NEWSLETTER No. 46 – WINTER 2024

1. From the Chairman

After a busy summer this year, October saw members attend our President's Day in Alston where the history of the town and vernacular buildings were enjoyed, albeit in typical Cumbrian weather. In December, our Christmas lunch was enjoyed by 29 members at the Farmers Arms in Lowick Green and there are full reports for these events in this newsletter.

Our programme of **ZOOM** presentations for this winter has begun with an excellent exploration of a 17th century historic farmhouse by Helen Evans and David Tyler; in January our next presentation will see the features of a Grade II* 5-bay farmhouse in the Lowther Valley presented for members, following recording work this month by our own survey team.

The programme of events for 2025 will be finalised and circulated shortly and will include a varied series of visits to farms, industrial buildings, and historic houses once again.

I hope you can join us next year for another enjoyable year of visits and meetings.

With kindest regards,

Exterior view of our Christmas Lunch venue © John McDowell

2. Christmas lunch at the Farmer's Arms, Lowick Green – 5th Dec

Our interesting venue this year was in the Crake Valley, South Cumbria on the A5092. On arrival 30 members will have noted a characterful building with a large cross-axial chimney stack with rounded shafts on a historic range with various later additions.
The welcoming bar area had an open log fire in the hearth, beams, flagged floor and antique furnishings in an open plan arrangement of rooms which are attractively decorated. Seated at five tables for our lunch, chosen in advance from seasonal options, we enjoyed this served in a private area. During the meal five teams completed the quiz which had been compiled by Jackie Lewis, keenly contested a winning team needed to be drawn from the three equal top scorers. Jackie also oversaw the raffle with a variety of prizes including several books; *Cumbria 1000 years of maps* by W.D Shannon was a clear favourite.

Hearth at the Farmers Arms & Wall inset © John McDowell Top Inset © Justin Wood

Adam Sutherland, a Grizedale Arts Director, and our chef then gave us a short history of the building and recent developments. Reputed to be the oldest inn in the Lakes, they believe it to be a C16 building in part, this may have followed an earlier building on the site. It has likely been a hostelry for centuries with stabling for the horses of travellers on a trade route to Coniston & Hawkshead and for drovers herding sheep from local pastures. An order of Savignac monks from Calder Abbey (established 1135) who later become Cistercian, with a mother house at Furness Abbey, had cultivated these marginal lands.

Originally a small farm & inn a legal conveyance document of 1839, in the Archive Centre in Barrow, describes it as 'a beer house, gardens and premises at Lane Head near Spark Bridge'. The name of Farmer's Arms for this inn appears first in 1886, a common name for licensed premises in the Lake District and along the

Welsh border. The licensee then was Margaret Wilson and several generations of Wilsons had owned the property. Local industry included iron-ore mining, smelting and wool production. There had been a water-powered bobbin mill at Spark Bridge.

The licensee's name changed to Carruthers in 1934. Two brothers who were antique dealers from Manchester bought The Farmer's Arms at auction along with two fields and they converted animal sheds, added extensions to the ground floor including 'an old-world gallery 'or fake spinning gallery in 1936. It was run as a hotel with an upstairs dance floor, the lounge was furnished with antique furniture and gilt-framed art attributed to famous artists, we heard of an art heist and its recovery. Three additional neighbouring fields were acquired in 1938.

Cylindrical chimney stacks © John McDowell

After c.1950 it was taken over and run by several brewery companies, a new wing was added in the 1980's. Having closed suddenly after the death of a landlord within two years it was starting to become derelict but was saved by a local community campaign. The fundraising enabled Grizedale Arts to buy the pub and to take on the renovation and redevelopment project. The diversification plan by Grizedale Arts and involving the local community has included reopening the Stable Bar in 2021, running courses and workshops: pottery, wood crafts and gardening in the six acres of land. The aim is to be a rural hub inspiring local by education and social programmes, boosting the local economy along with a commitment to sustainability and green energy. Tom Philipson, a cabinet maker was in charge of the restoration and along with his woodwork skills there has been sympathetic use of materials within the building including red iron oxide in the wall paint producing a deep red colour. A recent project was the student built outdoor oven with veranda, designed by Hayatsu Architects, which drew on British & Japanese building traditions in construction and plastering.

Beams supporting chimney stack © John McDowell

Tom then showed a group of us some of the antique furnishings and traditional fittings including three-plank doors which were found in a shed, they have been restored and re-hung. We then explored the oldest part of the inn; listed in 1970 the grade II listing mentions a short C17 range with longer ranges at right angles to NW and SE, other alterations, and more recent additions. We thought the oldest part to be C16th on account of the wide plank flooring in the bar area, the hearth, chamfered beams, also one particular window upstairs which also reveals the wall thickness & all the very interesting, exposed timbers. The cruck framing includes many wind braces and original pegs. Whilst the attic floor has been divided up by insertion of stud walls for bedrooms, the cantilevered beams supporting the large cross-axial chimney stack (with the two cylindrical shafts) were seen in one room, but the chimney hood has gone. They hope to get funding and if possible, to redevelop this area by opening up the attic space again which should be very impressive.

