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BEDE COTTAGE AND MONKTON FARM, MONKTON

D. C. Kear

BEDE COTTAGE and Monkton Farm (NZ 321638) form the residential range of a farmstead in Monkton, a township in the parish of Jarrow. The farm lies immediately to the east of Grange Farm, which has been the subject of an earlier study,¹ and within a designated Conservation Area. Financial support from the Planning Department of Tyne and Wear County Council has made it possible both to survey the standing buildings and to study the history of the tenement holding. The County Council has also substantially supported the cost of publication.

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Most of all I would like to thank Carole and Ian Fairweather, the new owners, who have generously allowed me to observe and record details during renovation, and Barbara Harbottle who has helped and encouraged throughout the course of the project.

BEDE COTTAGE

The Building

This survives as a single-cell, two-storey dwelling of stone rubble walls bonded with clay. North-west and south-west quoins are formed from selected large stones laid in side- and face-alternate fashion, the eastern side of the building having been truncated by Monkton Farm. The main entrance at the eastern end of the south facade is directly opposed by another in the north wall. Two pairs of upper cruck blades are tenoned into first floor joists within the north and south walls, the joists being roughly hewn from quarter or half trunks. A fireplace on the west wall is positioned south of the axial line, with a gap to the north on the ground floor being filled by vertical timber studs and brick nogging. The stone wall is carried at first floor level on horizontal timbers that bridge the distance between the north wall and the chimney breast.

MONKTON IN THE MID-19th CENTURY

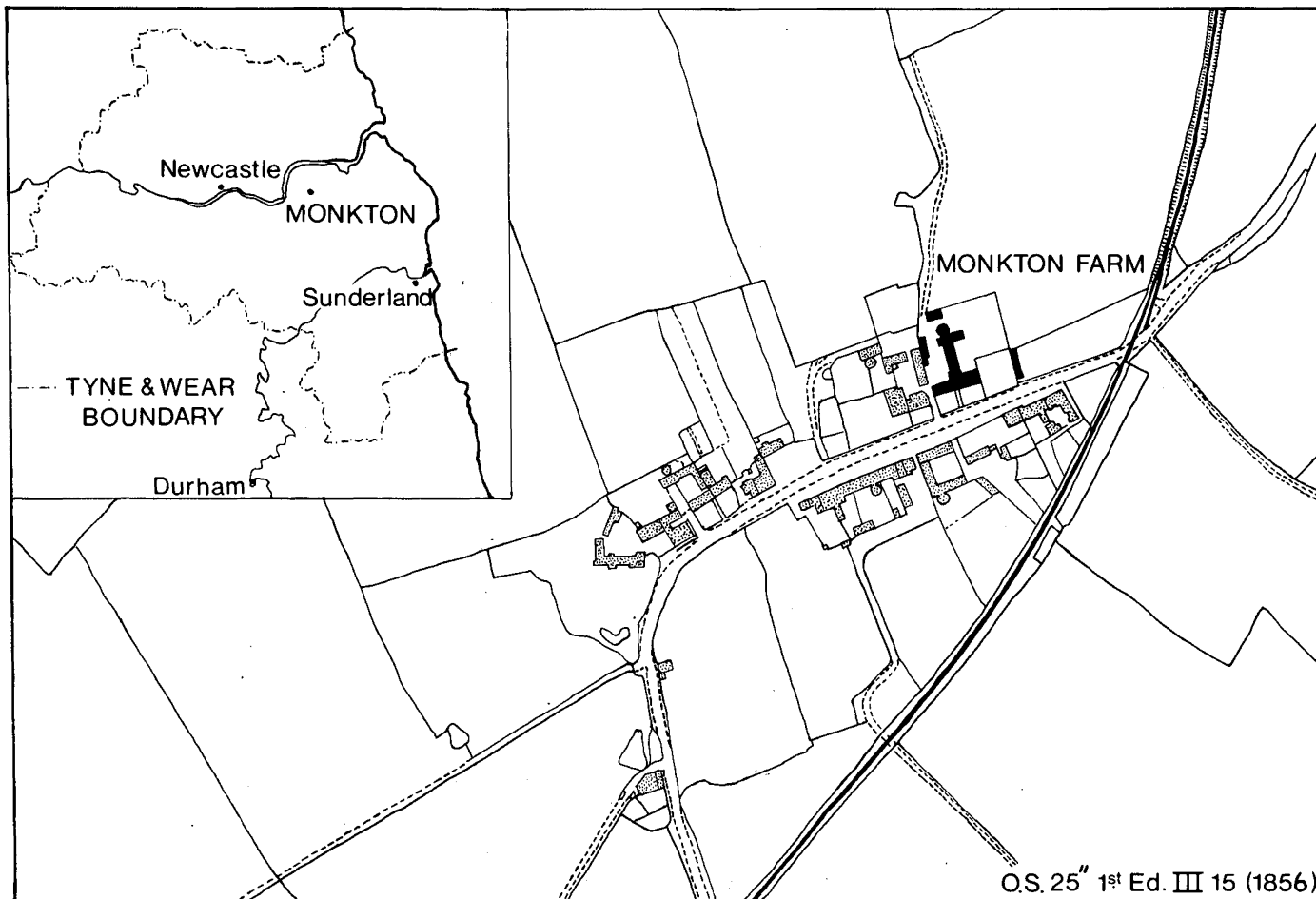


Fig. 1.

Notable architectural features include: a south door with false four-centred arched head, a deep lintel, splayed jambs and label moulding with dropped and returned ends; ground and first floor windows on the south side which have splayed stone mullions and jambs and similar label moulding; a large fireplace beneath a deep lintel with false, four-centred head and splayed and stopped jambs. All these features and a small splayed rectangular window, positioned between ground and first floor level in the north wall, are constructed using dressed sandstone blocks.

As only part of the original building survives, there are problems both in the interpretation of the earliest plan, with the arrangements for access, lighting and heating, and also of later alterations to make improvements and additions. One possible plan is that of an elongated building, a single room deep, and separated into two units. This is a type that has been recognized in the adjacent Pennine area;² it has a central entrance leading to a living kitchen, off which opens another room serving as a parlour. The principal fireplace, on the end wall of the kitchen, is complemented by one at the other end of the building. Such a plan could only be tested by archaeological excavation, as Monkton Farm has removed all evidence of the eastern portion above ground level.

An alternative approach to a conjectural plan is based on settlement evidence. The homes of agrarian communities in the medieval/early post-medieval period tend to be extremely simple and functional. When a high level of landowner interest or control was also a possibility, a notable degree of uniformity in house plans could result.³ If Bede Cottage were to be compared with Grange Farm along the lines of such a model, the present building could be expected to represent approximately two-thirds of its original core with the remaining third lying further east beyond a partition. Later this would have been enlarged by an addition to the west, built on using a through passage. With a hearth in the same position as the present fireplace, there would be a strong similarity in scale, structural organization and development.

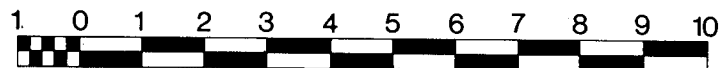
The present opposed entrances could have been an original feature, but it will be argued that all the architecture employed in the building is later insertion, leaving question marks against the positioning of earlier doors, windows and fireplaces. There was no sign of any partition to the west of the line of the opposed doors; first floor joists, north and south walls and beaten clay floor were all devoid of tell-tale scars. Similarly, the absence of any trace of burning makes it unlikely that this was ever the site of an earlier hearth. If Bede Cottage did originally extend further eastwards, any partition that existed is more likely to have been on the line of the present party wall with Monkton Farm. It is interesting though that the builder of this house chose not to re-use the notional north wall, despite only a minor variation in line.

Although the building now abutting the western side of the cottage is a stable, with constructional characteristics of a much later period, there is other evidence to support the idea of an earlier western addition. The south wall of the stable has a building break, with a short length of masonry immediately adjacent to the cottage varying from the rest in appearance; also, the butt joint with the cottage is more integrated and compacted than the corresponding north wall joint. It is possible that

SOUTH ELEVATION

Bede Cottage

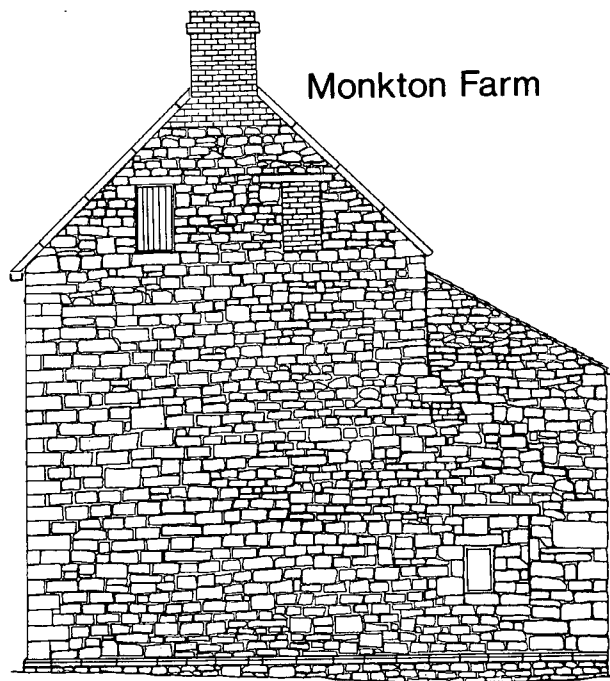
Monkton Farm



metres

Fig. 2.

