

# Littlebeck King's Meaburn

Historic Building Record



## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>General and Detailed Description.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Historical Development.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Historical Building Description.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Interpretation and Significance .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Historic Maps.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Existing Plans and Elevations .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Appendix A .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>24</b>

## **Introduction**

JB Heritage Consultancy was commissioned to carry out a Level 2 Historic Building Record of Littlebeck, King's Meaburn, Penrith, Cumbria on 12 July 2012 prior to alteration work being carried out. The inspection of the property was carried out by Mr John Bargh MSc IHBC on 16 July 2012 and the report was written also by John Bargh.

The report format is laid out in accordance with English Heritage: Understanding Historic Buildings a Guide to Good Recording Practice 2006 and will conform to Level 2 standard as set out in this Guide. The report will be written in accordance with the Brief for an Archaeological Building Recording Project issued by the Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service, Environment Unit, dated 5 July 2012.

Documentary research was undertaken at the Cumbria County Library, Cumbria Archive Centre Carlisle and Kendal, books and the Internet to discover information about the owners, occupiers and builders of the property and any other relevant information. A site survey was carried out to identify historic features at the property, phased development and architectural details. Photographs are allocated numbers and are marked on the existing plans at the back of the report. Plans and elevations are to 1:100 scale.

The plans and elevations in this report are taken from the drawings produced by A & J Davis.

Please note that there are two properties called Littlebeck, one is located in King's Meaburn and the other in Maulds Meaburn. This report is concerned with the Littlebeck just inside the Maulds Meaburn boundary but the postal address is King's Meaburn.

Note. There are different spellings for Littlebeck and Meaburn. In old documents they are sometimes spelt: *Little Beck, Meadburn, Meburn, Milburne and Meaburne.*

National Grid Reference NY 62430 19818.

The planning application number is 3/12/0393.

## **General and Detailed Description**

King's Meaburn is a small village in Cumbria, of roughly 80 inhabitants. It is located 5 miles from Appleby and 10 miles from Penrith in the Lyvennet Valley, and it is famous for its annual Beer Festival.<sup>1</sup> Littlebeck farmhouse is a Grade II Listed property and on the listing description is placed at probably early/mid eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup>



*Plate 1. South East Elevation Showing Stone Dressings Around Openings.*

The Granary is part of Littlebeck farmhouse and is attached to the north-eastern end of the house. The Granary is two storey and the external walls are constructed of stone random rubble laid in lime mortar with an external coating of roughcast. These walls are usually constructed with an inner and outer skin of stone with a loose stone and mortar fill between them. On the north-west elevation of the Granary and on the house there are projecting 'through' stones, visible on the wall surface, (Plate 2) which were built in to bond the inner and outer skins of the wall together. These bands of 'through' stones were widely used by the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The roof is pitched and covered with Lakeland slates laid in random diminished courses with a stone ridge. There is a gable facing towards the north-east. Access to the ground floor room is through an external door on the south-eastern elevation. First floor access is through an external door in the north-eastern gable wall and access to this is by an external stone staircase.



*Plate 2. North West Elevation Showing Through Stones.*

The ground floor room has a low ceiling height, approximately 1850mm high. The internal surfaces of the external walls are finished with lime wash but much of this is now worn off. The floor has a central passage, about 1500mm wide, which is lower than the rest of the floor. The remaining two areas of the floor each side of the central passage have a gentle slope towards the central passage (Plate 3). All areas of the floor are finished with smooth stone cobbles but most of this is concealed by deposits of soil. The ceiling is the upper floor construction as there is no applied ceiling finish. This comprises two pine beams, approximately 200mm x 200mm section, originally roughly cut from the tree as there are vestiges of the bark. These beams support 90mm x 60mm softwood joists at 360mm centres (Plate 3) carrying square edged floor boards, 25mm thick by an average of 180mm wide. The external door is a 900mm wide x 1850mm high ledged and braced door, probably softwood, hung on iron strap hinges and set in a stone dressed opening (Plates 1 and 5). The internal lintel over the door opening is probably oak. On the external wall on the north-west elevation there is an opening that has been built up with stone (Plate 3). This is 950mm wide x 1770mm high and has a timber lintel over, probably oak.



