

Coldwell Farm, Humshaugh, Northumberland

Archaeological Recording March 2007

Planning application no. 200670971

Northumberland County Council Conservation Team Reference T29/2; 6297

OASIS reference

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1. Introduction

Coldwell Farm was the subject of a Historic Buildings Assessment by Alan Williams Archaeology in 2005¹, in which the various buildings on the site were described and their structural history analysed, with the aid of map and documentary evidence. The present report deals with the further recording recommended in the 2005 Assessment and requested in a brief issued 25/8/06 by Karen Derham., Assistant County Archaeologist, Northumberland County Council.

The specified recording comprises:

- X A detailed photographic record of the graffiti and drawings on the panelled stair in the barn
- X Drawings recording the form and location of other features of historic significance
- X Sections to illustrate the vertical relationships within the building.

2. The Farm

Coldwell Farm (NY 908730) , stands on the south bank of the North Tyne 2km to the north-west of Humshaugh and c 10 km north-north-west of Hexham; the farm, reached by a minor road running east from Keepersshield on the B6320 Hexham -Bellinbgham road, turns its

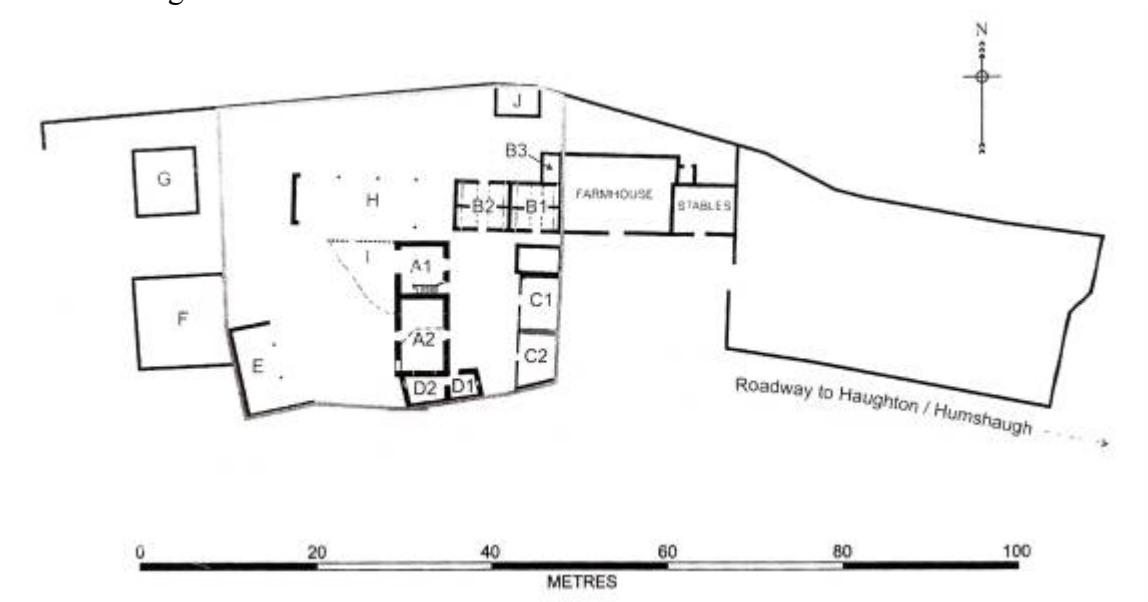


back on a steep slope dropping 20 m or so to the river, and faces south over gently-rising ground. The buildings consist of a linear range of farmhouse with attached buildings at either end, with a detached two-storeyed north-south range a little to the south-west (here termed the West Range). There are single-storeyed north-south blocks both to the east and west of the West Range, and also the remains of a Dutch Barn that adjoined the west

end of the farmhouse range and was destroyed by fire c1980.

¹Coldwell Farm, Humshaugh, Northumberland (NY 90785 72978) Historic Buildings Assessment October-November 2005. Alan Williams Archaeology.OASIS ID alanwil1-11228

The West Range (comprising buildings A and D in the 2005 Assessment), for which a planning proposal for domestic conversion has been made, is the subject of this report. It and the farmhouse range are listed Grade II.



Site Plan (after Alan Williams 2005). The West Range, subject of this report, is shown as buildings A1/A2 and D1/D2.

