NEWSLETTER No. 49 – AUTUMN 2025

1. From the Chairman

After the Annual General Meeting at Allan Bank, the focus of our committee now turns to the programme of events for the remainder of this year and into 2026. Full details are now on our reconfigured and upgraded website at www.cvbg.co.uk but here is a summary so that members can get dates into their diaries.

Our popular 'ZOOM' presentations will begin once more on 22nd October with the results of some recording work done at Peter House, Braithwaite, reputably the oldest dwelling in the village. On 8th November, a small party of members will be able to revisit Cragg Barn, Dent where the finishing touches are in progress to a 'green' refurbishment of a listed barn – watch out for the email notice as numbers are limited. *(See page 16 for venue images)*

Our ever-popular Christmas lunch will be held at the Punchbowl Inn, Askham on Friday 5th December where well-fed attendees can compete eagerly in our traditional Christmas quiz, this time made more challenging with testing questions on vernacular architecture. There will be some excellent books on vernacular architecture and other prizes to pitch for in our raffle, too.

Our recording team have been doing excellent work this year, providing fascinating insights into our traditional buildings across the County. One of those is a ruined farm in Little Asby whose name has been lost through the passage of time. Research continues, but the results gathered so far will form a 'ZOOM' presentation on Wednesday 14th January 2026.

One of the County's surviving watermills has recently been restored as a bothy at Coombe Gill, Borrowdale and a small recording team were recently privileged to be hosted at the newly restored premises. With possible monastic origins, the mill was much celebrated by artists of the 18th and 19th century, including Turner, Greene, and Constable. A 'ZOOM' presentation on its history and restoration will be given on 18th March, drawing on recent archaeological and historic research by Jamie Quartermain and the owners' family archive, delving deeper into the fascinating story of this romantic jewel, hidden in a small gill in Borrowdale.

One of the highlights of 2026 will be the opportunity to hear Angus Winchester, renowned author, speak of his appreciation of the landscape and villages of the Lake District. Lorton Village Hall will be the venue on 9th May.
I look forward to enjoying our events with you; notices of events and invitations to attend will be distributed by email at a suitable time as we proceed ▪

With kindest regards,

2. 2025 AGM - Allan Bank, Grasmere - 6th September 2025

Our Annual General Meeting was held at Allan Bank with the kind permission of the National Trust. Many thanks are due to Paul and Jackie Lewis, in their roles as Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, for conducting the business meeting very efficiently. Paul then gave a presentation on the history of the conservation movement in the Lake District and in relation to Allan Bank. A recording of his talk will be added to the others available to view on our website.
Following lunch Paul guided two groups, both in viewing the house and to learn more on its development and the restoration work. The house was built in 1805 for Mr Crump, a wealthy merchant/attorney from Liverpool. As the first large villa in Grasmere, William Wordsworth called it a 'temple of abomination' as it rose above the church ruining his view down the Easdale Valley from Dove Cottage. The house partially collapsed the following year and was rebuilt in a simple classical form and with stables to the rear. Wordsworth and his family needed a larger home and moved in as tenants from 1808 to 1811, a bow window was added during their stay to his study (where he wrote the text for a book of prints, this was his first version of his Guide to the Lakes) but they were unhappy with the chimneys which blew back smoke & coal dust. Coleridge and De Quincey both had stays during these years. The house was bought in 1834 by Thomas Dawson, a Salford-born solicitor, he had the house remodelled to a Gothic style, perhaps by George Webster, with extensions incorporating a large roof lit central staircase, a back kitchen, servants' accommodation as well as front and rear porches. The house is faced with scored stucco, with hoodmoulds & roofed in slate. A chapel-like detached billiard room, where we held our AGM, has been restored with stained glass windows reinstalled, these contain the remains of Dawson's collection of Medieval and Renaissance glass. Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley (co-founder of the National Trust) was the last owner and bequeathed Allan Bank and the estate to the Trust. There have been two disastrous fires, firstly in the 1950's in the large wing at the rear and in 2011 due to an electrical fault in the attic. Fortunately, the internal oak doors around the atrium were closed on discovering the fire but the house was gutted with both water and smoke damage. Paul Lewis and James Woolgrove as conservation officers were involved in the prolonged restoration work. Open to the public since 2012 it has been left largely undecorated apart from a large mural on the staircase wall. Paul related the problems in fighting the fire and resultant damage. A canopy over the building was required and much woodwork needed

