

# VERNACULAR BUILDING 11

## Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group

1987



KIRKWALL

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# **VERNACULAR BUILDING 11**

**Scottish Vernacular Buildings  
Working Group**

**1987**

SCOTLAND: Showing sites described

ST KILDA

STROMNESS

SCAPA FLOW

ST ANDREWS

GIFFORD

WANLOCKHEAD





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## TWENTY YEARS OF THE SCOTTISH VERNACULAR BUILDINGS WORKING GROUP<sup>1</sup>

Alexander Fenton

The SVBWG was formed – or perhaps, like Topsy, it simply grew – in 1972. Because it was a natural continuation of thinking and activity that began to fuse together some years before that – in 1967 – I think I can with reason speak of 20 years of life. Don't the Chinese count the date of birth from the twinkles in the parents' eyes?

Background details were given in *The Rural Architecture of Scotland* (1981), 13–24, and I shall do no more than summarise them, as a kind of aide-memoire.

1967: A Scottish Vernacular Buildings Survey Working Party was set up under Scottish Development Department chairmanship, following a joint approach by the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. The primary motivation was the neglect of small rural buildings, few of which appeared in the SDD's Statutory Lists set up under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Acts of 1947 onwards. The Museum was motivated, of course, by the need to know about such buildings in order to consider the basis of selection for a possible future open-air museum of Scottish country life.

In the same year, 1967, a four-week pilot survey in the Glamis area was carried out, with the aid of a grant from the National Trust for Scotland.

1968: A one-day conference in Edinburgh University was aimed at assessing the state of knowledge, and at harnessing thinking and activity by architects, official bodies concerned with buildings, and social historians.

Following this, enthusiasm for a national survey, to help to fill this great gap in our knowledge of the countryside, was high. The stage was reached where a grant for a much wider-scale survey might have been forthcoming from a specific Trust, but a conflict of interest prevented this.

1972: If one door closes, as the comfortable saying has it, another opens. But sometimes you have to open it yourself. Some of us on the original Survey Party decided to set up a Working Group and meetings were held in Edinburgh in 1972 and Dundee 1973, after which there was some degree of formalisation, though informality remained one of our hallmarks. Its purpose was as it is now – to provide a meeting-ground for all those with a concern for the country's smaller buildings and their background of social history. It also had a missionary purpose – it still has – in broadcasting knowledge of the subject through lectures and discussions, through the stimulation of survey and recording, through publication, and where possible through teaching. These purposes are spelt out in our revised Constitution, and we have had them from the beginning.

How successful have we been? I think we can claim some credit, direct and indirect. Two books by architects may have had some indirect stimulation from our activities:

Glen L Pride, *Glossary of Scottish Building* (1975), which was supported by the Scottish Civic Trust, whose Assistant Director is a member of the SVBWG. It was seen by the Trust as a monument to European Architectural Heritage Year. Now that the *Concise Scots Dictionary* has appeared, anyone will be able to check Pride's *Glossary* which includes a number of misconceptions, but all the same it is a useful compilation.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was the presidential address given to the SVBWG annual conference at North Berwick 18–20 April 1986.

Robert Scott Morton, *Traditional Farm Architecture in Scotland* (1976). The author had attended SVBWG meetings, and his involvement in making up SDD Statutory Lists made him aware of the work of the Building Survey Committee. The book is essentially a picture book with extended text, with a strong interest, reflecting Scott Morton's artist's eye, in texture. The range covered does give an idea of the regional variety of Scotland's buildings.

Two further works flowed directly out of the Group's activities. The first was Fenton and Walker's *Rural Architecture of Scotland* (1981), based in part on data collected in the National Museum's Scottish Ethnological Archive, and in part on field surveys carried out by Bruce Walker. Its intention was to set a base-line that could act both as a data bank and as a stimulus for further work. It had the financial support of the Scottish Arts Council.

The second was Robert J Naismith's *Buildings of the Scottish Countryside* (1985). It is well to remind ourselves that it is the direct outcome of the early efforts many of us made to fund a national survey. *The Rural Architecture of Scotland* played a considerable role in helping to persuade the Countryside Commission for Scotland, as did members of the former Buildings Survey Committee, that there was here an important subject area, of great importance for the appearance of the Scottish countryside, that deserved strong support. The CCS commissioned a survey in 1979, and it was carried out by Sir Robert Mears and Partners, and the assembled photographic and documentary information has been lodged with the National Monuments Record. In this we have a national survey, to the extent that 23,500 small buildings erected between 1750 and 1914 were examined, recorded and photographed, taken at random in a ratio of 1:10, all over the country. To a great extent, photographic recording was limited to a main facade. The approach was conditioned by the level of grant and the need to cover the country within that budget, as well as by the duties of the CCS. To quote the foreword by the former chairman of the CCS, David Nickson:

As an organisation we are not concerned with buildings for their own sake, but they affect the amenity of the countryside and so we seek to ensure high standards of design, the aim being that each individual building should please the eye as much as its surroundings. It is a question of harmony and the proper fit of parts, and the builders of old seem to have known the secret of this art. Our decision to go ahead with a study was based on the assumption, therefore, that the underlying principles of the vernacular building tradition in Scotland hold the key to successful design solutions in the countryside.

The CCS thought to obtain 'technical information for the use of architects, planners and builders to encourage good conservation practices, as well as to provide useful pointers on how new buildings could be designed to blend with their surroundings'. The volume now under discussion was seen as a means of bringing these principles to a wider readership, lay as well as professional.

The CCS survey, therefore, had a specific aesthetic intention. Naismith's book, which is the main visible means by which we can judge the results, has a brief historical introduction, and two substantial sections, one on buildings and their main characteristics, including walls, roofs, etc., and an analysis of 'design principles', and another on regions which identifies, on the basis of data fed into a computer, thirteen 'character zones'. It is, of course, true that a computer is neutral, but it is no more neutral than what is fed into it. Different criteria could readily produce a different spread of character zones.

At this point, mention should be made of teaching programmes. In essence, they



barely exist, except for the sterling work of the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Architecture, Dundee, under Bruce Walker. I need only refer you to his outline in *VB* 8 of how the study and teaching of vernacular architecture has developed since 1973-74, and with the number of students now participating, and the range of projects being undertaken, we can look forward to substantial advances in coming years with a strong spin-off effect on the architectural fraternity.

To come back to my original question: how successful have we been? – I think the answer is that much has happened in the last 20 years, a great deal of which owes not a little to our unremitting efforts. But if I now ask: have we achieved what was intended? – the answer is an emphatic, 'no, only in part'.

In the first instance, the CCS survey dealt only with the countryside and its small towns and villages. Much can also be learned in the bigger towns. Our 1973 Dundee Conference was concerned with aspects of urban buildings. This has not been much followed up in our journal *Vernacular Building*, except for Ronnie Hartwich's 'Patterns in Small Shop Frontages in Dundee' (*VB* 7). However, the *Review of Scottish Culture*, founded in 1984, carried Peter Robinson's 'Tenements: a Pre-Industrial Urban Tradition', of which the second part appeared in *ROSC* 2, 1986. In 1984 also, there appeared B Walker and W Sinclair Gaudie's *Architects and Architecture on Tayside*, published by the Dundee Institute of Architects. Of course there have been other publications on urban buildings, but what I miss in general is our kind of approach, with its mix of factual observation and recording, and of examination of the background social and economic environment that gave rise to particular types and forms of buildings, whether for living or working in. This approach is no different from the one we adopt to buildings in the countryside. Let us avoid driving wedges between town and country. We are equally concerned with all, and this should appear in our future publications' programme.

Secondly, there is the question of ethnological regions. Naismith gives computer-induced distributions of elements of architecture. What we are looking for is the relationship between vernacular buildings and the seven or eight major ethnological regions of Scotland that can be identified through a range of criteria, including variations in dialect and language. Buildings of earlier types are responses to functional needs, social structure and availability of building materials. We must learn better how to use them in the way that historians use documents. Let us build up by all means, through the interests of local individuals and through the stimulation that should precede and follow SVBWG conferences in specific localities, data on buildings that will eventually permit a reasoned view of what characterises and differentiates localities, and what is common to all or inspired from outside sources.

Thirdly, we should, alongside and in extension of such activity, foster the study of themes or topics such as smithies, joiners' shops, mills, ice-houses, saw-mills, dry-closets and sanitation, water-supply, offices associated with businesses and works, and so on – there is no shortage, and our journal, *Vernacular Building*, would welcome articles and notes. More substantial studies will continue to be dealt with as separate booklets whether with thematic or regional emphases, or both.

Fourthly, we should try to get farther back in time than is covered by the bulk of the articles in *VB*, to early modern and medieval conditions. Sources in this case are archaeological and documentary. Since the dwelling-house and associated structures have always been the primary focus of human activity, we should use any information we can draw together to throw more light on pre-18th-century ways of living.

I could go on, but I have said enough. I have outlined again the programme we have, in essence, always had. It is time now to intensify it, and to use our journal and publications to get the material out into the world of learning, so that scholars can take account of it. Scotland is not a 'primitive isolate' on the edge of Europe. The country has a pivotal position between northern and continental Europe. What we



produce has international value and colleagues abroad and in neighbouring parts of these islands appreciate it.

The message is that we have established creditable foundations. It is now time to build on these.

Edwina V W Proudfoot

### Introduction

The underground structure lies on the east side of the garden of the house known as Priorsgate (NGR NO 514 168), next to the Pend wall, at approximately 20 metres above Ordance Datum. The site lies on a gently south-facing slope, in well-drained sandy soil (fig. 1). Today Priorsgate is part of St Leonard's School, and the work described here was undertaken by the author at the school's request<sup>2</sup>.

After a period of heavy rain early in 1982, the structure was revealed below the path leading from Priorsgate to the Coach-house at the south end of the garden, after soil and debris collapsed into it. The top of a circular stone structure, 0.75m in diameter lay 0.50m below the modern surface. The walls were of dry-stone, though the upper courses had been mortared, as had the sandstone paved surround. On the west side several pieces of rotten wood had partially collapsed inwards, revealing the structure, filled with pale-coloured sand, garden soil and wooden spars to within a metre of the opening.

Much of the debris and some sand had been removed before the site was seen by the writer. Subsequently, several days were spent excavating the structure with the help of two school workmen and several students<sup>3</sup>. This was carried out with considerable difficulty because of the restricted access, through the circular opening in the top. It proved impracticable to section the filling of the structure, and so the loose soil and sand fill were totally removed from the upper part of the chamber. The lowest metre of the filling comprised large boulders and sand; the boulders were too big to remove without lifting gear, and therefore only one quarter of this part of the structure was excavated to the base of the filling, in order to determine the dimensions and nature of the building.

