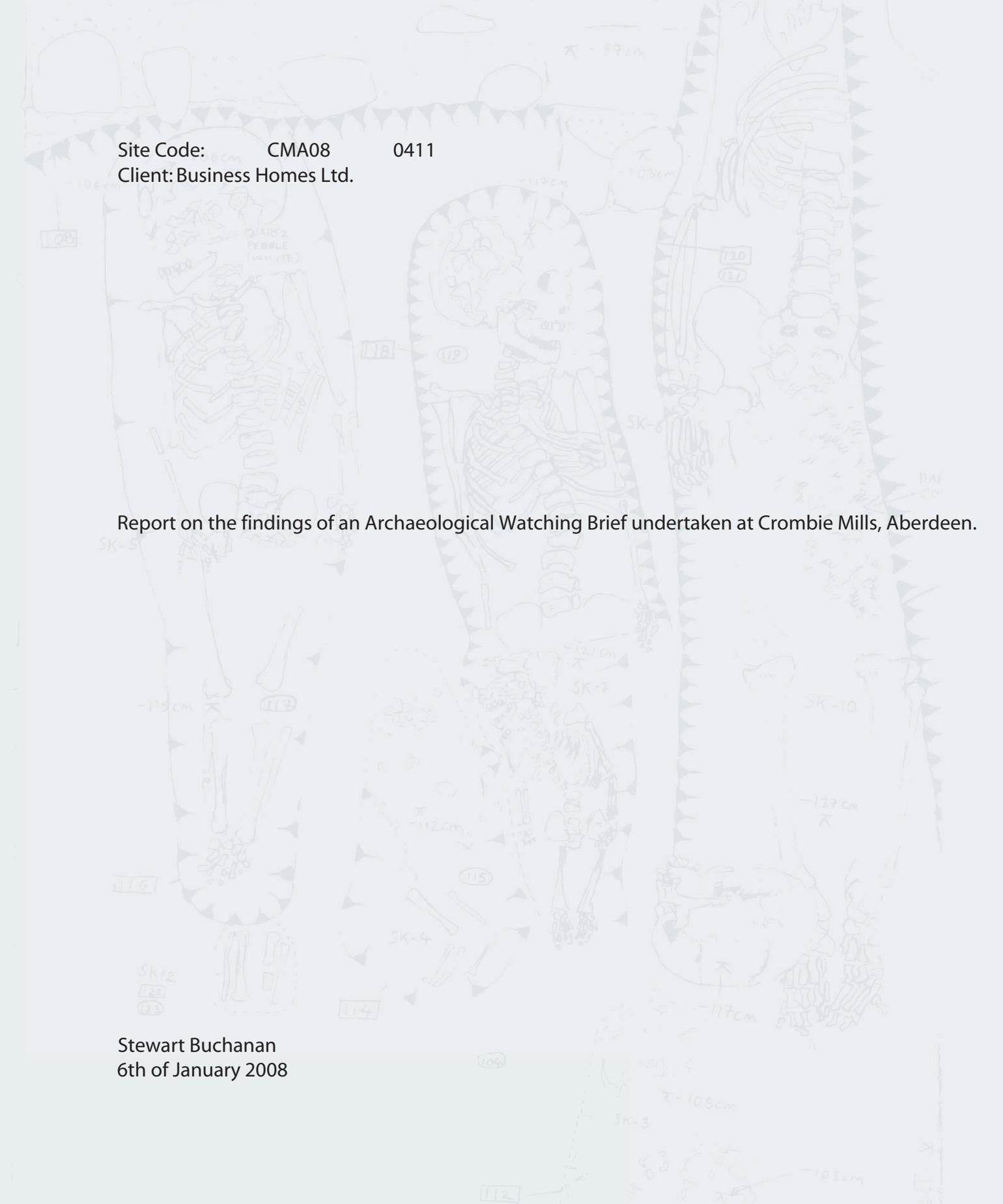


Site Code: CMA08 0411
Client: Business Homes Ltd.

Report on the findings of an Archaeological Watching Brief undertaken at Crombie Mills, Aberdeen.

