HISTORIC BUILDING SURVEY REPORT:
LIMESTONE HILL MILL, TICKHILL, SOUTH YORKSHIRE

NGR: SK 5767 9291
AAL Site Code: TILM 11
OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-92724

Report prepared for Scorer and Hawkins Limited
On behalf of Mr and Mrs Dewar

By
Allen Archaeology Limited
Report Number 2011008

February 2011
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Cover image: General view of the site, looking east-north-east
Summary

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by Scorer and Hawkins, on behalf of Mr and Mrs Dewar to carry out a photographic survey of Limestone Hill Mill in Tickhill, South Yorkshire.

- The survey was requested to be included in part of a management plan for the mill, which was required by Natural England in advance of an application for funding for the restoration of the mill.

- The mill comprises a three-storey stone structure with an associated mill race, dam and mill pond, and is believed to date to c.1800. The building itself is in a poor state of repair, with many large cracks in the walls and holes in the roof and floors. This has also resulted in the loss of historic graffiti with plasterwork falling off the walls. Many of its original features still remain however, including the waterwheel and much of the internal gearing.
1.0 Introduction

1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited (hereafter AAL) was commissioned by Scorer and Hawkins on behalf of Mr and Mrs Dewar at Limestone Hill Farm, Tickhill in South Yorkshire to undertake a photographic survey of Limestone Hill Mill watermill and associated millrace north-west of the farm. The survey is part of a management plan created by Natural England for restoration on the mill.

1.2 The methodology conforms to a brief prepared by the Regional Historic Environment Advisor at Natural England (Hopwood-Lewis 2010) a specification prepared by this company (AAL 2010), the English Heritage guidelines ‘Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice’ (English Heritage 2006) and the IfA ‘Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures’ (1996, revised 2001 and 2008).

1.3 The survey report will be included as part of the management plan for the site. A copy will also be submitted to the South Yorkshire Historic Environment Record, and a digital copy will be submitted to the OASIS project (Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations).

2.0 Site Location and Description

2.1 The site is situated in the administrative district of South Yorkshire, approximately 10km south of central Doncaster and c.1.5km west of Tickhill. It is on the south side of Denaby Wife Dyke/Paper Mill Dyke, north-west of the miller’s cottage and is accessed by a track from Limestone Hill Farm, to the south-east of the mill. The site centres on NGR SK 5767 9291, and lies at a height of approximately 25m above Ordnance Datum.

3.0 Project Background

3.1 Mr and Mrs Dewar expressed an interest in restoring the old water mill on their land at Limestone Hill Farm, Tickhill, which entered Higher Level Stewardship in November 2010, with a view to arranging educational visits for schools and the local community.

3.2 Though Limestone Hill Farm falls within a conservation area and is Grade II listed, the mill itself is not listed, as it is not considered to be part of the model farm. It represents one of only four water-powered corn mills in the county however and is considered to be of great historic significance for the local area (Hopwood-Lewis 2010). It was therefore requested that prior to any restoration works being undertaken a management plan should be prepared, including a programme of historic building recording.

4.0 Historical Background

4.1 The structure that is the subject of the proposed survey is a limestone built watermill dating to c.1800. It has a double pitched pantile roof, and exhibits significant survival of interior fixtures and fittings associated with its use as a mill, as well as numerous carvings and historic graffiti. Externally, a metal waterwheel survives in situ in the mill race, which has silted up and is no longer functional (Hopwood-Lewis 2010).
5.0 Methodology

5.1 The works described below are based on the English Heritage document ‘Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice’ (2006) requirements for a RCHME Level 3 Building Survey. The methodology also fulfils the recommendations of a brief provided by the Natural England Regional Historic Environment Advisor (Hopwood-Lewis 2010), and the relevant IfA standards and guidance document (IfA 1996, revised 2001 and 2008). The building survey was undertaken by the author on Friday 21st January 2011, using a 12 megapixel digital SLR camera (Fujifilm Finepix S9500). Weather was dry, bright and sunny, although little light was available for some interior shots.

5.2 The photographic works comprised the recording of:

- All external elevations
- All internal elevations (including internal walls and subdivisions)
- The relationship of the structures to their surroundings and the wider landscape
- Architectural details, i.e. windows, doors, decorative brickwork, carpentry joints, carvings, re-used timbers and other interesting features, fixtures or fittings. Generally a single representative shot was taken of particular features such as windows or openings of a single type that occur more than once within the structure
- A general internal photographic record of the building to show the form, general appearance and methods of construction

5.3 All photographs incorporated metric scales of appropriate length for each photo where applicable. A tripod was used when required.

