



Fig 1 The survey team

Walden farmhouse is 2 miles east of Gifford, East Lothian, on the former estate of the Marquis of Tweeddale. The ruins are a narrow range comprising a partially-roofed cart shed, farmhouse and courtyard with a well. Of the farmhouse, nothing remains above two metres: most of the front wall is missing; the west gable has collapsed.



Fig 2 Walden from the air

An 1844 farm plan shows that these remnants formed one side of a rectangular steading. Walden was merged with the neighbouring farm of Sheriffside in 1846. A new farmhouse and steading were built there and Walden farmhouse used to accommodate farm servants. The rest of Walden steading was demolished and ploughed over. By the late 1950s, when the walls were toppled, the house was a shell. Recently the interior was cleared prior to an unsuccessful development proposal.

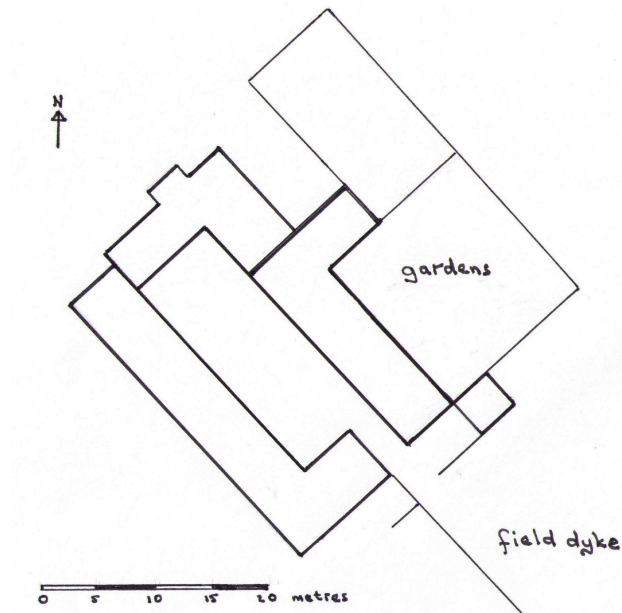


Fig 3 Walden from an 1844 farm plan

These development plans failed but we can rebuild Walden on paper due to the generosity of the 10th Marquis, who donated his archive to the NLS. This contains

detailed accounts for the building of a farmhouse, barn and byre in 1717 for William Sanderson, tenant.

The earliest account is from September 1717 when Sanderson purchased “twenty four double trees and thirty deales” in Leith. There are tradesmen’s accounts from November 1717; from two masons, one responsible for the house and barn and the other for the byre, and a wright (*carpenter*) for the woodwork for all three. There are four deliveries of lime. A summary account includes the cost of glass and smith work.

The ruin we see today is the remnant of the house in the 1844 plan. But can we be sure it is the 1717 building? The ruin shows numerous changes with blocked doors, new windows cut and raised floor levels. The cart shed has once been a byre or stable. The steading was much larger than Sanderson’s house, barn and byre.

Could our ruin be a later building? The evidence suggests not. The farmhouse abandoned in 1846 was not of recent construction. The OS name book (ca. 1851) describes Walden as “An old house which formerly had a farm of land attached”. More compelling evidence comes from the 1717 mason’s bill. Although the Union of 1707 abolished Scottish currency and measures, usage continued for at least two decades. The mason quotes in pounds Scots but bills in sterling. He uses roods and ells (37.06 inches) for rubble masonry but linear feet for cut stone. “Ther is built to William Sanderson in Walden a sithous (*farmhouse*) misuring six roods and twelf ells”. Walden farmhouse is 21’ 7” by 62’; 7 ells by a shade over 20.

“Ther is of skews 69 fut at an penie for hewing the futt”. The length of skews allows us to estimate the pitch of the roof. But what is the height of the walls? The mason describes them as “higher than ordiner”. A rood is 36 square ells of masonry so the area of rubble masonry amounts to 228 square ells. Allowing for “two doars and four windows”, the best fit is a wall height of 4 ells.

“Of hewn caip cornies and watter barg to the chamber chimnie head 29 fut at 5 pence per futt”. Twenty-nine feet of cut stone would allow for a chimney roughly 3 feet by 2 feet, rising to three courses.

