Furniture and Fittings in the Traditional Scottish Home

Vernacular Building 30

FURNITURE AND FITTINGS IN THE TRADITIONAL SCOTTISH HOME

VERNACULAR BUILDING 30

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

This is most certainly a multipurpose publication. Issue 30 of *Vernacular Building*, it is also in part conference proceedings, with a good number of the articles having arisen from papers given at the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group meeting on 'Furniture and Fittings in the Vernacular Home' held in Edinburgh in November 2005. But we hope it is more still - a book for all those, from novices to experts, with an interest in the interiors of everyday, traditional Scottish dwellings.

The first section of the volume comprises eight essays which look at various aspects of Scottish furniture and built-in fixtures. The reader will notice certain themes running through most of these articles: constraint and ingenuity; the relationship between the local and the wider world; the difficulty of drawing hard-and-fast rules about the nature of the 'traditional' or 'vernacular'. David Jones sets the scene with an investigation of the distribution of furniture types across time and space and the materials, particularly the woods, out of which they were made. Also focussing on the example of chairs, the fascinating story of the creation of vernacular furniture is the topic of Dave Hutchinson's essay which investigates the makers and their tools and techniques of woodworking. Highland Scotland alone presents sufficient variety in furniture terms to fill many volumes and R Ross Noble deftly selects and frames his discussion of salient Highland furniture items ranging from dressers to box beds and particularly chairs. Similar scope, but at the level of one county, Argyll, is shown by Stephen Jackson, who draws on various types of source material related to his own recent fieldwork. Crissie White looks at the exquisite textile and paper furnishings to be found in nineteenth-century two-roomed Scottish homes. Here the past manifestly is colourful and rich. Elizabeth Beaton's investigation is of the items within a single building. The nineteenth-century longhouse at Moirlanich, Perthshire, is both typical of its type and remarkable in terms of its state of preservation and a detailed analysis of its fittings is presented here. It is to the world of museums that Elizabeth Hancock takes us and to the collection and display of vernacular furniture in Glasgow in the first half of the twentieth century, examining the role of groups of enthusiasts and individual collectors such as Sir William Burrell. Finally, Crissie White presents an illustrated and descriptive list of furnished Scottish vernacular homes open to the public - a must for anyone wishing to see traditional furniture for him - or herself.

The Shorter Notes and Articles section looks at a number of buildings-related topics, reflecting the very wide-ranging interests of SVBWG. M Dalland, T G Holden, G F Geddes and J M Morrison continue their examination of the farm-buildings group at Ewingston, East Lothian, by examining the mill. Sally Spencer looks at dry-stone sheep-clipping stools in Inverness-shire. There are reports from policy-shaping and news-making conferences and projects and much more besides. The volume finishes with a fine collection of reviews selected by the journal's Reviews Editor, Veronica Fraser.

Susan Storrier

SURVEYING THE LANDSCAPE

David Jones

The appeal of Scotland's landscape must lie in its diversity. Consequently it can be one of the most exciting, and difficult, places for the furniture historian to pursue fieldwork. The contrast between highland traditions and their lowland counterparts, for example, is quite marked, but there is also a complex interaction between the two, which has produced some very idiosyncratic furniture.

On surveying the landscape, the first observation to be made is that Scotland appears to be more than one country. The highlands, in their appearance and geology, people and culture, are quite different from the lowlands. Although there is no precisely defined boundary, the physical division of the land can be seen by looking at a relief map and distinguishing the mountainous landmass in the north and west from the low-lying, cultivated and more heavily populated area along

Fig. 1. A Wester-Ross-type 'cutty stool', nineteenth or twentieth century, of fir, alder and elder. From Duncan Mackenzie's croft house, Lonbain, Applecross, Wester Ross. (Applecross Estate)

Fig. 2. Caqueteuse *armed chair, 1682, Aberdeenshire, Scots fir. (Marischal Museum, Aberdeen)*

the east coast and across the south. Some take the boundary to be the route of the geological fault that runs from Dumbarton on the west to Stonehaven on the east, while others draw a contrived 'highland line' that follows a course from Dumbarton to Ballater in south-west Aberdeenshire and thence to Nairn on the Moray Firth. For the purposes of this essay, the dividing line will be drawn in a diagonal from Dumbarton to Kirriemuir, Angus, in the east, continuing north following the eastern edge of the mountains until the northern coast of Caithness is reached. To the west of this line will be considered highland and to the east and south, lowland.

The highland/lowland duality that is described here is not simply a north/south divide but also one that separates east from west in the upper regions of Scotland. In these northern counties furniture traditions seem to have occurred in bands across the country and the standard of workmanship was more highly developed in the eastern parts. Thus furniture from Caithness was much more sophisticated than its counterparts in the western region of Sutherland and furniture made in Wester Ross was more primitive than the same items made in the fertile coastal area of Easter Ross. Moving further south, the spectrum was even more extreme between Argyll, Perthshire and the eastern counties of Aberdeenshire and Angus (Forfarshire).

Stopping for a moment in Aberdeenshire, this is a relatively large county (1971 sq miles or 5,105 sq km), with a predominantly lowland character, but it is one of the most interesting for common furniture as there is such a diversity of repertoire. For example, highland types of chair such as the 'cutty stool' (fig. 1) occur in specialised form, alongside completely contrasting and elaborate forms such as the so-called *caqueteuse* chair (fig. 2) that has a regional distribution all along the east coast. Being a maritime county, it has also been most receptive to attractive and practical ideas brought by sea from distant locales. One of the most exotic was the combined settle/table known as a 'Buchan dees' that occurs in Norway and also in some northern Spanish regions and Portugal.[1]

A landscape is made up of boundaries and in furniture terms these can be concrete, as suggested above: highland/lowland, native timber/driftwood, rural/urban; or abstract - this category includes issues of status, patterns of furniture usage, even correspondence with linguistic groupings. But perhaps the most engrossing, and troublesome, area of division is that between the vernacular and the fashionable, or common

and high style. Curators and historians of material culture in the twentieth century have been trained to study furniture in such binary terms, placing common against high style and defining the two as fundamental opposites. There are even separate societies for the study of the two disciplines. However in Scotland this approach has inherent shortcomings because the majority of the country's common furniture is not immediately distinguishable from its fashionable counterpart. A Chippendale-influenced chair, for instance, is as likely to be found in a croft as it is in a country house, but the two might be made from different materials and have differing levels of ornamentation (fig. 3). It is probably more appropriate to see items of Scottish furniture from the broad handmade tradition as markers on a continuum than as belonging in ring-fenced categories. That being said, the landscape is occupied by furniture that is quite remarkably varied and close study must be made before connections can be safely established.

The furniture landscape can be mapped, to a certain degree of accuracy, by recognition of materials. For instance the naturally bent knee of timber is a good general indicator of furniture made in the northern counties; but this is a very wide area. Some found objects were more regionally specific. Whale vertebrae, for example, occasionally used as stools, usually occurred only in coastal districts of the highlands. They were more likely to have been scavenged from washed-up carcasses than obtained from hunted animals. Driftwood is much associated with Scottish vernacular furniture, but was used mostly in the Northern Isles and Shetland in particular. Here, in an almost treeless landscape, home-grown timber was a precious commodity, but driftwood was in relatively plentiful supply. It was not collected randomly, but in an efficient and organised manner; crofts had their own recognised driftwood piles that were carefully sorted and protected from scavengers. Furniture-making wood was usually deal or 'fir' planking, often recognisable as sea timber because of the circular boreholes made by the ship worm *Teredo*. Teak from ship's superstructures was frequently made into strong pegs for fastening furniture joints. Fish boxes, made in Aberdeen, provided excellent furniture-making material; some was used in the Northern Isles, but examples come mainly from the west highlands.

The principal native wood of the northern mainland, particularly the highlands, was *Pinus sylvestris*, the Scots or Caledonian pine. This adaptable timber was widely used in common furniture making but, confusingly for foreigners, most Scots refer to it as 'fir'. This is not

botanically correct terminology but it has a much older history than 'Scots pine' and was in daily use by craftsmen. Where inventories of highland cottage furniture survive, they mention furniture made from fir (the *caqueteuse* chair in fig. 2 is made from this timber). Painted or 'grained' furniture, for example the *trompe l'oeil* fruitwood presses, meal arks and cradles of the north-east coast, was usually made from fir or deal.

Oak was not greatly used in the making of common pieces as it was in relatively short supply after the seventeenth century. Having been employed for the making of regional chairs, such as the *caqueteuse* type, its use subsided in the 1700s, giving way to other timbers such as wych elm and ash. Oak grown in Scotland, 'aik' in Scots, is of the same species that is widespread in England and the rest of northern Europe, *Quercus pendunculata*, but it has a tendency towards slower and more crooked growth. The figure, which has striking and sometimes swollen medullary rays appearing in swirly patterns, has more visual interest than that from oaks with a tall straight bole. This characteristic, by itself, will not identify a piece as Scottish, but may do so in conjunction with other features.

In the lowlands, Scots or wych elm, *Ulmus glabra*, became ubiquitous towards the nineteenth century. The timber is white, as opposed to the red colour of the once-common English or field elm. Furniture made from Scots elm, when new, has the same pronounced figure as the field elm, featuring dark lines with feathery interstices, but this shows up with particular clarity against the contrasting light-coloured background. It was an excellent wood for making common splat-back chairs. Scots ash is the fourth notable furniture timber in the common repertoire. A frost-hardy, wind-firm native, this tree was familiar in the lowland agricultural landscape, used when needed for tool handles, framing components and everyday chair making. It could be successfully coppiced, producing long, straight-grained stems that converted into slender banisters for the likes of the 'brander-back' (grid-backed) chair, a type that was made by 'wrights' (carpenters) in the eastern counties from Aberdeenshire to the Lothians. William Boutcher, in his *Forest Trees*, Edinburgh, 1775, p62, observed of ash, 'when it is young it is as strong and lasting as the timber of old trees'. It was certainly the case that relatively quick-grown ash stocks could be used for chair making to good effect; they had resilience and suppleness, which meant that the wood was not easily broken. They had, also, a light, clean look.

The most readily available hardwood in the highlands of Scotland was birch, which was found growing wild in most upland places but was not a plantation tree. Although the tree seldom grew straight enough to provide first-rate timber, Loudon, writing in 1833, claimed that, 'the Highlander makes everything of it: they build their houses of it; make their beds, chairs, tables, dishes and spoons of it'.[2] The Edinburgh *Cabinet Makers Price Book of Prices* (1811) supports Loudon's observation that the timber was used for making common furniture by including it along with deal and stating that work should 'start scratch beaded' (marked with a groove to imitate a more-sophisticated raised and moulded bead).[3] But birch is quite perishable, particularly when exposed to damp conditions, and little early vernacular furniture in the timber has survived. During the later nineteenth century large

Fig. 3. A 'cutty stool', Killin, highland Perthshire, with bottomed seat and Chippendale-inspired central splat. Acquired from Mr Forbes, farmer, Killin, 1968. (Raymond Morris of Balgonie)

Fig. 4. Director-*inspired chair from a cottage at Knockhill of Nydie, Fife, late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, Scots laburnum (Laburnum Alpinum).*

quantities of better-quality birch imported from Canada and the United States were used to make chairs, but these were generally dark-stained and polished.

Sycamore, 'plane tree' or 'maple' in Scots, was certainly used widely in eastern Scotland, possibly following the tradition of employing the related, but native tree, the field maple, but more plausibly because the central-European sycamore, *Acer pseudo-platanus,* was so adept at growing and surviving on the most exposed and windy parts of the east coast. The timber could range from white to bright yellow in its colour and its decorative effect was highly valued. It is interesting that so much of the common furniture of the Scottish highlands and lowlands, that made from Scots elm, ash, birch or plane tree for example, was light-coloured in its final finish. This must have lent the vernacular interior a distinctive look and helped to differentiate it from other countries such as England and Ireland, where darker woods tended to be used. As mentioned above, wood stains became more generally used in Scotland in the second half of the nineteenth century, so diminishing the effect of previously light-coloured surfaces.

Amongst the more unusual furniture timbers to be found in particular regions was Scots laburnum; *Laburnum alpinum*, as opposed to *Laburnum anagyroides*. Like the plane tree, this species was particularly well suited to growing in the east of Scotland and, because it reached a good height and girth with a reasonably straight trunk, it could be planked and used for making furniture. In contrast to the predominantly pale furniture timbers of the traditional Scots interior, *Laburnum alpinum* furniture possessed a colour that ranged from nut brown to almost black, depending on the fertility of the soil in which it was grown. It can be identified by bright flashes of whitish-yellow sapwood in the otherwise dark timber. Perthshire, Forfarshire and Kincardineshire were its heartlands.

In the glens of the highlands clumps of alder are found scattered on the lower slopes of the hills, along riversides and in boggy meadows. The forest-tree expert H L Edlin, writing in 1944, claimed that, 'logs were sometimes immersed in peat bogs after felling, when they assumed an attractive reddish stain'. This 'Scots mahogany' was then used for furniture making.[4] Alder furniture is not found in great quantities and this is not due to perishability, as it is a most enduring timber. Where examples are found, they are almost certain to have originated in the highlands or the north west.

Eighteenth-century newspaper advertisements attest to a greater use of walnut and cherry (Scots 'gean') than we might have thought probable amongst regional furniture makers, but there was a very healthy trade in all workable timbers and particularly garden specimens. Ancient pear trees growing in gardens in St Andrews, Fife, for instance, were eagerly bought up for making chairs. Although there is a broadly discernible pattern of regional timber use in Scotland, it would be folly to see this as fixed. As in vernacular architecture, if some unusual construction material was available then it was used. Just as basalt blocks may have been employed to build a cottage in an area where most others were of freestone rubble, a stash of walnut or Scots laburnum acquired in an area where there was little decent hardwood might be used to make a set of good chairs - thereby endowing the owner or maker with a little status.

The hierarchy of common furniture types in Scotland is worthy of note because in different places throughout the country, different pieces were valued over others. In eastern agricultural counties for example, more was spent on the box bed than any other item in the small home.[5] They were sometimes made after elaborate architectural patterns, dressed with expensive bed curtains and covers (particularly in fishing areas) and constructed with knock-down joints for ease of removal in case the family flitted to another house. Domestic longcase clocks were also symbols of status in the countryside. From the late eighteenth century onwards, it was not uncommon for small householders to go into debt just to own one of these, and if the clock was too tall for the low rooms of an unimproved cottage, a hole was dug in the earth floor to accommodate the case.[6] This type of clock remained popular in Scotland until the 1880s, far longer than in other parts of the United Kingdom. To a great extent this popularity was due to the number of skilled case makers in regional centres (there had been a thriving export trade since the eighteenth century) and the variety of colourful painted dials (often illustrating favourite scenes from the works of Robert Burns or Walter Scott) that were offered by the Scottish dial makers. Fancy dressers were frequently the pride of the house in coalmining districts and elsewhere and were often quite costly. They were often positioned so that they could be seen straightaway by visitors, so they were commonly placed opposite a door. Chests of drawers and elaborate cooking ranges also could be symbols of relative prosperity. On a simpler level, there was healthy competition amongst farm 'loons' in the North East over ownership of the best kist. The kist, or box, was

of great importance to the farm lad and many spent time painting the lids, a practice that can still be seen at some cattle shows in Banff and Buchan.

If the dresser, the bed and the longcase clock were status objects that had fixed places in the small house, the role of other types was certainly more flexible and practical. In the countryside, for example, where so much time was spent outside, some of the domestic furniture was designed to be carried out of the house and used in the open air. Typical of this robust category was the small, boarded stool or 'creepie' that occurred so frequently in the small household. This could be used in many ways, as a seat, stand, or support for larger objects. Creepies are shown, for example, in nineteenth-century photographs of fisher folk in coastal settlements baiting lines and handling nets. The creepie stool was conveniently close to the ground for these tasks and could be taken inside when the day's work was over. The same stool, which had a finger hole in the seat board for ease of carrying, might be taken to church on Sunday and used by young family members as a hearthside seat at night. The boarded stool, which is still a familiar piece in Scottish houses, is not an object of status, but is held in great affection by adults and children alike. This sentimental attachment, which has elevated the creepie stool to folk object, has contributed to the widespread survival of the type. It became such a part of family culture that toy versions were made and, at least until the 1970s, young boys would construct their own creepies in school woodwork lessons, sometimes decorating them with popular comic characters.

The common chair was less likely to develop folk-object status but, like the stool, it had endless versatility. Wherever work was done, a chair might be taken. Photographs from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are still the main evidence for this; they show common chairs being used in conjunction with specific working tasks that required plenty of outside light and space. Places remain where abandoned domestic chairs may be seen, at harbour sides, for example, or scattered about farm steadings. Sometimes an old chair was adapted for a particular agricultural purpose such as turnip slicing for cattle feed or other simple mechanical processes. Similarly, household kists were adapted for farm purposes, such as for use as fodder containers out in the fields.

The boundary between inside and outside was certainly transcended by the settle, but this was more often used outside the house for leisure

purposes, or for resting, than for any working task. Some nineteenth-century photographs show men passing the time of day, out of doors, on settles, a practice that seems to have been particularly prevalent on the islands. There is good evidence, for example from locations such as Jura, in the Inner Hebrides, and St Kilda, in the Outer Isles. Settle traditions were strong in those places and the long seat was greatly used. Tables, a relatively uncommon item in the Scottish cottage, do not seem to have been used out of the house, unless they were those made for dedicated purposes, such as for pig slaughtering or sheep shearing. In terms of definition, these specialised items occupy a grey area between the table and the stool.

Furniture was also taken outside to be washed; that is scoured with river sand, wiped down and dried in the sun. Central hearths, earth floors, solid fuel stored inside and close proximity to animals in the unimproved longhouse all contributed to furniture grime. Whatever was portable enough was taken down to the nearest burn by the women of the house and cleaned by rubbing and rinsing. Such a fastidious ritual can be seen as a folk custom as much as a feature of the housekeeping round, as it was a definite event in the family calendar. Although furniture, including beds, fireplace, window frames and even door locks were frequently taken from a house when a young farmworker and his family moved to a new cottage, on occasion the full complement of household furniture was taken outside and burned for a fresh start to be made in the next place. This practice was recorded in the eastern lowlands as late as the 1950s.

The taking of furniture outside, for whatever purpose, can be seen as crossing a boundary, but it can be viewed also as part of a natural pattern of movement in which the open air was as much a place for things as the interior. One of the most regularly seen instances of this pattern must have been the recycling of bedding, in which the deep mattresses or 'tikes' covered in canvas cloth and filled with chaff were removed from box beds and taken to the cow byre to be trodden into manure. This, in turn, was spread on the cereal fields to fertilise a crop that would provide fresh bedding.

Migration to multiple-housing types in the cities, contexts where there was effectively an absence of 'outside', brought an end to the putting out and carrying out of furniture. The seasonal and ritual cycle enjoyed by country dwellers was stopped; but not entirely. Whether for urgent reasons of family overcrowding or perhaps some lingering

atavism, the practice of putting out furniture on tenement stairs persisted in places such as Glasgow into the twentieth century. Even late in the century, householders provided with balconies in new council flats would treat these as outside spaces for storing furniture.

The premise has been introduced that a great deal of this country's common furniture is not readily distinguishable from its fashionable counterparts. Before this can be investigated further it makes sense to look at 'high-style' furniture in a Scottish context. Alexander Peter's dining chairs, for example, made in 1759 for Dumfries House, Ayrshire, are a very good example of the fashionable modernity of eighteenth-century Edinburgh production.[7] Built using very dark Jamaican mahogany, of the type favoured by mid-century Scots cabinet makers, and upholstered in Scottish-made 'osenburgh' cloth (a loose-weave flax fabric), they represent Peter's response to the stimulus of rococo chair designs in the first edition of Thomas Chippendale's *Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director* (1754). The fan-back enrichment of carved wheatsheaf, acanthus plumes and rosettes is Peter's own and not copied from the *Director*. The seats are of wide proportion and characteristic extended scratch stock markings, a tell-tale sign of Scottish construction, can be seen on the underside where the seat rail joints have been set or marked out.

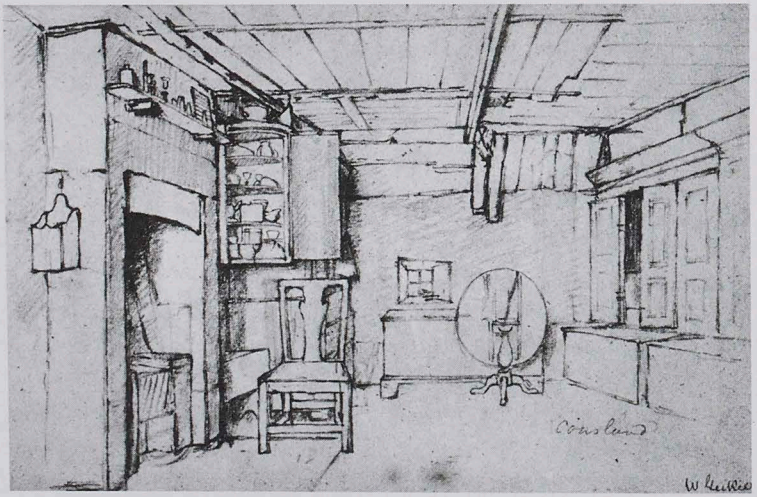


Fig. 5. Pencil drawing by Walter Geikie of the living kitchen of a small farmhouse at Cousland, East Lothian. A Director*-inspired best chair is shown by the hearth. (National Galleries of Scotland)*

However in the same house is a set of twelve related chairs, of slightly smaller proportions, not enriched with carved detail and plainly constructed from Scots elm. These chairs, made for the backstairs areas of the house, could be described as 'common furniture' because they were made using native materials and were intended for everyday use by the working staff. Although the chairs are a deliberate simplification of a fashionable model, made by a fashionable Edinburgh maker and not a country wright, they are nevertheless part of a spectrum of furniture design across the social scale in Scotland. To move across the spectrum, still using the Chippendale-inspired chair as an example, we could look at versions made for Old Aberdeen Town House around 1770, less refined but still fashion-conscious, made from oak, with blind panelled backs and visible pegged joints; at solid laburnum chairs from Blair Atholl, Perthshire, farmhouses; or at diminutive hearthside chairs adapted to cottage proportions and placed within the limited furnishing repertoire of the small vernacular lowland dwelling. Common furniture is therefore a continuum with interesting variables dependent upon region of origin and other circumstances, but its manufacture was not the exclusive privilege of the common man (figs. 4 and 5).

As with any furniture map, that for Scotland follows no political boundaries. That the cultural influence of our vernacular types spreads further south than the present border is amply demonstrated by the appearance of 'Scotch' chests in the north west of England or east-coast Scottish-style box beds in Northumberland farm cottages. These broad areas require mapping in further detail; but within our present boundaries, the regional variation of the box bed, for example, and the recording of *caqueteuse* chairs of all forms, are two subjects that could do with immediate attention.

Notes

1 The form is found particularly in the Basque Country and in Aragón (information from Manuel Balaguer-Cortés).

2 Loudon, John Claudius, *Arboretum et Fructitetum Britanicum*, London, 1838, vol III, 1699.

3 Jones, David, *The Edinburgh Cabinet and Chair Makers' Books of Prices, 1805-25*, Cupar, 2000. See the section that reprints the Price Book of 1811.

4 Edlin, Herbert Leeson, *British Woodland Trees*, London, 1944, 10-11.

[5] Jones, David, 'Box beds in eastern Scotland', *Regional Furniture*, V (1991), 79-86.

[6] An example of this practice survives in the National Trust for Scotland's preserved longhouse at Moirlanich, Perthshire.

[7] Jones, David, *Looking at Scottish Furniture*, St Andrews and Glasgow, 1987, 19.

THE VERNACULAR FURNITURE MAKER: HIS TOOLS AND HIS CRAFT

Dave Hutchinson

I find it very difficult to look at a piece of furniture without touching it. There is an uncontrollable need to let my hands follow its line and form, to feel the smooth line of a polished crane's-neck arm, or the contrast between the well-scrubbed top and the natural sides of a Highland dresser, or even the patina of a well-used and cherished chair. All of these tell the story of the piece and give us a picture of its use. But there is an earlier story, that of the timber that was selected for its making and then the work of the craftsman whose hands and tools fashioned it. These add to the signature of the piece. Scots very rarely signed their pieces by name, but they did so with regional styles, with their methods of practice and with the tools to hand.

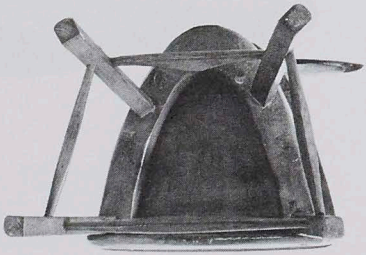
In this paper it is possible to give only an introduction to how our vernacular furniture was fashioned and with that a greater understanding of its making. Five topics will be looked at: the choice and preparation of timber; the socket joint; the mortise-and-tenon joint; the dovetail joint; and the finishing of the piece. These will be examined in the context of the simple furniture of the home maker, to that of the house carpenters of rural areas and the joiners of urban areas, through to the products of the specialist wrights and cabinet makers.

Fig. 1. A stool made from bogwood.

The choice and preparation of timber

Perhaps the most easily recognised pieces of vernacular furniture are those made from found timbers. At their most basic, these are adapted logs and timber from the hedgerow (fig. 1) but we also have a number of vernacular styles where natural forms, such as limbs and crooks, are the essence of a piece's construction. Two chair types give good examples of this practice; the natural 'knee' used in chairs in the Far North (fig. 2) and the crook used in the under-frame of the seat in chairs from Inverness-shire (figs. 3 and 4).

Fig. 2. A 'Sutherland' chair by Samuel Clark, Assynt.



Figs. 3 and 4. An 'Inverness' chair with crook under-frame.

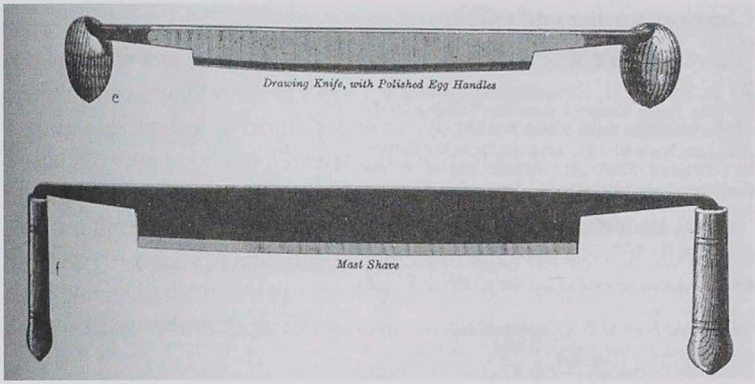


Fig. 5. Draw knives.

Fig. 6. A chair made from cleaved timber, Shetland.

Cleaving, sawing and milling

Cleaved timber was much used in chair construction and at all levels. At its simplest, the method converts a log into many staves using an axe and wedges. The staves would then be fashioned into chair legs using a drawknife (fig. 5). Where there was no sawmill, or perhaps out of choice, timbers, especially oak and ash, would be cleaved and often worked 'green', then prepared with planes and jointed to make furniture. This was often the case in chairs of the northern tradition, such as those from Shetland and Orkney. The tell-tale indicator of this method having been employed is the emphasised corrugations evident in the wood's grain with ageing (fig. 6).

Furniture made by house carpenters, joiners and cabinet makers was in general prepared from sawn timber, the local sawyer working perhaps with a simple pit saw to cut a trunk into slabs (fig. 7). Pit saws eventually gave way to steam-driven sawing and planing mills preparing large quantities of timber for the ever-increasing demands of the market (fig. 8). Two methods were used, one employing the circular saw (which leaves trace marks of concentric arcs), the other the band saw (this creates a trace of parallel lines). These traces are often visible where timber has not been dressed, as on the backs of dresser doors, the

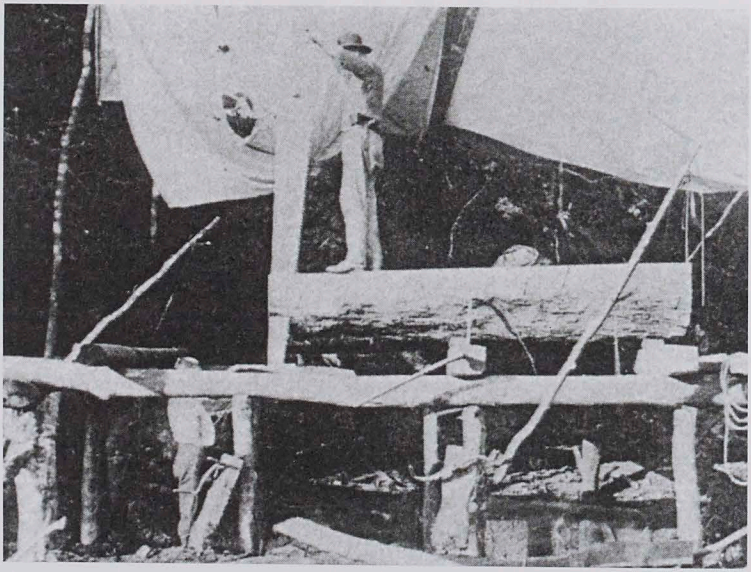


Fig. 7. A pit saw.

Fig. 8. D Sutherland letterhead.

underside of chairs and drawer bottoms.

The sawyer having prepared the timber to the maker's 'picking list', it would then be carted to the workshop. There it would be rested, measured, marked and prepared for each job.

Hand tools

At its simplest level, vernacular furniture is made using hand tools that are to be found in the home or on the croft and basic saws, axes and augers would have been available from a local merchant, some may have even been fashioned by the local smithy. Exploration of old barns often yields rusting remains of these implements.

For more creative and skilled workers a selection of dedicated tools are required, some for general use and many for very specific tasks. Often these were handed down and perhaps adapted, but at some time they would have been bought from a tool merchant or maker, although it was not uncommon for tools to be made by the craftsman himself.

Scotland can boast a tradition of fine toolmakers, mostly based in the Central Belt. Names are often stamped on the iron or wood of a tool and names like Malloch of Perth, Marshall of Glasgow, Moir of Glasgow, Piers of Aberdeen and Spiers of Ayr are common. By far the most successful was Alexander Mathieson of Glasgow whose Saracen Lane Works produced the greater part of many craftsmen's kists, both at home and in the colonies. The Mathieson catalogue of 1899 is a veritable tool cornucopia and contains almost 200 pages full of drawings and illustrations (fig 9).

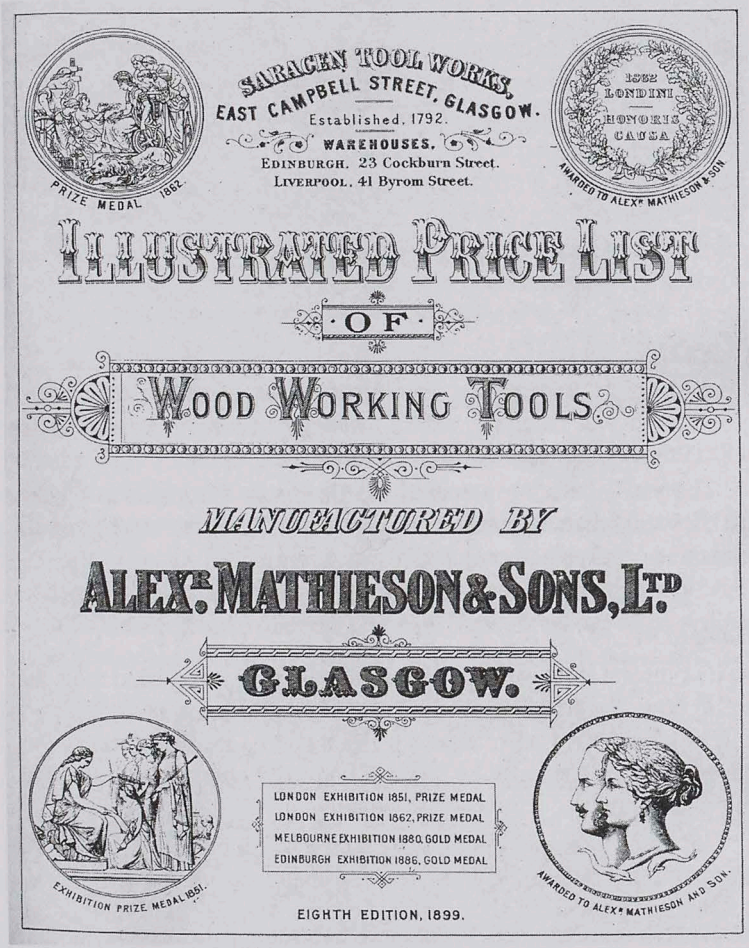


Fig. 9. Cover plate from Alexr Mathieson, Illustrated Price List of Woodworking Tools.

The socket joint

Perhaps the simplest of joints, in essence a rounded piece of wood fitted into a round hole, this features in the most primitive furniture to the most skilled chair-making. Fig. 10 shows a simple bogwood seat from Skye which has been fashioned from a piece cut from the snag of a fallen tree. The three legs have been shaped using a knife and there is evidence that the socket holes may have been created using a hot iron or poker.

Fig. 10. A primitive bogwood seat, Skye.

Fig. 11. A west-coast stick-back chair.

The chairs of Wester Ross (fig. 11) are entirely made using socket joints with most commonly a wooden brace and a wrought-metal spoon bit employed to make the hole (fig. 12). The legs and stays in the back of this example have been carefully rounded to fit using a drawknife or perhaps a chisel. The joints are then secured using wedges or pegs (fig. 13). Over the years such joints can dry out and the resultant shrinkage causes the wedged end to rise from the seat or cresting rail (fig. 14).

