


Armaside Wood, Little Asby

Field Barn & Historic Farm Building Surveys

Survey by Paul Gingell, Summer 2019



 *General view of remaining structure at Armaside Wood,
Little Asby, Cumbria*

Context

This field barn survey was undertaken in 2019 as part of a Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) initiative to survey all historic farm buildings within the National Park, including the newly extended area of the Westmorland Dales. The work aims to increase understanding and protection of these important historic buildings, and - as importantly - to track the condition relative to previous surveys.

Summary

Armaside is a partially abandoned intake or isolated enclosure within the common at Little Asby. Its history presumably mirrors that of other nearby intakes, including at Mazon Wath - which are more actively maintained.

The barn - also ruinous - is a single storey form of bank barn, most interesting (aside from its obvious aesthetic charm) for its partial dry-stone construction. Its remoteness from the main walking areas of Asby common, and the limited livestock grazing, have probably helped protect the remaining structure. Where it more frequently visited, its fragile structure could be hazardous.

What remains of the building contains features of interest - particularly on the west gable - that would benefit from some relatively minor stabilisation works.

The following is a summary of details recorded in the survey. The full survey form is held by the YDNP.

Building Name: Not known (barn at Armaside wood)

Parish: Asby CP

Grid Ref.: NT 703 084

Position: On elevated ground above enclosed water meadow.

Plan Form: Bank barn

Storeys: One. No sign of former timbers for hayloft.

Walling Material: Limestone (likely sourced from borrow pits adjacent to the site)

Roof: Not present. No remnants of timbers. Roofing material not obviously present, but may present amidst rubble.

Grid Ref.: NT 703 084

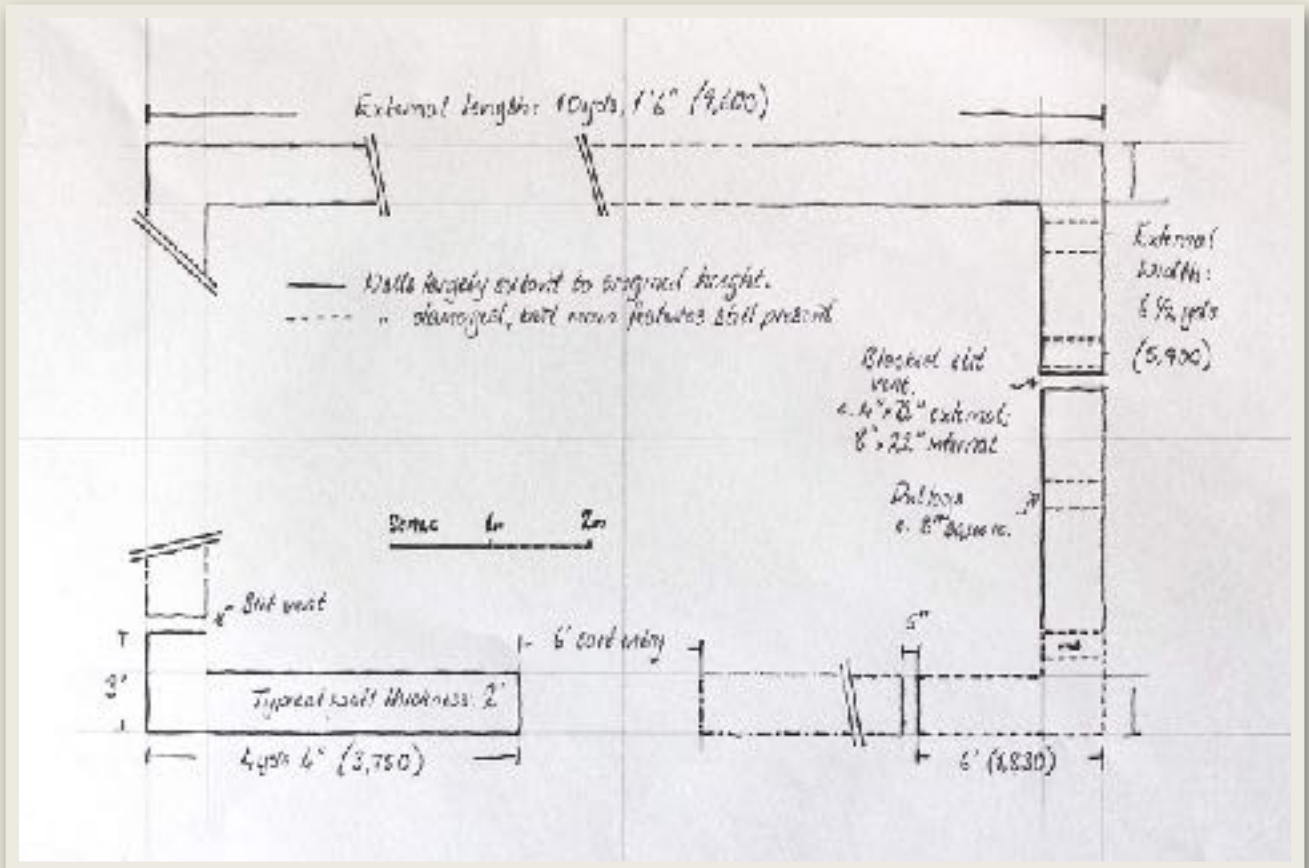
Outshots/Lean-tos: None

Porch: No obvious evidence (much of cart entry lost)

Internal Features: None remaining. No structural evidence of internal divisions.

