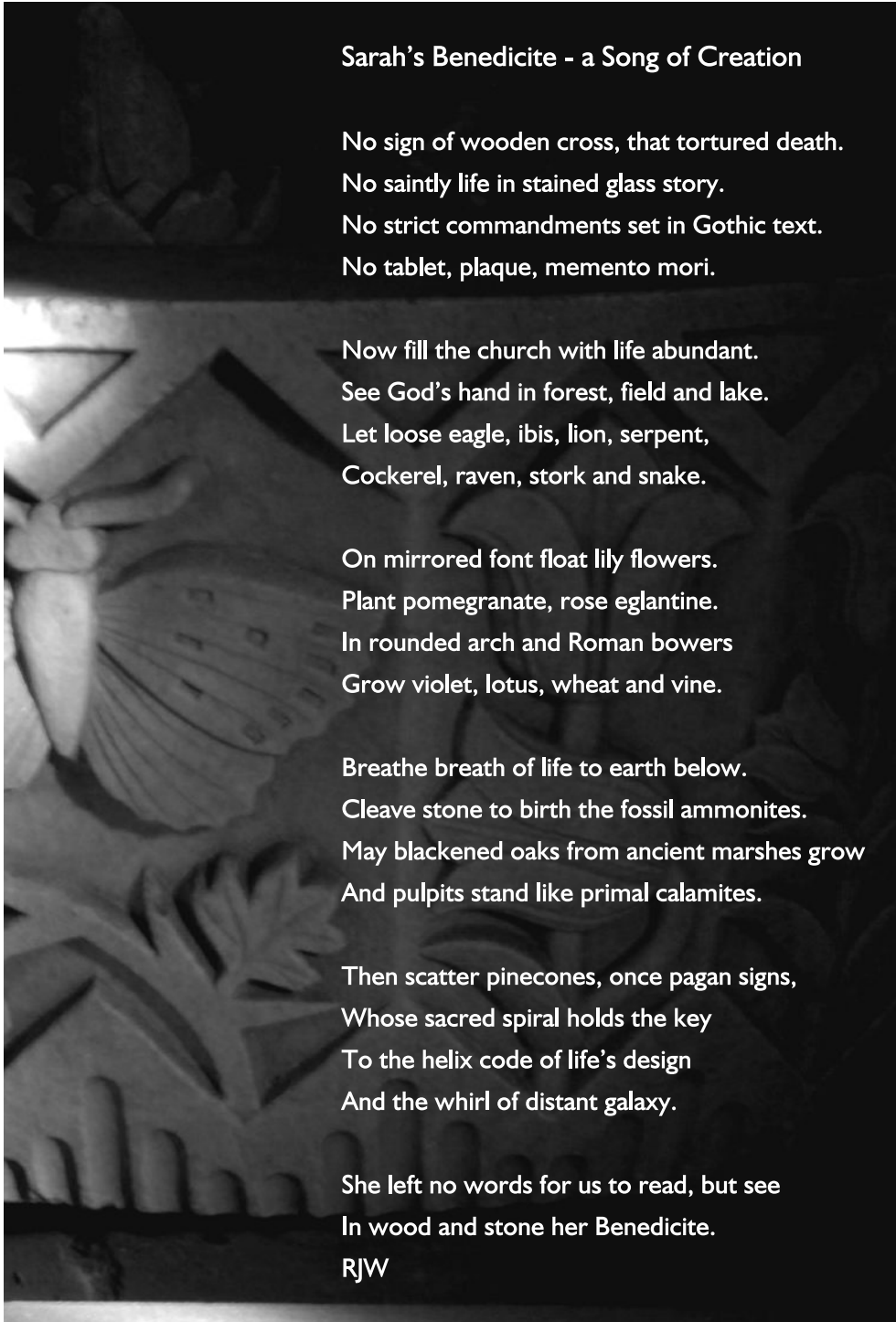




Sarah's Benedicite - a Song of Creation

No sign of wooden cross, that tortured death.
No saintly life in stained glass story.
No strict commandments set in Gothic text.
No tablet, plaque, memento mori.

Now fill the church with life abundant.
See God's hand in forest, field and lake.
Let loose eagle, ibis, lion, serpent,
Cockerel, raven, stork and snake.

On mirrored font float lily flowers.
Plant pomegranate, rose eglantine.
In rounded arch and Roman bowers
Grow violet, lotus, wheat and vine.

