

# VERNACULAR BUILDING 25

## Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group

2001



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**Scottish Vernacular Buildings  
Working Group**

**2001**

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Cover illustration: Shoemakers' Land, Linlithgow, West Lothian: front elevation

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## PREFACE

This issue of VB has a pleasing balance of the industrial and the domestic, the urban and the rural, representing a true cross-section of all that the SVBWG stands for. As a timely reminder of just what that is, Elizabeth Beaton has undertaken an 'update' of a paper which Professor Alexander Fenton published in VB 8, on the first 20 years of the SVBWG. Professor Fenton's paper is first reprinted, which will make very interesting reading to those of you who, like me, came upon the SVBWG once it was well established and had little idea of its antecedents. Elizabeth Beaton then brings the picture up to date, giving an overview of how far the Group has managed over the last 15 years to meet the challenge Professor Fenton posed, to build on its established foundations. Her conclusion is that the Group's achievements to date are reasonable, but that there is no room for complacency. To underline the need for the Group to be proactive, in a separate article Elizabeth Beaton and Nick Brown outline the Group's latest challenge: to record Scotland's doocots and publish the results. This task is now well underway, but more volunteers are needed: please read, note, and send off for advice and data sheets on which to set about recording your local area.

From the general to the specific: the first paper in this issue sees Bill Bartlam recreating the vanished Moray Brick and Tile Works, a task for which the description 'industrial archaeology' is appropriate. As with many another brickworks, scarcely a trace remains of this once-thriving business, although its products were used all over Moray.

Recreation on a domestic scale is the considerable task undertaken by Sabina Strachan in her paper on the Haa of Cruister, Bressay, Shetland, now just a fragmented wall or two. The picture presented is made all the more vivid by the detailed information given about the family who built it, the Bolts, and their mercantile activities in Shetland. The building has a complex history of additions and alterations, largely influenced by the family fortunes from the 17th to the 19th centuries. This neatly emphasises the importance of examining 'the background social and economic environment that gave rise to particular types and forms of building', as Professor Fenton observed in his VB 8 paper.

From rural isolation to urban tenement living: Dr Peters' paper on a property in the centre of Linlithgow, built by the Shoemakers' Guild, records an interesting Scots tenement as it was in 1969; it has since been partially demolished, and partially restored. This paper is a classic example of the importance of recording 'what is there' before it is there no longer, a task in which SVBWG members have a vital role to play.

Veronica Steele rounds off this issue with book reviews ranging all over Scotland, from Shetland and St Kilda to Strathnaver, Deeside and the

Mearns, Perth and Kinross, Glenesk and Menstrie Glen. Ideas for book reviews are always welcome, as are the books themselves, and should be sent to Veronica at the RCAHMS, John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX.

Papers for *VB* 26 (2002) are now invited, and may be sent to me at 10 The Square, Fochabers, Moray IV32 7DF.

***Beth Ingpen***  
***Editor Vernacular Building***

# THE MORAYSHIRE BRICK AND TILE WORKS: A vanished industry

W. A. Bartlam

## Location

The location of the original works was at Lochside (NJ 208656) on the southern fringe of the former Spynie Loch. The final site of the works was at Windyridge (NJ 235674) on the northern shore of the Spynie Loch.

## Geology

The geology may be briefly explained as Upper Old Red Sandstone and Jurassic formations with a large part of the area being covered with alluvium consisting mainly of alumina silicate. The clay is grey in colour and the plasticity varies from laminae which split easily to a consistency similar to putty.

## Historical background

The history of the industry has been pieced together by reference to newspaper notices from *The Courant* 20 May 1898 and 18 May 1928, together



Figure 1 Locations of the brick and tile works



with a sale announcement in the *Moray and Nairn Express* of 14 December 1885. The original works were established in 1849 and were operated by Wm Priest and Co., at Lochside until the clay source was exhausted (Beaton 1993, p. 239). The business was offered for sale at the beginning of 1886, together with a list of machinery and available stock.

The new works were opened at Windyridge some eleven years later in 1897. The new proprietor was James Christie, who had been manager to Wm Priest and now continued the business under the name of 'James Christie and Son, Elgin'. James Christie was born at Sheriffston in 1839 and rose to be Lord Provost of Elgin 1905-8. He was joined in the tile works business by his two sons James and Alexander (Douglas 1926).

A visit to the new works by the Moray Field Club under the direction of the president, the Rev George Birnie of Speymouth, took place on a Saturday afternoon in mid May 1928, a visit that is recorded in some detail in the newspaper.

## Topography

The Ordnance Survey map, 6 inches to 1 mile edition of 1905 shows the layout of the works in their context with the Elgin to Lossiemouth road and the parallel LNER railway line.

The site lies about 3 miles (5 km) from Elgin and 2 miles (3 km) from Lossiemouth, approached by a short spur road on the west. The LNER railway adjoins the site on the east and there is a siding serving the works. The pit from which the clay was dug lies at a short distance to the south of the works and is connected thereto by a narrow gauge 2' 3" railway or tramway.

At the time of the writer's inspection of the site, September 2000, the clay pit was filled in to within about 2 m of the surrounding area. Originally it was of some considerable depth. It is reported that before the clay could be uncovered, sand to a depth of between 17 and 20 ft (5-6 m) had to be removed. In addition there was then a further layer of peat to be taken out, even before any clay was dug. It is further reported that by 1928 between 150,000 and 200,000 tons of clay had already been extracted. Assuming a six-day week, this is an approximate rate of 16 tons per day. As this pit is below sea-level, a wind pump was installed to keep it clear of water.

## The layout of the works

The layout of the works in 1905 is shown on the 6 inches to 1 mile Ordnance Survey map (see Fig. 2). The function of the various buildings may be inferred by reference to the topographic relationship of one to another, supplemented by the newspaper descriptions and the morphology of the buildings themselves as suggested above.

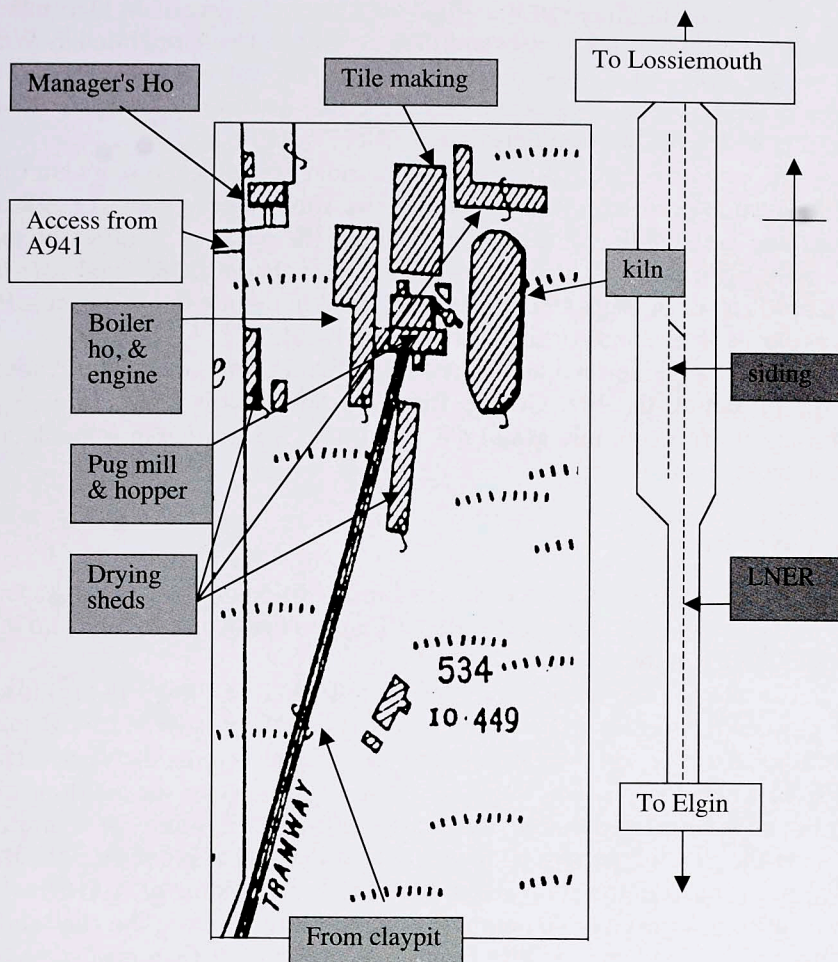


Figure 2 The layout of the works, 1905

Perhaps the outstanding feature and clue to the layout is the light railway between the buildings and the clay-pit. This is laid to a gradient to the pug-mill hopper at first-floor level in the terminal building, which may therefore be taken as the starting point of the manufacturing process. Waggons carry the newly dug clay by means of a continuous wire rope round two horizontal wheels being continually driven. The waggons are attached to the rope by an ingenious clutch designed and made by Wm Munro, millwright at Urquhart, who erected all the machinery.

Despite the changed nature of the site, it is still possible to see the line of the railway from the claypit where the hardcore and bottoming of broken



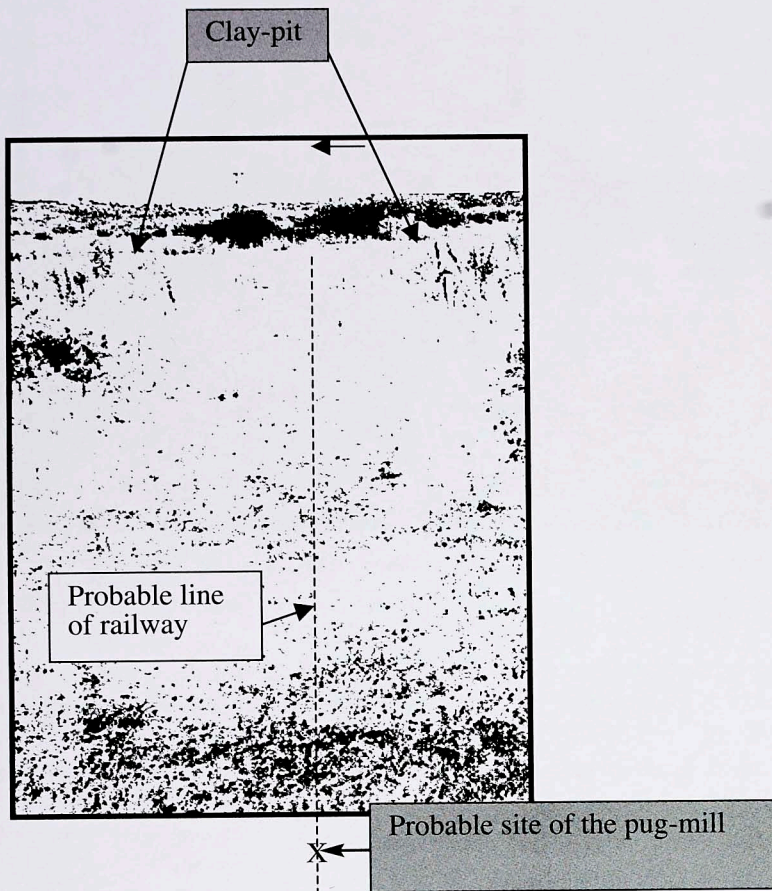


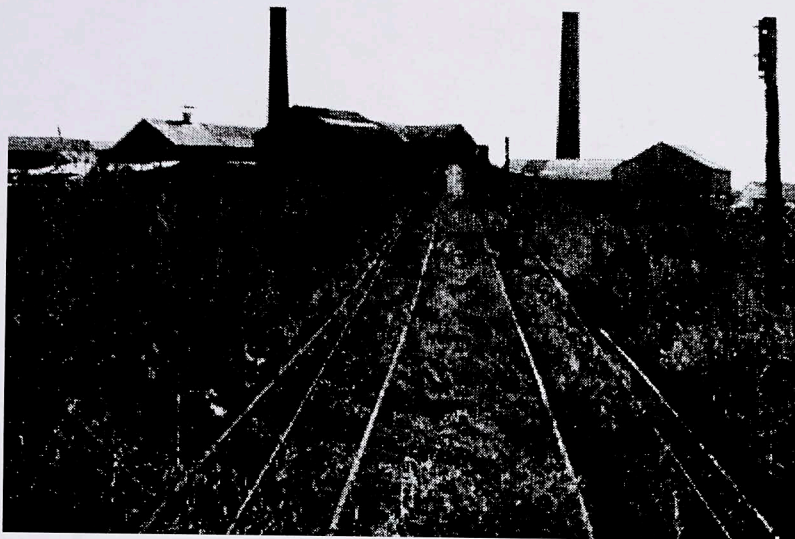
Figure 3 The site today (photo W.A.B.)

brick and tile formed the bed of the track (see Fig. 3).

Figure 4 shows the tramway from the claypit looking towards the brickworks at Cruden Bay, Aberdeenshire. From the archival evidence, it appears that there was probably a close similarity with the Morayshire works. Both installations employed two-storey Hoffman kilns and the methodology of winning and transporting the clay was similar.

The proximity of the LNER railway and the provision of a siding and loading bank (Fig. 5) was clearly of considerable value to the business which was commanding a wide market.

The easy access from the A941 provided an alternative route for the distribution of the firm's output. The substantial stone-built house standing at the entrance to the site must clearly have been the Manager's or Partner's residence (Fig. 6).



*Figure 4 Cruden Bay Brick and Tile Works tramway (by courtesy of John Hume)*

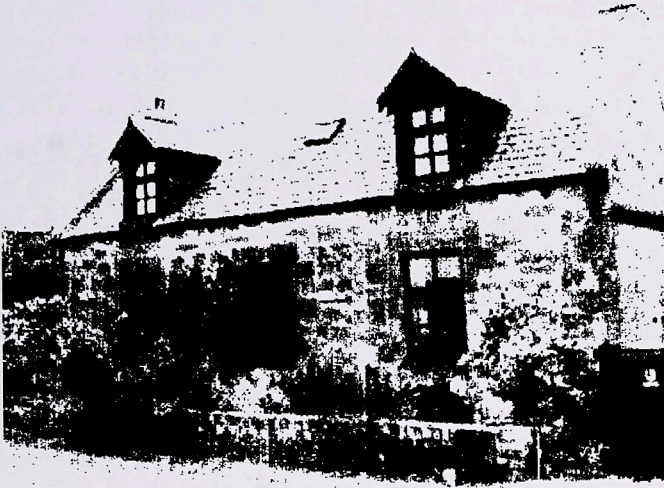
## **The machinery and equipment**

The newspaper articles are gratifyingly specific about the details of machinery and equipment, and by analogy it is possible to obtain an impression of what the tile and brickworks were like when they were in operation. Several contemporaneous works in Banff and Aberdeenshire have been recorded and illustrated by the RCAHMS (Douglas and Oglethorpe 1993). The works at Cruden Bay in Aberdeenshire appear to have been very similar, employing the same type of kiln (see below).



*Figure 5 The site of the railway siding looking north (photo W.A.B.)*





*Figure 6 Stone-built Manager's or Partner's house*

According to the 1885 'Notice of Sale', the original Lochside works comprised engine and mill houses, five kilns and the necessary drying sheds. The machinery included a ten-horse-power (nominal) horizontal engine, two pug-mills, two 'Whitehead's' steam-powered tile machines, and one pipe machine complete with all necessary dies and moulds for making drain pipes and tiles. There was also a stock of various types of bricks, pipes, tiles, chimney pots, flower pots and paving.

The new works was established at Windyridge in 1897 and when the Moray Field Club visited in 1929 the buildings and machinery were noted. The light railway and the pug-mill have already been referred to. 'Murray's' brick-making machines came next in the production process. Before reaching there the clay was prepared or processed. This involved crushing, grinding, screening and de-airing. The clay was 'grogged' by the addition of fine ash from the kiln in a mixing machine before being pugged.

From the pug-mill the clay came to the brick-making machines, being forced through dies in a rectangular stream before being cut into brick sizes by taut wires set in a rocking frame. The 'green' bricks were then taken to the drying sheds, where the louvred sides allowed the clay to harden whilst protecting the bricks from the rain. In due course the bricks were then taken to one of the fourteen kilns where they were baked. It was in the kiln that the grey clay acquired its familiar 'red brick' or terracotta colour.

## **Tiles**

The manufacture of drain and roof tiles involved forming curved shapes

requiring various dies, moulds and extrusion machinery. This work was carried out by a 'Whitehead's' tile machine and the wet clay emerging from the machine was taken to a large building furnished with a steam-heated drying floor. When dry enough the material was transferred to the kiln.

## The kiln

Although the kiln has now been demolished, it is possible to get an impression of it by analogy from the illustration of a similar 'Hoffman' kiln that operated at Cruden Bay Brick and Tile Works in Aberdeenshire at NK 085360 (Douglas and Oglethorpe 1993, p. 37).

The kiln was of the 'Hoffman' pattern shaped like a parallelogram on plan with rounded corners. It was invented by Freidrich Hoffman in 1856 and modified to the present version in 1870.