### Description

The chamber proved to be wholly underground, with access only from the top. It was 3.7m deep below the modern surface and was cone-shaped in the upper part, to a depth of 2.7m, while the lowest metre was vertical. It was constructed of dry-stone work, roughly coursed, of uneven clawed boulders; the top three courses had been mortared at the same time as the rim of paving was set around the opening. The greatest diameter in the lowest part of the chamber, was 2.8m, narrowing to 0.75m at the entrance (fig. 4).

The only structural features were an inlet on the north side and a socket opposite on the south side, both about one metre below the entrance (figs. 2 & 3). The inlet on the north side, 0.7m below the entrance was 0.25m wide and 0.3m high. The associated drain led due north as far as could be measured, that is over 1.25m. The socket on the south side was also 0.7m below the entrance; it was 0.2m wide, 0.3m high and 0.1m deep.

The west side of the chamber had been destroyed from the top to a depth of one metre, when, at some time in the past a drain-pipe had been laid alongside (fig. 2).

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<sup>2</sup> Fife Archaeological Index site number 16/22/5.

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to Bruce E Proudfoot, Patrick Topping, Ewan Campbell, the late Denny Edwards and to the St Leonard's School groundsmen who assisted in this project.

ST LEONARDS SCHOOL - underground chamber  
1982

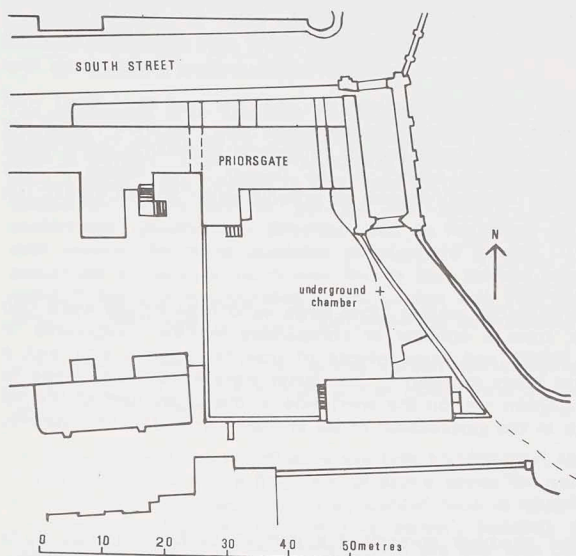


Figure 1

ST LEONARDS SCHOOL - underground chamber  
1982

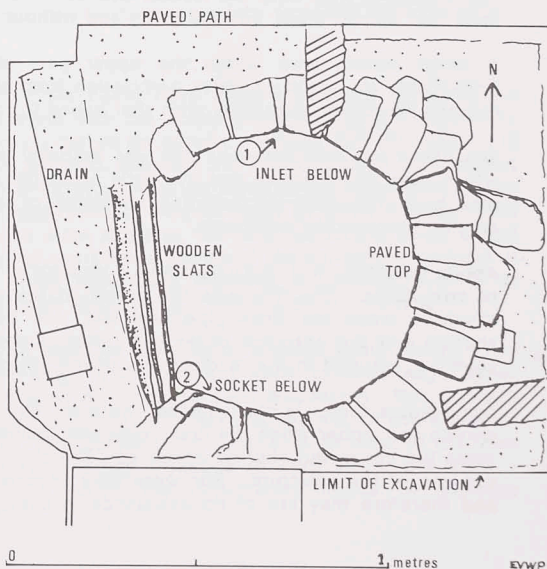


Figure 2

This damage had been shored up with wooden planks or an old door. Possibly at the same time, the entrance had also been covered in the same way. The whole had been covered with garden soil, and, later, a stone flag path was laid directly over the structure, presumably without knowledge of its existence. When the wood eventually rotted and gave way, the wood, soil and flagstone collapsed into the chamber, thus revealing the structure.

On removal of the recent debris, it was noted that the chamber had been filled with sterile sand almost to the level of the inlet. This sand was very fine pale-yellow dry dust, clean and free of other matter. Small broken sandstone fragments were found throughout the filling, with very large blocks in the lowest layer, where it was somewhat discoloured and damp. A small amount of ground water flowed across the base of hard, undisturbed sand.

### Finds

Located near the base of the chamber among other large sandstone blocks were two pieces of architectural stone, from a window or comparable feature. Fragments of bottle glass and tile, a few shells and three pieces of iron including a bolt and a spearhead were the only other items recovered. The latter were found quite close to one another, in the intrusive garden soil on the west side in the upper part of the fill of the chamber. The finds are in the possession of Mr D Stewart, Bursar, St Leonards School.

### Discussion

The filling of the underground chamber comprised a deposit of large stones, to a depth of one metre. Among and overlying these stones was a deposit of sandy debris, largely dust and small chippings, that filled the chamber to a height of approximately 2.5m. This material appeared to be all of one period. It was sterile and gritty, as would be expected from a product of industrial waste, such as the dust and debris resulting from stone cutting. The chamber was dry, although the season before its discovery had been extremely damp. Only the bottom metre of the deposit appeared to have been wet, and was stained brown from periodic inundation. It is unlikely that the chamber would have been waterlogged for any length of time in view of the porous nature of the filling and the fact that there was a flow of ground water at the base of the structure, with only the lowest five centimetres at most holding water: here the sand was almost black, but still gritty and without organic content.

A small central area within the upper part of the fill was also stained brown, presumably the result of water percolation from above, as moisture seeped or dripped through the cover, especially after that began to rot.

The filling was homogeneous and was probably all deposited on a single occasion, by which time the structure was evidently no longer required for the purpose for which it was built. The time-lag between cessation of use and the deposition of the sand cannot, however, be estimated.

Above the filling just discussed was a deposit of black garden soil. This was probably of two dates. The first was the result of the destruction of the west side of the structure when the drain-pipe was laid, and the side was shored up. When this shoring and the entrance cover had rotted, a second, substantial fall of soil into the chamber, resulted in the re-discovery of the structure.

The objects found in the chamber were in the upper fill and were derived from the garden soil, either when the drain-pipe was inserted alongside (fig. 2) or more recently when the cover and shoring collapsed. The objects are, therefore, not associated with the use of the structure. Nor were they associated with the deposit of sand debris, and therefore they are of no assistance in dating the construction, period of use, or



abandonment of the structure.

The only item which may be an exception to the above comments is the iron bolt, which could have derived from the shoring of the chamber side or the cover over the chamber, if either of these had been an old gate or cupboard door, since the bolt was a small one of the type used for such purposes. However, it was extremely corroded and no definitive characteristics could be noted.

The spearhead is an unusual find, being unlike the majority of spearheads found in Scotland. It is not earlier than 17th century in date, and is not a type which would be used in warfare. David Caldwell, of the National Museums of Scotland, considered it to have a slight resemblance to one from the Darien Colony at Panama, but felt that the comparison could not be pursued too closely. He could not, however, find a comparable spearhead in Scotland, and so the study of this item must remain open, until another becomes available to compare it with. The source and origin of the spearhead as well as the reason for its loss remain unknown, as does the means by which it became incorporated in the garden soil. The third iron object proved to be a lump of rusted iron, no longer identifiable as an artefact.

The remaining objects found in the garden soil comprised a tile fragment, pieces of flower-pot, bottle-glass and an oyster shell. None of these has any relationship with the chamber or its use.

The only other items found were the two architectural stones, in the fill at the base of the structure. One is a fragment of stone keyed for use, with one side curved, to fit an arch, such as a window. This curved face is chamfered. The stone could have been removed from a 16th- or 17th-century building, possibly even from Priorsgate itself, at the time of its reconstruction in the late 18th century.

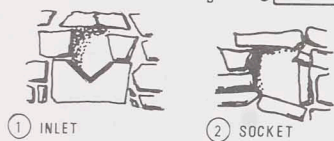
The second stone is also a structural fragment, again keyed, with one curved edge, though this is not chamfered. It is unclear which part of a structure this fragment may derive from.

As noted above, Priorsgate may have been the source of the building from which the architectural fragments derived, as it underwent a major reorganisation in the late 18th century. This rebuilding may also be the source of the sandy builders' debris. This would offer a potential date for the closure of the underground structure, though not the date when it ceased to be used.

### Conclusion

It has been suggested that the structure could have been a sump or a well. The presence of the inlet and socket, integral with the construction, makes the possibility of it being a well unlikely. The filling contained no organic residues and therefore it is not likely it was in use as a sump. In addition, although the inlet had been constructed as an integral part of the structure the stone showed no signs of having carried water. The cut edge of the stone and the edge-tooling were as fresh as when first cut. Had they been subjected to water flow, or even dripping, the soft sandstone edge would have worn to some extent. Because of the porous nature of the sandstone bedrock it is also unlikely that the structure could have been intended as a water cistern or storage tank, and the problem of the inlet would have a bearing on such a use.

The sides of the chamber showed no signs of staining or deposit which might have provided information about possible use. In the present state of knowledge about medieval burghs there is little information on which to base discussion. Nor is much known of the domestic arrangements within garden areas subsequent to the medieval period, during the 17th, 18th or even 19th centuries. It is unlikely, in view of the inlet that this could have been a small-scale urban icehouse or root store, but such a possibility should be borne in mind when the opportunity arises to examine



ST LEONARDS SCHOOL - underground chamber  
1982



underground structures. All too often they are not examined, once the top has been identified. They are described as wells and then covered over.

A number of underground structures are known in St Andrews, in addition to many wells. Superficially they resemble the one under discussion, being approximately 0.75m in diameter at the paved top, and they are of sandstone construction. One lies behind the former Fine Fare supermarket in South Street and another on the north side of the University Library. The latter is open, with a grill and is described as a well; it is of the same general dimensions as that at Priorsgate, and likewise does not hold water today. There is no description of the original filling of either of these structures.

Such structures are apparently not widely known elsewhere, the only other known to the writer being in Stirling. This may be because, as noted above, many structures are thought to be wells and are covered over, without further investigation. At present, therefore, it is not possible to suggest a use for this underground chamber. Nor is it possible to provide a date for its construction, when it ceased to be used and finally the date at which it was filled in.

The structure now has a grill over it and is incorporated in a flower bed.

### Catalogue

1. Spearhead: head and top of shaft; wood still in socket; strong mid-rib; iron. Length: 195mm; blade: 90mm long by 43mm wide, 10mm at thickest part of rib; shaft: 105mm long, 22mm wide at broken end.
2. Bolt or cupboard catch: length 122mm, maximum width 28mm, width of end plate 32mm; iron.
3. Lump of iron, unidentifiable, 75mm by 75mm.
4. Tile fragment.
5. Fragments of flower-pot, (3).
6. Fragments of bottle glass; one early piece (18th-19th century), 8 pieces of recent manufacture.
7. Oyster shell, (1).
8. Architectural fragment: square section, curved; chisel marked or keyed on all faces; base 143mm by 120mm ; height 300mm.
9. Architectural fragment: almost triangular, curved on one side; base 210mm by 70mm; height 320mm.

