Low Byre, Low Fawnlees Farm Wolsingham, County Durham

Historic Building Recording



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Historic Building Recording

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Assumptions and Limitations

Data and information obtained and consulted in the compilation of this report has been derived from a number of secondary sources. Where it has not been practicable to verify the accuracy of secondary information, its accuracy has been assumed in good faith. The information accessed from the relevant HER and national lists of designated heritage assets represents a record of known assets and their discovery and further investigation. Such information is not complete and does not preclude the subsequent discovery of additional assets and the amendment of information about known assets which may affect their significance and/or sensitivity to development effects. All statements and opinions arising from the works undertaken are provided in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

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Solstice Heritage would like to thank Simon Robeson for commissioning this assessment. Thanks, are also due to Lauren Pratt from Durham County Council for her advice regarding the project. Where map data has been used in the preparation of the accompanying figures, this is derived from Ordnance Survey Opendata and is Crown copyright all rights reserved unless otherwise attributed.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Solstice Heritage LLP was commissioned by Mr Simon Robeson to produce a record of the built heritage resource prior to the conversation of Low Byre to a residential annexe at Low Fawnlees Farm, Wolsingham.

Low Fawnlees Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building (NHLE 1233184). As such, the agricultural byre is considered curtilage listed and is located at (NGR NZ 06090 38556). The byre is a mid-18th-century cow byre, currently used for sheltering sheep and is a typical representation of a North-Pennines agricultural farm building with semi-coursed stone walling, a low hipped slate roof and access from both the central farmyard and the surrounding pasture.

The historic building recording of the byre has provided a documentary and photographic record of the building. It can be seen that the byre developed in two distinct phases, all of which relate directly to its use as a livestock and agricultural byre from the 18th century and including a substantial mid-20th-century renovation. The earliest map reference to Low Fawnlees located was the 1838 tithe map of the area, on which the byre is seen as a distinct building on the northern side of the farmstead. This layout has remained largely unchanged up to the present day, though modern farm sheds have been subsequently built adjacent to the byre and the main road to the farm has been redirected. As such, the byre can no longer be accessed from the main road.

The first phase is the original 18th-century build of the byre, separate to the main farmstead but still accessed from within the main farmyard to the west. The second distinct phase comprises presumed early- to mid-20th-century renovation of the roof, alterations and insertions to windows and doorframes, and the insertion of an internal subdividing wall creating the separate Rooms G1 and G2. At this point, the main stalling in Room G1 was upgraded with cast-concrete stalls, trough, foddergang, group and rear walkway. The insertion of the external chimney stack may belong to a separate phase between the two distinct phases or may be part of the 20th-century alterations. The subdivision of the internal space seems likely to have been, at least in part, for the creation of a loosebox at the southern end. The use of looseboxes was of importance to farmers cultivating fat stock during the 19th century, while smaller byres were often used for domestic milk cows (Edwards and Lake 2014).

The building is typical of the North Pennines agricultural vernacular but is also demonstrably part of a farmstead with some elements of agricultural ornamentation. The traditional aesthetic lies in its semi-coursed watershot stone walling with lime mortar, accented by large stone quoins and the low hipped slate roof. The later renovations are obvious due to the fabric changing to machine-made red brick, or where the inserted or altered door and window surrounds fit uncomfortably against the stonework and are patched in with cementitious mortar.

Overall, Low Byre retains much of its original form and legibility of historical use, with little of the historic fabric having been altered or lost over time. Where the 20th-century renovations and alterations have been inserted, they have also retained the original purpose of the structure, while contributing an additional phase of use to its story.



1. Introduction

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

This Historic Building Recording (HBR) has been commissioned by Mr Simon Robeson to provide a record of the building known as Low Byre prior to proposed development at Low Fawnlees Farm, Wolsingham, County Durham.

1.2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The proposed development is located at Low Fawnlees Farm, Wolsingham, County Durham (NGR NZ 06090 38556) (Figure 1). As the building is situated immediately adjacent to the Grade II listed Low Fawnlees Farmhouse (NHLE 1233184), for the purposes of this assessment it is considered curtilage listed, following advice from Durham County Council. The listing description for Low Fawnlees Farmhouse is reproduced below:

NZ 03 NE 22/377

WOLSINGHAM LEAZES LANE (North end, off) Low Fawnlees Farmhouse II Farmhouse. Mid C18. Coursed squared rubble with ashlar dressings and large quoins; stone-flagged roof with brick chimney. Two storeys, three bays. Central partly-glazed six-panel door in plain stone surround with blank pediment-like panel above; late C19 ground-floor and 16-pane first-floor sashes in plain stone surrounds; end chimneys. Rear elevation shows round-headed stair window with glazing bars, in third bay. C20 left addition not of interest.

