

scene, the ultimate conclusion must remain that the actual creator of the "Stewart Despotism in Scotland" was in the final instance James VI himself who saw what his Chancellor failed to observe, that if all was not to be lost, the Church, as well as the nobility, must be bridled rather than conciliated.

IAN B. COWAN

Pitcastle, a Cruck-Framed House in Northern Perthshire

This building seems worth placing on record because it differs in one important respect from other examples of cruck-framed houses that have so far been noted in Scotland (cf. published material cited in Dunbar 1959). Moreover, the house is now uninhabited and is falling into decay, so that many of its more notable structural features seem likely to disappear within the next few years. The chief interest of the building, which is probably of seventeenth-century date (*infra*), lies in the fact that it was evidently erected as the residence of a small laird and therefore stands in a class apart from other cruck-framed buildings in Scotland, the surviving examples of which are invariably no more than cottages, small farms or outbuildings.

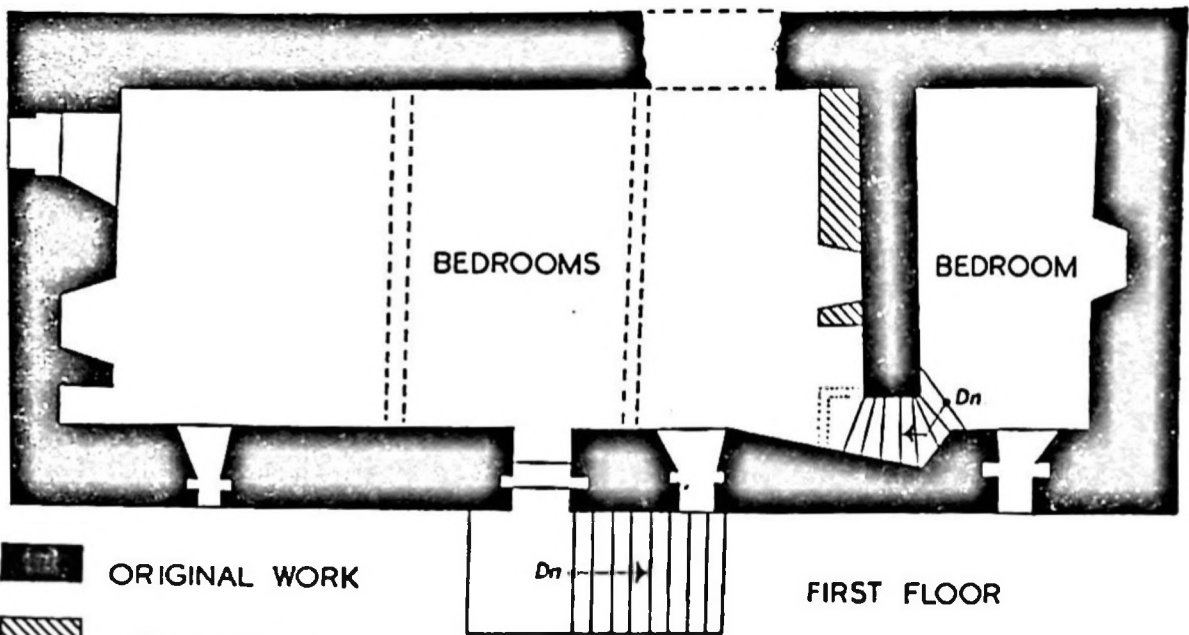
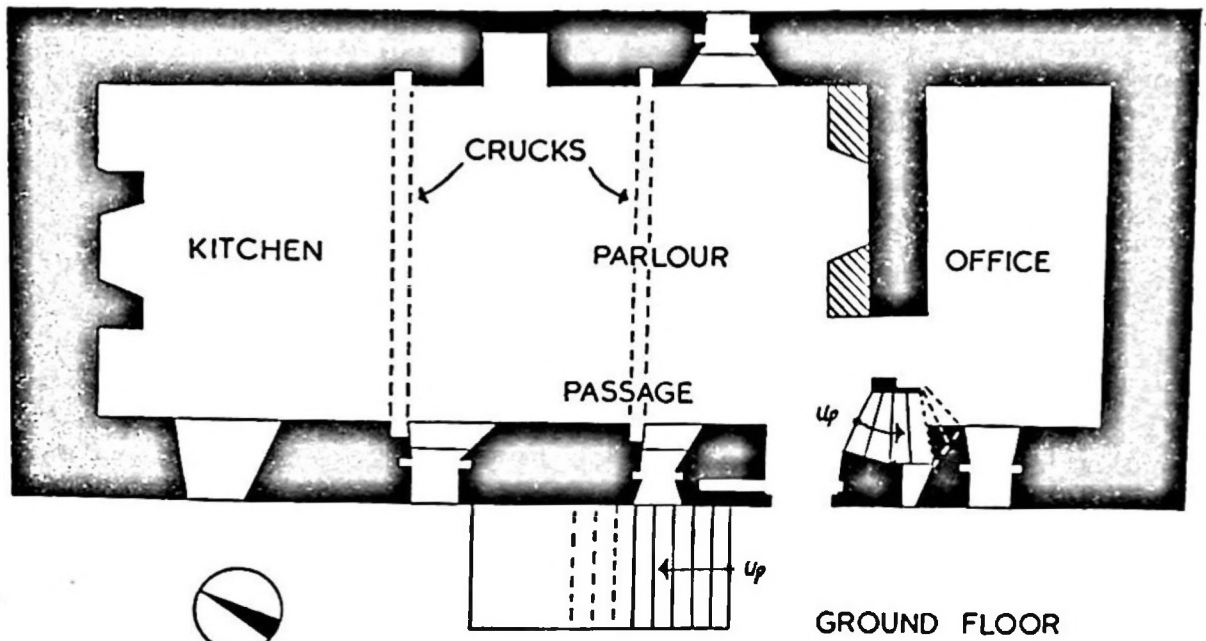
The "old laird's house", as it is sometimes called, now roofless and derelict, stands behind the farmhouse of Pitcastle about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles S.E. of Pitlochry (NN/973554). It runs roughly north and south and measures about 53 feet by about 23 feet 9 inches over walls that vary in thickness from 3 feet 6 inches to 4 feet 1 inch, and rise to a height of two storeys. The masonry is of rubble, set in mud mortar, and the roof was thatched. The original windows were evidently unglazed and consisted of heavy, slatted, wooden frames, which were bonded into the masonry of the jambs; only one frame now remains *in situ*, the remainder being represented by socket holes only. The existing example (Pl. VII, fig. 2) has a daylight of 1 foot 5 inches by 11 inches and was originally provided with three vertical slats; subsequently it appears to have been adapted for glazing. The house has been open to the weather for some years and many of its internal fittings and minor structural features have already disappeared. In compiling the present account therefore, free use has been made of an earlier description of the building which was written by the late J. H. Dixon,

