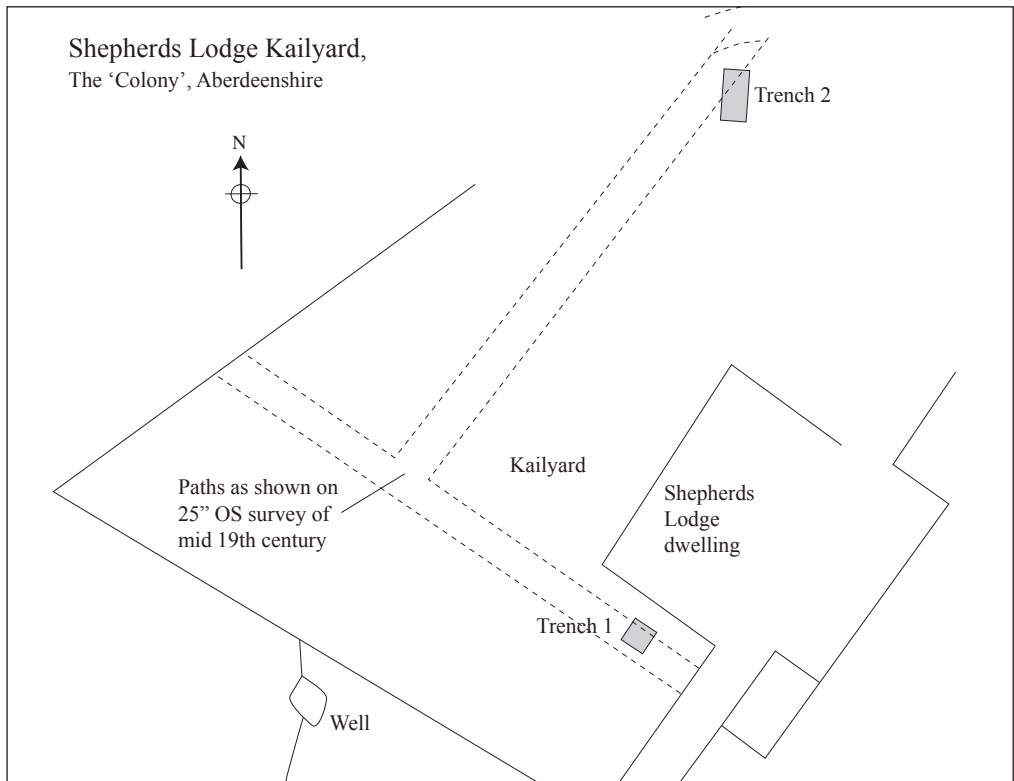


## SHEPHERDS LODGE KAILYARD: PRE-PLANTING EXCAVATION

Barry Foster

### INTRODUCTION

Shepherds Lodge is one of the colony houses on Bennachie. It formed part of the squatter settlement in the first half of the 19th century and was partially excavated in 2013 (Oliver *et al*, 2015; 2016). In 2017 members of the Bennachie Landscapes Project decided to recreate a kitchen garden or kailyard on the site of the original garden associated with the Shepherds Lodge house. In advance of this work, two small excavations were carried out in order to discover whether a garden footpath, as noted on the 1st edition OS map 1867 could be identified. This had



*Figure 1. Measured survey of Shepherds Lodge kailyard with 19th-century paths taken from 25'' OS plan placed in position.*

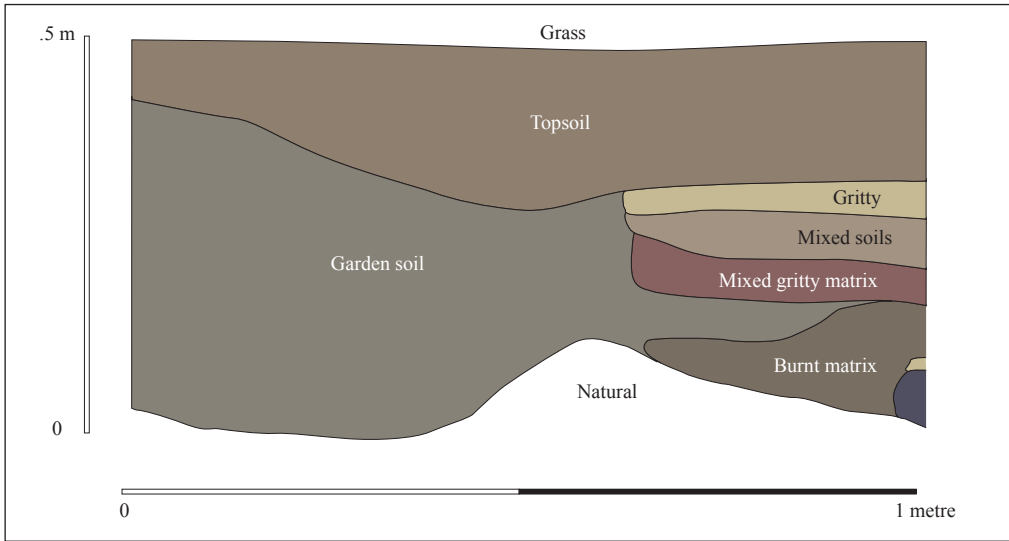
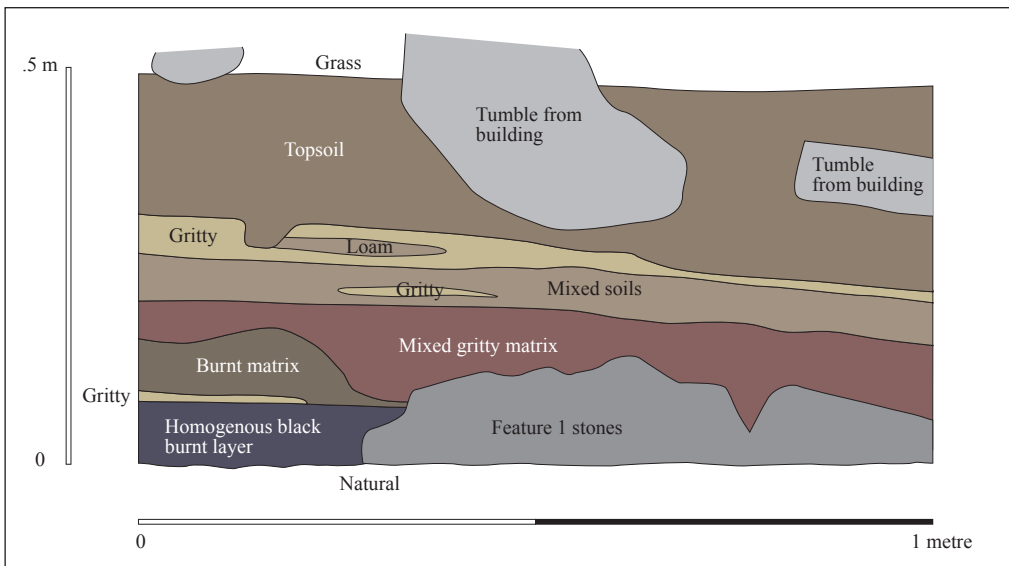