EAST ELEVATION



WEST ELEVATION

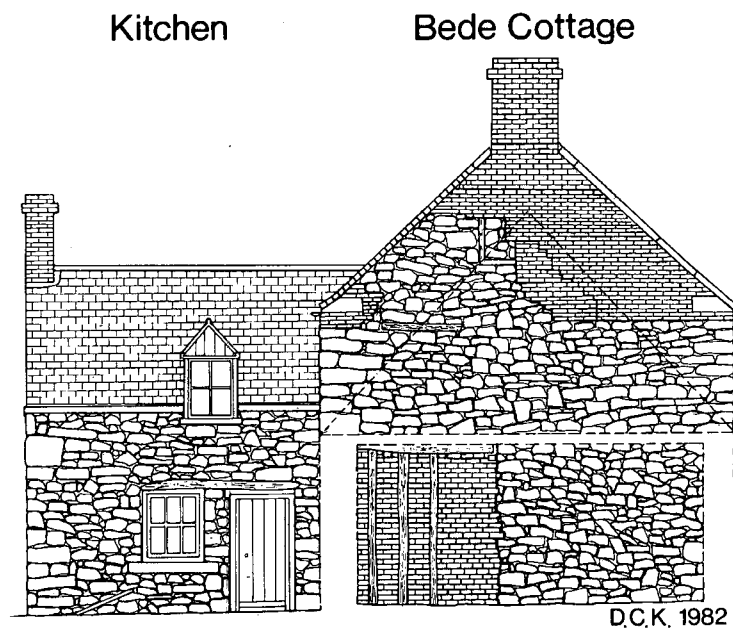


Fig. 3.

BEDE COTTAGE & MONKTON FARM, MONKTON

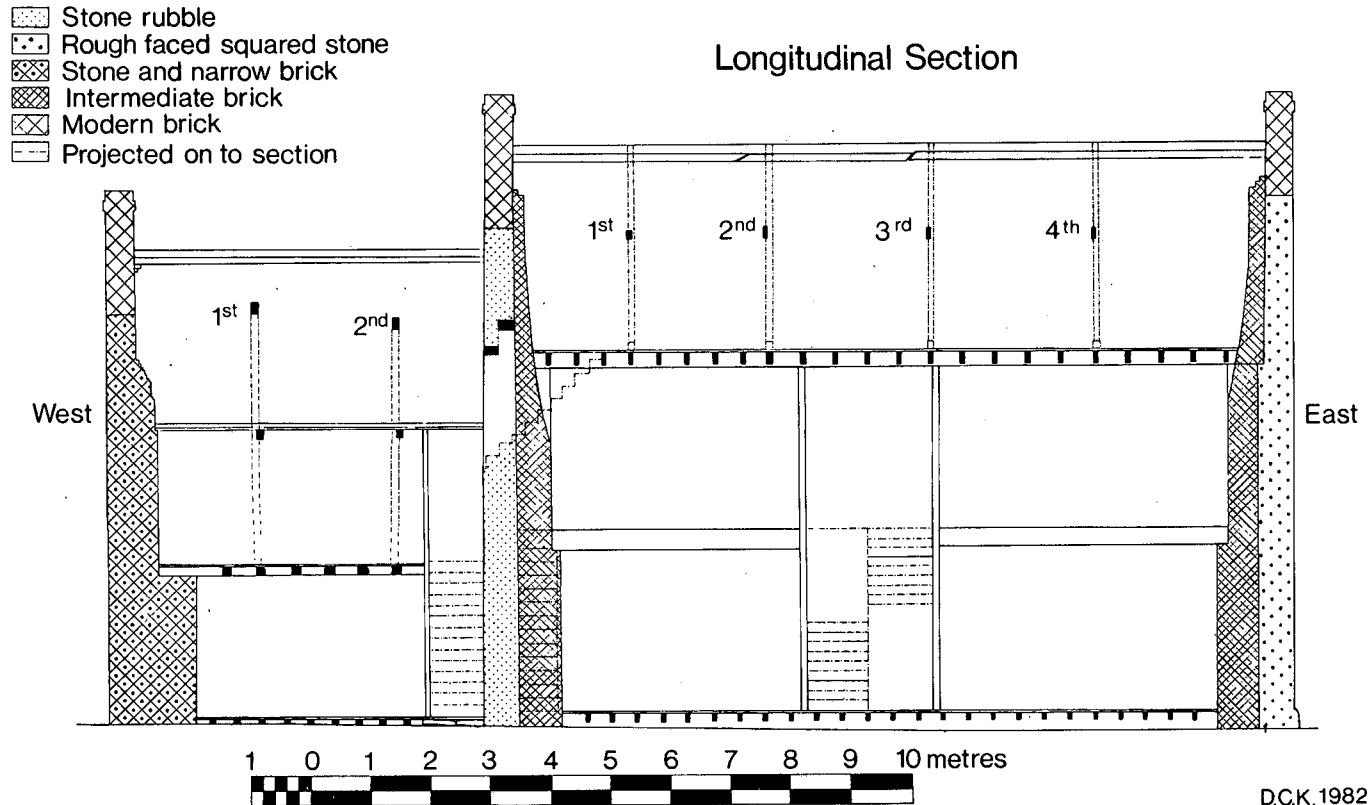


Fig. 4.

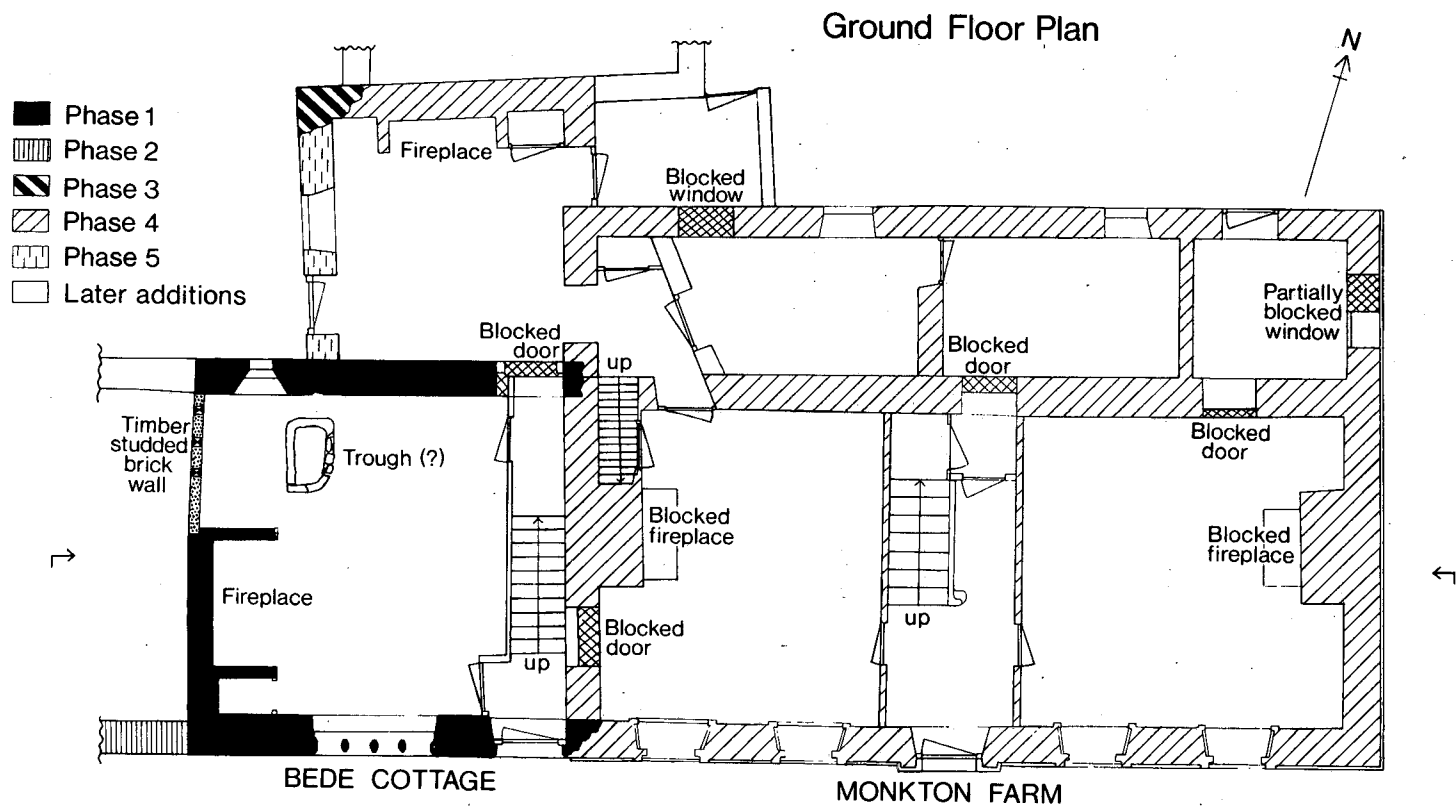


Fig. 5. Principal phases of structural development.

this is a surviving portion of an earlier structure, although there are no accompanying features to support this idea. The bonding material of the wall is obscured by heavy pointing outside, and lime-washing inside.

