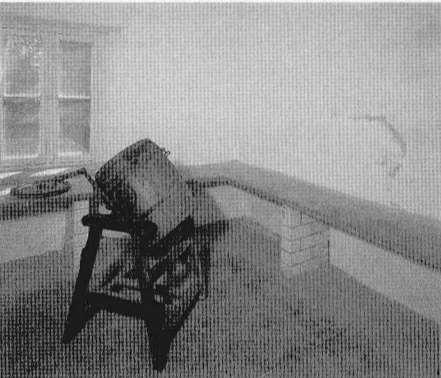


ADIARY IN STONE: Wester Kitchtochside Steading

If the new exhibition building is an outlook place over the Agricultural Revolution, scanning the historic landscape at one remove, old Wester Kitchtochside Farm is its direct, living diary - a three dimensional record of change in stone, spanning the period from the pre-improvement era, through the late 18th and 19th centuries, to the most recent changes of the present day. Although this typically West of Scotland dairy farm is of relatively small scale, it nevertheless contains all the basic elements of the Agricultural Revolution: the farmhouse, farm-servant accommodation, and kitchen garden; the barn, grain loft, and straw barn; byre and milk house; stable, cart shed, gig shed; and the stackyard and midden. The farm experienced none of the late 20th century's radical modifications for bulk handling and large machinery, and the contents of the house are preserved in time-capsule condition. Although the farm was originally in the front line of innovation, in the late 18th century, successive lairds from the mid 19th century followed a highly conservative approach to the built fabric, extensively re-using elements from earlier phases.



Hand churn in the dairy at Wester Kitchtochside Farm (RCAHMS E7966)



Aerial view of Wester Kitchtochside farm standing from the south-east, showing the new Manager's House at top right. (RCAHMS E4145/CN)

WESTER KITTOCHSIDE: The 1780s Farm

Wester Kitchtochside Farm is situated on top of one of the transverse ridges that cross the site. Looking up at the main frontage of the house, the image of the classical villa is dominant over that of agricultural production. But in reality, the group is a complex one, whose layers clearly show the successive traces of the farm's development. At each stage, the farm consisted not just of a physical shell, but also an entire working system of production, an 'industrial plant'. The most shadowy traces are those of the pre-Improvement history of the farm. The north range of the present quadrangle stands on the footings of an earlier building, perhaps a 17th century longhouse, containing a dwelling, barn, stable and byre in one long row. The present north and west ranges, along with the farmhouse, were built from new in 1782-4 by the young John Reid. The grouping contains, in microcosm, the elements of the ideal farm-plans recommended in the pattern books of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, formally arranged in a right-angled, open-sided courtyard plan:

there is a separate house, like a simplified villa or manse, and a steading court to the north. The steading accommodation comprised only two buildings, one containing the stables and small byre, and the other the corn barn and cartshed. The buildings were mainly of lime-washed squared rubble, with slated or (in the case of the steading) probably thatched roofs; there was strong general uniformity and conservatism of style. The corn barn was originally laid out for hand threshing, with two sets of doors facing one another on the north and south walls, to allow a through draught to assist the winnowing process. The adjacent cart-shed is entered by an archway on the end (east) gable, with a doocot above. The stable was especially important in the time of the 6th laird, in view of his quarrying and lime-burning activities. It has boulder footings, and contains stalls for three horses and a loose box, and a loft above. The small byre was re-roofed and upgraded in the mid 19th and early 20th centuries, and housed up to six dry cows or calves.

The farmhouse is remarkably formal for a relatively small farm – almost like a miniature

classical country house, or a villa like that of the Glasgow tobacco lords. Accounts of December 1783 show payment of £45.12.7 to Hendry Granger and Tom Lochore for 'building my house'. The main south elevation is symmetrical and of five bays, with a central pediment. This facade is of formal ashlar masonry, while the others are of squared-off rubble. The house has two floors, cellar and attic: originally, the fanlit south entrance led to a hall and stone staircase, with a dining room to the right and two rooms to left. The best room, the drawing room, was on the first floor - doubtless to command views over the farm - and stretched the full width of the house; the eastern section was the only bedroom, with a partitioned-off closet. The attic contained three small rooms, with box beds to house the children and servants. The plan was generally typical of a 'manse' type of house, in which the external appearance of a grand villa concealed a relatively shallow layout and multi-use planning inside, with an axial entrance, and one large room, with the rest of the spaces subdivided - a disguised throwback to the older Scots tradition of a household piled up in a handsome sandwich.

Present-day view of Wester Kitchtochside Farmhouse (RCAHMS E7825/CN)



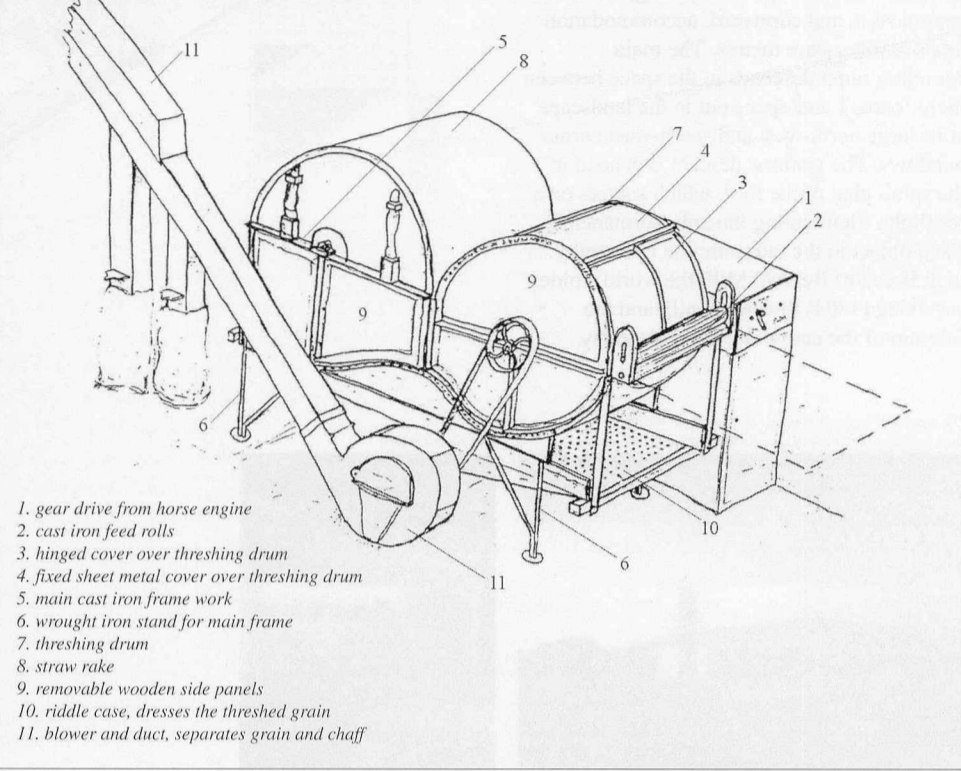
The main facade of Wester Kitchtochside Farmhouse as it was c1950. (Al Darragh, 2001)

