NEWSLETTER No. 21 – AUTUMN 2018

Cumbria Vernacular Buildings Group

1. From the Chairman

Thank you to all who attended the AGM earlier in the month. It was the first time we had held this event in an evening, and it seemed too be as well attended as ever, with 36 members, including nine out of ten of the committee. One committee member was indisposed. All were re-elected and each one has a role to play. Grateful thanks for their support and hard work during the year.

With reluctance, we accepted the resignation of Vicky Slowe. She, like all the others (except Hannah Kingsbury, who joined the committee last year), has contributed since our foundation in 2013. Her work commitments do not allow her time to spend on the CVBG committee just now, and we wish her well with all the professional projects she has, especially the scheme to bring Bluebird back to the Ruskin Museum at Coniston, where she is director.
Thank you, too, to all the members who volunteered to lead an event in the last year. These have been much appreciated and enjoyed. The who programme for 2018 has been varied in content, venue around the county, and day of the week. It is always difficult to fix a day, as those who are in work cannot come during the week, and weekends are not suitable for everyone. Unlike many historical organisations, we are fortunate in having a high proportion of members who are still working full time, (i.e. "young"), and in positions concerned with the historic environment.
This year, we have involved members with the organisation of events, and thanks go to Anna Gray, Chris Craghill, Alex Gibbons, Helen Evans and Dan Elsworth., as well as all those who have willingly helped with arrangements. We have also cooperated with other organisations. Again, we held a joint event with the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group, and will take part in Appleby in October, with the Heritage Action Zone project. Barbara Grundy and I took CVBG display and publicity material to Whitehaven earlier in September, for the Heritage Skills Fair, (part of the Whitehaven Townscape Heritage Initiative), where several of our members were demonstrating their particular skills. Peter Messenger and Richard Wilson planned, researched and led the 'Recording Old Welsh Houses' Group for several days, based in Carlisle, took them on tours and gave evening talks.

cont'd.../

Thank you to all members who responded to my request to help catch up on the backlog of **unfinished reports on buildings.** We will make a start on this work on **Wednesday 17 October, at the Old Courthouse, Shap,** I will communicate with those who responded, individually.

Looking to the future, I am concerned to find members who will be willing to take on the commitment of running the Group. Please give this some serious thought, as Anno Domini seems to be flying past more swiftly than ever, and we need to ensure that CVBG is self-sustaining. I am sure that there is a role for the Group to play, but it can only do so with vision and hard work. No new people came forward at the AGM, and we are grateful that the members trust us to carry on,. If any particular task emerges during the year, and requires a special skill we don't already have on the committee, we will co-opt someone for the purpose.
Ideas, requests and suggestions for events in 2019 are still welcome, although an outline programme is in place ■

June L Hill

2. Thatched Roofs in Whitehaven – Graham Brooks

The Cumberland Paquet for the 13th October 1790 carried a short editorial on the subject of thatched roofs in Whitehaven. It stated that it was several years since thatched roofs had been seen in Whitehaven except for two cottages in the old town. It was pleased to announce that last week they had been taken down and that a dwelling house of the 'most genteel kind' was to be erected on the site.

Unfortunately they had to retract this statement a fortnight later, when in the Paquet for 27th October they stated that only one had been demolished. The other was to remain as a 'monument of the obstinacy of the owner of the property' who was said to reside in Dublin! However all was not lost because the house would be completely surrounded by the other buildings and therefore hidden.

The date of the demolition or reroofing of this property I have not found yet but the annual report of the Whitehaven Dispensary for 1807 does state that there are no thatched or tiled roofs in the town ■

(CVBG member Graham Brooks is bulletin editor for the 'Cumbria Industrial History Society')

