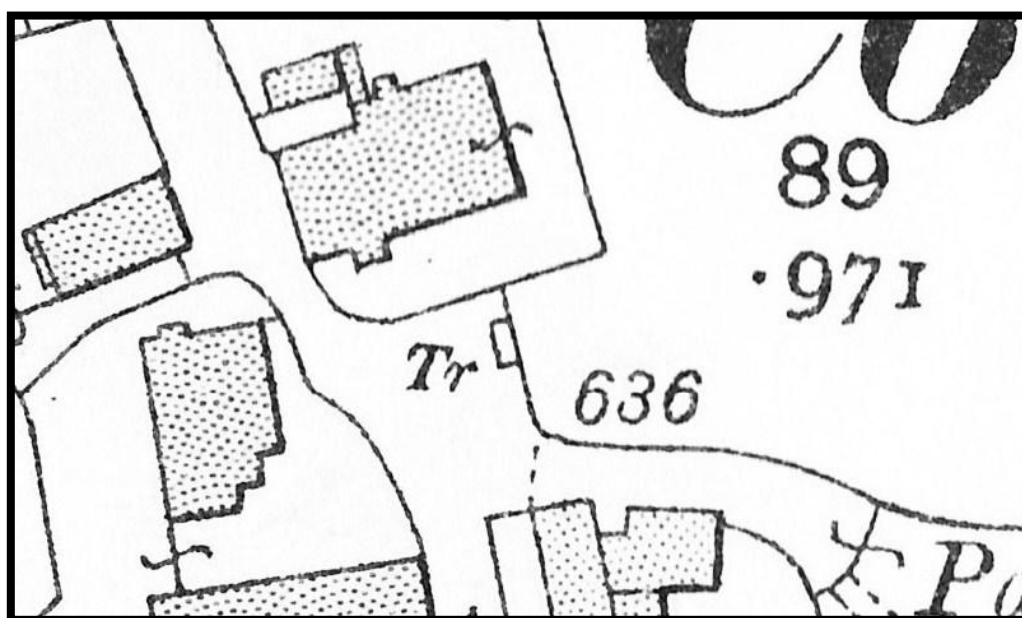


## Conistone Keld History

Very little is written about this village feature. There is no mention of the Keld in any local history books. This is possibly because troughs such as the ones in the Keld would have been commonplace and hardly worth a mention in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Location

**Conistone Keld** is the local name for an area where a spring feeds into three troughs. (*The name "Keld" derives from the Old Norse word Kelda meaning a spring*). It is situated South of Conistone Old Hall, on the eastern side of the road to Grassington. (Grid Ref SD 98178 67357). Three troughs are located beneath a drystone wall to the east. The spring line follows the line of the wall behind the troughs and continues to the north and south.



**Fig.1 The Keld Troughs (marked Tr)**

*This map is taken from an early 20<sup>th</sup> century O S Map. The building to the North of the Keld is Conistone Old Hall. The building to the East is Hemplands Farm. The area between the Keld and the road is open space belonging to the Village.*

It should be noted that on the 1848 Tithe Map, the Keld is clearly shown. Therefore the Keld must have been in place in or before the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

## Photographs

Despite thorough searches, only two photographs showing the Keld area have been found, both from the collection of Wendy Hall. (See Photos 1 & 2). One is a photo of around 1895, showing people standing in front of Conistone Old Hall. The other is a postcard of Conistone Old Hall dated to around 1905. (We hope that other photos may emerge in the future). The two photographs found do help a great deal in the historical research of the Keld.

