

**COWHILLS
PETERHEAD
ABERDEENSHIRE**



Standing Building Survey

Carried out 23rd October 2017

by

Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2017-26

by

H K Murray and J C Murray

H K Murray BA, PhD, MCIfA, FSA Scot

J C Murray BA, MCIfA, FSA Scot, FMA

Hill of Belnagoak, Methlick, Ellon, Aberdeenshire AB41 7JN

Telephone: (01651) 806394 e-mail: cmurray@btinternet.com

COWHILLS
PLOT 1
PETERHEAD
ABERDEENSHIRE

- Standing Building Survey -

1. Background

1.1 A standing building survey was required for a farm house at Cowhills, Plot 1, Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, prior to its demolition and replacement by a new dwelling house.

1.2 The archaeological condition (Condition 1) was applied in the context of planning legislation (PAN 2/2011, SPP, HESPS), which states that it is necessary for developers to arrange for archaeological work to take place prior to development, in appropriate circumstances. Planning Application Numbers: APP/2017/1961.

1.3 A Level 1 Standing Building Survey of the extant buildings and structures was required which includes measured plans and elevations, a written account of the building's plan, form, function, age and development sequence in addition to a photographic survey of the interior and exterior of the building.

Although the steading (Cowhills Plot 2. APP/2017/1964) is outwith the application site, it has been included in this report as it is integral to the understanding and interpretation of the farmhouse.

1.4 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned to undertake the work by Stephen Brown Architect Ltd for his client, Mr John Munro. The site element of the survey was completed on the 23rd October 2017.

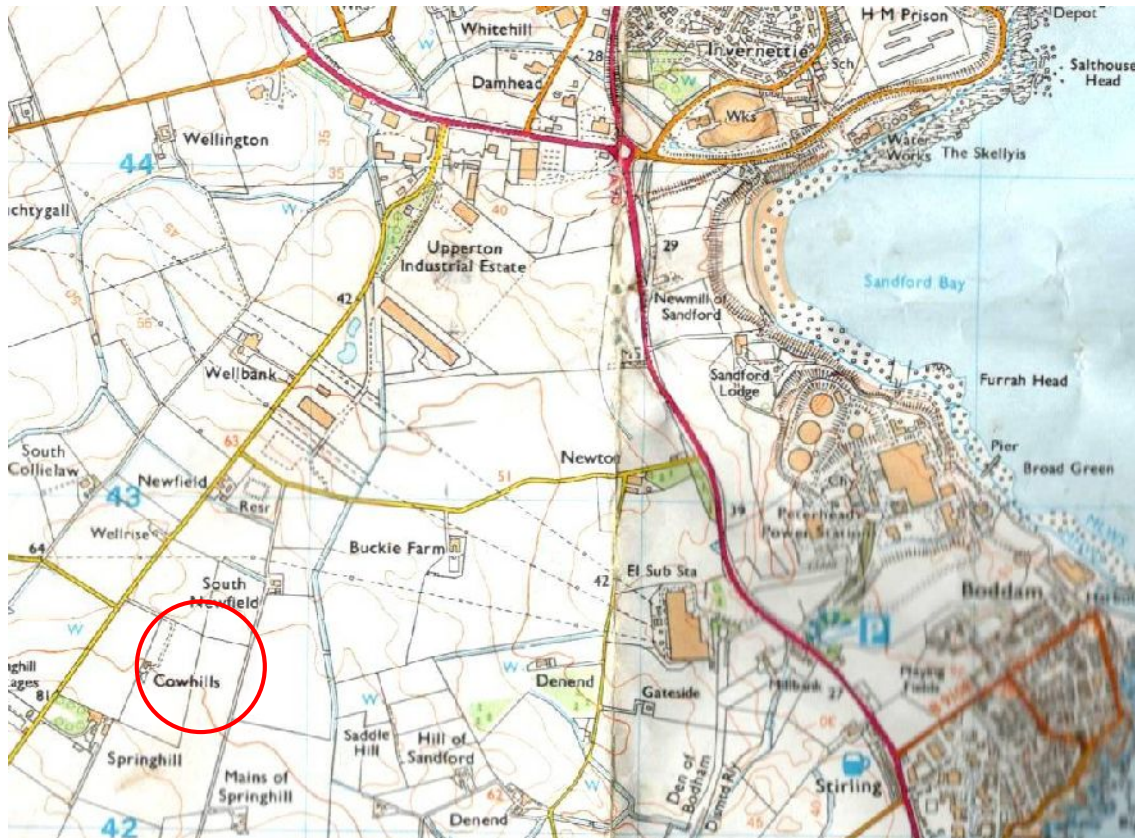
2. Desk-top survey

2.1 A search was carried out in the Sites and Monuments Record, Archaeology Service, Aberdeenshire Council and in the Sites and Monuments Records of the

Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Scotland (RCAHMS, now HES) through Canmore and Pastmap.

2.2 The 1st and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey maps were consulted.

2.3 Plans and elevations have been kindly supplied courtesy of Stephen Brown Architects Ltd and annotated as necessary by MAS Ltd (Illus 9, 24, 36-39).



Illus 1 Detail of OS map. Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright (2002) All rights reserved. Licence number (100049810). Site indicated by red circle.

3. The Site

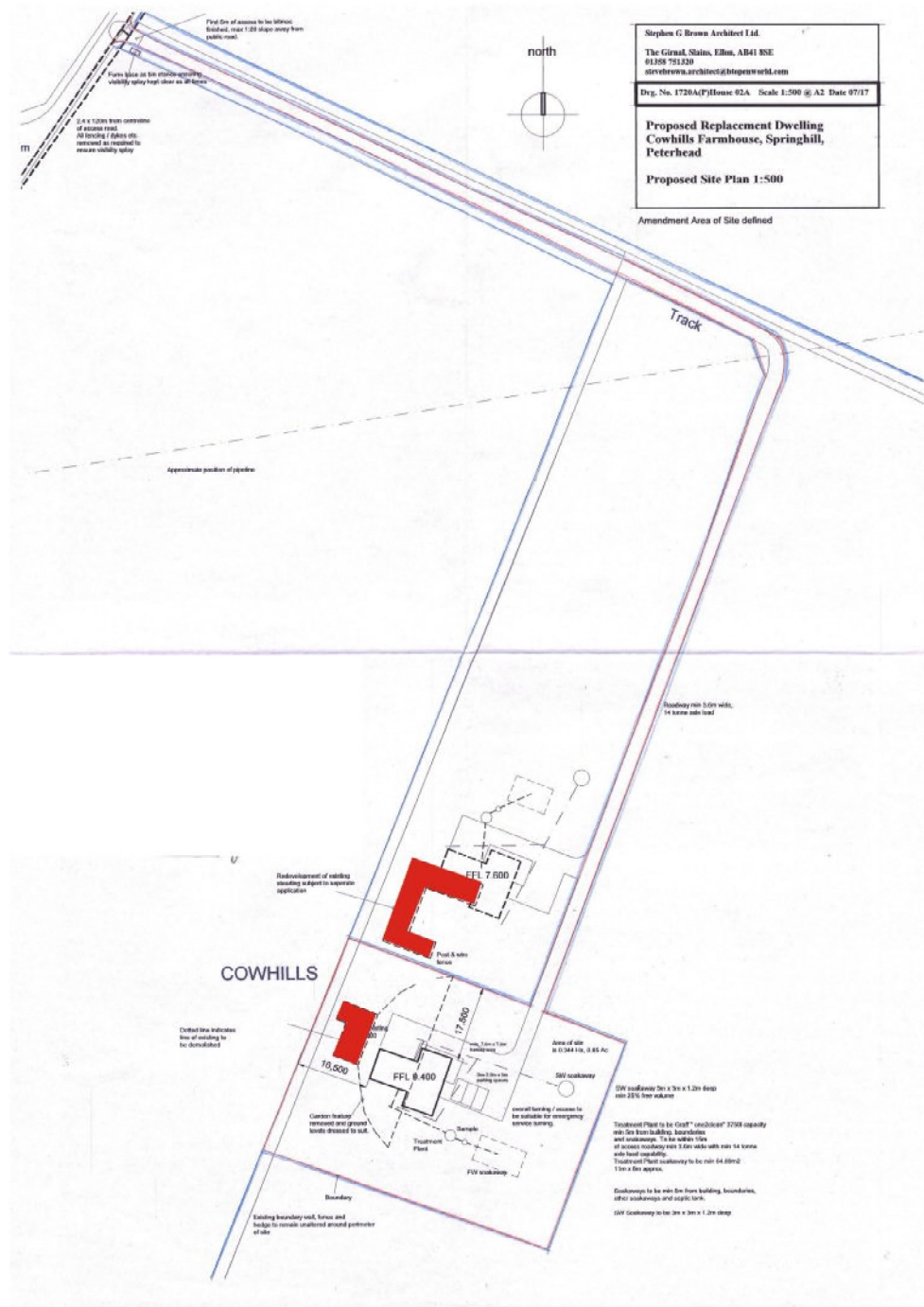
3.1 The site lies some 3km SW of Peterhead and c. 2.5km W of Boddam, beside a minor road that runs S from Upperton Industrial Estate.