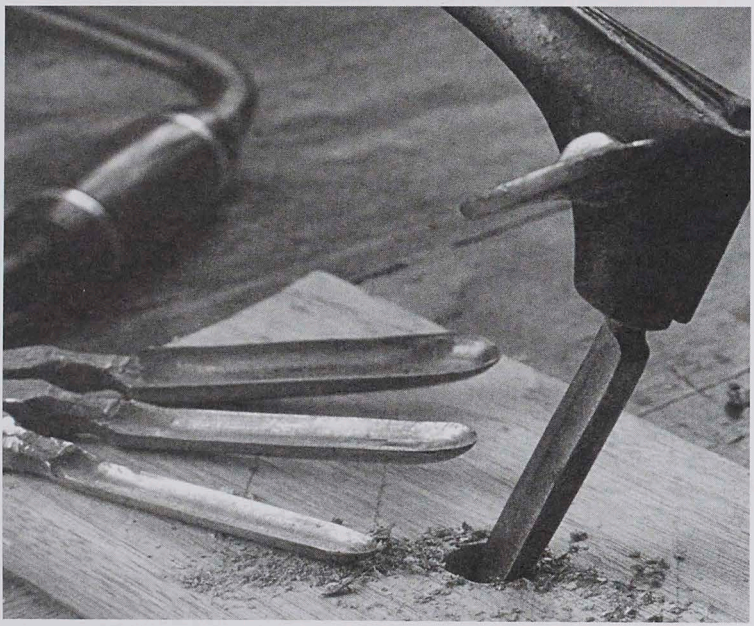


Fig. 12. Boring with a spoon bit.

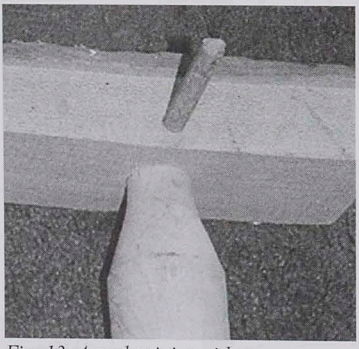


Fig. 13. A socket joint with peg.

Fig. 14. A raised socket joint.

The 'Darvel' chair (fig. 15) is a fine example of the socket joint being used within the most sophisticated construction. The chair is amass with socket joints, through and stopped, to create the magnificent back and to house the legs and rails. In such a chair the stays would have been turned and the joints finished with a rounder, while the sockets would have been bored with a screw bit - one of the few tools to which the name 'Scotch' has been added - having a characteristic double twist to the screw and no spurs (fig. 16). It is possible that the maker of this particular example had acquired the latest 'Best Forged Steel, Scotch Pattern' brace, priced in the Mathieson Catalogue at 12s 6d with an extra 2s for an ebony handle, to produce the precise and clean-cut sockets that the chair demands (fig. 17).

Fig. 15. A 'Darvel' chair.

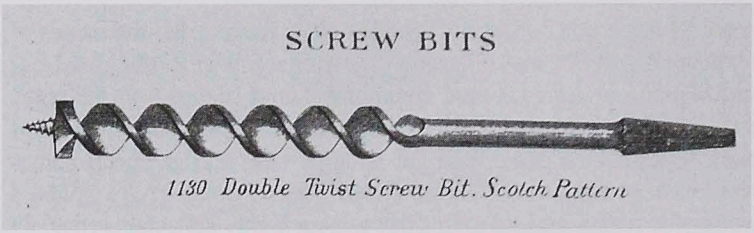


Fig. 16. An illustration from the Mathieson catalogue.

Preparation

Absolutely crucial to the cutting of a good joint and to the making of a good chair is a square piece of timber. The preparation of face, side and edge with a hand plane requires good control and a keen eye is necessary to make satisfactory legs and rails. Inaccurate work at this stage can easily throw a chair's construction out of true (fig. 18).

Fig. 17. An invoice from Alexr Mathieson for a 'best brace' (inset).

Scotland has a rich heritage of wooden plane makers and the names of Malloch (Perth), Marshall (Glasgow), Moir (Glasgow), Panton (Aberdeen) and Mathieson (Glasgow) are commonly found stamped on the plane ends or on the plane irons. More demanding work saw the creation of more sophisticated planes and the wrought-steel and gunmetal planes of Alexander Mathieson (Glasgow) and Stewart Spiers (Ayr) gained a worldwide reputation and to this day remain highly collectable (figs. 19 a and b).

The mortice-and-tenon joint

Whilst the socket joint might be thought of as a joint of general use and available to all makers, the mortice-and-tenon characterises the skilled and time-served craftsmen. Its practise and use were kept almost jealously within the 'guild' in early times. A well-cut mortice-and-tenon joint is extremely strong and ideal for the construction of

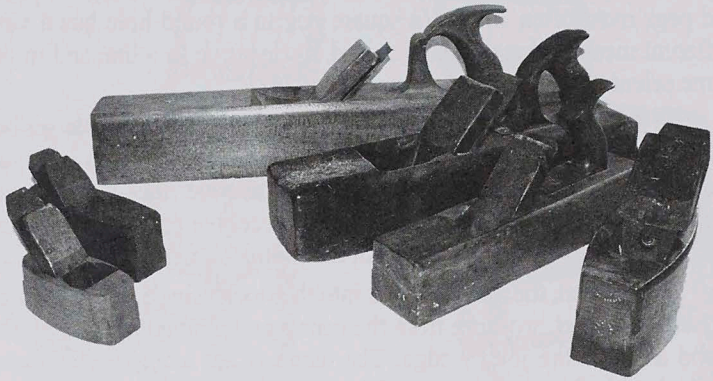


Fig. 18. A selection of wood planes.

Figs. 19 a and b. Makers' stamps; Alex Mathieson of Glasgow, plane iron and wood, plus the owner's stamp.

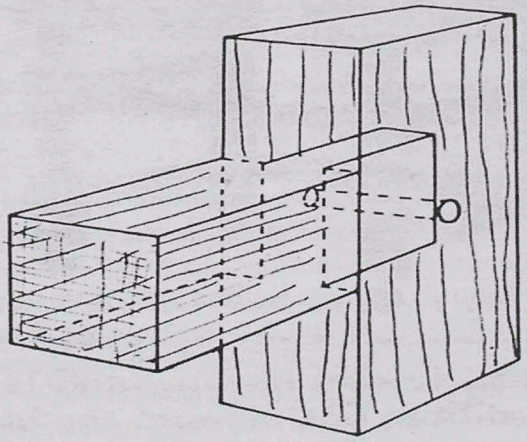
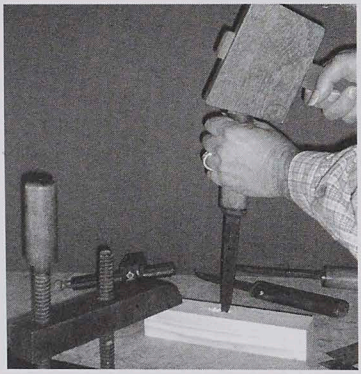


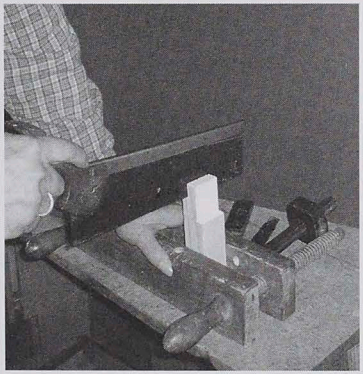
Fig. 20. Mortice-joint construction.

chairs. It will stay firm without glue, held secure with a wooden peg or a pin. Makers took as much pride in their pegs as in cutting the joint, the pegs most often square (a square peg in a round hole has a very different meaning here), neatly raised, always true to a line and in the same orientation throughout a piece (fig. 20).

The joint is marked out with a mortice gauge, an adjustable scriber with two points to give parallel marks on the timber. It was common practice for Scots craftsmen to extend these scribe lines well beyond the joint, a good guide to the origin of a piece, the practice elsewhere being to keep the scribe lines within the joint.

Once marked, the mortice is cut into the stock using a heavy mortice chisel and mallet, working from the centre and gradually chipping the wood away to the joint's edge. The tenon is cut using a tenon saw; marked with the same gauge a high degree of accuracy is possible. The saw has a solid brass back and fine teeth that produce straight, controlled cuts (figs. 21 a and b).





Figs. 21a and b. Cutting a mortice and tenon.

Three different types of this joint are common: the through mortice (going right through the joined timber); the stopped mortice which conceals the structure of the joint (this goes beyond halfway through - common where rails meet legs in chairs and tables); and the stub mortice (fitting a small hole less than half the width of the joined timber). The first is most common in early furniture and pieces made by rural craftsmen who, although they may have had considerable skill, lacked the knowledge to make the more complex mortice joints. Figs. 22 a and b show two versions of the crane's-neck arm, the left on a

Fig. 22 a and b: A wright-made chair from Dunbeath, Caithness; right: a chair from an Edinburgh cabinet maker.

chair from Dunbeath, Caithness. Here a chair in the tradition of the Far North, which would usually have a pair of simple straight arms, in the manner of a Windsor kitchen chair, now has a pair of regency-style arms but they are fixed to the back by through mortises that have been pegged. The right-hand chair is a fine example of the Edinburgh pattern and is constructed in the classic manner of a chair maker; the arm is set into the back with a stubbed mortise and held by a screw, deeply countersunk and concealed from the rear. One example unashamedly states its method while the other presents a smooth curve and line, the finish cleverly concealing the practice. Similarly, the curves of the Caithness chair would have been shaped with a drawknife whereas the cleaner, smoother lines of the other are clearly the work of a spokeshave and scraper in a highly skilled pair of hands (fig. 23).

Fig. 23. A selection of spokeshaves.

The dovetail joint

Slide open a drawer in a chest and the skill of its maker will be immediately revealed, firstly in the smoothness of the glide, but most clearly by the set of dovetails fixing the drawer sides to the front. At their best the dovetails will be close-fit with the finest in the front and wide sections in the side pieces; at their most average they will be coarse and evenly proportioned (fig. 24).

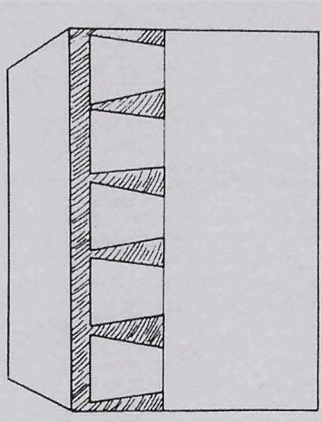


Fig. 24. Dovetail construction.

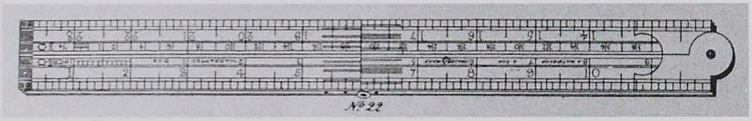


Fig. 25. A rule from the Mathieson catalogue.

Cutting a dovetail is the combination of accurate measurement, fine tools and knowledge of practice. Again we see a division of skilled from less-skilled workers, with the latter not having access to the same training and knowledge. To mark out the joint, a brass arch-hinged and -edged boxwood rule, marked in intervals down to one sixteenth of an inch (fig. 25), is used in combination with a mahogany dovetail bevel; a piece of mahogany 2 1/2 inches [6.3cm] long, 1 1/2 inches [3.8cm] wide and 1 1/4 inch [0.63cm] thick, rebated out one sixteenth on each side to within 3/4 inch [1.9cm] of the end, with shoulders cut to an angle of 80°. The dovetail bevel would have been made by the craftsman in his time as an apprentice, its creation supervised by the journeyman. Attempts with these tools would have become acceptable and eventually 'practice' before the apprentice was allowed to work on any outgoing furniture. 'Apprentice pieces' were made as part of the process of becoming a fully indentured craftsman and were essential for gaining acceptance into a guild. Even today, when applying for membership of the Guild of Wrights and Coopers of Aberdeen an 'essay' piece has to be made, to be judged by the membership before acceptance is given.

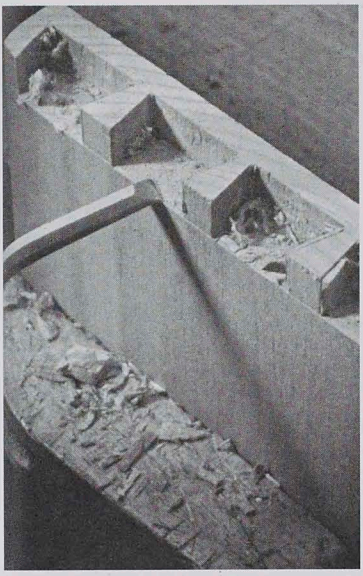


Fig. 26. Cutting a dovetail.

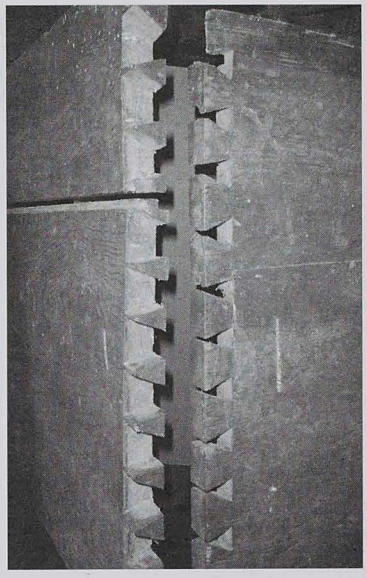


Fig. 27. The corner of a kist with dovetails.

A fine-tooth brass-backed dovetail saw (a smaller version of the tenon saw), combined with fine bevel-edged chisels, enables the cutting of these joints. In the dovetail, very sharp tools are required to cut clean across the wood's grain and there is a particular need for steel that will hold an edge (that is, remain sharp when worked) (fig. 26). To create and maintain such edges a series of carborundum stones and strops were used.

Apart from being a delightfully decorative joint, the dovetail is also extremely strong and the favoured joint in the making of kists and girnals. Here the box ends are a series of evenly spaced large dovetails, at their best tight-fitted and dry-jointed (no glue). Such boxes, apart from being the core of domestic storage, were also the essential store for travel and many a family in Canada and New Zealand display their family kist with great pride (fig. 27).

Finishing

In woodworking terms, 'finish' is the final stage prior to presentation. Vernacular furniture varies greatly in its levels of finishing and whilst there are some very endearing pieces that have had very little attention and have been smoothed only by the passage of time, perhaps now

Fig. 28. Mahogany woodstain.

presenting a fine patina, vernacular does not have to mean crude, primitive or lacking finish. After preparation and construction the piece may require further smoothing or it may be stained or polished (all these final stages are 'finishing'), or it might be left as natural wood and need no more attention. By far the greatest amount of vernacular furniture was left as natural timber, but the use of dyes and paints that made simple pine and birch furniture appear like mahogany became fashionable and many a worn kist will reveal lighter pine beneath (fig. 28). Some more-fashionable pieces have shellac coatings and some will be French polished, using several layers of shellac to gain a depth of sheen.

Where additional shaping or smoothing is required, on the arms of a chair perhaps, a cabinet-maker's scraper is used. This simple, often rectangular piece of tool steel, with a burr raised on its edge, allows the finest of shavings to be removed. In skilled hands it is much more effective than modern glass paper, reflecting light and giving a natural sheen (fig. 29).

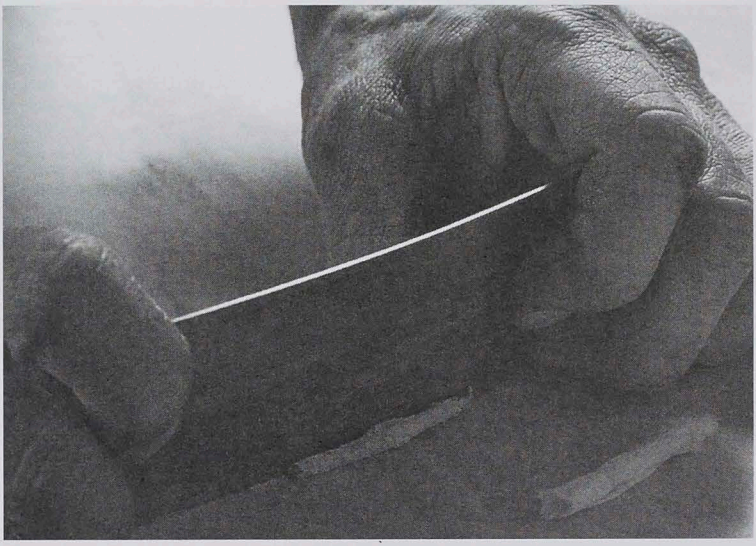
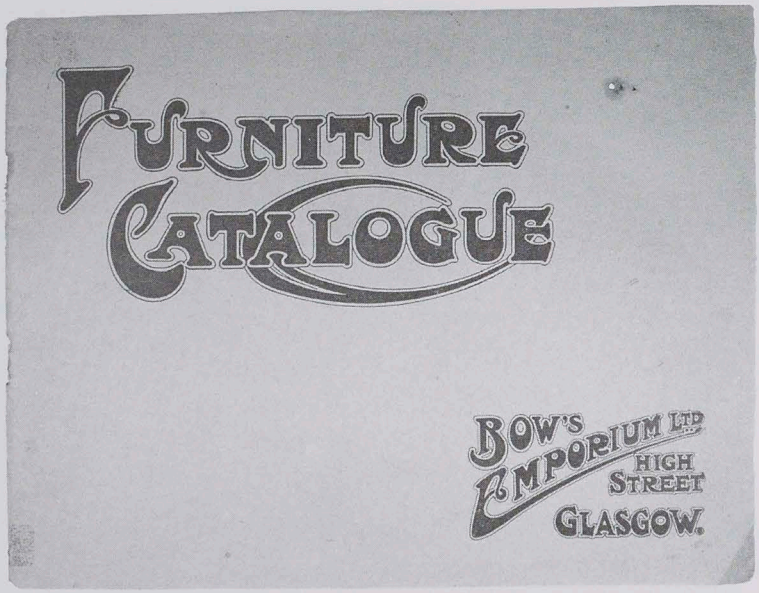
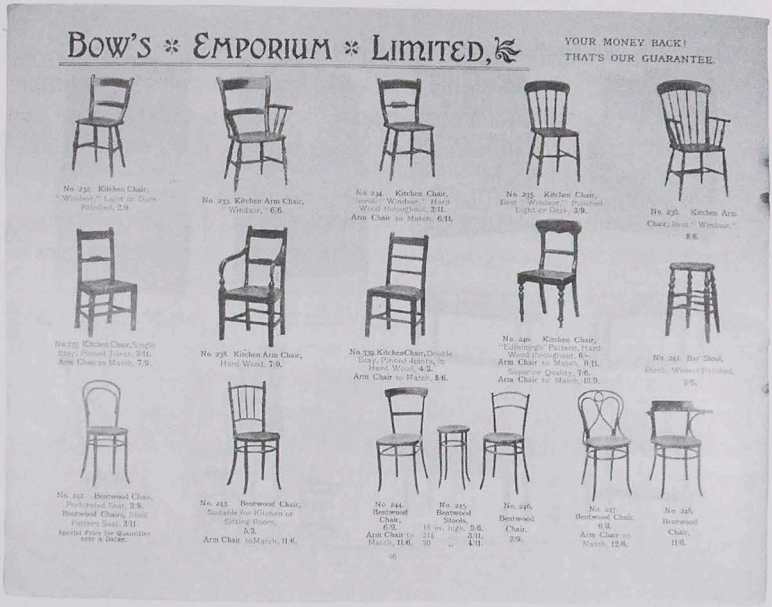


Fig. 29. Using a cabinet scraper.

The degree of finish also relates to the timber used; the fine detail that can be achieved in hardwoods, like oak or Scots laburnum, or exotic timbers like mahogany, is not possible with softwoods like Scots pine or those with troublesome grains like birch. This presents a further divide between the country craftsman, working mainly in pine and local timbers, and the urban cabinet maker with the resources of a wide range of imported timbers.

As the twentieth century approached and unfolded, such differences between town and country began to disappear, partly because of increased communication and improved infrastructure. Journeymen travelled ever wider spreading their skills. Furniture makers, looking for a wider market, combined with greater public demand, brought the demise of regional styles and these were replaced with items of 'fashionable' furniture which were available by mail-order catalogue from firms such as Bow's of Glasgow (figs. 30 a and b). In craftsmen's workshops practice was, to some degree, replaced by machine and furniture became part 'manufactured' with, in some cases, prepared pieces bought in to be finished at the bench. Few regional styles now remain; perhaps the great survivor is the Orkney chair, which is still produced in traditional fashion but now in the manner of a visitor attraction.





Figs. 30 a and b. Cover and page from the mail-order furniture catalogue of Bow's Emporium, Glasgow.

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HIGHLAND VERNACULAR FURNITURE AND CONTEXT

R Ross Noble

In the past thirty or so years, while curating and studying Highland vernacular furniture, I have become increasingly aware of the need to examine pieces in context. Here, rather than simply present a catalogue of Highland vernacular pieces, which if it were to be truly representative would require a much larger essay, I will look at several 'contexts' that I apply when looking at furniture.

The most important of these is the context of the environment that produced the materials from which the furniture was made and the context of the house in which the furniture was used. It is also helpful to look at the pieces in relation to the wider world - the context of regional ethnology. Before any of these matters are considered, however, it is necessary to examine closely the meaning of 'vernacular' and see how the various pieces fit into that context.

The vernacular

Vernacular furniture is that made by 'the people' themselves, using traditional designs or even, on occasion, without any outside design influence at all. This furniture was, in the main, made for use in the maker's own home, the homes of his family or for friends and neighbours. More rarely, but not unknown, such pieces were made with the specific intent of selling them, within the local community or further afield.

This definition is useful as a working tool, but in reality there was a spectrum of Highland furniture makers and the boundaries between various bands were exceedingly blurred. Country joiners looked towards traditional design for inspiration, while the farmer setting out to furnish his home with his own hands borrowed willingly the ideas and techniques of the craftsman. A particularly grey area comprises the people who were very adept at woodworking but lacked any formal craft training and yet they set themselves up as practising country joiners. It is recorded in the late eighteenth century that in north-west Sutherland there were, 'scarcely any artificers in the parish, but are self-taught. And yet there are among them pretty good carpenters and boat wrights'.[1]

Fig. 1. Cradle from Mull. (Highland Folk Museum)

Fig. 2. Lowland-style dresser, North Uist. (Highland Folk Museum)

Another band in the spectrum is that of craft workers with a different specialisation using their skills to produce distinctive pieces of furniture. There is no doubt that a shipwright was involved in the making of a cradle from Mull, now in the collections of the Highland Folk Museum, Inverness-shire. The body of the cradle has deep, sweeping double curves, reminiscent of a sailing ship, and the mitred butt joints are firmly locked in place by splines, or slip feathers. The hood suggests that the maker either had dry-coopering skills or involved a dry-cooper in the work (fig. 1). Dry-coopers were certainly responsible for the barrel-shaped meal girnals found in Caithness. A staved-back chair from Orkney might well be a similar case.

There comes a point where the vernacular spectrum is rather fuzzy at the edges, such as where traditional furniture makers, craft-trained or otherwise, begin to copy designed furniture from beyond the area. Locally made 'chippendales', for example, can normally be credited to well-trained local craftsmen. The emergence of the ubiquitous dresser will be dealt with at slightly more length later, but evidence of such mimicry can be seen in rather crude copies of Lowland dressers (fig. 2). When I was shown in a house in Lochcarron, Wester Ross, a dresser of fine quality, I happily pronounced it to be the work of a Lowland

furniture maker, only to have produced the receipt, dated to the 1870s, of the local joiner who had been paid to make it. At the same time one can find an item which has a number of stylistic features which say 'country copy by a local joiner' and then open a drawer and discover a very crude attempt indeed which is certainly not the work of a trained carpenter.

Perhaps the most recognisable pieces of Highland furniture are a series of local chair types. These shall be used to illustrate the complexity of the vernacular.

Chairs of the West- and central Highland tradition

From Wester Ross to the Mull of Kintyre, chairs were traditionally made on the 'comb-back' principle. This is an extremely simple form of construction, making use only of the wedged joint, which as Victor Chinnery - one of the most significant scholars of traditional English furniture - points out, was one of the basic methods of joining used in peasant furniture throughout Europe. It may be then that the comb-back style of chair has great antiquity on the west coast of Scotland. The basic structural element in this chair type is the seat, which comprises a slab cut from the trunk of a tree. A number of holes is then bored through, or burnt out of this and into the holes are socketed the sticks which form the legs and back. In more-sophisticated examples, the sticks are split at the ends which fit into the sockets and a small wooden wedge driven fully home in the opposite direction to forcibly fix the joint. In many cases, however, the ends of the sticks are simply whittled to a taper, hammered through the hole until they jam tightly and the protruding portions sawn off. The top rail is again normally no more than a roughly shaped branch, through which all the sticks are socketed. The fact that these branches are curved makes the analogy with ladies' hair combs even more apt.

The broadening of the vernacular spectrum comes almost immediately when we look at a group of stick-back chairs from Mid Argyll, known locally as 'Kenmore chairs' (see fig. 7 in 'Recent Fieldwork in Argyll' by Stephen Jackson). Kenmore is a small settlement on the shores of Loch Fyne, a few miles south of Inveraray. It was founded in the 1770s, possibly as the result of the eviction of tenants from townships further inland. There, in the nineteenth century, a family of Campbells supplemented their meagre income from crofting and fishing by becoming chair makers. The chair makers of Kenmore

Fig. 3. Natural-fork chair; the seat board is missing. (Highland Folk Museum)

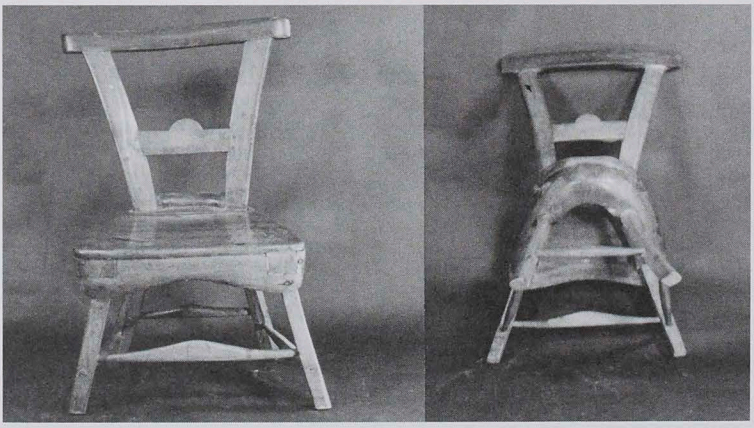

Fig. 4. Natural-fork chair, Grantown-on-Spey, Inverness-shire, c1770. (Highland Folk Museum)

were Colin Campbell, who was producing chairs from c1840, and his son, also Colin Campbell, who continued this practice up until c1920. According to local tradition, the range of tools available to the makers was limited, although it has been suggested that some turned work was done by them, or for them, at the joiner's workshop at Inveraray Castle.

A variation in the stick-back chair type, found more commonly but not exclusively in the central Highlands, is one where chairs are constructed around a natural fork of a tree. The forked limb of a mature tree is a far stronger union of timber than any a joiner could hope to make. This was obviously recognised by the inhabitants of the area, who used such forks in the construction of the massive roofs found in traditional houses and in the making of agricultural implements. It is not surprising, therefore, that the technique was utilised in the making of furniture (fig. 3). However, as early as the 1780s, chairs of this type had their vernacular structure concealed by an overlay of decoration, obviously stemming from the world of fashionable furniture. A cursory glance at such chairs would condemn them as crude copies, rather than as vernacular chairs with aspirations (fig. 4).

Chairs of the northern Highland tradition

An even more striking local tradition in chair making comes from the northern Highlands and in particular Sutherland and Caithness. This uses for the main structural element a pair of natural 'knees' of timber. In many parts of the area the environment is not favourable for tree growth and the few scrub trees that are found are bent over at an early stage in their growth by the wind. Such knees of timber were also suitable for use in boat building and shinty-stick production. In chair making a series of spars joined two knees to form back rails and seat stretchers. A slot cut from the inner face of the knees allowed a seat board to be fitted.

In north-west Sutherland this tradition continued into the twentieth century, with, again, the surprise of a named maker. Samuel Clark, an Assynt shepherd, made seven of these chairs between 1895 and 1905, while another was made for a retiring Episcopalian vicar in Caithness shortly before World War I. Even by the early nineteenth century, though, 'Caithness chairs' were being influenced by craftsmen (fig. 5) and by the closing decades of that century a new, distinct subset had appeared (fig. 6). Caithness chairs are still being made by craft workers to this day.

Fig. 5. Natural-knee chair, Watten, Caithness. (National Museums of Scotland)

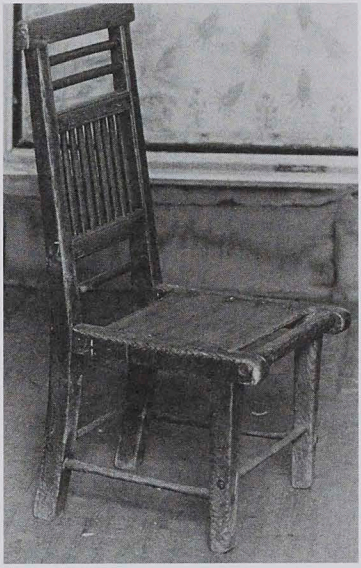

Fig. 6. Caithness chair. (Thurso Museum)

Materials

The materials used in Highland furniture making are greatly influenced by the natural resources of any specific area. Stone furniture and fittings are more likely to be found in areas like Caithness or north Argyll where the stone is easily split. Indeed one can fairly link this tradition right back to the stone dressers of Skara Brae, Orkney. Plaited oat and barley straw are augmented on west-coast and island pieces by woven marram grass. However very few straw or grass-seated chairs, or indeed the straw-mat work of Orkney chairs, seem to pre-date the emergence of the gentry-inspired craft revival of the later nineteenth century. In particular, Highland Home Industries, inspired by such patrons as Lady MacKenzie of Gairloch, encouraged craftwork which could be sold in lucrative southern markets. It is not always clear whether these were traditional crafts or ones (such as stocking knitting) newly introduced as economic generators.

Only a few clues are emerging to suggest that there was an older tradition of straw- or grass-seated chairs. An Irish 'natural-knee' chair, recorded by the Ulster Folk Museum, was the first I had ever encountered which appeared not to have had a slot-in seat board (fig. 7). I have since

Fig. 7. Irish natural-knee chair. (Private owner; photograph courtesy of Ulster Folk Museum)

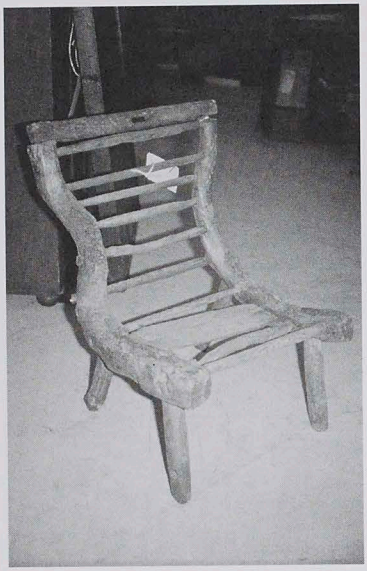

Fig. 8. Natural-knee chair, Achlipster, Caithness, with recycled top rail. (National Musuems of Scotland)

seen several Irish examples and have also recorded one on Skye. The most logical way to add to these chairs something approaching comfort would be to attach a straw-rope seat to the three seat spars. A little Caithness chair, bought in a Highland antique shop and now sporting a seat of rough cloth or carpet, may also have originally had one of woven straw.

In 1978, on a field trip of the SVBWG, the croft house known as Achlipster in Watten Parish, Caithness, was visited. A number of the group's members were distracted from the remarkable vernacular building features, especially the corn kiln, by a pile of broken timber which looked as if it had once been a chair. The chair was reassembled in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland and proved to be one of the first pointers to a northern-tradition chair type in Caithness as opposed to Sutherland. Still more interesting here is the chair's top rail. It has been 'recycled' from previous use as the cross handle of a *cabar lar* or 'flaughter spade' for flaying turf (fig. 8). So we can add re-use to our spectrum of materials.

One of the most significant sources of recycled timber was the enormous coastline of the Highlands and Islands. Driftwood - be it lost

Fig. 9. Dresser, North Uist, made with driftwood. (Highland Folk Museum)

deck cargo, jetsam, or the remains from a shipwreck - played a large part in house building and furniture making even in parishes with little or no direct access to the sea or sea lochs. In some cases rather fine furniture emerged, as with a beautiful dresser from North Uist (fig. 9). Although very attractive it is difficult to fit this item into a pattern of Highland dressers. It is the only one of which I am aware where the plate rack is integral with the base unit; the rear planks on the sides of the base continuing up to form the sides of the plate rack. This is a well-known construction technique for Irish dressers.[2] So has the maker here been influenced by the Irish dressers, which is a perfectly reasonable assumption to make about someone from the Outer Hebrides, or has it simply been the best way of utilising the driftwood?

