

## VIII

### THE DESERTED VILLAGE OF WEST WHELPINGTON, NORTHUMBERLAND: THIRD REPORT, PART TWO

*D. H. Evans, Michael G. Jarrett and Stuart Wrathmell*

*Sections 1 to 4, in Part One reported the excavations from 1970–76 and analysed the medieval and post-medieval buildings of the village. Part Two considers the chronology of the village, the archaeological and architectural evidence from the rest of the township, and the wider implications of the whole excavation programme from 1958 to 1976. The prehistoric and Roman sites found by excavation form the subject of a separate report. The Appendices A to E to the present report are in the microfiche at the end of the volume.*

#### *Authorship*

This report, interpreting the evidence from West Whelpington presented in *Part One*, is edited by Michael Jarrett from the *Full Report* prepared by Dave Evans; this incorporated sections on vernacular buildings and on documentary sources by Stuart Wrathmell. Dave Evans and Stuart Wrathmell have seen and commented on this version, though they do not necessarily agree with all of it.

#### *Acknowledgements*

In addition to those acknowledged in *Part One* the authors wish to thank Mr. Paul Brassley and Dr. Stuart McDonald, who provided several important documentary references.

### 5. THE CHRONOLOGY OF THE VILLAGE

The deserted village is an archaeological phenomenon, and it is with the evidence from excavation that we must begin, though it will be necessary to use other evidence if we are to interpret the archaeology intelligibly. Excavation consistently revealed three main phases of occupation, and all the indications were that these were the same throughout the village. It is therefore both possible and desirable to consider them as Periods, of general relevance. The Periods described below have been defined, when possible, by stratigraphic relationships; where these were lacking it has sometimes been possible to assign buildings to a period on the basis of stratified finds or of building plans. The period plans show buildings and enclosures which were in use at some stage during that period, though not all were necessarily built at the same time

or remained in use throughout the period. Where more than one structure existed on a site during one period (e.g. site 26) only one building is shown. Incompletely excavated buildings (e.g. sites 21 and 23) have been shown only as earthworks. The period divisions suggested by Jarrett and Wrathmell (1977) have been modified by the division of Period III into Periods III and IV. No account is here taken of the pre-medieval settlements which are the subject of a separate report.

#### PERIOD I *To the early fourteenth century* (fig. 114)

More extensive excavation since 1970 has failed to produce structural or artefactual evidence to confirm the Anglo-Saxon occupation which once seemed possible (*Second Report*, fig. 31, no. 81). Evidence may have been missed in the small-scale excavations at the east end of the village, or may yet be found at the west, but it seems more likely that we have an isolated find of a pot of uncertain but probably pre-Norman date.

Apart from this the earliest excavated pottery would be consistent with occupation from the 12th or even late 11th century. Lack of well-dated local pottery sequences makes precision impossible. West Whelpington does not appear in the documentary record before 1256, when it was amerced for failing to attend an inquisition (Page, 1890), and general historical evidence from the county does not indicate a likely date for the establishment of the village. We may note however that in England as a whole many nucleated villages seem to originate at the same period as West Whelpington, and many of them show evidence of deliberate planning (Taylor, 1983, 125–50).

Figure 114 shows most of the known structures of Period I. Settlement was certainly more extensive than this. Evidence for timber buildings has survived only on clay or soft bedrock and even here may have been disturbed or destroyed by later activity which may also have cleared stonework of Period I. Structures survived best at the west end of the village where there was little later occupation. It is quite clear that the frontages on the north and south sides of the green, which were to persist as long as the village, had been established before the end of Period I, and they may have been original features of the plan. There was also at least a rudimentary croft system whose extent and layout remain uncertain. Some of the crofts were cultivated, and boundaries may not have been permanent. The houses, in timber or stone, were of a proto-longhouse form, with an entrance separating the living room from the byre but usually without a cross-passage. Some outbuildings are known in the crofts.

We shall see that in the later Middle Ages there were probably 19 husbandland tenements in West Whelpington, apart from any cottage holdings. The archaeological evidence from the village, where the west end was abandoned, and circumstantial evidence from the whole county, suggest that the number of bondage holdings in the 13th century was greater than this: possibly as many as 30 or 35. The only relevant contemporary documents relate to disputes between Hugh de West Whelpington and the de Harles about the status of various tenements in the village in the period 1274 to 1275 (*Northumbrian Pleas* nos. 96, 285, 468; Page, 1890, 242). They indicate an average holding of 20 acres of arable and 2 acres of meadow; it is not impossible that this was a standard holding for the vill. A general review of inquisitions *post mortem*

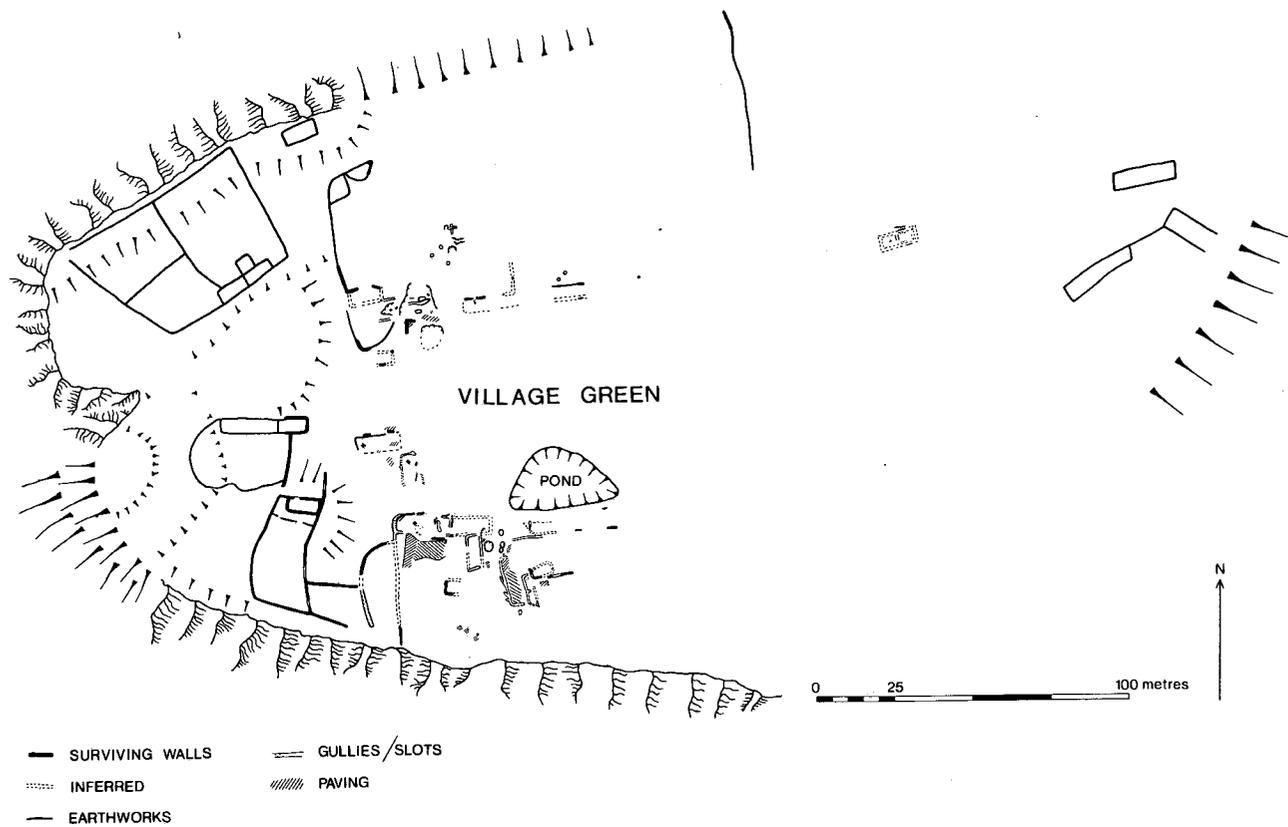


Fig. 114. West Whelpington: Plan of the village in Period I.

for this period in Northumberland reveals that the most frequently recorded tenement is a bondage or villein holding containing between 15 and 30 acres of arable (Wrathmell, 1975, 247–9). The West Whelpington tenements were probably such bondages. In many vills all or most of the bondagers occupied holdings which, for purposes of assessment of services, were regarded as of equal size. At Kirkwhelpington, for example, ten bondages, each of 24 acres of arable, are recorded in an i.p.m. of 1325 (Hodgson, 1827, 187). The vills in which there were substantial variations in the amount of arable attributed to the bondagers were mainly in areas of 13th-century colonization, such as the forest of Bywell (Wrathmell, 1975, 105–6). The kind of equality which we infer at West Whelpington was presumably imposed at some stage either by the lord or (less probably) by the vill community and must have been maintained by custom: it seems to be reflected in the regular planning of the village in Periods II and III, which must surely be the result of seigneurial intervention.

No excavated building looks remotely like a manor house, and probably none is to be expected. Only in the late 13th and early 14th centuries when the de Whelpington family held the manor (Appendix A M1/A4) may there have been a resident lord; but the absence of the de Whelpingtons from the Lay Subsidy Roll of 1296 (Fraser, 1968, 27) suggests that they were not resident. A manor house may have been destroyed at the east end of the village before 1958; at the west end site 12 and its adjacent croft have not been excavated, but the earthworks do not have the plan form which might be expected of a manorial settlement, though it might be a bailiff's dwelling.

The occupation of several Period I buildings ended in fire (see table below), and sites 13 and 14 were never reoccupied. A coin hoard abandoned in site 14 has been dated to c. 1311–1320, suggesting most strongly that the destruction of that building was part of the wave of devastation inflicted by the Scots after their victory at Bannockburn in 1314.

The devastation of Northumberland is amply documented, though many of the documents are pleas for relief from taxation and have usually been discounted. For Kirkwhelpington parish it is recorded as early as 1317 that the church revenues were *penitus exilia et destructa* (Hodgson, 1827, 204). In 1325 Robert de Umfraville's demesne at (Kirk)Whelpington was said to have been wasted by the Scots (*Cal. IPM* VI, 379, no. 607) and in 1334 the men of the parish petitioned for relief from taxes, describing "their houses as laid in ashes; their lands wasted by the frequent inroads of the Scots; and their tenantry so spent and weakened by pestilence and contagious diseases, that they were unable either to maintain their household, to repair their dilapidated buildings, to bestow their customary alms, or to support the great influx of nobility, and others who resorted to them for hospitality" (*Cal. Pat. R.* Ed. III, 1343–5, 409; Hodgson, 1827, 204). These events have a particular importance for the village of West Whelpington which is the first site at which the archaeology can be linked with confidence to these historical events. It would be perverse to argue that the blow from which the village never recovered was not a consequence of Bannockburn. The correlation of historical and archaeological evidence seems not merely justified but compelling. This is not necessarily to argue for a single act of destruction; raiding was endemic after 1314. In historical terms West Whelpington may have been damaged by a series of events; in the coarser chronology of archaeology these become one.

PERIOD II *14th to 17th centuries* (figs. 115, 116)

The village was rebuilt as four main terraces of longhouses flanking the green, with a few isolated buildings at the east and west ends. The regularity of the plan and of the house types suggests a strong element of overall design. The west end of the outcrop was abandoned, and at a fairly early stage the shrinkage was marked by a boundary bank erected across the west end of the green. Presumably the abandoned area was now available for grazing. A regular pattern of crofts was laid out behind the terraces. The longhouses were of a standard pattern, with opposed entrances leading into a paved cross-passage which separated the living-room from the byre; the buildings were of stone, but such internal partitions as existed were of timber. Where excavation has been extensive the evidence suggests that each holding had a croft and at least one outbuilding; in addition there were several larger barns. The new buildings were almost all of stone. Access to the fields and common was provided by a system of droeways which probably date to Period I, though they cannot be proved to exist before Period II.

During Period II several small cottages were built on the green. This may not be a significant change: only one Period I cottage was recognized (site 26a) but its remains were so slight that others may have been missed. A pele house was built, probably at the east end of the village; it was not recorded in the survey of 1542 (Hodgson, 1832, 214) and it should probably be dated later in the 16th century. Its foundations were seen by Hodgson (1827, 197), and a moulded jambstone, probably from this building, was re-used in a Period III farmhouse.

Excavation suggests that at the beginning of Period II the village comprised up to 28 longhouses and at least 8 cottages. Some further shrinkage took place in the later Middle Ages; for example 26/2 and 26/3 were replaced by a single holding, 26/4. Such shrinkage is common in Northumberland villages. Scottish raids continued, punctuated by periods of formal warfare between the two kingdoms. In addition to further raids the Black Death and succeeding outbreaks of plague down to the early 15th century obviously had a severe impact on rural Northumberland. Almost all the long-established vill communities (and their village settlements) survived these troubles, but the rentals and surveys of the 15th and 16th centuries often record smaller numbers of tenants with larger holdings (NCH VIII, 227–8; Wrathmell, 1975, 154–5). Furthermore there are significant changes in the status of the unfree tenements. The successors to the old bondage holdings are called husbandlands, and on some manors their tenants acquired greater security through the development of copyhold tenure. These changes, which presumably included the redistribution of lands by the lord, seem to have taken place in the 15th century. For much of the 14th century some lords appear to have clung to the hope that the combined effects of plague and devastation were only temporary, and that the existing holdings would be repopulated. This optimism can be seen in a series of extents which recites, time after time, the number of waste bondage holdings (e.g. NCH XV, 244–5, 277).

It is for the period after the emergence of husbandlands that we have our first reasonably comprehensive record of West Whelpington holdings, though the record itself is of 19th century date. In the county as a whole the husbandland came to be used as a unit of assessment for levying the church rate (Percy, 1895, 18–39). On the evidence of some Tynemouthshire vills the number of rating units, later called ancient

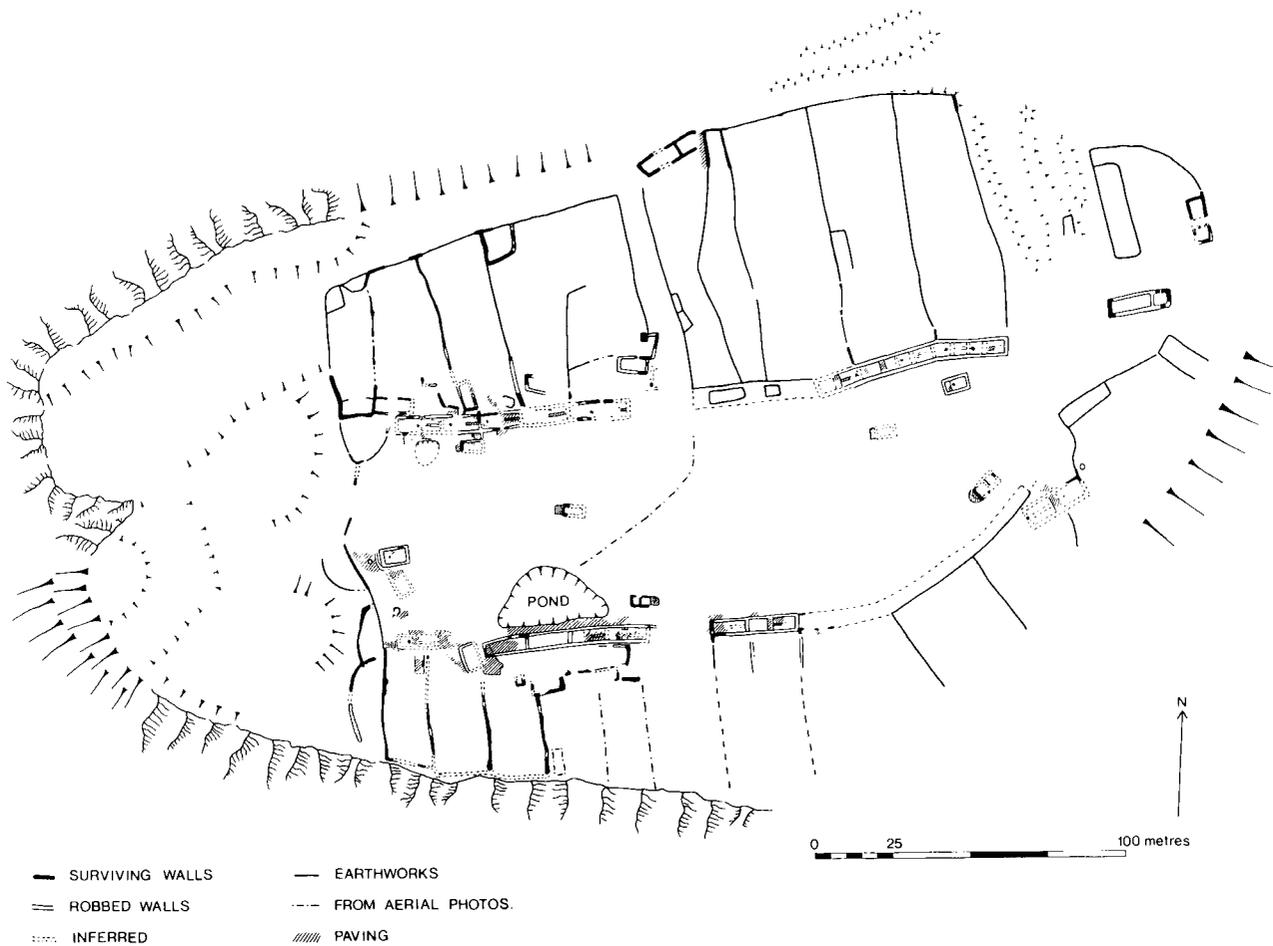


Fig. 115. West Whelpington: Plan of the village in Period II.