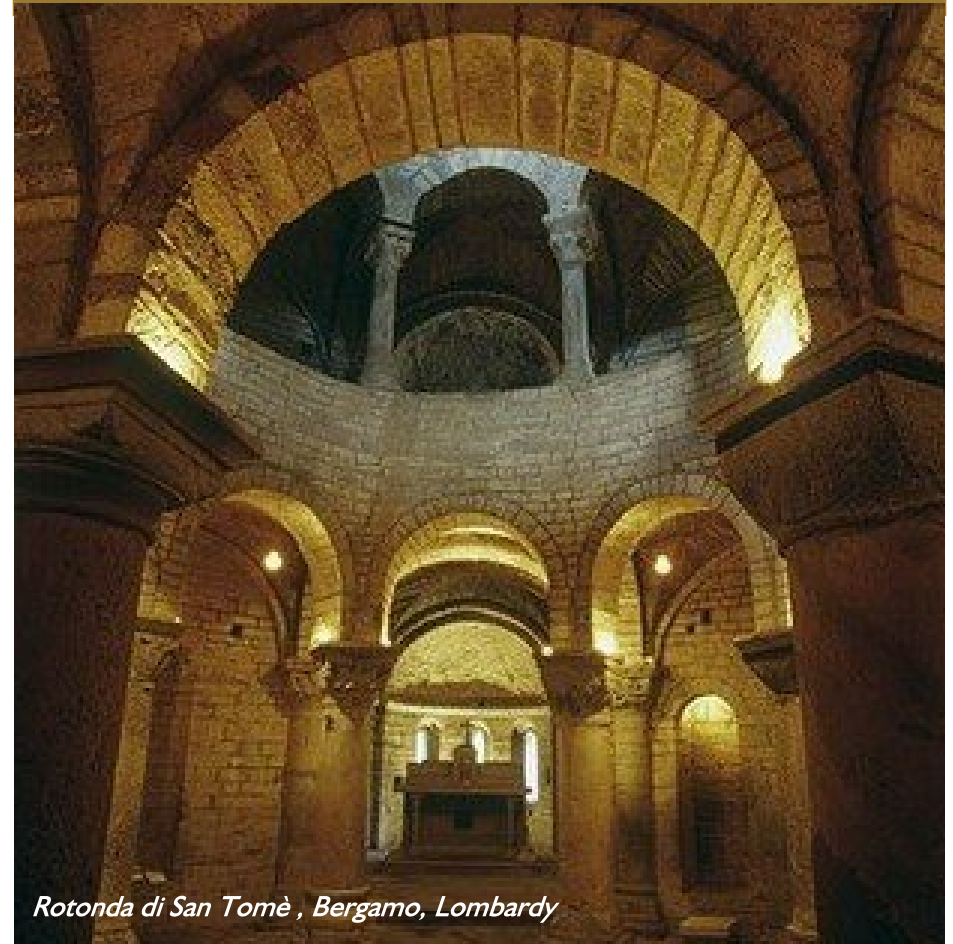
Breathe breath of life to earth below.
Cleave stone to birth the fossil ammonites.
May blackened oaks from ancient marshes grow
And pulpits stand like primal calamites.

Then scatter pinecones, once pagan signs,
Whose sacred spiral holds the key
To the helix code of life's design
And the whirl of distant galaxy.

She left no words for us to read, but see
In wood and stone her Benedicite.
RJW

PINE CONE

The Newsletter of The Friends of St Mary's Church, Wreay
Issue No26 May 2023



Rotonda di San Tomè , Bergamo, Lombardy

The Losh portrait - another chapter
Bookbindings
Memories of The Keep

DEAR FRIENDS,



The Friends of St Mary's Church, Wreay

c/o Wreay Syke Fold, Wreay CA4 0RJ

Website: www.stmaryswreay.org.uk

Chairman: Raymond Whittaker 016974 73687

Secretary: Janet Madden

Treasurer: Mike Jones 016974 73744



'We are all now connected by the Internet, like neurons in a giant brain.'
Stephen Hawking

It is still a constant surprise to me how the Internet and emails have shrunk our world and made connections that in the past would simply have never been found.

While the three articles in Pinecone 26 may appear at first sight to be rather random and unrelated they have all come about because of enquiries or approaches from persons outside our circle of Friends.

