

Huggins, Mike ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2789-4756> (2024) Sport and identity in Cumbria in the 19th century. In: Monthly Cultural Landscapes talk series, 9 April 2024, University of Cumbria, Ambleside, UK. (Unpublished)

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Sport and Identity in Cumbria in the 19th Century

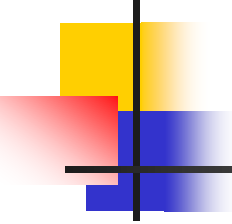


- Dr Mike Huggins
- Professor of Cultural History,
University of Cumbria



Have there ever been such things as Cumbrian sporting identities?

- Have they been been constructed more by offcomers?
- Or by those born and bred here?



Sport is a mirror in which nations and communities...now see themselves. The sports we watch and play tell stories about who and what we are.

How far has sport been a potent agent in making Cumbrians proud of their past and their place and creating a regional consciousness..

- **How far has it brought to life an ‘imagined community’ glossing over divides and the region’s many overlapping identities?**
- **Do the supposedly ‘distinctive’ characteristics of regional sport reflect more general beliefs?**



GRASMERE

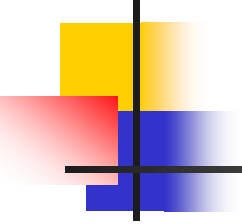
PATHE GAZETTE

www.britishpathe.com



Discursive features of outsider sources. Newsreels.

- Grasmere sports were 'Lakeland's Olympiad', or 'the dalesmen's Derby'.
- 'world-famed'.
- 'the most difficult sports in the world'; the 'world's most difficult meeting'.
- Competed for by 'mighty men of the fells', 'intrepid giants', 'fearless giants', 'stalwart dalesmen', 'successful dalesmen', 'hefty men of the lakes and fells' or 'the north's toughest dalesmen'; tough men who were variously 'part of the heart and tradition of Lakeland', 'more famed in the district than any screen stars', 'names of local renown'.

- 
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- The regular reports from various *Times* 'Special Correspondents' generally treated local sports with respect, but sometimes described wrestling in gently mocking tones: 'To an ignorant southerner wrestling is a peculiarly engaging spectacle ... it can be exhaustingly comical ... a clumsy imitation of modern dancing, the gentleman in embroidered tights and pink flush trunks'



Sport's identities are learned, experienced and multiple

identity isn't a stable concept with a fixed meaning. It is fluid and context-specific.

We learn from parents

Enjoy watching some sports or sports events

Enjoy playing some sports

Variously support local, regional or national teams/individuals

Sporting identities are linked to experience and age, class, gender, race etc.



Cumbria and the Lake District: political place, an 'imagined community', a cultural construction?

- Historic counties of Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire (west of the sands)
- Cultural geographers: 'far north'?
- In print, poems and literature: Wordsworthshire? national mythic significance drawn from the English Romantic movement?
- The National Park?
- 1911 census: North-west (with Lancashire, Cheshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire), 1931 C&W part of North 2 with Yorkshire's East and West Ridings, In 1951 C&W in Northern Region with Northumberland, Durham, and Yorkshire's North Riding, 1972 Local Gov. Act creates Cumbria, and put into North-west with Lancashire & Cheshire. Now a 'ceremonial county, with two new authorities.



Problems of 'sport' definition: slow growth of 'modern' sports forms

- In early 1800s 'sport' used for activities such as horse racing, hare coursing and hunting organised for the elite.
- 'sportsmen from hereditary instincts....squires and statesmen, hill-farmers and dalesmen keep alive and encourage sporting qualities during many generations' (VCH 1905). Notions of local distinctiveness?
- West coast industrial sports, Lake District walking, local traditions of wrestling, hunting and hound trailing,
- Most 'modern' sports emerge in Cumbria after a time lag. Playing catch-up?



Early nineteenth century sporting life.

- Local identity: village sports: wrestling, cockfighting, flinging the “geavelick” (similar to a javelin), football, foot racing, handball, horse racing, hunting, leaping, quoits, shooting, throwing the stone, and wrestling.
- Elite class sports: shooting, foxhunting, harrier hunts, regattas, annual race weeks at Carlisle, and more occasionally Penrith and Kendal.

Regattas and yacht races



Windermere Regatta

WILL be held at the Ferry House, on Thursday, the 29th inst., for BOAT RACES, to commence at 11 o'clock. Prizes will be given for Running, Leaping, &c.; and a BELT and FIVE GUINEAS to the best Wrestler.

