

Nether Lochaber Village Hall, Onich



The Initial Purpose of Visit.

To inspect the village hall with a view to it being moved to the Highland Folk Park at Kingussie. However, the preferred option would be to repair the Village Hall and bring it back into community use.

Background Information

I was provided with a detailed building survey carried out by Samuel & Partners, FSS, 20 High Street, Fort William on the 26 May 2023 and a report completed on 29 August 2023. The survey was commissioned by the Nether Lochaber Village Hall Committee.

The purpose of the survey was to: -

Report on the condition of the building and summarise the general condition

Advise on extent of repairs and improvements together with any associated costs required to allow the hall to reopen.

Provide further advice in respect of the options regarding upgrading the existing structure or a new build replacement hall.

The report mentions a Structural Engineer's report prepared by Daid Matheson which I have not had sight of.

The property has been out of use since early 2023.

My original site visit was on the 28 November 2024

Current Condition of the Building.

The assessment conducted by Samuel & Partners is in general a fair assessment of the current condition of the building. The report is caveated by a number of areas they were unable to get access to.

My assessment is similarly limited and was restricted to a visual inspection from ground /floor level.

Purpose of My Site Visit and Preliminary Report.

To inspect the property for, The Highland Folk Museum Curator of Large Collections, Liz English, with a view to the museum taking this building into its collection at Newtonmore. However, this has since been modified to look at the conservation needs of the Village Hall insitu.

Site Notes

Current Location

The original entrance porch to the east gable still remains. However, this, with the addition of a lean-to has been converted into toilets. A new simple mono-pitched entrance porch was formed on the west gable. There looks to have been some reuse of original doors in the formation of this entrance. A further extension has been added to the rear to provide kitchen facilities. There is also a later fire door knocked through on the east elevation which may have been a requirement of the local authority.

All of these later extensions are in very poor condition and add nothing to the authenticity of the hall. However, they have allowed the hall to remain in community use for a number of years and have facilitated a considerable number of community events over the years. It is important that these areas are fully recorded.

There is a need for a detailed survey of the property and the preparation of a costed full repair scheme.

A Conservation Accredited Professional should be appointed to develop a scheme and consider possible options for the provision of a food preparation area and fully accessible toilet provision.

This report offers some possible suggestions for consideration by the Community.

General site comments



The hall is located at the west end of the village. It sits very close to the roadside. This is the main A82 to Fort William. Careful thought should be given to providing a safe working area for the conservation work. Looking to the future consideration should be given to the pedestrian and vehicular access.



The general area surrounding the hall should be cleared of all overgrown vegetation to allow access to all areas surrounding the building and allow access for contractors.



The ground levels around the hall have risen over the years. This has blocked the under floor ventilation in a number of locations. It has also accelerated the decay of the bottom edges of the corrugated iron cladding. Ground levels should be lowered around the hall.



North roof Main Hall

The roof is showing signs of decay and there are a number of areas on the interior showing signs of water penetration



North pitch with kitchen extension



Junction of Main Roof and later Kitchen extension.



North pitch east end. Note the edge detail of the main roof.



North pitch west end



North pitch west end eaves decay. Typical edge detail with the corrugated iron sheet carried over and nailed to the barge board.



Chimney minimal or no flashing. Investigate the construction of the chimney. It may be cast concrete.



South Elevation,

The corrugated iron looks to be in a poor condition. It will require a detailed inspection to assess the condition. Replacement corrugated iron should match the original in size and gauge.



The West Gable.

Late mono pitch porch formed where there was an original window opening.

The porch is in a poor condition.

The original timber decorative elements to the upper gable have been removed from both gables



Eaves detail. Replace rainwater goods in deep flow metal.



Corrugated iron and zinc flashings throughout require to be replaced



Timber work needs to be carefully inspected throughout the hall, stripped down , replaced where required and repainted.





