

**DRUMLAIRE CROFT
WHITECAIRNS
ABERDEENSHIRE**



Standing Building Survey
Carried out 14th August 2017
by
Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2017-18
by
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DRUMLAIRE CROFT WHITECAIRNS ABERDEENSHIRE

- Standing Building Survey -

1. Background

- 1.1 A standing building survey was required for a steading at Drumlaire Croft, Whitecairns, Aberdeenshire, prior to its demolition in preparation for the erection of three dwelling houses.
- 1.2 The archaeological condition was applied in the context of planning legislation (PAN 2/2011, SPP, SHEP), which states that it is necessary for developers to arrange for archaeological work to take place prior to development, in appropriate circumstances. Planning Application Number: Planning Application Numbers: APP/2016/3000.
- 1.3 A Level 1 Standing Building Survey was required which includes measured plans and elevations, a written account of the building's plan, form, function, age and development sequence in addition to a photographic survey of the interior and exterior of the building.
- 1.4 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned to undertake the work by Mr Alan Smith. The site element of the survey was completed on the 14th August 2017.

2. Desk-top survey

- 2.1 A search was carried out in the Sites and Monuments Record, Archaeology Service, Aberdeenshire Council and in the Sites and Monuments Records of the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Scotland (RCAHMS, now HES) through Canmore and Pastmap.
- 2.2 The 1st and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey maps were consulted.

- 2.3 Plans and elevations were supplied by the client and annotated as necessary by MAS Ltd.



Illus 1 Detail of OS map. Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright (2015) All rights reserved. Licence number (100049810). Site (formerly known as Belle Vue) indicated by red circle.

3. The Site

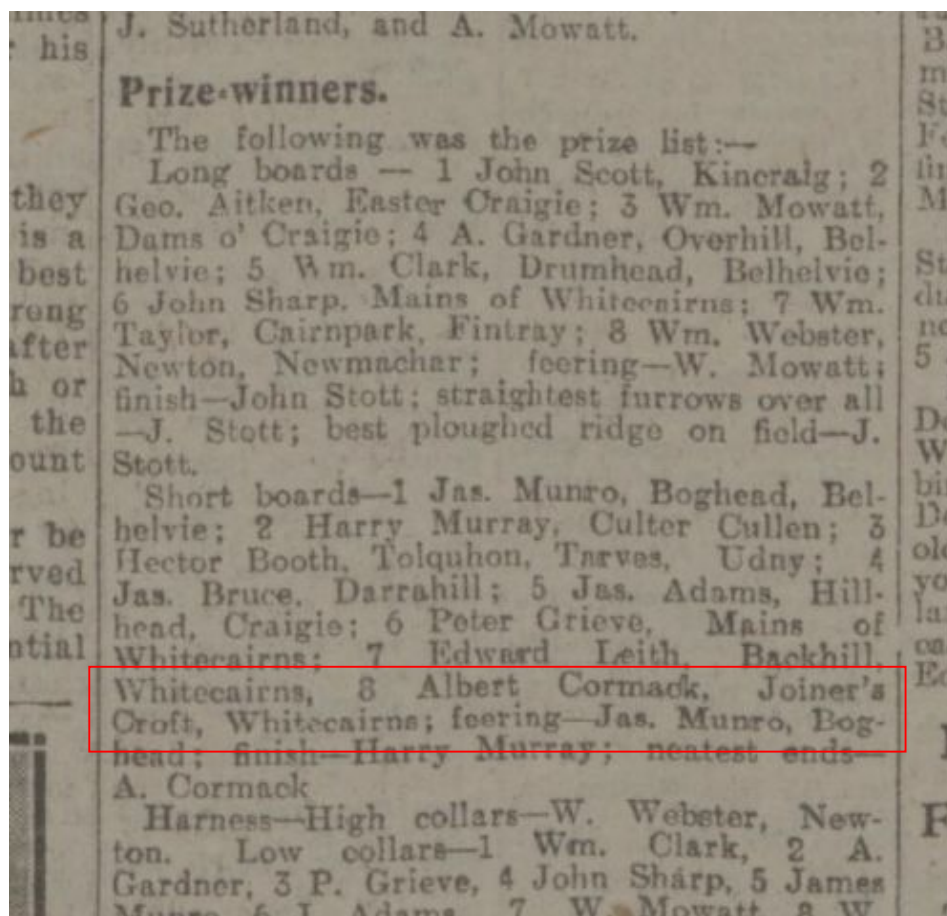
- 3.1 The site lies some 9.7km S of Pitmedden on the B999 Aberdeen to Tarves road and just S of the small village of Whitecairns.

The 1st OS map of 1866 names all the crofts as Whitecairns

However, by at least 1929 this was known as **Joiner's croft** (the name is still known locally) and this name is recorded in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* 29th

Jan 1929 when Mr Albert Cormack of Joiner's Croft, Whitecairns won several prizes in the Whitecairns ploughing contest. According to Robbie Moir, an elderly neighbour of the owner, Mr Cormack made threshing machines.

Later it was called **Belle Vue** after a dance band in which the then owner played. The present owner, Mr Alan Smith and his family named it **Drumlaire**- a rough translation of 'the back of a mare' (drum=ridge or druman= back band of carthorse. Druman, Ridge. 2 Hill. 3 Summit. 4 Little back. 5 Back-band of a cart-horse <http://www.faclair.com/?txtSearch=druman> Lair=mare), as part of the reason for buying the croft was to keep horses (pers. comm Alan Smith).



Illus 2 Aberdeen Press and Journal 29 Jan 1929 <http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

Parish: Belhelvie NGR: NJ 9236 1787 (croft general)

GPS in front of Steading: 392378/817880

Aberdeenshire SMR: NJ91NW0156 Farmstead

4. Documentary evidence

1747-55 Roy's Military Map shows a cluster of five buildings W of the road, where Mains of Whitecairns farm lies, as opposed to beside the road where the present village is situated. The area of the Drumlaire croft is shown as cultivated land.



Illus 3 Detail of Roy's Military map of 1747-55. www.nls.ac.uk

1866 OS map 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25" map, Aberdeen sheet lvi: 14 1866 (published 1870) shows an L-plan steading open to the S. The NE range of the steading appears to have a wooden (grey) structure at the SE gable. The NW range is composed of two abutting buildings, the W one being slightly narrower in plan. A horse mill is shown abutting the N wall of the more easterly part of this range. A small rectangular building with an outshot in the centre of the W facing wall, closes the SW side of the steading. This is likely to have been the original dwelling house as it was removed when the original part of the present house was built before 1899. At this stage only a pump is drawn to the S of the farm road.



