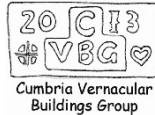


# NEWSLETTER No. 16 – SUMMER 2017



## 1. From the Chairman

As some of you know, the last few months have been quite eventful for me, resulting in my absence from a few events. I wish to thank members of the CVBG committee and others, who have kept the flag flying and made sure that our plans came to fruition.

Apart from recurring bouts of the mysterious virus which many people have been bothered with, myself included, the main event in April, was my marriage to Roy Hill – making a very slight change of surname! Thank you to everyone who sent cards and good wishes.

Enclosed is the first of CVBG's Occasional Papers, which Peter Messenger has written and our secretary Mike Turner has produced. This is partly a response to the large number of applications for the visit, when numbers were limited, and also, as the start of what we hope will prove to be useful and interesting reference works for members.

We are already looking at plans for the 2018 programme, and welcome requests, suggestions, offers and ideas. As the last two winter recording sessions in January and February have proved a little inconvenient, especially when trying to draw elevations on cold, snowy days, we will try indoor sessions, probably in the record offices, looking at documents, instead. As a result of the most enjoyable and informative day in the Scottish Borders with the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group, one of next year's events will be a joint visit on the Cumbrian side of the Border, when we will host SVBWG members.

We need to make better progress with writing up building reports, and if you feel that you could help, I am looking to form a recording team from our membership. Most regional groups in the UK seem to have a small group of members engaged in recording, while most members are content to receive newsletters, attend some events and support us with their subscriptions. This is fine, and we are typical in this respect. More later.

An invitation has been received from Appleby, for our display to be shown at the time of Heritage Open Days, 7 – 10 September. Appleby is to be a Heritage Action Zone, a project supported by Historic England and Eden District Council among others. There will be various events, many concerning historic buildings. Public involvement will be encouraged so watch for announcements ■

June L Hill

## 2. Eamont Bridge and Yanwath Hall – Visit 26<sup>th</sup> April

There was a massive response to the Yanwath visit and many of our members were disappointed. If we can arrange another visit, we will, but meanwhile, the enclosed occasional paper, our first, will provide an account.

On the day, 24 members assembled in the Crown Hotel car park, grateful thanks to Mike Gardner the landlord, for his co-operation. Because of the limitation in numbers allowed at Yanwath the first group of twelve departed for the Hall and the second group walked through and around Eamont Bridge.

A pre-arranged brief visit to the Mansion House was organised for each group, manager Hannah Baldwin duly met both groups for a look inside, currently under renovation the Mansion House is also a working office.



Mansion House © Kevin Illingworth



Eamont Bridge © Rachel Nutman

The walkabout Eamont Bridge did not disappoint, the busy A6 always in the background, members carefully crossed the road to see all buildings and of course the bridge, with its interesting underside and three segmental arches.



Eamont Bridge © Rachel Nutman



Bridge End © Kevin Illingworth

At this point we could view Bridge End, a roughcast two storied building with Welsh slate roof and a dated inscribed lintel, the windows having chamfered stone surrounds. Timings had to be adhered to and thanks to the planning of Mike Kingsbury and Peter Messenger, everybody had an opportunity to view each venue, for the maximum time allowed ■

**Mike Turner**

### 3. Appleby in Westmorland – A Heritage Action Zone

Appleby in Westmorland became a Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) in April 2017 and is currently only one of ten HAZs created by Historic England in England. It is, however, the only one in the North West. Through Heritage Action Zones, Historic England, working with local people and partners including local authorities, seeks to reinvigorate the historic environments of villages, towns and cities and unlock their potential to contribute to local economic growth.

Tourism is one of Appleby's major industries but the town has suffered from a decline in visitor numbers in recent years. Furthermore, Appleby was badly hit by the winter floods of 2015-16 and since then Appleby has been designated a Conservation Area at Risk by Historic England and several buildings in the town are included on the Heritage at Risk Register.



