

**CONTENTS**

	<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Project origins</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Project design</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Desk-based assessment</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Walkover survey</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Location, topography and geology</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>HISTORICAL CONTEXT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Historical background</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>5.1</b>	<b>Academic merit</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>RESULTS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Survey results: the clay dabbins cottage</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6.3</b>	<b>Survey results: the brick barn</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>6.4</b>	<b>Survey results: the brick offshoot</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>6.5</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>ARCHIVE</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>15</b>

## **FIGURES**

<b>Figure 1</b>	Location of study area	5
<b>Figure 2</b>	Site location of study buildings	6
<b>Figure 3</b>	First edition Ordnance Survey map 1868	6
<b>Figure 4</b>	Location of study buildings	8
<b>Figure 5</b>	Ground plan of cottage	9
<b>Figure 6</b>	Detail of clay dabbins	9
<b>Figure 7</b>	Eastern elevation showing clay dabbins wall	9
<b>Figure 8</b>	Western gable end illustrating the clay dabbins	10
<b>Figure 9</b>	Reduced southern clay dabbins wall	10
<b>Figure 10</b>	Western clay dabbins wall	10
<b>Figure 11</b>	Ground plan of brick barn	11
<b>Figure 12</b>	Northern elevation of barn.	11
<b>Figure 13</b>	The brick barn showing the cattle shed	12
<b>Figure 14</b>	The barn now used as a workshop	12
<b>Figure 15</b>	Western walls within cattle shed part of the brick barn	12
<b>Figure 16</b>	Eastern walls within the cattle shed part of the brick barn	12
<b>Figure 17</b>	Ground plan of offshoot	13
<b>Figure 18</b>	Eastern brick offshoot	13
<b>Figure 19</b>	Interior showing cattle shed	13
<b>Figure 20</b>	Northern elevation of offshoot	14
<b>Figure 21</b>	Ground plan of offshoot	15

## **SUMMARY**

The building survey at Croft End, Blackford confirmed the presence of a clay dabbins cottage that comprised of a single eastern gable, the remaining parts of the building have been demolished or collapsed leaving little recoverable evidence for further study.

The cottage appears to have been protected by a single course of brickwork prior to the enlargement of the farm.

Domestic habitation probably migrated to the main house whilst a range of brick agricultural buildings were raised next to the clay dabbins cottage. This action may have occurred in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> Century according to the Ordnance Survey map but stylistically appears to be from the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

These brick buildings had few architectural embellishments, were utilitarian and possessed little architectural merit.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project origins**

Cumbria County Council's Historic Environment Service (CCCHES) was consulted by Carlisle City Council regarding a planning application for the conversion of a bank barn for domestic use at Croft End, Blackford, Carlisle, (NY 41270 62405), Planning Application No. 1/09/0994.

The scheme has the potential to affect the character and appearance of a building of special architectural and historic interest. The proposal will affect the character and appearance of the buildings and, as a result, a condition has been placed on planning consent requiring a programme of archaeological building recording to be undertaken prior to the conversion taking place

In order to ascertain the historical and archaeological merits affected by this development, the brief issued by the curatorial authority requires investigation of known historical records through a rapid desk-based assessment and the survival of extant buildings via a programme of building recording equivalent to Level 3 as described by English Heritage *Understanding Historic Buildings A Guide to Good Recording Practice, 2006*.

The desk-based assessment included visits to Carlisle Library and The Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle. The objective of this exercise was to collate sufficient detail to identify the issues and potential for academic research, provide a series of questions for targeted archaeological enquiry and outline, if any, possible mitigation response.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Project Design**

In response to a request by Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service, Gerry Martin Associates Ltd submitted a project design (Written Scheme of Investigation) for the archaeological recording of extant buildings. This document outlined the contractors' professional suitability, a brief historical summary of the study area, general objectives required of the project, the methodology and the resources needed for the successful implementation of this work.

The project design on being accepted by the curatorial body, Gerry Martin Associates Ltd was commissioned to undertake the desk-based assessment and the archaeological survey by the client Mrs Jennifer Beck.

The following report has been assembled to the relevant standards and protocols of the Institute of Field Archaeologists, combined with accepted best practice and in accordance with the brief prepared by the curatorial authority.

Fieldwork took place on December 15th 2010.

### **2.2 Desk-based assessment**

In accordance with the Design Brief, the desk-based assessment investigated primary and secondary historical sources, maps and other literature in order to set the survey results into their past cultural, historical and topographic context.

The study area centred on (NY 41270 62405) comprising a 500m radius from the proposed development.

