

## HORTON HISTORY GROUP .

Photographs, North Yorkshire Vernacular Reports and Reports written by Barbara Hutton, are listed and shown in the two volumes prepared in February 1995, by RGKG.

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Also included are descriptions of Horton, Selside and Newhouses, written by Barbara Hutton, and in each volume there is a map showing the approximate position of each building.

An index detailing the contents of each volume is situated at the front of each volume, and the latest listed buildings report is to be found at the end of Volume One, and the older edition is to be found at the end of Volume Two, which may give further information upon detailed investigations.

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS / DESCRIPTIONS / REPORTS IN VOLUME ONE.

Address, and number of pages.

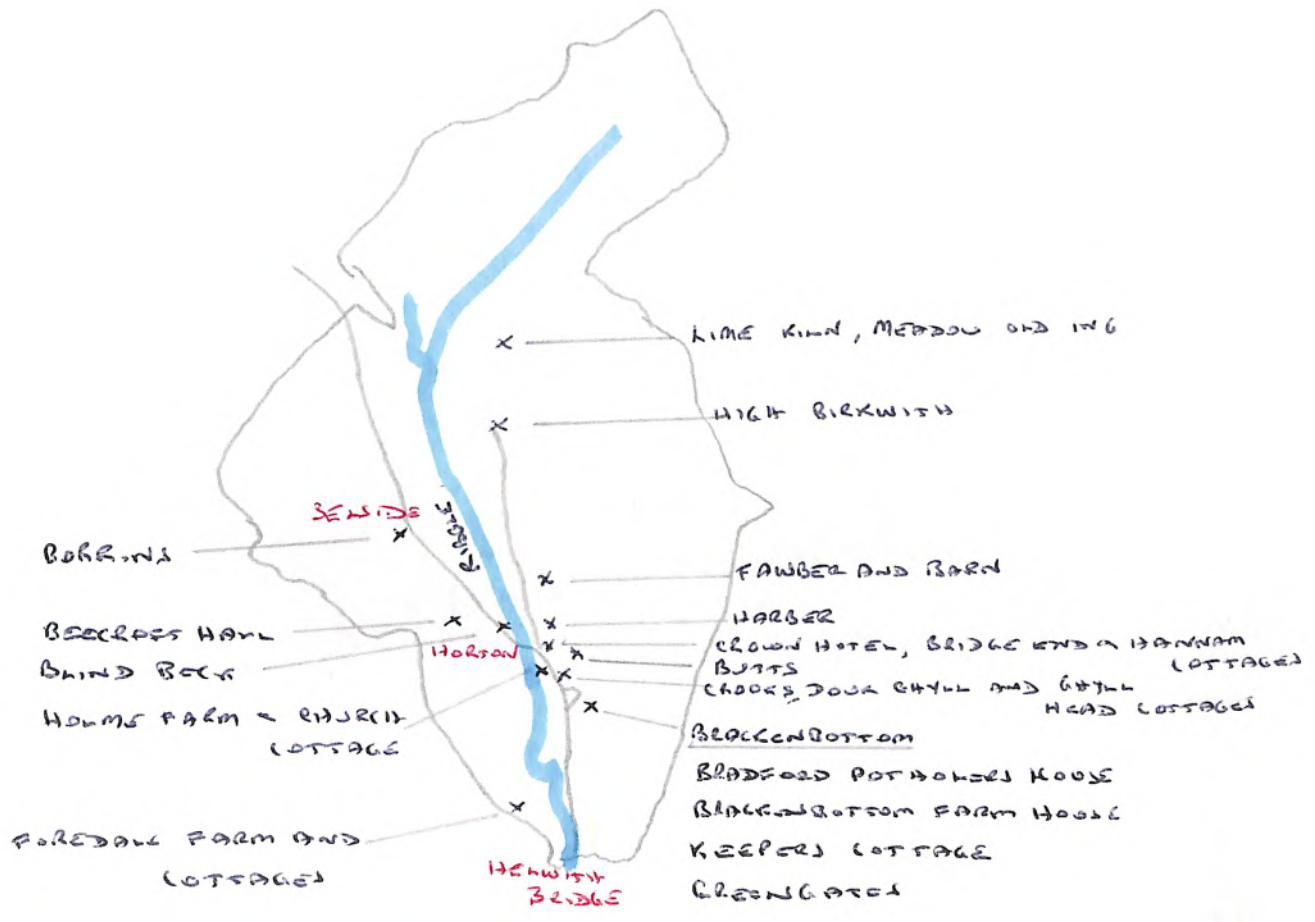
- Barn opposite Crook's, Horton--1.
- Beecroft Hall, Horton--4.
- Blind Beck, Horton--1.
- Borrins, Selside--2.
- Brackenbottom Farm House--4.
- Bradford Potholers House, Brackenbottom--1.
- Bridge End Cottage & Hannam Cottage, Horton--1.
- Butts, Horton--1.
- Capstick's Farmhouse & Tithe Barn, Studfold--2.
- Church Cottage, Horton--1.
- Crooks Farm, Horton--1.
- Crooks Farm Barn, Horton--1.
- Crown Hotel, Horton--1.
- Douk Ghyll, Horton--1.
- Fawber, Nr.Newhouses-1.
- Fawber Barn, Nr.Newhouses--1.
- Foredale Farm, Nr.Helwith Bridge--2.
- Foredale Cottage, Nr.Helwith Bridge--2.
- Ghyll Head Cottages--2.
- Greengates, Brackenbottom--1
- Harber, Horton--1.
- High Birkwith--1.
- Holme Farm, Horton--1.
- Keepers Cottage, Brackenbottom--1.
- Lime Kiln, dry laithe, Meadow Old Ing.

North Yorkshire Vernacular Reports in Volume One.

- Beecroft Hall, Horton--Report No.970.
- Blind Beck, Horton--Report No.961.

Overleaf are shown the locations of photographs included in Volume One.

Map giving the approximate positions of the photographs included in Volume One, in the Parish of Horton in Ribblesdale.



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Horton-in-Ribblesdale is a very large parish with an interesting settlement pattern, in one of the finest landscapes of the Dales. There is the principal village, or kirk town, from which the parish is named, and hamlets that may be equally old in origin at Selside, Newhouses, Rowe, Brackenbottom and Studfold. Then there are secondary settlement-foci like that at New Inn and by the Vicarage, and a large number of isolated farmsteads ranging in size from Lodge Hall at Ribblehead to little Harbor off the Newhouses road. Most of the buildings use traditional techniques, local materials and choose from the small range of standard plans common in the Dales generally. They are chiefly 18th and 19th century, at least as far as external appearance goes but there are a large number of dated houses most of which are 17th or early 18th century, and some indications of yet earlier remains. Houses nearly always face south east, with one northeast and one southwest, but their builders had a knack of arranging them in delightful groupings, either with their own barns and outbuildings or together with other houses in hamlets of which Selside and Newhouses are outstanding. The houses sit appropriately to the slopes and contours of a landscape that is almost never flat, and are beautifully blended with tree groups and streams. They have a lot to teach us about designing a landscape and about balancing masses of stone and hillside, roof and wall and setting buildings in relation to other buildings and to roads, field walls and streams. The details of the houses have usually been designed to make a balanced elevation of one kind or another, but very often they have been redesigned to fit in with different requirements arising later, so they make an interesting study. We can preserve some of the characteristic flavour of the Horton scene if we always maintain the traditional scale of buildings, never extend them further than the proportions of the original will take, keep low roofs and replace old low buildings with new low ones, old long buildings with new long ones and so on. It goes without saying that traditional materials are best; to alter the shape of a window is the surest way to ruin the appear-



ance of a house; if you like modern buildings, don't turn an old house into a modern one but start from scratch and you'll get a better result. But those who live in Listed Buildings have all the advantage of centuries of history behind them, so that such a house maintained in good repair will continue to increase in value indefinitely.

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Barn opposite Crooks Farm, Horton-in-Ribblesdale.





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Beecroft Hall SD 800726

The house is built of thin coursed rubble heavily mortared over, and appears to be a standard late 18th century two-room-deep house. The windows, however, are all different, and an internal carved stone doorhead suggests the house was originally one room deep. The staircase with turned 18th century balusters and square newels, is of good quality and the house would be well worth restoring were it not for the propinquity of the quarry.



