Welcome to our Spring Bulletin. I hope you are all well and ready for the new season of archaeology volunteering? It doesn’t seem like we have actually stopped for a break though, I know many of you have continued to work on projects throughout the Winter, for which I am very grateful. Some of these are outlined in this Bulletin, which I hope you enjoy reading. Thank you all for your continued support and for all the contributors to this Bulletin and Philip for his work in editing it. As Mervyn has outlined below, the bracken bashing is making a huge difference, so please join us in June in our continued efforts to eradicate bracken from our very special scheduled monuments. Your efforts to date have achieved so much.

Eleanor Kingston

Bracken Bashers make a real difference..!!

Below are two examples where the bracken-bashing efforts of Archvol volunteers have made a dramatic improvement to the appearance and conservation of scheduled monuments at risk.

Heathwaite Bronze Age settlement

The Hawk Iron Age Settlement
Unless we keep on top of it, the bracken will keep on growing back. We will be out again bracken-bashing at the end of June (Louise is to publish a list of dates and locations), so do please do take the opportunity to volunteer and come and join us.

Mervyn Cooper

Bloomeries in Witherslack Woodlands

In the last bulletin, I reported on the archaeological and historical surveys of the two bloomery sites in Witherslack Woodlands. A level 1 survey of the woodlands has now been undertaken and very challenging it was too with impenetrable thickets, steep slopes and a profusion of brambles, blackthorn and holly. Never mind maintaining a nice straight line, actually maintaining visual contact was an achievement. The exception was Kevin Grice attired in his bright yellow head-to-toe survey suit who must have been visible from space!

For an estate which ran two bloomeries and which in its heyday sold over 200 dozen bags of charcoal a year to the local blast furnaces, we came across surprisingly few pitsteads during the survey. I never thought I would find myself actually wishing for pitsteads! Indeed, we only came across 1 we could classify as ‘absolute’ and that was simply because we found some charcoal. Of the other 22 possible sites, more than half were classified as having a low or medium degree of certainty. We think the explanation is partly the topography – the woodlands occupy limestone terraces below Whitbarrow Scar so the charcoal burners will probably have used naturally flat areas of which there were many. Furthermore, the woodlands are also actively managed so features may have been eroded over the years.

Everything else seemed to come in pairs. We found two potash kilns, two bark peeler’s huts, two breached dams, two quarries, two water yeats and two smoots. A large but very over-grown tank having a capped outlet pipe set in a very substantial limestone frontage caused considerable head scratching. The eventual verdict, given its location between Witherslack Hall Farm and the fields, was a Victorian slurry tank.

The highlight of the survey, which had Brian Hardwick, an engineer in another life, in ecstasies, was a Victorian Hydram pump still in place (but no longer in use) below the dam for Witherslack Hall Lake. The pumps were used in rural areas because they required no separate power source. They operated on the energy of flowing water to pump water to a higher level than the source.
The results of the Level 1 survey were built into the project report which was then lodged with the HER and issued to participating volunteers. An electronic copy of the report is available from me (j.rowanrobinson@btinternet.com) should anyone would like one.

Since then we have been fortunate in securing a grant from CWAAS to date specimens of charcoal from the High Park Wood bloomery and we are also seeking funding to date charcoal from the Low Park Wood bloomery. The historical survey showed that rental was being paid on a bloomery in the Manor of Witherslack from 1614-1640. However, the archaeological survey showed two bloomeries and it seems unlikely that the Manor would have operated two bloomeries on different parts of the estate at the same time. This suggests that one may be older than the other. We are hoping that the dating exercise will clarify this.

Jeremy Rowan Robinson

Recent discoveries in the north
Sow kilns, a possible mill site and an enigmatic earthwork

Having completed our survey work on Faulds Brow, above Caldbeck, the Group have now turned our attention to Aughertree Fell, some 4 km to the west. Aughertree Fell is best known archaeologically for a group of large sub-rectangular earthwork enclosures, generally believed to be of Romano-British date, and a probable Neolithic enclosure on Green How which was identified a decade ago by the English Heritage Survey team.

Our work has initially concentrated on the southern part of the Fell, away from the major sites. We have so far identified about 50 features of interest of which the most numerous are shallow oval depressions generally 5m across surrounded by a slight bank with a gap or entrance on one side.

