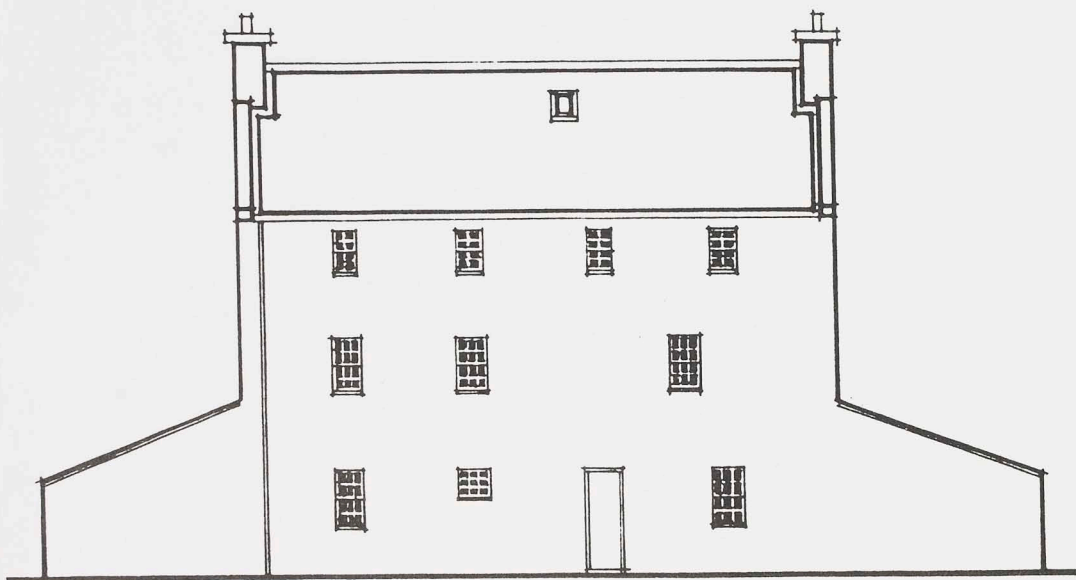


VERNACULAR BUILDING 20

Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group

1996



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Cover: West elevation, Haa of Sand, West Mainland, Shetland. Drawing by Mike Finnie.

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Preface

This has been an interesting year for SVBWG, with conferences in the contrasting venues of Sutherland and Glasgow, and the publication of the latest in the Regional and Thematic Studies series.

The Group's activities are reflected in this volume of *Vernacular Building*. The 1995 autumn conference was held at Craibstone Limekilns; the results of that event will be published in the spring of 1997, and an extract is included in this volume, outlining what can be achieved by 'hands-on' Group activities. James Hardie's study of cruck construction, and the entry on Maidenloch croft, recall the Lochinver conference. Looking forward to the 1997 twenty-fifth anniversary conference, the contributions by Mike Finnie and Alastair Hamilton draw our attention to the buildings of Shetland, and their past and future.

The future of the vernacular buildings of Scotland is vital to the interests of the Group, and several articles in this year's volume deal with the treatment of these buildings. Udrigle House is an example of a rescued building, and Roy Wentworth, and John Sanders of Simpson and Brown, Architects, describe its history and restoration. Belmont House in Shetland is an example of a building in need of a similar process. The Haas of Shetland have had varying fates. Also in the northern isles, Paul Newman and Jocelyn Rendall draw attention to the fascinating but fragile resource in Orkney.

The exhibition and publication on St Kilda also dealt with a fragile source of information. The decay of buildings can, ironically, assist in their study, as James Hardie's description of abandoned cruck-framed houses in Sutherland reveals. Materials of other building types are discussed in John G. Harrison's analysis of mudstone slates in Stirling, and the theme of materials, which also includes the lime from Craibstone, ties in happily with the publication of *Building Materials of the Scottish Farmstead* by Ingval Maxwell.

The immense variety of the traditional buildings of Scotland is illustrated throughout this volume, with Elizabeth Beaton showing how a member of Scotland's most prestigious architectural family, John Adam, was involved in the building of a granary in Portsoy. The curiosities are illustrated by Jocelyn Rendall and Graham Douglas, dealing respectively with a 'scone house' in Orkney, and the rare occurrence of the corbel bracket.

As we have now reached the twentieth volume of *Vernacular Building*, an index, incorporating that printed in *Vernacular Building* 10, will be included in the next volume. Any items for inclusion in the 1997 volume - articles, reports on events and collections, items for review, or any observations on vernacular buildings - are invited. I would welcome notifications of intentions to contribute as soon as possible.

SVBWG gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of RCAHMS in the production of this volume; I would like to thank colleagues at RCAHMS and Elizabeth Beaton for their advice and assistance.

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CRAIBSTONE LIMEKILNS, DESKFORD

Nick Brown et al.

*Those who participated in the SVBWG weekend at Craibstone Limekilns, Deskford, on 17-19 November 1995, found it to be an excellent opportunity for hands-on study of a building by the Group, combining learning about processes with gaining valuable information about a little known site. The results of the weekend will be published in 1997 by Nick Brown; **The Ruins of Craibstone Limekilns, Deskford** will combine survey results and drawings, with background information describing the history (and the future) of the site, and uses and processes of lime. Here Nick Brown and Elizabeth Beaton introduce the volume with descriptions by the workshop leaders of a successful working weekend.*

Recording of traditional buildings with measured drawings, however simple, has always been envisaged as part of SVBWG's task, but the skills of surveying elude those of us who are not professionally experienced as architects, surveyors and the like. The Group has long advocated training and help in this field, often requested by members. The first attempt to introduce simple measuring techniques, in particular with the plane-table, was during an October weekend on Colonsay, 1988, initiated by Sonia Hackett, with Graham Douglas and Ian Gray as instructors. The small fisher settlement of Riasg Buidhe made an ideal subject, though the Mediterranean weather and idyllic coastal site proved a rival attraction to the rigours of the measuring tape.

After Sonia's untimely death, Graham and Ian contributed an article on the use of the plane-table based on the experience of the Colonsay weekend to *Materials and Traditions in Scottish Buildings* (1992). It was good of both of them to give their time and expertise again at Craibstone.

Craibstone proved a sharp contrast to Colonsay. The weather was unkindly wet, the overgrown site in a damp and soggy wooded hollow. For the thirty or so members (figure 1), this dank scene was brightened by the exotic blue and white striped shelter loaned by the Cullen football club, which was a cheerful haven, particularly at coffee time. The site was further enlivened by colourful waterproof clothing worn by members, topped by hard hats precariously balanced on a variety of 'bonnets'; the accolade for the best dressed surveyor went to Geoff Leet in his striking sunshine yellow ensemble with matching hard hat.

The Craibstone limeworks had been introduced to the delegates on the Friday evening by Len Hall and John Rennie, of the Cullen, Portknockie and Deskford Heritage Group, who videoed the site and made a commentary which was a most informative and professional production. The task for the weekend was not only to measure and record, but also to recognise and identify. Every member had something to contribute and discuss on this challenging and often difficult site.

Under the guidance of our instructors we divided into groups, to be introduced to, and to attempt, the basics of measuring, sketching, site-surveying



figure 1: View of the group

and plane-tabling. Members with intent expressions crouched under golf umbrellas working on their drawings; we dug and paddled in the wheel pit, measuring the visible masonry; we tramped the line of the lade through the undergrowth. Most had some instruction on the plane-table with Graham Douglas, squinting along the alidade to a variety of masonry or woodland markers. Imagine Pat Newton's consternation when her chosen tree trunk marker suddenly disappeared from view, unexpectedly felled by bush-hatted Ian Harper doing some site clearance. What a contrast Elaine Brown's cosy office in Cullen was, where we were comfortably and delightfully introduced to the disciplines of the drawing board, parallel ruler and puzzling scales. The groups worked hard with real concentration; our damp drawings were personal achievements and our understanding of the site satisfying. After the two days, we were a team to be reckoned with.

Such a recording task is like the proverbial stone thrown into a pond; the ripples are not only a set of drawings forming a record of the Craibstone limeworks, but a wider understanding of the problems of measured recording besides more confidence in using tape, pencil and note-book. There is also an enhanced knowledge of the uses of lime, a valued commodity won from quarries with great effort. Around the site one could see evidence of its use in agriculture, the lime enriched land besides the lime mortar binding the masonry farm steadings, most re-built in the second half of the nineteenth century. It was also used in the construction of the neighbouring industrial buildings, the Lintmill distillery and brick works, each of which played an important part in the local economy.

On the Saturday evening, Pat Gibbons, Director of the newly established Scottish Lime Centre in Fife, introduced us to the work of the Centre and a wide range of buildings associated with the lime industry.

Amongst others, SVBWG is particularly grateful to the Rt Hon The Earl of Seafield for allowing us access, and to his factor, Andrew Norval. Ken Dickson arrived with a sack of hard hats for members' use. Brian Wilkinson searched for us at Craibstone, together with a photographer, and reported our activities in the *Banffshire Advertiser* (28 November 1995). Elaine and Nick Brown, Graham Douglas, Ian Gray, Chris McGregor and Ronnie Robertson were patient and skilled instructors. Thanks to them all, to Ronnie as Conference Secretary and especially to Nick who thought of and superbly organised the weekend.

Elizabeth Beaton, Chairman SVBWG

The following is an account of the recording exercise as perceived by the six workshop leaders.



Nick Brown explains how to sketch the wheel axle

WORKSHOP 1 - ELEMENTARY SKETCHING Nick Brown (Environment Section, The Moray Council)

The focused objective of the workshop was to produce some drawings which would become useful to the specific weekend exercise. The wider aim was to encourage

enthusiastic but inexperienced members of the group to develop the courage to produce simple sketches to record buildings, either on their own, or in small groups.

Three workshops of four people took part in three-hour tutorial sessions which rotated around the area of the site, taking in the crusher, the wheelbase and the bothy. Members of all groups were introduced to the importance of protecting not only oneself and one's colleagues but also one's valuable work (and in the pouring rain this point took on even greater significance). The sight of Elizabeth Beaton, Chairman of the Group, sitting in waterproofs under an umbrella drawing a section of the wheelbase with her clipboard within a polythene bag, epitomised the members' dogged determination to succeed.

All groups were introduced to the tools of the sketching trade and again the weather helped to determine clearly the advantages of using film as a drawing medium, sharpened pencils with a variety of lead densities, and elastic bands or bulldog clips as a means of keeping paper on the board. The inadequacies of biro or felt pens on wet days became apparent as did those of normal writing paper. Even keeping hands warm proved part of the lesson.

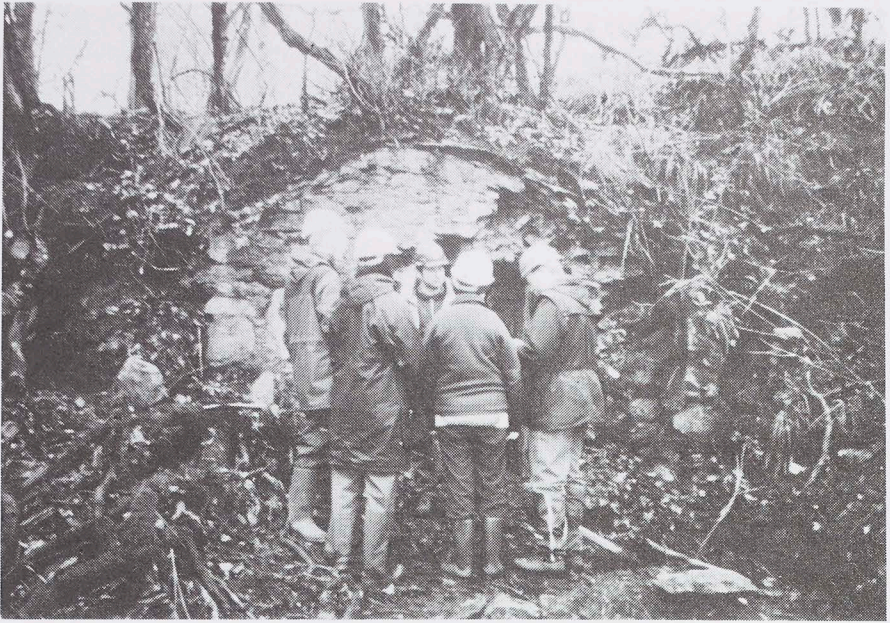
The architectural concepts of plans, sections and elevations were discussed in order to overcome the fear of sketching by explaining the requirements of preparing technical two-dimensional rather than artistic three-dimensional artistic drawings. Bearing in mind that sketches are used to record site measurements, each member was then asked to examine and evaluate the area they were to draw, in order to produce a drawing containing the maximum amount of record information. Some members found this difficult to picture until they had taken part in the measuring and/or draughting workshop which assisted them in the comprehension of the entire process. Most however found the measuring of a plan and an elevation easy to relate to but those who attempted cross sections required further explanation.

With hindsight the tutorial session might have been more beneficial in a more formalised step-by-step format rather than the 'have a go until you get stuck' method which was employed on the day. That said, everyone who participated rose to the challenge and it was gratifying to know that certain devotees took their site drawings home in order to complete their work in dry conditions using photographic evidence.

WORKSHOP 2 - ELEMENTARY MEASURING Ronnie Robertson (Planning Department, The Moray Council)

The objective of this workshop was to introduce members to the process of collecting measurements from the extant remains of buildings on site which could then be used to produce scale drawings for publication.

The first group concentrated on the wheelbase area; the introduction to the overall site area by Len Hall enabled me to sketch out basic plan, elevations and sections beforehand, and therefore the groups were able to start work immediately.



Ronnie Robertson explains measuring at the bothy

Principles such as, always measuring from left to right, and taking running sizes to features marked on the sketch plan, were quickly absorbed by the participants. The allocation of ‘who holds the end of the measuring tape’; ‘who reads out the sizes’; and ‘who excavates to find base for the measuring rod’ was supplemented by ‘who holds the umbrella to ensure that the survey papers do not get wet’.

The fact that the wheelbase area was fairly extensive and complex, due to disintegration of the walls and the waterlogged wheelpit, meant that we did not quite complete the survey within the allocated time.

The second group worked on the bothy or blasthouse which being a smaller structure, more immediately recognisable as a building to the novice meant that dimensions were assembled more easily. Members of this workshop who had sketched it in Workshop 1 were then able to gain a better impression of which points to identify on the sketch in order to be able to relate them to dimensions later.

The third group worked on the crusher and adjacent structures and was able to combine detailed measuring of the crusher and its timber housing with the longer lengths of flanking walls. The importance of diagonals and cross tie dimensions to tie disparate elements together was stressed.

The second and third groups completed their measurements well within Nick’s whistle periods and so there was time to return to the wheelbase area and take further dimensions for a cross section to be produced.

Our attempt to determine the actual depth of the wheelpit led to a mini land-drainage squad digging a ditch towards the burn. The flooded pit began to

drain quickly which served only to release noxious smells from rotting vegetation. The exact depth of the wheelpit remained elusive.

The speed with which all the participants absorbed the basic techniques of measuring was impressive and gathered far more data than I had expected within the allocated time. The production of the record drawings required only one further visit to the site to check on the inevitable 'missing' size.

A valuable spin-off from the workshop commented upon by several participants was the realisation that by gathering detailed measurements in a structured way you are more aware of features and construction details which leads to a greater understanding of how the building possibly functioned.

All participants eagerly looked forward to the next 'hands-on' meeting.



Technical drawing with Elaine Brown in her office

WORKSHOP 3 - DRAUGHTING FOR NOVICES Elaine Brown (Architect in private practice, Cullen)

The aims of this workshop were:

- (1) to give members of the group the courage and elementary skills necessary to draught up simple buildings with some accuracy;
- (2) to increase members' ability to read architectural drawings;

- (3) to increase members' understanding of the recording process from measuring through to finished drawing using scale setting out and drawing procedures.

In order to achieve this, the group was set the task of draughting to 1:50 scale a plan, section and elevation of a simple local vernacular building (sadly not one from the limekilns since the survey was not at a suitably advanced stage). Twelve people were tutored in three different sessions in elementary drawing skills which involved basics such as fixing tracing paper to the drawing and the more complicated concept of transferring written dimensions to scaled drawings on paper, each offering two to three hours on the drawing board. Novices all grasped setting out, the use of the tools of the trade such as clutch pencil, adjustable set square, and scale rule, and all managed to produce a recognisable drawing. Nerves appeared to be the biggest stumbling block to 'having a go' along with the shyness associated with making a mark on paper that others could see. They all however realised that with a methodical approach and a little tuition they could achieve a reasonable standard of measured drawing.

It seemed as if everyone enjoyed the exercise - perhaps mostly because it was in the dry. Whilst it is not possible to learn technical drawing in a few hours, it was proved that everyone can soon learn to record simple buildings to scale from a basic survey and hence explain them far better than words alone can do.



Chris McGregor lowers the measuring tape

WORKSHOP 4 - ADVANCED MEASURING TECHNIQUES Chris McGregor (Historic Scotland)

The only way to understand a building or structure is to study it in some detail. Photography is useful if time is short. However, it is not sufficient to fully understand any building or structure. To point and press the button is not enough. It is only when one sits down to draw the building that one has to think about how the various elements relate to each other, and how the structure was actually built. In looking at the structures in some detail, we can pick

up the different periods of build. The longer or more often one looks carefully at a building, the more one finds.

The rules and procedures which apply to the measured survey of all buildings were obeyed at the Craibstone limekilns. Before starting the survey the teams had to walk around the structure, and contemplate the three-dimensional entity. First a basic understanding of the buildings had to be established, and a survey strategy devised. The limitations of the assembled teams had to be recognised. Within SVBWG there is a wide range of skills, but at Craibstone there were no archaeologists. For this reason it was clear that we should not carry out any invasive investigations. The site is of considerable importance, and it was vital that we did not unwittingly destroy valuable evidence which we do not fully understand. A person with greater knowledge of the particular subject could understand the significance of particular features. The question of personal safety had also to be considered; for safety reasons, a camera is often an essential tool though not a substitute.

The other tools used were not prohibitively technical. A length of flexible tubing with some water in it (a water level) is all that is required to set up a horizontal line. We established a truly horizontal datum line on the structure and took all measurements from this datum. A heavy weight and a piece of string make a plumb bob to indicate a truly vertical line. The two lines were the basis for a grid to which all the dimensions can be related. The limekiln walls sloped, and by using the true vertical, the angle of the wall slope could be established. Tape measures and measuring rods were also required. Once a known fixed point was established, all other parts of the site could be related to it. With the help of the theodolite, the various elements of the site could be drawn together as a whole. The full site survey was tied back to a benchmark, using the method described by Ian Gray (below).

WORKSHOP 5 - LEVELLING Ian Gray (recently retired from Historic Scotland)

The main aim of this workshop was to introduce members of the group unfamiliar with levelling practice and equipment to the general principles of taking heights above and below a plane projected by an instrument, taking into account the function and setting up of the various items of equipment (level, tripod, staff and water level) and accompanying methods of booking and site reduction. Emphasis was placed on the importance of levelling to the interpretation of the site, in the case of Craibstone relating water levels in the dam and quarry to machinery on the site, producing sections through the site, estimating potential water power and relating known fixed point levels of elevations produced by other groups. Also demonstrated was the possibility of combining levelling with other techniques such as plane-tableing which can produce vertical heights as well as a drawn plan. Attention was drawn to the availability of electronic systems such as the EDM (Electronic Distance Measurer) and laser level. An important aspect was the



Ian Gray explains levelling

production of a gridded level survey of the site to be used in its various interpretations. With a view to the survey as a whole, levelling was used to provide datums for the measured survey groups, thereby tying them all together.

All members attended a short introductory talk and demonstration, and a detailed handout was provided to reinforce the introduction, and for future reference. More experienced members carried out three practical levelling exercises:

- (1) bringing a level down approximately 350 metres from the Ordnance Survey Bench Mark (OSBM) on the wall of the cottages to provide a temporary bench mark (TBM) for further levelling and closing this back to the OSBM to ensure there were no errors;
- (2) levelling the area in front of Kiln 1, the wheelpit area, the lade and the dam remains;
- (3) levelling the quarry area to determine the water level and extending the survey up the ramp to the top of Kilns 3 and 4 and the area beyond.

This workshop was successful, with the main objectives achieved. Completed, reduced level booking forms are included in the survey information. The datum level for the measured survey of Kiln 1 was established. A level plan and site section were produced from the survey information, and an approximate

area for the mill dam was deduced. As a result of this information, conclusions can be drawn as to the possible function of the dam and the lade.

Due to the fairly unpleasant weather conditions which made observations through a misted-up telescope difficult, and the overgrown nature of the site which often required sights to be sneaked between leaves, coupled with time constraints, it was not possible to spend much time allowing members of the group 'hands-on' experience. The reduction of the booked levels had to take place off site.

I am very grateful to Geoff Leet for setting out the grid which also gave the group more sophisticated experience in the use of ranging poles, 3:4:5 triangles to set out right angles, and triangulation of points where spot levels were taken.

WORKSHOP 6 - PLANE-TABLING Graham Douglas (RCAHMS)

The objective of this workshop was to demonstrate the use of a plane-table and alidade, and the particular features of their use that applied to the limekilns. As a piece of equipment, the plane-table can be quite mystifying, and an aim of the workshop was to show its accessibility. The groups seemed delighted by the ease with which it could be used. This equipment can be used for an area survey with the aim of recording geographical features. At a larger scale, the equipment is



Graham Douglas explains the plane-table

equally useful in the recording of buildings. Thus the limekilns could be recorded in their geographical context with trees and contours indicated.

At Craibstone, the groups were shown how plan views generated by the use of the plane-table and alidade could be used in conjunction with details gathered by the workshops dealing with other surveying equipment. The success of the plane-tabling workshop despite the adverse weather on the day illustrated how this equipment can be used irrespective of conditions. The limekilns were a particularly good site for the demonstration of this equipment in that the area chosen was all within the limits of a 30 metre measuring tape. This meant that a high level of accuracy could be achieved. The fact that the chosen site was level also presented fewer difficulties than in situations where the site has great variations in ground level.