2.1. The West Range: Description

The main body of the range (building A) is set more or less north-south and measures 15.3 by 6.2 m externally, with walls c 0.65 m thick, built of coursed roughly-squared stone, with substantial alternating quoins at the angles and irregular block surrounds to the original openings; later openings have tooled-and-margined dressings; the moulded ashlar kneelers and cut copings to the gables are clearly secondary as well, copings overlying heavy and irregular triangular blocks that formed the earlier coping. The present roof is of Welsh slate. Internally the range is divided into two by a full-height cross-wall set north of centre; the southern part, 8 m long, forms a barn and the northern is now a cart shed.

Original features in the barn comprise a square-headed doorway, with a heavy and irregular block surround (rebated internally), set in the centre of each side wall, and a series of slit vents, two vertical pairs on either side of the eastern door, and a pair and a single vent flanking the western door, as well as three levels of slits (two singles and a pair above) in the south gable end. The cart shed has been altered; the splayed internal jambs of its eastern doorway may survive from an original opening, and there is an odd recess in the centre of the internal face of the north wall that may indicate an earlier opening (although nothing of it is visible externally; the north gable end in fact shows no sign of any openings whatsoever).

There are two later pitching doors in the west wall of the barn, one at the south end of the all and the other directly above the older central doorway. The northern part of the range has an identical pair of doorways on the west, one to a stair rising to the granary and the other into the cartshed, and a broad cart entrance under a timber lintel on the east, that looks to be of 20th century date in its present form. The granary above has a 19th-century window in each side wall, which have had three-pane upper sections above slatted lower parts, the western having

lost its slats.



The range from the north-east, showing the original barn door and slit vents in the further section, with a pair of late 19th or early 20th century doors (and a granary window above) nearer the camera

Internally, the northern part of the barn has a hay loft over, its floor carried on transverse beams of sawn softwood (of a standard upright section 230 by 75 mm). The granary floor is of similar construction; the stair which gives access to it is separated from the cart shed by a tongue-and-groove plank partition, carrying the pencil graffiti described in the second section of this report. The planks are each 140 mm wide and 24mm thick.

The roof structure over the barn is of three bays and over the granary of two; the trusses are of collar-beam type, the collars being lapped and notched into the south face of the principals, and bolted into position; there are three levels of purlins and a vertically-set ridge, all 140mm by 70mm, carrying continuous boarding, to which the slates are fixed..

Distant south-east view, showing the Added stable set at an awkward angle to the south end of the barn, and the earlier coping stones re-used (?) in the gable behind.



The stable (building D) at the south end of the barn is set slightly skew to the older structure (so as to align with the adjacent road) and is c 9 m long, being 3.85 m wide at its west end and 3 m at the east. It is built of coursed roughly-squared stone, with rounded southern corners; there are some large blocks in the footings, such as that underlying the north-east corner. The roof is of Welsh slate; that of the western part is pent against the taller barn gable behind, whilst that of the eastern is gabled; both ends have ashlar copings and kneelers of the same character as the other farm buildings, although the kneeler at the south-east corner and the adjacent length of

gable coping have fallen. There is a 4-pane sash of late 19th-century type, with a tooled-and-margined lintel and sill, in the west end, and a superimposed pair of smaller windows (the lower apparently an insertion) in the east end. Access is by a plain doorway on the north, hard up against the barn wall, and the interior is divided by a cross-wall in line with the east side of the barn.

The west side of the range (south part), showing the original west door of the barn, with secondary openings above and to the right, and, further right, the west end of the added stable.



2.2. Discussion

The 2005 Assessment follows the list

descriptions in ascribing the range (and farmhouse) an early 18th century date, but there is little to allow a close typological dating. The irregular block surrounds of the doorways, and large triangular stones of the original gable coping are certainly of 18th century character (as is the general character of the masonry) but in a simple vernacular building such as this could be as late as the third quarter of the century. The 2005 Assessment suggests that the pitch of the roof shows that the building was originally thatched. The present pitch is no more than 45°; the present roof trusses look no older than the late 19th century, and thus probably go with the current covering of Welsh slate. The original roof may have been steeper (as it would have been if in fact the building was thatched); the big triangular blocks below the present coping have the appearance of being re-set at a shallower angle than their original.

The first two editions of the Ordnance Survey 25":1 mile map (1860 and 1896) show a circular structure on the west of the barn, presumably a gin-gang or threshing floor of some type, although it is shown in open broken outline rather than shaded in as a roofed structure. No trace of it survives now; it seems to have aligned with the western door of the barn, through which any drive shaft to machinery inside the barn could have been carried.

