

Redford Farm, Bavelaw, Balerno¹

Site report by SRP Pentland Hills, March 2010²

Introduction

The ruins of Redford Farm are situated on the SW shoulder of a low ridge N of Threipmuir reservoir about 50 metres NE of the Redford bridge where the road from Balerno to Bavelaw Castle crosses the western end of the reservoir. They are difficult to access being deeply hidden in woodland and the buildings have been overwhelmed by mature trees. The current edition of the OS Explorer no. 344 Pentland Hills map shows two unroofed buildings but in 1852-54 on the 1st edition 6" OS map it was depicted as one unroofed building arranged around a courtyard with four attached enclosures. The accompanying OS Object Namebook (1852-54) described it as the 'ruins of an old farmhouse and offices which formerly had a farm of land attached.'

In 1971 the site was reported on by an Inspector from the DoE Ministry for Public Works (NAS DD27/5220) who identified it as a large-scale steading of the later 18th century built around a quadrangle during a major period of Agricultural Improvement which began in Scotland about 1760. The structures were described as "rubble with freestone dressings, mostly clay-built but with limited areas of lime mortar" and it was thought the steading may not have been completed. The principal building on the W side of the quadrangle was described as a straw barn for winnowing with ventilation slits, two pairs of opposed double doors and an associated walled stackyard to the W of the barn visible as a raised platform. In the S range the principal buildings were described as a cart shed for three carts with a grain loft above and, E of a broad entrance, the house of the steading. The E range was presumed to include stabling for at least three horses but was too ruinous for any characteristic plan-form to be identified. The N side was bounded only by a wall and although a range may have been intended for this side it was never built.

Redford was designed and built between 1769/70 and 1772 at a cost of £300 sterling on land assigned to the Scott family following a commonty division in 1768/69 and is therefore an unusually early example of an 18th century farmsteading. The steading consists of a huge barn over 4m in height, an open fronted cartshed, grain lofts, stables and a two storey dwelling house along with an attached farm of 30 acres and some moorland. The external walls of the steading are

¹ NMRS number NT16SE 8

² Scotland's Rural Past (www.scotlandsruralpast.org.uk)

all keyed into each other and appear to have been constructed as a single unified enclosure measuring about 39 metres on each side with a W/E crossing wall at the southern end. Interior walls were then butted on to these external walls to form separate units within the enclosure. The buildings are roughly coursed with decorated freestone quoins at the corners some of which are of a considerable size. The droved or broach marks on the quoins and also on the facing stones in doorways take the form of unusually broad sweeping curves rather than the narrow straight lines usually seen on structures of this type (see photo).

Redford was originally part of the Bavelaw estate and historical confusion with Bavelaw Castle led to its (incorrect) description as a Royal Hunting Stables as shown in a picture postcard view c.1910 (in private collection). Redford farm was included when the Bavelaw estate was advertised for sale in 1772 but although the estate was purchased in 1774 the new owner did not utilise the farm which was instead planted with trees. The farm buildings became redundant and eventually ruinous except for a small dwelling house in the SE corner of the steading which was refurbished at an unknown date and could have accommodated an estate Manager or perhaps a forester or gamekeeper. The layout of the steading has therefore remained unaltered providing a rare example of a 1770s Improved farmsteading in its original form.

The site remains largely unchanged since 1971 although the E range is now almost entirely covered by tree stumps. There has been considerable stone robbing and several trees have fallen so it was decided to record it in greater detail to expand the information previously available and clarify the history. A plane table survey was undertaken during 2008 – 2009 and a detailed description of the site follows, below. This should be read in conjunction with the measured survey and buildings elevations, which are deposited in RCAHMS and are digitally available on Canmore.

Detailed description

The site is raised well above the water and although initially boggy due to the dense undergrowth and wet weather it subsequently dried out considerably. The low lying wet peat marshlands of Bavelaw Marsh Nature Reserve are situated due W of the farm beside the reservoir but the higher ground to the N is good arable farmland. The quality of the rubble construction varies across the different units but it would be wrong to assign these variations to different periods. It is known that the steading was built no earlier than 1769 and was complete by November 1772 so walls with sections constructed of orange sandstone adjacent to grey sandstone or whinstone are likely to

represent different wagon loads of stone delivered while construction was underway. The units have been numbered Unit 1 to Unit 5.

