

ART. XIV – *Some Traditional Buildings in the Troutbeck Valley: a Documentary Study.*
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EVEN for the eighteenth century scarcity of documentary evidence hampers our knowledge of the traditional building activities of Lakeland yeomen. Fortunately several members of the Browne family of Townend, Troutbeck were local officials and attorneys who retained various contracts, specifications, accounts and appropriate correspondence¹ associated with the erection of a variety of ordinary buildings belonging to themselves or relatives. Although the evidence for individual structures is incomplete, the documents allow close examination of the workmen, construction details, source and price of materials, owners' requirements and builders' obligations as traditional building work gradually evolved into a more formal contractor-based industry. Other documents provide complementary detail and reveal the complex relationships which linked three yeoman families whose buildings are typical of countless undocumented examples in the Lake District. For convenience the buildings will be considered out of chronological order.

The earliest complete contract containing the four essential elements (namely the identity of both parties, the contract price and the completion date) is a carpenter's agreement dated 25 May 1719. It occupies the left-hand side of a sheet containing resultant building accounts (vi, 122-5) but, unlike later documents, it includes no specification details. As matters like materials and design were undefined, it relied on tradition and the craftsman's skill and integrity to produce a successful building. It simply states that "an agreement [was] made between Geo. Birkett of Troutbecke . . . Carpenter on ye One part and Benjamin Browne of . . . Troutbecke yeoman, and Geo. Dixon of Satterthwaite in Lancashire yeoman on ye other part" to the effect that Birkett would "putt and worke all ye worke belonging to a Miln Wright at ye ancient Corn Miln & Kiln at Troutbeckbridge in good & sufficient repare for a goeing Miln & Kiln." Browne and Dixon were to find all materials and were to pay Birkett £8 "when ye worke is finished which must be done before Michaelmas next". All three signed the agreement witnessed by James Birkett and John Wilson.

Significantly, the document was drawn up by the elder Benjamin Browne (1664-Oct. 1748) in his own handwriting.² As he was High Constable of Kendal Ward from 1711 to 1732,³ perhaps his experience of controlling workmen engaged on bridge and highway construction and repair made him more cautious than other Lakeland yeomen. On the same page he made a list of wood supplied by the joint owners. Browne provided six trees, an axletree, braytrees and Louthers planks⁴ from his woods whilst Dixon supplied eleven trees from Gatefoot⁵ mostly for "Sheilds or Bottomes and Cogg Wheels", together with two trees from Borrans, "One for Arms". Browne made up his share during October by supplying "Wood of mine from my house" comprising sundry boards, posts and "a Tree for a Winder", presumably from a stock he kept seasoning for such an occasion.⁶ The remainder of the document comprises simple accounts drawn up on 22 January 1719/20. These show that Browne had paid £22. 15s. 2d. and "Couz. Geo. Dixon" £20. 17s. od. to workmen who included William Birkett and James Cookson (wallers),

Rowland and Anthony Cookson, Thomas Cookson ("Clerke"),⁷ John Dixon (labourer), George Lang and John Dawson (both labourers with a horse) and John Wilson (smith). George Brathwait "o'th'Boat" was paid ten shillings "for Carriage of Wood & Flags down Water" (Windermere), presumably from near Pull Wyke and Brathay respectively, for £1. 18s. 4d. was paid to "Mr Sam. Ridgeway for 43 foot wood at pull". James Birkett, who was paid £2. 10s. 0d. "for Lime, Wood, Nails & trayling [wood] &c", seems to have been landlord of the Black Cock inn at Troutbeck Bridge where the mill owners each spent 2s. 9d. "with ye Workmen at Jamy's" when they settled their accounts with the builders. The £9 cost of millstones and George Birkett's £8 were shared equally by Browne and Dixon, who then leased the mill to James Birkett for £8. 6s. a year (Unbound MSS, 58).

It is significant that the Hawkshead registers record the baptism on 31 March 1725/6 of "Margt daughter of Thomas Dixon of Satterthwaite grandchilde to George Dixon of Orresthead" for, when the latter was buried at Windermere on 4 April 1729, he left only his "moiety in the tithes of Lewson Park in Furness Fells" to his eldest son Thomas, who apparently had taken over the Satterthwaite property after George married again in 1719. Orresthead passed to the second son John to support the widow, and properties at "Borrance, Fusethwaite Yeat and Gatemelhow"⁸ were to be sold together with his "Moiety in two Mills and one Kiln" at Troutbeck Bridge to provide trust funds for his younger children. The trustees, who included "Cozen Benjamin Browne", disposed of the farms as directed in Dixon's will (xiv, 36-7), but his half share in the mills was not sold until 15 October 1745 (iv, 147).

The purchaser was James Birkett senior, an innkeeper of Ambleside. He paid £20. 5s. and then had to pay for repairs to the paper mill at Troutbeck Bridge. No contracts have survived, but accounts (vi, 126-134) provide interesting evidence. Wood was brought from Gowbarrow *via* Ullswater and 3s. was paid "for Bringing Sheeles [apparently 2 loads] to top of Kirkstone". Another 7s. was paid "for Crookd Wood from Longdale & Ambleside 3 Pieces" and trips were made to Penny Bridge, Coniston, Clifton and Lickbarrow in search of other wood.⁹ "Expences for Bring Axeltree in Licquer from Home" were 5s. The workmen included Will. Hodgeson, John Birkett (carpenter), Wm. Brownrigg (see below), John Crosthwait and Willm. Birkett (waller) whilst £3. 15s. was paid to "James Birkett of Black Cock for Workmens board @ 5d. p. day" and £2 "for himself and horse for fetching Wood & other things". The mill was let to James Akister for 21 years at £8. 10s. (ix, 137-8). The mills were demolished many years ago to make way for the former Windermere Electric Works behind the present wood-working machinery works of Messrs W. A. Fell Ltd., so the results of the builders' work cannot be studied in the field. Fortunately, most of the other buildings to be considered have survived, some of them almost unaltered.

In 1731 Benjamin Browne built a new barn at Lane¹⁰ and the records (vi, 118-21) include accounts and a wallers' contract attached to a plan of the building (Fig. 1). The Troutbeck Valuation of 1846¹¹ shows that the Brownes possessed plot 344 called "Lane Close", 345 "Lane House and garden" and 346 "Lane barn and yard", all of which lie on the north-west side of Robin Lane as shown in Fig. 6. For many years the building has been known as Rose Cottage but its identity is confirmed by a slate corner-stone

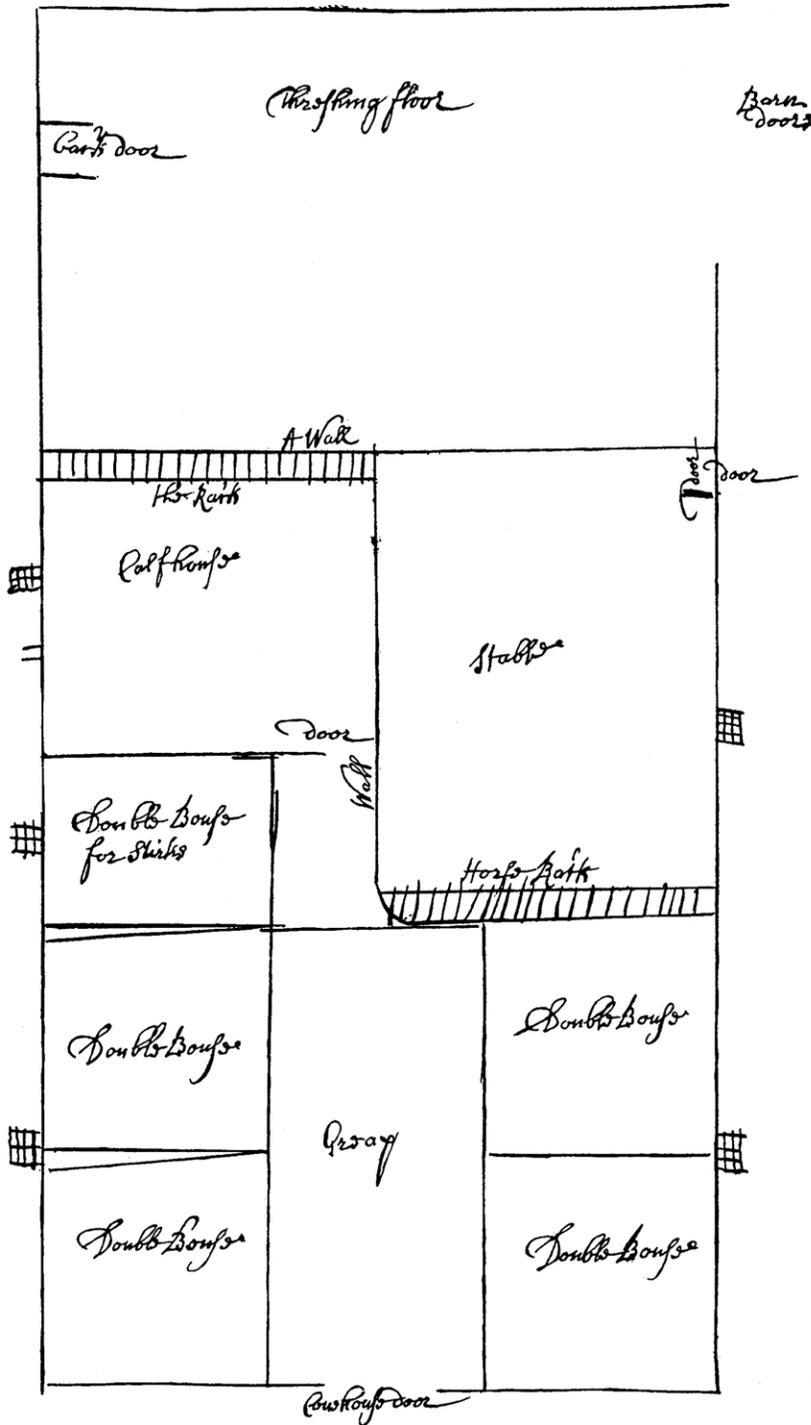


FIG. 1. - Lane barn, Troutbeck. Original plan reduced from the wallers' contract dated 28 December 1730. Size of original 11.85 × 5.87 inches.

inscribed B B 1732 (Fig. 2) apparently carved shortly after the builders finished their work.

On 28 December 1730¹² Benjamin Browne contracted with Thomas Cookson, James Cookson, William Birkett, Thomas Turner and Thomas Browne (signed by all except Turner) to the effect that:

The said persons Walers doe hereby promise to Build a New Barn at Lane in Troutbeck according to the demensions within. That is to say 12 yards long within & 6 yards wide within and 4 yards betwixt ye Loft floor and ye Crook Bauke,¹³ and to slait, pave, Ly the threshing floor and everything of Waler buisness about the said Barn . . . Benjamin Browne must pay in Consideracon . . . thirteen pounds, the said Work to be Covered before ye 15th of June next.

