NEWSLETTER No. 51 – SPRING 2026

1. From the Chairman

I am delighted to report that the CVBG committee remains busy and focused on providing engagement for the growing membership, now topping 240. As our programme of ZOOM presentations for the winter months comes to an end, members can look forward to a wide range of events and talks over the spring and summer months.

On Saturday 9 May members will gather at Lorton Village Hall to hear Angus Winchester, author, address "Village, Hamlet and Farmstead in the Lake District." Sarika Jhawar, Architect with the National Trust, will also provide an intriguing insight into her journey as a SPAB Scholar, recounting the historic places she experienced on her travels.

Friday 5th June will provide an opportunity for members meet at Skelton Village Hall before visiting Blencowe and Hardrigg Castles to enjoy their medieval architecture.

We are fortunate that one of members, Dr. Abigail Lloyd has recently completed her PhD studies on the history of place names, and she will be providing an evening presentation at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 1st July by ZOOM on the place names of Cumbria.

On Tuesday 4th August members can enjoy a tour of Cockermouth Castle with the Civic Trust and take in the vernacular and Georgian architecture of the town.

Our annual general meeting this year will be held on Saturday 5th September when I shall stand down as Chairman after three busy and rewarding years; I must thank members for their kind encouragement and support. Our new Chairman will be Andrew Carter, committee member and former radio producer. He is passionate about historic buildings and will bring that enthusiasm to the group. With the committee's support, I hope to retain an involvement in steering the recording group, zoom presentations and occasional newsletter articles.

Our President, June Hill, will shortly announce details for this year's President's Day in October so watch out for details from the Secretary.

With kindest regards

N.B. Editor's note

We have a Facebook Group where we like to post information about events, courses and interesting buildings we've spotted, not all serious! Why not join the group and share something interesting you've come across? The address can be found on the adjacent page.

2. Schools – June Hill

Schools are often overlooked in terms of vernacular building, but they can give insights into local building traditions. These few examples are intended to draw attention to old schools and invite contributions from across Cumbria.

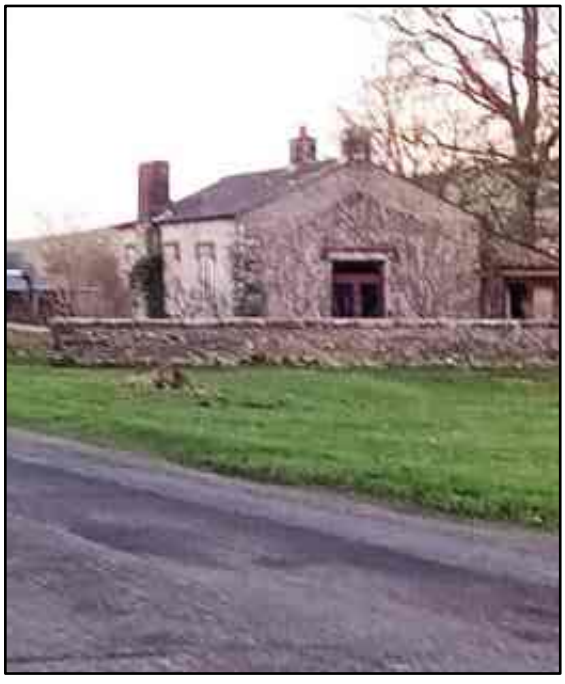
Dame Schools

Dame Schools were usually found in the homes of widowed or unmarried women who could benefit from the few pence paid weekly by the children who attended. They dwindled after the 1870 Education Act was passed, establishing Board Schools. Subsequent acts of 1876 and 1880 provided for attendance committees and compulsory education for all children up to ten years of age.

Maulds Meaburn

© June Hill

The first known school in the village was in a house now named Brookside. (Photo, left) annexed to a linear farmstead. The barn at the other side of the house is now converted into a dwelling. In 1824 it was replaced by the building which stands on the Green, across stepping stones over the River Lyvennet. (1st edition OS map, 1859). This closed in 1963 when the school at Crosby Ravensworth, near the parish church, was rebuilt.



© June Hill

'Maulds Meaburn Endowed School,(Right) now a house known as Meaburn Lodge. Although late Georgian in date, the style of the three windows facing west is Tudor.'

Raisbeck near Orton (Images © Jennifer Callis)

What makes the Dame School at **Raisbeck** different is the fact that local farmers got together and built the school for their own children. Built of local squared rubble, in courses, with quoins, this building stands on the edge of Hollow Green, Raisbeck, in Orton Parish and forms a section of the adjacent field boundary. The entrance to the schoolroom faces south east and is protected by a lean-to porch, entered from the green, which once housed the earth closet.

View from North West

The single unit purpose-built school is of two storeys, with one south east facing window to each floor, a fixed light replacing a casement serving the upper floor and a sash (now also fixed) the ground floor.

The roof is of graduated slate with a stone ridge. On the north east wall of the school, through stones protrude. A stone chimney (still open) stands on this gable apex end of the roof, with water tabling and a commercial chimney pot.

The entrance from the porch is by a six-panelled door which looks fairly modern. Re-used, it has previously been hung on the other side as the latch hole and hinge traces show.