3. Hutton John and Dacre – Tour & Walkabout, July 12th.

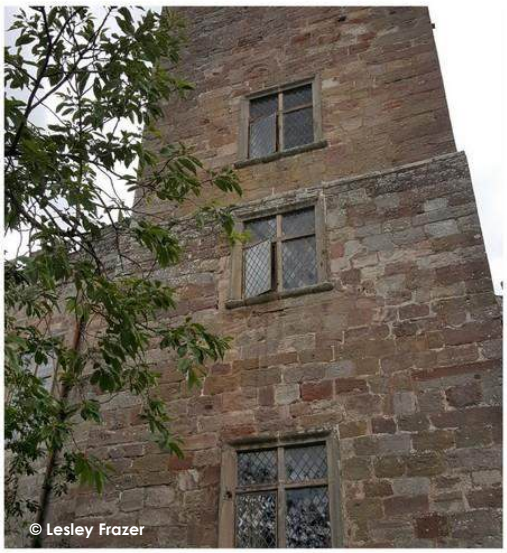
Members went first to **Hutton John,** a fine mansion owned by Mrs Kate Fraser, who guided us round, and related the story of the building. Starting as a fourteenth century pele, which replaced an earlier moated building on a nearby site, it was added to and altered over subsequent centuries. Features including windows, doors and even datestones, have been relocated within the building. The tower, now in the south-east corner of the house, has a single tunnel vault to the ground floor, with spiral stairs leading upwards. The property has been in the Hudleston family until the 20th century. (This branch of the family, whose principal seat was Millom, has only one 'd ' in the name.) Most periods of architecture are represented in the building. Work was done by almost every generation, but especially enthusiastic builders were Andrew Hudleston and his wife Dorothy Fleming, in the late seventeeenth century.

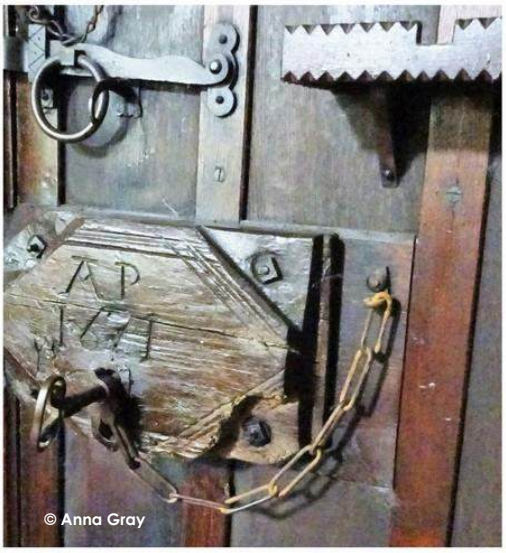
After lunch in the village hall at Dacre, we walked to the parish **Church of St Andrew.** Here, at 'Dacor' in 731 AD, Bede wrote that there was a monastery, and in excavations of the 1980s and subsequently, corroborative evidence was provded. Wiliam of Malmesbury reported a meeting of three kings, in 927 AD, when Constantin of Scotland (Alba) and Owain of Strathclyde, paid homage to Athelstan King of England.
Two fragments of pre-Conquest sculpture can be seen inside the church. One ninth century piece shows Northumbrian characteristics, and depicts a winged dragon. The second stone is carved in Norse style, and may depict a rare illustration of Abraham and Isaac.
The present fabric of the church dates from Norman times – see the tower arch and the chancel, with a priest's door on the south side. There is a typical water-leaf capital to one of the shafts. The nave arcades are thirteenth century Gothic, with a Perpendicular (15th century) clerestorey above. The tower was rebuilt in 1810 and the east windwo lancets are also nineteenth century replacements. In the churchyard, the famous Dacre 'bears' continue to defy positive assignment to period or function. Even to call these four severely weathered stone figures bears is questionable.

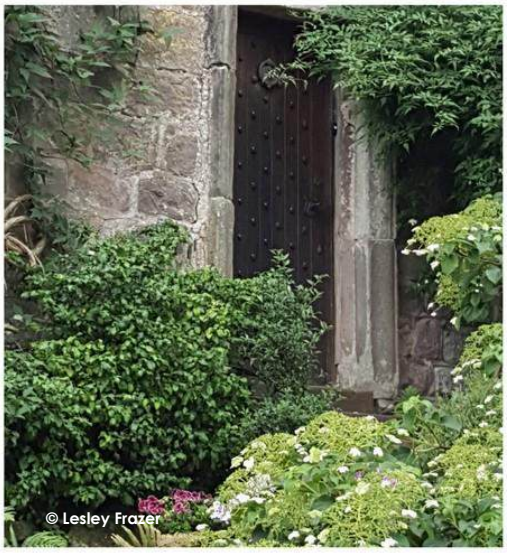
Dacre Castle remains a single fourteenth century tower, on a grand scale. Four buttresses, two square and two diagonal, define its corners. A moat survives on three sides and was probably never a complete square. Licence to crenellate was granted in 1307. The piscina in the Great Hall probably dates from this period. Living accommodation is stacked vertically above a double barrel-vaulted ground floor. In Tudor times, alterations were made, and the fine ceiling of the Great Hall, with chamfered and stopped beams. Alterations were made in 1675 by Sir Thomas Dacr, when he came of age. He created the impressive first-floor entrance and placed his coat of arms above it. Now, Dacre Castle is part of the Dalemain Estate. We only saw the exterior of Dacre castle, but it was interesting to compare it with the tower at Hutton John, which is now embedded in a complex and much extended house ■