Whilst some of the later features in the building - eg the pitching doors on the west side of the barn - could be of any date, the doorways and windows in the northern part of the range probably belong to a general remodelling which may have taken place at the beginning of the 20th century. At this time most of the buildings of the farm seem to have been re-roofed, with moulded ashlar kneelers; these are seen on the now-ruined Dutch Barn, which from the evidence of the 2nd and 3rd edition Ordnance Survey maps (see 2005 Assessment) was built between 1896 and 1922. It is probably significant that the earliest date to appear in the graffiti on the stair partition is 1911, so a date in the first decade of the 20th century seems likely.

The stable at the south end of the barn is clearly a later addition, although it appears on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1860; it may be of early 19th century date, but was probably altered and re-roofed at the time of the general early 20th century remodelling of the buildings.

3. Pencil Graffiti on the Stair Partition

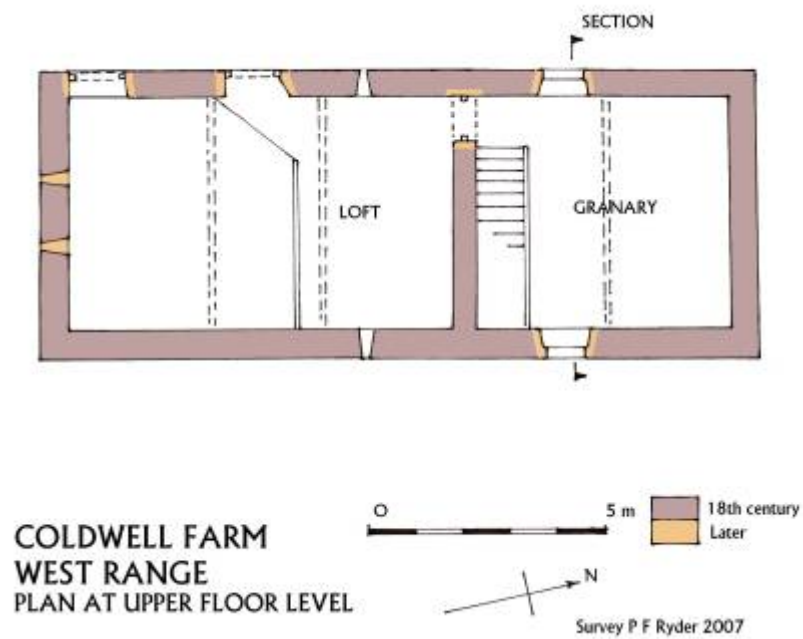
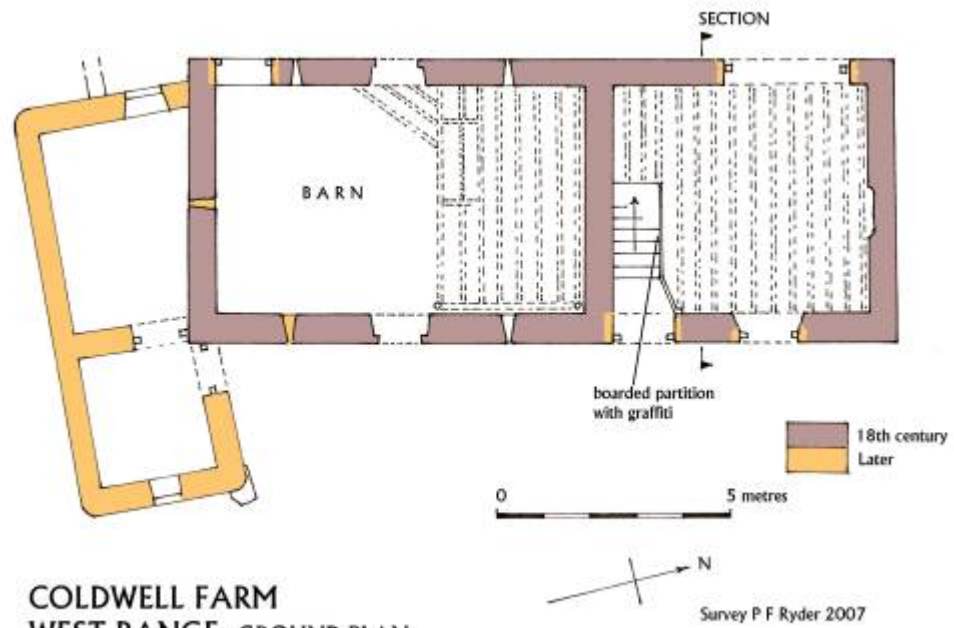
The boarded partition alongside the stair is covered in pencil graffiti, largely dating from the first half of the 20th century. This in itself is not unusual; suitable surfaces such as this (and sometimes wall plaster) in farm buildings often attract inscriptions and sketches, one imagines made by farm workers sheltering from inclement weather or taking a meal break.