Unit 1 is a large building aligned N/S comprising a central Barn with two small compartments at either end. It measures 39m overall in length and occupies the whole W range. The northern compartment Unit 1A measures 3.5 metres N/S by 5.5 metres W/E internally with its W and N walls comprising the outer walls of the quadrangle. Its E wall is also keyed in to the quadrangle showing that this unit, although small, was designed as an integral component of the overall structure. A door at the S end of the E wall gives access to the central courtyard but there is no external access. The W N and E walls stand 1 metre in height with no evidence of any window openings. The S wall forms the gable end wall of Unit 1B, the straw barn. The lower portion butts against the W outer quadrangle wall but stone gaps higher in the gable suggest that upper courses of the wall may have been keyed in. The gable still stands 4.5 metres in height and has a large central opening in the top half which has been extensively damaged by stone removal so its original shape can no longer be discerned (see photo). It could have been a high level access between the two units but quoins visible in the upper courses of the gable and the lack of a visible roof line in the wallface suggests that Unit 1A was either never roofed or that it was a lightly roofed windowless structure no more than 1.5 or 2 metres high probably intended for storage, perhaps for root vegetables.

Unit 1B, the Straw Barn, measures 28 metres N/S by 5.5 metres W/E internally. Its W and E walls still stand to a height of 3 metres and each has a pair of opposed double doors as well as four pairs of opposed ventilation slits which would have provided a good draught throughout the structure. This was essential for hand threshing so its design and construction must predate the invention of the threshing machine in 1788. These machines were rapidly adopted by larger and more prosperous farms leading to the blocking of surplus doorways and apertures in barns where they were installed. However no doorways were blocked at Redford (see photos) and despite the evident prosperity of the farm there is no indication that any threshing engine was ever included so clearly the barn was already redundant by this date.

A few pantiles have been found indicating that this was the original roofing material and the floor of the northern interior appears to be raised slightly higher than the southern so the unit might have been partitioned into sections. There is no visible evidence of this on the internal wall faces but two

separate internal aumbrys are located alongside the N and S doors in the E wall each presumably intended to hold a lantern.

The S gable end wall of the barn forms the N wall of Unit 1C and also the W end of a W/E cross wall at the S end of the quadrangle. The cross wall is keyed into the W outer wall and extends 16 metres into the interior. The E wall of the barn butts against this cross wall up to a height of 1.5 metres. Above this height the two walls are keyed together and externally decorated quoin stones are visible on the S side of the wall (see photos). It appears that an additional structure was intended to occupy the internal SW corner of the courtyard but was not built.

Unit 1C is a small square compartment measuring 4.5 metres N/S by 5.5 metres W/E internally. The wall between Units 1B and 1C has been damaged by a fallen tree and only stands about 0.5 metres in height at one point but there does not appear to have been any internal access between them. Instead Unit 1C is accessed from outside by a centrally placed door in its S wall with finely dressed sandstone door jambs. The W and S walls are formed by the outer wall of the quadrangle and there are particularly large decorated quoins at the SW corner.

The roofing and form of this unit is very uncertain but it may have had a lean-to W/E sloping roof. The E wall is currently 1.5m in height with the lower 1m butted up against the cross wall while the upper two stone courses are keyed in. The cross wall at this point stands 3 metres in height but the decorated quoin stones comprising the top metre would have been visible above the roofline of Unit 1C so the E wall could not have been higher than 2 metres. However the W wall still stands up to 3 metres high and the presence of 3 joist holes in the S wall (see photo) indicates an internal loft. Holes visible in the W wallface could be support holes for an internal stair but there is also an elevated external access window in the W wall set 2.5 metres above the ground of which the lower portion measuring 1 metre wide is still visible. .

