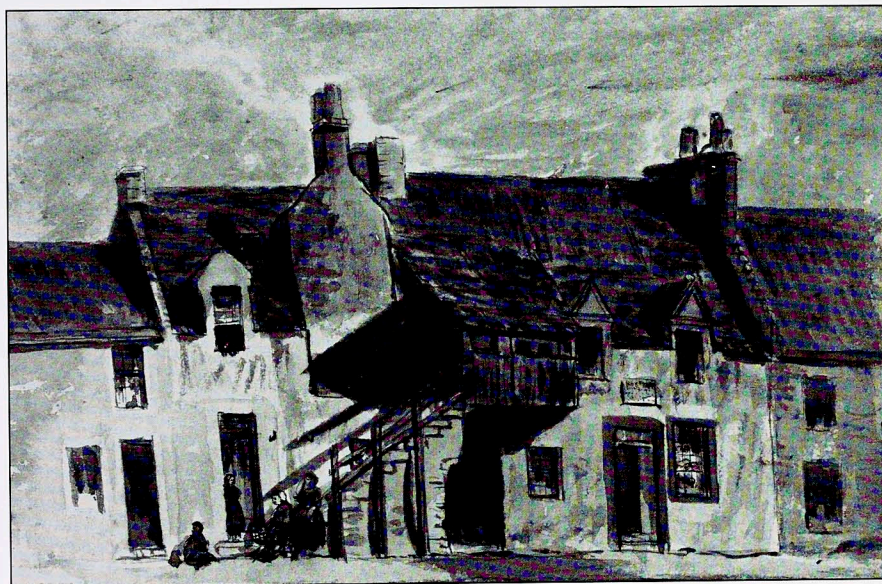


# VERNACULAR BUILDING 28

## Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group

2004



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**Scottish Vernacular Buildings  
Working Group**

**2004**

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ISSN: 0267-3088

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## **Acknowledgments**

The editor's deepest thanks go to the following people for their invaluable advice and help during the production of this issue: Elizabeth Beaton, Veronica Fraser, John G Harrison, Beth Ingpen, Dorothy Kidd, Janice Robertson and Marion Wood.

## PREFACE

There is a tang of the salt sea in this issue of *VB*, reflecting the maritime theme of the Group's 2004 spring visit to Cullen, Banffshire, and the seatowns west to Buckie. Elizabeth Beaton begins the volume, giving an appreciation of the Banffshire-Aberdeenshire border coastal villages of Gardenstown, Crovie and Pennan and investigating the unique aspects of their layout and the construction and design of dwellings and other buildings. Although the coastal salmon bothies and associated structures found around the Scottish coast and elsewhere were designed as temporary housing for fishermen and their equipment, there is no lack of variety or ingenuity in their construction. Roger Leitch looks at structures on the river Tay and around the east and west coasts as well as the work and way of life with which they were associated.

Both Stephanie B Stevenson and Andrew M Sherriff examine dwellings in Anstruther, Fife. The former outlines the history of a number of grander sixteenth- and seventeenth-century houses before discussing the nature of contemporaneous but humbler and much more ephemeral abodes - 'houses of the meaner sort'. Andrew M Sherriff examines the development of the house built in the late seventeenth century at 21 Shore Street, outlining elements of adaptation and continuity through the centuries and showing how aspects of traditional belief can be reflected in the construction, details and use of domestic spaces.

The coastal flavour is not entirely absent from Veronica Fraser's text accompanying a selection of illustrations from the sketchbook of the architect John Lessels senior. Lessels was involved in the design of some of the grandest constructions in nineteenth-century Scotland yet continued to record the vernacular buildings of Edinburgh and parts of Fife, Perthshire and the Lothians. Sarah Parkinson rounds off the selection of articles with a review of the role of vernacular buildings in the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, Scotland's first National Park.

The 'Short Notes' section outlines forthcoming events and developments in SVBWG and also gathers together snippets of information on vernacular buildings. It begins by outlining some cases of discovery and destruction of buildings reported recently in the regional press. To conclude the volume, Veronica Fraser proves that she can go more than just the one extra mile by providing a range of insightful reviews to well and truly whet the reader's appetite. The selection is complemented by a review written by Jean Hansell. The publications presented include both overview volumes and those dealing with specific locations and building types.

*Susan Storrier*

# SEATOWNS OF THE BANFFSHIRE-ABERDEENSHIRE COAST: GARDENSTOWN, CROVIE AND PENNAN

## Elizabeth Beaton

In April 2004 SVBWG held its annual spring meeting in Cullen, Banffshire, concentrating on fishertown housing between there and Buckie to the west. Most of the settlements have a reasonable area of suitable building land around their respective havens, although sites are randomly crowded close to the sea. Cullen seatown is concentrated on the crescent of low ground fringing the shore, while at Findochty, Buckpool and much of Buckie there is room along the lower coast for housing, although later expansion pushed settlement to higher ground. The exception is Portknockie which, from its foundation in 1677, was settled on the cliff top above the harbour, this deep set in a natural cove.

Single-storeyed cottages were the general housing type from the eighteenth century onwards, some of random rubble or even of clay mixed with beach stones, superseded by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by two-storeyed houses. Because of a shortage of good dressed stone in the area, cast concrete was used for window and door margins from the 1880s, after the establishment of the local railway to transport the raw material. It is, however, of tedious appearance. The drab surfaces were weatherproofed with coloured paint, the coursing picked out by 'stroking', that is outlining with white paint lovingly applied with a fine brush, and all adding up to a cheerful streetscape. The decorative treatment sometimes contrasts with brightly colour-washed harl. Originally the cottages were thatched, although pantiles from Whitehills and Tochieneal, both close to Cullen, were popular and longer lasting. Local pantiles, however, were slightly porous so an 'easing course' of two or three rows of slates at the base of the roof provided stouter protection from the elements at the vulnerable wallhead, the red tiles and contrasting grey slates also contributing to the colourful scene.

This short paper seeks to show that although the 'Tartan Tounies' of the Moray-Banffshire coast are very attractive, they are not the only seatown building traditions on the southern shores of the Moray Firth.

Eastwards, between Macduff and Rosehearty and spanning the Banffshire-Aberdeenshire border - an area of substantial farms with arable land and cattle - the magnificently scenic coastline is particularly rugged and steep, the inhospitable narrow shoreline offering little room for shoreside settlements or shelter from the sea. Above **Gardenstown**, east of Macduff on



*Figure 1. Narrow paths climb the steep hillside between houses at Gardenstown.*



*Figure 2. Gardenstown: Narrow roadway raised above the beach. Note that the houses are all gable end to the sea, facilitating greater housing density close to the shore as well as reducing the impact of gales on the dwellings. Paired gable windows facing the sea enable the occupants to watch for boats.*

the east side of Troup Head, there are remains of an earlier settlement on a terrace half way up the hillside overlooking the seatown. The area is occupied by the roofless shell and burial ground associated with the sixteenth-century, perhaps earlier, church of St John and, like Pennan further east, with evidence of former cultivation.

Gardenstown was founded by Alexander Garden of Troup in 1720 and its earliest phase may have been largely taken up for the storage and export of the rents in kind associated with the Troup estate - grain, hides, etc - which were exported by sea to urban settlements by the laird to realise cash. There are remains of warehouses close to the harbour and an earlier one is just above, apparently dating from the eighteenth century and constructed of local red sandstone.

The village climbs the hillside from the shore, the houses accessed by flights of steps via steep narrow footpaths (fig. 1) or along a lane crowning the seawall (fig. 2). Despite the early eighteenth century foundation, housing appears to date from the early nineteenth century, perhaps from 1812 onwards when Gardenstown became involved in the herring fishing. The dwellings are externally similar other Banffshire seatowns adapted to the steep terrain, the earliest flanking the shore-side raised walkway (which can *just* accommodate a car) while later development is higher up, a steep line of overhang dividing the two settlements in some places. Indeed, having a new house built on the hillside high above the shoreline indicated that the owner had prospered and could afford the more convenient building sites nearer inn, church and the coastal road linking Macduff with Fraserburgh. This trend continues, as evinced by modern housing development.

**Crovie** is sited along the crescent-shaped shore east of Gardenstown to which it is linked by a footpath. The available level terrain is narrow, sometimes offering only space for a single dwelling between seashore and hillside, the settlement fronted by a narrow footpath and exposed to the sea and gales (fig. 3). The only road descends steeply to the west end of the linear village where former fishing sheds with paired shuttered windows face the sea, and where there was space to leave handbarrows in which to trundle goods to and from houses, each barrow bearing the number of its respective owner's dwelling. There are between 50 and 60 houses strung out along the crescent shoreline fronting narrow sites squeezed between beach and hillside. These are largely single-storeyed cottages, but some sites abutting the cliffside have given rise to a Crovie fisher-house type. Single-storeyed-and-attic dwellings, of conventional three-bay width with gable end to the sea, are built over a two-bay fishing store (fig. 4). These stores run back to the sloping cliff face and each has a ground-floor entrance while the centre



*Figure 3. Crovie: Linear settlement squeezed between cliff and beach. Note in the foreground cottages built against the slope. The pier is sited on the only sandy stretch of shore.*



*Figure 4. Crovie: Dwelling built against the slope with a two-bay cellar/fishing-gear store with independent access (now converted for domestic use). The regular upper-floor, three-bay frontage is approached by a forestair, and together with the attic, formed the family accommodation with a sea-facing gable window. The building probably dates from the first half of the nineteenth century; the dormer window is later.*

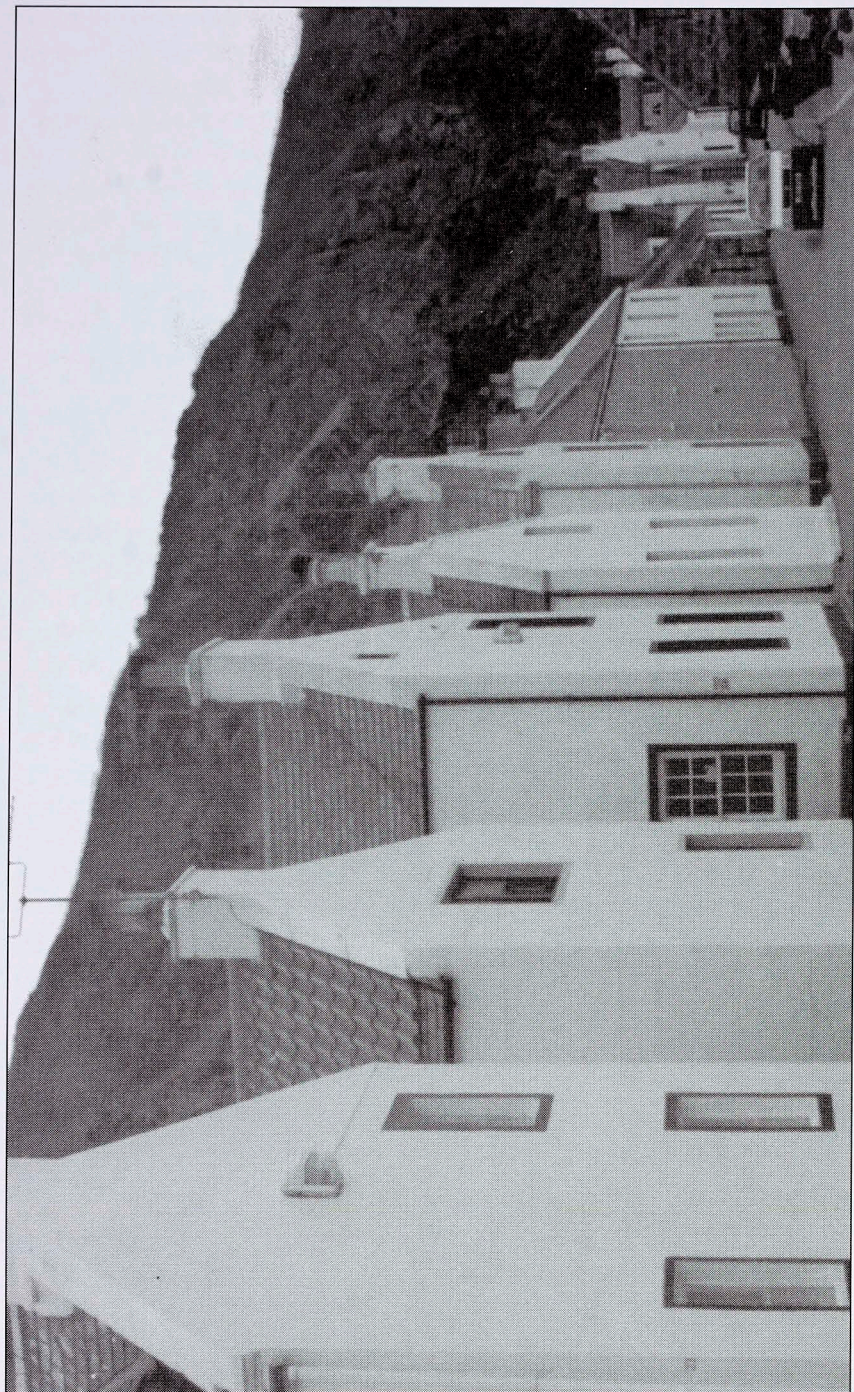
door accessing the three-bay domestic quarters above is reached by forestair, the additional single-bay width exploiting the sloping cliff face. The narrow two-bay ground-floor, sunless site is utilised for storage, while the dwelling above can exploit the marginal additional space of the retreating hillside at a higher level facilitating greater width and more internal space. Of the 60 or so dwellings in Crovie, ten are of this pattern, apparently unique to the southern shores of the Moray Firth.

**Pennan** is also compressed into an exposed site fronting the bay and enclosed east and west by high cliffs, although the site has greater depth between cliffside and sea than Crovie. Here most of the houses are relatively substantial two-storeyed dwellings with regular three-bay frontages, unusually for a seatown somewhat small-town in character, the linear frontage resembling a street (fig. 5). At the western end of the village there are a few single-storeyed cottages, perhaps originally housing fisherfolk. The buildings are constructed of local red sandstone, mostly now rendered and whitewashed. Fishing stores are freestanding small gabled buildings sited in front of the houses above the shore and were once more numerous; they share the space with the clothes lines, and laundry flapping in the sea breezes is part and parcel of the scene. When Peter Anson (artist and writer, 1889-1975) visited the village in 1929 there were 24 open boats engaged in line fishing. At this period the houses were not whitewashed, the red sandstone buildings blurring against the equally red cliffs. Whereas 50 years ago the dwellings merged into the background, Pennan now stands out as a white-painted linear settlement.

There has been a small harbour at Pennan at the east end of the bay, the only rock-free section of the shoreline, since 1704 (fig. 6). Both the original harbour and its successor of 1799 were swept away. By the mid nineteenth century there were improvements; the east pier was built in 1854 and the west in 1903, extended in 1909, each additional alteration exploiting the improving skills of civil engineers and also the introduction of concrete. Like Crovie, the houses of Pennan are now largely holiday homes and the Pennan Inn, coupled with limited vehicular access by the steep road from the high ground above, attracts many patrons, particularly during the summer.

On the hillside above the east side of the village there are plots of land cultivated by villagers as allotments. Although these are now overgrown, the gardening/vegetable production tradition they evince is more akin to that of the country dweller than that of the coastal fisherman, one of the aspects of Pennan linking it to the agricultural hinterland, as also at Gardenstown.