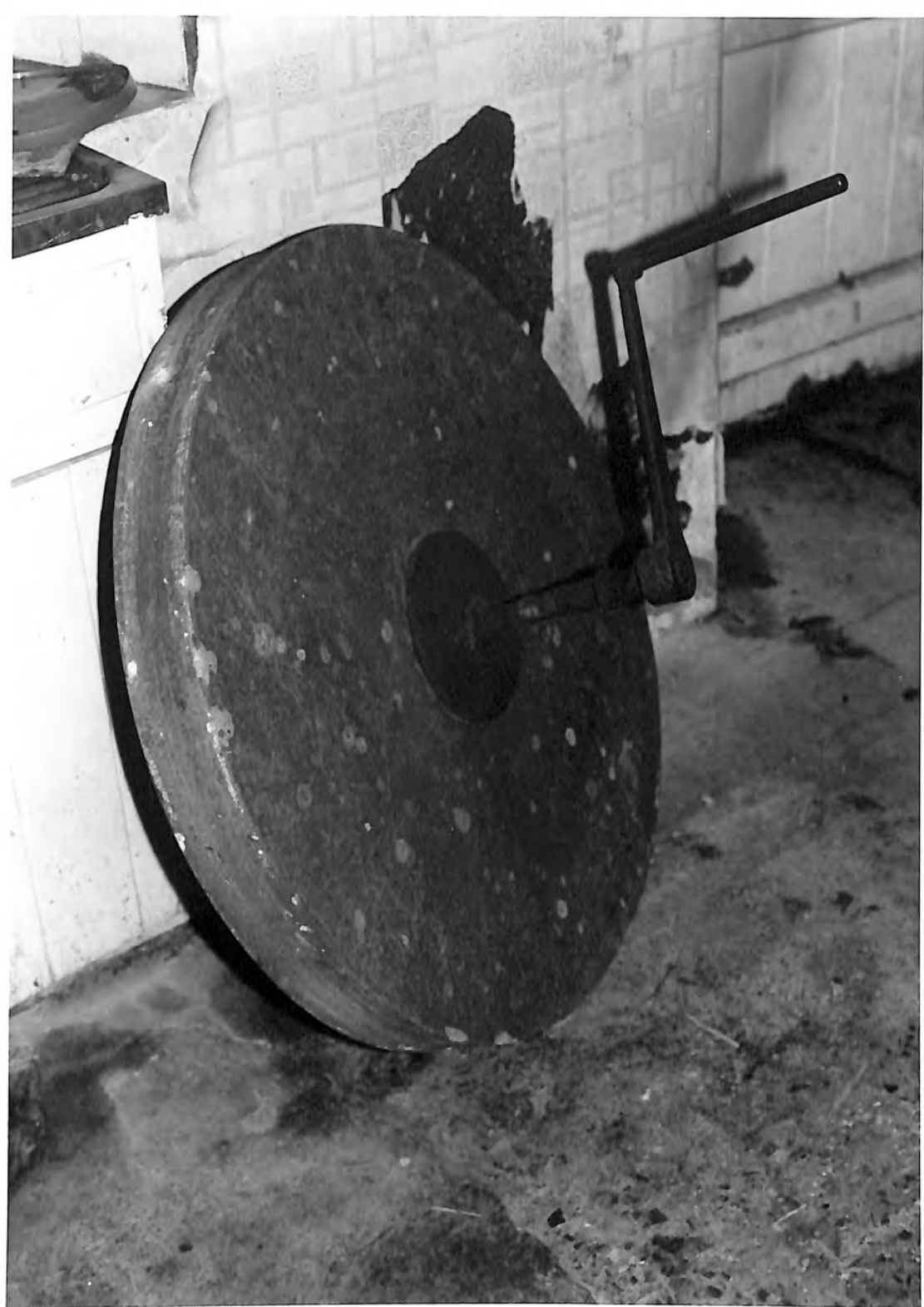
Two larger photos of each in file, plus NYVB Report 970.



Approach to Beecroft Hall and buildings.  
Larger photograph in file.















Beecroft Hall (3).



Date-stone, Beecroft Hall.  
Larger photograph in file.





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Beecroft Hall (2).

Grinding Wheel,  
Beecroft Hall.



Stairs,  
Beecroft Hall.

Larger photograph of each in file.

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NORTH YORKSHIRE (W.R.)

HORTON IN RIBBLESDALE, Beecroft Hall. SD 799725. visited 16-5-84

Beecroft Hall, originally the seat of the Rectory Manor of Horton, stands in a slight hollow on the lower slopes of Moughton at just under 900 ft, approached by a farm track from the Horton-Selside road. The earlier approach was directly across from New Inn, where there is still a footpath. The house is two storeys high and two rooms deep on plan, built of stone roughly mortared over, with a slate roof.

The site slopes down from west to east. At the west end of the south front is an added block standing gable-end on, whose joint with the main building is inconspicuous. It has only one upper window facing south, with a hung sash of two panes to a sash; the gable has plain bargeboards. The main house front has a stone chimney at each end of the roof ridge; there are two square upper windows in recessed-splayed stone frames with a slate drip-course over each. The lower windows are larger and framed in cement but they also have narrow dripstones. The front door is framed in plain milled sandstone blocks. A plinth runs along the base of the wall.

The east gable end has rows of boldly-projecting through stones; there is a single circular window to the attic, placed well to the south of centre. The lower half of this end wall is covered by an added leanto stone shed.

The north wall of the main building is again marked by rows of through stones. Most of the windows have recessed splayed frames, except that of the kitchen which is framed in cement. In the western addition, which presents a gable end to the north, there is one sash window at each level and a back door.

The west end has a large stone cistern for collecting rainwater from the roofs built against it towards the northern end. There is a pair of low windows for the dairy at the southern end of the west wall.

Entering the house by the back door in the added block, one sees immediately on the left a fine stone doorway into the main house. The gritstone frame is chamfered and cut to a design of two semicircles flanking a triangle which resembles a doorway at Lawkland Hall. The surface within the triangle is uneven, but attempts to decipher an inscription there failed - we cannot be sure if there is anything under the paint or not. This is evidently the main entrance doorway of an earlier house, but whether it is in situ is another matter. Through the door one enters a fairly small kitchen, with a blocked fireplace in the west wall. There is an east-west ceiling beam with wide splays on both sides; the north window has been enlarged and is modern without splayed reveals.

A door on the far side of the kitchen leads to the staircase, which has turned balusters and a rather thick, flat handrail. It runs north to a half-landing lit by a two-light window, and has a cupboard underneath with steps down into it. Beyond this is a dairy with a rank of slate shelves against the south wall for cheeses, and slate slabs on two other walls, one with a drainage hole.

From the foot of the stairs a passage runs south to the front door between two parlours. A pair of narrow-chamfered ceiling beams crosses both rooms, but they appear to be in two lengths set into the thick stone cross wall on the east side of the passage. Both front rooms have early 20th century windows and modern fireplaces let into the wall thickness; in the west room there is a recessed cupboard to the south of the fireplace. The floors are surfaced with slate in slabs up to 1 x 3 metres in size.



On the first floor the major bedroom is in the southeast corner and has a north-south ceiling beam. From its doorway a passage runs along the south side of the spine wall behind the other front room into the upper storey of the western addition. There are two small rear bedrooms, and above the entrance-passage are the attic stairs.

All the stone internal walls rise right up to the roof. At the back of the house, the ceiling of the stairwell is under the rafters, and over the rooms on either side of this the roof is supported by purlins set into the cross walls. These attic spaces are not floored. The southern half of the house, however, is roofed differently. There are two half-trusses with deep principals supporting four sets of overlapping purlins of substantial size, lightly trenched into the back of the principals. There are angled supporting struts as drawn, and numbered i or ii according to the truss; these attics are floored.

The ground floor of the western addition has a large dairy to the south with slate slabs round three sides and two east windows. A stone water-trough is bisected by the dividing wall between the two rooms. The north room is presumably a back kitchen, and has at some time had a set-pot with its flue running into the back of the kitchen chimney.

#### Historical Development.

Beecroft is an ancient site first mentioned in 1377; the earlier form of the name was Bygcrofte meaning barley field. The earliest feature of the present building is the stone doorway which is 17th century, probably dating from about 1660-1690. About that time we have evidence suggesting that the Wilson family, who owned Horton Rectory and its manor, were then living in Horton, and it seems likely that they were the builders of the house to which this door belongs. The two upper south windows and four of the back ones are re-used two-light mullioned windows of comparable date.

The staircase has rather chunky turned balusters and a thick, flat handrail suggesting a date around 1700.

