

Whitehaven Hematite Iron Company

Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company

Iron manufacturers of Cleator Moor, Cumberland

This document is intended to provide a more detailed supplement to the [Graces Guide web page](#) for the iron works in Cleator Moor belonging to the above companies.

This is a desktop study only and the information included is raw and somewhat disjointed. There is a great deal of material in the National Archives at Kew and various offices of the Cumbria Archives which would enable us to tell a much better story, but this contributor does not intend to explore this any further in the foreseeable future.

Bill Swift 31 Jul 2025

1841 **"New Iron Works.** A Company has just been established for erecting furnaces and carrying on the melting of iron in the neighbourhood of Whitehaven. It consists of seventeen persons including Messrs. Hartley, Littledale, G. Harrison, Lindow, Burns, Randleson, and Foster, as well as several other wealthy individuals of the district, and we are informed that a bargain was concluded on Monday morning for a detached portion of the Cleator Hall estate, about forty acres, whereon to erect blast-furnaces, and other requisite buildings for carrying on the business upon an extensive scale. The site chosen for the erection of the buildings for this establishment is a central situation between Messrs. Harrison and Barkers' coal pit on Cleator Moor, and the Messrs. Lindow's iron ore field. "ⁱ

1843 New works at Cleator Moor belonging to the Hematite Iron Company reported to have begun production of pig iron.ⁱⁱ This was the first iron works in West Cumberland. Quite early on, the firm became the **Whitehaven Hematite Iron Company**, to distinguish it from others appearing in the area, though this may have been informal, and when it started is not clear but it was used in 1845.

1847 Directory entries – Hematite Iron Works, Cleator Moor:- William Thorburn, manager; [Isaac Armstrong](#), clerk; John Currie, book-keeper.ⁱⁱⁱ

1857 William Thorburn moved to the newly formed [Workington Hematite Iron Company](#)^{iv} and was succeeded as manager by [Isaac Armstrong](#).

1858 Directory entry - Hematite Iron Works, Cleator Moor, Manager [Isaac Armstrong](#). "There are three blast furnaces at work, producing 500 tons of pig iron weekly. Another furnace is in the course of erection. The three furnaces consume annually 40,000 tons of hematite ore and about 70,000 tons of coals for all purposes." ^v

1859 The partnership, trading as the Whitehaven Hematite Iron Company, comprised the following:- George Harrison; John Thompson; George Pew; Isaac Burns; Stanley Dodgson;

Richard Barker; Thomas Ainsworth; Gilfrid William Hartley; Margaret Hartley and John Dawson, who left the partnership on 19 Jan 1859.^{vi}

1859 Partnership dissolved with effect from 6 Jul 1859. The list of partners included several groups of trustees and executors. The business was to be carried on by a revised partnership:- George Harrison; John Thompson; Thomas Ainsworth; Gilfrid William Hartley; George Pew; Isaac Burns; Stanley Dodgson; William Randleson; Peter Fisher; [[James Dees]]; Joseph Fletcher; John Postlethwaite.^{vii}

1861 or earlier, some or all the partners took a lease on the coal royalty at Bowthorn, just north of the iron works. (See [Bowthorn Colliery](#)).^{viii} Thomas Ainsworth is credited with being the driving force behind this initiative. It later became part of the business of the Whitehaven Hematite Iron Company.

1863 Reference to a board of directors, with John Thompson as managing director.^{ix}

1867 All four furnaces in blast and two more under construction.^x

1865 Isaac Armstrong resigned his position as manager at Cleator Moor.^{xi} He was succeeded as manager by former clerk [John Fletcher Kirkconel](#). Armstrong moved to manage the new [Solway Hematite Iron Works](#) at Maryport.

1871 Previously constituted by a deed of co-partnership the firm was registered as a company limited by guarantee, as **Whitehaven Hematite Iron Company Limited** (Company No: 5383).^{xii}

1872 Six furnaces, five in blast.^{xiii} Produced only grey Bessemer iron.^{xiv}

1873 Directory entries – Whitehaven Hematite Iron Company Limited . Offices: 3 Cross Street, Whitehaven, John Brydon, secretary. Works, Cleator Moor, [John Fletcher Kirkconel](#), manager.^{xv}

1876 [Jonas Lindow Burns-Lindow](#) of Irton Hall, chairman.^{xvi} His cousin Jonas Lindow was a director in 1878.^{xvii} J L Burns-Lindow and J Lindow were partners in iron ore proprietors S and J Lindow. When they became involved is not yet known but probably in 1871 when the company was reconstructed.

