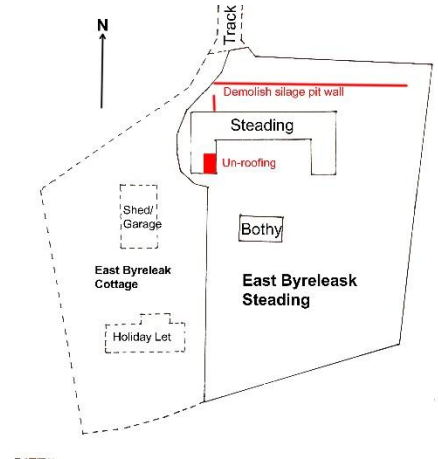


April 2015 – Un-Roofing

We were back in Aberdeen over Easter, taking advantage of the public holidays to eke out our annual leave allowances. Ahead of time we had:

- Worked with the architect to get a Demolition Warrant from Aberdeenshire Council, to allow us to remove the roof and break & crush all the concrete walls and hardstanding. The architect had concerns over the quality of the slates on the roof, we opted to hang onto them, to see if we could re-use them. The crushed concrete we will re-use as hardcore under floors and along our (shared) trackway – it costs money to get materials/waste off- and on-site so we want to reuse/recycle as much as possible.
- Bought slaters tools, breaking bars, a ladder and a roof ladder.
- Ordered a 12m run of Kwikstage scaffolding. We need it off and on over the entire project - 5 years or so – so hiring did not make sense. It will go up to 4.8m high, enough to get to the tops of our gable-ends. It was to be delivered the day after we drove up.



of our gable-ends. It was to be delivered the day after we drove up.

- Got our digger man, George, to demolish the large silage wall on the north side of our plot.
- Got the blessing of Scottish Water to get a contractor to connect our water supply.

On arriving at the steading for the first time since Christmas, we were duly impressed by the amount of open space in front of the steading and the huge pile of broken concrete in the north-west corner. George had not had time to remove the very chunky steel reinforcing I-beams, set in big lumps of concrete – a job for another time.

The scaffolding arrived on time. It was as easy to set up as expected, so we put up a short run and got started on the roof. The ridge tiles are pipeclay and in excellent condition, we put them to one side to re-use. They were marked as

made by 'Hurlford of Kilmarnock'. I had expected the slates to be fixed down with easy-to-remove copper nails – unfortunately the previous roofer had used galvanised steel nails, we had to re-plan. We found we could loosen the nails with a pair of pliers then lever the slates off, with a reasonably low breakage rate. We experimented with a chain hoist to get the slates down to ground level, then found places to stack the slates on edge.

After four days we had cleared half of a short run of roof – about 500 slates out of the 10,000 total, it was clear we would need to find ways to speed it up. We left a sample of slates with the family, to be checked by a local slater, before we headed south again.

We did get other things done. We got rid of the 'Mark 1' compost heap and moved the contents to the more permanent 'Mark 2' that we built the previous Christmas. We sprayed ground elder. We got a contractor on-site to quote us for our water connection. We discovered a pile of locally-made bricks down the plot and stacked them to one side for re-use.

The slater gave the thumbs up to our slates, offering to buy them from us at a price that would more than pay for importing new slate from Spain or Brazil.

Jill & Andy Walker



May 2015 – More Un-Roofing

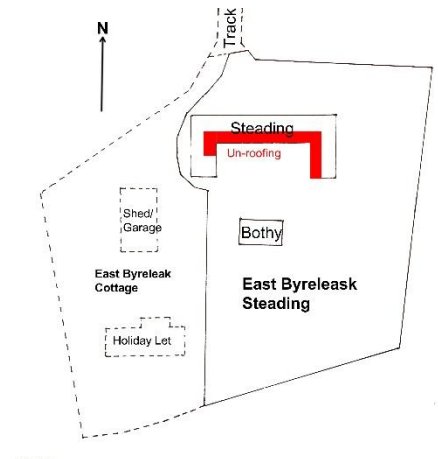
We had booked our next working visit to Aberdeen as soon as we got back last time around. This time for 10 days in May, flying there and back from Luton. The flights were evenings, so we gained the best part of two extra days by not driving. The only prep this time was to get an electrician lined up to put a temporary power supply in and for us to buy a petrol strimmer, a 50m extension lead and a second, longer, roof ladder.

It was straight back on the roof, but with some innovation.

Rather than using the chain hoist for lowering slates down, we passed the slates down to an intermediate level by hand, then again down to ground level – massively faster. So much so that

we were able to treat ourselves to some strimming and a bonfire before we finished for the first day. Anyone who knows Scottish roofing practice will know that slates are laid on wooden boarding – sarking - rather than battens. It had to come off, but was mostly well-rotted.

Every movement over it, breaking bar in hand, was an adventure. We made good progress, got our first length of roof cleared and worked round the corner on to a long stretch. We had reinforcements – another family builder, Geoff, came up on holiday and lent a hand. Being much more fearless at height, he worked at twice our speed and we were actually pushed to get the scaffolding built up ahead of him fast enough. One of our sons, Alec, was helping. Our friend, Lynn, came over from Glasgow and got stuck in. By the time we had run out of working days we had removed the best part of 4,500 slates, a bit less than half the total.



We sorted another significant nigggle. The concrete wall across our courtyard was very ropy in places, but was supporting



one end of a rather massive concrete lintel that is embedded at the other end into one of our gable-ends. I worried about it working loose and bringing the gable-end down with it. I worked out it was about half a tonne, so we put scaffolding under it, hired a concrete saw and cut it through, close to the gable-end. It settled nicely onto the scaffolding, we could then cut it into quarters at our leisure. We pushed

them off the edge onto the ground to await a digger and dumper truck. In fact we used them as seating for lunch breaks for a while.

The electrician came and went, giving us an earthing spike and a metal box with a switch, a mini-ring and four working sockets. We borrowed a leaky kettle and revelled in a first cup of our own builders brew.

We also found time to get a couple of 'keep out' signs and some wire mesh builders panels to run across our north-west corner, to discourage unwanted visitors.