AGM in progress in the Billiard Room

to be replaced due to not only damage by fire and water but also subsequent woodboring insects due to the damp; dehumidifiers took 3 years to control this. Aided by forensic work on doors, moulds, and architraves, using pre-existing photographs of interior features, much was reinstated and in the original locations after the new joists and boards had been laid. One replica Scottish limestone fireplace upstairs was possible, based on the reconstructed fragments of the original. There are new oak timbers in attics which are without insulation and ventilation grills to basement are now fitted. We heard of an unusual rising shutter mechanism to the bay window and appreciated the choice of replacement glass for the roof light panels over the stair well. An impressive new boiler is housed in the previous stables, fuelled by wood pellets for the central heating with thermostatic control to a constant 15°C, a temperature found to be comfortable due to radiant heat from the walls. There are a few original cast iron radiators, the others are replicas, draughts are reduced, and the heating costs around £8000/yr. Traditional techniques were used in the restoration including lathe and lime plastering. Paul told us tales of paranormal experiences of plasterers and painters; voices were heard when no-one else was in the vicinity, this had also been reported after the earlier fire.

Wordsworth had contributed to the design of the grounds, laying out the grounds with trees, a tunnel on a woodland walk which opens to a view over the house, as well as other features such as stone seats at viewpoints for Helm Crag, Dunmail Raise and the mere. The kitchen garden will be planted with heritage varieties of apples to establish an ornamental orchard as indicated on an old OS map of Allan Bank.

We found it to be an informal house with comfortable furnishings and interesting galleries with exhibits on the Lake District, literary connections, photography, printmaking, and all in an ideal setting for artists. The house and grounds were enjoyed by those attending and we had many opportunities to explore ▪

Interesting rooflines at Allan Bank (Above)
View from bow window of study (Right)

3. Vernacular Building Terms from the Troutbeck Valley across the 18th and 19th Centuries

By Paul Lewis, Chairman

Blake Tyson wrote a transaction for CWAAS entitled, "Some Traditional Buildings in the Troutbeck Valley: a Documentary Study" [1] in 1982, drawing upon the accounts and diaries of the Browne Family from Townsend. In doing so, he shed light on the terminology employed by the local gentry and crafts people to organise their building works. Here is a selection of the terms that appear in the Browne's personal papers; a prudent reader might remember these, should they wish to do well in (say) a Christmas quiz!

- Crook baulk – a tie beam
- Spikings and pikes – large nails, square cut with small heads
- Ridwiddy or riggwiddey – a hoop for fastening a cow's neck band to a vertical slider on a stall
- Dorm – a fixed horizontal beam
- Selletree – a crooked post
- Butment – an access ramp to an upper floor
- Tables – flat, rectangular stones capping a wall or acting as drip courses or through stones
- Wimble – an auger for boring stone or wood
- "Tom" slate was third quality, "Country" slate second and "London" slate the best
- Goam – to smear with a sticky substance
- Cerbase – the moulding immediately above the lower panelling in a room; a chair rail
- Washboard – a skirting board
- Coans – quoins
- Corbs – corbels
- Rabbited – rebated
- Transom – a horizontal bar across a window or door
- Gist - joist

References: 1. tcwaas_002_1982_vol82_01

4. The Place-Names of Cumbria: a reading list and primer

Autumn draws close, Winter nears. A good (focussed) read, by a warming fire – even better should hearth, heck, fire window, and spice cupboard envelop such a cosy scene - brings the chance to better understand the vernacular architecture of Cumbria, why the places we live in and visit are so named, as well as recognising notable historic properties, and gaining an understanding of architectural styles in Cumbria and regions across Britain.

