

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March.

Arrived about 16:00. Checked plaster in bedroom of No. 2 cottage. All fully dried out and no signs of any damp patches anywhere! De-humidifier I'd left running overnight was full to the brim with water, but then I'd been expecting that. Did a couple of hour's work after tea, clearing tools etc. out of the living room and covering / sealing doorways. Took down the dry-lining on the back wall of the living room, cutting up the larger pieces of timber for the fire tonight and bundling up hundreds of laths again for kindlers. Again, rear wall in

pretty good condition. A bit more loose mortar and lots of holes in the stone-work that could be potential mouse gateways. They'll be getting filled. Doesn't take long to do a lot of demolition! Ceiling coming down tomorrow.

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> March.

Coffee time. Half the living room ceiling down and already half a trailer load of rubbish for the tip. Decided not to get another skip at £240. Beginning to wonder if I might regret that. Burned hundreds more laths and hundreds still to go. Saved a big bundle for kindlers but simply no room to store them all.



All weathers since 08:00 this morning. Miserable with torrential rain, 50+ mph winds, sunshine and thunder, wind easing a little now. We've been worried that we might just hear the proposed ventilation system fans running. However, with the background of the wind and the sea, I think there's little chance of that! Coffee breaks are a brief moment of calm away from the clouds of dust, but it's hard to get going again.





Coombes full again at the top of the front wall. Not the same on the back wall, presumably because the wind blows all the rubbish and sand in at the front. Encouragingly though, even with the dry-lining full of rubbish, it hadn't been bridging damp across from the wall to the old plaster. That suggests there isn't significant damp in the front wall. However, there is evidence of damp rising up the rafters from where they sit on top of the wall. Is that just because they sit surrounded by all the sand that has been blown in over the years and holds the moisture – which will be cleaned out as best we can before we put things back together. All ceiling down and dry-lining off the walls by lunchtime. Trailer loaded with all the plaster. Lunch, then into Stranraer to unload at the tip. Nice and sunny when got back – it wasn't thunder this morning, it was the bombing range! For a change, raked a bit of the blackened, dead moss out of the grass in the field. Put it all on the bonfire to smoulder away.

Insulated plasterboard all off the fireplace wall. No obvious damp, but just the whole wall a darker colour than the rest of the room. I think the problem was that the wall just couldn't breathe. One issue was that the builder had left all the temporary fixings in place – nails which were now all rusting, swelling and forcing the plaster off on top of each nail head. All loaded into the trailer and off to the tip again about 16:00 (Second load).

Bit of shopping. Back about 17:30. Put the tea on while I fitted a new latch to the gate into the field. Early finish today – got plenty done and very pleased with progress.



### Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March.

Brushed down the exposed stone walls to get rid of any loose mortar. 'Painted' with a breathable silicon surface sealer to stabilise the walls. Used this before; it's good stuff but not cheap. The ¾ tin I had in stock didn't go very far, so into Stranraer to get two more tins. Sunny morning, so hired a lawnmower while there, to get the field cut. Finished putting the sealer onto the walls on return and just managed to get the grass cut, finishing in the sleet showers.



Started taking down the living room / kitchen wall. The poor quality photo is actually the dust in the air! The door on the right is the old door into the kitchen. The scaffolding is in the hallway with the doorframe of the living room door just visible 'framing' the scaffolding.

Full load of bricks to the tip (Third load) about 16:00 and returned the lawnmower.

Back about 17:30 and finished taking down the living room / kitchen wall. Just the tank cupboard left standing. Finished about 18:30 and put the tea on while I had a long shower to try to wash away all the dust.



Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> March.



Clearing up the last of the living room / kitchen wall. All loaded into the trailer, but not quite a full load so started breaking up the concrete living room floor. Two swings with my sledgehammer and the shaft broke! Change of plan; into Stranraer to empty the trailer (Fourth load) and get a new sledgehammer. Paid a bit more for one with an 'unbreakable' fibreglass shaft. Have to think who I'll leave it to in my will!

Back for lunch then started on the floor. Not an easy job. Trailer full after about half the floor lifted, so off to the tip again (Fifth load).



Finished off the floor on return and another trailer load ready for the tip tomorrow. Glad that job's done. Just got to dig out about 5" of sub-floor now.

Something funny going on in the TV corner of the living room. Concrete very thin in that area, and when I hit it with the sledgehammer, it not only broke, but sank 2-3" as well. On removing the broken concrete, the sub-floor was noticeably wetter in that corner. Have to investigate what's going on there.



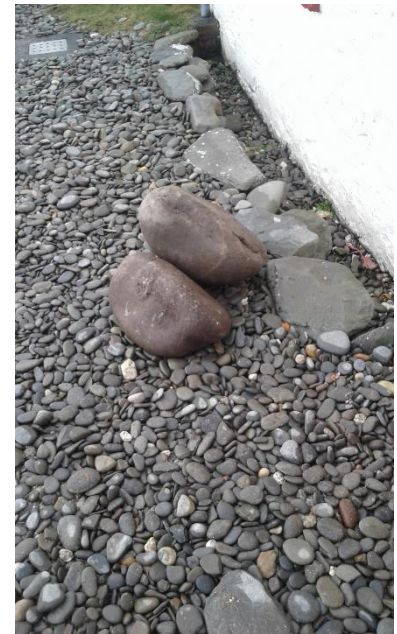
Sub-floor looks as if it is just sand and shingle from the beach. Hopefully that'll be fairly easy to dig out. Wondering if the external ground level is too high in that corner, causing the wetter area?

Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March.

Started 07:00, digging out about 5-6" for the new floor. Hmmm! Thought it would be an easier job, but no such luck. It turned out to be a thin screed of sand and shingle on top of all the 'waste' bits of rock from the stone that was used to build the walls I guess. Pick-axe to loosen it, then pick out all the larger stones by hand until you're left with something that can be shovelled. Put it all on the bank over the road where the storms of 2014 washed it away. Hope it will reinforce our sea defences a bit. Strictly, not allowed, but as I'm almost certainly putting back on the beach what came from the beach originally, and since it's all 'natural' material, I'll argue my case if anyone objects. Found the broken spout of a brown Victorian teapot, a small piece of broken clay pipe stem and lots of shells.



Also, several very large stones which were too big for me to move single-handed. I managed to roll two out of the door, but I think I'll wait for Iain's help to deal with the rest.