Parish: Peterhead NGR: NK 1051 4247

GPS 410531 842451 (in front of house)

Aberdeenshire SMRP: NK14SW0050

HES No: NK14SW76



Illus 2 Site plan courtesy of Stephen Brown Architect Ltd annotated with the existing buildings marked in red.



Illus 3 Cowhills, House (LHS) and Steading (RHS), looking SW

4. Documentary evidence

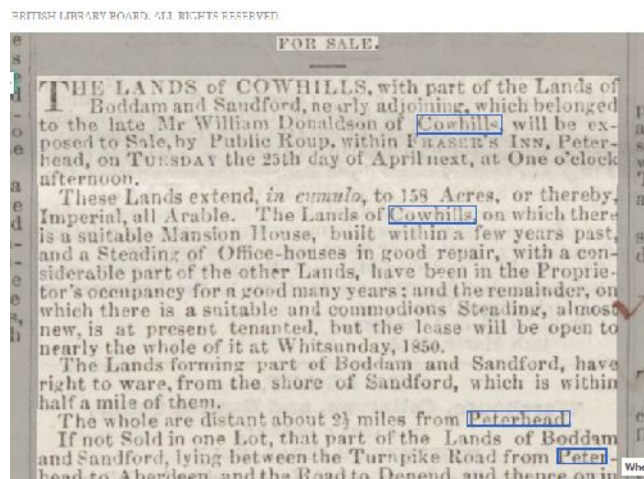
1845 The new Statistical Account for Scotland lists William Donaldson of Cowhills as one of landowners in the parish.

<http://stataccscot.edina.ac.uk/static/statacc/dist/viewer/nsa-vol12->

[Parish record for Peterhead in the county of Aberdeen in volume 12 of account 2](#)

[/](#)

1848 At the death of William Donaldson, Cowhills is described as having ‘a suitable mansion house, built within a few years past, and a steading of office houses in good repair’ (Illus 4).



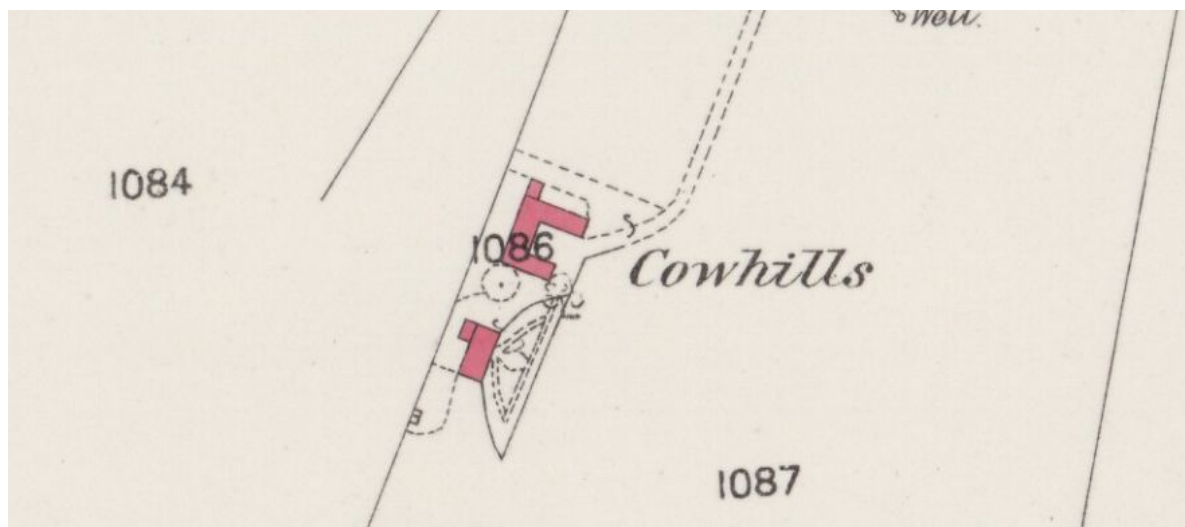
Illus 4 Extract from Aberdeen Press and Journal 5th April 1848
(<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>)

1862 Kenneth Mackintosh (aged 78) died at Cowhills, Peterhead (Dundee Advertiser 13th February 1862).

1865-71 The OS Name Book describes Cowhills as ‘an ordinary farm house so-called with offices, garden etc attached occupied by the proprietor, Mr J Mackintosh.’ (OS1/1/72/68). <https://scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/digital-volumes/ordnance-survey-name-books/aberdeenshire-os-name-books-1865-1871/aberdeenshire-volume-72/68>

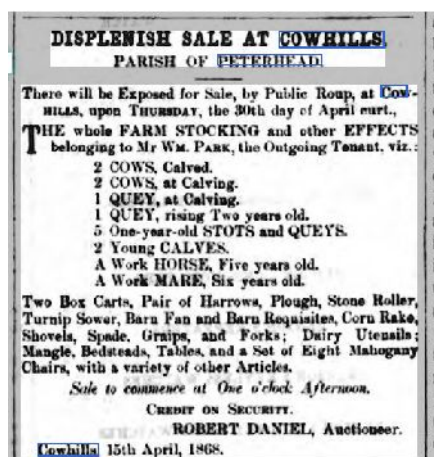
This suggests that the Mackintosh family bought the property after the death of William Donaldson.

1868 OS map Aberdeen sheet XXIII.14 surveyed in 1868, published in 1872, shows the house with an outshot at the N end of the W wall. An enclosed semi-circular garden lies in front of the E side of the house. The steading is U-plan with a horse-mill at the W end of the S wall. A small outshot is attached to the W end of the N wall.