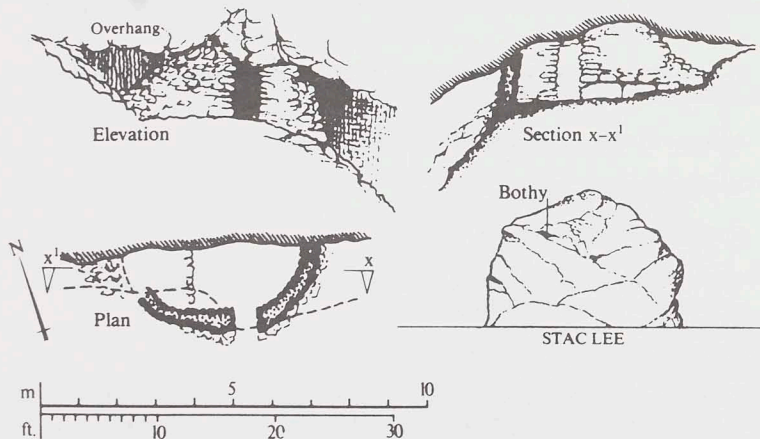
## GANNET-HUNTERS' BOTHY ON STAC LEE, ST KILDA<sup>4</sup>.

Peter Moore

Stac Lee is one of the major sea-stacs of the British Isles and forms part of the St Kilda archipelago, lying to the west of the most northerly island in the group, Boreray. It rises to a height of 172m and forms a significant part of the largest Atlantic gannetry, hosting over ten thousand pairs. The young gannet or guga were an essential part of the St Kildans' diet. It was to Stac Lee that they would come, late in the season, to harvest the crop of guga, having left the crowded ledges undisturbed in the preceding months.

The timing of this annual pilgrimage to the stac in August/September could result in the islanders having to undertake difficult landings in unfavourable conditions. Landings were made at the south side of the stac, at a blow hole, and were facilitated by the placing of a large iron spike in the rock, over which a rope could be cast and 3m of sheer rock scaled to the first reasonable ledge. The crossing from here to the south-east point, from where the climb commenced was a straightforward task.

A broad ledge provides easy access to the summit slope, which is, and probably always was, the densest part of the seabird colony. At the top of this ledge, beneath a slight overhang, at a height of about 120m, the St Kildans built a bothy, large enough to accommodate three people comfortably and possibly four.



Bothy, Stac Lee; plan, section and view (drawing based on survey by Peter Moore and Stuart Murry).

<sup>4</sup>I am grateful to Mary Harman for drawing on her wealth of knowledge of the St Kilda structures and commenting on the draft.



The existence of this bothy was noted by Martin-Martin in 1697<sup>5</sup>:

About two Leagues and a Half to the North of *St Kilda*, is the Rock *Stack-Ly*, two hundred Paces in circumference, and of a great height, being a perfect Triangle turning to a Point at the Top; it is visible above twenty Leagues distant in a fair Day, and appears blue; there is no Grass nor Earth to cover it, but sometimes perfectly White with *Solan* Geese sitting on and about it. One would think it next to impossible to climb this Rock, which I expressed, being very near it; but the Inhabitants assured me it was practicable, and to convince me of the Truth of it, they bid me look up near the Top, where I perceived a Stone Pyramid-house, which the Inhabitants built for lodging themselves in it in *August*, at which time the Season proves inconstant there; this obliges the Inhabitants in point of Prudence to send a competent Number of those to whose share the Lot falls; these are to land on this Rock some Days before the *Solan* Geese take Wing; if they neglect this Piece of Foresight, one windy Day may disappoint them of five, six, or seven thousand *Solan* Geese, which this Rock affords yearly. They are so very numerous here, that they cannot be divided in respect to their Lands, as elsewhere; this therefore is the Reason why they send here by Lots, and those who are sent act for the public Interest, and when they have knocked on the head all that may be reached, they then carry them to a sharp Point, called *Casting-Point*, from whence they throw them into the Sea, for the height is such that they dare not throw them into the Boat, until the Boatmen cry, *Enough*, lest the Sea, which has a strong Current there should carry them off, as it does sometimes, if too many are thrown down at once: Thus, by Degrees, getting all in, they return home; and after their Arrival every Man has his share proportioned to his Lands, and what remains under the Number ten, is due to the Officer as a Part of his yearly Salary. In this Rock the *Solan* Geese are allowed to hatch their first Eggs, but it is not so in the Rocks next to be described; and that for this Reason, that if all were allowed to hatch at the same time, the Loss of the Product in one Rock would at the same time prove the Loss of all the rest, since all would take Wing pretty nearly at the same Time.

It is thus of 17th-century origin at least.

The presence of this bothy was noted by Balharry and Boyd (1968), in the account of what is generally accepted as being the first ascent of the stac since St Kildan times, but this makes no attempt to describe the structure<sup>6</sup>. In 1985 Stuart Murray, Raymond Simpson and I visited the bothy whilst working sections for the National Gannet Census.

The siting of the bothy is probably linked both to the ready availability of building material, which would have been gathered from the shattered summit slopes, and to its position affording ready access to the summit colony. There is an early account of

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<sup>5</sup>Martin Martin, *A Voyage to St Kilda – The remotest of all the Hebrides or Western Isles of Scotland* (visited 1697, first published 1698).

<sup>6</sup>T Weir, 'Two men on the Stacs', *Scots Mag*, December 1969, 260-5.

water being available on the stac, though this was not recorded in 1985<sup>7</sup>.

The overhang provided a dry shelter which needed only to be enclosed. This was partially accomplished by the placing of two large boulders, each 0.9m long and about 0.56m high, which dominate the interior of the wall. Around and on top of these, smaller, angular rocks are piled in the form of cladding in an arc approximately 4m high and set slightly downhill of centre; the overhanging rock forms an angled lintel and a threshold slab has been laid.

Inside, the floor is level and the roof, which reaches a maximum height of 1.65m, slopes toward the back. Left of the doorway is a raised stone platform, some 0.3m above the floor, which may have been used to sleep on, though the proximity of an aperture in the roof suggests a use as a base for a fire. However, there is no evidence of blackened stone or ash, but if a stay of several days were envisaged then fuel, possibly cut turves, may well have been brought and gannet nesting material also used. Another possible reason for this aperture is that there was no suitably sized building material available to complete the corbelled roof.

The bothy probably had little extended usage, though it would have provided shelter for those harvesting the guga, a task unlikely to be completed in a day. It would also have provided cover during daylight hours, before work at nightfall commenced. The adult gannets were taken during the hours of darkness and it is possible that the bothy was built in times when these were taken from the stac and the later idea of farming the guga unthought of. Night-time operations would also be required if the season was too far advanced and the guga very large and thus capable of spreading panic through the colony.

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<sup>7</sup>Sibbald MS (post 1697): 'There is a small spring issues out of the face of the rock, which the islanders when there, drink and say it is good water'.

## GREEN BOTTLE HOWFFS: A PILOT STUDY OF INHABITED CAVES

Roger Leitch

While caves might hardly be classed as vernacular buildings, they have long served similar purposes, and to this day, there are far from primitive cave-dwellings to be found in Western Europe and countries such as Tunisia. Indeed, caves have made a major contribution to the welfare of man in the form of shelter. A number have been artificially enlarged or incorporate man-made fixtures and fittings. On the island of Jura, for instance, two caves have been converted into a shooting bothy<sup>8</sup>.

Cave occupation is part of our indigenous folk-tradition. Apart from the recurring phantom piper found in popular folklore, caves are associated with giants, wizards, fugitives and kerwachs<sup>9</sup>. There are sacred caves in Scotland such as the dripping cave of Craig-a-Chowie, near the point of Kilmuir, Ross-shire. Even in relatively modern times, the water from the roof of this cave was regarded as being a cure for deafness and ear-ache<sup>10</sup>.

Many caves are associated with smuggling by virtue of the fact that they were natural cellars. There are inshore fishermen who still use small caves for storing their creels and other gear. On the island of Raasay, the *Uamh-nan-Ramh* was reputed to have been where pirates at Clachan kept their oars<sup>11</sup>. Boswell and Johnson were shown this cave on their well-documented tour of the Hebrides. It was then described as being a fissure in the rock, roofed with long stones and covered with turf<sup>12</sup>. Another 18th-century traveller recorded that a cave on the north coast of Islay had a corn-drying kiln built into its eastern side<sup>13</sup>.

The cave in question is today marked on maps as *Uamh Mhor* or the Great Cave (NR 398783). No trace of the kiln is to be found, but the recent addition of drystone walling at the entrance indicates that the cave is now serving as sheep-pens<sup>14</sup>. A 17th-century description of the county of Angus, makes reference to local 'peasants' driving sheep into caves during the 'severe seasons'<sup>15</sup>, while a cave at Covesea on the Moray Coast was used as a clandestine stable in 1745<sup>16</sup>. 'A cave behind the village of Lossiemouth, had in ancient times been formed into a small hermitage, not exceeding 12 feet square'<sup>17</sup>. It was completed by a handsome Gothic door and window, although this entire cave was destroyed by quarry workings sometime in the 1850s. Quite a few caves have been used as places of assembly, for religious services, or other, more

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<sup>8</sup>RCAHMS *Argyll*, vol 5 (1984), 19. See *Glasgow Archaeological Journal*, 5 (1978), 68; plan and photographs in NMRS.

<sup>9</sup>Kerwachs were naked wild men who lived in caves. See J F Campbell, *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*, vol 3 (1860-62), 49.

<sup>10</sup>J M McPherson, *Primitive Beliefs in the North East of Scotland* (1929), 85.

<sup>11</sup>R Sharpe, *Raasay: a study in island history* (1977), 36, n 29.

<sup>12</sup>J Boswell, *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson* (1936), 126-55.

<sup>13</sup>M Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* (1703), 163 (new ed. p.241).

<sup>14</sup>*Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* (1974), 11.

<sup>15</sup>Rev R Edward, *A description of the county of Angus* (1678), 39.

<sup>16</sup>L Shaw, *The History of the Province of Moray*, vol 2 (1882), 62. The family of Gordonstown were concealing their horses from supporters of the Jacobite cause.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid* 62-3.



mysterious ceremonies. At Ledaig in Sutherland, a cave was furnished with benches for the purposes of religious worship, and two Wester Ross caves at Sand and Cove, were similarly used up until the late 19th century. A more curious history surrounds the Masons' Cave near Auchmithie on the Angus coast. Up until the 1880s or thereabouts, the St Thomas Lodge of Freemasons in Arbroath held their initiation ceremony within the cave on St John's Day<sup>18</sup>. The Rev Aitkin, writing about 1790, mentioned that 'the Mason Lodge of Arbroath built a gate to it and gave it a door many years ago'<sup>19</sup>. This however, pales into insignificance beside a legend attached to the Weem Cave in North Perthshire, which was supposedly linked to Loch Glassie by a subterranean tunnel stretching a distance of  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles. This long tunnel had nine iron gates which opened and closed of their own accord, and at parts widened out into large roomy chambers with gem-studded roofs<sup>20</sup>.