June Hill

A selection of images from Hutton John and Dacre







4. Priorslynn Bothy, Hands-on 'Clay Day' – Canonbie, July 28th .

It was my great delight to welcome a joint trip between the Cumbria Vernacular Buildings Group and the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group in July this year. We met at Priorslynn Bothy and a very drizzly and grey day at the end of July, but that didn't hold us back!

Priorslynn is a Category A listed clay walled and cruck framed building in the village of Canonbie. The parishes of Canonbie and Kirkandrews-on-Esk make up the notorious 'Debateable Lands', a no man's land area between England and Scotland, which was neither claimed nor unclaimed by either country until the union of the crowns. Even after this time, the area remained lawless, controlled and fought over by local reiving families. Thankfully, those days are behind us (most of the time!) and Canonbie is now a relatively sleepy village, located just two miles into Scotland.

Members will already be aware about clay dabbin buildings of the Solway Plain, thanks to the marvellous work carried out by Peter Messenger and Nina Jennings. Although we have around 300 remaining examples on the Cumbrian side of the border (which I spend most of my time repairing and maintaining!), Priorslynn is supposed to be the last remaining clay building in South West Scotland. Of course, it is extremely likely there are others remaining, and we are currently working with Historic Environment Scotland to identify more examples of this once widespread vernacular building type in this part of Scotland.

The day began with a tour of the building, which is so small I always worry there is enough to talk about! However, thanks to the enthusiasm of the group, this easily filled our morning session. There was discussion of the history and development of the building, as well as the repairs that we carried out when it was in the ownership of the Duke of Buccleuch, including a large dose of conservation philosophy, which, as a SPAB Fellow, I'm afraid I couldn't avoid! Notably, the cruck frames in the building do not appear to have been re-used, owing to a lack of mortice housings or signs of reuse. This is very unusual for cruck frames on the Solway, and may indicate the frames to be contemporary with the building. I hope this might allow us to gain a relatively accurate date for construction when dendrochronology is carried out next year.

cont'd..../

The discussion developed from past and present to the future of the building. Increasingly, many small scale vernacular byres, barns and bothies are threatened through inappropriateness of scale for modern day agriculture, and can suffer considerably if converted to residential through having to meet modern building regulations and incompatibility of traditional construction with modern living expectations.

Thankfully, through Scotland's more progressive planning outlook, the designation of 'Hut' was enshrined in law in 2017. Although really intended for new structures, nothing precludes the designation being applied to existing structures. The definition is as follows,
"A simple building, used intermittently as recreational accommodation (i.e. not a principal residence); having an internal floor area of no more than 30m2; constructed of low impact materials; generally not connected to mains water, electricity or sewerage; and built in such a way that it is removable with little or no trace at the end of its life. Huts can be built singly or in pairs"

As I hope is clear, many small scale traditional agricultural buildings could meet this criteria. Furthermore, hut status means most areas of building regulations do not need to be applied, I believe we have successfully gained planning permission for the first listed 'Hut' in Scotland, and I hope to see many more in the future!

After a rather breezy lunch, including lots of tea, the hardy souls engaged in a some practical earth building techniques. The group split in two, rotating between lime / earth plastering and earth block making. I hope that most would agree that this practical element was not only worthwhile to gain a deeper understanding of the materials we were talking about through the day, but allowed discussions to develop through the process of making.

I hope that delegates found the day to be informative, interesting and useful, and I really appreciate those who came making the trip. I look forward to doing more with CVBG and SVBWG, and hope that I can be useful in more events in the future, particularly given my geographic location in the 'debatable lands'! Thanks must also be extended to Mike Kingsbury and June Hill for organising, Derek Lane for helping with the practical element and Wilson Irving for making the all important tea! ■

Alex Gibbons

5. Little Langdale – Archaeology Fieldtrip, August 9th .

Eight CVBG members enjoyed a visit to deserted farmsteads near Fell Foot Farm in Little Langdale, led by Dr Helen Evans.

In contrast with many CVBG events, the main purpose of this half-day expedition was to look at things which were no longer there! But that was no problem, given that our guide was the lead archaeologist for a 2017 professional survey of the settlements, and was able to talk us through her findings, assisted by some detailed site-plan hand-outs.

