

# The Landmark Trust



‘The Shore Cottages at Berriedale have formed a backdrop to so many happy memories over the years. I was devastated to see how derelict they had become. Can you save them?’

This is an excerpt from a letter written to Landmark in 2006 by retired history teacher and Caithness native, David Brennan. We receive many such approaches each year, but the severe plight and fascinating history of this row of four humble cottages caught our attention. **Without your help to save them, they will soon decay beyond repair and be lost forever.**

The Shore Cottages embody a defining moment in Scottish history, when Highland crofters moved to the coastal margins to find a new livelihood in the booming herring industry. They were built around 1800 by renowned agriculturalist, Sir John Sinclair in a sheltered cove known simply as The Shore at Berriedale, in northeast Scotland.

Such simple vernacular buildings are particularly vulnerable to decay and loss once abandoned, as these have been for decades. The herring industry dominated this area throughout the Napoleonic Wars and beyond; cold, perilous work in small sailboats. **It is a fascinating and courageous story – please help us to make sure it is told.**

At Berriedale, the fishermen turned by 1840 to higher value salmon, shipped down to London packed in ice. By 1900, the fishing fleets became concentrated in larger ports like Wick. The last fishermen on The Shore gave up in the 1950s.

**The abandoned cottages now stand on the cusp of irreversible decay, which is why we urgently need your help.**

The cottages can only be reached by a narrow footbridge over Berriedale Water, which must now be replaced. The roofs have holes, the window glass is long gone. What remains of the internal joinery is left exposed to seaspray and weather. Using traditional craft skills, Landmark can still gently repair the cottages, bringing in water

**Please turn over...**

Your contribution will make a real difference to the Shore Cottages.  
*Thank you for your support.*

Please make your cheque payable to:  
**The Landmark Trust** and return with this form  
**OR**

Please charge my card (below) with the amount indicated (left).

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Please accept my donation of:

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I would like the Landmark Trust to reclaim the tax on any qualifying donations made by me in the previous six years and all donations I make hereafter as Gift Aid until further notice (\*).

Signature X \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\* You must be a UK taxpayer and pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax equal to the tax we claim as Gift Aid on your donations.

We would like to acknowledge your gift, please tick here if you would prefer us not to.



and electricity and burying the cables underground to preserve the cove's wild beauty – **but only if we act fast.**

We hope to turn these four small cottages into two Landmarks, to be booked together or separately. One, for two people, will keep the exact dimensions of an original fisherman's home. The other three will be sensitively combined to provide accommodation for six.

It will cost **£600,000** to save the Shore Cottages and we have already raised over £88,000. Despite Scottish Category C listing, grant aid from Historic Scotland or the Heritage Lottery Fund is unlikely, so we must rely more than ever on the generosity of individual supporters. **Without your help, the Shore Cottages will surely be lost.**

This will be a magical place to stay. A scenic, two hour coastal drive north from Inverness, the Shore Cottages will look out on nothing but sea, sky and wheeling sea birds. To stay in this beautiful cove will be an experience of exceptional peace and tranquillity, a haven for birdwatchers, fishermen, writers and all those seeking a complete escape.

Any gift, **no matter what size**, will make a valuable contribution towards saving the Shore Cottages, and help preserve a flavour of the lives of the brave fisher families, who ventured forth for the 'silver darlings.'

**Please make your donation today and help us create two Landmarks in one of Scotland's finest landscapes, for future generations to explore and enjoy.**

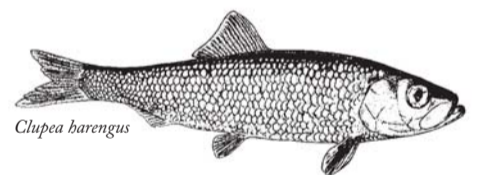
Yours sincerely

Peter Pearce  
Director

**PS.** If you have a particular interest in the Shore Cottages and would like the opportunity to become closely involved with their rescue, then please consider becoming a **Guardian**. To learn more go to [www.landmarktrust.org.uk/theshorecottages](http://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/theshorecottages) or contact Anna Gordon on **01628 825920**. Thank you.

