

Newsletter



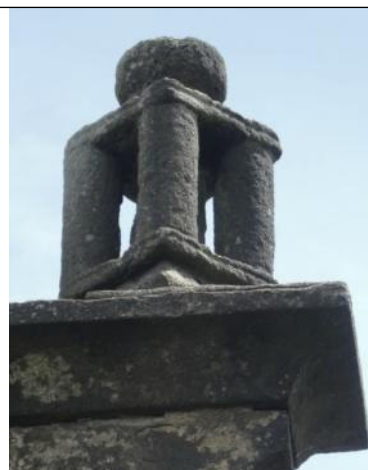
A feast of finials!

Welcome to our August Newsletter. Our recent events and activities have taken us around the county, and in this edition we feature write-ups of visits to Baildon in West Yorkshire (where finials were in evidence), Foulbridge and Lastingham in North Yorkshire, and Loftus even further north.

Tony Robinson recalls another encounter with old buildings, this time in Thirsk Market Place, from the time of his career in conservation and historic buildings. Over the county border into Lancashire, Kevin Illingworth offers another example of the lengths that house owners appeared to go to in order to avoid Window Tax.

Earlier this year we sent out a questionnaire to ask members whether the events, activities and resources offered by the Group are what people want, and to seek thoughts on future directions. The overall response was positive and we present a summary inside. As always, we're interested to hear of members' skills and expertise, and encourage all to get involved! Your views, and offers of help, guide us in planning future events; we are already thinking about next year although we still have a couple of events taking place this year and we hope that some of you will join us – details can be found inside.

Photos of Baildon, West Yorkshire. Top: rear view of Baildon Hall. Centre: the former Brookhill Stores. Bottom: finials at Old Hall in Westgate.



Future YVBSG events: dates for your diary

Annual Recording Conference in Arncliffe

Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 September 2026

The 2026 recording weekend (postponed from May) is being held in the village of Arncliffe in Littondale, part of Upper Wharfedale. It has been organised in conjunction with the Upper Wharfedale Heritage Group as part of a joint vernacular building recording project. Arncliffe is an interesting and attractive village that is currently under-represented in the YVBSG archive with only one cottage recorded by YVBSG, and yet there are twenty listed cottages and houses.



Arncliffe

An objective of the conference is to provide an opportunity for members to take part in building recording with teams led by an experienced member of YVBSG, and several buildings in the village are lined up to be recorded on the Saturday. The Sunday provides an opportunity to discuss the recorded buildings and includes a talk on the history of village followed by a walkabout to view the buildings surveyed.

The event is non-residential and you can attend on both days or just the Saturday or the Sunday. We will use Amerdale Village Hall in Arncliffe and there is no charge to attend. Do note that there is limited parking, and no public transport from Skipton, so car sharing is advised where possible. For those who might want to stay overnight there are options in Skipton and Grassington and other local pubs and B&Bs.

Full details and a link to the online booking form have been sent by email to members and details are also available on the website at www.yvbsg.org.uk/events.html. The deadline for booking is 27 August 2026; if you wish to book after this date, phone/email to check availability of places. Enquiries to Jan Goode, Treasurer, at treasurer@yvbsg.org.uk or text 07539 911430.

A visit to Northowram

Saturday 10 October 2026

A full-day visit to Northowram village, two and a half miles north-east of Halifax on the A58 road. Meet at 10am in the large car park of the picturesque seventeenth century Shoulder of Mutton public house, Towngate, Northowram HX3 7EA. We will have lunch here at 1pm. The attached eighteenth century former Priestley Hall is part of the pub; it has a tall mullion and transom staircase window at the rear. The pub offers an extensive menu with light bites starting at £7.50. If needed, there is a very good 'Go Local' shop on Towngate. The bus service 534 (Northowram Circular) from Halifax runs along Towngate.

Opposite the pub is No 31 Towngate, altered but dated 1604 and 1640. Owner and committee member Mark Womersley will show members around his house in the afternoon.



31 Towngate



Marsh Hall

There are a few seventeenth century houses in the village with renewed mullions, such as Hillway House on Tetley Lane - we can go into their garden. Another house easily seen is Marsh Hall, by the roadside on the outskirts - a mid-sixteenth century hall with a 1626 datestone and a full-height open hall with a 36-light hall window.

We will visit at least one rare surviving 'slab' wall. This has 224 slabs and is 174 metres long (Grade 2 listed).

Maximum of 20 members. If you want to come please email kevinillingworth1943@gmail.com or telephone 01422 844941, also leaving your phone number. Please say if you would like lunch in the Shoulder of Mutton.

Getting your hands dirty ...

Welcome to our summer Newsletter. A big thank you to the seventy or so members who responded to the questionnaire about the Group's activities. You can see the results in the analysis later in this Newsletter. This will help the committee prepare our activities for the coming year. To me, it looks as if many of you rate the provision of information through publications, email messages and events like the day school as more important than the actual recording and analysis of Yorkshire's vernacular buildings. This may partly explain why it is not easy to get members involved in recording the buildings 'offered' to us. Our archivist has a list of nearly thirty people 'interested' in being involved in recording and hearing about forthcoming opportunities – if you would like to be included do let David Cook know (archivist@yvbbsg.org.uk).

Following on from this, the falling numbers coming to the annual recording weekend has been a long-term trend. This year, due to the low number of team leaders and lack of time to organise, we decided to postpone the May event. However, a slimmed-down version is being held at the beginning of September in Arncliffe in collaboration with the Upper Wharfedale Heritage Group. Initially we gave priority booking to members of the 'joint' project group who have already expressed interest – drawn from both societies, but bookings are now open to all members. Details have been sent by email to members but if you have any queries do contact Jan Goode, our treasurer (treasurer@yvbbsg.org.uk), to find out more.

