

# The Fairy Placenames of Cumbria

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## Introduction

People have long given names to supernatural forces and they have long named points on the landscape after these imagined forces. “Supernatural forces” included, in England, fairies and it is only natural, then, that fairies appeared in English placenames. This was true in the early Middle Ages, when elf placenames were given by the first English-speakers (Hall, 2006, 61-80; Hall, 2007, pp. 64-66). And it has been true in modern times, as dozens of English fairy placenames demonstrate: in the appendix to the present article I list thirty six fairy placenames for Cumbria,<sup>1</sup> and there are many more on maps and in records for other parts of England, particularly to the north of the Trent. The earliest example I have come across for an English fairy placename dates to 1606 (Smith, 1961-1963, VI, p. 267 for “Fairy Gill”, Sedbergh). Others were, meanwhile, still being coined in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Many continue to be used in 2018.

I have two aims in the following article. First, I have included (in an appendix) a handlist of Cumbrian fairy placenames to facilitate the study of north-western supernatural toponyms. Having tracked fairy placenames, and written elsewhere on Cumbrian fairylore (Young, 2018), my suspicion is that Cumbria has the highest density of fairy toponyms in England: something that, though, only a larger study could confirm. Second, I want to reflect on what we can learn about Cumbrian fairylore from the patterning of fairy toponyms. For example, on the evidence of placenames, were fairies more likely to be found in the east or west of the county? Were they more likely to live above or below ground? Can we make some kind of determination about the size of traditional fairies? Is it true that fairies and prehistoric sites often go together?

I will concentrate, in what follows, on primary sources for the simple reason that supernatural placenames, particularly post medieval supernatural placenames, have been little studied (e.g. Harte, 2009; Young, 2014). True, fairy toponyms have sometimes been catalogued, if incompletely: of the thirty six placenames in the appendix only four appear in the English Place-name Survey’s volumes: Fairy Close (Brough); Fairy Crag (Rosgill); Fairy Gill (Sedbergh); Fairy Holes (Newby).<sup>3</sup> But fairy placenames have not been discussed. Indeed, I know of no sustained historical or folklore discussion of fairy placenames for anywhere in England from the past two hundred years (some pages in Rieti, 1991, pp. 66-67; Young, 2016). The present is, then, a pioneering and, thus, necessarily, a provisional work. In sharing my findings with a wider public I hope, above all, to increase the number of fairy placenames available for Cumbria. In the list of thirty two traditional names in the appendix, ten names are attested in just a single source. That is a strong hint that many others await discovery.

However, before looking at Cumbria, we must briefly set out a complicating factor, one that risks hamstringing any study of fairy placenames. In the 1800s, a new type of fairy

toponym began to be used, particularly in scenic areas: what I will term here “beautified fairy names”. This subject badly needs a study: the problem bars all analysis of modern fairy names. For example, homes were called “the Fairy House”; or bits of countryside, particularly stretches visited by the first middle-class tourists, were rebranded as “Fairy Glen” or “Fairy Valley”. In some cases these names were loosely based on fairylore: for example, the Fairy Oak at Wrexham (which dated back to at least the eighteenth century and that was traditional) led to a newly-built neighbouring house being called “Fairy Mount” and a nearby lane “Fairy Road” (“The Fairy Field”, 1882: “the pleasure grounds of ‘Fairy Mount’ as one of the handsome houses now in course of completion is to be called”). In other cases, fairy toponyms were conjured up, without any reference to tradition.

These “beautified fairy names” cause confusion in surveys of the supernatural. There is the difficulty of distinguishing placenames coined for aesthetic or commercial reasons by Victorians from placenames emerging from local beliefs. The easiest way to separate the two is to look at the name itself: for example, the earthy-sounding “Fairy Hole” (for a cave) will not be a beautified name; whereas “Fairy Mount” for a house (see the last paragraph) does not sound, in any way, traditional.<sup>4</sup> The only cast-iron way to judge the difference is, instead, to track local names back through time, if possible to their origins. The tendency to beautify British placenames with “fairy” seems only to have begun in the 1840s and 1850s, so placenames that are older are probably traditional.