In 1723 Mrs Jane Wilson died and was buried at Horton, and at some time between then and 1738 the house was let to a tenant. An inventory of 1738 mentions a hall, a little parlour and a back room; the parlour loft and the loft over the house (= hall); there was also a turfhouse which was lofted, possibly but not necessarily part of the house. These rooms suggest a house like this in plan:



and with only lofts rather than a proper upper storey. This might almost be a 16th century cruck house from the description; it certainly does not appear to be the sort of house the present staircase could have been built for, and the rooms do not correspond to the present rooms which are two large parlours and nothing that could be called a hall or house. In 1739 the tenant was John Carr.

In 1742 'a reckon and three pairs of bedstocks in the garrets' were among the items added to the tenant's inventory. Garrets suggest the roof-space over chambers, while lofts sound like substitutes for chambers: was the house rebuilt between 1738 and 1742 in its present form? It can only be said that the plan is appropriate to that period, and the roof although most extraordinary dates from about then.

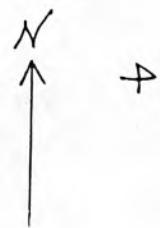
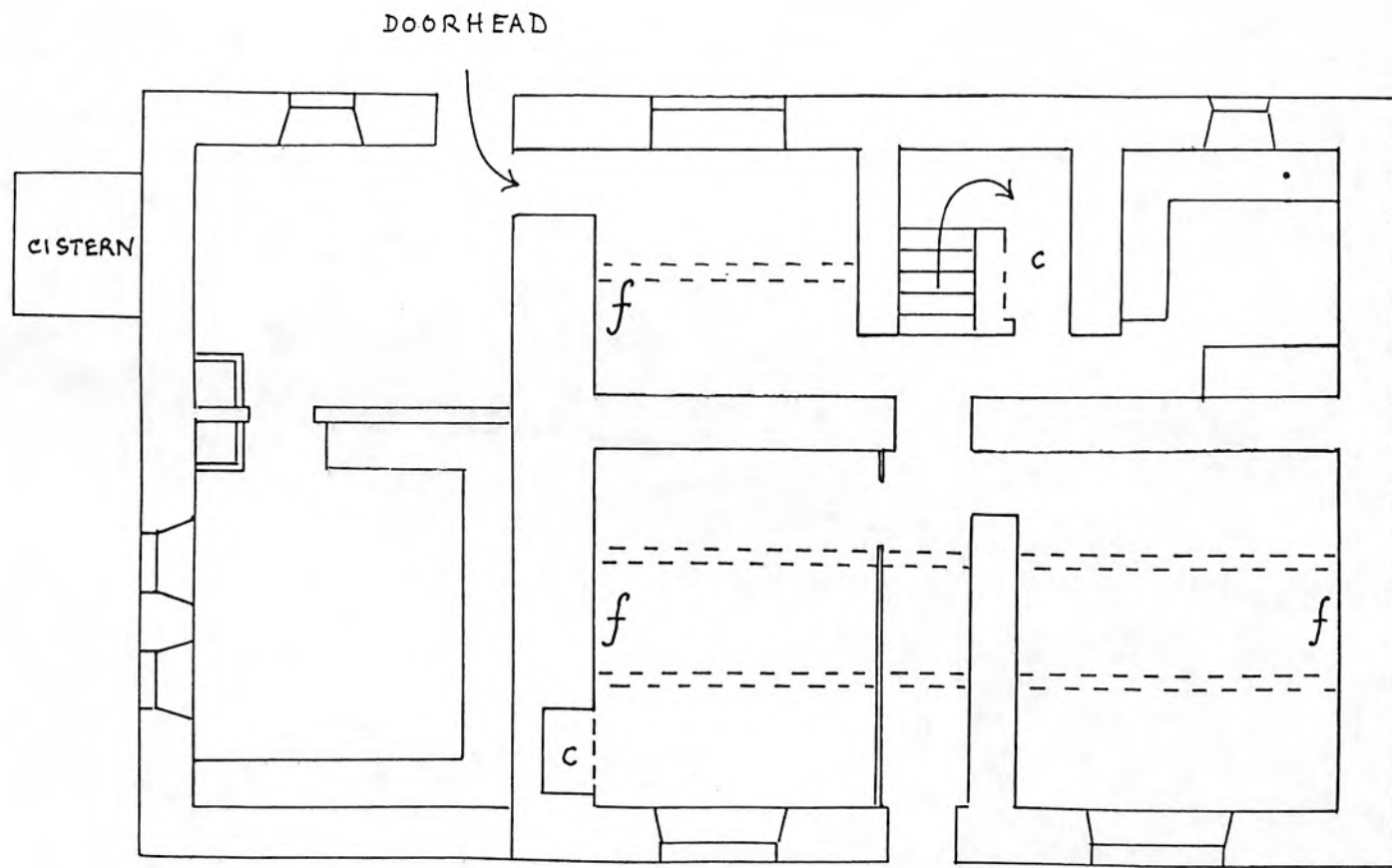
In 1772 John Jackson paid £70 rent for Beecroft Hall, and he was still the tenant ten years later. A lime kiln was built at Beecroft in that year and 300 loads of coal bought for use in it. Thomas Carr, carpenter, mended some doors at the Hall in December 1772.

In June 1774 packthread was bought 'for lines for seting out Beecroft Hall - 3d'. In November 1774 bills were paid for glazing £2-16-10, plastering £4-13-0, as well as for walling and for roofing materials though unfortunately the sums for these are included with work elsewhere; 2000 latt nails and 6000 tearing (= plastering) nails cost 19s 6d, and 700 four-foot sap latts 12s 10d. Matthias was paid for steel to make a new lock and handle for the outer door, 5s 6d. Perhaps the most significant sum was for 11 yards of hewed rigging for the roof (16s 6d): the roof of the western addition is exactly 11 yards long, whereas that of the main roof is 18 inches longer so that amount of rigging would not be enough for it. It seems likely, then, that the accounts are for the western addition to Beecroft Hall.

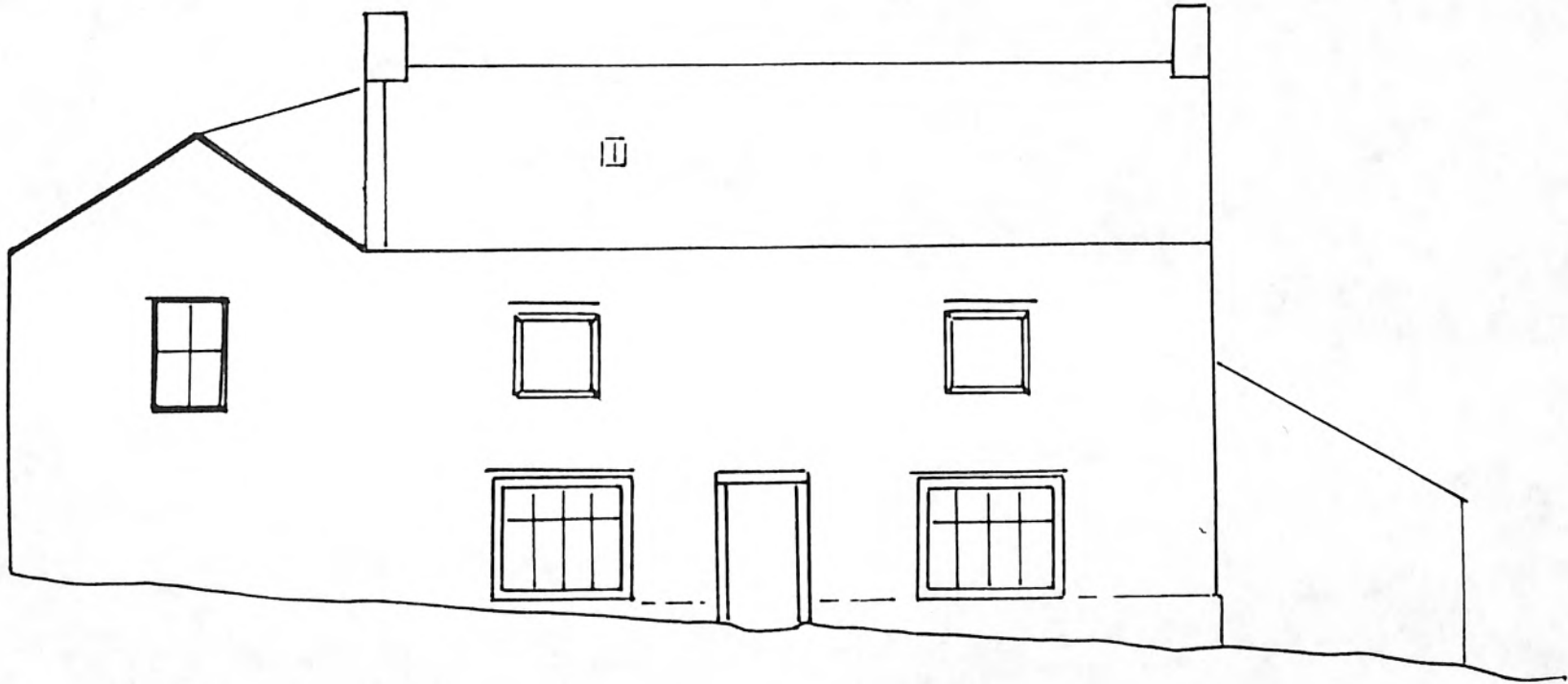
Its present windows are mid 19th century, and in 1851 Richard Knowles was farming 412 acres from Beecroft Hall.