The exterior face of the west wall of the cottage has a timber feature high in the gable resembling the surviving portion of a window frame. The postulated north jamb and sill fall just below a line of chimney and wall modifications in narrow gauge brickwork;⁴ but the presence of stonework within the framed angle of the aperture may be an indication that the window was blocked before this rebuilding campaign. Such an event may have been occasioned by the erection of a western extension to the cottage, the roof line of this addition curtailing the usefulness of the window.

Lower down the west wall of the cottage, at its northern end, there is another, slightly longer, horizontal timber. Although it resembles a lintel, there has been no obvious interference with the wall fabric around it, either externally or internally. Thus, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions about it. Below this however, at ground floor level, the timber studding with brick infill is very thin; it seems unlikely that a single skin of lime-washed, stretcher bond brickwork would ever have been expected to function as an exterior wall. When the stable was built, therefore, it may have been an immediate replacement for a dismantled earlier building.

The gap that the timber and brickwork plugs is of such a considerable size that it is not really conceivable as an ordinary opening to the outside; it is far more likely to have provided internal access between separately built, but adjoining structures. Although the three timber studs do not divide the space in equal proportions, there is no sign that the original blocking was just partial, allowing reduced access through a door. The appearance is consistent with a one-period build that effected a complete separation.

It is not possible to determine whether this void in the west wall of the cottage was an original feature or a later modification. But it may have been operational at the same time as, and connected with, a curious stone-built trough of unknown function, the base of which survived below the level of the original beaten clay floor, just north of the fireplace. No stratigraphic evidence for the date of the trough survived, although it must have pre-dated the latest floor of the cottage. The part of the base closest to the fire was slightly deeper than the rest, with a very smooth surface seemingly worn by frequent friction. Despite the fact that several pieces of stone were used in its construction, the whole appeared to be quite well sealed.

The Roof

The present roof is of very recent date and consists of common rafters supported by a ridge purlin and two sets of side purlins built into the gable walls. The purlins are also partially supported by the surviving portion of a timber skeleton of much earlier date. The latter is made up of two sets of paired and tied cruck blades, truncated short of the ridge, the upper ends of each pair being tenoned into a linking timber (collar). Both collars have empty, centrally-positioned mortise holes in the upper surfaces, and a single peg hole which would have been used to hold the incoming tenon of a king post. These mortise holes are in east-west alignment with

each other, and indicate a ridge line slightly to the north of the present one.

At a lower level, now supporting a first floor ceiling, are further timbers (lower transverse members); these are trenched into the cruck blades but project to the east. They do not reach the north and south walls however, and only have a marginal supportive function to the frame, so they are not really tie beams. Resting on the outside of the junction of the two northern cruck blades and their respective lower transverse members, and also on the original stone rubble wall of the west gable, is another purlin, possibly the only one that survives from the earlier roof arrangements.

The western truss is referred to as the 1st, the eastern as the 2nd, only for convenience in discussion; no implication is intended regarding the total number of trusses and their ordering in the original, complete building. The eight timbers constituting the two surviving trusses have all been roughly shaped by axe or adze but do not form a coherent unit. It is possible to isolate two groups according to their characteristics.

Group A

The south cruck blade, the collar and the lower transverse member of the 1st set.

These are related by the fact that they all bear the same carpenters marks (||||). This is taken to be significant because, although there are five examples of this denotation on the three timbers, no other markings have been detected on the five remaining timbers. In addition, the blade has a slightly different appearance from the other three blades, elbowing only within the thickness of the wall, and forming a neat joint with the well-matched collar. The lower transverse member has been cut from a softwood (all the other timbers are hardwood) and has a bolt supplementing a wooden peg at its junction with the north blade.

Group B

The other three blades, *viz.* the north blade of the 1st set and the north and south blades of the 2nd set.

All three have a similar elbowed appearance, share the same approximate proportions, and have a single redundant peg hole in the centre of the blade surface, near the elbow. These holes are all positioned at the same vertical height above the ground, and it is notably absent from the Group A blade. None of the blade joints with the collars is as neatly cut as the Group A example.

This leaves the collar and the lower transverse member of the 2nd set remaining. They cannot be positively associated with the Group B timbers, but because of the absence of related markings can be excluded from Group A.

The dismantling of one portion of the upper north wall during renovation revealed, at the level of a definite building break, a continuous length of original wall plate, still *in situ*. It was formed from two lengths of timber scarfed together with recesses on the upper surfaces for the feet of the common rafters. At the 1st cruck position, a cruck tie⁵ had once been attached to the wall plate but was now truncated flush with the face of the wall; the surviving part lined up perfectly with the empty peg

BEDE COTTAGE

1st Pair of Cruicks

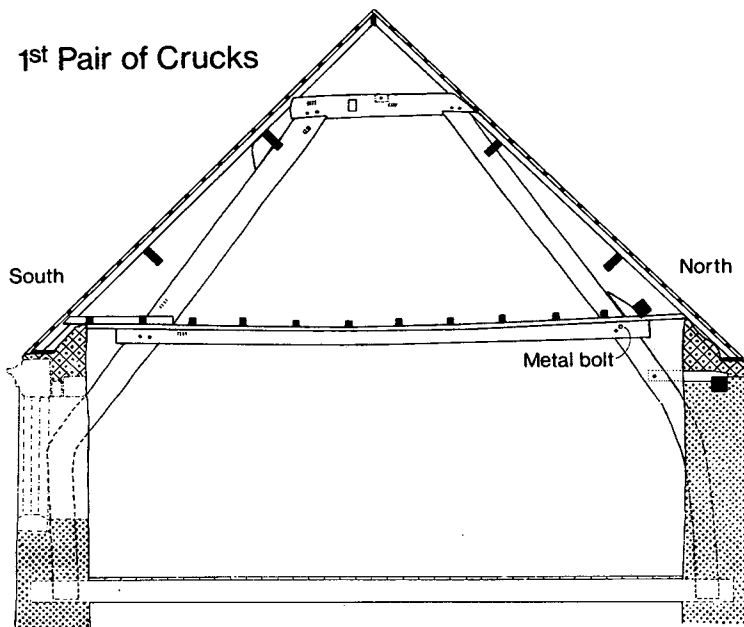
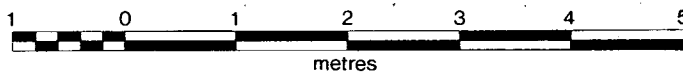
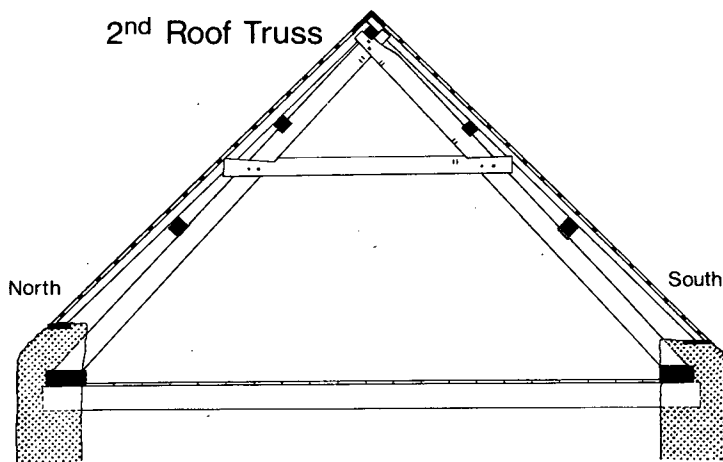


Fig. 6.



MONKTON FARM

2nd Roof Truss



D.C.K. 1982

Fig. 7.

