

DNHHL:2001.038

RHIAN : A SUTHERLAND DRY-STONE CROFT HOUSE.

(Text underneath sketch)

A dry-stone building, with right angled corners, hearted with clay. The main central building has an outhouse abutting onto both ends by simple butt junction construction with no interdigitating stonework, suggesting they were of later construction. Both outhouses are sloping away, slightly from the main building, the eastern one having an interconnecting doorway, while that at the west end is discrete. South-facing, there are no north windows or entrances. There are no obvious roof crucks, and no signs of a wall fireplace or chimneys. There is much decay of all walls, with more massive collapse, in two places, of the inner wall, and especially at the entrances and windows. The stonework of the main house is excellent: that of the outhouses of more rough construction.

(Text below above on same board)

RHIAN : A croft house of probably some 300 years standing, in the valley of the Evelix River, in East Sutherland, is a discrete dwelling set in its own field system, with its own corn-drying kiln a hundred yards or so from the house. It is of interest in that, while of dry-stone construction, with clay hearting, it epitomises the utilisation of more modern dressed stone vertical walls, with right angled corners, using interlocking corner blocks, and so may be taken as a further transition stage between its largely turf walled progenitor and the cement and stone construction of its current counterpart. Its generic predecessors were the sloping walled, right angled cornered, dry-stone houses of Miss Grant's illustration, and the round ended version, of similar construction, there being no hard and fast demarcation in the evolution of the Highland croft house, though the central and east Highlands tended to anticipate more modern construction earlier, being less remote from the civilising influence of trade with the Continent, and were considerably less bleak. One would, however, have tended to equate the use of dressed stone, in association with rectilinear construction with such concurrent advances as, possibly, recessed fireplaces and intramural stone lined chimneys, but Rhian highlights a definite phase in Highland house development where the roof treatment lagged behind the advancing capabilities of more modern masons: or was it simply a matter of economy? Again – there are no traces of roof crucks.

(Texts with photographs on separate board)

DNHHL:2001.038.01 (Photo: S.J.T.R. 87/1/32A-33)

The front façade of the croft house “Rhian”, viewed from the south east, looking towards Achormlarie, in the far distance. The four highest peaks of masonry indicate the four corners of the main house. The west end byre is seen sloping towards the left of the picture, with a glimpse of the Evelix River behind it. To the right, the east byre, or extension of the main house is seen descending among the reeds to its narrowest east gable. Despite the massive collapse of the front of the building, especially about the main entrance and windows, a small (14” x 20”) window, complete with its inner lintel, remains (1987), and an idea of the good craftsmanship of the old masons is apparent. 7/2/87.

DNHHL: 2001.038.02 (Photo: S.J.T.R. 87/1/35A-36)

The interior of the main house, viewed from its south west corner. Achvaich farm steading is visible on the extreme left, with the Evelix River hugging the shoulder of the hill in the middle distance. Outstanding is the interconnecting doorway between the main house and the east byre, or extension. Mr James M. Bell, President of Dornoch Heritage Society, inspects a gap in the wall, probably a collapsed artefact as it is too narrow for a cupboard recess. The gentle slope is apparent. 7/2/87

DNHHL:2001.038.03 (Photo: S.J.T.R. 87/1/36A)

This view towards the east end of the main house block was taken standing on top of the north west corner where the wall seems to be intact for its full height. The inward bulging and collapse of the north (back) wall, together with the massive collapse of the front façade, and the crisp construction of the door way through to the east byre, or extension, are well displayed. The group of stones in the right hand top margin of the picture marks the site of the corn-drying kiln building. 7/2/87

DNHHL: 2001.038.04 (Photo: S.J.T.R. 87/1/33A-34)

The south east front corner of the main building block, showing the right angled corner construction, originally neatly blocked, but the victim of the ravages of collapse. The butt join of the eastern byre to the original house, suggesting a later addition, the extensive collapse of the front façade, together with the remains of a small (14” x 20”) window complete with inner lintel, or seen.

DNHHL: 2001.038.05 (Photo: S.J.T.R. 87/1/34A-35)

The south west front corner of the main building block showing rectilinear construction, the butt junction of the west byre wall and detail of the excellent masonry work. The west byre is now practically a heap of rubble. The building must be between two and three hundred years old and is a monument to the building craft of its day, with such empirical tools and materials. 7/2/87

DNHHL: 2001.038.06 (Photo: S.J.T.R. 87/5/10)

Rhian: view north west from the lower slopes of Beinn Bhreac, in front of Rhian croft house (middle distance right) to show the deeply excavated croft way winding down the hillside. Achormlarie croft is seen in the far distance with the Evelix River meandering in the bottom of the valley. The new forestry road over to Loch Buidhe skirts the hill opposite and climbs into the distance. 7/2/87

DNHHL: 2001.038.07 (Photo: S.J.T.R. 87/5/6)

Rhian: view into corn-drying kiln remains of Rhian croft house 7/2/87

DNHHL: 2001.038.08 (Photo: S.J.T.R. 87/5/9)

Rhian: Distant view northwards down the lower sloped of Beinn Bhreac onto the front of Rhian croft house (centre of frame, middle distance) showing croft tract winding down hillside. The Evelix River lies in the bottom and the new forestry road is seen at the base of the hill opposite. Note vertically set stones marking the edge of the track. 7/2/87

DNHHL: 2001.038.09 (Photo: S.J.T.R. 87/5/2)

Rhian: North west corner of main croft house, from inside the building, to show right angled corner construction. Achormlarie Croft in the distance, and new forestry road from thence to Loch Buidhe may be seen rising into the distant hills. 7/2/87

DNHHL: 2001.038.010 (Photo: S.J.T.R. 87/5/3)

Rhian: Croft house in the valley of the Evelix River, between Achvaich and Achormlarie (O.S. Sheet 21 0 1:50 000 Series; Grid Ref: 708.939): view of front façade of Rhian croft house complex, from the south west showing rectilinear construction with butt joined outhouses, suggesting later construction. Field system boundary wall remains are in the foreground. 7/2/87

DNHHL: 2001.038.011 (Photo: S.J.T.R. 87/5/4)

Rhian: Close up of south east front corner of main house to show rectilinear construction: butt joined east end outhouse, suggestive of later extension, and lintel of a small, southe facing front window (14" x 20").

DNHHL: 2001.038.012 (Photo: S.J.T.R. 87/5/5)

Rhian: The remains of the east end wall, of the east outhouse or extension to the croft house, here three feet thick, viewed from the south east.