

Ballantruan Farmhouse

Ballindalloch, Moray

Analytical assessment

for

Jennifer Stewart and Malcolm MacGarvin

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Ballantruan Farmhouse, looking west.



View of the rear (west) side of Ballantruan farmhouse

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Analytical Assessment

1. Introduction

i. General

The purpose of this assessment report was to review the understanding of the history and evolution of Ballantruan farmhouse so as to inform the development of architectural proposals, by Simpson and Brown Architects (contact Jenny Humphreys) for potential improvements to the property.

Ballantruan farmhouse is a Category A listed structure located some 8km to the north of Tomintoul within Kirkmichael parish, Moray (NGR NJ 14727 25264); immediately adjacent to the north is the Tomintoul distillery. The farmhouse is located upon a mid-level terrace upon a scarp just above the east side of the narrow floodplain of the River Avon; its site is bounded to the east by the Tomintoul to Ballindalloch road (B9136).

ii. Designations, listing description., etc.

Listed Building – Category A (No. LB8918), added 22 February 1972.¹

Mid-later 18th century. 2-storey, wide 3-bay farmhouse with single storey, 2-bay wing to NE gable. Harled rubble. Wide centre entrance with double-leaf panelled door. 12-pane glazing, 9-pane to smaller 1st floor windows. Small stair window, centre rear elevation. End stacks, Tomintoul slate roof.

INTERIOR: ground floor, right room; some panelling remains; left room; extensive panelling concealing former box-beds, 2 panelled angle cupboards, well finished ceiling joists. Raised and fielded panelled doors survive throughout.

Statement of Special Interest: Unusual survival of good, panelled interiors.

CANMORE²

Ballantruan farmhouse is situated to the east of the River Avon, a short distance from the Tomintoul-Glenlivet Distillery. Built in the mid-eighteenth century, the farmhouse is a two-storeyed building, with a small, single-storeyed wing to the north-east. It is roofed in Tomintoul slate and is constructed of harled rubble masonry.

The house has a well-preserved panelled interior, which is made of pine that was floated down the River Spey from the Rothiemurchus Forest

Note – ‘Tomintoul slate’ is referred to locally as *Cnoc Fergan* slate after the name of the actual quarry.

Moray Council, Historic Environment Record (undated)³

¹ <http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/LB8918>

² <https://canmore.org.uk/site/81576/ballantruan>

³ <https://online.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/smrpub/master/detail.aspx?tab=spatial&refno=NJ12NW0009>

Farmstead, still in use. It is depicted at this site on the 1st and 2nd edition OS maps as four rectangular buildings, the Northern two with attached enclosures. To the South is a lime kiln (NJ12NW0008), a mill lade and a mill dam. Three of the original buildings appear to survive, but the Southernmost one has been replaced by a new building. Neither the lime kiln nor mill lade are depicted, the mill dam is shown as a marshy area. The farmhouse was built in the mid- to late-18th century. It is a 2-storey, wide, 3-bay farmhouse, with a single storey, 2-bay wing to the North-East gable. It is constructed from harled rubble, with a wide centre entrance with a double-leaf panelled door. There is 12-pane glazing, with 9-pane glazing to the smaller first floor windows. There is a small stair window in the centre rear elevation, and end stacks with a Tomintoul slate roof. Inside, some panelling remains in the right room on the ground floor, and in the left room there is extensive panelling concealing former box-beds, 2 panelled angle cupboards and well finished ceiling joists. Raised and fielded panelled doors survive throughout.

Walker and Woodworth (2015, 750) include the following entry,

*Ballantruan Farmhouse ... Mid C18, a typical two-storey and three-bay house with unpretentious Georgian trappings inside, e.g., fielded panelling in the l. room, originally fronting an alcove with box beds. Dentilled cornice along the top. Two angled cupboards opposite and ceiling with well-finished wooden joists*⁴

iii. Survey methodology

Tom Addyman visited Ballantruan on 11 August 2022 during which all parts of the existing structure and its immediate setting were viewed in the company of the clients. A particular purpose of the assessment was to examine in detail a number of areas already identified by the clients as of particular interest or uncertainty in relation to their developing understanding of the building's evolution. The assessment also involved review of available documentation for the structure, this mostly researched and supplied by the client, see following section.

⁴ *Buildings of Scotland: Aberdeenshire: North and Moray*

2. Historical

i. General

Much careful historical research has already been carried out by the clients, and summarised in their 2022 draft document, *Ballantruan Farmhouse: its history and people – a brief summary*;⁵ that includes considerable investigation into the history of the occupants whether as tenants of the Gordon Estate or more recently, owners. Other than reference to key source material specifically relevant to building history it is not intended to reiterate the detail of this research in the present report.

ii. Cartographic

A settlement at Ballantruan appears on early cartographic sources such as the late 16th century manuscript map of Timothy Pont and General William Roy's of 1747-55, the latter showing an informal cluster of structures, a nominal representation. Of more specific relevance are estate surveys of 1773 by Thomas Milne and 1840 by McWilliam. Upon the earlier the present site is very recognisably delineated, a somewhat irregular rectilinear enclosure defined by dykes whose south side is occupied by a linear range, as discussed below this a structure whose truncated remains are still recognisable. The site of the existing house, at the north-east extent of the enclosure, is unoccupied. The 1840 survey shows site configuration as it exists. The range on the south side has disappeared, the north-east part of the pre-existing enclosure has been squared off with the imposition of the existing main house. Otherwise, the enclosure walls remain on their original alignments. The alignment of the north enclosure wall is in line with the north gable wall of the main house, the kitchen range projects further to the north. Self-evidently this confirms that both the main house and kitchen range were built between the dates of the two maps, a gap of 66 years. Later Ordnance Survey maps show no further development at the site.



Left. Detail of 1773 survey by Thomas Milne (Plan [no title] (1773). By Thomas Milne. Scale 1: 2880, 1 in. = 3 Sc. chs. 20 links. 87 x 183 cm. RHP.1751. Crown Estates Commissioner's records, Gordon Castle muniments.)
 Right. Detail of 1840 survey by McWilliam (Plan [no title] (1840) By George. McWilliam. Scale 1:4000, 1 in = 5 Imp. chs. 53 x 131 cm. RHP. 1808. Crown Estates Commissioner's records, Gordon Castle muniments.)