BEDE COTTAGE

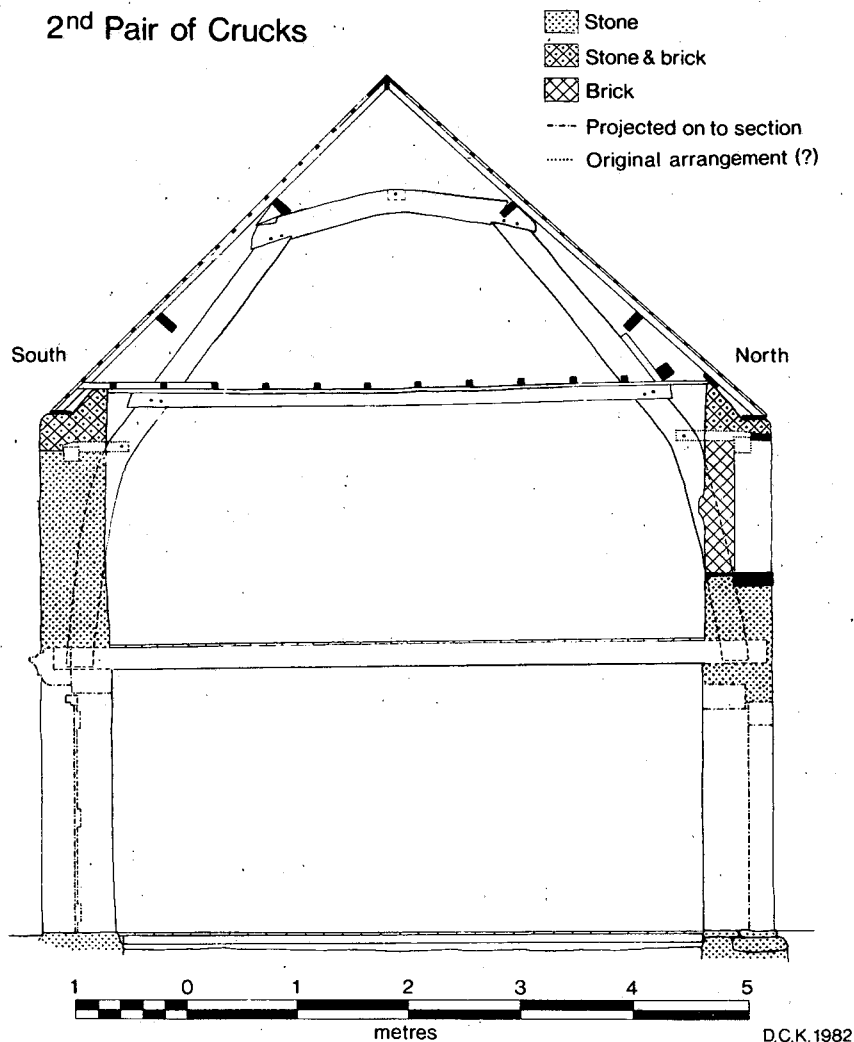


Fig. 8.

hole in the blade. This confirmed that the level of this building break was an earlier wall height, and that the empty peg holes in the three blades were part of the original roof structure. The corresponding break in the south wall was less obvious because a higher proportion of stone, rather than brick, had been used in its raised section. This was perhaps the result of a desire to maintain the continuity of appearance on the principal facade.

If the unmarked Group B timbers, together with the cruck tie arrangement, can now be considered original, there is the problem of explaining the different characteristics of the Group A timbers. The cruck tie link was obviously deemed dispensable at some stage, these timbers being cut. Also the Group A blade, which was never attached to the wall plate, is best explained as a replacement that post-dated the functioning cruck ties. It seems likely that the raising of the walls was the occasion when these changes occurred. The markings on the Group A timbers would then have nothing to do with Bede Cottage, but would be associated with the use of these timbers as part of a truss of another building. Other implications now follow from this.

The logic of raising the walls by a relatively small amount (about 1ft. 6 in.) seems to lie in the desire to turn the building from one which is essentially one and a half storey, i.e. one floor and a loft, into a genuine two storey dwelling. In the process the lower transverse members were probably added to support the ceiling, but they may have been intended to assist in maintaining the rigidity, rendering the cruck tie superfluous. If however, the collar arrangement also dates from this period, the 2nd set timber being newly cut and mortised to match the Group A king post arrangement, then it means that the evidence for the earlier roof ridge has been lost.

The recess on the upper surface at the south end of the collar may mark the side purlin position for the secondary roof plan, the northern equivalent having been lost when the collar was trimmed to make room for the present roof covering. The extant purlin on the north side is a puzzle; it is sited too low to be particularly useful, and it aligns with the original wall plate rather than the raised wall. Although its west end lies on top of original walling, its attachment at the east end can only date from after the building of Monkton Farm. It may be an early purlin, later moved to a different position to assist the connection with the roof of the northern extension, and now rendered redundant by the recent renewal.

Dating

An attempt to deduce a plausible sequence of changes and adaptations is a necessary prerequisite to the consideration of dates. Both north and south walls were raised using combinations of stone and narrow gauge brickwork that was lime mortared. This mortar, identical to that employed in the chimney breast on the first floor, contrasts with the clay bonding of the original walls. Narrow gauge bricks were also used in the segmentally arched fireplace and the rebuilt portion of the west gable wall, which together with the chimney breast has the appearance of a single build.

On the ground floor, narrow gauge bricks were well integrated behind the dressed sandstone of the fireplace, and despite the later displacement of the south jamb to provide for a salt/spice box against the wall, part of the fireplace lining survived backed by such bricks. This type of brick had also been used to fill the voids in the rubble core of the wall, and line the soffits of the apertures, before the sandstone blocks of the window were mortared in. There seems a good case for associating the alterations employing the narrow gauge brickwork with the incorporation of the dressed stone architecture.

Both south windows, the south door, the ground floor fireplace and the small north window have decorative styles that are comparable, and it is argued that they form a coherent group all of one period. If they are associated with the wall raising, this would obviously make them later insertions rather than primary features. This idea may be supported by the fact that the internal timber lintel in the first floor window rises above the line of the wall plate as indicated by the redundant peg hole in the 2nd set south cruck blade. The timber also has a joint position, marked by a slanting cut in one face plus three accompanying peg holes, that cannot be related to its present situation, and indicating that it is re-used.

The curious position of the north window, between ground and first floor level, requires explanation. Two first floor joists, one of which is truncated, bear recess scars consistent with a simple ladder stair ascending from west to east, close to the north wall. The window is perfectly positioned to light this, and would be required to counter the reduction in natural light if the timber stud and narrow gauge brick blocking wall was erected at this time. The feet of the stairs would have stood within the area occupied by the stone trough, making it unlikely that the two co-existed. A present staircase against the east wall of the cottage is very modern, and in the absence of any evidence for a further stair position, it is best perhaps to surmise that the north wall ladder stair was operational until recent times, and that the trough functioned for a period before its erection.

Considering the sum of the above evidence, it is now possible to suggest a sequence for the early development of the building. Starting as a one and a half storey structure, the two familiar problems of difficulty with lighting and lack of headroom prevented the full use of the loft.⁶ The first, partially overcome by the use of a gable window, was exacerbated when the roof of a new western extension cancelled out, or greatly diminished this source. The second was tackled by raising the eaves, enabling a low level window of reasonable size to be inserted into the side wall at the same time, and thus overcoming the light problem. The well adapted upper cruck roof survived this reorganization, with one blade being replaced for unknown reasons. A new arrangement of transverse timbers however, helped to support the first floor ceiling and the new ridge. The original steep pitch of the roof, often associated with a thatch covering, may have been slightly reduced.

The upgrading of the house into a full two-storey structure was reinforced by the introduction of architectural trappings into what had probably been a very plain building. A fine large fireplace of dressed sandstone probably replaced a smaller, simple example, with the new solid, brick-built chimney breast perhaps superseding a more fragile firehood. This also allowed a small fireplace to be opened out upstairs. The reorganization was completed by blocking the internal access to the west building, reducing and filling in the trough, and inserting a small ladder stair, together with additional window light, to serve the first floor.

The dating for all this activity is best considered in reverse order. The label mouldings of the south door and windows are of a simple and common form. As a type they span a period from the late 16th century through the 17th century. Although horizontal label mouldings continue into the 18th century, those stopped

by vertical terminations tended to die out by the end of the 17th century.⁷ A good local parallel is provided by Bishop Cosin's almshouses, Palace Green, Durham, built in the 1660s. For the fireplace interesting comparisons are provided by several examples of probable 17th century date at 41-4, The Sandhill, Newcastle.

The North-East is conventionally regarded as rather retarded in adopting the building improvements of the immediate post-medieval period,⁸ and it is unlikely that much local work was in advance of that for which the Bishop of Durham was responsible. On this reasoning a mid to late 17th-century date would seem appropriate for the changes. The style of timber studding and brick nogging infill blocking, and the use of narrow gauge bricks, would also be consistent with this date.

There are fewer clues when turning our attention to the original building. The plan, the arrangement of door and window openings and fireplaces, and the ridge structure of the roof, are all largely guesswork. We do know, however, that the clay bonded walls stood to a height of one and a half storeys and that the earliest roof was a variety of upper cruck that employed cruck ties. Recent work by H. Martin Roberts in Durham⁹ suggests that the upper cruck is a 17th and early 18th century adaptation. However, there must be a possibility that Bede Cottage had an earlier origin, and that a 16th century date would be plausible.