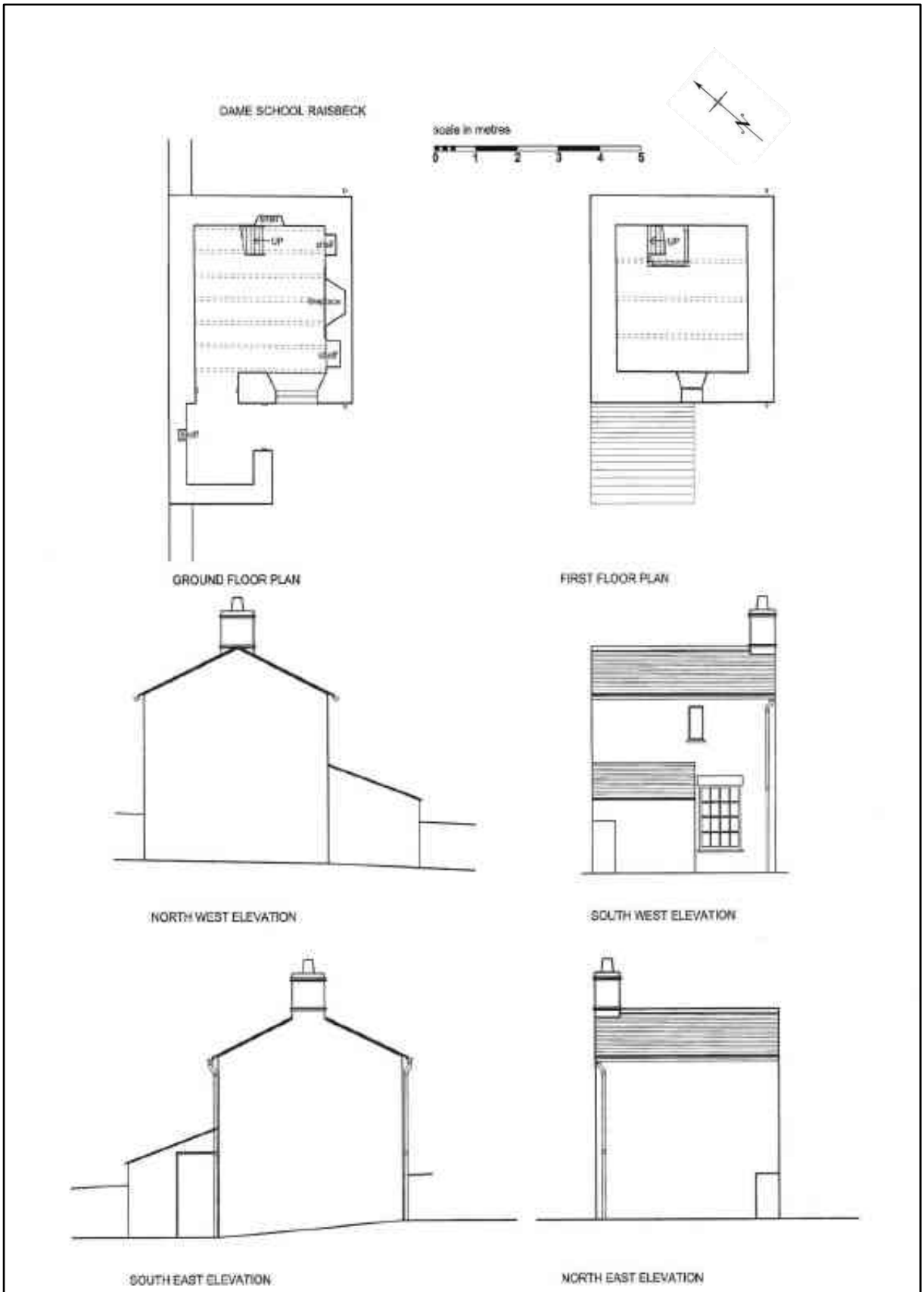
Internally, the schoolroom is approximately 10 feet 6 inches (3.2 metres) square. The floor is of cement, replacing original flagstones, and the walls are plastered and lime washed. There are few internal features, and apart from the splayed window, the main one is the hearth. Roughly central in the north east wall and level with the floor, it is of rough stonework, semi-circular in plan, with one large stone lintel. Either side is a square alcove, and another taller one is in the north west wall at the foot of the wooden stairs. These take the form of a steep step ladder with a handrail.

Upstairs, there are fewer features still. The newel posts upstairs are the only decoration. The floor boards, supported on seven beams and the stairs have been replaced, as far as possible replicating the original installations.

The little building stands on common land in the hamlet of Raisbeck in the parish of Orton. It is now in the care of Orton Manor Court, itself a rare survival and is freely open to the public. It is well worth a visit. The recording group for Raisbeck School was Claire Jeffery, Jennifer Callis, Keith Cooper, Lynne Seignot and June Hill.

View showing porch

Top of stairs



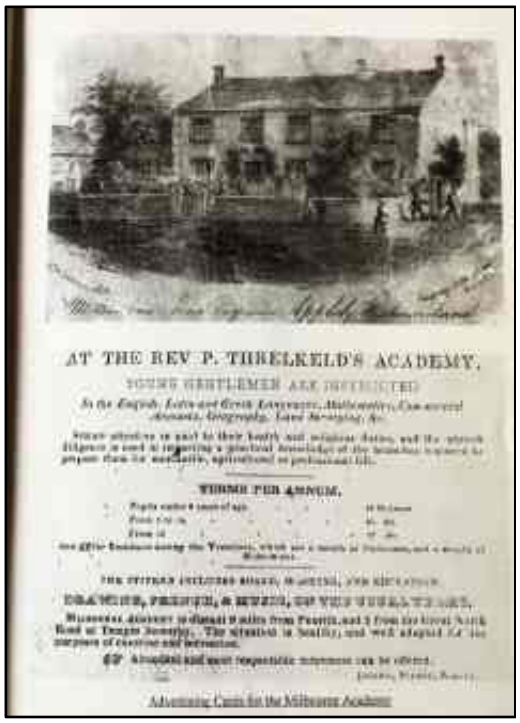
Drawing of Raisbeck Dame School © Lynne Seignot

Appleby

Now housing the Courtyard Gallery in Boroughgate, is a little building which was used as a school until 1901. The current owner remembers being told by an old lady, that her brother attended the school. It stands in the courtyard of a house facing the street and is approached through a passage way. The upper storey was the schoolroom with an outside staircase, now replaced. Inside, there is no ceiling, so the roof trusses are visible, and all but one have had the tie beams removed. (Open Tuesdays to Saturdays and selling good coffee and cakes.)

Academies

Milburn Academy is a house now, one those who went on the walkabout which John McDowell led in 2025 would have seen. Now named Eastgate it is the home of one of our members. Academies were popular in Georgian and Victorian times among parents with the means to pay fees. It was run by a vicar and later by his son, so lasted as a school for just two generations.


AT THE REV P. THRELKELD'S ACADEMY,

TERMS PER ANNUM.

Advertising Cards for the Milburn Academy

(Left) Milburn Academy, built on land bought in 1827 for £350.

Bowes Academy, immortalised in the novel by Dickens as Dotheboys Hall, in Nicholas Nickleby, is just over Stainmore from Milburn and was one of the schools in the north, particularly Yorkshire, where children were sent from the south, particularly children in the care of the City of London, who were destined to become apprentices.

Manor House, Winton, was another such school. Now also a house, it commands the centre of Winton, near Kirkby Stephen. CVBG did a village walkabout there some few years ago.