Paul Lewis thanked Stephanie Hewison, Jackie Lewis, and Barbara Grundy for making all the arrangements and also the staff at the Farmer's Arms.
We were grateful to Tom and Adam for their hospitality also to hear of the history, see plenty of vernacular features in the building as well as the workshop, pottery, and shop; we wish them well with their plans ▪

John McDowell

Members listen to Jackie Lewis marking the quiz, three teams eventually contested the winning place. (Image © John McDowell)

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A group of 35, including our speakers, met at the Town Hall in Alston which was built, 1857, in Gothic style with a central clock tower. Following refreshments, June Hill, CVBG President and organiser of the day welcomed us to Alston and outlined the programme. We were pleased that our Patron, The Hon. Philip Howard, was able to attend the event. CVBG last visited the region in 2015 when it hosted the conference of the national group, the VAG.

June introduced our speakers for the morning talks: *Alastair Robertson*, *Richard Wilson* and *Ivan Day,* describing the somewhat gloomy weather dependent options for the afternoon but which would conclude with a visit to nearby Lovelady Shield, a hotel in the North Pennines by the River Nent.

Alston is the highest market town in England at 1000 ft above sea level. The South Tyne and River Nent meet in the town. Alston Moor is an ancient parish of Cumberland including Alston, Garrigill and Nenthead and within reach of the Scottish Border. Despite the climatic disadvantages and isolation, pastoral farming, lead mining and smelting boosted settlement and the economy from the medieval period until the C20th. The population peaked in 1831 but declined from 1870 due to fall in lead prices, less productive mining, and competition from the New World.

Other extractive industry included quarrying (of sandstone and limestone), coal mining, also of zinc and minerals. The landscape has undergone many changes; Roman occupation, shielings, or summer pastures of medieval times, then during time of the Border Reiving with much building of bastles, the lead mining era and tourism. Buildings in the landscape were extended and adapted in response to these activities.

SHIELINGS - an illustrated talk by Alistair Robertson.

The term shieling describes structures (for example huts or rectilinear stone buildings) that were used on a seasonal basis, as accommodation for herdsmen looking after cattle and sheep on distant summer pastures. These structures are typically found on marginal land in northern upland areas (Cumbria, Northumberland, County Durham, Scotland). The Paine Roll of civil laws, a medieval document (later C15th) for Alston Moor, 'instructs farmers to go with their stock to the shieling grounds for the summer months, where cattle and sheep would graze on the open fell' (Frodsham et al, 2024, p175).

Shielings may well be associated with an enclosure (wall, bank, or ditch) and set amongst rough pasture; such tend to be sited by streams. Most remains are dry stone built, though turf structures have been identified (and turf may well have overlain lower stone walling). The outline shape of a shieling varies from rectilinear to oval in plan. A range of shieling house plan layouts are recognised, reflecting both external shape, internal room structure, passageways, door positions, hearth

location, and purpose. Both exterior and internal walls are thick (2' plus). The absence of windows in shielings may reflect centuries of collapse. Smaller structures are likely to have specific functions, such as a peat hut; structures may also be linked to mining. See:

Historic England (2018). Shielings. Introductions to Heritage Assets. https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-shielings/
Ramm, McDowall and Mercer (1970). Shielings and Bastles. RCHM.

The North Pennine landscape, including around Alston, was a mixture of small settlements, open fields and meadows, upland pasture, woodlands and forest, and mining works. The medieval church was a strong influence in land ownership, for example via monastic granges; land management was also controlled through the Lord of the Manor and manor courts.

How though to make a distinction between seasonal shielings and permanent occupation farmsteads? especially as seasonal sites may later be upgraded and continually occupied. Shieling settlement groupings are an additional feature in the landscape. Do groupings of shielings reflect failed settlements? The Whitley Shielings, for example, unusually located close to the west of Alston, survive within the landscape as clusters of rectilinear building structures that run along Gilderdale Burn. See:

English Heritage (2013). Alston Moor, Cumbria. Buildings in a North Pennines landscape.
Frodsham, Green & Finch (2024). The North Pennines from Prehistory to Present. Archaeopress.
Roberts and Fairbairn (2007). Whitley Shielings in Gilderdale near Alston. Archaeologia Aeliana Series 5. Vol 36, p257-266.
Winchester (2000). The Harvest of the Hills.

Presenting a hard life in harsh terrains, with the necessities for living, such transhumance ended after the medieval period (c.1600). Surviving shieling structures may well be more than 400 years old; indeed, community archaeology projects on Ingleborough have obtained dates that take individual building structures back to the early medieval.

Dr Justin Wood

BASTLES THEN AND NOW – a talk by Richard Wilson

(Richard has a qualification in Building Conservation, PG Dip. Bournemouth, MA York)

A bastle is a defensible farmhouse, the name derived from the French bâtir, to build, as in bastille, a fortified building.

