

## NEWSLETTER No. 23 – SPRING 2019



### 1. From the Chairman

We are already a quarter of the way through 2019 and CVBG, along with many other groups and societies in Cumbria, is extremely active. Our group has been consulted by several other bodies, including the North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, The Appleby Heritage Action Zone Project and the North West Digital Mapping project. Several of the consultations are leading to joint events. (See items in this newsletter.)

Mike Kingsbury and myself have been invited to give talks on Cumbria's vernacular buildings, to local history societies, Mike at Kirkby Lonsdale and June at Cartmel Fell, Appleby Archaeology Group and the Ullswater Festival, Coniston Local History Society, Morland WI and Cumbria Family History Conference. Often at these occasions, new members join CVBG. Our display panels are being well used.

Looking ahead to the AGM in September, we may, for various reasons, be seeking two or three new members for the committee. If you feel you could offer your services and skills, we should be delighted to hear from you.

If you have not used probate records in researching the history of your house, or any other old building, then there is an introduction to this rewarding class of **record in the following pages**. Even if "your" house does not have known occupants in the past, there may be other contemporary probate records for houses in the locality, which can throw light on the lifestyle of the period in question.

Many CVBG members also belong to neighbouring groups, particularly the Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group. Their annual study day, entitled 'Building our Knowledge', took place in York this month.

Please try to attend our basic once-a-month events. There is still time to register for the visits to Flookburgh (5 April), and Rosgill (11 April). If you have not yet been able to attend, you will be warmly welcomed. As you see, there is a lot happening, and we'd love you to be involved ■

*June Hill*

## 2. Bolection Mouldings in Carlisle and the Solway – Richard Wilson

Living in a particular corner of Cumbria for a number of years and keeping the eyes open can often result in the identification of architectural characteristics which appear to be unique to the immediate district. I was struck by the unusual design of the front door surround at the Old Vicarage in Dalston (see



left) when I first encountered it. Most of the classical mouldings are typical of those found on houses throughout the country in the late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century, but the way in which they have been used is not. The bulbous bolection moulding, which projects forward from the wall plane, was very popular in the Queen Anne and William and Mary periods. It gave prominence to important features like doorways and fireplaces, (below) where it normally decorated flat lintels. In and around Carlisle, an unknown mason has departed from the rules to create a local 'vernacular Georgian' motif which doesn't seem to occur

outside the locality. Round arches appear to have been popular in new houses, and the bolection moulding has been adapted to follow the curves. This is seen in its most basic form in Castle Street, Carlisle, and at the Oddfellows Arms at Bolton Low Houses, but the design was sometimes embellished with additional ornament; at the Old Vicarage, a Tuscan entablature on engaged columns (below left) contains the doorway, while at Arlosh House in Wigton there is a striking swan-necked pediment with unusual proportions. This is dated 1716.



Bolection mouldings also decorated 'eared' architraves to doors, windows and fireplaces. The examples seen locally were probably the work of the same anonymous mason, as the details have been found around a fireplace in at least one house which also features arched bolection mouldings, while an almost identical eared surround frames the front door of nearby Stonethwaite, dated 1724. The doorcase on the main elevation of Brecon Hill, Dalston, displays a similar swan-neck pediment to the one seen in Wigton. Some documentary research to identify this maverick designer needed! ■

(All images © Richard Wilson)

### 3. Digital Mapping Project – June Hill (Images © Marge Ainsley)

CVBG was invited to take part in a consultation meeting at Cumbria Archive Service (CAS), record office in Carlisle, on Friday 1 March. Six CVBG members attended.



Marge Ainsley, a freelance consultant, is in the early stages of a project which aims to digitise maps in the record offices of Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria. Included will be early editions of Ordnance Survey maps, but also, enclosure, tithe and estate maps, some of which are extremely fragile, damaged and kept rolled up in storage. By making the maps available on line, access will be easier. Maps which are too fragile

to be consulted in the record offices, will be available and considerable wear and tear on the originals will be avoided. Besides saving travelling time and expense, and adhering to the limited opening hours of record offices, we shall be able to consult a selection of maps in the comfort of our own homes.

Members heard about the project from Marge, and from Robert Baxter, senior

archivist, CAS, before being given a tour of the conservation department, where we saw a variety of original maps, some of which were in poor condition, and could not currently be seen by the public.

Many CVBG members are already aware of the very useful on line service which



the National Library of Scotland offer. On their website, <https://maps.nls.uk>, it is possible to see early editions of OS maps for all of the UK.

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The proposed project would greatly increase the range of maps available, while contributing to the survival of the original maps. Although nothing compares with the experience of seeing an original map, we must be realistic and accept that over-use of delicate documents does damage.

The project will not be achieved overnight, and our consultation, the first of several in Cumbria, gave a positive response to its development, helping the bids for funding to go ahead. Thanks to CVBG members who took part, and to CAS and Marge Ainsley for involving us ■



#### 4. Documents for House History – Probate Records.

In order for an estate to be passed to heirs, on the death of someone, probate documents have to be drawn up. These usually include the last will and testament, an inventory of goods and chattels, made shortly after the death, and other pieces of information, such as the administration and tuition bonds.