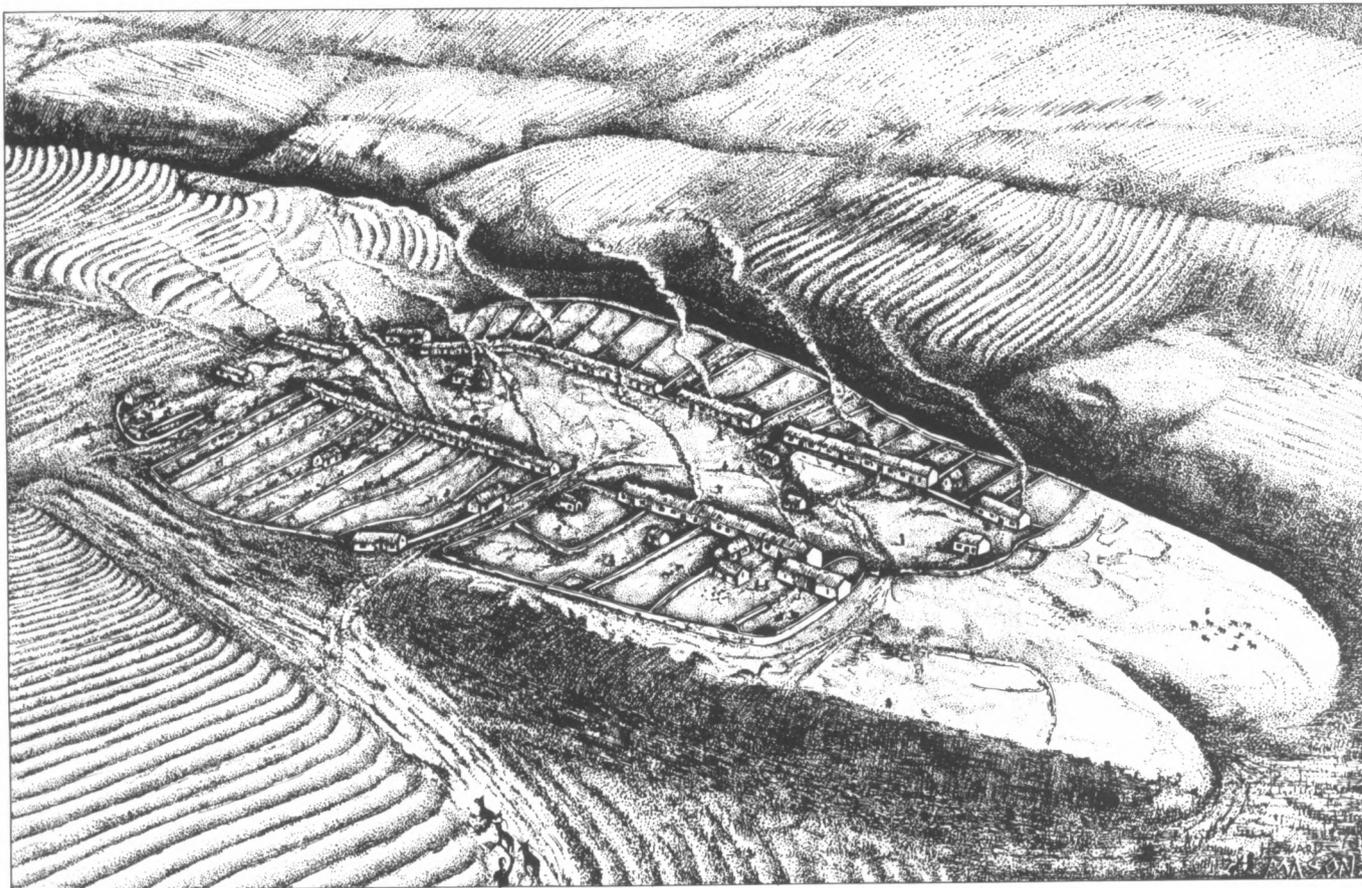


Fig. 116. West Whelpington as it may have appeared in the early 15th century.  
*Drawing by Howard Mason.*

farms, accords with the number of 15th to 16th-century holdings, but not with those recorded in the 14th century (NCH VIII, 242–6). Thereafter the ancient farms gradually ceased to reflect the current agrarian organization as husbandlands were converted to leasehold farms and as holdings were engrossed or otherwise reconstituted. In the 19th century the township of West Whelpington was assessed at 19 “ancient farms” (Dendy, 1893, 152). This will have represented the number of husbandland tenements in the later Middle Ages; there may have been cottage holdings in addition.

*Buildings with evidence for burning*

<i>Period I</i>	<i>Period II</i>	<i>Period III</i>	<i>Period IV</i>
7	1 East	1 East ?	15a
9 East	6/1	6/2	
9 West	9/1 ?	8/2	
13/2	16a East	9/3	
14 ?	16c West	16a ?	
16c	17 West	16c	
26/1	19		
	20		
	24		
	26/2 ?		
	26/3 ?		
	26a/3		

Figure 116 is a representation of the village as it might have been in the early 15th century, before the pele-tower was built. It is based on the secure structural evidence. Almost certainly there would have been many more temporary structures, such as hay-stacks, feeding troughs and washing lines.

It is not possible to fix an exact date for the beginning of Period II. The end of Period I may have been sudden and cataclysmic or may have been spread over two or three decades. The planning of Period II suggests most strongly that it was the result of seigneurial initiative, presumably at a single date; if so, general historical considerations would probably place it after rather than before 1350. Even an early 15th century date is not impossible, though the absence of late medieval pottery sealed by Period II buildings argues against a later date. Period II continued into at least the mid-17th century, for some Period III buildings sealed pottery and clay pipes of that date. The exact date depends on our historical assessment for the beginning of Period III.

**PERIOD III** *Late 17th century* (fig. 117)

The Period II terraces were modified to produce a number of separate farmsteads. In the new buildings a stone wall divided the living rooms from the byres; most of the houses had a small shed or outhouse at one end. Many of the crofts were subdivided into a number of small enclosures, and in several the area adjacent to the house was

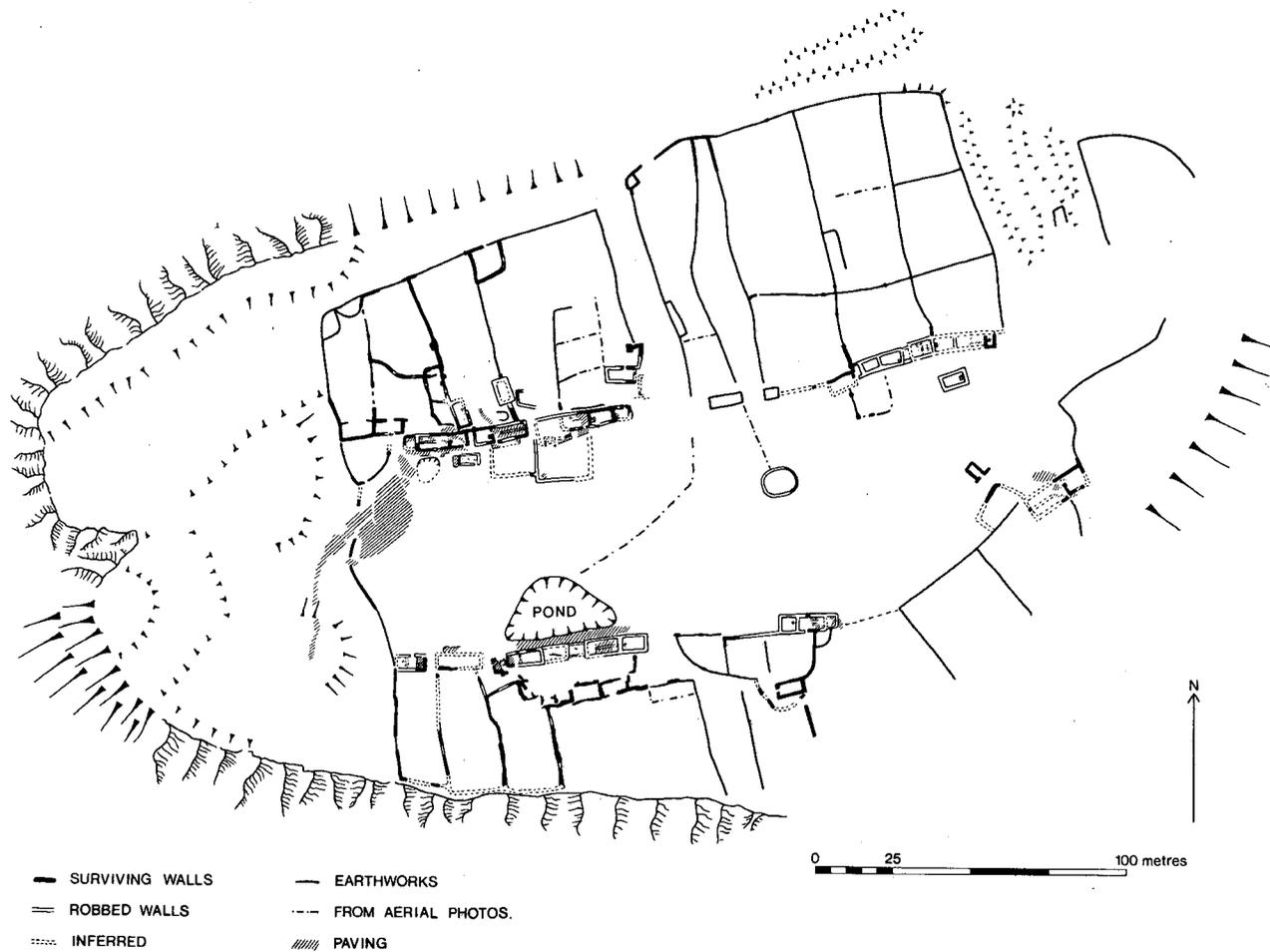


Fig. 117. West Whelpington: Plan of the village in Period III.

roughly paved. Some Period II outbuildings probably continued in use, and these were complemented by new ones (e.g. 8c).

Some of the cottages on the green were apparently abandoned in Period III, but a number of yards extended into the green from the main terraces. In this period, if not earlier, we presume that the cock-pit or pound (*Second Report*, 255–7) was built. The pele-house was probably abandoned; it is the obvious source for the door-moulding incorporated in the new steading on site 9.

At its inception the Period III village seems to have consisted of about 13 farmsteads, 3 cottages and a forge: in addition to the buildings shown on fig. 117 site 18a has produced enough late 17th century material to suggest a Period III holding. These numbers represent a substantial decline from those postulated for Period II. The Hearth Tax returns of 1666 suggest that even these figures may be too high: the list for West Whelpington and Ray (combined) contains the names of only seven taxpayers, each assessed on one hearth, and four householders who were exempted from the tax, their holdings presumably valued at less than 20 shillings a year (PRO E179/158/103; West, 1962, 131). The archaeological evidence from West Whelpington village suggests that there must have been considerable under-enumeration in this document, the result doubtless of deliberate tax-evasion.

The evidence from excavation, on its own, could never determine whether Period III involved a deliberate policy of eviction and rationalization, or whether it merely catered for a population which had already shrunk. The rebuilding seems to reflect a consistent policy inaugurated and implemented by a landlord. It may be no accident that two isolated farmsteads in the eastern, arable part of the township, Horncastle and Cornhills are first recorded in the parish register in 1686 and 1689 respectively (NRO EP/89/1). The general problems of using the Kirkwhelpington register were discussed in the *Second Report* (189–90). The difficulty to be noted here is that, because the register survives (as a copy) only from 1679 we cannot be certain that these steadings were creations of the 1680s: they may have existed, undocumented, since the Middle Ages. On the other hand their foundation in the later 17th century would accord well with developments in other Northumberland townships.

The most reliable archaeological evidence for dating the beginning of Period III consists of clay pipes and pottery sealed by the walls and paving of house 9/3; much of it lay below external paving which, though associated with the farmstead, need not be primary. The group of clay pipes can be dated on bowl typology to c. 1645–1670, though none need be later than 1650 (*Part I*, 283–4). The pottery consists mostly of slipwares and brown-glazed redwares which are broadly comparable with material from a pit-group of c. 1645 from Newcastle upon Tyne (Ellison et al., 1979; *Part I*, 260–2). Much of the material associated with the Period III occupation can be dated to c. 1660–1680. On archaeological grounds alone we might suppose that Period III had begun in the 1660s. The documentary evidence does not easily agree with this: a reasoned assessment would produce a date after 1675 when Mark Milbank bought West Whelpington from the impoverished Sir Cuthbert Heron (Appendix A, M1/A4). Heron lacked the capital, and probably the capacity, to initiate such a reorganization of a peripheral manor. Milbank by contrast was a wealthy and

upwardly-mobile Newcastle merchant, and he was pursuing a policy which was being followed by a number of his peers and contemporaries. Usually they seem to have invested not only in the purchase of townships but also in their "improvement", by abolishing communal agriculture and customary tenures, by establishing severalty leasehold farms and by moving steadings to new sites where appropriate. The best documented examples in southern Northumberland are on the estate of John Douglas (Wrathmell, 1980, 114–23). If we attribute similar motives to Milbank his purchase may well have led to the establishment of "ring-fence" farms at Horncastle and Cornhills on part or the whole of the townfields, and to the erection of farmsteads within them.

If this interpretation is correct we may be confident that the removal of arable lands from the township resources and the creation of new settlement sites will have led to a reduction of the village population. The parish registers show that several families lived at Horncastle and Cornhills in the later 17th century, the members of some of them presumably working as labourers or servants.

#### PERIOD IV *Late 17th century to 1720* (fig. 118)

Period III (as defined by Jarrett and Wrathmell, 1977) was to last some forty or more years until the final abandonment of the village. During those years further changes and modifications took place. These we have defined here as Period IV, but they really represent the condition the village had reached shortly before its depopulation. At least three farmsteads (6/2, 8/2 and 15/5) were abandoned, as was the forge (15/4). Various new enclosure walls were built, some encroaching on the green. The effect was to leave a number of discrete farmsteads scattered round the green. The buildings which are known to have been abandoned were in the western half of the village, which was less sheltered; but excavation further east was not sufficiently extensive to reveal similar abandonments there. At least two of the steadings which survived until the end (9/3 and 20) had more sophisticated fittings than those which went out of use.

We do not know how many buildings survived until the end of the village. Fig. 118 shows mainly those which produced 18th-century finds, or for which there is no evidence of disuse during Period III; there may have been others which were not excavated. The archaeological evidence suggests that there may have been as many as 9 farmsteads and one cottage in use after 1700, though the number might have decreased before 1720.

There was no significant archaeological dating evidence for the changes which make up Period IV. They occurred, probably piecemeal, between the creation of Period III and the final depopulation.

#### DEPOPULATION 1719–1722

There is no doubt that the final abandonment of West Whelpington came between 1719 and 1722, and probably early within those years (Jarrett and Wrathmell, 1977, 110). Hodgson (1827, 197–8) represents this as the work of a single tenant, Stott, who "put out 15 farmers here when he took the whole of it to rent". This is oversimplification. It has always been assumed that this statement, if accurate, refers to a

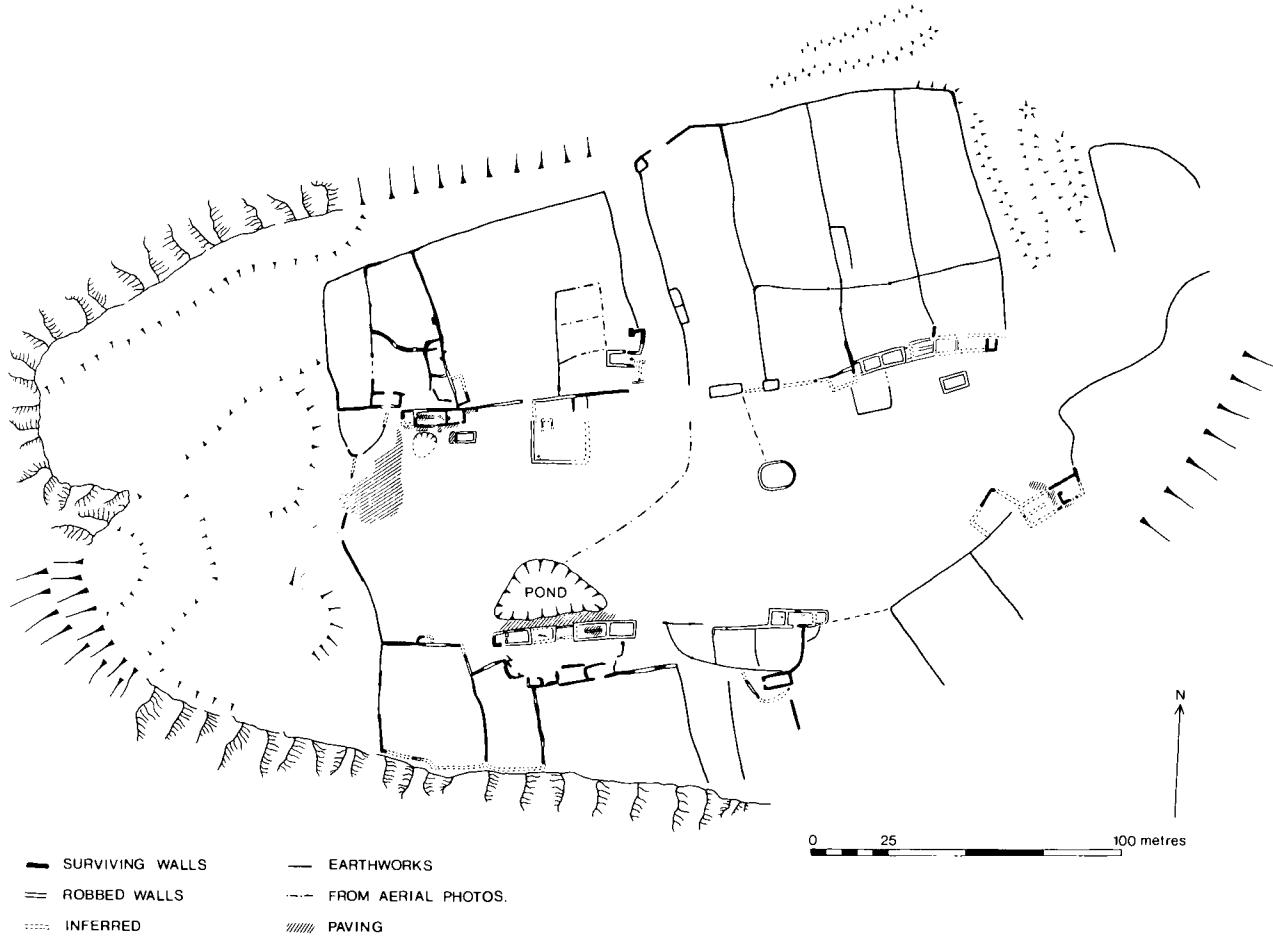


Fig. 118. West Whelpington: Plan of the village in Period IV.

single event, but it may have been a process spread over a number of years and may have involved more than one member of the Stott family. When he died in 1710 Thomas Stott was already far more wealthy than the average villager (Appendix B, M1/A7) and he may have held more land than a single customary tenement.