The Bairs of Auchmedden were the landowners and, like Garden of Troup and most other contemporary landowners, were no doubt involved in



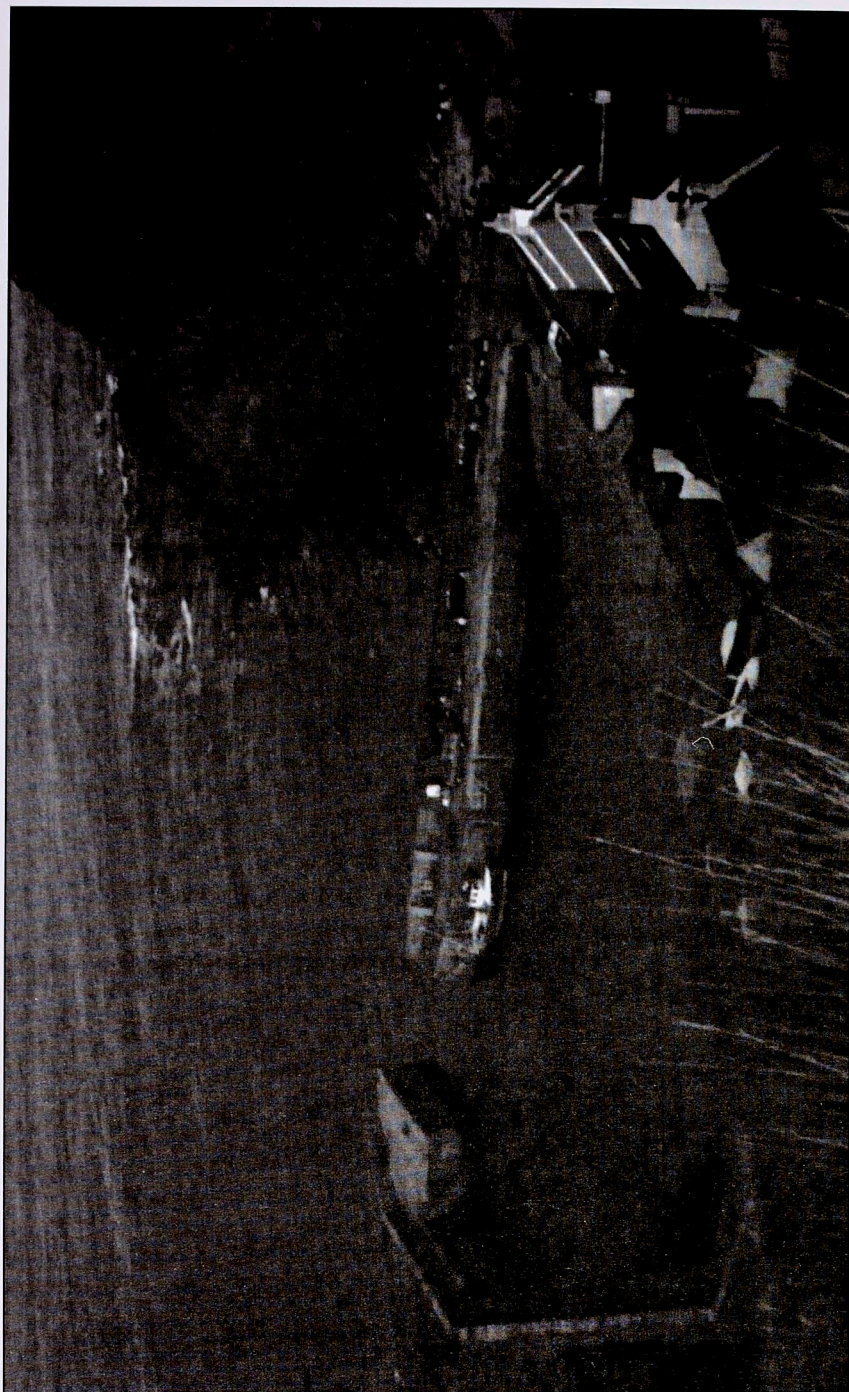
*Figure 5. Penman: Regular two-storeyed houses face the sea. A fishing store stands at the extreme right.*

coastal trade in order to raise cash from the sale of their farm rents in kind. At Pennan, the laird's giral was sited above the village close to Pennan Farm and the coastal track. At least until 1988 (when it was visited by the author) this was the site of an early eighteenth century rectangular, roofless giral or storehouse for grain and other goods prior to export by sea to urban markets. Built possibly on the site of Auchmedden Castle, the granary is recorded by J B Pratt in *Buchan*, Aberdeen, 1858, revised 1901, 313, as being used 'within living memory'. The red sandstone store had a hearth in the north gable enhanced by simple but elegant moulded chimneypiece, presumably warming the custodian's room, the surround similar to that in the parlour of 23-7 North High Street, Portsoy, another Banffshire mercantile settlement. The granary has now been demolished.

Pennan Head, on the east side of the bay, was the site of a millstone (conglomerate) grit quarry from which millstones were quarried and cut. There is a millstone from a whin mill incorporated in the dyke near the Pennan Farm steading. Whin (gorse) shoots were collected and crushed as feed for stock, often in a circular trench with the horizontal millwheel carried on a long pole, pulled around by a horse. The wheel is approximately 40cm (16 inches) thick with a radius of 122cm (4 feet).

It is likely that the original residents of the Pennan two-storeyed houses were also concerned with trade besides fishing. Mercantile activity and the local millstone quarry may account for the mainly two-storeyed, straight-fronted houses rather than characteristic fishertown dwellings. Be that is it may, the housing at Pennan does not resemble other seatown types on the southern shores of the Moray Firth.

Gardenstown, Crovie and Pennan form an interesting trio. Each has individual building traditions stemming from its geographical location in combination with the activities and livelihoods of both its landowners and its inhabitants.



*Figure 6. Pennan Harbour sited at the extreme end of the village.*

# COASTAL SALMON BOTHIES AND ASSOCIATED STRUCTURES

## Roger Leitch

In 1883 upwards of 2,000 men were employed in commercial salmon fishing and river watching around the coasts of Scotland.<sup>1</sup> This constituted an important source of seasonal employment, one governed by tides and runs of fish, and for long made use of communal salmon bothies to house the fishermen. These were situated in every nook and cranny of the coastline, very often at the far extremities of peninsulas. By 1960 the total number of seasonal netsmen had dropped to 1,644 and since then the industry has experienced a dramatic downward count of workers, the result of buyouts of fishing stations by consortia of rod fishermen and a general reduction in the numbers of wild salmon.<sup>2</sup>

To survey the coastal bothies - including those of the firths - would be an extensive project involving a good deal of expense. Over the years the writer has made intermittent fieldtrips and managed to record certain bothies prior to them being demolished or undergoing change of use. Many have been left to gradually decay.

### The East-Coast salmon bothies

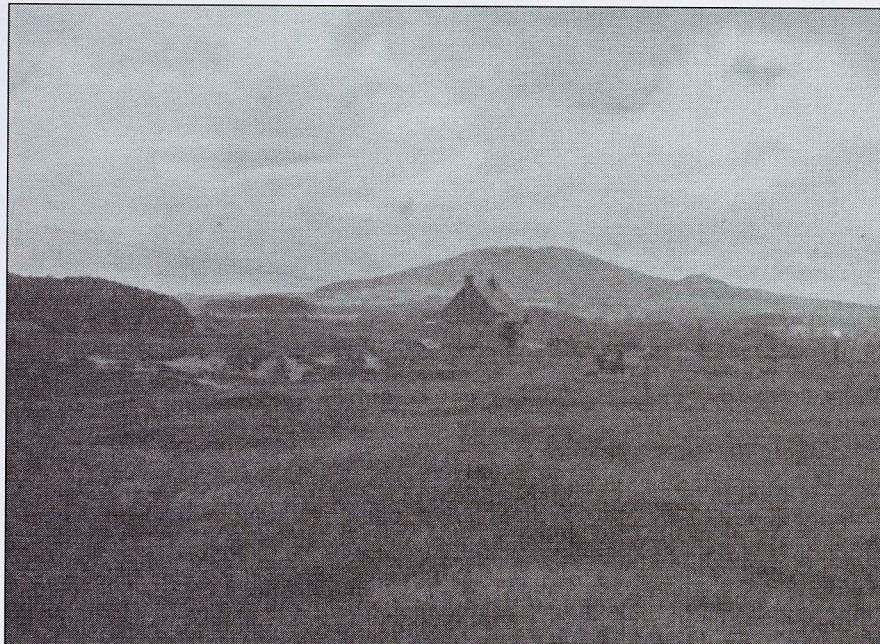
There was formerly a string of salmon bothies stretching along the Firth of Forth. On the Fife coast these were located approximately from Kinghorn in the west to Caiplic (near Crail) in the east. Not many have escaped falling into dereliction. To a great extent this enhances the opportunity for interpreting the building tradition and material culture. Near or at the finality of a tradition can be the best time to codify that tradition, particularly when a building reveals an opportunity for closer scrutiny.

Some former bothies, such as that at Dysart, Fife, have been converted to residential use.<sup>3</sup> Others, such as that at Leven, also Fife, have been demolished. In this case, the salmon bothy was a single-storeyed structure with the loft space accessed by an external stair on the east gable. The bothy was built around 1880 and provided living quarters downstairs with space for nets in the loft above. A picture postcard in the possession of the author clearly shows the building and also a line of stake nets running seawards, with Largo Law providing a backdrop to a scene which has changed dramatically and now embraces a caravan park. (figs. 1 and 2)

Dwellings and farm buildings with red pantiled roofs are still a vernacular feature of the East Neuk of Fife. Pantiled roofs were rare before the 1850s, except when used as an inexpensive substitute for thatch. The pantiles were often dislodged during gales and had poor insulating qualities,



*Figure 1. Old picture postcard of Largo Bay, Fife, with Leven salmon bothy (centre left) and the line of stakes running seaward. Probably early twentieth century.*



*Figure 2. Leven salmon bothy (centre), Fife, with porch and twin chimney stacks, in the foreground of Largo Law. Coble (centre right). Probably early twentieth century.*

but were less expensive than slate.<sup>4</sup>

The usual number of men in a crew housed on the Fife shore of the Forth was four, but there were exceptions. At Dumbarnie bothy, near the seatoun of Largo, accommodation was required for ten men and in 1914 the rent for the bothy was over £286.<sup>5</sup> Many of the Fife stations were leased by Joseph Johnston & Sons (Johnston's), salmon merchants of Montrose, Angus. However at St Monans, for example, the pressure on housing stock created by deep-sea fishermen meant that the company was unable to obtain the lease of a suitable property as a salmon bothy.<sup>6</sup>

Caipie, the most easterly fishing station along the north shore of the Forth, was rented for £3 in the early twentieth century and was described as 'fairly satisfactory but rather far away from the natural creek where our salmon coble lands'.<sup>7</sup> The salmon coble varied in size between river and coast. Essentially it was a flat-bottomed boat like a scow, such as the Montrose bay coble, capable of being launched from a sandy beach and passing over bag nets without causing damage. (fig. 3) River cobsles were smaller and were launched more frequently from gravel hailings on the river bank, as occurred on the Tay.

The section of the Fife coast between Fife Ness and St Andrews suffered from poor fishing and its two stations ran at a loss for many years. Pitmilley salmon bothy was located close to the mouth of the Kenly Water in the vicinity of a sandy section of an otherwise rocky coastline and not far from



*Figure 3. Old picture postcard (possibly 1920) of a coble being launched presumably from the bay at Spittal (Northumberland?).*



*Figure 4. Rear elevation of Pitmilley salmon bothy, Fife, with the red pantiled roof and twin chimney stacks. The glass pantile is just visible. Photograph Roger Leitch, 1989.*

the village of Boarhills. This was a detached building, probably dating from the later nineteenth century, with a porch and ground-floor living quarters and a loft area above, roofed with red pantiles. When first visited in 1989 the roof was intact and was fitted with a glass tile to light the loft. (figs. 4 and 5) By 1998 the greater part of the roof had fallen in. Pitmilley was initially the berth for four salmon fishers, latterly reduced to two, at an annual lease of £10, excluding net ground, whereas the salmon fishers' bothy at St Andrews included net-drying ground on the town's links and was leased for £8.<sup>8</sup>

The historical importance of the Tay as a salmon river and estuary is demonstrated by there being ruins of a salmon bothy on Lucky Island, off Tayport, Fife, in 1861. This was taken down by Admiral Dougall and the materials used in rebuilding work.<sup>9</sup> Indeed the ecclesiastical houses near the Tay, such as those at Balmerino and Lindores, both Fife, as well as those further afield, were granted fishing rights by Royal charter as early as the late twelfth century.<sup>10</sup>

The Tay's net fishing was chiefly situated in the lower reaches of the river, extending from Broughty Ferry, Dundee, and those along the Fife shoreline, as far as Stanley, Perthshire. In 1920 it was estimated that there were nearly 100 fishing stations over the 35 miles (59km) from Stanley to the sea.<sup>11</sup> The riverside stations on the Fife side of the Tay have, on a number of sites, two generations of bothy sitting beside each other, the water of the estuary almost lapping their door.

The Tay salmon bothies are more exactly referred to as 'lodges'. Lower Taes Lodge, situated at the foot of a woodland dell close to the former Flisk



*Figure 5. Close up of Pitmilley salmon bothy roof and building stone, with the glass pantile visible. Photograph Roger Leitch, 1989.*

School, Fife, is a bothy of classical proportions and a high level of workmanship, demonstrated by impressive whinstone quoins at its external corners and stugged sandstone rybats at the windows.<sup>12</sup> Other untypical features of the lodge are its high windows on front and rear elevations, presumably to afford as much light as possible, and the predominant building stone being whin, with accomplished masonwork. The ground plan is symmetrical in design

with two rooms separated by a storage area, this possibly to house a coble out of season. The hipped slate roof is not of local slates but the fireplaces and chimneys reveal a high-quality local brick. Plaster, covered with salmon-pink distemper, has been applied directly to the internal masonry, with stretches of lath evident on the ceiling. To the rear of the structure is a 'swale' or ditch in a moist tract of land, usually filled with rank vegetation.<sup>13</sup> As with many of the lodges, the structure has fallen into decline through neglect.

