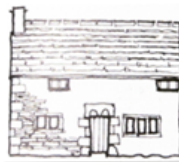


The excerpt below is a small section of a report into a recent commission focusing on a property located near Rydal in the Lake District. Close examination of the architectural features revealed it to be an original seventeenth century cottage which had been substantially remodelled in the nineteenth century. Archive sources showed it to have Wordsworth connections: the house was originally occupied by William Wordsworth's secretary, John Carter, and later by William's daughter Dora and her husband Edward Quillinan.



A statesman's cottage

Most of the original exterior features at Low Cockstone were updated during the Victorian alterations. This sketch shows what the cottage might have looked like originally. The rough cast rendered walls had large quoins at the corners. The windows were set in stone surrounds and divided with stone or wooden mullions. The chimney was round in keeping with Lakeland tradition. The front door was a simple plank design set in a stone surround. There may have been a single storey porch.



Low Cockstone was built to a fairly typical two-unit plan. At the heart of the house was the living room, sometimes known as forehouse or the kitchen. This room contained the only hearth and was the place where all the general domestic tasks were conducted.

The fireplace was set against the gable wall and above it was a hooded chimney usually made of studs lined with wattle, clay daub and plaster. This rose up to join the stone chimney stack and formed a funnel-like area where joints of meat were hung to dry.

Across the mouth of the chimney was a long beam known as the rannel-bauk from which cauldrons and pans could be hung. On the side of the hearth was a partition called the heck behind which was the stone staircase. A long settle stood with its back to the heck.



'On the other side of the chimney was the locker, a little cupboard made in the depth of the wall and used for such treasures as the household possessed. Its door was always adorned by carving or initials and date.'

¹ Armit M.L. Rydal

The floor is said to have been coarsely paved with pebbles which were later replaced with smooth slabs of slate. The room was simply furnished with a long oak table with forms either side, a few chairs and three-legged stools. Opposite the chimney was the bread cupboard where the family's pots and utensils were kept. Either side of the fixture were doorways - one to the pantry, and the other into the bower where the statesman and his wife slept. Probate inventories of the period have given a wonderful insight into the contents of these homes. The bower would have been furnished with a set of bedstocks and bedding, a chest, a cupboard and, if the family could afford luxuries, a looking glass.



The upper floor was reached by a stone staircase lit by a small window. Originally this would have been open to the rafters and divided by rough oak partitions. Here slept the children and servants. The area was also used to store food and other household items.

The seventeenth century roof truss is still visible on the landing at Low Cockstone. This would have been cut from a large oak felled in one of the vast manorial forests which existed centuries ago.