They generally seem to occur in clusters adjacent to quarries (Aughertree Fell is on the carboniferous limestone) and our present interpretation of these features is that they may be sow kilns for the production of lime. It appears that these slight structures have received little attention elsewhere though several were investigated by the Ingleborough Archaeology Group a dozen years ago. They are likely to date from some time between the late medieval period and the eighteenth century. From the nineteenth century onwards lime production switched to the more familiar and substantial stone-built lime kilns whose ruins can be observed in many of the quarries across Faulds Brow and Aughertree Fell.
The most substantial feature we have encountered is a long linear earthwork which runs broadly north-south for some 800m and is bisected by the present Caldbeck to Uldale road.

The earthwork appears to be associated with a square enclosure alongside the present road. At this point a map of 1778 shows a tollhouse on the roadside.

It may be that the earthwork, perhaps topped by a fence or hedge, was intended to prevent people seeking to avoid the tolls on the new turnpike by circumventing the tollhouse. If so this was a major enterprise which ought to be recorded somewhere. Several members of the Group are now exploring the archives to see if there are records which may shed some light on this.

Before starting our work at Aughertree Fell we had a day exploring the slopes above Fell Side. Here we recorded a rectangular structure which is shown on early OS maps as a sheepfold but is clearly the remains of a building.

The proximity of the building to the stream raises the possibility of this being a mill. This is reinforced by the presence nearby of a probable potash kiln which, if associated, might suggest that this could have been a fulling mill for the cleansing of wool. We hope to return to the site later this year to undertake a more detailed survey.

John Hinchliffe

**Bethecar Moor Survey**

Bethecar Moor is not the easiest area of the Lake District to walk across; the vast bogs and uneven terrain make it a challenge for anyone who dares traverse the landscape. However, this did not
stop us from tackling the area in pursuit of archaeological features and further insight into the past lives of the moorland.

Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd (NAA) were commissioned by LDNPA to lead six weeks of landscape surveying across the 6.5km² of open moorland that makes up Bethecar Moor. With Coniston Water to the west of the survey area, Satterthwaite Moor to the east, and the woodlands of the Rusland Valley to the south, we knew the potential for numerous archaeological features was great. Other than a small area in the northern section of the moor, it had not previously been surveyed. However, the area that had been surveyed offered up multiple archaeological features associated with the farmsteads High and Low Parkamoor, and the woodland surrounding them (OAN 2010). In September and October 2018, we undertook four weeks of surveying, followed by another two weeks in March 2019. A total of 292 features were identified and recorded by volunteers with the guidance of staff from NAA.

The majority of these features were walls and trackways, indicating the numerous ways the land had been exploited and utilised throughout hundreds, if not thousands of years. Long trackways wind across Bethecar Moor, leading from one side to the other, and often disappearing into the woodlands surrounding them. It’s these woodlands that indicate the use of the trackways. Whilst they may have been used to access peat on the moor, they likely originate from the charcoal industry and the need to transport charcoal across the landscape. This industry dominated the area around Bethecar Moor during the late medieval period and well into the post-medieval, finally declining when the railroad arrived in 1851, luring the workers into the cities following the rise of industrialisation.

The walls across the moor indicate the centuries of agricultural practice that have gone on there. The land would have originally been owned by Furness Abbey and used by the monks for sheep grazing. Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries the land was sold to local farmers who would have continued to graze stock on the moor. Several small intakes represent pockets of Nibthwaite parish within the moor that actually fall into Colton parish. It is possible that these intakes could date to the medieval period when small, irregular parcels of land such as these were ‘taken in’. This was due to population pressures prior to the Black Death that pushed farmers onto marginal land that previously would not have been needed for food production (Ochota 2016, 157).

The historic farm complex of High and Low Parkamoor is located towards the northern end of the survey area and are evocative of times gone by, as the 17th–18th-century farmhouse of Low Parkamoor is available to rent as a low-tech getaway. High Parkamoor lies nearby and is mostly ruinous, probably abandoned once the population began to subside after the Black Death and food requirements were easily fulfilled in the lower lying areas of the Lakes.
On the public footpath that crosses the south-eastern corner of the moor, a Bronze Age cairn sits and gazes across the valley. On a clear day, the view from this location can reach as far as Morecombe Bay, and you can understand why the previous populace of this moorland chose this position for their monument. The numerous small peaks on Bethcar also house cairns, although these are significantly younger, likely having been constructed by people using the moor recreationally in more recent times.