### **The Patterning of Fairy Placenames**

The first determined attempt to record Cumbrian fairylore was made by John Briggs in Westmorland in 1822 (Briggs, 1825, pp. 223-224, first published in a local magazine). It is striking that even Briggs, a working class writer, with good contacts among rural communities, had problems gathering material; his work on Cumbrian ghosts was much more confident (Briggs, 1825, pp. 219-220). Several other Cumbrian writers recorded fairy traditions in the second half of the nineteenth century, but those traditions were clearly withering away. The proof for this withering is not that fairies are said to have vanished; after all stories about disappearing fairies have been told since the times of Chaucer (Briggs, 1978, pp. 7-8). The proof is, rather, that we can track the tradition as it declines. The unpleasant side of fairies – the killing of human neighbours, the stealing of babies and of food – is glimpsed in the older sources, particularly the snippets of fairylore we have from the 1700s; the sources from the 1800s show less interaction between fairies and humans (Young, 2018). By 1900 it is likely that fairy traditions had vanished from almost all the county (Hodgson, 1901, 116; though see Newman and Wilson, 1952, 93).

The entirety of traditional Cumbrian fairylore runs to a few thousand words. Fairy placenames offer us a useful and an unexploited source for Cumbrian fairy traditions. Here we have, after all, names decided on by local populations, without the biases of the nineteenth-century collectors, or twentieth-century folklorists. I have mapped the traditional names in Figure 1: in some cases we have fairy clumps – names cluster in the same place. I have put these on the map as a single red symbol. Distribution is reasonably even throughout the county. Only the Cumbrian coast lacks fairy placenames – with the notable exception of

Fairy Rock at Whitehaven. This could be because supernatural placenames tend to be on higher ground; though note the many fairy placenames on the North Cumbrian plain. Alternatively, it could be chance, particularly when we remember that there are likely other Cumbrian fairy placenames waiting to be unearthed.

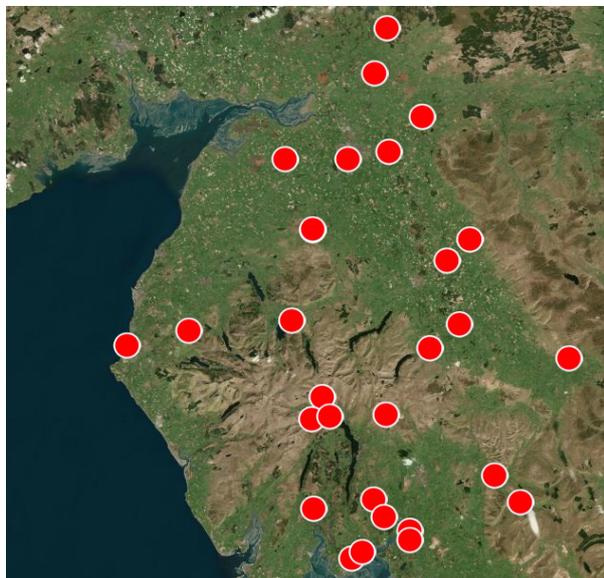


Figure 1: Fairy Placenames of Cumbria

placenames. This may be because not all legends and placenames have been passed down. But it is more likely to be because not all fairy placenames had legends associated with them; or if they did, the legends were of the very blandest kind: e.g. “fairies were once seen at that beck”.

When we compare the fairy placenames on the map with the fairy legends that have been passed down to us, there is some modest overlapping. There is a legend about the Fairy Rock at Whitehaven, from the generation before it collapsed into the sea (Dickinson, 1876, pp. 130-131). There is also a legend recorded from 1849 for the Howk at Caldbeck, a place where two different fairy placenames are found (Linton, 1849, 1-16).<sup>5</sup> The fairy well at Eden Hall is, of course, at the very centre of the most famous of all Cumbrian fairy legends, the luck of Eden Hall (Rowling, 1976, pp. 86-89). However, other than this the fairy legends we have are not related to fairy

**Caves (12):** Fairy Chapel (Allithwaite); Fairy Chapel (Pool Bank); Fairy Church (Allithwaite); Fairy Hole (Dent); Fairy Hole (Milnthorpe); Fairy Hole Meadow (Colton); Fairy Holes (Lamplugh); Fairy Holes (Newby); Fairy Holes (Pool Bank); Fairy Kirk (Caldbeck); Fairy Kirk, T' (Kentmere); Fairy Pits (Wetheral).  
**Water (11):** Fairy-Bead Beck (Stainton); Fairy Beck (Cummersdale); Fairy Gill (Great Corby); Fairy Gill (Sedbergh); Fairy Keld (Castlerigg); Fairy Kettle (Caldbeck); Fairy Kettles (Brampton); Fairy Pool (Melmerby); Fairy Well (Aikton); Fairy Well (Loughrigg); Fairy Well, The (Langwathby).  
**Rocks (7):** Fairy Castle (Brackenhill); Fairy Crag (Rosgill); Fairy Graves (Little Langdale); Fairy Rock (Whitehaven); Fairy Scar (Mill Side?); Fairy Steps (Beetham); Fairy Tables (Brackenhill).  
**Fields (2):** Fairy Close (Brough); Fairy Holm (Brampton).  
**Uncertain (1):** Fairy Knowes (Nicholforest).

