



FIG. 12.

Burns Cottage

With a diagram devised and prepared by STEPHEN HUNTER, D.A.

By a feu charter, dated 22 June 1756¹ Dr. Alexander Campbell, physician in Ayr, disposed to William Burns, gardener at Doonside Miln,² seven acres and eighteen falls (Scots) of land, 'bounded on the North-East by a Ditch betwixt the said Land and the Land now feued out to John Tennent, on the South-East by the Road from Slaphouse to Bridge of Doon as now fixed by the Justices of Peace; on the South-West by the new-made Road from Alloway amongst the Serjeants Burn, and on the North-West and North by a Ditch to be made betwixt the same and the said Alexander Campbell's property according to the Straight Line now pited.'³ This land William Burns named New Gardens and on its eastern boundary facing the road built his cottage, where he lived from his marriage in December 1757 till he and his family moved to Mount Oliphant in 1766. A year later William Burns sold a portion of his holding (Wrightfield) and presumably found a tenant for the cottage and the remainder. In 1776 when the move was made to Lochlea, a bond on the cottage and its land was granted to the family of Fergussons of Doonholm, owners of Mount Oliphant.

On 1 August 1781 William Burns was able to dispose of his Alloway property to the Incorporation of Shoemakers in Ayr, for £160. The Incorporation, who had bought it as an investment, let it, and from an unknown date before 1800 the Cottage was in use as a public house, for a period known as the 'Burns Head Inn.'

In 1881 the Burns Monument Trustees acquired the Cottage and its land from the Incorporation, at a cost of £4000. The public house was closed and a museum established in its stead. Later the exhibits were removed to a new and separate museum building, and the Cottage restored to as near the original condition as the Trustees found possible.

While William Burns was still owner, alterations were made to the original fabric of the Cottage, and extensive additions and renovations were made during the ownership of the Incorporation. As it stands at present the Cottage differs from what it would be in 1759 in the following respects. The walls have been strengthened (this during William Burns's ownership). The turf roof was later straw-thatched, and is now covered with a reed-thatch. The roof ridge has been added and new chimney heads. The windows on the south-east side may have been enlarged. Whether the doorways have been altered is not known.⁴ Apart from these minor details, the Cottage faithfully retains its original characteristics. Inside, the articles of furniture are not original, but are of a period contemporary with the Poet.

1. For the feu charter and fuller details of the Cottage and its history see James McBain, *Burns Cottage*, 1904; see also T. C. Dunlop, Historical Note, in *Burns Cottage Catalogue*.
2. So spelled in the charter, though the signature is 'William Burnes.'
3. The feu charter clearly indicates the road as following its present route; an older route (see the article on *Tam's Road*) passed behind the New Gardens. The 'new-made Road . . . amongst the Serjeants Burn' had been made by William Burns. (See the article on *The Roup of the Lands of Alloway*.)
4. The doorway between the room and the byre is not shown on the plan in McBain, p. 123.