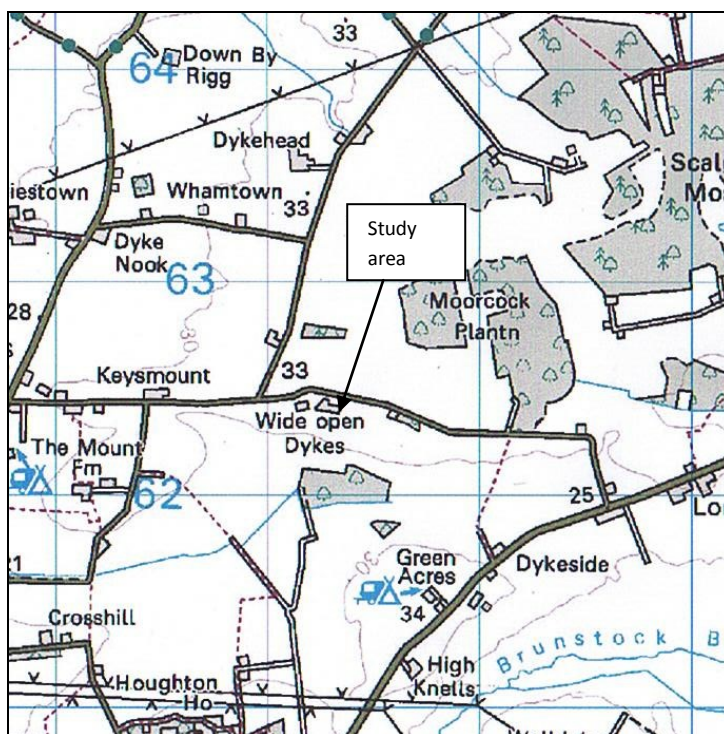


Figure 1 Location of study area. (OS copyright licence no. 100044205).

The desk-based assessment comprised a search of three archival repositories.

Carlisle Library provided sources for published works including newspaper articles, archaeological and antiquarian reports, photographs and journals.

Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle was sought for the earliest tithe map for the parish, details of landowners and occupiers and cartographic evidence.

The Historic Environment Record, online, provided the Sites and Monuments Record describing previous archaeological observations and electronic media showing the spatial distribution of these findings

### 2.3 Walk-over survey

A walk-over of the site found the clay dabbin building to be in a poor state of repair; the southern wall having collapsed, the western wall overgrown, the northern wall totally removed and only the eastern gable extant.

## 3 BACKGROUND

### 3.1 Location, topography and geology

Croft End forms part of a collection of redundant farm buildings in a flat, low-lying area comprising alluvial silts and sands above pink Boulder Clay and solid geology consisting of Red Sandstone.

