

PENDLE HERITAGE ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP

Wycolter Landscape Project



A Report on a Survey of Parson Lee Barn, Wycolter, Trawden

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Site

- Record No. AB.04
- Location Parson Lee Farm, Wycoller
- NGR SD 9420 3870
- Altitude 250m
- Orientation of barn doors east-west
- The barn and adjoining farmhouse are unlisted
- Date of Survey 18th June 2014

Description of the Building

The barn is planned with four bays and built of coursed, squared stonework. The roof covering to the south is of blue slate and that to the north of grey slate. The original roof structure has been replaced with queen post trusses and purlins, which are nineteenth century in date. There are projecting barn doors to the east and west elevations. At a later date additional buildings have been added onto the original barn to the east, west and north elevations.

Historical Record

The historical record of the site, together with that of Wycoller is presented elsewhere.¹ The deeds held by the present owners of the property refer to the sale of Parson Lee in October 1772 to Henry Owen Cunliffe from Whalley Abbey. No further details are given as to the identity of the vendor. The property is one of the first bought by Cunliffe when he arrived in Wycoller in the summer; the purchase price was £840.00. In 1859 the farm was sold for £1250.00 and again in 1959 when the value of £1200.00 was slightly less than 100 years previously.

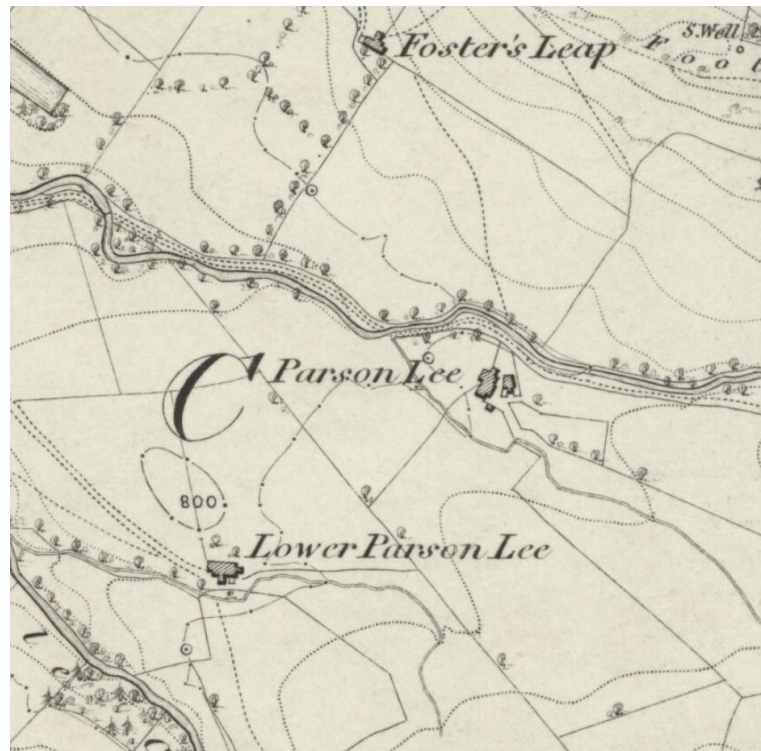
Setting

The barn is sited adjacent to the farmhouse and is located within the Township of Wycoller alongside the ancient road leading from Colne across the Moss to Keighley and Haworth. Wycoller Beck flows close by to the north.

There is some evidence of earlier settlement to the east of the farmhouse where a level platform is evident. Some worked stonework has been recovered from this area. The farmhouse is largely Victorian but retains some elements of an earlier building. To the south of the barn runs a narrow gully which leads on to pasture to the east. It is possible that an earlier farmhouse was sited in this position due to the topography, which could allow for the collection of animals at this point.