The agreement was witnessed by William Mackreth and George Birkett whose signature is not unlike that of the millwright mentioned earlier. Presumably William Birkett and the two Cooksons were the same men who worked on the mill, for the Troutbeck registers record the following burials: Rowland Cookson, waller (30 August 1734), James Cookson, waller (28 April 1750), Thomas Cookson, waller (10 June 1753), William Birkett, waller (28 July 1759) and Elizabeth Cookson Clarks (11 Oct. 1738). However their genealogy is too uncertain for publication.¹⁴

The accounts show that the walls must have been complete by 20 February 1730/1 when 5s. 2d. was paid for "Cheese bought 28 lbs at 2¼d. p. lb for ye rearing" and "Bread 2 dozen and a half" cost 2s. 6d.¹⁵ On 13 March the customary payment of "Gloves for ye Workmen 16 pair", costing 8s. 6d., indicates how many men raised the roof timbers into position. The wallers were paid £12 on 19 March but had to wait until 3 October 1731 for their final £1, presumably after internal work had been completed. In addition they received £2. 5s. 10d. "by days for other work", including James Cookson "Laying on Lime", using four bushels @ 10d., and 2s. to Rowland Cookson for unspecified work. Browne's memorandum book (E,22) shows that he paid 5s. to "Tho. Cookson, Jamy Cookson & Willy Birkett each 2 days plaistering over Barn floor at 10d. a day" probably to prevent corn dropping through cracks in low quality floorboards.¹⁶

Unfortunately, no carpenter's contract survives, but the accounts show that wood was being bought as early as November 1730 from "John Borwicke 6 pieces 20 [cubic] foot, one of ym A Crook bauk" for 9s. John Cowperthwait supplied four larger pieces measuring 18½ cubic feet at 5½d, presumably for main beams, five smaller pieces from Cringlemire (NY 395019) and another "piece for 2 dorms". He supplied also "10 joysts 3 yards long", "42 joysts 2 yards long at 2d a yard" and "2 great Doors' Harrs [hinges]". Christo^r [Richardson] supplied other timber including "9 Dozen of Spars [rafters] 8 foot" for 19s. These would have been of cleft oak spanning from the eaves and ridge only to the purlin (or rib). In addition Browne bought 500 laths for 15s, "Latt Nails 3000 at 2s. 2d." and spent 10s. 6d. on iron goods including "Spikeings, pikes, hoops & Ridwiddys 10".¹⁷ "Slait from parke, 20 Loads [at 1s. 4d.] laid at ye Lane Barn" cost £1. 6s. 8d. which was "paid [to] Thos. Morland at Mrs Waughs" on 8 May 1731. Morland was tenant at both Crook Hall and Hellsfell Hall (Kendal)¹⁸ for Major Pigeon, who also owned Troutbeck Park and its slate quarry.¹⁹ Browne used more "park Slait 45 Loads Carryed from home". If each of the 6.5 tons of slate covered 23 square yards²⁰ there would have been a surplus of about one load on a roof 42 feet long by 23 feet wide with a 30° pitch.

The plan, reproduced as Fig. 1, must be considered a rarity for such a barn at that

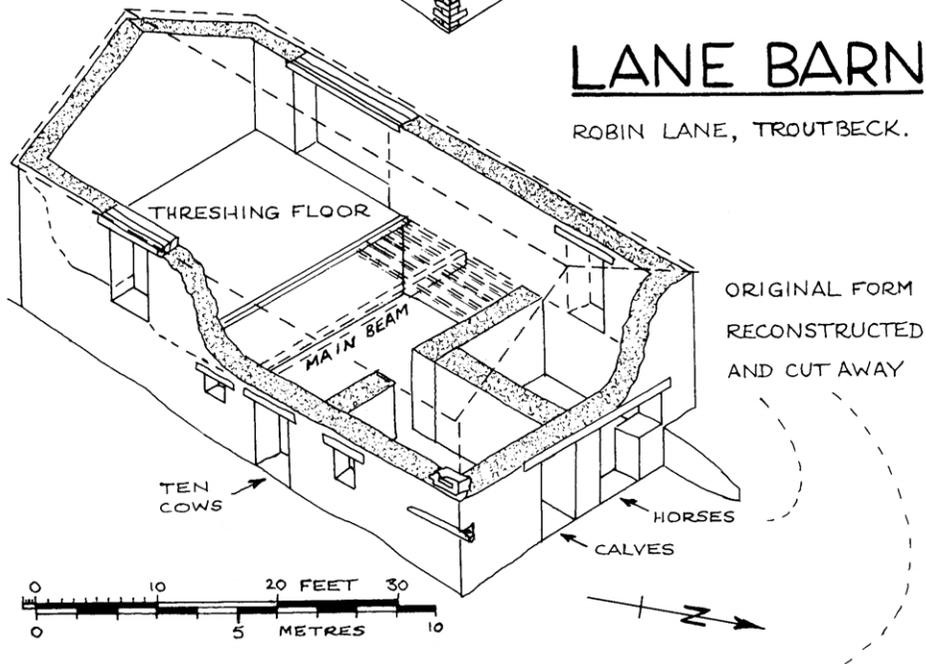
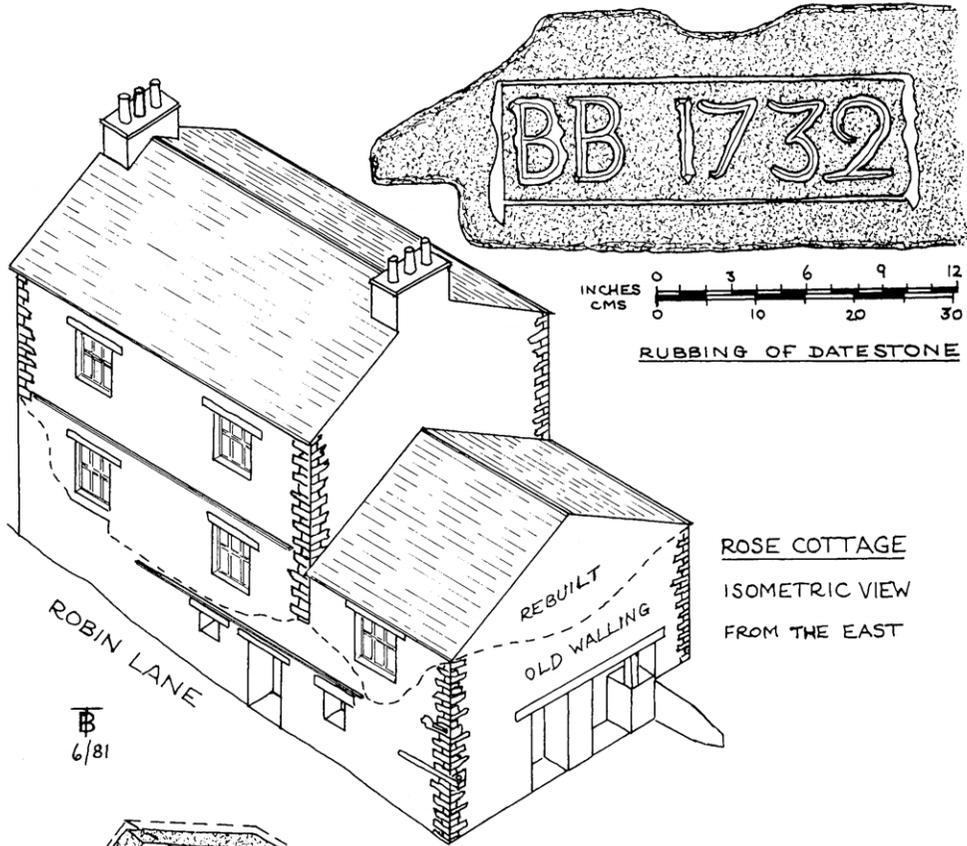


FIG. 2.

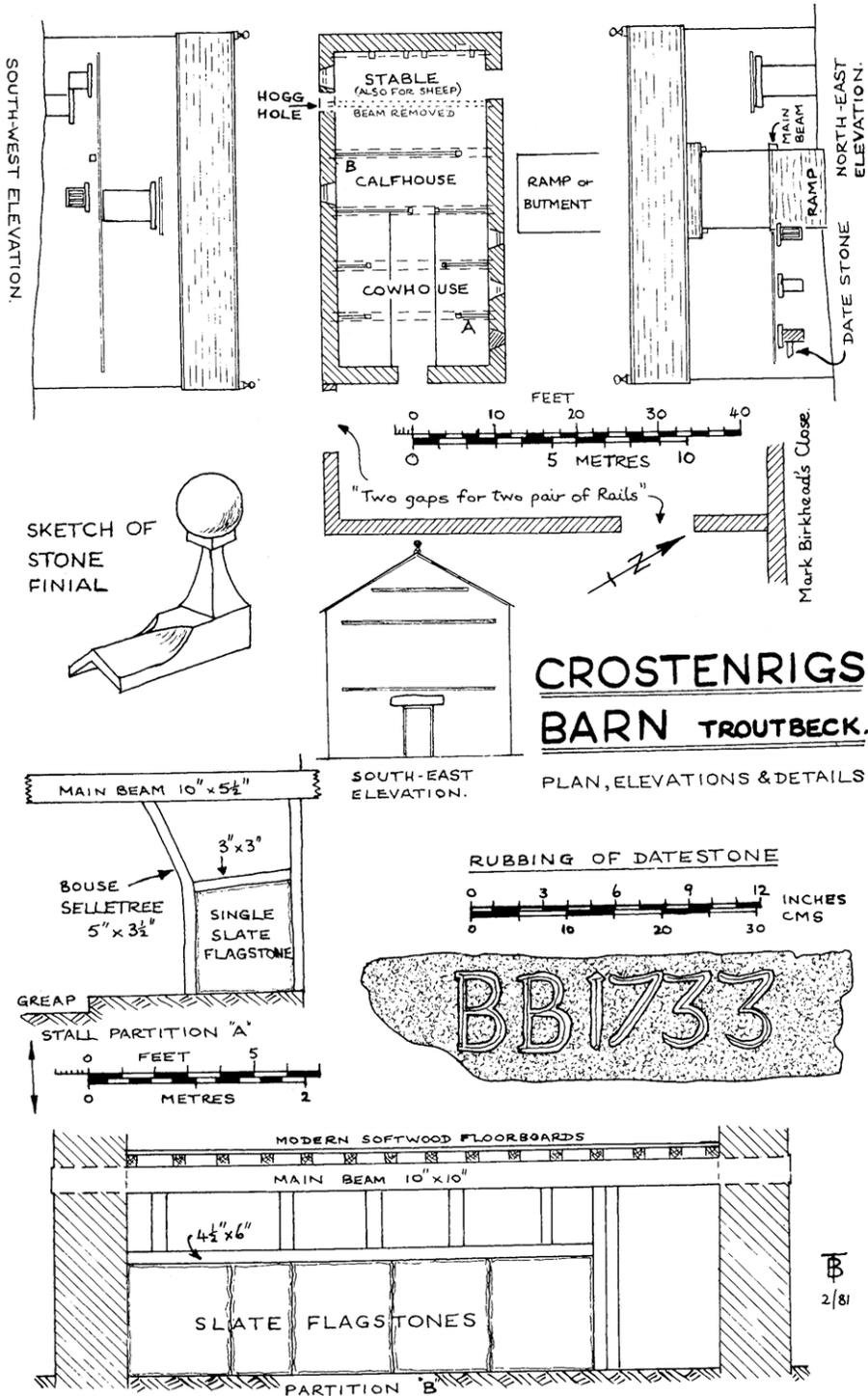
time and deserves close inspection. As Robin Lane climbs steadily southwards here, the barn's upper end comprised a single-storey threshing area with double doors facing westwards towards the hillside behind for easy access. A smaller "Back Door" allowed a through draught for winnowing purposes and perhaps was used also as a pitching door from the lane. Beneath the loft, which extended over the remainder of the building, ten cattle were to be housed in double bouses (stalls) on either side of a greap (manure passage) leading from a door placed centrally in the northern gable. Internal access was planned for the calfhouse but the stable was to have a separate doorway at the rear of the building. Five windows were indicated by crude grills drawn outside the internal wall line but the walls' outer surfaces apparently held little interest for the draughtsman, who used a scale of roughly 1 inch = 1 yard and did not always hold his ruler steady.

