



ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING
SURVEY REPORT

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**THE BARN (BUILDING A),
TOWNHEAD ROAD,
DALSTON, CUMBRIA**

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**THE BARN (BUILDING A), DALSTON,
CUMBRIA**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING SURVEY

Summary

Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd has been commissioned by Story Homes Ltd to undertake the preparation of a building recording report for a barn (known as Building A), Townhead Road, Dalston, Cumbria. This work was undertaken to inform a decision on a planning application, submitted by Story Homes Ltd, for the demolition of the building to facilitate access for a housing development to the north.

The Barn (Building A) is not listed, but lies within the Dalston Conservation Area. The building is of some local interest and therefore a Level 1 building survey (English Heritage 2008) of the building was required in advance of demolition, to mitigate against the subsequent loss of the heritage asset.

The Barn (Building A) is a small single storey building, rectangular in plan, with two smaller extensions abutting each end. The building measured approximately 15.9m by 4.4m. The date of construction for the barn is unknown, though it does appear on the enclosure map of 1807, and therefore dates at least to this date. The barn forms part of a complex of farm buildings spread out along Townhead Road, with the farm yard to the rear of the property on the north side; at least one of these buildings, potentially the original farm looks to be a possible bastle house of 16th century date. The barn was therefore designed to face inwards and northwards, towards this yard. Originally the barn and the two extensions were accessed independently from the yard by means of doorways, but the front (north wall) of the barn has now been removed and combined with a modern shed, largely removing these entrances.

The remainder of the walls survive intact, and retain a number of features such as ventilation slits, and evidence for a steep gable, which indicates the barn was clearly thatched originally. The eastern extension, which appears nearly contemporary in style, incorporates a hayloft and pitching door in the east-facing gable.

A number of later phases of rebuild have been noted within the barn interior, stylistically of 19th century date. The barn appears to have been affected by a fire, and it is possible this is the reason for the rebuilds and its reroofing. Use of the barn has clearly changed throughout its history, as noted by the infilling of ventilation slits and doorways, though the use and function of the barn and extensions is unclear, beyond a storage capacity. In the 20th century, the building was drastically altered with walls rebuilt, and the insertion of new modern apertures. This is the form of the barn today.

The current report is considered to be a comprehensive record of the barn and its extensions. No further work is recommended. The majority of the south facing elevation of the barn and extensions is to be retained as it contributes to the special architectural and historic interest of the Conservation Area.

Acknowledgements

Northern Archaeological Associates would like to thank Paul Fenton, Story Homes Ltd, and James Walton, landowner, for their help during the inspection and assistance throughout the project. Jeremy Parsons, Historic Environment Officer, Cumbria County Council, is also cordially thanked for all his assistance.

Project No: 1168

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**THE BARN (BUILDING A), DALSTON,
CUMBRIA
BUILDING RECORDING**

CONTENTS

SUMMARY.....	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION	5
Project Aims and Objectives.....	6
Scope of the Project	6
2.0 METHODOLOGY	6
Building Recording	6
3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION	7
Location	7
Ownership.....	7
Designations.....	7
Previous Work	8
4.0 CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE.....	8
5.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTION.....	8
Form	8
Exterior.....	9
Interior	12
<i>Main Barn.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Eastern Extension</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Western Extension.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Roof.....</i>	<i>14</i>
6.0 DISCUSSION	15
7.0 CONCLUSIONS.....	16
8.0 REFERENCES	17
<i>Maps and Plans.....</i>	<i>17</i>

LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1: The Barn (Building A), from the south-east; the eastern extension lies behind the ranging pole	5
Plate 2: Tithe map of Dalston, 1852. The barn is arrowed.	7
Plate 3: interior of main barn, facing east. Note burn-marks on purlins.	8
Plate 4: ventilation slits (arrowed); note rebuilt wall above ranging pole	9
Plate 5: the western extension; note lower cobble wall	10
Plate 6: the east-facing elevation of the eastern extension.....	11
Plate 7: west wall of main barn; note former gable and heightened wall above, and extensive rebuilding around inserted door. Note also burning to purlin.....	12
Plate 8: rebuilt north wall of main barn, note position of original door at ranging pole	13
Plate 9: east wall of eastern extension	14
Plate 10: carpenters marks on rafters (arrowed)	15

