CUMBRIA VERNACULAR BUILDINGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER Number Seven Spring 2015

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

- Booking form for event, Grasmere, 10 May.

1.Training in Recording Buildings, Mosedale, 23 January, 6 and 13 February.

Ten members took part in these practical sessions, using a most interesting house in Mosedale, to measure, draw and attempt to interpret. The first impressions were of a three-unit, two-storey farmhouse of some style, entered by a pedimented doorway on which are inscribed the initials of George and Sarah Marke, dated 1722. After further examination, the date was found to apply to a re-fronting of an earlier building.

Stuart Eve, a member of both CVBG and VAG, demonstrated how to make a sketch plan and take measurements. Allan Adams, of English Heritage and VAG, showed how to draw up a finished plan from field notes, and Paul Lewis, CVBG, concluded the sessions with a close look at the house, to arrive at its probable chronological development.

It was extremely valuable to work with professional practitioners and we are grateful to them for giving their time and expertise. Our bases were the friends Meeting House, Mosedale, and St Mungo's church room at Mungrisdale, both interesting buildings. As the photographs show, the snow provided a challenge to our activities, but attendance was 100%.

Research on the house continues. To understand it more thoroughly, the adjoining earlier house should be examined. The whole property belonged to the Marke family, who adopted Quakerism from its foundation in the 1650s. From their wills and inventories, they appear to have lived modest lives as farmers, as did their neighbours in the valley. However, the style of the house façade suggests social aspirations. The mullioned and transomed windows and pedimented doorway contrast with the simpler fronts of nearby farmhouses and resemble socially superior houses such as Kirkby Lonsdale Old Manor House, (c1700), and Kirkoswald Mansion House, (late seventeenth century wing). Were the "cross" windows brought here from another building in 1722? They certainly replace earlier mullioned windows. As in numerous Cumbrian buildings, the rendered walls hide a great deal of evidence.

The parlour appears to have been added to an existing two-unit house, possibly also in 1722, and the central first-floor room, approached by a fine staircase with turned balusters, seems to have been used as a reception hall – another high-status feature.
A report will be made in due course. Meanwhile, our findings are being used on one of the display panels, which are in preparation.
As the course was limited to ten members, it may be possible to run a similar course in the autumn for those who missed this one. Several of the group feel confident to record more buildings in their part of Cumbria.
We are most grateful to the owners of the house for making it available.

Elevation (Richard Wilson)

2. Study Day, 21 March, Kirkby Lonsdale, *Urban Survivals of Vernacular Buildings.*

Despite serious gremlins in the technical department, 34 members enjoyed a full programme of talks and a guided tour of Kirkby Lonsdale. The sun shone, the food, supplied as usual by the Watermill Café, Caldbeck, was delicious and the company good humoured.

June Hall introduced the subject for the day, outlining the origins, morphology and the urban function of Cumbria's small towns. Nationally, most towns were established during the thirteenth century, when population expanded rapidly, but not all towns flourished. Cumbria has numerous "failed" towns, which declined, just as others developed. Markets and fairs, granted by the monarch or overlord, were business opportunities, which generated income from tolls, as venues for the exchange of goods – raw materials (eg wool, livestock and dairy produce) from the rural hinterland for manufactured items (eg. gloves, locks), made in town workshops, and foreign merchandise.

While prestigious buildings – castles, churches - survive in towns, little that can be called vernacular, remains from before the late 1400s. What can we expect to see in Cumbria's towns? Our speakers had prepared thoughtful and thorough presentations, which offered a wide variety of observations.

CVBG Group outside Abbot Hall, Kirkby Lonsdale

Michael Mullett spoke about two inns in Penrith, the Two Lions, Gerard Lowther's New Hall, which he bought in 1580, and the Gloucester Arms, rebuilt also in 1580, by John de Whelpdale. The Two Lions retains a fine plaster ceiling, but has lost a stone spiral stair and a rare bowling green. The Gloucester Arms has associations with Richard Duke of Gloucester, later Richard 111, (1483 – 1485). The royal arms, with Richard's emblem, the white boar, are prominently displayed over a doorway. Inside are panelled rooms and large arched fireplaces.
Both inns are now closed and their future is not secured.

Richard Wilson compared Alston's buildings as they are now, and as they are shown on a late eighteenth-century map. External flights of stairs are the most striking feature. Although many shown on the map have been removed, plenty remain. It seems that first-floor living accommodation was the norm, the basement room being used for animal housing and storage. There is much debate about the origins of this type of building. One theory is that it derives from the defensive buildings, bastles, found in the Border region in the late sixteenth/early seventeenth centuries. Another idea is that the tradition grew as a consequence of building on a steep slope. Also, the outside stairs led in many instances to living space for the fluctuations in population, as the lead mines flourished or declined, and premises were divided for several households.