**Photo 1 Conistone Old Hall c 1895**



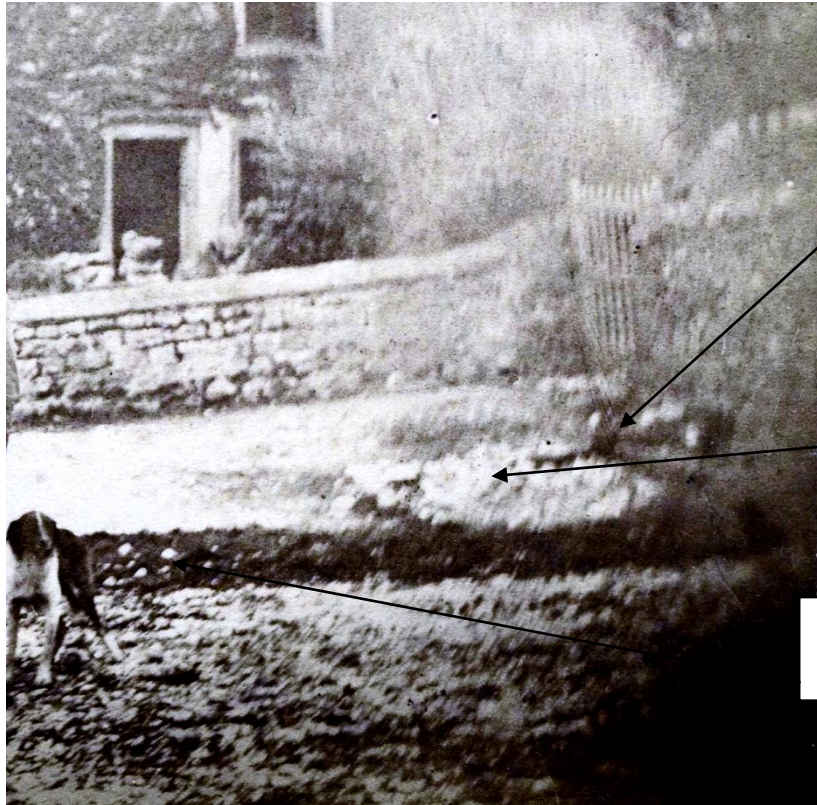
Photo 2 Conistone Old Hall c.1905



### Conclusions from Photographs

The oldest photo (**Photo 1**) dating from around 1895 shows three people posing for a photograph in front of Conistone Old Hall, along with dogs. Careful study of an enlargement (**Photo 3**) shows that digging has taken place across the Keld following an East –West axis. A pile of stones, probably to be used for cobbling, can be seen in front of the northern Trough (number 1). Trough number 1 has objects visible on the top, so the trough had no water in it, but is filled with solid material. This activity is seen as work to repair/renovate the Keld, as this would have to be done periodically to keep the Keld running and clear.

In **Photo 2**, the cobbles are in position, (see the enlargement in **Photo 4**) and can be recognised as the cobbles uncovered in the 2018 project. There seems to be a marked break of slope which leads to the Keld, and there is a level area in front of the Old Hall which probably gave access to the house and the field to the East (left) behind the Keld.