Particulars will be stated next week in hand bills.



S O N G S

BY

JOHN WOODCOCK GRAVES.

D'YE KEN JOHN PEEL?

[AIR: "Bonnie (or Cannie) Annie."—The history of this celebrated hunting song is very curious, as will be seen by reference to the interesting autobiographical sketch of its author. Thirty years since no person could walk through the streets of Carlisle, without hearing some one or other either whistling the air, or singing the song. Since then its popularity has spread far and wide. It has been chanted wherever English hunters have penetrated in the world. It was heard in the soldiers' camps at the siege of Lucknow, and was lately sung before the Prince of Wales. Stray copies, and generally imperfect ones, have got into the newspapers; but it now appears for the first time in a general collection. The hunt is supposed to commence at Low Denton-holme, near Caldbeck—thence across a rugged stretch of country in a south-easterly direction—and bold reynard is finally run into on the heights of Scratchmere Scar, near Lazonby.—The old rant of "Bonnie Annie" is obsolete.]

DYE ken John Peel with his coat so gray?
D'ye ken John Peel at the break of the day?
D'ye ken John Peel when he's far, far away,
With his hounds and his horn in the morning?

'Twas the sound of his horn call'd me from my bed,
And the cry of his hounds has me oft-times led;
For Peel's view holloa would 'waken the dead,
Or a fox from his lair in the morning.

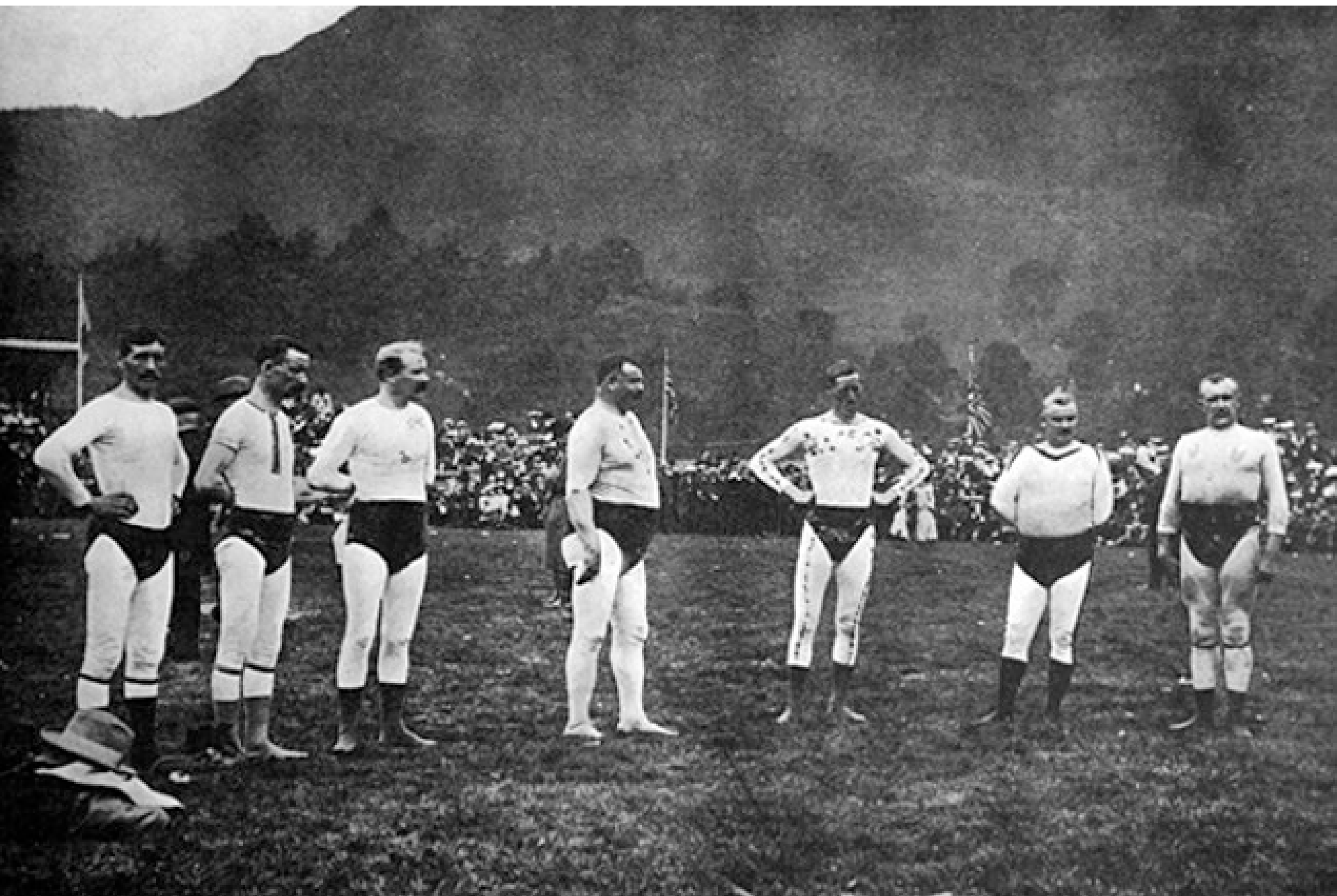
Horse-racing: much less significant in terms of Cumbrian identity



