



**ARO67: A Minister's abandoned farmstead at
Greenan, Strath Brora, Sutherland**

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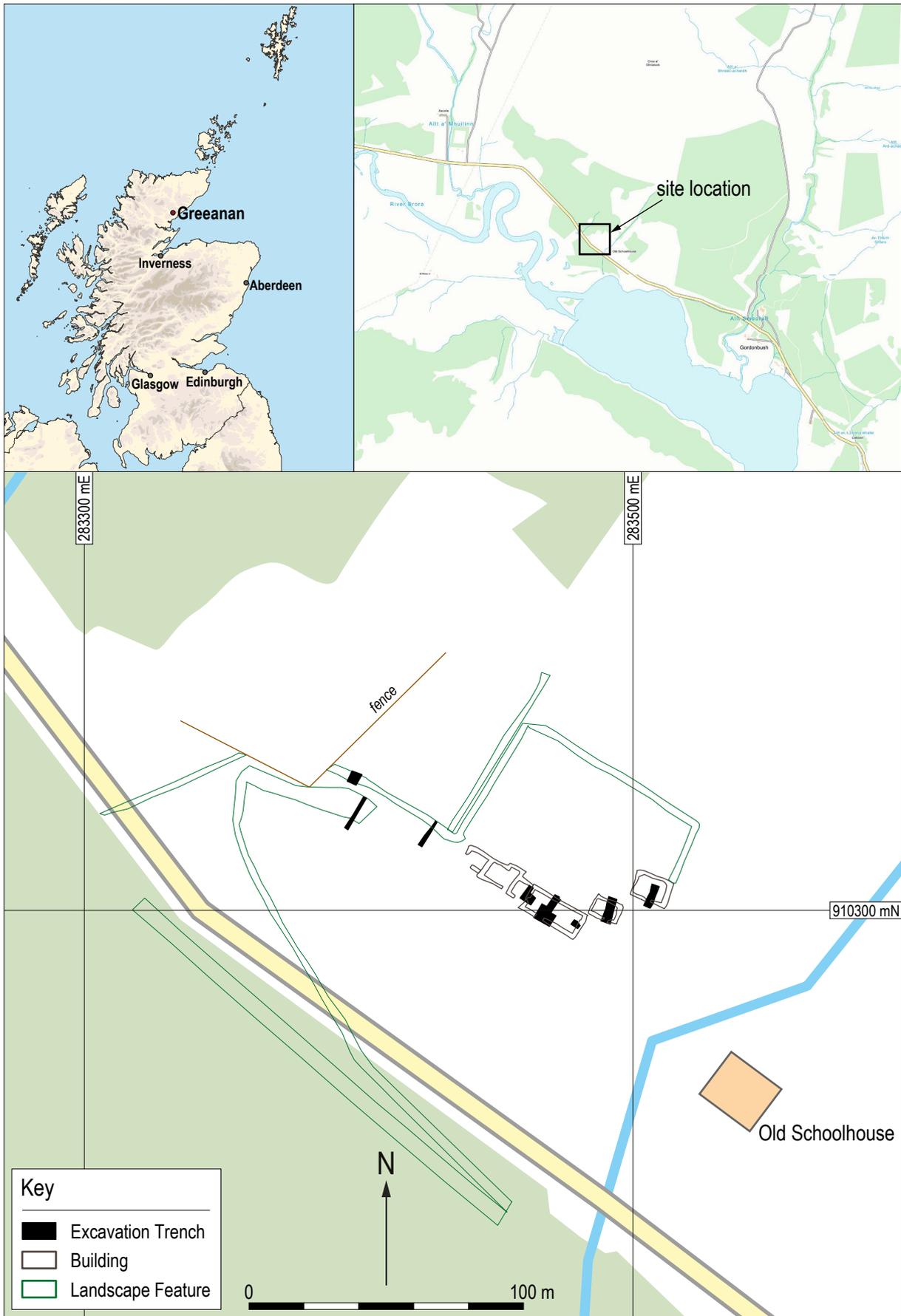
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Summary

The extant remains of Greeanan Steading comprised six roofless, heavily dilapidated structures, all of which appear originally to have been thatched. A vestigial garden, now marked by a dispersed patch of rhubarb (*Rheum rhabarbarum*), survives on the steep, south-west facing slope below the principal range, testifying to cultivation more than a century ago after the steading's abandonment in the early twentieth century. Architectural style, documentary and cartographic sources place the original steading in the early to mid-eighteenth century, although the complex was modified periodically and most recently in the nineteenth century under Walter Ross's stewardship. Its present survival is limited to wall bases and selected interior fittings, although the site has high interpretive value for studies of post-Improvement rural architecture, tenancy change and the material aftermath of the Highland Clearances in the Brora area.



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Figure 1: Site with trench locations.

Introduction

An archaeological excavation was undertaken by GUARD Archaeology Ltd, on behalf of Clyne Heritage Society at Greeanan, Loch Brora, Sutherland (Figure 1). The work was carried out between 13th June and 19th June 2022 to investigate the remains of parts of the Greeanan Farm Steading and other associated features in the immediate surrounding area. The investigations involved members of the Clyne Heritage Society, volunteers from the local community and archaeology students from the universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, including overseas students from America and China. The project involved the hand excavation of a series of eight trenches across parts of the farmstead buildings' footprints, an enclosure wall and a track approaching the farm steading from the north-west. A metal detecting survey was also undertaken across the site.

Site Location and Description

Greeanan lies on improved pasture just to the north of an unclassified road at the north-west end of Loch Brora approximately 6.5 miles north-west of Brora, Sutherland (NGR: NC 83490 10250). The geology of the area is Kildonan psammite overlain by Devensian till (BGS 2025). The site is located on top of a small elevated promontory on the south-west facing of Cnoc a' Ghrianain and has excellent views up and down Strath Brora to the north-west and south-east. To the south-east is the former Strath Brora School latterly used as a Scout Hut and now converted to a domestic dwelling house.

The site has the remains of three buildings; two detached apparently single-roomed structures, the principal building is made up of four compartments with an enclosure to the north, and a trackway accessing the site off the main Strath Brora Road (Figure 2). The steading is located in the parish of Clyne in Sutherland.

Archaeological and Historical Background

Only two archaeological sites are noted on the Highland Historic Environment Record within 100 m of Greeanan: an undated cairn is located approximately 65 m to the north of the site (HER ID: MHG30031), and an undated quarry scoop is located 100 m to the east (HER ID: MHG32075). Other information is from historic maps.

'Grianan' (HER ID: MHG32074) is first marked on the *Roy Military Survey of Scotland, 1747-1755* with eight structures noted, suggesting a construction date by at least the early to mid-eighteenth century (Figure 3). It was also marked on Thomson's 1832 *Atlas of Scotland* as Greenan, although only the name and no buildings were recorded.

The First Edition OS map of 1879 (surveyed 1872) showed four buildings at 'Greeanen', within, or on the edge of, two small enclosed areas of cultivated land (Figure 4). A trackway was noted running to the north-west from the main road, before turning back on itself to run ESE to the buildings at 'Greeanen'. A rectangular garden was also depicted directly to the south-west of the main buildings. By the time of the 1907 (surveyed 1904) OS map only one of the buildings at 'Greeanen' was still roofed, and both the trackway and the garden had disappeared. The nearby school to the east was depicted for the first time. However, a postcard from 1914 appears to show the main building at 'Greeanen' still roofed. The buildings were still visible on the 1940 War Office map, although the fourth building was depicted as unroofed.

The proposed area of investigation comprised the remains of the lower courses of each of the three buildings at Greeanan, the enclosure wall, and the trackway.

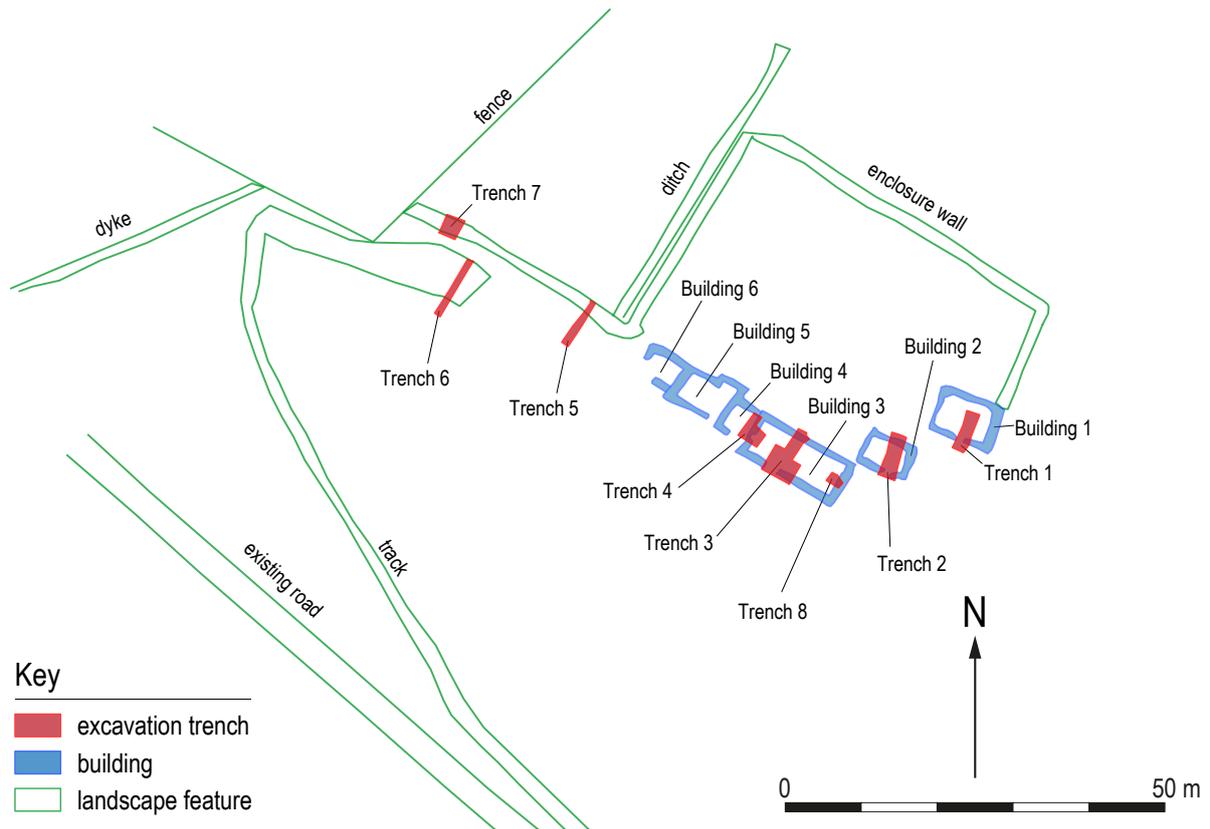


Figure 2: Plan view of Greenan, the footprints of the buildings and enclosure walls forming the steading are clearly visible, with the position of the excavation trenches.