UDRIGLE HOUSE

Roy Wentworth and John Sanders

*Udrigle House, which was restored in 1992-94, has been described as one of the most notable, if not the most distinctive of the surviving small laird's houses in the Highlands¹. The historical background in the following article is based on Roy Wentworth's unpublished **History of Udrigle House** (1995) by kind permission of Donald and Joanna MacKenzie, and John Sanders of Simpson and Brown Architects describes the restoration process.*

Udrigle House lies in Gairloch parish, Wester Ross, on the west shore of Gruinard Bay. 'Udrigle' is an anglicisation of the Gaelic 'Udraigil' derived from the Old Norse, 'ytra gil' meaning the outer gully, or the gully nearer the sea; the Norsemen had arrived in the area at the end of the eighth century. The township of Udrigle was later part of the earldom of Ross. This earldom was held by the Lord of the Isles in the first half of the fifteenth century, and in 1463 some of the lands of Wester Ross were granted to Celestine, an illegitimate son of Alexander, third Lord of the Isles. Celestine styled himself 'of Lochalsh', and Udrigle and the other lands of Lochbroom continued in the Lochalsh family until 1519, when they passed by marriage to the two families of the Dingwalls and the MacDonalds of Glengarry. Udrigle fell within the MacDonald share of the land which in 1572 was acquired by Colin MacKenzie of Kintail. At this time, MacKenzie tacksman would have settled on Lochbroom lands. From 1623 the MacKenzies of Kintail were styled Earls of Seaforth.

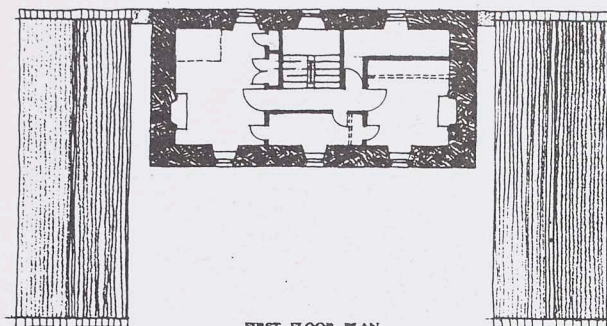
Udrigle appears on maps of the period; as 'Ouderginn' on a manuscript map of Timothy Pont (1584-96, National Library of Scotland), and on Blaeu's *Atlas Novus* (Sheet *Extima Scotia*, 1654) as 'Oudergill'. 1654 was also the year in which General Monck burnt much of the Seaforth estate, although it is not known if Udrigle suffered under this. In 1688, John MacKenzie, illegitimate son of George MacKenzie, second Earl of Seaforth and fourteenth Laird of Kintail, acquired from his father a wadset of Meikle Gruinard in Lochbroom parish, half of the Isle of Gruinard, and the lands of Udrigle and Sand in Gairloch parish. By 1709 John's son, George (c.1655-c.1738) was owner of Udrigle, Drumchork and Sand, and wadsetter of neighbouring lands belonging to the MacKenzies of Fairburn and Coul.

By this time the family styled themselves 'of Gruinard', though they resided at Udrigle in a dwelling whose masonry was found during the restoration of Udrigle House in 1992-4. George was succeeded by his son John, who in turn was succeeded by his son William, fourth of Gruinard, who in 1745, with his wife Lilius (daughter of John MacKenzie, first of Lochend) built Udrigle House (figure 1).

The house was built on or near the site of an earlier laird's house. It is of the traditional two storey and attic type, of harled rubble with heavy boulder footings. It has a ridge roof with crow-stepped gables and a facade of three small

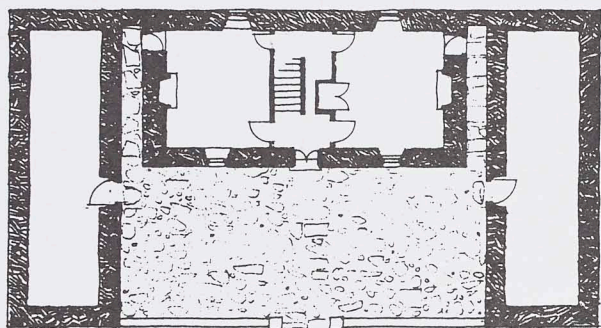


SOUTH ELEVATION



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

GROUND FLOOR PLAN



NORTH ELEVATION

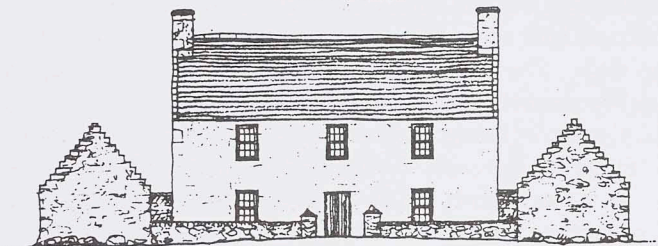


figure 1 South elevation, first floor plan, ground floor plan, north elevation.
Conjectural reconstruction c.1750. (Simpson and Brown Architects)



figure 2 View from north-east, before restoration (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS)

sash windows. The principal north elevation is symmetrical, with a centre doorway which has a low, crow-stepped porch bearing the date 1756. One of the most important features is the original panelling in both first floor rooms. It is unusual for the Highlands in being ogee-shaped with moulded and lugged door frames, and the panelling and associated details are similar to those in the parlour of Flowerdale House, Gairloch, built by the MacKenzies of Gairloch in 1738. Other internal features of interest are the lintel of the mantel shelf in the east bedroom, inscribed '17 W MK L MK 45', for William and Liliass; and the staircase rising to the attic. The scale and platt staircase with silhouette balusters, which had partially collapsed before restoration, is built against the rear wall of the house and is lit by windows at half-landing stage. The main building is flanked by office buildings, one of which was possibly a stable.

The MacKenzies of Udridge had a colourful history, and one episode draws attention to a feature of the house. Around 1778, Liliass MacKenzie was anxious for her son to get a commission, which could be achieved with a set number of recruits. Unfortunately, young sons of tenants were press-ganged for this purpose, and were confined in Udridge House, and the nearby Airds House (demolished during World War Two). Udridge House was said to have large cupboards in the very thick walls which were used for detaining boys captured by the pressgangs.

James Simpson has suggested that these holes may have been the gaps between the gables of the house and the office buildings. It is possible that when the office buildings were thatched, the roof was carried across these narrow spaces to meet the gable walls of the house forming two long, thin, poorly lit and unventilated spaces.

The family of Udrigle House was sustained by, amongst other enterprises, revenue from farming tenants and sub-tenants; trade in salmon, cattle, cod, herring and ling; and possibly smuggling. However, debts forced the sale of the house and other lands in 1788 to Murdoch MacIver, minister of Lochalsh; in 1798 they were sold again to Duncan Davidson of Tulloch. His son sold the lands to Meyrick Banks of Winstanley Hall, near Wigan, in 1835. Despite the change of ownership, the house continued to be inhabited by members of the MacKenzie family, though for a period, until the 1870s, members of the Morrison family stayed there. Information from the census of 1891 shows how the fortunes of Udrigle House had changed; from being a laird's house, it was occupied by two crofting families headed respectively by Angus Macleod and Alexander MacKenzie. In 1897, John MacKenzie became tenant of the house, and his daughter Kate lived there until 1972; she died two years later at the age of 94. The house was to remain empty and deteriorating for twenty years (figure 2).

Roy Wentworth

Udrigle is a rare example of a small but formal eighteenth century house in the north-west Highlands. The repair and restoration work was carried out in two phases between 1992 and 1994 by Donald and Joanna MacKenzie, with grant aid from Historic Scotland. Simpson and Brown were the architects and the principal contractors were J.I. MacKenzie with Ian Cumming as specialist harling contractor, and John Haytor as joinery restorer. In the first phase the roof and external walls were tackled and the building allowed to ventilate so that the masonry and surviving internal joinery could dry out. In the second phase the interior was converted to form a three-bedroom house for holiday letting.

In the first phase the roof was stripped and reslated, reusing the slates, and making up the shortfall with matching second-hand slates. Some extensive masonry work was required to cut out collapsed and cracked flues within the gable walls and to partially take down and rebuild the porch using the original stones. The walls were harled with lime mortar following an analysis of fragments of the original harl. It was clear from remnants of harl at the window ingos that the final coat of harl was taken over the chamfered rybats and into the ingo as far as the timber frame of the windows. The external joinery of the windows and doors had decayed beyond the possibility of reuse or had been replaced at various times during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In order to achieve a consistent appearance to the external elevations, it was decided to renew all of the windows following the design of the oldest surviving sash.

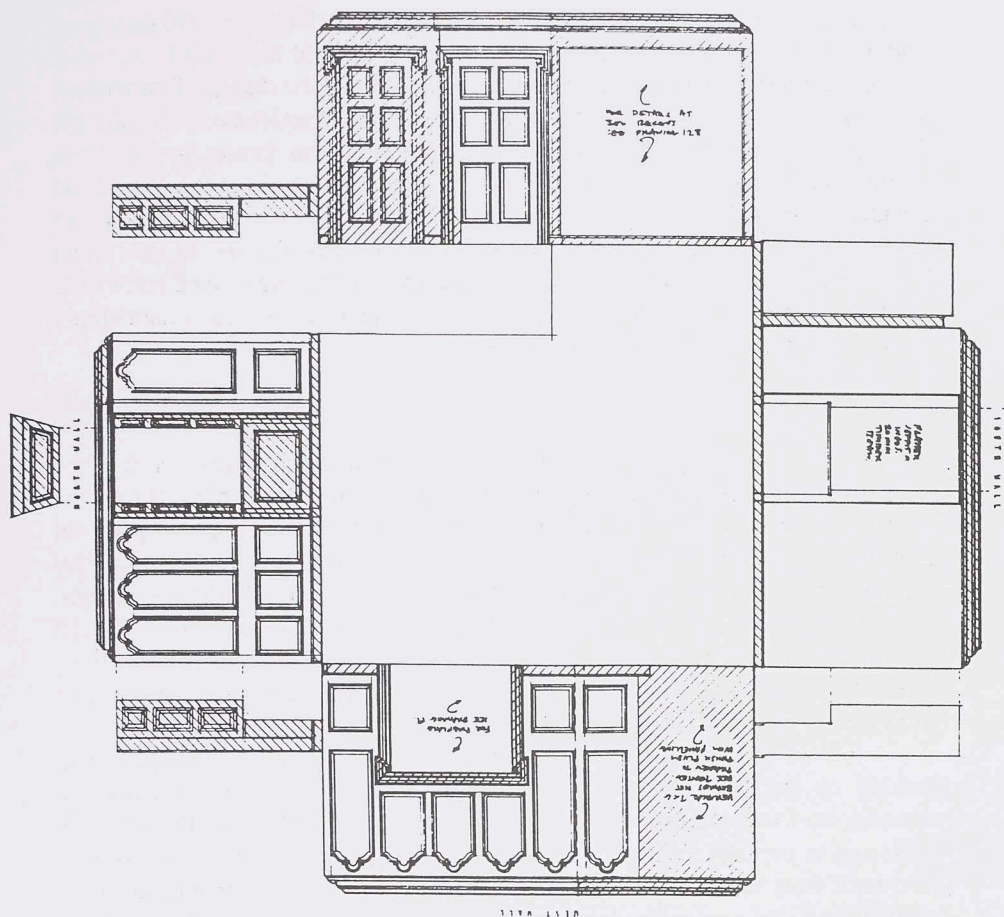


figure 3 First floor, west room - internal elevations. (Simpson and Brown Architects)
Joinery repaired or restored in 1994 is shown hatched

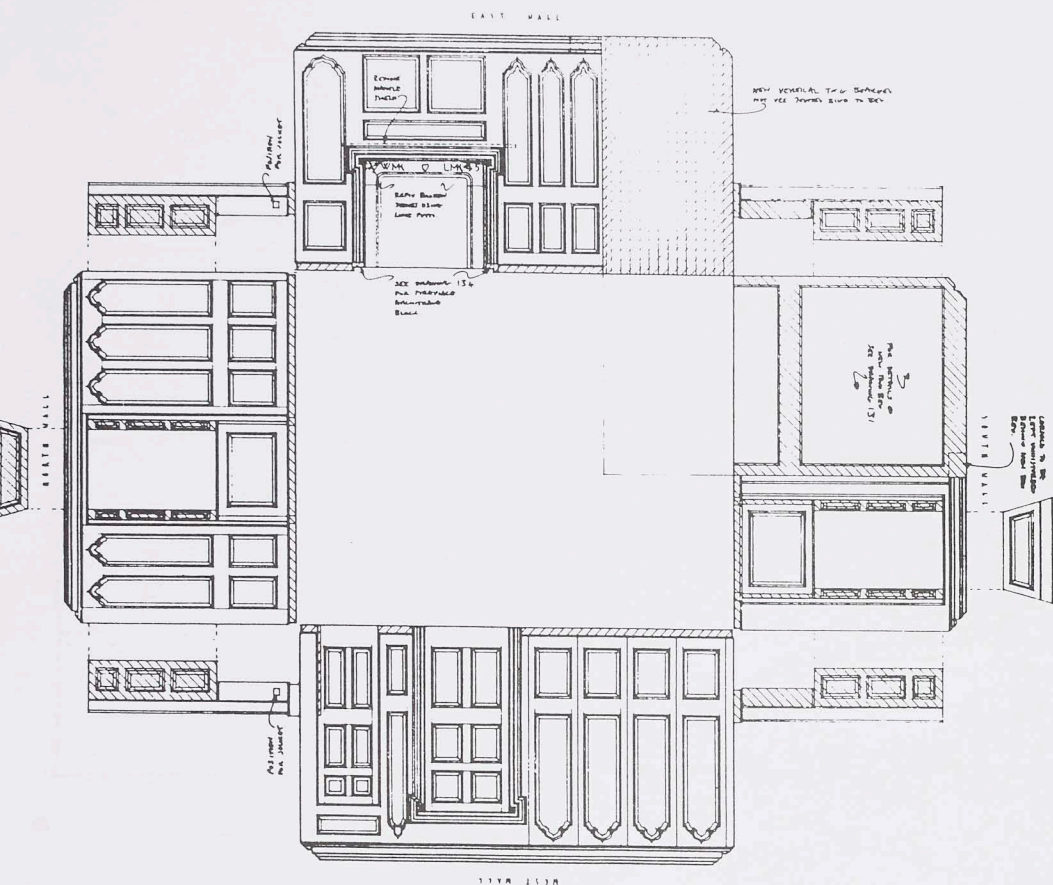


figure 4 First floor, east room - internal elevations. (Simpson and Brown Architects)
 Joinery repaired or restored in 1994 is shown hatched



figure 6 View of panelling in first floor east room, before restoration (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS)

At first sight, the symmetrical arrangement of the north and south elevations and the similarity of the gable elevations give the impression that the house was built in a single campaign around 1745. However, there is evidence that the building incorporates masonry from an earlier structure. In the gables near the south-west and south-east corners small blocked windows were discovered; as they were too close to the floor to belong to the present design, it can be concluded that the earlier building had a lower first floor level. In the centre of the south wall, below the stair window, a roll moulded stone was discovered built into the masonry. This moulding is of late medieval character, and is different to any mouldings in the present house where the windows have simple chamfers, and the fireplaces early classical mouldings.

The conjectural restoration drawing shows the house as it might have appeared in 1750 before the construction of the porch in 1757 (figure 1). The house had single storey crow-stepped outhouses next to each gable, with a gap between the buildings of about 1 metre. This symmetrical disposition of subsidiary agricultural buildings is common in smaller lairds' houses in the Highlands and Islands, and reflects the pavilions of grander houses. The eastern outhouse was demolished some time ago and the western outhouse has been converted and extended to form a cottage. The outhouse buildings enclosed and sheltered a courtyard to the north of the house. On the south side the two flanking buildings

would have given a more fortified impression of the group. The house was approached from the north, along a road which was probably axial with the front door. Possibly there were formal gardens, orchards and kitchen gardens laid out on either side of the road.

Udrigle House is most remarkable for the survival of its mid-eighteenth century joinery. The illustrations show this in two panelled rooms on the first floor, and also on the stair, which retains its original moulded timbers (figures 3, 4, 5 and 6). The areas shown with cross hatching indicate where missing joinery was reinstated or severely damaged parts replaced.

The shapes of the panel heads differ in the two first floor rooms; in the west room the heads have a semi-circular arch and in the east they are brought to a point. These rooms were intended as bedrooms. In the east room the position of the boxbed was clear; the design of the panelling changed to vertical boarding where it was hidden by the bed in the south-east corner. All the original shutters had been lost; a conjectural design was reinstated with the moulding profile and frame sizes copied from the single surviving soffit board at the south window in the east room.

The east room was the better preserved of the two. The panelling incorporates a series of doors along the west wall; those to the south are for cupboards, and the north one is a closet door. The present boxbed was built during 1994 and is a conjectural design based on examples at New Lanark and Orkney.

The west bedroom has been altered at various times. There may always have been two rooms here with a bedroom to the north and a smaller room to the south reached from the door on the landing to the west of the stair. The extent of the south room is suggested by the boarded area to the south of the panelling on the west wall. It must have been a small room, possibly a closet. By the twentieth century the original partition had been replaced by a new one placed slightly further north. This is indicated on the room elevation drawing by a dotted line on the west wall (figure 3). The later partition was removed in 1993. The door from the landing has been retained in position but has been fixed shut. The door in the north-east corner now leads into a cupboard. The design of this door and the architrave around it is of 1994, based on the adjacent door.

The central room on the north side of the first floor is now used as a bathroom. It seems to have been a closet associated with the east room, but it also had a door, possibly a later insertion, onto the landing. The panelling to the west of the window carried through behind the partition which forms the cupboard in the north-east corner of the west room. It seems possible that the room originally had doors into both the east and west bedrooms.

The stair is remarkable for its use of fretted silhouette balusters. This particular technique is typical of the vernacular adoption of classical forms in the Highlands and elsewhere. Wide boards have been cut to imitate the silhouette of a turned baluster. Presumably this generally reflects a lack of machinery for turning timber, but in Udrigle it must be considered that this fretwork design has been carefully and attractively set out. The balusters are so massive that they are only

distantly related to turned balusters. Also, the profile of the balusters is distorted to meet the angle of the stair; 'real' balusters could not have been turned at such an angle. At each landing there is a squat newel post with moulded timber planted on each face to make panels. Most of these secondary timbers have been lost but it was possible to reconstruct the design from 'shadows' left by the missing timbers.

Significantly, less original plaster and timber survived on the ground floor. The lowest flight of stairs was missing, but the balustrade had survived. The east room on the ground floor was replastered and fitted with new joinery in the nineteenth century. This work had decayed to such an extent by 1993 that it was done again, repeating the nineteenth century design, but using modern materials. The chimney piece and doors at the foot of the stairs incorporate part of the mid-eighteenth century work. This room might have been the main parlour or drawing room. The east room seems always to have been the kitchen with a large fireplace for a range. The fireplace had been built up in rubble during the twentieth century. It was roughly where the new stove stands.

John Sanders

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- 1.Elizabeth Beaton, *Ross and Cromarty*, 1991, Edinburgh, p.92.

VERRACOTT, NORTH RONALDSAY: A CASE FOR RESCUE AND CONSERVATION

Paul Newman and Jocelyn Rendall

Verracott (HY758544) is an old farmstead of traditional type which was occupied until the 1970s. It is a building of considerable importance to Orcadian vernacular architectural traditions.

On the low sandy islands of North Ronaldsay and neighbouring Sanday, the ancient farmstead sites can be recognised by their conspicuous farm mounds, which are the accretions of midden and other redundant material from earlier buildings. Typically, at Verracott the line of a steading and two dwelling houses curves across the top of the mound, with the older house sitting on its highest point.

The farmstead is listed in rentals of 1653, 1733 and 1785. The oldest part of the present complex is the old house, which has the local reputation for being the oldest on the island (figure 1). This is now roofless but the rounded gables and remnants of roof material indicate a thatched roof of the 'needled' type where the roof covering is supported on a 'tent' of closely packed simmens (straw ropes) - a specifically Orcadian thatching technique (figures 2 and 3)¹. Fallen flagstones probably comprised a row of stones resting on the wallhead and leaning on the simmens where they are wrapped around the lowest lath. A small window is

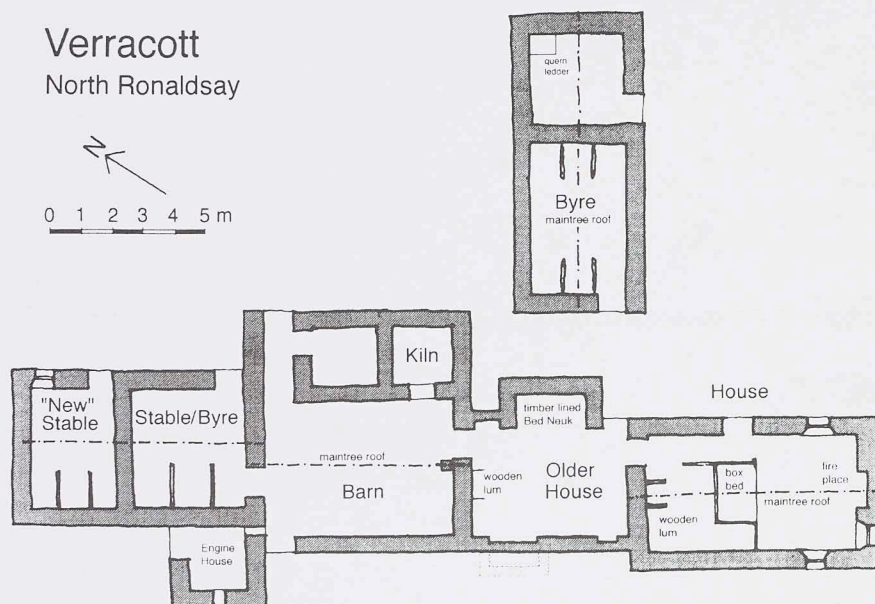


figure 1 Plan

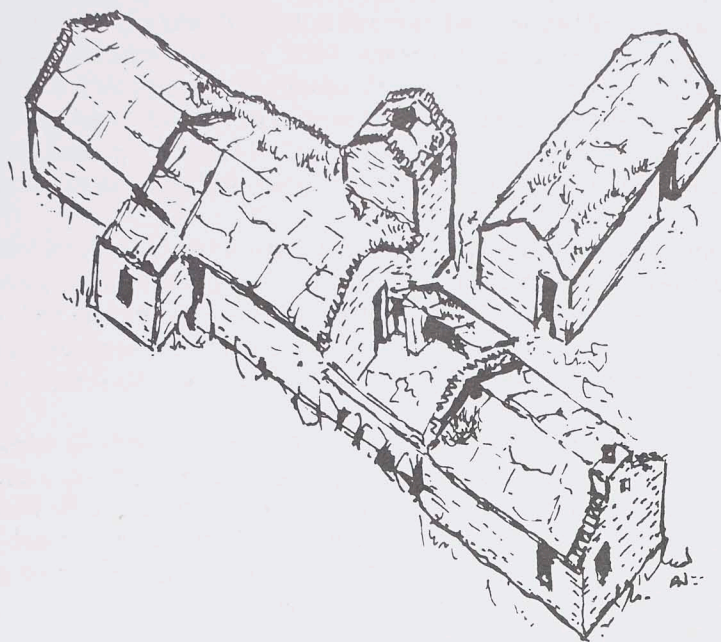


figure 2 Axonometric view, as existing

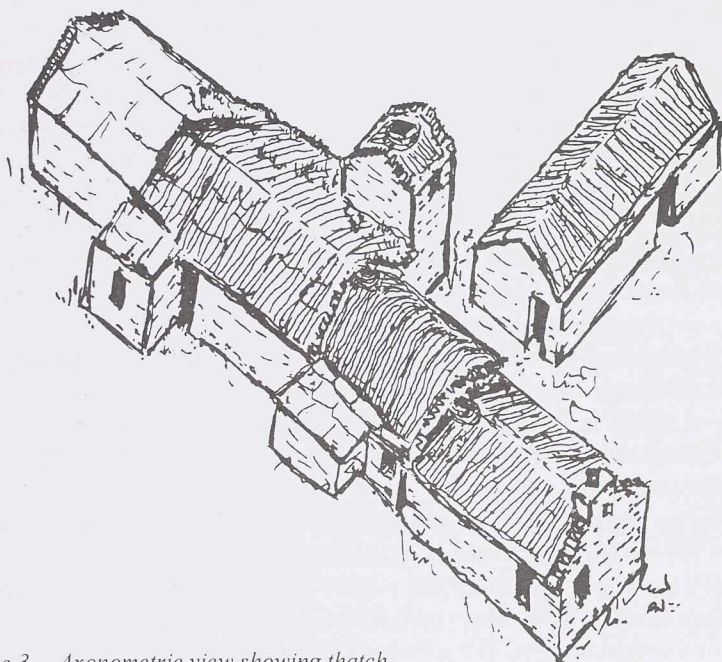


figure 3 Axonometric view showing thatch

remembered in the south wall and there may have been rooflights in the thatch.