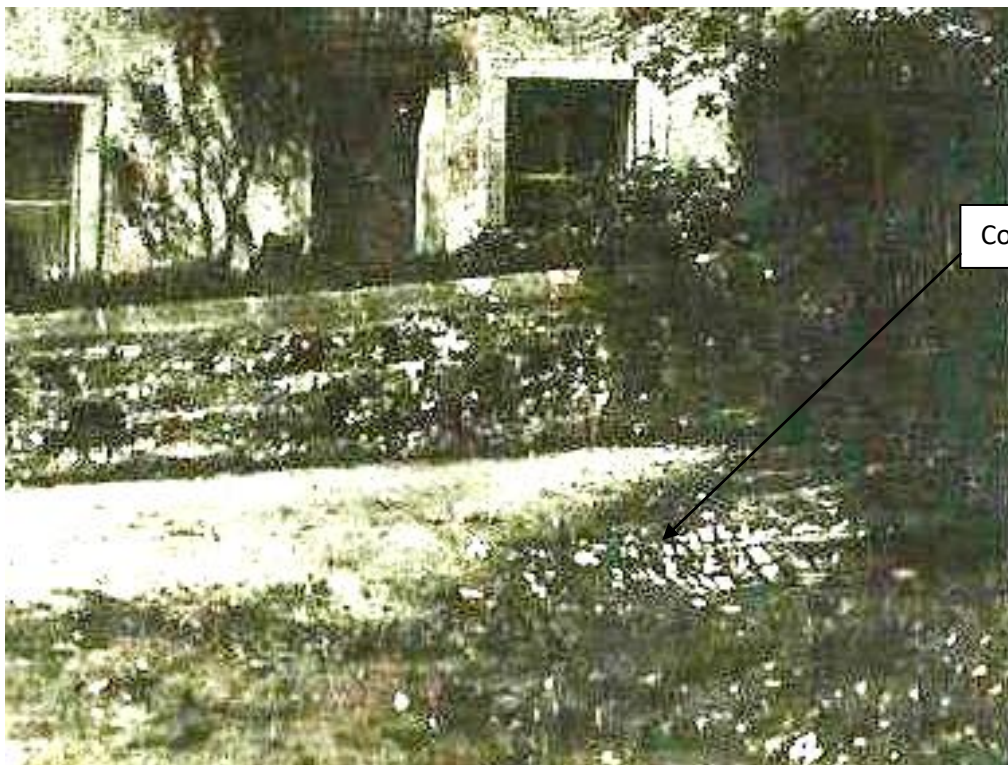


Trough 1- objects on top

Pile of stones for cobbling surface?

Evidence of digging across the Keld

**Photo 3 1895 Photograph close-up**



Cobbles in place

**Photo 4 1905 Photograph Close-up**

## **The Keld in William Hall's farm diaries**

The diaries are in the possession of Graham Hall, and they were generously loaned for study.

References regarding the Keld were found in the diaries of 1929, 1935, 1941 and 1947. William Hall moved to Conistone to take the tenancy of Hemplands Farm in late 1916. Only 9 diaries have survived from this period, 1916, 1921, 1922, 1927, 1929, 1935, 1941, 1944 and 1947. The diaries are clearly written in a confident hand, mostly in pencil. The vast majority of the content is of farming activity and the weather. The Keld is mentioned on eight occasions, and W. Hall uses the spelling of "Kell" rather than "Keld".

### **The entries follow in chronological order.**

*August 4<sup>th</sup> 1929. The Kell water started running again after being stopped for several months.*

*June 12<sup>th</sup> 1935. Heavy showers during the night and most of the day again swelling the river and making the Kell water run a little.*

*July 5<sup>th</sup> 1935. Heavy rain morning, fair afternoon. The Kell water running and a flood in the river.*

*August 29<sup>th</sup> 1941. The Kell began to run today.*

*June 4<sup>th</sup> 1944. Rain at night and most of the day. The river full all day and the Kell running.*

*June 22<sup>nd</sup> 1944. The Kell dried up.*

*Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> 1947. The Kell dried up so had to water the home shippon cows in the river.*

*March 16<sup>th</sup> 1947. The Kell water started running again.*

*June 15<sup>th</sup> 1947. Heavy rain this weekend made the river almost bankful and the Kell ran for a few days.*

### **Conclusions from diary entries.**

Only two entries are from the winter months, and they refer to the terrible winter of 1947. It tells us that the Keld did not run between February 23<sup>rd</sup> and March 16<sup>th</sup>. This lack of flow must have created extra work because the cows in the home shippon (at Hemplands Farm) had to be taken down to the river to drink. There are no other winter entries regarding the Keld, so it can be assumed that the Keld runs consistently in the winter months, and only an exceptionally cold winter such as in 1947 stopped the flow. The diary reveals that the Keld flow was important for watering the cows kept in the home shippon during the winter months.