5.4 As well as being recorded photographically, any identified graffiti or carvings were also recorded by means of rubbings taken using tracing paper and a charcoal pencil, and sprayed with fixative to prevent smudging and aid their preservation.

6.0 Results (Figure 2 – 12)

6.1 The watermill is situated north-west of the miller’s lodge, on the south bank of a watercourse that is known as Denaby Wife Dyke to the west of the mill and Paper Mill Dyke to the east. Though water still runs through the Dyke it has silted up since the last usage of the mill and the surrounding area including the mill race is heavily overgrown (Plate 1).

6.2 The watermill is a three-storey structure built in coursed limestone blocks, with a double pitched gabled roof of S-shaped ceramic pantiles (Plate 2). There is an entrance on the south elevation with large stone jambs and lintel including a prominent keystone, framing a pair of wooden panelled doors (Plates 2 and 3). The doors are in poor shape and falling off their hinges, with evidence for several later ad hoc repairs, including the addition of steel grilles and wooden planking.

6.3 The lintel to the east of the keystone possesses an inscription which was too faint to read either in situ or on the rubbing which was taken. Each door also includes graffiti, the west one reading ‘W.S’ and the east consisting of scratched cross marks in a roughly circular pattern (Plates 4 and 5).

6.4 An opening to the first floor is located east of the ground floor entrance and at the time of writing was accessible by ladder. The opening has a flat arch over with a keystone and rubbed limestone blocks, and a wooden frame, but no door (Plate 2).
The west elevation has three openings, one on each floor, each with a flat arch the same as that over the first floor opening on the south elevation (see 6.4 above). None of the openings retain their windows (Plates 6 and 7).

The mill has a cast iron waterwheel located in a wheel pit on its north elevation (Plates 8 and 9). It is a breastshot wheel, which means the water falls on to the wheel approximately on the same level as the central axle. This is a common feature for mills that are fed from a mill pond (Schmoller 1992), as was the case with the current building. The current wheel is in a poor state of repair, and many of the blades are badly rusted. Today the pond or dam which lay upstream (west) of the mill is very overgrown and has reverted to a marshy area (Plate 10). Water would have been directed from the mill pond into the mill race via a dam and weir; it would then have flown into and gathered at the feed tank. Once the sluice was opened from within the mill, the pressure of the falling water would power the wheel (Plates 8 to 12).

The east elevation has three openings, the same as on the west elevation, although the lower half of the first floor opening has been bricked up (Plate 13). More brick repairs are evident on the north-east corner at ground level, and at the roofline to the south. Derelict and overgrown elements of a former brick structure, possibly an outhouse or store, extend to the east.

Many of the original interior features of the mill remain, however some stone floor slabs have been removed on the ground floor or ‘spout floor’, a later brick repair has been made on the south-east corner and the plaster is falling off on all interior walls on all three floors. The ground floor space is mostly occupied by the wooden structure (hereafter referred to as ‘the cog-house’) built to protect the machinery of cogs, shafts and bearings (Plates 14, 15, 17 – 24). Cog-houses such as these protect the machinery from freezing, thus minimizing the risk of losing many hours of work during cold weather.

Within the interior of the mill several examples of graffiti still remain both on plaster and wooden surfaces. On the south elevation, east of the doors graffiti was observed depicting a symmetrical floral pattern within a circle (Plate 16). On the wooden door of the cog house are a number of depictions of windmills, presumably the same one, and a house, overlapping some much fainter earlier graffiti (Plate 20, Figure 12).

West of the cog-house is a wooden partition wall, aligned east-west. To the north of this, in the north wall is a small square opening with a metal wheel, which is used to raise and lower the sluice gate outside (Plate 17).

The main external waterwheel appears to be the only one completely made of metal. The other wheels and cogs inside are composites of iron and wood or entirely wooden. This is a common combination, which reduces the noise levels, as it avoids having metal grinding against metal, the motion of the machinery itself is made smoother, it is easier to replace damaged wooden teeth on the cogs, and it eliminates the chance of sparks catching on the very dry, fine and flammable flour dust (National Trust 2010 and I.W. undated).

