

WATERMILL FRASERBURGH ABERDEENSHIRE



Archaeological Evaluation and Standing Building Survey

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Carried out 8th January 2009
by
Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



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by
H K Murray

H K Murray BA, PhD, MIFA, FSA Scot
J C Murray BA, MIFA, FSA Scot, FMA
Hill of Belnagoak, Methlick, Ellon, Aberdeenshire AB41 7JN
Telephone: (01651) 806394 e-mail: cmurray@btinternet.com

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1 Background

- 1.1 Proposals for the development for housing of a site on land at Watermill, Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire were subject to a planning condition requiring an archaeological evaluation and a survey of standing buildings to be carried out.
- 1.2 The archaeological condition was applied in the context of the National Planning Policy Guideline No 5, Archaeology and Planning, which states that it is necessary for developers to arrange for archaeological fieldwork to take place prior to development, in appropriate circumstances.
- 1.3 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned by Claymore Homes and the work was undertaken on the 8th January 2009.

2. The Site

- 2.1 The site is located on the south side of the A98 at the present W edge of Fraserburgh.
NGR: NJ 980 666. Parish: Fraserburgh
- 2.2 The site lies on a gentle north facing slope rising up from the road. It extends to slightly over an acre, the E part of which was in rough grass, with the derelict buildings of the Watermill pub, house and tarred carpark covering the remainder.
- 2.3 Part of a 19th century mill complex had survived on the site until some 2 years ago when it was deemed dangerous and was demolished by Aberdeenshire Council.

3. Desk-top survey

- 3.1 A search was carried out in the Sites and Monuments Record, Archaeology Service, Aberdeenshire Council and in the Sites and Monuments Records of the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Scotland (RCAHMS) through Canmore, Canmap and Pastmap.
- 3.2 The 19th century mill buildings and brewery formerly on the site are cited in RCAHMS as NMRS No: NJ96NE 33.00 and as Seggie and Co Mill NMRS No: NJ96NE 26.

The brewery and mill are in the Aberdeenshire SMR as NJ96NE0013.

The complex was described in 1977 by Hume as ‘an irregular, much-altered group of 1-, 2- and 3-storey buildings dominated by a large asbestos-roofed kiln. Most recently an oatmeal mill’. (J R Hume 1977 *The industrial archaeology of Scotland, 2: the Highlands and Islands*, London, 99).