Internally it measured somewhat less than the original design and was divided into twelve chambers, which could be separated by iron doors as necessary. When visited the kiln was roofed, the fuel of slack coal being dropped into the kiln from above, but an attic drying floor was planned for drying tiles using the residual heat from the exhaust gases of the firing process. Using a programme of kiln setting and drawing, the firing could be kept going continuously. The kiln operated at a temperature in excess of  $1000^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The smoke from the firing was carried to a chimney 90 ft (27 m) high.

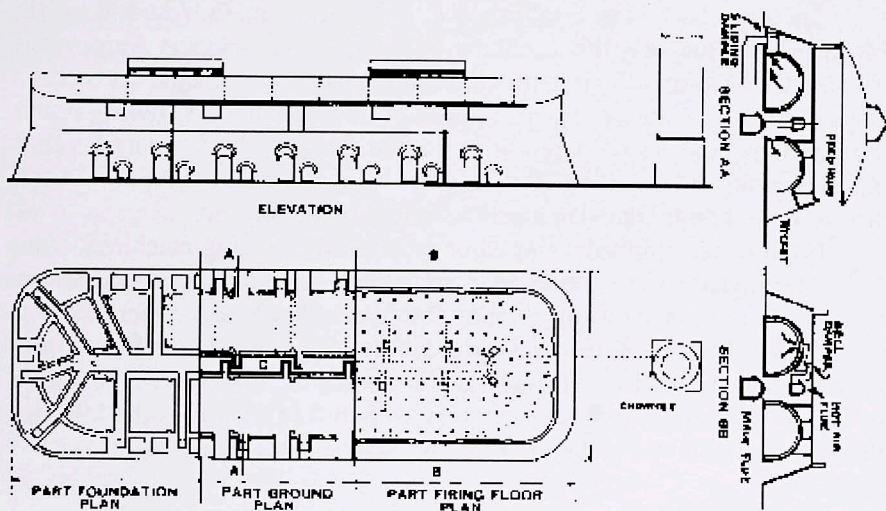


Figure 7 A typical rectangular Hoffman kiln, from the period 1890 to 1960 (after Hammond 1981).



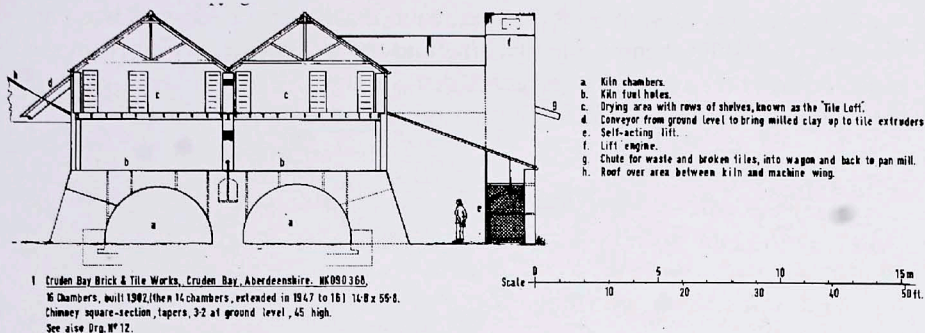


Figure 8 The kiln at Cruden Bay Brick and Tile Works (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS).

## Fuel

The kiln, burning continuously and taking a week or more to fire a batch of bricks or tiles, used a considerable quantity of slack coal as fuel. The source of supply has not survived in the record but several possibilities may be considered. Coal may have come from Scottish coalfields or from further south. It could have come by sea and the nearest port was clearly Lossiemouth two miles to the north. In the late 19th century and even the early 20th century this would probably have been the likeliest route.

From Lossiemouth the coal could have been supplied by road or more probably by rail to the siding adjacent to the works. Until recently there was a large coal dump at Elgin beside the railway station. This was supplied in recent years by road but it was formerly served by rail. Coal could equally well have been supplied to Windyridge siding from this source.

## Clay extraction and conveyance

The method of excavation of the raw material is not recorded, but the usual arrangement would be either hand or machine digging. Thereafter the clay had to be conveyed to the production area. If the light railway, already referred to, was taken down to the bottom of the clay pit, the conveyance was clearly by that means. It would, however, entail the occasional adjustment of the incline to keep pace with the deepening pit. The alternative was some form of conveyor belt system to take the clay from the dig to the end of the railway. In some pits, Inverkeillor in Angus, for example, a combined mechanical extractor/conveyor was employed (Douglas and Oglethorpe 1993, p. 11)

The side-tipping waggons used on the endless ropeway generally had a capacity of approximately two tons.

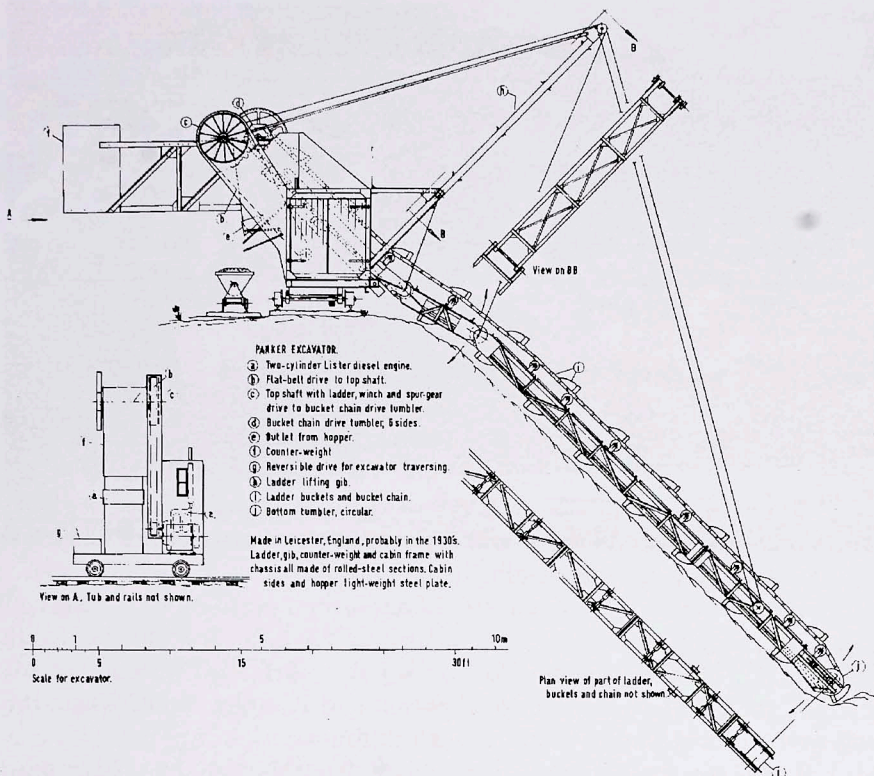


Figure 9 The Parker Excavator (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS).

## Impurities

The presence of impurities in the clay can cause deformation of the bricks or tiles when they are subject to the intense heat of the kiln. In processing, the clay impurities are either crushed and ground or if they are large enough or of special interest, they are removed. The marine origin of the alluvium in which the clay is found produces quantities of shells, but at times other items of interest occur. It is recorded that at the time of the Moray Field club visit in 1928 Mr Christie had arranged a small exhibit of such items. These included shells of oyster, cockle, mussel, clam, razor fish, voluta, helix, cyrena and paludina. There were also an ammonite, a belemite and several star fish. Most of these were found up to 40 ft (12 m) below ground level. It is also recorded that in 1924 at a depth of 18 ft (5.4 m) the fossilised skeleton of a fish like a sole (*Gnathostomata actinopterygii*) was recovered. In 1928 a large bone later identified as the femur of a roe deer (*Mammalia* of *Cervus elaphus scoticus*) was found at a depth of 20 ft (6 m), these were presented to the Elgin Museum.

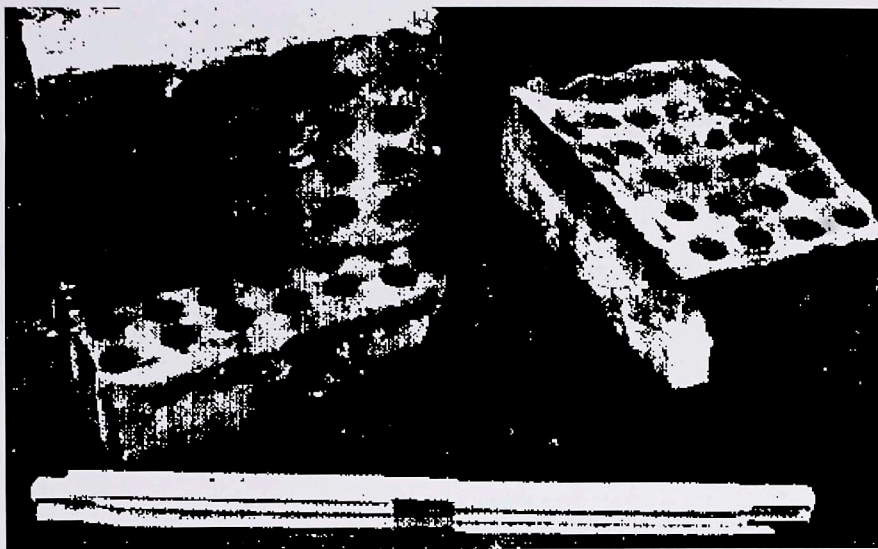


Figure 10 Perforated bricks (photo W.A.B.).

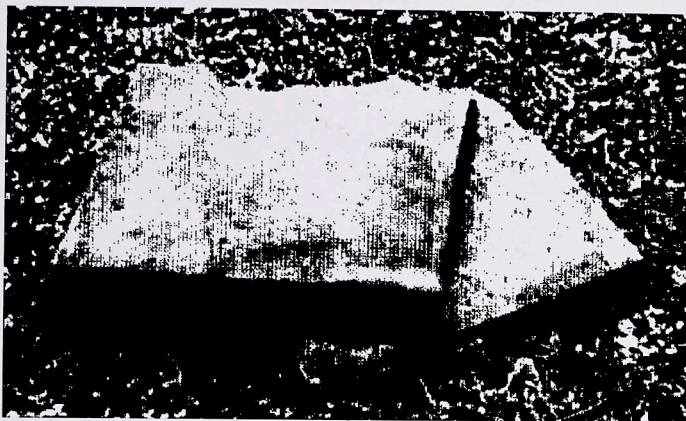
## The products

It is thought that the products would have found a market locally and to the west and north of Moray, since Aberdeenshire was well supplied with clay products from works at places like Cruden Bay (NK 085 360), Peterhead (NK 088 465), and (NK 123 451), Strathbathie (NJ 959 086) and Logie Buchan (NJ 969 268). In Banffshire, brick and tile works flourished at



Figure 11 Roof ridge tiles and finial reused as wall coping (photo W.A.B.).





*Figure 12 Floor tiles (photo W.A.B.).*

Whitehills (NJ 661 658), Craigellachie (NJ 291 445) and at Tochieneal (NJ 521 648).

Builders' merchants in Elgin had a yard adjoining the railway sidings at NJ 219 622 where the products were stockpiled and displayed. These included a wide variety of bricks, tiles and pipes of various sizes and descriptions. One of the commonest bricks produced was 9"x6"x2". This brick was pierced with 24 holes which made it lighter and easier to handle, and gave better insulation and a good key for plaster (see Fig. 10). It was used extensively for internal partitions before the introduction of plasterboard on studding.

Clay pipes for field drainage were produced in great quantities. Farmers and landowners were encouraged by legislation to promote drainage schemes. The first drainage tile works in Scotland is thought to have been set up in Ayrshire in 1826 (Taylor 1839, cited in Douglas and Oglethorpe 1993, p. 16) and by the 1840s tile works were well established elsewhere in the country.

The removal of the tile tax in 1839 together with further legislation culminating in the Land Drainage Act of 1846 (Fenton 1976, cited in Douglas and Oglethorpe 1993, p. 16) gave further impetus to the industry.

In addition to pipes and bricks, the works produced roofing and ridge tiles and floor tiles (see Figs 11, 12), pipes for all types of drainage work, and also flower pots.

## **The workforce**

No official records of the workforce have been discovered, but from old photographs it would appear that the number of men employed was c. 20–25. In



*Figure 13 A photograph taken in the 1920s*

one old photograph, undated but believed to have been taken in the 1920s, there are 23 men (Fig. 13). In another photograph of slightly later date there are 24 men. These did not include any management or office staff, so one might assume a total payroll of say 30–35.

In Figure 13 the men are posed somewhat self consciously in front of one of the buildings. It can be seen that there is some machinery at the left of the picture. The building appears to be clad in vertical boarding and laps with a clay pantile roof. Judging by the building on the right, it seems likely that it was of timber-frame construction. This accords with the usual custom, which was to have lightly constructed buildings of this type with the exception of the kiln which was always built of brick.

Figure 13 is reproduced by courtesy of Mr S. Kelman, whose grandfather is standing at the back, second from the right. Another photograph from his brother Mr H. Kelman, sadly too poor to reproduce, included their uncle, George (Dod) Kelman and their grandfather; so at least two generations found continuing employment in the works.

It must be assumed that in the absence of any evidence of housing at the works, apart from the house already illustrated (Fig. 6), the employees must have come from nearby settlements, probably mainly from Lossiemouth and Elgin.



## Acknowledgements

The author is pleased to have the opportunity of acknowledging the assistance received in the preparation of this paper from: Mrs Elizabeth Beaton for helpful information; John Hume for permission to use Figure 4; The Elgin Library (Local Collection); Messrs. S. and H. Kelman for personal reminiscences and use of their photographs; the RCAHMS for permission to publish Figures 8 and 9; Shire Publications Ltd., for permission to reproduce Figure 7.

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# **THE HAA OF CRUISTER, BRESSAY, SHETLAND**

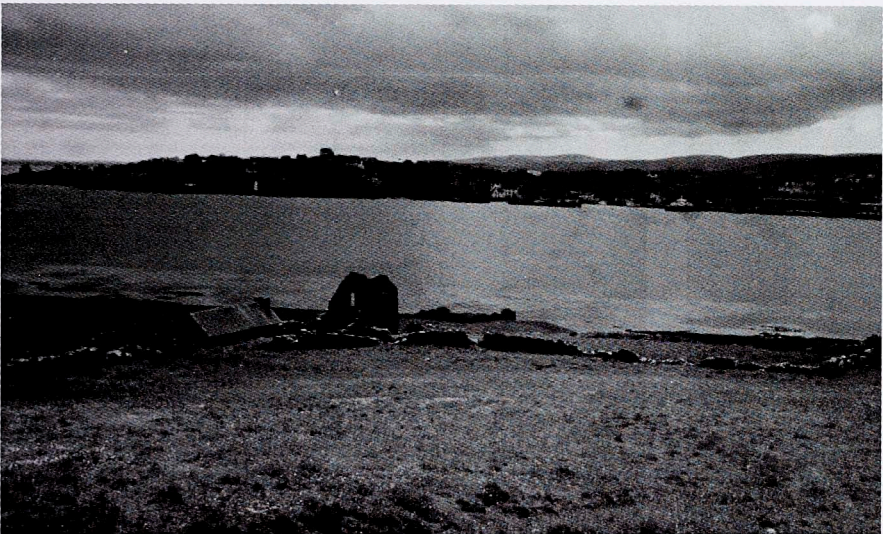
## **Three generations of the mercantile Bolt family: their role in 17th–19th century Shetland society and their architecture**

**Sabina Strachan**

The house of the Bolts, a significant mercantile family in Shetland until the early 19th century, would have sat prominently above Bressay Sound and across from Lerwick on the western side of the island of Bressay. Devoid of its harling the ruin now disappears into the brown-green hillside of Cruister. The following is a study of both the evolving role of enterprising generations and of the built-form which resulted.

