CUMBRIA VERNACULAR BUILDINGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER Number Six Winter 2014

Cumbria Vernacular Buildings Group

The study of "home grown" buildings in Cumbria, made for a particular purpose from materials to hand, using local skills and traditions.

ENCLOSED

- Programme of Events, 2015.
- Booking form for events, January to March, 2015.
- Membership card for those joining since September.

1. Message from the Chairman

We are ending our first full calendar year on an optimistic note. Over 90% of members have renewed their subscriptions, leaving fewer than ten, who we hope will stay with us. We have gathered new members during the year and hope they feel welcome. Thank you to all of you who have supported CVBG, in a variety of ways – by your subscription, by attending events, helping with arrangements, and giving talks, and by finding interesting buildings to record and visit.

Events in 2014 have ranged around Cumbria. Attendance has been really good – between a quarter and a third of total membership on each occasion. The only one which was cancelled through lack of bookings was the visit to Ryedale Folk Museum in North Yorkshire. Perhaps it was too far for a day visit, but I hope that some of you will find the opportunity to go there. It is an object lesson in vernacular building

history, especially cruck construction and room use, and is altogether most rewarding. Maybe we will arrange an informal visit in the coming year.

The forthcoming programme is enclosed. Again, events are spread around our large county, so that wherever you live, there will be something not too far from your home. We are planning to get to know the neighbouring groups in the Borders, by inviting them to join us for a day in October. Building traditions in the region were massively influenced by the repeated periods of unrest and we can compare local solutions to the challenges our predecessors faced.

After a year and a half of events which have helped to familiarise members with each other and the huge variety of buildings in Cumbria (materials, social status, time scales, purpose, etc.), we will begin a training programme in recording buildings. We are very fortunate to have professional members who are willing to share their expertise, to help us make good records of our historic buildings. It would be excellent if members who attend the courses could eventually form small local groups. Please support this development, as it is a vital part of CVBG's work. *June Hall*

2. Report of Study Day, Cockermouth, 15 November, 2014.

The Great Rebuild – How thorough was it?

The Study Day was based in the Friends Meeting House, Kirkgate, a building with early eighteenth century origins, remodelled and given and Italianate frontage in 1884.

- June Hall introduced the theme of the Great Rebuild, when the medieval housing stock of the country was replaced by houses built from solid materials, and "built to last". W G Hoskins promoted the theory in 1953. His suggested period for this modernisation of the nation's homes was c1570-1640, "*except in the four northern counties*". This of course covers Cumberland and Westmorland, for reasons which include the Border disturbances and the so-called "provincial time-lag". Evidence for medieval peasant homes comes from documentary and archaeological sources, as no lower status medieval house survives in its entirety in Cumbria. Central, open hearths in single-story buildings, often thatched, were replaced by fireplaces under smokehoods or chimneys, usually on a gable of cross wall,

controlling smoke and enabling first-floor rooms and staircases to be installed, under slate or stone roofs. The Great Rebuild in our county appears to be at its height from around 1660 to 1730, but subsequent generations made changes at different dates. Partial rebuilding kept pace with current requirements and developments in the standard of living. This makes the task of working out the buildings' histories all the more interesting.

- Professor Michael Mullett presented the work of another CVBG member, Gordon Fairclough, for discussion. Gordon could not attend in person, but kindly offered his essay, written as part of a doctorate at Oxford. This reviewed the study of The Great Rebuild, from Hoskins' theory, through many subsequent publications evaluating the validity of the concept. Michael added his own suggestions for the desire to rebuild, and the opportunities offered by the Dissolution of the Monasteries, which led to changes in land ownership, and the release of capital following the abolition of chantry chapels and religious giving. The rise of the gentry and the professions brought wealth within reach of a wider section of the population. He widened the rationale to consider the European context and suggesting that an earlier rebuild, after the Black Death (1349), took place.

- Christine Craghill gave examples of buildings in Cumbria which showed evidence of the Great Rebuilld. Many earlier houses were totally replaced by new buildings, often in the same farmyard. These new houses, with a Cumbrian interpretation of "polite" features, are what we consider the typical farmhouse of Cumbria – with pedimented doorways, sash windows, symmetrical (or almost) frontages, and stressed quoins. The redundant house, relegated to use for livestock, or crop storage, holds clues which reveal its former domestic use.

