

Ruby's ancestors, the Petersons, were in Sand before 1800. Her great grand parents, Harriet Peterson and George Pole were the tenants of Burnside (Granny's, now a ruin) and her great grand uncles, Arthur, James and Peter Peterson were the tenants of Lower Gairdins (the house is now a shed). As the years went by the tenancy of Lower Gairdins passed on to Ruby's grand uncle, James Pole and the tenancy of Burnside passed to her grandparents, Jessie Pole and Laurence Moncrieff. In 1962 Lolly Moncrieff (Ruby's father) took the tenancy of Lower Gairdins and when Lolly's mother Jessie died in 1977 Lolly took on the tenancy of Burnside. Lolly died in 1986 and his family retained the tenancy of the crofts from the Sand estate.

1991 – Lolly Moncrieff's daughter Ruby and her husband Alan Inkster began to develop the Sand crofts after selling their business. After stockproof and rabbitproof fencing had been erected four shelterbelts of Lodgepole Pine and Sitka Spruce were planted with grant aid from the A.D.P. (Agriculture Development Plan). All the rabbitproof fencing and tree planting was done by Ruby and Alan.

1992 – Deciduous trees set in order to comply with grant conditions. Barn at Lower Gairdins renovated. Grant aided from the A.D.P. and the work done by Ruby and Alan.

1993 – Many of the deciduous trees died because first shelter hadn't started to grow after one year. All the young trees which were still alive were weeded and fed.

1994 – Crofthouse at Lower Gairdins gutted and renovated and turned into a storage shed. All the work was done by Ruby and Alan except for the demolition of the gable and the construction of large doors in the gable. The project was grant aided. Weeded and fed young trees in shelterbelts. Replaced dead trees.

1995 – Had a quiet year! Weeded and fed shelterbelt trees and replaced more dead trees.

1996 – The opportunity arose to buy the holding which had been tenanted until about 1958 by Annie Johnson. Acquiring this portion of land joined up the two crofts, Burnside and Lower Gairdins of which Ruby was the tenant. On this holding were three chalets which had been used for holiday lets. The Inksters put a lot of time and money into renovating two of them but it wasn't a successful venture. In September /October the old crofthouse at Annie's was re-roofed with Perspex and used as a cold greenhouse. In December with the help of Stuart Malcolmson and his digger the top pond was created and was lined with blue clay which was already there.

1997 – More fencing and another shelterbelt was created from the public road down along the west boundary of Annie's holding. This time 1,000 Sitka Spruce and 1,000 Hybrid Larch. After planting the trees there was six weeks of dry weather with northerly wind and most of the larch died but only about a dozen of the sitka died. In November with the help of Angus Moar and his digger the middle and third ponds were created, again lined with the natural clay which was already on site. Alan's dream of making ponds was complete with the top pond feeding the middle pond with water and the middle pond feeding the lower pond with an outlet pipe from the third pond. By March of 1997 frogs had started to inhabit the top pond.

1998 – Made the lower half of Annie's stockproof and drained wet parts of the land. Tried to spot kill dockens which were rampant in the lower half. The crofts of which Ruby was tenant were accepted into the E.S.A. (Environmentally Sensitive Area) scheme for five years. A replacement boundary fence was erected at the east side of Granny's with grant aid from the E.S.A. Weeded and fed trees which were planted last year.

1999 – Started to concentrate on what is now Annie's Da Lower Gairdin. Planted a shelterbelt of Sitka Spruce. Some of the trees were not of good quality and the ground in places was very wet with a result that some died in the first year. Swedish Whitebeams were planted in the North East corner of this piece of land. The whole area was then rabbitproofed. All this work was done by Ruby and Alan. In September second hand double glazed hardwood windows were being thrown out so Alan set his mind to utilize this gift. The result was a lean-to greenhouse built onto Annie's old crofthouse which had already been re-roofed. All this work was done by Ruby and Alan. Still trying to kill dockens in this piece of land! Replaced dead trees in the shelterbelt which was planted up in 1997.

2000 – Erected a high shelter fence around the yard in front of Annie's and began to build dykes and shelter-fences at the east side of the yard which is now Da Gully. All this work was done by Ruby and Alan. Still trying to kill dockens!