Anthony Edmund Lamb appointed secretary. He had joined the company in 1868.^{xviii}

1879 A deed of covenant exists (not seen), with Jonas Lindow Burns-Lindow of Irton Hall, managing director, Jonas Lindow, director and A E Lamb, secretary of Whitehaven Hematite Iron Company Limited.^{xix} This suggests that they were the only officers of the company at that time, but we would need to see the document to be sure.

1880 Report in Feb, construction of 3 new blast furnaces at Cleator Moor begun.^{xx}

The Directory of Directors list only J L Burns-Lindow as a director of Whitehaven Hematite Iron Co., but this may not be complete.^{xxi}

At an EGM of the Whitehaven Hematite Iron Company Limited (5383) on 15 Jun 1880, the following Special Resolutions were duly confirmed^{xxii}:—

1. That the Company be wound up voluntarily.
2. That Thomas Brown, of Whitehaven, in the county of Cumberland, be and is hereby appointed Liquidator.
3. That Mr. Thomas Brown, the Liquidator of the Company, be and is hereby empowered to sell and transfer the business, property, and effects of the Company to a proposed new Company, to be called the Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company Limited and to accept shares in such new Company as compensation for such sale or transfer, and he shall have all powers conferred on a Liquidator by the 161st section of the Companies Act, 1862.
4. That the Whitehaven Hematite Iron Company Limited consent and agree to the new Company taking the name of the Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company Limited.

J L Burns-Lindow, Chairman.

Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company Limited (Company No: 14257) registered in July. To take over from the liquidator the property etc. of an existing company and to carry on that business.^{xxiii}

"In Friday's Gazette appears a notice of the voluntary winding up of the Whitehaven Hematite Iron Company, Limited. The old company is to be taken over by a new company called the Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company, Limited. The deed of partnership under which the old company carried on business expired on the 5th inst. All the partners in the old concern are taking up shares in the new company to the same extent as they had in the old. The introduction of the word "Steel" in the name of the new company is thought to portend an extension of their operations to steel as well as iron. The works are the oldest in Cumberland, and are situated at Cleator Moor. There is really no difference between the old and the new company so far as the shareholders are concerned. The new company is simply the old one under a new name."^{xxiv}

Despite the addition of "steel" to the name, the works ever produced steel, only pig iron.

1882 The directors of the new company were Jonas Lindow Burns-Lindow, Jonas Lindow, John Postlethwaite, John Fletcher Kirkconel (managing director) and Captain George Pew RN of London (who was elderly and did not attend meetings; last of the original partners to be involved, he died in Dec 1882).^{xxv}

1882 In July 1882, two major shareholders sought an injunction to prevent J L Burns-Lindow and Jonas Lindow, who were partners in S and J Lindow, iron ore proprietors, and John Postlethwaite, who owned limestone quarries, from entering into contracts between their personal interests and the Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company. It was stated that the two firms met all the work's needs for ore and limestone. A decision was deferred in court to allow the directors to consider their position, but no return to court was reported.^{xxvi}

However, in September at an EGM (J L Burns-Lindow in chair) an extraordinary resolution was passed for winding up the company and Manager J F Kirkconel was appointed liquidator. Although it states that the company's liabilities were such that this was a necessary action, it was later stated that their assets well exceeded their liabilities. A few days later, the two shareholders in the earlier injunction, lodged a petition with the Court for the company to be

wound up.^{xxvii} The following February the petition for winding up was withdrawn, stating that matters had been settled. Notwithstanding this, the company remained in the hands of the liquidator and he continued to operate the company, which reports suggest was doing very well.

Around this time, Burns-Lindow asked [Walker and Peile](#) (their mining engineers) to try to find a buyer for the Iron company. This they were unable to do (though as we will see below, they later bought the works with their wealthier business associates).^{xxviii}

1883 Directory entry – Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company Limited. Office: 3 Cross Street, Whitehaven. Works: Leconfield Street, Cleator Moor. J F Kirkconel, managing director. A E Lamb, secretary. Bulmer's Directory of West Cumberland 1883

In April 1884 a petition was presented to the court by the shareholders asking that the liquidation be halted and the company handed back to the shareholders. It was stated that all the creditors had been discharged, 10s in the £ being paid by the liquidator out of the assets of the company and 10s in the £ paid by the shareholders. The petition was granted.^{xxix}