In a society where the subsistence economy was still a major part of the overall economic structure, imported goods were at a premium. In this situation we can well understand that making local copies of furniture from outwith the area was an attractive alternative to importing from the Lowlands of Scotland or beyond. The consequence of this attitude was that many traditional craftsmen were drawn into the business of furniture making. We have already seen the cooper and the shipwright involved. Perhaps a more unlikely seeming candidate was the blacksmith. Yet many pieces of furniture in museum collections have been strengthened by a band of iron or a short bracing bar. Kists often involved the blacksmith, not only in terms of strengthening the chests but decorating them with wrought-iron work. By the nineteenth century, blacksmiths were frequently called upon to make iron bedsteads, which were gradually replacing box beds, or they provided new sleeping accommodation by creating attic spaces under a corrugated-iron roof covering, this replacing thatch. The evidence can be seen to this day, as simple smith-made bed frames acting as garden gates, patches in broken fencing, pens for lambing and so forth. Indeed, one wonders what Highland crofters did without iron bedsteads.

Finally, in this section, we turn to wattle. Basket making was no mere peripheral craft in the Scottish Highlands, or indeed in many rural societies across Europe. The furthest north that I have found documentation of a 'sally garden' (*sallix* or golden willow) is on the Island of Scarp, off Harris.[3] Not only storage and carrying baskets, but carts, fishing creels, barn and house walls were made with young pliable willow, hazel, rowan and ash. So it is not surprising that wattle would be used in furniture making too. Wicker panels kept food fresh

Fig. 10. Turf-walled manse, Howford Bridge, Nairnshire, c1880. (Highland Folk Museum)

in an aumrie from Ardnamurchan, where 'creel work' seems to have been ubiquitous (see fig. 11 in 'Recent Fieldwork in Argyll' by Stephen Jackson). The Highland Folk Museum has a photographic record of another aumrie which was simply a wooden box frame with wattle panelling on all sides, top and bottom. The museum was once offered, in the 1930s, a creel coffin - not second hand!

The Houses

The third context to be examined is that of the houses for which pieces of furniture were made. How did the house type influence the type of furniture and equally how did the furniture help to create the nature of the house? A few points at least need to be highlighted. Many houses in the central and northern Highlands (and on the Western Isles) were not walled in stone, but in turf. The house in fig. 10 was a manse and the photograph dates to the 1870s or even the 1880s. There were people in the Badenoch area of Inverness-shire in the late twentieth century who remembered inhabited turf-walled houses from the time of their youth. Much of the furniture discussed in this paper would have been

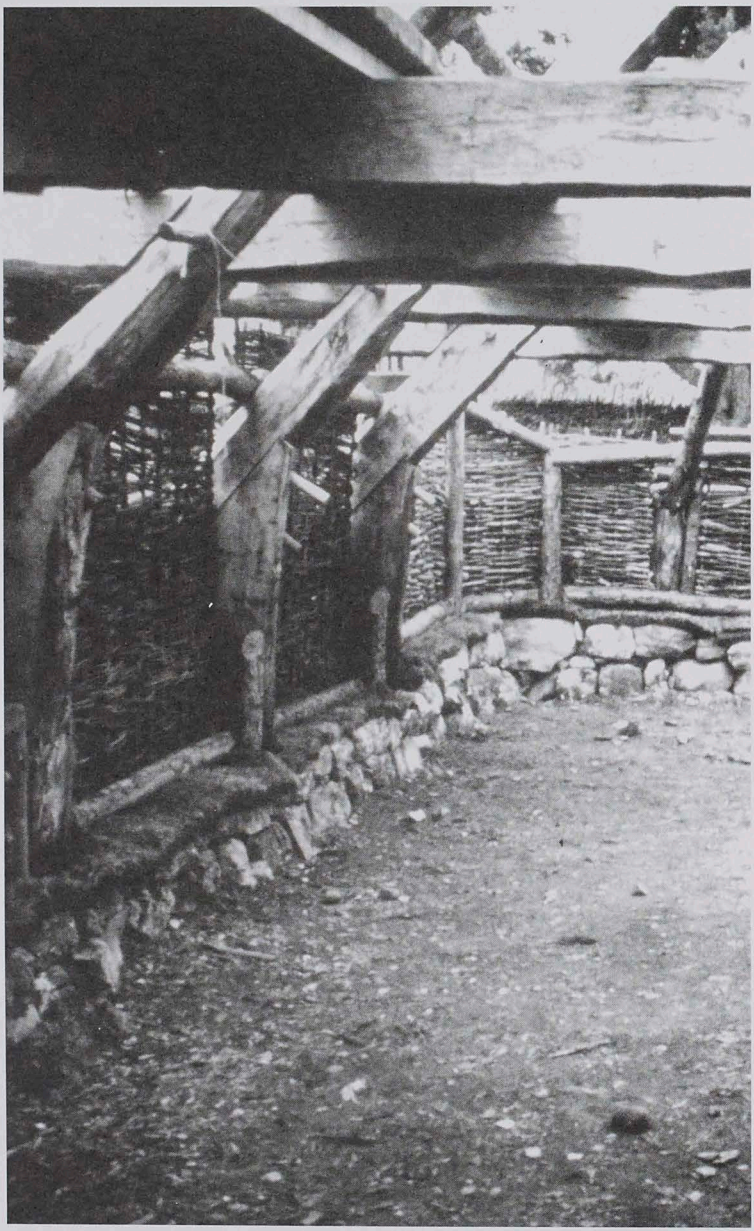

Fig. 11. The 'creel house' under construction at the Highland Folk Museum, Newtonmore, Inverness-shire, 1998. (R Ross Noble)

made for such houses, or for cruck-framed dry-stone houses in the West Highlands, which replaced the turf dwellings at an earlier date there than in Badenoch.

The Highland Folk Museum contains a fairly large 'creel house', where a wattle wall provides a support for the exterior cladding of turf, and this building makes for a good study of the relationship between dwelling and furniture. The house is a reconstruction, based on archaeological and documentary evidence, but the furniture within is all copied from actual pieces in the museum's collections. It can be seen clearly from a photograph taken during construction that the insertion of the creel or wattle panels has left turf-topped ledges all around the interior of the house (fig. 11). These are ideally suited to function as built-in furniture, either as storage space or, with an additional padding of turf or other soft material, as seats. Visitors to the house during the construction phase, when no other furniture was in place, were instinctively drawn to using these wall recesses as seats. Perhaps there is a greater significance in James Boswell's choice of words than usually has been realised when he wrote, 'Where we sat, the side walls were wainscoted ... with wicker'.[4] In an inn such as the one in Glenmorriston, Inverness-shire, of which he was writing, seating of this sort would have been of great benefit. Even with large pieces of furniture such as kists and a box bed in the main 'fire room' or living quarters, the creel house in the museum can easily accommodate there some 10-15 seated adults.

The rectilinear form of the creel house is quickly and easily broken up by the strategic placing of a series of box beds into a number of smaller rooms, without the necessity of a single partition wall (fig. 12). In a house as big as this, the spaces can be seen as separate bedrooms, but elsewhere the bed often acted as a divider between the fire room

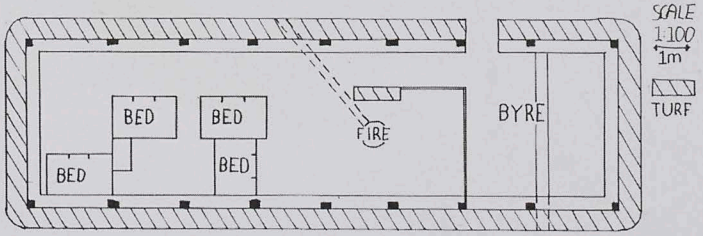

Fig. 12. Highland Folk Museum 'creel-house' plan showing the interior layout. (Drawing courtesy of Donald Noble)

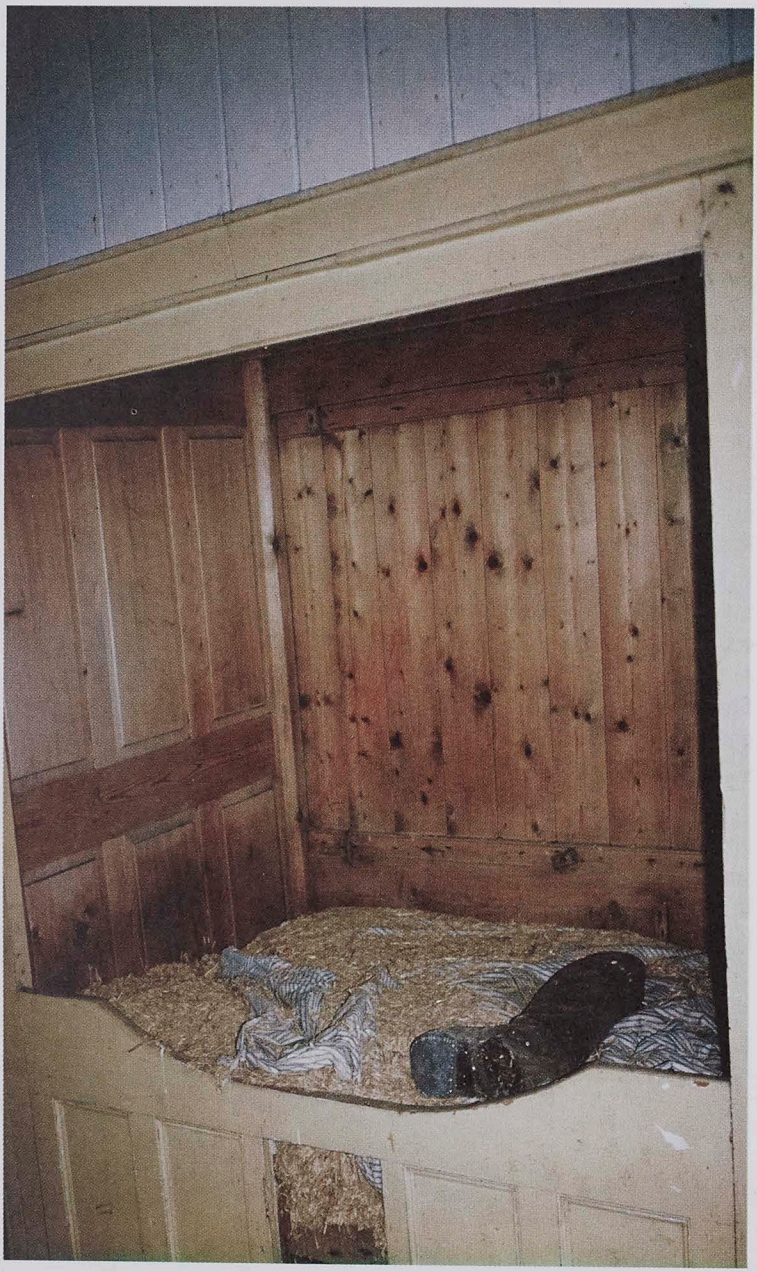

Fig. 13. Box bed with moveable panel, Island of Stroma, Caithness. (R Ross Noble)

and the 'good room', this important for rites of passage such as birth, marriage and pre-burial ceremonies, amongst other roles. A separate storage room, the closet, could also be created, giving a cool space, removed from the fire, where dairy products and so forth were kept.

Beds as room dividers continued to be used in later stone-built houses. I have recorded examples in Badenoch, Argyll, Ross, Sutherland and Caithness and in the Hebrides. Ashley Bartlam discussed a very ingenious form of this room divider in *VB* 6 after a SVBWG fieldtrip to Stroma.[5] Here the back panel of the box bed is moveable and can fit either side of the bed, allowing choice as to which room the bed is accessed from (fig. 13). I have since recorded similar examples on the Caithness mainland.

Box beds provided an even greater service to the user than privacy. The bed afforded extra draught proofing and, still more essential, protection from the drips of sooty water (and worse) from the thatched roof. The deeply panelled and canopied cradles offered similar protection to infants.

Most people viewing Highland vernacular chairs for the first time comment on how low they are. They often assume that this stems from taller chairs being cut down as damp from earthen floors rotted the legs. There may be an element of truth in this but there are much more significant reasons for their lowness. In a house with a central hearth and either no chimney or one which encourages smoke to linger (in order to utilise it for the curing of fish or meat) low seats allowed the inhabitants to sit comfortably below the normal level of the peat reek. A central open fire, and a single multi-purpose living space around it, meant that tables were not pieces of furniture which suited the arrangement. Domestic tables or 'boards' are not numerous in the list of survivals of Highland vernacular furniture. The low chairs allowed the in-dwellers to sit around the fire and use the floor as a convenient resting place for bowl, plate or bicker. 'Creepie' stools, which are lower still, are another outcome of this arrangement.

In our age of runaway consumerism it is difficult to imagine that a household stored all its possessions, including the major part of the winter food supplies, in a scattering of boxes or kists. Nor can we easily picture how these kists could come to dominate the living space. William Mackintosh of Balnespick, tacksman of the farm of Dunachton in Badenoch, refers to the storage of meal for household use in his farm accounts for the 1770s, 'Clean white oat meal in the chist [sic] next the

Fig. 14. Lewis croft house. (Scottish Life Archive, National Museum of Scotland)

bed ... Barley meal in the chest below the window in the corner, and in the end of the chist next the door.' Other kists were to be found, '... at the end of the bed ... in the cross house [passageway]' and so on.[6] Add to these the kists for storing bedding and clothing and one starts to get a picture of the ubiquity of this item of furniture. Then think too of work surfaces, places for candles or other lamps, additional seating, etc, and the real value and usefulness of the kist, and the way it fulfilled varying functions in different parts of the house, becomes obvious.

In the same manner as furniture is used to define the nature of the house, the nature of the house can impact on the design of the furniture. This has already been mentioned in reference to chairs but an even more telling example is to be found in the Highland dresser. I have discussed the very late introduction of this piece of furniture in various past articles.[7] The earliest Highland dressers date to the end of the eighteenth century and most are much more recent. Nevertheless traditional house types had an overwhelming influence on this furniture item. Firstly, in the plate rack of a Highland dresser the plates, bowls, etc, lean forward and rest on a centre rail approximately half way between the shelves. In English, Welsh and even Lowland Scottish dressers, the dishes lean backward. This relates directly to the issue of low seating. Only by this form of display would a collection of status-giving tableware be seen properly by those sitting in the house (fig. 14). Moreover, the space

needed between shelves is minimised if this method of presentation is used and, particularly in the islands and on the west-coast mainland, houses were often built as low as possible to present less of a target for Atlantic gales. Thus the relative newcomer was adapted to fit. Indeed I F Grant argued that the presence of a sloping top to the plate rack was a distinguishing feature of West-Highland dressers and was directly linked to the low wall height in houses in this region.[8]

Regional ethnology

The final context for discussion here is that of regional ethnology. How does furniture in the Scottish Highlands relate to other traditional societies in Europe and to the societies of expatriate Scots in the New World? This is again a huge topic, requiring a great deal more research before statements can be made with any degree of confidence.[9]

The chairs to which reference was first made in this essay - those of the West-Highland tradition - are undoubtedly among the archetypal vernacular chairs in Scotland. But so too are they common in Wales and in Ireland. So is this a traditional 'Celtic' chair? Not so, they are equally common in Slavic Europe and in the Eastern Mediterranean. An English furniture historian will be used to having them linked to Windsor chairs, often as 'primitive Windsors'. Victor Chinnery recognised the anachronism in this as early as 1979, pointing out that Windsor chairs are an eighteenth-century development of an earlier widespread chair type.[10] As recently as 1993, another eminent English furniture historian, Dr Bernard Cotton, could write of Manx chairs of this type:

> The term Windsor chair is applied, as a definition, to all chairs which have a wooden seat into which legs are mortised from below, with back uprights mortised into from above ... distinct Windsor chair-making traditions developed in the Celtic areas of Britain, including Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall and the Isle of Man.[11]

The natural-knee type chair, which I have called the 'northern tradition' in Scotland, is also known in Ireland. However several similar chairs in Transylvania put paid to the thought that this was a unique solution to a windy, almost treeless environment. Even a chair

that appears to be a 'one off' - made from a twisted tree trunk in Harris - has its parallels in Latvia and Baltic Russia. The natural fork used for chairs in the central Highlands has been seen by Dr Cotton on the Isle of Man[12] and can be found in a traditional Baltic stool type.

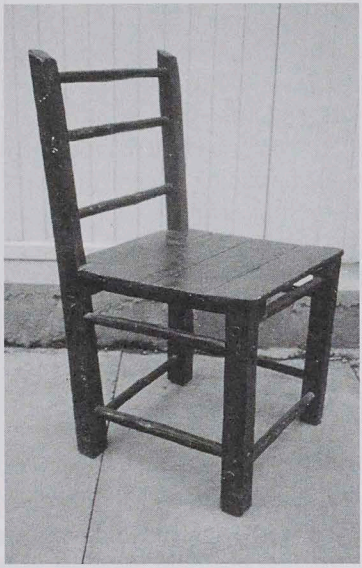

Fig. 15. Northern-tradition-type chair from Gairloch, Wester Ross. (Gairloch Museum)

One final, and fascinating, example must suffice. While researching the northern-tradition chair type, I came a cross a group of chairs, including one from Gairloch, Wester Ross (fig. 15). The wooden seat sits rather unhappily on top of a frame which echoes the shape of the natural-knee chairs, but without that feature. These chairs would make more sense with straw seats, woven, as I have suggested above, around the top, otherwise redundant stretchers. In other words, these chairs may be quite ephemeral - part of a short interlude when wooden seats replaced woven ones. However this chair type went over to Nova Scotia and especially to Cape Breton Island with early settlers, many of whom travelled from Gairloch and Loch Broom, Wester Ross, or the Uists, areas all represented in the survivals of these chairs in the Highland Folk Museum. In Cape Breton they are known and cherished as the traditional chair of the homeland and are still being made to this day (fig. 16).

Fig. 16. Traditional Cape Breton chair. (Highland Village Museum, Iona, Cape Breton)

Notes

[1] *First Statistical Account*, Vol XVII, new reprint edition, Wakefield, 1979, 387.

[2] Kinmonth, Claudia, *Irish Vernacular Furniture*, Yale, 1993.

[3] Duncan, Angus, *Hebridean Island: Memories of Scarp*, Edinburgh, 1995.

[4] Boswell, James, ed Chapman, R W, *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, Oxford, 1979, 246.

[5] Bartlam, Ashley, 'Box beds on the island of Stroma, Caithness', *Vernacular Building*, 6 (1980), 7-10.

[6] Grant, Isobel F, *Everyday Life on an Old Highland Farm*, London, 1924, 248-62 passim.

[7] Noble, R Ross, 'Highland dressers and the process of innovation', *Regional Furniture*, 6 (1992), 36-46; 'Highland dressers: A study in antecedents', in Cheape, Hugh, ed, *Tools and Traditions*, Edinburgh, 1993, 218-24.

[8] Grant, Isobel F, *Highland Folk Ways*, London, 1961, 173.

[9] Noble, R Ross, 'On the trail of folk furniture: A Highland heritage shared across the seas', in Fladmark, Jan Magnus, ed, *Sharing the Earth*, London, 1995, 162-75.

[10] Chinnery, Victor, *Oak Furniture: The British tradition*, Woodbridge, 1979.

[11] Cotton, Bernard D, *Traditional Manx Furniture*, Douglas, 1993, 38.

[12] Ibid, 91-4.

RECENT FIELDWORK IN ARGYLL

Stephen Jackson

In 2002 I embarked upon a long-term, object-centred fieldwork project encompassing the historical county of Argyllshire. So far my wanderings have taken me to Arran, Islay, Kintyre, Knapdale and the area described in 1819 by James Playfair, as 'Argyll Proper'.[1] The purpose is to enhance our present definition of the regional vernacular furniture style within a geographical area that has been relatively little studied. The realities of artefact survival in what was for long an economically poor region, where the population has never been great and where damp prevails, mean that most of the study relates to nineteenth-century objects and the infiltration over time of Lowland products, fashions and ways of living. This article begins, however, with visual evidence for the period before 1900 and the question of its admissibility.

Fig. 1. 'Inside of a Weaver's Cottage in Ilay', John Frederick Miller, 1772. Engraving. (Plate XVI in Thomas Pennant, A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides*)*

The earliest representation of an Argyll interior, exceedingly well-known, is the engraving of a weaver's cottage by Charles Grignon, after a sketch by John Frederick Miller which was made in the summer of 1772 during a voyage to Iceland led by Sir Joseph Banks (fig. 1). The engraving was made for Thomas Pennant, author of *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides*, who wrote in 1772 of a:

> ...set of people worn down by poverty: their habitations scenes of misery, made of loose stones; without chimneys, without doors, excepting the faggot opposed to the wind at one or other of the apertures, permitting the smoke to escape through the other, in order to prevent the pains of suffocation. The furniture perfectly corresponds: a pothook hangs from the middle of the roof, with a pot pendent over a grateless fire, filled with fare that may rather be called a permission to exist, than a support of vigorous life: the inmates lean, dusky and smoke-dried.[2]

Fig. 2. 'Highland Hospitality', John Frederick Lewis, 1832. Watercolour and gouache. (Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art)

The location of the cottage was on Islay but Pennant was quick to add that 'my picture is not of this island only'. Although the impression is a powerful one, the visual detail is frustratingly partial. The image is not engraved entirely competently; the figure of the woman hovers unsupported and while the bed behind her is identifiable from the textile folded over the side, the function of the box between her and the loom remains uncertain. Clearly the illustration was intended to draw together observed details (the hanging clothes, the hens, the 'kishie'-style basket)[3] in a composite diagram of clutter. For crowding, rather than sparseness, is the primary index of poverty in this representation, evoking disorder, discomfort and decay. The anachronistic, foreign-seeming squalor which Pennant reported was real enough and yet drawings like this operated as shorthand for pre-existing ideas of rustication and the exotic. There is a gap between witnessing the outlines of a material culture and recording its detail. The low table or bench, for example, on exceptionally splayed legs, is unlike anything known to British furniture history. Was it really like that?

Images of Argyll interiors remain rare well into the nineteenth century. In 1829 and 1830, the artist John Frederick Lewis visited the Scottish Highlands sketching across an area extending from Loch Lochy, Inverness-shire, in the north to Arran in the south.[4] Six finished watercolour interiors and a dozen landscapes were exhibited in London as a result. Like most genre artists, Lewis was not interested in folk-life customs. He was absorbed in the visual effect of 'the other', either as the raw material for a dramatic narrative, as with 'The Fisherman's Return', based on sketches made in Newhaven,[5] or as an encounter in itself, as in one of his most successful works of this period, 'Highland Hospitality' (fig. 2). 'Highland Hospitality' depicts Lewis' fellow artists George Cattermole and William Evans on an imaginary visit to an improbable Highland interior. Elements of the scene (including the 'hallan', the wooden interior partition with a central doorway) derive from sketches made on Arran but the composition is composite and contains entirely fanciful elements. The late-seventeenth-century caned chairs and ornately carved mid-seventeenth-century cabinet - both understood in the 1830s to be sixteenth-century - are studio props introduced to add an air of antiquity appropriate to the tartan kilted Highlander, who raises an eighteenth-century glass of hospitality. The appearance of the dresser may be more subtlety misleading; the set of three cupboards above the plate rack would be highly unusual and indeed Lewis' preliminary sketches feature more conventional arrangements, open

Fig. 3. Arran cottage interior, John Frederick Lewis, c1830. Watercolour and gouache. (Trustees of The British Museum)

at the bottom with a range of small doors at waist height and a plain plate rack above. In other words, even plausible details, unconnected with the artist's narrative intention, cannot be relied upon as historical evidence.

In spite of these caveats, Lewis' sketches are potentially useful to the furniture historian, as records of both interior arrangements and of individual furniture items. A sketch inscribed 'Arran', now in the British Museum, shows two unenclosed bed recesses either side of a central passageway, integral elements of the building structure (fig. 3). A finished watercolour by Lewis, sold at auction in 1992, depicts two freestanding timber box beds in a similar configuration.[6] In 1807 James Headrick recorded that on Arran inner and outer chambers might be divided either by a 'clay skreen, which is whitewashed on the inside' or 'by means of wooden beds'.[7] These two sources confirm each other but Lewis' work shows that this common arrangement was achieved using a range of bed forms. The table and chair in the British Museum sketch may not have been present in reality but if they were, the Lowland 'brander-back' chair, with tapering legs in the Scottish manner, represents a significant cultural importation. The enclosed brazier is equally notable and surely not an artistic invention. Insecurity

Fig. 4. 'A Visit to a Farm-House', Edward Bradley, 1859. Woodcut. (Cuthbert Bede, Glencreggan, or a Highland Home in Cantire, *Vol II, 16)*

of land tenure on Arran, as elsewhere, militated against progress in house construction and yet portable domestic commodities, probably island-made, were perhaps consumed more widely than the privation of the actual dwelling structure might suggest.

In an important essay about Irish vernacular furniture, Claudia Kinmonth described illustrated journalism as, 'more useful and reliable than evidence from commercial painting, which is rarely accompanied by written description'.[8] A lot depends upon the artist, however, not least when a written description is being used as the basis for an image. Where the artist himself has seen the objects under description, his powers of observation often excel those of the writer. In the case of Edward Bradley, artist and writer were the same person. In 1859, under the pseudonym of Cuthbert Bede, he illustrated his own descriptions of life on the west coast of Kintyre (fig. 4).[9] The published engravings are quite detailed but are they accurate? Bradley's honesty is not in question but do we ask too much of his recording? Did the window really look like that? Was the pot really so large? And is the layout of the room plausible? Is this chair strengthened with diagonal blocks or is it a mis-reading of a chair made from natural knees of timber?

Fig. 5. Dressing chest in an abandoned farmhouse, Toranore, Islay, 2004.

Visual evidence and physical evidence address different questions. The first can shed light on room arrangements or the interaction of people and possessions without revealing much about furniture design and construction. Surviving furniture opens up different lines of enquiry. Careful analysis of sufficient objects from a given locality may sometimes uncover a distinct regional style whose idiosyncrasies betray some specific functional imperative. More commonly, however, one gains a sturdy impression of the degree to which local makers followed established national patterns, with differing degrees of skill and ability. Recording significant details is a time-consuming process. A first hurdle is the elimination of unoriginal features, frequently encountered in the antiques shop. The next is to establish from items of indisputable provenance what the essential local traits are and to catalogue these through comparison. To take the example of the kitchen dresser, the configuration of drawers, doors, handles and shelves, the sophistication of proportions, mouldings and surface finishes, and the diversity of structural techniques must all be recorded and compared.

Fieldwork in this context may involve exploring abandoned ruins but consists far more in visiting house after house, speaking to anyone who may be able to help progress the search. A great deal of what one

Fig. 6. Chair from Bridge of Douglas, Argyll. (Private collection)

Fig. 7. Chair by a member of the Campbell family of Kenmore, Auchindrain Museum.

encounters cannot be described as vernacular furniture. Items such as the dressing chest (fig. 5) abandoned in the ruins of a house at Toranore, Islay, probably originated in Campbeltown, Glasgow or Belfast.[10] The material one is looking for is joiner-made furniture from local centres. The chair from the former schoolhouse at Bridge of Douglas, perhaps made in Inveraray, is a typical example (fig. 6). More primitive items produced by men without a formal training are so rare that it is nearly impossible to study them using original artefacts. The comb-backed chairs made to a traditional pattern by members of the Campbell family of Kenmore are a rare exception (fig. 7). Members of this family of crofter-fishermen made chairs of this pattern from the early nineteenth century until the 1920s.[11]

In collating both physical and anecdotal information, two pictures emerge; one of making, and one of use and ownership. Although the hectic pace of touring restricts the physical analysis of some pieces, the information given by owners and observers, whether or not minutely accurate, contributes towards an overall picture. The assertion that something is the work of a particular well-known joiner may at times be educated guesswork, yet the knowledge that a particular item came from a particular house, and had been sold at a particular roup before that, can be remarkably helpful. To cite a specific example, the dresser in fig. 8 was made around 1900 for a house in Lamlash, Arran, and because the house was tenanted, stayed with the house. When sitting tenants bought the house in the 1920s, the furniture remained, as was usual. The dresser was stripped around 1990, revealing that it had been re-varnished and re-painted several times, including one layer of oak-effect graining. The five drawers were previously veneered in mahogany but this was so damaged as to warrant removal.

This example alerts us to two things: firstly that the surface we see may tell us very little about the original decoration; and secondly that items such as this were liable to re-decorating in the same way as a wall surface. A corner cupboard at Auchindrain Museum, painted in white and in two shades of green, reminds us that we may have lost a lot of colour information in our study of vernacular interiors. Equally, one can forget that just as the grandest works of applied art are susceptible to alteration over time, so are individual vernacular objects and interiors. An example is the bed alcove at Prospect Hill near Lamlash on Arran, inspected recently by Crissie White and the author (fig. 9). There were two alcoves in this room, either side of the door, in a configuration

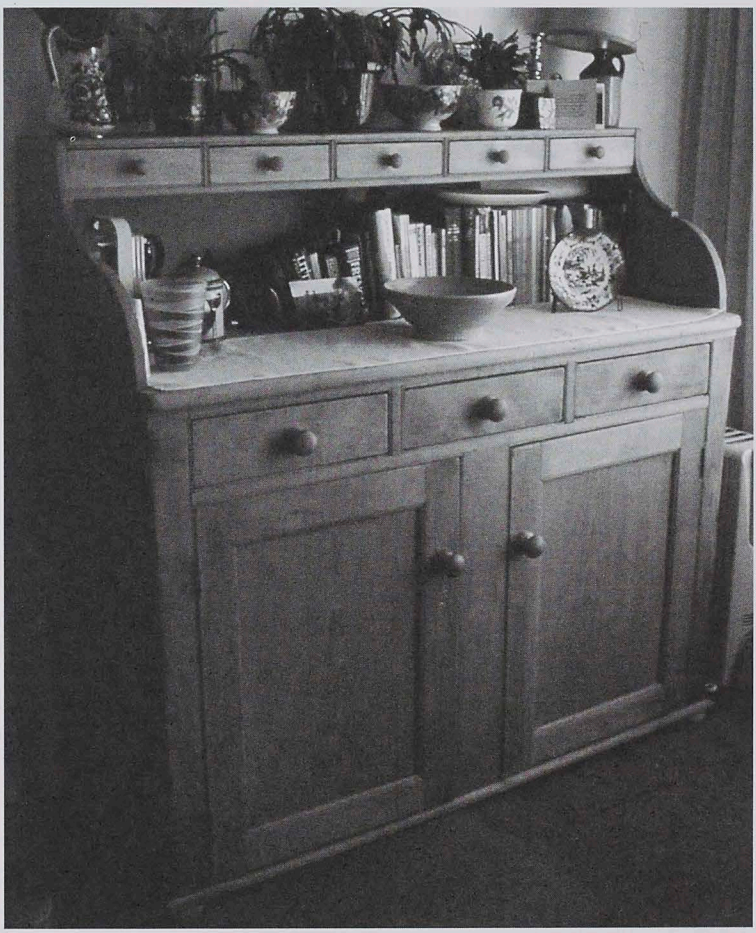

Fig. 8. Dresser from Lamlash, Arran. (Private collection)

that Headrick or Lewis would have immediately recognised. One was converted to a cupboard but the other was still in use, adapted to twentieth-century products, the curtains to be drawn during the day rather than at night. The pine-cone ceiling rose was made in around 1900 by the then proprietor in imitation of the Bavarian Summer House at Brodick Castle. It was carefully taken down and re-instated when a new ceiling was installed in the 1970s.

For Argyll, survey results and the evidence from printed and artistic sources combine to produce a dialogue across time since the latter

Fig. 9. Interior at Prospecthill, Arran, 2002.

Fig. 10. Mrs Livingstone's parlour, Strone, c1910.
(Scottish Life Archive, National Museums of Scotland)

generally predate the former. The evidence from Lewis and Bradley, for example, suggests that Arran and Kintyre dressers were tall structures with integral plate racks in the Highland manner. Unlike the classic Highland dresser, however, the lower sections were sometimes enclosed with cupboard doors. R Ross Noble and David Jones have done much to document the regional forms of the Scottish dresser, an item which combined the functions of kitchen 'press' (cupboard), sideboard and working surface ('dressing board').[12] The distinction often made between Highland and Lowland dressers hinges on an 'open with plate rack versus enclosed without plate rack' division. The definition holds true for the geographical extremities, but is not always workable for the broad band of Highland-Lowland encounter. The forward-leaning arrangement of Scottish Highland plate racks has been linked to Irish practice and the southern, maritime parts of Argyll were certainly subject to immigration from northern Ireland during the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century, however, Argyll experienced immigration from mainland Scotland and the physical record for dressers today reflects this later development, with a healthy survival of the classic Lowland form (fig. 8 again).