2001 – Alan was fed-up trying to kill dockens so decided to keep cutting the grass. With so much grass to cut a ride-on mower was purchased in July. More trees and willows set in Da Lower Gairdin and beds created around the ponds. Frogs are now in all the ponds. It was decided to pipe the water from the top to the middle pond and cover the open ditch. In October an old outhouse which was joined to Annie's crofthouse was renovated. While cleaning out the floor it was discovered that the back wall is built around a glacial erratic. There is another one which forms a feature in another part of the garden. Another storage shed and more stone to build low dykes!

2002 – E.S.A. status was granted for another five years starting in 2003. This scheme was beneficial to both flora and fauna. D. & R. Contractors repaired the track from the public road down to Annie's. More trees and bushes planted in Da Lower Gairdin.

2003 – In June good friends of neighbouring crofters in Sand wanted to buy a house site and it was decided to sell the chalet site as holiday letting was not a profitable exercise. As a lot of new materials had been invested in the chalets it was agreed that the Inksters would be responsible for removing the chalets from the site. This they did in their normal careful "waste not want not, reuse recycle manner". Two chalets were demolished in 2003.

2004 – In March a contractor was hired to replace the fence around the hill-right (the apportionment) at the Semblister loch. This fence was grant aided. Unfortunately Alan was hospitalised in April and diagnosed with cancer. This did not stop the Inksters from demolishing the third chalet before the builders moved on site. With continual mowing the dockens are disappearing, thank goodness.

2005 – Six sleepers were purchased and positioned at the upper side of the middle pond. A walkway was made at the bottom of the sleepers and so the raised bed along the north side of the middle pond happened.

2006 – With the professional help of Thorntons in Dundee a charitable company was being set up to protect the environmental project at Sand. All the time Alan was planning how to make the most of the materials salvaged from the chalets. Later in the year it was decided to open up Granny's shelterbelt and make use of the shelter being given by the well established trees.

2007 – An extra bit of land was taken in when the new boundary fence was erected along the south side of Granny's shelterbelt. It was now easier to plan a track around the area. A grant was received through the Shetland Islands Council's "Access for All" funding. In March a substantial track was made using the services of Mitchel and David Johnston with their earth-moving equipment. Da Gairdins Environment Company Ltd., was formed with four directors. The laird, Peter Hick, was approached to see if he would be willing to sell the land of which Ruby was the tenant. He agreed and the land was bought and transferred to the company when it was formed. Mitchel Johnston took out the site for the shed while he was making the track through Granny's. Later in the year the concrete was run for the floor (26 feet long and 24 feet wide) the size of two chalets joined together. This was done by Ruby and Alan and a Belle concrete mixer.

2008 – Hydro-Electric re-routed power lines under the upper shelterbelt in Annie's at no cost to Da Gairdins. Started to plant rhododendrons in Granny's. Ewan up in March/April brashing and thinning trees in Granny's and made a start to Upper Gairdins.

2009 – In February after the Plantiecrub had gathered unwanted Christmas trees, the chipper was taken to Tingwall and 48 bags of chipped trees appeared in twenty minutes with the help of Olaf and Crystal. The chips were taken to Sand for future use. During May, June and July young people and their supervisor from the Bridges Project helped to weed and do other gardening jobs. A second-hand grid was purchased from the S.I.C. and in June D. & R. Contractors opened up the end of the track which joins on to the public road and made provision for a grid and a gate. William Smith, a local builder, did the concrete work for the grid, Peter Scott laid the grid sections with his tractor and William finished the whole thing by the end of July. In August Andy Alderman and Frank Gilfillan came to see what the Community Service people could do to help Da Gairdins. Since then the Community Service workers and their supervisors have been many times and have done a great deal of good work all over the company land especially with the cutting of paths through the shelterbelts. In September ~Da Gairdins has the services of a teenager with learning difficulties and a helper from the Special Need Department of the S.I.C. Education Department. They helped to set bulbs and shrubs. Also in September the company was nominated by Doreen and Willie Waugh (who bought the chalet site in 2004) for recognition in the Shetland Environment Awards which is held each year. The nomination was successful and Ruby and Alan attended the awards ceremony on 18<sup>th</sup> November and received a plaque made from re-cycled materials. Also in September a replacement boundary fence between Upper Gairdins and Grindaby was erected. Most of the work was done by Colin the owner of Grindaby. The fence was grant aided. In October setts were gifted by Zandra and Ian Gilfillan to build a low retaining wall around a glacial erratic boulder. Alan was busy with this building job when his health deteriorated and he had to go to hospital on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2009 and sadly died on 1<sup>st</sup> December.