

# Remembering the Strathpeffer Area:

## 4. Achterneed and Blairninich



During 2015 people gathered at Strathpeffer Community Centre and Achterneed Hall to remember the physical remains of the Strathpeffer area – Jamestown, the Heights, Strathpeffer, Achterneed and Blairninich – focussing on buildings, sites, or monuments which were new, modified or no longer there. They built on previous sessions which had begun to look at Strathpeffer. Using old maps, photographs (some more than a century old), various printed sources, and memories spanning over 80 years, information about over 350 sites was gathered. Some pupils from the school joined us as well for Strathpeffer sessions, as part of their project investigating World War II.

This report summarises the results of the meetings focussing on Achterneed Village and Blairninich. The details have also been forwarded to heritage databases: the Highland Council Historic Environment Record (HER) ([her.hIGHLAND.gov.uk](http://her.hIGHLAND.gov.uk)) and Historic Environment Scotland's Canmore ([canmore.org.uk](http://canmore.org.uk)) where they will provide valuable new information about the heritage of the area.

The 2015 sessions were part of a project organised by ARCH and Strathpeffer Community Centre, and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Mackenzie New York Villa Trust. Funding for the smaller projects in previous years was provided by Generations Working Together and High Life Highland. Thanks also to the Highland Museum of Childhood for allowing us to see text panels from their 2009 'Hands Across the Sea' exhibition. But most of all thanks to everyone who has shared their memories and photographs, often braving difficult weather.

Any additions or corrections should be sent to ARCH at [info@archhighland.org.uk](mailto:info@archhighland.org.uk) or The Goods Shed, The Old Station, Strathpeffer, IV14 9DH. This version: December 2015.



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## Achterneed and Blairninich

Achterneed is Castle Leod's home farm. The placename is quite old, from at least the 15<sup>th</sup> century. On the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps it is spelt Auchterneed.

Blairninich stretches from the road leading to the Heights along to the mill at Millnain. It includes the site of the parish church, though perhaps not the original one which may be on the hill near the present cemetery at Fodderty. The school was also situated there, near the old church, and served for children on the Heights and from Strathpeffer. The presence of the school and church here shows how the importance of Strathpeffer was later, and this area was the heart of the parish of Fodderty. Blairninich also included some of the industrial sites of Castle Leod, including a sawmill and smithy.






2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS map, surveyed 1904. Base map ©National Library of Scotland






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## ACHTERNEED AND BLAIRNINICH





ARCH No.	Name	Where ?		Condition	Description	HER and Canmore numbers	Name of contributors
383	Achterneed Farm and Mill	NH 48934 59501	 	Surviving, though much of the steading is in very poor condition	This is the farm for Castle Leod, with a farmhouse (NH 48948 59473), large steading (NH 48934 59501) and a row possibly of originally cottages, but now a steading (NH 48921 59475). The large steading had a water wheel, fed from the Achterneed Burn, with a small mill dam at NH 48890 59587 depicted with its sluice on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. From the dam an aqueduct is labelled on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS map leading to the steading. The outflow was channelled southwest to the Peffery Burn. On the 1 <sup>st</sup> edition OS map the steading is U-shaped, but it had been filled in by the time of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS map. The wheel pit still survives. The current front of the farmhouse is reputed to be over 350 years old, with the rear even older. In the <i>Manual of Strathpeffer Spa</i> published by the Ross-shire Journal (18 <sup>th</sup> edition, probably dating 1909/1910), Mrs Forbes at Achterneed House let out 4 bedrooms and 2 parlours. She lived in the newer part. The mill pond has been filled in.		Kenny Stewart, Neil MacDonald, John and Valerie MacGregor
250	Farm cottage	NH 48849 59486		Surviving with additions	To the west of the Achterneed burn and Achterneed Farm three buildings are depicted on the 1 <sup>st</sup> edition map. On the 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition, the middle one has gone and the southern one has altered, but a new building appears to the west. There is also a pump labelled. This is where Roddy Munro had a dairy, and delivered milk to Strathpeffer in his horse and cart. Only the western building still survives.		John & Valerie MacGregor