The east elevation porch details of the central timber finial



Inspection area open. The original roof/ceiling finish can be seen above the later lowered ceiling (as can be seen below in the original entrance porch, now WC) Daylight can be seen through the board adjacent to the chimney lining boards
The lowered ceiling is in a poor condition and should be removed. Careful consideration should be given to insulation options.

The preferred option would be to install a priority thin insulation layer above the original timber ceiling. There will be a need to replace sections of the original timber boarding due to rot.



Original entrance porch ceiling



East Elevation

The later addition to the East elevation to form a WC is in a poor state of repair. Consideration should be given to removing this completely.



Corner detail corrugated iron sheets wrapped around the corners throughout the building. This detail should be replicated in the renovation of the building.



West Elevation window. Typical loss of timber facings to most windows. Sills generally in a poor condition. Most windows are six pane with a hopper opening top section. One 8 pane on the North elevation



Lead cover flashing to all windows apart from the five windows on the south elevation that are protected by the eaves. The lead flashing is taken up the back of the corrugated iron joint and dressed over the top of the timber window facings.



Poorly formed later fire exit on the East elevation



East elevation fire escape

Poorly formed cover flashing. The installation has also damaged the corrugated iron



Paint system is not adhering to the corrugated iron. Investigate original colour scheme where earlier layers can be found. Strip back the decayed and flaking paint and apply an appropriate paint system



Interior

The later ceiling and glass wool insulation should be removed. Careful consideration will be required when re-roofing and the installation of an insulation system



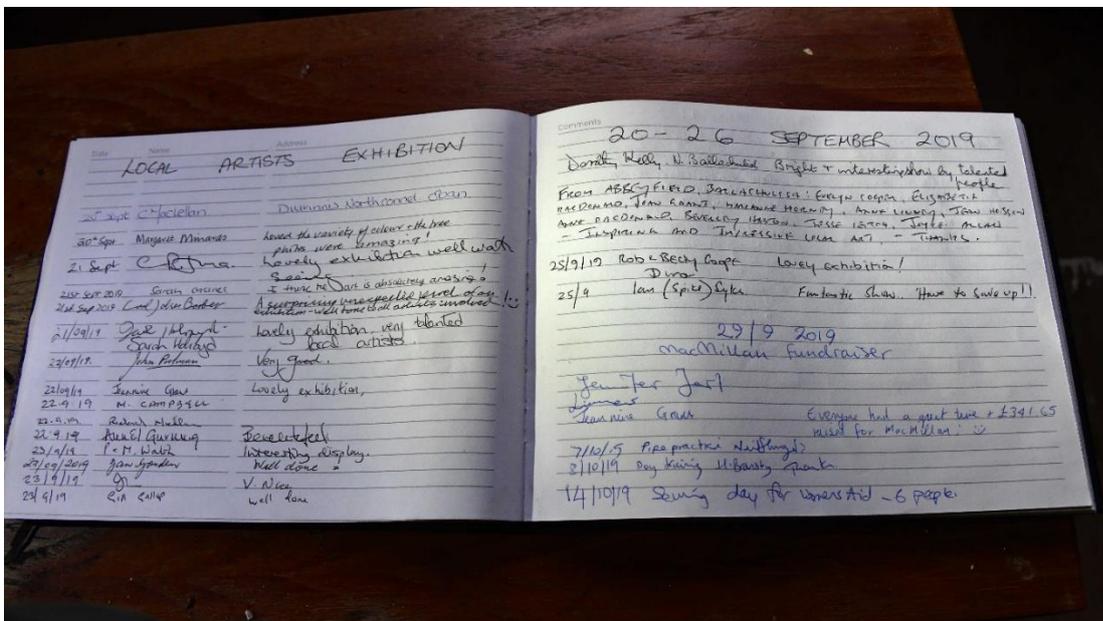


The hall floor looks to be in reasonable condition. There are defective areas identified in the earlier survey that require to be replaced.