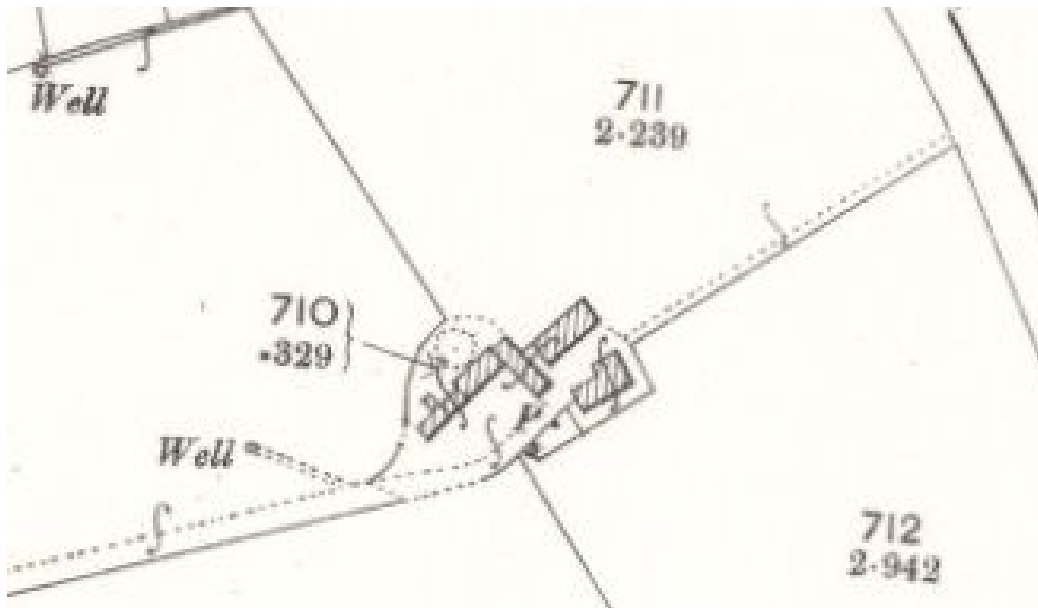
Illus 4 Detail of the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25" map, Aberdeen sheet lvi:14 1866 (pub 1870)
www.nls.ac.uk

1865-71 The OS Name Book Aberdeenshire volume 8 notes that the name 'Whitecairns' includes a large district of scattered dwelling houses consisting principally of crofter's residences etc ' OS name book OS1/1/8/46 (<https://scotlandsplaces.gov.uk>). Drumlaire is not named individually.

1868 Present farmhouse built (pers.comm owner Mr Alan Smith from title deeds)

C1897 John Farquharson bought Whitecairns Estate, Belhelvie, which included this croft, from Sir Charles Forbes of Newe

(<http://www.glenbuchatherine.com/picture/number915.asp>) . Sir Charles Stewart Forbes, 4th Baronet of Newe and Edinglass had bought land in Belhelvie parish using money that his father had accrued by mercantile activity in Bombay (Grosjean, 2005, 225)

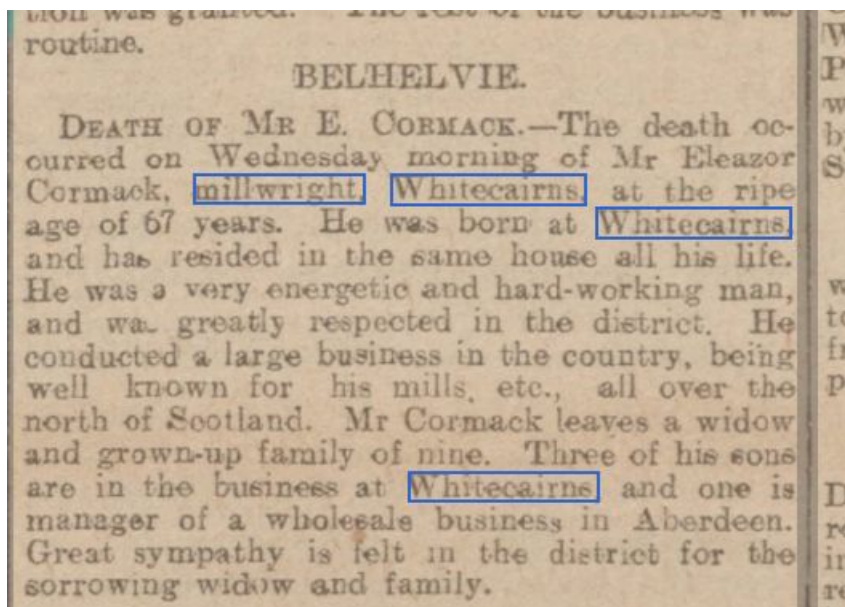


Illus 5 Detail of the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey 25" map, Aberdeenshire sheet 056:14 1899 (pub 1900) www.nls.ac.uk

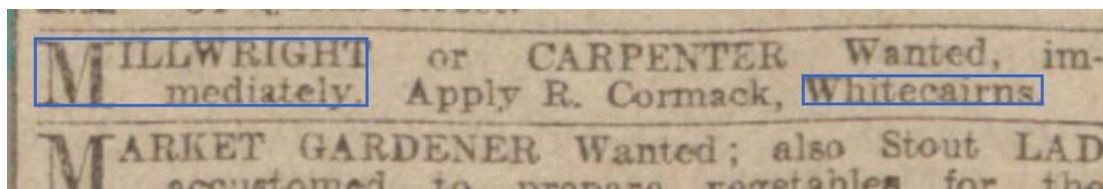
1899 On the 2nd edition 25"/mile Ordnance Survey of 1899 (published 1900.

Aberdeenshire sheet 056.14) the SW building, which may have been the original cottage, has been removed and a new L-plan building (the core of the present farmhouse) built S of the farm road. A new farm building has also been built N of the road and E of the existing steading. Otherwise the only change to the steading appears to be a small outshot on the N wall of the W part of the NW range.

