

CASTLE HOLME

The main settlement in the area until the mid-18th century was Ellenborough, a small village surrounded by fields on the south side of the River Ellen. At the mouth of the river was Ellenfoot, little more than a few fishermen's huts. This rural landscape, dominated by the river and Mote Hill, had changed little for hundreds of years, but the growth of mining in West Cumbria brought great changes.

Ellenfoot developed into a busy site, shipping coal from the local collieries. In 1749 local land owner Humphrey Senhouse II obtained an Act of Parliament to improve the facilities for ships and develop the town. The new harbour was an immediate success, providing Senhouse with revenue he needed to build Maryport, which he named in honour of his wife Mary.

This image, from an engraving dating from 1816, shows a papermill at the foot of Mote Hill, purpose built by the Senhouses in 1756. Papermaking had ceased by 1810 when the building was converted to an Inn called the Ship Launch referring to the adjacent ship yard. The papermill had been run by Jonathan Banks who became landlord of the Inn. He also started his business as a nail manufacturer. By the 1860's a rope works was operating on the site, supplying the prosperous local ship building industry. The tall masts of sailing ships can be seen crowding in the harbour.

Most traces of industry have now gone leaving Castle Holme, the river's flood plain, as a green space. This is home to many species of wildlife in the midst of the town. The name 'Ellenborough Place' commemorates its original settlement.