NORTH EXTENSION/KITCHEN

At some stage a single storey addition was made to Bede Cottage, the new structure abutting the cottage north wall and connected to it *via* a doorway in this wall. In appearance and scale this extension has a strong resemblance to the cottage, the walls being constructed with random rubble, and selected large stones built into side- and face-alternate quoins at the north-east and north-west. However, there is a perceptible difference in the construction of these two corners: there are several well-squared blocks in the former, only a single example of which is used in the latter, which is composed mainly of irregular blocks, like those in the cottage quoins. In common with the cottage, the exposed stonework is well weathered and heavily pointed.

The east wall, at least, is contemporary with the building of Monkton Farm. The butt joint with the cottage north wall, visible on the western face, does not show on the eastern face; and the outshut wall of the farm is in bond with it. The *two* eastern doorways, both of which appear to be contemporary with the building of the wall, would surely have only been necessitated by the existence of the outshut; access being required both to it, and to the garth outside. The doorways are constructed using timber lintels and have jambs built by including large thin slabs of stone laid on edge, as at Grange Farm. There is also a continuous wall foundation running below the threshold. These features are shared with the door opening into the cottage.

The fireplace on the north wall is large for the size of the room. It is constructed from rectangular blocks of sandstone, finely dressed, but otherwise undecorated. Above the lintel is a relieving arch and chimney breast built with intermediate gauge brick, the type employed in the chimneys of Monkton Farm, suggesting that the

fireplace too dates from this phase of building. The rough internal wall plaster of the extension building, on the north wall of the cottage, passes through the joint with the west wall. This end of the west wall has a door and vertical sash window under a common external lintel. But the doorway has no wall foundation below its threshold and a stone on edge only in its north jamb. The window has a seat below and narrow glazing bars. It is likely that both are later introductions or replacements, and that the rebuilt wall was aligned further east to allow more light into the cottage stair window. This would account for the trapped plaster, the absence of foundations, and the slightly odd, out of square orientation to the cottage.

Dating

The kitchen/north extension obviously post-dates the cottage, because it has been built on to it. Yet it has proportions and a constructional style which are very similar, and should logically date its erection before that of Monkton Farm. Demands for extra room at this later date could be expected to have been accomplished within the design for the new building; the apparent absence of cooking facilities here suggests they were provided elsewhere. However, all the surviving features within the extension can only be dated to the period of the building of Monkton Farm or later.

No trace of clay bonding has been detected in the walls, and it is suspected that the building is lime mortared throughout. The mortar in the east wall differs from that employed in its foundations, but matches that used in the north wall and fireplace; they all differ though from the type bonding the west wall. Apart from the difference in bonding material there is otherwise a close similarity between the simple foundations of the north wall of the cottage and those of the east wall of the extension.

All the evidence encourages the view that the east wall of the extension is a rebuilding, probably re-using the same material on the original foundations, at the time of the erection of Monkton Farm. Perhaps the north wall was also largely rebuilt at this time when the new fireplace and chimney were added. It may have been decided to strengthen the new north-east quoin using surplus ashlar blocks. The west wall remained intact, but was partially dismantled later, when the new or replacement door and window were inserted. The single large block in the upper north-west quoin may mark a building break from this alteration. More recently the roof covering was replaced together with that of the cottage; the roof space was equipped with timber-lined walls and ceiling for storage, and a casement dormer for lighting.

Further support for a pre-Monkton Farm date for the original extension came from a blocked access between the first floor of the cottage and the roof space of the extension. It was found that the aperture lining was constructed using narrow gauge bricks. This feature could not be earlier than, but may date from, the raising of the walls of the cottage. The opening did not have the characteristics of a normal window, and timberwork built into the sill was unweathered on the extension side, revealing that it had never been exposed to the elements. It is likely that the roof space of the extension had also been used for storage at this earlier period, the opening allowing for the convenient passage of goods to and from the cottage.

If this interpretation is correct then the north extension pre-dated the wall raising and the introduction of architecture into Bede Cottage, but post-dated the building of the cottage itself. A date in the first half of the 17th century is perhaps most likely. However, it must be reiterated that all the features now visible in the extension date from the building of Monkton Farm or later, and so it is possible that the building was erected at this later date, deliberately separated from the house, and built to match the constructional style of the cottage.

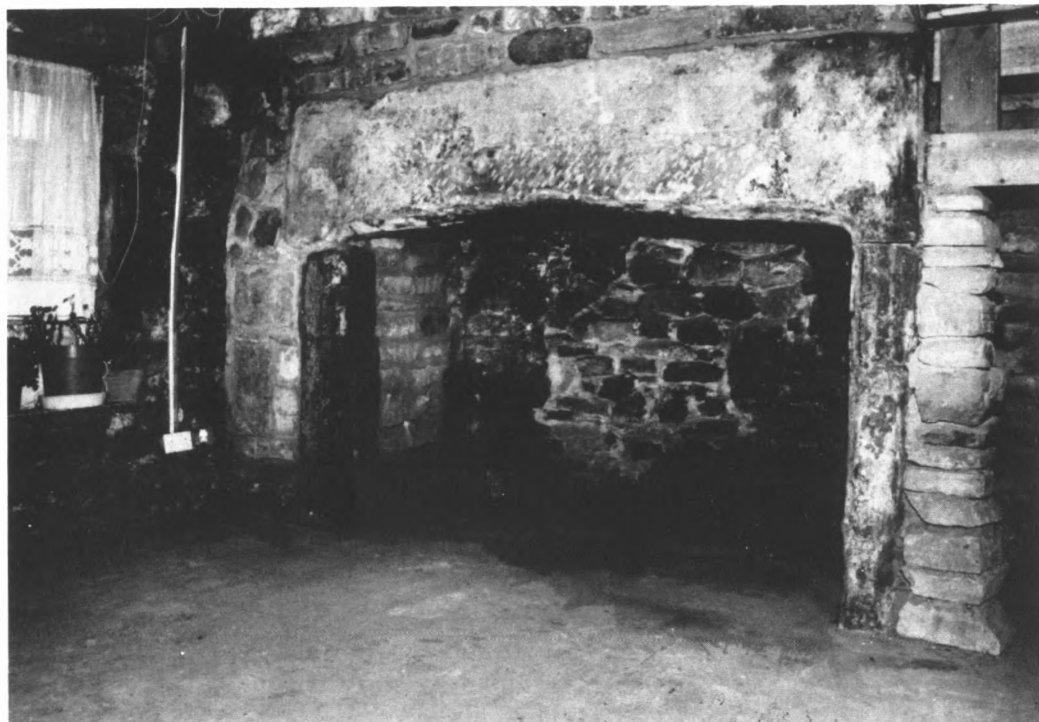
MONKTON FARM

An altogether larger building than Bede Cottage, Monkton Farm is built in symmetrical Georgian fashion with a central Tuscan style doorway opening into an entrance lobby. Large rooms opening off either side are duplicated on the first floor, where they open from a landing at the head of a wide dog-leg staircase. An outshut, built at the same time but under a separate roof, supplements the single pile house, and is currently divided into three. The eastern portion has lately been used as a coal house but originally may have functioned as a closet; the central room is notable for its thick ceramic floor tiles; and the western area is the only place where the original outshut roof survives, the rest having been replaced by a modern brick addition at first floor level. The primary roof support is a single trunk of a young tree angled upwards from the top of the outshut wall to the north wall of the house.

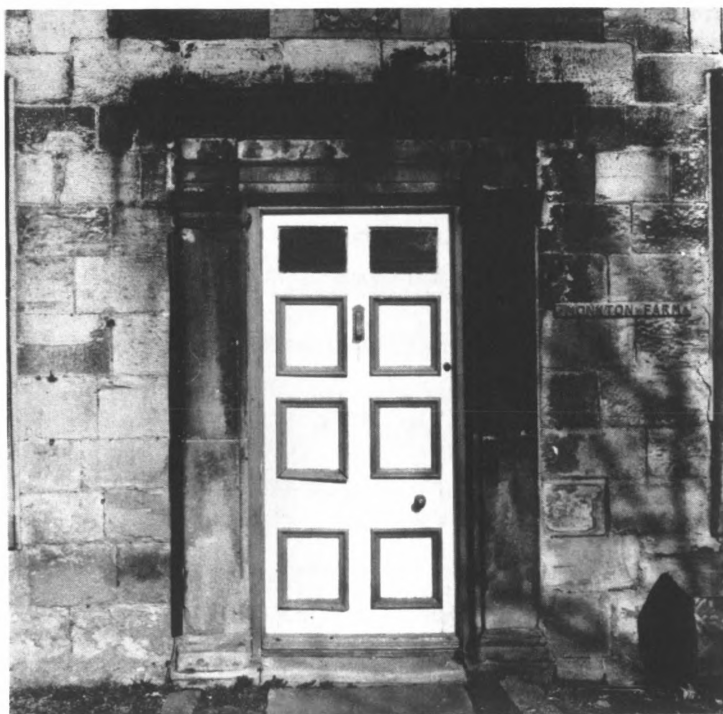
In the house itself there is a fine timber roof of five bays. The four roof trusses are all marked in order; pairs of sawn principal rafters of relatively light scantling rise from the wall plate, are crossed and halved at the apex, where they support a ridge purlin. The ridge and two sets of side purlins consist of more than single lengths of timber, simple scarf joints occurring at the truss positions. An expansive roof space was obviously of considerable importance; it is boarded throughout, has two shuttered openings in the east gable, and would have provided ample room for storage and/or bedspace for a labour force.

