

ART. XII. – *The Cragg, Troutbeck and the Otley Family: A building project and its social setting in 18th-century Westmorland.* By BLAKE TYSON, B.Sc., F.C.S.I.

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ALTHOUGH the vernacular architecture of Cumbria has been studied in some detail in recent years and has been well summarised by Dr. R. W. Brunskill,¹ relatively little attention has been paid to the ways in which the region's building traditions declined in the later part of the 18th century, to yield eventually to "polite" external influences. The importation of fashionable ideas and tastes through improved communication with urbane society, especially that of London, brought about a general deterioration of the yeoman class and its traditions in the Lake District,² and since architecture represents an outward expression of the countless forces which make up the social system, change in building styles was inevitable even in property belonging to poorer families.

This article examines the nature of the changes in one surviving Lakeland house, formerly of traditional vernacular style, and reconstructs the family circumstances which engendered them. It establishes the humble origins of an ambitious Westmorland youth who migrated to London and became a successful shopkeeper. He absorbed many of the ideals of fashionable society during the second half of the 18th century and his surviving letters reveal his personality and how his attitudes affected the demands he placed on standards of design, materials and workmanship when, in 1779, he financed the extension of his former home. Subsequent events are outlined and measured drawings attempt to reconstruct the building as it was two centuries ago.

It is unusual to find documentary evidence which provides sufficient detail to allow a reconstruction of what actually happened in a building project undertaken by an ordinary Lakeland family even in the late 18th century. It is fortunate, therefore, that nearly thirty letters written between Richard Otley (1748-1809) of London and his friend George Browne (1741-1804) of Townend, Troutbeck, have been preserved in the Browne manuscripts in Kendal Record Office.³

George Browne studied law in Mr Fothergill's office at the Inner Temple (XI, 94) and qualified as a solicitor in 1764. He then moved back to Troutbeck to become the local attorney and an influential yeoman farmer. Partly to record his legal and farming activities he kept a series of memorandum books from 1775 to 1798,⁴ of which volume R contains over eighty references to Otley's business, more than half of which refer directly to building work at the Cragg (now Crag Cottage), Troutbeck, for Richard Otley's father, George, in 1779.

The available evidence indicates that George Otley must have been a very ordinary man of limited means and education. His youngest son, Richard, writing to George Browne (XII, 24) when building work was imminent, said "I wrote you some time ago . . . as we have nobody but yourself that we could trouble and you are sensitive that the Old People are incapable of it".

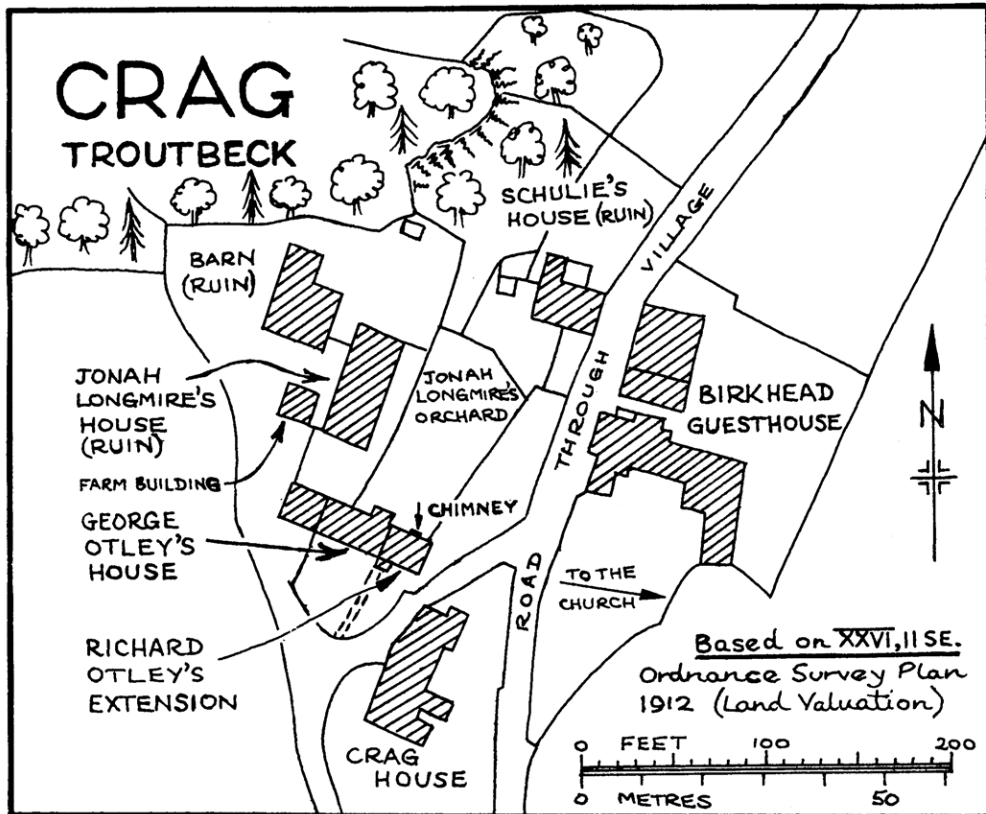


FIG. 1. — Plan showing the relationship of the several properties at Crag, Troutbeck. Otley's house can be clearly correlated with the descriptive evidence.

Although George Otley's inability gave rise to much of the evidence used below, it was probably more the result of old age than of illiteracy, since his grandson, George, writing from St Martin's Le Grand, London, to Browne in 1799 (XII, 39), said he believed his grandfather had been "a Farmer and at the same time officiated as Clerk to the Church".

Old George Otley "of Cragg" died in 1789 and was buried at Troutbeck on 24 September. There is evidence of two wills. Memorandum book R records that on 7 September 1780 George Browne was "Drawing & Ingrossing Geo. Otleys Will" and that on the following day he was at "Storey's" executing it (R, 293).⁵ But it was not until 26 March 1786 that *gs. 6d.* was "Received of G. Otley for making his will 7th Sep. 1780" (O, 452). Dated 18 August 1780, the minutes for this will survive (IV, 167) and not only give evidence of the composition of the family but, with additional clues from letters, provide proof of the exact location of the building (Fig. 1). George Otley intended to give

to his son Richard all the new erected Building . . . Built and Erected at the Expende of his said son at the East End of his House at Cragg . . . together with the walk leading from the south to the entrance Door of the said new Building and such part of the Garden as lays on the East side of the said Walk . . . after determination of wife Agnes viduity.

Appointing his cousin John Otley of Lindeth as a trustee he left £10 to his daughter Jane and the remainder of the estate to be divided equally between his six surviving

children: George (baptised 5 Aug. 1733), James (16 Nov. 1735), William (24 Apr. 1743) and Richard (27 Dec. 1748) and two daughters, Elizabeth (1 June 1740) and Jane (24 Mar. 1745). Another son John was baptised on 2 October 1737 but his burial has not been found.