The archaeology of Bethcar Moor is mostly reminiscent of past farming practices, and the signs of people having lived and worked here for generations before now are clear as you walk across the landscape. As we traipsed across the moor, experiencing all four seasons usually within each day and narrowly avoiding falling in the bogs that lay hidden between us and the archaeological features, it was easy to get caught up in the historic landscape around us. This was especially the case on those frequent days when we didn’t see another person for the entirety of our surveying.

All the volunteers who took part worked tirelessly in less than ideal conditions to complete the survey, which couldn’t have been done without their contributions. This was one of two archaeological landscape surveys that been completed as part of the Rusland Horizons Landscape Partnership in collaboration with the LDNPA, both of which were led by NAA. These projects were supported by funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.


Rebecca Cadbury-Simmons
Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd

Gale Fell, Smithy Beck and Clews Gill

A reasonably mild winter has made it possible to get out on the hill to continue our survey of the environs of Gale Fell. An alternative approach to the survey area from the south, through the Ennerdale Forest, enabled us to linger at the well-known “shieling” settlements at Smithy Beck and Starling Gill. These are dated from the medieval period on the basis of pottery, found during excavations carried out in 1962-3, the bulk of which was attributed to the 14th and 15th centuries (Fletcher & Fell, 1987). In fact it is likely that these sites are not shielings in the traditional sense of seasonal settlements but more permanent dwellings associated with the likely medieval iron ore mines on the fell above in the gulley of Clews Gill, to which we were able to trace a miners track up the fellside immediately above to the site of these workings.
The double wall construction of the Smithy Beck settlement sites has been a matter of some debate (Figure 1). Specifically, the inconsistency in the distances from internal wall to the outer wall on some of the structures, makes it unlikely they were integral to the structure of the building as a whole. I have always considered it to be more associated with stock management, keeping the sheep and cattle away from the building and grazing or disturbance of the roofing material; turf, heather or rushes. After a visit to the Moorforge Norse period reconstruction (Figure 2) at Gilcrux (https://www.moorforge.co.uk/) and discussion with David Watson the owner, it turned out he had to fence the building off as the sheep had been climbing on the turf roof and damaging it, problem solved?

In fine weather we explored the medieval iron workings and extent of the exposed iron rich exposures in Clews Gill (Figure 3) where an ancient level and collapsed shaft are adjacent to a revetted platform likely to have been used for ore sorting. In addition, a curious enclosure linking outcrops was identified to the west of the Gill with a small “shelter” of some antiquity (Figure 4).

On one of the more challenging days of winter with snow flurries coming in from the north we explored further the evidence for hushing on the north face of Gale Fell above Mosedale (Figure 5), it was a hard life being a miner up here! A weir had been built across the stream on the moor above and a cut made to the area of ore exploration previously reported in the Autumn Newsletter. This cut had eroded down some 2.5m and was 6.5m wide. In better spring weather we located more evidence of mineral exploration in the form of trenching and an associated spoil heap from a collapsed level. On the slopes we found a possible small ring-cairn and on the moor above, Ennerdale Common, various walling features and enclosures were identified.
Scales Beck

A return visit was made to Scales Beck to check out some points that had come up as a consequence of the start of digitising the drawings created over the four-five seasons of survey work there. This is a slow business, with ten drawings to stitch together but the preliminary outline drawings are nearing completion and some are shown here. Once these are complete, more detailed hachured drawings can be produced of the individual sites, hopefully a hachure software package will be available to speed this up, drawing about a thousand odd hachures individually doesn’t appeal much! (Figures 6-8)

To those who haven’t had the pleasure of visiting the site, as can be seen from the drawings this is...
an extensive site and this is just what is visible to the eye, it is likely that other archaeology has been buried by peat and bracken. It spans a period from the Early Bronze Age, evidenced by cup marked rocks and roundhouses, through to Late Medieval farmsteads and shielings of, as yet, indeterminate date. It is possible that there is also archaeology present from the Iron Age/Romano-British period – a lead artefact has been attributed to that period. The period of Norse settlement is also a grey area in the region, it could be that some of the longhouse structures here date from that period.