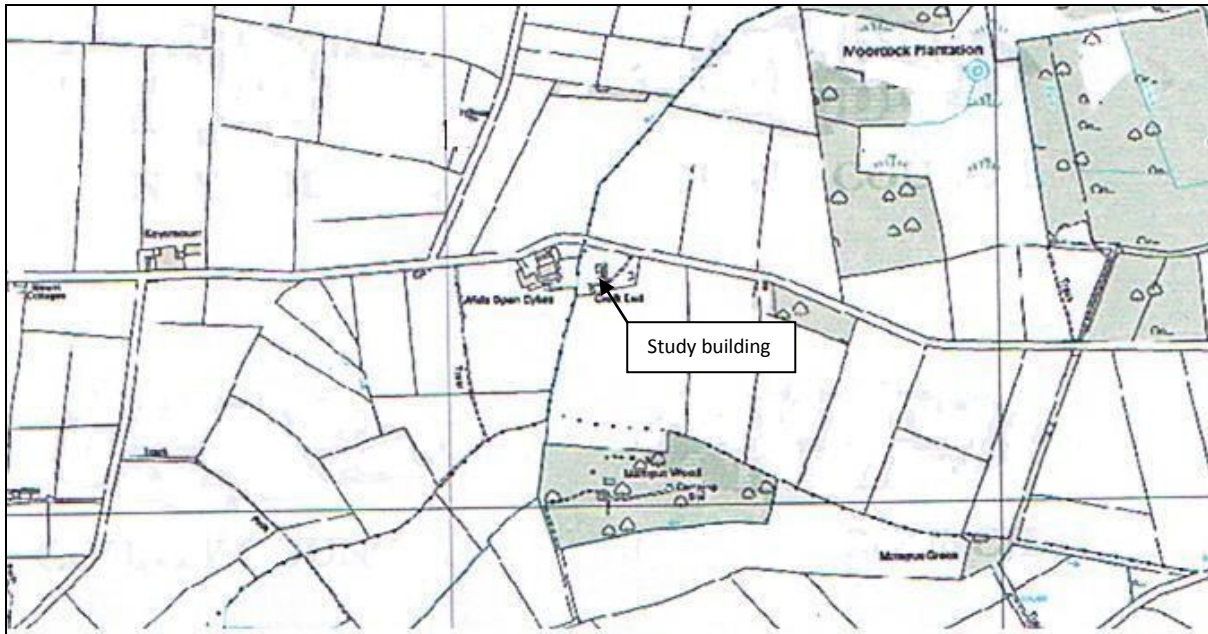


Figure 2. Site location of study buildings

#### 4 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

##### 4.1 Historical background

The study area (NY 412700 62405) currently comprises a range of brick buildings that appear on the first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1868 and includes a clay wall incorporated from an earlier structure.

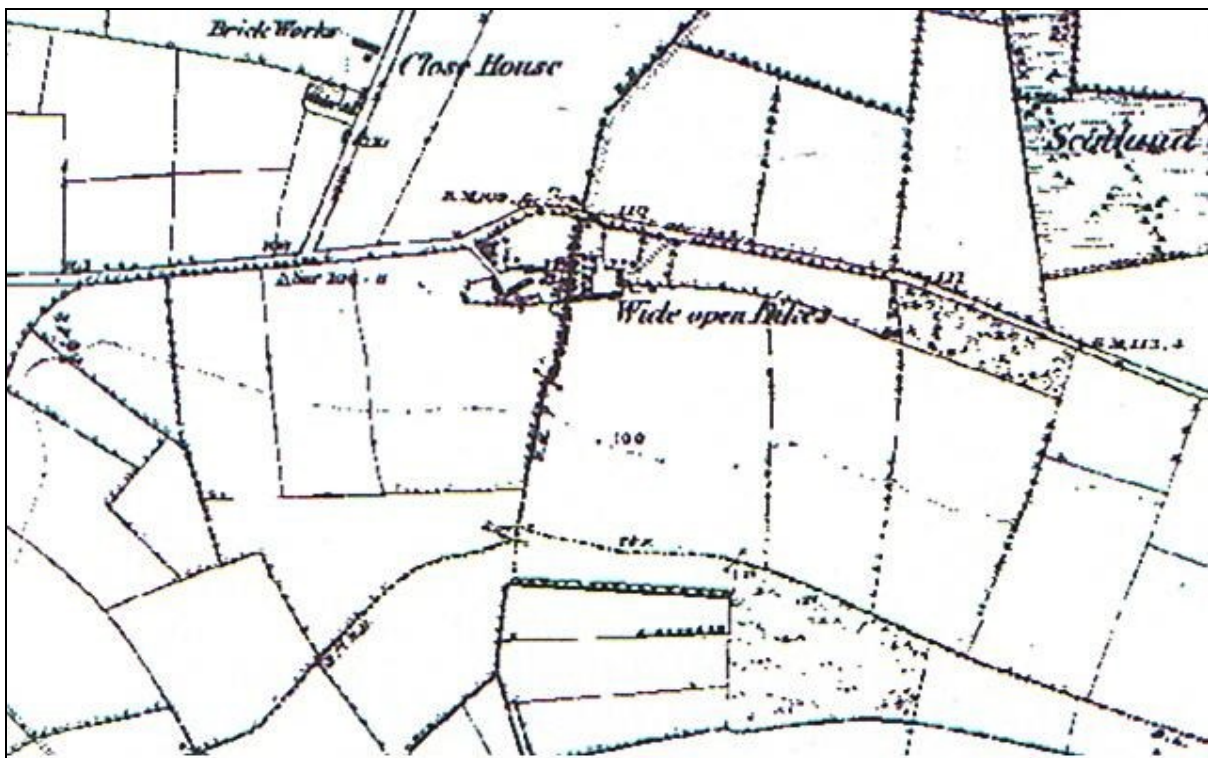


Figure 3. First edition Ordnance Survey map 1868

Brunskill has identified that hundreds of buildings in north Cumbria still retain clay walls incorporated into later reconstructions, particularly prevalent along the Solway Plain between Silloth and Carlisle. Documentary sources suggest that this tradition was further widespread although rarely are these buildings more than 400 years in age (Brunskill 2002, 159-160).

Although not mentioned in Nina Jennings seminal work on clay dabbins (Jennings 2003), the study building forms part of an assemblage of clay-built structures that are traditional to the Solway Plain.