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Site location

Figure 2: Floor Plan of the Main Buildings

**THE BARN (BUILDING A), DALSTON,
CUMBRIA**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BUILDING SURVEY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Northern Archaeological Associates Ltd (NAA) has been commissioned by Story Homes Ltd to undertake the preparation of a building survey report for The Barn (Building A), Townhead Road, Dalston, Cumbria (NGR: NY 36745 50005) (Figure 1). This work was undertaken in order to inform a decision on a planning application, submitted by Story Homes Ltd, for the demolition of the building to facilitate access for a housing development to the north (Planning Reference 12/0878). The building lies within Dalston Conservation Area.
- 1.2 The Barn (Building A) is not listed, but lies within the Dalston Conservation Area. The barn was of sufficient local interest to warrant a survey and therefore a Level 1 building survey (English Heritage 2006) of the barn was requested by Cumbria County Council in advance of demolition, to mitigate against the subsequent loss of the heritage asset.



Plate 1: The Barn (Building A), from the south-east; the eastern extension lies behind the ranging pole

- 1.3 The survey and assessment was carried out, under optimum conditions, by a Senior Project Officer on the 10th of March 2014. Full access to the property was provided by the client. All work was conducted in accordance with a Method Statement (NAA 2013) approved in advance by Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Officer, and followed all relevant standards and guidance published by English Heritage (2006, 2008) and the Institute for Archaeologists (2008).

- 1.4 The following report details the results of all aspects of both the survey and assessment, and is intended to provide a 'basic visual record' of the barn (English Heritage 2006); exploring the origins of the building through physical evidence.

Project Aims and Objectives

- 1.5 The principal aim of the project was to provide a pre-intervention, descriptive record of the barn, to act as a permanent record of the heritage asset and mitigate against its subsequent loss. In order to achieve the above, the following objectives were identified and met:

- the production of an annotated site plan, depicting the form and location of any structural features;
- a written and photographic record of the barn and its structural features, providing details of their form, function, date and significance;
- a short illustrated report summarising the history of the barn, and
- an archive of additional photographs.

Scope of the Project

- 1.6 The survey comprised an assessment and record of both the interior and exterior of the barn. A rapid assessment of the broader area was also made in order to understanding the significance of the building within both a local and regional context.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Building Recording

- 2.1 As a Level 1 survey, a detailed metric survey of the barn was not required, though a measured floor plan of the interior of the barn was produced as requested (Figure 2).
- 2.2 An external and internal photographic record was made of the building using a digital SLR camera at a resolution of 10 megapixels. All photographs were taken from vantage points as near parallel as possible to the elevations being recorded. The photographic record included general views of the interior - looking from all directions - as well as detailed shots of representative examples fixtures and fittings (windows, doors etc.). A catalogue of all unedited and edited images has been submitted with this report as part of the archive. Each photograph contained a graduated photographic scale of appropriate dimensions.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Location

- 3.1 The Barn (Building A) lies on Townhead Road, immediately north of the junction with Madam Banks Road, though the Townhead Road side is in fact the rear of the barn. Further east along the road are the surviving contemporary farmhouse and other related buildings, all on the north side of the road. The building immediately adjacent to the farm entrance looks to be a bastle-type farmhouse, of 16th to 17th century date (Brunskill 2002, 42-3), though no examination of this building was undertaken as part of the survey. Access to the front of the barn is from a drive off Townhead Road, opposite a doctor's surgery, which leads a farmyard to the rear of the farm buildings. The farm-yard is concrete, and now includes a number of modern farm buildings to the north and west, with most of the older contemporary properties lying immediately to the east of the access drive. A series of greenhouses lie just north of the farmyard, which relate to the farm's later development as a market garden. The barn under consideration has been subsumed into a modern farm shed, and is not visible from the farmyard.