The other six entries all refer to the Keld running intermittently during the summer months of June, July and August. Clearly, the Keld did not provide a consistent flow all year round, and the diarist thought it significant when the flow stopped or re-started. It is interesting to note that the Keld

stopped running at the beginning of May this year (2018) and it did not run until July 29<sup>th</sup> after two days of heavy rainfall. The Keld ran for 24 hours and then dried up again

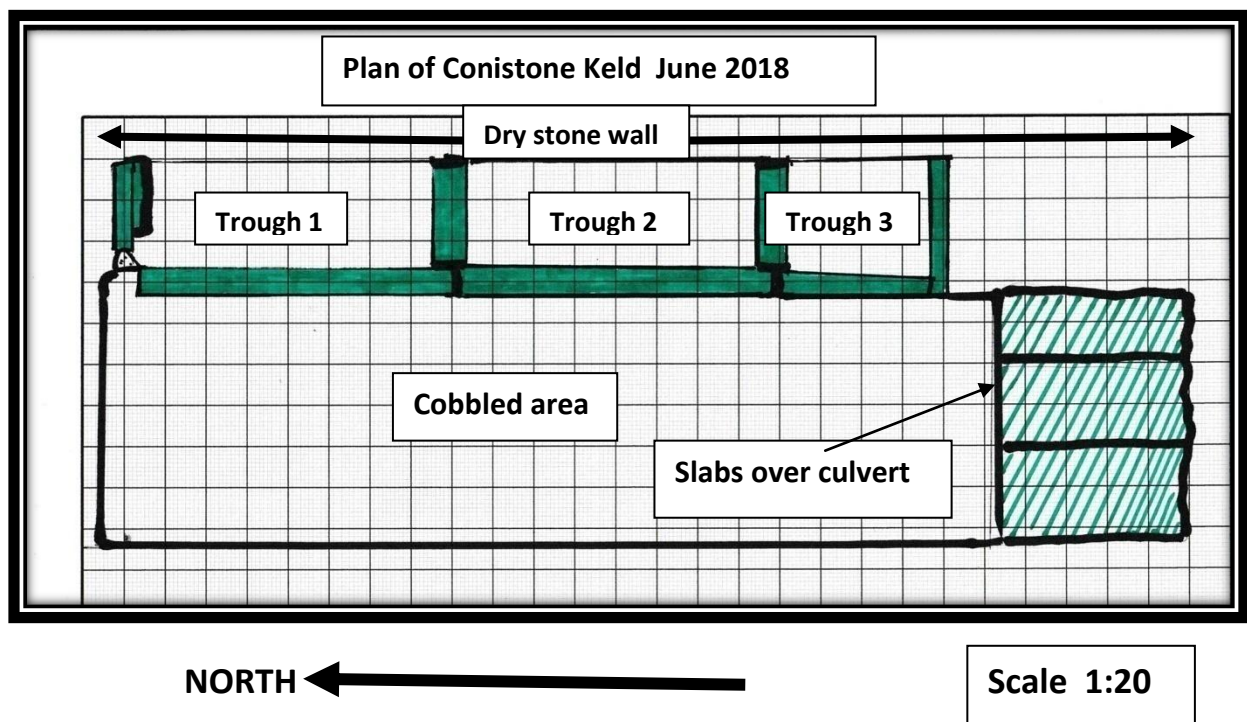
## Oral History

There are a number of pieces of local oral history which have been passed down Conistone families.

1. Thelma Hall, the farmer's wife who lived at Hemplands Farm, used to wash Wharfedale Rugby Club's shirts in the troughs after the weekend games. The probable date for this would be in the 1950's.
2. In the harsh winter of 1947, animals were brought down to the Keld because the water kept running into the troughs. This seems wrong following study of the 1947 diary entries.
3. Wendy Hall remembers being able to walk down a slope from the roadside in the 1970's and washing wellington boot mud off in the Keld.
4. The present tenant of Hemplands Farm, tells of advice given that when the Keld stops running in summer, then it is a good time to make Hay, the obvious inference being that the Keld dries up in dry conditions.
5. James Whitaker remembers getting water in a bucket from a shallow trough 1 and 2 in the 1980's.

## Evidence from the 2018 Restoration Project

When the project started in February 2018, the Keld was almost lost to view because of the encroachment of vegetation. As the overgrown area was cleared, three troughs were revealed and were numbered 1, 2 and 3



The troughs have been constructed using sandstone slabs. Four shorter slabs are laid on an east - west axis, and three longer sandstone slabs are on a north-south axis. Trough 3 seems to be shorter and truncated. Trough 2 was the only trough with a steady flow of water running out of the South west corner. Both the other troughs were choked with sediment and vegetation.

