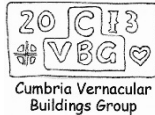


# NEWSLETTER No. 13 – AUTUMN 2016



## 1. From the Chairman:

Having just held the fourth Annual General Meeting of CVBG, it has caused me to reflect on progress made since the beginning of the Group, in 2013. Membership continues to grow and participation in activities increases. In November, the display panels will start a tour of Cumbria, to spread the word and maybe encourage more people to join. Looking back, we have cooperated with several groups with similar aims to ours, (VAG, Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group, North East Vernacular Architecture Group, Historic Farm Buildings Group, Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Regional Furniture Society and Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group.)

We receive newsletters and journals from YVBSG, SVBWG, British Association for Local History (our insurers), and the VAG. These are available to all members to read, on request.

We have held meetings in a widespread number of venues, looked at buildings of various types, from many periods and seen materials which reflect the area of Cumbria where they occur. Gradually, a story is emerging. Maybe before too long, we shall be in a position to write something which would give members and the general public an account of Cumbria's traditional buildings which we have studied and understood.

We can look forward to three more events this year, I urge you to attend the October study day at Burgh by Sands. This will take a closer look at building materials, from a fresh angle. It will be our first joint event with CWAAS, as part of their 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. I hope that CVBG will be well represented. An interesting programme for 2017 is almost complete. If you have suggestions or requests, please let us know.

Your officers and committee were re-elected at the AGM. Please see inside front cover for details. Any of us can be contacted with requests or ideas. Please feel welcome to contribute to the newsletter.

*June Hall*

## **EVENTS TO NOTE**

### Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October

LDNP Annual Conference – Archaeology in the National Park 2016  
Theatre by the Lake, Keswick: 10am: £15 (no Lunch) or £21.75 (inc. Lunch)  
Booking essential at [www.ldnnpa.co.uk](http://www.ldnnpa.co.uk)

### Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> & Friday 30<sup>th</sup> September – Building with Lime, 2 Day Course

Muncaster Castle, full booking information at Eventbrite <http://bit.ly/2cvAlzb>

## 2. Townend, Troutbeck : Extra CVBG event Saturday July 2<sup>nd</sup> .

On 2 July, 10 members of CVBG braved torrential rain to attend a special conservation tour of Townend, the farmhouse in Troutbeck formerly owned by the Browne family and managed since 1947 by the National Trust. The house is an excellent example of a seventeenth century Cumbrian vernacular farmhouse. When we visited, the house had been closed since Easter for major renovations, and the tour was an opportunity to find out about the work while it was still in progress.

We learnt about how the National Trust went about the project. It was initiated following a survey which involved removing the 150 year old render from the façade of the house, and this revealed rot in the timbers underneath. All the contents of the house (3000 objects including 1500 books) had to be packed up, and everything was labelled and listed. Joiners came in to build partitions to protect the internal fabric of the building. The large oak table, which was probably assembled in the fire house and couldn't be removed, had to be boxed in and protected in situ. In order to support the structure while the big beams over the front windows and in the jetty were being replaced, a fantastic construction of what looked like giant meccano was built in front of the house.

The work has led to some interesting discoveries about the building, including traces of the original fire hood (unfortunately now plastered over again). Lifting the carpet in the firehouse revealed the original slate floor. Removing the external render revealed evidence of modifications to the windows upstairs – the original lintels are much wider. Smaller discoveries included a horseshoe under the floor of the main bedroom, and a lead weight, which may have been a counterweight for the original front door (now blocked). Every stage of the work has been meticulously recorded, and great care has been taken in selecting materials e.g. using air dried timber for the beams and building test panels to find the best lime render.



New timber in place © Sue Bletcher

The National Trust has used this opportunity to improve other aspects of the property, such as re-routing the rainwater goods, and improving the visitor toilets. We were amazed to learn that the total cost of the project was only £150,000. This is partly because the Trust used its own staff for some of the work, such as the joinery, and volunteers for the packing and labelling, but even so it seemed a remarkably modest sum.