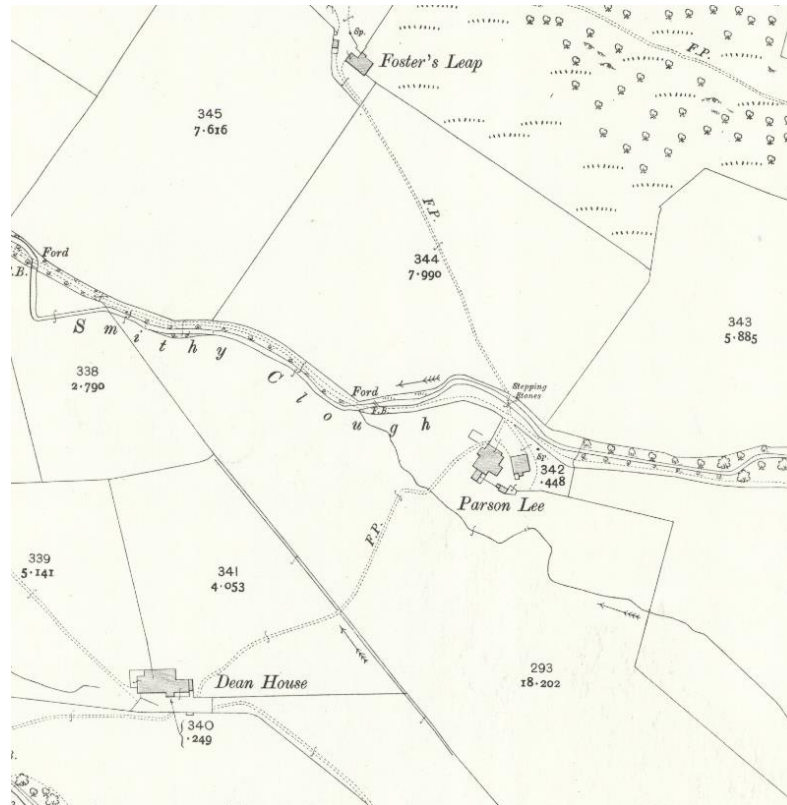
Map Regression

The first edition map of 1848 shows the barn and the farmhouse, together with a small building situated to the south east of the barn. A projection is shown to the west elevation which could indicate the barn doors, this is not shown on the east elevation. The road from Wycoller to Howarth is clearly shown.



The map of 1910 25 inch map shows the barn, farmhouse and the small building to the south east. The west wall to the barn is shown as before. The barn door to the east is not shown as being central and it would appear that the two extensions to the east elevation had not been built, which are shown on Fig. 1. The modern extension to the east elevation is not shown. Doubt must be placed on the accuracy of this map.

The site name remains the same although the name of Lower Parson Lee farm has been changed to Dean House.



The Plan (Fig. 1)

The barn measures internally 8.400m in width and 14.950m in length and is built to a high degree of accuracy, there being little variation on the opposing internal dimensions. The barn is divided into four bays of equal width.

Within the northern and southern end bays stalls were set out for cattle with a hayloft over. Door openings were formed in the east and west walls to each of these end bays. The original haylofts were supported on projecting corbels set into the two gable walls and projected 3.130m (south) and 3.90m (north) into the barn. There is no evidence of the original floor in these areas.

Double projecting wagon entrances to the east and west are placed in the second bay measured from the north (pl. 1). The two projecting barn doors are set directly opposite each other and measure 3.350m (3.380m) in width. The amount of projection is 1.820m (1.860m). Across the width of the barn between the doors the floor is made up of large conjoining slabs of stone. A further door is formed in the west wall adjacent to the cattle stalls giving access into the central bays.

Four vents are set into each of the two gable walls below the hayloft. The splayed vents are formed with large pieces of stone together with the stone members forming the external splayed jambs together with a similar head. Vents at high level were seen to both haylofts.

The original barn was extended by small areas either side of the eastern barn door and

subsequently a modern extension was built on the west side.

