

The biging on Allertown: a reconstruction of an 18th-century farmhouse and steading in Cromarty

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ABSTRACT

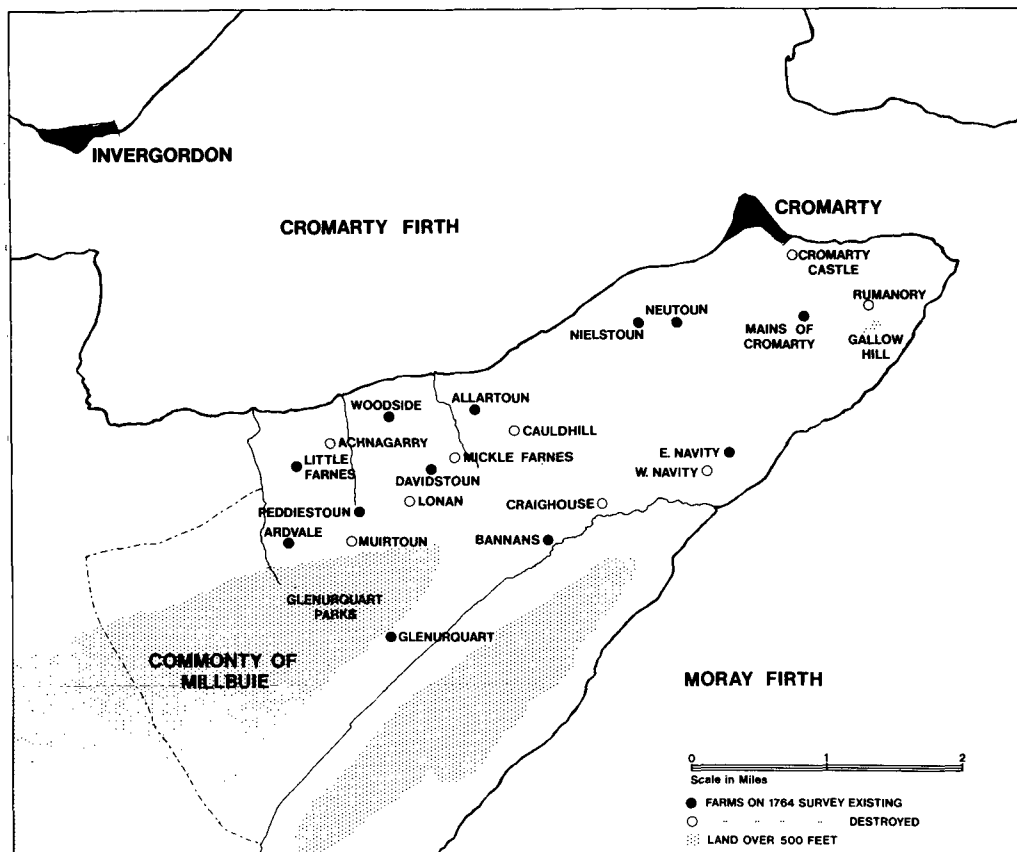
Amongst the papers in the Charter Room at Craigston Castle, Aberdeenshire, is an inventory, or appretiation, dated 1757, of a farm held by Kenneth MacCulloch on the Cromarty estate. From this inventory, and from some other surviving letters and papers, it is possible to know something of what lay behind the making of the inventory and to reconstruct the buildings themselves.

INTRODUCTION

The old Urquhart estate of Cromarty had been bought back into the family in 1740, by William Urquhart of Meldrum, acting for Captain John Urquhart, who was both his cousin and his son-in-law. Following its purchase and that of Craigston in the following year, Captain Urquhart caused both estates to be surveyed by James May. These surveys still survive amongst the Craigston archives. That of Cromarty, which dates from 1748, is not complete, and there are drawings only of the farmlands of Little Pharnes, Mickle Pharnes, Davidstown and Pedistown (illus 1). At this period the estate was not broken up into single tenancy farms; instead each of the large farmlands would be divided between a number of tenants, whose holdings were scattered in small parcels over the whole property, with the old medieval pattern of strips or rigs prevailing. The cottages, steadings, and cottar houses would be grouped together in a fermtoun or cottartoun, and on the 1748 survey of Mickle Pharnes such a fermtoun is clearly shown (illus 2). The rent return of 1755 for the Cromarty estate shows that there were then five tenants on Mickle Pharnes. The size of Mickle Pharnes extended to 160 acres, giving an average holding of 32 acres to each tenant; some of course were larger than this and some were smaller. This form of land tenure was to disappear in the face of agricultural improvements, but the change took place slowly. As late as 1792, at Arbuthnott in Kincardineshire, the farm of Boghall, which covered 189 acres, was divided amongst 12 tenants. Here the largest holding was 66 acres and the smallest under two acres – but the largest single enclosure on the farm was 11 acres (Slade 1980). Nor had the tenants usually any great rights in any buildings which they might have erected. As a result these were, in general, of the meanest and most miserable description.

The present farm of Allerton, the toun of the *Allars* or *Alders*, lies two and a half miles (4.02 km) west of the burgh of Cromarty, and some 600 yards (549 m) north of the A832, the high road from Cromarty to Rosemarkie. It stands on, or close to, the site of the earlier farm of the same name, which appears on David Aiken's survey of 1764. This survey of Cromarty was

