**Supporting the Roof Seminar April 5th – Speakers and What they will speak about**

**Malcolm Bangor-Jones**

Malcolm hails from Assynt which his parents moved to in 1964. He is a retired civil servant (latterly Historic Environment Scotland) who has maintained an interest in Highland history for many years. He is an experienced historian and archival researcher. His most recent publications cover the resettlement of Strathnaver by the Congested Districts Board in 1901 and emigration from Sutherland to Prince Edward Island.  He is former Chair of the community archaeological organisation ARCH (Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands). He has been interested in the history of the northern Highlands for many years: this interest has included documenting the vernacular building.

***The evidence for crucks in the Northern Highlands.*** His presentation will consider evidence gathered from fieldwork and documentary material for the use and disappearance of crucks

**Piers Dixon**

A graduate of Cardiff University Piers obtained a doctorate there on the Deserted Villages of North Northumberland in 1985. He became a member of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (now CIfA) in 1984 and joined Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) in 1989 as an Investigator, after 11 years as a freelance archaeologist excavating medieval urban and rural sites in Northumberland and the Scottish Borders, before retiring from the successor body to RCAHMS, Historic Environment Scotland, in 2018.

He has published extensively on these topics, including accessible books on medieval rural settlement in lowland Scotland in 2002 called Puir Labourers and Busy Husbandmen (Birlinn), co-authorship of A History of Scotland’s Landscapes (Historic Environment Scotland) in 2018 and co-editorship of Seasonal Settlement in the Medieval and Early Modern Countryside (Sidestone) in 2021, as well as academic publication of the excavations he worked on as a freelance. Recently published articles include ‘Turnberry Castle’ in Castle Studies Journal for 2020-21 and ‘Cruck buildings in Scotland: A review’ in Cruck Building: A Survey, 2019 and Dormount Hope – Medieval Deer Trap, Park or Hay? in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland for 2021. I am currently working on publishing the results of the Peeblesshire Archaeological Society’s (PAS) excavations at Shootinglee, a forest stead of Ettrick Forest and another (PAS) project to date medieval .earthworks on Bowden Moor using OSL dating.

***Bridging the gap: how do we interpret archaeological evidence for cruck roofs in the light of architectural survival?***

If this question was easily resolved we would not be still talking about it. It may safely be said that crucks were used to support the roofs of rural buildings from mainland Scotland and some of the Inner Hebrides in the 17 th and 19 th centuries, before being overtaken by Improvement. The question is what is the evidence for them before the 17 th century? Archaeological evidence from the medieval and post-medieval periods will be explored and discussed in relation to architectural survivals and

documentary sources.

**David Newman**

After qualifying as an architect in 1976, David moved to Oban where he worked for two local architects before establishing his own practice in 1981.  As well as undertaking a wide range of commissions in the Highlands and Islands, he developed a particular expertise in the design of aquariums which led to a senior role in the leisure industry, followed by a decade of design consultancy work across Europe.  Upon retirement he and Jean divided their lives between South Uist in the Hebrides and eastern Andalusia, and they eventually settled permanently on North Uist in 2012.  There his long-standing interest in archaeology was re-ignited by the SCAPE coastal survey project and he and his neighbour on the island of Grimsay, Roger Auger, a retired mathemetician, carried out extensive field survey work across North Uist over the next 10 years, publishing several books on their discoveries on such diverse topics as lost townships, thatched houses and shielings.  Jean and David now live in Easter Ross, having moved there in the autumn of 2022.

Between 2015 and 2020 David Newman and his field survey colleague Roger Auger surveyed nearly 250 former blackhouses on Uist in the Outer Hebrides.  (These are know locally as *taighean-tughaidh* or thatched houses).  Their work culminated in David's 2020 book 'The Thatched Houses of North Uist' which aims to both chart the development of and dispel some of the myths around what has been described as an example of a 'true vernacular building' rooted in the specific traditions and materials availability in the Outer Hebrides.  The houses' distinctive roofs, which give the building type its name within the Uist community, are an important part of that development process in a part of Scotland with a relatively extreme climate, and this talk will explore that process including the earliest records, and how the use of thatch continued well into the 20th century including on the first post WWI government designed and sponsored 'Department' houses.

