



WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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**THE BARN AT BYERS GARTH**

**SHERBURN**

**CO. DURHAM**

prepared for

Theakston Estates

Project No.: 1253

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**THE BARN AT BYERS GARTH, SHERBURN, CO. DURHAM**  
**WATCHING BRIEF REPORT**

***Summary***

*This document presents the results of the archaeological monitoring undertaken at Byers Garth, Sherburn, Co. Durham (NZ 317 409). The monitoring work was undertaken on behalf of Theakston Estates during redevelopment works to the barn. The watching brief included the monitoring of the removal of a concrete floor surface, laid down during earlier renovations in 2000, and the monitoring of the excavation of a service trench in the yard to the north of the barn. The overall aim of the watching brief was to mitigate against the loss of any buried archaeological remains.*

*The monitoring inside of the barn was successful in identifying a number of archaeological features and deposits relating to previous phases of building at the barn. The earliest archaeological features encountered were two construction cuts for the north and south walls of the barn.*

*Other archaeological features included a brick wall foundation running parallel to the 19th century interior wall thought to form part of an interior corridor, an early 20th century concrete surface, two late 19th century postholes, a cobbled surface of indeterminate date (probably also 19th century) and a flagged stone surface bordered by a skin of 19th century bricks that formed part of a floor surface.*

*No archaeological features were observed relating to the original 15th century medieval barn; all features were related to later phases of building at the barn.*

*No archaeological features were encountered in the yard to the north of the barn during the monitoring of the excavation of the service trench.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 A programme of archaeological recording was carried out during refurbishments to the barn at Byers Garth, Sherburn, Co. Durham (NZ 317 409, Figure 1), between 15th and 22nd of February 2016. The monitoring work was primarily focussed on the removal of a recent concrete floor inside the barn to check for traces of any earlier phases of building associated with the barn. A secondary focus for the monitoring work was concerned with the excavation of a service trench to the north of the barn in the adjacent yard, to check for the survival of potential archaeological features and/or deposits in the trench.

## **2.0 LOCATION**

2.1 The barn at Byers Garth lies approximately 0.8km to the south-east of Sherburn Hospital, 1.5km to the south of Sherburn Village and approximately 6km east of Durham (NZ 317 409). The barn was accessed via the main Byers Garth development entrance off Mill Lane. It was situated 40m north-east of the Byers Garth farmhouse, bordering the northern boundary of the former farm complex (Figure 2).

## **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

3.1 Byers Garth farm was thought to have been established as a demesne, or 'home farm' serving the hospital. The date of the foundation of the original settlement was uncertain, although the name might suggest an early vaccary associated with the hospital hence the name 'Byers Garth' but this is conjectural (NAA 2015, 34). The construction of the late 15th century barn possibly represented a move away from cattle husbandry to a more mixed production in response to the increased economic significance of arable production in the late 15th and 16th century. Alternatively, it may be associated with a period of renewed investment subsequent to a century of neglect following the Black Death and the later poor harvests of the early 15th century (*Op cit* 2015).

3.2 A full survey of the farm was undertaken over three separate visits in late May and early June 2015 (NAA 2015). The barn was the oldest surviving building associated with the farm but it had been extensively modified over the years, most significantly in the early 19th century when the whole complex was extended as part of a

countrywide phase of agricultural expansion. This saw the eastern half of the barn demolished, the addition of the two new southern ranges, and the insertion of a gin-gang - or horse engine- on the north side of the property.

#### **4.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

4.1 The objectives of the archaeological monitoring were to:

- record any element of historic interest relating to the fabric of the barn;
- establish the presence, nature, extent and significance of any archaeological remains and provide a detailed record subsequent to their loss;
- prepare an illustrated report on the results of the archaeological investigations to be deposited with the Durham Historic Environment Record (HER) and the National Monuments Record (NMR).

#### **5.0 METHODOLOGY**

##### **Archaeological Monitoring**

5.1 A professional archaeologist monitored all intrusive groundworks as requested by the Durham County Council Senior Archaeologist. Monitoring was required during any sub-surface works, including the installation of services, suitable to mitigate against the loss of any potential buried archaeological remains (NAA 2016).

##### ***Machine excavation***

5.2 Excavation took place using a back-acting excavator, fitted with a toothless ditching bucket under the supervision of the attending archaeologist.