Illus 5 Detail of 25" OS map Aberdeen sheet XXXIII.14, 1868, published 1872 www.nls.ac.uk

1868 In 1868 a Displenish sale at Cowhills names the outgoing tenant as William Park. The list of livestock for sale, which includes 4 cows, two heifers (queys) and 7 young cattle as well as 2 work horses, gives an indication of the size and function of the steading buildings.

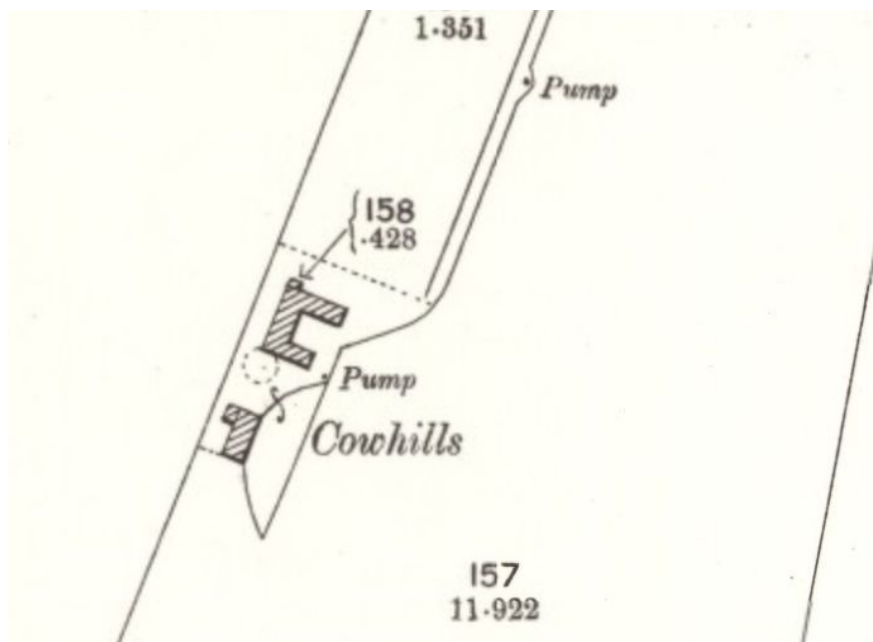


Illus 6 Extract from Peterhead Sentinel and General Advertiser for Buchan District 17th April 1868

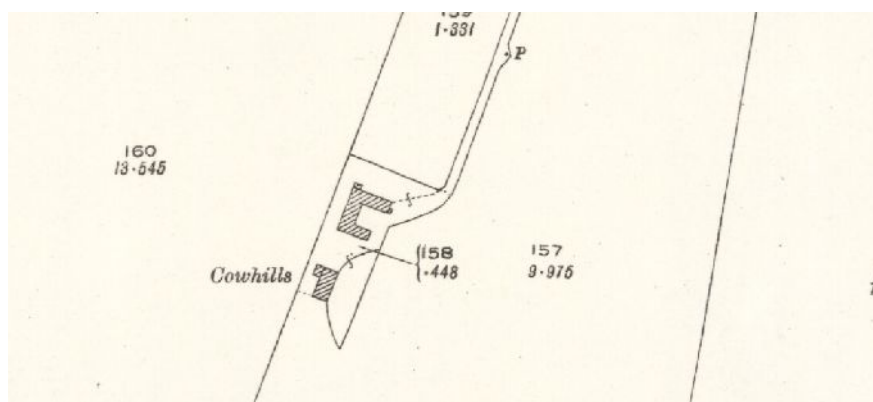
1898 Death of Mary Mackintosh (aged 69), wife of Peter May of Cowhills. (Buchan Observer 25th October 1898). This extract suggests that a relative (daughter?) of William Mackintosh and her husband then owned or farmed Cowhills.

1899 J May (? Son of the above) of Cowhills, Peterhead advertised a horse for sale (Buchan Observer 30th May 1899)

- 1900** The OS map of 1900 (Aberdeenshire 023.14 published 1901) shows the buildings unchanged.
- 1901-4** Post Office Directory list J May at Cowhills.
- 1909** John May of Cowhills, Peterhead advertised another horse for sale (*Buchan Observer* 8th June 1909)



Illus 7 OS map of 1900 (Aberdeenshire 023.14 published 1901) www.nls.ac.uk



Illus 8 OS map of 1924 (Aberdeenshire 023.14 published 1926) www.nls.ac.uk

- 1924** The 1924 OS map shows no change to the buildings, but the horse mill has gone.
- 1935-c.1941** The May family continued to farm at Cowhills, with May advertising to obtain a tractor and binder to cut 20 Acres of corn in 1939 (*Aberdeen Press and Journal* 5th January 1939) and offering an aged horse for sale in 1940 (*Aberdeen Press and Journal* 6th January 1940) – perhaps a poignant reminder of the change from horse to

tractor at this period. In 1941, Jane Cruikshank died (aged 75), the widow of John May of Cornhills (*Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 30th January 1941) and later in the same year a May (?son) sold 7 cattle from Cowhills. (*Aberdeen Press and Journal* 28th August 1941). During the same period, Leicester (*Aberdeen Press and Journal* 8th October 1936) and Suffolk sheep were sold from the farm (*Aberdeen Press and Journal* 30th September 1937) and the farm appears in the mart reports for the sale of store cattle ((*Aberdeen Press and Journal* 6th April 1935).

5 Methodology

- 5.1 The ground plans and elevations (House: Illus 9, 24, 38-39. Steading illus 36-37) have been annotated to show details which may help in understanding the development and history of the building.
- 5.2 The areas recorded were photographed. The full set of photographs will be supplied for the archive and annotated plans in the present report (illus 40-41) indicates the position of each.

6 The Buildings

Building 1: The farmhouse

Plan Main rectangular block with small lean-to outshot on the N end of the W wall.