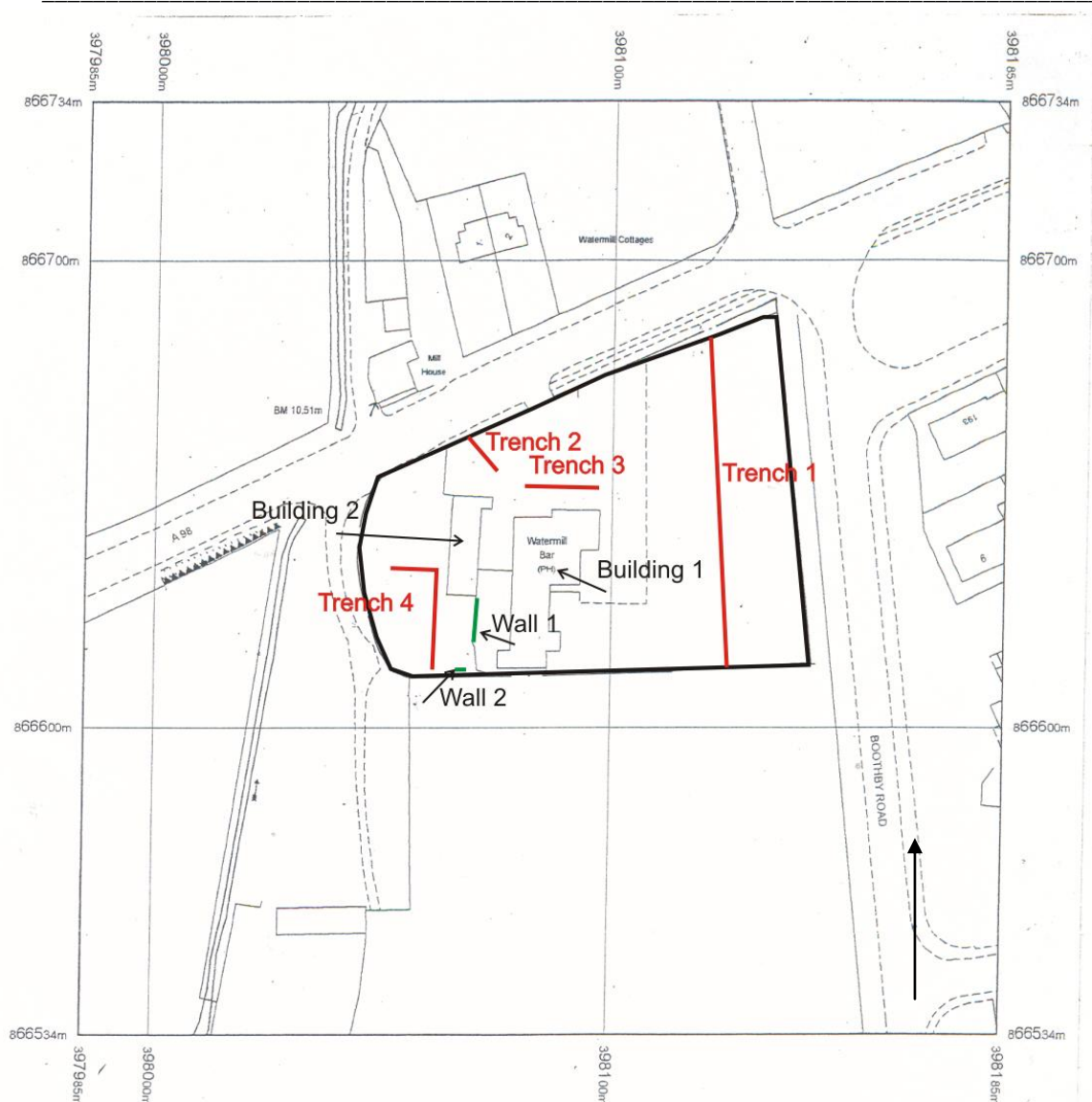
4 The Standing Building Survey

- 4.1 As the original intent of the standing building survey was to record any remaining elements of the mill and brewery, the survey has included wall foundations and other features that may relate to the 19th century complex.
- 4.2 Existing Buildings Two buildings were standing on the site at the time of the survey.

Building 1 was a single-storied building of concrete block construction with a pitched tiled roof over the frontage and a tarred flat roof over the rest of the structure. It had been built as a pub (The Watermill bar) and included bar, lounge, kitchens, toilets etc. It appeared to be of 1960s/ early 1970s construction.



Illus 1 Building 1 from north



Illus 2 Plan of site showing evaluation trenches and surveyed buildings and features

Building 2 was a single storied house with loft above. The front wall on the east was of semi-dressed granite blocks, the other walls being of rubble stone construction. The roof was pitched with granite chimneys at each gable, the present roof covering being of asbestos slates. All the windows were modern replacements. The interior had been restructured and has not therefore been recorded in detail. An extension built of harled concrete blocks had been added to the north side, with a separate brick chimney; this had a separate entrance door but at some stage access had been broken through the north gable of the main cottage. The south gable of the cottage is of interest as it appears to be of double thickness with very large blocks visible in the west wall. It appears likely that the cottage

had been built abutting the original brewery building and that, when the brewery was demolished, its north wall (common to the cottage) was left standing.

The cottage appears to lie to the north of the more northerly building attached to the brewery as shown on the 1st edition map (Illus 9). It may date to after the 3rd edition OS map of 1909 (surveyed 1907) as the buildings on that map do not appear to be as far north as the cottage.



Illus 3 Front (east) wall of Building 2



Illus 4 South end of back (west) wall of Building 2 showing double thickness of gable
Walls to the south of building 2. The line of the front wall of the cottage was continued to the south by a low stone wall foundation, 600mm wide (Illus 2: Wall 1).

Two vertical iron columns were built into this wall. This is thought to be part of the foundation of the brewery- a wall in the bank at the south of the site (Illus 2: wall 2) may have been the back of the building, with traces of a lighter mortared wall with less substantial foundations being possibly an internal wall at right angles to it. Part of the footprint of this building had been reused as a concrete block built garage or shed of which only part of a wall and the sliding door groove remained. This had abutted the south wall of the cottage.



Illus 5 Wall 1 to the south of the cottage Building 2

- 4.3 The 1st edition Ordnance Survey map of 1874 (surveyed 1871) shows that the mill and brewery formerly on the present site were part of a complex series of different functions using the same burn and mill pond (Illus 8). The mill appears to have been the western building, with the brewery to the east.
- Mill pond* : The map shows the burn to the south of the site diverted to fill a mill pond which is now infilled and only visible as a slight dip in the field to the south. Two lades (lades 1 and 2) are shown leaving the pond.

