NEWSLETTER No. 45 – AUTUMN 2024

1. From the Chairman

The summer months have seen members gathering in growing numbers to enjoy two memorable visits to sympathetic restoration projects of historic buildings; one was a model farm at The Luham, Edenhall and another at a very early Georgian house at Banksfoot Farmhouse, Lanercost. Full reports are included in this newsletter from the pens of John McDowell and Stephanie Hewison.

Our AGM at Acorn Bank, Temple Sowerby went well with members taking advantage of an open Heritage Day with the benefit of a guided tour of the 17th C house; some members took the opportunity to view the working water mill too. The highlight of the day was a talk by Jeremy Lake, former Historic England Inspector, when he gave us extracts from his extensive work on the development of historic farm buildings in the varying landscapes of England. Dr.Justin Wood, a new committee member, gives his perspective in an article on page 18 of this newsletter.

Our programme for the remainder of 2024 will see us joining June Hill, President and others on 9th October to take members for a guided tour of Alston and its historic buildings, including an icehouse and bastle; sadly, this event is now fully booked.

In November, Helen Evans, Archaeologist will provide the first ZOOM presentation of the winter period on the stratigraphy of a 16th century house - watch out for an email confirming the date and time.

Our very successful year will finish with our traditional Christmas lunch; this year we will meet at the Farmers Arms, Lowick Green on Thursday 5th December to enjoy good food, festive games and a talk by the owner on the history of this 17th century Grade II listed inn. More details of the venue can be found at hello@lakedistrictfarmersarms.com. A CVBG notice with menu choices and booking details will be circulated shortly.

The Committee says goodbye this year to Mike Turner who has yielded up the post of Secretary after ten years of sterling service; I am sure we will all thank him greatly for his diligent work. However, at his own request, he remains with us to produce our quarterly newsletters, for which we are very grateful. We say hello to his replacement, Jackie Lewis who has stepped forward to take up the role of Secretary; any communications should now be addressed to jackielewiscvbg@gmail.com who will hold members information.

Our Committee has also said goodbye to Claire Jefferey who has been instrumental over the years in work with June Hill, particularly in publications. We can only thank her again for her valued service. To further strengthen the skills available within our Committee, we have two new members, Dr Justin Wood and Catherine Taylor, Heritage Engineer; we will welcome their insights and enthusiasm.

The programme for 2025 is being prepared with the prospect of visits and talks to a variety of historic halls, farmhouses and cottages. An outline programme with key dates and venues will be published by the date of our Christmas lunch in December.

With kindest regards,

Chairman

2. Askham Study Day (Part II) – John McDowell

Dr Caron Newman's presentation on the Medieval Settlements and Landscapes of Cumbria and the Eden Valley was reported by Stephanie Hewison in the last Newsletter, Chris Craghill then addressed the group on:

The Development of Askham and its Vernacular Buildings.

Chris, a CVBG and CLHF member described Askham as being a planned medieval village, after the coming of the Normans, with three open common greens. There was a free-flowing stream which is now largely underground following the mile long single street running west to east between Askham Fell and the River Lowther. The vernacular stone buildings include domestic, usually rendered, and agricultural with stonework exposed. A 1735 map shows the narrow strips of land (tofts) to the south side and names the customary tenants of the lord. A feudal system existed under the Lords of the Manor in Askham Hall, a defensive tower house of C14th which had several inhabitants before the Lowthers bought the village in 1724. The hall later became the rectory with the building of Lowther Castle.

The development of the vernacular buildings in Cumbria was discussed with reference to work by Nina Jennings, Susan Denyer and R.W. Brunskill. The clay houses of Cumberland had a simple early plan form of one or two room single storey cottages in which smoke from the fire passed through the thatch. These were the beginnings of a longhouse with a straight sloping roof but with a lower floor level at one end for the animals. The smaller houses from the early C17th were variations of this, of two-unit plan form & incorporating a firewall hearth & inglenook featuring a wooden or stone heck wall, firebeam, lattice & plaster or stone firehood, the chimney being supported on wooden beams. In addition, there would be a fire window, spice cupboard and other storage spaces near the fire. The plan could be lofted to give more sleeping accommodation & storage above, the parlour or bedroom partitioned to give a small dairy or pantry. These houses could be attached to farm buildings or extended with additional service rooms. The longhouse version had this developed domestic accommodation as well as a house for cattle and a barn, elongating the main house. A cross-passage gave access to the house and also in early examples to the cow house or later to a service room which eventually became the kitchen. In a continuous outshut house, where the roof sweeps down to cover the outshut, then a front entrance is common and the outshut houses the staircase and a pantry or when more developed also a scullery. Service rooms were also added at the rear or in a gabled wing. These versions of the two-unit plan were further modified with

Hill Top Cottage © John McDowell

the cramped loft becoming a full height upper storey to include the main bedroom along with an adequate staircase. There are some of these two up two down houses in Askham. The ground floor parlour also gained a fireplace and was then used as today. An alternative arrangement was of massive stone chimney stack and back-to-back hearths. Baffle entry houses, or a lobby–entry plan, where the farm entrance was via a lobby formed by the jamb wall of two fireplaces with back-to-back hearths of the kitchen & living rooms. There would be a staircase off the living room and an adjacent parlour. Fuel for the fire was initially wood or peat but use of coal by 1750s required a grate and a narrower flue to draw the air through a stone chimney.

