

Grove Farm, Kirkbride

Historic Building Record



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Introduction

JB Heritage Consultancy was commissioned to carry out a Level 3 Historic Building Record of Grove Farm, Kirkbride, Cumbria on 17 June 2012 prior to demolition work being carried out. The inspection of the house and barn was carried out by Mr John Bargh MSc IHBC on Monday, 25 June 2012 and Monday 2 July 2012. The report was written also by John Bargh. The report format is laid out in accordance with English Heritage: Understanding Historic Buildings. A Guide to Good Recording Practice 2006 and will conform to Level 3 standard as set out in this Guide. The report will be written in accordance with a typical Brief for an Archaeological Building Recording Project issued by the Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service, Environment Unit.

Documentary research was undertaken at the Cumbria County Library, Cumbria Archive Centre Carlisle, books and the Internet to discover information about the owners, occupiers and builders of the property and any other relevant information. A site survey was carried out to identify historic features at the property, phased development and architectural details. Photographs are allocated numbers and are marked on the existing plans at the back of the report. Plans and elevations are to 1:100 scale.

In December 2009 there was a serious fire which extensively damaged the interior of the house¹ resulting in some structural failure. The fire and smoke damage has caused charring of the timber components and general discolouration making identification of the fabric difficult and some parts of the house potentially unsafe. Notwithstanding this a limited inspection of most areas of the house has been possible. The south wall of the barn has become unstable and some collapse of the masonry has taken place. The condition of the barn is cause for concern with regard to safe entry and as a result no inspection could be made of the interior.

Note. There is a different spelling for Whitrigg and Whitrigglees. In old documents they are sometimes spelt: Whiterigg and Whiterigg Lees.

The plans and elevations in this report are taken from the drawings produced by Architectural Design and Planning Ltd.

National Grid Reference NY 2402 5725.

The planning application number is 2/12/020.

General Description

Grove Farm lies within a small hamlet of mostly farm buildings and dwellings just off the B5307 heading out west from Carlisle to Kirkbride. It comprises a range of buildings once constituting a farm but now generally derelict. At the northern end of the farm there is a farmhouse and barn. At the west side is a small detached two storey building positioned south of the farmhouse. On the eastern side are three farm buildings of more recent construction and of no historical significance. Of the buildings on this site those to be described in this report are the farmhouse and barn with their additions which lie to the north of the site. The house and barn are attached end to end forming an elongated building. There is a single storey addition attached to the rear (north) of the house and at the east end of the barn there are two separate buildings, a store and byre, built against the barn gable.



Plate 1. North West Elevation of House



Plate 2. North Elevation of House

The house is two storey, rectangular on plan and has two gables. The external walls are clay dabbins with some brick to the first floor. The roof is pitched and covered with blue slates, probably welsh, with a blue clayware ridge. There are two chimneys at the gables with rendered stacks, capping and clay pots. The external walls are finished with a roughcast coating. The window frames and doors are modern PVCU. On the west gable there are three brick buttresses of more recent date. Internally the ground floor has two main rooms and a hall. On the first floor there are four bedrooms, landings and two staircases. The ground floor is constructed of solid concrete. The first floor is of timber suspended construction and all the internal surfaces of the external walls on both floors are plastered. The ceilings to the ground floor hall and all the first floor rooms are also plastered or plasterboard and skimmed. The ceilings to the two ground floor main rooms are timber board, joists and beams as there is no applied finish to these ceilings. The thin partition walls on both floors are timber stud with a plasterboard, hardboard or vertical timber boarded finish. Internal doors are modern flush type. The staircases are fabricated from timber treads and risers let into timber strings.

Attached to the north of the house is a single storey extension. This has a mono-pitched roof covered with blue slates with some sandstone at the eaves course. There is an apparent join

in the roof slope indicating that the extension has itself been extended (See Plate 2). The external walls appear to be a mixture of brick and stone finished externally with roughcast. The interior comprises two rooms. The floors are solid concrete, the wall finishes internally are plaster and the ceiling is lath and plaster and plasterboard and skim. The three window frames on the north elevation are more recent and the openings appear to have been modified at some time.

There is a small timber framed extension at the rear abutting the end wall of the single storey extension. This contains a WC and is of no historical significance.

The barn has a pitched roof covered with corrugated metal sheeting with a waterproof coating. The external walls are a combination of brick, stone and some concrete blockwork at the rear. The doors and window frames are timber. The barn is very dilapidated and unsafe and as such was not inspected internally.

On the east end of the barn are two separate buildings. A store which is built of modern blockwork and of no historical significance and a byre. The byre has a solid floor and external walls of brick, stone and concrete block. The roof is covered with corrugated asbestos cement sheet supported on old timber tie beam trusses. There are four cubicles for farm animals. The byre has been extensively altered so that little survives of what may have been original. As a consequence its heritage value is significantly diminished.



Plate 3. Small Detached Building

Despite not being required for inclusion in the historical recording it is desirable to give a brief description of the small detached building to the south of the farmhouse (See Plate 3). As Grove Farm was a working farm the small building to the south of the house would have had an important function. This building is two storey with a single storey addition. The external walls are mostly constructed of stone with some brick and some of the quoins are dressed stone ashlar. It has pitched roofs covered with slates and the trusses to the two storey part are rough tie beam type. The single storey roof has heavy timber purlins supporting the roof. The first floor is suspended timber and the ground floors are solid. There is a chimney stack on the two storey part built in brick serving a former fireplace, now built up, on the ground floor. The first floor is accessed from an external stone staircase which is supported on brick walls and the stone treads are not built into the main walls of the building. Doors are timber boarded and there are window frames in stone surrounds on the ground and first floor; one on the first floor is blocked up. The single storey addition appears to have been used for farm animals.

Historical Development

The Barony of Burgh embraced the locality of Whitrigglees. It was created in 1092 as a defensive area against Scottish invasion from across the Solway and was first granted to Norman barons.² It passed through six great families: the Estrivers, Engaines, Morvills, Lucys, Multons and the Dacres.³ The Barony of Burgh was inherited by Anne Dacre who was married to Philip Howard, the Earl of Arundel⁴ and from this union the Barony entered the Howard family. In the 1580's powerful challenges about the Dacre lands led to the estates being forfeited to the Crown but in 1601 the Howards were allowed to buy back their lost inheritance and Whitrigglees was included in this repurchase.⁵

Whitrigglees is mentioned in a Burgh Manor Court Leet record dated 20 October 1663 regarding a certain Christopher Sibson, a cottage at Whitrigglees and rights to feed from Browne Moore.⁶ In this document the Baronie of Burghe and the name Knubley de Fingland is mentioned.⁷ The name 'Knubley' will later be seen associated with the ownership of Grove Farm in the nineteenth century.