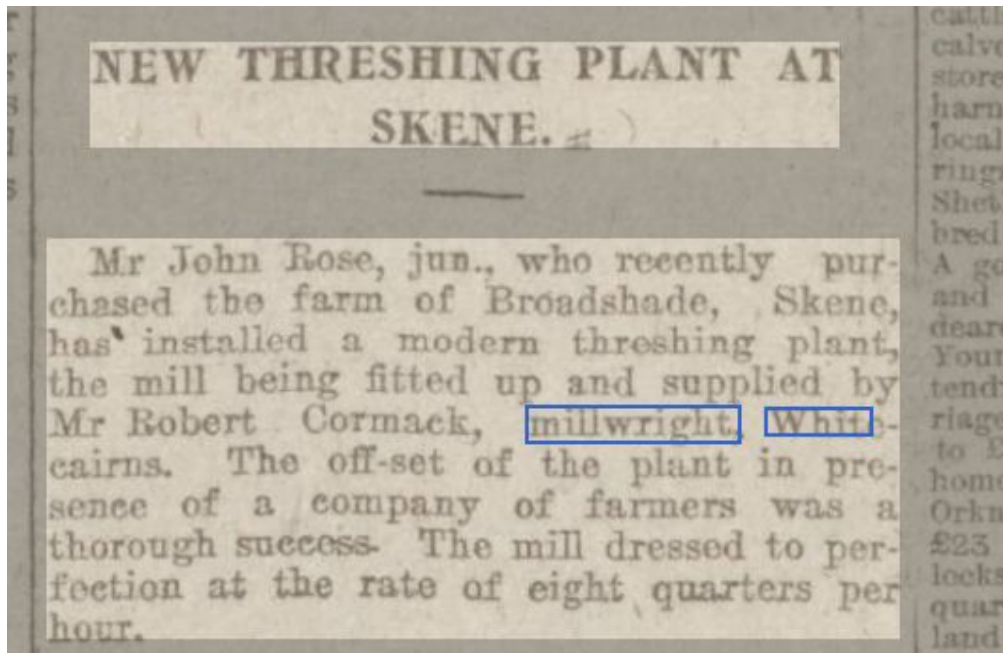
Before 1903 Death of Mr Eleazor Cormack, millwright at Whitecairns. Three of his sons continued in the business (Illus 6). It is within reasonable possibility that this is the father or grandfather of Albert Cormack of Joiner's Croft Whitecairns who won a ploughing match in 1929 (Illus 2 above) and father of Robert Cormack of Whitecairns who was advertising for a carpenter or millwright in 1905 (*Aberdeen press and Journal* 13th September 1905), again in 1907 (Illus 7) and in 1914 (*Aberdeen Press and Journal* 28th July 1914), and who had a trade stand at Aberdeen Agricultural Show in 1920 (*Aberdeen Press and Journal* 19th July 1920) and who was building threshing machines in 1923 (Illus 8).



Illus 6 Extract from Aberdeen Press and Journal 9th May 1903
<http://www.britishnespaperarchive.co.uk>



Illus 7 Extract from Aberdeen Press and Journal 26th September 1907
<http://www.britishnespaperarchive.co.uk>



Illus 8 Extract from Aberdeen Press and Journal 10th November 1923

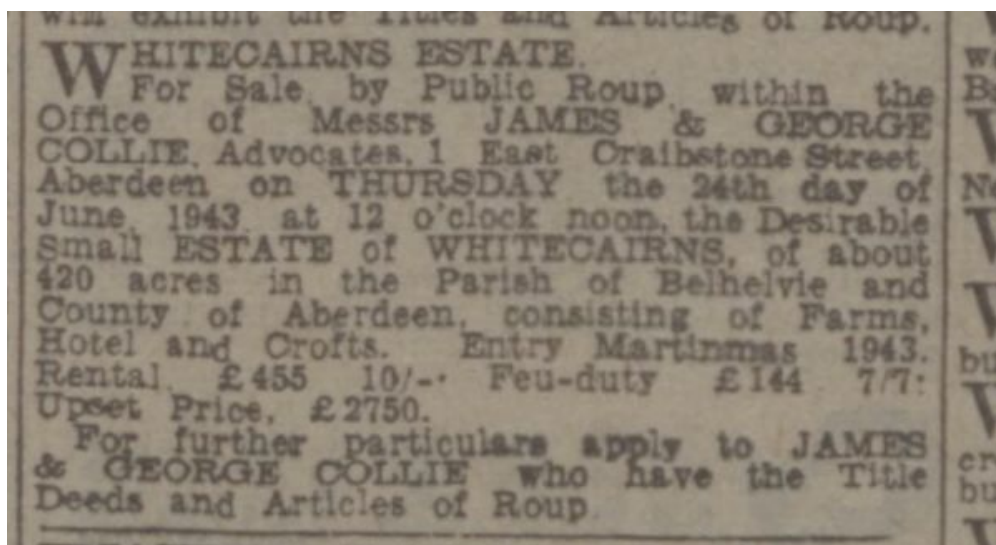
<http://www.britishnespaperarchive.co.uk>

After 1914 Death of John Farquharson (owner of Whitecairns Estate). Bequest of Whitecairns Estate to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary (Aberdeen University Special Collections GRHB 1/11/6

<http://calms.abdn.ac.uk/DServe/dserve.exe?dsqIni=dserve.ini&dsqApp=Archive&dsqCmd=Show.tcl&dsqSearch=RefNo==%27GRHB%201%2F11%2F6%27&dsqDb=Catalog>)

Not accessed.

1943 Whitecairns Estate for sale: 420 acres, farms, hotel and crofts



Illus 9 Aberdeen Press and Journal 16th June 1943 <http://www.britishnespaperarchive.co.uk>

5.1 The ground plans (illus 12, 22) and elevations (illus 20, 23) have been annotated to show details which may help in understanding the development and history of the building.

[illegible]

Illus 10 Plan. Annotated from plan courtesy of William Lippe Architects

6 The Buildings

For ease of reading, approximate compass positions have been used throughout.

Building 1

The map evidence shows that Building 1 was built between 1866 and 1899. The most probable time might be around 1868 when the dwelling house was built.

Orientation NE/SW

Dimensions 13.2m x 7.15m externally

Present/recent use Workshop and storage.

Prior to that it had been used for pigs (c. 1950s/60s).