Numerous caves are associated with overnight stays from passing tramps, and even those in remote regions have served a similar purpose for the more adventurous hill gangrels and climbers. Some caves played host to long-stay occupants. A seashore cave near the South Ayrshire village of Ballantrae was occupied for more than 30 years by Harry Ewing Torbett, better known as **Old Snib**. 'He became a permanent resident, gathering driftwood from the beach for a fire in the cave which was once an old smiddy, and living off hares and rabbits killed by traffic on the nearby A77 road'<sup>21</sup>. East from Cellardyke in Fife, the sandstone caves at Caiplie (fig. 1) are a well known coastal landmark. Numerous chambers inter-connect within the honeycombed crag whose base level is several feet above the high-water mark. Some say St Adrian was a former occupant, and others attach credence to the many incised crosses on the walls by suggesting these were made by pilgrims<sup>22</sup>. According to one well-informed Cellardyke man:

The maist famous occupant that the Caiplie Coves has ever had, wis a man known locally as Cove Jimmy. This man somehow had given up livin in houses, but neither did he wander, because when Jimmy came to the Coves he stayed there for 13 years, summer and winter. Tinkers also came to live there, off and on, but somehow they recognised his right to live in the cave which he had selected, and they seemed to regard him as almost being the landlord o the caves<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>18</sup>G Hay, *History of Arbroath* (1899), 474.

<sup>19</sup>*OSA XII* 182-3.

<sup>20</sup>N D Mackay, *Aberfeldy Past and Present* (1954), 181. In one of the chambers there was treasure of untold wealth, guarded by the Devil in person. A man who studied the black art in Italy under the direction of Satan was Donald Duibheal Mackay, the wizard of Reay. While exploring a subterranean tunnel in the famous Smoo Cave, the wizard's dog was stripped of all its hair. Also at Smoo, tinkers are known to have earned coppers by acting as cave-guides.

<sup>21</sup>'The old tramp a village cannot forget', *Scottish Sunday Express* 10 April 1983. A variety of abodes were used by old-time tramps: boat-sheds, railway huts, hill bothies, shelter stones, etc. Amongst the more unusual were a Forfar tramp who occupied a pig-sty, and an Elgin gangrel who would only sleep on the 'feeding-bench' of a thrashing mill. Modern 'crackpots' have included a Plymouth tramp who lived in an empty barrel (*The Times* 18 December 1984), and a Dundee man who slept in a wardrobe at Riverside.

<sup>22</sup>Similar crosses have been found at the **Uamh nan Cailleach** or Nun's Cave at Carsaig on Mull.

<sup>23</sup>(Personal Tape Ref) *RWL15* Eugene D'Espreminil recorded at Cellardyke, Fife, on 12 September 1982. Copy in the Sound Archive of the School of Scottish Studies.



When Cove Jimmy arrived at Caiplie in the late 1920s, he selected the mind-boggling Mortuary Cave as his abode:

It wis jist a rocky, damp place that showed signs o very early artificial enlargement. Jimmy swept the whole place out and had linoleum on the floor, carpets, a bed, a table and some chairs. He also had one o these pillar-like stoves that had a flue, and this wis led up the wall, along the roof and oot through the door – for he also built a door to this place, wi the stove-flue comin oot through it<sup>24</sup>.

I inspected the Mortuary Cave in April 1986 and found evidence of a possible one-time attachment to Cove Jimmy's door. About 7 ft [2.13m] up the side of one of the entrance walls at the cave mouth, was a hole containing a portion of wood which had been obviously snapped or broken at an earlier time. On the opposite wall there was another of these man-made holes, this time at a lower level but near enough in a parallel position. The remains of a crude barrier wall could be ascertained across the cave entrance which also had a hefty tree trunk lying further in. Extending to a depth of about 16 ft [4.88m], the 'Mortuary' had a surprisingly flat floor, an average ceiling height of 8½ ft [2.59m], good acoustics and was certainly wind-tight. These factors apart, I would need a very good reason for staying there for 13 years.

Stone walls at cave-mouths are not uncommon. These probably served as wind-breaks, ensured privacy, or were built for security. In Ireland, a fortified cave on Island Magee was occupied by outlaws as late as the 1790s<sup>25</sup>. The most elaborate frontage-wall is possibly the one found at a cave near Dirleton in East Lothian. At one end, a lookout space had been incorporated in the wall, which descended in a series of steps on both sides to a low mid-point or doorway. This cave-wall was 5½ ft [1.68m] in width, and on its inner side, were two fireplaces or ovens which had substantial lintels, paved hearths, and flues<sup>26</sup>. Originally, the wall of this cave could well have reached the natural roof. Caves sealed off in this manner are not unknown. St Ciaran's Cave in the Achinloan headland of Kintyre was formerly sealed by a wall built of rubble masonry laid in lime mortar<sup>27</sup>.

In the wilds of Glen Mark, Angus, a well-constructed frontage-wall is to be found at Balnamoon's Cave (fig. 2), which although marked on the map, is quite difficult to find. The rebel laird Balnamoon allegedly used the cave as a refuge after the 'Forty-Five'. By all accounts Balnamoon was an eccentric figure, whose zeal for the Episcopalian faith was more than matched by his fondness of port wine. Dundee town planner, John Smart, has made a number of visits to this area and eventually located Balnamoon's hide-out with difficulty. The entrance is extremely narrow and could be completely sealed with a couple of rucksacks. As Mr Smart points out:

The entrance is probably narrow so that it could be blocked up in bad weather. From the cave itself, you can't see down the glen; you see across to the screes coming down from the Craig of Doune. Inside you can't properly stand up and there's a massive back wall which

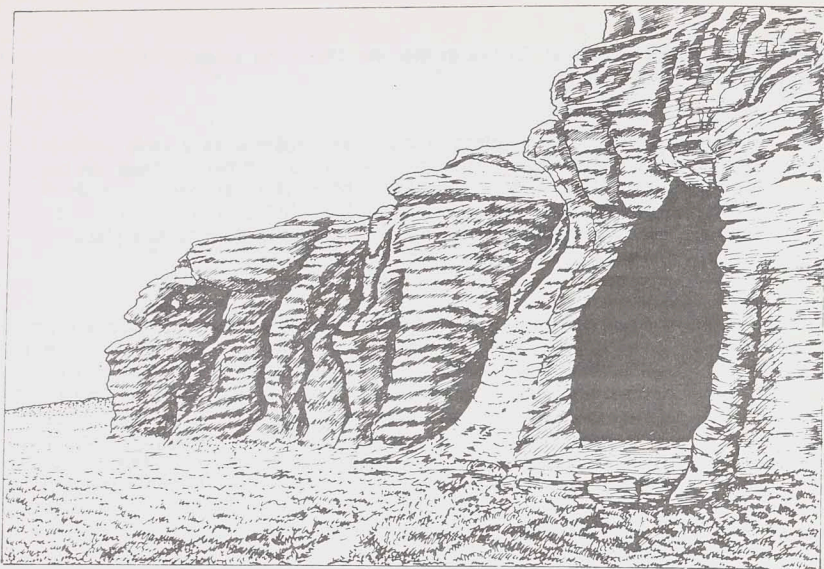
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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

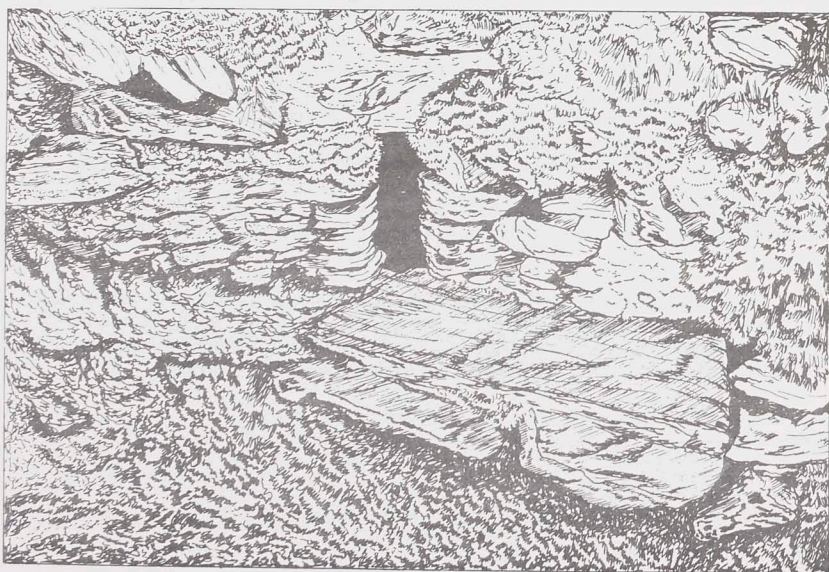
<sup>25</sup> *Guide to Belfast* compiled by the Belfast Naturalists Field Club (1874), 211.

<sup>26</sup> *PSAS* XLIII (1909), 243–68.

<sup>27</sup> *RCAHMS Argyll*, vol 1 (1971), 298, pl 48a.



Sculptured by time, the Caipie Caves present an interesting coastal landmark. The large Chapel Cave on the extreme right, has at one time been protected by a slightly curved wall of masonry, of which only a few foundation stones now remain *in situ*. This cave is associated with pilgrims, smugglers, tramps and travelling folk. The presence of 'very old people' was detected by a former occupant in the 1930s. (Drawing by Colin Hendry, NMS; based on a photograph by Ian Haddow, 1986)



A well constructed frontage wall at Balnamoon's Cave. The narrow entrance means that the cave can be easily missed, despite being marked on maps. (Drawing by Colin Hendry, NMS; based on a photograph by John C Smart, 1986)



immediately strikes you as you come in. It slopes towards you and forms the main natural cavity. If you'd intended spending the night there, you could have four or five in comfort. I came upon heather remains which had obviously been used in the past as bedding<sup>28</sup>.

Many countries have caves which are associated with bandits, outlaws and other desperadoes. Perhaps none can compare with Hardin County's cave in Cave-in-Rock State Park, USA. Apart from regular tenancy by explorers and barge-men, it housed the notorious Harpe brothers and the legendary Mike Fink, the King of the Keelboatmen, who was reputed to be half man, half alligator<sup>29</sup>. Often spurious tradition in Scotland associates caves with the fugitive Prince, Rob Roy, Bruce or Wallace. There are, however, one or two caves in Highland areas which have credible links with Charles Edward Stuart after his flight from Culloden Moor<sup>30</sup>.

In September 1956, a fieldwork team from the School of Scottish Studies investigated a packman's cave at *Meall na h-Uamh*, Moidart. Here, a crude drystone wall about 2½ ft [0.76m] in height had been built out from the cave. Additional screening for a bed-space was found *in situ* and comprised sacking and tarpaulin, supported by three wooden posts<sup>31</sup>. These small caves and rock-shelters were quite often used as stopping-places by pedlars, lay preachers, fishermen, drovers and such-like.

