

# Agnes Gill, Whinfell Bank Barn

Historic Building Record



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## **Introduction**

JB Heritage Consultancy was commissioned to carry out a Level 2 Historic Building Record of Agnes Gill Bank Barn, Whinfell, Cumbria on 21 March 2012 prior to development work being carried out. The inspection of the Bank Barn was carried out by Mr John Bargh MSc IHBC on 26 March 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 12 March 2012.

As the suspended floors and internal wall structure has collapsed, identification of the fabric will be done from photographs taken before the collapse and the evidence that can be discerned on site. Much of the lower solid floor is covered with debris.

The Grid Reference is: SD 5685 9944.

The Planning Reference is: SL/09/0419.

## **General Description**

The Agnes Gill complex (also referred to as: Agnesgill, Annisgill, Ansgill or Annasgill) comprises four main buildings. There are two dwelling houses and two barns all built as detached buildings on the site. The bank barn described in this report is the most easterly building at Agnes Gill. It is understood from a neighbour that one of the dwellings on the site may have been a fulling mill and that there are remains of a mill race nearby. One of the past owners of Agnes Gill was a weaver which may support this evidence.

Bank barns had an upper and lower level and were built into a bank so that the upper level could be accessed from an external door leading from the field or track.<sup>1</sup> The upper level often had a threshing floor and the lower level had a stable and byre.<sup>2</sup> Agnes Gill bank barn generally falls under this description. The upper level could have been a threshing floor. The lower level appears to have been divided into three parts: the central area was probably the byre; a separate walled room to the north-west was probably the stable and another small room to the south-west was also for farm animals. Brunskill identifies three types of bank barn: the true bank barn, the variant bank barn and the hybrid bank barn. As Agnes Gill barn is built across the contours of the sloping ground it may be classified as a variant bank barn.<sup>3</sup>

The bank barn is rectangular on plan. The external walls are random rubble built with local stone bedded in lime mortar. The roof is pitched and covered with Lakeland random diminished slating. All the doors are of timber. The upper floors are suspended timber and timber on solid ground. The lower floors appear to be stone, cobble and concrete.

### **Historical Development**

At a very early stage in the history of Whinfell the manor was divided up into moieties and in 1723 was sold to the tenants who were required to pay an annual sum to the King and Lord Viscount Lonsdale.<sup>4</sup> When the manor was divided up, among the owners were the Redmans, Stricklands, Thornboroughs and Duckets.<sup>5</sup> On 4 February 1748 a Thomas Summers, yeoman of Abbey in Lambrigg conveyed a messuage and lands called Agnesgill (or Annasgill) in Whinfell to Thomas Atkinson the younger of Yeathouse.<sup>6</sup> Thomas Summers' wife was called Agnes which may have inspired the name Agnesgill or may just be a coincidence.

In 1806 there was a Bryan Hayton of Whinfell, husbandman, mentioned in a bastardy bond<sup>7</sup> and the name Bryan Hayton appears at Agnesgill later in the nineteenth century. In 1829 a farmer and yeoman George Hayton was living at Annisgill.<sup>8</sup> The 1835 Plan of Whinfell Township for the Commutation of Tythes shows the four main buildings that make up Agnes Gill marked on in approximately the same positions as today.<sup>9</sup> The book that accompanies this plan gives the landed possessions of Edward Hayton who was the owner and occupier of the Agnesgill Estate.<sup>10</sup> In addition to his surrounding fields Plot 382 is Agnes Gill Houses and 'Tongue' and Plot 383 is Barn Scalf Close (the barn recorded in this record).<sup>11</sup> The plan in the Inclosure Award of 1838 also shows the four buildings making up Agnes Gill.<sup>12</sup> In the award the occupier of Agnes Gill was a Bryan Hayton, a spirit merchant of Kendal.<sup>13</sup> He possessed fields surrounding Agnesgill which were set out for him under the Inclosure Act 1842 in lieu of, and in exchange for certain dales situated in the outfield in the township of Whinfell.<sup>14</sup> In 1849 and 1851 an Edward Hayton was the owner of Agnesgill and described as a farmer and weaver.<sup>15,16</sup> In 1858 Edward Hayton was a farmer at Annisgill or Ansgill<sup>17</sup> but the name Hayton disappears as in 1885 Edward Parrington was a farmer at Agnesgill<sup>18</sup> and in 1905 a farmer called John Airey was resident at Agnesgill.<sup>19</sup> Moving into the twentieth century Agnes Gill still continues as a farm as, in the 1934 directory, the Wilson Brothers are farmers at Agnes Gill.<sup>20</sup>

### **Historical Building Description**

Brunskill writes that a farmstead could consist of just a farmhouse and bank barn.<sup>21</sup> Bank barns are very numerous in Cumbria,<sup>22</sup> some date from the seventeenth century but most came into general use from 1730 to beyond 1850.<sup>23</sup> The manor had been divided up and sold

to the tenants in 1723 and a message<sup>24</sup> (house and adjacent buildings) and lands called Agnesgill was mentioned in a conveyance in 1748. The four main buildings comprising Agnesgill as seen today were shown on the 1835 Commutation of Tythes plan. The 1859 First Edition map<sup>25</sup> shows the range of buildings in similar positions to the Tythe map and this arrangement of buildings is repeated on the 1898 Ordnance Survey map,<sup>26</sup> the 1914 Ordnance Survey map<sup>27</sup> and the 1920 Ordnance Survey Map.<sup>28</sup> Since 1835 there appears to be no change to the Agnes Gill estate layout. The barn would have been built before 1835, and probably between 1723 and 1748.

