

URGENT NEWS

Because of the changing situation over the coronavirus, we will not proceed with planned monthly events for April (Pennine Edge), May (Great Asby), and June (Hills Tower). Sadly we had to cancel the March Event (Inventories), the first time since 2013 that we have had to postpone an arrangement out of around 80 monthly events.

We are in unprecedented times and must act accordingly, to help keep our members safe. Any further cancellations will be communicated to you by e mail, or by post for those few who do not use it.

If the situation changes and is not as bad as predicted, so that we can reinstate events, then you will be informed. We hope to rearrange the above events later in the year. Meanwhile, we are including information about them, so that you can see what was planned, but **NO BOOKING FORMS.**

In the near future, we plan two publications which will be sent to you. Look out for e mails in preparation, with background information on several aspects of vernacular buildings. Stay well.

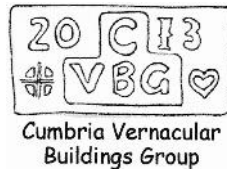
June.

N.B. Mike Kingsbury will not be refunding any monies paid just yet until it becomes clearer if and when events are rearranged.



16th March 2020

NEWSLETTER No. 27 – SPRING 2020



1. From the Chairman

2020 has begun in a lively way and is set to continue to be a busy year.

Our first two events, **Along the Lines**, involved about one fifth of our membership and is leading to an interesting outcome. (See separate item).

The recently published annual periodical of the VAG, *Vernacular Architecture*, celebrated its 50th anniversary by reviewing the past, while pointing the way ahead. One article, by David Clark, of the Oxfordshire Buildings Record, is particularly pertinent. It is entitled **The Role of the Volunteer and Local Recording Groups**. In it, the author considers the long-term value of the work done by groups, of which there are eighteen, including CVBG. He argues that without a tangible outcome, there will be no lasting value to our hard work and experience.

He examines the “grey literature” of reports, including those by professionals, in respect of planning issues, many of which are never seen by interested members of the public, or indeed, by members of groups such as ours.

If we don't record buildings, then any photographs, notes, conclusions and the like will disappear.

Most regional groups have only a small core of recorders, but some manage to achieve a high standard of reports and a prodigious output. Essex, Norfolk, Somerset, Wales and Yorkshire are among the most productive groups. Cumbria was not included. Surely the county deserves better. A possible way ahead is to arrange an intensive training course to create a team of members confident enough to undertake surveys of individual buildings.

Some members already have shown willing to take part in surveys by volunteering for example, for the Barns survey conducted recently in the north west of Cumbria, by fellow members Rose Lord and Peter Messenger, and currently in the Westmorland Dales field barn survey, again organised by a member, Hannah Kingsbury. Our work in Appleby and Maulds Meaburn earlier in the year, and in Swindale and Naddle in the autumn, was particularly good, and an occasional paper is in preparation on the latter. **Please complete the enclosed questionnaire**, and we'll take it from there.

The VAG is continuing to run training courses, and the next one will be in Ashwell, Hertfordshire, in late September or early October. Any of our members is eligible to attend. More detail when it becomes available.

Good news came very recently, that CVBG has been allocated £1,000 of funding for our project on the Pennine Edge, as part of the Fellfoot Forward initiative, part of the North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty programme. The outcome will be some form of publication or public information, The April event will develop the work we started last October, in Croglin, Newbiggin and Cumrew. The local weekend press (7 March), featured the Fellfoot Forward project, which is aimed at developing “slow tourism”, absolutely in line with our aims, one of which is to “increase enjoyment and understanding” of buildings.

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Is there anyone out there? Changes are on the way. In September, when we hold our AGM, **Mike Turner**, our Secretary and much more, will retire. As some of you know, he was seriously ill last year and as a result, he and his wife have reorganised their lives. While he still plans to fulfil a number of the roles he has gathered over the last years, he will no longer be able to undertake others, as he and Sue have moved to Scotland and Mike will not be able to participate in a lot of events, especially committee meetings. So, we need people to come forward to volunteer. Mike will continue to produce the Newsletter and the jobs he can do via the computer. But we will need the following -

- **Minutes secretary** at four committee meetings a year.
- **Membership secretary**, which involves sending out reminders when subscriptions are due, receiving renewals and new membership applications sending welcome packs to new members, keeping a database of members' details, and GDPR (data protection).
- **Production of booking forms** for events and sending joining details to those who book. (Mike Kingsbury, our treasurer, handles booking returns.)

If you have the skills and/or enthusiasm to do any of the above, please let me know as soon as possible. Thank you. Mike has become indispensable and we will miss him very much indeed ■

June L Hill



2. Listed Buildings

Wherever you live, there are listed buildings nearby. You may even live in one. It is useful to read what the listings say about buildings. Texts may have been written some years ago, and were mostly drawn up from observations made from the outside only. To find out which buildings are listed, go to -

www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk then choose '**England**'.

