NEWSLETTER No. 28 – SUMMER 2020

Cumbria Vernacular Buildings Group

1. From the Chairman

I very much hope that you and yours have steered clear of the Corona Virus pandemic and are coping with the restrictions placed upon us. These notes are being written a couple of weeks before the Newsletter will be posted to you. We may well be facing more changes to our daily lives by the time you read this, an unusual edition of the Newsletter. I hope it makes interesting reading. The committee members have contributed items which they have found worth sharing with you in this and the next edition. Also included is an alphabet of architectural terms for you to puzzle over. Have fun.

As you are aware, we have postponed events planned for July and August, and at our recent committee meeting, held on Zoom, came to a decision about the AGM.
We decided that the best option will be to hold a virtual AGM by Zoom, and to postpone our arrangement to visit Stott Park Bobbin Mill. For those who regularly use Zoom for contact with friends, family and for work, but for those new to it, as I was until about three weeks ago, it really is straightforward. If I can do it, anyone can. The emerging thought is that we should run the 2020 programme from March, in 2021. We will decide as circumstances change and keep you informed.

Membership of CVBG is due for renewal at the end of July and a form is enclosed. We sincerely hope that you will stay with CVBG. Our treasurer has devised a scheme which we hope meets with your approval, so that when the situation improves, we can once again safely enjoy events together, please see Mike Kingsbury's message (A5 insert). Several of our members as well as those on the committee, volunteered to organise events this year, and put in a great deal of work, both in practical preparation and background research. By postponing events rather than cancelling them, their efforts will not be wasted.

Meanwhile, a small editorial group is working on material collected by those who attended the ***Along the Lines*** *m*eetings in January and February. The plan is to produce a book. Work has been delayed, of course, but we will proceed as and when we can ■

Look after yourselves,

June L Hill

2. Lockdown architecture alphabet

See how many of the architectural terms below you can define, and if possible, find examples from buildings in Cumbria.

	For starters.....	.....and a little more technical
A	Architrave	Arris
B	Baluster	Bolection
C	Chamfer	Collar
D	Dormer	Dentils
E	Elevation	Embrasure
F	Fenestration	Frieze
G	Gable	Gibbs surround
H	Hood mould	Hammer beam
I	Inglenook	Ionic
J	Jetty	Joggle jointed
K	Kneeler	Kingpost
L	Louvre	Lunette
M	Mullion	Muntin
N	Newell	Nathex
O	Oriel	Oculus
P	Pediment	Pargetting
Q	Quoins	Queenpost
R	Rafter	Rannel balk
S	String course	Spandrel
T	Transom	Tumbled gable
U	Under thatch	Upper cruck
V	Voussoir	Vermiculated rustication
W	Wattle and daub	Water tabling
X	(Try to find a term!)	(Keep trying)
Y	Yorkshire sash	Yett
Z	Zig zag moulding	Zoomorphic

3. Graffiti in 19th Century Houses by Dan Elsworth

The discovery of historic graffiti in buildings is known from at least the Roman period but given the likely date of most vernacular buildings in Cumbria examples from the 18th or 19th century is far more likely. Research into Medieval graffiti has become more popular in recent years but there is still plenty to learn from later examples. However, while Medieval and earlier graffiti is often found scratched into stone, later examples, in domestic dwellings especially, are often present scratched into plaster and so covered by layers of later wallpaper and paint. If you therefore happen to be stripping a room back to the original plaster it is definitely worthwhile looking out for such graffiti, although it will often only comprise a hastily scrawled signature or sketch.

I am aware of two specific examples scratched into the finishing plaster, probably while still wet, in houses in Ulverston. The first was simply the name 'J Butcher', in my house on Town Street. The house was almost certainly built in 1851 as it seems to correspond to a gap in the census return for that year that records two houses being built at that time. An examination of Mannex's directory for 1849 names Joseph Sharples Butcher a plasterer living on Fountain Street, who is presumably the person responsible. In my current house on Sunderland Terrace, which was probably built in the early part of the 19th century, certainly before 1832, a whole panel with a design perhaps showing a boat in an oval 'frame' was uncovered. Marked across this is what appears to be some text, perhaps 'PN Wilkinson' but very indistinct (compare Plate 1 and Plate 2). It has not yet been possible to identify a corresponding name, although Wilkinson is common locally.