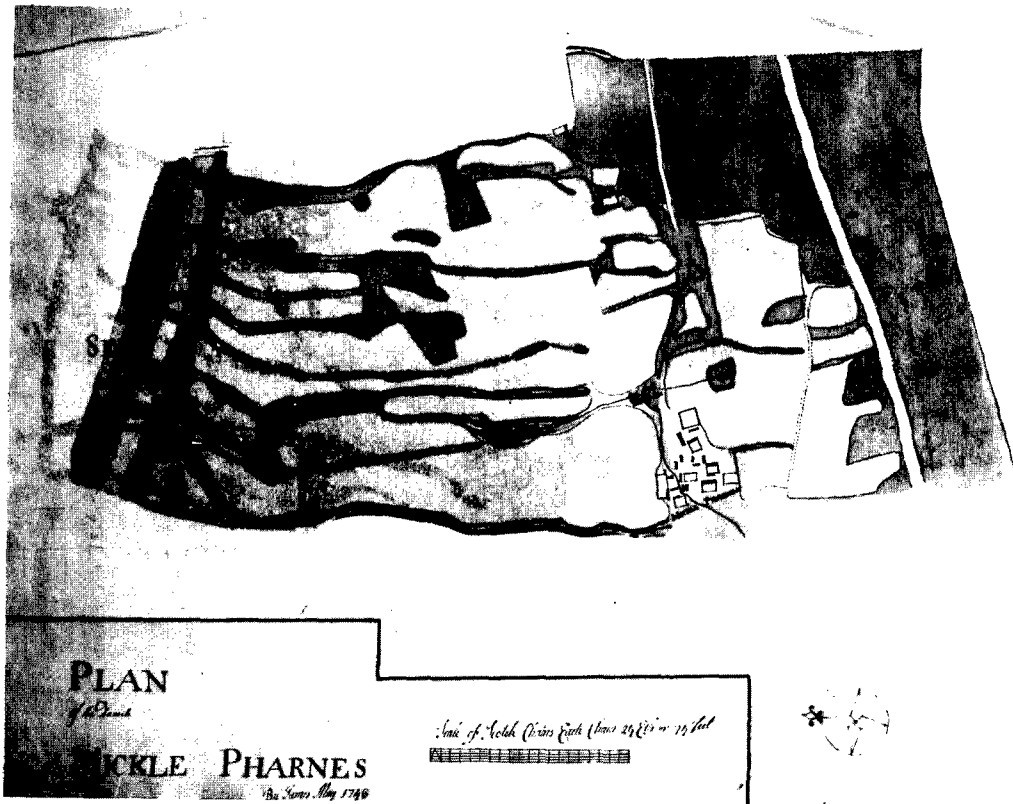
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ILLUS 1 The lands of Cromarty 1740–1764

made for Lord Elibank immediately after he had bought the estate from William Urquhart. It is done in great detail, and to a very large scale, the whole being mounted on one large backing sheet measuring 3 ft by 10 ft (0.914 m by 3.048 m), so that the entire estate can be seen at a glance. The lands extended from the Sutors of Cromarty west to the mouth of the Ethie burn, which then formed their southern boundary, and for just over five miles (8 km) along the shore of Cromarty Firth. The western marches included most of what is now Millbuie Forest, but which was then known as the *Commonty of Millbuie*. Of the fermtouns that then existed, *Lonan*, *Mickle Farnes*, *Cauldhill*, *Craighouse* and *Achnagarry* have disappeared; *Little Farnes*, *Ardvale*, and *Neuton* have become *Farness*, *Ardville*, and *Newton*; and *Easter* and *Wester Navity* have preserved only the single word *Navity*. The road system has altered with the disappearance of the old turf roads, and a later hand has indicated the line of a proposed new road, which follows, at least for part of its way, that of the present A832.

The survey is of great interest as it shows the condition of the estate when it was sold by William Urquhart to Lord Elibank in 1763, and displays the improvements of the previous 24 years. Photocopies of the survey exist in the Record Offices in Edinburgh (SRO) and Belfast, and



ILLUS 2 Mickle Pharnes: James May's survey 1748 (Craigston Papers)

are said to have originated from the library of the Queen's University, Belfast. Unfortunately at the time of writing it has not proved possible to locate the original drawing (illus 3).

On the James May survey of 1746 the only buildings shown on Mickle Pharnes are those of the *fermtoun* itself, an unnamed building on the burn below the Mill Dam, and three unidentified structures on the eastern side of the land. Apart from the marking of two wells, four springs and some wooded areas, there is no other information. In contrast David Aiken's survey of 1764 gives a very much clearer picture. Mickle Farness remains the main centre, with seven houses, but continues in its unimproved state. The building by the burn is named as *Nether Milns*, and occupied by Lachlan Stewart, and between it and the Mill Dam, three small mills are shown. The structures on the eastern boundary are shown as three cottar houses and the area is named as *Caulkhill*. The fields are indicated, together with their acreages and estate numbers, and various notes descriptive of the use of parts of the land and the nature of the soil have been added.

The most important difference is of course the appearance of the new farm of Allartoun. This lies between Mickle Farnes and the sea, and to the west of it is an area of marshy ground planted with Allar shrubs, from which the farm takes its name. As this particular area is not shown on the 1746 survey it may be a deliberate piece of planting by Captain Urquhart. It is worth recalling that in a inventory of trees at Craigston which was made in 1749 it was recorded



ILLUS 3 Allartoun: Part of David Aiken's survey 1764 (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland)

that there were 160 of this species growing in the policies, and that they were of commercial use (Slade 1983).

The survey shows the layout of Allartoun remarkably clearly: the longest range of buildings runs east–west, and lies on the north side of a court open on the south. This range is shown as having chimneys, thus agreeing with the *appretiation* and can be identified as the house. Two ranges running north–south and set forward from the house face each other across the court. It seems that the shorter range is on the west, and the longer on the east. This again agrees with the written description, where one range is longer than the other, and it is interesting that this latter building, which contains the stable and byres, has the pasture behind it, and is close to the cart house. A small detached building to the east is probably the *Servants House*. What is also clearly demonstrated is the marked difference between the unplanned huddle of the fermtoun of Mickel Farnes, and the formal arrangement of buildings at Allartoun. This arrangement was to last in the north-east for at least the next hundred years, and must be one of the earliest examples of this type.

The spelling of place names is variable, *Pharnes*, *Farnes* and *Farness* being an example. It has remained variable in the text, taking its form from that used on the papers under discussion at the time.

After the death of Captain John Urquhart in 1756, John Gorry, the factor of the Cromarty estate, returned an inventory of all the papers which he held on 3 May of that year. This included a list of the tenants with Tacks granted by Captain John Urquhart on 28 September 1753; Kenneth MacCulloch's name does not appear on that list. However on the rental return for the following year he appears as a tenant on *North* or *Mickle Pharnes*. The rent was paid partly in kind and partly in cash, being set at £12.2.3¾ in meal, £10.0.0 in bere, and £7.6.10¾ in sterling. The tenants seem invariably to have been behind with their rents, and by 3 September 1756, the total amount due from Kenneth MacCulloch was set at £41.13.0; no rent having been paid for the first 18 months of his tenancy.