Introduction

This is the first of a small series of pieces proposed for upcoming CVBG quarterly newsletters. The aim of each is to highlight reference books and web links that can help the reader develop a deeper understanding of vernacular architecture, and Cumbria as a locality (for long a relatively remote corner of Northern England), which has distinctive types of historic buildings, and furnishings used within homes. Part 1, here, the Place-Names of Cumbria (Newsletter 49: Autumn '25) considers 'why is where we live so named?'

Place-names

The British Isles offer a remarkable range of place-names, which reflect the diverse history and topography of regions, different groupings of inhabitants and settlers, whether they be Celtic, Roman, Saxon, Norse or Norman, all contributing to a vastly different language of names within localities far apart. Travel between Wales, Wessex and Westmorland, for example, and sense the noticeably clear different origins of local names. Within Cumbria, the names of villages, hamlets, towns, and the landscape all around us, display their origins from within Cumbric (a close relative of old Welsh), Old Norse (reflecting the move of Norse settlers out of Dublin/ Ireland), Old English - Northern variety (a gradual Anglo-Saxon migration into the region), and Middle English (the later domination of Norman lords). The derivation of names can be overly complex, different origins intertwined.

Words within place-names reflect prominent natural landscape features (for example, based upon hills, valleys, forest, trees, woodland, rivers and lakes, and how each feature varies), different types of settlement (farms, dwellings, villages, fields, enclosures, roads, routeways), land use and industrial activity, wild and domestic animals, and the ownership of a place – personal names. All are typically practical descriptions, not at all romantic. For example:

Gosforth: 'gosa-ford' (first mention 1150), meaning geese's ford in Old English (Armstrong et al, 1950).
Hawkshead: 'Hauk's sheiling' (first mention 1198), comprising the Old Norse ' Haukr' and his 'saetr', possibly in part Old English 'Haukrs set, setr or settlement (Whaley, 2006, p158)
Maulds Meaburn: Maud or Matilda's 'meadow stream' (first mention c1200), Influences of Old and Middle English (Smith, 1967)

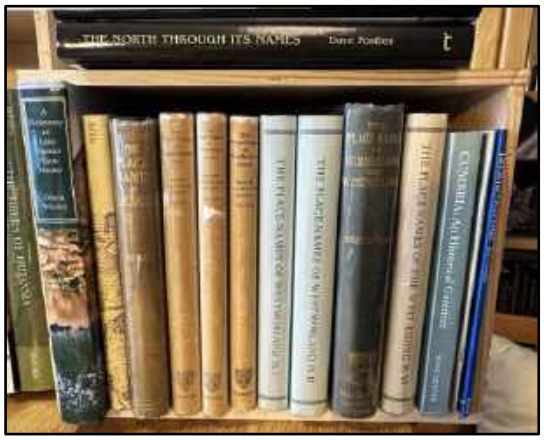
Sources of information on Cumbrian place-names

Cumbria, an administrative non-metropolitan County, was formed in 1974; the abolition of the County Council in April 2023 leaves 'the place of the Cumbrians' a ceremonial county, The Lake District at its centre.

In understanding Cumbria, its place names, topography, history and architecture, it is best to study a variety of books often written before 1974. Resources are available that cover the historical area from which Cumbria was formed: the historic Counties of Westmorland, Cumberland, parts of Lancashire 'North of the Sands', and in addition a small part of the West Riding of Yorkshire. For many visitors, the Lake District National Park, will be the focus of interest.

The English Place-Name Society (EPNS was founded just over 100 years ago, its aim being to undertake a comprehensive, county-by-county survey of England's place names. Each EPNS volume explains the origin and meanings of local names within a county. Three volumes covering Cumberland were published in the early 1950's (Armstrong, et al), the small area of the West Riding brought into Cumbria published in 1961 (Smith), and two volumes covering Westmorland in 1967 (Smith). A Lake District focus to place-names is provided by Whaley (2006). Within these books, the interpretation of names is based upon the earliest clear evidence of use, early spellings offering clues to linguistic origins. A typical name will have two or more parts to its structure. EPNS books detail the elements found within county place names, personal names found within, and explain the meaning of all place-names, along with field names and rivers / becks.