Listing NGR: NZ0604938565.

The proposed development involves the conversion of Low Byre to form a residential and office-use annexe at Low Fawnlees Farm.



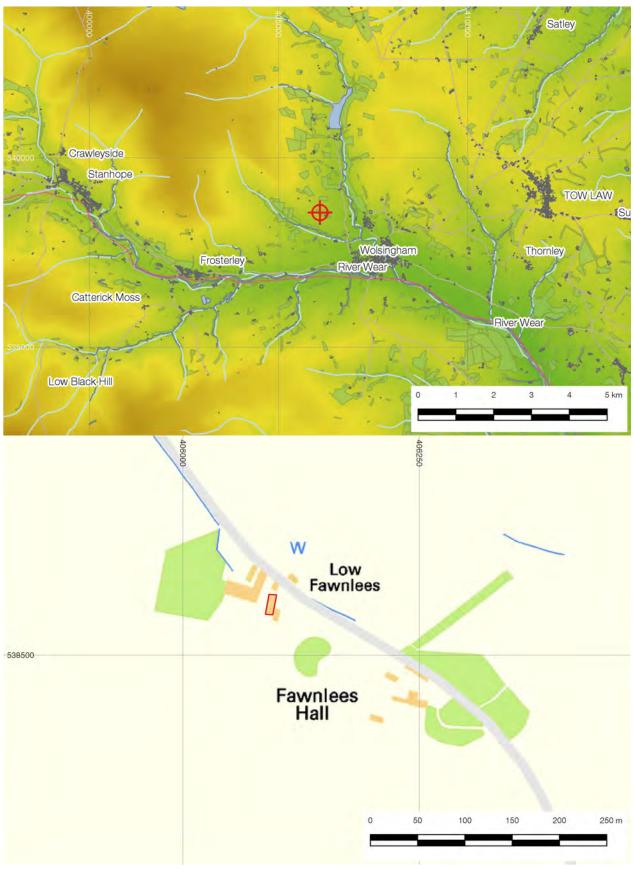


Figure 1 Site Location



2. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

2.1 BUILDING RECORDING

An historic building survey to Historic England Level 2 standard (Historic England 2016) was carried out by Amy Talbot PCIfA and Jim Brightman MCIfA of Solstice Heritage LLP in March 2019. This level of survey provides a detailed descriptive account of the building, together with a systematic analysis of its origins, development and use. The survey consisted of a written, drawn (measured) and photographic account involving the following:

- The written record comprised: the precise location of the building together with any statutory and non-statutory designations; the date of the survey and the location of the archive; a descriptive account of the form, function and phasing of the building. This element of the work also identified all features, fixtures and fittings relevant to the original and subsequent uses of the site.
- The drawn record comprised: measured plans of each of the floors, together with drawings of the principal elevations. Existing architect's plans and elevations were adapted for the building, and their accuracy was checked. The plans show the form and location of features such as blocked windows and doors, and evidence for fixtures of significance.
- The photographic record comprised: photographs of the building's wider aspect together with general views of the external appearance of the building. These are normally oblique, but right-angle photographs of elevations containing complex detail were taken. The overall appearance of internal rooms and circulation areas was also captured, together with detailed views of features of significance. The photographic archive consists of digital colour photography at a minimum of 20 megapixels. All detailed photographs contain a graduated photographic scale where possible. A photographic register detailing (as a minimum) location and direction of each shot was compiled.

2.2 Assumptions and Limitations

Data and information obtained and consulted in the compilation of this report has been derived from a number of secondary sources. Where it has not been practicable to verify the accuracy of secondary information, its accuracy has been assumed in good faith. Any information accessed from relevant HERs and/or national lists of designated heritage assets represents a record of known assets and their discovery and further investigation. Such information is not complete and does not preclude subsequent discovery of additional assets and the amendment of information about known assets which may affect their significance and/or sensitivity to development effects. All statements and opinions arising from the works undertaken are provided in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

2.3 COPYRIGHT

Solstice Heritage LLP will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).