F.S.A. SCOT. (1925:143-5), more than thirty years ago, when the house was more or less intact.

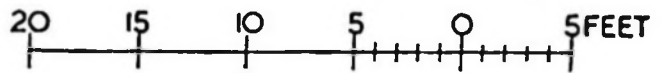
The main entrance-doorway, which is in the west wall, has chamfered arrises, and behind the checks there is a socket for a sliding draw-bar; the door itself was nail-studded and was provided with a triangular peep-hole. The doorway gives access to the larger of the two main divisions that comprise the ground floor (Pl. VII, fig. 1). This apartment, which occupies the north part of the house, was latterly subdivided by timber partitions to form a kitchen and a parlour. Both rooms were reached from a passage running along the west wall, and the partition between the kitchen and the parlour is said to have been decorated with a "painted arcade" (Dixon 1925:144). The northernmost room, which was the kitchen, has a large fireplace with a wooden lintel in the gable wall, and on either side of the fireplace there is a cupboard. The parlour has a large fireplace in the south wall and a deep cupboard in the east wall. The parlour fireplace, however, is plainly an insertion and this suggests that the subdivision just described is secondary, and that in the original arrangement the north division of the house contained a single large room only, serving both as kitchen and parlour. The south division of the house, which is separated from the remaining portion by a substantial stone partition, contains a small apartment having a single window but no fireplace. This room is said to have been the laird's office or private study.