Additionally, the picture was certainly more nuanced than this. A photograph of an interior at Strone, on the Cowal peninsula, in around 1900 shows a cabinet form which was probably quite widespread two-hundred years ago (fig. 10). The central ventilated cupboard is a meat aumbrie and dressers with the feature are recorded from as far afield as Perthshire and Fort William. The wicker closet at the Highland Folk Museum, recovered from Acharacle in Ardnamuchan by I F Grant before 1954, may be the unique survival of a *cliath chàise*, or cheese press, described by the Reverend Thomas Sinton in 1906 as a once-common object in the barn (fig. 11).[13] Mention of creel chests in eighteenth-century Islay inventories points towards some sort of wickerwork tradition.[14]

This article has skimmed the surface of its subject and it will be some time before any finished conclusions can be drawn. Not only is much more fieldwork required but historical and sociological research must be further integrated into the process. Many absorbing questions, however, are thrown up in the course of investigation. How does change come about? How deep do the roots of tradition lie? And when does the home cease to be vernacular? All cultural artefacts evolve, certain forms developing while others fade away, their function performed by a new class of object. The refrigerator, for example, began by

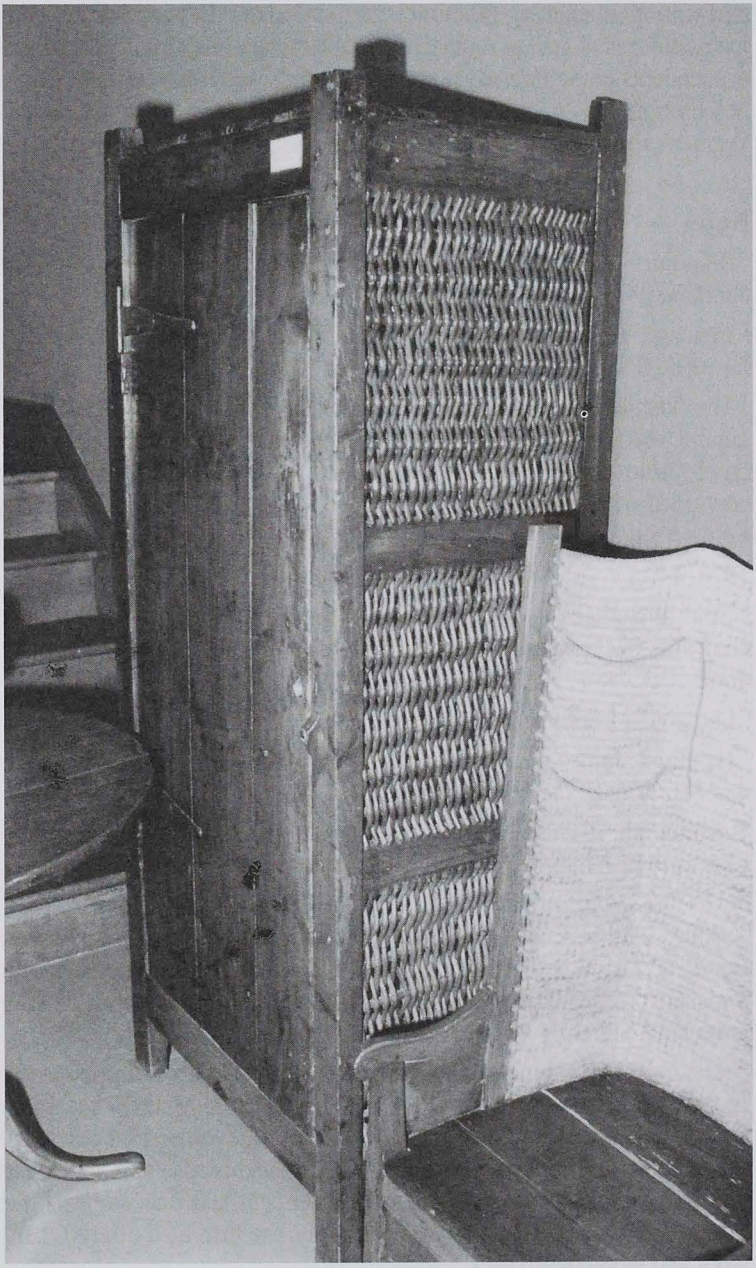

Fig. 11. Wicker closet or food aumrie, Highland Folk Museum, Kingussie, Inverness-shire.

performing an existing function better, only later, in combination with many other changes, to radically alter the behaviour of its users. If our descendents come to analyse the photographs we leave behind, it may be combinations of past and present, side by side in daily use, which fascinate the most.

Notes

[1] Playfair, James, *A Geographical and Statistical Description of Scotland: Argyleshire*, Edinburgh, 1819, 15.

[2] Pennant, Thomas, *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides*, London, 1790, 262-3.

[3] The 'kishie' is a northern word for a close-woven grass basket with a handle, used here for convenience since no exact Gaelic term is readily employable. There appears to be a second *ciosan clòimhe* (wool basket) contained within this basket.

[4] Lewis, Michael, *John Frederick Lewis RA, 1805-1976*, Leigh-on-Sea, 1978, 14.

[5] Sold at Sotheby's, London, 30 November 2000, lot 354. The man confronts his wife and daughter with an empty basket at the cottage door.

[6] Sotheby's, London, 19 November 1992, lot 347.

[7] Headrick, James, *View of the Mineralogy, Agriculture, Manufactures and Fisheries of the Island of Arran*, Edinburgh, 1807, 313.

[8] Kinmonth, Claudia, 'Irish vernacular furniture: Inventories and illustrations in interdisciplinary methodology', *Regional Furniture*, Vol X (1996), 1-27.

[9] Bede, Cuthbert, *Glencreggan, or a Highland Home in Cantire*, London, 1861. Another interior view records a stone-built cottage with a masonry fireplace set against the gable end and containing an iron grate but apparently venting through the roof.

[10] The only true cabinet-making centre in Argyll was at Campbeltown. In the pages of the *Campbeltown Courier* in 1883, Mathew's Cabinet and Upholstery Warehouse at 26 Main Street advertised an extensive range including 'special bargains in oak sideboards' and made the general claim to sell at 'two-and-a-half per cent less than some of our Glasgow Wholesale Houses'. Interestingly, the firm also offered 'hair, wool and straw mattresses'.

[11] Noble, R Ross, 'Chairs, stools and settles: The vernacular tradition in the Highlands', in Cruickshank, Graeme, ed, *A Sense of Place: Studies in Scottish Local History*, Edinburgh, 1988, 163-76.

[12] Noble, R Ross, 'Highland dressers and the process of innovation', *Regional Furniture*, VI (1992), 36-46. Jones, David, 'Storage' in Storrier, Susan, ed, *Scotland's Domestic Life* (Scottish Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology, Vol 6), Edinburgh, 2006.

[13] Sinton, Thomas, *The Poetry of Badenoch*, Inverness, 1906, 26. I am grateful to R Ross Noble and to Hugh Cheape for discussions about this object.

[14] National Archives of Scotland, cc 12/3/3 22 and 63. I am grateful to David Caldwell for these references.

SOFT FURNISHINGS IN THE VERNACULAR HOME

Crissie White

Setting the Scene

A home is dressed as one would a person, to both decorative and practical purpose, the two often intertwined. Factors such as the interior climate and housekeeping, for example, inform the choice of embellishment within shared living spaces, adapting from work to mealtimes, to recreation, rest and sleep.

There are other important elements - the furnishings of a home, taken together, communicate the household's social position, its aspirations and its ingenuity. Vernacular homes mimicked grander dwellings, differing only in scale and effort and by what could be afforded or made. The desire for display might express itself in the way a room was dressed, a table laid, a bed made. A household with the hearth at its centre would measure itself by its hospitality, the mantleshelf, trimmed to set off precious objects, an iconic symbol, the dresser a potent sign of hospitality.

This article looks at the use of textiles and paper in Scottish vernacular homes, focusing on the two-room-and-attic dwelling during the nineteenth century, a time of enormous change.[1] It looks at some of the general uses of soft furnishings and then focuses on particular settings for their use. A wide range of such furnishings were to be found in quite humble homes during this time, imported and of Scottish manufacture, the latter including cotton and linen fabrics, lace, blankets, carpets and rugs. Beyond printed records, we can gain an insight of what was to be found in vernacular dwellings of this period from paintings, prints, photographs, language, surviving habits and memories and material evidence.

The uses of soft furnishings in homes

Soft furnishings not only added colour, cheer and comfort to vernacular dwellings but allowed householders to express their individuality and artistic taste. They were able to do this in increasingly sophisticated and sometimes eclectic ways as the nineteenth century progressed. Yet textiles and paper were in homes for practical reasons too.

Protection from the climate within

The external climate, combined with the structure of buildings and the nature of household activities within them, meant that cold, draughts and damp were normal in nineteenth-century vernacular homes. Furniture and fittings were designed to reduce their impact. The hooded Orkney chair is an ingenious combination of wood and straw fibre which shielded the sitter from draughts, while various furniture items on legs were employed to store textiles and grain, particularly susceptible to moisture, mould and vermin. Valuable objects such as tea were kept dry

Fig. 1. Mrs Sandison knitting in her house, Balta Sound, Unst, Shetland. There is a lime-washed gable hearth with a peat fire on a floor of stone slabs. A popular printed covering like congoleum completes the floor while a shiny wax-cloth border with a pinked edge dresses the mantelshelf. Above this the wallpaper covers the aumrie cupboard door in the wall. The string for warming clothes is empty. (Scottish Life Archive, National Museums of Scotland, C4766/1926. Source: Mrs Davidson, Roxburghshire)

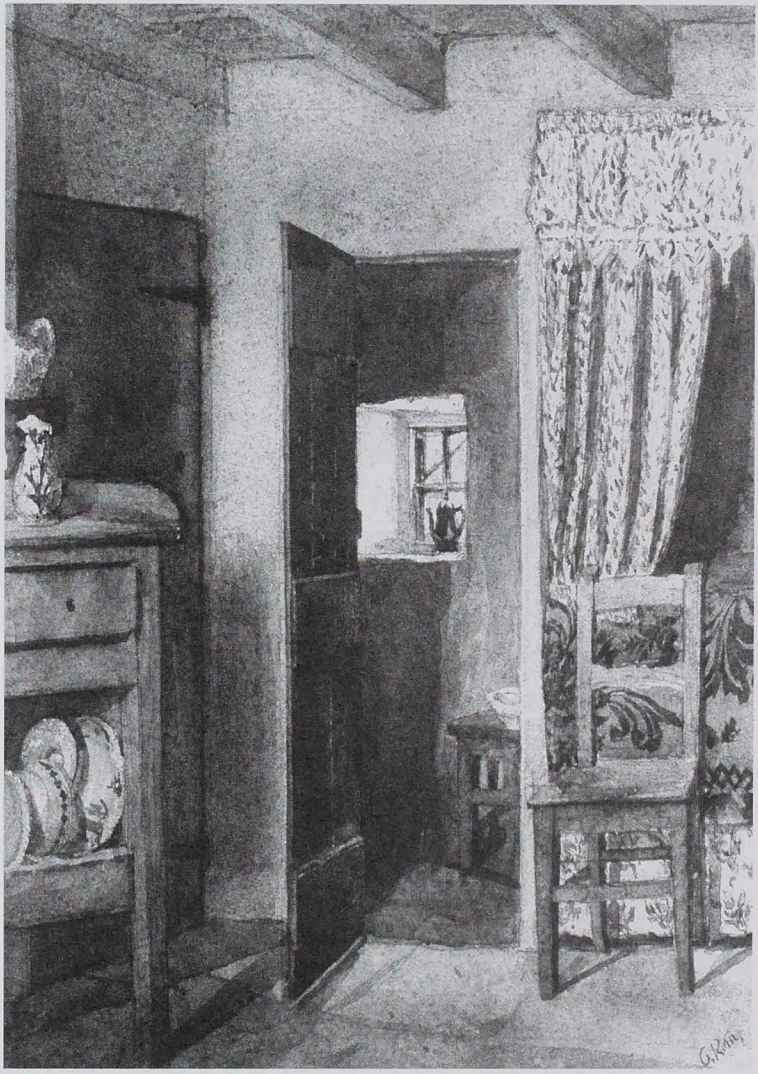

Fig. 2. A painting of a cottage interior, Callendar, Perthshire, in the possession of S Maxwell. The interior holds a galleried baking dresser and well-dressed box bed. The bed is dressed with a gathered and fringed pelmet and the curtain is tied back to show off the decorated bedcover and fabric trim below the bed. Giving the impression of lace, the pelmet and curtain are likely to be printed cottons, lace a poor draught excluder. The large scale of the pattern on the bedcover indicates a jacquard weave and thus an important investment for the household. (Scottish Life Archive, National Museums of Scotland, C3030)

on a mantelshelf. The Bible, a precious possession, might be kept in an aumrie, a cupboard in a warm fireplace wall (fig. 1), often enclosed by a curtain.

To keep the inhabitants warm and dry, the foremost measure was the provision of a hearth. 'Catching your death of cold' (temperature) was both a fear and a reality for much of the year and a fire was a prerequisite for survival. Close behind, and closely bound up with the fire, was the use of textiles. Out of doors, textiles insulate and protect human beings from the elements and the same is true within. Sitting close to the hearth, in long woollen trousers or skirts and with all-purpose rugs/shawls/plaids, was essential to achieve warmth.

Textiles and heating could be combined in other ways. Water would be boiled to fill stone bottles or 'pigs' which warmed beds. The pigs were refilled until the bedding was satisfactorily 'toasted' before people retired to bed.

Additional measures to protect the residents from the internal climate included the curtaining of doors, windows and beds (fig. 2). Sausages of cloth were placed at the foot of doors and walls were papered and crevices stuffed with rags or paper.

Textiles, paper and housekeeping

Textiles were extremely important in housekeeping, both in numerous cleaning tasks and to prevent soiling and contamination. An astonishing range of protective devices existed. Net covers were mandatory accessories for jugs and bowls of milk to keep out 'stoor' (dust) and flies. The covers were made from a circle of lace or net edged with crochet and weighted down with glass beads or discarded boot buttons.[2] A fire of peat, coal or wood is a source of smoke, debris and ash no matter how artfully managed, be it on the ground, in grates or in cooking ranges. On a visit, a Lowland woman poked what she perceived to be a dull fire of peat in the range of her sister-in-law's home in Easter Ross.[3] Without a word, the hostess whisked an organdie cloth over the table before the fine peat ash, which is light and rises high, slowly came down to land on dishes of food.

Objects on the mantleshelf would be preserved from the dust of the fire by a border of fabric or paper (see fig. 1 again). The plate rack, and dresser with a fixed plate rack, might similarly be trimmed with fabric, lace or edgings cut from newspaper. A newspaper trimmed a dresser at

Fig. 3. Miss Bella McKilligan, Yonder Bogney Cottage, Forgue, Aberdeenshire beside a splendid cooking hearth/fireplace of cast iron. This has a polished brass rail, which replaces a string for drying and warming clothes. The deep mantelshelf displays typical Staffordshire figures and 'wally dugs'. A marbled linoleum-type floor covering is enhanced with a homemade 'clootie' rug and the upholstered chair is protected by a cover. The walls are timber lined to half way, with wallpaper above. (Scottish Life Archive, National Museums of Scotland, S18470/1963. Photograph by W Morrison, New York, USA)

Calbost, Lewis, for example.[4] Paper was folded in a strip and holes cut to make a lace-like pattern for trimming other types of shelves to keep them clean, such as those found in the summer bothies of travelling fisher girls.

Fancy prints, imitating textile designs, decorated wax paper and oilcloth, these used to line both open shelves and enclosed spaces like drawers, cupboards and kists. They might have pinked edges lying decoratively over a shelf front or even within a cupboard. Furniture was thus secured from insect pests and rodents. Mildew and wood-resin stains on textiles were also avoided.

Of course, although textiles were of great assistance in housekeeping, their care added to the burden of household chores. Unlike today, when the discarded sofa is a common sight at the kerb side, furniture and

Fig. 4. 'Clootie' rug in bright colours and a geometric pattern on a paved stone floor. The longhouse, Moirlanich, Killin, Perthshire. (Crissie White)

furnishings were a lifetime purchase to be looked after carefully and this was the case with most objects in the home until well into the twentieth century. Nothing was thrown out and everything was cared for, used, reused and adapted. Clothes were cut down and sheets were cut and turned side to side before they wore through, with mending and darning art forms taught at colleges of domestic science until the 1960s.

Laundry was a major activity and in the countryside trampling washing outside beside an outdoor boiler in fine weather was thought sufficiently interesting to be a subject for picture postcards. Travellers made and sold clothes pegs to secure washing on lines.[5] 'Winter dykes',[6] a folding set of wooden rails, or clothes horses, hinged with tape or leather to dry and air clothes inside, is a linguistic survival from the vernacular home and relates to the drying of laundry over a stone dyke. Airing fabric items was extremely important. A string above the kitchen fire in would be in constant use in this regard (see fig. 1). Not only string was used (fig. 3); nails and hooks of infinite variety speak of ingenuity. The top of a stripped fir tree is hung as a coat rack at the Arnol Blackhouse Museum, Lewis, while wooden sewing bobbins were used as pegs at Druidfield Croft, Lochearnhead, Perthshire. Sticks positioned between furniture for drying and airing larger articles were eventually grouped to form a pulley, an item only practicable when ceiling heights were raised later in the nineteenth century. Knitwear like Shetland shawls and fishermen's ganzeys or jerseys had purpose-made wooden frames and stretchers.

Flat irons, heated by fire or stove, might be used in sequence for ironing clothes. In contrast, dry sheets were folded and sat upon on suitably flat chairs, pressed by the heat and weight of the body.

Floors

Earth and sand, stone and cobble predate timber floors in Scottish vernacular homes. By the mid nineteenth century unglazed yellow ceramic tiles laid on a thin base of lime mortar might be found within new farm cottages and dairies. Wooden flooring, where it existed, was first fixed on to round poles laid on an earth floor before greater wall heights allowed the use of joists. These became the norm in improved cottages built as the nineteenth century progressed. Covering the timber surface might be thick paper impregnated with bitumen, congoleum or the more expensive and durable linoleum, made of crushed cork and linseed oil on

Fig. 5. Wallpapered box beds at Auchindrain Museum. One bedcover is made of pieced and padded Turkey-red cotton prints, the other uses pieced dress cottons, geometrically as the sizes of scrap cloth allow. (Crissie White)

Fig. 6. A best room of late-Victorian style with an iron bed dressed with sheets, blankets and padded patchwork bedcover. There is also a wooden crib with a 'plaid' shawl and a tin trunk with another folded bed cover. The pile carpet is oriental-inspired and commercially made. A dark wallpaper dado has a bright Paisley-inspired print above. Auchindrain Museum. (Crissie White)

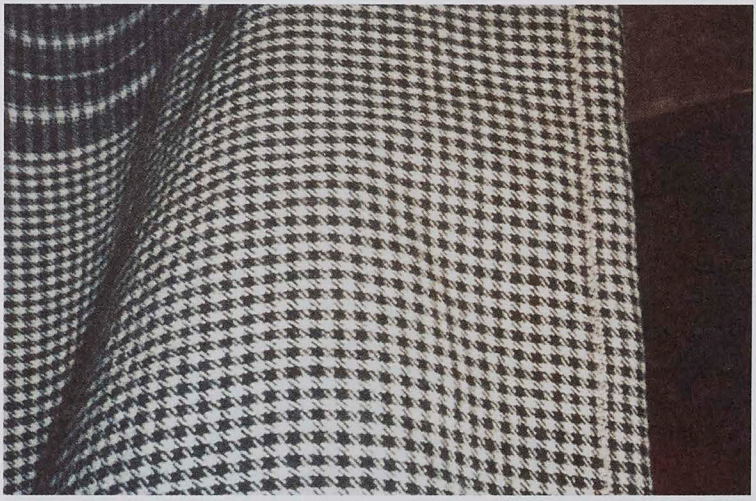

Fig. 7. Detail of a shepherd's plaid. The plaid is checked in indigo-blue and natural white wool in twill over the main area, the bottom border has a dark stripe variation. The centre join is visible. Auchindrain Museum. (Crissie White)

a backing of jute fabric (see figs. 1 and 3). Printed in overall patterns or in bordered squares and narrow runners in the manner of oriental carpets, such coverings became important purchases, easy to clean and a cheery alternative to bare wood. They found their way into kitchens, lobbies and passages and were used on stair treads. 'Clootie' or tufted-cloth rugs, made largely from old clothes cut into strips and hooked or prodded into a jute backing, were used for decoration and to protect a floor surface (figs. 3 and 4). When machine-woven tufted carpet came into common use in the latter part of the nineteenth century, carpet runners on stairs (2-feet [60cm] wide) were secured by tacks or behind rods held by two rings. Extra length allowed the carpet to be moved up and down to even the wear.

Walls

Before and during the eighteenth century, stone walls were packed and finished with clay. Internal partitions, where not of stone, were of timber or nogging (a timber frame in-filled with small stones). At the same time, lime mortar, introduced as part of agricultural improvement, allowed new houses to be built with higher and stronger walls, to be lined with lath and plaster early in the nineteenth century. Cross walls might be timber-framed, of vertical floor boarding or plastered brick. It was common to refresh walls with a yearly coat of distemper or with lime wash, which sterilised and thus signified cleanliness, or by lining them with oddments of paper, from newspaper to wallpaper. Colour and pattern in wallpaper were used in abundance. Rarely stripped, walls often held layer upon layer of finish; eleven layers of wallpaper were identified in an eighteenth-century cottage in Arran in 2006.[7] 'Hanging lums' (timber smoke canopies), ceilings, shelves, box beds (fig. 5) and under-stair cupboards could also receive the same treatment.

Tables

Tables were dressed according to the importance of the occasion; simply for everyday meals and with decorative tablecloths when there were guests, and woe betide family members if anything was spilled on such a cloth! Plates were covered with a cloth doily edged with crochet or knitted lace, later imitated commercially in paper, and before tin boxes and plastic wrappings were invented, baked food like bread and cakes was kept fresh and moist in a clean cloth. Oilcloth, the table equivalent of linoleum, which could be wiped, was a popular nineteenth-century innovation for everyday use.

Fig. 8. Twill broadloom blankets of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in natural white wool showing the variety of proportions used in horizontal-weft borders. The top blanket follows an earlier tradition of incorporating a warp border, thus creating a check on the corners. This example also shows a change of direction in the twill in the broad centre stripe. The brushed pile has worn off to reveal details of the weave construction. (Collection Crissie White)

The kitchen table was used for all manner of purposes other than eating. An old blanket folded with a flannelette sheet on top served as an ironing surface; a galleried tray for baking. For other messy activities newspaper, also excellent for polishing windows, was used to protect the table.

Beds

Victorian ideas of hygiene preferred the use of a freestanding iron bedstead with a sprung base and horsehair mattress, as there was relatively little fabric to harbour moisture and bedbugs (fig. 6). The 'three quarter' (4-feet [1.2m] wide) bed for two was a common example of this type used in Scotland until World War II.

However, other kinds of bed could be found in nineteenth-century vernacular homes including alcove beds and box beds. The opening to a box bed, an item which could also act as a room divider, might be curtained or fitted with a door; Madras cotton lace from the Darvel

Fig. 9. A woollen bedcover, woven in diamond twill weave. There is a red warp with a dark border edged with yellow and a blue cotton fabric finish at the selvedge. The dark weft shows up the diamond pattern. A fragment of Turkey-red printed cotton bedcover can be seen underneath. Auchindrain Museum. (Crissie White)

Valley in Ayrshire was used to curtain both windows and box beds (see fig. 2). Box beds provided a draught-free, private space, equivalent in benefit to modern double glazing:

> The beds all over the house were of the box variety, generally with a door to shut them in during the day, and notwithstanding the fact that doctors nowadays condemn the box bed, I can testify that they were most comfortable on a winter night, with two pairs of blankets, a bedcover and a 'het [hot] pig'.[8]

The bedding materials in such pieces of furniture might include straw, heather, hay or chaff and they could be placed loose on top of wooden slats set within a timber framework or, more commonly, held within a fabric bag or mattress, the stuffing changed regularly as the contents disintegrated.

Both woollen and linen textiles could be produced at home, although they were more commonly made by a local weaver. Linen sheets gave way in the nineteenth century to cotton examples, in part the result of a thriving Scottish weaving industry. Feather pillows and bolsters were lately used even in the humblest homes and might be made, if unaffordable by purchase, from poultry feathers held in cotton ticking.

The mattress was first protected by a 'binder', usually a worn woollen blanket which also gave extra warmth. Over the sheets a bed plaid, a term first used in inventories of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, might be laid. The white Scotch blanket is a sister product of the plaid and also of the *arisaid*, the smart adaptable travelling dress of Highland men and women in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Bedding and garments were sometimes interchangeable and both the plaid and *arisaid*, once abandoned as fashionable dress, were likely to be relegated to the of role bedcover, as happened in the late nineteenth century to the Paisley shawl (figs. 6 and 7).

The Scotch blanket in twill weave was woven on a narrow loom. It featured simple striped borders of indigo blue, perhaps a weaver's identity mark,[9] woven in what might be described as various plaid or tartan proportions, often with a small change of direction in the twill to create a herringbone effect (fig. 8).[10] Finished to a width of 30 inches [76cm] or so, the blanket was four times the length of a double blanket

today. It was cut into two pieces, which were sewn together lengthwise, striped borders to the outside, and folded double.[11] People sometimes slept without sheets and directly between the two blanket layers, with the folded end at the foot. As the nineteenth century progressed and this type of blanket began to be made in weaving mills on a broad loom, the border stripes on the white ground moved from vertical warp to horizontal weft and, in the 1930s, colours other than indigo were used. Known sometimes as an Ayrshire blanket, it could be found well into the twentieth century, to be replaced by the duvet or 'downie'.

A unique survival into the twentieth century is a woollen bed rug with a shaggy pile, the 'tattit' rug of Shetland. In this the coloured 'tatts' or tufts are worked with a needle or hook into a pre-woven ground. With the exception of the embroidery or hooking process, they resemble the Ryija rugs of Scandinavia, which were in use until the early twentieth century.[12] In these the tufts are integrated on the loom and the long pile might be on one or both sides. Unlike a sheepskin fell, such rugs stayed supple in damp conditions[13] and there are Welsh examples in the eighteenth century.[14] Tattit rugs, like the Ryija, the *arisaid* and Scotch blanket, are joined in the centre from two pieces of a similar width.

Various types of bedcover were popular in nineteenth-century Scotland. Homemade or locally made woven woollen rugs might cover blankets and were sometimes edged with a manufactured tape or decorative fabric border (fig. 9),[15] or there might be found white cotton covers with jacquard patterns. Produced in the Vale of Leven, Dunbartonshire, bright Paisley-patterned cottons printed in Turkey-red dye were joined to specially printed borders and lined with cotton flannelette to make delightfully bright bedcovers (figs. 5 and 9). Similar fabric might be purchased by the yard and a bedcover made at home in two layers padded with a cotton or woollen filling and roughly quilted.

Old blankets and woollens were routinely reused to create bedcovers by sandwiching them between dress cotton prints joined in large pieces and attached in layers by hand in tacking stitch or by machine (see fig. 5). These bedcovers are also likely to have been made commercially and although pieced, seem too humble to be included within the wider patchwork and quilting tradition.

Much more could be done to recognise the heritage of such utilitarian textiles within museums and historic houses by dressing beds with authentic bedding. In the same way, furniture might often benefit by being dressed with appropriate trimmings.

The best room

The best room was kept in good order and might be the first to acquire luxury items such as an upholstered chair. Horsehair and its cheaper counterparts such as Rexine, an imitation leather, were practical and popular coverings. Upholstered chairs were often protected with a cushion, rug or crocheted or embroidered decorative covers, used on arms and on the back, where an anti-Macasser kept hair oil from the headrest.

Scotch carpet, a reversible double-weave carpet without pile, was fashionable in genteel homes in the eighteenth century. Woven in Scotland and popular here and in the north of England, it descended the social scale to be used the best room of vernacular homes, as can be seen in Moirlanich longhouse, Killin, Perthshire. When the household's financial resources permitted, manufactured rugs might dress the centre of the best-room floor, laid on a newspaper underlay. Their embellished geometric designs, inspired by oriental carpets, allowed regular rotation to extend wear (see fig. 6).

Relatively plain in the kitchen, the mantleshelf display was complemented by a fancy mantle border 'ben the room', where the fire was lit on special occasions only. The ornate trimming extended, in miniature, to open shelves in the best room, where lace borders were applied to the edges to reduce dust as well as to look good. Flexible fabrics also allowed china items or books to be pushed easily onto a shelf.

Elsewhere in the best room could be found fancy tea cosies, teapot nests and potholders. There were also fringed cotton chenille table covers and lace or embroidered mats to decorate and protect polished surfaces. Ingenuous use was made of scraps of expensive materials acquired from affluent houses by gift or at a 'roup' or house sale, a common means of disposal and acquisition.

Beyond the nineteenth century

As new levels of comfort were achieved and the quality of life in Scottish homes improved, some soft furnishings disappeared, while usefulness and sentiment ensured the survival of others well beyond the nineteenth century. However the widespread adoption of central heating in the late twentieth century radically changed the choice and arrangement of furniture and furnishings in Scottish homes and the way in which they were dressed. With it disappeared a broad understanding of the traditional hearth-centred Scottish home.

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Notes

[1] See, for example, *Ayr Observer*, 29 June 1847, which reports on the annual Brodick Fair and notes a change in the inhabitants of Arran and their way of life, in part the result of exposure to an expanding Clyde-steamer trade:

> The intercourse with the mainland has greatly worn off the particular traits of the Islanders; and every fair they appear less singular, more improved, and better appointed in their turnout than on the previous one ... The homemade dress is giving place to more stylish manufactured fabrics ... The crowd of wooden dishes, cogs and platters exposed for sale, show the prudence of old habits; and that the cleanly earthenware is too costly and breakable to displace the wooden bowl.

[2] Estate of Catherine K Liston, North Kiscadale, Isle of Arran Heritage Museum, 2001.

[3] Mrs Harry White, Bearsden, Glasgow, and Mrs James Munro, Glaic, Ardross, Ross-shire, 1948.

[4] Collection of the late Angus Macleod of Calbost, Museum nan Eilean, Stornoway, Lewis.

[5] Estate of Mrs Agnes Cunninghame, Lamlash, Isle of Arran Heritage Museum, 1996.

[6] Lawyers' valuation of the house contents of Mrs Emily Travis, 1975.

[7] Rose Cottage, Auchencairn, Isle of Arran.

[8] Wilken, John, *Ellon in Bygone Days*, Peterhead, 1920, 57-8; Scottish Life Archive, National Museums of Scotland.

[9] Sheena McAllister, daughter of an employee at the Woollen Mill, Kintyre Trust Heritage Centre, Campbeltown, Argyll.

[10] Matthew Fowlds, Fenwick, Ayrshire, painted at his loom, about 1901. Fowlds was the last-known weaver of joined blankets in Ayrshire. Dick Institute, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire.

[11] In such Scotch 'doubill' blankets may originate the tradition of selling blankets in pairs. They are distinguished from 'English' blankets in the surviving eighteenth-century inventories of the Earls of Cromarty.

[12] Pylkkanen, Riitta, 'Ryija in boats and beds in Swedish-speaking archipelagos of Aland and Turku, Finland'. In Pylkkanen, 1974, 62.

[13] Harding, Robert, 'The art of dying: The Brathwaite Bible miniature', *The British Art Journal*, I/1, Pl 1 and Pl 3.

[14] The Welsh Folk Museum, St Fagan's, near Cardiff.

[15] Auchindrain Museum, by Inverary, Argyll.

Exceptional collections of plaids, arisaids, shawls, blankets and bedcovers can be found at the following sites:

Dick Institute, Kilmarnock, Ayrshire.

Inverness Museum and Art Gallery.

National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Paisley Museum, Renfrewshire.

Shetland Museum, Lerwick.

Shetland Textile Working Museum/Weisdale Mill, Weisdale, Mainland.

West Highland Museum, Fort William, Inverness-shire.

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MOIRLANICH: A PERTHSHIRE[1] LONGHOUSE AND ITS FITTINGS

Elizabeth Beaton

Moirlanich, Glen Lochay, Killin,[2] purchased by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) in 1992, is described as a 'longhouse', that is a linear dwelling with accommodation for both family and animals (mainly cattle) under the same roof and, on the Scottish mainland, usually of a single storey. The arrangement was handy for the care of livestock, including milking and the tending of sick animals, the tasks possible without having to go outside in bad weather, while the presence of the beasts in winter helped to warm the building. These dwellings were far from standard in form. Accounts by early-nineteenth-century travellers highlight poor, cramped accommodation, families living with their livestock in a single space in great poverty and filthy conditions with both humans and animals entering by the same door while poultry roosted

Fig. 1. Early-twentieth-century picture postcard of Glen Lochay. Moirlanich longhouse is in the foreground. The front door has a porch and the image indicates that the low bridge over the burn has replaced the hump-back bridge depicted in fig. 3. The stack yard to the rear of the cottage gives the impression of a good harvest in late summer. In the foreground (right) there is a 'yard' for kale and/or potatoes with a dry-stone dyke in poor state of repair. The building in the centre might be a stable, suggesting the area was re-used to accommodate horses after they replaced oxen. (Gillean Ford)

Fig. 2. Glen Lochay, First-edition Ordnance Survey, 1867 (Kenmore Parish). The National Trust for Scotland longhouse is at the extreme right of the map, fronting the lane, while the line running along the base of the map indicates the head dyke.

amongst the roof timbers. The sole source of heat was the hearth on the floor in the middle of the room, from which the smoke rose to the roof, escaping through a hole.[3] Others, larger and more robustly constructed like Moirlanich, provided good accommodation for their time.

The shared entry existed in larger, more prosperous houses as well as those mean and cramped examples cited above, the family turning one direction into the kitchen and beasts the other into the byre. Where there was sufficient space and the desire to keep stock separate grew, so a byre entry was sometimes inserted later.[4] Moirlanich always had dedicated doorways for family and livestock, the byre entrance also serving the family rather as a back door does in homes today.

This paper sets out to place this Perthshire longhouse in its topographical and agricultural setting and to elaborate the exploitation and use of the internal domestic space. It will draw attention to the original built-in fittings, probably acquired and fitted over time but in-place in 1992, some of which have dual roles as furniture and room dividers. The NTS has re-furnished the property according to 'archaeological evidence'[5] and comment relating to items of freestanding furniture is outside the scope of this article.