Burnt Mounds
Nick Russell has also been out on a solo trip on Stockdale Moor where he found not one but two unrecorded burnt mounds on the sloping ground to the north of the River Bleng (Figure 9). These are on the same watercourse about 100m apart and discrete from the other prehistoric archaeology found there, surveyed in 1985 by Quartermaine & Leech (68-81, 2012). These are excellent examples of this type of monument that date from the Early-Mid Bronze Age and were used for heating water in troughs with fire heated stones, various functions have been attributed to them including cooking, mashing grain for ale, dyeing fabrics and sweat lodges, the jury is out but it is likely they had multiple functions. There are several excavated examples in the Transactions of CWAAS such as at Drigg.

Corn Stack-stands
Finally, a heads up for a different kind of archaeological feature, stack-stands (pp 54-61, Ramm et al., 1970). In this instance these are circular features generally constructed by digging a ditch and placing the up-cast soil in the centre forming a slightly raised platform that varies in diameter from 2.5-4 metres with an overall diameter of 4-6 metres, located on flat ground of cut into the hill slope. Over the last few years I have noticed discrete groups of 4-16 of these features on the areas of fellside where ridge and furrow is extant. These are in the enclosed pasture high up on Whin Fell at the northerly end of the Low Fell ridge (Figure 10) and Sale Fell, Wythop. Generally smaller than other recorded stack-stands, which may also be rectangular, at Sale Fell there are 24 stack-stands in three groups next to the track and at Whin Fell about 29 again in three groups next to the track at an altitude of 2-300 m AOD.

Further research is needed on these sites and although recorded from earlier periods in all likelihood, these were areas ploughed during the Napoleonic Wars and/or the time of the Corn Laws when land was under intense pressure and marginal areas were brought into cultivation. It was likely that this put pressure on the storage capacity at the farmstead and was stacked on the fell in corn ricks, sheeted and fenced off until ready to use. It was likely to have been poor quality, possibly underripe grain that was fed as winter fodder to stock on the fell or brought down for use as required. So, look at for these in similar settings as they must be found elsewhere in the lower Fells. [https://blog.yorkshiredales.org.uk/stackstands-and-stackgarths/](https://blog.yorkshiredales.org.uk/stackstands-and-stackgarths/)
Millbeck – A Hamlet through time

At the foot of Skiddaw nestles the hamlet of Millbeck. The National Trust owns a house there called Millbeck Towers, now holiday accommodation. It was once a carding mill and it has a garden which contains the remains of a larger mill complex. A small group of LDNPA Archaeology Volunteers was asked by the Trust to investigate the history of the site before renovation works to the garden were undertaken. It proved a surprisingly complex but fascinating project.

The name of the hamlet speaks of its industrial past. ‘Milnebek’ is recorded in 1260 and a corn mill fed by the abundant beck was in use there for centuries. In 1663 a deed of sale (Fig. 1) includes a water mill, almost certainly associated with Millbeck Hall built in 1592 by the Williamson family and where Sir Joseph Williamson, Secretary of State to Charles II, was born in 1633. The Hall was later owned by Dr William Brownrigg of Ormathwaite, the distinguished physician and philosopher. The corn mill building still stands today.

In about 1796 a carding mill was built at Millbeck. It was run by Dover, Younghusband & Co and it clearly prospered because in 1805 they built a second carding mill in what is now the garden of Millbeck Towers, together with a fulling mill and loom sheds further up the valley. All this required significant diversion of the beck and the present grounds still reveal a mill dam and pond fed by races, launders and sluices. Tenter rows were also created, one of which later became a tennis court. In its heyday (about 1824-1839) the complex employed about 100 people. The business ledgers from 1823 onwards reveal an extensive trade in various coarse woollen products such as blankets with sales made not only to Britain and Europe but to the Caribbean, North and South America, a remarkable reach for a small Cumbrian hamlet industry. Daniel Dover died in 1842 and was succeeded by his son Arthur, both of whom lived at Skiddaw Bank, a substantial residence next to the mills.