This talk by Richard, formed a key part of the morning presentations. Richard has had a particular interest in bastle houses for many years. This resulted from living for some years in Clarghyll Hall in Northumberland, a building with origins as two bastles, and from meeting Building Archaeologist, Peter Ryder. Richard showed an image from a pre 1970s publication which was an attempt at that time to identify and survey bastles as a particular type of building. Since that time, Peter Ryder has gone on to become the leading specialist in bastles and has discovered large numbers of these buildings throughout the borders and particularly in Northumberland. Whilst there were already defensible buildings such as peles and

tower houses, bastles (sometimes referred as pele houses, strong houses, and stone houses) were indeed a unique building type. They were smaller in size and generally occupied by smaller landowners and tenants. They were built on both sides of the Anglo Scottish border during a lawless period in the mid C16, with Reivers (from the OE reafian-to rob) on both sides marauding, raiding and sometimes slaughtering the other. Scores were often settled through blackmail and cattle thieving. The unification of the Crown in 1603 did not completely halt the building of bastles or impair the effectiveness of the structures and building continued into the C17.

Bastles were built with local, irregular stones resting on a rough plinth of large boulders (foundations were exceedingly rare) and walls between 0.7m and 1.3m thick. They were usually no bigger than 12m x 9m though the two bastles which now form parts of Clarghyll Hall were smaller at 9m x 6m. In some cases, there were structural differences between bastles in Northumberland and those on the Cumbrian side of the border. In Northumberland, a stone barrel vaulted undercroft or ground floor was typical with a way through (which could be closed) to the upper floor. On the Cumbrian side, the ceiling of the ground floor was often stone flags sitting on heavy timber transverse joists. A trapdoor in the ceiling gave access to the upper floor. This practice continued long after the bastle era. In rare cases, bastles had a staircase within the thickness of a gable wall, e.g. Woodhouse Bastle near Holystone. Fire was one of the greatest risks should thieves gain entry to the ground floor so as much stone as possible in the ceiling reduced the risk of fire spreading. The Bastles on both sides of the border had a door into a byre at ground floor level, usually in the gable end, into which cattle were driven when a raid was imminent. The door was harr-hung (pivoted into the lintel and threshold), and further secured with very substantial drawbars, the bars often slotting into drawbar tunnels. The door lintels and coin stones were often massive. Any windows at ground floor level were tiny slits for ventilation and light. A small number of tiny windows was usual in each side of the upper storey and these windows would be iron barred. Many bastles had another doorway in the wall at first floor level and this was only accessible by ladder. A simple fireplace on the first floor (often with a smoke hood) was built into the gable end furthest from the door. Early bastles had steeply pitched gables and were probably roofed with heather thatching. In the case of less steep roof pitches, stone slabs were used. Bastles were not always built in isolation; they often had sight of others or were built in small groups. At times of attack, this enabled an alarm to be raised within earshot of neighbouring families who could come and give help.

Throughout his talk, Richard described the gradual changes made to many of the bastles as cross-border hostilities ceased. External stone staircases to the upper floor doorway were frequently added, replacing ladder access and fireplaces became more elaborate. Ground floor byres became living areas, windows increased in size and bastles were sometimes extended in a linear way or with the addition of outshuts. Dates were sometimes added to buildings as they were developed. Clarghyll changed greatly, absorbing two separate bastles and over the centuries, gradually came to resemble a Scottish tower house and hall in the style of a medieval manor. Thanks to Richard for this illustrated talk on such a fascinating subject.

Stephanie Hewison

ICE HOUSES – an illustrated presentation by Ivan Day

We were privileged to hear Ivan Day talk to us again, last year he covered 'Cooking on an Open Fire' at our Study Day on 'The Hearth.' Ivan is a food historian, broadcaster, writer, and curator of kitchen artefacts on period food. This was a rather different presentation on the uses of ice and the buildings in which ice was stored.

We learnt how they tend to be park buildings, generally semi-underground and were introduced to the UK from France in the reign of Charles II in the 1660s. Most large mansions had one by the mid C18th. Sited near a source of ice with protection from the sun such as a north facing position or shady woodland area near a lake with access for carting; the ice well / storage pit was usually brick lined and sunk in the ground with a mound of earth covering a domed or barrelled roof. The pit would be lined with straw for insulation, and they required a means for drainage of melt water and an ice chute or portal for access to fill it. The more architectural edifices were built as an expression of wealth. The need declined with transportation of imported ice from America and Norway from the 1830s, as well as warmer winters and refrigeration.

In the CWAAS Transactions of 1981 there is an article by R.G. David on 'The Ice-houses of Cumbria' (P137-155). In that article there is a map showing their distribution in Cumbria and Rob David divides them into six categories, his classification depending on their form (chamber shape) as well as including other dubious or lost structures. The concentration in the South Lakes is associated with the affluent households there.

Ivan invited Alastair Robertson to tell us of Lovelady Shield where a handyman thought he had found a mine entrance but on exploration identified it as an ice-house, lined with single layer of red pressed bricks, forming a 6 ft (2m) cube with a barrel-vaulted roof. There is a vent in the rear wall near the ceiling possibly for use in adding ice to the chamber. No drain or slope of flooring is identified but there may be an opening in the retaining wall at the base in an unexcavated section.