Firstly an email from Italy with a fascinating link with the Losh portrait by Henri Linssen. Then an email enquiry about the books that are displayed in the apse of St Mary's and an answer from Australia and finally a letter and subsequent email exchange with a former Wreay resident of a most curious house.

In the mid 19th century Sarah kept a substantial library, subscribed to learned periodicals, discussed and debated with the great thinkers of her time and travelled far to further her education. What would she have made of the Internet? What wealth of information is available to us now at a click of a mouse or a tap on a keyboard. How easy it is to communicate, learn and share with others regardless of location.

This year instead of the September Friends Day we are celebrating Wreay School with a three day exhibition on 16th-18th June and a concert/talk at 2pm on Saturday 17th June in St Mary's. Do drop in to see the exhibition in the Village Hall where drinks and snacks will be available or come along to the concert.

We continue to welcome contributions to the Pinecone, just email me on raymondwhittaker53@gmail.com, after all we are indeed *'all now connected'*.

Raymond Whittaker, Chairman and Editor

THE LOSH PORTRAIT - ANOTHER CHAPTER by Silvo Tasso

Early last December an email landed in my inbox from a Silvo Tasso entitled 'Painting Sarah Losh'. Another chapter in the story of our Losh portrait was to open. Silvo wrote *'sorry for my English, but I do not speak English very well.'* That is not the case as I have amended very little of his text. He wrote,

'I'm 53 years old and I live in Italy, in the north of Italy, near the town of Bergamo, 35 miles from Milan, more or less, although I was born near Venice. My family has had a painting for 5 years and so I've done some research on this obscure (for me) painter. In the same way I've found your newsletter sailing through the web digitising the word "Henri Linssen". Reading the Pinecone newsletter (number 21 & 24) I've found an interesting article on a painting probably painted by a Dutch painter called Hendrik (Henri) Linssen (1805-1869), a painter born in Roermond and who lived part of his life in Paris.'

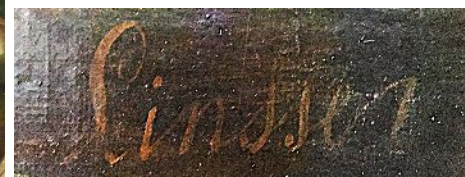
'Well, my family has at present a painting (oil on wood) by Henri Linssen, a landscape dated 1835. I've enclosed some photos of this painting. Behind the painting is the signature of the artist and the title of the work: "Linssen Ruremonde 1835". As you can observe the signature is the same as the signature present in the portrait of Sarah Losh.'

Silvo is quite correct when he says that the signature on his landscape and our portrait is one and the same – further confirmation that it was indeed executed by Henri Linssen. Silvo continued,

The Tasso Landscape



*Linssen signatures Above: Tasso Landscape
Below: Losh Portrait*



'I've done some research on the web on this painter and I've found also a document written in Dutch where you can observe the portrait of the painter H. Linssen conserved in the Haags Historisch Museum in Holland, together with portraits of other Dutch artists of the XIX century. The artist is the first man on the left in the second line, with blonde hair. The portrait has been done in Paris during the years 1835-1837.'



2nd Series of Portraits by Van den Berg C H Linssen

The article that Silvo had found is entitled 'The Gallery of the Rotterdam Artists' by Wilma van Giersbergen. It concerns 45 portraits divided into three series painted between 1834 and 1845 by the Rotterdam painter Jacobus Everhardus Josephus van den Berg. The portraits each measure approximately 15x12 cms and were painted in a number of locations, Rotterdam, The Hague, Palermo, Messina, and Paris and were only brought together at a later date after Van den Berg's death. Giersbergen writes,

'Because the 45 portrayed are not only painters, but also architects, musicians, composers, men of letters and sculptors, the suspicion arises that the persons recorded by Van den Berg belonged to his friends, associates, colleagues and pupils, whom he met during his artistic life and with whom he worked or whom he taught. Because the paintings are about the same size it is possible that he wanted to use them as an 'album' as a reminder of his encounters.'

Van den Berg was in Paris between 1835 and 1837 at the same time as Henri Linssen was practising and submitting work to the Paris Salons and, we suspect, painting the Losh portrait.