Floor material: Obscured by rubble

Ancillary site details: Remains of structure (either building or fold) immediately south of barn.



Sketch plan of remaining structure (top); West gable exterior (bottom)



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West Gable

The west gable is the most complete part of the building and contains most of its extant features (including a blocked ventilation slit, putlogs, and forking hole. Partial collapse has occurred, associated with the loss of the adjoining north wall. That structure is important to the stability of the gable, and reconstruction to eaves height would aid its preservation - as would some form of capping of the wall heads.

Soft capping a dry-built structure could prove difficult. Lead capping might be feasible.



Rectangular structure marked by fragmentary walls and earth works, immediately south of barn.



Probably stone source above site (top); General position in landscape (bottom)



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South elevation, with no apparent doorways (top); North elevation with remains of cart entry (bottom).



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East gable, substantially lost. The unusual construction and steep terrain make it unlikely that there were any openings beyond putlogs and ventilation.

East Gable

At the eastern end the ground levels fall away sharply, prompting the builders to construct the east gable in a tiered or abutment style. Bank barns don't usually include this feature, which would make constructing openings difficult. The decision to do so may reflect the limitations of dry-building.



(Top Left) Interior view of north wall, displaying no signs of former timbers or divisions; (Top Right) ventilation slit in north elevation; (Bottom Left) Detail of stepped construction of east gable; (Bottom Right) full profile view.





View of south elevation interior showing well mortared wall brought flush or rendered with a harl-like finish.

Dry-built structure

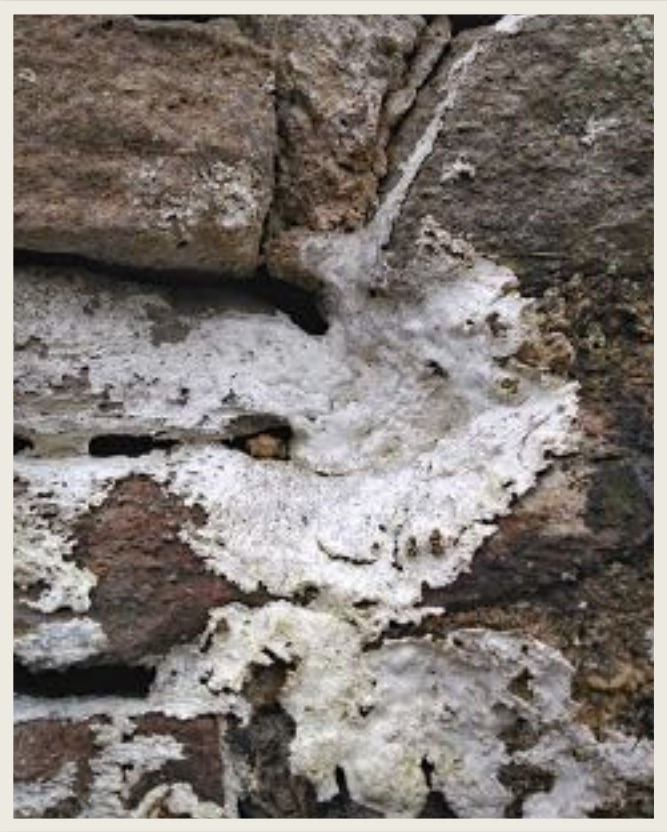
Dry-built buildings do exist locally, but their history and distribution is not well understood. They may be early, or they may be a solution to remote locations. Clearly, where suitable stone is abundant, dry building is quick and very cheap. Whilst its draughtiness would preclude its use in domestic structures, for storage and livestock the construction method would be wholly serviceable.

The decision to mortar the internal face in this instance is unlikely to be for structural reasons. More likely it was for cleanliness and moisture control. A purely dry-built build would provide good ventilation (important for storing hay), but this is easily provided by ventilation holes. On the other hand, the crevices would soon accumulate dirt and be a ready home for vermin. Using mortar solves this problem, and would facilitate in taking up excess moisture during less windy periods.

It appears that the walls were originally well straightened either by dubbing out or harling (locally termed 'wet-dashing'). However, surviving fragments of limewash appear

to have been applied to a much less regular surface. This may indicate a period of neglect; after which the interior was cheaply limewashed.

Externally, the surviving dry-built walls are in good condition, with structural issues caused by the loss of integrity of the building as a whole (rather than deterioration of the fabric). Measures to conserve the internal mortars are unlikely to majorly benefit the remaining structure, and would be done so for their own historic value.



(Top left) Remnants of render-type finish on interior wall, possibly harled (top right & bottom left) remnants of limewash, evidently applied to mortars that were already recessed or eroded.