Members of the Stott family appear frequently in the parish register of this period, and they also figure in a few early 18th-century estate records which survive. A full family reconstruction has proved impossible, partly because of gaps in the record, partly because of their restricted selection of christian names. The earliest reference to Stotts in the township (and in the parish as a whole) occurs in February 1696/7 with the baptism of a daughter to Thomas Stott. (To avoid confusion only those Stotts thought to have been tenants are named here.) Thomas had three other children baptized at later dates: Thomas II in 1700, and two other sons in 1702 and 1706. It seems however that Thomas I had two older sons, John and George, whose baptisms are not recorded in the register. Given the frequency of the recorded baptisms it is unlikely that John and George were both born before 1690. From this we may infer that the Stotts had arrived in the parish during the last decade of the century.

Thomas I is recorded as "of West Whelpington" rather than of Horncastle or Cornhills; but neither of these places is named in the register between 1696 and 1716, probably because of clerical inconsistencies (*Second Report*, 190). In view of the family's later holding it seems probable that Thomas I came to the township as a new tenant of Cornhills. The inventory of his goods and chattels, taken in May 1711, reveals him to have been a farmer of substance (Appendix B, M1/A7).

### *The Stott family*

Thomas I (d. 1711) m. Elizabeth (d. 1715). Had issue:

1. John. Probate valuer 1711. Accompanied Milbank steward on boundary ridings in 1720, 1725, 1737 (NYRO ZAL 16/2/5). Joint tenant of Cornhills with Thomas Weddle and Thomas Stott II in 1748 (NYRO ZAL 16/2/6). Daughters baptized 1718 (West Whelpington) and 1722 (Cornhills).

2. George. Wrote in January 1721/2 from Horncastle to his landlord about infringement of common rights, citing his brother John as witness (NYRO ZAL 16/2/1). A son was baptized in the same month. George's death is not recorded under Horncastle, but by 1748 the holding was let to the Greave family (NYRO ZAL 16/2/6).

3. Thomas II. Baptized 1700 (West Whelpington), d. 1749 (Cornhills). Joint tenant of Cornhills 1847. Had issue:

William. Baptized 1730/1 (Cornhills), d. 1798. Farmer at Cornhills 1762 (NRO M46, Militia Returns). Moved to Ferneyrigg by 1780 (*Newcastle Courant*, 4.11.1780; we are indebted to Dr. Stuart McDonald for this reference) where his initials and the date were inscribed on the door lintel of a new building in 1789. By 1797 Ferneyrigg had been taken over by "Mr. Gibson" and Thomas II had become the Milbanks' bailiff at an annual salary of two guineas.

We assume that the depopulator to whom Hodgson refers was John, who was certainly at Cornhills by 1722; possibly the family had been there before the death of Thomas I. Stott cannot have acted alone. The changes will have required at least the

consent and active participation of the Milbank owners, for new farmsteads were built at Ferneyrigg (attested from 1725/6) and Middle Rig (1721/2). Even if Stott had possessed the necessary capital he would hardly have invested it in buildings which would be the property of the landowner.

The depopulation of *c.* 1720 seems best understood as part of changes in landholding and agricultural practice which lasted from *c.* 1675 to 1720, and which resulted in the township being divided into four severalty farms, none of them on the village site. The reasons are clear enough: more efficient arable farming, for profit rather than subsistence, would benefit landlord and tenant alike. This was not a sheep depopulation, though the Stott inventory of 1711 may be evidence for an increasing emphasis on sheep. If anything, more land was ploughed under the new regime, as the new fields around Middle Rig indicate. The very name Cornhills implies arable farming. In the late 17th and early 18th centuries Britain was producing a surplus of grain, and bounties were paid for its export. Subsidy maintained artificially high prices, and may have encouraged the cultivation of marginal land like that round Middle Rig: more recent parallels can easily be found! Such cultivation may only have been possible after reorganization which will have removed common grazing rights from the dispossessed villagers.

Legal problems are unlikely to have arisen over the changes. Milbank seems to have been the only freeholder, so that he did not need to negotiate with others. The villagers seem to have been tenants-at-will, with no protection against the landowner. The depopulation of this and other Northumberland villages needed no more than a landlord with spare capital and a tenant willing to take a lease with the expectation of making a profit: there is a clear contrast with the old agricultural pattern, which restricted the opportunity of one tenant to benefit at the expense of the others.

We lack documentary evidence for the fate of those farmers less fortunate than the Stott family. Hodgson's source recorded the eviction of "15 farmers"; this would be a reduction from the number of late medieval husbandland tenants, but not as great a reduction as might have been expected if large areas of the open fields were already leased to the Stotts of Cornhills and the tenants of Horncastle. Nor does archaeology support the notion that there were as many as 15 farmers by 1720, though Hodgson's old man can have known of the depopulation only from report, and figures may have been distorted.

Some of the evicted families may have moved out of the township. Others probably remained to work on the new farms as labourers or, in the case of Middle Rig alone, possibly as tenants. In only one case is it possible to trace the movement of a family with certainty: Thomas Harle and his wife moved from the village to Ferneyrigg (Parish Register, May 1698 and January 1725/6: NRO EP 89/1). However the ecclesiastical parish as a whole shows an increase in the recorded population between the mid-16th century and the mid-18th with no material change before 1827 (*Second Report*, 294). The bishop's returns of 1569 listed 108 households in Kirkwhelpington parish, including Capheaton (British Library, Harl. MS 594, f. 192). George Mark's survey of the same area in 1734 recorded 198 families (NRO ZAN M13/F9). Mark's entries relating to West Whelpington township have unfortunately been nibbled by rodents; but he lists two families at Ferneyrigg and two at Middle Rig. His figures

presumably exclude single labourers, and may be based on an extended family unit. The rent book of 1748, which has also suffered damage, provides a list of houses for each farm (NYRO ZAL 16/2/6). At Cornhills there were three dwelling houses, a herd's house and a cottage. At Horncastle there were at least two houses. Ferneyrigg probably had a house and cottage. Middle Rig seems to have had more than one subtenant, though its entry is difficult to interpret.

We do not know whether the successor farms absorbed all or most of the village. Emigration to Tyneside or other industrial areas seems unlikely at this early date. Similarly we cannot assess, though we are not justified in forgetting, the social consequences of the reorganization of West Whelpington's agriculture. Total production for the township may well have risen after 1720, but the majority of the villagers had lost their land, their common rights, their way of life and their independence.

## 6. VILLAGE AND TOWNSHIP

In Section 5 we endeavoured to place the deserted village of West Whelpington in a historical context, using documentary as well as archaeological material to explain the evidence derived from excavation. A grant from the British Academy made possible a survey of the whole township, designed to produce topographical, archaeological and architectural evidence which might be combined with such documentary material as survived to throw greater light on the deserted village, and to place it in a wider context of changes in settlement and agricultural practice. Four principal aspects are to be considered: the township area and its boundaries; the standing remains of the successor farms; various field systems, some related to the village or its successors, others probably of much earlier date; and the earthworks of sundry buildings and enclosures of all periods before c. 1860. Omitted from the survey of the township, and from consideration here, are: i) a number of stack-stands and sheep-folds in the western part of the township, which were in use until recently; ii) Ray Mill cottage, built after 1869; iii) buildings and earthworks associated with the branch railway from Scots Gap to Redesmouth.

### *The township area*

The township comprises a broadly rectangular area of c.  $6.05 \times 1.8$  km, which rises gently from east to west (fig. 119, upper), ranging from c. 180 to over 300 m O.D. It is mostly bounded by small rivers. No record earlier than 1665 survives to give us the limits of the area available to the medieval villagers, though the known boundaries are probably an accurate reflection of those of earlier centuries. The western, moorland part of the township was undefined inter-common with neighbouring townships until the early 18th century, when the division of the township into severalty farms provided an impetus for definition. That division was not completed when the village was depopulated. Substantial areas of common land remained open. In 1721/2 common rights near the Risey burn were still being disputed (NYRO 16/2/1) and the township boundaries here were only settled by an agreement between landlords in September 1732 (*ibid.*). Two Milbank documents record boundary

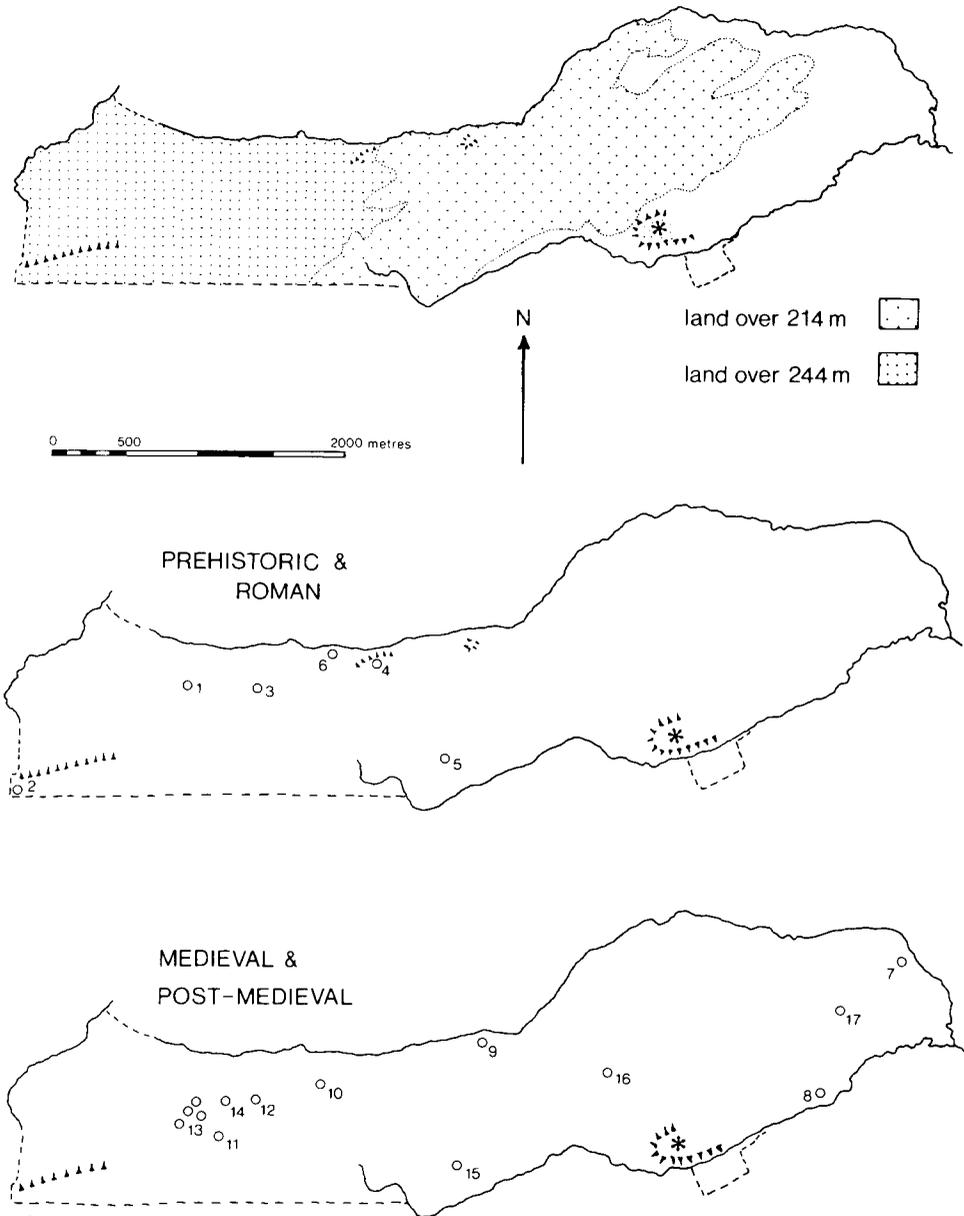


Fig. 119. West Whelpington township. Topography (top); prehistoric and Roman sites centre); medieval and later sites, to 1869 (bottom).

ridings in some detail: NYRO ZAL 16/2/5 is dated 1.5.1665 and the fuller account of NYRO ZAL 16/2/4 must be dated between then and 1736. Both are copied in Appendix C (M1/A10) and the *Full Report*. In 1736 the south-western boundary with Hawick was agreed (NYRO 16/2/2). It was, and is still, marked by stones which bear the initials of those who were party to the agreement: Mark Milbank for West Whelpington, Walter Blackett and Thomas Smith for Hawick. (The attribution of the initials Th.S. to Thomas Stott, made in the *Second Report*, was incorrect.) The stone is comparable with others erected by Blackett at the boundaries of the Wallington estate, and suggests that the demarcation was at his initiative. Later, probably in the 19th century, the boundary was shifted to the SE by an exchange of lands between the townships. The S and E boundaries of the ridings are those shown on the tithe survey map of 1844 (NRO DT 498); on the N the ridings treated the township of Ray as parcel of the same manor; the tithe map shows the boundary between the two villas as the Ray burn. Only when boundaries had been defined did the tenants of Ray and West Whelpington agree, in 1743, to divide the remaining common lands in such a manner that each tenant would have a part proportional to his "ingrounds" (NYRO ZAL 16/2/3).

#### *The successor farms*

By 1726 at latest there were only four farmsteads in the township, none of them on the village site. We have already seen that the desertion of the village did not mean the depopulation of the township, but rather an agricultural reorganization into larger and more profitable holdings. Three of the steadings survive, but Middle Rig was to be short-lived.

#### *1. Horncastle (fig. 120; site 17 on fig. 119) NY 986847 c. 210 m O.D.*

The modern farm consists of an inner yard with a number of outlying buildings to the N and W forming an outer yard; a second, smaller, house lies to the SW. The earliest references to the steading are in 1686 and by 1721 George Stott was gathering ling

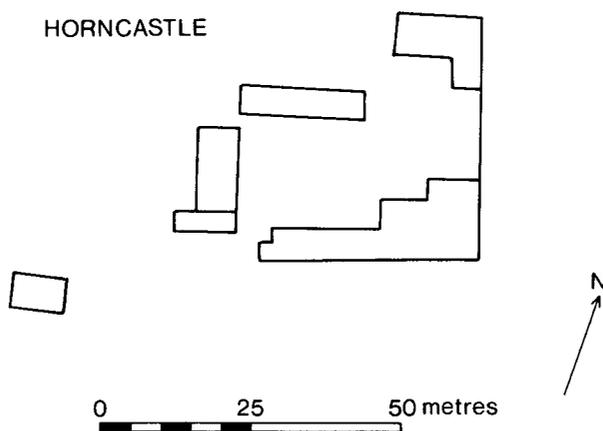


Fig. 120. Horncastle: the buildings extant in 1869.

from the common for its repair (NYRO ZAL 16/2/1). In 1748 there were at least two dwellings here, both lofted and thatched with ling (*ibid.* 16/2/6); one of them is presumably the “poor thatched building without any appearance of a fortified place . . . rebuilt by Mark Milbank esq.” in c. 1765 (Hodgson, 1827, 197n.). This might be incorporated in the present farmhouse, but unfortunately all external details have been obscured by rendering. It lies at the SE corner of the inner yard and is two storeys high and two rooms deep; the upper rooms at the rear lie partly in the roof-space of a continuous outshut. It has very small, widely spaced windows. At present it has a slate roof with a stone ridge. Possibly contemporary is a single-phase range forming the W side of the yard; the S part is a cow byre beneath a storage loft with loading doors on each side, the N part a hay barn with opposed arched threshing doors or cart entrances. The building has chamfered corners and ventilators throughout. The N range of the yard is a single-phase stable with three rooms; a cart door in the central room has been narrowed. The block has bevelled doorways, continuous chamfers and pecked stone dressing; there is no evidence for windows or ventilators. The E end has been rebuilt.

The NE corner of the outer yard is formed by an L-shaped single-phase stable block with bevelled doorways. It is probably of the 19th century; it is shown on the 25 in. OS map of 1869. Its E wing was a cart shed with an arched entrance in the W wall; the N wing was a stable, its cobbled floor containing the sockets for at least six, and possibly eight, timber stalls. The quoins are rusticated, but the walls have been plastered. Both windows have ventilators and lack side dressing.

The other buildings forming the outer yard are later than 1869. On the N a single-phase, single-storey cow-house has a feeding walk and a single width entrance. Door lintels have run-cut chamfers, and the quoins are rusticated. An E doorway has been converted into a window and replaced by a cart door further S. On the W side of the yard is a single-phase, single-storey outhouse with pecked stone quoins; it has been re-roofed and much modified; none of its openings is original.

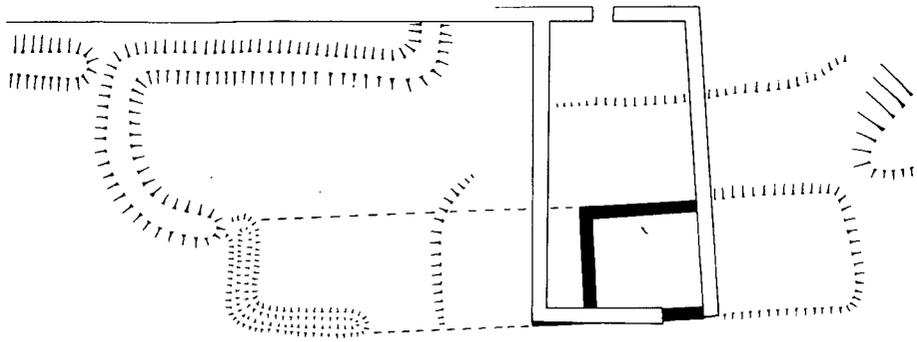
SW of the two yards is a second south-facing house, probably of the early 19th century, recorded on the 1844 tithe map. It has regular coursed masonry on the front, with sliding windows on the first floor. The sides and rear are very rough, with only one window at the back. It has rusticated quoins, slate roof with stone ridge and a single-flue chimney at either end.

## 2. *Cornhills* (fig. 121, bottom; site 16 on fig. 119) NY 969842 c. 234 m O.D.

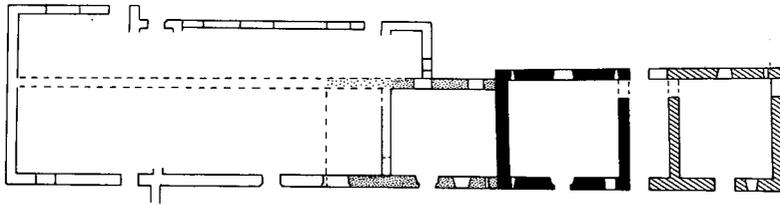
The modern farmhouse is set at a distance from a yard which incorporates part of the original steading. The earliest reference to the steading is in 1689, and it may have been in the possession of Thomas Stott I before his death in 1711. In 1748 there were at least three lofted and thatched dwellings, each with its byre and barn, together with a milk-house, herd's house and cottage which, by inference, may not have been lofted (NYRO ZAL 16/3/5). At least four building phases are apparent.

