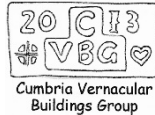


NEWSLETTER No. 14 – WINTER 2016



1. From the Chairman

As Christmas approaches, we can look back on another full year of events held around Cumbria. From Workington to Newby and from Burgh by Sands to Cartmel, we pretty well covered the county. 2017 looks like being another year full of delights and again, events will be as widespread as possible, giving all of you the opportunity to visit somewhere not too far distant.

We hope you find the enclosed calendar acceptable and a help in keeping track of events. Thank you to contributors of photographs which appear on it, and thank you, too, to everyone who has supplied material for the newsletter throughout the year. Over twenty members have done so, and all are welcome to contribute.

The programme for 2017 is enclosed as are booking forms for the first four events. April seems a long way off, but we need to have numbers in good time. Why not mark dates on the calendar as a memory jogger.

New members are being recruited each month. For the first time, our display material has gone to a public venue – the Cumbria Record Office at Carlisle. It seems to have created quite a lot of interest. If you know of a venue, or event where we can put the display, please let me know. Because the main banners and panels were in use in Carlisle, we made the proof versions into a table top version of the display. Mike, our secretary, produced stand-up panels, and although they are small, compared with the full items, they proved quite legible and looked attractive at the annual convention of the Cumbria Local History Federation, held recently at Shap.



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June Hall

Editor's Note

Apologies for the typo on the calendar, there were three errors at the proof stage, unfortunately I spotted only two! This newsletter is the first with a slightly larger font size, along with a brighter, crisp white 90gsm paper, I hope it improves the read quality for everyone. (MT)

2. 13 October. Burgh by Sands.

**Joint event with Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society.
“Building materials – Animal, Vegetable and Mineral”**

This study day formed part of our annual pattern of study days, but was also part of CWAAS's 150th anniversary year celebrations.

Although we have held a study day on building materials in Burgh, in our first year, it was chosen as a theme, by CWAAS, from a list of titles offered to them. The approach was different this time, to reflect the great variety of resources available to our ancestors, and the ingenious ways which they found to use them in creating homes and workplaces.

The day began with an introduction to the CWAAS celebrations by **Rob David**, followed by an appreciation by **Marion McClintock**, of the life and work of Ron Brunskill, our first patron, and president of CWAAS from 1990 to 1993. We were delighted to have as our guest, his son in law, John Glass.

Alan Smith, CVBG member and former chairman of Cumbria Geological Society, gave the first paper on mineral materials used in buildings.

The talk reviewed the wide range of materials available for traditional builders to use in the early buildings of the County. Cumbria is dominated by stone buildings. The complex and varied geology of this very large County determined availability and was the key factor behind the distinct regional identity of the vernacular architecture. Stone was widely available for walling and roofing, but the County also has rich resources in the superficial materials that overlie the bedrock. Clay for bricks and clay dabbins was found over much of lowland Cumbria. Sand and gravel provided aggregates and mortars. Limestone and gypsum were sources of materials for rendering and plastering. Cumbria was also rich in metal ores which had many uses in fittings for building and for building tools. In 1974 Ron Brunskill compiled the first map of regional building materials in the County. Dr Smith built on this survey, adding more regional details and greater precision to the regional types of buildings.

Stone is heavy material and hence it was primarily used close to sources, thus minimising on transport. Examples were provided of how far material was actually transported in times before the advent of the railways and modern road vehicles. The concept of 'the 400 metre rule' was examined in relation to a number of Cumbrian examples. It was shown that early important buildings such as churches often used stone sourced from considerable distances. Roofing materials were also generally transported over longer distances, because of their relatively high value. The 400 metre distance however, was a significant trend in the county and could be illustrated from several areas. It was also noted and illustrated how buildings are often constructed with very mixed arrays of stone and that the reuse of stone was a common feature of many places. A brief description of the use of boulder clay for clay dabbins in the Solway area, particularly locally around the venue at Burgh-by-Sands, concluded the presentation.

Peter Messenger spoke about the vegetable resources, particularly straw, used in binding clay to build clay dabbins.

