

June 2015 – More of the same

Our June visit was a fleeting weekend to celebrate our daughter Mairi's birthday. We flew up and back again, spent a relaxed day at Cruden Bay and Slains Castle and were on site the following day. We finished off what we had not quite finished last time, removing the sarking from the last piece of roof facing the courtyard. We spent more time



putting scaffolding up and taking it down than working on the roof, but it got done and it was a major milestone.



We strimmed grass and nettles, had a good bonfire to get rid of the most



rotten sarking and

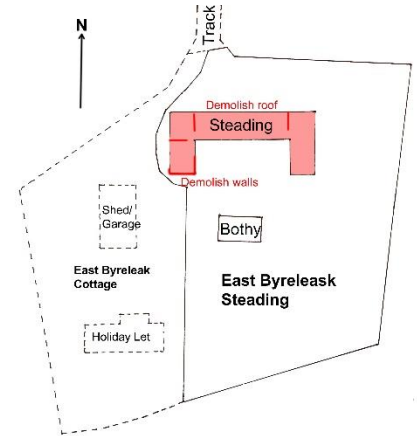
were generally a bit chilled out. Other snippets: The Japanese Knotweed is fatally wounded from spraying last September; we planted a root of rhubarb and six container-grown rowan trees back in May, they are looking settled; we had built a Mark 2 compost heap last December and transferred everything into it from the Mark 1.

September 2015 – Hardcore Demolition!



Water: Getting a water supply on site had stumbled on slowly ever since we put the form in to Scottish Water last October. We paid the connection fee and the building-water charge in March and had got hold of an approved contractor to do the work. When they remembered about us, they got a shift on. They even offered a water bowser if they did not get it connected in time. And so it was that we were greeted by a blue plastic standpipe in just the right place, where we

will eventually want to run the supply pipe into the steading. The water pressure and flow rate seem decent, quite a bit better than our home down south.



Demolition: Our family builder, Ric, made good on his promise of three weeks work in September. He was on site a week before us and started to bring down the fire-damaged gable-end. He removed enough slates and sarking from the side of the roof that we had not cleared, to be able to bring down 5m or so of roof timbers. The gable-end was down to below wall height when we got there and he had started a pile of quoin stones (corner stones) for doorways and window openings. Not bad considering it had rained solid for several of those days. Being new to the area, he assumed that is what it is always like, he was sceptical when we claimed that we had hardly lost more than a couple of days to the weather up until then. It did brighten up a lot for the following two weeks,

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with a few half-days of heavy showers. With a gang on site, there were suddenly lots of possibilities. To make the best use of a professional builder, we got back on the roof, removing slates and sarking board. We did our first mini digger hire and Ric carried on bringing down the gable-end, but at a vastly faster rate. He started on the concrete wall across the courtyard and got it down to waist height but then hit reinforcing posts



that would have to wait for George.

The rest of the time was a race to get the roof removed fast enough to keep Ric busy. With several of our family available to labour for us at intervals, we had two people removing



slates and two more getting them down to ground and stacking them. Ric snapped at our heels

removing sarking and bringing down the rood timbers. Which he did by tying a rope to the next timber to come down, using a saw to cut through one end just about where it rested on the wall head, then applied a bit of welly. We took time out to clear the tangle of roof timbers and pull them apart, stacking them behind our bothy for future use in a



woodburner. As we went, Ric demolished the internal granite rubble walls and we hired a dumper truck to get stuff out of the way. We started a usable-granite pile and a waste pile that we can add to the crushed concrete when we get that job done. Over a matter of days the site transformed into a much more ruinous looking spectacle. Very much a case of having to take down before we can build up. Ric used the digger to pull up concrete shed bases further down the plot and get some of the bigger lumps of loose granite out of the way. He dug us a trench through old trackway, in line with next-door's shed, so that we could at a future date plant hedging and trees for screening.



Between bouts of roof clearing we also hired a big concrete breaker to remove 20m+ of concrete blockwork from the top of the north wall of the steading. This had been built up to form one wall of the silage clamp. The other wall, George had already demolished.

Anyway, we made good progress and before we knew it, were photographing the last slate, finishing demolishing the roof and bringing down the last internal wall. Ric dug out bits of the concrete flooring to see the state of the ground underneath – of great interest for the next stages of work. It was OK. When we left, we really only had our granite rubble walls left plus the bits of concrete wall that we could not bring down without George's much bigger digger.

We all headed down south feeling that it was a good job well done. We know that

leaving the wall heads exposed to the elements is not good for more than a year or two, so it puts pressure on us to get the walls cleaned up, windows and doorways sorted and a new roof put on!