Thanks to Emma Wright, Townend Manager, for showing us round and to CVBG member Peter MacGowan for organising the visit.

**Claire Jeffery**

### 3. Duddon Trip 7th July 2016: The longhouse expedition

After a very interesting and enjoyable talk enjoyed by all of our members by Steph Cove from the Duddon Local History Group, which outlined the results of the recent excavation, those of us who were going on to visit the longhouses began our journey by car. Meeting at the bottom of the road built as part of the construction of the Seathwaite dam in 1904, we continued on foot, as those taking part in the excavation had done. At first this was along the well-constructed track, but we were soon off-road and heading through the bracken and soon crossing the outlying walls associated with the longhouse that was most fully excavated – known as Tongue House A. Each of the structures has a wider system of field boundaries connected to it, covering quite a large area in most cases. The excavation had revealed a large amount of tumbled material but once this had been cleared evidence for a possible cross-wall was found, but this appeared to be later. The original structure appeared to be a single long unit with opposing entrances (perhaps originally wider and later partially blocked?) but with evidence of hearths in one corner and against the cross passage, so this was perhaps divided by a timber partition, as well a stone platform at one end. In any case there was little in the way of finds and the debate about what constitutes a true longhouse will no doubt continue even after the carbon dates have been obtained.



Longhouse site © Mike Kingsbury



En-route to the longhouses © Dan Elsworth

After stopping for a picturesque lunch nearby we continued on to another structure – Tongue House B – in an even more awkward and remote location set against a large outcrop. This had not been excavated but it was nonetheless obviously very similar in style to Tongue House A. From there we then continued to an area helpfully known as Longhouse Clough, which contained a much more complex set of remains. This included not only the extensive outlying walls but also a very large structure with slightly bowed side walls set into the slope, with a possible platform at the upper end. Inside this was a smaller structure closer in form to those seen at Tongue House A and B, again with a cross passage, and on one end of the larger structure a sheep fold had been constructed. There was much discussion

about how the different elements fitted together, how many structures were represented, and in what order the site had developed. There is some hope that this will prove to be a true Norse longhouse, but until the site is subject to excavation it remains difficult to interpret. Fortunately it is scheduled for investigation as part of the next phase of the project.

**Dan Elsworth**



## Duddon valley alternative route

The 'alternative' Duddon visit (for those that did not want to climb the fell) was a driving route around the valley which took in some fine scenery, many Herdwick sheep (for which the Duddon is famous) and vernacular buildings. The first was *Hall Dunnerdale Farm*, a mid/late 18th century whitewashed farmhouse next to the river. The low-ceilinged firehouse included an inglenook with many interesting details, a fire window, a wonky slate floor and the remains of a plank and muntin partition.



Image © Lynne Seignot



Image © Kevin Illingworth

The homeowner, Dianne Leetham, kindly allowed us access into the house, which has been sympathetically renovated, and to the attached barns with haylofts. Dianne has a list of the owners and tenants (and their family trees) from 1668-1942. There is plenty of opportunity for someone to do some research on this- the list can be provided!

Dunnerdale fells towards Broughton Mills. A pub lunch was taken in the *Blacksmiths Arms* (c 1577, with oak panelled corridor and beamed ceiling, fixed bench seating, original farmhouse range and slate floors). From the *Blacksmiths Arms* was a short walk down a public footpath, following a trackway between some 18th century cottages, culminating at *Lumholme*. This was a stunning three storey three bay late 17th/early 18th century farmhouse with a barn range. Lovely details there (beyond its setting) included mullioned windows, gable-end stacks, swept valleys and wrestler-slates.



