

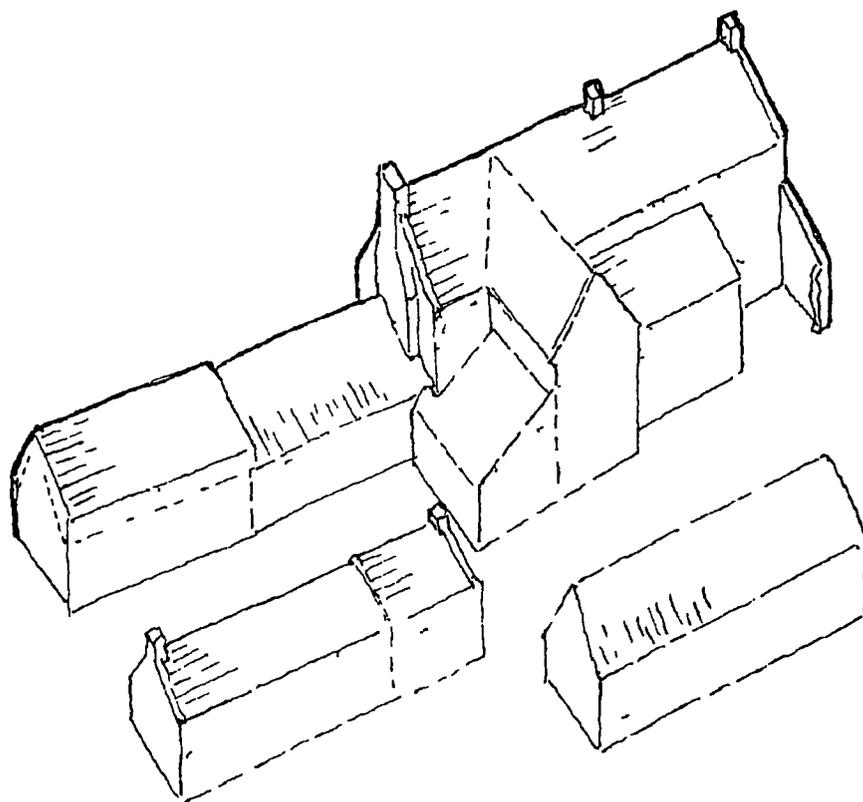
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Parish	1037
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# TOFTA FARM

RAVENSWORTH  
NORTH YORKSHIRE

## AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

SEPTEMBER 1998



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**Tofta Farm**  
**Ravensworth North Yorkshire**

**An Archaeological Assessment September 1998**

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# Tofta Farm, Ravensworth

## 1 Introduction

Tofta Farm (NZ 134078) stands at the east end of the village of Ravensworth, on the north side of the road which runs east and then south, rounding the marshland surrounding the castle site, up to Kirkby Ravensworth. The substantial farmhouse faces south, overlooking the castle remains, behind it are an extensive group of farm buildings. At the time of survey the house had recently been divided into two, and is undergoing renovation. The commissioned recording work relates to Tofta Farm, which comprises the rear wing of the house, the adjacent barn and the farm buildings behind, in order to facilitate the archaeological analysis of the group. The main body of the farmhouse (now Tofta House) has also been, more briefly, examined, with the consent of the owner.

The house was surveyed in 1980 by the North Yorkshire and Cleveland Vernacular Buildings Study Group, this is in general an accurate and detailed account of the building before the recent sub-division, although the accompanying architectural interpretation of the building can now be revised, partly in the light of features exposed during the current works.

## 2 Description

The farmhouse consists of a two-storey four-bay block, with a three-storeyed rear wing close to its east end. Later additions flank both sides of the wing, the flat-roofed two-storey stair block on the west and a single-storey kitchen outshut (pent-roofed against the wing) on the east. A lower range of farm buildings (here termed the **Barn Range**) continues the line of the house to the east.

Running parallel to the **Barn Range** on the north, and separated from it by a small yard, is the detached **Smithy/Cartshed Range**. This in turn forms the south side of a square yard enclosed by the attached **East Range** and **North Range**, with on the west is the east end of another east-west range, the **Stable** with an open-fronted **Shelter Shed** adjoining it on the north. There is also a detached **Animal House** to the north of the east end of the north range.

### 2.1 The Farmhouse

#### Exterior

#### 2.1.1 The Main Block

The south elevation, of two storeys and four bays, varying somewhat in length is of roughly-coursed and roughly-squared stone with some larger squared blocks, especially in the lower part of the western two bays, the angle quoins are quite large, but vary somewhat in size, and the roof is of Welsh slates. The doorway in the second bay has a raised surround of tooled ashlar, with one upright block forming each jamb, the windows are 12-pane sashes with cut lintels and slightly-projecting sills, the dressings of the windows in the third bay are more highly tooled than the others, and may be of a different date. On either side of the lower window in the westernmost

bay are remains of earlier mullioned windows, that to the right having been of at least two heights. The gable ends both have an oversailing coping, chamfered on the lower angle, carried on moulded kneelers, the west end has an old stack with a chamfered base and a moulded cornice, whilst between bays two and three is a ridge stack of old brick on a stone base, with a cogged cornice, the eastern gable has a 20<sup>th</sup>-century brick stack on a stone base, the original stack here has projected from the gable end,

The west end of the house shows much more of the very large squared stonework, extending more or less up to first-floor level, there are two windows (recently re-opened), both set towards the south end of the wall, each is a rectangular light with a chamfered surround, that on the ground floor rather wider than the one above. Both have ashlar surrounds in which each jamb is formed by a single upright block, and both appear to be insertions in earlier walling.

The east end of the house shows the remains of a central projecting stack, its upper section has been largely cut back (leaving a scar visible externally) but a section of the original projection remains intact within the first floor of the adjacent barn range. At first-floor level the remains of a small chamfered window are just visible close to the north end of the wall, above the roof of the adjacent range, on the south there is a boarded opening, under a timber hutch, at attic level.

The north wall of the main block is partly concealed by the north wing, and the added stair block. To the west of the latter (within an open garage with a pent corrugated metal roof) the walling is of large squared blocks, some of the courses being markedly off the horizontal. At the east end of the upper section of the wall, above the garage roof, the east jamb and chamfered sill of a small window are visible, its head possibly truncated by the present eaves.

The wall forming the west side of the garage appears to be the west end of a former outshut, the quoins at its north end indicating that it originally returned eastwards. Whatever the function of this outshut, it never appears to have had any openings communicating with the interior of the house.

Attached to the west wall of this outshut are a pent-roofed pair of privies, originally one was entered from the south (through a doorway with an tooled ashlar surround) and one from the north, but the dividing wall has been removed to create a through passage, the west wall shows two small blocked windows and a wider opening below and between, from which the privies could be cleaned out. The privies appear contemporary with the garden wall, of neatly squared and coursed stone, which extends westwards.

## 2.1.2 The Rear Wing

The fabric of the rear wing is little more than roughly-coursed rubble, its side walls rise a little above the eaves level of the house. There are no features in the exposed end section of the west wall, whilst only the topmost metre or so of the east wall is exposed externally, above the roof of the outshut kitchen, this does show the upper part of a two-light mullioned window with a chamfered surround, near its south end.