Normally one might expect builders to be bound by such a plan in their contract, but examination of the site reveals that the stable door was obviously impossible in the planned position, for the land behind the barn is at upper floor level. The builders kept to the stated dimensions but must have pointed out the difficulty and no doubt agreed verbally to adopt the more practical arrangement shown in Fig. 2. The cowhouse was moved to a central position, whilst the stable (with a small window) and the calfpen were placed at the north end with separate doorways. Two-thirds of the upper floor is now occupied by a late nineteenth-century house which required that part of the roof to be raised by a whole storey. However, the original roof-line appears to have been preserved in the northern third even though the upper part of that gable has been rebuilt. Although the stone walls inside may have been inserted later to carry the cottage gable, the ground floor retains much of the original detail, so that one can examine the extent to which unrecorded modification of a contract was possible.

A year after the Lane barn was completed, Benjamin Browne, on 4 January 1732/3, contracted with Thomas Cookson, James Cookson, Rowland Cookson and William Birkett, all wallers, for "A Hoghouse to be Buildded at Crostenrigs Yeat" for £18. 10s. as follows (vi, 119):

The House must be 12½ yards within and 3 yards & a half above ye loft under ye Bawke, and 2 yards at least between Bouses selletree to ye Dorm,²¹ Makeing ye Butment on to ye loft, paveing all the under houses. Slaiting, and setting flags [upright] betwixt all ye Bouses, and seting flags betwixt ye Cowhouse and Calf house; & alsoe be[t]wixt ye Calf house and Stable, a paveing one yard broad from the house all along on ye north side and East end of ye said house; and A Course of Tables round ye house above ye loft and 2 Course on ye West End and all other Work which belongs to Wallers, finding and provideing all Stones and laying them at [the] Work and making a Wall from the East Corner down Eastward, and then Northwards to Mark Birkheads Close leaving two gaps for two pair of Rails.

The agreement was witnessed by Ben. Birkhead, Jonathan Elleray and William Mackreth and gives more detail than the Lane contract. Although Browne omitted the building's width, fieldwork proves it was six yards wide internally (Fig. 3) like Lane, and of a similar length, but the price was 142 per cent higher. Perhaps this extra cost can be explained by the barn being of two storeys throughout on a flat site, requiring a large ramp for upper floor access, and having 18 yards of field walls at the eastern end. The builders also needed to demolish and clear an earlier hoghouse mentioned in Browne's memorandum book in 1730. Belatedly, on 21 June he had paid 6s. to "Jon Dawson [for]



**CROSTENRIGS
BARN TROUTBECK.**

PLAN, ELEVATIONS & DETAILS

FIG. 3.

plowing an acre before ye Hoghouse at Crostenrigg” and then 5s. “to Tho. o’th’Wrights for Shearing the Acre of Oats before Crostenrigs Hoghouse” on 4 September 1730. Re-using the slate from the hoghouse probably explains why the building account records a mere £1. 4s. od. paid “To Mr Pigion for 24 Loads of Slait at 1s.” and “for Carriage at 4d. p. Load to Mr. Pigeon 4s. & to Jon Kemp 4s.” to deliver it to the site from Troutbeck Park. Presumably about 40 loads of slate were recovered from the old building in addition to timber and stone.

The accounts record the supply of other materials. In February 1732/3 “Wood bought A[t] Clappersgate and fetching 5 pieces cost 9s. 1d.”, whilst “Five Dozen of Joysts 2 yards long of Christo^r Richardson cost £1” and “Two Dozen of Joysts of George Longmire Cost 8s.”. The latter man and Jonathan Elleray each supplied “Boards A quarter of A Rood” for 13s. and 18s. 9d. respectively. “Two Dogs and Loops” for hanging the doors were supplied by a William Atkinson for 1s. 6d. and “Makeing 12 pikes, Making a stone Wimble & 1 Mending²² & Nails to R. Cookson” cost 1s. 7d. On 6 June Edward Brathwait was paid 4s. 4d. for 2,000 lath nails and 6s. 4d. for 1,000 lofting nails, indicating that perhaps the building was almost complete.

Although “Beef bought for ye Raiseing 27½ [lbs.]” cost 3s. 11d. and “Bread 9d., Sugar 1 lb, 4d., [and] Gloves 13 pairs 6s. 8d. to Jona paid” cost 7s. 9d., the date of that event can be assumed only to have preceded the next listed payment “Ap 28. Then paid William Sharp £4. os. od. and to Willy Birkett £2. os. od.”. The sequence of events can be sketched crudely from petty “Expenses” (beer money) recorded in Browne’s memorandum book for 1733 (Vol. E). On the contract day, 4 January, he spent 2s. 6d. at “Ben. Birketts wth Walers”; on 21 February, 3d. “At Clappersgate fetching 5 trees” and on 26 March, 6d. at “Knotts for my Wood Carters”. On 12 March he had been at the “Black Cock with Wrights” spending a guinea, presumably for work partially completed, and then on 4 April at John Birkett’s he spent 1s. “wth Workmen Laying on ye Loft”. He was there again on 2 June “wth walers 1s.” and “Slait Leaders 2d.” and on 21 June spent 6d. “Black Cock to Crostenrigs Hoghouse”. On 15 July he was “At Gills with 2 Wrights Geo & Wm 6d.” and the next day at the “Black Cock with them again 4d.”. On 9 October he was at “John Birketts with slaiters” and on 17th was at both Robert Cookson’s and Ben. Birkett’s with G. Longmire, presumably one of the wrights.²³ Although most of these details are vague, they do indicate the extent to which such business was transacted in local inns over a glass of ale.

The barn’s location can be proved from the Troutbeck Valuation map of 1846, which shows that the Brownes of Townend owned three six-acre fields half way down Wain Lane, namely “Crossen Riggs” with a barn in its northern corner (NY 4002 0124), Low Meadow and High Meadow totalling 18½ acres (Fig. 4). It is also possible to infer the source of the barn’s stone, for the accounts record 9s. paid for “Stones Trayling from Whitabrow to Seathw^t green”. The Troutbeck Enclosure map²⁴ identifies the latter location at the foot of Fell Lane (NY 4048 0189) whilst document xv, 208 mentions a field called “Thwaites Brow at Robin Lane head”. The Brownes held two enclosures at Green Thwaites near there and were then awarded an “Allotment in the Lowest Hundred” immediately north-east of them. This contains a sizeable quarry clearly marked on Ordnance Survey maps at NY 3972 0267 and from its topography must surely have been Thwaite Brow before enclosure.²⁵ Presumably the wallers agreed to transport the stone the half-mile from Seathwaite Green down to the barn within the contract price and Browne paid for the remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ mile.

These locations are all indicated on Fig. 4, which also shows the relationship of land ownership to hoghouse and barn positions south of Troutbeck. Normally the buildings stood either in the middle of a field or group of fields or at the village end of a plot beside a lane for more convenient access, particularly when haulage distances exceeded $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the main farm buildings in the village. A distinct distribution pattern can be identified and the area served by each building is shown. The smallest plot to justify such a building was of only $2\frac{1}{2}$ acres belonging to Lowwood (now Wood Farm to distinguish it from the hotel). It was one of four fields, all under different ownership, named "Hoghouse Close". Another such field, just north of Crostenrigs, was owned by the Birketts of Low House (see below) whose hoghouse served $12\frac{1}{2}$ acres and is inscribed $\frac{WB}{M}$ 1695.²⁶ On the other side of Wain Lane, their Great Blake Syke ($10\frac{1}{2}$ acres) has a more recent, undated hoghouse. The scatter of fields under each ownership is well-illustrated by the Browne holding.

The Crostenrigs evidence suggests that farmers made little distinction between hoghouses and barns, but the former were probably smaller, simpler, may not always have had an upper storey and probably lacked stalls for cattle. Although Crostenrigs retained its former name for some years, it was designed to house sheep, cattle, horses, hay and corn, and there is evidence of yet another use: on 29 December 1748 George Browne (1688-1767), Benjamin's eldest son, held an auction sale at Crostenrigs (ii, 264) of wood for coaling. All trees except oak were to be cut before 25 April and cleared by Martinmas (11 Nov.). The purchaser (Henry Williamson) had "liberty to house the bark in the Barn at Crostenrigs until 29 June and in the underhouses until the usual time of lying in of cattle". However on 20 March, to Browne's surprise Mr Longmire of Linefoot ordered Williamson's men ". . . not to work any more 'till after the fifteenth of April", apparently because Longmire's daughter, Elizabeth Browne, considered they were "doing damage to the herbage" (v, 311). She had married Benjamin Browne's second son Benjamin (1692-Jan. 1748) at Windermere on 13 August 1737 as his second wife. Having lived in London from 1719 to 1735 (v, 78-145) Benjamin had returned to Troutbeck and had taken a lease on the farm at Townend in 1737 (ix, 157).²⁷ Thus Elizabeth, just widowed, was no doubt exercising her rights as tenant and, though the outcome of the bark incident is not known, it sheds useful light on her personality as shown when Limefitt is discussed later.

The main beam and floor over the stable at Crostenrigs have been removed and the remainder of the loft floor has been replaced by modern softwood, but otherwise almost all the original detail survives, including the crotched stall posts (selletrees). Significantly, the barn, which is inscribed B B 1733, was built by the same wallers as Lane barn and both date-stones bear identical B's, 7's and 3's. Presumably this indicates the characteristic style of one of the wallers, but it has not been possible to disprove other possibilities such as that Benjamin Browne may have carved them himself. Had the Troutbeck Bridge mills survived, comparable date-stones might have been found there.

In passing it is worth referring to extensive repairs made to Troutbeck church and recorded in the Chapelwardens' accounts submitted in 1737 (iii, 70).²⁸ The 1736 date inscribed on the tower's west wall is quite different from those on the barns and was cut, presumably, by the "Undertakers" (not named) who received £40 out of recorded payments totalling £48. 16s. 3d. From the remainder, both Thomas Cookson and William Birkett were paid for some walling work and John Dixon for flagging. The

wardens paid 10s. 6d. to "George Birkett [carpenter] for making the [bell] frame" and 1s. 6d. to "Robert Cookson for Ironwork for it", so that several of Browne's barn workmen were employed there. It is interesting that one of the largest sundry payments was £1. 6s. od. "Spent at three Alehouses upon the acct of the church", no doubt for arranging work with the builders.