Image © Kevin Illingworth



Image © Sue Bletcher

The driving route then took us to the market town of Broughton-in-Furness; its elegant Georgian market square is surrounded by merchant's town houses, the Manor Arms, and the market hall with its arcaded frontage, now the Tourist Information Centre. Following tea and cakes from the award-winning Broughton Bakery, our route then returned us to the Duddon Valley proper. Via Ulpha Bridge we ascended Bobbin Mill Hill, past the bobbin mill (now converted into holiday cottages but retaining its chimney) up through a steeply wooded valley with mining and quarry remains, towards *Ulpha Old Hall*. First referred to in a document of 1666 it is in

ruinous condition and was probably a late 15th century hall-house built by the Hudlestons of Millom. Returning down towards Duddon Bridge, the road passes through *Logan Beck Farm*, a lime rendered 17th century two storey three bay farmhouse with a stone barn.

Our final stop was Duddon Furnace. Duddon Ironworks was established by the Cunsey Company in 1736 and operated until 1866, using locally produced charcoal to fire the blast furnace. There are many grown-out coppice stools in the surrounding woodlands. Pig iron cast here was sent to Chepstow and Bristol where it was used in the manufacture of anchors, chains and other iron work for ships. The site, a Scheduled Monument, consists of an arched furnace, huge charcoal barns, a wheel-pit, leats, and the remnants of slag dumps, trackways and cottages (now converted).



Image © Kevin Illingworth



Image © LDNPA

Although it was until lately possible to wander through the building complex, the winter rains of 2015 have rendered it unsafe and it now has to be viewed from behind a fence.

**Helen Evans**



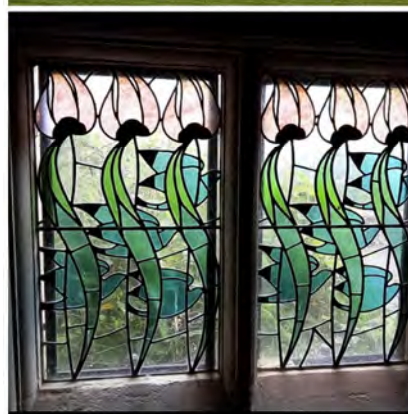
#### 4. Vernacular Revival Tour: Monday 22 August.

The idea of the day was to familiarise ourselves with some of the remarkable houses built in the Lake District, between about 1890 and the First World War. This was a time when the wealthier classes in England could afford to have the very best of architects designing homes in beautiful settings, built by the finest craftsmen, and using the choicest materials. It was the period of great interest in excellence, learning from earlier periods, which came to be known as the Arts and Crafts movement.

Successful businessmen, many from the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Cheshire, bought plots of land in prime locations, beside Windermere. Here, they had homes built, where they could withdraw from the smoky cities of Manchester and Liverpool, and the mill towns. Some were able to commute, using the railway, while others used their lakeside houses for holidays. They created a social milieu, with a yacht club, tennis club and house parties. Most of the houses have moveable partitions between the principal reception rooms, so that they could be opened to form a large space for entertainment.

The idyllic life came to an end with the War, when servants became scarce and some families lost sons in battle, as happened to the Holt family of Blackwell, the first house on our visit. Now, many of these splendid buildings have become equally splendid hotels, eg Cragwood and Langdale Chase, while others such as Ashley Green are still in use as homes.

**Blackwell**, at Bowness, designed by Baillie Scott and completed in 1900, for the Holt family, brewers, of Manchester, is now open as a museum and art gallery. After being used as a girls' school, and offices, it has been restored and presented as a wonderful example of its period. Furniture by notable craftsmen, much of it by Arthur Simpson of Kendal, is shown to perfection in the beautiful light rooms. The house is full of features from earlier minstrels' gallery, panelling and stained glass.