The longhouse elsewhere in Great Britain

The longhouse was adaptable to the farming needs of other parts of Scotland. A separate stable is sometimes found where horses had replaced the use of oxen as draught animals, as at Laidhay, Caithness. In the damp northern counties of mainland Scotland, and in Orkney and Shetland, a kiln to dry grain frequently forms one end of the linear building with the barn, while a winnowing floor between opposite mural openings provides a cross draught to separate chaff from grain. Another name for the building type is 'byre dwelling', which aptly describes the dual accommodation role and certainly is more precise for similar buildings in Shetland and the Western Isles (for example, Southvoe, Mainland, Shetland, and 42 Arnol, Lewis) where the structure has a single front entry for two parallel inter-communicating ranges. In Great Britain the longhouse is found in Highland (although not necessarily upland) areas and it is not confined to Scotland. In England there are fine examples on Dartmoor in the South West, while Wales, like Northern Ireland, has a fair sprinkling.

Topography

Moirlanich longhouse fronts a minor road leading westwards through the valley where the River Lochay winds it way to join the more energetic River Dochart before emptying into Loch Tay (fig. 1). The valleys of both these rivers were described as:

> ... rich and fertile, yielding good crops of corn, potatoes and turnips: and in the more marshy districts, on the banks of the river, bearing meadow hay of excellent quality in great abundance. Their scenery is in many places highly picturesque, being enriched with thriving plantations, and a considerable quantity of natural wood.[6]

The climate, however, was 'damp and variable'.[7] In Glen Lochay some of this dampness rose from ground within the looping river, identified as 'Subject to Floods' (fig. 2). The descriptions quoted above were written by the Killin parish minister in 1843, about the time that the present longhouse was built, and, as his parish was more rural than urban and with part of his stipend paid in kind, he would have had a good understanding of the local agricultural scene. This was not land

where a meagre living was wrested from poor ground by harsh labour but one where, under normal circumstances and consistent work, the tenants should have been able to live adequately by the standard of the time, with sufficient to feed family and livestock, the yearling calves sent with the drovers to annual fairs (probably at Falkirk) where their sale realised the yearly cash rent to the Breadalbane Estate. Killin, only a mile [1.6km] away, might also have offered opportunities for the sale of eggs, milk and the like and provided school, church and a wider social life than was the norm for many isolated small farms. That said, it must be recognised that poor harvest and loss of stock through flooding, sickness or other disaster would soon be felt.

In the mid nineteenth century the longhouse now named as Moirlanich was not the sole dwelling of its type in the area. The First-edition Ordnance Survey map reveals a scatter of small cottages strung out along a track branching from the road (now the A827) running westwards through Glen Lochay. Most of these dwellings were rectangular and probably also of the longhouse type, some with associated buildings and the outlines of stack yards and enclosed garden areas, apparently protected and sheltered by dry-stone walls.

Fig. 3. Moirlanich longhouse c1900. Note the hump-back bridge crossing the burn (compare with fig. 1) and the thatched roof. The thatch is held in place by horizontal timber spars fastened to the turf underlay by hazel pins. The porch has not yet been added. (National Trust for Scotland)

This evidence is reinforced by late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century postcards of Glen Lochay.[8] The name Moirlanich now covers the scattered settlement, although the earlier Stobie's map of 1783 reveals East and West Muirlanich, with a slightly different spelling.[9]

Historical background

The cottage is said to date from the mid nineteenth century and given the favoured site may well have replaced an earlier but inferior building, an evolution probably replicated on many of the inhabited sites in Glen Lochay and elsewhere (fig. 3). Until 1968 the house was home to at least three generations of the Robertson family. The farming would have been mixed arable and livestock, the former on the low ground to the rear of the cottage. There was also a series of strip fields running south to join a long 'head dyke', separating cultivated land from the higher ground, beyond which were upland grazings where the cattle were kept during the summer months, both to protect unfenced crops and to exploit the fresh growth and summer warmth. This movement of stock, or transhumance, was widely practised not only in Scotland but throughout upland areas in Europe.

Description of the building

The longhouse measures externally 65 feet 8 inches long by 19 feet 8 inches wide [20m x 6m], the wall thickness varying between 2 feet 11 inches to 3 feet 3 inches [60-80cm]. The partly lime-washed walls are built of roughly coursed rubble masonry, the corrugated-iron (formerly thatched) roof supported by five pairs of curved cruck trusses or 'Highland couples', the foot of each timber or 'cruck blade' slotted into a mural cavity which rises from the base of the inner wall face, transmitting the weight of the roof directly to the ground rather than to the walls, which are not fully load-bearing. The timbers are linked at wall head and apex by tie beams and crude collars. The material for this framework, besides for the house fittings and furnishings, was probably obtained from the extensive local woodlands. The timber structure was repaired during NTS restoration, including the insertion of the cambered tie beam in the byre as a replacement (see figs. 5 [A-A] and 11).

There are two chimneystacks. The ridge stack is of corrugated iron and serves the kitchen hearth with its canopy or 'hanging lum'.

Fig. 4. The longhouse after restoration. The corrugated-iron roof and chimney had replaced thatch some years before purchase by the National Trust for Scotland.

This chimney, and the flue it serves, is slightly tapered and had been renewed in corrugated iron before 1992, probably at the same time as the building was re-roofed with corrugated iron, overlaying the thatch which was retained for its valuable insulation properties (fig. 4). The addition of a domed cope was apparently made during the repairs by the NTS after purchase in 1992. Chimneystacks associated with a thatched roof took the form of a tapering wooden frame daubed with clay inside and out. They were thatched and usually bound with twisted grass or cord and, like the roof thatch, were renewable (fig. 5). The gable-end masonry stack serves the mural flue of the best-room ('ben-end') fireplace, its more expensive and permanent nature reflecting the importance of the room it serves.

Division of interior space

The overall internal space is divided with approximately 3/5 devoted to the east section of the building for domestic use and 2/5 for the byre at the west, the domestic quarters thus only slightly favoured. The byre adjoins the kitchen but is separated from it by a dresser (fig. 6) and box bed between which is the doorway. These two items of wooden furniture were formerly reinforced in their role of physical divider of space by a shallow cupboard fronting the box bed. The domestic eastern half of the building has a close-fit plank ceiling inserted within the original

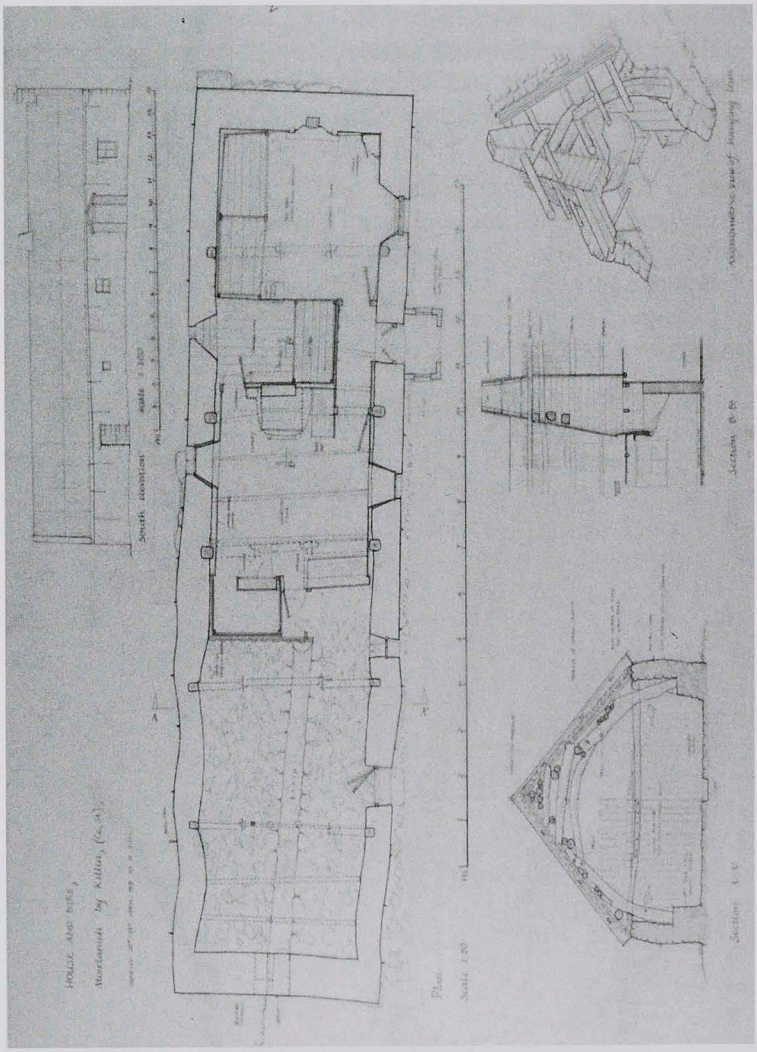

Fig. 5. Survey drawings, 1991. Top, south elevation of cottage: note the size and disposition of windows and doors. Centre, floor plan: right to left, the best room with box beds; closet or press room; kitchen with hanging lum and box bed. The cupboard originally fronting the kitchen box bed, in situ in 1991, is now in the 'dairy' between the byre and the kitchen. Note the dresser flanking the entry to the byre; the byre with its central drainage channel and doorway. Bottom, left to right: section A-A showing a cruck frame and collars with the profile of the cruck blades in mural slots and (faintly at the left) the re-positioned log screen separating the byre from the dairy; section of chimney and hanging lum; axonometric drawing of hanging lum. (RCAHMS)

timber-frame structure, probably a later improvement providing better insulation, greater cleanliness and a more pleasant environment, and contrasts with the byre end, which is open to the roof. The internal height from floor to ridge is approximately 14 feet 6 inches [4.42m].

The principal entry to the domestic end is in the south side, the doorway fitted with a double-leafed door (affording easy entry for one person yet keeping out cold and damp) and sheltered by a later, gabled corrugated-iron porch. This entrance is flanked right by the best room window and left by the kitchen ('but-end') window. The byre has its own entrance and a single small mural window lighting the dairy space. The most generously lit room, as one might expect, is the kitchen - living room

Fig. 6. The kitchen dresser in 1991, before restoration by the National Trust for Scotland. Note the passage to the right of the dresser to the dairy and byre. All three shelves of the plate rack (the lowest deeper than the two above) are fronted with a bar against which the plates rested leaning outwards. There are three drawers (now replaced) and three cupboards below. (RCAHMS)

with a second window in the north wall, besides a diminutive rear vent lighting the small, connecting middle closet or 'press'.[10] The divisions of the interior and the dedication of the various spaces are indicated externally by the window pattern, larger for principal rooms, smaller where light (and the expense of glazed window frames) was deemed less important. All windows are widely splayed internally to maximise light.

Interior domestic space and fittings

By modern living standards the interior space dedicated to domestic use is small. Yet this space is carefully exploited, with three rooms accommodating two hearths, four box beds (providing separate sleeping quarters for the parents and for the male and female members of the family), a built-in dresser, cupboards and shelves. Further storage is available under the beds.

The main cottage entrance opens into a passage linking the ben end and the kitchen; the internal passage wall is created by the closet box-bed rear wall which extends into the kitchen as a hearthside bench back.

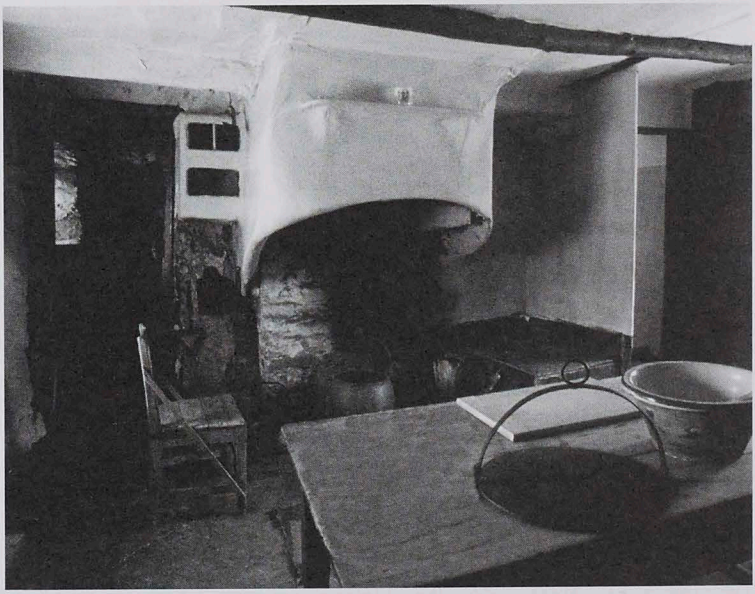

Fig. 7. The kitchen. The rounded extension to the hanging lum is unusual. To the right there is a low fixed bench against the passage wall and to the left a small white-painted open mural cupboard. There is also entry to the small press room with its box bed. NTS freestanding furniture. (National Trust for Scotland)

The kitchen and closet

The kitchen is the 'heart of the house' and has direct entry into the byre. On the opposite wall there is a doorway to the closet or press room (fig. 7), this furnished with a box bed used by the sons or other male members of the family, the girls sleeping in the best-room beds.[11] Additional accommodation for males may have been in the small building with chimney over the road from house revealed in fig. 1.

The hearth dominates the kitchen and is fronted by a chimney fitted with a hanging lum which appears to have had a slightly balloon-like addition to its base extending the usual rectangular frame, perhaps created in the course of repairs. The alterations reveal do-it-yourself on the part of the occupants and incorporate a short length of corrugated iron beaten (nearly) flat. A neat little shelf is supported by brackets on the face of the canopy and a low bench cosily installed right of the hearth, exploiting the passage wall as back rest. The writer has not seen similar elsewhere in Scotland but in parts of Northern Ireland they were a traditional fixture, often with a small vent or glazed light cut into the back to observe arrivals at the front door.[12]

The warmth from the hearth, where peat was the usual fuel as it gives heat without sparks to endanger the wooden lum, would have permeated the building. The location suggests a continuation of the traditional open hearth on the floor in the middle of the room, where the smoke would have drifted upwards to seep out either through a hole in the thatched roof or at eaves level, obliging the residents to sit on low stools ('creepies') or perhaps, for the senior members, low chairs to keep below the smoke level.

To the left of the hearth is a small open hanging cupboard which looks very much as though it were made from an old crate, something on the lines of a wooden orange box such as those commonly found in grocers' shops during the period before and after World War II. Like the canopy shelf, the cupboard is well out of reach of young children and all the more useful for that.

Flanking the doorway leading from the kitchen into the byre is, right, a curtained box bed and, left, the dresser. Before 1992 the box bed was partially screened by a wide, shallow cupboard with double-leaf plank doors fitted with long, slender blacksmith-made strap hinges (fig. 8). This covered two thirds of the box-bed frontage with a curtain closing the remainder and providing both entry and privacy for the parents. After acquisition by the NTS, this cupboard was moved to the dairy area between the kitchen and byre.[13]

The dresser is a fine example of a 'Lowland' type, with open shelves above, three drawers and three cupboards below. Lowland dressers

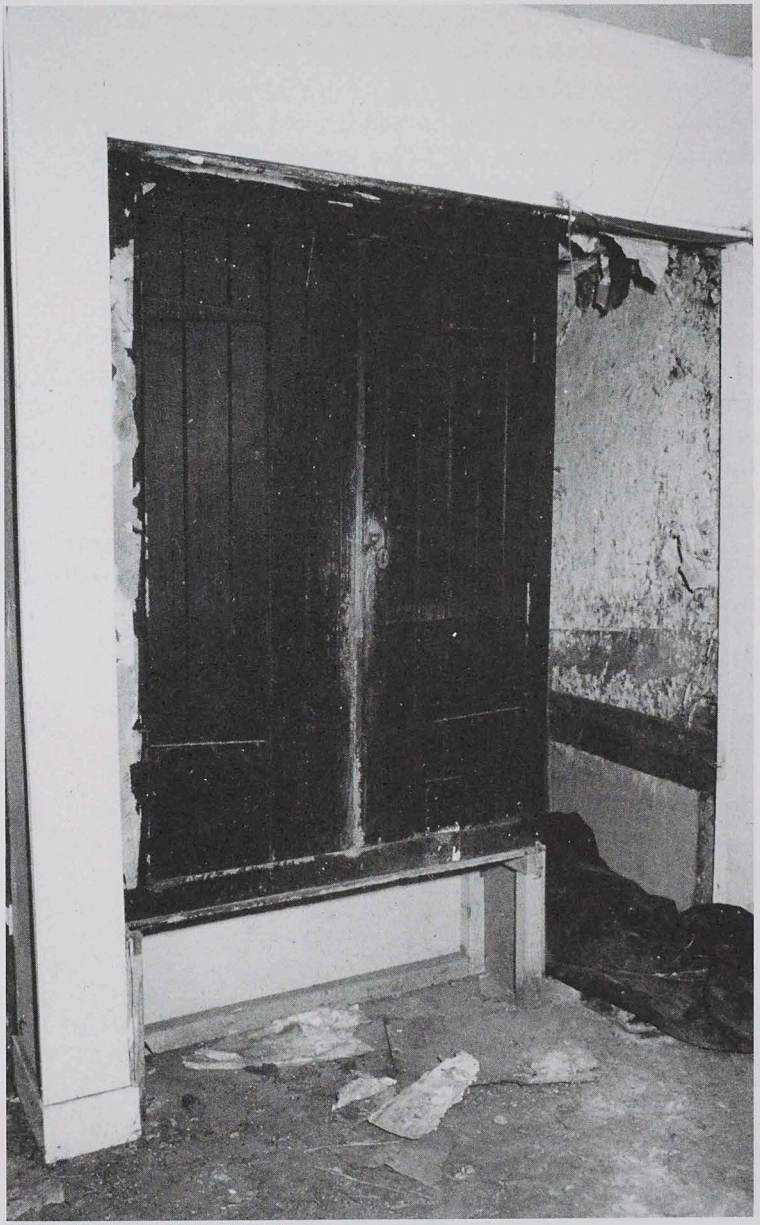

Fig. 8. The shallow cupboard has plank doors with slender blacksmith strap hinges. It formerly screened the box bed, but is now removed to the dairy. Photographed in 1991, before restoration by the National Trust for Scotland. (RCAHMS)

have fully fitted cupboard doors beneath the dresser top, as opposed to 'Highland' pieces which tend to have open spaces.[14]

The kitchen floor is now of concrete but there is evidence that this is laid over 'roughish' stone slabs. Similar slabs floor the closet but here these have been overlaid with wooden planks.[15]

The best room

The east of the cottage is taken up by the best room, fitted with two box beds which occupy the north wall and a plain black-painted timber chimneypiece with mantle and small cast-iron grate (fig. 9). To the right of the hearth there is a fitted corner cupboard of painted pine with a simple frame and two doors; this fills the south-east angle from floor to ceiling (fig. 10). As elsewhere in the building, the box beds are closed with curtains. The flooring is now concrete, but it is unlikely that this is original.

This room is sited furthest away from the byre, preserving it from the daily coming and going to tend stock, with the inevitable soiling of footwear and clothes.

Fig. 9. The best room. One of two box beds in the north wall (left) and the corner cupboard (right). The freestanding furniture and the curtains were selected by the National Trust for Scotland. (National Trust for Scotland)

Fig. 10. The corner cupboard in the best room, flanked by remnants of the original wallpaper. Pictured in 1991, before restoration by the National Trust for Scotland. (RCAHMS)

The byre and dairy

The byre is open to the roof, revealing the timber framing that is masked in the domestic quarters by the inserted ceiling. Two pairs of cruck trusses rise from a little above floor level, each blade in a mural slot, the trusses linked at the apex with two collars and with tie beams at wall-head height (fig. 11). Some of the timbers still retain bark, indicating there was no, or very little, finishing or shaping.

Entering the byre from the kitchen one passes into a small space formed by the end of the box bed and the dresser back, lit by a narrow

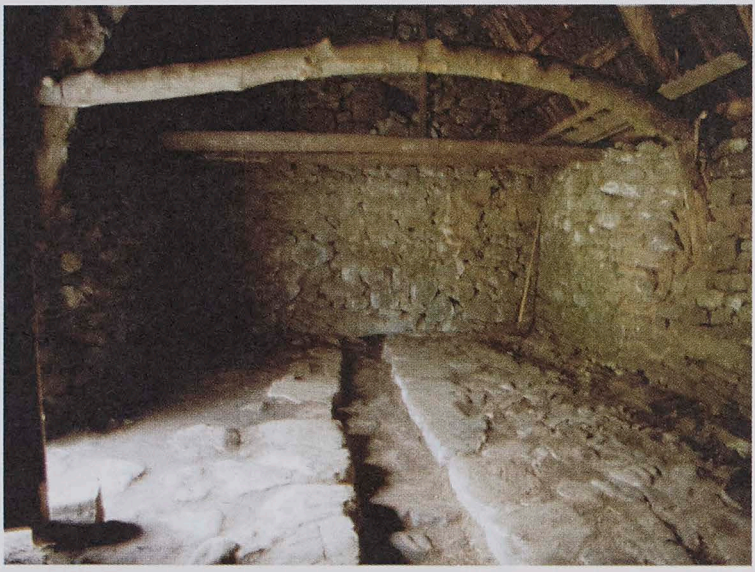

Fig. 11. The byre. Cattle would have been tethered at each side, their urine carried away by the central drain running through the gable wall.

window. Since 1992 this area has been further enclosed by re-siting the split-log partition which formerly backed the kitchen box bed, to screen the area from the byre door (see fig. 5). The shallow cupboard which was in front of the kitchen box bed now stands against the partition. The area is now called the dairy and, as it is lit and ventilated, probably fulfilled that role in the past. The urine drainage gutter is within the recently enclosed space and, in the light of contemporary hygiene regulations, there is a natural tendency to query the inclusion of the drain within the dairy space. Times change!

The central gutter runs almost the full length of the byre to drain through a mural 'muck hole' low in the west gable. Dung would have been removed through the external doorway. This entry was formerly fitted with a 'half door', whose traditional horizontal division enabled the upper section to be opened for light and ventilation, while the lower, when closed, kept stock in or out. Cattle were most likely tethered against the north and south walls and probably over-wintered indoors, only coming out for a daily drink in the neighbouring burn. There are two types of flooring: a couple of small areas are cobbled with rounded stones (approximately 5 by 4 inches [12 x 10cm]) but the floor is mostly of large, unevenly sized stones (approximately 1 foot square [30 x 30cm]).

Conclusion

At Moirlanich the division of the interior space to accommodate the family and the livestock that were vital for its livelihood is, as in other buildings of this type, arranged with areas reserved for domestic and animal use. Moirlanich reveals both tradition and ingenuity in the disposition of the built-in fittings; box beds, cupboards, dresser and bench, each exploit a small, dedicated space but together provide for the household's needs.

In the longhouse or byre house the spaces of combined home and steading are adaptable and vary according the needs of the occupants, their domestic and farming lives and seasonal change. Moirlanich is a fine Perthshire example, drawing attention to this interesting although fast-disappearing traditional house type.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to many in the preparation of this paper. Gillean Ford, Killin Heritage Society, who knows Moirlanich well, has read the draft of the article and been generous with her help, knowledge and the loan of old postcards. Dave Hutchinson, furniture historian, has also given help and advice: both he and Jocelyn Rendall read the draft text and I appreciate their interest. Isla Robertson, Photo Librarian, NTS, Edinburgh, has been most co-operative as has Ian Riches, Archivist, also NTS. The Trust has kindly donated the use of photographs. Veronica Fraser, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), found drawings and other sources. RCAHMS have kindly allowed reproduction of their drawings of Moirlanich, which are Crown Copyright. The staff of The Map Library, The National Library of Scotland, and of Elgin Library have been most helpful. My sincere thanks to Elizabeth Robertson, and to Helen Williamson who rescued me from the baffling guiles of my computer!

Notes

[1] Moirlanich is in the historic county of Perthshire but within Stirling Local Authority.

[2] Grid reference NN 562 342: identified as NTS and named on OS Explorer, sheet 378 (2001). All compass directions relevant to this property are given as north, south, east and west to simplify the slight orientation to the south west and north east of the long front and rear elevations.

[3] Mechan, Dallas and Walker, Bruce, 'Possible byre dwelling at Borve, Berneray, Harris', *Vernacular Building*, 13 (1989), 23-33.

[4] As at Laidhay, Caithness.

[5] National Trust for Scotland, Moirlanich leaflet.

[6] *New Statistical Account*, Vol 10, (1843), 1078.

[7] Ibid, 1079.

[8] I am grateful to Gillean Ford for sight of her picture-postcard collection recording Glen Lochay in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with single-storeyed cottages and small farms.

[9] *Pers com* Gillean Ford.

[10] A press is a large cupboard (Scots).

[11] Information *per* Killin Heritage Society, SVBWG Annual Conference, 22 April, 2006.

[12] Coshkib Hill Farm, Co Antrim, re-erected at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Belfast (SVBWG Annual Conference, 27 April, 2000). Dave Hutchinson also comments that he has not seen similar, suggesting that it was an intuitive 'one-off' construction to exploit this space, although the maker may have seen similar in the local 'big hoose'.

[13] *Pers com* Gillean Ford.

[14] *Pers com* Dave Hutchinson.

[15] *Pers com* Gillean Ford.

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COLLECTING AND DISPLAY IN MUSEUMS: VERNACULAR FURNITURE IN GLASGOW, 1900-1950

Elizabeth Hancock

This article examines the development of two museum collections of traditional seventeenth-century Scottish chairs acquired between c1900 and 1940 and aims to establish the relationship between the dealers, collectors and curators responsible for their acquisition and display. These chairs can be seen on display in Provand's Lordship, a medieval canon's house built around 1471, and the Burrell Collection, a purpose-built museum for the 8,000 objects gifted by Sir William Burrell (1861-1958), a wealthy Glasgow shipowner.[1] Although both are now in public ownership, as part of Glasgow Museums, the collections were put together by a local literary society and a private collector.

Andrew Hannah described both these chair collections from a historical perspective, illustrating mainly those in Provand's Lordship.[2] T J Honeyman, writing to celebrate the quincentenary of the building, featured photographs of the furnished interiors and acknowledged Sir William Burrell's role in filling the rooms with 'period' furniture.[3] Most recently, a new guidebook to the house by Helen Avenell provides a historical context for the building and its furnished interiors.[4] Burrell's significance as an art collector has been researched and published by Richard Marks[5] and his furniture collecting discussed by Victor Chinnery.[6] However the extent of Burrell's interest in old Scottish furniture, and his involvement in the acquisition of the Provand's Lordship collection, has received less attention.

The development of the Provand's Lordship collection was the product not only of William Burrell's patronage and the energies of members of the Provand's Lordship Literary Club (later Society), but also of a small group of dealers. Burrell's Purchase Books and file photographs have been important sources in tracing the purchase, provenance and movement of objects.[7] Similarly, an album compiled between 1906 and 1929 by Dreda Boyd, a member of the Provand's Lordship Literary Club, has provided evidence of the extensive social and fund-raising activities of the Society.[8]

By the 1890s, private antiquarian, guild and learned-society

collections of 'Old Scotch' furniture had become more widely accessible to a broader public through loans for exhibition and auction sales. The Edinburgh sales of the property of two notable antiquarians, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe of Hoddam, in 1851,[9] and W B Johnstone, curator of the Scottish National Gallery, in 1869,[10] can be seen to indicate an established interest in old Scottish furniture. The 1881 Glasgow sale of the collection of John Bell of North Park House confirms the interest in a noble or royal provenance, where two early-eighteenth-century carved oak straight-back chairs surmounted with crowns (formerly in the Paton collection),[11] and with an assumed association with Linlithgow and Falkland Palaces, were displayed prominently in the Front Museum Room of the house.[12]

A reproduction of the fifteenth-century Bishop's Palace, which had once stood near Glasgow Cathedral, was a popular attraction of the International Exhibition of 1888, held in Kelvingrove Park, Glasgow.[13] The catalogue, published after the exhibition closed, was described as, 'the outgrowth of the interest excited by the Historical and Archaeological Collection ... of Scottish National Memorials [which] was the largest and most important that had ever been brought together.'[14] In the Burghal Memorials section, visitors could view three of the important guild chairs from Trinity Hall, the headquarters of the Old Incorporated Trades of Aberdeen.[15] Included among the archaeological and historical relics was an oak armchair carved with the Ruthven family coat of arms and inscribed 'MGR 1588', loaned by the Literary and Antiquarian Society of Perth.[16] The chair was said to have been found in the former Gowrie House in Perth.

The new Art Gallery and Museum building in Glasgow, funded from the profits of the 1888 Exhibition, formed the centrepiece of the International Exhibition of 1901 and was described in the catalogue as 'one of the most elaborate edifices devoted to Art in Europe'.[17] Scottish furniture was again exhibited within Scottish History and Archaeology, housed in the ground-floor west wing and corner pavilions of the Art Gallery and Museum. The historical association of the objects was of prime interest. Furniture from private, church and civic collections was classified under several different themes. Within Ecclesiastical Relics, three chairs loaned by Glasgow Cathedral were described as, 'The Lord Provost's chair, made from oak which formed part of the original structure' of the Cathedral; Cromwell's chair, 'which the Protector is said to have used when he attended service in Glasgow

Cathedral in 1650'; and an old high chair, 'occupied by the Precentor, and stood in front of the pulpit of Glasgow Cathedral till the organ was introduced'.[18] In the Scottish Burghs section, the Trades House of Aberdeen lent eleven of the guild chairs.[19] The Earl of Mar and Kellie and Sir John Stirling Maxwell loaned items associated with James VI and George Buchanan, displayed in the Scottish History and Covenanting sections.[20] More furniture exhibits classified under Dress and Domestic Objects included nine items lent by Theodore Napier, five of which came from J N Paton's collection and were said to be from Dunfermline, Holyrood, Falkland and Stirling Palaces.[21] A carved oak armchair from the parish of Killearn, Stirlingshire, 'said to have been the property of near relatives of George Buchanan, the historian', was loaned by the Glasgow Archaeological Society, a Scottish armchair made in 1682 lent by the Corporation of Glasgow and five Scottish chairs dated between 1597 and 1720 lent by A G Heiton.[22] Classified within a historical context, a tradition of collecting and displaying well-provenanced late-sixteenth/seventeenth-century Scottish furniture was clearly well established in Glasgow by 1901.

One art collector who was actively involved in the organisation of the 1901 Exhibition, as a member of the Art Objects Committee, was William Burrell. As the largest single lender, with more than two-hundred items including tapestries, needlework, antique furniture, woodcarving and paintings, he also contributed a number of pieces to furnish the Royal Reception Rooms, such as six Spanish-leather-covered chairs and a gothic chest. The exhibition catalogues provide valuable early evidence of his collecting interests. Described by his friend Robert Lorimer in 1898 as, 'a great buyer of furniture, etc ... he possesses ... really a lot of beautiful old furniture',[23] he acquired items while on business trips to the Continent and on holiday. Photographs of 1905-06 of his home at 8 Great Western Terrace, where he moved in 1901 following his marriage to Constance Mitchell, show seventeenth- and eighteenth-century furniture, but there is no evidence of an interest in Scottish items. In contrast, as Lindsay Macbeth has pointed out, Lorimer, who remodelled the interiors for Burrell, designing Gothic-style fireplaces, a staircase and furniture for the house, was already collecting Scottish vernacular furniture, including a 'gossiping chair' and pieces described as old Scotch oak or elm.[24] David Jones has discussed Lorimer's reproduction of chairs of an east-coast type, made for the Earl of Crawford for the estate office at Balcarres, Fife, in 1904.[25]

By 1904, Provand's Lordship, a stone-built manse in the Cathedral precinct, was in danger of being demolished because of plans to extend the Royal Infirmary (fig. 1). The house and the Cathedral were the only surviving buildings from the medieval city. Built around 1471 by Andrew Muirhead, Bishop of Glasgow 1455-73, the house was lodgings for the priest of the Chapel and Hospital of St Nicholas and temporary living quarters for cathedral clergy.[26] The Provand's Lordship Club was formed to preserve the building and to establish it as a focus for literary, historical and archaeological activities. The club entered into a feu contract, paying an annual ground rent of £100. Many prominent local businessmen and members of the Scottish press attended the foundation dinner on 21 December 1906. The directors included the Marquis of Graham of Brodick Castle, Sir John Ure Primrose and Arthur Kay (Secretary), a keen art collector of Arthur & Co, a Glasgow drapery firm.

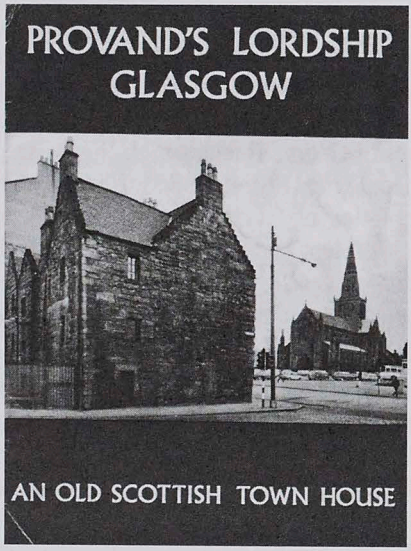

Fig. 1. Provand's Lordship, Glasgow, with the Cathedral beyond. (Lewis Clapperton, An Old Scottish Town House, *Glasgow, 1930)*

Parts of the building were opened to the public at a fee of sixpence, which included a guidebook of the Cathedral and Provand's Lordship.[27] The first year's syllabus for 1906-07, listing 141 founder members, many of whom were businessmen and -women,[28] journalists and curators, included an invitation to:

> ... all ladies and gentlemen in the west of Scotland, who are interested in Scottish History and Antiquities, to cooperate with them in increasing the membership of the Club. The centre shop ... will be used as an entrance hall to three rooms on the first floor and will show the style of the period at which Provand's Lordship was built. Two

of the rooms will be restored to their original fifteenth-century style by facsimile furniture, etc, while the third room will be used as a Museum for Local and Historical Antiquities.[29]

Donations of local, historical or archaeological interest were requested for the museum, either by gift or loan. Life membership cost two guineas and ordinary membership five shillings.