The situation had probably been brought about, in part at least, by MacCulloch's expenditure on the buildings, the value of which was put at £29.12.11. This was slightly more than the annual rent. It must also have been influenced by a succession of bad harvests, which had made the payment of rents in kind extremely difficult. Writing to the widowed Mistress Urquhart in March 1757, John Gorry despaired of the weather:

‘... Our season continues very backward, and the Labouring much behind, and really the consequence considering our past seasons looks Gloomy. May God Almighty soon send us more favourable weather and times...’

In the same letter, written from Invergordon, Gorry throws some light on what is proposed over the difficulties at Allerton:

‘As to Kenneth McCulloch he has given up his Tack by Reason given by him in a letter he writes me of ye 2nd Curr: a copie of which, and also a copie of another letter of the same date obliging him to remove himself at next Term without the Ceremony of a Legal warning, I herewith send your Laps: and will be glad to have your directions thereanent. James Glenn proposes to take Kenneth's possession as it lies near the Milns, and his father-in-law Hugh McCulloch means to help him in it – But he must keep his present possession in the hill another year unless he find a proper Tenant for it. – But I look upon Kenneth McCulloch as Intirely Bankrupt, and unless he get some business in the public [way] as he was proposing two years agoe I do not know what will become of him... You see also what Kenneth writes as to the comprizing of his Bigging which were intirely put up by him in that place, Nor was there any one house there formerly...’

[Since this paper was written two further letters have come to light; they appear as an appendix to this paper.]

In a memorandum from Mr Urquhart and his curators to John Gorry, dated 9 September 1757, the instruction is:

'That Mr Gorry adjust the comprizing of Ken. McCulloch's houses and only allows what is reasonable to him at counting and as Mr Gorry does not imagine the interests on Kenneth's Bills will exceed three or four pounds it is thought proper that Mr Gorry allow him this.'

Normally at the end of a tenancy the buildings would have reverted to the proprietor with only a small allowance given to the outgoing tenant. In Aberdeenshire in the late 18th century it often amounted to less than *one-sixth* of the annual rent. The result of this was that the house would generally be bad and the offices worse, and that towards the end of a lease there was little to encourage a tenant in the proper maintenance of the buildings. Under this practice not only would the estate have been entitled to possession of the buildings but also the right to pursue Kenneth MacCulloch through the courts for his arrears of rent.

The accommodation that was arrived at was somewhat more civilized. As John Gorry pointed out in his letter to Mistress Urquhart the buildings were comparatively new, barely three years old, there having been none on the site before, and the implication is that it would be fair to allow Kenneth MacCulloch something for them. This may have been the proposal put forward by MacCulloch in his letter to Mistress Urquhart. The *appretiation* set the value of the buildings at £29.12.11 sterling but discounted the sum of £3.10.10, being the value of the thatch and feall (that is the turf-built gables) from the total. Thus buildings to the value of £26.1.1 were to be set against arrears and debts amounting to £41.13.0. The value of the buildings was therefore roughly equivalent in value to the cash rent due from Candlemas 1754 until Whitsunday 1757. In view of the bad harvests of the past years there would have been little point in pressing for any of the rent in kind. In the final settlement John Gorry was instructed to allow MacCulloch the interest on his bills. Certainly by the standards of times this treatment was not ungenerous. James Glenn, MacCulloch's successor at Allertown, does not appear to have been any more successful: by the end of 1757 the returns for the tenants on Mickle Farnes show that he was in arrears to the tune of £112.10.5. It is perhaps not surprising that the Cromarty estate was sold in 1763, as soon as William Urquhart came of age, for it seems never to have been a very profitable venture.

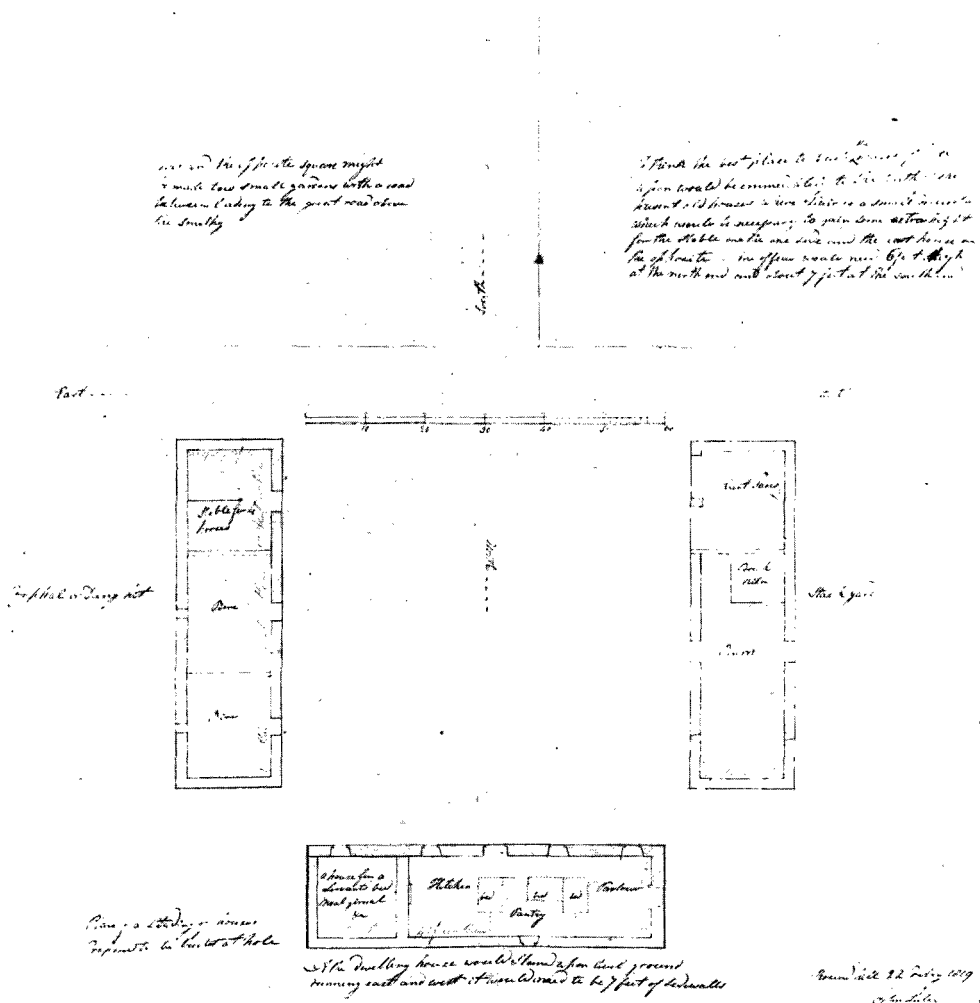
When MacCulloch gave up his tenancy the buildings on Allertown were three years old; from the inventory they appear to have been substantial and better suited to a larger farm than the share of Mickle Farnes which they served. The layout derives from the larger farm courts which were then beginning to appear. There may have been such a court at the Mains of Cromarty; certainly a very large one was designed for Craigston c 1753, although it was built some years later on a much reduced scale.