- Barry Harrison, who was a founder of the Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Ground (1972), has been president of the VAG, and is a member of CVBG, outlined the characteristics of houses of the Great Rebuild in North Yorkshire. This added a wider perspective to our experience of observing datable features, materials, plan forms and regional variations in vernacular buildings. Brick walls and tiled roofs, timber frames and cruck trusses are more plentiful in the neighbouring county. The medieval plan form, where households still lived communally,

gave way to the improved house, with more rooms, for particular functions, and added privacy.

- Following the talks, members were explored the nooks and crannies of the area of Cockermouth centred on the Market Place and the Castle. Percy House, the town house on the Percy family bailiff, was the focus. Now an art and craft gallery, it is a rare survival, with timbers dendro-dated to 1390 (owner), or 1462-3 (Pevsner and Hyde). The first floor hall has a plaster chimney piece carrying the date 1598 and the Percy arms. Mill sites on the Rivers Cocker and Derwent and on other tributary becks were used many times, over the centuries, by a variety of industries, for processing corn, linen, wool, leather and timber. Cockermouth Castle, first constructed as a Norman motte and bailey castle, passed through several eminent families, including the Percies, to Percy Wyndham, Earl of Egremont, in 1780. The family still own it and use the mansion of 1800 as a summer residence.

3. Christmas Lunch and Talk by Ivan Day, 10 December, 2014.

Thirty-six members gathered in the seventeenth-century barn at West Curthwaite, near Thursby. Our hosts, Joy and Maynard Hall, had prepared a welcome festive table and after mulled hot fruit punch, we enjoyed a delicious three-course meal, provided by Helen Dalgleish from the Watermill Café at Caldbeck.

Our guest speaker was Ivan Day, from Shap, food historian, well-known as a broadcaster. He first showed us something of his work in museums around the world – glittering displays of banquets in St Petersburg, Prague (with Empress Marie-Therese's porcelain-handled cutlery), and in Los Angles.

The main theme of his talk was open-fire cookery in Cumbrian farmhouses. Ivan's own kitchen is set out in traditional style, with original utensils and fire-irons, where he can recreate the food from manuscript and early printed recipe books. Cumbrian fare was based on oats, *(haver* - the Old Norse word which appears in Cumbrian place-names), for porridge and oat cakes, and barley, or *bigg*. Many of the items mentioned in probate inventories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were illustrated and their use explained.

Meat was usually from the pig, made into sausage or ham and bacon, and mutton. Goose was the customary Christmas bird, roasted in front of an open fire, the dripping cooking the potatoes in the pan below.

We thank everyone involved in making CVBG's Christmas lunch a cheerful and enjoyable event.

4. Historic Farm Buildings Group Conference in Downham, Lancashire.

19th to 21st September, 2014 Report by Kevin Illingworth

The HFBG was set up in 1985 and now has about 150 members. The annual subscription is £15.

Friday, 19th September

25 delegates gathered in Downham Village Hall at 5pm. Some members had travelled over 200 miles from Oxford, and Wiltshire, but one lady came from Looe, Cornwall (336 miles). Sandra Silk, AONB Project Officer, gave a talk entitled 'The 50th anniversary of Bowland Forest Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty'. We all received an 18-page conference brochure produced by Harry and Joan Grundy.

Saturday, 20th September

Joan Grundy, originally from Lancashire but now from the Hereford area, was the first speaker, which was about Lancashire dairy farming and its buildings from the 17th to the 20th century. Extracts from her talk showed how barns and shippons got bigger as milk production increased, and that in 1915 81% of Lancashire's milk production went by rail. Then in the mid-20th century concrete boskins were manufactured. The area she covered was mostly north-east Lancashire to the Preston area.