A one room cottage with a loft bedroom above was still acceptable in 2nd half of the C18th as found in the Lowther model village. Cottages as small two-unit houses have an off-centre doorway and a ground floor parlour and living room on each side, a staircase between rising to two bedrooms & often a small pantry added at the rear. A double pile plan house ca.1770-1850 has 4 rooms on each floor with a front door entrance to the living room & a parlour at the front, the back kitchen and dairy at the rear with a staircase between and 4 bedrooms on the first floor, all under one roof of equal pitch.

True bank barns had a conventional threshing barn on the upper level; the lower level on the farmyard side would have a cart shed entrance, doors to the cowhouse and stable and a winnowing door above. We appreciated this overview of what to look out for on our village walkabout after lunch.

Askham Village walks, led by Paul Lewis & Chris Craghill, also some self-led. We took in much of the Askham Conservation Area as designated in1981.

Centred on the crossroads near to Askham Stores where the main street is crossed by the Penrith to Haweswater Road our routes in two groups varied. Making an anticlockwise circuit of the main street & going uphill initially we took special note of the following buildings, the majority are grade II listed:

Holly House

Keld Head Farmhouse and Barn © John McDowell

Holly House 1750 symmetrical square pile house with harling and a barn of mixed stone rubble under one common roof of graduated Westmorland green slate. Paul discussed the sash boxes hidden behind stonework, glazing bars & original 8 over 8 patterns, some with hand spun glass, stone surrounds with one weathered edge and stooled cills. The stone architrave to door has a plain frieze & cornice. There is a small garret window on gable. The barn has a segmental arched cart entrance under slit vents and a loft doorway. Brook House, 1750 and later stable have mixed calciferous limestone rubble walls, probably originally lime rendered for weather

protection. Window casements replaced but were previously in the local style with 2 mullions.
Keld Head Farmhouse, 1704 on lintel, a coped gable with kneelers, square windows with chamfered reveals, there were probably originally flat faced mullions, A house of 5 bays, the 5th one to right being an addition and has an in-filled taller window (upper right) & gabled porch to the 4th bay. The barn has square ventilation holes, 1814 on lintel of 1st floor winnowing door with sandstone quoins, cow house entrances and window below. The rear of the property has an outshut, gabled wings & ramp access to upper barn floor.
Keld Cottage, 1777, whitewashed rubble walls, 2 bays, 3 light flat stone mullion windows on right side, the fireroom to left but fire window was lost by insertion of a larger window with sliding casement. The ridge drops down over Keldside on the left, originally a working building. Curlew Cottage, 1724, the farmhouse is to the left, a fire window, cross passage, and a converted barn to right. It has been remodelled and of varied fenestration, ground floor window in 2nd bay previously had 2 stone mullions. Beech House, there is evidence for possible medieval foundations at base. Remodelled and delisted due to loss of original windows. Front door is in renaissance style. We also viewed the rear wing which is a modified earlier building. Hill Farmhouse, an L plan house of rough stone, C17th, datestone M 1660 L on lintel of a triangular headed doorway, with pentice roof to this elevation and a small casement window below, the adjacent elevation has a 3 light double chamfered mullioned window & label mould over another doorway.

Smithy near to Sawmill Cottage © John McDowell

We did not go as far uphill as Townhead Farm, which is still a working farm; it is also listed as are some other buildings in the upper level of the village.
The Hollies, probably mid C18th & a later makeover. A&HD 1800 is over the entrance. Square pile plan, it has protruding throughstones on gable wall. There are 3 light flat stone mullioned window on the right, left sided sash windows with horns indicative of an early date. We passed Brookside to view Nook Cottage, a one room cottage with loft bedroom above, of low storeys & 2 bays, a closed up fire window, gable end stack & a single storey wing to right. Going downhill past Wellington House and then the cart entrance and adjacent access door inscribed I& EL1683 of Askham Gate at the crossroads on Helton Road. Clark Hill faces south beside the middle green & is dated 1674 with a painted stone architrave, moulded cornice, and enriched scroll frieze above entrance. There are double sash windows in C19th painted stone