Further to the north of Whitrigglees was Whiterigg which was situated in a manor belonging to Sir Wilfrid Lawson purchased from the Skeltons of Armathwaite⁸ about 1712.⁹ It was first inhabited by the Bruness who were a great ancient family.¹⁰ Another hamlet belonging to Sir Wilfrid Lawson called Whiterigg Leys was the pasture ground and lee of Whiterigg.¹¹

The directories before the middle of the nineteenth century are not clear as to the occupiers of specific properties in the hamlet of Whitrigglees. The directory of 1829 saw the names: Backhouse, Lawson, Reed, Studholme, Taylor and Watson who were farmers at Whitrigglees but it does not indicate which property.¹²

In 1842 the land and buildings in the hamlet surrounding Grove Farm were under various occupation. Jonathan Studholme occupied land, an orchard, buildings and a yard to the north-west of Grove Farm and this land was owned by Abraham Bird.¹³ John Barnes, the owner of buildings, a yard, an orchard, a stackyard and a garden to the immediate east of Grove farm let this to Isaac Cheesburgh.¹⁴ To the south Jane Backhouse occupied buildings, a yard and lane, orchards and a stackyard.¹⁵ The stackyard may mean a stackgarth which was used for storage of crops outside.¹⁶ Thomas Watson had a house and garden immediately to the south of the premises occupied by Isaac Cheesburgh.¹⁷

The Tithe Map of 1842 gives John Thirlwell as the occupier of the buildings and yard, an orchard, and a stackyard, now known as Grove Farm.¹⁸ He also occupied fields nearby called Croft and Trod Rigg and several other fields and a plantation remote from the farm.¹⁹ John Thirlwell's holding was owned by Edward Carr Knublay.²⁰ He was an attorney from Whitehaven and lived from 1785 to 1850.²¹ This surname appears to be identified in a document in the seventeenth century already referred to. The directory in 1847 gives a John Thurlwell resident at Whitrigglees.²² In 1879 John and Geo Thirlwall were at Whitrigglees²³ and a Geo Thirlwall is there in 1884.²⁴ This occupation is probably John, the father, then John and his son George and then finally George. The 1906 directory sees the disappearance of the name 'Thirlwell' and farmers called: Wood, Wilson, Studholme, Lawson and Hill, farm at Whitrigglees but as to their exact abode, the directory is silent.²⁵ The census returns also do not give sufficient detail to be able to place the names with their actual abode.

In the nineteenth century some of the farms surrounding Grove Farm were offered for rent. In 1850 the farm with dwelling house and farm buildings at Whitrigglees occupied by Isaac Cheesburgh was offered for rent by D Barnes, presumably the owner.²⁶ The landowner, Abraham Bird, offered for rent, a dwelling house and farm buildings at Whitrigglees occupied at the time by William Mitchinson.²⁷ A William Mitchinson was identified as a joiner and cartwright in 1829,²⁸ a useful trade to have close to a farmstead.

Historical Building Description

The fabric of the house and barn has been extensively altered over many years and has suffered fire damage and structural failure. However, there is sufficient original structure

surviving to be able to make an informed judgement of the type and form of farm buildings that were originally constructed.

Near Wigton, up to about 1900, the typical design of a farm would be the dwelling house, farm building and out offices in one range with the entrance for all into a central passage.²⁹ This form, called the longhouse, is an elongated building where humans occupy the house at one end and animals are located at the other, all in one building and all under the same roof.³⁰ Access to the longhouse is through an external door leading into a central cross passage running from front to back of the building and serving both house and animal accommodation.³¹ Grove Farmhouse and barn has an elongated plan as shown on the historic maps.

From the historic maps it is evident that Grove Farm has been a farmstead for some years. The Hodkinson and Donald Map of 1770 ³² shows a settlement at Whitrigglees but no fine detail. The 1868 6" to 1 mile map³³ gives a good layout of the whole of Whitrigglees. This map was surveyed in 1866 and shows the layout of the farmstead at Grove Farm largely as it is today. The Ordnance Survey Sheets of 1900 ³⁴ and 1924 ³⁵ again show the farmstead layout largely as seen today. The exception is the range of buildings shown on the maps to the east of the farmstead which today appear to have been replaced with more recent structures.

The Tithe Map gives the type of cultivation of the fields held by John Thirlwell in 1842. John Thirlwell's holding was over 74 acres and comprised pasture, fallow, barley, oats and wheat with land allotted to seeds, green crop and some waste.³⁶ From this information it helps confirm that Grove Farm was a farmstead in its own right. Brunskill would class this as a large farm which used the U-shaped arrangement of farm buildings.³⁷ He gives buildings that, in addition to the farmhouse and farmyard, constitute a farmstead. These are the barn, the byre, the stable, the granary and subsidiary buildings including loose boxes or hulls.³⁸ Grove Farm would always have contained a barn required for storage and conversion of grain crops.³⁹ The pasture land would probably have supported cattle and a byre would be required for them in the winter months and for milking.⁴⁰ Today there are cubicles for cows in the barn and detached byre so in more recent times there has been cattle at the farm. From the evidence it is not known whether there was a stable. A granary is always on the first floor and reached by an external stone staircase, had domestic type windows and sometimes a fireplace.⁴¹ The detached stone building (Plate 3) to the south of the house may have been a granary or simply an outbuilding used by the household. The single storey addition attached to this building has two small compartments probably used as hulls for farm animals.

Looking at a design for a farmhouse and the similarities with Grove Farm. Brunskill describes a typical two unit house with a room that contains the principal or only hearth which was where cooking, eating and general domestic tasks were carried out.⁴² Off this room there was another smaller room, the parlour, which was the bedroom.⁴³ Brunskill goes on to discuss the upper storey. Above the ground floor rooms was a continuous loft which was gradually given taller side walls until it became a full height room and divided up into bedrooms.⁴⁴ Most early houses were open to the roof but eventually most were given a loft accessed by a ladder.⁴⁵ From the mid eighteenth century the more prosperous farmhouses acquired an upper storey.⁴⁶ Plate 4 shows the remains of the fireplace in the larger main ground floor room at Grove Farm. Plate 8 shows the smaller ground floor room, probably the parlour, and the staircase leading up to the first floor.



Plate 4. Main Fireplace



Plate 5. First Floor Bedroom

Today any evidence of a cross passage has been engulfed in a more recent conversion to provide a first floor bedroom. To achieve this, part of the barn roof has been heightened and a staircase installed leading from a ground floor hall which was no doubt the former cross passage. This conversion also provides access into the rudimentary WC on the ground floor at the rear.

It is likely that the attached barn today may occupy the same plan area as the original one. At the rear (north) and front (south) the bricks to the external walls are old and appear to be hand made. In some areas at the bottom of these walls there appears to be a rudimentary stone plinth, probably the vestiges of the first barn. The east gable has been rebuilt probably during the last century in bricks laid in English Garden Wall Bond. It appears that a large opening on the rear (north) elevation has been built up recently with modern concrete blocks. The architect's drawings show king post roof trusses supporting purlins and also stalls inside for cows.

The main house has four external walls constructed from clay dabbins approximately 600mm-800mm thick on the ground floor. On the first floor the clay dabbins reduces in thickness and at a height of about 1100mm above first floor level the wall is continued in brick up to eaves height where the wall reduces in thickness by about 230mm. The roughcast

coating on the external wall conceals the wall construction therefore it is uncertain whether the brick continues for the full thickness of the wall.