Riddled some of the sub-floor to produce some fine 'soil' to use as a soft layer immediately under the damp proof membrane. Stops it being punctured during the floor-laying process. Note the large stones!



All day job, finishing about 18:00. Just got one remaining trailer load of concrete to take to the tip tomorrow and that's the end of demolishing / clearing out!

Another strange thing with the floor, was that there seemed to be a thin 'black' layer, almost a 'line', which I initially thought might be soot, perhaps from the days of a simple earth floor? However, I think it more likely that it was the grass / vegetation that had simply been covered as the cottage was built. The start of the 'turning to coal' process?

Treated myself to a take-away from the Clansman for tea. Very nice.

Monday 18<sup>th</sup> March.

Final bit of demolition – removing the cupboard that used to house the hot water tank and the cold water storage tank above. Got it all down safely and the very last bit of lath and plaster off the wall behind. Sealed off all the pipework temporarily.



Used the laths to start a bonfire and all the rest of the cupboard went on the fire.

Concrete booked for 13:00 tomorrow.

Last bit of rubble added to the trailer load of concrete and off to the tip. Last load (Sixth load) of rubble to the tip!!

Back with sheets of insulation to go into the floor tomorrow. I get a very good discount with Jewson's now! I've certainly spent enough with them over the last month. Have to say, I find them very helpful, but then we've always found that with the locals here. Never found anything but a warm welcome for 'incomers'.

Mixed up some mortar to fill the numerous holes in the walls. Anything that could possibly constitute a mouse gateway is now blocked! Bricked up the kitchen window opening internally to the new sill height. Also sealed the new stonework externally with the breathable silicon surface waterproofer. Might try to get a first coat of paint on it if it's dry tomorrow.



Long past my bedtime, falling asleep in the chair. It is nearly 20:00! Did start at 07:00 and Iain will be here before 08:00 in the morning, so time for an early night.

#### Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March.

Woke at 05:00 after my early night. Up at 06:00 and started work at 07:00, clearing tools etc. out of the way ready for prepping the floor. Iain arrived just before 08:00. Final levelling of the floor, laying the dpc, 100mm of insulation and two temporary battens set either side of the fireplace to level to. When the new fireplace was put in, the builder put a new bit of properly insulated floor underneath the fire opening and hearth, so we had that to work to for levels. Finished all the floor prep by coffee time.

Measured up for the timber we'll need next time for the dry-lining and remaining stud wall. Put up a board on the new stud wall above the bedroom door so we could refix the electrics more permanently. Early lunch.





Just finishing at 13:00 when the concrete arrived. All off-loaded by 13:30 with one very full barrow load surplus. Floor laid and levelled off by 14:30. Very pleased with the floor – went down even better than the bedroom floor and I was really pleased with the finish of that.

Used the surplus concrete underneath the coal bunker in an attempt to stop the rabbits burrowing. Cleared off all the tools and had a coffee before Iain left about 15:30. An early finish for him for once.



Put a first coat of Weathershield paint on the new 'wall' under the kitchen sill. Cleared up and loaded the trailer with the spare door (very well wrapped with padding) and all sorts of rubbish for disposal at home. Finished about 18:00 for tea. Early night again.

### Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March.

Up early. Living room floor looks really good! Cleaning up No. 1 cottage. Set off for home about 08:30.

### Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April.

Arrived late last night having dropped Judith and friend off at Manchester Airport en-route to Krakow and a visit to Auschwitz. Living room floor looks excellent. Bit of clearing up after the concreting, then started taking out the hundreds of nails which held the laths to the ceiling joists. Typical Craginarget day, wet and windy. Full sun in Krakow! Finished de-nailing the living room by about 14:00, with numerous blisters to show for it. Started on the electrics for a change of job. The loft looked like spaghetti with all the additions and alterations there have been to the circuits over the years.

Impossible to try to sort out what goes where, so in the end just took out the entire existing ring main which fed the bedroom and living room, then I could start from scratch again. I'd already got the new bedroom sockets wired in with Katherine's help before we put the plasterboard up in the bedroom, so just the rest of the cottage with the exception of the kitchen to add on to the new ring tomorrow. Finished for tea about 18:30 – still raining and freezing cold!



## Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

All morning finishing off 'first-fixing' the bedroom and living room ring main. It's slow work single handed, up and down the ladder and crawling around on the ceiling joists to drop a wire down in the correct place. Then down the ladder again to fix the wire at the bottom. Back up to unroll the reel of cable to get to the next point to drop the wire down again, and so on. The new ring is going in neatly stapled into place in straight lines along either edge of the roof and then tacked to the top edge of ceiling joists where it needs to cross from front to back. Beginning to see a visible reduction in the spaghetti jungle.

Lovely afternoon, so decided to have a break and cut all the grass, the field and the verge opposite. Looking very smart, pity we won't be having any visitors yet to enjoy it! Rabbits didn't manage to dig under the coal bunker last night – have I defeated them at last? Somehow, I doubt it.

Sealed the new concrete floor with pva last thing so it can dry overnight.

## Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April. – was our late father's birthday.

Didn't even wake up until 08:30, so a bit of a late start this morning! Floor sealer dried out nicely, so should be a bit less dusty now.

New cable in for the immersion heater.

Took out all the old kitchen sockets and re-aligned the cooker cable. The cooker will be in more or less the same position, but the cable won't be hanging down from half-way up the wall. A bit more of the spaghetti gone.

Put the 'dwangs' which will provide secure fixings for the new wall cupboards, into the new kitchen stud wall at 2050mm off the floor. Time for lunch.

Re-wired for the new kitchen sockets, but realised I was going to run out of cable so off to Stranraer. There appears to be no electrical wholesaler in Stranraer any longer. Best suggestion was to order from a firm in Dumfries and they deliver twice a week to the Stranraer area! Tried everywhere I could think might be a chance with no success – I could get a 5m reel, I needed 50m. Just on the way back, tried Douglas Dairies on the off-chance and they have 'just started stocking it as there is now nowhere else in Stranraer that does'. Only had a 100m roll, but they were happy to measure off 50m for me even if it turned out to be a bit of a pantomime!

Got back about 15:30 and carried on with the kitchen ring. Finished that off – pleased to see another significant reduction in the spaghetti.