The E wall of Unit 1C forms the W wall of the cart shed (Unit 2) which measures about 5 metres N/S by 10 metres W/E. There is no visible wall line at all on its S side so given the quality of survival of the other walls it is likely that the southern face was originally completely open except for a series of wooden or metal posts supporting a lintel all of which have now disappeared. The W/E cross wall forms the N wall of the cart shed and stands 1.5 metres high along much of its length except for the W and E ends which are both 2.5 metres high. Three joist holes are visible in the W end and a recessed section of damaged stonework at the E end may indicate a similar

situation. This is probably the grain loft referred to in 1971. It was accessed externally through a large opening in the E wall 2 metres above ground level which has been badly damaged by a fallen tree but a massive sill or lintel stone still spans an opening 1.5 metres wide. This E wall is keyed to the end of the cross wall and forms the W side of a broad entrance 5.50 metres wide W/E and 6.0 metres deep N/S. A possible stone pillar on this side of the entrance suggests it may originally have been arched but evidence on the other side is less clear (see photo) and has probably been removed.

A small dwelling house (Unit 3) lies E of the entrance (see photo). This measures 6 metres N/S by 13 metres W/E overall across walls 0.6 metres wide and is in a very ruinous condition. The house is divided into two sections (Units 3A and 3B) by a narrow internal sandstone wall which has collapsed down to its foundations along most of its length. A gap at the N end of this wall suggests an internal doorway connected the two units. The western Unit 3A measures 4.5 metres N/S by 6.0 metres W/E internally and probably had two windows in the S wall. A wide doorway in the N wall opens into the central courtyard. A hollow that probably represents a drain or soakaway appears to run due S from the exterior SW corner of this building and although no opening is visible in the interior there is a large stone at ground level suggesting a drain opening has been plugged or blocked at this point. The W wall of this unit forms the W gable of the house and still stands about 4 metres in height. Joist holes visible on the inside face 2 metres above ground level show this was a two storey building and there is a small centrally placed window 3 metres above ground level (see photo). There is no sign of a fireplace in the gable but there might have been a centrally positioned fireplace in the internal dividing wall which would explain its present denuded condition.

The floor of Unit 3B is about 0.5 metres higher than 3A with a considerable slope between the two but this could be the result of roof collapse or infilling. The unit measures 4.5 metres N/S by 5 metres W/E internally with a narrow door in the N wall opening into the central courtyard. The S wall has a thick layer of plaster on its internal wall face and has a large centrally placed gap that could have been a window as well as an additional very small window at the E end measuring 0.50 metres square which has been inserted through the wall. Internal grooves show it may have held a narrow panel secured in place by cement, perhaps for ventilation. This suggests the house must have been refurbished and occupied at least once following its initial construction and this occupation could have been comparatively recent.

The E gable end of the house butts up against the S wall which continues eastwards to form the S wall of the N/S stable range referred to in 1971. The house gable itself forms part of the W stable wall which extends northwards for a distance of about 20 metres before disappearing beneath vegetation and the N wall of the house butts up against it. A doorway in the range adjacent to the NE corner of the house gave access into the central courtyard. Unfortunately the range was almost entirely covered by tree stumps when the Redford Plantation to the E was clear felled in the 1980s and only this small portion is now visible. However an 1843 plan of Threipmuir and Harlaw Reservoirs (NAS: RHP 473) shows the E range was only about 20 metres long

A wall and ditch closing off the N side of the steading is only visible for about 22 metres before being covered by vegetation. A 2 metre wide gap adjacent to Unit 1A was probably an entrance into the NW corner of the yard. The 1843 map (NAS: RHP 473) shows no buildings along this side however if a N range had been built the sides of the central courtyard which today measure 32.0 metres N/S by 28 metres W/E would have been almost equal. This suggests that a range of rooms along the N side was considered but never built and that the steading remained incomplete. The courtyard surface today is hidden by a thick mass of vegetation and fallen trees so it was impossible to determine whether there were any cobbles or paving but the NE corner probably gave direct access to the 30 acres of land referred to in advertisements dating to 1772 and subsequently occupied by the Redford Plantation.

An enclosure measuring about 50 metres by 50 metres shown W of the barn on the 1843 reservoirs plan (NAS: RHP 473) is probably the stackyard. A portion of the southern line of the enclosure wall is still visible with a broad ditch on its S side (see photo) and a parallel ditch to the N probably marks the N line.