Lade 1, which passed to the west of the mill cottages (A: now in ruins), still exists and was photographed beside the road (E; Illus 6,7) to the west of the present site. At this point it has a well-built stone revetting, a surviving metal sluice and a culvert beneath the road which bifurcates the flow to lade 3 and to the main outflow to the sea



Illus 6 Lade 1 at point E with mill house on opposite side of road



Illus 7 Lade 1 detail of culvert

Lade 2 fed the mill on the present site, with what appears to be a further channel running to the brewery buildings. No positive trace of this lade was observed in trench 4, although it is possible that the cut on the east side of trench 4 filled with midden may have been the line of the channel to the brewery (Illus 13).

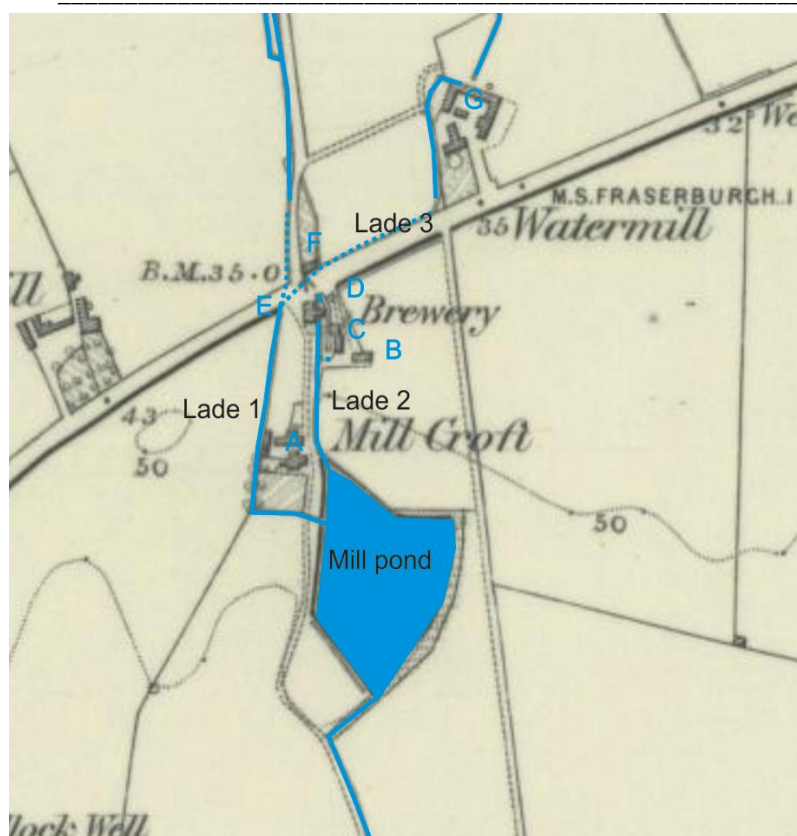
The line of outflow from these channels is not clear on the 1st edition map but it may be assumed that it will have passed under the road and joined lade 3. It is possible that the large drain in trench 2 may have been a remnant of this outflow (Illus 11, 12).

Buildings on present site in 1874 (1871): Three buildings are shown on the present site (Illus 8). The most westerly (D) is clearly the mill with the wheel on the east side. This is also shown on the 2nd and 3rd edition Ordnance survey maps and survived until its demolition c. 2 years ago and has been described to the writers as still having had the wheel visible on the east side up to the time of demolition. The extreme disturbance in the west section of trench 4 is likely to represent the demolition rubble backfilled into the lade and the mill wheel pit. Building C appears to have been the brewery complex with a separate water channel. This is shown as two conjoined buildings which appear to be still shown on the 3rd edition Ordnance map of 1909 (surveyed 1907). Wall fragments 1 and 2 recorded to the south of the existing house (Building 1) may be remnants of the brewery.