Only minor alterations have been made since. The house is now uninhabited because of the proximity of the quarry, although there are hopes that it may be brought into use again.

Barbara Hutton.



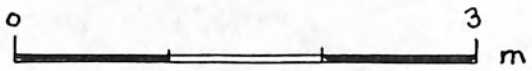
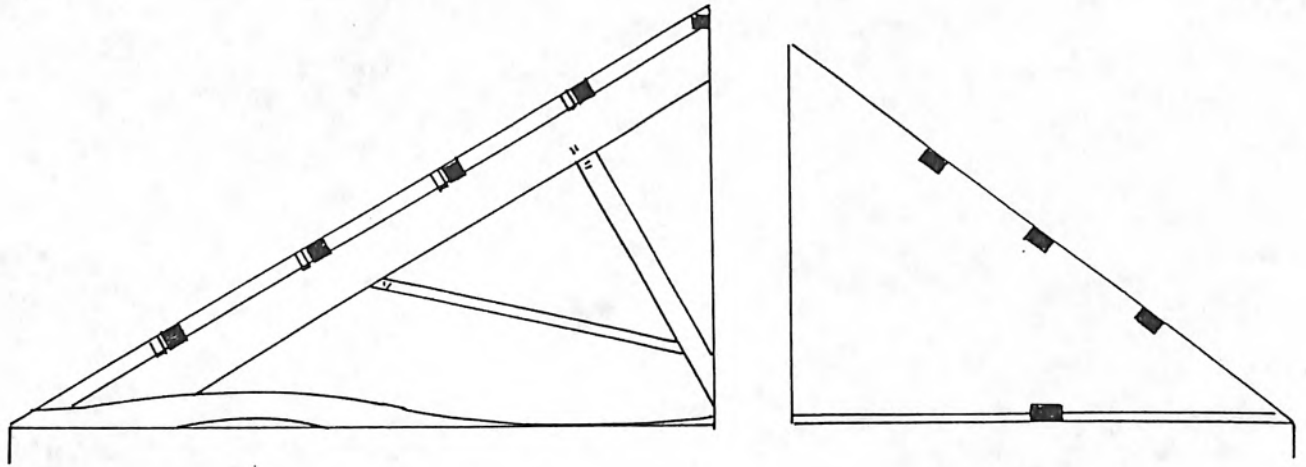




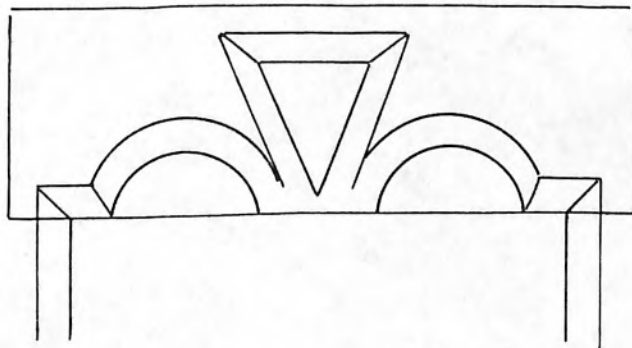
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SOUTH ELEVATION 1:100

6



ROOF SECTION 1:50



SKETCH OF DOORHEAD - NOT TO SCALE

[Extract from 'The Craven and North West Yorkshire Highlands' by Harry Speight, published in 1892]

CHAPTER XLII.

MOUGHTON FELL AND ALUMN POT.

Beecroft Hall and the Wilsons--Moughton Fell -Erratic boulders-Interesting geological sight--Moughton Fell Cave--Selside--Alumn or Helln Pot-- A stupendous chasm--What means Alumn or Allan?--The Celtic river Allan, and local family Aleman, a suggested explanation-Immense size of the rift-First descent of the Pot--Subsequent descents and explorations --Professor Dawkin's description.

LEAVING Horton station by the wicket-gate on the west, or up side, you may pass over a large drift-hill to the retired farm-house at Beecroft. This was formerly a fine old hall, and the chief seat of the ancient manor of Beecroft, which in Elizabethan days comprised about a score tenements, with lands belonging thereto. After the dissolution of monasteries the manor came into possession of the Crown, and in 1568 we find it the property of Thomas Hennage, Esq., who also held the rectory of Horton at this time. About a century later the old hall was occupied by the Wilson family, and in the time of George I., the Rev. Thos. Wilson, D.D., a great benefactor to the church, resided here. Dr. Wilson received his early education at Sedbergh Grammar School, and became Dean of Carlisle. He died in 1778. His wife was a daughter of Josias Morley, Esq., of Scale House, Rylstone, who was lord of the manor of Beamsley and Clapham.

The tourist on leaving Beecroft Hall may proceed southwards over Moughton Fell, and by making a gingerly descent of the scars into the lonely Crummack valley, reach the romantic hamlet of Wharfe. From Wharfe there is a good road through Austwick either to Settle or Clapham.

## THE BEECROFTS OF HORTON IN RIBBLESDALE

### The Origin

Even the most modern Dictionaries of English surnames contain no explanation of Beecroft, although it is a distinctive and localised name. Beecroft also occurs as a place-name in exactly those areas where the family has resided for hundreds of years and it is clear that this is no coincidence but that the two are in some way connected.

There are four minor place-names, typical of which is Beecroft Hall in Horton in Ribblesdale. This has been explained simply by place-name experts as 'bee-croft', that is a field where bees were kept and theoretically this should also apply to the surname. However, all the argument about both the place-names and the surname overlooks one very important fact - the original spelling of the surname. There are three examples: 1379 Bygcroft, 1473 Bigcroft, 1544 Byggecrofte. Records confirm that these are early forms of Beecroft the surname and this opens up a new line of enquiry. In fact in Horton in Ribblesdale, where the surname first appeared, there was a fieldname Bigcrofte meaning not 'large field' but 'barley field'. Bygg was originally a Scandinavian word and Horton in Ribblesdale is certainly an area in which the Norsemen settled one thousand years ago.

It is in fact probable that all the minor localities now known as Beecroft took their name, paradoxically, from the family, for Beecrofts were settled throughout Yorkshire by the 16th century. We can now summarise what has been said and state that the family name Beecroft is derived from a small locality in Horton in Ribblesdale known as Bigcrofte and meaning simply barley field. Subsequently as the family became distributed over a wider area it gave its name to other small localities.

### Beecroft and its variants

Although Beecroft was originally Bigcroft, or Bygcroft and these spellings persisted for 200 years, they do not seem to have survived and the name is now most frequently spelt Beecroft, particularly in the West Riding of Yorkshire which is the original home of the family. In the 16th and 17th centuries as Bygcroft gave way to Beecroft several alternative spellings were commonly used. These can be seen in the case of one man living at Mill Hill in Leeds who was known alternatively as Edward Becroft, Beacroft or Beecroft, and a

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Ribblesdale family where the surname developed from Bygcroft, via Bickrofte and Bicroft, to Beecroft. The following is a list of variants now known to be surviving.