### **Detailed Report**

#### The Roof

The roof is covered with Lakeland random diminished slating nailed to battens which are fixed to softwood rafters supported on purlins carried on three tie beam trusses, one of which has a thin collar below the apex (Plate 1). There is a timber ridge linking the trusses at the apex. The main roof timbers appear to be pine and some have saw marks suggesting mechanical preparation. The underside of the slates is torched with lime mortar against the battens to keep out the weather. Externally is a stone ridge on top of the slates.



*Plate 1. Roof Construction.*

### External Walls Generally

The random rubble walls are approximately 600mm thick and built with local stone bedded in lime mortar. On all elevations there are horizontal bands of projecting 'through' stones which pass through the full thickness of the wall to help tie it together. On most walls there are small openings left out in the stonework for ventilation.

### The North Wall

This wall contains a pair of large timber doors hung on wrought iron pins which project into the floor and also the underside of the oak lintel (Plates 3, 4 and 5). This appears to operate on a similar basis to harr hanging. The doors have chamfered vertical hanging styles and chamfered horizontal rails morticed into the styles. There are no meeting styles at the leading edge of the doors. The doors have vertical timber boarding nailed externally to the rails and some of these boards have a quirk bead moulding along the long edge. Above the doors is a canopy, or pentise to protect the doorway from the weather. It is timber framed and slated with random diminished Lakeland slates (Plate 6). In the centre of the north wall, and set perpendicular to it, is a concrete block wall which appears recent and may have formed the end wall to a former extension. This extension is no longer present. The western part of the main north wall would have formed the inner wall of this extension and is finished with plaster. At ground level is a single ledged timber door with timber lintel.



*Plate 2. North East Elevation.*



*Plate 3. Door Hanging Pins in Lintel.*



*Plate 4. Door Hanging Pins in Floor.*



*Plate 5. Large Doors.*



*Plate 6. Pentise over Large Doors.*



*Plate 7. East Elevation.*

#### The East Wall

This is a gable wall and has no specific features. There is an owl hole towards the top of the wall which is visible in Plates 2 and 7.

### The South Wall.

There is another pair of tall timber doors hung on wrought iron pins as those on the north elevation. Over these doors are oak lintels internally and a rough stone soldier arch externally. There are also vestiges of a timber pentise frame at each side at the top of the doorway so this door also had weather protection. Access to this doorway is from higher ground formed as a ramp behind a stone retaining wall. To the west end of the wall at high level are two windows with timber lintels and slate cills, the timber frames probably being of more recent date. One window has a top inward opening hopper and the other is a side hung casement type. There are three timber ledged doors with external vertical boarding serving the lower floor of this elevation each with a glazed upper panel. The lintels over the openings are oak internally with a very large stone lintel externally.



*Plate 8. South Elevation.*

### The West Wall

This wall has an owl hole towards the top. There is a ledged vertically boarded stable door at the bottom of the gable with oak lintels over it and to the side is a small window with a large stone lintel over the opening externally.



*Plate 9. West Elevation.*

#### Floor

The floor to the upper level is solid but has a timber boarded finish. This may have been a threshing floor and one leaf of the large doors possibly opened for winnowing. The floor to the lower level is largely concealed by debris but visual and previous photographic evidence reveal some information. The floor to the byre was partly large uneven pieces of slate within the stall area with a step down to the concrete floor of the manure passage (Plate 10). This split floor level was the usual arrangement in a byre.<sup>29</sup> The ceiling height in the byre is about 1800mm. When constructing a byre, low ceiling heights were usual practice well into the nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup> The stable floor appears to have been stone cobbles. This floor is lower therefore giving a greater ceiling height for horses and helping to confirm that this was used as a stable. It is useful to refer to Brunskill who mentions the taller ceiling height for a stable.<sup>31</sup> The timber suspended upper floor is largely missing due to collapse but evidence and previous photographs provide some information. The floor structure comprised oak beams and possibly oak joists supporting timber floor boards. The beams were probably reclaimed timber, possibly former cruck frames, and built into the walls. The joists were housed into the beams and also built into the main walls. The underside of the floor structure including the boards was coated with lime wash.



*Plate 10. Internal View of Byre Showing Manure Passage and Boskins.*



*Plate 11. Underside of Upper Floor Above Stable Also Showing Two Hay Racks.*

### Internal Walls

The internal surface of the external walls and the internal walls are coated with lime wash. There is a recess in the retaining wall to the threshing floor, size 600mm x 700mm and about 400mm deep, all finished with lime wash (Plate 12). There is a recess internally on the north external wall, size 400mm x 500mm. The 'L' shaped stone rubble wall that formed the stable is 450mm thick. On the byre side the wall was finished with lime wash. On the stable side it was given a rough plaster finish with lime wash.