The cog-house a recess or pit adjacent to the external waterwheel to house the pit wheel, a large vertical cog connected to the waterwheel via a horizontal shaft. The pit wheel in turn powers a smaller horizontal cog also known as the wallower or primary crown. The wallower is fitted with a large vertical wooden beam or main shaft which extends to the first floor (Plate 21). The wallower powers the main shaft which makes the large horizontal great spur wheel above rotate (Plate 22).

If the miller chose to the great spur wheel could power up to three stone nuts, which are smaller horizontal cogs abutting the spur wheel to the east, west and south. A threaded screw at the base of each spindle allowed the nut to be raised and lowered to engage or disengage with the spur wheel.
wheel, as and when it was required to turn each individual millstone (Plates 23 and 24). The examples to the south and east remain in situ; the stone nut to the west has been removed and currently lies adjacent to the sluice wheel. The stone nuts are connected to vertical shafts (spindles) that rotate the three millstones located on first floor.

6.14 The first floor, also known as the ‘stone floor’ is accessed by the opening on the south elevation and is where the grain was milled to produce the flour. Two of the three stationary lower millstones or bedstones remain in situ and are situated to the east and south of the main vertical shaft, reflecting the position of the two remaining stone nuts below (Plates 25 – 27). Only one of the upper revolving stones, called running stones, is in situ to the south of the main shaft, although the eastern runner stone is present leaning against the north wall.

6.15 The millstones are built of shaped stone blocks fitted within a metal hoop, and bonded with plaster or cement. They have a pattern of irregular grooves, known as ‘furrows’ with flat areas between known as ‘lands’ (Watts 2002). These are likely to be French ‘burrs’, blocks of a tertiary chert from the Paris area, generally imported as ballast and shaped into blocks for milling. These were expensive stones, as they required manufacture by a specialist maker, whereas other cheaper stones, such as millstone grit from Derbyshire and imported German lava stone were generally made from a single piece. However, they were also considered to produce a far superior, fine white flour, whereas some stones, particularly German lava stones left a dark powdery residue which discoloured the flour (Watts 2002 and Weaver 2004).

6.16 The millstones would probably have been covered by a wooden box or ‘tun’, thus preventing the grain flowing over the entire floor. A ‘horse’ or wooden frame would hold a grain hopper on top of the tun. The hopper would be fed with grain from the second floor or ‘bin floor’ and there is a wooden chute for this purpose evident to the south of the crown wheel. The grain would then run from the hopper into a chute or ‘shoe’, which was repeatedly shaken by an iron spindle (damsel) that revolved with the runner stone, causing the grains to fall into the centre of the millstone. Here the grain would fall between the furrows and be ground finer and finer as it made its way to the outside of the millstones. The flour would gather under the tun and fall through a hole in the floor to a chute on ground floor where it would fall into sacks (Plate 23). Many of these items survive in the mill, although no longer in situ (Plates 25 – 27).

6.17 At the top of the main shaft on the first floor is the horizontal crown wheel, which was used to power auxiliary machinery (Plate 28). To the north, the crown wheel engaged with a vertical cog that turned a belt wheel, which would have powered the flour dresser, now in the possession of Cusworth Hall Museum (Hopwood-Lewis 2010). The purpose of the dresser was to separate whole meal into bran and white flour and it would probably have been located on the first floor adjacent to the wheel. The cog was attached to a wooden gearing mechanism that allowed it to be engaged and disengaged as and when the flour dresser was needed.

6.18 The second set of auxiliary machinery driven by the crown wheel is a sack hoist to the east. A vertical cog engages with the crown wheel, and is connected by a shaft running east to a wheel, with a chain still in situ connecting to another wheel on the second floor (Plate 27). Again, the cog can be engaged and disengaged by means of a wooden gearing mechanism.

6.19 The south wall on first floor also bears some graffiti on the plaster comprising a number of initials and dates, ranging in date from 1807 to 1827 (Plate 30). Loss of plaster from the walls has resulted in the loss of further graffiti from the building in recent years (Mr Dewar, pers. comm.). A search of trade directories for the area failed to elucidate to whom the initials belonged.

6.20 The second floor is accessed by a flight of wooden stairs in the south-west corner of the building. The roof structure is visible and comprises king post roof trusses with common and principal rafters, with purlins trenched into the front of the principals (Plate 31). In the north-
east corner is a wheel for the sack hoist connected by a chain to a wheel on the first floor and
driven by the crown wheel, also on the first floor. A shaft extends to the west from this wheel,
the western end of which is threaded to receive a rope that connected with a pulley to the south,
positioned directly over a hole in the floor through which sacks of grain would be raised and
lowered (Plates 32 and 33).