External Walls

The external walls are built of good squared coursed masonry and the internal face is similar. Large quoins with a punched finish are built into the external angles (pl. 2). The inner and outer leaves of stonework do not appear to have been adequately tied together and this is particularly evident to the south west corner where the two leaves appear to have separated. The top course and third course from the top to the south gable are made up of larger squared stones, which are not seen elsewhere in the building (pl. 3).

The two doors serving the cattle stalls to the east elevation are of higher quality than those set in the west wall having splayed jambs with stop ends and a chamfered lintel with rounded corners (pl. 4). The three door openings to the west have simple splayed jambs and heads. In all instances the lintels to the west are very large and are set as quoins to the south west and north west corners; the lintel over the south-west door measures 2.300m long by 600mm deep and 300mm thick (pl. 2 and 5). This is a similar detail to that seen at the barn at Bracken Hill, Wycoller.

Corbels are set approximately 500mm below the underside of the tie to the trusses. The four to either side of the two barn doors appear to have been cut out of a single piece of stone forming the internal quoin to the return of the projecting barn doors (Pl. 6). The quoins to the hayloft are of high quality.

The Roof (Fig. 2)

The roof covering comprises blue slate to the western pitch with stone tabling over the gable walls and grey stone slate to the east. The change in the roof covering probably came about due to the failure of the roof covering to the western pitch as it was on the `weather` side of the building. The ridge is made up of cut stone ridge pieces. The end ridge piece to each gable has a four-sided base formed to receive a decorative finial (pl. 3).

The roof structure is made up of four equally spaced queen post trusses with a ridge piece and three purlins to each side with the exception of the wagon doors where there are five. All the timbers are modern and appear to be of pine.

The presence of projecting corbels approximately 500mm below the underside of the present tie beam to the trusses is unusual and suggests the original form of the roof. It is possible that the ends of each principal rafter were supported on an arched bracket which was supported on the corbel. The tie would have been placed at a higher level

some distance above the top of the walls (e.g. Charles and Charles 1984, 39)². The rafter and the arched brace would fit over the top of the wall and any lateral thrust due to the lack of a tie beam associated with a truss would be taken up by the thick external walls. This could account for the need of an external buttress at Bracken Hill barn at Wycoller, which has a similar roof. This would suggest that the barn is of an early date at a time when the builders were more familiar with constructing timber buildings than stone. The ties to the trusses are presently propped from the corbel.

The tops of the east and west walls appear to have been raised by approximately 300-400mm and this is almost certainly due to the placing of the present trusses and purlins and the need to raise the external wall due to a change in the design of the roof (pl. 7). The west truss foot to the bay to the south of the wagon door has been cut into large stone blocks forming the return angle to the door opening. This would seem to have been a later arrangement.

Discussion

Although the design of the barn differs from that of Bracken Hill, Wycoller the architectural details and dimensions are similar in many respects.

The span of 8.400m is identical and the width of the barn doors almost equal. The use of exceptionally large lintels over the doorways to the west elevation echoes their similar use at Bracken Hill, as does the use of a lintel to act as a quoin at the corner of the building. This can also be seen in the use of fine corbels to support the hayloft and trusses. The use of large, squared stone to the upper part of the south elevation reflects their use in the lower part of the west gable wall at Bracken Hill, together with the splayed heads to the vent and the finials to the roof (pl. 8). It is suggested that Parson Lee is the later due to the large squared masonry being placed at the top of the south gable wall and that at Bracken Hill can be seen in the lower courses.

The presence of corbels below the trusses at both barns is unusual and has not been seen elsewhere locally, except as stated above. It is inconceivable that they would not have had a functional use and their size suggests a substantial structural purpose. This would support the alternative early form of roof put forward in the appendix.

The variation in the detailing to the external door openings to the east and west elevations is unusual as one would have expected similar detailing to both elevations. The appearance of the doors to the east elevation reflects a much higher standard of workmanship and detail; this could be because they faced the farmhouse. It is unlikely that they have been reused from a former building due to matching stonework.