The building is dated 1726 on the segmental pediment over the panelled door. The classical front has six bays to the three storeys, the door being off centre, with two windows on one side and three on the other. The two upper floors both have six windows.

© Jennifer Callis

Grammar Schools.

© Google Images

Many old grammar schools are situated in or near churchyards. This is because they were founded by religious bodies in order to teach boys Latin grammar, to equip them for a career in the church. They taught Greek and other subjects as well, but Latin was the main aim. **Dent** Grammar School (where geologist Adam Sedgwick was a pupil), is beside the church, as is **Hawkshead** Grammar School, (Photo left) famous for having William Wordsworth as a scholar.

Other schools

St Bees School founded in 1583, was the initiative of a 'local boy made good'. In this case, the man was Edmund Grindal, who became Archbishop of Canterbury, after holding many important roles at Oxford, Cambridge and elsewhere. The school still retains the Tudor block first built.
Another school built by a boy who went to London and made a fortune was the one in **Penrith,** founded in 1670 by William Robinson. He was a member of the Grocers' Guild. Robinson's School, Penrith, (Photo below) It has all the features expected in a seventeenth century building.

© Google Images

This one was for poor girls, to give them a free education. They learned to "read, work lace, knit and other matters proper for young girls to learn." When they went out in Penrith, they were "to refrain from swearing, lying, stealing and quarrelling."

Their day began at six in the morning in summer and in winter at seven.
After many changes to the curriculum the school closed in 1971, the year after celebrating its 300th anniversary.

It is now used as Penrith Museum and is free to enter ▪

3. An exploration of the Anglo-Scottish borders area of Cumberland.

The borders area of Cumberland is a rather remote region with a turbulent history between England & Scotland. There are many buildings of interest reflecting this, not exclusively vernacular but the castles, pele towers and bastles along with country houses and churches give this area a particular character. In recent years the group has enjoyed AGMs at both Naworth Castle and the Dacre Hall at Lanercost Priory which are also nearby in Hadrian's Wall territory. A favourite circuit of mine for heritage interest is perhaps to start from near junction 44 on the M6 and explore to the north of Carlisle. A combination of cycling in the area and with reference to old road maps helped me discover the local topography and the buildings; I particularly like the Stockdale/ Cary map of 1805, also John Ogilby's road maps of England (1675) and the Taylor & Skinner maps (1776) for Scotland which were also published in strip map form for travel and tourists. Ordnance Survey Explorer maps 314 & 324 in 1:25 000 scale are more helpful. I loosely follow the Ogilby map from Carlisle to Berwick on Tweed (as far as Newcastleton in Scotland) and then meander back via Bewcastle.
Brunskill's field handbook and his other publications covering local vernacular building and the Cumbria volume of the Buildings of England series 2010 (Matthew Hyde & N. Pevsner) are of course always worth consulting. In the latter there are entries for Arthuret, Longtown, Netherby Hall, Kirkandrews on Esk, Kirklinton, Brackenhill Tower, Nicholforest, Bewcastle, Askerton Castle, Scaleby and the Houghton areas which will give more detail. The Medieval Fortified Buildings of Cumbria by D.R. Perriam and J. Robinson, (CWAAS Extra series; vol. xxix) published in 1998 is based on J. F. Curwen's work of 1913 (CWAAS Extra series; vol. XIII), a recent book on 'the lesser defensible buildings of Cumbria' of 2025 is by Peter Ryder (CWAAS Extra series 53); in addition J.M. Robinson's Guide to Country Houses of the North-West of 1991 and the books by Mike Salter on Castles, Tower Houses and Old Parish Churches of Cumbria are all very informative and well-illustrated.

Coop House, Netherby

The A7 towards Longtown passes through Harker, Blackford and Westlinton. The ancient Arthuret Parish in Eskdale ward contains the townships of Brackenhill, Longtown, Lineside & Netherby. Arthuret Church is to the west and was rebuilt from 1609 on the orders of James I with a spacious medieval plan, the quatrefoil shaped piers inside may be C 13th. Longtown contained only a dozen houses in 1688, then mainly of clay but was laid out afresh from 1757 by Robert Graham of Netherby. At Netherby Hall, the Grahams ancestral seat for over 400 years until 1989, a large tower house survives within the remodelled building, but it has been refaced. The hall is in Baronial taste with neoclassical wings. There has been much restoration of the hall, coach house and stables carried out under new owners, the grounds and walled garden are open annually for some events.

Within the estate the Coop House of 1760-70 is a Landmark Trust property, a suspension bridge crosses the River Esk to the ashlar faced Kirkandrews church of 1776, which is in Italianate style, the church can be accessed from the A7. Nearby is Kirkandrews Tower which CVBG saw jointly with the Scottish Group (SVBWG) in June 2019, it is a perfect C 16th free standing example of a tower house with a gatehouse & barmkin enclosure. Rebuilt as a farmhouse in 1530, it is intact and occupied. Gilnockie Tower, a C 17th tower house north of Canonbie in Dumfriesshire, was originally known as Hollows Tower. At Haithwaite farm, close to Penton, a traditional farmstead is being regenerated and diversified by the Netherby Hall company as a destination for visitors and will include a Heritage Centre, Cafe and accommodation. It is due to open in two phases over the next year. A choice of quiet roads before Penton Bridge over the Liddel Water head north to Newcastleton but Ogilby's route from Westlinton was via Kirklinton & here the old road crossed the River Lyne to travel north past Brackenhill Tower.

Kirklinton Church of 1845 has some reused Norman parts; it is at a prominent junction before reaching Kirklinton Hall. This hall of 1660 for Edmund Appleby was designed in Jacobean style with stepped gables in Dutch fashion; it was enlarged & extended in 1845. Requisitioned in WW II, it later became a hotel and latterly a notorious nightclub. Some restoration of the ruins was carried out and the gardens opened for a few years until it was resold recently. Brackenhill Tower, C 16th was a NW entry in the BBC2 Restoration series of 2003, a charitable trust had hoped to create a visitor centre, but it was sold to a businessman and has been subsequently restored. The road continues north via Kingsfield (recent property sale) to pass Stonegarthside Hall which may date back to 1276, the present thick-walled double-pile house of 1682 has two wings and an enclosed courtyard (garth), which is now roofed over. It is then a short distance to Kershopefoot and the border with Scotland at the bridge over the Liddel Water.

