

Heritage Statement

14 St George's Terrace, Millom, Cumbria



January 2018

Heritage Statement

14 St George's Terrace, Millom, Cumbria, LA18 4DB

for

The Norman Nicholson Society

by

Marion Barter Associates

January 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report was commissioned by Mike Darwell of John Coward Architects on behalf of the Norman Nicholson Society, in 2017. The building was the home of the poet Norman Nicholson from 1914 until his death in 1987, and has recently come onto the market. The Society was awarded a grant under the HLF's Resilience Heritage programme, to explore the potential for acquiring the property and developing a community heritage project. This report is part of this initial options appraisal; it summarises the historical background to the building and its association with Norman Nicholson and assesses the heritage significance and value of the building as a heritage asset. The assessment will be used to inform discussions about the future of the building and the potential of the project.

This report was informed by research using material collected by the Norman Nicholson Society, in the collection at the Millom Discovery Centre, with assistance from Barrow Archives, using published sources such as Nicholson's autobiography *Wednesday Early Closing* (1975) and Kathleen Jones' biography *Norman Nicholson, The Whispering Poet* (2013), and online. A visit to Millom and the building was made in October 2017. The report was written by Marion Barter BA MA IHBC.

Millom did not exist before the 1860s; it grew rapidly after an iron mine was established near Hodbarrow Point in the early 1860s. This successful venture was soon followed by blast furnaces (1867), a brickworks, a new pier, railway sidings and branch lines. A new town was developed with a grid pattern of streets, inaugurated in 1866; Millom took its name from the castle and rural parish. St George's Road and Market Square were laid out in 1876, and St George's Terrace was built around 1880, to connect the western centre to the rest of the town. In late 19th century, the terraced houses on St George's Terraces were gradually converted to shops with living accommodation above and to the rear. The shop at No.14 was a gents' outfitters until the 1950s.

Norman Nicholson was born at No.14 St George's Terrace in 1914 and apart from a few short spells, lived his whole life at this address. This was where he wrote his best-known books of poetry and prose, such as *Five Rivers*, *The Pot Geranium*, *the Lakers*, *Provincial Pleasures* and *Wednesday Early Closing*. After Nicholson died in 1987, the property was sold and the ground floor is now used as a cafe.

No. 14 St George's Terrace is not a listed building but it is in Millom conservation area; the building can be considered as an undesignated heritage asset of regional significance, primarily for its association with Norman Nicholson. The house has high significance for literary and historical significance but its aesthetic and architectural significance is at a medium level, although this value could be enhanced by repair and restoration. Evidential value is low; the building and site has no archaeological potential, although there may be scope for more to be discovered about the interior through paint research.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Marion Barter was commissioned in 2017 to provide a heritage statement for the building, No.14 St George's Terrace, by Mike Darwell of John Coward Architects on behalf of the Norman Nicholson Society.

The statement has been written to inform discussions about the future of the building and the potential for a community heritage project; this is being explored with the assistance of a grant from the HLF's Resilient Heritage programme. The building is currently in private ownership, but the potential for the Norman Nicholson Society to acquire the building is under discussion. Norman Nicholson, the Cumbrian poet and writer, lived at the property from 1914 until his death in 1987.

The postal address is 14 St George's Terrace, Millom, Cumbria, LA18 4DB. The grid reference is SD 1732 8007. The property is currently used as a café, with storage on the upper floor.

Millom serves as a market town for the surrounding villages and rural area of south Copeland. St George's Terrace is within the Millom town centre boundary identified by Copeland Borough Council, the local authority. The former Hodbarrow ironworks site on the east edge of the town, cleared since closure in the 1960s, is now a SSSI, a nature conservation designation. Millom is just outside the Lake District, which became a World Heritage Site in 2017, situated in south-west Cumbria (Cumberland until 1974); the fine coastal scenery, the Hodbarrow SSSI and the town's distinctive character give Millom the potential for tourism.

1.2 Acknowledgments

The report was written by Marion Barter, BA MA IHBC, informed by a site visit in October 2017 and research into the building, its associations with Norman Nicholson and the cultural context. The author is grateful to Charlie Lambert, Marshall Mossop and the Norman Nicholson Society for sharing their research, to Susan Benson for assistance with research at Barrow Archives, to Mark Brennand at Cumbria County Council for checking the Historic Environment Record, and to the volunteers at Millom Discovery Centre.

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2. HISTORY & CONTEXT

2.1 Summary history of Millom

Millom Discovery Centre holds a collection of artefacts and visual material that, with interpretation, provides a vivid introduction to the history of the town and the iron works. There are scholarly articles on Millom's history in the journals of the *Cumberland and Westmorland Archaeological and Antiquarian Society* and other published sources. Television and radio broadcasts also provide a background into Millom's recent history. The following provides a short summary of the town's history.

Millom did not exist before the 1860s; the previous settlement consisted of a linear farming village at Holborn Hill to the north-west of the present town centre, and the medieval buildings of Holy Trinity church and Millom Castle about a half a mile to the north-east of Holborn Hill. Transport improved with the opening of the railway line and a station in 1850, part of the Whitehaven and Furness Railway, and a brick and tile works was established north of the station around the same time. The first edition OS map of 1860 shows Holborn Hill with the new railway line running diagonally to the south (Fig.1). The area now occupied by St George's Terrace was previously a field on the south-west side of the old lane past Lapstone Lodge; the Historic Environment Record (HER) for Cumbria holds no records relating to previous archaeology on this site. The back lane of St George's Terrace seems to be on the line of an old field boundary running from north-east to south-west, shown on the map below.



Fig.1: The area before Millom was developed: red dot marks approximate location of 14 St George's Terrace. (1860 6 inch OS sheet XC, Cumbria Archives)

The impetus for the creation of Millom was the haematite iron mine established near Hodbarrow Point in the early 1860s, run by the Hodbarrow Mining Company on land owned by the Earls of Lonsdale. Previously there had been some small scale mining, quarrying and lime kilns in the area, with materials

shipped from a small harbour at Borwick Rails, Haverigg creek and Hodbarrow beaches. The success of the iron mines was soon followed by the building of blast furnaces in 1867, a brickworks, a new pier, railway sidings and branch lines. By 1866 the local population had risen by about a 1000, an influx attracted by work in the mines, at the iron works and in building construction. In response, a new town was planned with a grid pattern of streets, based on a plan of 1865 by Wadham and Turner of Barrow (Appendix 1). Millom was inaugurated in 1866, taking its name from the castle and rural parish.