It is the will and the inventory which can be particularly helpful to those wishing to research house history. Of course, not everyone is represented in surviving documents, and not everyone made a will.

Until 1857, probate was the business of the Church. Deaneries, (groups of parishes), held consistory courts where these matters were dealt with. Probate records are currently held by diocesan record offices, (for people owning property in one county), often the county archive service, where catalogues of all such records are filed on open shelves.

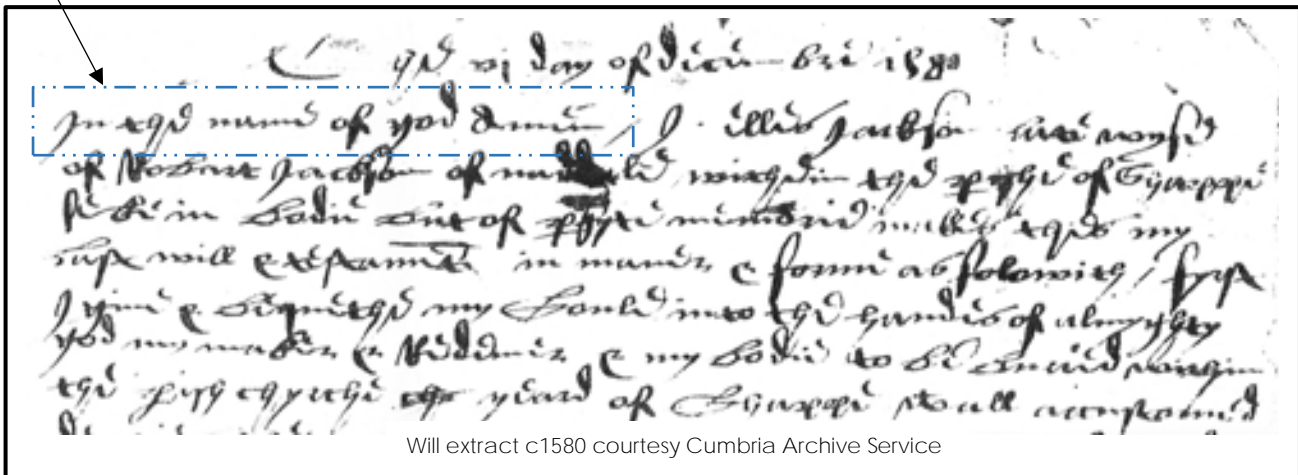
The records for anyone with property in two or more counties, are stored in York, for the Prerogative Court of York, if in the northern province, and for those whose property was in the south as well, then those records are at The National Archives, Kew, which houses the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, (the southern province), records.

There can be obstacles in your path, but if you are lucky, the rewards are worth the effort. Survival may be patchy, and documents may have suffered damage. Handwriting in the earlier records is in secretary hand, a style with particular letter forms, which can easily be learned. Abbreviations and omitted letters, dialect, and archaic terms all add interest!

The most productive period, from our point of view, which produced documents with an immense amount of detail, was between about 1550 and 1750. What can the documents tell us? Each document is unique. They can be full of surprises. Briefly -

### The Will.

A will is a statement of wishes, and not a guarantee of what happened. As a legal document, it usually follows a formula. The first words are usually, "In the name of God, Amen." These words can help with the deciphering of preamble



handwriting, containing twelve letters of the alphabet. The next part of the preamble (opening), tells you who is making the will, their parish, often their occupation or status, and age. They say where they wish to be buried. Then follows the bequests, which can often give information about family relationships, and name(s) of the executor(s). Witnesses then sign the will, those who cannot write, making a mark.

### The Inventory.

This is usually the most rewarding item for house historians. Four reliable men from the community went round the house and buildings, listing all the items to be passed on, and giving the value of each. The amount of detail varies, but can tell us –

Room names. Regional and local names for rooms. *Chamber* usually refers to a first floor room.

Furniture and utensils. Particularly important were metal items, such as fire irons, cooking pots, even candlesticks. Beds, bedding and other household textiles (all natural and mostly locally produced, of course).

Luxury items – clocks, mirrors, cushions, books.