Phase I: 12 m of a single-storey wall of mortared random rubble is preserved in an E continuation of the N range of the yard. It contains a flat-headed doorway of dressed sandstone with a plain chamfer, and a blocked window.

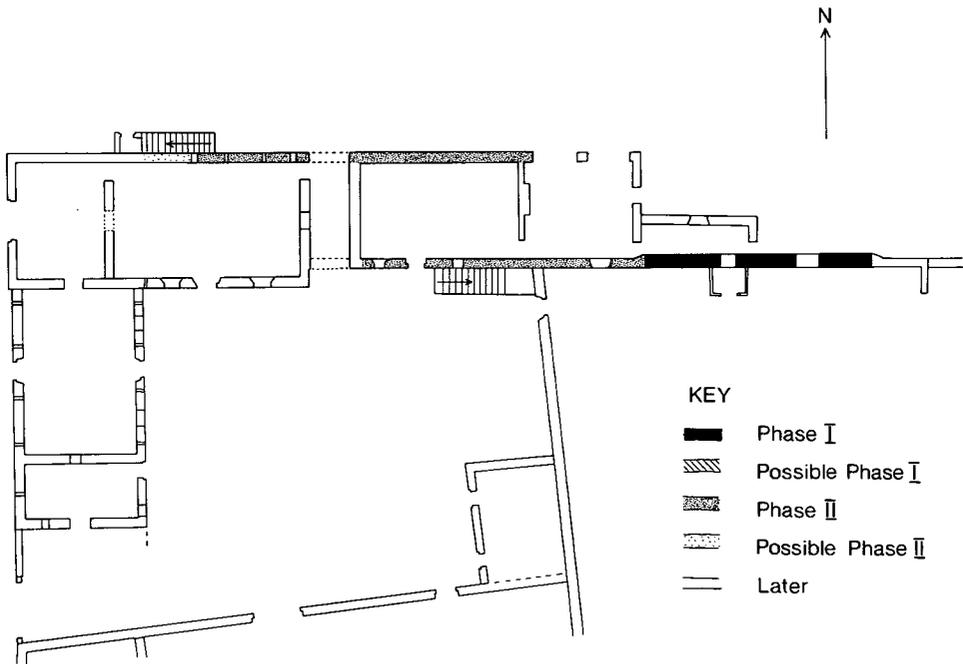
Phase II: At the W end of the Phase I wall is a two-storeyed building of coursed



MIDDLE RIG



FERNEYRIGG



CORNHILLS

Fig. 121. Development of the successor farms; for Horncastle see fig. 120.

rubble, c. 5 × at least 23 m internally. The E end contains fireplaces with two flues and may be an extension to the Phase I house; the W part showed no evidence of function.

Phase III: In the 19th century a pigeon loft was built into the first floor of the E half of the Phase II building; the W part was extended and remodelled, with a carriage arch through the old block and a two-storeyed wing, c. 15.1 × 6 m internally, forming the new W end of the range. External stairs gave access to the first floor. The ground floor had a cow-shed, c. 9.9 × 6 m with a hay store of c. 6.1 × 4.7 m to the W. At first floor level the more westerly of the two rooms had a fire-place with stone surrounds against the W wall and a stone chimney shaft on the roof.

This range formed the N side of a yard. A single-storeyed stable of dressed coursed stone with rusticated quoins and jambs was built against its W end. An entrance in the E wall is inscribed RT 1869, for Robert Thornton, who died in 1897. A first floor window has glass in the top two lights with wooden ventilators beneath.

Robert Thornton's obituary that he "lived upon his estate, with his eldest son, Mr. T. Thornton, at Cornhills, which he purchased about 30 years ago. Here he spent a large amount of money in draining and enclosing the pastures, living a peaceful and happy life in the old farm house as long as its walls would hold together. He was reluctant to quit its 'ingle neuk' so long as it would give him shelter. At last he built a substantial, modern residence." (Newspaper cutting in the possession of Mrs. Thornton.)

Phase IV: The present farmhouse is the house described in the obituary. It probably dates from the 1880s or early 1890s, and was built with stone from the Blaxter Quarry, near Ottercops in Redesdale. The ground floor of the old farmhouse was used as a cow-shed and hay-store, the first floor as a granary or as labourers' accommodation. In c. 1918 the S and E sides of the yard were augmented by a cattle shed and pig-sty respectively (information from Mr. and Mrs. R. Thornton).

3. *Ferneyrigg* (fig. 121, centre; site 15 on fig. 119) NY 960837 c. 243 m O.D. A number of yards and outbuildings lie N of a main range which incorporates considerable portions of the 18th-century steading. It is first recorded in 1725/6, and we assume that it was created at the depopulation of the village. In 1748 it comprised a house, a cottage and outbuildings, all new lofted and thatched with ling (NYRO ZAL 16/2/6). The terrace slopes gently from W to E. At least four phases of building are apparent.

Phase I: A single-storey room, c. 5.8 × 5.1 m internally, of coursed rubble faced with weathered iron-rich blocks is incorporated in a byre. A S doorway is lined with dressed sandstone blocks with a plain narrow chamfer and with upright holes for the jambs on its east side. This room may have been part of a building which extended to the east with a cross-passage 2 m wide with half-blocked cart entrance to the N and a second room to the E, measuring c. 4.9 × 5.2 m internally. The quoins at the SE corner of the range are pecked but not rusticated. No trace of a chimney was found. The buildings are roofed with slate with a stone ridge over the eastern room.

Phase II: W of the Phase I buildings an added single-storey room, c. 4.6 × 8.7 m internally, is now also used as a byre. It has dressed stone walls and opposing

entrances without chamfers; that in the S wall is inscribed WS 1787, presumably for William Stott, formerly of Cornhills; the N door is now blocked. The surviving S window has a wooden lintel and shutters but no sill.

Phase III: W of Phase II a two-storey house, *c.* 8.7 × 7.7 m internally, with rear outshuts, has been added. The S wall lies on boulder sills, which may be earlier foundations. The walls are of a hard grey stone in irregular courses with pecked surfaces; windows and doors have chamfered edges and the dressings are very smooth. The roof is slate with a glazed tile ridge; a chimney at the E has a stone parapet with a brick stack.

Phase IV: In the late 19th century the range was extended further W by the addition of a two-storey house, *c.* 7.3 × 8.4 m internally with rear outshuts, built of small regular courses of grey-brown stone with rusticated quoins. The roof is slate with a stone ridge; at either end is a two-flue chimney. Traces of Phase III walling continue beneath the SE Phase IV quoins, suggesting that Phase III once continued further W.

#### 4. *Middle Rig* (fig. 121, top; site 14 on figs. 119 and 130) NY 945839 over 244 m O.D.

The post-medieval farmstead identified as Middle Rig lay on top of the ridge N of Middlerigg burn. Like Ferneyrigg it seems to have been centred on a long terrace, possibly similar to the developed longhouses of Period III at West Whelpington. The stonework still visible in the turf, surviving to three courses in places, suggests distinctly neater walling than was found in the village, though the building was probably only one storey high. Immediately to the SE is a terrace of possible outbuildings. The rectangular buildings to W and SW, at NY 942838 (site 13), lie within its field systems and those aligned with the fields may be contemporary with the steading. Their function is unknown. Some may be barns, others cottages for labourers.

Documents tell us little about this farm. It is first recorded in 1721/2, and is assumed to be a new creation. It seems to have had little independent existence. The 1748 rent book (NYRO ZAL 16/2/6) records it under Horncastle as "5 cuple at Middlerigg let to subtenants all in very bad repair". A farmer is recorded in 1762 (NRO M 46, Militia Returns) but by 1798 its lands had been attached to Ferneyrigg and the steading had probably been abandoned. In 1827 Hodgson wrote "the site of its farm-house may still be seen on ground that has been ploughed, on the left of the way from Farney-rig to Woodburn" (Hodgson, 1827, 197 n.).

After the steading was abandoned a N-S drystone field wall was built over its site; this in turn has been overlaid by the east wall of a stone stock enclosure. The sequence is demonstrated quite clearly at the SE corner of the enclosure: the drystone field wall cuts an E-W bank of one of Middle Rig's enclosures but is itself overlain by the standing walls of the stock enclosure.

Clearly in 1827 there was already a track in the vicinity, though none is shown on the 1844 tithe survey map; by 1869 (OS 25" map) the site of the steading had been bisected by the track which forms the base of the modern road.

*Field systems*

At NY 942840 a complex of six possible roundhouses was indicated by foundations of large stones set on end (site 1, figs. 119 and 128); the sites of three of the buildings are certain, the other three were heavily overgrown with bracken. A curving stone enclosure bank abuts the wall of one of the houses and clearly precedes the post-medieval field systems since it is cut by one of their boundary banks. It may be related to two further stone banks at some distance to the S; post-medieval banks seem to be uniformly of earth or clay and these stone banks are assumed to be earlier.

Most of the area S and W of the roundhouses was covered with peat through which some fragmentary stone alignments protruded; it seems likely that much of this area has prehistoric field boundaries concealed by the peat.

The survey revealed no evidence of Iron Age or Roman field systems, but this is explained by the extent and depth of medieval and later cultivation (fig. 122).

*Medieval and early post-medieval fields* (fig. 122, top)

A number of strips of reversed S-shaped ridge and furrow range in width from 9–12 m from ridge to ridge, and up to 1.8 m in depth from ridge-top to furrow-bottom. In certain parts of the township (notably on Horncastle ground, fig. 124) this wide ridge and furrow is clearly cut by narrow ridge and furrow, which we assign to the early 18th century; of uncertain date, but also earlier than the narrow ridges, are a number of strips with straight broad ridges c. 7–10 m wide.

*Early 18th-century fields* (fig. 122, upper middle)

A large number of strips of straight, narrower and shallower ridge and furrow are assigned to the successor farms of the 18th century. The width ranges from 3 to 7 m and the depth is 1 m or less. In several places these ridges bisect the older, wider ridges and in one field S of the farm at Horncastle they cut the wide ridges at right angles. They survive best on land which is now used for pasture; elsewhere modern ploughing has obliterated them. Cultivation covered the whole area of the fields of the former village, augmented by several new intakes; the most notable of these is at Middle Rig, where c. 27.6 ha was taken under the plough. The overall impression is that the new farms continued to run on a mixed economy.

More headlands and droeways survive for this period, but we do not know how, or even if, the new fields were enclosed. Some of the field boundaries in the Horncastle ground might belong to this period but large areas of Cornhills were not enclosed until c. 1880.

*The 1844 tithe map* (fig. 122, lower middle)

By this date the farmstead at Middle Rig had been abandoned, and no enclosures are shown; presumably cultivation had retreated from the area. Much of Ferneyrigg and Cornhills was unenclosed, suggesting concentration on pastoral farming; in 1827 “the greatest part of it [the parish] is in sheep farms, or used in grazing or dairy purposes” (Hodgson, 1827, 190). Only on Horncastle had a patchwork of small fields been created. Their boundaries were earthen banks, some of which still retain their stone cladding; these were planted with hawthorn (*crataegus*), occasionally interspersed

with ash (*fraxinus*). These two species predominate throughout the farm, though the garden at Horncastle contains a wider range of species, many planted for ornament.

c. 1880 (fig. 122, bottom)

At about this date most of the large fields of Cornhills and Ferneyrigg were divided and enclosed with drystone walls, usually with one or two courses of projecting through-bands. In the case of Cornhills at least, the stone for these walls was taken from the village site (*Second Report*, 198). These walls and many modern fences have been omitted from the detailed plans, figs. 124 to 127; the areas covered by these plans are shown on fig. 123.

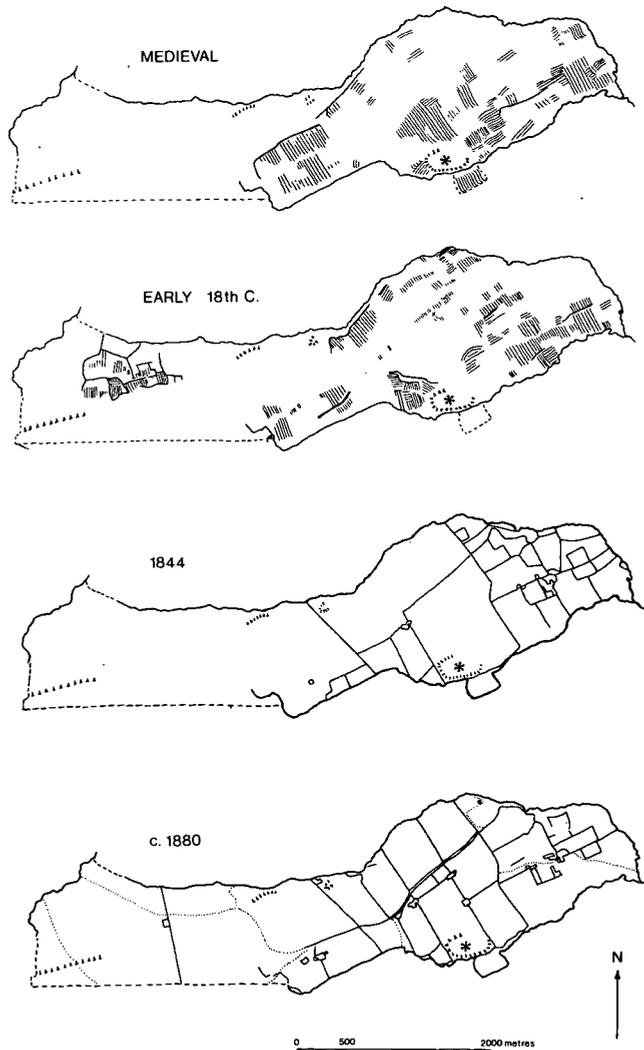


Fig. 122. West Whelpington township. Development of field systems.

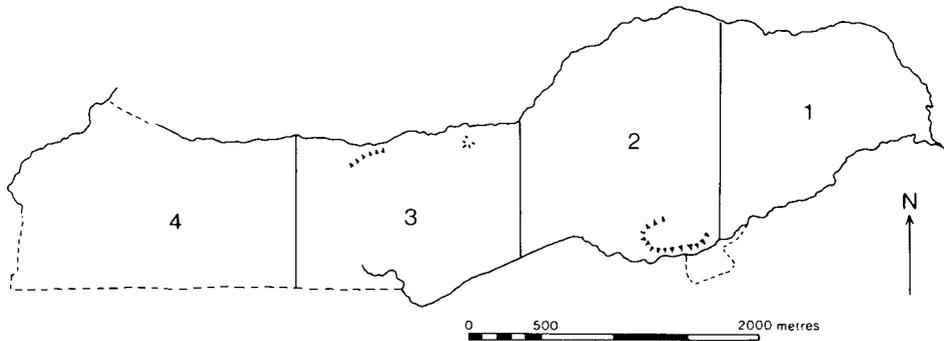


Fig. 123. Key plan to figs. 124–127.

*Map 1* (fig. 124)

Although many of the fields in the N half of this area have been ploughed flat, the impression is that the entire width of the township was formerly covered in ridge and furrow, except for the steep slope down to the Ray burn on the N and the boggy ground by the Wansbeck on the S. Only a swathe of stony ground running west from Horncastle shows no evidence that it was ever ploughed. Much of the area retains wide reversed S-shaped ridge and furrow, which extends even into the NE corner of the township, suggesting that the coverage does not reflect an extension of arable after the desertion of the village. Post-desertion ploughing seems to be represented by the subdivision of the earlier broad ridges; the priority of the broad ridges was apparent in several places, notably S and E of Horncastle.

*Map 2* (fig. 125)

Although several large fields have been ploughed flat in recent years the whole of this area was formerly in ridge and furrow, defined on the N by a bank. Both wide and narrow ridges were found, with a particularly clear example just west of the village; a number of wide reversed S-shaped selions survive, but the remainder have been narrowed and straightened. Here also are the remains of two driftways between various blocks or furlongs, though the earlier pattern of furlongs and routes has been obscured by later, narrower re-ridging. Two parallel banks immediately N of the village suggest another droveway, apparently joining that which separates crofts D and E. On Sledhoe, a smaller outcrop NE of the village site, some of the ridges take the form of cultivation terraces.