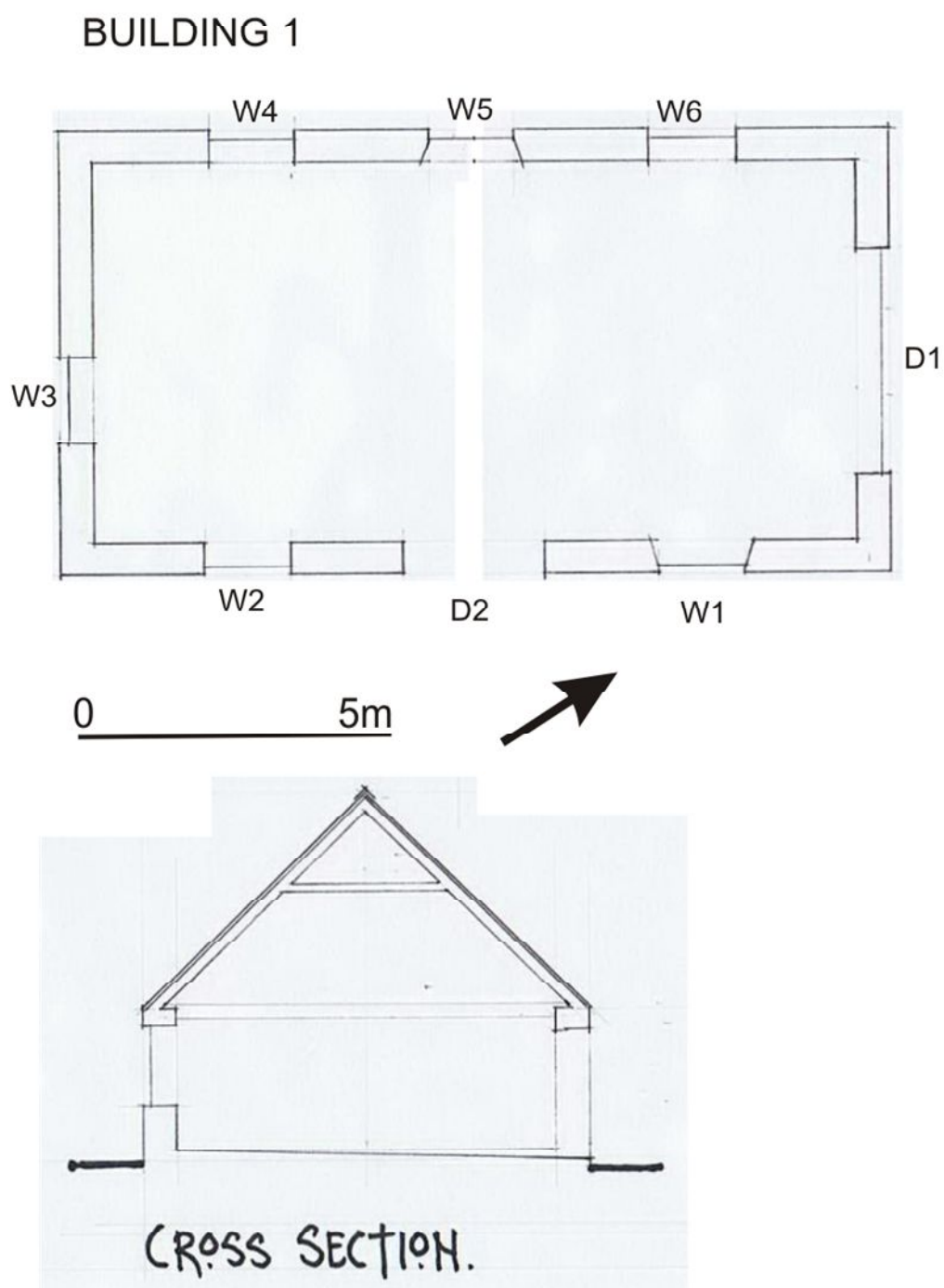
Original use The size, which is disproportionate to a croft of this size, suggests that this may have been built as the joiners' workshop- especially if, among other things, threshing machines were made or repaired as the press cuttings appear to indicate.

Walls Rubble stone with rough granite rybats. Stonework much hidden by cement.

Roof Slate



Illus 11 Building 1 looking W towards Building 2, house on LHS.



Illus 12 Plan and cross section of Building 1. Drawings courtesy of Alan Low.

Doors and windows

N wall

W4 W: 1.38m H: 1.27m (to base of arch) Shallow brick arch at lintel, with strong wooden lintel behind. Squared rubble rybats Opening splayed internally.

W5 W: 1.38m H: 1.27m (to base of arch) Shallow brick arch at lintel, with strong wooden lintel behind. Squared rubble rybats Opening splayed internally.

W6 W: 1.38m H: 1.27m (to base of arch) Shallow brick arch at lintel, with strong wooden lintel behind. Squared rubble rybats Opening splayed internally.



Illus 13 Building 1, N wall, Detail of W6 from inside showing wooden lintel and splayed sides.

E wall

D1 W: 3.7m H: 2.20m. Knock-through to give tractor access. Steel lintel.

F1 Ceramic and brick entry to former pigeon loft (Constructed by former owners the Ashtons. c. 1970s). Set within a former loft door with granite rybats. Red brick shallow arch at lintel.



Illus 14 Building 1, E gable F1 over D1



Illus 15 Building 1, E gable. Detail of F1

S wall

W1 W: 1.38m H: 1.27m (to base of arch) Shallow brick arch at lintel, with strong wooden lintel behind. Squared rubble rybats Opening splayed internally.

W2 W: 1.38m H: 1.27m (to base of arch) Shallow brick arch at lintel, with strong wooden lintel behind. Squared rubble rybats Opening splayed internally.



Illus 16 Building 1, S wall.



Illus 17 Building 1, S wall, detail of W1

D2 W: 2.3m H: 2.08m Squared rubble rybats to N. Metal lintel to E. Wooden lintels. Sliding metal door.



Illus 18 Building 1, S wall, detail of D2

W wall

W3 W: 1.38m H: 1.27m (to base of arch) Shallow brick arch at lintel, with strong wooden lintel behind. Squared rubble rybats Opening splayed internally.