June Hall talked about animal materials and the housing of farm livestock from which many materials were derived. Many materials are only known to us from archaeological and documentary sources, as organic products were perishable and were replaced at an early date in higher status buildings, by more permanent materials. There is good evidence that horses, cattle, sheep, pigs, and deer provided many of the items which enabled buildings to function. For instance, there are leather hinges on one of the spice cupboards at Glencoyne, (Glenridding). This is because salt corrodes metal, but not leather, so indicates the use of the cupboard.

Another example are the sheep leg bones used to hold roofing slates in position, at Yanwath Hall, near Penrith. (We shall have the opportunity to see these in April). Blake Tyson has contributed many articles to the Transactions of CWAAS over the years, based on thorough research of archives, and cites several instances of orders for vast numbers of "sheep shanks" for the purpose. Skin, hair and wool were vital components of vernacular structures. Parchment served as window panes, before glass was generally available as well as being used for writing building contracts. Hair, from cattle and horses was a valuable commodity in binding together the plaster which came into use as living standards rose, in the seventeenth and especially the eighteenth centuries. Builders obtained their supplies from tanners, who were vital members of society, especially in the market towns – Penrith, Carlisle, Cockermouth,- and around Temple Sowerby, where Acorn Bank provides a clue, in its name, to the numerous oak trees in the area, used in the tanning process. Tons of hair, scraped from animal skins, went into plaster. In the inventory of Edmund Bird, a wealthy tanner of Kirkoswald, 1723, one room is called the *hair loft*.

Pig bristle made brushes, used to maintain buildings and as tools by builders.



Plaster was not only used on walls, but in smoke hoods, as shown by **Helen Evans**, who had recreated a smokehood. Her photographic account of the process showed how the mixture was made from lime, to which hair and dung were added. Dung from cattle and sheep, provided additives for plaster, as did urine and blood. The animals themselves trod in the dung, providing the labour as well as the material. Chimneys lined with such a mixture were still being constructed in Wales into the twentieth

century. Floors of lime plaster were not uncommon. The restoration of the Tithe Barn at Great Musgrave (visited by CVBG) has a plaster floor, and several loft floors where crops were stored, are known to be of plaster.

Hooves and bones were made into glue, which held wooden components together, Horn and antler made handles. Materials from birds (feathers, eggs for adding to plaster and paint), wax from bees used for lighting and for polish, and even fish substances for glue, and oyster shells for grit in plaster, played their part in creating the vernacular buildings we study.

Features of the buildings such as the lant troughs for storage of urine, show that these materials were necessary, and the housing of animals in byres, stables, pig hulls, pigeon lofts, and bee boles, remind us of the vital role animals played in rural lives ■

CVBG/CWAAS Study Day, Burgh by Sands.

This combined event was to prove a successful collaboration, providing a good holistic overview to the subject of how animal, vegetable and mineral come together in the story of our built vernacular heritage. It clearly illustrated that such aspects require to be taken into account when looking at any building and attempting to work out a phasing sequence. The day also provided fresh views and information on up to date research that was going on. Of particular interest to me was the 'pop-up museum', which provided an example of a previously unknown use, as far as I'm aware, for soapstone (steatite).

When is a 'treenail' not a treenail?

Amongst the various exhibits was a bowl containing a group of finds made whilst restoring a mid-18th century house not far from Caldbeck. Within the open roof structure was discovered what appeared to be a stone, or possibly ceramic, 'treenail' amongst those normally encountered (see illustration). Being different from the norm, the peg was retrieved from the beam in which it was being used in the same way as the others, unfortunately receiving some damage in the process. However the broken piece was glued back and the artefact can now be studied. This 'treenail' takes the form of a short spike, measuring approximately 12.2cms long and 2cms thick tapering down to around 1cm at the point. It's slightly ovoid in section and has a flat top. The top appears to have a crude letter N incised into it. The shaft of the piece exhibits both facets from having bits shaved off and file marks. The surface presents a smooth dark grey patina. Closer examination ruled the piece out as being ceramic, but it certainly wasn't wood. Stone of some sort appeared to be the answer with soapstone the most likely contender as the surface was not cold to the tongue, but soft and the material fairly light.