The pedlar Joe Wilson, mentioned in Gavin Maxwell's famous *Ring of Bright Water*, is credited with sharing a sea-cave along with his co-habitee Jeannie<sup>32</sup>. Another cave used by the same man is to be found near Glenelg village on the way to the Kyle Rhea ferry. It is a tight recess and can be found at the base of a crag, marked as Biod Ban on the 1:50,000 OS map. Decreasing in height to a depth of around 8 ft [2.44m], it occupies a rather exposed position and this may well have been the reason for Joe's flit to the sea-cave near Maxwell's former home. When I visited the Biod Ban cave in 1982, there were a few hobo-relics such as the proverbial green bottle glass and a few rusty cans. A deposit of loose stones lay immediately down from the cave entrance – signs that a stone wind-break or protective wall may have been built.

Gypsies have a long association with cave occupation. Entire 'villages' of troglodyte gypsies are to be found in Asiatic Turkey and the largest cave village in the world was inhabited by Spanish gypsies to the east of Granada, in the suburb of Albaicin. In Transylvania, the *Rudari* (basket-makers and makers of wooden tools) occupied half-underground habitations, covered with earth and roofed with interwoven branches.

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<sup>28</sup> Tape-recorded interview with John C Smart recorded at Dundee on 8 April 1986. Reference is made to a number of other caves in the Glen Mark area which do not appear on maps and show signs of recent occupation.

<sup>29</sup> W Allen, *It Happened In Southern Illinois* (1968), 96–7. Micajah and Wiley Harpe specialised in brutal executions. About the cave they disposed of a half-dozen or so victims by such methods as tying them, naked, on a blinded horse and lashing it over the high cliff. They even pushed unsuspecting persons off the cliff for no apparent reason. Mike Fink is credited with being a noted rifle shot, bully and braggart. The earliest written record of this cave is that of M de Lery, a Frenchman, who visited it in 1729. A legendary sign was positioned in close proximity and announced 'Liquor Vault and House of Entertainment'.

<sup>30</sup> A cave near the *Ailt Coire Mheadoin* in the Braes of Glenmoriston is reliably associated with the Prince. He is also said to have used a cave on South Uist. See *SHS XX* (1895), 321–54 and *SHS XXII* (1896), 375–83.

<sup>31</sup> S F Sanderson in *Scottish Studies* vol 1/2 (1957), 243–5. Reference is made to protective walls being built across cave mouths by homeless unemployed men at West Kilbride in 1937.

<sup>32</sup> G Maxwell, *Ring of Bright Water* (Pan Paperback ed 1963), 17–19. I have an informative taped sequence concerning Joe Wilson which was recorded from retired crofter/shepherd, John MacAskill (b. 1900), at Glenelg, Inverness-shire on 24 May 1982.

A man could hardly stand up in these Rudari 'manholes'<sup>33</sup>. In Scotland, similar types of structure were used by exiled Covenanters<sup>34</sup>. Above Hearthstane Farm, Tweedsmuir, the ridge known as the Crooked Bank had three such hiding-holes. These were known locally as Hunter's Holes, being associated with the martyr John Hunter of Polmood. Unfortunately, forestry operations have completely destroyed two, and a third is altered beyond recognition<sup>35</sup>.

Sea-caves were periodically occupied by tinkers or travellers. The most famous of these are at Wick, and in particular, a commodious cave to the south of the town which was close to the famous cliff relief - The Old Man of Wick. One 19th-century writer noted four families occupying this cave along with their 'numerous and vicious dogs'<sup>36</sup>. Heating was provided by open peat-fires, whose reek doubtless prevented any attempt at screening the cave-mouth for shelter. Moreover, during high tides assisted by strong north-westerlies, the sea encroached into the cave. During one evacuation, eleven people and a donkey were ascending the treacherous cliff-top path, when a woman slipped and fell to her death<sup>37</sup>. A colony of rats forced the occupants out on another occasion, and with the arrival of the Great War, black-out restrictions meant a further period of leave, since the cave-fires would have alerted the enemy<sup>38</sup>.

Until the 1930s, sea-caves in South Fife were occupied by Argyll Williamsons along with their horses. At Southend, Kintyre, caves have also been used by travellers for shelter and other tinker caves are known at Collieston in the North-East<sup>39</sup>, at Ham in Caithness, Kinlochbervie, and on Skye.

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<sup>33</sup> J P Clebert, *The Gypsies* (English transl. 1963), 182-3.

<sup>34</sup> A cave in Garrel Glen, Stirlingshire, is associated with the Covenanters. The date 1699 was carved above the entrance and although Ordnance Surveyors found the cave to be damaged by quarrying, the date was clearly legible. *NSA VIII* (Stirlingshire), 152.

<sup>35</sup> Tape-recorded conversation with Andrew Lorimer (b. 1906) who formerly farmed Hearthstane. Recorded at Peebles on 25 July 1985. In the Sound Archive of the School of Scottish Studies.

<sup>36</sup> A Mitchell, *The Past In The Present* (1880), 73-75.

<sup>37</sup> Letter to the writer from I B Salmon, Stanmore, Middlesex, dated 24 April 1982.

<sup>38</sup> Letter to the writer from Elizabeth Jack, Halkirk, Caithness, dated 29 April 1982.

<sup>39</sup> *SA 1955/155* Tape-recording in the School of Scottish Studies Sound Archive. According to Hamish Henderson's informant, 'the caves are condemned now', the last shift being about 1903. The original occupants acted as middlemen for a Dutch smuggling ring who were trafficking kegs of gin.



## GIFFORD – A PLANNED VILLAGE?

John H Simpson

Robert Naismith's book *Buildings of the Scottish Countryside*, in the chapter entitled 'The pattern of building', says: 'The finest plans of villages were characterised by well-known examples such as Gifford'. His assumption in that chapter and elsewhere is that planned villages are an 18th-century, and mostly late 18th-century, phenomenon and consisted of buildings of the new improved style. With regard to Gifford, he specifically dates the promotion and/or the start of feuing to the mid 18th century. This perpetuates and exaggerates an error common to most books about East Lothian villages. By them I was led to assume that if I researched the papers of the Tweeddale family on whose Yester estate the village grew up, I would be bound to find some sort of proposed lay-out or at least a reference to a plan. There is no such thing and the reason is quite simply that Gifford was never planned in that sense. In the context of family planning, a planned family is a family you intended to have. In this sense only is Gifford planned. Quite clearly it was the intention of the early Marquises of Tweeddale to have a village.

So we accept Naismith's more equivocal term 'promotion' rather than 'plan' but then it turns out that he puts it 100 years too late. What the Tweeddale papers show is a piece-meal development starting in the 1660s.

In the stonemason's accounts for enclosing Yester Park in 1666 there is reference to building the House of Gifford – the first ascertained use of Gifford as a place-name. By 1672 rents were collected for a smiddy, meal-mill, malt-barn and kiln. The following year a waulk-mill was built half a mile downstream. By 1680 the House of Gifford was referred to as the Inn. In 1681 royal assent was given for weekly markets and three annual fairs. A 'long house' was improved in 1678 to provide suitable accommodation for the Estate Chamberlain and the first feu-title was granted to a shopkeeper (but was redeemed three years later). A further mill – a paper mill – was built in 1694 and soon acquired the contract for making notes for the Bank of Scotland, founded by (*inter alios*) Lord Tweeddale in 1695.

Apart from the written evidence, these buildings can be identified on a painting which hangs in Yester House. The exact date and ascription is uncertain but it cannot be later than 1705. I should mention also the Hearth Tax returns for 1691 which list 21 householders in Gifford. Sixteen of them had only one hearth and were presumably little more than hovels, which would account for their not being considered worthy of the artist's attention in the picture referred to.

Clearly, then, Gifford was being promoted long before Naismith and others would have us believe. And there is no overall design; despite the number of works and buildings, there was still at this stage no public building – no church, no school.

It was the decision in 1699 to set aside 55 acres of land for grazing and digging turf as a privilege to feuars that really pushed things forward. In the next few years a dozen properties were feued, a court-house, school and schoolmaster's house were built (1705), and, after appropriate changes in parish boundaries, a church and manse (1708–10). The positioning of these buildings is the nearest one comes to a plan, but there can be no suggestion that sites were purposely left vacant until development should warrant their construction. Just as the mills, houses and inn had been sensibly arranged with a view to access and good order, so the public buildings were fitted into the best available sites. They were, after all, the work of James Smith, the architect involved in the building of the new Yester House at the same time, so he could be expected to have a good eye for such things.

Promotion – yes, from way back in the 17th century; orderliness – yes; plan – no.

## HORIZONTAL PANES IN SASH AND CASEMENT WINDOWS

David Roberts

Scottish builders and architects added their own distinctive contribution to the accepted tradition of wooden window design during the first half of the 19th century. The incidence of 'lying panes' starts at the 'polite' levels of architecture and gradually extends to the vernacular. English preference for vertically-accented structures has been noted by several writers<sup>40</sup> and it is very evident that Scottish designers were more conscious of horizontal emphases. By far the greater proportion of windows having horizontal panes are to be found north of the Border and observant architectural writers like Dr Brunskill<sup>41</sup> have either ignored or overlooked this essentially Scottish trait. In England and Wales windows with horizontal panes are regarded as some sort of architectural solecism and, where they do occur, Scottish influence is perhaps detectable. On the Yarborough estates in Lincolnshire the occasional model double-cottage is glazed in this way during the 1840s and 1850s at a time when William Burn<sup>42</sup> was making substantial additions to the Yarborough seat at Brocklesby Park (as well as building new mansion-houses in the same county). By and large the English solution to glazing wider windows, particularly sashed ones, was to increase the number of vertical glazing bars to produce windows up to seven panes wide, all of which were, of course, vertically accented<sup>43</sup>. Although the pattern of distribution throughout Britain has been disturbed by the recent activities of the moderniser and double-glazer the national emphasis is still very evident.

Window-types having horizontal panes may be summarised as:

- a) sash-windows having six panes to each lift, with one vertical glazing-bar and two horizontals to each lift. A greater number of panes is produced by the insertion of more horizontals.
- b) casement windows, usually of hinged type, having two or more horizontal bars to each light and no verticals. In some very wide casement lights a single wider vertical is fitted,
- c) fixed lights and glazed doors,
- d) canted or compass or segmental-plan windows glazed with components as a) and b) above.

Although the types outlined above seem to have a close family resemblance, the similarity is caused by a later fusion of the two sources of the idiom. One source is

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<sup>40</sup>Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art* (1955), 6: here Pevsner stresses '...the liking for tall perpendiculars, long horizontals and the grid formed by both together...'. This theme he elaborated in his Reith Lectures to which the volume is a handbook.