Interior

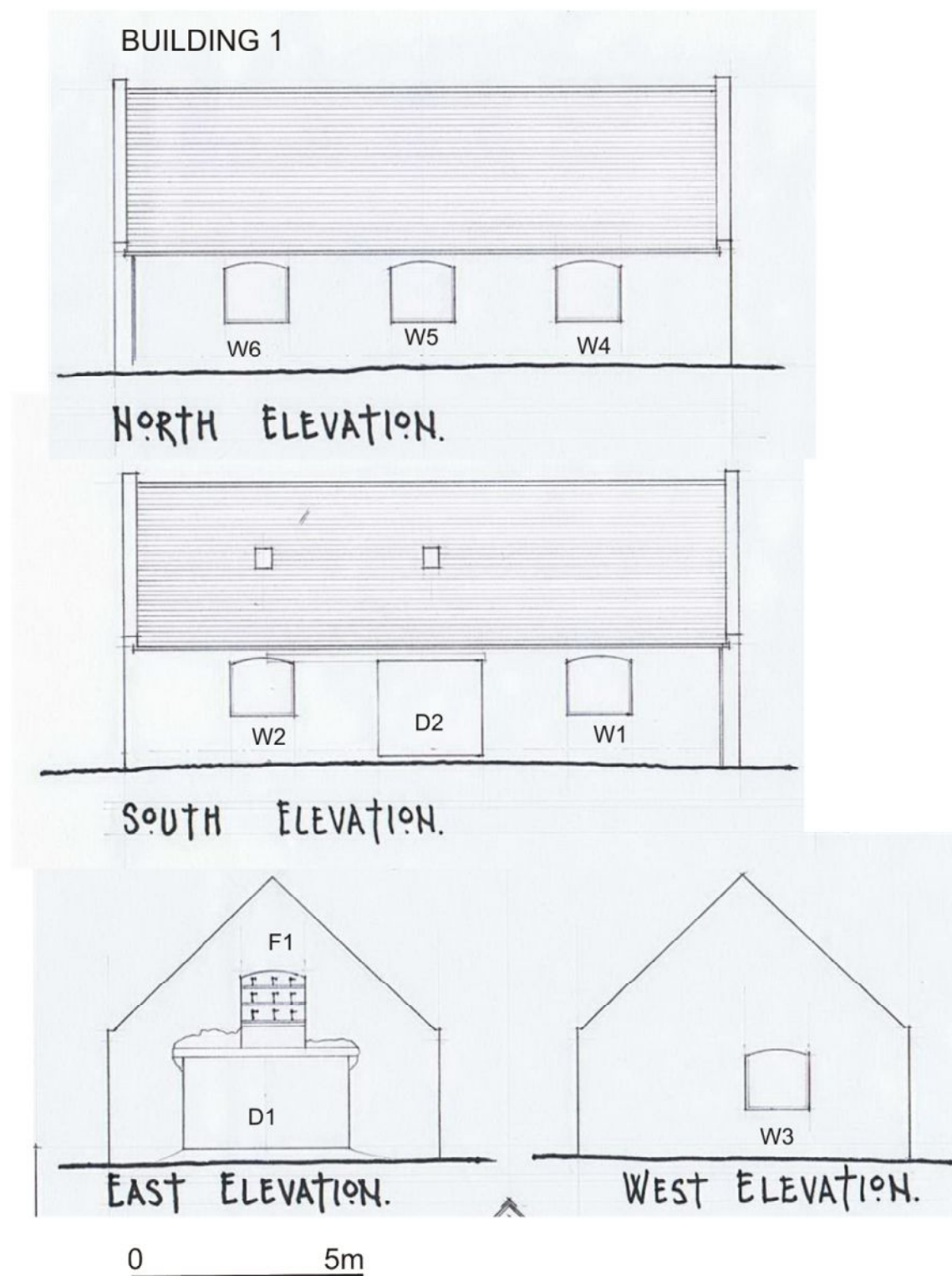
Former owners (c. 1970s) had converted Building 1 to a games room, removing all the tie-beams to open up (and destabilize) the roof space. As they kept pigeons, only a small part of the original loft was retained at the E end, with access for the birds through F1.

The concrete floor with wide drainage channel is likely to have been put in when the building was in use for pigs.

No other original features remain.



Illus 19 Building 1, Interior looking E to remnant of loft.



Illus 20 Building 1. Elevations. Drawings courtesy of Alan Low.

Building 2

The map evidence shows that Building 2 had been built before 1866. It had originally extended further to the W, but had been reduced to its present footprint by 1899. A modern pole barn extension on the N wall covers the position of the former horse mill.

Orientation L-plan with long axis approximately E/W and the open angle of the 'L' facing roughly S.