Jennings has suggested that this form of building dates from the fifteenth century constructed from a cruck-frame possibly continuing an earlier Viking or Scottish tradition (Jennings 2002, 24). A typical clay-built structure according to Jennings stands on a cobble plinth 0.40m in height with outside dimensions of approximately 15m x 6m. The walls are formed from pebbles and sand (80% aggregate) with a clay binder (20% of the total) strengthened with straw and stand to 2.3m in height with a ridge (apex of the roof) 5.3m in height (Jennings 2002, 20).

These buildings were simple in form and easy to construct utilising local materials and built with non-specialist tools. A description during the late eighteenth century detailing the construction method and its concomitant organisation suggests that building these structures was a communal affair utilising 20 to 30 people who would undertake the work as a favour within one to two days and then celebrate their effort with festivities provided by the client (Jennings 2002, 23).

The study building is part of a group of agricultural buildings that form an integral and significant part of a past historic landscape that captures former farming techniques and rural settlement patterns.

## **5 DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Academic merit**

Past cultural settlement in Cumbria has been predominantly rural, where agriculture has been the main economic driver and product. Increasingly, those features associated with past farming technique have been lost or converted for domestic use or for local tourism.

A challenge to historians, archaeologists and other researchers is to compile a record of those rural buildings that indicate past agricultural practice and social conditions before their industrial, agricultural and social context is lost.

## **6 RESULTS**

### **6.1 Methodology**

The buildings in the study area were surveyed on December 15<sup>th</sup> 2010 by Gerry Martin using a Disto measuring device and hand-held GPS equipment.

The buildings were fully accessible except the first floor of the brick barn which was unsafe. Natural light was restricted within the study buildings requiring flash photography.

The survey comprised of scaled photographic recording of the interiors and elevations of all the buildings, with detailed photography of any worthy architectural elements.

Using the architectural plans, notations were undertaken regarding the characteristics of these farm buildings, including metrical data, thresholds, materials and building techniques employed.

The study buildings comprised three parts

- Western clay dabbin cottage
- Brick barn
- Brick offshoot

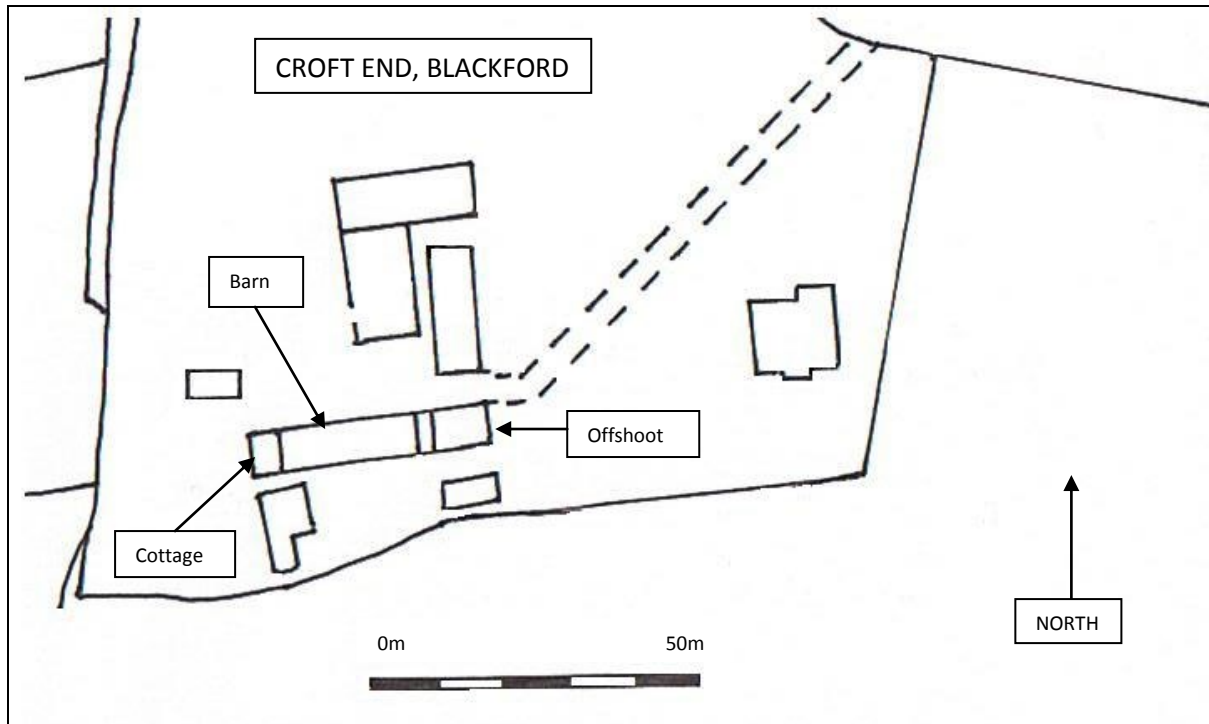


Figure 4. Location of study buildings

The corpus of the following report is formed from these notes and photographs.