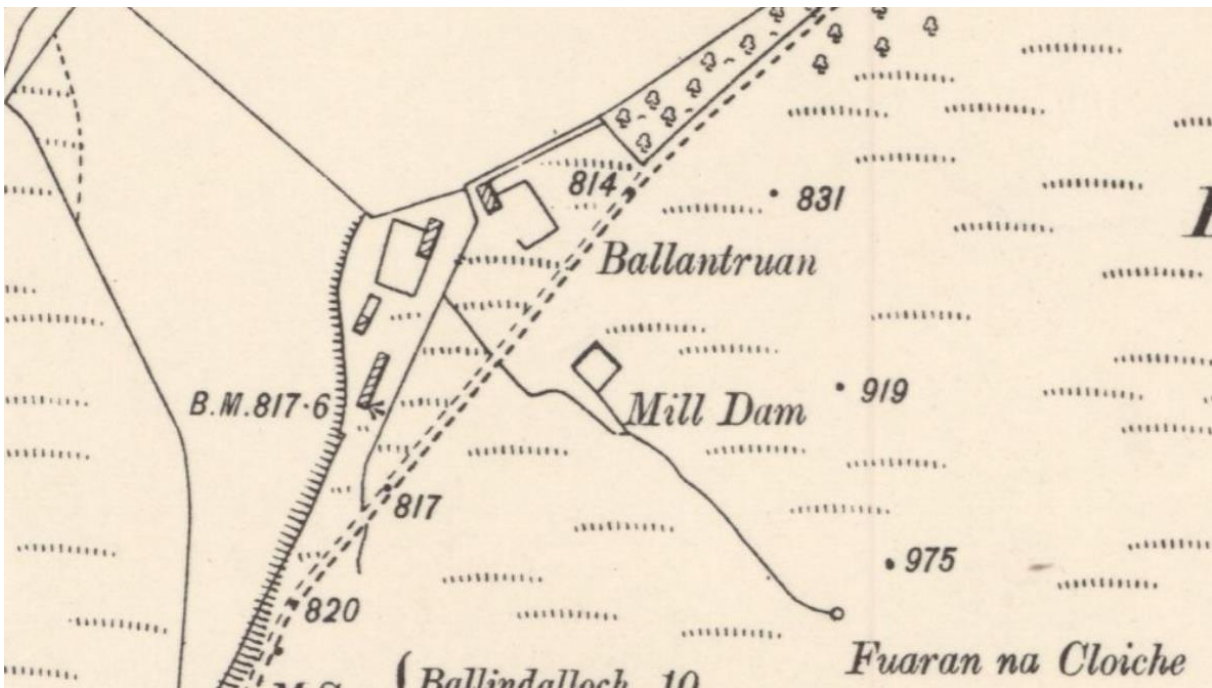
⁵ Copy of report available from jstewart49@gmail.com



Detail of the 1773 and 1840 survey plans, present site indicated.



Figure 2 Ordnance Survey 6": mile, of 1872 (surveyed 1869). NLS



Ordnance Survey 6": mile, published 1905 (surveyed 1900) - Banffshire Sheet XXXIV.SE & XXXV.SW. (NLS)

iii. Photographic

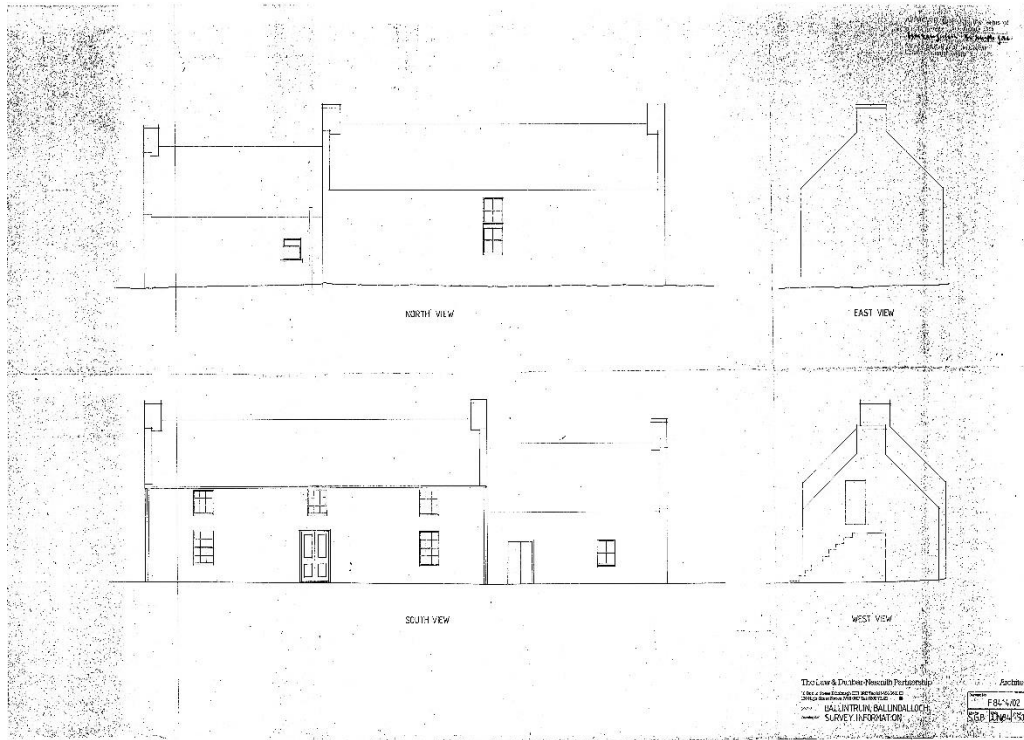
The present study is aware of a single historic photograph of Ballantruan farmhouse, taken before 1947. This shows the exterior of the structure from east; it is much as it exists today. The east frontage of both the main house and kitchen range are harled, however their gable walls appear unharled, apparently flush-pointed masonry, possibly limewashed. The harl as existing at this date may not be the original application or finish detail.



