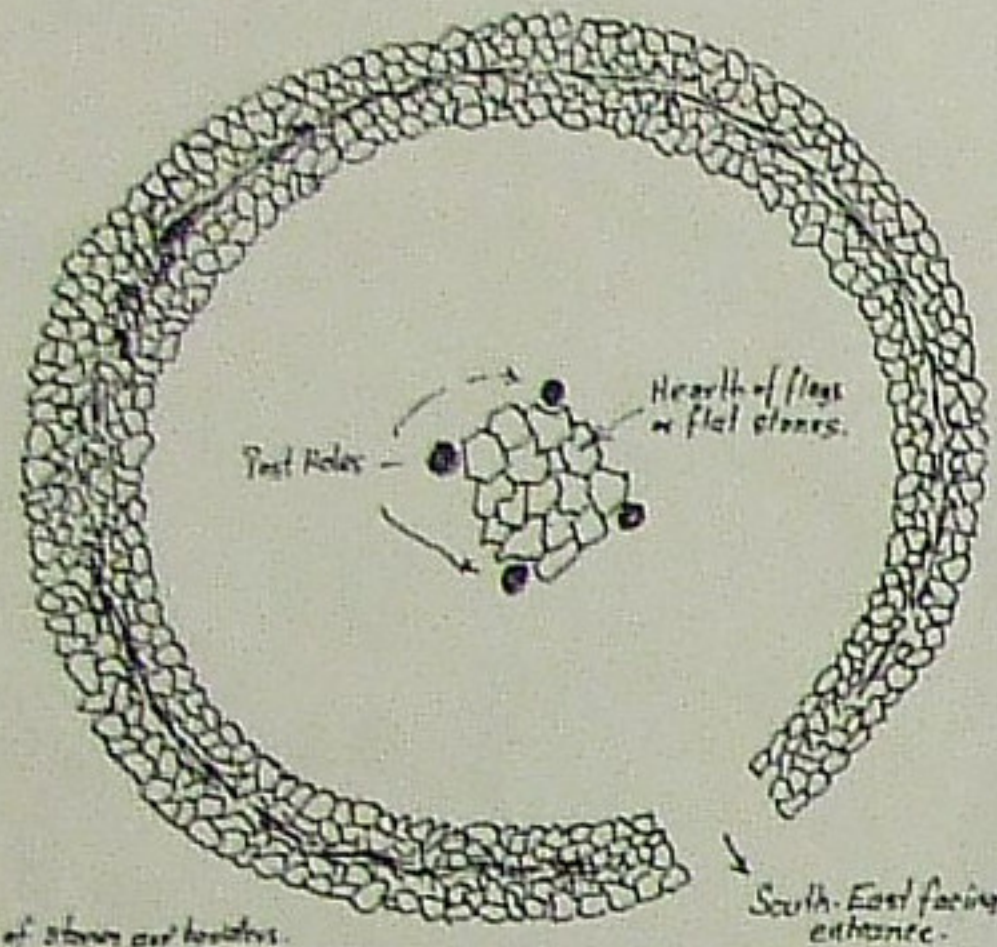
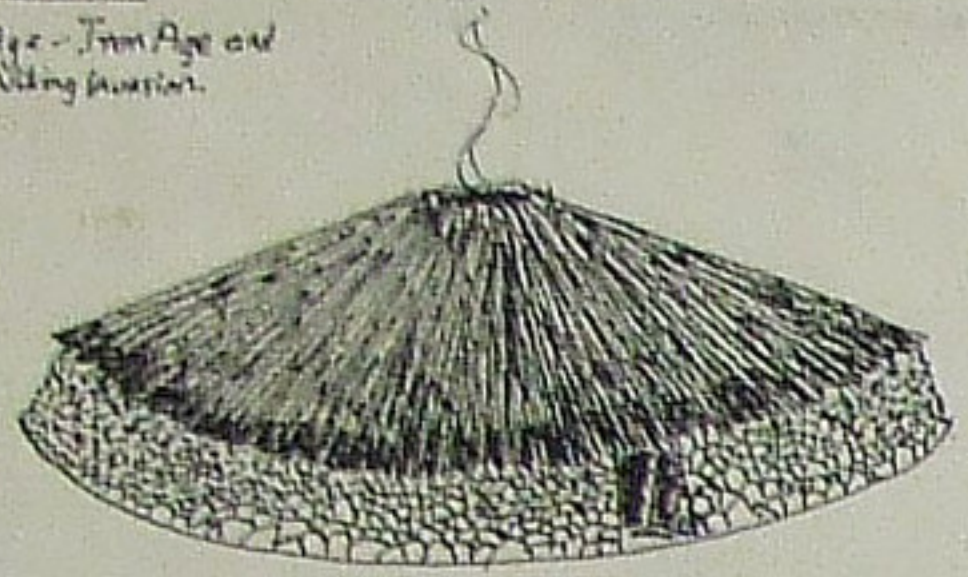