surrounds. Cobbling to the front of the 2-bay barn on the left. Hill Top Cottage dates from late C17th with projecting boulder plinth and painted rubble walls, stone slates in diminishing courses. It has an off-centre door, chamfered surround & blocked single light window above, a lower right 3 light flat stone mullioned window, others previously of 2 light but mullions have been removed.
We passed Sycamore Cottage, Lilac Cottage, Hill Top & a tall terrace to reach Croft House: an early C19th 2 storey, 3 bay houses with sash windows, larger one above the entrance via a prostyle Tuscan porch. Midtown Farmhouse, E & BI 1813 over entrance, with painted rendered walls, 2 storey, 2 bay with extension to right. Midtown Cottage, a 2 storey, 3 bay house and 2 bay stables with double plank doors on the right & all under one roof; it has a left sided fire window on ground floor. Sawmill Cottage, 2 storey, 3 bays in coursed limestone rubble with red sandstone blocks, the ground floor door & window openings under relieving arches, right pent extension. The former Smithy is of mixed limestone and cobble rubble, single storey with a large segmental arched doorway and a central square vented cupola. The gable wall facing the road has a blocked stone surround doorway. Low Side, early C18th rendered walls with C19th alterations, stone chimney stacks. Askham Hall Farmhouse, barns & stables, mid C18th, a 2 storey, 2 bay farmhouse with a fire window, barn to right with segmental arched cart entrance, small loft opening. A lower barn on the left has stable & cart doors within a pent extension. The Punchbowl Inn is of roughcast stone, of 5 bays (first 2 bays are taller), with paired sash window to 4th bay and small light to their right. The interior has chamfered beams. Hall Cottage, the 1st 2 of its 5 bays have horizontal sliding sashes in square windows. The listed rusticated gate piers and a driveway to Askham Hall (grade I) are opposite; the hall was visited by CVBG for Christmas lunch in 2017. We did not go further east downhill to St Peter's Church (grade II* rebuilt by Robert Smirke in 1832-3 incorporating some features from the medieval church) or to Askham Bridge crossing the River Lowther below.
West View, early C19th, three houses & a barn in a row which closes the view at the east end of the village green along with trees of Askham Hall behind.
Pear Tree Cottage is an early C18th farmhouse, it has a small upper floor horizontal sliding casement window and there is a barn to the left. ParkView: No. 4 was formerly two houses: the entrances dated ME 1712 (now a window) & 1732 with chamfered reveals, scaffolding in place for renovation work at the time of our visit. Numbers 2 & 3 have a wall plaque: JEA 1832. Rose Cottage, the entrance inscribed A&AH 1763 with walls on projecting boulder plinths. School Hill, 3 houses of 3 storeys, single bay each and with painted render. School Bank Cottage, early C18th with C19th alterations, limestone rubble stonework which would have been lime washed in the past, has a cross-passage doorway nearest the house with the barn to the left. The Old School buildings nearby are C19th; the school was originally founded in 1779 & closed in the 1980s. Robin Cottage is a 3-bay farmhouse with a cross-passage door to the left along with an extension and the former stables all under one roof. Queen's Head Inn was previously two houses, one doorway inscribed T & AN 1682 (in fact 1782) the other is now partially blocked & has a window.

We were treated to seeing a wide variety of features amongst these vernacular buildings; the Askham Conservation Area townscape appraisal, management plan & map of 2014 identifies the listed buildings, others of distinctive character and gives much additional information ▪

3. Beckbank Farmhouse, Salkeld Dykes, Great Salkeld, near Penrith.

Saturday, 22nd June - by Stephanie Hewison

(With kind permission of the owners Jayne Potts and Robert Orr.)

Image © Justin Wood

A warm welcome awaited us at the intriguing sounding Grade II listed Beckbank Farmhouse, situated in the beautiful Eden Valley. Resembling in parts a fine Georgian farmhouse, it soon became clear that many changes have been made to the house over the centuries and some puzzles remain. Robert set the scene for us with a thorough and fascinating introduction, beginning with a 1939 quote from Sir Winston Churchill –
'It is a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma; but perhaps there is a key…'

A great deal of research has been done by Jayne and Robert into the origins and history of this building, with references to a possible secret meeting place for the Knights Templar (and a possible spy hole, now blocked, through a wall in the older part of the building). Stories also of a, now blocked, secret passage from the cellar of the house, across the walled garden to the nearby dyke (as in Salkeld Dyke) raising many questions, e.g. was this an escape route? The dyke is marked on some early maps, including one dated 1774 (J Hodskinson & T Donald) and another dated 1823 (C & J Greenwood). The known history and purpose of the dyke is however a mystery, with little evidence of exploration or archaeology. It stands some 4-5 metres high, and it is uncertain whether it is a man-made structure or a natural geological feature, e.g. an esker (a meandering ridge of sands and gravel deposited by glacial meltwater) or perhaps a mix of both? There appears to be a made stone walkway (possibly Victorian) along the top of part of the dyke not far from the house. Also of great interest, the remains of a small structure, part Victorian and part possibly C17, with remnants of mullions matching some of those in the

windows in the house. This structure lines up with what may have been a secret passage coming from the house. Could the dyke have been to deter cattle raiders or was it a protective rampart surrounding the Great Salkeld area (including nearby small communities of North and South Dyke)? Did it hide Beckbank Farmhouse in an earlier guise as a two-storey fortified house or does its purpose go back even earlier, when access over the River Eden became easier? Stories of an early bridge over the Eden, linking Great Salkeld to Little Salkeld, suggest a possible medieval structure or earlier. 'In the bed of the river not far from the village is a column of masonry, supposed to have been the pier of an ancient bridge. In the year 1360, the bridge which spanned the river at this spot having been washed away by the flood'.

