

## December 2014 – Electricity & Water

It was clear where our big building project needed to start – we could not do a great deal without electricity and water on site.

Since this involved two utilities, we anticipated layers of



beaurocracy and opened proceedings in mid-October, hoping for some December action.

**Electricity:** In our case, we wanted one of the two electricity meters removed and the other one moved from the current location, where the wall needed to be demolished and re-built, to a point about 8m away.

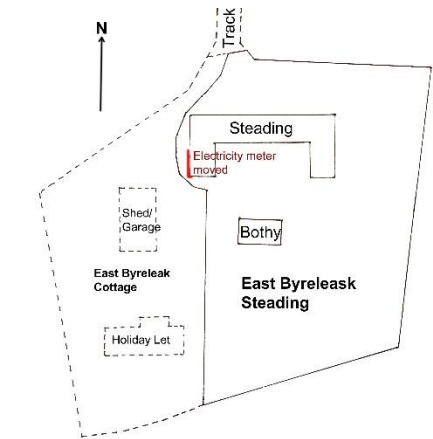
This involved finding out who is responsible for the electricity network and the electricity meter - SSE for both, but



different divisions. I applied online and got acknowledgement quickly. A week later I had a quote for the job, but I was expected to dig out the existing cable, the trench for the new cable and provide all materials. I had to negotiate between the distribution people and the meter people, narrowly getting agreement to get the job done over the Christmas break. It took around 100 phone calls, but we got there. Bizarrely, I had to get our neighbour to request the removal of the second meter (that fed the now-demolished farmhouse.)

So we arrived in Aberdeen for Christmas and went out to buy a new meter box, the associated pipes and a pile of bags of sand. On Boxing Day, I squared up with a shovel and a breaking bar and started digging. It took a working day, much sweat and a few blisters, but I discovered the underground cable first go and excavated a big enough hole for SSE to work in. Then enter George, our digger man, who ran a trench from my hole to where we hung the meter box. The rest went like clockwork. Two groups of SSE people got the business sorted in an hour or so. They were all local old boys, I could understand most of what they said to me, but between themselves it was the full-on Doric Scots dialect and I completely lost track. I was aghast to see one of them connecting live cables by hand, but it turns out this is a done thing and you do need training and a certificate to do it. Once they left, George filled the trench and we had our electricity meter sorted. No power yet, because we need an electrician to connect a distribution panel and a temporary supply to the meter. But still a good deal of satisfaction that we had got the job done, below budget.

**Water:** Scottish water is a public utility and the only supplier of public mains water in Scotland. We filled out a paper form and waited two months to get an acknowledgement back, with confirmation that the form was fine and that they would quote for the water connection in due course. On the plus side, at least I was dealing with one organisation. However, it was obvious this would not be sorted in time for Christmas, so more anon...



## December 2014 – Fencing

We had been moderately ambitious for our December block of work, planning to get our runs of missing post-and-wire fencing sorted – some 100m along the west, north and east sides. We did our homework and knew exactly what we needed. We got the tools we needed ahead of time, delivered directly to Aberdeen.

Finding someone who sold fencing was another matter altogether and it was mere days before we got up there that we came across Midmar Timber, well to the west of Aberdeen. They



were obliging and got me a quote within hours, but could not deliver in time.

So, a couple of days before Christmas, we went out to Midmar with the trusty Ford Galaxy and bought everything we needed. We worked out we could get it moved in two loads. Firstly the strainer posts and struts. Strainers are the thick ones which start and finish runs of wire and are used at every change of direction, the struts prop up the strainers to stop them being pulled out of vertical. The second load was

the 60+ intermediate posts, the straining wire, barbed wire, pig netting and staples.

Enter once again George, our digger man. We needed him to dig out the 1.2m deep holes for the strainers – equal lengths above and below ground - and fill them in afterwards. The process was awesome. George was digging holes and filling faster than I could a) run and get a post, b) put the post in the hole and c) throw lumps of concrete down to hold the posts in place. So he sorted out the electricity people (previous newsletter) as I caught up. By the end



of the day we had our 8 strainers in the ground.

We spent two days running strainer wire along the bottom of the strainers, laying the intermediate posts, using our post thumper to knock the posts into the ground, then putting the second run of strainer wire in and tensioning it all. The last day was frantic

because we were running out of time and had to get finished before we went back south. The weather

had taken a turn for the worse. We were stapling the wire and netting to the posts, running barbed wire along the top, then stapling and tensioning it, amidst horizontal sleet. It did impress our local farmer who came out to commiserate with us. We got everything finished, under budget. And, for a first go, it was really quite impressive.

By the way, barbed wire is a beast to handle – very heavy, stiff, unco-operative and unforgivingly vicious on skin and clothing.