On the first floor the two gables are constructed differently. The west gable above first floor level appears to be built entirely of brick. The east gable seems to be constructed of clay dabbins with straw in the mix probably for most of the gable. In this gable at the entrance to the kitchen, oak beams span over the door opening to support the clay above. On the south elevation near paving level there is a stone plinth at the base of the wall about 500mm high on which the clay dabbins is built. The method of construction for the clay dabbins appears to have involved building the clay up in layers approximately 75mm thick with a layer of straw between the layers (See Plate 6).



Plate 6. Clay Dabbins Wall

There is evidence of former cruck frames having been built into the clay dabbins. Some internal plaster was removed and there are two vertical pockets about 250mm wide in the clay dabbins that have been built up with brick. There would almost certainly be other pockets built up elsewhere on the ground floor. It would seem a decision had been made to provide first floor rooms. In most cases the installation of a full upper floor in a cruck building necessitated raising the ridge and removal of the crucks ⁴⁷ as it would seem was the case at Grove Farm. Taking the development further: once it was appreciated that clay could be loadbearing both barns and farmhouses were built without crucks and triangular roof trusses were used and rested on top of the walls.⁴⁸

The roof is supported on two king post roof trusses made from timber that appears to be softwood and machine cut. The ridge piece is let into the top of the king post. The slates to the house are torched.

The first floor construction comprises oak beams averaging 230mm deep and 200mm wide and fixed at approximately 1800mm centres. These beams support 90mm x 55mm joists positioned at approximately 360mm centres. These carry softwood tongue and groove floor boards approximately 160mm wide. The ceilings to the first floor have a sloping corner at the junction with the wall. Details of the floor construction is shown in Plates 4, 7 and 8.



Plate 7. First Floor Construction



Plate 8. View of Main Ground Floor Rooms and Staircase

There was no clear evidence of a fireplace in either ground or first floor room on the west gable but there is a vertical joint line in the plaster in the ground floor where an area of brickwork has been constructed and there is a chimney, so there was probably once a fireplace in the ground floor room.

There was no evidence of a heck partition having been fixed alongside the fireplace in the kitchen.

The ceilings in the first floor western part of the house are mainly lath and plaster with possibly some plasterboard replacement. The ceilings in the eastern part which has undergone some modification appear to be plasterboard and skim.

Interpretation and Significance

It has been possible to establish a link between Whitrigglees and the Howard family, major landowners in Cumbria, in the sixteenth century and to find that they were to lose their estates. It was no doubt quite humiliating to have to repurchase your lands back from the Crown, but this the Howard's did at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Later in the seventeenth century a court record mentions the name, 'Knubley' being associated with Whitrigglees and this name occurs again in 1842. This is a significant year for historical research as a clear connection is made with the buildings forming Grove Farm; a

tenant farmer by the name of John Thirlwell and an owner of the farm called Edward Carr Knublay. By the end of the nineteenth century a name connection is lost but evidence does show that the hamlet contained several farms that appear to be owned by different people who conducted a practice of letting them to tenant farmers. Also of interest is William Mitchinson who practiced the trade of joiner and cartwright, trades which would no doubt compliment the success of the hamlet.

The Tithe Map gives details of the farm holding of John Thirlwell. According to Brunskill it would have been a large farm requiring a good range of buildings in order for it to function. It can be deduced that Grove Farm was a farmstead containing the requisite buildings and that it followed the 'U' shape layout described by Brunskill, this layout clearly visible on the map surveyed in 1866.

It is highly likely that the house and barn constituted a longhouse. This is based on evidence from old maps and observations on site. The earliest map accessed shows the elongated plan form which is still evident today. The ground floor layout of the house as determined by the clay walls appears original and a typical layout for the house within a longhouse. The remaining part of the longhouse is the barn. This appears to have been rebuilt or at least significantly remodelled with the loss of the cross passage but the barn still occupies an elongated footprint, the trademark of the longhouse.

It is difficult to interpret the barn since it has been altered and is now unsafe and inaccessible. Sir John Lowther encouraged the use of brick and from 1687 exposed brick had been used in housing ⁴⁹ and brickwork had been used in nearby Wigton in 1688.⁵⁰ Brickwork was adopted in Cumbria towards the end of the seventeenth century.⁵¹ Jennings gives examples of farm buildings being rebuilt of brick in the mid eighteenth century.⁵² The present building probably replaced an earlier building for which there is no evidence of its construction. The older parts of the barn could date from the late seventeenth to the mid eighteenth century.

The house would appear to be a longhouse, based on the two unit house, with two ground floor rooms, and the remains of a fireplace in the larger room. It had clay dabbins external walls and originally a cruck frame. Evidence for the cruck frame found internally in the external wall to the ground floor parlour supports this. It would probably have had a thatch roof. The house was probably originally single storey and open to the roof but it was decided that first floor rooms were required, possibly for a large family. This necessitated removal of the crucks and extending the walls in brick up to eaves height, providing trusses and a slate roof. It has been established in the texts that from the mid eighteenth century farmhouses acquired an upper storey. Also brickwork was adopted in Cumbria towards the end of the

seventeenth century and farm buildings being rebuilt in brick in the mid eighteenth century. This conversion to make the house two storey was probably carried out at the same time as the barn, in the late seventeenth to mid eighteenth century. The single storey extension on the rear of the house was probably built at the same time. As recorded earlier, this extension has been extended itself but as this is not shown on the 1924 Ordnance Survey map it was probably built shortly after this date. It is not known what size the original window openings were. It is likely that they would have been square and not rectangular. The openings were no doubt cut rectangular to accommodate vertical sliding sash windows which were eventually replaced with PVCU.

There is no evidence to pinpoint the date of the clay dabbins building. However, since Brunskill recognises that the clay walled buildings he has examined do not appear to be more than 400 years old ⁵³ and the provision of an upper storey probably occurred about the mid eighteenth century, the clay dabbins house was probably built after the mid seventeenth century.