Records do not support S. H. Scott's statement⁶ that George Otley bought the Cragg. The Kendal parish registers record that on 28 May 1732 George Oattley of Hawkshead married Agnes Hoggart of Troutbeck. She was probably baptised on 28 November 1708, the daughter of Richard Hoggart of High Green, Troutbeck, who was buried on 26 April 1712 and left a will mentioning his wife Elizabeth, son Richard and daughter Agnes.⁷ In 1736, the Windermere Manor court books⁸ note that Agnes, wife of George Otley, should be admitted to a tenement of 1s. 3d. fineable rent by descent from her mother, Elizabeth Hogart,⁹ who was buried on 11 November 1735.¹⁰ Elizabeth had in 1727 been "admitted tennant of a Parchall of a tennement" of 1s. 3d. fineable rent "by Deed from James Longmire" (IV, 288), who in 1721 was of "Orrest (late of Cragg)" (IV, 278a).

In this way, George Otley came to "be admitted tenant in right of his wife" in 1736.¹¹ He seems to have been baptised in Windermere parish on 14 June 1702, the "son of Edw. Otley of St. Catherine Brow in Applethwaite" and probably went away to work as a young man. Memorandum book entries (e.g. B179, B297, R397) show that he was still actively farming in old age and even in 1782 he took over closes called Longmire Yeat Banks from a James Birkett¹² to add to his customary holding. Parish records¹³ indicate that he was relatively poor. In parish tax assessments of 1743 and 1751 only one person out of 57 named paid less than he did and the same was true of the land tax levied in the Barony of Kendal in 1773. However, in a list of the "Value of Troutbeck Estates" in 1774 (VI, 146-7), 25 out of the 73 entries were valued at less than Otley's £6, so that he must have been on the threshold of being excused from paying taxes. In addition his children received support from the Francis Borwick Charity for the poor in Windermere parish,¹⁴ James and John in 1750 and two un-named children in 1754 (VI, 107 and parish box). Perhaps all his children were helped in this way.

Undoubtedly, poor prospects in Troutbeck encouraged Otley's eldest and youngest sons to migrate to London where Housman in 1798 noticed that "the compting houses are much supplied with country lads from Cumberland and Westmorland, who exchange the plow and the flail for the pen and prove as expert with the one as the other".¹⁵

Young George Otley became a "Woollen draper, men's mercer and button seller" at 43, Holborn¹⁶ and no doubt had been glad to develop a lasting friendship with George Browne whilst the latter was studying at the Inner Temple in the early 1760s. Richard Otley went to work for his brother and his earliest surviving letter, written on 4 June 1770 (XII, 7) when he was 21, shows that he had already become interested in the fashionable life and buildings of the capital. He apologised to George Browne for delay in replying to his letter:

having been so much Ingaged in Business that I scarce had any Leisure time . . . [There is] little news Except in Politics which I think is not worth meddling with . . . The amusements of the Town Continue as usual. Vauxhall, Ranlagh¹⁷ and all summer Places of pleasure are opened for the season . . . We have got a new Building Called the Pantheon¹⁸ betwixt Cold Bath fields & Bagnidge Wells Built in the same manner as Ranlagh is, very much Crowded with Company and is so large and Commodious that above a Thousand People may sit and regale themselves in it at a Time; besides the Gardens there is a very handsome Organ &c. &c. I send . . . inclosed . . . some India handfs [handkerchiefs] . . . the very best [that] can be had . . . my Brother talks of

Comming Down [to Troutbeck] but think he will scarce be able this summer, as he has Enlarg'd his Business Considerably – in the Woolen Drapery

George Otley, who seems to have been rather more staid than his brother, was also on friendly terms with George Browne. The first of only two surviving letters from him, written on 30 March 1771 (XI, 61) shows concern over the political disturbances associated with the Printers' Case.¹⁹

We have at Present Strange work: the Lord Mayor & one of the City Members [are] Committed to the Tower, am afraid shall have some Mischeff before long: the Mob has greatly Insulted several of the Members of the House of Commons: and Lord North first Lord of the Tresurey they have Broke is Carrage, and hurt him much Shall be extremely Glad to see you in London, as to your Box . . . [I] shall take care of it. Green [who] keeps the Livery Stables opposite me . . . [will] take care of your Colt . . . Pray give my love to our People . . . tell Sister Betty [I] Intend to send for her in Summer (Perhaps about June).

On 17 May 1771 William Birkett, a Troutbeck friend wrote (XI, 99) to Browne at Fothergill's office giving local news and added "Geo. Otley Desires his Compliments to his Sons . . . and is Very glad to here Geo: takes such Care of his Brother Richard".

Presumably George also intended to do the same for the elder of his two sisters. Meanwhile on 15 May Richard Otley, writing from 4, Catteaton Street²⁰ (XII, 9) within easy reach of Holborn, sent an invitation to visit Vauxhall the following evening to "Mr Browne at Mr Marshalls, Peruke Maker, Arundel Street, Strand".

Two years later, Richard Otley visited Troutbeck and wrote to George Browne on 17 August 1773 (V, 319) apologising for having left in haste due to ill-health. On the return trip he had had

an exceeding fine voyage of 4 days which . . . much prefer to the Coach . . . I have now left Holborn and am got into the West End of the Town amongst a sett of Neighbours I have not the least knowledge of and above 2 miles from Holborn. A little time I hope will make us a little more familiar or might as well Live on some [of] your Fells. We have open'd the shop but 2 days so can give but little account of succiss but I am Inclined to Judge favourable of the situation – . . . N.B. My new Habitation is at No 71 New Bond St.²¹

It seems that it was not just ambition or business sense which prompted his move to the more fashionable West End. His brother must have been courting and probably wanted more house-room, because George Otley married Sarah Hatch of St. Clement Danes parish at St. George's, Hanover Square on 21 December 1773: their eldest son George was baptised on 16 January 1775 at St. Andrew's Holborn.²²

Richard Otley writing to his father (via George Browne) on 29 March 1774 (V, 321) expressed surprise that his parents had not been told of the marriage and outlined an important problem which he now faced:

For several weeks before Brother George was marry'd [my sister] had Lived with me in Bond Street Occasioned by some words they had . . . her Ill state of health will not admitt of any Hard Employment. I have no Objections to her staying with me if she could be of any service but as I must have a Maid & her it is an additional Expence which I can by no means support and If I should alter my plan of Life (as I have no settled resolution to continue all my life single) she then must come down [to Troutbeck] – My Brother says he had better maintain her at Home than here & at a much Less Expence . . . As she seems to take no notice of what I say to her, would have you to write to her yourself. As to anything my Brother may allow you for her account I have told her I shall every year make some addition to it

London 22^d Augt 1780

Bought of Richard Otley
 WOOLLEN DRAPER, MENS, MERCER, & BUTTON SELLER,
 N^o. 16 New Bond Street, near Conduit Street.