WESTER KITTOCHSIDE: In the 19th Century

The early 19th century brought single-storey infills at the junctions of the three buildings: a lean-to gig shed at the north end of the stable; and a bothy (a single room to house batchelor farm servants), linking the house and the small byre; the bothy was used as a tack room in the early 20th century, and to house prisoners of war during World War II. The second main phase of development of the steading took place from the mid 19th century, and brought it essentially to its present state. It became a four-sided courtyard, fairly densely linked together and presenting a more 'solid' face to the outside (not unlike the new MSCL exhibition building) with various more ephemeral

buildings added alongside it, while the farmhouse was expanded into a more segregated and stately plan. Alongside this building work, the advance of mechanisation made steady inroads into the way the existing buildings were used. By the 1820s-40s a threshing machine, powered by a horse-engine outside the barn, with drive shaft through the north wall, was in use; its workings still survive. This was replaced in 1860 by the present threshing mill, a roller-feed, fixed mill made by McCartney & Drummond of Cunnock, wright and cast iron maker. This in turn would have been superseded in the 1870s by travelling mills, which dressed and graded the grain in one.

1986 annotated sketch drawing by Graham Douglas of the horse driven threshing mill at Wester Kitchtochside Farm. (RCAHMS MS7546/163)



- 1. gear drive from horse engine
- 2. cast iron feed rolls
- 3. hinged cover over threshing drum
- 4. fixed sheet metal cover over threshing drum
- 5. main cast iron frame work
- 6. wrought iron stand for main frame
- 7. threshing drum
- 8. straw rake
- 9. removable wooden side panels
- 10. riddle case, dresses the threshed grain
- 11. blower and duct, separates grain and chaff

WESTER KITTOCHSIDE: Towards the Present

The economic context of Wester Kitchtochside in these years was dominated by the expansion of the milk industry. The main building work was the construction of a new east range and milk house, running south from the end of the corn barn/cartshed block. The east range, built possibly in the mid 19th century, comprised a byre for 25 cows of the expanded milk herd, with Caithness stone divisions. To the north is a late 19th-century corrugated metal hay shed, and a small stack yard; an iron hay barn built in 1907 just to the north of this has since been demolished. The midden was outside the court, on the east side, with a low perimeter wall. In the 20th century, developments concentrated on further refinement of the milk industry: during the 1930s, for certification of the dairy herd, the

milk house was rebuilt. A Dutch barn, with steel framed columns and segmental roof was erected in 1949. In the farmhouse, a new north wing was added in 1906 to allow the segregation of the various domestic functions, and the provision of more specialised rooms, including a new kitchen and bedrooms. It was probably in the late 1920s that electric power was installed, replacing the use of oil lamps and candles. The drawing room is now in a largely late 19th-century classical style, with rococo mirror overmantel. The presentation of the farm and farmhouse as part of the new museum focuses on the period of the 1950s, the Indian summer of its use for dairy livestock and the time when mechanised motive-power and domestic conveniences were just establishing themselves.

Drawing Room in Wester Kitchtochside Farmhouse (RCAHMS E7954/CN)



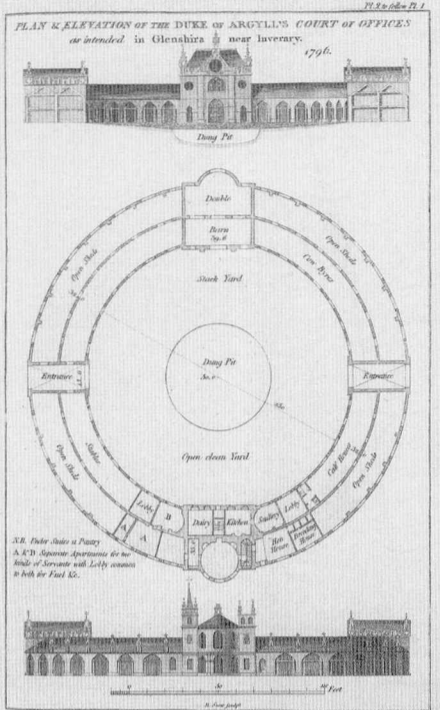
BUILDING THE LAND: The Agricultural Revolution

On leaving Wester Kitchtochside Farm, visitors return to the new Exhibition Building and then to the wider outside world. Hopefully, the experience of the visit will provoke them to begin asking their own questions, and to look on the rural landscape and rural issues with a new perspective, informed by the complex history of 'Improvement'. To stimulate those thoughts, the final section of this broadsheet sets out some of the key themes of the MSCL's wider historical and architectural context.

Scotland's agricultural revolution followed a different trajectory from the more intense industrialisation of the cities: it got underway earlier, but took longer to complete. Always, it was closely bound up with urban modernisation, as it provided city-dwellers with food, while their growing numbers boosted its profits. From a slow beginning in the later 17th century, by the late 18th century Scotland led the world in the movement of 'Improvement' - a vast and multi-faceted campaign, bound up with Enlightenment intellectualism as well as the development of capitalist and colonial wealth. It was dedicated to the liquidation of 'traditional' subsistence agriculture, replacing its semi-communal patterns of land-holding and cultivation by science-based commercial systems. The fundamental change was in land use. Here, in place of the old separation of arable and pasture, there were complex new crop rotations which alternated the two and integrated the new fodder crops, sown grass and root crops, within consolidated and enclosed blocks of land. This change was supported by new patterns of single-ownership or tenancy, and a far more productive labour system, including the development of new service trades. It also necessitated far-reaching work to make the soil suitable for the new crops: for example, application of lime fertiliser and removal of stones from the fields, and development of more sophisticated tools and machines, with Scottish inventors literally at the cutting edge



A cruck-framed, thatched byre-dwelling in the Auchindrain township in Argyll. The typical byre-dwelling of the pre-improvement era comprised a room, close, kitchen and byre, all disposed linearly under the same roof with separate doorways to the house and the byre. Auchindrain was a highly unusual survival of multiple-tenancy farming: most of its buildings date from 1770-1840 period, more normally associated with early Improvement. (RCAHMS E19387)



Engraving of Maam Steading, near Inveraray. The circular arrangement reflects the modernity of architect Robert Mylne's design and was envisaged by its builder, the 5th Duke of Argyll, as a model of Enlightenment agricultural building, and one of the showpieces of the vast programme of Improvement on the Inveraray Estate. (RCAHMS AGD/06/2)

of innovation. In the 1760s, for example, James Small of Blackadder Mount, Berwickshire, designed the modern plough, with a curved mould board (to turn over the furrows); Andrew Meikle invented the threshing machine in the 1780s; and Patrick Bell invented the world's first reaping machine in 1828.