*Plate 3. Inside of Byre Showing Cobbled Floor, Central Passage and Blocked up Door.*



*Plate 4. Inside of Byre Showing Boskin Positions. See Also Ground Floor Plan. Page 20.*



*Plate 5. External Door to Byre.*



*Plate 6. External Door to Granary.*

The first floor room is open to the roof (Plate 7). The slates are fixed to thin timber battens supported on rafters, carried on purlins and the whole structure is carried by roof trusses. There are signs that the slates are 'head' fixed against the battens with timber pegs, usually oak, and the slates are torched against the battens with lime mortar (Plate 8). The softwood rafters are average 60mm x 60mm section and the purlins are various sized sections and probably made from pine. There is a pine ridge piece at the apex and the roof is supported by two tie beam trusses made from pine members of various sizes. Above the entrance door there is a pine beam spanning across and supported on the external walls. Several of the large section roof members have been roughly cut from the tree as some bark is visible along their edges (Plate 9). The internal surfaces of the external walls are finished, in some places, with a lime plaster and in others lime wash applied to the stone surface. High in the gable internally is a small aperture of approximate size 350mm wide x 400mm high formed in the stone wall and is not visible externally (Plate 10). The window openings have splayed reveals and the frames within the openings are modern replacements. Externally there are stone dressings to the window openings (Plate 1). Internally lintels above the windows are timber, probably oak. The external door is a 970mm wide x 1760mm high softwood ledged door (Plate 6). The horizontal ledges and the vertical boards have quirk beads along their edges. The door is hung on iron strap hinges in a timber frame and there is an oak lintel over the

opening. In the back of the room and rising above floor level is a raised area of stone wall with a joist and board top. This would be constructed to facilitate the passage below giving access to the farmhouse (Plate 7).



*Plate 7. Interior of Granary Showing Raised Section of Wall and Floor.*



*Plate 8. Timber Peg.*



*Plate 9. Part of the Roof Truss.*





*Plate 10. Inside of Gable to Granary.*



*Plate 11. External Stone Staircase.*

The external staircase is constructed from solid sandstone blocks about 1000mm long forming the treads of the staircase and carried on a stone random rubble wall (Plate 11). The treads are independent and are not built into the main external wall of the Granary. There is no handrail on the outside of the steps but a recess cut into the edge of the top landing stone suggests that some form of balustrade may have been fitted. The surface of the stone treads is very worn, no doubt from constant foot traffic in the past.

Nearby there is a Grade II Listed Parish Boundary Stone to the west of the bridge outside Littlebeck. ID No 422791. English Heritage.

### **Historical Development**

Meaburn (*Meadburn*) is an Anglo Saxon name, possibly meaning 'meadow by a stream' and there may have been an early Anglo Saxon settlement there in the seventh to eighth century.<sup>4</sup> William Rufus, the son of the Conqueror, divided the lands among his Norman nobility and gave the whole of Cumberland and the Barony of Westmorland to Ranulph des Meschines<sup>5</sup> but some of the lands in Meaburn belonged to Ketel, son of Eldred.<sup>6</sup> The manor of Meaburn included two Meaburn settlements and the land between them called Meaburn Field.<sup>7, 8</sup> The Barony of Westmorland passed through Hugh de Morville senior to Hugh de Morville junior<sup>9</sup> but due to a misdeed Henry II confiscated Hugh's section of the land in 1174.<sup>10</sup> Part of the manor was now held by the Crown on the forfeiture of Hugh de Morville and took the name *Meburn Regis* (King's Meaburn)<sup>11</sup> It was a Hugh de Morville who was complicit in the murder of Thomas à Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>12</sup>

Because Littlebeck lies between King's and Maulds Meaburn, its history is touched by both settlements. The land held by Maud, Sir Hugh's sister, was called 'Meburn Matildae' or Maud's *Meburn*, now known as Maulds Meaburn.<sup>13</sup> Maud brought Maud's Meaburn to William de Veteripont through marriage.<sup>14, 15</sup> The grandson of William de Veteripont granted Maud's *Meburn* to John le Fraunceys.<sup>16</sup> The family of Fraunceys ended in a daughter who married into the Vernons and Richard Vernon held the manor of *Meburn* Mauld until it was settled on the Lowthers.<sup>17, 18</sup>