### **David Bolt, Trader**

A mortgage of Cruister is made to one David Bolt in 1699; this transaction infers that David already tenanted the land as he also already possessed the designation ‘of Cangasetter’ when he acquired a tenement of land in Lerwick.<sup>1</sup> This acquisition also points to David’s likely occupation as a merchant, as Lerwick emerged during the 17th century as a trading centre for the visiting Dutch fishing fleets. Site requirements for trading booths were twofold; firstly its proximity to the inshore fishing grounds, the ‘haaf’, and



*Figure 1 The Haa of Cruister, looking east to Bressay Sound and Lerwick.*

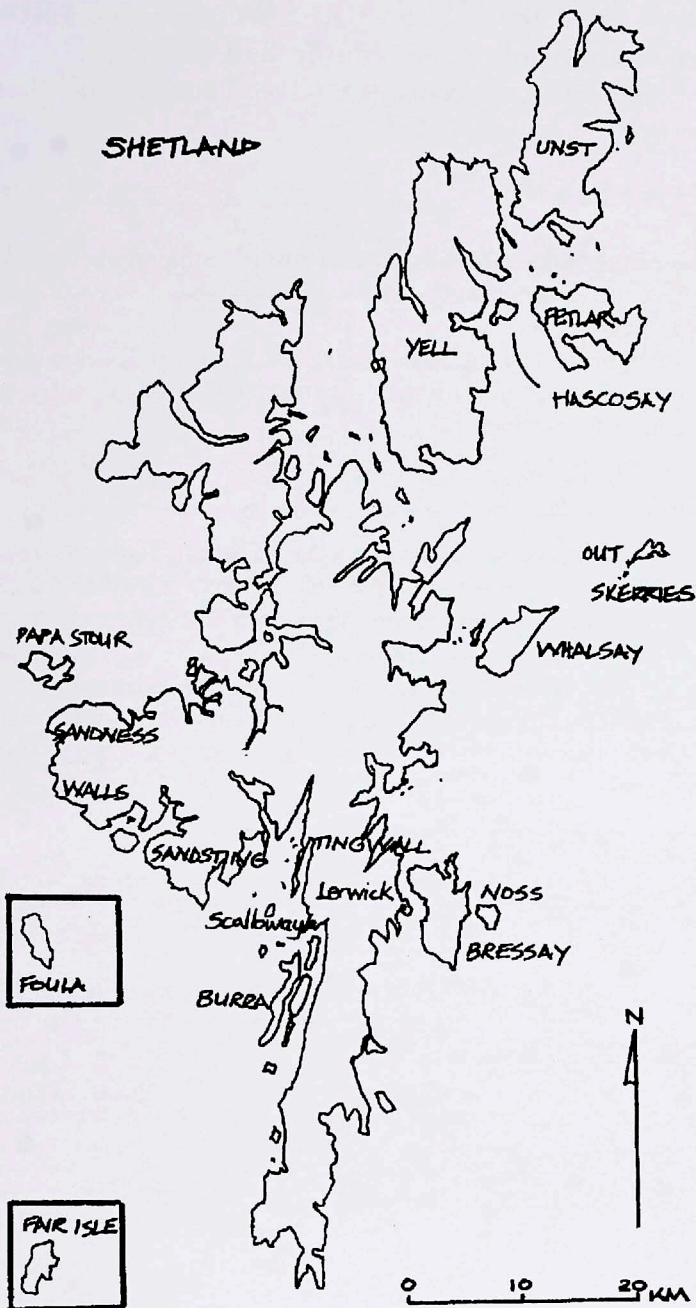


Figure 2 Shetland. West and Central Mainland parishes relating to the Bolts, major islands and conurbations.



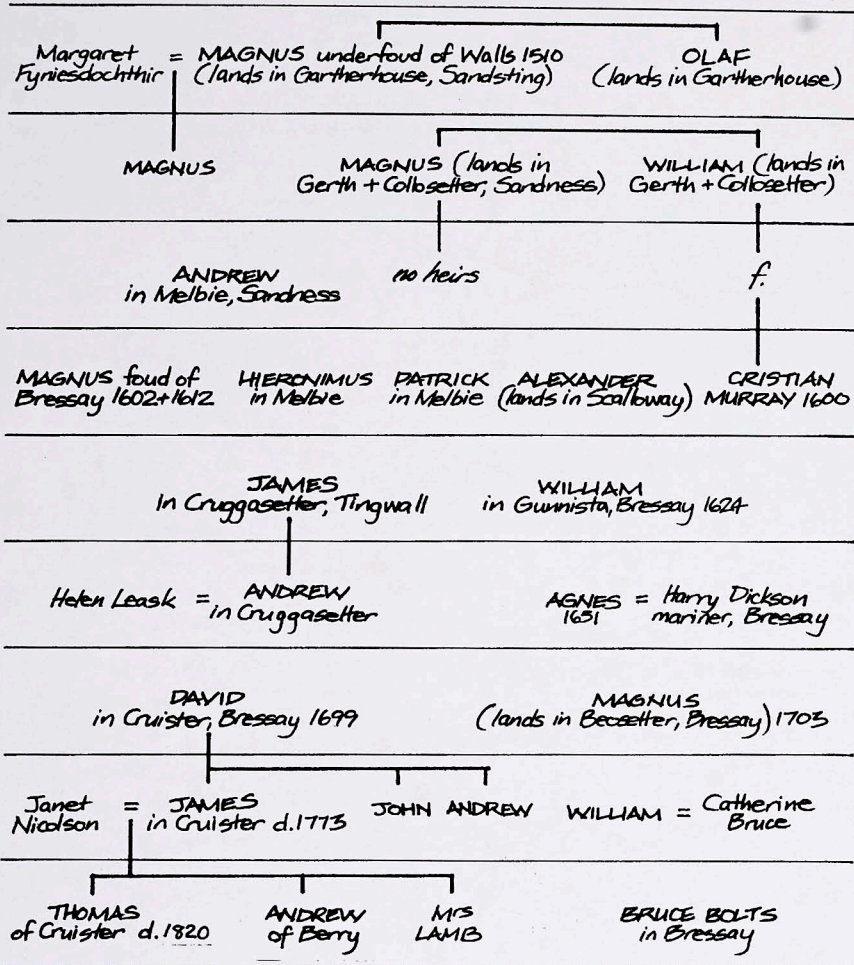


Figure 3 Conjectural sequence of generations of the Bolt family in Shetland, 1500–1800.<sup>3</sup>

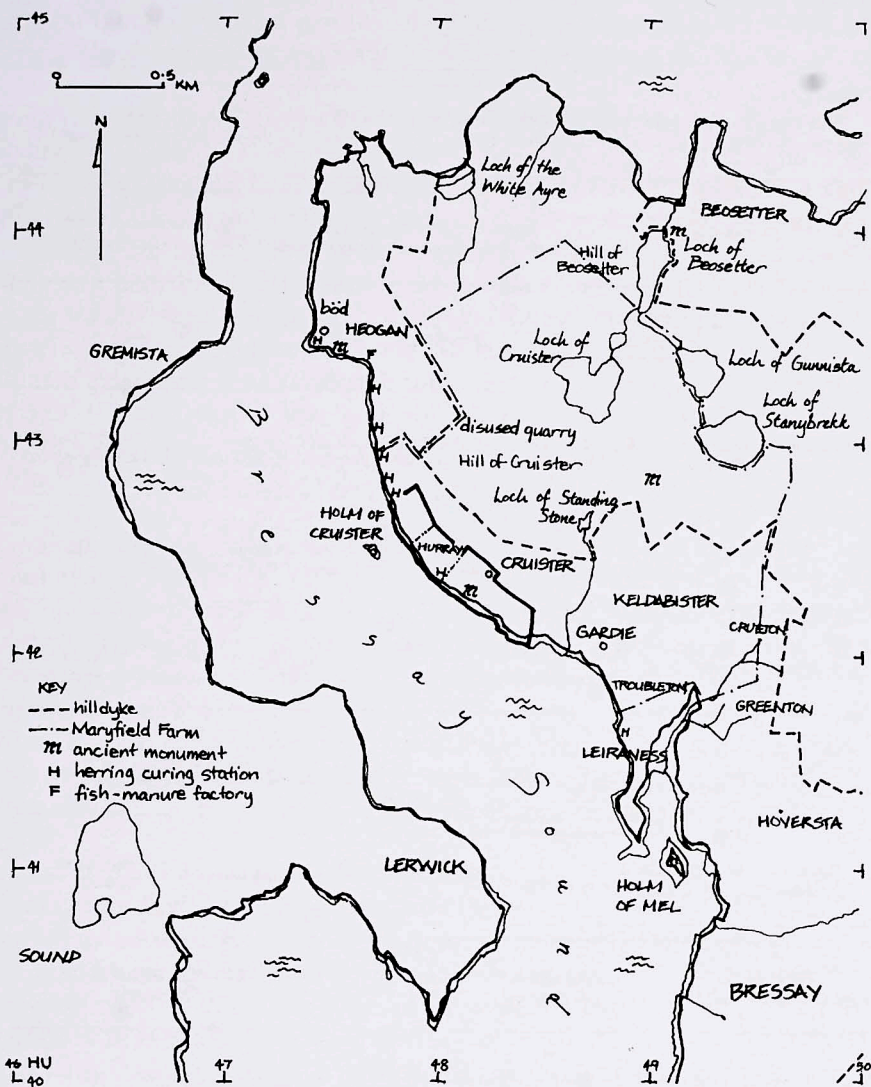


Figure 4 Bressay Sound. Agriculture and fisheries, townships and outsets.<sup>4</sup>

secondly an appropriate shingle beach, an 'ayre', to dry the catch. These could be described as 'böds'; however, their form and function varied considerably over time and circumstance, for example, from two-storey merchant's dwellings with living accommodation above the storeroom as at Greenwell's Booth, Yell, to one-and-a-half storey böds with lofted accommodation such as the Böd of Nesbister, Whitnass, to simple single-storey stores and also 'truck' shops.

David's relative wealth and status within Shetland's economy may have been influenced by his (inferred) lineage from local 'sheriffs' and small landowners (see Fig. 3). In the early 16th century *fouds* were major landowners, contrary to the prevailing fragmentary landholding model. The early 17th-century foud of Bressay, Magnus Bolt, would have been directly involved with trade organisation by collecting dues from itinerant merchants, setting prices and regulating ship locations, weights and measures.<sup>2</sup>

The böds in Bressay suffered the same fate as the embryonic Lerwick in 1615 and 1625 as buildings erected for the purposes of trade were demolished.<sup>5</sup> It is therefore likely that the 'biggings' which existed at Cruister in 1699 dated to the second half of the 17th century. As a consequence of the Third Anglo-Dutch War Fort, Charlotte and several of Lerwick's most convivial houses were razed in 1673.<sup>6</sup>

Bressay is composed of Old Red Sandstone which provides excellent building stone and heavy stone slates, of a thicker and coarser variety than Orcadian counterparts. Different qualities of stone and workmanship are evident in the surviving buildings of Cruister. Building B primarily consists of bands of tightly bedded flagstones in lime-mortar and its short span and pitch suggests that it may have originally been roofed with local slate. Building material of this type would have been readily available and easily quarried from the outcrops at the shore. If the burnt mound was deteriorating at this time some of its stone may have also been robbed for this purpose.

The farmhouse at Gungstie in the island of Noss is said to date to the 1670s or 80s,<sup>8</sup> is built with Bressay flagstones and has massively thick chimneystacks; the pitch of the main single-storey block and span is similar to that of Building B in Figure 6. At Cruister there is evidence of rebuilding in its NE portion, particularly visible about 1 m above ground level on the SE wall. The NE gable appears to have been rebuilt with an entrance at its E corner in which a piece of timber, originally a boat strut, has been reused as a lintel (see Fig. 7). The SW chamber has a large, deep fireplace with aumbries at either side in the gable and a small window in the SE wall. However, these have been blocked using similar materials and techniques, suggesting that little time had elapsed before this change took place. Building B may have functioned as a residential building or kitchen serving a house, probably located at A, the remainder of the small courtyard having had ancillary



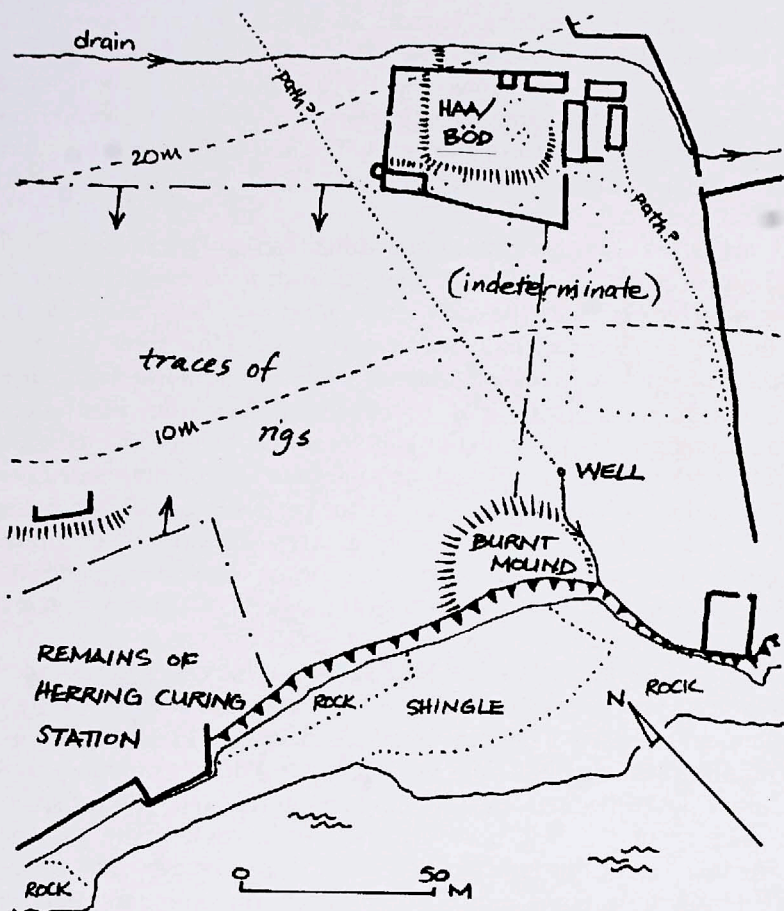


Figure 5 Cruister. Immediate landscape: prehistoric-present.<sup>7</sup>

buildings and a screen wall. A slightly different alignment is suggested by protruding footings beneath the SW wall at A. This may be contemporary with Building B or slightly later. Perhaps Building B became an ideal böd and cooking became internalised within a new house or a rebuilding at A.

Parallels exist for this courtyard form with merchant's dwellings in Lerwick<sup>9</sup> and houses of those landowners who were directly involved in the fish trade. William Sandison suggests that the Lerwick houses were built end-on to the shoreline only after space was at a premium;<sup>10</sup> however, the same form is employed at Cruister where this is not a priority. Here the buildings are not positioned immediately adjacent to the shore, instead they are sited so that the long axis may take advantage of the best sightlines towards both the north and south mouths of the Sound (see Figs 1, 7).<sup>11</sup>



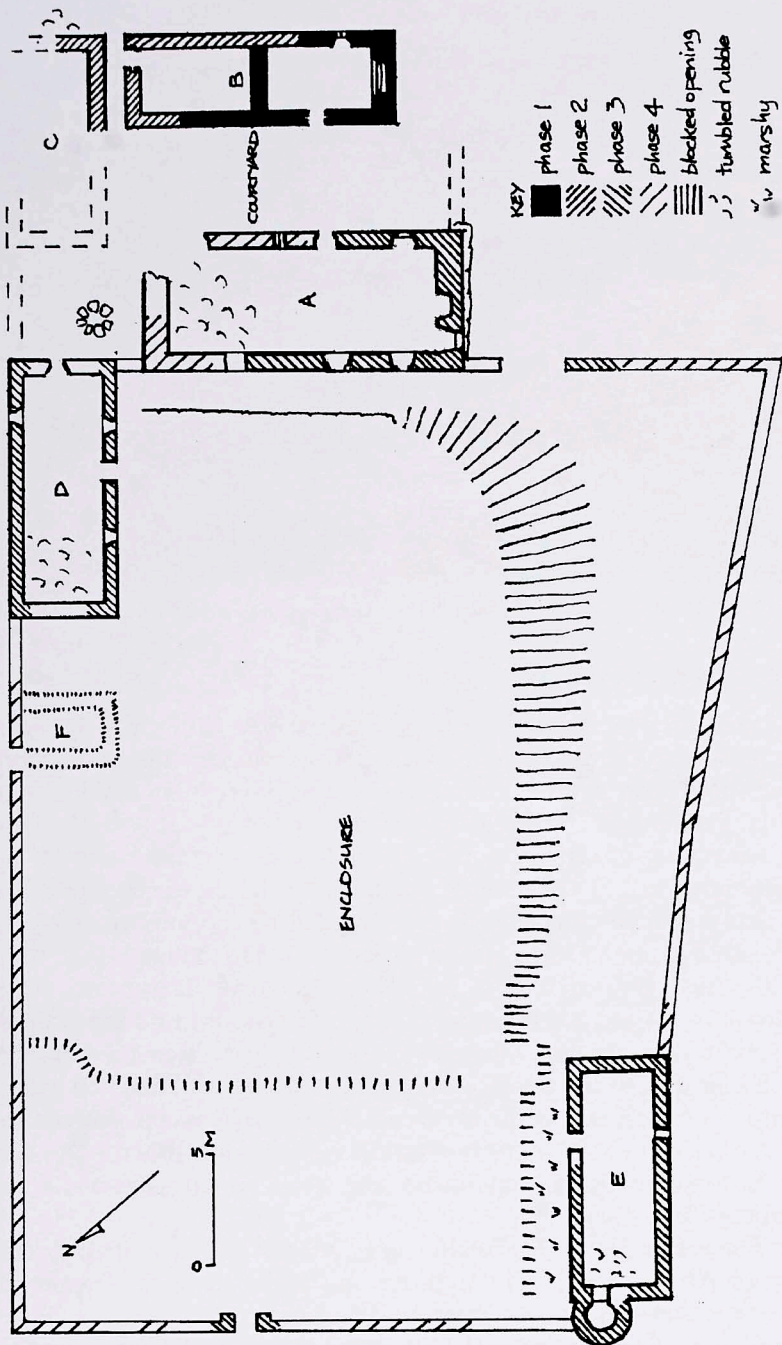


Figure 6 The Haa of Cruister. Phases of building/rebuilding and its present condition.