Plate 2: Tithe map of Dalston, 1852. The barn is arrowed.

Ownership

- 3.2 The barn is owned by James Walton who kindly provided full access during the site inspection, undertaken on the 10th March 2014.

Designations

- 3.3 The Barn (Building A) is not a designated heritage asset, but lies within the Dalston Conservation

Area (Figure 2).

Previous Work

- 3.4 The site has been the subject of a desk-based assessment (CFA Archaeology 2012) for the proposed residential development on land to the rear of Townhead Road. This work was commissioned by Story Construction Ltd in support of the planning application. However, this application did not include the barn which is the subject of the current study, or the farmyard to the rear. Following an amendment to the application, a condition for an English Heritage Level 1 Building Recording project of the building was requested by the Historic Environment Service, Cumbria County Council, prior to its demolition (Parsons *pers. comm.*). No previous recording work has been undertaken on the barn.

4.0 CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

- 4.1 No historical research was required as part of this survey, though limited searches were made of cartographic sources. The earliest depiction of the barn is on the 1807 Enclosure Map for Dalston, which shows it as a long rectangular structure, much as it survives today, with the land shown as being owned by 'Ar. Watson'. The tithe map of 1852 (Plate 2) depicts the building occupying much the same footprint, with a small protrusion on the north side corresponding to gabled porch or a lean-to building. The same layout is depicted on the First Edition Ordnance Survey Mapping of 1868.



Plate 3: interior of main barn, facing east. Note burn-marks on purlins.

5.0 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Form

- 5.1 The surveyed building is aligned broadly east-west, and is rectangular in plan, with a very simple

plan form. The interior of the main building comprises an open rectangular space, with two smaller extensions on the eastern and western ends (Plate 3). The interior floors have been extensively altered, with concrete floors inserted, and there is no evidence of any original fittings or divisions surviving within the barn. The building measures approximately 15.9m by 4.40m.

Exterior

- 5.2 The southern elevation of the main barn is stone built, constructed of a combination of randomly coursed stone cobbles and roughly dressed sandstone through-stones, of differing colours and forms, which gives a pleasing appearance to the wall. This style of building is common to the Solway plain (Brunskill 2002, 159). The south elevation measures 3.10m in height, and it is notable that the top 1.2m of this wall has been rebuilt, using better dressed sandstone blocks and fewer cobbles, though close in style to the original structure. The raising of the wall appears to correspond with the reroofing of the structure, which is discussed below. The corners of the main barn comprise squared and better dressed alternating sandstone quoins at the south-west corner, though those at the south-east corner appear to have been partially removed during the construction of the eastern extension. The walls have been entirely repointed though presumably were originally bonded in lime mortar or clay.