Graffitied images of boats are surprisingly common; a barn at Bow Windows Farm in Rampside had a basic boat design scratched into a doorframe, and there is or was, a barn outside Broughton in Furness, one door of which is covered with images of boats amongst the more typical graffitied names and initials, (the building was in very poor condition when last seen several years ago). It is extremely easy now to forget how important boats and shipping were along the West Coast of Cumbria and how common a sight these must have been. These ephemeral snippets of everyday life are not only a very tangible connection with the people who left them, they have the potential to tell us a great deal about their lives, interests, and everyday surroundings ■

Plate 1 (left): The graffiti at Sunderland Terrace
Plate 2 (right): Interpretation of the graffiti at Sunderland Terrace

4. Blackhouses of the Outer Hebrides by Mike Kingsbury

As a family we should have spent most of May 2020 in Cornwall but due to the lockdown this holiday had to be cancelled. So, my thoughts are taken back to the Spring of 2018 when Clare and I spent several weeks touring the Outer Hebrides off the north west coast of Scotland. This landscape is dotted with hundreds of abandoned "blackhouses", the vast majority of which are ruins with no roof and only the walls surviving in various states of survival.

There are a few exceptions to this, and one of the best preserved examples is in the village of Arnol, on the west coast of the Isle of Lewis, which is in the care of Historic Scotland and which presents a traditional furnished blackhouse with all the elements which define the Lewis blackhouse (picture 1). The long, low building has a central doorway (picture 2) that gives access to the family accommodation to the left, to a byre where cattle were wintered to the right (picture 3), and to a barn to the rear (picture 4). Thick windowless stone-faced walls with earth cores support a roof thatched in Hebridean style and weighted down with nets and stones (picture 5). In the living room is a central hearth where the peat fire supplies heat and cooking (picture 6), and beyond, the sleeping area with box beds (picture 7). During the winter, the cattle added warmth to the house and provided manure which was spread on the fields in the spring. The barn was used for storage of crops, potatoes, and equipment, for additional accommodation, and as a threshing floor with winnowing hole in the rear wall. A stack yard with peat stack is outside, foreground of picture 5.

This represents the ultimate development of an indigenous vernacular building tradition that started in the Neolithic, and the fact that it dates from 1885 and was occupied until the 1960s gives this house great significance ■

Further reading: -

The Arnol Blackhouse, Isle of Lewis official souvenir guide (Historic Scotland 2005)
Ancient Lewis and Harris – Exploring the Archaeology of the Outer Hebrides by Christopher Burgess (Glasgow 2008)


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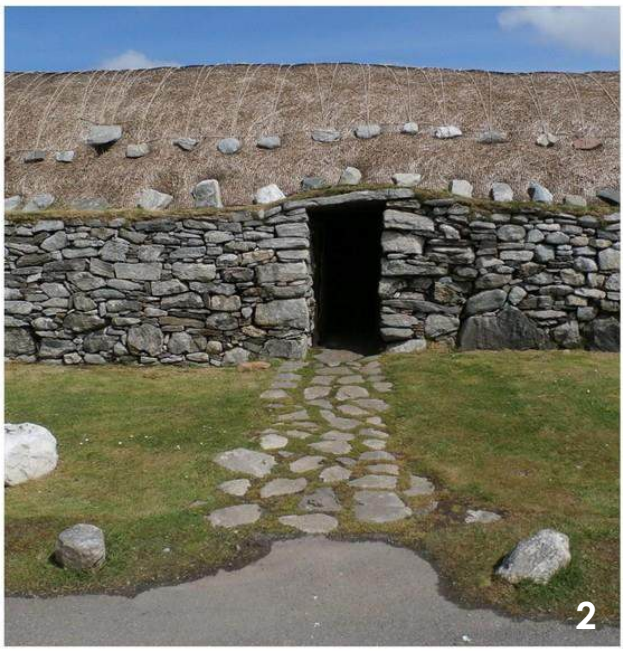
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5. A week in Romania: the traditional farm buildings of Rimet by Hannah Kingsbury

In July 2017 I had the opportunity to spend a week in Romania on a Pride* trip. This week was unique, and I am incredibly grateful to everyone involved, but particularly Martin with GRAMPUS and Monica with Satul Verde.
While we were there, we were able to spend a couple of days at Rimet, a rural mountain village (covering 90km² and consisting of 13 hamlets). The traditional landscape and the vernacular buildings are truly special. I felt privileged at being able to visit this one of a kind area. However, although this was an extraordinary experience, it was also very sobering. The landscape and buildings are not protected in any way, as there is no formal interest, nationally or locally.