*Figure 7 Cruister, looking west. Building B is in the foreground, with Lerwick in the background.*

## **James Bolt, merchant**

In 1718 Patrick Leslie sold the mortgaged land of Cruister to David's heir 'James Bult in Crewaster'<sup>12</sup>. A backbond relating to this transaction was issued shortly thereafter and reserves to Leslie the right 'of making Quarries or taking mining or Carring away of stone, or schat [slate]'.<sup>13</sup> The German merchants were effectively expelled from Shetland by the high duty placed upon foreign salt in 1712, which dramatically altered the characteristics of Shetland's economy henceforth compounded by sporadic years of famine and disease from the 1690s. These difficulties led to the bankruptcy of some lairds, which generated land for others to create larger estates; these landowners devised the fish-tenure or 'truck' system to fill the void left by the departing merchants. Tenants were now obliged, threatened by eviction, to sell their fish to the laird, or his agent, or to a pre-designated local merchant for a fixed price to the exclusion of all other possible outlets. During the first half of the 18th century, truck shops were established where tenants paid in kind for fishing equipment and items to subsidise their meagre income.<sup>14</sup>

James Bolt married Janet, daughter of John Nicolson of Gilsbreck and niece of Arthur Nicolson of Bullister and Lochend who were prominent Lerwick merchants. James is described as 'merchant in Lerwick' in the Sheriff Court Register of Deeds, and was active in the European market, as in 1725 Jan Wynties, an Amsterdam merchant, gave him power of attorney.<sup>15</sup>





*Figure 8 Building B: the blocked window.*

It is likely that James fulfilled an intermediary role during his career as he did not build up large holdings. Instead, he would have entered into contracts with lairds for their tenants' fish, employed men and boys to cure them on the beach at Cruister and made all the necessary arrangements for their export.

James' fortuitous marriage may have instigated the rebuilding of his house at Cruister as the wall thicknesses and size of openings as exist in the two-storey-and-garret Building A seem to place it in the era of James Bolt



*Figure 9 Building B: the blocked fireplace; note the triangular-headed lintel.*

rather than his father. For example, 17th-century thick-walled houses such as Tangwick, Eshaness and the Old Haa of Brough, Yell, seem to possess squatter proportions than Cruister. The western ground-floor windows of Building A are small, which suggests that the principal accommodation was on the first floor. Direct access may have been via a forestair with the main room possessing larger windows north-westwards. The ground-floor window

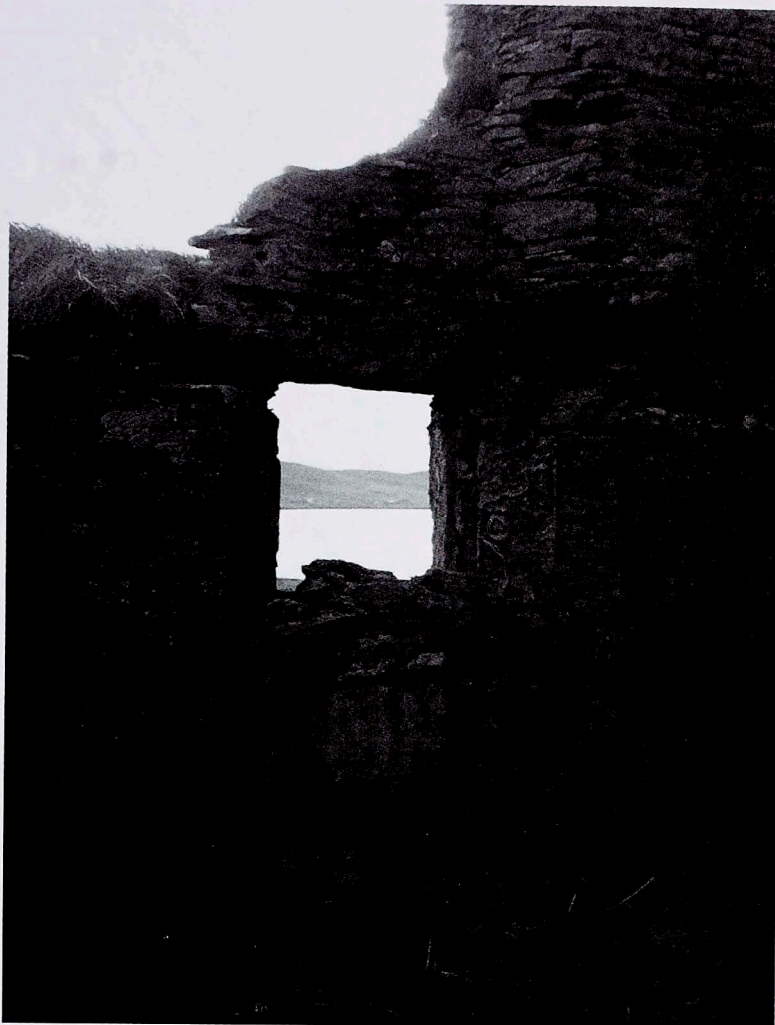




*Figure 10 Building A: the NW elevation.*

at the southern corner of the SE elevation possesses the same proportions as the surviving first-floor examples. The view, as in Figure 11, suggests that this sightline towards the southern mouth of Bressay Sound would be retained if there existed an archway at the return of a screen wall adjacent to Building B. The shell-lime mortared house may have originally been of a lesser length than that inferred on plan. However, as a substantial proportion of the NE end is a later rebuilding and much has collapsed, conclusivity upon this issue cannot be assured. The roof pitch as inferred by the surviving SW gable suggests that less substantial slate than the local variety was used, such as Easdale slates which were imported in the early 18th century from the west coast of Scotland.<sup>16</sup> The dwelling is indicated by a house symbol marked near the 'Holme of Cruester' on the inset of Bressay Sound upon the 1727 map of Shetland by Gerard van Kenlen<sup>17</sup> and the arrangement of Cruister in the era of James Bolt is suggested by Option A in Figure 12.

Little of Building C now remains, much of it may have been robbed, either for the construction of further outbuildings or for the 19th-century period of enclosure; jambs lie amongst its debris. An indeterminate circular feature formed of flat stones exists in the small yard between Buildings A and C. This may represent a stack base or perhaps a midden or even a water source.



*Figure 11 Building A: the interior of the south window of the SE elevation; note the remains of decorative plasterwork on the right chamfer.*

## **Thomas Bolt, merchant and agent**

James' heir Thomas Bolt married Barbara, daughter of Alexander Innes of Fracafield (an important merchant-laird in Tingwall), in 1763, by which time Thomas was already a prosperous merchant in his own right. The 1762 accounts of his uncle, Arthur Nicolson, recorded that in that year Thomas supplied to him 98 cans of oil, 1167 ling and 1376 lasts of tusk, and that they were party to the smuggling of German gin and Dutch brandy in which

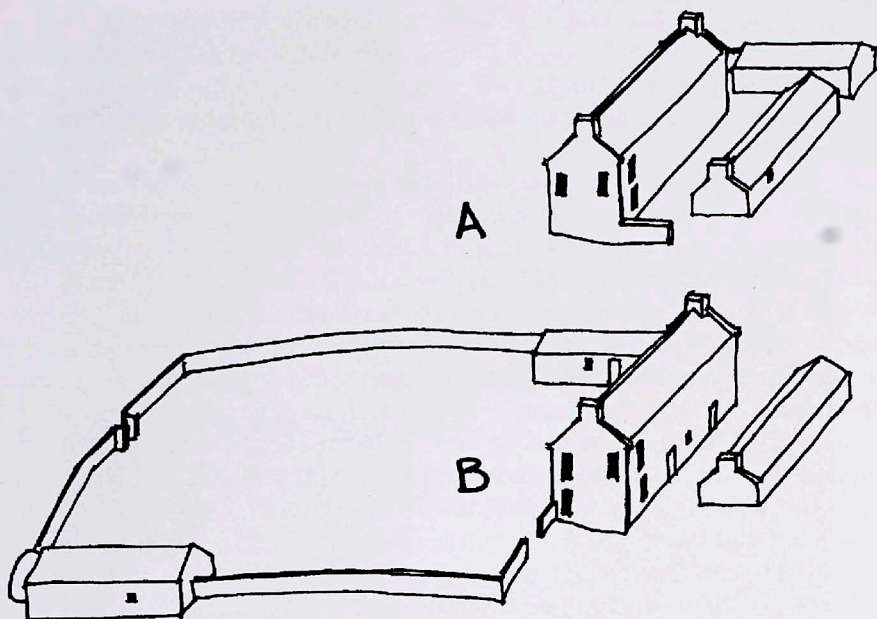


Figure 12 The Haa of Cruister: conjectural development.



Figure 13 Buildings A and B from the south-west.



Cruister played a key role.<sup>18</sup> Andrew Bruce of Heogan and Thomas Bolt were particularly active in developing markets for cured fish in Spain in the late 1750s and early 1760s. British merchant houses ordered Shetland fish for the new South European markets from local representatives such as Thomas Bolt.<sup>19</sup>

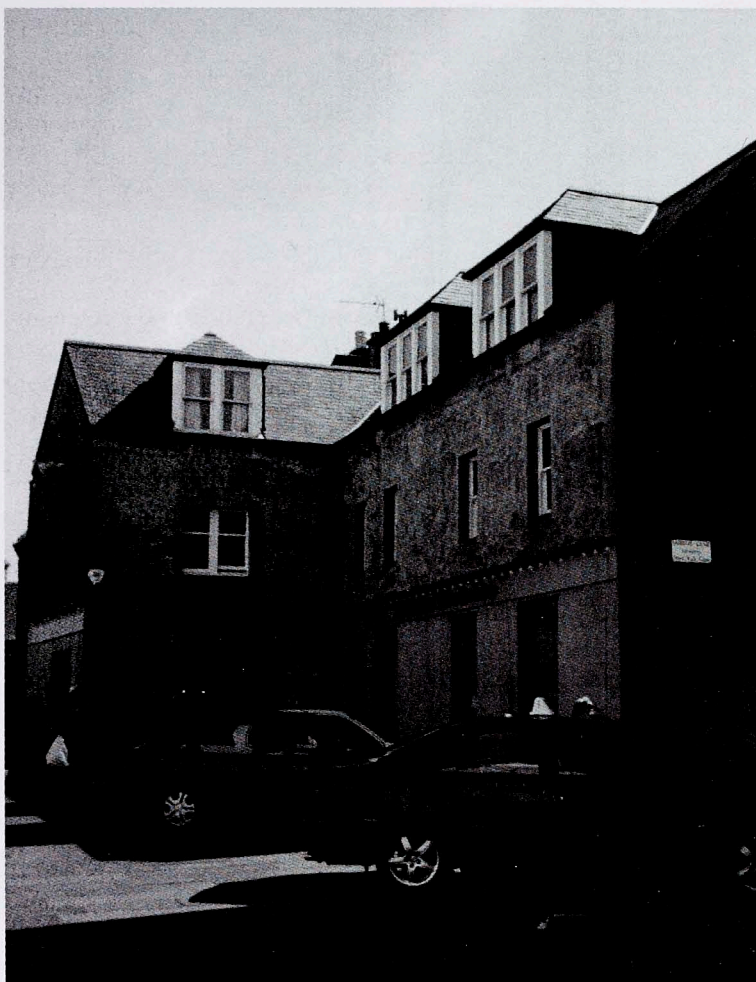
Thomas formally inherited Cruister in 1773 and a second seisin was recorded upon the same day whereby the Brough lands in Bressay were exchanged for a larger proportion of Cruister.<sup>20</sup> This may have instigated some alterations to the existing structure and the development of a formal garden. The latter would have been a costly venture as regards the importation of soil and creation of a revetment to form a level terrace NE of the house. The fashion for walled formal gardens seems to have been popular in Shetland in the mid-18th-century, as one 19th-century commentator noted at the old house of Bruce of Symbister in Whalsay.<sup>21</sup> A large ground-floor window was also added to the SW gable of Building A and it appears as if the south-westernmost doorway on the SE wall dates to this period. The window lintel and lowermost jambs of the portal, which are in-situ, are of the same light-grey granite and the broken marriage lintel in the courtyard debris is also likely to originate from the doorway. The conjectural arrangement of Cruister in the time of Thomas Bolt is given as Option B in Figure 12.



*Figure 14 Building E: the barn and kiln from the north. This example of a 18th-century circular kiln in Bressay is unusual as it had been thought that they 'are confined to the southern tip of Shetland.'*<sup>22</sup>

The sills of a number of openings survive in Building D; its function was most probably as a byre. The barn is located at the opposite corner of the garden and has a circular corn-drying kiln attached to its northern corner. A small winnowing hole survives at ground level opposite the door opening. Turf-covering footings of a small rectangular structure are discernible to the NW of Building D. Outbuildings were a necessity and were not considered as something to be disguised at this period.

A small, roofed, single-storey structure is marked by the shore beneath Cruister upon George Thomas' 1829 chart of Shetland.<sup>23</sup> Its site is now occupied by a small enclosure, which seems to date from the late 19th cen-



*Figure 15 79 Commercial Street, site of the townhouse of Thomas Bolt.*





Figure 16 *The Lerwick Tolbooth.*

tury and may be associated with the herring station which was established nearby. The shoreside structure, in addition to Building B, would have related to the fish processing and storage needs of the 'haaf', the inshore fishing from Cruister. During the 7–9 weeks of the ling, cod and tusk season the small bōd would have been in a practical position whilst Building B may have stored the imported goods, salt and fish which were over-wintered.<sup>24</sup>

Thomas Bolt was also socially active in Lerwick, his townhouse having been located at 79 Commercial Street; the existing structure on this site may be a rebuilding. He was involved with the two major architectural projects of his generation: the replacement of Lerwick's Parish Church and the rebuilding of the Tolbooth. Land for the extension of the latter was donated by Thomas' uncle Arthur Nicolson, whose own townhouse was in its immediate vicinity, and the work was carried out in the 1760s. Bolt's townhouse was midway between the Tolbooth and the kirkyard which sat on the steep incline to the south. The new church was completed in 1782 and Bolt's role in both these projects was described as 'overseer' by the Commissioners of Supply.<sup>25</sup>

### **Thomas Bolt, merchant-laird**

Famine in late 1770s and early 1780s coincided with embargoes resulting from alliances during the American War which was followed by poor returns



from the Hamburg and Italian markets in 1781.<sup>26</sup> The situation recovered somewhat during the 1780s and at the end of that decade Thomas Bolt was appointed factor to Sir Thomas Dundas of Kerse and Vice Admiral Depute.<sup>27</sup> Bolt's fee and lofted status seemed to have instigated a programme of major land acquisitions such as the lion's share of the island of Hascosay after 1786.<sup>28</sup> This suggests that Thomas was directly participating in the fish-tenure system himself, becoming a merchant-laird in his own right; therefore tenants in his newly acquired lands would have been bound to fish for him.

Thomas Bolt embarked on a major remodelling programme at Cruister in 1787; a contemporaneous account of work survives whose detail gives an unparalleled insight into a house of this date in Shetland.<sup>29</sup> Reference is made to the presence of a dining room, mid room and backroom, passage and garret in addition to two or three 'Beds', which may imply boxbeds or bedrooms, and the installation of a number of brick partitions. The arrangement of rooms on the ground and first floors cannot be discerned with any accuracy given the present state of the remains. The work included 'Making & putting up two flights of a stair' and, of the 49 individual entries, a number refer to the payment of labourers, yards of timber for joists, partitions and the provision of new doors, new cornices and architraves and 'Making a toilet table'.<sup>30</sup>

Whereas the preceding account was headed 'Work done at Cruister for Mr Thomas Bolt, 1787 Augt', the following pages were titled 'Account of Work Done in the House now Supplied by me Belonging to Mr Thos Bolt' and therefore do not *necessarily* apply to Cruister itself. Here a kitchen, low room, high room, garret and booth are the terminology used, the work including 'Making a new outer Door With Jambs Bulding in' and 'flags & repairing street & close'.<sup>31</sup> It is, however, feasible that some of the work may have applied to Cruister: evidence exists on the ground that a second doorway was created at the north-easternmost end of the SE elevation where brick can be found in-situ in the jamb. A small window between the two external doors is barely discernible as it seems to have been blocked soon after its creation. It appears as if the NE end of Building A was rebuilt at some stage in its history and, although this is not detailed in the documents cited, either no new stonework was required or this was recorded in another account.