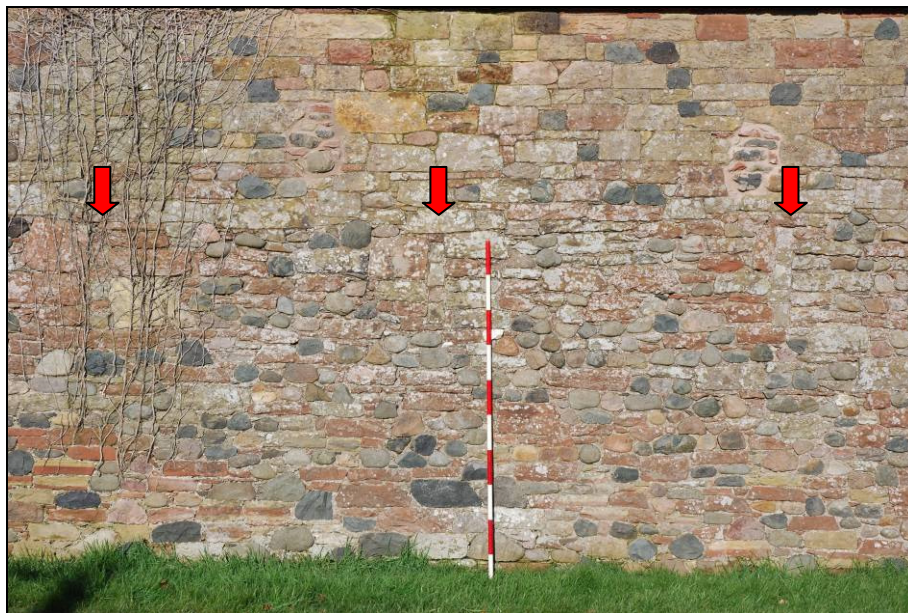


Plate 4: ventilation slits (arrowed); note rebuilt wall above ranging pole

- 5.3 Within the southern elevation, a series of ventilation slits were identified, measuring approximately 0.8m in height and 0.15m in width, with a stone lintel above, and in some cases a stone cill (Plate 4). These ventilation slits are arranged evenly along the wall, at a spacing of 2m; the exact number of ventilation slits is unclear, as these have been blocked with identical stone to the wall fabric, and in some cases the cills or lintels have been removed. Based on an examination of both the interior and exterior, approximately six slits are estimated. Brunskill (1982, 41) notes that ventilation to the

storage bays of a barn was only necessary to a limited extent. Cereals were stored dry and needed much less ventilation than hay, however it is possible that hay was stored within this building at a later date as shown by the possible pitching door in the east elevation (see below). The southern elevation does not appear to incorporate any further original features, though two modern and blocked holes were noted in the elevation; the function of these is unknown.



Plate 5: the western extension; note lower cobble wall

- 5.4 The southern elevation of the eastern extension appears to have been built of almost identical fabric to the main barn, and as such is almost indiscernible in style of construction; the sole suggestion of this being a later phase is the presence of some original quoins for the barn within the divide between the two structures, and the differing roof lines (Plate 1). The upper courses of this building have also been notably raised, and the south-east corner includes alternating well-dressed quoins. This suggests that the two buildings are almost contemporary. In contrast, the western extension is much later (Plate 5). The lower 1m of the elevation of this extension is in fact the original boundary wall for the farmyard, and is constructed almost entirely of rounded cobbles with only very occasional roughly dressed sandstone blocks. The upper wall of the extension has been added on to this boundary wall, and comprises randomly coursed but better dressed sandstone blocks, with only occasional cobbles used. The south-east corner of this extension also includes alternating sandstone

quoins. The roofs of all three phases of building are now covered with Welsh slate with ceramic ridge tiles, though sandstone flags survive just above the eaves of the main barn and eastern extension. Traditionally, sandstone flags were used at the eaves, underneath thatch and over the tops of vulnerable clay walls, which indicate that the barn may originally have been thatched. These flags often survive when the roofs are replaced in Welsh slate, as they do here. Thatching in this area was of a Scottish rather than English influence; turf was used as an under-thatch, with straw the main material used, though heather or ling was also favoured. Cumbrian buildings are recorded as thatched into the late 18th and 19th centuries; Welsh slate roofs probably don't become prevalent until after 1840 and the development of the railway network (Brunskill 2002, 164).

- 5.5 The west- and east-facing elevations of the respective extensions are largely obscured by later constructions or are otherwise difficult to access. The west facing elevation appears to be blind, with little evidence of discernible features. The east-facing elevation is more interesting, and includes at first floor level a pitching door within the gable, with a large stone lintel (marked with an incised cross), and alternating quoins for the surround (Plate 6). The door was used to transfer hay into a hayloft from a loaded cart, evidence for which is visible within the interior (see below). At ground floor level, beneath the pitching door, are two infilled but contemporary openings, possibly small windows. All the openings in this elevation have been infilled with well-dressed sandstone blocks. The north-facing elevation has now been entirely subsumed into a modern shed, and is discussed further below.