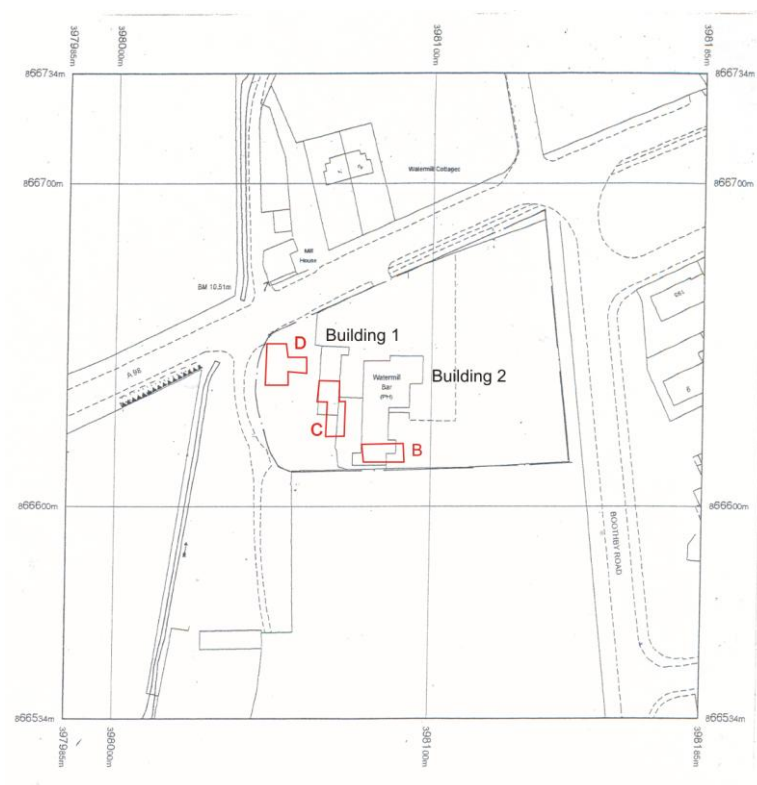
Building D shown at the south edge of the present site is likely to have been totally removed by the modern pub (Building 2).

Lade 3 is shown emerging at the N side of the road serving the farm building (G) where it may have powered a bruiser for cattle feed etc. The outflow joins the main outflow to the sea.

The outflow to sea flows alongside the lane to the west of the mill house (F) and splits with a channel running to a small building.



Illus 8 1st edition Ordnance Survey map with overlay highlighting the water courses



Illus 9 Plan of site with rough overlay of the buildings shown on the 1st edition Ordnance survey map

5 The Evaluation

- 5.1 Evaluation trenches 1 and 4 were excavated using a full-slew mechanical digger with a 2m wide toothless ditching bucket. Trenches 2 and 3 were excavated through the tarmac of the carpark using a toothed bucket.
- 5.2 A total of four trenches were excavated comprising c. 7% of the development area outwith the buildings. Trenches 2-4 were placed to locate any traces of the 19th century mill and brewery complex that survived.

Trench 1

GPS N end: NJ98115 66673. S end: NJ98119 66610

Length: 64m. Width 2m Orientation N-S

From N end	Total excavated	Made up ground	Original buried topsoil
4m	1.55m	1.15m	0.40m
15m	1.30m	0.90m	0.40m
30m	0.55m	0.15m	0.40m
35-50m	c.0.20-0.40m	c.0.20-0.40m	
62m	0.75m	0.50m	0.25m

A rubble field drain running WNW/ESE was cut at between 60 and 61m from the N end of the trench. A path to the pub ran E/W at 43-47m from the north end of the trench.

Finds: None

The natural slope of the field had been levelled in this area with considerable dumped material. Nothing related to the brewery or mill was observed.



Illus 10 Trench 1 looking N with farm on opposite side of road

Trench 2

GPS NW end: NJ 98065 66648 SE end: NJ 98073 66640

Length: 11m. Width 1.5m Orientation NW/SE

From NW end	Total excavated	Made up ground	Original buried soil
2m	0.90m	0.35-0.40m	c 0.50m
11m	1.10m		

A rubble field drain was cut into the buried soil at 2.5-3.5m from the NW end of trench, running SW/NE.

Between 4 and 8 m from the NW end there was a cut for a far larger drain with parts of a ruinous stone lined culvert with a single surviving stone capstone. The culvert appeared to be c 1m wide but could not be recorded in detail as water trapped in it flooded the trench. It had been cut into the natural from the top of the old buried soil. It was sealed by mortary rubble.

This is likely to have been the outflow drain from the lade which fed the mill and/or the brewery.

Finds: Late 19th/early 20th century stoneware and glass bottle fragments were found at the surface of the mortar/ rubble.