<sup>41</sup>For example, R W Brunskill, *Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture* (1978), 128-30, or R J Brown, *The English Country Cottage* (1979), make no mention of, nor do they illustrate, horizontal glazing. Eric Mercer, *English Vernacular Houses* (1979), has only one illustration of the type, pl. 26, No. 4, Maney Hill Road, Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire, a single replacement window. Olive Cook and Edwin Smith, *English Cottages and Farmhouses* (1954), pl.195, Hassop, Derbyshire (late 17th-century stone-mullioned window converted to horizontal glazing in hinged casements of 19th-century type) is the only representation of the type in a profusely illustrated work.

<sup>42</sup>Personal comment and Pevsner, *Lincolnshire* (1964), 200, 642 and 644.

<sup>43</sup>A good 19th-century example is illustrated in David Hey, *Yorkshire* (1981), 75 - window in an extension to Kimberworth Manor House, 155 - the re-windowed front of Beswick Hall.



from the leaded casement window in common use in the 17th century<sup>44</sup>. On the removal of small quarry-glazing from these windows, the wrought-iron frame, hinged or fixed to the stone or wooden mullions, was frequently retained and new glazing in larger panes was designed to fit in with the existing divisions of that frame. The new panes were leaded and tied to the iron frame in the same way as the originals, which may still be seen in English houses particularly in the northern counties<sup>45</sup>. The association with mullioned windows may have recommended the idea to the designers of 'revival' buildings, although it is strange that the architects of the Picturesque movement seem not to have taken up the notion<sup>46</sup>. Certainly, this association must have suggested the use of horizontal glazing in buildings like Abbotsford<sup>47</sup>, and such a descent is well exemplified by the window design to be seen in the Study at Treberfydd, Breconshire, Wales, by the architect J L Pearson who worked there from 1850 onwards<sup>48</sup>. For the horizontally-glazed sash-window a quite different parentage is suggested by James Newlands in the mid-19th century when he refers to them being 'in imitation of a French window' (Fig 1)<sup>49</sup>; that is the type having two tall outward-opening casements serving as a door to a garden or conservatory. It is perhaps this derivation which recommended its use in the parlours of croft-houses in Skye or the slightly superior parlours in Telford's manses like the one at Hallin in Skye. The use of horizontal glazing to one window or a group of windows in a facade does give an air of slight imbalance related to the fashionable late-18th-century concept of *sharawadgee* – the slight 'blemish' to accentuate perfection. Horizontal glazing is also to be found in the sophisticated high-design of Scottish neo-Greek, respected as a foundation of Modernism<sup>50</sup>. It is not too fanciful to extend this usage into the modern designs for steel casements<sup>51</sup>. Certainly, it is more likely that the early 20th century

<sup>44</sup>Brunskill, 127, op.cit. comment p126.

<sup>45</sup>Hey, op. cit., illustrates windows of this type, 157, Threshfield School (which has a mid-19th-century 'Tudor' window to the porch as well), also as a particularly good example at Kershaw House, 69.

<sup>46</sup> For example, John Nash favoured leaded diamond glazing and the specifications are quoted in Nigel Temple, *John Nash and the Village Picturesque* (1979), 131, 140.

<sup>47</sup>James Macaulay, *The Gothic Revival* (1975), pl. 180 (1816–22). Macaulay also illustrates two of William Burn's houses with horizontal glazing, Carstairs House, Lanarkshire (1821), and Ratho Park, Midlothian (1824).

<sup>48</sup>Mark Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (1971), 83 and pl. 140, obviously descended from those illustrated by Hey, (1981), at Kershaw Hall, 69.

<sup>49</sup>James Newlands, *The Carpenter and Joiner's Assistant* (n.d., ?1860), pl. LXXVI, fig.2, no. 1, reproduced here, is described, p.188, as '...a sash window margined, in imitation of a French window...'. Newlands also illustrates pl. LXXVII, fig.2, a horizontally glazed '...window on an irregular (half) octagonal plan...' (a canted bay) which he goes on to describe on p. 188. James Newlands' work comprises much of the book projected by John White, author of *Rural Architecture* and is essentially a Scottish treatise (see, for example, the Glossary entries) although my copy first belonged to a carpenter of Sturton le Steeple, Nottinghamshire.

<sup>50</sup>Catalogue, Alexander Greek Thomson (1817–75), (1984), fig. p. 19, Queen's Park Terrace. Mark Baines writes that (p.13), 'The Rhythmic description of the facade's vertical and horizontal dimensions became the object of seemingly inexhaustible fascination for Thomson'.

<sup>51</sup>The close similarity between the decaying forebuilding of Watnish House, Skye, and the 1930s steel casement is underlined by the fact that its date was only revealed recently by an early photograph, perhaps of the 1860s, in the collection of Iona Macdonald, Watnish. The photograph shows the house before the extensive Victorian facelift of c1880 with the glazed screen already in position. Apart from the photograph there would be little to differentiate it from those illustrated in the Architectural Association, *Recent English Architecture 1920–1940* (C L 1947), pl. 29, 'Comet' Road house, near Barnet, Hertfordshire, or Hope's advertisement p. vii at the end of the volume.

Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus* (1935, repr. 1956), pls. 2, 3 and 7: Administrative Offices, Werkbund Exhibition, Cologne (1914) and the Bauhaus itself (1925). In the Catalogue (1984), no. 11 above, Mark Baines notes on p. 16 that Thomson's work '...prefigured the ultimately large-scale developments...in Europe and America...'.

took its cue from 'Greek' Thomson rather than the evolution from the leaded light, although that would have recommended itself as being 'true to the material'.

Following the acceptance of the type in the early 1800s its use had, by the 1850s, reached all social levels and its use was apparently indiscriminate. At Talisker House in Skye the best parlours and chambers of the 18th century house at one end of the facade are glazed with orthodox sashes, whilst those in the new service-wing that doubled its size in the 1860s are horizontally glazed. The former manse, now the Church Hall, Bernisdale, Skye had horizontal glazing on the first floor and orthodox glazing on the ground floor of a three-bay front. In Dunvegan a tiny three-bay croft-house has an orthodox and a horizontally-glazed window separated by a projecting porch. Dunvegan Castle has a hotch-potch of both, but the horizontal glazing marks the repairs and extensions of the 1840s. In central and eastern Scotland the tendency is for complete schemes of horizontal glazing in houses that were obviously architect-designed. Two notable houses are a stone-built one in Carslogie Road, Cupar, Fife, having a complete scheme intact, which includes a segmental bow, and Spean Cottage, Spean Bridge, a very substantial 'cottage residence'<sup>52</sup>.

In such a short discussion as this, it is impossible to do more than indicate the type of building and a date-range in which examples of horizontal glazing may be found. The proposed sources for the design may extend beyond James Newland's book and no printed source has been found for the casement type employed in early 19th-century revival building. In view of the paucity of pattern-book illustrations<sup>53</sup>, it is a matter of speculation as to how the predominantly Scottish distribution of horizontal glazing

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<sup>52</sup>The opportunity to note the houses and occasional industrial building having horizontal glazing between St Andrews and Skye on 6 July 1985 produced the following list. Only buildings visible from the road were recorded and some in the more densely built-up areas may have been missed. Steel casements and modern versions have been ignored.

St Andrews: W Law, watchmaker, South Street (converted house); 26, Bridge Street, first floor only survives.

Cupar, Fife: three properties in Bonnygate and one in East Road. A very notable example is a stone-built house on the corner of Carslogie Road (A913-A91 junction) which has these windows on two floors including a segmental bow.

Between Cupar and Newburgh: at the junction of the A913 and A914 (NGR: NO 320 180), is a substantial farmhouse having three bays of these windows to a two-storeyed segmental bow to the middle of the front. Further west the lodge to Kinnaird House, under Tudoresque lintels.

Tower Well: one house.

Newburgh: school, centre light of triple 'palladian' window; ? schoolhouse.

Abernethy: Ferryfield; the Corn Hotel.

Aberargie: extended group of agricultural cottages on one floor.

Perth: St Andrew Street School - a borderline case; 22, Atholl Street; Dunkeld Road, industrial premises now occupied by Kinnoul Bakery.

Dunkeld: Hotel on east of A9.

Haugh of Tulliemet: farmhouse and its lodge.

Killiecrankie: former ? toll-house.

Monadhliath: farmhouse near the turn to Glentrim off A86; Single-storeyed cottage: deadlights to porch.

Cromra: estate cottage, upper part of first-floor windows.

Spean Bridge: Spean Cottage, a very notable minor 'cottage residence'.

Cluanie: Inn, older windows.

Balmacara: cottage on north side of A87.

Luib (Skye): croft-house.

Only one building, the school in Perth, was inscribed with a date - 1892 - and most appeared to be of earlier 19th-century origin. Those seen in South Street, St Andrews, were perhaps the earliest and may be of the late 1830s.

I am indebted to my daughter Kate for noting down the buildings and for pointing out those near difficult bends!

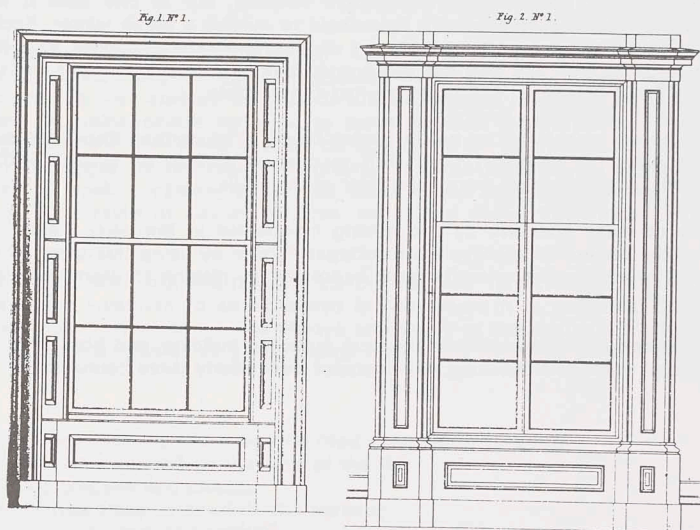
<sup>53</sup>By convention window-openings were usually shown as open, black or closely-hatched areas in architectural drawings before the 1860s, and most pattern-books followed that convention except where ornamental glazing was part of a decorative scheme.



came about. During the early 19th century, a period of prosperity in Scotland if the evidence of standing building is anything to go by, horizontal glazing was a fashionable craze. For a short time it was taken up with as much fervour as is now evident in recent housing schemes, where windows of curious design carried out in varnished, ginger-stained wood have appeared in their thousands in the last few years. There was no mass advertising of off-the-peg merchandising as far as the horizontally-glazed window was concerned. It spread by the efforts of countless joiners abetted by a handful of architects who seem to have hit on a mannerism which appealed to Scots of all classes. Perhaps this short account may prompt more research into the origin and uses of horizontal glazing, which has been stifled by the reaction of many architectural historians<sup>54</sup> who see it as a solecism rather than a significant Scottish mannerism.