HUT CIRCLE

Bronze Age - Iron Age and up to the Viking invasion.



Foundation - of stone or turves.
 Walls - dry-stone or turves.
 Roof - four central poles carried a square wooden frame from which wicker poles radiated and were set into the walls. The whole was thatched with whatever material was available: heather, reeds, bracken, willow - interlaced with wicker and turf.
 Heating - Central stone-flag, or flat stone hearth, with square hole in the roof to let smoke escape.

THE ARCHITECTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SCOTTISH CROFTER COTTAGE.

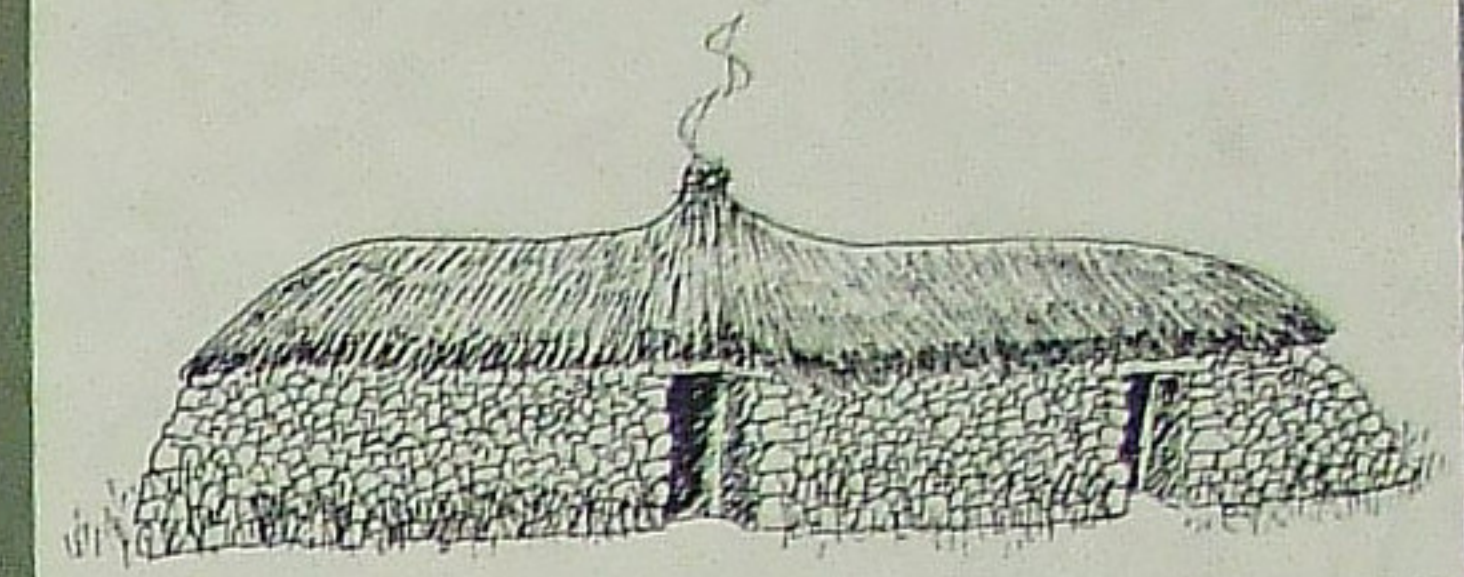
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The entire valley of the Evelix River, from its source in Loch Laro, in the hills behind, and north of Bonar, has been heavily settled with primitive agricultural traces down to the more modern small farmers and crofting folk, from Bronze and Iron Age times, and examples of most types of house construction from the pre-historic Hut-circle through to the modern cement-and-stone built, slate-roofed cottage may be found, together with several interesting and well-preserved examples of more modern eorn-drying kilns, making the entire catchment area of the Evelix River an open-air museum of crofting and pre-historic architecture.