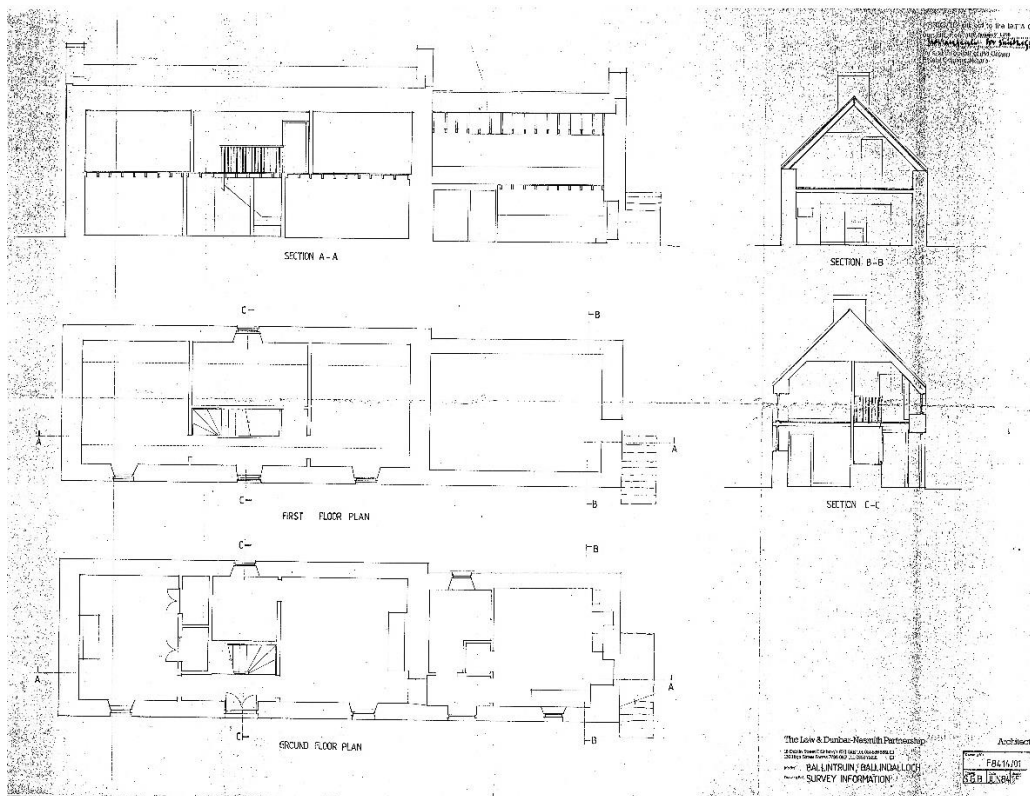
Ballantruan farmhouse in the 1940s (photo Robert Hurd. Source: Btw pages 178-180 in Meikle, Henry W. (ed.) (1947) Scotland : A Description of Scotland and Scottish Life. Thomas Nelson and Sons, London)

a. Works c. 1985

Following an inspection and report on the property by John Knight, Architect for the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland (inspection 24 May 1984) grant-aided repair and refurbishment works were carried out c.1985 according to designs prepared by LDN Architects of Edinburgh in preparation for which an as-existing survey was carried out in June 1984. The architect's report concluded, *Ballantruan farmhouse is a remarkable survival from the eighteenth century with some good internal panelling etc. It should respond well to a careful scheme prepared by the applicant's architect.*



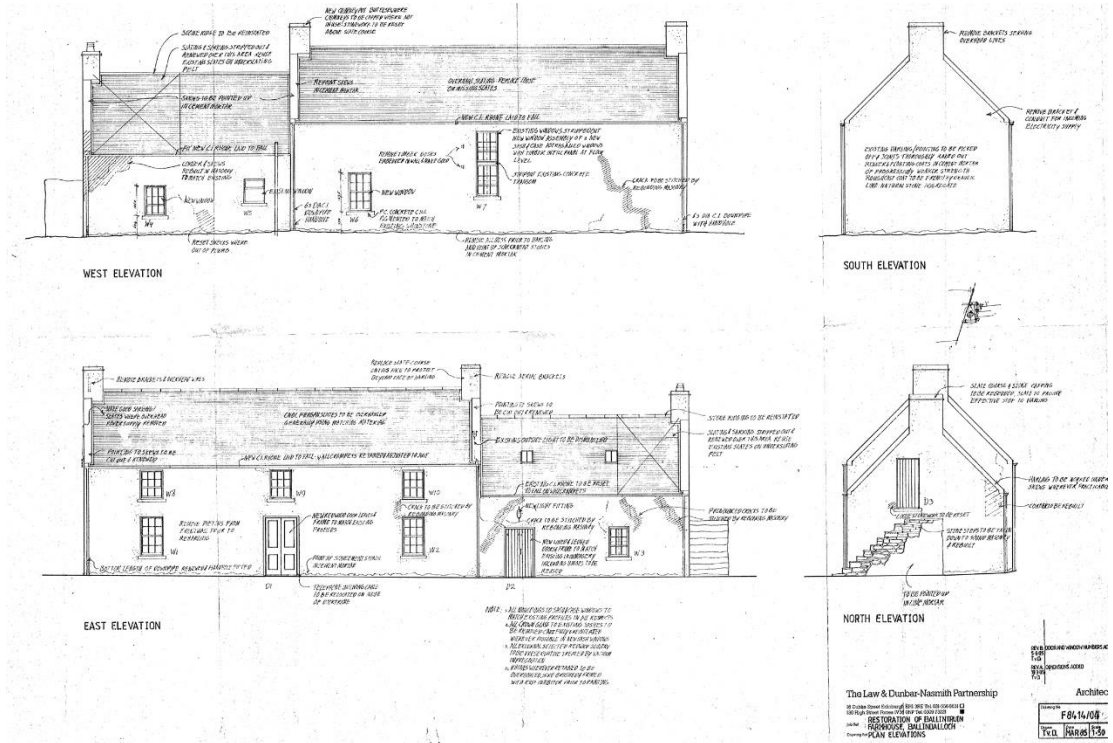
As existing drawings – elevations, June 1984 by LDN Architects