The byre area was divided by boskins which were made from oak. These had vertical oak members fixed into an aperture in the floor and bolted or housed into the underside of the floor beams above. In early barns the vertical member was curved and this was a typical feature up to the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>32</sup> However, the vertical members at Agnes Gill were straight, therefore helping to date the barn. A sloping horizontal rail was fixed between the vertical members at about two-thirds height and another one was fixed at ceiling level. The panel between the oak framing was a solid piece of slate about 70mm thick (Plates 10, 13 and 14).

The stall divisions to the stable were a similar framed construction but have timber boards instead of slate as an infill. There appears to have been two hay racks with probably wrought iron grilles at high level for hay, probably fed through a trap door from the hay loft above (Plate 11). Brunskill identifies this feature is to be found in a stable compartment.<sup>33</sup>



*Plate 12. Recess in Internal Wall.*



*Plate 13. Boskin in Small Animal Compartment.*



*Plate 14. Oak Framed Boskin in Byre.*

### **Interpretation and Significance**

There are a number of clues to help determine the age of the barn. The Listing description for Agnes Gill places the house at late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. It is likely that Agnes Gill barn was built during the eighteenth century possibly after 1723 when the manor was sold to the tenants and before 1748 when Thomas Summers conveyed Agnes Gill to another. It is conceivable that Agnes Gill estate was built then and named after Summers' wife, Agnes.

Brunskill says that some bank barns date from the seventeenth century but most came into general use from 1730 to beyond 1850. A date of early eighteenth century for Agnes Gill barn therefore fits well with this general statement.

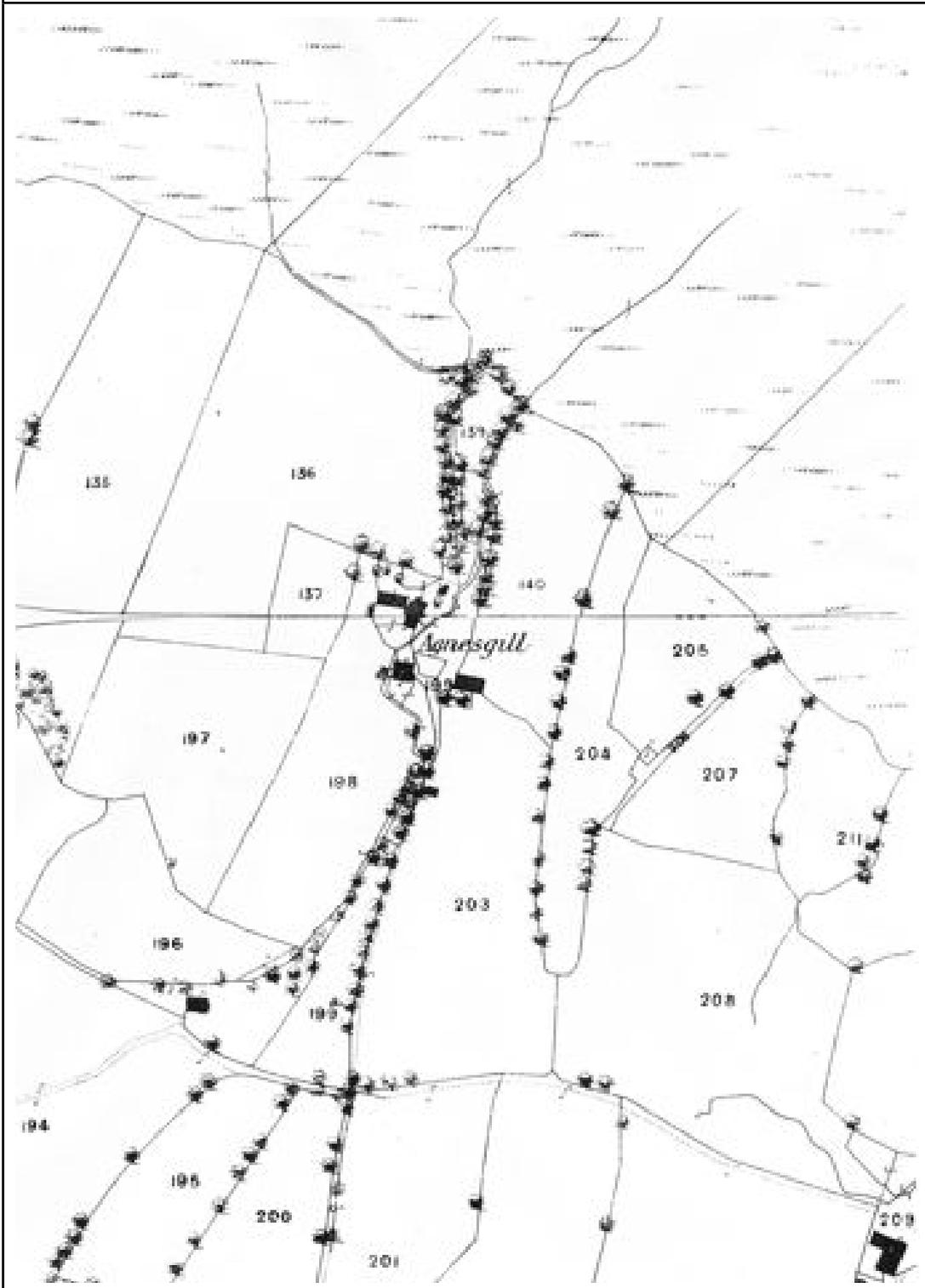
The external walls contain horizontal bands of 'through' stones which were widely used by the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Some aspects of the design, particularly the accommodation for the farm animals, are worthy of scrutiny. The straight vertical timber member of the boskin in the byre stall dates from after the early eighteenth century, again supporting the suggested date. It appears that the stalls were arranged across the width of the barn with the doors in the long side of the building opening out from the manure passage. This arrangement was common in bank barns.<sup>35</sup> Photographic evidence suggests that, along with the manure passage at the eastern end of the byre there could have been a separate feeding passage across the width of the barn at the western end. Separate feeding passages were not common in Lake District barns before the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Only in very large late nineteenth century bank barns were separate manure and feeding passages commonly provided.<sup>37</sup> The drawing of the barn plan shows the position of the possible feeding passage and boskin arrangement. Evidence generally points to Agnes Gill barn being early eighteenth century.

