

VERNACULAR BUILDING TRADITIONS IN THE LAKE DISTRICT

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The Lake District, or more accurately Cumbria, forms one of the most well-defined regions in Britain. Just as it has a distinct topographical, social, historical and economic character, so its traditional or vernacular buildings have their own characteristics. These may be seen in plan and general organization as well as in materials and construction. No single feature is unique to the region: tower-houses may be found in Northumberland as well as Cumberland; carboniferous limestone walls may be seen in Yorkshire as well as in Westmorland; but the combination of features means that a Cumbrian vernacular building can usually be recognized as of that region and no other.

The term 'vernacular architecture' refers to buildings erected for utilitarian purposes by the people of a locality to house their everyday activities according to their own traditions and making use of locally available building materials. It is becoming generally accepted in preference to such terms as 'peasant building' or 'folk architecture'.¹

In architecture as in so many other fields a distinction may be made between the strand of low culture which runs alongside the more familiar and prestigious strand of high or academic culture. Vernacular architecture is part of the one strand while polite architecture is part of the other. The analogy with speech is an obvious one: there is the polite speech of the cultivated urban minority and the vernacular speech of the uneducated country-dwellers who once were in the majority. Whereas works of polite architecture are principally influenced by academic precedent, by aesthetic rules, by abstractions and by fashions in high society and only slightly, if at all, by traditions, those of vernacular architecture are influenced principally by immediate, local considerations and only to a limited though perhaps constantly increasing extent, by fashion or academic precedent. Innovations in polite architecture are frequent, speedily adopted, readily discarded; changes in vernacular architecture occur slowly and with a very long overlap between the decline of one tradition and the rise and general adoption of another. If any Scandinavian influence on the architecture of the Lake District is to be found, one would search among the examples of vernacular rather than polite architecture in order to find it.²

Vernacular building traditions vary with time and place but also with building type and the social status of the person or activity to be housed. The traditions are a product of geography through the availability of building materials, of history through the changing influences on the

society which they serve, and of economics through the fluctuations in circumstances which allowed the accumulation of capital to be invested in buildings. The traditions do not, however, make up a continuous fabric representing all history in a given area, rather they are weak at some periods for some people and strong at other periods for other people. Evidence of vernacular building traditions may be sought through a 'vernacular zone' representing the pattern of construction and survival of a given building-type over a period in a selected region.

DWELLINGS FOR GENTRY, FARMERS AND COTTAGERS: 14th–19th CENTURIES

In Cumbria there still survive for our observation and study buildings which are complete, or almost so, from the Norman period to the present-day, while evidence of earlier structures is being accumulated from excavations. In polite architecture there is a continuous thread from the eleventh century to the present day; in vernacular architecture, however, the picture is much less complete. If we take the most interesting set of vernacular buildings, the farmhouses of yeomen or tenant farmers, then examples survive only as far back as the mid to late seventeenth century; houses of their social superiors which may yet be considered vernacular in their inspiration take the story back to the fourteenth century; cottages of their social inferiors are rarely older than early or mid-eighteenth century in date. At each social level the buildings emerge suddenly, fully developed in planning and construction and apparently the result of a 'Great Rebuilding'. They leave behind tantalisingly few indications of the nature of their predecessors. At all times there was a tendency for traditional elements to become overwhelmed by influences from the higher culture. Thus by the mid-eighteenth century, the minor gentry had come to build houses designed by architects according to fashionable rules; by the mid-nineteenth century many farmhouses were being professionally rather than traditionally designed and built; and by the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries the same applied to cottages. In looking at surviving examples of domestic vernacular architecture we see Large Houses of the fourteenth to eighteenth centuries, Small Houses of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries and Cottages of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries [Fig. 10.1]. These form the vernacular zone of domestic buildings in Cumbria. Similar circumstances applied in vernacular farm buildings. The earliest ones are associated with the largest farms and may be of late sixteenth-century date or rather earlier; most are associated with small farms and date from the early eighteenth century to the late nineteenth.³

Large Houses: 14th–18th Centuries

Taking Large Houses as the dwellings of people of some local importance then examples in the Lake Counties which may be called vernacular rather than polite range in date from fourteenth to mid eighteenth century. The

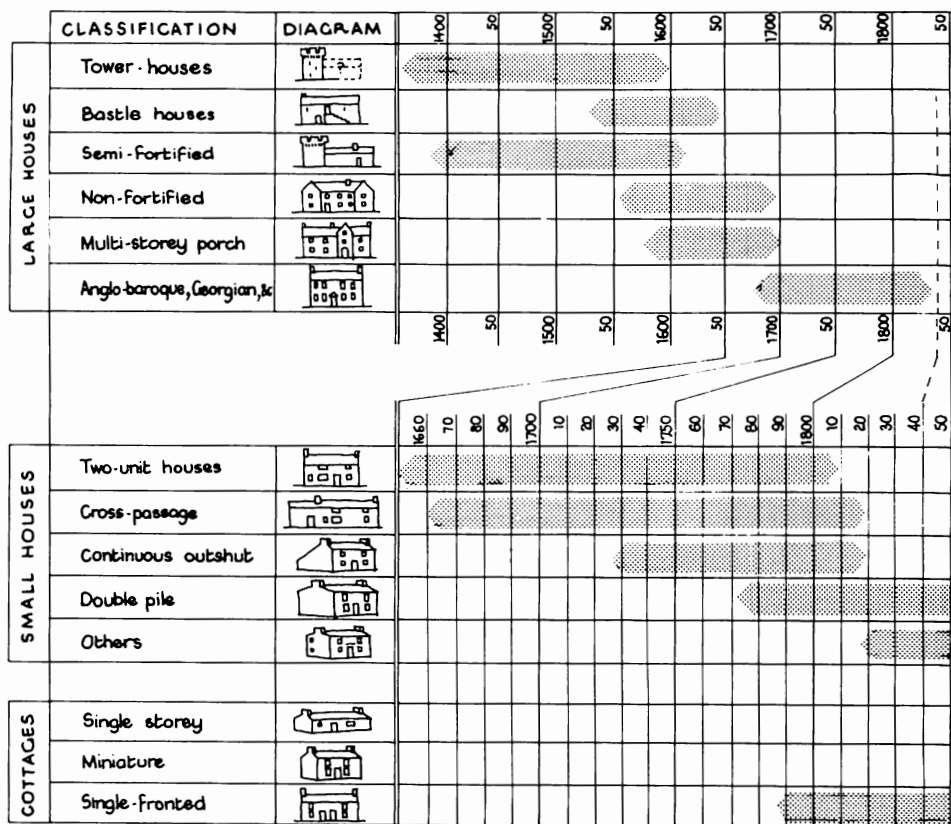


Fig. 10.1 The various time scales established from dated examples for plan types have been combined. Different scales have been used for the time span of Large Houses, which is longer than that of the other two classes; there are, however, too few dated examples for satisfactory time scales to be established for single-storey and miniature Cottages.

earliest examples show some indication of need for defence while later examples include the hall-and-cross-wing plan, the multi-storey H-Shaped plan, the compact and projecting wings plans and culminate in the double-pile plan [Fig. 10.3]. The most characteristic Large Houses of the Lake District are those in which security or defence affected design, and of these the greatest number have a hall and cross-wings with one wing raised in the form of a tower, having thick stone walls, sometimes including a stone-vaulted basement and serving as a place of refuge from Border raiders [Fig. 10.2].

Related to these houses are the few true tower-houses in which all accommodation is arranged vertically within the defensive structure (as at Dacre Castle and Kirkandrews Tower), and the small handful in which

Fig. 10.2 Semi-fortified and other hall houses (see key on p.141).