Ivan Day and Alistair Robertson © John McDowell

There are flagstones in the entrance passage and a sandstone step. Due to some collapse of the front external wall around the door extraction of stone and earth was required. This ice-house can be added to the list for Cumbria.

The entertaining and very authoritative talk by Ivan on the history and uses of ice-houses was accompanied by many and varied illustrations: prints, title pages of antiquarian books, reproductions of etchings, text, and photographs as well as equipment, from his own collections, for demonstrations. There were early recipes from Receipt books found in the Wellcome Collection.

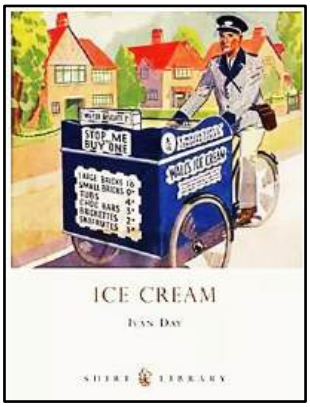
A historical tour of ice-houses: initially of hot climates such as in Rome or Persia for storage of fish in summer months. The earliest recorded in Britain was in 1619 for James I at the Queen's House, Greenwich and by 1660 Charles II had introduced a snow-house for compacted snow (along with leaves and debris) and an ice-house

for ice harvested from the lakes during winter at St James Park, London. Food was not stored in the ice-house but would be taken to the kitchen when required to keep food & chill wine & other drinks in summer season. Harvested ice was loaded into 'fothers,' high sided carts pulled by two horses. An 18 ft deep ice house could hold 100 fothers if well beaten down, with a bigger mass it could last 2-3 years. Other examples discussed were those at Holkham Hall, Norfolk (thatched roof for extra insulation), Chatsworth, 1693 & 1841 & that at Wentworth Woodhouse, 1735, is a puzzle as there was no lake, so perhaps it was necessary to scrounge ice from Chatsworth. Kenwood House in Hampstead had a creamery with a chilled water fountain, a combined dairy and ice-house.
In Cumbria, the ice-houses were small & simpler, such as the C19th one at Rydal Hall which replaces that of the C17th when the Fleming family were there. Other domed/globe shape ones are the well-constructed one at Levens Hall and an interesting one at Brantwood. The ice-house at Holker Hall c.1732, in parkland above a pond, has a circular chamber, those at Crofton Hall, Johnby Hall and Newbiggin Hall at Carleton have a rectangular chamber and one at Barrock Park, Low Hesket nearby along the A6 is a tunnel shaped chamber. Joseph Bell, Newcastle in 1817 published a Treatise on Confectionary &c., Part IV was entitled 'Hints necessary to be observed when building an Icehouse'.

Ivan enthusiastically covered iced confection and ice cream making. The earliest known recipes for ice cream were of the 1660s. At a Garter Feast for Charles II in 1671, one plate of ice cream accompanied a selection of fruits, confections, and sweetmeats on the Sovereign's table as part of the Banquet. Emy, Paris 1768 published 100 recipes for flavoured ices and an engraving of the Tuileries Palace Ice Kitchen, Paris in 1860s illustrates ice cream production in large quantities.

Ivan Day shows ice cream making utensils
© John McDowell

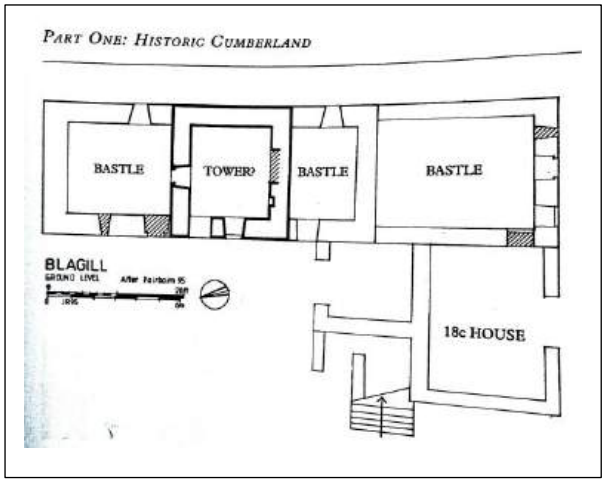
London's supply of clean ice came by ship from Norway where blocks were cut with large saw-like ice-cutters. We saw a Trade Card c. 1800 for a Cook & Confectioner in London the etching illustration shows a pineapple ice and a sorbetiere as is used in making ice cream. A book by Robert Abbot with the title: 'The Housekeeper's Valuable Present: or Lady's Closet Companion, being a new and complete art of preparing confects, according to modern practice' had an early 1800s edition printed in Penrith and so was available then in rural Cumbria.
A service of Sevres porcelain, 1766 at Waddesden Manor includes a very elegant wine cooler and a lidded 'freezing pale' in which ice cream placed in a bowl within it on a bed of salted ice was kept cold for the dining room. The Cavendish family at Holker Hall are known to have made ice cream and various creams and ices are listed among an extensive supper menu at a Mayoral Ball held in the Rainbow Hotel, Kendal in 1893.