THE INVENTORY

This was drawn up on 2 June 1757, by which date Allerton had already been re-let to James Glen, and his son-in-law, Hugh MacCulloch, and it is likely that Kenneth MacCulloch had given up his Tack on Whitsunday 1757, the previous quarter-day. The comprisors of the inventory were four tradesmen from Cromarty and two neighbouring tenants, chosen by John Gorry, and two tradesmen, a tenant and a farmer (there seems to be a nice distinction, probably a matter of acres or the form of lease, between a farmer and a tenant) chosen by Kenneth MacCulloch. The Clerk of the Comprising, the mutual choice of both parties, was John Urquhart who held the Tack of

the Mains of Cromarty. A measure of the literacy of the district is shown by every witness signing in a running hand – except for Donald Robson, the mason, who chose to print his name in serriffed capitals.

The document itself presents no problems of legibility, although many of the words in it have passed out of use. From it it is possible to understand the construction of the buildings and to hazard a guess at their appearance and plan. In the accommodation provided the farm of Allerton differs very little from an improved farm, built at Hole, on the Craigston estates in 1819 (illus 4). MacCulloch may have been encouraged to erect buildings above the station of his



ILLUS 4 House and Steading at Hole: John Leslie 1819 (Craigston Papers)

holding by his landlord, and his resulting difficulties and the comparative leniency with which he was treated sprang from this.

Copie of the Biging on
the Possession of Allerton
taken the 2^d. June

1757

£29.12.11. sterl.

(19)

| | |
|--|------------|
| To Acco ^t as @..... | £29.12.11 |
| By thatching and feall } Discounted } | 3.11.10. |
| Ballance | £26. 1. 1. |

To be allowed in arrear.

Inventory of the Biging on the Possession of Allertown on Low Farness lately possessed by Kenneth MacCulloch and now let to Hugh MacCulloch and James Glen Comprised at the Desire of Mr John Gorry factor and the said Kenneth MacCulloch by the following Comprizers – Donald Robson, Mason in Cromarty, James Gleig, Smith there, George Simpson, Gardner there, John Keith, Wright there, Thos. Thomson, Tennant in Pedistown, and John Pedison, Tennant in Davidstown, chosen by the said Mr John Gorry. And Isaac Hood, Mason and Farmer in Achnagarry, Donald Sanderson, Wright in Cromarty, Donald Roberston, Smith in Farness, John Watson, Tennant in Bogneelstown by the said Kenneth MacCulloch and John Urquhart, Tacksman of the Mains of Cromarty mutually chosen to be Clerk of the Comprizing.

| | Sterling | £ | Sh. | d. |
|---|----------|---|-----|------|
| 2 Wester Rooms: To R.518 Ells Mason work at 20 sh each. | | 5 | 10 | – |
| To the Hewen Work and Carrying of 2 Vents. | | 0 | 15 | – |
| To the Lining of the Outer walls of the Chamber pined with lime } | | 0 | 15 | – |
| To two ash Couples in the 2 Wester Rooms | | 0 | 11 | – |
| To the Rails in Do. | | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| To the Cabers of Do. | | – | 6 | 6 |
| To 4 joists Covered with boards of Loft | | – | 11 | – |
| To the Thatch | x | – | 8 | 3. x |
| To the Lintells of 2 windows | | – | – | 6. |
| To the Door Lintells | | – | – | 4. |
| To the windows of Do. being 2 running sashes | | – | 16 | – |
| To a Small Window back of the house in Do. | | – | 2 | – |
| To the Outer Door and frame of Do. | | – | 4 | – |
| To 3 Inner Doors in Do. with frames | | – | 11 | – |
| To 2 Locks and bands, with snecks to the @ 4 doors | | – | 6 | 7½ |

| | | | |
|-------------|---|-----------------|----------------|
| Fire House: | 1 Couple in the firehouse | | - . 1 . 8. |
| | 1 Couple more in Do. | | - . 3 . - |
| | Rails of Do. | | - . 6 . 6. |
| | Cabers of Do. | | - . 6 . 6. |
| | To the thatch of Do. | x | - . 11 . - . x |
| | To the Lintells of 2 Doors in Do. | | - . - . 5½ |
| | To the Lintells of 3 Windows in Do. | | - . - . 6. |
| | To the Outer Door of Do. | | - . 4 . 6. |
| | To the 2 Inner Doors of Do. | | - . 5 . - |
| | To 3 Windows with broads, Bands and half chess } Glazed | | - . 12 . - |
| | Carried Over | | £13 . 4 . 10. |
| Firehouse: | Brought forward | | £13 . 4 . 10 |
| | To the bands of the two Inner Doors of Do. | | - . 1 . - |
| | To the Lock and bands of the Outer Door of Do. | | - . 3 . 1½ |
| Mealhouse: | 1 Couple | | - . 5 . 6. |
| | Rails | | - . 3 . 9. |
| | Cabers | | - . 4 . - |
| | Thatch | x | - . 5 . 6 . x |
| | Door and Window Lintels | | - . - . 3. |
| | Door and frame of Do. | | - . 4 . 6. |
| | Lock and Bands of Do. | | - . 1 . 8½ |
| | 1 window in Do. with Broad, half chesse glazed | | - . 3 . 6. |
| Cart House: | 1 Couple | | - . 4 . 3. |
| | Rails | | - . 4 . 2. |
| | Cabers | | - . 2 . 2. |
| | Thatch | x | - . 5 . 6 . x |
| | Lintels of 2 Doors | | - . - . 7. |
| | To the fail Tops of 4 Gavels in the whole row | x | - . 9 . - . x |
| | To 2 leafed Door and frames | | - . 7 . - |
| | To back Door and frame of Do. | | - . 1 . - |
| | To Lock and bands of Do. Door | | - . 3 . 9½. |
| | To the Kitchen Loub. | | - . 2 . 6. |
| | | | <hr/> |
| Barn: | To 27 Ells mason work | £ - . 12 . 6. | 16 . 17 . 7 |
| | To 10 Do. mudd work | - . 5 . - | - . 19 . 9. |
| | To the fail work on the top of } the Gavels | x - . 2 . 3 . x | |
| | 5 Couples | | 1 . 1 . - |
| | Rails | | - . 12 . 6. |
| | Cabers | | - . 11 . 6. |
| | Thatch | x | - . 11 . - . x |
| | Lintels | | - . - . 3. |
| | Fore and back Doors of Do. in halves | | - . 8 . - |
| | Lock bands and staples | | - . 4 . 8. |
| | | | <hr/> |
| | | Carried over | 4 . 8 . 8. |
| | | Brought over | £21 . 6 . 3. |
| Stable: | To 31 Ells of mudd work in the stable } To the stonework of the Byres & Inner Gavels being 1 Rood & 9 yards } | | 0 . 10 . - |
| | | | 1 . 10 . 10. |
| | | | <hr/> |
| | | | 1 . 10 . 10. |