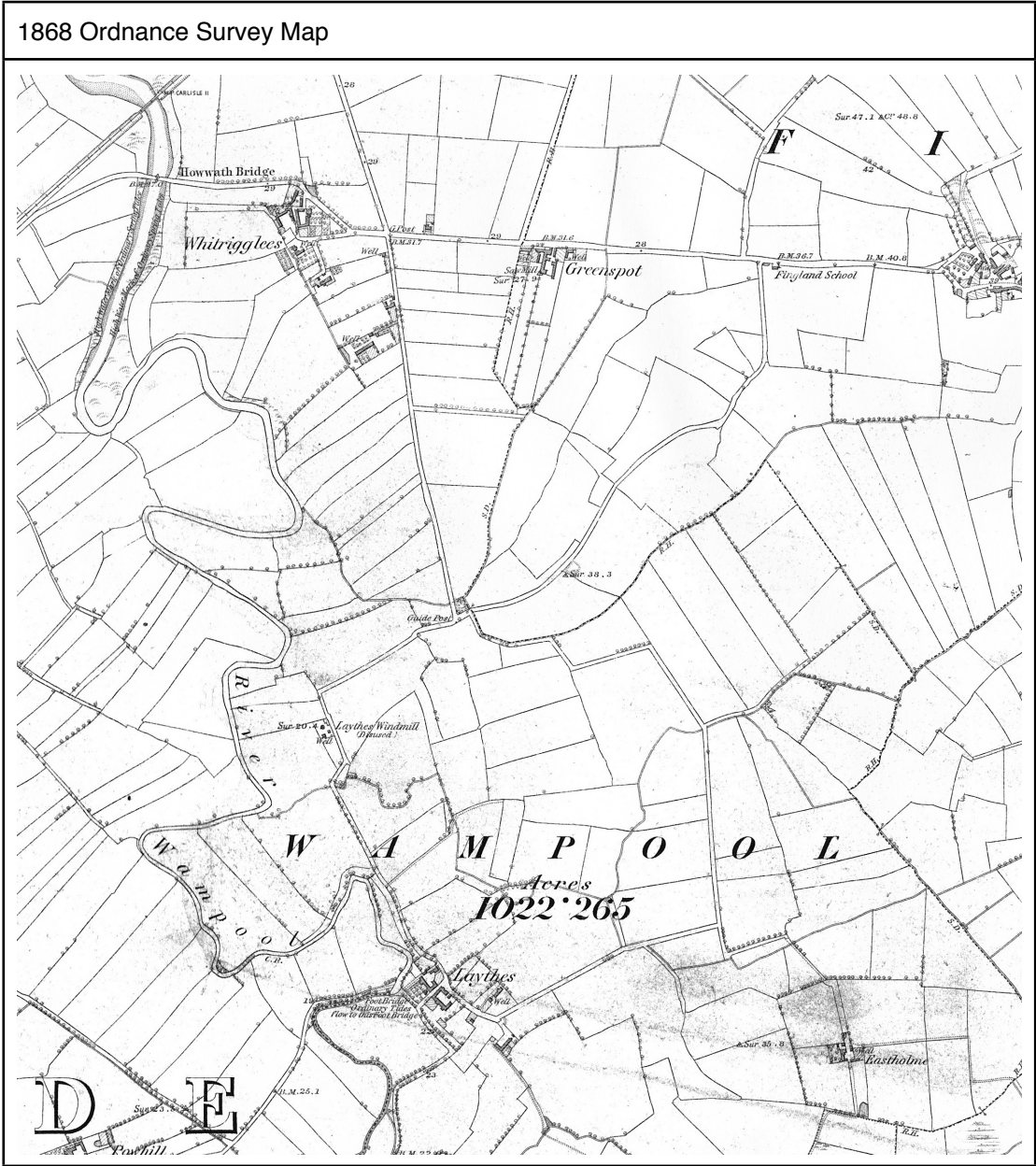
So little undisturbed material remains at this property and due to its condition it is to be demolished. The investigations have revealed with reasonable confidence what this property was in its heyday and this recorded building can now stand beside those comparable buildings that still remain. So its significance is not so much in what stands today but more in what Grove Farm longhouse was. It was one of Cumbria's clay dabbins longhouses and contributed to the farmstead at Grove Farm. It is now one of Cumbria's historically recorded historic buildings.

By way of comparison there are two similar properties nearby listed by English Heritage. To the south of Grove Farm is Whitrigglees Cottage. This is a late seventeenth century property with whitewashed clay walls, originally thatched and probably was originally a longhouse. It has alterations carried out in the nineteenth century, a Welsh slate roof and rendered chimney stacks ⁵⁴ In the nearby village, Fingland, there is a late seventeenth century longhouse with a cross passage and barn. It has clay walls on a stone plinth which was raised in height with brick. Alterations were carried out in the eighteenth century and it has rendered chimney stacks.⁵⁵