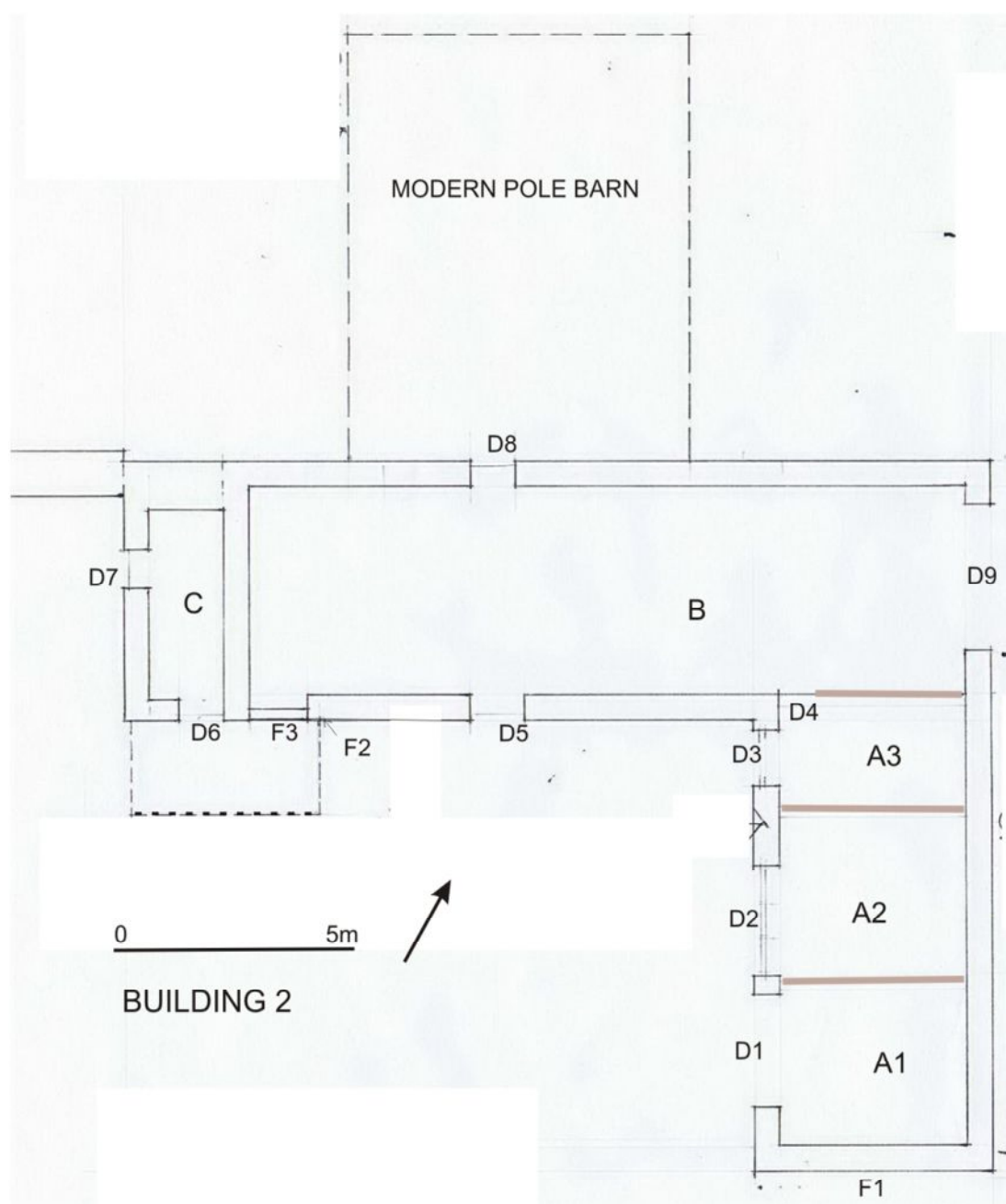
Dimensions 4.90m x 14.80m

Present/recent use Storage.

Original use Byre and barn



Illus 21 Building 2 looking N



Illus 22 Building 2. Plan. Drawings courtesy of Alan Low.



Illus 23 Building 2. Elevations. Drawings courtesy of Alan Low.

Walls Rubble stone, heavy concrete pointing obscures the detail but the S and W facing aspect, which would have been towards the original house, appear to have quite good horizontal coursing.

Roof Slate with ceramic ridge ventilators on the ridge of N wing and on the N end of E wing.

Chimney at S gable of E wing. Appears to be brick built but heavily covered in cement. Square with flat table.

Doors and windows

S wall of E wing

F1 Ornamental plaque of a mermaid. Thought to have been made by the former owners, the Ashtons.



Illus 24 Building 2, F1

W wall of E wing

D1 W: 2.30m H:1.95m. Rubble rybats, wooden lintel.

D2 W: 2.30m. H: 1.90m. Wooden lintel. Modern blocking with timber and ply, door and window.

D3 W: 1.14m. H: 1.85m. Rubble rybats, wooden lintel. Plank door.

S wall of N wing

D5 W: 1.12m H:1.95m. Rubble rybats. Wooden lintel, plank door.

D6 W: 0.93m H: 1.85m. Rubble rybats, timber lintel.

F2 Raggle of earlier shed abutting B2 – also visible in concrete flooring. Now partly covered by small lean-to green house.

F3 Blocked door (concrete blocks) W: 1.23m. H: 2.02m. Wooden lintel.

W wall of N wing

D7 W: 0.78m H: 1.80m. Door into area C, now from a modern lean-to. The wall here has been raised with concrete blocks and brick to 2m, the lower stone part of the wall is 1.47m high. The 1866 and 1899 OS maps show that this wing of Building 2 had originally extended further W, so the lower stone part of this wall may have been an earlier internal wall.

N wall of N wing

D8 W: 0.92m H: 1.85m. Wooden lintel. Modern door. The present owner put in the modern door to give access to the pole barn, but is sure there was an existing opening. This makes sense as this opening is beside the position of the horse mill shown on the 1866 and 1899 OS maps and it is common to have a door between the barn and the mill in this position. (see for example Gartrenich, Stirling.

<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/648810>)



Illus 25 Building 2, N wall and door D8 from inside Pole Barn.



Illus 26 Building 2, Detail of N wall to E of door D8, in area where horsemill had been in the 19th century. Enlargement shows possible but far from positive blocking.

Horsemill? The N wall, where the horsemill is shown on the early OS maps, was examined in detail. There was no obvious sign of the blocking of the shaft hole for the mill; however, this would have been at or possibly below foundation

level and is likely to have been obscured by the build-up of the external ground. One possible blocking is less than convincing as there was no sign of a lintel which would have been essential to avoid vibration dislodging the stones above. It was not possible to look at this wall from the inside.

E wall of both wings

D9 W: 3.10m H: 1.95m. Knock-through at gable to allow tractor access. Concrete and brick at sides.

Interior

E wing

This part of the steading had for a time been used as an office so no original features survive, with the exception of the fireplace in area A1.



Illus 27 Building 2, interior of area A2

A1 Length: 3.39m. The original fireplace in the S gable is blocked. Stone sides and lintel. W: 0.61m. H: 1.22m (to base of lintel).



Illus 28 Building 2, fireplace in S gable wall.

Rough plank partition between areas A1 and A2. On A2 side this partition covered by stained pine.

A2 Length: 3.47m. All walls vertical stained pine planks. Modern hardboard ceiling.

A3 Length: 2.55m. Horizontal plank lining. Modern ceiling. Two partitioned cubicles.

D4 Door between A3 and B. W: 0.94m. H: 1.95m.

N wing- Area B

Interior gutted. No original features. A small horse stall at the W end does not appear original.



Illus 29 Building 2, interior from door D9

Building 2a Pole barn. 7.3m x 9m. Pole barn with corrugated tin cladding.

Abuts N wall of Building 2. Formerly used for sheep.

Building 3 General Purpose shed. Modern steel frame agricultural shed.

Not part of present survey.

Building 4 Dwelling House. The core of the existing dwelling house is the house built 1868 and shown on the 1899 OS map. It has been raised and extended considerably. Not part of present survey.

7 Discussion

This is a fascinating survival of a small Aberdeenshire estate croft, with provision for the tenant to derive his main income from a craft, while having sufficient land to provide for his family. While many such crofts with a workshop did exist in the late 19th and early 20th century, it is rare to have surviving oral and documentary evidence for the function of the craft buildings.

It is probable that Building 1, which is of proportions unusual in a farm of this size (18 acres), was always intended to be used as a joiner's and millwright's workshop. The loft would have allowed storage of timber. The large door in the S wall (D2) and large windows appear original (with internal splay and rubble stone rybats), although the actual door and windows themselves have been altered. Space and plenty of light would have been essential for the workshop. Large windows became more possible from the late 19th and early 20th century, when it was possible for large pieces of glass to be made more cheaply (Historic Scotland, 2007). The lack of air vents or roof vents also indicate that it is unlikely that the building was used for livestock.