*Map 3* (fig. 126)

The field systems surrounding Ferneyrigg lie on either side of the modern road. This is bounded to the S by a bank which forms the northern limit of ridge and furrow; on the N the ridges run up to the edge of the road. It is therefore not certain whether the road follows an earlier droveway. All of the ridges run N–S, up and down the slopes. Broad (8–10 m) ridges have been bisected to form narrower ones. The only fragments of reversed S-shaped ridges are on a haugh just above the Ferneyrigg burn in the SE

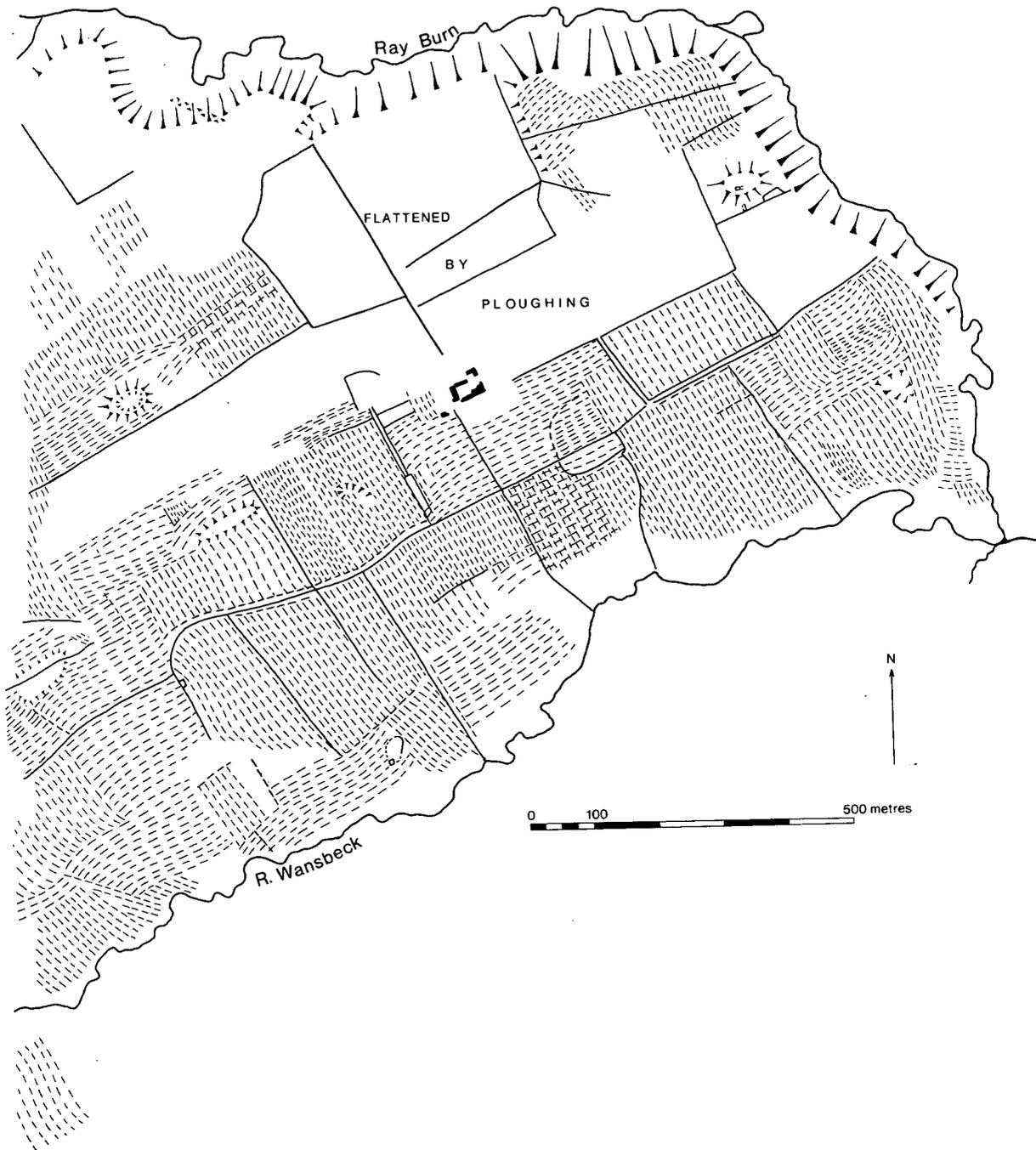


Fig. 124. West Whelpington township. Field systems round Horncastle.



Fig. 125. West Whelpington township. Field systems round Cornhills.

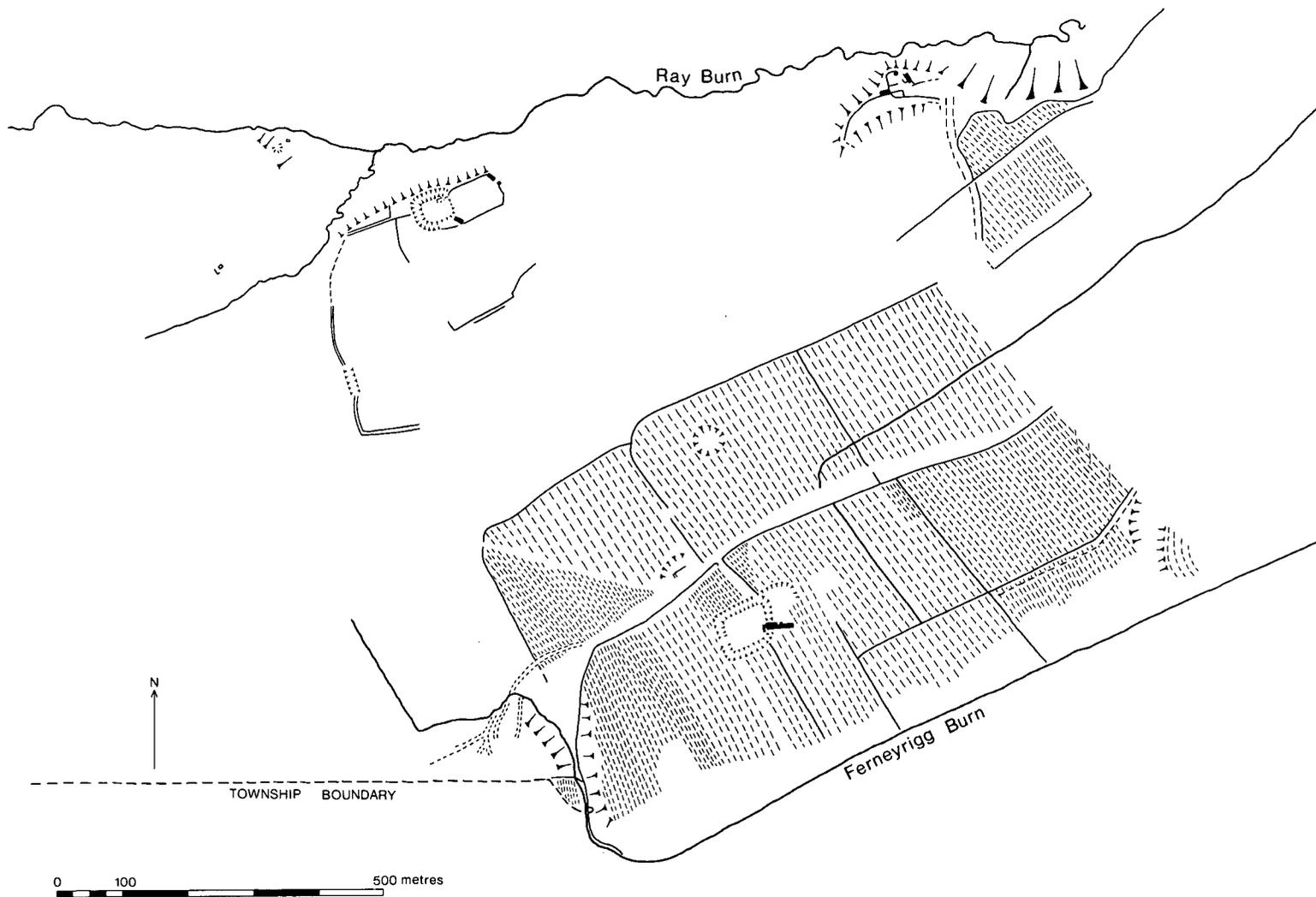


Fig. 126. West Whelpington township. Field systems round Ferneyrigg.

corner of the map; these do not now run into Cornhills ground where the fields have been flattened. The wide ridges presumably imply that this area was part of the open fields of the village; the scarcity of reversed S-shaped furlongs may indicate that it was a late or occasional intake.

The N and W boundaries of this system of fields are marked by earthen banks. A droveway linked the fields to the enclosures on Bewick Hill (NY 963844). Around Ferneyrigg are a few enclosures formed by earthen banks topped by hedges which are predominantly of hawthorn (*crataegus*) interspersed, notably on the south side of the road, with ash (*fraxinus*).

*Map 4* (fig. 127)

The fields associated with Middle Rig are defined by earthen banks which presumably supported hedges, though no trees or bushes survive. They mainly take the form of cross-ridge banks which disappear into the boggy ground by the Ray and Middlerigg burns. Most of the enclosures on the S-facing slopes above the Middlerigg burn seem to have been in ridge and furrow whose survival is now obscured by bracken and by recent drainage. W of the steading some of the field boundaries seem to have been realigned; the possibility of earlier settlement in the area makes interpretation impossible. Ridges in this area are all between 3 and 6 m wide and straight, suggesting that cultivation only began with the establishment of Middle Rig. The only changes in alignment relate directly to the topography. The N-facing enclosures above the Ray burn show no evidence of ploughing, and were presumably used for stock. Clearly Middle Rig was on the margin of cultivation throughout its short life.

#### OTHER EARTHWORKS

*Pre-medieval* (figs. 119, middle, and 128)

A complex of roundhouses with associated fields, at NY 942840, was discussed under *Field systems* (site 1); their period might be Bronze Age or earlier. Later prehistory is represented by the two settlements on the village site (Jarrett and Evans, forthcoming), by a hillfort on Great Wanney Crag (site 2; Jobey, 1965, no. 118), by three rectilinear banked-and-ditched enclosures (sites 3–5; Jobey, 1960, nos. 80–2) and possibly by a small scooped enclosure containing a single rectangular building; the building is probably medieval or later but the enclosure could be earlier (site 6). All are described in Appendix D, M1/A12.

*Medieval and post-medieval* (figs. 119, lower and 129–131)

A number of small settlement sites consist of either single buildings or small clusters of buildings with associated enclosures. Some may have been shielings, others permanent dwellings. Some of the more westerly sites (e.g. nos. 11–13) may have been associated with the farm at Middle Rig.

7. NY 988850 c. 198 m O.D.

A possible rectangular building under the cairn on Rowley Hill. On the S-facing slope

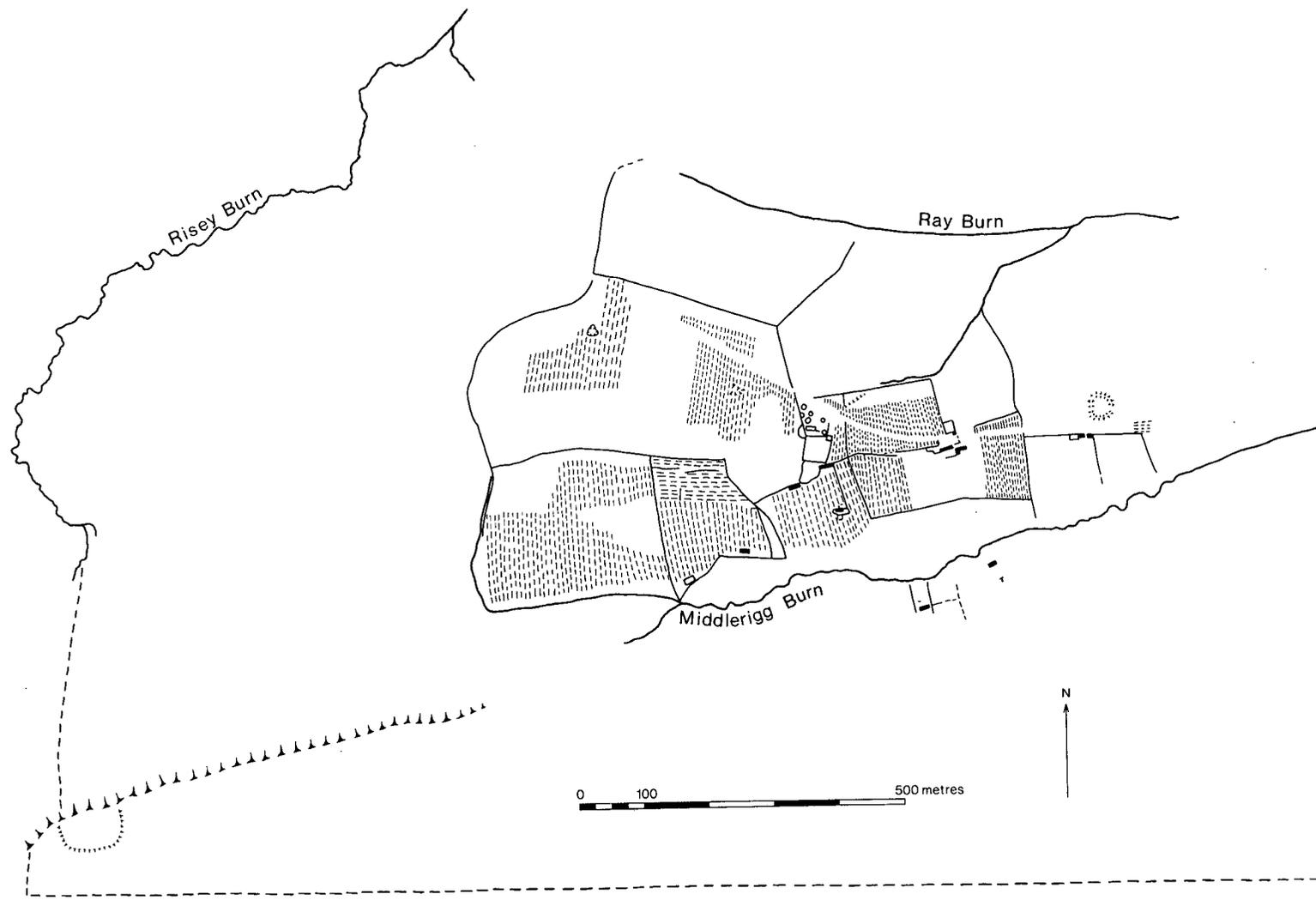


Fig. 127. West Whelpington township. Field systems round Middle Rig.

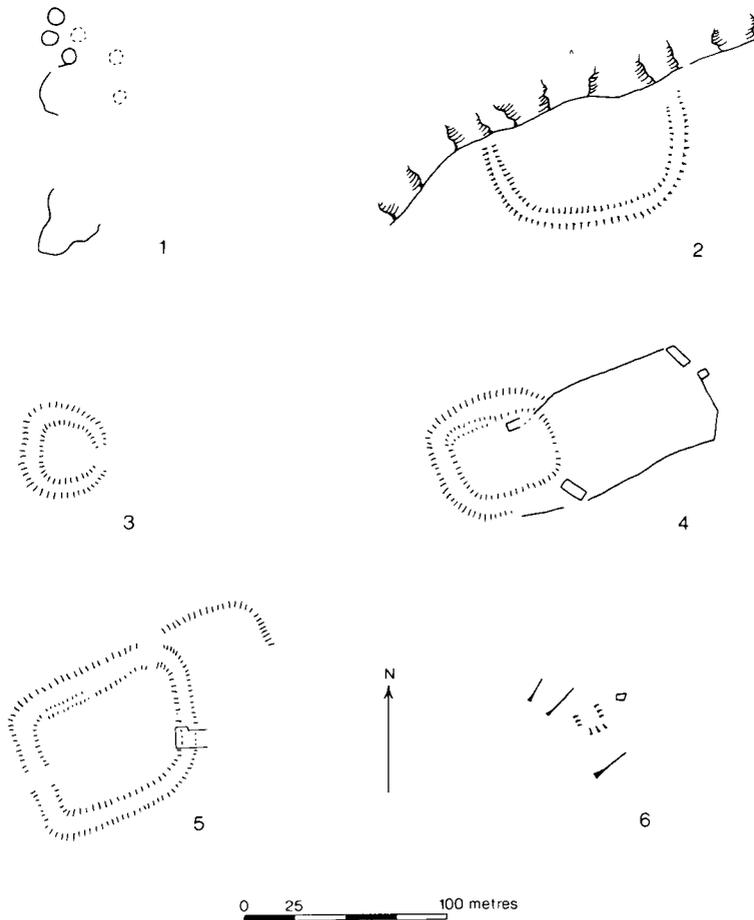


Fig. 128. West Whelpington township. Prehistoric and Roman sites, other than those on the village site.

the stone foundations of a second building are possibly associated with a D-shaped enclosure.

8. NY 983841 c. 183 m O.D.

On the brow of a hill overlooking the Wansbeck an oval enclosure contains at least one rectangular building; grazing stock prevented a thorough examination of the interior; cf. Hodgson, 1827, 193 n.: "*The Cross* is the name of a hill in the Horncastle ground, close to the north side of the Wansbeck, and on which there are strong traces of the foundations of buildings".

9. NY 963844 c. 244 m O.D.

On a SE-facing slope of Bewick Hill a cluster of small enclosures and associated

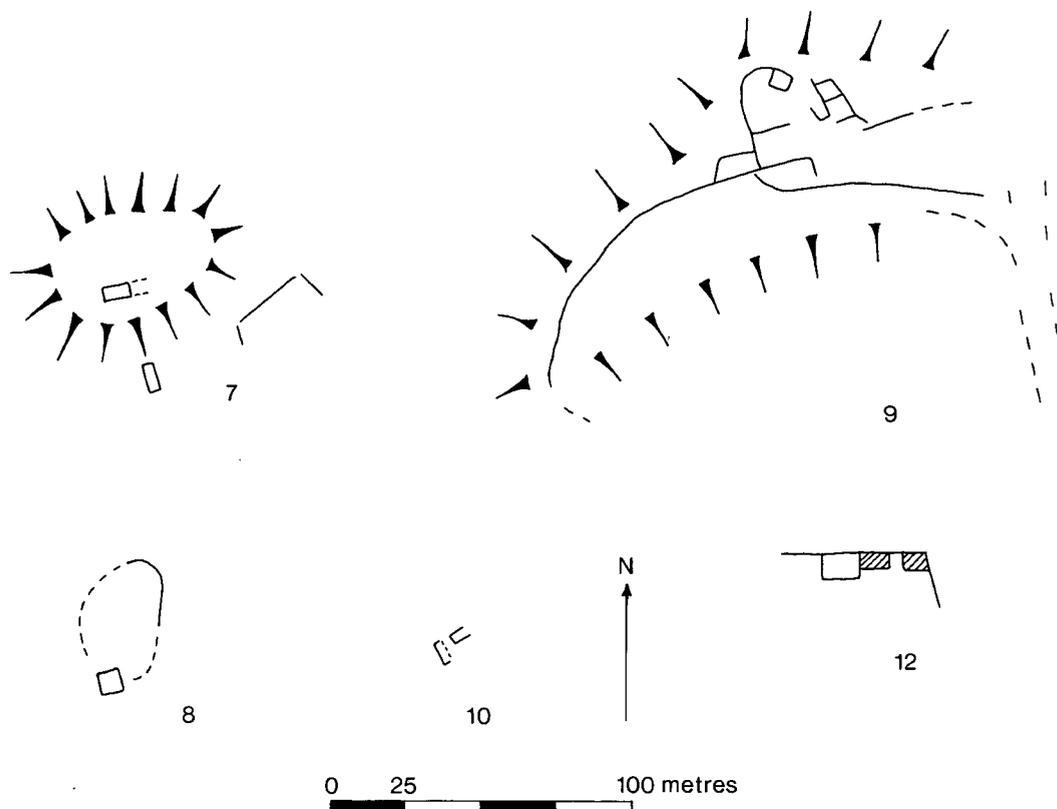


Fig. 129. West Whelpington township. Medieval and later sites, cf. figs. 130 and 131.

buildings is delimited to the N by a steep drop to the Ray burn; the buildings, of which one might be circular, are indicated by stony banks. To the S a driveway leads into the open fields, suggesting medieval or post-medieval grazing. Bracken on the lower slopes of the hill prevented full recording of the enclosures.