3. Results of the Historic Building Recording

The results of the Historic Building Recording are presented, with exterior elevations described first followed by interior rooms. This account identifies all features, fixtures and fittings relevant to the original and subsequent uses of the site. Phased plan and elevations also showing the location of photographs taken for the photographic archive, derived from architect's drawings, have also been produced and are included below as Figure 2.

Low Byre is part of Low Fawnlees farmstead, comprising a farmhouse and several gradually developed ancillary buildings with the byre to the east of the main farm as a separate construction. The byre cannot be accessed directly from the main road and sits next to a modern sheet metal farm shed, both of which are located adjacent to a large area of pasture. The farm has at least 17th-century origins, indicated by 17th-century features being retained *in situ* and as re-used elements in later sections of repair and rebuilding on buildings within the farmstead.

The byre is constructed in water shot, semi-coursed stone fabric with lime mortar and original stone quoins and has a hipped slate roof. The byre consists of two internal rooms, with the subdivision being an insertion contemporary with later renovations of the byre. These consist of:

- · Renovations to the internal roof trusses and presumably replacement of some or all of the slates
- Alterations to all the external doorways
- Insertion of a dividing wall to create two internal rooms
- The potential insertion of a later chimney within G2, though this may be earlier
- Blocking up an external doorway in the western elevation.

3.1 EXTERNAL NORTH-FACING ELEVATION

The north-facing elevation of the byre contains one small doorway into room G1 on the eastern side, with sand-stone jambs and lintel. The doorway appears to have been re-used as it is not flush with the structural quoins and has cementitious mortar pointing to the surrounding wall rather than the lime mortar seen in the original fabric. The doorway is also bolted and strapped for reinforcement. There were no other features observed on this elevation (Figure 3).

3.2 EXTERNAL EAST-FACING ELEVATION

The east-facing elevation includes one metal tie-bar with pattress plate towards the northern end (Figure 4). Two original windows, with sandstone lintel and sills on both and metal bars across the windows provide light and ventilation. Towards the southern end, it can be assumed that the east-facing wooden door is in the original location; however, it has been altered, with the original quoins replaced by a surround of modern machine-made brick. It can also be assumed that the doorway was also raised as the original stonework does not fit straight with the base of the doorway. The concrete lintel is contemporary with the brick, as it does not sit flush with the original stone towards the southern end. The alteration of the doorway is likely to have been contemporary with the internal inserted wall, as it enters room G2. There is evidence of renovation of the window towards the southern end of the eastern wall in the form of inserted stone rubble at the edge of the sill with cementitious mortar repointing. Unlike the two windows towards the northern end, this window has no bars. There is evidence of a metal tie-bar close to the eaves, but no further features were observed in this elevation (Figure 5).

3.3 EXTERNAL WEST-FACING ELEVATION

The west-facing elevation, which faces towards the farmstead, contains two original windows at the northern end (Figure 6) with original stone lintels, sills and metal bars to provide light and ventilation. The doorway appears to have a re-used sandstone jamb and lintel, with cast concrete used as the southern jamb. As such, the doorway is unlikely to be original and was probably inserted for yard access into Room G1. The doorway does not fit flush with the stone fabric and includes some brick infill around. A bolt and strap for reinforcement on the left-hand side of the lintel also provides evidence for the doorway to be a later insertion. Tie-bars with pattress plates are noted on the northern and southern end of the west-facing elevation. On the southern end of the west-facing elevation is a blocked doorway with stone quoined surround. The lower half has been blocked to create a small window. The lintel is a later insertion, and it is likely that this doorway was blocked contemporary to the renovations noted upon the east-facing elevation along with the internal wall insertion (Figure 7).



