

WILLIAM LAWSON

GENTLEMAN FARMER AND INNOVATOR

William Lawson was born at Brayton, in 1836, the son of an 'old and wealthy family'.



Inspired by the Essex farm of agricultural pioneer, John Mechi, Lawson acquired Blennerhasset Farm in 1862 and renamed it 'Mechi Farm'. Over the next decade, he introduced many innovations, including mechanised cultivation and gas lighting for the farm and village.



A village 'parliament' met weekly to debate local issues such as what materials should be available in the library and reading rooms also set up by William Lawson. A bath house, school, and night school for adults were further contributions to 'the public good'.

A profit-sharing scheme aimed to create an 'industrial partnership' with the farm-workers; new cottages were built; and co-operative shops selling the farm's produce were opened in Blennerhasset, Ireby, Carlisle and Newcastle.



Unprofitable crops, disastrous potato blight and a major fire at Mechi in 1871 convinced Lawson that his farming was 'very far from being remunerative' and never likely to be so.

The Blennerhasset estate was sold to William's brother, Wilfrid, in February 1872. William Lawson died at Falmouth, in 1916.

Thanks are due to everyone who has contributed to the project, including the school, the landowners who gave permission for the archaeological survey, and Blennerhasset and Torpenhow Parish Council.

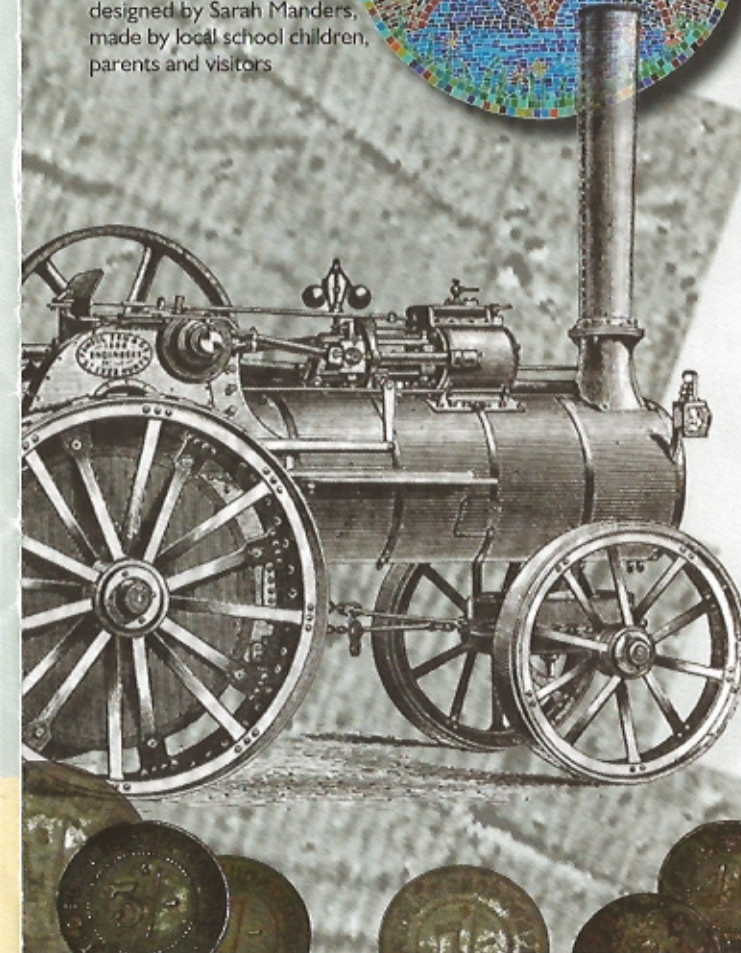
Special thanks are due to Peter Messenger, who collated the House History information, and Mike Turner, who up-loaded it to the website.