Stewart Buchanan
6th of January 2008



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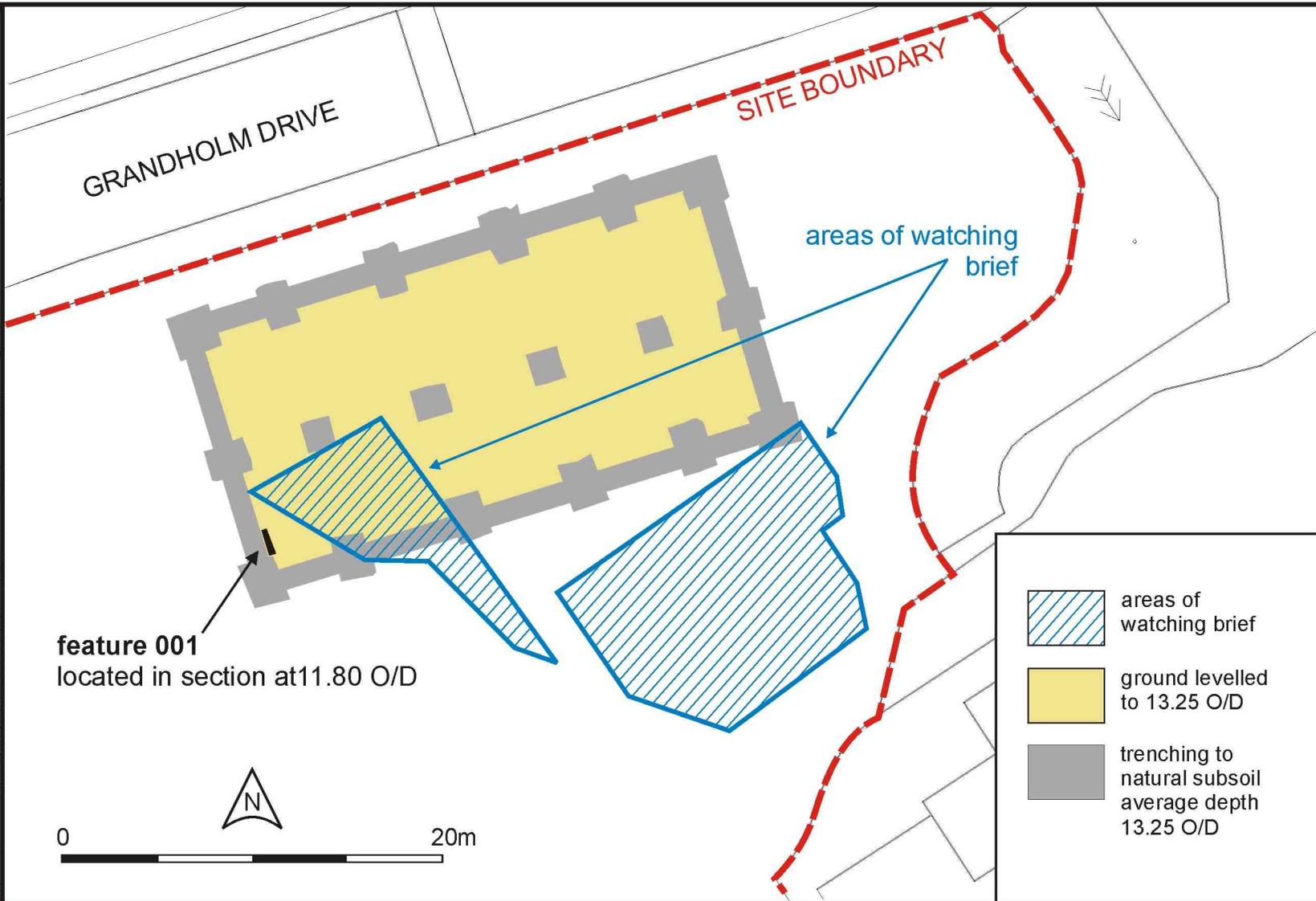
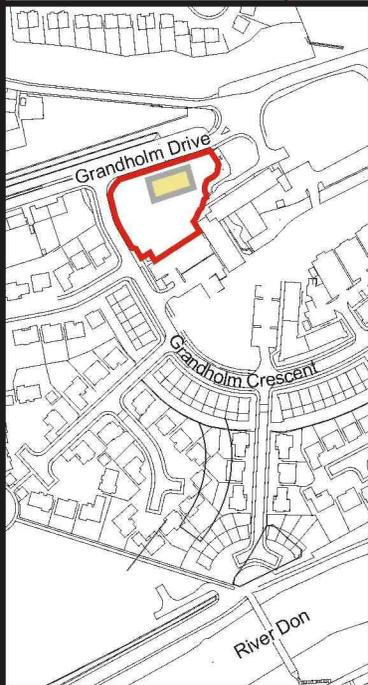
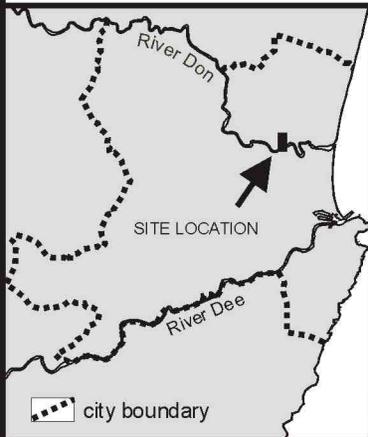
Summary

In July 2007, Scott Wilson Ltd commissioned Stewart Buchanan (on behalf of clients Business Homes Ltd) to present an interim report on the findings of an archaeological watching brief conducted during groundworks at Crombie Mills, Aberdeen.

One discreet archaeological feature was encountered outwith the watching brief area; a stone structure probably associated with water management (a soakaway/sump/culvert), of a possible 19th century provenance. The isolated nature of the structure and its limited dimensions suggest that it is unlikely to be related to the primary functioning of any phase of the Mill proper.

The interim report recommended that the archaeological finds to date did not justify a full archaeological investigation.