Perhaps the most interesting architectural feature within the house is the main staircase. It is open string with balusters turned from two and a quarter inch posts: the handrail is strikingly downturned at the top of the first flight of stairs. Together with the other stairways, it partially reflects the social complexity of what had now become an amalgamation of three individual buildings. The simple modern eastern staircase in Bede Cottage was only constructed after a doorway in the party wall to the house had been blocked. Another, of utilitarian construction, led from the first floor of the cottage to the roof space of the house.

The discretely boxed, narrow stair leading from the kitchen area to the first floor of the house alongside the western chimney breast, and that giving access to the loft, built within a kitchen cupboard, also clearly display social context as well as function. The kitchen, the cottage and the lofts were now the domain of the domestic and agricultural servants and labourers in the expanding household. The large rooms of the house would have been used by the members of the principal family: they



a. Bede Cottage fireplace.



b. Monkton Farm doorway.

may have been arranged with a dining room to the west (near the kitchen) and a living room to the east on the ground floor; and with two bedrooms on the first floor.

Dating

Monkton Farm has a stone above the doorway with the letters, R F A and the date 1740 inscribed either side of a coat of arms. As it can be established that Richard and Ann Forster were the tenants and occupants at this time,¹⁰ the correlation suggests the use of this evidence for dating is legitimate. There are anomalies concerning the coat of arms (see below), and the proportions of the stone suggest it may have been employed elsewhere, originally as a lintel. However, it has been well integrated into the construction of this building from the outset, and is not a later insertion. Although certain features such as the window frames and the west bedroom cast iron fireplace may be 19th century alterations, the essential fabric of the house appears to be a single-period build. The inscribed date then is far more likely to refer to this than any subsequent alteration.

The staircase, unusual in some respects, has very strong similarities with that of the Grange, the 18th century building that represents the culmination of residential developments at Grange Farm. Details at Monkton Farm are typical of mid 18th century taste.¹¹ Balusters with bulbous columns and closely grouped mouldings were superseded by much plainer examples at the end of the century. Handrails, with curved top and simple applied mouldings, swept over a turned newel post in an elegant curve at the foot of the stairs, are also consistent with this date. Interestingly, there are plain rectangular blocks below the open string moulding, in contrast with the more normal decorative brackets at the Grange.

Crow Hall, Felling provides a good local parallel as a building. Erected in 1715 by Francis Rudston¹² it is of five bays and was thought to be of two storeys originally, which would make it directly comparable in size with Monkton Farm. The doorcase detail is almost identical and although it lacks the complete and projecting window architraves, its lintels have similar angled incisions in imitation of a brick arch. The facade also is of a polished stone design. A date of c. 1740 is suggested then for the building of Monkton Farm.

FARM BUILDINGS

Mixed farming is likely to have been practised most of the time, but perhaps with an emphasis on livestock. In 1683 the rental of £45 on a seven year lease was to be increased by £5 for every additional acre converted to tillage;¹³ in 1770 the lease expressly forbade the ploughing and sowing of more land than had been the custom. The terrier of 1783¹⁴ describes quite a large proportion of arable, the Woodfield surveys of 1805 and 1806¹⁵ show that at that time most of the land was under grass or providing fodder crops, whilst the tithe apportionment of 1838¹⁶ records a more even combination in land use, slightly favouring crop production.

Provision of farm buildings in the North-East of England is likely to have been



a. Monkton Farm staircase from the first floor landing.



b. Monkton Farm—the coat of arms.

fairly modest until the end of the 18th/19th century. However, a lease of 1677 given by the tenant of Monkton Farm to the occupant of a neighbouring farm¹⁷ includes a covenant to build a barn or oxhouse on the holding. These certainly appear to be the prime requirements in terms of extra buildings. A newspaper advertisement of 1770¹⁸ lists the premises of two farms in Monkton: one possessed house, barn, byre, and stable; the other had house, barn and byre. The 1783 map shows three buildings to the rear of Bede Cottage/Monkton Farm, and the 1838 tithe map shows three again, but in a slightly different arrangement. The identification of farm buildings from these sources alone though is problematical; a number of cottages are known to have been clustered around the main homesteads, and not all of these can be pinpointed.

The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1856 shows that by this time there had been a complete reorganization. Only the barn may have survived from the earlier isolated buildings, now replaced by a range partially enclosing a fold yard. Since then, a long rectangular structure to the east of the farm, and a gin engine attached to the barn, have disappeared; and a modern brick-built dairy has been erected behind the main farmhouse. The gin engine, one of five in the village in the mid 19th century, is an interpretation of the circular plan form shown on the map. Its unusual end-on positioning to the barn may be explained by the desire to avoid blocking a track to the fields on the west, and the yard to the east.

Dating

Precise dating is difficult because the farm buildings lack the diagnostic features of architectural style employed in the domestic block. The stable, barn, byre (between the barn and kitchen), cart shed with granary above (to the west of the track), and additional buildings for livestock and storage (to the north and east of the barn/gin engine) are all of a simple, functional, rubble stone wall build. They all have utilitarian, machined and metal-bolted timber roof trusses.

The barn has crow-step gables, and the unusual orientation of the gin engine may support the idea that it was a later addition; the scars in the north wall reveal it was a relatively small example. The byre was certainly built later than both the barn and kitchen because its walls were constructed as infill without any quoining. A date in the second quarter of the 19th century then is likely for the erection of most of these buildings, but perhaps one in the second half of the 18th century for the barn.

HISTORY

A list of the farm's tenants and owners can be compiled stretching back to 1495,¹⁹ and it is sometimes possible to interpret that the tenant was also the occupier, or in other cases, to discover the identity of the occupier. From the end of the 15th century until the early 17th century the tenement seems to have passed through the hands of at least four generations of the Brompton family. At the beginning of this period it was one of four in Monkton all paying different rents to the Prior and Convent of Durham, from whom the land was held. Between 1512 and 1538 however,

an apparent reorganization increased the number of tenants to five, all paying identical rents. It is unlikely that this is connected with the enclosure of the township fields because a document of 1612²⁰ is a draft agreement by the tenants of Monkton for the division of the north, west and south fields.

The status of the Bromptons is unknown, but their successor Thomas Cocke was a merchant from Newcastle. He died in 1628 leaving an inventory of all the goods and chattels at his Monkton farm.²¹ The list is divided into three groups that appear to respect real divisions in the location of property; the first part for example consisting of livestock, agricultural equipment and items probably in store. The remainder can be further sub-divided into five on the basis of the repetition of the same or similar items; this provides the only evidence for postulating the number of rooms in the house. Comparison with a contemporary inventory of property at Grange Farm shows Cocke's possessions had a stronger emphasis on house fittings and items of comfort, less on agricultural produce and equipment.

The link with the merchant class is maintained in 1635 when the tenement passed to Robert Crissop and his wife Barbary. It is thought that this is the same man who instigated a tuition bond of 1648,²² obliging his wife Barbara to provide for their two sons. Certainly Barbara was widowed by 1646, but then she married another Newcastle merchant, Jacob Blenkinsoppe. These two then made an assignment bond that eventually transferred one half of the holding to Ann Davison and Jane Carre in 1651.²³ Both were the wives, once again, of prominent Newcastle merchants. Throughout this period, and in fact right up to the freehold sale, the reserved rent remained a static and nominal sum. The real rent was now paid in the form of a fine, either on entry or on the renewal of the twenty-one year lease.

During the Commonwealth period however, the post-Reformation Dean and Chapter ceased to exist, and some of the Monkton lands were sold. Richard Stott of Lincoln's Inn, Middlesex, had agreed to buy one half of the Bede Cottage farm, but defaulted on the balance of the payment. Thomas Davison then acquired this portion by "bargain and sale" in 1651.²⁴ At the Restoration the Dean and Chapter were re-established and their land returned. Those who had previously bought holdings were to be accommodated as far as possible within the new leaseholds. The Monkton entry in a lease renewals book referring to this period is headed by a note that says, "5 farms ... generally £45 renewed at £40"; this is obviously recording a reviewed tariff of fine. Understandably the records reveal considerable confusion because of the enforced break in continuity; the tenement listings at Monkton are complicated further by the subdivision of two of the farms.

