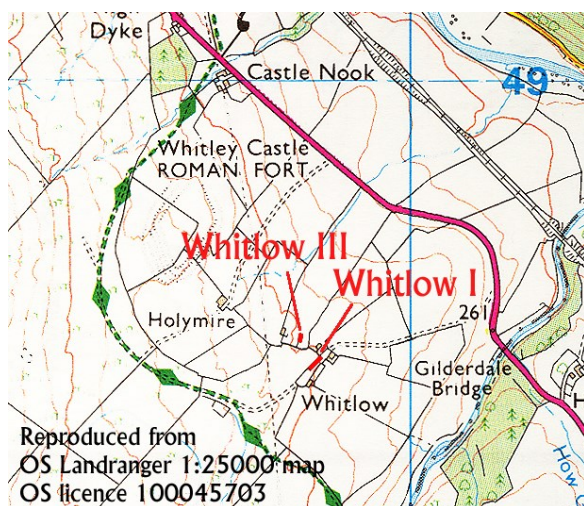


Whitlow III.

The ruinous building, known as Whitlow III, stands on rising ground c 100 m to the west of the present farm of Whitlow, which lies on the west side of the valley of the Gilderdale Burn c 3 km north-west of Alston; it is one of a number of structures of historic interest within the vicinity of the Roman fort of Whitley Castle.

The building comprises a former house, originally a bastle, with a later barn attached to its north end. It was listed (Grade II) as a structure of special historic or architectural interest in 1985, when it remained intact and roofed. Considerable deterioration has taken place, especially within the last five years, with the collapse of the southern part of the south gable end. The shell of the building is currently (November 2007) undergoing clearance and conservation works, and the remains of the roof have now been removed.



The building consists of a house, originally a bastle, 10.8 by 6.4 m externally, with a second bastle-period building 7.4 m built onto its south end, a small outshut 4.3 m long and 3.05 m deep built onto the centre of the west wall, and a 19th-century barn 6.5 m long added to the north end. The bastle has walls of coursed roughly-squared stone of no great size, with substantial quoins, notably at the eastern angles; its walls are c 1.0 m thick except for the east wall, only 0.60 m thick, which was rebuilt in the 19th century.

The code numbers in the description below relate to the separate Structural Inventory, which contains a fuller description of each feature.

Exterior

The front (east) elevation is of two broad bays with a central doorway (A1). The flagstone lintel of its front door is surmounted by a pair of blocks - the western (A6) the re-used sill or head of a small chamfered window - that in turn carry an upper lintel, any cavity between them having been later infilled. The flanking windows have been quite large, and probably held sashes; their lintels seem to be the re-used head (south) and sill (north) of an earlier two-light mullioned windows. The lower part of the southern window (A2) has been blocked (its present sill being another re-used section of an older window) and the northern (A3), which also re-uses an earlier sill, has been reduced to a considerable smaller opening. Of the two upper windows, the northern (A5), again re-uses an earlier chamfered sill that it is a little too wide for it, whilst the southern (A6) has been partly destroyed by the collapse of the wall.

Much of the southern gable end of the house has fallen within the last few years, but

its only architectural feature, the central byre doorway of the original bastle (A1), remains intact. Long blocked by the insertion of a fireplace, this has a shallow segmental arch cut into the soffit of a heavy and irregular lintel, and massive blocks in its jambs, which are left square-edged without any chamfer or moulding.

The rear (west) wall of the house has a blocked doorway (C1) set near its centre, opening into the rear outshut, of which little more than footings survives; that this outshut was an addition can be seen from a small blocked loop (C3) in the original wall being set directly on the line of the largely-fallen north end, visible internally as a rather larger infilled recess. There is also another small ground-floor loop to the south of the outshut (C2), the internal opening of which is cut by a later recess (C7). Above there is what seems to be an original a first-floor window (C4) that is almost square, and has a neatly chamfered surround; internally this had an interesting little recess or locker directly above its timber lintel, although that has now fallen.

Little survives of the bastle-period extension at the south end of the house, other than the section of its west wall adjacent to the older building, now leaning perilously outwards. This is 1.0 m thick, and has a plain square-headed doorway (E1), rebated and splayed internally; a particularly massive block forms its internal lintel. There has been a similar doorway opposite (F1), of which only the lower part of the south jamb survives, its base formed by a massive block in the external face of which is a roughly-cut niche. A field wall has been built on the footings of the adjacent east wall; only the footings remain of the southern part of the west wall and south end.

There also seem to be traces of a further structure on the east side of the extension. Rubble and footings mark its south and east walls, the latter continuing north to disappear beneath the later garden wall in front of the house.