In the 1819 lease of the böd at Cruister to Arthur Nicolson, Thomas made reservation to his heir, his great-granddaughter Janet Scott.<sup>32</sup> It followed the transfer of Bolt's lands in Cruister and Lerwick to Janet which was recorded in 1824 and described the buildings as extant: 'the Manor House of Cruister, Farm House, Byre and Baron of the same'.<sup>33</sup> A number of scenarios can be devised to identify these buildings with the remains at Cruister. Given the certainty that the 'Manor House' is Building A and the 'Barn' is

Building E, it seems most likely that the 'Farm House' is Building B and the 'Byre' Building D. Fish prices slumped in the 1820s and it is possible that Nicolson no longer held the tack at Cruister and therefore none of the buildings were being used as a böd. Alternatively, devoid of its windows, perhaps Building B was described as a byre and Building D as a farmhouse. The shoreside building indicated on the 1829 chart<sup>34</sup> does not appear to have been mentioned at all.

In 1815–16 William Mouat's sister occupied the house and he managed to acquire it in 1826 despite complaints of damp and his description of it as an 'eyesore'.<sup>35</sup> The 1838 seisin of lands which passed to his heir, his nephew William, included the 'Mansion House, Stable and Booth thereof'. Again the 'Mansion House' is Building A, it is then most likely that the byre became described as a 'Stable' at D and Building B is the 'Booth'. A second possibility is that only Buildings A and B are referred to and the booth described is the shoreside building.

## Conclusion

Cruister became incorporated within Maryfield, the home farm of Gardie (see Fig. 4) and the house was tenanted, at least from the first census returns of 1841, until the 1860s by the poorest echelons of society: day labourers and paupers.<sup>36</sup> It appears as if the garden perimeter was rebuilt at some stage and the SW boundary was repositioned to the extremity of the revetment. A jamb and knocking stone forms part of the lowermost reaches of the SE wall.



*Figure 17 Cruister, looking to the south.*



After its abandonment it was used for target practice: Sandison describes it as having been 'disfigured...by a large bulls'-eye...by the Garrison gunnery'.<sup>37</sup> This puncture resulted in the collapse of the SW chimneystack prior to the first aerial photographs of 1944 and the Ordnance Survey map of 1878 suggests that only Building B and the kiln were roofed by this date.<sup>38</sup>

Cruister reflects the hey-day of Thomas Bolt and his forefathers. Their integral and pivotal role in the mercantile industry of Shetland shaped its development from the 17th until the 19th century.

## Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to: Brian Smith and Angus Johnson of the Shetland Archives; the staff at the National Map Library of Scotland and the National Archives of Scotland, in particular Susan Cornwall; John Lowrey of Edinburgh University; Keith MacLaren, Air Photographs Collection, RCAHMS; and Maria Strachan, Shirley Smith, Kevin Jones and Ian Forrest for their generous and invaluable help. Illustrations: the author's own; photographs: the author's own or Maria Strachan's for which permission for their reproduction has been granted.

## Abbreviations

APC	Air Photographs Collection, RCAHMS, Edinburgh
GP	Gardie Papers, Bressay, Shetland <sup>39</sup>
NAS	National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
NMRS	National Mounuments Record of Scotland, Edinburgh
OS	Ordnance Survey
RCAHMS	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
SA	Shetland Archives, Lerwick, Shetland

## Notes and references

- 1 Kirkwall, 20th & 30th July 1699. NAS, Minute Book of Particular Register of Seisins, Orkney & Shetland, 1696-1744, RS 78/2. Reference is also made to David Bolt having part-owned a tenement of houses with cellar and yard which comes into the possession of his sons Andrew and John in 1710. Kirkwall, 22nd May 1719. NAS, Min. Book of Seisins, RS 78/3, f.28r.
- 2 B. Smith (1990) p. 28 & p. 31; 'Notes on offices and officials in Shetland, 1195-1611', Ballatyne & Smith eds. (1999), p. 307; and H. Smith (1984), pp. 15-16.
- 3 Sources: Seisins and Min. Book of Seisins, NAS; Lerwick Sheriff Court



Register of Deed, SA; GP; Ballantyne & Smith eds. (1999); Ballantyne & Smith eds. (1994); Donaldson ed. (1954); Donaldson ed. (1991); Barclay (1962); Johnston & Johnston eds. (1907-13); Grant (1907); Black (1946); *The Shetland News*; and Shetland Family History (2000). Note: the generational arrangement of the Bolts in Melbie is purely conjectural though familial ties are likely e.g. father and sons, brothers and son/nephew. They appear as witnesses to an instrument of seisin in Melbie, 1608. SA, D.10/17/4, Ballantyne & Smith eds. (1994), no. 470, p. 225.

4 Sources: Wills (1968); RCAMS (1946); and OS (1981), *Lerwick, Sheet HU 44/54 & part of HU 34*, Pathfinder Series of Great Britain, 1:25,000.

5 Wills (1968) p. 28; Barclay (1967), p. 65; and NAS, Sheriff Court Book of Shetland, SC10//1/4. Smith (1984), pp. 26-27.

6 Shaw (1980), p. 176.

7 Sources: (aerial photographs) 106G/Scot/UK 97 4050-4051, 1:10,000, 1946, OS/64/221 037-036, 1:7,500, 1964 and Fairley 7343/46 762-763, 1:10,000, 1975, APC; (maps) OS (1880), 6" to 1 mile, NLS Map Library and OS (1999?), EDINA Digimap, detailed view, 1;1,900.

8 A one-and-a-half storey extension was appended to one end. Noss came into possession of the Garth estate (Delting) in the 1670s. Butler (1982), p. 10. Gungstie was restored in 1986 as a visitor centre for the Nature Reserve. Finnie (1990), p. 85.

9 William Aberdeen (1766), 'Perspective View of Lerwick From the North End', Finnie (1990), p. 8.

10 Sandison (1934), pp. 72-3.

11 The 1672 Old Haa of Burravoe, Yell is sited at a position 'where all boats attempting to enter the shelter of the narrow Burra Voe could be monitored'. Ritchie (1997), p. 69.

12 Kirkwall, 28th February 1718. NAS, Min. Book of Seisins, RS 78/3, f.14r & f.14v.

13 1718. SA, Lerwick Sheriff Court Register of Deeds, 1685-1954, SC.12/53/2, pp. 243-4.

14 B. Smith (1999), p. 12; B. Smith (1978), pp. 13-15; H. Smith (1984), p. 40 & pp. 61-3; B. Smith (2000), pp. 70-72; and Goodlad (1983), p. 109.

15 1723. SA, Lerwick Reg. of Deeds, SC./12/53/2, p. 177.

16 Finnie (1996), p. 40.

17 Gerard van Kenlen, 'Breesondt of Suyder Sond of Buys Haven' inset on 'Heteyland Hitland met zyn onderhourige eylanan', 1727. Copied from EMS s.96, NLS Map Library.

18 Arthur Nicolson, Day Book, 'Acco.t of Fish and Oyl Rec.d by Thomas Bolt for my acco.t this year'; and 8th June 1762. Sandison (1934), p. 28 & p. 35.

19 NAS, Customs Accounts, Quarterly Returns Shetland (Lerwick), 1760s, E504/32. H. Smith (1984), p. 64; R. Smith (1987), p. 138; and B. Smith (1984), pp. 64-5.

- 20 Lerwick, 9th June 1773. NAS, Min. Book of Seisins, 1744-1782. RS 79/1, pp. 92-3.
- 21 Rev. James Everett, 1828, who was one of a party of touring Methodists. 'Clareana: collected during a trip to the Zetland Islands, in 1828'. Manuscript, Methodist Archives, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester. Flinn (1989), p. 148.
- 22 Tait (2000), p. 38. A good overview of the construction and function of Orcadian circular kilns is given in Newman (1994).
- 23 George Thomas (1838), 'Fair Chart of Shetland', British Admiralty. Flinn (1989), plate XI.
- 24 Wills (1975), pp. 260-61 & p. 271.
- 25 Minutes of the Commissioners of Supply. Robertson (1991), p. 15.
- 26 B. Smith (1999), pp. 14-16; H. Smith (1977), p. 23; and R. Smith (1987), p. 144, pp. 146-9.
- 27 SA, Lerwick Reg. of Deeds, SC.12/53/6, pp. 103-104; and Robertson (1991), p. 15.
- 28 Grant (1907), p. 68.
- 29 I am grateful to Angus Johnson of the Shetland Archives for bringing this document to my attention.
- 30 'Work done at Cruister for M<sup>r</sup> Thomas Bolt, 1787 Aug<sup>r</sup>', SA, Gifford of Busta Papers, D17/6/15.
- 31 "Accounts of Work Done in the House now Supplied by me Belonging to M<sup>r</sup> Tho<sup>s</sup> Bolt", SA, Gifford of Busta Papers, D17/6/15. A John Murray wrote to Thomas Bolt in 1801 upon a matter which 'we have been long on dif<sup>t</sup> minds; I mean as to the work, I did on your house so long unsettled for...' (20th November 1801, SA, Nicolson Papers, D24/80/24) which may relate to the 1787 work '210 foot Deals Bo<sup>t</sup> from John Mur<sup>y</sup> when my wood Run out'.
- 32 Missive Tack of the Booth of Cruister, Thomas Bolt to Arthur Nicolson of Lochend. 15th Nov 1819. SA Nicolson Papers, D24/1/27.
- 33 March 17th 1824. SA, Bridge. of Seisins, P.R.9.150, 138.
- 34 George Thomas (1838), 'Fair Chart of Shetland', British Admiralty. Flinn (1989), plate XI.
- 35 GP: February 1815, 2231, f.2; Gardie, 6 December 1825, 1825/71; 31st December 1825, 1825/78; 1825/80; Edinburgh, 2nd January 1826, 1826/1; Edinburgh, 4th January 1826, 1826/2; 5th January 1826, 1826/3; and Annsbrae, 30th January 1826, 1826/6; Cruister, 1st July, 1816, 2291, f.2; Gardie, 28th September 1823, 28/09/1823, f.2; and Gardie, 6th December 1825, 1825/71.
- 36 Census records 1841, 1851, 1861 & 1871, SA.
- 37 Sandison (1934), p. 28.
- 38 106G/DY/24 60067, 1:28,000, 1944, APC; and OS (1880), 6" to 1 mile. NLS Map Library.



39 Access to this archive was not possible at the time of the author's visit due to unforeseen circumstances, however summaries of some of the documents are available in the SA.

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# RECORDING SCOTLAND'S DOOCOTS – AN AMBITIOUS, YET EXCITING SVBWG CHALLENGE!

**Elizabeth Beaton and Nick Brown**

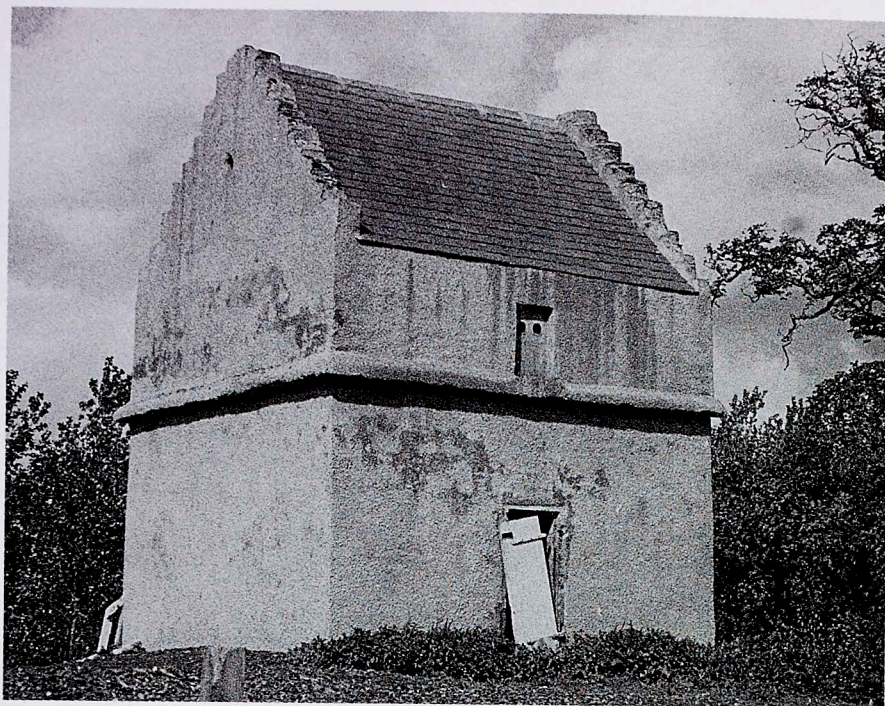
In this edition of *Vernacular Building*, we are launching a project to record historic doocots all over Scotland, with the aim of publishing the findings in a SVBWG series of regional monographs. Recording and contributing spans all skills and expertise from simply identifying a cote and providing the address, to taking photographs, writing notes or preparing sketches or measured drawings, so this project is potentially relevant to every member.

The recording of doocots in Scotland has been spasmodic. Dr Niven Robertson was the pioneer, and he visited and briefly recorded what he found on a county-by-county basis, collating his material in a typescript in 1961. In complete contrast, Nick Brown's Ph.D thesis is a detailed, widely researched academic study of cotes in Moray, completed in 2000.<sup>1</sup> In between these contrasting manuscripts are various published works. Dovecotes have been identified and individually described in Caithness<sup>2</sup> with line drawings by Bruce Walker, while G. A. G. Peterkin published *Scottish Dovecotes*<sup>3</sup>, his introductory essay backed up with county lists including the typology of identified buildings, the types interpreted by simple icons devised by D. C. Bailey and M. C. Tindall in their *Dovecots of East Lothian* (1963)<sup>4</sup>.

Unusually this single type of building offers a wide variety of form, construction period (medieval to 20th century), materials and condition, is of historic interest, and is sometimes known nationally, though usually associated with local estates, families or parishes. Most are redundant and at risk: some are included in Historic Scotland's Statutory List of Buildings of Architectural and Historic Interest, but this is a statutory identifying and grading mechanism and does not necessarily mean that the 'listed' cote will in good repair. Most doocots are of a size that can be measured, sketched and/or photographed, nesting boxes counted and the building materials identified, all this by anyone interested and curious enough to visit. It is estimated that there are over 500 in the lowlands of Scotland alone and other clusters elsewhere.

At the outset this project may sound overwhelming, and it will certainly take several years to complete. It will hopefully involve many members, from those who provide snippets of information to others with greater resources. It is pioneering and something the Group should be able to manage with credit, given time. The buildings are usually obvious, not too large and readily identifiable, and the information we seek can be basic or complex.





*Figure 1 Rectangular dovecote at Durn, Portsoy; probably late 17th-century.*

Why doocots? As many members will know, young pigeons were farmed intensively for their flesh in Scotland from Norman times until the last century, their cotes frequently prestigious symbols of land ownership. The role of the doocot was to provide the birds with a secure breeding environment; basic requirements variously manifested as buildings large and small, of different plan forms and shapes, age and materials, reflecting both national and local building characteristics and sometimes the influence of contemporary architectural fashion. Doocots play a valuable role, not only in the architectural and building field but in agricultural, social and economic history as well. These small but always individual structures can be seen in a wider context than first appears: for example, our President, Professor Alexander Fenton, commented after a lecture on the subject that they constitute ‘an index of Scottish vernacular building’<sup>5</sup>.

The constitution of the SVBWG enjoins us to ‘diffuse knowledge of the subject (vernacular building) through discussion and through publication of information...and recording of vernacular buildings in their regional and social settings’. What better than to record and publish on doocots – a subject in which we can all participate to a greater or lesser extent – after all, ‘small is beautiful’ and every contribution counts!





Figure 2 Beehive dovecote, Dale, Caithness, flanked by later garden walls (Bruce Walker).

The publications envisaged are regional booklets with introduction, an essay about doos and doocots, also about the locality, glossary and distribution map. A page, more where advisable, will be dedicated to each cote with description, commentary, illustrations and essential data. This format is reasonably flexible and can be adapted to the requirements of different areas and authors.

For this task we are fortunate that Nick has agreed not only to write the first monograph, entitled *The Doocots of Moray*, but also to act as Series Editor and as a clearing house for all information. No one could be better qualified. During the past six years he has worked on and completed his doctoral thesis devoted to the Doocots of Moray with Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, after having already received an RIAS award for

architectural research. With that, his work, a young family and the recent set-back of illness (now happily recovered), we have not seen him at recent events, but those of you who recorded the Craibstone Limekilns, Cullen, in November, 1995 will well remember how he cheerfully masterminded the weekend and collated the subsequent monograph.

In response to the initiative, some members have already started work on doocots in their own areas. David Elder is recording in East Lothian, his work to be published in the series, Kenneth McCrae and friends are collating material in Dumfries and Galloway, while Ian Temple intends to write up the Edinburgh cotes. Elizabeth Beaton is actively seeking contributions from the Highlands and Islands besides having an overall input in the series in her current role as SVBWG Publications Co-ordinator.

SVBWG is seeking information in the form of notes about building materials, OS grid references, addresses, descriptions or more. Illustrations can include sketches, measured drawings and photographs. Meantime, an inventory of the basic information sought appears at the end of this paper. Do not be put off by the length of the list, just supply what you can, when you can. It is intended that this inventory be reproduced in a more convenient form to serve as a checklist for use on site. Write to either Elizabeth or Nick, who will suggest how to go about looking and recording; they will also forward copies of the checklist.

