

Skiddaw U3A News 1st October 2019

Local History – Britain's first black policeman

Retired policeman Ray Greenhow recently gave a talk to the Local History group about John Kent, who served in local police forces during the period 1835 to 1846. Ray has written a book about John Kent, having spent several years tracing Kent's life through various archives and records. John Kent was born around 1805. He firstly joined the Maryport force as a constable and later worked in Carlisle. He was also in mountain rescue teams, and may have worked as a harbour officer in Maryport. He made numerous arrests during his time as a policeman and was quite a well-known figure. He was sacked from the police force for drunkenness, but was apparently re-hired. By 1851 was working for the railways as a railway policeman. He also served as a court bailiff, later in life was a clerk, and he may also have been a wrestler.

Ray also told the stories of other people who had been connected with John Kent, including a fellow officer who was murdered. Ray gave the group examples of the harsh conditions of the time, which saw people forced into workhouses, and criminals transported to Australia for sometimes relatively minor crimes. Kent lived until 1880 and has numerous descendants both in this country and abroad.

Roamers explore Aira Force and Lucy's Wood

On another soggy morning, a surprisingly large number of clearly amphibian Roamers started their walk at Aira Force, which, boosted by persistent precipitation, tumbled down with a thunderous roar. The party then followed the foaming Aira Beck upstream, enjoying its lively cascades. Having walked through Dockray, they ascended to Lucy's Wood, an enchanting plantation commemorating the short life of a local girl. Secluded within it was Lucy's Barn, generously opened to visitors by the girl's family, which provided a welcome respite from the rain. The return route led via High Row to Thornythwaite and on to the charming hamlet of Ulcat Row, nestling at the foot of Gowbarrow Fell. The final leg traced Aira Beck on its other side, with the lively flow captivating the travellers anew.

Fell Walkers head for Tarn Crag

A small group of Fell Walkers caught a bus to Armboth Road and climbed slowly up to Steel Fell on a cloudy but dry day. Heavy rain had fallen overnight and there were several wet areas to negotiate before the group reached Calf Crag. They descended to the head of Far Easedale and climbed alongside Mere Gill to the small nameless Tarn where they turned eastwards towards Tarn Crag. The path was difficult to follow as it disappeared into several boggy areas. Lunch was taken underneath Tarn Crag, with its wide-ranging views. After the superb descent the group took refreshments at the Lancrigg Hotel before catching the bus back to Keswick.

Forthcoming events and activities

The next monthly meeting will be on Wednesday 16th October, at Crosthwaite Parish Rooms, where Doug Thompson will give a talk on 'The Artist as Pioneer – the European Tradition in Australian Art'. There will be an extra event in November, on Thursday 7th, when chocolatier Andrew Thwaite will give an insight into his profession. This is a ticket-only event, and tickets will be on sale at the October monthly meeting. For more information on Skiddaw U3A go to www.skiddawu3a.co.uk