Figure 3: Greenan as shown on the Roy Military Survey 1747 – 1755, © British Library Board

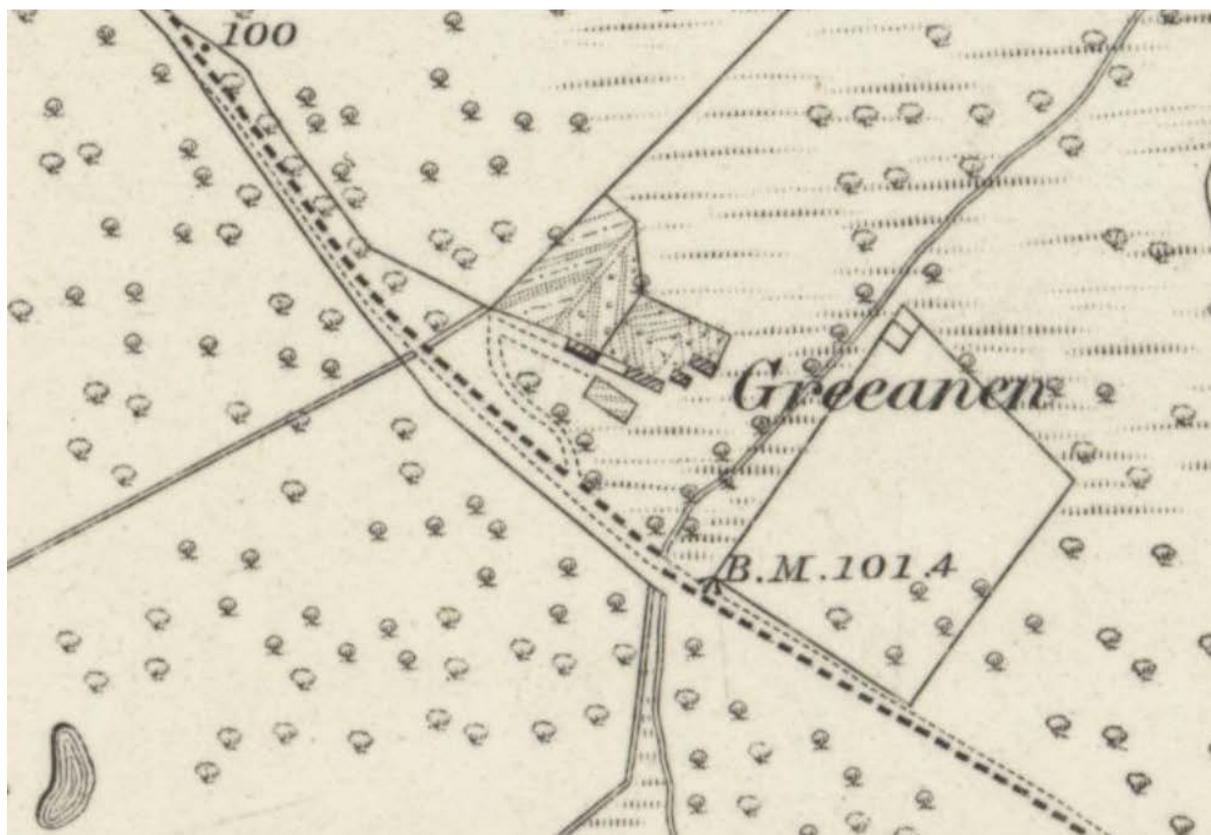


Figure 4: 'Greeanan' depicted on an extract from the Ordnance Survey map of Sutherland, Sheet XC VII six inch 1st edition published 1879 (includes: Clyne; Golspie).

A short history of Mr Walter Ross the minister at Greeanan

The notorious minister Mr Walter Ross held the tack (lease) at Greeanan. In 1777, he was appointed minister of the parish of Clyne, succeeding a Mr Gordon, against the wishes of the local parishioners, who had wanted Mr Graham, a native of Lairg. The Countess of Sutherland, patron of the parish rejected Mr Graham's nomination and endorsed Mr Ross, whose theological and personal principles she preferred. Mr Ross was not regarded as an effective preacher, as his sermons were often borrowed from others, which he memorised and reproduced verbatim, sometimes for wages. He was described as irreverent, frivolous and frequently dishonest, thereby undermining his moral authority as a minister (Sage 1889, 70-71)

In addition to his various local duties, Mr Walter Ross was incidentally and indirectly involved

in foreign trade, specifically in the form of contraband activities, which were widespread along the Sutherland coast during that period. Smuggling vessels regularly landed goods, primarily spirits, at numerous inlets and harbours where they anticipated demand. One of the key figures in this illicit trade was Hugh Houston of Brora, who was significantly engaged in the distribution of smuggled merchandise. Revenue officers (gaugers) were tasked with intercepting such operations and were authorised to search private homes and storage facilities. Mr Ross had aided Mr Houston in avoiding the officers' intelligence about his possession of a substantial quantity of illegal spirits. Mr Ross organised to move the contraband at night using local residents with carts and to transport the gin and brandy to be concealed in the church at Clyne. The following day the revenue officers found no evidence of the illicit cargo after searching Houston's. Subsequently, Mr Houston ceased his commercial activities in Brora and took a lease on the farm of Clyneleish, located near the manse of Clyne (Sage 1889, 390-391).

Despite his shortcomings in ecclesiastical duties, Mr Ross was skilled in farming, cattle trading and estate management. During the summer, he managed a grazing estate at Greeanan near the River Brora, where he raised cattle for profitable sale. While residing there, he would preach on Sundays in a tent to reach inhabitants of the more remote areas of the parish. His skill in domestic and financial management led Sir Charles Ross of Balnagown to engage him to oversee the household at Balnagown Castle, resulting in the neglect of his ministerial responsibilities in Clyne. Mr Walter Ross married Elizabeth Sutherland, the daughter of Captain John Sutherland, who resided at the farm of Clyneleish near the manse. The couple had two children, a son and a daughter but Mr Ross passed away aged c. 74 years of age in 1825 (Sage 1889, 71-72). He was succeeded as Clyne parish minister by Dr Hugh Mackenzie (Munro 1953, 30), and a David Gordon moved to Greeanan, to a very comfortable cottage which Mr Ross had built for his own use (Munro 1953 47). In the 1841 census, newlyweds John Matheson (79) and Isabella Baillie (27) are recorded as being married and living at Greeanan (Nick Lindsay, pers comm.). There are people from the area recorded in succeeding censuses, whose last occupation is noted in the 1911 census.

Metal Detecting Survey Results

A metal detecting survey was conducted across the investigation areas and the immediate area around the Greeanan Steading by a local metal detectorist, after consultation with the site directors. Two coins were found, one a 1970s 1 penny piece (SF 005) the other a pre-decimalisation coin, possibly a half-penny piece (SF 003). Three expended brass bullet cases (SF 010, 011 and 014) were found, although the calibre of the weapon that discharged them is unclear. A large axe head was recovered from the enclosure to the north of the steading and a bent lead double disc and lead strip (SF 002) and a bent iron bar (SF 015) was also recovered. Modern finds included ring pulls and tent pegs.

The Excavation

The excavation was designed to target Greeanan Farmhouse and the buildings and features associated with it (Figure 5). The trenches were located across areas of each building with the intention of investigating specific features of the above ground built-remains noted during an initial site visit by Nick Lindsay of the Clyne Heritage Society. Where it was deemed appropriate, trenches were expanded to provide an opportunity to better understand the various elements of the structures.

Across the site was a thin post-abandonment topsoil and turf horizon consisting of grey-brown sandy loam (001) with gravel c. 0.15 m in thickness. It was also found over the collapsed walls and interiors of each building. The underlying natural subsoil comprised pale orange-yellow sandy clay with gravel and occasional cobbles.

The buildings and enclosure walls were all built from a mixture of red and grey granite, and fine-grained sandstone. The sandstone was a local resource but granite could have come from glacial erratics or been brought in perhaps from as far away as Helmsdale or Rogart (BSG 2025). The buildings all featured large stones and occasional boulders forming the fabric of the exterior elevations although much of this material had been robbed, smaller random rubble brought was used to face the walls' internal elevations. The areas of paving encountered in the farmhouse appeared to have been laid using Caithness flagstone, which may also have been incorporated into the floor surfaces of other buildings.

The retained artefact assemblage consisted of 86 sherds of pottery, 196 shards of glass, 251 metal items (17 of which were Metal Detecting finds), 11 finds of bone, 84 pieces of building material and 1 object made of shell.



Figure 5: General view of the Greenan Steading during excavation with views over Loch Brora towards Carrol Rock.

The farmhouse

Three trenches were excavated across parts of the Greenan farmhouse, the largest building on site located towards the top of a steep south-west facing slope. This was abutted by a range of buildings to the north-west. Trenches 3, 4 and 8 were excavated across parts of the farmhouse with Trench 4 extended to the north-east to investigate the relationship between the farmhouse and store. Trench 3 was excavated across the south-west and north-east walls of the building (3003 and 3004, respectively) and across part of the interior (Figure 6). Trench 4 was located across the north-west gable wall; Trench 8 was located across the south-east gable wall. In Trench 3 below a shallow topsoil and turf horizon (3001) and varying depths of tumble/collapse (3002) the north-east and south-west walls of the building were revealed along with a variety of floor surfaces.

The north-east wall of the farmhouse (3004) was built of random rubble bonded with lime mortar. It comprised sub-rounded and sub-angular stones brought roughly to course along the inside face of the wall with smaller chocking and pinning stones used throughout the wall's

construction. The internal face was partially covered by plaster render (3007), which was also present along the internal face of the south-west wall (3003) (Figure 7). Large stones formed the outside face of the wall with a lime mortar bonded rubble core (Figure 8). Occasional single through-stones were visible laid across the width of the wall (Figure 9). The large stones forming the outside face of the wall were visible built off a projecting lime mortar bonded foundation wall (3010) projecting externally 0.06 m beyond the base of the wall. The wall was excavated over a distance of 1.56 m and measured 0.55 m in width by 0.43 m in height.

The south-west wall (3003) featured large stones forming its outside face, visible along the unexcavated area of the wall but these have largely been robbed around the excavated area of the wall. There was no definitive evidence of the entrance to the farmhouse that appeared, but it seems to have been slightly offset towards the north-west end of the south-west wall (3003). The entrance may have featured useful stone around the margins of the doorway that were robbed for reuse after the building's abandonment. The approximate position of the threshold was indicated by two large rectangular



Figure 6: The location of trenches across the excavated area of the farmhouse.



Figure 7: Internal elevation of wall (3004) showing remnants of plaster render adhering to the wall. From the south-west.



Figure 8: Wall (3004) built off foundation (3010) showing large boulders used to face the external edge of the wall, From the north-east.



Figure 9: Wall (3004) showing large through stone incorporated into the wall build. From the south-east.

paving slabs (3006) laid on a bed of mortar, each measuring 0.7 m in length by 0.48 m in width and 0.02 m in thickness, now broken and cracked. The paving was abutted to the north-east and south-west by a decorative arrangement of truncated orange unglazed tiled surfaces (3005 and 3008 respectively; Figures 10 and 11).

In conjunction with the decorative but functional paved and tiled area adjacent to the threshold the very degraded remains of wooden joists (3014) aligned north-east/south-west were recorded measuring up to 0.5 m in length by 0.04 m in width and spaced 0.61 m apart. These were overlain by similarly degraded wooden floorboards (3020), aligned north-west/south-east measuring up to 0.2 m in length by 0.18 m in width and had been secured to the joists by hand made, square headed iron nails. Further remains of the wooden flooring (Figure 12) in the farmhouse were recorded in Trench 4 as (4009/4016) and in Trench 8 as (8009).