Regional groups of counties will appear, so choose **North West**, and **Cumbria**.

Most **parishes** are shown, in alphabetical order. Select the relevant parish and all the listed buildings are given.

Most buildings do not have a photograph, and there is the opportunity to add a picture. Why not submit a photograph? ■

Dacre Castle near Penrith

A Grade 1 Listed Property

Image © www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk



3. VAG Winter Conference, Leicester, 4 & 5 January 2020. Marks on Buildings

As always, the Winter Conference was well attended (142 members), and gave the opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones. It was good that at least ten members of CVBG attended. Twelve papers were presented, in addition to the AGM and the launch of a new book, **Cruck Buildings: A Survey*** in which our committee member, Peter Messenger has written a chapter.

The subjects covered in the weekend, were many and varied, They included graffiti, marks and symbols (e.g. six petalled rosette, ritual marks of all kinds}, charms, spells and curses. Burn marks on structural timbers in barns and on fireplace lintels, and on furniture, were discussed.

Much attention was given to the purpose and possible meanings of such marks. Were they for protection against evil, or witches or what? The first paper, delivered in absentia, as a sound recording to accompany photographs, was by Owen Davies. He used the total lack of documentary evidence to disassociate the presence of ritual deposits (shoes, mummified cats, et al) and ritual marks, from the fear of witches, claiming that such connections were retrospective and purely a matter of coincidence.

Following speakers held different views, some more convinced of a connection than others. Such apotropaic marks remain a mystery, but their abundant presence cannot be denied. The making of burn marks was demonstrated, using a candle, to prove that burn marks on buildings cannot be the result of accidents.

Less controversial were masons' marks, carpenters' assembly marks and datestones. It was interesting to see examples of carpenters' marks, both in the usual Roman numerals and in early forms of arabic numerals, the forerunners of our numbering system today.

The final paper, by Lee Prosser, was on the subject of Baltic timber marks. He and his colleagues have spent years examining such marks on imported timber, and have found them to provide information on the ports of origin, batch numbers, names of ships used in transport, merchants' names, etc.

Please look out for any marks on buildings, during your visits to our vernacular buildings in Cumbria, and take photographs. Please send them to me for possible inclusion in the next newsletter ■

June Hill.

**A copy of this book has been bought for the CVBG Library. See separate item.*

4. Along the Lines- A report on January and February events

The two meetings held in High Newton for the south of the county and Low Hesket for the north, were both well attended. The project was outlined as follows.

Our member Dr Alan Smith, who has recently had his book **Lakeland Rocks** published, kindly agreed to draw two lines across the geological map of Cumbria. These were to pass through as many types of rock as possible. The two lines, from Silloth to Milnthorpe and from St Bees Head to Stainmore, intersect at Wythburn, on the east bank of Thirlmere. Members were given the task of recording vernacular buildings on each rock type, which reflect the underlying material our predecessors had access to, for construction. Illustration (photographs or drawings), with a written description, were required. Members selected a section of line near their home, or where they had an interest.



The results of their findings were brought to the joint meeting in February, and were extremely good. We all enjoyed hearing about discoveries, and seeing the variety of presentations offered.

Shap Old Market House © Rachel Nutman/Geoff Thompson

Built with local limestone with sandstone sills.

Now, four volunteers (Jennifer Forsyth, Stephanie Hewison, John McDowell and Lesley Fraser) have joined June Hill to form an editorial group. The aim is to decide what form the eventual publication should take. After the first meeting, it was decided that a book, suitable for taking on field visits, would probably be the best option. A pro-forma was sent to those participating, to ensure that essential information is included.

As well as demonstrating the wide variety of materials available, it is hoped that we can show the range of building types. Houses, from the defensive buildings of medieval times, to farmhouses and cottages, as well as agricultural and industrial buildings, are included. So we will see medieval towers, monastic buildings transformed into houses, early churches and a dovecote; a renaissance house, farmhouses and detail such as doorways and windows from the seventeenth century; and bank barns, houses and cottages, bee boles, lime kilns and mills dating from from c1700 onwards.

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There are gaps in coverage of the Lines and the editorial group is undertaking to fill these. Where settlement is sparse, for example over the mountain tops, from Ennerdale to Honister, Patterdale and Borrowdale to Shap, building materials used in stone walls are being photographed.

All buildings included can be seen from a public place – the street, or a footpath – and privacy of the owners is essential.

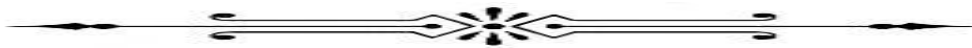
As one of the stated aims of CVBG is “to increase enjoyment and understanding of the county's traditional buildings”, the publication should do just that.