Figure 2: Breakdown of Fairy Placenames

Let us now leave the legends to one side and concentrate solely on the names. I have broken them down, in Figure 2, into landscape categories. Of the thirty three traditional fairy names, twelve relate to caves or holes in the ground; eleven to bodies of water (still and running);<sup>6</sup> and seven to rocks (ranging from cairns to a rock “scar”). There are three other names that are more difficult to classify. Two are likely some kind of open ground: Fairy Close and Fairy Holm. I have been unable to track down their exact position. Fairy Knowes,

which can be pinpointed, in Nicholforest, is probably a series of hillocks or earthworks, though there is nothing obvious on the map there. I explore, in the next paragraphs, five points relating to these thirty three names: the connection of Cumbrian fairies with the underworld; the connection of Cumbrian fairies with water; the size of Cumbrian fairies; types of fairy sites; and the lack of references to prehistoric sites.

First, the question of subterranean dwellings. When Alaric Hall examined elf place-names from Anglo-Saxon England he noted that these names (as Hall admits, his sample was small) were often associated with high places (Hall, 2006, 80; Hall, 2007, p. 66; Semple, 2013, p. 186). Some of the Cumbrian fairy names are from high places (e.g. the Fairy Scar), some from low-lying places (the Fairy Rock), but there is a consistent connection with the subterranean world. The twelve names involving caves suggest that fairies are supposed to live underground: and we know of one other unnamed cave where fairies were said to live (near Shank Castle) (Bulmer, 1884, p. 477). These underground dwellings were not simply an abstract supernatural place: in one case we have a description of late eighteenth century children exploring a Fairy Hole with a pistol for fear of the fey (W.D., 1827)! This habit of subterranean dwellings might also be implicit in some of the other fairy placenames, including the two fairy gills (ravine-like valleys) and the Fairy Crag, the Fairy Castle, and the Fairy Rock. Cumbrian fairies were, on the basis of this evidence, chthonic creatures.

The connection with water is also there in our list. Nor are we talking about just one kind of body of water. In three cases we have a fairy well. We have one pool. We have a keld or spring. We have two fairy kettles (cauldrons): pools in a river that look as if they are boiling. We have four streams (two gills and two becks), including one where “fairy beads” were found, probably a kind of fossil (Sullivan, 1857, p. 138). The Fairy Crag, meanwhile, is set in the middle of a loop of river; the Fairy Rock is next to the sea; and the Fairy Table and Fairy Castle are by a river. Perhaps fairy water sites should, too, be connected to the subterranean side of fairies: most of these placenames, after all, involve water coming out of the ground, or, in the case of the kettles, a force appearing to emerge from underground (the boiling action of the water)? Fairies are frequently connected to springs and wells in the rest of England.

Another interesting point is what these names tell us about the size of fairies. The most important in this respect are the fairy caves. The various fairy holes tend to be difficult for adults to enter: they are the preserve of potholers and were often only properly explored in the later nineteenth century. The larger caves are called kirks or churches, here and elsewhere in the north of England: the Fairy Kirk, for example, at Caldbeck is some eighteen or twenty yards high. Both of these name types suggest child-sized fairies: fairies that can penetrate the small holes; or that could stand together in the larger caves as a congregation. This scale is also, incidentally, pointed to, repeatedly, in our few nineteenth century written sources for Cumbrian fairies. They were “generally of small stature” (Briggs, 1825, p. 224); they were “harmless little beings” (Cowper, 1899, p. 308); they rode “small horses” (Bulkeley, 1886, 227). These are not the miniaturised fairies of Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, but four- or five-foot high humans (see Briggs, 2003, pp. 368-369 for an overview of fairy size; Latham, 1930, pp. 67-79 for a polemical but still valuable account).