Re-routed the main earth wire which connects to the copper water pipes and hence discharges any earth leakage current safely into the ground in the event of a major fault in the wiring.

Put in a new separate circuit for the two hard-wired, interconnected smoke alarms. One in the bedroom and one in the living room. Didn't really want to install these, but if we're letting out the cottage I suspect hard-wired alarms are technically mandatory.

Just the new supply for the underfloor heating and the lighting circuit left to do tomorrow, plus a route for a cable from the MVHR (Ventilation unit) in the loft, to its control panel in the hallway. That will just be a length of binder twine at the moment, which will eventually be used to pull through the control cable. It's a special cable which is scheduled for delivery with the unit on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, the same day as the new kitchen is due for delivery. It's slow work and not much visible progress, but it all has to be done.

Another coat of paint on the 'new' kitchen wall externally, before finishing at about 19:00. Judith enjoying 18C in Krakow. Just crept up to 8C here! Today, they were visiting Auschwitz and Birkenau – quite sobering I should imagine.

## Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April.



May have defeated the rabbits! Two nights now without any significant burrowing around the coal bunker area. Maybe they've got the message at last. Early start at 07:00 this morning to tackle the lighting circuit. It resembles nothing more than a ball of string that's got completely tangled up. Sorted it all out by disconnecting it at certain points and un-crossing the wires, then reconnecting. Eventually got it all sorted out and all the lights working again. Ceiling roses and pull switches are all tacked in place on the ceiling joists, ready to be fixed in final positions once the ceilings are up and the walls are dry-lined.

Wired for the supply to the two heating mats, one in the bedroom and one in the living room/kitchen area. Each needs a switch fused spur (one of the little switches with a tell-tale light) lower down the wall, and a position for the Thermostat at a height of 1300mm off the floor.

A bit of spaghetti left with the lighting wires as they're deliberately flexible as to final locations at the moment, but all in all, a great improvement.



Did a bit of clearing up and covered all the tools etc. with old blankets prior to spraying the woodworm treatment. Mixed up 25lt of insecticide – it's not pleasant stuff so goggles, mask and gloves plus a boiler suit and straight into the shower afterwards.



Took nearly 3 hours to spray the whole roof, sarking (the boarding under the tiles), ceiling joists and rafters. Not a pleasant job! Hopefully, we'll have a few less woodworm around in the hatching season in the Autumn. Interestingly, they'd gone for the rafters and joists mainly. I'd have expected to find most in the sarking but actually very little there. Maybe too cold just under the tiles?

Wanted to load up the car a bit tonight, but it's a miserable wet evening so don't think I'll bother.

#### Friday 5<sup>th</sup> April.

07:00 start again. A lot of clearing up in the cottage again. Fortunately, by the time I started loading up the car it had stopped raining. Had to wait until after 09:00 to get a 13A plug from the hardware shop in Port William. Only one single socket working in the cottage now – the single socket alongside the old cooker switch – because that's on a completely separate circuit. Wired up a temporary double socket plugged into this single socket, so I could leave on the dehumidifier and oil-filled radiator for a few hours overnight.

The existing consumer unit has two spare spaces for additional RCDs. If I can get the necessary RCDs and fit them into the existing unit for the new underfloor heating and smoke alarm circuits, that will save us several hundreds of pounds getting a new consumer unit put in.



Took the final lath nails out of the three ceiling joists above the kitchen. That's the last of that job.

Set off for home late morning via John & Wendy's near New Abbey, and T3 Manchester Airport to pick up Judith and friend returning from Krakow.

#### Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> April:

Arrived about 12:30. Other nephew Andrew and his partner Donna here for the weekend with 2 of their boys – certainly picked the right weekend. Andrew and the boys out in the boat as I arrived. Came back with 4 mackerel which will go on the barbecue tonight!

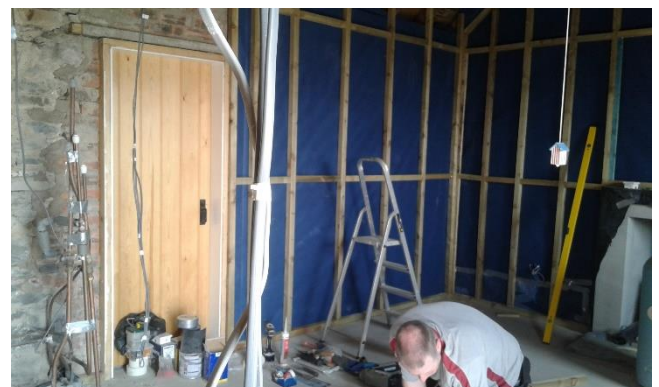
Cleared out the cottage ready for Iain coming tomorrow to do the rest of the dry-lining and stud walls. Put more noggins in the kitchen walls ready for fixing the units. Cut out a section of one ceiling joist to form a larger, more accessible loft hatch. Brought up a load of timber I had in store at home. Hope to fit in marking a new garden furniture store / bike shed either this visit or next. Also hope to put in an outside tap nearby at the back of the cottage for washing off mountain bikes. Cleared all the spare sheets of insulation and stacked them all in the trailer temporarily. Early night, Iain will be here before 08:00 in the morning.

#### Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> April:



Got started just before 08:00 when Iain arrived. Straight on with dry-lining. Front wall and fireplace wall done by lunchtime. The fireplace is wrapped in black plastic sheeting to protect it while the plastering is done. It'll have a bit more sheeting added before the plasterers start, to protect all the front – although I've never seen plasterers who make as little mess as these guys!

Back wall and kitchen back wall done in the afternoon. Measured up everything for positioning the kitchen stud walls and got it all marked out on the floor before breaking for tea. Phoned the plasterer. He's coming on 2<sup>nd</sup> May when I have to be here again for a meter change and to receive delivery of the MVHR unit.





Rest of kitchen stud walls done after tea with the open-plan 'flying wall' made up as a reinforced frame and then lifted into place before being fixed to the ceiling joists. Just a few odd bits and pieces to do tomorrow before we can start on the ceilings. Finished about 21:30 and had to clear up in the dark.



Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April:

Wide awake at 05:00. Stuck it out until 06:00 then got up. Discovered Iain hadn't slept at all so we were starting at 07:00. Finished off the bits and pieces before putting the dwangs in between the ceiling joists for fixing the edges of the plasterboard. 9 rows of noggins / dwangs with 7 pieces of timber to cut and fix between ceiling joists in each row – and that's just the living room. 7 rows in the kitchen but only 4 in each row. About 100 lengths cut and fitted altogether! All done by 11:00 so decided to have an early lunch before tackling the plasterboard on the ceilings.



1 ½ sheets per run in the living room with joints staggered like a brick wall for extra strength. Not an easy job, with Iain on steps and me on the small scaffolding tower, balancing each sheet on our heads as we line it up and support it precariously while we get enough fixings in place to hold it up. Living room and kitchen ceilings done by about 15:00. Iain able to leave about 15:30 – a good start for him as he's going up to Portmoak tonight with his glider for a bit of a holiday and a competition that runs over the weekend.

Carried on doing bits and pieces, breaking for tea at 19:00 and finally finishing around 21:45 and once again clearing up in the dark. Got the insulation fitted to most of the front wall; will carry on with that tomorrow. Long days, but got a huge amount done in the time and very pleased with progress.





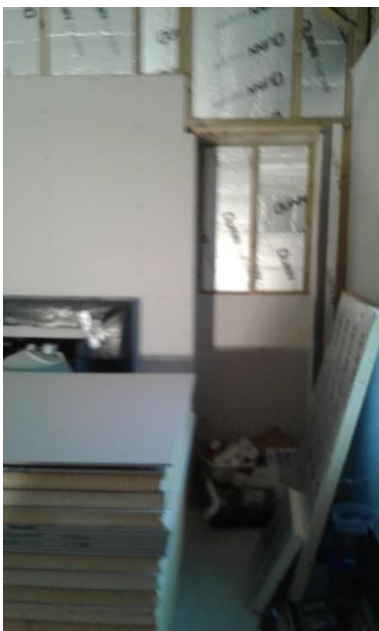
Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April:

Early start again. At work before 07:00. Putting insulation into the framework of the dry-lining. A few more pieces of timber to put up so that there's something to fix plasterboard to on both 'sides' of corners etc. Took a long time to finish the shelves to the right of the fireplace – as I've said before, can't believe how much timber goes into what you think is a simple framework to hold a bit of plasterboard! Putting up plasterboard in strategic places as I go, but now run out so another trip into Stranraer. Worked out I'll need 14 more sheets of plasterboard, 13 lengths of



angle bead (for outside corners prior to plastering), and enough 'space blanket' to insulate 22 sq m of stud walls around the kitchen.

Late lunch at 14:30 before moving all the sheets of insulation back into the cottage and loading up the trailer with stuff for the tip while I'm in Stranraer.



Carried on with insulating and plaster boarding the living room walls. Trying to get it all done but finally admitted defeat at 22:00 after cutting two pieces of plasterboard to completely wrong dimensions!



#### Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> April:

Cleared up a bit in cottage No. 2 before doing the same in No. 1. Set off about 10:00 for home. Back again next Wednesday.

#### Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May:

Arrived about 17:00 after a tedious and long week-day daytime journey! Judith with me this time to help with getting everything ready for the plasterers. Started work straight away with putting more insulation into the dry-lining and fixing up plaster boards.

#### Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> May:

Up at 06:00 and at work by 07:00. My helper started a little later! All day putting in insulation and finishing off with plasterboard in the living room and kitchen. Made lots of progress.



Electricity meter changed pm to a standard Economy 7 meter. Can now change to any supplier. Most suppliers wouldn't take over the old 3 rate meter with its completely separate rate for the night storage heater.

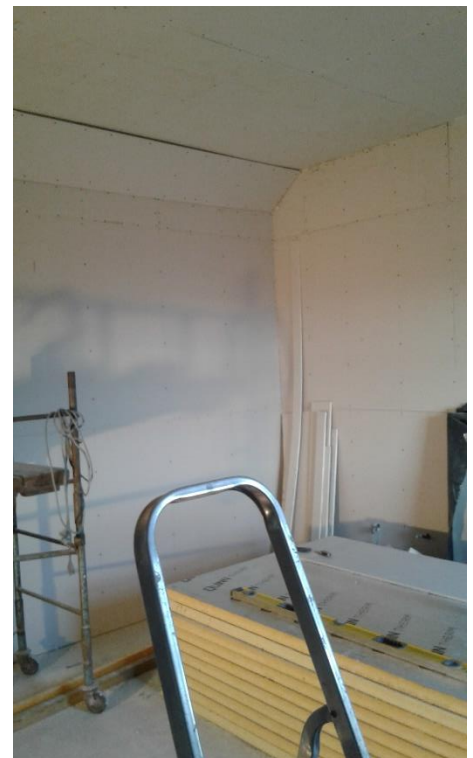
Also had two deliveries today – the MVHR unit and all its associated ducting, vents etc. Had another ex-visitor call in today. He used to come with his parents and then latterly with his wife and family, before they moved up to this area. He's now moved back to Scunthorpe to work in the steel works there because the money was so good and because "unless you're a farmer or in the tourism industry, there's nothing in this area now". He plans to work down there for 8 years until they can retire back up to this area.



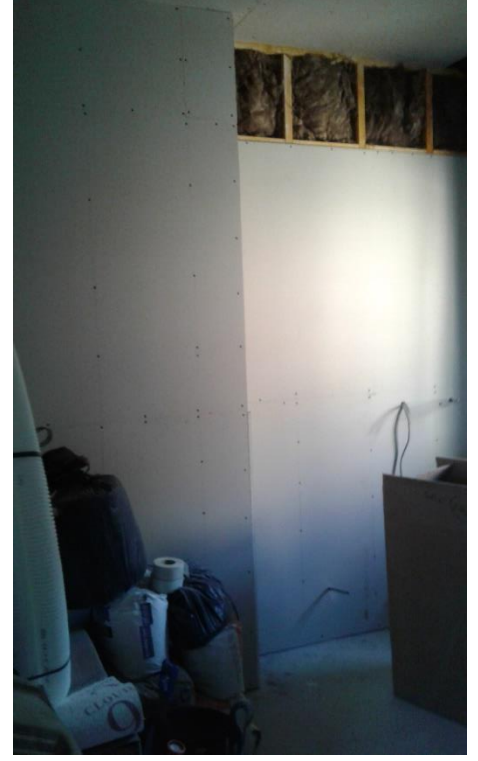
Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> & Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> May:



Nothing but cutting and fixing insulation and plasterboard! Last bit left to do in the living room – the coombe to the rear wall and the plasterboard around the bathroom door frame – looking from the open-plan kitchen!