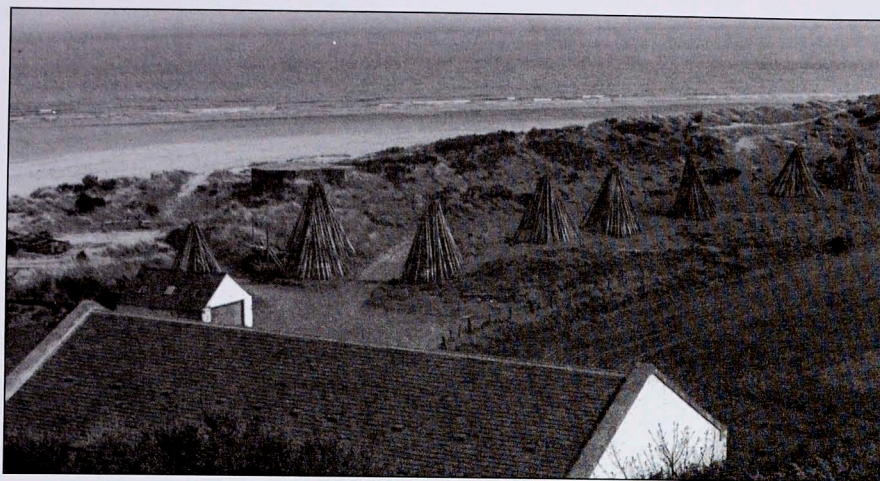
A plan of the Tay between Kinfauns and Cairnie Pier, both Perthshire, was drawn up by John Young at Perth on 30 December 1859 and its large-scale format reveals the density of sweep-net and coble fishing on this stretch of the river.<sup>14</sup> Also shown are names of bothies, many of which have faded from living memory; Tappy Lodge, Millhurst Lodge, Inchuray Lodge, Flukey Lodge, Hurly Lodge, Middle Pow Lodge - all on the Kinfauns side of the Tay (there was a railway station at Kinfauns, doubtless to aid distribution of the catch) - while on the Fife shore opposite were Fuddy Lodge, Sir Robert Peel Lodge, and Upper and Lower Mary Lodges. All are



*Figure 6. Salmon fisherman within the bothy at Lunan Bay, Angus, in 1988. Photograph Roger Leitch.*



*Figure 7. Interior of the net loft at Redcastle, Angus, formerly a salmon fishers' bothy. Photograph Roger Leitch, 1988.*

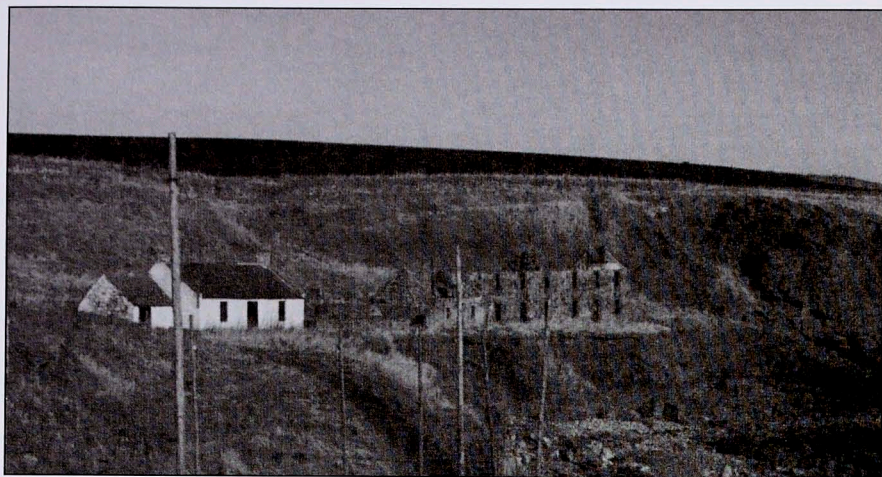


*Figure 8. View over the roof of the former bothy at Redcastle to the ground used for stacking stakes in wigwam-type style. A bay coble can be seen beached (centre left). Photograph Roger Leitch, 1988.*

sited immediately above the High Water Mark. By 1997 it was reported that, 'Net fishing at the various stations along the tidal waters of the river Tay has declined in such a level that it is no longer economically viable to continue ....'<sup>15</sup>

Salmon fishing interests were also very much part of Broughty Ferry and north into Angus, particularly centred around Lunan Bay, whose beautiful stretch of sand was fished by a densely sited line of stake or fly nets running seawards. At its southern end lay the former fishing station of Ethie Ha'en. Redcastle, on the south side of the Lunan water, had a bothy, surveyed by Bruce Walker and the author in 1988 before conversion to residential use. Only the net loft was in use and, out of season, the fly-net stakes were stacked on the adjacent ground in the manner of wooden wigwams. (figs. 6, 7 and 8) Previously the Redcastle bothy had housed a bag-net crew and a fly-net crew in separate rooms. Segregation was necessary owing to their differing shift patterns. It was generally the older men who fished the fly nets because they were better at rising earlier for the tides, whereas younger men were more able to undertake the harder physical work of bag-net fishing by coble.

A short distance inland from the sand dunes on the north side of Lunan Water stand two generations of salmon bothy. The older, more truly vernacular example is rectangular in plan with a hipped roof of Angus stone slates, a diversity of building stone and an architectural flourish above its door. The single small window afforded little natural light, the men sleeping in this part of the structure with gear stored in the other, windowless side.



*Figure 9. Two generations of commercial salmon netsmen's bothies at Boddin, Angus, with poles for drying bag nets in the foreground. Photograph Roger Leitch, c. late 1980s/early '90s.*

The more modern bothy is a detached, stone-roofed building.

Nearby, in the grounds of the former Lunan House, is a subterranean icehouse which has a castellated tower feature, probably consistent with the estate architecture and built by a squad of experienced stonemasons. Such structures were a feature of commercial salmon fisheries and smaller estate examples may well have been built by well-diggers.<sup>16</sup> The largest commercial icehouse in Scotland is at Tugnet, Moray, at the mouth of the river Spey. It now serves as a museum. Three turf-covered barrel roofs provide a clue to its size.

Along the cliffs north of Lunan Bay sits the outpost of Boddin, a 'rock' station which had both fly nets and bag-net fishing. (fig. 9) Here the coble was launched down a steep concrete slipway. Boddin Point is a jumble of old boats, bag-net anchors, net ground, icehouse, two generations of bothy accommodation, a fish manager's house and a crumbling limekiln of exotic aspect. The older ruined bothy structure of two storeys to the north side once housed salmon fishers and lime quarriers. It was constructed from a mixture of limestone, sandstone and brick, now roofless but still revealing fireplaces in both storeys. Nearby is the more modern salmon fishers' bothy. This is more like a detached cottage with an outhouse which retains the traditional Angus stone slates (known locally as grey slate) which came from quarries in the Sidlaw Hills, Angus/Perthshire. Such stone-slate roofs were a feature of eighteenth-century weavers' cottages as well as farm buildings.<sup>17</sup> In the 1990s the bothy was used as a base for ornithologists taking advantage of the

spectacular coastal setting.

Usan, like Boddin Point, is a fascinating place to explore. Once a thriving fishertown it is now semi-deserted. It boasts a massive coarsed-rubble icehouse built against a grass cliff, having earlier connections with the salt industry here. The salmon fishers' bothy, now a domestic residence, sits on the upper level of a two-storeyed building with a store below. The original outer walls are 29 inches (0.74m) thick and it last served its purpose as a bothy in 1957, when men came south to the salmon fishings from ports such as Gourdon and Johnshaven.

The Woodston fishery at St Cyrus, Kincardineshire, had bothies sited at the foot of steep cliffs, where catches formerly were taken in creels by donkey up a steep switchback path. Some of the St Cyrus bothies are now leased as holiday homes. A feature of the bothies at Kirkside, Kincardineshire, and Kinnaber, Angus, is their outside stairs.

Along the wild Mearns coastline, exposed to the teeth of North Sea gales, Johnston's took a nine year lease on the Kinneff fishings in 1934 from the Crown Estate Commissioners. Johnshaven, one of Scotland's premier seafaring ports in 1772, suffered from the activities of press gangs and a disaster at sea which led to a maritime decline. By 1928, derelict fishing vessels were lying on its quay and the traditional fishing industry had dwindled to the point of virtual extinction. As a result many men from the village took to the summer salmon fishing, scattered in bothies up and down the coast, coming home at the end of the season to harvest work on farms, general labouring and 'crabbing' and lobster fishing early in the year.<sup>18</sup> (fig. 10)

Tangible remainders of bothy life can still be found in isolated coves such as Shieldhill, Kincardineshire - once itself a line-fishing settlement with five boats - and Little John's Haven in the same county. Two separate generations of salmon bothy are a forlorn legacy to the salmon fishery in this area. The crumbling older structures are sandstone built and stand back-to-back with their modern counterparts. The latter, which probably replaced the former, seem to date from about the 1950s, a clue being their construction from no-fines concrete bonded with thousands of small, rounded beach pebbles.<sup>19</sup> Shieldhill was fished up until 1960, perhaps later. Most men came from nearby Inverbervie, Kincardineshire, as well as a few from Kinneff. Here the bothies were essentially to provide daytime shelter only, although beds were installed in the event of emergency. Their dilapidated condition is a sad reminder of bag-net fishing along this wild and stormy coast.

A few miles further north in Kincardineshire, the picturesque and dramatic cliff-top village of Catterline houses another salmon fishers' bothy on its shore, not far from the harbour. It is a small structure with a wood and



Figure 10. Old picture postcard of 'The Salmon Fisherman's Bolty Newtonhill' (probably north of Stonehaven in Kincardineshire). Early twentieth century.

tarred - felt lean-to. When the bothy was used to house some of the crew before World War II, it possessed one wooden bunk and two-tier iron beds. The walls were all wood lined, as was the floor, and lighting was by paraffin lamps.

Overnight accommodation in bothies met its death knell with the wider use of the bicycle in the 1930s and the relative freedom of travel which this provided. Fishermen could now return to their homes in the neighbouring villages at night, although those bothies which were in more remote locations appear to have continued in overnight use into more recent times. But now these too are redundant, owing to motorised transport, the reduction in the stocks of wild salmon around our coastline and the spiral of decline in netting wild salmon.

The somewhat remote fishing station at Eathie on the east coast of the Black Isle, Easter Ross, is one of those rarely marked on Ordinance Survey maps. When surveyed in 1987 it was in a sad state of neglect. It is very probable that it had accommodated a four-man crew. The roofing and external walls were a hotchpotch of materials and most likely this was a consequence of the bothy's isolated position, accessed from above by a steeply twisting track or jeep scrape.

Dunbeath on the coast of Caithness, and birthplace of the novelist and Scottish Neil Gunn, is also the location of a vernacular icehouse and salmon bothy, superbly surveyed and drawn by Geoffrey Hay and Geoffrey Stell of the RCAHMS.<sup>20</sup> With regard to the icehouse, 'the extrados of the semicircular barrel vault is overlaid with turf; the vault incorporates a high-level trapdoor enabling ice to be fed into the inner freezing chamber'.<sup>21</sup> In certain respects, although on a far smaller scale, it is reminiscent of the triple-vaulted icehouse at Tugnet. The Dunbeath salmon bothy, 'built partly into the headland with its gable facing seaward (ND 166293) ... includes a foreman's office',<sup>22</sup> indicative of a structure of higher status than that usually associated with bothy-type accommodation. The floors are, in the vernacular tradition of Caithness, flagged throughout and in contrast to the lower Tay bothies, there are fireplaces in each gable wall.

## **The West-Coast salmon bothies**

We turn now to the western seaboard of Scotland. The rugged nature of the indented coastline and the sheer distance involved meant that fieldwork was limited to certain areas only.

It is clear from Johnston's archival records that the company also acquired salmon fishings off the coast of Skye. As early as 1858, the firm made a marginal profit of just over £40.<sup>23</sup> In terms of the expenditure for

running the Skye fishing stations, £418 was the largest outlay, for wages, in turn followed by the bill for ice (including cartage), and other items such as the £14 spent on two cobs, down to £1 16s for work done by a local blacksmith.<sup>24</sup> By startling comparison, the profits of 1859 amounted to £338 9s, indicative of the fluctuating fortunes of the business. We learn from a brief entry for the season 1876 that thatch for the Portree bothies cost £2 6s, with £19 over and above in respect of peats and coal.<sup>25</sup> Rents paid to three proprietors, including Lord Macdonald, amounted to £415,<sup>26</sup> in addition to poor-rates.

From an Inventory and Valuation of Stock belonging to the Skye Salmon Fishings taken on 1 December 1876, cobs, tackle and other hardware amounted to £666 12s 6d.<sup>27</sup> 75 good-quality bag nets represented the highest sum at over £112. A payment in respect of the SS *Frederick* of £100 would point to gear reaching Skye by sea rather than overland.

The Inventory gives an invaluable insight into what was a highly enterprising venture by an East-Coast firm, setting up salmon fisheries on a commercial basis on the West Coast. Not only Joseph Johnston (originally of Berwick-upon-Tweed) but the family business of the Powries of Perth, who established stations in Wester Ross, were in the mould of pioneers. The logistical problems were immense. Organising and equipping stations situated on often remote headlands and deeply indented sea lochs, as well along stormy parts of the coast, called for rare qualities indeed. A newspaper article in the *Glasgow Weekly Herald*, (17 August 1935) discusses the transportation of wild salmon caught from the Powries' West-Coast salmon stations. It mentions the 'Barbara Ann', a herring-fishing boat of Zulu type (originally bought in MacDuff), with two Kelvin engines and an average speed of eight knots, skippered by Jack Watt and crewed by East-Coasters. The boat was about 50-feet long [15.2m] and went round collecting the salmon at each fishing station every second day, before taking them on to Kyle of Lochalsh, Wester Ross, presumably for transport to London by rail. Local skippers also had their place and were able to appoint to their crews skilled local men, in the process providing valuable employment in areas of the West Highlands where there was traditionally an exodus to find seasonal work elsewhere.

From Johnston's archive we learn that their bothies on Skye were located in the 1870s at Portree, Broadford, Isleornsay, Knock, Kilmalunig, Lussie and Duntulm. These appear to have been constructed in the ubiquitous vernacular tradition of the island; perhaps with stone and lime, but having thatched roofs before the introduction of corrugated iron or tarred felt for roofing. Expense and the weight of building materials were important

considerations.<sup>28</sup>

Before cessation of trading, c.1945-6, the West Highland Salmon Fishing Company had stations on Skye at Braes, Camus, Camustinavaig, Lealt, Portree, Raasay, Rigg and Staffin. The company had bought over the lease from the Kilmuir Estates on Skye in 1944. The directors were James Banks and his wife Jane. Surviving assorted papers from the collection held in the archives of the University of Dundee shed light on the struggle to run the business with wartime shortages. We learn that fishermen turned their hand to carpentry work to fashion wooden bunks in bothies such as Rigg, a remote station north of Portree.<sup>29</sup> Powries' men from Wester Ross, and Gairloch in particular, were equally adept. For example, they made hand barrows, for carrying nets, from plain wood. Other gear was customised, one example being the buoys which were not made of rubber but rather were specially made oak casks which came in different sizes. These were produced by coopers and were tarred to prevent seepage affecting their buoyancy.

The Gairloch fishing stations were at Laide, Mellon Udrigle, Camus nan Gobhar (Mellon Charles), Port na Seann (Mellon Charles), Drumchork, Cove, Sand, Gairloch, Port Henderson, Redpoint and Craig. Redpoint was reached firstly by a twisting single-track road ending at Redpoint Farm, followed by a jeep scrape over one mile (1.7km) of moorland. Before the jeep scrape was created the fishermen had to walk over the moor. Peats were cut and dried in advance for fuel, although there was also coal. The bothy was simply a cottage-type dwelling in the traditional style. Cecil Powrie recollected that a pig was killed for hams which hung from the kitchen ceiling.<sup>30</sup> Craig was even more remote. Prior to the Powries' involvement, in the days of the Mackenzies of Gairloch, the catch was taken to Poolewe, where the salmon were boiled then packed in kegs filled with vinegar to await dispatch.

The district of Coigach, Wester Ross, is equally far from markets and is also characterised by dramatic scenery. It contained local salmon fisheries and was also an area from which fishermen migrated to the East-Coast fisheries in search of work. On a fieldtrip to the area in 1988, the writer was fortunate to rely on the experience and local knowledge of salmon fisherman William Muir (b.#1925) of Badentarbat, Achiltibuie. From this settlement had been established six satellite fishing stations; Achduart, Badenscallie, Fox Point, Reiff, Rubha Bhig and Lagnasaille. All were fished by bag net, which had been used since the late 1830s. The bothies were positioned so that the stations were all within rowing distance of one another, taking into account any stiff breeze which might prevail. The bothy at Fox Point was built in 1890, most likely succeeding an earlier, more primitive one. The

walls, for instance, are expertly chiselled and dressed stone prevails. William Muir bothied at Rubha Bhig and described the thatched roofing as being laid on turf divots pegged in the vernacular style.