There are five what might be called “fairy religious sites” in the list: two fairy chapels, a fairy church, and two fairy kirks. It is worth noting that these churches and chapels are among the most widespread and also some of the oldest supernatural names from Britain: there is a Little Goblin’s Church recorded in Gloucestershire from 950.<sup>7</sup> These names are also widely attested across modern England, though with different entities associated with them in different regions: for example, there is Pookchurch to the south of Crawley, and a Lud’s Church at Gradbach in Staffordshire. Such names are surely to be connected to the Green Chapel in *Gawain and the Green Knight*:

2178 Then he bowes to the berwe, aboute hit he walkes,  
2179 Debatande with himself what hit be myght.  
2180 Hit had a hole on the ende and on ayther side,  
2181 And overgrowen with gres in glodes aywhere,  
2182 And all was holw inwith, nobot an olde cave  
2183 Or a crevisse of an olde cragge, he couth hit nocht deme  
With spelle.

(Harte, 2009, p. 31).

In Cumbria, fairy religious sites refer to caves. However, this does not always seem to be the case in the rest of England, where the name perhaps refers, at least sometimes, to a rock taking on the outer form of a “church” (Harte, 2018, p. 67). A wider, more ambitious study is needed to track these places through time and across the English and lowland Scottish counties.

A further observation worth making is the way that the Cumbrian fairies are situated in the natural world. This is not just the obvious fact that all these names are to be found away from human habitation; though they are. It is the subtler point that several of the toponyms suggest that the landscape is itself part of the fabric of the domestic fairy universe. So the strange run of marks in a rock at Beetham become fairy steps; pools in a river become fairy cauldrons; a large flat sandstone rock becomes the fairies’ table; and cairns are fairy graves. The extinct giants and demons of English folklore – not to mention Robin Hood and King Arthur – are often used to explain rocks (from throwing matches) or tombs (large rocks) (Rowling, 1976, pp. 15-17; Barrowclough and Hallam, 2008, for nearby Lancashire). Their “furniture”, however, is placed in the heroic past. The fairies’ possessions were part of a mythical present.

A final and very tentative point is the connection between fairies and prehistoric landscape markers. Often we read that fairies were associated with prehistoric sites. Yet this does not come out of this admittedly small sample of placenames. The Fairy Graves at Little Langdale were three prehistoric cairns, and the name is only attested once. It is conceivable that the Fairy Knowes related to some prehistoric mounds: though, as noted above, there is nothing on modern OS maps at this point. In fact, I am struck by a lack of connection between fairies and prehistoric remains in our few nineteenth century legends from the county (Maclean, 1912, 145 for a “fairy” connected with Maiden Castle that sounds more like a hag). Prehistoric remains *do* appear in Cumbrian lore, just not in connection with fairies

(Rowling, 1976, pp. 71-85). Perhaps the link between fairies and prehistoric sites has been exaggerated: that would be, in any case, what the Cumbrian evidence suggests.

In conclusion, the fairy placenames of Cumbria can give us several insights into fairy-lore: something particularly important given the relative scarcity of reliable fairy records from the county. Hopefully a future study will be able to take all fairy toponyms from northern England and assess them together, testing for regional differences and broader symmetries. An even more ambitious project would be to take *all* modern supernatural place-names from Cumbria and assess these together. Here we have boggart and boggle, hob and dobbie toponyms creating, with fairy placenames, a complicated pattern across the county. This pattern could only be unpicked with extensive references to dialect and writings on the supernatural from the nineteenth century, and with considerations of wider writing on supernatural taxonomies.

### **Appendix: Handlist of Cumbrian Fairy Placenames**

There follow (i) the traditional and (ii) beautified fairy placenames I have identified from Cumbria. Note that OS refers to six-inch Ordnance Survey maps with numbers and a county code: C (Cumberland), L (Lancashire), W (Westmorland) and Y (Yorkshire).

#### **(i) Traditional Names**

**Fairy-Bead Beck (Stainton, C):** “ ‘Fairy-bead beck’, near Stainton, some years ago, furnished an unlimited supply of curiously shaped pebbles, from which the stream received its name. They are described as of the size of large beads, partly shaped like the joints of a backbone, partly having a resemblance to ladles with handles, and to ‘cups and saucers’. But they are scarcely to be found now, as if the fairies and their beads had disappeared together” (Sullivan, 1857, p. 138).