This identification of the material (if correct), poses a real question, just why was it used? My own immediate thought was that it was an early form of stress/movement monitor. But that seems rather unlikely. The only other plausible explanation I can come up with is that it's a one off, perhaps made by the carpenter who constructed the frame of the roof as a form of maker's mark, akin to that used later in the twentieth century by 'Mouseman' Robert Thompson. If this is the case, then we should be looking closer at other houses within the area for any other examples that might help confirm this theory. As to where the actual soapstone came from is beyond my experience, except that it was a choice material used by the Vikings in making bowls and has a more recent history of being used for lining fireplaces.

When is a nail, not a nail?

We're used to referring to 'roofing nails' in a vernacular buildings context, be they made of oak, bone or the later iron and galvanised varieties. The former strictly speaking are pegs, pushed through the slate or stone tiles and used to hang them on the laths within the roof. The latter are used in a different way in that they are hammered into the laths or other covering so as to make a more permanent fixing. But there was an intermediate form of 'nail' used, one made of lead! My attention was drawn to these when I was asked to identify a small group of artefacts found by a metal-detectorist in a field near to Sedburgh. They turned out to be good examples of these seldom seen everyday objects, (see illustration below). These particular specimens measure on average 58mm long. The shank is 5mm. dia. and the large flat head 16mm across. They weigh 15g and exhibit a clear cast line along the length of the shank. Such 'nails' were used in the same way as the earlier ones, as pegs. Perhaps due to the cost of



manufacture, or possibly the tendency to bend when subjected to high winds and other forces on the slates, their use appears to have been short lived, spanning the period c.1750 to 1850 or thereabouts. A further example can be seen in the earlier illustration. This slightly smaller 'nail' came from off the surface of the ramp up to the bank-barn at Sizergh Castle. It might represent a stray loss from goods being brought into the storage area, or a later phase in the development of the barn itself.

Finally I should like to say how beneficial the study day was to putting the finds from the pop-up museum into context. Walking round Burgh by Sands we inspected the composition of the make-up of the clay dabbin walls, particularly those of Leigh Cottage, North End. Closer scrutiny revealed not only clay, straw and stones but shards of glass and sherds of pottery. This inclusion of anything to hand when knocking up a batch of clay dabbin has left us with a superb window on the everyday lives of the people who built these semi organic walls and homes. Dating evidence can be got from the pottery and glass fragments, often a cut-off date and a start date, all this without recourse to carbon 14 or tree-ring analysis testing being needed. If only such evidence was readily available in the limestone area of Kendal ■

Text & Images © Clive Bowd

3. 7 November

Workshop, "Using Documents in researching Buildings": Newbiggin, June Hall.

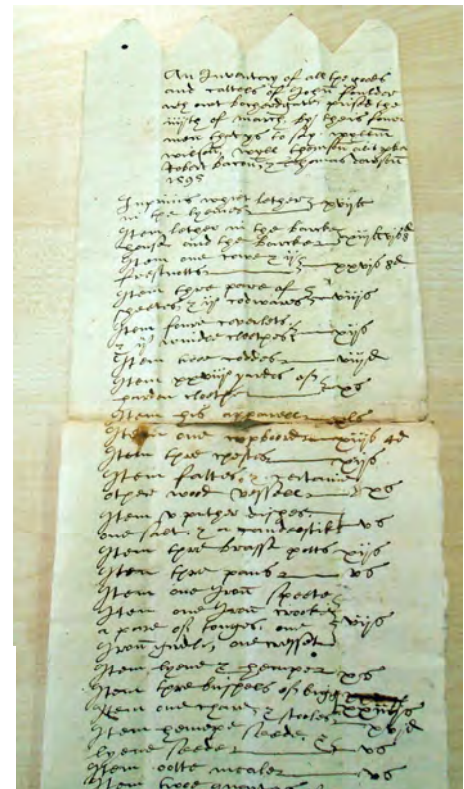
Thirteen members spent the day looking at the categories of records of most use in researching the history of buildings. Many are published and readily available, but those which are not, require some practice in palaeography.