| | | Sterling | £ | Sh. | d. |
|-----------------------|---|----------|---|-----|------------|
| | 2 Couples in the Stable | | - | 5 | 9. |
| | Rails | | - | 5 | 3. |
| | Cabers | | - | 4 | - |
| | Thatch | x | - | 2 | 6. x |
| | Lintel | | - | - | 1. |
| | Fore Door of Do. | | - | 2 | 6. |
| | Back Door of Do. | | - | 1 | 6. |
| Big Byre: | 3 Couples in Do. | | - | 12 | 6. |
| | Rails | | - | 7 | 6. |
| | Cabers | | - | 6 | - |
| | Thatch | | - | 4 | - |
| | Lintels | | - | - | 3½. |
| | Fore and back Doors | | - | 4 | - |
| Little Byre: | 1 Couple | | - | 3 | - |
| | Rails | | - | 3 | 4. |
| | Cabers | | - | 2 | - |
| | Thatch | x | - | 3 | 4. x |
| | Lintels | | - | - | 1½. |
| | Door of Do. | | - | 2 | 6. |
| | Bands of Doors of Byres and Stables | | - | 4 | 3. |
| | To the tops of 4 Gavels failed | | - | 6 | - |
| | | | | 5 | 11 . 3 |
| Servants } House } | To yards stonework | | - | 6 | 8. |
| | To 2 Couples | | - | 7 | - |
| | To Rails | | - | 5 | 5. |
| | Cabers | | - | 3 | 4. |
| | Door & frame | | - | 1 | 6. |
| | Thatch | x | - | 6 | 6. |
| | To the tops of Gavels | | - | 3 | - |
| | | | | 1 | 13 . 5. |
| | To the Fail and Corn yard dykes, Ditch Dyke | | 1 | 2 | 0. |
| | | | | £29 | . 12 . 11. |

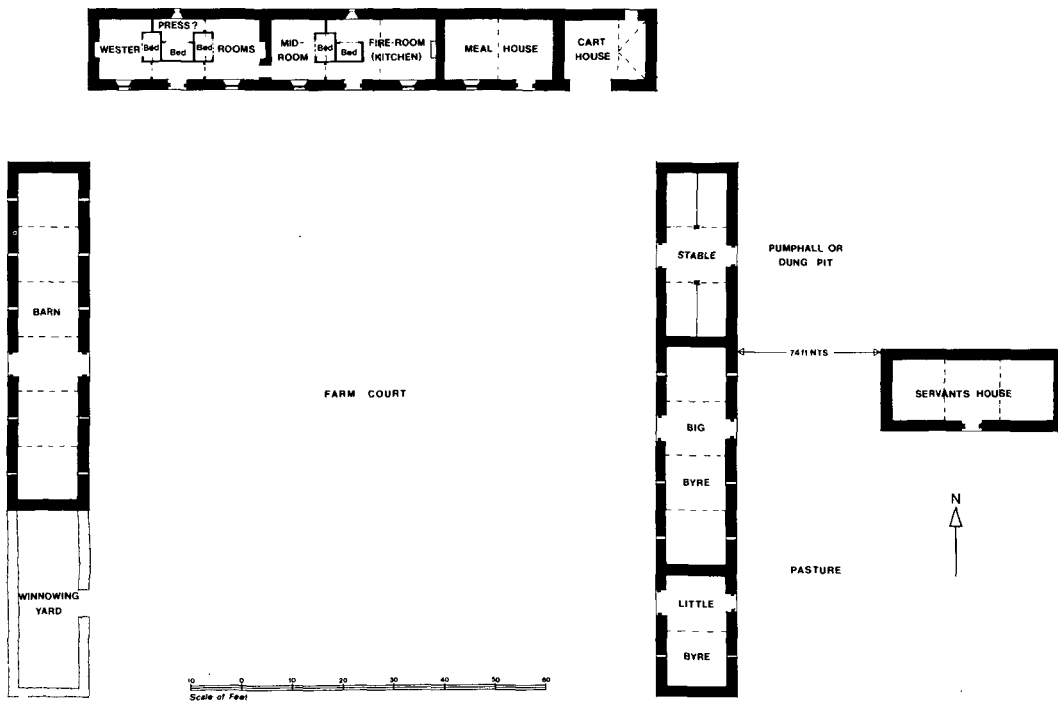
Allertown 2^d. June 1757

The afforegoing appretiation of the above Bigings Contained in the three preceding pages was justly Comprized by the affore named appretiators the sum Totall of the whole amounting to Twenty nine pound Twelve shillings and Eleven pence sterling money which is attested by our Subscription in presence of James Glen now Tacksman here and the forenamed John Urquhart writer hereof Witnesses thereto Day, place and year of God above written.

