP,	Female, born 1908. Father's occupation: farmer then a miner. Respondent worked in service in Grasmere.
Respondent IV,	Female, born 1919, London. Mother's family was from Ambleside, left London age 18 because of bombing. Father worked at The India Office. Worked at 'War Nursery' at Brathay Hall and helped to run Girl Guide groups locally between 1940 and 1970.
Respondent IZ1,	Male born 1910, Ambleside. Father's occupation: builder's labourer. Respondent worked as an errand boy.
Respondent J,	Male, born 1920, Kendal. No information provided on father's occupation. Respondent worked as a shop boy (junior assistant) to a skilled worker and then at the Windermere aircraft factory in wartime.
Respondent JE,	Male, born 1931 Corny, West Cumberland. Father's occupation: farmer, Respondent also went into farming.

- Respondent JM, Male, born 1925, Grasmere. Father's occupation: painter, decorator and sign writer. Respondent worked at the local bobbin mill.
- Respondent KI, Male, born 1930 Liverpool, was adopted as a baby by parents living in Rydal. Father's occupation: gardener, mother 'took people in' as a B&B service. Respondent eventually became a teacher.
- Respondent MB, Female, born 1922, Ambleside. Father absent, Mother let rooms to lodgers & summer visitors. Respondent worked for K shoes in Accounts Office.
- Respondent MP, Male born 1940, in Yorkshire, moved to Grasmere at only a few months old as an evacuee. Father's occupation: policeman. Respondent worked as a tour bus driver.
- Respondent X, Female, born 1922, Langdale. Father's occupation: Farmer. Respondent worked in a shop.

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## **Online Resources**

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Getty Images online archive: <http://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/3066463/Hulton-Archive>

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