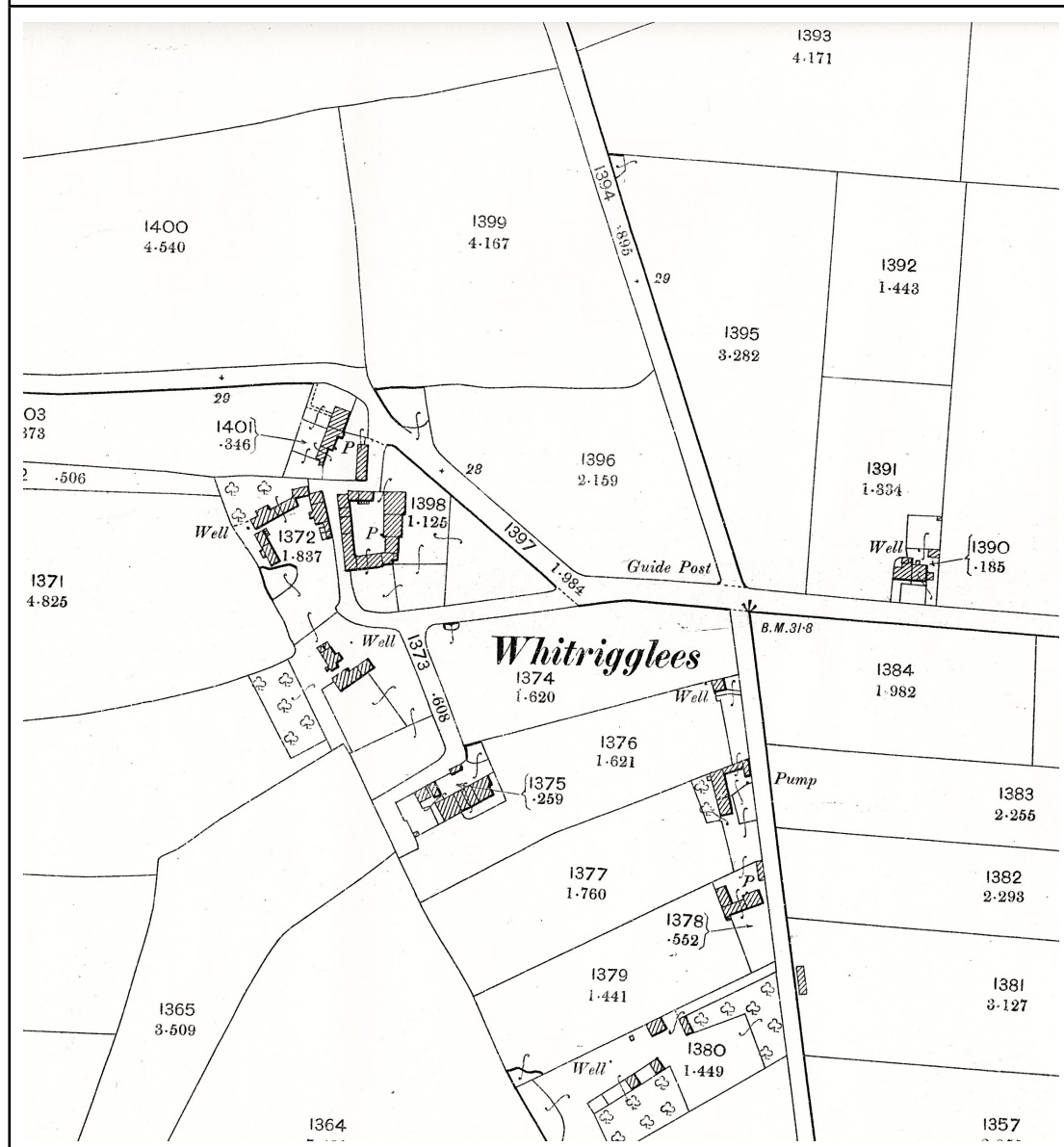
Historic Maps

Hodkinson and Donald's Map

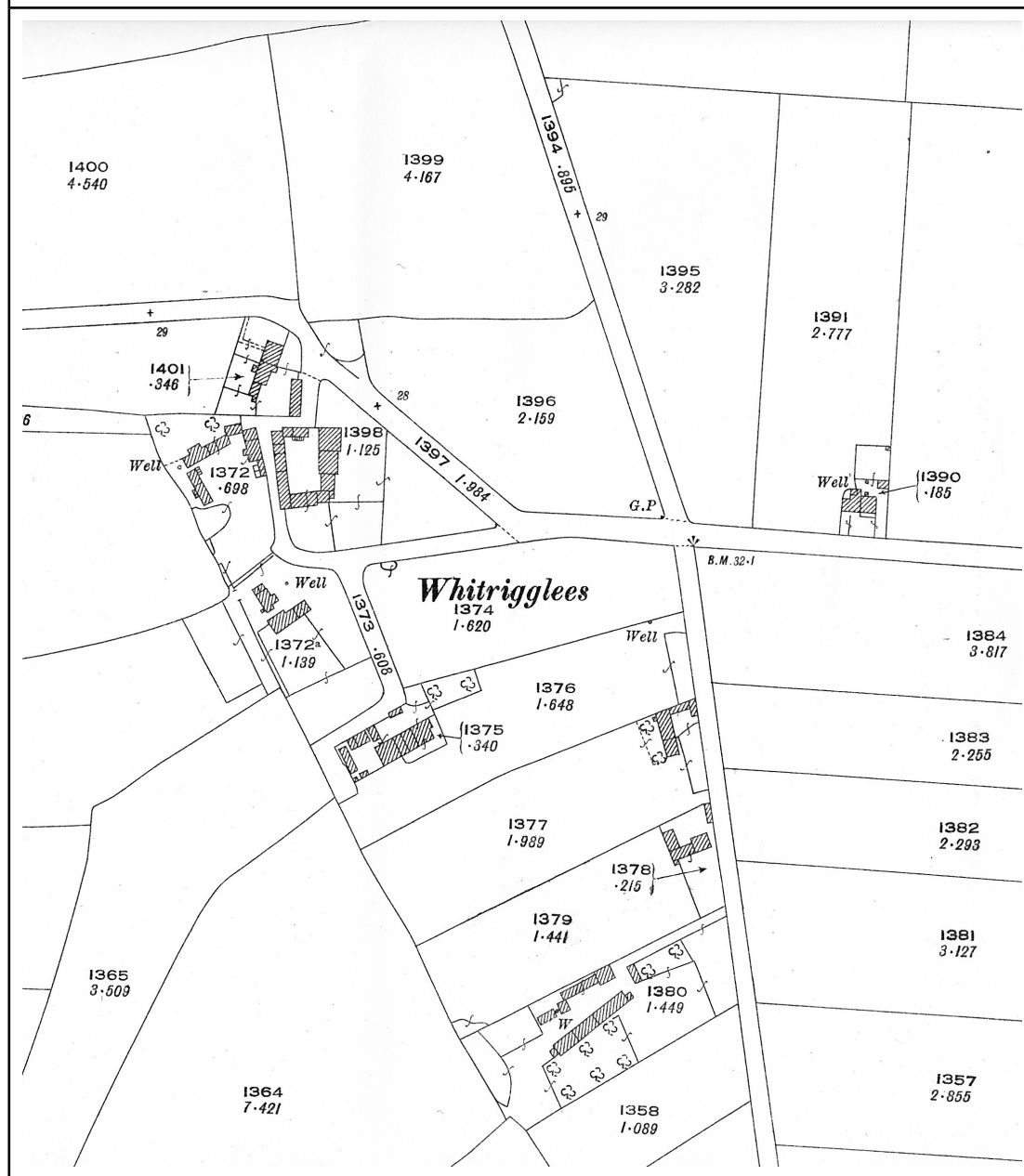




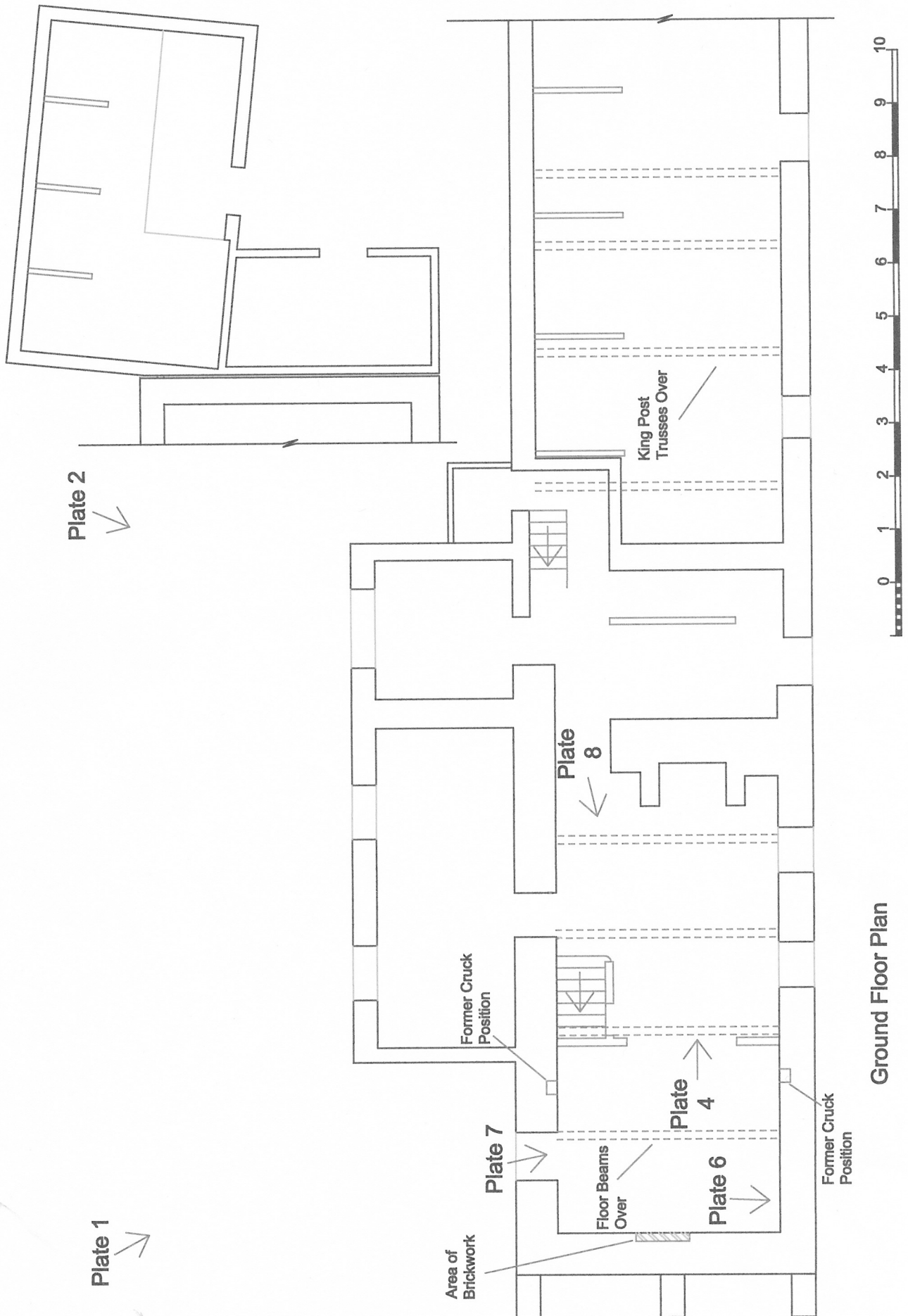
1900 Ordnance Survey Map