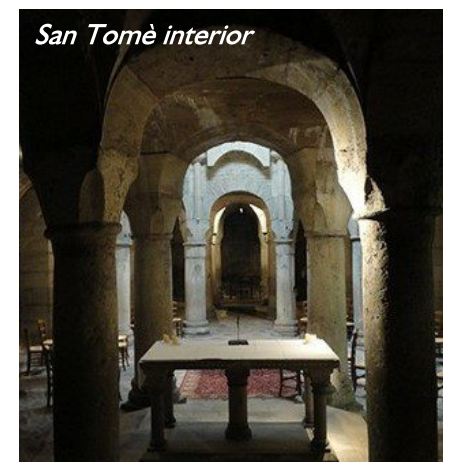
My thanks go to Silvo Tasso for his fascinating and revealing research and we now know what Henri Linssen, the artist of our Losh portrait, looked like. Silvo concluded his communication as follows,

'Through the web I could observe your beautiful church and it is a little jewel. Near my home exists a church, a romantic church called San Tomè (dedicated to Saint Thomas) of XI century. I send you some images of it. Observing the photos of your church I've noted above all in the internal part that it's very similar to the Lombard style of St. Tomè Church with the columns. It is possible that our church of San Tomè has been visited in the past by John Ruskin during his travels in Italy though I am not sure of this.'

The Rotonda di San Tomè (Rotunda of St. Thomas) is a church in the province of Bergamo, Lombardy, Northern Italy. It has a circular plan and is in the Lombard-Romanesque style, dating from the early 12th century, and dedicated to St. Thomas the Apostle. One of the most notable examples of Romanesque architecture in northern Italy, the interior has eight columns in a circle creating two concentric spaces. The wall enclosing them has niches marked by semi-columns with elegant capitals. To the rear of the Rotonda are the rectangular presbytery and semi-circular apse. The whole structure is lit by slit and small arched windows. Looking at the photos of San Tomè one cannot help but wonder if Sarah Losh visited as part of her continental Grand Tour in 1817 – she was certainly in the area and was greatly influenced by this style of Lombardic architecture.

I leave the last words to Silvo,

'Perhaps destiny has wanted that these two jewels have been connected in this moment!'



BOOKBINDINGS by Helen McPherson and Barry McKay

Following a recent visit to St Mary's, Barry McKay emailed -

'My researches into the history of the book trades in Cumbria in past times has included the accumulation of a deal of information of bookbindings in the county, or executed by Cumbrian bookbinders. However, nothing as unusual has come within my ken as the bindings in Wreay Church. They were on open display when I visited the church a while ago and immediately excited my interest. Is anything known about their history? For instance: when they were acquired and who executed the bindings?'

I could not even attempt to respond to Barry's questions but fortunately a fellow Friends Committee member, Richard Dixon, has a friend in Australia, Helen McPherson, who is a conservation book binder and has been working on an original King James Bible at Melbourne State Library, Victoria. She had recently visited St Mary's and Richard subsequently sent her photographs of the books. Helen's response is as follows -

'The volumes, detailed below, were probably originally bound in leather, maybe Morocco goat, and appear to have subsequently been rebound, perhaps some time in the twentieth century.

If the volumes were originally bound in leather, the original boards might have become detached, due to the leather having been paired too thinly at the joints, and eventually breaking; this is a common feature of nineteenth century leather bindings. Normally, a bookbinder or restorer would retain as much of original binding as possible, and if the boards had become detached, would reattach them with a new leather spine piece, a process referred to as an underback or re-back. The original boards on the volumes might have been millboards, made from a mix of ingredients including rope and fibre refuse. This is fairly typical of nineteenth century bindings.

Perhaps the binder who carried out the work, had some woodworking skills and wanted to recreate wooden boards, in the style of earlier centuries where wooden boards were often used on large heavy bindings. Boards of this style were split from a log, wedge-shaped, then worked to the appropriate thickness using a hand adze. Adze marks on the face of the boards were often visible, and the thickness measurements of an individual board did vary, depending on the skill of the worker. Boards made this way had the growth rings of the tree at right angles to the face of the board. (See quarter-sawn note below). Being readily available, boards were often made from oak. By contrast,

the current wooden boards on the volumes appear to be very even and smooth, and were probably produced using woodworking machinery.

The boards on the first three volumes detailed below, have been radially-sawn, with the tree growth rings almost parallel to the face of the board, producing the distinctive grain pattern. The wood might possibly be elm. The boards on the fourth volume have been quarter-sawn, the tree growth rings are at right angles to the face of the board, producing a more stable board which is less prone to warping. Wood identification of these quarter-sawn boards is unknown.