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386	Wellington Villa, Achterneed	NH 48960 59519		Surviving	The L-shaped house is depicted on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. In the <i>Manual of Strathpeffer Spa</i> published by the Ross-shire Journal (18 <sup>th</sup> edition, probably dating 1909/1910), Miss Macrae advertised rooms for visitors to the Spa. Mrs Macrae lived there within memory; she was in charge of the Red Cross. When Margaret Newton (Dr. Paddy MacDonald) was a girl in the 1920s/1930s, she was sent from the Heights to get vegetables from there.		Kenny Stewart, Fiona Newton
385	Achterneed Farm Cottage	NH 48923 59538		Surviving	A building with two semi-detached cottages is depicted here on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. It is now one. The Rosses lived there.		Neil MacDonald
384	Glenlia, Achterneed	NH 48914 59562		New house on site	A cottage appears here on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. It is remembered with thatched roof and in a derelict state. Philip Bannerman built a new house on the estate.		Kenny Stewart
387	Lilac Cottage, Achterneed	NH 48943 59561		Surviving	A cottage appears here on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. Jackie Mellis and his wife Dorothy Bruce stayed here. He was the postie and she was the telephonist in Strathpeffer. The building has a date plaque on the west face, with 1830 and initials, D. M or D. MP.		Fiona Newton
388	Morven, Achterneed	NH 48925 59598		Surviving	A cottage appears here on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. The Roxburgh family has lived there for some time. An extension at the back (east end) was originally made from sleepers, but has been taken down and a new extension added. A previous owner was said to have been the stationmaster. A feu document shows that in 1906 the house was occupied by John Corbett, Mason. The house although not overly large was fitted with bells in all rooms, perhaps indicating that it was let out to spa visitors.		Avril MacPhee, Sandy Ross, Neil MacDonald, Norman Roxburgh


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251	Wooden house behind Morven, Achterneed	NH 48966 59599		Surviving	To the east side of Morven is a wooden house. A local story is that the builder of Morven constructed it to live in while he built Morven, but he fell when building Morven, broke his back, and never lived there. The porch has railway sleepers inside. Willie Robertson stayed there.		Neil MacDonald, Sandy Ross
389	New Rose Cottage, Achterneed	NH 48925 59612		New house on site	A cottage appears here on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. A shoemaker named Mr MacPherson stayed here.		Kenny Stewart
390	Fern Cottage, Achterneed	NH 48924 59626		Surviving, with additions	A cottage appears here on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. The Gabriels lived here.		
391	Gabriel's Corner, Achterneed	NH 48919 59557		Surviving	The curve of the road leading up to the Heights was known to some as Gabriel's corner, because the Gabriels lived in Fern Cottage. It was also known as Achterneed or Kent's corner.		Betty Mackenzie, Neil MacDonald
392	Rowan Cottage	NH 48821 59714		Surviving	A cottage appears here on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps, with a well depicted to the north on the 1 <sup>st</sup> edition map. Nell (Helen) Mackenzie lived here.		
393	Sunnybrae, Achterneed	NH 48858 59653		Surviving	A cottage appears here on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. A tin house was moved here from Nutwood in Strathpeffer, and became known as Sunnybrae. The building survives, but the tin has been rendered. Johnny the Gaelic singer lived here. He also had a mobile cinema van.		Sandy Ross, Neil MacDonald, Valerie MacGregor
394	House - Tin Houses, Achterneed	NH 48866 59631		New house on site	A cottage appears here on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. A tin house was in front of the current house on the site (called Newholme). It was a semi detached house, with one side called Birch and the other Burnside.	HER: MHG5627 8	Valerie MacGregor
395	Building, Achterneed	NH 48875 59618		Gone	A small cottage appears here on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps, north of the dam. It no longer survives.		



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396	Cairn Cottage, Achterneed	NH 49094 59622		Surviving	An L-shaped house is depicted on the 1 <sup>st</sup> edition OS map, but only the part running east-west is roofed. On the 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition map only the east-west oriented building is shown. The MacClyments lived there.		Jessie MacDonald
363	Woolston Cottage	NH 49327 59054		Surviving	On the 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition map this site is marked as a gravel pit. The cottage belonged to the nearby garage, now demolished, owned by the Campbells.		
228	Woolston Garage and Bicycle Shop	NH 49345 59060		Gone; new house on site	Andrew Campbell in Blairninich made bicycles in Bathgate before coming to the area in the 1920s. He sold bicycles and did repairs from his large premises in Blairninich in the 1920s and 1930s, and knew a great deal about bicycles. He was known locally as Cahoochy (presumably after the rubber used to patch tyres). He also learned about electroplating, and people brought items to him to be electroplated. He also sold petrol here during and after the war. There was a fire in 1964 destroying much of the house. In the 1970s Mrs Campbell ran the shop on her own, and sold sweets and chocolate. The garage / shop was called Woolston Garage.		Duncan Finlayson, Jennifer Haslam, Betty Ramsay, Fiona Newton, Kitty Campbell Neil MacDonald, Jock Watt, Sandy Ross
364	YARD	NH 49361 59064		Surviving	The yard beside Cahoochie's garage had a number of large traction engines. It was also used by the County Council.		Kenny Stewart
229	Smiddy	NH 49346 59070		Converted to house	A smiddy is depicted on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. It was owned by Alan MacDonald (Alan the Blacksmith) after the war. Horses from all round, including from the Heights, were brought there. Douglas Murray converted it to a house.		Betty Ramsay, Jennifer Haslam, Sandy Ross, Neil MacDonald
365	Woodburn	NH 49446 59104		Surviving	This house is depicted on the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition maps. It is thought to have belonged to the County Council after the war. Dan Bruce, who managed the Ravens Rock quarry, lived there.		Neil MacDonald, Sandy Ross