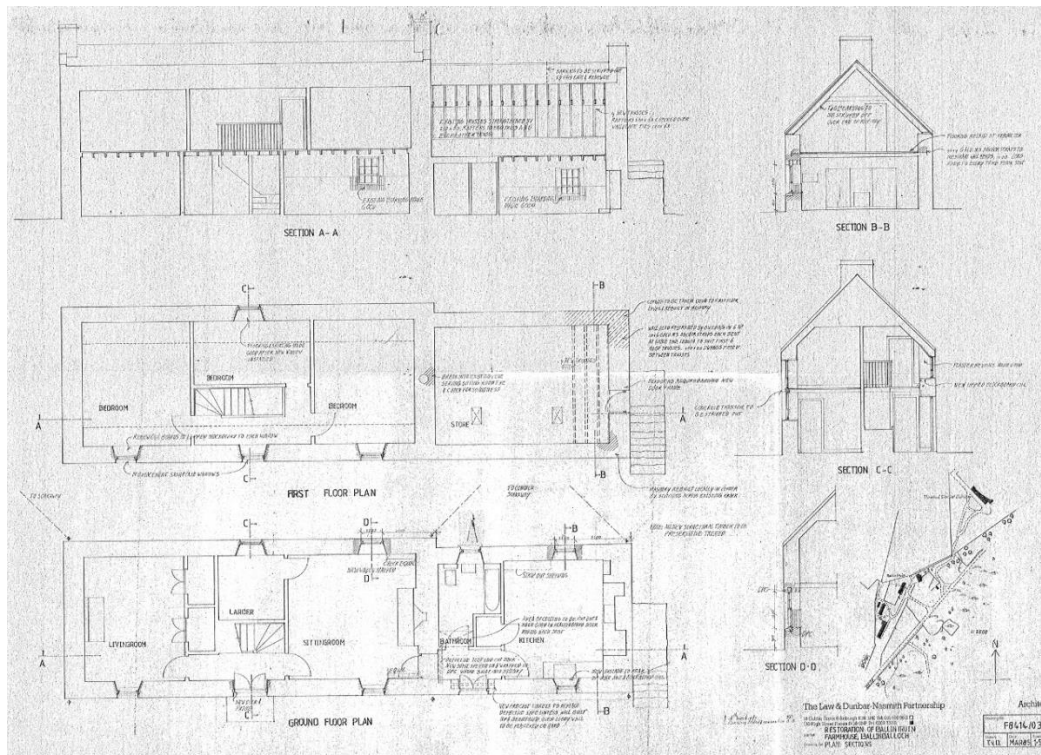
As existing drawings – plans, June 1984 by LDN Architects

According to the proposal plans of March 1985 the works generally addressed localised building defects such as settlement fractures, repointing of skews, localised masonry repair, such as the re-bedding of the steps of the external masonry stair to the north and repair of defective timberwork. Existing windows and doors were repaired or renewed; their details, moulding profiles, etc. matched to the existing. The

installation of concrete flooring seems to have formed part of the works as completed at this stage.⁶ To the exterior following the raking-out of beds and joints the building was re-harled in cement, a specification having been supplied by John Knight.



Proposal drawings – elevations, March 1985 by LDN Architects



Proposal drawings – plans, March 1985 by LDN Architects

⁶ This was certainly the case for the north principal room and may have been the case for the south room though now inaccessible below floorboards.



View of the house from Southeast soon after restoration, 1995 (Photo from Malcolm MacGarvin & Jennifer Stewart)

3. Site assessment

i. General

b. Exterior

Ballantruan farmhouse is an elongated structure whose long axis aligns SSW-NNE; for ease of description this orientation is given as north-south. The entrance frontage lies to the east and is considerably set back from the existing road. The farmhouse is composed of two principal elements – the main house, a two-storied, gabled range of three bays and, extending from its north gable, a further range of a full story with loft level above – the kitchen range.

The main house is a handsome symmetrical composition of simple 18th century proportion and detail. Its principal frontage comprises a central entrance with single window to either side and three further somewhat smaller windows at first floor level that align with the ground floor openings. All openings are simply detailed, the existing harl running up to their jambs and over the lintel, the ingos plastered within. The only exposed stonework are the cill stones, these coarse slabs of schist – likely never intended to have been exposed. The windows themselves are of sash-and-case form, 6-over-6 at ground floor and 6-over-3 at first; these were replaced during the 1980s works, however pre-existing moulding profiles were to be faithfully reproduced (*fillet-and-ovolo* astragal profile).⁷ The kitchen range window to the east frontage had formerly been of 2-over-2 sash-and-case detail, this renewed with a 6-over-3.

Both the main house and kitchen extension to the north are rubble-built, of lime-bonded mixed field-stone, predominantly granite, employing extensive pinnings, some laddered within joints, neatly executed. Little of this fabric is presently accessible, exceptions being inside the main loft, the north gable of the original house as seen within the existing ground floor bathroom interior, albeit painted, and at the upper loft within the kitchen extension. Quoining is not visible except for part of the jamb of what may have been an early entrance within the north gable wall – the existing ground floor entrance to the kitchen wing – apparently an original feature. As partly visible within the bathroom the jamb appears to have been formed of roughly hewn and squared blocks that may indicate the character of quoining of the principal angles of the structure. Within the kitchen loft it is seen that the east and west extension walls are not keyed into the existing building.



Detail of masonry of the main house, seen within the loft room of the kitchen extension

Detail of masonry of north gable – exterior as seen within the kitchen range; arrows indicate hewn jamb stones of opening further to the left

⁷ The 1984 architect's report stipulated ... *Joinery is nearing the end of its useful life and should be renewed to exactly match existing ... Windows must retain their present configuration ...*

Though rubble-built the masonry of the kitchen extension appears to be of less refined construction although visual access is limited to the interior wall face within the north gable at the upper level.



Interior of the north gable of the kitchen extension – detail of masonry construction

The existing harled finish extends to all exterior walls. This was applied during the c.1985 works evidently according to a specification supplied by the Historic Buildings Council for Scotland's architect. This stipulated,

... render and float to a fair surface in 2 coats with a mixture of one part Portland xcement and 3 parts clean gritty sand, waterproofed with an approved waterproofer.

... roughcast with a dashing coat of 3 parts 3/16" rough grit, 1 1/2 parts sharp sand and 2 parts semi hydraulic hydrated lime (Tottenhoe, or similar) gauged with 1/4 part cement.