A record of earlier church repairs, made in 1707 (iii, 29), lists men who helped by "working att Church", "Mossing the church", "Getting Flaggs on Applethwaite Fell" and "Getting [slates?] on Foster How". The names include Thomas Cookson of High Green who did 15½ days work, Anthony Cookson (28 days), Rowland Cookson (15½ days), James Cookson (3 days), William Birkett (15½ days) and George Birkett Carpenter (2 days). This may suggest that the same group of workmen remained together for thirty years or more but, as fathers and sons often had the same names and occupations, one cannot be certain.

Details survive for only one other farm building erected for the Brownes in a "Specification for Walling Slating &c required to be done in the Erecting of a Building on Woundale for George Browne"²⁹ but it is undated (ii, 279). On the back is a note in a later hand stating "Woundale Hoghouse was build when Woundale was enclosed", and as a stray letter dated 27 June 1838 from the Enclosure Commissioner, A. B. Tomlinson, to another Benjamin Browne states that the "Woundale Fences were to be completed before 1 October 1839" the structure can be dated reasonably (Fig. 5). The 1846 schedule shows that George Browne's allotments on Woundale amounted to 446¾ acres out of his total farm area of 734¾ acres, but plot 784 of 52½ acres, originally allocated to Benjamin Browne, was included (Fig. 5). To serve this great area of remote mountain pasture immediately east of the Kirkstone Pass inn, one tiny ruinous building stands at NY 4100 0818 about 1400 feet above sea-level. It can be compared with the specification which states:

The Building to be 12 feet square Inside of the Walls which walls is to be 2 feet 3 inches thick below the Loft; above, 2 feet at least. The ground work to be made to leave a space if required round the Building of 2 feet, also of sufficient depth to keep the water of[f] the Floor. The Floor to be well Paved to the Level as staked out. The hight of the walls from the Pavement to the under side of the Joists to be 6 feet 10 inches [and] from the Loft to [the] square³⁰ hight 5 feet 6 inches. A Chimney to be made in the north end and the stack to be raised a foot above the Ridging. The walls, except the Chimney Flue, to be walled without Lime but the whole [is] to be well seamed inside. The Building to be Slated, Ridgen'd with wrestlers, Tabled at the ends and well Pointed inside. The Contractor to find the Stones for the walls & Pavement also Lintels over the door ways and windows, also all Tableing required for the Building. A good Level stone to be laid in the bottom of the Top door way and walled in at each end and proper stones in the bottom of the Low door way to fix the Frames to. A good Lintel to stand the fire which can be procured on Woundale to be laid over the fire Place.

Compared with previous examples, this specification shows much more attention to construction details, but at least one variation was made by building the fireplace in the western side rather than the north end wall, where the chimney would have obstructed the loft door in the gable. Undoubtedly, the fireplace was incorporated to burn peat and provide some measure of warmth for shepherds, who might easily need to stay overnight in such a bleak and remote spot, but their accommodation was not distinguished from

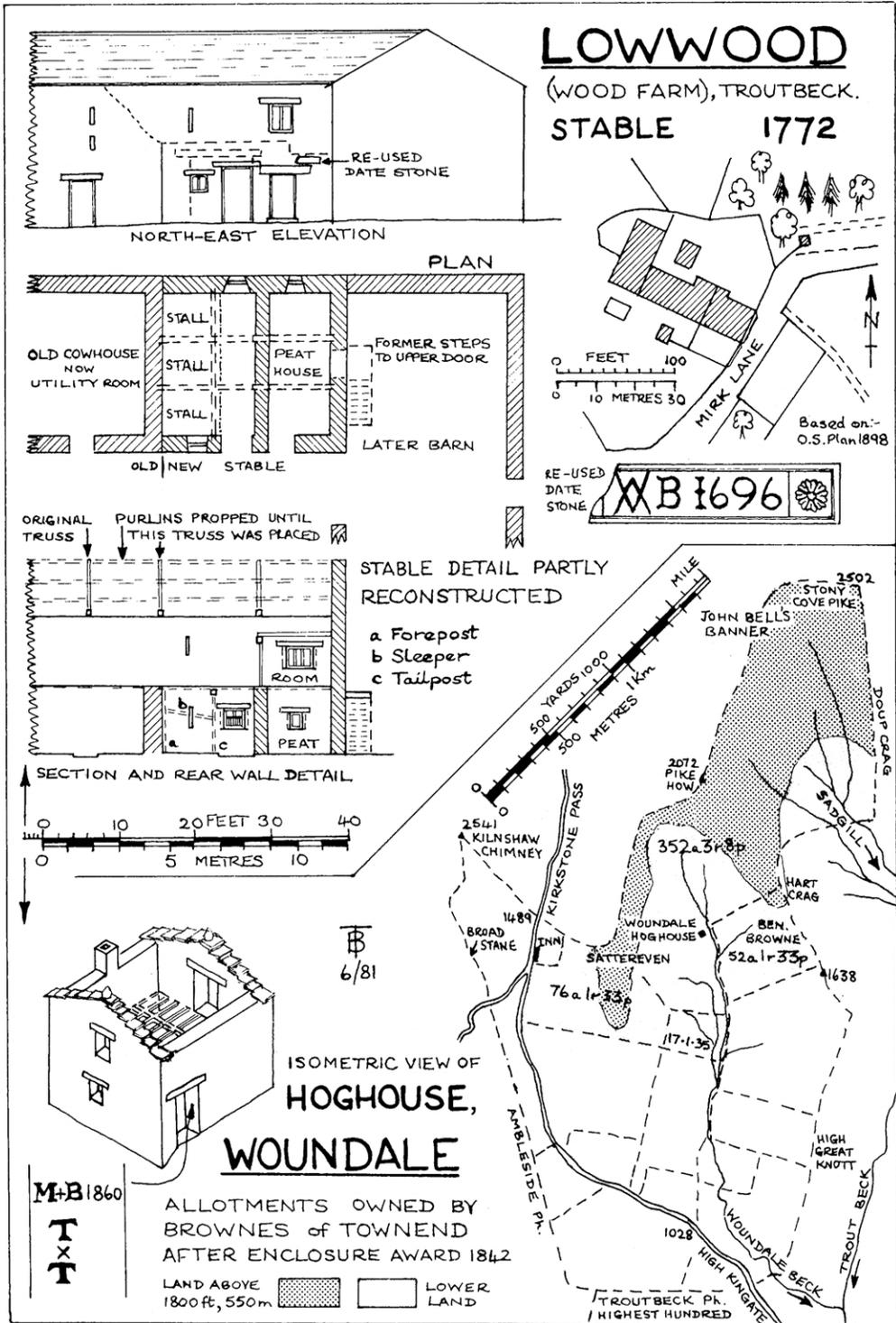


FIG. 5.

that of the sheep. At best a little poor quality hay or bracken would have been stored in the loft, but now the building provides only a roofless, decaying reminder of ambitious enclosure of marginal upland grazings and subsequent retreat, typical of countless examples in the Lake District. Its crow-stepped gables and (missing) wrestler ridging-slates indicate that vernacular traditions lasted much longer in the uplands than in lowland areas where outside cultural influences were more readily assimilated. The hoghouse, now owned by the National Trust, suggests that not all ruins with fireplaces were necessarily houses.

As the buildings to be considered in the remainder of this article were erected by various relatives of the Brownes, it will be necessary to refer to family matters in some detail. An "Account of the Carpenters Work to be done and performed at my Barn &c as Lett to Geo. Birkett Carp^r March 30th 1772" has survived in a box of unsorted Townend papers. It states that:

. . . at the additional building of my Barn the length to be 6 yards and a half withinside, viz. 2 pair of principles with Beams, the Ribs rigtrees and [wall] plates and Sparrs to be done and completed. One Beam aCrose the Stable with 2 Girders; and Joists through the whole house. One other Beam aCross the house seven feet higher, three yards off the End wall with 2 Girders with Joists, which 2 Lofts are to have Boards laid down and each board to be tacked with 2 nails and the sappwood edged off each board as handsomly as Possable with an Adze. The upper Room to be partitioned off with Studds one in every 16 Inches and the Joists over it to be one in every 16 Inches, the partition aforesaid is to have Ash Boards or other to be nailed next the Hay Mow. In the Stable one Horse Rack quite aCross as also a Manger; three Shell Stalls with fore posts, tail posts and sleepers to be done either with board or Stone. One step Ladder up into the Barn; a partition between the Stable and peat House. Three Doors with Checks & Seals [and] Lintels; three windows whereof one to be made new if I do not buy one. Three Ashes to be sawn for partitions and all my other wood which will be any way serviceable to the said building; the remainder I must buy either wrought or unwrought. The old Ribs &c to be propped untill fixed to the new principles and the work to be all finished before the usual time of lying in of Hay . . .

As this document was signed by a William Birkett but not by the carpenter, it must be considered a draft specification, especially in view of a rather flippant final statement: ". . . if any other article be necessary and not here specified it is to be done but at present I can't call to mind any thing".

To identify the building, one must first distinguish William Birkett from many others of the same name. Of numerous letters addressed from Lowwood (now Wood Farm, NY 3942 0157) in the same characteristic handwriting, the most helpful is his request to be excused militia service because he was "disabled . . . by wanting the use of his left arm by being shot through the Elbow Joynt with a pistol ball when a Schoolboy Thirty one years since".³¹ The document is dated 29 October 1757. If he was about 15 in 1726, his baptism was recorded in the Windermere parish registers on 13 May 1711 as "William son of William Birkett de Lowwood". His father was Benjamin Browne's son-in-law, for the latter noted that on 17 January 1704/5 "Wm Birkett Junior de Lowwood and my Daughter Ellin was married" at Ambleside (viii, 2a). Lowwood passed by "Deed of Gift" in 1709 from another William Birkett to his son of the same name,³² but Browne recorded later that on 21 February 1716/7 "Sone Wm Birkett Dyed at Bampton and

[was] buried there on 22 . . . he was teaching a Writing School there" (viii, 2a). This Birkett's will (iv, 70), made three days before his death, mentioned his wife Eleanor and children Mary (1706), Anne (1708), William (1711) and Benjamin (1714) and states that if William did not reach the age of 21 then Benjamin was to inherit Lowwood. Thus when William Birkett was admitted tenant "by descent from his father" in 1719 he must have been aged about eight. In addition to farming, he gained skill as a surveyor³³ and married Dorothy Longmire of Limefitt at Kendal on 6 November 1731.³⁴ She died in 1789 and he was buried on 24 February 1794, shortly to be followed by his son "William Birkett Junior of Lowwood" on 6 March 1794.³⁵

At the south-east end of the buildings at Lowwood a fine, three-storey traditional house bears inscriptions suggesting occupation by William and Mary Birkett in 1685.³⁶ At the north-west end, a simple nineteenth-century barn lies at right-angles to the main range of buildings next to a former stable which retains, in the rear wall, a characteristic window with sliding ventilators. This stable has been converted into a modern garage by inserting double doors in the north-east side and raising the loft floor by about two feet (Fig. 5).