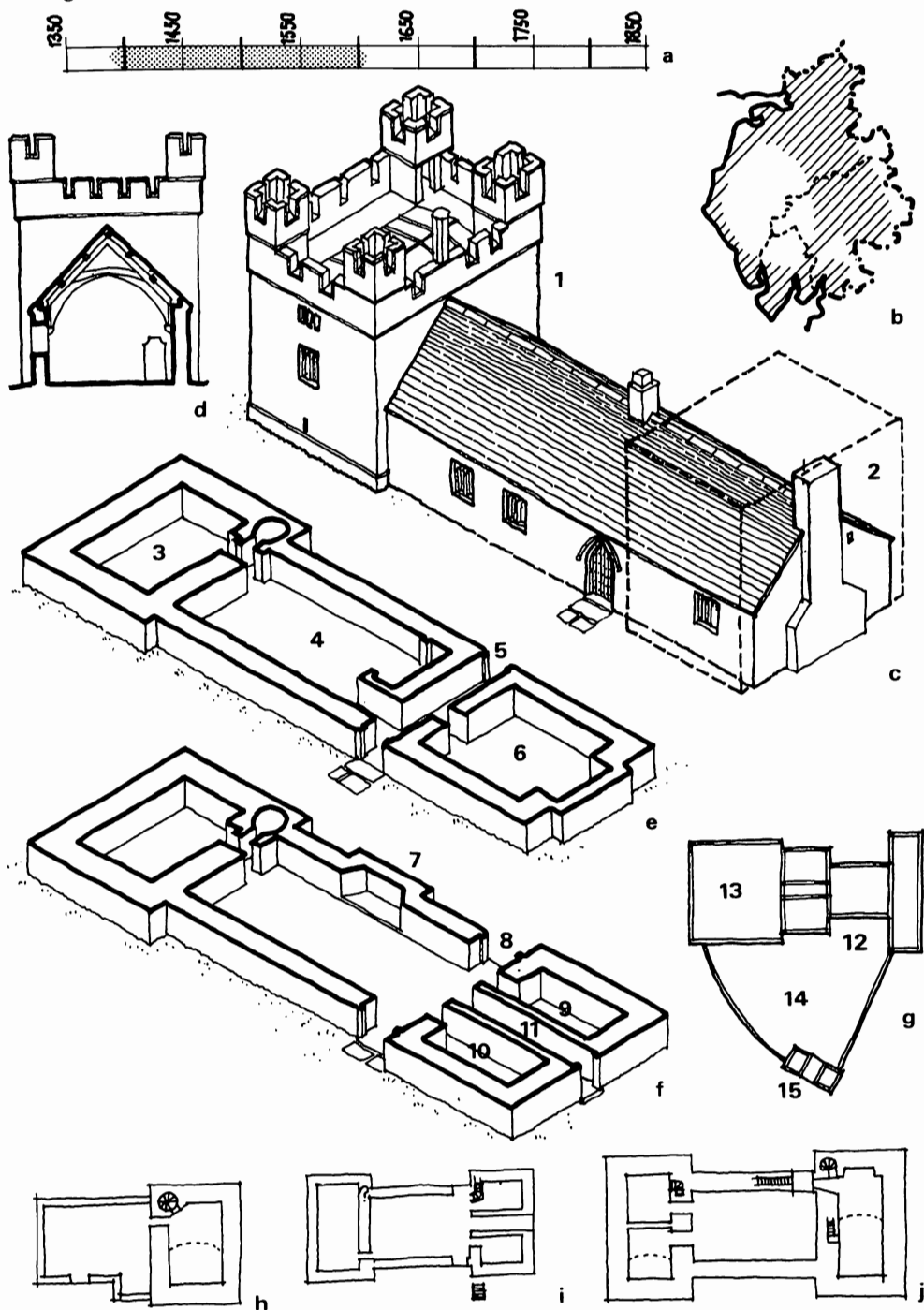


Fig. 10.3 Later non-fortified houses — without an open hall (see key on p.141).

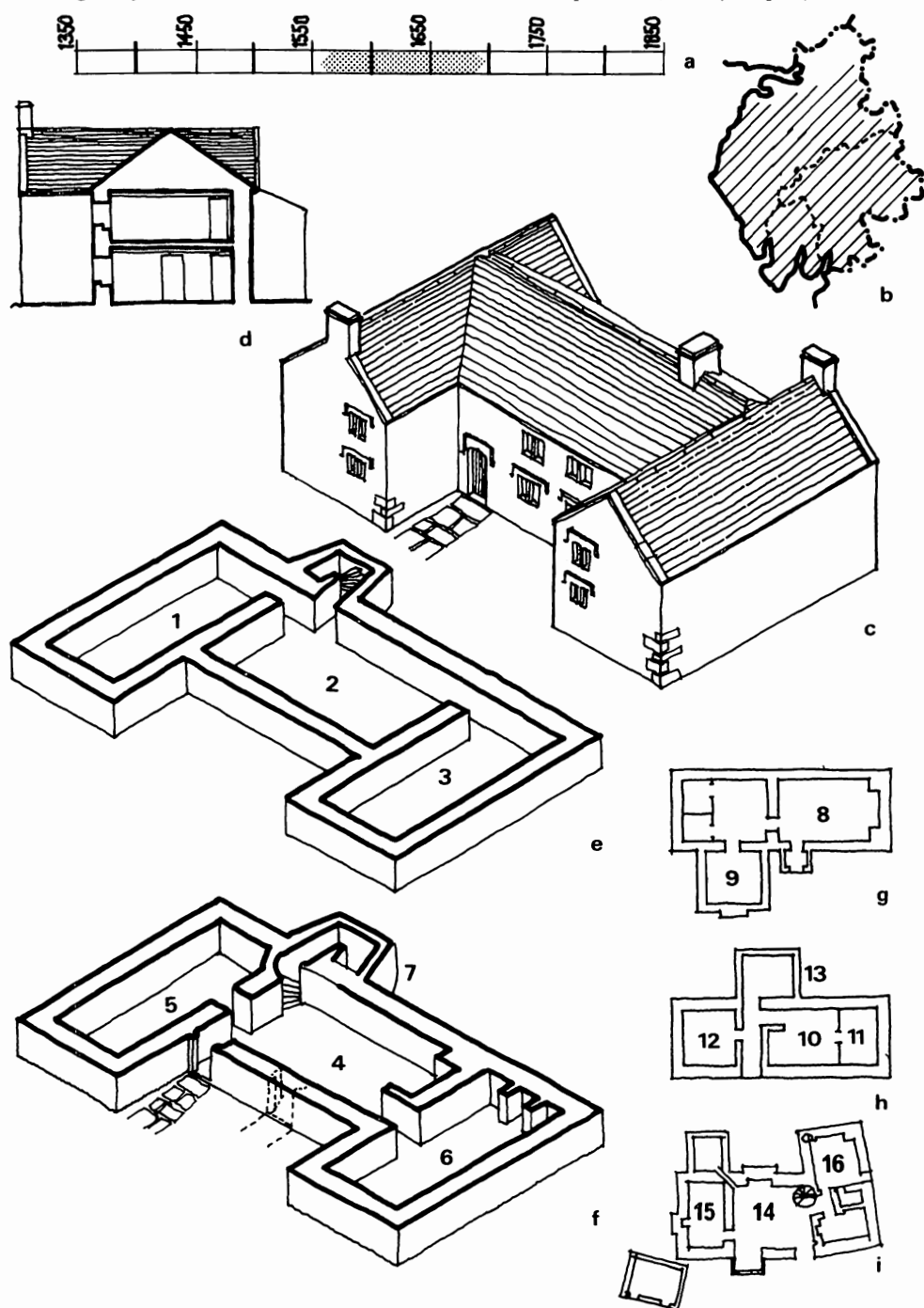


Fig. 10.4 Bastle houses.

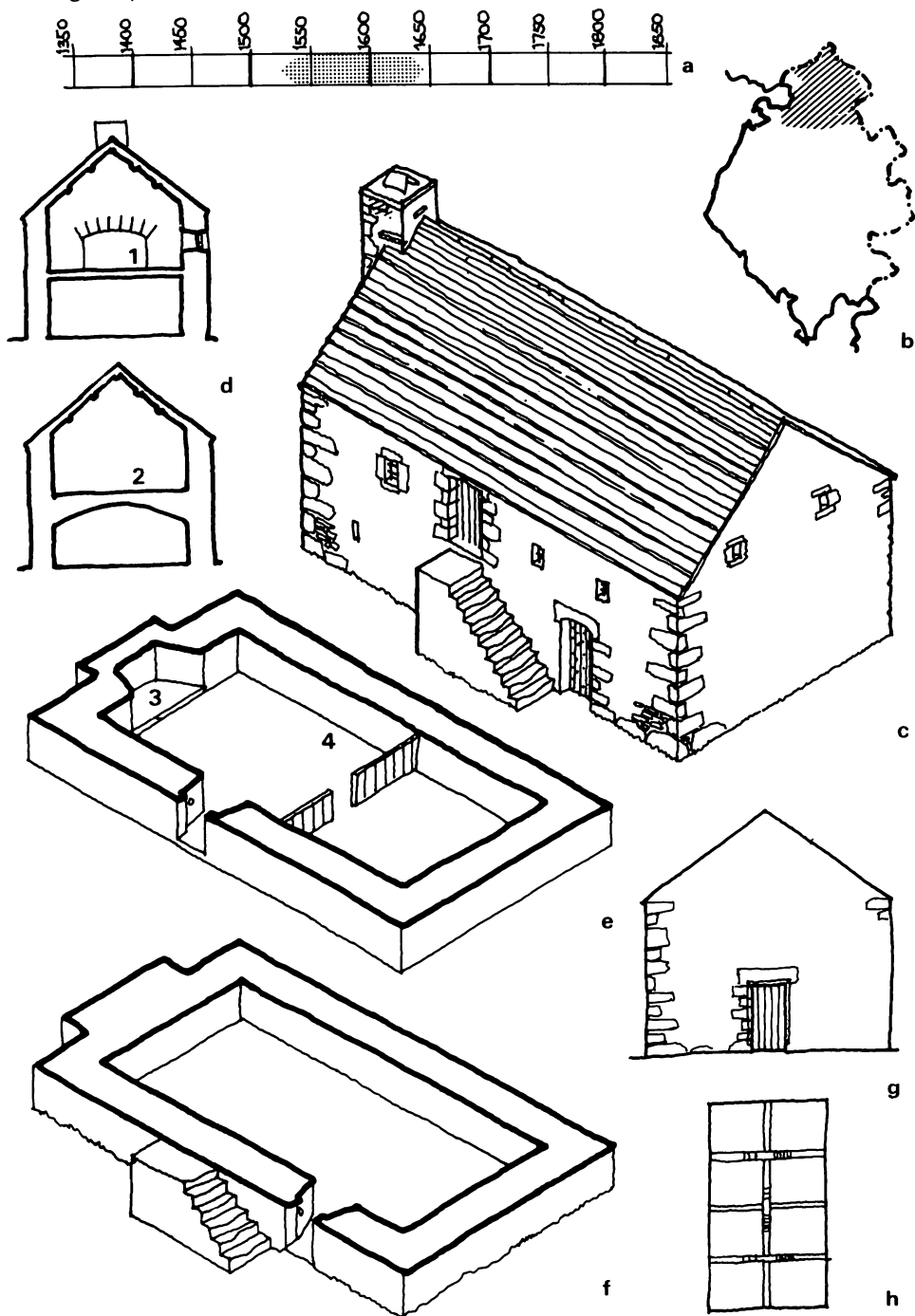


Fig. 10.2 Semi-fortified and other hall houses:

- (a) period of construction, ca. 1400 to 1600
- (b) distribution map
- (c) house with a central hall, the upper wing carried up as a defensible tower (1) and the lower wing a kitchen which also could be made into a tower (2) (based partly on Yanwath Hall, West.)
- (d) cross-section showing hall open to the roof
- (e) ground-floor plan with vaulted cellar and solar above (3), hall (4), fireplace backing on to cross-passage (5), kitchen (6)
- (f) alternative ground-floor plan showing fireplace in side wall (7), cross-passage (8), buttery (9), pantry (10), passage to outside kitchen (11); these last three usually have stone vaults above
- (g) diagrammatic arrangement showing semi-fortified house (12), kitchen garth (13), walled yard (14), gate-house (15) (based on Burnside Hall, West.)
- (h) T-shaped hall house (based on Kirkby Thore Hall, West.)
- (i) H-shaped hall house (based on Preston Patrick Hall, West.)
- (j) house with two defensive wings (based on Howgill Castle, West.)

Fig. 10.3 Later non-fortified houses — without an open hall:

- (a) period of use, ca. 1560 to 1700
- (b) distribution map
- (c) isometric, showing many windows and projecting wings (based mainly on Newby Hall, West.)
- (d) cross-section showing two storeys, chamber over hall, and space for garrets above
- (e) first-floor plan showing bedrooms (1, 2, 3)
- (f) ground-floor plan with hall (4), parlour (5), kitchen (6), staircase in a projecting wing (7), an alternative, central, position for doorway shown
- (g) alternative plan with hall (8), kitchen (9) in a projecting wing (based partly on Collinfield, Kendal, West.)
- (h) alternative plan with hall (10), parlour (11), kitchen (12) and later staircase projection (13) (based on Barwise Hall, West.)
- (i) alternative plan with hall (14), parlour (15), kitchen (16) (based on Kirkby Hall, Kirkby Ireleth, Lancs. after H. S. Cowper)

Fig. 10.4 Bastle houses:

- (a) period of construction, ca. 1540 to 1640
- (b) concentration of bastle houses near the Border
- (c) ground-floor entrance to cow-house, external stair leading to first-floor entrance to domestic quarters, small barred windows, windows to garret space (example based on Town Head, Newbiggin, Cumrew, Cumb.)
- (d) cross-sections showing normal timber intermediate floor (1) and alternative stone vaulted floor (2)
- (e) first-floor plan showing larger room which has gable (3) or side wall fireplace (4) and door through partition to smaller, usually unheated room
- (f) ground-floor plan with space for cattle or horses
- (g) alternative (and more common) gable entrance to ground floor
- (h) unglazed window protected by interlaced wrought iron bars

there is a slight defence of the whole building (as at Smardale Hall). Also related is the much larger number of bastle houses [Fig. 10.4] which are small in size but contained within defensible walls the cattle of a substantial farmer on the ground floor, and the living space for his family on the floor above.⁴

Small Houses: 17th–19th Centuries

The earliest surviving Small Houses of Cumbria are variations on what is often called the 'two-unit plan'. In this there are basically two cells. The larger, more public cell was reached through the only entrance door, contained the principal or only hearth and served as a room for living, dining and cooking; the smaller, more private cell opened off it and served, unheated, as the principal or only bedroom. These two units made a house which could be found alone, attached to farm buildings or extended with additional service rooms.

As found from late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century date, the basic two units have generally been developed to some extent. The whole plan has been lofted so as to give sleeping accommodation for children and storage space for grain at the upper level; the ground-floor parlour or bedroom has been partitioned to provide a dairy or pantry for cool storage of food and dairy products while leaving the main part of this cell to serve as the master bedroom. Houses of this arrangement may be found throughout the Lake District but are especially characteristic of the southern half. The 'longhouse' version consisted of this developed domestic accommodation together with accommodation for cattle and, perhaps, a barn as well in an elongation of the main house. A passage running across the building gave access to the house and, in the earlier examples at least, also to the cowhouse. The third version also included a cross-passage, but this gave access on the one side to the house and on the other side to a service room which was a scullery or brewhouse and which eventually became a heated kitchen. Houses with the cross-passage may also be found throughout the region, but are most characteristic of the northern half [Fig. 10.5].

No sooner had these three versions of the two-unit plan been clothed in materials permanent enough to survive than the plan was modified and improved to give greater floor area, greater privacy and greater comfort. The cramped loft became a full-height upper storey and contained the principal bedroom as well as subsidiary bedrooms all reached by an adequate staircase. The ground-floor parlour, having gained a fireplace, took on the uses which the name implies at the present day. Service rooms were added at the rear or in a gabled wing. Finally, from the late eighteenth century onwards, farmers built houses of the double-pile plan consisting of four rooms on the ground floor, four bedrooms on the first floor and often a garret within the roof space [Fig. 10.6].

Fig. 10.5 Cross-passage houses with downhouse (see key on p. 145).

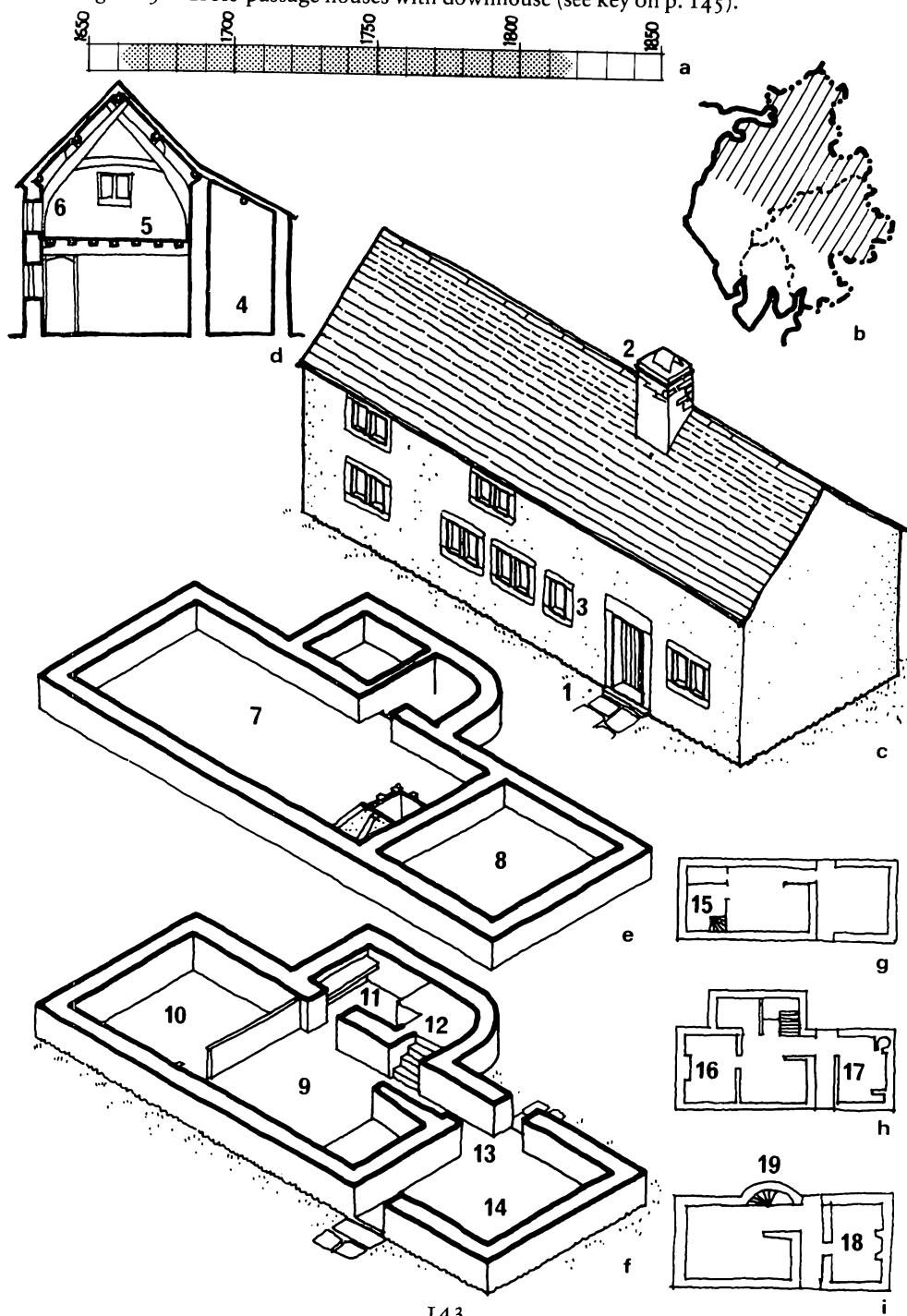


Fig. 10.6 Double-pile plan.