**Fairy Beck (Cummersdale, C):** “the footpath on the Holme near the Black Dub and the Fairy Beck bridge” (“Cummersdale Parish Council”, 1897).

**Fairy Castle (Brackenhill, C):** A heather-covered rock on the river. See **Fairy Table (Brackenhill, C)**.

**Fairy Chapel (Allithwaite, L):** “Near to this Holy Well are two cavities in the mountain limestone rock, called ‘The Fairy Church’ and ‘The Fairy Chapel;’ and about three hundred yards to the north there used to be another well called ‘Pin Well,’ into which, in superstitious times, it was thought indispensable that all who sought health by drinking the waters of the Holy Well, should, on passing it, drop a pin” (Stockdale, 1872, p. 591); OSLa17 (1851).

**Fairy Chapel (Pool Bank, W):** “Fairy Chapel” (“Kendal Literary”, 1856), see **Fairy Holes (Pool Bank, W)**.

**Fairy Church (Allithwaite, L):** See **Fairy Chapel (Allithwaite)**, another cave in the same area.

**Fairy Close (Brough, W):** Smith (1967, II, p. 66) offers an 1843 date.

**Fairy Crag (Rosgill, W):** Smith (1967, II, p. 174) offers an 1859 date. OSWe14 (1863).

**Fairy Gill (Great Corby, C):** In 1866 a hunt found a fox “near Fairy Gill by Corby” and killed at Armithwaite (“The Gilsland Fox Hounds”, 1866).

**Fairy Gill (Sedbergh, Y):** Smith gives the form Fayraye for 1606 (Smith, 1961-1963, VI, p. 267).

**Fairy Graves (Little Langdale, W):** “In connection with the names of cairns, etc., Mr. Hall tells me that he has heard that the cairns in Cockley Beck intake in the Upper Duddon Valley are known to one of our older Eskdale residents as ‘The Fairy Graves’ ” (Fair, 1913, 219).

**Fairy Hole (Dent, Y):** OSY64 (1852).

**Fairy Hole (Milnthorpe, W):** “probably in origin a natural ‘pot-hole’ and known locally as ‘The Fairy Hole’, is situated on the S.W. slope of Haverbrack Bank nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  m. W.S.W. of (2). It was partially explored in 1912 by Dr. J. W. Jackson (*C. and W. Trans.*, N.S. XIV, 262). Its opening, which measures about 5 ft. by 3 ft., is at the ground-level and partly masked by two heavy limestone covers. The shaft below was filled with clay and limestone blocks to within 3 ft. of the surface and has a diameter of about 3 ft. at the top. Excavation showed that the E. wall opened out to give a maximum width of 12 ft. Practical difficulties brought the excavation to an end at a depth of 17 ft., the bottom not being reached. The upper deposit yielded one potsherd said to be of 16th-century date, and lower down were bones of various animals: horse, sheep, goat, pig, dog and wolf. Bones of dog (50 individuals) and pig were most numerous and there were remains of five wolves” (*An Inventory*, 1936, p. 104). Note that Fairy Hole does not appear on OSWe46 (1862).

**Fairy Hole Meadow (Colton, L):** Cumbria Archives have BDHJ/398/2/134, dated March 10th, 1790, giving mowing rights at “Fairy hole meadow”. The two parties were: 1) William Benson of Blackbeck, Colton, Lancaster, Gentleman and Mary his wife; and, 2) Elizabeth Burns of Cringlemire, Widow. There is a Cringle Mire farm to the east of Colton marked on OSLa8 (1851); the meadow was presumably found in this area.

**Fairy Holes (Lamplugh, L):** “Having business in Lamplugh the other day, near the place where the first rudiments of education were impressed on my mind, I felt a strong desire to revisit the ‘Fairy Holes’; so often the scenes of sportive gaiety to the brethren of the adjacent schools, in all generations prior to the present. I went in hopes to greet the place as an old and familiar acquaintance, for whom I entertained a feeling of respectful friendship: but ah! how sad the change! Scarce a vestage remains whereby to recognize the well known place.... In their day they were composed of a suite of caverns, situate on each side of a turbulent stream, which runs down a dark wooded valley, from east to west... Often have I entered this cavern with the trembling company of youngsters, with a lighted candle to explore the extent, and armed with a pistol to protect ourselves in case of an attack from the airy beings on whose mansions of darkness we were intruding, as as often emerged to the light of day in unsuccessful safety... a few score yards would number the extent of our researches, being always prevented by the abrupt rising of the rocks in front, beyond which all is sacred to the genius of the place. Often have we been startled by the red glaring eyes of the wild rabbit, appearing suddenly before us in some dark recess, then darting quickly away, as much terrified with our visit as we under the idea of the presence of some unearthly form: and as those visits were generally paid by way of initiating some new school-fellow, the results were almost invariably a regress of terror to the novice, in nowise allayed by the tricks and misrepresentations of the initiated clan ... the rocks constituting [the Fairy Hole] have, within these half dozen years, been burnt for lime” (W.D., 1827).

