

Shootinglee – Excavation, 2018

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Trenches 3-5: Excavation continued at the remains of Shootinglee peel-house, a fortified farmstead in what was formally Ettrick Forest. Previous seasons had revealed the peel-house which had been partitioned to make two living areas at ground floor level at the N end and a substantial extension that had been built on at the S end, also used for domestic purposes. The N end had subsequently burnt down and the whole building extensively robbed of stone.

The N end of the building was divided into quadrants for excavation, each of which was excavated in sequence, starting with the final occupation layer of grey clay (Figs 1 & 2). This had circa 20mm of burnt debris at the S end, near what had been the partition, reducing in depth towards the N. Two central hearths were removed and a further group of hearths towards the NE corner, all made from weathered whinstone, suggesting a large hanging lum. Below the burnt layer there was a made floor of upright packing stones with yellow clay between which had been so placed in order to raise the floor level (Fig 3). Removal of these revealed the rest of the substantial N-S drain, part of which had been revealed in previous seasons, a typical feature of bastle and peel houses of the Border country where the ground floor was used to house cattle (Fig 4). To either side of the drain was a paved area overlain by patches of concreted dark brown clay, possibly the residue of byre deposits. In the extension at the S end of the building, removal of the paving stones and hearth uncovered a second, earlier occupation layer also covered with a layer of burning over another paved surface. A section of the S wall of the extension was removed to reveal that it was built upon scree like that which occupies the hillside above the site.

Finds from the building have included clay pipe and metal objects, some of which are nails, but also two musket balls, one of which has been flattened from use, and knife blades, probably of domestic type. Occasional finds of medieval pot suggest that there has been earlier activity at the site.



Fig 1 Successive hearths: the upper hearth and associated grey clay layer sealing the earlier hearths.



Fig 2 Grey clay floor during excavation, with the burnt occupation debris starting to show in patches.



Fig 3 A raised stone floor occupies the right hand part of the interior of the peel house, but the floor in the other part has been robbed. Part of an earlier drain visible here runs underneath the raised floor.



Fig 4 Excavation of the raised floor revealed the drain running the full length of the peel-house.