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| George Simpson | |
| James Gleig | Apr. |
| DONALD ROBSON | Apr. |
| John Watson | Apr. |
| James Glen | Appreciator |
| Thos. Thomson | Apr. |
| John Peddieson | Apr. |
| Isaac Hood | Apr. |
| Daniel Robertson | Apr. |
| John Keith | |

As described in the inventory the house and steading at Allerton consisted of four buildings. First a range which, in addition to the farm house, contained the *Meal house* (or girnel) and the *Cart House*; secondly a *Barn*; thirdly a long range containing the *Stable*, and a *Big* and *Little Byre*; and fourthly a separate *Servants House*. From the survey of the Cromarty Estate made in 1764 and the inventory it is possible to reconstruct the farm (illus 5 & 6).

The most elaborate structure is the block which contained the living quarters. These are described as 2 *Wester Rooms* and *Fire House*. Unless *Wester* has some esoteric and long lost significance it must mean that these rooms were at the western end of a range running east-west with a southerly aspect; this would shelter the house from the northerly winds but at the expense of sacrificing the view across the Bay and Firth of Cromarty. The *Fire House*, which is usually taken to indicate a dwelling house with a fireplace, rather than an out building, contained the kitchen, as becomes clear from the inventory. Although there is reference to 2 *Wester Rooms*, this part of the house seems to have had three apartments. In addition to the outer door, there are three inner doors, and, as well as the two main windows, a further small window *back of the house* is also mentioned. This would seem to give the standard later three-bay cottage plan: a small entry off which two of the three doors open, and two end rooms separated by a small chamber or press. Both the larger rooms had stone chimneys or *vents*. The two roof couples are described as being of *Ash*, a description not applied to any other couples on the farm. In addition to the couples there were four joists to carry the boarded floor of the loft. The windows, those on the front of the house at least, were sliding or *running* sashes. It is not clear whether these would have moved horizontally or vertically. In England at this period and at this level of building a sliding sash would be unusual, but in Scotland a primitive sliding sash could be expected.



ILLUS 5 House and Steading at Allerton: reconstruction HGS



from the site plan of the house and steading at Allerton

ILLUS 6a & b House and Steading at Allerton: reconstruction HGS, realization TB

The *Lining of the Outer Walls of the Chamber pined with lime* – that is to say the insertion of stone pinnings between the larger stones and the pointing of the joints with lime is again indicative of a degree of finish that Sinclair noted in 1795 on the improved farms in the north, but somewhat unexpected 40 years earlier. It also suggests that all other masonry walls were either of dry wall construction, or set in mud and left unpinned and unpointed.

The *Fire House*, like the *Wester Rooms*, is of three bays, the roof being carried on two couples, but the construction is simpler. The windows, of which there were three, are described as being *with Broads, Bands and half chess glazed*; that is the upper parts were glazed and fixed, whilst the lower were secured with wooden shutters carried by iron bands or straps. This was of course the normal manner of making windows in the larger houses of the 16th and early 17th centuries. The internal planning of this part of the house is not clear from the inventory. With two internal doors, one external door, and three windows it seems reasonable to assume that this part of the house was divided into two rooms, the larger of which was the kitchen. There are two likely arrangements of the rooms; the first is that where the kitchen occupied the two western bays, with a doorway through the gable into the *Wester Rooms*, and was entered from the courtyard by way of a scullery in the eastern bay. This would provide two inner doors with the third window in the rear wall to light the scullery. The kitchen chimney or *kitchen lounb*, which appears as something of an afterthought, would probably have been a hanging lum incorporated into the partition and couple between the kitchen and scullery. Given the obvious pretensions of Allerton an open fire would have been unlikely. The second solution would have been to have put the kitchen in the two eastern bays, and devoted the space between it and the *Wester Rooms* to a *Middle Room* or *Dairy*. This would have had the advantage of providing a substantial gable wall to back the fireplace and support the kitchen chimney. It would still have provided for two internal doors. The entry to the kitchen was probably in the centre and screened to form a lobby. The third window would then have provided light for that part of the kitchen behind this partition (illus 5). Since the cost of the *kitchen lounb* was a third of that of either of the vents in the *Wester Rooms* it is likely to have been of timber and clay, or, if of stone, little more than a rubble backing to a timber hanging lum. A large kitchen would have been something of a necessity. Apart from the MacCulloch family there would have been farm servants to feed as well. At this period it was still customary for the family and servants to eat together, and there seems to have been no provision for a fire in the *Servants House* where the men could have cooked their own food.

Beyond the kitchen was the *Meal House* or girnel. Since this may have been of two bays (that is it had one couple between the gables) and had a window of similar pattern to those in the *Fire House*, it could have doubled as living accommodation. In the farm at Hole the room next to the house was designated a *House for a Servants Bed, Meal Girnal etc.* The absence of a fireplace would not have been considered at all unusual.

The *Cart House* was the last building in the range and, since it may have had a hipped or *peen* roof, must have been of one and a half bays. The reasoning behind this argument is based on the fact that although there are four divisions in the range calling for two end and three cross walls, the inventory only records four gables. It is possible but unlikely that one of the intermediate walls had not been carried up as a gable. The description is fairly conclusive that the end walls of the *Wester Rooms* which supported stone chimneys would have been gables, and it is equally probable that the walls on either side of the *Meal House* would have had to be carried up, if only to protect the meal. A hipped roof to the *Cart House*, which would result from there being no gable, would have meant that the length would have been reduced from two to one and a half bays if a proper roof construction with an even slope was to be achieved.

The construction of this range seems to have been largely of masonry, except for the *kitchen loub* which has already been discussed, and the *gavels*, which had *fail tops*, that is to say that the upper parts of the gables were built of turves. No mention is made in the inventory of any internal partitions, although these must have existed. There does not appear to have been enough masonry recorded for them to have been of this material, nor is there any mention of mud walling in this part of the buildings. That the partitions were fairly solid is indicated by the presence of the internal door frames and lintels. The most likely answer is that the partitions were formed as box beds, and that these were counted as furniture and did not remain in the house, but went when the tenant flitted. In the reconstructed plan the likely position of such beds has been suggested.

