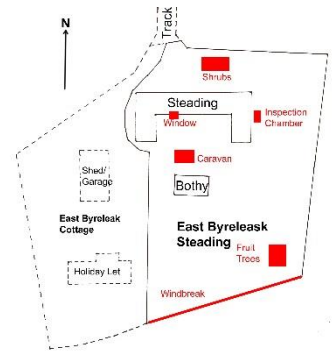


December 2016 – Bits & Pieces

We were up in Aberdeen over Christmas & New Year for the best part of two weeks, but it was mostly social so we did not have a long to-do list.



Caravan: Ric had left the caravan with two webbing straps, one each end, that went over the roof and were bolted to big chunks of granite either side. The idea being to stop the caravan moving and damaging in strong winds. Jill had been in the area in November, dropped by, and reported that one of the straps had come apart and was not doing its job. It was quick to fix and ratchet back down. More irritating was that back in September, we had turned off the water and left taps open etc., but omitted to drain the gas water heater. It had frozen up at some point and,



with the water back on, was squirting water through a tiny pinhole. We closed the water off, consulted with Ric and concluded that the heater was probably in bad condition and would need changing. A job for 2017.



Wind: The tree guards we had made earlier in the year from heavy-duty netting, to protect our bigger shrubs from rabbits/hares, had blown over or, in a couple of cases, away. We fixed them back down with much chunkier stakes.



Our south boundary seems to get the full force of the strongest winds and had been the only part without windbreak netting, so we took the opportunity to put up a heavy grade mesh – not pretty, but hopefully up to the task!

Fruit trees: Back in September we took three apple trees and a plum tree north with us. We had also put weed membrane down in the south-east corner of the plot, just inside the hedging – one of the few areas that we thought would not get disturbed by building works. So we took a few hours to cut slits in the membrane about 2.5m apart, dig holes, add compost and plant the trees. Knowing how hungry the rabbits/hares get, we made tree guards from the heavy-duty netting and staked them down.



New window opening: Mairi and Ian were up in Aberdeen for the festivities, we inveigled them into spending a short day on site. They opened up a new window in the long wall facing the courtyard

Drains: We sorted the one drain issue that the building inspector had highlighted - the 90 degree bend into the bathroom inspection chamber, from the backdrop, which he thought would block. We dug out the chamber, cut out the bend and swapped it for two 45 degree bends. We sent photos to the inspector, he had not replied by the time we needed to head south so we filled the hole in anyway. He OKed it shortly after.



March 2017 – Prep

Ric had agreed to spent a long stretch on site between March & May. Andy went up for a long weekend to get him settled in.



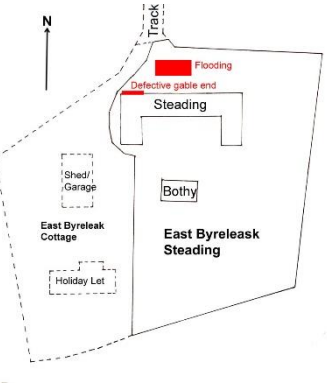
Getting final floor level marked out: We need to know exactly where our final floor level needs to be so we dig down to the right depth to lay hardcore, sand blinding and the concrete floor slab. Then we can get joists, roof trusses, doors and windows at the right levels as well.

We got the level and staff out, worked out floor heights accurately at one point, then sprayed orange paint at floor slab level on the blockwork in each & every opening in the outside wall. We sprayed a smaller number of purple marks for final floor level, 15cm above the slab.

Roof design: Marking final floor level settled a discussion I had been having with the architect and Stevenson & Kelly, who design roof trusses. Getting combined attic trusses i.e. where the upstairs floor joists are built in to the trusses, looked to be a lot cheaper than the raised-tie trusses and separate joists the architect had designed. But it turns out attic trusses cannot have joists thinner than 300mm, whilst separate joists can go down to 200mm. This extra 10cm makes all the difference, allowing us 2.2m high rooms on both ground and first floors, with a higher and smaller lie-ins upstairs. Decision made.



Minor flooding: We were surprised at the amount of standing water on our track as it approaches the steading and on the drive-off onto our hardstanding. Delivery trucks would get bogged down. On investigation, we found land drains that looked to have been cut through and blocked when our water supply was run to the steading over a year before. They must have backed up a head of water to the point where a spring had formed on our property. We had planned a French drain across the flooded area anyway, we bought 20 tonnes of sub-base, dug out the soft ground and the drain, then hired a road roller to give a graded run-off from the track. So far, so good, we will



see how it survives the next winter.

Defective Gable End: Whilst sorting our flooding, Ric discovered that the gable end wall that overlooks the track and drive-off had no foundations on one side. Someone had dug them out and put some brickwork and clay pipes in, probably as part of the enormous silage clamp that had been built alongside the steading. We could have underpinned the wall, however it is to have a garage door cut into it anyway and we were worried the whole lot could collapse. On balance, we agreed with the architect that we would demolish most of the wall, lay a proper foundation and rebuilt it. Ouch!