Image © Justin Wood

The earliest documented reference to Beckbank Farmhouse is from 1674 and relates to the building of the house by Mr William Dalston. A descendant of an ancient family with estates in Cumberland and Westmorland, William was the fifth son of John Dalston of Acorn Bank, near Temple Sowerby (Acorn Bank being a property of the Knights Templar then the Knights Hospitaller). The Dalston family had a long ownership of Acorn Bank and to a lesser degree, Hornby Hall on nearby Winderwath Estate, approximately two miles from Acorn Bank. Business dealings appear to have taken place with Nunwick Estate in 1777 and 1778 and by 1808, Beckbank Farmhouse seems to have been in the hands of the Bowsteads. It remained so until 1894, during which time, they constructed the East wing of Beckbank. By now the house was part of Nunwick Estate once again, before eventually being let separately from the farm and then sold.

Whilst the above reference to William Dalston 'building' Beckbank in 1674 is clearly significant, it is most likely that this referred to alterations and additions carried out by him at that time. With its very thick walls, early door surrounds and massive timbers in the older parts of the house, a much earlier history is suggested. Fascinating findings have come to light through study and research of this house and of course speculation. Earlier thoughts as to the possibility that Beckbank could have been a bastle house have been put to one side in the light of findings:

- Circa1350, a two-storey fortified house is built with a possible external stair or ladder to the upper floor (into what is now the red bedroom) and with a parapet walkway on the two long sides. A 60 sq. metre barmkin (defensive external enclosure) is also constructed. The building cannot easily be seen from the East because of the dyke.

- Circa 1450, barmkin walls raised and a roof added forming a Great Hall.
- 1674, William Dalston makes major alterations to the building, demolishing the outer South facing metre thick wall and building a slimmer wall inside where the original wall had been. Openings were made for mullion windows and a doorway, now into a cross passage. The addition of an extension in the form of a continuous outshut along the North side of the building provided larder space and also space for an internal staircase. An early piece of stained glass showing the Arms of the Dalstons of Acorn Bank was found here and is now part of a window. An entrance hall on the West side and a North wing was also added with alterations being made to stairs. Was it during this period that the parapet was removed, and the roof slightly raised?

Image © Justin Wood

In the 1820s, the windows on the East side were 'remodelled' and replaced with two over two sliding sashes and a Georgian extension was also added. At some point, along with the original early part of the building, render was added. A small upper floor window in the gable end to the left of a very early fireplace was blocked and rendered over. A two over two sliding sash window to the right of the fireplace was added.

Over subsequent years, alterations continued, internally and externally. These have taken the form of demolition of an extension against the west wing, exposing what appears to be a C17 fire window but the fire and chimney are no longer there. Render was removed from the West wing and mullion windows were exposed/restored. All evidence of a cross passage was removed, and the house now has an elegant cream painted Georgian South wing with four over four sliding sash windows.

Towards the end of a fascinating visit and with open minds, some members had on opportunity to use dowsing rods over the possible area of a secret passage and a pattern in the movement of the rods was evident! Undoubtedly there are still puzzles to be solved about this intriguing house. A delicious lunch was provided by our hosts to round off a great visit.

A bouquet was presented along with thanks to Jayne and Robert for their generosity and time in hosting our visit ▪

Image © Stephanie Hewison

4. The Luham, Edenhall, Penrith. Tuesday, 16th July 2024- by Stephanie Hewison
The Development of a 19th Century Improved Farm from 17th Century Origins.
With kind permission of Daniel and Barbara Jayson.

Prior to our visit to The Luham, a group of around 30 members gathered at Langwathby Village Hall to the side of a large village green, for an introductory presentation by the Charman, Paul Lewis.

Brief History of The Luham

Langwathby,(village by the long ford…old Norse; the ford described as long because it crossed the river diagonally), is a relatively large Norman Plan village on the East bank of the River Eden. Access across the river is now over a substantial Bailey bridge, put in place temporarily after severe flooding washed away the beautiful three arched sandstone bridge in 1968.

Bell-Pull © Stuart Harling

Close by lies the small community of Edenhall (hall from 'haulk'…alluvial land, by the river Eden) and The Luham, which was a part of Edenhall Estate. Whilst only 5% of farms were owned by large estates, The Luham became one of several improved farms, along with others in this area, including Home Farm, Dolphenby and Honeypot. Originally being part of the great forest of Inglewood, the name Luham may derive from 'Ludham' (the grove farm), reminiscent of former woodlands. The ancient church of St Cuthbert (with evidence of pre-Norman and early Norman origins) stands in the midst of Edenhall Park and there are references to John de Ludham being the first vicar there at the beginning of the 14th century.