By 1855 however the business was failing in the face of competition from Yorkshire mills, a decline in the domestic market and lack of a railway connection; the Cockermouth, Keswick & Penrith Railway did not open to goods traffic until 1864. A proposed sale in 1855 (Fig. 2) failed to produce a buyer and Arthur Dover soldiered on until his retirement in 1865. Miss Agnes Nicholson of Kendal ran the mills at reduced output thereafter but her sudden death in 1883 at the age of 46 prefaced the final closure in about 1890.
The land and now derelict mills then passed to John Daniel Banks, a relative of the Dovers by marriage and a wealthy Liverpool solicitor. He sold off part of the land behind the old carding mill to Keswick UDC for a scheme to harness Millbeck Gill to supply water to Keswick and the remains of reservoirs then built are still extant today. He converted the old carding mill into a substantial holiday home (Figs. 3 & 4) whilst the Council demolished the new carding mill, the fulling mill and a row of workers’ cottages, converting the former loom sheds into dwellings as they remain today (Fig. 5).

In 1920 John Banks died and The Towers (as the house was now called) was sold to Ralph Simey, a London barrister, his sister Mabel and Hugh Lupton, their brother-in-law. Hugh Lupton was Lord Mayor of Leeds in 1926/7 with Isabella Simey as Lady Mayoress. In 1928 they in turn sold it to Cecil Kaye, the recently retired headmaster of St Bees School. He improved the garden, a process continued by his son Brigadier James Kaye, who inherited The Towers in 1953 upon the death of his mother. His colourful Army career included distinguished service in the Royal Artillery and command of the Somaliland Camel Corps (Fig. 6). In 1972 Brigadier Kaye bought back the land surrounding the mill pond from West Cumberland Water Board and the full garden grounds were then finally re-united with the house. He and his wife laid out the gardens in their present form, including stocking the former mill pond with trout. Brigadier Kaye gifted the property to the National Trust in 1973 but continued to live there until 1985. He died in 1990 aged 91.

The author is grateful to Annette Dalton and Jamie Lund at the National Trust, all the staff at Archive Centres and Libraries in Cumbria and beyond, Richard Hall and in particular to Jeremy Rowan-Robinson, Jackie Fay, Mark Simpson, Roger and Liz Kingston and Mike Green with whom...
he has worked on this singular insight into a mill hamlet through time.

Acknowledgements
Fig. 1, 2 Courtesy of Cumbria Archives
Fig. 3, 4, 5 Courtesy of Cumbria Industrial History Society
Fig. 6 Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery

Kevin Grice

Volunteer Leadership Team

Would you like to help shape the future of volunteering in the National Park? Do you have ideas or suggestions to improve the experience of volunteering? If the answer to either of these questions is yes, then you may wish to consider joining the Volunteer Leadership Team (VLT) as the Archaeology volunteer member!

The committee brings together a mix of staff, authority members and volunteers from different parts of the Park all with different backgrounds, skills and interests. It is this unique mix which makes the VLT an interesting and stimulating forum for discussion and decision-making. The aim is to deliver the volunteer strategy and the volunteer representatives bring an important range of perspectives to the discussion at the quarterly meetings and act as a 2-way conduit of volunteer ideas and views.

If you are interested in this role, please contact Eleanor Kingston.

Chris Shearin

Update from Louise Martin

Well I can’t quite believe that six months have passed since I joined the Historic Environment Team last October! It’s been a really busy few months, getting to know the team, learning how all the office systems work, exploring the archaeology of the Lake District and meeting the volunteer network. When I look back and reflect, there have been many highlights and there is a really exciting year of archaeology and training projects to look forward to.

Firstly, it has been lovely to have been welcomed so warmly by the members of the archaeology volunteer network. In the first few weeks of joining the LDNPA, the annual archaeology conference gave me an opportunity to meet and chat to lots of the volunteers in person. I have been to the conference in the past ‘as a punter’ and always enjoy the diverse range of speakers and informative talks. The highlight for me this year was hearing about all the work undertaken by volunteers in the Park and, of course, the excavation/investigations at Copt Howe. I look forward to helping with planning for the next conference in November 2019.

There were two more opportunities to meet the volunteer network; at our annual ‘Thank you’ event and the leaders get together. For the first event, I was given the unenviable task of arranging the design of a bespoke cake which reflected the work of the volunteers. What could I choose? I decided on a working scene capturing the investigations of a longhouse as part of ‘The Duddon Dig’, complete with surveyors and excavators hard at work. The cake was a great interpretation of the site and tasted as good as it looked. Any ideas for the 2019 cake please send them my way.