The barn is unusual in many respects and the possible connection with Whalley Abbey

could suggest that certain parts of the building such as the roof finials and perhaps the corbels together with some of the masonry emanated from there. The dimensional accuracy of the building, together with the quality of the original work, is high. There can be no doubt that the builders of this barn and that of Bracken Hill were the same and that they obtained many building materials for the building from the same source. It is suggested that the building predates the barn at Bracken Hill by a few years and could date from the first half of the seventeenth century.

It is strongly recommended that repairs are carried out in the short term to the south gable wall so as to stabilize the building. It is also our opinion that the building should be placed on the statutory list of Listed Buildings.

Notes

1. Bentley, John, 1975, *Portrait of Wycoller*, Nelson; Folley, E. W., 2004, *Romantic Wycoller*, Nelson.
2. Charles, F. W. B. with Charles, Mary, 1990, *Conservation of Timber Buildings*, Stanley Thornes.

Acknowledgements

The Archaeological Group gratefully acknowledge the help and assistance given by Mr and Mrs J. B. Hodgson who allowed unlimited access to the barn. The help given by members of the Group not named is also appreciated.

Appendix

An assessment of the primary roof configuration (Fig. 3)

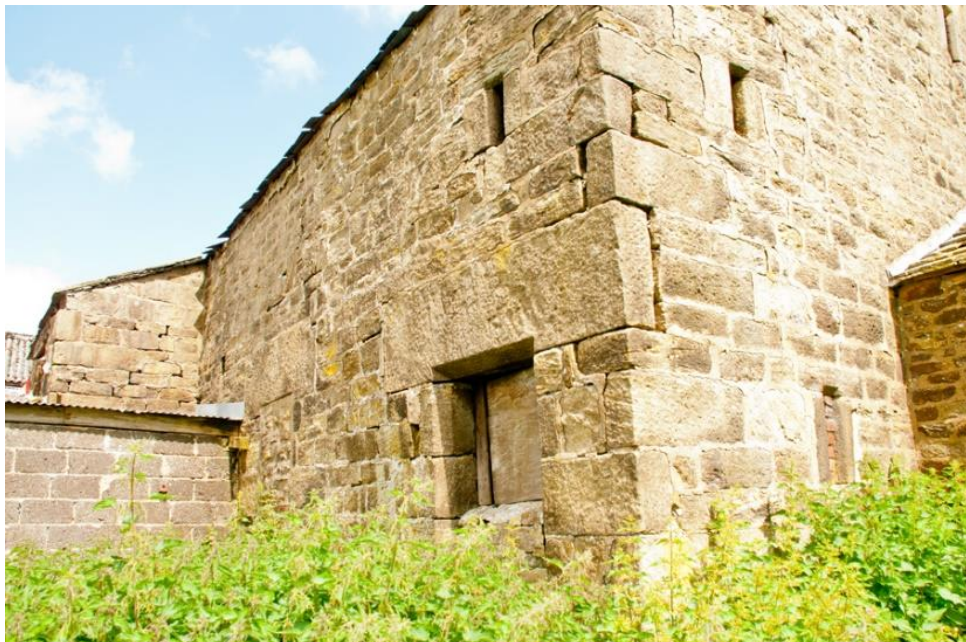
From the existing site evidence, both the barn at Parson Lee and that at Bracken Hill, Wycoller had the same primary roof configuration. This is shown in the presence of projecting stone corbels on the internal face of the external walls some short distance below the top course. The corbels of the barn at Parson Lee appear to be of similar heights, although the levels have not been checked. At Bracken Hill the present trusses rest on corbels made up of a series of projecting courses; the top of the corbels does not correspond in some cases to the original, whose position cannot be verified with certainty. The drawn reconstruction is based on evidence from Parson Lee Barn with a wall plate shown in the position as seen at Bracken Hill.