The actual hall of Edenhall, which was owned by the pre-eminent Musgraves, was rebuilt in 1821, employing the architect Robert Smirke (and rebuilt again in 1860s). It no longer exists, as it was demolished in 1934. A stable block and clock tower remain in the same white stone and Italianate style as the original hall. Whilst only 5% of farms were owned by large estates, the Cumbrian 'gentry' had

Interesting roof lines © Justin Wood

a major influence on the development of agriculture in these lowland areas. Whilst there is evidence of earlier roots, The Luham was built early/mid C18 as a traditional farm on the estate. The sandstone was sourced very locally, probably from small quarries on the nearby Penrith Beacon or from Bowscar. The Luham was a tenanted or 'in -hand' farm with the core business being grazing and dairy farming. Over time, corn and fatstock gradually became more important, increasing the need for yards and buildings.

In 1804, John Bell was a tenant at The Luham. The farm at that point may still have been single storey with a longhouse footprint (now buried in the fabric of the building). Parliamentary Enclosure continued at nearby Inglewood (1804) and later at The Luham (1831). Common fields disappeared and the Musgraves, who were very influential, could steer the enclosures of farmland and pastures.

In 1851, The Luham was acquired by gentleman and Industrialist, George Smith. Redevelopments took place, gradually forming a courtyard layout. Modifications of the original farmhouse range created 'an island of planned countryside' and gradually a model farm.

In 1890, Robert and Janet Graham took over The Luham and development continued but in a less significant way. Farming conditions had become more difficult nationally due to the import of cheap corn, wool and dairy produce. A photograph taken of The Luham at this time shows ivy-clad three storey and two storey dwellings. Paul showed a series of maps showing changes to the farm, dated 1862 (interestingly, with Luham spelt Leuham),1898 and 1923.

Paul Lewis discussing The Luham © Justin Wood

Before moving off to visit The Luham, Paul outlined the sensitive approach used in the recent refurbishment of the historic buildings, whilst incorporating interiors for modern living. The following key points were made:

- Understanding the farm's evolution and significance
- Ensuring repair of roofs and chimneys with attention to management of rainwater, renewed drainage, and effluent disposal
- Minimal removal of original fabric with historic merit and justification of any alterations
- Renewal of decayed, beyond repair materials with traditional methods e.g. using lime plasters and mortars.
- Ensuring that the original pattern of use remains readable.

Importance of reducing heat losses in the following ways:

- Decayed timber floors replaced with insulated limecrete and underfloor heating.
- Air filtration controlled by draught proofing, insulation of roof voids to the maximum and installation of narrow-gauge double glazed metal window units ▪

References and Further Reading:

- Historic Farmsteads-Preliminary Character Statement: North West Region Vol 1-111 by Historic England 2006. Co-Authored by Jeremy Lake, guest speaker at the AGM, recently held at Acorn Bank.
- 'The English Farmhouse and Cottage' by M W Barley 1961.

Visit to The Luham

We arrived at The Luham in bright sunshine, swallows wheeling overhead and a warm welcome from the owner, Barbara Jayson. The scale of this striking model farm was immediately apparent with sensitively converted barns alongside warm, red sandstone living accommodation. What had been a haybarn had a fine double height entrance surrounded by high quality masonry and a later added piggery to the right. We remained outside moving round to the front of the three-storey farmhouse, each storey built at a different phase and with adjoining two storey accommodation. The third storey to the farmhouse was probably added in the 1850s and the pre-existing windows altered to give a uniform appearance. It is thought that the unusual Victorian porch (1860/70) is now sited at a later doorway, the original front entrance probably being central to the building (but now a window). The uniformity of the fenestration gives a cohesive look to the building

along with the fine sandstone roofs throughout some of the barns and all of the domestic buildings.

Looking then at the buildings from the courtyard, it was clear to see that the barns were built in distinct phases; the stable block with partitions (still in place) for four horses was built in 1800 and a later loft added before the adjacent barn was built. The stonework of the three-storey part of the farmhouse clearly shows the additions of the second and third storey with an arched sliding sash stair window carefully extended upwards from the second to the third floor. The other windows on the second and third floor of this elevation are also sash windows. A chimney of an adjoining single storey building clearly shows additions to its height, probably to increase the draw.(See image below, © Justin Wood)

Whilst work will continue on the weather protected barns forming the courtyard, one small single storey barn stands alone outside of the courtyard and is still to be made weathertight. This was originally a smithy, with bellows and tools found inside. We were kindly given free access to wander through the home of Mr and Mrs Jayson and to observe the minimal impact of appropriate materials and techniques in the renovation of this interesting property. It was clear to see where in some cases new stone had been appropriately used, for example in fireplace lintels. Vital original historic features were visible throughout the building, for example in the remains of C17 stone stairs off a passage way and indentations in a ground floor beam in a sitting room at the front of the now three storey farmhouse, suggesting the positioning of a plank and muntin screen and a possible earlier cross passage arrangement.