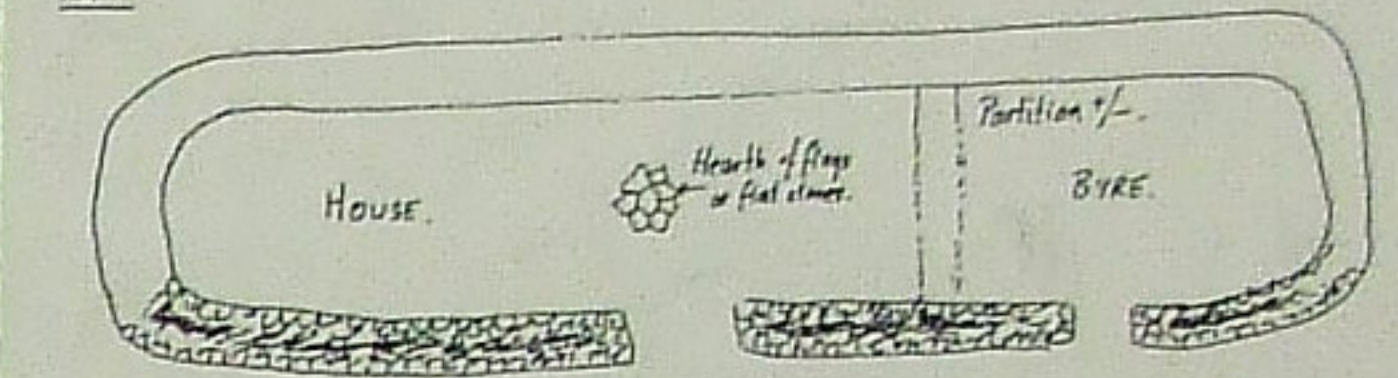
Rhian was probably inhabited within the current hundred-year span, and has been taken as a good example of Phase III croft-house construction; a review of the development of design since the Vikings introduced the "Long-House" architectural concept after the withdrawal of the Romans, is outlined in the pen-drawings below. Many of the families of these old crofting cottages spread throughout the valley are traceable in the 1841 Census returns for the County of Sutherland.

These little pen-drawings have been based upon Miss L.F. Grant's Highland Folk Ways (1961), and other sources, and while descriptions of the older ones tend to vary on certain points, from source to source, historical anecdote remains almost the only evidence to base any concept of construction upon.

PHASE I - The Long House (Viking Influence)



PLAN:



Foundations - usually none; just bare earth.
 Walls - of turf and stones. Often recessed into a hillside. Rounded corners.
 Roof - introduction of standard rafters and rafter purlins - probably with tie-beams - though of rudely shaped boughs, and thatched with any available material - usually heather and divots of turf. Thatching usually roped and weighted down with heavy stones.
 Heating - Central stone-flag, or flat stone hearth, with hole in the roof - the first "Birk House".

PHASE II - Dressed Stone Introduced.