It is possible to make an approximation of the number of animals kept at the farm. The stable has hay racks in two of the compartments suggesting there were two horses. Interpretation of the byre layout is difficult due to the available photographs and what is visible on site today. If the cows were housed in pairs there may have been only four cows, or possibly six. The loft above the byre and stable would be kept for hay.

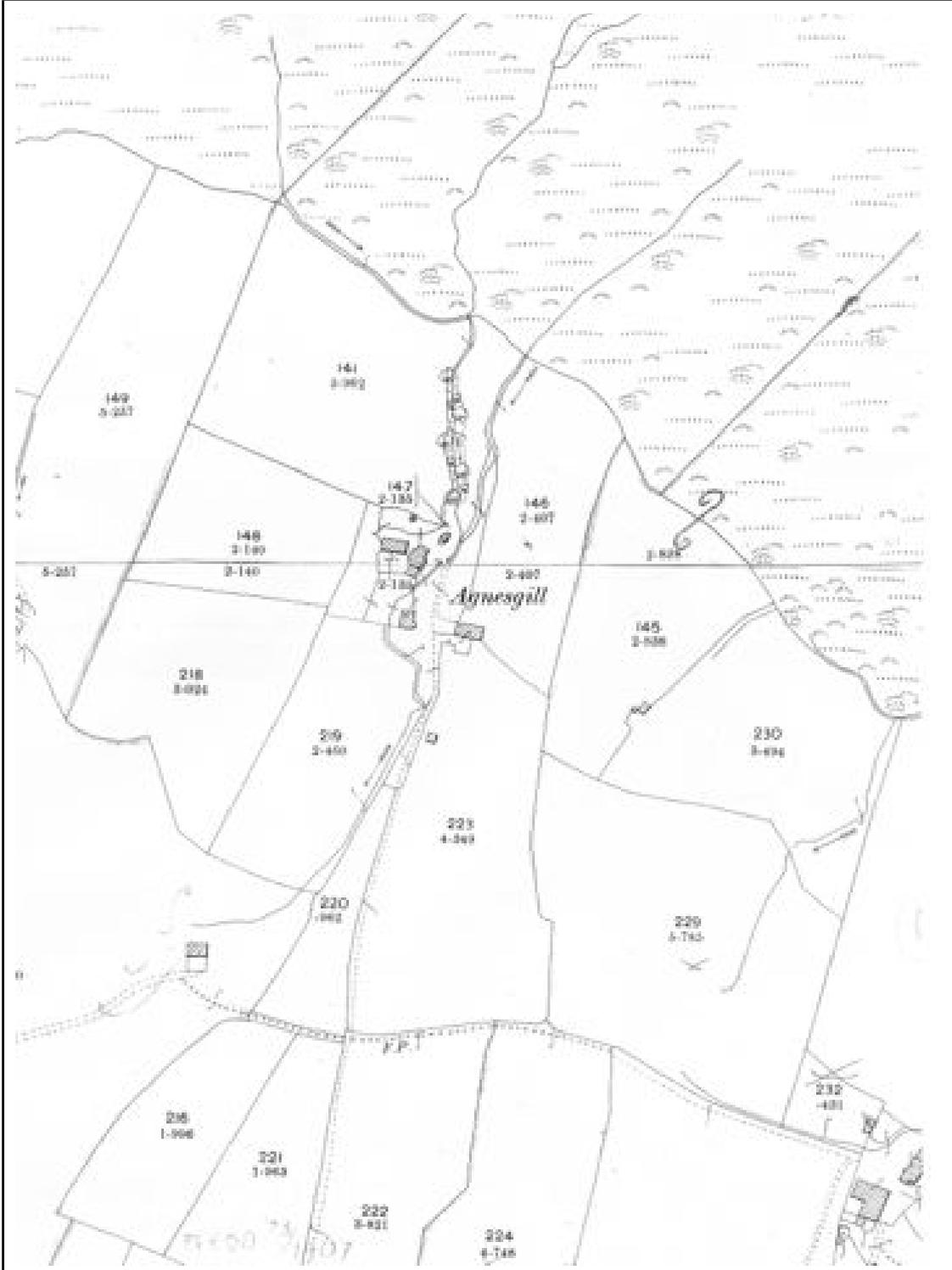
Agnes Gill barn has evidential value.<sup>38</sup> The evidence described in this report contributes to the knowledge bank of Agnes Gill. Information has been gathered about what type and number of livestock was kept and how they were housed.