5.3 The mechanical excavator was used to remove overburden (including made-ground, rubble, turf and tarmac) down to the level at which significant archaeological deposits were identified (NAA 2016).

### ***Hand excavation***

- 5.4 Where structures, finds, soil features or layers of archaeological interest were exposed or disturbed by groundworks, the attending archaeologist was provided with the opportunity to observe, clean, assess, excavate by hand and record these features and finds (NAA 2016).
- 5.5 Hand excavation of selected archaeological features was undertaken in order to characterise the site's archaeology and ensure the recovery of artefactual and environmental evidence.

### ***Monitoring***

- 5.6 During the course of the monitoring work, access was made available to the Durham County Council Senior Archaeologist in order that they might inspect the recording works. The Senior Archaeologist was kept informed of progress and was notified of the discovery of any unexpected or important archaeological elements.
- 5.7 Regular communication between NAA, the Durham County Council Senior Archaeologist and other interested parties was maintained to ensure that the project aims and objectives were achieved (NAA 2016).

## **6.0 RESULTS**

- 6.1 The following section discusses the archaeological features and deposits recorded during the mitigation works at the barn. The numbering system (numbers below **1000**) from the previous historic building survey (NAA 2015) have been utilised to discuss features associated with those identified during monitoring. The position of all features discussed below can be found on Figure 3.

### ***Group 1***

- 6.2 Group 1 consisted of seven contexts associated with the north south aligned wall (**1021**) all of which are thought to be contemporary with each other and represent part of the early 19th century rebuild of the barn.

6.3 These included two floor surfaces (**1023** and **1011**), three timbers (**1027-1029**) and an organic deposit (**1006**).

*Wall (1021)*

6.4 A north-south aligned interior wall (**1021**) was recorded towards the eastern end of the barn. The wall was aligned with the entrance of a threshing barn entrance on the north face of the building and a recently blocked up doorway (**203**) on the southern face of the barn.

6.5 The wall consisted of two skins of rounded limestone blocks arranged lengthways forming a curb on the inside face. A clear break was observed at the northern end of the wall where the limestone blocks were laid at right angles to the rest of the wall. This break likely represents a later repair or rebuild of this section of the wall. Also noted at the northern end of wall **1021** was the construction cut (**1022**) for the recent doorway (**111**) inserted into the barn entrance, which cut the north-south wall. The southern end of wall **1021** butted up against the interior of the barn wall and was sat on top of construction cut (**1016**). This demonstrates that wall **1021** was later than the construction of the exterior barn walls.

6.6 This wall was thought to be associated with an adjoining building (Byre D, figure 1) which was aligned north-south. This building was first seen on Greenwood's map c.1820 (NAA 2015, figure 5) and cannot be seen on the Tempest estate map dated from 1774 (NAA 2015, figure 4) meaning that the wall likely originated somewhere between 1774 and 1820.

6.7 This date range has been confirmed through the retrieval of a copper alloy finger ring which was recovered from material (**1006**) overlying surface **1023**. The ring was broadly dated as no earlier than to the 18th century.

*Floor surface (1023)*

6.8 Adjacent to wall **1021** was a firm floor surface **1023**; this consisted of patches of clay and lime mortar. The remnants of three timbers could be seen within this surface and likely formed part of a floor surface together with floor surface **1011**. Above this surface was a dark grey organic deposit (**1006**).

*Timbers (1027 – 1029)*

- 6.9 The remains of three timbers were recorded beneath deposit **1006**. All three timbers were aligned east west and sat in between walls **1003** and **1021**. Each timber could be identified by a dark rectangular staining on the surface of deposit **1023** with fragments of wood present.

*Deposit (1006)*

- 6.10 Deposit **1006** comprised a dark brown organic sandy silt approximately 0.05m thick which overlaid floor surface **1023** and timbers **1027-1029**. This deposit contained an 18th-19th century copper alloy finger ring.

*Mortar surface (1011)*

- 6.11 The remains of a lime mortared floor surface (**1011**) were recorded to the west of wall **1021**. This feature comprised of compacted lime mortar with angular stone inclusions which formed part of a floor surface.
- 6.12 This floor surface was contemporary with wall **1021** as it could be seen butting up against the stones of the wall giving a probable 19th century date to this feature.