Beacroft	Beacraft	Beekroaft
Beecroft	Beecraft	Bycroft
Becroft	Becraft	

#### The Beecrofts in Yorkshire 1379-1650

In all probability Beecroft is a distinctive surname with a single family origin. The evidence for this is convincing for as we have seen, it has developed from Bigcroft which in turn owed its derivation to a tiny locality. There is no evidence that I know of for other identical place-names. Secondly, in the very full Poll Tax returns for Yorkshire of 1379 only two Beecroft families were taxed, both of them in villages in Ribblesdale not many miles apart. This suggests that the surname had become hereditary some years previously. The full entries for the families in 1379 read as follows:-

William de Bygcrofft et ux (and wife).....	iiiijd. (4 pence)
	(Horton in Ribblesdale)
Robert Bygcroft et ux .....	iiijd
	(Gisburn)

The fifteenth century is one for which comparatively few records survive. It was a turbulent period in English history and the documentary evidence on which the researcher must rely appears to have been one casualty of the disorder. A famous English historian G.M. Trevelyan, referring to this century said 'it is clear that the whole social fabric was affected by the general state of misrule'. It was also a period in which the traditional centres of the clothing trade, on which much of England's prosperity was built began to change. Those rural families which increased in numbers and prosperity tended not to remain rooted in one spot and in this the Beecrofts are typical. In the fifteenth century the surname became distributed over a much wider area and settled in several parts of Yorkshire where it is still common.

#### Rural distribution

In assessing this distribution and migration it should be said first of all that many Beecrofts continued to live and farm in Ribblesdale and the neighbouring valleys although they do not appear to have stayed long in Horton itself. One move took them over the hills into Wharfedale where they became tenants of

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Bolton Priory. The Priory records contain the following entry:

'1473 Robert Bigcroft holds 1 messuage (house with land), 1 bovate of land and 4 acres of forland, for which he pays 10 shillings 2 pence.'

This land was in the village of Appletreewick, a stronghold of the Beecrofts for hundreds of years. When a rental for the Priory was made at the Dissolution in 1539, two Beecrofts were tenants and from the description of the land, the line of descent from Robert seems assured:

'1539 8 shillings for the farm of 1 tenement and 1 bovate of land there with appurtenances, called Forland, .... in the tenure of James Becrofte this year.' (John Becrofte had a similar piece of land).

The number of wills registered by the Beecrofts of Appletreewick in the next hundred years is evidence of their standing in the community. Despite this they occasionally fell foul of the law and the West Riding Sessions records, reporting one of their misdemeanours also provides interesting information about the family's status:

'1641 William Beecroft of Appletreewick, a wheelwright and Thomas Beecroft of Girston (Grassington) a milner, fined 6 pence each for on 10th October assaulting and maltreating Peter Atkinson at Appletreewick. Both confess.'

In fact, from the sixteenth century onwards the surname spread throughout the western dales. It was established in Ribblesdale at Long Preston, Wigglesworth and Gisburn and it seems quite likely that these families were descended from the original Robert Bygcroft of Gisburn. We have seen how the name migrated to Wharfedale and in 1544 it appeared at Fewston in Mashburndale, in 1614 at Spofforth in lower Wharfedale, in 1586 in Airedale in 1618 in Nidderdale, and in 1679 in Lonsdale. All this migration took place within an area where farming was the basic way of life, but the Beecrofts did not confine themselves to farming. We know that in Wharfedale they became skilled tradesmen - milners and wheelwrights and their involvement in the Cloth Trade is revealed by a further extract from the Sessions Rolls which records the fact that in 1637, at Grindleton in Ribblesdale, two men Clerke and Threlfall stole 43 yards of woollen cloth, valued at 12 pence a yard - the property of Abraham Beecroft.

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### Urban distribution

From the very earliest times Beecrofts, as I said earlier, were attracted to thriving industrial or trading communities. In the sixteenth century this took them to places like Leeds and Halifax but in the previous century York, the county capital was still the magnet, drawing people from all over the kingdom. In 1454 Henry Becroft a wright was made free of the city as was Anthony, a fishmonger in 1555. A fascinating document of 1492 records the induction there into the Guild of Corpus Christi of Thomas Becrofte.

'Nomine Fratrum admissorum sive introductorum per dom.  
Johannes Bollyng capellanum cantartiae s. Thomae Martiris.'

Rather later than this wills registered at York show that Beecrofts were resident in the North and East Ridings of Yorkshire - at Scarborough 1618 and Hull 1620 but a document of 1461 shows that one Beecroft family had moved east of York over 150 years previously. The information is provided in the will of a yeoman farmer Richard de Ley. There are bequests in it to Thomas Bigcroft, Richard Bigcroft, and John Bigcroft - a priest at Huggate. The latter entry, taken together with the information about Thomas in York suggests that Beecrofts who did not go in for trade or farming, entered the church - a familiar enough occurrence at this time.

### The Beecrofts of Leeds

The Beecroft family has been well established in Leeds, a major industrial city now and a thriving town even in the 16th and 17th centuries, for at least 400 years. It would be more accurate perhaps to say that there have been two major periods of settlement there, from c. 1540 until c. 1690 and from c. 1760 until the present day and it is not yet possible to say whether one or two branches of the family is concerned.

In 1545 Edward Becroft was taxed at Beeston, a locality in Leeds and died there in 1582, having been twice married. His descendants can be traced in the parish registers and in his will dated the 22nd July 1582 in which he was described as a yeoman. Although the bulk of his estate passed to his son Robert, his granddaughter received the useful sum of 43s 4d. The witnesses to the will included Bryan Beeston of Beeston (Gentleman) and this suggests that Edward was a man of some status, possibly a tenant of the Beestons. It may even have been this connection which had brought the family to Leeds in the first place.

From 1545 until c. 1690 the Beecrofts were numerous in the growing town. They are mentioned in a dozen localities in Leeds either resident in the very heart of the town in Kirkgate, Boar Lane, Briggate and the Headrow

or in the ring of rapidly expanding hamlets, Beeston itself, Holbeck and Austhorpe. Occasionally the place of residence appears rather more picturesquely, if less accurately, as 'beyond ye bridge' or 'at Town end'. Furthermore a pattern began to emerge among the christian names given to the children and the most frequently used were Edward, William and John.

The 1640s appears to have been a crucial time for the Beecrofts, as for many other families. Plague and Civil War decimated the community and the parish registers are full of tragic entries. Families were large and many of the children did not survive much beyond the first year. George Beecroft of Hunslet Hall lost three children in the single month of May 1643 and Ralph Beecroft at least four in the 1640s. Peter Beecroft of 'beyond Leeds Bridge' born in 1619, had numerous children between 1642 and 1662 but his sons either died or migrated away from the city, for after the death of Margaret Beecrofte of Beecroft Lane in 1686, the surname disappeared from the city records until 1763.

#### The Rise to Prominence

However worthy the 17th century Beecrofts had been, they had made little impact on the city of Leeds - but this is far from the case with the branches of the family which have been established there since the latter years of the 18th century. It is impossible at the moment to say just where this branch of the family came from, probably from one of the family strongholds already mentioned or one of the numerous villages that ringed Leeds. What is interesting is the reappearance of the christian name George, which had last appeared in the city records 100 years previously. The long line of Georges begins with one whose death was recorded in 1793 at the age of 83. He was said to be the father of Mr Beecroft of Kirkstall Forge. Several generations, each naming its first son George built up the importance of this iron works and in a directory of 1853 George Beecroft was described as IRON MASTER, and lived at Kirkstall Abbey House close to the picturesque ruins of one of England's greatest and most ancient Monasteries. This man entered political life and after serving as a town councillor became a Member of Parliament for the Borough of Leeds in 1857. His son George, M.A., Mus. Bac. (Oxon) forsook industry and chose a scholarly life.

The same Directory for 1853 shows how integrated Beecrofts were in the life of the city. They manufactured iron and steel, were engineers and millwrights,



printers, tailors and watchmakers. Yet another George Beecroft was an innkeeper and William Beecroft kept a hostelry at 6 Bishopgate Street, known simply as Beecroft's Hotel. It is, however, in Whites Directory for 1881 that we find the first mention of the most famous Beecroft of all, Thomas Beecroft Sewing Machine Manufacturer. A delightfully nostalgic advertisement in the directory draws the reader's attention to the virtues of the 'Beecroft No 2', the 'Beecroft Paragon' and the 'Beecroft Simplex'.

#### Thomas Beecroft: Engineer and Inventor

Years before George Stephenson's famous 'Rocket' achieved world-wide fame, a Leeds pioneer had developed a steam engine which worked on the train lines at a local colliery. One of the men who worked with him was a Thomas Beecroft and since that date the Beecrofts have been connected with British engineering. It was, however, a later Thomas born in 1832 who brought the name Beecroft to the fore. As a boy of 19 he made, in his spare time, a practical sewing machine and was the founder of a firm of 'Clothiers Engineers'. In the 1850s they were the only firm of their type. Some of Thomas Beecroft's homemade sewing machines are still in existence and not so long ago one was certainly still in good working order. However it was also in 1851 that Isaac Merrit Singer, the American developed his sewing-machine. He went in for mass-production and by 1860 was the largest producer in the world. Meanwhile Thomas Beecroft had turned his attention to other inventions and in the 1860s he saw an opportunity and started to manufacture a specially designed, band-knife machine. The first of these purpose-built machines was installed in a local clothing factory in 1865 and in the next twenty-five years, scores of these machines were made and installed, and some are now in the premises at Hill Top works in Buslingthorpe Lane, Leeds and a Beecroft is still the owner.