One other important result of the questionnaire was that members would like to find out more about identifying and interpreting buildings. Indeed, despite having completed a course in industrial archaeology, I still felt like a novice at surveying nearly forty years ago when I joined the Group and I'm still learning. So we do encourage people to 'get their hands dirty' – and in some buildings there is plenty of opportunity for a wider coverage in the cellar, or a roof space, for example.

Finally, a big thank you to those members who take part in organising visits, doing research, helping at events and contributing to the continued success of our Group. I look forward to meeting or hearing from you in the coming months.

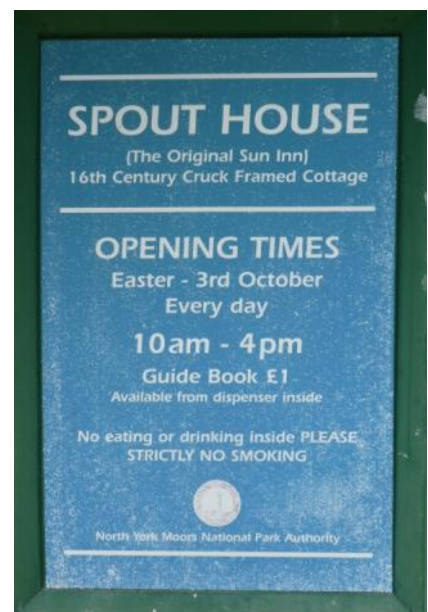
David Cant, Chair, enquiries@yvbbsg.org.uk



Could we tempt you into a cellar such as this one under
17 High Street, Bridlington?

Spout House – well worth a visit

If you're visiting the North York Moors, you might like to drop in at Spout House in Bilsdale, some eight miles north of Helmsley on the B1257. Originally the Sun Inn (the new Sun Inn of 1914 is a few yards away), this Grade I listed cruck-framed building is looked after by the North York Moors National Park and is normally open to the public during summer months. If you're lucky you'll have it to yourself and can enjoy the atmosphere of a sixteenth-century building!



Heading up to the far north-east of the county: exploring Loftus

Earlier this year, the Group received a request for help with understanding the older buildings of Loftus in North Yorkshire. Although I'd heard of the town and knew it was between the coast and the North York Moors National Park, no image popped into my mind. Apart from Whitby and Robin Hood's Bay to the south-east, and the resorts of Saltburn and Redcar to the west, it wasn't far from Guisborough, which I'd visited several times with our President, Barry Harrison. I also knew the work of the Royal Commission, following, amongst others, Raymond Hayes in studying the many cruck-framed buildings and landscape of the moors. But I knew little about the area between the high land and the sea.

Indeed, the landscape itself is quite dramatic. The land ends in steep cliffs which are cut by steep valleys with streams rushing down to the sea. Apart from a few select places, the coast does not lend itself to easy settlement. The steep lanes lined with cottages leading down to Robin Hood's Bay are found in several other locations. Away from the coast, the undulating hills between the valleys rise towards the moors and the rich soil provides valuable land for cultivation. They also hold mineral deposits that have been exploited in the last three hundred years, despite the difficulties of moving the products to market. First alum, later iron ore and more recently potash have attracted investment – although evidence of their early exploitation has almost all disappeared.

The established settlements, the inhabitants living from fishing or farming, expanded significantly. Iron ore extraction and processing led to large works, many close to the coast, in the mid to later nineteenth century. However, the earlier remaining buildings in Loftus were based on the prosperity from the exploitation of alum, which brought significant wealth to a few and the need for cottages for the many. There are few clearly identifiable pre-eighteenth century buildings, but the High Street has a wealth of sandstone houses. The later nineteenth century iron-based expansion led to stone and brick terraces in the town, with a few impressive Victorian buildings – banks, a town hall, chapels and a rebuilt church with origins in the thirteenth century.

We were invited to visit an exceptional brick building, Pear Tree Cottage, in the centre of the town. It was undergoing restoration and the removal of plaster from the internal walls had revealed a number of alterations, ranging from the raising of the first-floor level to the building of rear extensions on the site of earlier farm buildings. There were several farms in the town centre two hundred years ago – now there are none. Building in brick in the early to mid eighteenth century in an area with plenty of good stone was taken as a sign of status. The two front rooms look out over the High Street in classical symmetry, but the main entrance is in the east gable. Now it is hidden by what

appears to be a conventional front door, but this leads to a passage under a flying freehold, part of adjacent stone buildings from the early nineteenth century.



1696 datestone over fireplace at Pear Tree Cottage

Both upper floor chambers were heated – their fireplaces, with stone lintels, still in situ. One has the date 1696 with initials, but the surrounds to the decoration have been damaged and it may be re-sited. The brick stacks rise clearly through the building. A large iron range was added to the rear of one room during the nineteenth century. The wealth of thin but wide hand-made brick, in complete contrast to those around, makes this building a prominent feature on the High Street. A local historian has agreed to survey this building for the owner.

From here we went to look at some more typical stone cottages close to the town centre. The regular coursed sandstone, often with characteristic herringbone dressing and coped gables, with simple blocks of stone as kneelers, typify these buildings. However, if you venture round the back, less regular coursing and alterations to windows and doors suggest a less uniform approach. To the rear of Cromwell Cottage in East Crescent (the Civil War commander reputedly slept here) there was evidence of a smallholding with an orchard on a large sloping plot of land. Refronted, perhaps?



Rear of one of the stone cottages, Prospect Cottage in Micklehow Lane.

We completed our tour by visiting Westfield Farm, in South Loftus. This was the site of a medieval settlement, but from documentary evidence the farm dates from the early eighteenth century. Surrounding fields, previously belonging to other farms, were gathered together to be farmed from here. This seems to have been part of the policy of agriculture improvement by the landlords, the Beckwith family. The complex of stone-built farm buildings, with a fold yard, a horse-engine house and repurposed granary certainly appear to have been carefully set out.