The plan of the first floor (see p. 115) follows that of the ground floor. A forestair against the west wall rises to an entrance doorway which gives access to the north division of the house. At one time this has evidently contained two rooms for there are fireplaces both in the north and in the south walls; but, as on the floor below, the fireplace in the south wall is an insertion, and it seems likely therefore that in the original arrangement there was a single large apartment only, forming a common sleeping room. There is no communication between the two divisions of the building at this level, and the small room that occupies the south end of the house is reached by a stone stair opening off the south jamb of the main entrance-doorway. This apartment, which enjoyed considerably privacy, was presumably the laird's own bedroom; there is a fireplace in the gable wall.

It is difficult to estimate the age of the building, but the chamfered arrises of the jambs of the main entrance-doorway

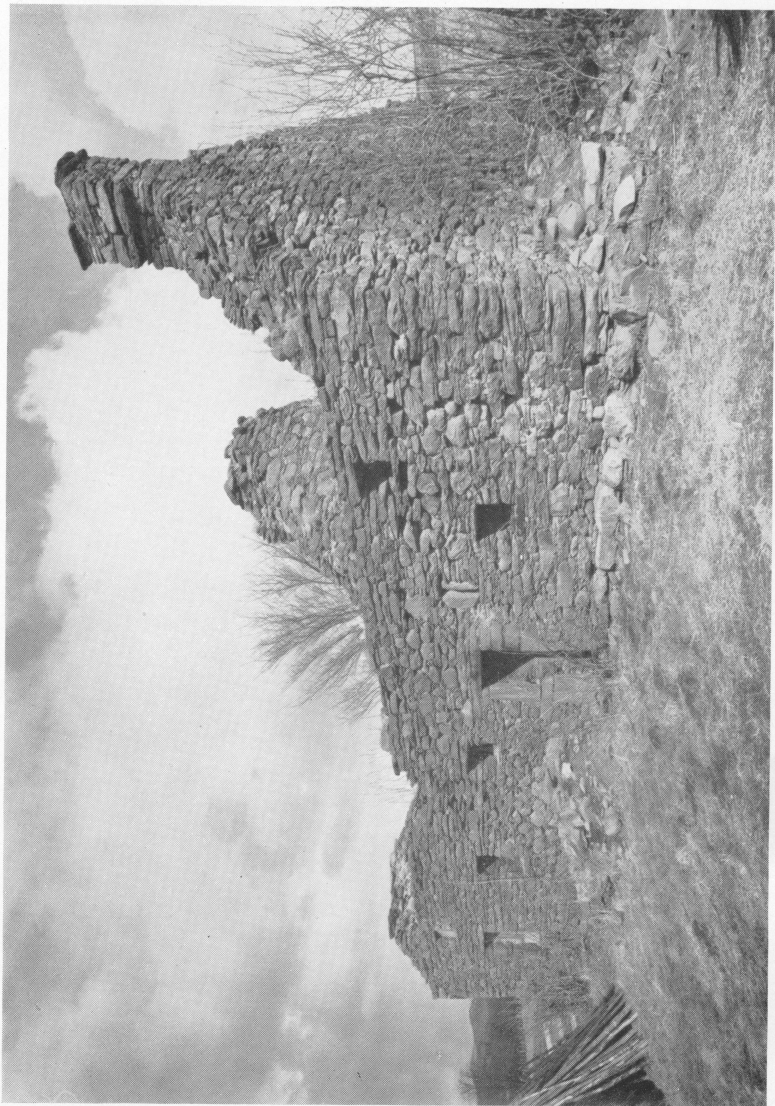


PITCASTLE



Pitcastle, Perthshire: plan of ground and first floors.
 Note wall-slots for the timber framework of the house, which comprised two pairs of cruck trusses.

PLATE VI



Pitcastle, Perthshire: from the south. The cruck-framed residence of a small laird.
(For this, and Plate VII, see pp. 13-16).



FIG. 1—Pitcastle, Perthshire: the interior.

Note vertical slot for wooden cruck-blade (left), parlour fireplace (lower centre), doorway to the laird's office, and corner stair. Entrance on right.