## 6.2 Survey results; the clay dabbin cottage

The floor plan for the cottage measured 6.59m x 4.49m and was covered by linoleum above a modern concrete floor.

The eastern gable was still extant (orange shade in figure 5) and measured 4.49m in width, 6.33m in height and 0.50m in thickness. It comprised of pitted, red clay bricks with minimal straw inclusion and very occasional rounded small pebbles, approximately 0.08m-0.10m in thickness, lain in horizontal courses that formed the clay dabbin super-structure (figure 6).

On the ground floor, the gable had been painted cream onto plaster 0.03m in thickness applied directly to the clay wall (figure 7).

At a height of 2.12m were ten rectangular recesses measuring 0.23m in height x 0.10m in width accommodating former roof joists. These recesses were spaced approximately 0.25-0.30m apart.

On the first floor, the clay dabbin had been left exposed apart from a red brick "fire back" 0.95m in height x 0.75m in width, probably representing the sleeping quarters for the cottage. A single recess for a roof joist marked the central point in the roof trusses (figure 8).



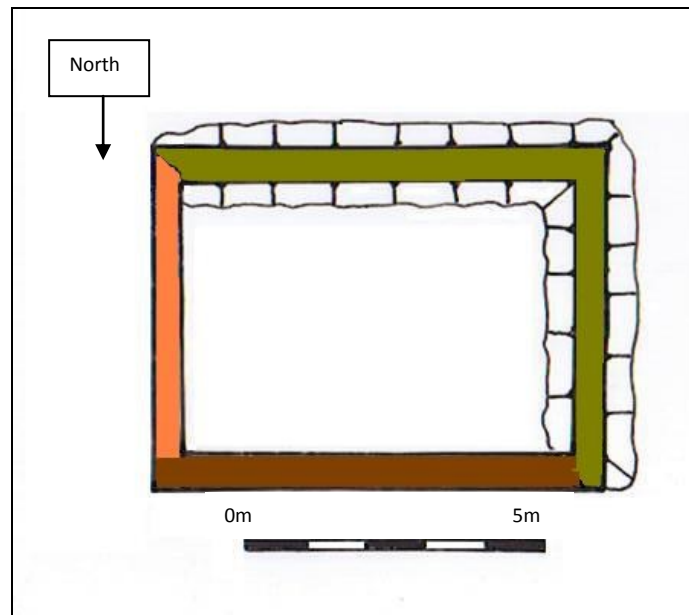


Figure 5. Ground plan of cottage.



Figure 6 and 7. Detail of clay dabbins and eastern elevation showing clay dabbin wall

The southern clay dabbin wall had collapsed or was demolished and reverted ostensibly to its clay constituent (figure 5 olive shade). A mound stood approximately 0.50m in height where the wall once stood (figure 9). Examination of the eastern gable end demonstrated that the southern clay dabbin wall was 0.50m in thickness and currently stood to a maximum height of 1.20m.

The western clay dabbin wall (figure 5 olive shade) was buried under collapsed brick debris (figure 10) probably from the former cottages first floor. A door appeared to exist in the south-west corner of the building but the area was overgrown and impenetrable. The wall still stood to a height of approximately 1.00m.

The northern wall (figure 5 brown shade) had been replaced in brick following deliberate removal of the clay dabbin wall in the past. This brick wall pre-dated the brick barn that conjoined the cottage to the east.