1886 Only one out of five furnaces in blast.

1888 At an EGM on 19 Mar 1888 (J L Burns-Lindow in chair) an extraordinary resolution was passed for winding up the company and manager J F Kirkconel was appointed liquidator. The reason given was that the company could not, by reason of its liabilities, continue.^{xxx}

The **Whitehaven Iron and Steel Company Limited (Company No: 26174)** was registered on 28 March 1888.^{xxxi} Objects, to take over from the liquidator the property, effects and goodwill, etc., (including blast furnaces at Cleator Moor and a lease on Bowthorn Colliery) of the earlier company of the same name (in liquidation) and to carry on the business connected therewith.^{xxxii} It was reported that this was an initiative of William McCowan, William Burnyeat and engineers [William E Walker and William Peile](#)¹, and this is evident in the initial subscribers:-

- [W McCowan](#), iron smelter, Roseneath, near Whitehaven.
- [W Burnyeat](#), iron ore proprietor, Millgrove, near Whitehaven.
- [J F Kirkconel](#), iron smelter, Cleator Moor, Cumberland.
- [W E Walker](#), mining engineer and civil engineer, Croft End House, Cleator, Cumberland.
- [W Peile](#), mining engineer and civil engineer, Cartgate, near Whitehaven.
- H Walker, farmer, Sellafield, Cumberland. (Henry Walker)
- J Hartley, merchant, Beckermet, Cumberland.

Initial directors to be William McCowan, William Burnyeat and John Fletcher Kirkconel.

1889 New blast furnace commissioned. Turned on by J W Brockbank of Kirksanton, “one of the directors”.^{xxxiii}

¹ These four individuals, in various combinations, can be found working together on many ventures.

1891 "A Flourishing Iron Company. At the annual meeting of the Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company, on Tuesday, the Chairman (Mr McCowan) moved the adoption of the directors' report and balance sheet. The report recommended dividend 10 per cent, (less income tax). The motion was seconded by Mr Burnyeat, and carried. A resolution in favour of a dividend 10 per cent, was also adopted. In the course the meeting it was stated that about £124,000 had been spent in improving and rebuilding the works at Cleator Moor, in erecting coke ovens, and in putting down new machinery at Bowthorn Colliery, and in sinking two shafts. About £20,000 has been spent on the colliery alone. The works are in first-class order." ^{xxxiv}

1891 Mr James Crawford, who had been manager at the works for 3 years, left to work for the [Moss Bay Hematite Iron and Steel Company](#). A glowing testimonial was presented by the company to mark his departure. The indications are that he had been brought in specifically to effect a turnaround in the works, and was going on to a similar roll at Moss Bay, which was undergoing a similar reconstruction, with McCowan and Burnyeat on the new board. It was said that he had "thoroughly overhauled the works and put them into splendid condition." ^{xxxv}

1892 New offices built at the entrance to the iron works site. "The offices include a board room capable of accommodating about 150 persons, and rooms for the managing director, general manager, secretary, and clerks, and also a laboratory." ^{xxxvi}

1893 A depression in the industry left the company with large stocks, so notice was given in January that one furnace was to be damped down. At the same time Bowthorn Colliery faced difficulties as the main seams had been worked out and the six quarters seam, recently opened, was proving uneconomic to work. In February the company announced that as all the furnaces were all likely to close down, they would have to try to sell coal on the open market, and asked for a reduction in miners' rates of pay, otherwise the mine would also have to close. A reduction was agreed. On 14 Feb the last furnace was damped down and on 18 March the Bowthorn coal miners voted to cease work entirely.

The annual report in May stated that the furnaces had been out of blast for 19 weeks in the past year, on half blast for 7 weeks and the colliery idle for 11 weeks. Blame was laid on the Durham strike, the breakdown of one blowing engine and dull trade. ^{xxxvii}

In June, one furnace had been put into blast and a second was being prepared. ^{xxxviii}

It was to be August before a settlement was reached with the miners and work resumed at the colliery. ^{xxxix}

1894 Directory entry - Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company Limited; Wm McCowan and Wm Burnyeat managing directors, John Fletcher manager [sic] (?Kirkconel?), Anthony Edmund Lamb secretary. Offices Cleator Moor. James Ramsey, colliery manager, Bowthorn Colliery for Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Co.^{xl}

1894 Bowthorn Colliery permanently closed.

1897 Directory entry - Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company Limited; Wm McCowan and Wm Burnyeat directors, John Fletcher Kirkconel managing director, Anthony Edmund Lamb secretary) Offices Cleator Moor.^{xli}