Fig.2: detail from mid 20th century relief OS map in Millom Discovery Centre showing the town with the iron works to the west and the iron mine to the south

The original plan envisaged a model town with uniform houses on wide streets supplied with drains and main sewers, but a more piecemeal approach took place in the 1860s when building plots were quickly sold off for speculative development; the standards anticipated by Wadham and Turner were not followed. This unregulated development caused overcrowding and diseases such as typhus and smallpox, due to a lack of sanitation, drainage and mains water (Harris, p460). The iron companies subsequently built houses to higher standards at Haverigg (Concrete Square, 1872-75), Steel Green (1874-1881) and Oxford and Surrey Streets (1885-89). They also helped fund St George's Church (1874-77), built to designs by Paley and Austin on a low hill to the west of the new town; the 5 acre site was given by the Earl of Lonsdale (Brandwood p228).

In 1875, St George's Road was built to connect the new town to Holborn Hill to the north via a new railway bridge. This is shown on a plan dated 1875 (Appendix 2). This led to the town centre shifting towards the west side of the new town; Market Square was laid out on the east side of St George's Road in 1876 and the market hall and council offices were built in 1879. The market halls and shops were on the north-east side, with the West County Hotel to the north, shops to the south and two banks on the west side of St George's Road. Millom Market Square was originally going to be at the

bottom of Market Street, before the slag bank produced by the ironworks started to encroach on the area (pers comm Marshall Mossop). St George's Terrace connected the new Market Square and St George's Road to Lapstone Road and the rest of the town, so it was an important street. By the 1880s, housing conditions in the town had improved and a full range of amenities were being built to support the new community: non-conformist chapels and churches, schools, institutes and shops. Until Millom Urban District was established in 1894, the town was run by the iron companies.



Fig.3: Market Square built in the 1870s, from a postcard of c1905 (Marshall Mossop collection)

The grid pattern of the Victorian town in relation to the iron works is shown on the map in Fig.2. The OS map of 1899 (Fig.4) shows the area around St George's Terrace after the area had been built-up. St George's Terrace was laid out and developed with a terrace of houses along the south-east side, in about 1880, with a taller block, originally built for shops at the west end, which face onto the south side of Market Square. The form of the long terrace shows that they were built in one phase, using matching details for the houses (Nos 5-16); the photograph in Figure 5 shows the single sloping eaves line, pairs of gabled dormer windows, the brick elevation and chimney stacks and pots. The houses were designed in pairs, each with a bay window and front doorway to the front elevation, a single sash to the first floor and an arched sash window to the attic dormer. To the rear of the terrace, each house had an outshut with a side door and window facing a rear yard, and at the back of this yard was a small outhouse (for the privy) against the wall with the back alley. This layout was typical of byelaw housing built in the late 19th century (see section 4).

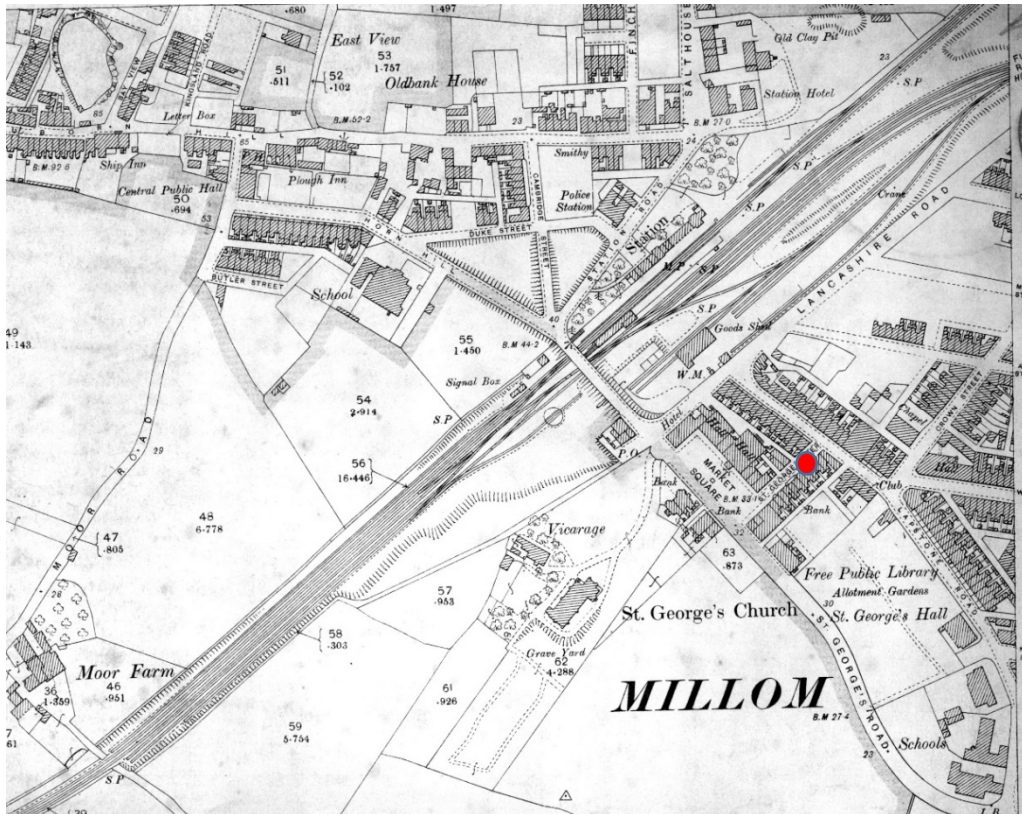


Fig.4: Millom on the OS map 1899, 25 inch sheet XC.2 1 (Cumbria Archives)

Over a period of about twenty five years up to around 1914, the houses were gradually converted to shops, and shopfronts were built over the former front gardens. As this was done in a piecemeal fashion, the shop fronts varied in their design. By the 1911 census most of the buildings had been converted to shops and only a few were still classed as 'private houses' (the census lists these as Nos. 5, 7 and 10, although the 1899 OS map and the photographs show Nos. 6, 9 and 10 still with bay windows and/or front gardens). The street's mix of houses (with walled front gardens and bay windows) and shops is shown on the 1899 map (detail in Fig.6) and in the photograph below. The gradual shift to retail use is recorded by the plans submitted for Building Surveyor's approval in Whitehaven Records Office, such as plans in 1893 for converting No 16 to a shop and house, for Thomas Richards.