Plate 6: the east-facing elevation of the eastern extension, showing pitching door

Interior

Main Barn

- 5.6 The interior of the main barn is now accessed through a modern metal shed, which abuts the northern side of the barn. The interior measures 4.37m by 11.83m, and has little in the way of period features. The barn is open to the roof, with no divisions, and is divided into three bays, by three roof trusses. Suggestions of interior divisions are indicated through wooden fixings on the southern wall towards the western end of the barn. These divisions correspond with areas of white-washing on the wall, and seem to post-date the blocking of the ventilation slits; they may mark the position of animal stalling. The slits open out into splayed rectangular recesses, visible as regular patches of different fabric within the walls. The southern and western walls of the barn are clearly original. The western wall, which is otherwise blind and featureless, retains the line of the original gable, which runs up from the line of the original walling in the south wall to the roof height at a sharp 50° angle (Plate 7).



Plate 7: west wall of main barn; note former gable and heightened wall above, and extensive rebuilding around inserted door. Note also burning to purlin.

- 5.7 Thatched roofs need a high, steeply-pitched roof in order to allow rainfall or snow to deflect

properly, and were also common in areas of high wind, as they break up the airflow and are less likely to be blown off. This is probably the case here, and would seem to reinforce the idea that the roof of the earlier building was also thatched. The west wall has been heightened, to give a shallower pitch to the roof, using the same construction material as that visible on the exterior. The north side of this wall has clearly been extensively modified, and a modern sliding door supported by a modern machine-sawn timber beam has been inserted through into the western extension; the stonework around this insertion is also clearly later (Plate 7).

- 5.8 In contrast to the south and west walls, the northern and eastern walls of the main barn have clearly been completely rebuilt. The date for this is uncertain, but stylistically the rebuilding looks to be 19th century in date. The walls comprise random coursed squared and well-dressed sandstone blocks, with alternating rectangular quoins. All the stones have a tooled finish. The north wall may originally have incorporated a large central (?double) door. The western side of this wall has now been removed, but the eastern side of what appears to be a doorway is visible, now with a modern breeze-block wall abutting its west side (possibly originally blocking the double door - Plate 8). The removal of earlier fabric to the west of the breeze-block wall seems to correspond to the insertion of a very large doorway with a sliding door, supported by a steel roof-supporting joist. At the north-east corner of the main barn is a short projecting stub of walling, which may mark the position of an early exterior enclosure wall.



Plate 8: rebuilt north wall of main barn, note position of original door at ranging pole

Eastern Extension

- 5.9 The interior of the eastern extension measures 3.39m by 4.98m, and has no surviving interior partitions or features. The east wall of the extension includes four large sockets for floor joist beams

at about 1.4m above the modern floor and at a spacing of 1.2m, measuring 0.35m by 0.25m. The southernmost of these has now been blocked. The sockets originally would have held beams which crossed transversely and were socketed into the original east wall of the main barn, now lost since the wall was rebuilt (Plate 9). The floor was clearly replaced after the rebuild, and a line of three much smaller sockets is visible above the earlier ones, with corresponding examples in the rebuilt wall. The pitching door, which is now blocked with stone, has a large timber lintel and stone cill. The southern wall is largely featureless. The heightening of the roof is clearly visible here, as the earlier interior walls are white-washed, whilst the heightened walls are not. The northern wall appears to have been entirely removed, probably when the 20th century metal barn was constructed.



Plate 9: east wall of eastern extension

Western Extension

- 5.10 The interior of the western extension measures 3.06m by 3.98m, and has no surviving interior partitions or features. There is little further to add with regards the fabric of the walls, though it is notable that there is no evidence of the walls having been heightened here. The lower courses of the wall have been rendered in cement, and the extension was at one time used as a piggery (Walton *pers. comm.*). The north wall of the extension has now been removed and forms part of large doorway to the main barn; consequently the north-west corner has been rebuilt using large blocks of squared sandstone, though may also mark the position of the original door into the extension.