The twin driving forces of this revolution were population increase and the emergence of capitalist society. But it was also inspired by a network of intellectually-based innovators, including improvement societies and educators: Edinburgh saw the founding of Europe's oldest agricultural society (in 1723) and the first university chair of practical agriculture (1790). A central innovative role in this process was played by 'model' estates improved by innovative landowners, and linked to the encouragement of planned villages and rural industry: by 1780 Improvement had become a patriotic duty, and reluctant tenants and owners were swept along. Because of the unrealised potential of Scottish farming, the productivity improvements were spectacular and many tenants became substantial men of business. There was from the start a process of wide diffusion: the Polish Count Zamoyski, visiting East Lothian in the 1820s, was astonished at the practical and intelligent conversations between lairds, tenants and farm servants.

The buildings associated with pre-Improvement subsistence farming had mostly comprised makeshift structures of turf, creel and other organic materials in irregular, scattered 'fermtoun' groups: house-types such as the 'byre-dwelling' had mixed together farming and living accommodation. In the absence of any formal national or regional ideologies or definitions, there were almost limitless local variations, including the parallel longhouse ranges found in Caithness, Orkney, and Galloway; the south-east Lowlands saw more nucleated and ambitious farming settlements, often using stone or clay construction. By contrast, the architecture of Improved farming was formal and

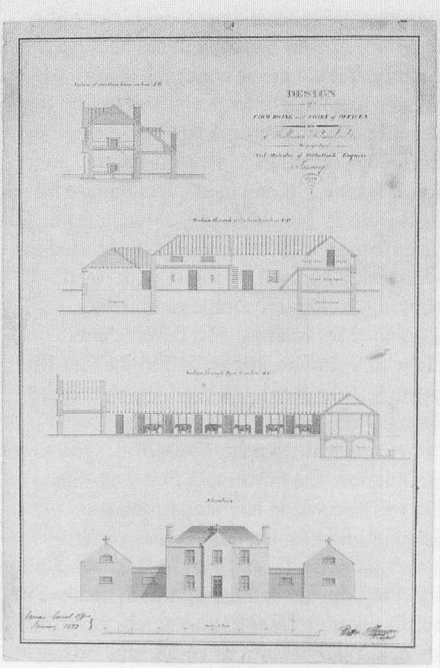


1970s view of the cattle stalls in the east wing of Maam Steading, built 1787-90 to Robert Mylne's designs: only half of the circular layout was actually completed. (RCAHMS E1912/1)

homogenised, being based on normative intellectual concepts and disseminated by publications. A transitional phase was represented by early Improvement farms built by tenants on semi-regular lines. Soon large numbers of formal 'model' farms were built by more ambitious lairds, and more general national norms began to emerge, focused on rectangular or U shaped courtyard plans - as at the 1780s Wester Kitchtochside farm. All-important was the 'central' principle of concentration and regularity, in place of the old dispersed groups, and the segregation of the housing of humans and beasts. The formula of Improvement depended on soil fertility for success - as was demonstrated by the very different outcome in the Highlands and Islands, where the pressures of population increase began to really bite in the mid 18th century, and eventually triggered an attempt to industrialise a fragile environment: the old communal farms which produced little income from the land were replaced with huge single-tenant sheep farms let at good rents, and small holdings (crofts) in resettled planned townships. Thus started the *via dolorosa* of the Clearances.

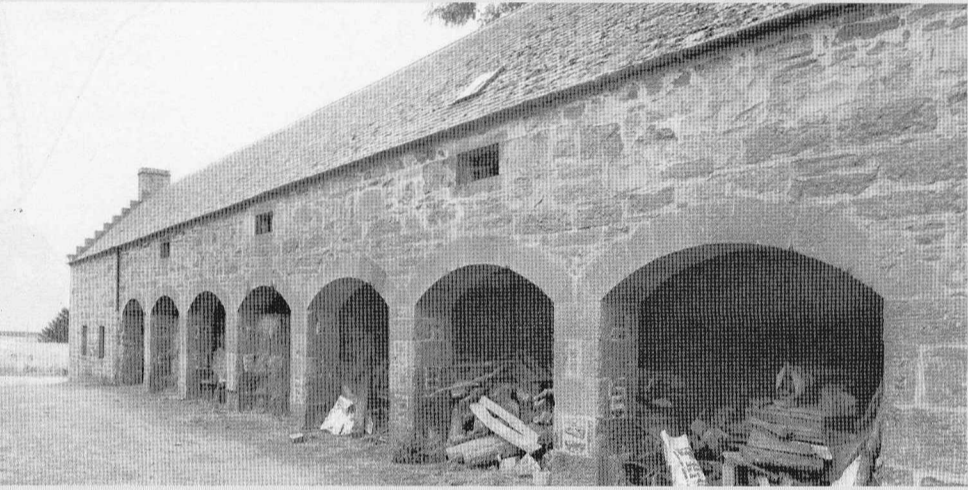
HIGH FARMING: The Shape of 19th Century Scottish Farms

By 1830, the barely credible transformation was complete, and the first generation of improved steadings were themselves beginning to disappear. The mid 19th century era of so-called 'high farming' only elaborated this established pattern, linking the town and country into a national market through the railway and penny-post links, the growth of a banking network, and the beginning of significant exports of produce overseas. What were the architectural expressions of late 19th-century Scottish farming, at the end of this period of establishment and consolidation? Most Lowland farms became mixed farms, combining buildings and equipment for crops and livestock as well as housing of equipment and labour. Many steadings were built from new, although farms were also often added to in stages, from the 1780s. In the layouts of farms the nationwide norm, just as in the earlier model farms, remained one of regular courtyard arrangements of elongated blocks. Croft buildings in the Highlands, serving holdings generally of not more than 20 acres, tended to comprise smaller detached or linear blocks, usually now of stone or concrete rather than turf construction.