The Renewals Books and the Notitia,²⁵ which record leases and their renewals, can be used to establish a list of tenants at Bede Cottage/Monkton Farm until its freehold sale in 1866. A fine of £100 on 4 December 1660 is the first against the name of Thomas Davison, but this includes the rental on another half tenement at Monkton and, no doubt, calculations concerning the return of the lands to regular leasehold. Davison's later fines were £60 for his one and a half tenements. Son of a skinner and glover also named Thomas, he had risen from these roots to become governor of the Merchants Company and first alderman, then mayor, of Newcastle.

His eminence had been partially achieved by his close association with the Cocke family who lived at 41-3, The Sandhill, Newcastle. In 1620 he was indentured to John Cock as boothman²⁶ and he later married Ann Cocke, daughter of Ralph.²⁷

It is possible that the Davisons lived at 41-3, The Sandhill, in the 1650s, but towards the end of Thomas' life it is more likely that they used a house in Norton; a seven hearth dwelling in Thomas Davison's name can be traced in the hearth tax records.²⁸ Davison died in 1676, leaving a will²⁹ that devised an extensive list of property and lands in Newcastle and the County of Durham to his wife, sons and the fellowship of the Merchant Adventurers. Legacies were also left to the poor of the parishes of Newcastle. Obviously his holding at Monkton, the profits of which were now enjoyed by his widow although the tenancy passed to his son Thomas, was only a modest portion of a considerable estate, and presumably never intended for his own occupation.

Nonetheless, the half farmhold that Stott had bought in 1651 was "to be worth £16 10s a year more after improvement".³⁰ Whether this part of the tenement included Bede Cottage and whether the forthcoming "improvement" refers to the building is impossible to say, but it may be a reference to the changes noted above. On the 1 May 1659, Davison had leased the farmhold to Robert Softley,³¹ a yeoman of Monkton, for a term of six years at a rent of £45; the survival of a further lease of 1683 suggests that Softley was the subtenant farmer for the whole of this intervening period. However, the hearth tax records of 1665, showing him to be the occupant of an above average four hearth house, do not list his name in 1666 or 1674. There is enough internal consistency in the documents to support their accurate recording of at least the larger houses, so perhaps an "improved" Bede Cottage was now being occupied by one of the persons marked "gent" in the lists.

An assignment made by Thomas Davison to Ralph Davison esq. of Laton, Durham,³² confirms that his one and a half tenements were to benefit first his wife, then after her death his son, Thomas Davison the younger. The latter is recorded in the *Alumni Cantabrigienses*³³ and was a well-known vicar of Norton. The 1683 lease sub-letting the tenement to Softley has alterations that make the deed read as a draft for a similar document to transfer the tenement to Robert Gibson of Low Hebburn in February 1693. In fact, it passed in 1696 to Richard Forster who, at that time, also had a half tenement at Hedworth, the neighbouring township. There may be a connection here with William Forster, once of Hedworth, then later of Monkton, who was the subtenant of Davison's half tenement in Monkton.³⁴ No relationship though has yet been established.

In 1703 the lease on the Bede Cottage farm was in the name of Margery Forster, widow, and her son Richard. So by then the tenant named in 1696 (Margery's late husband?) may well have been dead. The lease was renewed in 1707 in Richard's name only, and he added Thomas Davison's old half tenement in Monkton to his land in 1710. This Richard Forster later settled in Whitburn, perhaps as the result of marrying a local girl; the parish records note a marriage between Richard Forster and Sarah Taylor in 1707.³⁵ Amongst their offspring was another Richard, who succeeded them at Monkton; father and son were referred to as "the elder" and "the

younger" while they worked the farm together. The leases of 1735 and 1742 name "Richard Forster the younger and son"; the son and future tenement holder was probably the fourth Richard Forster to farm there.

By 1748 Richard Forster the younger was dead, his will³⁶ lists bequests to his mother Sarah, his wife Ann and children Ralph, Richard, William and Eleanor. Despite his early death (at least two of his children were still in their minority) he had obviously acquired considerable wealth for the son of a yeoman. He had property at Monkton, Cleadon and Whitburn and silver tankards were named amongst personal items in his will. He titled himself "gentleman", which would be consistent with the bearing of arms in an 18th century context. Those displayed at Monkton Farm are appropriate to that status, the helmet above the shield is shown in profile with closed visor. But the coat of arms, three cocks with a central roundel, and another cock as crest, are undoubtedly those of the Cocke family of Newcastle.³⁷ When, on the death of Richard Forster the younger, his son inherited the tenancy, he, like his grandfather was titled "yeoman"; as he is also named on the 1735 lease, the 1740 date inscribed on the stone is unlikely to celebrate his parent's marriage.

On turning attention to the land, there are a number of developments to note. Each tenement had a holding within the town fields plus pasture rights at Simonside shared with nearby townships. Enclosure of the Monkton fields, possibly early in the 17th century, left two small pieces of land held in common; the terrier of 1783 records how these were used by each tenement in turn, on a ten year rota. In 1720 the fell land to the south-west of the village was enclosed;³⁸ this added thirty-seven acres to Forster's earlier allotment of eighty acres. In 1739 the land at Simonside still lay open, a petition by the tenants of Monkton to the Dean and Chapter described how overgrown it had become and begged for its division.³⁹ Forster however, still had the use of another half tenement until c. 1760, and this added a further forty-three acres on the south-east side of the village.

The last Richard Forster alienated his tenancy in 1779 to Anne Kent, a widow from West Auckland. By the end of the century though the tenant and occupier was William Whitehead. His term is marked by the fear of events in France. A census taken in 1796 showed details of agricultural produce and appurtenances within ten miles of the coastline:⁴⁰ in the event of a threat from across the sea, these would be quickly withdrawn from the range of the enemy. At this time Whitehead possessed 9 horses, 8 cows, 10 pigs, 140 acres of wheat, 240 acres of oats and 50 acres of beans. He also had 14 tons of hay, 2 carts and 2 servants that could be mounted on horseback. The level of fines which until now had been rising only slowly, suddenly took a sharp rise. Between 1805 and 1812 the sum tripled from £127 to £372, more than reflecting an increased land valuation from £152 to £250.

After this there was a stabilization and Whitehead was succeeded first by Cuthbert Ellison esq. of Hebburn Hall, and then by George Greenwell Russell. A small plot of land with cottages in the centre of the village, that had been part of the tenement holding since at least 1783, was now sold off.⁴¹ And in the 1830s, the portion of Simonside land attached to the holding was detached and leased separately.⁴² Whereas Dean and Chapter records are usually only concerned with the tenant

leasing directly from them, the tithe apportionment of 1838 records the occupier of the land and whom they held from. Russell occupied the Bede Cottage/Monkton Farm tenement, but he also possessed twenty acres of fields held from three trustees, and a six acre field held from Cuthbert Ellison esq. Russell was not resident in Monkton, however, living first at Willington, then Newcastle and finally at Tynemouth.⁴³

At this point the census records⁴⁴ allow a glimpse of the social structure of the farm, in the wider context of what was still primarily an agricultural community. All the farms had servants, both domestic and agricultural; in the case of Monkton Farm there would also have been the equivalent of a subtenant farming family in residence. There is a very strong presence of agricultural labourers throughout the township, most of whom would have lived with their families in very modest cottages. In 1841 there are four farms which all have between three and five servants on the premises; this number gradually declined so that by 1881 there was only a single servant on each farm.

In 1849 Russell sub-let to Edward and Anthony Hall who were already farming at Jarrow. They were followed by Joseph Jewitt from Washington and in 1881 Henry Woodgate, a native of Norfolk, took over; he employed another Norfolk man as servant. The records of the later 19th century name the individual farms for the first time,⁴⁵ and all three on the eastern side of the township had the title of Monkton Farm at some time or other. In the middle of the century the Dean and Chapter started selling its land through the intermediary Church Commissioners. Monkton Farm was subsequently sold in 1866 at a freehold price of £3,300.⁴⁶

The purchaser was John Anthony Woods of Benton Hall. He had followed the path of his father as a successful merchant and banker.⁴⁷ "Woods & Co.", based originally at 2, Mosley St., Newcastle, expanded to have branches throughout the North-East by the end of the 1870s. Woods' early involvement with the timber merchants, "A. Hood & Co.", gave way eventually to an interest with the "Middle Dock Co.". The ownership of Monkton Farm then passed to Lord Northbourne.⁴⁸ Walter Charles James was created Baron Northbourne of Betteshanger co. Kent and of Jarrow Grange co. palatine of Durham on 5 November 1884, having married Sarah Caroline, fifth daughter and coheir of Cuthbert Ellison on 17 April 1841. In 1883 the family estates received a rental of £25,000 in Durham made up of the property where he was the ground landlord.⁴⁹

In the second half of the 19th century a slag heap belonging to the Jarrow Steel Works began to make encroachments on traditional Monkton Farm land.⁵⁰ At the same time holdings of the other township farms began to change. High Farm had c. 250 acres in the third quarter of the 19th century, but only half of that at the end of the century; by the beginning of the 20th century South East Farm had 227 acres, compared with 113 acres thirty years earlier. At Monkton Farm, Henry Woodgate was farming 105 acres in 1881, but by 1910 Robert Seymour had been reduced to 51 acres.⁵¹ In between Magnus Miller had been titled "dairyman" rather than farmer. Housing development started in the inter-war period to the south-east of the township, and later expansion on land in, and immediately around the village, finally killed off the farms as functioning concerns. Fortunately, Conservation Area

status has brought a halt to the unnecessary demolition of buildings, and careful restoration by considerate owners has given them new life in a changing landscape.

