

Shootinglee - Survey & Excavation, 2014

Piers Dixon and Joyce Durham

NT 3160 3140 (centred on)

Funder: Peeblesshire Archaeological Society

From archival sources it is known that Shootinglee was a stead within Ettrick Forest and was of some importance for a short time in the 15th century being the administrative centre of a ward or division of the Forest (Registrum Magni Sigilli Scottorum ii, 59). The site lies on the E of the Newhall Burn; it is split into two parts by a dry stone wall to the W of which is a pasture field and to the E a conifer plantation.

Trench 1: Several features were visible in the pasture including the footings of at least one small building and several earthen banked enclosures, one of which has been trial trenched (Tr 1 on plan) and interpreted as a garden plot.

Within the forest, planted in 1976, there are the footings of a row of five buildings all badly damaged by forest ploughing. The southern-most of these is currently being excavated (Tr 2).

Trench 2 (NT 31597 31299): The site of the southern-most building has been cut into the break of slope at the foot of a steep W-facing, scree-covered hillside, and levelled off to form a terrace on which the building was constructed (Fig 1). Removal of the over-burden of tumble and loose soil revealed the stone and turf walls of a building measuring 11.5 x 4m internally. The E wall, built into the hillside, has a single inner skin the back of which has been packed with stones from the hillside. The N wall stands to two courses in height and is around 0.7m in thickness. Outside this wall there is paving with a gap in the middle - possibly a sump for an internal drain. The W wall is around 0.9m thick at the N end and preserves a covering of red-brown silt, probably the residue of the turf superstructure, but is dilapidated at the S end. There is a central hearth in the S end and a probable entrance slightly off centre in the W wall (Fig 2). Forest ploughing has unfortunately considerably distorted the archaeology in many places. The N end of the structure has seen later re-use. During the most recent phase the floor level was raised about 150-200mm with a layer of earth and stone that extended over about half the width of the original building and over part of the N wall, suggesting that post-occupation use. Removal of these features revealed a paving of large stones and a central byre drain. A hearth from an earlier phase was also revealed under the N wall, which appears to part of a clay oven (Fig 3).

Finds have included iron objects, nails, glass and clay pipe stems along with two sherds of medieval pottery. Samples of charcoal have been collected from strategic places and will be sent for radiocarbon dating in due course.



Fig 1 Excavation of the southernmost building showing the house platform, cut into the scree on the left of the picture.



Fig 2 Orthorectified vertical aerial photograph of Trench 2 showing the byre drain and central paved area of the building. The entrance is immediately above the horizontal ranging pole.



Fig 3 The clay oven under the N wall showing the hearth which provided charcoal for radiocarbon dating, giving a date of 1442-1523 cal AD (69.2% probability) – SUERC 59056.