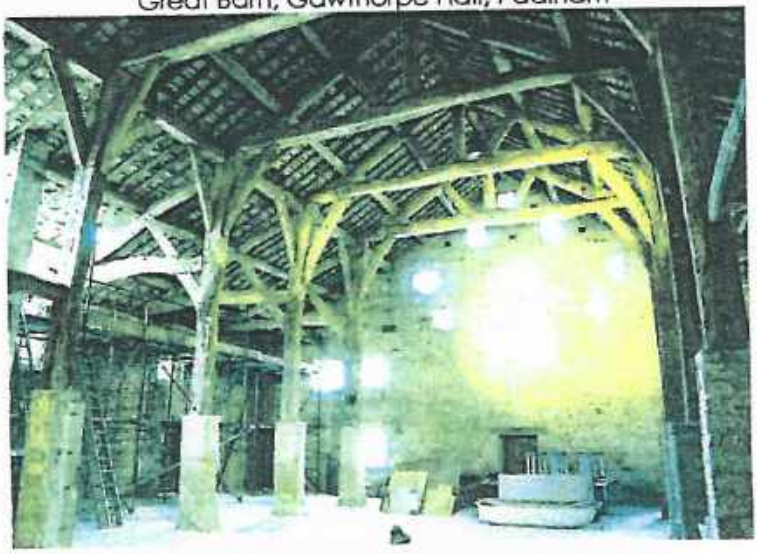
Nigel Neil, of Neil Archaeological Services, Lancaster, showed us barns and other farm buildings built of stone, brick, cobbles and timber from Silverdale and Tatham in the north as far south as Lathom, near Ormskirk, and at Stoneleach Farm, Wrightington where he suggested that a barn could be a bank barn, out of its area, or a pseudo-bank barn. Other buildings were a bull-pen at Browne's Farm, Euxton, and Lancashire's grandest cowhouse at Barton Old Hall, near Preston (a 16th century, or earlier, highly decorated timber-framed house which became a cowhouse). An introduction to the Downham Hall Estate by Ralph Assheton of Downham Hall was followed by a splendid buffet lunch. Next, a visit by coach to the 17th century aisled barn of seven bays at

Downham Hall. To see the interior of an aisled barn one only needs to go to the five-bay barn at Wycoller, or Shibden Hall, Halifax, or several more aisled barns in West Yorkshire. A visit to farms on the Downham Estate finished the day, where the barns were mostly 19th century, plain, functional buildings. Some of us were disappointed that we didn't make time to visit some 17th century farms, such as Hecklin. A 40-page survey of the farm buildings on the Downham Estate was handed out to all of us.

Sunday, 21st September

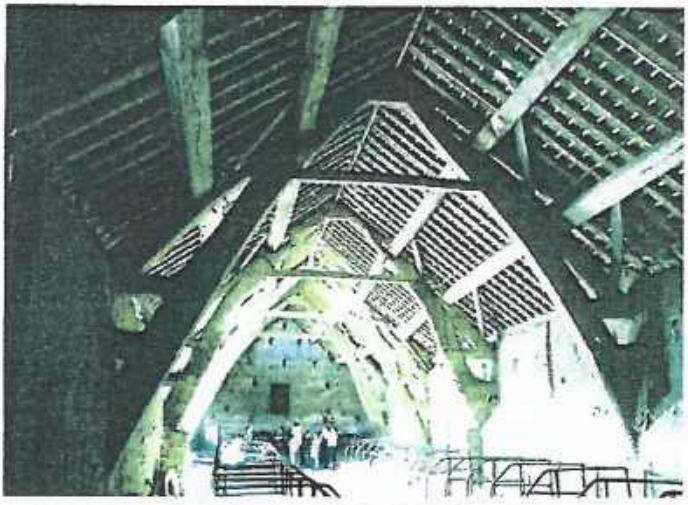
Before our coach arrived, Jamie Quartermaine, from Oxford Archaeology North, spoke about the archaeology of the Ribble Valley, from Ribblehead to Hesketh Sands. Our first visit was to the enormous nine-bay aisled barn at Gawthorpe Hall, Padiham, which is Listed Grade I. Built from 1602-4, it is 100ft long. Our thanks go to Nikolas Taylor, National Trust Ranger, who arranged for us to see inside, and Wayne Slater, car park attendant for Burnley Football Club, who kindly allowed us to view the south-west side of the barn, which is undergoing temporary roof repairs.

Great Barn, Gawthorpe Hall, Padiham



(photograph by Kevin Illingworth

We then departed to Stonyhurst to see the cruck barn at Hall Barns Farm thanks to brothers Phil and John Hough, who have farmed there for over 40 years. Listed Grade 2*, and perhaps 16th century, there are five cruck-trusses, with evidence of timber-framing outside (wall posts) and inside, where the wall-plate has mortices underneath for vanished wall studs and angle braces. The Cruck Database wrongly states that there only four cruck-trusses. In Lancashire there are several cruck barns open to the public.