**Trough 1** was almost completely full of sediment when the vegetation was cleared away. This sediment was carefully removed using trowel and bucket. The sediment was removed until a clay layer was revealed at a depth of 49cm from the trough top. This clay layer marks the bottom of the trough, and spring water could be clearly seen rising from the north east corner, at the base of the drystone wall.



**Photo 5 Trough 1 before removal of sediment.**

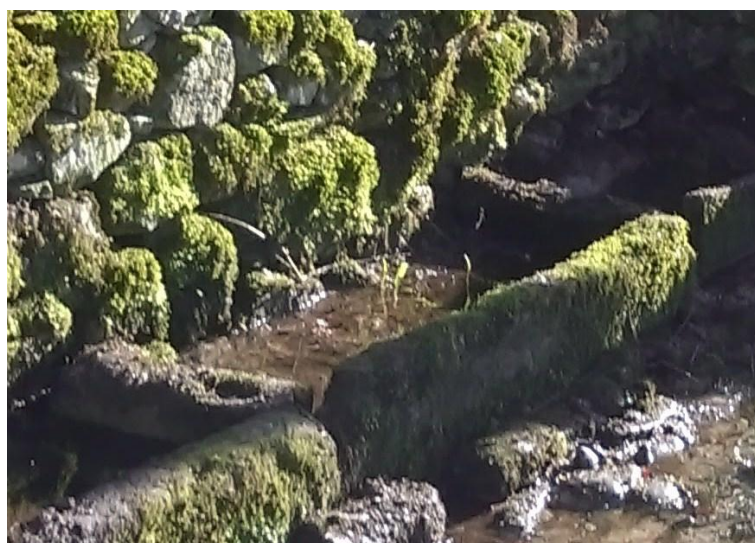
*The spring source can be seen in the cavity in the drystone wall. There is no water in the trough. Note that no cobbling can be seen in the foreground due to debris and vegetation. This was revealed later.*



**Photo 6 Trough 1 after clearance.**

*Spring water can be seen rising from the recess at the back of the trough. The sediment which was removed revealed a quantity of shards of 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery. Animal bone fragments and some glass was also present. At the lowest level in the trough the oldest material was 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery. This evidence tells us that sedimentation/infill in the troughs must have started during the 1800's. There was a high proportion of broken earthenware plant pot material.*

**Trough 2** was almost full of sediment, but did have a shallow pool of surface water which emptied via a gap between trough 2 and 3



**Photo 7 Trough 2 during clearance**

The archaeological material recovered was of the same period as trough 1. Again this indicates that sedimentation/ infill seems to have begun in the 1800's. The southern end of



the long sandstone slab is damaged with a triangular piece broken off. This could have been done deliberately to aid flow of water out of the trough. (See Photo 8). The clay layer at the bottom of the trough was 44cm from the top.