The living room rear coombs done and the plasterboard around the bathroom door. Looking through to the kitchen wall, where the cooker will be.



We're getting there! In order:-

Looking from living room through to front door with all the ducting etc stacked in the kitchen.

Hallway being boarded – that's the front door.

Last bit of the cooker wall in the kitchen to be done.

Plasterboard around the kitchen window.

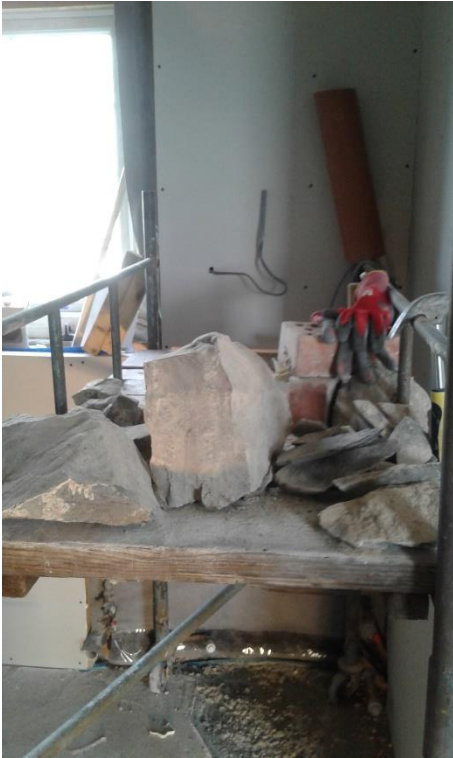


### Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> May:

Nice morning. Looked out of the door and there was a deer on the beach, strolling through the rock pools at low tide. Obviously got a taste for seaweed? Wandered off across the sand and through the rocks heading towards Craignarget Burn. More insulation and plasterboard. Finished the hallway and then had to start making a hole through the rear wall to get the ducting through to the bathroom extension.



Been putting this job off as long as possible! Turned out to be relatively easy – whole job only took about an hour including re-building the wall around the inserted pipe. Some serious stones had to come out of the wall to be able to get right through!



Only the insulation and two pieces of plasterboard on the coombes in the kitchen left to do now. Hallelujah!



### Monday 6<sup>th</sup> May:

Into Stranraer early for what might be the last trip to Jewson's for significant purchases. Just little bits and pieces hopefully from now on. Still insulation to cut – Judith cutting hundreds of pieces of insulation board to fit between the joists in the loft. The first layer has to be cut to length as well as width to fit between all the noggings we put in between the joists to support the joints between sheets of plasterboard. The second layer can be longer strips going over the top of the noggings just cut to the width between the joists. We deliberately over-ordered on sheets of insulation so we'd have enough left to do the loft. Got one layer in place throughout the loft and still got 4 sheets left to start the second layer.



Needed to get the ducting through the new hole in the rear wall, and an overflow pipe in place before the final plasterboard goes up on the coombes. Not an easy job as the ducting came in one roll which seems about 100m long! Managed to feed it up into the loft and out through the pipe in the wall – then realised there was an arrow on the ducting which presumably indicates the direction of air flow and of course, we'd got it the wrong way! Had to take it all out and start again. Got it the right way round this time and then had to feed all the rest of the ducting up into the loft to get it out of the way temporarily. Might run a duct across to the Isle of Man while we're about it! There's miles of it – it goes round the loft space two or three times. Together with all the other joins, bends, fixings etc, the loft space is full!

Finally, we can now finish off the insulation and plasterboard on the coombes in the kitchen. Didn't quite manage to finish it today.

### Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May:

Up early to finish off the last bit of plasterboarding! Had a good clear up in No.2 and cut the final last two sheets of insulation to go into the loft so those are out of the way. All the rubbish just went into the trailer for taking to the





tip next time. Cleared up in No. 1 and had some lunch before setting off for home, calling on John & Wendy on the way home. Expecting to be back up Sunday evening, ready for the plasterers two days out of Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday and then the kitchen delivery on Thursday.



(As I'm writing this back at home, just confirmed the plasterers for Tuesday and Wednesday.)

#### Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May:

Arrived about 21:30 after a very easy journey up – very little traffic. Lovely sunny evening.

#### Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May:

Early start, too early to take the trailer load of rubbish to the tip, so started cleaning the algae off the back wall of the cottage. Comes off quite easily with just water and a scrubbing brush. Just a bit time-consuming. Took the rubbish to the tip once it got to 09:00. Tried to hire a very long masonry drill to get through the back wall of the cottage for the outside tap, but no luck. Got some bits and pieces for plumbing in the tap and some felt for the roof of the new store.



Emptied all the tools etc. out of the cottage and just put everything into the trailer temporarily. Checked over all the plasterboard for any screws that weren't sunk properly and put in more fixings where necessary. I like to go for overkill!

Finished scrubbing the dirt off the back wall then started to dig out for the base of the new store. Made a frame for concreting the base and got it levelled ready.

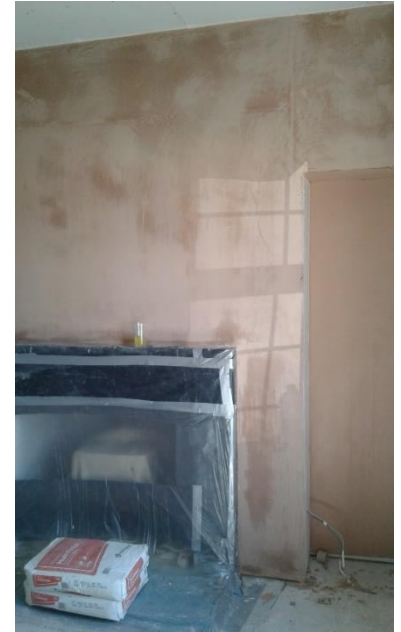
Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May:



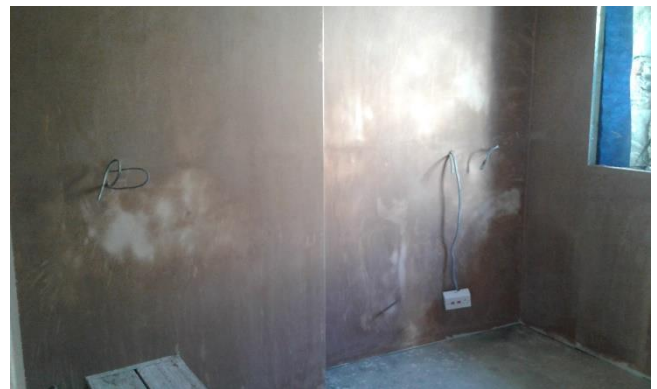
Plasterers arrived 08:30. Soon as they were started, got on with mixing concrete for the base of the shed. Used up the left over sand/gravel mix and then just used sand and gravel off the beach! Had to nip into Glenluce for more cement.