Boroughgate



White Hart

The focus in Appleby HAZ is therefore on restoring and reviving the town as a tourist attraction to benefit the local economy and the people who live and work there. It is hoped that this will be achieved in a number of ways, including the repair of a number of prominent listed buildings and in some cases their return to use, restoration work on the Keep at Appleby Castle, generally showcasing the town's rich heritage and making the most of initiatives such as Heritage Open Days. A review of the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) entries for Appleby, most of which date from the 1950s, will also be undertaken.

A better understanding of Appleby's historic environment will be crucial to the success of these and the many other initiatives which make up the HAZ programme, and so, underpinning and informing them, will be an Historic Area Assessment (HAA) conducted by staff from Historic England's Research Group.

HAA is an important and practical tool for the informed management of the historic environment at area scale, where the built environment exerts a defining influence. It is intended to assist planners, historic environment specialists, communities, developers, and others in evaluating and understanding how the past is encapsulated in today's landscape, explaining how it has assumed its present form and distinguishing its more significant elements. A guide to this type of assessment entitled *Understanding Place: Historic Area Assessments* can be downloaded from Historic England's website.



C17 Datestone

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The HAA will involve a rapid survey of all the historic buildings and features of archaeological interest in the Appleby Conservation Area followed by more detailed investigation and survey of the most important and best preserved examples: those which promise to yield the most valuable insights into the types they represent and the ways in which they have developed. In this way it is hoped to tell the story of the town's physical evolution as a chronological narrative and by detailed description of specific character areas.

Work will take place on the ground throughout 2017 and the results will be published as a report in Historic England's Research Report series, available for free download, in 2018. It is also hoped that the HAA will be used as the basis for a new tourist book on Appleby's Heritage to be published in 2019. ■

**Text and Images by Simon Taylor BA FSA, Senior Investigator, Historic England.**



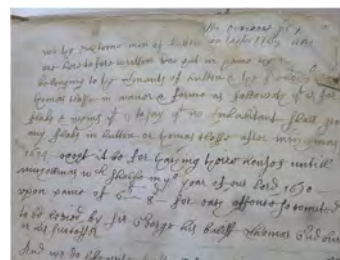
#### **4. FLAX and the Resolutions of the 16 men of Hutton - David Shore**

Further to the article by Peter Messenger in the Spring 2017 newsletter re: Vegetable Materials for Vernacular Buildings, There is another organic material to be added to the list of thatching vegetation – FLAX.

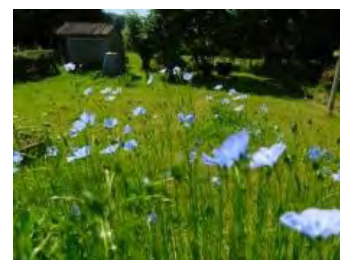
There is an explicit reference in PR 11/9, Carlisle Archive Centre. This document concerns, inter alia, the Resolutions of the 16 men of St James Parish, Hutton-in-the-Forest. In summary, the growing of FLAX is prohibited after Michaelmas 1684 until Michaelmas 1690, except flax grown for the thatching of houses. Fine of 6sh 8d for each offence.

Transcript as follows, the right hand page corner is missing, spelling as the document ■

*We the sixteene men of hutton.....  
are heretofore written Doe put in paine the.....  
belonging to the Tenants of hutton and the freholders of  
thomas close in maner and forme as followeth that is for  
flaks and whins that is to say that no Inhabitant shall grow  
any flaks in hutton or Thomas close after Michaelmas  
1684 – except it be for thaching ther houses untill  
michellmas which shallbe in the year of our Lord 1690-  
upon paine of 6s 8d for each offence so committed  
to be levied by Sir George his baliff Thomas Gudburn  
or his successor.*



© The Parochial Church Council



Flax growing © Sebastian Graham

## 5. Honister Slate Mine – 23rd May



Watching the pre - tour video

It seemed counter intuitive to drive up the rough track to go underground, but eight CVBG members boarded the bus and we arrived at the mine entrance. The setting was spectacular and the sun shone in a clear blue sky. We met our guide and looked across the valley to Yew Crag, where the perfect light showed mine entrances, tramways and the great fan of scree composed of waste rock from the workings. On the Honister side, the site of the former aerial ropeway and its supports was pointed out to us – the feature which the mine owners hope to reinstate as a *via ferrata*. The present operation was started in 1997, by Mark Weir (who died in a helicopter crash in 2011) and now has 40 employees.