**Group 2**

- 6.13 Group 2 included two contexts that represent a phase of 20th century rebuilding associated with carriageway/corridor leading into Byre D (figure 3); wall **1003** and concrete surface **1002**.

*Wall (1003)*

- 6.14 Running parallel to wall **1021** to the east were the remnants of a brick wall foundation (**1003**). The wall foundation was four skins wide and one course high and formed part of an interior corridor with wall **1021**. The construction cut (**1022**) for wall **111**, recorded during the building survey cuts across wall **1003** at the northern end and the southern end of this feature was obscured by a brick buttress.



- 6.15 An early 20th century date has been assigned to this structure from the nature of the bricks making up the wall foundation and the presence of a George V coin from deposit **1026**, which overlaid wall **1003** on its eastern side.

*Concrete surface (1002)*

- 6.16 To the east of wall foundation **1003** a degraded concrete surface was observed (**1002**). Overlying this deposit was a dark brown silty deposit (**1026**) which contained a George V coin which likely dates this surface to early 20th century.

*Cobbled surface*

- 6.17 A roughly circular patch of cobbles, arranged in a rough herringbone pattern, were observed during monitoring in the middle of the barn underneath the end of a modern mezzanine floor. The cobbles were made up of similar rounded limestone blocks to that of wall **1021** and were bonded with lime mortar.
- 6.18 The cobbles were set into an existing hollow suggesting they were laid down in an effort to level off the ground surface. No dating evidence was found within this deposit, however, the type of blocks and the mortar of which they were set into were very similar to wall **1021** which has been dated to between late 18th and early 19th century and therefore it is likely that this feature is of similar date.

*Postholes*

- 6.19 Two square postholes were observed in the centre of the barn. Initially these were thought to represent part of an earlier phase of building at the barn, however, the recovery of rolled glass fragments from the fill of one of these post holes date these features to late 19th century. It was unclear as to the function of these features as no meaningful alignment could be seen. Interestingly the postholes did not line up with the overhead roof-trusses. This could indicate that either the postholes were not structurally related or they represented an earlier configuration of roof trussing than that is seen currently.

### ***Soil layer***

- 6.20 A dark brown soil layer **1012** overlain by the lime mortared floor surface **1011** was recorded adjacent to the northern face of the barn. This soil layer lay above the construction cut for the northern wall of the barn and was probably associated with the activities carried out there. Upon machine removal of this deposit a disarticulated cattle skull, missing the mandible, was recorded. No other animal remains were present within this deposit.

### ***Flagstone surface***

- 6.21 A partial stone flagged floor surface (**1010**) was observed during monitoring at the western end of the building aligned north-south, and was associated with the interior of doorway **207**. During the building survey this doorway was demonstrated to be an original feature (NAA 2015, 24). Surface **1010** was most likely to be 19th century in date as it aligns with doorways **207** (original to the barn) and **213** (19th century insertion).
- 6.22 The eastern side of the flagged stone surface was bordered by up to four skins of post-medieval bricks and the surface itself had been partially repaired using heavy post-medieval floor tiles at its southern end directly adjacent to doorway **207**. A small area of degraded limestone flagstones existed at the southern end but it was not clear whether this was an original surface or part of a later surface which had seen numerous additions and repairs.

### ***Construction cuts***

- 6.23 Two construction cuts (**1015** and **1016**) for the northern and southern walls of the barn were exposed during monitoring. Both of these features were associated with the original barn building.
- 6.24 Cut **1015** was visible on the interior of the northern barn wall and had been cut by **1014**, which was a later construction cut relating to break-line **112** and the rebuilding of the northern barn wall at a later date (NAA 2015, plate 4). Cut **1016** was visible on the interior of the southern barn wall and was overlain by wall **1021** and surface **1023**.

- 6.25 Both cuts are thought to relate to the original barn building and have been disturbed heavily by later features. Interestingly the western half of the barn seems to have been built directly on top of natural sand (**1024**) and no construction cut was visible.

