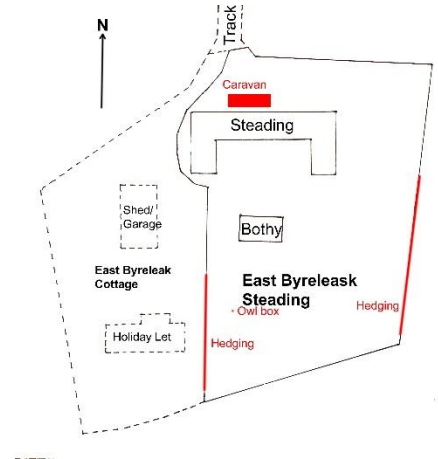


## March 2016 – Caravans, Hedging & Snippets

We were up for seven days over Easter, again making best use of the public holidays.



**Caravans:** We will need a caravan by the time we move north, still 3 years away. However the more we thought about it, the more attractive it seemed to have somewhere to get out of wind and rain, other



than hiding in the bothy. So we decided to look around. The

choice is limited and we ended up at 'Nia Roo' (clue – reverse it and imagine you are a native of Aberdeenshire) caravan park, between Aberdeen and Newmarcher. The alternative is at New Deer, quite a bit further away. Nia Roo did indeed have a decent

range, including half a dozen that were in our price bracket, they were pushed away at the back of the site. They were all very different, some we did not want, but we could not decide on the remainder. We got family to help us decide and, in the end, size mattered. We went for the 12-foot wide one, with a decent sized lounge and three bedrooms. The décor was solidly 1995, but it is undoubtedly in good nick. Without effort on our part we bartered the price down and got them to include delivery. We asked them to drop it off between the bothy and the courtyard – the most sheltered spot. We look forward to having somewhere to shelter next time we are up!

**Hedging:** We had gone back to Eddie at Hattens Farm Nursery, Metfield, and ordered 200 more bare-root hedging plants, they were waiting for us when we arrived. We noted that some of the granite boulders holding down the new lengths of windbreak netting had been pushed off, we suspected wind. Anyway we tidied up, got stuck in with planting and, as we worked down towards the south end, discovered that the ground got easier to work. We finished with time to spare, the first time this has happened so far.

**Windbreak Netting:** The bits of windbreak netting we had sewn onto the pig netting, back in January, were fine, so we did the rest of the original length. We then put up another roll of netting down the east and west sides and sewed that on – not a very satisfying job, but the netting makes a big difference at ground level.

**Building Warrant:** Our architect was beaver away in the background responding to



Aberdeenshire Council queries about our building warrant. Being over 200 square m of floor, he had to consult a fire master and incorporate their recommendation on smoke alarms and sprinkler systems. Problem – the Scottish fire services have amalgamated and they have no firemasters at the moment.





**Owl Box:** A library borrower had constructed us a rather magnificent owl box, we took it up on a previous visit but did not have the means to put it up. We finally had a big enough toolkit to do a proper job of it!

**Bothy doors:** We could not get the old doors off the bothy at Christmas. We borrowed a chunky angle grinder with a metal-cutting disk, put up a bay of scaffold and sawed up the rail that the old doors run along. Having detached the doors, we broke them up, the wood joining our woodburner pile and the metal the scrap pile. We added a coat of woodstain to the new doorway.

## May 2016 – Grounds

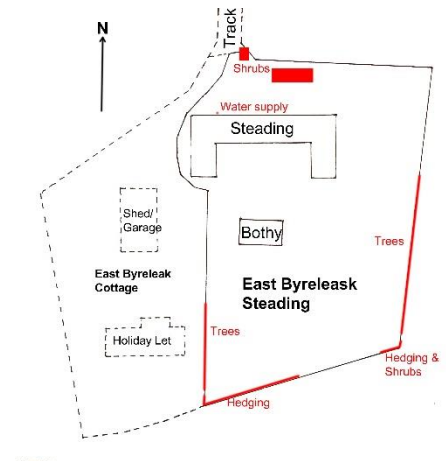
We needed to drive up for our May visit, for the first time since Christmas. The reason? We had a large number of container-grown plants of our own that needed to be planted out. There



were quite a few hedging plants we had taken from cuttings down south, plus a few that had sentimental value. The car was quite a sight, with just enough room left over for two people and a dog.



We made it to Aberdeen and were greeted by our caravan, dumped unceremoniously on the concrete on the north side of the steading. Furthermore our safety panels were in a sorry state, one had clearly been run over by something large and heavy.



It turned out that it had been very wet when they delivered the caravan and had trouble getting it on site, let alone round to the courtyard. They also appeared to have used some of our slates to get traction, mincing them in the process – not happy. We cleared up the mess, bent the panel back to shape and decided to level up the caravan where it was. One of the roof vent covers had fallen apart and from the bits of ash twig on top of the caravan, we deduced collateral damage from coming up our track. Anyway, even without any services connected, it was a lot more comfortable having lunch in the caravan than outside.

Our water contractor had been back and made an odd housing for the standpipe out of extra-wide blue plastic water pipe, with a cover on top and a door in the side.



We laid more weed membrane along most of the southern boundary and spent several days planting our shrubs there. There are now trees every 5m along three boundaries, including some cherry plums taken from a fruiting tree near Slains school and two copper beech trees, one each from our family homes. We were a bit concerned with how dry everything was, unlike our two previous planting episodes. We fear for what state they will be in when we are up in July.



Then there was the usual – picking glass out of the ground, strimming nettles and grass, spraying persistent perennial weeds.