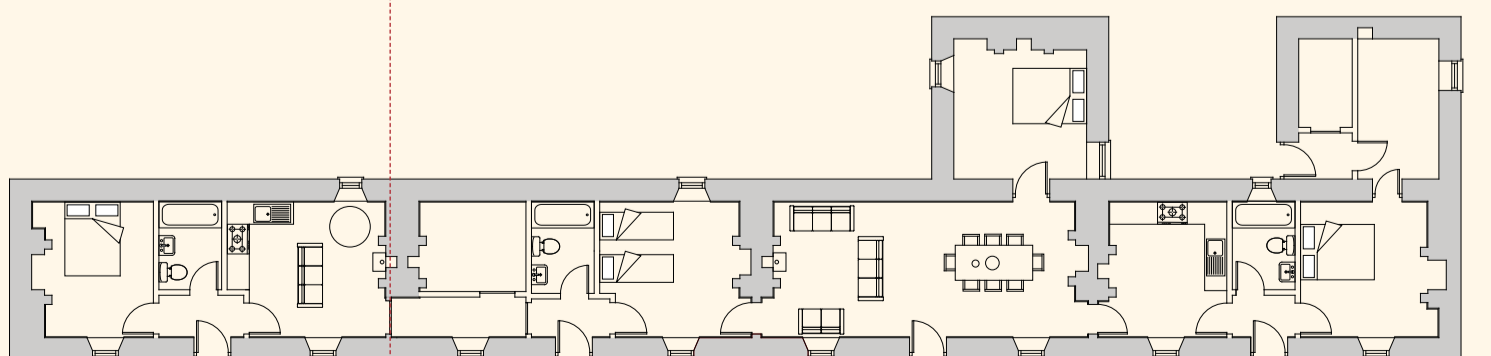
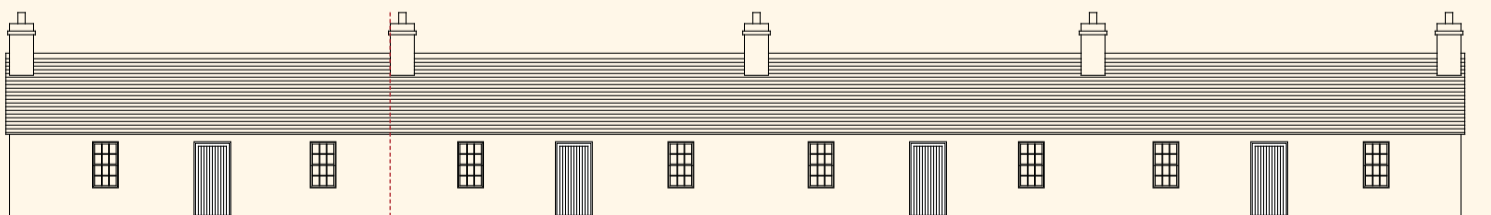
The Landmark Trust Shottesbrooke Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 3SW  
Charity registered in England & Wales 243312 and Scotland SC039205

Telephone 01628 825920 Website [www.landmarktrust.org.uk](http://www.landmarktrust.org.uk)



## Help us save the Shore Cottages and preserve the memory of a lost way of Highland life

The Shore Cottages elevation and floor plans



← Landmark for two people →

← Landmark for six people →

If you would like a copy of the plans of the Shore Cottages, you can download them from our website at [www.landmarktrust.org.uk/theshorecottages](http://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/theshorecottages).



All along the rugged Caithness coast, improving landlords built new homes for the crofters turned fishermen, like these early 19th-century fishermen's cottages at Berriedale. Abandoned for decades and left without water or electricity, the Shore Cottages will be lost forever unless urgent action is taken.

As herring shoals sweep close to the northeast tip of Scotland in the summer, the late 18th century saw a new livelihood for crofters – the herring fishery.