In December, the volunteer leaders, Eleanor and I braved the Lake District weather and headed to
Caldbeck. What a stunning village. This was an opportunity to see the areas the northern team have been busy working on and look at planning for 2019. Despite the bracing weather, Trisha did an amazing tour, leading us around Faulds Brow where the team have been busy recording enclosures, kilns and bell pits and a most interesting pentangular enclosure, which they have interpreted as a probable iron age enclosure subsequently re-used over the last two centuries possibly with the advent of the shepherds’ meets and sports days held there.

Over the last few months, I’ve been helping to develop the volunteer programme for 2019 and visiting new sites to survey, such as the woodlands at Cinder Hill. Permission has been granted to progress with the surveys at Shap, which will form a key component of the programme over the summer, alongside our annual attack on the bracken and ongoing Level1/2 surveys.

I’m keen to work with the volunteers to explore new projects and training opportunities. One such project I am looking at developing is recording and surveying historic barns across the Park, so I was delighted when the opportunity arose with the Yorkshire Dales National Park to open up their historic barn training to our network. The training with the Yorkshire Dales is expected to be repeated so if you couldn’t attend or were unfortunate not to get a place, I’m hoping that there will be more opportunities in the near future.

In early July, we will be welcoming Matt Oakey and a colleague from the Historic England aerial investigation and mapping team to Murley Moss to share their expertise on the use and application of Lidar. We have had an overwhelming response for this training course and I’m looking forward to brushing up my skills in the application of this important archaeological resource.

Alongside the volunteer activities, I have been busy helping Rusland Horizon apprentice Maddie to create an interpretation panel for the site at Cunsey Forge, incorporating the results of the 2017 excavation. The panel which has been designed by Anna Gray and include a stunning reconstruction by Peter Lorrimer and is currently in print, so should be installed on site in the coming weeks.

I’ve also been working with our GIS team to get the recording tablets up and running. The tablets are a wonderful addition to our recording kit, as they allow information which would normally be captured on hand written survey sheets to be captured quickly, with the information being synced to our servers. This will assist in getting the information gathered through our surveys onto the Historic Environment Record even quicker. The tablets had their first outing In March at the final Rusland Horizon survey at Bethecar Moor and despite some challenging weather conditions the feedback has been really positive. Over the next few months, additional training will be delivered to volunteers in the use of the tablets and tweaks will be made to the software with the long-term objective to undertake all our recording in this way going forward.

So it’s been a really busy and rewarding start to my role with the LDNPA and with a packed programme for 2019 I’m looking forward to getting out in the landscape, being involved with projects and meeting more of the volunteers.
Keswick Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan

Conservation areas were first designated under the Civic Amenities Act of 1967 and are defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.” Within the Lake District National Park there are 23 conservation areas, covering both large and small settlements. Designation as a conservation area allows the National Park Authority to formulate specific policies and proposals to preserve or enhance the conservation area – known as Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Plans. Work has just begun on an appraisal and management plan for Keswick Conservation Area and it is hoped that a draft will be available for public consultation in June.

Many of you will no doubt be familiar with the history of Keswick but I thought it might be useful to do a very brief overview in relation to the conservation area and built environment, as the surviving buildings and spaces provide such a rich resource for uncovering the history of the town.

Keswick was granted a market charter by Edward 1 in 1276 and medieval Keswick was laid out as a planned town where the building plots, building lines and height of merchant’s houses were rigidly controlled. Around the elongated market place the land was subdivided into a regular pattern of ‘burgage plots’ with the market place frontages containing a timber framed house, the linear plot behind often containing gardens, orchards, or allotments. Clarke’s survey of 1787 shows the town had altered little from its medieval core by the late 18th century.

 Sadly there are no timber framed frontages to be seen, as by the 18th century the timber framed buildings had been replaced, or re-faced, by stone and slate structures, with the long garden strips becoming infilled with small houses and workshops. However, evidence of the earlier timber framed structures may survive within the later stone buildings.

Evidence of Keswick’s mining history is also apparent within the town; Miners Way and the adjacent George Hotel for example - built in the 16th century and said to be the oldest inn in Keswick, although it now has a later Georgian frontage. It was here that German miners paid their dues to the officers of Queen Elizabeth I and supposedly where unscrupulous traders bought the plumbago ore stolen from mines in Borrowdale.

Wad, or graphite, was mined from the Elizabethan period and Keswick developed as a centre of pencil manufacture; there is evidence of early pencil mills along the Greta and of course the 20th century former Cumberland Pencil Factory at Southey Hill. High Hill and Southey Hill are currently not included within the conservation area but will be looked at as part of the appraisal process to establish if there is enough special interest to include them.