The north end of the wing has substantial quoins, especially in its lower parts. The gable end has a single window, set centrally, at each of the three floor levels, these lack any cut dressings except

for the large roughly-shaped lintel of the lowermost, the uppermost has a timber lintel. None of the windows themselves are of any great age, the upper two are late sashes. The gable has moulded kneelers of the same type as the main block, and a coping interrupted by the stub of a chimney stack. There are indications that the wing has been heightened, the outline of an earlier gable (springing from a little below the level of the lintel of the first-floor window, and with its apex truncated by the second-floor window) can be traced and coincides with an irregularity in the angle quoins.

### 2.1.3 The Stair Block

The stair block is of coursed rubble, similar to that of the north wing, it has been raised to its present flat-roofed form, probably relatively recently, and the original line of its shallow-pitched pent roof can be traced on the west wall. There are two old openings on the north, a ground-floor window and a larger span-window at mid height, further west, both have tooled ashlar surrounds and old external iron bars, a first-floor window looks like a 20<sup>th</sup>-century creation, with possible traces of a smaller predecessor directly below. There are no openings on the west side of the block.

### 2.1.4 The Kitchen Outshut

The outshut kitchen on the east of the rear wing has walls of coursed hammer-dressed stone, with substantial roughly-tooled quoins laid in side-alternate manner at the north-east corner. At the south end of the east wall is a doorway with a tooled ashlar surround, very like that at the south end of the cross-passage at the west end of the Barn Range, north of this is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century window in an older surround of similarly-tooled ashlar blocks, the original sill appears to have been lowered. There are no openings on the north of the outshut, where the wall is capped by a 20<sup>th</sup>-century brick stack.

## Interiors

### 2.1.5 The Main Block and Stair Block (Tofta House)

This was only seen after renovation had been in progress for some time, and a number of features had been 'restored'. At ground floor level are an entrance hall with one room to the west and two to the east, with an arch at the rear giving access to the stair and a room to the east of it. The side walls of the western part of the block are 0.75 m thick, in contrast to those of the eastern part which are 0.60-0.65 m.

The western ground floor room has a large square-headed fireplace with an ashlar surround, flanked by recesses, the southern of which has the lower of the recently-unblocked windows at its rear. The fireplace lintel is simply moulded, but the jambs chamfered, the original form is not clear, as the dressings have been tidied up and retooled during the present works. Decayed timber lintels spanning the flanking recesses have been replaced in concrete. This room has an early 19<sup>th</sup>-century plaster ceiling with a reeded border, concealing heavy transverse beams, these were only seen when floorboards were lifted in the roof above, their lower angles (with any chamfer or moulding) were inaccessible, but their proportions suggest an 'early' (i.e. 16<sup>th</sup> or early 17<sup>th</sup> century) date.

The lower part of the wall on the east side of the entrance hall was exposed, and was of rough rubble, with one small re-used piece of a window surround (with a glass groove between two chamfers) At the south end was a blocked opening, its splayed northern jamb retaining some plaster This wall, almost 1.0 m thick, has contained fireplaces, apparently on both faces, although no remains of these are currently exposed

The ground-floor room at the east end of the block has had a very large fireplace against its east wall, served by the larger external stack Remains of the original fireplace here had been fragmentary, and were no longer exposed, within the recess was a smaller fireplace of 18<sup>th</sup> century character, now restored in new stone, with a plain lintel carried forward on moulded corbels

The dog-leg stair in the rear block has stick balusters, simple moulded newels and a moulded and ramped handrail

At first-floor level remains of an old fireplace were exposed in the west end wall, this had a plain square head, and a chamfered surround, the north jamb had been destroyed by the insertion of an early 19<sup>th</sup>-century fireplace with a reeded lintel and paterae, and a patterned iron grate To the south of the original fireplace is a recess containing the upper of the two recently re-opened windows The east end wall also has a first-floor fireplace, quite small, with a plain raised stone surround and another patterned grate, at the north end of the wall is a recess or lobby formerly lit by the single-light window visible externally

The second or attic floor has been raised around a metre above its original level, as demonstrated by the manner in which it cuts across the (blocked) doorway to the stair in the rear wing, and across a blocked opening, probably a simple fireplace, in the west end wall

The roof structure of the main block is of considerable interest, consists of two three-bay sections of quite different character The western section is divided off by a full-height cross wall which has a chamfered set-back visible just below roof level on its east face, access is by a small hatch set towards the south end of the cross wall, which may have been a full-height doorway before the raising of the floor level The west face of the wall has a broad shallow projection, presumably relating to a stack

The roof of the western section has trusses with collars, the tie-beams appear to have been removed The timbers are all very neatly finished, the principals and collars all having narrow and neatly-stopped chamfers, the apex is halved but the collar is tenoned in, the joints being triple-pegged, and there are two purlins on each roof slope and a (replaced) diagonally-set ridge Each collar has a single peghole, slightly off-centre, driven diagonally down from the top of the east face, not quite penetrating the full depth of the timber

The roof of the eastern section has superficially similar trusses with collars, but here the timbers are more massive and more roughly finished, halvings (secured by pairs of pegs driven at different angles) are used rather than mortice-and-tenon joints, and the principals are overlapped at the apex The eastern truss is largely made up of re-used material, the character of the trusses is much more vernacular than those in the eastern part of the roof In this section rafters and ridge have all been replaced relatively recently

At the east end of the roof there is a large tapering chimney breast, in old brick, with one chamfered jamb surviving of a stone fireplace, partly hidden by the present floor, as at first-floor level there seems to have been a little lobby or closet north of the stack

## 2 1 6 The Rear Wing and Kitchen Outshut (Tofta Farmhouse)

The rear door to the house opens into a passage or lobby, in the southern section of the kitchen outshut, with a passage extending south through what is technically the west end of the Barn Range. On the north a doorway through a substantial wall opens into the kitchen, which retains no features of any interest, various steps and projections in the north wall probably relate to flues and replaces, but modern plaster and tiling make the hard to interpret. Tapping the plaster on the west wall suggests that there is an older opening here, in the east wall of the old stair wing. A hatch in the roof of the lobby opens into the roof space over the kitchen, from which the external face of the east wall of the earlier rear wing is visible. This shows a well-preserved two-light mullioned window, with a chamfered surround, this retains old glazing with greenish glass and diamond leading, each light having two vertical iron bars within the glazing. To the north of the window is the angle quoiring of the upper section of the north-east angle of the original wing, confirming the evidence of heightening seen on the external face of the north wall, and showing that the southern part of the wing, containing the stair, was three-storeyed from the first, but the northern section only two storeys. There is also evidence of the roof-line (a sloping cut and some projecting ends of flagstones) of an earlier and lower outshut to the east of the wing, its roof pent against the rear wall of the main block.

The lobby also gives access into the ground floor of the rear wing. At each floor level a thick cross wall divides this into two parts, a roughly square room to the north, and a stair well to the south. On the east of the stairwell is a new breeze block wall, prior to the recent division of the house, access to the foot of the stair was from the ground-floor room in what is here termed 'the stair block'. The stair itself has been very much altered, and retains little datable evidence, at its foot a door of four fielded panels gives access to a few steps down into a little stair-foot cellar. An adjacent door of six fielded panels opens into the ground-floor room in the wing (the pantry), which has no features of interest other than a series of old meat hooks on the ceiling, the window in the north wall has quite widely-splayed jambs, but shows no features of any antiquity. South of the stair is a recently-blocked door into the westernmost ground floor room of the front block.