1897 Death of managing director [John Fletcher Kirkconel](#).

Hematite Iron Works, Cleator Moor Data from Mineral Statistics of the UK		
Year	Number of furnaces	Number in blast
1853	2	2
1856	4	3
1866	4	4
1872	6	5
1882	5	2
1884	5	2
1887	5	1
1889	5	2
1899	4	2

1900 Death of director [William McCowan](#).

A E Lamb appointed general manager and secretary (date approx only).^{xlii}

1903 Trade poor; no furnaces in blast at the end of the year.^{xliii}

1904 One furnace relit in Feb and a second in Mar.^{xliv}

1904 Death of director James Wilson Brockbank.^{xlvi}

1906 J A Jackson ([John Arthur Jackson](#)) and [Joseph Huntrods](#) appointed directors.^{xlvi}

1910 Mr Thomas Edward George Marley of St Bees appointed managing director.^{xlvii}

1912 Capital reduced from £140,000 to £89,050.^{xlviii}

1913 25th Annual Meeting. Officers attending were [Myles Kennedy](#) (chairman), T E G Marley (managing director), [William E Walker](#), [Joseph Huntrods](#), [W J D Burnyeat](#) (directors) and A E Lamb (general manager and secretary). A 5% dividend on ordinary shares was recommended.

1915 Cumberland Waste Heat Owners Co Ltd built a 1,000kw power plant utilising waste heat from the iron works furnaces.^{xlix} Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Co later acquired a stake in this company.

Anthony Edmund Lamb relinquished his post as general manager and secretary after 47 years service and joined the board of directors.^l He was succeeded as secretary by Guy Harvey Muriel, CA.

1916 Death of director [William John Dalzell Burnyeat](#).^{li}

1917 Death of director Anthony Edmund Lamb.^{lvi} [John William Pattinson](#) was elected to the board in his place.^{lvi}

1918 Dividend of 10% paid on ordinary shares.^{lv}

1920 Dividend of 12½% paid on ordinary shares.^{lv}

1921 Directory entry - Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company Limited; T E G Marley managing director, Gerald² [sic] Muriel secretary.^{lv}

1921 Death of director [William Burnyeat](#), 21 Jun 1921.

1921 **A controlling interest was acquired by the [North Lonsdale Iron and Steel Company, Ulverston](#), by exchange of shares.^{lvii}** Myles Kennedy, John A Jackson and John W Pattinson were already directors of the North Lonsdale company and continued on the board of Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Co. Other directors retired.

1924 Death of former director [Joseph Huntrods](#).

1925 Directory entry - Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company Limited; E L Tosh³ managing director, Guy Harvey Muriel secretary.^{lviii}

1925 Death of former managing director Thomas E G Marley, aged 70.^{lix}

1927 Board of directors comprised :- [Myles Kennedy](#), chairman; [John Arthur Jackson](#), vice chairman; Stephen Hart Jackson (solicitor), Wilfrid Hugh Burton Rowley Kennedy, [John William Pattinson](#), Basil Sadler, James Walker (of Ulverston) directors. All were also directors of the North Lonsdale Iron and Steel Company.^{lx}

1928 Death of company chairman Myles Kennedy.^{lxii}

1930 Financial year ended 31 Mar, no furnaces were in blast for the entire 12 months.^{lxii} It is understood that they were never re-lit, though no contemporary record has yet been seen to confirm this.