10. NY 952842 over 244 m O.D.

Stone footings of one or two rectangular buildings on a SE-facing slope.

11. NY 944837 (figs. 130–131) over 244 m O.D.

On a N-facing slope on the S side of the Middlerigg burn the remains of two, or possibly three, rectangular buildings are associated with one or more enclosures. The most westerly building was aligned E–W and had boulder foundations; it was overlain by part of a drystone stall (fig. 131) and lay within an embanked enclosure; earthworks to the E, though overgrown with bracken, suggested that this was part of a larger system of enclosures. Further E was a two-roomed building, with a third possible building to its S.

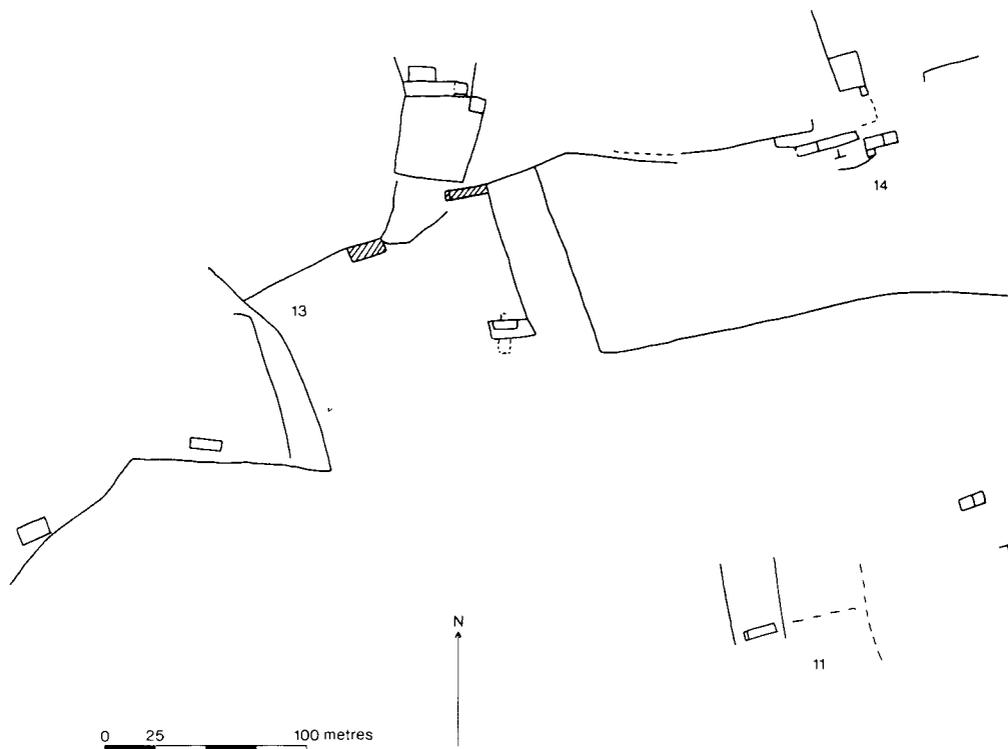


Fig. 130. Middle Rig (14) and adjacent sites.

12. NY 947839 over 244 m O.D.

On a S-facing slope above the Middlerigg burn, two rectangular buildings and a yard or enclosure. E of Middle Rig farm, they are incorporated in its field systems and are probably contemporary with it.

13. NY 942838 over 244 m. O.D.

On the ridge N of the Middlerigg burn or the slopes down to the burn the remains of about nine rectangular stone buildings W and SW of the steading of Middle Rig are incorporated in its field systems. Those aligned with the fields are presumably contemporary, others might be earlier. If they are all contemporary some at least must be outbuildings, though the number of buildings suggests that some may be discrete homesteads.

## 7. WIDER IMPLICATIONS

### *Materials and methods of construction*

Little was said in earlier reports about construction and roofing of the village buildings, partly because there was little to say. If the reader was left with the

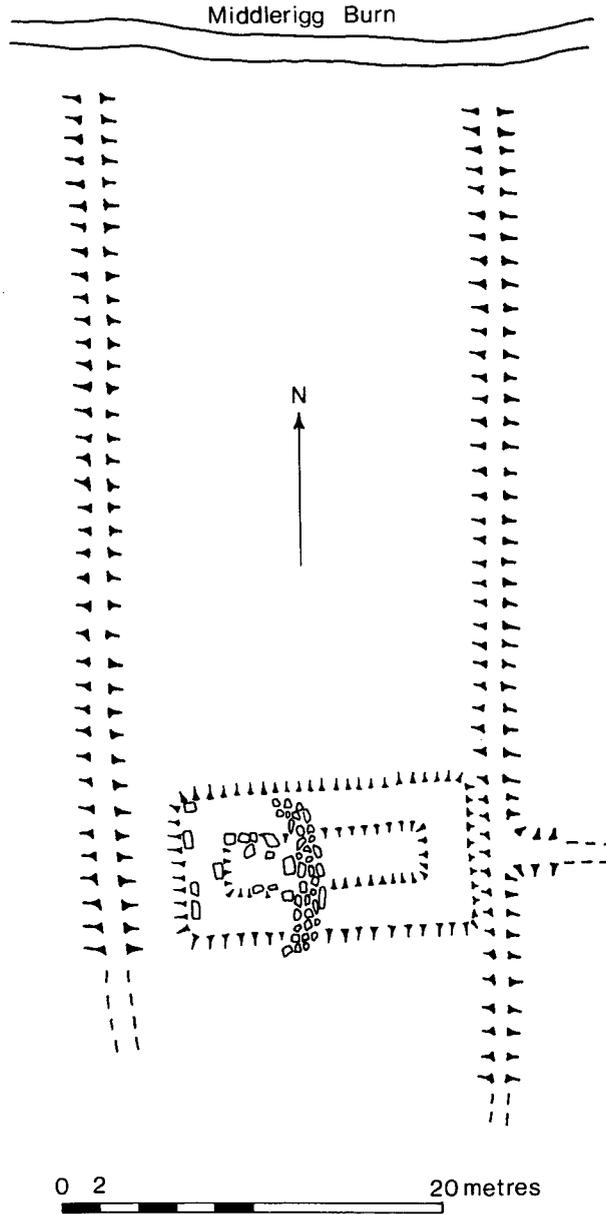


Fig. 131. Site 11, south of Middle Rig.

impression that, in its later centuries at least, West Whelpington consisted of houses with low, unmortared stone walls supporting timber rafters, the reader might be forgiven. It is surprising that no scholar pointed out the inadequacy of such walls to support the roof. With greater evidence from West Whelpington, and with increased awareness of the problems in other areas, it is now possible to put forward more convincing models.

The buildings of the 12th to 14th centuries were represented by a variety of archaeological evidence: post-holes, trenches, insubstantial stone sills and wide stone foundations which might be evidence for full stone walls. In general terms the evidence suggests a movement away from earth-fast timbers towards stone walling though these changes were not so clear cut as they seem to have been in other villages. Later medieval and post-medieval buildings exhibit relatively substantial stone foundations which have been interpreted as the remains of full-height stone walls, dry or clay-bonded. Roofing material is assumed to have been mainly organic though small quantities of stone flags were used in some buildings, perhaps round smoke outlets; they may however have been bake-stones. The method of supporting the roof remains uncertain, though the sockets in the inner faces of the walls on sites 8 and 9 are best interpreted as evidence for light crucks, by analogy with Scottish buildings. A burnt cruck from the eastern part of site 26 was probably of Period I or Period II.

Single-storey longhouses, some lofted, with small-scantling cruck trusses, unmortared stone walls, thatched roofs and fire hoods have been recorded widely in Scotland and north-east England (Smith, 1970, 143; Brunskill, 1975, 131–5; Dunbar, 1956, 87–91; Mercer, 1975, 24–8, 38). In Northumberland a cruck building existed in recent times at Featherstone, 38 km SW of West Whelpington (Mercer, 1975, 192); others were noted in the later 19th century at Alwinton, 22 km to the N (NCH XV, 419) and at Corbridge, 20 km to the S (PSAN 2, 1886, 169). This last example, of a type said then to be not uncommon elsewhere in the county, is well-recorded structurally though not in plan form: dry walls 6'6" high, thatched roof and cruck blades set on the ground surface inside the building. This method of founding the blades, also recorded for a building at Edmondbyers, County Durham (Innocent, 1916, 65), is significant, for it means that crucks need not be evidenced in excavation either by wall sockets or by stylobates. In West Whelpington township the 18th-century farmhouse at Middle Rig was referred to as "5 cuple" in 1748, presumably (but not certainly) indicating that it was a house with five cruck trusses (NYRO ZAL 16/2/6). The other successor farms were lofted and thatched at this date. Ferneyrigg at least was "new lofted".

It has been argued (Dyer, 1986, 35–7) that the use of crucks and of stone both became common in the 13th century, and that the two are to be associated; the stone "protected the timbers from damp, and provided a level base for a good quality roof". This is to be contrasted with earlier buildings with earthfast posts but otherwise uncertain superstructure.

There is in fact no need to postulate a sharp break in construction methods on the basis of the abandonment of earth-fast posts. Crucks might well be set into the ground. Like any other timber they would be subject to more rapid decay than if kept above ground. The introduction of stone footings need have nothing to do with the

structure they supported; it is possibly an indication that timber, whether for crucks or posts, was becoming scarcer—likely enough with a rapidly increasing population in the 12th and 13th centuries. There is little to show that crucks became popular in the 13th century, since we have very little evidence for the roofing structures favoured in the preceding period. At West Whelpington crucks or gavelforks were used in (at least) sites 14 and 26 before *c.* 1320, as well as in later buildings; the Period I post-settings in the north wall of sites 6/7 would be more appropriate to crucks recessed slightly into a bedding trench than to free-standing timber uprights supporting rafters. Elsewhere postholes either form no coherent pattern, as on site 10a, or could be associated with internal partitions, as in the byre on site 2. Nothing precludes the judgment that cruck construction was usual throughout the life of the village. Given the apparent conservatism of the village, and its remoteness, this is a strong argument against the view that crucks were not common before the 13th century.

Documentary evidence, mainly of the late Middle Ages, suggests that cruck construction was common in tenants' houses in the north-east. The Percy estate records for 1471–2 refer to more than 100 pairs of crucks in townships around Alnwick (Hodgson, 1921, 24–43); similar evidence for the 14th century comes from the records of Durham Cathedral Priory cited by Innocent (1916, 36, 60). The records also make it clear that the provision of the crucks themselves was the responsibility of the lord.

The use of crucks, set above the ground, is of importance for the understanding of a stone-walled site like West Whelpington. The crucks are the essential part of a structure, capable of bearing a substantial roof without support from walls; yet it is the walls which are susceptible of archaeological record. Rebuilding of the whole or parts of those walls may be detected by excavation, and may be interpreted as evidence for replacement of the whole building, or for different occupation periods; this in turn leads easily to theories about the short lives of medieval peasant houses. The reality may have been very different. The "rebuildings" may have been piecemeal repairs, undertaken as necessary at various dates over a long period during which the essential structure—the cruck—survived. Such repairs are to be expected in unmortared stone walls on exposed sites, and may well have been routine. There is plentiful evidence from West Whelpington which seems best interpreted in this way. Cruck construction will have made the repair of walls relatively simple, because they were not bearing the weight of the roof; the same factor may also have given the stone and clay wall a longer life without repair.

If repairs to walls were probably common it is even more certain that renewal of the roof cladding was a regular necessity. We assume that the preferred material was ling which was readily available and, labour excepted, free. It continued in use over an insulation of turfs until the late 19th century at Rothbury (*Part One*, 297). While estimates of the life-expectancy of a ling thatch vary, none suggests that it would last more than seven to twelve years without patching; most favour a much shorter life before renewal. The penalty of using a cheap material was regular and frequent replacement. The persistent use of ling thatch betokens a community with little money but plentiful labour, a conclusion borne out by other evidence from West Whelpington. Whether for this reason or simply from conservatism ling thatch was



West Whelpington, looking westwards, with the valley of the Wansbeck on the left and the former village and modern quarry central. *Photograph from the Cambridge University Collection reproduced by permission of the Director in Aerial Photography, University of Cambridge.*

still used at the successor farms in 1721/2 and 1748 (NYRO ZAL 16/2/1 and 16/2/6) just as crucks persisted at least at Middle Rig, down to 1748 (NYRO 16/2/6, referring to "5 cuple"). Improved building construction sometimes lagged behind other agrarian improvements, especially where capital was restricted. The whole process of improvement could take a number of decades to accomplish (Wrathmell, 1980).

*The impermanence of peasant houses and the Rebuilding of Northumberland*

One of the most significant general conclusions to emerge from the excavation of villages is that peasant houses were built to last for only a generation or so (Hurst, in Beresford and Hurst, 1971, 96–100, 122). There will be little dissent from this judgment insofar as it relates to structures based on earth-fast posts (cf. Barker, 1977, 85–7). It has also been applied, with less obvious justification, to buildings erected after the general introduction of stone foundations; buildings "which still seem to have lasted little longer than a generation after the introduction of this important improvement" (Beresford and Hurst, 1971, 96). Furthermore, reconstruction seems often to have taken place in new positions within the toft, or on different alignments (ibid., 122; Andrews and Milne, 1979, 45). Unless such changes were due to alterations in functional requirements they would presumably indicate a need for complete rebuilding rather than repair.

The concept of the one or two generation peasant house has been accepted not only by archaeologists but also by students of vernacular architecture (Mercer, 1975, 36; Smith, 1970, 122). It finds no support at West Whelpington. The 12th-century (and earlier?) timber houses may have been short-lived: there was no material by which to date their length of occupation, though they were so few in number that we should be happy to think of a long rather than short life (in terms of timber-founded buildings). The stone-founded or stone-walled houses of the 13th century may have been occupied for less than a hundred years but, on the evidence from the west end of the village, their failure was due to devastation and abandonment rather than inherent structural weakness. The late medieval houses, which were probably cruck-built with dry-stone or clay-bonded walls, probably survived for two centuries or more before they were remodelled when a reduction in the number of holdings brought new housing requirements; even then the basic structure seems to have been retained, as can be seen in the north-west terrace, where the modifications were mainly within the lines of the north and south walls, and where the modifications to those walls (not necessarily of the same date) are consistent with repairs rather than complete rebuilding. The remodelled houses lasted only for about half a century, but there is no reason to suppose that they were in danger of collapse when the village was abandoned, though they will have deteriorated rapidly once they ceased to be maintained. The village was "remarkable for the distinctness of its ruins" a century after desertion (Hodgson, 1827, 198) and the walls were probably standing to a height of 1 m or more when they were robbed in the late 19th century.

This interpretation of West Whelpington contrasts markedly with that proposed by the excavators of Wharram Percy village in North Yorkshire. Though the number of structural phases in area 6 and 10 at Wharram has been reduced in the full report (Andrews and Milne, 1979, 26–9, 42–5) the general picture is still of late medieval

stone-founded buildings being succeeded every 50 to 75 years by new structures, often on different sites within these tofts. If we avoid the assumption of frequent, indeed regular, structural failure we may use the evidence presented to create a different model. In area 10 the building which marks the second of three phases covering the period 1300 to 1500 produced no evidence of a domestic hearth (*ibid.*, 38–9). The succession may therefore be due to functional changes within the toft. In Area 6 the main structural feature (Building 2) marking the second of four stone-founded dwellings would fit admirably into the framework provided by the walls of the final phase house (Building 1). The principal element of the intervening phase (Building 4, on a different site and not necessarily a house) may be earlier than, contemporary with or later than Building 2, depending upon the varying structural and ceramic evidence (*ibid.*, 50). This uncertainty permits an alternative hypothesis: that Building 1/2 was occupied for up to two centuries, though subject to repairs and modifications as evidenced in the published photograph (*ibid.*, pl. IV C). We may note that Wharram also lies in an area of cruck, rather than post, construction. Allowing for the difference between chalk and whinstone the repairs and modification at Wharram seem comparable with those at West Whelpington.

We see no reason to suppose that the structural succession at West Whelpington is unrepresentative of the general development of “impermanent” peasant housing from the 14th century onwards. Though there were certainly improvements in the arrangement of functional elements in the longhouses there is nothing to suggest, for instance, that the ?late 13th-century house 13 was structurally inferior to the 17th-century house 9/3, or that either was built to last decades rather than centuries.

This interpretation requires a slight change of emphasis in our understanding of the “threshold” of survival (Brunskill, 1978, 26–7). In their potential for survival the West Whelpington houses from the 14th century onwards would seem to be little different from, for example, the mud-walled houses at Naseby, Northants., which were said to be capable of lasting 200 years and which formed a substantial proportion of the housing stock of that village until the mid-19th century (Innocent, 1916, 144–5). Two conditions would be required to enable them to achieve this potential. The first is continuous maintenance: at West Whelpington the regular renewal of the thatch and the frequent repair of the dry walls after frost damage. The buildings may be characterized by their low cost (apart from the crucks, which seem to be provided by the lord) requiring a high level of maintenance; it is this which differentiates them from the succeeding, late 18th- or 19th-century “permanent” buildings with mortared walls supporting the trusses for stone-flagged or slated roofs. (We owe this concept of “impermanence” to Susan Wrathmell.)

The second factor affecting the survival of peasant houses is represented by functional changes and/or improvements in housing standards. If either were sufficiently dramatic it would entail demolition. A general improvement in the sub-manorial housing of Northumberland began in the late 17th century. It is probable that many of the “impermanent” farmhouses had been replaced by the early 19th century, as may be deduced from Hodgson’s account of the Kirkwhelpington houses (see next section) and from other descriptions of rural dwellings at this period (e.g. Bailey and Culley, 1805, 27). It is equally important that the building of “imperma-

ment" houses ceased in the early 18th century; Ferneyrigg and Middle Rig may be amongst the latest to be built. With the life-span suggested above we might expect a significant number to survive into the second half of the 19th century but not much beyond that period. That this seems to be the case with the houses at Corbridge and Alwinton cited above may or may not reflect their true potential for survival; by the late 19th century external factors had begun to change Northumberland agriculture and its buildings. There was a move towards the construction of two-storey dwellings; by their nature, cruck buildings were difficult to convert to two storeys, and so were more likely to be demolished and replaced rather than improved. Moreover the coming of the railways opened up new markets for produce and also made available new building materials such as brick and slate. How the aspirations and ambitions of farmers were changed as a result is a chapter of social history which has been little explored, and one to which archaeology may yet make a contribution.