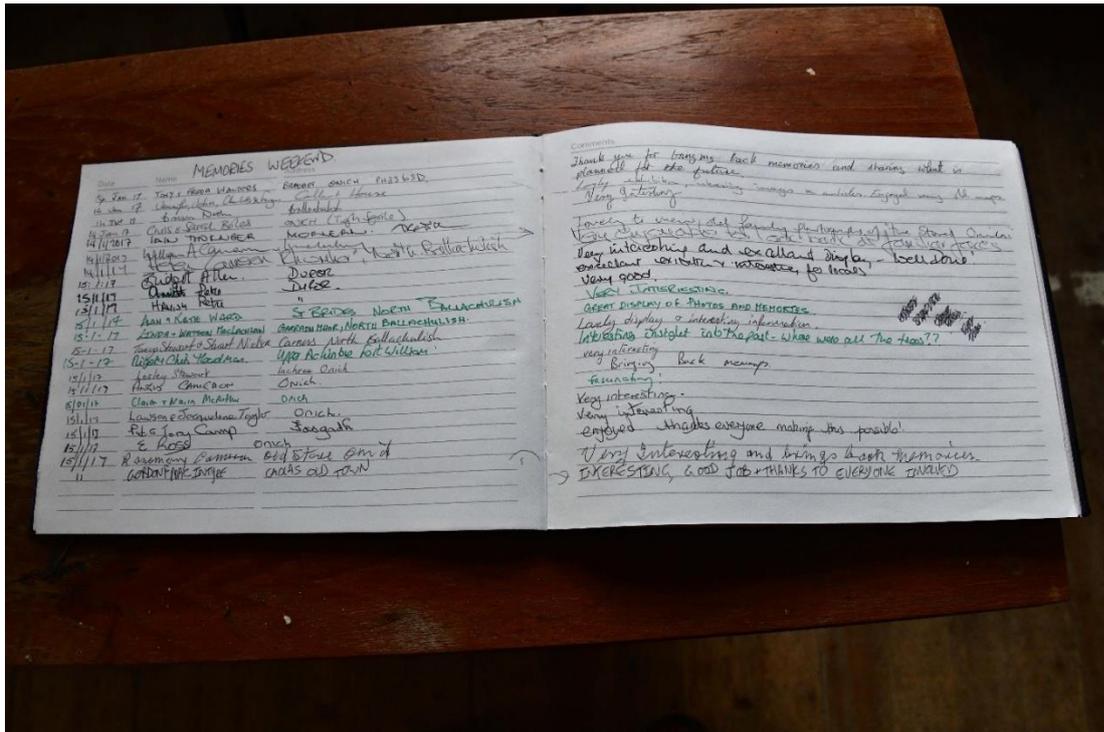


Inspection hatch in North wall to confirm construction and condition of timber base plate. Consideration should be give to the provision of an insulation system for the whole building. This will require care to maintain ventilation and the need for a vapour barrier to protect the corrugated iron and the timber linings.

The Hall has a long history of community activities. The cultural significance both tangible and intangible is very significant.



Visitor Book



Visitor Book

The Hall has played an important part in the life of the village.

It is currently in a poor condition but it can be saved and redeveloped to continue to provide the village with a venue for community activities for years to come.

Possible Options.

The community will need to consider what they need from the hall. I would suggest the following:-

- Reinstate the original entrance to the hall.
- Remove the poorly constructed and defective later kitchen extension and the additional toilet.
- Remove the fire exit from the east gable
- Remove the later porch entrance to the west elevation.
- New build corrugated iron extension to the west gable to provide new accessible toilet and kitchen facilities.