Of King's Meaburn: Roger de Clifford married one of the heirs to the Veteriponts<sup>19</sup> and King's Meaburn entered the Clifford family. In 1322 Roger de Clifford was wounded at Boroughbridge by the forces of Edward II and surrendered to Sir Andrew de Harclay after which his estates were forfeited to the Crown and he was condemned to death.<sup>20</sup> The King granted King's *Meaburne* to Sir Andrew de Harclay but this was eventually restored to the Cliffords.<sup>21</sup>

Between 1550 and 1650 there was a rise in yeoman farmers who, being released from their obligations to monastic overlords, became prosperous and bought and sold land under Earl George Clifford.<sup>22</sup> Yeoman farmers were able to build stone farmhouses between 1650 and 1750, probably using the local stone from the Mill or Jackdaw Scar quarry.<sup>23</sup>

Lady Anne Clifford died in 1676.<sup>24</sup> Margaret, the sole heir of the Clifford family married John Lord Tufton, 2nd Earl of Thanet after which the estates of the Clifford family entered the Tufton family.<sup>25,26</sup> At the time the Tuftons took control the other principal landowners were Robert Addison, Robert J Addison, Robert Burra, Rev W Airey, another Robert Addison and several small proprietors.<sup>27</sup> The name 'Burra' recurs throughout the history of Littlebeck.

The first evidence that there was a house at Littlebeck is an entry in the Morland registers of Mary who was born to Joseph Walker of *Little Beck* in 1727.<sup>28</sup> From this it is not known to which property in Littlebeck the entry refers. No other entries could be found before this date so possibly there was not a house at *Little Beck* (Littlebeck) before 1727. The Jeffery's Map of 1770<sup>29</sup> shows a place with the name 'Little Beck' so by this time it has taken an identity. When the common and waste land was allotted to various proprietors in 1779 by the Lord of the Manor, Sackville, Earl of Thanet Island, Robert and John Burra were identified as proprietors.<sup>30</sup> Between 1819 and 1867 the Thanet/Hothfield estates sold off land to the tenants to raise money.<sup>31</sup>

A man of some standing was to emerge from this small farming community. Sir John Hall was born at Littlebeck in 1795 to John and Isabella Hall who farmed there.<sup>32,33</sup> He eventually became Principal Medical Officer of the Bombay Presidency.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, the actual house of his birth at Littlebeck is unknown.

If a visit is made to Littlebeck today it would be discovered that there are two properties a short distance apart, both called 'Littlebeck' but one is located in King's Meaburn and the other in Maulds Meaburn. It would appear that a Henry Newton farmed at Littlebeck in Maulds Meaburn in 1829.<sup>35</sup> The 1828 Plan of Westmorland by Thos Hodgson<sup>36</sup> is quite detailed and shows both 'Littlebecks' in the positions they occupy today. This report is concerned with the 'Littlebeck' just inside the Maulds Meaburn boundary and any reference to Littlebeck relates to this property.

In Victorian times the name Burra is still prominent. Robert Burra was a founding trustee of the school in King's Meaburn which was built in 1831.<sup>37</sup> They were successful yeoman farmers and main owners of land here in the Victorian age.<sup>38</sup> There are two persons by the name of Burra and are described as proprietors of houses and lands within the manor.<sup>39</sup>