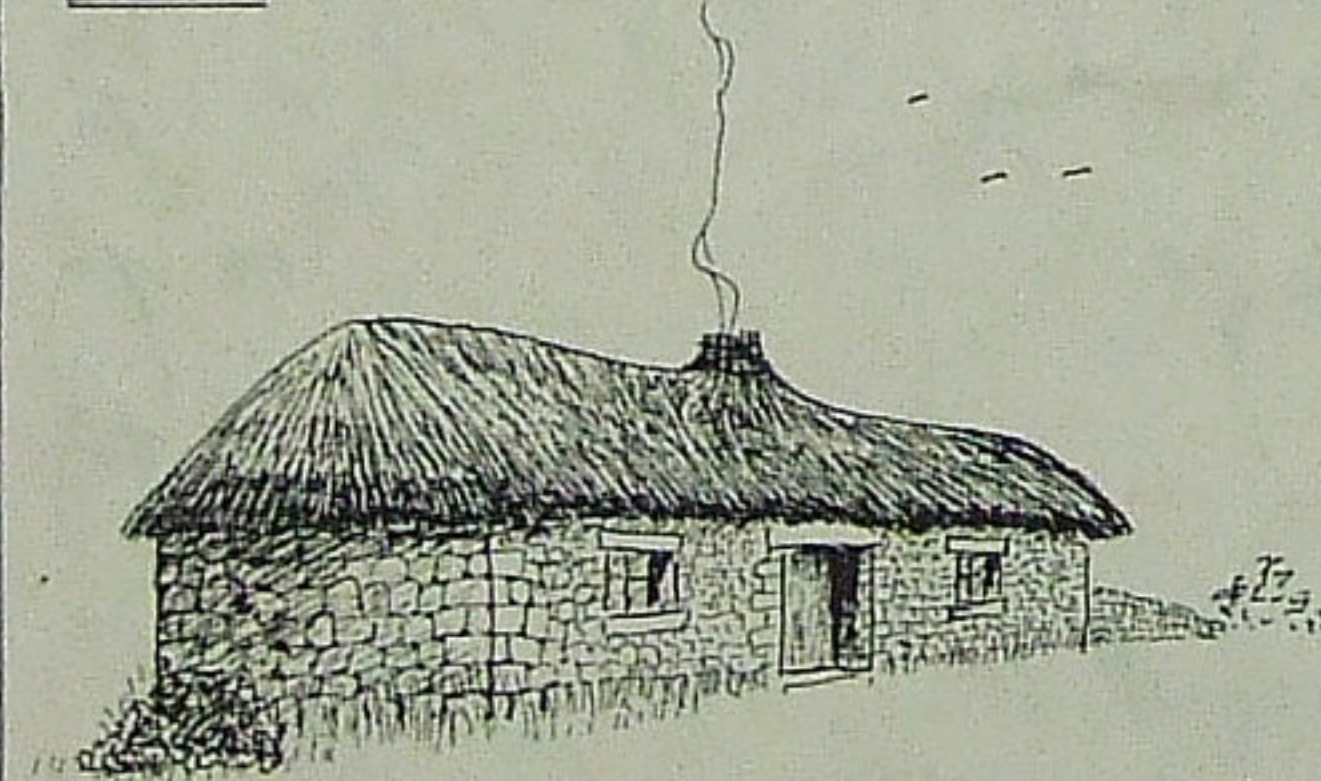


The introduction of roughly-dressed stone meant both an economy in the use of that material and the emergence of the right-angled corner. The walls remained sloping for both strength and stability of the piled stones and were heathered with clay. Windows, however empirical, had arrived: these were wooden-shuttered vents in the walls, as glass was not yet available.

The communal house-cum-byre began to see the segregation of beasts from man, into an outhouse, or extension byre, partitioned off, and usually at a lower level for drainage purposes, though still communicating with the main building so as not to lose valuable animal warmth.

Bare-earth floors with a central flagstone, slate or sandstone hearth below a central hole in the thatched roof aided smoke dispersal.