An introduction describing the most appropriate categories, including *inquisitions post mortem*, (IPMs), which are surveys of property made after the death of a tenant in chief, who held property directly from the Crown; *probate records*, mainly consisting of wills, inventories and associated legal papers, compiled after the death of a person, and enabling his or her, (in the case of spinsters or widows), estate to be passed to an heir or heirs; *hearth tax lists*, which give the number of taxable fireplaces in buildings, in every parish; and *parish records*, *census returns* and *maps*.

Practical reading of documents was principally from copies of probate records, in secretary hand, dating from around 1590 to 1720. The letter forms of the alphabet, in upper and lower case, was examined. Abbreviations, archaic terms (for livestock, crops, household utensils and textiles), and anomalies of spelling were covered, then members worked at their own pace to transcribe documents as accurately as possible.

Probate inventories provide a unique record of a house and its contents at one moment in time. No two are the same. Even the simplest ones are full of information. They reveal the personal wealth of an individual, and their standard of living. The fullest ones give a room by room survey of the contents of a house, livestock and crops, tools of the trade, luxuries such as clocks, mirrors, books and cushions, as they became available, and the use of rooms. The early ones show quite clearly that parlours were used as sleeping rooms, often before the "great rebuilding" resulted in second stories of upstairs bedrooms.

The time of year greatly affected the stock of animals, crops and actual cash, as goods were sold seasonally, income from sales was not regular and money was lent and borrowed in the community, before the existence of banks. Details of particular trades can be revealed through inventories. The tanners of Penrith and Carlisle, in the 1590s list quantities of leather, at various stages of the tanning process. (See the example.)



© June Hall

Another variable factor is the age at which a person dies. A retired elderly person would have only a few basic possessions, whereas someone in mid-career would have left a house full of furniture and other contents. Two very useful volumes of probate records have recently been published for Ingleton parish, which, although just over the border into Yorkshire, describe houses and a way of life very similar to those of old Westmorland. Having full transcripts enables comparisons to be made, and over the years occupants of certain farms and houses can be traced and the standard of living followed ■

4. 8 December, Christmas lunch, The Tithe Barn, Carlisle.



© Mike Turner

This was the first CVBG event actually held in Carlisle. The idea was for members to have the option of travelling by public transport, do a little Christmas shopping and see Carlisle in Christmas trimmings. The Settle to Carlisle railway is still not fully restored after the landslide. And Carlisle did not prove to be the hoped-for attraction. There were fewer bookings this year, and we had nine cancellations (all for

quite valid reasons, and we send best wishes to those who were prevented by illness), but it meant that there were only 21 of us for the meal.

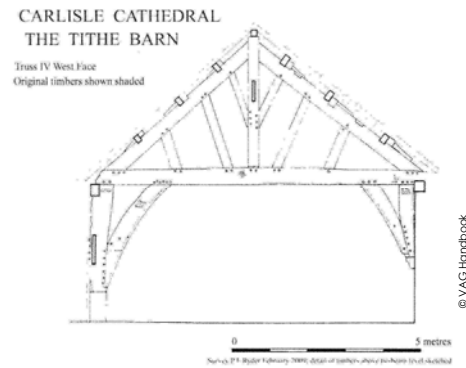
Despite the small numbers seated in the massive interior of the Tithe Barn, we were well served by the nearby Sportsman Inn, who provided an excellent meal, prompt and attentive service and welcome mulled fruit punch. Thanks to Alison, manager of the Sportsman, and her staff. Our after-lunch entertainment could not have been more suitable. The group, *Alte Musik*, a U3A band from Cockermouth, regaled us with half an hour of medieval and Tudor pieces, from around 1400 to 1591, played on replica instruments, and introduced, conducted and led by Bridget Hilton. Her lively style brought the music, and the Tithe barn to life, with sounds which were current when the great timbers above our heads were trees growing in Inglewood Forest. Thank you to Bridget and her musicians.