A wood-lined bed neuk still survives in the north wall and a second outshot on the south wall survived until after the 1960s. The bed neuks suggest that the house may date back to the late eighteenth century. A hinging lum is remembered on the gable shared with the barn, with the external part bound with simmens in the traditional manner, but the house may originally have had a central hearth for burning the dried cow dung which was the principal fuel of North Ronaldsay and Sanday.

Farm buildings and a new house were built around the old house at Verracott. After the kelp boom collapsed in 1831, the processes of agricultural improvement which made a fitful start in Orkney in the eighteenth century and had been in abeyance during the heyday of kelp manufacture, started to make a profound effect on the rural economy. William Thomson, in his *History of Orkney*, says:

The blow fell most heavily on those islands such as North Ronaldsay which were most thoroughly geared to kelp production. It had a large kelp-making labour force, living on small crofts and operating a debased form of run-rig with annually changing plots of land. In the absence of kelp, it was grossly overpopulated. In 1832 run-rig was abolished over the greater part of the island and the land squared off into small farms².

Alexander Fenton in *The Northern Isles* states: In North Ronaldsay, Robert Scarth, factor to Dr Traill of Woodwick, abolished payment of rents in kind in 1832, along with all kains and services, and squared off the runrig fields³.

The additional buildings around the old house at Verracott would appear to be a product of the land reorganisation and the increased investment in buildings which followed. In this case it would seem reasonable to date the barn, kiln and byres to some time in the 1830s with the new house being added a few years later. The new buildings have maintree roofs (figures 7 and 8), a type of Orcadian vernacular construction only found on North Ronaldsay, whereas couple roofs are almost universal throughout the rest of the islands⁴. The maintree is a massive ship's timber which defines the ridge of the roof, with unpaired rafters, also massive, carrying a covering of flagstones.

The building at the west end of the complex has a fine overseamed flagstone roof made with large flags with rectangular edges. This building is known locally as the 'new' stable, built by Old Willie of Verracott. He was born in 1863 which suggests that the stable was added sometime between the 1880s and the first decade of the twentieth century.

Whereas the pattern of the typical Orcadian traditional farmstead is one of a long row of buildings with a round kiln at one end, or two parallel rows of building separated by a narrow closs, the layout is quite different at Verracott and a number of other farmsteads in the southern part of the island⁵. Verracott is perhaps the best example of this type of farm. The layout is a T-shape, with the barn and kiln being

central. A feature of the linear type of layout has been retained in that there is internal access from house to barn, kiln and stable.

Most small farm kilns in Orkney are circular⁶. Larger square kilns are to be found in the improved farms of the gentry along with courtyards and other features of the high farming models of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A few square kilns are to be found on small farms, covered by extensions of the barn roof. Only on North Ronaldsay at Verracott and similar sites is the distinctive one and a half storey small square kiln to be found.

Why should North Ronaldsay have a type of traditional farmstead which is so different from the more typical traditional farms of the rest of Orkney including some in North Ronaldsay itself? Could it be that Robert Scarth was responsible for introducing ideas for improved farm design adapted to suit these small farmsteads? The T-shape begins to define partly sheltered spaces, though hardly the 'court of offices' recommended by the nineteenth century agricultural improvers. The high kiln (a scaled-down version of kilns to be found in large improved farms such as Braebuster in Deerness) may vent combustion gases more effectively and would be easier to build than the bottle-shaped kilns. So Verracott and the other similar North Ronaldsay farmsteads represent a particular local development in vernacular building and mark a period of Orcadian history when traumatic changes took place in the rural economy. William Thomson notes from the *New Statistical Account* for North Ronaldsay that in 1836 'organised emigration removed thirty-two families; some were allowed to settle on the under-developed west side of Eday and others left Orkney'⁷.

Verracott is very probably the last building in Orkney to have been rethatched with simmens in the traditional manner (apart from the farm museums), and probably the last to have needled thatch (figure 9). The roofs of all the buildings apart from the old house are covered with flagstone applied in a rather rough overseamed technique which was then covered with straw thatch, secured in place by straw simmens and bendlin stones. Remnant thatch, or the grass it has sprouted, can be seen in many places on the roofs.

The new house is of the kind where one space is subdivided by boxbeds. A boxbed is still in situ (the remains of another have been identified in the old house). The ben end of the house has a fireplace and flue built into the gable. The maintree projects through the flue and out through the external face of the gable. At the butt end there is a very rare feature for Orkney, a wooden lum with flagstone cheeks to the fireplace⁸. The new house made use of the existing gable of the old house, and this may account for the wooden lum. The barn maintree is supported by a large post as well as projecting through the gable.

A future for Orkney vernacular building?

None of the traditional farmsteads in North Ronaldsay of the Verracott type are listed and few are listed for other parts of Orkney. To preserve an adequate

record of Orcadian vernacular buildings, with their variety of design and construction, requires the preservation of many individual buildings throughout all the islands.

The loss of each building gradually impoverishes the historical record. When a significant number are lost, an aspect of the vernacular disappears entirely; we are very near that point with the needled roofs. The future for Verracott is uncertain - its loss, and the loss of similar buildings in North Ronaldsay would be a great blow to our record of the vernacular building traditions of Orkney.

A case could be made for North Ronaldsay to be an area of special interest (perhaps we need the architectural and cultural equivalent of the Site of Special Scientific Interest) for the study of vernacular building with a survey programme to record the traditional farmsteads, particularly those with square kilns, maintree roofs and needled roofs in the southern part of the island. Many of these buildings are derelict and getting perilously close to collapse. Action needs to be taken now if they are to be adequately recorded.



figure 4 Verracott from south - stables, byre, barn, kiln, houses

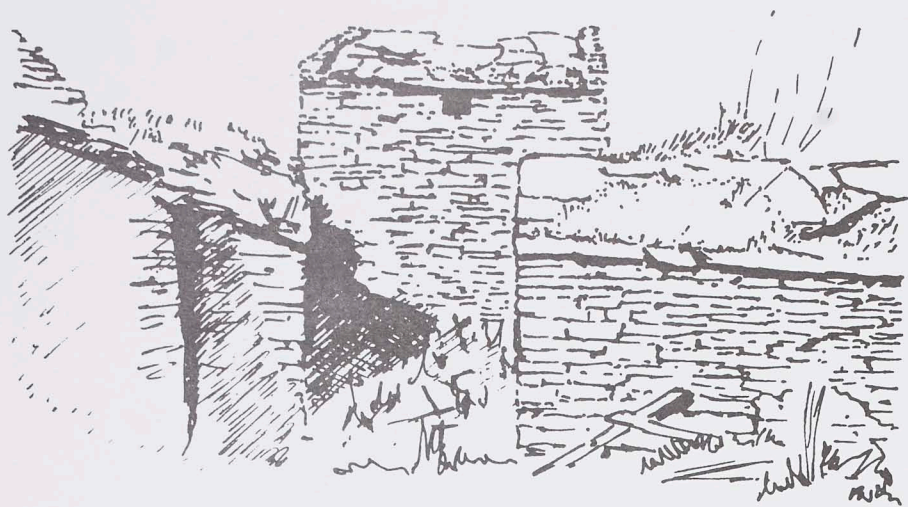


figure 5 Verracott from east - house, kiln, byre



figure 6 Verracott from north-west - kiln, barn, stables



figure 7 Interior of Verracott barn showing maintree and kiln opening on left



figure 8 Interior of Verracott barn looking west



figure 9 Verracott from south, based on a photograph of rethatching, taken between 1950 and 1970, in the Scottish Ethnological Archive

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2. William P. L. Thomson, *History of Orkney*, Edinburgh, 1987, p.212.
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The illustrations which accompany this article are based on a survey made by Jocelyn Rendall and photographs taken by her and by Paul Newman. In addition to the illustrations to this article, the buildings at Verracott have featured in several articles on Orcadian traditional building in *Vernacular Building*.

WOODEN LUM AT VERRACOTT, NORTH RONALDSAY

Paul Newman

No wooden lums of the hinging lum or wood and clay canopy type were found in my 1991 survey of vernacular farm buildings on Orkney, or subsequently. However at one site on the island of Graemsay, short walls on either side of a gable fireplace suggest the possibility of a canopy over the fireplace. An informant on North Ronaldsay described bracket holes in the gable wall on either side of a fireplace of a cottage he had rebuilt, which again suggests the possibility of a hinging lum in that building. Wooden lums of the hinging lum type were not unknown in Orcadian building traditions even if there are no survivals. Fenton and Walker include an old photograph of such a lum in a house in Stromness.¹

Whilst making a photographic survey of traditional farm buildings in North Ronaldsay in 1991, a wooden lum was found at the farm of Viggay, where the wooden enclosure rose from floor to roof against an internal stone gable wall. The fireplace was a coal burning grate with cast-iron surround in Victorian style, inserted into the wooden lum. So far this find has not been reported in previous articles published in *Vernacular Building*. Because of the state of the interior (full of old furniture and with a collapsing roof) it was not possible to take satisfactory photographs. In any case a single example might simply be regarded as idiosyncratic, rather than an example of the variety within a vernacular tradition. However, another example has now been seen.

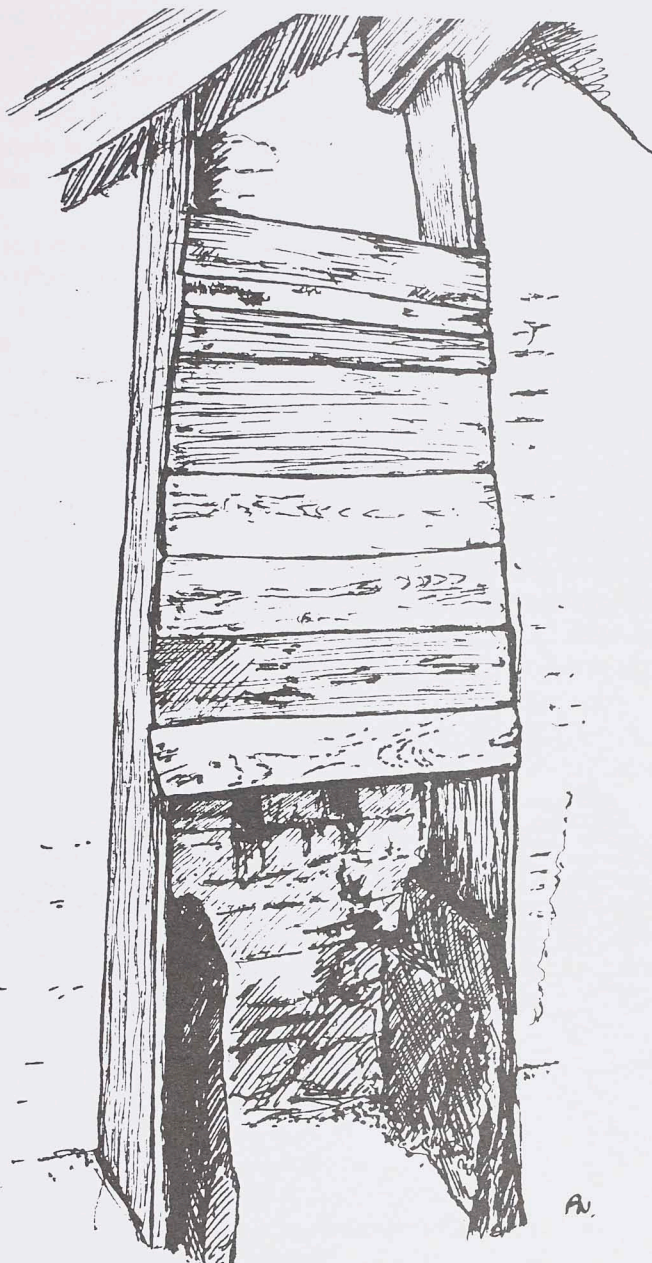
In 1995, on another visit to North Ronaldsay, some of the sites were revisited. On this occasion a second wooden lum of the same basic type was found in the derelict dwelling at Verracott (HY758544); we had not been able to see the interior of this dwelling previously. The fireplace is against the gable wall and contained at the sides with flagstone cheeks. As at Viggay, the wooden lum rises from floor to roof.

As can be seen in the illustration, two vertical wooden planks rise from floor to roof, the wood being protected from the fire by two vertical flagstones. The fuel would have been dried cow dung ('scones' in North Ronaldsay) or imported peat. Horizontal boards are nailed to the vertical members to make a flue, which is contained at the back by the stone gable. It will be noted that the horizontal boards do not extend all the way to the roof. It would seem reasonable to assume that the flue would have been enclosed at the top, in which case some of the horizontal boards are missing. It can be seen that the flue is somewhat off the centre of the gable.

It will be noted that there is a substantial ridge beam at the apex of the roof. This dwelling is one of those Ronaldsay buildings with a maintree and rafter roof rather than the typical Orcadian coupled roof². The smoke hole is to one side of the maintree.

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- 2 Paul Newman and Alison Newman, 'Roof Types in the Traditional Buildings of Orkney', *Vernacular Building*, 16, 1992, pp.39-55, (p.39).



SCONE HOUSE AT GARSO, NORTH RONALDSAY

Jocelyn Rendall

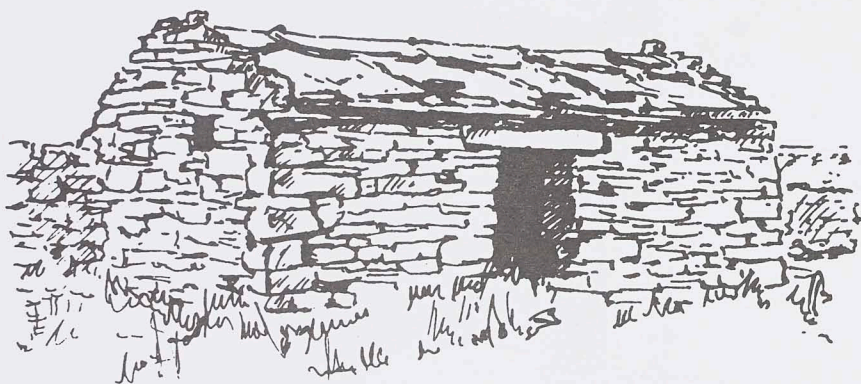
A small building on the farm of Garso in North Ronaldsay was pointed out to me by the owner as a 'scone house' or store for the pats of dried cow dung which were collected for fuel (HY772554). The house is a detached drystone building, approximately 18 feet by 8 feet, with a flagstone roof, and is built just inside the sheep dyke which separates the farm from the shore. There is no proof that the house was built for this specific purpose but I was told by my informants that formerly every house on the island had its scone house.

Most of the north isles of Orkney are peatless as well as treeless. Many people had peat-cutting rights on the island of Eday, but this involved a long and dangerous boat journey. Driftwood was the only source of timber, so fuel was obviously at a premium.

Mr Muir, senior, of Garso (now aged ninety) remembers that the milking cows were kept indoors at night throughout the year. The dung was formed into scones with a shovel and laid on the dyke to dry. John Rendall remembers collecting scones on Papa Westray in the 1930s; it was one of the tasks of schoolchildren during the summer to turn the pats to dry them, and then gather them. However, they were stored in the barn and there is no tradition of special scone houses on Papa Westray or on any of the other north isles.

Have members come across scone houses in any other parts of Scotland?

The author wishes to thank to Christine Muir of Garso.



Drawing by Paul Newman based on a photograph by Jocelyn Rendall

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HAA HOUSES OF SHETLAND

Mike Finnie

The Shetland landscape is scattered with ground-hugging crofthouses which have developed their extended, altered and often abused form from the last century and before to the present time. New developments, generally of the kit house variety, display unsympathetic proportions, discordant colouring, and illogical and insensitive siting. But here and there stand larger, dour, substantial houses, rising high and aloof above their surroundings; these are the Shetland Haa houses.

The definition of a Haa is subject to interpretation; the dictionary definition is a "laird's house"¹. I have defined the true Haa as a house which displays the typical characteristics of the building form — tall, narrow, gabled buildings often with pronounced garrets. There are other buildings which possess enough of these characteristics to be considered Haas, and there are many other buildings which may have been Haas at some time in their development, but have since been altered. Town houses were never true Haas but nevertheless are built in similar styles often by the owner of a rural Haa. Some properties retain the name of Haa, but have either been altered beyond recognition, or only serve as a reminder of the site of a former Haa. There is much overlap between the Böd and the Haa (in some instances their appearance is indistinguishable). The dictionary definition of a Böd is a "fisherman's booth or hut; a store for fishing requirements"². The physical form of a Böd spans a wide range from simple, single storey buildings to much larger examples.

There are at least one hundred place names, ruins, memories or surviving buildings linked with Haa houses or their locations. Of these at least forty buildings, some ruinous, display the typical characteristics of the building type. There were certainly others, and some may remain unknown, either incorporated in later buildings or as unrecognised ruins.

The Haa house developed from the seventeenth century as the residence of lairds and merchants. After Earl Patrick Stewart was executed in 1612, the Northern Isles of Orkney and Shetland came under the effective control of the Scottish Crown, and soon after the building of lairds' houses began. These early houses reflected more peaceful times with none of the defensive features found on the earlier castles of the Stewart era. The earliest houses remaining in anything like their original appearance are of one and a half or two storeys, and are thick walled and rectangular in plan with irregular deep set windows, often with crow-stepped gables and attendant outbuildings and courtyards. The Old Haa of Brough (Burravoe, Yell), 1672, is typical (figures 1 and 2); it was built for Robert Tyrie, a merchant, and retains fragments of its former courtyard including an arched gateway surmounted by an armorial panel. The flanking buildings which formed the opposite side of the courtyard, and can be seen in early photographs, have gone.

Later forms of the building type developed as taller and more formal buildings with regular fenestration. This form of building reached its apogee around 1730-50 by which time the largest were three storey buildings, generally only one room deep. The Haa of Sand (West Mainland) of 1754 (figure 7) and the Old Haa of Scalloway, c. 1750 (figure 6), illustrate the Haa at its most advanced state of development. Later houses, such as the nineteenth century factor's house of Maryfield (Bressay) (figure 16), continued to display the typical tall, narrow, gabled form, often with a pronounced garret, until well into the nineteenth century.

These tall buildings are unusually prominent in the open Shetland landscape, and seem to be unsuited to such an exposed and harsh climate. The earliest Haa builders were immigrants from Scotland or their descendants, either merchants, landowners or similar, and it is possible that these incomers brought with them the tall laird's towerhouse tradition of mainland Scotland. Shetland, in common with Scotland at the time, was lacking in timber resources, and wood was scarce and presumably expensive. The lengths of timber necessary for spanning floors and for roof construction would have been imported. The timber used for the earlier Haas is likely to have been pine originating from the Baltic area (by the end of the seventeenth century large quantities of timber were being imported into Scotland from that area). Nineteenth century imports are more likely to be pine from North America. In some cases drift or wreck wood was used. To economise, timber floor spans between walls were kept to a minimum and the extent of the roof area was reduced. The tall Haa form maximised internal accommodation by expanding upwards, with no increase in floor spans, or roof area.

Apart from imported timber, local materials were used in the structure of the Haa. Stone is Shetland's most plentiful building material, and that available to builders included the horizontally bedded sandstones of the South Mainland, Mousa and Bressay; hard limestones from the fertile valleys of the Central Mainland; and various granites, schists and even serpentine from throughout the Islands. Brick only features as an oddity; its occasional appearance is traditionally attributed to ballast carried by Hanseatic vessels and other ships. Until the late seventeenth century, lime for mortar and harling was obtained from shells burned over peat. Limekilns for this purpose still exist at Fladdabister and other locations in Shetland. Before the nineteenth century, most roofs were finished in turf or thatch, and only grander buildings were finished in local stone slabs or imported slate. It is probable that at least some of the earlier Haas were thatched. Some smaller Haa buildings retain felt roofs, which were probably formerly thatched. An example is the Haa of Aywick (Yell), said to be from 1650, now a one and a half storey croft house, with thick walls and window proportions and positioning which suggest the early date. The flat section at the apex of the felt roof is usually indicative of thatch at some point in the building's history. Slates began to be imported from Easdale on Scotland's west coast from the early eighteenth century, and from Ballachulish on a large scale during the nineteenth century. Most Haas have or appeared to have had timber partitions; floors spanning the depth of the

house from front to back walls needed little additional internal support. The empty shells of many derelict examples show no trace of internal stone walls. The Haa of Sand (West Mainland) retains all of its internal timber partitions (figures 8 and 9). The reuse of materials has always been a Shetland tradition and no more so than with timber where even today beaches are dragged for wood for possible reuse. The Haa in Fair Isle (figure 3) is said to have timbers obtained from wrecks, and the Haa at Gossabrough (Yell), once a shop, has partitions lined with sections of the packing cases of biscuits and golden syrup.