PHASE III - The Vertical-Walled Building.

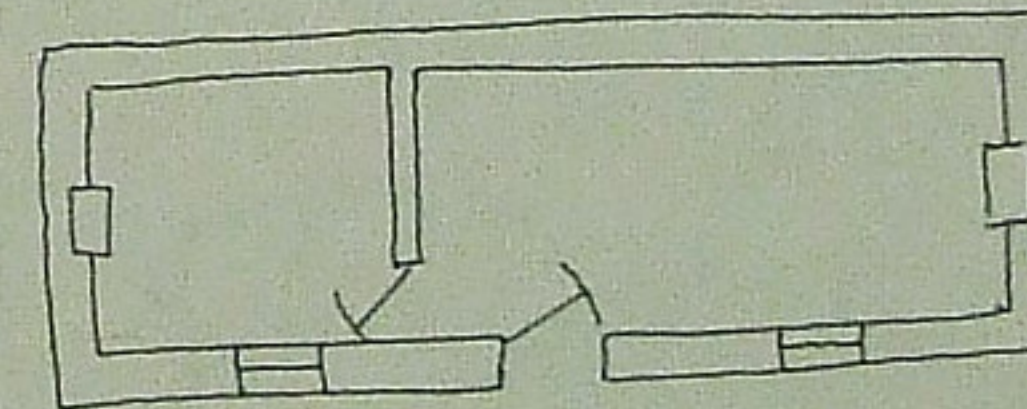
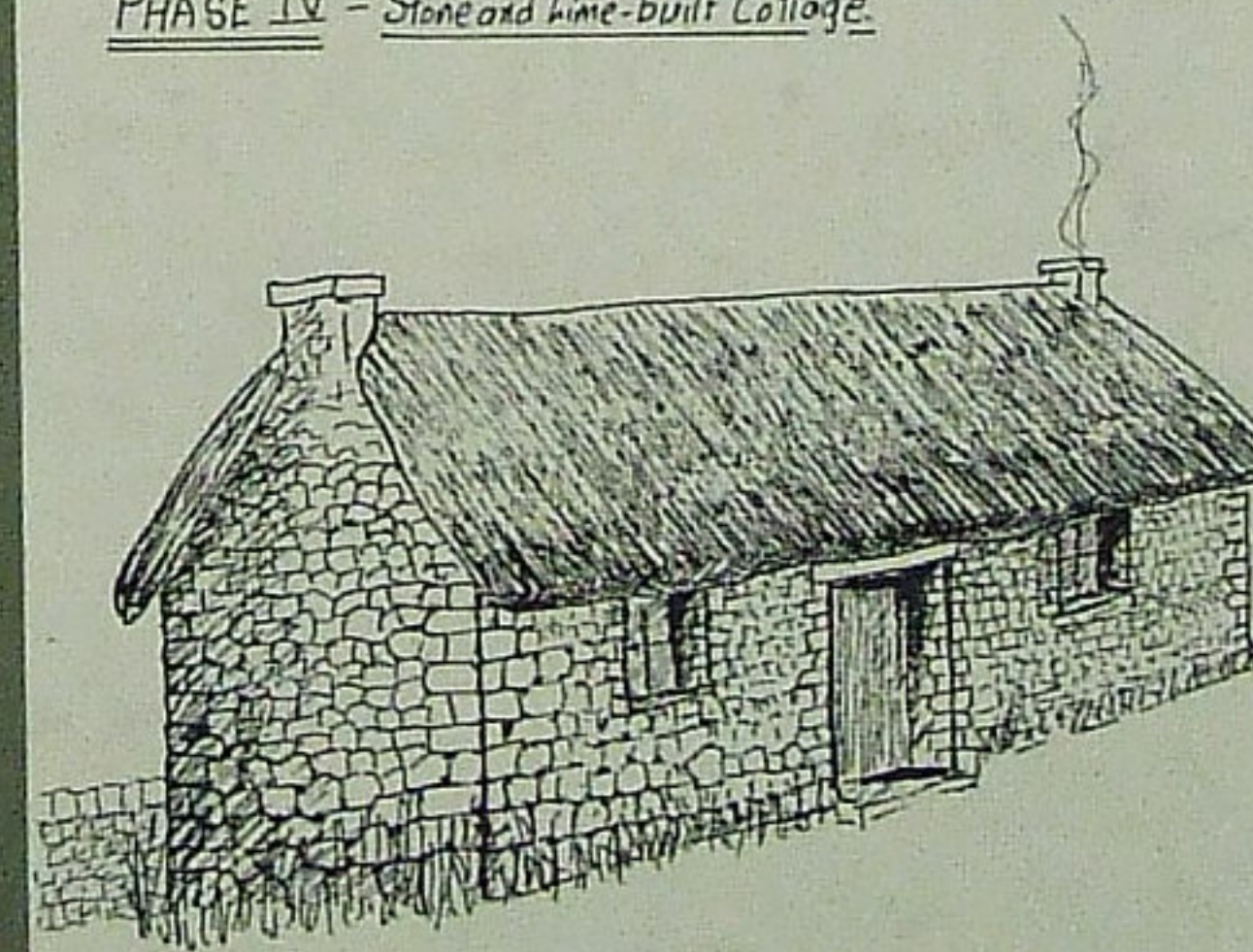


