

Byre at Carrawbrough Farm

An Historic Building Assessment

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The house and byre use from the south-east

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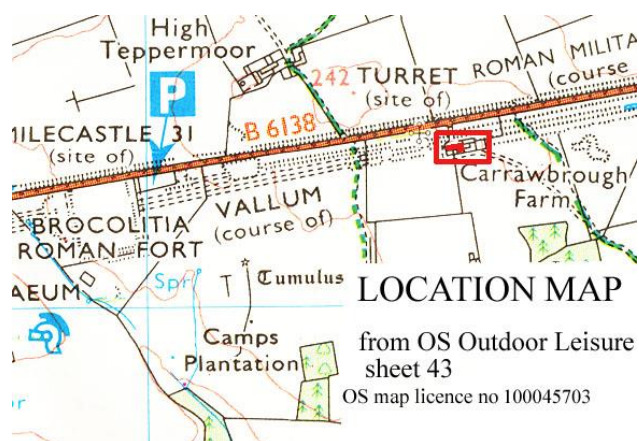
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Byre at Carrawbrough Farm

Carrawbrough Farm (sometimes Carrawburgh) stands on the south edge of the earthworks of the vallum, immediately to the south of Hadrian's Wall, which is here followed by the B6318, in rolling upland c 240 m above sea level, c 5 km west of the North Tyne crossing at Chesters, and c 700 m east of the Roman Fort of Carrawbrough or Brocolita.



The house faces south, away from the Wall, and is two storeyed, with a central rear wing, and a lower structure, still two-storeyed (the downhouse) to the east. Attached to the east end of the downhouse is

a broader block containing byres, the subject of this report (NGR NY 86612 71317). An open Dutch Barn beyond this was demolished some years ago.

The house was listed (Grade II) in 1985; in the listing the attached farm buildings to the east are stated not to be of interest.

Description

Exterior

The building measures c 12 x 8.2 m internally, with walls c 0.60 m thick and a modern roof of corrugated asbestos. The north elevation, towards the road, is of coursed roughly-squared stones, many almost square blocks indicating that, hardly surprisingly in this location, they are re-used Roman material. There is a



North Elevation

East Elevation



doorway set right-of-centre with a chamfered alternating block surround. Further east has been another doorway, without cut dressings, now blocked and with a rather narrower window (with a cut lintel) inserted; there is a similar but smaller window towards the west end of the wall. The east end is partly of coursed roughly-squared stone like the north side, but has an area of rubblier and more yellow fabric in its northern part; the top of the gable is ragged, as if it has been cut down, or a coping has been removed. There is a doorway set a little left-of-centre, with a timber lintel on the external face of the wall but a chamfered alternating-block surround on the internal (west) face, indicating either that it has been re-set or that there was an additional contemporary structure at this end of the range¹. The internal jambs of the doorway have a shallow bar socket on the south and what looks like a drop-bar socket on the north. Above and set central to the gable is a pitching door with a stop-chamfered surround of ashlar blocks, with each jamb consisting of two horizontal blocks with a single upright between them. Structural movement has resulted in a major crack close to the south-east corner.

The south elevation is the most complex. The fabric is again of roughly-coursed stone, although with more elongate blocks than on the north and east. There is a central boarded door in a stop-chamfered alternating-block surround of pecked-and-margined grey ashlar. On either side of it have been a pair of cart entrances, all under timber lintels. Those closest to the ends are completely infilled with roughly-squared and roughly-coursed stone, whilst the inner two have blockings with part-slatted windows, their heads formed by the timber lintels of the older cart entrances, and with cut stone sills.

¹ A relatively recent Dutch barn here was removed a few years ago; the stylobate block at its south-west corner, chamfered on its edges, remains adjacent to the south-east angle of the byre.



South Elevation

The northern half of the west elevation is concealed by the adjacent house; in the southern part a vague patch of disturbed stone indicates the position of a small window more clearly visible internally.

Interior.

The interior of the building is divided into two equal east-west compartments by an axial wall, 0.60 m thick and rising to a level a metre or so above the side walls; this wall seems in fact to have been the south wall of the original building, which was later doubled in width. The wall has a small horizontal offset on its south face, at the level of the side-wall eaves.

There is a doorway near the west end of the axial wall, with a timber lintel but without cut dressings, and an opening 2.3 m wide at the east end, which has been partly closed by a thinner brick wall leaving a gap 0.8 m wide against the east wall. Ragged tothing on the end wall shows that the axial wall originally

extended the full length of the building. Internally all the openings (except for the chamfered doorway in the east wall) have timber lintels. The internal opening of the window in the eastern part of the north wall is the full width of the earlier blocked doorway, the position of which it occupies; externally the blocked opening is considerably wider, suggesting that some form of stone surround may have been removed.



North Part of Byre looking West

In the west wall of the northern compartment of the building are a vertical pair of blocked openings; this was originally the external face of the east wall of the down house. Above the top of the axial wall is a large shaped block which appears to be the kneeler of the south-west corner of the downhouse, prior to its later heightening. In the west wall of the southern compartment are remains of a small window (?) with splayed jambs, and towards the east end of the axial wall one jamb of a blocked opening is visible through the plaster and whitewash which obscure much of the internal fabric.

The roof structure of the byre is of five bays, and perhaps of the early 19th century; the trusses are of sawn timber, morticed together without pegs or bolts, and each have two pairs of raking struts from tie-beam to principals, the springing of the central pair being concealed within the medial wall, which rises c 0.75 m above the ties. There are three levels of purlins – mostly (along with many of the rafters) older timbers re-used – and a diagonally-set ridge carried between the overlapped ends of the principals. Evidence of an earlier phase of the roof is seen in cut-outs in the upper face of the timber lintels of the original cart entrance in the south wall, which appear to indicate a previous generation of tie beams set a little to the east of their successors.