East elevation – detail of harl application at ground floor window

West elevation – detail of existing harl finish applied c.1985, no showing harder cement substrate and higher lime-cement finish coat

Roofing is of local schist-like *Tomintoul* slate (from the Cnocfergan quarry, NGR: NJ12SW0058), this laid in diminishing courses rising to sandstone ridge stones at the apex. The raised gable heads are coped with slabs, held by plain skew-putts; the chimneys are formed with roughly squared rubble quoins and detailed with a drip course.



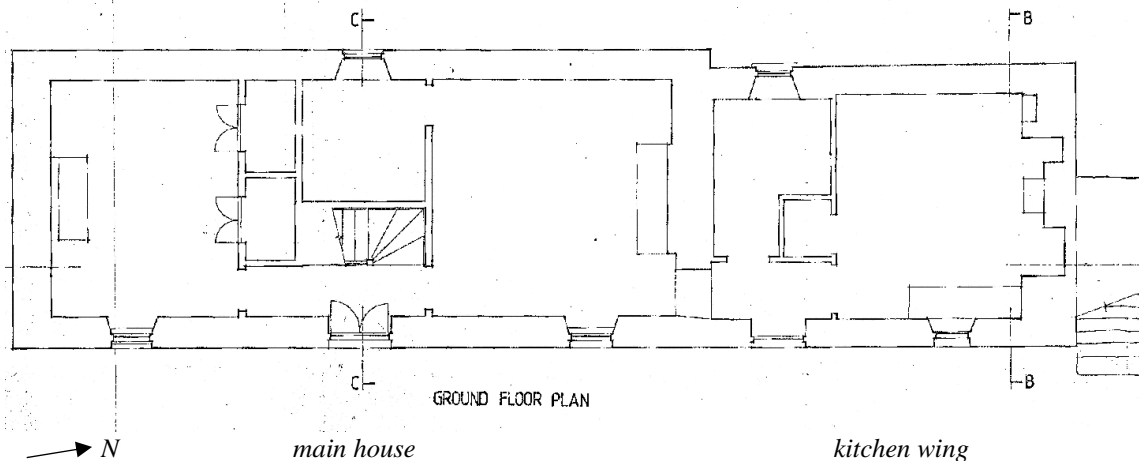
Main house – roof details, slating, gable head and chimney



Ex situ 'Tomintoul' slates at site, some retaining wrought iron nails, some with mortar residues

ii. The main house

a. Ground floor



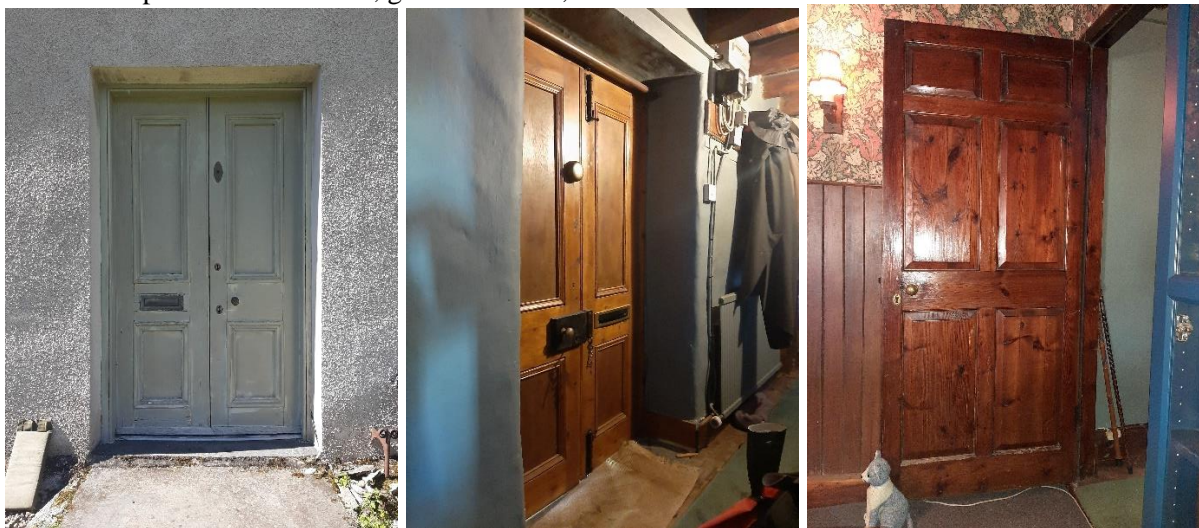
Ground floor plan – as existing in 1985, mostly unchanged (LDN Architects)

The main house is of a notably regular elongate rectangular outline; it is of typical tripartite plan type with principal rooms arranged to either side of a stair-hall/entrance with ancillary accommodation behind the latter. These basic sub-divisions are defined by two north-south aligned principal partitions that are of stud construction, plastered to the room-facing sides. Where the rear sides are visible, at points within the ancillary room and within the sub-stair void, the coarse nature of the timber employed for the studs is apparent, rough adze-dressed still partly in the round, limewashed in some places.

The ground floor ceiling is of open beam-and-board construction throughout, with no indication that rooms, even the principal room to the south, had had ceilings.

Entrance hall

The entrance hall, accessed through a two-leaf exterior door (a copy of c.1985 of the pre-existing⁸), is a narrow vestibule-like space, almost a passage, that provides access north and south to the principal ground floor rooms, however the space also opens out to the west side to access the stairwell. The interior is notable for the fine 6-panelled doors to the rooms, these are pegged, and detailed with raised and fielded panels to both sides, good ironwork, etc.



Front door and entrance hall; right – detail of panelled door to north room

⁸ And, interestingly, identical to that at Dalrachie...

South room

The ground floor room to the south is the well-appointed principal reception room. It features a fireplace with unornamented timber fascia and mantle-shelf over to the centre of the south wall with corner presses to either side these well detailed with panelled doors. To the south, west and east the walls are plastered onto the hard, a dado-level baton is embedded, likely for an applied rail, that is absent.