Before leaving The Luham, we returned to the large entrance area for generous refreshments and to give appreciative thanks to Mr and Mrs Jayson for allowing us access to their historic home being refurbished in such a sensitive way ▪

5. Banks Foot House, 15th August 2024- by John McDowell

Two groups, totalling around 40 members, visited this carefully restored farmhouse with the kind permission of Mark and Carol Lewthwaite as arranged by Paul Lewis. Carol and Paul were on hand throughout the visit to answer our questions; we had freedom to explore the house and grounds, enjoying great hospitality in the kitchen too.

The house had in the past been part of the Naworth Castle Estate, the 14th C castle being the ancestral seat of the Howard family. Banks Foot is close to the course of Hadrian's Wall, 3.5miles from Birdoswald Fort. It sits on an elevated corner site, south facing overlooking the River Irthing Valley and between fragments of the wall at nearby Hare Hill and Banks East Turret. Much of the wall stone in this area was repurposed in the building of medieval farm buildings and Lanercost Priory in the 12th and 13th centuries; we could see courses of square blocks, likely Roman stonework, in the front wall of Banks Foot.

Image © Justin Wood

Grade II listed, the farmhouse is built of mixed calciferous and red sandstone rubble, coarse lime pointing with raised V-jointed quoins and a plain cornice. There is a Welsh slate roof with end yellow brick chimney stacks. The mid to late 18th C four square house is of 2 storeys and 3 bays with a 2-storey outbuilding of lower roof line to the right. When previously sold as a dairy and stock farm of just over 143 acres, the mainly 19th C and 20th C outbuildings included a 4-stall stable, byre, hay & straw barns, a bull house, loose boxes, granary, and poultry house. The listing includes a hexagonal gin-gang with steeply pitched hipped green slate roof. These adjoining outbuildings are a separate property and were not included in the sale of 2018. The front door has a quoined surround and keyed entablature. The sash windows with glazing bars (6 over 6) have plain stone surrounds; the rear staircase window has a round-headed arch. Two fine reception rooms to the front, a kitchen and living room to the rear and ground floor side lobby, the pantry/utility room, with an external door to the front. The hall walls are rendered and scored to resemble

Landing © John McDowell

stonework, include period features of an ornate cornice and a timber panelled arch to a staircase at the rear. There are wide Georgian doorways. The first floor currently has three bedrooms, a study and bathroom. On an inner landing there are stairs to an attic space, with an exposed double collar truss, a gable end window and two skylights, subdivided with two connecting rooms, as well as eaves storage and a bathroom which has been inserted with the ongoing modernisation. Access to the cellar by stone steps revealed vaulted ceilings and two rooms with stone flagged floors. This basement has older mullioned windows to the rear (17th C?) and gable walls with chamfered cills & reveals. Several members pointed out how this cellar once extended through the rear of the property; the basement stair has been punched through this vault and is contained by partition walls of late 18th C brick. It appears that the square pile plan of the 1770 phase was built by extending forwards from an earlier structure and would explain why the cross wall between the reception rooms and rear spaces is much thicker (around 75cm) than need be to support the upper floor and partitions. The roof timbers span from front to back without any support from this cross wall.

We heard about and could see the results to date of five years of careful repair and refurbishment of this historic building from the 1780s Alterations have been sensitively introduced by craftsmen using traditional materials and techniques. A digital photo album was running during the visit for our benefit illustrating the extensive renovations. Restoration has included fixtures and fittings inside and out with appropriate use of paints, plasters, and mortars.

© Justin Wood

Central heating has been installed, an oil-fired system with heritage style cast iron radiators.
Old concrete floors have been removed in the hall, kitchen and scullery and replaced by a base Geocell layer, from Cornwall, then under floor heating which has been laid below limecrete. Tiles have been laid - black and white in the hall and terracotta coloured kiln fired ones from Essex in kitchen and utility areas. The kitchen hearth has been restored, a cracked lintel replaced, sourced from a sandstone quarry near Lanercost as well as the cast iron range which was made in Brampton. There is a built-in cupboard adjacent. Timberwork including floors has been repaired and patched with new wood where necessary. Window shutters, seats, banister spindles and built in cupboards have all been painted white.
Cement render removal and replacement with lime plaster has allowed the walls to breathe.

Attic © John McDowell

In a front living room, which was the previous dining room, there are built in cupboards flanking a fireplace which has been re-opened, it now has a cast iron stove in the hearth.
Paper was stripped from stairwell, all plaster & coving repairs with lime plaster, Earthborn Claypaint was applied in the original colouring of reds & ochres, with some infill to give a more uniform effect. This claypaint does not reduce breathability and is an alternative to lime wash. The upgrading of facilities in the attic is ongoing.
Outside: the stone retaining walls have been restored, rebuilt where needed in new sandstone, a driveway replaces a front path and is surfaced with reused cobble sets from Newcastle upon Tyne, the gate piers are original but the gateway has been widened with new gates fitted; they are in keeping with the original wrought iron railings which have also been restored.
A Klargester septic tank has been installed in the back garden.