2.2 No.14 St George's Terrace

No.14 St George's Terrace is the third property from the bottom of the street on the south side; Nicholson states it was 'number fourteen of sixteen original houses'. The 1899 OS map shows a terrace of 12 matching houses (Nos 5-16), so the other four properties were probably the larger shops at the upper end of the street. The earliest official record of No.14 St George's Terrace is the census for 1881 which lists Joseph Rich, a Mine Agent as resident at the address. At this date the building was in use as a dwelling and had not yet been converted to a shop; Norman Nicholson describes how the house initially had a small walled front garden separating the front of the house from the public footway (WEC p22). As first built each house in the terrace had a ground floor bay window, a 4-pane sash window to the first floor and the attic dormer on the front, the latter with a semi-circular headed window and a timber finial. No.14 would have had a front door to the left of the elevation, leading

into a front lobby, and a bay window to the parlour on the right (as on the houses in Fig.5). No.13 would have been a mirror image of this, with the doorway to the right side of the bay window.



Fig.5: St George's Terrace from the east, c1905, showing Gregson's shop to the left and front garden walls for some remaining houses (postcard, Marshall Mossop collection)

At an unknown date in the early 1890s the house at No.14 was converted into a shop, obliterating the original ground floor elevation and the front garden; by 1894, Kelly's Directory lists Numbers 13 and 14 occupied by Peter Gregson, tailor and outfitter. Gregson and his family were resident in 1901, recorded in the census. Around the same time, the shop and front elevation were photographed (Figure 7). This shows the shop fronts to Nos. 13 and 14, probably inserted by 1894. The front garden is not shown on the OS map for 1899.

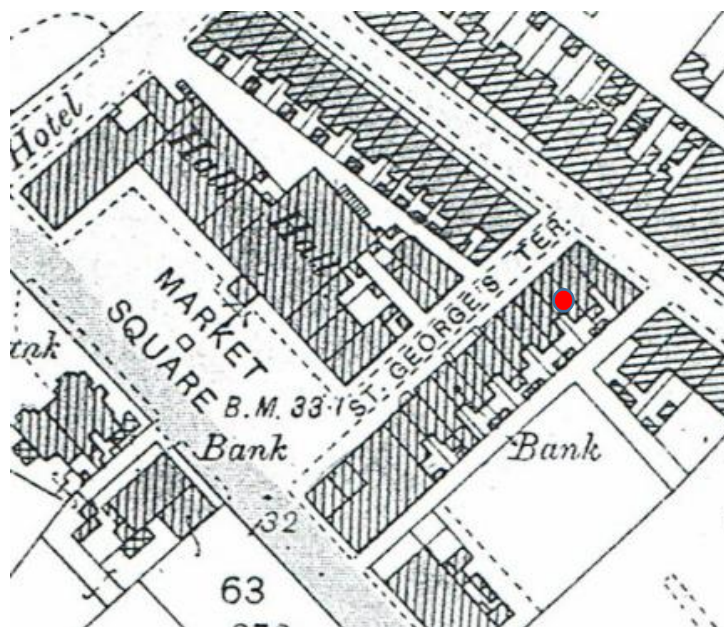


Fig.6: detail from 1899 OS map, showing St George's Terrace (Cumbria Archives)

The alignment of the original front entrance was retained by the position of the recessed shop door, on the left side of the shop front, more or less in the location of the original house door. Nicholson describes how the interior of the house had been altered to create a shop, by 'knocking down the internal wall between the lobby and the front parlour. The old vestibule door had then been set back, almost to the foot of the stairs...' (WEC p22). The front wall of the ground floor was removed to form the shop window, with a beam inserted to carry the brick masonry above.



Fig.7: Numbers 13 (right) and 14 (left) when Gregson's gents' outfitters, c1900 (Marshall Mossop collection).

The timber shop front was built as a single-storey extension projecting towards the footway, with a flat roof. This is clearly shown on the c1900 photograph in Figure 7. The photograph shows a double shop front for Gregsons, with large glazed windows over the low 'stall-riser' (the name of the low wall below the window) with a dentilled cornice to the top of the fascia, just below the gutter. The doorway

to No.14 was separated from the doorway of the adjoining property by a timber pilaster with a moulded capping. Some of these details are still extant (see section 3 below).

The trade directories show that in 1901 the shop at No.14 was probably vacant (there is no directory entry for this address), but in 1906 Gregson was listed at No.13.

The connection of No. 14 to Norman Nicholson began in 1906 when his father moved into the building, to take over the vacant shop previously run as a gents' outfitter's by Peter Gregson. Joseph Nicholson had married Norman's mother Edith Cornthwaite the previous year, 1905, in St George's Church. Joseph had been apprenticed and worked for a tailor, Seth Slater, who had premises on the other side of St George's Terrace (tailors and post office). The newly-wed couple lived 'over the shop' and in the ground floor rooms behind it.

Interestingly, the Kelly's Directory for 1910 lists two occupiers at No.14, J.Nicholson and Fredrick Dixon, the latter listed as a chemist and druggist. Norman Nicholson states that 'one of the previous owner-occupiers had been a chemist who needed extra room for his pharmacy, so he had 'knocked a new door in the wall and enlarged the wash house, by adding a corrugated iron roof and sides and a long horizontal window...' (WEC p23). The sequence of occupiers is not clear, but it seems likely that Dixon used the building or part of it between Gregson moving out and Joseph Nicholson taking over the shop, perhaps continuing to use space there until at least 1910.

The 1911 census records Joseph and Edith (known as Edie) living at No 14, aged 34 and 31 respectively, and poignantly records that they had had one child who had died (Harold was born and died in 1907, Jones, p23). The census gives a little factual information about the building in 1911; it records seven rooms in the dwelling (excluding the scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom, warehouse or shop). The seven habitable rooms would thus have included two living rooms on the ground floor (middle room and back kitchen), three on the first floor (sitting room and two bedrooms) and two attic rooms. Joseph Nicholson's employment status is recorded as 'own account' meaning that he was neither an employer nor working for a trade employer.

2.3 Norman Nicholson at No.14 St George's Terrace: childhood

Norman Cornthwaite Nicholson was born on 8 January 1914, at 14 St George's Terrace, the only child of Joseph and Edith Nicholson. He lived in the house until the end of his life in 1987, apart from when he had TB as a teenager and was treated in a Hampshire sanatorium from 1930 to 1932. He went to school in Millom and as a child attended the Methodist Church, his step-mother's church.

Nicholson records early memories of living at the house in *Wednesday Early Closing*, his 1975 autobiographical book (referred to in abbreviated form as WEC). This vividly describes the early years after his mother's death (WEC pp9-27) and how the household altered when his father married Rosetta (Rose) Sobey in 1922. Nicholson was five when his mother Edith died of Spanish flu in March 1919; for a few years his maternal grandmother, Eliza Cornthwaite, moved into the back bedroom of the house to help look after the boy and his bereaved father. Nicholson vividly describes the layout of the shop and how the domestic rooms were used, furnished and decorated during this time. Joseph Nicholson ran the shop until his death in 1954; afterwards, tenants ran the shop while Nicholson and Rose lived in the rooms above and behind.

