



KILRUBIE

A Survey Project

undertaken by

Peeblesshire Archaeological Society

in conjunction with

Scotland's Rural Past

Jack Boughey

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1. Introduction and Objectives

In 2008, as part of the initial reconnaissance, undertaken as part of a wider Eddleston Parish Project, members of Peeblesshire Archaeological Society (hereafter,PAS) noted the remains of an early farmstead at Kilrubie. At the time, it was resolved that we would revisit this at a later date with a view to carrying out a fuller survey.

Accordingly we carried out further reconnaissance in November 2009, noting the turf footings of domestic structures, enclosures, boundaries, cultivation traces and lazy beds. We decided that the site merited a more intensive study and decided to seek the assistance of Scotland's Rural Past Project (SRP).

In December 2009 we submitted a Project Design to SRP which, to our delight, was accepted. This gave us welcome access to SRP's training expertise and the use of equipment on loan.

Objectives

The main objectives as stated on the Project Design were as under:-

- To survey and record the archaeology in the area of Kilrubie Hill and to set it in its local archaeological and historical context.
- To engage more of the existing membership of the Archaeological Society in active Fieldwork and/or Research and to attract new members to the society by undertaking a field survey project with training as a key element

Specific aims of the survey

- To understand the nature of the structures on the site: can we say anything about their original form and function? for example, are the possible dwellings really of turf as the visible footings appear to suggest or were they more substantial?
- To understand how this settlement complex might have operated as a farming unit: can detailed survey enable us to disentangle the inter-relationships and relative chronological sequence of the visible remains such as the systems of enclosures and the cultivation traces?
- To understand the possible historical context of this rural settlement: can we set this site within the wider picture of settlement history and archaeological remains both within Eddleston parish and the wider region?

2. The Archaeological Objective

To survey and record the archaeology in the area of Kilrubie Hill and to set it in its local archaeological and historical context.

2.1 Summary

Kilrubie Farmstead lies around 5 miles NNW of Peebles in the Scottish Borders. At the heart of the farmstead are the much degraded turf footings of **three farm buildings**. These centre on NT 21724 46796, at altitude 350m. The buildings lie toward the northern margin of the site.

The most northerly building is around 14m long from west to east and 8m wide, divided into two compartments. A larger building abuts the south side of the above, being 27m long and 7m wide, but there is no evidence of internal access between the buildings. There are three compartments in the larger building, the most westerly with opposing entrances and the most easterly with a drainage channel in its south-east corner. Finally there is a smaller building 3m to the south of the above which at 7m x 7m may have been a storage facility.

The farmstead is divided from north to south by an **old trackway**, running from Peebles to Cloich. It is further divided from east to west by an impressive and clearly later, turf-built **March Dyke**. The dyke crosses the farmstead from the east before heading up Kilrubie Hill. It is 50cm high with a spread of around 1.5m

One of the most distinctive features of the farmstead are the **lazy beds** which lie between the northern enclosure and the Whitelaw Burn. There are 17 beds in total, each varying in length from 3m to 4m and extending over a distance of around 50m.

Almost equally distinctive are the **enclosure walls** which surround the farmstead. Again apparently built entirely of turf they still stand some 50cm high with a spread of up to 2.5m. There are around 1100m of enclosure walls, encompassing almost 9 acres of well taited land. All of the land enclosed shows distinctive evidence of rig-and-furrow cultivation, with later grooved rig sometimes cutting the original rig.

Across the trackway from the farm buildings lies a **Garden Plot**. It is an enclosed area some 30mx20m. Unlike the other enclosures there is no evidence of rig-and-furrow or other cultivation. In this area was found part of a shoe buckle, of engraved steel covered with copper alloy and dating to AD 1690 - 1790, but probably nearer the later date.