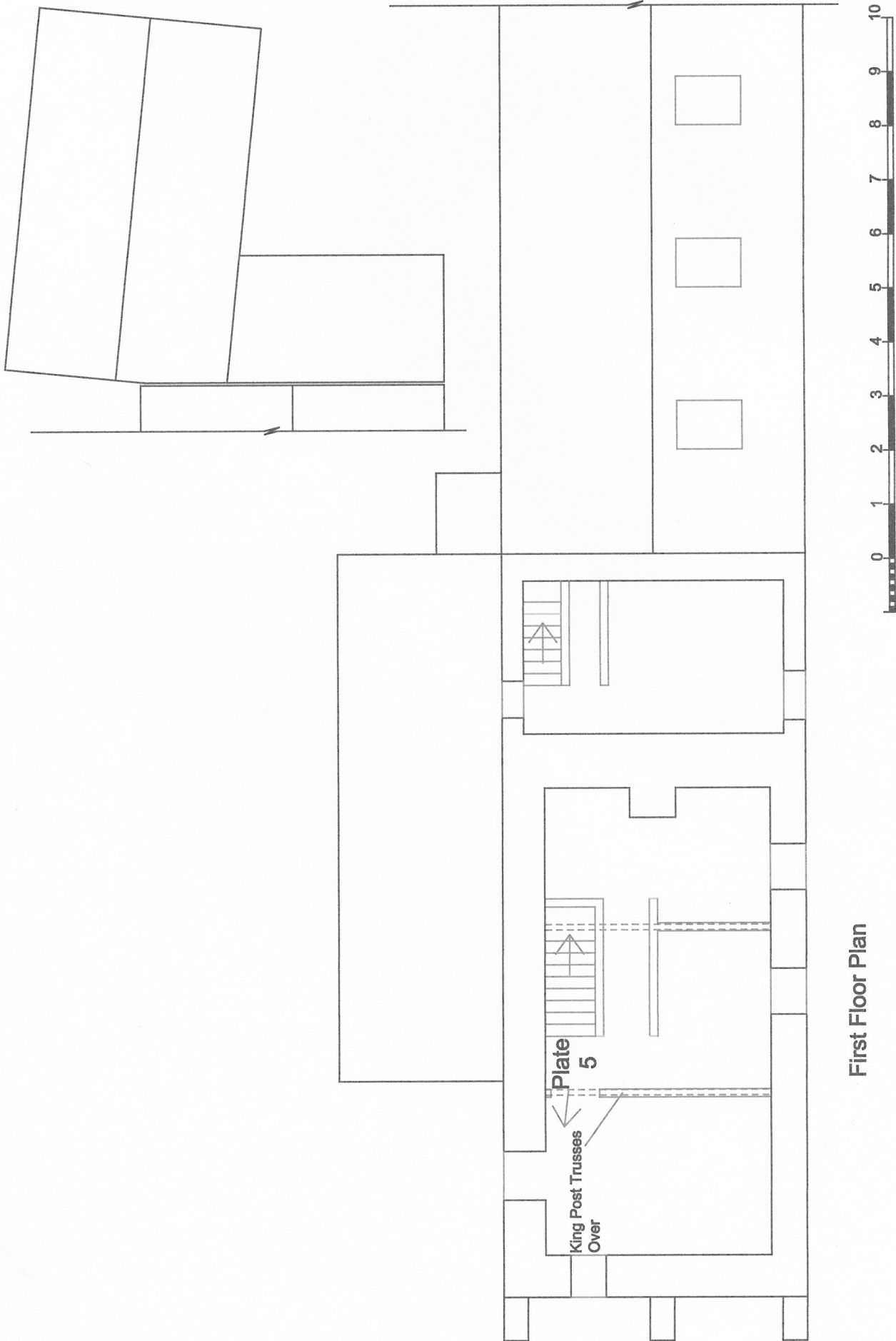


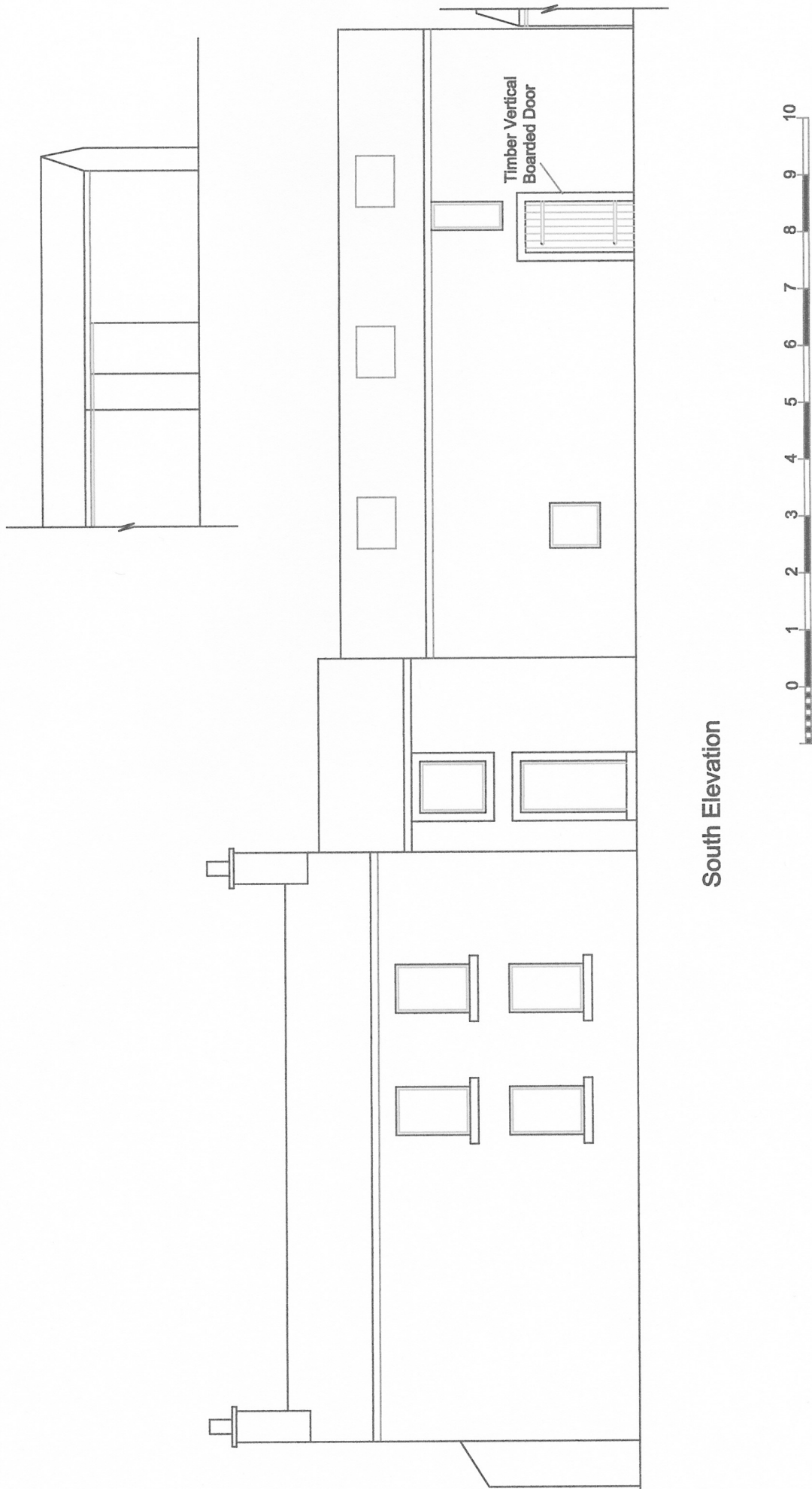
1924 Ordnance Survey Map

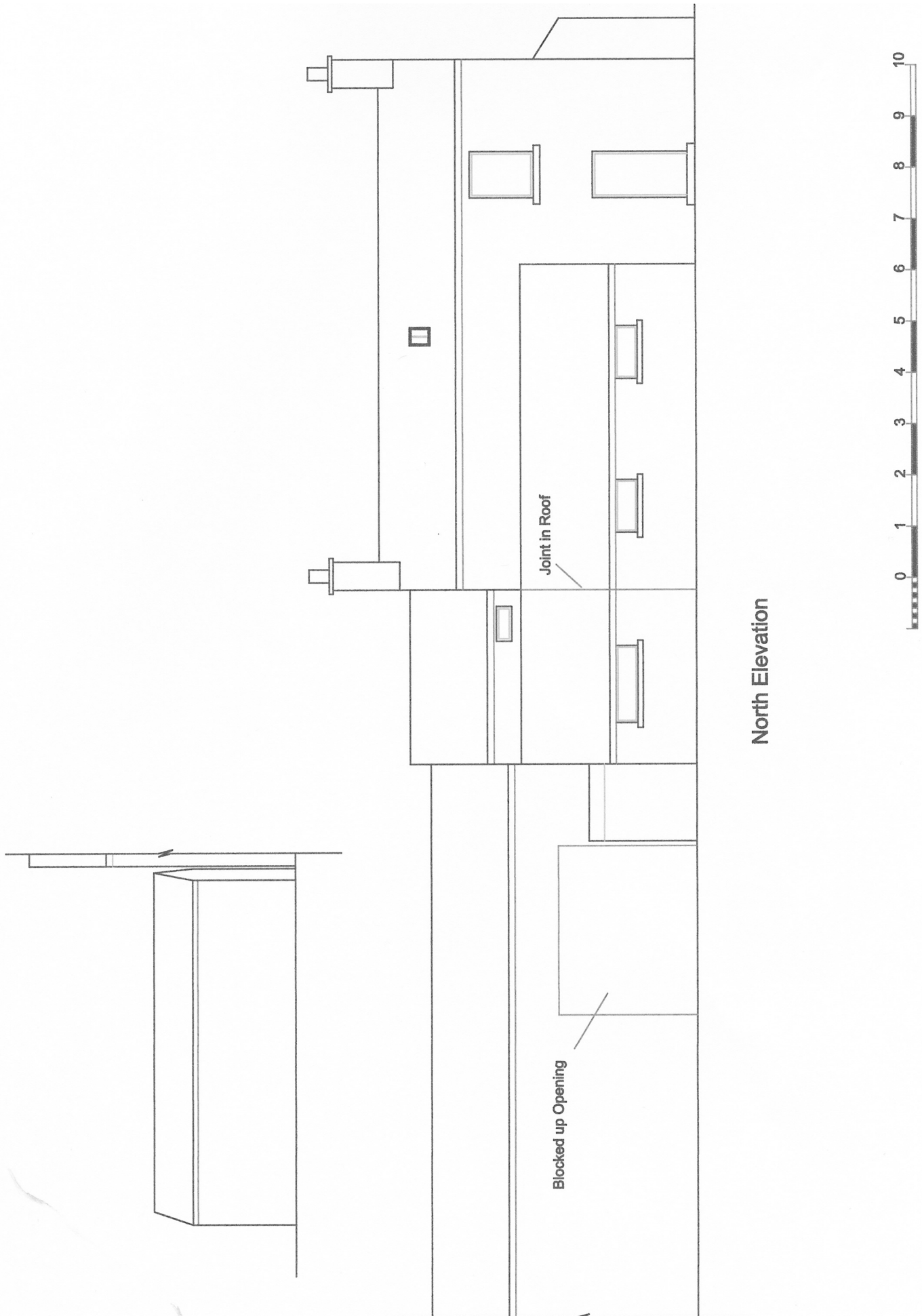


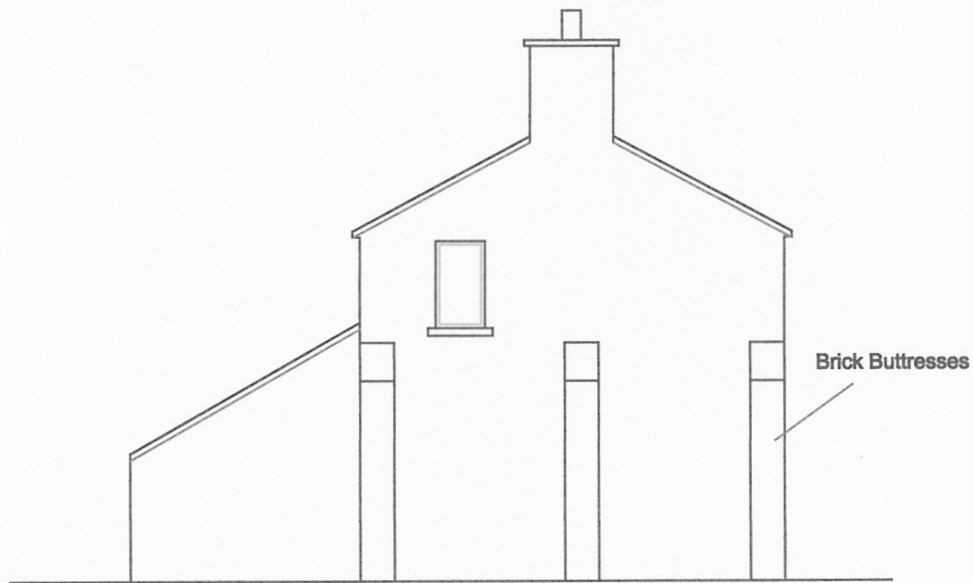
Existing Plans and Elevations