18 Solid gilt Chair Coats — 6/ 0:9:0

Recd the Contents in full for
 M^r. Otley O. Owen

FIG. 2. — Account (much reduced in size) submitted by Richard Otley to Sir Michael le Fleming, apparently for buttons. By 1789 Owen had become Otley's partner and by 1795 was proprietor at 73, New Bond Street.

Nothing seems to have been done about this proposal for some years, but further letters expose more of Richard Otley's character. For example on 14 August 1775 he wrote to Browne (XII, 121) complaining of not receiving a letter for a long time and went on:

[I] suppose your engaged in Fishing . . . I often wish for only one Day along with you but to no purpos as I am tyd fast by the Leg. Mr. Robinson informs me that you had a Regatta²³ on Windermere, that the Island is much improved and worth visiting²⁴ — you neglect all these trifles supposing them of so little consequence that the recital would give me little Pleasure but I do assur of the very contrary as these things are the only News to us in Town . . .

He went on to mention that he had “had Sir Michael Fleming & Cap. Hazell in the Shop Last Week”, no doubt patronising a fellow Westmerian's business. Fig. 2 shows an account of Richard Otley's found in Sir Michael's papers in Kendal Record Office (WD/Ry Box 114).

Otley was unaware that George Browne had married on 9 July 1775²⁵ but, writing on 29 December, (XII, 12) he congratulated his friend and hoped that it would “not intirely deprive him of the pleasure of his correspondence . . .”.

Two years later in planning his first Lakeland holiday since his sister had moved in with him, Richard Otley revealed a rather presumptuous side to his character in a note of 28 July 1777 (XII, 13) to Browne hoping for

the pleasure of seeing him at Troutbeck in about a fortnights time & hopes for his company on the water & the use of some of His Pearch Lines . . . [and] . . . insists on his company every day for a Fortnight at least [and] intends to bring a friend along . . . do not forget to fill your Cellars well as we are resolv'd to drink all your Ale.

On Sunday 17 August 1777, Browne's memorandum book records that not only had he been "Viewing Island with Wife &c" but that "Mr. R. Otley came". The following Thursday "Messrs. Robinson, Otley, Anderson &c [were] at my House" and he went fishing on 28 and 30 August. Monday 8 September was spent "at Holbeck with Mr. Otley &c". (B, 380, 384, 388)

Otley must have taken the opportunity to discuss with his father the possibility of extending the Cragg to accommodate his ailing sister because in his next relevant letter (XII, 15) dated 25 February 1778, he outlined his ideas and requirements for the proposed building work. Holes caused by tearing off the sealing wax do not mar the wealth of detail. He wrote that he had been too busy to speak to his brother

concerning the alteration [my father] talked of making in the House . . . but would not have him begin it till he acquaints me of the plan. I have inclosed a sketch done while I write this . . . [No. 1?] to be the door in the new part No. 2 to be a [large?] window at the end facing the Church in the Par [lour, No. 3?] to be a Good Bed chamber over it same [size?] & same window facing the Church & there will be a Good Garrett over it – would have them keep the end wall full as far out as the shop²⁶ wall or further if they can as it would be a pity to make it small which will cost as much as if made larger & if they Board the first floor as they did the old House they had better do nothing but let it be boarded with good seasoned Deal Boards and not cutt in 2 or 3 lengths but one Board to go from one end of the room to the other.

The Parlour to be boarded with the same Boards or Oak which think would be better – I shall esteem it as a favour if you will take the trouble of explaining it to them & the workmen otherwise I know they will spoil it the Carpenters in particular – there must be a good Grate in the Parlour & an other in the bedroom not to have the fire on the Hearth as that is very uncomfortable, the fireplace to be on that side next Jonah Longmires Orchard & not make the Chimney near so wide as they Generally do – make the room quite Square & let the Chimney project on the outside of the House not into the room – shall be happy to hear from you when the plan is determined on & should like a sketch of it if Mr. Heaton would do me that favour to whom pray present my Compliments . . .

Mr Heaton, a friend of George Browne,²⁷ was employed by Thomas English as an architect at Belle Isle, certainly the most adventurous and significant Lake District building at that time.

On 31 May 1778, Browne sent a letter "for G. Otley to Mr. R. Otley London", probably about the proposed work and received a reply (XII, 20) on 9 June saying that there had not been an opportunity to discuss the contents with his brother. Other letters (XII, 18; XII, 117) say nothing about the proposed building work until an important letter (XII, 24), recorded in George Browne's memorandum book (R, 134) was received on 3 March 1779. Although there is some repetition of material, such as emphasis on the quality of floor boards, it displays marked impatience and contains the order to start building. Otley expressed concern that George Browne had not written for some time and then went on:

The reason of my troubling you now is about the plan we had of altering or rather making an addition to the old House for as my sister in a few weeks is coming down it will be Necessary to put it in hand on the receipt of this and as I intend coming down this summer myself would have

it finished by June or July at farthest so that as the stones are ready it may be begun directly on the receipt of this upon the plan that Mr. Heaton was so kind as to send me up which I believe I have mislaid.

I do not think it could be better done only I could wish he would take the trouble of giving directions to the different workmen so that they may not spoil it for which I will repay him with thanks when I see him – The old improvem[ent] is so badly finished especially the Carpenter work in Boarding the floors that would not have the same by any means again except they take more pains – in short I would wish it to be a very neat snug House warm & Close that if any of us should come down or on [holiday?] we might be comfortable in it. – I [don't?] expect my Father to be at any expense [whatsoever?] and for what money is wanting if you will take the trouble of drawing and advising on me will be paid with thanks.

After the shell is properly finished my sister will see that it is properly furnished and if you would take the trouble of seeing that the workmen get forward properly should be obliged to you – they proposed to bring it more forward than the shop was which would advise as it will make the room more square & roomy.

I shall be obliged to you for an answer to this by the very first post . . .

This letter drew a response from Browne the next day and he preserved a draft (XI, 70), perhaps as evidence in case of dispute. He began:

Yours of 23^d Feb. (put in post office 27th) I received yesterday evening and carried same up to your Folks (who are all well) immediately . . . [and explained] . . . I had writ²⁸ to your Brother by J. Longmire all the particulars here worth mentioning . . . so either your Brother or you must be more guilty of neglect than myself . . .

A good many stones and some timber is ready prepared towards the intended new building – and as you are so earnest about having same push'd forward with all possible speed I shall as soon as I have finished this letter go to the Island to consult Mr. Heaton about setting out the work and Letting the same to proper workmen that your directions may be put in execution immediately. Mr. Heaton's plan which I sent you and which you say you have mislaid, I have before me and 'tis intended that same plan shall be followed. Your father and mother desire . . . that you would not send your sister so soon as you mention for they justly observe that 'twill be very uncomfortable living in the old House while the end wall is down especially if a cold spring ensue . . .