But starting at the start – our fell-side walking route initially took us past Blea Tarn, with magnificent scenic views to the Langdale Pikes. Once on the road to Wrynose & Hardknott passes, we came to the first Scheduled Monuments of the day: a rugged stone outcrop called Castle Howe; and in its shadow, the Ting Mound, a deliberately terraced natural mound, believed to date from Viking times, and to have been used as an open-air meeting place for local government.

Passing by (gloriously decrepit) Fell Foot Farm; and, via a small diversion to Bridge End Cottage (possibly THE cutest building in Lakeland?) – a fine example of a (cottage-with-barn, as opposed to longhouse) plan-form typical of the area – we finally reached the deserted settlements themselves, the main focus of the tour.....So, what were they?

They were both isolated small farmsteads, which may have formed a hamlet with the (still remaining) Fell Foot Farm**. One of these dated back to approx. 1620s, the other to approx. 1660s.

They were probably sustained by, and contributed to, the local "cottage industry" of flax growing, producing the raw material for linen, in addition to the better known sheep-farming/wool industry in the valley.

Flax/linen needed retting ponds (shallow water-filled enclosures in which the raw flax was steeped for weeks, to rot-down the outer husks, exposing the usable fibres inside) and sure enough, there the enclosing banks were – if you knew what you were looking for! Helen also showed us how the buildings' archaeology matched Bridge End Cottage's plan-form.

cont'd.../

Easier to identify was a kiln – possibly for burning bracken to produce potash (for manufacturing soap, for de-greasing wool.)

The buildings were abandoned probably in the early 19th century, probably due to the agglomeration of holdings to Fell Foot Farm; with decline in the linen industry also being a likely factor.

Potash Kiln © Stuart Harling

One of the buildings has been part-absorbed into a (still extant) field barn, but the others are now ruins, with little left but the foundations.

Altogether, a fascinating tour. Thanks to Helen for sharing her observational skills, which again proved the benefits of having a knowledgeable guide; and congratulations on choosing the day with the finest weather of the summer! ■

****** *A check on a pre-1974 map shows that it <u>was</u> in Westmorland (despite rumours to the contrary!) – the county boundary with Lancashire being the River Brathay, alongside the road up to Wrynose/Hardnott.*

Peter MacGowan

Group near Ting Mound © Stuart Harling

6. Farmhouse Recording Day – Millom, August 18th *(Images © Mike Kingsbury)*

Until recently, the CVBG's introductory survey sessions have taken place in the winter, but progress on these has sometimes been affected by the limited daylight and unpredictable weather. This has led to a recommendation that the site visits should be moved to the summer, and the winter slots reserved for archive research instead. The recording day at Millom was the first experience of the new arrangement.

In comparison with earlier recording days I've attended, the number of participants was quite small, but this helped to ensure that there was less risk of tasks being duplicated, and of congestion occurring while moving within the buildings. Parkhead Farm is so-called because of its relationship with the site of the former deer park which was associated with Millom Castle. This existed from about the fourteenth century to 1802, when it was split up under new ownership, the estate having been sold by the Hud(d)lestons to the Lowthers in 1774.

The day began with an introductory tour of the site, led by Carl Carrington, who hosted the visit.

The house is a long, two-storied building, constructed of the local slate, now mostly rendered with cement. There is a large barn to the rear, which is built of the same materials. The interior of the house was extensively modernised in the early 20th century, probably at the time the render was renewed, which involved the replacement of the floors to the upper storey, as well as many of the partitions. Despite the loss of original materials, it is still possible to work out the likely development phases, as the newer work generally took the form of renewal rather than modification, with the layout basically remaining unchanged.

It appears that the building may have originated as a single-storey gable-entry house. The stub of what seems to have been a bresummer beam remains above the pier between the two enlarged front windows, indicating that the principal room may have contained a firehood. The position of the smaller window suggests that it was originally a fire window, a feature that permitted sedentary activities to be carried out by the fire in the colder months. A second large oak beam divides the ceiling of the room. It has decorative stops to both ends, which, by comparison with similar features in contemporary local buildings, may help to establish an approximate construction date.

cont'd.../

A major discovery was made during the recent stripping out of modern features in this room. An elaborately carved stone fireplace was concealed behind 20th century wall linings. Although damaged as a result of the earlier modernisation, this feature is still largely intact. It consists of a lintel supported on jambs by a pair of corbels. The fireplace has a strong 'Early Georgian Vernacular' character; a simulated keystone with fluted detail, and a form of shouldered moulding, are carved into the lintel; the corbels, now badly damaged, have prominent foliage decoration, while the jambs are fluted in a similar way to the lintel. The right hand side has been roughly inscribed: 'F H 1753', which research has found stands for Ferdinand Hunter, who was the tenant at the time. Ferdinand was a recurring name in the Huddleston family, and it appears that this individual was named in honour of his father's landlord.