It is possible that the primary roof was covered in thatch rather than slate. The roof covering in the reconstruction is shown with this material; if it were incorrect and stone slate was used the pitch could have been less at around thirty five degrees and the slates laid as shown on the accompanying drawing. The pitch of any roof is determined by the roof covering and exposure. Generally speaking, the smaller the unit of roof cover then the greater the exposure, the steeper the pitch. Thatch requires a minimum pitch of 45 deg. In a sheltered position; this has been assumed in the reconstruction where there is evidence of a steeper primary pitch.

It would appear that when the roof was replaced with the present arrangement, the roof trusses were placed on the top of the existing walls (pl. 7). The external walls were then raised to cover the ends of the truss where they rested on the wall and to allow the spars to bear on the top of the external wall. These raised sections of walling can clearly be seen internally and externally at both barns. The primary roof form would appear not to have incorporated a tie beam placed at the bottom of the principal rafters with these rafters bearing on a shaped bottom member bearing on the corbels. This member could have been adjusted in height to take up any variation in levels. A tie would then have been placed at around first purlin height with a possible additional tie positioned higher up.



Pl.1 East elevation showing barn doors and later extension to south side.



Pl. 2 Detail of large quoins and lintel to south-west corner.



Pl. 3 Detail of south gable showing decorative finial and deeper courses to upper section of the gable wall.



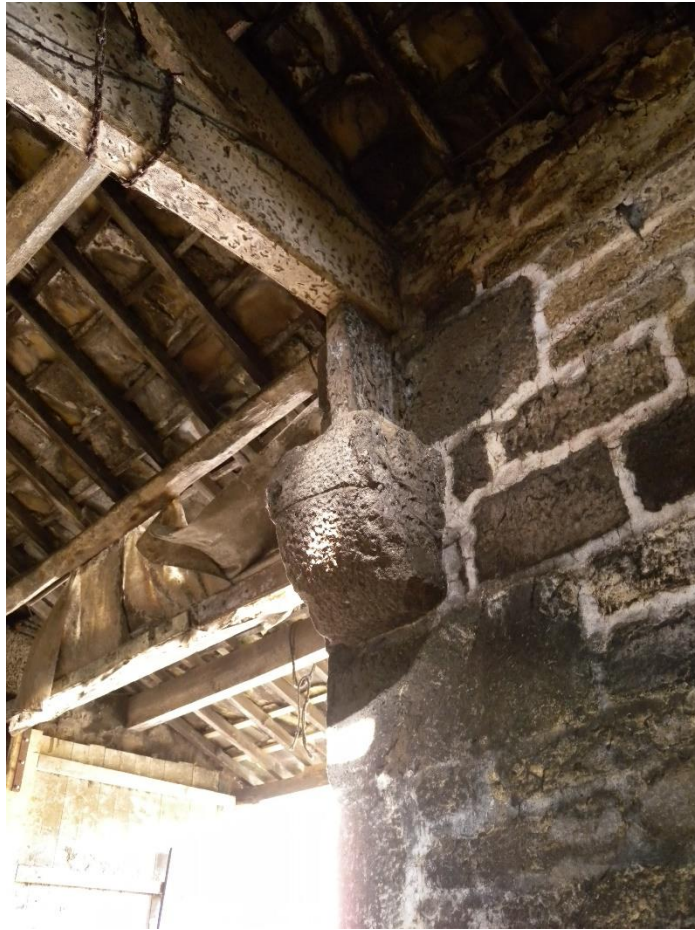
Pl. 4 Door to south southern corner of east elevation showing splayed jambs and rounded corners to the curved head.



Pl. 5 Door to shippon at north end of west elevation with splayed head and jambs.



Pl. 6 Corbel and quoin to barn door cut from a single piece of stone.



Pl. 7 Corbel and truss to east wall note raised external wall around truss foot.



Pl. 8 The barn at bracken Hill, Wycoler seen from the west.