Ivan described the process involved in making ice cream including a pewter sorbetiere that would have been filled with the recipe and then spun in an oak pale containing ice & salt. He passed round equipment used. Very visually appealing ices could be produced using moulds. We saw a late C18th pewter tripartite 'bomb mould' for a pineapple shape ice cream (pineapple was a luxury item for the very rich), tin and copper moulds, the process also needed a spaddle (a kitchen tool 1600s to 1860s). Novelty items such as asparagus shaped ices or a sorbet basket of flowers for the table were very decorative and impressive creations for their time – long before Master Chef!

Recording features of a former bastle at nearby Blagill with Richard Wilson.

A small group of four, including Richard, headed out after lunch in pouring rain to Blagill, a small hamlet close to the River Nent. We parked alongside a range of farm buildings which, though substantially altered, showed clear bastle characteristics. A plan provided by Richard suggests potentially three bastles in a linear arrangement with a possible small square tower embedded. Several small windows are visible, two now seen to be mullioned and there is a partially hidden blocked ground floor doorway with a very substantial upturned V shaped lintel. The gable end of the southernmost bastle clearly shows a very steep roof scar, indicative of there being an earlier heather thatched roof on a considerably lower building.
Little information seems to be available about this range of buildings, suggesting little previous research. Richard found no clues in Periam and Robinson's 'Medieval and Fortified Houses of Cumbria.' The Gatehouse Gazetteer suggested 'the central square structure may have been a tower, enlarged with low two-storey bastles on either side.' No references to Blagill being the site of 'a gentry status house.' A comment suggested 'the central 'tower' of this bastle complex may actually just have been a square bastle extended several times.'



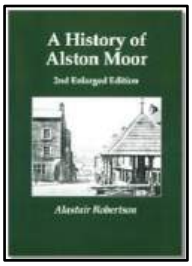
Unfortunately, a combination of the relentless rain and no available access to the buildings meant that the recording session will take place at a later date. We were however able to observe this remarkably interesting range of buildings at close quarters and gather some photographs.

Stephanie Hewison

Walking tour of Alston town with Alastair Robertson

Despite the threat of rain, a group of around 20 of us joined Alastair for a guided walkabout. Leaving from the Town Hall we walked up Front St. which has many grade II listed buildings, with several dating back to the 17th&18th centuries.
We passed the Angel Inn, on a lease since 1621 from Henry Hylton of Hylton Cas. nr. Sunderland, Lord of the Manor. It has a two-storey canted bay window to the left of the doorway with chamfered surround and a bracketed cornice. The Church Gates Inn is next along: lintel reads TLF 1681, an inn from late C18th until 1900, with a fire window, a mullioned window to right of the door; a porch and gate addition date from 1890. We climbed the right-hand side of Front St. past the Shambles & shops. There are some information plaques from the Alston Townscape Heritage Scheme. A mid C18th three-storey shop on a sloping site has a curved glass front of 1900, a wagon opening to the left gives access to Kate's Lane.

Further up is a former Barclays Bank & Manager's House of 1898, (see image on left) red sandstone with ornate detail including lintels, cornices, kneelers, ball finials, date stone tablet, parapet, balustrade & pediment in buff dressings; the semi-circular porch has Corinthian pilasters. Further up is the Friends' Meeting House of 1732, originally single-storey with three mullioned windows, two now blocked but visible, heightened in 1764 to add a gallery and insert two large sash windows. The porch is an addition of c.1850 but has 1732 lintel. It has a gable wall to the street with a boulder plinth; we could not access the front due to work in progress. We viewed buildings opposite which in the past included shops, businesses, and a fire station, now mainly converted to housing. At Townhead & to the right of the closed Swans Head pub is St. Paul's Methodist Church of 1864, closed 1990s, it has polychromatic brown & yellow stone front, twin entrances and of two storeys.
We crossed the street to go downhill again along the narrow Overburn (Back o' the Burn). Outside stairs were once a common feature in Alston and a fine set remains here. A Wesleyan Methodist Chapel of 1760 was rebuilt on Overburn in 1797, enlarged 1825 & closed in 1868; the original church entrance is to the rear and now the main door for Chapel House. The Mill Burn runs beneath the road in a stone culvert. Jaycot has an external flight of steps to a central front door and the stonework reveals blocked previous windows just under the eaves & a chamfered corner aiding cart access to the side.
From High Market Place, the former Potato Market, we then followed Pigeon Lane, which in the past was at a lower level, hence a blocked doorway, now filled in.



Further down was the Royal Oak Inn, now a house but with front canopy retained, next the Post Office and lower down the Crown Hotel. Demolition of several buildings on the lower part of the market place in the early 1960s has altered the symmetry of this area.