#### ***Yard/Service trench***

- 6.26 Archaeological monitoring took place to the north of the barn for the excavation of a service trench in the outside yard. Prior discussion with the client revealed that much of the yard outside of the barn had been previously disturbed as during the 2000 renovations. This disturbance could be seen through the presence of a large quantity of dolomite which had been deposited outside of the barn. It was decided to monitor the service trench excavation as a precaution in case any undisturbed layers existed. From the excavation of the trench it was shown that the modern disturbance was not as extensive as was expected. The recent dolomite deposit was approximately 0.10m in depth at its deepest point and was sat upon natural sand (**1024**), the same that was recorded inside the barn. No archaeological features were encountered cutting into this layer.
- 6.27 At the eastern end of the service trench excavation the modern disturbance was much more extensive with fragments of pantile and modern brick found within the backfill of the trench. This disturbance was focussed around the threshing barn entrance and was probably associated with the 2000 renovations which saw the addition of a new door-way inserted into the barn entrance.

## **7.0 DISCUSSION**

- 7.1 The monitoring inside of the barn was successful in identifying a number of archaeological features and deposits relating to previous phases of building at the barn.
- 7.2 Two construction cuts were the only evidence for the possible 15th century barn building but these were obscured by later features. Interestingly, no construction cut was visible at the western end of the barn.
- 7.3 Two north-south aligned walls which were associated with the threshing barn door were recorded towards the eastern end of the barn. These are thought to date between

the 18th and 19th century and form part of an internal corridor. The width of the corridor suggested it may have been used as a carriageway probably associated with Byre D.

7.4 Four separate floor surfaces (**1002**, **1023**, **1011** and **1009**) were recorded within the barn. These represent various rebuilding phases in the 19th and 20th century. No evidence of any 15th century floor surfaces was encountered during mitigation works. It was likely that any evidence of this was removed during the 19th century rebuild.

7.5 No archaeological features or deposits were encountered in the yard area to the north of the barn during monitoring of a service trench.

## **8.0 REFERENCES**

Northern Archaeological Associates (2015), *'Historic Building Survey, Byers Garth Barn, Sherburn, County Durham'* Report No: NAA **15/92**

Northern Archaeological Associates (2016), *'Byers Garth Barn, Sherburn, County Durham, Watching Brief, Written Scheme of Investigation'* Report No: NAA **16/7**