BLANNERHASSET

ALL OUR STORIES



THE SCHOOL MOSAIC - designed by Sarah Manders, made by local school children, parents and visitors



Supported by
The National Lottery[®]
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



YOUR HISTORY YOUR HERITAGE

In 2013, the residents of Blennerhasset and Baggrow began to explore their local history, looking in particular at the Roman fort, William Lawson's 19th century co-operative venture, and the history of the houses in the two villages.

The project was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund's *All Our Stories* scheme.

Your Chance to Make History

Details of every Blennerhasset and Baggrow property and its occupants in 1910 can be seen on the website, www.blennerhasset.com.

You can update the information about your house and add a recent photograph so that the residents and visitors of tomorrow can see the villages as they are today.

BLANNERHASSET

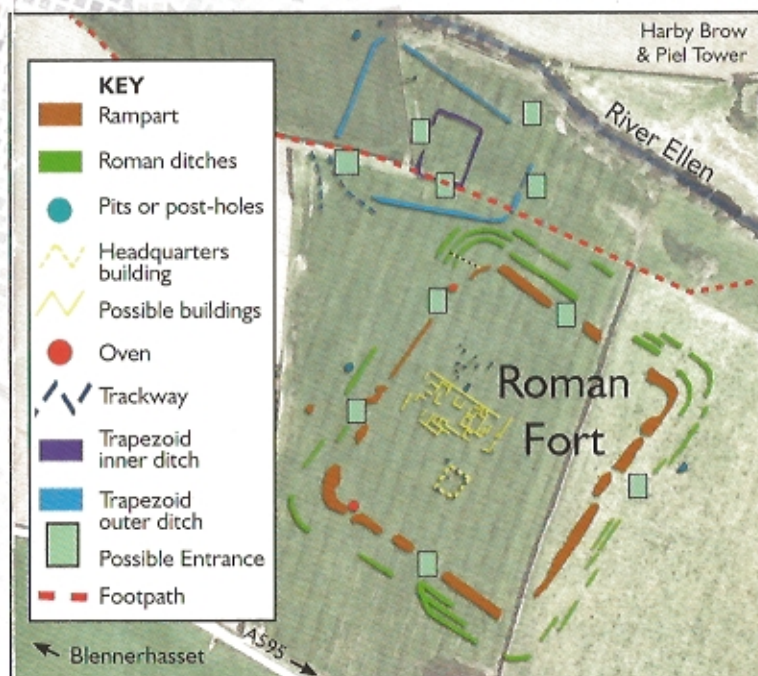


Local volunteers helped Grampus Heritage and Training to survey the site, near Harby Brow, using magnetometry to detect traces of past human activity, such as building or burning.

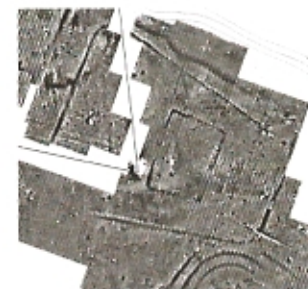


ROMAN FORT

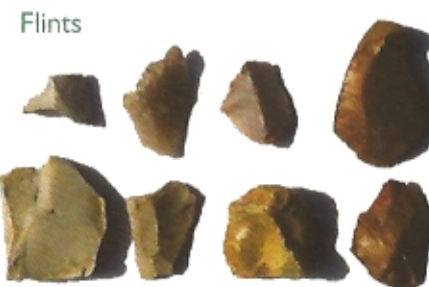
The survey revealed the contours of an extensive ditch and rampart enclosure, which may have been a fort or a marching camp, used by hundreds of soldiers at a time, during the Roman occupation of Cumbria in the first century AD.



The surprise finding was a trapezoid double enclosure to the north-west corner of the fort. It may date from the Iron Age (about 800 BC to 100 AD) and was possibly a shrine, a ceremonial site, or even a high-status settlement.



Flints, some possibly from the pre-agricultural Mesolithic era (9,600 to 4,000 BC), suggested even earlier human occupation.



These ancient remains are now part of the agricultural landscape of Blennerhasset, but their story stretches back thousands of years – a reminder of the rich and varied heritage of the village and its environs.