Interior of south room, south wall, 1995 (Photo from Malcolm MacGarvin & Jennifer Stewart)



Detail : press to south-west angle of room

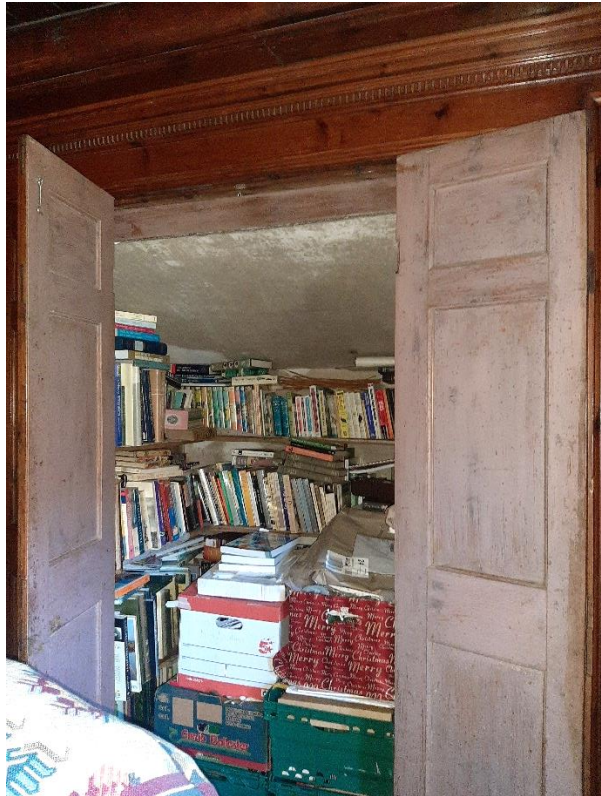
The outstanding feature of this interior is the joinerywork to the north wall whose panelling contains paired doors to each of two former box beds, a notable individual survival. While the bed-frames are no longer extant the interiors retain evidence for early paintwork and wallpapered linings, the fixing for the bed-frame itself is traceable within the western box. The panelled frontage is notable for its quality and richness of detail, the bed doors, room door and intervening panels all detailed with three levels of raised and fielded individual panels, the whole composition is surmounted with a cornice including dentils with a pulvinated frieze above (actually the rounded side of a joist). Such refined detail is in some contrast to the open ceiling structure of exposed beams; there is no evidence (e.g. lath nails) that the interior had had a plastered ceiling.



North wall showing arrangement of panelling incorporating paired doors to two box beds



Joinery details : left - cornice, etc.; right – panels



Left - detail – panelling to north wall and door from entrance hall to east end

Right – interior of eastern box bed; paintwork on door interior



Left - wall-papered interior of western box bed, paper onto timber lining boards terminating at top of bed-frame below, now missing; right – paper lining visible within eastern box bed

Even within this, the higher status room of the house, there was no obvious evidence that the window had been shuttered. The window astragal profile of narrow *fillet-and-ovlo* form.



Detail, window astragal

North room

The principal ground floor room to the north may have been the original kitchen as suggested by the substantial proportion of the fireplace and chimneybreast that projects from the centre of the north wall. The interior has an open beam-and-board ceiling structure, the joists of lightly dressed (with a draw-knife) timbers still mostly in the round; framing for the hearth stone of the fireplace on the floor above can be seen to the north with an unexplained cut-out on the left side of the chimneybreast. The lower walls are wainscotted with vertical tongue-in-groove boarding, evidently secondary (mid 19th century?); with some more recent modification and repair from the 1980s restoration – for example within the ingo of the window to the west. At the west side of the chimneybreast can just be seen behind the wainscoting a limewashed surface upon the masonry.



Main house – existing sitting room (original kitchen?) looking northwest, 1995 (Photo from Malcolm MacGarvin & Jennifer Stewart)



Detail of ceiling structure – light dressing of joists with a draw-knife; right – framing for the first floor fireplace hearth-stone to the north wall

The existing entrance at the east end of the north wall, now leading into the present kitchen range, may have been an original external entrance. However, the thick external wall and the finish of the doorway, including the discrepancy in height between the internal and external openings is not in keeping with the joineray and structural work elsewhere in the first phase of the building. The door within is relatively early, of plank-and-batten construction that features wrought iron fittings - band hinges with pointed termini suspended from loops, a latch (re-set), etc.



Detail of door to kitchen range

West room

An entrance at the west end of the south wall of the north room provides access to a subsidiary room to the west, behind the stairwell. The door itself is of plank-and-batten construction, with wrought band-hinges hung from loops



Door – details

The modern room interior is mostly lined out with the exception of the open ceiling structure. Towards the wall-tops parts of the framing behind are visible, revealing roughly dressed vertical studs affixed to the joists above with wrought nails, lath and plaster to the outer side, all limewashed. This chamber may originally functioned as a larder off the kitchen.



Interior of inner room; right – detail of wall top showing early partitioning construction – top of a stud, whitewashed

Stairwell

On the west side of the entrance hall is the stairwell, the stair itself rises anticlockwise, with winders at the angles, to a first floor landing. On the first turn are small square wooden features, used to level a grandfather clock that was reportedly present until the 1980s. The balustrade is simply detailed with plain newels and unmodelled square ballusters.



Stairwell : left - ground floor looking west; right – first floor landing looking north



Detail of balustrade – newel, rail and baluster

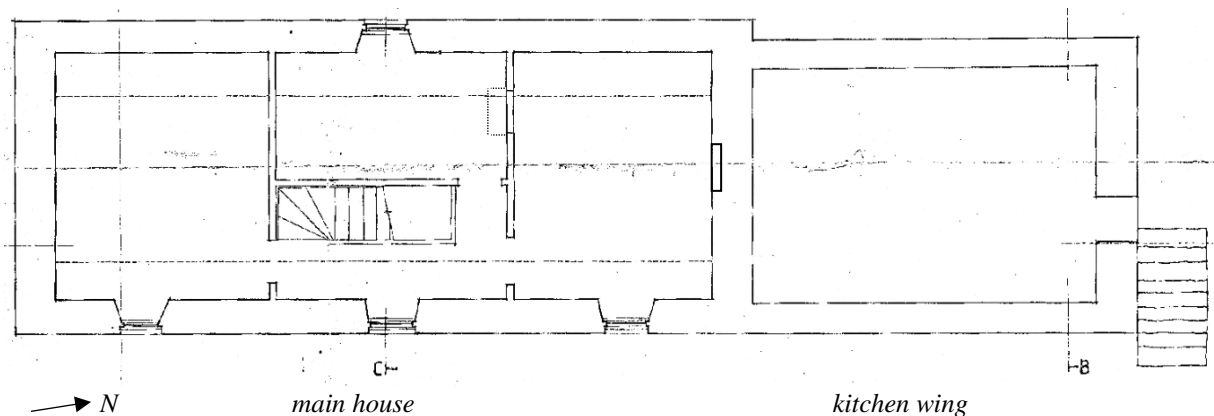
The under-stair space revealed details of the construction of both the stair sub-structure itself and of the adjacent partition walls. Localised investigation during the site visit demonstrated that the partitioning had been footed upon flat stones apparently laid on to the underlying sub-soil.