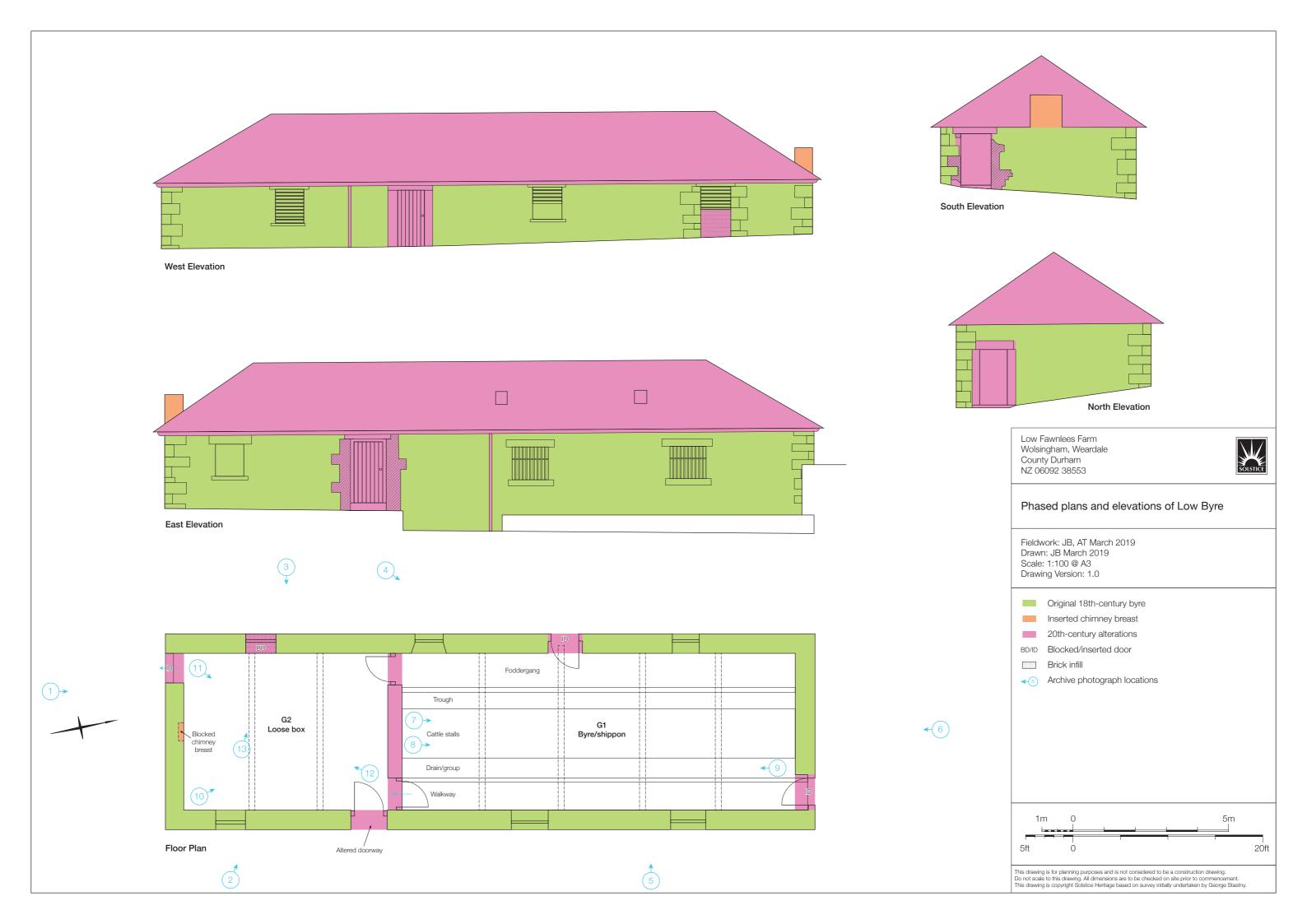




Figure 3 North-facing external elevation of byre. Scale $1x\ 2\ m$



Figure 4 East-facing elevation, north end. Scale 1 x 2 m $\,$





Figure 5 East-facing elevation, south end. Scale 1 x 2 m $\,$



Figure 6 West-facing elevation, north end. Scale 1 x 2 m $\,$





Figure 7 West-facing elevation, south end. Scale 1 x 2 m $\,$



Figure 8 South-facing elevation of byre. Scale 1 x 2 m $\,$



3.4 EXTERNAL SOUTH-FACING ELEVATION

The south-facing elevation has an inserted doorway with brick jambs and a tooled sandstone lintel with stone infill surrounding it. The doorway leads into room G2 and out into an area of pasture. This is the only elevation which has no metal guttering below the roof, yet there is a chimney stack towards the centre of the elevation at the eaves. It is likely that the chimney stack is an insertion with the later renovations and as such is contemporary with the inserted brick doorway and the modern inserted wall in the interior; however, it it also possible that it represents a phase of alteration in the 19th or early 20th century not contemporary with the other renovations. There is a structural crack on the eastern side of the elevation which has been patched with mortar.