© Mike Turner

It was a great privilege to spend time in the wonderful building – a chance for CVBG members who were not at the national VAG conference last year, to see the interior. It has one of the few massive medieval timber roofs with curved braces, in Cumbria, although some timbers (wall plates and purlins) have been repaired and replaced. All the massive tie beams are said to be original. Dendrochronological dating has produced a felling date for the timbers, of 1477/8, the time when Prior Gondibour rebuilt the barn after probable devastation during Scottish raids in 1461. The king post trusses have raking struts and curved braces from the king posts to the ridge.

The walls are of large sandstone blocks that on the south side, facing Heads Lane having ventilation slots and numerous mason's marks. The north elevation was originally open, but has been cleverly fitted with glass walls to maintain the impression of an arcade. The whole building was threatened with demolition, after some refurbishment in 1875, and rescued in 1971. It now serves as the parish hall for St Cuthbert's ■



5. Can you help?



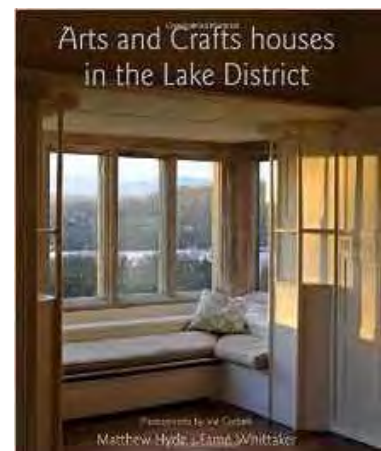
This photograph has turned up in an old file, source, date and photographer unknown. On the back is written - *Cottage opposite Duddon Ironworks. Note tree trunk forming two lintels.* Does anyone recognise this building? Who lived there and when? The photograph was with another, dated 1989, in similar handwriting. The building looks to be in a perilous state, so has probably not survived. We did not see it when we visited Duddon in the summer ■

6. Mathew Hyde, an appreciation – by Mike Kingsbury

Mathew Hyde sadly died in September 2015, after suffering a stroke, at the age of just 68. The Lancaster University Regional Heritage Centre recently held a study day in honour of him on the theme of “Architecture, Beauty and Place” with a number of speakers who had collaborated with him over the years.

In Cumbria he is perhaps best known for the updated *Pevsner guide for Cumbria* that he wrote, which was published in 2010. He also co-authored with Clare Hartwell, one of the speakers on the study day, the Pevsner update for *Lancashire: Manchester and the South East* (2004) and *Cheshire* (2011).

His other notable publication on the buildings of Cumbria was the *Arts and Crafts houses in the Lake District* (Frances Lincoln, 2014), co-authored with Esme Whittaker, another speaker on the study day, and with photographs by Val Corbett. This book won the Bookends prize for arts and literature at the Lakeland book of the year awards 2015. Some of the buildings featured were visited by CVBG members earlier this year, with the day being introduced by Val Corbett.



Mathew was born in London but spent his first years at Karen House in Nairobi, the former home of Karen Blixen, author of *Out of Africa*, returning to the UK in the 1950s to go to school.

Mathew went to Bristol University in the late 1960s to read Botany but it was Bristol that opened his eyes to architecture. He moved to Macclesfield in Cheshire with his wife and two young children in 1972 and he found work teaching rural studies and biology. When the college he was working in closed he took redundancy and completed an MA in Architectural History at Keele University.

He lectured and taught part-time in Manchester museums and galleries, and wrote books on local history and architecture including *The Villas of Alderley Edge* (1999), *Lindow and the Bog Warriors* (2002), with Christine Pemberton, and *Around the M60: Manchester's Orbital Motorway* (2004), with Aidan O'Rourke and Peter Portland.



He made the leap to full time writing with the revised Pevsner architectural guides. Each revision takes on average three years to do, which compares with just six months, which Nikolaus Pevsner took to complete each of the original guides. The majority of the Buildings of England series have now been revised and there are 14 yet to be done – these should all be published within the next five years.