The Rebuilding of northern England has been dated to 1670 to 1720 (Brunskill, 1978, 27), though in Northumberland there are few sub-manorial houses of the 17th century. Northumberland and Durham are, in the words of J. T. Smith, "the only two English counties where it is possible to travel any length of time without seeing a single house built before 1700 and very few before 1800" (Smith, 1970, 142). There is however one group of buildings which is exceptional: the pelehouses and "bastles" which were built about a century earlier. These structures may be considered anomalous in the development of peasant housing, the result of particular circumstances (Ramm, 1970, 61), but from a different point of view they replicate an important theme in the history of "permanent" housing further south.

### *House and farm plans*

When Hodgson compiled his *History of Northumberland* he chose two adjacent structures in his own village of Kirkwhelpington to typify the principal and inferior kinds of farmhouse which had been common in the county in the early 18th century (fig. 132). In view of Hodgson's reliability as both observer and interpreter these buildings should provide an accurate picture of the dwellings to be expected in West Whelpington during the last century or so of the village's existence.

The first house described is called the Bolt House: it "consists of a byre or cow-house below, and the family apartments above, viz: an upper room with a boarded floor, and a garret, both approached by stone stairs on the outside, and the whole covered with thatch . . . This was the character of the principal farm-houses in Northumberland a hundred years since. The peels of the *lairds*, or yeomanry proprietors, had each a stone arch over the byre, and were frequently covered with freestone slate, which made them more secure than houses with thatched roofs, from being burnt in the plundering irruptions of the Scotch . . ." (Hodgson, 1827, 189).

The Bolt House is a pelehouse, a type of dwelling with a wide distribution in the uplands of southern Northumberland, thought to have been constructed in the period 1550-1650 (Dixon, 1979, 241, 249). Hodgson records the ruins of one on the village green at West Whelpington, "a peel house, about 23 by 21 feet in the inside, having very thick walls, and a sort of yard or barmekin in front" (1827, 197). He notes that it stood near to "a small circle" which he identifies as a cock-pit. The pelehouse was not

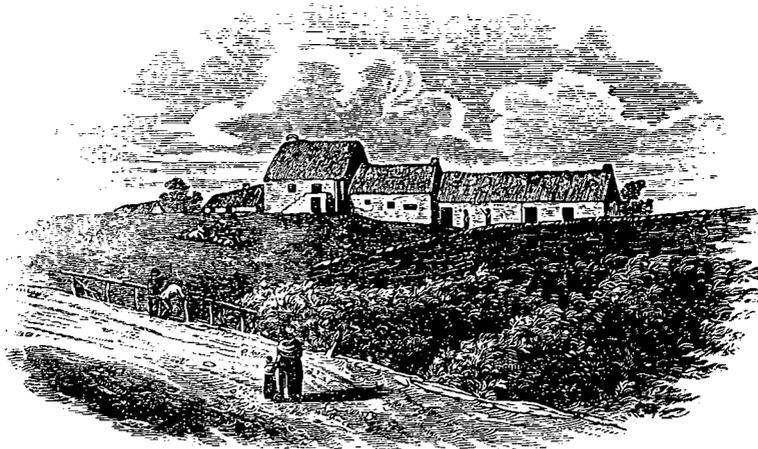


Fig. 132. The Bolt House, and adjacent farmstead, Kirkwhelpington.  
From Hodgson's *History of Northumberland*.

evident among the village earthworks recorded from 1958 onwards, nor were its remains observed in the areas of the green which were excavated: the structure with large stones south of site 2 (*Second Report*, 220) should probably be interpreted as a cottage with an attached platform. However there is oral evidence that “a round house with a sunken clay floor” and “a very solid square building” were destroyed c. 1942 (*Second Report*, 204). These must have lain either in the south-eastern part of the village or at the east end of the green, though their precise locations are unknown; they seem to match Hodgson's description. One other piece of evidence attests the former existence of a pelehouse. It is a dressed jambstone, reused in the final phase paving on site 9. It is impossible to believe that this stone was transported from outside the village, simply to be used in paving; yet none of the excavated houses, even in the final phase, boasted dressed openings though they occur in the earliest surviving wall at Cornhills. Such openings are characteristic of pelehouses, and the simple round moulding of the West Whelpington stone is closely comparable with that which delineates the ground-floor entrance of a pelehouse at Gatehouse, North Tynedale (Ramm, 1970, 62, 92 and pl. 17).

This type of farmhouse, combining the functions of dwelling and byre in vertical rather than horizontal succession (*ibid.*, 66), occurs singly or in clusters, in large settlements as well as small. Peles represent the homes of the more prominent members of Border society, but men who were still usually customary tenants rather than freeholders (Dixon, 1979, 249). These included the leaders or headsmen of the “surnames”, the kindred groupings which evolved during the later Middle Ages in the Marcher uplands. The presence of such a dwelling at West Whelpington is therefore not inconsistent with the documentary evidence, which fails to record freeholders in the township; nonetheless it indicates a greater social diversity than is visible in the written record, and may be indicative of “surname” influence. A comparable

pelehouse in the village of Barrasford, 12 km to the south-west, was called the Head House. In c. 1586 it seems to have been occupied by John Heron, who had one of the smallest of the 21 customary holdings there. It is likely, however, to have been the property of the other tenant with this surname, Roger Heron; though he was only a tenant-at-will he was evidently the principal one, having three messuages and husbandlands, and paying more than double the rent of anyone else at Barrasford (NCH IV, 316-7).

The second type of house described by Hodgson, the dwelling adjacent to the Bolt House at Kirkwhelpington, was "a good specimen of an inferior farm-house, the room at the entrance of which was, and still continued in many places to be, a byre in winter and a bed-room in summer, and is called the *Out-bye*; the *In-bye*, or inner room, with three small windows to the left of the out-door, was the dwelling of the family, and often partitioned by two pressbeds into two apartments" (Hodgson, 1827, 189).

This inferior farmhouse is a longhouse, with a common entry for man and beast in the cross-passage position, and only internal access to the living room. Figure 132 shows stone walls and a thatched roof. The position of the chimney or, more probably, the fire-hood indicates that the hearth was set against the partition wall. The dwelling and byre were of separate construction, the byre having apparently a narrower plan and a lower roof line. This might be seen as evidence of the byre being attached to a pre-existing gable-entry house, a development which has sometimes been inferred from surviving examples; the theory was considered (and rejected) by J. T. Smith (1970, 140). In plan form, and perhaps also in construction, the Kirkwhelpington house is virtually identical to some of the excavated 17th-century farmhouses, such as those on sites 8 and 9, which were the result of modifications to an earlier series of longhouses with cross-passages and opposed entrances. If Hodgson's "good specimen" may be regarded as typical of the late 17th-century housing for customary tenants in the region then the West Whelpington examples acquire a similar significance. We may further suggest that the earlier longhouses also lie in the mainstream of vernacular housing in this area.

Little can be said about the organization of these farms. Each had a byre, and was in close proximity to a croft which normally contained one or two out-buildings; some of these were barns, others may have been stables. Attribution of crofts to specific farmsteads has not been attempted, for reasons stated in the *Second Report* (301). For more detail of structures and functions, see *Part One*, 299-305.

West Whelpington produced evidence of a third type of dwelling to which Hodgson did not refer. Smaller than the longhouses, these lacked a recognizable byre or croft; they were usually sited on the edge of or within the village green, and were free-standing; nine out of the thirteen examples had a stone platform at one end (usually the west) which we have interpreted as the base for a hayrick; if we are correct it will imply that animals were kept, despite the lack of a byre. We have termed these buildings cottages.

There is little to show how the cottages were constructed. Crucks may have been used, though evidence for or against is lacking. The most solid feature, where present, was the platform. Other walls had often been robbed, but where they survived they

were probably too slight to have been built “in alternating courses of turf and stone, each turf course acting as a bed for the field gathered stones above” as were the servants’ cottages on a Midlothian farm in 1793 (Fenton, 1976, 183). “This technique was widespread from the Borders up to Sutherland” (*ibid.*); it involved low walls set with upright posts at *c.* 1 m intervals, supporting “heavy roofs of timber, sods and thatch”. While this technique might explain some of the “clay-bonded” walls at West Whelpington we do not consider that it extended to the form of roof support; it would be more appropriate to the freestone walls of Period I than to the walls of irregular whin blocks which are characteristic of later periods. It does not seem at all likely for the cottage construction where, in several cases, the walls were discernibly narrower than others at West Whelpington. Even the smallest cottages were considerably larger than the Scottish examples described by Fenton.

Archaeologically there is a clear distinction between these cottages and the longhouse/farms. No cottage had a byre and no longhouse had a stone platform. Documentary sources indicate a division between cottagers and a superior class termed variously, at different dates, bondagers, husbandmen, yeomen and farmers. We believe that there is a compelling case for linking the two categories of evidence, with potentially fruitful results for both history and archaeology.

Unfortunately West Whelpington was not the site to produce such results. While the cottages are discernibly inferior in size and comfort it would be difficult to differentiate them on the basis of the artefacts found; this is partly due to the paucity of finds throughout the village. On a site with floors of earth rather than rock results might be more encouraging. At West Whelpington there would be the further difficulty that we should not be contrasting rich farm with poor cottage but attempting to gauge relative levels of abysmal poverty.

Archaeology provides no evidence for the survival in the township of cottagers after the desertion of the village. We should note however that the successor farms, as elsewhere in Northumberland, provided accommodation for more than a farmer and his family. At Cornhills, for instance, there are clearly cottages, and the 1748 rental refers to three dwellings plus a herd’s house and a cottage. At the same date Ferneyrigg comprised a house, cottage and outbuildings (NYRO ZAL 16/2/6). Clearly the new steadings might each house several families, apart from unmarried labourers.

The survey of the successor farms suggests that at first they did not differ much in plan or construction from the latest steadings in the village. By 1748 a loft (perhaps providing accommodation for labourers) had been provided in the houses, though Ferneyrigg was then “new lofted”. The plan was still linear, and yards surrounded by buildings do not seem to be developed until the late 18th century. Horncastle was rebuilt *c.* 1765 (Hodgson, 1827, 197 n.), and a similar date may apply to Cornhills. By this period, if not earlier, the use of dressed stone for quoins and jambs seems to have been normal: it was conspicuously absent from even the latest village houses. Continued use of the successor farms, with later rebuildings and modifications, makes it difficult to determine the plan and arrangements of the steadings early in their history. Middle Rig, which was abandoned only a few decades after its foundation, is therefore of considerable importance for the development of farms in Northumber-

land since it should provide evidence of 18th-century changes undistorted by later modifications. We would recommend that it be added to the schedule of ancient monuments and that if it is in any way threatened (e.g. by forestry) it should be fully excavated.

Any such investigation should also include the sites possibly associated with Middle Rig (Section 6, nos. 11–13; cf. fig. 130).

### *Village planning*

With the full excavation of the north-west crofts some understanding has been gained of the planning of West Whelpington. In consequence it is both possible and necessary to offer a reinterpretation of the evidence presented in the First and Second Reports.

From the 14th century, and possibly during Period I as well, the north-western tofts were laid out as a terrace of longhouses of fairly standard pattern. We have argued that the construction was of crucks, supplied by the lord, and that the whole terrace was planned and built as one. In Periods III and IV the pattern was modified: a reduction in the number of farms occupied led to new planning, sometimes with extended byres, but still within the lines of the Period II terrace. It now seems clear that the evidence from the north-eastern and south-western quadrants reveals a similar picture of a terrace of Period II longhouse/farms, with a reduced number of farmsteads in Period III. The evidence from the south-eastern quadrant would be consistent with a similar interpretation, but is too slight for certainty. A thorough reconsideration of the material which was published in the First and Second Reports will be found in the *Full Report* and on fiche (M1, B1); only the main conclusions for the frontage buildings of these three quadrants are offered here. The reader is referred to the complete text for a reconsideration of the excavated cottages and outbuildings, as well as the eastern end of the north-west terrace (sites 6 and 7).

Sites 1 to 5 appear to have formed a single terrace. Despite the incomplete excavation three periods of building can be identified, though little is known about the earliest. In Period II sites 1 to 3 formed a continuous terrace of 5 longhouses, with a frontage of 62 m; the earthworks suggest that the terrace also included sites 4 and 5 and extended to about 102 m. If it did it is likely that the number of farmsteads was 8 or 9. This interpretation presents one anomaly: in the fourth house from the east (on site 3 and the western part of site 2) the byre may have lain west of the living room. All the other steadings of this period had eastern byres.

Phase III structures were extensively robbed. The five eastern longhouses of Phase II (sites 1 to 3) seem to have been replaced by two farmsteads. The more easterly was 27 m long internally with byres to both east and west of the living room and with an outhouse at the east end. Finds from these farms suggest that occupation continued at least until c. 1700.

In the south-western quadrant sites 16a and 16c formed part of a continuous but substantially robbed terrace; this becomes clear from a re-examination of site notes and photographs, even though the two were interpreted as discrete buildings in the *Second Report* (244–9). On site 16c were found the remains of a Phase I building, distinguished by narrow stone sills for the walls; further west were a number of pits

and postholes which may be of the same period. On site 16a hardly any remains of the frontage buildings of this date survived. Phase I ended in destruction by fire, associated with a coin of Edward I: the burning may therefore be contemporary with the abandonment of the west end of the village.

In Phase II there was a continuous terrace 52 m long, probably of four holdings rather than the two suggested in the *Second Report*; the two eastern holdings were longhouses and we assume that the others were of similar form. The eastern half of "16a/1" (now described as 16a, eastern holding) is interpreted as a living room west of a cross-passage with (presumably) a byre beyond. Immediately west of the living room was the byre of 16a, western holding, only 5 m long (this holding consists of "16a/3" and the western part of "16a/1": *Second Report*, 246–8). 16c, eastern holding, occupied the areas at the east end of 16c and the west end of 16a which are almost blank on figs. 22 and 23 of the *Second Report*; it had been extensively robbed. 16c, western holding, corresponds broadly to the "period II building on site 16c".

In Phase III these four tenements were modified to form two farms which correspond approximately with the later buildings on sites 16a and 16c as originally interpreted. As in the north-west terrace the Phase II walls apparently continued in use. The new eastern steading was probably c. 25 m long internally, with a living room east of byre and outbuilding; the western steading, only 19 m long, had its byre to the east of a living room and outbuildings. Finds from these farms suggest that occupation continued until at least 1700.

For the south-east quadrant of the village we have the least accurate earthwork survey, the smallest aerial photograph coverage and the earliest and least extensive excavation. A curving block of enclosures of different sizes (Q to U, figs. 4 and 5) was recorded, but site 17 was the only toft which showed clearly as an earthwork. There is no positive evidence for a continuous terrace fronting crofts R to V but it seems reasonable to suppose that there would once have been houses in front of crofts S to U; the line may not have been continuous, in view of the changes in direction recorded. Site 20 may have formed the north-eastern end of a terrace fronting crofts T and U; if so site 18a presumably formed a part of this terrace and was completely misinterpreted in the *First Report* (199–200). The size of this south-eastern block suggests comparison with the north-east quadrant, with 8 or 9 holdings in Period II. The original (and only) survey of the east end of the village was certainly incorrect. It seems likely that the green was almost completely closed off, with possible entry routes between sites 22 and 23; between site 25 and the north-eastern block of crofts and, less probably, between crofts U and V.

Site 17, though inadequately excavated, can be reinterpreted as two longhouses (broadly corresponding to 17/2 and 17/3) in the western part of the site, succeeded by a single farmstead on a different alignment. This incorporated those structures described in the *Second Report* (249–51) as 17/4 and the eastern half of 17/3; this new steading was associated with three sub-rectangular enclosures to the south, and with site 17a. We presume that these two phases correspond to Periods II and III in the rest of the village; unstratified finds dated to the mid to late 17th century.

Site 20 showed at least two phases of building and produced finds datable to as late as the early 18th century. As originally interpreted (*First Report*, 203–7) it consisted of

a single-roomed house with outbuildings to the west, and is completely different from any other house at West Whelpington; it is however susceptible of reinterpretation.

We suggest that the earliest surviving building was a longhouse with its living room north-east of a heavily paved cross-passage and a byre; part of the sump paving was interpreted as an eastern threshold to the outbuilding. Some of the northern kerb of the sump survived, with a line of facing on the edge of the cross-passage. Postholes to the north may indicate stall divisions. If our reconstruction is correct the building measured  $20 \times 5.5$  m, substantially larger than most other longhouses in the village.

The longhouse was replaced by a farmstead. A new clay floor was laid in the living room. The west side of the room was formed by a new partition wall, with a stone hearth and a raised hob set against it. Access to the byre was provided by an internal door north of this hearth. The new north wall continued across the cross-passage, which presumably became part of the byre. A semi-circular feature against the west side of the partition wall remains without parallel; its original interpretation as a buttress chimney therefore seems even less plausible than it did in 1962. Stone chimneys do not appear in farms in this area before the introduction of "improved" houses with slate roofs.

As will be apparent from *Part One*, and from Section 5 above, the evidence for the Period I village is not sufficient to enable us to postulate a village plan with certainty, though there are some indications that it may have resembled the plan of Period II. Such evidence as we have for Period I comes from the west end of the village (abandoned in Period II) or from the area of the main Period II buildings; evidence for Period I structures was not found in the excavated areas of the green and the crofts. In the north-west terrace Period I was almost completely obliterated by Period II. In consequence we have tended to think of West Whelpington at all stages as a village centred on a long triangular green, which is certainly a convenient shorthand for Periods II and III. The larger Period I village will have looked very different from its successors. Not only was the west end built up; the main buildings there (13, 26) were aligned east-west and not north-south, as we might expect in a "green-centred" village. At the other end of the village site 21, which produced only medieval finds, is aligned more closely with site 26 than with the postulated terrace line between sites 17 and 20, being oriented ENE to WSW. Those who wish to categorize village plans may prefer to see in Period I a multi-street village which failed to develop and became a green village in Period II. Designation as a green village however depends on ignoring the cottages and other structures on the green. In Roberts' classification (Roberts, 1972) Periods II and III should be "an agglomerated cluster with green".