1937 Death of company chairman Lt Col John Arthur Jackson.^{lxiii}

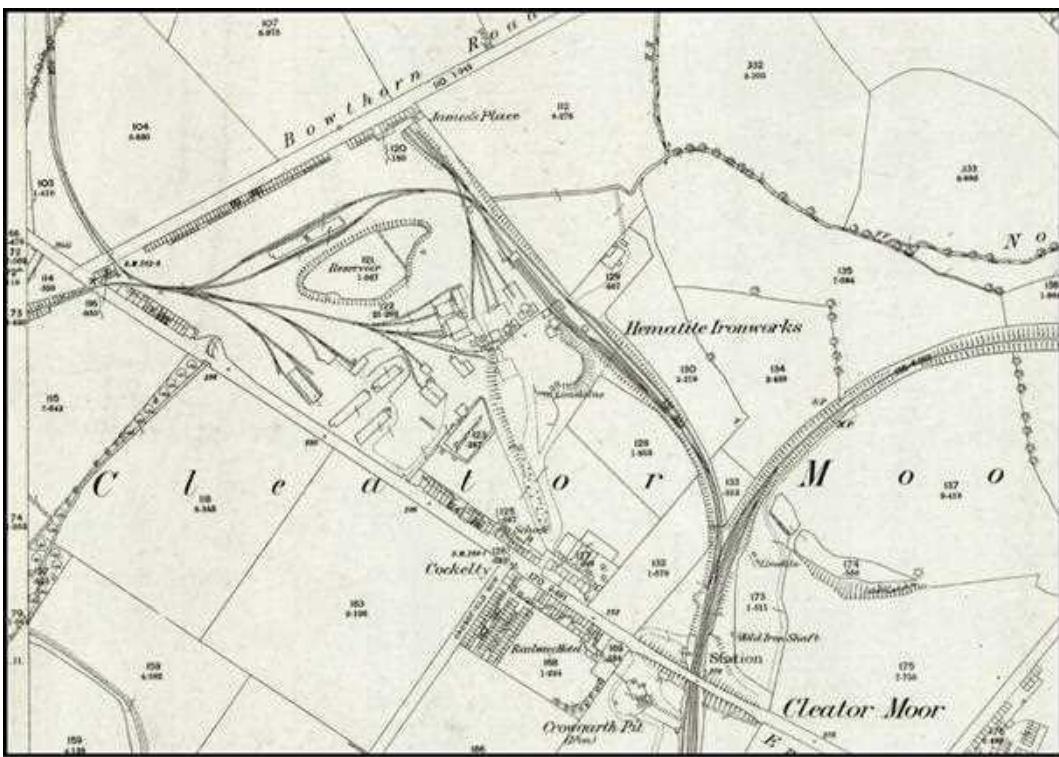
1942 In liquidation.^{lxiv}

² This is demonstrably incorrect. The 1921 Census confirms that Guy Harvey Muriel was secretary of Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company Limited.

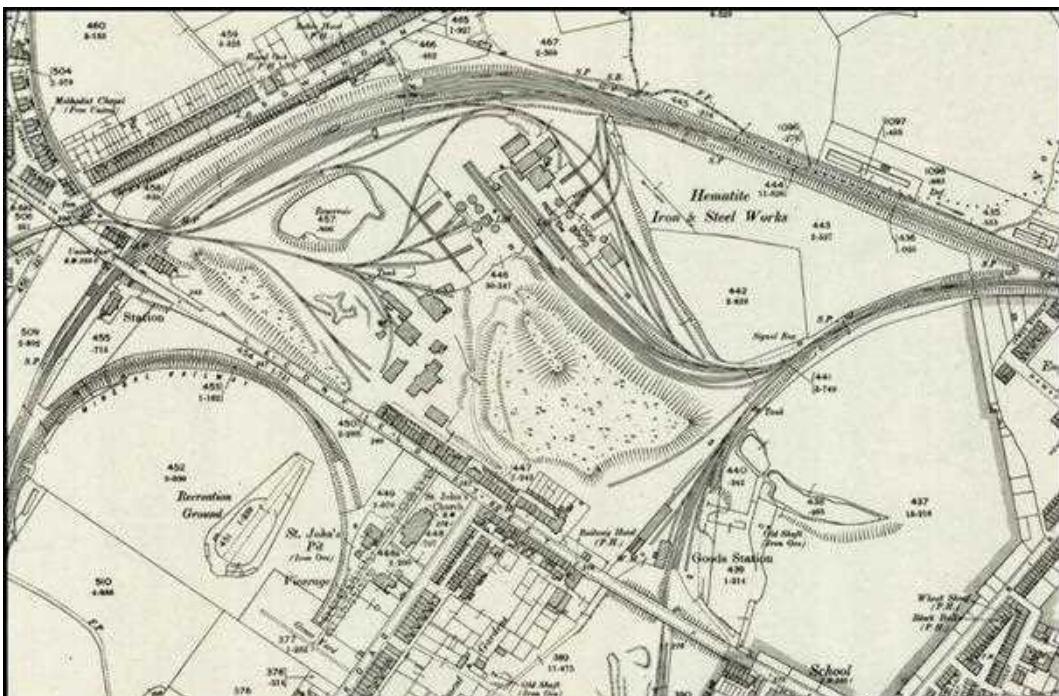
³ Edmund Logan Tosh. Also general manager of North Lonsdale Iron and Steel Company



Undated photo of Cleator Moor Iron Works (Source Pintrest, no known copyright)