In the lower storey only, an unbonded join separates the stable from an older cowhouse, part of which was later converted into extra living accommodation. The absence of a join in the upper storey can be explained by reference to the specification. Clearly the upper gable and its corners were removed to allow the cowhouse loft to continue over the new stable without interruption and the projecting purlins ("Ribs") were supported on props until the principal rafters of a new roof truss could be substituted for the former gable. As the stable merely continued the line of the old buildings, Birkett did not bother to specify its width. The beam across the stable and its two lesser longitudinal members (girders) were removed during the garage conversion, but the "other beam . . . seven feet higher, three yards off the End wall with 2 Girders" survives and marks the limit of an upper room with windows in front and back walls. As its walls and ceiling are well plastered, it was probably used for a groom's accommodation (or a farm-worker's bothy) rather than as a harness room. Sockets and nails indicate that the vertical studs separating the room from the hay loft were placed at one foot intervals rather than 16 inches. The ceiling-beams are strong enough for hay to have been stored above, so improving heat insulation in winter. Access is still through a doorway in the north-west gable but no steps survive. A fuel-store below, lit by a small window, was undoubtedly the peat house mentioned in the specification.

Also dated 1772, "An account of what Cash I have paid towards my new stable Exclusive of my own Wood and work" provides additional evidence. Wood, in unspecified quantities, was supplied by William Kendal, Edward Wilson and James Swales and £1. 15s. 9d. was paid to "John Barrow younger for Sawing Boards Timber Joists posts &c", whilst £3. 4s. 6d. was paid jointly to "Geo. Birket Carpenter, Brownrigg and Hayton in part for workmanship". The main expense was £8. 7s. 0d. paid to "William Benson for Getting stones Walling Slating Paving &c."³⁷ William Farrer was paid 7s. 6d. "for getting Flags" and Thomas Jackson supplied lime at 13s. a quarter. George Harrison received £4. 19s. 10d. for slate and John Harrison 17s. 6d. for leading it from Troutbeck Park.³⁸ Gunpowder cost 9s., presumably for winning quarry stone or blasting foundations (or both). Up to 4 January 1773, the only date given, the work cost £24. 2s. 8d. Then sundry ironmongery cost £1. 18s. 1d., "500 Sap laths [and] 300 Hart

laths" were bought for 1s. 2d. and 4s. 6d. per hundred respectively and "a Flag for the top o'th'Stairs from Applethwaite Fell" cost a shilling. Regrettably no other information has been found and one cannot be sure what work and materials came from Birkett's own resources.

Previously he had been responsible for extensive repairs to another farm building after a fire in 1757. In his handwriting "An Account of the whole Expences of Rebuilding Mr Jonah Birkhead's Barn at Lowhouse which was Burnt" accompanies a long covering letter but neither is dated. Although there is evidence of a (missing) carpentry agreement, the only additional material is a series of letters between Birkett and his cousin Jonathan (see footnote 31). The latter was baptised on 25 July 1686 "son of William Birkhead of Beckside", Troutbeck, and, after he was buried on 12 June 1764,³⁹ his daughter Maryann Jackson, of Lancaster, widow, was admitted customary tenant of both Beckside and Lowhouse by Birkhead's will dated 16 August 1763.⁴⁰ Jonathan Birkhead "Officer of Excise and Port-gauger at Lancaster" bought the properties for £560 on 4 February 1748⁴¹ from "George Birkett Elder, House Carpenter" and others who, in turn, had it from "Mark Birkhead of Beckside . . . by Deed dated 28 January 1747 in Trust to be sold to pay Debts". A parish overseer's note dated 23 April 1752 refers to "Wm Birkett [being] Agent for Mr Jona. Birkhead", and much of their correspondence refers to the management of land, particularly at the southern end of the parish. Fig. 4 shows the land belonging to Low House in 1846 and helps to prove the barn's location at NY 4078 0257 (Fig. 6)

First intimation of the fire survives in a very badly damaged draft letter in William Birkett's handwriting. In the first half one can pick out the sympathy expressed for his cousin's predicament and he went on: "I went up . . . to calculate the Damage . . . which . . . according to my computation 'twill amount to near 15 pounds". He doubted whether much building material could be rescued from the wreckage . . . "the lowend being very much burn't and the Stones mouldered and broken . . . by the heat (I mean the lower Bay, their being Two Bays burnt . . .). [I] would advise you to have it done right so as it might not come tumbling down almost as soon as built up. I suppose James Wilson [the tenant] has suffered to the amount of £5 or upwards in his vestures but all his grain was saved without loss". Birkhead's reply on 10 November 1757 proves this letter was written on the 4th but he had already received news of the fire in his brother's letter of 28 October.

Birkhead was philosophical, referred to Job i, 21 and thanked his cousin for his concern. He thought "it would be the least trouble to agree with an undertaker for the whole as Timber & Workmanship are ye chief that's wanting", and asked Birkett to make arrangements with suitable workmen for which he would be re-imbursed. He would "draw a Bill on Wmson for ye Wood money, [but] the rest we'll send betwixt [now] & Cand^{mas} [2 Feb.]", and "as the Wall is Damaged within by Fire", he queried "whether Liming the Inside would answer the same end as pulling down and rebuilding", presumably to save expense. On 23 February 1758 he sent £12. 2s. *via* Thomas Hodgson in Kendal to settle Birkett's building account and remarked "I shall always be thankful for the favours already received" and hoped that their friendship would continue.

The account gives details of suppliers, materials and workmen. Thomas Williamson and Co.⁴² supplied "a Selar beam 12 [cubic] foot at 9d. p foot . . . other Timber 40½

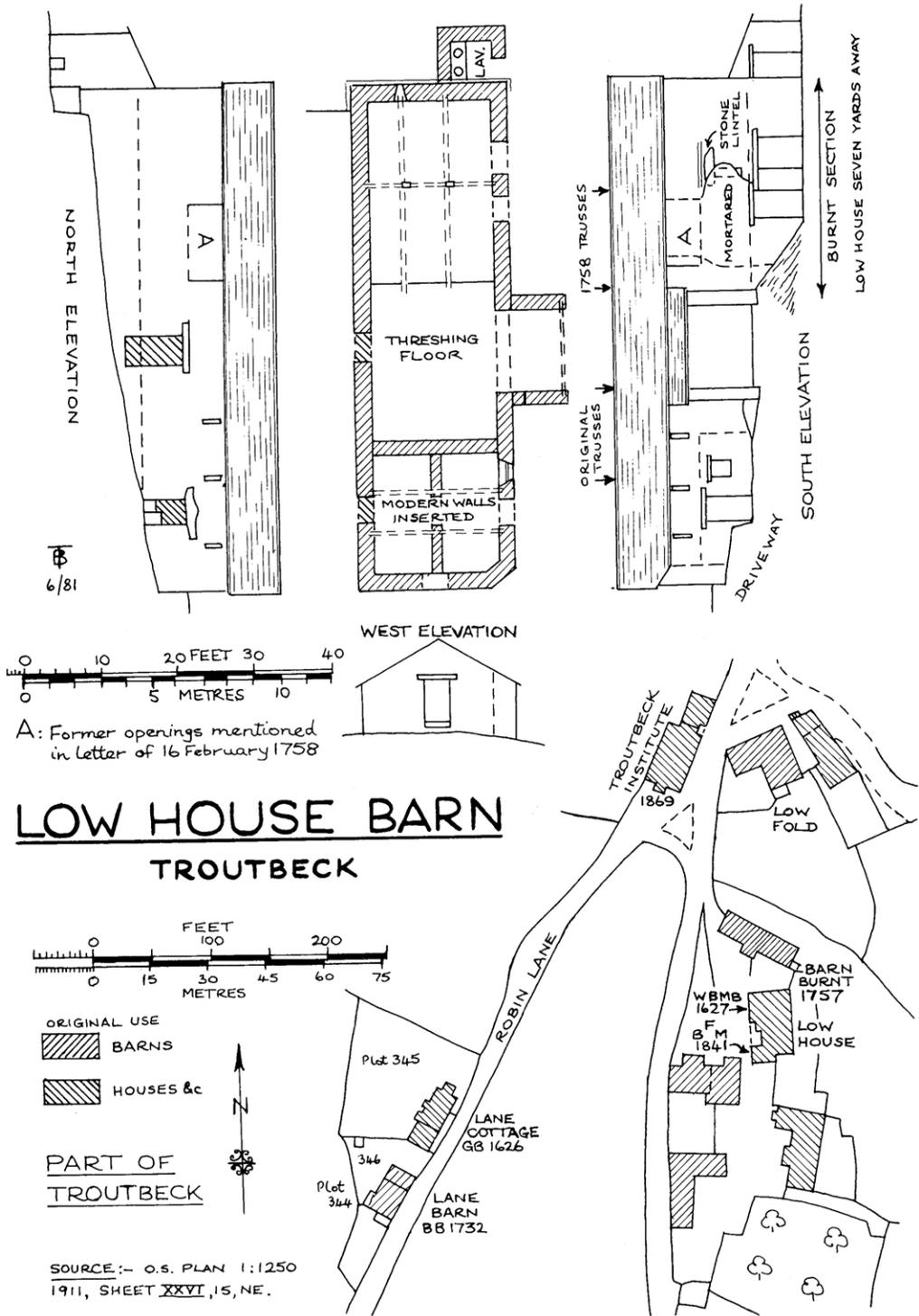


FIG. 6.

[cubic] foot at 6d. . . . 3 Dozen of Rafts or Sparrs 2 yards Long at 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. p. yd . . . [and] 3 D[oze]n of Ditto 7 foot Long" at the same price. The Backbarrow Company⁴³ supplied "3 Ribs 9 [cubic] foot at 7d. p. foot" and "for Ditto 4 [cubic] foot at 9d." Robert Dixon received 3s. Thomas Atkinson was paid for "2 Dozⁿ of Joists at 5s." and William Birkett himself provided "152 foot of quartered oak boards weel seasoned at 3d. p. foot". George Birket and William Brownrigg⁴⁴ did the carpentry work for £2 and Doctor Atkinson (of Troutbeck Bridge) supplied "five Bundel of Hart Laths at 2s.", presumably for the roof. William Birkett obtained "3 Tuns of Tom slate at 10s. 10d. [and] . . . 2 Tuns and one Load of Cuntry slate at 16s. 8d."⁴⁵ per ton, carriage paid, from Troutbeck Park where Birkett was then quarry manager. Thomas Dixon did the slating, a Mr Gurnel supplied nails and £1. 5s. was paid "To Cousin Mark [Birkhead] for Carriage of Timber &c". Although 2s. 6d. was spent on "2 $\frac{1}{2}$ Gallons of Ale when ye Timber was Reared" the date was not recorded.