The vernacular buildings in Rimet are medieval in style and construction. The tall, steeped thatched roofs stand out in the environment in which they inhabit. The vernacular barns are remarkably similar in layout to the field barns in the Yorkshire Dales. There is the main part of the barn for storage, a byre on one or both ends to overwinter the cattle, with a space for hay above. In the Yorkshire Dales the field barns are on the whole too small for modern farming methods. The traditional subsistence farming that still takes place in Rimet enables some of these barns to continue to be used. Therefore, to some extent they are protected. But this way of life is disappearing, making the barns heritage at risk.
It is unclear what the future will be for these buildings; they are unprotected and the majority of the population of Rimet associate the vernacular buildings with poverty and their past. But protection, for instance National Park designation, or even becoming a Barns and Walls Conservation Area, does not guarantee survival ■

** Pride (Partnership for Rural Improvement & Development in Europe) is supported by the EU Erasmus+ programme and is an adult education staff mobility partnership. Grampus Heritage and Training Ltd is a non-profit making organisation and has been involved in the management and promotion of European projects concerned with culture, heritage, archaeology, and the environment. Grampus works with partners like Satul Verde who are based in Romania. For more information see -* https://www.grampusheritage.co.uk/

6. Seventeenth Century Carved Decoration in the Ayle Valley

(The drawings have been produced to emphasise certain details which are indistinct on existing photographs).

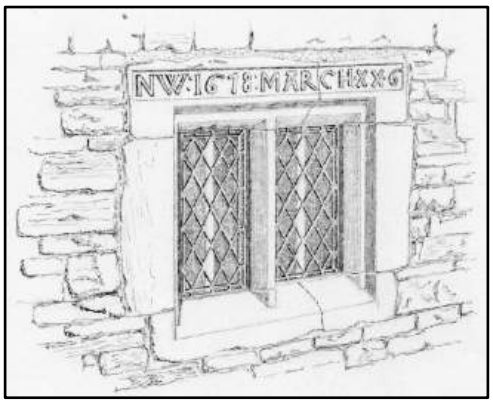

Figure 1. (and front cover)

The Ayle Burn is a small tributary of the River South Tyne, which it meets about two miles downstream of Alston. The burn defines part of Cumbria's border with Northumberland. In spite of its distance from the Scottish border, the tradition of building houses with accommodation over byres - derived from the defensible bastle – persisted in this region long after James I imposed a political settlement between the countries. The proliferation of carved architectural ornament which appeared from the mid-17th century is evidence of new prosperity and confidence, expressed in local investment. Being of substantial construction, the bastles often became a subject of alteration and enlargement; these improvements were sometimes commemorated with a piece of carved decoration in stone or wood.

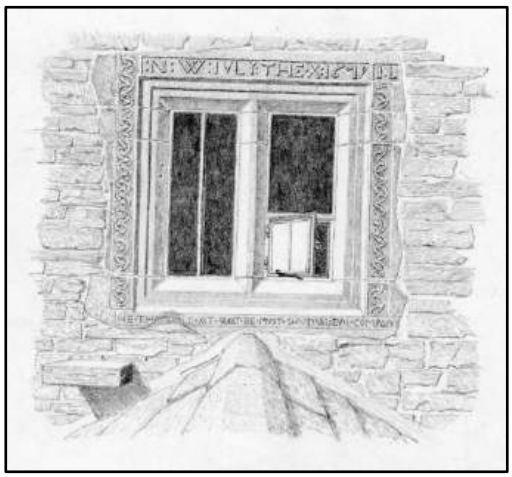

Figure 2.

The work of a particular mason has been identified at three sites in and around the Ayle Burn. Peter Ryder has noted that they are unusual for displaying a specific day of the month, presumably signifying an important event. In all cases, the inscription is carried across the lintel of a prominent window. Clarghyll Hall (or Clargill to use the pre-19th century spelling) has two examples, dated March 26, 1678 **(Fig.1)** and July 10, 1679 **(Fig.2)**.