**APPENDIX A: WATCHING BRIEF CONTEXT CATALOGUE**

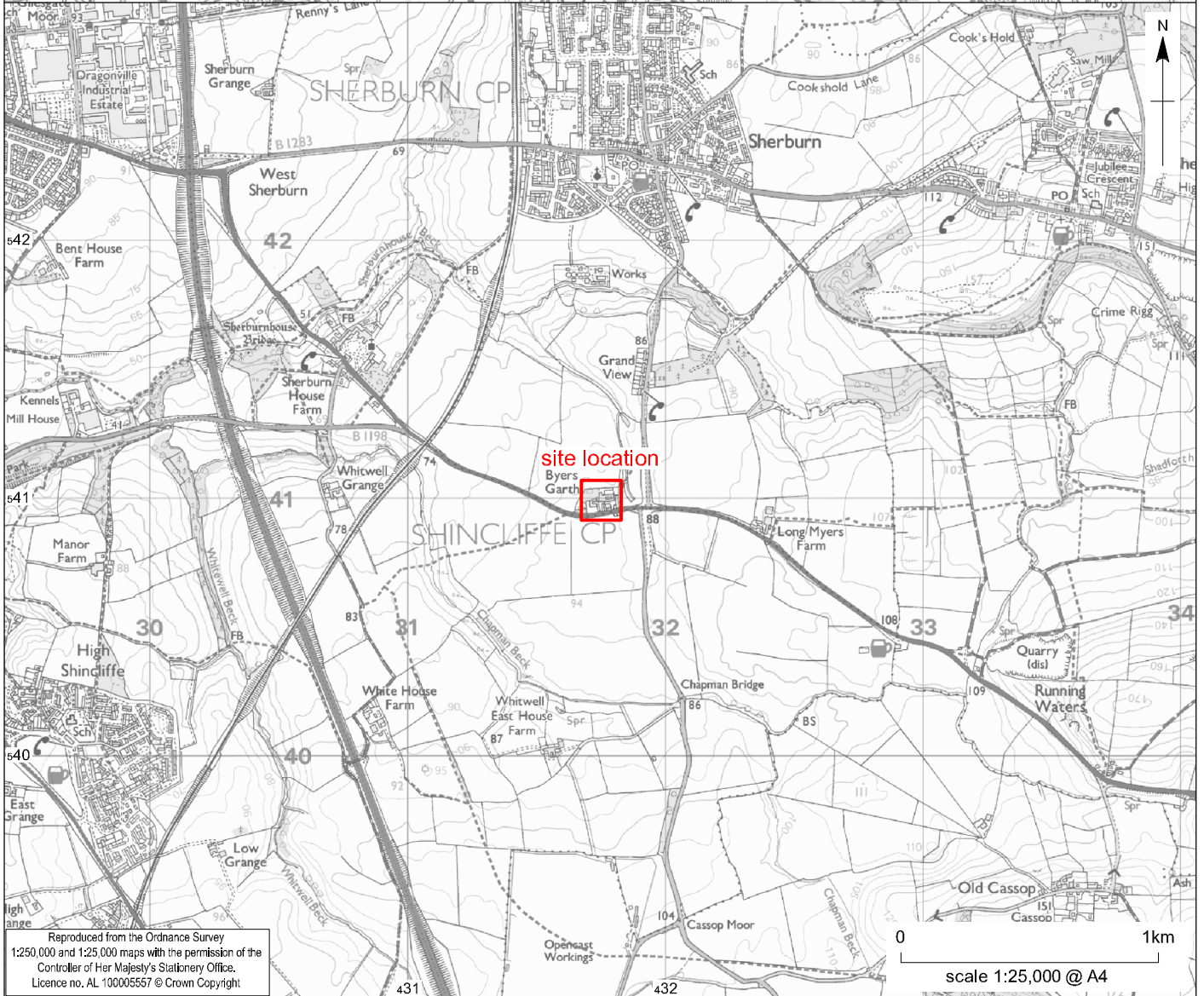
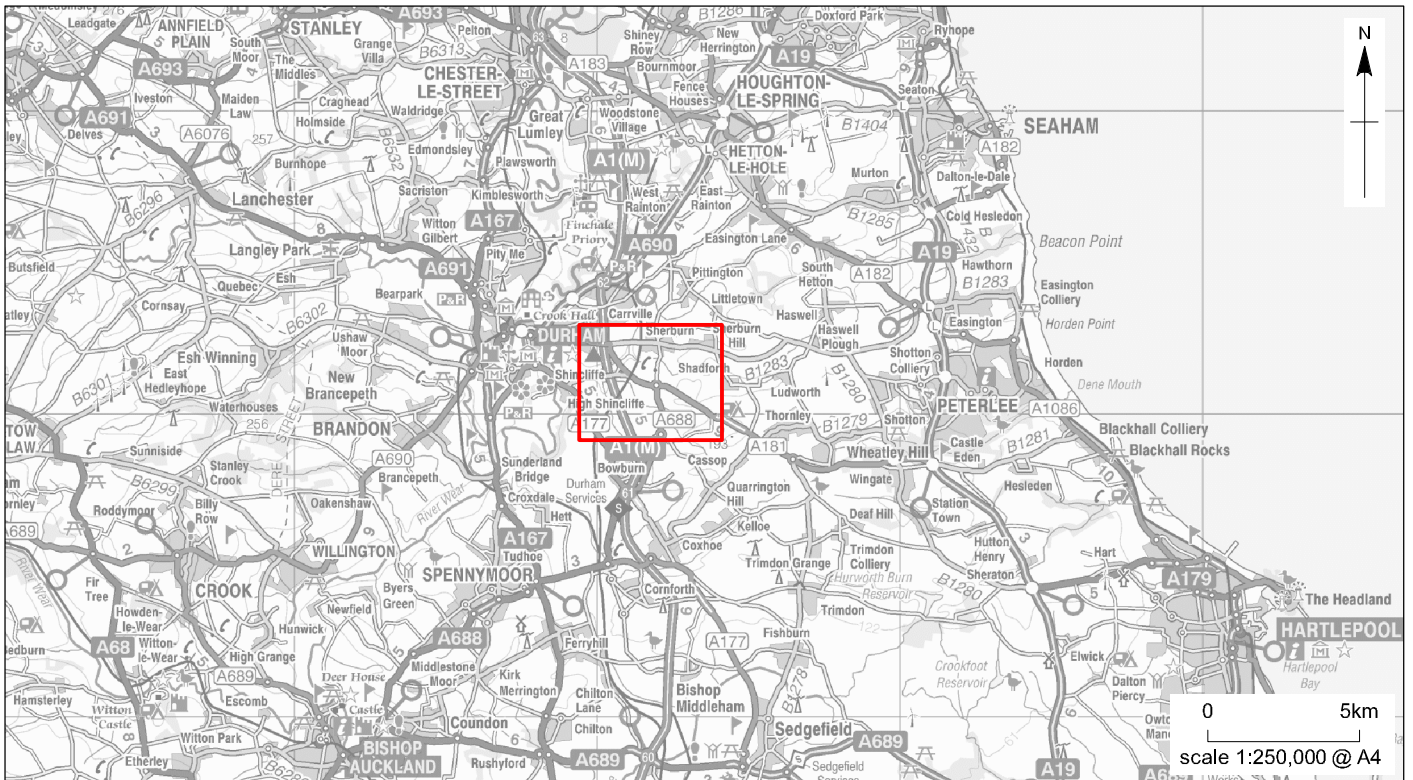
**Table A1: Watching brief context catalogue**