Significantly, no walling costs were included in the account. Birkett's advice to rebuild the low end of the barn must have been rejected by his cousin for field-work reveals that the barn's eastern end comprises badly split and crumbling slate rubble, partly mortared on the south side. Although it has not collapsed as Birkett feared, it contrasts with the barn's western end which is built of large, sound, watershot stones obviously unaffected by the fire. The three western bays have neatly squared purlins and ridge beams carried by two trusses with collar beams, whereas the two eastern bays have rough, crooked purlins on two simple triangular trusses, the easternmost of oak (newly fashioned in 1758) and the other, apparently, of re-used timber. This checks with Birkett's comment on the extent of the fire. Although it spread only as far as the threshing floor, it must have been an alarming experience for the occupants of Low House only seven yards to the south.

Birkett's covering letter gives extra information. He explained that the cost of "Slate come higher than I at first supposed, thinking that a Considerable quantity of the old Slate would have been of Service, but when it came to be raked out from among the ruins, by the excessive Heat as I suppose and falling in hot had crushed most of it to pieces, so that a very small matter was of any service". He went on "there is yet a want of some Boards. Ash would do in the Hay Mowstead [but] I got all the old Timber sawn yt was of service [and it] has covered about Half of it. The Loft in the Corn Mowstead you might sift oatmeal upon it without loss". He complained that "Your Tenant James Wilson has used very ill maners in the affair. I only desired him to fetch some Laths from St Catharine's Brow,⁴⁶ not half a Cart, but he absolutely refused and [I] was forced to employ Couzⁿ Mark for 1s. He would not so much as either borrow or even help to fetch a Ladder nor carry 'em Home again". Birkhead had promised to leave "rent in Coz. Ben's Hand . . . to defray the Expençe" but the latter's refusal to pay caused more animosity. In addition "Cozⁿ Betty come one Day last week to see when they might fetch the wood away that was leaving" but Birkett had already told Wilson to store it safely for he "intended to sell it towards Expences".

A letter from Birkhead on 16 February noted that Birkett "had set the Carpenters Work for £2 & the chippings of the new Wood only, But . . . that Cousin Mary Brownrigg came into [the] Houses and took several sparrends of timber new & old". Clearly wood was much sought after and relatives were not always helpful in times of trouble. Also, Wilson had written complaining that "the Places in the Barn sides, which

were made up with Boards, are left so open, that Rain or Snow will beat in . . . if so pray let it be rectified; that ought to be in the Carpenters agreement". Had such an agreement survived, perhaps the legality of Mary Brownrigg's pilfering could be checked. At least the openings referred to can be identified in the barn's walls. Both were about ten feet by four and are now blocked by stonework leaving unbonded joins (Fig. 6).

Writing again on 16 March, Birkhead noted that "the Boards set in ye side of the Barn will answer their design" and he intended that Wilson's rent "should be advanced in proportion to the expence [of rebuilding] as he was the occasion [for the fire] & more so as he has been so untractable towards the repairs, and [I] will be obliged for your assistance for a better Tenant, tho' too late for this year". On 26 October 1758 he reported that Wilson had agreed to pay £16 per year for three years to continue his tenancy, but on 18 January 1759 Birkhead requested "if by any means I could prevail with you to hold the farm for one year more I should be thankful". Presumably Wilson had left and Birkett was managing Low House.

Birkett also became involved in the aftermath of rebuilding the only farmhouse for which comparable evidence survives in the Townend papers. The "Minutes of Linefoot House" (iii, 326) provides a detailed draft specification for rebuilding Limefitt farmhouse (NY 4168 0303) after "the Old one [had] been burnt down".⁴⁷ It reads:

The North End to be $9\frac{1}{2}$ yards within the Walls, South End $8\frac{1}{2}$ yards and the whole to be 11 yards in Length within the Walls. A Celar to be Dig'd under the Stair Case and Buttery to be 4 yards in Length & 3 in Breadth and 6 foot & a half in height under the Beam. [The contractor] to make proper places in the walls of the s^d Cellar to put Barrels &c in. A Stone Table to be set in the Cellar 6 feet in length & $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet in Breadth. Stone Stairs into the Cellar. The Cellar and all the rooms below Stairs to be well Flagged with good Braithey Flaggs. The walls to be a yard in Thickness till the Ground floor and to be 2 feet & two Inches thick at the Top. A Genteel Freestone Chimney peice in the Hall $5\frac{1}{2}$ feet in Breadth and height proportionably. [There are] to be 4 Handsom Slabb peices for the following Chimneys (to wit) one for each parlour one for the Hall Loft and one for the Parlour Loft each of a Proportionable Bigness for the Room where same is set and a large and strong Goam⁴⁸ Chimney to be made in the Kitchin the Coans raised properly with Bri[cks?] and a substantial stone Mantle Tree. Cheeks for the out Doors to be all H[ear]t of Oak & 4 by 5 Inches Squ[are]. Proper Corbs for a Handsom slated shell over the Front Door and a porch over the Kitchin Door; the s^d out Doors to be double 6 feet & 2 Inches High, 3 feet in Breadth and [to] be well rabbited. The two Front windows below stairs to have Shu[tters], to [be] four feet & a half in height & two yards or upwards in Breadth, to be of the best Crown Glass the Pains 7 by 8 Inches Square or upwards. 4-3 Lighted backside windows to [be] 4 ft in Breadth & $4\frac{1}{2}$ ft in length and 1-2 lighted Window of same ht and Glass joint to the Stairs window but underneath it and to be all Transom'd and proper. Casements to be 4 Sash Windows 3 of 'em in the Front Rooms and 1 in the back parlour Loft, the Sash pains to be 11 by 13 Inches Square and 18 Pains in each Window. [There are] To be two Windows in the Garrets without Glass one at each end and proper Shutters for the same. All the Front Windows to be properly Seated and wainscotted at the Bacck wth r^d Deal and all the rest of the Windows seated with the same Wood and handsome Plain Backs. All the Rooms, Partitions, Cupboards, Windows, Stairs and Doors to be made in the same man[ne]r as marked in the Plan. All the studs for partitions to be H[ear]t of Oak $3\frac{1}{2}$ by $2\frac{1}{2}$ Inches Square and 12 Inches between mid. and mid^l. The stairs to be of Oak with good Rails and Bannisters. Proper Oak Turnstairs out of the Kitchin into the Buttery Loft. All the Rooms in the House, except Kitchin, to be properly Cerbased and washboarded⁴⁹ and all the Door Cheeks well Cased. 15 Inn Doors to be each 6

Pannl'd and made of good red Deal 13 of w^{ch} the rails are to be runn on both sides and pannel rais'd on one side and the 2 facing the Lobby [the] pannels to be raised on both sides. Brass Snapp Snecks & Bolts for all the Inn Doors and 4 Good Locks for such of them as Mrs Longmire thinks proper. The out Doors to have good and Substantial Locks Bolts and Latches and all the Doors to be Hung in proper Crooks Bands and Gem[ble?]s. All the Rooms on the Ground Floor & above Stairs to be well Lath'd and Seal'd over Head & 8 Feet each room from the Floor to the Cealing. All the partitions to be Lath'd & plaster'd on both sides & the Gists 16 Inches Between midd^l & mid^l and Sufic[ien]t oak Beams, Girders and Timber for such a Building, the Principals to be Crook Footed so that they are a yard from the Floor to the Sparr in the Garrets. Hart Laths & Lon[do]n Slate well pointed, Freestone Rigging & the Chimneys all walled in mortar and out side of whole House well Rough casted.

The only other information on this building work comprises a list of quotations from three contractors. "Proposals made by the Workmen for Building a House at Linefoot pursuant to Mrs Longmires Demensions and plan⁵⁰ thereof" (iii, 325) were:

Mess ^{rs} Wm Robinson and George Suarts proposals	£240
Mess ^{rs} Castlehow Satterthwaite and Company	£240
Mess ^{rs} Brown and Thwaite	£260
Let to Satterthwaite & Company for	£218

Sadly the exclusions or bargaining which cut the estimate by 9% must remain unknown. Neither document is dated, but when Limefitt was sold at Mr Ullock's "White Lion" inn at Bowness on Thursday 8 October 1772, the sale advertisement (iii, 353) referred to the "Estate called Linefoot, consisting of a well-built *new* Dwelling house, with convenient outhouses" together with between 50 and 60 acres of good arable land in a ring fence, sundry other lands and an "antient . . . Water Corn Mill & Drying Kill".⁵¹

To date the house more closely and understand how the sale came about, one must go back to James Longmire of Limefitt and his marriage at Patterdale on 28 June 1702 to "Mistress Dorothy" daughter of John Mounsey, the so-called "King of Patterdale". The Troutbeck registers record baptisms of their children: James and John (1704), George (1706), Elizabeth (1708) and Dority (1712). Dorothy married William Birkett in 1731 and Elizabeth, by marrying the younger Benjamin Browne in 1737, became her sister's 'aunt', but she did not bring "the tenement by marriage to the Brownes" as claimed by S. H. Scott,⁵² for, of Longmire's sons, James survived his father's burial on 3 July 1757. The latter's will, dated 27 September 1753, left Limefitt to his wife Dorothy for life, then to James for life and then to his son's legitimate heirs with £200 each to Dorothy Birkett and Elizabeth Browne (xvi, 12-14).

James Longmire tried to evict his mother but lost his case at Appleby Assizes on 4 August 1758, though for £20 he was allowed to take over the corn mill only. He was admitted tenant of Limefitt on 30 January 1764 after his mother's burial on 19 December 1763, but on 19 February 1767 "James Wadeson of Sedbergh Town" was admitted tenant as mortgagee "on the alienation of James Longmire of Whinny Haw in Firbank" (xvi, 1a). Likewise, James Holme of "Dillakerpark" was admitted on 9 February 1769 to secure a mortgage of £1192 (xvi, 2) and, as extra security, Longmire mortgaged his freehold Whinny Haw to Holme for £1000 (xvi, 9-10). At Longmire's death on 29 May 1769 he willed £200 to each of Dorothy Birkett's children and the residue to his wife Jane (*née* Wilson of "Dillickar Park") whom he married in 1740.⁵³ At her death it was to go "to a Bastard daughter (he had by a Servant Girl) when 21 . . ." (xvi, 10). Elizabeth

Browne, through her eldest son George (1741-1804) a solicitor, contested the will, claimed Limefitt and on 3 June 1769 tried to lease the farm for seven years to one John Doe but "James Holme and Jane Longmire, widow, ejected him forcibly" (iii, 337). Hence William Birkett, who had "never sued or been sued till now", found himself having to defend his wife and childrens' interest.⁵⁴ An item in Mrs Browne's legal bill, which totalled over £181, referred to "Attending at Westminster [on 13 June 1771] when the court [of Common Pleas] directed that the Plaintiff should be at liberty to proceed on the verdict as to the Fulling Mill only (iii, 352). Mrs Browne was appalled but cut her losses and the mortgagees sold Limefitt to Fletcher Fleming of Rayrigg. He was duly admitted on 5 September 1776, but died the next year and his nephew John Raincock was admitted on 15 September 1778.⁵⁵