A design for Ballinmore Farm and Court of Offices, near Lochgilblhead, from a rare surviving set of plans dating from 1822. The arresting wealth of detail reflects the importance placed on the new farming of the Improvement era. (RCAHMS D7373/CN)

1905 view of Shalloo Farm, near Dornoch, built in 1853 after a design by James Leitch, the powerful Commissioner to the Sutherland Estate. The view shows the cross-stepped range of cart bays with granary above. (RCAHMS C61040)



Industrial Farming Comes of Age

It was only in the mid 20th century that the Agricultural Revolution reached its logical conclusion, and the process of food production assumed a fully 'industrial' character. In the years of wartime production and siege, maximum production was a vital part of the 'Home Front'. Even when peace came, there was a fear of sliding back into over-reliance on imports, so an essentially wartime drive for output continued. After 1945, the application of scientific research radically increased the productive capacity of the land yet again, and in turn led to massive rural depopulation. And the eventual accession to the EEC substituted a successor 'political' strategy of state-subsidised agriculture. Under state patronage, the industrialisation of farming was completed, with a vast range of tractors, combines and bulk handling plant for the projection of industrial power across the land. Like the earlier stages of Improvement, this modernisation drive of the mid 20th century left a deep imprint on the built environment, with intensified drainage, enlargement of fields and industrial-scale forestry schemes. In the crofting counties, the old houses had already begun to dwindle in numbers in the 1920s, when the government provided cheap 'modern' building materials; as with vernacular buildings, there were big regional variations across the Highlands and Islands.

There were relatively few new building types during this time: the regulated dairy production of the early 20th century called for more hygienic milking parlours and

processing buildings, and new patterns were developed for bulk storage: tall concrete or (later) metal towers for silage, and lightweight, partly open 'Dutch barns' for hay storage. After the 1950s, existing steadings, suited as they were to horse working, were fast becoming obsolete, as the scale and intensity of mechanised production and bulk handling increased, and greater productivity made much workers' housing redundant. The response was to build new large multi-purpose sheds, to shelter livestock, store straw, and house machines. The building technology of these structures stemmed ultimately from the lightweight types of prefabrication pioneered in wartime. These were optimised for lightweight, low-labour erection, either by a contractor or by the farmer himself. Early variants emphasised precast concrete construction (e.g. Atcoast), but increasingly, by the 1970s, lightweight metal frames and cladding of corrugated asbestos or metal became dominant. The only specialised building types still needed were those of high-intensity livestock-rearing - 'factory' pig and poultry farming - with their elongated, low sheds and metal feeding towers. The redundancy of many Improvement steadings was viewed with alarm by the growing conservation movement. Statutory 'listing' can only ever take in a small number of such buildings - which is where systematic recording exercises such as the RCAHMS-NMS Scottish Farm Buildings Survey (SFBS) can provide a more economical alternative.

Shapark Farm, on the Black Isle, was rebuilt in 1999 by contractor John Duncan of Buckra for the Banchhall Estate, replacing a pre-damaged 19th century steading with a single metal-framed structure. It represents the most up-to-date arrangement of farm buildings in Scotland, with all systems combined under the one roof in an open-sided shed. An earlier 20th-century shed survives on the right.



Auchmarie Croft, near Strichen, Aberdeenshire: a rare survival of a small substance croft in the North-East. Here, the farmer still cooks on an open peat fire and sleeps in a box bed in the same main room. (RCAHMS E2607/CN)

Auchmarie Croft: this late 19th-century croft farmhouse, still in use, comprises three rooms with a loft running the length of the building. (RCAHMS E2671/CN)



Thus the visitor's journey through Scotland's rural past, in the MSCL, ends up back at today - with a series of open questions for the future. Will the present polarisation of the countryside between regulated picture-postcard playground and deregulated factory continue? What will be the architectural response to the 1990s' spread of global capitalism and the prospective reduction of state supports for the farming industry across Europe? In organisational and economic terms, the modernisation of Scottish agriculture is an ongoing rather than closed story - but what, if any, will be the implications of that fact for the built environment of 21st century rural Scotland?

**The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland** is Scotland's national record of the historic built environment. Its objectives are to survey and interpret the monuments of Scotland's past, to promote a greater appreciation of their value through maintenance of the National Monuments Record of Scotland, and to present them more directly by selective publications.

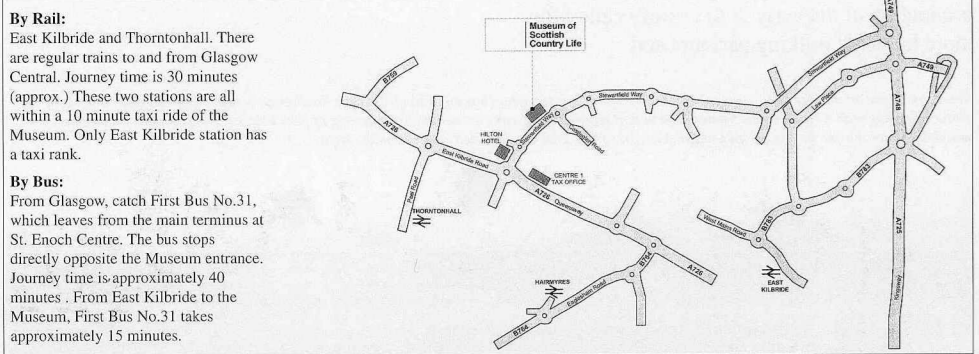
*Address: John Sinclair House, 16 Bernard Terrace  
Edinburgh EH8 9NX  
Tel: 0131 662 1456  
www.rcahms.gov.uk*

**The National Trust for Scotland** was founded in 1931. It is an independent charity sustained by its members and by donations, and promotes the care and conservation of land, buildings and articles of historic interest or natural beauty for the benefit of the nation, while facilitating access for the public to enjoy them. Wester Kitchside Farm and the new Museum buildings are the property of the Trust, which was gifted the house, steading and 110 acres of land in 1992.

*Address: 28 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh EH2 4ET  
Tel: 0131 243 9300  
www: nts.org.uk*