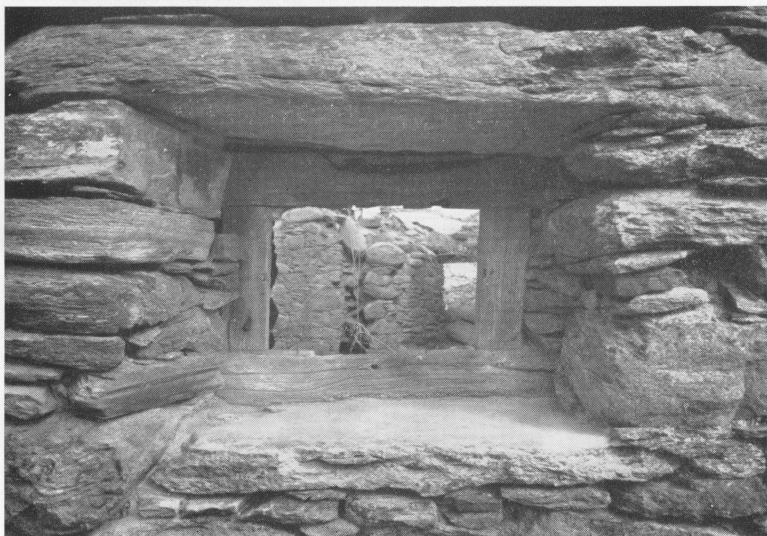


FIG. 2—Pitcastle, Perthshire: detail of window.

Note (inside) the vertical slot for one of the cruck-blades of the timber framework of the house.

are typical of the seventeenth century, and all the other features noted above are consistent with a date in this period. The lands of Pitcastle were at this time in the possession of the Robertsons of Tenantry (cf. Robertson 1860:64-5), who held them of the Earls of Atholl, but it is uncertain who was responsible for the erection of the "old laird's house".

The north division of the house originally incorporated two pairs of cruck trusses, the northernmost pair at one time framing the partition that separated the kitchen from the parlour. Only a fragment of one blade now remains *in situ*, the position of the other trusses being marked by slots in the walls. The remaining blade is rectangular in section measuring about 10 inches by 8 inches at base; it rises vertically from just above ground level to a height of 6 feet, that is to say to about first-floor level, at which point it begins to curve inwards. The upper portion of the blade is missing and consequently it is impossible to determine either the manner in which the crucks met at the ridge or the disposition of tie-beams and collars. The remaining truss shows no traces of peg-holes such as would suggest that an upper member had been scarfed to it (cf. the examples quoted by Walton 1957:155-62), but so much of the blade is missing that it is impossible to be certain on this point. The ridge appears to have been set at a height of about 18 feet above ground level.

By virtue of the fact that it bears the whole weight of the roof, the cruck framework is particularly suitable for use in buildings the walls of which are made of flimsy materials such as sods or wattle and daub. No doubt structures of this sort were once common in Scotland, but few remain to-day, and Pitcastle is again of interest because it demonstrates in an extreme form a characteristic common to the great majority of cruck-framed buildings that now exist in Scotland, namely the incorporation of a timber framework within stone walls. Local building traditions must surely have been very strong if they could cause the builders of Pitcastle to select and fashion crucks, only to set them within substantial stone walls that were perfectly capable of bearing the weight of a normal coupled roof.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks are due to Mr. J. R. Wallace who assisted in the survey of the building. The photographs, which are the work of Mr. G. Quick, are produced by permission of the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments (Scotland).

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JOHN DUNBAR

Tools for Making Ropes

While studying salmon net fishing on the River Tweed in 1958 I was shown portable tools for rope making. The gear, referred to as "the teels" [tilz], was stowed in the net-loft of a shiel belonging to the Berwick Salmon Fisheries Company. Mr. Tom Elliott, foreman at Low Bells Shiel, and his crew kindly demonstrated the use of the teels: I wish to thank them, and the Directors of the Company, for very generous help throughout my investigations.

The teels are designed for the manufacture of three-stranded rope, which used to be made from old and unserviceable fishing nets. Two processes are involved: firstly, twisting the three strands; secondly, laying them into the completed rope.

The first teal (Fig. 1) consists of a cogged iron wheel, rotated by a cranked handle, and geared to three smaller wheels each of which turns a hook. This specimen had lost its wooden framework, in which it should stand about 3 feet 6 inches high.

