

Site **Fort George**

N.G.R NH 7618 5681

Project Description Watching brief in the Blacksmiths Shop

Report

The blacksmith's shop measures 11.5m E-W x 4.86m N-S, and the part covered by the watching brief comprised the W part of the floor, and area of 4 x 4.86m. The excavated trenches (1 and 2) measured 4.6m N-S x 0.4-0.9m in width, and lay 3m apart. The W part of the shop is partly divided by a short N-S wall protruding from the N wall, and measuring 1.62m long and 0.48m wide, located 1.76m from the NW corner of the room. This serves to create an alcove in this corner, and the wall contains a chimney flue on its E side; these features indicate the position of the furnace.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was aligned N-S and was located 0.2m from the W wall. 120mm of concrete (101) and rubble flooring was removed over the N end of the trench to reveal a compact layer of coal debris (102), 35-60mm thick. This in turn sealed a paved area of sandstone and shale flagstones (103) extending 2.3m S from the N end of the trench. The flagstone comprised well cut rectangular slabs 60mm thick, laid in a bed of white mortar. The range of size of the flags was from a maximum of 1m x 0.6m to a minimum of 0.24m x 0.6m. Almost all of the flagstones are in a shattered state, and would therefore not have been removed for re-use elsewhere in the fort.

The S end of Trench 1 had a different sequence, where 101 gave way to a surface of hard trodden coal debris (104). This surface was located at a similar depth and lay adjacent to flagstones 103 to the N. 104 lay on a deposit of broken red sandstone debris (105), which in turn sealed an indefinite depth of yellow sand and gravels (107), the general levelling material on which the fort was erected.

Trench 2

Trench 2 lay 3m to the E of Trench 1, and was of similar dimensions. Concrete 101 overlay further flagstones at the W end (106) and an associated sandstone block (108). Flags 106 differ from those in Trench 1 in that they are square, measuring 64 x 64cm. The sandstone block stands some 8cm above the level of the flagstones at the NW corner of the flagged surface, and may be part of the support for the smithy furnace.

Interpretation

As the trenches did not encounter the upstanding walls, the relating of floor to wall deposits is problematic. However, the following is a likely sequence of events. The building was erected c1760 on levelled sand deposits (107). The floor was then flagged throughout (103, 106). After the smithy fell out of use, the flags were removed, where they could be re-used, and the building became a coal store, the floor of which (102, 104) was eventually concreted over (101).

Contexts

Context	Description
101	20th-century concrete floor sealing all contexts
102	Coal dust and debris overlying flagstones in W part of smithy
103	Flagstones in Trench 1, grey shale and yellow sandstone
104	Coal dust and debris overlying non-flagged area S of 103
105	Thin layer of red sandstone dust & fragments, founds for paving
106	Flagstones in Trench 2
107	Redeposited yellow sands & gravels, general infill material
108	Corner of a sandstone block in Trench 2, to support the furnace platform

Finds

No finds were recovered