Reiff was virtually a ruin when inspected in 1988. It latterly housed only one occupant. The likes of Kenneth MacLellan (b. 1907) could recall that it had been occupied about the time of World War I by two of a four-man crew. On entry to the right was the equipment store which had a square hole in the gable wall to allow stakes to pass through as they were too long for storage within the room. The other room was for living, sleeping and cooking. Two bunks were on the back wall and two on the side wall. Water came from a standpipe close to a stream. Kenneth MacLellan recalled the cooking pot was suspended over a peat fire which was central in the room and, in true blackhouse style, smoke filtered through a hole in the thatch, the pot chain being known in Gaelic as the *slabhraidh*. Before straw was imported, dried rushes were used for thatch. The thickness of the outer wall on the south gable where the stakes could pass through was measured at 29 inches (0.74m).<sup>31</sup> Further south in the Powries' Gairloch fishery, gear was stored in separate sheds. Here corrugated iron was a popular roofing material until the introduction of asbestos tiles.

One of the few writers to include material on the utilitarian buildings connected with the salmon-fishing industry is Elizabeth Beaton.<sup>32</sup> Commenting on Badentarbat, she points to most of the surviving buildings dating from the 1850s onwards and, '... there may well have been a fishing station here from the early 1800s'.<sup>33</sup> One of the buildings was 'originally single-storey with an attic pole store reached by an outside stair and a net store at one end. This building had a slated roof from the beginning.'<sup>34</sup> The available evidence would point to the structure fulfilling a more important role than that of the typically spartan salmon bothies usually found, many of them reduced to mere shells by neglect over the years.

Perhaps it is all too easy to dismiss buildings such as salmon bothies as being less well designed and showing little in the way of diversity. In many instances these humble seasonal dwellings exemplify strands of regional vernacular building tradition and some are certainly there to offset such a generalised dismissal. In Assynt, Sutherland, the bothy at Stoer was formerly of drystone-constructed walls and corrugated-iron roofing. The latter material was used over a disparate range of buildings, including schools and churches.<sup>35</sup> Assynt is a region virtually bereft of trees and so roofing timbers were scarce. Driftwood might be employed or long-fallen pine timbers, buried in the peat on the moors.<sup>36</sup>

Buildings are not static. They can be fluid in terms of change of use, or

suffer from neglect, even destruction. In this way they mirror the fabric of society at every level. In these terms it is vital that traces of their history be recorded and the importance of listing recognised in respect of our diverse architectural heritage; humble as well as grand. That said, what is deserving of preservation may not always be feasible, as theory does not always make practical sense.

## Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Susan Storrier for coping with a roughly drafted script and her encouragement throughout. A special thank you is due to Veronica Fraser of the RCAHMS for forwarding the relevant sections of *Monuments of Industry*. Staff at the A K Bell Library in Perth - Iain MacRae, Steve Connelly and Jeremy Duncan - all helped in various ways. Dr Bruce Walker and Gordon Lockhart, formerly with the School of Architecture at the University of Dundee, were of invaluable help on fieldtrips. The late Joan Auld, formerly Archivist at the University of Dundee, was extremely helpful in regard to the archival papers which I consulted there, as were the present staff. Jonathan Stansfeld, retired Director with Joseph Johnston & Son, Montrose, gave me free access to papers in the company's possession. The late Cecil Powrie and William Muir, salmon fishermen, along with David Pullar of Usan, Angus, each helped with practical information, David kindly taking me out in a salmon coble to witness fishing with bag nets at first hand. Last, but by no means least, I owe gratitude to Nina MacAulay of Drumbeg in Assynt, Sutherland.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Second Annual Report of the Inspector of Salmon Fisheries for Scotland, 1883.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, 'Salmon haul belies "gloomy" report', *The Scotsman*, (4 October 2004).

<sup>3</sup> RCAHMS Buildings List, computer no 92374.

<sup>4</sup> Fenton and Walker, 1981, 65, 69.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Johnston & Son, salmon fishers, Montrose, Angus, Archival Papers, letter book No 1 (wet copy), 1908-18, 97.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>9</sup> Scott, 1927, 42.

<sup>10</sup> Leitch, 1998-9, 7-8.

<sup>11</sup> MacFisheries Ltd, 1920, 5.

- <sup>12</sup> Leitch, 2003, 226.
- <sup>13</sup> Information supplied by Gordon Lockhart, architect.
- <sup>14</sup> Plan of part of the river Tay showing the fishing stations on either side, 1859, Nos 1 and 2, Perth and Kinross Council Archive ref: MS60/P8&9. Information kindly supplied by S J Connelly, Archivist at the A K Bell Library, Perth.
- <sup>15</sup> *Perthshire Advertiser*, (21 March 1997), 4.
- <sup>16</sup> Buxbaum, 1989, 110.
- <sup>17</sup> Fenton and Walker, 1981, 68-72.
- <sup>18</sup> (*Aberdeen*) *Press and Journal*, (29 March 1928); (*Dundee*) *Courier and Advertiser*, (10 July 2004), 10.
- <sup>19</sup> Information provided by Bruce Walker.
- <sup>20</sup> Hay and Stell, 1986, 22-3.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 22.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>23</sup> Joseph Johnston & Son, salmon fishers, Montrose, Angus, Archival Papers, Vol 3, expenditure and receipt book, 1858-72 (unpaged).
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>25</sup> Joseph Johnston & Son, salmon fishers, Montrose, Angus, Archival Papers, Vol 2, expenditure and receipt book, 1860-81, 289; Joseph Johnston & Son, salmon fishers, Montrose, Angus, Archival Papers, Vol 3, expenditure and receipt book, 1858-72 (unpaged).
- <sup>26</sup> Joseph Johnston & Son, salmon fishers, Montrose, Angus, Archival Papers, Vol 2, expenditure and receipt book, 1860-81, 291.
- <sup>27</sup> Inventory and Valuation of Stock belonging to Skye Salmon Fishings, 1 December 1876; Joseph Johnston & Son, salmon fishers, Montrose, Angus, Archival Papers, Vol 2, expenditure and receipt book, 1860-81, 302.
- <sup>28</sup> Joseph Johnston & Son, salmon fishers, Montrose, Angus, Archival Papers, Vol 2, expenditure and receipt book, 1860-81, 259.
- <sup>29</sup> West Highland Salmon Fisheries Co Ltd, letter from Alex MacLean dated 20 February 1945, University of Dundee, MS 52/3/1.
- <sup>30</sup> Tape-recorded interview with the late Cecil Powrie, salmon fisherman, Gairloch, 1988.
- <sup>31</sup> Fieldwork survey with Derek Robertson on 9 May 1988.
- <sup>32</sup> Beaton, 1994, 159-92.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 186
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 186, 188.
- <sup>35</sup> Information provided by Duncan Kerr, Drumbeg, Sutherland.
- <sup>36</sup> Hardie, 1996, 71.

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## Glossary

**bag net** - a net extending seawards from the shore, suspended from floats and anchored in a fixed position. It consists of a trap made of netting to which fish are directed by a leader of netting. One end of the leader is attached to the trap and the other securely fixed either to the shore or the seabed (from Association of Scottish District Salmon Fishery Boards, *Salmon Fisheries of Scotland*, Farnham, Surrey, 1977, 31).

**stake or fly net** - a net fixed to the foreshore by stakes. It may be defined as a curtain of netting erected on stakes, set vertically in the foreshore, which

acts as a leader to approaching salmon, with a pocket or trap inserted to take fish which are directed along the leader. It is fixed to the foreshore throughout its length (from Association of Scottish District Salmon Fishery Boards, *Salmon Fisheries of Scotland*, Farnham, Surrey, 1977, 31).

**sweep-net and coble fishing** - within rivers such as the Earn, Tweed and Tay the established mode of commercial salmon fishing was by sweep net and coble. The coble was invariably launched from a hailing with the net on its stern; the boatmen (formerly two with rowing cobs) began to pay out the net at a chosen point on the river which would embrace as much of the river in a semi-circular sweep as possible. On shore a towman held a rope attached to one end of the net; that rope was of such length as to be suitable for drawing the net. The coble was manoeuvred to make a sweep of the river, while the towman who held the rope at the point where the coble started, walked along the riverbank until reaching the point where the net could be drawn ashore, frequently with the aid of a windlass. Wooden salmon cobs were latterly replaced with fibreglass models which had engines and were crewed by a single boatman.

## **‘HOUSES of the MEANER SORT...’**

### **Stephanie B Stevenson**

There are several examples in Anstruther, Fife, of solid sixteenth-century houses of the grander sort,<sup>1</sup> some, like the Old Manse, standing as they were built. Others survive under a modern guise, but of the ‘houses of the meaner sort’ of people nothing now remains.

When the Rev James Melville arrived in Anstruther in 1586 there was neither glebe nor manse, but the parishioners obliged themselves to build him a house on land which the Laird of Anstruther gave freely for that purpose:

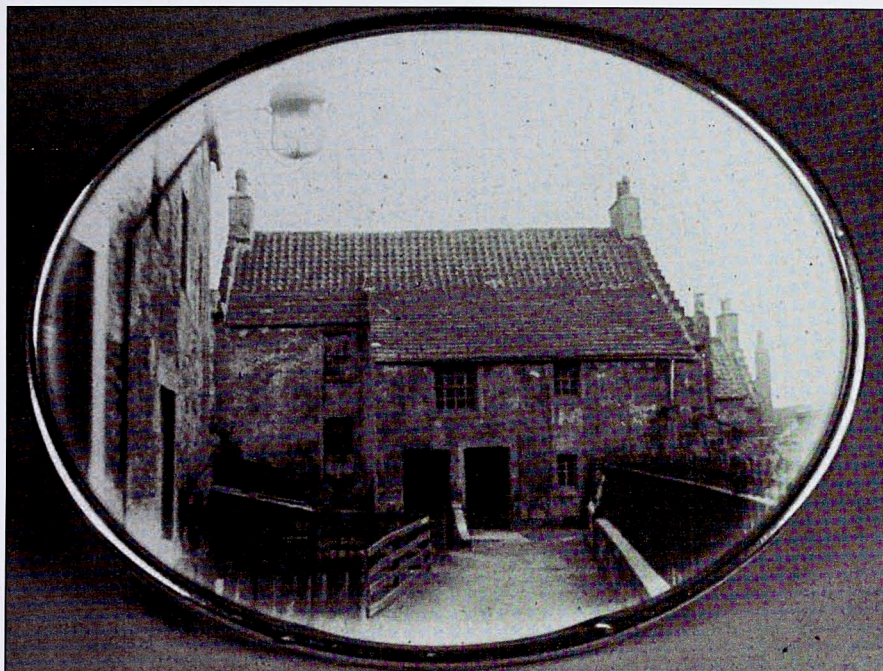
This [the manse] was undertaken and begoun at Witsonday in anno 1590, bot wald never haiff bein perfyted, giff the bountiful hand of my God haid nocht maid me to tak the wark in hand my selff; so that never ouk [week] past bot all sort of warkmen was weill payit, never a dayes intermission fra the beginning to the compleitting of it, and never a soar finger during the hail labour. In Junie begoun, and in the monethe of Merche efter, I was resident therin.<sup>2</sup>

It is a four-storeyed L-plan tower house with two vaulted chambers on the ground floor and a corbelled stair turret in the re-entrant angle, a traditional type of house with which the local builders would have been familiar (fig. 1). From 1637, Melville’s house was owned and occupied by members of the Anstruther family and a house for the minister was acquired in Tolbooth Wynd. In 1713 the two houses were exchanged and since that date Melville’s manse has reverted to its original function. Even without the west wing, which was added in the eighteenth century, it would have been considerably grander than the dwellings of the people down below on the shore.

The outline of a tower house with a stair turret can be traced in Anstruther Easter’s High Street, east of the bridge over the Dreel. It was owned in 1651 by Andro Strang, shipmaster and baillie in ‘Anstruther be east the burne’.<sup>3</sup> In 1641 he gave the new parish church a bell which bears a medallion with his portrait bust and the arms of the Strangs of Balcaskie as well as the Skeith Quarter of Kilrenny. The tower house had probably been built by the Strangs as their townhouse. Most local estate owners had one of these as a refuge from the discomforts of a rural winter. The house was aligned to the ford across the Dreel (between the sixteenth-century house, now the Dreel



*Figure 1. The Rev James Melville's manse, built 1590-91. The west wing was added in the eighteenth century.*



*Figure 2. An old photograph of Chalmers' birthplace. The door on the left leads down to the original ground floor.*

Tavern, and the old mill, at present divided into four dwellings), the only connection in those days between the Easter and Wester burghs; the bridge was not built until 1630. The dwelling is now part of the Smugglers' Inn and its ancient alignment is the reason for the awkward corner there.

Dr Chalmers' birthplace in the Old Post Office Close, which has a deep cellar below it, was another tower house built between the shore and the foot of what was then a steep slope from the High Street (fig. 2). This slope was levelled up to the High Street at the end of the seventeenth century or the beginning of the eighteenth century by Philip Brown, skipper and baillie, who owned a newer house in Castle Street in front of the tower house. The tower house was probably built by the Anstruther family alongside, or perhaps in replacement of, the family's ancient castle at the mouth of the Dreel. There are ship's timbers ingeniously adapted in its roof, part of the original stone stair survives and, discovered in 1981, a great open fireplace with corbelled pillars and a seven-foot stone lintel indicates that this had once been the hall on the first floor of the tower house, now the ground floor. The outlines of two small windows are evident in the north wall of the present cellar. The tower house was the home until his death in 1583 of the Rev William Clark, James Melville's much-loved predecessor. For many years, until its restoration in 1981, it housed at least two families.

Another small tower house (or part of one), still occupied, stands in Cunzie Street behind Shore Street, at the foot of one of Anstruther's several burns which flows erratically beneath a cobbled path. Nothing is known about the house beyond the fact that it used to be known as 'Mrs Guthrie's house'.

There also survive, although they are not immediately recognised as such, two 'Great Lodgeings', described thus in old title deeds. Not as grand as the tower houses, they were nonetheless the property of substantial citizens. One, number 25, in the High Street of Anstruther Wester (the title has recently been transferred to the former 'Fernbank', number 29, once the home of Captain Keay of Clippership fame), was built with a 'Dove Coat in the yaird' - a sure sign of its superiority - to the west of a vennel or passageway which led to a 'piece of waste ground called the Lone'. It was built gable end to the High Street, then known as the market square. The other is at the corner of Shore Street and Tolbooth Wynd in Anstruther Easter, near the old townhouse and overlooking the then market centre of the burgh. Both are three-storeyed stone buildings, the former the townhouse of the Borthwicks of Lingo. The latter, George Gourlay says in his 1888 book on Anstruther, was built by George Hamilton, a wealthy brewer and baillie of Anstruther Easter in 1609 and 1617.<sup>4</sup> The house was bought in 1752 by

Andrew Johnston, merchant, and from 1769 it was occupied by his son, the Collector of Customs in Anstruther. Under two subsequent Collectors it remained the Custom House until the early years of the nineteenth century. Sometime before a public roup of the property was carried out in 1868, it had been converted into two shops on the ground floor, one dwelling house on the first floor and two smaller dwellings on the second floor. John Darsie, fish curer and provost of Anstruther Wester, bought the Great Lodging in 1874 and lived there until his death in 1896. The late 'Eddie' Clarke acquired the property in 1947, running one of the shops as a select grocery and converting the other into a popular café, before finding a property suitable for the hotel which he had long had in mind. This was the large nineteenth-century manse in West Anstruther which became the Craw's Nest Hotel in 1965.