#### Beecrofts in Yorkshire at the present day

The Beecrofts originated in a rural area which is even today relatively untouched by industry. As a consequence their expansion distributed the surname throughout Yorkshire at an early date and since then it has, in a variety of forms found its way into most areas where English is spoken. Nevertheless, a nucleus of Beecrofts still reside in their county of origin, probably as many as 250 families in fact. In Yorkshire Beecroft is by far

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the most frequent spelling although both Beacroft and Bycroft are occasionally found. Forms such as Beecraft and Becroft tend to be found in the London area and probably point to early migration there by some branch of the family.

If we look at the Beecrofts of Yorkshire now, several interesting points emerge. Perhaps one should note, first of all that the surname is still found in Ribblesdale where it originated. For example, the firm of John Beecroft Ltd., Fuel Oil Distributors located at Long Preston, less than 10 miles from either Horton in Ribblesdale or Gisburn where the first recorded Beecrofts lived. Other Beecrofts live and work in Wharfedale and Washburndale where the surname has been known for at least 500 years and the Post Office at Fewston is still kept by a Beecroft. The traditional occupation of farming is still carried on in both Wharfedale and Nidderdale after 400 years. However, the greatest concentrations of the name in Yorkshire today are in Sheffield and perhaps rather surprisingly in the East Coast port of Hull where the surname first appeared over 350 years ago.

Swinbank family group at  
Seecroft Hall in c. 1933.

From left -

John Swinbank,

Ann Swinbank (daughter-in-law)

Leonard Swinbank (2nd son)

Robert Swinbank (eldest son)

In front - Margaret Swinbank (granddaughter)  
(& youngest child of Leonard)

(Colour photo - Seecroft in the 1960's)



4, South View,  
Horton-in-Ribblesdale,  
Nr: Settle,  
North Yorks. BD24 0HQ.  
25. 1.'85.

Dear Mr Rahilly,

We are writing to you as we understand that the future of Beecroft Hall is under discussion at the moment. Our researches into the history of Horton have shown that the manor of Beecroft has been of importance locally for many hundreds of years, and the house, although at present in a serious state of disrepair, is of considerable interest as an example of farmhouses in this dale. It would be splendid if the house could be repaired and once again lived in, but if this is not possible, we would like to suggest that it would be an excellent place to house a 'Horton Heritage Centre',

We envisage a centre of which the main function would be to record and preserve in a living form the traditional skills and knowledge which enabled people to live in this remote area in past times. These would include farming methods, the making and using of traditional tool, cloth and clothing making, gathering and use of fuel, the making of furniture and furnishings, the making and use of medicines etc. The centre could be equipped as a 17th century farm, and a team of people could be built up who had mastered the various skills, and then courses could be run for children and adults. Also a variety of exhibitions could be mounted. At a later stage it might be possible to equip craft workshops where certain items could be produced for sale. We would hope to see the centre set up as a trust, with the purposes of education, of enhancing the village and of providing work for village people. Initially we would suggest trying to raise finance from various national heritage funds, with the ultimate aim of becoming financially self supporting.

We would be most interested to hear your views on the likelihood of Tarmac Roadstone being able to give any support to such a venture, and if there is any possibility of Beecroft Hall becoming available for this purpose.

Yours sincerely,

Shelia Haywood.



# Tarmac ROADSTONE

**Tarmac Roadstone Limited**

North West

Moorcroft

Lismore Road

Buxton

Derbyshire SK17 9AP

Telephone Buxton (0298) 5441

Telex 668631

Please reply to:

Our ref: AFR/PB

6th February, 1985.

Mrs. S. Haywood,  
4, South View,  
Horton-in-Ribblesdale,  
Nr. Settle,  
Yorkshire,  
BD24 OHQ.

Dear Mrs. Haywood,

Beecroft Hall

I received, with interest, your letter of 25th January, 1985 concerning the possible use of Beecroft Hall as the 'Horton Heritage Centre'. The future of the balance of Beecroft Farm still in our ownership, which includes Beecroft Hall, is being reviewed together with other property we own in and around Horton. Whilst I will certainly bring your letter to the attention of the committee conducting the review, I must point out that there are severe practical problems associated with your proposition. However, when all aspects have been considered and a policy formulated I shall contact you again to advise you of our conclusions.

Yours sincerely,



A. F. Rahilly  
Regional Director - North West



6/24

248  
Blind Beck SD 803730

The northern most of the detached farmhouses at Rowe End, standing end on to the road and facing southeast. It is built of mortared rubble with a storeyed front porch and a low leanto second porch, with a stone roof and three chimneys. The porch doorway has a fairly deep lintel with a Tudor arched head under a squared chamfered frame; there is a single-light window high above the door. The windows of the house have splayed frames and mullions, three upper windows with 3 lights each (the <sup>e</sup>estern one at a lower level) and two taller ground floor windows. The one west of the porch has been enlarged by dropping its sill and perhaps also widening the lights, since the present sill is a reused lintel from a window with narrower lights. The other window has had at least one light blocked up. The label over the west window is returned at each end and the other lobal peters out. At the back is a wing and a number of recently made stone-framed windows making an acceptable elevation. The house was probably built in the second half of the 17th century with an early 18th century porch and later alterations; its appearance is very pleasing.



Larger photograph in file, plus NYVB Report 961.



NORTH YORKSHIRE (W.R.)

HORTON IN RIBBLESDALE, Blindbeck. Mr and Mrs Huddleston. visited 15-3-84  
SD 802730

Blindbeck is a long, low stone-built house facing south where the Hawes road begins to turn west to go under the railway bridge. The west end of the house nearest to the road has recently been rebuilt and the roof raised to the same ridge-line as the rest. The middle part of the house, which is the original core, has a central porch and at the east end is a further room formerly belonging to Blindbeck but now divided off as a separate dwelling with its own porch over the entrance. At the rear, a wing built as part of the main house now belongs to the cottage, and a further room on each floor has been added to fill the northeast corner between the front range and the wing. Only the central part of the house was measured because of the time available, but the approximate plan of the cottage has been sketched in.

The house was photographed by the National Monuments Record about ten years ago, but at that time both downstairs fireplaces were concealed and one of the dated cupboards had not yet been discovered.

The west side of the main front has two three-light windows with splayed mullions, the lower one using a lintel from a four-light mullioned window as its sill. There is a label over the lower window made of flagstone and returned at both ends. The porch has a Tudor-arched doorway and a small light above it; there is also a window in the east wall of the porch downstairs. East of this are two three-light windows, the upper with splayed mullions and the lower with mullions splayed inside but recessed and flat outside. To the right of it are signs of another blocked window, and there is a similar label cut off by the porch at its west end and returned at its eastern end. The upper window of the cottage is lower than those of the house but also a three-light splayed-mullion window. At the back of the house are some modern windows.

The porch is unexpectedly spacious and may have been used as a pantry although as it is on the south side this can hardly have been satisfactory. There is an inner lobby beyond the porch, with a door east into the larger room, now a sitting room. It has no ceiling-beams except the sleeper beams in north and south walls. The recently-exposed fireplace has a large, simply-moulded frame of grey stone, defaced by hacking off the mouldings to flatten the front surface. On the far side of it is a cupboard let into the wall (NMR photo) inscribed SW 1659. Unfortunately this does not immediately suggest an owner's name, since at that time the house was occupied by Francis Howson. There are no less than three blocked doorways in the east end wall.

On the west side the lobby leads without a door into the living-room. This has a central ceiling beam and a sleeper beam in the north wall; a new beam has been added to take an open-tread stair beside the south wall. The fireplace, which also was not exposed until recently, has a two-piece Tudor-arched stone lintel and stone jambs, but is rather smaller than that in the sittingroom. A recess to the north of the fireplace shows where formerly the stairs ran up in a straight flight eastwards against the rear wall of the sitting room; the likely original stairs would have been curved and come out into the room immediately above, but this is the traditional position. A door in the northwest corner leads into the rebuilt kitchen.