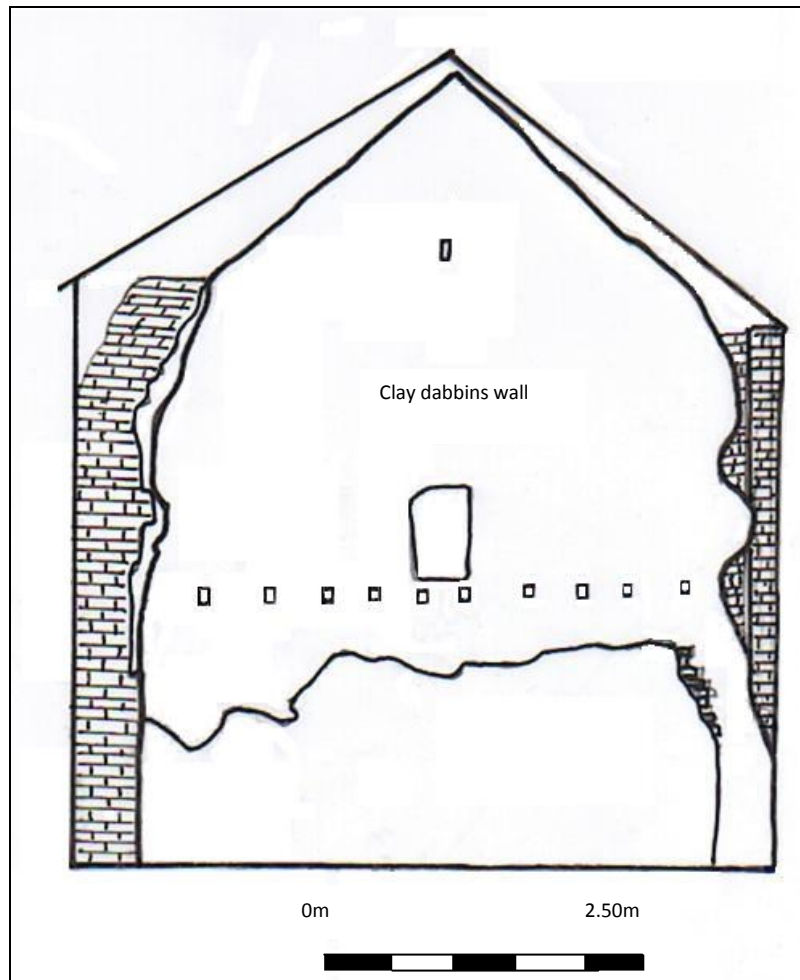


Figure 8. Western gable end illustrating the clay dabbins



Figure 9 and 10. Reduced southern clay dabbin wall and western clay dabbin wall

### 6.3 Survey results; the brick barn

The brick barn divided into two parts; a cattle shed and a barn currently used as a workshop.

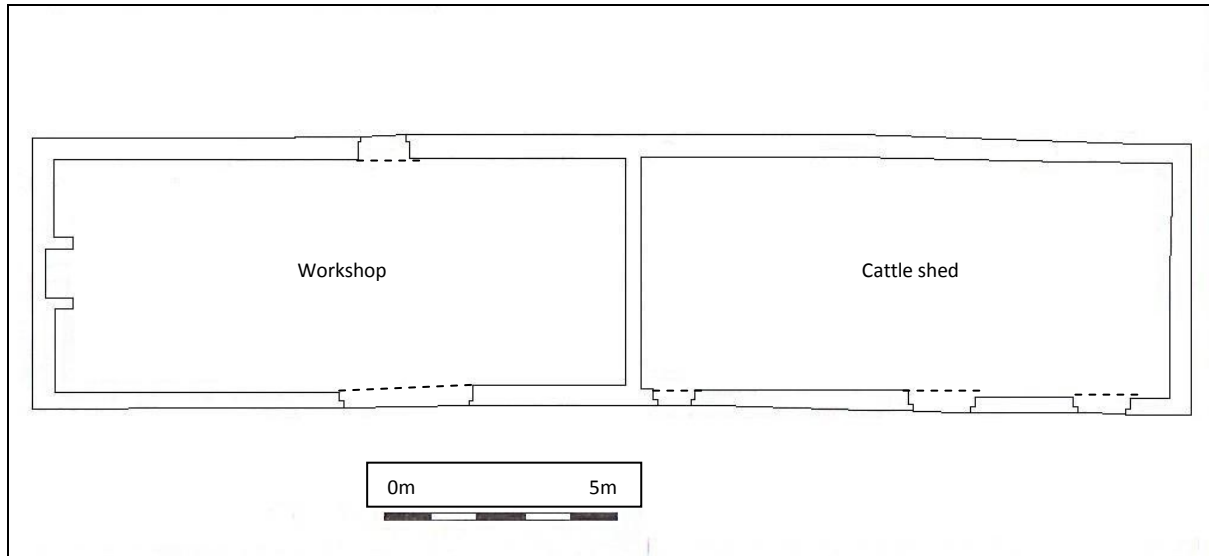


Figure 11. Ground plan of brick barn

The cattle shed measured 7.76m in length x 5.03m in width and 2.44m in height and contained a trough (figure 16) on the southern wall accompanied by a 2.23m wide concrete standing for the cattle stalls overlying a brick floor. The interior was part lime-washed and the ceiling and floor were modern (figure 15). The first floor was inaccessible but clearly vacant.