Kirklinton Hall

Newcastleton (or Copshaw Holm) is an C 18th planned village, the Liddesdale Heritage Centre there exhibits much of interest on reiving history and life in the Debateable Lands. Hermitage Castle is nearby just off the B6399, the C 13th Norman tower was added to 200 years later. It all looks very solid and complete but grim in a remote glen. A formidable fortress which often changed between English and Scots possession, at one time it was the stronghold of the Cumberland Dacre family. Returning to Cumberland via Kershope Forest and crossing the Black Lyne river near Blackpool Gate, a tortuous minor road passes farmsteads at The Knowe, Slacks, Myre & Croft. The vernacular buildings here were built by local craftsmen to traditional patterns (one is derelict & with date stone of 1770) there are also remains of bastles and castles (e.g. Crew).The bastle houses built on a smaller scale to peels tended to be owned by better off tenant farmers. Most of them were built in the C16th and lie within 15miles of the border. A farmhouse at Peel O'Hill is on a

public footpath and listed grade II as a former bastle house, late C 16th, thick walled but with C18th fenestration, white washed stone rubble on projecting plinth stones. Nearby is Bewcastle with the castle founded by William II in 1092. A curtain wall and gate house were added later. It lies in the NE corner of a Roman fort and is a square court with walls about 23m long and 1.8m thick.

Bewcastle Church is adjacent, c1200 at east end & the rest C 19th, a single chamber with a west end tower. The C 7th cross shaft with runic inscription and high quality well preserved carvings on all four sides. There is a small exhibition in a separate building which is free to view and usually open, information boards cover the local Edge of Roman Empire history, royal connections, the Reiving families, the raids and feuding clans on the Anglo-Scottish border, as well as details on the castle, church & cross. Continuing south to Askerton Castle which can be viewed over a garden wall from the roadside but the front of this early hall house (C 13th – C 14th) is now unfortunately partly hidden by the yew trees in front. Towers were added in late C 15th, Dacre on left and Dovecote on right, and the ranges enclosing a courtyard had extensive remodelling late C 16th.

Askerton Castle

Going south through Walton (which is on the Hadrian's Wall path) the A6071 is reached close to Brampton and turn towards Longtown. There is a thatched cottage in Laversdale down a road to the left and which would continue behind Carlisle Lake District Airport to the A689. An alternative road on the left from the A6071 is to Scaleby. Scaleby Castle is on the left before the village; a significant group of buildings with a moat and all in an interesting arrangement. The tower and gateway are of C 14th origin, much of these older parts are ruinous but the south range was restored several times between 1685 and 1838 and is still occupied. Nearby the All Saints' Church in Scaleby dates from C 13th & has a defensible west tower. Going south passes Long Park where there is a large barn with clay walls visible from the road. The Knells is a neoclassical house of 1824 built for John Dixon (the older brother of Peter Dixon), local mill owners in Carlisle and Warwick Bridge, it is now a residential home. On reaching the A689, near Houghton Hall garden centre, the starting point is only a short distance to the right.

There is much worthy of seeing in this remote part of Cumberland which is still sparsely populated; the remaining buildings give an idea of their defensible nature and reflect the difficulties of living on the border until the two kingdoms came under the rule of one monarch ▪

Text and Images © John McDowell

(More images on the inside back cover)

4. The Smithy at Hayton, Aspatria – Text and Images Andrew Fielding

Shortly after I moved to the village of Hayton, near Aspatria, this small and unobtrusive building became the subject of a planning application to the then Allerdale Council (FULL/2021/0303) requesting its demolition and replacement by a new detached dwelling in a style similar to the former Sun Inn, which is situated in a terrace-row to the east (Fig.1). There were no objections submitted by neighbours, other Hayton residents or any other interested parties regarding the heritage value of the building.

Allerdale Borough Council requested that the client should prepare a Heritage Statement in support of the proposed demolition of 'a derelict single store barn'. However, that statement provided few details or any historical background for the building stating that the 'former smithy, is not designated as a listed building but does lie within the Hayton Conservation Area created in 1981.'

The statement described the position of the building in the village but that it was 'not a significant feature in the village-scape and is in a state of disrepair to the point of dereliction. The roof has been replaced with corrugated metal and the walls in some areas are at the point of collapse. The building is noted as a 'Smithy' on the historic ordnance maps, and it could be assumed that it has been in that use for many years before the survey date. As a village being central in a rural setting it would have traditionally accommodated a village blacksmith/farrier as an essential service to the immediate community. Its more recent historical use is unknown but is unlikely to have had any commercial purpose in the last 70 years. More recently it has been used for general storage until it reached a point of near dereliction. It is hoped that some of the demolition stone can be reclaimed and used to construct parts of the new boundary walls.'

The Officers report to Allerdale Council stated that 'the existing building in its current state does not enhance the character of the conservation area or that it is of significant design to prevent the loss of the building it its entirety.' Unsurprisingly the application for the demolition of the smithy was approved on 3 March 2022.

Figure 1: Terrace row east of the 'Old Smithy, comprising Sun Inn Cottage, Main House, former Sun Inn and Smithy Cottages 1-2 and 3-4'. Looking over the village Green. The smithy is situated to the right of Smithy Cottages.

Survey

During the process of putting the smithy and the adjacent field on the market I approached the owner, via the agent, and asked for permission to make a more accurate record of the building prior to its demolition. Permission was approved and I took photographs of it and some basic dimensions as well as conducting desk-based research into the development of the plot and who the blacksmiths were who worked in it.

The smithy comprises a stone built two-bay building 7.5m x 7.5m with a height of 6.5m to the ridge. The single roof truss is in the centre of the building, the tie-beam being supported on the top of the front and rear walls.

The plot on which the smithy stands is listed on the Tithe map as Field 234, called 'Croft' and House 235a as being owned and occupied by a William Donald, farmer. The building was attached to the terrace of buildings running to the east, but became detached and then had outshuts added to it. By 1898 it was labelled on the OS map as a smithy.

There is evidence of an external structures and two outshuts visible in the external, east gable wall (Fig.2). The infilling elements are no longer standing but remains of two roof lines can be seen in the east gable elevation. The earlier roof had stone slates covering a possible bread oven, but this was replaced with a more recent timber-framed out-shut with a mono-pitch, galvanised corrugated iron covering.