The 1841 Tithe Map of Maulds Meaburn in the parish of Crosby Ravensworth<sup>40</sup> shows Littlebeck with its outbuildings and the barn opposite. It is situated immediately inside the township boundary. Unfortunately there is no list of owners and occupiers with this map. The directories do give the names of the farmers who farmed at Littlebeck. William Atkinson was a farmer at Littlebeck in the township of Maulds Meaburn in 1849<sup>41</sup> and again in 1851.<sup>42</sup> Joseph Robinson farmed at Littlebeck in 1858<sup>43</sup> and George Shepherd was a farmer there in 1885.<sup>44</sup> James Hall farmed at Littlebeck in 1894<sup>45</sup> and also in 1897.<sup>46</sup> After James Hall came William Shepherd who was a farmer at Littlebeck for many years: 1905<sup>47</sup>; 1906<sup>48</sup>; 1910<sup>49</sup>; 1914<sup>50</sup>; 1921<sup>51</sup>; 1925<sup>52</sup>; 1929<sup>53</sup>; Elizabeth Ann and William Shepherd and also Annie Jackson are at Littlebeck in 1930<sup>54</sup>; William Shepherd, farmed at Littlebeck in 1934<sup>55</sup> and 1938.<sup>56</sup> The Land Valuation Records dated 1910 lists a house, buildings and land at Littlebeck occupied by William Shepherd and owned by Robert Burra of Sedbergh.<sup>57</sup> In 1947 there was a conveyance of Littlebeck farm from the Burra family to a Mr Jackson<sup>58</sup>

### **Historical Building Description**

The subject of the report is the building known as the Granary which has been described in some detail. However, it is important to view this building in the wider context of a farmstead. Brunskill describes the attributes of a granary as always being on the first floor, approached by an external stone staircase and having domestic type windows.<sup>59</sup> The granary accommodated grain in wooden chests, or kists, or in piles on the close boarded floor.<sup>60</sup> On a small farm the granary was usually attached to the house<sup>61</sup> and appears in this example to have been placed over accommodation for animals.

There is evidence that the ground floor of the Granary was used as a byre. The cobbled floor surface and sloping floor with central passage at a lower level supports this view (See Plate 3). Brunskill describes a sloping surface on which the cow would stand or lay and the passage where the cow's dung was deposited and then transferred to the midden.<sup>62</sup> Byres were also low in height, ill ventilated and had no windows well into the nineteenth century.<sup>63</sup> The floor was usually finished with stone cobbles and the central passage was at a lower level than the rest of the floor.<sup>64</sup> The byre area was usually divided up by stall partitions, often of timber, called boskins. At Littlebeck there are small apertures in the walls with one containing a vestige of probably a timber boskin (See Plate 4 - piece of boskin in back wall). There appears to have been two of these boskins constructed each side of the room so each side would have three stalls making a total of six stalls for the byre (See Ground Floor Plan for positions). Usually the farm animals would have been given hay from a hay loft above<sup>65</sup> but this does not appear to be the case at Littlebeck.

The granary is only one component of the working farmstead. Despite not being the subject of the report, the large barn opposite the Granary should be mentioned. On the north elevation ground floor of the barn there are two doors. One of these is a stable type door and it is understood the space within was used as a stable at one time: the other door serves a byre. Above these doors on the first floor there is a domestic sized door. Moving around to the south elevation there are large doors, access to which is along a ramp.

### **Interpretation and Significance**

The interpretation of the Granary based on the texts of Brunskill and site observations leads to the conclusion that the first floor part of the building under investigation probably was a granary. The corn from here would likely be taken to the local corn mill at King's Meaburn run by the Dent family. Henry Dent was recorded in a directory in 1858 as being a farmer and corn miller at King's Meaburn mill.<sup>66</sup> The Dent family were farmers and millers for several generations.<sup>67</sup>

The evidence for the ground floor points to it being used as a byre. If the cows were housed in pairs in each stall, the total number of animals could have been about twelve. The Granary appeared to occupy the space normally taken by the hay loft so hay would need to be brought in from another building.

The barn across the road would have had a pivotal function on the farmstead. The crop would be brought from the fields, up the ramp and into the barn for threshing: the hay being given to the animals below. The door on the first floor north elevation was probably a winnowing door. This would be opened to induce a draught for winnowing to remove the chaff from the grain. The grain could then be transported across the road to the Granary. This barn has the design for a bank barn but is built on relatively level ground. The ramp has been constructed to give access to the upper floor.