DISCUSSION

There is no direct link between the surviving buildings and the documentary sources. No reference has yet been located indicating the quality of habitation at any time, nor any account describing alterations, additions or renovations. Nonetheless, the structural and written evidence are at least complementary. From Thomas Cocke in the 17th century to John Woods in the 19th century the property was in the hands of local men of high standing. Some like Richard Forster, William Whitehead and George Russell were prosperous farmers who were tenant-occupiers; others like Thomas Davison and Cuthbert Ellison were men of higher status who acquired the holding as part of a larger estate.

In the century after 1660, lessees on church property invariably had a good deal;⁵² the level of fines was usually below the figure that represented their full economic value. The church found it difficult either to raise their fining rates, or to increase their valuations upon which calculations for fines were based. Leading gentry families and prominent local merchants were keen to take advantage of this imbalance, and were unlikely to yield to pressure by the dean and his canons. The incidence of such prominent persons in this list of tenants then is not surprising. Once acquired by a Newcastle merchant in the 1620s, the property was passed on to others in agreements and deals that must have been typical of their activities in the 17th century.

The architecture incorporated into Bede Cottage, however, would have been added to enhance the status of the occupier, not the tenant. As it is unlikely that the Davisons would have used it personally, and Robert Softley, the tenant occupier is only described as a yeoman, this presents a problem. A clue may be gained from the inventory of Thomas Cocke. *His* goods at the farm suggests that *he* did use it; and articles like muskets with bandeliers and rest, comfortable sounding beds and chairs, together with cushions and carpets, do not read like the contents of a typical 17th century northern farmhouse.

Perhaps this particular building was something a little different, a merchant's country retreat. Was this why Richard Stott of Middlesex was interested in buying part of the tenement? Or why Robert Softley does not appear to occupy it after 1665? If the building was used personally by a Newcastle merchant in the first half of the 17th century, it seems reasonable to suggest it may have been "improved" and used by a "gentleman" in the second half. There would then be a correlation between the status of the occupant and the architectural embellishment of the building.

Monkton Farm though can be seen in a slightly different light. Little information has yet been found on Richard Forster; in particular his pedigree and coat of arms seem to be notably absent from books on local heraldry. Although he was from humble roots he was obviously fairly successful. As a member of the "nouveau riche", he lavished some of his wealth on a new large house in the current architectural style. But perhaps his origins proved too big a barrier to a comparable degree of

social acceptance. It is difficult to speculate further without more knowledge of the man and his circumstances, but the carving of his initials beside the full Cocke coat of arms, behaviour against all normal convention, hints at social status not fully founded.

NOTES

- ¹ K. J. N. Fairless, "Grange Farm—A Cross-Passage House in Tyne and Wear", *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland* (hereafter *Trans. A. & A. Soc. D. & N.*) new series 5 (1980), 81–9.
- ² R. W. Brunskill, "Vernacular Architecture of the Northern Pennines: a preliminary view", *Northern History* 11 (1975), 118.
- ³ Michael G. Jarrett and Stuart Wrathmell, "Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century Farmsteads: West Whelpington, Northumberland", *Agricultural History Review* 25, Part II, (1977), 118.
- ⁴ One of three distinguished in a simplified typology, and representing a chronological sequence. *Viz.* (a) narrow gauge ("2 in.", hand-made), (b) intermediate (handmade but appreciably larger), (c) modern.
- ⁵ R. W. Brunskill, *The Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture* (1971), 82–3.
- ⁶ *Ibid.* 116.
- ⁷ J. T. Smith and E. M. Yates, "On the Dating of English Houses from External Evidence", *Field Studies* 2, No. 5 (1968), 571.
- ⁸ M. W. Barley, *The English Farmhouse and Cottage* (1961), 244.
- ⁹ H. Martin Roberts, "Crucked-framed Roofs in the City of Durham—preliminary notes on identified examples", *Trans. A. & A. Soc. D. & N.* new series 5 (1980), 91–6.
- ¹⁰ Prior's Kitchen, Durham. Leases C.C. 104/261342 and C.C. 120/261907.
- ¹¹ Linda Hall, "Timber Staircases in Northavon Houses to the mid 18th century", *Bristol and Avon Archaeology* 1 (1982), 16–27.
- ¹² N. Whittaker, *The House and the Cottage Handbook* (1976), 84–5.
- ¹³ Dept. of Palaeography and Diplomatic, University of Durham (hereafter Dept. Pal. & Dip.), Shafto (Beamish) Papers No. 195.
- ¹⁴ Prior's Kitchen C.C. 13643, with map C.C. 13642.
- ¹⁵ Prior's Kitchen, Small Woodfield Surveys (1797–1805). Not Indexed.
- ¹⁶ Dept. Pal. & Dip. Tithe Apportionment for Monkton 8 November 1838.
- ¹⁷ Shafto (Beamish) Papers No. 187.
- ¹⁸ *Newcastle Courant* No. 4881 7 April 1770.
- ¹⁹ Prior's Kitchen, Dean and Chapter Muni-ments. Renewals Books and Bursar's Rentals for Monkton.
- ²⁰ Shafto (Beamish) Papers No. 59.
- ²¹ Dept. Pal. & Dip. Probate Records, 1628 Cock Thomas Tinv.
- ²² Dept. Pal. & Dip. 1648 Crissup Newcastle Tuition 49.
- ²³ Shafto (Beamish) Papers No. 119.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.* No. 122.
- ²⁵ Prior's Kitchen. Renewals Book 2 (C.C. 235424½), 3 (C.C. 235425½), and 4 (C.C. 235426½). Notitia (167099).
- ²⁶ F. W. Dendy ed., *Extracts from The Records of the Merchant Adventurers of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne* Vol. II, Surtees Society Volume 101 (1899), 241.
- ²⁷ J. Brand, *History of Newcastle* I (1789), 280.
- ²⁸ Durham County Record Office (hereafter D. R. O.), M6/2.
- ²⁹ Dept. Pal. & Dip. Probate Records, 1676 Davison Thomas Armiger.
- ³⁰ Shafto (Beamish) Papers No. 122.
- ³¹ *Ibid.* No. 143.
- ³² *Ibid.* No. 154.
- ³³ J. & J. A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses* Part I to 1751 Vol. II (1922), 18.
- ³⁴ Shafto (Beamish) Papers Nos. 187 and 205.
- ³⁵ Herbert Maxwell Wood ed., *Registers of Whitburn (1579–1812)* (1904) Durham and Northumberland Parish Register Society.
- ³⁶ Dept. Pal. & Dip. Probate Records Index 1660–1786, 259 T102.
- ³⁷ C. H. Hunter-Blair, "Renaissance Heraldry of Northumberland", *Arch. Ael.* 4, XI (1934), 220.
- ³⁸ Prior's Kitchen. Register 26, 16–18. Award of Common to the Township of Monkton and Hedworth.
- ³⁹ Prior's Kitchen. Post-Dissolution Documents, Loose Papers, Box 4, Monkton.

⁴⁰ D. R. O. Q/D/LM 38.

⁴¹ Dept. Pal. & Dip. Durham Bishopric Halmote Court Records, Sundry Notitia, Bundle 3, XXVI, Monkton G. G. Russell (1840).

⁴² Prior's Kitchen. Receivers Books Nos. 203 and 204.

⁴³ D. R. O. Q/D/PV/1-33.

⁴⁴ T. W. A. D. Census Records, Monkton, MF 2, MF 21, MF 50, MF 84 and MF 95.

⁴⁵ *Wards Directories* of Newcastle, Gateshead, North and South Shields, Wallsend, Jarrow, Sunderland and adjoining villages.

⁴⁶ Prior's Kitchen. List of Post-Dissolution Muniments, Register 140A, 773.

⁴⁷ *Wards Directories*.

⁴⁸ Deeds of Sale, Mr. and Mrs. Fairweather.

⁴⁹ H. A. Doubleday and Lord Howard de Walden eds., *The Complete Peerage* IX (1936), 689-91.

⁵⁰ Ordnance Survey 25 in. series, Durham III 15, 1st ed. (1856) and 3rd ed. (1916).

⁵¹ T. W. A. D. 1172 Inland Revenue Land Evaluation.

⁵² Christopher Clay, "The Greed of Whig Bishops?": Church Landlords and their Lessees (1660-1760)", *Past and Present* No. 87 (1980), 128-57.