Historic mapping begins with inclusion of the site in Armstrong (1775) continuing through to Thompson (1832). The 1841 census, and those subsequent, show no entry for Kilrubie. We might therefore surmise the floruit of the farmstead to be around 1750 - 1840. If, however, we conjecture that Kilrubie's omission from Edgar, Moll and Roy's

maps of 1741-1755 was perhaps simply a reflection of this turf-built farmstead's relative architectural and economic insignificance, then we cannot rule out the possibility of origins considerably earlier in the 18th century.

2.2 Location

Kilrubie lies to the west of the village of Eddleston, 5 miles NNW of Peebles, in the Scottish Borders

The site itself occupies the south-eastern flank of Kilrubie Hill, centred on NT 21724 46796, altitude c350m.

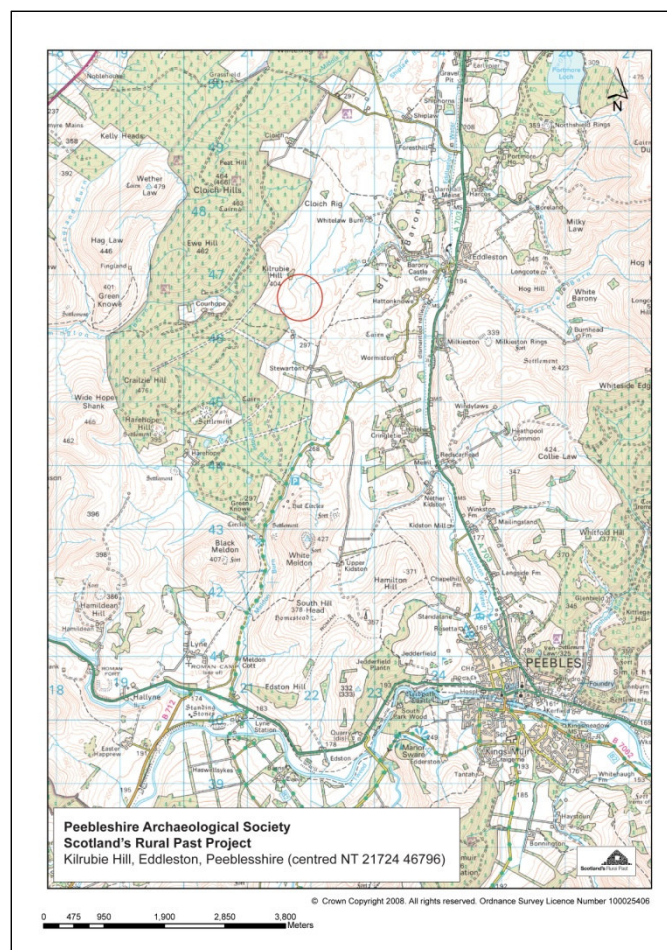


Figure 1 Ordnance Survey Location of site of Kilrubie Farmstead

At present the only site recorded on the RCAHMS database consists of probable prehistoric chert extraction pits on Kilrubie Hill (RCAHMS NT24NW 48), discovered by RD Knox, one of the members of our group (Discovery Excavation Scotland 1993,9). The site was subsequently surveyed by Dr Graeme Warren (then of the University of Edinburgh).

2.3 Survey

Timing and Methodology

The Survey was carried out between November 2009 and July 2010, with Research continuing through to December 2010.

The Survey was carried out by members of Peeblesshire Archaeological Society with training and assistance from members of Scotland's Rural Past. (For fuller details see Acknowledgements).

Survey methods used included plane-tableing, tape and offset, and use of handheld GPS. A limited metal-detector survey was also carried out on the structures and the garden plot.

2.4 Overview of Farmstead

The farmstead of Kilrubie has proved notoriously difficult to photograph. All of the main elements - buildings, enclosures and boundaries are of turf construction and, as well as being very degraded, blend in with the natural grass of the landscape. A high viewpoint, such as the top of Kilrubie Hill, offers a better vantage point but the terrain and the nature of the features mitigate against clear definition.