The house itself is two-storey with two large front rooms with a corridor, stair

and service rooms to the rear. It has had several additions and alterations. The original entrance appears to have been in the west gable, now hidden by a two-storey nineteenth century extension. At right-angles to this is a single-storey section, now forming a kitchen. It is built on a substantial stone plinth, with courses of sandstone from blocks of varying sizes. The front (south-east) elevation has a very regular appearance, but the rear has altered openings, some with the remnants of stone jambs. Other inconsistencies include use of quoins for part of the walling at one end but not at the other. The kneelers, unlike almost all the others in Loftus, have a curved shape

and include motifs or carvings – all different! The pantile roof is carried on a principal-rafter truss; the most interesting timbers are transverse ones supporting the first floor. They are clad in panels with a small, moulded edge, probably Victorian. It is intended to see what is underneath in due course!

By the end of the day a substantial amount of information had been shared, illustrating the value of such co-operative ventures. Some members of the local group have joined YVBSG; we hope to continue this relationship and record some buildings in this interesting area.

David Cant



Westfield Farm (photo from Google Street View)

Those so-called witch marks ...

We often come across various markings on buildings, some of which are misleadingly referred to as 'witch marks'. An article on this subject by Professor Jenny Alexander of Warwick University appeared in *The Guardian* on 9 July 2026, in which she argues that symbols such as daisy wheels are no more than the working marks of stonemasons, and states that there is no evidence that such marks have anything to do with witches or any 'mystical meanings'.

The article kicked off a lively debate on social media, with contributors arguing that it portrays a narrow view which disregards the wider context of marks and ignores the fact that they are found on timber, plaster and furniture, not just on stone, and that many do indeed appear to be apotropaic or ritual protection marks rather than relating to construction.

The debate on this emotive subject continues, but one thing is clear: the term 'witch marks' is a relatively recent invention by the media and its use is discouraged nowadays. For more on this topic see James Wright's blog, *The Problem of "Witchmarks"*, at triskeleheritage.triskelepublishing.com/mediaeval-mythbusting-blog-2-the-problem-of-witchmarks/.

Lorraine Moor

Duck!

A warning of 'duck!' is often heard when recording buildings with low beams or low doorways. Whilst surveying a house on the North York Moors recently, however, the warning of 'duck in the bedroom' was for a different sort of duck! We carefully measured around Pascale, who was being cared for indoors during a period of recuperation, well out of reach of the resident cats.

Lorraine Moor



YVBSG Members' Survey: what you told us ...

Earlier this year we sent out a questionnaire to members on priorities and activities, the objective of which was to find out whether the events, activities and resources offered by the Group are what members want, and also to find out a little more about members' skills and knowledge. We thank all those who completed the questionnaire; 70 responses were received, with 36 responders providing their names and 34 remaining anonymous. Here is a summary of the responses to each question.

How did you first hear about the Group?

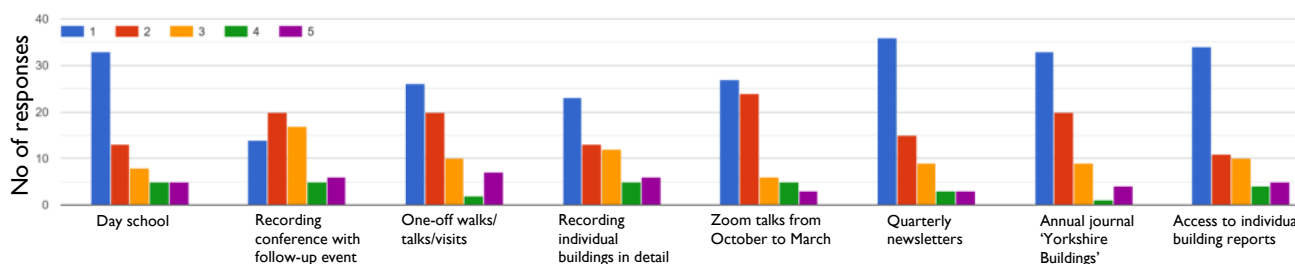
70% of responders had heard about the Group by word of mouth, 13% by the YVBSG website and 3% via social media. Other members became aware of the Group through various societies, courses, articles in the media, book fairs and other events. A few longstanding members confessed that it's too long ago to remember!

Have you been in touch with the Group? Please rate our response.

Most of our communication these days is by email, and 60 members rated email communication as *good*. Only a small number of members provided a rating for our communication by post, Facebook message or other means but the rating for these was *good*, with just one vote of *poor* for postal communication.

Every year we offer the following activities and resources. Please rate these in importance for you.

The chart below shows how members rated our main activities and resources (1 = most important, 5 = least important). We also asked whether you had any ideas for other activities or resources, and you put forward a couple of suggestions including requests for more one-off walks and visits, carried on throughout the year.



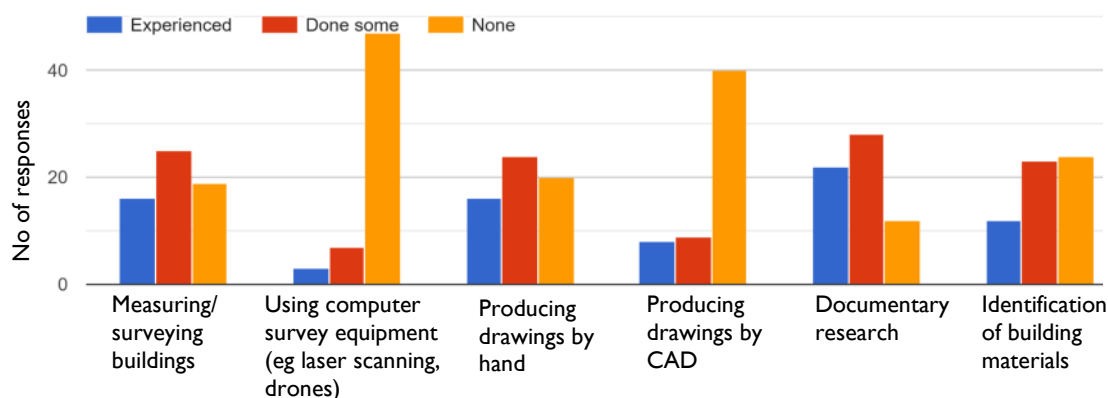
In your local area, would you be able to offer any of the following:

- ◇ Organise/lead a guided walk: 5 members said *yes*, 13 said *possibly*.
- ◇ Organise/lead a building visit: 4 members said *yes*, 16 said *possibly*.
- ◇ Provide local information for publications and event organisers: 12 members said *yes*, 31 said *possibly*.