The bill of Androu Hay “wright to the marquis” helps recreate the roof. The 24 “double trees” purchased at Leith become “twentifour kupls (*V-shaped rafters*) for his dwelling hous”. The house has three doors, two windows at 2s 6d each and three at 10d. Assuming one door is internal, there is an obvious conflict with the mason’s bill for 4 windows.

The roof is open to question. Was it slate or divot and thatch? The only mention of roof is “ane day for montin of a renruf ... 10d”. If this is sarking, Hay is an astonishingly fast worker. In contrast, it takes him 6 days for the flooring. I suspect the roofing bill is missing. Neither is there mention of roofs for the barn and byre. The early date supports divot and thatch but an argument can be made for slate. Slate is used as spacing between the joints of the fireplace and in surviving rybats (*margins*). There is no ‘thackstane’, a feature of thatched roofs, in the mason’s bill for the chimney, although the ‘watter barg’ may serve a similar function. The imported timber also meant that a more level roof could be constructed, necessary for

slates. Tradesmen and materials were available. A ‘sclater’ was on Haddington Council in 1723. The Marquis bought 4000 Stobo slates in 1665 but roofed his new mansion with Easdale slates in 1699.

Whatever its original roof, Walden was eventually slated. Roughly cut Scotch slates are present in the rubble as are 2’ sections of stone rigging (*ridges*). Similar riggings are found in Gifford on Yester Kirk (1710) and the Tweeddale Arms, (mid 17th century), although the inn was originally thatched.



Fig 4 Note the thackstone at the base of the chimney stack and stone riggings.

Fig 5 A Walden rigging

The interior of the building remains unknown apart from a ‘chimbla brace’ (*mantlepiece*) in the main chamber. The walls may have been timber. Hand-made brick is found in the rubble but possibly from later partitioning of the house.

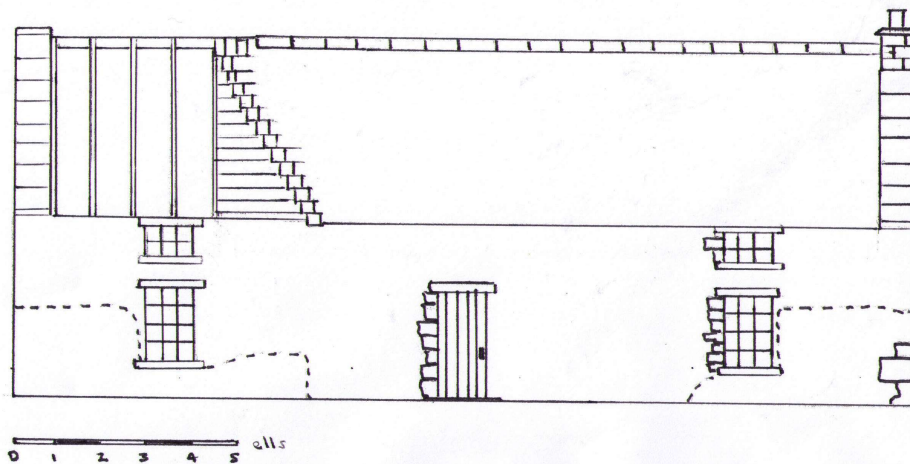


Fig 6 Walden as it might have looked when slated.

Everything above the dashes in Fig 6 is conjectural but based on the 1717 accounts and archaeological evidence. Questions remain. There is no mention of stairs although a stair nib survives. When were the stone riggings applied? The mason charges for 87 feet of cut stone for the doors, windows and hearth. Our reconstruction requires about 98. But the evidence suggests the core of the 1717 house is what we see today.

It is likely to have been built on earlier foundations; one account refers to “reparations of the houses in Walden”. The tenant prior to Sanderson was James Witherspoon. The Yester Papers (NLS) record:

James Witherspoon for his roume of Walden pays 266 lib 13s. 04d.

2 douson of ken foulls

4 cartfuls of coals

8 bolles of oatts

15 thraves of stra

This tack is for 15 years beginning at Whitsunday 1662 and expyring at Whitsunday 1677.

Witherspoon paid hearth tax on April 18 1691 for one hearth. He was an Elder of Baro church during the ministry of Robert Colville 1694-99. He died aged 61 on 17th June 1714 (or 1716) and is buried in Baro kirkyard.

Eric Glendinning, Haddington's History Society