Images © [www.blackwell.org.uk](http://www.blackwell.org.uk)



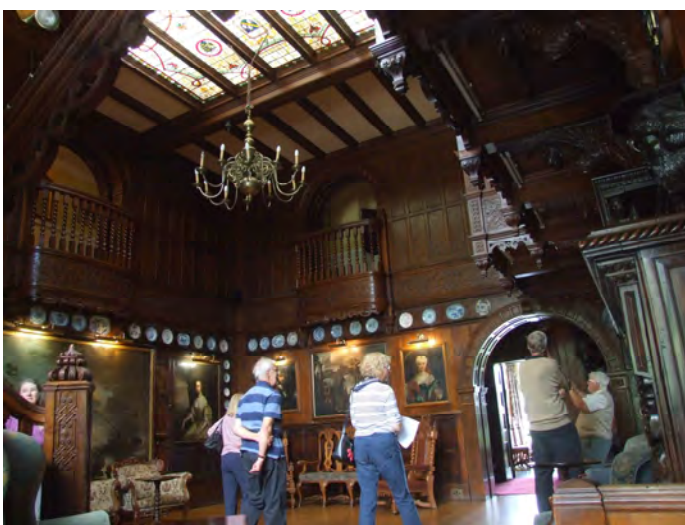
Reception room plasterwork © Mike Turner

At **Cragwood**, we had a talk, illustrated with photographs, from Val Corbett, whose pictures illustrate the fine book on the subject – *Arts and Crafts Houses of the Lake District*, by Matthew Hyde (who sadly died in 2015), and Esme Whittaker. (Published by Frances Lincoln, 2014.) Val gave us a different approach to the study of buildings, viewing the aesthetics of architecture with a photographer's eye and giving insights into considerations such as using only natural light, deciding what to move out of view, etc.

Cragwood was built in 1910, from stone quarried on the site – slate, used with close joints and mortar set well back from the surface, so that the walls appear to be of dry stone construction. The three lovely reception rooms overlooking the lake, are in a restrained style, with exquisite woodwork and ceilings filled with plaster, rather unusually, of woodland creatures. Bats, owls, oak leaves and fruit reflect the name of the house.



Cragwood rooflines © Mike Turner



Great Hall, Langdale Chase © Mike Turner

After tea at Cragwood, we saw **Langdale Chase**. The contrast could not be sharper. Begun in 1890, on a more modest scale than the finished house, it was completed in 1895, after the death of her husband, by Mrs Edna Howarth, it is a feast of features, both inside and out. Medieval and Jacobean styles, decoration everywhere, a grand staircase with a huge window on the main facade, leading to galleries and narrow spiral stairs to the third storey,



strapwork, panelling , stained glass, and corner turrets create a fascinating building. The grounds are equally full of interest. Mrs Howarth had her own steam yacht, complete with an extraordinary boathouse.



Lounge © Mike Turner

**Ashley Green** was only seen from the outside, but again, it displays the features favoured by the Arts and Crafts designers. Long sweeping roofs, overhanging eaves, gables, decorative plaster work, inside and out, imposing chimneys, dates and initials, oriel windows, impressive entrances and fine rain-water goods combined in various ways, leave a legacy of a short but important period in architectural heritage. Many of the gardens were designed by Mawson, making good use of the steep lakeside to create terraces, winding paths and vistas.



They reflect the time when the area was home to families who had the best of both worlds – nostalgic settings in which they lived lives of relative luxury, with “mod cons” such as central heating, electricity and plumbing.

All Images © Mike Turner

**June Hall**



## 5. Devon made 'cloam' bread ovens.

I've just returned from a stay down Devon, on the border with Cornwall, and whilst exploring the farmhouse was invited to look at the owner's latest discovery, a fine intact clay oven.

Whilst I've seen such ovens before, I had not really been in a position to study them in any great detail so was unaware of their local production, restricted to Devon. These portable clay ovens, known locally as 'cloam ovens' were made from early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century right through into the early twentieth, the design barely changing.

Early examples are found in the excavations in Jamestown, Virginia and were shipped over with the first colonists. They were made on formers from slab like pieces assembled using slip, the finger and thumb prints of the potter clearly visible in the process of crimping the joins rather like a Cornish pasty!