# FINISHINGS OF WINDOWS.

PLATE LXXVI.



James Newlands' illustrations of an 'orthodox' sash and a 'horizontally glazed' sash reproduced from *The Carpenter and Joiner's Assistant*.

<sup>54</sup> I am indebted to Elizabeth Beaton for the information that Alec Clifton-Taylor was amongst their ranks.

## A NOTE ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSES AT WANLOCKHEAD, DUMFRIES-SHIRE

W S Harvey and G Downs-Rose

Wanlockhead and the neighbouring village of Leadhills are located in the Lowther Hills in south west Scotland. They are at an altitude of about 450m so the climate is severe. Nevertheless, both villages have a history of continuous settlement since the beginning of the 18th century when the cottages were built by the miners who came to work the lead veins.

The Wanlockhead Museum Trust is at present researching the construction of cottages in that village, and in particular the changes that have been made by their occupants over the years. It seems that a high proportion of the original cottages were built with their rear walls buried in the hillside. All had earthen floors and roofs of turf and heather. There were probably many reasons for the buried walls, but experience with such houses as remain, shows this construction will hold the inside temperature above freezing even in severe frosts. We have not found any references to deliberate attempts at heat conservation in Scottish housing, but at one time it might have enabled the weaker members of a household to survive a harsh winter. Such buildings must be damp, and a report on the state of the Wanlockhead houses in 1906 indicates that many occupiers had dug out the ground behind to leave the rear walls clear, and by then 73 out of around 135 cottages had slated roofs.

Another improvement was to put in timber floors. The earthen floor was dug out, and drystone piers (dwarf walls) were built to support a floor of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch [0.033m] deals carried on light joists that were kept clear of the walls.

The use of mass concrete by the mining companies in the early 1900s encouraged some of the miners to improve their cottages further by using this material to build on additional rooms and/or raise the attic bedrooms by placing shuttered concrete on top of the rubble walls.

Neither village has been affected by local authority building, and both offer interesting examples of vernacular housing development over nearly three centuries.

## STROMNESS – GATEWAY TO ORKNEY

James A Troup

Today most visitors to Orkney make landfall at Stromness after passing the Old Man of Hoy and the towering cliffs of St John's Head aboard the daily ferry from Scrabster. It is a delightful little harbour town whose unity has been recognised by the imposition of a Preservation Order on the whole historic seafront area.

For most of its history Orkney was closely connected with Norway. Thus the east side of the islands flourished. It was only when North American trade developed that the west became more important. The sheltered waters of Hamnavoe near the western extremity of Scapa Flow was a good place for ships to wait for a favourable wind. Not surprisingly, a little hamlet grew up there to serve the needs of seafarers. The first building was an inn, but its site was not suitable. Hence the village – with many inns and many carpenters – grew along the other side of the bay. By the end of the 17th century some Stromnessians had prospered and become merchant shipowners in their own right.

War helped the development of the place. From 1689 to 1815 wars were frequent. Much shipping sailed round the north of Scotland to avoid the major war zone further south. Early in the 18th century the Hudson's Bay Company discovered Stromness as a convenient recruiting-centre for men to serve in their Arctic posts. When they streamlined enlistment late in the century by appointing an agent he also operated as banker for the wages of the men. Merchants saw the advantages of agencies to provide men to whaling companies for the short Arctic season. Stromness did well financially as a purveyor of labour, services, water and cheap fresh meat to passing vessels.

The results can be seen in a fine mass of sturdy 18th and 19th century houses built in local stone which weathers to an attractive brown where it is not concealed under harling. The crazy, narrow street was always secondary to the sea as a highway. It is an unplanned natural growth of great charm with many side closes and little stone piers.

The street uncoiled like a sailor's rope from North to South  
And closes swarmed up the side of the hill  
Among gardens and clouds,  
And closes stepped down to the harbour  
And the nets and whitemaas<sup>55</sup>.

The sea has always been vital to Stromness through herring boom, World War naval HQ, to its present position as handler of the bulk of Orkney's import-export trade. Fishing is more highly developed and more prosperous than ever before. Some of the biggest vessels of the Scottish purse-seine-net fleet are based here. Yet, strangely, while a procession of tankers comes to load with oil at Flotta, employment in Britain's rapidly shrinking merchant fleet is almost impossible to find. Great concern is felt in the community as the threat of redundancy hangs over the Northern Lights' tender, Pole Star, and the shore base. The loss of some fifty jobs would be a severe blow to a little town of around 1,800 people.

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<sup>55</sup> *Per Mare* by George Mackay Brown. This Stromness pageant was performed in 1967, but is otherwise unpublished.



## NOTES ON THE CHURCHILL BARRIERS AND BLOCKSHIPS IN SCAPA FLOW<sup>56</sup>

W Ashley Bartlam

The closure of the eastern entrances to Scapa Flow, to improve the security of the Fleet Anchorage, was being actively considered from the time of the Munich crisis onwards. The Admiralty instructed the King's Harbour Master, Invergordon, to report on the state of the blockships in March 1939, 6 months before war was declared: these blockships were mainly relics of World War I and they were still a deterrent to navigation of the Kirk, Skerry, Weddel and Water Sounds. Nevertheless as a result of the Harbour Master's report, work was put in hand to improve the defences and other ships were sunk as soon as they could be acquired. In Kirk Sound, for example, the 'Soriano' (372 ft [113.31m] long by 43 ft 9 ins [13.34m] beam and with a draught of 28ft [8.53m]; displacing 3,543 tons and built in 1917 as a two-deck cargo ship) was sunk on 15 March 1939 loaded with 2,000 tons of stone ballast.

Shortly after the outbreak of war, on 13 October 1939, Lt. Gunther Prien in U-47 penetrated the Flow in a daring raid and sank HMS 'Royal Oak' lying at anchor in Scapa Bay. U-47 entered the Flow via the north side of Kirk Sound using a narrow gap between the bow of 'Soriano' and the shore and exiting on the south side through a gap between the 'Thames' and Lamb Holm. Further blockships were obtained and sunk to close these and other gaps, and Winston Churchill instructed the building of the Barriers.

In considering the blockships it should be remembered that they were put in place during two World Wars. Some of those from the 1914-18 War were subsequently salvaged for scrap before 1939. Others broke away and were swept by the vicious tides into new positions during salvage attempts. Many broke up and vanished in the course of time. Further blockships were sunk from 1939-41, and many of these were recovered after the Barriers were built. Records, especially of the First World War blockships, are non-existent or at best sketchy, and records of later ships are often vague or not available. The names of the ships are often spelt in several different ways, like Cape Oriental - Ortegál - Ortega, or Juanita - Juniata. The names of other ships sunk as blockships are known but unfortunately there is no record of their position, e.g. Harvest Moon, Tweedledum, etc.

Where the history of blockships is available it is always of interest. Lake Neuchatel, for instance, built by Charles Strubin & Co. of London, grossed 3,829 tons and was frequently re-named as 'Houstone' - 'Mari' - 'Elversmead' - 'Renfrew' - 'Claveresk'; she was sunk as a blockship on 21 October 1939 and raised in 1948 and arrived for breaking up at Arnott Young (Troon) on 18 June 1948. Some ships were casualties of age and were diverted from their last voyage to the breaker's yard to Scapa Flow where they were ballasted and sunk with scuttling charges, sometimes breaking their backs in the process. Other ships were War booty like 'Empire Seaman' grossing 1,926 tons, built in 1922 at Lubeck by the Lubecker Flenderweke and launched as 'Morea'. She was captured off the Portuguese coast by HMS Hasty and was taken over and sunk as a blockship in Weddel Sound on 3 June 1940. Other ships were war casualties like 'Caroline Thornden' of 3,645 tons, built by Crichton Vulcan and taken over from Rederi A B Suomi. After being badly damaged by air attack off the Faroes on 26 March 1941, she was sunk as a blockship on 8 April 1941, raised in 1949 and broken up for salvage on the Forth.

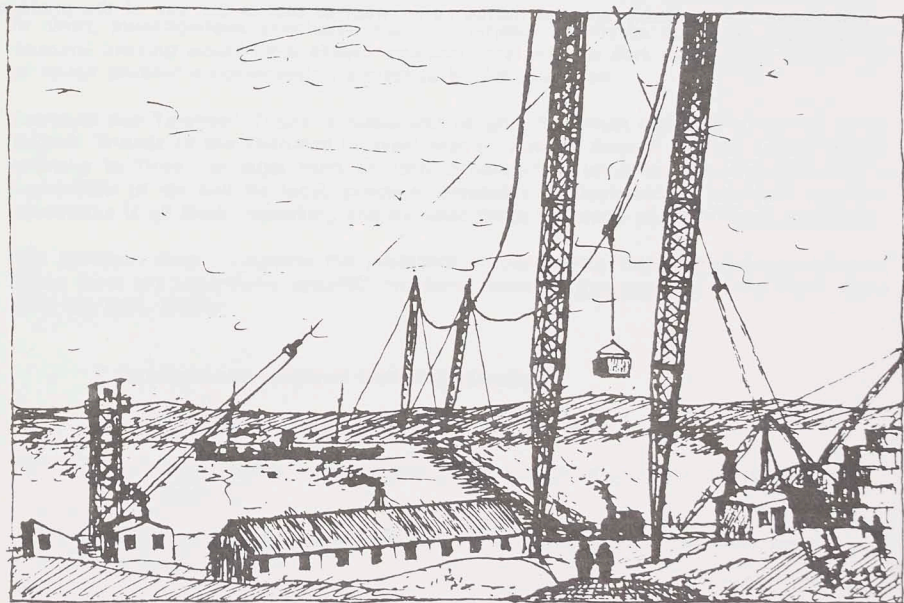
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<sup>56</sup>With acknowledgements and thanks to: Orkney Islands Council; Balfour Beattie Construction Ltd.; Alexander Wyllie, Kirkwall; Public Record Office, London; The Ministry of Defence; The Institution of Civil Engineers; The World Ship Soc.



The building of the Barriers was a secret project code-named 'Rockworks', and the site of the contractors' HQ, where the Commodore Motel now stands, is still known as Rockworks. During the War, Orkney was a prohibited area with restricted access and cameras were forbidden. Balfour Beattie were appointed main contractors and work began in 1940. The Royal Mail liner 'Almanzora', loaded with stores and supplies, machinery plant and everything required to begin the work, together with 230 men and about 20 contractors and admiralty staff, arrived in Scapa Flow and unloading began on 10 May 1940. The first four months saw a battle with wind and weather to maintain a flow of materials ashore, and to transport men to remote landing-places by Naval Service drifters. To begin with, men lived in tents until huts were available, but by September camps were erected at St Mary's (HQ), Lamb Holm and at North and South Burray. Initially, landing facilities were restricted to piers at St Mary's and South Burray, so other piers were built at North Burray, Lamb Holm and Glimps Holm.