Cruck barn at Hall Barns Farm, Stonyhurst
(photograph by Kevin Illingworth)

The final visit of the conference was to the barn at Little Mearley Hall, near Worston, east of Clitheroe. The house was the highlight of the conference, although the visits were to farm buildings. We were able to walk all round the house, thanks to Matthew Whitwell, who has a dairy herd of more than 80 cows. The listed Grade 2* late 16th century hall-and-cross-wing house has a worn datestone of 1590 with the initials of Christopher Nowell and Elizabeth (Walmesley). The north-west front (seen from the public footpath) has an early 16th century half-octagonal bay window, said to have come from Sawley Abbey. Other features include stepped three-light windows, round-arched mullion windows, a squarish stair turret, and 'Dairy' incised at a low level under the bay window.

There were no slides shown of farm buildings in south-west or south-east Lancashire, therefore no hay barns or extant timber-framing. The HFBG website has very little information on it, although a new website is planned. On the positive side, the Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study Group sold 14 publications (some with Lancashire content) and recruited two new Lancashire members. Our thanks go to Les Hardy, HFBG Chairman, from Church, near Accrington, who organised the conference, who is also a recent YVBSG member.

5. Allerdale Grade II Listed Building Survey **By Rose Lord**

Project Summary

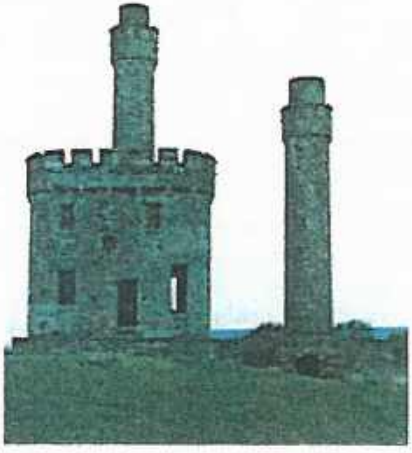
North of England Civic Trust (NECT) is leading on this English Heritage commissioned project for Allerdale Borough Council. The survey is one of nine test projects funded by English Heritage to survey Grade II listed buildings and at the same time trial the data collection methods used.

Grade II buildings account for 92% of all listed buildings but their overall condition is not known by English Heritage. The Heritage at Risk document published annually by English Heritage, currently only features grade I and II* buildings and only a few local authorities have their own buildings at risk register encompassing all grades of buildings.

Grade II listed hotel, Maryport
(photograph courtesy of North of England Civic Trust)

We are looking for volunteers who are interested in getting out and about in their local area to help us complete a survey of grade II listed

buildings in the towns of Workington, Maryport and Cockermouth. There are over 220 grade II buildings to survey, ranging from lighthouses and chimneys to cottages and mansions.



Grade II listed Jane Pit Chimney and Engine House, Workington
(photograph courtesy of North of England Civic Trust)

No previous experience of building surveying is necessary. Volunteers need to complete a short survey on each building and take a couple of photos, but full training on what to look for and how to complete the survey will be given at the start of the project.

Surveys are external only and will look at the essentials of roofs and gutters and whether the building is occupied or in use; there is no requirement to go onto private land or inside buildings. Staff from NECT will also be on hand throughout the project to help with any queries or technical issues.

We are hoping to robustly test two paper versions of the survey form and an electronic version of the survey.

At the end of the project we will have tested English Heritage's survey methods; including the training tools and given them feedback on the different survey forms. We will also have a baseline condition survey of

grade II buildings in the three towns which can be used by Allerdale Borough Council to help inform a building at risk strategy.

This is a fantastic opportunity to discover your local heritage, learn new skills and meet like-minded people. Training will take place in early January and we aim to complete the surveys by the end of March 2015.

Further information about English Heritage's Heritage at Risk Programme can be found on their website http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/caring/heritage-at-risk/

For more information about the project or to register as a volunteer please contact Rose Lord at North of England Civic Trust on 0191 232 9279 or email rose.lord@nect.org.uk

Founded in 1965, North of England Civic Trust is a registered charity, active in conservation and regeneration across the North East, Cumbria and North Yorkshire. For more information please see their website www.nect.org.uk

.....

Events organised by other groups

a. **Thursday 26 February**, Lancaster Archaeology and History Society, *The Castle Dairy, Kendal*, Dan Elsworth, St Paul's Hall, Scotforth, Lancaster, 7.30pm. Visitors £3.

b. **Thursday 10 March**, *Slate Quarrying in the Lake District*, Andrew Lowe, Staveley District History Society, Staveley School, 7.30pm.