As I have now with a great deal of Trouble and abuse got the remainder of Crawfords Cash we shall be able to push the work a great while without Drawing on you.

This last point was the subject of the only other surviving letter from George Otley to Browne (XII, 32). Undated, it said:

Inclosed you have Crawford Acct. Ballance Due £27.10s.7d. he says there is a few shillings Due to him from old Mr Otley for work done. You must allow it: but he sho'd pay Interest for the Long time it has stood but make the best you can on him . . .

Memorandum book entries from April 1777 indicate that William Crawford and his son John lived in Longsleddale and that their goods were sold on 19 May and 26 June 1777, perhaps to meet accumulated debts.

Browne's letter of 4 March 1779 also gave news of his hunting activities and his wife's pregnancy and concluded "I am in haste to the Island so depend upon it your Commands about the Building or otherwise shall be punctually observed". His book (R, 134) records his next move that same day: "Expenses going to Mr. Heaton about Mr. Otley's Building 10^d".

The reply to his letter was equally prompt. Dated 8 March 1779 (XII, 26) it shows Otley's continuing impatience and criticism of the workmen:

... thank you for your readiness in obliging me ... I hear with pleasure of your assisting them in putting forward the Building and hope by this time Mr. Heaton & yourself have pulled down the old end wall and employed such men as understand their Business to put up another.

I am sorry I cannot compliment the Troutbeck Carpenters on their abilities and from their slovenly finishing the other floor I hope they will not have the doing this – as they have neither plan'd nor cut the Boards right.

I beg you will present my Compliments to Mr. Heaton and if convenient for him to inspect them a little I shall be much obliged to him – observe that a Grate will be necessary for the new room & not a Large wide Chimney (to hang Mutton in) but Built rather modern and the room made as close and warm as possible or my sister will not be able to be as [comfortable in] an open cold Room. I ... never heard of the Letter you sent my Brother – he is now laid up in his old disorder, the Gout in his arm & leg.

[I] forgot I sent you the old plan being so long since ... My sister has sent her cloaths down by the last Frydays [i.e. 5 Mar.] waggon Directed to Mr. Hodgson, Kendall. They ... will be a Cart Load ... [so] ... as she has not Cloaths left ... they must get the end wall down & up again as soon as possible ...

Although he asked to be kept informed as work progressed, the remaining letters are less informative about the building work but the memorandum book entries give much useful dated information which will therefore be followed closely.

Two weeks after going to see Heaton, Browne, on 18 March 1779 (R, 138) wrote "Attending sale and writing articles of Building Geo. Otley's new room", but then apart from recording the receipt of two (missing) letters from Richard Otley on 24 and 25 April the book is silent until 11 May (R, 154), when Browne "Spent at Storeys laying Foundation Otley's House 2s.0d". Perhaps he had had difficulty finding local builders prepared to meet Otley's demands. He wrote a (missing) letter to Otley on 31 May (R, 160) and then, only three weeks after the foundations were laid, he recorded "1st floor laid at Otley's new Building" on Wed. 2 June (R, 160). The following Monday, 7 June, "G. Otley's House end [was] pul'd down" (R, 162) and a few days later on 12 June another letter from Richard Otley arrived, dated 7 June. This letter survives (XII, 119) and in it Otley expresses pleasure at the progress on the house in spite of disappointments, but also concern over the quality of the woodwork. He goes on:

for your care & Mr Heatons I can only return you my sincere Thanks ... I received my Sisters letter ... The trunk I find has laid at No 71 ever since she went and did not know it till today but shall send it by friday wagon ... [I] propose coming down ... in beginning August ... acquaint me how the House goes on ... as I should not like to come down when the House was so bad ...

Although Otley was concerned for his own comfort, he had obviously packed off his sister well before the gable wall of the old house was demolished in spite of the request to the contrary. Perhaps her departure coincided with his change of address to 16 New Bond Street (XI, 72²⁹ and Fig. 2).

Heaton apparently visited Cragg on 18 June (R, 164). On the following Tuesday, only three weeks after the first floor was laid, Browne recorded: "Spent laying on second floor Otley's workmen & c 2s. 6d." (R, 166) whilst that Thursday he spent 1s. 2d. in "Expenses going to seek Mr Heaton at Bownas & c". Heaton came the next day, no doubt to supervise the workmen who appear to have been recruited mainly from Bowness, probably on

Heaton's own recommendation (R, 164, 180, 184, 188). So after the initial delay the construction of the shell advanced rapidly and the second storey must have been completed with the roof timbers in position by mid July. Although no house rearing or "raising" is mentioned,³⁰ Browne must have written reporting this progress and the birth, on 4 July, of his eldest son, George, (R, 168) since in a reply written on 23 July, (XII, 28) and received on 27th (R, 176), Otley wrote:

I sincerely give you Joy of your son & Heir and hope Mrs. Browne is quite recovered – I still continue in the Bachelor state and am likely so . . .

The Difficulties attending the House & Workmen I hope by this time is over and am sorry to find Mr. Heaton affronted as you do not give me any reason for it . . . I was in hopes . . . to have come Down but am afraid I shall not till next summer . . . I hope our folks are all well . . . I have sent them a Barrell of Porter to warm the House with Directed to Mr. Hodgson by sea . . . & desire you will help them to Drink it.

Perhaps Heaton was not prepared to be paid merely with thanks.

Work meanwhile was continuing on the Cragg. The slate had apparently been brought to the site by 30 June, when Brown "paid Turnpike Otley's slate 10^d" (R, 168): on 1 September he "paid Mr. Townson for 30 Loads of slate Otley's £2. 12s. 6d." Undoubtedly the slate was brought by packhorses, each carrying its load of two hundredweight. Since a ton would cover 23 square yards³¹ the 30 loads would cover the 22 feet by 25 feet extension allowing a 30° roof pitch. Unfortunately, this is the only quantity stated for any of the materials used. William Townson's slate quarry was in Langdale.³² The slate must have been laid in late July and early August because on 26 July Browne recorded "delivered to Otley 2 Hundred Heart Laths 4 foot @ 4^s per." (R, 175) and on 2 August "G. Otley [had] 1 Hundred Sap Laths", presumably for slating. Browne also arranged for rigging the roof on 24 July when he "Spent about Otleys Riggin & Lime 4^d" (R, 174).