From brilliant sunlight, we walked into deepest darkness. This is the last working slate mine in England, producing the famous green slate of the Lake District. Slate is a metamorphic rock, formed from volcanic ash and lava, around 450 million years ago. The three bands – Kimberley, Honister and Quay Foot, vary in thickness from around four to fourteen metres in depth, Honister averaging about six metres. It was worked from six levels - bottom level, levels 1, 2, 3, 4 and top level. In the mile or so of tunnels, passages and huge caverns we walked through, the extraction processes were explained. The first short tunnel led into the chamber of level 2, where the “clog” of slate, between the lower and upper sills was clear to see.



The entrance tunnel



Slate splitting

Tools were simple, pick, shovel, wedges and some dynamite. Technology changed little over time. Various ways of transporting the slate were devised, but the waste here was treated differently from that across the valley. Here, it was stacked neatly in the cavernous spaces, in one place used as seating and now for events including concerts and weddings. Ventilation was natural with no noxious gas, unlike the hazards in coal mines.

The mine once employed most men in Borrowdale.

Borrowdale slate has been mined for three or four hundred years. In living memory, the siren at 8 00 am signalled the start of work, and the men emerged from the mine at 4.30, to finish for the day at five o'clock.

We emerged into sunlight again, and returned to the mine visitor centre to watch a demonstration of slate splitting and trimming.

Anyone who has not been to Honister has missed an exciting and informative experience. For the miners who had to work and spend their days hacking out slate with only candles for lighting, it would not have been so much fun ■

**June Hill** (Images © Mike Turner)

## 6. Glenochar Bastle, Fermtoun and Biggar Museum – 18<sup>th</sup> June

On the gloriously sunny morning of Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June, thirteen members of CVBG and eight members of the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group met at the Glenochar Bastle and Fermtoun Trail car park in Lanarkshire, for a joint visit hosted by the SVBWG. This site was selected for our first shared excursion partly on account of it lying roughly halfway between Carlisle and Glasgow – about a one-hour's journey from each – but mainly because it is an easily accessible, extensive, and most interesting place.



Glenochar Bastle © John McDowell

After a 15-minute walk across rough sheep pasture, in hilly, upland country, we reached our objective, and the company heard a short talk by myself about the main features of the site. When this small bastle was first located, all that remained was a lump of masonry projecting through a large mound. The walls are over 1 m thick, and built of random rubble and lime mortar. They mostly stand well above head height, and show the base of a

barrel-vaulted ceiling at the south end, where the gable is also high enough for a small window to survive. Within, the first few steps of the internal stairway to the upper floor survive just inside the doorway. This entrance is placed in the western side-wall, and has been altered with short internal walls to give a very short, dog-legged passageway into the lower chamber – perhaps in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. A fireplace with slate cheeks, built against the north gable, probably dates from the same period, and may indicate that the building was used to accommodate a shepherd. This was one of several small, fortified houses built in an area that was terrorized by border reivers (raiders); 'bastle' has the same etymology as the French word *bastille*. The reivers specialized in livestock rustling, at a time when a person's wealth was measured by his cattle – a word that shares its etymology with 'chattel' and 'capital'. Excavation of the site in the late 1980s by Tam Ward and volunteers of Biggar Museum Trust, together with the Lanark and District Archaeology Society, had exposed the floor; the cobbled central drain and discharge tunnel through the gable – relating to this lower chamber's original use as a byre – are still visible.