3.5 Room G1

Room G1 is a large ground-floor space, originally used for cow stalling and currently used as a seasonal sheep shelter. The wooden latched doorway on the west elevation opens inwards from the yard to a foddergang or feeding passage facing a low concrete feeding trough which runs lengthways down the room. Metal posts and rings for tying the animals are noted at intervals down the length of the now-removed stalls, with the byre likely to have been subdivided into six compartments. A drain was noted at the end of the trough leading out towards the north. Towards the east side of the room, there is a gradual slope from the concrete stalls into a cast concrete drain or group which led out into the adjacent yard and pasture. The doorway in the north-facing elevation does not contain a door, presumably to allow ease of animal access into the byre.

An internal subdivision was inserted during probable early 20th-century renovations which separates Room G1 from Room G2 with two doors, at the east and west sides of the room (Figure 9). These are small narrow doorways with wooden latched doors, allowing access between the rooms and keeping livestock contained. The eastern doorway sits on a raised concrete floor surface to compensate for the gradual slope towards the drain. There is no loft in Room G1, which is open to the roof. The internal roof structure in this room comprises six tie-beam and principal rafter trusses, with the principal rafters attached by halved joints. Collar beams are noted on every other truss in sawn timber, suggesting an early- to mid-20th-century date for renovations, contemporary with the insertion of the internal subdividing wall. The trusses are inserted into the external walls which were later whitewashed. (Figure 10).

3.6 Room G2

Room G2 is a small ground-floor space used for livestock stalling, presumably as a loose box or similar function. The wooden latched doorway in the east elevation opens inwards from the adjacent yard and pasture. The smaller doorway with brick jambs in the south wall has no door, potentially for ease of access. There is no direct access into this room from the main farmyard.

The room was previously part of the large cow byre prior to the inserted wall subdivision, with two doorways in the dividing wall. The doorway on the western side of the dividing wall opens inwards into Room G2, while the eastern doorway opens out into Room G1 (Figure 11). As well as this being a preventative measure to keep live-stock separate, it could be that livestock were brought into the room from the yard, through the western doorway and into room G2. The blocked doorway as noted on the west elevation is visible on the internal wall, with the small window providing light and ventilation into the room (Figure 12).

Regarding the chimney stack noted at eaves-level on the south elevation, it is considered unlikely to have been part of the original construction due to a lack of evidence for a stove or fireplace setting on the internal wall of Room G2. A small hole below the stack has been in-filled with loose brick, and it is considered most likely that the chimney was a later addition, potentially 19th-century in date. It suggests that the southern end of the building had a different purpose, or was multi-purpose, prior to the sub-division of the internal space. It is also possible that the addition of the chimney was contemporary with the early- to mid-20th-century renovations and was blocked at a later date (Figure 13). The roof timber structure is the same as observed in Room G1.





Figure 9 Room G1 facing south towards the internal subdivision between Rooms G1 and G2. Scale 1 x 2 m $\,$



Figure 10 Room G1 facing north. Scale 1 x 2 m $\,$





Figure 11 Room G2 facing north towards the inserted dividing wall. Scale 1 x 2 m $\,$



Figure 12 Blocked doorway in west wall of Room G2. Scale 1 x 2 m





Figure 13 Oblique shot facing south-west with chimney stack shown in south wall. Scale 1 x 2 m $\,$



4. HISTORIC MAP REGRESSION

Consultation of the historic mapping showed that there are several early pictorial maps which are not of a suitable scale to provide detail of the proposed development site and its wider surroundings within the farm.

The earliest available mapping showing the farm is the 1838 tithe apportionment map. The landowner is recorded as George Darnell, and the farm is occupied by John Hutchinson. The farm is listed as arable, with the same landowner and occupier listed for both Middle and High Fawnlees. On the map, Low Byre is visible as a standalone building set to the east of the farmstead; however, it is demonstrably a part of the farmyard, with the main access to the farm going past the byre.