## Historic Maps

Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 25" Sheet 1859



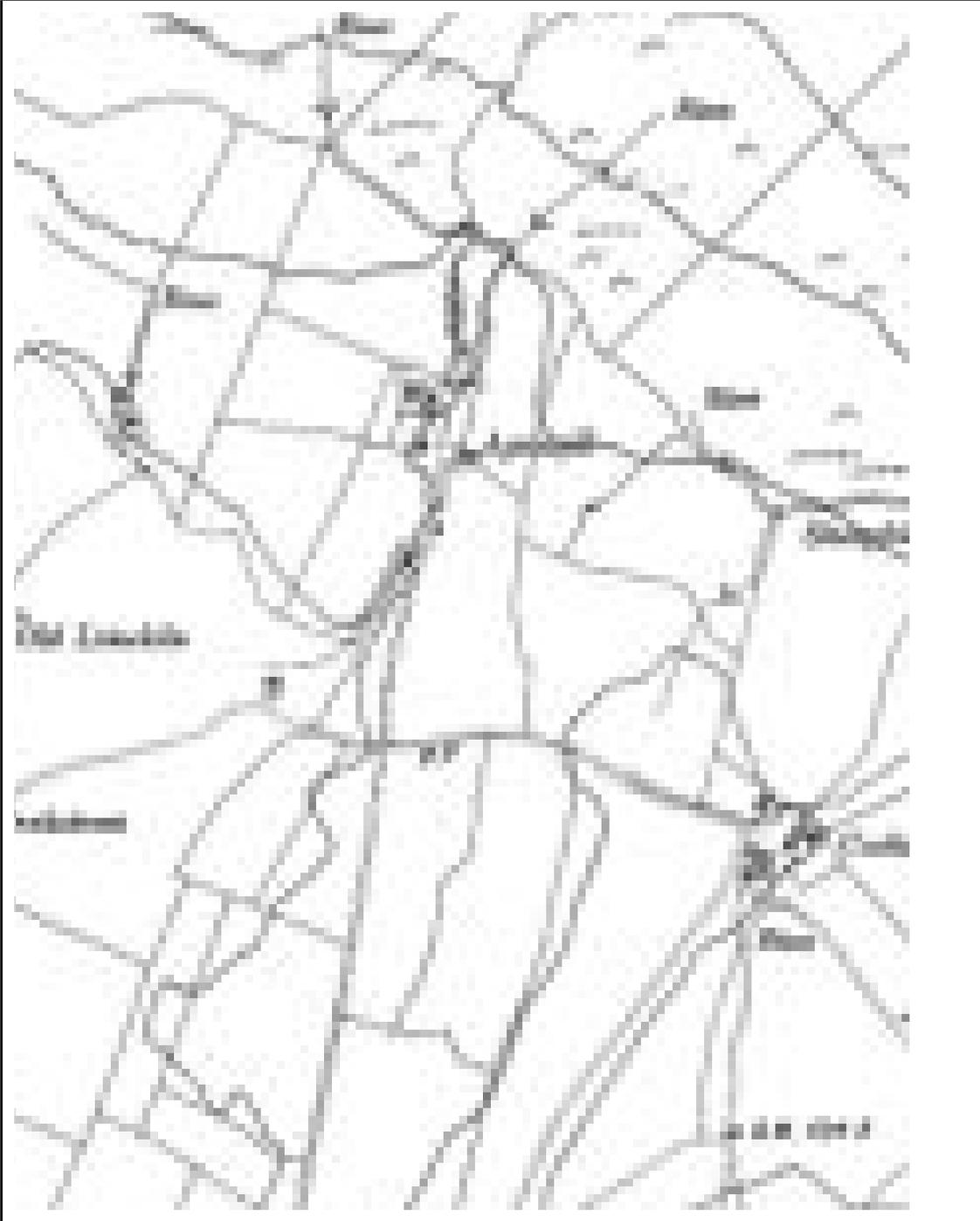
Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition 25" Sheet 1898



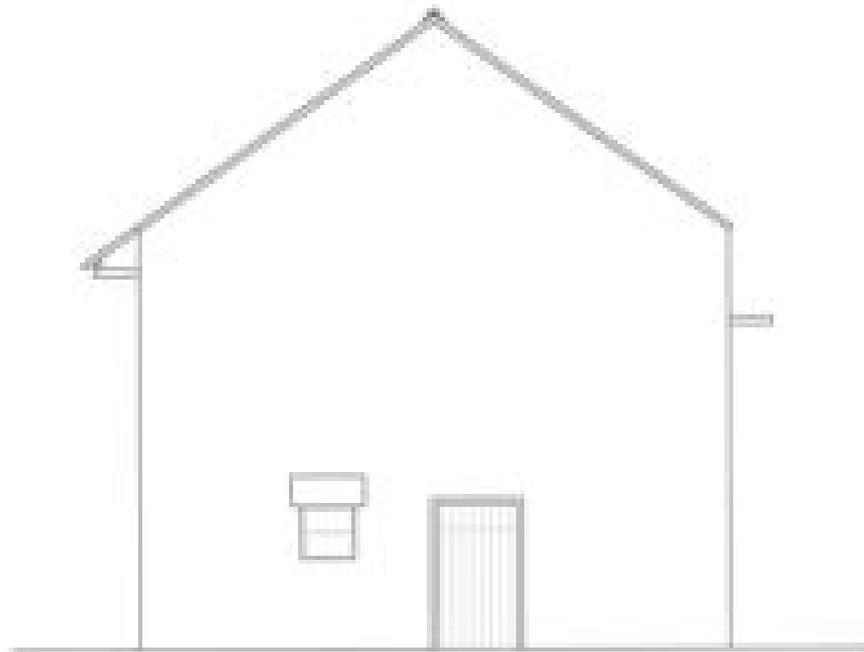
Ordnance Survey 3rd Edition 25" Sheet 1914