Figure 2 General View: Showing Lazy Beds, Enclosures, Farm Buildings and Trackway, looking south-east from the top of Kilrubie Hill

As in many situations, some things are often best viewed from the air, and the attached satellite photograph and drawing clearly show all the main elements.

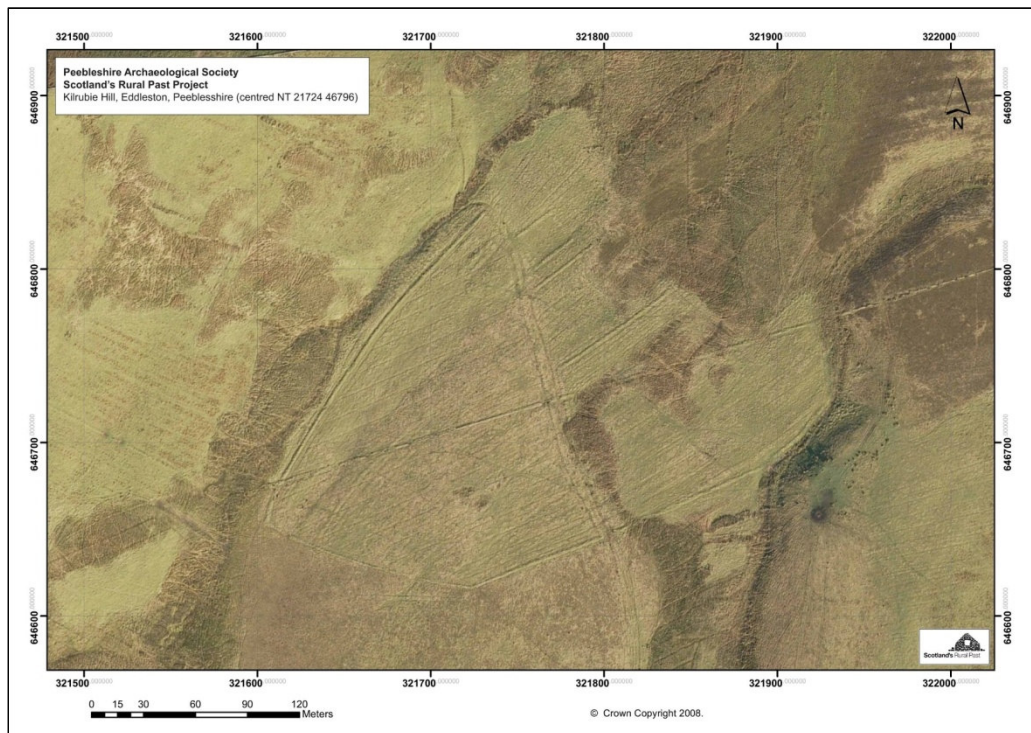


Figure 3 Satellite Image showing Kilrurie Farmstead

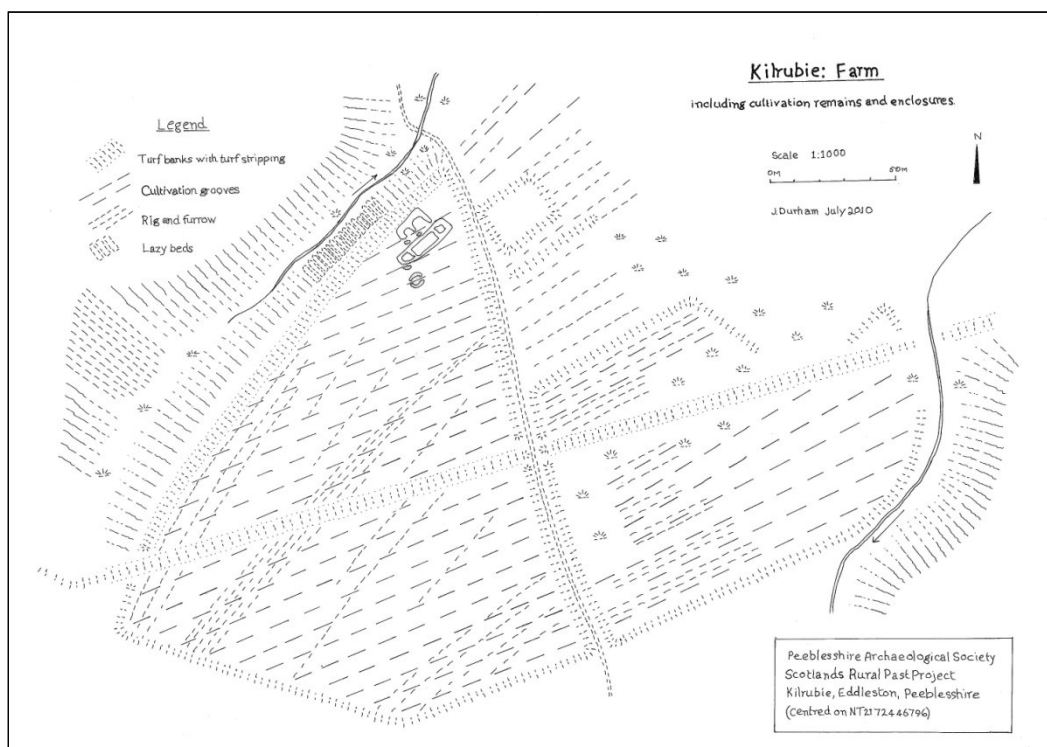


Figure 4 Kilrurie Farm: Drawing by J Durham showing the Farm Buildings, Cultivation Remains and Enclosures

The old local **Trackway** from Peebles to Cloich bisects the farmstead from north to south. The **Farm Buildings** lie to extreme north, while beyond the northern enclosure and running down to the stream lie the **Lazy Beds**.

Across the track from the farm buildings lies a smaller enclosure which has been interpreted as a **Garden Plot**.

The largest of the **Enclosures** lie to the west of the trackway, with a smaller one to the east. All of the enclosures (except the Garden plot) show evidence of distinctive **Rig-and-Furrow Cultivation**. The enclosures have been bisected from east to west by a **March or Boundary Dyke**.

2.4.i Old Trackway

There are a number of old trackways in the area, the main one running from Peebles to Eddleston, passing around 300m east of Kilrubie. A subsidiary of that track branches off around Nether Stewarton to the south and cuts through the farmstead of Kilrubie. These are shown on **Armstrong's Map of 1775**.

2.4.ii Farm Buildings

The farm buildings consist of 3 distinct elements (if the word distinct can be applied to such ephemeral remains !). All the buildings have apparently been built of turf, now very much degraded. None of the remains stand above 25cm high, and have a spread up to 3m in width. No stone footings are visible nor can be probed, while the possibility of earlier robbing seems unlikely given that the remaining outlines of the structures would have had a wider spread had that been the case.