**Fairy Holes (Newby, W):** Smith (1967, II, p. 148) offers an 1839 date.

**Fairy Holes (Pool Bank, W):** Not on OSLa9 (1863), but, in 1856, “We pass through Pool Bank, and opposite on the left, a cavern in the limestone rock, named Fairy Holes, and above it, on the edge of the steep scar, the Fairy Chapel, interesting relics of extinct superstition” (“Kendal Literary”, 1856, 6).

**Fairy Holm (Brampton, C):** “Fairy Holm” in 1860 (“Grazing”, 1860, 3).

**Fairy Keld (Castlerigg, W):** “We were once guided... to another fine spring, known by the beautiful name of ‘The Fairy Keld’ hidden in the woods at the foot of Walla Crag” (“Jonathan Otley”, 1858).

**Fairy Kettle (Caldbeck, C):** “The Howk... A few feet on one side of this bason, there is a curious excavation of a rock, called the FAIRY KETTLE. It is about six yards in diameter, and scooped out almost exactly in the shape of a huge cauldron... Sundry smaller ones lie near it; all of which have long borne appellations similar to the *Fairy’s Kettle*. And here too, another cascade is formed between two perpendicular rocks, about 18 or 20 yards in height: a little to the right of which is a cavern, about 20 yards long, called the FAIRY KIRK... This place is, as might be suspected, the scene of sundry superstitious notions and stories; which, as fanciful tales, characteristical of other times, are not uninteresting” (Hutchinson, 1794, II, pp. 388-389). “The word fairy, so little in use now in the North of England, is however retained at Caldbeck, in Cumberland, where a curious excavation in a rock is called the Fairy’s Kettle” (Henderson, 1866, p. 277). “The locality is less disputable, for have we not Hesketh ... Caldby [Caldbeck?] with its fairies kettle and bobbin mill; Iton Hall ... Highhead Castle, Dress Hall ...” (“De Omnibus Rebus”, 1887, 4).

**Fairy Kettles (Brampton, C):** There is a very late notice (1968) of what must be though at least a nineteenth-century name (Findler, 1968, p. 16). Fairy Kettles is not a name that would have been invented in the twentieth century. It is not in OSCum 18 (1868).

**Fairy Kirk (Caldbeck, C):** see **Fairy Kettle (Caldbeck, C)**.

**Fairy Kirk, T’ (Kentmere, W):** “A cave beneath a rock behind a farm-house of Brockstone, is still called t’ Fairy Kirk ... Now the maid servants of Westmorland have to do their work without supernatural aid. The Fairy Kirk has been turned to the utilitarian purpose of housing calves” (ETA, 1859). Note that this does not appear on the OSW27 (1858), but a Brockstones farmhouse is clearly shown.

**Fairy Knowes (Nicholforest, C):** “Fairy Knowe” (“Grazing”, 1895); on OSCum3 (1868).

**Fairy Pits (Wetheral, C):** “Fairy Pits (to Graze)” (“Grass Letting”, 1897).

**Fairy Pool (Melmerby, C):** “Fairy Pool”, OSC 41 (1868).

**Fairy Rock (Whitehaven, C):** “At this season of the year it is her custom to walk in the evening along the quarry road to Fairy Rock” (“The Merchant’s Niece”, 1862). “I am afraid that Neptune’s plans and schemes would have been buried under Fairy Rock” (“Neptune’s Breakwater”, 1862). OSCu67 (1867). “The Fairy Rock fell in one of the violent January storms of 1872” (Dickinson, 1876, p. 130).

**Fairy Scar (Mill Side?, W):** “Fairy Scar” (“Fox Hunting”, 1841).

**Fairy Steps (Beetham, W):** OSWe46 (1862). “A sombre pine-wood and a wondrous view/ Of mountain, vale, and sea, stretched out below” (Tatton, 1890). “[A] lame horse from Morecambe was drawing a load of passengers for Fairy Steps” (“Police Cases”, 1898). See also **Fairy Tables (Brackenhill)**.