Fundraising events featured an annual winter lecture series on historical themes, when members climbed up a 'hen ladder' to reach the two club rooms. Plays and historical pageants were often linked with exhibitions, the first of which was the Old Glasgow Exhibition in 1907, which included performance of a play, 'The Legend of St Mungo'.[30] Sir John Stirling Maxwell of Pollok House lent George Buchanan's armchair to the exhibition, John A Holms[31] sent three seventeenth-century Scotch armchairs and Charles E Whitelaw[32] contributed a carved oak armchair, dated 1675, from Fife. A major loan of furniture and pewter from the local antique dealer, Muirhead Moffat,[33] created an appropriate historical backdrop to a special 'Old Glasgow Dinner', with a menu of sheep's-head broth, sheep's head, a haggis, a turkey, boiled beef, potatoes, kale, peasemeal bannocks, nut-brown ale, a bowl of Old Glasgow rum punch and a claret cup (fig. 2). Moffat was among the early donors of furniture, giving an old Scots high-backed chair in

Fig. 2. Advertisement for Muirhead Moffat & Co, Dealers in Works of Art, Glasgow. (Provand's Lordship Literary Club, Old Glasgow Exhibition, List of Exhibits and Book of Words, Glasgow, 1907)

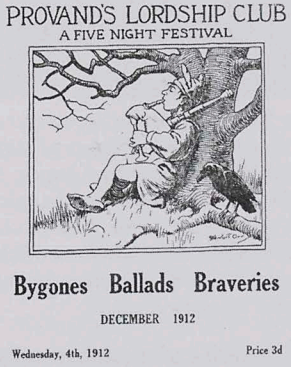

Fig. 3. Bygones: Ballads: Braveries. *Provand's Lordship Club Festival programme, December 1912. (Provand's Lordship archive)*

Fig. 4. Miss Dreda Boyd, Secretary of the Ladies' Section, Provand's Lordship Society. (Unknown newspaper source, housed in Provand's Lordship archive)

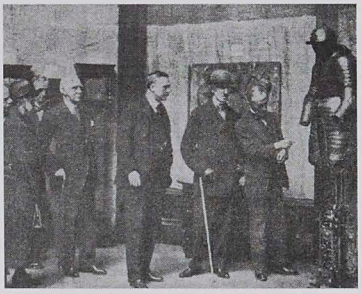

Fig. 5. The Duke of Atholl opening the Antique Furniture and Tapestry Exhibition at the McLellan Galleries, Glasgow, April 1924. The Duke is third from the right, and with him are Colonel Robert Aitken of Aitkenhead, Lewis Clapperton, Robert Lauder, W C Stirling Stuart and John A Holms. (Glasgow Herald)

1921.[34] An 'old Scots Oak Chair, originally in Provand's Lordship' was donated by Mrs Inglis Ker in 1923[35] and a large nineteenth-century Glasgow pattern chair, donor unknown, was recorded in the house in the same year.[36]

Plays, festivals, musical events and historical tableaux, with lively titles such as 'Bygones: Ballads: Braveries' (fig. 3), 'The Meeting of St Mungo and St Columba' and 'Bishop Muirhead Blesses this House' (1910), were a regular feature of the Club. Muirhead Moffat lent props and Dreda Boyd, Secretary of the Ladies' Section, was particularly active in the presentation of such tableaux (fig. 4).[37] This fascination with pageants was part of an international popular activity, conforming to the contemporary spirit of romantic nationalism.[38] The 1911 Scottish Exhibition of National History, Art and Industry, Glasgow, for instance, featured pageants, a fake 'Auld Toun' and quaint 'Highland Village' or clachan. At Provand's Lordship these activities continued during World War I, with the Club holding fundraising dramatic festivals in aid of charities and exhibitions, for instance the Heraldic Exhibition, 1913.

A series of specialist collectors' exhibitions showcasing Old Pewter (1909) and Antique Articles Connected with Lighting and Heating (1909-10)[39] became more ambitious in scale, leading to the organisation

in 1924 of the Antique Furniture and Tapestry Exhibition in aid of the Provand's Lordship Club and held at the McLellan Galleries (fig. 5). Whereas the collectors William Burrell and John A Holms lent Gothic pieces along with fine eighteenth-century items of furniture, at the opening of the exhibition by the Duke of Atholl it was noted that:

> Scottish furniture is well represented. Of particular interest are two Scottish chairs from Aberdeenshire, beautifully carved with heraldic motifs. These chairs, which are the property of Mr G Davidson, show the French influence in Scottish work of the seventeenth century, which resulted in a harmony of design that gives a dignity quite superior to the contemporary English chair.[40]

The lender referred to here was George or Taffy Davidson (1893-1976) of Aberdeen, dealer and avid collector (fig. 6).[41] It seems likely that these exhibits attracted Burrell as two years later he bought a large group of Aberdeenshire chairs from Davidson.

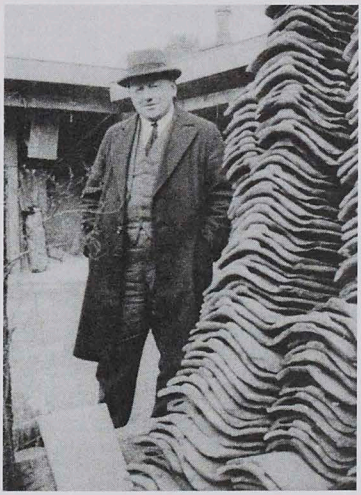

Fig. 6. Taffy Davidson in the yard at Davidson & Co, probably in the late 1940s. (Marischal Museum, University of Aberdeen)

The exhibition was organised by Robert Lauder, an established local dealer and friendly rival of Muirhead Moffat, who specialised in fine furniture, tapestries and works of art.[42] Lauder was one of the Scottish dealers who advertised regularly in *Connoisseur*. William Burrell had been his client since 1917 and Lauder was to be a key figure in the furnishing of Provand's Lordship.

Burrell's furniture buying was now at a peak, with 170 items acquired in the period 1925-26 alone. This was focused on furnishing Hutton Castle in Berwickshire, a fifteenth/sixteenth-century Border fortress which he had bought in 1916 from Baron Tweedmouth.[43] The refurbishment, which took seven years, was finally completed in 1932,

Fig. 7. Seventeenth-century armchair, oak, Aberdeenshire, at Provand's Lordship, Glasgow. (Glasgow Museums, PL 1927.12)

with medieval fireplaces, antique furniture and stained glass in the public rooms and also in the bedrooms. Frank Surgey,[44] who became a close and trusted friend of both Burrell and his wife, was the main contractor for the refurbishment, provided everything from antique furniture, chimneypieces, panelling and doors, to modern 'period' radiator grills, curtains and lampshades.

Burrell's purchase in 1926, through Robert Lauder, of the newly published reference volumes by Percy Macquoid[45] and Herbert Cescinsky[46] confirms his growing interest in furniture history. The books were sent to Burrell at Broxmouth Park, Dunbar, East Lothian, a furnished mansion house where he and his family stayed from 1924-27. Its proximity to the railway station at Dunbar, on the North British Line, gave him easy access to Glasgow and London and to Hutton Castle, where he was overseeing the building alterations.

Burrell's involvement with the furnishing of Provand's Lordship would seem to have been a catalyst for the start of his own small collection of Scottish chairs. In 1926 he started buying objects specifically to furnish Provand's Lordship, where the aim was now to recreate the interior as it might have been towards the end of the seventeenth century.[47] These early purchases feature in his own Purchase Books, which suggests he initiated or at least approved the acquisitions. On 3 June 1926, his purchases for Provand's Lordship were two old Scottish armchairs, an old Scottish oak cabinet 'from Lennoxlove', East Lothian, and a set of six old Scottish chairs, bought for £114 from Robert Lauder. One of the armchairs has a cresting rail with central scallop flanked with six-pointed stars and is seventeenth-century (fig. 7).[48] The other, a later mid-eighteenth-century chair, possibly from Orkney, inscribed 'John Blacki 1764',[49] is the only chair in the collection from the Northern Isles.

Fig. 8. Seventeenth-century marriage chair, oak, inscribed IS and AM (J Swift and Anne Moncur), dated 1646, Aberdeenshire. (Burrell Collection, 14/50, Glasgow Museums)

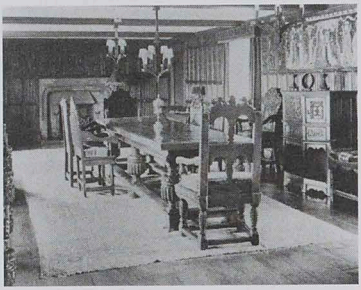

Fig. 9. The Hutton Castle dining room in Burrell's time, showing the Aberdeenshire marriage chair (14/50) on the right. (Burrell Collection, Glasgow Museums)

Three months later, on 2 September 1926, nine Aberdeenshire chairs from Taffy Davidson were purchased for £600, again for Provand's Lordship. These are *caqueteuse* chairs, with tall decorated backs, wide trapezoidal plank seats and curved arms. Only two of the chairs are individually described in the Purchase Books, where their carved initials are given, one inscribed 'IS and AM' (J Swift and Anne Moncur), dated 1646 (fig. 8),[50] and the other 'IK' (J Kemp) above the date 1689.[51] By October the following year these two chairs had been sent across to Hutton Castle for the dining room where, as part of the refurbishment, the walls had been lined with linenfold panels and hung with fifteenth-century tapestry altar frontals. A series of seventeenth-century armorial oak chairs were arranged around a large refectory table in the centre, with other chairs set against the wall panelling, amongst which was the 1646 chair (fig. 9).

The group of chairs supplied by Taffy Davidson would have been a formative influence in the developing scheme for the interiors at Provand's Lordship. Precise information about their source, which must surely have been provided by Davidson, is recorded in the Inventory. Many are dated marriage chairs, some are carved with heraldic motifs and they range from urban guild chairs to country and coastal chairs. The seven chairs are described as follows: fisher-folk marriage chair from Stonehaven, Kincardineshire, inscribed 'GF CW'; pine farm chair, dated 1688 and inscribed with a heart inside a heart, from Lumphanan, Aberdeenshire; chair from the House of Kelly, Aberdeenshire, inscribed 'GI 1582'; chair with arms of Buchan of Auchmacoy, inscribed 'GB 1646'; burgher's marriage chair, inscribed 'ILMW 1635'; chair with Lumsden coat of arms, inscribed 'IL 1659', from Pitcaple Castle, Aberdeenshire; chair with arms of Cockburn and Paterson, dated 1629.[52]

By December 1926, Lauder had supplied another large group of items to Provand's Lordship, including a seventeenth-century refectory table, bench, buffet and chest, three Scotch chairs, eight spindle-backed

chairs, a long oak table and a gate-legged table, for a total cost of £301.10 shillings. This is the last Provand's Lordship entry in Burrell's Purchase Books, although his patronage was to support the completion of the furnishing schemes.

Burrell's gift of £5,000 for the furnishing of Provand's Lordship, announced by the Glasgow Herald[53] early in 1927, funded twenty-seven furniture purchases recorded in the Purchase Books and a further thirty-one items described in the Inventory, acquired between 1927 and 1933. The immediate source of the latter items has not been traced, with the exception of a refectory table associated with Taffy Davidson. The group includes two contrasting marriage chairs, one celebrating the marriage of William Chalmers, Professor of Divinity, Kings College, Aberdeen, and Isabella Forbes, dated 1667,[54] the other a plain pine farm chair carved with the initials 'IR EM' and the date 1688, from the Parish of Glass, west Aberdeenshire.[55] The last acquisition, a chair from Fife dating from around 1670, came from a London collector in 1936.

Photographs taken in the 1930s and published in guidebooks to the house follow fashionable early-twentieth-century interpretations of historic interiors.[56] Visitors entered through the kitchen, where the nineteenth-century Glasgow pattern chair was placed to the right of the hearth, with a table and bench in the centre of the room and, by the door, a dresser and plate rack[57] stacked with pewter. Two of the rooms were generously furnished with large refectory tables, placed in the centre with chairs all around, and buffet cupboards with further chairs against the stone walls. Information on the place of origin of individual chairs was given in handwritten labels, pinned firmly to the seats. Seventeenth-century Flemish tapestries, purchased through Burrell's fund, were hung in the bedrooms, one of which was furnished with a 'bedstead made from Henry VII bedposts with contemporary headboard' and with seventeenth-century hangings, fringes and needlework bedcover, and a cradle with carved thistle motif, described as 'period of James VI'. A Mary Queen of Scots Room commemorated her 1567 stay in Glasgow, when it was believed she might have lodged at Provand's Lordship.

By the late 1920s, Burrell's furnishing of Hutton Castle was nearing completion. A Scottish chair initialled 'AP BC' and dated 1687, attributed by Victor Chinnery to south-west Scotland, possibly Kirkcudbrightshire, was placed in the hall.[58] Frank Surgey found another Aberdeen chair, carved with the arms of Graham and inscribed with the initials 'PG' and 'MG' surmounted by the date 1627.[59] After

restoration of the seat, feet and right arm, it was sent to Hutton for Sir William's bedroom. In another bedroom, an east-coast chair[60] with a carved interlaced pattern on the back panel had previously been in two distinguished collections. It was owned by Sir William Fraser (1816-1898), of 32 Castle Street, Edinburgh, genealogist, archivist and Deputy Keeper of the Records in Registry House.[61] The chair passed into the collection of Sir George Donaldson (1845-1925),[62] a collector of English and European furniture and musical instruments, and was described by Percy Macquoid in 1919.[63] As has been noted, Burrell had a copy of Macquoid's book in his library so would have known of the Donaldson connection, but possibly not the Fraser link.

Three more chairs, believed at the time to be Scottish, were purchased for Hutton Castle, these an, 'antique Scotch Oak Arm Chair, Perth with Double Eagle carved on back'[64] from R Cowie, used in the Business Room, a pine, 'Scottish Arm Chair with Crown'[65] from Robert Lauder, placed in Miss Burrell's sitting room, and a fine Aberdeenshire chair inscribed 'MH 1634', bought from John Hunt[66] in 1937 and said to be from the Mansion House of Ballochmyle, Mauchline, Ayrshire.[67] In all, Burrell had bought eight old Scottish chairs.

At Provand's Lordship the displays remained virtually intact until World War II when, owing to concerns about the safety of the collection, members living outside the city were asked to take items of furniture for safe-keeping. It was emphasised that, 'these are all free from worm and in perfect condition and might be used in your rooms if you so desire'.[68] By May 1945 it was thought safe to take down the blackout curtains in the building and the furniture was returned in September 1945. Provand's Lordship was run by the Society until 1978 when ownership was transferred to Glasgow City Council. Now a Grade-A listed monument, the building was extensively conserved and restored in the late 1990s.

Burrell's two Scottish chairs from the dining room at Hutton Castle were transported to London in 1931 for the Loan Exhibition of Scottish Art and Antiquities, held in Grosvenor Square.[69] They were also selected for The Burrell Collection Exhibition at the McLellan Galleries, Glasgow, in 1949, with the addition of the 1687 chair from the hall at Hutton, all described as 'Scottish oak armchairs'. Tom J Honeyman, celebrating the opening of the exhibition of over a thousand objects from the collection, wrote:

> It is now five years since Sir William and Lady Burrell announced their munificient gift to the City and it will still be some time before the collection can be placed permanently on view ... In the meantime, the Art Gallery and Museum Committee have acted on the assumption that the citizens of Glasgow and visitors to the City ought to have some indication of the quality and range of this notable acquisition.[70]

The three chairs were returned to Hutton after the exhibition had closed and remained there until the stripping of fittings and furnishings started in 1954 and the collections were transferred to storage in Glasgow. Problems with finding a suitable site outside the city caused long delays. The Burrell Collection finally opened in 1983, with the three principal rooms from Hutton Castle recreated in the centre of the building.

It is clear from the evidence that has been examined that in the mid 1920s there was a lively market in Glasgow for regional chairs, mainly from Aberdeenshire, which were being brought to the city for display in exhibitions and for sale by dealers from Aberdeen and Glasgow. They may have been newly onto the market from their original context in farms, cottages, or city guilds, or already in established collections. Some of these were part of an antiquarian tradition, noted particularly in Edinburgh in the second half of the nineteenth century. Scottish chairs were also entering the London market from private collections. William Burrell contributed directly to the acquisition of furnishings for Provand's Lordship and may in turn have been encouraged by activities of the Society to add some of these distinctive regional chairs to his own collection at Hutton Castle, displaying them in both the principal public rooms and the private family rooms. The chairs in question are distinctive in style, often dated, carved with initials and/or heraldic motifs. Perhaps it is this distinctive identity that made them highly collectable and contributed to the survival of details of their provenance to the present day.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Helen Avenell and Harry Dunlop for access to their collections.

Notes

[1] For details of the 1944 gift, see Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries, *The Burrell Collection*, London and Glasgow, 1984.

[2] Hannah, Andrew, 'Some early Scottish chairs', *Scottish Art Review*, V/3 (1955), 7-10.

[3] Honeyman, Tom J, 'The oldest house in Glasgow - Provand's Lordship', *Scottish Art Review*, XII/2 (1971), 7-10. Dr Honeyman (1891-1971), a Glaswegian who had worked for Alex Reid & Lefevre, art dealers, in Glasgow and London, was Director of Glasgow's Museums and Galleries, 1939-54.

[4] Glasgow Museums, *Provand's Lordship and Old Glasgow*, Glasgow, 2004.

[5] Marks, Richard, *Burrell: A portrait of a collector*, Glasgow, 1983.

[6] Chinnery, Victor, *Oak Furniture: The British tradition*, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1979.

[7] Glasgow Museums, Burrell Collection Archive, Purchase Books 1911-57. These are hand-written records giving dates, sources, descriptions and prices, with occasional references to an earlier owner.

[8] Glasgow Museums, St Mungo's Museum, Provand's Lordship Archive, PP 1984.89.1.

[9] Messrs Tait, C B and Nisbet, T, Edinburgh, 'Catalogue of the Collection of Objects of Vertu from the late Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe Esq of Hoddam, June 12-14, 16-18, 1851'. Copy in National Art Library, ref 23D.

[10] Mr Chapman, T, 'Catalogue of the Valuable Collection of Pictures, by Ancient & Modern Masters, Water-Colour Drawings (Framed & Glazed), Portfolios of Old Engravings, Etchings, &c: The property of the late W B Johnstone, Esq, RSA, Curator of the Scottish National Gallery, February 6, 8 & 9, 1869'. Copy in National Art Library, ref 23D.

[11] Joseph Noel Paton (1821-1901), of Wooer's Alley, Dunfermline, history painter, collector, member of the Board of Manufacturers and the Council of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. He used some items from his collection as props in his paintings.

[12] Morrison, Dick and McCulloch, 'The "Bell Collection", North Park, Glasgow: Catalogue of the collection of rare, antique and modern art treasures. To be sold by auction in North Park House & Galleries, Hillhead, Glasgow, 17-20 January 1881'. Copy in National Art Library, ref 23G.

[13] Kinchin, Perilla and Kinchin, Juliet, *Glasgow's Great Exhibitions*, Oxford, 1988, 45.

[14] Paton, James, ed, *Scottish National Memorials: A record of the historical and archaeological collection in the Bishop's Castle*, Glasgow, 1888.

[15] Paton, 1888, 200-201, no 992 Alexander Idle's chair, fig 144; no 993 Jerome Blak's chair; no 994 Andrew Watson's chair, fig 145.

[16] Paton, 1888, 245, no 1004. Both the chair and the records of the Literary and Antiquarian Society are in the collections of Perth Museum and Art Gallery.

[17] Kinchin and Kinchin, 1988, 64.

[18] *Official Catalogue of the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1901*, Glasgow, 1901, nos 2694, 2694a, 2694b.

[19] *Official Catalogue*, 1901, no 2528.

[20] *Official Catalogue*, 1901, nos 380, 382, 599.

[21] *Official Catalogue*, 1901, nos 1612-1620.

[22] *Official Catalogue*, 1901, nos 1622, 1623, 1631-1635.

[23] Letter from Robert Lorimer to R S Dods, 12 February 1898, quoted in Marks, 1983, 51.

[24] Referred to in Macbeth, Lindsay, 'A history of collecting vernacular furniture in Scotland', *Regional Furniture*, VI (1992), 22-35.

[25] Jones, David, 'Robert Lorimer's use of timber', *Regional Furniture*, XIX (2005), 69-79.

[26] For details on the history of the building see Helen Avenell's text in Glasgow Museums, 2004. The house became known as Provand's Lordship as one of its inhabitants was the canon of the parish of Barlanark, who became known as the Lord of Provan as his income came from the rental of the estate of Provan to the east of the city.

[27] Guide by Thomas Lugton of the People's Palace, Glasgow, author of *Old Lodgings of Glasgow*.

[28] Founder members included Catherine Cranston, the tearoom entrepreneur.

[29] Provand's Lordship Literary Club, *Syllabus, Session 1906-07*, describes the transaction whereby the house was acquired by the Provand's Lordship Literary Club by the creation of a ground annual of £100, with the option of completing the purchase at any time by a

payment equal to 26 times the amount of the ground annual.

[30] Provand's Lordship Literary Club, *Old Glasgow Exhibition: List of exhibits and book of words*, Trades House, Glasgow, 22-26 October 1907.

[31] John A Holms, a Glasgow stockbroker, of Sandyford, Paisley, later of Formakin, Renfrewshire, by Lorimer.

[32] C E Whitelaw (1869-1939), a Glasgow architect, was an important collector of Scottish weapons.

[33] Muirhead Moffat (d1932), Glasgow antique dealer of 134-138 Douglas Street, working from c1895, Scottish Councillor of the British Antique Dealers Association. See Moffat, W Muirhead, 'Portrait of my father', *Scottish Art Review*, XIV/3 (1974), 24-7, and XIV/4 (1975), 24-6.

[34] Provand's Lordship, Inventory of Contents, February 1968. PL 1921.4.

[35] PL 1923.5.

[36] PL 1923.29.

[37] Miss Dreda Boyd, romantic novelist and author of *The Scarlet Cloak*, whose *nom de plume* was Audrey de Haven, was a founder member of the club, Ladies' Secretary c1907, Joint Honorary Secretary 1922 and President by 1924-25.

[38] See Cumming, Elizabeth, 'The Marquess of Bute and the beginnings of the Dovecot Studio' and Kinchin, Juliet, 'Art and history into life: Pageantry revived in Scotland', *Journal of the Scottish Society for Art History*, 2 (1997), 10-23, 42-51.

[39] Provand's Lordship Club, *Catalogue of Loan Exhibition of Old Pewter (Ecclesiastic and Domestic)*, 1 January-31 March 1909 (707 items); Provand's Lordship Club, *Loan Exhibition of Antique Articles Connected with Lighting and Heating*, 1909-10. Lewis Clapperton, accountant and Honorary Curator, was an enthusiastic pewter collector, writing on Scottish pewter measures. His collection was bequeathed jointly to the Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery, the University of Glasgow, and Glasgow Museums.

[40] *Glasgow Herald*, 30 April 1924. The exhibition was shown until 24 May 1924.

[41] See Marischal Museum, University of Aberdeen, *'Taffy' Davidson: An Aberdeen collector*, Aberdeen, ndp. Davidson studied painting at Gray's School of Art, ran the family building business and, from 1954-74, was Curator of the Highland Folk Museum at Kingussie, Inverness-shire.

[42] Robert Lauder's premises were at 38 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. For his obituary see *Antique Collector*, VIII (1937-8), January/February 1937, 54, where he is referred to as a well-known antique dealer (at one time a Vice President of the British Association of Antique Dealers) who held a Royal Appointment to George V for his work in Holyrood Palace. After Lauder's death the business was carried on under its old name by Messrs John Bell of Aberdeen.

[43] For information on the reconstruction of the three main public rooms - the hall, dining room and drawing room - see Marks, Richard, 'The Hutton Castle Rooms', in Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries, 1984, 19-23.

[44] Frank Surgey of Acton Surgey Ltd, London, dealers specialising in architectural renovation and interior decoration.

[45] Macquoid, Percy, *A History of English Furniture*, 4 vols, London, 1919.

[46] Cescinsky, Herbert and Gribble, Ernest, *Early English Furniture and Woodwork*, London, 1922.

[47] Clapperton, Lewis, *An Old Scottish Town House*, Glasgow, 1930, 8.

[48] PL 1927.12.

[49] PL 1927.13.

[50] Burrell Collection 14/50.

[51] Burrell Collection 14/76.

[52] PL 1927.21.1 - 21.7.

[53] *Glasgow Herald*, February 1927, reported the gift by 'Glasgow Shipowner'.

[54] PL 1927.22.

[55] PL 1928.49.

[56] Clapperton, 1930.

[57] Dresser identified as from Montgomery in Powys c1720.

[58] Burrell Collection 14/53: source unknown. See Chinnery, 1979, fig. 4, 112.

[59] Burrell Collection 14/92. MG is thought to be Mungo Graham of Ratherino.

[60] Burrell Collection 14/52: source unknown.

[61] Dowell's, 18 George Street, Edinburgh, 3 December 1898, *Catalogue of the Remarkable Collection of Antique Scotch Furniture and Relics*

which Belonged to the Late Sir William Fraser, KCB, LL.D, p9, lot 74, illus (p10), sold for 20 guineas. I am grateful to Dr Bernard Cotton for the loan of his copy.

[62] Donaldson, who was born in Edinburgh and settled in London, had retired by the 1890s from his dealer's business in New Bond Street. He died in Hove, Sussex, in 1925.

[63] Macquoid, 1919, Vol 1 'The age of oak', p86 'a lady's chair of the *cacqueteuse* type, of Scottish origin.' Illustrated in fig 73 as the property of Sir George Donaldson.

[64] Burrell Collection, Purchase Book 1929, 33; 14/192. Discussed by Chinnery, Victor, 'Some thoughts on the mythology of old oak furniture', *Antique Finder*, 2 (February 1977), 27, fig 212.

[65] Purchase Book, 1930, 23; 14/210.

[66] John Hunt, Burrell's advisor on medieval objects, especially enamels, ivories and bronzes.

[67] Purchase Book, 1937, 34; 14/183.

[68] St Mungo's Museum, Provand's Lordship Society Archive, Membership File, letter from T W Donald, Honorary Secretary, Provand's Lordship Society, to Arthur C Connell, Dougalston, Milngavie, 16 July 1941. Connell was a Glasgow shipbuilder.

[69] *Loan Exhibition of Scottish Art and Antiquities*, Grosvenor Square, London, February 1931, cat nos 585 (14/50), 587 (14/76).

[70] Corporation of Glasgow, Art Galleries and Museums, *The Burrell Collection Exhibition*, Glasgow, 1949, McLellan Galleries, foreword, and cat nos 396 (14/53), 415 (14/76), 420 (14/50).

FURNISHED VERNACULAR DWELLINGS IN SCOTLAND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Crissie White

Scotland's traditional houses evolved in each district from local materials, with the best being examples of design excellence in which form follows function. Many incorporated the workplace and this was especially the case in those farmhouses where domestic quarters, byre and barn were under one roof. Fisher houses often included attic space for the storage of fishing gear, and merchants' and artisans' dwellings a ground-floor shop or workshop. Where changes in style arose from wider cultural exchange, and the use of materials was sustained, buildings have retained an identifiable Scottish character.

Furnished dwellings in Scotland form the main body of examples listed here. Most houses are original and furnished with authentic artefacts, to be distinguished from a very few furnished as left by a previous owner. Museums with room settings, where authentic furniture, fittings and furnishings can be seen in context, are included since they may be the only examples available in an area. 'Room setting' is used to describe rooms or part rooms within a museum or heritage centre and some may be interiors rescued from demolished buildings. Curators and local historical and heritage society members are to be congratulated for the dedication shown in presenting the diversity of Scottish domestic life and culture to an increasingly high standard.

Full addresses and access details are available by the name of the building or trust from websites, local-authority sources and tourist-information-centre guides. For any site inadvertently omitted, sincere apology is due and the opportunity to remedy the error offered by inclusion in a future publication. E-mail: crissiewhite@ntlworld.com

Furnished dwellings and room settings within museums by area

Aberdeenshire

Aberdeenshire Farming Museum, Aden, Mintlaw, by Peterhead (Aberdeenshire Council). The museum includes the 'Horseman's House'.

Fig. 1 a. The first-floor kitchen of Barrie's Birthplace, Kirriemuir, Angus. (National Trust for Scotland)

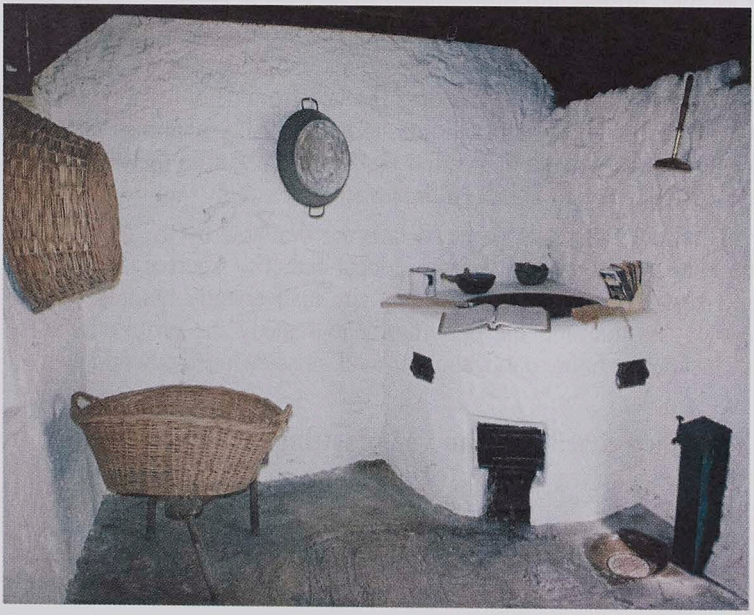

Fig. 1 b. The washhouse, Barrie's Birthplace, Kirriemuir, Angus. (National Trust for Scotland)

Session Cottage Museum, Turriff (Turriff and District Heritage Society). A mid-eighteenth-century 'but and ben' (two-roomed) cottage with an open fire and a box bed, dresser and other furnishings of about 1900.

The Angus Folk Museum, Glamis (National Trust for Scotland). Jean, Lady Maitland's collection is presented by local trustees and housed in a farm steading, comprising bothy, smiddy, stables and hearse house, and also in six eighteenth-century cottages. The cottages hold displays illustrating the domestic life of a land worker.

Barrie's Birthplace, Kirriemuir (National Trust for Scotland). In this late-eighteenth-century Angus weaver's cottage J M Barrie was born in 1860. Situated at the end of a row, the house has a kitchen-living space above a loom shop with flagstone floor while the parents' sleeping room with box beds is above a room in which goods were kept. The rooms are furnished in keeping. A separate washhouse at the rear served as Barrie's first theatre. The adjoining cottage has displays relating to the life and career of Barrie as an author (figs. 1 a and b).

Glenesk Folk Museum, Glenesk (Glenesk Trust). 'The Retreat' was set up in 1955 by Greta Michie. From 2007 the collection will be housed within a new building, in a series of rooms including room settings of a kitchen-living room, parlour and bothy.

Arbroath Signal Tower Museum, Arbroath (Angus Council). This was once the shore station of the Bell Rock Lighthouse, built by Stevenson in 1813, with four flats as quarters for the families of the keepers. Today one flat is furnished and includes a Victorian lighthouse-wife's parlour. Exhibits detail the lives of fishermen and also include civic treasures and souvenirs of Arbroath's great trading days and its industries such as flax spinning and weaving.

Argyll and the Isles, Loch Lomond, Stirling and the Trossachs

Auchindrain Museum, by Inverary, Argyll (Auchindrain Trust). Auchindrain is one of the last examples of a joint-farming or multiple-tenancy township in Scotland. Known to have existed in the eighteenth century and built over a period of years, it was finally abandoned in 1963. Some twenty buildings include cruck-framed dwellings, where byre and domestic quarters share the same roof, and separate barns. A number of roofs are thatched. The dwellings are furnished with authentic artefacts including chairs, benches, dressers, wallpapered

box beds complete with bedding, rugs and clothing. There is also a 'best' room of the late-Victorian type and a display of tools, furniture, shawls and shepherds' plaids in the reception area (see fig. 6 in 'Soft Furnishings in the Vernacular Home' by Crissie White).

Lismore Heritage Museum, Lismore, Argyll (Comann Eachdraidh Lios Mòr). 'Tigh Iseabal Dhaidh' is a reconstructed thatched cottage whose walls have the batter (inward slope) typical of a building type earlier than the 1890-1915 period chosen to furnish the interior.

Moirlanich Longhouse, by Killin, Perthshire [Stirling Council Area] (National Trust for Scotland). This is a traditional longhouse of 1850 which incorporates home and byre under one roof. The dwelling features a papered and lime-washed 'hanging lum' (canopy chimney), a side cupboard and an original dresser. A Bible chair sits alongside other domestic artefacts. The best room has an iron bed, treadle sewing machine, Scotch carpet and a 'clootie' (rag) rug and displays the sophisticated taste in textiles and furnishings usual in the late nineteenth century (see 'Moirlanich: A Perthshire longhouse and its fittings', by Elizabeth Beaton, especially fig. 9).