2.3.1 Ground floor rooms and shop in Norman's childhood

The shop at the front of the house was lined on 'three sides by a foot-deep lining of shelves' (WEC p33), filled with labelled boxes (WEC p158). Peggy Troll described the shelving and lots of small

drawers (oral history interview with Charlie Lambert, September 2017). The window on the fourth side was built up 'more than half way up to the ceiling' by the back of the window display, so the room was dark, 'lit at night only by hanging gas globes' (WEC p33). On one side of the shop was a 'polished mahogany counter'; it is not clear on which side, but probably on the west or south as the door and window were to the north. A standing mirror hid a 'shelf of a desk', and there was a cane chair. There was no fitting room; if a customer needed to try something on, Joseph Nicholson hung a 'green paper blind over the door' (WEC 157). The room was heated by an oil stove (the original fireplace on the party wall with No.13 would have been removed and blocked to make space for the wall shelving). The shop was not directly connected to the middle room until after Nicholson died in 1987; the main door into the domestic rooms was near the foot of the stairs (this door is in situ).

The middle room was referred to as the dining room (WEC p22). Norman describes the fireplace with a red and black painted slate chimneypiece, with an iron fire hood embossed with 'lily stalks, heart-shaped leaves and snakes knotted like bow ties' and red and green tiles set in the sides of the fireplace by his father (WEC p9). Over the fireplace was an 'Edwardian overmantel, one large mirror lined with a dozen struts and ledges, with little niches and shelves' (WEC p9). The room was lit by gas lamps on the wall either side of the fireplace, 'each with a glass globe' (WEC p23). It was entered from the lobby at the foot of the stairs and red plush curtains hung from the rail at the top of the door. The middle room had 'mud-brown twined-waterweed' wallpaper that lined the walls, before it was redecorated in 1922. On the floor was an oil cloth on which young Nicholson played (WEC p23). There was a table (referred to by Peggy Troll) in front of the window, and stiff chairs with 'arms of turned wood, upholstered in a dark khaki corduroy' (WEC p23). In this room Nicholson was taught his 'letters' by his grandmother and aunt Lizzie, before he went to school (WEC p23). A zinc bath was used to bathe the young boy, possibly in front of the middle room fire which was where it was brought when his father sprained his ankle at the iron works during the First World War (WEC p14). When Rose Sobey moved into No.14 in 1922, her piano came too; it is not clear whether this was in this room or the sitting room on the first floor.

Behind the middle room was the scullery or back kitchen (in the 2-storey outshut); this was where food was cooked on the 'old iron range' or on a single gas ring. The range was 'only stoked up on Sundays' after Nicholson's father remarried in 1922 (WEC p79). It is not clear whether there was also a range in the middle room fireplace, as Nicholson does not refer to this in WEC, although Jones refers to a 'big black range for cooking and heating' in this room (Jones p24)

Beyond the back kitchen was an old wash house, originally 'entirely separate' but with a connecting door (inserted by Mr Dixon, apparently) by the time Nicholson was a child. The wash house had 'one cold tap and the old slop-stone, a rectangular horse-trough-like basin, only about three inches deep, made of some coarse brown earthenware' (WEC pp23-24). This was probably the room used for personal washing 'at a cold tap in the sink' and where clothes were washed in in a 'huge built-in copper that had to be fired and stoked from the bottom like the furnace of an old steam engine' (WEC p17). Nicholson describes the built-in brick copper or boiler in one corner used for wash-day, 'covered on other days... by an unpainted wooden lid' (WEC p23). The boiler would have had its own brick flue or chimney, above the roof of the wash house, and a metal vessel – the 'copper' - that would be filled manually with water.

The back yard was paved with slate slabs; Nicholson's father made a narrow bed along one side to grow ferns and a Virginia creeper, filled with soil from the fields that he 'carried home carefully in brown paper bags' (WEC p26). At the end of the yard against the wall to the back alley was an outside toilet, possibly installed as a water closet to comply with the byelaws. There were no internal facilities until 1922.

2.3.2 First floor rooms in Nicholson's childhood

Nicholson wrote that the staircase to the first floor was painted with 'pasche-egg-coloured grain and varnish that I could faintly recall' (WEC p10). This was uncovered when decorators were stripping layers of paint when Nicholson was eight years old, also revealing 'the original green, laid on bare wood, that had been put on when the house was built in 1880' (WEC p10).

As the shop had taken over what was the front parlour, the front first floor room was used as a sitting room. Before Nicholson's mother Edith died of Spanish flu, his parents' bedroom was in the middle room, overlooking the back yard. Nicholson's room was the 'little back bedroom' (above the back kitchen), lit by a gas lamp on a bracket over the bed, which was close to the window (WEC p11). After his father remarried, in 1922, the house was redecorated and the back bedroom became a bathroom; Nicholson's bedroom was moved to the unheated back attic, which was lit and ventilated only by a rooflight, 'always shut tight against the rain and soot' (WEC p82). Nicholson commented that 'we had taken another step up the social ladder, and I had taken a step down towards chronic ill-health' (WEC p82).

The front attic bedroom had a dormer window with a sash facing towards Black Combe over the roof-tops. After Nicholson returned from the sanatorium in the early 1930s this became his room; he wrote that the window 'had been turned into a casement, to give me more fresh air' (WEC p202). The room had a fireplace but it is not known if this was lit during Nicholson's years in the room.



Fig.8: the view from the front attic window towards Black Combe (Raymond Troll)

2.4 Norman Nicholson at No.14 St George's Terrace: a writer's life

This was the house in which Nicholson wrote some of his best-known poetry and books. By the late 1930s Nicholson was writing poetry and from 1938 lecturing for the WEA. His first book *Man and Literature* was published in 1943, and in 1944 Faber (editor T S Eliot) published his first volume of poems, *Five Rivers*. In 1940 Nicholson was confirmed in the Church of England and for the rest of his life attended St George's Church, Millom. In the post-war years his writing was well-regarded and in recognition of his success Nicholson received many accolades including honorary degrees, the Queen's medal for poetry (1977) and the OBE in 1981.

After Joe Nicholson's death in 1954, the shop at No.14 was occupied by a tenant; little is known about this period of the shop, but the Sportsman was there in the 1960s (Fig.9). Nicholson married Yvonne Gardner in July 1956, at St George's Church; Yvonne was a teacher of English and drama at Millom School and a close friend of the vicar's wife at St George's Church, where she and Nicholson would have met. She also met Nicholson when producing his play *The Old Man of the Mountains*. Nicholson dedicated *Provincial Pleasures* (1959) to Yvonne, a fictionalised account of a year in the life of Millom (renamed Odborough in the book).