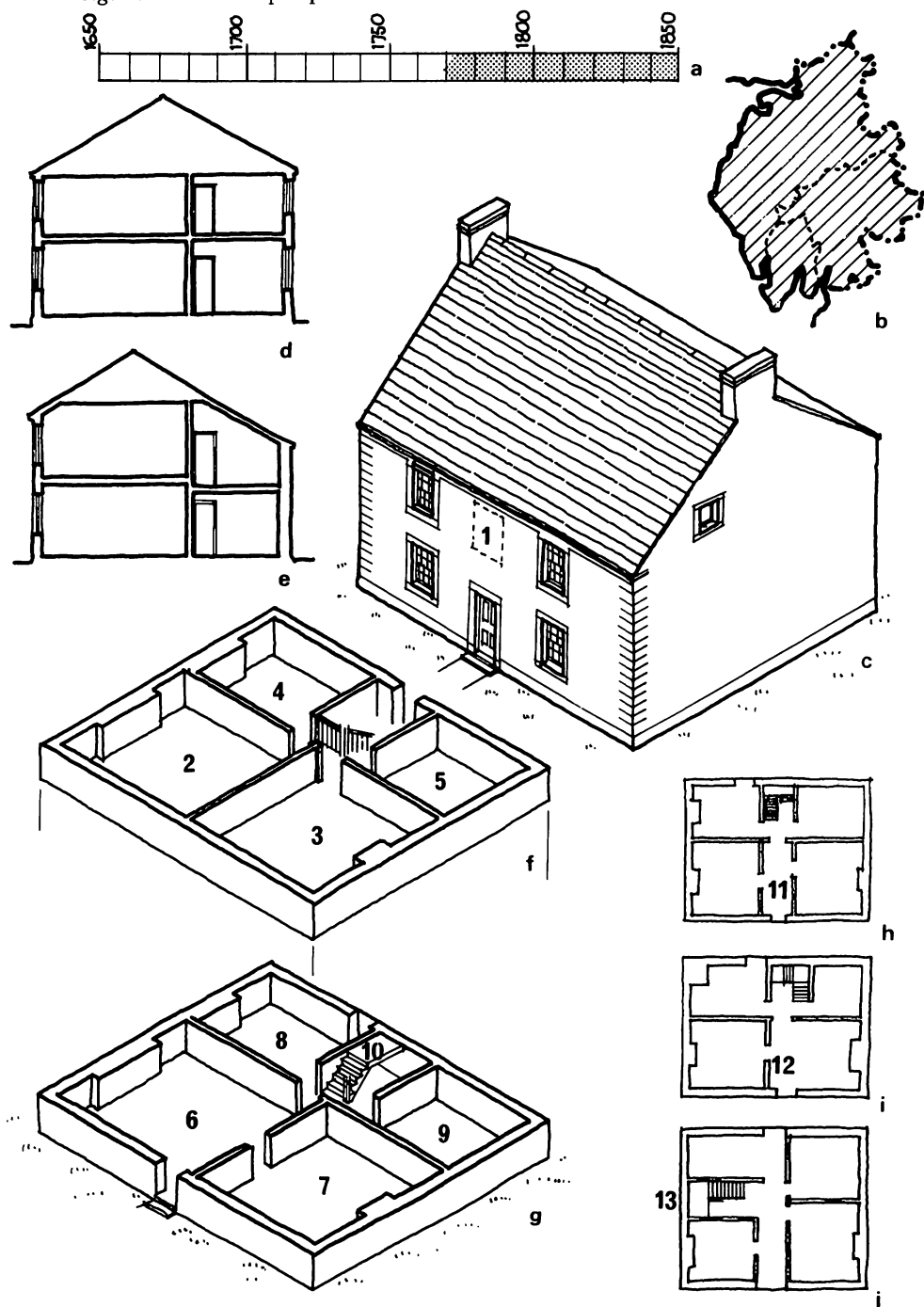


Fig. 10.5 Cross-passage houses with downhouse:

- (a) period of construction, ca. 1660 to 1820
- (b) concentration in northern half of the region
- (c) position of door (1) in relation to chimney stack (2) and fire window (3)
- (d) cross-section showing outshut containing staircase and pantry (4), upper floor in roof space (5) with upper crucks (6)
- (e) first-floor plan showing loft space (7) and downhouse open to the roof (8)
- (f) ground floor plan with living room (9), parlour (10), pantry (11), staircase (12), cross-passage or 'hallan' (13), downhouse (14)
- (g) alternative plan showing spiral staircase rising to the loft from the parlour (15) (based on a house in Cumrew, Cumb.)
- (h) alternative plan showing a fireplace in the parlour (16) and a fireplace with oven making the downhouse a kitchen (17)
- (i) alternative plan showing the parlour with its fireplace in the position of the downhouse (18) and the staircase in a bulge from the rear wall (19)

Fig. 10.6 Double-pile plan:

- (a) period of use, ca. 1770 to 1850
- (b) widespread distribution
- (c) door near the centre of the main elevation, roof covering a plan two rooms in depth, position for blind window (1)
- (d) cross-section showing eaves at same height front and back; roof is normally carried on purlins supported by the gable walls and one intermediate wall
- (e) alternative cross-section showing transition from continuous out-shut plan with lower room heights and lower eaves at the rear
- (f) first-floor plan with four bedrooms (2, 3, 4, 5) and the load-bearing intermediate wall so close to the middle of the plan as to discourage use of a centre window and to suggest use of blind window
- (g) ground-floor plan with front door opening straight into living room (6) off which is parlour (7); behind are the back kitchen (8), dairy (9) and staircase (10)
- (h) alternative plan showing use of lobby lit by a fanlight over the front door to improve the comfort of the living room (11)
- (i) plan showing how a door off-centre allowed a larger parlour (12)
- (j) alternative plan showing staircase on a gable wall (13)

Fig. 10.7 Cottages as miniature Small Houses:

- (a) widespread distribution
- (b) miniature two-unit house with door off-centre and rooms on each side
- (c) section showing house one room deep but two full storeys high
- (d) ground-floor plan with living room (1) and parlour (2), staircase between rising to two bedrooms. Often a small pantry is added to or incorporated in the rear (3)
- (e) early 'one up and one down' cottage
- (f) plan with the single living room entered directly from the front door and the single bedroom reached by a steep ladder-like stair in a cupboard in a corner of the room
- (g) an even simpler type of cottage with a single room on the ground floor and a loft above lit by a gable window in the wall opposite the chimney stack
- (h) plan showing the single living room entered from the gable and a steep wooden spiral staircase rising to the loft above.

Fig. 10.7 Cottages as miniature Small Houses (see key on p.145).