Lancashire, remarkably, remains a major County still not published by the Society. Historic resources nevertheless provide detailed guidance on Lancashire North of the Sands (Ekwall, 1922; Mills, 1976.), and Westmorland & Cumberland combined (Sedgwick, 1915). Publishers such as Dalesman offer introductory place-name guides (Gambles, 1980). Winchester (2017) provides a glossary of the elements that make up field names; at the local level, the Duddon Valley Local History Group, for example, went out to farmers and published a guide (2003) to the more recent names given to each field within their valley. Winchester (2016) offers a helpful historical gazetteer to Cumbria, which provides brief summaries of parishes, townships, towns and boroughs (area, population, core functions, landownership). In linking place names to personal surnames, Postles (2007) examines Northern-ness and distinct identity in family names.



Further reading

In seeking to understand vernacular buildings, always consider the landscape, topography, geology and history that enfolds and surrounds a property or location. Place-names, where we live and explore, can be utterly fascinating, and offer a descriptive window to our past, and homes. The following books, as referred to above, offer helpful guidance in understanding such.

Armstrong, A.M., Mawer, A., Stenton, F.M. and Dickins, B. (1950). The Place-Names of Cumberland. Part 1. Vol XX. English Place-Name Society. Cambridge University Press.
Armstrong, A.M., Mawer, A., Stenton, F.M. and Dickins, B. (1950). The Place-Names of Cumberland. Part 2. Vol XXI. English Place-Name Society. Cambridge University Press.
Armstrong, A.M., Mawer, A., Stenton, F.M. and Dickins, B. (1952). The Place-Names of Cumberland. Part 3. Vol XXII. English Place-Name Society. Cambridge University Press.

Ekwall, E. (1922). The Place-Names of Lancashire. Manchester University Press.

Gambles, R. (1980). Lake District Place Names. Dalesman.
Mills, D. (1976). The Place-Names of Lancashire. Batsford.

Postles, D. (2007). The North Through its Names. A phenomenology of Medieval and Early Modern Northern England. Oxbow.

Sedgefield, W.J. (1915). The Place-Names of Cumberland and Westmorland. Manchester University Press.

Smith, A.H. (1961). Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Part 6, East and West Staincliffe and Ewcross Wapentake. Volume 35. English Place-Name Society. Cambridge University Press.

Smith, A.H. 1(967). The Place-Names of Westmorland: Pt 1. Vol XLII. English Place-Name Society. Cambridge University Press.
Smith, A.H. (1967). The Place-Names of Westmorland: Part 2. Vol XLIII. English Place-Name Society. Cambridge University Press.

Whaley, D. (2006). A Dictionary of Lake District Place-Names. English Place-Name Society. University of Nottingham.

Winchester, A.J.L. (2016). Cumbria: An Historical Gazetteer. Lancaster University.
Winchester, A.J.L. (2017). Lake District Field-Names: a guide for local historians. Lancaster University.
English Place-Name Society
https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/groups/epns/index.aspx
Digital Survey of English Place-Names
https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/research/groups/ins/resources/digital-survey-of-english-place-names.aspx

Later CVBG newsletter contributions will seek to cover:-

- The broad architecture found within Cumbria. Such books include the Pevsner Guides to notable buildings by hamlet, village and town, both rural and urban. Palmer's Historic Farmhouses. The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Westmorland. The distinctive vernacular architecture and domestic furniture of Cumbria.
- Major vernacular authors. The influence of architectural historian R.W Brunskill, his seminal work on Vernacular Architecture of the Lake Counties / Cumbria, and other standard historical architecture works. Denyer on The National Trust in the Lake District. Reference books and articles on distinctive styles of rural Cumbrian furniture. Distinct types of Cumbrian architecture: small and large homes, halls, farmhouses, and guides to distinctive local bastles, clay dabbins, fortified buildings, towers and halls.
- Key resources and textbooks on vernacular architecture across Britain. Cruck frame buildings. Regional building styles and available materials.
- Popular works on the history of Cumbria, and how architecture fits within ▪

Dr Justin Wood

Please visit if you can, our newly updated, fresh and crisp website, where you will find all the up to date information about recent visits and forthcoming events. Previous newsletters in PDF format are all available to download at **www.cvbg.co.uk**

5. North Pennine Villages of Skirwith, Blencarn & Milburn- 5th July

© John McDowell

A group of 30 members attended the village exploration day. The morning was devoted to informal walkabouts in Skirwith and Blencarn, self-led individually or in small groups with maps indicating the main buildings of vernacular interest. Half the group was in each village at a time, swopping over mid-morning. Skirwith, Blencarn and the hamlet of Kirkland are in the Parish of Culgaith and lie at the foot of the Pennine Fells. Many thanks to Stephanie Hewison for her help during recce visits, as well as liaising with local contacts over arrangements for the day.