For the first years of their married life, Rose Nicholson was also living at No.14 and was the dominant figure in the household until 'around 1965 when she handed over the running of the house to Yvonne' (pers comm Charlie Lambert). After Rose's death in 1969, 'Yvonne began to decorate the house to suit their way of life...Yvonne learned to hang wallpaper, lay carpets and even do simple plumbing' (Jones, p186). Yvonne was remembered as 'artistic' by Peggy Troll (oral history interview with Charlie Lambert September 2017); the rooms as decorated by her are recorded in Raymond Troll's photographs, and described below. During the 1970s the shop was not tenanted and the space was used as part of the house, re-decorated by Yvonne (filmed and shown in the 1984 South Bank Show programme).

Yvonne died in 1982 and Nicholson died five years later, on 30 May 1987; the couple had no children. They are buried in the church yard of St George's Church, where a stained glass window was installed to the memory of Nicholson in 2003, designed by Christine Boyce.



Fig.9: No.14 and The Sportsman shop in the 1960s (Marshall Mossop collection)

2.4.1. Ground floor rooms from the late 1960s to 1987

The interior of the house was redecorated by Yvonne Nicholson in the late 1960s, giving the rooms a distinctive, colourful modern style in contrast to their previous pre-war character. The middle living room was decorated with tartan wallpaper in sage green, beige and grey. The Figure 10 photographs seems to show a wood-effect 'Fablon' or wallpaper on the ceiling and above the picture rail. These photographs were taken in the 1980s by Raymond Troll (Peggy Troll's nephew), a valuable record that show how this important room was used and arranged during Nicholson's lifetime. There was a 1960s armchair on the right side of the fireplace, a metal floor lamp, music speaker on a wall bracket and a

framed print of Morden's map of Cumberland on the wall. Nicholson was interviewed in this room for the South Bank Show in 1984, filmed reading his poetry from the armchair beside the fire. There is now an opening in this part of the room, connecting to the shop. From the sitting room a door led to the back kitchen which had been redecorated with wallpaper and white gloss paint (just glimpsed in the left hand image in Fig.10).



*Fig.10: middle sitting room – door to back kitchen (L) and Nicholson's chair near fireplace (R)
(1980s photographs by Raymond Troll)*

It is not known how the shop interior was fitted or altered in the 1960s; only one external photograph has been seen (Fig.9). After the Sportsman shop closed, the shop space was absorbed back into the house and used as a front hall and store area. It was redecorated with striped window curtains and a matching window seat. The shop shelves were used for storage, screened by curtains probably made by Yvonne. In the South Bank Show film from 1984, external views of the shop are shown, with net curtains in the shop window.



Fig.11: the shop as re-decorated in the 1970s, for domestic use (photographs by Raymond Troll)

A photograph (Fig.12) by Troll show the former shop in use as a front hall, with a 1960s geometric floral and paisley paper on the east wall beside the front door, and a green floor rug, antique desk and a circular table for books. On the wall over the desk the image shows a framed historic photograph of St George's Terrace, a south Cumbria estuary landscape and a photograph of Nicholson in the house.



Fig.12: the shop in use as a front hall in the 1980s (Raymond Troll)

2.4.2 Upper floor rooms in Nicholson's adult life

The first floor front room was used as a library (Fig.13), decorated with white and green striped wallpaper and painted white by Yvonne Nicholson, with a red carpet, red curtains and a red cover on the divan (against the south wall). Yvonne slept on the divan in this room after her marriage to Nicholson who continued to sleep in the front attic room (Jones, p154). A press photograph of Nicholson in this room shows him surrounded by book cases, which are also recorded in the photographs by Raymond Troll. The fireplace had been blocked and the chimneypiece removed, with an oil-filled radiator used to heat the room. Lighting was provided by a pendant light with a typical 1960s lamp shade, and an Anglepoise table lamp. A circular table was used for books, and framed prints were hung on the walls included a Lowry, a Leonardo da Vinci and a Breughel, with an abstract landscape painting on the chimney breast.



Fig.13: the first floor library, from the east, with book cases and a divan (Raymond Troll)

Norman had a desk in his front attic bedroom for writing; the views from this room over the town are referred to in his poem *The Pot Geranium*, 1954 (also see Fig.8). The Raymond Troll photos of this interior show a suite of early 20th century bedroom furniture, painted a caramel colour (also used on the door), a 1960s arm chair, a metal filing cabinet and a sofa bed with pink floral cover. The walls were lined with a floral geometric 1960s wallpaper and the sloping ceiling was lined with polystyrene tiles, a popular 1960s finish. On an old wash stand was a set of oak boxes or shop-fitting drawers for Colorbide's handkerchiefs, probably from Joseph Nicholson's shop. On the south wall (between the front and back attic rooms) the old gas lamp bracket was in situ, alongside three framed prints, including one of Grasmere church (Wordsworth's burial place) by Pam Brown, and a print of an

industrial scene. In a Look North programme shown on 29 September 1985 (North West Film Archive), Nicholson is shown working at a desk in this room.



Fig.14: the front attic rom with 1960s wallpaper, painted furniture and cast-iron chimneypiece (photos by RaymondTroll)



Fig.15: shop handkerchief boxes in front attic room (Raymond Troll)

3. No 14 ST GEORGE'S TERRACE TODAY: A SHORT DESCRIPTION

3.1 Plan and Exterior

The building has a plan typical of byelaw housing built in England in the late 19th century, but altered for a shop in the 1890s. The building has a 2-room deep plan to the front range parallel to the street, with a narrow outshut projecting to the rear, on the north-east side of the yard. The rooms are arranged over three floors with the second floor partly within the roof (see floor plans in Appendix 1). There is no basement or cellar. The front faces roughly north-west to St George's Terrace with a back lane or alley to the rear south-east side.

The exterior of the building retains some key features such as the shop front, the attic dormer, chimney stack and pots, the overall building form and the pattern of door and window openings, but the overall appearance of the exterior has been altered by rendering the brick and altering the windows. Similar changes have affected other buildings in the terrace and the varying render colours and window patterns have eroded the unity of what was once a homogenous row of properties. The render has been applied since the 1960s (it is not shown on the photo of the Sportsman shop, Fig.9)

The shop front retains many of the elements seen in the c1900 photograph (Fig.7): the moulded dentil cornice below the gutter (now plastic instead of cast-iron), the stall riser, the part-glazed panelled door with inward-opening transom window above and a moulded pilaster to the left side of the doorway. The shop window has been replaced several times; the existing window is different to the window when The Sportsman was in the shop (Fig. 9), which again differed from the Gregson's shop window (Fig.7).