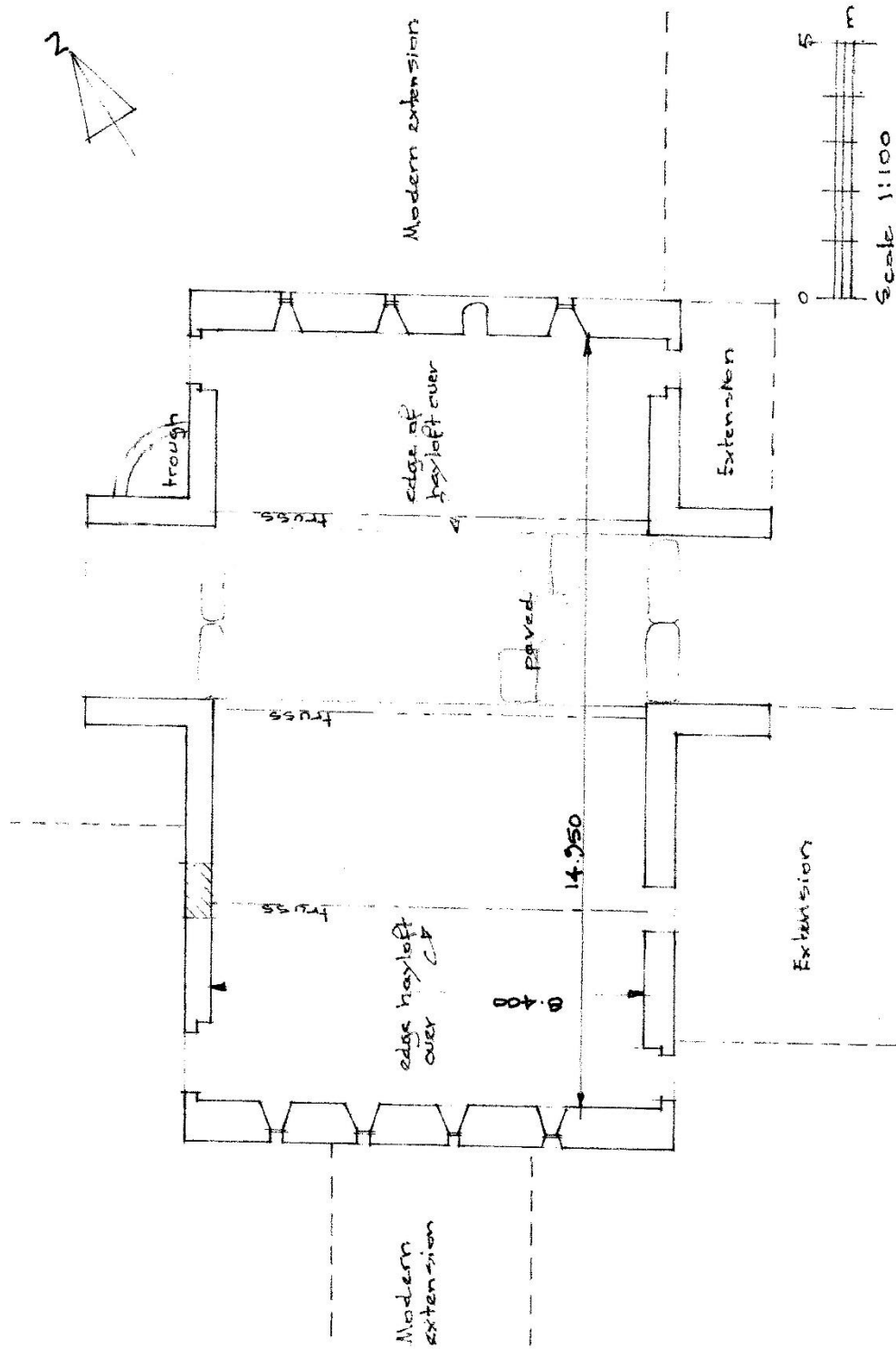