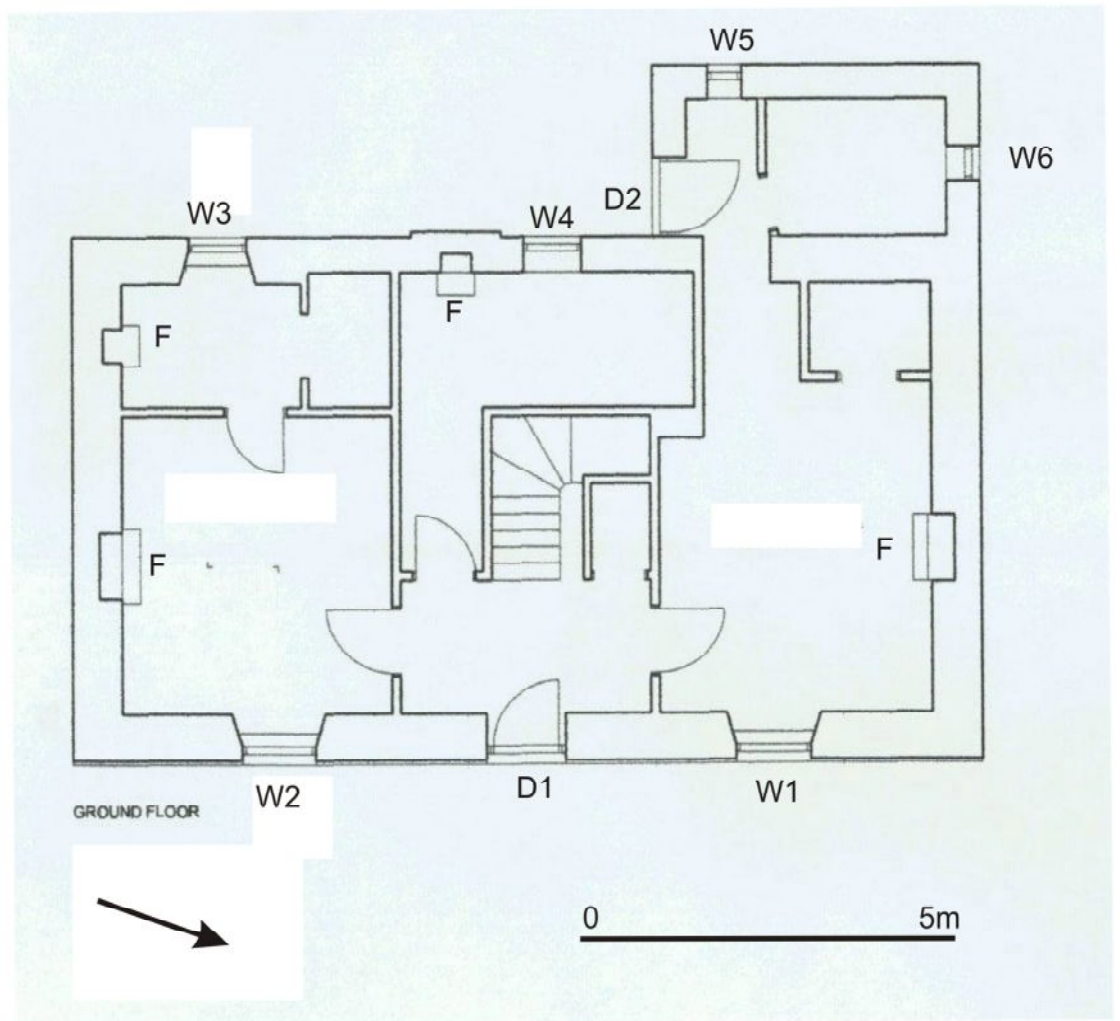
Orientation Roughly N/S, facing E.

Dimensions 7 x 12.2m

Present/recent use Derelict

Original use House

Walls Well coursed squared rubble blocks (Illus 10). The front (E) wall had been harled and also had a foundation course of dressed granite, as well as granite quoins, and rybats. The edges of these had been dressed with a raised margin, to fit the harling (Illus 11).



Illus 9 Farmhouse. Ground floor plan courtesy of Stephen Brown Architect Ltd annotated by MAS Ltd.



Illus 10 Farmhouse E gable, showing well coursed rubble.



Illus 11 Farmhouse N end of front (E) wall showing ashlar basal course and raised margins on quoins.

Roof Slate, partly missing. Rectangular pink granite chimneys to E and W, with fluted ceramic pots. Square chimney near middle of back (W) wall.



Illus 12 Farmhouse. Front (E) elevation.

Doors and windows

E wall

D1 W: 1.08m H:2.35m (Door H: 1.91m with light above). Pink granite rybats and lintel with raised margins.

W1 W: 1m H:1.67m. Pink granite rybats, sill and lintel with raised margins.

W2 W: 1m H:1.67m. Pink granite rybats, sill and lintel with raised margins.



Illus 13 Farmhouse. E wall, W1

N wall

W6 (outshot) W:0.46m H: 0.63m. Roughly dressed granite rybats, lintel and sill.

W wall

D2 W: 1.05m H: 1.75m Roughly dressed granite rybats and lintel.

W3 W:0.78m H:1.51m. Roughly dressed granite rybats, lintel and sill. Remains of sash window.

W4 W:0.78m H:1.51m. Roughly dressed granite rybats, lintel and sill. Remains of sash window.

W5 (outshot) W:0.46m H: 0.63m. Roughly dressed granite rybats, lintel and sill.



Illus 14 Farmhouse, W wall, W4 (D2 to LHS)



Illus 15 Farmhouse . Lean-to outshot at N end of W wall.

Interior

The interior was unsafe to enter at the time of the survey. It was recorded and photographed through the windows.

Ground Floor

N room:kitchen? The N room extended the full width of the house, with a fireplace with built-in oven in the N wall and a large cupboard/pantry in the NW corner. A door in the W wall gave access to the lean-to outshot (probably a milk house). The walls had been lathe and plastered, with painted decoration.



Illus 16 Farmhouse Looking in through W1. Main N room.



Illus 17 Farmhouse. Looking in through W1. Main N room. Detail of paintwork



Illus 18 Farmhouse Looking in through W1. Main N room. Detail of fireplace.

Front S room: parlour . The S end of the house was divided into a front (E) parlour and a much smaller room at the back of the house. The most distinctive features of this room- and the reason for identifying it as the parlour – was a line of plaster moulding around the top of the walls (Illus 20) and the fact that the cupboard to the W of the fireplace in the S wall had clearly at one time been glass fronted – both unusual elements in a farmhouse of this size.



Illus 19 Farmhouse. Looking in through W2. Main S room, looking through to back room.



Illus 20 Farmhouse. Looking in through W2. Main S room, Detail of plasterwork



Illus 21 Farmhouse. Looking in through W2. Main S room, Detail of fireplace.

Back room to N This was a small room with a fireplace on the S wall and a partitioned area on the N side. There was no visible evidence of function. It opened off the front room/parlour.



Illus 22 Farmhouse. Looking in through W4. N back room.

Central back room This was entered from beside the stairs. It had its own fireplace and chimney in the W wall. It may have been a chaumer for a farm servant.

Outshot

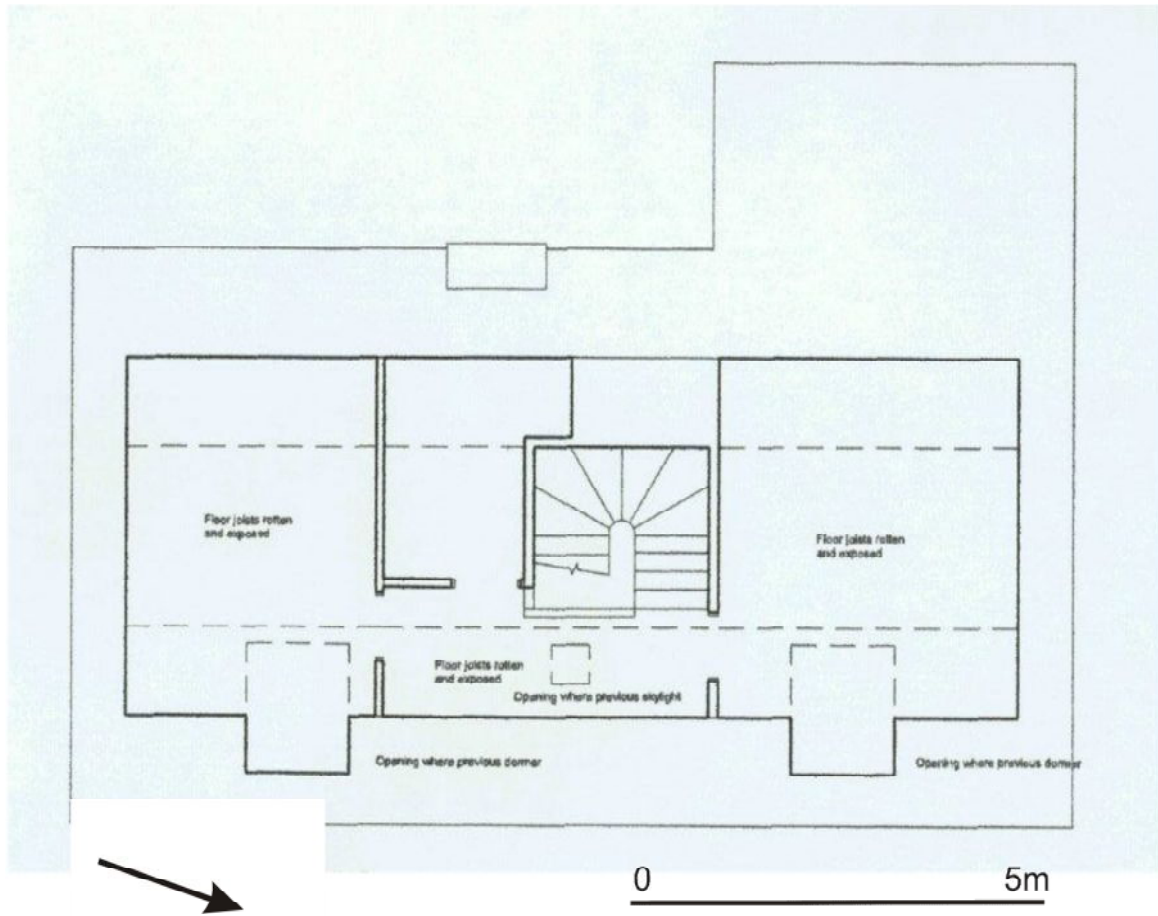
This could be entered either from the outside (door D2) or through an internal door from the front N room. No internal features survived but the double access and its position on the 'cold' corner of the house suggest it had been a milk house.