At the top of the stairs a very large purlin can be seen in the slope of the roof on the south side, which has diagonal halvings as if for windbraces towards each end (drawn), although the purlin must have been turned as they are upside down. The stairs lead to a passage with a door



with a door opening in to a bedroom on the north side and leading on to a bedroom in the rebuilt western end at a higher level. Eastwards, the passage runs along the front wall of the house with a bathroom on the north side; in the side of the main chimneystack is another oak cupboard inscribed TH 1697, for Thomas Howson of Blindbeck who died in 1705. This cupboard was concealed in the wall broken through to make the passage, and has been reset as near as possible to its original position. Beyond the bathroom there is a bedroom over the far end of the sittingroom, and in the wall between the bathroom and this bedroom there is a roof-truss (drawn). It is imperfectly visible because a softwood partition has been erected in front of it within the roof-space and only partially removed. A flat-laid ridge-piece is visible but not the apex joint of the truss. One pair of purlins can be seen and another pair must be inferred lying at the same level as the purlin seen above the stairs. One of the visible purlins, though large, is set upright and must be a replacement; the other is just like the one described earlier, i.e. about 25 cm square in section halved over a trench and with a seating for a windbrace, but now turned so that the halving and the windbrace-halving are upside down. The roof seems to be built with one truss centrally over the sitting room and using the cross walls for the other ends of the purlins. There is no visible tiebeam, but the bottom ends of the principals are concealed; a modern timber seems to have been run across the truss at ceiling level, hidden by the ceiling.

The ground floor room of the cottage has two modern beams and a modern fireplace replacing an earlier stone one in the east end wall. Above there are two bedrooms crossed by a roof-truss with a rough tie-beam a foot below the ceiling, the feet of the principals showing well within the walls, and narrow angle-struts from them down to the tiebeam.

#### Historical Development.

It seems likely that the larger, eastern room of Blindbeck was the bodystead (or living room) although it has a parlour-like fireplace; as there are no remaining ceiling beams, the possibility remains open that this fireplace is a replacement for an earlier timber firehood, as at Newlandhouse. One or two of the doors in the east wall may have led to a buttery and perhaps a second room at that end, or alternatively the east end may originally have been an outbuilding. The present living room would then be the parlour, and regarded as a parlour fireplace this one would be early - perhaps c. 1650 or thereabouts. It is usual for the stairs in a house of this plan-type to rise between the central chimney and the back wall. Unfortunately neither date inscription can be linked to any particular work on the building, and one of them may not have originated in it.

The roof over the main house is probably mid-17th century but re-uses purlins from an earlier roof of high quality. Windbraces are extremely uncommon in North Yorkshire, and are likely to be early; the size of the purlins is also extraordinary. The pattern of building a roof with a single truss over the bodystead and using crosswalls to take the purlins elsewhere, is Craven idiom of the 17th century.

The cottage roof is at a different level and not so well built as that over the house, therefore probably later.

The rear wing was added to contain service accommodation, chiefly a dairy or buttery with a bedroom above. It is mentioned in the inventory of 1705.

\* The earliest mention of Blindbeck is in a will of Thomas Howson of Blindbeck, proved in 1549. Agnes Howson, widow, tells us nothing about the house in her will of 1597. Thomas Howson, yeoman of Blindbeck, 1646, left all his property to his two sons William and Francis jointly. Francis died intestate in 1691. Thomas Howson who died in 1705 left Blindbeck to his elder daughter Jane and Raw End to her sister Agnes;

he also left a remarkably detailed probate inventory giving the following room names in order: bodystead, parlour, chamber over the parlour, bodystead chamber, porch chamber (presumably now sealed off), buttery chamber which would be in the wing, and buttery. This indicates that the stairs rose from the parlour straight into the chamber over it.

John Howson was living at Blindbeck in 1714 when his daughter Isabel was baptised - we cannot at present tell what relation he was to Jane Howson who inherited it. He died intestate in 1739, when there is an inventory showing that he occupied only half the house: bodystead, little back room, buttery, buttery chamber and bodystead loft. The room over the bodystead is often called merely a loft rather than a chamber, suggesting that it was inferior to the parlour chamber. Perhaps Jane (who could perhaps have been his cousin) lived in the parlour and parlour chamber, a frequent arrangement.

Blindbeck must have passed out of the hands of the Howsons because the only other will is that of William Procter of Blindbeck in 1797, though of course he may have been a son of Jane Howson.

The house is of great interest because of its lobby-entrance plan, of which there is only one other example known in the parish so far, and because of the many wills and inventories relating to it. Blindbeck has been carefully modernised and remains a very attractive house with a long history.

Barbara Hutton.

PROBATE INVENTORY OF THOMAS HOWSON OF BLINDBECK, HORTON IN RIBBLESDALE.

	£	s	d
10 January 1705			
purse and apparel	8	0	0
horse, saddle and bridle	3	0	0
two young colts	2	0	0
three cows and three calves	6	10	0
one pair of steers	4	0	0
two ox stirks, one bull stirk	2	13	4
25 ewes and no Tup	5	0	0
In the <u>bodystead</u> of the house one great cupboard	1	0	0
a long table a long settle		12	6
a clock and case	1	0	0
five Ash chairs and two cushions		5	0
In the <u>Parlour</u> one great table one great cheste	1	0	0
one salting tubb four loose boards and other hustlements		5	0
one bedstead curtains and vallans		15	0
two chaff beds one pair Blanketts one pair sheets and two bolsters two coverletts and one Rugg		8	0
one little truckle bedstead and two other bolsters		1	6
one warming pan and spinning Wheele		7	0
In the <u>chamber over the Parlour</u> one bedstead and chaff bed thereon		15	0
one close press one table four oak chairs and one wanded chair	2	6	8
one great trunk		5	0
In the <u>chamber over the bodystead</u> two great arkes		8	0
one great chest one lesser chest		2	0
one bedstead and two chaff beds thereon three chaff bolsters one pair Blanketts three napkins		5	0
In the <u>porch chamber</u> one bedstead		1	0
In the <u>Buttery chamber</u> one bedstead a chaff bed two bolsters	15	0	
one great chest one little table and one chair	16	0	
In ye <u>Buttery</u> 13 Pewter dishes six Pewter plates two candle sticks 12 Pewter porringers mustard box one Pewter chamber Pott Pewter flagon two Pewter tankards two salts	15	0	
one brass mortar brass candlestick two ladles and a strainer	5	0	
four flannodor Pan one frying Pann one iron Pott	1	0	0
In wood vessels as tubbs Gallows Pigins Basons and dishes	10	0	
In bedding a featherbed seven cushions and curtains for a bed	4	0	0
two pair linen sheets and two tablecloths and 8 napkins	1	0	0
In meal four bushells	1	1	6
Curtains and vallances for another bed		5	0
five old arks		4	0
	57	9	10

In Husbandry Gear			
six carts one coope two pair wheels	1	0	0
two ploughs one harrow		7	6
yoakes and teams		7	6
one Gavelock two stone hammers and other implements		8	0
forks spades Ropes Traves Brackbands		2	6
Corne in the sheafe	1	10	0
	3	15	6