The Repair Work

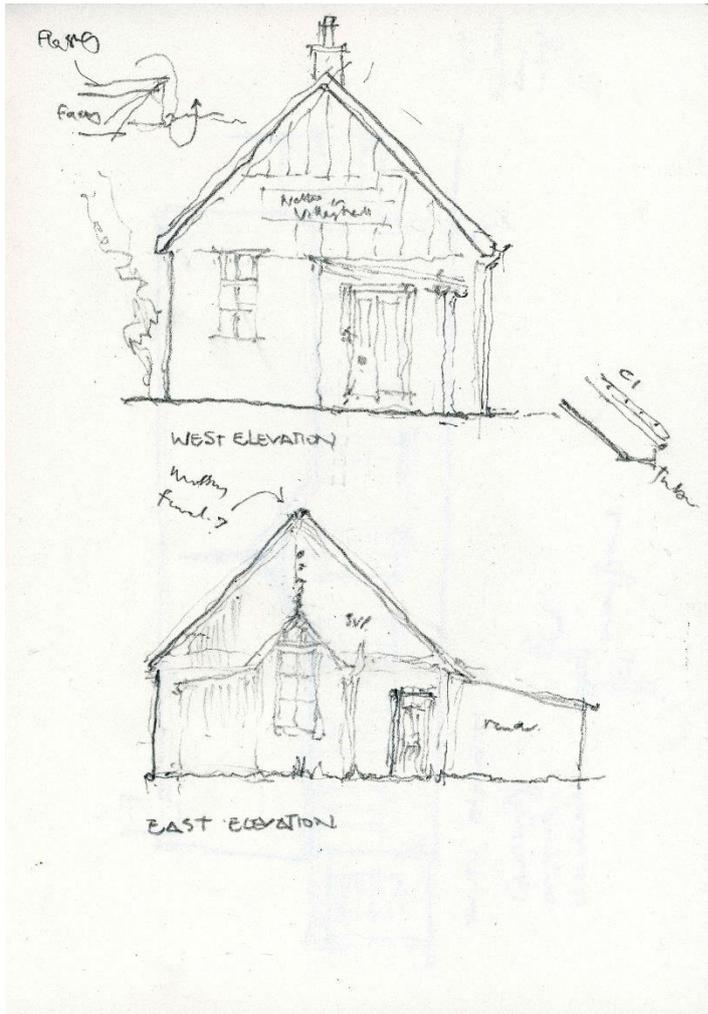
There will be a need to carefully inspect the existing corrugated iron to establish its condition. There will be clear areas that will require complete replacement. From initial inspection the north pitch looks to be life expired. The south pitch may well be in a similar condition. The corrugated iron to the elevations looks to be capable of reuse. Where later elements are to be removed there will be a clear need to insert new corrugated iron. However, if the Hall is to be insulated it may require the stripping of the iron to allow this to happen. (This would, in my view, be less damaging to the fabric than attempting this from the inside. However, the appointed consultant may propose other options.) The condition of the sheeting can then be assessed and its location recorded so that the original sheets that are in a good condition can

be secured back in their original location. With a good conservation team and a good contractor, perhaps a Joinery based firm, this could be a very successful project. The project would make an excellent case study offering very good educational opportunities during the repair works. During the repair works the Highland Folk Museum team may be able to advise on repair and maintenance options.