The graffiti here come in several forms. There are several tallies, and sums of figures, which presumably relate to storage of materials. Then there are inscriptions; the simplest have names and sometimes dates - one list gives 'John Purvis, May 13th 1914, William Glenwright May 15th 1912, John Huddleston November 11th 1914, J.V.Dodds, November 11th 1915 - which seems as if it might be workers listing their dates of birth (?) rather than the actual date of writing. The largest number of inscriptions are of a religious nature, including scriptural texts, the Lord's Prayer, and the ominous warning 'be ye also ready for the harvest of death' In a different hand (one presumes) is a partly-illegible poem about a 'bonie maiden fair' with blue eyes and golden hair, losing her maidenhead, and the nursery rhyme 'there was a crooked man, who walked a crooked mile...'. which may perhaps have had some special implication to its scribe. Towards the foot of the stair are a few drawings including what look like a couple of attempts at portraits-in-profile, one of a woman labelled 'Christobel Pankhurst' (the famous suffragette) and another of a man 'Loyde (sic) George', which would again date the drawings to the period immediately before the First World War. Although of no real artistic merit, the choice of subject gives the drawings (see frontispiece) some real historical interest.

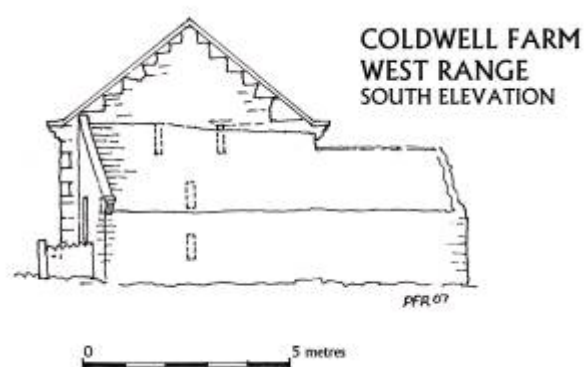
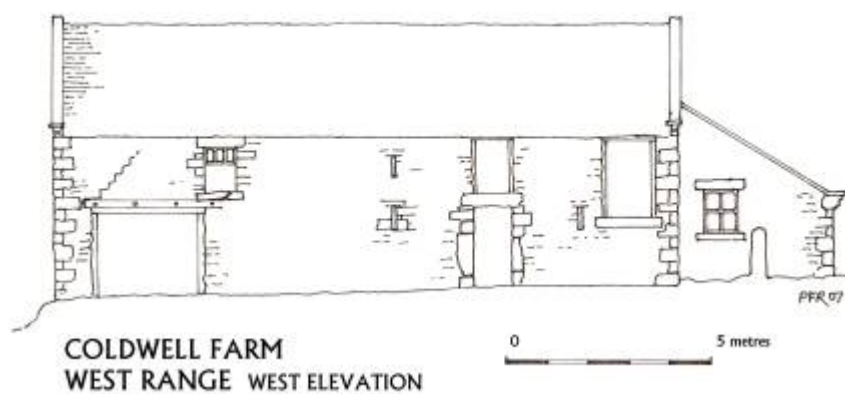
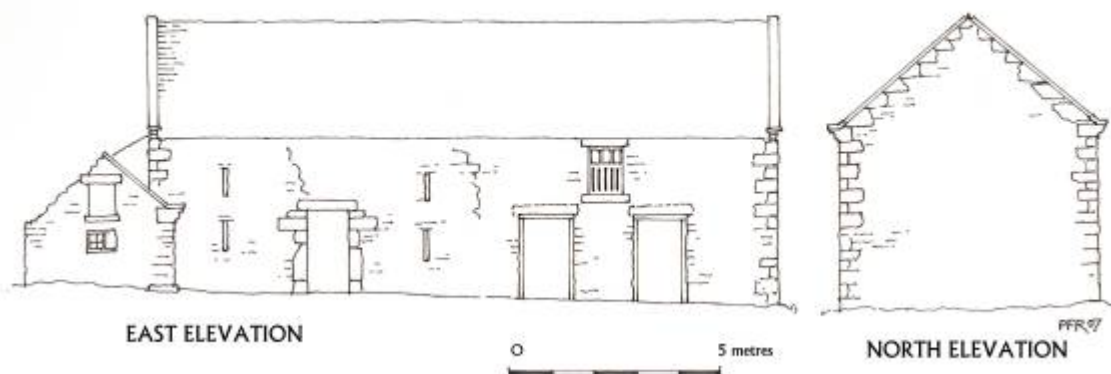
Christabel Pankhurst born 1880, best known as a suffragette who formed the Womens' Social and Political Union, and was imprisoned 1908 for disrupting Liberal party meeting. She was a prominent and controversial figure who espoused violent action but believed that only women with money and property should be able to vote, and then became intensely patriotic during World War I, before moving to the USA in 1921 (becoming a well-known Seventh-Day Adventist writer and preacher); she died in 1958.