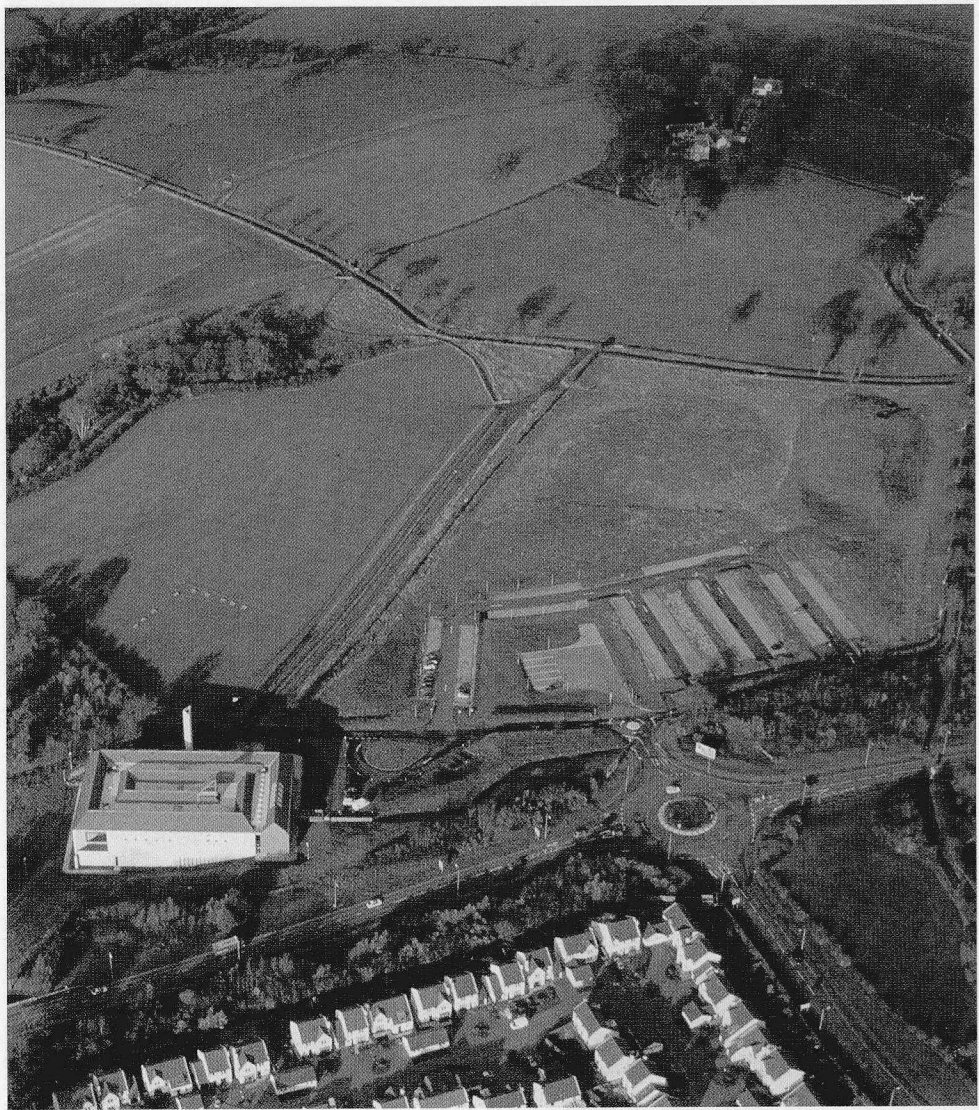
**The National Museums of Scotland.** The Museum of Scottish Country Life is one of the constituent museums of the National Museums of Scotland. It houses the National Country Life Collection, which illustrates the regional variety and structure of pre-industrial rural society, and the various stages of the Agricultural Revolution to its maturation with tractor and combine after World War II and beyond. The MSCL collection promotes public awareness of regional ethnology, economic and social history, and the science of agriculture, and is backed up by the Scottish Life Archive.



*Address: Chambers Street, Edinburgh EH1 1JF  
Tel: 0131 225 7534  
www: nms.ac.uk*



By Rail:  
East Kilbride and Thorntonhall. There are regular trains to and from Glasgow Central. Journey time is 30 minutes (approx.) These two stations are all within a 10 minute taxi ride of the Museum. Only East Kilbride station has a taxi rank.

By Bus:  
From Glasgow, catch First Bus No.31, which leaves from the main terminus at St. Enoch Centre. The bus stops directly opposite the Museum entrance. Journey time is approximately 40 minutes. From East Kilbride to the Museum, First Bus No.31 takes approximately 15 minutes.



 The National Trust for Scotland  
 National Museums of Scotland

## KITTOCHSIDE: A Legacy of Improvement

It is unusual to have a personal history of a farm which goes back much beyond the 18th century. Yet we know about the history of Wester Kitchside two centuries before that, because of a violent incident adjudicated by the privy council of James VI. In 1567 John Reid, tenant in Kitchside, had bought his land from Robert Muir of Caldwell. Some 20 years later, Caldwell unsuccessfully tried to wrest back his land by force; with royal backing, Reid won compensation and expanded his holding. His descendants showed a similar energy, and in the late 18th century, John Reid, 6th laird, embraced the nationwide crusade for farming 'Improvement'. By the 1760s, the Agricultural Revolution, the movement that would lead to the modernisation and industrialisation of farming, first took a hold in the western Lowlands and Highlands.

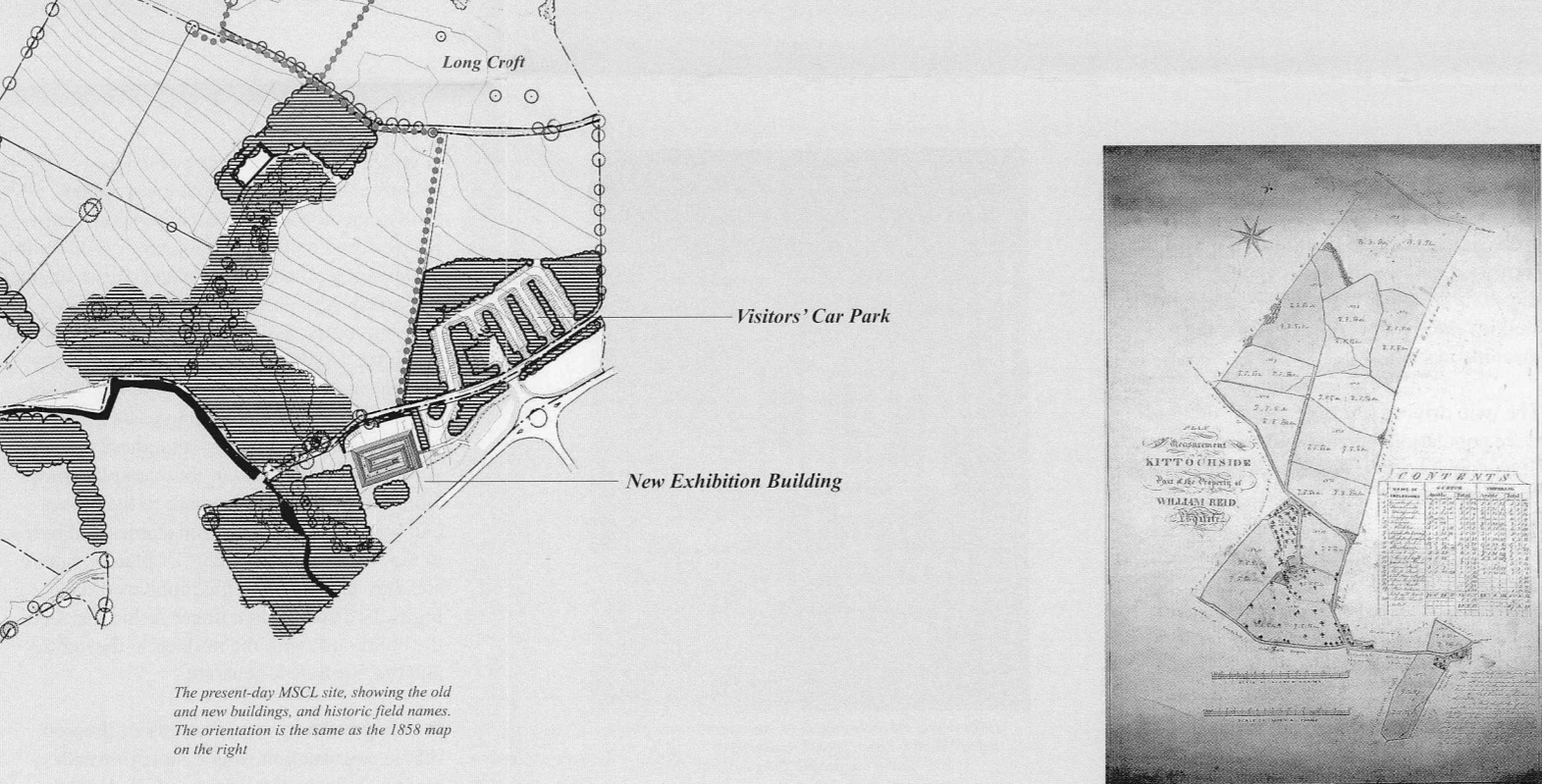
*Address: Wester Kitchside  
Philipsill Road  
East Kilbride G76 9HR  
Tel: 0131 247 4377  
01355 224181  
Fax: 01355 551290  
www.nms.ac.uk/countrylife*