Colcharton Farm © Clive Bowd



'Bideford' cloam bread oven © Clive Bowd

This particular example dates from the mid to late Victorian period, the clue being impressed 'BIDEFORD' stamp which according to information received from John Allan, via the Devon Buildings Group, is sometimes paired with W.H. CROCKER or FISHLEY among others. The latter were obviously the makers with other centres of manufacture including Barnstaple and Truro. These products were shipped all-round the southwest of England including parts of Wales and into Ireland, along with the American trade.

The ovens were usually incorporated into

existing fireplaces, presumably offering better control and more efficient baking than stone or brick ovens, some were used free standing in the kitchen or in out-houses. Not only used for baking bread, but roasting meat too. This example probably replaced an earlier one in the kitchen dating from the Georgian period.

My reason for bringing this find to the attention of our membership is that whilst I realise this is not a local industry, it does beggar the question 'were such items traded here and are any examples to be found within the vernacular architecture of Cumbria'? Answers on a postcard.....

**Clive Bowd**

## 6. CVBG AGM 19<sup>th</sup> September Millbeck, Keswick

Our day was opened by a fascinating talk by Paul Lewis who had overseen the recently completed repair work at Townend in Troutbeck. He gave some background to the property, which has at least early 17<sup>th</sup> century origins, although there are references to an earlier building, and contained a significant early library and collection of carved furniture, largely the work of the Browne family who owned it over a considerable period of time before it came to the National Trust. Obvious structural problems had become apparent over the years, with movement in the walls and floors visible. The



Paul Lewis at the AGM © Mike Turner

restoration involved hi-tech inspection of the timber, which revealed considerable decay and so the front was propped on massive supports and the lintels over the windows removed. This inevitably led to other problems being revealed, such as the way the water tabling was failing to do its job because the render had failed and that the beams supporting the upper floors did not run right through the wall thickness as might be expected. The projecting galleried section was in a particularly poor condition. However, removing and replacing the render throughout, following detailed analysis of its development (which revealed it had probably originally been more ochre in colour than white – a cause of some debate at the Trust about what colour to put back!) revealed a number of further features. These included a blocked doorway including a small alcove into which a lead ball had been deliberately left, evidence that the windows in the lower down house had originally been wider (perhaps connected to some industrial purpose such as textile production), and that the opposing wing had had an opening placed directly below a chimney, with no sign of a corresponding chimney breast! Plenty of interesting new information was discovered and the final report will certainly make interesting reading.

After the business of the AGM June introduced the history of Millbeck and its buildings. Despite being a very small hamlet it is a remarkably fascinating place, with a number of very interesting buildings, many connected to the local textile industry (the name



Millbeck Hall © Clive Bowd

Millbeck is of course a clue that the area has been a home to mills for some considerable time!). Particular mention was made of some of the important local families, the Tickells and the Brownriggs especially, with William Brownrigg of nearby Ormathwaite requiring a detailed history; such was his extraordinary list of scientific achievements. June also ran through a description of the various processes involved in the processing of wool, which aided the understanding of the purpose of several of the buildings we would see.



Moving outside, the village hall in which we were meeting was completed in 1896, as shown by the date stone, after the formation of the new parish of Underskiddaw in 1894 on land owned by a local family, the Tickells. It is a remarkably lavish structure for such a small settlement, with Arts and Crafts details in red sandstone and originally housed a reading room and billiards, with later additions such as kitchens and toilets in the 1920s and 1950s. Opposite is Millbeck Hall, with origins as a pele tower and an impressive datestone of 1592 with Latin inscription translated as “Whither are we going? To live is to die. To die is to live”. Clearly the inhabitants of the locality were well-educated from an early date! The elevation facing the garden is awash with



Millbeck Towers © Clive Bowd

mullion windows, and spare fragments had also used to prop up slate benches. Opposite the hall, and further down the road was the mill, still intact and containing a water wheel (although unfortunately we couldn't look inside). The water supply came via a leat supported on a massive stone structure to the north, the latest version being a large ceramic pipe that is still present. On the opposite side of the beck is the recently completed turbine house for a hydro electric scheme constructed by the current owners of

Millbeck Hall; which continues the tradition of using water power. The field behind this also contains a large number of earthworks including the remains of two pot ash kilns, which probably relate to the medieval settlement.