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366	Foresters Cottage	NH 49461 59161		Surviving	A house with two extensions to the east is depicted on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps near the sawmill. The green to the west of the cottage was used as a nursery.		Margaret Stewart
367	Saw mill, Blairninich	NH 49468 59206		Gone, new buildings on the site	This is not on the 1 <sup>st</sup> edition map, but there on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition. Before the war there were around 20 odd people working out of the saw mill. It was in operation until around the 1970s. There was a separate shed with mica, and a big tank with a fire underneath for creosote. The saw mill was also said to have housed a wood-fired electricity generator in the past, when demand outstripped the capacity for the hydro scheme in Glenskiach. It is said to have powered Seaforth House.		Kenny Stewart, Margaret Stewart
339	Drill Hall, Blairninich			Gone	There was a drill hall in Blairninich, either at the sawmill or the last house in the row of buildings going towards Dingwall, on the south side. It is not marked on the 1 <sup>st</sup> or 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps.		Kenny Stewart
368	Hillview, Blairninich	NH 49543 59157		Surviving	A house does not appear on the 1 <sup>st</sup> edition OS map, but is on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition map. Within memory Mr. D Mackenzie lived there. He was a taxi driver, and the garage behind the house was used for this taxi. He always dressed as a chauffeur.		Neil MacDonald, Margaret Stewart
369	Cottage, Blairninich	NH 49568 59172		Surviving	On the 1 <sup>st</sup> edition OS map this row of cottages is divided into four units, with an additional small one at the eastern end. On the 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition map, there are only four units. Various people are remembered who lived here, including Bobby Paterson after the war, and Fay Manson at the Dingwall end. Currently there are three cottages, with extensions to the rear.		Neil MacDonald
370	Beechwood (Old Manse)	NH 4940 5950		Surviving	According to the Listed Building Report, the house was built in 1794, with additions in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century. It was formerly a Church of Scotland manse, successor to Fodderty Lodge.	HER: MHG16154 Canmore: 12454	

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371	Inchvannie House	NH 4976 5954		Surviving	According to the Listed Building report, this dates to the early 19 <sup>th</sup> century. After the war Lady Gough lived there, and it is currently owned by her son, Viscount Gough. Before the Goughs were there, Tom Mackenzie stayed in the house.	HER: MHG1661 4 Canmore: 111275	Sandy Ross
372	Inchvannie Steading	NH 4983 5955		Surviving	On the 1 <sup>st</sup> edition OS map, the steading is E-shaped, with the long side running east-west, and a threshing circle behind. A separate small building is to the east. On the 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS map, the steading is completely enclosed, with additions to the north. It is a two storey building with internal stairs.	HER: MHG2126 5 Canmore: 106976	Fiona Newton
397	Inchvannie Farm Cottages	NH 50000 59621		Surviving	Farm cottages to the northeast of Inchvannie steading are depicted on both the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. They had narrow, steep internal stairs to the first floor rooms. A number of people have stayed here over the years. By the 1960s it was no longer used for farm workers, but let out.		Fiona Newton, Sandy Ross
373	Kilvannie Manor	NH 4996 5935	 	Surviving	The red sandstone building was formerly the church. According to the Strathpeffer and Fodderty church website ( <a href="http://www.strathpefferchurchofscotland.org">http://www.strathpefferchurchofscotland.org</a> ) the church was built in 1807. It briefly was used as a school while a new school was built which opened in 1875 (information from School logbooks). In 1902, the church moved to Strathpeffer, where the village was expanding rapidly due to the Spa development. The church was then used as a dwelling house, from around 1904. It was used as a hotel in the 1970s, run by the Simpsons and Mrs Hamilton, and then in 1990s let as flats. It is now (2015) a single dwelling house. There is said to be a ghost there. The bell tower was taken off at some point and lies in the garden. Two standing stones are on either side of the building.	HER: MHG3352 2	Sandy Ross, Fiona Newton, Neil MacDonald