Roof: is still thatch, using heather or other locally available material, and with a central chimney-hole. The thatch was secured by slabs of dried peat or divots of turf, pinned or roped down.

Walls: are dry-stone, but using dressed corner stones, and we have the completely rectilinear building - but without gabled ends. The body of the walls used largely unworked, or roughly dressed stones, and crissec were maintained in so far as the material allowed.

Doors and Windows: are all a neater fit, and so more draught-proof. Originally the windows would be shuttered, though these would be replaced, in time, with small glass panes.

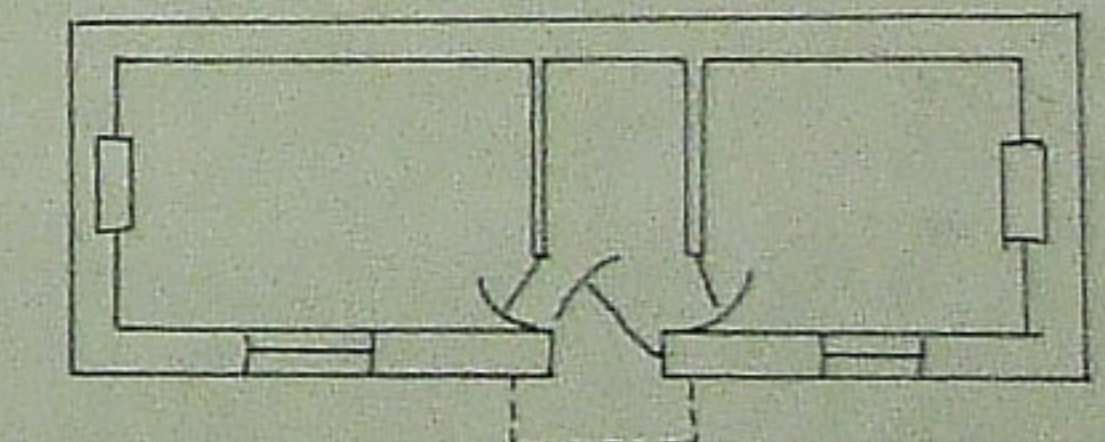
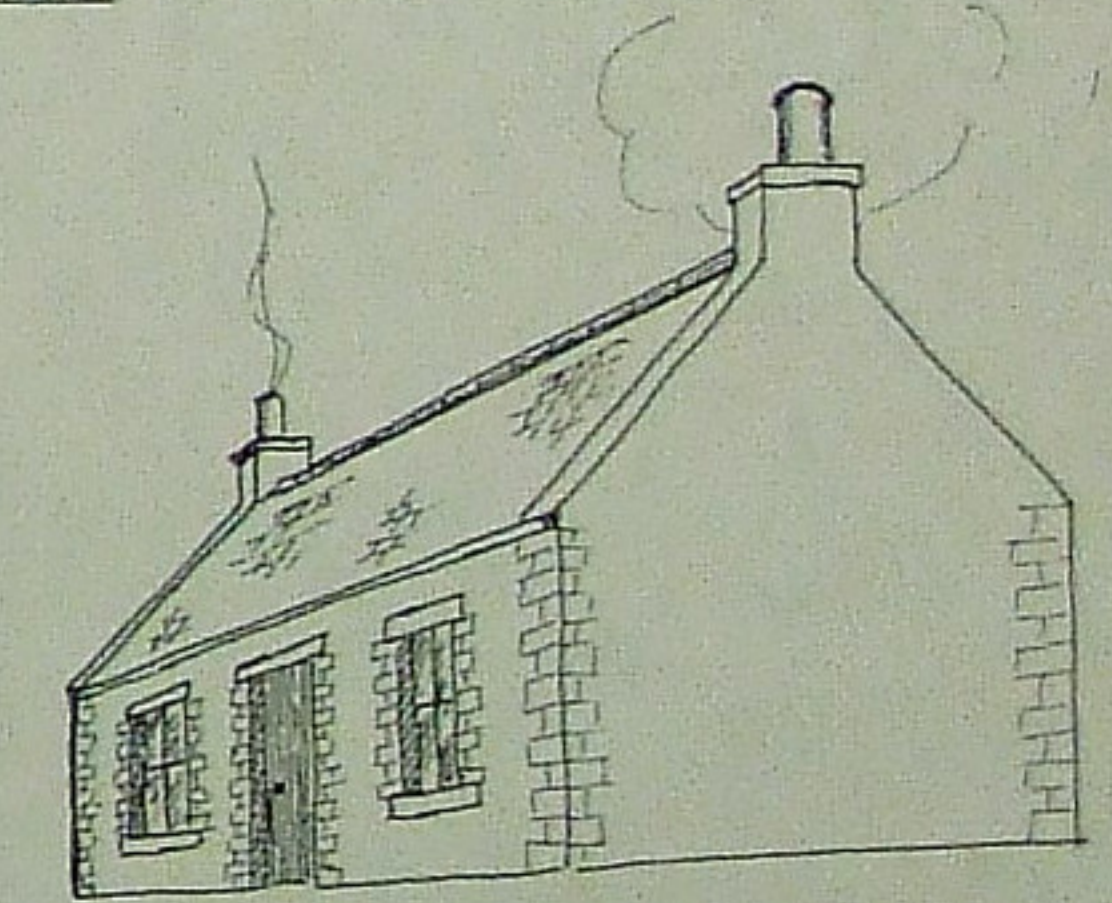
PHASE IV - Stone and lime-built Cottage.



Here we have the early two-roomed cottage, constructed of dressed stone and lime-mortar, gabled and with gable chimneys. The roof remains of thatch on standard timbering, and heating was by two recessed fireplaces with stone-lined flues within the gable-ends, and open chimney-pops.

The first "But-and-Ben" Scots Cottage, of eighteenth century vintage, and referred to by Grant as the "Iny-side" Cottage. There was a living-room with a bedroom off it, with internal wall partitioning. Many were as narrow as their clay-stone predecessors, but from this point onwards, broader and higher building took place.

PHASE V - The Modern Slate-roofed Cottage.



A stone-and-mortar built cottage with slate roof (occasionally corrugated iron). In addition to two rooms, the front-door now opened into a narrow two-room space used for hanging outdoor clothes, personal belongings, sacks of grain, seed or cattle food. In many cases an outside porch was added which enhanced appearances and gave for a warmer, less draughty house. Chimney pots now capped the chimney heads.