Roof

- 5.11 The roof of the main barn is supported by three simple close-coupled rafters, with the roof covering supported by a squared thin ridge beam, and trenched purlins pegged to the rafters with large timber pegs. The roof and trusses seem to be fixed directly to the wall with no evidence of wall-plate visible.

The purlins, and the main tie beam of the trusses, seem to be original hand-tooled timbers and look to be of some age; these have clearly been reused from an earlier roof. The purlins bear evidence of burning, and if they have been reused within the same structure, indicate the building may have been destroyed by fire at some point. In contrast, the rafters of the roof truss are made of machine-sawn timber, and bear evidence of carpenters marks as Roman numerals (Plate 10). Though notoriously difficult to date, these became less common after the early to mid-19th century. The roof coverings of both the western and eastern extensions, and the main barn, have clearly been relaid in recent times, with the historic slate covering now supported by machine-sawn purlins and rafters. The presence of sandstone flags within the exterior roof coverings suggest the roof may originally have been thatched.



Plate 10: carpenters marks on rafters (arrowed)

6.0 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 Traditional farm buildings are notoriously difficult to date generally due to the lack of documentary evidence and architectural features, but the evidence from this barn suggests at least three phases of construction. The earliest structures comprises the original central barn, which appears to have been a simple rectangular structure with steep gables, and ventilation slits within its south wall. The barn was presumably accessed from the north, but the original doors are lost.
- 6.2 Date of construction is difficult. The barn clearly forms part of a dispersed farm complex along the north side of Townhead Road, and may relate to the possible bastle house further to the east (the enclosure map of 1807 shows only these two buildings as being extant at this time). As such the barn could be as early as 16th century in date. The barn was clearly thatched, to judge from the pitch of the gable, so, at the latest, an 18th century date is likely. At some point shortly after its construction, a small extension was built in similar style on the eastern side, with a hayloft and pitching door in the east-facing gable. Both the main barn and eastern extension were abutted by an enclosure wall built

of cobbles.

- 6.3 As with many agricultural buildings the barn has undergone a large degree of rebuilding, and structural repair. The barn also appears to have been affected by a fire, and it is possible this is the reason for the rebuilding of the roof and heightening of the gable and side-walls to the current shallower pitch. The east and north wall of the main barn also appear to have been fully rebuilt, perhaps as a consequence of this fire. Externally, the fringes of the roof of the main barn and eastern extension retain sandstone flags over the eaves, which is again an indicator of thatching, and would imply that the new roof was also thatched. Shortly afterwards, a further extension was constructed to the west, incorporating the original cobble enclosure wall in its fabric, and the roof of all three structures was replaced in Welsh slate, with ceramic ridge tiles.
- 6.4 Use of the barn has clearly changed throughout its history, as noted by the infilling of ventilation slits and doorways, though the use and function of the barn and extensions is unclear, beyond a storage capacity. In the 20th century, the building was drastically altered with walls rebuilt, and the insertion of walls and new modern apertures. This is the form of the barn today.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The current report is considered to be a comprehensive record of the barn and its extensions. No further work is recommended. The majority of the south facing elevation of the barn and extensions is to be retained, as it contributes to the character and significance of the Conservation Area.
- 7.2 There is no indication that any additional information regarding the above ground structure would be gained from further investigation or from monitoring during the demolition works. The potential for any below ground archaeology is perceived to be low, though there remains the potential for medieval deposits to be uncovered along the street frontage.