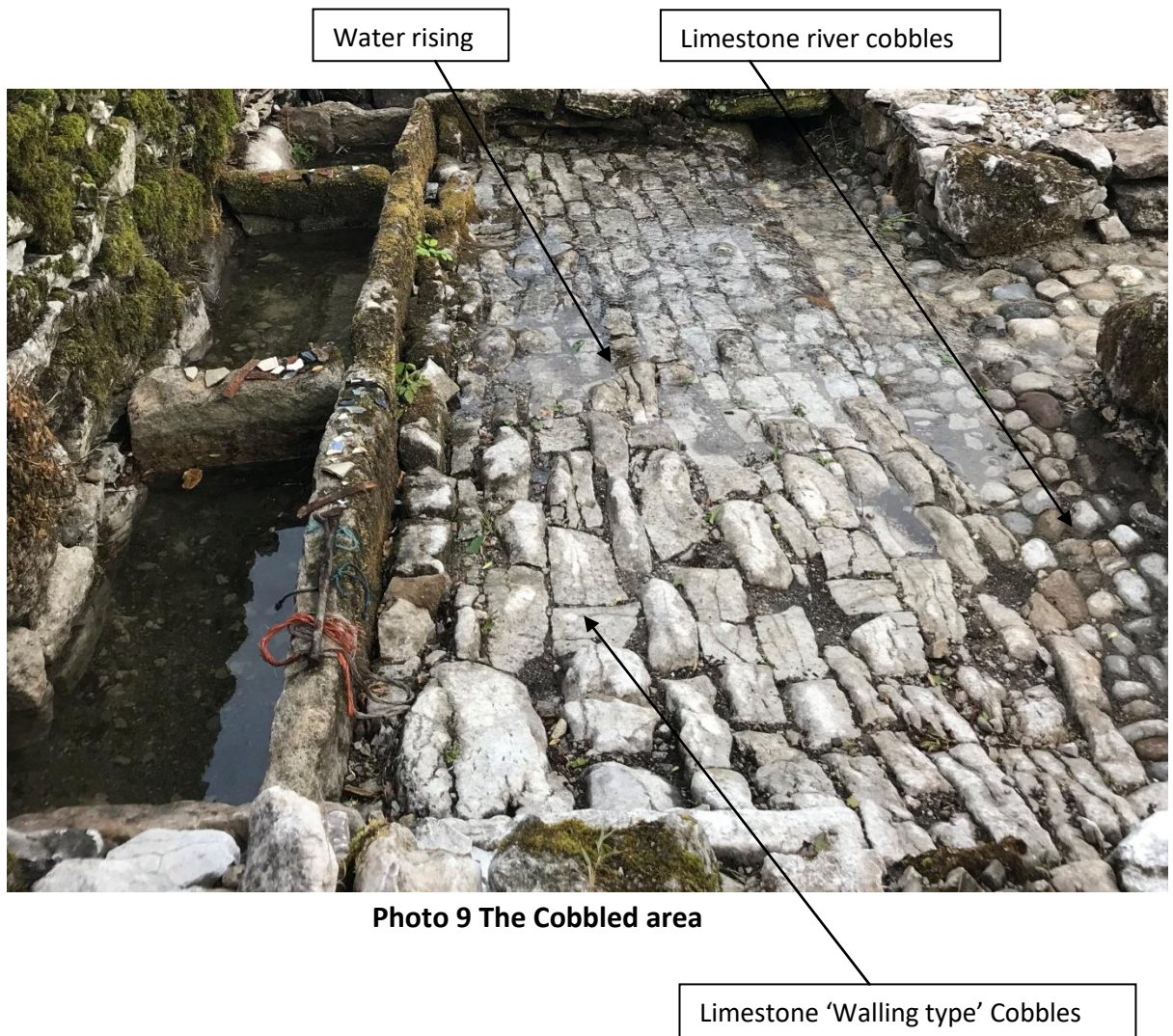
**Trough 3** is shorter than the other two troughs. Clearance revealed that the infill was of limestone stones of various sizes, with little evidence of sedimentation. This suggests that the trough was filled in deliberately at some period in the past. There was a small number of pottery fragments present (19<sup>th</sup> Century) . The sandstone section at the southern end of the trough is probably a broken piece of the original front sandstone slab. Wall collapse may have broken the front slab and the broken section moved to the side to form a shorter, truncated trough. The bottom of this trough was 38cm deep.



**Photo 8 Trough 3**

**The Cobbled Area** is the area immediately to the west of the troughs. The area was carefully cleared and the full extent of the cobbling was exposed. The cobbles nearest to the troughs are limestone similar in size to walling stones, but laid on edge. The cobbling around the periphery are limestone river cobbles. The cobbles must have been laid to keep mud/dirt from getting into the trough area when animals used them.

Water issues from an area where cobbling has been removed. Could this have been the result of the troughs being blocked and the water table has been tapped to access water more easily?