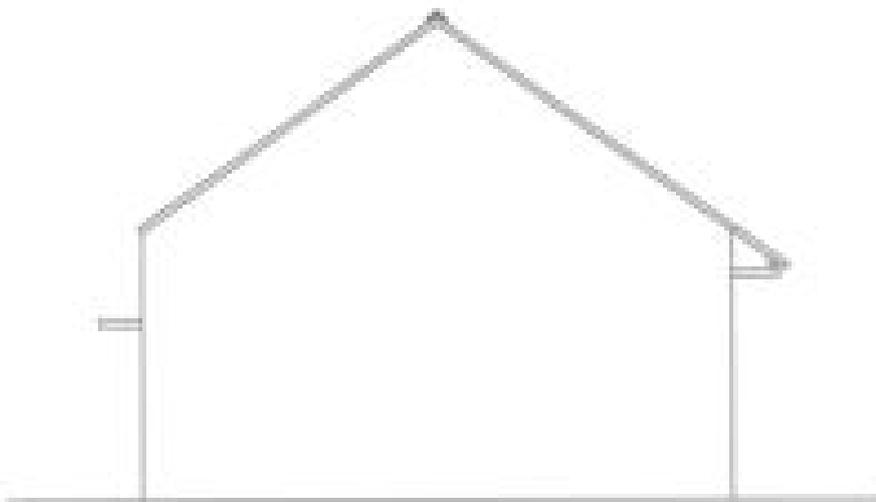
Ordnance Survey Map 6" to 1 mile 1920



## **Existing Plans and Elevations**



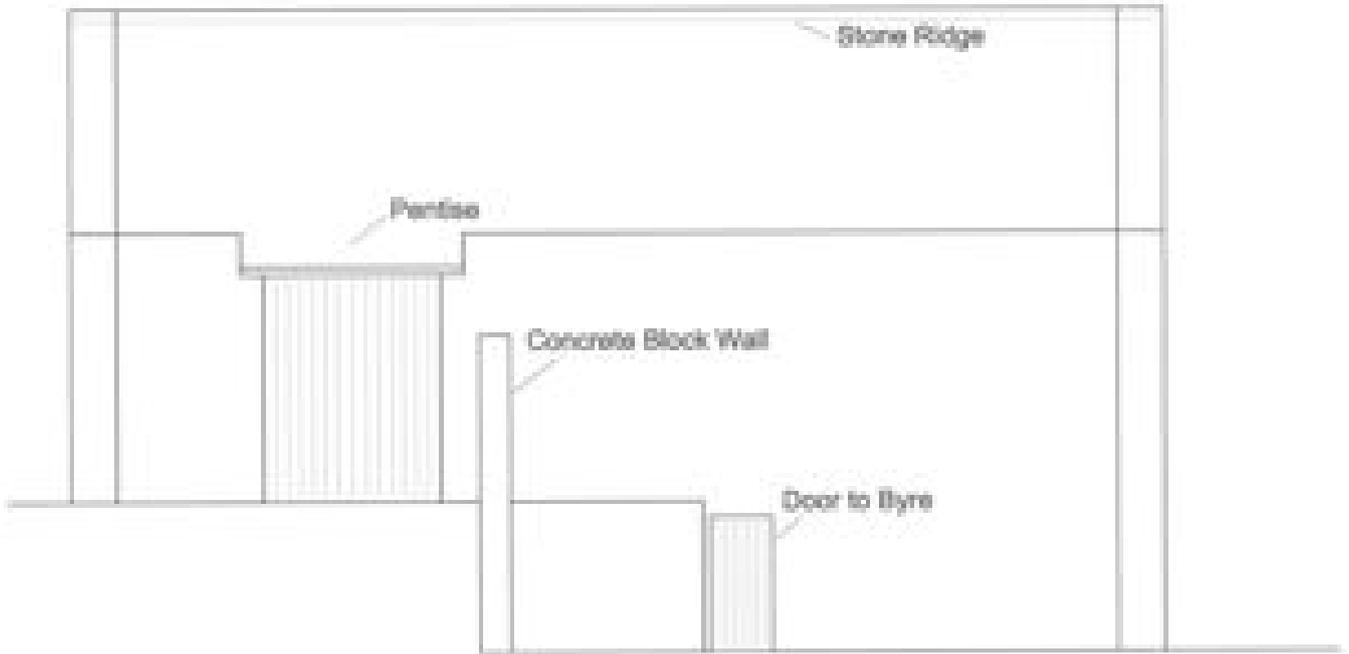
**West Elevation**



**East Elevation**

**Scale Metres 1:100**





North Elevation



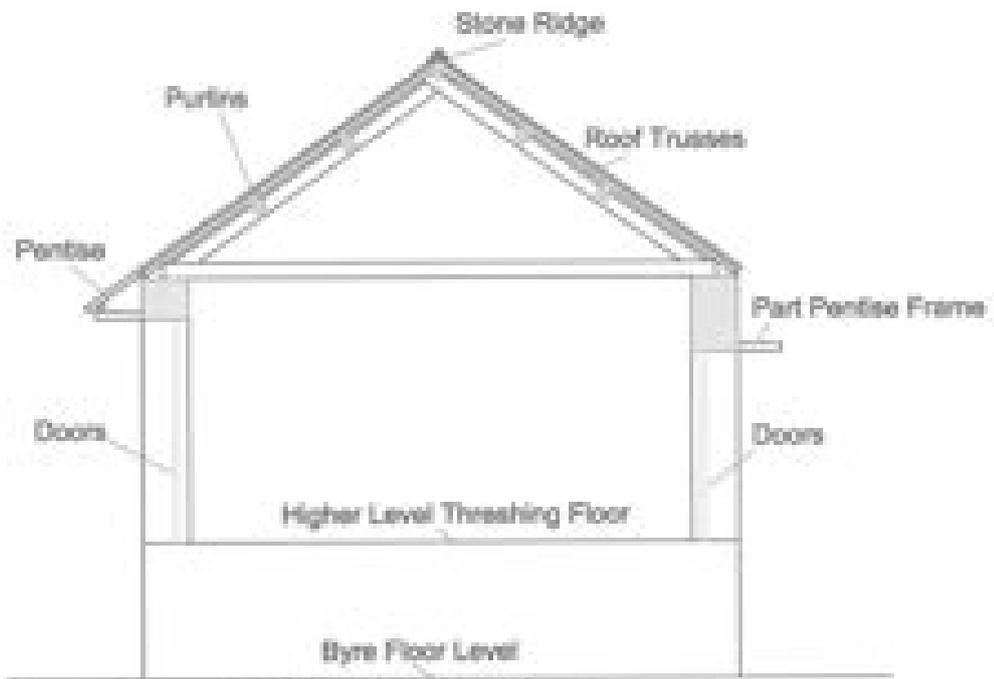
Plan

Scale Metres 1:100





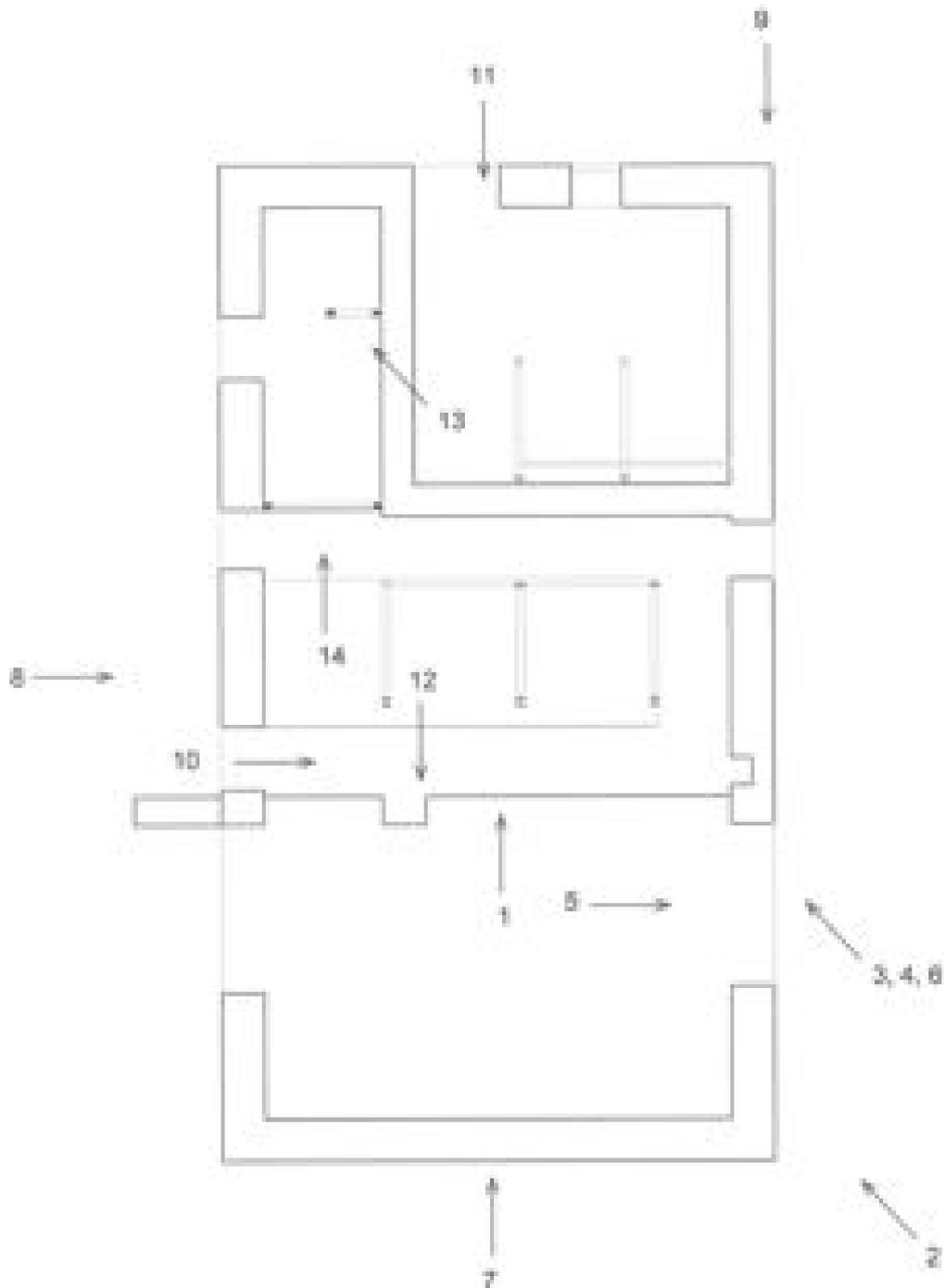
**South Elevation**



**Vertical Section**

Scale Metres 1:100





**Plan Showing Photograph Positions  
(not to scale)**

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Brunskill. R. W., 2002. Traditional Buildings of Cumbria the County of the Lakes. London: Cassell. Page 105 and 106.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid. Page 105 and 106.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid. Page 105, 106 and 110.
- <sup>4</sup> Mannex. 1978. History, Topography and Directory of Westmorland with Lonsdale and Amounderness in Lancashire 1851. Beckermet: Michael Moon. Page 315.
- <sup>5</sup> Bulmer. T., History, Topography and Directory of Westmorland 1905. Page 594.
- <sup>6</sup> Cumbria County Archives Kendal. Deed of Indemnity 1748. WDX 111/2/7 or WDX 111/T15
- <sup>7</sup> Cumbria County Archives Kendal. Bastardy Bond 1806. WQ/SR/614/10.
- <sup>8</sup> Parson. W. White. W., 1976. History, Directory and Gazetteer of Cumberland and Westmorland with Furness and Cartmel 1829. Beckermet: Michael Moon. Page 675.
- <sup>9</sup> Cumbria County Archives Kendal. Plan of the Whinfell Township for the Commutation of Tythes 1835. WQRC 23 .