From the Main Market Place & the Alston Co-operative Society building of 1871, adjoining The Turks Head Inn, we viewed the Market Cross: 1765, an 1883 reproduction with Tuscan columns, replaced in 1968 & 1981 after being struck by a lorry & a wagon. The road has been re-laid in this area with attractive stone slabs & brick pavers; although originally much of the street was cobbled it was covered by tarmac in recent years. Behind the Market Cross are Cross View Cottage and Cross House, a pair of stone houses with white painted render & a stone flag roof, three-storeys with attics. There are ground floor shops as well as cellars, necessary on a restricted site. Steps lead up to neighbouring doorways on the middle floor; there are window sashes & a gabled dormer on Cross View Cottage has decorative bargeboards. Lantern House, two doors to the west, has similar dimensions.

We passed The Turks Head Inn c.1679 & Stokoe House. Their main entrances were also originally at first floor level & approached by an external stair. We turned right via Gilmore Close to view Stokoe Cottage to the rear. We saw Back Garth, 1721 over door, which is in The Butts; this was formerly the Greyhound Inn and closed c.1903. It is rendered & painted pale grey with white sash windows, there is a fire window to the right. Behind a door on the left a passageway led to a yard behind. That has a separate carriage arch entrance and a bothy over a stable, possibly originally separate from the inn. We then visited High Mill, (Image on Left), grain was ground here from C14th, but the

current mill was a rebuilding of 1767, a water powered corn mill by John Smeaton (he built the Eddystone lighthouse), extended 1775 & heightened later, four bays and four storeys in an L-shaped plan. Inside we saw the site of the pit wheel and original wallower housing, North Pennines Heritage Trust displays information there. We also viewed the cast iron and timber wheel, 21 ft. with approx. 60 buckets (originally had narrower 30 ft. wheel) in the wheelhouse; both wheels were pitchback in type, water was formerly directed via a timber launder from Mill Burn race but latterly in cast iron pipes. The mill closed in 1930s but from 1947 it was used for precious metal casting using the Shaw process & then by Bonds Foundry. Privately owned there are plans to restore the mill as a workshop with a small museum. These last few buildings were visited during the VAG Spring Conference of 2015 which was hosted by CVBG; a handbook gave more detailed notes, drawings of elevations and floor plans.
The parish church of St. Augustine of Canterbury originally from C12th, in the time of Henry II, it decayed & was rebuilt by1770 by Smeaton in stone with a Cumberland slate roof & a square tower. It was deemed to be too small & plain, so it was demolished to be rebuilt again 1869-70 in Early English style with lancet windows, ashlar stone with buttresses & Welsh slate roof; a spire was added in 1886. A restored clock displayed inside is of C16th origin & belonged to James Radcliffe, 3rd Earl of Derwentwater of Dilston Hall, nr. Corbridge ; he was beheaded for treason. On leaving the church there is a fine view from the churchyard to the rear of houses on Front Street, (see image on front cover). Despite the inclement day Alastair's tour of the upper part of the old town was very worthwhile and informative; he covered a wide range of vernacular buildings and many other features of note on our tour, lasting about 90 mins., before a return to the Town Hall to depart for Lovelady Shield.

LOVELADY SHIELD HOTEL – and afternoon tea

We concluded President's Day with a visit to Lovelady Shield Hotel and to enjoy an afternoon cream tea with their (v)large scones. The Dickinson family lived here from before 1700 until 1903 but the present Italianate house dates from the 1830s.
Before our departure Alastair Robertson and accompanied by Ivan Day led a group to view the entrance to the ice-house that we had heard of earlier. The ice-house is set into the valley side of the River Nent with its entrance by a lane to the rear of the house. It dates from the second half of C19th, judging by Ordnance Survey 1st & 2nd series map detail, as it is shown on the latter 1898 map. We saw the stone flagged entrance passage, sandstone step & flooring where stones and earth had been dug out for examination. Due to the collapse of the external wall around the doorway it is not safe to enter. To visit an example of ice-house in this area that had been discussed earlier during Ivan Day's talk was an ideal way to end the day's varied programme. Alastair also published a paper on this ice-house in the latest CWAAS Transactions for 2024 (p216-219).
Many thanks again to June for arranging this event, to our speakers and the guides for our afternoon activities ▪

