

### **Brookside Manse, Brookside**

Christine and Neil Roberts came to live here in 1983, originally with our children Paul (who returned to live on Smithy Hill in 2017) and Amy. We were still the occupants in 2022.

As its name suggests, the house was formerly inhabited by a minister of religion. Although the house is directly below the Wesleyan Methodist Church (our garden wall supports the graveyard), it was for many years the home of Primitive Methodist ministers, attached to the former chapel on Hugh Lane. It was bought by the Primitive Methodist Church for £152 in 1874 from a Primitive Methodist minister living in Barrow-in-Furness, though it seems to have been used as a manse before then. In the 1841 and 1861 censuses the house is occupied by Benjamin Somerset, a joiner and later timber merchant. At one time our property, the property that is now Brookside House and Brookside Barn, and the land on which the Methodist church stands, were a single property owned by the Somerset family, who were wheelwrights. There is a headstone for members of the Somerset family at the front of the Methodist church.

After the Education Act of 1870 every community held a meeting to decide whether to have a Board school or to leave elementary education in the hands of the church. This meeting was held in our house, and since there was a Non-conformist majority in the village the decision was for a Board school to be set up (now the junior school).

In 1951, following the unification of the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists, the house was sold by the Methodist Church to Mrs Marian Cowlshaw of St Anne's Cottage Brough for £1150. The conveyance of this sale included the encumbrance 'that the premises... shall not be used for the manufacture distribution sale or supply of intoxicating liquors nor for use as a Public Dance Hall nor for any purpose in connection with the organisation or practice of gambling in any of its forms.' Mrs Cowlshaw died in 1959 and bequeathed the house to T.R. Elliott.

In 1975 the house was bought for £12500 by Dr and Mrs Gordon Young. The Youngs were divorced and we bought the house from Mrs Helen Young in 1983 for £35000. Their daughter Kirsty returned to live in Stretfield till she sadly died in 2021.

The history of the house before the mid-nineteenth century is obscure. There has been a building on this site since at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century. An early map shows a building of completely different shape. The wall dividing the front and back of the house is very thick and might once have been an outside wall—the front of the house is probably less old. Beams in the roof still have bark on them.

There is a small shed, formerly a wc, at the end of the garden. There used to be another shed, formerly a pig shed, which we converted into a conservatory in the 1990s. The bay windows were added in the 1920s.