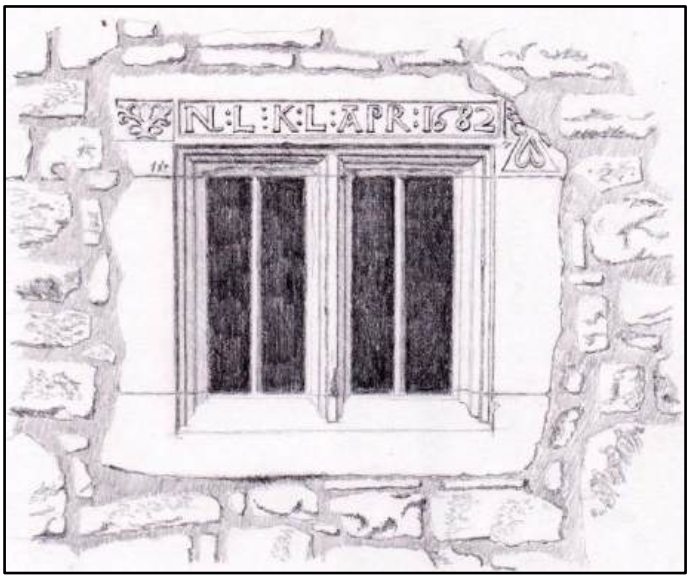

Figure 3.

The latter window also features a motto on the sill, which is thought to read **'HE THAT WOULD AT QUIET BE MUST SHUN ALL EVIL COMPANIE'**, although it is now missing in places.

The window is located directly above the main entrance, but the addition of a porch in the early 18th century has largely hidden the motto from view. A projecting flagstone near the sill

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may have carried a lantern to guide approaching visitors. The other window was moved to a new position in the 19th century, but it seems likely that, prior to extension of the house, it was situated above the rear entrance. In both cases, the initials stand for Nicholas Whitfield, whose family occupied the house for about 250 years. The letters 'IL' may be his wife's initials, but this requires research. She was possibly a member of the Lee family, with which the Whitfields were closely linked. They lived at White Lea, on the Northumbrian bank of the Ayle, and directly opposite Clarghyll. A window there is dated April 1682 **(Fig.3)**; in this instance a specific day is not displayed. The final example is also just into Northumberland, in the South Tyne valley, and close to the confluence. The original building or improvement of Middle Row is marked by an inscription on a much-altered lintel **(Fig.4).** It is dated October 6, 1687; Peter Ryder attributes the initials to Nicholas Thornton.

Figure 4.

At Clarghyll, the interior contains two contemporary pieces of carved decoration, both of which are on the doors of spice cupboards. The dated example **(Fig.5)** was relocated in the 19th century but is thought to be near its original position. Nicholas Whitfield's initials are evident again. The second spice cupboard **(Fig.6)** does not carry a date, but other features of the room in which it is situated suggest it was carved no later than about 1710. Both doors are carved in oak and are hinged on pivoted pins. The carver's style differs in character with that of the stonework. Scratch mouldings and repetitive, punched detail appear on both cupboard doors ■

Richard Wilson

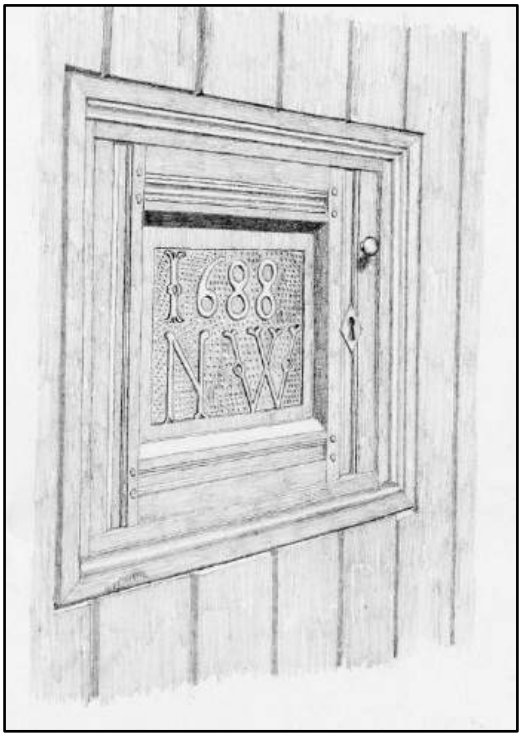


Figure 5.