The memorandum book contains entries for the settlement of debts with the various workmen and suppliers from the beginning of August 1779. On 3 August, after the walling must have been finished, £6. 6s. od. was "paid Wm. Benson towards walling of G. Otleys House" (R, 178). Benson received another £6. 2s. od. in two further recorded payments (R, 228 and 238). On 9 August Browne was "Drawing Article of Joiners Work to be done at Otley's new Building" (R, 180), which he had arranged the previous day when he "Spent with Ladyman &c about Otley's Building 1s od." Then six weeks later on 18 September £8 8s. od. was "paid Ladyman & Co. in part for Joiners Work", the first of four recorded instalments to Holme and Ladyman totalling at least £18. 18s. od. (R. 190, 248, 256, 258), but the record of their final payment on 14 May 1780 fails to state the amount paid in full. On 21 August Browne had "paid [Joseph] Bowsher on account for Otley's Lime £2. 2s. od." (R, 182) the first of three recorded payments amounting to £3. 16s. 6d., but at least one payment must have been omitted because on 18 June 1780 (R, 268) his total payments are recorded as £5. 13s. 6d. Such discrepancies prevent detailed pricing of the work. Bowsher probably operated from the Rydal area.³³

The cost of materials also lacks detail. On 29 October 1779 £8. 3s. 5d. was "paid Harrison & Wilson in full for wood for Otley's building" (R, 202) and then on 18 December, £18. 1s. 6d. was "paid Matthew Glass in full for Mr Otley's wood". Perhaps one supplied the deal and the other the home-grown timber, but although wood accounted for a third of the recorded costs, quantities are lacking and the source of the

supplies is not known. The total recorded building costs in the memorandum book amounted to £78 with £1. 6s. 10d. for Browne's sundry expenses, whilst recorded receipts total £65.

Up to early August, expenses must have been paid out of the £24. 18s. 0d. which Browne received on 13 February 1779 "of W. Crawford in full of my own and Mr Otleys acct" (R, 127), which he referred to in his letter of 4 March (XI, 70). However, on 14 August he recorded that he received "of Mr Patrick in payment of £20 on Mr Otley's Acct £15" (R, 179) and the other £5 was paid him a week later. On 16 August he sent a (missing) letter to Otley (R, 182) about this. Richard Otley's reply, written on 31 August and received 6 September (R, 188), is preserved (XII, 30). It shows that he was already worried about the cost of the work:

Your last favour advised me of your Drawing on me for £20 which I have accepted and will be paid when due.

I shall be much obliged to you for informing me what the amount of the whole Building will be as I find some person has told my Brother that it will amount to £100 . . . Now as I never understood it could cost more than £30 or £40 making the addition it much surprises me – as the Building can be of no use to me. I meant it only for my 2 sisters to live in if anything should happen to my Parents as I know the [old] House would be wanted by perhaps both Brothers in the Country³⁴ and if Brother in Town did not like to give anything to it I meant to advance the above sum – as we are not on the most Friendly terms . . . [he] says that my Father is uneasy about the Building – it was his own proposal when I was Down merely on account of my sisters . . . there must have been some very strange mistake amongst us as I never meant to sink such a sum.

Browne's prompt reply dated 7 September (V, 257) gives a clear impression of the stage reached in the building work. He expressed regret at the brothers' disagreement and went on:

The Building which is now going forwards at Troutbeck (so far as I could understand) was meant for a Genteel and snug Box for either of the Brothers as should happen to come into the Country and the work so far is performed in the best and genteelest manner the Country would afford – so that double the money (40£ you mention) will be pinch'd to compleat the work as begun. We have already condemn'd upwards of £60 in materials wages &c. I would now have sent particulars of the whole expences But some of the Bills are not acertain'd and others not come to hand so that I cannot give you the account I could wish – what you have said about your fathers uneasiness is somewhat true . . . He does not understand Building himself [and] was apt to hear what every simple Body said, which caus'd frequent alteration of planns and a deal of unnecessary Expenses . . .

The Doors are all made and we are now about Glaising the two large Venitian windows towards the Church. The Joiners work is all contracted for by your Father and 'twill be very hard now to curtail any of the Expenses except the plasterers work, papering and Rough cast – I should be glad to hear from you with your full sentiments & directions soon and will write to your Brother (as [if] from your father) as you shall advise.

This letter indicates the acceptance of new ideas through the use of wallpaper and the installation of Venetian windows emulating those in the most fashionable local building on Belle Isle where Heaton was employed.

The glazing work had been arranged on 28 August, when Browne was "Attending R Elleray about Grasing [sic] Otley's Window" (R, 184) but was not paid for until 22

January when he “paid Rowland Elleray. Glaising Mr Otley’s Windows £5. 9s. 5d.” (R, 226). Elleray lived in Applethwaite.

More arrangements were made for drawing on Otley. Browne recorded that he had “paid Mr Fothergill my [London] agent by Draft on Mr R. Otley £15. os. od.” on 6 November 1779 and had “writ to Agent with Bill & advising Mr Otley thereof” (R, 204). A copy of this draft (XI, 72) and the letter to Otley of the same date (XI, 71) survive. Browne mentioned

Miss Otley’s ill state of Health . . . [She is] . . . now so lame as not to be able to leave her Bed on account of a violent pain which was in her Breast and is now falen into one of her Leggs.

He mentioned the draft and another “for £20 more in a few posts and will let the remainder alone till spring when I hope all will be settled and compleated”. Thus, on 9 November 1779, (R, 205) he drew “on Mr R Otley for 20£ payable to John Simpson. I to have Cash on Demand” and received the money on 18 December (R, 215).

Both of these drafts were mentioned in Otley’s reply of 4 December (XII, 33) and received on the 8th (R, 214). This continues:

As I suppose the whole to be now finished I should be glad to know what remains further to be paid and whether the alteration is adequate to the expence which I hope will be the case. I cannot help thinking myself very Ill used by my Brother in refusing to pay his share after he had promised it, but his conduct is and has been to me more like an Enemy than a Brother . . .

His next letter dated 22 February 1780 (XII, 35) mentioned the death of his cousin John Otley on the 18th at George Otley’s house in London. He thanked Browne for his (missing) “kind but short Letter . . . and am pleas’d to find by it that the House goes on so well now. I hope it will soon be finished to their satisfaction”.

Bearing in mind Otley’s comment in his letter of 8 March 1779 regarding the grates and the comfort his sister would need, it is interesting to note that it was not until 11 March 1780 that Browne “Spent with W. Robinson & Son about Otley’s Hearthstones 4d.” (R, 240) and it took eleven weeks more before 6d. was “Spent bespeaking Grates & Otleys” on 27 May 1780 (R, 262). The inconvenience the family must have suffered can be imagined. William Robinson was a slatemonger of Clappersgate, near Ambleside (XVI, 251).

Browne wrote again to Otley on 1 May 1780 (R, 256) and the reply dated 11 May (XII, 37) and received on 15th (R, 260) was as follows:

I was favoured with yours covering a schedule of the expenses of the House . . . I shall answer . . . any . . . draft previous to my coming down which will be about August I suppose: It seems to have cost a very large sum & much more than I expected but hope it will at least be a comfortable House. I suppose they have got it quite compleat and likewise what furniture they want in it, the principle of which will be a good Bed as I find that the most comfortable thing after being fatigued with Fishing &c.