Classical influences began to appear in Shetland in the early eighteenth century and around this time the first of the Forbes family of masons is said to have arrived from Aberdeenshire to work on Gardie House (Bressay), 1724. This is itself not a Haa, but a sophisticated piended roofed box in the Scottish tradition of Sir William Bruce and James Smith. John Forbes was responsible for a number of classical funeral monuments and armorial panels in Shetland between 1730 and 1750, and his sons worked on the Lerwick Tolbooth in 1767-70. John Forbes may have been instrumental in bringing classical ideas to Shetland. Initially only appearing in details such as door architraves, moulded window openings and armorial panels, classical influences became more sophisticated as at the Haa of Sand (West Mainland), 1754 (figure 7), which has a five bay frontage with a 2/1/2 arrangement. At The Old Haa of Scalloway, c.1750, the windows of the secondary rooms on the second floor are smaller than those below (figure 6); again there is a five bay frontage, arranged 1/3/1. Around 1820, the whole frontage of North Haa (West Sandwick, Yell) was refaced, in a showy arrangement of pedimented porch and flanking pavilions with Venetian and tripartite windows (figure 15). Quendale House (Lerwick), 1865, is a tall three storey town house with a formal arrangement of bipartite, tripartite and round headed windows. Smithfield (Fetlar), 1816, is typical of a number of rural Haa houses with flanking outbuildings and grounds set in a symmetrical arrangement.

Haas were sited to suit the activities of their occupiers. Those of merchants, like their Bòds, were located near harbours, sheltered voes or trading locations for the benefit of import and export. Landowners sited their houses in locations which were convenient for overseeing their estates, usually near a suitable landing place at a time when communication was principally by boat. Many of these merchants were also operators of fishing stations and their Haas were near beaches suitable for the drying and curing of fish. At Grobsness (West Mainland), eighteenth century (figure 13), the Haa is located in an elevated position at one end of the beach, where it would have commanded a view of the activities below. A number of natural beaches were 'improved' by extending the area available for drying fish with flat stones forming platforms at the head of the natural beach. The earlier Haas served as both the residence and workplace with storage or shop in the ground floor and living accommodation in the floor or floors above. As the building type developed, trade was forced out, either to outbuildings in the vicinity of the Haa, or to Bòds and stores near the landing places or beaches. Later the Haa was largely

residential although still serving a business interest in overseeing the estate. Town houses, often built in the same style as the Haa, served as a base from which to conduct business, and allowed lairds to escape from the confines of their rural existence to experience the urban sophistication of Lerwick or Scalloway. Quendale House (South Mainland), c.1800, is a tall gaunt Haa of two storeys and an attic, three bays wide (figure 14). The town house of the laird in Lerwick, again Quendale House, 1865, is grander, with a full three storeys, and has an elaborate arrangement of windows. Some of the last buildings in the Haa style are nineteenth century manses, factors' houses or farmhouses, such as The Haa, Watsness (West Mainland), nineteenth century; Maryfield, (Bressay), nineteenth century (figure 16); and Kergord House, formerly Flemington (Weisdale), 1850s. Although these houses continue to have tall Haa features, these are tempered by contemporary styling appearing from outwith Shetland.

Most Haas have been changed, extended and adapted over the years and few survive without alteration. A notable exception is the Haa of Sand (West Mainland) (figure 7) which is almost unaltered except for changes to the side wings and to the internal layout of the ground floor. All rooms on the upper floors retain their fielded timber panelling, with that in the drawing room being elaborate with arcaded sections, panelled columns and doors with shouldered architraves. Some examples of timber panelled interiors survive in other Haas and houses of the period. Gardie (Bressay) has panelling in its drawing room to the same pattern to the Haa of Sand (West Mainland) (figure 7). Other examples remain elsewhere, including the Old Haa of Brough (Burravoe, Yell) (figures 1 and 2).

The decay of many of Shetland's Haas started last century. The changing fortunes of the owners contributed to their downfall. The fishing industry changed from open boats sailing from remote beaches to larger boats concentrated at larger, fewer harbours. Lairds' fortunes changed from rural trade dependant on their tenants, to commerce increasingly centralised in Lerwick. The harsh treatment of tenants, their labour exchanged for goods in advance (the notorious truck system) is ingrained into the memories of the Shetlander, and there has in many cases been little fondness for the Haas of the former lairds. The last fifteen years has seen some saved as museums - the Böd of Gremista (Lerwick), eighteenth century; Tangwick Haa (North Mainland) seventeenth or eighteenth century; The Old Haa of Brough (Burravoe, Yell) 1672 (figure 2). Bayhall (Walls, West Mainland), c.1750, survives, converted to flats (figure 5). Some continue their lives as hotels - Burrastow House, (Walls, West Mainland), 1759 (figure 10), while the fortunes of others have reduced them to agricultural stores - Midbrake (Yell), c.1735, and a number remain as private houses. Most of the decayed Haas are past saving, as either dereliction is too far advanced, or because their location excludes them from having an economic future. A few examples are in danger of continuing decay, including the prominent and important example of the Old Haa of Scalloway, c.1750 (figure 6).

Unless stated, the illustrations are by the author

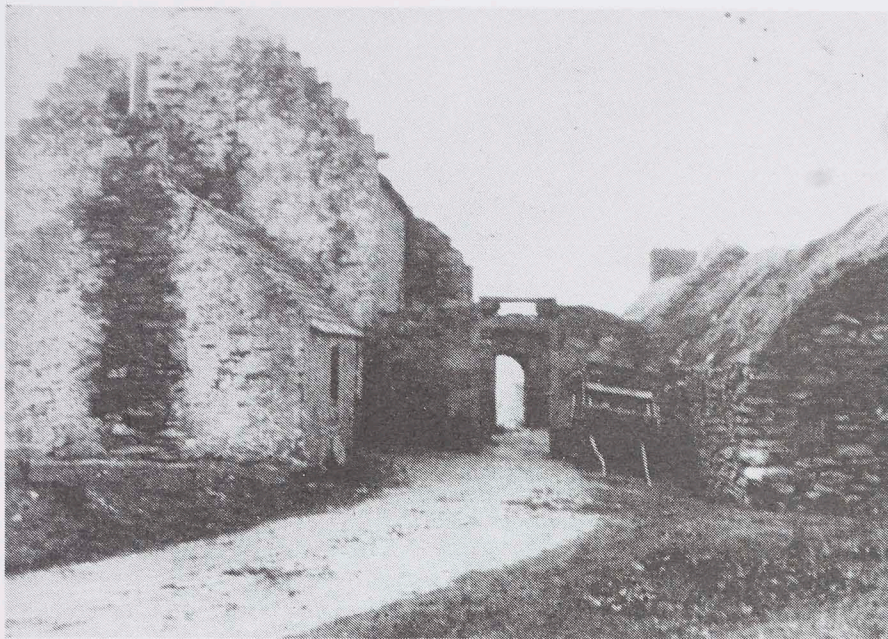


figure 1 Old Haa of Brough, Burra, Orkney. An early Haa, from 1672, of two rather low storeys, with crow-stepped gables. Built for Robert Tyrie, his initials and 1782 are on the armorial panel above the round headed arched gateway, the only remains of the former courtyard. (Photograph - Barbara Garriock)



figure 2 Old Haa of Brough, Burra, Orkney



figure 3 The Haa, Fair Isle. Eighteenth century. A small solid looking Haa with windows placed irregularly on the front elevation. The gables are crow-stepped, and the roof timbers are said to be from wrecks. The Haa was built as the factor's house by the Stewarts of Brough (Orkney), who acquired Fair Isle in 1766. A fine early Haa, probably more influenced by Orkney building traditions than by those of Shetland. (Photograph - Shetland Museum)



figure 4 10 Commercial Street, Lerwick. A town house from c.1730 built in a similar form to contemporary Haas. An early merchant's house built by Patrick Torry showing typical Haa form with crow-stepped gables

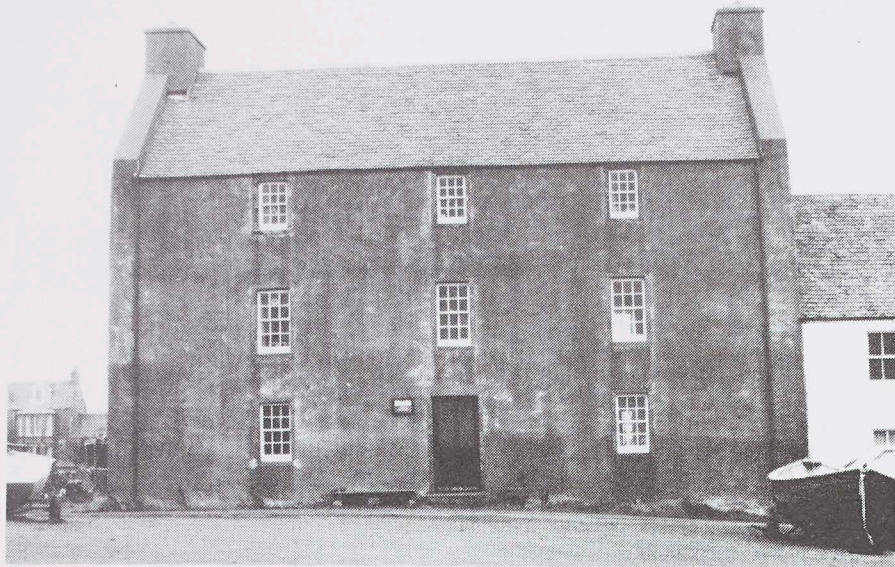


figure 5 Bayhall, Walls, West Mainland. Built c.1750, this tall three storey Haa, three bays wide, was rescued from decay, and converted into flats in 1978. Note the larger windows to the first floor principal rooms. A fine Haa from the period when the Haa reached its most developed form. Residence of the Henrys of Bayhall.

figure 6 Old Haa of Scalloway. One of Shetland's most impressive Haas, almost identical to the contemporary Haa of Sand (West Mainland) (figure 7). Three storey, five bay grouped 1/3/1. Stairs to the front not contemporary, but include dressed stone from a former gateway. Armorial panel commemorating the 1750 marriage of James Scott to Katherine Sinclair, heiress of estates in Scalloway and Burra (Houss), over entrance doorway with shouldered architrave. Converted to flats and in poor condition.

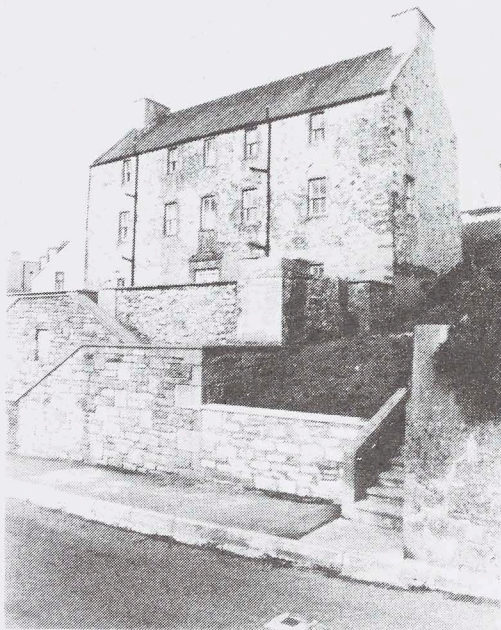
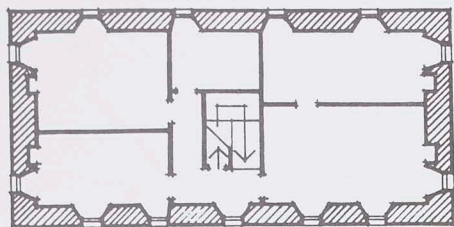
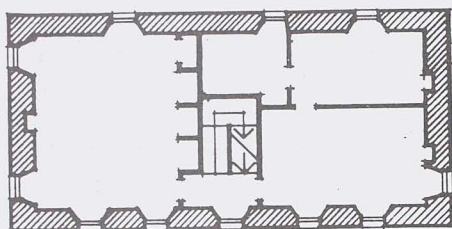




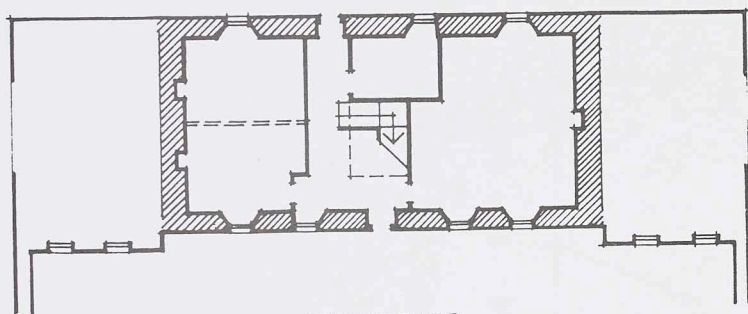
figure 7 The Haa of Sand, West Mainland. Perhaps the ultimate development of the Shetland Haa, dating from 1754. A tall three storey, five bay wide Haa. The entrance door has a shouldered architrave with an armorial panel above it. Symmetrical single storey wings at either side of the Haa (now altered) each have a ball capped apex. The principal rooms on the first floor are indicated by their large windows; smaller windows serve the second floor bedrooms. All first and second floor rooms retain their fielded panelling with arcaded panelling in the drawing room. Almost unaltered internally other than the ground floor where the staircase has been turned and the entrance hall enlarged. The Haa was built as a summerhouse by Sir Andrew Mitchell of Westshore (Scalloway) who was given leave by the Earl of Morton to remove from Scalloway Castle 'dressed freestones torn from their place to supply door and window jambs and lintels, and cornerstones for this mansion'³. Two complete doorways from the castle lead into the walled policies.



SECOND FLOOR



FIRST FLOOR



GROUND FLOOR

figure 8 The Haa of Sand, West Mainland. The drawings reproduced here show the thick walls, thin timber internal partitions and the formality of the east elevation with its flanking wings. This Haa is a remarkable survivor, having seen few alterations over the years. These plans are indicative only and not wholly accurate.

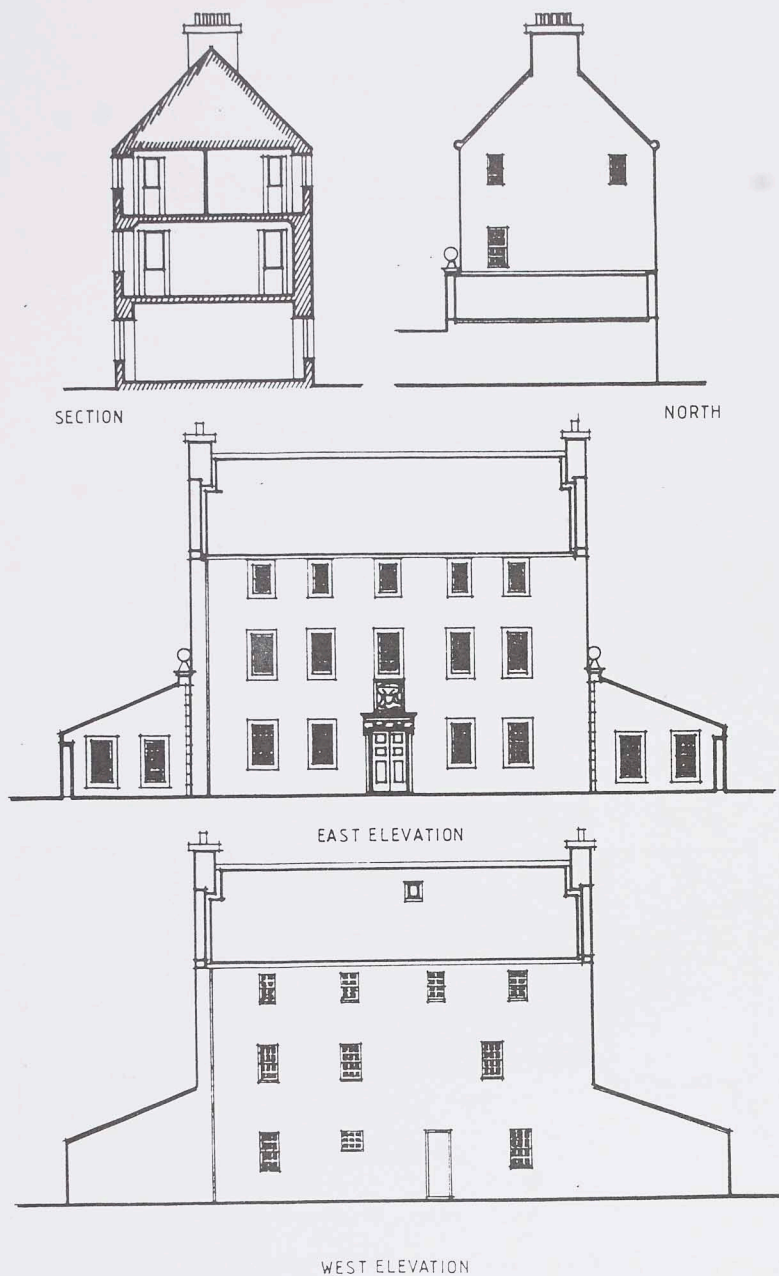


figure 9 The Haa of Sand, West Mainland (as figure 8)



figure 10 Burrastow House, Walls, West Mainland. A typical Haa, dating from 1759, and altered internally at the turn of the twentieth century. Two storeys and garret on raised basement, three bays. Note the associated booth. (Photograph - Shetland Museum)



figure 11 Bigton House, South Mainland. The main house of 1788 illustrates well the features of a substantial Haa of two storeys and prominent garret, three bays wide. Built by John Bruce who had married Clementine Stewart in 1744; his initials and the date are above the old entrance. Said to have been an extension to an earlier building. (Photograph - Shetland Museum)

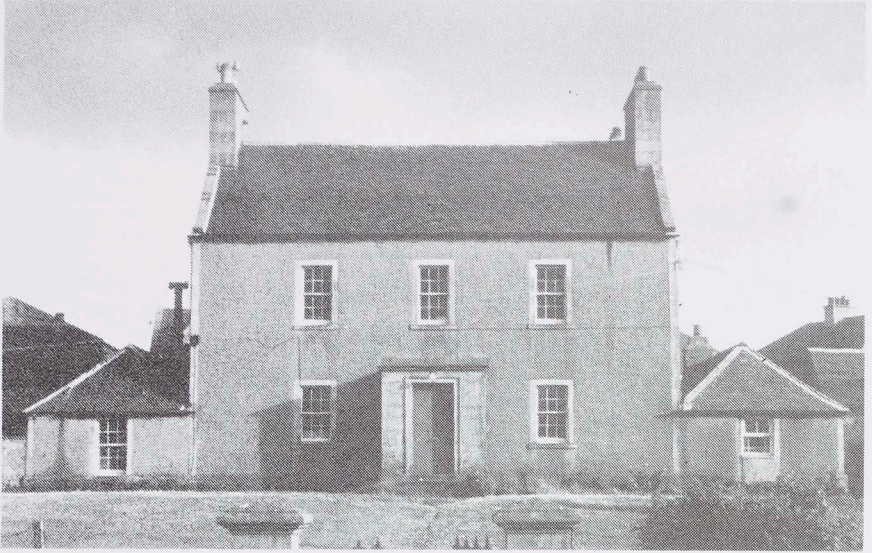


figure 12 Annsbrae House, Lerwick. A Georgian town house from 1791. Although the house has a refined classical character, Haa influences can still be seen in the proportions of the main house and in particular the distance between the upper floor windows and the eaves. (Photograph - Jim Gray)



figure 13 The Haa, Grobsness, West Mainland. Two storey and garret, three bay. A typical merchant's Haa, c. 1800, on an elevated site overlooking a former fishing station. The beach is stony and has a flat area above high water indicating its use as a fish drying beach. There are other ruinous buildings around the Haa and on the beach. The walls remain, but the roof which had stone slates, held in place by large iron nails, has collapsed. (Photograph - Shetland Museum)

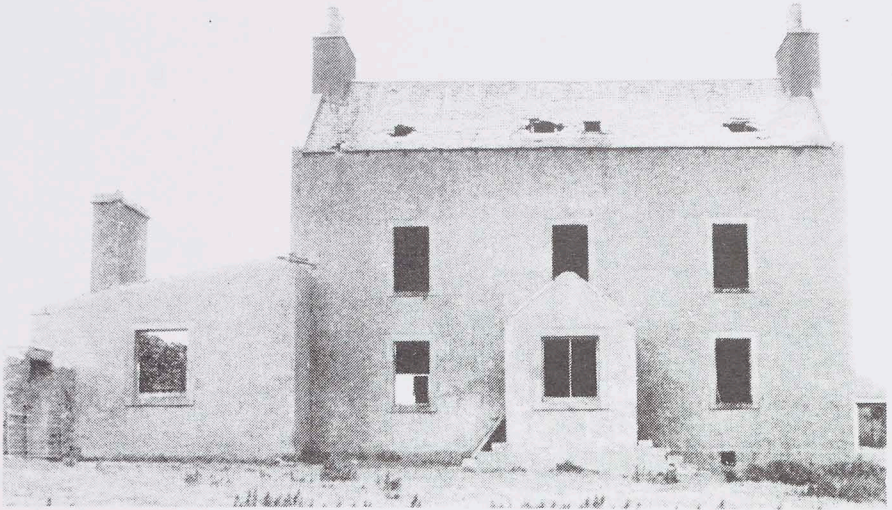


figure 14 Quendale House, South Mainland. The gaunt shell of this Haa remains, dating from c.1800. Two storey and garret, three bays. Typical later Haa. Seat of the Griersons of Quendale, successors to the Sinclairs.

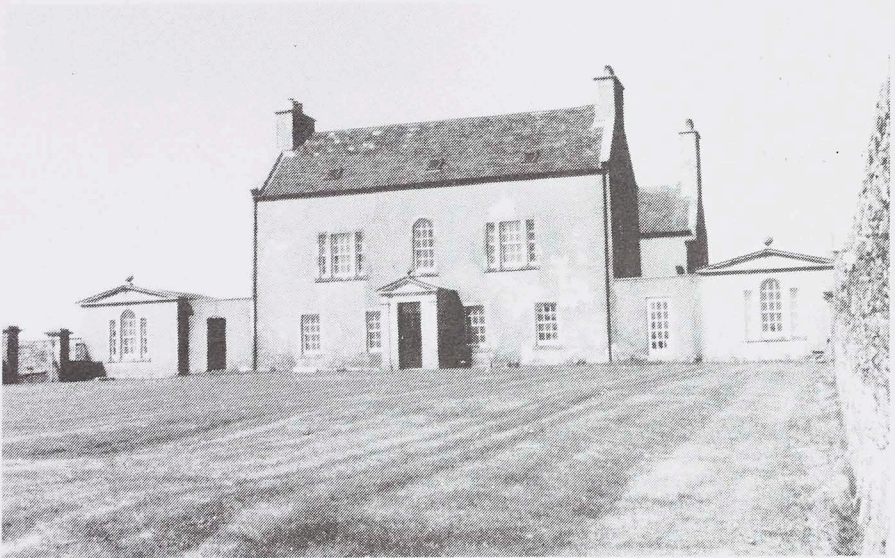


figure 15 North Haa, West Sandwick, Yell. The classical features on the frontage of this large double pile Haa date from a remodelling in 1829. The Haa itself is said to date from the seventeenth century with the front block added c.1770. The four smaller windows on the ground floor indicate that this was probably a five bay wide Haa before the remodelling.



figure 16 Maryfield House, Bressay. L-plan. Two storeys, three bays. Late Haa form. Built by the Garth Estate factor, Walker, brought in to improve the land in the 1860s and 1870s, and dating from this period. Note the associated boathouse.