Illus 11 Trench 2, looking SE. the ranging rod marks the line of the culvert



Illus 12 Detail of culvert

Trench 3

GPS W end: NJ NJ98079 66640 E end: NJ 98094 66641

Length: 14m. Width 1.5m Orientation E/W

From W end	Total excavated	Made up ground
0m	600	600
14m	750	750

The ground was made up with sandy rubble to the top of natural.

Finds: None

Trench 4

GPS NW end: NJ 98051 66622 S end of N/S section: NJ 98058 66603

L - shaped, length: 22.5m N/S and 13m E/W. Width 2m Orientation N/S and E/W (at N end)

	Total excavated	
S end of N/S	0.60-0.90m	Deeper to

section		bank, midden and rubble on E, W side natural sand.
N end of N/S section	0.60-0.75m	W side :0.60 natural sand E side : 0.70- 0.75m rubble
W end of E/W section	1.0m	1.0m all rubble

The E side of the N/S section of the trench was of dark midden material and some rubble which appeared to fill a cut in natural. This may be related to the water channel for the brewery or the demolition of the brewery buildings which would have been slightly to the east.

The W side of the E/W section of the trench was deeply disturbed (to below the excavated level) with infill of heavy rubble. Much water flowed through the rubble and flooded the trench.

This is on the line of the mill building and is probably the rubble from the recent demolition filling in the mill lade, wheel pit and foundations. The very disturbed ground suggests that it is unlikely that any coherent foundations survive.

Finds: Late 19th/ early 20th century glass and stoneware bottle fragments and some sherds of redware dishes of similar date were found in the midden at the E side of the trench.



Illus 13 Trench 4 N/S section showing midden material in cut along east side of trench



Illus 14 Trench 4 E/W section showing demolition infill from mill

6. Impacts and Mitigations

- 6.1 Although the survey and evaluation revealed some features of the 19th century mill and brewery complex these were all robbed out, demolished or badly disturbed. It is deemed very unlikely that any more coherent foundations will survive.

Impacts

None

Mitigations

None

- 6.2 Although no archaeological features or finds were evident in the evaluation trenches, this does not preclude the possibility of chance finds or archaeological discoveries outwith the evaluation trenches.

Should such chance finds occur during the development phases, then the Archaeology Service, Aberdeenshire Council, or Murray Archaeological Services

Ltd, must be informed immediately so that an appropriate archaeological response can be formulated and agreed by all parties concerned.

Catalogue of Finds

Some late 19th/ early 20th century glass and stoneware bottle fragments were found in trenches 2 and 4. Most were very fragmentary and unmarked. Those fragments with names were recorded in case they related to the brewery but not retained. Three appeared to relate to Fraserburgh, one to Peterhead and one to Aberdeen. Two of the Fraserburgh bottles appear to have the name Barnsley on one side.

1. Glass bottle fragment. At top :M.MORTIM** At base :FRASERBURGH
On other side of bottle **NDS LD and below that *AKERS and below that *ARNSLEY
2. Glass bottle fragment. At top: **ED At base: MARK* and *TERS
Below that: **SERBURGH. On other side of bottle D* and below that BAR**
3. Glass bottle fragment. ** SERBURGH
4. Glass bottle fragment. Oval medallion with letters starting at top and running around the medallion: ** CO MARK At base *****DEEN
5. Stoneware bottle fragment **ONLY
**NTER
***EAD

Catalogue of digital photographs (supplied on CD to NMRS and Aberdeenshire SMR)

Digital frame no	Subject
1-3	Trench 1, looking N
4	Building 2 looking W
5-7	Building 2 (Pub) looking S

8-12	Cottage Building 2, front wall, looking SW
13-18	Trench 2 with details of culvert
19-22	Trench 3
23-26	Trench 4, looking N
27-29	S gable of cottage Building 2
30-32	Trench 4 looking E
33-39	Lade 1 and culvert
40-45	Retaining wall on east side of lade 1 to S of culvert
46-50	Lade 1
51-52	Double gable at S end of cottage Building 2
53	Mill cottages to S of site
54-57	Walls 1 and 2 to S of cottage Building 2
58-59	Looking N along line of wall 1 towards cottage Building 2
60-62	Interior views of watermill lounge (Building 1)
63	Looking SW of front (E) elevation of cottage (Building 2)
64-65	Interior shots of cottage Building 2
66-67	Looking NW at the double gable at S end of cottage Building 2
68	Looking S along wall 1