The walls for this structure were 0.35m in thickness constructed from mass-produced bricks suggesting a 20<sup>th</sup> Century date for construction.



Figure 12. Northern elevation of barn.

Only the northern facade (figure 13) of the cattle shed demonstrated any architectural features namely:

- A window measuring 0.86m x 1.17m in height with a stone sill, brick fan lintel and timber surround, 1.16m above the ground
- A doorway measuring 1.18m x 2.14m in height bearing a red sandstone lintel measuring 1.62m x 0.38m

- A window 0.62m directly above the door described above measuring 1.18m in width and 1.00m in height outlined by a red sandstone lintel
- A doorway measuring 1.14m x 2.14m in height bearing a red sandstone lintel measuring 1.60m x 0.30m
- A window 1.06m above the west end of the doorway described above, measuring 0.92m x 0.96m in height bearing a stone sill and brick fan lintel



Figures 13 and 14. The brick barn showing the cattle shed and the barn now used as a workshop



Figures 15 and 16. Western and eastern walls within cattle shed part of the brick barn

The interior of the barn measured 12.41m x 5.19m and stood to a height of 6.01m. The building possessed a concrete floor, corrugated metal roof with four modern roof trusses.

Originally, there had been a first floor but this had been removed to the east of the main door where a series of cavities and sawn-off joists indicated this action. The west end appeared to always have been a single open space.

The southern elevation illustrated a doorway outlined by a stone jamb 0.94m-1.10m and 1.91m in height, possessing a timber lintel and metal door that lined up with the east end of an open doorway 2.75m in width and 3.65m in height. This doorway was surmounted by a timber lintel measuring 4.40m in length and 0.30m in thickness.

The northern elevation also possessed a window measuring 1.64m x 1.18m outlined by a red sandstone sill and lintel.

#### 6.4 Survey results; the brick offshoot

The brick offshoot measured 7.34m x 5.59m in area (figure 17) and stood to a height of 4.60m (figures 18 and 20). The interior (figure 19) was cement rendered with a concrete floor that had been used as a cattle shed. The building contained the following architectural details:

- A doorway measuring 2.51m in width and 1.95m in height bearing a timber lintel 2.90m in length and 0.25m in thickness
- A window measuring 1.24m in width and 1.28m in height bearing a red sandstone lintel
- A timber door measuring 1.27m in width and 1.94m in height bearing a red sandstone lintel measuring 2.42m x 0.41m in thickness

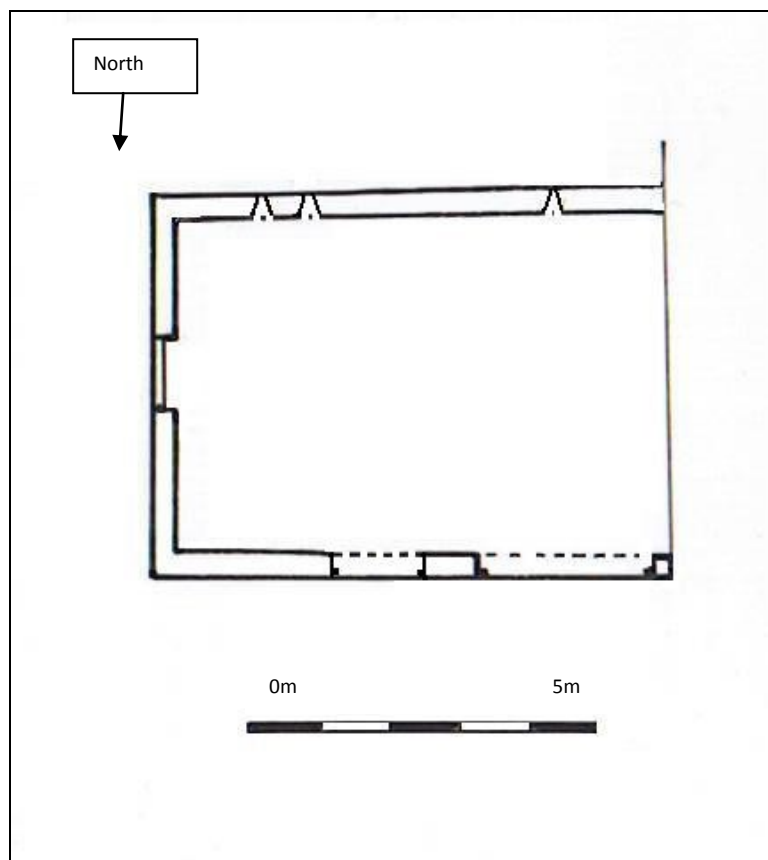


Figure 17. Ground plan of offshoot.