So we hope there will be a good response – don't be backward about coming forward – now or later!

## **Contacts**

Elizabeth Beaton, Keam Schoolhouse, Hopeman, Elgin, Moray IV30 5YB, Publications Co-ordinator, SVBWG.

Dr Nick Brown, Ellieside Cottage, Lintmill, Cullen, Buckie, Banffshire AB56 4XP, Series Editor, Doocot Project.

### **Appendix: List of desirable doocot DATA (but better collect some, even if all are not possible)**

1. Owner's name and address of property
2. Permission to view from? (if different from above)
3. OS Grid reference
4. Date (or dates) information collected
5. Approximate building date of cote
6. Typology, i.e. beehive, square, lectern (mono-pitch roof), cylindrical
7. Ground plan, i.e. external measurements, internal divisions
8. Wall thickness
9. Height to wall-head
10. Overall height



11. Walling materials, rubble, harl, brick, etc.
12. Roof finish, i.e. slates, pantiles etc.
13. Measurements of outer doorway
14. Type of door (if still present)
15. External ledges
16. Mural vents, holes or openings
17. Flight holes, number, type and location
18. Number of nesting boxes
19. Nesting box material: wood, stone or brick etc.
20. Do nesting boxes start at ground floor or are they raised above floor?
21. Internal ledges (in front of nesting boxes)
22. Flooring material – if visible
23. Any indication of potence (revolving ladder within nesting chamber) or perhaps plinth or shaped boulder on which it stood?
24. Photographs, sketches, measured drawings, published and unpublished information from library, archive, architects' office. (Please name and date photographs, drawings and sketches.)
25. Any other information, notes or comment

**Measurements:** These should preferably be given in metric, followed by the imperial equivalent in brackets.

## References

1. Copies deposited in Elgin Library, Moray, and Robert Gordon University Library, Aberdeen. For further information, correspond with Nick Brown.
2. Elizabeth Beaton, *The Doocots of Caithness*, SVBWG Monograph, 1980.
3. G. A.G. Peterkin, *Scottish Doocots*, Coupar Angus, nd but c. 1980.
4. D. C. Bailey and M. C. Tindall, 'Dovecots of East Lothian', in *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society NS 11* (1963).
5. Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, c. 1980.

# SHOEMAKERS' LAND, LINLITHGOW WEST LoTHIAN

**J. E. C. Peters**

Shoemakers' Land is an interesting example of a Scots tenement property, built in the centre of Linlithgow, by the Shoemakers' Guild. The rear wing was of some age; the article shows that the front section was in fact substantially younger than is generally credited in recent architectural descriptions of the burgh.

Shoemakers' Land, Linlithgow, was surveyed by the writer and the documentary research carried out in 1969, the building then being empty, except for one of the shops which was let to a television repairer<sup>1</sup>. The front part of the property was restored in 1973, the rear then being demolished.

Shoemakers' Land belonged to the Incorporation of Shoemakers in Linlithgow; it formed 123-7 High Street, and is on the south side of that road, a little to the west of the Cross, the centre of the burgh. Shoemaking was one of the more important trades in the town in the 18th and 19th centuries, being one of the eight incorporated trades. It was related to tanning, the most important industry in the town.<sup>2</sup> The ground slopes up steeply behind the building, to what was the back lane of the burgh, the line probably altered when the railway was built. In 1969 the building consisted of a three-storey range to the road, dated 1829, with an older wing behind, mainly two storey. The southern half of the site was a garden, with a gate to the back lane.

Until 1829 the property was in two separate ownerships. The descent of the western half can be traced from 1577, when it belonged to J. Glover and Christian Wilson, his wife; it descended by inheritance until 1659 when it was purchased by Janet Meikle, owned jointly with her husband, James Henderson, from 1661. Their son sold it to the Incorporation in 1680, perhaps to clear a mortgage raised on the property eight years before by his father. The eastern half, apparently only the street frontage, was purchased by the Incorporation in 1829.<sup>3</sup> Whether the full width of the garden at the rear had previously belonged to the western property, or whether part went with the eastern half is not apparent.

The Incorporation seems to have been flourishing in 1829, as it not only purchased the additional property, but spent £528 0s 8d that year and the next rebuilding the street frontage, and a further sum laying out the garden. Part of this was borrowed. The building appears to have been erected as an investment, most or all of it being let. The Guild had some 68 members in 1829, but it began to decline in the 1850s and was down to 6 in 1908.<sup>4</sup>

Behind no. 127 was a two-storey range running up the hill, still relatively intact in 1969; the end was dug into the hill. There was also a lower



wing behind no. 123, but this was entered only from the property to the east of Shoemakers' Land, an odd arrangement which may go back to the 17th century. The western property, no. 127, was described as bounded on the east by the lands of Liverance, Notary, and Drummond of Hawthornden; no. 123 was described as bounded on its east and south by the property of Drummond of Hawthornden. To the west and south of no. 127 were the tenements and tailings of Robert Stewart.<sup>5</sup>

The form of the pre-1829 building against the road is not clear. The crow-stepped gable which in 1969 formed the south wall of the stair access to no. 127 extended the full width from the site boundary to the central access passage, suggesting that there had been here at one time a three-storey range at right-angles to the road. This would have been like Hamiltons Land, 38-42 High Street, one of the surviving 17th-century properties in the eastern half of the town. This has two gables filling the frontage, save for a roofed access between.

Wood's map of 1820 shows the front of nos.123-7 as a plain rectangle, slightly projecting in front of the adjoining properties, but no further than small, open enclosures in front of the property to the east, and a projection a short distance away on the west. One development before 1829 is known, however; in 1666 James Henderson gained permission to extend the front of no.127 as far forward as the building line of William Drummond of Hawthornden on the east, and the turnpike stair of Provost Robert Stewart on the west.<sup>6</sup>

The re-building of the front section of the property is dated by the year 1829 inscribed at the top of the panel high up on the façade, carved with the mark of the Incorporation, and also by the building accounts.<sup>7</sup> The façade is symmetrical on the ground floor, but not above, the thick stone wall to the east of the entry perpetuating the old property division. There are quoins to the east gable, but omitted on the west, which is visually finished by those to 129 High Street. This was also re-built in 1829; the opportunity seems to have been taken to share the gable wall which included a chimney serving the two properties.<sup>8</sup> It is likely that the builder was a shoemaker, by name Dougal; a Dougal built the shoe factory in nearby Dog Well Wynd, and owned the house by 1876.<sup>9</sup>

The ground floor at the front consisted of two shops with an entry between; owing to the slope the shops are two steps below the yard at the back, in spite of being set three steps up from the pavement. The tenements above the western shop were each of two heated rooms, reached by a stone stair. The rear room of each was, at least latterly, a kitchen, advantage being taken of the thin wall below the window for a sink. There was a cupboard recessed into the wall, one flat had two. There were enough stores accessible off the stair and back yard for each flat in 1829 to have had one. The stair and adjoining small yard date from 1829, but use an earlier gable to the south,



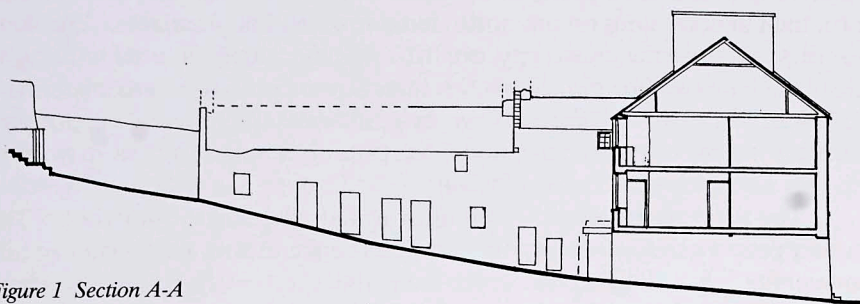


Figure 1 Section A-A

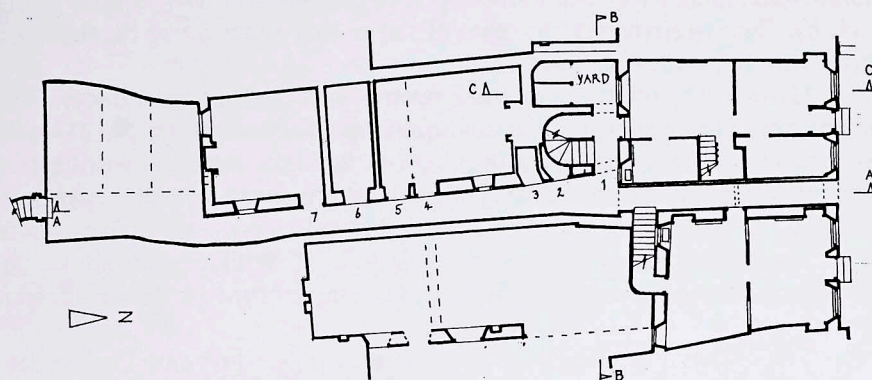


Figure 2 Ground-floor plan

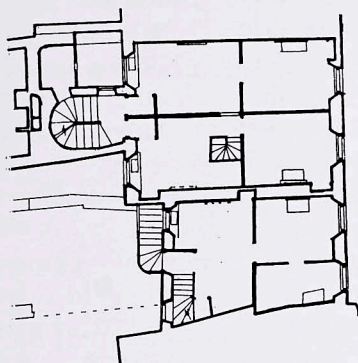


Figure 3 First-floor plan

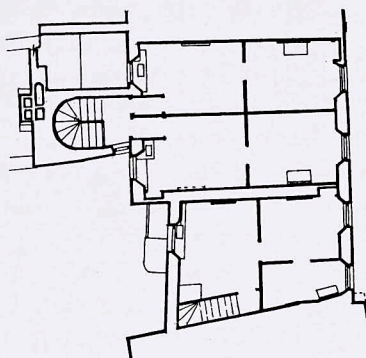
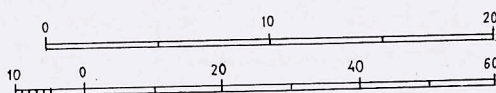


Figure 4 Second-floor plan



referred to above. This had in 1969 two fireplaces on the south, with a further two, then unused, flues on the north, indicating blocked fireplaces. The door to the stairs from the entry (1) was moved slightly nearer the road in 1829, to clear the bottom steps (see Figs 1, 2), the old door jamb left unaltered. The high wall to the west of the yard was built with no. 129 in 1829 (Fig. 6); presumably it gave privacy to its garden, but possibly it was also built to prevent Shoemakers' Land obtaining rights of light over the adjoining garden.

The eastern half of the building retained part of the back wall of the earlier property, and possibly also part of its gable. Above the shop were two tenements, each of three heated rooms, and each with a wall cupboard. Access was by an external stone stair to the first floor, roofed only in the upper section so as to avoid obscuring two windows, and also to provide light to the stair; the stair thence to the top floor was internal, and of wood (Figs 2-4, 6). The two stores accessible off the entry (doors 2 and 3) may have gone with these flats.

Certain alterations were made to the front section after 1830. The shops were probably both originally two rooms; the eastern was let to a saddler in 1869, and was still occupied by him in 1882; the other was let to a shoemaker at the earlier period, who had been replaced by a greengrocer by

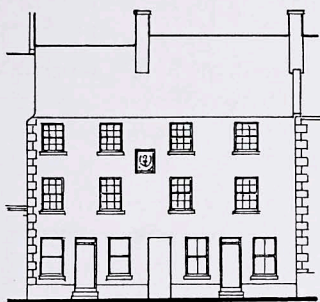


Figure 5 Front elevation



Figure 6 Rear elevation/section B-B

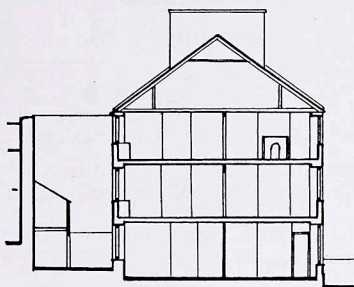


Figure 7 Section C-C

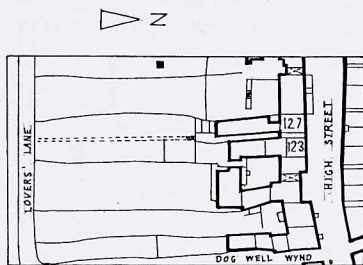


Figure 8 Site, 1855, based on 25-inch O.S. map



1882.<sup>10</sup> Some partitions were added later in the western shop, possibly when it was let with the flat above, as a stair was inserted between the two floors, since floored over. At some stage the two flats above were let together, a door being cut between; this was later reblocked. How this related to the insertion of the stairs is not clear.

The wing behind no. 127 was of at least two periods, not including the 1829 work. From the moulding to the original door (door 1), the wing as far as door 4 was late 16th or 17th century in date, the walls of random rubble, the gable crow-stepped and the windows small. The end wall was probably removed when the wing was extended to the south; this extension was of roughly squared stone with flush quoins to the openings, the quoins having a fielded margin. The whole wing appears to have been occupied when the front was rebuilt. The first section beyond the stairs was possibly two tenements, door 4 into the lower, door 5 perhaps to stairs to the upper one. The narrow room beyond may have been the stable and loft mentioned in the 1827 and 1832 rentals.<sup>11</sup> At the south end were two single-room tenements, each with a fireplace, the upper one reached by an external stair on the gable, leading to a blocked door. There being no window to the upper part of the gable, this flat must have been lit by dormers, which, like the floor structure and roof, had disappeared before 1969. The byre which appeared in the 1832 rental may have been in one of the ground-floor sections, as by the following year the number of tenements was down to three in the rear wing.<sup>12</sup> The external stair is not marked on the 1855 25-inch OS map. To the south of the wing was an open section, cut into the slope, the purpose of which is not clear: it was shown divided into three enclosures in 1855. The garden lay beyond, at a higher level, reached by a slightly curving flight of steps, with a door at the bottom, slots for the frame remaining in the side walls.

The front elevation is of well-squared stone, approaching ashlar for the plinth. The openings had large, flush quoins, tooled to give a fielded surround on the arris. There were projecting quoins to one end only, as noted above (see Fig. 5). Stonework to the rear elevation was coarser than the front, but the openings were equally well formed; random rubble was used, or retained, to part of the east end. Some lying pane windows appear in the rear, possibly as an alteration (see Fig. 6), but why something that was fashionable in the 1820s and 1830s should have appeared on a rear elevation only, grouped together, is not clear.

The 1829 roof was of coupled common rafters, each reinforced with struts and a collar, the whole finished with pantiles, but with plain tiles to the eaves at the front. There were cast-iron gutters from the beginning, an entry appearing for this in the 1830 accounts. Internally, the partitions were all timber, plastered, arranged one over the other, so as to support the floors. Brick was used in four places; the most obvious is the outer wall to the external stairs serving the eastern half of the front wing; the curved wall to the



other stair is also brick. Both were only half a brick thick. The stores in the little court were built of brick. The fourth place is the whole-brick wall between the passage and the western shop. Apart from the stores and the outside of the stair walls, the brickwork was all plastered. Bricks were therefore used only where they would not be seen and were protected from the weather; the stores were unimportant and hidden and most of the wall to the eastern stairs would have been hidden below the roof of the adjoining wing. This was not the earliest use of brick in Linlithgow; some of the ground-floor partitions in the 18th-century ballroom wing of the Cross House were of brick, and appeared to be original. There was also a brick-nogged partition in 77-79 High Street, which property is dated 1805. Significantly, these were only found during alterations which involved stripping plaster, so there may be other examples hidden elsewhere in the town. Brickwork was rarely used, at least where it could be seen, before the late 19th century.<sup>13</sup>

The building is thus an interesting example of a tenement block built by a craft guild as an investment. Whilst the main part of the property, adjoining the street, was rebuilt, earlier work was retained behind, although this section was the first to fall into disuse.

## Footnotes

1. For access to the property and to the deeds the writer is indebted to solicitors in Edinburgh, at 61 Castle Street. The author is also grateful for helpful comments on this paper from G. Stell and Miss S. Pearson.
2. E. P. Dennison and R. Coleman, *Historic Linlithgow* (Edinburgh 2000), pp. 6, 26, 35, 41, 44. The writer is grateful to G. Stell for drawing his attention to this work.
3. Deeds as 1 above.
4. Building accounts and other papers, part of contents of the Shoemakers' Box, for access to which the writer was indebted to the daughter of the last surviving member of the Guild, in whose custody the box was in 1969.
5. Deeds as 1 above.
6. *Op. cit.*, 2 above, pp. 33, 34.
7. See 4 above; C. McWilliam, *Lothian* (Harmondsworth 1978), p. 305 dates front as late 18th century; R. Jaques and C. McKean, *West Lothian* (Edinburgh 1994), p. 19, dates front to early 18th century. The date on the panel is in small numerals, and probably not legible without binoculars.
8. Date stone on rear of no. 129.
9. Deeds as 1 above.
10. Insurance description in Shoemakers' Box, 4 above.
11. Rentals surviving in Shoemakers' Box, 4 above (1827, 1832, 1833).
12. *Ibid.*
13. Writer's observations whilst living in Linlithgow, 1966-9.

