**Cumbrian Lives**

**a.k.a. The Dictionary of Cumbrian Biography**

In September 2004, the new Oxford Dictionary of National Biography [O.D.N.B.] was published by Oxford University Press, containing 60,000 biographies. This massive project, largely generated in the 1990s, involved the re-writing of the lives included in the volumes of the original Dictionary of National Biography [1885 to 1900], and the inclusion of the lives of those written up in supplements [1912-1996]. The O.D.N.B. also included the lives of those who had been excluded or omitted from the earlier volumes, particularly those of prominent women and members of ethnic minority groups. There is a full sequence of the O.D.N.B. volumes in Carlisle Library and also online.

In anticipation of this publication and in collaboration with the editors of the O.D.N.B., in June 1999, almost twenty years ago, David Cross, a Cumbrian art historian, called a meeting at Charlotte Mason College to establish a county wide project, initially entitled the Dictionary of Cumbrian Biography [D.C.B.]. The initial aim was to identify and research the names and biographies of significant Cumbrian figures who had not, at that date, been included in the O.D.N.B. survey. William Rollinson, Robert Woof, Michael Wheeler, Keith Hanley and others were unable to attend. Apart from David Cross, those attending the first meeting included Les Shore, the engineering historian [chair]; Angus Winchester, the historian; Rob David, the historian; Alan Hankinson, the journalist and obituarist; Richard Hall, the archivist; Jackie Fay, the librarian and Christine Parker, the original secretary of the project. Soon afterwards, the D.C.B. was re-named, more succinctly, Cumbrian Lives. Its ultimate goal was to be an online source of Cumbrian biographies. There followed some ten planning meetings at Kendal Archive Centre from 1999-2000 and the committee members set about listing suitable names and accumulating bibliographical details.

For 2018-19: an exhibition of Cumbrian portraits, both paintings and photographs, is being planned to be shown in Carlisle Library demonstrating the range of figures so far included in the ODNB and in Cumbrian Lives.

Much has been achieved already, but there is still a great deal to encompass. David Cross, whose publications include writing on Cumbrian artists, including George Romney, Sawrey Gilpin and Percy Kelly, in addition to his recent volume on Cumbrian public sculpture, is keen in his semi-retirement to assemble a new team to carry the project forward. The current plan for 2019, the 20th anniversary year, is to meet in Carlisle for several hours once a month. There will be scope for more frequent meetings, if the new members are keen.

If anyone would like to join the project, please let David know via: [dcrossart@gmail.com](mailto:dcrossart@gmail.com).

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