Lobby and stairwell Door D1 opened into a fairly generous sized lobby and stairwell, with a door to the S of the stairs leading through to a back room with its own fireplace (Possibly a chaumer for a farm servant).



Illus 23 Farmhouse. Stairwell inside door D1. Door to back room on LHS, cupboard on RHS

1st/attic floor Appeared to have 2 rooms and a box room.



Illus 24 Farmhouse. 1st/attic floor plan courtesy of Stephen Brown Architect Ltd



Illus 25 The Steading, E Elevation

Building 2: The steading

Plan U-plan, Open to E.

Orientation Approx N/S

Dimensions Maximum overall: 17 x 20m. S range: 4.65 x 13m. N Range: 5.5 x 17m.

Present/recent use Derelict.

Original use Steading

Walls Well coursed rubble with granite quoins, skews etc..

Roof Slate. Much missing.

Doors and windows

S Range

- D1** W: 2.14m H: 2.05m. Pink granite lintel and rybats.
D3 W: 0.56m H: 1.91m. Pink granite lintel and rybats.
F1 0.38m square recess on inner wall face. Depth into wall:0.22m
F2 W: 0.41m H: 0.38m Granite lintel. Bolt holes for fixing mill drive shaft.
W1 W: 0.94m H: 0.70m
W5 W:0.53m H: 0.85m. Into loft above mill



Illus 26 Mill shaft holes F1 and F2, window W1 to RHS



Illus 27 F2, detail of bolt holes

N Range

- D6** W: 1.12m H: 1.90m. Granite lintel and rybats
- D7** W: 1.21m H: 2.20m Granite lintel and rybats
- W3** W: 0.38m H: 0.50m Granite lintel and rybats
- W4** W: 0.90m H: 1.30m Granite lintel and rybats
- W6** W: 0.89m H:1.2m. Into loft above stable.



Illus 28 S elevation of N Range (D6, W4, D7)



Illus 29 E gable of N range with W6.

W Range

- D4** W: 2m H: 1.95m Granite lintel and rybats. Iron door pivots.
D5 W: 1.08m H: 1.95m Granite lintel and rybats
W2 W: 0.40m H: 0.40m Granite lintel and rybats
V Vents through wall, splayed internally.

Interior

S Range The E end of the S Range had a cart bay (D1) with a loft above. This was divided from the mill at the W end of the range by a stone wall at ground floor level, with a wooden partition at loft level, with a door through the loft partition to the mill. The W end had been the mill, with F1 and F2 confirming the documentary evidence of the position of the horse mill outside the W end of the S wall.



Illus 30 Interior of S Range, mill looking W. F1 & F2 beside ranging rod. Door D3 on RHS



Illus 31 Interior of S range mill, looking E to left. Door D2 on LHS

N Range The E end of the N Range had been a stable with a hay loft above. The remnant of a wooden trevis indicated that there had been 2 stalls, with a wooden hay hake and pipe ventilators through the wall.



Illus 32 N Range looking N. Stable with ranging rod beside hay hake indicating the collapsed trevis.



Illus 33 N Range, W end- byre or stable. W3 on LHS.

The W end of the range appeared to have been a byre or stable with a hay hake but no surviving evidence of stalls.

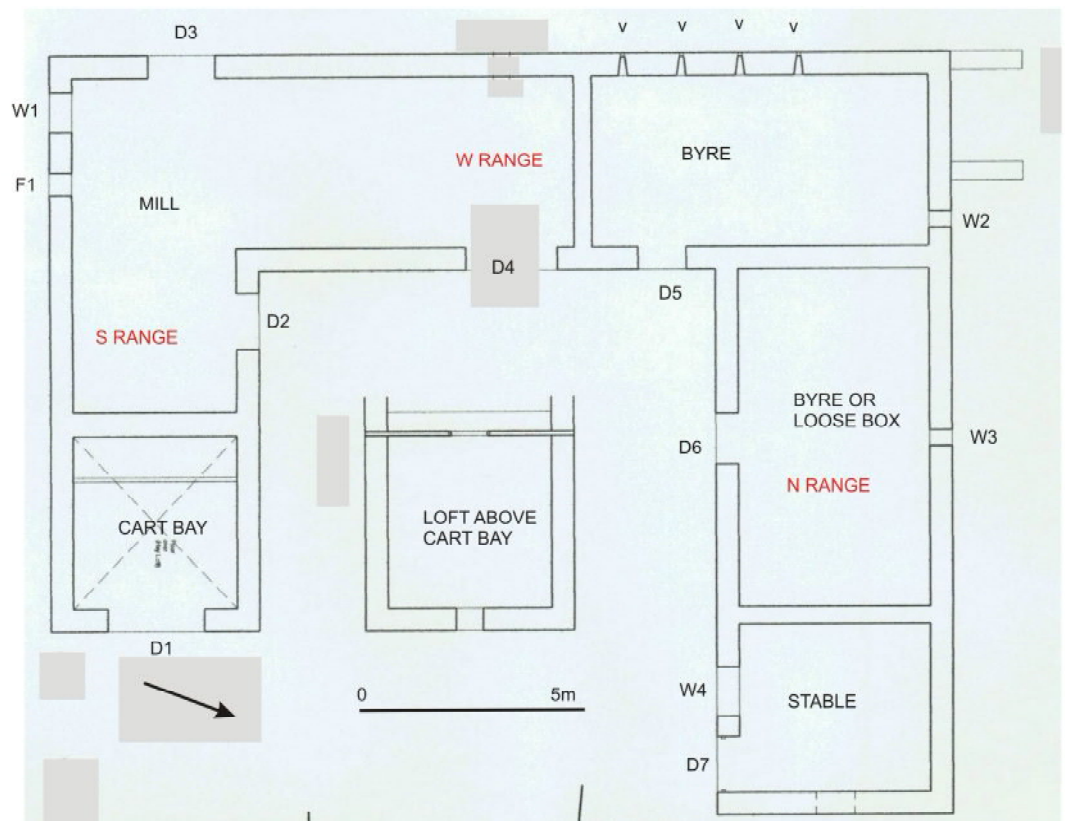
W Range The W Range appeared to have been a cattle byre, with the regular air vents through the W wall suggesting that there may have been tied cow stalls along this wall although no traces of them remained.



