

Tales from DalesRail

Travellers and Tennis in Edenhall Stuart Leese

DalesRail may not be operating in 2020 but that doesn't stop us sharing our many interesting experiences about our journeys. We hope you will share your interesting stories, favourite walks, fascinating anecdotes and pictures about DalesRail. Please send them to richard.watts.crl@gmail.com or Simon Clarke at simon.clarke.crl@gmail.com

We are into July and the History Boys are busy. Aidan took his Carlisle: Through the Back Door last week and has gone over the border today doing 'further research'. Next week, I am taking one of my Carlisle Snail Pace Strolls. Today, I am taking one of my Paces Through the Past Walks: Edenhall.

Have got to be at my best today. Keep it interesting Stuart. Not too much detail and keep the party moving. After all it is a walk and it's a fine afternoon. I've got stiff competition today. It's been all the talk on the train.

It's also a fine afternoon in Wimbledon where the Men's Singles Final commences shortly. Yes. Must keep it interesting and the party will forget the tennis. So off we go leaving Langwathby and heading for Edenhall, our tennis escape, just a few fields away.



Roger Federer at Wimbledon (photo Tennis Time)

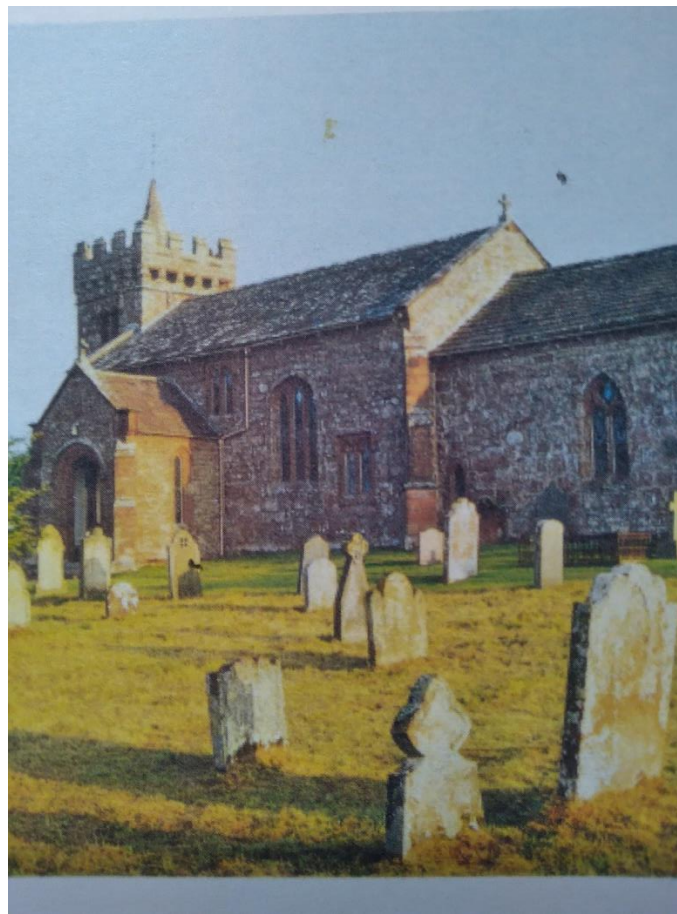
We cross the River Eden; one of the few major rivers that flow northwards. The fine three arched sandstone bridge, built in 1686, was sadly washed away by flooding after heavy snow and then rain in 1968. The Bailey Bridge which has replaced it saw service in the Middle East before being stationed here. It came as a temporary measure for about ten years but fifty years on is still here.

And all is quiet on the Wimbledon front.

We follow the river upstream. Here in summer willow-herb, brambles and butterbur abound. Midsummer's colour is by courtesy of cranesbill, valerian and St. John's Wort. At this time of year curlew, oyster catchers and goosanders can be seen. Sand-martins have made their homes in the riverbank.

And all is quiet on the Wimbledon front.

We leave the river heading up to the seat of the Musgrave family. They came over with the Conqueror and the first of the family on record is one Sir Peter in the twelfth century. They took the seat and name of Musgrave of Westmoreland and took the seat of Edenhall by marriage into the Stapleton family three centuries later. Through the centuries as Baronets, Royalist leaders, High Sheriffs and Members of Parliament they became very powerful on the political and social scene. There is a clocktower memorial to the family in Penrith and they are buried here in St. Cuthbert's, Kirkby Stephen, Halifax, Westminster, Brighton, Rome, Madrid and Penwortham. Yes. Penwortham, Preston!