The cableways known as 'Blondins' were acquired and set up, quite a job in itself. The height of the masts varied from 135 ft [41.14m] at Weddel Sound to 190 ft [57.91m] at Skerry Sound and main cables were  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches [0.063m] in diameter. Three main electric generating stations were built to provide power for the cableways – only one was steam-powered – and for blockyards' lighting and general purposes. Two auxiliary power plants were also set up at St Mary's and Grimsetter. Quarries were opened for stone for tipping and for making the concrete blocks. East Weddel Sound cableway was the first to be completed, and tipping began. The first sign of the Barrier above high water appeared in August 1942. Concrete blocks were cast in five yards: St Mary's, Lamb Holm, Warebanks, South Burray and Grimsetter. Altogether, approximately 333,000 tons of blocks were cast, mainly in 5- and 10-ton blocks, though 4.8-ton blocks were also cast for the roadways.



This drawing, from a painting by the author, shows the construction of No 1 Causeway over Kirk Sound between St Mary's and Lamb Holm as it was about June 1943. (The painting is in the Commodore Motel bar.)

The Barriers consisted of broken rock, some loose, and some in wire cages called 'bolsters'. Tipping was overhead and from each end. When the rock fill appeared above high water it was clad each side with concrete blocks - 5-ton blocks below water-level and 10-ton blocks above. The blocks were dropped from overhead and also placed by cranes. The transport of material from quarry to blockyard and from blockyard to site was partly by lorry and trailer and partly by rail. Up to 10 miles of track were laid and 58 locomotives were employed - 2 ft [0.61m] and 3 ft [0.91m] gauges were used. The work began in May 1940 and reached practical completion in September 1944, but the Causeways were not officially opened by the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Rt Hon. A V Alexander, until 12 May 1945. The approximate cost was £2 million.

The stage illustrated is after the formation of the Barrier by the use of 'bolsters' and loose stone fill tipped from each end and from overhead by the 'Blondins'. The next stage was cladding the formation with 5- and 10-ton concrete blocks which were placed from above by the 'Blondins' and from the road-level by a steam crane. Finally the roadway was formed.

The Blockship in the drawing is the 'Numidian' which was sunk in the early part of World War I. Subsequently she was shifted by the tide into the position shown, when an attempt was being made to salvage her. Other Blockships were sunk, at various times, out of the picture to the south-east; they included the Gambmira, Soriano, Redstone, Thames and Neuchatel.

The tower to the left of the drawing was one of two from which the 'Blondins' were operated and controlled. On the right is the blockyard and the railway is visible in the foreground which brought stone to the crusher and block-making plant from the quarry on the south-east side of Lamb Holm. The Rockworks blockyard can be seen just above the Blockship and the hutted camp west of that is the site of the present Commodore Motel.

## CAIRDEAN NAN TAIGHEAN TUGHA (FRIENDS OF THE THATCHED HOUSES)

Jim Souness

The traditional domestic buildings of the Highlands, notably the thatched house, have received relatively little attention to their study (except, perhaps, by members of SVBWG) and even less to their conservation.

This is a pity, because in their basic form these buildings are a classic example of vernacular architecture, relatively simple in construction yet incorporating a wide range of local variations, having been adapted by a poor people to cope admirably with harsh weather and limited building materials. Their strength and integrity, as R J Naismith writes, 'respond to much of what is being sought for in an architecture of local character'.

Despite being the homes of a majority of Highlanders until the late 19th century, thatched houses have now all but disappeared, so that those few remaining are of great importance to local identity and heritage. Practically all are now listed, several at 'A' grade, yet listing alone is unable to prevent deterioration and collapse through neglect. Numbers continue, therefore, to decline and those remaining are at increasing risk.

Realisation of this threat led Argyll & Bute District Council in co-operation with other bodies, notably HBC, to investigate the practicality of conservation. Efforts focussed on the island of Tiree where one of the densest concentrations (around 15 or so) of thatched buildings can be found. A survey was carried out of the buildings themselves, the potentials, the problems, and of local attitudes – this latter requiring the unusual field tools of pidgin Gaelic and the half-bottle!

In short, investigations concluded that the physical problems could be solved, that financial backing would be available, and that local interest was surprisingly great – all of which enabled a conservation project to be set in motion.

Cairdean nan Taighean Tugha (pronounced roughly 'karshtyin nun tye-in too-a'), or in English 'Friends of the Thatched Houses', was founded in August 1985 at a busy public meeting in Tiree. In legal form an Unincorporated Association, the Cairdean has a committee of six and its local, practical emphasis is illustrated by the fact that the committee is all Gaelic-speaking and includes three thatchers plus the local councillor.

The Cairdean must overcome the problems of conserving Highland thatched houses. Since these are essentially 'organic', problems focus on maintenance of the roof. Main aims are then, briefly:

1. to ensure the supply of thatching materials;
2. to encourage the passing on of the relevant skills;
3. to obtain regular maintenance grants for those owners/ occupiers who wish it;
4. to encourage the continued use of buildings and to find uses for redundant ones.

Considerable progress has already been made and the project has now been greatly boosted by the award of a substantial grant from the HBC, to be administered through the Cairdean.

This highly unusual conservation project needs much more than cash, however. A continuing social involvement and physical commitment is required, and the need to foster the local interest is vital. There will no doubt be some disappointments but a good number of these unique buildings now have a strong chance of a future. One most satisfying outcome of progress would be for this initiative to extend elsewhere in the Highlands where thatched buildings survive.

'The Friends of the Thatched Houses' are now recruiting members. Subscription is only £2.00 and should be sent to Donald MacDonald, Heanish, Tiree, Argyll.

Over the next year or so Cairdean nan Taighean Tugha are also starting the compilation of a comprehensive archive of thatched buildings, thatching, and related matters throughout Scotland. This will initially focus on photographs and written descriptions, although it is hoped that there will also be scope for recordings, both audio and video. The end-product should include at least two copies of all the important material - one set to be held in a permanent home (eventually with accompanying exhibition), one set being available for loan to interested individuals or organisations. Some material is in the hands of private individuals, but the greater part is held in existing collections and archives (e.g. in museums, libraries, universities, etc.) scattered literally throughout Scotland. Much of this rarely sees the light of day, and the sources are very rarely catalogued with thatching in mind.

The compilation of a comprehensive archive therefore threatens to overwhelm the voluntary researchers in terms of time, travel and expense. Much of this will be unavoidable, but if any SVBWG members would be interested in assisting with this work, we would be very pleased to hear from them. Furthermore, if anyone is aware of private or local photographic collections that might be of interest, we would be grateful to know of them. If you think you might be able to help, please contact James Souness, 6 Fernoch Drive, Lochgilphead, Argyll (phone; 0546 2106).



## BOOK REVIEW

PIERCE, Richard; Alastair COEY & Richard ORAM: *Taken for Granted: A Celebration of 10 Years of Historic Buildings Conservation* (1984), The Royal Society of Ulster Architects and the Historic Buildings Council.  
ISBN 0 903058 02 2

Price: £12.50

At first glance, *Taken for Granted* is a stimulating publication. It is a well designed and beautifully produced book with an attractive cover and one hundred and twenty excellent full-colour photographs. The book momentarily creates the impression that the Northern Ireland Historic Buildings Council must be a living, vibrant force tackling a wide range of conservation projects and encouraging some very high-quality work. Unfortunately, the illusion stops here. On closer inspection the book fails to fulfil initial expectations. There is no significant statement of NI-HBC policy; no informed comment as to the value of particular groups of buildings; no before and after photographs to illustrate the potential of conservation; no plans showing methods of adapting old buildings to new uses; no constructional details to show how the requirements of the building regulations can be met in traditional buildings; and no bibliography. Instead, there is a two-hundred-page directory listing eleven hundred properties which have received grant-aid over the last ten years, followed by a thirty-page section on repair and maintenance.

The 'directory' section is arranged according to building-type and each entry comprises: the postal address and brief description of the property; the recipient and amount of the grant; a general description of the work undertaken; the total cost of the project; the date of execution and the names of the architect, contractor or other specialist firms involved in the project. It makes dull reading as the descriptions are too short to have any real significance. The academic value of the book would have been greatly enhanced had case-studies been provided for the illustrated projects and the information on the other properties reduced to a simple gazetteer.

The repair and maintenance guide is by far the most useful part of the book and should be made available in leaflet form in all Planning and Building Control offices. In the context of the book this section suffers from attempting to cover all classes of building and all eventualities in the statement on each building element. A series of guides, each giving information on a particular class of building, inserted into the text at the appropriate section, would have been easier to digest. Simple line diagrams showing crucial stages in the work to be carried out would also have been useful.

Had this book been 'cheap and nasty' or simply 'dull' in its presentation it could have been dismissed as yet another useless list of facts produced in a futile effort to show the importance of the issuing body. The fact that this is a costly production, published jointly by the Royal Society of Ulster Architects and the Northern Ireland - Historic Buildings Council with support from the Northern Bank Ltd. and the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland, is much more worrying. Did none of these prestigious bodies stop to ask the obvious questions: What is the purpose of this book? Who will read it? What message do we wish to convey? These questions, and many more, have not been answered unless the publishers are relying on each individual mentioned in the book buying their own copy.

Perhaps the fault lies outwith Ireland in the Royal Institute of British Architects' concept of 1984 as a 'Festival of Architecture'. The RIBA's idea was to encourage as many architecture-based projects as possible during the Festival. This approach caused considerable problems as many of the commissioning bodies failed to agree the subject or approach until it was almost too late to meet the publication dates.

Whatever the reasons behind the decision to produce this book in this particular format, it should be recognised that this is a missed opportunity. With the knowledge and expertise available in Northern Ireland, the substantial subsidies that this

publication must have attracted, and the obvious abilities of the designer and printer, this publication should have been in the top rank of books on conservation. Conservation bodies cannot afford to waste such opportunities.

Bruce Walker

## BOOK NEWS

Two books by members of SVBWG:

FENTON, Alexander: *Country Life in Scotland. Our Rural Past* (Edinburgh, September 1987) John Donald Publishers Ltd.  
ISBN 0 85976 188 6

Price: £7.50

Based on Sandy's book *Scottish Country Life* (now out of print), but incorporating new research, it provides a picture of the way in which the countryside and its people have changed over the past 300 years.

And COMING SOON:

STELL, Geoffrey & Mary HARMAN: *Buildings of St Kilda* (Edinburgh, mid 1988) HMSO.  
ISBN 0 11 493391 X

Price: c £10.00

Although much has been written about the remote and spectacular islands of the St Kilda archipelago this book is the first to be wholly dedicated to the islands' buildings and antiquities. Illustrated with maps, line-drawings and photographs, it embodies the results of a detailed survey of the main areas of historic settlement.

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