The remains of a thin vertical plaster screed (3013) formed a partition aligned north-east/south-west (Figure 13). It had inclusions of small stones and the imprint of a vertically set timber baton on the east side of the feature. This appeared to have enclosed the north-western most room in the farmhouse and was recorded to the immediate north of the paved and tiled floor that appeared to have led to the entrance of this room. Wooden floor boards (3020) and joist remnants (3014) with iron nails were visible on both sides of the partition.

Finds recovered from Trench 3 in the farmhouse included numerous pottery sherds, iron nails, window, bottle and possibly lamp glass, part of a clay tobacco pipe bowl, a button made of shell (SF 3016), a bone spoon (SF 3021), a glass button (SF 3027) and an ornamental small pyramidal-shaped object possibly of jasper (SF 3050).



Figure 10: Paved area (3006) and decorative orange unglazed tiles (3005 and 3008) indicating approximate position of threshold through the south-west wall (3003), visible top right of frame, of the farmhouse, from the north-west.





Figure 12: Remains of timber joists (4009), white arrows indicate position of vertically set nails in Trench 4, the farmhouse, from the south-east.



Figure 13: Remains of timber clad plaster partition (3013) and north-east to south-west aligned timber joists, white arrows indicate position of vertically set nails, from the north-west.

The north-west gable wall (4003) of the farmhouse was recorded in Trench 4 and found incorporating a splayed hearth (Figure 14). The wall, aligned north-east/south-west was built from sub-angular and sub-rounded lime mortar bonded-rubble brought to course with frequent small pinning and choking stones that were also used to fill the voids between larger stones. The roughly faced internal and external wall edges did not feature the large stones used on external walls of other steading buildings. The internal face showed evidence of having been rendered with a lime plaster. The presence of frequent wall plaster fragments was found in a discrete deposit (4005) close to the wall, which also contained numerous broken orange tile fragments. The wall measured 5.8 m in length by 0.8 m in width by 0.58 m in height. The wall incorporated a splayed hearth recess partially lined with unfrosted red brick (4012) and a fragment of collapsed cast-iron hearth furnishing was found lying over a basal ashy fill (4011). The hearth measured 0.86 m by 0.46 m leaving the wall only a single course of stone wide at the back of the hearth. A single broken flat paving slab (4015) bedded in mortar measured 0.54 m by 0.46 m by 0.03 m and was

all that survived of a paved area in front of the hearth.

Trench 4 was expanded to the north-east to establish the relationship between Buildings 3 and 4 (Figure 15). The north-east wall of Building 4 was partially excavated and was aligned north-west/south-east, built with sub-angular and sub-rounded rubble with an earth-bound rubble core, brought roughly to course and with roughly faced edges. Large boulders formed the outside edges of the wall and occasional single through stones were visible laid across its width. The wall measured 0.94 m in length (where excavated) by 0.8 m in width by 0.63 m in height and abutted the north-west wall (3004) of the farmhouse (Figure 16). Below the tumble collapse (4002) inside this building an earth floor (4007) was recorded. This comprised a brown-black, slightly sandy loam 0.10 m thick with occasional gravel and occasional lumps of coal. Finds recovered from the floor included bottle glass fragments and an iron nail. Other finds from Trench 4 recovered from within the farmhouse included nails, glass, pottery sherds, animal bones and a fragment of a writing slate (SF 4032), along with a possible ink well and stylus (SF 4004).



Figure 14: The north-west gable wall of the farmhouse (4003) incorporating a hearth partially lined using red brick (4012) and a truncated area of paving (4015) in front of the hearth From the south-east.



Figure 15: Plan of the excavated area of the farmhouse and store, in Trench 4.



Figure 16: North-west facing elevation of north-east gable wall (4003) of the farmhouse abutted by the north wall (4014) of Building 4. From the north-west.

The south-east gable wall (8007) of the farmhouse was excavated in Trench 8 (Figure 17). The wall aligned north-east/south-west was built from similar sub-angular and sub-rounded rubble bonded with lime mortar brought to course and roughly faced on its internal face. The external face was constructed from large edge set boulders measuring 700 mm by 600 mm. The wall incorporated a splayed hearth recess (8004), the base of which was lined with flat stones (Figure 18). The wall measured 1.13 m in length (excavated) by 0.95 m in width by 0.7 m in height. The hearth within the wall measured 1.2 m in length, reducing to 0.78 m at the rear of the splay, by 0.52 m in width. A single large boulder formed the width of the wall (8007) at the rear of the hearth. Below the hearth at the base of the trench a mixed rubble infill layer (8006) was recorded, that appeared to have been laid down to level this part of the site in conjunction with the construction of the farmhouse. A single very degraded timber floor joist (8009) was visible lying on top of the rubble infill layer (8006). Finds of metal, glass and pottery were recovered from Trench 8 during excavation.

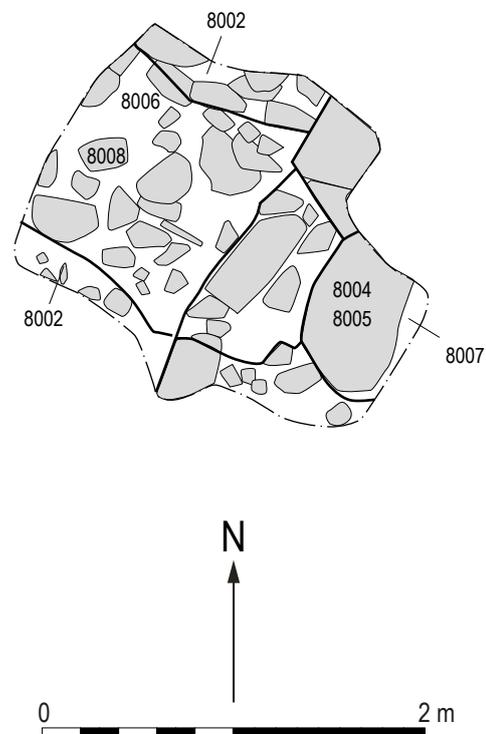


Figure 17: Plan of the excavated area of the farmhouse, in Trench 8.



Figure 18: South-east gable wall (8007) of Building 3 incorporating hearth (8004), below which the rubble infill/levelling layer (8006) is visible. From the north-west.

The byre

The byre was built against, and partially into, a steep slope at the south-east end of the site. A single trench, Trench 1, was positioned from the south side of the entrance through the south-west facing wall (1004) extending across the interior of the building towards the north-east wall (Figures 19 and 20). A shallow turf and topsoil layer (1001) was removed, below this a layer of stone and earth tumble/collapse (1008) was also removed to reveal a floor surface (1003) inside the building, and an area of paving (1002) immediately outside the entrance to the building. The internal floor (1003) comprised a mixture of sub-angular slabs, sub-rounded and sub-angular stones laid on bed quite tightly butted together with voids between stones filled with smaller stones and gravel. The floor was laid over a buried topsoil horizon (1007). The overall dimensions of the exposed area of floor were 3.51 m by 1.6 m and it continued below the trench edges to the north, east and west.



Figure 19: Post-excavation view of Trench 1 across the byre. From the south west.

The entrance to the byre was approximately 1 m in width and the opening was offset slightly towards the south-east end of the south-west wall (1004). The entrance was flanked by large end-set boulders measuring 800 mm in length by 700 mm in width by 550 mm in thickness. The south-eastern stone had been displaced and now lies recumbent to the south of its original position. The paving (1002) at the threshold outside the building comprised sub-rectangular slabs laid on

bed and was visible over an area 1.02 m by 0.7 m. A thin layer of soil (1005) overlaid the paving below the tumble layer (1008). The paving (1002) continued below the trench edges to the south and west (Figure 20). Artefacts recovered from the paved floor during the excavation included glazed pottery sherds, a fragment of animal bone, metal nails and fragments of window and bottle glass.



Figure 20: Plan of the excavated byre in Trench 1.

The milking parlour

The milking parlour or dairy was located at the top of a steep slope towards the south-east end of the site. Trench 2 was positioned from the south side of the entrance through the south-west facing wall (2008), which was built with mixed rubble two courses wide with a rubble core bound by earth (Figure 21). Larger stones were visible forming the external faces of the wall across parts of the building that were excavated. The excavated area of degraded wall measured

0.5 m in length, and continued beyond the trench edges to the north-west and south-east, measuring 0.80 m in width and 0.28 m in height. The trench continued across the floor of the building and over the north-east wall foundation (2007) 0.8 m in width, built from random rubble, sub-angular and sub-rounded stones brought to course. It was roughly faced along its internal and external faces with an earth-bound rubble core, and occasional single through-stones were visible laid across it.

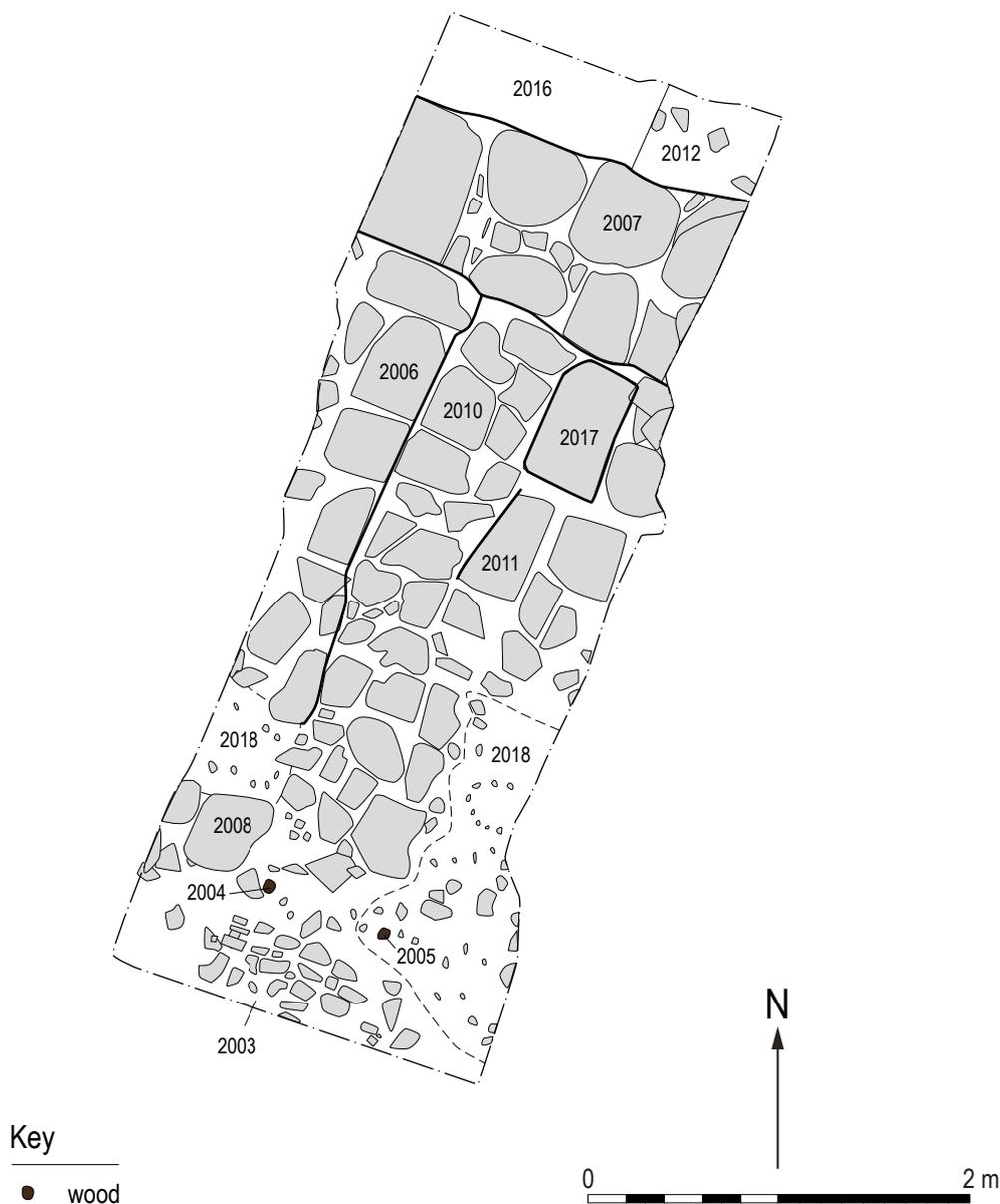


Figure 21: Plan of the excavated area of the milking parlour in Trench 2.