Skirwith ('a wood in common use' from Old Norse) straddles the Skirwith Beck and a wide central village green. The village layout has some characteristics of a medieval village with redevelopment in an east/west direction along the route from Kirkland to Langwathby and Penrith. The Manor of Skirwith was part of the barony of Adam Fitz-Swein in the 12C, the Middleton family in the 16C passing to the Huttons and later Flemings (of Rydal hall). The nearby Manor of Bank towards Kirkland was in possession of the Salkeld family until 1399 and passed by marriage to the Crackenthorpes until 20C. The 13C Church of St Lawrence in Kirkland has an effigy of a knight of that date in the sanctuary and an old cross in the churchyard. The church (extensive 19C restoration) served Skirwith until the Church of St John the Evangelist was built there in 1856 in decorated gothic style. The manor house known as Skirwith Hall was built on a possible site of a religious house belonging to the Knights Templars; taken down in 1772 when the present Skirwith Hall Farmstead complex was rebuilt on the site. Skirwith Abbey was built nearby in 1768 by John Orfeur Yates; John married Mary Aglionby of Hutton Hall, Penrith, and their son Francis inherited the Nunnery later taking the Aglionby name. The Abbey was sold to William Parker in 1822. He founded the church (listed grade II*), built the Sun Inn & coach house, the vicarage and stables (gd II). The majority of buildings dating from 17C onwards are of brown/red sandstone with graduated Westmorland green slate roofs. Skirwith was designated a conservation area in 2000, a character appraisal was published in 2007.


Gate Farm, Skirwith © John McDowell

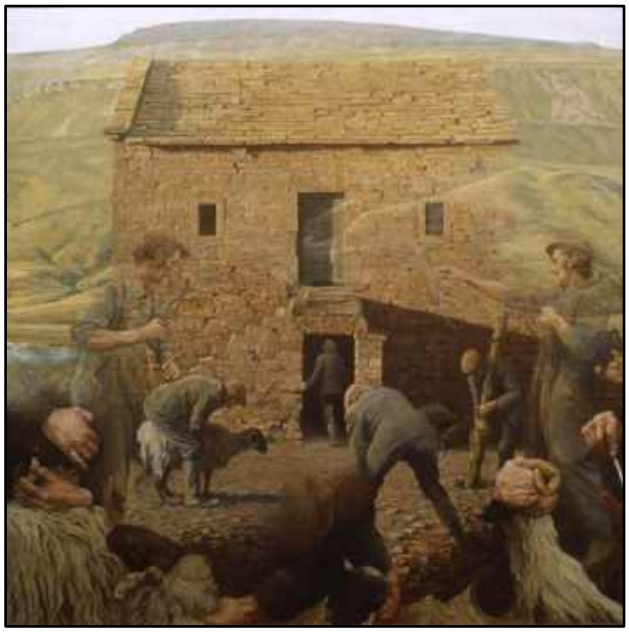
Our walk took in buildings which likely existed in 17C, such as those at Beck Farm (west) to Town Head and Guilders Cottage on the Kirkland Road (east), and on the way we passed other non-designated buildings which contribute to the

character of the village such as Brook View, Hayriggs, Greencourt, Gate Farm, Aglionby Farm & barn, Pear Tree Farm, Chapel House and Croft House. We had access to see inside the church on Church St. which is across the green and admired high quality carving of woodwork and stonework; much of the 17C panelling and furniture and a rococo chandelier (from Brougham Hall) were from the collections of William Parker.