Behind their nineteenth-century frontages, many of the houses along Castle Street and Shore Street have vestiges of their seventeenth-century (or earlier) origins; low rooms, tiled roofs and, in one Castle Street house, a stone spiral stair. They, and the group of old houses at the corner of Shore Street and Hadfoot Wynd, were the homes of successful shipmasters, merchants or tradesmen. They are mostly two-storeyed, built of stone (now harled) and with timbers which the masters themselves would have brought home from the Baltic and Scandinavian countries with which they traded.

But where did the 'meaner sort of peopell' live? That their houses were simply constructed can be judged from John Lamont's account in his diary of October 1655 of 'great and excessive rayns', by reason of which in West Anstruther several houses 'of the meaner sort of peopell did fall downe to the ground';<sup>5</sup> in December, in 'extraordinar mutch snow' and high winds, 'piers were doung doune' and 'lesser houses blowen downen'.<sup>6</sup> The records of the Wester burgh's Town Council reveal that an Act of Parliament of Charles II in Edinburgh in 1663 'anent ruinous houses' empowered magistrates to sell by public roup any deserted and ruinous houses, after the owners had been warned at the Market Cross and to 'caus build and repair in an Decent way within year and day' their ruinous dwellings. The Act was not put into effect in the burgh until the early years of the eighteenth century and many 'old walls, timber and stones' left by indifferent or absent owners were put to roup and promptly re-built, in a more systematic town plan, as two-storeyed houses of stone with sash windows and an outside stair (which made construction easier and saved space inside). Two still remain with their outside stairs.

Those ruinous houses would have been of the simplest construction. The skipper Philip Brown was taken to task by visiting commissioners from Crail



*Figure 3 and Figure 4. Fisherman's cottage in West Anstruther built of stones 'from within the sea mark'. Figure 3 c. 1950? and Figure 4 present day.*



in 1716 for not repairing his house by the sea in West Anstruther which he seemed to have 'relinquished if not disclaimed and seems under no concern about it'.<sup>7</sup> He was living at the time in Castle Street, Anstruther Easter, in a more substantial house; the simple one in West Anstruther was clearly worthless.

There must have been a scatter of simply constructed houses along the Anstruther coast since earliest times; there was an abundance of fresh water, a sea teeming with fish, havens and sandy shores for anchoring small fishing boats and a fertile hinterland. The inhabitants would have used what was immediately to hand for their simple houses, including stones from the beach and turf from the adjacent land. The Royal charters granted to the two burghs in the 1580s confirmed the people's customs into the people's rights and privileges; later title deeds in the Easter burgh regularly specified the owner's right of 'winning stones from within the sea mark and clay from the Loan for the building, beeling and repairing of houses built and to be built'. (fig. 3 and fig. 4)

The Barony of Anstruther, granted to a Norman family by David I about 1130, consisted of the hamlet at the mouth of the Dreel 'and not many acres of land', so the value of the king's gift was in the hamlet by the sea rather than the land, and the inhabitants had traditionally the use of the shore as their source of building material. The Rev James Melville wrote that when building his manse, his parishioners contributed about three thousand sledges of stones and 'fourtein or fyftein chalder of lyme; the stanes from the town [ie the shore], and lyme from the landwart'.<sup>8</sup> Unlike the manse, the meaner houses were probably built without mortar, as were the harbour piers which so frequently required re-building after winter storms.

The Wester burgh was not part of the Barony but held its rights first of the monks of Pittenweem and then of the Crown. The inhabitants there too had built their dwellings from materials available locally. The burgh's charter preserved to the town certain commonty lands from which it would derive its income and preserved to the inhabitants their customary right 'of casting Tairff for their houses'.

As muir land was cleared for farming in the eighteenth century, part of the East Milton Muir at the Milntoun was to be reserved 'as shall be thought necessary for the use of the Inhabitants for Fail and Divots for their Houses'.<sup>9</sup> 'Fail', thick turf, was used in building the walls of an earthen house and 'divots', 'thin, flat turfs, generally of an oblong form', were used for covering walls and roofs. Thatch later replaced divots. Stones would have been used where possible, but foundations would have been scanty. At the Milntoun, across the fields from Pittenweem and Anstruther, where the

remains of the old mill on the Dreel and a cottage were still standing in the 1980s, there was a thriving settlement of small holders from at least the sixteenth century until the end of the nineteenth century, but apart from the cottage, now restored, not a sign of the many habitations nor their layout remains. And this is true of the many farm labourers' and miners' hamlets which were scattered across the East Neuk parishes not so long ago.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Lamont, 1830, 94.

<sup>2</sup> Melville, 1842, 6.

<sup>3</sup> A phrase frequently used in the Kirk Session and the Anstruther Burgh Records at St Andrews University Library.

<sup>4</sup> Gourlay, 1888, 39.

<sup>5</sup> Lamont, 1830, 94.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 95.

<sup>7</sup> Anstruther Wester Burgh Records.

<sup>8</sup> Melville, 1842, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Anstruther Wester Burgh Records.

<sup>10</sup> Jamieson, 1840.

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## 21 SHORE STREET, ANSTRUTHER, FIFE

Andrew M Sherriff

21 Shore Street consists of the first and second floor of a traditional terraced building facing onto the harbour and situated within the Anstruther conservation area. In the autumn of 2003 some SVBWG members on a walkabout tour of Anstruther had a spontaneous and unplanned tour of the property. This article is not intended to be a detailed survey or study of the building but a record of some of the more interesting vernacular features which have survived. (fig.1)

Number 21 is thought to result from the rebuild of an earlier house in the late seventeenth century. The ground floor, now number 22, saw conversion to a shop in the first part of the nineteenth century. The west gable still retains its crow steps but the east gable was built over when the property next door was replaced. It is widely thought that in the thirteenth century the burgers of Anstruther established the pattern of long rigs which are still evident in the twenty-first century. Archaeological evidence of the early occupation of this site was found in the summer of 2003 when a small test-pit dug in the garden of number 21 yielded approximately 51 fragments of medieval and late medieval pottery dating from the thirteenth century onwards. Written evidence in the form of a sasine dating from 10 August 1741 describes:

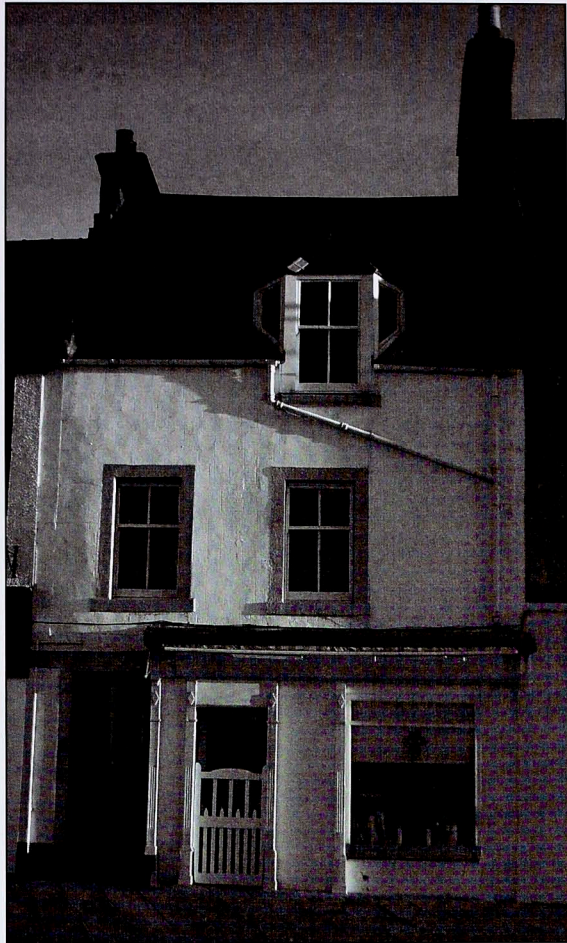
... a quarter or fourth part of a tenement of land ... lying within the Burgh of Anstruther Barony there of the Shyre of Fife bounded by the east most quarter of its tenement of land yeard & pertinents sometime pertaining to umquhile Alexanders Dicks heirs now to Grizel Robertsons heirs on the east, the full sea & common passage on the south, the other half of the part of the tenement and yeard sometime pertaining to the heirs of Alexander Hepburn there after to Robert Richardson now to William Fairfowls heirs on the west, and the old gate and passage striking west be south the barns.

The 'Old Gate' has long since vanished and the site of 'The Barns' is now occupied by a house called 'The Hermitage'. The properties of both Grizel Robertson and William Fairfowl have not survived in their eighteenth-century form, being replaced in the early nineteenth century. The former is now the shop and flat at 23 Shore Street, while the latter has evolved into

what is now known as the Waterfront restaurant.

The Anstruther family retained feudal superiority over the land on which number 21 was built. However written into the agreement were some concessions, an example being the right to take stones from the shore and clay from the loan for the repair of the property.

The first floor of the building has retained some older features, mainly relating to the fireplace and the replacement of the turnpike stair. The original access from ground level was via a wooden turnpike stair partially inset into the east gable (fig. 2) At some point, possibly in the early nineteenth



*Figure 1. 21 Shore Street.*

century, a new stair at the west side of the room replaced this. (fig. 3) Evidence of the old stair's existence has been found in the survival of an intersection of two joists under the floor. A joist running at 45 degrees to others is jointed near its rounded end and this beam end would have been at the centre of the old stair. (fig. 4) The intersection has been exposed to view under a toughened glass plate inset into the floor. In addition, the distinct curvature inset into the gable to accommodate the old stair can still be seen at the back of a cupboard on the second floor.

The original fireplace (1.9m or 6 feet 3 inches wide) (fig. 5) has been downsized by the insertion of a smaller one inside, biased to the right. From the gap at the left one can estimate an original depth of 0.81m (2 feet 8

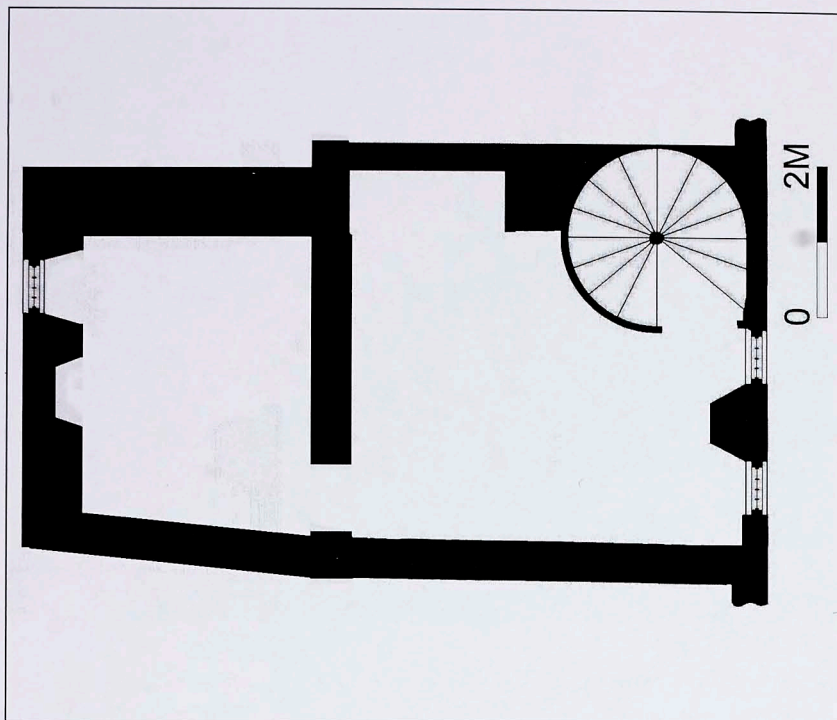


Figure 2. The first floor with the old stair.

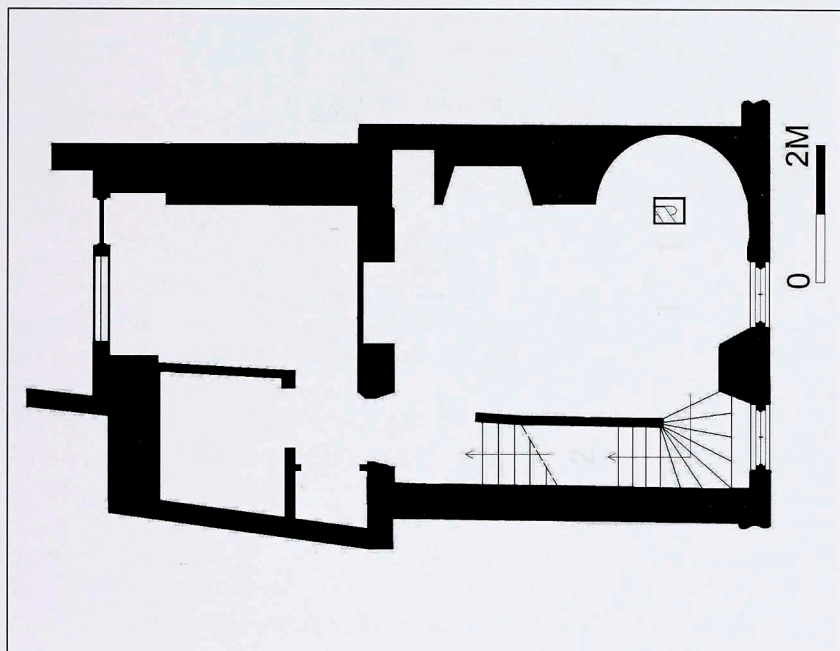
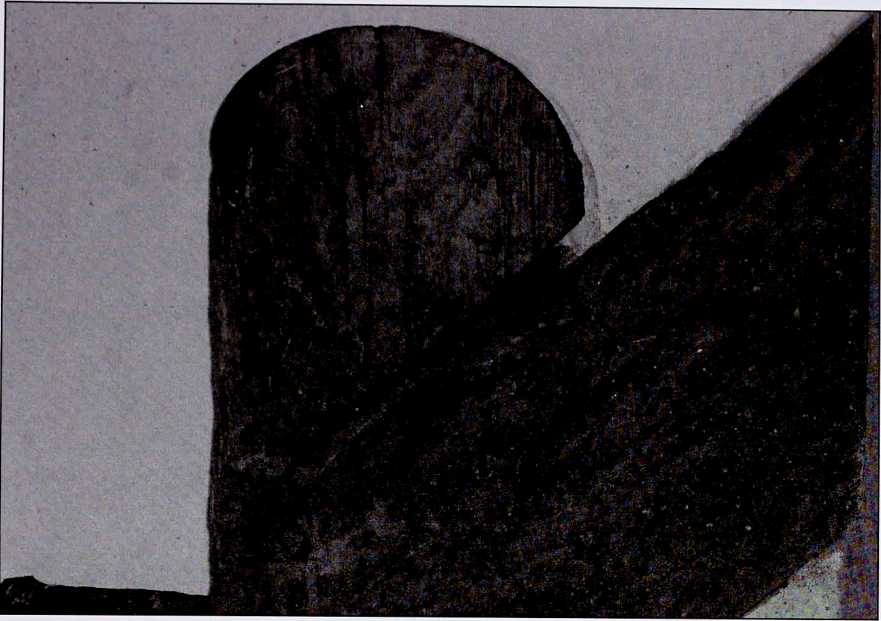


Figure 3. The first floor as current.



*Figure 4. The stair centre.*

inches). The space to the left once had a small door fitted and seems to have been used for the storage of coal. The flue still exists for the fireplace's full original width in the gable. An interesting feature, which is hidden up the chimney, is the stump of a wooden pole which crossed the flue from left to right about 3.3m (10 feet 10 inches) above the original hearth level. Could this have been a functional part of a 'smoking' chimney? It is possible that the smaller fireplace was built about the same time that the old stair went out of use. I have noticed a similar pattern of fireplace with adjacent access stair in the remains of a house being renovated in Cellardyke, Fife.

