

## **Redford Farm History, Bavelaw, Balerno<sup>1</sup>**

**By SRP Pentland Hills, March 2010<sup>2</sup>**

The history of Redford Farm is complicated by the problem that there are very few documents relating specifically to the farm but with the assistance of John Scott of Currie District Local History Society it has been possible to construct a fairly comprehensive sequence of events from maps, newspapers, Court of Session Records and Malleny estate papers in the NAS.

Redford is an early steading built 1770-72 during a surge of activity by the owner of Bavelaw in an effort to improve an estate he was anxious to sell. Bavelaw (or Bavillay) dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century when formed part of the King's Hunting Moor of Pentland and was held by Henry de Brade, Knight and sheriff of Edinburgh during the reign of William the Lion with the tithes granted to the monks of Holyrood for the upkeep of the chapel of St Katherine in the Pentland (St Catherine's of the Hopes the chapel submerged by the creation of the Glencorse reservoir). The 'two Bavelaws, alias Bewlais, commonly called Easter and Wester Bavelaw' were purchased by Laurence Scott of Harperrig in 1628 (confirmed 1635 and ratified by Parliament 1641) (NAS, PA2/22, f.274v-275v 1641/8/351) and passed down through the younger sons of the family until in 1755 at the age of 17 Charles Scott, 4<sup>th</sup> son of William Scott 6<sup>th</sup> laird of Bavelaw inherited. This inheritance may have come as a burden since it carried an on-going financial problem involving the lands of Kersland which he also inherited. Legal arguments continued until about 1761 and could explain why in 1763 Charles Scott sold Buteland (part of the Bavelaw estate) and in 1766 he made his first attempt to sell Bavelaw itself.

Laurie's map of 1766 shows the Bavelaw estate at that date was still largely unimproved. Bavelaw Castle stands in the midst of a small square plantation and the farms surrounding it include W Bavelaw still situated close to Bavelaw Mill. N Bavelaw is situated close to Bavelaw Castle and perhaps served as the mains farm for the castle and E Bavelaw is depicted as a collection of dwellings.

The 1766 sale advertisement in the Edinburgh Advertiser ran from January until March describing it as 'The Lands and Estate of BAVELAW comprehending the lands of Easter and West Bavelaws and mill-lands thereof and the mansion-house, garden and park with the privilege of commony, and common pasturage in the moor of Balerno and other privileges and pertinents & hereto belonging

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<sup>1</sup> NMRS number NT16SE 8 'Redford Wood'

<sup>2</sup> Scotland's Rural Past ([www.scotlandsruralpast.org.uk](http://www.scotlandsruralpast.org.uk))

all holden blench of the crown and lying within the parish of Pennycuick, and shire of Edinburgh, about seven miles SW from the city'. An annual rent of £120 13s 1½d was given and although the leases were old and due to expire in 1769 the advert describes how 'a considerable advance of rent had already been offered for the new set of tacks' which gives an insight into how keen tenants were to maintain their holdings on this estate.

Bavelaw failed to sell in 1766 but changes in farming techniques were beginning to sweep across Scotland and Charles Scott realised he was in a position to take full advantage of these. The limestone quarry, still visible today, in the grounds of Bavelaw was open by 1757 and a petition for the division of the commonty of Balerno was finalised in 1768/9. It was very favourable to the Scott family and in January 1769 John Scott of Malleny sublet large portions of the Balerno, Harlaw and Threipmuir moorlands to his cousin Charles (NAS RD4/218) on condition that he improve them. These improvements must have happened at great speed because Armstrong's map of 1773 shows that considerable changes have taken place. The twin streams of Bavelaw Burn have been combined into a single flow and the roads around Bavelaw castle have been reoriented. Bavelaw policies have been extended northwards as far as the southern bank of Bavelaw Burn which is crossed by a single straight avenue giving direct access to Bavelaw castle. The farm of N Bavelaw has gone but the new steading labelled Redford has appeared on the N bank of the Bavelaw Burn alongside the new river crossing.

With many of the Improvements in place Charles Scott attempted to sell Bavelaw again and an advertisement in the Edinburgh Advertiser that ran from November-December 1772 gives Redford a comprehensive mention. It is described as a farm of about 30 acres Scots with a tack of 537 acres of moorland together with a recently built 'very compleat steading of houses' which cost about £300 sterling. It can therefore be said with some certainty that the steading was built within the period 1769/70 and 1772.

The farm is described as having been limed and laid down to grass and 80 acres of the moorland tack had also been limed and tilled. The stone built draw kiln whose ruins are still visible alongside the quarry is also mentioned in this advert so that structure was also built during this period, as indeed the new steading at W Bavelaw must have been since Armstrong's 1773 map shows it had been repositioned closer to the castle. However none of this was sufficient to encourage a sale and Bavelaw was advertised twice more in 1773 and again in 1774. Notably Redford Farm was not included in the first 1773 attempt having been retained by the proprietor – it appears that Charles

Scott saw Redford as his own farm, perhaps intending to retain lands N of the Bavelaw Burn. However after failing to sell Bavelaw on this occasion the clause was dropped and when Bavelaw was eventually sold in April 1774 to David Johnston of Lathrisk in Fife, Redford Farm was included.

Redford's subsequent use is unclear. David Johnston does not appear to have resided at Bavelaw after his purchase and presumably leased it out although no record of this has been found. His second son William Johnston inherited the estate in 1809 and Knox's map of 1812 labels the site but the area that must have formed the 30 acre farm is depicted as a plantation with no sign of any farm buildings and this is still the case in Greenwood's 1828 map. The 1843 reservoir plan gives a clearer image of the state of the farm. The steading is labelled "Redford in ruins" and although the outline of the steading is clearly shown none of the buildings are roofed. The steading and its associated yards to the W are free from trees but the enclosure to the N and E is planted with a mixture of pine and deciduous trees and labelled Redford Plantation. George Johnston inherited in 1856 but census records for 1851 and 1861 show that only an Overseer was resident at Bavelaw. The RCAHMS OS Namebook (c.1852-54) says that the farm seemed to have been in ruins for many years and the OS 1<sup>st</sup> edition map of 1852-54 depicts the site as a ruin but still clear of trees although these were beginning to encroach. The land was sold to John Scott Tait in 1903 (*pers comm. John Scott, Currie District Local History Society*) but it seems that Redford was never used as a farm by him and may never have been used at all.

It is probably the mention in the OS Namebook of Bavelaw Castle as a hunting lodge that started the mis-attribution of Redford as hunting stables belonging variously to James IV or James V. The only postcards that exist of the ruins describe it as such and thus perpetuate the error but Robert Cochrane, in his *Pentlands Walks* book c.1930 describes Redford as a "ruined farm" (p.89) so any widespread acceptance of this error is of very recent date.

In conclusion it would appear that once the 30 acres of farmland belonging to Redford had been planted with trees it remained a plantation. The steading was left unused and untouched and since it is situated in a fairly protected environment it could have remained roofed and intact for quite a long time after its construction although the small dwelling house might have been used for accommodation and the farm yard kept clear of tree growth. Presumably this residence did not extend beyond the 1820s but it is interesting that even as late as a postcard view c.1911 the farm

remained clear of trees and it is only since then that the steading has become overwhelmed by its woodland.