An encouraging result! We also asked whether members could offer any other local involvement, and your responses included an offer to handle enquiries about buildings in the local area.

Do you have any relevant skills, expertise or knowledge which you could offer to the Group or share with other members?

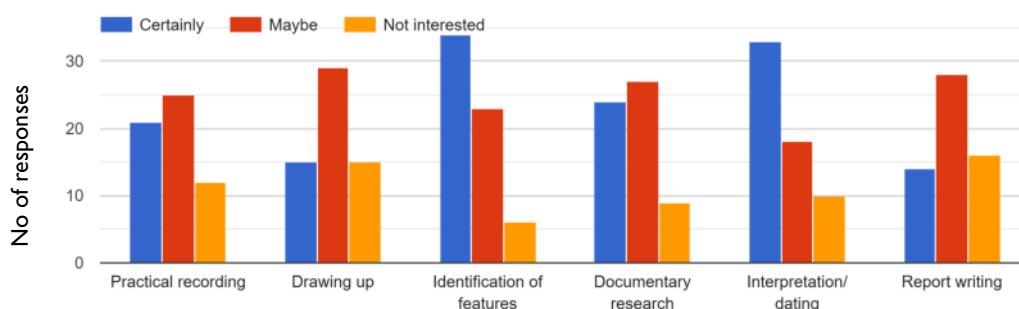
The chart below shows the skills distribution of those who responded. Perhaps not surprisingly, the Group has less expertise in the newer technologies used for surveying and drawing, and more experience in the traditional methods.



We also asked whether you had experience in any other subjects, and it transpired that members have a most impressive range of knowledge which includes restoration and conservation, historic mapping, dendrochronology, historic carpentry, building methods and traditions, and synthesis and context.

We are considering offering more training events. Are there any particular topics which you would like to see covered?

The most popular potential training topics were identification of features and interpretation/dating. Report writing and drawing up were a lower priority, although a request was received for training on drawing up using CAD.



Do the website, quarterly Newsletter and annual journal, *Yorkshire Buildings*, provide the information you need?

75% of respondents said *yes*, 25% said *mostly*, no-one said *no*. We asked whether anything was missing from the information we provide but no significant omissions were put forward.

Any other comments?

We were gratified and encouraged to receive some positive and appreciative comments, which included:

- ◇ Impressed by the group's professionalism and activity.
- ◇ Excellent organisation with good regular email contact.
- ◇ The newsletter and *Yorkshire Buildings* are always excellent.
- ◇ I think the Group is a most valuable focus for enhancing the history of Yorkshire and its people.
- ◇ As a remote member, I find the newsletter, online talks, journal and archive of recorded buildings useful; and the administration of the Group is very efficient.
- ◇ I love this organisation, the dedication to vernacular buildings is very welcome as the built environment continues to evolve – thank you.

Some of you said you are getting on in years, have family commitments, don't have transport available or live too far away to participate regularly in activities. Others expressed a wish for a good geographical spread of events across the county, although there was no consensus on preferred locations and inevitably some members would like more events in East or North Yorkshire whilst other members would prefer West or South Yorkshire!

We also received some very helpful comments regarding the scheduling and timing of events and activities, possible future projects, thematic/synthetic write-ups, motives for recording, and more.

Over the coming months the Strategy Group and Committee will consider the questionnaire results in detail and will give further thought as to how best to follow up on your responses and make optimum use of our resources. If you have additional suggestions or comments (or even grumbles!), please do get in touch at any time.

Third Thursday Talks

These talks normally take place by Zoom at 7.30pm on the third Thursday of the month, although none are scheduled at present. We are always looking for volunteers to give future talks and if you are interested in doing so, please contact Mary Cook on secretary@yvbbsg.org.uk. We hope to resume the programme later in the year.

Recordings of previous talks can be watched online by going to our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/@yvbbsg. The collection includes talks on a variety of buildings and features, as well as some highlights of walkabouts. Some of our recordings and videos have proved popular and have attracted more than 800 views.

Next committee meeting

The next meeting of the full committee will be held on Saturday 17 October 2026. If you'd like to raise any matters at any time, or have ideas for future events, please contact the Secretary, Mary Cook, on secretary@yvbbsg.org.uk.

Next Newsletter

The next Newsletter will be in November 2026 – please send any contributions to the editor at newsheet@yvbbsg.org.uk by 31 October 2026. Short articles on buildings or features would be appreciated, as well as details of publications or events of interest to other members. Is there a particular building or feature which puzzles or intrigues you? Do tell us about it!

Previous YVBSG events

Baildon Hall and Baildon village walkabout

A group of around twenty-five members gathered at Baildon Hall for this fully-booked event on Saturday 20 June 2026, organised by Kevin Illingworth. Our hosts at the Hall, which these days is a social club, were local historians and researchers Mike and Tish Lawson, assisted by their daughter Charlotte. After a very welcome coffee and biscuits Mike, who is also the social club president, gave a short introductory talk about the Hall, outlining its history and drawing our attention to its main features.