Internally, below a shallow turf and topsoil horizon (2001) overlying a shallow deposit of tumble (2002), was a paved floor. On the west side of the trench the floor comprised an area of paving (2006) raised c. 0.1 m above a partially sunken paved stone channel (2010) roughly 0.4 m wide. To the east of this a further partially raised area of paving (2011) was found. Towards the north-east corner of the building the paved area (2011) abutted a single large stone (2017) laid on bed and rose up noticeably above the floor height. This may have served as a simple stone furnishing within the building.

An area of cobbling (2003) was recorded outside the threshold of the building that comprised mixed stones laid on bed quite tightly butted together, aligned east/west and visible over an area measuring 0.9 m by 0.4 m. The cobbles continued beyond the trench edge to the south (Figures 22 and 23). Two possible pile driven posts were visible at the threshold to the milking parlour (2004 and 2005). These appeared as remnants of degraded wood, measuring 0.04 m in diameter by 0.04 m deep and may have been associated with timber door jambs (Figure 24). Finds of glass, pottery, including 12 sherds of a large stoneware vessel (SF 1717), metal and a small stylus (SF 1616) were recovered during the excavation of Trench 2.



Figure 22: Post-excavation view of the milking parlour, from the south west, showing walls (2008 and 2007), cobbles (2003) outside the threshold to the building and paved surfaces (2006, 2010 and 2011). Possible stone furniture (2017) raised above the floor level is visible towards the north-east corner of the building.



Figure 23: Post-excavation view of the milking parlour, from the north-east showing walls (2008 and 2007), cobbles (2003) forming the threshold to the building and paved surfaces (2006, 2010 and 2011). Possible stone furniture (2017) raised above the floor level is visible towards the north-east corner of the building. A large single through-stone is visible bottom right of the trench across wall (2007).



Figure 24: Plan view of the milking parlour showing extents of the structure after excavation of Trench 2.

Westernmost building

Trench 5 (Figures 2 and 25) was designed to investigate the most western building forming part of the Greenan Steading as depicted on the 1879 Ordnance Survey 6" map of Sutherland, (Figure 4). There was no visible trace of this building on the ground. The trench was aligned north-east/south-west and positioned to include excavation of part of the enclosure wall (5003) (Figure 26). The latter was aligned north-west/south-east and was drystone built with random rubble. The stone size vary greatly from very small to medium and large stones 400 mm by 150 mm by 150 mm forming the faces of the wall

with a rubble core where it had not collapsed or been robbed out. Sections of better-preserved areas of the wall were visible across parts of the unexcavated course of the structure. The excavated part of the wall here measured 1 m in length (where excavated) by 0.8 m in width by 0.35 m in height. To the south-west of the enclosure wall orange/brown clay loam (5005) with occasional charcoal inclusions overlay a small putative stone setting (5004) constructed using small sub-angular stones laid on bed, aligned ENE/WSW. The feature measured 0.81 m in length, and may have continued beyond the trench edge to the ENE by 0.64 m in width.

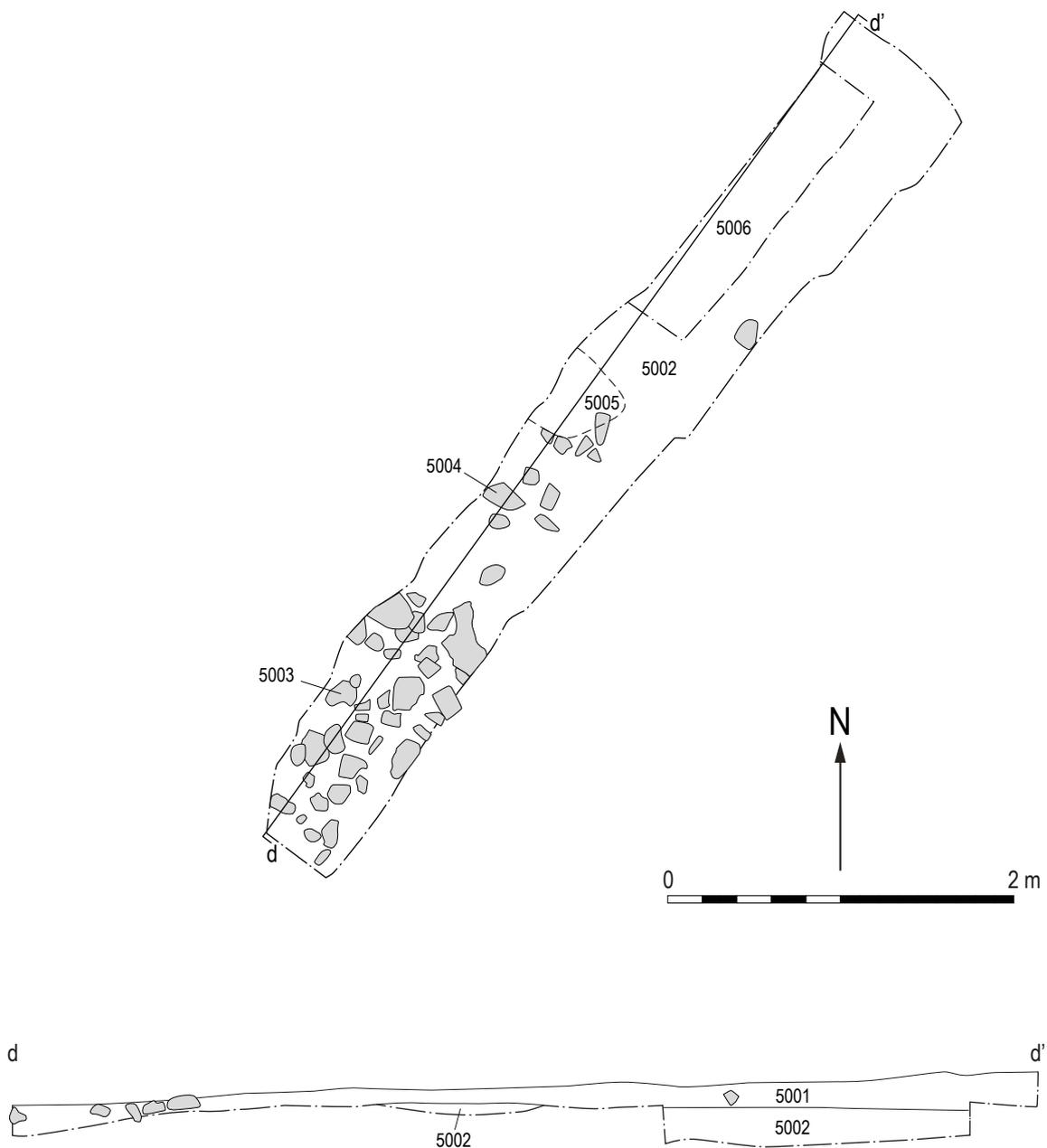


Figure 25: Plan of features in Trench 5.

Trench 6 was aligned north-east/south-west and located across the track approaching the Greeanan Steading from the north-west (Figure 27). The track was overlain by a trample layer of black-brown silty clay (6004) with gritty inclusions, 0.05 m in depth. It overlay a layer of small to medium-sized sub-rounded stones

graded with gravel (6003). Below this, in a small sondage excavated through the track, was a further layer of medium sized cobbles in dark grey silt (6005) that forming its basal layer, 7.3 m in width. It was excavated over a distance of 0.75 m and measured 0.18 m in depth. The track overlay natural glacial till (6002).



Figure 26: Trench 5 shows the spread of stone fabric forming part of the enclosure wall (5003), with putative stone setting (5004) to immediate right of the blackboard. From the north-east.



Figure 27: General view of the track (6003/6004/6005) approaching the Greeanan Steading from the north-west in Trench 6.

The enclosure wall

Trench 7 was designed to investigate a further section of the enclosure wall (7001) towards its north-western extent where it was built in the same way as the enclosure to the north of the steading, but it appeared to form part of a stone dyke at this point. The wall here was found in a poor condition and was spread over an area 2 m

(where excavated) by 2.08 m by 0.72 m (Figure 28). It was drystone built with random rubble: the stones varied in size greatly from very small to medium and large stones 400 mm by 150 mm by 150 mm that formed the faces of the wall with a rubble core where it had not collapsed. The large facing stones were visible across parts of the grassed over course of the enclosure wall.



Figure 28: Collapsed remains of enclosure wall (7001) in Trench 7 from the south-east.

Specialists' Reports

Pottery Report

By Bob Will

Introduction

The assemblage of pottery recovered from the archaeological investigations at Greeanan consisted of 87 sherds (2060.3 g) of factory produced wares that date to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Table 1). Many of the sherds were small and abraded although it was possible to identify the complete profile of an industrial stoneware storage jar for butter.

All the sherds were examined, weighed and recorded according to guidelines and standards produced by the Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG 1998 and 2001). No scientific analysis of the fabrics or glazes was undertaken.

Nineteenth and twentieth century industrial wares

The assemblage consists of factory produced ceramics and includes white earthenware (64

sherds), red earthenware (8 sherds) and industrial stoneware (14 sherds). These fabrics date from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. White earthenwares tend to be table wares while the red earthenwares and stonewares are usually more utilitarian consisting of large bowls and storage vessels. The different pottery types and methods of decoration are found throughout the trenches and probably relate to the later occupation and abandonment of the buildings. The numbers of sherds found within the trenches is highlighted in Table 2.

White earthenware

The largest group of sherds in the assemblage is white earthenwares (64 sherds) and a variety of forms, including plates, bowls, teapots and teacups are represented. The vessels have been decorated by a number of methods including hand painting, sponge printing and transfer printing. Unfortunately, most of the decorated sherds are too small to be able to identify the pattern or manufacturer.

The use of sponge printing as a decorative technique is thought to have been introduced from the 1830s or 1840s and was popular with Scottish factories although there was a tendency

Fabric	Total	Rims	Bases	Handles	Body sherds	Weight (g)
Modern white earthenware	64	26	9	1	28	463.2
Modern red earthenware	8	1	0	0	7	111.9
Modern stoneware	14	5	2	0	7	1483.5
Brick	1	0	0	0	1	1.7
Total	87	32	11	1	43	2060.3

Table 1: Pottery fabric types.