David Cant described a house in Dent, surveyed on the CVBG/YVBSG recording weekend in 2014. Flintergill House showed several phases of development from a seventeenth-century two-unit house of three storeys, to the imposing dwelling we see today. Mullioned windows were blocked and replaced by sashes, the earlier ones being revealed when the render was removed. A corbelled chimney survives on one gable and the roof trusses contain re-used timbers.

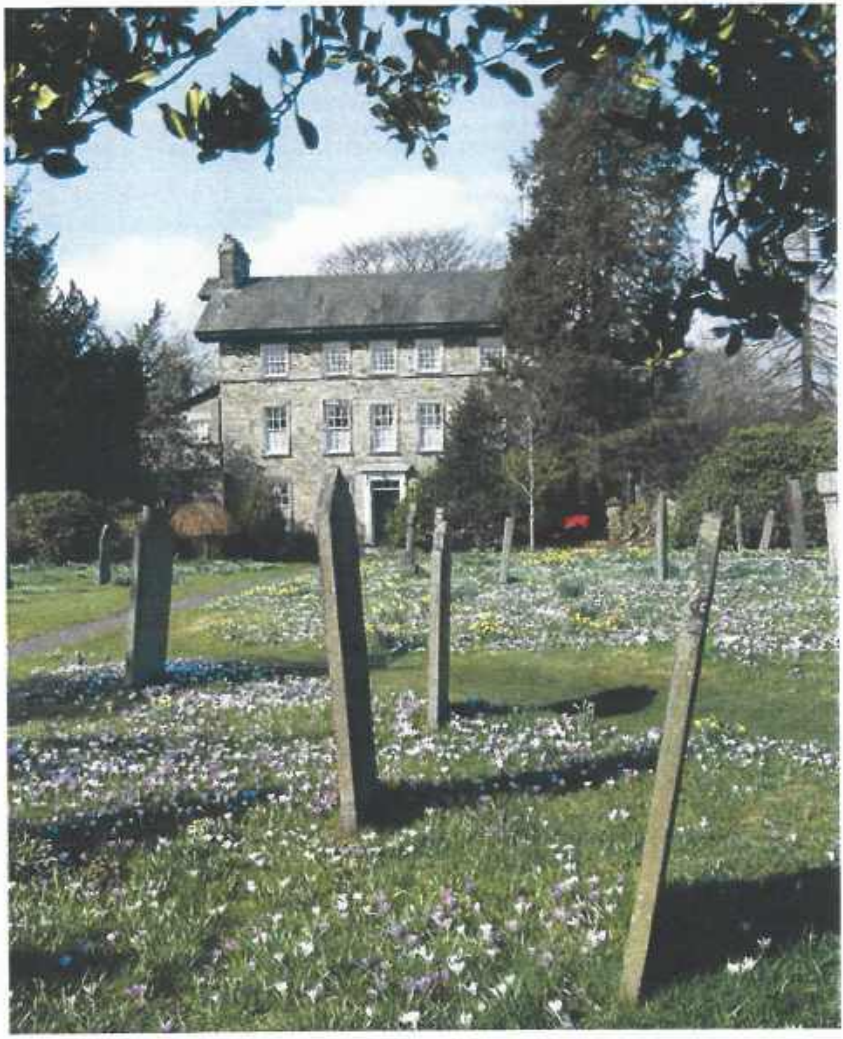
Clive Bowd showed the "ginnels" of Kendal, passage ways leading from the street into the yards of former burgage plots. While frontages have been largely rebuilt in stone, timber remains in ginnel walls. Farrer's Coffee House is a good example of a timber interior. Ginnels gave access to pedestrians, horses and wheeled traffic. To prevent wheel hubs from making contact with the corners of buildings, "knocking stones" were embedded in the ground. Many ginnels are still accessible as public paths, and a look behind buildings reveals early features.

Kevin Illingworth described three hidden gems noticed on his travels. In Penrith, he found a seventeenth-century interior in the Cottage Café, Burrowgate. A dated spice cupboard, a blocked fire window and a spiral stair to the attic remain. The chemist's shop in Boroughgate, Appleby, differs from the rest of the buildings in the street, which are of local sandstone. The mid-seventeenth-century features include mullioned windows, and drip moulds with roundels as stops, reminiscent of those seen on buildings in Lancashire. In Ambleside, wrestler slates, interlocking slates forming roof ridges, were noted.

