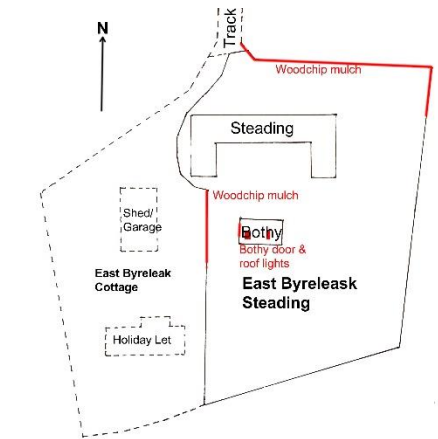


December 2016 – Bothy & Woodchip

Having got the hedging in the ground, we wanted to get a mulch over the weed membrane to keep weeds down and insulate the ground a bit. We had trouble finding the quantities we would need – 8 cubic metres or so - at a price we wanted to pay. Garden centres, for example, sell little bags for a few pounds each. Eventually we tracked down Aberdeen Tree Specialists, cunningly based in Huntly. They occasionally do jobs over our side of Aberdeenshire and would provide 4 cubic meters of wood chippings at a time, at a price I was quite happy to pay. The downside is not knowing when they will get a job anywhere near



us.

Anyway, with

Christmas being a time for family, we only really planned to replace the doors on the bothy and cover the open roof lights to make the bothy more secure, dryer and less draughty.

The existing Bothy doors are meant to slide open, but are just about

defunct. We bought timber, cladding, two ledged & braced doors and all the trimmings from Jewson. We did not have the tools to remove the old doors, so got going on the replacement, leaving the old doors in place. We built a frame inside the existing doorway and then a frame inside that to hold the two new doors. We put shiplap cladding over the framing, hung the doors and applied a coat of woodstain. It is a bad idea trying to stain wood in near-freezing, breezy and wet conditions but we did not have an alternative. It did sort of dry out after a few days. Meanwhile we cut up a sheet of clear corrugated plastic, screwed



it onto wooden frames and just about managed to work them in amongst the corrugated asbestos roofing sheets around the two missing skylights. The last bit of plastic sheet we fixed over our one windowless window, it was very Heath Robinson, but it will do the job for a few years.

And we struck gold with the wood chippings – they delivered a load just

before Christmas. The person who dropped it off had been to a wedding in Lowestoft a few years ago. There was a lot of woodchip and it took the best part of a day and a half to barrow it along the weed membrane and spread it into a nice uniform 10cm layer. We ran out before we had covered all the hedging, I phoned ATS again and asked them to drop another load when they had one. We noticed a very useful property of woodchip – it does not really blow around in strong winds. Some of the roof timbers holding down the membrane moved, even some of the granite cobbles. But the woodchip stayed where it was.

Jill & Andy Walker



January 2016 – Hedging Prep



We were up for a quick weekend in January and got two days at the steading. The hedging and mulch were in a good state, but the windbreak netting had suffered. The cable ties we used were not up to the job, the netting tore away and was flapping around getting tangled on the barbed wire. It clearly needed more points of contact to hold it against the pig netting.



As an experiment, we got a reel of plastic twine from the nearest garden centre and fashioned a crude needle out of wire. We sewed the top of the netting along the top straining wire using the holes knitted in to the netting, then went back and sewed the bottom edge of the netting to the bottom wire. It looked a lot more secure. Time will tell.



The main job was to prepare for another lot of hedging, to finish off the east and west boundaries. To do so we had to sort out our fencing on the east side. When we bought the plot, the north-east boundary had a complicated embayment sticking out into the farmers field. We agreed with Mr Jamieson to straighten it out, losing part of the bit that stuck out and gaining a wedge of his field down the east side. We put our new fence along the new boundary and just left the old fence where it was. Where it was in the way of where we want to put weed membrane, so

we spent a happy day rolling up 50m of pig netting, strainer wire and barbed wire and pulling out fence posts. We cleared the stray concrete, metal, glass and boulders that we happened upon, then were able to lay weed membrane down both east and west sides, just about into the corners. We used a mix of the fence posts we had taken up, roof timbers and granite boulders to weigh it down.