Wrestling at Kendal races in 1834

The following is the entry, and the first round:

STOOD.	FELL.	added.
Edward Nelson, Hutton	George Winder, Patterdale	Sir J. Ross
John Sill, Hutton	Robert Pearson, Crosthwaite	Mr. Skips
James Collinson, Kendal	Robert Loy, Kendal	Mr. E. Pe
James Robinson, Kendal	Thos Martindale, Kentmere	The Trade
Wm. Horsfall, Long Sled.	Israel Mark, Kendal	in specie
Wm. Barnett, Orton	Rich. Chapman, Patterdale	2 miles s
John Metcalfe, Staveley	John Nelson, Hutton	Mr. Whee
Wm. Airey, Staveley	Edwd. Ward, Underbarrow	Lord Wilt
John Dixon, Patterdale	John Rigg, Staveley	Mr. H. Sa
John Martindale, Winster	John Holme, Sedbergh	A Plate of
John Dixon, Underbarrow	John Berry, Strickland	Heats, 2
Geo Birkett, Patterdale	Richard Robinson, Kendal	Mr. Giffar
Th s. Dixon, Bonning Yeat	E. Cowperthwaite, Kentmere	Lord Derby
John Sharp, Kentmere	Matthew Rigg, Staveley	Mr. Griffit
Thos. Grisdale, Patterdale	John Robinson, Middleton	
James Gilpin, Kentmere	Jonathan Gilpin, Staveley	
Thos. Kitchen, Patterdale	Walker Martindale, Selside	
Joseph Parker, Crooklands	Isaac Brockbank, Natland	
Moses Mawson, Troutbeck	John Pearson, Crosthwaite	





Hound trailing

- 'a sport that may be said to challenge wrestling and fell running for the affection and loyalty of Cumbrians. Rarely seen outside of the county, hound trailing has no long history yet it has become one of the most characteristic sporting events in the Lake District social calendar' (simon Roberts)
- one of Cumbria's oldest and most popular sports (Hound trailing association).
- Already found @ Ambleside regatta in 1824 as entertainment for visitors and gambling.
- But relatively few families regularly involved



Workington 'uppies and downies'.

- Workington 'uppies' and 'downies' contest, originally a battle between two occupational groups, miners and sailors, survives to this day, despite early opposition from the respectable and religious.
- Workington is now the largest town to host these wilder, mass events. The annual game had already become a tourist attraction by the 1870s, when it was already attracting perhaps 5,000 spectators, some coming by special train. Shows off masculinity of mining communities to a wider public.
- Recorded on film *Topical Budget*, 5 April 1923; *Mining Review*, Year 1, Edition 2 October 1947.
- More generally outsiders have viewed it with incomprehension. As one writer from the Observer noted, such games were 'conclusive proof for foreigners everywhere that Brits really are a bit bonkers'