The barn at the north end of the house is built of coursed roughly-squared stone, a little smaller than that of the adjacent house, although there are some big blocks in the footings, notably at the north end. The front (east) wall has three slit vents low down, with a pitching door above the southern, and the west wall two pitching vents and a blocked window. The north end has a doorway set centrally (with a massive block as its lintel), still an echo of the local bastle tradition, and a smaller doorway to the west; above this, and a metre or so below eaves level, is a horizontal line of projecting flagstones, as if a remnant of the roof of some additional structure.

Interior

In November 2007 the interior of the house was cleared of the fallen remains of the roof and south gable. At the south end what seems to have been the parlour fireplace survives (B2); this is c 1.2 m wide, has a neat scrolled moulding to its surround, probably of early 18th century date, with a timber strainer beam directly above. The northern room seems to have been the main living room, and had a larger fireplace (D1), perhaps of the later 18th century, which formerly had a lintel carried on shaped corbels; the lintel has gone and the front of the opening has been walled up, although the side-pieces and corbels survive, along with a timber strainer beam above the lintel. There is another strainer just below the level of the bedroom ceilings, although there never seems to have been any fireplace at first floor level. As at the south end of the house, at first floor level the stack can be seen to be built up against the earlier gable

wall, which has a marked set-back at around the level of the first floor. The northern bedroom has a small wall locker on the west (C11), and on the north, to the east of the chimney breast, a recess formed by a small blocked window (D4) also visible within the adjacent barn; the walls of the bedroom (and whole length of the north wall) have considerable remains of plaster, except on the face of the chimney stack.

Only one ceiling beam of the first floor of the house survives, a little to the north of the front door, along with some axial joists over the parlour, all of fairly light scantling and probably of 19th century date. There has been a second beam immediately to the south of the front door.

The roof of the house has been of four irregular bays, with shallow-pitched collar-beam trusses that were probably of 19th century date; in November 2007 only the northernmost survived, carrying two purlins and a diagonally-set ridge; in addition there is a collar set between the lower purlins, close to the north end of the house, which carries a vertical strut or king-post supporting the ridge.

The only current access to the interior of the barn (apart from the pitching door) is by means of doorway (or more properly passage, bearing in mind the wall thickness) D2 cut through the west end of the north wall of the house, roofed by a series of timber lintels. On the external (north) face of the wall and c 0.5 m above the west end of the lintel is a stone bearing a series of parallel incised lines that might be a re-used piece of Roman work from the nearby fort. The external face of the north end of the house shows a small blocked window (D3), almost square, set centrally at ground floor level, and the first-floor window (D4) already mentioned, towards the east end of the wall. The roof of the barn is of two bays, with a principal rafter truss that has a collar lapped and nailed onto its north face, carrying two levels of purlins and a ridge board. There are sockets for the timbers of a removed loft that seems to have run the full length of the barn.

Discussion

Although in poor condition (and having suffered considerable recent deterioration) Whitlow III remains an interesting example of the development of a small Alston Moor farmhouse. There may well have been an earlier structure on the site; footings extending from beneath the present garden wall, parallel to the southern extension, may relate to an earlier building, perhaps a medieval long house.

The oldest parts of the upstanding fabric clearly relate to a defensible bastle, probably of the early 17th century, typical of the area. This had walls around a metre in thickness and a byre entrance as usual set in the centre of the (south) gable end; other original openings survive in the central loop at the north end (showing that there was no ground-floor fireplace), in two small basement loops on the west, and first floor windows at the south end of the west and east end of the north walls. The original upper doorway to the first-floor living accommodation would have been in the east wall.

Soon after its construction, the bastle received an addition at its south end, still with thick walls, but with a pair of doorways, in effect forming a cross passage set against the entrance end of the original bastle. Although doubling the number of ground-floor

doorways would hardly add to the defensive capability of a building, but follows a pattern seen elsewhere in the area, eg at Clarghyll Hall and in Allendale at Sinderhope Shield.

It would appear that the bastle was remodelled as a conventional ground-floor house in the later 17th or early 18th century, to judge from the rather attractive parlour fireplace that still survives; the remains of the main living room fireplace, with its corbelled-out lintel, look rather later; they might either replace an earlier firehood (cf Whitlow I) or simply reflect a rather more up-to-date style for the larger opening. The rebuilding of the front wall of the bastle probably represents a second phase of modernisation, which probably took place in the early 19th century. The new windows, reusing parts of surrounds of c1700 predecessors, were large enough to contain 12-pane sashes.

The house would appear to have been abandoned in the later 19th or early 20th century, and followed the fate of many, reflecting the decline of the local lead mining industry and subsequent depopulation. It was converted into a farm building; the windows on the east elevation were either blocked or reduced in size, domestic fittings stripped out and the present flooring (concrete, slabs and cobbling) put in.