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1. John J. Graham, *The Shetland Dictionary*, Stornoway, 1979, p.33.
2. Graham, 1979, p.7.
3. *The New Statistical Account*, XV, Edinburgh, 1841, p.115.

BELMONT HOUSE

Mike Finnie and Alastair Hamilton

The 1997 conference of SVBWG will be held in Shetland, and one of the buildings to be visited is Belmont House on Unst. Mike Finnie and Alastair Hamilton outline here the history of this ambitious building, which is in urgent need of restoration.

At the south end of Unst, Shetland's northernmost island, stands Belmont House. It is the first large building the traveller comes to in Unst and currently presents a sad spectacle of advanced decay.

In the late eighteenth century, a young man called Thomas Mouat, son of the laird of the Garth estate, decided that the time had come to build a mansion on Unst which would be equal in architectural quality if not in size to the most fashionable houses being constructed elsewhere in Scotland. He toured the Lothians, visiting and viewing examples of contemporary design. In 1777 he completed Belmont House, which was to remain the family home until the mid-twentieth century.

The small classical house consists of two storeys and an attic, and is three bays wide. The main block is connected by quadrant walls to small pyramid roofed pavilions advanced from the main block. On axis with the house, former grounds and a roadway lead to the sea where there would have been a Böd (a booth either for domestic use in connection with the owner's boat, or for trade). The central door of the house has a console cornice, and over this on the first floor is a Venetian window. Above this again at the attic level, is an open pediment containing a small arched niche. The quality of design in these elements is high and particularly remarkable in the Shetland context.

The house is arguably the most ambitious house in the northern isles, and even today, in decay, remains a fine building. In 1972 it was sold to an Edinburgh architect on the understanding that it would be fully restored, but his intentions were to be unfulfilled. The building today presents a sad spectacle. The roof was badly damaged in a great storm in 1993 (the same storm which wrecked the Braer). There are now ominous cracks in the stonework suggesting that the facade may be slowly detaching itself from the rest of the building. This risk is exacerbated by the rotting of the first floor joist ends so that the front and back walls are no longer securely connected. Some elements such as the skews are damaged or missing. There is now well founded concern that unless repairs can be carried out the building will simply collapse.

Fortunately, other elements of the building have survived; the interior is almost entirely original and includes a fine staircase and panelling, all largely intact. With the exception of a small Victorian extension to the east, the form of the building is just as Mouat created it.

Although urgent repairs are needed, these would only make sense as part of an overall restoration. Unst is a small island with a fragile population of under one

thousand, and there is no local market for a house such as Belmont House. A charitable trust - The Belmont Trust - has therefore been formed to carry forward the restoration project. It is likely that the restoration will be phased over a number of years starting with emergency repairs, and eventually resulting in complete restoration, including landscaped grounds.

Belmont House, when fully restored, will take its place in the heritage of Unst, of Shetland, and indeed of Scotland. Alongside Unst's architectural treasure trove of prehistoric, Viking and more recent buildings, it will complete a tapestry on which the settlement of man in the island will be recorded for us and for generations to come. This range of architectural and archaeological interest will help the island, whose economy is uncertain, to attract visitors and create income and employment. Whilst the final use of the house cannot be determined, it will certainly be open to the public on a regular basis so that as many visitors as possible can read this chapter in Unst's social and economic history.

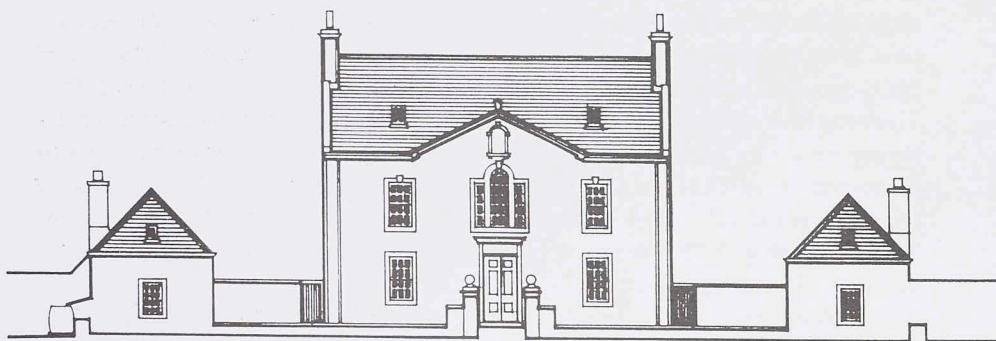


figure 1 Drawing of proposed front elevation of Belmont House

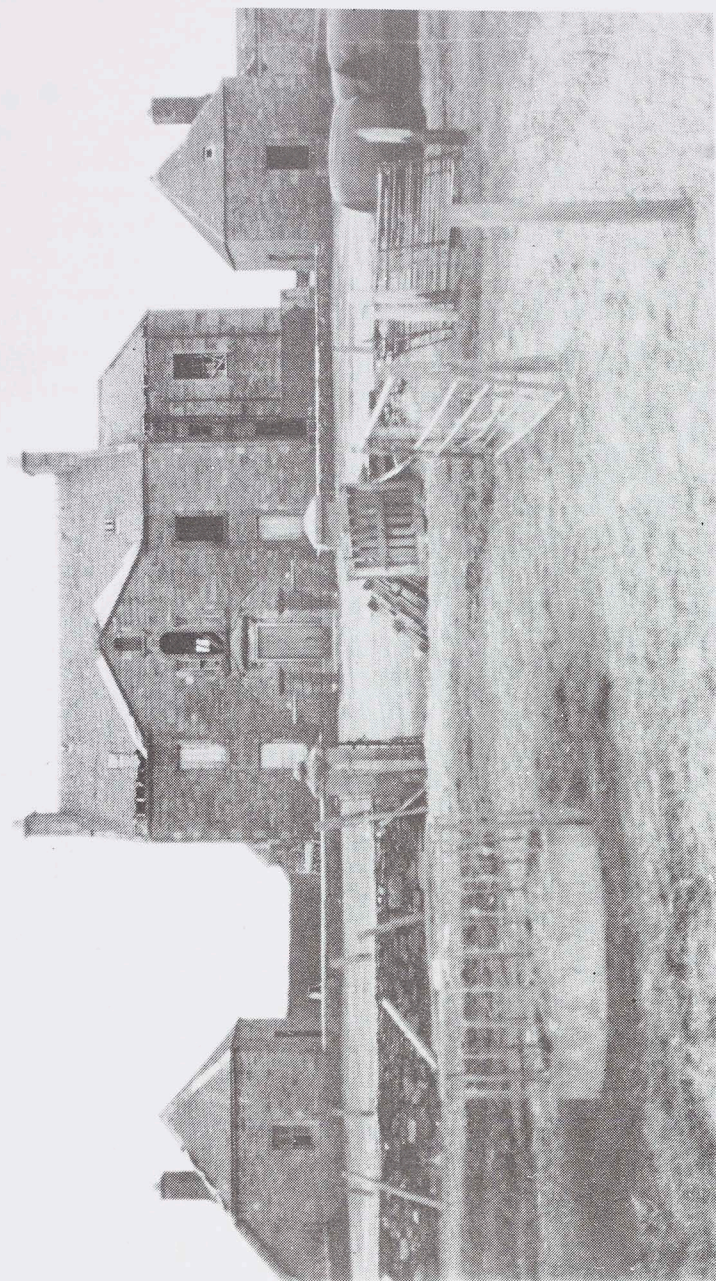


figure 2 Belmont House

MUDSTONE SLATES IN EARLY MODERN STIRLING

John G. Harrison

Two papers presented at the SVBWG meeting in Dundee in November 1994 covered the quarrying and use of Carmylie slates and pavement¹. The afternoon visits gave opportunities to see the slates in use. Unlike conventional slates, these are sedimentary rocks, an inch or more thick. When used for roofing in Angus and elsewhere, they were not nailed to sarking but hung by a wooden pin from a slating rod. The presentations encouraged me to re-examine the evidence for the use of a similar stone in seventeenth and early eighteenth century Stirling.

Stirling records use two words to describe slates - *sclaits* and *scailyie*. Although they were sometimes used on the same building, presumably on different sections of roof, they are carefully differentiated, as in the account submitted to Spittal's Hospital for:

upholding the heal slate and skalzie work belonging to the said Hospitall
and furnishing sclates nails pins Lime sand and other necessars².

The artisans who used them were all called 'sclaters' though some may have specialised in one or other material until about the middle of the seventeenth century³. *Scailyie* are sometimes specifically called 'blue scailyie' and are clearly conventional slates of the Highland Boundary Series from the Aberfoyle area, such as '90 blew sclaiillie' bought for Spittal's Hospital in 1664-65 or blue scailyie bought for the town from Duchray in 1702⁴. These were secured with 'scailyie nails'. *Sclaits* are often described as 'gray sclaits' and when diagnostic information is given it suggests that they are of the anomalous type, usually secured by 'pins'.

Most of the slates purchased for the primary building of Cowane's Hospital in the 1630s and 1640s were *scailyie*, nailed to sarking. However, when the overseer for the building was in Perth on other business he took the opportunity to purchase 3000 *sclaits*, which were shipped to Stirling and stored in the workman's ludge. Later, two lots totalling 4000 '*sclaitts*' were bought in Dundee, transported to Alloa and again delivered at the shore⁵. Probably these entries refer to Carmylie slates, but local sources of *sclait* were more often tapped.

In 1642-43, 500 '*sclaitts*' were bought from Kippenross for Cowane's Hospital and further supplies of 'gray *sclaitt*' came 'fra kippenross' for the town in 1665-66. In 1675-76 two consecutive entries in the town accounts read

Item for 300 gray sklait to the scholl carried fra kippenross £11 8s Item
for 600 timber pins at 4s per cent £1 4s.

By chance a receipt given by William Pearson, servitor to the laird of Kippenross for payment of £6 for 300 'gray sclates' supplied for Cowane's House in the same year also survives, suggesting that transport almost doubled the cost of sclates from Kippenross⁶.

By a contract drawn up in 1609, David Anderson, slater, undertook that when the walls and sarking of Robert Erskine's house were complete he would roof it

with sclait upon both the sides[...]and[...]sall win the said sclaitt & furnes & mak pinnis requisite thereto providing In ye meane time that the said Robert caus Inbring the sclaitt & furnes timber to be pinnis⁷.

Royal works in Stirling also used sclaits. In 1617, payment was made for 4500 gray sclaits from Dundee whilst in 1625 Alexander Jack was paid for 750 'sclait pines at ii merk the thowsand'. In 1628-29 Jack supplied 791 'gray sklait' at £30 per thousand with a thousand 'sklait pinnes' costing 30s⁸.

The use of timber pins is further confirmed by two later reports. The first, probably by the knowledgeable Baillie Ronald, describes the unroofing of 'Queen Mary's Palace' (now known as Cowanes Hospital of various dates of build from the mid-sixteenth to the late seventeenth centuries):

The slates on the roof had been fastened on, not with iron nails but with wooden pegs which came through to the inside to the extent of from one inch to two and a half inches⁹.

Fleming says of the Coffee House (probably a seventeenth century building) that the 'original roof was oak, with oak pins holding the slates'¹⁰. Ronald's word would have been more reliable than Fleming's on this interesting question of the species of timber preferred for slate pins, discussed at Dundee. The first of these reports with the building contract and the case of Cowane's Hospital all suggest that in Stirling, sclaits might have been laid over sarking, not hung from slating rods, which are never mentioned or implied.

Although they were usually fixed with pins, there are also records of sklait nails which are comparable in price with iron nails, whilst pins are much cheaper. In 1675, for example, the town paid for '200 sklaits to the burrow milne', for 150 'sklait nailes' which cost £1 and for 150 'pines which cost only 6s. An account submitted in 1716 mentions supplies of gray sklaits, skailie, skailie nails and 'gray skleat nails' which cost 2s 6d for 25, compared with 1s 6d for 25 'skailie nails'¹¹.

Storm damage to Cowane's Hospital in early 1714 was repaired with 4500 skailie but the slater's account also includes:

for two several tymes ledring off the Hospital and tiring off the gray sklaits and geathering off them through the brea five men of us the most part of two days...£4¹².

So the sclaits were ripped off and thrown down the steep brae behind the Hospital but then gathered up for reuse.

Price comparisons are difficult. In the early seventeenth century the Master of Works usually paid 53s 4d per hundred for scailie for the royal works in Stirling and £3 per hundred for 'gray sclaits' which are sometimes said to be 'great gray sclaits'. Were sclaits always larger? In any case, the pins were considerably cheaper than nails and it is impossible to compare the costs of putting the slates on, and later maintenance. Accounts do not give comparable information and in one case what seems to be a sharp price differential is partly explained by the use of free transport in one case and not the other¹³. If scailie eclipsed sclaits because they were cheaper and better, why were sclaits used at all? Were they only used when scailie were not available? Supply difficulties are suggested by the purchases of odd batches from Dundee and Perth, and were a problem with other building materials¹⁴.

Enquiries amongst well-informed local historians, slaters and builders have failed to elicit any memory of the use of sclaits for roofing in the Stirling area. Ronald and Fleming thought the pins noteworthy over a century ago, suggesting that they were already rare.

Apart from Perth and Dundee, the main source at Kippenross is close to the quarry at Gallowhill, between Bridge of Allan and Dunblane (NS782988). 'The strata here consist of massive grey or purplish-grey sandstones, with mudstone bands'¹⁵. There are further exposures of these strata from Bridge of Allan almost to Kippenross House, and another exposure at NN783003, adjacent to a quarry apparently worked for sandstone¹⁶. Another possible quarry was located just south of Old Kippenross (NS784995) and shards of mudstone were found on the surface throughout the southern part of the policies on both sides of the River Allan. Thin gray mudstones are common in buildings and field dykes eastwards to Sunnyley and Pendreich, and northwards to the Sheriffmuir. They have been a principal building material of the undated 'fort' (NS784984).

Acknowledgements

I am grateful of Margaret King who kindly interrupted her breakfast at the Rothesay Conference to examine a sample of 'gray sclait' from a field dyke in the Kippenross area and confirmed its similarity to Carmylie slate. Mrs S. Stirling-Aird participated enthusiastically in a search of the Kippenross policies. My thanks are again due to the staff of Stirling Archives, and to Mr Cameron, Mr Young, Bob McCutcheon and Archie McKerracher for their interest and assistance.



Mudstone slaits in a field dyke at Gallowhill, Lecropt (NS783984).

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2. Stirling Archives (hereafter SA) Vouchers of Accounts of Cowane's Hospital, SB5/6/32 'Account and receipt by John Steill slater'. Spellings are very variable, particularly for sclaiylie; where 'z' is used in this paper, it corresponds to the obsolete seventeenth century letter 'yogh', sounded like a 'y', so 'scaillyie' and 'skailzie' are identical.
3. Accounts of the Master of Works II 1616-1649, *passim* for recurrent association between 'Alexander Jack' and the quarrying and use of slaits.
4. SA Accounts of Spital's Hospital, SB6/3/1a f 194v; SA Stirling Burgh Treasurer's Accounts B66/23/1, unfoliated, discharge 1702-1703.
5. SA, Accounts of Cowane's Hospital, SB5/3/1, unfoliated, discharge 1638-1639, 1640-1641, 1641-1642.
6. SA, Accounts of Cowane's Hospital, SB5/3/1, discharge 1642-1643. Scottish Record Office (hereafter SRO) Stirling Burgh Treasurer's Accounts E82/55/5, f 34r; *ibid.* f 103v. SA Vouchers of Cowane's Hospital Accounts. SB5/6/10 'receipt for 300 gray sclates'. All sums of money are in £s Scots, £1 Scots was worth one twelfth £1 Sterling.
7. SA Stirling Burgh Court Book, B66/16/2 f 86.
8. Master of Works Accounts II pp.443, 163, 232.
9. *Stirling Observer*, July 5 1877, p.4, col. 6.
10. J.S. Fleming, *Old Ludgings of Stirling*, Stirling, 1897, p.42.

11. SRO, E82/55/5 f.34r. ibid. f. 103r. SA Vouchers of Cowane's Hospital Accounts, SB5/6/44, 'Ane acomptt off uork and ffurnishing to Couans Hospitell being imployed buy James Gibe present Maister bay me Adam Jack'.
12. Vouchers of Cowane's Hospital Accounts, SB5/6/45 'Accompt of the reparation of the roof of the hospital hous in July 1714'.
13. Master of Works Accounts vol. II passim. SA, Accounts of Spittal's Hospital, SB6/3/1a, f43r.
14. John G. Harrison, 'Lime Supply in the Stirling Area from the Fourteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries', *Forth Naturalist and Historian*, 16, (1993), pp.83-89, (pp.86-7).
15. *The Geology of the Stirling District*, ed. by E.H. Francis and W.A. Read, Edinburgh, 1970, p.73.
16. Francis and Read, p.73.

THE GRANARY, PORTSOY, BANFFSHIRE

Elizabeth Beaton

A communication from John Adam, a member of the illustrious Adam family of architects, belongs at first sight to the field of architectural history rather than of vernacular building¹. But, when the vernacular embraces traditional buildings besides building traditions, the boundary blurs. Adam's involvement was with an estate granary (figure 1) at Portsoy on the Banffshire coast, almost certainly that now known as Lord Findlater's Corf House². The following letter was written in 1765 by John Adam to the Earl of Findlater and Seafield, Cullen, Banffshire about his proposed harbourside storehouse.

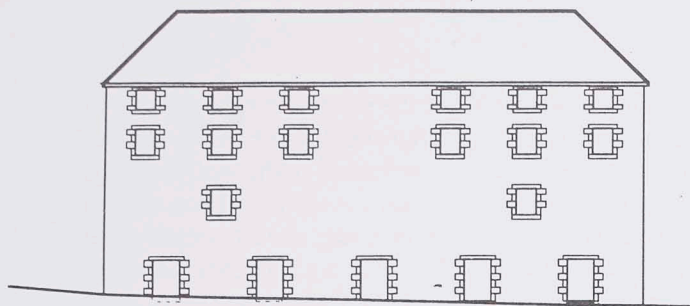
My Lord

I have the honour of your Loss³ of this date, and would wait upon your Loss to give the answer. But as I must go to Fife tomorrow morning early by appointment, I hope you will accept this manner of returning an answer.

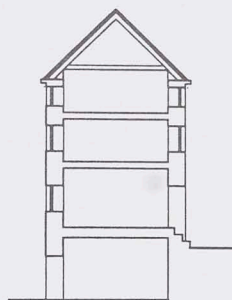
As to the Cellars under the granary, I do not imagine they would be advisable in point of expence, as well as convenience. To make them answer in point of convenience, they should be sunk under the level of the Ground. But then the expence of digging out the Rock would far exceed what would be got for them: And I am afraid they would be liable to underwater. And if they were kept totally above ground, it would raise the Granary higher than one would wish in point of convenience. As to dampness arising from the Ground to the meall Girnells, I do not think there can be much danger from that, especially as the floor is proposed (if I remember right) to be raised about 2 feet above the level of the Ground, which should be filled up with Lyme riddlings or such dry Rubbish, under the flagging as Pavement. And that I think would effectually prevent any danger. Indeed I do not see from whence damp is to come, except from the high ground behind the House; But I would propose that it should be cut down, as the distance of 2 or 2 1/2 feet from the Back Wall, and some deeper than the level of the floor, so as to serve for a Drain and it should be made with a good descent if possible to both ends that the rains, or what weeps from the rock, may run easily.

I should not imagine that at the width drawn, there would be any need for posts under the Center of the Joisting. If it shall be thought necessary to make the Granary wider, then Posts would be very proper. But I kept it narrow both to save putting down much of the Rock behind and a wide span of the roof. For these reasons I should think it improper to increase the width, unless it shall be found upon further examination that the Rock will admit it without much trouble. No doubt the width may be increased a little without much addition to the expence. But if it was to any degree, the Charge would be very considerably augmented.

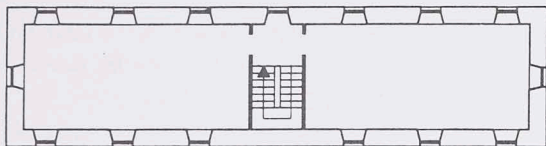
I have the honour to be with the greatest Respect and Esteem



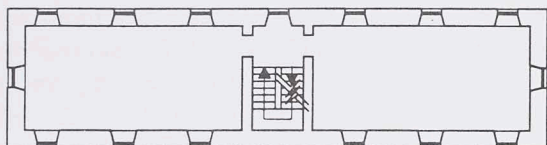
South East Elevation



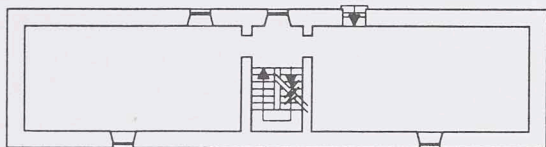
Section



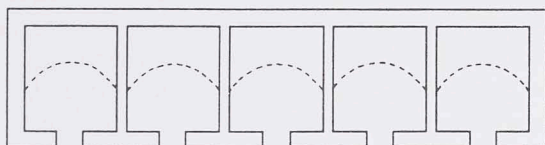
Third Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan

**THE GRANARY,
SHOREHEAD,
PORTSOY.
(Lord Findlater's Corf House).**



figure 1 The Granary, (Lord Findlater's Corf House), Portsoy

My Lord

Your Lordship's

Most faithfull and obedient Hum. servn.