Ayrshire and Arran

Bachelor's Club, Tarbolton, Ayrshire (National Trust for Scotland). Burns attended dancing classes in this once-thatched seventeenth-century house and formed a debating club which met there. The building is furnished as in the time of Burns.

Burns Cottage and Museum, Alloway, Ayr (Burns National Heritage Park). The birthplace of Robert Burns, this is a thatched lowland farmhouse of longhouse type furnished in period style. There is a separate museum with artefacts relating to the poet's life and times.

Burn's House Museum, Mauchline, Ayrshire (South Ayrshire Council). The cottage in which Burns and his wife lived after their marriage in 1788.

Souter Johnnie's Cottage, Kirkoswald, Ayrshire (National Trust for Scotland). The home of 'souter' (shoemaker) John Davidson, immortalised by Burns in the poem 'Tam O' Shanter'. The thatched cottage, built in 1785, is furnished in period style and contains a workshop with the tools of a village souter.

Isle of Arran Heritage Museum, Brodick, Arran (Isle of Arran Heritage Museum Trust). The museum is set in agricultural buildings associated

with a smiddy, an early-nineteenth-century school and a late-nineteenth-century dwelling house. There is a two-roomed cottage with a box bed and an attic bedroom and also a laundry and dairy furnished from local sources. The working smiddy is used for demonstrations and the former stables are intact while the house accommodates exhibitions.

Dumfries and Galloway

Burn's House, Dumfries (Dumfries and Galloway Council). The two-storeyed house where Robert Burns spent his last years retains its eighteenth-century character. Among the contents is the chair in which Burns wrote his last poems.

John Paul Jones Birthplace Museum, Arbigland Estate, near Kirkbean, Dumfriesshire (John Paul Jones Birthplace Museum Trust). A two-roomed cottage furnished in the style of the 1700s. A room to the back, built in 1831 by Lieutenant Pinckham of the US Navy, ensured the building's survival.

Thomas Carlyle's Birthplace, Ecclefechan, Dumfriesshire (National Trust for Scotland). Born in 1795 in 'The Arched House' built by his father and uncle, both stonemasons, Thomas Carlyle left Ecclefechan on foot to attend Edinburgh University and subsequently established

Fig. 2. Cruck Cottage, Torthorwald, Dumfriesshire. (National Trust for Scotland)

himself as one of the nineteenth century's leading voices on morals and social equality. The two-storeyed house with 'pend' (open-ended passageway through the building) contains portraits and personal belongings and is furnished in the domestic style of the eighteenth century.

Cruck Cottage, Torthorwald, Dumfriesshire (Solway Heritage Trust, keyholder Bill Lawson). A restored cruck-framed thatched cottage with a sleeping end and living end, the latter with hanging lum, furnished in the style of 1910 (fig. 2).

Edinburgh and the Lothians

Cousland Smiddy, Dalkeith, Midlothian (Cousland Smiddy Trust). An authentic eighteenth-century smiddy, smith's cottage and garden, along with tools and artefacts tracing almost 300 years of continuous activity. The buildings are in process of renovation. Open by appointment.

Gladstone's Land, Edinburgh (National Trust for Scotland). A typical Edinburgh Old Town tenement or 'land' on five levels and attic with the rooms accessed from a stone turnpike stair. Purchased in 1617 by Thomas Gledstanes, a prosperous merchant, enlargement of the building was completed in 1620 and the apartments rented out to tenants from various social classes and financial backgrounds. Two floors are furnished in seventeenth-century style and have the original painted ceilings and wall decoration. There is also a reconstructed 'luckenbooth' cloth shop with replicas of seventeenth-century goods.

Fife

Culross Palace, Culross (National Trust for Scotland). This 'great lodging' or 'palace' was built between 1597 and 1611 as a compound group for George Bruce (later Sir George Bruce of Carnock), an enterprising merchant with interests in coal mining, salt production and foreign trade. Many building materials were obtained by Baltic barter, returning as ballast in coal and salt ships - red pantiles from the Low Countries, Baltic pine and Dutch floor tiles and glass all feature in this merchant's house of three stories, including attic. Baltic pine panelling and decorative mural and ceiling painting in the small rooms are typical interior fittings of the period. There is also a restored seventeenth-century garden with raised beds.

Fife Folk Museum, Ceres (Fife Folk Museum Trust). This is a tolbooth of 1673, built by Hopes of Craighall, with a prison cell and adjoining cottages and garden ground. There are domestic, agricultural, weights and measures, sports and pastimes, gardening, embroidery, linen and lace collections.

Scottish Fisheries Museum, Anstruther (Scottish Fisheries Museum Trust Ltd). A range of diverse buildings houses material from all over Scotland related to fishing. The buildings include a sixteenth-century abbot's lodging, a merchant's house of 1724 and a furnished fisherman's house and net loft of about 1900.

Fig. 3 The kitchen, Kittochside, Lanarkshire. (National Museums of Scotland)

Greater Glasgow and the Clyde Valley

David Livingstone Museum, Blantyre, Lanarkshire (National Trust for Scotland). Born in 1813, Livingstone's early life in the cotton mills of Blantyre and adventures in Africa are depicted in the museum. The family home is a single-roomed tenement house, set within former mill buildings called Shuttle Row which housed 24 families.

Kittochside, East Kilbride, Lanarkshire (National Trust for Scotland in partnership with National Museums of Scotland and the Museum of Scottish Rural Life). This is an eighteenth-century farmhouse whose upper sitting room has retained its original doors, panelling and buffet niche. The kitchen is traditionally furnished. Elsewhere there is an eclectic mix of furnishings and fittings, from nineteenth-century to 1950s (fig. 3). A dresser has been demoted to use in an outhouse.

Museum of Scottish Rural Life, Kittochside, East Kilbride, Lanarkshire (National Trust for Scotland in partnership with National Museums of Scotland). This national collection includes a room setting and artefacts and tools for domestic activities.

The Tenement House, Glasgow (National Trust for Scotland). This second-floor flat, comprising kitchen - living room, parlour and bathroom, looks back to tenement life in the early twentieth century. Inherited from her parents, Agnes Toward lived in the flat for around 50 years, leaving a 'time capsule' of domestic life behind her. Original features, fittings and furnishings include the bed recesses, a kitchen range, pulley, coalbunker, grandfather clock and rosewood piano.

Fig. 4 a. Curator Chris McLeod spinning in the kitchen of The Weaver's Cottage, Kilbarchan, Renfrewshire. (National Trust for Scotland)

The Weaver's Cottage, Kilbarchan, Renfrewshire (National Trust for Scotland). Once accommodating three households off a close, this is an eighteenth-century handloom-weaver's cottage and garden. The loom shop is on the lower ground floor and holds the last of the 800 looms working in Kilbarchan in the 1830s; the treadles of this are accommodated in a hole dug in the earth floor. A cruck roof is visible and there are original box beds and fittings and collections of furniture, textiles, domestic utensils, looms, weaving equipment and photographs (figs. 4 a and b. See also the cover illustration).

The Provand's Lordship, Glasgow (Glasgow City Council). The oldest surviving house in Glasgow, built for Bishop Andrew Muirhead in 1471. A rare survival of fifteenth-century Scottish domestic architecture, the building has three chambers on three floors, each with a fireplace, and a unique collection of Scottish domestic furniture and fittings of about 1700. There is a herb garden at the rear (see fig. 1 in 'Collecting and Display in Museums: Vernacular furniture in Glasgow, 1900-1950', by Elizabeth Hancock).

Fig. 4 b. The Weaver's Cottage, Kilbarchan, Renfrewshire; the loom shop. (National Trust for Scotland)

Highland

Caithness

Wick Heritage Centre, Pulteneytown, Wick (Wick Heritage Trust). The Centre reflects the status of Wick as the largest herring port in Europe in the late nineteenth century and houses a collection of chairs from Caithness and two original furnished room settings from town houses; a bedroom with a box bed, and a parlour with a collection of furniture by McEwan's of Wick, including a Scotch chest. Arising from the tradition of wrights (carpenters) and coopers, from the 1850s McEwan's were the only major furniture manufacturer north of Inverness.

Salmon Fisher Bothy, Dunbeath (local keyholder). Bunked accommodation for seasonal use.

Laidhay Croft Museum, Latheron, Dunbeath (Laidhay Preservation Trust). This is a typical early-nineteenth-century longhouse of a small, tenanted farm, with the barn, byre and dwelling in a connecting row. The buildings are cruck-framed and thatched with the furnishings including box beds and a collection of provenanced traditional chairs from Caithness (fig. 5).

Mary Ann's Cottage, Westside Croft, Dunnet (Caithness Heritage Trust). This is a single-storeyed linear croft complex, with additions, built by John Young around 1850. The dwelling is furnished as Mary-Anne Calder left it in 1990. Mary-Anne and her husband James farmed the croft with a blend of old and new methods and many original fittings and farm tools have been retained within the buildings.

Sutherland

Timespan, Helmsdale (Timespan Heritage Trust). Timespan includes a museum with a croft room setting containing furniture items such as box beds, a dresser, a crib and, from Gartymore, a chair which is a distinct variant within the Caithness and Sutherland tradition.

Strathnaver Museum, Bettyhill (Strathnaver Museum Trust). This includes a room setting and an armchair in the Caithness and Sutherland tradition. There are also examples of crofters' initiative in furniture making.

Banffshire

Drumin Museum of Country Life, Ballindalloch (Charles Reid). The lifetime collection of the late Cathy Reid, farmer's wife, includes rural

Fig. 5. Laidhay Croft Museum, Dunbeath, Caithness. (Elizabeth Beaton)

and local memorabilia sections relating to the kitchen and farming.

Tomintoul Museum, Tomintoul (Moray Council). This contains a reconstructed farm kitchen and the contents of the last smiddy in Tomintoul.

Moray

Findhorn Heritage Centre, Findhorn (Findhorn Village Heritage Association). This houses material relating to Findhorn from Mesolithic times until World War II. Displays deal with Findhorn as a port and with boat building, salmon netting and salmon-fisher life in bothies. An icehouse of 1850 is nearby.

River Findhorn Heritage Centre, Findhorn (River Findhorn Heritage Trust). Originally built as a model farm in the 1920s, Logie Steading includes an interpretive centre with a croft-house kitchen-living room setting furnished with a box bed and other furniture from a Lochindorb croft.

Ross and Cromarty

Hugh Miller's Cottage, Cromarty (National Trust for Scotland). The house is dated 1711 and was built by Miller's sea-captain father. It is a thatched single-storey-and-attic cottage with the main room occupying the full height of the building to the roof. Some original furniture can be found within.

Gairloch Heritage Museum, Gairloch (Gairloch Heritage Society). The complex of old farm buildings at Auchtercairn holds a croft-house room setting.

Fig. 6 a. Croft-House Museum, Southvoe, Dunrossness, Mainland, Shetland. (M Finnie)

Fig. 6 b. Fireplace and box bed in the Croft-House Museum, Southvoe, Dunrossness, Mainland, Shetland. (Elizabeth Beaton)

Skye and Lochalsh

Colbost Croft Museum, Dunvegan, Skye (Peter McAskill). This is a restored nineteenth-century thatched blackhouse of double-walled construction which has a byre attached. The interior contains a central peat-burning hearth and local furniture including a dresser, crib, barrel chair and settle. There is a separate illicit still.

Skye Museum of Island Life, Kilmuir, Skye (Mr and Mrs J Macdonald). Comprising seven nineteenth-century thatched cottages, six of which are built to the traditional Skye pattern, the museum contains a dwelling, a ceilidh house, a byre, barn, smiddy, tailor's workshop and an equipped weaver's cottage.

Grampian

The Highland Folk Museum/The Highland Folk Park, Kingussie and Newtonmore, Inverness-shire (Highland Council). The Highland Folk Museum is Scotland's oldest folk museum, founded in 1936 by I F Grant. The main collections of furniture, plenishings and domestic textiles are held at the Kingussie site, where there are also a number of reconstructed buildings (see figs. 11 and 12 in 'Highland Vernacular Furniture and Context', by R Ross Noble). On the 80-acre Highland Folk Park site at Newtonmore, opened in 1989, there is a range of reconstructed and restored buildings dating from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. A township of c1700, with dwelling houses, a barn and corn kiln, includes earth-walled buildings and contains replica furniture based on items held in the collections. Other furnished buildings at the Newtonmore site include a church, schoolhouse, farmhouse (with parlour setting), farmworker's cottage, a farm steading, railway halt, garage, tailor's shop, clockmaker's workshop and a joiner's shop.

Orkney

Knap of Howar, Holland, Papa Westray (Historic Scotland). Dated to 3900-2800BC, this is the oldest dwelling in north-west Europe and comprises a farmhouse and separate workshop which are linked by a doorway. The furnishings include a central hearth, bench, bed places and a cupboard, all fashioned from flagstone.

Skara Brae, Bay of Skaill, Mainland (Historic Scotland). This farming and fishing settlement of 3000-2500BC contains flagstone furnishings including shelves, dressers and beds. A number of small tanks are

thought to have been for storing fishing bait.

Bothy Museum, Holland Farm, Papa Westray (John Rendall). Containing a farmworkers' bothy and a collection of domestic utensils, clothes and small farming and fishing tools, this farm dates from the late nineteenth century.

Corrigall Farm Museum, Corrigall, Harray (Orkney Islands Council). This eighteenth/nineteenth-century partially thatched farm includes a barn and barn-kiln complex. Furnishings include the parish weaver's loom.

Kirbister Farm, Birsay, Mainland (Orkney Islands Council). Restored in 1987, the buildings date from 1723. The dwelling holds a central hearth with fireback, served by a ridge vent with a wooden smoke hole, flagstone shelves and a 'neuk' (recess) bed. Outbuildings include a grain-drying kiln, pigsty and a smith's forge.

Red House, Eday (Peter Meason). A group of croft buildings open to the public.

The Crow's Nest, Glen of Rackwick, Hoy (Jack and Dorothy Rendall). Buildings restored and thatched in the traditional manner in 1998.

Na h-Eileanan Siar (Outer Hebrides)

The Arnol Blackhouse Museum, Arnol, Lewis (Historic Scotland). This is a thatched and double-walled Western Isles blackhouse, probably dating from the late nineteenth century, which comprises domestic quarters, barn and byre. The furnishings include dressers, settles, chairs and box beds and there are fabrics and ceramic ware.

Dualchas, Barra, Castlebay, Barra (Barra and Vatersay Historical Society Trust). This is a heritage and cultural centre with two living-room settings; a nineteenth-century 'fire room' (kichen-living room) with a peat-burning hearth on the floor, and a 1940s room with a stove.

Museum nan Eilean/Museum of the Outer Hebrides, Stornoway, Lewis (Western Isles Council). The museum houses the domestic collection of the late Angus Macleod, Calbost.

Gearrannan Blackhouses, Lewis (Garenin Trust). A group of traditional double-walled dwellings with thatched roofs on a site inhabited for over 300 years but unoccupied from 1974. The houses are now restored as letting cottages with one retained as a museum of domestic life and furnished accordingly.

Scottish Borders

Brownsbank Cottage, Biggar, Lanarkshire (Biggar Museums Trust). A farmworker's two-roomed cottage and the restored home of Hugh MacDiarmid from 1951. Open by appointment.

Shetland

Croft-House Museum, Southvoe, Dunrossness, Mainland (Shetland Council). A furnished dwelling house of c1870 and integral farm steading, with barn and kiln, which were restored with traditional materials and opened as a museum in 1971. There is also a 'click' (horizontal-wheel) mill and a henhouse made from an up turned boat, both traditional features (figs. 6 a and b).

George Waterson Memorial Centre and Museum, Auld Skoll, Fair Isle (independent trust). The centre and museum includes displays relating to social history, costume, domestic textiles, furniture and applied art.

Bod of Gremista, Lerwick, Mainland (Shetland Council). An eighteenth-century 'bod' (booth), with domestic accommodation and a working store for the nearby fish-drying beach. The building is simply furnished and contains box beds with 'tattit' (tufted) bed rugs local to Shetland.

The Old Haa Museum, Burravoe, Yell (The Old Haa Trust). The Old Haa ('haa' indicates a laird's or merchant's house) of Brough was built for Robert Tyrie in 1672. Restored in 1987, it now holds displays of island life.

Collections with furniture and fittings from Scottish vernacular homes

Blair Castle, Blair Atholl, Perthshire (independent trust). Blair Castle houses a Bible chair and furniture made from locally grown laburnum, broom and larch.

Glasgow Art Gallery and Museums (Glasgow City Council). The collections include material on domestic life in St Kilda.

National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh. The Museum of Scotland includes a kitchen setting and there are extensive collections of Scottish-made furniture and fittings including painted ceilings

Perth Museum and Art Gallery (Perth and Kinross Council). Exhibits here include Scottish-made furniture.

Museums with examples of vernacular furniture and furnishings

(For museums with exceptional collections of specific domestic textile types see the notes section of 'Soft Furnishings in the Vernacular Home' by Crissie White.)

Grantown Museum, Grantown-on-Spey, Moray (local trust). This is a community-based museum presenting local heritage and culture.

Kintyre Heritage Centre, Campbeltown, Argyll (Kintyre Heritage Trust). The centre has displays on social history and holds domestic furnishings, equipment and artefacts including fishermen's knitwear and blankets from the local woollen mill.

West Highland Museum, Fort William, Inverness-shire (West Highland Museum Trust). The museum includes a Jacobite display with chairs.

Links

Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group www.svbwg.org.uk.

Regional Furniture Society www.regionalfurnituresociety.com.

Furniture History Society furniturehistorysociety@hotmail.com.

Scottish Museums Council www.scottishmuseums.org.uk .

24hourmuseums.Org.Uk www.24hourmuseums.org.uk.

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SHORTER ARTICLES AND NOTES

Ewingston Mill, Humbie, East Lothian

M Dalland, T G Holden,
G F Geddes and J M Morrison

The former water-powered grain mill at Ewingston Farm, Humbie, East Lothian, is part of a complex of farm buildings that is largely nineteenth-century in date but, in the old farmhouse, includes elements of seventeenth-century vernacular architecture.[1] The mill forms part of an important small group of watermills which includes Thornton, West Saltoun, Tyninghame, all East Lothian, and Colinton, Midlothian, in an area where horse-driven milling was more common due to the lie of the land. Ewingston, sitting at the base of the Lammermuir hills, allowed the farm to harness hydropower in an effective and efficient way.

Ewingston farm is first mentioned in Blaue's atlas of 1654, although detailed surveys are not available until the later eighteenth century. The farm courtyard and associated buildings, just to the east of the mill, can

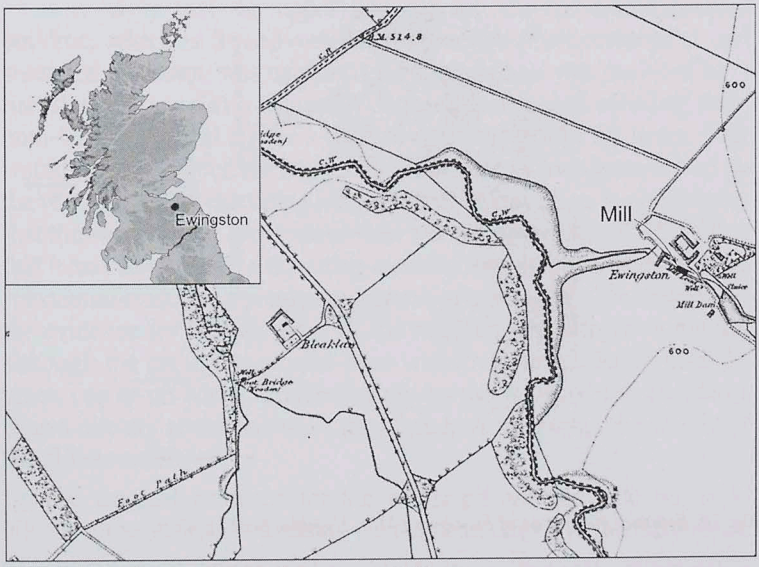

Fig. 1. First-edition Ordnance Survey map, 1855.

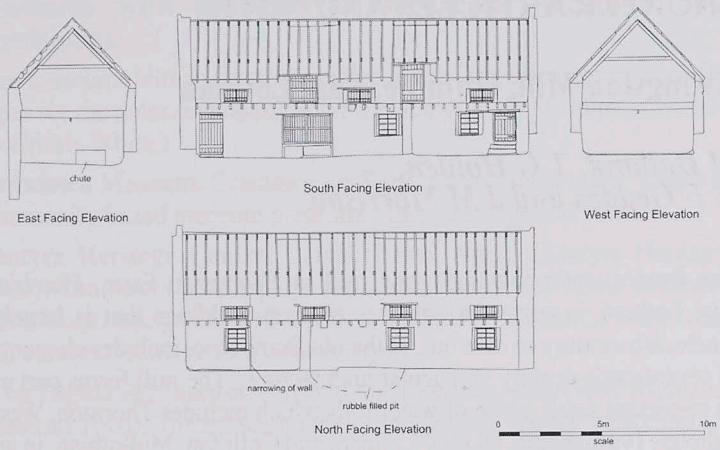

Fig. 2a. Internal elevations of Ewingston Mill, Humbie, East Lothian.

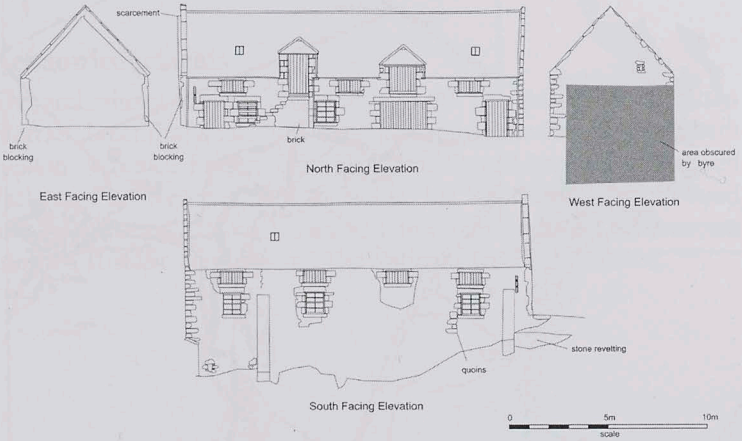

Fig. 2b. External elevations of Ewingston Mill, Humbie, East Lothian.

be seen developing through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although the mill and the buildings surrounding it do not seem to appear until the mid nineteenth century. Certainly, the mill is shown on the First-edition Ordnance Survey map published in 1855 (fig. 1) but is absent on maps from 1825 and 1844, although the accuracy of these may be called into doubt. The position of the mill, separate from the rest of the farm, was of course determined by the availability of water power. Cartographic and archaeological evidence from the eastern gable of the mill suggests that originally it extended further in that direction. It is also possible that an earlier extension to the building, evidenced by redundant quoins in the mill's southern elevation (figs. 2a and b) and the variation in wall thickness around the south-east corner of the building, had already been demolished by the survey of 1853. This suggests that the building may have a longer history than the cartographic evidence intimates.

The construction of the mill is typical of the local estate architecture of the nineteenth century, being of random rubble with roughly dressed sandstone margins. This type of construction, considerably more complex and functional than that used in the rural mills of the earlier eighteenth century, can be seen to typify the move towards small, efficient, almost industrial, operations.

It is likely that the upper floor of the one-and-a-half-storeyed building, which is lit and ventilated by seven small rectangular and shuttered windows, was used as a granary. Access was provided by a first-floor entrance with a forestair, formerly timber, and a loading door, both with wall-head dormers. It is also probable that the upper floor would have contained the hopper and millstones which were driven by the vertical spindle extending from the floor below. There is a possibility that the water wheel drove more than one set of millstones or, further, that it may have driven a threshing machine, but in the absence of more substantial evidence a single application is most likely. Unfortunately, the evidence for the workings of the mill has been largely removed, although the pit in the ground-floor western room probably held the inner, cog or pit wheel, driven directly by the water wheel. Two large beams directly above this must therefore have supported the weight of the millstones (fig. 3).

The external evidence for the wheel pit and the lade has been largely removed and buttressing on the southern elevation may relate to primary or secondary uses of the building. However, cartographic

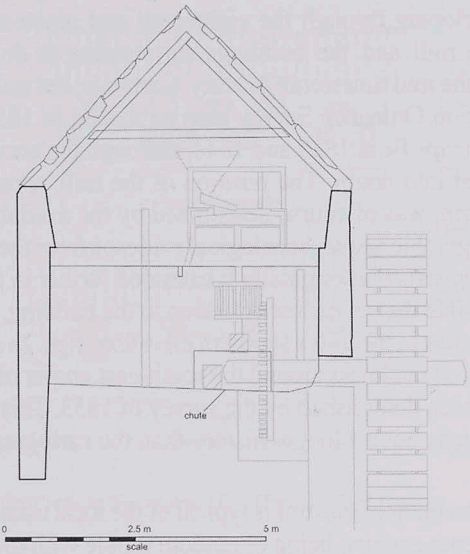

Fig. 3. Reconstruction proposal showing how a mill like that at Ewingston might have operated.

evidence from the 1850s shows the approximate position of the mill lade and the mill pond. The mill pond would have enabled the mill to function for most of the year since it could avoid the problems that burn mills suffered - the superabundance or scarcity of water depending on season.[2] This further supports the argument that the mill was built as a determined effort to monopolise and profit from the local area's grain production, rather than as a farm-specific mill for use on an *ad hoc* basis. If we accept the likelihood of the pit relating to the axle gearing, then it is likely that the external wheel was fairly central in the southern elevation. This supposition is further supported by the position of the lights in this elevation. Evidence for an external wheelhouse is scant although it is a distinct possibility and may explain the evidence for a demolished building to the south.

Most water-powered grain mills in the Lothians had the water wheel at a gable end and a drying kiln at the other, but there is no evidence for this at Ewingston. Indeed, the position of the mill, partly revetted into the stream bank, allowed the north elevation to provide easier access for unloading grain into the ground- and first-floor level (figs. 4-7). However, another possibility is that the L-shaped building seen on the

Fig. 4. The mill from the north.

1855 Ordnance survey map may be the original 'meal mill' incorporating a kiln at right angles to the surviving mill, a typical traditional design.[3] This possible kiln may survive in part in the surrounding buildings but, if so, it has been so altered as to make identification extremely difficult. No evidence was found for the internal or external hoists that would have been used to lift materials. Further, the floors did not have trap doors although this was probably because the granary and mill hoppers were on the same floor. The ground-floor chutes at the windows may be related to the removal of the mill product rather than the storage of grain, although the water wheel perhaps drove millstones on both floors.

Clearly the Ewingston mill is an important example of a water-driven grain mill of the mid nineteenth century. It was probably built at the end of the principle period of water exploitation in Scotland; that is 1730-1830. In can therefore be seen as a dedicated attempt by the landowner at Ewingston to dominate a regular market related not only to the farm's crop production, but also that in the surrounding area. This type of entrepreneurial enterprise might have been instigated by a rise in the price of corn, perhaps due to the Napoleonic wars.[4] Whether or not the mill would have been in competition with Humbie Mill, only a few miles distant, is unclear on the basis of the research so far undertaken.

Fig. 5. The mill from the south.

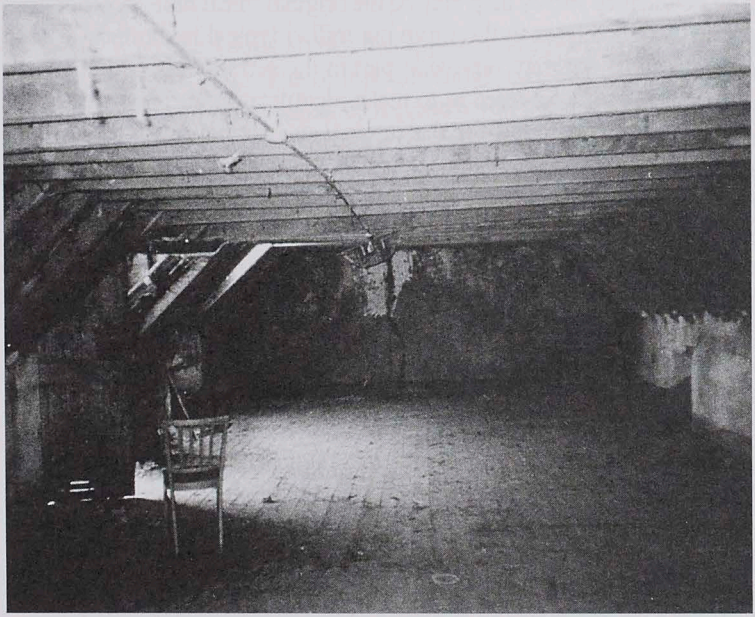

Fig. 6. The first floor from the north west.

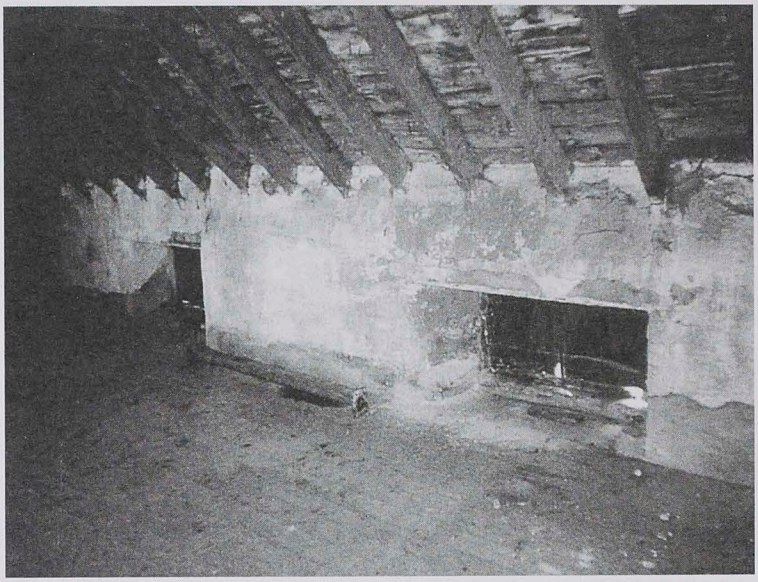

Fig. 7. The first floor from the north.

Notes

[1] Dalland, et al, 2005.

[2] Shaw, 1984, 31.

[3] Gauldie, 1981, 73.

[4] ibid, 72.

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Dry-stone Clipping Stools, Laggan, Inverness-shire

Sally Spencer

Laggan is to the south west of Newtonmore, stretching into central Inverness-shire through the Upper Spey Valley, Glen Shira and eventually the Corrieyairack Pass. General Wade's military road links Laggan with Fort Augustus, the track rising steeply to 1,475 feet [450m] and with approximately 30 miles [48km] from Laggan Bridge to Fort Augustus.

The author, an SVBWG member who lives in the area, spent a (very wet!) day in October 2006 with fellow members of Laggan Heritage visiting sites traditionally associated with sheep farming where they were shown clipping stools built against the dry-stone dykes enclosing fanks. These 'stools' are low dry-stone platforms projecting from the dykes, on which shepherds sat when shearing sheep.

Campbell Slimon, who farms at Laggan, and whose forthcoming book triggered the day's activities, showed the group the clipping stool he had excavated beside his own fank. Projecting at right angles from the wall, it was about 3 feet [c91cm] long, widening out slightly at the foot and just the right width for a man to sit astride. In height it was about 15 to 18 inches [38-45cm] and was built of small boulders with a turfed surface. Much to his amusement, when Campbell was excavating this stool he found an empty whisky bottle tucked down beside it on the right!

According to a retired shepherd, one of the few left who have driven flocks of sheep along the old drove roads, including over the Corrieyairack Pass, the best stools were slightly raised at the foot end so that the sheep being clipped was tilted marginally towards the shearer. If the stool was flat, or sloping down from the back rest provided by the dyke, the animal was prone to slip away from the shepherd, making the task more difficult, besides tiring the arms. Clipping stools were usually built in rows against the fank wall.

Turfed stools must have been quite common in Upper Badenoch and many are probably waiting to be excavated. At first glance they simply look as though grass has grown on top of yet more fallen stones.

At the slightly larger fank at Crubenmore (NN 67 91) one stool had been excavated, but there were clearly several more along the length of the dry-stone wall, possibly about twenty (fig. 1). The shepherd

Fig. 1. A dry-stone stool at the fank at Crubenmore.

demonstrated how the stools were used, clipping a couple of ewes with hand shears, probably much to their disgust since not only was it October but the day was very cold and wet (fig. 2)! When he had finished, he tied the blades of his shears together with a wisp of wool and was most surprised when Bob Powell, the Curator of the Highland Folk Museum, commented on this. For the shepherd this act was entirely automatic, 'what we always did', and so not worthy of comment.

These shepherds were wise through long experience. The group was shown how they used to roll the first fleece up and sit on it, tucking the second behind their backs against the drystone wall, and were thus comfortable and warm for the rest of day. The warmth did not come only from the fleeces; Campbell read out the staggering amount of whisky (at 3/6d a bottle) drunk during a day of clipping - around sixty bottles. Even with thirty or so men working, that is a lot of whisky!

Of the two other fanks visited, as far as the author knows no-one has attempted to discover if there are any stools ranged along the walls. Like the fanks of which they were part, the stools probably remain, but well camouflaged by vegetation.

There are several similar sheepfolds in Upper Badenoch which just 'sit' peacefully in the countryside, their presence reflecting

Fig. 2. Clipping ewes using a stool and hand shears.

the disappearance from the glens of the crofts and the families who lived and worked on them, caring for their flocks and any cattle they might also have had. Though many of the dwellings have vanished, the beautifully constructed fanks, and possibly their clipping stools, remain.