Today the stone building comprises a central hall with rear stair turret and a cross-wing at each end. At the south end, the cross-wing is timber-framed internally, dating from the late fifteenth century. The history of the building as suggested in *Rural Houses of West Yorkshire 1400-1830* (RCHME 1986) is that this wing was built to provide expanded solar and service accommodation for a pre-existing house, with the early hall range then being replaced in the early to mid seventeenth century by the present hall with staircase and north wing, and the south timber-framed wing being encased in stone in the mid seventeenth century.



Baildon Hall: rear elevation



Baildon Hall: the hall window

We had an excellent view of one impressive feature whilst enjoying our coffee in the hall – a partition between the hall and the timber-framed wing incorporating three pointed arched doorways from a former screens passage (see photo in previous Newsletter), and perhaps re-used from an earlier hall on the site. Colum Giles in *Rural Houses of West Yorkshire* explains that ‘the common medieval grouping of three doorways in the lower wall of the passage is found in only one house in West Yorkshire, Baildon Hall, Baildon. Here, the outer doorways probably led into buttery and pantry, with the central doorway opening into a passage leading through the wing to a detached building,

possibly a kitchen.’ The hall is lit by a large ten-over-ten-light mullion and transom round-headed window, with three of the lights having been replaced by a door, now blocked, at some time but with the king mullion still in place. The seventeenth century staircase (pictured in the previous Newsletter) took us up to the first floor of the north wing and hall range, where we wondered whether the upper voussoirs above the fireplace acted as a structural relieving arch or were simply a decorative feature.



Baildon Hall: fireplace in chamber over hall

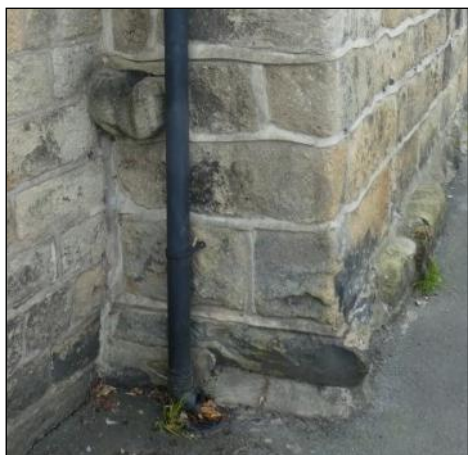


Baildon Hall: the three-bay timber-framed south wing

After a buffet lunch (fabulous doorstep sandwiches!) in the panelled parlour with its ornate plaster ceiling, we set off down the road to the Brook Hill area of Baildon. Here we saw two 'Dairy' lintels, one at 27/27A Station Road being very worn whilst the other one at Rose Cottage was repainted; these windows were marked as such because such rooms were exempt from Window Tax. Facing away from the road, the former Brookhill Stores has an attractive façade with a datestone of 1718 below an oval window (see front page of Newsletter). On Station Road, where Brookhill Stores abuts the early nineteenth century 2 and 4 Brook Street, a curious spout-like opening can be seen in the wall. One suggestion was that this might be a lant hole, through which male urine (yes, apparently it had to be male!) was removed from the house and collected in barrels for use in the textile industry (see 'Buildings of Barden' in *Yorkshire Buildings* 26, 1998, p51).



The dairy lintel at Rose Cottage, Brook Hill



Spout on Station Road

It was a warm day and rather than climbing the steepish hill on foot, we hopped into cars to drive to upper Baildon, meeting close to the eighteenth century Grade II listed stocks and the nearby landmark known locally as the 'potted meat stick' – a former drinking fountain and memorial so called because of its pink granite which has the appearance of the traditional beef spread.

On Westgate, the array of varied and unusual finials on Old Hall, a house of the seventeenth century and later, is shown on the first page of this Newsletter. Other details of interest included hoodmould stops with circular designs flanking the 1715 datestone over the front door, and some with spiral designs framed by a less attractive downpipe.



Cat flap and patio at Bank Walk House

At Bank Walk House on Bank Walk, we were invited into the garden for a closer look at the front of the house, which according to the listed building description is a timber-framed building dating from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. How people adapt buildings for modern living is often of interest, and here at the back of the house was a quirky example: a cat flap had been ingeniously inserted into an opening in the wall. The fortunate cat appears to have its own patio too.

That Saturday saw the beginnings of a heat wave, and it was good to finish the day with a refreshing cold drink (under the pretext of looking at at the building's fireplaces) in the late seventeenth/early eighteenth century Malt Shovel public house. Our thanks go to Kevin for arranging a most enjoyable day and to the Lawson family for welcoming us at Baildon Hall and sharing their local knowledge.

Lorraine Moor



Hoodmould stops at Old Hall, Westgate

A visit to Foulbridge Farm and Lasingham Church

Around thirty members made their way down a long single-track lane (with some encounters with large tractors on the way) on 24 July 2026 for a visit to Foulbridge Farm which sits in the middle of the low-lying Vale of Pickering, arranged by YVBSG member Pamela Martin. Approaching from the farmyard, the rear of the building is unassuming, comprising a late Georgian brick farmhouse with smaller house attached as a wing. Step inside, however, and you are transported back to 1288 on entering a former aisled hall built by the Knights Templar, lying between the main house and the wing. Astonishingly, this hall was undiscovered, embedded in the walls and roof of the farm manager's house, until the 1980s when the current occupier's mother took to the inserted ceilings with a pickaxe. I won't



South elevation of Foulbridge Farmhouse



The Knights Templar hall at Foulbridge



Three-seater privy at Foulbridge Farm

known crypt and apse, David pointed out some more unusual features such as the funeral bier stored in the crypt and a gravestone in the churchyard with a keyhole carved into it, similar to a door and apparently symbolising a portal between worlds. David then led a few hardy souls to see two of the three 'holy wells' in the village.

We are grateful to Pamela for organising such an enjoyable and interesting day, to Andrew Nutt for his introductory talk at Foulbridge Farm and for allowing us to roam freely around the buildings; to John, Peter and Angie at The Barn; and to David Haddon-Reece for showing us around Lasingham Church and the village wells.