8.0 REFERENCES

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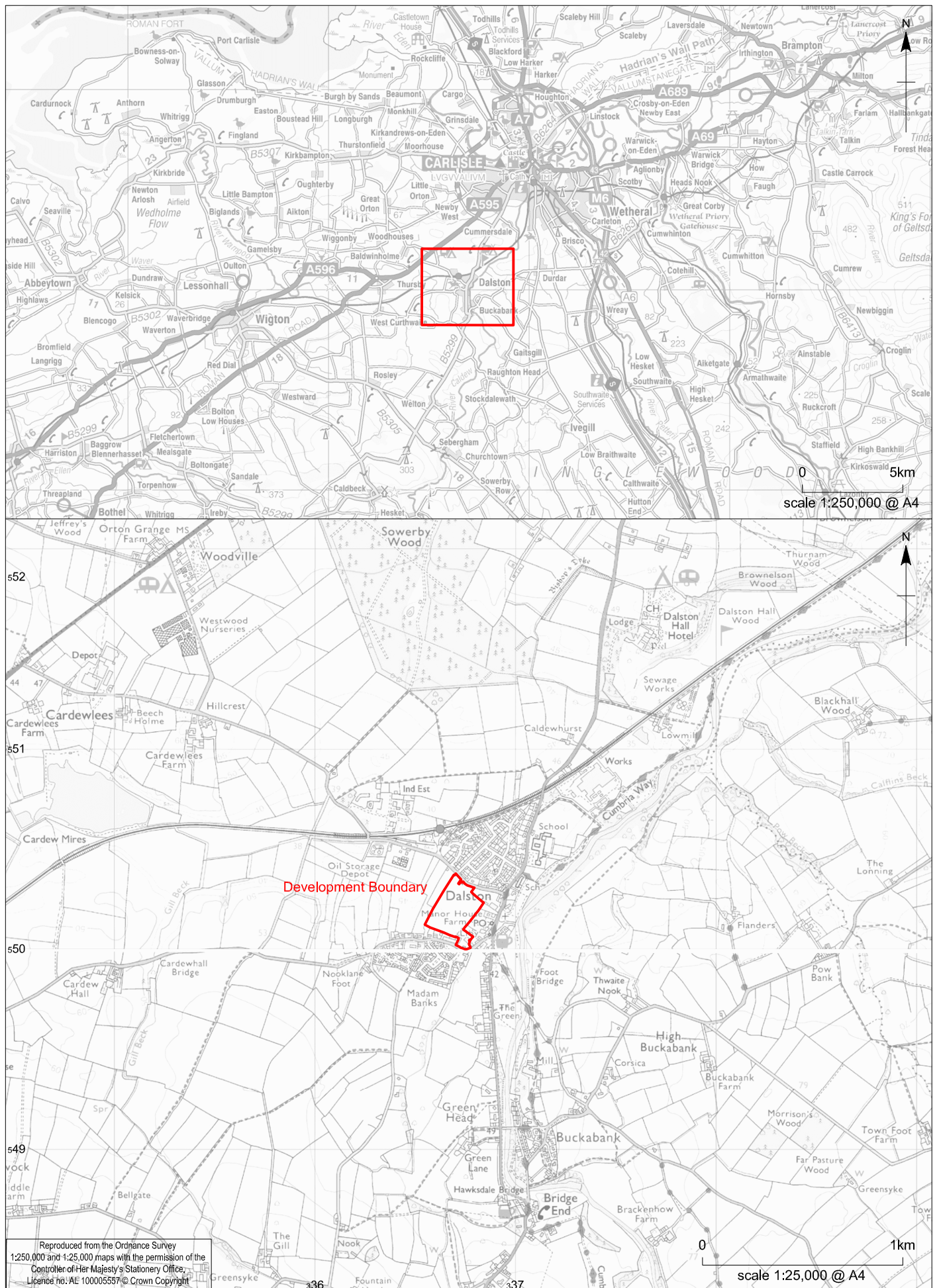
Maps and Plans

1807 Enclosure Map of Dalston D/HA/1/4

1852 Tithe Map of Dalston, CRO(C) PR41/131

1863 1:2500 Ordnance Survey Map

1974 1:10000 Ordnance Survey Map



Townhead Road, Dalston: site location

Figure 1