There is a similar recently-blocked door at first-floor level where the stair landing has a recess on the east which correlates with the blocked window visible from the roof space over the kitchen, and a door of four fielded panels leading north into a room which again lacks any particular features of interest, lit by a window which has its internal sill lowered to form a shelf or seat, whilst the ceiling is of narrow transverse joists with chamfered angles, except for a larger one set against the south wall which is simply moulded, it is not clear whether this is of any real age.

The uppermost section of the stair is boxed in, and entered from the first-floor landing by a plain boarded, this section has a solid handrail, with a broad moulded handrail set on plain uprights carrying stoothing, the handrail may be an older piece re-used, the open balustrade at the stair head is of no great age.

The landing on the turn of the stair midway between first and second floors has a blocked window in its west wall, set above the timber lintel of the tall opening (now infilled with breeze blocks) that communicated with the 'stair block' to the west, the window was blocked in the mid-20th century when the adjacent block was heightened. The second-floor landing has a blocked two-light mullioned window (the one visible externally) on the east, on the south is a recently-blocked doorway into the attics of the main block. The upper section of this wall is of oldish brick, the wall on the north of the stair well, also continued up to the apex of the roof, is, above second floor level, the original end wall of the wing and is of stone to its full height. The second floor room in the wing has a plaster ceiling under-drawn at the level of the purlins, and the sill of its window lowered to form a seat.

The roof timbers of the wing exposed above the stair well simply consists of longitudinal timbers spanning the gap between the two walls, they may be coeval with the wing, but have no features of special interest, the section of roof above the room to the north is not accessible.

## 2.2 The Barn Range

The Barn Range is quite complex, the western half, which has two storeys, is the earlier. The walling of the range is roughly-coursed and roughly-squared stone (in places little more than rubble) with a scatter of larger squared blocks, the stonework in the later eastern part of the range is (at least on the south) slightly more regularly coursed than in the original section. The southern slope of the roof is of Welsh slates, and the northern of graduated stone flags.

### 2.2.1 Exterior

The western part of the range has an upper floor, but this has no openings on the south side.

On the south side of the range, from west to east, are a doorway with a surround of tooled blocks, the jambs each having a tall upright block with a smaller square one at top and bottom, beyond is a blocked doorway with an alternating-block surround, the jambs at least of which carry a wave moulding. Then comes the original east end of the range with substantial squared quoins rising to a height of c 3 m, above this the joint steps c 0.60 m westwards to the upper quoins which in fact mark the west end of the eastern section of the range which at one stage was clearly a taller building than the older western section.

The eastern part of the range has had a central doorway, now blocked, with a rough alternating-block surround with a blocked slit vent to either side. A later window has been inserted immediately to the east of the doorway (destroying the upper part of its east jamb), this has a tooled lintel and a projecting tooled-and-margined sill.

The east end of the range has no openings except for a brick pigeon hole, with two alighting shelves, in the apex of the gable, there are clear indications of an earlier and steeper roof line (and lower eaves), probably implying a heather-thatched roof.

The west end of the north wall of the range is overlapped by the kitchen outshot of the house, beyond this, from west to east, are, a boarded hatch to the first floor, a doorway with a timber lintel (its east jamb formed by an added brick buttress) then a pitching door, and a second

doorway with a surround of large blocks and a rough chamfer showing evidence of knife sharpening in places. Beyond is an area in the lower wall containing some large blocks, terminating in a straight joint indicating the original east end of the range, it also forms the west jamb of a former doorway, now blocked, the east jamb of which is much smaller stonework. The eastern section of the range has a similar disposition of original openings to those in the south wall, a central doorway with slit vents to either side. On this side the doorway, with a rough alternating-block surround, remains intact, but a later window has been inserted on either side. These have roughly-tooled lintels and projecting tooled-and-margined sills, and hold part-slatted windows. At the far east end of the wall is a blocked doorway with a decayed timber lintel.

## 2.2.2 Interior

The cross-passage at the west end of the wing, set against the external face of the east end of the main block of the house, and the two rooms opening westwards from it, are now part of the farmhouse. The opening into the northern room is clearly recent, the room itself (also entered from an external doorway on the north) has no features of interest other than north-south beams of varying section, possibly of 19<sup>th</sup> century date. The southern room is entered from the passage by an old boarded door, the room itself has recent panelling all round, although the ceiling beams seem to be the same as those seen in the room to the north.

The upper floor, or loft, over this section can only be entered from the central section of the range. The west wall here shows the projecting chimney breast on the east end of the main block of the house, with, just below the present roof, cut triangular blocks marking a sloping set-back on its southern face. The northern angle of the projection is flush with the inner face of the north wall of the Barn Range, but the southern angle is c. 1.2 m inside the south wall. The south wall shows some minor features, with what look like a trio of small pigeon boxes at the east end, followed by what may be a small blocked vent, and a small rectangular locker. On the north the first 1.5 m or so of walling from the west looks like a later rebuild, the small window at the east end of the wall has an internal timber lintel.

This section has a two-bay roof, with a central collar beam truss, the southern principal has a reverse curve, as if it was a cruck blade re-used on its side, an apparent halving on the east face is puzzling as, if this interpretation is correct, it would run vertically rather than horizontally. The principals are overlapped and pegged at the apex, but the collar, clearly secondary, is bolted onto the east face.

The central section of the range is entered by a doorway on the north, to the west of the doorway, in the south-west corner of the room, is an old stone staircase leading up the first floor. At the west end of the south wall is a recess formed by a blocked doorway with a timber internal lintel, further east is a second blocked doorway with a locker or cupboard formed within its blocking. In the north wall there is a rough recess c. 0.60 m east of the door. This section is spanned by two heavy square-section transverse beams, carrying square-section joists, these may be of 19<sup>th</sup> century date. The west wall, butt-jointed against the side walls is largely of cobbles, and clearly an insertion.

The loft or upper floor of this section has a central opening in its east wall, flanked similar openings that have been bricked up, there are two much smaller square openings (running

through the full thickness of the wall) above and to either side of the central one. An earlier roofline is clearly visible here, similar to that visible externally at the east end of the range. No such roof-line is visible on the west wall, where there is a doorway, slightly off-centre, giving access to the loft above the western part of the range.

This section has a two-bay roof, with a central principal rafter truss of no great age, carrying two levels of butt purlins, with tusk tenons, on each roof slope, and a ridge board.

The eastern section of the range, here referred to as the barn, is open to the roof, except at its east end where there are a pair of rooms, which have had their own low-pitched roof or ceiling (now gone) pent against the east end wall. This part of the range is entered by a central doorway on the north, which has two old timbers, with various cuts and pegholes re-used as its internal lintels.

The west wall (the east end wall of the older western part of the range) has some large squared blocks in its lower courses, this wall is c 0.70 m thick (in contrast to the side walls of the west part of the range which are c 0.55 m). At mid-height (c 2.5 m above the floor) are the three openings, each c 1.0 m square, which communicated with the loft over the central section of the range. Each has a cut stone sill sloping down towards the barn at around 45° at around the two side openings are now blocked by single-skin brickwork flush with the west face of the wall. The earlier gable-line is only faintly traceable on this face of the wall, much clearer is the manner in which the north wall has been raised, the junction between the two phases being marked by a series of thin slabs or flagstones c 0.8 m below the present eaves.

c 2.5 m from the west end of the barn are a pair of large ragged sockets c 2.5 m up, indicating a former transverse beam, to the west of the northern socket is the blocked doorway visible externally, with a timber lintel. The other doorways and windows also have timber lintels, the southern window (bisected internally by the inserted brick-and-timber partition) and the eastern window on the north have cut stone internal sills, sloping down at around 30°.