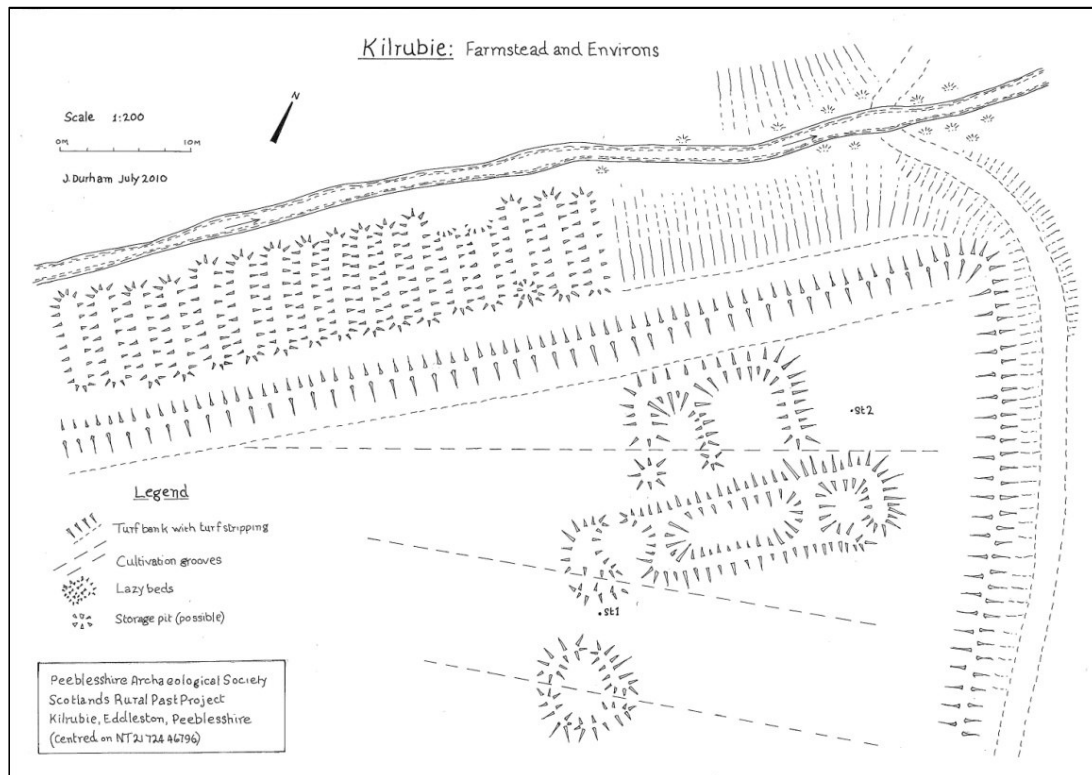


Figure 5 Kilrubic Farmstead and Environs - Drawing by J Durham showing the Farm Buildings, Lazy Beds and immediate vicinity

The most northerly of the 3 structures (A) may well have been the earliest building on site, running 14m from west to east and 8m wide. It is divided into 2 compartments, the smaller to the west being 5m x 2m internally and the larger being around 5m x 5m. It is very indistinct and without excavation, little can be said about form or function. Structure A might have been contemporary to or have been earlier or served as an adjunct (storage etc) for structure B. The Armstrong map of 1775 however shows two contemporary structures.

The main farm building (B) is the central one, and abuts structure A but without any apparent internal access between the 2 buildings. Structure B runs west to east and is some 27m in length and 7m wide.

The building consists of 3 separate compartments. The most westerly has internal dimensions of 5m x 3m, with opposing entrances, and may have served as a byre or storage facility. The central compartment is the largest, being around 7m x 3m internally, and would presumably have served as family accommodation. No evidence of an entrance can be traced. The most easterly compartment is around 4m x 3m. This may have accommodated cattle, since there is evidence of a drainage channel exiting from the south-eastern corner. There is evidence that farming continued after the collapse of structure B, with the most westerly remains being overploughed by a grooved furrow.

Structure C lies around 3m to the south of structure B and is around 7m x 7m overall, and 4m x 4m internally. Again without excavation it is difficult to determine form or function; if

co-eval with the farmstead, it may have been a storage facility, or an animal pen. A metal-detector survey was carried out on all of the structures. Structure C produced two cartridges, which are currently being researched. It is likely they will date to around 1900. These may suggest that once it had fallen into disrepair the structure saw re-use as a Shooting Butt (equally it is possible that it was built as a Shooting Butt in the immediate vicinity of the earlier farmstead).

The structures lie on a distinct slope, with a fall of around 2.5m over a 27m length.

2.4.iii Lazy Beds

The Lazy Beds lie to the north of the Farmstead, between the northern enclosure and the Whitelaw Burn. Indeed it is tempting to conjecture that the lazy beds have been constructed at the same time as the northern enclosure, with the turf being stripped to form the enclosure and the soil underneath being used to form the lazy beds, resulting in a distinctive causeway between the two.