The binder has also gone to some trouble to make shaped wooden spines for the volumes, something not found on earlier wooden board bindings. Raymond Whittaker has suggested that the spine is attached to the boards by a 'rather ingenious ball and socket hinge the full length of the wooden spine.' He also thinks that in some cases, short brass hinges were inserted at a later date. The glossy finish on the boards is possibly a modern polyurethane varnish, unlike earlier wooden boards where the wood was left bare or covered with leather.

The filigree wire 'crown' on The Book of Common Prayer is reminiscent of a wire watermark attached to a mould, used to make handmade paper. The white accretions on and around the wire are probably due to the use of a polishing compound such as 'Brasso' being used on the wire at some stage. I am undertaking further investigation of this 'crown' design. The clasps and corner bosses on The Communion and Other Services volume are possibly silver, and might have been salvaged from another binding. Usually, silver oxidises over time, turning a grey or even black colour. That appears not to have happened here, although it doesn't rule out the possibility that the metal has been polished.

The varied decorated endpapers, reinforced with cloth strips, have been sewn and tipped (glued) onto the textblocks. This normally creates a strong attachment, although in this case, the cloth strips and the sewing thread appear to be the only materials holding the heavy textblocks in the bindings. The paste-downs (outer part of the endpapers) have been attached to the inner faces of the wooden boards. One volume shows a possibly new endpaper not quite covering an earlier endpaper.

The spine on The Book of Common Prayer, 1838 appears to be lined with a cloth, but is not adhered to the inner surface of the shaped wooden spine. The other bindings probably also exhibit this feature.

A closer detailed examination of these bindings might provide further information relating to their provenance.'

Contd.

The Friends of St Mary's Church, Wreay

Memories of Wreay School

Friday 16th - Sunday 18th June , 10am - 4pm, Wreay Village Hall

Exhibition of memorabilia of Wreay School

Saturday 17th June, 2pm, St Mary's Church

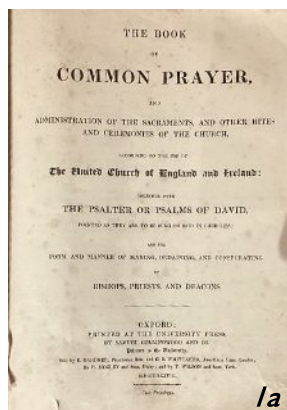
Concert by Wreay School Choir with dramatic interludes



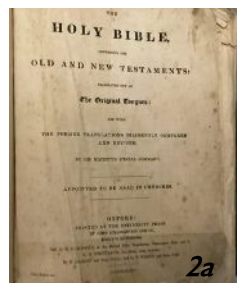
Three day celebration of the history of education in Wreay and its link with St Mary's & Sarah Losh

Refreshments & light lunches available in Wreay Village Hall each day

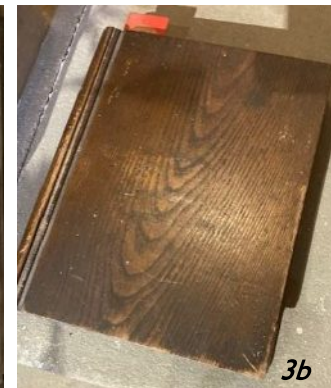
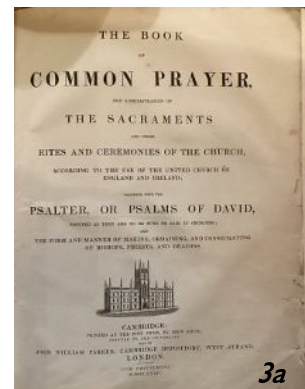
For further information contact raymondwhittaker53@gmail.com or visit www.stmaryswreay.org.uk



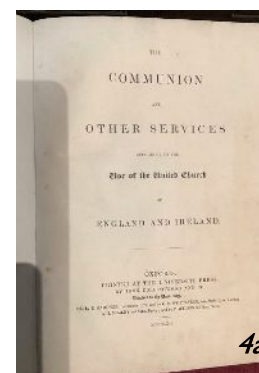
- 1a** The Book of Common Prayer, published 1838
Oxford, Printed at the University Press
- 1b** Wooden boards, possibly elm (?), radial sawn
Shaped wooden spine
Possible ball and socket hinge
Filigree silver (?) wire crown attached to front board adjacent to spine
- 1c** Endpapers, black markings on white paper, possibly made by dropping powdered black pigment onto the surface of damp paper
Endpapers sewn onto textblock, sewing thread visible in green cloth joint
Textblock cased in with paste-downs only, attached to the boards.
Textblock spine appears to be lined with cloth, but cloth is not adhered to the inner surface of the wooden shaped spine