The arrangement of the farm buildings in the farmstead fits the parallel arrangement with farmhouse and granary in one building and the barn and byre contained in another building opposite.<sup>68</sup>

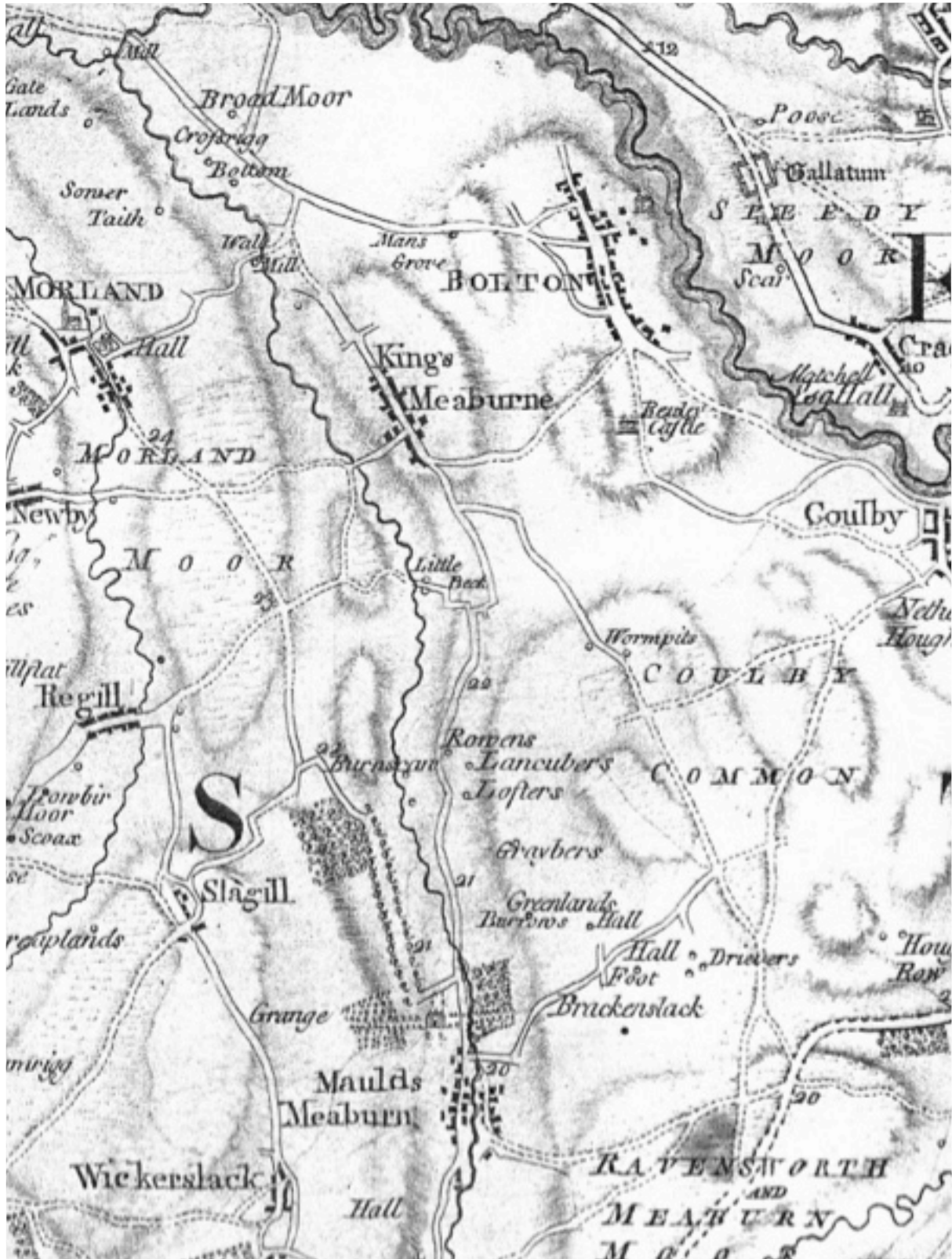
The date of the early/middle of the eighteenth century given by the listing description can be supported. When considering the 'through' stones in the external walls of the house and Granary: this construction was widely adopted by the middle of the eighteenth century, suggesting that before then they were seldom seen. The Morland registers give a birth in Littlebeck in 1727 and no entry could be found earlier than this early/mid eighteenth century

date. This suggests that there may not have been a house at Littlebeck before the early eighteenth century. Littlebeck is likely to be dated around the early/middle of the eighteenth century.