The identification of the building as a joiner's and millwright's workshop is supported by the oral history of the croft linked with the documentary evidence of the Cormack family of joiners and millwrights (threshing mills) who lived at Joiner's Croft, Whitecairns in the first quarter of the 20th century. Building 1 was built after 1866 and before 1899 on the basis of the map evidence. Mr Eleazor Cormack, millwright at Whitecairns died aged 67 in 1903 and had lived in the same house all his life and left his sons to continue the business. One of the sons is referred to as having lived at Joiner's Croft, a name which is associated with the Drumlaire

property. It seems likely that the workshop was built for, or by, the Cormacks, in the last quarter of the 19th century.

Building 2 comprises a fairly typical small L-plan steading, suited to a farm of some 18 acres. It was part of the original croft, before it became the Joiner's Croft (see 1866 OS map). The internal arrangements have been lost but it probably comprised a byre with a barn and cart shed and probably stabling for 2 horses, which would have been sufficient for the size of the property. The chimney at the S gable suggests that there had been a small bothy at this end; this may have been for a single farm worker- but it may also have been used later as accommodation for an employed additional joiner or millwright as in the early 20th century the Cormacks advertised on several occasions for joiners. However, this may have been converted to a cart shed at a later date as the wide doors D1 and D2 do not appear domestic.

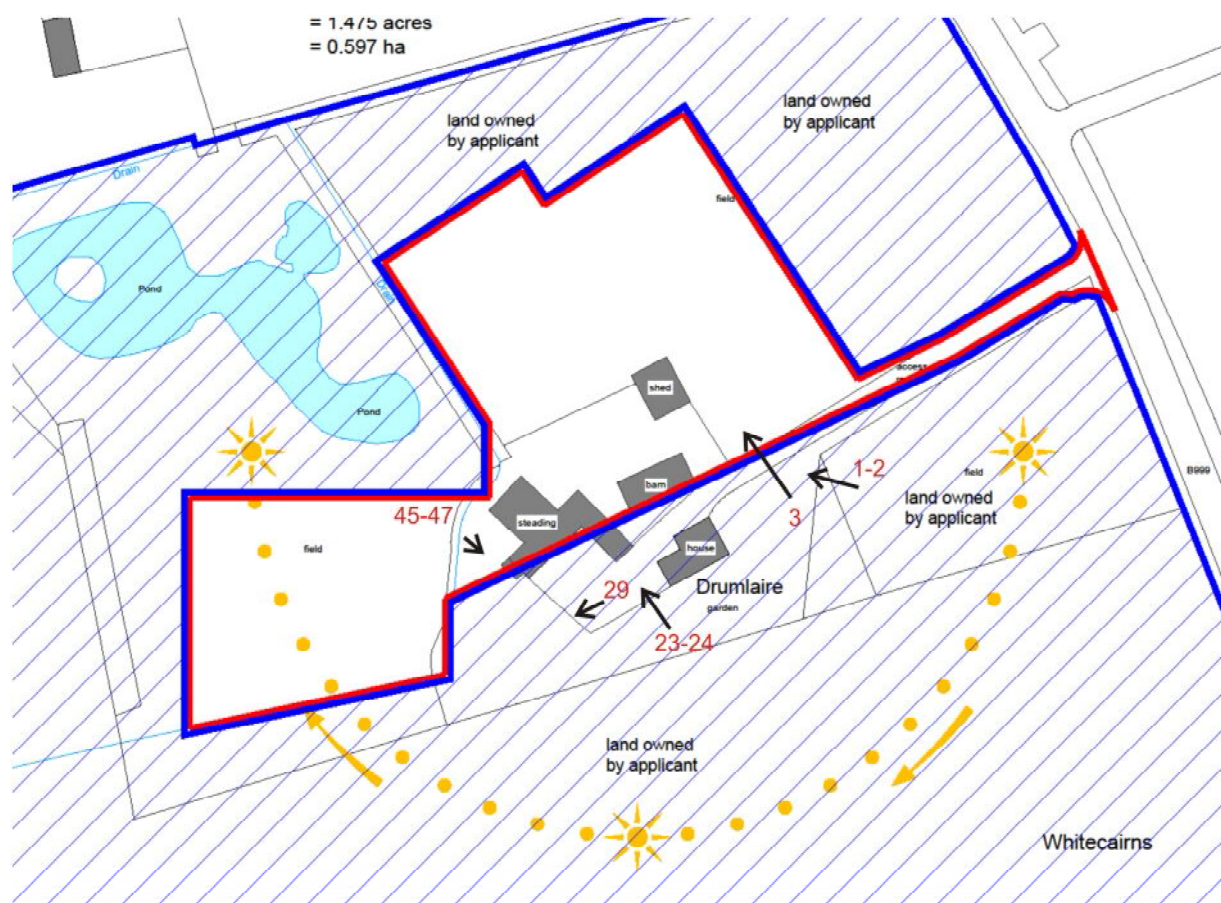
References

Grosjean, A 2005 'Returning to Belhelvie, 1593-1875: the impact of return migration on an Aberdeenshire parish' in M Harper (ed) *Emigrant Homecomings: the return movement of emigrants 1600-2000*. Manchester University Press.

Historic Scotland 2007 Traditional plain glass and glazing. Inform Guide. Edinburgh:Historic Scotland. <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=2717a618-f94c-46f6-a4ad-a59500fb6347>