John McDowell

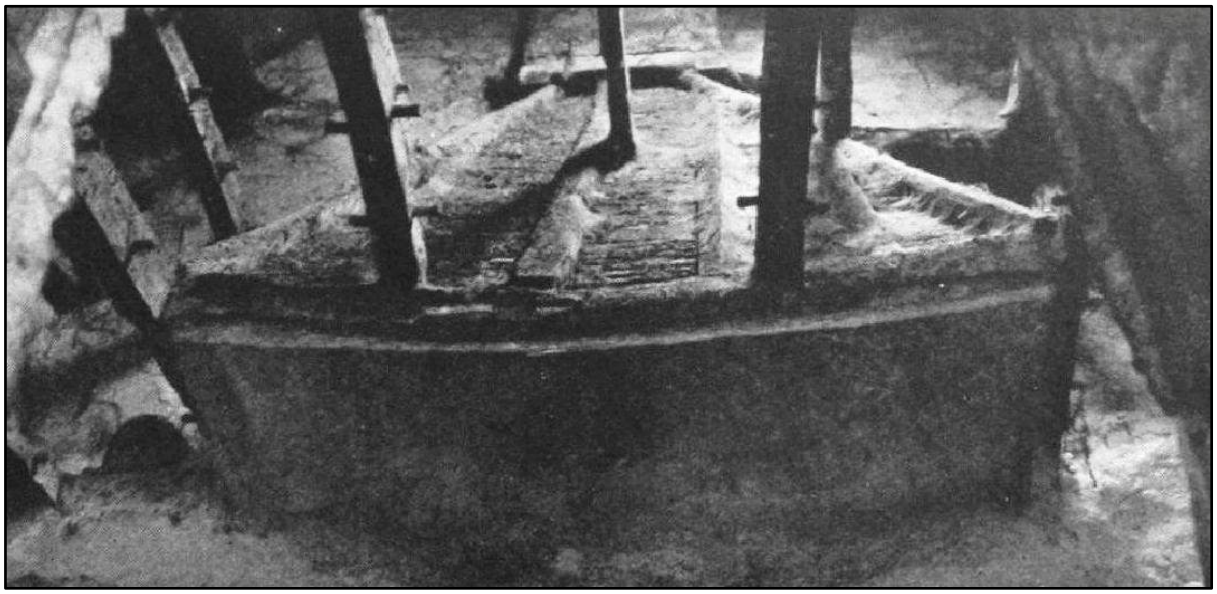
More Images From The Alston Walkabout (1)

(Above)Back Garth, previously the Greyhound Inn
© John McDowell
(Right & Below) Steps to house on Front Street and the group gathering before entering the old mill.
© Justin Wood

More Images From The Alston Walkabout (2)

Interesting shop on Front Street © Justin Wood

Cross View Cottage from The Market Cross © John McDowell



1. Extract from 'An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Westmorland 1936'

In 1936 the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England made a photographic record of a hood in barn above Askham (see above) but incorrectly associated it with 17th C residential types of construction. Although the construction is similar, the space incorporates none of the other attributes normally associated with dwellings, e.g. a transverse fire beam, fire window, food holes or spice cupboard. The hood is supported on a frame that spans along the axis of the building, rather than across it in the normal residential style. A study of the surviving fabric in the barn showed that surviving timberwork (see Plates 2, 3 and 5 below) had the capacity to support approximately 136 hams during curing processes.

The space to create the smokery or curing house appears to have been created by installing a masonry cross-wall within an existing 18th century structure (see Plate 4); provisions were made to control the supply of air to the fire grate and hood by way of ventilation holes. Physical access to the high-level hanging rails was provided by a hatch, albeit that the door is now missing. The style and materials employed in the cross-wall indicate the date of construction around the mid-19th century. Plate 5 shows a cross-section drawing of the hood and the hanging beams.

At the date of the RCHME survey the smoke house will probably have fallen out of use as many of the farms in the area were acquired by a conveyance dated 23 February 1923 between Lord Lonsdale's Trustees and the Mayor, Aldermen and Citizens of Manchester to enable the construction of Haweswater reservoir in the 1930's. 'Common Stories' by University of Lancaster (2) clarified:
"With the change in ownership came a change in philosophy. Manchester saw Bampton Common (and its other acquisitions) as a water catchment area rather than as a farming resource…. In 1935…Manchester Corporation ordered that all

farming operations other than hay and sheep farming should be discontinued by September 1936."

Accordingly, the smoke house will have fallen out of use around that time as the local market for its services disappeared.
Denyer [1] states that in late medieval times the rights of tenants for 'pannage', i.e. grazing of pigs in woodland, diminished so that by 1600 most manors had banned pannage because of damage to young seedling trees. Consequently, "few farms kept pigs and those that did kept only one or two." Nevertheless, the practice is echoed in several placenames, including nearby Swindale.