We saw only a distant view of Skirwith Abbey across the parkland beyond the Home Farm buildings. It is a 2 storey Palladian house on a full basement, a 7 bay front with full height bays to the sides and an interesting internal layout according to Pevsner. The two detached wings have Venetian windows.

From the vernacular aspect those 17C buildings mentioned before were appreciated by the group but in some need of conservation. We noted dressed sandstone quoins, sandstone ridges, window surrounds, copings and kneelers, the buildings facing the stream and wide green have small front gardens, strip fields behind.

Blencarn is another idyllic small fell side village and just 2 miles away towards Milburn (some took a short detour there via Kirkland), it is a starting point for an ascent of Cross Fell (2929 ft.) the highest point on the Pennine chain. The Manor of Blencarn was granted to William L'Engleys. Many of the buildings are farm houses, cottages & barn conversions in a linear layout on either side of a road through the middle of a broad central village green. Blencarn Hall and barn is set above the beck on which there is a previous corn mill (converted to a dwelling) nearby. A walk around the green took us past The Green, Bastiel House (corruption of bastle) Fell View, The Croft, Ellicar barn, West View, Barn Croft, Long Laithes, Byre Cottage, Mid Town Farm, Rose Cottage, Glen Cottage and Whitehall Farm. Arrangements had been made, for those wishing, to visit Alan Stones at Glen Cottage to see his studios for paintings and printmaking by stone and plate lithography. We were very grateful for his time, a guided visit and repeated explanations to small groups. A hog house in the garden has been sensitively conserved; it is likely from 17C, of rubble stone and thatched roof originally, there is a low entrance on a side wall. It was added to in C19 & now has a sandstone flagged roof. The upper floor has a small opening to outside with a sandstone shelf, likely the access for hens. Alan has kindly forwarded a copy of his atmospheric painting 'Jarrod and the Bastle House' as viewed in his studio,(Left). Bastiel House, across the green, could only be seen from the road. It has been greatly altered but with clues to the earlier existence of a bastle such as a steeply pitched now sandstone clad roof and single very small window in upper storey of side wall.



There are currently no listed buildings in Blencarn but there are certainly many of interest. Andrew Carter was shown round two houses of note by their owners. The Croft is a cross passage house where in the attached barn the thatch is still visible under the tin roof. The house is much altered internally and the heck has gone. Across the road Barn Croft is a thatched cottage which still has crucks, however since renovation much of the original internal features have been lost, a spiral stair and balcony are modern additions.

Croft Barn, with thatch visible © Andrew Carter

We all met up at Milburn Village Hall, around 1.5 miles from Blencarn on the road towards Appleby. After our lunch break I gave a short talk, illustrated by Saxton & Cary maps, village plans and photos covering the topography and some history of Skirwith, Kirkland & Blencarn in old Cumberland across the border from Milburn, Knock and Dufton in old Westmorland. A stretch of the Carlisle to Settle railway line, between Langwathby and Appleby, runs nearby through Culgaith. The settlement in Bank Hall wood and an old Roman Road, the Maiden Way, which ran nearby from Ardale Beck to Kirkby Thore were discussed. There are also a series of lynchets or cultivation terraces known as the 'Hanging Walls of Mark Anthony', these earthworks for agricultural use are on the south face of Baron's Hill, there is also a well and a circular building on a hillock (foundation only), all found near the farm of Ranbeck. The Wilton Tenement (Kirkland Hall) and Skirwith Hall are two farmsteads rebuilt in the 18C and documented well by Blake Tyson in CWAAS Transactions of 1981. We then reviewed the buildings of note that we had seen in the morning before a brief introduction to Milburn and district.

Milburn (or 'mill stream') first mention was in 1178. The Forest of Milburn was recorded in the time of King John. The medieval village layout was illustrated by aerial photos and a field map of c1800. It became a parish in 1753. A planned village with a large oblong green lined by cottages & houses attached or close to each other with roads entering at the four corners; this was a defensive arrangement as these openings could be blocked to marauding Scots. The field map shows where the church, the mill, the grange and Howgill Castle are to be found outside the village.