By the 18th century Keswick was a major trading centre for the textile industry and the town boasts a good number of attractive Georgian buildings from this period of growth, ranging from small
cottages like those at Police Court Yard, to large town houses which can be found on Main Street and Penrith Road.

By the mid-19th century the pattern of yards was fully developed and the rear of the plots had been built up for social and economic reasons. The problems of overcrowding and insanitary conditions led to a Board of Health survey in 1852 which found ‘houses and tenements are crowded with foul middens, and are encroached upon by privies, with large open cesspools, by pigsties, stables, cowsheds, and by slaughterhouses.’

The same report also describes the local economy and stated that ‘the great source of income is, however, derived from summer tourists and visitors, some 8,000 or 10,000 of whom either pass through or lodge temporarily in the town and neighbourhood, attracted by the natural beauties and healthy atmosphere outside the town.’

The second half of the 19th century saw Keswick’s role as a tourist resort expand rapidly, no doubt in part to the arrival of the Cockermouth, Keswick & Penrith Railway and its impressive Railway Company Hotel. By the 1890s the town had taken on a distinctive Victorian character, with taller buildings and the ‘imported’ architecture of the substantial stone built hotels, guesthouses, terraces and public buildings. Railway access freed the area from dependence on locally available materials and encouraged the import of coloured sandstones, various bricks and welsh slate.

The growth in retail premises within the town centre is evidenced by a variety of shopfronts, many still with their 19th century shop surrounds, sometimes hidden by later alterations. No 33 Lake Road, Mayson’s shop, is a listed building and a rare example of an unaltered commercial building dating from circa 1900, built with a shop at ground floor and a glazed frontage lighting a studio or workshop on the upper floor.

As in many other towns there are some modern developments and alterations which detract from the character of the historic core. The creation of the two main car parks has caused significant changes to the back ends of the yards which were once private, but are now truncated and on full public view. The yards are highly significant features of the conservation area, but many are in need of enhancement as they appear unwelcoming and this detracts from the pedestrian experience between the car parks and the market place.
Sharing the history and key characteristics of the town is one of the purposes of the conservation area appraisal but the resulting reports are not very accessible so an interpretation scheme might also be a potential future project. Keswick has some excellent slate plaques at key sites within the town and a heritage trail produced by Keswick Civic Society (sadly the civic society is no longer active).

Ideas for sharing and celebrating the history and development of Keswick and its interesting range of built heritage would be most welcome, and if you would like to find out more about the conservation area appraisal process please do get in touch with me:

Rose Lord Rose.Lord@lakedistrict.gov.uk

Rusland Horizons

The programme of surveys and excavations carried out under Rusland Horizons has come to an end and the results are being collated. There is an opportunity to hear the results of the woodland surveys, the Bethecar Moor surveys and the bloomery excavation on 21st May at 18.30 at the Outback Hall, Backbarrow. The Liverpool University team and Northern Archaeology Associates will be presenting their findings. You can register through Eventbrite at: Registration. A buffet will be provided.

The Rusland Horizons team is keen to continue exploring the archaeology of the Rusland valley and Grizedale and hopes to arrange further surveys in cooperation with the National Park Archaeologists. Watch this space.

P.S.

I hope you have enjoyed this edition of the Bulletin. Perhaps you would like to contribute to the next Bulletin yourself. We would welcome short articles:- archaeology you have been involved in; events you would like to advertise; that interesting find you noticed on a walk last week. If you have something to say then do get in touch.

Maybe I could introduce the idea with something that is clearly “modern”. I was shown this little oddity by the forester in Grizedale. Only a short walk off the path through the woodland there is a glade (SD 34579 94090) with what appears to be a steamer funnel over 3 metres high with fine riveted plates. It looks remarkably like the one on MV Tern that cruises Windermere today. In the early 20th century the estate was owned by the Brocklebank family who had major interests in the shipping industry and it is mentioned on the Lawson Park web site as a memento of the Brocklebank connection. Talking to a knowledgeable local resident I was told it was a memorial to a son of the family, lost at sea but so far I have failed to find any confirmation of that. So I am still unclear as to how or why this monument came to be here. Someone will now tell me the well known history!

Philip Minchom pminchom@gmail.com