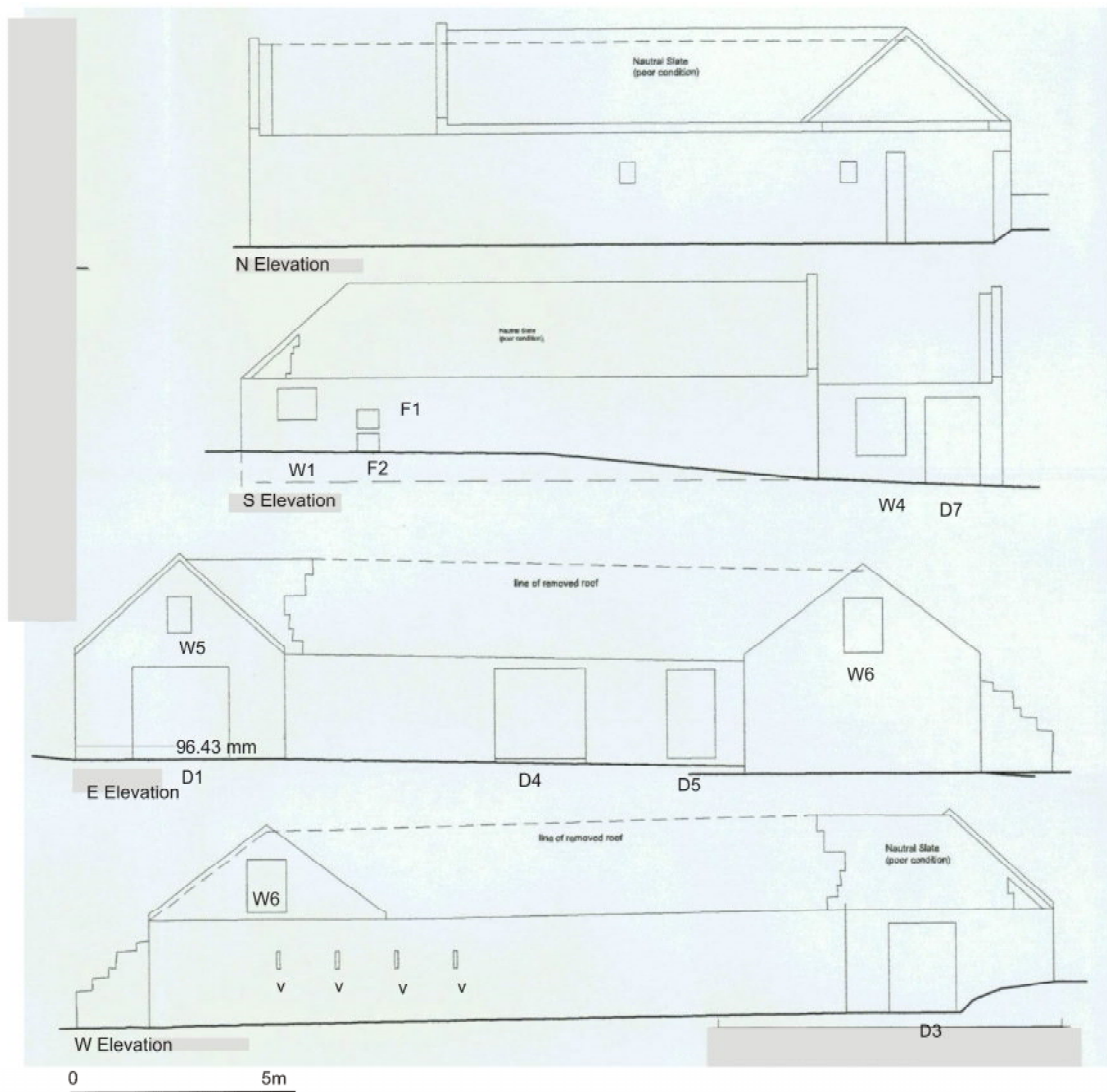
Illus 34 W Range- byre looking N to W2



Illus 35 W Range- byre looking W. Detail of vents.



Illus 36 Steading plan courtesy of Stephen Brown Architect Ltd, annotated by MAS Ltd



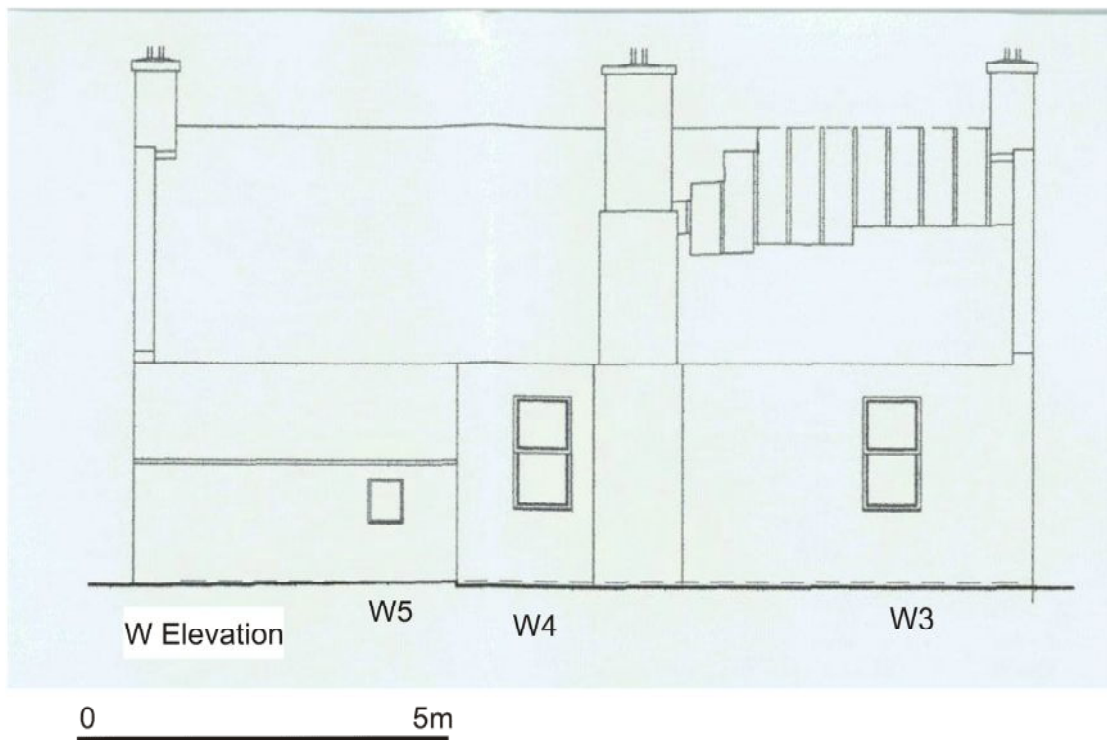
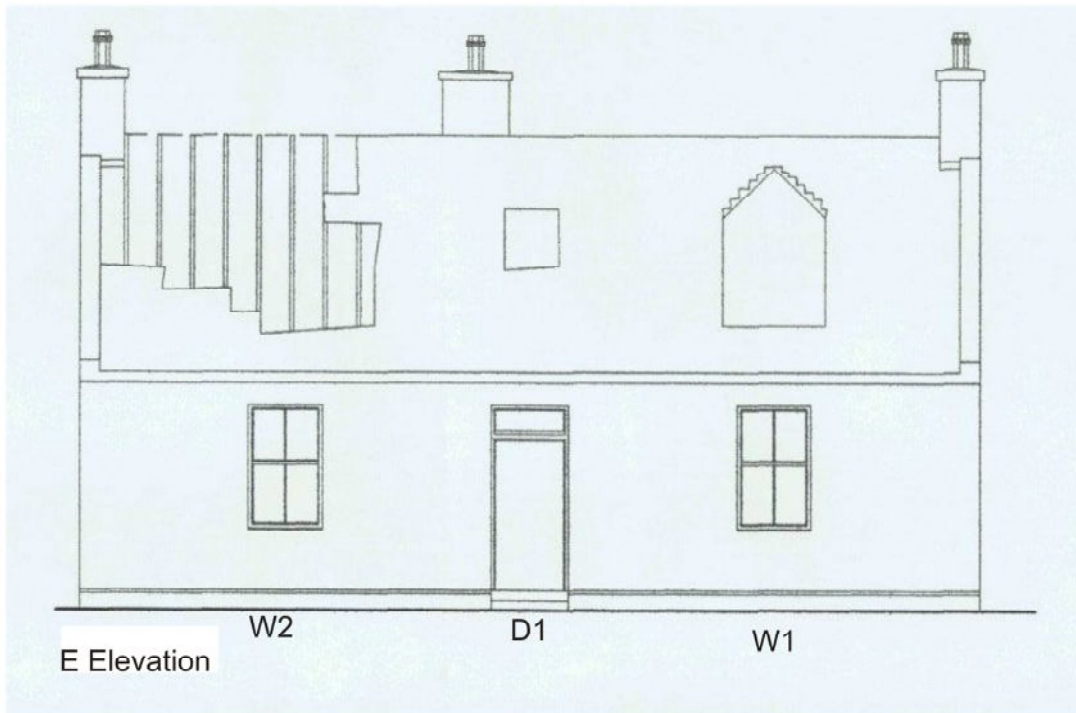
Illus 37 Steading elevations courtesy of Stephen Brown Architect Ltd, annotated by MAS Ltd