Trench	Total	Rims	Bases	Handles	Body sherds	Weight (g)
Trench 1	16	6	2	0	8	91.1
Trench 2	23	7	1	0	15	1493.2
Trench 3	8	5	1	1	1	63.7
Trench 4	7	3	0	0	4	53.7
Trench 5	21	4	4	0	13	131.4
Trench 6	10	7	3	0	0	214.2
Trench 7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trench 8	1	0	0	0	1	0.6
MD/unstrat	1	0	0	0	1	12.4
Total	87	32	11	1	43	2060.3

Table 2: Distribution of pottery by trench.

not to mark these wares (Cruickshank 1982). Sponge printed wares can be found just with the sponged design but are more commonly found combined with hand painted bands or decoration. Although found on plates it is more often found on bowls and most of the sherds from Greeanan are from small bowls.

Trench 1 produced three rim sherds from a shallow bowl with abraded sponge printed design in green.

Trench 2 produced one rim and three body sherds from a sponge printed bowl with a green foliage design with a pink band below the rim. Trench 2 also produced one body sherd with a sponge printed design that consisted of purple flowers and green leaf.

Trench 5 produced two rim sherds from bowls, one with a pink sponged design and the other with a blue design.

Several sherds had transfer printed designs, although transfer printing was developed in the late eighteenth century it was only in the middle of the nineteenth century that it really took off with mass produced factory designs and became the standard form of decoration. The sherds from Greeanan have blue, black, brown and grey designs but the sherds are too small to identify the pattern. There is a base sherd from Trench 1 that has a blue and white Chinese inspired 'willow pattern' design. Unfortunately, this design was made at a number of factories throughout Britain over a long period of time.

Ten white earthenware sherds recovered from Trench 6 were all from the same vessel, an undecorated plate with a scalloped edge with a partial maker's mark on the underside. The sherd has 'T Royal' on it, the use of 'Royal' by manufacturers was introduced from the middle of the nineteenth century (Ceramic marks n.d). The glaze on the sherds was cracked or crazed with a light brown colour, the result of moisture getting into the fabric through the cracks once the vessel was broken and discarded.

An interesting find was a small complete conical cup with a wide rim that was recovered from Trench 4. It appears to be an inkwell designed

to sit in a hole in a desk. Around the rim was printed D. MACANDREW & CO, ABERDEEN... Daniel MacAndrew and Company were a firm of architects based in Aberdeen that operated from 1887 and worked on many prestigious projects in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

Red earthenwares

The red earthenwares (8 sherds) represent more utilitarian vessels than the white earthenwares, the vessels tend to be larger with thicker walls and are often made from coarser fabrics. The sherds from Greeanan represent large slip-lined dairy bowls or storage vessels and a brown glazed teapot. The dairy bowls are large bowls with a white or cream coloured slip on the interior that has then been covered by a clear lead glaze. On some examples there are also spots or swirls of brown or green glaze on the interior, while the exterior generally remained unglazed. These vessels tended to have a narrow base and a wide mouth at the rim. They were used to cool milk and for separating cream from milk. These vessels are found throughout Scotland and were made at a number of different factories, including Cupar in Fife (Martin and Martin 1996). Brown glazed teapots were made in numerous potteries throughout Britain over a long period of time from around 1850, although their style and decoration changed, the sherd is too small to identify the pattern.

Industrial stoneware

Fourteen sherds of Industrial stoneware were recovered including 12 from the same vessel. These sherds join to provide the complete profile of a straight sided storage jar. It had a rounded rim with a brown band round the top of the jar with a cordon below the rim with a band of impressed decoration. There is also a small incised band of beading round the base. This type of vessel usually had a lid and is often described as a butter crock for storing butter and would be contemporary with the redware dairy bowls.

A rim sherd from a small brown coloured stoneware ink bottle was also recovered. Stoneware vessels were made in vast quantities at factories in Glasgow, Newcastle and Portobello, as well as many other locations from around 1860 until the early twentieth century.

Brick

One small fragment from a brick was recovered in a coarse orange/red fabric and probably dates to the nineteenth century.

Discussion

The assemblage as a whole dates to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and is typical of assemblages recovered from similar rural excavations and a number of similar sherds were recovered from Ben Lawers (Atkinson 2016) and at Brotchie's Steading at Dunnett (Holden 2009). Although there is a range of decorative techniques used, the sherds with the different techniques are often found together in the same layer or context, for example, sponge decorated sherds are found alongside transfer printed wares. It has been suggested that both the sponged wares and transfer printed designs were made at the same time in the same factories but the sponged wares are usually not marked and were cheaper than the transfer printed wares (Cruickshank 1982). Sponge decoration is usually found on bowls rather than flat plates, as bowls are more versatile in a household with few vessels.

There are no examples of white salt-glazed stoneware, pearlware or creamware fabrics which tend to be earlier in date but also remained in production for a long period of time and overlap with later white earthenwares.

Glass Report

By Helen Spencer

Introduction

A glass assemblage, comprising 196 shards, was found during the excavations at Greeanan (Appendix 1). Glass was found in all trenches, with the exception of Trench 7, with the majority of glass finds retrieved from Trench 3 (the farmhouse).

A range of domestic glass items are represented in the assemblage, including wine or ale bottles, Codd bottles, medicine bottles, oil lamps and window glass. All the glass finds are dated to either the late nineteenth century or twentieth century, with no glass identified as being of an earlier date.

Trench 1 (the byre)

Twelve various pieces of glass were found in the turf and topsoil layer of Trench 1 (1001). One piece is the neck and top lip of an ale bottle with a further six pieces being from ale or wine bottles from the or early twentieth centuries. Two small pieces of glass are 'tumbled' and have all sharp edges rolled away and may be from earlier bottles, two pieces are window glass and a final piece comes from a small blue 'medicine' bottle.

Further pieces of ale/wine glass bottle fragments were found on the paving area outside the entrance to the building (1002), along with a further piece of twentieth century window glass, more small, eroded pieces and one small fragment of decorative pink glass from a small vessel. The final three pieces from Trench 1 come from the buried topsoil under the floor and comprise a piece of green bottle glass and two pieces of thin clear glass, likely from an oil lamp.

Trench 2 (the milking parlour)

Twenty-four pieces of glass were found in Trench 2, of which 22 pieces come from a single bottle found in the topsoil (2001). This bottle is a thick mould blown 'ginger beer' Codd bottle stamped with W Russell (of Banchory) and showing a central embossed 'Highlander' motif. Codd bottles were made from 1872 to the 1930s and the style and pattern of this bottle suggest it is likely to have been made in the last decade of the

nineteenth century or early twentieth century as the earliest W Russell ginger beer Codd bottles were missing the Highlander motif.

A single piece of clear colourless glass comes from the base of a round cornered, rectangular shaped bottle, which has a mould code of 851 embossed on the underside and likely to be early-mid twentieth century. The final piece of glass from this trench was found in the topsoil, was a clear shard of 'modern' (later twentieth century) bottle glass.

Trench 3 (the farmhouse)

Glass, from the widest range of items, was recovered from Trench 3, including window glass, bottles and oil lamps. Most sherds were found in the topsoil (3001), with a significant number also found in the tumble/rubble collapse (3002).

The remains of more Codd bottles were found which would have originally contained soft, fizzy drinks (SF 3006, SF 3020 and two fragments of SF 3046).

A number of medicine bottles were found including a narrow (35 mm diameter) blue bottle base, typical of a castor oil or similar bottle from the early twentieth century (SF 3055). There were also multiple pieces, including the neck, of a clear, sub-rectangular medicine bottle. The manufacture of this bottle predates machine blowing as the thickness of the wall varies, while the top of the bottle has a tooled lip and is therefore likely to date between 1890 and 1920. There are also fragments from similar small sub-ovoid bottles medicine type bottles (SF 3034, 3036, 3037 and 3069). Several finds (SF 3010, 3 fragments of SF 3046 and one large piece part of SF 3041) may all be part of the same bottle or two similar small medicine bottles.

Twelve window glass fragments were found in Building 3. Their colour, consistent thickness and lack of surface corrosion all visually suggest that the glass was made in the nineteenth or early twentieth century. One piece has an original corner. Three pieces were analysed by p-XRF and all had a chemical composition which confirmed they were manufactured sometime between 1870 and 1930. All were rich in sodium and silica suggesting a 'soda' glass made between the 1830s and 1930s but with non-detectable/

negligible arsenic suggesting the glass was manufactured after c. 1870. This was the largest building on the site and the presence of window glass suggests that it was glazed in the latter part of the nineteenth century, with the glass being added sometime between 1870 and the time of abandonment. None of the window glass found dates from an earlier period and it is possible that windows were not fully glazed until later in the life of the building.

Two adjoining pieces of hand-blown bullseye glass (SF 3022) may form part of a small glass dish/vessel, which also adjoin another piece of SF 3024. One very thin shard of slightly curved glass is likely from an oil lamp and has the typical manganese pink tinge (SF 3011). A small decorative dark blue glass and copper alloy button was also found in Trench 3. This is likely to have been from a ladies' boot or dress, again dating from either the nineteenth or early twentieth century.

The remaining glass finds in this trench are parts of early-mid twentieth century ale or wines bottles.

Trench 4

The remains of at least two oil lamps were found in trench 4 (DF 4025) and a second likely combining (SF 4016, SF 4017, SF 4018, SF 4037) with an additional piece in SF 4013). These fragments are all very thin hand blown glass with a slight pink tinge due to manganese levels in the glass. The use of manganese to clarify glass used in oil lamps was most common between around 1880 and 1915.

Another fragment from a W Russell ginger beer Codd bottle was also found in this trench with the feet of the Highlander and the 'H' of Banchory visible on SF 4011. Small finds (4005, 4020 and 4021) are from a similar (or possibly the same) Codd bottle.

A single piece of window glass was also found in this trench. An original cut straight edge of 53 mm can be seen, although this is truncated and does not represent the original size of the pane. The colour, lack of bubbles, uniform thickness and lack of corrosion again suggests a later nineteenth century or early to middle twentieth century date.

Trench 5

Ten fragments of glass were found in Trench 5. Seven fragments (SF 5002) represent at least 4 different bottles. Three of these pieces are probably from the same pre-1930, mould blown bottle due to the similar green colour and elongated air bubbles – one piece being the edge of the bottle base. Another shard is from an aqua coloured thick-walled bottle, while two further pieces have a light green tint and much thinner walls. The final bottle is represented by a piece of clear or 'non-tinted' mould-blown small octagonal medicine bottle.

Two pieces (SF 5003), one dark brown and one dark green, likely come from beer bottles while the curved, thin shape and pinkish tinge of SF 5004 suggests that it is a shard of another oil lamp.

Trench 6

Two conjoining pieces found in Trench 6 are from a middle to late twentieth century dark green bottle neck.

Trench 8

The remains of a further Codd bottle were found in this trench (SF 8006 and probably SF 8004b) as well as two pieces of adjoining thin glass with a mould blown seam (SF 8005).

More middle to late twentieth century glass bottle fragments were also found, mainly in the top soil, while metal detecting, and were probably left by visitors to the site since it's abandonment in the early twentieth century.