Mike Kingsbury led a tour of Kirkby Lonsdale, which revealed a great deal of interest. Not a lot of early vernacular building is evident, but the town layout of market places, mills, the church and main streets is ancient. Members saw St Mary's parish church and the eighteenth-century rectory, in the garden of which is a Norman motte, and Ruskin's view across the River Lune, towards the Pennine hills. Seventeenth-century houses include the Old Manor House, in Mill Brow, and Abbot Hall. We saw a sock-knitting workshop, early shops in the main street, the Sun Inn, where Lady Anne Clifford reputedly stayed, and the market crosses.

There is clearly much to discover in Cumbria's towns. Our thanks go to all the speakers for their observations.

Kirkby Lonsdale Collage (Mike Turner)



Kirkby Lonsdale Rectory from St. Mary's Churchyard (Mike Turner)

Mike Kingsbury leading group round Kirkby Lonsdale

3. Yorkshire Vernacular Buildings Study group, Annual Day School, Leeds, 14 March
Early Town Buildings and their Constructional Materials – Recent Discoveries and New Understandings.

This day school's theme complimented CVBG's study aay, (see item 2, above). Around ten CVBG members who also belong to YVBSG attended and heard six papers, describing early buildings in York, Beverley, Hull, Ely, Gloucester, Shrewsbury, Worcester and Durham. All, the contributors spoke of a "forensic", archaeological approach to the study of early buildings, with reliance on dendrochronology for dating purposes.

Many early urban structures described , were of timber construction, seen in Beverley, and York, and may suggest what Cumbria's early town buildings were like. For instance, Carlisle was a town of timber buildings as late as the eighteenth century. Celia Fiennes recorded that there was a scarcity of stone houses in the city around 1700, and Hutchinson, in 1794, stated that most buildings were of wood, clay or laths, mostly thatched, few being of more than one storey.

Cumbria's only surviving fully timber-framed medieval building, the Guildhall, in Carlisle, has a crown-post roof, like the most common form found in York and Beverley. (Note –other timber framing survives, now concealed by later work.) YVBSG will hold their annual recording weekend in Beverley this year, (15 – 17 May, details from secretary@yvbsg.org.uk). This event is associated with the Beverley Project, led by YVBSG in cooperation with English Heritage's National Heritage Protection Plan.

4. Links with other organisations.

a. CWAAS Spring newsletter, 2015.
b. YVBSG Newsletter, spring, 2015.
c. Cumbria Local History Federation Bulletin, Spring, 2015.
d. Display and participation in CLHF Group meeting at Shap, 7. March, 2015.
e. Talk to Lunesdale Archaeology Group, Tebay, February, 2015.

5. Your help is requested.

Mullioned and transomed windows are a feature of some houses in Cumbria. They belong to a short phase which Brunskill calls "Anglo Baroque", beginning in the late seventeenth century larger houses. (See R W Brunskill, *Traditional buildings of Cumbria* ,Cassell, 2002, pages 58 to 62.) Please photograph examples in your locality, or seen on your travels. Easily seen examples are shown below. Early examples such as the "great house", Hutton in the Forest, 1680, (see Hyde and Pevsner, photograph 50), seem to have started the trend, followed by local gentry and others, but still in the vernacular tradition, using local materials and skills. Is there a "Cumbrian Baroque"?

If possible, details of the mouldings are welcome, in attempting to create a data base of these interesting features.

Is there a volunteer to create a data base?

Middles Farm, Mosedale dated 1722, but possibly earlier.

Mansion House, Kirkoswald, late 17th Century.

Kirkby Lonsdale Old Manor House

6. Forthcoming Events, CVBG.

Wednesday 16 April, 2pm – 4pm. FREE -No booking required.
Walkabout Allonby, Cumbia's Coastal Spa, led by June Hall.
Meet outside the Village Hall, Allonby, 2pm.
There is plenty of free parking on the shore car parks.
Come suitably clad for Cumbria's weather.

Early 20th Century view of Allonby.

Sunday 10 May, 10.30am – 3.30pm. Wordsworth Museum, Grasmere.
In Search of Grasmere, around 1800, *the time when William and Dorothy Wordsworth lived at Dove Cottage. £9.00 (subsidised price).*
This event, in cooperation with the Wordsworth trust and their local study group, will look for clues in documents, including the writings of the Wordsworths and their friends, and paintings of the period, as well as at standing buildings. A tour of Dove Cottage, to examine the building, is included. **Booking essential.** See enclosed form.

The deadline for contributions to the Summer newsletter
is
1st June 2015.

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