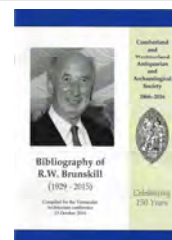
His final publication, published posthumously, was Britain's Lost Churches (Aurum, 2015). This was described in his obituary that appeared in The Guardian on 15th Dec 2015 as “a lament to a vanishing heritage and an exploration of the surprising new uses found for churches, it reflects Mathew’s curiosity and sense of story-telling, and his deep love for the creators and architecture of these buildings, lost, abandoned, rebuilt or reborn.”■

'Cumbria: The Buildings of England' (Pevsner Architectural Guides) by Mathew Hyde, Yale University Press (reprinted 2010).

'Arts & Crafts Houses in the Lake District' by Mathew Hyde & Esme Whittaker with photography by Val Corbett, Francis Lincoln (2015).

LIMITED EDITION

A Bibliography of R.W. Brunskill by C.W.A.A.S.



Those members who attended our Burgh by Sands joint event with the C & W will remember they received a copy of this comprehensive booklet, compliments of the C & W. We have a limited amount leftover which will be sent to anyone requesting same, just send your request to the secretary, via email, telephone or letter, and your copy will be sent out with the next newsletter, (to save on postage cost). Please remember copies are limited, it will be strictly first come, first served!

7. Forthcoming Events. Booking form enclosed.

- **Recording practice. January 12 and February 9.**

This will be held at the home of Jimmy and Anne Reynolds, at Elm Bank, Tirril, near Eamont Bridge, an exquisite house of stone and brick, remodelled in 1765 by John and Ruth Ritson, influential Quakers in the area. There are only **ten** places, so please book quickly.

Practice in measuring and drawing plans and elevations, describing both exterior and interior features and documentary research are planned.

- **Study day, *Vernacular Interiors*, 18 March, Swarthmoor Hall, Ulverston.**

Swarthmoor Hall was the home of Margaret Fell, who became the wife of George Fox, founder of the Quaker movement in 1652. Much of the furniture dates from this time, and the house and grounds evoke a seventeenth century atmosphere.

We are fortunate to have secured Peter Brears, one of the country's foremost folk life specialists, to work with us on Cumbrian domestic interiors. Earlier this year, he spoke at the national conference of the Regional Furniture Society in Carlisle. This event will be an important contribution to our understanding of the life led by our ancestors in the houses we study.

- **Visit to Yanwath Hall, near Penrith. 26 April, by permission of the owner, David Altham.**

Said by many to be the best example in Cumbria of a medieval tower house and farmstead in Cumbria, and containing many features which will extend members' experience and illustrate written descriptions. Numbers may have to be limited, so again, early booking is advised.



Yanwath Hall, nr.Penrith

© Google Images

8. Other notices.

- Remember to look at the website for events at the **Regional Heritage Centre, Lancaster**. www.lancaster.ac.uk/users/rhc

Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group annual day school and AGM will be held as usual at Leeds Beckett University on Saturday 25 March, 10.00 am to 4.30 pm. The theme of **House and Home** is most appropriate for our coming year's work. Papers will deal with lifestyles, furnishings and fittings, mainly revealed through material culture, and documentary evidence in probate inventories. The introductory talk will be given by Dr Adam Menuge, a member of CVBG and due to be elected Chairman of the VAG in January. His talk will include a discussion of Nappa Hall in Wensleydale, a fourteenth century tower house, ancestral home of the Metcalfe family, and one of the houses where Lady Anne Clifford stayed on her peregrinations around the north in the 1660s.

For details of membership and day school, contact David Cook on dcook0@talk21.com

The **VAG annual conference and AGM** at Leicester in early January (now fully booked), is also on an appropriate theme for CVBG. Entitled *Seeing the wood and the trees*, it will explore the sources of timber for vernacular buildings and the processes used in converting raw timber into structural elements. Several CVBG members will be attending, including committee members Claire Jeffery, (now VAG secretary), Mike Kingsbury and June Hall, (a committee member of VAG), and several others. A report will appear in Newsletter 15 in late March.



Alte Musik take a bow at the Tithe Barn, Carlisle © Mike Turner