Townhead, Milburn © John McDowell

The medieval church of St Cuthbert was founded by William de Lancaster 1355, there is much Norman work, and a bellcote dated 1616. The church (listed gd II) was founded by monks of Shap Abbey for the benefit of inmates at Milburn Grange. Howgill Castle is half a mile to the east and built as twin pele towers originally c1375 with a central block added in 1733. The sandstone tower walls are up to 10 ½ ft thick and incorporate garderobes, stairs and mural passages. Measuring 64 ft x 33 ft they are equivalent in proportion and detail to those at Newbiggin Hall nearby.
A village trail as detailed by R.W. Brunskill in his book 'Traditional Buildings of Cumbria' and revised by David Butterworth in his book 'Milburn, A History' in 1997.

Barn Croft © Andrew Carter

The group were to follow this suggested route which I had updated again due to some new development and changes in house names. This central part of the village was designated as a conservation area in 1975. There are many grade II listed buildings and features around the green, which mostly date from mid/late C18 to early C19, including Cross Fell Cottage, North Gate, Garth Cottage, Eastgate (previously a ladies college), Netherley, Milburn House as well as a farmhouse with byre & barn range with gingang adjoining. These now converted farm buildings are around a cobbled courtyard. Architectural details with features of vernacular note that we saw included use of impressive sandstone blocks, rusticated quoins, snecked rubble sandstone, herring bone chiselling and some chequered pattern to stone work. Square cut mullions and fire windows, some blocked. There is ashlar stonework, incised stucco or pebble dash to facades. Looking up we saw kneelers, voissoirs, early gutters on corbels, slate and stone roofs. Some houses are one room deep with outshuts & others double pile plan. Farm buildings including bank barns have mostly been converted to houses but retain much character. Garth Cottage has an oven projection on a gable and at Linden Cottage the door jamb is worn from knife sharpening.
Fortunately it was a relatively dry day for our visit and those attending appreciated the variety of vernacular buildings within these three villages ▪

John McDowell

(Editors note; Unfortunately, space requirements only allow for a small selection of images to be shown from the many excellent examples submitted. The website may be used for others in time).

6. Escomb Anglo-Saxon Church, c670AD.

"one of the most important and moving survivals of the architecture of the time of Bede" (Pevsner, County Durham guide, 1951).

Some 30 miles from the Westmorland border, Escomb Church is a most remarkable survivor, and very well worth a visit. Built 670-675AD, it is one of only a handful of extant early Anglo-Saxon period churches, its core largely intact and original. Jenkins (England's Thousand Best Churches, 1999) describes its importance as only subsidiary to Jarrow and Monkwearmouth as an Anglo-Saxon shrine. The church has long outlived the early Kingdom of Northumbria.

Escomb is a double cell chapel, with no tower, its porch (to South only) a later addition. High on the outer wall an C8th sundial is flanked by beasts, a serpent below, with three etched lines in the stonework suggesting the time of prayer or services. Five small original windows remain in-situ high up. Each is splayed inwards to let in light, while limiting the ingress of the weather; nevertheless, they indicate how little light would have penetrated the early church. These windows have been joined on the South side by later larger windows in Norman and Gothic styles.

The walls of the church have in part (or all) been brought from the nearby Roman fort at Vinovium (Binchester); where a ready supply of masoned, quarried stone was to hand, why not! Though who in power gave permission for its use? The corners to the outer walls of the church comprise massive quoin stone masonry blocks, very well cut, each level laid on alternate sides. A reused Roman legionary inscription, for the LEG VI Legion, can be seen high on the outer North wall, along with a possible steplike mounting block. Neighbouring recent estate houses are built on gravel beds from the River Wear. If the water table is high, as found with Salisbury

Cathedral, such compacting may well explain the lack of movement of the Church walls over 1350 years?