By 1784 the old buildings of Wester Kitchside had been all but swept away, and the core of what we see today built, including an attractive classical farmhouse and a regular steading. By the time the 6th laird died in 1850, a new and bigger byre had been built and, along with many other farms, Wester Kitchside was supplying the 'Workshop of the World' with milk. Later years saw only occasional additions, including hay sheds and a new wing to the house. The milk cattle went in 1963, and the farm continued in grazing. In

their quiet enjoyment of the place James and Margaret Reid let the age of the combine roar by. The steadings have never been ripped asunder to install grain dryers or demolished in favour of portal-framed cattle units, nor the grass parks supplanted by nitre-fed silage grass. In 1982, James Reid died, and in 1992 his widow Margaret generously gifted Wester Kitchside to the National Trust for Scotland - almost exactly four centuries since John Reid had defied a different invasion!

## THE LANDSCAPE OF KITTOCHSIDE

Wester Kitchside is important not only for its surviving historic buildings, but also for the intactness of its landscape. The network of field boundaries and roads has been maintained in more or less its early 19th-century form, and much of the pattern of cultivation ridges established in the late 18th century and earlier has survived. Extensive vestiges of early Improvement straight rigs, or cultivation ridges, remain both to the north and the south of the steading. Today's layout was created by the post-1780s process of enclosure and planting, through the amalgamation of older interleaved landholdings and the partitioning of common grazing land; open fields were replaced by squared and hedged ones. These boundaries were often formed in two stages, with the fail (or turf) dykes first and then thorn hedges set on them. There are few trees, with the exception of the policy plantation around the house itself. This rich farming landscape is presented to visitors in roughly its condition in the 1950s, including a five or six shift crop rotation normal at that time, with grazing supporting milk cattle and working horses; cultivation comprised grass at the north and south extremities of the farm, and hay and turnips in the middle.



The present-day MSCL site, showing the old and new buildings, and historic field names. The orientation is the same as the 1858 map on the right

## THE MUSEUM PROJECT

The project to make Kitchside the home of a new Museum of Scottish Country Life was developed jointly by the NMS and the NTS. The new MSCL includes not only the Kitchside historic farm, but also the historic rural life collections of the NMS, which include the world's oldest known threshing mill and the best collection of combine harvesters in Europe, design models of early agricultural implements, and 19th century portraits of animal breeds. The ambitiousness of the MSCL lies not just in its sheer size but also in its diverse and dynamic layout, integrated directly with the landscape and the historic remains of Wester Kitchside Farm. The complex also includes a new Farm Manager's House (from 1999), designed by Vernon Monaghan. The MSCL is conceived

not as a static 'monument' or a fixed frame for display objects, but as a complex journey, which constantly provokes the visitor to confront three questions: First: what was it like beforehand - before the Agricultural Revolution? How do we get inside the mentality of this world, so far from the stereotype of the 'simple life' in its complicated patterns of local self-reliance? Second: what actually was the Agricultural Revolution, radical and yet protracted, spanning over two centuries? What did its transformations mean for the people who experienced those centuries of constant change? Third: what are the implications of that heritage for us today and in the future? Is the story of 'Improved' farming, of the rural landscape as an industrial commodity, one that is now nearing its close - bringing us in some ways full circle back to the 17th and 18th centuries?

In answering all these questions, the central theme of the MSCL is the interrelationship of the past with the present and future. The journey taken by the visitor begins naturally in the present, and gradually penetrates the foreign land that is the past. This past is initially confronted at second hand, in the collections and interpretative features of the new Exhibition Building, and then at first hand, in the historic steadings and farming landscape of Wester Kitchside. These are presented in the condition of a working farm of the 1950s, when the old horse-working was still familiar, but today's tractor and combine had begun their victorious march. This broadsheet is designed to accompany the visitor on a literal and metaphorical exploration of these buildings and landscapes, with the aim of building other landscapes of the mind, the wider world of Scotland and her setting in European agriculture.