The partition wall fronting to the two rooms at the east end is of brick (early 20<sup>th</sup> century?) built into a timber frame, the rooms are divided by an axial wall of brick, the northern face of which has a sloping set-back c 1.5 m up. Both of the eastern rooms have a recess (containing a hay rack) set quite high (sill c 1.6 m above ground level) in the centre of their east walls, these recesses have segmental-arched heads.

The barn roof is of four bays, with simple collar-beam trusses, the collars simply being nailed to the eastern faces of the principals, there are two levels of purlins with tusk tenons, and a diagonally-set ridge.

### 2.3 The Smithy/Cartshed Range

This is a single-storey range four bays in length, built of roughly-coursed rubble with quite substantial roughly-tooled quoins, the roof is of graduated stone slates. The slightly-taller eastern bay is the oldest part, although the fabric and quoins are virtually identical in both sections, it has a rebated segmental-headed cart entry on the south, with tooled-and-margined dressings that look rather more recent than those in the western part of the range, implying that the arch may be an insertion. In the east end wall, low down and towards the north end, is what looks like a blocked

segmental arch, its apex only c 0.8 m above ground level, it is not visible internally, and its function remains uncertain, the gable is capped by a small stack with a square cornice. At the west end of the north wall is a window with a roughly-tooled lintel.

Internally there is a small fireplace set towards the south end of the west wall, with an old non grate and a tooled stone surround, on the south is a small wall locker immediately west of the cart entry, and there is another, rather wider, at the south end of the east wall. The roof is of two bays, with a simple principal rafter truss and two levels of butt purlins on each slope.

The remainder of the range is of one build, the western two bays comprise a single cartshed, opening to the south by a pair of rebated segmental-headed arches with tooled-and-margined dressings. The roof is of three bays with simple principal rafter trusses, there is a single wall locker (or nesting box) near the south end of the east wall.

The eastern bay of the range is the former smithy, on the south are a doorway and window, with tooled-and-margined alternating-block surrounds, and on the east a small window with a cut stone lintel, the gable has a simple cut coping and is capped by a small stack similar to that at the west end.

Internally the smithy retains little evidence of its original function, only the very top of the stack remains, projecting from the wall. On the west there is a wall locker towards the south end of the wall, and a blocked opening or recess with a timber lintel, only c 1.5 m tall, at the north end of the wall.

#### 2.4 The East Range

This is built of coursed roughly-squared stone, with quite substantial roughly-tooled quoins, it now has an asbestos roof, in poor condition. On the west, towards the yard, is a central doorway with a badly-eroded cut lintel. The south gable end has a window set quite high, with rough diagonal tooling to its lintel and a slightly-projecting sill. There are two more windows of this type in the rear (east) wall, the northern blocked. The range is clearly later than the adjacent north range, the quoins of the latter having been cut into to key in the added walling.

Internally the range has a doorway into the north range, set at the east end of its north wall. The five-bay roof has simple king-post trusses with the posts bolted to the tie-beams.

#### 2.5 The North Range

This is built of roughly-coursed rubble (largely cobbles), with roughly-tooled quoins and dressings, and has a Welsh slate roof. To the yard on the south are two doorways, one at the east end of the wall and the other a little way short of the west end, both with cut lintels. The east end has a large cart entry with rebated jambs, their dressings matching the adjacent quoins, and a timber lintel. On the north are three raking buttresses, set at irregular intervals, and two windows, both with cut lintels and slightly-projecting sills, a pitching door in the west gable is similarly treated.

Internally there are traces of a removed cross wall immediately to the east of the eastern doorway to the yard. The range has an eight-bay roof, of the same type as that over the east range.

## 2.6 The Stable Range

The lower part of this is of roughly-coursed and roughly-squared stone/ rubble, once again with some re-used material (there is a scatter of larger blocks in the north wall, including some triangular-shaped ones). There are roughly-tooled quoins of the usual type. The building was raised to two storeys, perhaps in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the upper section being in brick, largely in stretcher bond. The range faces south, the entrance doorway, set a little west of centre, has a three-pane overlight, and is set in tooled-and-margined alternating block jambs, carrying a segmental brick arch. On both sides of the doorway are windows with tooled-and-margined block surrounds, at the far east end of the wall are traces of an earlier opening, probably a window. The brick upper section has four equally-spaced part-slatted windows. The west end has indistinct traces of blocked openings in its lower part, and a pitching door, with a timber hutch, above, the east end has a doorway with an alternating block surround at the south end of the wall. The lower part of the north wall has a plain window near its west end and the brick upper part a pitching door near the centre.

The lower floor of the building has been a stable, most of its features are relatively recent. The first floor, carried on transverse softwood beams of plain square section, has partly collapsed, so that the upper floor cannot be safely inspected, although it can be seen that the roof has collar-beam trusses with upper kingposts, the base of the post being clasped between a pair of collars, bolted onto each face of the principals.

## 2.7 The Shelter Sheds

These are set between the east end of the Stable Range and the west end of the North Range. The front wall consists of two openings, under timber lintels, divided by a broad pier of walling of fairly large roughly-squared stones, the pantile roof (now partly collapsed) is pent against the taller rear wall, which has a doorway at its north end. The rear wall has a feeding trough set on a stone base which is made up of eight pairs of large trapezoidal stones, each pair laid on their sides, on top of each other, one with its broad end to the south and the other to the north, so as to produce a level upper surface. The stones are roughly tooled, it is not clear what their original function was.

## 2.8 The Animal House

This is a small block built of roughly-coursed and roughly-squared stone with the usual roughly-tooled quoins and dressings. The low-pitched roof slopes down from the taller front wall, in the centre of which are a pair of doorways serving the two divisions, now separated by an axial wall of 20<sup>th</sup> century brick. In each side wall is a small part-slatted window with a cut lintel and a slightly-projecting sill.

## 2.9 The Western Outbuildings

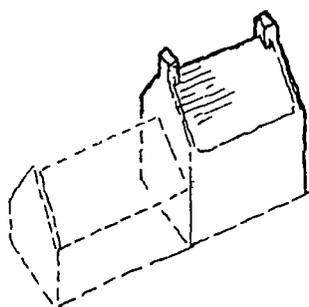
The privies and garden wall attached to the west end of the house have already been mentioned.