Unfortunately, a copy of the schedule has not been found but Otley did fulfil his sporting ambition. On 8 August 1780, Browne recorded “Expenses with Mr Otley &c Fishing at Holbecke 3s. 3d.” (R, 285) and the following Thursday “Expenses at Holbeck Dining at Wrea &c 1s. 9d.” The following Monday (R, 287) he “settled with Mr Otley about Crawfords Business paid him £10 4s. 6d. which with £12. os. 6d. paid G. Otley³⁵ and £5. 5s. od. my charges make up the £27. 10s. od.” The following Friday the minutes for old George Otley’s will were drawn up, Richard Otley being left the house extension he had thought so expensive.

Subsequent events need to be briefly related to complete the story. Elizabeth Otley did not live long to enjoy her new accommodation for on 23 September 1781 she was buried in Troutbeck churchyard and the memorandum book records the "Sale of Miss Otley's Close" on 28 March 1782 (R, 352), perhaps as part of the settlement of her affairs. Then on 3 June 1783, John Robinson wrote (XII, 87) to Browne from Bartlett's Buildings, just behind George Otley's shop "by desire of Mrs Otley to give you the malincoly account of the death of poor George Otley. He was cut for the stone the 29 May and died the 31" He was 49 and his eldest son, George, was eight.

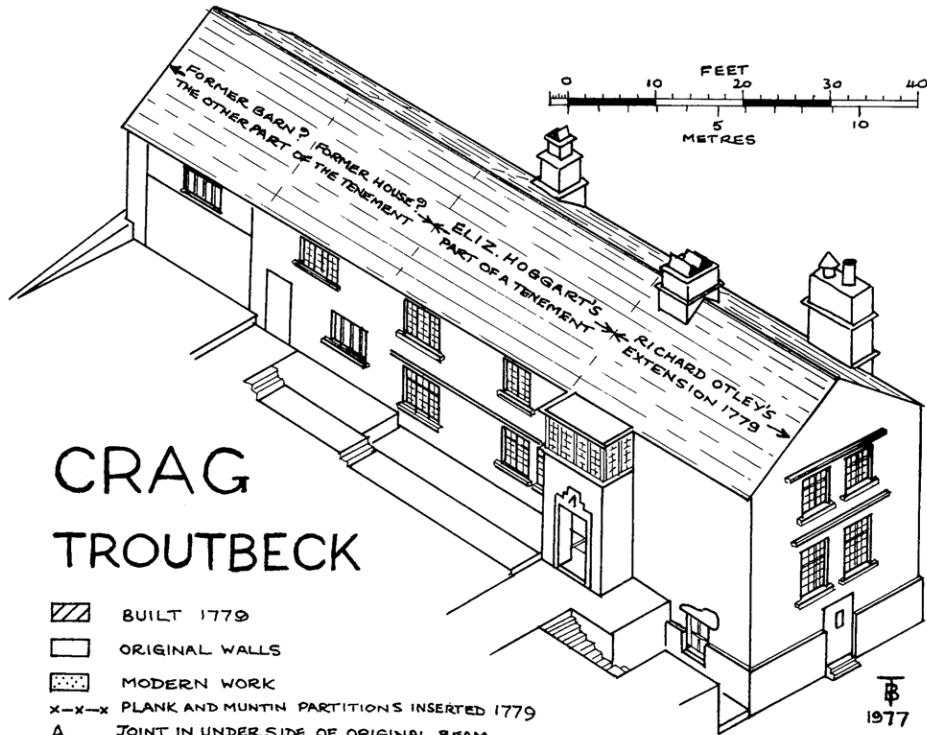
That very summer Richard Otley paid his next visit to Troutbeck. The memorandum book records that on 22 August 1783 (O, 66) George Browne "Settl'd and Ballanced with Mr Richard Otley about the Building at Cragg and Delivered him all articles and my receipts and vouchers & received of him for porch stones [from Mr. Townson] paid 20th 2s. 6d. and for Bricks &c of W. Robinson 1s. 6d." That same day "Mr. & Mrs Otley sett [off] for London." Richard Otley had married by licence Ann Otley (probably his cousin) of St. Anne's parish, Westminster, on 29 July so they were on honeymoon in Troutbeck and undoubtedly conceived their eldest child, Richard, there. He was baptised on 5 May 1784 but must have died an infant since the next son baptised on 11 February 1787 was also named Richard: he was followed by George (13 Aug. 1788), Ann (23 Dec. 1789) and Charles Bethel (12 Dec. 1791).³⁶

Old George Otley must have altered his will because on the back of his grandson's letter of December 1799 (XII, 39) is a note by George Browne: "Geo. Otley in his lifetime after the decease of his son George Otley made all his Estate to his Youngest son Richard Otley in Consideration of 120£ and an annuity to daughter Jane Otley".

Jane Otley seems to have been favoured in both wills. Perhaps she stayed at home to look after her elderly parents but she remains obscure. Her mother, Agnes, was buried on 24 August 1786 aged 77 and Browne attended her funeral (O, 497). Old George Otley, aged 87, was buried on 24 September 1789, having released his customary tenement at Cragg to his son Richard in 1787,³⁷ perhaps because of senility.

Richard Otley seems to have prospered. In 1791 he took over a Troutbeck tenement from James Birkett and in 1802 yet another at High Green from George Birkett of Cragg, his tenant.³⁸ Also in 1802 he bought three fields from Margaret Elleray of Windermere and John Robinson of London,³⁹ but in 1808 he sold almost all of these properties to five different buyers, including George Browne (son of George Browne) who paid £187 for the three acre close called Castle How Syke (NY 400016).⁴⁰

On 22 May 1810, the Jury of Troutbeck Manor presented that Richard Otley was dead and a first proclamation was made for the heir to come forward to claim the Troutbeck properties.⁴¹ Otley's burial has not been traced but he probably died in 1809. Until then he paid land tax assessments for New Bond Street, but in 1810 was replaced by Richard and George Otley (his sons) and from 1811 by his wife, Ann.⁴² On 6 December 1814, his eldest son Richard was admitted to the Cragg, his mother "having released all her right and title thereto" and he thereupon sold it to George Hayton of Troutbeck. Ann kept part of High Green tenement until her death so that on 19 July 1831 her second son George was admitted tenant there but he had already sold his title to it for £29 to John Benson on 14 February 1825.⁴³ Since Pigot's London directory of 1823-4 shows George Otley as a men's mercer of 19 New Bond St., it seems likely that his elder brother had died and on taking over his father's business George had finally severed the connections with Troutbeck.