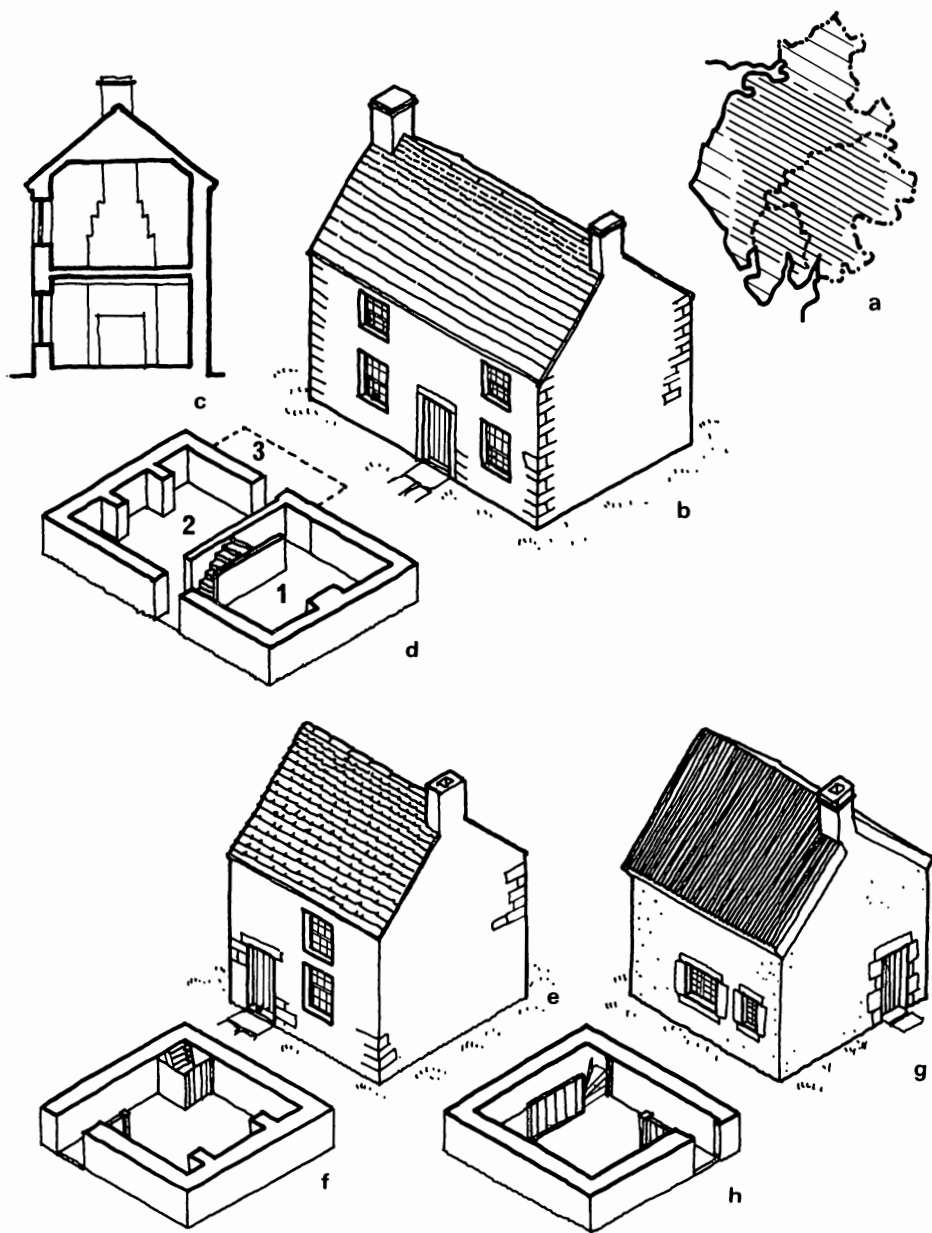
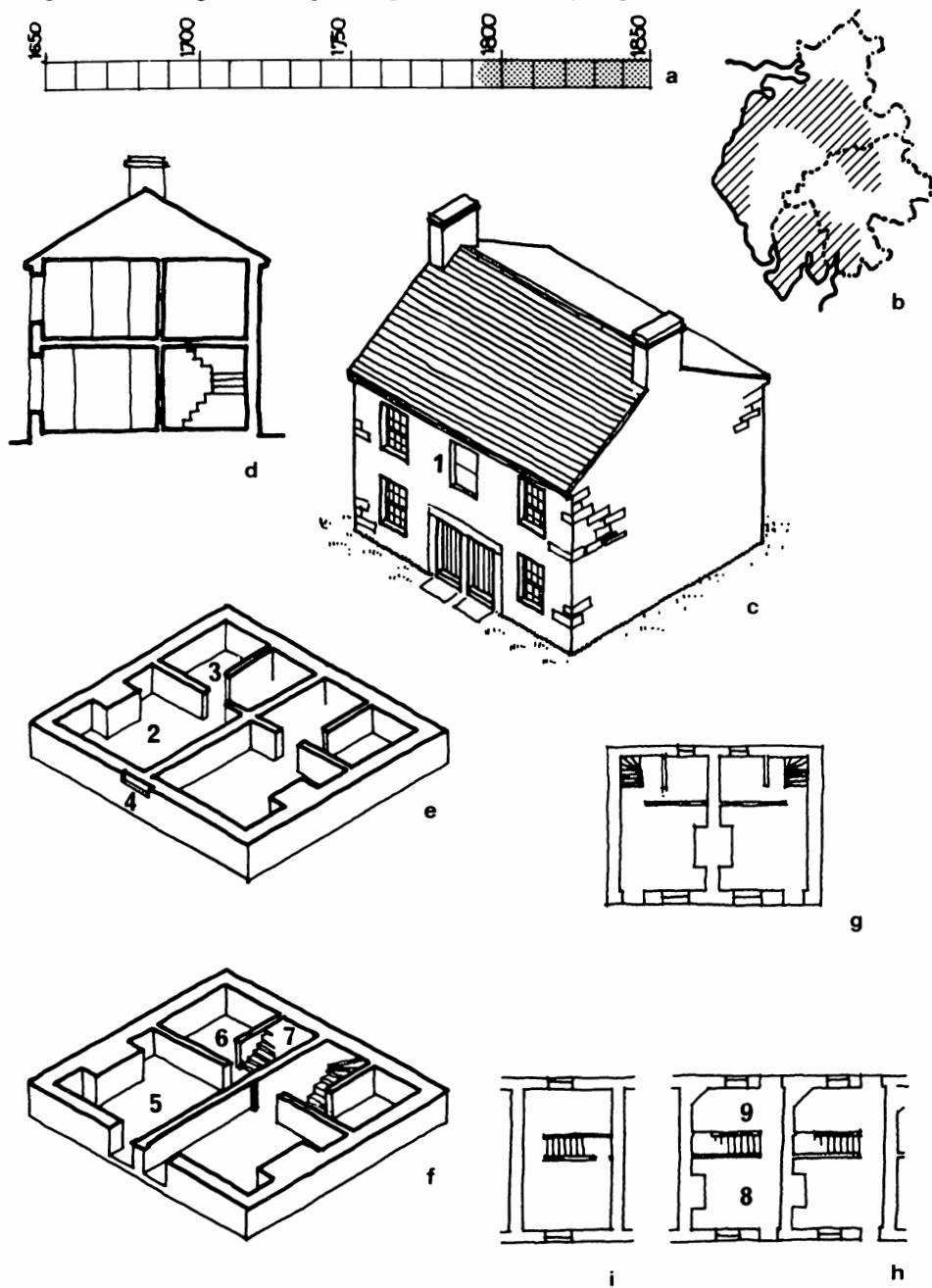


Fig. 10.8 Cottages double-pile, single-fronted (see key on p. 148).



Cottages: 18th–19th Centuries

The cottager class was slow to develop in the Lake Counties where farms tended to be small and run as family enterprises by yeomen or virtually independent customary tenants. Changes in farming practice, especially during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, together with development of mining, quarrying, smelting and textile industries led to a demand for cottages for a rapidly expanding class of landless craftsmen and labourers.

Early cottages were essentially one-room dwellings, though nearly all surviving examples show a loft above the heated kitchen/living room or some extra space alongside [Fig. 10.7]. Rapid improvement in the amount of living space available to the cottager meant that the characteristic Lake District cottage had a kitchen/living room and a scullery or pantry on the ground floor and two bedrooms above. In most cases rooms were placed one behind the other (i.e. single-fronted) but in some cases the rooms were placed side by side (double-fronted). Generally cottages were built in pairs but sometimes a single cottage stood alone, was attached to a house or farm building, or was included in a terraced row [Fig. 10.8].

FARM BUILDINGS: 16th–20th CENTURIES

Although the cold wet climate of the Lake District suggests an exclusively pastoral agriculture there was, until about a century ago, a good deal of cultivation of hardy grain crops such as oats and rye. Architectural evidence for this may be seen in the threshing barns which abound in the region, each with its threshing floor and storage bays on each side. The earliest barns are, as one might expect, related to Large Houses, and some are quite big. That of Park House Farm, Heversham, has eight bays; the Long Barn at Burgh-by-Sands is smaller in width but has eleven bays.

Most farmsteads include the buildings required for the mixed farming economy of cattle and corn which flourished in the region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The standard family farm of this period would have a barn, a cowhouse, a stable, a granary and cartshed,

Fig. 10.8 Cottages double-pile, single-fronted:

- (a) period of use, ca. 1790 to 1850 and beyond
- (b) widespread distribution with concentration in mining areas of West Cumberland and industrial Furness
- (c) a reflected pair of cottages with doors together and a blind window above (1)
- (d) cross-section showing two full storeys' height
- (e) first-floor plan of a reflected pair with the main bedroom (2), small bedroom (3), party wall at blind window (4)
- (f) ground-floor plan with living room (5), pantry (6) and staircase (7)
- (g) alternative ground-floor plan showing a reflected pair with doors apart
- (h) alternative ground-floor plan with living room (8), scullery (9) as part of a terrace
- (i) first-floor plan with two bedrooms

and a pigsty, all arranged in a row, in an L or U shape or as a scattering of buildings on a steep hillside [Fig. 10.9]. Generally the farmhouse would be attached to one of these buildings, most often the stable or the granary. As farming practices developed during this period so each of the buildings became more specialized in function and each of the activities became more carefully housed. The cowhouse developed from a low, dark and steamy cave under a hayloft into a light, airy and spacious as well as hygienic single-storey building; the barn, by contrast, declined from being the largest and most imposing building of the farmstead as its activities were taken away first by the fixed threshing machine and later by the travelling steam-powered threshing equipment. Farm buildings are as important a part of the visual scene in the Lake Counties as the farmhouses, and the building types are equally characteristic.⁵

Fig. 10.9 Layouts of Farmsteads:

A. Longhouse:

- (a) single elongated range, main chimney stack near the middle of the building, entrance to cross-passage running behind the chimney breast, farm buildings at 'lower' end.
- (b) typical plan with house (1), cross-passage (2), cow-house (3), barn (4)

B. Laithe-house:

- (a) main chimney stack at one end of range, no cross-passage, farm buildings usually at 'upper' end of house
- (b) typical plan with house (1), barn (2), stable and loft over (3), cow-house (4)

C. Parallel:

- (a) two parallel ranges of buildings, one including the farmhouse
- (b) typical plan with house (1), stable with loft or granary over (2), barn (3) with loft over cow-house (4)