## Can you help us save the Shore Cottages?

Since its foundation the Landmark Trust has been saving Scottish buildings. The Shore Cottages will be our most northerly Landmarks and must be restored to preserve:

- Fragile evidence of vernacular housing for the early Caithness herring fishery
- The memory of the lives of those fishermen and crofters
- The traditional skills of local craftsmen

Your donation, no matter what the value, will help rescue the Shore Cottages, creating two new Landmarks in this remote and beautiful spot at the heart of the Scottish Highlands.

Please help now:

- **By post** Complete and return the donation form attached to the letter
- **Online** Visit [www.landmarktrust.org.uk/theshorecottages](http://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/theshorecottages)
- **By phone** Call **01628 825920**

© The Wick Society



The memory of a vibrant part of Caithness history has faded into decay. Help us keep it alive by providing a secure future for the Shore Cottages.

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# The Shore Cottages

## Berriedale, Caithness

Help us save the Shore Cottages and preserve the story of the way of life that created them

## The Landmark Trust



Printed on an FSC certified paper made from 80% recycled fibre

Berriedale c. 1820 by William Daniell  
The cottages are located just off to the left-hand side of the engraving

## The Shore Cottages embody the early years of the Caithness herring boom

When crofters were moved from the Highlands to the coastal margins in the late 18th century, fishing provided an alternative livelihood. Landlords like Sir John Sinclair at Berriedale built new settlements to house them. The men set sail in small boats called fifies, often in perilous conditions. The women gutted the fish at troughs on the shore and packed them into barrels. This way of life, led from small coves like The Shore at Berriedale, has long since vanished.



Fishing provided work for all generations – mending nets, baiting lines and lobster pots, gutting and packing.



It was the return of the salmon to their spawning grounds up the Berriedale Water that led the fishermen to add salmon to the catch landed on The Shore, and to build the handsome bothy and icehouse visible beyond the footbridge below. The footbridge must now be replaced and will be part of our project.



Leave the present behind and journey into the past navigating a footbridge spanning the Berriedale Water to reach the beauty and stillness of The Shore.



This early photograph shows the Shore Cottages still lived in. Nets are spread out to dry, and boats would have been pulled up onto the shingle above the sandy beach.

Photograph donated by Alan McIvor



The Shore lies just below the old road as it winds its scenic way north. The row of fishermen's cottages sits directly on the beach, far right. The outcrop in the foreground holds the ruins of 14th-century Berriedale Castle and is a nesting ground for seabirds, such as guillemots, kittiwakes and razorbills.



What remains of the internal fabric is exposed to seaspray and weather.