2. Remains of fire hood

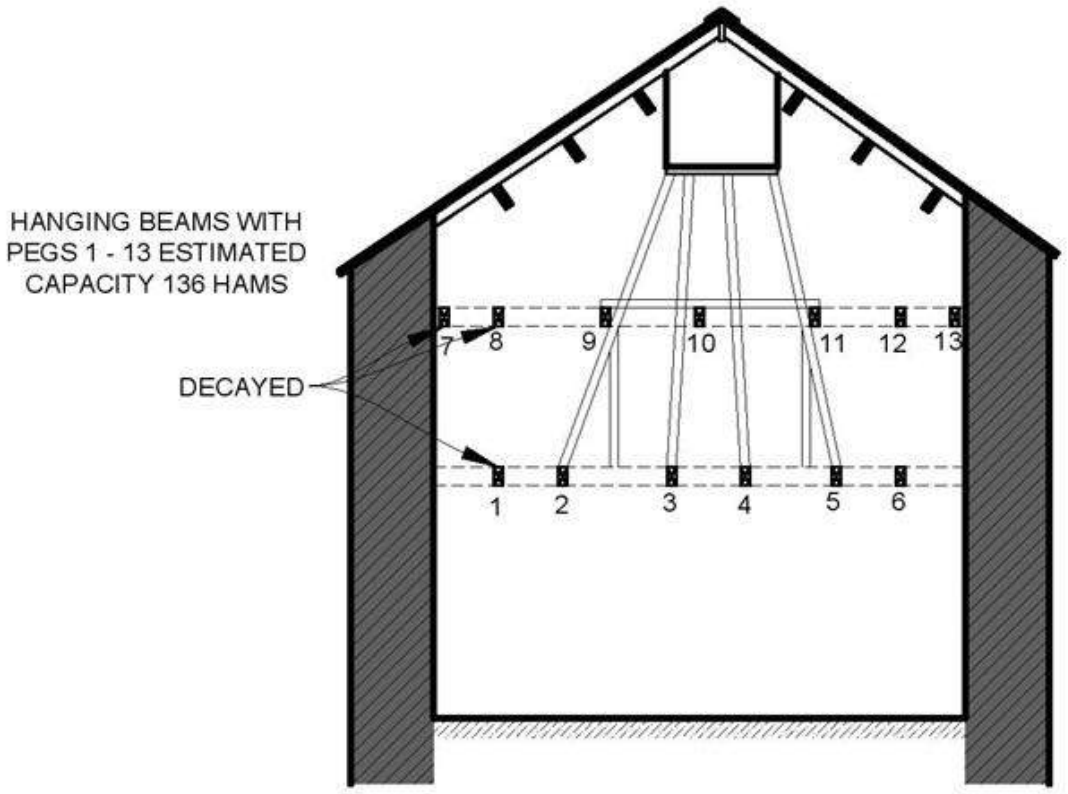
During the 18th and 19th centuries selective breeding of pigs produced breeds such as 'Heavy Whites' and 'Gloucester Old Spots.' In the Lake District a Cumberland breed was developed but is now extinct. Whilst farmers normally kept no more than one or two of these new breeds, piggeries rarely extended to two or three double sties for housing. Crag House Farm at Irton had five but this was exceptional.

Domestic curing of hams was therefore modest with perhaps a dozen or so meat hooks in a larder or fixed to a firebeam in an inglenook. Even Gentry style houses, such as GD I listed Coniston Hall, hung no more than 25 cured meats within the

curve of its Tudor fireplace. It is therefore safe to conclude that capacities above this level were commercial in nature.

3. A typical beam with oak pegs for hanging hams

4. The masonry cross-wall inserted into the barn to create the smokery



5. A cross-section sketch showing the arrangement of the timber framework and hood

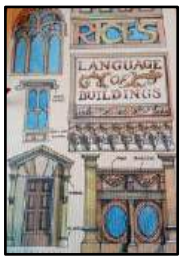
In comparison, the smoke house at Dunthwaite, Setmurthy is a recognised large-scale commercial operation for curing hams with a capacity of over 700 (see Plate 6 above); the business was run by the Harrison family who exported Cumberland Hams as their principal business.

The barn at Askham appears to house a small-scale commercial smoke house that probably served its immediate local markets, falling out of use when pig and cattle farming were banned in the area by Manchester Corporation in 1936. This rare survival of Agro-Pastoral activity therefore attracts exceptional heritage value within the World Heritage Site ▪

Acknowledgements:
"Traditional Buildings and Life in the Lake District" by Susan Denyer 1991. [1]
"Bampton Commons Community History Project 2012-2013 for 'Common Stories', University of Lancaster [2]

5. Book Review - Matthew Rice, *Rice's Language of Buildings*

Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018 - £20



Does anyone remember The Observer's books? The one on architecture was my constant companion as a teenager. Now I have found this book, which is a worthy successor to that much loved little volume. The book sets out to help you to "talk fluently about the buildings that surround you". The format is mainly of illustrations, annotated to point out the main features of each period, starting with the classical orders, and ending with the modern era. The classical orders are important as they underpin much of what follows over the centuries.

The succinct chapters which introduce each era are rarely more than a few pages long but sum up the essence of the period beautifully. At the end of the book are sections on building materials, the one on brick being particularly good, as it illustrates the various bonds very well. Throughout, the illustrations are brilliant and often are enlivened by quirky little figures. Although it is not specifically aimed at students of vernacular architecture, this is the basic vocabulary we need when describing buildings.

It is definitely the book to spend your Christmas tokens on!▪

June Hill

6. A rare find at Eastward, Bampton - by the CVBG Recording Team

Eastward, Bampton looking towards the Haweswater Valley © Paul Lewis

In December, our recording team had the good fortune to gain access to this GD II* listed farmhouse before refurbishment began. The full details will form the content of a **ZOOM** presentation early next year, watch out for a notice by email. In the meantime, we share a rare find in the downhouse – a bakestane for making oat cakes, a diet staple in former times ▪

A bakestane ©Liz Kerrey