(see 2 1 1 ) Some distance further west, in the angle between the west end of the garden wall and a boundary wall extending northwards, is the shell of a north-south building with two cart entrances in its east wall, it lacks dateable features but could well be of 18<sup>th</sup>-century date. There has been another building to the north, only the west wall of which remains (as part of the present boundary wall), this contains two slit vents. These ruins are remnants of a larger group of buildings shown on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance Survey 6" 1 mile map (dated 1857)

### 3 Analysis

The schematic illustrations accompanying this section all show the buildings as viewed from the north-east, this presents what is very much a 'back' view of the house, but the most suitable for the purpose of demonstrating the development of the complex

#### 3.1 Later 16th century? The First House



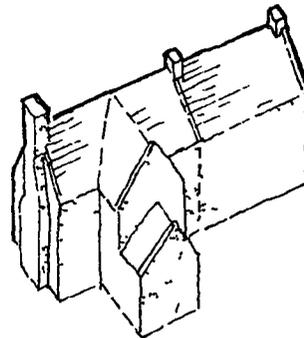
The earliest surviving building on the site is represented by the western part of the main block, built of large well-squared blocks clearly re-used from the ruined castle. No closely dateable features survive from this phase, the fireplaces and flanking recesses in the west wall may be original, but the two windows there certainly look to be insertions. The roof structure may well be original, and is of simple late medieval or 16<sup>th</sup> century character, it is conceivable this too has been removed from the decaying castle, although there is no real evidence for this.

The castle seems to have fallen into ruins at some time in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a document of 1608 (Plantagenet Harison 1885, 127ff) refers to large amounts of stone being removed from the gate house tower (which, rather surprisingly, is today the best-preserved part of the ruin), this would certainly imply that castle materials were being re-used locally by this time.

One might thus tentatively date the western part of the house to the later 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is not clear whether it formed a self-contained residence, or part of a larger building. The walls of the eastern part of the main block are markedly thinner than the western, this might imply that they are of later date, or possibly that they represent a lower building of the same period. This is borne out by the faint indications of an earlier gable line on the external face of the east end of the block, and possibly also by the fact that the only evidence of quoins visible in the south wall is at first-floor level, although it is also worth noting in this point that the remains of an opening seen in the lower part of this wall during the 1998 works had a plastered jamb splaying to the west face of the wall, i.e. as if this had been an external wall. The south wall has obviously been heavily patched and re-faced, so it is difficult to interpret the apparent quoins, all that can be safely said is that one possible interpretation is of a three-storeyed block with a range of one, or one-and-a-half storeys, adjoining to the east. Whether such a lower range was an agricultural building, or possibly the hall of an earlier house (with the present western block representing a remodelling of the solar) is pure conjecture.

### 3 2 Later 17<sup>th</sup> century A New House built adjoining the Old?

By the later 17<sup>th</sup> century the main block of the house had taken on its present three-storeyed form, with a rear wing close to the east end comprising a short full-height section containing the stair, and a lower northern part. The house had mullioned windows with fairly broad lights and single-chamfered surrounds (without hoodmoulds), the roof trusses of the eastern half of the main block demonstrate the influence of the cruck tradition in their halving joints and general 'vernacular' character. The remains of the massive stack at the east end of the block probably indicates the position of the kitchen.



The planning of the house at this stage raises some interesting problems, primarily in the siting of the stair wing, which one might have expected to be placed more centrally, and to be easily accessible from the main entrance.

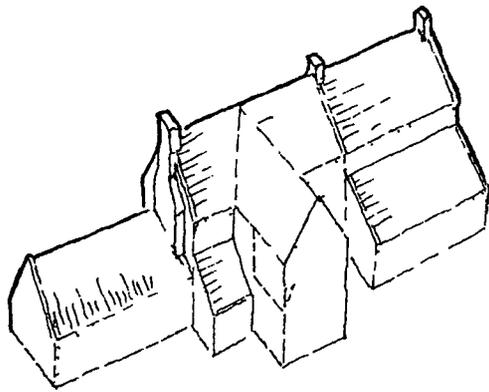
The NYCVBSG Report interpreted the western part of the house - ie the eastern two bays of the Main Block and the stair wing - as the earliest section, seeing the west part of the main block as an addition of the later 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is now clear that the west part of the block is much older than this, but the interpretation is to some extent understandable in that the east part on its own would be readily interpretable as a self-contained T-plan house of a common 17<sup>th</sup> century type, having a central stair wing at the rear. The report suggests that the front door of this section might have been in the southern part of the east end (where there is now a deep cupboard).

Possibly the most likely scenario is that in this 17<sup>th</sup> century phase there was not one but two houses on the site, the earlier western building, and a separate dwelling (either newly built or incorporating some earlier structure) built onto its east end. Additional evidence for this theory may be deduced from the fact that there seem to have been two quite separate groups of farm buildings associated with the house/houses, one to the north-west and the other to the north and east.

### 3 3 Late 17<sup>th</sup>/Early 18<sup>th</sup> Century, The Stair Wing remodelled and (?) outshuts added The Barn Range built in two phases

Evidence seen from the roof space over the present kitchen, and externally on the north gable, makes it very clear that the northern half of the stair wing has been raised to three storeys from two. It is less clear when this happened, although the proportions of the windows in the north end wall look pre-1750. There is another puzzle here, as the wall is capped by a stack, it is not clear how these windows, if indeed they are coeval with the remodelling of the wing, related to the fireplaces (now removed) which must have served this stack, the most likely scenario would seem to have been for the fireplaces to have been set in one of the northern angles of the wing (typical of the mid-late 18<sup>th</sup> century).

There may have been outshuts added to the rear wall of the Main Block on either side of the rear wing during the late 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, there is clear evidence of the roof-line of one to the



east of the wing (shown to be secondary by the manner in which its roof cut across the corner of the dressings of the first-floor mulhoned window in the wing) The end wall of an outshut survives at the west end of the house, this may pre-date the early-19th century stair block

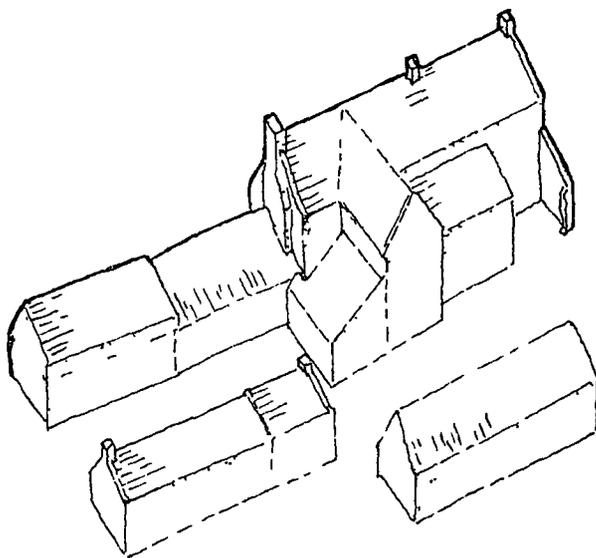
The western part of the Barn Range may well be of later 17<sup>th</sup> century date, but could conceivably be older (see 3 4) , it lacks any dateable features except perhaps for the moulded surround of the blocked doorway in the south wall, which would correlate

with this period, and is perhaps a little surprising if this was always an agricultural building In its original form the range was lower than at present (and probably with a high-pitched thatched roof)

The eastern extension of the range also had a steep-pitched roof when first built, once again there are few dateable features The rather elaborate segmental-arched recesses in the internal face of the east wall look as if they might be of mid-18th century date

### 3 4 The early-19th century remodelling of the house The Stair Block and Kitchen Outshut added

In the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the house was extensively remodelled and enlarged, it is not clear whether this took place in a single campaign, or whether there were two or three different periods of work around 1800, the slight discrepancy between the dressings of the windows in the third bay and of those in the other bays suggests at least two phases of work It seems clear that