Lorraine Moor

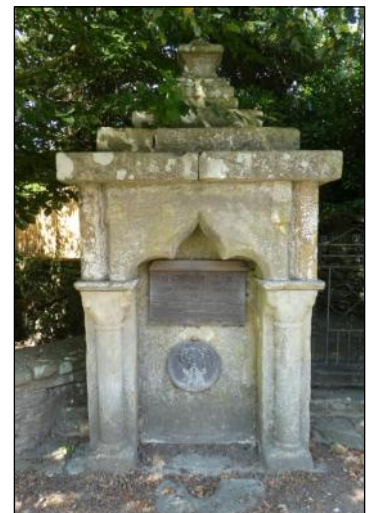


Burn marks on a brace in the Hall

attempt an architectural description of this complex building here, other than to borrow the succinct description in a VAG conference handbook of 2004 which explains that the hall has four pairs of posts with one pair retaining the original double arch-braces to a strainer beam spanning the hall below the cambered tie-beam. Lowering the pitch of the roof at some point has turned the former crown-posts into king-posts. The listed building description offers more detail. For those intrigued by such things, a stone fireplace with Tudor-arched lintel in the wing is said to bear apotropaic marks, and we also spotted clusters of burn marks on timbers, which these days are believed to have been made deliberately rather than accidentally by candles or tapers (John Dean and Nick Hill, 'Burn marks on buildings: accidental or deliberate?' in *Vernacular Architecture* 45, 2014).

Ranges of eighteenth and nineteenth century farm buildings are no longer in their original use, but we were fortunate to have a plan of their former layout, prepared by Malcolm Birdsall in 2004 for the above-mentioned conference handbook. A surviving set of pig feeding troughs and a three-seater privy caused some discussion!

At lunchtime we enjoyed an excellent buffet provided very efficiently by John, Peter and Angie at The Barn Guest House and Tea Rooms in Hutton-le-Hole. It was then off to Lasingham, for a guided tour of St Mary's Church led by the Revd David Haddon-Reece, who had previously worked with historic buildings in a former career. Again I'll leave the architectural description of this atmospheric ancient church to Pevsner and the listed building description, and other printed and online sources. In addition to the well-



St Cedd's Well at Lasingham

A curious building – what could it be?

The Group has received a query asking about the use of a building at Water Lane Farm, Woolley near Wakefield.

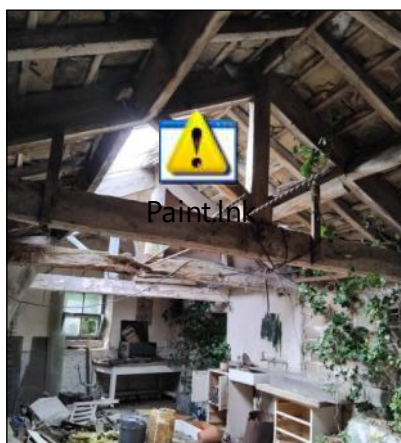
The enquirer says that 'On first glance it looks like a combination cart shed, stable and loft. But the size of doors and their positioning, with regard to the first of the two bays, just doesn't seem large enough for a standard cart – perhaps horse/pony-drawn machinery.

'The first bay has two arched entrances (pictured) one to west and one at the gable end facing north (partly infilled) both effectively opening into a single small bay – from the photos the width of doors to the first bay would appear to be about four feet.



'It's just sparked my interest so if any of the Group can shed some light that would be really appreciated. There is almost no information with regard to the site let alone this structure – not even on the Historic Environment Record!'

Do any YVBSG members have any thoughts about the purpose of this little building? At the time of writing, there are more photos at www.onthemarket.com/details/14332932/, relating to the sale of the residential property to which the building belongs. Any suggestions on its possible use can be sent to David Cook on archivist@yvbsg.org.uk.



Publications

The Built Heritage of the Temperance Movement: The Way Out of Darkest England by Andrew Davison. Published January 2026 by Liverpool University Press for Historic England. A major nineteenth-century social movement, Temperance sought to combat alcohol's devastating effects in England. Millions 'signed the pledge,' creating a parallel world of alcohol-free halls, coffee taverns, and even hospitals; this book explores the movement's physical legacy. Author and YVBSG member Andrew Davison is an Inspector of Ancient Monuments with Historic England. Hardback, £50, or £40 from www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk. Andrew tells us that although it is not a book on vernacular buildings it might be of interest to YVBSG members; Yorkshire was one of the heartlands of the Temperance movement, and a number of Yorkshire buildings are included in the book.

Bucklers' Yorkshire Buildings: The Architectural and Topographical Drawings of John Buckler and John Chessell Buckler of 1804-1820 by Peter Brears and Michael J Rochford. In the early nineteenth century the Bucklers made a graphic record of hundreds of the county's finest and most interesting buildings, as part of a body of work that took them across England and Wales. This book features a large selection of these drawings. Hardback, £35, July 2026. Published by Wakefield Historical Publications and Shaun Tyas. Available via www.rickarobooks.co.uk.

Attention all essay writers!

Feeling creative? The Cleveland and Teesside Local History Society runs a biennial essay competition, the J T Packett prize, and is offering a first prize of £250 for the best new local history essay, plus another prize of £50 for an essay that shows promise.

Entries should be on local history topics relating to any part of Teesside or the Cleveland district – for example a town, a village, a building, or a person or activity. Further details can be found on the Society's website at www.ctlhs.co.uk. Closing date 27 March 2027. Entries from professional historians are not accepted.

Encounters with old buildings

89 Market Place, Thirsk

Back in the late 1980s, Thirsk Market Place was part of a Town Scheme for the grant-aided repair of buildings in the conservation area, jointly funded by English Heritage and the County and District Councils.

The scheme attracted much interest, involving many site meetings and discussions with property owners, one of whom was the owner of a local shoe shop at 89 Market Place. This was a distinctive building, with two Flemish- style shaped gables fronting Market Place, dated 1904, but clearly the refronting of a much older building, which achieved a certain notoriety in the 1980s as the principal roosting place for the local pigeon population.