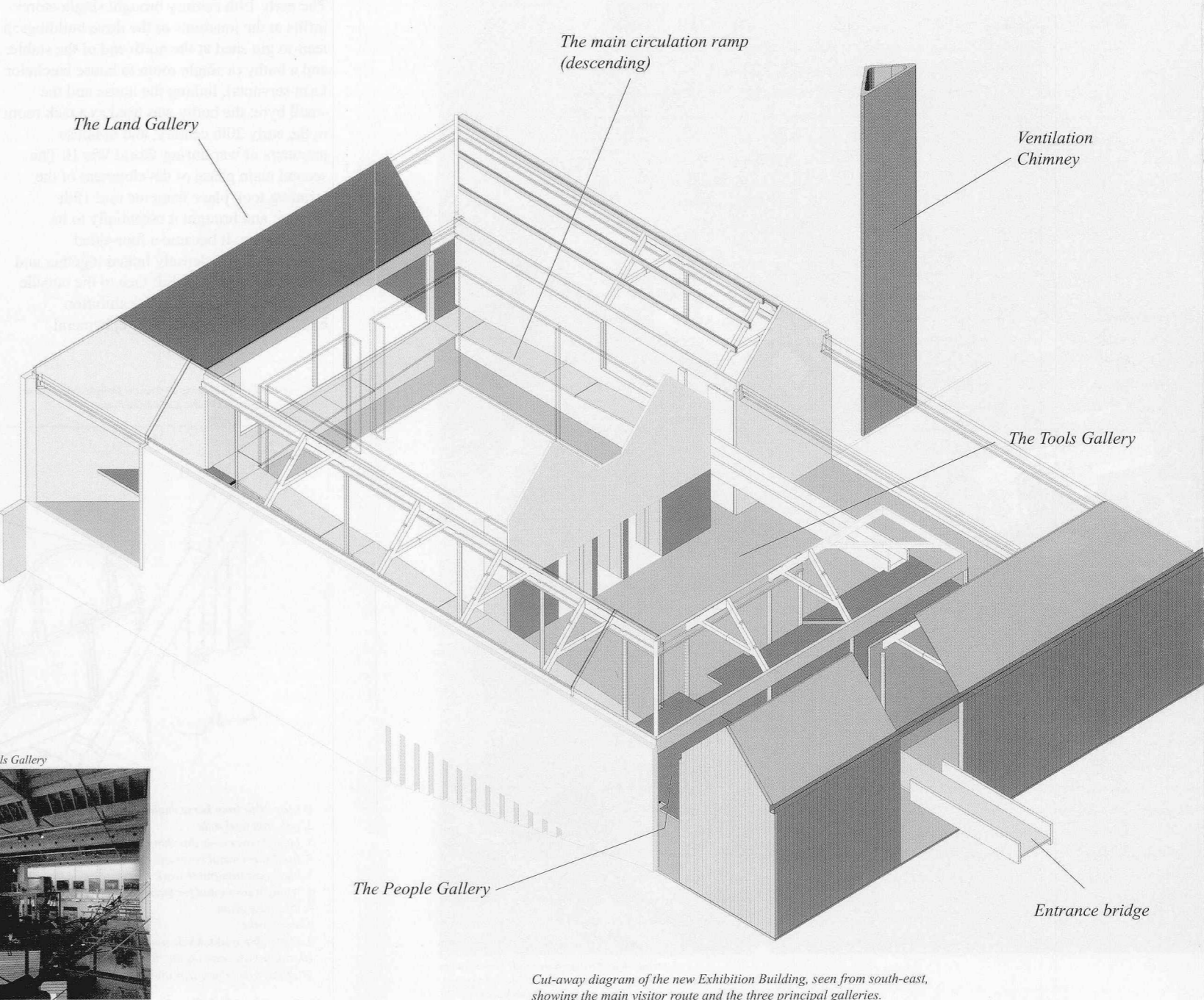
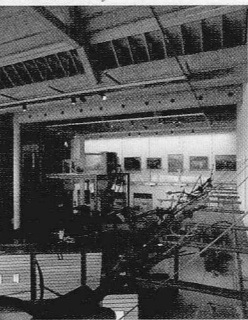
## THE NEW EXHIBITION BUILDING

The visitor's journey commences within the new and monumental Exhibition Building, which acts as an interface between the present day urban context and the historic landscape and farm, drawing the visitor into the settings and values of the Agricultural Revolution. Built in 1998-2001, the building acts as an outlook platform overlooking historic rural Scotland: it takes the visitor on a spiralling, descending route through its displays and collections, until finally confronted directly with the historic farming landscape itself, at the departure point for the walking route up to the old farm steading. This layout constantly reminds the visitor of the modern, industrial character of the Agricultural Revolution: this is the story of a process of farming industrialisation, which feeds the industrial world we live in. The new building is, essentially, an accessible store, with barn-like exhibition and storage halls arranged around a central store and courtyard: accommodation totals 5,500 square metres. The main spiralling ramp descends in the space between these 'barns', and opens out to the landscape at its large north-west and south-west corner windows. The visitors' descent is echoed in the spiral plan of the roof, which centres on a rooftop, illuminating the only permanently fixed object in the museum: the two-storey high Breck of Rendall Mill, the world's oldest surviving (1804) threshing mill, and the fulcrum of the entire display philosophy.

The new exhibition building seen from the north-east, showing the covered terrace and ventilation chimney



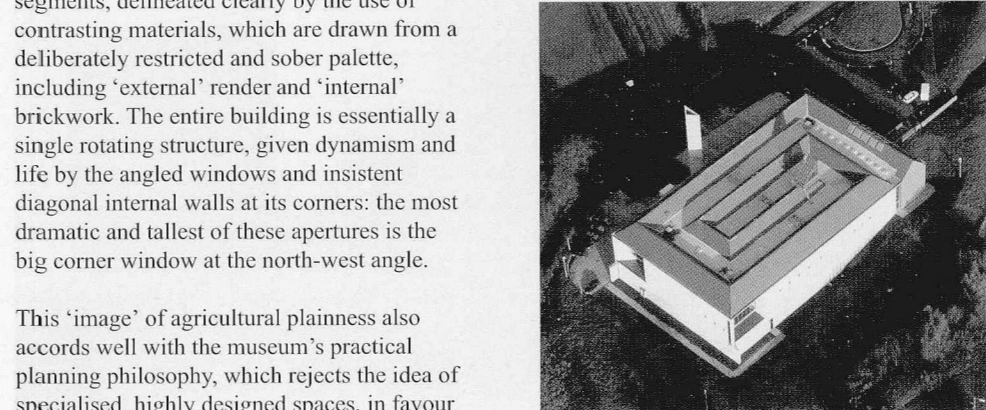
The Tools Gallery



## A MODERN VERNACULAR: Designing the New Building

The present museum concept first began to take shape in 1996, after a limited selection process had led to the appointment of the Glasgow architects Page & Park. The brief was designed to generate not a design but an intellectual partnership with the designers: what was required was a 'modern industrial vernacular for the 21st century', a building which could express the tension within the original Improvement movement between modernity and tradition, through itself making a ruthlessly utilitarian use of materials and modern forms. After many debates, the design eventually adopted concentrates all the accommodation into one single block, under a continuous roof; the only significant vertical element is a tall ventilation chimney. It echoes the simplicity and introversion of many Improvement steadings, in its austere external walls and pitched roofs, whitewashed in south-western fashion. Internally, the planning of this monumental block echoes the tendency for complex layered accretions inside many older steadings, with formerly external courtyards and walls gradually internalised and swallowed up, and complex top-lit communication patterns. The MSCL is conceived as an essentially dark interior, with points of light filtering in through the gloom, but with deepset windows giving dramatic views to the outside. The ramp circuit and its branches and links slice the building into segments, delineated clearly by the use of contrasting materials, which are drawn from a deliberately restricted and sober palette, including 'external' render and 'internal' brickwork. The entire building is essentially a single rotating structure, given dynamism and life by the angled windows and insistent diagonal internal walls at its corners: the most dramatic and tallest of these apertures is the big corner window at the north-west angle.