total 61 5 6

Debts owing to Testator

50 9 0

total 111 14 4

Chris. Litton

Tom. Sigwick

Law. Burton

John Bateman

Debts owing to Testator

funerall expenses

136 13 4

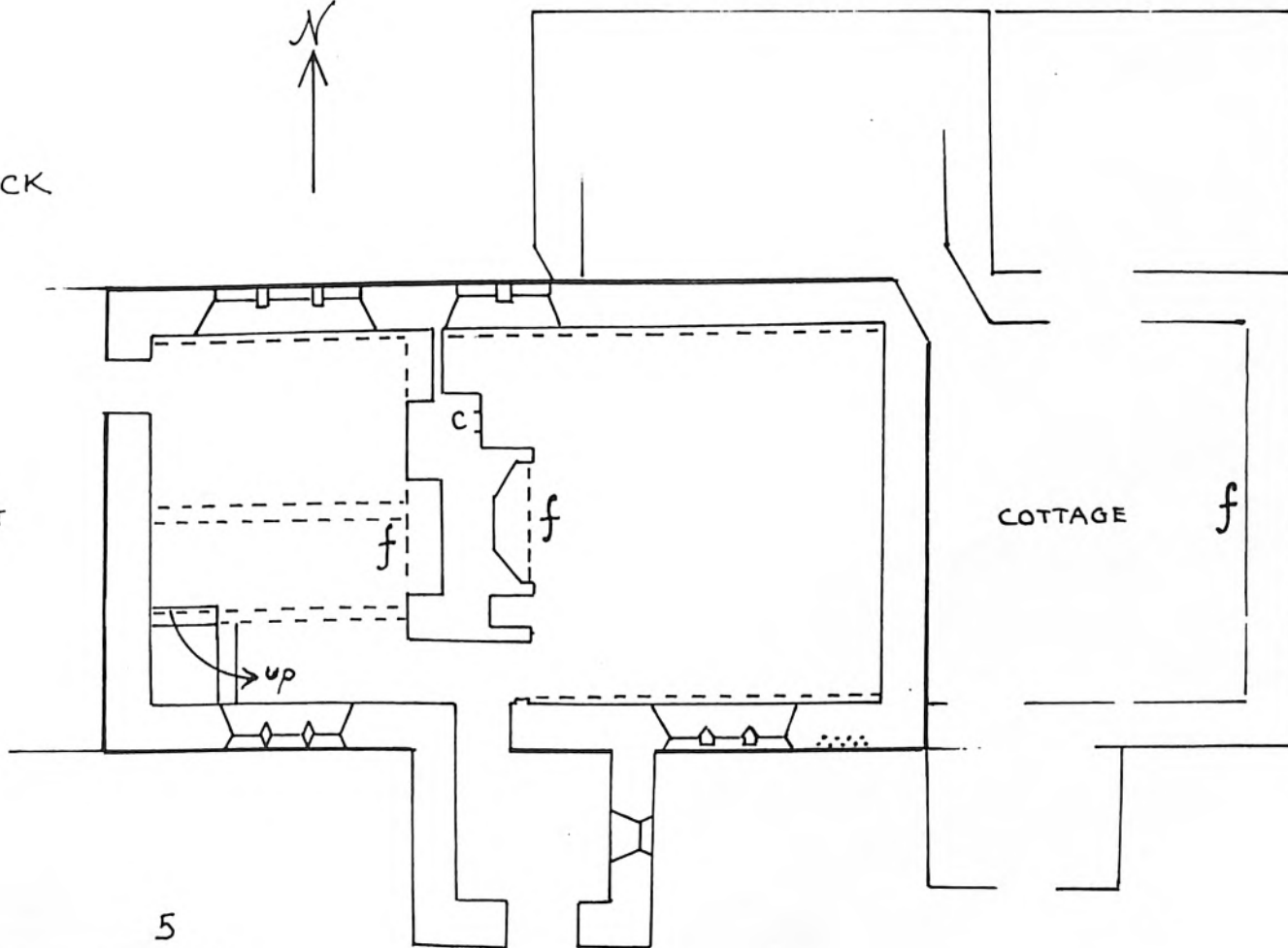
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BLINDBECK



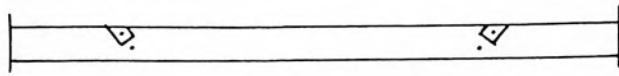
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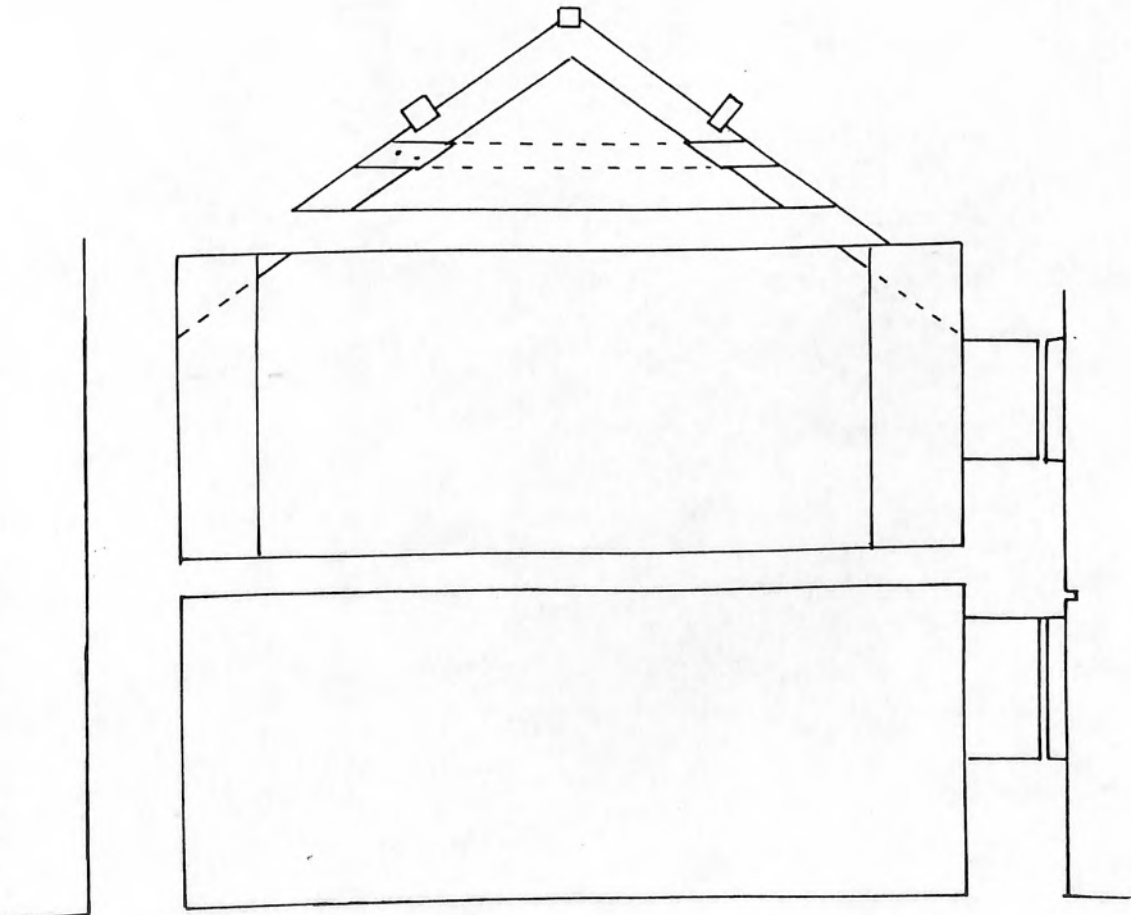
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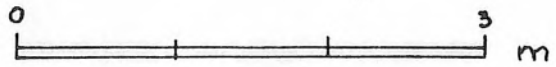
*(only house itself measured)*



purlin over bodystead



roof over parlour





216

Borrins SD 784748

Stands up on the hillside in an isolated position facing southeast, built of rubble mortared over with regular rows of projecting through-stones. Two chimneys mark off the dwelling part of the building, which has four two light windows framed in flat stone blocks and mullions and a central single-storey porch with an off-centre door and a tiny window. The west end of the house was originally non-domestic and has a plain door and one square, unframed window. A flight of stone steps against the west gable-end leads to a first-floor hayloft door. At the back there is no break in the masonry and the rows of throughs are not interrupted; a rear wing, probably added, has pigeon holes above its gable end window, and the west wall of the wing is protected from the weather by an outer separate wall (c.f. North Cote). The date of the house is late 18th or early 19th century and it was built with a non-domestic end in one with the house, a most interesting, unaltered example of what must have been a widespread type.



Larger photograph in file.





Borrins (2).

017



Rear of Borrins, larger photograph in file.



Brackenbottom Farm House SD 816723

This house faces east away from the green, and has a front with splayed mullion windows looking out onto the hillside. There is an added lean to porch towards the north of this side. The front door is in the south gable end and has a hollowed lintel on imposts, 19th century, with to the right of it a three light window framed in flat blocks to each storey. The back has a central staircase window framed in flat blocks with one transom, a square upper window north of it and another square upper window south of it with a flat recessed mullion; below on the south side a square splayed window which has originally been divided into two lights by a splayed mullion. The house has a magnificent interior, including an early 18th century panelled room with an arched shelved recess framed with classical fluted pilasters and a Doric entablature surmounted by an open cyma-shaped pediment enclosing an acorn-shaped urn. This is an important house, first built in the 17th century and modernised several times during the 18th and 19th centuries.



Larger photograph in file.

019

Brackenbottom Farm House (2).



Cupboard in Brackenbottom Farm.

Brackenbottom Farm House (3).



Interior of Farm House.

Larger photograph in file.







021

Brackenbottom Farm House (4).



Display cabinet.

Larger photograph in file.