Figures 18 and 19. Eastern brick offshoot and interior showing a cattle shed

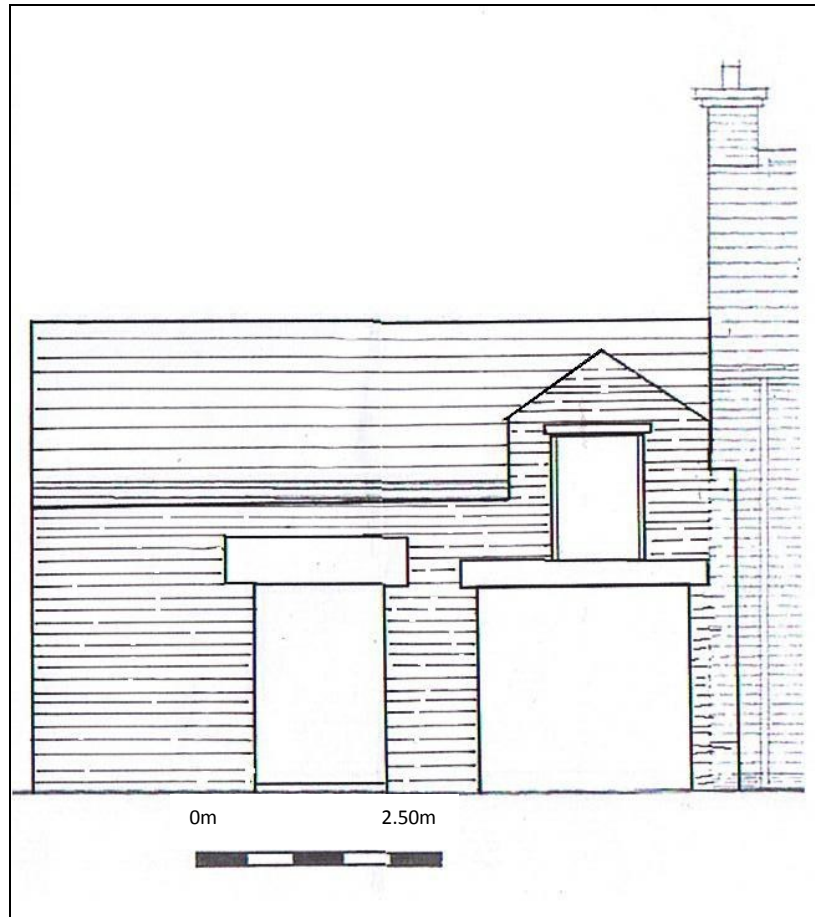


Figure 20. Northern elevation of offshoot

## 6.5 Discussion

The study building appeared to be one of the most northerly examples of a clay dabbins building identified (Jennings 2002, 19). Only the eastern gable remained but was in generally good conditions and it represented the earliest phase of activity at Croft End.

The northern facade of the cottage was replaced in brick probably during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and represented the second phase of structural activity as the adjacent barn abutted this brickwork. The northern wall to the cottage was no longer extant when the survey took place, a small brick foundation being present.

As the clay dabbins building was vulnerable to rain, a skin of a single course of bricks appears to have been applied to the exposed eastern gable (figure 21). Most probably this action was repeated on the southern and western elevations.

Moreover, other *ad hoc* building improvements and repairs occurred at this time, possibly including the introduction of a south-western door within the cottage. Unfortunately, the poor ground conditions and the denuded clay dabbins made any further structural analysis hazardous.

The barn was probably introduced as a possible third structural phase and was used for purely agricultural purposes. This building may have replaced an earlier barn for the lack of architectural embellishments and the mass-produced brickwork heavily suggests a utilitarian function associated with the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century.



Figure 21. Eastern gable with applied brick skin

An offshoot building (phase 4) used as a cattle shed appears to have been applied to the eastern end of the barn. Although possessing some architectural finesse, due to the building material employed and its stratigraphic provenance, it appears to butt the barn, strongly suggesting that this building was erected during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

## **7 ARCHIVE**

The archive for this project will be deposited with the appropriate archaeological curator, Tullie House, Carlisle. This archive has been assembled in accordance within the protocols of Management of Archaeological Projects (MAP2).

## **8 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I am grateful to Mrs Jennifer Beck for her assistance with the fieldwork and commissioning the work. I would also like to thank Jeremy Parsons for his help and guidance with the archaeological brief and reviewing my provisional draft of this report; the staff of Carlisle Library with my research into the local history of the area and the staff of Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle with the map regression and other documentary research.

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