View of the east side of Thirsk Market Place, with No 83 (The Blacksmiths Arms, listed Grade II) on the left and No 89 (Wm Rukin) with the twin Flemish gables on the right. Photographed around 1985-7 – note the many UK-made cars!



The timber framing revealed during works to No. 83 (Blacksmith's Arms), involving rebuilding of the dormers and parts of the front wall. Photographed 23 November 1988.

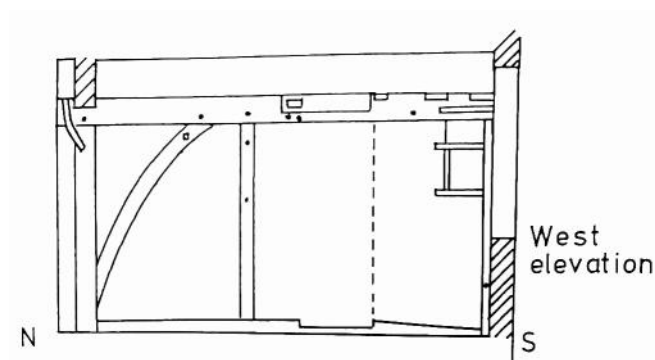
The owner was interested in reinstating the glazing bars to the upper floor windows, which had been crudely chopped out and replaced with plate glass. After a lengthy discussion with the owner, during which a solitary customer appeared and purchased a pair of shoelaces, we ventured up to the attic, to be met by a flock of pigeons which, greatly disturbed by our entry, exited via an open window.

The grant enquiry came to nothing, but some time later, after the property changed hands and the builders were in, I had a phone call asking if I could come and look at some timber framing they had found. I went over at lunch time and made some hasty measured drawings of the framing, which consisted of a wallplate, post, curving brace and a single stud. Fairly fragmentary, but clear evidence of a much older building.

Behind the largely Victorian facades of Thirsk Market Place, other fragments of timber framing remain at No 45 and at No 59 (formerly Bateman's), where a whole cross-wall of close studding survives on the first floor. The

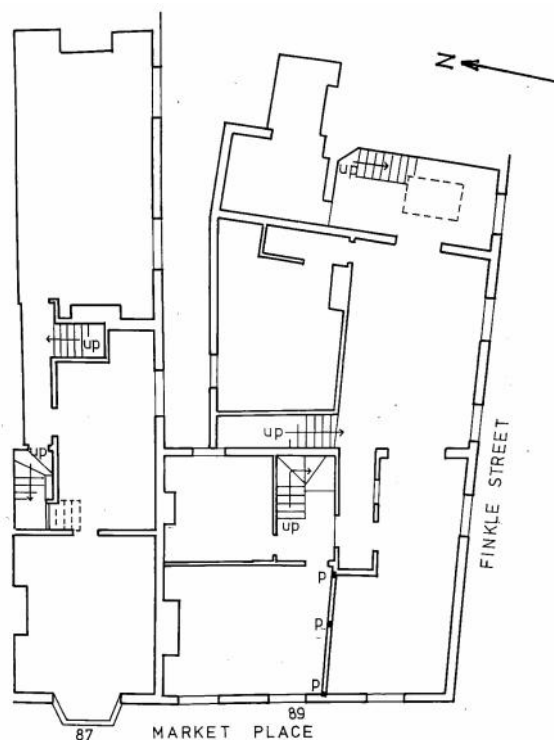
Blacksmiths Arms (No 83) was recorded by the RCHME in the 1980s, and was found to comprise two different timber-framed buildings of medieval date, refronted in the nineteenth century. Who knows what else is hidden behind the facades?

Tony Robinson, editor@yvbsg.org.uk



Timber frame in crosswall first floor
89 Market Place, Thirsk

Scale 1:50
0 1 2
metres
ADR 20.9.03



First floor 89 Market Place, Thirsk

Scale 1:100
0 5
metres
p = post

Reducing window tax – another Lancashire example

Here is my final study of small, fake windows and vertical channels that reduced window tax, unless more are discovered.

Carr House at Bretherton, Chorley, Lancashire, dated 1613 and listed II*, is a handsome house built of red brick with a diaper pattern of blue headers. This is another example where vertical channels were cut into the brickwork to limit window tax, as at Shepherd's Farm, Cockerham, near Lancaster (see YVBSG Newsletter No 123, June 2026, page 10). The channels at Carr House, eight inches wide and one-and-a-half inches deep, are mentioned in the *Victoria County History of Lancashire*, Vol 6 (1911) when they were filled with plaster or cement. Around 1970, when the house was being 'cleaned,' the late W John Smith (former Vernacular Architecture Group and YVBSG member) saw the remains of painted reproduction of glazing in each groove. He suggested that proper glazing was originally fitted, but when this needed attention it was removed, and painted glazing effects were substituted (VAG Newsletter No 22, January 1992).



Carr House, photographed before 1955. The vertical channels between upper and lower windows are clearly visible.

The Pevsner guide to *Lancashire: North* (2009) tells us that 'the vertical channels were there to give the façade movement'? Jeremy Horrocks is said to have observed the Transit of Venus on Sunday 24 November 1639, from the room above the porch doorway at Carr House. From 1966 until the 1970s the house was open to the public as the Barry Elder Dolls Museum. Later, in the 1990s, I had access to the front garden when children's swings, slides and roundabouts were for sale. For more information see S Dowell – *History of Taxes and Taxation in England* Vol 3 (1884) pp 168-177.

See also *Yorkshire Buildings* No 50 (2022) pages 50 & 55, and YVBSG Newsheet No 102, March 2021, page 4.