The walls were estimated at *R[oods] 5 18 Ells Masonwork at 20sh each* value £5.10.0. A Rood contained 36 Ells or 36 square yards of masonry. It is worth noting that both here and in James May's survey the English Ell of 36 in (914 mm) seems to have been used in preference to the Edinburgh Ell of 37½ in (953 mm). Aiken's survey on the other hand quite clearly uses the Scotch Ell. From this it is possible to calculate the likely size of the range. Given 5 Roods and 18 Ells of masonry, the area of masonry walling is 1782 square ft (165.73 m²). It is necessary to make two assumptions at this point; these are that the walls of the range are 2 ft (0.61 m) thick, and the internal width between walls is 12 ft (3.66 m). Both these dimensions seem to be common to most improved estate buildings in the north-east in the second half of the 18th century, and although Cromarty may lie, strictly speaking, outwith the north-east, the influence of a proprietor who was both an Aberdonian and an improver should not be discounted.

From these assumptions the following formulae were arrived at:

- 1
$$\frac{\text{Total area of masonry}}{\text{Assumed wall height}} = \text{linear run of walling}$$
- 2 Linear run of walling – sum of the length of walling in the gable and cross walls = length of range
- 3 Length of range – sum of the thickness of cross walls and end gables = internal length of range
- 4
$$\frac{\text{Internal length of range}}{\text{Number of bays}} = \text{couple spacing.}$$

Three arbitrary wall heights were shown, 7 ft 0 in (2.134 m), 6 ft 6 in (1.981 m), and 6 ft 0 in (1.829 m), which gave couple spacings of 9 ft 6 in (2.896 m), 10 ft 9 in (3.277 m), and 11 ft 9 in (3.581 m) respectively.

The result given by the last would be an unusually wide spacing for couples. None of the calculations has allowed for doors and windows, except for the large doors to the cart house, and it is doubtful if the makers of the inventory were any nicer in their day. A wall-head of 7 ft (2.134 m) is generous but it gives a couple spacing of 9 ft 6 in (2.896 m) which not unusual. On the other hand the height of 6 ft 6 in (1.981 m) is reasonable but with a slightly wider spacing at 10 ft 9 in (3.277 m). It is this calculation that has been used as the basis for the reconstruction of Allerton.

In deciding the form which the stable roof took it is worth considering if the inventory affords any clues. The roof is, as are all the roofs in the steading, thatched, probably with straw. The thatch in turn is carried on *cabers* – rough timbers serving as rafters. These in turn are carried on *rails* or purlins spanning between, and supported by, the gables and the couples, and spiked or

pegged to the couples. The clue lies in the thatch for the *Meal House* and the *Cart House*: in both the value of the thatch was put at 5s 6d. A calculation based on the couples being spaced at 10 ft 9 in (3.277 m) centres and a roof pitch of 45° gives a roof area of 387 square ft (35.95 m²) for the *Meal House* and of 357 square ft (33.17 m²) for the *Cart House*, if the *Cart House* roof were hipped. The additional labour necessary to form the hips would account for the equal value of the dissimilar areas.

At first sight it is tempting to describe this range in view of its great length as a *longhouse*. Indeed if no inventory existed, and if only the traces of the foundations had been found by excavation it is likely that it would have been so described. However, the term *longhouse* refers not to length but to the nature of the plan. The true *longhouse* contained both humans and stock, and often food stuffs, under the same roof with the convenient result in bad weather it was unnecessary to venture out. Allerton is a longhouse only in the matter of feet and inches. The working functions of the farm have been clearly separated into different buildings, and whilst the increase in elegance is unquestionable it is doubtful if it outweighed the inconvenience of attending to sick animals in the depths of winter.

In considering the remaining buildings it is more difficult to arrive at an understanding based on the value of any of the items recorded. As far as the values are concerned there are too many variables – the quality and condition of the structure, or the size of the timbers – to make any useful comparison difficult, except in the case of the couples and rails and cabers. These are all near enough in value to suggest a common spacing of the couples, although it is not clear why the two couples in the *Fire House* should be of different worth (1s 8d and 3s 0d), nor why the value of the cabers in *Cart House*, *Stable*, and both *Byres* should drop in value except for the reason that human beings, meal and grain needed a more secure base for the thatch than the livestock did.

It is possible to draw some conclusions from the dimensions given in the inventory as to size of the remaining buildings. To take the barn as an example: the walls, both masonry and mud, but excluding the turf gables, total 37 Ells. Since the value of the individual gables, rails, couples and thatch are of approximately equal value in all the buildings it must be assumed that the roofs throughout are built to a common pitch and with couples at a common spacing. If this is accepted, then the *Barn* which is of six bays must have an internal length of about 64 ft (19.51 m). This would mean a linear wall-run of something in the region of 161 ft (49.07 m). If the dimension of 27 Ells of masonry work is linear the run of masonry is only 81 ft (24.69 m) which is not adequate: if, however, it is a square measurement, which gives 243 square ft (22.58 m²), there is the possibility that there was a masonry footing, 1 ft 6 in (0.46 m) in height, to carry the mud walls above. Unfortunately 10 *Ells of mud work* do not make sense. To provide a barn with a wall head of 6 ft 6 in (1.98 m) above the ground it would require 89 Ells of mud walling.

This proposition is borne out in the range containing the stable and byres. Here the figures given are 31 *Ells of mudd work in the stable* and *To the stonework of the Byres and Inner Gavels being 1 Rood and 9 yards*. Working on the same principle as for the Barn, and assuming a similar form of roof construction and spacing, the result is that again there is only enough masonry to provide a base wall 1 ft 6 in (0.46 m) high. However, 31 Ells of mud walling is inadequate and on the same basis would need to be increased to 145 Ells. Since there seems to be regularity in the roofs and foundations, there must be something in the measurement of mud construction which defies rational analysis.

The Barn was of six bays, with the walls, as have been seen, being built of mud on a stone base; the tops of the gables were of turf. There were *fore and back doors in halves*. The doors were halved vertically, that is they were single hung double-folding doors. Doors of this type

placed opposite each other allowed the centre of the barn to be used as a threshing floor, and by halving the door it was possible to control, to a certain extent, the draught for winnowing. Similar doors survived certainly until recently at the Rothiemay kiln barn, Moray, which also dates from the middle years of the century (Slade 1978). Probably there were small openings in the walls to aid ventilation.