Roman stone is clear all over the church inner walls. Many of the re-used stones display diamond-broaching cross-hatching, a distinctive Roman feature that was originally designed for plaster to adhere to. The chancel arch dominates the inner church and is likely a rebuilt Roman fort arch. The long and short Saxon stonework style that raises the arch is now defined as 'Escomb.' The remains of C15th medieval scrollwork painting adorn the arch underside. A fragment of wall fresco has not been covered in limewash. An incised small consecration cross, engraved into the wall behind the pulpit, too suggests Irish / Celtic influence; a small stone cross behind the alter dates to the C9th. The original, unusual, North wall door is clear and was later closed up to stop evil spirits entering (whiskered bats still fly around within the church). Inside, the door frame design is suggested to indicate 'the tree of life' The porch contains a super display, including remnants of early stone crosses.

On first entering Escomb Church, its proportions appear fascinating. A possible holy trinity? the church is 20' wide, 40' high, and 60' long. Its height is unusual, suggesting early connections with Gallic chapels (Escomb Church Guide, 2015). You may never step within a similar church - why not go and see. Escomb remains an active parish church. To visit, take the A66 from Penrith; Escomb is just to the west of Bishop Auckland. The front door key is always available, on a hook outside neighbouring house no. 28 (the church gate sign, and church porch - door unlocked - has information); the church lights are inside the door (do switch off when lock up) ▪

7. An Architectural Enigma by Keith Cooper and Paul Lewis

1. The view from the south east

Nestled in a small valley below Swathburn Crag, near Great Asby, sits an architectural puzzle upon which CVBG has been invited to shed some understanding. Keith Cooper and the Chairman recently paid a visit, and whilst research continues, its building style hints in part at Tudor or even earlier beginnings.

Breaks Hall is a large farm that has had several clear phases of extension and improvement; at first glance it could be summarized as an Anglo Baroque house with an early 20th century wing added on the northeast end of the main range. However, the southwest wing is clearly earlier with a 3-storey spiral stone stair lit by narrow windows that at one time held iron bars for security. The main windows of this part have been modified in the 19th century but there are hints of retained window heads with chamfers, mullions and bars for supporting leaded lights, typical of the Tudor period.

2. A surviving older window head with hints of a central mullion and bars for mounting leaded lights

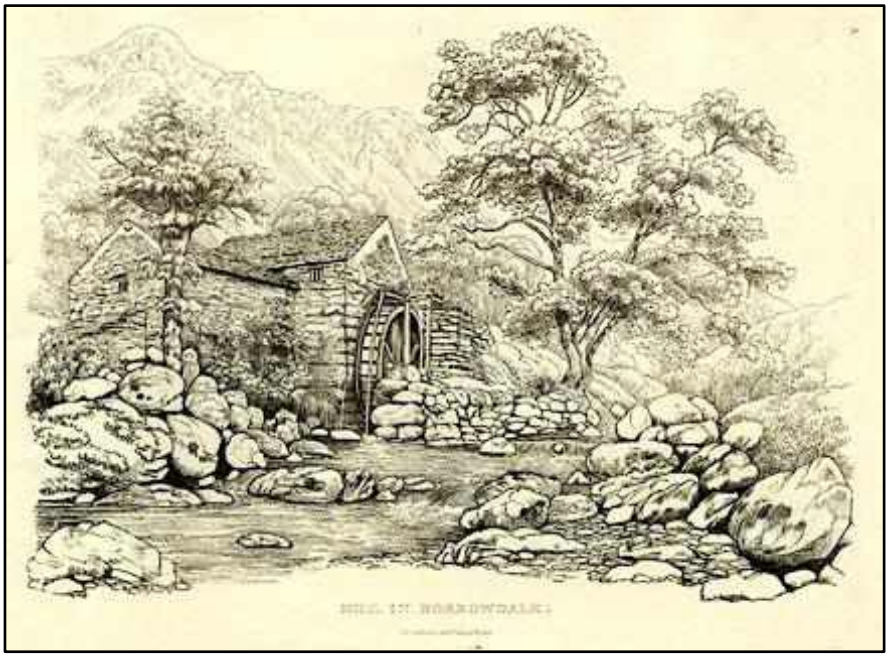
Archive investigations continue to explore the farm's early history, and more insights will hopefully become clear in time ▪

8. Forthcoming events and venue images

Christmas Lunch Venue- Punchbowl, Askham

Peter House, Braithwaite

Little Asby



Coombe Gill, Borrowdale