7 Discussion

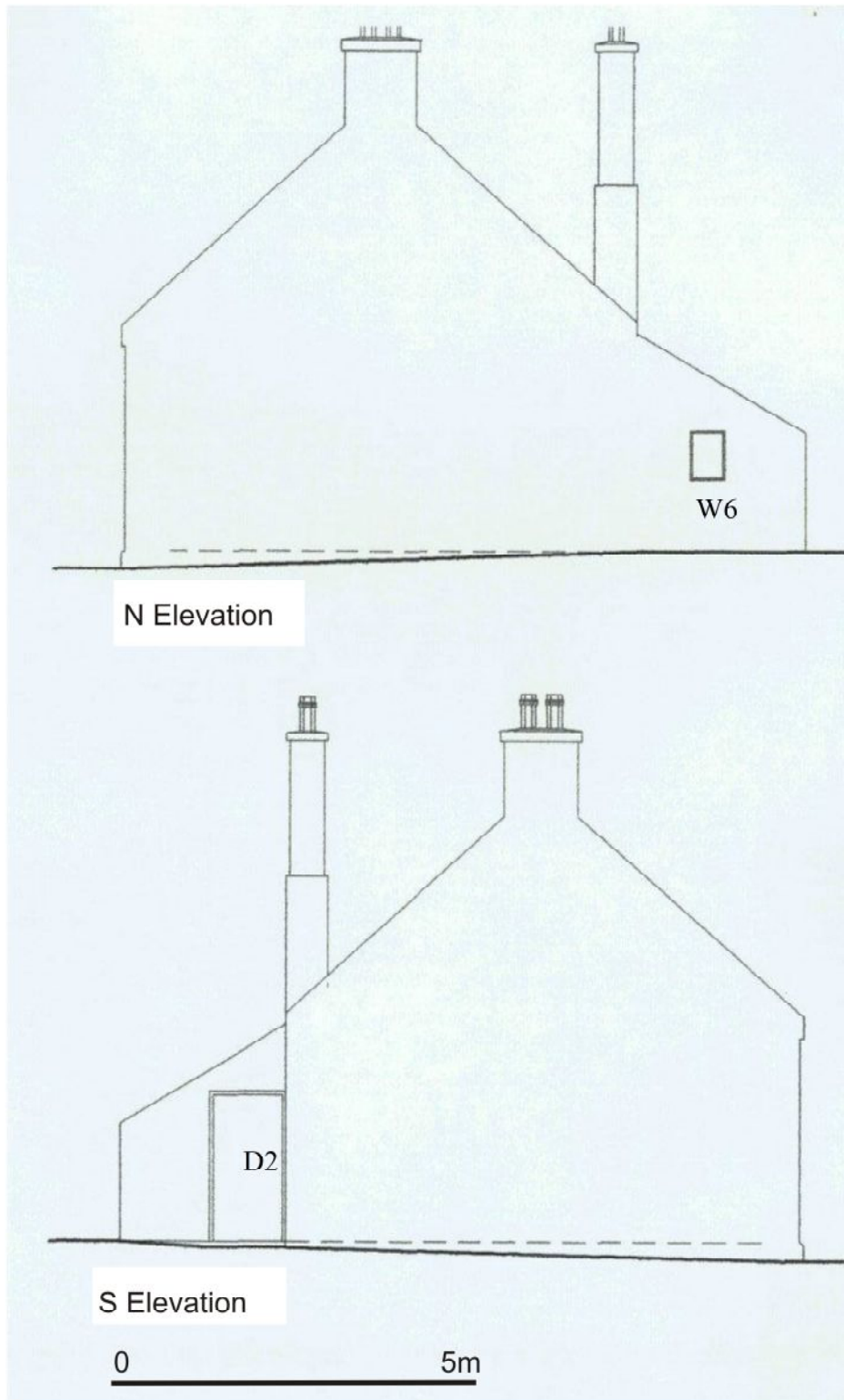
In many ways Cowhills is a fairly typical small farmstead. The 1848 advertisement (Illus 4) suggests it had been built just before the middle of the 19th century and the 1868 OS map shows the house and steading as they appeared at the time of the survey. There was no obvious change until the 1924 OS map which shows that there was no longer a horse mill – possibly a reflection of the loss of many horses during WW1.

The farmhouse, although typical in basic plan and size for a steading of this size, has nevertheless some unusual features which show an unusual degree of sophistication. For example, the ashlar basal course on the front wall and the recessed margins

around the door and windows on that elevation, are far more urban in style and can be matched for example, by houses in Peterhead (for example in King Street). The detailing of the parlour, with a glass fronted cupboard and the decorative plaster cornice mouldings, are also more elaborate than the apparent size of the farm would normally justify.