Kevin Illingworth

Working safely at heights

The Group has been looking into the possible provision of online safety training for YVBSG team members who might use ladders whilst recording buildings. Ideally we'd like to avoid working practices such as the one shown on the right! Photo taken in Austria by Tony Robinson, whose companion at the time remarked 'Is he training for the circus?'.

"Slaidburn is a little sad at present"

In Slaidburn, the seventeenth century Hark to Bounty Inn is closed, but the Slaidburn Estate is hoping to find a new tenant. We had our annual recording conference in the courtroom upstairs here on 18-20 May 2007, and the conference review day on 30 September 2007. Several members were accommodated in this pub for two nights. The development of the inn is complex.

Slaidburn Youth Hostel has also closed – the YHA has cleared it out and removed the signs. The lease expired in July 2025, but because of significant water damage the hostel closed in February 2025. Three members stayed here during the 2007 conference, including myself. The warden was Betty Longmate, of Bolton, who became a YVBSG member soon afterwards. Some wardens would let you go down into the cellar, where there are long slate shelves, but others would not allow this. The building is listed as late eighteenth century, with seventeenth century remains such as chamfered mullions re-used as gutter brackets.

Kevin Illingworth



Interesting ladderwork at Steyr in Upper Austria 1971

Other events of possible interest ...

We recommend that you check for any updated information if you plan to attend an event, in case of late changes to schedules.

Subterranean Beverley

Until 2 October 2026

An exhibition at Beverley Guildhall looking at the hidden history beneath the streets and historic buildings of the town. The Guildhall incorporates walling of a medieval timber-framed house and is open 10am to 1pm Wednesdays, 10am to 4pm Fridays, free.
www.eastridingmuseums.co.uk/whats-on.

Then & Now: photographs of vernacular buildings by Ralph Cross (1893-1978) and Kevin Illingworth

Tuesday 8 September 2026

A talk by Kevin Illingworth to Ryburn Valley History Society, 7.30pm at Ripponden Club, Halifax Road, Ripponden. Tel 07410 550066.

Charles Watson (1771-1836), 'Yorkshire's leading architect'

Tuesday 8 September 2026

A talk by architectural historian Christopher Webster for Yorkshire Philosophical Society. 2.30pm in Tempest Anderson Hall, York, £5. Watson's buildings included several impressive country houses, churches, chapels and court houses in Yorkshire, County Durham and Lincolnshire.
www.ypsYork.org.

Heritage Open Days

11 to 20 September 2026

Annual national festival with lots of free events, talks and buildings open to the public. This year's theme is 'Everyday Histories', exploring stories of working lives and highlighting the craftspeople, labourers, volunteers and families whose daily efforts left their mark on the country. Some events require booking so check out the full programme at www.heritageopendays.org.uk or look out for local publicity – Hull and East Riding, for example, both produce an excellent illustrated brochure with informative articles as well as event listings, available from local museums, libraries and tourist information centres.

Walking East Yorkshire

12 to 20 September 2026

Annual festival which includes walks around historic towns such as Beverley and Hornsea. Further details at www.visiteastyorkshire.co.uk/walking-east-yorkshire-festival/.

Discover Wakefield's Architecture

Monday 14 September 2026

A talk by Kevin Trickett at Wakefield Town Hall, 2.30pm, free. A Wakefield Civic Society event. To book, visit www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/wakefield-civic-society-8474119491.

A walk around Heptonstall village

Thursday 17 September 2026

A walk with South Pennine Archaeology Group. 10am - 2pm. £5. Tel 07798 582225, digspag.org.uk.

Bucklers' Yorkshire Buildings

Thursday 17 September 2026

A talk by Peter Brears and Michael Rochford about their new book. 7.30pm at Wakefield Town Hall. To book, visit www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/wakefield-civic-society-8474119491.

Local History Book Fair

Saturday 19 September 2026

East Yorkshire Local History Society annual bookfair, 10am to 3.30pm in Hull Minster, free. www.eylhs.org.uk.

Barkisland

Sunday 20 September 2026

A walk by Calderdale Heritage Walks, with YVBSG member Anne Kirker. For details of this walk and many others, see calderdaleheritagewalks.org.uk.

People Not Walls

Tuesday 22 September 2026

Join York Conservation Trust at York Theatre Royal for an evening to celebrate 50 years of caring for York's historic buildings. Featuring a talk by stonemason Andrew Ziminski. £20..
www.yorktheatreroyal.co.uk/show/people-not-walls/.

York Unlocked

Saturday 3 and Sunday 4 October 2026

Annual free event with interesting and significant buildings in York open to the public. Programme available at www.york-unlocked.org.uk.

Sawley Abbey, a Cistercian Abbey

Tuesday 6 October 2026

The Annual Bowland Lecture by Susan Harrison of English Heritage. 7.30pm in the Tithe Barn, Browsholme Hall. £5, book via www.forestofbowland.com/annual-lectures.

Yorkshire Towns Through the Ages

Saturday 10 October 2026

Yorkshire Archaeological and Historical Society conference at Friends Meeting House in York, in conjunction with the Historic Towns Trust. Looking at towns and cities and mapping across the county in different historical periods. £20.
www.yas.org.uk/Meetings/Yorkshire-History-Conference-10-October-2026.

The Buildings Archaeologist – Discovering the Secrets of Britain's Ancient Buildings

Tuesday 20 October 2026

A talk by Dr James Wright to mark the publication of his book of the same name. 7pm in Tempest Anderson Hall, York. £5, in cash on the door. Further details at www.ypsYork.org.

Back-to-Back Housing in Keighley and Silsden

Monday 27 October 2026

A talk by Jude Rhodes to Silsden Local History Group at Silsden Methodist Church, Kirkgate. 7.30pm, £3.
www.silsdenhistorygroup.co.uk.

A history of slate quarrying in the Lake District

Thursday 19 November 2026

A talk by Mark Hatton to Lorton and Derwent Fells History Society, 7.30pm at at Yew Tree Hall, Lorton. £3.
derwentfells.com.

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