### **The Culvert covered by large Limestone Slabs**

As clearance progressed, a culvert was revealed, covered by large limestone slabs. (Photo 10). This must have carried the water in a westerly direction to Hemplands Farm. Interestingly, there is another drainage culvert in the village, running from the lower village green in a westerly direction. The construction is identical to the one at the Keld, and could have been built at the same time. When trough 3 was filled in, the water could not exit the Keld through the culvert. The water was diverted away from Trough 2, across the cobbled area in a westerly direction and then on towards Hemplands Farm.



**Photo 10 The large limestone slabs to the south are uncovered.**

The large slabs cover a culvert which at one time took the Keld water under the road to Hemplands Farm.

The limestone slabs would have been used to prevent contamination of the water running through to Hemplands Farm. It would prevent debris from the adjoining areas from entering the flow. The slabs seem to be contemporary with the troughs when they were first constructed.

## **Conclusions**

The troughs at Conistone Keld were in position in the early 1800's. This can be ascertained due to the infill of 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery which was found in the deposition material inside each trough. It is probable that the troughs date from before this period.

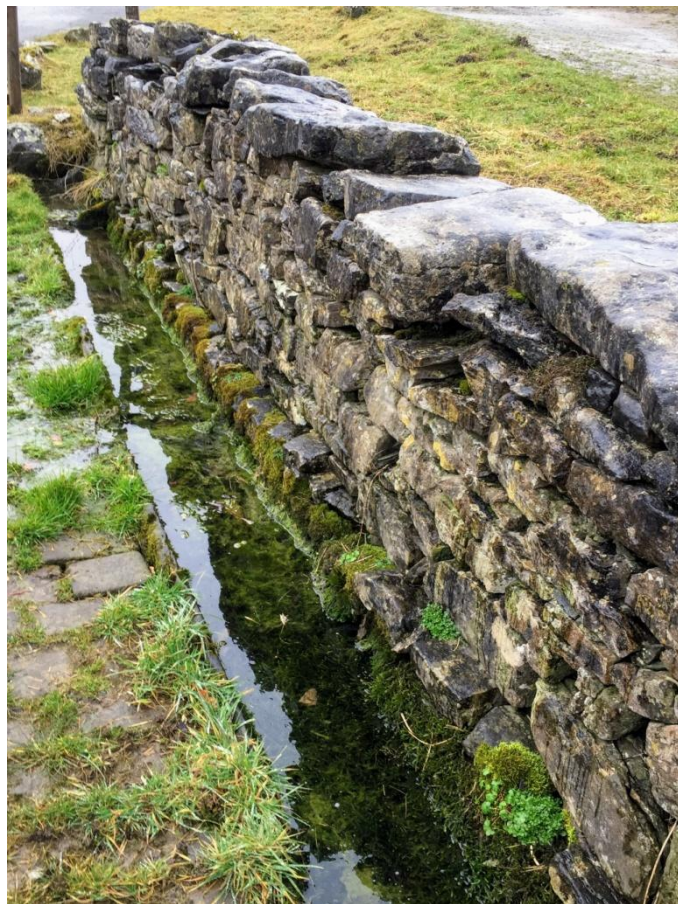
The construction techniques, using long sections of stone, traversed by shorter cross sections of stone, are to be found in other areas of the Yorkshire Dales. The troughs at Appletreewick are identical in construction. Could it be the case that the troughs at Conistone were constructed by the same builders? (see Photo 11)

The trough at Feizor, North Yorkshire is shown in Photo 12. This trough is also built using the same techniques:-

Back Wall, Spring –fed troughs, long stone slabs traversed by shorter cross section stone slabs, with an outflow at one end of the troughs.



**Photo 11 Troughs at Hall Well, Appletreewick**



**Photo 12 Troughs at Feizor**

During this project, it soon became obvious that there is little written evidence about this type of water source. Holy wells are found in various locations within the Yorkshire Dales, and they do provide some historical information, but overall there is scant written evidence re -the history of these once common and essential village water sources. Little is to be found on construction techniques and materials. Research should be done to find out more about these important features of our heritage.

**Note**

All finds from the excavation of the troughs can be viewed by contacting Conistone-with-Kilnsey Village Meeting.