Back about 10:00 in time to make the workers a cup of tea as they waited for the first lot of plaster to go off. Finished concreting about 11:00.

Rest of the day spent cutting / treating / preparing timber for the shed. Hardest job today is trying to understand the 'boss' who does like to talk!



Plasterers got all kitchen done + living room side of kitchen wall + fireplace wall. All looking very good. Beautiful day – sitting outside writing up the diary at 18:00 while my tea's cooking.



Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May:

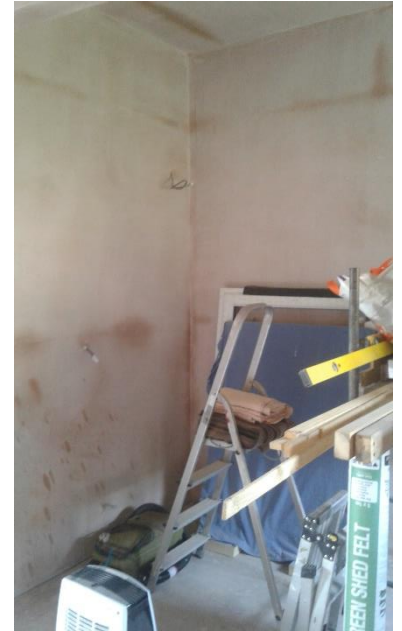
Plasterers 08:30 again. Straight on with the living room – up the front wall, straight across the ceiling and down the back wall, all in one go. Meanwhile, I investigated the chimney cowl. Disappointingly, we had another episode of rain coming down the chimney and dripping onto the fire – and as a consequence, the glass cracked again. The chimney pot is sealed at the top by a disc rather like a lady's hat with a wide brim. The chimney liner is attached to a short pipe which forms the 'crown' of the hat (without a top of course) and the brim seals to the top of the chimney pot. The brim slopes 'outwards', so if any rain does come in through the mesh of the cowl it should run outwards and down the outside of the pot instead of going down the liner. I think we'd made the mistake of sealing the cowl to the brim, so if any water got in it would be trapped at the outside edge of the brim. Then, if there was any imperfection in the seal between the brim and the top of the pot, water could find its way down the chimney outside the liner – which is what seems to have been happening.

So, took off the cowl, cleaned off all the sealant, checked and repaired the seal between the brim and the pot and then refitted the cowl. This time however, I put three little copper spacers under the cowl so if any water does get in it should be able to run out down the outside of the pot. We shall see . . . !



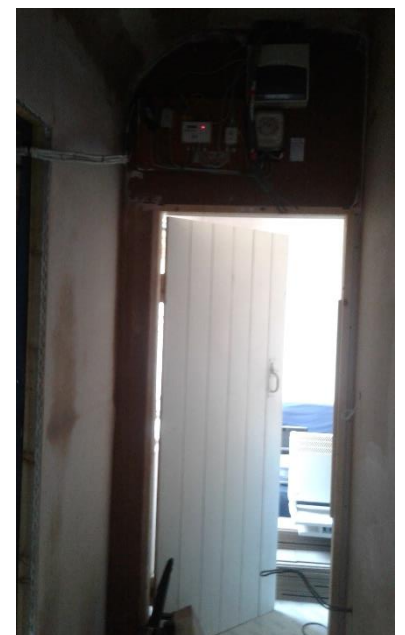
After lunch, started constructing the framework for the store. Still to finish next time. My back's just about given up now!

Kitchen delivery tomorrow morning then off to Dumfries to source some picture rail for delivery next time. Then on to home.



All plastering finished and they even cleaned up after themselves.

Had a problem with the plaster in the hallway opposite the front door. Drying too quickly in the sun and wind. We may need to do some surface filling and sanding just on the bit opposite the door. See what it's like when it's fully dried out. Writing this outside again (18:45) as I eat my tea. Lovely evening again without a breath of wind and too early for midges.



Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May:

Bad night last night. Ended up sleeping on the floor! All cleaned up and waiting for B & Q to deliver the kitchen. Saw the lorry go past just before 11:00 – soon rang and I 'talked him down' on the phone. There's a lot of kitchen!



Found some 'raised door moulding' at Dumfries Timber Company. A bit more character with more moulding than the plain picture rail. Ordered for delivery on the 27<sup>th</sup>, when hopefully I'll be fit to be back up at the cottage.

### Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May:



Travelled up in the evening – very easy journey. Slightly longer than normal as I had to stop mid journey to do my back exercises. Went to the osteopath last Friday. Very good young man who prodded and manipulated and gave me some exercises to do. He thought the driving was more likely to be the cause than the work! Within 2 or 3 days, I was much better – far faster recovery than I've ever had from back problems before. Full marks to the osteo!  
My brother and his wife will be here with friends this week, so had to get my camping gear out again including my trusty old ex-army camp bed bought about 1956!

### Monday 27<sup>th</sup> May:

Started by sorting through all the boxes of kitchen units and re-locating everything to the centre of the living room so I could get to all the walls around the edge of the room. Measured up in the kitchen to show the outline of the kitchen design on the floor, then worked out where to sight the kitchen ceiling downlighters. Marked it all out on the floor and then used a plumb-line to transfer the locations to the ceiling. John and Wendy arrived just before lunchtime, so got him to help me check everything by re-measuring directly onto the ceiling.

Drilled four holes in the ceiling for the downlighters and started wiring them in. Took 3 hours to wire 4 downlighters! They're hopeless things with connecting blocks much smaller than they should be – I always have trouble with these.