About one yard of net is gathered onto each hook of the teal. Three men then take the lengths of net and walk them backwards, holding them well off the ground, until they are drawn taut. The teal is then rotated in order to twist these lines into strands (Pl. VIII, fig. 1). When the strands have been twisted they are then all attached to the second teal. This (Fig. 2) is similar to the first except that there is only one small wheel and hook. The framework of the second teal is mounted on wheels and should have a footboard projecting at the back: it had broken off this specimen.

The next part of the operation is to lay the rope against the lay of the strands by rotating the second teal. A wooden "tap" [tap] is used to impart a smooth twist and even tension during this process: for description of another device used for

this purpose see Fenton (1959:104), and (1959:105) where his informant mentions another type more akin to that at present under discussion.

The tap is a truncated conical wedge: this specimen ranges in diameter from 3 inches to 6 inches, is $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, and is fitted with a transverse handle $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. It has three equidistant grooves cut down the sides to take the strands of

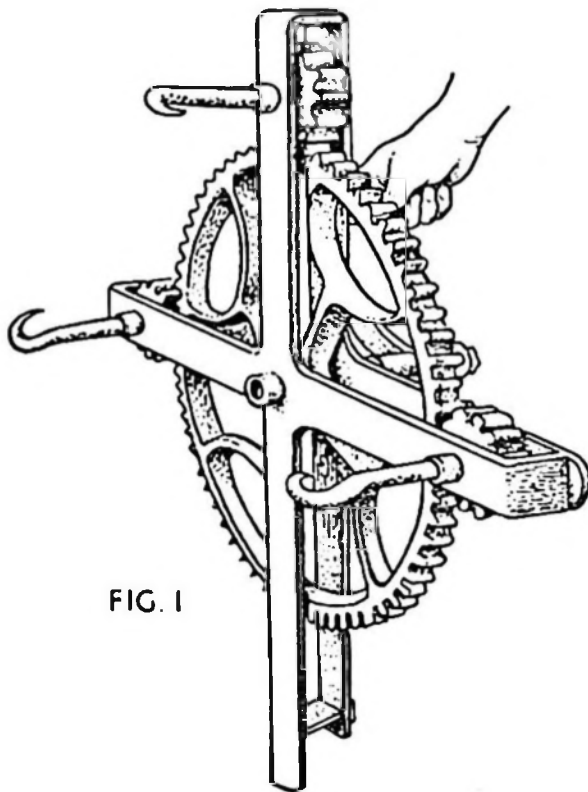


FIG. 1

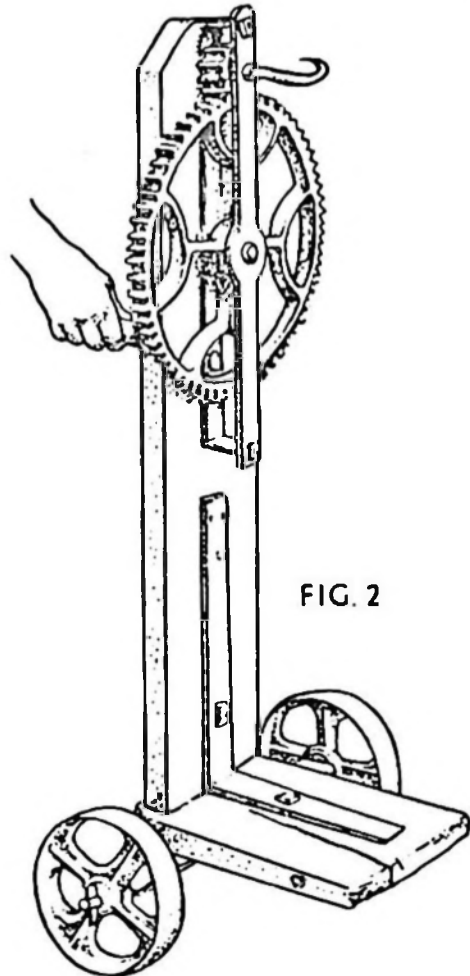


FIG. 2

rope, and is inserted between the strands with its narrower end as close as possible to the second teel. As this teel is rotated the tap is moved along towards the first teel, paying out the three-stranded rope behind it. During this process the second teel, with its operator standing on the footboard, travels towards the first teel to allow for the loss of length through twisting. When the tap is up against the first teel it is removed, the ends of the completed rope are whipped, and the rope is cut from the teels (see Pl. VIII, fig. 2).