Of the early ownership of the land upon which Littlebeck stands there is some uncertainty. Between King's Meaburn and Maulds Meaburn there was a tract of land called *Milburne Field*. In antiquity Sir Hugh de Morville gave some land in *Milburne Field* to the priory of Carlisle.<sup>69</sup> Littlebeck appears to be located within this area of land so could have belonged to the priory at one time. Littlebeck is so near to the border between the townships of King's and Maulds Meaburn that it is difficult to determine an owner of the land in the several centuries before there was a house at Littlebeck. A common thread appears to exist with the name Burra. This family are mentioned as landowners at about the time of the death of Lady Anne Clifford in the late seventeenth century. They appear again towards the end of the eighteenth century when the Earl of Thanet enclosed common land and Robert and John Burra were proprietors. There are two persons by the name of Burra who were proprietors of houses and lands in Victorian times. None of these ownership details can be attributed to Littlebeck with any confidence but the 1910 Land Valuation Record finally ties Robert Burra to the ownership of Littlebeck and in 1947 a Burra sells Littlebeck to a Mr Jackson. The Burra's had been recorded as landed proprietors for many years so it is possible that the Burra family had owned Littlebeck for some time.

## Historic Maps

Cumbria County Library Jeffery's Map 1770

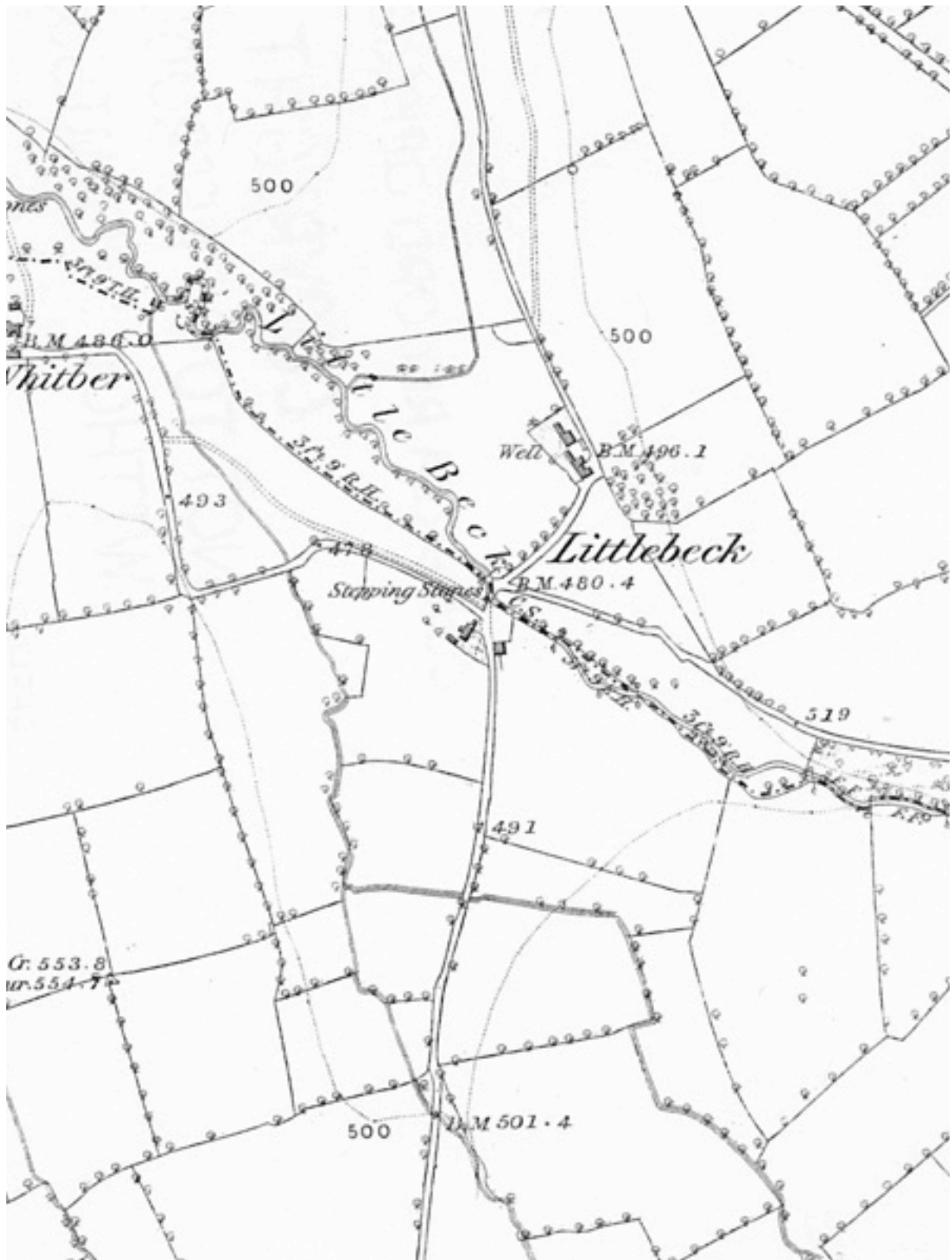




Cumbria County Library Plan of Westmorland Thos Hodgson 1828



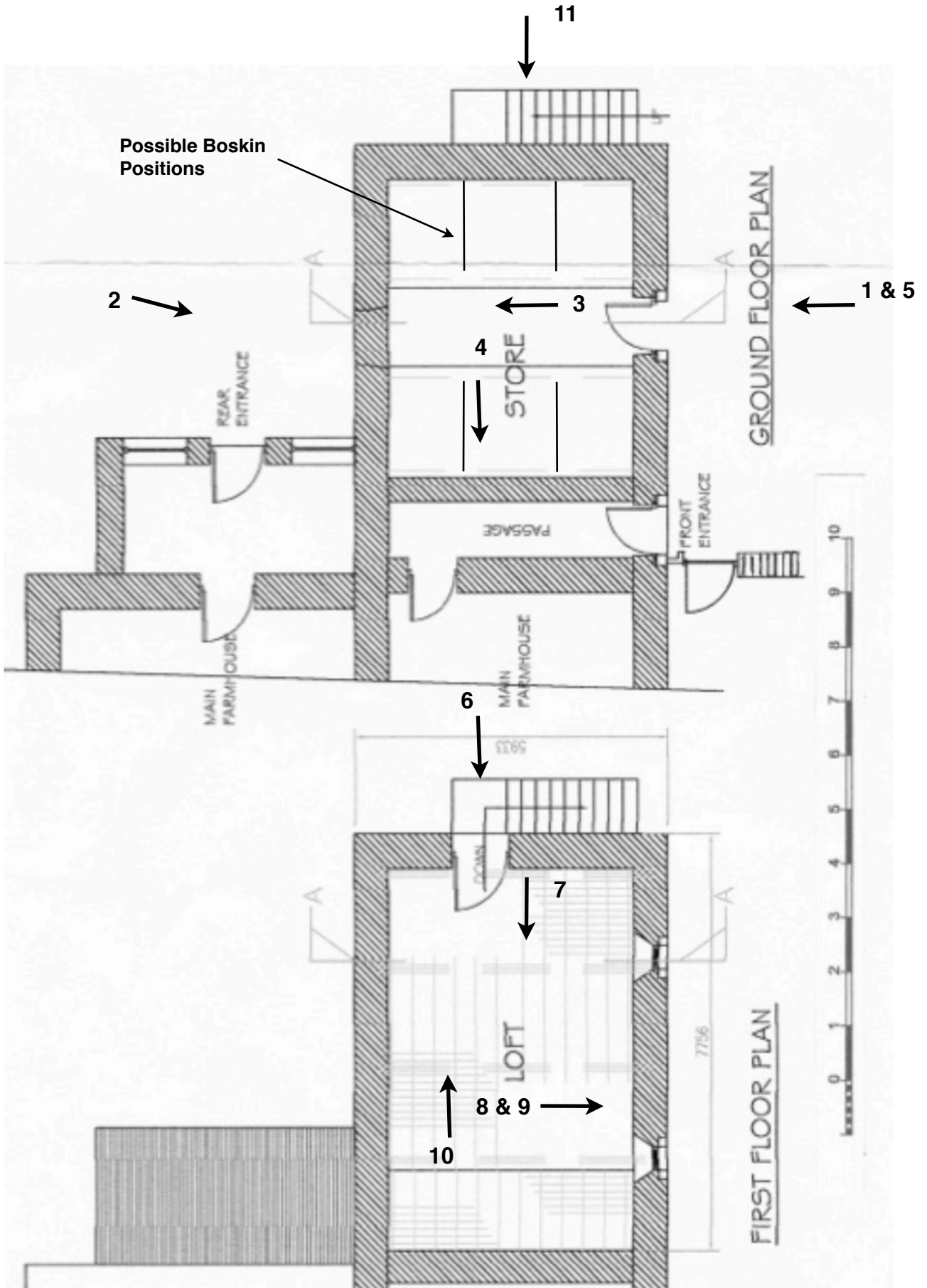
Cumbria County Archive Service. Ordnance Survey Sheet 14. First Edition 1863. Scale:  
6 inches to 1 mile.