There are 17 beds in total, stretched out over 50m. Each bed is around 2m wide and they vary in length from 3 to 4m. Two of the beds show signs of digging, which could be badger activity or could be early potato pits.



Figure 6 Possible Potato Clamp on Lazy Beds

The lazy beds would have been cultivated with both cereals and also potatoes, and in all probability would have been for domestic consumption rather than commercial use.

2.4.iv Garden Plot

The Garden Plot lies to the east of the trackway, immediately across from the farm buildings. It is an enclosed area, some 30m x 20m, with walls standing 40cm high with a spread of 2m. There is nothing, beyond its size relative to other enclosures that designate it as a garden plot, as opposed to any other form of enclosure. It may equally have been a livestock enclosure. As distinct to other enclosures there is no sign of rig-and-furrow or other cultivation remains. A metal detector survey was also carried out here. Part of a shoe buckle was found, of engraved steel covered with a copper-alloy and dating to AD 1690-1790, but probably towards the later end of that range.

2.4.v Enclosures

Enclosures surround and divide the Kilrubie farmstead. They are formed wholly of turf and presently stand up to some 50cm high, with a spread of around 2.5m.

Enclosures lie to the west and east of the trackway. The enclosure to the west is bounded on its east side by the trackway for a length of some 200m. It is bounded on the north side by the lazy bed channel which runs for some 220m south west. There are two further boundary lines running 120m to the south east and 80m due west. They amount to a total of 620m of enclosures, encompassing 5.1acres.

To the east of the trackway there is an enclosure wall which runs north east, parallel to the garden plot, for some 40m before turning south and petering out into some boggy area. This may have enclosed some more cultivable area in the past. Further south more enclosures run from the trackway to the Fairydean burn. This area comprises a total of 500m of enclosures, encompassing some 3.7acres.

The construction of these enclosures must have been time-consuming not to mention backbreaking work.

All of the enclosed areas show distinctive evidence of rig-and-furrow cultivation, in some cases with later grooved rig cutting the original rig.

The enclosed areas would have been well manured by the practise of taithing, from grazing animals.

Enclosure generally began in Lowland areas after 1760.

2.4.vi March or Boundary Dyke

The march or boundary dyke runs east-west. It begins at the Old Post Road from Peebles to Eddleston and runs, like an arrow, without deviation for around a kilometre. When it meets the Kilrubie enclosure wall running southwest, it overrides it and strikes due north toward the crest of Kilrubie Hill.



Figure 7 Turf Boundary Dyke looking East

It is an impressive feature on the landscape, still standing over 0.5m high and 1.5m broad. It is constructed entirely of turf, except for a few areas rising on Kilrubie Hill where the builders appear to have used local stone and scree as footing.

2.5 Research Strands

2.5.i Historical Mapping

The maps of Gordon (1636/52), Blaue (1654), Edgar (1741), Moll (1745) and Roy (1755) are all silent on the subject of Kilrubie and it is not until Armstrong (1775) that Kilrubie appears as a place name and with 2 houses shown - albeit in the wrong place.



Figure 8 Armstrong Map of 1775 with Kilrubie shown east of the Trackway

On the Armstrong map, the two houses are shown east of the trackway, whereas the two houses we have found are to the west of the track. Are these the houses we have found and through mapping error have been shown in the wrong place or are there the remains of two houses east of the track yet to be discovered? Extensive searches have taken place east of the trackway but no structural remains have been found.

Ainslie (1821) and Thompson (1832) both continue to show one house at Kilrubie (again east of the track) but by the time of the Ordnance Survey 1st Edition (1855/73), no houses remained at Kilrubie.

If we assume that the houses shown on Armstrong are the two structures we have found, then we might surmise they went up after 1755 (Roy) and were ruinous by 1859 (OS 1st Ed.)