- <sup>10</sup> Cumbria County Archives Kendal. Book accompanying the Plan of the Whinfell Township for the Commutation of Tythes 1835. WQRC 23.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid. WQRC 23.
- <sup>12</sup> Cumbria County Archives Kendal. Award of the Commissioners for the Inclosure of the Commons in the Township of Whinfell. WQR/1/94. 1838.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid. WQR/1/94.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid. WQR/1/94.
- <sup>15</sup> Mannex. 1978. History, Topography and Directory of Westmorland with Lonsdale and Amounderness in Lancashire 1851. Beckermet: Michael Moon. Page 332.
- <sup>16</sup> Mannex. P. J., 1849. History, Topography and Directory of Westmorland and Lonsdale North of the Sands in Lancashire. London: Simpkin Marshall. Page 332.
- <sup>17</sup> Post Office Directory of Westmorland and Cumberland 1858. London: Kelly. Page 38 and 83.
- <sup>18</sup> Bulmer. T. F., (Edited by) 1885. Bulmer's History, Topography and Directory of Westmorland. Manchester: Bulmer. Page 603.
- <sup>19</sup> Bulmer. T., History, Topography and Directory of Westmorland 1905. Page 595.
- <sup>20</sup> Kelly's Directory of Cumberland and Westmorland 1934. London: Kelly's. Page 176.
- <sup>21</sup> Brunskill. R. W., 2002. Traditional Buildings of Cumbria the County of the Lakes. London: Cassell. Page 105.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid. Page 107.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid. Page 108.