Fig.16: some original shop front details have survived

The first floor sash window, to right of centre, has been replaced by a modern uPVC window and the detail of the segmental brick window head with keystone is hidden by render. The attic window has also lost its original sash and the current window is probably a late 20th century timber replacement for the 1930s casement window, but the dormer brickwork is still visible (albeit weathered). The shaped barge board is an original feature but this is missing the apex finial, the bottom section of

which is just seen in a photo (taken in the late 1980s). At eaves level, the timber fascia appears to be an original feature, but the plastic gutter is modern. The window is now painted white but was black or dark grey in the 1980s (1975 Look North television film)



Fig.17: Front attic dormer from inside (LH: 1980s by Ray Troll) and today, from outside (RH)

To the rear of the building, the brick walls have also been finished with a modern render, obscuring brickwork details over windows. The windows are all modern replacements for sashes. The cast-iron rooflight to the rear attic room appears to be the original and the roof is laid with Cumbrian slates in regular courses.



Fig.18: rear elevation, outshut and shed from the rear.

The outshut has a mono-pitch roof in the form of a catslide continuing the angle of the main roof. The side elevation of the outshut has a blocked doorway to the left (this was the back door from the back kitchen into the yard, but now contains a window) and a modern window to the right, with a similar window to the first floor bathroom. Beyond the outshut is a single-storey shed, clad in corrugated metal (now painted green); this is on the site of the original wash house, said to have been built by Mr Dixon the chemist. The roof and rear wall of this shed (facing the yard to No.15) is clad in corrugated asbestos or mineral sheeting. It connects to the back kitchen internally, and has a plain flush external door into the yard with a modern horizontal window to the right. Yvonne is shown by this doorway in the 1975 Look North film. At the south-east end of this shed is a WC with a mono-pitch roof, in the position of the original privy or earth closet (the fittings are not original).

The south-east end of the yard is separated from the back lane by a red brick wall, topped with blue ceramic copings and with sandstone blocks for the hinge pintles; the wall is now finished in render with 'ashlar scoring' to the outer face. The doorway has a boarded door, now painted white, with a metal latch. The yard is surfaced in concrete. Nicholson is shown by this gate, in the 1975 Look North film.



Fig.19: view of the rear from the back lane

3.2 Interior

The internal layout of rooms is still legible, despite some changes to circulation since the café was created. The front of the café in the former shop fills the full width of the front range on the ground floor, but as built the house had an enclosed entrance lobby separating the front parlour from the party wall. The front of the café retains a few finishes that relate to the late Victorian shop, including a section of the tongued and grooved boarding to the south-west wall, but most of the fittings and all finishes are modern. The opening from the front shop area to the middle room is a modern insertion (Fig.20), made after Nicholson's death in 1987.



Fig.20: inside the former shop with modern opening in the back wall

The truncated lobby and the staircase are against the north-east party wall; the door now used to access the staircase from the front of the café appears to be an original door, relocated from the front entrance hall when the shop was created. The doorway has a semi-circular fanlight and chamfered frame, and the door has a pair of arched panels to the upper part and a wooden knob handle. On the right (south-west) wall of the lobby a 4-panelled door serves the middle room, although not now in use. The staircase rises the full height of the house to the second floor, with pine turned newels, stick balusters and simple moulded handrails.

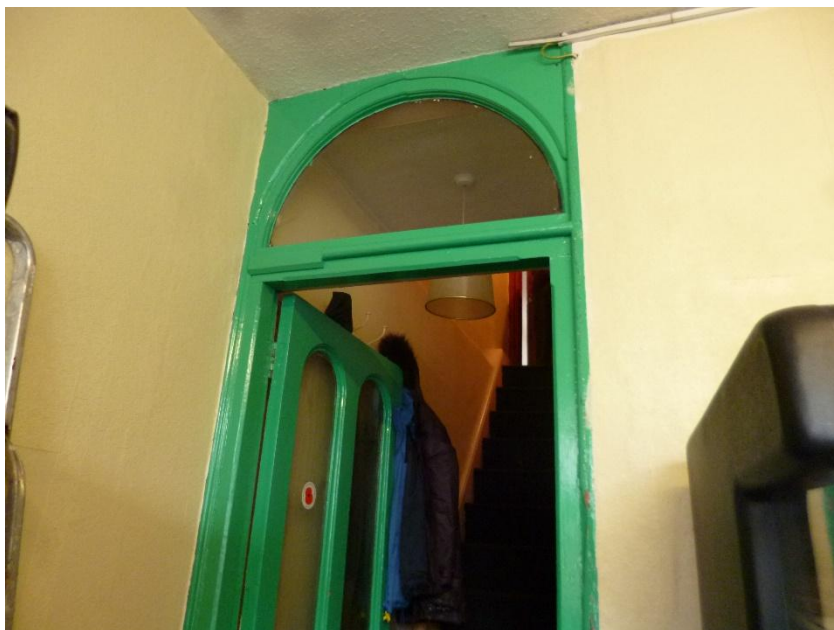


Fig.21: original entrance lobby doorway, relocated when the shop was created

Behind the shop is the former middle living room, now part of the café. This was originally accessed only from the lobby at the foot of the staircase, but now connects to the front room by a modern opening; two steps up mark a change in level from front to back. The middle room retains the slate

chimneypiece described by Nicholson and sections of picture rail; the dado is a modern addition and all other finishes are modern. The fireplace was probably built with a range for cooking; it is not known when this range was removed, but perhaps when Nicholson was a small child.



Fig.22: the middle room with original chimneypiece

Beyond the middle room is the former back kitchen or scullery within the outshut, now part of the café; this retains a blocked fireplace on the end wall, with cast-iron chimneypiece and mantel shelf. It is not known if the range is in situ. The door into the yard from this room is blocked (now a window), but there is a door to an under-stairs cupboard. All finishes are modern. The shed beyond the back room is now the café kitchen, connected via a doorway that existed in Nicholson's childhood.



Fig.23: back kitchen fireplace

At first floor are three rooms, reducing in size from front to back; the rear room is now a bathroom but was built as a third bedroom. All doors are modern panelled doors in new frames, and the floors are laid with vinyl. The front bedroom (later the library) is now a food store and has plastic wall linings, a blocked fireplace and uPVC window. The middle bedroom retains a cast-iron fireplace but all finishes are modern. The bathroom to the rear outshut has a 1920s cast-iron bath, fitted in the year that Joe and Rose Nicholson married.