We had a fascinating visit to this delightful home which was much appreciated by everyone.
With so much fabric being of elegant Georgian design the house may have been built for someone with more elevated status than a tenant farmer ▪

(Editor's note: This property will feature in another newsletter, there are too many excellent images to fit in a single article!)

6. Annual General Meeting at Acorn Bank – 7th September 2024

Acorn Bank, near Temple Sowerby, was our AGM venue this year. A group of just over 40 members met in the Drawing Room for the meeting which Paul Lewis had arranged and chaired. The agenda was followed and despite Mike Turner's delayed arrival, this was timed perfectly for delivering his report! There have been some changes to the Committee, welcome to those who are joining us and special thanks to those retiring or with a change in role after years of work. We heard of forthcoming CVBG events and of our itinerary for the rest of the day. We had eagerly awaited a talk on the Vernacular Farm Buildings of England and Cumbria by Jeremy Lake; an excellent presentation followed the AGM business and was very well received. (Jeremy's talk report is on page 18)

Paul Lewis chairs the AGM © John McDowell

A break followed during which attendees either enjoyed the catering facility in the courtyard or their own provisions in the renowned gardens and ideal weather. We were advised that the watermill would be milling until about 2pm when the wheel would be stopped before closing an hour later so several of us took the short walk over lunchtime to visit the mill.

Dalston Glass © John McDowell

The group met up again for the afternoon tours which followed an introductory talk from Nick, the Facilities Manager at Acorn Bank. We heard that the Manor of Sowerby and estate was once owned by the Knights Templar & Hospitaller, a mill is recorded from 1307 although the current watermill buildings date from the early 1800s. The land was taken over by the Crown at the Dissolution and sold to the Dalstons in 1543. LiDAR scanning suggests a square footed building in the field which may have been a Pele tower but by the 1590s Christopher Dalston had his seat at Acorn Bank. Ownership descended through the Dalstons and latterly by marriage the Boazman family until sold in 1930s to Dorothy Una Ratcliffe, a Yorkshire writer. It was gifted to the National Trust in 1950, without contents other than an Armorial Overmantel, the fabric has since suffered at the hands of private tenants and use as a care home but was renovated in 2017.

Staircase ceiling plasterwork © Stuart Harling

The1590s house has seen many developments which Nick described orientating us as to the chronology and features. We divided into two groups for tours, one group was guided through the house by Nick; from the panelled Drawing Room with a fine

chimneypiece, we ascended the cantilevered stone rear stair of 1743 with Italianate plasterwork to ceiling. We saw the 1st floor Parlour & other rooms with panelled wainscot, fireplaces (one with small Delft tiles) and a spiral stair in the NW corner of 1st floor, doors now blocked at other levels, fine heraldic glass panels on stair & other windows. We descended by a C18 wooden staircase in a turret dated 1656 past fine heraldic glass panels on stair to view the C16 kitchen and C17 hall. These have large segmental arched fireplaces, a service room lies between, an original chequerboard stone floor is in the hall. Groups then swopped over.

Charles II cast iron fireback © Stuart Harling

Rainwater goods © Stuart Harling

Paul led the exterior walkabout starting with the Tudor W wing passing a chamfered plinth in NW corner (possibly C13 or C14) at base of the C16 N wing, a four-panel mullioned window to kitchen, mixed fenestration is due to Georgian insertions. We saw reused stone of an earlier building in walls of the various extensions and graduated slate roofs throughout. The renaissance E end of1670, has a gable in rusticated ashlar, we noted several Venetian windows (some blind), and a screen wall to stable yard with adjacent dovecote. The main S front in reddish sandstone is of 9 bays with a central door. This facade had been rebuilt slightly forwards in 1656 & then raised to 3 storeys in 1670s but with mid C18 improvements: new sashes, segmental pediment to front doorway, refacing of the W wing and a new E stable wing.

We were privileged to have two knowledgeable and insightful guides for our tours and to have access to parts not usually open to view at this remarkably interesting property ▪

Article © John McDowell

Kitchen four-light window

East end of building rear

©John McDowell

7. 'The Vernacular Farm Buildings of England and Cumbria' - Jeremy Lake.

Where a speaker 'loves' their topic, and has a national remit and expertise, such knowledge shines through. The 2024 CVBG AGM keynote presentation, given by Jeremy Lake, was outstanding, with very well-deserved thanks offered by an audience fascinated in the 'field'. Jeremy, author of English Heritage's (now Historic England, HE) guidance and research on the historic character of traditional farmsteads, their significance, and issues regarding change of use, described in turn: (a) perceptions of farmsteads, (b) differing functions, plans and land use (c) changes in farming, markets, farm plans and technology from the present, as far back as 'the long C8th'. Regional styles were contrasted, as well as local character areas within Cumbria.