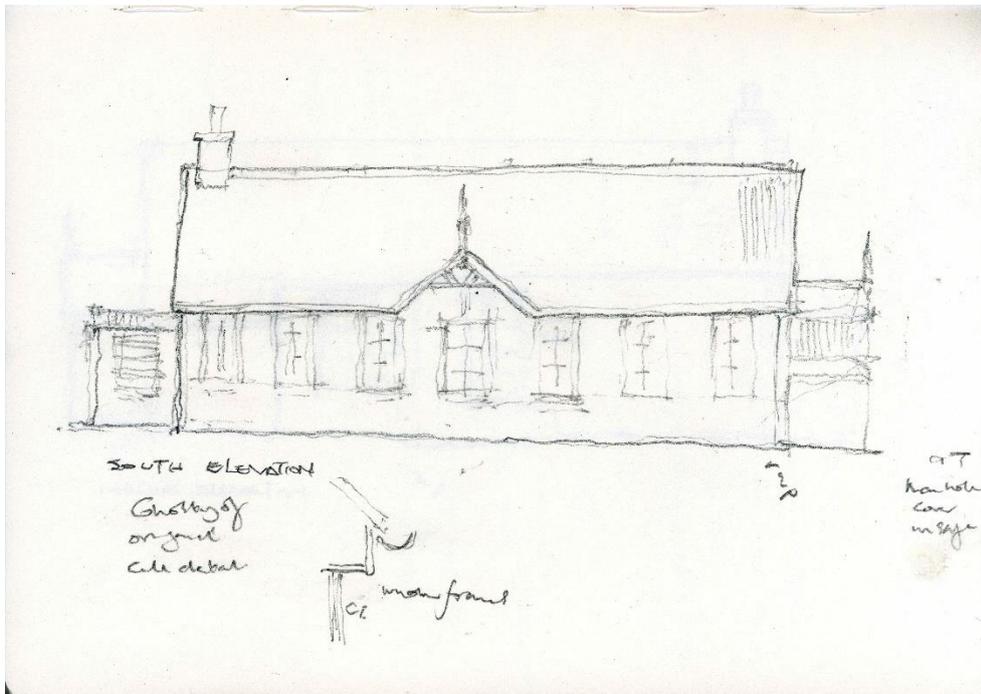
Other example

Village hall on the Laggan Road, Very similar situation with a number of the same issues .

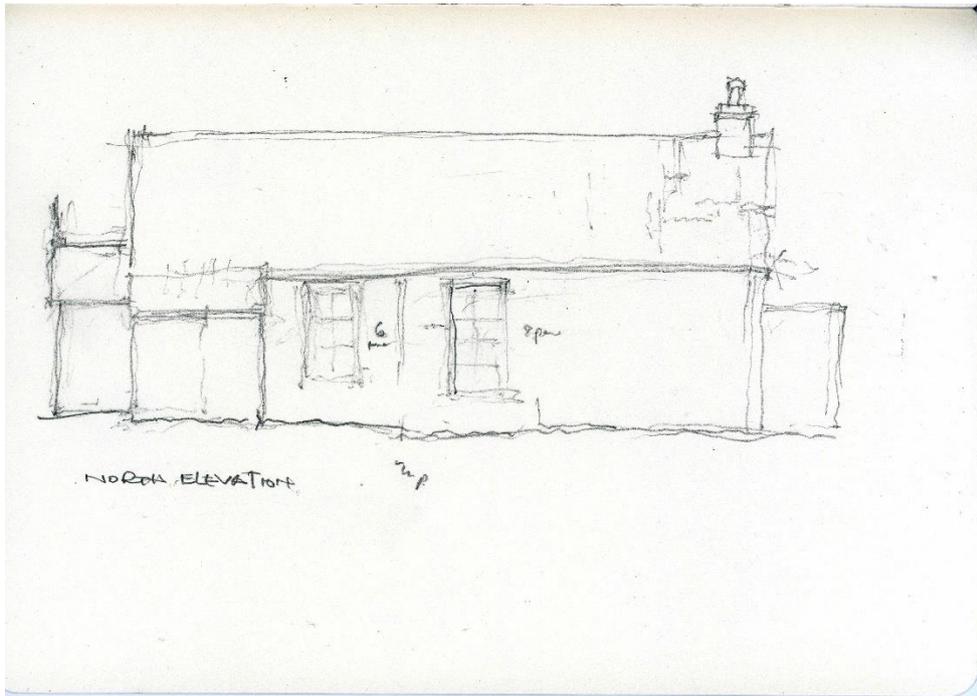




East and West Elevations



South Elevation



North Elevation

Christopher McGregor
30 June 2025 updated 29 July 2025

Nether Lochaber Village Hall CMcG2025