Roof Structure, looking North-West

None of the internal fittings of the building – a number of partition walls towards the west end, and two cast-iron boskins (stall divisions) on the north side of the southern part – are of any great age, or special interest.

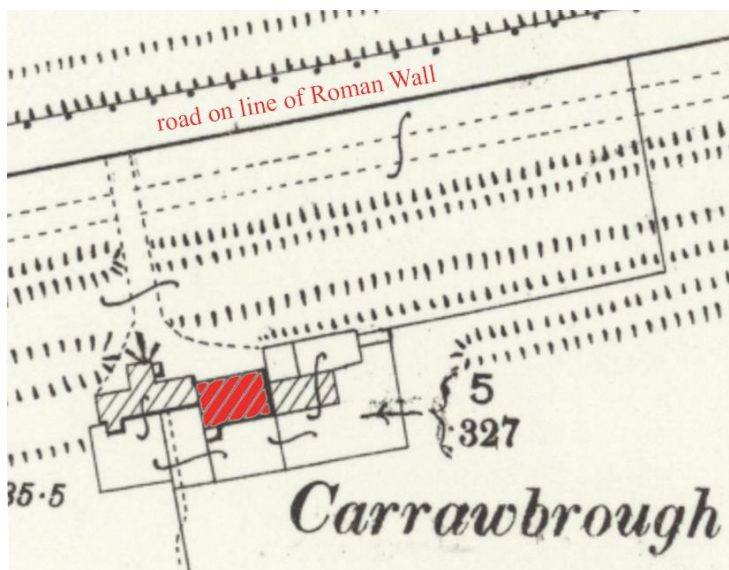
Discussion

Although not being of any great age, or especial architectural interest in itself, the byre is an interesting and quite complex building. It clearly post-dates the house, which is perhaps of the later 17th century, and its northern part is probably of 18th century date. Its southern extension, probably made in the early 19th century, seems to have initially provided a series of open hemmels or sheds, but later in the century their openings were walled up, and a central doorway substituted, along with a pitching door in the eastern gable.

There are a number of enigmatic features. The ground-level doorway in the east wall looks of 18th-century character, but is both situated in the southern extension and set ‘the wrong way round’ as regards the present building. Is it re-set? Until recently it opened inside a Dutch Barn, which first appears on the 1895 OS 25”:1 mile map; the 1st edition OS 6”:1 mile map of 1866 shows no additional structure here.



Doorway in East Wall, Inner (south) jamb, now external, with socket for draw bar



Carrabrough (Byre in red) from 1895 Ordnance Survey 25":1 mile map

Then there is the matter of the original form of the roof of the building. The present trusses may be no older than the earlier 20th century. They must be later than the alterations when the southern cart entrances were blocked up, and the south and east gable pitching doors inserted, which probably took place in the later 19th century, to judge from the character of their stop-chamfered ashlar surrounds. The positioning of the pitching door shows that there were still lofts at this stage; the cuts in the upper faces of the lintels of the cart entrances on the south are probably for their floor beams. It is not clear when the axial wall was heightened, to divide the roof space and carry the ridge of the new broader roof. The present roof structure is clearly later than this – its diagonal struts would have impeded use of any lofts – and is probably contemporary with the removal of the loft floors. The pitch of the roof may have been reduced at this stage (the gable ends seem to have lost a coping) and the present roof material, is clearly quite recent, presumably replacing either Welsh slates or pantiles - or even heather thatch; the shape and positioning one or two elongate shaped blocks at the foot of the southern roof slope are reminiscent of coping to thatched buildings.

Peter F Ryder September 2018

BYRE AT CARRAWBROUGH FARM

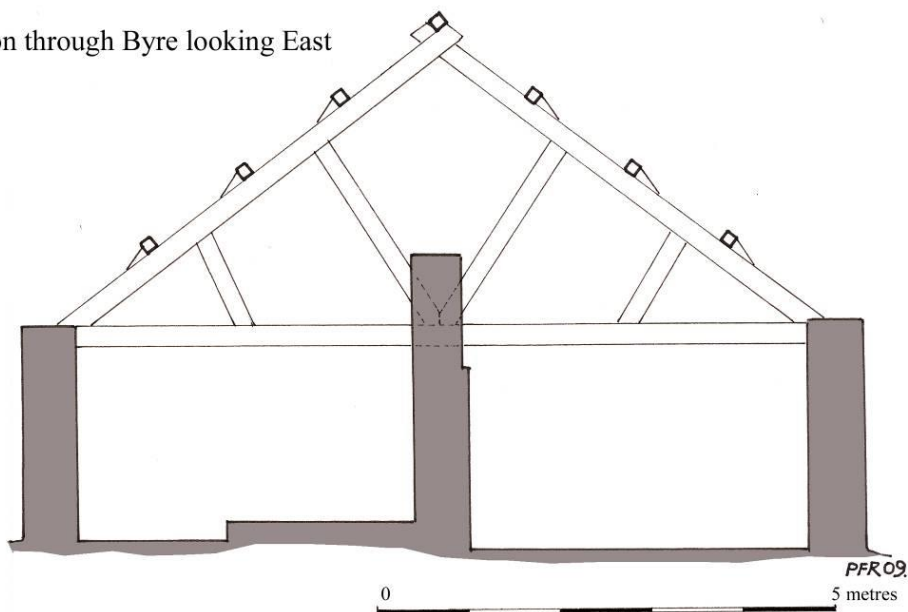
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CARRAWBROUGH FARM

Section through Byre looking East



Survey P F Ryder February 2009