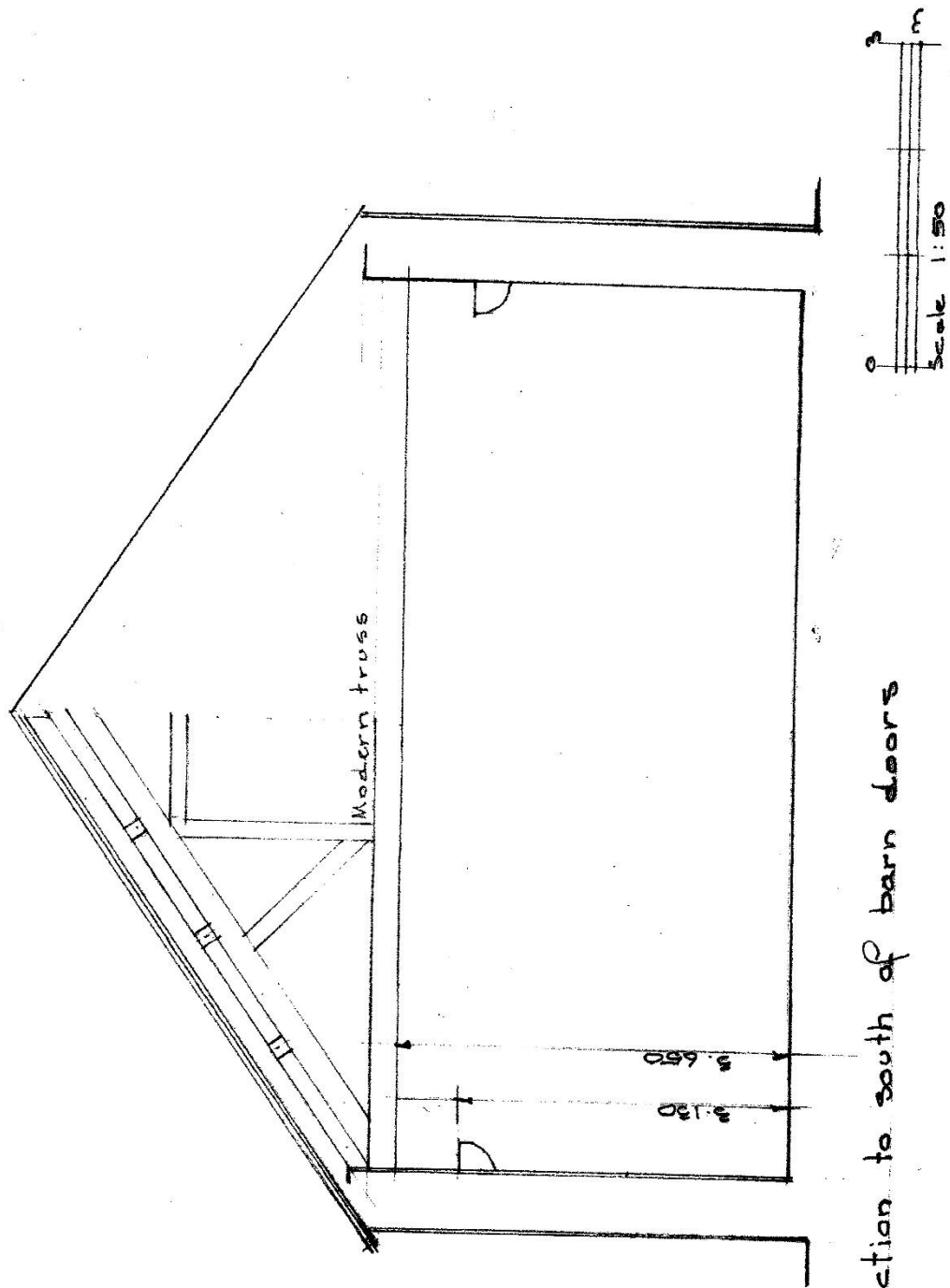