CRAG TROUTBECK




-  BUILT 1779
-  ORIGINAL WALLS
-  MODERN WORK
- x-x-x PLANK AND MUNTIN PARTITIONS INSERTED 1779
- A JOINT IN UNDER SIDE OF ORIGINAL BEAM
- B NEW BEAM INSERTED IN 1779
- C 3 JOISTS REMOVED FOR LATER STAIRCASE
- D PANTRY WITH COAL STORE BELOW AND BATHROOM ABOVE. POSSIBLE POSITION OF MISS OTLEY'S STAIRCASE
- E WALL IN BASEMENT. THE POSSIBLE LIMIT OF SHOP.
- F DOOR TO GARDEN
- G LIMIT OF 1779 DEMOLITION

FIG. 3 a ↑
b ↓

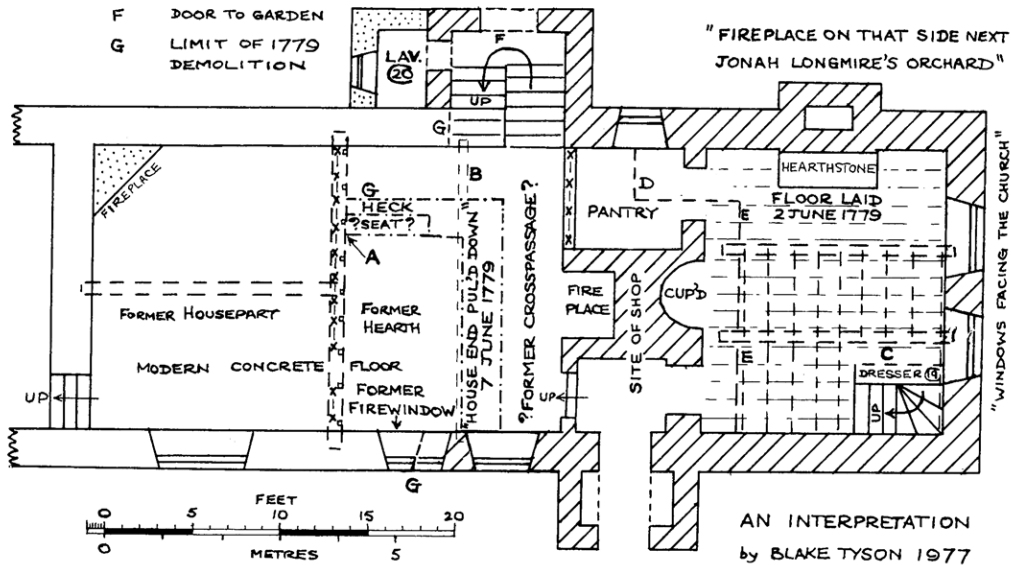


FIG. 3. - Crag, Troutbeck.

Subsequent alterations to Cragg have not masked the essential features demanded by Richard Otley in 1779; the gable-end windows, no longer Venetian, command a superb view not only of the church but of the fells beyond. The chimney projects on the outside of the north wall whilst, inside, the chimney breasts are virtually flush with the wall and the grates have only recently been removed leaving in place the original hearthstones of sandstone. The pitch-pine floor boards, one foot wide, are in one length as directed. Unfortunately, one cannot check Otley's original sketch plan or Heaton's version with the present layout but, instead of the garret conceived by Otley for the second floor, Heaton substituted a basement because of the fall in ground level east of the house. Access from basement to upper floors seems to have been by a staircase occupying the position of the present coal-store, pantry and bathroom (Fig. 3b). The small room above the front door was probably a dressing room leading off Miss Otley's bedroom but became the means of access to that bedroom when the extension's staircase was removed, probably in late Victorian times. At the same time a new stair was inserted in the S.E. corner of the living room to give access to the basement. The upper storey of the old house was subdivided by lath-and-plaster partitions. In the old house modern concrete floors downstairs and softwood floorboards upstairs prevent assessment of Otley's complaints about the quality of flooring. However, it is possible by reference to the main beam separating the present dining-room and sitting-room to infer where the former gable wall of the old house stood. On the underside of this beam, about five feet from the north wall of the house, is a single blocked socket where the end-post of a heck partition would have been. The area to the east of the beam would have been a large open hearth typical of 17th century Lakeland farmhouses.⁴⁴ In the rebuilding, the fire window was undoubtedly enlarged to form the western window of the present dining room and the new ceiling joists were placed on top of the main beam. If this interpretation is correct then a cross-passage probably existed opposite the foot of the present staircase between the shop and a gable entry to the old house. The new fireplace and chimney stack were built immediately to the east of this passage so that the flue sloped eastwards above the curved rear wall of a fine semi-circular cupboard in the new extension to provide dry storage space for the Otley sisters.

This interesting transformation of a traditional house lies right on the vernacular-polite threshold⁴⁵ in that it was basically designed by an amateur for the purely functional purpose of accommodating his sisters as cheaply as possible. Using mostly local materials, it was built by tradesmen probably steeped in Lakeland building tradition but "performed in the best and genteel manner the Country would afford." On the other hand the use of new features like grates (especially in the bedroom), wallpaper and Venetian windows and the prominence of aesthetic considerations of outlook, comfort, chimney size, flooring quality and room size and shape reflect new attitudes imported from polite urban society. The employment of an architect from the most fashionable local building merely confirms an evident desire to break with vernacular traditions in the home of an ordinary family by 1779.

Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks are due to Mr and Mrs A. Ferguson, owners of Crag Cottage, who generously allowed me to investigate and measure their home. Miss S. MacPherson, Mr B. C. Jones and the staff of the Cumbria County Record Offices at Kendal and Carlisle have given invaluable assistance. The co-operation of my wife, Margaret, of Mr Richard Samways of Middlesex Record Office and of the librarians at the Guildhall Dept. of Manuscripts, is gratefully acknowledged.