6.21 There are a number of other voids in the floor, including a large gap in the south-west corner
and another in the north-west corner. Some of these voids appear to be a result of decay and
damage, whereas some are functional, such as the hole below the sack hoist pulley. (Plate 35).
At least part of the large hole in the south-west corner would have been purposefully made,
perhaps to enable sacks being lowered and pulled between the floors. There is also a smaller
opening under the roof pulley for this purpose (Plate 36).

7.0 Discussion

7.1 Limestone Hill Mill is built adjacent to and powered by water flowing from west to east along
Denaby Wife Dike, known as Paper Mill Dyke east of the mill. It has been suggested that this
name may point to a usage other than for corn milling, although this name is more likely to
derive from the mill that was situated further downstream at the former medieval friary at
Friar’s Hill, just outside Tickhill and shown on the 1854 (Figure 9) and 1902 (Figure 10)
Ordnance Survey maps of the area as a paper mill.

7.2 The date of the building is generally considered to be c.1800, and there was little evidence
recovered from the site survey or the documentary research to contradict this view. The earliest
surviving graffiti recorded inside the building dated to 1807, providing a terminus ante quem.
Nor does the presence of a metal rather than wooden waterwheel aid in dating the building. Cast
iron wheels began to be used from about 1800, and became almost universal by c.1850, so an
early 19th century date would again seem acceptable in this case. In addition, it is unclear
whether the existing waterwheel is original or a replacement (Ball et. al. 2006). Further
evidence of the date of the building is derived from the transcription of an interview with Mr
and Mrs Dewar undertaken for the Tickhill Local History Society in 2008
(www.tickhillhistorysociety.org.uk). Mr Dewar refers to a field on his land known as Irish
Close, which he believes is so named due to an encampment of Irish labourers who excavated
the millpond, and he reports findings of early 19th century Irish coins from the field. He goes on
to say that he was told of a map of 1793 that does not show the mill, but that it was present on a
map ten years later, and also that there was some graffiti dated to 1805 in the mill that has since
fallen away.

7.3 The mill is generally in a poor state of repair, with major cracks evident in all the walls, and
holes in the roof and floor, with no windows and only a single pair of doors on the south
elevation that are themselves rotten and falling off the hinges. Nevertheless it does appear to
contain much of its original machinery and fittings, in situ or stored within the building. The
flour dresser that is missing from the building is known to be held at Cusworth Hall Museum
(Hopwood-Lewis 2010). Two of the three bedstones remain in place, and one of the running
stones, with a second stored nearby. The third set of millstones have been fully removed, as has
the stone nut and spindle below, and this may have been done deliberately to avoid the cost of
maintenance at a time when demand for the produce of the mill was declining. The stone nut
and spindle associated with this millstone are located on the ground floor, west of the cog-
house.

7.4 Externally much of the surroundings of the mill are very overgrown, includes the mill dam, weir
and mill race, as well as a derelict brick outbuilding immediately to the east of the mill.
8.0 Acknowledgements

8.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank Scorer and Hawkins for this commission and Mr and Mrs Dewar for their cooperation during the survey.

9.0 References

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Appendix 1: Colour Plates

Plate 1 (Shot 1): General shot of the watermill and to its right the miller’s lodge. Paper Mill Dyke meanders from west to east directly north of the mill, behind the trees. Looking north

Plate 2 (Shot 4): South elevation of the mill, looking north
Plate 3 (Shot 27): Detail of wooden doors on south elevation, with later repairs. Looking north

Plate 4 (Shot 26): Close-up of graffiti with the initials W.S found on the left hand side door, right upper panel. Looking north
Plate 5 (Shot 27): Close-up of graffiti found on the right hand side door, right upper panel. Looking north

Plate 6 (Shot 9): West elevation showing windows on each of the three storeys and vegetation on roof. Looking east-north-east
Plate 7 (Shot 10): Representative shot of window with flat arch and rubbed stones. Ground floor of west elevation, looking east.

Plate 8 (Shot 7): North elevation with metal wheel still in situ in the wheel pit. Looking south. Sluice mechanism visible to right of wheel.