The next available map is the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition Durham XXIV (includes: Stanhope; Wolsingham; Wolsingham Park Moor) which was surveyed in 1857 and published in 1861. Little has changed on this map, with the main access to the farm still going past the barn, and showing the adjacent field boundary intact except for a footpath traversing from the farmyard to the field. Little has changed by the time of the next revision of the OS map, surveyed between 1895 and 1896 and published in 1898. The byre has not changed in relation to the farmstead and still appears adjacent to the main road access. There is, however, another track depicted which leads straight from the main road to the farmhouse. By the time of the next OS revision, surveyed in 1919 and published in 1923, the barn is still part of the main farmstead.

At some point in the early to mid-20th century, a large section of the irregular farmstead amalgamation to the east of the farmhouse was infilled with a brick-built annex including cast-concrete animal stalling. This is similar in construction materials to the renovation of the byre and provides the best estimate of date for this phase of alteration.

Historic mapping consulted is outlined in the table below:

Date surveyed	Map/Compiler	Author and Work (Where Known)
1838	IR 29/11/290 Tithe apportionment of Low Fawnlees, County Durham	
1857	Ordnance Survey 1st edition	
1895-6	Ordnance Survey Revision	
1919	Ordnance Survey Revision	

Table 1 Historic maps consulted



5. Discussion

The historic building recording of Low Byre has provided a documentary record of the building. It can be seen from the structural evidence that there are two distinct phases for the byre, with a third phase potentially represented by a small added chimney stack to the eaves of the southern end of the building.

The first phase is the original 18th-century build of the byre, separate to the main farmstead but still accessed from within the main farmyard to the west. The second distinct phase comprises presumed early- to mid-20th-century renovation of the roof, alterations and insertions to windows and doorframes, and the insertion of an internal subdividing wall creating the separate Rooms G1 and G2. At this point, the main stalling in Room G1 was upgraded with cast-concrete stalls, trough, foddergang, group and rear walkway. The insertion of the external chimney stack may belong to a separate phase between the two distinct phases or may be part of the 20th-century alterations. The subdivision of the internal space seems likely to have been, at least in part, for the creation of a loosebox at the southern end. The use of looseboxes was of importance to farmers cultivating fat stock during the 19th century, while smaller byres were often used for domestic milk cows (Edwards and Lake 2014).

The building is typical of the North Pennines agricultural vernacular but is also demonstrably part of a farmstead with some elements of agricultural ornamentation. The traditional aesthetic lies in its semi-coursed watershot stone walling with lime mortar, accented by large stone quoins and the low hipped slate roof. The later renovations are obvious due to the fabric changing to machine-made red brick, or where the inserted or altered door and window surrounds fit uncomfortably against the stonework and are patched in with cementitious mortar.

Overall, Low Byre retains much of its original form and legibility of historical use, with little of the historic fabric having been altered or lost over time. Where the 20th-century renovations and alterations have been inserted, they have also retained the original purpose of the structure, while contributing an additional phase of use to its story.



6. SOURCES

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APPENDIX 1 – PHOTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE REGISTER

Shot No.	Direction of View	Scale	Description	Photo By
1	N	1 X 2 m	South- facing wall of byre (external).	JB/AT
2	NW	1 X 2 m	South-east- facing wall of byre (external).	JB/AT
3	NE	1 X 2 m	South-west- facing wall of byre (external).	JB/AT
4	NE	1 X 2 m	South-west -facing wall of byre w. NW end visible.	JB/AT
5	S	1 X 2 m	North -facing wall of byre (external)	JB/AT
6	W	1 X 2 m	East- facing wall of byre (external)	JB/AT
7	N	1 X 2 m	South- facing wall of byre G 1 (internal)	JB/AT
8	Ν	1 X 2 m	South- facing wall of byre G 1 (internal)	JB/AT
9	S	1 X 2 m	North- facing wall of byre G 1 (internal)	JB/AT
10	Ν	1 X 2 m	South- facing wall of byre G 2 (internal)	JB/AT
11	NE	1 X 2 m	South-west -facing G 2 (internal)	JB/AT
12	SW	1 X 2 m	North-east- facing G 2 (internal)	JB/AT
13	W	1 X 2 m	East- facing blocked doorway G 2 (internal)	JB/AT