Watch this space ■



Barn at Shap © Rachel Nutman/Geoff Thompson

June Hill



N.B. Event Postponed

5. Great Asby 'Village Walkabout', Tuesday, May 12, 2020

Great Asby is a good example of a so-called planned village, with a basic layout, or 'bone-structure', probably dating from the 12th century, and set within a still-discernible medieval landscape. It has a fine former Rectory, with a 14th century solar tower at its core; Asby Hall, significantly reconstructed around 1694 by a member of the Musgrave family and enlarged in the 18th century; a number of good examples of linear farmsteads, most reconstructed in the 17th and 18th centuries; four early 19th century Almshouses in a square block; and 2 miles to the north-west of the village is Gaythorne Hall, "built c1600 as a hunting lodge for the Bellinghams of Levens".

The day will include an overview of Great Asby and its landscape by CVBG member and Great Asby resident, Keith Cooper; a lengthy visit to look inside the Rectory; an opportunity to closely examine the exterior of Asby Hall; a shorter visit to the interior of the domestic portion of one of the linear farmsteads; a village walkabout; and an optional end-of-day visit to look at the exterior of Gaythorne Hall, led by Paul Lewis, who gave a paper about this building at the November 2019 CVBG Study Day at Burgh-by-Sands.

Programme

10.00 Arrive and coffee. Village Hall

10.20 Introduction to Great Asby, Keith Cooper

11.15 Visit Rectory, by kind invitation of Peter and Jackie Lambert

12.30 Pub lunch. (Please order in advance)

1.30 Walkabout and visits to Asby Hall and Dial House

3.15 Village Hall, Tea.

Depart, **or optional visit.**

3.45 Leave for Gaythorne Hall. View outside, with Paul Lewis.

Cost £10.00 – to include sandwich lunch at the 'Three Greyhounds Inn'

Organiser - Keith Cooper. Keith's first degree was in History but he spent most of his working life in university administration. Following retirement, he has returned to the 'world of history', researching various aspects of Asby Parish's buildings and historic landscape. He is currently working on editing a Victorian farm diary written in the parish, which will be published by Hayloft, (working title) *Almost a Year in the Life of Halligill; from 'deated some oats' to 'puling turnips'*.

6. HILLS TOWER, Dumfries, DG2 8NL visit shared with Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group-Saturday 13 June 2020, 11.00 – 3.00

N.B. Event Postponed

Hills Tower near Dumfries is listed as category A, (Scottish equivalent of Grade 1). Hills Tower, Gatehouse and Courtyard form an insight into defensive building north of the Border. The Tower a 16th century structure with later modifications, and the Gatehouse, considered to be an important example of its type, are contemporary. The house, built in 1721/3, once stood apart from the Tower,



but now is joined to it by a later linking building. Building accounts survive. The whole has been carefully restored over the years by the owners, and our hosts for the day, Alan and Alison Gibbs. Altogether, the buildings form a memorable group in a superb setting, and the generous owners provide information and hospitality which result in a delightful experience.

Arrive 11.00 am.

Tea and cake provided throughout the day.

Introduction and tour led by the owners, and freedom to explore.

Bring a packed lunch to eat either inside, or out in the Courtyard, depending on the weather. Leave by 3.00pm.

For more information, Google britishlistedbuildings.co.uk go to Scotland, then Dumfries and Galloway, and you will find Hills Tower.

Map and more information will be sent to those booking.

7. A Brief History of Coniston Hall – Paul Lewis

Proposed Event Planned for
Monday 20th July 2020

In 1909 W. G. Collingwood visited the property with CWAAS and summarised the history of the Hall to members (Journal vol.10.0022 1910).

In 1586 Sir William Fleming 'enlarged and repaired' the house. Coniston had never been raided by the Scots and in these later years of Elizabeth 1's reign the border counties found themselves in more peaceful times following the rebellions of her father's reign. There is therefore no pretence of defence to the house and hall, save one might assume heavy doors. Unlike the halls of other great families in the county, the structure had not developed from a defensive Pele tower.

The best insight to the original appearance of the property is contained in a picture made from a 1788 engraving by T Whittaker where the building is depicted with a jettied oriel and a 2-storey porch on the northwest side, much in the fashion of the time. The oriel was removed in the 19th century when a ramped entrance was made to the banqueting hall to create a bank barn; the two-storey porch was truncated to a mono-pitch roof structure that now serves the bathroom on the upper level and a campsite shop at ground level.



1. From an engraving by T Whittaker 1788

William's son, Sir Daniel Fleming (1633 – 1701) vacated the hall and by the mid 18th century it was recorded as ruinous.

When Collingwood visited the property in 1909, the building layout was much as seen today. The general arrangement of rooms is very similar to Hawkshead Hall, built in the mid 16th century from medieval origins.

Thank you for your patience with this ever changing situation, rest assured that the CVBG will continually inform and update all members accordingly.