

### RUINED BUILDINGS

#### Managing ruined structures in the countryside

##### Why are these features important?

Old farmhouses, barns, stables, mills, kilns, bothies and other abandoned structures may well survive on farms. Too often they are seen as problems or hazards that should be demolished because they are dangerous or in the way of modern farming practice. Though redundant and too badly damaged to restore they are still important features on a farm worthy of retention. They tell how farms were managed in the recent past, where people and animals were kept and what different work was carried out on farms.

##### Why are they at risk?

Many old farm and croft houses, like the building below, do not conform to modern building standards and have therefore been rejected for more modern buildings.

Others have been abandoned because of changing practices like reducing labour or the milling of grain off farm. Some are demolished because they are in the way of modern farm buildings or dangerous structures. Others, however, are knocked down merely because they are perceived as unsightly. While it is not possible or



Most derelict buildings have a history, like this former barn belonging to the schoolmaster in Sand in the 19th century. This makes them important to both locals and visitors searching for family roots.

appropriate to keep them all, those that do survive give a greater depth and history to the farming countryside.

##### What should I do to protect them?

Recognising that these buildings are significant is the first step towards protecting them. By giving them value it is less likely that they will be destroyed without consideration. Routine maintenance, like preventing the establishment of tree seedlings or protecting wallheads, can help maintain the stability of ruinous buildings.

Where buildings have to be destroyed because of their ruinous condition take photographs to make a record of their current form and supply this to your local Sites & Monuments or Historic Environment Record Service.



This derelict building at Broubster in Caithness looks an ideal candidate for demolition. However the thatch of the roof contains valuable data on past crops and within are significant details as to how the building was used.

### GOOD PRACTICE

- Identify where these features survive through a farm audit or from your own knowledge and research. Use this to identify which buildings are significant both to you and to the wider public.
- Identify those buildings most at risk from decay or erosion.
- Consider if minor repairs might stabilise the building and if so, do these as soon as possible to delay or stop further damage.
- Cut back trees and other vegetation that are damaging walls (making sure not to damage further a structure when cutting or removing material) unless there are biodiversity or other reasons for leaving them in place.
- Consider treating stumps with herbicide to prevent regeneration.
- Remove rubbish dumped in and around ruined structures.
- Where there is a health and safety risk and you feel it is necessary to reduce a dangerous structure, consider only partial demolition.
- Make a photographic record of any structure you plan to alter or demolish and send copies (either digitally or as prints or slides) to your local Sites & Monuments/Historic Environment Record Service.
- If you consider a dangerous building is architecturally or historically significant contact your local authority archaeologist or the building survey team of the RCAHMS. They may be able to help you make a record of the structure. (It will help if you can supply photographs or other records to show a building's significance.)
- For specialist advice on techniques and materials for conserving derelict structures contact Historic Scotland.

For further information on the architectural and archaeological significance of individual buildings contact your **local conservation and archaeology service** or check the [national monument database](#).



Derelict structures, like this medieval peel - a defended border farmhouse - have a long and interesting history worth protecting from demolition



This pile of stone marks the collapsed gable of a 17th century church at Lawers village near Loch Tay.