The floruit of the farmstead would then have been in the period 1750 - 1850. Census returns however (see below) would further restrict that to 1750 - 1840.

If, however, we conjecture that Kilrubie's omission from Edgar, Moll and Roy's maps of 1741-1755 was perhaps simply a reflection of the relative insignificance, both architectural and economic, of this turf-built farmstead, then we cannot rule out the possibility of origins considerably earlier in the 18th century.

2.5.ii Census Returns

We have examined the Census Returns of 1841, 1851 and 1861 and none show evidence of a separate dwelling at Kilrubie.

2.5.iii Hearth Tax

The Hearth Tax of 1694 showed no separate entry for Kilrubie. It may however have been subsumed into that of Hattonknowe which we assume was the owner's farm.

2.5.iv Horse Tax

The Horse Tax of 1797 showed no separate entry for Kilrubie. Again it may have been subsumed into that of Hattonknowe.

2.5.v Name Derivation

Although members were initially tempted to speculate whether Kilrubie could derive from Kil (Scottish Gaelic: Church) and Rubha or Mael Ruba (Scottish Gaelic: early Christian Saint, mostly celebrated in north west Scotland), a note from place-name specialist Frank Harkness concludes:-

"As Kilruby/Kilrubie (Hill and Wood) are in or next to the Cloich Hills, whose name can hardly not be Gaelic, a Gaelic origin wouldn't be too surprising. However rubha/rudha seems to be generally used of coastal features. Unless some indication of a small ancient ecclesiastical building can be found in records or archaeologically, I would suspect coille, 'wood' as more likely to be involved. Just conceivably the other element could be ruighe, literally 'forearm' but used topographically for lower slopes, especially those in the Highlands suitable for summer grazing, the 'shieling grounds' as stated in an elderly Gaelic dictionary. Thus 'wood on lower slopes [of Cloich Hills]????? But anything would be very tentative without early forms."

More prosaically, according to J.W. Buchan, 'A History of Peeblesshire', 1925,

"The Rev. Dr. Macdonald, Kiltarlity, suggests that Kilrubie means '**the cell of the red tonsured priest**'. Pratt's Hill, which in old maps is located here, may be Priest's Hill."

2.5.vi Artefacts

A limited metal detector survey on the 3 structures and the garden plot uncovered the following:-

(Garden Plot) - Steel engraved copper alloy shoe buckle, 1690-1790. (NT 21760 46805.)



Figure 9 Part of Shoe Buckle found in "Garden Plot"

(Structure C) - 2 Cartridges. (NT 21727 46782)

2.5.vii Other Research

Further research has taken place at the National Archives of Scotland. While no direct mention of Kilrubie has yet been found, there are interesting references to the nearby farm of Pratstile Knowe and to the owning farm of Kilrubie at Hatton Knowe.

Firstly there were Poor Law payments to one Agnes Haige in Pretsile Know, regularly from November 1752 to February 1759, evidencing that a rural life was not always a prosperous one.

Secondly, there is a Tack (lease) of 1735 granted to the tenant of Hatton Knowe, as under:-

8 Feb 1735 Sir Alexander Murray of Blackbarony leased to Alexander Gibson tenant in Hatton Knowe for tak 19 years beginning Whitsuntide at 900 Merks Scots yearly plus the following obligations-

"supply 2 tons of peats and turfs, supply good and sufficient hens (or 6s 8d for each hen undelivered), supply 32 carriages of coal or lime (or 1 Merk for each carriage not delivered), 2 workmen to cut turfs, 1 day carting turfs, grind his corn at Mill of Eddelston, pay the schoolmaster at Eddlestone, keep the houses wind and watertight and leave in good condition at removal, not to plough or labor the Green or Long yeard of Eddlestone but to let the same lie in grass, and (quit?) coalhouses of Eddlestone."