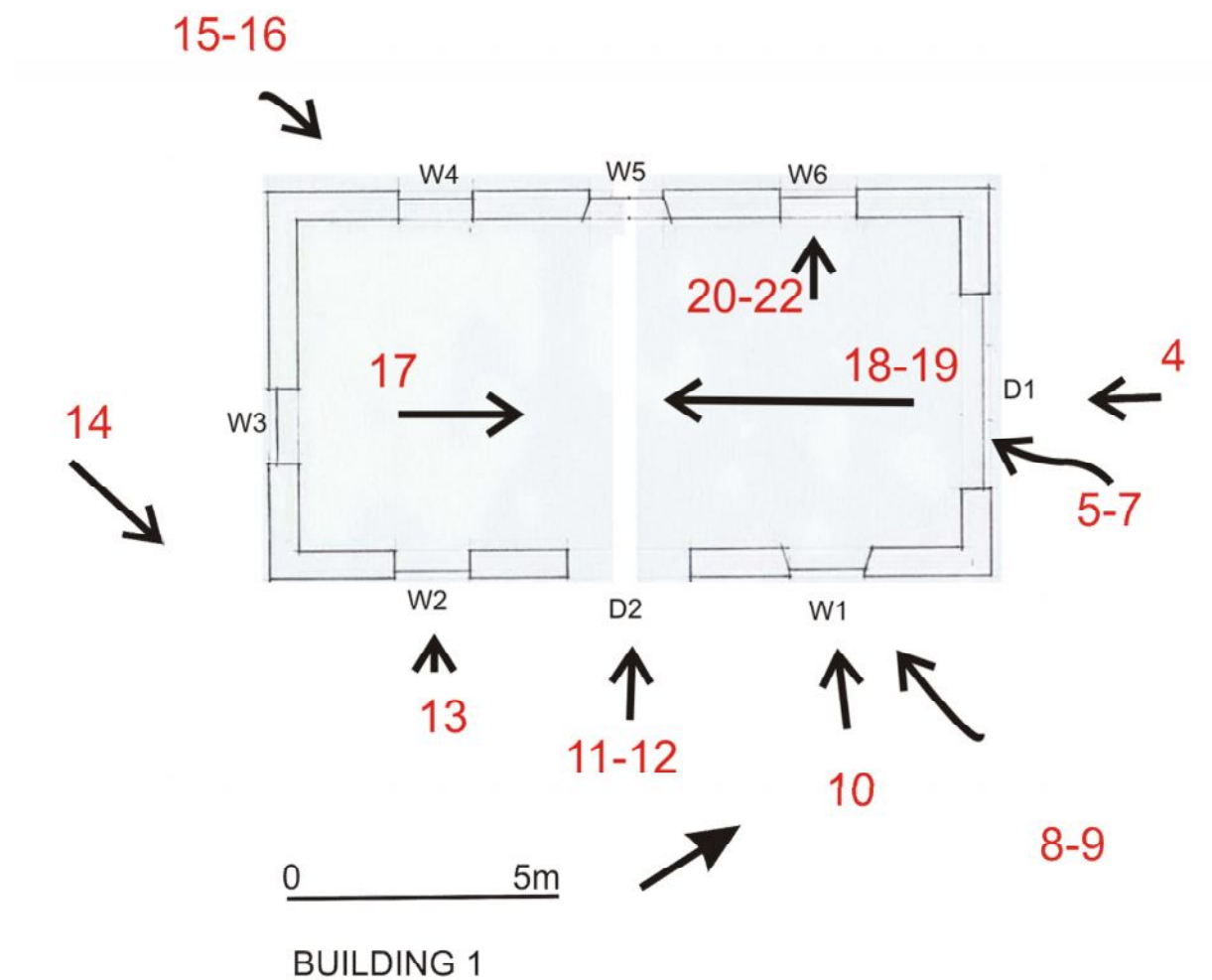
8 Archive

A full set of photographs with the photo location plans (Illus 30-32) will be supplied to the Aberdeenshire SMR in Aberdeen and to the HES archive.

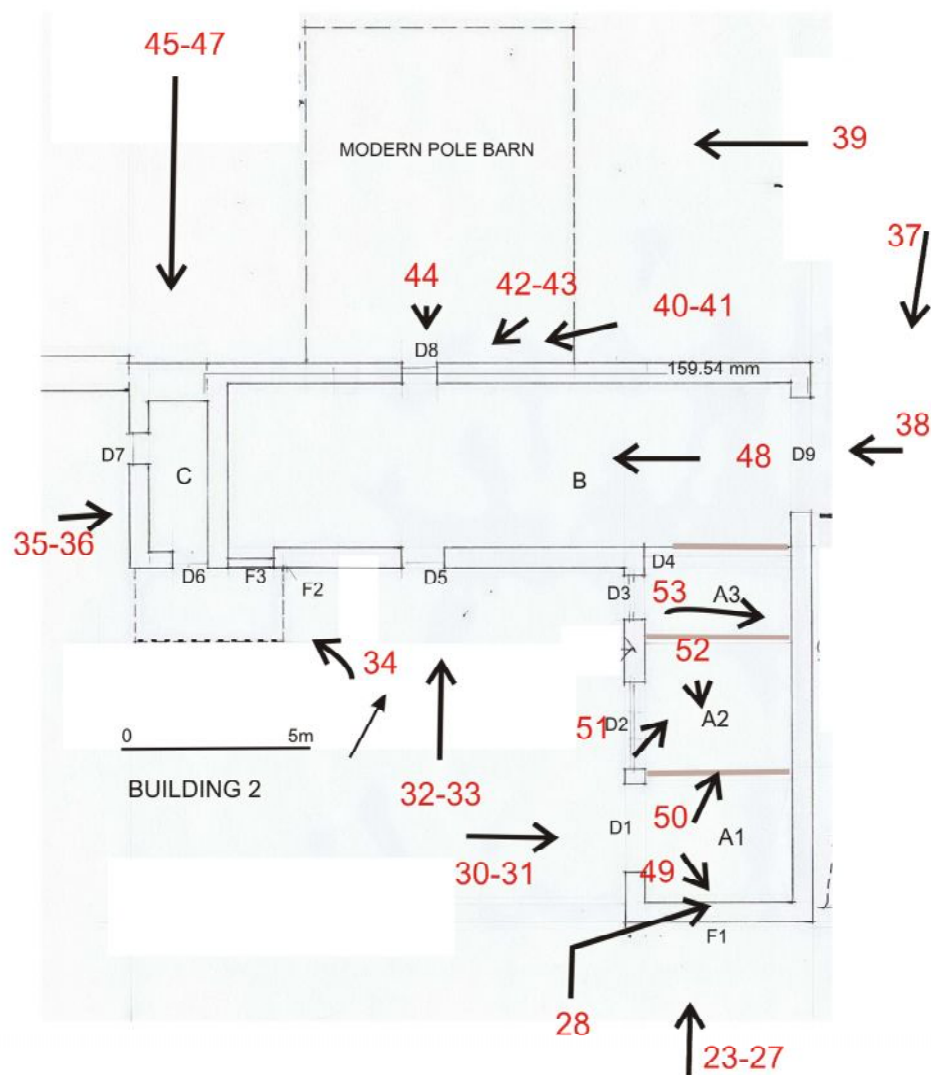


SITE PLAN

Illus 30 Photo location- general views.. Annotated from plan courtesy of William Lippe.



Illus 31 Photo location- Building 1. Annotated from plan courtesy of Alan Smith



Illus 32 Photo location Building 2 Annotated from plan courtesy of Alan Smith