Such categorization of course fails to take account of the topographical constraints of the site. It seems unlikely that the western holdings were abandoned because they were particularly hard hit by Scottish raids, or because a new village plan had become fashionable; more probably, if also more prosaically, a reappraisal of peasant numbers and needs led to a rational decision to vacate the least hospitable parts of an exposed site. Moreover our detailed knowledge of West Whelpington leaves us with little confidence in elaborate categorization, which implies an attempt to read the minds of medieval planners. There can be little doubt that Period II at West

Whelpington was planned as a green village, with its longhouse/farms arranged in four terraces; the plan may go back to the original settlement of the village, with the western holdings representing piecemeal expansion—though no archaeological evidence suggests that they were of later origin than the rest of the village. By contrast with the regular terraces, which seem to reflect imposed planning, the cottages and enclosures seem opportunistic; their lack of planning is not to be explained by inadequate excavation. Do they represent private initiative rather than lordly control? Did the planner of Period II expect such development, or were cottagers unknown to him? The questions may be posed, but scarcely admit of answers.

We consider that the planned layout of Period II, whatever its categorization, points strongly to an external stimulus; it was, in other words, organized and (at least for the crucks) funded by the lord. Our credulity will not stretch to believing that the plan results from a corporate decision taken and adhered to by a group of twenty or thirty peasant farmers who had suffered for years, or perhaps decades, the miseries produced by warfare and border raids. We are less convinced that the cottages were the result of a lordly initiative; if, as we suppose, they are the dwellings of men with no arable land but with grazing rights on the commons their irregular disposition may reflect a class whose members were, in manorial terms, little more than squatters. Only under James VI and I will their security of tenure have begun to approximate to that of the farmers, who then became no more than tenants-at-will if they had hitherto held by Border Tenure. This tenure may however have been limited to the royal estates of Tynedale and Redesdale and, in a modified form, to the Percy estates. More evidence on the forms of tenure elsewhere in the county would be welcome, for tenants throughout southern Northumberland seem to have accepted reorganization without a struggle.

The sons of Thomas Hynmers (died 1661) may illustrate the point. His will (Appendix B, M1/A7) left the bulk of his property to his eldest son William, who was also residuary legatee. Doubtless he also succeeded to the holding, for in 1666 he was assessed on one hearth in the Hearth Tax returns (PRO E179/158/103; cf. West, 1962, 131); his brother Robert, apparently the only other surviving son of Thomas, was amongst those exempt from tax, presumably because his holding was worth less than 20s per year. We suppose Robert to have been a cottager at this date, though if William subsequently died childless Robert would presumably inherit the family holding. It is worth noting that his father left him an ox stirk. An earlier Hynmers had presumably been the tenant of a husbandland, for he is described as a yeoman (NRO *Vet. Ind.* 358).

Archaeology does not provide any real evidence for the nature of the replanning of West Whelpington in the late 17th century. On the basis of what is known from documents relating to other sites, and of the background of Mark Milbank, we have suggested that the reorganization was the result of his acquisition of the manor in 1675; this would parallel the actions of some of Milbank's peers and contemporaries (Wrathmell, 1975; 1980).

Certainly his successors must have been responsible for the final evacuation of the village and for the building of the new farms at Ferneryrigg and Middle Rig, even though local mythology a century later attributed the depopulation to the Stotts.

“Improvement” of this kind did not invariably lead to the desertion of a village. Successor farms might survive on a village site, as at Clarewood (Wrathmell, 1980), but the effect was the same; the customary holdings were abolished even though some of the tenants remained on the land as labourers or lessees. Dispersal of the successor farms at West Whelpington probably resulted from the fact that the village was not central to the township. Already Horncastle and Cornhills had existed for a generation or more on the best lands, and the village site would have had only disadvantages and inconveniences for the tenants of the western farms.

### *Settlement patterns in Northumberland*

Deserted villages have only been recognized as a common feature of the English landscape during the last 40 years. In some counties they are numbered in hundreds, and in Northumberland they are a frequent and recurrent phenomenon; over 250 could be listed without difficulty.

The earliest printed references to deserted villages occur in the works of Tudor moralists and pamphleteers who were deploring the conversion of large areas from arable to sheep farming, with consequent depopulation, in the 15th and 16th centuries. So successful were these propagandists that this has been seen as the classic period of desertion, and sheep running the principal cause. This may be true for some regions, but it does not apply throughout England; the Border counties, with their particular need for manpower, are a clear exception.

The growing popularity of landscape history in recent years has also changed our understanding. Its broader chronological approach has suggested that change rather than stability is the norm (e.g. Taylor, 1983); it has long been known, though not always appreciated, that village desertions occurred in every century from the 12th to the 20th. Within those nine centuries the rate of desertion was not constant; in Northumberland the peak probably came somewhere between 1660 and 1760. A variety of factors contributed to this. The Union of the Crowns gradually brought an end to border raiding, and thus reduced the need for a large population; in the areas affected the abolition of Border Tenure left most peasants without rights against their lord; old gentry families failed to adjust to changing times and succumbed to financial disasters: their lands were often acquired by lawyers and merchants who sought to increase the profitability of their new estates by agricultural reorganization. The motives were the same as those of the Midlands depopulators of two centuries earlier, though changes in the relative prices of wool, meat and grain meant that Northumberland did not experience the same emphasis on sheep farming.

We can understand village desertion only if we see it as one factor in this wider process of agricultural reorganization. While depopulation might be a single act the reorganization might take several decades. This seems clear at West Whelpington, where old-style building methods and farm plans seem to have been retained in the successor farms; where considerable areas of new ridge and furrow seem likely to be part of the reorganized pattern, and where division of some of the fields did not take place until the late 19th century. Long before that the new farm at Middle Rig and much of the new arable land had been abandoned in the course of further agricultural change.

Inevitably the study of deserted villages has tended to concentrate on the date of and reasons for desertion. It should therefore be emphasized that, because they failed, these are the villages which are most readily accessible to archaeological investigation. In other words their importance lies in the centuries during which they were more or less successful as well as in the single event—or protracted series of events—which led to desertion. If we wish to study the archaeology of medieval (or later) villages it is to the deserted sites that we must turn; remembering, of course, that many of them, like West Whelpington, may have been on the margin of cultivation, and may be atypical for that reason.

In some senses more important questions than desertion are those which concern the origins of the village: when, why and by whom was it established? Whence did the population come? These are particularly important questions for Northumberland where dispersed rather than nucleated rural settlement seems to have been the norm from prehistory to the present, with the Middle Ages providing the only exception. A major difficulty is that we lack any significant number of rural settlements of the period from *c.* 400 to 1100 A.D. This, with an absence of datable artefacts for the same period, makes it impossible to say when West Whelpington originated. It was certainly a recognizable village before the end of the 12th century, and flourished in the 13th; it may, or may not, have been a new settlement in the 12th century. Clearly we need much more information from many other villages before we can determine whether villages were a new phenomenon in the 12th century. Even if this proves true of upland areas and marginal land like West Whelpington it will not enable us to generalize about lowland villages which may have had a different history, the upland sites perhaps being indicative of colonization from earlier villages which were becoming overpopulated; even if that proves to be an acceptable theory it will leave other questions about how new settlements were initiated. For Northumberland, of course, the absence of a Domesday survey is a major handicap.

*If* West Whelpington is typical of Northumberland villages, and *if* the earliest datable pottery (12th century) actually reflects the foundation of the village two propositions may be advanced for consideration. Firstly, we may suggest that many villages were Norman foundations and may have resulted from changes in land ownership. It may be that we should see the spread of open field agriculture, which is closely linked to villages of peasant farmers, as one of the effects of the Norman conquest. We may note that the Harrying of the North under William I may have rendered the area ripe for an imposed agricultural organization. New villages presumably were imposed, since their foundation must have involved withdrawing land from other townships.

If there is any truth in this first proposition a second must also be considered, that there was already a considerable growth in population in the late 11th and early 12th centuries. There is little new in this suggestion: demographers have long argued that the population in 1300 was greatly in excess of that recorded in Domesday. The establishment of new villages may reflect this, and may also indicate that the increase in population was already occurring during the first half of the 12th century.

*The economy of the village*

Apart from the blacksmith's forge and a shale mould for a buckle West Whelpington has produced no evidence for industrial activity. The coal found in or close to many of the Period III houses probably came from open-cast workings in the area, but nothing indicates whether the villagers mined it themselves. Apart from this all the evidence indicates that West Whelpington was a purely agricultural village, occupied by a considerable number of small farmers. It must be assumed that its agriculture was directly related to the ridge-and-furrow which is still apparent over much of the township (fig. 122); such ridge-and-furrow is taken to indicate "open-field" agriculture, the ridges being strips of land held by peasant farmers, whose holdings consisted of a number of such strips scattered throughout the village fields. While the ridge-and-furrow has been plotted it has not proved possible to establish the area under the plough at any one time.

Influenced by modern land use earlier reports on West Whelpington have probably tended to over-estimate the pastoral aspects of agriculture. Certainly animals were important, but not all-important. Each holding is likely to have maintained a balance between arable holdings in the open fields and grazing animals on the common. Animals will have been important for their manure, and for working the land. Hay and (probably) grain will have been needed to feed those animals which were over-wintered: at least the basic breeding stock plus draught oxen. Surplus stock will presumably have been sold at market, along with wool, sheep and perhaps dairy products to provide a small cash income; it is unlikely that there was a grain surplus, and if there were the cost of transport might have precluded its sale.

We have no direct evidence for the grains cultivated at West Whelpington; soil and climate suggest that oats may have been the most common. They could have been used to feed either people or stock. Grain was probably stored in the ear if not on the stalk, with relatively small quantities being threshed and taken to the mill for grinding. We have no evidence for a mill in the township, though there was one in Ray. The hand-querns found on the village site were too few in number for their use to have been normal throughout the life of the village.

The lack of animal bones makes it impossible to estimate the relative importance of different animals before the 17th century when two probate inventories produce some slight evidence (Appendix B, M1/A7). Every steading had a byre at all periods, and the inventories suggest that oxen were the favoured draught animals as long as the village survived. Cattle, sheep and horses are prominent in the inventories. The archaeological evidence for horses consists of shoes (few of them stratified) and for sheep two or three ram bells, a pair of shears and a handful of spindle-whorls. Clearly sheep were kept for wool, and we may suspect that neither sheep nor cattle were eaten until they had ceased to be useful in other ways. Horses were presumably kept for riding, and perhaps for sale; their use as draught animals is most unlikely.

The animal most likely to be kept for meat was the pig. Pigs are omnivorous and they are also the most efficient converters of feed to meat. For these reasons they have always been popular with the rural poor. Dr. Thirsk regards them as a normal attribute of a peasant holding in the 16th and 17th centuries, although she notes that they were less common in the northern counties where there was little woodland for

them to forage and insufficient kitchen waste to feed them (Thirsk, 1967, 192). Surplus milk and milk products have always been used for fattening pigs, and both the late inventories from the village record enough cows to indicate milk production beyond the consumption of a single household (Appendix B, M1/A7). In 1770 Arthur Young recorded that a ratio of two pigs to five or six cattle was normal in the area around Rothbury. In Wales as late as 1933 the advent of the Milk Marketing Board led to an immediate decline in the production of butter and in the numbers of store cattle, sheep and pigs (Jenkins, 1976, 25).

It is therefore surprising that the only evidence we have for pigs is a single fragment of bone which cannot be identified with certainty. Some of the enclosures in the crofts could have housed swine, though we have no real evidence for their function. Neither of the late inventories mentions pigs; perhaps they were regarded as part of the household rather than as farm stock, and therefore omitted. Support for this view may be found at Wigston Magna, Leics., where late 17th-century church rates were based on land, communicants, cattle and sheep; pigs were not assessed, though some peasants certainly kept them (Hoskins, 1957, 236).

Dogs may similarly have been regarded as part of the household, for they also are missing from the inventories. The only evidence for them is the indictment in 1607 of two villagers for keeping greyhounds (NRO *Vet. Ind.* 298); but it is scarcely conceivable that there were not working dogs on each farm. The greyhounds are, incidentally, the only suggestion we have that wild animals may have been hunted for food.

The evidence for poultry is equally scarce. Only the (dubious) cock-pit on the green suggests that some fowl were kept, if only for sport. There is not even this evidence for geese and ducks, though both might be expected. Nevertheless most households are likely to have kept a few hens, for eggs rather than meat. Rent-hens occur commonly enough in medieval documents relating to Northumberland, particularly on the better-documented ducal estates, but it is unlikely that they ever formed a significant element in the agricultural economy. As a source of meat they were regarded as unprofitable: "labouring people are so well convinced of their inutility, that they constantly and universally sell them, knowing from experience, that if the value received for them be laid out in either beef or mutton, it will be much more serviceable; and this piece of economy is so well understood, that we believe there is scarcely an instance of a labouring person ever making use of poultry for his own family; they are always considered as articles *purposely bred to pamper luxury*" (Bailey and Culley, 1805, 163).

The animals recorded in the inventories and attested by the archaeological evidence will presumably have grazed on the common or on fallow during the summer months, but the horses and cattle at least will have required feeding throughout the winter, as will the sheep in hard weather. The only evidence we have for winter feed is the mention of hay in the Stott inventory of May 1711. Hay is not recorded in the inventory of Thomas Hynmers of October 1661 though he must have intended to overwinter most of his stock. He might have planned to sell at an autumn market the 4 stirks and some of the 8 cows, but the 6 oxen and 3 horses would surely have been retained, along with 4 or more cows. It should perhaps be stressed that we have no

evidence that autumn killing was to be expected in this area in the 17th century. Probably Hynmers owned hay which was omitted from the inventory; if he did not he was presumably intending to feed his stock on corn, which seems improbably extravagant.

*The excavation of deserted villages*

Excavation is an expensive way of obtaining evidence which is, on its own, of restricted value. That value may be increased if there is relevant documentary material which may assist in the interpretation of the archaeological evidence or if comparable sites have been dug and published, providing information not available from the site being excavated. Such comparable excavations give a further advantage, in that the excavator may have some idea of what to expect.

It will be seen that West Whelpington had few of these advantages. The directly relevant documentary evidence, even for the 17th and 18th centuries, is of poor quality and minimal quantity. To some extent these defects are offset by evidence from better-documented sites (cf. Wrathmell, 1975) though ultimately we cannot prove that the reorganization of West Whelpington was a part of the pattern so well recorded at Clarewood and East Matfen (Wrathmell, 1980). In our judgment the activities of Mark Milbank at West Whelpington are best understood in the light of what John Douglas and others were doing further south, but other scholars are entitled to produce alternative interpretations.

Since West Whelpington was the first large-scale excavation of a deserted village in Northumberland and one of the first in Britain, enlightenment could not be expected from other excavations. Thirty years ago no one knew what to expect of a deserted village site anywhere in Britain, and mistakes in excavation were inevitable. With hindsight we can see that the greatest weakness was the small scale of excavation in the early years—at first too small even to demonstrate that much more was needed. A number of factors contributed to this weakness: fashion in excavation methods, attempts to select “typical” house sites, shortage of money, above all ignorance. Against this the site had one great advantage, the slow pace of destruction which ensured that excavation could continue over many years, with increasing knowledge and enhanced resources. In consequence West Whelpington is, and seems likely to remain, the most completely excavated deserted village in England. This gives a greater authority to the results, as a comparison with the *First* and *Second Reports* will show. The site has shown clearly the advantages, indeed the necessity, of large-scale excavation of village sites. Even after 18 years work at West Whelpington it would be difficult to identify a small area which could have been excavated to provide a meaningful sample of the village. In part this is due to the large-scale planning of the village, which would not have been detected without the excavation of at least one of the main terraces in full. Such patterns are likely to recur in other villages, and would require similarly extensive excavation before they could be recognized with confidence.

Superficially West Whelpington appeared to have well-preserved earthworks, from which a village plan was readily produced. This proved misleading. Many of the earthworks were heaps of rubble which had fallen into buildings whose surviving walls

were subsequently robbed. Once this phenomenon had been recognized it would have been possible to produce a plan from these robber trenches which would have differed markedly from that of the original survey.

The scale of excavation inevitably led to the clearance of substantial areas of the green and the crofts which proved archaeologically barren. Even this negative evidence was of value in recreating a plan of the village, and there was also positive evidence of buildings which had not been located by the earthwork survey. We cannot over-emphasize the importance of stripping a high proportion of these "undeveloped" areas if we are to understand the whole village rather than individual buildings within it. We have grave doubts about the value of digging small sample areas within a village, no doubt at all about digging enough to relate houses and cottages one to another and to the site as a whole.

Excavation at West Whelpington came to an abrupt end in 1976 when changing economic conditions led to the closure of the quarry which was destroying the village. Archaeologically this was to be regretted, since funds were no longer available to complete the excavation of the west end, which had been expected to take two further seasons. This demonstrates one of the problems which arise when funding for excavation is related more directly to what is threatened than to the archaeological problems. In consequence the village has not produced as full a picture as was hoped. In particular site 13, the only 12th–13th century complex which was not damaged by later building, is not adequately understood; its excavation remains a very high priority, since it might be expected to contribute greatly to our understanding of the Period I village. Site 12 might be of similar value, though its siting and apparent plan are so anomalous that nothing can be predicted until it is excavated.

If and when further Northumberland villages are excavated the West Whelpington experience will be of value; it will at least provide one possible model against which excavators may test their findings. It will inevitably be assumed, until there are further village excavations, that West Whelpington was typical of the county, and we hope that it may prove so; but proof lies many decades ahead.

A more urgent problem relates to the successor farm at Middle Rig, which seems likely to be destroyed by afforestation before the end of the century. Its excavation, and that of the associated (?) structures, would be of inestimable value to any study of the development of the landscape or of agriculture in the county.

It would be unrealistic to expect that the excavation of West Whelpington village will be completed in the foreseeable future. The village itself seems to have been a relatively short episode in the farming history of an area where at other periods agriculture seems to have been based on isolated steadings. The archaeological poverty of the site is probably a genuine reflection of the material poverty of the inhabitants. Only in the 13th century is there any indication of a period of even relative prosperity; that relative prosperity ended with the Scottish wars, which coincided with a period of climatic deterioration which emphasized the marginal nature of the settlement. After the 13th century the reality of existence at West Whelpington probably bore little resemblance to the idyllic picture presented by Hodgson of a noble peasantry thriving on the broad and healthy moorland..

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