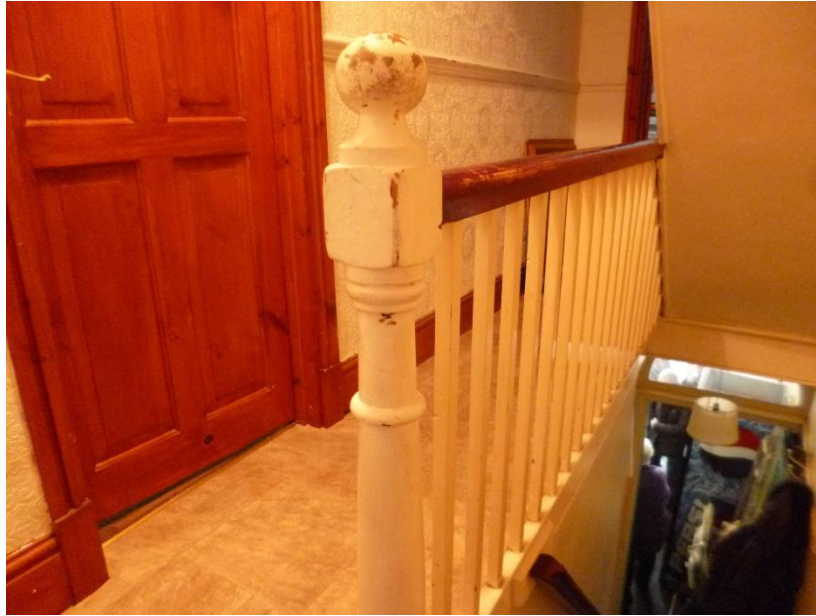


Fig.24: original staircase balustrade and modern doors, first floor

The pine staircase up to the second floor has brass sockets for missing stair carpet rods. The back attic room (south-east) retains a 4-panelled door with brass knob handle, cast-iron rooflight, pine floors and skirtings. The 'gathered' flues from lower floors are a feature on the south-west side wall but this room does not appear to have been heated by a fireplace. The front attic room, used after 1930 by Nicholson as his bedroom, also has a 4-panelled door with brass knob and a cast-iron fireplace decorated with ferns, a popular late Victorian motif. The pine purlin is exposed in the front room, but covered in the rear attic. The walls are finished in woodchip wallpaper.



Fig.25: front attic room (left) and rear attic (right)

4. CONTEXTS

4.1 Victorian Terraced Housing

Outbreaks of cholera and other diseases in fast-growing early 19th century towns and cities prompted a campaign for public health reform; this led to Parliamentary legislation in the 1840s, particularly the Public Health Act of 1848. This and the Local Government Act of 1858 required new houses to be built to certain standards, applied locally through byelaws, hence the term 'byelaw' housing, which was built according to byelaw rules. These covered details such as the width of streets and back lanes, private rear yards, the distance between the backs of houses, drainage and ventilation. This resulted in uniformity in terraced house planning, nationally, and repeated features such as a water closet in the back yard, connected to sewers running under the rear alleys. Economies of scale by builders also tended to result in repeated features such as the position of staircases, entrances and outshuts. The byelaws led to the standardisation of construction, drainage and ventilation to improve living conditions and public health.

Internally, a standard plan was used, with a front parlour off a small hall or lobby, the kitchen in the room behind, with a cooking range and often a quarry-tiled floor, and a rear outshut (if there was one) for the scullery with a tap and a shallow sink. The rooms were simply fitted out, with architectural decoration reserved for the staircase, hall and front parlour; the latter would have decorative plaster cornices, a ceiling rose, deep skirtings and a slate and cast-iron fireplace. Upstairs, the landing had a plain balustrade around the stair well and doors to three bedrooms; the outrigger bedroom was often partly in the roof. Staircases were steep and narrow to maximize the space available for living accommodation. Cellars were not normally provided in smaller houses, but attics were common in some areas.

Externally, the builders distinguished blocks of houses using slightly varying details and decorative brick work. The better houses had a ground floor bay window and a small garden, to differentiate them from workers' housing lower down the social scale which directly fronted the footway. Windows were generally sashes and all joinery was made using pine intended to be painted. Mass-produced materials such as slate, brick and terracotta unified the appearance of terraced houses, but regional variations in byelaws and building materials shaped the identity of local housing, so that workers' housing in Lancaster or Barrow differs slightly from housing built in Sheffield or Leeds, for example.

Most housing built in the late 19th century was for rental rather than owner-occupation. A landowner would typically assign a large parcel of land to a builder on a ninety-nine year building lease, often with the ground rent deferred for one or two years until development was underway. The lead builder would then lay out the roads and subdivide the area into smaller parcels which in turn would be let-out to other builders at a higher rental, who then sub-let houses to tenants. Tenanted terraced housing tended to remain little altered, until owner-occupation increased in the 20th century, bringing individualised changes such as new windows, concrete tiled roofs, wall cladding or render.

4.2 Norman Nicholson, Cumbrian Poet

Interest in Nicholson's work is enjoying a revival. The term 'regional poet' has sometimes been used dismissively in the past, but his work is now being re-evaluated as part of the current interest in local identity, post-industrial landscapes and nature writing, all of which were celebrated by Nicholson in his work. Nicholson's poetry and prose were inspired by the close proximity of the Lake District and its natural and man-made environment, the industrial landscape of the ironworks, the town of Millom and its people and by his home at No.14 St George's Terrace and his childhood here.

An appreciation of Nicholson by Fran Baker, Archivist at the Rylands Library in Manchester (which holds the key collection of his work), provides a useful summary of how Nicholson is now viewed; this is an extract from the Norman Nicholson Society website:

There has always been interest in Nicholson's work, but in recent years this has seen a resurgence, boosted in part by the publication of the first two full-length biographies. Having sometimes been categorised dismissively as 'religious' and 'provincial' in a negative sense, his work is now being reinterpreted for a new generation. An environmentalist ahead of his time, his poetry and verse drama is being viewed through the lens of ecology, and his work reassessed as part of the growing interest in the poetry of place. Recent archival research has included a study of Nicholson's reception in non-Anglophone cultures, and an innovative project in the field of digital humanities: using computational tools developed in the fields of geography and corpus linguistics, researchers have analysed and mapped Nicholson's correspondence network, demonstrating its global reach and confirming his position as a writer on the international stage. The range of Nicholson's writing, and the direct language of his poetry, also gives his work an appeal far beyond the academic.

For Nicholson being 'provincial' – rooted in the culture of his native region – was only ever a positive thing, and the Cumbrian people and post-industrial landscape are central to his work. His home town of Millom, and more importantly the house where he was born and lived for virtually his whole life, are crucial to understanding and appreciating his life and work. His most famous poem, 'The Pot Geranium', is set in his attic bedroom but looks outwards to the world beyond, fusing the local and the global.