Context	Trench	Group number	Same as	Description	Relationships	Notes
1000	Barn			Concrete		2000 renovations
1001	Barn			Rubble beneath 1000		modern
1002	Barn	2		early 20th century concrete surface	1026	20th C
1003	Barn	2		Brick wall foundation		
1004	Barn			Cut of posthole		
1005	Barn			Fill of 1004		
1006	Barn	1		Dark material above 1023	1023	Ring
1007	Barn			Cut of posthole		
1008	Barn			Fill of 1007		
1009	Barn			Cobbled surface		
1010	Barn			flagged surface bordered by bricks.		
1011	Barn	1		Lime mortar surface.		
1012	Barn			Soil layer		cow skull
1013	Barn			Cut of square posthole cutting 1002 (no fill)		
1014	Barn			Construction cut for 112.		
1015	Barn		1016	Construction cut for north barn wall.		
1016	Barn		1015	Construction cut for south barn wall.		
1017	Barn			VOIDED		Not post holes.
1018	Barn			VOIDED		Not post holes.
1019	Barn			VOIDED		Not post holes.
1020	Barn			VOIDED		Not post holes.
1021	Barn	1		North - south wall.		
1022	Barn			Construction cut for 111		
1023	Barn	1		Surface between walls 1003 and 1021		
1024	Barn			Natural sand.		
1025	Barn			Construction cut for new eastern wall.		
1026	Barn			Material above 1002	1002	Coin
1027	Barn	1		Plank		
1028	Barn	1		Plank		
1029	Barn	1		Plank		

**APPENDIX B: BUILDING SURVEY CONTEXT CATALOGUE**

**Table B1: Building survey context catalogue**

Context	Area	Function	Description
110	Exterior	North Facing Elevation	The main elevation of the building, although historically both the north and south facing elevation would have be equally important, containing the two threshing doors.
111	Exterior	modern door	2000 renovations
112	Exterior	break line	19 <sup>th</sup> century
130	Exterior	South Facing elevation	Originally a primary elevation but now largely obscured by later buildings.
201	Interior	corner pier	
202	Interior	stub wall and buttress	
204	Interior	door	19 <sup>th</sup> century would have lead into Byre D
205	Interior	blocking	Blocked up after concrete floor was laid in 2000.
207	Interior	flagstone floor	An original door opening with a timber lintel (appears to be a replacement) and relieving arch of upstanding stone. The door surround stones are chamfered on the exterior. There are some original paving stones on the floor to the interior (see next feature). A new door has been inserted.
213	Interior	door	19 <sup>th</sup> century
214	Interior	door	19 <sup>th</sup> century
215	Interior	wall pier	15 <sup>th</sup> century?
218	Interior	wall pier	15 <sup>th</sup> century?
219	Interior	wall pier	19 <sup>th</sup> century
224	Interior	flagstones	There are some remaining flagstones to the interior of the original door (207). Although now largely covered by the concrete floor which was inserted in 2000, there may be some potential for interesting archaeological finds.



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Byers Garth Barn, Sherburn: site location

Figure 1



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*Byers Garth Barn, Sherburn: detailed site location showing The Barn and associated buildings*

*Figure 2*