Started assembling kitchen units after tea and got the first unit put into place. The toaster is on the window sill; the kettle's on the floor; the gas cylinder and burners are on the hearth and my sink is a washing-up bowl in the bath!

John & Wendy and friends went to the Cock Inn for a meal – very good but enormous portions!

Spent the latter part of the evening being sociable. John's gliding friend is an interesting chap! After a career as a commercial airline pilot all over the world and a spell piloting air ships, he spent his latter working years as a Logan Air pilot flying the island hopping routes to the Western and Northern Isles, with daily landings on the beach on Barra.

#### Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> & Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May:

Assembling and fitting more of the kitchen units. The half-depth base units along the dog-leg wall beside the oven / hob and then the sink base unit in front of the window and the small pull-out larder type base unit that will go to the right of the sink. Finally, the tall cupboard unit which will house the hot water tank.

However, the sink base, small pull-out unit and the tall cupboard can't go in until I've sorted all the plumbing which will be behind these. The pipe-work will go up a small gap to the right of the tall cupboard, up into the loft to connect to the new cold water header tank.



You can see the two clamps holding the cupboards temporarily in place while I mark the positions of all the pipework. The cupboards then come out while everything is connected up in the right place. If I get any leaks, it'll be a major job taking everything out again to fix them!

All the units fixed together and levelled in every direction ready for the worktops!

Note, I do now have a small kitchen 'table'!

#### Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May:

Final pipe-work in place by lunchtime with appropriate holes cut in the back and base of the sink unit. 4 pipes running up / down the side of the tall unit into the loft:-

Cold water feed to the header tank;

Cold supply from the header tank to the bath (maintains hot and cold at the same pressure in the bath);

Cold supply from the header tank to the hot water tank;

Vent pipe from the hot exiting the hot water tank, into the header tank in the loft – in case of boiling / over-heating.

Now can fit the tall cupboard and fix all the units securely to the wall. This is where I discovered that the back wall of the kitchen is bowed, so had to modify / trim the back of the tall cupboard. No problem, as none of that will be visible in the end.



Doesn't sound much for a long day's work, but it isn't easy moving a tall unit about single handed! To take it in and out repeatedly during adjustment / trimming and fitting requires some ingenuity. Long timbers underneath the 'floor' of the unit, with the last one inserted while the unit is gently raised with a long lever, raise the unit by about half an inch to allow the unit to be slid in and out without breaking all the legs!

#### Friday 31<sup>st</sup> May:

Bit of clearing up this morning as Iain is coming to fit the final window to the front of the living room. Able to utilise the kitchen cupboards to store all the tools and electrical bits and pieces so that I can clear some working floor space. Iain will bring with him a Conex drill bit – an ingenious cone shaped device which allows the cutting of holes any size from about 4 – 40mm. Needed for drilling all the holes in the new header tank.

Iain arrived mid-morning and started on the window. This is the third wet day in a row, and when he started taking the window out, you could see all the rain that had come in round / under the old window! I think it's been letting water in for years. Put the new window in with belt & braces sealant. A double row of sealant under the sill with a small gap in the front row of sealant so if any water does get under the sill, it can drain out. Doesn't take long to fit a window. Had a late lunch with Iain before he headed back to another job near Dalbeattie.

Started cutting all the holes in the new header tank and got it up into the loft. Fitted the ball valve, overflow pipe, and vent pipe. Connected up the cold feed and the feed from the header to the hot water tank, then realised I needed more connectors to finish off. Called it a day as I had to go and get some food, having shared my tea with Iain at lunchtime!

#### Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> June:

Took my tent down and packed it up as soon as it had dried as it was actually sunny this morning!



Builders Merchants not open yet so started sealing the plaster with a 3:1 water:pva mix rolled on. Quite easy to do, just time consuming. Got the living room done before going into Stranraer for some more connectors and a trip to the tip with 4 bags of general rubbish.

Called to see our caretaker on the way back. They are both well happily, and filled me in with the local news. The doctor's surgery in Glenluce is under threat as the new owner is required to make lots of improvements by the NHS. It's hoped that residents will support the use of the community funding from the wind farms, to fund this work. Otherwise, there's a danger they'll lose the surgery.

Also, there's a new café in Glenluce – half way down the High Street on the ground floor of what used to be the Kelvin Hotel. Very good apparently. They're open during the day and are doing take-away meals in the evening, but they plan to do evening meals in the future. With doubts over whether the Clansman in Port William will re-open, this new venue is very welcome.

Back to the cottage and finished off sealing the plaster in the kitchen and hallway.

Back to the header tank. Got it all connected up and carefully turned on the water. 3 leaks.

Two were very easily and quickly sorted. The third meant I had to take the sink base out again to get to the pipes behind, but that's probably the easiest unit to get in and out and I could isolate the hot water so I didn't have to drain everything down. Running short of connectors, I'd re-used a brass elbow and one of the compression joints just wouldn't seal properly so replaced it with a push-fit plastic elbow.

Sorted that and then put the unit back in place. Checked round everything again and found each of the outlets from the header tank was leaking very slightly. The instructions said 'do not over tighten and do not use any sealant'. I always use sanitary sealant and will do so in the future regardless of instructions to the contrary! Plus there was a very small leak from a joint at the base of the hot water tank. Running short of connectors, I re-used an old one, so that one's my own fault I guess!



Need to drain everything to sort these, so I'll drain everything down before I leave and sort these before I re-fill next time. At least they're easy to get to.

Packed up and set off about 17:30, only to get as far as the A75 at Glenluce and find it was closed Eastbound!! Diverted back past the cottage and down to Port William, over to Wigtown, then up to Newton Stewart I presume. However, got on the phone to Katherine and she quickly checked the situation (accident), allowing me to cut across via Mochrum Loch to Kirkcowan and onto the A75 at Shennanton. Arrived home about 22:45.

Got a delivery arriving at the cottage on the 13<sup>th</sup> of this month so we'll be back up then. Judith may well be with me then as she'll be able to start decorating! Katherine is at home this week, so we're looking at paint colours and tiles so hopefully we'll be ready to go!

### **Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June:**

Arrived 22:00, still broad daylight. Slept in the cottage overnight.

**Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June:**

Nice morning so cut the grass before putting up my tent again. All done by 08:00 – woke early again. 1<sup>st</sup> job this morning is to fit the extra cupboard on top of the tall unit housing the hot water tank. Had to be cut to fit the coombes – used a sheet of cardboard to cut a template first and then transferred it to the sides of the unit before cutting. Not a bad fit! Assembled the unit but then had to lift it into place on top of the tall unit. Not an easy job single-handed. Had to do it in stages using the scaffolding, trestles and boxes. Then the same with the colour matched end panel. All sorted and temporarily fixed in place



Had avoided refilling the water system, so now could tackle the three leaks I'd identified. New joint soon fitted in the h/w cupboard and after baling the last of the water out of the header tank in the loft, could put sealant on the two outlets that were weeping. Left it all to set.

Put colour matched end panels on the base unit (x3) – either side of the fridge space and on the end of the cupboard that will be underneath the breakfast bar.

Then, time to re-fill the water system and test again. All looks good. No sign of any leaks this time!



Tried to work out what height to position the picture rail. Tried running it across the top of the opening to the kitchen but didn't look right.

Raised it to match the top of the architrave above the window but still didn't look right.



Raised it further to about 6" above the kitchen opening, well above the door architrave and also above the window architrave. Seems to look best like that. Sent pictures to Judith and Katherine for approval! Need a decision so I can use the same height in the kitchen to paint the ceiling and walls before putting up the wall units. Ceilings will be

white – walls will be Orchid White (an ivory colour which nearly matches the kitchen units).

### **Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June:**

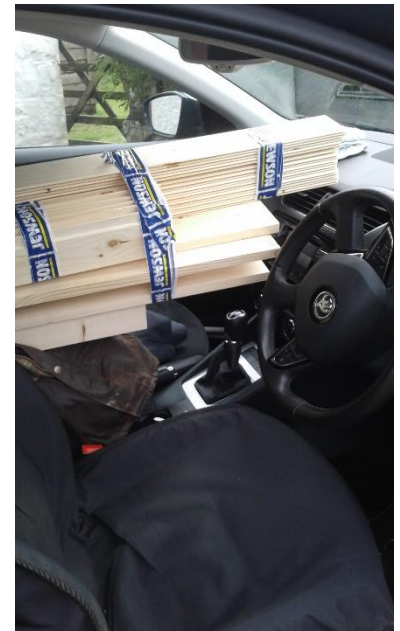
Lot of rain last night. No water in the tent. Did some re-proofing at home last week which seems to have worked! Got agreement on the height of the picture rail last night so started painting the kitchen. Found some lovely blue / green tiles for the kitchen which have a slight ripple effect in the colour. Looks a bit like the ripples on a calm sea. Extra worktop arrived via B and Q Glasgow about 09:45. 2-4 hours to wait before I can do a second coat so started fixing the boarding to the sides of the furniture / bike store. Had to drill two holes to secure the frame to the cottage wall first. First hole ok. Second hole I must have been going into a block of granite. Took about an hour to drill the hole and two masonry bits!  
2<sup>nd</sup> coats on the ceiling and walls in the kitchen. A bit more work on the shed, then time for tea.

### **Friday 14<sup>th</sup> June:**

Assembled all the kitchen wall units and stacked them in the corner of the living room. Trying to clear space for when the joiner comes to do the worktops. Cut the timbers for the platform to mount the MVHR unit on in the loft and put it all up in the loft in place. Roll of insulation up into the loft. Old laminate underlay up into the loft – keeping it just in case we need any. All bits of spare timber out into the shed.  
Started raining about 15:00, so moved all the remaining kitchen stuff over towards the fireplace to create more space for the joiner and had a good sweep up.  
Started working out how to do the window reveals and measured up for the timber I'll need.

### **Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> June:**

Into Stranraer first thing to try to get the match-boarding I need for the window reveals – successful! Just £188 for the timber for 3 windows. You'd have thought it would be cheaper up here as we're so close to the source of much of our timber.  
Dry and sunny on return, so cut rest of grass before starting on the windows.



Started with the living room window. Took the entire rest of the day to do one window! Should hopefully be a bit quicker with the others now I've worked out how to do it. Have to make a 'frame' that sits behind the boarding. Not actually attached to the wall at all, so no possibility of damp transfer, plus a damp proof layer behind the match-boarding. Very pleased with the finished job.

### Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June:

Kitchen window reveals next! A bit more awkward to get to, working above the kitchen base units.

Nothing is symmetrical, so first job is to even up the angle of the two sides of the reveal so it looks right! Nearly the full day just on this window.



### Monday 17<sup>th</sup> June:

Helping my brother put a new wood burning stove into the fireplace in No. 1 cottage. The hearth / base of chimney / throat that we built using fire bricks in about the mid 70s, has finally given up and is collapsing. Something had to be done as the fire was smoking badly.

We had a canopy over a large open grate, which gave a lovely fire, but all the heat just went up the chimney. Took the old fireback out and the old canopy – which had completely burnt through at the back!



Laid two slate slabs as a base for the stove and then had lunch while the mortar set a bit.



Lifted the stove into place and then just had to connect up the flue. Quite an easy job as it turned out, and had the new stove working by about 16:00.

### Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June:

Had just about given up on the joiner but then had a message late last night to say he'd come at 17:00 today: Don't know how he'll manage to get it done – there are 3 joints and two cut-outs to do plus the breakfast bar. We'll see.

Set to on the last window reveals in the bedroom. Had to clear some working space first. Another full day to do that window, finishing about 16:00.



Just fitting a support rail for the breakfast bar when the joiner arrived about 16:40. Hadn't been here 10 minutes before the first piece of worktop was cut and test-fitted! Got them sorted with tea and cakes and left them to it while I went into Stranraer to get some cash to pay them! Had tried in the Keystore in Glenluce earlier in the day (free cash withdrawals), but the machine was empty. It usually is by the end of the day apparently, so if you need cash, try to go in the morning! Back after about an hour – they're well on with the job. All done by about 19:00. £120! Very quick workers and looks good to me.



All ready for me to fit the sink and hob. Fortunately, I have clamps, so left the clamps on a couple of timbers holding the edging strip which has to be glued to the back of the worktop that forms the breakfast bar. Leave those until the morning when the glue should have set nicely.

Dry and sunny, so took my tent down so that I won't have to unpack it to dry it off. Slept overnight in the cottage again.

### **Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June:**

Cleared up and made a list of things I need next time. Set off about 09:00 for home.