Under-stair area : left – rear wall of box-bed to south; right – stair construction

First floor

Overall the first floor level is sub-divided into three equally-sized bays, the centre one containing the stairwell and landing to the east and a chamber to the west, and more substantial single rooms to the north and south. All rooms are accessed directly off the stair landing; each entrance contains a 6-panelled door, the panels raised and fielded to both sides.



First floor plan – as existing in 1985, mostly unchanged (LDN Architects)

South room

The room to the south is a principal bedroom though apparently always without a fireplace (there being no obvious evidence for a hearth or supporting timber sub-structure). It retains early plasterwork throughout.



Interior of south first floor room – south wall

North room

A principal bedroom this is the only first floor room with a fireplace, central to the north wall. The interior retains early wall plaster throughout. A notable feature is the press with paired 3-panelled doors to the west end of the south wall; presently fitted out with shallow modern shelves, a scar on the floor within the room behind to the south demonstrates this to have formerly been of full depth – the boxing-out into the adjacent room an idiosyncratic feature.



North room ; left – north wall; right – detail of fireplace



Left - press to west end of south wall; right – evidence within central room that rear of press formerly extended



North Room South wall looking southeast, 1995 (Photo from Malcolm MacGarvin & Jennifer Stewart)

West room

The central chamber to the west side at first floor level is evidently a subsidiary bedroom; it retains early plasterwork throughout. It is lit by a low window to the west – the upper extent of the tall central window to the west exterior.



West room – general view looking south.

Roof structure

The roof structure is accessible by means of a hatch at the head of the stair. With the rafter feet and lower rafter extents obscured by the first floor coombing, only the upper parts of the structure are presently accessible. The roof is a notable survival of common rafter construction comprising multiple coupes of A-frame configuration with a single collar that corresponds to the ceiling flat above the coombing at first floor level⁹. All timbers are roughly adze-hewn conifer cabers that are squared or still partly in-the-round. As noted the rafter foot assembly was not accessible. The existing configuration comprises a single relatively low collar that is of half-lapped half-dove-tail detail, affixed with single wrought spikes. At the apex the rafters are lapped and similarly spiked.



Detail showing adze-dressing to roof timbers

⁹ The coombing is unusual as other examples are full height or less of a coomb.



Left : roof - detail showing relict collar-beam lap-joints with peg-holes, and the existing collar below, similarly jointed but affixed with an iron spike.

Right - roof apex joint

The structure displays evidence for a complex history. The upper (north) faces of many (but not all) rafters display relict joints of both upper and lower collars, the latter at higher level than the existing, and, in some instances multiple collar joints. Some carpenters' assembly marks are also in evidence, but displaying no sequence. That many relict joints appear to correspond between rafter pairs and also between respective couples – i.e. jointing at the same level suggests that most if not all timbers that display relict joints come from the same roof of origin – possibly an original roof structure for the existing building. While the existing joints are spiked with iron all pre-existing joints had been pegged into drilled holes; some pegs still remain *in situ*. Some rafters displayed evidence for more than one phase of relict joint.



Roof interior looking south; upper faces of many rafters display relict upper and lower collar lap-joints (red arrows); some timbers display assembly marks (green arrow)



Detail showing relict collar joints – the upper with some weathering, the lower more recently exposed, both pegged



Interior of roof structure, looking north; note to right in situ pegs within relict collar joints

The roof is sarked with machine-sawn conifer boards, the slates evidently iron-nailed.

Kitchen range

a. Ground floor

The existing ground floor is sub-divided, comprising a restricted vestibule-passage to the south-east that accesses the main house to the south, an external entrance to the east, an existing bathroom to the west and the existing main kitchen interior to the north. Though now mostly obscured the partitioning appears to be of studwork and boarded configuration. It is believed that this was done when water was plumbed into the house. An electric heated tank, and electricity was installed by the Crown Estate (early 1960s) when the kitchen box beds were sacrificed for a bath and a new pantry.

The bathroom interior and fitting-out is modern, the south wall presented as white-painted exposed masonry. The bathroom was reported to have been plasterboarded throughout, thought to date from the 1960s. In the early 2000s frozen and thawed pipes above the bathroom brought down part of the ceiling and plasterboard walling. In the repairs the plasterboard was removed from the south wall exposing the masonry. The plasterboard on the external wall was replaced, and now includes fiberglass insulation, as does the replacement ceiling. The frosted 1960s bathroom window (shown in the 1980s plan) was replaced with a 6 pane double glazed sash window. The door to the kitchen is of plank-and-batten form with a cross brace (secondary)? The kitchen interior walls are plastered onto the hard, the ceiling comprises plastered soffit panels between the ceiling joisting, the latter of rectangular-section circular-sawn conifer. The existing floor is of substantial dark sandstone flags.

The kitchen interior is dominated by the froad fireplace opening to the north wall. Though visually impacted by the insertion of the existing boiler, c.1985, this still retains an early wrought-iron *swey*, chains etc, the ash pit and grate remain, and other internal features such as a salt box recess to the west jamb and a further recess to the east. Elsewhere within the kitchen interior there are further mural recesses to the west end of the north wall, the south end of the east wall, and possibly one, now blocked, within the west wall to the south side of the existing window.