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to prove the date of rebuilding to closer than late 1757 to 1763, and the house has been altered considerably at various times since. It is an interesting typical double-pile house⁵⁶ with a lobby entrance to improve comfort (Fig. 7). During the 19th century the front, ground-floor windows and their red deal, panelled seats were removed and built out to form bay windows on a stone 'verandah', the quoins of which are of wrought limestone, quite unlike the original walls. Its roof was removed in 1980 (Plate I). For weatherproofing the southern gable has been clad in hung slate and there is now no sign of the southern garret or its unglazed window. Recently the chimney-stacks were removed and the house has been made into two flats. The stairs

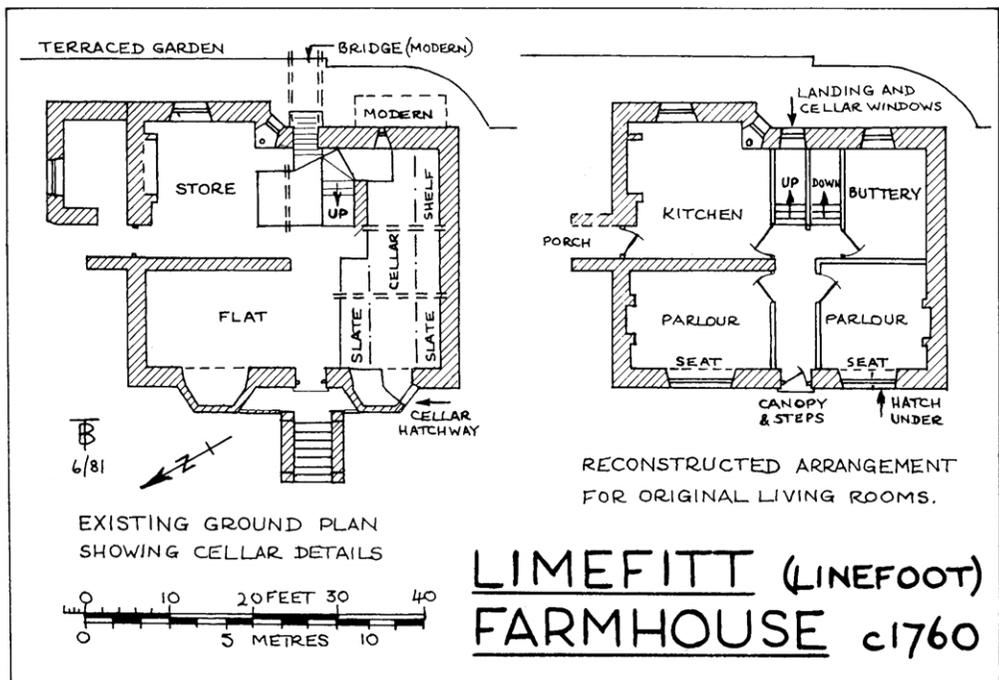


FIG. 7.



PLATE I. – Limefitt farmhouse, parish of Applethwaite. View from the north-west (1979).

were blocked, so the upper floor is now entered from a bridge spanning between the former stairs window and the terraced garden behind, producing a split-level interior arrangement. The northern garret (with its window) remains as a pleasant bedroom approached from an open staircase and balcony. Of the roof timbers, the purlins and crook-footed principal rafters survive, whilst two garret floor beams retain mortices into which were tenoned six lesser girders carrying the joists.

On the ground floor, only the former kitchen retains any semblance of its original character. The fireplace (with a wooden mantleshelf) has been blocked so that the chimney lining cannot be checked and there is an interesting, turned wooden pillar supporting the angle of the rear wall above a small skewed window. Beside the original porch, which gave direct access from the farmyard, a lean-to back kitchen/dairy was added, thereby allowing transfer of some original kitchen functions. Except for a relatively modern, narrow doorway occupying a former window opening at the rear, the cellars have remained almost untouched by progress and show that full-length slate shelves were substituted for the "Stone Table" and "proper places in the wall . . . to put barrels &c". The Brathay flags are intact and free from damp. As the builders adhered to the specification's dimensions, perhaps the glazing and internal fittings were installed as indicated, but there is now no trace of the original doors, shutters, panelling or plasterwork. Fortunately, the specification's emphasis was on those details rather than the basic structure which retains its original form.

For comparison, it would have been desirable if details had survived for other farmhouses from the main period of Lakeland's 'Great Rebuilding', but the Townend papers contain only one document which is at all suitable (Further MSS, 102). Dated 10 April 1637, it is listed as the "Contract for building Troutbeck School", but it mentions only building "a house att Troutbecke church". As "Articles of Agreement" dated 29 July 1639⁵⁷ mention the sum of "five pounds yearly for retaining of a schoolmaster for teaching . . . at a new school . . . lately erected" it is likely that the term "house" was used in its general sense as in the Crostenrigs contract.

The document is an unsigned memorandum which does not mention the client's identity except by reference to paying the builders "out of the Churches good" (or property). It states:

That Stephen Birkett, George Birkett and George Longmyre, Wallers shall . . . build a house att Troutbecke church . . . to be in length eight yards . . . [and] foure yards and three quarters breadth within the house and foure yards and a half height in the side walls and to make a sufficient Chymney [of stone] in the end of the foresaid house from the ground . . . and a paire of stayres of stone where the same is conveni[en]t. [The wallers] to have in consideracon . . . Fiftye three shillings foure pence, viz. XXVIs. VIIId. to be paid when the one halfe of the foresaid work is wrought and other XXVIs. VIIId. . . . when the whole worke is finished out of the Churches good and that any stones wanting for building . . . [are] to be brought to ground by the sawders⁵⁸ belonging the said church.

And likewise that Myles Sewart Carpenter in consideracon of the some of XLs. . . . to make a sufficient Rooffe . . . answerable to the foresaid walls, three doores, seaven windowes viz. two windowes of Five lights, two of Foure lights and three of three lights and all to be Cipher Joynted⁵⁹ on the lower side . . . on the outside. [The carpenter] to lye two dormes a greater and a lesse[r] within the said house with Joysts fitting for the same and to make & lye a chymney beame. All the wood worke and walls to be finished before the XXIIIth of June next coming.

If the details are similar to those used for dwelling houses of the period, there is a noticeable lack of information about internal arrangement and fittings. Perhaps this resulted from the school being a plain room, but the height of the side walls and a "paire of stayres" and "two dorms" suggest that there was an upper floor. Other details resemble those of the later documents already considered.

The evidence discussed in this article indicates a gradual increase in complexity of agreements with respect to both design and obligations as truly vernacular building gave way to a more formalized industry with organized contractors. As far as can be judged, detail for farm buildings lagged behind that of contemporary houses and traditional standards clearly influenced matters which were not specified. For example, when the walls of Woundale hoghouse were to be $2\frac{1}{4}$ feet thick, they merely reflected long established practice in countless undocumented Lake District buildings, whose lower storey walls normally differ from this by not more than an inch. However a barn's down-slope gable might be four feet thick if thirty feet high.⁶⁰ Usually thickness was not mentioned and, in all cases, quoted dimensions were internal. In addition, ordinary barns were so commonly six yards wide inside that it was perhaps considered unimportant when the width of Crostenrigs barn or Lowwood stable was not specified. Presumably this reflects the frequency with which old materials, particularly roof trusses and main beams, were re-used.⁶¹ Certainly there is ample evidence of a struggle to find enough suitable timber from sources over a wide area (see footnote 9) and from private caches

accumulated for building needs. To some extent slate was hoarded also, but most came new from Troutbeck Park whilst slate flagstones came from Applethwaite or Brathay.

A source for stone was mentioned only for Crostenrigs barn but, perhaps more often, it was obtained nearer the site. Comments by Jonathan Birkhead to William Birkett in a letter dated 30 March 1758 cast light on how stone might be obtained for a proposed ash-house at Low House. He remarked “. . . that there was an old Hoghouse in the Northern end of my Fathers Intack from which [we] might have had stones . . . [but] if that be removed . . . [perhaps] some remains of old Houses or Walls . . . [may] be had at a reasonable rate . . . At the worst . . . they might . . . be had out of a quarry in Geo Jonies Bank, or elsewhere . . .”. This shows a clear order of preferences and a keen sense of economy. It helps to explain why so few ancient, humble, stone buildings survived the ‘Great Rebuilding’ in the Lake District and elsewhere. Support for this is provided by two of William Birkett’s petty transactions when, on 2 February 1750, James Longmire signed a receipt for £5 “for an old Kiln which Wm Birkett bought” and, on 2 January 1749, when Birkett “sold to John Tyson of Drumlemire all the Stone Walls of the old Kiln at one pound one shilling”.⁶² Presumably, if they refer to the same building, he made up the difference by selling the old slate and timber to unknown persons and then paid his father-in-law the net proceeds.

No doubt such practices and local traditions were fostered in a close knit community by the apparent persistence of groups of workmen to stay together for considerable periods and by intricate family relationships. The latter has been demonstrated clearly for owner’s families, if not for workmen, and provides an intriguing social background to highlight the problems and practices of ordinary builders in the Lake District over two centuries ago.

Notes and References

- ¹ Preserved at Cumbria County Record Office, Kendal (K.R.O.), WD/TE. To save footnotes, references to the bound volumes of manuscripts are included in the text. Definitions derived from *Oxford English Dictionary* unless stated otherwise.
- ² Proved from his family history notes in volume viii, pp. 2-13.
- ³ See Margaret A. Logie in CW2, lxxi, 75-89. In addition, on 24 March 1728/9 he was appointed Chief Bailiff to the Marquis and Richmond Fees of the Barony of Kendal and Collector of Annual Rents for Henry, Lord Lonsdale (xiv, 154).
- ⁴ Bray; to crush to powder usually in a pestle and mortar. Louthier = lowder. In a lowder mill the stones are surrounded by a lowder frame, usually boarded-in to reduce dust penetration to greased gear-wheels. Information kindly given by Mr Don Ainslie (Curator of Heron Mill, Beetham) and Mr Michael Davies-Shiel.
- ⁵ Probably at Staveley where Gatefoot bobbin mill is now converted for housing and light industry.
- ⁶ Also he supplied “a Hopper trinle lead” for directing flow of corn to the stones and paid £1. 10s. to “Couz. Tho. Philipson for half a Rood of Oake Boards” (i.e. 220.5 sq. ft.).
- ⁷ As “Mary wife of Thomas Cookson, Sexton” was buried at Troutbeck on 13 May 1724, he was probably the Parish Clerk and may have acted as “clerk of works” also.
- ⁸ All in Applethwaite. Gate Mill How was near Calgarth. M. L. Armitt, *Rydal*, 1916, p. 412.
- ⁹ K.R.O., WD/TE, ix, 128 lists the transport costs for cart loads of wood carried to the mill as follows: From Ullswater Head (4 @ 2s. 6d.), Mary Gills (1 @ 8d.), Water Head (1 @ 10d.), Longdale ([1] @ 1s. 4d.), Ambleside (3 @ 1s.), Lickbarrow (5 @ 1s), Kirkstone (2 @ 9d.) and “2 Carts of Dale” (deal) from Kendal @ 2s., apparently from one Gosling (ix, 132). Lancelot Wilson and John Chamney supplied more, and £1. 12s. 9½d. was “Paid for More bought at Backbarrow”. Clearly the countryside was scoured!
- ¹⁰ Lane was bought by George Browne “younger . . . balliffe” on 27 March 1674 from Anne (widow of

