

1. PREFACE.

In 1894 Mr. and Mrs Gibson took the tenancy of High Blaithwaite Farm in the County of Cumberland. Their son-in-law Mr. H. Spark, after taking over the tenancy of the farm in 1915, bought the property, when Sir William H. Bragg, F.R.S. put his Estate on the market in 1920. His grand-son, Mr. John Spark, the present owner, possesses a small parcel of letters from the years 1861 to 1865, when the tenant of the day, Mr. Joseph Hutton, faced the disruption of a new line being driven through some of the prime land on the farm. These letters illustrate the problems created for landowners and their tenants when expanding Railway Companies and their predecessors the Canal Companies obtained Parliamentary authority to survey and to build new routes.

Thousands of agreements were made between companies and the owners of property on the planned routes of firstly canals and then railways from about 1760 until the early part of the 20th. Century. National, local and company archive collections contain a myriad of conveyances, court records, packets of correspondence and other documents many, as yet, unresearched. This small collection of 40 letters is of particular interest, however, not only because of the local evidence, which survives on site at High Blaithwaite and in the community, but because both sides of the correspondence between the landowner and other parties remain together to a large degree. Frequently, in such cases, only one side of an exchange of letters can be found, but in this instance Mr. William Bragg Bragg, the estate owner, kept rough draft copies of most letters of significance, which he wrote from his home in Market Harborough. These, with the letters he received, were preserved together in the estate papers held by Mr. Spark's solicitor.

The letters illustrate the problems created for a farmer and the hard bargaining which could occur over one farm. They show too that it was no easy task to defeat the "company" and the interests it represented.

S.R. James.