3.The Social Engagement Objective

To engage more of the existing membership of the Archaeological Society in active Fieldwork and/or Research and to attract new members to the society by undertaking a field survey project with training as a key element.

3.1 Training

We revisited Kilrubie last November, noting the remains of an early farmstead, with turf footings of domestic structures, enclosures, boundaries, cultivation traces and lazy beds. We decided on a more intensive survey of the area - but there was a problem.

In spite of having a membership of 40+, there were only 3 - 4 members who regularly participated in archaeological fieldwork. Also, while we appreciated what we should be doing to survey the area, we lacked the appropriate equipment, and techniques were a little rusty.

But we had a cunning plan! In December 2009 we submitted a Project Design to Scotland's Rural Past (SRP), a team working within RCAHMS, which to our delight was accepted. This gave us access to SRP's training expertise and the use of equipment on loan.

We presented plans to our members and tempted them away from their firesides, even on the snowy days of December and January. We now have turnouts of 10 - 12, all enthusiastic over the level of input from SRP. Members have been trained in basic surveying skills on site, have participated in more formal training days at SRP venues including *Presenting Materials to the Media, Photography and Drawing Skills*. There is much still to do. We need to follow up our fieldwork with archival research - putting the flesh on the bones of those who lived and worked at Kilrubie - part of the fascinating detective work teasing out the story of our cultural heritage.



Figure 10 PAS being trained by Danny in the black art of Plane-Tabling



Figure 11 Surveying in the Kilrubic Landscape

Next on the list.....to attract new members!

3.2 Recruitment and the Agricultural Show

That opportunity arose on 14th August 2010 with the Peeblesshire Agricultural Show. There has always been a good rapport between the Archaeological Society and the local farming community, and the Agricultural Show attracts a broad range of visitors.

We decided to showcase the work we had been doing on Kilrubie.

The Archaeological Society's distinctive edifice (Bob's gazebo) was called into action, to house our display and, very likely, protect us from the elements of a typical Peeblesshire monsoon summer. Oh us of little faith! The day was bright, the sun shone, and the crowds arrived, eager for archaeological edification and ice creams.

We set out the SRP plane table in front of our stall, pleased that there was no one from SRP around to check our levelling skills on the lumps and bumps of our undulating pitch. We assembled our alidade, tape and even a pencil (6H of course) and began to look marginally professional.

Next to be set up was our 8 - panelled stand.



Figure 12 Table, Tent and Stand set up for the Peeblesshire Agricultural Show

Up went our OS location map showing Kilrubie and also a satellite image of our farmstead site (both supplied by SRP). Blown up to A2 they looked quite smart. Next up were our plane table drawings, of both the site and of the turf buildings, a thing of beauty, the hachures inked in with patience, archaeological expletives, and a modicum of malt whisky by Joyce.

We followed this up with our historic maps - Roy 1747-1755 (no sign of Kilrubie), Armstrong 1775 (the first mention of Kilrubie), Ainslie 1821(still there), OS 1st edition 1859 (Kilrubie gone) telling part of the story of this landscape.

Then there were the photographs - of the landscape - the lazy beds, the march boundary, the rig and furrow. And photographs of people - including a training session at Kilrubie in snowy January, with Danny waxing eloquent over the joys of a plane table survey and the rest of us contemplating the icicles on our noses. And finally we included some details of our research to date - the Hearth Tax of 1694, the Horse Tax of 1798, the 1841 census, and some notes on the possible derivation of the name "Kilrubie", including the rather prosaic "cell of the red - tonsured priest".

Then there were our finds -including part of an engraved shoe buckle, dating to the latter part of the 18th century.

For the interested visitor there was a flyer, telling the story of Kilrubie and setting out our contact details and Programme for next year.

Did we recruit any new members? As of the time of writing it's too early to tell. What we can say is that we created an interesting story which attracted a good deal of attention, brought people in to look, to ask questions and in turn to tell their stories.