Farmsteads are part of our landscape; whilst the image of a classical landscape appeals to the romantic, with very different perceptions, landscapes are no longer natural. The English landscape has been subject to change from at least the 2nd Millennium BC, resulting in land clearance, grazing, ritual use, farming, hunting, and the development of field systems, settlements, buildings, land enclosure, and human movement; all are affected by local soils, their richness, and the topography of landscapes. The character of a place still retains its past within a tapestry of field systems, ploughing, spatial layering and building change.

Farmsteads, at the local level, need to be looked at as part of the landscape in which they sit. Traditional farm buildings exhibit bespoke solutions to the functions of different types of farms (used for living, barn storage, processing of corn, rearing of cattle, dairying for milk, cheese production, stabling, fodder and field crops, production and machinery storage). The shape and form of a farm is affected by region and the pattern of surrounding landscape. Vernacular farm buildings (their shape, style, form and colour) are characteristic of their area, reflect local geology and building traditions, typically making use of available building materials (timber, earth, thatch, stone, brick, slate may all dominate) and the status of the farm; as such all celebrate local distinctiveness and character. *[Such applies to all vernacular buildings]*

The West of England is wetter, the focus on mixed farming and pasture, and particular farm building requirements, the East drier. Arable land grows corn and crops, meadows offer grass and hay. A range of farmstead plans, based around three broad typologies, are found across England. Courtyard layouts are the most common, the largest found in arable areas, though also used with rearing. Dispersed farm plans are found along a routeway, are often bisected, and found in the uplands and on commons. Linear farmsteads have the farmhouse and working buildings attached and in-line, were predominant in the North West uplands, and largely served farms of under 30 acres. Each broad type of plan shows distinct regional variations; specialist landscapes such as downland and wood pasture demonstrate alternative building styles. Extremes of landscape present nucleated and widely dispersed farmsteads.

Looking backwards in time by key farming periods, Jeremy described how farming, buildings, and the farming landscape changed: Post war ministry grants brought in multifunctional steel frame buildings; cheap grain, beef, bacon and lamb imports undercut British farming; silage towers and silos developed; fields were merged. The 1850-60's saw a high point for agriculture; after the 1880's collapse in crop prices, there was a national move to dairy. Earlier to this, with the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, huge sums of money were invested into farm drainage, new buildings, fertiliser and sheds. Steam ploughing developed, steam engines threshing and processing fodder. Cattle housing saw huge investment. The application of science, continually in development since The Enlightenment, was key.

1750-1840 witnessed a 'Heroic Age' of agricultural revolution, with investment by large estates, their farms completely redesigned. There was a national exchange of ideas on farm development, landowners congregating at large events. A question concerned how to increase food production during the Napoleonic wars. National & regional markets developed. Yet C18th improvements show earlier landscapes. 1550-1750 saw the emergence of regional markets, and specialisation within local markets. Surviving farm buildings tell of the development of specialisation, with different types of farming and production found best suited to local soils and the specific climate of different areas. Granaries developed to store large quantities of corn, economics resulting in corn being kept until price goes up. Within Westmorland and Cumberland, bank barns were one clear development, corn brought into the barn, with stables on the ground floor, as part of a mixed economy; longhouses developed with cross passages, these small farms clustering into hamlets. Northern dispersed field barns contrast with large estate barns that brought numerous farm functions together.

Pre 1550, saw a focus on survival after the Black Death, though yeoman farmers prospered in some areas. From the C9th and C10th, waves of building and rebuilding may still be seen within the rural landscape. Within Cumbria, place names highlight Norse settler farmstead origins. The Long C8th brought the redevelopment and reorganisation of villages within valleys; village settlements were surrounded by communal open fields, common land on territorial edges. The remodelling of village landscapes varied within diverse landscapes, for example, farms growing at the nodal point where routes met. In remoter areas, for example Cornwall, Bronze Age farming landscape can still be identified.

How farms and buildings are arranged, historic to current, is fundamentally dependant on the early landscape in which they sit. Waves of rebuilding over centuries have been both piecemeal and a planned reorganisation of landscape. Farmsteads, through the ages, can all be seen as part of the drive towards landscape development. Within any region, where farms, villages and topography have been clustered within a recent classification of type, consider such boundaries to be 'fuzzy lines'; nature, people, ideas and buildings cross over ▪

(Might CVBG consider the evidence base for differing types of historic farm buildings and farmstead layouts, both across the County and within distinct localities ?)

Further reading / resources:

HE's National Farmsteads Character Statement, North West Region summary, research on Farm Building Types, and advice on conservation & development, are available from:
https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/rural-heritage/farm-buildings/

Resources bore down from national to regional levels:
https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/national-farmsteads-character-statement/
https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/national-farm-building-types/
https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-farmsteads-preliminary-character-statement-north-west/

https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/ consider locality identities within each region

Brunskill, R.W. (1982) Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain, Gollancz, London
Brunskill, R.W. (2002) Traditional Buildings of Cumbria, Cassell, London

Presentation summary and Jeremy Lake image © Dr Justin Wood