Conference of the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland (HEACS)

Dave Hutchinson

I attended this conference, held in Falkirk on 14 September 2006, as a member of SVBWG and as an independent historian. The event was well attended and was intended as a means of presenting reports submitted to the Scottish Executive on the historic environment. These reports were the result of consultation with interested and concerned bodies and individuals over the past three years. It was hoped that they would form the essence of the Executive's future policy on the historic environment.

Full copies of all reports are available on the HEACS website: www.heacs.org.uk. The essence of the three most recent reports follows.

Report and recommendations on whether there is a need to review heritage protection legislation in Scotland

A fundamental override to the reports is the recommendation to Scottish Ministers that a review be undertaken of heritage-protection legislation. It was argued that a disadvantage of current legislation is that it does not allow the historic environment to be viewed as a whole and it was considered important that any change in the management of the historic environment should, where feasible, be integrated with the Scottish Executive's policy for modernising the planning system and not be set apart from it.

There was without doubt support for the historic environment to be more greatly appreciated. It was felt that, where possible, those involved should be better engaged so that they might encourage a more effective approach to the historic environment as a whole.

A review was seen to have the advantage of assessing shortcomings in the current system and to propose remedies. In doing this it was essential that current legislation should not be diluted. There was also a need to acknowledge that primary legislation was only part of a greater package that would include the 'deliverability' of the proposals: resource implications, provision of specialist skills and capability building in all agencies, government, non-government and those in the voluntary sector.

HEACS gives some suggestions for inclusion within the review:

- The introduction of a new designation that recognises the significance of historic or cultural areas, this requiring new legislation.

- The benefits of a single-designation regime, by way of a unified list.

- A unified consent regime and a unified system of financial assistance.

- The grading of all heritage assets.

- Greater openness and transparency in all processes at all levels.

- The benefit of combining cultural and natural heritage protection.

- The introduction of 'duty of care' provision in heritage-protection legislation for public bodies, in parallel with recent legislation for the natural environment.

Report and recommendations on the role of local authorities in conserving the historic environment

This report addressed the individual and partnership roles of local authorities and the Scottish Executive and its agencies in the historic environment. Some of the report's recommendations were already becoming part of best practice, but we were a long way from forming an overall response to meet the perceived needs for the historic environment. The recommendations form three groups:

Improvements to the historic environment sector:

- The introduction of a statutory 'duty of care' for the historic environment.

- The commissioning of an independent survey of local-authority policies, staffing and resource levels for the historic environment.

- The reassessment of the balance of work between Historic Scotland and local authorities to separate those matters that should be dealt with nationally and those best dealt with locally.

- The encouragement and the establishment of cooperation between neighbouring local authorities to share resources and skills.

Improving Scottish Executive internal communication:

- The provision of guidance on the significance of the historic environment to broader policies on economic development, regeneration and social inclusion.

- The provision of continued support for the further development of a linked historic environment database involving local authorities and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland for use across government.

- Further development of Scottish Historic Environment Policy papers through partnership working with the historic environment sector.

There were also a number of recommendations dealing with professional standards, staffing and resources which were backed with further recommendations for training and support.

Report and recommendations on the availability of adequate and appropriate traditional materials and professional and craft skills to meet the needs of the built heritage

HEACS was asked to consider how to ensure the availability of adequate and appropriate traditional materials and craft skills to meet the needs of the built heritage. The report addressed the total stock of historic buildings in broad terms; those built before 1919 equal some 500,000 buildings. The lack of appropriately trained craft workers, training centres and raw materials, with the incompatibility of traditional and modern building technologies and the use of inappropriate imported materials, are combining to create a crisis in the repair and maintenance of our historic buildings. The report makes the following recommendations:

Traditional materials:

- Scottish Ministers must commit to bring about new sources of supply of Scottish slate as a matter of urgency. Until there is a new supply, Ministers should issue the guidance that re-used Scottish slate should be reserved for the repair and maintenance of historic buildings.

- The development of the Scottish stone-quarrying industry, particularly the production of dressed stone, should be taken forward as a priority.

- Historic Scotland should be invited to form a study group to investigate the extent to which Scottish vernacular building materials can continue to contribute to regional diversity and a sustainable future.

Skills and professional issues:

- Skills and materials audits should be carried out to provide comparative information. The Construction Industry Training Board should assess how approaches taken by the Scottish Lime Centre might be used to develop high-quality apprentice training without becoming an economic drain on small businesses.

- The creation of a National Certificate in Traditional Building and Building Conservation Skills.

- Historic Scotland should promote an awareness of accredited schemes and encourage the training and use of accredited practitioners.

- Government departments should set an example by using accredited practitioners on historic-building projects.

Demand for traditional materials and craft skills:

- Local authorities should encourage an increased awareness and appreciation of the need for sympathetic repair and maintenance.

- Historic Scotland should partner local authorities in providing repair and maintenance grants to listed buildings and unlisted properties in conservation areas.

- The major stakeholders should be brought together with a view to formulating a national strategy for maintenance.

- A commitment to maintenance should become a condition of Historic Scotland grant-aided projects.

- A National Environment Maintenance and Repair Fund should be investigated.

- Scottish Ministers should join with their counterparts in the home countries in calling for a government review of the impact of VAT on the repair and maintenance of historic buildings.

In conclusion

Considerable work had gone into presenting these reports and the consensus of opinion at the conference seemed to be both appreciative and in support. The reports may well form the basis of legislation and policy for years to come. Such matters clearly pertain to the Scottish Executive and in that hangs faith in the political process, a process only kept in motion by continual and concerted effort. When one considers,

for example, that the last slate was cut in a Scottish quarry in the 1950s, that traditional trowel trades and joinery apprenticeships ended at roughly the same time, leaving us now bereft of a skilled workforce, and that we have a management for the historic environment that may be adequate but is not truly enough for the purpose, we may not yet be in crisis but we are at a critical point.

These reports and the work of HEACS may well prove to be one of the most significant issues to affect Scotland's vernacular buildings, not just for the present but also for the future.

Mourne Homesteads

Elizabeth Beaton

SVBWG held their millennium conference in Northern Ireland in April 2000, the itinerary including Mourne, designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Little did I think that I would be back in Ulster less than two years later, in the role of Heritage Lottery Project Monitor. My task was to advise whether a selection of run-down traditional dwellings in the Mourne Mountains area had sufficient vernacular integrity to be considered for rehabilitation by Mourne Homesteads. This restoration scheme was devised and carried out under the over all management of the Mourne Heritage Trust and the work grant aided by Northern Ireland Heritage Lottery. I spent one of the wettest days of my life in January 2002 tramping around neglected dwellings, all in very poor condition and some with water dripping through the roof!

Four years later, on 16 June 2006, I attended the launch of three restored properties (a fourth had been rehabilitated a year or so previously). The first of these was Ronans, Hilltown, an attractive and unusual complex comprising a long single-storeyed cottage with a parallel row of farm buildings fronting a narrow courtyard. The courtyard is closed with simple but dignified iron gates (probably made by a local blacksmith) hung on stalwart piers. The three-roomed cottage had an adjoining byre, entered from the yard. With the byre now linked to the cottage and accommodating a bathroom and small bedroom, this is now a two-bedroom dwelling with kitchen and living room.

Lowtown, Ballyward, was a single-storeyed cottage of three rooms. A derelict cottage stood in a field not far from this and near a tall brick industrial chimney, marking what might have been brickworks (brick is used generously in the rubble building for flue and chimneys). When I saw it first, Lowtown was dark and dank, not improved by the wet weather inside and out! In the cottage's re-incarnation another bay had been added (the recommendation was to re-use material from the neighbouring derelict cottage) and the pre-existing structure completely restored. It is now has a whitewashed exterior and fits snugly into its pastoral landscape. Delightfully, the re-used circular millstone doorstep has been retained.

Whitehill Road, Benraw, was the third building and quite different. This is a grey two-storeyed rubble house with generous use of brick dressings and dated 1894. It was never completed, allegedly as the builder's intended marriage did not take place. No staircase had been inserted and the house was used as a barn; my 'before' photograph reveals bales stacked against the four-pane sash windows. After restoration, Whitehill Road has a spacious kitchen and sitting room downstairs and three bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs.

All three dwellings blend well into their landscape and have added to Northern Ireland's housing stock. Financially it was an expensive undertaking, but hopefully Mourne Heritage will be able to continue their good work.

The International Bee Research Association (IBRA) Bee Boles Register Online

The Register is a large and valuable collection of records of the structures which some beekeepers used until c1900 to protect their 'skeps' (traditional hives of bees) from the weather. The commonest type of structure surviving in Britain and Ireland is a wall containing a row of 'bee boles' (recesses). Other types of structure have also been recorded: alcoves, beeshelters, beehouses and winter storage buildings.

Dr Eva Crane began recording these structures in 1952 when she was Director of the Bee Research Association (later International Bee Research Association) and gradually local historians, beekeepers and house owners in many parts of the country also sent in records. By 1983 more than 800 structures were listed in Crane's *The Archaeology of Beekeeping*. Since then a further 570 structures have been added to the Register and others are still being found and recorded.

With financial contributions from Awards for All (Guildford), CADW (Cardiff), Historic Scotland (Edinburgh) and the Eva Crane Trust, Penelope Walker, the voluntary Curator of the Register for IBRA, has organised the conversion of the paper records, photographic prints and transparencies into the online bee-boles database, which now contains 1370 records and over 1100 images. This can be accessed free at http//www.ibra/beeboles. Searching is easy and selected records and images can be viewed. In addition, a list of relevant publications is provided. The site will be of special value to beekeepers interested in history, to local historians interested in our beekeeping heritage and to anyone wishing information on vernacular buildings.

New records are welcome and the database is updated regularly. For contact details, see the website or call 029 2037 2409 (IBRA).

Highland Folk Museum, Newtonmore, Inverness-shire

On Sunday, 8 July 2007, Laggan Heritage and the Highland Folk Museum (formerly Highland Folk Park), Newtonmore, jointly held an Open Day. The Highland Folk Museum celebrated new exhibits of structures associated with sheep and shepherds, such as fanks, clipping stools and a re-erected two-roomed shepherd's bothy. Originally located near Dalwhinnie, the bothy is constructed of railway sleepers and lined throughout with tongue-and-groove boarding (note that one of the earliest SVBWG Monographs is Derek Kerr's *Railway Sleeper Buildings: A study of examples in the Badenoch and Strathspey District in the Highland Region*, 1986). Laggan Heritage launched a publication, *Stells, Stools and Stroopachd*, written by their chairman, Campbell Slimon, a retired sheep farmer.

Readers are encouraged to visit the Highland Folk Museum at Newtonmore if they are in Speyside. A number of SVBWG members will recall an autumn Day Meet at the Folk Park some fifteen years ago with R Ross Noble and Ronnie Robertson.

SVBWG CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

2006 Annual Conference

Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, 21-23 April

Despite a start that must have been the nightmare of all conference organisers, the smell of burning in the air, wisps of black smoke rising from the hotel and four fire engines, the evening began with a fine introduction by Sarah Parkinson (Planning Officer for the National Park) who remained with us throughout Saturday. Our visit to Druidfield croft revealed some fine shepherds' crooks and furniture items, with members being diverted to wayside barns, but the visit to Moirlanich was perhaps the gem of the day, aptly followed by Elizabeth Beaton's illustrated talk.

Sunday began with a challenging and thought-provoking lecture by Michael Davis followed by a day of contrast. First there was the delightfully restored Old Auchentroig, where we were able to view the rough-cut poles of the roof structure via a ladder and loft access. Then we went on to the modern eco-house of Mains of Branshogle - new vernacular in the making - and its contrastingly dressed and pegged timber framing. This was followed by a visit to Luss village and in particular its fine parish churches. The day and the conference ended with a visit to Balloch Castle and Park.

Dave Hutchinson

2007 Annual Conference

Fife: The interior, 27-30 April

The 2007 Spring Conference will be based in Freuchie and will include talks by Dr Paula Martin and Bill Howard as well as visits to Ceres Folk Museum, Cupar, Monimail, Collessie, Newburgh, Falkland and Lindores Abbey.

PUBLICATIONS

Doocots of Scotland: Lanarkshire, Munro Dunn, 2006. ISBN 1-901971-04-X. £4.00 to SVBWG members, £6.00 to non-members. *Doocots of Lanarkshire* is the second of regional guides to dovecots, written by Munro Dunn who is a native of the county. He has catalogued over 50 known cotes, with descriptive notes, illustrations and background histories for the 25 that survive.

REVIEWS

Edited by Veronica Fraser

Irish Rural Interiors in Art

Claudia Kinmonth. New Haven and London. Yale University Press. 2006. pp286. £40 hardback. 0-300-10732-3.

Irish Country Furniture, 1700-1950

Claudia Kinmonth. New Haven and London. Yale University Press. 1993, reprinted 2005. pp250. £20 paperback. 0-300-06396-2.

The publication of *Irish Rural Interiors in Art* coincides with the reprinting in paperback of Claudia Kinmonth's 1993 monograph, *Irish Country Furniture*. The former expands on a methodological strand already apparent in the latter and the two works are mutually reinforcing. Both are abundantly illustrated and transparently structured, major contributions to a literature that is anchored in Christopher Gilbert's *English Vernacular Furniture* (1991) and Peter Thornton's *Seventeenth-Century Interior Decoration in England, France, and Holland* (1978). The use of images to understand the material culture of the past, pioneered by Thornton and then extended as an adjunct to the meticulous recording of physical furniture by Gilbert, here stands alongside the more sophisticated appreciation of artistic intention brought to bear on such methodologies by Charles Saumarez-Smith's *Eighteenth-Century Decoration* (1993). Kinmonth's work extends beyond even this in embracing folk-life studies, literature and historical sociology to produce a celebration of Irish national culture that is multi-faceted, quietly spoken and grounded in historical intelligence.

The majority of the 250 figures in *Irish Rural Interiors* in Art are drawn from genre painting, whether romanticising or realist; indeed the two tendencies frequently combine in the same artist. There is also a healthy selection of vernacular painting, pictorial journalism, early folk-life recording and twentieth-century work. Instead of dismissing such evidence as mediated beyond trustworthiness, painstaking interpretation of each image brings out both the detail of the depicted cultural artefacts and the lives that revolved around them. Of the eight

chapters, three address the physical functioning of domestic interiors, a further three examine the work and communal activities that took place in the home and the final two encompass public houses, shops, health and education, all in their rural context. Interiors are the source but by no means the only subject of this text.

Irish Country Furniture is structured around furniture forms (seating, storage, beds and tables) and will appeal to a more restricted audience. It is here that the *súgán* chair, the Carbery settle, stillions, shake-downs and falling tables are to be found. The book reads, however, from the point of view of the historical householder, rather than today's scholar or dealer. The analysis of construction, functionality and regional variation serves the purpose of describing a way of life, rather than providing a framework for collecting and trading. The emphasis placed upon colour is a particularly striking feature of the book, with its exceptionally fine photographs. Among views of museum reconstructions and isolated antiques posed against exterior walls are a number of interiors which were lived in when photographed by the author. If the work that Kinmonth undertook in Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s had taken place in Scotland during the 1950s and 1960s, a far richer record of the late vernacular would exist for our own country.

It was neither social historians nor art historians but rather students of material culture, and furniture historians in particular, who were the first to turn to the apparent banality of ordinary art for the purpose of comprehending the past. Having produced a body of authoritative fieldwork, it was perhaps inevitable that Kinmonth would progress to the re-placing of people within the visual frame, assembling the representations that comprise the raw material of *Irish Rural Interiors*. Museum curators have long sought to enliven the presentation of a faded artefact with some contemporary illustration conveying its use. This dimension of action, considered with the people in the foreground, however, means that in Kinmonth's text, alongside pot-lid display and fishing nets, will be found eating, spinning, wakes, fairs, vaccination and literacy. As Saumarez-Smith indicated, this turn in scholarship confronts, 'the way in which images constitute the public idea of the historical past ... what it felt like to be there. And to undertake this form of investigation, in addition to looking at what images of the past survive, we must also uncover what image they were intended to project'.[1] The potential gain is immense, but the labour of understanding forces us to examine a medium, art, which we might not instinctively gravitate towards.

In 1859, writing of his own sketching activity in Kintyre, Edward Bradley remarked that rural poverty was:

> ...one of those subjects that, with a good *chiaro-scuro* effect, is so acceptable to the artist, and looks so well upon paper, while, in sober reality, it is all that is repelling. For, however correctly the forms may be sketched and the lights and shades painted, yet it does not come within the pencil's province to depict the dirtiness of the dirt, or the smokiness of the smoke ... points that make themselves disagreeably apparent to the visitor, and which the artist cannot imitate if he would, and would not if he could - unless he were a stark and staring pre-pre-Raffaelite [*sic*]. It is for these reasons that pen and pencil may not quite agree, and yet do their work faithfully.[2]

In Ireland, however, in the years after the Great Famine, artists sought emphatically to express political and social veracity, as they perceived it, and truthfully observed local colour was a mark of authenticity. The accurate recording of material culture was thus a by-product of engagement. For Kinmonth, the record, the intention and the present-day sense of value are all of vital interest. This is a notable feature of Irish historiography and cultural consciousness. Scotland differs, but not to the degree that England differs. For Scotland, the value of these two books will lie in wherever we wish to take their methodology - and whether an audience can be found for our efforts.

Reviewed by Stephen Jackson

[1] Saumarez-Smith, Charles, *Eighteenth-Century Decoration: Design and the domestic interior in England*, London, 1993, 8-9.

[2] Bede, Cuthbert, *Glencreggan, or a Highland Home in Cantire*, London, 1861, Vol II, 133.

The Limekilns of Upper Donside: A forgotten heritage

Ken Cruickshank, John Nisbet and Moira Greig. Aberdeen. Aberdeenshire Council. 2004. ppiv + 71. £13.50. 1-903714-09-5.

This excellent study examines the abandoned limekilns of Upper Donside, an upland area of Aberdeenshire. Some 93 were shown on the First edition of the 6"-to-the-mile Ordnance Survey maps and a further seven on the Second edition. Six more were identified during the survey, giving a total of 106.

The construction of the kilns is placed in the context of the agrarian history of the area. The impact of agricultural 'Improvement', the re-organisation and creation of new holdings and the colonisation of waste ground, often achieved with immense labour, are all thoroughly detailed. The impact of transport developments is also assessed.

The authors examine the quarrying of the limestone, the exploitation of the peat mosses, the types of kiln, the process of burning limestone and the use of lime to improve the soil. The production of lime appears to have been particularly marked during the boom period from the early 1790s to 1815 and also during the high farming period from c1840 to c1870 when colonisation of new land was taken to new heights. A large proportion of the Improvement farms had a kiln. The decline of local lime production is set within the context of the agricultural depression which began in the 1870s and the ensuing rural depopulation.

The account places emphasis on the application of lime to the land, but the production of lime for building purposes is also mentioned. Individual farms appear to have produced lime for their own use, although sales to farms in areas without lime may have been a useful source of income (there is also evidence that this did not necessarily gain the laird's approval). There are some interesting extracts from estate papers.

The survey itself forms a major element of the book. Most of the kilns conformed to a basic design but there was considerable variety in terms of their detail. The 106 sites have been classified into five categories according to their condition. Only seven fall into the well-preserved category while 61 have been classified as unrecognisable. The photographs are excellent in showing the design features on the better-preserved sites and the nature of the surviving field evidence on the less well-preserved sites. Attention is drawn to the loss of sites, especially through changes in land use, particularly forestry.

This study is a model of its kind. The combination of the results of field survey and historical context is exemplary. The study may also be regarded as an audit of a heritage asset. It demonstrates the value of quantification as not only an aid to a better understanding but also in making the case for conservation. Indeed the authors conclude with a plea for the conservation of the best of the remaining structures. They contrast the support for castles, churches and big houses with the lack of legal protection for the kilns which, 'played an important but largely forgotten role in the early progress of modern agriculture in Upper Donside, and stand as mute stone memorials to the people who came before us and who toiled to create from a "wilderness" the farming landscape we live in, work in, and enjoy for recreation today.' It is to be hoped that the powers-that-be will heed their call.

Reviewed by Malcolm Bangor-Jones

The Dovecotes of Historical Somerset

John and Pamela McCann. Somerset. Somerset Vernacular Building Research Group. 2003. pp231. £11.99. 0-9523824-31.

This book claims to be the first in-depth study of the dovecotes (Scots 'doocot') of any English country. The book's principal author, John McCann, is no stranger to the subject and has previously published several articles and books on English dovecotes. A former Inspector of Historic Buildings for Essex County Council and English Heritage, as well as a regular lecturer on vernacular architecture at Cambridge University, John McCann is one of Britain's leading authorities on dovecotes, especially those in southern England. Together with his wife Pamela, an artist and vernacular-buildings researcher, McCann has produced another publication worthy of purchase by anyone interested in learning more about these buildings that, '... have always fascinated lovers of the countryside' (foreword by R W Brunskill, p4).

The book is produced and printed in full colour to a very high standard, thanks to funding support from various institutes, trusts, foundations and bequests. John McCann is a professional architectural photographer, so it is not surprising to find the book heavily laced with almost 200 images of dovecotes in both colour and black and white.

As is customary of McCann's work, historical dovecotes in the

Somerset region are assiduously researched and documented, including an extensive record of lost structures. Introductory chapters explain how dovecotes were used, who owned them, how they were designed and their nineteenth-century decline. Middle chapters are devoted to a survey of almost 60 dovecotes, with most photographed inside and out, and their salient features explained. Occasionally the cotes are visualised through the use of archive images or line drawings by others (the McCanns admit to only having limited technical-drawing skills).

Final chapters ambitiously attempt to summarise the survey work and compare features with other dovecotes, especially those in Suffolk (see the *Dovecotes of Suffolk* review in *Vernacular Building* 23, p60). The book ends appropriately with some short text giving the McCanns' personal views on options for the future of dovecotes in the region.

Not surprising given McCann's pedigree, *The Dovecotes of Historical Somerset* has few flaws. More technical drawings or sketches of some of the array of interesting features (for example, glovers, nest-box construction, potences, entry holes) could have improved the book as could the incorporation of more imagery of the occupants themselves. A few watercolours by the authors would also have enriched the publication (compare Emma Black's sketches of Moray's doocots in the 1930s). Nevertheless, the McCanns have successfully added to the United Kingdom's regional collection of books on the subject of dovecotes and the work is therefore commended to members with an interest in this field, especially those involved in the SVBWG project to record Scotland's historic doocots.

Reviewed by Nick Brown

Little Houses: The National Trust for Scotland's Improvement Scheme for small historic homes

Diane Watters and Miles Glendinning. Edinburgh. RCAHMS and NTS. 2006. pp200. £9.95. 1-902419-46-4.

This is not primarily a picture book, packed though it is with illustrations. It is a scholarly account of a remarkable initiative shown by the National Trust for Scotland which could be claimed to have led in turn to the setting up of revolving funds for repair and restoration throughout the United Kingdom, and so just possibly to the building preservation trust movement as a whole.

Although the Little Houses Improvement Scheme was not formally set up on the revolving-fund concept until 1960, the authors trace its roots to National Romanticism in general and in particular the Geddes philosophy of 'conservative surgery' that attempted to stem mass slum clearance across Scotland. The writers then concentrate on the two major forerunner projects, Culross, Clackmannanshire, and Dunkeld, Perthshire. Thus the LHIS itself does not commence until p64, but thereafter the narrative rattles along at speed covering every single project in just sufficient detail to maintain one's interest until the present, when sadly it seems the scheme's day is done, or largely so, as buildings become sought after by other more-local enterprises. It is a victim of its own success - but what a success.

It is not pertinent in this review to go down the 'Scotland never looked like this ...' road. Sufficient to say that while one may well regret the 'gut and stuff' practice of the early years, and with it the loss of so much clay wall and idiosyncratic window types (six-over-six to the detriment of any other formation), the coastal burghs of Fife have gained immeasurably from the LHIS and the overall image of Scotland enhanced by it. The well set-out gazetteer lists some 200 projects - enough said.

But the book is no anodyne eulogy and the authors pull no punches. The scheme has had its critics since day one; for example, 'a great brake on progress', 'interference by Edinburgh elitists', 'irredeemably suburban'. It shows admirable conviction by Watters and Glendinning to have quoted these, as well as to chart its financial near disaster at several stages. It seems astonishing nevertheless to read that the principles of architectural conservation were not actively applied to the projects until 1981 - prior to then, the term 'modern restoration' carried all before it. The lack of adequate recording is also discussed.

A valid criticism of this generally excellent account might be that the book is if anything over-illustrated, in parts often disrupting the text. The basketmaker on p98 (is he in a Little House?) would seem to have marginal relevance and the Trust's 'Three Musketeers' on p88 none at all. Nor is it best served by the somewhat 'retro' cover reminiscent of a 1950s Ministry of Housing and local-government pamphlet, and least of all by the incorrect caption of the town of 'Inverclyde' on p123 - it is Greenock - and the now outmoded English spelling of St Monans. But these are minor criticisms of an invaluable record of an epoch-making heritage initiative that was truly 'made in Scotland'.

Reviewed by John Knight

Back to the Wind, Front to the Sun: The traditional croft house

Caroline Hirst. Port of Ness. Islands Book Trust. 2005. pp195. 0-9546238-6-X

This book, based on the collections of the late Angus Macleod of Calbost, Lewis, is an unembellished account of crofting life in the Outer Hebrides, using Calbost as an example. There is an air of nostalgia about it, enhanced by the use of quotations from works of poetry, making it an elegy to a way of life, as it is described, 'with a social conscience'.

Angus Macleod (1916-2002) played an important role in the recording of crofting as it took place in the islands over the last two hundred years by both collecting physical items related to the way of life and also, possibly more importantly, recording the oral history of the place. His archive is available for consultation at South Lochs, Lewis, and Caroline Hirst has distilled his personal reminiscences and those he compiled in this publication. The book also draws upon texts and images from other publications.

Hirst looks at four different aspects of the croft and its place in society: the construction of the croft house; its interior layout and furnishings; the home's place in the life of the croft; and the family and community life. The importance of this last aspect is stressed throughout the publication. The study of the construction of the croft house, complete with a comprehensive listing of Gaelic terms for structural details of the buildings, examines reasons for the development of the building type. Prior to the Crofters Act of 1886, there was no security of tenure and therefore homes and furnishings were constructed with a view to dismantling and transportation elsewhere. Following the Act, it became practical to construct the more substantial 'white house'. From Angus Macleod's research and intimate knowledge of the community it is possible to outline the history of a family's occupation of an area, from the earlier thatched houses, to the white house later built adjacent, followed by the construction of a more modern bungalow or the family's move to Stornoway or beyond. The remaining houses, in varying states of repair, provide a telling illustration of this history. The interiors of the houses are described in detail, from the most important box bed, with its considerable amount of wood and which could be flat-packed for easy transportation, to stools and cradles. The croft's role as a workshop for all the activities that took place on the land is

also examined; the processing of the food produce of the croft and its locality included butter churning and the smoking of fish. The process of tweed manufacture, from carding the wool to waulking the woven cloth, is dealt with in detail; the songs to accompany these activities are also quoted. The cycle of the year, with the elements and produce dictating activities is stressed. The community aspect of these activities is illustrated throughout the book, with the importance of the church in community life being underlined.

This book provides a most interesting depiction of crofting life, seen through the eyes of one man and set in the context of the history of the community. It is heavily illustrated with images from Angus Macleod's collections and also from other notable collections of Highland-life artefacts. One could say that the book suffers from a rather fussy layout, and from an unfortunate lack of proofreading, but these are minor quibbles in a publication that, while stressing hardship, presents a fond memory of a way of life.

Reviewed by Veronica Fraser

Research Report: The blackhouses of Arnol

Timothy Holden with contributions by Louise Baker. Edinburgh. Edinburgh Heritage Policy Group. Historic Scotland. 2004. ppvi+ 66. £6.00. 9-904966-03-9.

This book takes as its subject the township of Arnol on Lewis and provides an in-depth historical and structural analysis of its blackhouses, with the aim of promoting a greater awareness of this vulnerable building type. In contrast to Caroline Hirst's book reviewed above, this is an archaeological study of the structures and records of the way of life in the community are placed in that context. No 42 Arnol, now the Blackhouse Museum, came into the care of Historic Scotland in 1965 and since the acquisition of No 39 Arnol, a ruined blackhouse and its associated white house, in 1996, a programme of study and excavation has been carried out on the settlement. This particular report, combining archaeological analysis with historical research, looks at the background of the area before analysing the development of the blackhouse in Arnol, its individual architectural features and how it was lived in.

The blackhouses of Arnol draw upon a thousand years of building tradition and may have an air of permanence about them, yet most of them are less than 150 years old. The flexibility of the building type has meant that the settlement has been rebuilt through realignment, with building materials from earlier structures being incorporated into newer houses. This flexibility adds to the buildings' vulnerability as the organic elements decay and only the stone outer walls remain.

The blackhouse provided a centre for crofting life in Arnol, where a subsistence existence was supplemented by fishing, weaving and the ultimately doomed kelp industry. The fortunes of the people were dependant on the island's landowners; like many such estates, the people of Arnol would experience relative prosperity but also the injustice of crofting tenure, the introduction of sheep and misplaced philanthropy. The twentieth century saw the introduction of 'better' housing in the shape of houses built to patterns of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, but also a gradual move in the population away from crofting areas and the islands in general. The majority of the blackhouses have been abandoned; in 1998, a study of 46 blackhouse structures showed that one was still occupied, one was the museum and another part of the visitor centre, with the remainder either having been abandoned or reduced to storage. This statistic emphasises the importance of this publication's focus on the building type.

The development of Arnol is traced through the use of maps and Reports to the Crofting Commission while the recent layout of the township is shown through the excellent use of aerial photography. The footprint of each blackhouse has been planned, showing remarkable variations on the simple concept of house/byre/barn. The individual features of the buildings are examined, from the gables and bed recesses to the horse hole *(toll each)* which was made each spring in the byre wall to remove the manure accumulated over the previous months. The development of the roof, from thatch to corrugated iron and asbestos, would have had a particular impact on the appearance of the blackhouse. Appendices describe the existing structure and condition of 20 pre-twentieth-century structures in Arnol and provide a table interpreting the development of 46 blackhouses and their current use and condition.

As with all books dealing with this way of life, the strength of the community is stressed. Crofting life meant a particularly multipurpose way of living, which at times would have been one of great privation,

but nevertheless was one to which the people were greatly attached. Evidence given to the 1917 Royal Commission investigating rural housing showed that very often when the 'better' white house had been constructed adjoining the blackhouse, the blackhouse was retained as the main living area and the new house kept for 'best'; present-day illustrations show the absorption of the earlier building into later, more advanced housing.

With analytical drawings of the structures and evocative historical photographs of their inhabitants, this publication provides a fascinating insight into an iconic township.

Reviewed by Veronica Fraser

What to See Around the Kyle of Tongue
What to See Around Durness

Kevin O'Reilly and Ashley Crockford. pp24 and pp44. £1.50 and £2.50 including p&p. Available from Rossley Cottage, Dowdeswell, Cheltenham GL54 4HG.

These booklets provide, in compact form, that physical and historical background information so often lacking when visiting an unfamiliar place. They are aimed at the non-specialist, but the authors' depth of reading and long familiarity with the areas is obvious. They summarise the local history, archaeology and geology and guide the reader around a wide range of key sites. The texts are illustrated by clear sketch maps and line drawings. Vernacular building does not feature strongly, but its study will be enriched by the readily assimilated information on the related disciplines presented.

Guides to Bettyhill and Strathnaver are under preparation.

Reviewed by Munro Dunn

CONTRIBUTORS

Elizabeth Beaton is a long-standing member of 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.

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Dave Hutchinson is a furniture historian specialising in the vernacular traditions of the north of Scotland. An expert on nineteenth-century tools and woodworking practice, he is currently archiving material for a series of interactive DVDs. He recently moved to Alyth, Perthshire, where he and his wife run an art gallery with a bookshop dedicated to topics relating to vernacular furniture and buildings, traditional tools and woodworking practice.

Stephen Jackson is Curator of Applied Art and Design at the National Museums of Scotland. He recently curated the exhibition 'Green Design: Creativity with a Conscience' and is currently working on the re-development of Edinburgh's Royal Museum. His published research includes studies of the cabinet makers William Trotter and Walter Newall, chair making in the Northern Isles and utility-furniture manufacture in Scotland.

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Folk Museum. Now retired, he is, amongst other roles, currently a member of the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland (HEACS). His main areas of interest lie in traditional buildings and their furniture, especially the use of natural, local materials and the concept of sustainability in the traditional building practices and furniture-making skills of Scottish Highlanders.

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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 34th Conference, in 2006, was held at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, and the annual Autumn Meeting, in the form of a recording day, took place in Glen Deskry, Strathdon, Aberdeenshire.

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* 31 please contact the Editor, *Vernacular Building*, c/o Veronica Fraser, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX. 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 some 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 accompanied by a disk copy.

We also welcome publications for review. These should be sent to Veronica Fraser, Reviews Editor, SVBWG, c/o Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments at the address above.

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Furniture and Fittings in the Traditional Scottish Home, **issue 30 of** ***Vernacular Building***, **the journal of the Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group, looks at the diversity and ingenuity displayed in the dwellings of the Scots over the centuries. Bringing together some of the leading experts in the field of Scottish furniture and architectural history, the volume examines the connections between domestic interiors, the local community and environment and the wider world.**

Contributors to this volume are Elizabeth Beaton, Elizabeth Hancock, Dave Hutchinson, Stephen Jackson, David Jones, R Ross Noble, Crissie White and others.

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