Figure 2 (above): south-east-facing section of Trench 1.

Figure 3 (below): south-west-facing section of Trench 1.



lain close to the house along the southern gable-end (see Figure 1) and a further path had continued across the kailyard to apparently exit on its northern-eastern edge. Trench 1 was opened in order to try to find the north-west to south-east path and Trench 2 was opened in order to look for the south-west to north-east path.

## TRENCH 1

A 1x1 metre trench was opened and excavated down 0.5 metre until the natural subsoil was reached. No evidence was found for a built surface on the line depicted on the OS map, so it seems likely that the path shown there was no more than an earth-trodden path. However, on the east side of the trench nearest to the gable end of the house was evidence for a series of compacted surfaces that showed up well in section (see Figures 2 and 3 and Photo 1). These layers of gravels and mixed soils were sealed by a layer of topsoil that may represent 'soil creep' from higher up in the yard after the house was abandoned. (This was also evident whilst digging the garden plot for planting where a greater depth of topsoil was discovered at the bottom of the slope than at the top.)

The gritty matrices may represent a walkway around the house and appear to have accumulated over time. The homogenous burnt layer and the 'Feature 1 stones' may reflect initial site clearance and construction activity. It is noteworthy that a spread of garden soil overlays a deposit rich in burnt material (the 'Burnt matrix' in Figures 2 and 3) and may indicate an early depth of garden soil. This



*Photo 1. Section of Trench 1 showing accumulated layers of gritty soils and underlying stone feature.*



*Photo 2. Shepherds Lodge with Trench 1 in the foreground and Trench 2 in the distance. The Littlejohns' house lies behind Trench 1.*

was clearly increased over time. The remarkably large number of pottery fragments found in such a small area also suggests a thorough régime of manuring and soil improvement. This was also noted from other Colony sites (Oliver *et al*, 2016, 359). It might be assumed that the layers of deposits above this earlier spread of garden soil originally extended further from the house. But they all appear to have been subsequently cut back at the same time. Presumably, this was in order to extend and tidy up the garden edge later on in the site's history.

## TRENCH 2

A 2x1 metre trench was opened to a depth of 0.5 metre down onto natural subsoil. This sought to establish whether the path depicted on the OS map did continue behind the house and whether it continued under the existing Forestry Commission path. Such a situation may have indicated that the property had extended further north. However, as with Trench 1, no evidence for a path was found. In fact, it appeared to contain nothing more than 0.5 metres of garden soil with 19th-century glass and pottery.

## DISCUSSION

Shepherds Lodge was the home of the Littlejohns who lived on Bennachie from the 1830's until their eviction in 1878 (Fagen, 2011, 7). It is, therefore, quite likely that the house and garden were in use for over forty years. In that, quite short, period a house was built (and possibly extended), land cleared and cultivated, a home established, and a family raised. Garden plots would have been an important requisite to that lifestyle, supplying fresh food for the table: fruit and vegetables, a few chickens for eggs and meat, a milking cow for milk, butter and cheese and not forgetting the sheep of Shepherds Lodge!

Constantly-used paths around the house would need some sort of surface if they were not to become muddy channels for water to lay in. The fieldwork carried out at Hillside, another Colony house (Oliver *et al*, 2013; 2016), has demonstrated the care that could be lavished on such walkways and the work carried out in front of Shepherds Lodge (*ibid.* 2015, 89) may suggest a similar concern. Trench 1 considered here does suggest a metalled surface surrounding the house. This is where most frequent walking is likely to have occurred. But, what about the missing paths shown on the OS map? It might be suggested that they were little more than grassy 'baulks' left in order to access garden plots on either side. They would also have acted as a form of small-scale 'fallowing' - giving a patch of soil time to recover before the path was moved and a different strip left to run to grass for the season. It is hard to imagine that, were anything more permanent constructed, it could have evaded detection in both trenches and during the subsequent garden preparations.

## SMALL FINDS

An impressive collection of 19th century pottery consisting of Rockingham ('Brown Betty') teapots, earthenware, brown and green bottle glass and clay pipe stems was recovered in the topsoil indicating the use of midden material on the garden.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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