The range containing the *Stable* and *Byres* was also of mud and stone, built apparently in the same manner as the barn. The tops of the four gables were again of turves. The *Stable* was of three bays with *fore* and *back* doors. This would mean that the stalls opened on to a central passageway. With an internal cross-dimension of 12 ft (3.66 m) this would have allowed three single stalls on each side, with space for six horses, or two double stalls which would have allowed for eight horses. The latter arrangement is more likely since it was the usual practice to stable a team together. With four such stalls Allerton was an eight-horse or four team farm.

The *Big Byre* was of four bays, and the *Little Byre* of two bays, and the *Big Byre* had both *fore* and *back* doors similar to those in the stable, which were valued at 1s 6d for the back doors, and 2s 6d for the larger fore-doors. It was through the fore doors that the animals, horses or cattle, entered, and it was through the back doors that the dung would have been shovelled into the *Pumphall* or dung-pit.

The last and smallest building is the *Servants House*. This seems to be the most simple or, more unkindly, most primitive of structures. With neither chimney nor window it must have been cold, dark and cheerless. It was of three bays and could have provided accommodation for at least six men; four horsemen would have been needed if there were four teams in the stable, and there was probably at least one cattleman, as well as the orraman. Since no chimney is mentioned it would be only charitable to assume an open fire with a smoke-hole in the thatch. If the 1764 survey is correct it was set some 80 ft (24.38 m) to the east of the stable.

In addition to the more formal buildings were the yards. Two are named, enclosed by dykes: the *Corn* and *Fail* yards. The former would have been behind the barn, and the latter probably close to the house for the convenience of fetching peats for the fires. The *Dicht Dyke* may refer to a dyke enclosing a threshing or winnowing yard. If so, this too would be close to the barn. Although not mentioned, there was probably a stock yard and dung-pit behind the byres and stable. The very large court in front of the buildings seems to have been left open. It was probably surrounded on three sides by a causeway, and the centre could have been used as either a stock or stack yard; there is no indication either way.

The importance of this inventory lies in the fact that it demonstrates how early in the 18th century improved farm buildings began to make their appearance in the north-east.

APPENDIX

Six months after this paper was completed two letters from Kenneth McCulloch to John Gorry came to light. With many other papers they had been lying forgotten in a press in one of the bathrooms at Craigston. They have been included as they both throw further light on the financial difficulties of the tenant.

Copie Letter Kenneth McCulloch – to Mr Gorry 2 March 1757

Dear Sir

When I saw you at Cromarty last week I intimet that I was not to keep the possession I now have after Whitsunday first, And in order to save you the trouble of publick or Legal warning I hereby bind and oblige myself to remove at said Whitsunday first and make way for any other tennant to whom you may Sett it, Meantime I hope you'll appoint two or three honest men with the like number that I shall

have for the Comprising of my Biggins at the term. At this time shall only add that I still am with Great Esteem and Regard –

Dear sir yours etc
K.M.

Copie Letter Kenneth McCulloch to John Gorry 2 March 1757

Sir

As I know what my Croft can do, and finds my arrears upon the Growing hand, Together with what I am indebted to others was what determined me to give up my farm to you when last week at Cromarty, that you might sett it to any other tennant agst. whitsunday first. Whatever I may be reduced to I could not think it honest to sitt and be wasting the subjects that should do justice to my Creditors.

As to my arrears due the Laird of Cromarty, I hope the Comprising of my Biggins, which I have writt too, to allow me and my claim (in vice Mackenzie of Navity) on the lands of Greenhill will very near clear up bygones and what it may want I propose to pay out of the just End of my Effects at Whitsunday, or uptill which claim I assigned to Mr Leonard Urquhart at the Capts. desire. That when the Lands were sold Mr Urquhart might draw my quota out of which to repair his own outlay and trouble. The Balance to goe towards my arrears due to the Laird of Cromarty. I write to this purpose I have from Mr Urquhart, at the same time he told me he believed my claim would draw about £400 Scots, but as the Lands may not be sold so soon, and in order to make a clearance at Whitsunday I would propose to reckon for only £15 start upon your giving me your promissory Letter to pay whatever Ballance may be when the Lands are sold, after the Sum and Mr Urquhart's are taken off.

I need not observe to you who knows it, that I got no house of any kind where I now live, such an unadvised and precipitate undertaking has contributed to and hastened my ruin. Sure I'll be £10 sterl Short of my outlay after Comprising is allow'd me, therefore I hope no advantage will be taken of me.

My Necessitous situation obliges me to take notice of the many Services I have done the family and for which I had the Capts. promises to reward me, I hope yr. Lady and tutors will find it equitable to do so, I can appeal to yourself if I have not been many times employed every year since the purchase of this Estate. I was a great part of 18 months upon a new Division of all the Possessions of all the Estate, and gave in the Rentals and marches of Each. I was twice upon the Comprising of all the Biggins on ye Estate and gave in copies of the Same.

I choose not to trouble you to a number of particulars I cou'd make But in general there was never Six months but I was employed for something or other. All the reward Ever I had was two years @ rent of 40 pounds Bond'g I was due for arrears, and shall I be allowe'd humbly to Observe, that however Lawfull it may be to take @ rent for Tennant arrears, it was never the practice here, Nor has it been found by Expedient by the Gentlemen in this Country. I mean not to give the least offence But were my arrears tryed since the year 1741 it would be found that near £20 of my present arrears is @ rent, But I still hope they will Sympathise with my greatly reduced situation .

May the Lord prosper that pritty family, They will survive the Better that they wisely Consider the poor man's Care. The Blessing is annex'd to such.

Forgive so tedious a Letter. The purport is for your Information and to beg the favour that you justly represent my Case to the Lady and Tutors.

I shall only add that I still am with Great Esteem.

Sir Yours etc
K.M.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks are in the first place due to Bruce Urquhart of Craigston for permission to reproduce the *Inventory of the Biging*, and the use of material from the Urquhart papers. The photograph of part of David Aitken's survey is reproduced with the permission of the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, and I much appreciate the help I have received in connection with it from Mr Donald Morris of that Office. The reconstructed view of Allerton is the work of Mr Terry Ball for which I am most grateful.

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