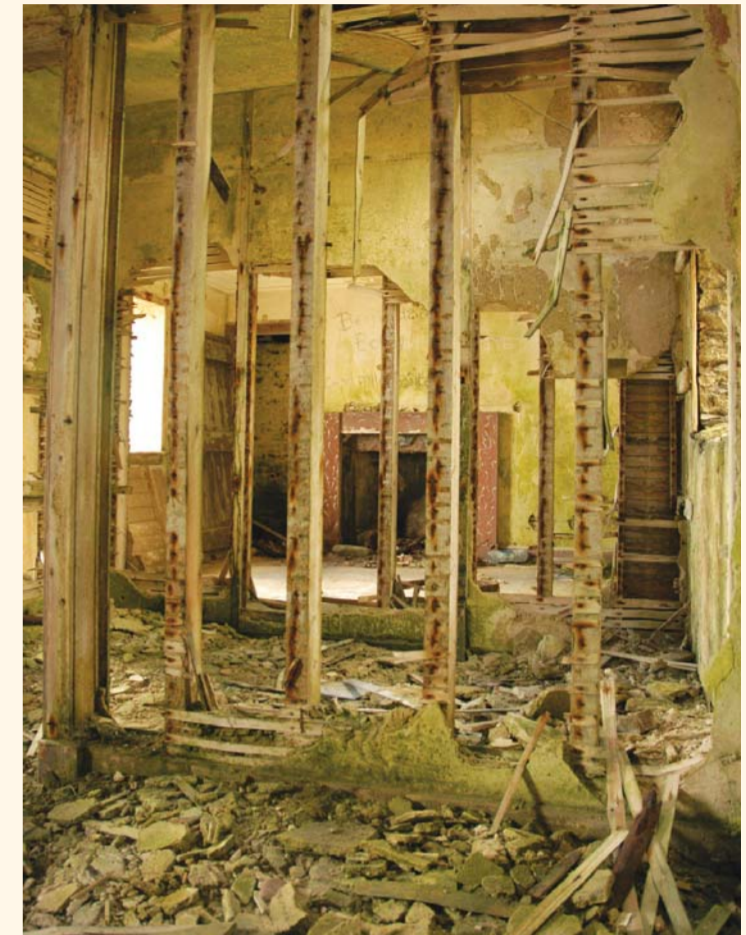
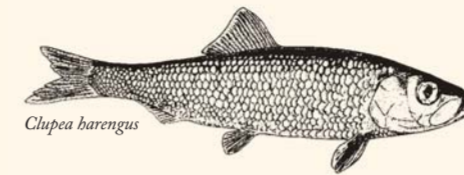
With your help we can save the Shore Cottages. We will renew the footbridge and carefully provide water and electricity. Craftsmen will repair the buildings using traditional skills and matching materials to the originals to form

two Landmarks, one preserving the form of a single fisherman's cottage. Carefully chosen books and the History Album will keep the story of the fisher families alive for those who stay, experiencing for themselves this atmospheric place, its wildlife and its history.



## Help us preserve this fragile evidence of a lost way of Caithness life

Once a thriving small community, these sandstone rubble cottages now stand derelict and at risk. Water pours through the roofs and the weather drives in through windows without glass. Irreversible decline is imminent. Unless action is taken soon, this evidence of a way of life that sustained thousands along the Caithness coast will be lost forever. The rescue of humble buildings like these lies at the heart of Landmark's purpose and with your help, we can bring them back to life.



Evidence of the interiors remains, but will soon decay beyond rescue.

## Imagine waking to this view...



The cottages look out on nothing but beach, sea and sky.