25" Ordnance Survey Map - Surveyed: 1860, Published: 1863
 Hematite Iron Works, Cleator Moor - Whitehaven Hematite Iron Company
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25" Ordnance Survey Map - Revised: 1898, Published: 1899
 Hematite Iron Works, Cleator Moor - Whitehaven Hematite Iron and Steel Company Limited
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[Link to National Library of Scotland Maps](#)

Bibliography

ⁱ Carlisle Patriot - 28 Aug 1841

ⁱⁱ Cumberland Pacquet - 5 Dec 1843

ⁱⁱⁱ Mannix Directory of Cumberland 1847

^{iv} Cumberland Pacquet - 24 Mar 1857

^v Kelly's Directory of Cumberland 1858

^{vi} London Gazette - 21 Jan 1859 – dissolution of partnership as far as John Dawson was concerned

^{vii} London Gazette - 10 Feb 1860

^{viii} Cumbria Archives Ref DLONS/W/7/1/463

^{ix} Whitehaven News - 4 Jun 1863

^x Carlisle Journal - 29 Nov 1867

^{xi} Whitehaven News - 24 Aug 1865

^{xii} [National Archives ref BT 31/1603/5383](#); Echo (London) - 22 Apr 1871; Morning Advertiser - 24 Apr 1871

^{xiii} Statistics of the Iron and Steel Trade 1872

^{xiv} Griffiths Guide to the iron trade of Great Britain 1873

^{xv} Kelly's Directory of Cumberland 1873

^{xvi} Cumberland Pacquet - 21 Mar 1876

^{xvii} Carlisle Express - Sat 8 Jun 1878

^{xviii} Whitehaven News - 30 Dec 1915

^{xix} Cumbria Archives Ref [BDHJ/162/4/1](#)

^{xx} Midland & Northern Coal & Iron Trades Gazette - 4 Feb 1880

^{xxi} Directory of Directors 1881.

^{xxii} London Gazette - 2 Jul 1880

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^{xxiv} Midland & Northern Coal & Iron Trades Gazette - 14 Jul 1880

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^{xxvi} Carlisle Express - 22 Jul 1882

^{xxvii} London Gazette - 6 Oct 1882 and 3 Nov 1882

^{xxviii} Whitehaven News - 8 Feb 1894

^{xxix} Carlisle Journal - 8 Apr 1884

^{xxx} London Gazette - 27 Mar 1888

^{xxxi} The Stock Exchange Year Book 1908; [National Archives Ref BT 31/31097/26174](#)

^{xxxi} Financial News - 4 Apr 1888

^{xxxi} Whitehaven News - 28 Mar 1889

^{xxxiv} Carlisle Patriot - 29 May 1891

^{xxxv} Workington Star - 29 May 1891 and Whitehaven News - Thursday 18 June 1891

^{xxxvi} Maryport Advertiser - 26 Nov 1892

^{xxxvii} Carlisle Journal - 19 May 1893

^{xxxviii} Maryport Advertiser - 3 Jun 1893

^{xxxix} Whitehaven News - 17 Aug 1893

^{xl} Kelly's Directory of Cumberland 1894

^{xli} Kelly's Directory of Cumberland 1897

^{xlii} Whitehaven News - 30 Dec 1915

^{xliii} Whitehaven News - 24 Dec 1903

^{xliv} Millom Gazette - 11 Mar 1904

^{xlv} Liverpool Evening Express - 11 Jan 1905

^{xlii} Carlisle Journal - 13 Mar 1906

^{xlvii} Whitehaven Advertiser and Cleator Moor and Egremont Observer - 19 Feb 1910. Also 1911 census confirms.

^{xlviii} London Gazette - 17 Dec 1912

^{xlix} Whitehaven News - 16 Dec 1915

^l Whitehaven News - 30 Dec 1915

^{li} Whitehaven News - 11 May 1916

- ^{liii} Whitehaven News - 11 Oct 1917
- ^{liii} Whitehaven News - 6 Jun 1918
- ^{liv} Whitehaven News - 6 Jun 1918
- ^{lv} Liverpool Journal of Commerce - 26 May 1920
- ^{lvi} Kelly's Directory of Cumberland 1921
- ^{lvii} Financial Times – 17 Nov 1921 and 29 Nov 1921
- ^{lviii} Kelly's Directory of Cumberland 1925
- ^{lix} Lancashire Evening Post - 20 Jun 1925
- ^{lx} The Directory of Directors 1927
- ^{xi} Financial Times – 13 Nov 1928
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- ^{lxiii} Financial Times – 27 Nov 1937
- ^{lxiv} London Gazette – 28 Aug 1942