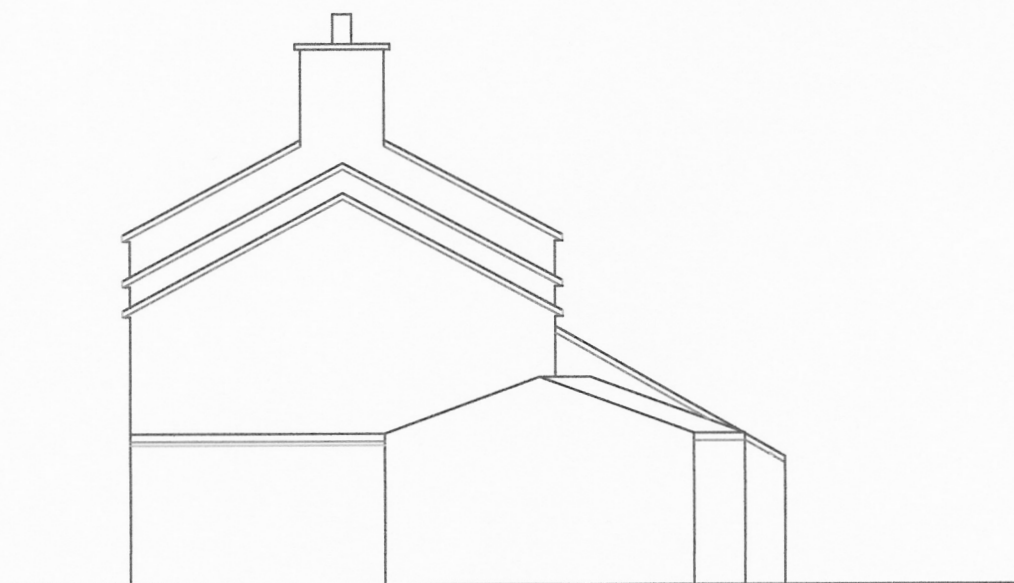






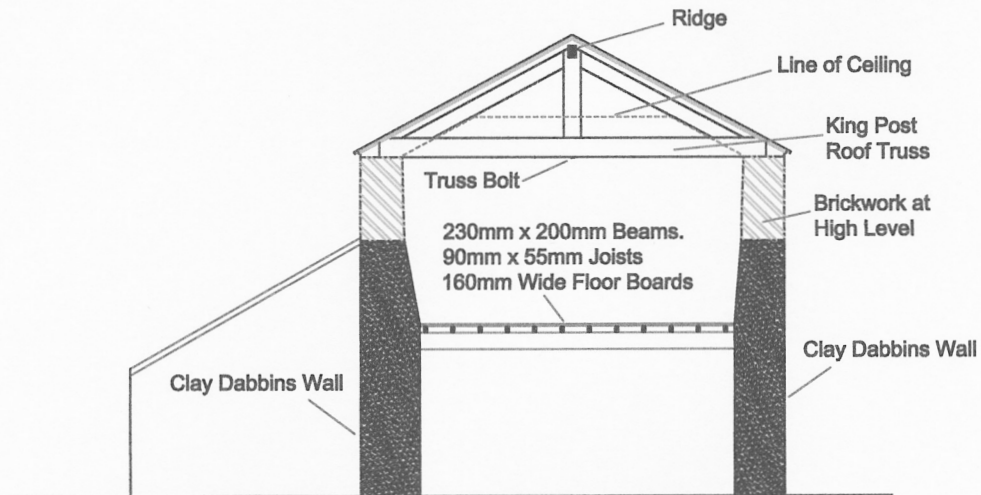


West Elevation

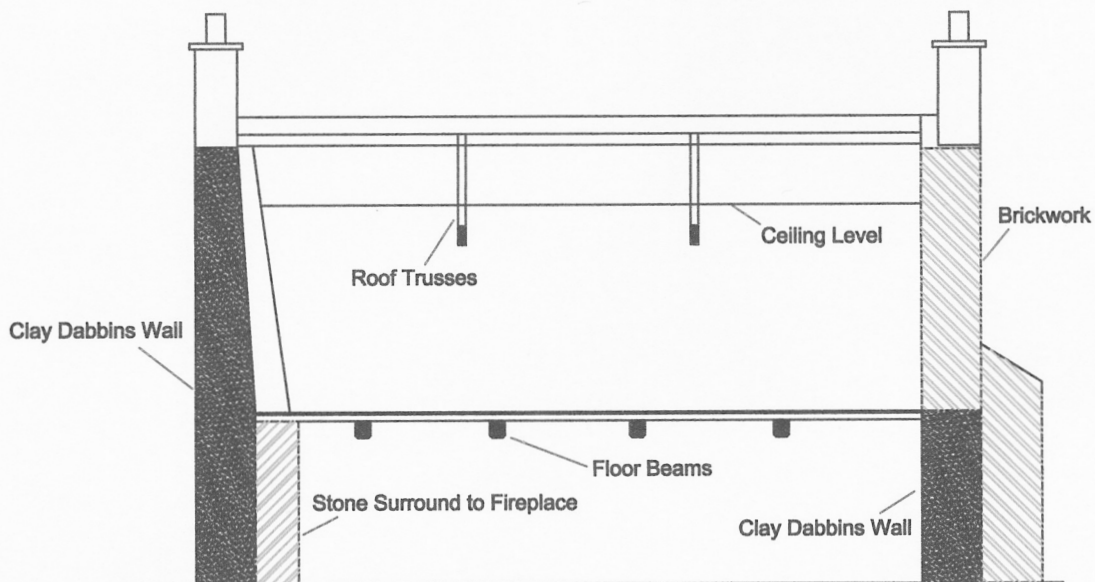


East Elevation

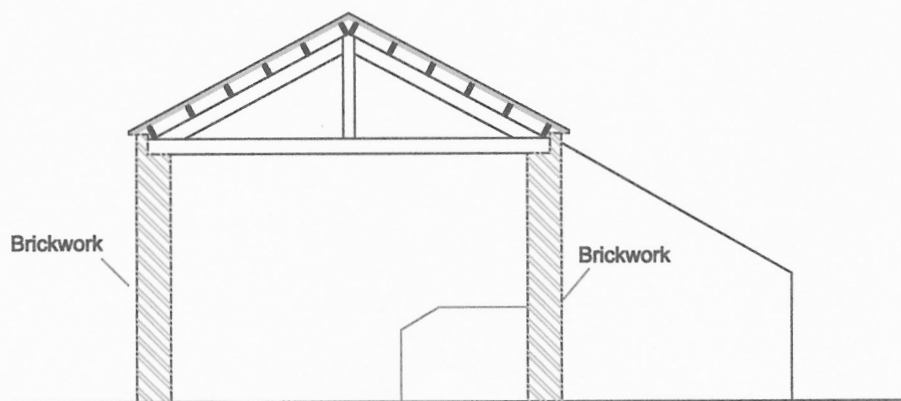




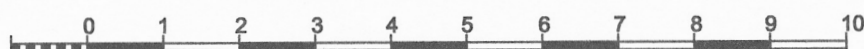
Vertical Cross Section Through House



Longitudinal Vertical Section Through House



Vertical Section Through Barn



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