St Cuthbert's Church

We are approaching the churchyard. Something has happened. Mobiles are out. Someone has earplugs in! A voice from the back announces Federer has dropped his serve.

The claim that the site here was a resting place for the Jarrow monks who carried the body of St. Cuthbert has some credence. The first church is believed to be Norman, but evidence of an earlier structure can be found in the north wall. A small window is of Anglo-Saxon type and a cross on a stone in the wall is thought to be Saxon. A medieval mass dial on the south wall can be located with, perhaps, a little help.



Another view of St Cuthbert's Church (Photo Alexander P Knapp)

Now very much isolated, the church could at one time have been surrounded by wattle and daub houses which were abandoned and then destroyed after a plague in 1598. With the arrival of the new Penrith road the village moved around the road and nearer the Hall.

The Musgraves have certainly made their mark here. There are numerous elaborate memorials to them; one a marble memorial with brass effigies and an inscription to Sir William Stapleton, Lord of Edenhall, date of birth, 26 Aug 1458.

We leave the churchyard and walk into the village. Oh! Ear plugs back in. A voice from the back announces that Federer has lost the first set.

The stone wall on the east side of the road down to the church was removed and rebuilt as a retaining wall along the riverbank. The estate workers discovered a small water trough and three steps that had been built into the wall. It is thought that the trough was filled with vinegar during the plague of the late sixteenth century. The villagers would have placed their coins in the vinegar to be cleansed before collection by the Penrith traders who had left food here. The trough went missing but the steps have been preserved with a cross placed above them.

We come to the school. All quiet.

The school here served not only Edenhall parish but also that of Langwathby. It was built by the Musgraves in 1815 with a schoolmaster's house added in 1847. Yes. The master's house is the larger building. The schoolchildren had to pay for the heating of the school. In 1890 children had

to bring 6d twice a year. If they didn't bring it, they were sent home for it. That's one way of getting out of school!

We come to the Penrith Road. All quiet.

Having power on the political and social scene has its demands. The Musgraves needed to entertain, and they did so lavishly. They built a mansion here in 1821 replacing a building of Charles I reign of which little is known. The elegant hall in Italian style, with terraces and gardens sloping down to the river, was surrounded by deer park and woodland. Later in the century, with power and prestige beginning to leave them, the hall became more and more difficult to maintain leading to its eventual brick by brick demolition in 1934.

All the villagers in Edenhall were employed on the estate. Each family had a house with garden with firewood provided. They paid no rent or rates, but wages were low. In this way the Musgraves stayed very much in control. This control was very much demonstrated by one Lady Musgrave in an issue concerning the village green which was known as Potter's Garth.

The travellers or Potters caused much excitement when they visited with their families and animals. They set up camp here and brought news from the outside world. This caused the Musgraves concern as such news as the good wages being paid in the new cotton mills in Carlisle would create discontent. The issue was resolved by Lady Musgrave who had the green walled around despite it being a common. The travellers came no more.

We are nearing the end when I heard in the distance a clip, clip, clipperty clop. I could not believe it. Coming slowly towards us as I had finished speaking was a traveller complete with a black and white cob and a traditional Romany Vardy. The full Monty! What a stroke of luck. I'll turn this to my advantage thought I. Let the group think I have set this up. So, for the ears of the group and not the traveller I thanked the traveller for being on time!

Perhaps I won't get thunderous applause I thought but a brownie point or two for my organisational ability! Well.....

All went quiet but the voice from the back announces that Federer has taken the second set!

Ah well!



Eden Hall in 1869 (From the Mechanical Curator Collection held by the British Library)

Extract from Wikipedia:

The original Eden Hall was extended in the 1700s from materials salvaged from the demolition of Hartley castle, the ancestral home of the Musgrave family. It was rebuilt in 1821 employing the architect [Sir Robert Smirke](#) and rebuilt again in white stone in an Italianate style in the late 1860s. The hall was sold in the early 1900s, when the Musgrave family moved to London, and was demolished in 1934, leaving its 19th-century courtyard of stables and coach houses which has been divided into seven properties retaining some stables.^{[6][7]}

The hall was noteworthy as the home of the [Luck of Eden Hall](#), an enamel and gilt glass beaker from the 14th century, once owned by the Musgrave family and currently in pristine condition. While reputedly stolen from the fairies during its history, it is actually an Islamic piece dating from the 14th century. It is now in the Victoria and Albert museum.[□]



Ariel view of St Cuthbert's Church (Photo: Visit Cumbria)