John Adam

North Merchiston

19 May 1765

*The Earl of Findlater and Seafield*⁴

Girnals (Scots), estate granaries/warehouses/stores were secure repositories for grain, meal and other commodities received by landlords as rent in kind, the accepted method of agricultural rental until the end of the eighteenth century. Most surviving examples in northern Scotland date from the eighteenth century, but there is a late seventeenth century store at Portmahomack, on the Easter Ross coast, the property of George MacKenzie, Lord Tarbat, first Earl of Cromarty. Though utilitarian in appearance and function, girnals were important within the hierarchy of estate buildings. They were usually sited on the coast to store goods pending export by sea to markets at home or abroad in order to realise cash. Until roads and bridges (and later the railway network) were developed during the nineteenth century, marine transport was paramount. John Adam, however, when referring to the meall Girnells in the granary at Portsoy seems to indicate storage on the upper floors above any 'dampness arising from the Ground', where generous ventilation made these spaces suitable for grain and meal storage⁵.

Portsoy, between Banff and Buckie on the Banffshire coast, belonged to the Ogilvie (later Ogilvie Grant) Earls of Findlater and Seafield, substantial landowners in Banffshire and Moray with the family seat in Cullen. There is little natural shelter on this bold and rocky coast⁶. Exceptionally, however, at Portsoy there was a safe harbour and bullwork by 1701⁷. The old harbour is a small square basin bounded by the quayside of Shorehead on two sides, and enclosed by piers to the east and north, exploiting the natural shelter of the high ground of Doonie (Downie) Point and protected eastwards by the rocky promontory of Craig Duff (figure 2). Variations in the masonry indicate different construction periods; the wavy line of the harbour in the feuing plan of 1802 (figure 3), contrasting with the firm outline of the piers, suggests exploitation of the rocky shoreline rather than the present regular, vertical rubble masonry harbour wall. However, this walling was probably constructed soon after Robert Johnston had prepared his plan in 1802.

Eighteenth century merchant houses in Portsoy testify to a prosperous mercantile community. Besides farm produce from the hinterland, particularly

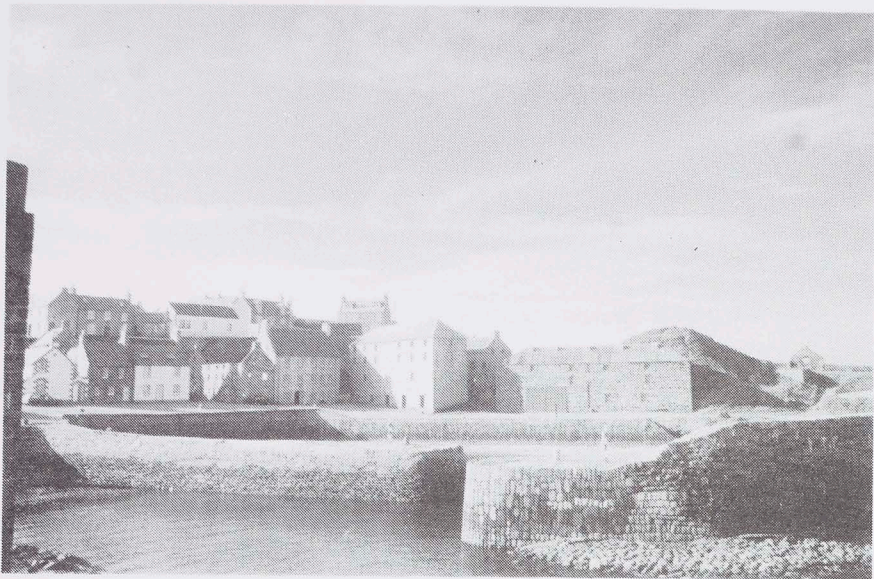


figure 2 Old Harbour and Shorehead, Portsoy. Lord Findlater's Corf House is in the centre of the harbourside group.

grain, flax was grown and there were bleach fields in the village. By 1842 there were eight vessels belonging to the port of Portsoy, and

.... eight to ten foreign vessels, chiefly from different parts of the Baltic, annually visit this port, bringing with them bones and taking cargoes of herring in return. Besides the export of herrings, grain is also frequently shipped to a large amount⁸.

Less obvious exports were artifacts made from Portsoy Marble, a red or green serpentine 'quarried in the ordinary manner, and manufactured into chimney pieces, funeral-monuments, tea-cups, sun-dials etc ...'; much of the marble was exported to France⁹.

The 1802 feuing plan reveals ground plans of long rectangular or L-shaped buildings crowded by the quayside, some of which are known to be warehouses; others can be assumed to have served that role. There is a post-1802 pencilled rectangle probably indicating another storehouse; subsequent conversion to, or replacement by, housing may disguise others. In 1996, four warehouses survive, forming a most remarkable group - perhaps the most remarkable group of eighteenth century harbourside storehouses in Scotland¹⁰. The salmon house (figure 3, feu no. 83) has gone, superseded in 1834 by a new building east of the

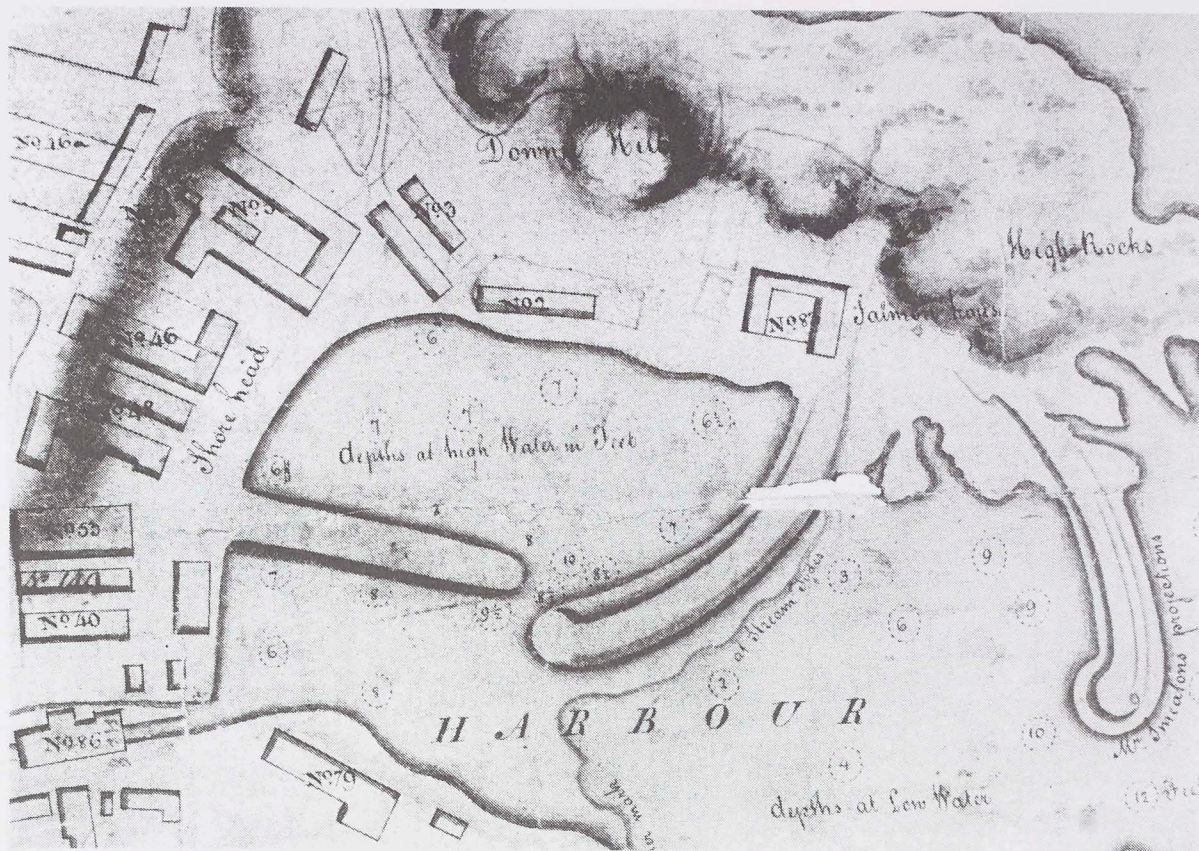


figure 3 Feuing plan of Portsoy by Robert Johnston, Land Surveyor, 1802. SRO RHP12889. Reproduced by permission of Scottish Record Office.

old harbour overlooking Aird Bay. Another in the group is 10 Shorehead (figure 3, feu no. 5) dated 1726, a handsome domestic looking L-plan range abutting the cliff backing the harbour area and at right angles to the Corf House. This combined the role of superior merchant housing with granary and storage facilities.

From its description, proportions and elegant arrangement of fenestration, the granary assumed to be by John Adam is the long, narrow building set at an angle between those bearing the feu nos. 2, 3 and 5 (figure 3). The dimensions of 81 feet, six inches by 21 feet could only be accommodated on the prime quayside site if angled, this angle aligning the front elevation to the main eastern approach along Shorehead. The site now slopes markedly, giving the impression of a running level to the base of the building. This slope, however, is largely caused by the raising and re-surfacing of the quayside above, and masking the door cills at the upper (left) end of the building. One and two steps respectively to the extreme right-hand doorways suggest that a shallow slope had to be accommodated by the builders. Between these doorways a large rock, probably original to the foreshore, has been built into the foundation.

Though now called Lord Findlater's Corf House, the association with the salmon industry is obscure. Until the turn of the nineteenth century, salmon were salted and packed in barrels, and these may have been stored in the lower part of the building pending export¹¹. It would have been practicable to roll barrels into the ground floor storage space and equally practicable to roll them out again to waiting boats. The ventilated upper floors reached from the rear and by an internal staircase would have been awkward, more suitable for sacks of grain and other more portable commodities.

The vaulted ground floor stores are built against higher ground at the back and have no light other than that entering when the doors are open. Interestingly, the vaulting (figure 1) is in brickwork, the bricks perhaps from Blackpots, a few miles east¹². Access to the well-lit upper floors is at the rear at first floor height, from the high ground behind the building. If some of this high ground was cut away 2 or 2 1/2 feet from the back wall for drainage, it has been carefully infilled as a soak-away and surfaces to facilitate water run-off¹³.

The doorway and fenestration pattern of this granary sets it apart from its neighbours. The ground floor entrances are wide and low with long/short dressed freestone margins set in sneck harled rubble walling. The ground floor masonry in the front elevation differs slightly from the rest of the building, for which there is no known reason; one could suggest either reuse of rubble excavated for foundations and the vaulted ground floor, a gap in the construction period or even reuse of an earlier building¹⁴. Reuse seems unlikely, for there is no such mention in Adam's letter quoted above. The entrances are closed with heavy wooden doors; two are now sympathetically arranged as recessed shop windows with the original doors converted as shutters.

The symmetrical fenestration, consisting of small square lights which originally closed with louvred wooden shutters, is unusually attractive. Two

windows light the first floor on the front elevation, but at second and third floor level, they are grouped in threes. To the rear there is an off-centre door (and a second later door, not marked on the plan) giving access to the staircase and upper floors well lit and ventilated with seven windows serving the second and third floors. Louvred shutters have been replaced throughout with single panes set in wooden frames. The regularity and elegance of the fenestration pattern set this building stylistically apart from its more vernacular neighbours. For example, the mid-eighteenth century building at the rear, now the Portsoy Marble Workshop (figure 3, feu no. 3) displays local building characteristics. Of these, the wallhead chimney stack with deep moulded cope on the long west elevation is pertinent; such wallhead stacks are evident on the street elevations of contemporary housing in Portsoy and Banff¹⁵. Hearths and chimneys were not uncommon in storehouses, indicating accommodation for the owner or a resident custodian.

The 1802 feuing plan reveals the rectangular ground plans of two buildings without feuing numbers, that to which this paper is devoted, and another at the rear. The absence of feuing references indicates that these two were the property of Lord Seafield, for which he would pay no feu duty to himself. That to the rear, now demolished, suggests a former warehouse; it appears the slightly wider and shorter of the two. Without evidence to the contrary, it seems safe to assume that Lord Findlater's Corf House, however misleading the current name, is the granary at Portsoy designed by John Adam in 1765.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Rt Hon The Earl of Seafield for permission to publish from the Seafield Papers held in the Scottish Record Office, SRO GD248/344 and RHP122889. Tom Burnett-Stuart has been endlessly patient and helpful with my enquiries about Lord Findlater's Corf House, where he has revived the 'Portsoy Marble' industry. His drawings of the building (c.1970) have been prepared for publication by Louise Crossman and Mike Jones.

References

1. John Adam (1721-92), eldest son of William Adam and his wife Mary Robertson. John, like his father before him, carried out commissions for Lord Seafield. See Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*, 3rd edn, London, 1995, pp.49-51, pp.62-66.
2. Corf, Corff or Corfe House - Salmon House (Scots). The building now accommodates a shop and pottery.
3. Lordship
4. SRO GD248/344.
5. For girnals in Ross-shire, see Elizabeth Beaton 'Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Girnals in Easter Ross and South-East Sutherland' in John Baldwin (ed.), *Firthlands of Ross and Sutherland*, Edinburgh, 1986, pp.133-51.
6. *The New Statistical Account*, XIII, Edinburgh, 1845, p.179.

7. The harbour is said to date from 1692. See John R. Hume, *The Industrial Archaeology of Scotland* ii, London, 1977, p.174; W. McFarlane *Geographical Collections Relating to Scotland*, ed. by A. Mitchell and J.T. Clark, 3 vols, Scottish History Society, Edinburgh, 1906, I, p.73; Ian Hustwick, *Moray Firth, Ships and Trade during the Nineteenth Century*, Aberdeen, 1994, p.26.

8. NSA, XIII, 1845, p.191.

9. *The Statistical Account (1790-1)*, ed. by Donald J. Withrington and Ian R. Grant, East Ardsley, rev. edn. 1982, XVI, p.147.

10. Feu nos 3, 4, 54 and the un-numbered Corf House designated on figure 3.

11. Within living memory there was a salt house by the Old Harbour, possibly part of the old salmon house later utilised as a salt store for herring fishing. Commercial salmon fishing with cruives (osier traps), stake-nets or hand-nets, was historically a considerable source of wealth in north-east and northern Scotland. Waters were sometimes worked and fished commercially by the owners or let as fishings to specialist firms, such as Messrs. Hogarth and Co. of Aberdeen, who rented the Portsoy fishings in the mid-nineteenth century (ex. info. Mr Pirie, Portsoy). Like herring in the nineteenth century, until about 1800 salmon were salted and packed in barrels for export; from the early nineteenth century the flesh was parboiled in brine and packed in ice stored in subterranean icehouses for export to urban markets. The rocky nature of the Doonie Hill/Old Harbour site makes it unlikely that an icehouse could be excavated under or close to this building. This and the need for a boiling house must account for the new salmon house built further east in 1834, with two semi-subterranean icehouses.

12. Blackpots Brick and Tile Works, Whitehills, about six miles east of Portsoy, were established commercially c.1785. However, small scale brick making was probably carried out earlier.

13. Pers. comm. Tom Burnett-Stuart.

14. The suggestion that material from excavations was reused in the ground floor walling is from Tom Burnett-Stuart, who also informs me that the majority of the stone used in the building came from a quarry at Boyne Bay, between Portsoy and Whitehills.

15. See nos 5-7 North High Street, Portsoy and nos 29-31 High Street, Banff.

SUTHERLAND: TWO CRUCK HOUSES 1965-66

James Hardie

The following article is based on a study made by James Hardie in 1965-66 when he was the Research Officer of Sutherland Education Committee. He places his observations of two cruck-framed houses, one at Stoer, the other at Slettil, within the greater context of a study of this traditional method of construction, using conversations with older members of local communities and information gathered from his own experience. As an account of cruck building in Sutherland it is most significant, because Sutherland, though providing cruck evidence in the form of wall slots, has not produced as much complete surviving construction as one may have expected.

STOER (NC041304)

The house and byre are built in a longhouse pattern running roughly north-east to south-west on a fairly extensive flood plain, beside Loch Neil Bhan (figure 1). The house is at the far end of Eilean Tigh, 210 Clashmore, Stoer. In 1965 all outbuildings had collapsed and the dwelling was disintegrating. The 1875 six inch Ordnance Survey map shows the building with two fields. The site has a good



figure 1 Stoer house

sunny exposure with silty soil while there are extensive reed beds in the loch. The last occupant died in 1955; the dwelling was cleared of easily removed goods, all else being abandoned.

SLETTIL (NC632624)

The last occupant of this house also died in 1955, when all useful and moveable items were removed. The clachan was originally of about six houses. In 1965 some of the structures were ruinous with collapsed walls and a few original timbers evident. Only two houses remained in recognisable shape, one on a prominent knoll with walls, gables, chimney breasts and one set of crucks still standing, the second being largely intact, though decaying, and with some items of furniture. This study is concerned with the latter (figure 2). It stands by a hill loch with a burn flowing north down hill slopes, across a small elongated flood plain to the steeply shelving stony beach. Some drystone revetments guard the banks of the burn against erosion. The landward margins of the flood plain rise to hillsides of heather and rough grazing. The house was sheltered from westerly gales by being close to the rising land.

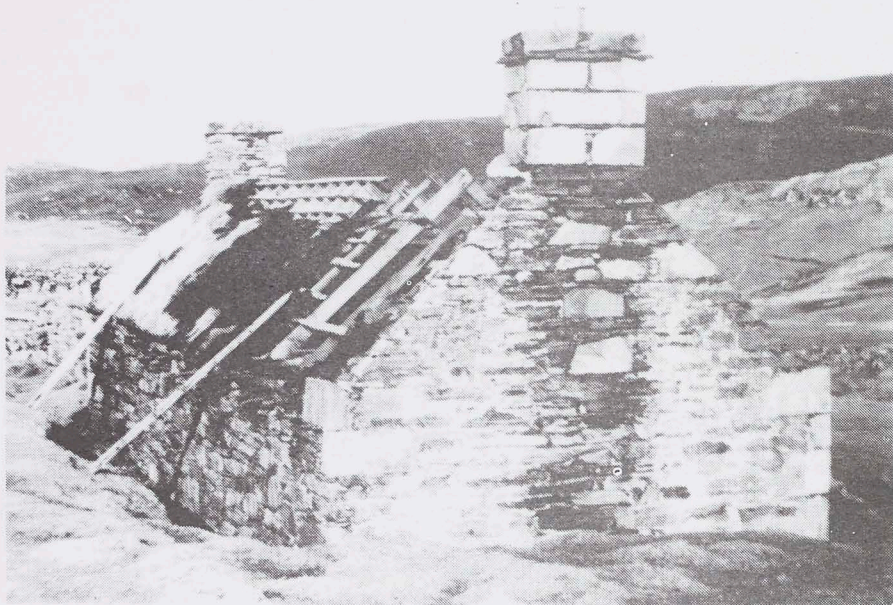


figure 2 Slettill house, showing modern roof trussing and skylight introduced above granary

CRUCK CONSTRUCTION (based on conversations with elderly residents of Sutherland)

SITE - A suitable site would be a reasonably level portion of ground with water close at hand. The heather and turf were carefully skinned off and set to one

side for later use in thatching. The exposed surface was then levelled, with soil and stones cast aside separately from the turf. Figure 2 shows grassy hummocks behind a building, presumably from the earthen spoil and levelling. The standard house size was 30 feet by 15 feet, with any byre and barn usually being in line with the house axis and extending from a gable, to form a longhouse type dwelling. The byre was always divided from the dwelling by a solid gable without a doorway. Neither house gave any indication of a garden; arable ground in Sutherland was a scarce commodity required for grazing and crop production.

MATERIALS - Stone is plentiful in Sutherland, but building timber is not, so the search for roofing timber was a priority. An eighty year old Sutherland crofter described the process. A sunny, frosty day was necessary. Three men would go to the moors with a long iron rod and spades. The aim was to find long-fallen pine timbers, buried under the peat. The turpentine from the wood soaks up to the surface of the ground. This turpentine would not freeze, so shows as dark shadows against white hoar frost among deer grass and mosses. Heather was not a suitable ground cover as it hid the shadows. The shadows indicated the length and shape of the timber while the iron rod was used to determine the depth. Those that lay too deep would be abandoned, but timbers lying close to the surface would be dug up. The weather conditions required for this process indicated that house building in crofting regions could have been a post-harvest activity when communal labour was available¹.

CONSTRUCTION - The sloping members of the cruck were formed from suitable timbers approximately 6 inches in diameter, and of a length to permit



figure 3 *Slettil, a house in an advanced state of decay, last standing couple*

jointing at the apex while spanning the width of the building. The timbers varied in straightness (see figures, especially 3), but the butt end of the timbers or cabars had to contain a natural bend for jointing to the vertical legs of the whole cruck so that each main portion would slope at 45 degrees as required. One or two smaller timbers would then be attached horizontally across the rafters to tie them. The cruck frames would be set about 6 feet apart. The legs to complete the framework were set into holes packed with stones and earth. The procedure was probably begun by laying the timbers roughly in position upon the ground for the necessary jointing to be done, following which the complete frame would be raised so that the legs would drop into their holes to be made secure.