Cumbria County Archive Service. Ordnance Survey Sheet 14.4. Second Edition 1916. Scale: 1/2500.



## **Existing Plans and Elevations**







## **Appendix A**

### Listing Description.

CROSBY RAVENSWORTH LITTLEBECK NY 61 NW (West side) 5/28 Littlebeck Cottage with byre adjoining II House and adjoining byre. Probably early/mid C18; later alterations. Rendered rubble; graduated slate roofs. 'T'-shaped plan (wing to rear) 2 storeys; house 3 bays, byre 2. Central plank door in gabled surround. 2 windows to each floor on left, all originally 3-light mullioned windows, now each is 2-light with inserted sash, following removal of one mullion. Byre to right has plank door with 2 small windows above; stone steps up to plank door in return. 2 rendered chimneys.



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- <sup>4</sup> Addison. C., King's Meaburn Through the Ages. Cumbria County Library. 1C 9 KIN 9. Page 13.
- <sup>5</sup> Addison. C., King's Meaburn Through the Ages. Cumbria County Library. 1C 9 KIN 9. Page 16.
- <sup>6</sup> Addison. C., King's Meaburn Through the Ages. Cumbria County Library. 1C 9 KIN 9. Page 16.
- <sup>7</sup> Nicolson. J., Burn. R., 1976. First Published 1777. The History and Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland Vol I. Wakefield, West Yorkshire: E.P. Publishing Page 502.
- <sup>8</sup> Whellan. W., 1860. The History and Topography of the Counties of Cumberland and Westmorland. Pontefract: Whellan. Page 794.
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- <sup>13</sup> Addison. C., King's Meaburn Through the Ages. Cumbria County Library. 1C 9 KIN 9. Page 18.
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- <sup>20</sup> Clifford. H., 1987. The House of Clifford. Chichester: Phillimore. Pages 60 and 61.
- <sup>21</sup> Nicolson. J., Burn. R., 1976. First Published 1777. The History and Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland Vol I. Wakefield, West Yorkshire: E.P. Publishing Pages 277 and 278.
- <sup>22</sup> Addison. C., King's Meaburn Through the Ages. Cumbria County Library. 1C 9 KIN 9. Page 41.
- <sup>23</sup> Addison. C., King's Meaburn Through the Ages. Cumbria County Library. 1C 9 KIN 9. Page 42.
- <sup>24</sup> Addison. C., King's Meaburn Through the Ages. Cumbria County Library. 1C 9 KIN 9. Page 43.
- <sup>25</sup> Nicolson. J., Burn. R., 1976. First Published 1777. The History and Antiquities of the Counties of Westmorland and Cumberland Vol I. Wakefield, West Yorkshire: E.P. Publishing Page 304.
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- <sup>32</sup> Hudleston. C. R., (Editor) 1966. Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society. Vol LXVI. Kendal: Titus Wilson. Page 402.
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- <sup>44</sup> Bulmer. T. F., Westmorland Directory 1885. Page 338.
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- <sup>46</sup> Kelly's Directory of Cumberland and Westmorland 1897. London: Kelly. Page 48.
- <sup>47</sup> Bulmer. T., 1905. History, Topography and Directory of Westmorland. Page 155.
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