The quality of rope made by this process is not, of course, very good, and the life of the rope (which depends on the state of the condemned nets) is short in comparison with the manilla

PLATE VIII



FIG. 1—Twisting the strands (see p. 117).



FIG. 2—Moving the tap towards the first teel, as the rope is laid (see p. 118).

lines used to-day. In the conditions prevailing before the First World War, however, it was economically worthwhile making bolt-ropes for the nets in this way. A proverbial sense of thrift was also doubtless satisfied. Mr. Elliott last made ropes from old nets in 1913.

The word "teels" is not reported with this meaning in any dictionary or glossary known to me. This long-vowel form appears to be the local pronunciation of "tools" among the sea-fishermen along the coast north and south of the mouth of the Tweed. The word has been given a specialised meaning by the river-fishermen who apply it to their rope-making gear.

I should be interested to learn of any other examples of this (or similar) portable rope-making apparatus elsewhere in Great Britain, and particularly what the apparatus is called. Scottish sources known to me afford no intermediate technical stages between the thraw cruik or wimble and the heavy machinery in permanent rope-walks. Photographs of a heavy jack, resembling the second teal but having four hooks, and of "tops", from the Rope and Twine Manufactory at Wribbenhall in Worcestershire, are to be found in Jobson (1953:160), a source to which my attention has been drawn by Mr. B. R. S. Megaw.

The Heibergske Samlinger contain two portable Norwegian tools, both constructed of wood, which Konservator Svein L. Vold was kind enough to show me: one is a wooden-cogged tool similar in type to the second Tweedside teal; in the other Norwegian tool the main wheel is formed as a pulley and drives four small bobbins, each bearing a hook, by means of a loop of cord. Examples of similar tools from Sweden and Denmark are illustrated in Sayce (1939: Pl. XXIX, fig. a, and Pl. XXV, fig. c).

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ILLUSTRATIONS

Photographs: S. F. Sanderson, 1958.

STEWART F. SANDERSON

A Symposium on Material Culture Research, 1959

An informal meeting of people professionally engaged in research on the Material Culture of the British Isles was held at the School of Scottish Studies, 9th-12th September 1959. The Symposium was attended by the research staff of the School and some of their colleagues, including members of the Department of Prehistoric Archæology and of the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland, as well as by the following representatives: From *England*: Mr. Andrew Jewell and Mr. J. G. Jenkins (University of Reading Museum of English Rural Life); from *Ireland*: Mr. A. T. Lucas (National Museum of Ireland), Mr. Kevin Danaher (Irish Folklore Commission), Professor Estyn Evans (Committee on Ulster Folklife and Traditions), and Mr. George B. Thompson (Ulster Folk Museum); from the *Isle of Man*: Mr. A. M. Cubbon (Manx Museum); from *Wales*: Dr. Iorwerth Peate and Mr. Vincent Phillips (Welsh Folk Museum).

Discussions, which principally concerned academic aspects of Material Culture studies in the British Isles, with emphasis on scope and methods of research, began with a review by Dr. Peate of "The Problems of Folklife Research" followed by Mr. Jenkins on "Fieldwork and Documentation". The relationship to Folklife Research of Archæology and Agricultural History were discussed by Mr. Charles Thomas and Mr. Jewell respectively; while Mr. Stuart Maxwell considered "The Museum's part in Folklife Studies". The work of the School of Scottish Studies and its Material Culture section was reviewed by the Director, Mr. Megaw, and Dr. Whitaker respectively, and at the conclusion of the meeting some of the results of two local surveys recently undertaken by the School were described—St. Kilda, by Dr. Whitaker, and Smearisary (Moidart), by Mr. Megaw and Mr. Maclean.

Many important points were raised in the course of subsequent discussions, in which the principal speakers were Mr. Lucas, Mr. Danaher, Professor Evans, Mr. Thompson and Dr. Peate himself. This was probably the first meeting of the kind to be held in the British Isles, and there was general agreement that it had not only served a useful purpose, but that it should, if possible, be followed by others.

EDITOR