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374	Fodderty School	NH 50192 59369		Surviving	The school opened in 1875, after building works forced the pupils to be taught in the church while work was undertaken. It expanded in its first three decades. The school log books mention trenches there during WWII, and a brick-built semi-underground air raid shelter is also remembered. The windows were all taped during WWII. The school closed in 2001, when a new school in Strathpeffer opened merging Fodderty and Contin primary schools.		Fiona Newton, Sandy Ross
375	Steading, Blairninich	NH 50003 59225		Surviving	A long building situated to the south of the old church on the south side of the road has been unused for as long as people can remember. Neil MacDonald heard it called the Coach House. On the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps it was divided into three units.		Neil MacDonald
376	The Old Inn	NH 49950 59295		Surviving	A rectangular building on the south side of the road across from the church appears on the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. Currently it is divided into two dwellings. A local story is that the inn sold drink from the window on the east side.		Sandy Ross
377	Inchvannie Cottage	NH 49865 59312		Surviving	An L-shaped cottage at the junction of the road and the land leading to Inchvannie House is depicted on the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. The Guss or Gess family who were at Newton Villa in Strathpeffer (no. 202) stayed here, and later Philip Bannerman did it up and extended it.		Avril MacPhee
378	Keppoch Cottages	NH 50433 59367		Surviving	A row of three detached cottages is shown on the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition OS maps. They are still there, but with extensions to the north on each. Millers who worked at the Millnain mill stayed there, as did Sandy Ross later in the most easterly cottage.		Sandy Ross, Kenny Stewart
379	Millnain House and Steading	NH 50371 59239		Surviving	The 1 <sup>st</sup> edition map shows two buildings to the west of the mill, but they have both been substantially rebuilt by the time of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition map, with the barn almost square-shaped. Davy Macintosh lived here.		Kenny Stewart, Neil MacDonald

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380	Millnain Mill	NH 5041 5927		Surviving	According to the Listed Building record, the mill dates to c. 1830. It was a meal mill, used by many locally including Neil MacDonald's father. Much of the original structure remains, though it has been renovated. It was a tea room for a while but it is now a private home.	HER: MHG9040 Canmore 12811	
381	Millnain dam	NH 50375 59170		Gone	The mill pond used by Millnain Mill was lined with clay. It was fed by a lade which ran quite some distance, taken from the Peffery River to the southwest at NH 49463 58733. Sandy Ross remembers black swans on the pond. The pond became silted up, and houses have been built on the site.		Kenny Stewart, Sandy Ross
382	Gravel pit, Millnain	Centre d on NH 50610 59212			A gravel pit is depicted on the 1 <sup>st</sup> edition 25 inch to a mile map. It is labelled Old Gravel Pit on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition map, and is much larger, stretching from NH 50520 59176 to NH 50690 59260. The Ross-shire pistol club now uses this area.		Sandy Ross
244	War Memorial	NH 5124 5938		Surviving	The War Memorial was one of the last to be built. The first plan was to put it in the square in Strathpeffer. Then there was a plan to put it on Knockfarrel. A stone base was put there with a wooden memorial which blew down. Then it was decided to put it in at Fodderty cemetery. A local committee used to look after it, with one representative from the Heights, one from Knockfarrel, one from Strathpeffer village and the Earl of Cromartie and the school master. A mason's firm from Aberdeen built it.	HER: MHG3914 8	Isabel MacMaster

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51	The Chalet, Knockfarrel	NH 50362 58382		Demolished; only iron foundation pieces survive	<p>This was a wooden building, encircled by a veranda, similar in character to The Shieling (MHG22633). In the 1920s/1930s Miss Camerons (sisters) ran it. They initiated the idea of teas at Knockfarrel, and then the enterprise was made a reality by the Cromartie Estate providing the chalet. It was very cleverly designed, where the shutters let down to form tables for outdoor teas. In busy times tables were also set out in the more level areas of the surrounding grassland. The Miss Camerons lived in one of the crofts lying immediately at the foot of Knockfarrel slope on the Loch Ussie side, carrying the necessary provisions and water up the slope. Duncan Finlayson remembers the delicious teas with home baking and, in season, strawberries and cream at 2/6 a time – a lot of money in those days. Some visitors to Strathpeffer regarded tea at the chalet as a ‘must’, though his family regarded it as a luxury.</p> <p>The chalet was in business until the mid 1950’s /1960s, when it was run by Flora MacDonald, who had a croft on the south side of Knockfarrel and also carried water up to The Chalet from a well on the croft each day. A number of photographs survive of the chalet (a particularly good one in Uncles 1998 p. 29). The chalet became very dilapidated and derelict, before it finally burnt down in the later 1960s (date not positive) - reputedly an act of arson by a group of boys seen running away from the scene. Remnants of the foundations can still be seen.</p>	HER: MHG5559 8	<p>Kitty Campbell; Jennifer Haslam Neil MacDonald Duncan Finlayson</p> <p>Other sources cited: Uncles, C.J. 1998 <i>Easter Ross and the Black Isle</i>. Ochiltree: Stenlake Publishing.</p>
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## Other Notes

- OS maps: 1<sup>st</sup> edition surveyed 1876, published 1881; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition surveyed 1904, published 1906
- It is generally believed that Dingwall was under water, and the sea washed up towards Millnain – but the date that it retreated is still not known for sure. Kenny Stewart notes that it is sand up to the burial ground, then to the west gravel, becoming larger as it gets further west.