Similar, but less elaborately carved fireplaces are known at the Blacksmith's Arms (Broughton Mills) and at Gornal Ground, suggesting they are all the work of a particular mason. The fireplace, apparently dating from the early to mid 18th century, has been inserted within the inglenook, which implies the house may have been in existence before 1700. Modifications of this type are widespread: a good example is the Old Bastle, near Nenthead, which was visited during the Vernacular Architecture Group's 2015 conference in Cumbria.

As with many other houses of this type seen throughout Cumbria, Parkhead seems to have been enlarged and redesigned during the 18th century. In most cases, greater security of tenure provided the incentive to invest in rebuilding; at Parkhead, sale of the estate to the Lowthers, after a long fallow period under the Huddlestons, may have been an additional factor.

It was probably at this time that the main entrance was moved to the front of the house, a second storey added (with stair outshut), subdivision of the hall to include a passage, and the provision of a dairy. There was also a hay loft or bothy – with separate outside stair – over the service room. There is a proposal to replace the cement render with a lime harl, which will give the opportunity to look for altered and blocked openings, and also for evidence of building phases.

Having had a chance to absorb some or all of this information, the visitors were formed into two groups, and began with collecting measurements of the interior, to enable a ground floor plan to be drawn. Running dimensions of the exterior were then taken, and wall thicknesses recorded, so that both outside and inside information could be co-ordinated. Finally, a horizontal datum was marked on the front of the house, vertical features being measured above and below it, to permit the outline of a front elevation to be drawn up.

Time passed very quickly, and more remains to be done before the survey can be completed, but it was an enjoyable experience and also an opportunity to meet CVBG members from the south of Cumbria. Thanks are due to Carl not just for granting access, but also for laying on an impressive cream tea, which included some popular home-made scones ■

Richard Wilson

7. Whitehaven Heritage Skills Day – September 15th *(Images © Barbara Grundy)*

Barbara Grundy and June Hill represented CVBG at the Heritage Skills Fair in Whitehaven Market place. The event was organised by Crosby Granger Architects, as part of the Whitehaven Townscape Heritage Initiative. It was an opportunity to raise awareness in a part of the county where we have few members and to meet crafts people working in the field of building conservation. Several of the people demonstrating traditional skills are members of CVBG.

Alex Gibbons, demonstrating building with clay. Behind him is a frame with wattles. During the day, this was covered with clay daub. On the table are clay bricks and the moulds used to form them. His company is *'Stick in the Mud Conservation'*. Peter Messenger, CVBG committee member, who has a great deal of experience in the conservation of Cumbria's "clay dabbins" was with Alex.

Chris Morphet of *'Lake District Lime'*, showing the skills used in plastering, pointing and lime-washing buildings. Tim Wells, of *'Eden Lime Mortars'*, was next to Chris, displaying hot lime mortar and insulating materials.

Brenden Teasdale with a display of stone-masonry tools, little changed since medieval times.

John Law, of *'Bespoke Forge'*, showed the ancient craft of the blacksmith. With a forge to heat the iron, he was able to use the age-old tools - hammer, tongs and anvil, to create beautiful objects in wrought iron, accompanied by evocative sounds.

Lizzie Hippisley-Cox works in conserving and creating stained glass.

CVBG stand, with our small display.

Brendan Teasdale trained as a roofer, restoring important buildings in the north of England.

Helen Elvin makes baskets from locally grown willow, coppiced in the traditional way. Baskets were essential for everyday life in the past, and Helen keeps this important skills alive.

Also taking part were Ross Moore, showing the joinery involved in repairing a sash window; the Drystone Walling Association; Cumbria Action for Sustainability, promoting energy efficiency and green practice; and of course Chloe Granger, of Crosby Granger Architects, who gave advice and technical information throughout the day ■

If you wish to contact any of the people mentioned in this report, a simple internet search will provide the details or, if you encounter difficulties please make an enquiry to any CVBG committee member.