Two wooden beams exist above the fireplace, the lower one acting as a lintel. Both beams back directly onto the flue and the upper example has been truncated at one time as a result of having caught fire. The surface of this beam has been roughened with 'C'-shaped marks, possibly to ensure the adhesion of plaster. The lower beam was decorated with a series of 'apotropaic' or 'evil-averting' markings and taper burns to bring good luck and deny entry to malevolent spirits.<sup>1</sup> (fig. 6) Concealed items - animal bones, a primitive cloth doll with pages of the Bible, ears of corn, peas, broken crockery and a small glass bottle with a damaged neck - for the same ritual purpose were also found throughout the house.<sup>2</sup> In the sketch of the markings any natural surface features have been ignored in the interests of clarity. The bolder marks were made with a race knife while the less distinct

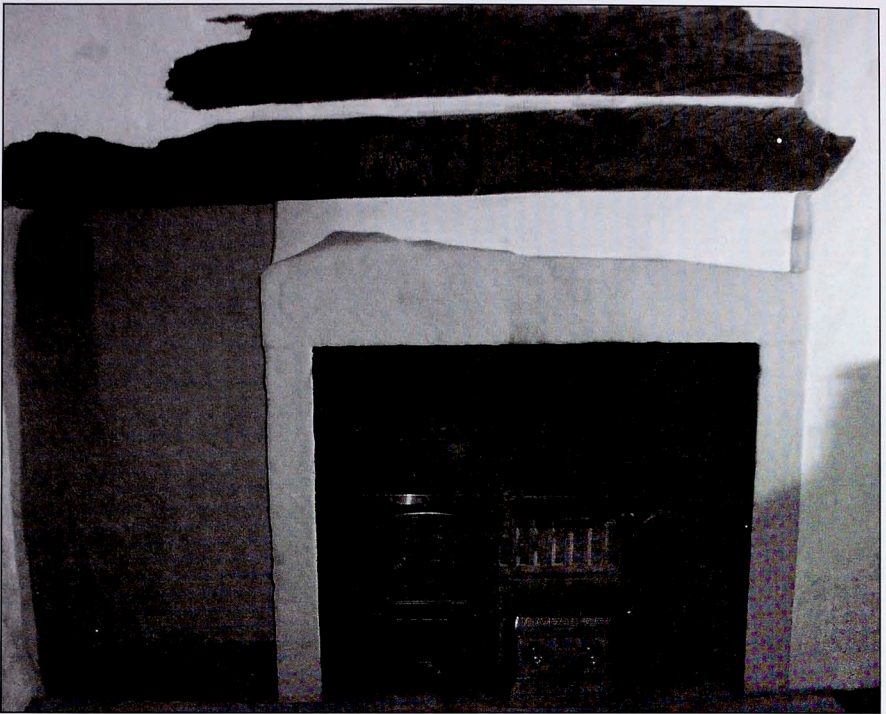


Figure 5. The first-floor fireplace.

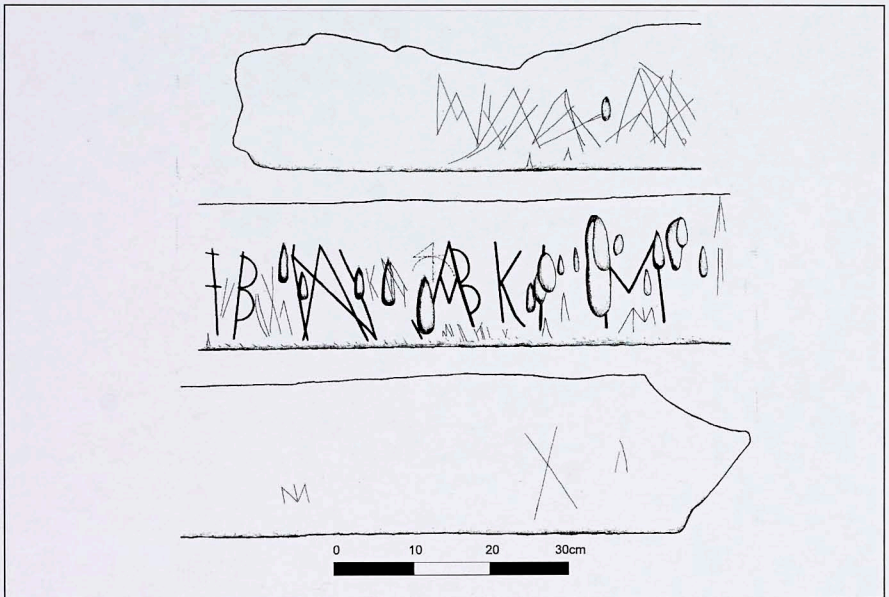
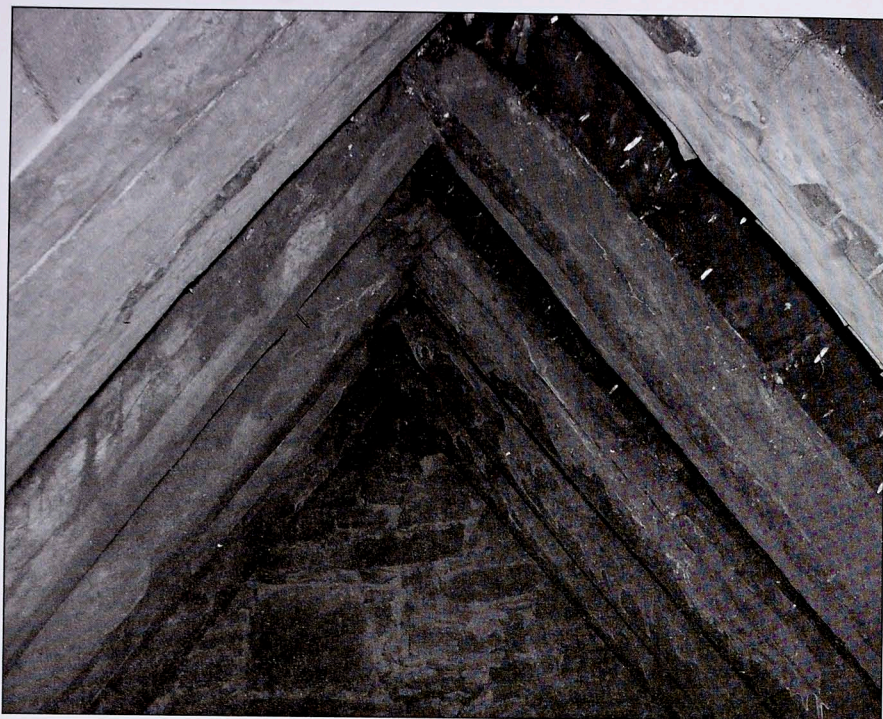
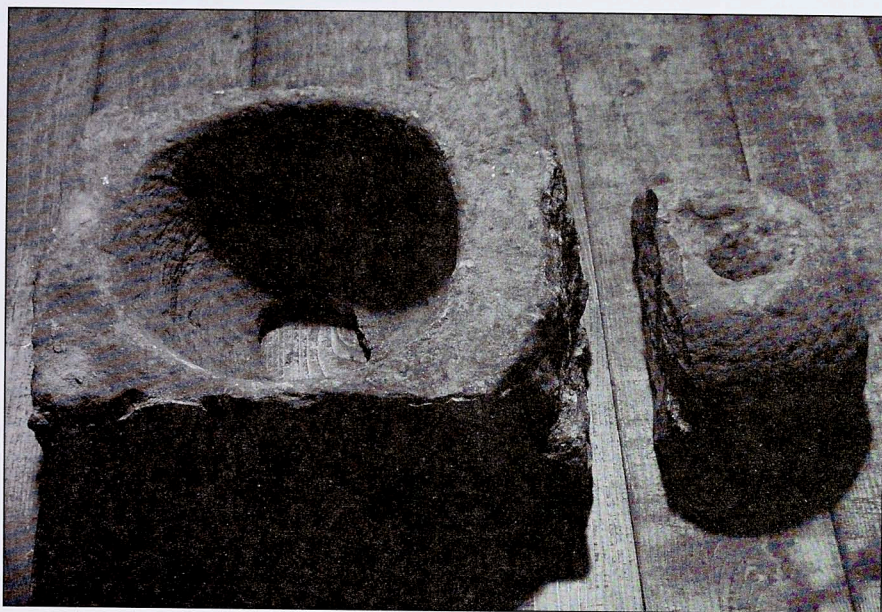


Figure 6. Markings on the beam.



*Figure 7. The roof structure.*



*Figure 8. Two interesting stones.*

ones were inscribed with a thin blade. The taper burns seem to have been made later than the race-knife marks but earlier than the feint marks.

The roof structure of this property is of considerable antiquity as can be seen from fig. 7. The timbers have wooden nails at the joints and carpenters' marks in the form of roman numbers are to be found on the sides. The sarking has been added in more recent times. The top-floor dormer window was remodelled about the end of the nineteenth century; a photograph from mid nineteenth century shows it as much smaller and lower set. Although the front of the roof has been slated the rear retains pantiles.

Fig. 8 shows two stones used as building material and discovered during the renovation of the washhouse. The rectangular stone is about 400mm (16 inches) long, while the rounded stone has had two sides hewn off it to make it fit the wall. These stones were situated adjacent to the doorpost and may have been placed there to protect the ancillary building. The rectangular stone may originally have been a receptacle for holy water as similar stones can sometimes be found in old churchyards.

## Conclusions

The exact antiquity of number 21 may never be accurately known but further work may give some important clues. The application of dendrocronology to the beams above the first-floor fireplace, the floor joists associated with the old stair, and the roof timbers could give some pointers as to the building's evolution. A study of this nature would probably involve enlisting professional help and any funding to enable it to happen would be most appreciated. It seems as if the garden has acted as a midden over the centuries and a comprehensive excavation and dating of its contents would help establish dates for early habitation. This work is something I would enjoy doing when enough time becomes available and there is a suitably dry summer.

A study of further written records might complement the material evidence in revealing the evolution of the house. Certainly there are still interesting aspects to discover, as a lath splitter's delivery note relating to some modernisation in 1903 shows.

The restoration/renovation of this property has been in progress for many years and I look forward hopefully to many more of the same.

## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> Easton, T, 'Ritual marks on historic timber', *Weald and Downland Open-Air Museum Magazine*, (Spring 1999), 22-8.

<sup>2</sup> Darwood, A and Sherriff, A M, 'Apotropaic markings found in a house at 21 Shore Street, Anstruther, Fife', *Tayside and Fife Archaeological Journal*, 9 (2003), 124-8.

## **RECORDS OF VERNACULAR BUILDINGS MADE BY JOHN LESSELS, ARCHITECT (1809-83)**

**Veronica Fraser**

In 2004, RCAHMS was lent a pair of sketchbooks, one compiled by the architect John Lessels (1809-83), the other by his son, also an architect named John (1833-1914). The books were lent by members of their family. Under the RCAHMS' Survey of Private Collections, the whole of John senior's book was copied, as was a selection of images from his son's. Photographic copies of their drawings can now be viewed in the National Monuments Record of Scotland and some of them are reproduced below.

John senior, whose father was an architect-builder and millwright, was born in Kirkcaldy, Fife. He became inspector of works to William Burn, and from 1833 lived in the Borders, supervising the building of some of Burn's country houses. By 1843 he was living in Edinburgh where, after a period as a watercolourist exhibiting at the Royal Scottish Academy, he worked on the Walker Estate, part of the western New Town, and was also joint architect to the City Improvement Trust. Pupils in his office included David MacGibbon and Robert Rowand Anderson, and also his son John. After training and partnership with his father, John intended emigrating to New Zealand, but decided to enter the service of the Crown, where he worked on such buildings as Windsor Castle and Hampton Court Palace. He also travelled to Constantinople, to work upon the British Embassy, and images from his journey and sojourn there appear in his sketchbook.

However, it is the sketchbook of his father which will be of most interest to current readers. Although John senior was involved in the design of prominent streets in the New Town of Edinburgh and worked upon the Smith Institute in Stirling and country houses such as Donavoured House in Perthshire, he never lost sight of his roots in Kirkcaldy. Buildings from that town, and vernacular buildings from the areas surrounding Edinburgh and Perth, as well as many now lost traditional buildings from those cities, feature in his sketchbook. His very detailed style reflects his early profession as a watercolourist, and he is at pains to record features and materials in a most informative way. His sketchbook provides a very valuable, as well as an exceedingly attractive, record of buildings which appealed to him as he travelled around Scotland. Some of those which appear in the following selection are dated to the 1850s, when he was working in Edinburgh, Berwickshire, Perthshire and Kinross-shire.

(For further information, see the RCAHMS website [www.rcahms.gov.uk](http://www.rcahms.gov.uk) or contact Veronica Fraser at RCAHMS, John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh, EH8 9NX 0131 662 1456, e-mail [veronica.fraser@rcahms.gov.uk](mailto:veronica.fraser@rcahms.gov.uk).)

## Acknowledgment

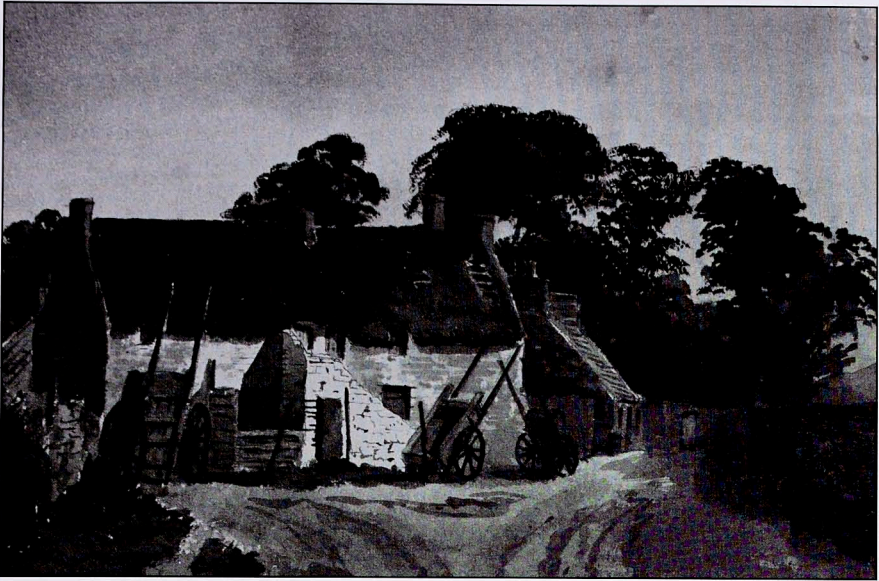
I would like to express my gratitude to Geoffrey Stell for suggesting this article and advising on its content.

## Bibliography

*Dictionary of Scottish Architects*, 2002, 2004.