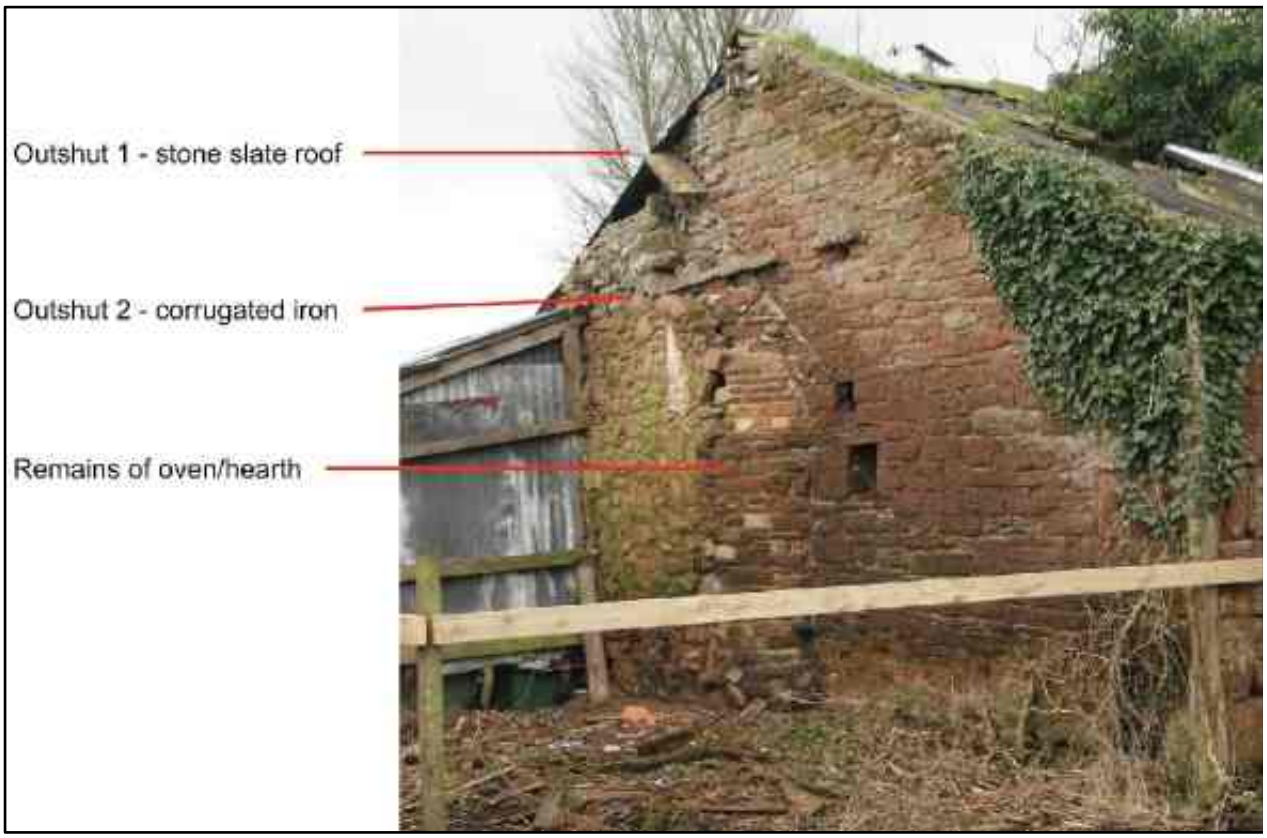


Figure 2: Eastern gable wall with two outshut phases and an oven/hearth.

Internal Survey

Internally there is little evidence of the building's use as a smithy. The hearths have been removed, and the floor has been laid with new concrete. Openings in the western wall are all that remain of the flues of two hearths, which vent to cavities within the external wall (Fig.3.) The brickwork has remains of whitewash.

Figure 3. Internal wall with location of two flues.

There is a centre king post truss connected to the tie=beam with a bolt. The upper face (Fig.4) has carpenters marks, an inscribed letter 'F' on the left side of the tie beam (Fig.5) and a graffiti mark (Fig.6) on the right side principal rafter. The right side joints are marked 'I' and the left side joints are marked 'II' on the tie-beam, king post and both principal rafters. Trenched purlins had been altered when the corrugated iron roof replaced the original. Common rafters only survived on the north side of the roof, but these were covered in ivy when I visited.

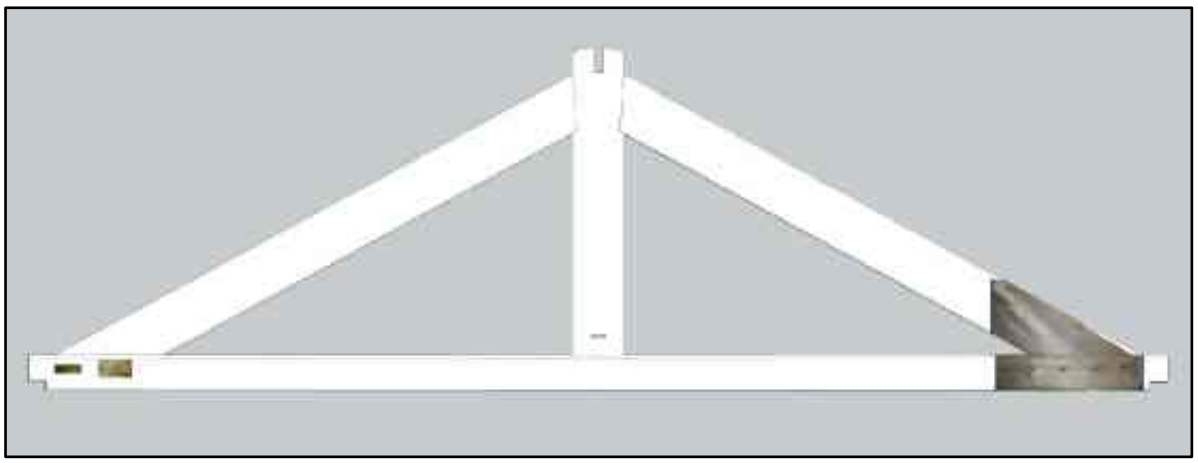


Figure 4: Fair face of the king post truss showing the location of the incised letter 'F' on the mail beam and graffiti on the principal rafter.

Figure 5: (Left) Inscribed letter 'F' on the main beam.