8. Vernacular 'Holiday Snaps' by CVBG committee members

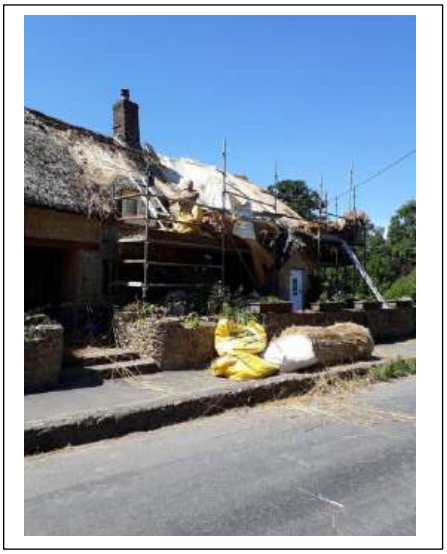
Keswick School of Industrial Art © Dan Elsworth

Little Moreton Hall, Cheshire © Barbara Grundy

Appenzell Castle, Switzerland © Claire Jeffery

Blackhouse, North Uist © Mike Kingsbury

Gatehouse at Stokesay Castle © Mike Turner



Thatching at Somerset © June Hill

Tewkesbury © Richard Wilson

9. Historic Farm Buildings Group Conference – Peak District

In mid-September a few members of CVBG went to the Historic Farm Buildings Group conference in the Peak District. This was a very interesting trip exploring some of the farm buildings on the Chatsworth Estate. Despite a similar style of farming we saw some very different buildings (compared to Cumbria and Yorkshire). This was predominantly due to us viewing farm buildings on a large and important estate.

We started with a series of talks which gave us an introduction to the Peak District and its archaeological landscape, an introduction to farmsteads found in the area and some examples of conversions. We then had a day and a half to explore different farm buildings in different settings, from farmsteads to villages to field barns.

We started with a walk around Beeley village. This village was partly owned by the Chatsworth estate, partly by yeomans. The village boasted some lovely buildings – including the remains of a cruck hall which was now an outbuilding, intriguing pig food chutes, and features relating to the dairying industry. Most of the site visits we made over the weekend were of farmsteads. These quite often had buildings for pigs as well as stables. We also saw a lot of large open barns for storing hay.

The field barns stood out as being different from ones usually seen in Cumbria (and especially when you were thinking of the Swaledale cow'us). They were very small and single-storey, often with no nearby water supply and nowhere to store hay (at the very least no more than hay for a day or two). This perhaps reflects the shorter season. It may also reflect the shared nature of these fields – instead hay would be carried there each day from another location while the cattle were being sheltered. A very interesting stop was the estate village of Edensor, not at all vernacular, instead planned from a "catalogue". On the walk through the village (to see some barns in the surrounding fields) we saw houses with a clear vision but each individual – all with the same sandstone, but different shapes, heights and details.

© Hannah Kingsbury

One of the small highlights of the weekend for me were seeing some small labels. These were located in what would have once been an open shelter barn, but had been changed into two lines of boskins with a foddergang in the middle. There were remains of labels above each boose – maybe naming prized cattle? ■

Hannah Kingsbury

10. Late News.

Please note the CVBG is now a group member of the Cumbria Local History Federation (CLHF).

1. Friday 12th October
The RHC in partnership with the Ruskin Centre is holding a study day: 'Upland Landscapes and World Heritage: Insights from the Past and Prospects for the Future'. More information here:
http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/users/rhc/events/details/2018/Upland_Landscapes.html

2. You'll be delighted to hear that The RHC is developing a **'Massive Open Online Course'** - and it will be **FREE**!
Dr Fiona Edmonds says "The title is 'Lancaster Castle and Northern English History: the View from the Stronghold' and the course aims to use the castle as a way into broader themes in the history of northern England. A MOOC can only tackle the material at a basic level (there are no entrance requirements) but nevertheless I'd hope it offers something enjoyable for everyone. For us, it is a useful first step in collaborating with the distance learning team here at LU, as well as enabling us to offer something free for both the region's community and (we hope) international participants. The launch date is 29th October and it will run for four weeks. More information/enrol here
https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/lancaster-castle

.....and finally, images © Hannah Kingsbury from our visit to Hutton in the Forest, where Lord Inglewood kindly provided the group with a whistle stop tour of the house and made us very welcome for the AGM.

Above left: Lord Inglewood welcomes members to his home. Above right: The much altered façade at Hutton. Below right: Examples of William Morris wallpaper found in the house.