Aerial view of Page and Park's new exhibition building, showing the 'spiral' form of the roof



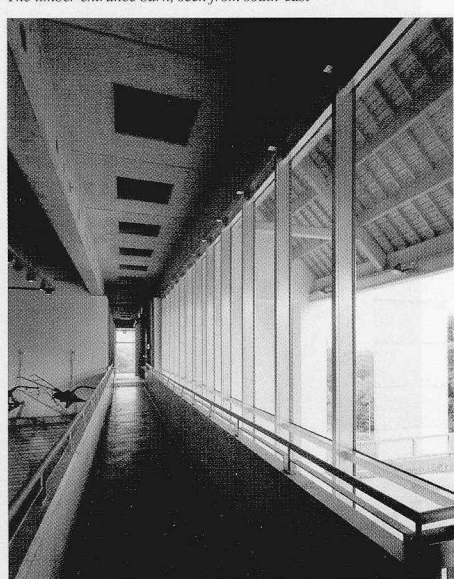
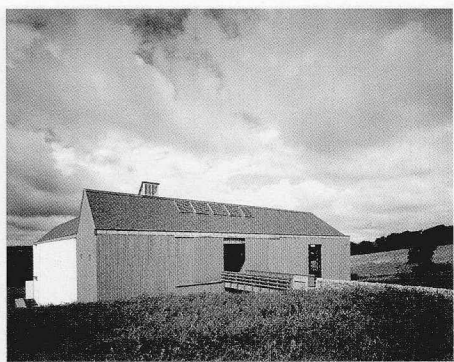
This 'image' of agricultural plainness also accords well with the museum's practical planning philosophy, which rejects the idea of specialised, highly designed spaces, in favour

of a storehouse concept of large, flexible, multi-purpose halls - an echo of the practical, generous proportions of traditional barns; there are no fixed architectural settings for any object other than the Breck Mill - an object which is 'architectural' in its own right through sheer scale. The presentation of the collections themselves, emphasising the role of modernity and mechanisation in the development of Scottish country life, banishes any cosy 'folk' image. The emphasis on flexibility is also reflected in the structural design of the new building. It was decided to build the main load-bearing elements (the roof trusses, the floors and ramps, and the wall columns) entirely out of precast concrete columns and slabs - in other words, from elements made in a factory and assembled on site. Inspired partly by the precast frames used for many post-1945 agricultural storage buildings, this construction demands a precise and systematised planning based on standard grid dimensions - a planning principle which facilitates the flexible-storage concept of the museum. This logic of precession is carried through to the internal services - power, plumbing, IT, etc - which are all gathered together into standardised ducting at eaves level, laid out on a grid across the whole building. The deep plan allows a loose-fit yet intelligent approach to environmental controls, using computer monitoring to obviate sudden swings in internal conditions.

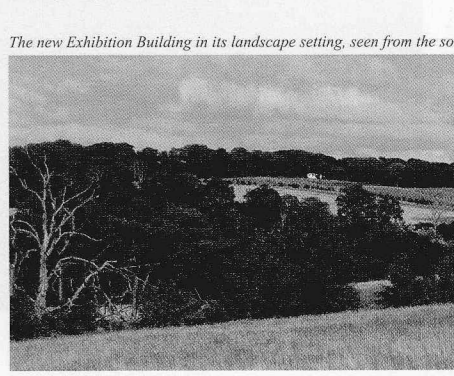


## THEMES OF THE EXHIBITION

The main visitor route is designed to make the chief exhibition themes as comprehensible as possible. The first parts of the collections encountered are of a general character: proceeding westwards along the north side of the building at the upper level, the ramp is flanked on one side by a special exhibition area, and on the other, by the study store, containing the Highland Society Model Collection in foreground cases and a variety of objects behind. At the north-west corner of the building, the visitor enters the area of the main, themed displays, which cover the historical geographer's classic trilogy of environment, society and technology. The first theme tackled is that of 'The Land', focusing on the break with the old ways and the creation of the 'improved' landscape in the 18th/19th centuries: the dramatic diagonal north-west window directly overlooks the result of that transformation, both at Kitchside and in more distant landscapes. The second theme, 'People', spans the period of 'living memory', and challenges stereotypical views and 'folk memories' of the rural society of the past. Then, in the courtyard itself, the visitor comes face to face with the third of the museum's main themes: 'Tools'. Here we confront the core message of the MSCL: that post-Improvement 'country life', as much as modern urban life, was only possible by the exploitation of technology, science and industry. Alongside the more familiar arrays of 19th and 20th century machines, such as threshers, ploughs, combine harvesters and tractors, the crucial role of scientific research in boosting productivity since the 1950s is also stressed: the same area of land can produce up to three times as much food today as it could a century ago. The bottom storey of the building, accessible on a supervised basis, supplements the Tools display: it contains the grandest objects, such as combine harvesters, threshing mills and large field machinery.



The new Exhibition Building in its landscape setting, seen from the south-west



## BRIDGING PRESENT AND PAST

How does the visitor actually experience the new exhibition building? Its main aim is to provide the visitor with a spatial and psychological bridge from the modern world of East Kilbride New Town to the historic world of Wester Kitchside Farm. The main entrance, through an apparently single-storey timber-clad 'barn', at first maintains the illusion of 'traditional' country forms. This, however, leads directly on to a dramatic balcony and bridge overlooking the central court. Here the first jolt is administered to the visitor's preconceptions: seeing the sudden scale of the courtyard and the machines on display, and with the Kitchside landscape visible disconcertingly far below through the huge side window, it starts to become clear that the 'traditional' countryside is as 'modern' and as potentially dislocated as everything else we do. The main exhibition court, which looks out over the historic landscape to the north, is dominated by the two storey high Breck of Rendall threshing mill. From this point, the wide spiral ramp of the display passage commences its anti-clockwise descent through the two storeys of the public exhibition spaces - although visitors can also use the lift and stairs to make more direct cross-connections. The ramp is wrapped round a central collection store, which can be viewed from glazed cross-galleries, while on its outer side is a series of exhibition rooms, panoramic diagonal views out across the landscape, and an audio-visual theatre.