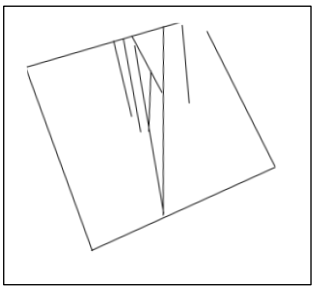


Figure 6: (Right) Inscribed graffiti on the principal rafter.

There are four bolts through the east gable wall with nuts and washers on the outside and internal rings on the inside, presumably for tethering horses (Fig.7).

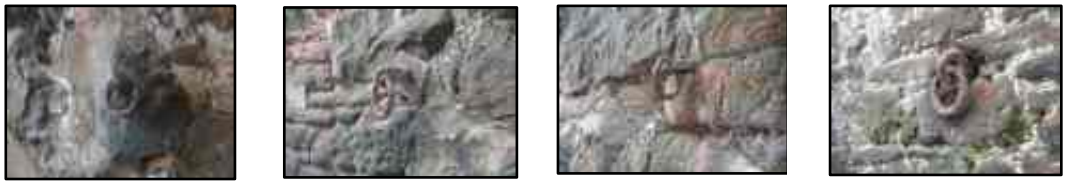


Figure 7. Four tethering rings inside the smithy attached to bolts passing through the gable wall.

Figure 8. Front elevation facing the village green.

A set of wide wooden doors, now replaced by corrugated sheeting provided access from the village green. The door hinges were hung from bolts set into the front wall. The associated field extends beyond the front of the building with its own access from the village green (Fig.8).

Summary of Blacksmiths at Hayton

The earliest mention of a blacksmith at Hayton, Aspatria I have found to date is of Joseph Gibson who is mentioned in a document of 1760 linked to land at Grange Farm, Hayton. (Cumbria Archives Service DBH 24/18/1/1)

A trade directory lists John Mann as being a blacksmith at both Hayton & Allonby in 1829 and Census returns provide a sequence of blacksmiths until the 1940s.

Pre1841 Benjamin Iredale moved to Hayton from a smithy at Allerby. He died in 1846 after which his son John Iredale took over. Sometime before1901 William Blaylock moved to the Hayton smithy with his family. His son Joseph is listed as working with his father from before 1911 until his death in WW1. William continued to work alone until he moved to and worked at Oughterside Colliery.

After WW1 Fred Barbour is listed in a trade directory of 1929 as a blacksmith but in the 1939 Registration Survey he was joined by Matterson W. Lightfoot. Barbour became a 'farrier & agricultural heavy works, smith' and Lightfoot traded as a 'joiner, cart wright & undertaker.' and there is said to be a photograph from this period showing coffins standing outside the smithy.

The Blaylock Family

The Heritage Statement submitted as part of the planning application that approved demolition of the smithy had provided no documentation about any blacksmiths who had occupied the smithy. Research into the Blaylock family has revealed a poignant link between the building and the village.

William Blaylock moved from the smithy at Gilcrux to Hayton to follow on as blacksmith from John Iredale. William and his wife Mary Ann had eight children. Two sons died, George and Robert died overseas in WW1, but Joseph died of flu whilst training with the RAF at Montrose, Scotland. Joseph's grave stone is located against the east wall of St James's church overlooking the smithy in which he worked with his father (Fig.9).

A fourth son, William, emigrated to Canada to be with other family members, where he worked as a railway engineer. He joined the Canadian Infantry Corps and died in Sicily in 1943, after both his parents had died.

William's will is to be found in the Canadian archives. He was unmarried and left his estate to his four sisters. Sarah (Sally) by then Mrs Greaves, was listed as his next of kin and living at Mains Hall, Ireby, Cumberland, now a Grade II listed building. Evelyn (Mrs Tyson) was living at Lydia Cottages Keswick, now a holiday cottage and Mary (Mrs Bowe) was living at Bolton, Cumberland. Elizabeth (Mrs Waite) stayed in Hayton and was living in Smithy Cottages, Hayton, the terrace-row next door to Hayton smithy.

The four brothers are included in brass memorials for the fallen in World War One and Two in St James Church, Hayton.

Figure 9. View from the grave of Joseph Blaylock looking towards the rear of Hayton smithy.

New Owner

The field and smithy were both sold to the same purchaser; however, it soon became clear that the building was being prepared for refurbishment and not demolition. The new owner had no interest in building a new house she did not need but did need a secure stable with an attached field for her two horses.

So, the old smithy is now ready to play a new, active, role as an important building within the Hayton Conservation area (Fig.10), one that pre-dates the church, but is linked to it by the war graves of the Blaylock family and through sympathetic restoration will enhance the Conservation for many years to come.

Figure 10. The refurbished smithy now re-purposed as a stable.

Figure 11. Hayton smithy, marked with the red balloon, is one of many smithies that once served the villages of NW Cumberland.

A plot of smithies across NW Cumberland (Fig.11) reminds us that almost every village once had its own smithy. Some became re-purposed as motor garages, others as general repair shops, some, such as the smithies at Allerby and Mealsgate have been demolished and no longer survive. Only the smithy at Uldale has been designated a listed building.