FIG 1 PARSON LEE BARN WYCOLLER



Section to south of barn doors

FIG. 2 PARSON LEE BARN WYCOLLER

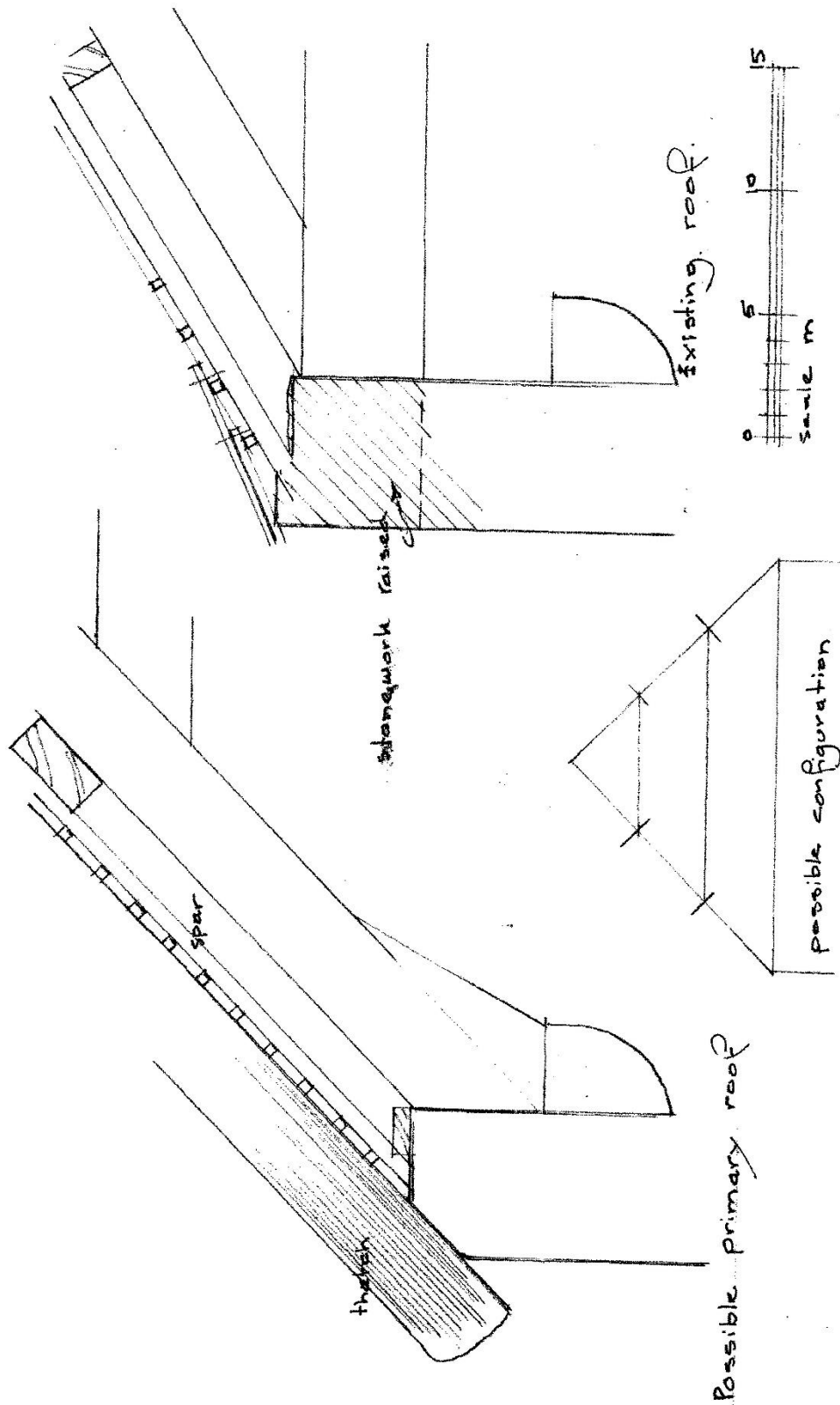


Fig.3 BRACKEN HILL BARN + PARSON LEE BARN WYCOLLER
EXISTING AND POSSIBLE PRIMARY ROOF ARRANGEMENTS.