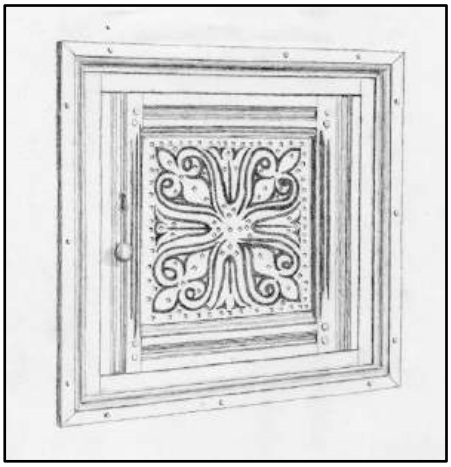


Figure 6.

7. The only windmill in Westmorland? – Claire Jeffery

One of the few advantages of lockdown was that it made me explore the immediate area in greater detail as I undertook my permitted daily exercise! It has also been an opportunity to find out more from talking to local residents. In the nineteenth century, the village of Colby in Westmorland had 2 corn mills. One was a watermill situated on the Colby Beck, which continued to operate as a mill into the twentieth century until it was converted into a private house, and the other was a windmill sited on a steep rise outside the village, just off the Kings Meaburn road, at NY657199. The hill is still known locally as Windmill Hill, although I have not found it named on any map.

Site of former mill with the Eden Valley as a backdrop © Claire Jeffery

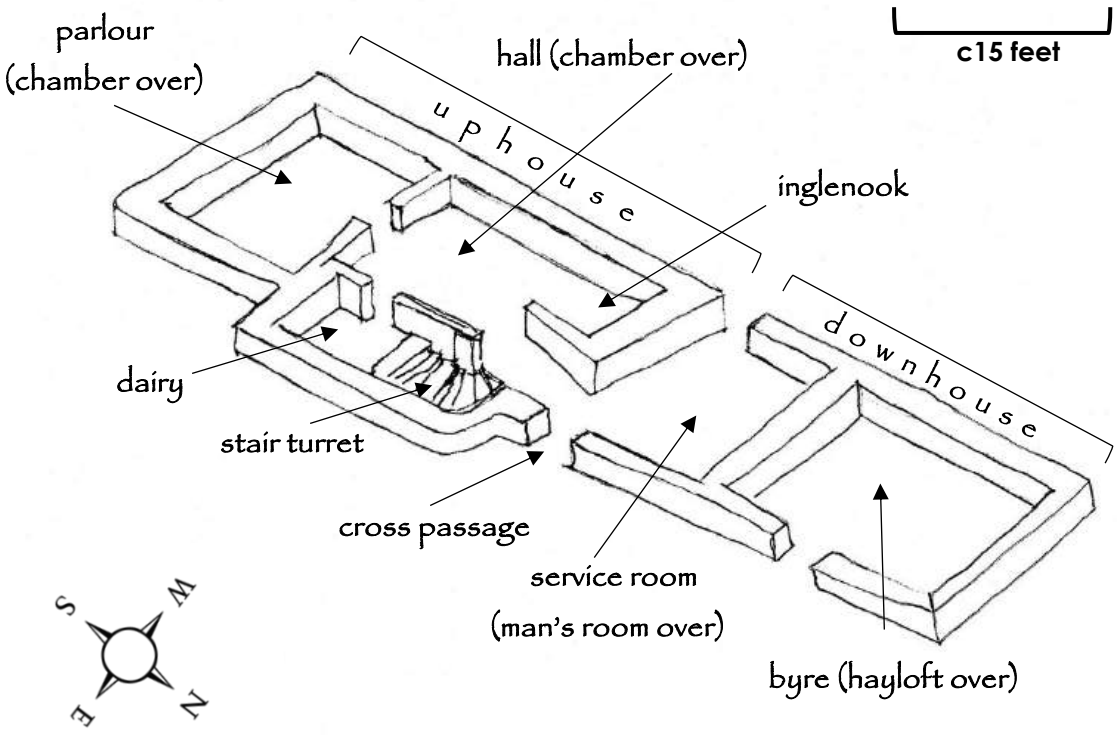
The windmill is marked as Windmill (Corn) on the first edition of the OS 6-inch map surveyed in 1859, published in 1863. By the time of the second edition, surveyed in 1897 and published in 1899, it is marked as an old windmill. It vanishes completely from twentieth century maps, and the village's oldest resident says that it was a ruin in 1926 when his family moved to Colby. All that remains now is a sad pile of stone blocks, with no trace of any machinery.