D. L-shaped:

- (a) buildings arranged about an angle; house is shown attached but may equally be separate
- (b) typical plan with house (1) attached to stable (2), cow-house (3), cartshed and granary over (4), barn (5)

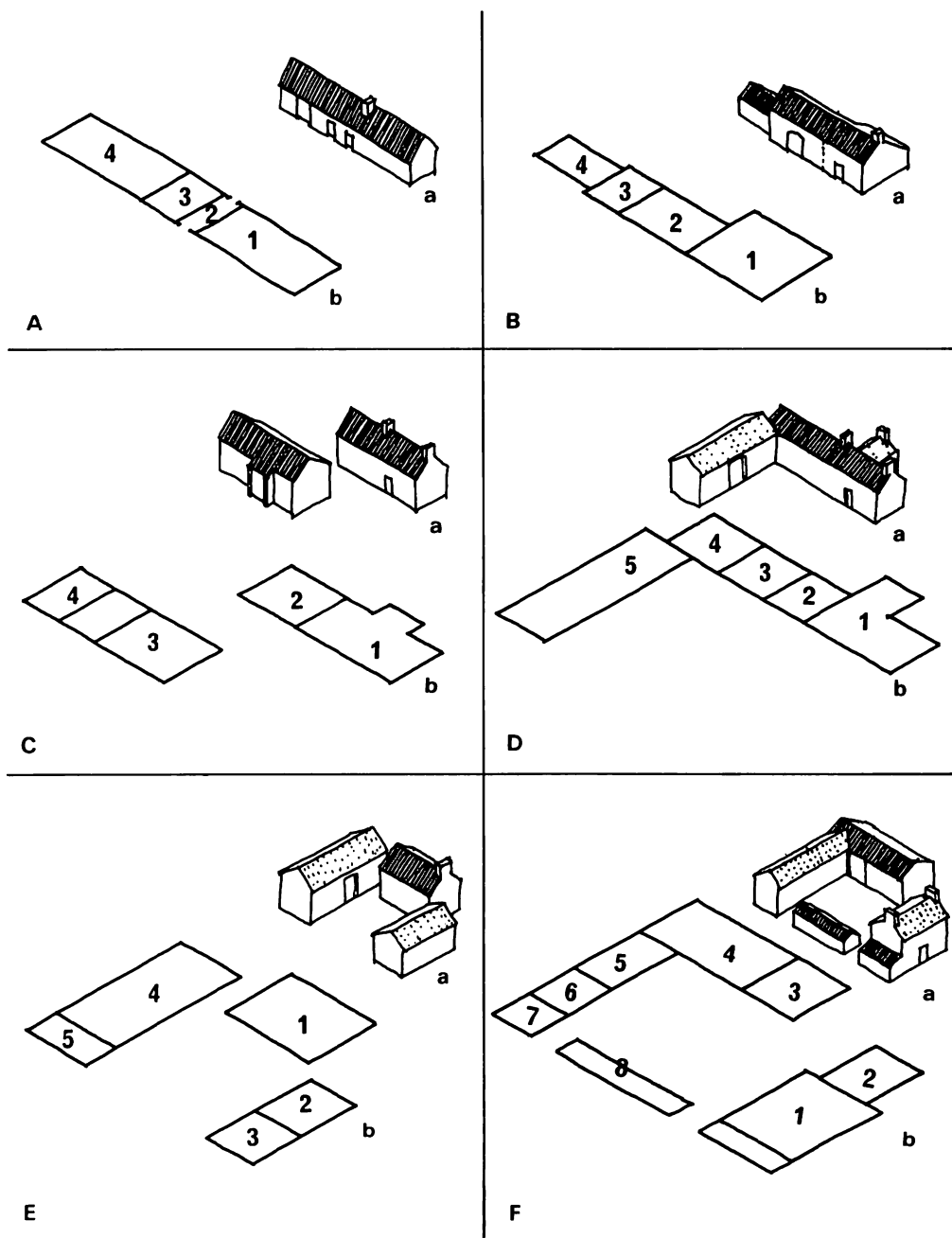
E. U-shaped:

- (a) buildings and house in a U-shape; alternatively the house may be quite separate
- (b) plan with house (1), cow-house (2), stable (3), barn (4), loose box (5)

F. Courtyard:

- (a) enclosed farmyard, in this case incorporating the back of the farmhouse
- (b) plan with house (1), carthorse stable (2), cowhouse (3), barn (4), carriage horse stable (5), traphouse (6), cartshed with granary over (7), pig-sties, shelter shed, etc. (8)

Fig. 10.9 Layouts of Farmsteads (see key on p. 149).



Building Materials

Not surprisingly, the vernacular buildings of the Lake District are monuments of stone and slate but other building materials, especially timber and clay, are also in evidence and may once have been very widely used.

It is increasingly recognized that the natural and obvious building material for use in vernacular buildings throughout Britain was timber, which must have been plentiful even in stone-bearing regions. This applied to the Lake District, which was once heavily forested,⁶ and evidence may be seen in the few half-timbered buildings of towns such as Carlisle and the quite numerous timber-framed and plastered buildings of Kendal and Hawkshead. Closer internal examination of old houses and barns will show the use of crucks to transfer roof loads to the ground between non-load-bearing walls in buildings in all parts of the region. In north-western Cumberland clay walls were used both in conjunction with cruck construction and also as a load-bearing material in its own right. However it seems to have been part of the vernacular building revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that stone was used for walling in preference to other materials — slatestone in the heart of the Lake District, carboniferous limestone on the fringes, and red sandstone in the Eden Valley and in West Cumberland [Fig. 10.10]. The growth of slate quarrying in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries made vast quantities of quarry waste available for cottage building. Clay remained in use in restricted areas but was eventually superseded by brick.

Nearly all vernacular buildings in the region have roofs covered with slate or flagstones, but the few survivors and documentary evidence as well as folk traditions show that until about 150 years ago all but the most superior buildings were thatched either with straw or heather, and the most inferior buildings were probably covered with turf [Fig. 10.11]. In fact, the predecessors to the vernacular buildings probably consisted of a thatch or turf roof carried on a cruck framework between low walls of clay, turf or crudely piled fieldstones.

Three aspects of the vernacular agricultural architecture of the Lake Counties are of special interest — the use of the bank barn, the use and distribution of fieldbarns and the spread and abandonment of shielings.

Bank Barns

A 'bank barn' is a farm building which comprises a threshing barn at an upper level and stables and cowhouses at a lower level, all under the one roof and in a building normally placed on a slope and along the contours [Fig. 10.12]. At the upper level a ramp allowed carts to be driven into the barn from the fields, at the lower level doors to cowhouse and stable opened into the farmyard. The barn doors at the upper level were often protected by a canopy or a projecting porch; at the lower level a continuous pentise, supported on beams projecting from the wall, protected the open half-doors from the worst of the weather. The multi-level arrange-

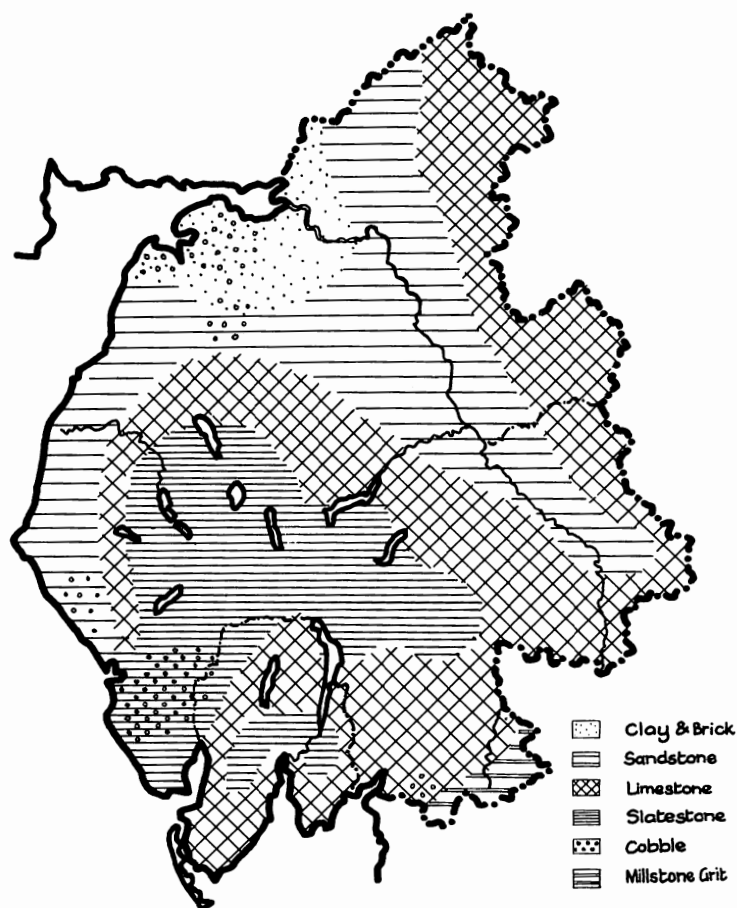


Fig. 10.10 Distribution map of walling materials:
 All the materials were used simultaneously except that brick succeeded clay in northern Cumberland; it was also used with increasing frequency during the late 18th and the 19th century in the Eden Valley and West Cumberland. Cobble was used a great deal in local patches, especially on the Solway Plain and in South-west Cumberland, usually as a mixture with other materials.