Summary

The glass assemblage from Greeanan, Strath Brora is typical of a late nineteenth century or early twentieth century domestic dwelling. A range of domestic items including soft drink bottles, wine/ale bottles and oil lamps are represented. The window glass finds suggest that the farmhouse was likely glazed sometime post-1870 and there is no evidence of window glass from an earlier period being used to glaze the building. Most of the glass found is likely to date from around the time of the abandonment of the site and none of it appears to come from proposed earlier occupation in the eighteenth century or early nineteenth century.

Metalwork Summary

By Warren Bailie

A metal detecting survey was carried out across the investigation areas and in the environs of the farmstead. The finds are recorded in Appendix 2. The finds from the metal detecting included a wrought iron axe head SFMD 006 (Figure 29), made from one single piece of iron folded on itself. Other metal finds from the main investigations included pieces of a cast iron stove (Trench 2, SF 2014-2015). The pieces included a rectangular stove side or back (SF 2014) along with two parts of the top of the stove with edges of the aperture for cooking over it (SF 2015, Figure 30).



Figure 29: The axe head (SF MD 006) found in the enclosure during the metal detecting survey.

Also, from Trench 2 the base of a General Electric Company (Inscription 'G.E.C. England') lamp (SF 2002, Figure 31) was recovered, this would have held glass panes on four sides. This lamp is likely to date from around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century when such lamps were first manufactured. A related latch piece (SF

1012) was recovered from Trench 1. The metal items recovered from within the buildings are the remains of domestic objects (lamp and stove) used by the latest residents. Multiple nails and nail fragments were also recovered along with miscellaneous corroded iron pieces which are unidentifiable. The bowl and part of the stem of a pewter spoon were found on the topsoil at the end of the excavation.



Figure 30: Pieces of a cast iron stove (SF 2014-2015).



Figure 31: Fragment of metal lamp (SF 2002), G.E.C. England inscribed on base.

Stone Report

By Beverley Ballin Smith

A pyramidal-shaped piece of polished jasper (8 by 10 mm) was recovered from Trench 3 (Figure 32). This is likely to be a stone lost from a piece of Victorian silver pebble jewellery, most likely a brooch.

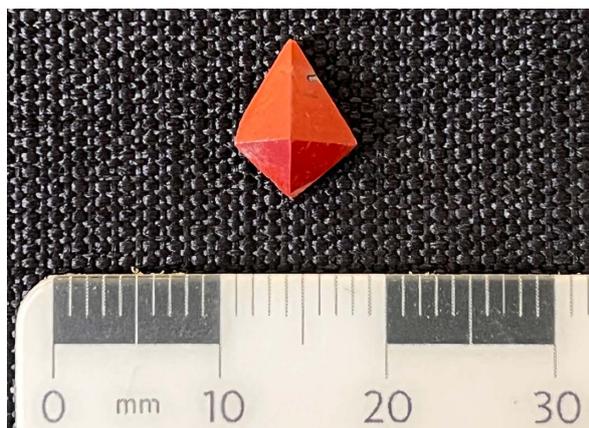


Figure 32: Small gem stone of jasper.

Faunal Remains

By Catherine Smith

Introduction

The excavations at Greeanan produced a very small assemblage of faunal remains. Excluding a worked bone spoon which may have originated outwith the immediate site, only ten pieces of bone were recovered. A shell button, a definite import to the site, was also found. However, all of these small fragments have their own story to tell, no matter their size.

Species present

A catalogue of the bones with a description of each is listed in Appendix 3 and Table 3 below, summarises the findings.

The pig bone, a distal humerus (SF 1005) in an abraded condition, was recovered from (1002), a topsoil and turf layer overlying the byre. The distal epiphysis was fused but as the humerus fuses at an intermediate period in the animal's life it is not possible to say whether it came from an immature or fully adult animal. It's fairly large size suggests the latter, in which case it may represent breeding stock.

The small ungulate remains consisted of a very small fragment possibly of molar tooth enamel (SF 3029, from 3001) and an ossified rib (SF 3033, from 3002). The possible tooth fragment most resembled sheep/goat enamel while the ossified rib fragment could have come from sheep/goat or small deer.

The rabbit bones came from both juvenile and adult animals. None of the five rabbit bones appeared to show any knife cuts but one, a juvenile tibia, was broken across the shaft, perhaps indicating consumption by humans (SF 4027, from 4013).

Two bones came from Galliform birds, the family which includes the domestic fowl. One bone was a femur from a wild species, most likely the ptarmigan (*Lagopus muta*) (SF 4034, from 4011). The Galliform cranium in the same context (SF 4033), unfortunately missing the beak, is characteristic of the domestic fowl (*Gallus gallus*) rather than a wild game bird.

Species	Trench numbers in which bones were found	Total no. of fragments*
pig	1	1
small ungulate	3	2
rabbit	3, 4, 8	5
Galliform bird cf ptarmigan	4	1
Galliform bird - domestic fowl	4	1
Total	trenches 1,3,4,8	10

*Excluding bone spoon SF 3021 and shell button SF 3016

Table 3: Number of fragments of animal bone by species.



Figure 33: The bone spoon (SF 3021), from the farmhouse.

Artefactual bone and shell

Bone spoon SF 3021, from (3001)

A carved bone spoon (Figure 33) was found in a topsoil and turf layer covering the farmhouse. It was in a well-preserved condition but showed slight cracking at the front and side edges of the bowl and some erosion at the rear edge of the handle. The bowl was of a flattened oval shape, narrowing to a deep, thick waist then flaring out to form a flat spatula-shaped handle of a similar thickness to the bowl. The spoon is nicely balanced at the waist, the bowl and handle being of the same length and presumably weight.

Its measurements are: complete length 121.6 mm, length of bowl 49 mm, thickness of bowl 0.9 mm, width of waist 3.3 mm, thickness at waist 6.9 mm.

The material from which the spoon has been made is probably cattle or horse bone, as indicated by the thickness of the spoon's waist, as well as the length of the complete item. Bone spoons of a smaller size dating to the nineteenth

century are well known in Scotland either in archaeological collections or as 'vintage' items. Bowl forms can be of a similar shape to (SF 3021) but are also found with a more tapered front edge. A bone spoon with a similar shaft or stele profile, but less elongated spatulate handle was found in an excavation at South Castle Street, St Andrews (Cox 1997, 103, Cat 6). A spatulate handle (broken) resembling (SF 3021) came from 134 Market St, also St Andrews and was thought to be of late eighteenth or nineteenth century date (Maxwell 1997, 89, Cat 266). The Greeanan spoon handle has similarities to examples from the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries manufactured in silver, although the Greeanan bowl shape is less oval than in the metal spoons (Moore 2005, 40).

Bone spoons were favoured for eating eggs, whose sulphur content can blacken and change the taste of silver spoons. Horn spoons were also favoured for this reason. They would also have been useful for weaning babies and feeding small children.

Shell button SF 3016 (Figure 34)

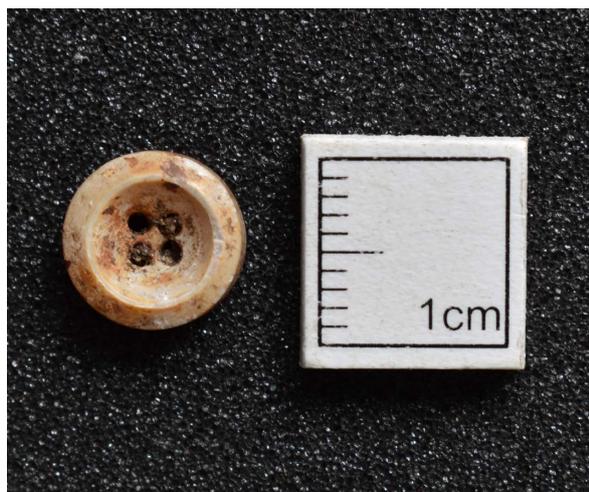


Figure 34: Shell button SF 3016.

From (3001) with measurements: diameter 9.8 mm, thickness 3 mm, hole diameter 0.6 mm

A circular button of mollusc shell with four centrally placed counter-sunk thread holes was found in the layer of topsoil and turf covering the farmhouse. The button is small, well-preserved and in an iridescent nacreous material usually described as Mother of Pearl. Mass production of shell buttons was carried on industrially, particularly in Birmingham, from the eighteenth century onwards, reaching peak production in the nineteenth century. The main source of Mother-of-pearl (nacre) was the pearl oyster, *Pinctada margaritifera* but other marine mollusc species from the Indo-Pacific region such as *Trochus niloticus* were also imported (Llewellyn-Jones 2012).

The Greeanan button is of a smaller diameter but thicker cut than sew-through buttons recovered from urban contexts such as Kinnoull cemetery, Perth (Cox 1998) and the Skinnergate, Perth (Smith 2023, 122–3) <https://kingandallen.co.uk/journal/article/the-history-of-the-button/>. At the Skinnergate, the buttons were retrieved from a drain within the Model Lodging House and as

such represent losses from the clothes of poor working people. The Greeanan button is perhaps of better quality than these. Its fairly small size indicates its use may have been as a shirt button.

Discussion

The Rev Walter Ross, a previous occupant of Greeanan and contributor to the Statistical Account of Scotland entry for Clyne Parish noted that the 'Highland part of the parish breeds all the domestic animals, viz, horses, black cattle, sheep and goats' but 'no hogs are reared for exportation, but many by the inhabitants for their own use, which they sell to one another at no contemptible prices' (1794, X, 298). 'Hogs' in this case is taken to mean pigs rather than 'hoggs' or young sheep, terms which often cause confusion in a Scottish context. The writer of the New Statistical Account of Scotland for the same parish noted that of the 300 pigs estimated to be present in Clyne, some were killed for 'winter food' (1845, X, 157). The pig bone from Greeanan probably represents one of these locally reared animals.

The household was also supplied with chickens, kept for eggs as well as a source of fresh meat. Besides the bones of domestic pig, chicken and sheep, this very small bone collection does contain wild species. Of the five rabbit bones, one may have been deliberately broken, indicating the meat may have been eaten by humans. One unusual item, the femur of a ptarmigan (*Lagopus muta*) indicated possible sporting activities nearby. The Rev Walter Ross was reputed to be a 'first-rate sportsman' (Northern Times, 9 June 2022) and one of his successors, The Rev George Mackay wrote in the New Statistical Account of Scotland that 'common gray rabbit', grouse, black cock and ptarmigan all inhabited the parish (1845, XV, 152-3).

The nicely made bone spoon and the fine shell button fit well with a late eighteenth/nineteenth century date, contemporaneous with the sporting Rev Walter Ross or his successors.

General Discussion

The Greeanan Steading in its present state comprised a series of six dilapidated unroofed buildings, probably originally thatched and with an enclosed area measuring 514 m² to the immediate north of the steading. Along the north-west side of the west enclosure wall was a drainage ditch. Part of a further enclosure wall or dyke was visible from near the north-west corner of the westernmost surviving steading building. The remnants of a garden were visible on the steep south-west facing slope to the south-west of the main range of buildings, identified as a patch of irregular rhubarb plants still flourishing over 100 years after the steading's abandonment in the early twentieth century.

Rhubarb was first brought to Scotland in the mid-eighteenth century after being introduced to the Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, by James Mounsey, a physician to the Tsar, who, at great risk to himself, brought seeds from Russia to Scotland. Rhubarb then was used for medicinal purposes, as it had been in China for thousands of years (Hutcheon et al. 2017). If rhubarb was planted at Greeanan in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century it may have been a high value product only accessible to those that could afford it.