At the time of the bastle excavation, nearby rectangular features tentatively interpreted as other dwellings were observed, and subsequent investigation revealed the boulder-footings of a further



Professor Niall Logan interprets the site © Roy Hill



twelve buildings that comprised a fermtoun; a joint-tenancy holding where the land was worked together by a small number of families. This type of toun, clustered about a bastle, appears to have occurred particularly in the Southern Uplands. Eight of the buildings were excavated in the early 1990s, and they can still be clearly made out. Most were longhouses or adapted longhouses – linear ranges with animals and



House byres at Glenochar © John McDowell

humans sharing a common entrance under a single roof. In several cases the byre drain could be seen in the downhill end of the building, and in one building several slots for the cruck timbers supporting the roof could be identified. I am a longhouse enthusiast, and I explained how the buildings functioned, with peat or possibly turf fires, and how they were probably constructed, with turf walls above the stone footings and turf-lined roofs thatched with whatever came to hand, such as heather or rushes. Excavated evidence suggested that some of the buildings were, at least latterly, used only as byres or for other, non-domestic purposes. An anvil was unearthed in one small chamber, suggesting that it had been used as a smithy. West of the buildings, and beyond a burn, evidence of lazy-bed cultivation could be made out. 'Lazy beds' were actually very hard work; raised beds divided by drainage ditches were dug by spade, in rough, boggy and boulder-strewn land that was

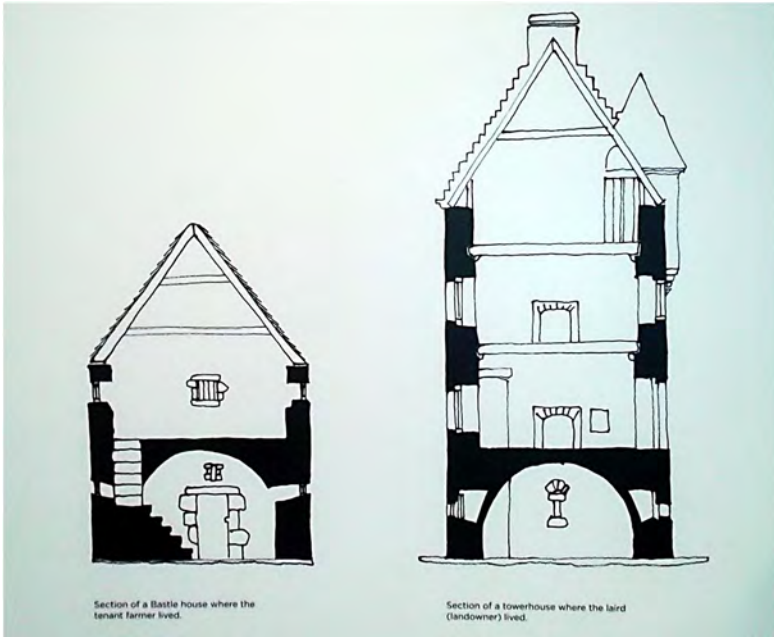
not amenable to ploughing. An obsolete sense of the word 'lazy' was 'uncultivated' – because the raised bed was made on top of uncultivated ground. We sat among the ruins and consumed our packed lunches, and then returned to our cars and drove to Biggar Museum. This is a first-class, small collection covering the archaeology of the area from earliest times, with excellent models of buildings alongside the artifacts; another very



Cutaway model of Bastle © Roy Hill

attractive and special feature of the museum is Gladstone Court, a collection of reconstructed 19<sup>th</sup>-century shops. There is a particularly large and fine cutaway model of a bastle, and a case beside it displays the Glenochar finds: roof slates (from the bastle), pottery, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century coins from Britain and the continent, horseshoes, the anvil, spindle whorls, clay tobacco pipes, thimbles and buckles; they indicate that the site's main occupation period was the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

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Bastle drawings © Roy Hill

Further support for that is given by a number of testaments (inventories and wills) for 'Glenocher' folk that were registered between 1623 and 1702 at Lanark Commissary Court. These testaments have been analysed by the Biggar group. I also plan to read some of them so as to learn more about the site's occupants, and hope to report on them in due course.

We then proceeded to Lochmaben, where CVBG members Charles and May McKerrell treated us to a splendid tea at their lovely house and garden: Buck's Fizz on the lawn, followed by sandwiches, cakes and scones in the dining room, and with honey from their own bees. This was the ideal finale to a perfect summer's day, and we went our separate ways, north and south, well satisfied ■

***Professor Niall Logan is Chairman of the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group and member of VAG and CVBG.***



Tea with Charles and May McKerrell © Richard Wilson