- <sup>24</sup> The Cassell Concise Dictionary. A messuage is a dwelling house with the adjacent buildings and land for the use of the household.

- <sup>25</sup> Cumbria County Archives Kendal. First Edition 25 inch Sheet XXXIV-6 (B). 1859.
- <sup>26</sup> Cumbria County Archives Kendal. Ordnance Survey Map 1/2500 1898.
- <sup>27</sup> Cumbria County Archives Kendal. Ordnance Survey Map 1/2500 1914.
- <sup>28</sup> Cumbria County Library. Ordnance Survey Sheet XXXIV N.W. 6 inches to one mile 1920.
- <sup>29</sup> Denyer. S., 1991. Traditional Buildings and Life in the Lake District. London: Gollancz. Page 98.
- <sup>30</sup> Brunskill. R. W., 1999. Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain and Their Conservation. London: Yale. Page 64
- <sup>31</sup> Brunskill. R. W., 2002. Traditional Buildings of Cumbria the County of the Lakes. London: Cassell. Page 106.
- <sup>32</sup> Denyer. S., 1991. Traditional Buildings and Life in the Lake District. London: Gollancz. Page 98.
- <sup>33</sup> Brunskill. R. W., 2007. Traditional Farm Buildings of Britain and their Conservation. London: Yale. Page 74 and 76.
- <sup>34</sup> Denyer. S., 1991. Traditional Buildings and Life in the Lake District. London: Gollancz. Page 154.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid. Page 98.
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid. Page 98.
- <sup>37</sup> Ibid. Page 139.
- <sup>38</sup> English Heritage. 2008. Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance. London: English Heritage. Page 28.