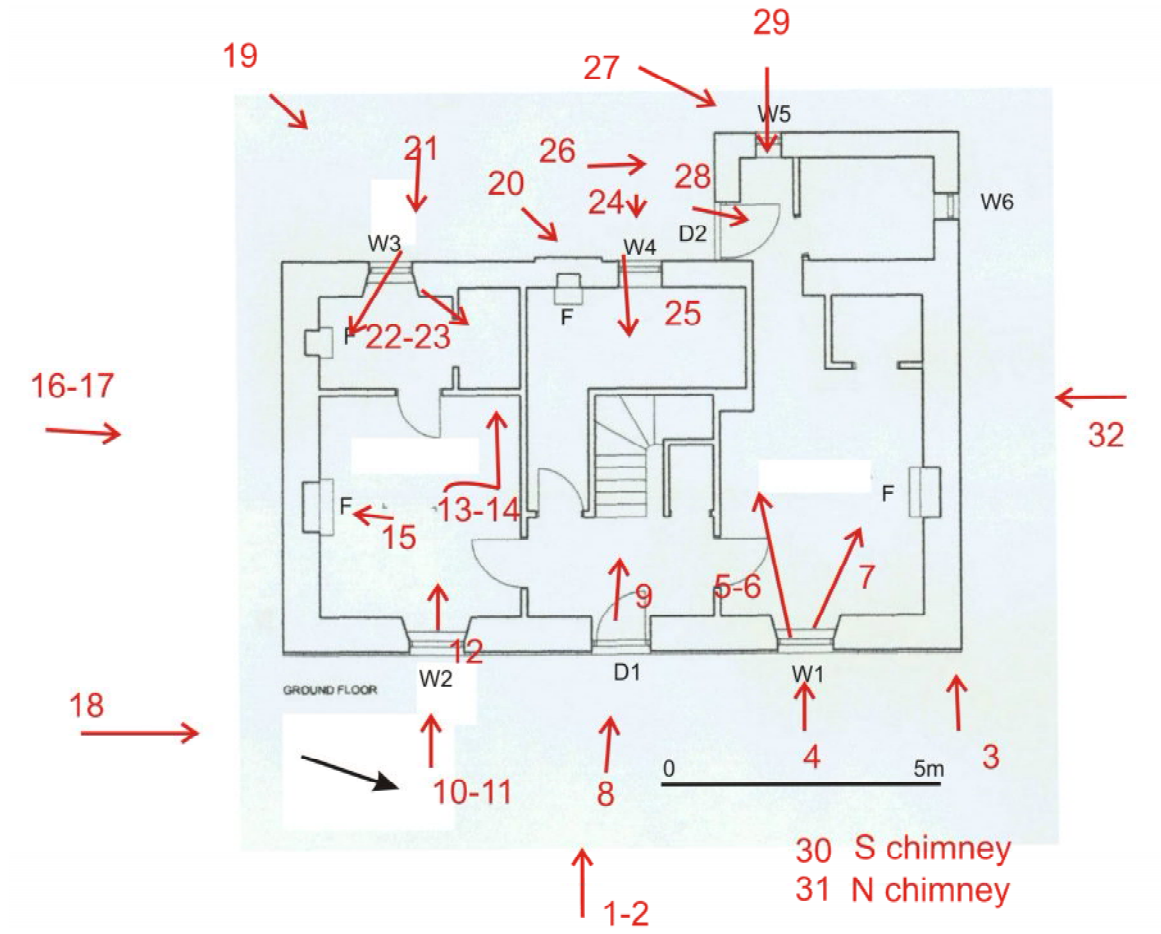
Illus 38 E and W elevations of Farmhouse courtesy of Stephen Brown Architect Ltd



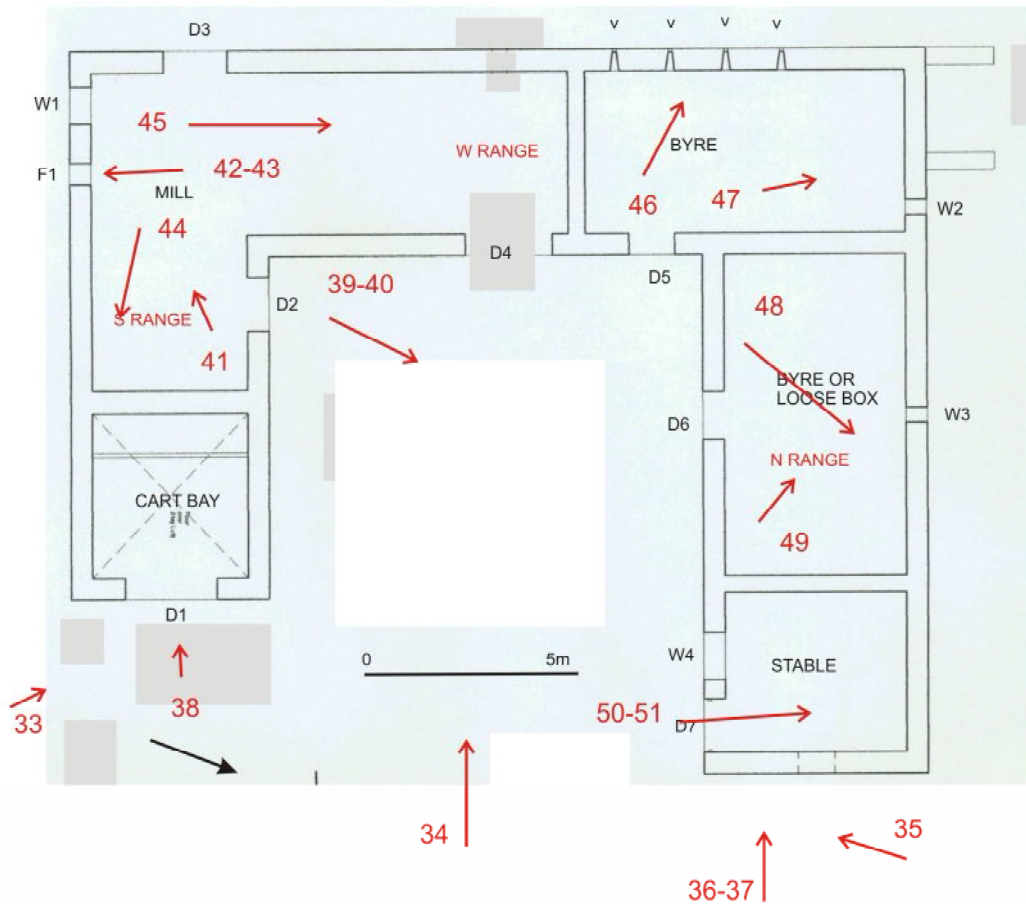
Illus 39 N and S elevations of farmhouse courtesy of Stephen Brown Architect Ltd

8 Archive

A full set of photographs with the photo location plans (Illus 40, 41) will be supplied to the Aberdeenshire SMR and to the HES archive.



Illus 40 Photo location plan : Farmhouse



Illus 41 Photo location plan : Steading

Photo number	Content
Farmhouse	
1-2	E elevation
3	Detail of N end of E wall
4	Window W1
5	View through W1
6-7	Details of NE room through W1
8	Door D1
9	View of staircase through D1
10-11	Window W2
12-15	Details of SE room through W2
16-18	S gable
19	Looking N along W wall
20	Back chimney
21	Window W3
22-23	SW room through W3
24	Window W4
25	View through W4
26	Door D2
27	Outshot
28	View through D2
29	View through outshot to front room through W5
30	S chimney
31	N chimney
32	N gable
Stabling	
33	General looking NW
34	General looking W
35	Stabling and house, looking SW
36-37	N range , E gable
38	S range E gable
39-40	S wall of N range
41	S range. Mill interior looking W
42-43	Mill, F1 & F2
44	Mill looking E to loft
45	W Range, S part of interior looking N
46	W Range, N end, Byre, detail of air vents
47	W Range, N end. Byre interior looking N
48	N Range, W end, looking E
49	N Range, W end, looking W
50-51	N Range, Stable interior, looking N