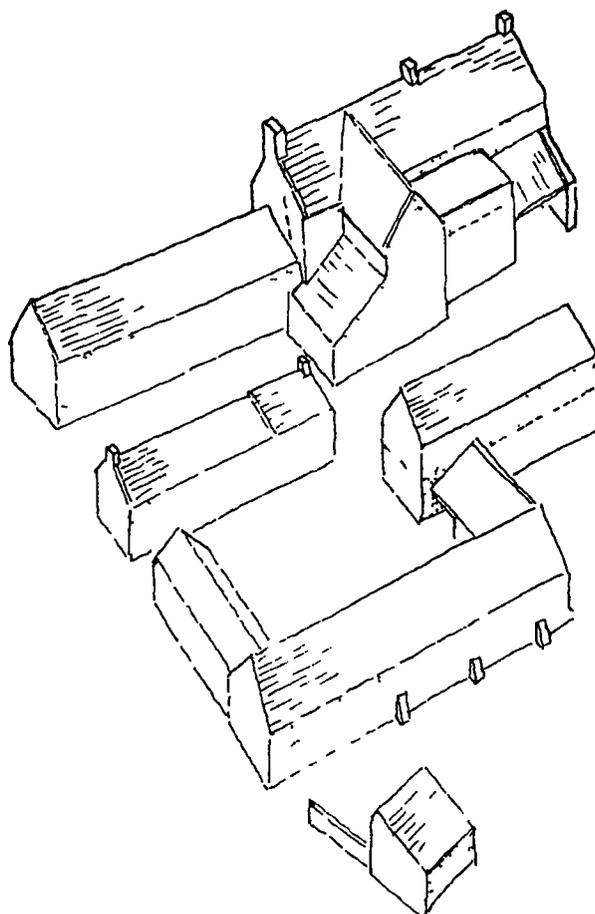
the entire structure was by now a single dwelling The front elevation of the main block was completely recast as it received a smart new Georgian facade, only the slight irregularity of the bays, and a few fragments of mulhoned window surrounds, being left to betray the survival of earlier fabric Whilst the first floor beams of the old house probably remained in place, the interior of the block was completely remodelled, the level of the upper floor being raised to create a spacious range of bedrooms, with the loss of the whole second floor, which now simply became attic The massive fireplace at the east end was probably replaced by a much smaller one, the lower portion of its external stack being cut away to widen the passage formed

The buildings as they may have appeared c 1857

through the west end of the Barn Range Whether this passage was introduced at this stage is uncertain, its position hints that it may have its origins in an earlier cross passage, adding weight

to the possibility already raised that the 'ghost' of a medieval or sub-medieval long house might survive in the lower walls of both Mam Block and the western section of the Bam Range

A new stair was formed within an extension, here termed the Stair Block, built in the angle between the north wall and the older north wing, its predecessor remained in use, although its lower part was altered so that it now opened from a service room in the east part of the new stair block, by means of a large opening punched through the west wall of the old wing, which also accommodated a passage running the full length of the rear of the mam block, continuing beyond the old stair wing through another outshut added east of the wing to house the present kitchen



The complex in 1998

### 3 5 20<sup>th</sup> century changes

The early-19th century works left the house very much the form in which it stood until the current alterations and division

into two properties, except for some minor changes (such as the removal of the fireplaces that must have existed within the north wing) which cannot be readily dated, and the mid-20th century addition of an upper floor (a bathroom) to the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century Stair Block, which was previously more of an outshut, this heightening blocked the window in the west wall lighting the top section of the old stair

### 3 6 The Farm Buildings

The fairly extensive complex of farm buildings associated with the house are generally lacking in dateable features, they would appear to have evolved in a series of stages throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One presumes that there were earlier farm buildings associated with the house/houses, these may well be represented by the mins here termed the Western Outbuildings (see 2 9) as well as the surviving Bam Range, which is clearly pre-1800 in date but was remodelled in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

Structural evidence suggests that the first part of the Bam Range to be remodelled and given a low-pitched stone slate roof was the eastern extension, to be followed, perhaps shortly afterwards, by the remainder, it seems possible that these changes may have taken place at around the same time that the house was remodelled

Several of the other buildings in the group have very similar angle quoins and dressings, consisting of large roughly-tooled sandstone blocks. Their general character and degree of weathering could easily be taken as implying a date of around 1800, but here the 1<sup>st</sup> edition Ordnance survey 6" 1 mile map surveyed in 1857) proves an invaluable aid, showing that at this date the only outbuildings to the house, apart from those to the west, were the Smithy/Cartshed range and the Stable. One can presume that the North Range, and Ammal House, were erected a few years after this date, and that the other buildings - the East Range and Shelter Sheds, later in the century. The brick upper floor of the Stable looks of early 20<sup>th</sup> century character. Documentary research, and in particular a map evidence would probably provide more information here.

#### 4.1 Recommendations

##### 4.1.1 Alterations to the House and Barn Range

Current plans are to remodel the Barn Range as domestic accommodation, it is planned to demolish the Kitchen Outshot and replace it with a new block, with new openings being broken through the east wall of the 17<sup>th</sup> century North Wing at both ground and first floor levels.

It is unfortunate that the upper of these openings will destroy the surviving two-light mullioned window, which, as well as being the only one of its type to survive in the house (in other than fragmentary form) has the rare distinction of retaining what looks like its original glazing and iron bars.

It is suggested that before these openings are made, plaster is removed from both wall faces (especially at ground floor level, where tapping the plaster seems to indicate some sort of opening) and any exposed features recorded.

If plaster is removed from any other internal wall faces, or render/heavy pointing from external walls (eg parts of the south wall of the Barn Range) other structural features may be exposed, and will merit recording.

##### 4.1.2 Re-used Worked Stones and Architectural Fragments

It is possible that any walling removed, either from the house or upon the demolition of farm buildings, might incorporate worked stones and architectural fragments from the Castle, which should be preserved and recorded.

Peter F Ryder September 1998

#### Sources

North Yorkshire & Cleveland Vernacular Buildings Study Group report 629 (Jan 1980)  
Plantaganet-Harrison, G H (1885) History of Yorkshire Wapentake of Gilling West

