

## Cottage Restoration

A cottage like this is repaired and rebuilt many times in its life. By the 1970's, the cottage was in a poor state of repair, and was derelict. The restoration by the Greiner family saved the building, and it once again became a home.

By 1990 the cottage was again empty and derelict and was given to Solway Heritage by the then owner, Mr Ian Mills along with a donation of £1,000. Solway Heritage prepared a scheme of repairs, and supervised the restoration in consultation with Historic Scotland. The majority of the work was undertaken by master-thatcher Jeremy Cox of Corsock, with the large crucks and other main timbers being repaired by craftsman Michael Todd.



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Careful attention was given to good conservation practice and use of authentic materials and workmanship using traditional tools. The crucks were first dismantled and numbered so that they could be reconstructed and replaced in their original position. When the backs and bases of the crucks were first revealed the full extent of the repairs was discovered.

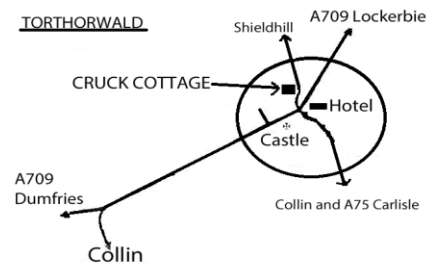
Tree trunks and branches were chosen to match the shape of the existing crucks. The new wood was carefully spliced into the old to make a strong repair. Walls were re-pointed and wall tops re-bedded in traditional mortar. The hanging Lum was re-constructed using a timber frame plastered in mud, cow dung and lime daub. Finally, the roof was re-thatched using wheat straw over heather turf.

**Outside:** Roger Lewis the Drystane Dyker from Twynholm, Kirkcudbright, constructed the dyke and the cobbles around the cottage were laid by Jeremy's wife, Jules Cox. Notice also the wooden gate – constructed without nails! In 2004, the roof of the cottage was again repaired and re-thatched by Jeremy Cox.

**Cruck Cottage Heritage:** In 2003, the Cruck Cottage Heritage was formed by a group of local residents. The aim of the group, with the co-operation of Solway Heritage, is to maintain the cottage in its present condition, raise the necessary funds, and promote and encourage access by both the local and wider community. The Group hope to arrange regular open days, craft workshops, school visits, musical and storytelling evenings and the like. The cottage has been fully furnished and dressed in great detail in Victorian style, to reflect that period in its life.

**Access:** The cottage can be visited at any time of the year. A list of keyholders, who all live nearby, is displayed in the cottage. Contributions towards the upkeep of the cottage are always welcome, and free membership of Cruck Cottage Heritage is available for those who may be interested. The cottage is situated in Torthorwald Village, on Shieldhill Road, which is signposted off the A709 Dumfries – Lockerbie Road in the centre of the Village. **Post Code - DG1 3PS**

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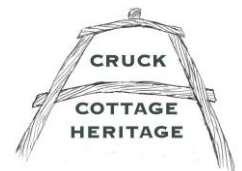
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# Visit the CRUCK COTTAGE



## Torthorwald Dumfries & Galloway

### ADMISSION FREE



## History and Characteristics

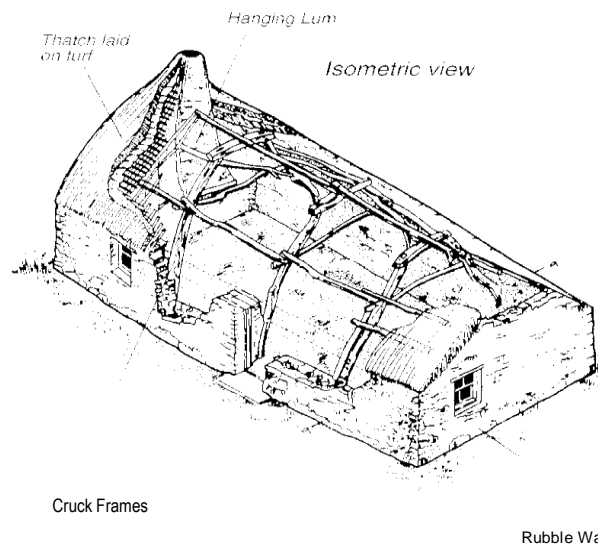
Torthorwald has all the attributes of a medieval village; a castle, parish church, water supply for a mill, and good agricultural land. However, little remains of the original settlement.

The Cruck Cottage is now the only example of a building type that would have been common from early times through the 19th century.

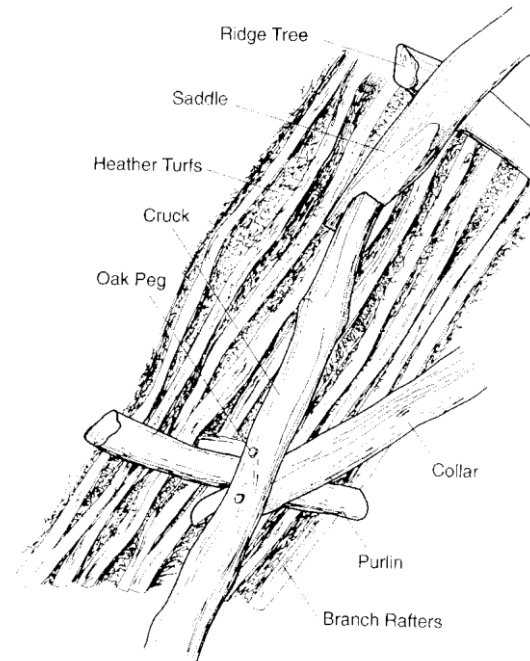
The exact age of the cottage is not known but it is part of a long tradition of building in southern Scotland and northern England. The Cruck Cottage has been recently restored using the same traditional skills and local materials.

## The Cottage Structure

The roof consists of 3 cruck frames spaced about 9ft. (2.7m) apart and just over 5ft. (1.6m) from the end walls. These frames would probably have been shaped and joined on the ground and raised into position onto low stone bases. The crucks were simply oak tree trunks left in their natural state with just the bark removed. The collars are pegged (with oak pegs – not nails!) near the top and support the purlins running the length of the cottage. At the very top are the saddle pieces pegged onto the cruck, these carry the ridge tree.



The purlins and the ridge tree support the closely spaced birch rafters. Over these is a layer of heather turf, with the heather itself facing down providing a base for the straw thatch.



Originally the walls could have been constructed of clay or turf.

Both materials were found on the nearby Lochar Moss.

The construction, with the weight of the roof carried on the main cruck frames suggest that this was likely.

The stone rubble walls are probably the improvements made in the 19th century.

## The Cottage Interior

The cottage is typical of those built in the early years of the 19th century. It is 'But and Ben' type and is an 'improved' cottage, though to the modern eye it still appears to be very basic. The kitchen was at the west end by the hanging Lum (chimney), most of the family activity would have taken place here close to the ever-present fire.



The cruck-tree was probably used to hang cooking pots. Smoke would have wafted into the cottage and hung heavily around the rafters. This must have been unpleasant, but helped to preserve the roof structure and reduce the numbers of mice and insects living in the thatch. The fire-place at the other end of the building was probably put in when the cottage was rebuilt last century.

In earlier times the furniture would have been very basic, and by the mid to late 1800's might have included a box bed, table and chairs, and a cupboard or dresser and probably little else. Originally the box beds would have been close to the kitchen area.