Interpretation of the buildings

The excavation of parts of four buildings forming part of the Greeanan Steading has allowed tentative interpretations to be assigned to the use of the buildings.

The farmhouse is of unusually high constructional specification for a rural building of the period: lime-mortar-bonded masonry, internally plastered wall faces, hearths in both gables, and a timber-panelled partition. Surviving joinery includes nailed floorboards on joists and a decorative tiled vestibule. Artefactual evidence, e.g. shell and glass buttons, an inkwell and scribe, writing slate and stylus, carved bone spoon and a diverse glazed ceramic assemblage, points to occupants of moderate social standing. No slate detritus was recovered implying the original roof was almost certainly thatched, though a 1914 postcard of the property depicts a possible tarred-canvas covering secured by battens.

The byre had a robust entrance built from end set boulders and a sturdy floor and well-constructed walls. No evidence of timber roof supports was found but the roof may have been supported by crucks potentially set into cruck slots against the walls of the structure.

The milking parlour had a channelled floor offset towards the south-east end of the building and draining towards the entrance. A large quantity of smashed stoneware vessel sherds, possibly a cream or milk jug, on the floor of the building helps support this identification of its function.

The store abutted the north-west gable end of the farmhouse. It had an earth floor with sufficient coal fragments to suggest it may have been used as a wood/coal shed conveniently situated next to the farmhouse.

The unexcavated range of buildings to the north-west may have been a pantry/store. The building featured a short projecting bay extending from the north wall of the building, which may have been a meat safe or larder kept cooler in this area by having three external walls (Nick Lindsay pers. comm.).

The final unexcavated building in this range, the most north-western compartment, featured a broad opening although how much of the building has been removed is unclear. Nevertheless, it is possible it may have been used as a cart shed and possible tool store. No sign of the westernmost building forming part of the Greeanan Steading was depicted on the 1879 Ordnance Survey 6" map of Sutherland (Figure 4). It may have been an open sided timber-built structure, possibly a hayshed.

No evidence of occupation earlier than the nineteenth century steading was found on the site during the course of the work, although the excavated trenches specifically targeted the extant structures. The site's location will always have been an attractive place to settle, and remained so, used casually for overnight stop overs indicated by the tent pegs recovered during the metal detecting survey. The buildings forming the Greeanan Steading all seemed to have been built in same way with the exterior of the buildings formed with large boulders, and the walls internal elevations being more

conventionally built, possibly a traditional build style local to the area or more regionally practiced.

Cartographic and estate evidence

'Grianen' first appears on the Roy Military Survey of Scotland, 1747-1755 map with eight structures noted. A 1772 map by Aitken depicted a plan of the ground and marches in dispute between Elizabeth Countess of Sutherland and John Gordon of Caroll Esq. and shows Ascoilebeg or Granan, as enclosed cultivated land with no buildings. John James Roy's map of Ascoilebeag dated 1814 shows the Farm of Grianen but again shows no buildings.

Some of the cartographic evidence is slightly misleading, the *Sutherland Estate Rentals from 1808* list the Rev. Walter Ross holding the Tack for Grinan, Furransmore, Altivulen, Clynekirkton and Badenlois. By 1811 he had Grinan, Clyne Kirkton, Tourammore, Crag-roy and Beaugie. A note in the 1811 entry for Grinan states;

'By lease granted in September 1810 houses and dykes on Grinan ordered to be then Appreciated and like Value left at tenant's Removal - not yet Valued.' Matters requiring immediate attention: 'Get the houses valued that the Amount to be left by him on the Premises may be ascertained.' And for the other steadings in his possession at this time *'Matters requiring immediate attention: Same'*. This implies the buildings had been recently built.

Instructions from the Sutherland Estate to Messrs Young and Sellar the factors in July 1814 included a note for the parish of Clyne *'Mr. Walter Ross to be bargained with as Mr. Young best can'*. Although bargain over what exactly is not clear but by 1815 Walter Ross had Clynekirkton and Ascoilebeg, and Grinan excluding Altnavoullen, which may have been subsumed into the new Kilcalmkill sheep farm established in 1813 that stretched from Loch Brora to the western bank of the River Helmsdale. The displaced tenants here were relocated to a resettlement area at Rock to the west of Aultcraggie (Lindsay 2014).

John James Roy's map of Ascoilebeag depicts the land around Greeanan as being divided into areas of arable and pasture and grass with some rushes. Most farmers typically cultivated half of their land with bere/bear (a primitive type of barley¹) and used the other half previously reserved for peas and oats for planting potatoes after their introduction around 1756. On coastal lands, seaweed or 'ware' was commonly used as fertilizer for fields of bere. Very little land suitable for cultivation was left fallow or unused, even temporarily. Overall, advances in agricultural practices were slow in having an effect in Scotland largely due to the continuation of traditional practices and the consistent unwillingness of the Sutherland estate managers to offer long-term leases (Statistical Account of Scotland 1794, X).

The Clearances and their effect at Greeanan

The Highland Clearances took place mostly in two phases from 1750 to 1860. In the Sutherland clearances, regarded as the harshest, people were removed from their traditional places and livelihoods in the interior to less favourable coastal areas, such as Port Gower. It is not clear if small tenants were evicted from Greeanan to facilitate Walter Ross' tenure there or across the other farms he leased. By 1818, all the sheep farms had been successfully leased out ahead of the planned removal of their occupants. The vilified Patrick Sellar (Scottish History Society 2025) was allocated land in Upper Naver and at Morvich; Paterson of Sandside received land on the eastern side of Lower Naver; and James Hall was given land at Strathbrora (Johnstone 2003). The years 1819 and 1820 represented the main clearance activity on the Sutherland Estate and in 1819 Francis Suther, factor to the Sutherland Estates (The Sutherland Collection) described how the people were very unwilling to leave their homes and typically remained until the last possible moment. In Strathbrora, for example, *'he noted that if he hadn't sent a team to forcibly remove them and demolish their houses, they wouldn't have left on their own'*. At Achness and Ascoilmore, the resistance to the 1821 evictions was far more intense than anything seen during these larger clearances of the

1 Bere barley has been grown in Scotland since the Neolithic (see Wallace et al. 2019), and is grown commercially in Orkney and more recently in Islay for whiskey production.

previous two years. James Loch, commissioner 'architect and apologist' for the Countess of Sutherland from 1812 (Scottish History Society 2025), described the situation in the north at that time as "a regular and organised system of resistance to civil power." directly challenging the accepted narrative that the Highland Clearances were met with passive acceptance. Although the 1821 evictions in Sutherland were smaller in scale, they were carried out under military force. By the end of May 1821, Suther expressed great relief that the removals were nearly finished, writing 'We are extremely busy just now with our Removings which, God be praised, will be completed eventually and without a whisper on Wednesday' (Richards 2000).

In 1825, Alexander Sutherland published his earlier visit to several areas in Sutherland that had been affected by the clearances, as well as the settlements where evicted people from the interior had been relocated. In Strath Brora, he came upon a township that had recently been cleared:

Everything was silent and desolate. The remains of burned, roofless houses still smoldered with smoke. Abandoned household items lay scattered, as if worthless to those now homeless. A few chickens picked through the ashes for food—these were the only signs that people had once lived there. In just a few days, a once-lively rural community had been turned into a wasteland (Sutherland 1825).

Walter Ross must have experienced the clearances first hand but appears silent on the subject. The small tenants in Strath Brora appear to have survived by modest subsistence farming but Walter Ross appears to have farmed intensively and profitably and perhaps with some of this profit built a model farm for the period at Greeanan.

The farmhouse and steading were probably built in the early 1800s and the farmhouse was probably a distinct building perched on a terrace overlooking the confluence of the River Brora with the north-west end of Loch Brora. The Ordnance Survey Name Book, accompanying the 1st edition map surveyed in 1872 lists Greeanan as the 'name applied to a Shepherds house situated about three-fourths of a Mile West of

Kilcalmkill the building is one storey high thatched and in fair repair'. Other properties in the area reflect the Strath Brora clearances and where the abandoned ruins were used as shepherd's cottages: Uarachoile is listed as referring 'to the ruins of a few dwellings the walls of which are standing about three feet high and situated about one half mile to the north-west of Kilbrare dwelling house'. The name of Kilbrare 'applies to a Shepherds house situated a short distance west of the Confluence of Scotterie Burn with the River Brora. The building is one story high with suitable out offices, slated and in fair repair'. Others include Fearach just to the north of Greeanan, Ascoilebeg, Ascoile 'a small one-storey slated house it is in good repair', and Ascoilemore (OS Name Books, 1871-1875).

Comparative sites

There are few excavated contemporary sites in Sutherland that can be directly compared with Greeanan. Wilkhouse, a droving inn on the road leading north from Bora was of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century date. It was built on earlier remains but like Greeanan it had fireplaces in its gable walls and was lime mortar rendered internally, but with glass windows and a slate roof, indicating its status and the importance of its function (Adamson and Bailie 2019, 13, 30). However, in contrast a late eighteenth to early nineteenth century pre-clearance building, House 9, was excavated in 1991 at Lairg (McCullagh and Tipping 1998, 61-69) and provides some comparison. House 9 had four soil-and-stone walls forming a long rectangular structure with a byre at one end. The walls comprised a soil or turf upper portion on a foundation of stones. Two central hearths were identified, along with a later hearth added against one of the gable walls. This gable was primarily constructed from dry stone masonry and was integrated at its base with the more loosely built long walls. Some evidence of clay bonding or lining was found on the inner face of the gable. Glass and glazed pottery were the two primary elements of the artefactual assemblage with bone china, white earthenware (Pearl ware and Pratt ware), red earthenware, stoneware, and coarse ware present. Pratt-type pottery was popular from 1800 to 1820, and Pearl ware most likely dates from the first half of the nineteenth century.

House 9 at Lairg indicates that the buildings at Greeanan were of superior construction, although they could have been near contemporary dwellings. However, in comparison to Wilkhouse, Greeanan was less well furnished, suggesting the Sutherland Estates invested in structures that were likely to bring in more income.

The artefactual evidence recovered during the excavations at Greeanan dates to the nineteenth and twentieth century occupation of the site. The majority of this material post-dates Walter Ross' tenure, when the farmhouse may initially have been furnished with wooden shuttered windows. The glass predominantly from window

glass, bottles and oil lamps and ceramic finds of white and red earthenware and stoneware all date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The faunal remains indicate an agrarian diet supplemented by game. The decorative tiles forming part of the floor at the main entrance to the farmhouse could conceivably have been produced at the Brora Brick and Tile Works that commenced operations in 1814. David Gordon took up residence at Greeanan after Walter Ross' death in 1825 and by 1841 John Matheson and Isabella Baillie were living at Greeanan (Nick Lindsay pers. comm.). The building was still roofed in 1914 (Figure 35) but by 1940 the farmhouse has been abandoned.