- 2a** The Holy Bible, published 1839
Oxford, Printed at the University Press
- 2b** Wooden boards, possibly elm (?), radial sawn
Shaped wooden spine
Possible ball and socket hinge
- 2c** Endpapers, black nonpareil marbled design, printed endpapers, sewing thread visible in red cloth joint
Textblock cased in with paste-downs only, attached to the boards



- 3a** The Book of Common Prayer, published 1834
Cambridge, Printed at the Pitt Press
- 3b** Wooden boards, possibly elm (?), radial sawn
Shaped wooden spine
Possible ball and socket hinge
- 3c** Endpapers, red/blue nonpareil marbled design, printed endpapers, sewing thread visible in red cloth joint
Textblock cased in with paste-downs only, attached to the boards



- 4a** The Communion and Other Services, published 1841
Oxford, Printed at the University Press
- 4b** Wooden boards, appear to be quarter sawn, species unknown
Shaped wooden spine
Possible ball and socket hinge
Silver (?) clasps and corner bosses
- 4c** Endpapers, red/blue/ochre colour, French Curl marbled design.
Earlier (?) endpaper appears on board underneath
Textblock cased in with paste-downs only, attached to the boards

Helen's notes may still leave questions unanswered but her expert eye has thrown considerable light upon another enigma within St Mary's.

Jenny Uglow in her book, *The Pinecone*, writes -

'Sarah thought of every detail. She had the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer, the psalter and service book bound in polished wood with brass clasps, in the traditional way.'

This is an intriguing theory, that Sarah herself had the books bound in the unusual wood casings. It is worth noting that all the four books predate the completion of St Mary's in 1842 but only just - 1834, 1838, 1839 and 1841 - as if they were bought especially in anticipation of use in the new church.

Sarah was an antiquarian who loved to explore history through 're-creation' for example in her copy of the Bewcastle Cross, the 'rebuilding' of St Piran's Chapel in Cornwall to provide the Chapel of Rest and indeed in the church itself in the style of early Romanesque churches of northern Italy. Did Sarah buy the books and then deliberately remove the leather covers to replace them with wooden boards in order to emulate older practice? The expert eye of Helen throws doubt on this theory.

'The spine on a new book of that time would have been shaped like a semi-circle, this is called 'rounding', it provides support to the sections of the book. In a photo of the 1839 Bible, there is a distinct dip in the centre of the textblock, which has produced two curves. I think that the book was used for some time, possibly left open for long periods and eventually the spine distorted. This is called 'memory', the materials in the book are permanently distorted, and it's difficult to reverse the damage. This distorted spine has remained when the volume was rebound. This makes me suspect that Sarah did not purchase the books and then get them rebound straight away.'

I have to admit that I had just taken the books for granted as part of the church furniture but Barry's enquiry and Helen's report made me take a closer look at them and I was particularly interested to find handwritten notes and amendments. On the back page of the 1838 Book of Common Prayer is a column of numbers, written in pencil, recording the attendance at services. It commences on 4th December 1842, the first Sunday the new church was open, with 136 present but by the following Sunday only 19 attended - curiosity had been satisfied! In the 1834 Book of Common Prayer a prayer has been amended in black ink - the words *Sovereign Lord King WILLIAM* have been crossed out and *Queen Victoria* written in the border. And now we pray for Charles.

MEMORIES OF THE KEEP

by Hugh Ruding-Bryan

In November 2022 the church treasurer received a letter from Hugh Ruding-Bryan together with a donation for the maintenance of his brother's grave in Wreay Cemetery. The headstone, which stands close to the entrance, is of grey polished marble and reads 'CADET JUSTUS MICHAEL RUDING BRYAN DIED 1 MAY 1946 AGED 16 YEARS'. Hugh's letter went on to say that his brother had just joined the Royal Navy when he caught meningitis and died quite suddenly as there was no cure in those days.