**Fairy Tables (Brackenhill, C):** “[the dogs] discovered a fine otter at a place called the Fairy Tables, where he took shelter among a number of large rocks” (“Exciting Otter Hunt”, 1861). OSC11 (1868). “A cavern in the rocky bank of the river Lyne, about a mile from Shank Castle, is pointed out as the spot where the fairies used to dwell; and in the river, opposite the cavern, is a mass of rock with flat top, on which they are said to have performed their nightly dance. This is the Fairies’ Table and another large heather-covered rock is known as the Fairies’ Castle” (Bulmer 1884, p. 477). Note that some websites give a picture of “Fairy Steps” in this area, but I have been unable to track any pre-twenty first century reference. E.g. <http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/1705033> [accessed August 7th, 2016]

**Fairy Well (Aikton, C):** OSC22 (1868). “The Fairy Well, 250 yards E. of Post Office. Old inhabitants of Aikton, some 40 years ago, mentioned resort thither by the younger folk on May day” (McIntire, 1944).

**Fairy Well (Loughrigg, W):** OSW26 (1863) to the west of Ambleside.

**Fairy Well, The (Langwathby, C):** “The most popular version of the origin of the Luck is that when a servant was going for water one night to the Fairy Well, in front of the hall he surprised a number of fairies at their revels ...” (Scott, 1899, p, 148).

## **(ii) Beautified Fairy Names**

**Fairy Glen (Grasmere, W):** Cumbria Archives have PROB/1903/W417, “John Dixon, builder, of Fairy Glen, Grasmere, Westmorland”.

**Fairy House (Beetham, W):** “Fairy House” (“On the 21st inst.”, 1855).

**Fairies’ Workshop (Gragareth, L):** “But hark! tap, tap, tap, comes slowly from the distant depths; this is the home of the gnomes or fairies; they are at work below in their workshop, and a far-off hammering can be heard. Leave them in peace! Some day the good fays may work your weal, although the ill-natured have designated as Rumbling Hole, what we prefer to dream of as ‘The Fairies’ Workshop’ ” (Balderston and Balderston, 1890, p. 72).

Author’s Note: As this article was being prepared for publication I came across three other fairy names from Cumbria, while combing through the data-dump of OS maps from c1900 (<http://geo.nls.uk/maps/gb1900/#zoom=6&lat=55.0000&lon=-2.5000&layer=0>).

I include them here:

**Fairy Ark (Broughton West), SD236923**

**Fairy Knott (Mungrisdale), NY382304**

**Fairy Walks (Nether Denton), NY588648**

## **Notes**

1. This is, of course, the modern county. In the appendix I give the pre-1974 counties.
2. “The Educational Minute”, 1861: “An odd stone quarried for the Birkenhead docks, chanced to be thrown aside on some open place, and to escape its intended use. There it lay, a contribution to a modern Stonehenge, if any one had been disposed to carry out a second edition of that Druidical antiquity; and Nature, who is never idle, set to work to clothe it with moss and lichen, and give it a hoar and venerable aspect. Then came Romance and Imagination, with legends and goblins in their train; and within ten or a dozen years of its escape from the quarry in which it had lain bound for ages it was popularly known as the fairies’ stone.” I hope to soon publish an article on the fairies of Liverpool, “Fairy Across the Mersey” in *Northern Earth*.
3. Note that the EPNS volumes on Lancashire have not yet been published. Some fairy names may yet appear, then, for Lancashire beyond the sands in what is today modern Cumbria.
4. Note that this is for England. There are examples of Anglo-Irish Fairy Mounts.
5. I owe Alan Cleaver for this very valuable tale.
6. A gill usually but does not inevitably have water in it. Fairy Gill near Sedbergh certainly does; I have been unable to find the Fairy Gill near Great Corby. I will assume for the rest of the article that the Corby gill also had water.
7. This appears in Sawyer 553 (<http://www.esawyer.org.uk/charter/553.html#>, accessed November 26th, 2018) for a site in Gloucestershire that appears as “Pucheleschurche”, “Pucelancyrcean”, “Pucelancyrca”. Note there is some question about the authenticity of this charter: even if a forgery it does seem to be based on tenth century material though.

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