Jointing was simple and direct, using tools such as axe, adze, chisel and drill. Mating surfaces of round timbers were flattened, after which both timbers were drilled through together with two or three holes, approximately 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Jointing was effected by stout wooden pegs of selected straight grained timber, one peg passing entirely through each matching pair of holes of the main timbers. Pegs were shaped by axe and chisel to form a roughly circular yet tapering shape of main diameter slightly larger than that of the holes. As with a knife-sharpened pencil, pegs thus had a series of flat planes separated by angular ridges, each slightly oversize, so that once driven home into the holes the ridges bit deeply into the main timbers, both ends of each peg left to stand proud. No rotation of the members was possible especially when at least two such pegs were used on each joint (figure 4). These pegs were known as 'trenails', literally 'tree nails', and

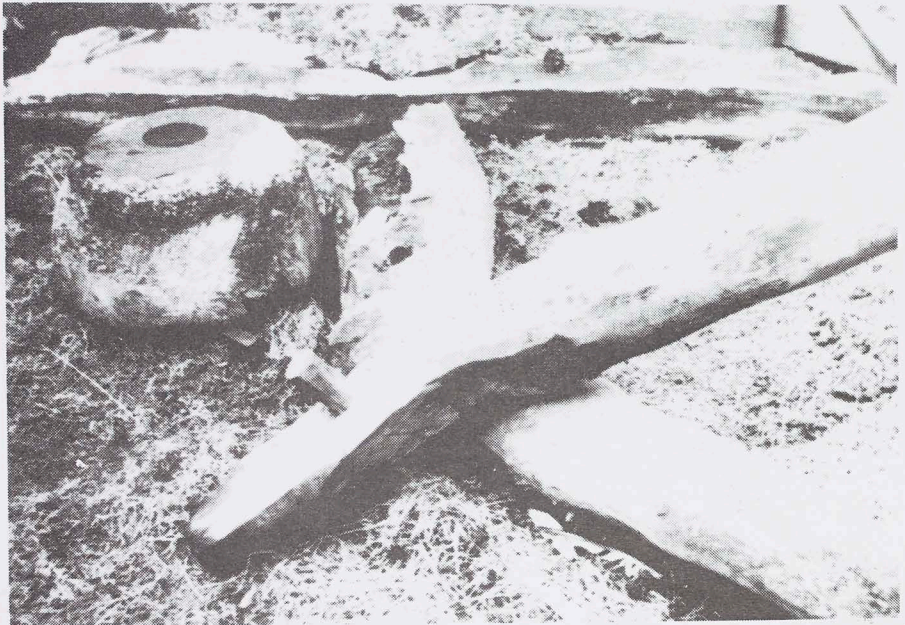


figure 4 Slettil house, byre, with collapsed couple showing tapered peg

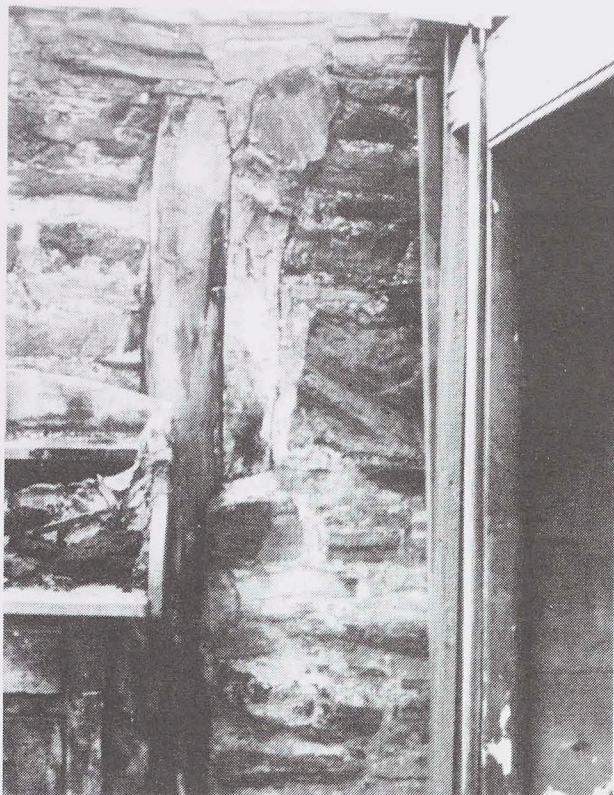


figure 5 Slettil house, original cruck leg and jointing seen to right of dresser. The doorway to the granary is just visible adjoining the boxbed end

were an ancient method of jointing, which could be used in tables, dressers, chairs and joint stools.

Once the requisite number of cruck frames had been constructed and erected, walling in stone could commence. The peak of each set of crucks was probably kept in line with a rope guide. Rough-hewn stones were used to produce sharp corners to the buildings. Coursed rubble set in mortar was used for dwellings, and barns and byres were of drystone construction. House walls were approximately 6 1/2 feet high, this being higher by one or two courses than the cruck joints. The walls were approximately 18 inches thick. The internal stonework surface finished flush with the rounded exterior surface of the cruck legs. The bulk of the leg was contained within the thickness of the wall (figure 5). Interior stonework was not plastered, but left 'natural'. Door and window lintels were of squared dressed timber, not stone, while wall heads were topped with a layer of turf, with the roots uppermost (figure 6).



figure 6 Slettil house, cruck frame smashed by gale, and timber window lintel

The house at Slettil was re-roofed in modern times, using timber imported to the area, possibly by a joiner's firm. Figure 5 shows one of its cruck legs and joints where the cruck itself has been sawn off. All of the timbers remaining in the house appeared to be sound. A plank ceiling created a garret for extra storage. A skylight was added to light the granary.

THATCHING - The interior of Stoer house gave the only extant example of the original thatchwork. Originally couples supported a matwork of twiggy branches of birch or gorse. A mat of heather overlaid this, with the line of the plants running along the building. In turn these mat foundations were overlaid by cut turf laid like slates, upon which the reed thatching was secured. The whole was finally secured by weighted ropes slung across the roof at intervals. Iron pegs were driven into the mortar of each gable (figures 7 and 8) and securing ropes ran from gable to gable. By 1966, following years of neglect, the roof had taken root, with dormant seedlings sprouting.

FLOORING - Stoer and Slettil both had hard and dry earthen floors. In Highland Perthshire the following method was used for the construction of such floors; a similar method had been described by elderly inhabitants of Sutherland. Sheep were penned inside a walled and roofed building, with the doors and windows blocked. Water and fodder were supplied, and the sheep remained, under supervision, in the building for a few days. Their hooves trampled the levelled earth, which combined with droppings, wool, and lanolin. The body weight and heat of the animals worked to create a hard and dry floor from the originally soft and damp surface.



figure 7 Stoer house, showing weighted ropes across roof and thatching pegs



figure 8 Slettil house, showing thatching pegs set into gable to secure horizontal ropes

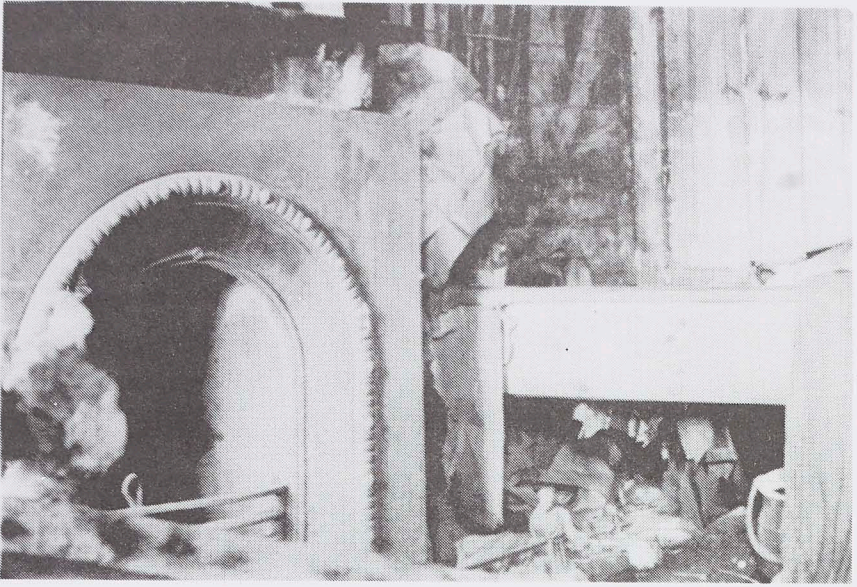


figure 9 Stoer house, interior with boxbed and Victorian Register grate

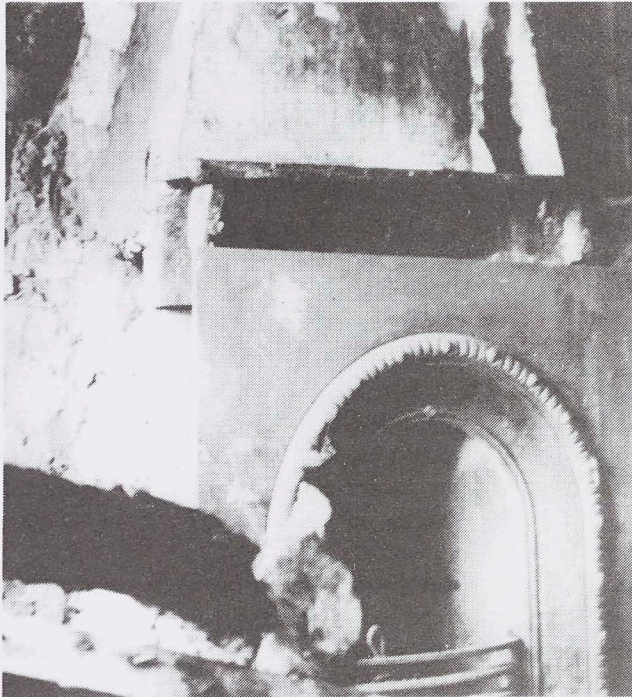


figure 10 Stoer house, interior with hinging lum and grate



figure 11 Stoer house, with chimney can visible

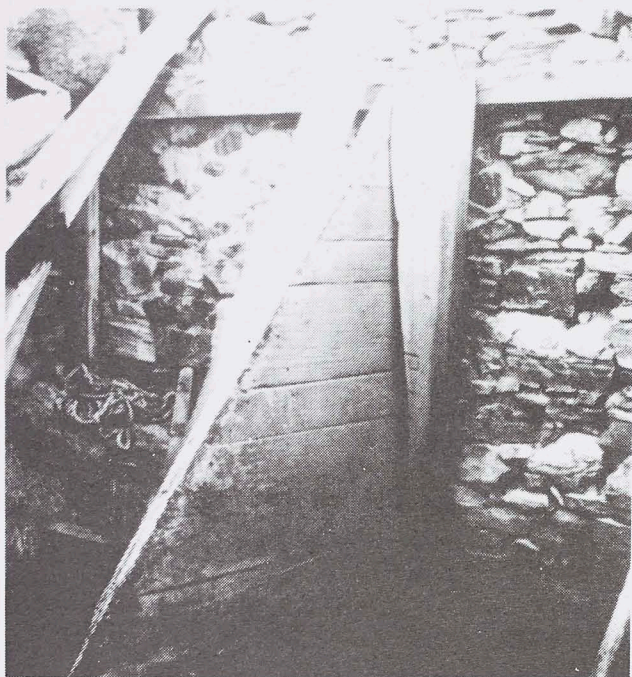


figure 12 Slettil house, byre, with livestock trevices, showing drystone construction

ROOMS AND HEATING - The typical building consisted internally of one large room approximately 30 feet by 15 feet with no divisions. Stoer and Slettil both took this form, but differed in the fireplaces. Slettil had stone chimney breasts with chimney stacks at each gable. One hearth contained a cast iron Victorian Register grate c.1880 set into the stonework. Built into the opposite gable, adjoining the byre, was a Carron Ironworks cooking range.

Stoer had no actual fireplace; its hearths were simply set against the internal surface of each gable. It had hinging lums. The one on the byre gable had collapsed completely, but the other survived (figures 9 and 10). Each lum was of pinewood thinnings in the round, approximately 2 inches thick, secured to the stonework at the apex of the interior thatch to form a triangular shape. Two more similar thinnings with associated wooden strapwork reached out from that structure, again forming a triangular shape to the height required. The exposed sides were covered by canvas fireproofed by plaster. Externally a chimney can was formed by a white enamel bottomless milk bucket set into the thatch and bedded with turf (figure 11). At a later date a Register grate was simply propped into position at the hearth. A rough mantelpiece completed the whole.

The internal divisions of both the Stoer and Slettil houses were determined by the position of the boxbeds (figure 9). These beds had vertical pine planking on three sides from floor to ceiling. There were two beds in each house, each placed to face a gable with its fire and set roughly centrally across the building to leave a three feet gap between each end and the walls. About six feet would be left between the backs of each bed. Pine planking was fixed to create a corridor, into which doors would be set. A doorframe in the Slettil house demonstrated the use of recycled material. Holes in a timber piece, too large for woodworm, were in fact made by teredo. These are found in tropical waters, and infest only below the waterline of a ship, often with devastating effects. This timber may have been salvaged from the beach, and put to decorative rather than structural use. A windowless granary would be created between the bed ends and the rear wall. Stoer house also had a third boxbed. A false ceiling would be created by tacking calico across the undersides of the crucks, to give a greater feeling of comfort, and to improve illumination.

DOMESTIC ITEMS - At Stoer the interior contained only the three boxbeds and two thistle-shaped Carron pots. The only other domestic items were two small stones shaped into dome shapes, as for the palm of the hand. Geologically known as 'dreiecks', formed by glacial and water action, they were used in the washing of clothes.

Almost everything had been abandoned at Slettil, even a Victorian pottery plaque on a chimney breast. As well as boxbeds, each principal room held a dresser containing earthenware plates and dishes. The pine dressers were roughly executed, and dated from about 1840. An easy chair frame survived, as did a pine kist holding bedcovers. There were Carron pots, anachronistic in a house with a grate and range, for no swey was evident for their correct use. Other pots and kettles

had presumably been removed. A fishing cran remained, as did circular cork net floats for sea fishing. Other oddments included a copper gunpowder flask for muzzle-loading weapons.

BYRES AND BARNS - Those at both Stoer and Slettil were of drystone construction with cruck roofs, and ruinous in 1966. The Slettil byre contained a collapsed cruck, and the woodwork of three trevises (figure 12). A turned wooden object found in that byre was possibly a base for a firwood torch, or part of a restraining harness (figure 4).

Reference

1. See also Bruce Walker, 'Vernacular Buildings of North-East Scotland: An Explanation', *The Scottish Geographical Magazine*, Vol.95, 1979, pp.45-60 (pp.54-55).

CROFT 120 CLACHTOLL, MAIDENLOCH

Members who attended the 1996 Lochinver conference will remember the visit to Croft 120, Clachtoll, by Maidenloch (NC047267). A full description is in *Historical Assynt*, the conference notes, by Malcolm Bangor-Jones. Later on that day, we were made welcome by the Assynt Historical Society. Issue 1 of their newsletter *An Iomradh* (March 1996) contained an item on this building by Iain MacRae, and below is reproduced an illustration from that item. A plan of the building was also reproduced, which was particularly valuable, as it showed the arrangement of furniture within the house. That plan has been used to create a conjectural version of a typical croft plan. Mr MacRae's grandparents John and Elizabeth Fraser raised seven children in this house; he spent almost every summer there from 1927 to 1944. It was the home of the Fraser family from about 1840 to 1954, and was vacated in 1954. SVBWG is very grateful to Mr MacRae for allowing the use of this material.



figure 1 View based on a photograph of c.1950

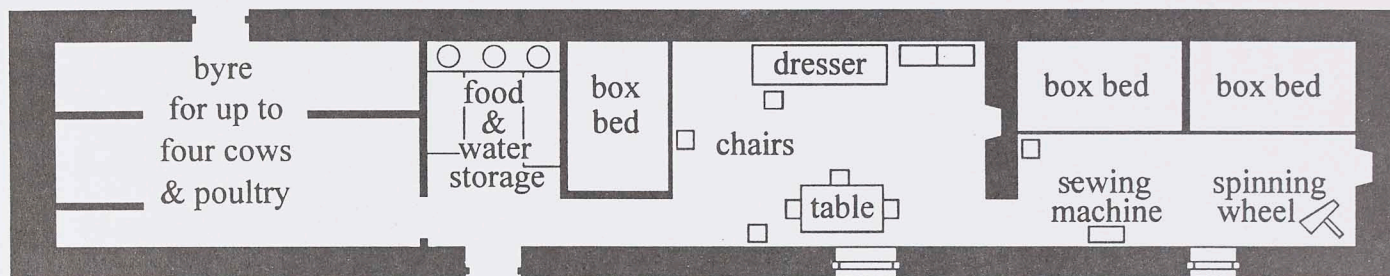


figure 2 Plan based on one by Iain MacRae, not to scale

CORBEL BRACKETS

Graham Douglas

Many of the buildings on the Sutherland estate of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have this architectural feature, located at the junction of the wall head and gable, and projecting out from the gable end wall. This is also known as a gable skewputt.

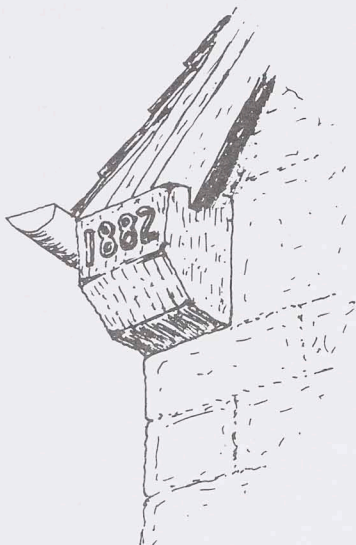
Its function is to carry the end of a barge-board which is at the edge of the overhanging roof. The position of this corbel had lent itself to a large number of end face shapes, with a combination of straight and curved faces. It is also a convenient place for the date of the building.

The oldest examples are probably those on the outbuildings on the north-west side of original Ribigill steading complex near Tongue (NC5854), which date from the early nineteenth century, and are simply roughly dressed blocks of local stones.

Dated ashlar masonry and concrete examples range from the 1860s through to the 1910s. One example, possibly concrete, appears on a house near Lairg, dated 1934, but this could be a copy of the estate tradition.

Two undated examples have been noted outwith Sutherland, one on a manse on Benbecula (NF7854) and another on the farm of Middle Barnego, near Denny, Stirlingshire (NS7883).

Elizabeth Beaton's talk on Sutherland Estate Architecture at the Lochinver Conference dealt with corbel brackets, and she adds the following note: The former Aberdeen Town and Country Bank, Golspie, Sutherland 1829 (now the Ben Bhraggie Hotel), is the earliest detailed example of building with gable corbel brackets I know. Another example has been spotted at Milnathort.



The illustration shows the corbel clasping pageboard with date on the stable leg of the steading at West Shinnes, Lairg, Sutherland.

A NOTE ON THE OLD SETTLEMENT AT KEIL, ISLE OF MUCK

Pamela and Laurence Draper

The map made in 1809 by J.A. Chapman shows a small settlement of about half a dozen houses at the upper end of the now-abandoned village of Keil above Port Mor (NM420796). A path leads from the harbour through the settlement towards the north coast, east of Gallanach. The present road lies to the east of the old path. The site is a sloping one with a cliff on the west and falling away to the east. Rock outcrops are abundant on the grassy hillside. In a survey in 1982, the rubble walls of about 35 buildings, most of which are assumed to have been houses, were located. Most walls are now of between 0.5 and 1 metre in height, and about 1 metre in width. Few were of dressed stone.

The most obvious characteristic of the settlement is that the main street was basically straight, a feature which suggests an element of planning. It is 4 metres wide, walled on the east side for all of its length of 178 metres and for 34 metres on the west. The planning which produced the straight street did not extend to the arrangement of houses, which are rather arbitrary in position and alignment, sometimes dependent on existing rocks and a water course; some were even built in the main street which then had to be diverted.

The site is overlooked by a level, roughly hexagonal grassy platform with sides of about 12 metres, near the top end of the main street. At the bottom end is the cemetery, still in use today. Amongst the houses there were several walled fields or gardens, but these show no signs of cultivation.

The history of the settlement is rather obscure. From discussions with the present owners and islanders, it seems that the population of Muck reached about 300 during the peak years of the kelp-potash industry, which by about 1820 had collapsed. Sheep, or possibly cattle, then became more profitable than people for the landowners, and the crofters were moved from their homes around the island; some emigrated to Cape Breton, Canada, in 1826, and those remaining were allocated the area around Keil and expected to live by fishing. Two years later, after hearing good reports from Cape Breton, many of those who had remained decided to emigrate. By 1830 the island population had halved, and by 1841 had halved again to 68.

The term house is a grandiose one for these small shelters building mainly of rough stones or boulders and turf. Although they were undoubtedly homes in their time, such simply structures would hardly be considered adequate for animals today.

A booklet *The Island of Muck: A Short Guide* by Lawrence MacEwan, Laird of Muck, 1995 (£1.50) is available from the author or the Arisaig Hotel and gives a good over view of the island including geology, climate, flora and fauna, and a brief history.

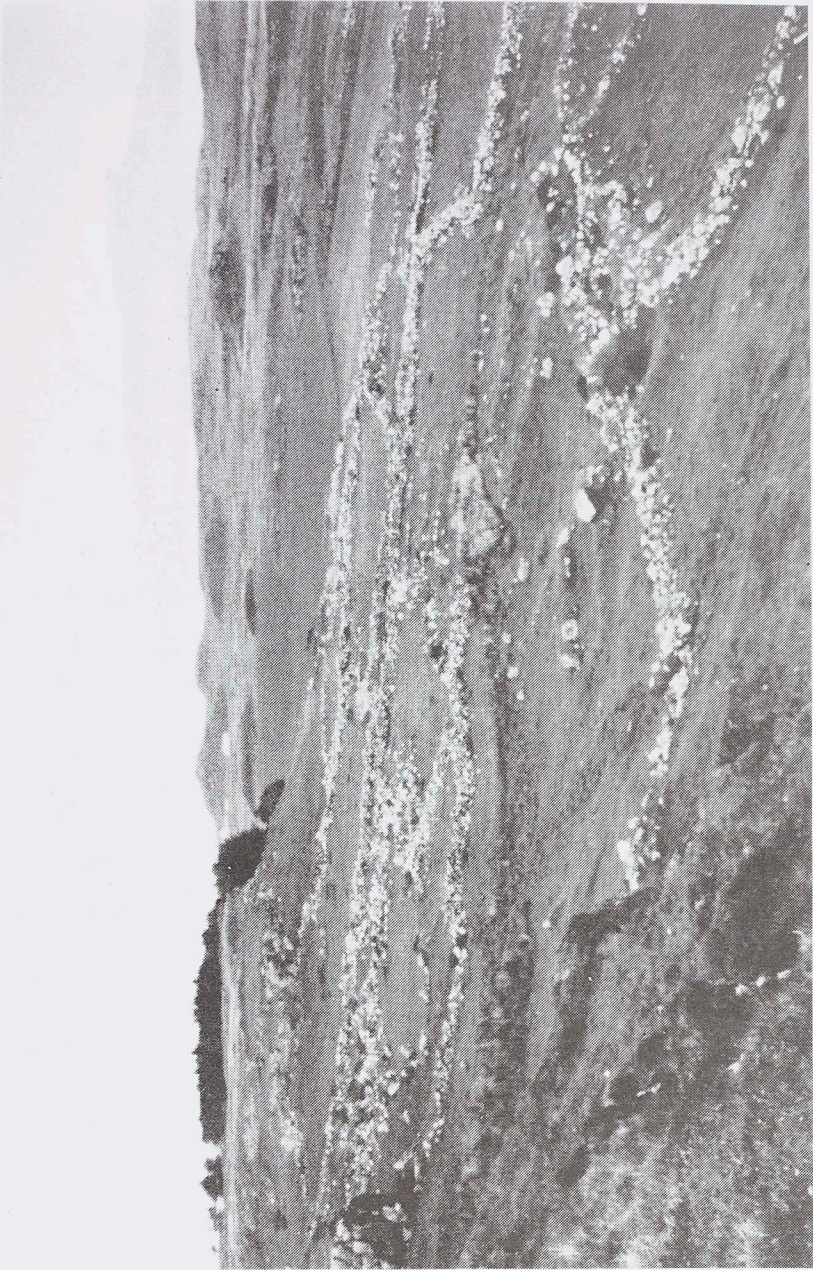


figure 2 View of settlement from south, with Eigg in the background

ROTHIEMAY KILNBARN, BANFFSHIRE - ADDENDUM

Elizabeth Beaton

In *Vernacular Building* 4 (1978), there is a paper on the Rothiemay Kilnbarn by Harry Gordon Slade accompanied by plans and elevations, now of utmost importance since this unique farm building is in a sorry state of repair. Plans are afoot to restore this structure for which the drawings will be invaluable. Gordon Slade suggests the barn dates from the 1740s, built during the ownership of William, Lord Braco, later Earl of Fife. Despite no access to archival resources, he was absolutely right.