**Coralie M Mills**

Coralie Mills is a dendrochronologist and environmental scientist with a long career in Scotland’s cultural heritage sphere. After post-graduate studies at Sheffield University, Coralie moved to work in Scotland, for Historic Scotland, then AOC Archaeology and, since 2009, in her own “Dendrochronicle” consultancy where tree-ring dating and related projects on historic buildings,

archaeological wood and old wooded landscapes are undertaken by a small specialist team. Coralie is also an Honorary Fellow of: the University of St Andrews; and Scottish Environment LINK. [www.dendrochronicle.co.uk](http://www.dendrochronicle.co.uk)

In this video presentation, Coralie will summarise the tree-ring evidence from vernacular roof structures in Scotland. The numbers of Scottish vernacular buildings which have been subject to dendrochronology is very very small, a situation which drastically needs to change given such buildings continue to be lost or altered without record. However, some valuable evidence has been obtained from a number of pine cruck cottages in the eastern Highlands and Upland Aberdeenshire areas, sampled as part of the SCOT2K research project in 2013-2017. Longer ago, some tree-ring evidence was also obtained from two cruck frame cottages in Perthshire which used species like ash and elm amongst others. The presentation will summarise the extant results and will also consider future research priorities, as recently distilled in the new ScARF Dendrochronology Research Framework for Scotland which can be read about in the Historic Buildings section here:   <https://scarf.scot/thematic/dendrochronology/4-dendrochronology-in-historic-buildings/>

**Derek Alexander**

Born in Inverness, brought up in Glasgow, Derek studied prehistoric archaeology at the University of Edinburgh, specializing in the later prehistory of temperate Europe. From a career in commercial archaeology Derek joined the National Trust for Scotland in 2000 as the West Region Archaeologist. He was appointed as Head of Archaeological Services for the Trust in 2011 and is responsible for the archaeology across the Trust’s estate. Derek has undertaken fieldwork on many of the Trust’s properties including Iona, Crarae and Arran. He has authored books, academic papers and magazine articles on wide range of subjects on the archaeology and history of Scotland. Recent research has included a major focus on the archaeology and history of whisky making in Scotland and on the Jacobite Risings, with work at Glencoe and Culloden.

**Crucks Slots -  Gaps in our understanding or a void in the evidence?**

The National Trust for Scotland has a number of vernacular buildings in its care that clearly display the use of crucks for supporting the roof structure. Most of these buildings such as Weavers’ Cottage, Beaton’s Cottage, Moirlanich longhouse and  Leanach are of 19th century date. During our work on the Ben Lawers Historic Landscape Project we excavated a few sites with cruck slots and have recently found more in a 19th century cottage at Torridon. While the cut back remains of crucks in the wall of a cottage have recently been found in a cottage on Iona. The archaeological evidence for pre-Improvement cruck roofs is scarce. The recently built replica turf house at Glencoe incorporates a mix of roof supports including crucks at one end, perhaps reflecting the possibility that pre-Improvement roof structures varied depending on the availability of resources.

**Daniel Postma**

Daniel trained as a settlement archaeologist in the Netherlands where he specialised in the reconstruction of early-medieval longhouses. He studied technical building conservation at the Engine Shed in Stirling and works as an independent researcher, contractor and educator to embed Scotland's vernacular building practices into modern natural building. His Grassroots Hutting project demonstrates the potential of such archaeo-based design and features as a case study for zero-carbon construction in Scotland's Strategy for the Historic Environment (<https://blog.engineshed.scot/2024/01/24/grassroots-hutting-an-architecture-borrowed-from-the-soil/>).

In this presentation, Daniel presents his research on cruck roofs in early-medieval longhouses in the Netherlands. While earlier explorations of crucks on the Continent were limited by typological classifications of historical timber framing, typological analyses of excavated ground plans have helped to recognise a cuppill-like building system in archaeological evidence from the 5th-13th century. The resulting reconstruction models suggest an older origin and wider spread of cruck construction than is commonly accepted and explains why this building practice was lost in the Netherlands during high- and late-medieval times. It is concluded that similar typological research, informed by practical experiments, is needed to clarify the origins and development of crucks in the UK, meanwhile informing building conservation guidance and the use of roundwood in newbuild.