- Christopher Birkett) and her second son George for £50 and £3 a year to Anne for life (xiv, 203). Several later leases have survived.
- ¹¹ K.R.O., WD/TE "Troutbeck Valuation Map and Schedule", 1846 by Bentley and Watson. Undamaged copy plan in WD/RG.
 - ¹² Confirmed in Browne's memorandum book (E, 48). "Dec 28. [At] Robt Cookson[']s when I Bargained my Barn Building wth Workmen 2s. od." spent.
 - ¹³ The crook balk would normally be a tie-beam but if it were, in fact, set 12 feet above the loft floor, it might have been fitted as a collar. The roof has been replaced but none of the buildings show evidence of having had crucks.
 - ¹⁴ Similarly with the carpenters. George Birkett, "carpinter" was buried 20 Jan. 1710, George Birkett "Senior, Carpenter" (18 May 1761), Elizabeth Birkett o'th'wrights (17 June 1750) and Christopher Birkett, carpenter (4 June 1725), whereas George and Christopher, sons of George Birkett, carpenter, were baptized in 1697 and 1699. So many Birketts had similar names that their relationship is uncertain.
 - ¹⁵ Browne's memorandum book (E, 26) records 2½ lbs "Small Twist for Walers" on 17 February 1731, presumably also for the raising (like the Rydal corn barn raising in 1670). See B. Tyson, CW2, lxxx, p. 116.
 - ¹⁶ As in the Skirwith Hall barn (1773). See B. Tyson, CW2, lxxxi, 101.
 - ¹⁷ Spikeings and pikes were large nails, square cut with small heads. Ridwiddy, ridwide, riggwiddey (now ringwiddy): a hoop for fastening a cow's neck band to a vertical slider on the stall. For example, "To 4 Iron Riggwiddeys in Cow House 1s. 4d.". Entry dated 13 May 1759 in "Account of our Payments charged upon the Estate at Nibthwaite", K.R.O., WD/Ry 66.
 - ¹⁸ K.R.O., WD/NT, bundle 30. Deed of Troutbeck Park dated 9 July 1742.
 - ¹⁹ A memorandum of matters to be considered at the manorial court in 1737 (ii, 383) includes an item "about Slate Quarrys" with intent "To Discharge the getting [of] any more [slate] & demand a sight of Mr Pigeon's Grant".
 - ²⁰ Handbill advertisement for second quality Coniston slate. K.R.O., WD/Ry 22.
 - ²¹ Dorm: a fixed horizontal beam, sleeper or summer. Selletree = sile or crooked post. Hence the dorms were loft floor beams partially supported by bent cow-stall posts (surviving, see Fig. 3). Other terms – Butment: access ramp to upper floor. Tables: flat, rectangular stones capping a wall or acting as drip courses (and through stones).
 - ²² Probably mending a wimble; an auger for boring in stone or wood (also womble or wummel).
 - ²³ William Sharp was probably the other carpenter.
 - ²⁴ K.R.O., "Act for enclosing Hugill, Applethwaite and Troutbeck" 1831. Award 1842.
 - ²⁵ Much later, G. H. Pattinson was allowed to get stone for six weeks from "Green Thwaites field". K.R.O., WD/TE box 8(2), Letter dated 25 August 1893.
 - ²⁶ Mentioned in a Barony of Kendal admittance, dated 6 Feb. 1766, when James Birkett of High Green, Troutbeck was admitted customary tenant of "Lowhouse . . . and four closes called Blakesikes on the east and south side of Wane Lane together with an outfield House or Barn on the North and by the West side of same [closes]".
 - ²⁷ Initially for 3 years at £20 a year "excepting such Rooms in the Mansion house and Barn as were excepted to Jonathan Elleray . . . and provide meat, drink, washing and lodging [for B.B. elder] and grass and hay for a horse" for which the father was to pay "£5 yearly forth of his Sallary as Bailife". Household goods and husbandry gear were included but stock was bought at valuation of £40. When both Benjamin Brownes died in 1748, Elizabeth claimed lodging expenses from her father-in-law's estate (iii, 295-305) so, presumably, the lease had been extended.
 - ²⁸ On 24 April 1735 the Chapelwardens reported "the Steepel . . . very ruinous & like to fall that 'twas thought prudent to take the Bell down, to prevent its being broken in the Fall". Also the roof, windows, plastering, chapel-yard walls and gates needed repair (iii, 83).
 - ²⁹ Probably instigated by George Browne (1779-1838) and completed by his son George (1804-1848). The handwriting has not been proved.
 - ³⁰ Presumably the top of the side walls or wall-plate.
 - ³¹ K.R.O., WD/TE, Box "Wm Birkett senr & junr (1720-1850) correspondence".
 - ³² K.R.O., WD/TE, Unbound MSS 89, apparently now lost. A Barony of Kendal admittance of 1714 refers to this transaction.
 - ³³ His manuscript Maths Book of 1731 is filled with calculations for land areas, building materials and farm valuations. K.R.O., WD/TE, "Browne/Birkett a/c books".

- ³⁴ Their children were Eleanor (1735), Mary (1737), Elizabeth (1740), Ann (1742), William (1748), James (1751), and Amelia (1753).
- ³⁵ Who on 21 Dec. 1775 married Dorothy Harrison daughter of John Harrison of Holehird and Bout and formerly Troutbeck Park (Barony of Kendal admittance to Holehird 5 Sept. 1776). Thomas Harrison, John's eldest son married Amelia Birkett (footnote 34) who became mother to Jane Harrison, who in turn married George Browne (1779-1838) in 1801 and had a daughter Amelia the same year.
- ³⁶ J. H. Palmer, *Historic Farmhouses of Westmorland*, 1944, 120. They appear to have married at Troutbeck on 2 June 1681.
- ³⁷ William Benson was paid £12. 6s. for "Walling of G. Otley's House" at Cragg in 1779 (see B. Tyson, CW2, lxxviii, 113). Also "Wm Benson begun to Wall on Wednesday the 27th of April 1774 for Rowland Birkett a Dwelling House" (a note copied by George Browne "from an old Memorandum Book amongst Middelriggs papers", K.R.O., WD/TE, "Green Wooden Box I").
- ³⁸ A bill from "John Harrison of Park to Wm Birkett" for leading slate about 1760 survives in WD/TE "slate papers". In the 1774 "Value of Troutbeck Estates" (vi, 146-7), "John Harrison, park" was rated at £80 compared with (for example) "Wm Birkett, Lowwood" £16. (see also footnote 35).
- ³⁹ In 1762 he gave £50 to the Troutbeck School fund out of a total collection of £113. WD/TE, box 2, Small black notebook; lists 65 contributors. (Also x, 49).
- ⁴⁰ Carlisle Record Office (C.R.O.), D/Lons, Barony of Kendal, admittance 4 Feb. 1765. On 13 Feb. 1765 she conveyed them to John Birkett, hatter and feltmaker of Beckside who, in turn, sold them to James Birkett of High Green, Troutbeck for £445 on 6 Feb. 1766 (see also footnote 26).
- ⁴¹ He should have been admitted on 14 June 1749 but disputed the Barony fees and so was not finally confirmed as customary tenant until 29 January 1752.
- ⁴² Like Henry Williamson, Thomas was a woodmonger of Windermere. The latter bought timber from Gowbarrow Park in 1742 (ii, 382) and bark from John Mouncey (*sic.*) of Patterdale in 1765. (WD/TE, Further MSS, 193).
- ⁴³ Established 1711. They also supplied some timber for Troutbeck Bridge mill in 1746. J. D. Marshall, in *Furness and the Industrial Revolution*, 1958, 60 mentions that their "heavy timber was used in shipbuilding, house construction . . .". Presumably it would be sold for a higher price than could be had for coaling.
- ⁴⁴ William Brownrigg had children: George (1740), Elizabeth (1744) and John (1747). In 1757 and 1760 he took 3 year leases on the Lane tenement (iv, 150 and ii, 334) but he was buried on 18 November 1762. Lane was then let to William Birkett, weaver until May 1788 (Memo. Book Vol. W). On 7 June 1784 "Wallers began slating the Lane Shop" (Vol. O). Perhaps there was a weaver's workshop there.
- ⁴⁵ 'Tom' slate was third quality, 'Country' slate second and 'London' slate the best.
- ⁴⁶ Presumably from Doctor Atkinson's.
- ⁴⁷ Note in the manuscript index to the Townend papers. The specification seems to have been written by George Browne (1741-1804), Mrs Longmire's grandson.
- ⁴⁸ Goam: obsolete form of Gaum (c.f. Gome = Coom). To smear with a sticky substance; to daub on a surface; to begrime with soot. This suggests a lined chimney to prevent smoke penetration. Compare with Woundale hoghouse chimney.
- ⁴⁹ Cerbase = surbase: moulding immediately above the lower panelling of a room; a chair rail. Washboard: a skirting board. Other terms: Coans = quoins; corbs = corbels; rabbited = rebated; transom = horizontal bar across a window or door; gist = joist.
- ⁵⁰ No plan has survived.
- ⁵¹ A proposal to let Linefoot (xvi, 8) says it had "a very good dwelling house . . . & near 150 acres of land now in possession of Mrs Longmire". This must have included rough grazing.
- ⁵² S. H. Scott, *A Westmorland Village*, 1904, 265.
- ⁵³ Robert Dickinson (ed.), *Lancaster Marriage Bonds VI, 1739-45*, Record Society of Lancs. & Ches., Vol. 100, 1949, 34. Bond dated 25 July 1740.
- ⁵⁴ On the reverse of an undated letter he wrote out a "Schedule of Goods left at Linefoot" after the sale, mainly furniture valued at £13. 18s., "Besides a Bed stead and Hangings sold in the Sale to Christo. Rigg and when he should have taken it away was discharged and stopped by the Plaintiff"; clearly a formidable lady.
- ⁵⁵ C.R.O., D/Lons, Barony of Kendal admittances, pages 71-3 and 44-50.
- ⁵⁶ Such houses are considered in R. W. Brunskill, *Vernacular Architecture of the Lake Counties*, 1974, 62-5.
- ⁵⁷ K.R.O., WD/EC/15/T4. Troutbeck General Charitable Trust documents. Also S. H. Scott, *op. cit.*, 181.

- ⁵⁸ The writing is clear but the meaning obscure. Perhaps the church employed suitable stone *sorters* at a nearby quarry.
- ⁵⁹ Cipher-joint; made by over-lapping the edge of one plank upon another with a bevelled edge to make a plain surface. Possibly a false or hidden joint (c.f. cipher tunnel; a false or mock chimney).
- ⁶⁰ For example Rydal Hall corn barn built in 1670. (CW2, lxxx).
- ⁶¹ For example Skirwith Hall barn built in 1773. (CW2, lxxxi, 100).
- ⁶² K.R.O., WD/TE, Further MSS 221 and "Wm Birkett account books", respectively.

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