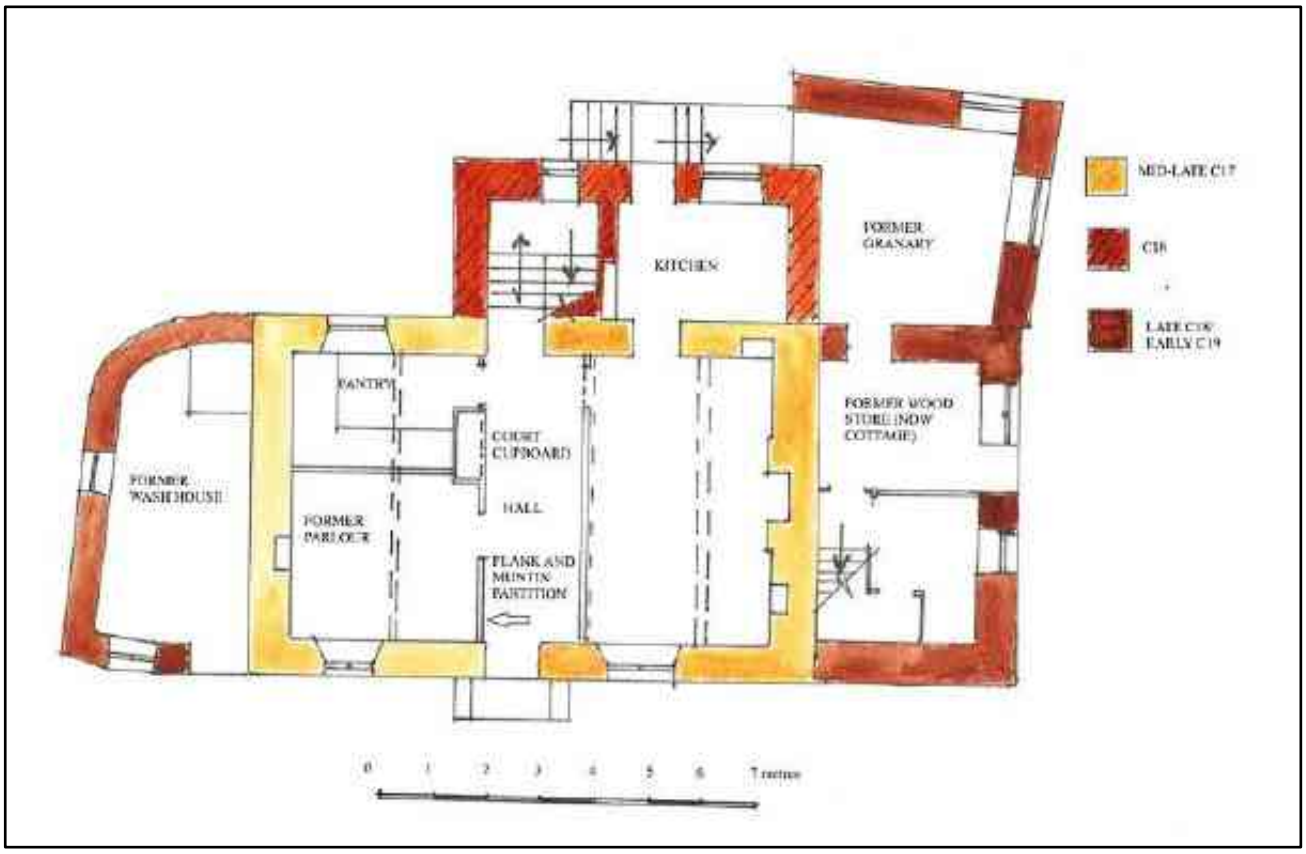
Further work is needed to assess the overall survival state of former smithies across the whole county ▪

Text and Images
© Andrew Fielding BA MCIfA

5. High Oxen Fell near Skelwith Bridge-A Mid-17th Century Farmhouse

by Paul Lewis (with kind permission from The National Trust)

High Oxen Fell is a mid-17th century group of farm buildings with C18th and C19th additions. The core and major part of the farmhouse is a 3-bay structure with fireroom, parlour and pantry beneath three bedrooms. Additions include an 18th century staircase and kitchen. A late 18th century woodshed and possible granary were incorporated into a separate cottage in 1982. Plan A below shows the approximate phases of its development.



Surveyed by T. Whittaker in 1986, features of particular note include a surviving plank and muntin screen in the central hall with a press, or 'court' cupboard, dating from 1673; photos 2 and 3 depict the arrangement of panels, cupboards and frieze.

Set under an unchamfered beam, the cupboard is inscribed 'W & C S' and 'NT FECT,' the latter referring probably to the maker, Nicholas Turner of Coniston as an unusual addition. The frieze is ornamented with rosettes and concentric circles. The upper panels incorporate double doors of moulded plank with butterfly hinges; these are flanked either side by large, inscribed rosettes and concentric circles (see photo 3) that appear very much in the tradition of apotropaic marks, rather than the more elaborate floral motifs and interlaced patterns found elsewhere.

In her book 'Traditional Buildings and Life in the Lake District 1991,' Susan Denyer tells us that they were built to impress visitors, but they also often commemorated marriages and important events. Additionally, they served practical uses to store clap bread and family valuables such as pewter, silver and spirits.

Within the building group there is a rare surviving example of a single room cottage, now incorporated into a single storey range of working farm structures (see photo 4, left side) and used as calf hulls. The robust chimney structure and the surviving internal fireplace tell of a time when working 'hands' lived on the farm, sleeping in lofts above a single room when access consisted of simple vertical ladders.

Like many buildings of this type, they were gradually vacated as farming became more mechanised and labour levels gradually diminished in the countryside, leaving the fabric to be adapted to other uses.

Another former small house lies to the east of the farmhouse, in this instance remodelled as an animal house. Hauntingly, Whittaker recorded a firehouse, blocked fire window and the remains of a pink limewash beside the fireplace, now no more than ghosts of previous lives in the landscape ▪

6. Cumbria: a county-wide vernacular architecture primer: Part 3.

Spring '26: "By heck, 'tis time to rise from settle'd doze, dust down the soot of winter eve fires, and peep out through fire window - for gentle warmth and longer days have arrived. Time now to move from hearth, boot laces to tie, depart yeoman farmhouse (should the reader be so fortunate), explore. What though to take as essential company during 'perambulations,' this summer ahead? Ahh - 'Pevsner'".

Introduction

This is the third in a small series of contributions to CVBG quarterly newsletters. The aim of each is to highlight reference books, reports, dataset resources, 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, the county has distinctive types of historic buildings, as well as furnishings used within homes. For Part 1 of this series 'The Place-Names of Cumbria', see Newsletter 49: Autumn '25. For Part 2 'Cumbria: a vernacular architecture reading list and primer' see Newsletter No. 50: Winter '25/26. Part 3, published here, considers a broad view of Cumbrian architecture guides and reports.

Pevsner, and contemporaries

Pevsner's 'Buildings of England' series of architectural guidebooks, first written between 1951 and 1974, offer detailed information on the architectural history and styles found within a county. Locality, town and street summaries are included, at times with a suggested perambulation to follow, exploring local architecture, styles, and time periods. Descriptions of well-known significant properties, of all time periods, as well as lesser explored vernacular buildings are included. Pevsner's series grew to cover all the historic counties of England, then extended to cover Scotland and Wales, Ireland to date in part covered. The importance of Nikolaus Pevsner, and his historical architecture and art guides, ranks alongside such post-war classic authorities as R.W. Brunskill (vernacular architecture reference books discussed in Newsletter 50), W.G. Hoskins ('The Making of the English Landscape', 1955) and the works of writer and broadcaster J. Betjeman (original editor of the Shell County Guides). An addendum to part 2, newsletter 50, Bill Rollinson was a historical geography author well known within Cumbria; his 'Life and Tradition in the Lake District' (1974) describes vernacular farms, farm buildings, hearth and home, within early chapters. All, aspirational resources and writers, introducing a wider post-war audience to 'England.'