Apparently Hugh and his brother had lived in The Keep near Woodside with their father, Lt Colonel Phillip Ruding-Bryan and mother, Kim, from about 1936 to the 1950's. Hugh describes it as '*a strange little house built by my father, single storey with battlements round a flat roof.*' The Keep had always intrigued me as it was such a curious, individual building. I had understood from local knowledge that it had been an experimental structure built of bricks from the John Laing Esk Brickworks at Brisco and so I went back to Hugh for more information. His email which follows proved that this was not the case and gives interesting insights into life in The Keep in the first half of the 20th Century.

'I think it was about 1936/7 that my father worked for the Lonsdale Brick and Tile works in Cumberland. He decided to buy a large wedge shape piece of land (about one and half acres) and build his own house with all the bricks he "acquired" from his works. His design was scribbled out on a piece of paper and



The Keep

he employed a local builder to help construct "The Keep", a strange flat roof building with battlements all round. The interior cladding was oak panels and old beams he bought from a ship's salvage scrap yard somewhere on the Clyde (sorry can't remember the name of the ship). He also installed a coke-fired boiler in the kitchen which heated the water for the bathroom.

I spent many happy years there during the war years keeping chickens and growing our own veg. Next door was the old manor house which the Carrs of Carlisle (biscuit factory) lived in I think it was Jeffery Carr and his wife Angela. The daughter of the MD was Didy Carr who became a lifelong friend of my mother.

Across the fields and over the railway footbridge was Kingstown Farm where I spent most days with the son Gascoigne driving their Fordson Major Tractor. During harvest time it took both of us to manage to drive this huge machine pulling a 5 ton trailer down the road to collect the hay or stooks of corn. We were both about 7 years old. Can you imagine allowing your son to drive this on the roads today pulling a 4 wheeled trailer loaded with about 8 tons?

Anyway, because of rationing my mother obtained lots of biscuits from the Carrs family and the odd leg of lamb or ribs of pork from the farm and fresh milk from their dairy.

My dear mother was very popular because she played piano and owned a grand piano. Most weekends I remember there were some wild parties with all the RAF officers from Kingstown Airport in Carlisle. I think she fell in love



Hugh & Justus



Hugh revisits their carved initials

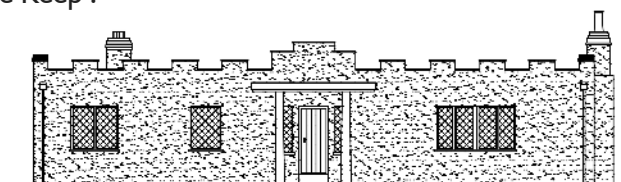
with one of the Squadron Leaders (Sqn Ldr Lines) and would often call him and ask him to bring home some food. A few minutes later a Tiger Moth would appear over our house, flying at about 100 feet above the house and the pilot would drop a bag into our garden which contained a loaf of bread, a tin of peaches, some chocolates for me and bones for the dog! Once he landed on the field next to us but was told not to do it again because he had frightened all the cows.

I also have a letter from the post master in Carlisle dated 1943 telling her to control the pet deer we kept in the garden because it had twice knocked the postman off his bike!

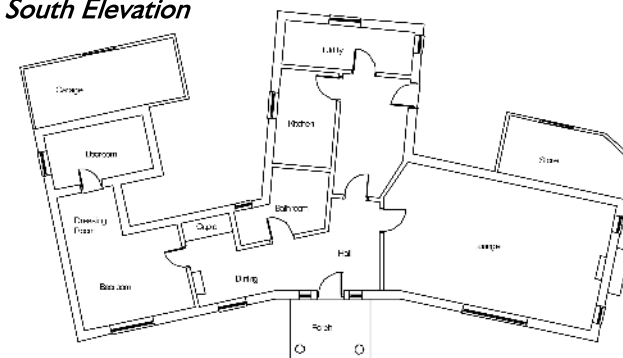
I played with all the Watson Boys at the Crossroads, where they had a carpentry shop which made huge carts for the work horses, and the two Lowe boys from the garden centre near Wreay.

I went to the local school in Wreay where I learned to write and read but not much else. It must have been good training because later in life I ended up owning two VW and Audi Dealerships - Walton Lodge and Wheelbase Garage - for 40 years and employing 30 people.'

Hugh and his brother left their mark on a tree in the grounds by carving their initials which can still be seen today. In the 1950s the family moved to Kent. In 2014 planning permission was granted for the demolition of the brick building and its replacement with a new two storey house which still retains the original name of 'The Keep'.



South Elevation



Plan

By permission of JPR Building Design