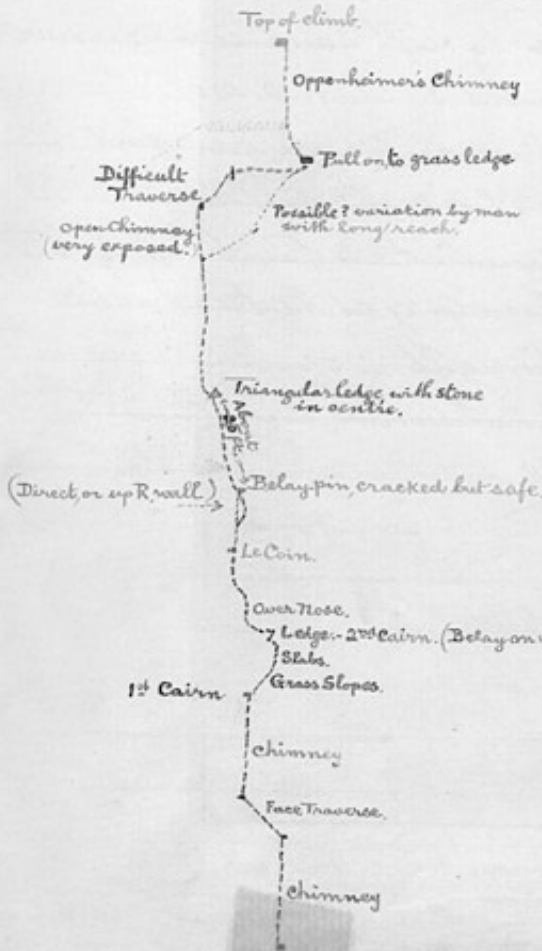


Highly innovative rock-climbing culture in/around Wasdale Head

- First developed in the 1880s, with apparently safer ascents of gullies and chimneys, led by Haskett-Smith
- Napes Needle 1886 and move to rock faces
- Shift to balance and technical climbing led by O. G. Jones in 1890s
- Widening of appeal away from visiting Alpinists, and v. middle-class
- More women climbing from 1890s.

Shamrock Gully. 31.7.06.

During an attempt on
~~reclimbing~~ this gully, the excellent spike rock in the
left branch of the top pitch became loose & showed signs
of falling outwards. Refusion.