Notes and References

- ¹ R. W. Brunskill, *Vernacular Architecture of the Lake Counties*, 1974.
- ² J. D. Marshall, *Old Lakeland*, 1971, 60. Chapters 2 and 6 provide useful background reading for this study.
- ³ K.R.O. WD/TE Bound MSS particularly Vols. V, XI and XII. References to these papers appear in brackets in the text.
- ⁴ K.R.O. WD/TE Box of diaries &c. 1781 is missing. Vols. B and O also have relevant entries.
- ⁵ "Storey's" was a local inn called the "Bayhorse" at High Fold, Troutbeck. (K.R.O. WD/TE Green Wooden Box I). It was opened on 2 July 1775 (memo. Book B).
- ⁶ S. H. Scott, *A Westmorland Village*, 1904, 205. Other inaccuracies are evident.
- ⁷ K. R. O. Troutbeck Parish registers and Lancashire R.O. Richmond Wills 1712.
- ⁸ C.R.O. D/Lons/L. Windermere and Troutbeck Manor Court books.
- ⁹ Although Richard Hoggart's wedding occurred shortly after the start of the 1707 entries, his wife's name has been torn from the Troutbeck parish register and the Bishop's Transcripts are missing. Presumably the son, Richard, was the "Richard Hoggart (alias Brown)" who was buried at Troutbeck on 11 June 1723, leaving Agnes as sole heir to Elizabeth's property.
- ¹⁰ Troutbeck registers.
- ¹¹ C.R.O. D/Lons./L.
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ K.R.O. WD/TE Box "Troutbeck Parish". Also the Troutbeck Parish deposit.
- ¹⁴ N. and B., *History of Westmorland and Cumberland*, 1777, I, 179 mention £100 left by Frances Bonack of Bought for the poor of Undermillbeck, Applethwaite, Troutbeck and Ambleside.
- ¹⁵ Housman "Tour", *Monthly Magazine*, Feb. 1798, 108. Quoted in D. M. George, *London Life in the 18th Century*, 1966, 347.
- ¹⁶ Middlesex Record Office, *New Guide to the City of London*, c. 1780.
- ¹⁷ Ranelagh, immediately east of the Royal Chelsea Hospital, with its enormous rotunda, and Vauxhall Gardens, south of the Thames, with its restaurant were both used for balls, masquerades and displays. See G. Rudé, *Hanoverian London*, 1971, 73 and plates 19-21.
- ¹⁸ The Pantheon, designed by James Wyatt and begun in June 1769, was to have been completed by Michaelmas 1770. It stood on the south side of Oxford Street and for some time "had raised the expectations and engrossed the conversation of the polite world". It was finally opened in 1772 at a cost of about £37,000. *Survey of London* (ed. F. H. W. Sheppard), 1963, Vol. 32, pt. II, 268-283.
- ¹⁹ Lord Mayor Brass Crosby had been committed to the Tower the previous day. *D.N.B.*, V, 210-211, gives a detailed account.
- ²⁰ Near the Guildhall on the south side of what is now the eastern section of Gresham St., London E.C.2. R. Horwood, *Plan of Cities of London & Westminster etc.*, 1792-9 shows the location of all the London addresses mentioned in this article.
- ²¹ On the N.E. corner with Union St., about 70 yards south of Oxford Street.
- ²² Information kindly supplied by Manuscripts Department, Guildhall Library.
- ²³ This regatta therefore pre-dates by five years the Bassenthwaite regatta stated to have been the earliest (W. Rollinson, *Life and Tradition in the Lake District*, 1974, 159).
- ²⁴ Belle Isle was described as "meagre pasture ground with . . . gnarled oak trees" before Mr. English bought it in 1774 and had the circular house built with Venetian windows on three main aspects and a classical portico on the fourth. He also created much-criticised formal gardens. E. W. Hodge, *Country Life*, 3 and 10 Aug. 1940.

- ²⁵ Browne married Elizabeth Benson by whom he was to have three sons and five daughters. Pedigree in S. H. Scott, *op. cit.*
- ²⁶ No evidence has been found for the form or purpose of the shop.
- ²⁷ Memo book entries (e.g. R, 20 and R, 150).
- ²⁸ This was probably the "Letter to Mr Otley No 43 Holbourn" sent on 29 Nov. 1778 (R, 105).
- ²⁹ This property was leased in 1719 for 61 years to Benjamin Timbrell, a carpenter, and after occupation by a succession of aristocrats was vacated by Catherine, Duchess of Devonshire in 1777. *Survey of London*, Vol. 32, 548. Perhaps Otley merely took up the last year of the lease, since later references give his address as 19 New Bond Street which also stood between Clifford St. and Conduit St.
- ³⁰ The memo. books record for example "At David Tyson's House rearing", 18 Nov. 1787 (W, 92) and "The Howe, Sir John Wilson House rearing when the front of the house was built", 11 July 1789 (W, 266).
- ³¹ K.R.O. WD/Ry Box 22.
- ³² Letter, John Gibson to Sir Michael le Fleming 9 July 1781. K.R.O. WD/Ry Box 108.
- ³³ Account "Josh. Bowsha for Lime from 11th June 1784 to 23rd £3. 8s. 9d." and other entries. K.R.O. WD/Ry Box 108.
- ³⁴ James, who married Elizabeth Grisedale on 9 Apr. 1759, and William who married Elizabeth Brownrigg on 21 Apr. 1766 and had two daughters, Agnes (6 Oct. 1766) and Mary (12 Mar. 1769). K.R.O. Troutbeck registers.
- ³⁵ This covered payments for quantities of meat dispatched to the brothers in London (XI, 70).
- ³⁶ Registers of St. George's, Hanover Square, W1. W. J. Otley witnessed the wedding. Marriage bond at Lambeth Palace Library, London.
- ³⁷ C.R.O. Troutbeck Manor Court Books p. 356.
- ³⁸ Loc. cit. p. 373 and 375: K.R.O. land tax assessments 1801 and 1809.
- ³⁹ They also sold High Fold, Troutbeck, to William Mounsey. Robinson's address, given as "Pentonville, Clerkenwell" suggests that it was probably he who wrote of George Otley's death, mentioned the regatta and visited Browne's house with Otley and Anderson.
- ⁴⁰ K.R.O. WD/TE Misc. Box for conveyance dated 13 Feb. 1808.
- ⁴¹ C.R.O. Kendal Barony Court Book 1802-1810 p. 506.
- ⁴² Middlesex R.O. land tax assessments for St. George's, Hanover Square.
- ⁴³ C.R.O. Troutbeck Manor Court Books, pp. 200-202, 394.
- ⁴⁴ Brunskill, *op. cit.*, fig. 64a, illustrates a similar example, but the main beam is jointed.
- ⁴⁵ R. W. Brunskill, *Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture*, 1970, 25-26.

Since the main body of the work was completed, the following additional information has come to light:

- (i) George Otley paid rates in Holborn throughout 1770 but is not mentioned in 1767. The rate books for 1768-9 are missing. In addition to George (1775), his other children were twins Joseph Henry and Richard Tompkins (baptised 5 May 1778) and Sarah (15 Nov. 1779). (Guildhall Library, Dept. of Manuscripts). His marriage bond is at Lambeth Palace Library.
- (ii) Holden's *Triennial Directory* of 1805-7 gives Richard Otley's private address as Flask Walk, Hampstead. The rate books in Holborn Central Library show that Otley started paying rates in Hampstead in May 1788 in "The Heath", but from 1792 he was listed under "New End". The parish registers record the birth of two more children, Mary (3 June 1794) and William (24 Apr. 1796) and Richard Otley's burial on 15 Apr. 1809. By 1811 the rate books show that the family had moved – perhaps back to Bond St.
- (iii) Ann Otley seems to have been born on 27 Oct. 1754, the daughter of Henry and Elizabeth Otley of St. Anne's parish, Soho. Nearby, E. & M. Otley were haberdashers in Cranbourn St., Leicester Square, in 1784 and a Henry Otley was a hosier and glover in Sidney's Alley, Leicester Square, from 1789 to 1829.
- (iv) John Robinson (baptised 25 Apr. 1741) was the son of Thomas Robinson who in 1783 mortgaged High Fold for £100 to Robert Elleray, a weaver of Applethwaite (XVI, 296-8). Thomas Robinson was buried on 26 Sept. 1796 (E, 186), so the sale in 1802 was probably to clear the mortgage.