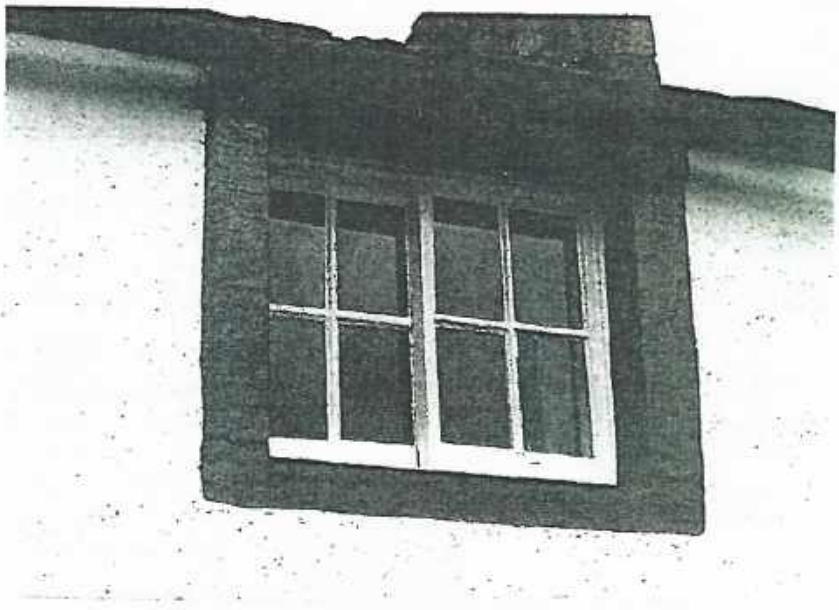
c. **Saturday 14 March**, YVBSG annual day school, *Early Town Buildings and their Construction Materials*. Leeds, 10am – 4pm. Members £26, non-members £30, including buffet (Note, this is one week before our study day, looking at a similar theme in Cumbria).

d. **Wednesday 18 March**, *Lakeland Architecture*, Andrew Lowe, Ravenstonedale Parish History Group, Ravenstonedale High Chapel Community and Heritage Centre, 7.30pm. Tel 015396 23306.

e. **15 – 17 May**, Annual YVBSG recording weekend, Beverley, Further details will be available in February.

f. **Saturday 6 June**, BRITISH ASSOCIATION for LOCAL HISTORY (of which CVBG is a member), Annual LOCAL HISTORY DAY. Birmingham. Professor Angus Winchester, Lancaster University, will be the main speaker, on *"By ancient right or custom": the local history of common land in a European context*. £25. Further details on request.

g. **Information from English Heritage**. Very useful and appropriate information is contained in the EH Newsletter HELM, (Historic Environment Local Management). www.helm.org.uk Particularly relevant are the items on recording farmsteads, *The National Farmstead Character Statement*, and *National Farm Building Types*. The latter contains terminology for use when describing farm buildings, and sources of further information. Search for English Heritage Publications.



Look out for .....

HORIZONTAL or YORKSHIRE SLIDING SASH windows.

They are not common in Cumbria, but examples can be found, often at the back of buildings. This one is in Askham village, noticed by Lyn Cole.

Please send photographs or notes to June Hall.

The next issue will be the spring newsletter, 15 March, 2015.

CVBG Committee, 2014-2015

- Chairman, June Hall, Chapel Farm, Newlands, Stainton, Penrith, CA11 0HJ, junelennahall@hotmail.com
- Treasurer and membership, Mike Kingsbury, Holly Bank, Bonsyke, Kirkby Lonsdale, Carnforth, LA6 2JG, m.kingsbury455@btinternet.com
- Secretary, Jan Hicks, Ivy Hall, Patterdale, Orton, Penrith, CA10 3RG, lyndall.hicks@ecclesiemail.com
- Website, Helen Evans, Peartree Cottage, Kirkby Stephen, CA17 4QT, helen@evansxtra.net
- Chris Jeffery, Rowanbeck, Kendal, Kirkby Lonsdale, Carnforth, LA6 2QG, chris@jeffery.karoo.co.uk
- Michael Mullett, 24 Ronnie Way, Penrith, CA11 8EE, mmullett@talktalk.net
- Nicky Stowe, Director, Ruskin Museum, Coniston, Ambleside, LA21 8DU, information@ruskinmuseum.com
- Richard Wilson, 2 Crakrees, Townhead Road, Dalston, Carlisle, CA5 7QU, richardwilson762@btinternet.com

www.cvbg.co.uk — info@cvbgmypostoffice.co.uk

The Committee hope you had a very Happy Christmas and send best wishes for a Healthy New Year.