# SCOTTISH VERNACULAR BUILDINGS WORKING GROUP – PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

## Alexander Fenton and Elizabeth Beaton

At its annual spring meeting held in North Berwick, 18–20 April 1986, the Group's founder and president, Professor Alexander Fenton, reviewed the development of interest in vernacular building in Scotland over the previous 20 years and the foundation of SVBWG in 1972. Elizabeth Beaton takes up the story with a glance at progress during the following 15 years, 1986–2001.

## Twenty years of the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group (Alexander Fenton)

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

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

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

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

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

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

1972: if one door closes, as the comfortable saying has it, another



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

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

Glen L. Pride, *Glossary of Scottish Building* (1975),<sup>1</sup> which was supported by the Scottish Civic Trust, whose Assistant Director<sup>2</sup> is a member of the SVBWG. It was seen by the Trust as a monument to European Architectural Heritage Year. Now that the *Concise Scots Dictionary*<sup>3</sup> has appeared, anyone will be able to check Pride's *Glossary*, which includes a number of misconceptions, but all the same it is a useful compilation.

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

Two further works flowed directly out of the Group's activities. The first was Fenton and Walker's *The Rural Architecture of Scotland* (1981), based in part on data collected in the National Monuments Scottish Ethnological Archive, and in part on field surveys carried out by Bruce Walker. Its intention was to set a baseline that could act both as a databank and as a stimulus for further work. The second was Robert J. Naismith's *Buildings of the Scottish Countryside* (1985). It is well to remind ourselves that it is the direct outcome of the early efforts many of us made to fund a national survey. *The Rural Architecture of Scotland* played a considerable role in helping to persuade the Countryside Commission for Scotland, as did members of the former Buildings Survey Committee, that there was here an important subject area, of great importance for the appearance of the Scottish countryside that deserved strong support. The CCS commissioned a survey in 1979, which was carried out by Sir Robert Mears and Partners, and the assembled photographic and documentary information has been lodged with the National Monuments Record. In this we have a national survey, to the extent that 23,500 small buildings erected between 1750 and 1914 were

examined, recorded and photographed, taken at random in a ratio of 1:10, all over the country. To a great extent, photographic recording was limited to a main façade. The approach was conditioned by the level of grant and the need to cover the country within that budget, as well as by the duties of the CCS. To quote the Foreword by the former Chairman of the CCS, David Nickson:

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

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

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

At this point, mention should be made of teaching programmes. In essence, they barely exist, except for the sterling work of the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Architecture, Dundee, under Bruce Walker. I need only refer you to his outline in *VB* 8 of how the study and teaching of vernacular architecture has developed since 1973-4, and with the number of students now participating, and the range of projects being undertaken, we can look forward to substantial advances in coming years with a strong spin-off effect on the architectural fraternity.

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



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

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

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

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

throw more light on pre-18th-century ways of living.

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

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

### **Fifteen years on: 1986–2001 (Elizabeth Beaton)**

When our President, Alexander Fenton, delivered his paper to the SVBWG in April 1986, he summarised progress and interest in Scottish vernacular building, both institutional and published, over the previous 20 years. He also reviewed the achievements of the SVBWG, indicating gaps in three areas:

1. urban building traditions;
2. ethnological or regional studies;
3. typological studies, smithies, ice-houses, etc.

In this section I attempt to bring the story forward, to suggest where in these areas SVBWG has made some progress, besides briefly summarising institutional and official recognition of vernacular building.

In the past 15 years I think the Group has moved on a little, built a bit more on those foundations outlined by Alexander Fenton in 1986, filled a few gaps, generated some more interest and certainly increased our published material. Group meetings, originally to be held every two years, are now regular twice-yearly fixtures. In the early years our annual journal *Vernacular Building* contained only a few pages, but now nearer a hundred; the Regional and Thematic monograph series had scarcely got off the ground.

Have gaps been filled in the three areas listed above? Agreed that most of our meetings have been based in rural areas, concentrating on rural buildings, neglecting the town. However, to put the record straight there have been some urban visits including Wick, Belfast and West Wemyss. *VB* 24 (2000) is notable in that there are two papers on contrasting city subjects. Rose Pipes was persuaded by Beth Ingpen, *VB* Editor, to submit an article on the Edinburgh Colonies, distinctive 19th-century terraced cottages built for artisans by co-operative effort. At the other end of the social scale, is Harry Gordon Slade's paper on another, earlier Edinburgh dwelling in Blackfriar's Wynd, which was the property of and apparently used by rural landowners when in the city. Extensively researched in the Clerk of Penicuik



and Urquhart of Craigston Castle (Aberdeenshire) papers, the material dates at least from the 17th century. These articles happily presaged our first day conference with an urban theme, 'Towns and Traditions: Urban Building in Scotland', held in conjunction with the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, on 3 November 2001.

Since 1987 we have published some regional studies. *North Sutherland Studies* resulted from the 1985 annual conference held in Bettyhill (and still the best-attended spring conference with over 50 delegates and a crowded bus). *Highland Vernacular Building* (1989) is a miscellany of articles on different Highland and Western Isles building themes, including planned villages, building materials and traditional dwellings. Regional studies of building fabrics include *Materials and Traditions in Scottish Building*, essays in memory of Sonia Hackett, a long-standing member and former Treasurer, and *Building Materials of the Scottish Farmstead* (1996) by Ingval Maxwell. Typological themes are introduced by John Hume in *Harbour Lights in Scotland* (1997) and, resulting from a Group recording effort led by Nick Brown, in *The Ruins of Craibstone Limekilns* (1996) (those who participated are unlikely to forget the wet conditions!). A list of SVBWG Monographs will be included in the forthcoming published Index spanning *Vernacular Building* volumes 1-25.

Looking ahead, fusing both the regional and the typological, will be a series devoted to doocots, now gradually getting underway (see the separate article in this issue of *VB*). Dovecotes are of interest for many reasons. They have a varied typology, reflect local building materials, methods and traditions, appear both in country estates and farm steadings and, together with the doos, have a place in agricultural, culinary and even medicinal history. They are compact enough for individuals or groups of members to record or note, be that detailed recording as architectural drawings and researched history, or simply noted as an address, OS Grid Reference and photograph. Nick Brown, Cullen, Banffshire is the Series Editor and will contribute the first publication devoted to doocots in Moray. Other volumes are in the pipeline.

In the wider sphere, vernacular building is beginning to generate interest. At a somewhat rarefied level, ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) adopted a Charter on the Built Vernacular Heritage at their 1999 General Assembly in Mexico. There is no room here for the full document, but the introduction includes the statement that 'The built vernacular heritage is important...the expression of the world's cultural diversity', going on to list both 'Principles of Conservation' and 'Guidelines in Practice'. Nearer home, Historic Scotland includes the vernacular in the 'Lists of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest' and as Guardianship Monuments. Members may have visited 42 Arnol, a 'black house' in the Western Isles, or the cruck-framed cottage at Thorthorwald,

Dumfriesshire, both now in State care. Over the last 20 years the National Trust for Scotland, more often associated with great houses and gardens, has acquired a Perthshire longhouse and a Glasgow tenement. The open-air museum, long established in Europe, is now better represented in the UK. In Scotland, the late Dr Isabel Grant was the innovator, establishing her collection of artefacts at Am Fàsghadh, the Highland Folk Museum, at Kingussie, Inverness-shire, in 1944, besides initiating the reconstruction of a Hebridean cottage. More recently, the Highland Folk Park has opened at nearby Newtonmore, not only reconstructing traditional houses but also re-siting representative but unwanted buildings, and initiating training skills. SVBWG is represented on the Highland Vernacular Building Trust, currently by Lyndall Leet, an architect and long-standing member from Caithness. Auchindrain, Argyll, a notable survival of the joint-tenancy farm, is also maintained as an open-air museum. Similarly, museums now recognise the value of the vernacular and curate traditional buildings as 'outstations', such as South Voe, Shetland, Corrigal and Kirbister, Orkney, and Wester Kitchside, near Glasgow. This last has been established jointly by the National Trust for Scotland and the National Museums of Scotland and opened on 2 July 2001. Equally traditional is the larger 'mains farm' steading, now represented within a museum context at the North East of Scotland Agricultural Heritage Centre, Aden, Aberdeenshire.

Fishertowns, formerly housing close-knit fishing communities clustered around harbours or the shore, are now recognised as part of the built heritage, mainly through Historic Scotland 'listing' and designated 'Outstanding Conservation Areas'. The same procedure identifies the early 19th-century settlements established by the British Fisheries Society, such as Pulteneytown, Wick, where the active Wick Society, besides establishing a museum and much else, has identified and restored what is believed to be the earliest covered fish market in Scotland. Fisher buildings are a far cry from castles and mansions, finally perceived as of interest in their own right.

The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, initiating the establishment of National Parks in Loch Lomond, the Trossachs and the Cairngorms, has delegated initial consultations to Scottish Natural Heritage. Three years ago SNH invited representation from SVBWG as an input towards recognition both of traditional buildings which enhance the countryside, as well as appropriate modern structures associated with the parks. Here SVBWG member Simon Fleming, an architect practising in Edinburgh, keeps a watching brief.

As his fourth point, Alexander Fenton suggested in 1986 that the Group should go further back in time and look at early modern and medieval antecedents in order to 'throw more light on pre-18th-century ways of living'. Hopefully there will be members interested in developing this line of research, but meantime we have a 'toe in the door'. For some years,



SVBWG has been represented on the Scottish Council for Archaeology, currently by Hugh Fearn.

Academically, vernacular building falls within the ethnological remit besides that of architecture. How fortuitous, therefore, for the Group that the first Chair of Ethnology in Scotland was established by the University of Edinburgh and that the first incumbent was our President, coinciding with his appointment as Director of the School of Scottish Studies in 1990-94. In 1984 he had established the *Review of Scottish Culture* as an annual journal dedicated to ethnology, SVBWG receiving generous review space for publications and conferences. Slightly later, in 1989, he founded the European Ethnological Research Centre, housed within the National Museums of Scotland. Vernacular buildings have their place in ethnology and his writings, particularly in *The Northern Isles, Orkney and Shetland* (1978) and *The Rural Architecture of Scotland* (with Bruce Walker, 1981, see above) establish the path we should aspire to follow in recording and writing.

The SVBWG achievement to date is reasonable but there is absolutely no room for complacency. Too many unrecognised and unrecorded *auld hooses* are rubble (or building sites) and too few people are aware of the aesthetic richness and ethnological value in the historic and regional identity of the vernacular. Farming and fishing alter rapidly, towns change, streets are modified to accommodate increased traffic, while expanding suburbs frequently obliterate rural or coastal settlements. The aims of the SVBWG, as stated in our Constitution, 'to provide a meeting point for individuals and institutions concerned...with aspects of vernacular buildings, to diffuse knowledge of the subject, to stimulate activity in surveying and recording buildings in the regional and social settings and to encourage the study of the subject in Universities and Colleges', are as pertinent now as they were in 1972.

Equally pertinent is what Alexander Fenton described in 1986 as 'our kind of approach, with its mix of factual observation and recording, and examination of the background social and economic environment that gave rise to particular types and forms of buildings, whether for living or working'.

For the future I can do no better than reiterate that the SVBWG programme is still valid: it should progress, expand and intensify as outlined by our President in 1986, and encapsulated in the final paragraphs of his paper reprinted above.

## Acknowledgement

Alexander Fenton's paper was first published in *VB* 8 and is reproduced with his permission. He also read and commented on Elizabeth Beaton's draft, for which she records her thanks.

## References

- 1 Revised and reissued in 1996 as *Dictionary of Scottish Building*.
- 2 John Gerrard, later Director.
- 3 Revised and reissued in 1985.



## REVIEWS

**Edited by Veronica Steele**

### **Rural Life in Shetland & Guidebook to the Croft Museum**

Ian Tait. Shetland Museum, Lerwick. 2000. 64pp. £6.00. ISBN 0-904562-94-8

SVBWG members who attended the 1997 Spring Conference in Shetland will remember Ian Tait of the Shetland Museum, whose knowledge of the vernacular heritage of the islands greatly added to the visit. This book is at once a distillation of some of that wide knowledge, and a guidebook for the Croft House Museum, one of the destinations of the conference. It can be used either during a visit to the Croft House Museum, or as a general guide and introduction to the rural life of the Shetland islander of the 19th and 20th centuries. By its nature, this publication is tantalisingly brief, and it is to be hoped that in the future Ian Tait will be able to publish more fully on this deserving subject. In the meantime this book is an excellent introduction for those seeking to learn of Shetland's rural life and also useful for those with a greater knowledge.

The book is well illustrated with historic and more recent photographs, including several in colour, detailing buildings, farming practices, domestic life and dress, and also with line drawings of implements and other everyday items, all of which serve to evoke a past way of life. Personal reminiscences and statistics are also used as part of this evocation. Throughout, a sense of community and discipline is apparent; these factors were essential to survival and a level of prosperity in naturally difficult conditions. The structures which are described – dwellings, mills, sheep pens and cattle housing – are always practical and their design dictated by the need to provide protection from the elements and to maximise production from crops and livestock in the face of poor natural resources. One of the most notable aspects of this book is the widespread use of local terminology, much of it unique and deriving from Scandinavian roots, which serves to enhance the sense that the islands were a community apart from the rest of Scotland, though still retaining many elements in common.

The book is divided into two halves, the first dealing with the agricultural landscape, the work of the year (including crop raising, peat cutting, hunting and domestic work), and the changes to crofting life following the 1870s. At that time a way of life that had derived much from the medieval period saw many changes due to the Shetland population peaking, the freeing of that population from the threat of eviction from their land and the

development of the herring trade. The second half of the book is an extremely detailed description and explanation of the Croft House Museum at South Voe, which serves as an illustration and example of rural life. This museum was established partly through the drive of expatriate islanders visiting Shetland in the 1960s, who recognised the need to preserve disappearing aspects of the islands and their way of life. An appropriate building was selected and restored, and serves the double purpose of an illustration of a typical building with 'but', 'ben', byre, barn and kiln, as well as a home for the everyday objects which are housed within in their traditional context.

## St Kilda

George Seton. Birlinn, Edinburgh. 2000 (this edition). xxiv+254pp. £9.99. ISBN 1-84158-033-3.

This is a new edition of a classic text, George Seton writing of St Kilda in 1877, and now reissued by Birlinn. Seton's account is of value, not only because of his own observations made during the maiden voyage of the *Dunara Castle* in 1877, but also due to his distillation of and comment upon writings of many other observers of the islands from Martin Martin in 1697 onwards. He wrote when the future of the island population was in doubt, and suggests what was in fact to happen 50 years later, the eventual evacuation of the islands, as he devotes his final chapter to 'The Future of St Kilda'. This is a welcome reissue, and although one would have wished that an index had been included in this edition, the expanded chapter headings are extremely useful. One also regrets the occasional typographical error within the text, possibly the result of a text having been scanned and then not proofread.

An introduction by Charles W. J. Withers places Seton's account in the context of other writings on the islands; typical of his time, he regarded the islands as a '“purer” and more ancient Scotland'. Seton offers a minute examination of a way of life over the centuries, and typifies the Victorian attitude to the unknown (in 1877, the islands were still not accurately plotted by the Ordnance Survey). No aspect of the islanders' lives is left undiscussed, from early history and local incidents to seabirds, diseases and, of course, the buildings that they inhabited. Seton is generally an objective writer, and he sympathetically defends the islanders against their detractors' accusations of drunkenness and idleness.

As well as devoting a chapter to the dress, food and houses of the islanders, details of their day-to-day lives and their dwellings and other buildings are apparent through the telling of the islands' history. Sands commented in 1876 upon the lack of ornament in buildings, tombstones and



dress as if 'the aesthetic faculty...seems never to have been developed'; Martin more sensibly commented upon the need to secure the roofs of the houses from being blown away by the strong and continuous winds. Seton's meticulousness is invaluable in his descriptions of the houses that he entered, and he compares the houses that were built following the destruction of many dwellings by a storm in 1860, with the abandoned earlier dwellings that were used at the time of his visit as byres and stores. Asides in earlier accounts also serve to illustrate the daily lives of the islanders. Lady Grange, who was detained on the islands on the orders of her husband from 1734 to 1742, was made a seat of twisted straw, considered a luxury, and for which she paid 12 shillings upon her departure. In 1841 Wilson described bed recesses 'with scanty bedding being placed upon stones, in imitation of the puffins'. In 1839, an injured English sailor, rescued from a wreck, was put to bed in such a recess, an event which made him think that 'the savages were lowering him into a well'. That very distinctive structure of St Kilda, the cleit, was described by Martin, who counted 500; by 1838 they numbered at least 5000. Seton was struck by their versatility and efficacy in preserving whatever produce – seabirds, eggs, hay or corn – was stored in them, and recommended them for use upon the mainland. The islanders' masonry skills also earned praise for the construction of the walls that sheltered cultivated ground. There are many such examples that contribute to a comprehensive study of the world of the islanders.