Figure 1. In this peaceful view of an unidentified mill near Perth, Lessels captures many important details including the mill wheel and the steeply pitched roof which suggests a loft space used for storage or in part of the processing work. (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS SC928560)



*Figure 2. This view of an unidentified group of buildings near Edinburgh dates from 28 July 1882, much later than the other dated material in the sketchbook. The neglected thatched roof of the main building betrays a degree of dereliction, but the three carts in the foreground suggest continued activity in at least part of the complex of buildings. (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS SC928562)*



*Figure 3. A view of buildings at Newbridge, probably Midlothian, 1852. Lessels has depicted interesting door and window arrangements and also the detail of the slate apron at the base of the pantile roof. The wooden lean-to building to the right has holes in its pitched roof, probably for use by pigeons or owls. (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS SC928561)*



Figure 4. Lessels shows the early sixteenth century bridge at Cramond, Midlothian and the pantile-roofed buildings at its end. It is worth noting the post-and-rail fence, a cheaper alternative to drystone walling. The timber could have been obtained at Dowie's Saw Mill, a short distance down the River Almond. (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS SC928543)



Figure 5. In contrast to the rural aspects of this 1852 depiction of the Dean area, Edinburgh, enhanced by the trees and grazing animal, Lessels also shows the growing water-powered grain and tanning industries developing along the Water of Leith. (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS SC928559)



Figure 6. A view of houses in Fisherrow, Musselburgh, East Lothian, c. 1860, including, on the right, the premises of Robert Tait, a cattle dealer. The other buildings shown are presumably fisher housing. This depiction is particularly interesting for the detail of the cantilevered timber section and the timber handrail on the forestair. (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS SC928542)



Figure 7. This is an extremely useful view of a timber-fronted building in Watergate, Perth. The last of the timber-fronted buildings in Perth, Kinnoull Lodging, was demolished in 1966. Again Lessels includes such interesting details as the shutters and the pend with canted shoulders, presumably leading to a yard at the rear. The building to the left is notable for its arched shopfront openings, still to be seen at Gladstone's Land, Edinburgh, and in Elgin, Moray. (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS SC928563)

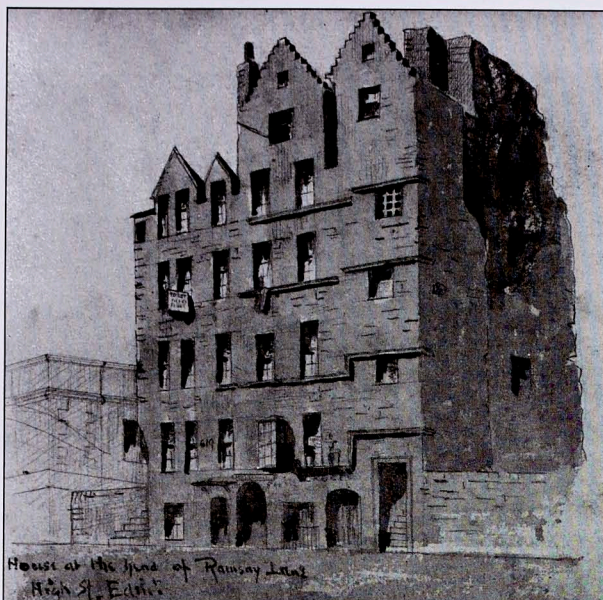


Figure 8. Executed between 1850 and 1853, this watercolour shows the house at the head of Ramsay Lane, Edinburgh, now the site of the Camera Obscura. A typical building of Edinburgh's Old Town, it displays crowstepped gables, string courses, and an interesting array of entrances at the street level. (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS SC928565)

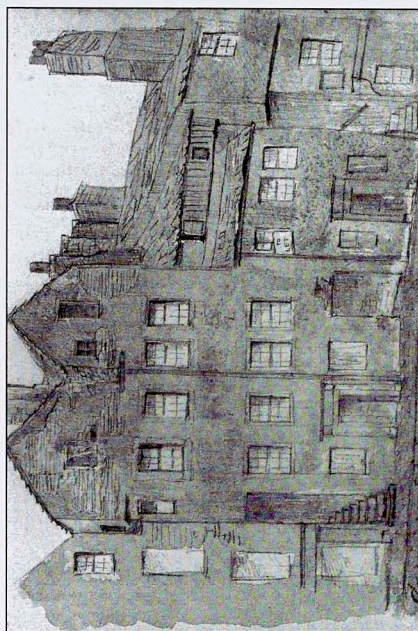
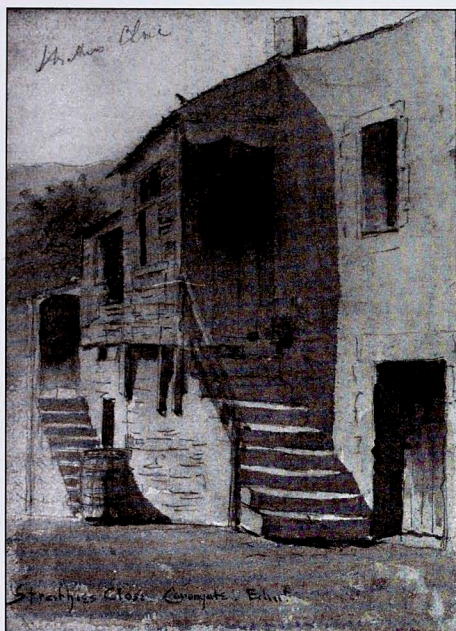


Figure 9. Here Lessels has recorded two groups of buildings: on the left, Strathie's Close, now gone, which ran off the south side of the Canongate, Edinburgh; and on the right, part of the north side of the Canongate. Both show the common use of timber in urban buildings and the different ways of accessing upper floors from the street. (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS SC928564)



Figure 10. Lessels shows White Horse Close, Edinburgh, prior to the reconstructions of 1889 and 1962. Now a picturesque display of modern vernacular housing, the Close then was a functioning warren of buildings serving the White Horse Inn. (Crown Copyright: RCAHMS SC928567)

# VERNACULAR BUILDINGS IN SCOTLAND'S FIRST NATIONAL PARK

**Sarah Parkinson**

Vernacular buildings are an important part of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park's cultural heritage and of the scenic qualities and sense of place which make the area so special. Traditional cottages, some with remnants of thatch, still survive on glen floors and in small villages across the Park. In Glen Ogle (Perthshire), just north of Lochearnhead, a small group of cottages still sits in its traditional setting and traces of traditional field patterns can be discerned. However such sites are becoming rare and, in common with other areas of Scotland, many buildings are falling into ruin and action is needed to arrest their decline and eventual loss.

## *National Park Aims*

- *To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage.*
- *To promote the sustainable use of the natural resources of the area.*
- *To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public.*
- *To promote sustainable social and economic development of the communities of the area.*

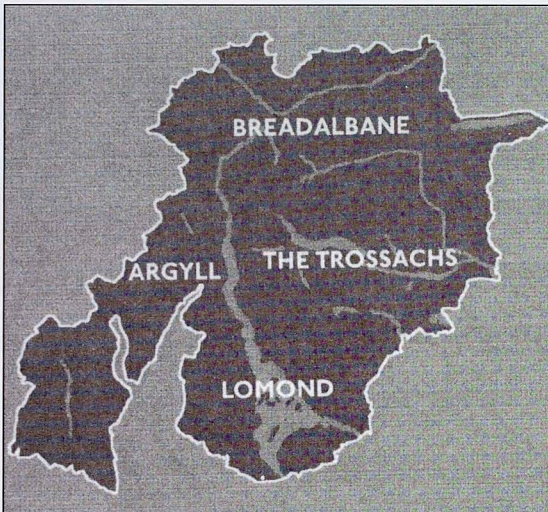


Figure 1. Map of the National Park area. (Crown Copyright © LLTNPA 100031883 2005)

Traditional farm buildings contribute to the rural character of the Park's landscape. The Highland Boundary Fault runs along the southern edge of the National Park and the contrast between typical highlands and lowlands is well expressed. The lowland landscape has been shaped by the agricultural improvements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and is

characterised by small rectilinear fields defined by stone dykes and hedges, farm woodlands, estate villages and farms, and large country houses and associated policies. The highlands, in contrast, are largely rough pasture, managed for sheep and game. The remains of historic rural settlement including townships, farmsteads and shielings are widespread. Changes in rural life and farming have caused many of these buildings to fall into disuse. There are significant pressures for development in the National Park and about half of all the applications received for Listed Building Consent are for the re-use of traditional buildings. Many of the vernacular buildings in the National Park are not listed and therefore may be more vulnerable to development pressures.



*Figure 2. Jock McIntosh's Cottages, Glen Ogle. (Scottish Civic Trust Buildings at Risk Register)*

Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park is less than an hour from Glasgow and was designated a National Park in July 2002, the first in Scotland. The National Park Authority has a range of functions and powers to undertake the management of the area. These include the power to enter into management agreements, make byelaws and provide grants and other assistance. It is also the planning authority and employs its own countryside

rangers who carry out a wide range of projects and community initiatives. The Park Authority is required to prepare a National Park Plan which sets out how the Authority will manage the National Park and achieve its four aims. The Park Plan will include policies and actions for conserving and enhancing vernacular buildings. It goes out to consultation in May 2005 and we are keen to hear views from anyone with an interest in the Park area.

Some of the key issues in the National Park in terms of vernacular buildings are:

- Many traditional buildings in the Park are redundant and falling into ruin. There are also development pressures on these buildings. A number of the buildings feature on the Scottish Civic Trust Buildings at Risk Register. Action is needed to ensure their survival.
- Although some recording of individual buildings has been carried out by the RCAHMS, there has been no comprehensive survey of vernacular buildings in the National Park. A survey would improve knowledge and understanding of the buildings, farming practices and ways of life, as well as regional variations in building traditions and materials.
- Raising the profile of cultural heritage in the Park, including traditional buildings and traditional craft skills. This could be achieved through conferences and events.
- Providing opportunities for local people and visitors to appreciate and enjoy the Park's traditional buildings through interpretation and education in the form of, for example, leaflets and trails.

The Park Authority is keen to work together with heritage groups such as the SVBWG and local communities and individuals with an interest in traditional Scottish buildings. If you have any views on conserving vernacular buildings in the National Park or wish to be included in the Park-Plan consultation please let me know. My email is [sarah.Parkinson@lochlomond-trossachs.org](mailto:sarah.Parkinson@lochlomond-trossachs.org), or telephone 01389 722629.

## SHORT NOTES

An information board for all sorts of snippets relating to vernacular buildings - outlines of research undertaken or proposed, press reports or anything else of interest and modest dimensions. Plus forthcoming events and developments in SVBWG.

### Press Reports 2004

**23 April**, 'Historic Smiddy will Make Way for New Road', *Press and Journal*.

A well-preserved nineteenth-century structure was discovered during the building of a dual carriageway at Upper Victoria, near Muirdrum, Angus. The domed structure was formerly a dovecot and was apparently converted at some point to a smiddy before being buried when a neighbouring quarry was filled in (within living memory). The structure was to be demolished and the ground below excavated for implements (photograph included in report).

**10 June**, 'Elgin Dig Delight over Fourteenth-Century Discovery', *This is North Scotland*.

A perfectly-preserved fourteenth-century oak-built well and contents (a garment, dead cat, horse's head, possible cart wheel, medieval pottery and moulded architectural sandstone) discovered at a construction site in Elgin, Moray. After excavation, sampling and photographing, the well was to be buried again to allow the construction of a department store.

If readers know of any similar reports in the local, regional or national press the editor would be most grateful if a brief synopsis, along with the title and date of the publication in which the report appeared, could be sent to her at the address on the penultimate page for inclusion in this section.

## SVBWG

### Spring Conference

The 2005 Spring Conference will be held on 22-25 April at Whitby, North Yorkshire. Based at the Saxonville Hotel, it will include talks by Dr Andrew White ('A History of Whitby') and Rosalin Barker ('Whitby's Fishing Industry'), tours of east and west Whitby and Robin Hood's Bay and visits to St Mary's Parish Church and Whitby Museum. Optional visits to Whitby Abbey and Visitor Centre, Sandsend and Staithes are included also. As usual, the AGM will be conducted at the Spring Conference.

### Autumn Meeting

The Autumn Meeting, 'The Vernacular Home - Furniture and Fittings', will

be held in the Augustine Church Centre, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh on Saturday 5 November 2005. The meeting will concentrate on the functions and changing roles of furniture as much as on style. After an introduction by David Jones (St Andrews), it will look at regional variations (including Argyll, the Hebrides and other parts of the Highlands) as well as at the furniture associated with particular occupations, such as fishing. Elizabeth Hancock (Glasgow) will discuss the display of vernacular furniture in museums and Chris MacGregor will look at the all-important fittings. Together, the papers should help us to understand the vernacular home more fully. Further details should appear on the website ([www.svbwg.org.uk](http://www.svbwg.org.uk)) shortly and booking forms, etc will be circulated with the summer/autumn mailing.

We are always keen to hear suggestions for conference locations and themes. If you have any ideas please do not hesitate to get in contact with the Vice Chairman/Conference Secretary Norma Smith, Monkswell House, Monkswell Road, Newburgh, Fife KY14 6AF.

### **VB Index**

An Index of back issues of *VB* is being prepared by Anne McCarthy and will be available on the SVBWG website shortly ([www.svbwg.org.uk](http://www.svbwg.org.uk)). Print-offs of the Index will be available for a modest charge from Frances and Munro Dunn, 6 Hillview Road, Edinburgh EH12 8QN.

## REVIEWS

**Edited by Veronica Fraser**

### **Scotland's Buildings (Scottish Life and Society: A compendium of Scottish ethnology, Volume 3)**

Ed by Geoffrey Stell, John Shaw and Susan Storrier. East Linton. Tuckwell Press. 2003. xxxii+761pp. £40.00. 1-86232-123-X.

This is a truly excellent book, essential reading for anyone with an interest in the buildings of Scotland, why they were built, and how they were used. Part of the *Scottish Life and Society: A compendium of Scottish ethnology* series, it draws together many different strands of scholarship to analyse structures built for any functional purpose; thus palaces, doocots, harbours, townhouses and bridges all feature. Taking in turn dwellings from bothies to chateaux, community buildings including churches and Martello towers, and structures relating to working life (ranging from cart sheds to retail warehouses), the book is a marvellous source of knowledge on a staggering variety of buildings, with some chapters by necessity being a brief survey of topics explored more fully elsewhere in single publications. Wisely, it treats the general subject of Scotland's buildings thematically, rather than chronologically, providing a coherent study which will be invaluable for reference purposes.

Many books dealing with the subject of Scotland's buildings can be disappointing to those wishing to explore the vernacular, but it is not the case with this volume. After all, any book containing a glossary which starts with *acanthus* and moves onto *activated sludge* must have a wide and varied range. This review focuses on the vernacular and traditional subjects of the book, but praise must also be given to the treatment of 'polite' architecture.

Dwellings are studied within chapters including Middle-Sized Detached Houses, Small Houses and Cottages, Tenements and Flats, Ancillary Estate Buildings, Seasonal and Temporary Dwellings, and Housing for Seasonal Agricultural Workers. Where appropriate, the subjects are dealt with chronologically, thus developments from the longhouse, the principal rural dwelling type until the eighteenth century, are traced. Factors such as the nineteenth-century move to towns, improvements (which did not necessarily mean progress, as on St Kilda), the spread of planned villages and the increased use of pattern books, all caused changes throughout the country. The effects of external factors, legislation on safety from the sixteenth

century, and of the Industrial Revolution and the post-War housing booms are especially noticeable in the treatment of tenements and flats. Other topics are treated thematically, with that of estate buildings including lodges, stables, laundries, storehouses, icehouses (rarely visible, but essential), doocots, beeholes, privies, electricity-generating stations and gasometers, sporting buildings and boathouses. The two chapters on seasonal dwellings are particularly welcome and use personal reminiscences to outline the lives of those who followed herring or salmon. They also discuss the lot of the farm worker, a way of life which continued to see considerable privation until the 1970s.