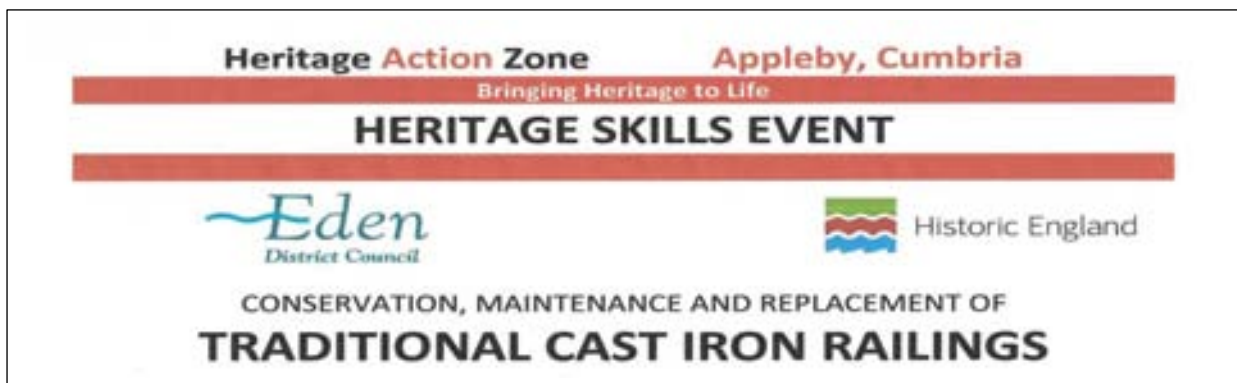
Livestock and crops – note the time of year.

Tools of the trade – joiners, shoemakers, weavers, etc.

Land use – e.g. "in the east field", denoting open fields still in use, or "corn in the ground".

Representation is uneven. The higher the status, the greater the likelihood that wills were made. Women are poorly represented – only spinsters and widows made wills, as married women could not own property. It is a surprise to learn just how recently this law was abolished ■

5. Traditional cast iron railings event, Appleby – Claire Jeffery



The railings belonging to St Laurence's Church in Appleby (along the riverside path) fell victim to Storm Desmond in December 2015, and have only recently been restored. This half-day event was organised through the Heritage Action Zone project, and showed the techniques used in the conservation and replacement of the railings. Some sections had survived intact but there was significant damage, and some of the railings had disappeared altogether, which meant that more than a simple repair job was needed.



Replacement railings were obtained from Ballantine Castings in Bo'ness near Falkirk because there are now no foundries in the north of England. The stone plinth was also in poor condition and this was replaced with Lancashire gritstone.

We heard from Countryside Consultants of Alston, the architects who led the project, and Parkin Bell, the local building contractor carrying out the work. It was fascinating to see the new cast iron being fixed into the stone using hot lead, a technique that uses basic equipment but requires skill and care ■

6. Forthcoming Events – please book your place now, (form enclosed)

**Friday 5 April 12.30 – 4.00 *Before and after the Great Fire of Flookburgh***  
Walkabout. Meet Helen Evans at Flookburgh Village Hall. LA11 7J Tea/coffee included.

**NOW FULLY BOOKED**

**Thursday 11 April 10.30 – 4.00 *Rosgill, houses and barns***  
Meet Sue Blecher and Lizzie Lindwall at Toathmain, Sue's home. Near Shap  
CA10 2QZ Map ref. NY 530168 £5.00. Bring packed lunch. Tea/coffee etc., provided.  
Rosgill is a small hamlet set on the east side of the Lowther valley, near Shap.  
**Some short-distance walking between properties.**

**Friday 3 May 10.00 – 4.00 *Kirkoswald Castle and the College: past, present and future***  
Meet Fiona Knox and June Hill at Kirkoswald Village Hall. CA10 1DQ  
Bring packed lunch. Tea/coffee provided.  
**FREE event, jointly with North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty,**  
Fell Foot Forward Project. Walk to the Castle ruin courtesy of the owners,  
Mr & Mrs Littleton, and to The College, guided by the owner, Timothy Fetherstonhaugh.

**Saturday 8 June 10.00 – 4.00 *Vernacular Buildings of the Debatable Lands***  
Meet Alex Gibbons at Canonbie Village Hall. DG14 0UX  
£10.00. Bring packed lunch. Tea and coffee provided.  
Find out what effect the troubles on the Border had on the built environment.

**Saturday 6 July 10.00 – 4.00 *Village-scape: Assessment of pre-c.1750 houses***  
Meet June Hill at Maulds Meaburn Village Institute. CA10 3HN  
£10.00 Bring packed lunch. Tea/coffee provided.  
Examine village houses, from the medieval manor house, to farmhouses and cottages.

There is still time to book for the Appleby #2 event Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> March 10am – 4pm.  
Ring Mike Kingsbury by Wednesday for full details.



Window & Doorway, Appleby Study Day,  
October 2018  
© Barbara Grundy



Appley Information Board – image © Barbara Grundy

## MEMBERS DETAILS

Do we have your correct details? If you are reading this, then your mailing address must be correct, however if there is an alteration you would like making, even a minor one, please notify the secretary. If you have not received an email for a while please check that we have an up to date email address, you may for instance have recently changed provider. The last general email to members was sent on 7th March – did you receive it? Again please inform the secretary regarding any changes. It is important that we can inform members of forthcoming events or changes ■

Thank You

### Late addition for your diary.

Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> September at 2pm - AGM  
Venue - Newbiggin Hall, near Temple Sowerby, the AGM will be followed by a tour of the Hall by the owner Marilyn Sawrey-Cookson.  
AGM (free) - Tour £6 pp Tea & Buns provided.

More detail & booking form with the next newsletter.