Back up the hill and we were presented with one of the most picturesque cottages you might ever see, known as Canon Cottage, although even this was originally industrial as it started out as a smithy and was at one time a sweet shop. Associated with it is Orchard Cottage, which is 17<sup>th</sup> century but much altered. Overshadowing both of these is the looming block of Millbeck Towers, from a distance appearing as if a particularly vulgar American millionaire had placed part of Disneyland in the village! On closer inspection it is a curious mix of fanciful styles, what Pevsner described a “Scottish baronial without the dignity”, apparently built largely in concrete and with curiously Arts and Crafts hinges to the windows. June had already warned us about this place; it too started out as an industrial building, having been an 18<sup>th</sup> century carding mill, converted into holiday apartments in 1903. Even closer inspection revealed the original bell that used to stand on top to keep the workers to time.

Further uphill again we came to a further range of what is now five cottages, some with impressive 30-light sliding sash casements. A theme was definitely now developing as this too was originally a fulling mill built in 1805, with evidence for the original water supply still present. The closure of the main bridge over the Millbeck itself, following damage caused by last winter's floods, meant a longer trip round to the other side of the village. Those that made the trip were rewarded with a considerable contrast as the buildings are largely agricultural and include the farmhouse of the Tickell family as well as associated outbuildings and other cottages. June had also supplied a list of other sites nearby worthy of a visit and after topping up with scones, following on from our earlier excellent lunch, we made our way home amazed at the number of interesting buildings that could be crammed into such a small settlement.



**Dan Elsworth**

## Members thoughts from the AGM

"...Paul Lewis's talk on how to repair the front wall of a house without it falling down...particularly important because the house in question was Townend at Troutbeck (Grade 1 listed)".

"...time well spent in the coffee break (thank you Dr Alan Smith!) learning how to tell the difference between St Bees and Penrith sandstone". **Sarah & Greg Nicholson**

"What a wonderful day! I was interested in what June had to say about the owners of Millbeck Hall and the William Brownrigg connection. It was a most successful AGM, if only all AGM's went that well"! **Clive Bowd**

## 7. Lime Day, Extra Event: Wednesday August 31<sup>st</sup>.

Lime Day event at CVBG member Sue Bletcher's house, "Toothmain" in the Lowther valley. Organised by Chris Mophet from Lake District Lime.

"It was good fun in a meaningful way, appreciating the craftsmanship involved in keeping the integrity of the original build intact and fit for purpose today. We certainly enjoyed the LIMEDAY EXPERIENCE, the kind welcome of our host Sue and Chris's patience and enthusiasm for explaining, imparting his knowledge, demonstrating this by working with Mark and myself and allowing us the real hands on experience.....spurred on by his chocolate caramel biscuits! I was very grateful for this fascinating and rare opportunity which has given me the confidence to undertake some project work myself, here at home". **(Charles Fraser)**

"I really enjoyed Mark & Charles' company for the day up in Rosgill. We got hands on with the pointing in the morning, explaining about the importance of using Gallots in the joints. We worked with hot mix lime, mixed on site with hair added for strength. In the afternoon we prepared the walls for a lime render which included dubbing out. We also used quick lime to make a lime wash for the wall. All traditional, all fun and all correct for a stone built building".

**Many thanks, Chris, Lake District Lime.**



Chris, showing work in progress, pointing the walls with lime © Sue Bletcher