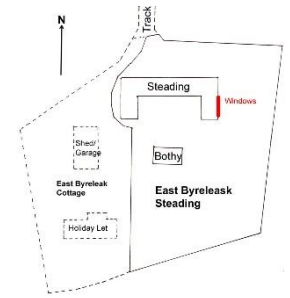


Christmas 2017 – Hole in the Wall

Christmas & New Year were cold and icy, fortunately we had just the one job planned – to ‘slap down’ two new windows i.e. to open them up in an existing wall. We considered making two separate openings; however the windows are less than 2m apart and the wall had several blocks of concrete and a length of rusty pipe embedded in it. We played safe and



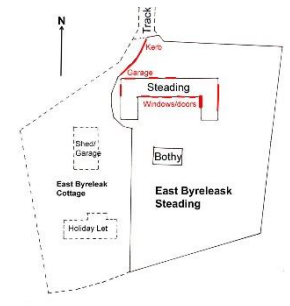
took out the pillar of stonework in between. This turned out to be good and bad. Good, because chunks of the wall were in shocking condition, with cement, brick rubble and even a 1m wooden plank embedded in it. Bad because, by the time I had pulled out all the rubbish and wet, decomposed, lime mortar, the opening was enormous and almost went up to the next opening in that wall. A case of being cruel to be kind!



April/May 2018 – Going Up!



Ric was on site at the start of April and did three weeks of preparation. He got rid of our standing water with two lengths of french drain, laid a linear drain in front of our garage & front doors, cut concrete structural lintels to size and laid more concrete blockwork where we need to rebuild walling. He assembled our best-shaped pieces of granite, mostly quoin (corner) stones, but also some gully surrounds that would make excellent water features. Once we were on site, we were spoilt for choice:



Driveway kerbing: We wanted to clearly separate the shared track from what will be our driveway – partly for looks and partly to stop water running onto our patch from the track. We dug out the foundation trench and spent several half-days mixing and barrowing concrete. Once it had gone off, we laid the kerbing on mortar, haunched up the sides with more concrete, then levelled out both sides. Straightforward, but a surprisingly heavy job.

How to use lime mortar: We spent two days on a ‘Working with lime mortar’ course that, very coincidentally, was exactly when we needed one. Our tutor was a Swedish master mason, who had lived in Scotland for 16 years and had an interesting hybrid accent. Very useful course and, as we were in Banff/Macduff, a chance for one of us (Andy) to see for the first time the truly spectacular Tarlair swimming pool – a Grade A listed Art-Deco wonder, built 1931, that is irretrievably falling into ruin. If you are in the area, go and see it!

Windows becoming windows: With one exception, all our window/door openings now have blockwork built up on the inside edge of the walling and concrete lintels across the top. For the first time we have a clear idea of the proportions of the finished building and what our views will be like. Where the windows are on original granite, we have trimmed the stonework to height and laid a bed of mortar ready for sills, when they are delivered. We have one window



left to open out, in a gable-end. This will wait for a while, possibly until the roof has gone on.

Garage doors: The old side-door in the garage area is now completely blocked up and is waiting for the granite walling on the outside face. The blockwork on the gable-end face is up over the first of our chunky Catnic steel beams – we have our new garage door opening – and is just about at sill level for the upstairs window.

Wallheads: We are raising our roof by 45cm



over the original building, to give us headroom on both floors of east and west wings. We have laid all the concrete blockwork for this that we can and can accurately measure up for roof trusses, when we are ready!



Working with stone: Ric has educated us on aspects of stone-

masonry. We know how to build up corners using quoin stones and how to split and trim them to size. We have constructed short lengths of granite rubble-walling across three openings that were doors and

are now windows, up to sill height. Ric has rebuilt a derelict doorway, reinstated existing granite lintels above the door and adjacent window and we completed the walling above, to roof-height. Another



transformative moment!

Gable-ends, parapets and coping stones: The trickiest problem has been reconstructing one of our two remaining gable-ends, where the top of the wall was heavily decayed. Some of the coping stones had gone, so we removed the rest a couple of years ago, to avoid accidents; both the

retaining stones had long gone. We needed to rebuild the top of the wall, allowing for the 45cm lifting of the roofline. Ric created a dummy roof truss, exactly to size, propped up on one side by a length of timber to wallhead height. He calculated where the retaining stones needed to be and built up the stonework accordingly. We lugged the retaining stones up the scaffolding and got them in place. Ric built blockwork up the wall to the apex and replaced the timber inner lintel of the existing upstairs window with concrete ones. It was all a bit of a 3-D puzzle that has transformed a formerly derelict stretch of wall.

Exciting times for us...