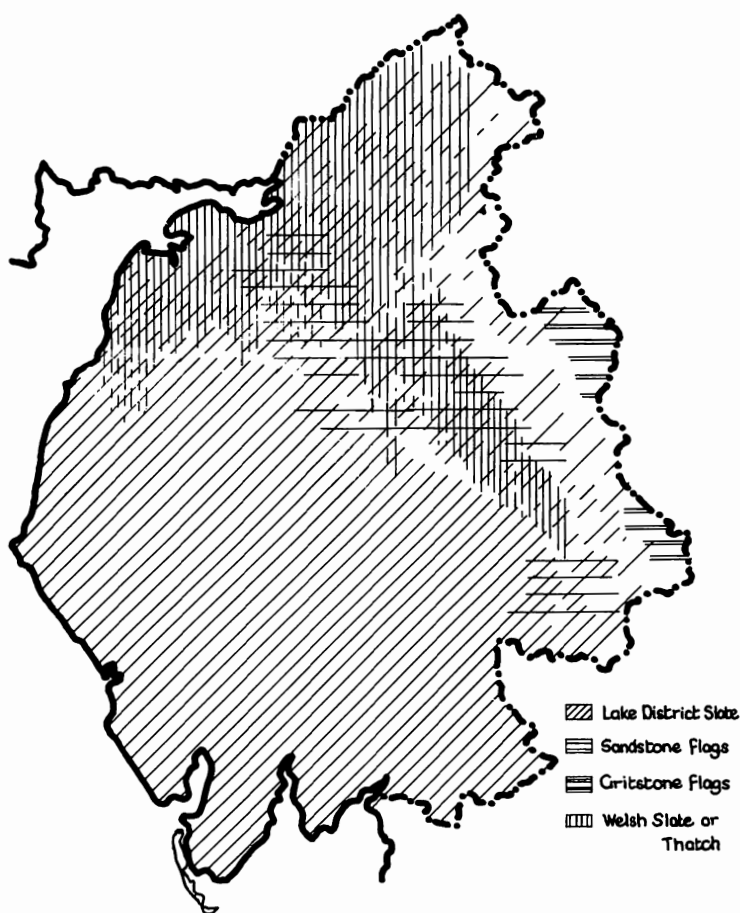
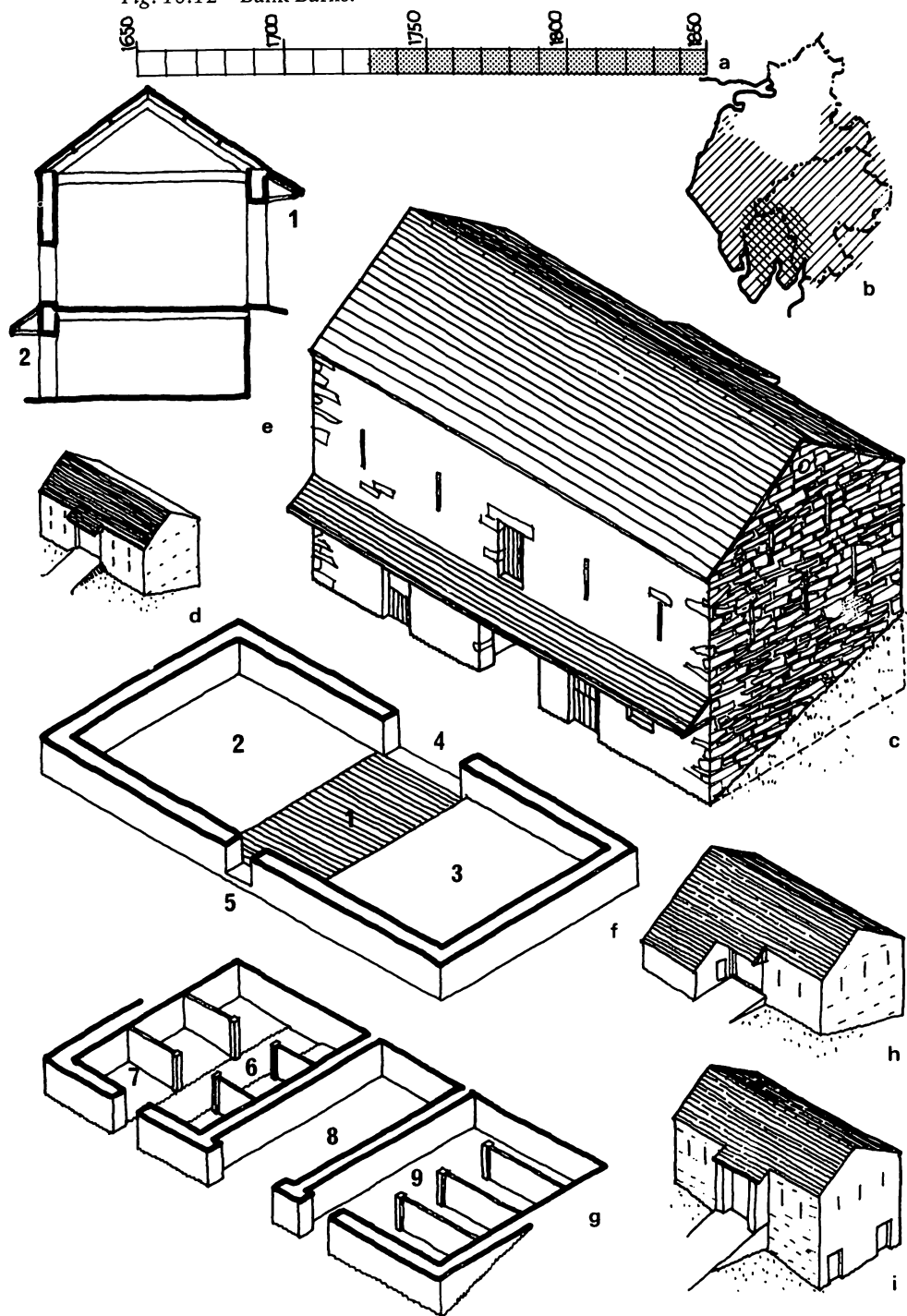


Fig. 10.11 Distribution map of roofing materials:

The shorter life of a roofing material leads to repair and replacement. In general, however, there is widespread use of Lake District Slate. In parts of the Eden Valley and Solway Plain sandstone flags are used; in parts of the Pennine regions flagstones of millstone grit. The hatching for Welsh Slate and Thatch includes the very few examples in which thatch survives, visible or concealed by corrugated roofing; also the more numerous examples where Welsh Slate has been used at a steep pitch, almost certainly as a replacement for thatch. There must have been many examples in the Lake District and the South-west in which thatch has been replaced by Lake District Slate.

Fig. 10.12 Bank Barns.



ment allowed straw produced by the threshing process to be dropped through hatches down to the lower level to be fed to the animals or used as bedding. The whole arrangement was compact, convenient, and economical both in first cost of construction and in day-to-day labour in operation.⁷

The bank barn may be seen as the characteristic farm building over the whole of the region other than certain parts of northern and central Cumberland. It is obviously suited to mixed farming and to hilly ground but its distribution is curiously localized in terms of Great Britain as a whole. There are some examples in Scotland and in Devonshire, and a sprinkling in Yorkshire and Lancashire, but nowhere does the density begin to approach that of the Lake District. Quite a number date from the early eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries, but recent research has suggested that a few of the biggest barns belonging to Large Houses may be of mid to late seventeenth century in date.⁸

The use of a slope to give ground floor access to multi-storey farm buildings at different levels may be seen in several mountainous parts of Europe — South Germany, Switzerland, and parts of Central France, for instance. It may also be seen in Norway.⁹

Field Barns

The 'field barn', locally known as the 'field house' is another building which makes use of the sloping ground [Fig. 10.13]. Whereas the bank barn is found on the farmstead the field barn is an outlying building; whereas the bank barn stores and accommodates the threshing of corn, the field barn normally stores hay. Hay was swept from upland meadows into the field barn, kept in a loft at the upper level which often ran into a two-level 'sink mow', then taken out at the lower level to cattle which were tethered or kept in a loosebox. Hay was also taken from the lower part of the sink mow to be fed to sheep brought into the upland fields from the mountain tops.