Left - vestibule to kitchen, looking north; right – rear of kitchen door



Kitchen interior showing broad fireplace opening to north wall



Kitchen fireplace interior – detail of swey

b. Loft and roof structure

The upper level of the kitchen range is reached by an external stone stair at the north gable, a straight flight that rises to the west, the subject of considerable repair c.1985. The loft-space thus accessed contains few individual features. The roof structure is constructed of machine-sawn conifer boards. The kitchen range roof is of a simple A-frame configuration with rafter couples rising from a plate, half-lapped and nailed at the apex, with a single collar, again half-lapped and nailed, the collar ends chamfered. The northern four couples were renewed c.1985 at which time structural bracing was also inserted rising from the floor to support the rafter soffits to either side; the flooring at the north end was also repaired at this stage, with renewal of existing joists.



General view of the kitchen range roof structure looking south

Detail of the west side of the roof structure, showing extent of roof repair at north end, and general strengthening



Left – detail of collar joint; right – detail of apex jointing

4. Discussion

Ballantruan farmhouse is an exceptional survival, this reflected in its Listing status at Category A. The building is extremely well preserved, in terms of its overall structure and general character. The structural components, especially timberwork, roof, etc., and the extensive survival of its internal arrangements, its many individual features and, outstandingly, its early joinery, are evidence of its exceptionalism. There is a notable contrast between the refinement of some of the joinery detailing and other features of the building, such as the open ceiling structures, which are of very vernacular character.

The clients believe that due to the consistency of material styles, tight coordination of construction, also with what must have been the first building actions (stones laid on bare earth), and lack of evidence of secondary modification, it is likely that the staircase and the carpentry of Principal Room South, ground floor are of a piece, and of the same early date. This includes the under-stair space – the lath-work, plastering, and its integration with box-bed construction. (There is also evidence that the staircase was socketed into a main joist of the original structure of the Principal Room North, ground floor - see photos 8.1 and 8.2 in Annex D - thus the core of the staircase and box beds, gave structural cohesion to both North and South Principal Rooms.) The early carpentry in the Principal Room South includes the box beds, their fronts, divided doors, and their dentil decoration, room panelling, and the angle cupboards, together with the six panelled doors throughout the main house, represent, the client believes, a core of top-quality joinery, relating to the original build. It is possible this original work was paid for by the Duke of Gordon as the building belonged to him, and was on his estate, and possibly constructed for his Tacksman [collector of rents] but further archival research is needed to document this building work and its funding more fully. This high-quality work can be contrasted with the kitchen extension and its loft space which appears of a later date and of poorer timber construction. This construction may have been required when the Stewart family expanded during the 1830s to 1840s, as shown in the 1841 Census document when 9 people, including children, were recorded in the dwelling. It's possible this later work may not have been funded by the Duke or was on a tighter budget. This two-phase construction is consistent with the map evidence of 1773 and 1840. Later, when the dwelling was no longer occupied by Tacksman families but by tenant families, and the annual rent was gradually reducing, there was no further obvious major refurbishment in the 19th century. There was however a third phase of estate-funded modification during the 1960s when electricity and internal plumbing was introduced, and a space made in what is now the bathroom for the bath, and the present larder. This was achieved by sacrificing, what local tradition says, were the two box beds in the kitchen. Later in 1983, the then Crown Commissioners sold the property to the tenant farmer, Elsie MacArthur.

Existing listings for the building suggest it to be of mid or of mid-late 18th century date. However, the building's absence from the estate plan of 1773 confirms it must post date that. Both the main house and the kitchen extension are in evidence on the later estate plan of 1840. Thus, the parameter for construction of both phases must lie between c.1775 and c.1840.

That the kitchen range is a secondary addition seems probable and is suggested by the character of its roof structure, which is of machine-sawn timber, and by the fact that it extends beyond the line of the north side of the original enclosure wall whereas the north gable of the main house is in precise alignment with it. More certain evidence would come from an examination of its junction with the main range if that were to be revealed (e.g., during a re-harling exercise).

The dating of the main house is problematic. In terms of its exterior character, construction, proportion, fenestration, etc. it seems to be of comfortably late 18th century character. It is also a structure, especially in such a remote location, of some moderate status (such as a tacksman's house). However, review of both its accessible structural timberwork and its interior joinery suggest a building history that may be more complex. In particular the individual timbers that make up the roof structure are not in their original position – many display relict jointing of a pre-existing configuration. This could suggest three possibilities – that the timber was recycled from a pre-existing structure, that the roof of the existing building may have been taken down and re-erected or that the unused collar joints were cut, but not used - perhaps because the first floor was not built to full height but coombed, which might have made these cuts redundant. It was not determined which possibility was the case. A candidate for a predecessor

structure might be the former range at the south side of the compound although the early map evidence suggests it may have been a narrower structure than the existing.

The second possibility would suggest that the existing building may have seen a major re-arrangement. Without further investigation and/or general exposure of the masonry fabric it would be difficult to demonstrate that this may have been the case. However, there is some suggestion of discrepancy between the existing internal arrangement and the arrangement of external openings, specifically the tall central window to the west wall that runs between floors, a type of configuration that in 18th century houses commonly corresponds to a stairwell – clearly not the existing arrangement. It is also possible that there were originally two separate 4-pane sash windows aligned vertically on the west wall that was altered in the 1980s restoration.

A further observation is the general character of the interior joinery such as the panelled doors, the box beds, corner cupboards in the southern ground floor room, and elsewhere, appears to be notably sharply defined and clean – a general absence of patina that could suggest a more recent origin, possibly of the earlier 19th century. It is also unclear to what extent such interior features saw ‘restoration’ in the 1980s or to what extent the joinery may have seen cleaning and refurbishment including the existing ubiquitous varnished finish. However, the joinery fabrication and detailing itself is of later 18th century character overall, pegged, etc. If of an early 19th century date, then the joinery would be very conservatively detailed (possibly the product of an estate joinery shop).

There are a number of avenues for possible continuing investigation, from further historical research (estate archives, account books, etc) to targeted investigation of the structure. The latter might include a more comprehensive study of the roof structure of the main house, localised opening-up at points of significance to address individual questions of interpretation, or a dendrochronological study of timberwork (e.g., main house joisting and roof structure). Further information may also be revealed during works for which monitoring may prove beneficial especially if these were to involve harl removal.