Buildings relating to the community, involving social function and public service, are the second main subject. Thus tolbooths, part of the early civic architecture of Scotland, are described, with attention drawn to the existence of fascinating documentation outlining their furnishings and decoration. Schools varied widely, from grand urban establishments to the numerous small buildings of the Highlands and Islands, many of which were replaced as a result of structural inadequacy in the 1870s. The essential structures associated with public service are given useful coverage, with topics including electricity generation, public baths and laundries, and water treatment. The use of prefabricated timber construction in sporting pavilions and clubhouses is highlighted, and attention is drawn to the many varied structures associated with defence, from Martello towers to the anti-tank measures of the east coast.

The study of the workplaces of Scotland is the final section of the book. Agricultural buildings are rightly awarded a gratifying three chapters, which deal in turn with the housing of equipment and draught animals, the storing and processing of harvested crops, and the accommodation of livestock and their products. The development of Scottish farm buildings, from the linear byre dwelling, with people and animals accommodated under one roof, to the sophisticated farms of the late nineteenth century, with smithy, joiner's shop and wood yard, is traced. Emphasis is placed on the importance of logical layout and construction to accommodate a variety of specialised activities with an ever-increasing array of processing equipment. Thus the stable, the kiln, the shieling hut, the horse engine, the potato house, the dairy, the poultry house, manure store, slaughterhouse, lambing house and many others are discussed in detail. A discussion of the workshop in Scotland is another welcome inclusion to the book; these range from the ephemeral shelters used in slate quarries to weavers' houses, still used as dwellings today. More substantial industrial buildings - mills and factories - are discussed, as are the structures relating to extractive and mineral activities.

The varied range of structures associated with harbours and docks are demonstrated by such examples as a tiny dry dock on Raasay, the small bothies serving a minor ferry route, the net-drying poles, curing sheds and smoke houses of the fishing industry, and the navigation aids provided by the Northern Lighthouse Board. Developing the subject of transport, the histories of roads, canals and railways are outlined, which again are associated with a wide variety of further structures; tollhouses, lock-keepers' cottages, bridges, aqueducts, goods yards and signal boxes.

As well as its superb range of study, *Scotland's Buildings* is well illustrated, each chapter is referenced and accompanied by a substantial bibliography, the previously mentioned glossary is extremely comprehensive, and - unlike some collected works - it has a thorough index. It is a most valuable addition to *Scottish Life and Society: A compendium of Scottish ethnology*, and cannot be recommended highly enough.

## **Traditional Buildings of Britain: An introduction to vernacular architecture**

R W Brunskill. London. Cassell in association with Peter Crawley. First published 1981, new edition 2004. 207pp. £35.00. 0-304-36676-5.

Brunskill's book has been a source of information for over 30 years for those studying vernacular buildings, so it is worth taking a look at this new edition. Partly a history of the vernacular buildings, partly an instruction manual for their investigation, the book provides an extremely useful reference for the subject throughout Britain, and while the emphasis is very much on the buildings of England, there is a healthy proportion of types and examples from Scotland.

The book's approach to the subject is straightforward. It asks basic questions such as 'What is vernacular architecture?', 'What are the common walling and roofing methods and materials?', 'What are the common regional variations?', and provides information in response. It does not claim to provide all the answers; while Brunskill sorts building types into common patterns, states which wall material is generally found with which roofing material (for example, timber frame and clay with thatch), and provides a table to assist with the dating of types of plan and stylistic features, he also stresses that there will always be exceptions. A building's story may be obscured by insufficient or misleading evidence, and anomalies can be caused by regional variations and the particular needs of one occupant

within generations. With this understood, one can appreciate the very great detail which Brunskill uses as he responds to the particular questions posed in this guide to the subject. His encyclopedic knowledge of the features of vernacular buildings provides him with numerous examples with which to illustrate his points. The lavish use of line drawings, whether depicting a house type (which can then become a subject for the explanation of building terminology) or providing information on the variations in walling materials or cruck construction, is one of the book's strengths.

As well as additional photographs (though sadly none in colour) and an extended bibliography, this edition boasts a new chapter looking at the Vernacular Revival and its consequences. During the late nineteenth century the work of architects such as Philip Webb and Richard Norman Shaw, followed by the Arts and Crafts Movement, signaled a move against machine-based production and non-local materials and a turn towards traditional building methods by skilled craftsmen. Subsequently, the Vernacular Revival Movement typified by C F A Voysey (1857-1941) produced buildings which, while not necessarily using local materials, were designed to be at one with their locations. For the Vernacular Revival in Scotland, while one might hesitate to group three very different architects under one convenient label, Brunskill mentions Robert Rowand Anderson (1834-1921), Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928) and Robert Lorimer (1864-1929); he particularly emphasizes Lorimer's inspiration from tower houses and small seventeenth-century country houses. Brunskill follows the influence of the vernacular throughout the twentieth century, through post-War housing booms and the Garden City Movement to early twenty-first century traditional replicas and dramatic barn conversions.

The book's subtitle ably describes its function, a thorough introduction to the subject, advising caution when necessary, but with ample detail and analysis to encourage further research into the subject of vernacular building.

### **Clay Dabbins: Vernacular buildings of the Solway plain**

Nina Jennings. Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society. Extra Series: Volume XXX. 2003. 197pp. £20.00. 1-873124-38-4. (Available from Ian Caruana, 10 Peter Street, Carlisle, CA3 8QP.)

Nina Jennings has taken as an object of study a select building type from a distinct geographical area, and in so doing has produced an excellent book

full of interesting structural and social detail. Through study of the clay dabbins of the Solway plain at considerable personal effort by public transport and on foot ('not more than five or six miles at each end'), and through exhaustive research into documentary and illustrative sources, as well as oral records, she has produced a definitive text on the clay buildings of the area, their construction, their role in the lives of the people who used them, and their current survival and condition.

The area of study is the English Solway plain, extending from the Solway to the hills, and taking in some miles east and north of Carlisle. Clay was used for the construction of buildings from possibly the Viking period through to the early twentieth century. This was the most readily available building material in the area; with the mixing of sand, and the structural use of what little timber was available, substantial buildings of most types - farmhouses, smithies, schools, but not apparently churches or watermills - were constructed, with at least 150 surviving to the present day. Such is the adaptability of the material that many have been successfully transformed into comfortable twenty-first century homes.

As well as studying the clay dabbins, the book also covers the way of life with which the buildings were associated. Therefore an early chapter is devoted to life in the area from the eighteenth century onwards, with an examination of aspects of village life, including the communal construction of buildings, times of buses through the village of Thursby in the 1930s, and fishing and farming techniques. Throughout the book emphasis is placed on how people lived in and used the clay buildings, and how the structures were easily adapted as living and working practices changed over the centuries.

The book's format allows for exploration of various types of clay buildings - focusing on farm buildings, farm houses and cottages - and various aspects of their construction - looking at thatch, crucks, plinths, rendering and the general stability of the building type. The text is complemented by a comprehensive glossary and thorough index. The author's enthusiasm for her subject is clear, as she refers to almost all of the surviving buildings in the area and quotes numerous examples for each aspect discussed. The book is copiously illustrated with black and white photographs (both the author's and those sourced elsewhere) and with many of her own plans of dabbins, frequently with complicated stories of development. For comparative purposes, local stone buildings of the seventeenth century are examined as are clay buildings around the world, from just over the border in Gretna Green to Peru. It is worth noting that one third of the world's population lives in buildings of clay construction.

For anyone looking at traditional construction methods, studying the

buildings of Cumbria, or with an interest in the relationship between people and their homes and workplaces, this very readable book is thoroughly recommended.

## **Lost Townships, Silent Voices: A field study of Mull**

Meg Douglass. Dunoon. Argyll and Bute Library Service. 2003. xvi +155pp. £20.00. 1-903041-06-6. (Available from Argyll and Bute Library Service HQ, Highland Avenue, Sandbank, Dunoon PA23 8PB.)

The purpose of this book is to provide a picture of Mull in the past. Drawing upon nearly 50 years' history of researching the island's archaeological landscapes, combining folk memory and recording of the physical remains of buildings, it serves as an introduction to the past life of the island. Meg Douglass, with her late husband, Roy, spent many years analyzing the topographical and place-name evidence of Mull, and this book is both a testament to that work and a guide to anyone wishing to add to their knowledge of the island and its past inhabitants.

The format of the spiral-bound book is straightforward; after a brief general introduction, each parish, and within that, each area, is taken in turn, illustrated by basic general maps and the townships or sites within examined. The place name, grid reference, and date of visit are given, followed by a summary of the site, including a brief description, and, where available, further information. The islands of Ulva, Gometra and Lunga are also included. Entries vary in length from two lines to several hundred words. Many are illustrated by thumbnail black and white photographs, and others by sketched plans. Documentary evidence used includes eighteenth-century prints by William Daniell, census details, and nomenclature and quotations from the first edition Ordnance Survey maps and Name Books of the 1870s. In the time since these records were made many changes have occurred: a school for 20 boys and girls is now buried underneath a road; a house occupied in the 1890s by the MacNeill family is a ruin, but with the central doorway still evident; a chapel is now a private house. The contexts of the remains are often given, noting formerly cultivated land which has degenerated to bog and traces of lazy beds.

The biggest single cause of dramatic change and loss of context is the forestry planting which has occurred throughout Mull, and this emphasizes the value of the Douglass' long-term association with the island. In many cases standing remains have been preserved within planting, but in others -

such as a farmhouse, fank, and supposed school, superimposed on older remains, at Penalbanach, Tobermory Parish - remains have been planted through. Changes in the condition and visibility of remains within planting or felling between the Douglass' visits are recorded.

The study deals with the widest possible variety of structure, from large-scale townships, burial grounds and schools to gallows, crannogs, enclosures and the many illicit stills of the islands. Natural features are also discussed, including a cave near Loch Buie occupied by the McGilvray family at the time of the 1851 census and another group of caves near the loch reputedly used as hen houses c. 1800. A building type given particular consideration is the kiln, and a separate listing is made of the 46 identified and possible kilns located, with the labelling of roomed, free-standing or bank-built type awarded.

Throughout the study the evidence of the buildings speaks for itself, creating a picture of activities from a way of life which has now disappeared, but the remains of which can still provide valuable and fascinating information.

## **Doocots of Scotland: Moray**

N A Brown. Regional and Thematic Studies 8. Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group. 2004. 90pp. £5.00 to SVBWG members, £7.50 to non-members. 1901971 03 1.

The Doocots of Moray by N A Brown is the first in a regional series by the SVBWG which is intended to cover eventually the subject of doocots throughout Scotland. It is an excellent and comprehensive account of the author's researches into the subject and a very welcome addition to the scanty literature on doocots in general. The handsomely presented book includes a detailed account of each doocot together with black and white photographs, drawings of floor plans and cross sections together with detailed data of many examples.

Introductory chapters entitled 'About Doos' and 'About Doocots' cover the basic facts about the history of the birds and their characteristics as well as their habits past and present. They also pinpoint several unusual features in the buildings. For instance, the Moray doocots are considered to be amongst the oldest agricultural buildings in Scotland, spanning a period of 500 years. Even more intriguing are the author's sketches, which relate the size of the bird to the shape and capacity of the different interior nest-box

designs in the doocot. This must be the first time that such a visual demonstration has been made. As well as information about the 38 individual cotes alphabetically listed, Ordnance Survey grid references are given to facilitate locating these.

The lengthy illustrated gazetteer, together with a location map, includes both freestanding doocots and those appended to and shared with other buildings. It is a brilliant idea to include the present-day racing pigeon complex at Elgin, which is described in detail and shows a plan of the main loft itself, together with nursery cotes or flights and a so-called bird-of-prey decoy. Like many other British lofts of this type, it is a modest and practical structure, differing from some of those built by pigeon enthusiasts abroad which are positively palatial in design. Such lofts are apt reminders of the pigeon's role in the past as messenger birds and subsequently in the sport of pigeon racing as well as being providers of squabs in the doocot.

Several other unusual variations in doocot design are included, for example, the crow-stepped lectern at Leitcheston with its unique arrangement of four ground-floor chambers linked by 'crawl tunnels', the loft doocot in the courtyard standing at Drummuir Home Farm, which is fitted with perching racks for the birds rather than the usual nest boxes, and examples of a single building, like Hazelwood, with a combination of upper-storey pigeon loft and ground-floor housing for ducks, hens or geese. An important feature of the interior design in some circular doocots was the central revolving ladder or potence which was designed to move around the chamber to facilitate collection of squabs. Only a few traces of these remain in Moray doocots apart from one at Orton where the recently reconstructed potence is a striking feature of the interior.

Reviewed by Dr Jean Hansell

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Elizabeth Beaton** is a long-standing member of the SVBWG with a particular interest in rural and coastal buildings. She served as an Assistant Inspector, Historic Scotland, 1979-89, in the Highlands and North-East Scotland and is the author of *Scotland's Traditional Houses from Cottage to Towerhouse* (1997).

**Veronica Fraser** is Curator of Architectural Collections in the National Monuments Record of Scotland, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. She is a previous Editor of *VB*.

**Dr Roger Leitch** is a freelance writer on Scottish interest subjects.

**Sarah Parkinson** is Policy Officer for the National Park Authority.

**Andrew M Sherriff** is an electronics engineer with an interest in history, archaeology and conservation; this was further stimulated by the acquisition of 21 Shore Street, Anstruther.

**Dr Stephanie B Stevenson** and her husband retired (by chance) to Anstruther in the 1970s. Having spent nine years in what was then Southern Rhodesia studying for two history degrees, she transferred her interest to local history, investigating, in particular, the title deeds of several old houses in the burgh, on which she gave talks to the Anstruther Improvements Association. This led to the publishing of her book on Anstruther in 1989. She has also conducted historical walks around the burgh.

## Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group

The Group was set up in 1972 to provide a focus for all those interested in Scotland's traditional buildings.

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

The Group embraces those whose interests are centred on general settlement or social patterns as well as those who have a specialist interest in building techniques or function, or in traditional building 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 come to have such variety and character. And this refreshing blend of interests and attitudes is clearly evident in the Group's activities.

Members are invited to attend annual Conferences held at different venues, mainly in Scotland, in the spring of each year. The 32nd Conference, in 2004, was held in Cullen, Banffshire, and the annual Autumn Meeting was at the Museum of Scottish Country Life, Wester Kitchesside, Lanarkshire.

Publications include *Vernacular Building*, an annual miscellany of articles issued free to members, and a series of Regional and Thematic works. For contributions to *VB* 29 please contact Susan Storrier, Editor, *Vernacular Building*, c/o Veronica Fraser, RCAHMS, John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX, or by email to [scjs@wanadoo.es](mailto:scjs@wanadoo.es). A preliminary letter or enquiry would be helpful, indicating the size and nature of the proposed piece, but we request that original photographs or drawings are not sent in the first instance. Photocopies of these are useful at this early stage. (Please note that many photographs taken by digital camera are not of sufficiently high resolution to be used in *VB*). Any text submitted should be as far as possible in the style of this volume. It should be typed, double spaced with wide margins, on one side of the paper only, and ideally accompanied by a disk copy. Alternatively hardcopy text can be supported by an email attachment version, sent to the above email address.

We also welcome publications for review. These should be sent to Veronica Fraser, Reviews Editor, SVBWG, c/o RCAHMS at the address above.

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For membership application forms, please contact:

Hugh Fearn  
Pith an Aigh  
High Street  
Rosemarkie  
Ross-shire IV10 8UF

For details of publications, please contact:

Frances and Munro Dunn  
6 Hillview Road  
Edinburgh EH12 8QN

For general enquiries, please contact the Honorary Secretary:

Veronica Fraser  
c/o RCAHMS  
John Sinclair House  
16 Bernard Terrace  
Edinburgh EH8 9NX









Printed by Astute Visual Communications  
44-46 Brechin Road · Forfar · Angus · DD8 3JX  
T · 01307 464467 F · 01307 464561