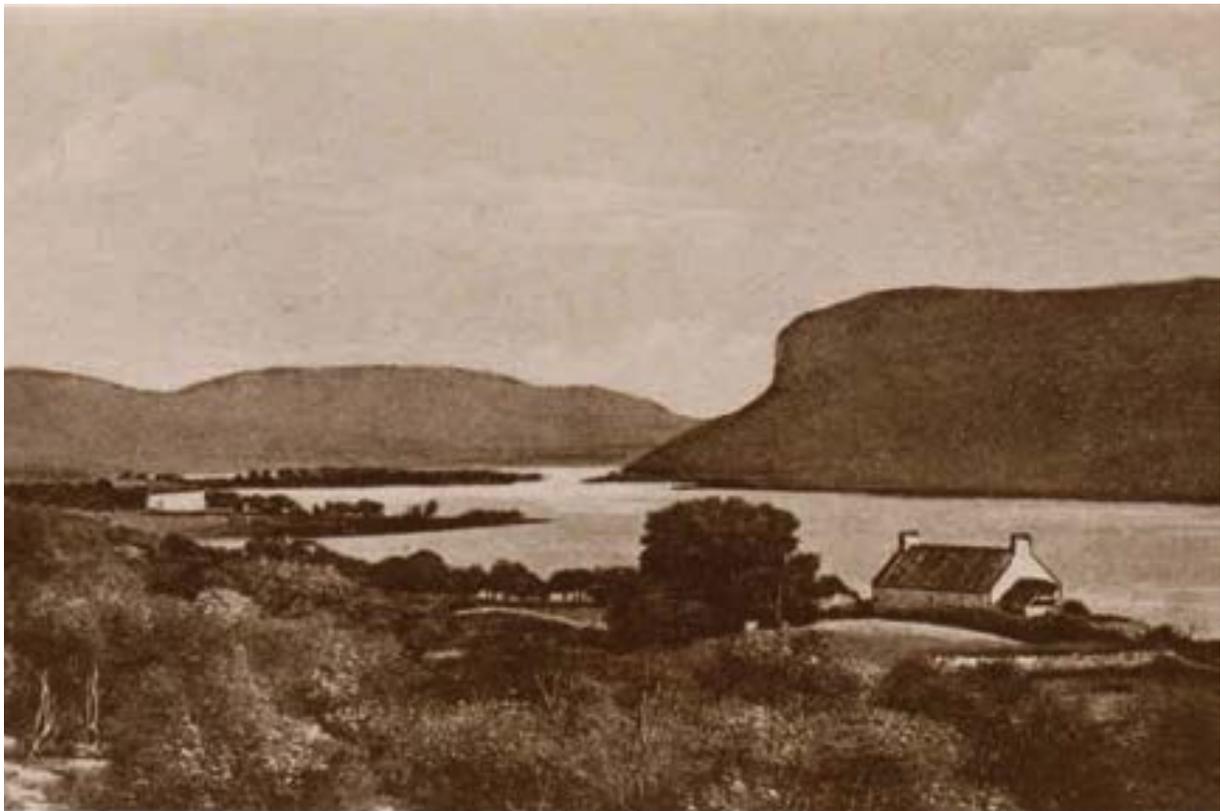


Figure 35: The farmhouse at Greeanan as depicted on a postcard from 1914.

Conclusions

The investigations at Greeanan have offered valuable insight into both pre-clearance and post-clearance life at the northern end of Strath Brora, an area that was relatively densely populated prior to the Highland Clearances. The construction of the farmhouse and associated steading at Greeanan appears to be the work of the Reverend Walter Ross, though the title Reverend may be questionable, who emerges from the historical record as a keen agrarian. He likely established a model farm for the period, comprising a byre, milking parlour, cart shed, and an array of storage buildings abutting the farmhouse's north-west gable end. The longevity and apparent continuity of occupation at Greeanan, and at other well-constructed buildings in the vicinity, from the early nineteenth century through to the early twentieth century, despite the widespread clearance and depopulation of Strath Brora attests to the robustness of the built environment and may reflect the elevated social and economic status of its original tenants. The site retains high interpretive value for studies of post-improvement rural architecture; tenancy change and the material aftermath of the Highland Clearances.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Catalogue of Glass Finds

SF	Context	Trench	No. of Pieces	Type	HS additional comments
017	-	MD1	2	Bottle	1x green 20th C bottle, 1 white/clear glass with elongated air bubble and blown seam (possibly mould blown bottle)
1001	1001	Tr 1	10	Various	Mix ale/wine, small blue medicine
1004	1002	Tr 1		Bottle	
1006	1001	Tr 1	3	Bottle	
1011	1002	Tr 1	8	Various	Mix ale/wine. Pink decorative vessel, 20th C window
1016	1006	Tr 1	3	Various	2x oil lamp
2001	2001	Tr 2	22	Bottle	W Russells of Banchory ginger beer 'Codd bottle
2005	2001	Tr 2	1	Bottle	20th C bottle
2024	2009	Tr 2	1	Bottle	Sub ovoid/recangular mould blown medicine bottle code 851 on bottom
3002	3001	Tr 3	2	Window	1x corner piece - p-XRF - soda glass, low As c. 1870-1930 date
3004	3001	Tr 3	6	Bottle	Sub ovoid rectangular bottle base c 80mm diameter, thick glass
3006	3001	Tr 3	1	Bottle	Codd bottle
3010	3001	Tr 3	1	Bottle	20th C bottle
3011	3001	Tr 3	1	Oil lamp	Oil lamp - manganese 1880-1920?
3012	3001	Tr 3	1	Window	
3013	3001	Tr 3	1	Bottle	
3014	3001	Tr 3	1	Glass	Oil lamp
3015	3001	Tr 3	1	Window	
3017	3001	Tr 3	4	Window	
3020	3001	Tr 3	1	Bottle	Codd bottle
3022	3001	Tr 3	2	Bottle	2 adjoining pieces, round base ? Dish
3023	3001	Tr 3	2	Window	
3024	3001	Tr 3	7	Bottle	1 piece adjoins 2x pieces in 3022
3025	3001	Tr 3	3	Various	
3026	3001	Tr 3	2	Bottle	Shoulder of bottle
3027	3001	Tr 3	1	Button	Copper alloy fitting - most likely boot button (or dress)
3028	3001	Tr 3	4	Window	3 x thinner 1 x thicker
3030	3001	Tr 3	2	Bottle	
3031	3001	Tr 3	1	Window	p-XRF - soda glass, low As c. 1870-1930 date
3035	3002	Tr 3	2	Bottle	Thick bottle - white - but weathered
3036	3002	Tr 3	3	Various	Small sub recantgular vial/medicine
3037	3002	Tr 3	1	Bottle	Small sub recantgular vial/medicine
3038	3002	Tr 3	1	Window	
3041	3002	Tr 3	41	Various	Most from 1 sub rectangular medicine bottle - mould blown seam with neck and lip of bottle and base present 55 mm by 30 mm. 1x piece of greener thicker more modern glass
3046	3002	Tr 3	5	Bottle	3x ale/wine, 2x Codd bottles
3048	3002	Tr 3	2	Window	
3052	3012	Tr 3	7	Window	
3055	3012	Tr 3	1	Bottle	Castor oil type bottle - cobalt blue 35mm diameter
3059	3018	Tr 3	1	Window	
3063	3018	Tr 3	3	Window	p-XRF - soda glass, low As c. 1870-1930 date
3069	-	Tr 3	2	Bottle	Sub recantgular vial/medicine
4005	4005	Tr 4	1	Bottle	Codd bottle
4011	4005	Tr 4	2	Bottle	Codd bottle - H Banchory ginger beer

SF	Context	Trench	No. of Pieces	Type	HS additional comments
4013	4007	Tr 4	2	Various	1x window, 1 x oil lamp
4016	4007	Tr 4	1	Bottle	Oil lamp - manganese 1880-1920?
4017	4007	Tr 4	1	Bottle	Oil lamp - manganese 1880-1920?
4018	4007	Tr 4	1	Bottle	Oil lamp - manganese 1880-1920?
4020	4005	Tr 4	1	Bottle	Codd bottle
4021	4005	Tr 4	1	Bottle	Codd bottle
4025	4002	Tr 4	1	Bottle	Oil lamp - manganese 1880-1920?
4028	4007	Tr 4	2	Bottle	
4036	4007	Tr 4	1	Bottle	
4037	4007	Tr 4	1	Bottle	
5002	5001	Tr 5	7	Bottle	4 x different bottles (1x octagonal)
5003	5001	Tr 5	2	Bottle	1 x dark brown 1 x dark green
5004	5002	Tr 5	1	Bottle	Oil lamp
6003	6001	Tr 6	2	Bottle	2 x bottle neck shards dark brown/green glass
8004B	8004	Tr 8	1	Bottle	Codd bottle
8005	8004	Tr 8	2	Bottle	2x adjoining mould blown seam
8006	8004	Tr 8	4	Bottle	Codd bottle

MD = metal detector

Appendix 2: Catalogue of Metal Finds

SF No.	Cat. No.	Context No.	Area	No. of Pieces	Material	Description	Length (mm)	Width (mm)	Height (mm)	Diameter (mm)	Weight (g)	Image id.
2004	1	2001	Tr 2	1	Tin	Lid of container	75	30	5	-	2	
4009	2	4002	Tr 4	1	Fe	Large staple	115	45	10	-	115	
1012	3	1002	Tr 1	1	Pb	Square sheet with holes and latch on reverse	72	72	Body=5 With attachments= 21	-	58	
2002	4	2001	Tr 2	1	Steel	Pressed metal lid, "G.E.C. ENGLAND"	90	90	25	-	52	Figure 31
4008	5	4001	Tr 4	1	Fe	Nail, square headed	97	Nail shaft=9 x 9 Nail head=19	-	Nail head=19	32	
2015	6	2002	Tr 2	1	Fe	? Flue plate	200	60	Body=14 With attachments=21	-	457	
006	7	001	MD	1	Fe	Axe head	225	On blade side=130 Non-blade side=65	At thickest=45 Blade=1	-	1804	Figure 29
2014.1	8.1	2002	Tr 2	2	Fe	? Stove/range top	232	125	10	-	1199	Figure 30
2014.2	8.2	2002	Tr 2	2	Fe	? Stove/range top	232	110	10	-	1202	Figure 30

Appendix 3: Catalogue of Faunal Remains

SF	Context	Trench	Number	Species	Bone	Part	L/R	Fusion proximal	Fusion distal	Age inference	Condition	Comments
1005	1002	1	1	pig	humerus	distal	R		df	I/A	abraded	fairly large, possibly adult
3016	3001	3	1	mollusc							fair	shell button; diam 9.8 mm; thickness 3 mm
3021	3001	3	1	LU		shaft					fair	carved bone spoon, length 121.6 mm
3029	3001	3	1	?SU	?tooth	enamel					fair	possible sheep/goat tooth enamel fragment
3047	3001	3	1	rabbit	radius	proximal		pf		I/A	fair	bio-eroded
3033	3002	3	1	SU	ossified rib						fair	fragment
4029	4007	4	1	rabbit	radius	distal			df	A	abraded	
4033	4011	4	1	bird: Galliform	skull						fair	cranium; beak missing; cf domestic fowl
4034	4011	4	1	bird: Galliform	femur	entire	L			A	fair	cf ptarmigan
4034	4011	4	1	rabbit	cf radius	proximal		pf			fair	probably hen
4027	4013	4	1	rabbit	tibia		L				fair	shaft broken across
8003	8003	8	1	rabbit	tibia		L	pY	dY	J/I	fair	recent damage (small puncture mark)

I = immature J = juvenile A = adult

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