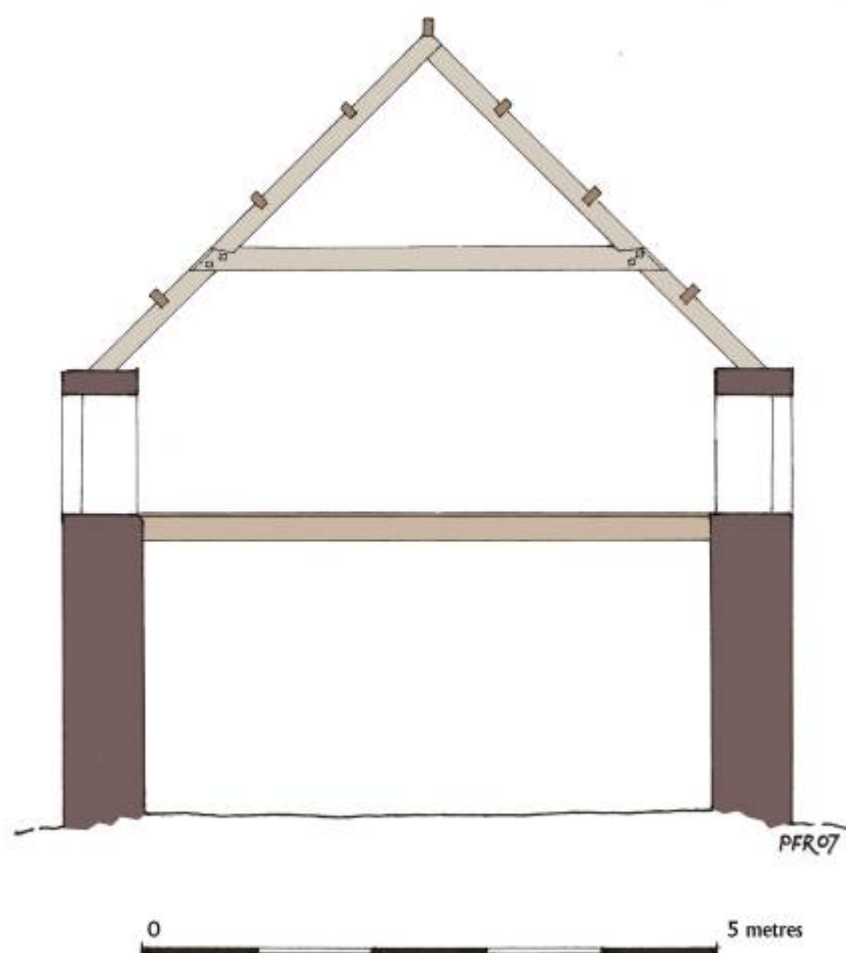
David Lloyd George, born 1863, rose to prominence as a liberal politician, but disappointed supporters of womens' suffrage, and in 1912 Christabel Pankhurst organised a secret arson campaign to burn down a house being built for him. Possibly this linkage of the two names in the news prompted their depiction here. He was Prime Minister 1916-1922, and died in 1945.

Peter F Ryder March 2007



**COLDWELL FARM
WEST RANGE**





COLDWELL FARM WEST RANGE
CROSS SECTION LOOKING NORTH