#### Acknowledgements

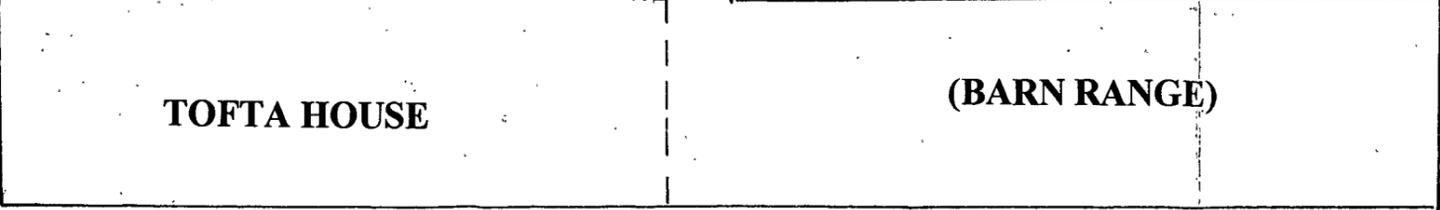
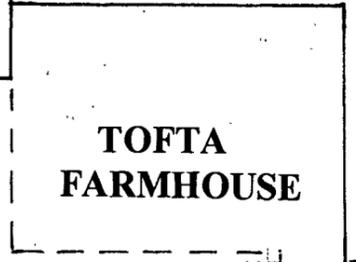
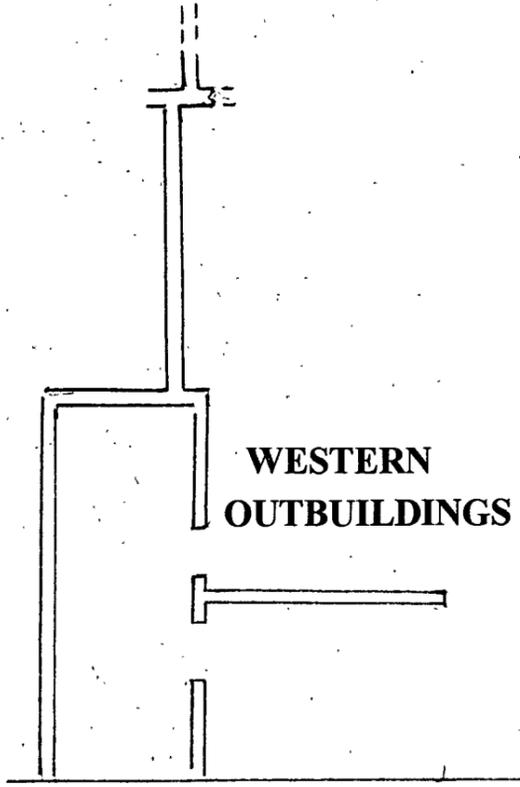
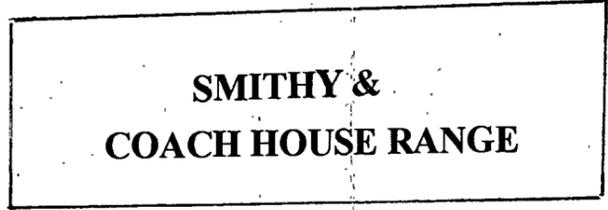
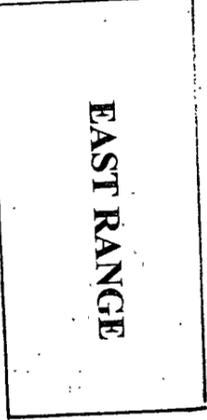
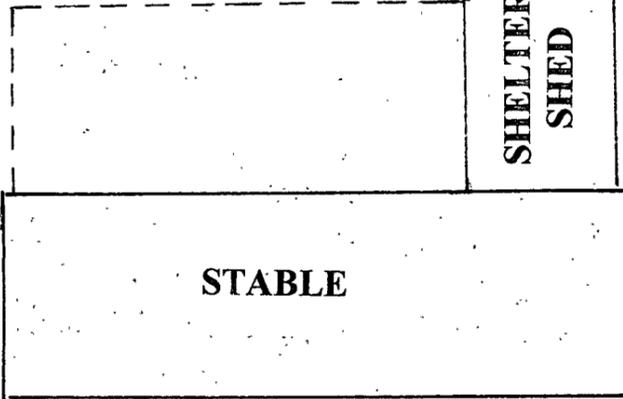
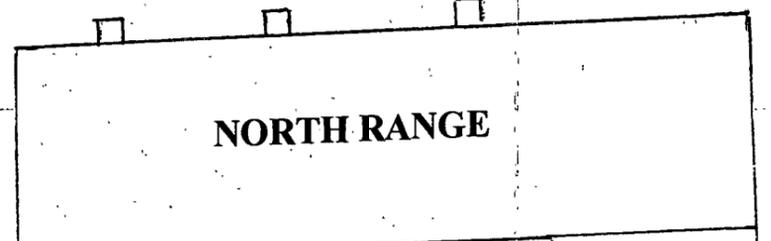
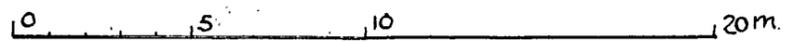
I should like to acknowledge the help of Jane Hatcher in the preparation of this report, as well as the cheerful cooperation of the owners of both properties, and the workmen on site.

Tofta Farm, Ravensworth

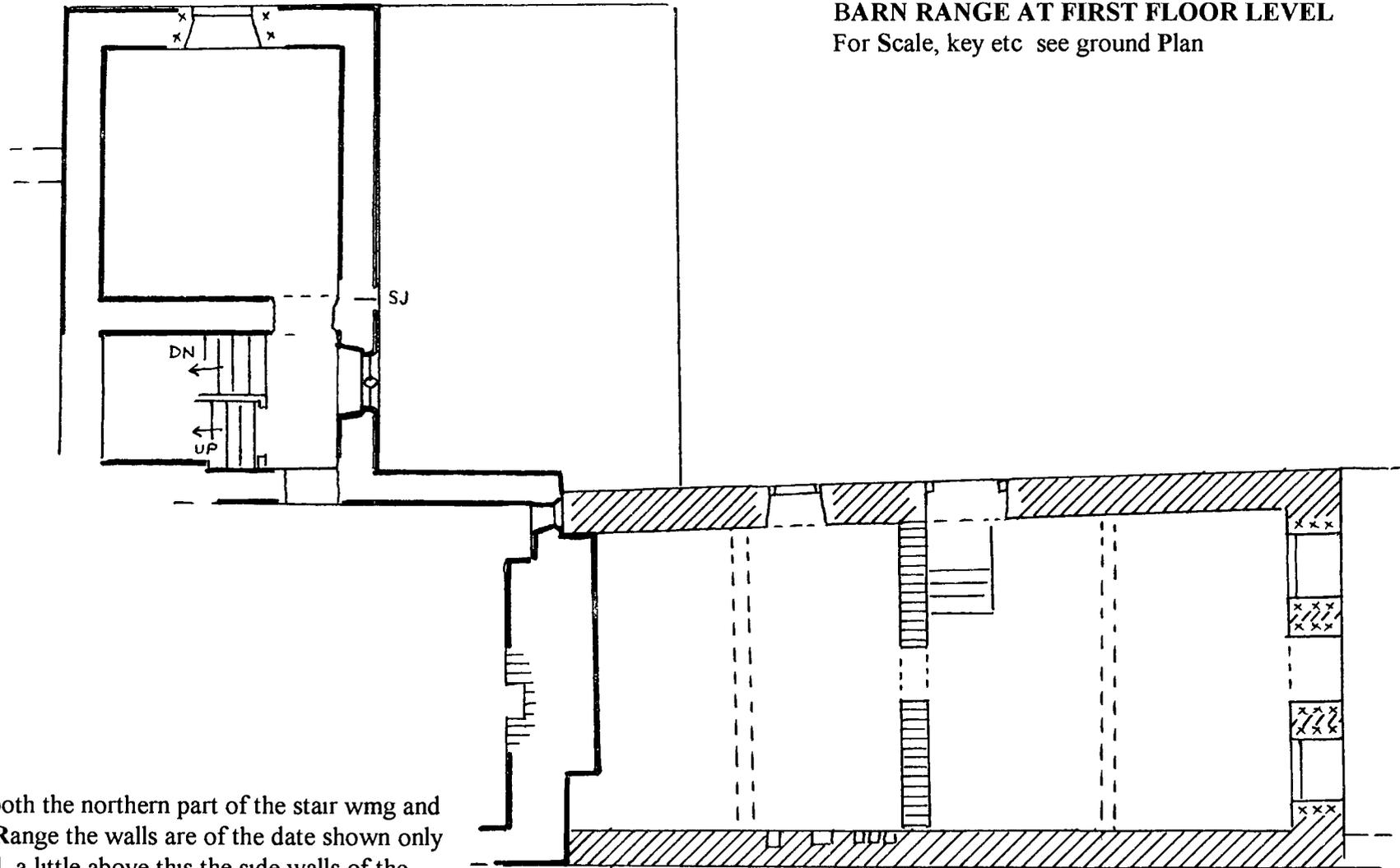
Photographs accompanying Archaeological Assessment P F Ryder September 1998