The Fife archive (Duff House (Montcoffer) Papers) has since been deposited with the University of Aberdeen Library¹. Research reveals that the kilnbarn was built in 1742 to 1743, according to 'a Plan and directions made out by William Anderson, Gardner (sic) therby his Lordship's orders'. The masons were 'Alexander and George Taylors (sic)', Aberdeen - though George Taylor seems to have been replace by George Leslie, a local man.

The kilnbarn replaced an earlier version for which £15.0.0 was charged for 'Slaping the old kiln barn'.

The papers are of interest for they contain the contract by Lord Braco and the mason, accounts, and how the work was measured and costed. I hope to expand on this in a future edition of *Vernacular Building*.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Captain Ramsay of Mar for permission to reproduce from the Duff House Papers, MS 3175/bundle 648. Also Mrs M. Anderson-Smith, University of Aberdeen Library, Special Collections.

Reference

1. University of Aberdeen Library, Special Collections, MS3175/bundle 648.

THE ALEXANDER ARCHER COLLECTION

The National Monuments Record of Scotland contains, in various forms, information on many different kinds of buildings. One collection which presents a great variety of buildings of interest to the student of vernacular buildings is the Alexander Archer Collection of drawings. In contrast to the measured drawings or impressive perspectives from architects' offices, these are pencil drawings, in a simple, sometimes naive style, which captures buildings, and their settings. Little is known about Alexander Archer, who executed these drawings between 1834 and 1840. In addition to some large houses and castles, the building types shown include mills, inns, rural churches, salt pans, limekilns, and cottages, as well as stooks, wells and market crosses. Each drawing is annotated 'Drawn from nature', and dated, which gives the immediacy of a photograph. Enquiries are welcome at the National Monuments Record of Scotland, 0131 662 1456 about this, or any other collection.

Veronica Steele



Dean Village Mills, Edinburgh, drawn by Alexander Archer in May 1837.

REVIEWS

St Kilda Explored

Exhibition at Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery, Glasgow, from 20 October 1995 to 25 August 1996.

The islands of St Kilda are known to different people for different reasons - the images by George Washington Wilson of the hardy population; the story of that population's evacuation; the Soay Sheep; the myriads of seabirds inhabiting Britain's highest cliffs; and the sheer remoteness of the archipelago. St Kilda Explored at Kelvingrove Art Galleries sought to present some of the facts behind the islands' almost mythical status.

In *Vernacular Building* 19, Meg Buchanan explained that the exhibition was aimed at the general public and school parties, but with items of interest for the specialist. The display was wide-ranging, and explanations at varying levels were available, to allow the visitor to choose the depth to which they wished to explore the subject. Leaflets and activity days held throughout the exhibition's run supplemented the display.

A magnificent cliff had been constructed at the entrance, inhabited by stuffed examples of the birdlife, and the early stages of the exhibition had sound effects of their cries and the noise of the sea. The core of the first room was a full size reproduction of House 8, with one half shown roofless, and the other in plan. Such a reconstruction is ideal for conveying the message of the basic level of the accommodation, and the small size of the houses. It was also a useful demonstration of the relationship between a structure and the results of a survey; drawings and other material compiled by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, the National Trust for Scotland and the University of Durham had been used in the reconstruction. Visitors could participate in such a process; a plane-table and alidade had been set up in line with points marked on the reconstruction. Younger visitors could explore a simulated excavation. Display panels on the walls of the first room detailed the survey work of the various bodies, on sites dating from prehistory.

The Discovery Room dealt with the topics of Archaeology, Buildings, Birds and the Sea, Sheep and other Mammals, People, and Outside Influences. Exhibits included artefacts, household items, fragments of building materials, tools, and stuffed birds. This section was 'hands-on' with visitors being encouraged to open drawers of exhibits, handle wooden tumbling locks, study sheep parasites through a microscope, and explore the database of the UK Digital Marine Atlas. Information folders, coded to show different levels, could be leafed through to gain further details on the various aspects. The juxtaposition of items such as the dried gannet stomach (used to store fulmar oil) with more sophisticated household items such as east coast pottery hinted at the reasons for the islanders' wish to abandon

their remote home. However, despite those exhibits, the poignant personal items such as pipes and bible, and the bleakly beautiful fragments of the poems which had remained in oral circulation, one felt that there could have been more about the day to day life of the islanders, and the story behind their evacuation. Fishing was one aspect which would have been particularly interesting to learn about.

The exhibition presented many of the fascinating aspects of the islands, demonstrating their worth as a World Heritage Site. The two final exhibits, a great auk, and an image which changed from the settlement street with inhabitants, to the same view with ruined buildings populated by sheep, ensured that one left with the impression of a unique place.

Veronica Steele

St Kilda: The Continuing Story of the Islands

**Ed. by Meg Buchanan. Glasgow Museums. Edinburgh. 1995. xxiv + 117pp. £10.95.
ISBN 0 11 495172 1.**

Published to coincide with the exhibition, *St Kilda Explored*, *St Kilda: The Continuing Story of the Islands* also relates the study of the archipelago, and deals with the history since the evacuation. Mary Harman's essay on the background history of the islands captures the sense of isolation, and the precariousness of the islanders' existence, so dependant on fragile links with the mainland. The other contributions deal with various aspects of the islands, in the context of the recording surveys by national bodies:- the RCAHMS buildings surveys; archaeological excavations which involved RCAHMS, NTS, the University of Durham and Glasgow Museums; and studies of the bird and marine life, as well as of the Soay Sheep. It is stressed that St Kilda is a microcosm, preserving many aspects of a past way of life that is lost elsewhere. The archipelago is referred to as a unique outdoor laboratory, where studies can be made without the encroaching contaminations of modern life. The aims and processes, rather than the results of the surveys are described. There is fascinating description of the challenges faced when working in such remote and inhospitable conditions. How does one count fulmars on a 450 metre cliff, from a rocking boat?

Geoffrey Stell's account of the building survey of the islands, one of the most challenging undertaken by RCAHMS, published as *Buildings of St Kilda* (1988), also describes earlier surveys dating back to the 1830s improvements. The illustrations allow a comparison to be made between nineteenth and late twentieth century visual results. The processes of recording a large area of scattered dwellings, followed by detailed studies of individual buildings are related. The full range of buildings was studied, from the improvement buildings of the 1830s and

the 1860s, to the cleit, or drystone storage building, of which there are more than 1400.

Norman Emery and Alex Morrison describe the archaeological surveys of the islands, which took account of remains dating from the Bronze Age onwards. The results are invaluable in creating an image of island life. Particularly interesting is the account of the communal corn-drying kiln, dating from the 1830s. As well as the evidence from structural features, that provided by small finds, such as pottery fragments, is related. Methods of obtaining evidence by making transects through the Village are described, as are methods of studying soil and pollen samples for any information which can be used in the study of the human activity on the islands.

The lives of the St Kildans were very dependant on the animals and birds of the islands and its waters, and further chapters relate the study of the ecosystems. The Soay sheep, survivors of a domestic type kept in the Bronze Age, have been particularly well studied.

The importance of the islands has been acknowledged by their status as a World Heritage Site, and there are various other protective designations. They are still very much at risk from pollution, and the dangers that visitors can bring. John Smyth's essay stresses the fragility of the islands, and the responsibility involved in safeguarding this unique place.

Veronica Steele

Building Materials of the Scottish Farmstead

Ingval Maxwell. Regional and Thematic Studies No 3. Edinburgh. Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group. 1996. vii + 74pp. £9.00 (£6.00 to members of SVBWG). ISBN 0 9595984 8 9.

This publication is the third in the Regional and Thematic Studies published by SVBWG and is a very welcome addition to the series. The history of materials on Scottish farmsteads shows that available resources have been used to their full potential. Structural strength and durability in the face of the elements were the most important factors, and only rarely were the aesthetic possibilities of a material considered.

Ingval Maxwell's study considers types of material in succession, tracing the development of use. There is a general progression from the most basic and earliest use of materials, like stone, through to the most recent in the shape of concrete, which has the flexibility demanded by modern farmers. The book is divided into two sections - walling materials and roof coverings, and is further subdivided into individual materials. This structure makes for easy reference, while still preserving a roughly chronological arrangement. Informative line

drawings (all from actual farmsteads) and photographs illustrate the materials mentioned and points raised. There is also a useful glossary.

All structures of the farmstead are considered - houses, steadings, walls and byres. The parallels with developments in general building practices are traced, but it is stressed that the major reasons for change in farmstead buildings related to farming practices. The most noticeable changes occurred in post-Improvement farms, when great advances in quality took place and more masonry features occurred. This period also saw greater use of material imported into areas. Before, only those materials immediately available were used, but with improvements in roads, and the advent of the railway, materials were brought in from elsewhere in Britain, for example, more durable Welsh slate. Imports can also be assigned to the fact that a landowner had connections with different regions. The use of imported resources has more recently taken in reuse, in the form of railway sleepers and telegraph poles.

As well as describing the sources of materials, the methods of achieving their full potential are discussed. This includes analysis of length-to-height ratios in stone construction; the arrangement of tiles to allow ventilation of byres; and the ingenious use of timber in horse-engine house roof, this last being beautifully illustrated. Distribution of materials is also discussed, though imports of course complicate this matter, as do such curiosities as a type of thatch construction found only in Shetland and the upper Scaur valley in Dumfriesshire.

This study of the use of materials in farmsteads is vital for anyone wishing to understand the construction of these buildings. Originally built for durability, inevitable decay has occurred, with the ironic fact remaining that it is often from a dilapidated or ruined building that the most information is gained. Ingvál Maxwell's study reminds us of this paradox of the fragility of this resource.

Veronica Steele

The Scottish Home

Ed. by Annette Carruthers. Edinburgh. National Museums of Scotland. 1996. 232pp.

Hardback £25.00 ISBN 0 948636 72 6. Paperback £12.99 ISBN 0 948636 85 8.

It seems that in recent years publications relating to what could be described at 'specialist' interests have taken the form of edited contributions rather than a single author. This can result in a publication where disparate writing styles can disrupt the easy flow from chapter to chapter.

This is certainly not the case however in *The Scottish Home*, edited by Annette Carruthers. Here contributions from seven authors, including the editor,

have produced a fascinating, fresh look into the wide variety of Scottish homes and the way Scots have lived in them.

Despite the difficulties of working with limited illustrative material particularly of poorer dwellings, together with the unreliability of some photographic records, where the scene has obviously been posed either to underline the owner's social aspirations or to support city improvements trusts' efforts to improve public housing, the book is very well illustrated and has been supplemented by a variety of evidence sources, paintings, inventories, diaries and oral history. How many of us today would photograph our own homes exactly as they are used, watching television in the living room, surrounded by children's toys?

The book explores the Home room by room, starting with the houses in which the majority of Scots lived in until the middle of the twentieth century - the two roomed house in country and town.

The more prosperous homes and country houses feature mainly in the chapters on the Dining Room and Drawing Room, being the only houses to have room specifically for those purposes, but once again it concentrates on how these rooms were used rather than the arrangements of furnishings or interior decoration.

The most fascinating chapters to me are those on Hall and Lobby, Kitchen and Bathroom. In the chapters on the Kitchen, the rapid changes in the use of this room in the twentieth century is brought home by the illustrations of kitchens and cooking equipment since the 1930s including the cartoon from the Sunday Post of 1954 where the 'Broons' replace their old fashioned range with the newest 'Triplex' grate much to the consternation of the male members of the family.

The one element of the modern home which has received the least attention in published documents and which is now seen as indispensable is the Bathroom and Water Closet. This fascinating chapter outlines the origins of water supply and drainage together with the development of the provision of internal sanitation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries very successfully despite the admitted problem of limited photographic material. How many readers of this book will have photographs of their bathroom in their photo album - few I suspect.

The book does make one think seriously regarding the changes made to our homes in our own lifetime and realise the importance of leaving documentation and photographs (annotated and dated) of our own homes to assist future authors and historians.

Ronnie Robertson

The exhibition on the Scottish Home Over the Threshold will be reviewed in *Vernacular Building* 21

Waternish: An Archaeological Survey 1993 24pp.
Strath of Kildonan: An Archaeological Survey 1993 23pp.
Glenesslin, Nithsdale: An Archaeological Survey 1994 24pp.
Southdean, Borders: An Archaeological Survey 1994 20pp.
Braes of Doune: An Archaeological Survey 1994 20pp.
Mar Lodge Estate, Grampian: An Archaeological Survey 1995 36pp.

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Edinburgh.
£3.50. ISBN 0969-0694.

The threat of destruction from changing land-use, principally afforestation, has brought a quickening of interest in medieval or later rural settlement in Scotland. Following an important conference held in Inverness in 1987 (Our Vanishing Heritage: Forestry and Archaeology) and representations to the Secretary of State, additional money was secured to assist with monitoring forestry grant applications and to fund field survey in advance of afforestation.

The Afforestable Land Survey of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland was established in 1987 and has already generated a significant body of knowledge. The aim of the Survey is to study every region of Scotland and the approach follows that adopted for the Commission's formidable survey of *North- East Perth* (1990), incorporating mapping at 1:10 000 with more detailed surveys of particular sites. Not all surveys have been published although all of the results have been placed in the National Monuments Record of Scotland.

The six surveys which have been published comprise areas with an interesting mix of prehistoric and historic sites which largely reflects the nature of the archaeology. However, one rightly or wrongly gains the impression that an element of discretion has been exercised. This review concentrates on the evidence which has been for medieval and later settlement and building.

Southdean, an upland area in the Borders south of Jedburgh contains a scatter of farmsteads dating from the late medieval period to the seventeenth century. Documentary records for Jedburgh Forest suggest that any major change to the medieval settlement pattern predates the mid-sixteenth century. On the other hand, the survival of a range of structures including pele-houses or towers, subrectangular buildings and turf-walled buildings testifies to the gradual abandonment of settlement in the eighteenth century as agriculture and society became more market orientated.

Peles were also found in *Glenesslin* in Nithsdale, along with a variety of pre- and post-Improvement farmsteads, shielings and nineteenth century cottages. The survey of the *Braes of Doune*, north of Dunblane, revealed two round-ended buildings of possible medieval date which significantly were located on higher and

more marginal land than the pre-Improvement farmsteads. The Braes also contain a considerable number of turf-walled shieling huts; no evidence was found for a change to stone-built huts. Otherwise, both *Glenesslin* and *Braes of Doune* provided evidence for the effects of eighteenth century farm consolidation. Neither survey, however, showed significant use of documentary sources, beyond Pont's survey or estate plans, making it difficult to place the sites in any secure historical context.

The survey of a block of the *Strath of Kildonan* in Sutherland revealed not only considerable prehistoric remains but also many pre-Clearance townships. Several townships were mapped and although the scale tells us more of township layout rather than building form or construction, they are a valuable resource. Most of the buildings were of drystone construction with square corners. Basic documentary research provides some useful historical background to settlement change. However many uncertainties remain and the history of individual settlements or buildings is inevitably rather tentative at times. It is unfortunate that the case study of Learable, a primary settlement within the strath which was divided into two clusters of long buildings or byre dwellings, was not matched by more detailed research into its historical past. Amongst other things, this might have reduced the likelihood of the suggestion being made that the tenants 'worked the ground in common' rather than by the more usual runrig system. However, Learable is a remarkable case study, and one which calls for more detailed surveys of other major townships.

The survey of the *Waternish* peninsula on the Isle of Skye unveiled extensive remains of cleared townships. Five maps are included within the publication, three of which are set alongside an estate survey of 1790. A brave attempt has been made to elucidate the settlement history but estate splitting and the lack of nineteenth century documentary sources has led to particular difficulties. A medieval estate centre is suggested for Trumpan where there is a church with late medieval graveslabs, a fortified promontory and various substantial buildings including a kilnbarn. A detailed plan is included of an early eighteenth century tacksman's house at Unish but there are no similar plans of the houses of the small tenants. This is unfortunate given the numbers of subrectangular buildings incorporating rubble-faced walls with earth cores often featuring an external batter and tapering towards the wall-head. Moreover, no evidence of cruck slots was found, prompting the suggestion that such structures may have had crucks set against the walls or had rafters set on the inner-edge of the walls.

The survey of the *Mar Lodge* estate in upland Grampian did not turn up any evidence for prehistoric settlement and the result is a publication devoted to the pre-Clearance townships and shieling, and the ruins of a relatively brief period of sheep farming and the later deer forest era. Extensive use has been made of the documentary evidence and an excellent attempt has been made to provide a context for settlement patterns and the history of individual sites and buildings. The management of the hunting forest, grazing rights and the impact of improvement

are well documented for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the history of township clearance or abandonment is the best which has been provided for any of the publications in the series.

The buildings in the various townships largely divide into eighteenth century subrectangular structures, with earth-bonded rubble walls with crucks, and rectangular drystone structures of the early nineteenth century. In addition, a handful of turf-walled buildings was discovered. A good number of corn-drying kilns, with or without barns; several limekilns; free-standing circular stone structures; shieling huts; and a whisky still were also found. Detailed plans are provided of the abandoned keepers' houses or small lodges which contrast with the grandeur of Old Mar Lodge itself.

From the vernacular point of view, the *Mar Lodge* survey is the best of the series. However, as a whole, the series constitutes a major contribution to understanding regional patterns of building construction and to demonstrating the importance of detailed history at the local scale. The Commission's high standards of survey and publication are maintained throughout the series, and all of the surveys are excellent value for money.

Malcolm Bangor-Jones

Farming

**Gavin Sprott. Scotland's Past in Action series. Edinburgh.
National Museums of Scotland. 1995. 84pp. £4.99
ISBN 0948636 69 6.**

Fishing and Whaling

**Angus Martin. Scotland's Past in Action series. Edinburgh.
National Museums of Scotland. 1995. 84pp. £4.99.
ISBN 0948636 67 X.**

This series aims to spotlight key activities in the shaping of Scotland. Other titles include *Spinning and Weaving*, *Farming*, *Feeding Scotland* and *Leaving Scotland*. Worth buying for the lavish and fascinating illustrations from the Scottish Ethnological Archive, they are highly informative books, and excellent value. They include useful lists of connected places to visit.

Farming deals with the human as well as the mechanical aspects of the activity, and therefore analyses the buildings used. The simplest buildings were very much part of the organic cycle of farming, for example, old thatch would be used for compost. The development of more permanent buildings and the ways of life associated with farm buildings are discussed. Poor housing, rather than low

wages, has always been the main source of complaint of Scottish farmworkers. The world of the travelling worker is examined, with life in the bothy being a particularly recent aspect to disappear.

Buildings and structures linked to *Fishing and Whaling* can take the form of work place, or accommodation, or in many cases, a combination of the two. The fisherman's home had to be particularly adaptable to house not only people, but also the storage and repair of equipment, and the processing of the catch. Other structures associated with this activity are fish traps, kilns, and icehouses. As workers often had to follow the shoals, accommodation was often temporary. In Shetland, crews would build and maintain lodges, returning each season to re-roof, and taking the timbers with them on departure.

Veronica Steele

Looking at Buildings: The East Riding

Hazel Moffat and David Neave. London. English Heritage and Penguin Books. 1995. 36pp. £5.99. ISBN 01470 710 647.

This attractively illustrated and presented publication in A4 format is the first in a new series which represents a joint venture between English Heritage and Penguin Books. Each double page focuses on a specific theme, fourteen in all ranging from Landscape and Building Materials through to Modern Architecture. Each theme is accompanied by suggestions for educational activities and further research. The emphasis is very much on providing a simple but clear guide to buildings and building features in the area, and explaining what the evidence means. For once, we have here a modest work of reference that will serve a genuine educational need, possibly at several levels. It can also be used as an inexpensive companion to the Buildings of England volume covering this same area - *York and the East Riding* (1972).

The attention of *Vernacular Building* readers is drawn to this booklet, not only for the intrinsic architectural charms of the East Riding of Yorkshire, but largely because the approach that is adopted here may be worthy of wider application. Should Penguin Books be encouraged to seek a co-sponsor in Scotland and allow the Buildings of Scotland volumes to benefit from a similar companion series?

Geoffrey Stell

CONTRIBUTORS

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Alastair Hamilton is a planner, and joined Shetland Island Council in 1976, initially in charge of Development Control. He later became the Council's first Conservation Officer and is currently Depute Director of Planning. He has contributed to various publications, most recently, the *Rough Guide to Scotland*.

James Hardie completed army service before graduating from University of Edinburgh. He conducted educational research throughout Scotland, linked to a research unit in the Department of Psychology, University of Aberdeen. He established a photographic archive in Sutherland, now deposited in the County Library, Brora. He founded J. and J. Hardie Antiques, specialising in woodwork, carving and furniture restoration, mainly from 1600-1900.

John G. Harrison lives in Stirling where he works as a historical consultant, lecturer and writer. His particular interest is Stirling around 1700.

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Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group

The Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group was set up in 1972 to provide a focus for all those interested in the traditional buildings of Scotland.

To some, Scottish 'vernacular' may mean cottages, croft-houses and farmsteads; to others, its essence may be urban tenements and terraces, industrial watermills and smithies, or even the older traditions of tower-house buildings. All - and more besides - find a place within SVBWG.

The Group embraces those whose interests are centred on general settlement social patterns, as well as those who have a specialised interest in building function, or in traditional buildings and crafts. The subject brings together architects, surveyors, archaeologists, historians, geographers, ethnologists, and above all, those who simply want to know how and why the traditional buildings of Scotland have such variety and character. The Group thrives on this refreshing blend of interests and attitudes, all of which are clearly evident in its activities.

Members of the Group are invited to attend annual conferences held at different venues in Scotland each year. The 24th Conference was held in the spring of 1996 in Lochinver, Sutherland, and the autumn meeting in Pollok Park, Glasgow.

The Group's publications include *Vernacular Building*, an annual miscellany of articles issued free to members, and to which members and interested readers are invited to contribute.

Annual subscription rates 1996-1997

Ordinary membership (UK only)	£10
Ordinary membership (outside UK)	£15
Joint membership (one copy of <i>Vernacular Building</i> journal annually)	£15
Corporate membership	£15
Student membership	£5

For membership application forms and details of publications, please contact:

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