Assessing the current standing of Nicholson as writer is outside the scope of this study of No. 14 St George's Terrace, but his national status can be partly measured by awards and recognition during his lifetime; Nicholson was awarded several honorary degrees, the Queen's medal for poetry (1977) and the OBE in 1981. Several films for television were made, which assessed his life and work, particularly a programme for the South Bank Show in 1984, with Melvin Bragg. Two of Nicholson's key works are still in print with Faber and Faber (*Wednesday Early Closing* and *Selected Poems 1940-1982*).



Fig.26: blue plaque on front elevation

Recent radio and television programmes made for the BBC, the Kathleen Jones biography and the work of the Norman Nicholson Society provide contemporary evidence of the high cultural significance of Nicholson and his life as a Cumbrian writer. The Society was founded in 2006 to educate the public about Nicholson and promote his works. Nicholson's association with this building is celebrated by a blue plaque on the front elevation, above the shop front.

5. SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

5.1 Assessing significance

Assessing the relative heritage significance of heritage assets (historic buildings or places) is a fundamental part of conservation and decision-making in relation to historic buildings, whether or not they are listed. Significance is defined as ‘the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest’ (National Planning Policy Framework: NPPF). Understanding significance helps decide priorities for repair and maintenance, apply for grant-funding and also informs decisions about change. For No. 14 St George’s Terrace, the significance of the building can be assessed in relation to the wider contexts of Millom’s social and industrial history, Victorian terraced housing and the literary association with Nicholson. The NPPF refers to four main types of heritage value or interest: archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic, but there are others which may be relevant here including intangible values such as spiritual or communal. Significance can also be defined in relation to levels in a hierarchy:

- **Exceptional** – an asset important at the highest national or international levels, including scheduled ancient monuments, Grade I and II* listed buildings and World Heritage Sites.
- **High** – a designated asset important at a regional level and also at a national level, including Grade II listed buildings and conservation areas.
- **Medium** – an undesignated asset important at a local or regional level, including local (non-statutory) listed buildings or those that make a positive contribution to a conservation area. May include less significant parts of listed buildings. Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is usually scope for adaptation.
- **Low** – structure or feature of very limited heritage or other cultural value and not defined as a heritage asset. May include insignificant interventions to listed buildings, and buildings that do not contribute positively to a conservation area. The removal or adaptation of structures in this category is usually acceptable where the work will enhance a related heritage asset.
- **Negative** – structure or feature that harms the value of a heritage asset. Wherever practicable, removal of negative features should be considered, taking account of setting and opportunities for enhancement.

5.2 Statement of Significance

No. 14 St George’s Terrace has high significance for the literary association with Cumbrian poet Norman Nicholson who lived here for over 70 years, from 1914 until his death in 1987, with one short break. The importance of the building to Nicholson’s life is summed up by Fran Baker, Archivist at John Rylands Library which holds the principal collection of Nicholson papers; *‘His home town of Millom, and more importantly the house where he was born and lived for virtually his whole life, are crucial to understanding and appreciating his life and work. His most famous poem, ‘The Pot Geranium’, is set in his attic bedroom but looks outwards to the world beyond, fusing the local and the global.*

The building has medium significance for architectural and historic value as a good example of a Victorian terraced house and shop, albeit slightly altered, that illustrates the social history of Millom as a northern industrial town that rapidly developed in the last quarter of the 19th century, and declined after the iron works closed in the 1960s.

Assessing the intangible significance of the building for communal value is not straightforward, as there are likely to be contested interests in relation to perceptions of Nicholson as a spokesperson for Millom. This aspect of significance has not been specifically assessed for this report, but

community value may be an important aspect of the cultural value of the building. The café provides a community resource, for example and the building is open on Heritage Open Days for fans of Nicholson to see the attic room associated with his poetry.

In townscape terms, the building has medium significance for aesthetic value as a terraced property on an important street in the market town, and in planning parlance it 'makes a positive contribution' to Millom conservation area (this term is important in deciding planning applications in conservation areas).

The significance of the interiors vary; the rooms most used by Nicholson, and that retain some features that existed during his lifetime have high significance: these include the middle ground living room, the first floor sitting room and the front attic room which he used for writing. These are also rooms recorded in Nicholson's life time in photographs and TV programmes. The former shop, back kitchen and remaining upper floor rooms have medium significance in relation to heritage values. The corrugated back shed has low significance as this has been much altered for the café kitchen use. The shop front has high significance for original joinery and features although the current shop window frame and glazing is not of historic value.

5.3 Designation status

The building is not a listed building, but should be considered as a non-designated heritage asset, a building of at least regional significance due to its association with Nicholson. Millom is a conservation area and St George's Terrace is within the boundary, which also includes St George's Church and burial ground, the Market Square, Lapstone Road, the railway station and part of Holborn Hill. A draft conservation area design guide is due to be adopted by Copeland Borough Council as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in December 2017, after consultation earlier this year.

6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

No. 14 St George's Terrace has regional importance as a Victorian terraced house and shop, notable as the home of poet Norman Nicholson for over 70 years, from 1914 until his death in 1987. The building has high significance for its literary association with Nicholson, as the place where he wrote his published work and which influenced his character and creative output. It is not a designated heritage asset nor a listed building, but the building is important in Millom conservation area and is a good example of a terraced house built on a principle street in an industrial town.

The current aesthetic significance of the building is at a medium level, due to several phases of change, particularly those made after Nicholson's death, such as the insertion of uPVC windows, the rendering of the exterior brickwork, internal decorative changes and structural changes to the interior for a cafe. There is great scope to enhance the significance of the building and enable it to be better understood and enjoyed, by selectively reversing some later alterations and using available evidence to reinstate missing elements such as decorative features.

A key decision to be made is whether to present the most important rooms as they were during Nicholson's childhood and early adult life or during his married life; the former has strong social history relevance but documentary records for the latter are particularly good. The property benefits from a rich documentary archive recording the interiors during Nicholson's life, which could be supplemented by other techniques such as historic paint analysis. The most significant rooms are the ground floor former living room, the first floor front former sitting room or library and the front attic room; these have high significance for their association with Nicholson and some retain important features.

The regeneration of this building by the Norman Nicholson Society also has the potential to contribute significantly to the tourism and community potential of Millom, at a time when local identity is increasingly valued and important for sustainable communities and local economic viability. This may require separate research and studies, such as audience development, for example.

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APPENDIX 1: BUILDING PLANS

John Coward Architects.

From left to right: ground floor, first floor, attic floor



APPENDIX 2: ELEVATION PHOTOGRAPHS

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From left to right: front, side elevation to rear yard and rear elevation



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