- 1 Distant S view, showing Castle and Tofta Farm beyond
- 2 The Main Block from the S
- 3 The Main Block, W end
- 4 The Main Block, E end
- 5 General E view ( Smithy / Cartshed on r )
- 6 Rear Wing, N gable
- 7 General NW view (Stable range on l )
- 8 First floor, fireplace(s) at W end
- 9 Main Block, C16? roof truss in western part
- 10 Main Block, C17? roof truss in eastern part
- 11 Main Block, C17 roof truss in eastern part
- 12 Mullioned window in E wall of Rear Wing
- 13 Mullioned window in E wall of Rear Wing
- 14 Barn Range, S side
- 15 Barn Range from NE
- 16 Barn Range, stone stair in central part
- 17 Barn Range, loft of west part, looking W
- 18 Barn Range, loft of central part looking E
- 19 Barn Range eastern part, looking W
- 20 Barn Range, northern recess in E end wall
- 21 Smithy/Cartshed range from S
- 22 Yard looking W to Stable (l) and Shelter Shed (r)
- 23 Re-used blocks in Shelter Shed
- 24 Re-used voussoir in E wall passage, Main Block
- 25 Re-used architectural fragments lying in garden, from blocking of recesses flanking W ground floor fireplace in Main Block

**TOFTA FARM,  
RAVENSWORTH  
NORTH YORKSHIRE NZ 134078  
OUTLINE PLAN OF  
HOUSE AND FARM BUILDINGS**  
based on survey by Malcolm Tempest Ltd.



**TOFTA FARM, RAVENSWORTH**  
**SKETCH PLAN OF PART OF HOUSE AND**  
**BARN RANGE AT FIRST FLOOR LEVEL**  
 For Scale, key etc see ground Plan



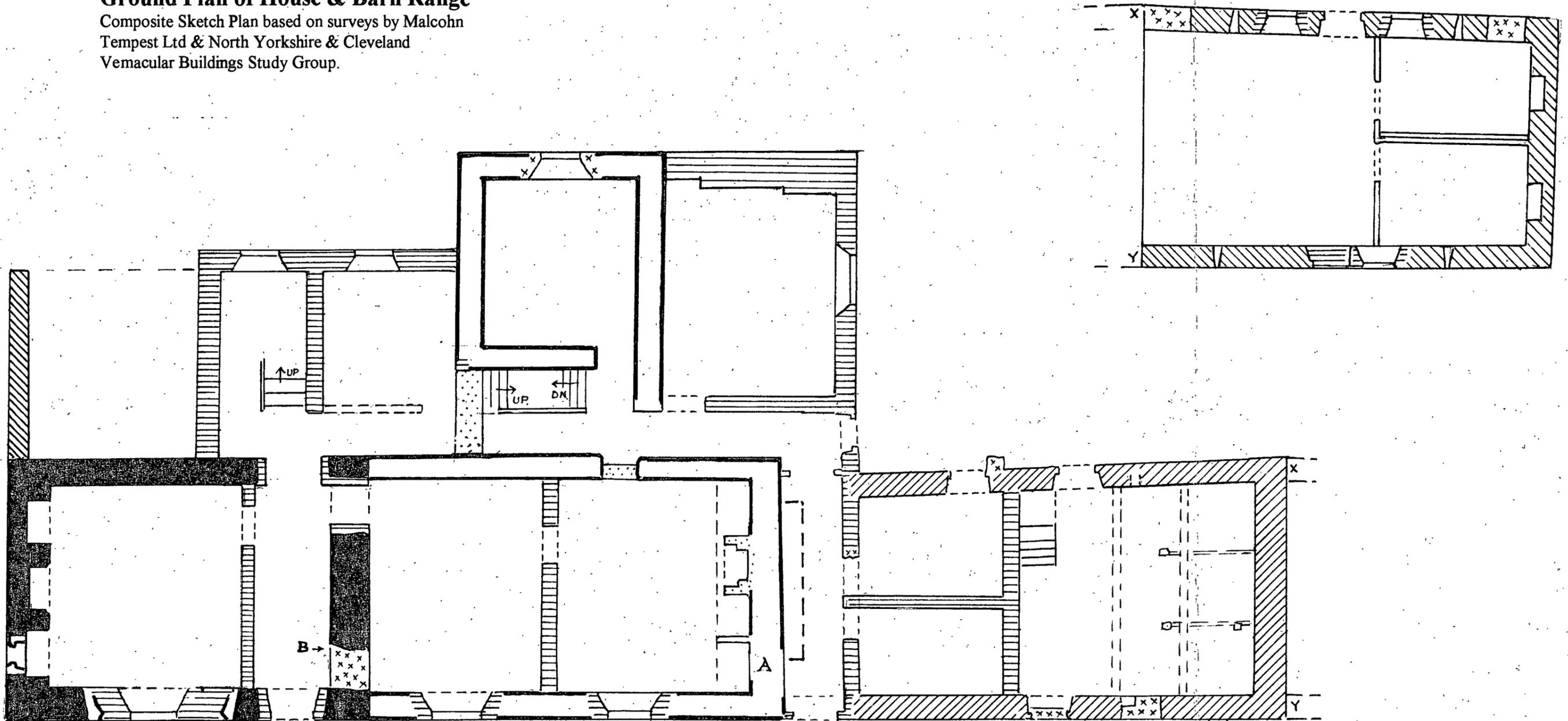
Note, in both the northern part of the stair wing and the Barn Range the walls are of the date shown only floor level, a little above this the side walls of the northern part of the wing (north of the straight joint in the east wall) wing are ?early/mid-18th century date and those of the Barn Range ?early 19<sup>th</sup> century date

# TOFTA FARM, RAVENSWORTH

NORTH YORKSHIRE NZ 134078

## Ground Plan of House & Barn Range

Composite Sketch Plan based on surveys by Malcoln  
Tempest Ltd & North Yorkshire & Cleveland  
Vernacular Buildings Study Group.

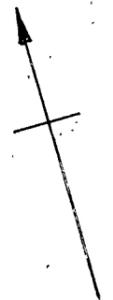


**Key**

-  ?16<sup>th</sup> century
-  Later 17<sup>th</sup> century, probably incorporating earlier fabric
-  ? Late 17<sup>th</sup> century
-  Early/mid 18<sup>th</sup> century
-  Early 19<sup>th</sup> century
-  Uncertain
-  1998

A: Possible door position  
B: Splayed jamb seen 1998

0 5m.



**TOFTA HOUSE, RAVENSWORTH**  
**ARCHITECTURAL FRAGMENTS**

Recorded September 1998 in garden of house  
having been found in blocking of recesses  
flanking western ground floor fireplace