A fascinating BBC Radio 4 'Archive on 4' (2016) view of Pevsner is available:
Pevsner: Through Outsider's Eyes: https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b07h2v3y

Pevsner guides (originally published by Penguin, later Yale)

Pevsner's Cumberland and Westmorland architecture guide was first published in 1967. This was the first in the series to include short chapters on the history and geology of a county. Cunliffe wrote about the Roman occupation, Clifton Taylor on building materials; given the county, geology and pre-history were also covered. The volume started by discussing insular Northumbrian stone-crosses, and flowed through Anglo-Saxon, Norman, Early English, perpendicular, military, church, Georgian, local domestic, Gothic, Victorian, C20th architecture, and so on. 'Less worthy' vernacular buildings were arguably not a focus for Pevsner, though any lack of detail is addressed within later editions of county guides. An A to Z of buildings of interest within villages, towns, valleys, or named property, forms the bulk of the guide, from Abbey Town to Lanercost Priory to Yanwath. Each volume concludes with a glossary of architectural terms.
Lancashire 2, The Rural North, covering North of the Sands, followed in 1969; Yorkshire, The West Riding of Yorkshire, for Sedbergh, had been published in 1959. County volumes were

revised over time within new editions. The Cumbria volume, published in 2010, now including Furness, is the most recent updated county guide for CVBG members. This volume (p38) notes how "There is not always a very heavy line in Cumbria between the polite and the vernacular. There are also several distinct vernaculars …" such as within the Lake District and along the Solway Plain. "Most significantly, these houses share common longhouse-derivative plans." Features such as the fireplace, screen-passages, chimneys, date-stones, stairs, and agricultural buildings are all detailed, the scarcity of timber framing notable in Cumbria. A further reading section notes a broad selection of special interest literature on Cumbria.

Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society

The remit of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society (CWAAS), founded in 1866, includes studying the heritage, history and archaeology of Cumberland and Westmorland. The society journal, CWAAS 'Transactions,' has been published since 1874. All journal contributions, from 1874 to 2025, are now available online, as pdf articles, available to download for personal study. Search terms can be input into the CWAAS transactions online database, at:

https://cumbriapast.com/cgi-bin/cumbriapast/cp_main.pl?action=cp_transactions_content_search

A superb resource, holding a wealth of county wide information. Searching within all CWAAS transaction journal 'full documents between 1874 and 2025', for example, brought up 95 articles that include the term "vernacular", 232 articles with the name "Brunskill", and 252 referencing "hearth".

Government Agencies research reports

The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME), established by the government in 1908, was the advisory body responsible for documenting buildings of architectural, historical, and archaeological importance in England; RCHME also advised on monuments. RCHME produced detailed, county-by-county inventories of historic buildings and monuments. Of the former historic counties within Cumbria, only the inventory for Westmorland (1936) was published; this covers buildings, monuments and sites within Westmorland to 1714. For example, 12 highly detailed pages describe Crosby Ravensworth Parish; C17th vernacular yeoman houses are described. Emery (1993), in 'Greater Medieval Houses', researches defensive houses, the medieval Cumbrian castles of 1300-1500.

RCHME's research remit moved to Historic England (HE), now tasked with protecting the historic environment of England. HE, along with its former English Heritage (EH) remits, offers a wide selection of research reports relevant to Cumbria. Available online, search within:

https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/publications/

Such HE guides, available as pdfs online, provide overviews of building characteristics and their development over time, with relevant examples, and examine architectural interest. Guidance includes 'Vernacular Houses' (2017), examining vernacular houses made from locally available materials; other guidance includes 'Town Houses' (2017) and 'Suburban and Country Houses' (2017). Introductions to a range of heritage assets are published, for example on Sheilings, also Historic Area Assessments (eg Appleby), both 2018.
Former English Heritage (EH) publications provide additional architectural evidence for Cumbria, for example, the 2006 Historic Farmsteads, Preliminary Character Statement: North-West Region. In addition, National Character Area profiles include descriptions of building

characteristics within similar landscape characteristic areas (for example, within the Eden Valley, Cumbrian High Fells, Low Fells, Solway, Morecambe Bay Limestone, etc).
Listings and details for all protected buildings in England, for example those that are GII listed, are available via the online HE national heritage list database, another valuable resource for architecture studies. Search within: https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/

Sources of information: defining Cumbria
Cumbria, an administrative non-metropolitan County, with The Lake District at its centre, was formed in 1974; the County Council was abolished in April 2023. In understanding Cumbrian architecture and furnishings, 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.

Suggested further reading.

Emery,A. 1996. Greater Medieval Houses of England and Wales: Vol 1, Northen England. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Hyde, M. and Pevsner, N. 2010. Cumbria. Cumberland, Westmorland and Furness. London: Yale.
Pevsner, N. 1959. Yorkshire. The West Riding. (the Buildings of Britain). Pevsner, N. 1967. Cumberland and Westmorland (the Buildings of Britain).
Pevsner, N. 1969. Lancashire. 2. The Rural North. (the Buildings of Britain). All three vols. – Harmondsworth: Penguin.
Rollinson, W. 1974. Life and Tradition in the Lake District. London: Dent.

English Heritage. 2006. Historic Farmsteads. Preliminary Character Statement: North-West Region https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-farmsteads-preliminary-character-statement-north-west/
Historic England. 2017. Domestic 1: Vernacular Houses https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-vernacular-houses/
Historic England. 2017. Domestic 2: Town Houses https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-town-houses/
Historic England. 2017. Domestic 3: Suburban and Country Houses https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/dlsg-suburban-country-houses/
Historic England. 2018. Sheilings. Introductions to Heritage assets. https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/iha-shielings/
Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. 1936. Westmorland. HMSO.

CVBG Library:

A CVBG library is held in The Old Court House, Shap. Contact the CVBG Secretary for an inventory of titles or with requests to borrow books ▪

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