Seton ends by considering the future of the islands; at that time there was discussion of an entire evacuation, or a partial evacuation over the winter months. Seton favoured the latter, or a continuation of permanent habitation with modifications to assist the islanders. His was mostly a compassionate view, which is apparent in this comprehensive study.

## **The Province of Strathnaver**

John R. Baldwin (ed.), Associate Editor William P. L. Thomson. Scottish Society for Northern Studies, Edinburgh. 2000. xxi + 249pp. £12.00 (plus £1.50 p&p). ISBN 0-9535226-0-1. Available from Scottish Book Source Ltd, 137 Dundee Street, Edinburgh, EH11 1BG, Tel. 0131 229 6800, E-mail [orders@scottishbooksource.com](mailto:orders@scottishbooksource.com)

This is a scholarly and detailed examination of many aspects of the province of Strathnaver, an area that stretched from Caithness to Assynt. It is an area rich in natural resources, and was sought after from the Iron Age to the time of the Clearances and beyond. Following an outline of the physical background and general history of the area, the authors analyse and relate the history, nature and man-made features of this remote and fascinating area in a series of varied but complementary papers, dealing with subjects which

also include Norse place names, traditional medicines and palaeo-environmental history.

In 'From Clanship to Crofting: Landownership, Economy and the Church in the Province of Strathnaver', Malcolm Bangor-Jones analyses the dominating features of the ownership of the area, during the period of the clans to the Clearances. The land was held by the Mackay family, but they were later supplanted by the Sutherlands. The important role of the church in ownership and local government is also examined. The economic background is also given, with analysis of the way of life of the landowner further down the social structure. The majority of the farms were held by tacksmen who occupied a position between the clan gentry and subtenants. Both tacksmen and tenants paid rent in money and kind, and also by service: providing peats or working on the mains farm. There is discussion on various aspects of ways of farming life within the economic context: arable crops, livestock, fisheries and kelp.

The subject of kelp is also taken up by John R. Baldwin. Seaweed emerges as an extremely important natural resource whether as manure or fertiliser, as medicine or preservative, or for making kelp. As well as being an important traditional activity, seaweed gathering in the area has continued to the present and the late 20th-century commercial seaweed industry is one of the main subjects of the paper. Now gathered mostly for the production of alginates, used for a wide variety of purposes from foods to plastics, seaweed has always been extremely versatile. As a fertiliser, different types were of benefit to different crops: bladderwrack was used for oats, red weed for turnips and so on. It was also used in conjunction with other fertilisers, but its use would ultimately leave the soil exhausted. Traditional methods of gathering are deemed more environmentally friendly; mechanised harvesting without careful monitoring could seriously deplete stocks and have implications for the food chain and shoreline erosion.

Elizabeth Beaton looks at Bighouse, a group of 18th- and 19th-century buildings forming a laird's house on the east bank of the Halladale River. It was owned by the Mackays of Bighouse from the 16th century until 1830, when it was acquired by the Sutherland estates (it was sold by the estates in 1919). The name 'Bighouse' comes from bygdh-hús, derived from the Norse for, ironically, 'village house', but Bighouse is a mansion together with ancillary buildings and garden. Built in the early 1760s, but with 19th-century additions, the principal buildings consist of Bighouse Lodge, The Barracks (servants' quarters), a walled garden with pavilion, an icehouse and a range of service buildings. The history of the main house is non-controversial, but the earlier style of The Barracks and evidence from Roy's map of 1755 suggests that this building may have been moved in its entirety, about 1770, from the site of the Mackay family's former residence, near the now almost entirely vanished settlement of Kirkton further up the Halladale River. The



feat of engineering involved in moving and rebuilding The Barracks commemorates this now lost settlement. The other structures at Bighouse include the walled garden described in 1767 as, for its size, the 'best and most elegant...in the North', where apples, pears, plums, cherries, melons and cucumbers were grown. The farm buildings, though altered, probably consisted of a kiln-barn and barn of late 18th-century date. The icehouse probably dates from the mid 1820s, and was in use until the early 1980s as part of the salmon fishing industry, an important part of the economy of the area, and particularly of Strath Halladale.

The other end of the housing scale is examined in 'The Excavation of a Turf Long-house at Lairg, Sutherland', by R. P. J. McCullagh. This paper marks just a small aspect of a large-scale archaeological project aimed at mitigating the impact of road improvements between Bonar Bridge and Lairg by identifying and excavating well-preserved examples of potentially threatened monument types. In 1991, in an area 1.5 km south of Lairg called Achimore, House 9 was excavated, and in 1996 it became part of a quarry for road stone. Before destruction, the remains of the house yielded much information which is summarised in the text. House 9 was interpreted as a typical pre-Clearance settlement in the Highlands. The house was probably of turf and stone, with a cruck-framed construction, occupied until the early 19th century. The excavated physical remains corresponded to the accepted type of a dwelling occupied by people at one end, with a central floor hearth, and tethered cattle at the other, with the necessary drainage provided. Analysis and excavation of the surrounding land has revealed poorly draining rigs. The archaeological evidence suggests that the house deteriorated, and then was re-occupied when some partition walls were inserted. The dwelling was abandoned, though there is no evidence of burning as did occur in areas affected by the Clearances; after the abandonment it became a shelter for sheep.

Other aspects of habitation in the area are discussed by Alex. Morrison in 'Souterrains in Sutherland', a structural type about which questions are still being asked. The literary portrayal of life in the area during one of its most traumatic eras, the Clearances, is discussed by Laurence Gouriévidis as he looks at the works of Neil Gunn, Fionn MacColla and Iain Crichton Smith. Aspects of the province in the medieval era are also analysed in this volume which will greatly add to the knowledge of all those interested in the area and of Scottish ways of life in general.

## **Perth and Kinross: An Illustrated Architectural Guide**

Nick Haynes. The Rutland Press, Edinburgh. 2000. 240 pp. £11.95. ISBN 1-873-190-123

## **Deeside and the Mearns: An Illustrated Architectural Guide**

Jane Geddes. The Rutland Press, Edinburgh. 2001. 167 pp. £10.95. ISBN 1-873-190-409

These volumes are two of the latest additions to this most informative and useful series, essential to any visit to or study of an area. From the basic information of 'who built it and when' to the margin notes ranging from a recipe for Atholl Brose to a pithy extract from Lewis Grassie Gibbon's *Sunset Song*, they are a joy to read or dip into. In reviewing these exhaustively researched and beautifully illustrated volumes, it is tempting to pull out many interesting examples but an attempt will be made to limit those to a few.

*Perth and Kinross* is one of the larger volumes of the series, given the geographical range of the area. Many vernacular buildings are featured, from a wide variety of farmhouses and Improvement steadings, appropriate to its position at the forefront of the agricultural revolution of the earlier 19th century, to town buildings including tenements in Perth. The abundance of rivers in Perthshire has spawned many fine bridges, including William Adam's bridge over the River Tay at Aberfeldy (1733) and pack-horse bridges in Alyth. Many fine laird's houses are described, and in many of the more recent architect-designed buildings of the area, the vernacular influence is emphasised. The work of Robert Lorimer in restoring Balmanno (1919-21) and building at Kinfauns (1928), of Charles Rennie Mackintosh at a shop and tenement in Comrie (1903-4), of James MacLaren and Dunn & Watson at Fortingall and Glen Lyon (from 1889), and of Oswald Milne, assistant to Edwin Lutyens, at Tirinie House (1934), all show an understanding of and admiration for the traditional. Construction methods are well illustrated; the traditional methods of clay-wall construction at Errol, and Cottown School and Schoolhouse's clay-wall and thatch structure restored by the National Trust for Scotland and Historic Scotland, find echoes in the eco-buildings of the late 20th century of Gaia and Ian Appleton, with their innovative use of lime-rendered straw bale walls and timber framing.

*Deeside and the Mearns* covers a smaller area, but one with a similar geographical diversity. This has been a factor in shaping the built heritage of the area, from farm buildings on the fertile Mearns and still-active fishing communities, to the buildings on the estates of Royal Deeside. The geology



of the area produces sandstone, a malleable surface suitable for carving, and the more resilient granite; granite buildings are plainer by necessity but some also sport the distinctive knotted tree trunks ('loggy columns') often seen in porches of the northern part of the area. As well as a wealth of larger houses, the area is rich in fine houses of a more modest scale: the Ha' Hoose at Raemoir (1715 or earlier) of rugged rubble construction, the simple traditional elegance of Tillyfruskie (dated 1733), and the unfortunately almost derelict Balnacraig House (1735). The traditional tower house, which reaches its apotheosis at Crathes Castle (from 1553), has been reinterpreted in recent times in such buildings as Strathieburn (1986) and Balfour Tower (1991), as well as the rebuilding of Lauriston Castle by Ian Begg (1994). Though there have been failures in the area when attempting to copy the buildings of the past, there have also been successes. There are also modern reinterpretations of more modest buildings: Riverbank near Maryculter (1990s) takes the traditional form of the fishing lodge and makes it a modern residence. In some cases original fisher dwellings have been badly converted and enlarged, but many do survive as dwellings, and at Craigwell, Aboyne, 19th-century poorhouse terraces have been enlarged for modern living. Other traditional dwellings can be seen in the 'wee houses' of Braemar: corrugated-iron or clapboard summer dwellings used by the residents when letting out their permanent houses to Victorian seasonal visitors. Another example of the 'temporary' surviving in the longer term is the Ballroom at Balmoral, which was based on the corrugated-iron houses designed for emigrants to the colonies that were viewed by Prince Albert at the Great Exhibition in 1851. There are many fine examples of farm buildings, the grandest of which must be the Coo Cathedral, part of the model Mains of Aboyne by George Truefitt (1889). Mills are also well represented, including the Mill of Clinter, with a 1511 founding date, and the Perciemuir Sawmill (c.1850), a complex of wooden sheds and several lades, that is still in use.

## **Glenesk: The History and Culture of an Angus Community**

Margaret Fairweather Michie. Compiled and edited by Alexander Fenton and John Beech. Tuckwell Press, East Linton. 2000. xvii+301pp. £20. ISBN 1-86232-181-7

This book is the distillation of personal reminiscences and research by Margaret Fairweather Michie (1905-85), who was deeply involved in the area and community of Glenesk. Excellent use of unpublished papers and personal memories has been made to tell the history and recreate the daily life of the upland rural community. Greta Michie, as she was known, was born in Glenesk, and her education took her from Tarfside and Montrose to the

University of St Andrews and teacher-training in Dundee. She returned to teach at Tarfside in 1947 and continued to teach there and elsewhere in Angus until her retirement in 1965. However, her greatest contribution to Angus life was the conception and creation of the marvellous Glenesk Folk Museum in 1955 at The Retreat, Tarfside. She directed it actively until 1975, but continued to advise and research for the rest of her life. Alexander Fenton had helped her shape her research for publication and with John Beech took it through to completion following her death. This handsome book, with a myriad of illustrations mostly taken from the Glenesk Museum and the Scottish Life Archive, is at once her achievement and a fitting tribute.

The history of Glenesk is examined from earliest times to the present day, and through the author's thoroughness almost every aspect of life has been covered. Throughout, a strong sense of community emerges with people pulling together throughout the year and especially in times of crisis and change. In common with many other rural areas of Scotland, one of the periods of greatest change occurred during Improvement. The lands of Glenesk, part of the estate of the Earls of Panmure, had been forfeited following the rising of 1715; due to these straitened circumstances, no improvement was apparent until the 1760s. Chapters are devoted to farming life before and after this date, with analysis of farm sizes, rents, produce prices and roup rolls. A similar chapter details the 19th century, and in one of the most fascinating passages of the book, two rare labourers' daybooks are examined. One dates from 1826 to 1856, and the other from 1866 to 1873. These books provide invaluable information for reconstructing the day-to-day activities of the two men, and, by extension, those of a large sector of the community, their place in the social structure, their financial well-being and their level of education, as well as details of common ailments and cooking recipes. The chapter on 'Hearth and Home' is well illustrated and there are full descriptions of dwellings, the process of their construction, their furnishings, down to the bedding, and the clothes and food of the inhabitants. Inventories of contents have been well used to create a picture of a typical house; there are examples of many items from homes, and also farming implements, in the Glenesk Museum.

The 19th century, at first a relatively stable period, began to see many changes with the increase of sheep farming and also the development of sporting estates, which had implications for people, landscape and buildings. Opportunities began to arise throughout the Empire, and the people of Glenesk were among those who emigrated. A chapter is devoted to the stories of those who travelled abroad, some of whom would return. One of the successful emigrants was John Jolly, who left for Colorado in 1887 and ended up owning as much land as the Earl of Dalhousie, the contemporary owner of Glenesk. The population of the glen declined steeply between



1860 and 1880, and from then continued to decline steadily, though it stabilised in the last third of the 20th century. Greta Michie played an important part in the community of the glen throughout the 20th century, and she has portrayed the life of the glen in that time and before in a most readable and informative book.

### **‘Well Sheltered and Watered’: Menstrie Glen, a farming landscape near Stirling**

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Edinburgh. 2001. 72pp. £5.00 (includes p&p). ISBN 1-902419-25-1. Available from RCAHMS, John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh, EH8 9NX, Tel: 0131 662 1456, E-mail: nmrs@rcahms.gov.uk

Walking the ‘Glens’ is a favourite pastime of many, but just how these landscapes developed and what type or scale of activity has gone on before is probably understood by few. Using photographic evidence from the archaeological survey of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), standing architectural remains and almost unique manuscript material, combined with research by John Harrison, SVBWG Chairman, the available data has been skilfully presented and interpreted.

The study originated with a coincidence of interests between (among others) John Harrison’s private research and RCAHMS (the national body for the survey and recording of architectural and archaeological monuments of all periods in Scotland). Archaeological evidence of the Ochils, photographed after the Second World War, was assessed against a contemporary survey covering Menstrie Glen, and subsequently Glen Devon.

Menstrie Glen lies just east of Stirling, and topographically does not appear to be the ‘stuff’ that prosperous farms are made of, owing to its deeply incised watercourses and terraced valley sides. However, the survey presents a picture of land-usage and farming settlement in the glen from the late medieval period to the present day, reaching its zenith in the 18th century with the foresight of a ‘reforming’ landowner. Earlier settlement patterns have survived well owing to limited land-usage since that time.

Divided into four sections with a useful glossary, the study initially considers the almost unique survival of source material in historical and archaeological evidence. Particularly interesting are the Wright of Loss papers; James Wright owned half of Menstrie Glen during the mid-18th century, and purchased Argyll’s Lodging, Stirling, in 1764. RCAHMS field and aerial survey programmes have produced superb photographs, many reproduced here together with some post Second World War RAF vertical photographs.

Part Two takes a chronological look at farming history. Documentary evidence is generous only for the 18th century, but enough exists to develop a picture during the 15th and 16th centuries of Crown and Church lands with a hierarchy of tenants and cultivation methods including a high percentage of sheep pasture. Largely occupied by tenant farmers by the 17th century, the landscape was changing with medieval sheepwalks divided into a pattern of small mixed arable farms. Described as 'a build-up to wholesale 18th-century land-use transformation', innovative farming methods were being introduced. Change focused on practices such as liming, crop variety across rigs, infield and outfield, and manure application through the practice of 'tathing' or folding animals in shelters (probably turf-walled enclosures identified by the archaeological survey) on land intended for cultivation the following season. By the 1750s James Wright was 'improving' his Loss estate, with policies enclosed by stone walls and banks, and planting large numbers of trees. The results still impact upon the glen today.

Moving on to types of settlement, the archaeological survey records abandoned farmsteads, but structural evidence suggests the development of broader categories. Again illustrated by plans and photographs, the range can be seen to evolve from shielings, to large turf buildings with byre houses and subsequently small farmsteads, to stone-built farmsteads of largely regular-plan, larger, more substantial houses, and onto the shells of 19th-century buildings. Development of the estate of Loss and its fine laird's house is presented in detail with tantalising glimpses of 18th-century life. Illustrated is a sketch by James Wright of his steading which includes hen house with stable, byres and barn forming a courtyard around a 'place for Dung'.

The final section looks at the archaeology of the landscape. Largely dictated by topography, the identifiable zones (lower, middle and upper slopes) are characterised by 'palimpsest' land-use remains. Again supported by maps, plans and photographs, and in order to retain holistic understanding, development is discussed through case studies of the farms of Lipney, Loss and Little Jerah prior to detailed explanation of the various categories or 'components' of the landscape.

*Norma Smith*



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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 or terraces, industrial watermills and smithies, or even the older tradition of tower-house buildings. All, and more besides, find a place in 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, usually in Scotland, each year. The 29th Conference was held in Spring 2001 in Stirling, and the Autumn Meeting was in Edinburgh.

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, and also a series of Regional and Thematic publications, of which *Rural Architecture in the North of the Isle of Man*, and *The Hearth in Scotland*, have just been published.



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