Fig. 10.12 Bank Barns:

- (a) period of use, from ca. 1730
- (b) scarcity of examples in the north of the region; cross-hatched portion indicates use of canopy in south
- (c) barn placed *along* the slope, access to lower level from the farmyard
- (d) opposite side showing access to upper level by ramp from road or field
- (e) cross-section with lower level built into slope, ramp to upper level, canopy over barn entrance (1), pentise canopy sometimes provided at lower level (2)
- (f) plan at upper level with threshing floor (1), storage bays each side (2, 3), outward opening barn doors (4), winnowing door (5)
- (g) typical plan at lower level with cow-house (6), cattle tethered in pairs in stalls (7), cartshed (8), stable (9), with horses tethered individually in stalls
- (h) development of out-shuts alongside ramp
- (i) bank barn variant placed *across* the contours with access to cow-house or loose-box at one end of the building

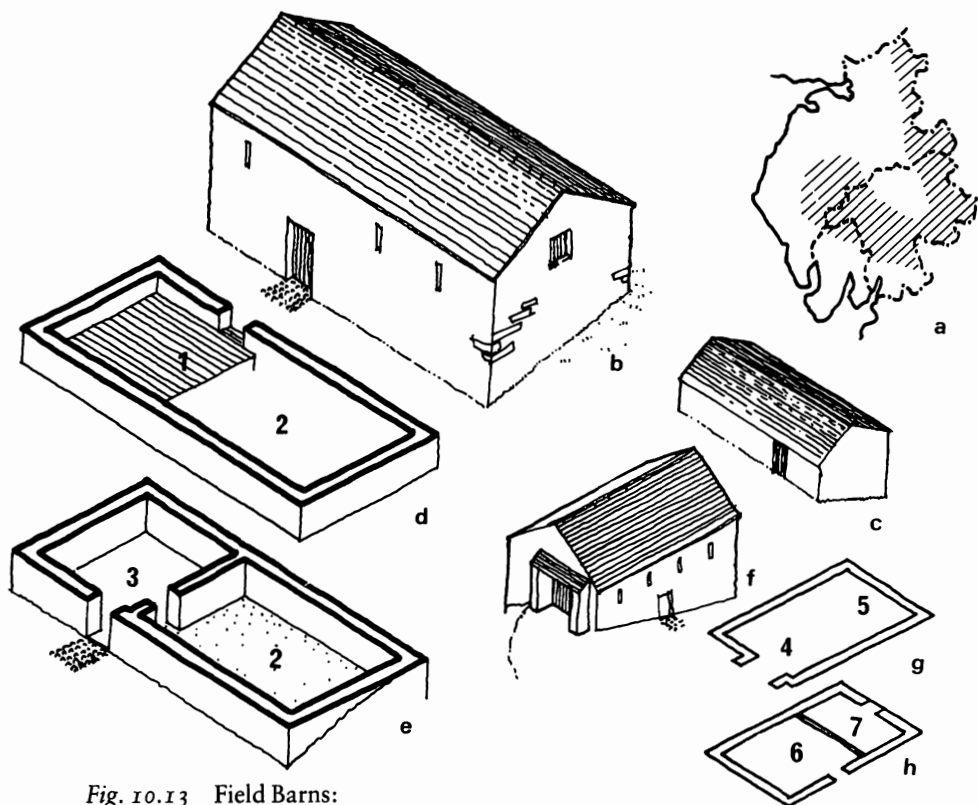


Fig. 10.13 Field Barns:

- (a) principal use along Pennines and lesser use in Lake District
- (b) field barn placed *along* the contours, access at lower level to loose-box
- (c) from opposite direction, access at upper level to hay loft
- (d) plan at upper level with loft (1) and 'sink-mow' dropping to lower level (2)
- (e) plan at lower level with lower part of sink-mow (2) and loose-box (3)
- (f) field barn placed *across* the contours, access at lower level to cow-house
- (g) plan at upper level showing loft (4) and sink-mow (5)
- (h) plan at lower level with cow-house (6) and lower part of sink-mow (7)

Like the bank barn, the field barn made use of the slope to minimize labour. Often the field barn was located part way up a field to balance the labour of delivering hay against that of spreading the manure accumulated from the cattle during the winter. One field barn was often placed alongside a wall so that it could serve two adjacent fields.

The field barn has a much more widespread distribution than the bank barn. Most examples are found in the Yorkshire Dales, many are found in various parts of the Pennines as far south as Derbyshire, and comparable buildings which do not usually make use of the slope are found in other parts of England including the Cotswolds. But the true field barn as described is characteristic of the hilly parts of Cumbria.

Shielings

One further aspect of farming in hilly countries deserves mention and this is the relationship of the shieling to the development of vernacular architecture in the region. The 'shield' or 'shieling' was the hut used by the families looking after cattle and sheep on the upland pastures. The practice of transhumance was maintained in the Lake District probably as late as the eighteenth century. Generally parishes in the dales extended from the valley bottom high up the mountainside so that all the farmers could benefit from meadow land, townfields and rough grazing as well as summer upland pasture, but old-established customs persisted whereby more distant parishes shared in grazing of the highest uplands and during the summer months whole families would move with herds up the mountains, living in shielings.¹⁰

So far most investigation of shielings has been confined to the Pennine fringes of the region but some material evidence of the practice has been discovered in the heart of the Lake District and place names incorporating such elements as 'shiel', 'shield', 'scale' are ubiquitous. After the practice of transhumance died out many shielings were left to decay, but many others became the sites of permanent farmsteads rebuilt in turn with the great expansion of cultivation of the mountain slopes during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Scalegate dated 1765 and Scales Farm dated 1763, for instance, may be examples of farmsteads established on sites which formerly served as summer pasture for the parish of Askham two miles away and 500 ft (153 m) below.

NORSE INFLUENCE IN VERNACULAR BUILDING

It is tempting to expect to find evidence of Norse influence on the vernacular architecture of the Lake Counties. After all the Norse invasions were movements of loosely organized bands rather than the highly disciplined patrician armies of Roman and Norman invaders, and one would expect Norse influence to show in the design of farmhouses and farm buildings rather than in castles and cathedrals and parish churches. Yet it is impossible convincingly to nominate any feature of the vernacular architecture of the region as showing Norse influence. The main reason lies in the long gap between Norse settlement and the emergence of vernacular architecture. Between the tenth century and the seventeenth century too long had elapsed. Fortunately archaeologists are showing increasing interest in the minor buildings from the Roman Period through the Dark Ages to medieval times. It may one day be possible to trace threads of design and construction back from the surviving buildings to the period of Norse settlement but that day has not yet dawned.

It is also tempting to hope that surviving vernacular buildings in Scandinavia might show points of similarity with those of Cumbria, as if from a common origin some similar developments might have occurred on both sides of the North Sea. But study of vernacular buildings in the field or collected in the open air museums of Stockholm, Copenhagen and Oslo

gives no grounds for hope at the moment. Neither the courtyard farms and hall farms of Denmark nor the tightly-packed courtyard farms of Sweden nor the loosely-grouped sets of house, storehouse and guest house of Norway suggest Cumbrian analogies any more than the heavy logs of Scandinavia relate to the heavy stones of the Lake Counties.

There are just faint possibilities of architectural links that may one day be established in the planning and construction of shielings in areas settled by the Norse, and rather stronger possibilities of links in the use of multi-level structures such as the bank barn and the field barn. For buildings of similar arrangement are known from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century on the west coast of Norway and many examples were built in the later nineteenth century in the better agricultural parts of south-eastern Norway.¹¹

One cannot, of course, push even this comparison too far. Not all Norwegian barns are bank barns, not all European bank barns are found in areas of Norse influence. And the long gap between the Norse settlement and the emergence of the building type in both countries still persists. But farms are internationally conservative and farming practices, farming implements, farming terminology and even farm building design were, until recently, slow to change. It may be that in this aspect of the vernacular architecture of the Lake District lies most immediate hope for the investigation of possible Norse influence.

Notes

¹ R. W. Brunskill, *Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture*. 2nd ed. (1978) 20–29.

² A. Rapaport, *House Form and Culture* (1969) 1–8.

³ R. W. Brunskill, *Vernacular Architecture of the Lake Counties* (1974) covers the various building types in more detail. The illustrations accompanying the present article also feature in this earlier volume.

⁴ R. W. Brunskill, *Collins Archaeology: Houses* (1981) deals in more detail with the house plans mentioned here.

⁵ R. W. Brunskill (1974) op. cit. 75–89.

⁶ W. H. Pearsall, *Mountains and Moorlands* (1968). Chapter 10, revised by Winifred Pennington, explains how pollen analysis has proved the former existence of vast woodlands almost to the tops of the Lake District mountains.

⁷ The term 'bank barn' I have imported from the United States in the absence of a specific local term for the building type. The special variation called the Pennsylvania Barn is described and illustrated in A. L. Shoemaker, *The Pennsylvania Barn*, Pennsylvania Folk Life Society, 2nd ed. (1959). Recent discussion of the European origin of the Pennsylvania Barn may be found in R. E. Ensminger, A Search for the Origin of the Pennsylvania Barn, in *Pennsylvania Folklife* (1980) xxx no. 20. 50–71.

⁸ B. Tyson, Low Park Barn, Rydal, in *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* (1979) LXXIX. 85–97.

⁹ Swiss examples may be seen in R. Weiss, *Hauser und Landschaften der Schweiz* (1959); South German in H. Schilli, *Schwarzwalddhäuser* (1971); and French in J. Stany-Gauthier, *Les Maisons Paysannes des Vieilles Provinces de France*, 2nd ed. (1952) 38.

¹⁰ H. Ramm et al. *Shielings and Bastles* (1970) 1–10.

¹¹ H. Vreim, Houses with Gables looking on the Valley, in *Folk-Liv* (1938) III. 295–314 touches on this matter in respect to Norway.



Plate XIV Bank Barn, Troutbeck. The barn, attached to a 17th-century statesman's house, reflects a distinctively Cumbrian type of outbuilding.

Plate XV Bank Barn, Forton, Lancashire. Although south of the Lake District, this bank barn has the same basic features as Lakeland examples.





Plate XVI The Normans introduced a new dimension to the ecclesiastical architecture of Cumbria. St Bee's Priory, c. 1160 A.D.