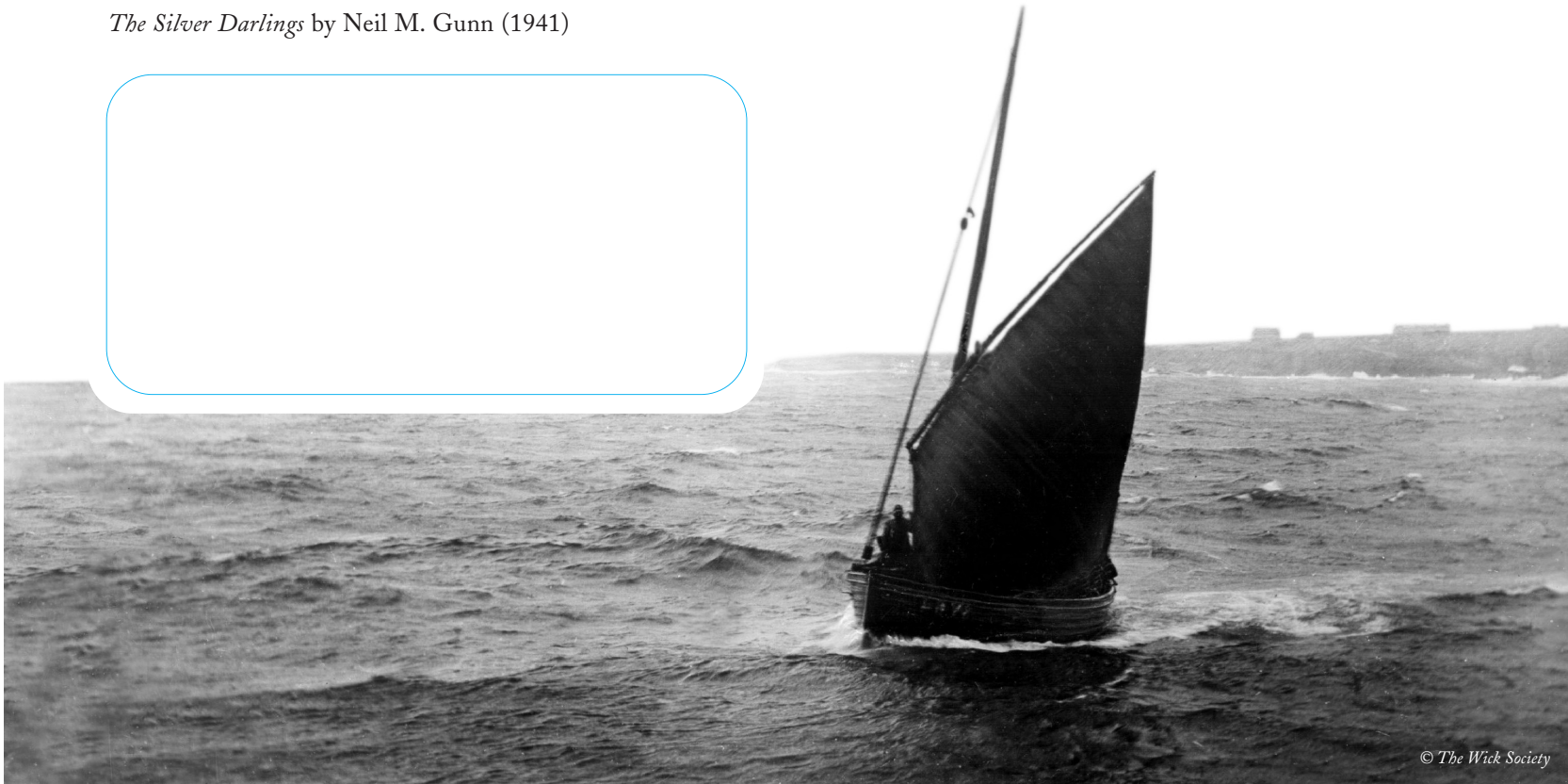
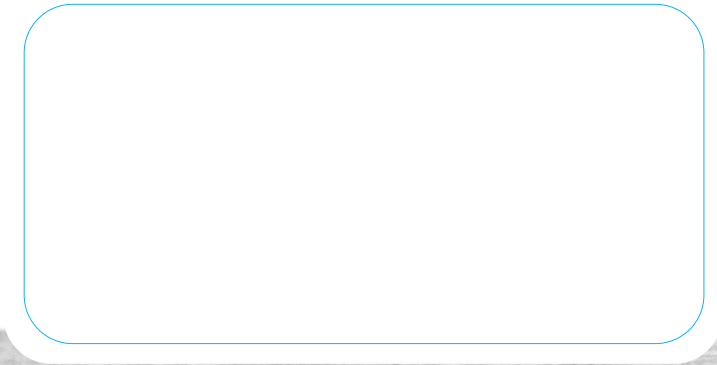
This magical bay in the far northeast of Scotland sits near fine bill loch and salmon fishing (the revered Helmsdale, Naver, Brora and Thurso are close by), while the cliffs are rich in birdlife.

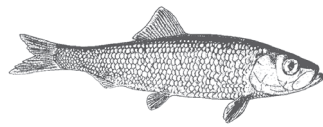
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*'They forgot everything, except the herrings, hundreds and thousands of them, the silver darlings...'*

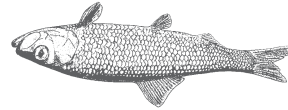
*The Silver Darlings* by Neil M. Gunn (1941)





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Have you remembered to tick the Gift Aid box?



## The Shore Cottages Appeal

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