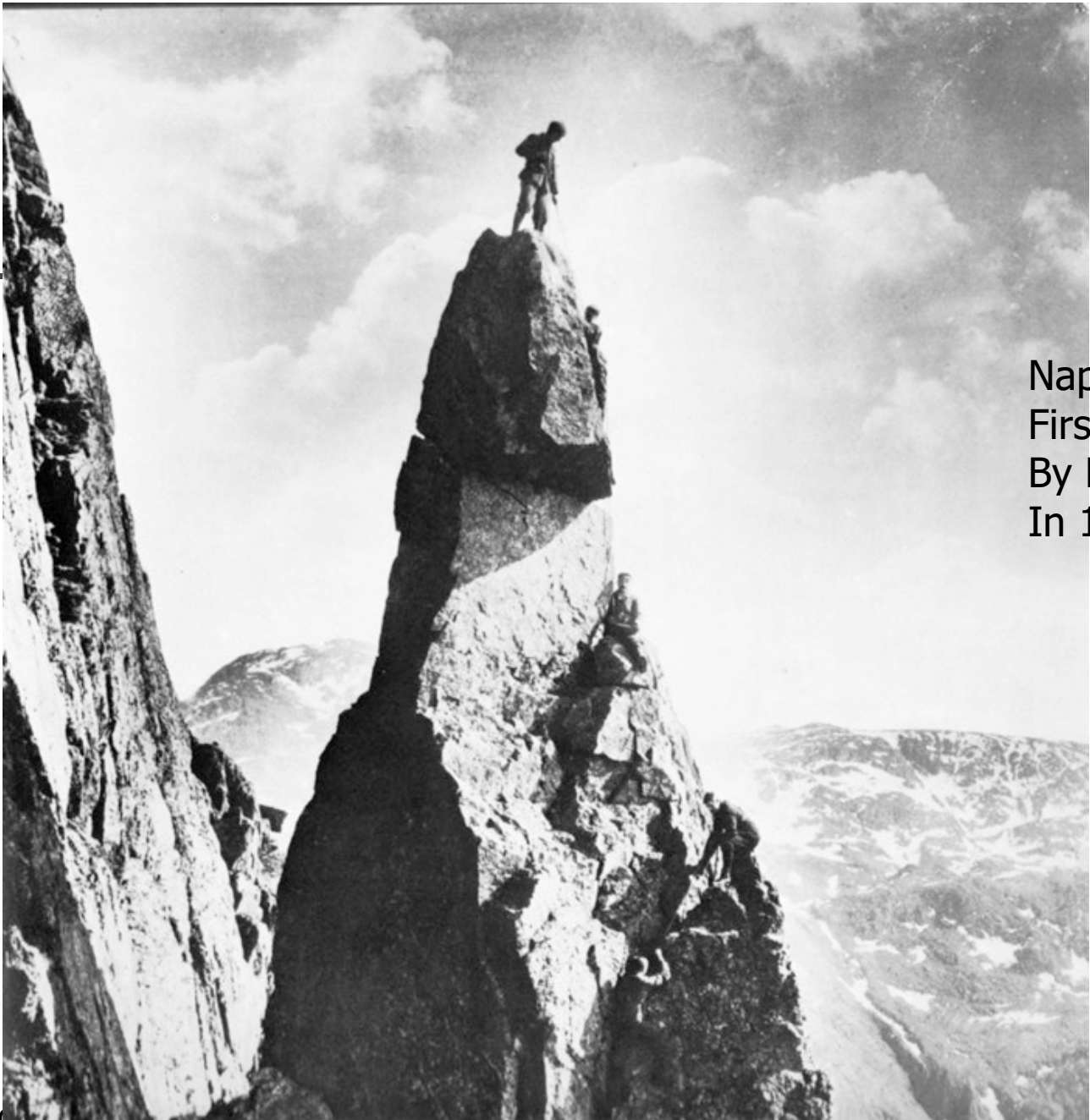
North West climb. - Pillar Rock

This was ascended for the second time on Aug. 23rd 1906 by a party of four, led by Mr. R. Lamb. The climb was found exceptionally severe, owing to the greasy state of the rocks after rain. The accompanying diagram gives our impression of the climb.

Time 4 hrs. 10 min.

Rob. Lamb
Edward Jolliffe
Robert Foster
Elo. Steeples

See footnote p. 224.



Napes Needle:
First Climbed Solo
By Heskett-Smith
In 1886.

Cricket – largely marginal to regional and local identity?





Cricket

- Cricket at Carlisle can be traced back to as far as 1828 when the Carlisle Patriot newspaper reported on a match in which Carlisle had beaten Cockermouth.
- Most early clubs were socially exclusive, had only a temporary existence, and the game ebbed and flowed
- there was reportedly an informal county club in Westmorland about 1835
- Cockermouth was more formally founded in the 1890s,
- Penrith briefly had a club in the early 1820s. Its tradesmen's club in the 1840s played at 4 am before work. A more permanent cricket club was founded in 1866.
- Lord Lonsdale provided a ground at Castle Meadows in Whitehaven in 1879.
- Barrow Cricket Club was formally founded in the 1890s.

Tennis – hotels and private houses, slow to find in parks.



OUR LAWN TENNIS MATCH



Rugby union rarely generated regional or local passion

- by the early 1890s, Aspatria, Barrow, Carlisle, Cockermouth, Kendal, Maryport, Millom, Whitehaven and Workington all had strong town teams. After rugby's 1895 split rugby league rapidly established itself in western urban, industrialised working-class areas. It reached a high standard in Barrow, Workington and Whitehaven, and became a potent source of working-class identity.
- Cumberland RU in 1880s, represented on RFU from 1888. After split in 1885 Cumberland the leading county side in north in 1890s, famous for forwards. But in 1900 only Carlisle, Aspatria and Penrith registered in Cumberland.

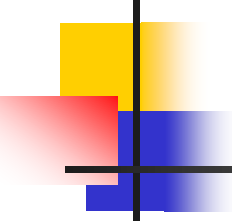


Northern union (rugby league)

- Cumbrian teams like Kendal, Workington, did not originally copy Lancs. and Yorkshire northern union split in 1895 but were rejected by elite Lancashire Union rugby clubs because of their popular support, forcing them into Northern Union. Barrow, founded in 1875, had strong links with the seceding Lancashire sides, and in April 1897 it voted unanimously to join the Northern Union, soon followed by Ulverston and Millom. By the 1898/9 season there were few rugby union sides left, and none at all in West Cumberland, a former union stronghold, but an area which soon gave more support to rugby league, especially in Whitehaven and Workington.
- Raised gate receipts, but soon distance to matches problematic.
- .

Cumberland Northern Union team c. 1906





Soccer: real problems in generating loyalty, support and identity.

- Cumberland Football Association only had four clubs in January 1886. Carlisle, Workington and Whitehaven main teams.
- In 1890s south Cumbria Barrow, Windermere and Kendal main centres. Barrow United, Barrow Old Boys and Carlton Rangers important. In 1890s Kendal, Burneside, Ambleside, Bowness, Grasmere, Patterdale, Milnthorpe, Windermere, Appleby, Grange, chief sides.
- Carlisle: entered Lancashire Combination 1905