It is difficult to undertake proper research at present, but I have been unable to find any information about windmills in Westmorland. There is a detailed article by J Hughes on Cumberland windmills in the Transactions of the CWAAS Series 2 vol 72 (1972) pp112-141, which includes a gazetteer. I would be interested to hear if anyone is aware of any other windmills in Westmorland ■

8. Chapel Farm, Newbiggin, near Stainton by June Hill

When I bought Chapel Farm in 2002 it was a little old Cumbrian farmhouse, totally neglected for around fifty years, which had been quickly given a make-over, to sell it. New wiring, plumbing and a heating system had been installed, and the rest patched up, redecorated inside and carpeted. The farmland and outbuildings had been sold off. However, it was clearly a typical seventeenth century house, with some features untouched. It may in fact have been built earlier, as the boulder plinth of the house, and evidence which emerged, could show. Although many more had gone, sufficient clues were evident to show where other features had been.

The most obvious clue was the plan of the building, that of a cross passage house, with an up-house and a down-house, all in line but under two separate



Chapel Farm, diagram of layout. (not to scale)

roofs. The domestic element consisted of a hall, (*firehouse)* and parlour (*bower*), The heck, rather unusually stone-built, was still in position, creating a short passage (*mell*), to enter the house from the cross passage, *(hallan*), and an ingle nook complete with fire window and spice cupboard, though without its original door. The chimney breast is inserted, and I have often wondered if there was a bread oven in the thick wall. The front door of the cross passage was partly blocked to form a window, with the kitchen sink in front of it. The window into the service room was blocked, becoming an alcove with shelves. The walls between the hall and parlour and those rooms above, do not exactly correspond. When work was done on the plastering, another clue was

revealed. There is a round wooden beam on top of the dividing wall downstairs. On the hall side, empty mortices at roughly fifteen-inch intervals could be seen, and the wall of nineteenth century brick was built up to the beam. This replaced a more traditional wooden screen wall, either post and plank, or panelled.

The staircase was on the back wall of the firehouse, with a door to a quarter-turn wooden stair, leading up on the east wall, parallel with the line of the house. It is in a "turret" forming a bulge on the outside, allowing space for a very small dairy under the stairs, but not extending behind the parlour.

Chapel Farm, west front, the entrance to cross passage in the downhouse can be clearly seen.

Now with three bedrooms and a bathroom, accessed from a corridor, there would originally have been just two upper rooms (*chambers*), the first, over the hall, open, and that over the parlour a more private room, with a door to the stair. There was no way through to what the third bedroom is now, but was the "man's room", in the downhouse and above the service room. The only way to reach it was by ladder from outside. The outline of the door is clearly visible in the stonework of the wall. And now reduced to form a window its light came from a tiny window with a single fixed pane of glass. There was never a hearth.

The rest of the downhouse, divided from domestic accommodation by a solid stone wall going up from the service room to the apex of the roof, is made up of what was a byre for seven cows with a hayloft above and reached by an internal ladder fixed to the wall. There was a door for loading hay.

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Externally, there were more clues. Rendering on the front concealed much of what was hinted at, but the present sash windows had surrounds made up in part, of former mullion surrounds. Mullion stubs and socket holes for iron bars are clear to see. The flat splay of the moulding round the partly blocked kitchen window, a false four-centred arch, clearly continued downwards under the rendering, as a door surround.

The longer I lived in the house, the more convinced I became that it had once been single storey. The chance to explore my suspicions came when I decided to have the rendering removed from the downhouse, and have it renewed on the house front. Sure enough, the cross-passage door was there, and the blocked window revealed, both now reinstated. Disappointingly, there was no initialled date stone above the door. However, a blocked window was revealed above the hall, as suspected, and very excitingly, proof that the house was originally of one storey only and possibly had a thatched roof. The stonework was markedly different, and a distinct line between the upper and lower levels was visible, though difficult to photograph with scaffolding in front.

The whole house appears to have had a substantial up-grading around 1840, judging from the rearrangement of upper rooms and the woodwork around the doors. Perhaps this is when the mullioned windows were replaced by the present sash windows and the wooden screen wall replaced with brick. At some stage the roof was replaced, removing more clues.
Chapel Farm fits Brunskill's representation of this type of house, his distribution map and timeline, on pages 67 to 71, It is a house which deserves to be cherished, as one of several similar ones in Newbiggin, with varying surviving features ■

References–

- R W Brunskill, *Traditional Buildings of Cumbria,* Cassell,2002, pages 67 – 74.
- S Denyer, *Traditional Buildings and Life in the Lake District,* The National Trust, 1991, pages 62 – 66.