All sub-surface excavations have since been completed at Crombie Mills with no further excavations occurring within the watching brief area. There are no archaeological reasons for the recommendations made in the interim report to be altered; this report recommends that further archaeological investigations are unnecessary.



1. Introduction and Background

In July 2007 Stewart Buchanan undertook an archaeological watching brief (on behalf of Aberdeen City Council Archaeology Department) at Crombie Mills, Aberdeen (see fig 1.). The work was commissioned by Scott Wilson Ltd, for their clients Business Homes Ltd.

The archaeological watching brief was commissioned in direct response to a Specification for Archaeological Evaluation (Planning Application A6/0332) written by Judith Stone, Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council, which informed the Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief (Job No. D113219) prepared by David Aspden for Scott Wilson Ltd (subsequently approved by Judith Stone). This clearly sets out the parameters for the archaeological watching brief, namely, to identify and record any archaeological structures and deposits relating to any phases of the former Mill with specific reference to identifying the structure and alignment of the Mill Lade.

No previous archaeological fieldwork had taken place on the proposed development prior to the current watching brief. A desk based assessment had however been undertaken on the site and its immediate environs by Headland Archaeology Ltd in 2000. The Archaeological and Historical background of the site is summarized thus in a *Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief* (Scott Wilson, Sept 2006).

The first mill to be constructed within the area referred to as Crombie Mills was in 1792; this was built by Leys, Masson & Co. The mill closed in 1848 when the company went bankrupt but was reopened in 1850 by Hadden and Curtis. Following closure in 1854, the site was purchased by J and J Crombie and reopened in 1859. A fire in 1868 resulted in some rebuilding work; further additions were made to the complex from 1870. The complex had expanded onto the area of the bleachfields to the southwest by 1900. It continued to development throughout the 20th century, passing to Salts of Saltaire in 1923 followed by Illingworth Morris in 1958.

The area of Crombie Mills was considered in a desk-based assessment undertaken by Headland Archaeology in 2000. Identified to the east of the present development site was a cutting for a 'lade' (leat); this was used to channel water from the River Don to power the mill. Contemporary with this was the construction of a flax-spinning mill, foundry and other buildings. Following this a large seven storey spinning mill was erected. The first map showing the area is Robertson's map of 1822 where the area is marked as *Grandholm Mill and Bleachfields*. The 1829 plan of Grandholm works provides a detailed plan of the complex; with the 1870 plan indicating the function of the buildings on the site. The 20th century saw a series of additions and modifications, with some buildings falling out of use and being demolished.

Cartographic analysis demonstrates that the area of the proposed development remained free of structures until around 1870. Two buildings are shown on an Ordnance Survey (OS) map from this year. One bridging the lade as it runs west with a second smaller structure located to the west of the lade as it turns south. By 1901 the building bridging the lade had been superseded by a larger structure which appears to incorporate the other building referred to, Headland Archaeology suggested that at this time the lade was either in-filled or culverted. This building remained standing until recently. The only other building within the development area, visible on the 1926 OS map ran along the northern edge of the site. The eastern end of this structure was demolished in the 1970's.

The mill site went out of use in 1990 and was subsequently sold to Cala Homes Ltd.

2. Objectives and Methodology

The objectives of the Watching Brief were:

- To identify the location, nature and extent of any features or objects of archaeological importance that could be damaged or destroyed by the proposed groundworks.
- To record archaeological features located in situ to the highest professional standards.
- To propose arrangements for the safeguarding where possible, of any archaeological features or finds identified. These will need to be agreed with the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council.
- To make sure that the needs for archaeological conservation and recording are met without causing any unnecessary delay or disturbance to the development project.

To this end:

- All archaeological features and deposits encountered will be fully excavated by hand and recorded by using pro forma recording sheets and a continuous unique numbering system.
- All plans, sections, profiles and elevations will be drawn at 1:10, 1:20 and 1:50 as appropriate.
- Drawings will be made in pencil on permanent drafting film. The depth of all principal features and levels will be calculated in meters relative to Ordnance Datum. Plans, sections and elevations will be annotated with depths as appropriate. All features and sections will have photographs taken to produce a photographic record consisting of monochrome prints and colour slides (The latter will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland, Edinburgh).
- All archaeological work will be undertaken following guidelines recommended by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 1999).

Monitoring

It will be necessary for City Development Services – Planning, to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the evaluation in order to ensure the proper execution of the specification and therefore conformity to the brief. Stages at which monitoring is appropriate will be agreed between the archaeological contractor and the Keeper, Archaeology. The possibility of random inspections should not be excluded.

Finds & Samples

Finds of objects will be subject to the Scots Laws of Treasure Trove and Bona Vacantia and reported by the archaeological contractor to the Secretariat of the Treasure Trove Panel (Dr Alan Saville, National Museums of Scotland, Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1JD) for disposal to an appropriate museum.

The post-excavation of finds will be processed by an approved archaeological contractor employing a recognized specialist.

Specialists in relevant subjects will be employed as appropriate to deal with archaeological artifacts recovered during work.

A bulk sample of deposits to be made where there is likelihood of organic or dateable remains, on-site factors to determine size of sample. All bulk samples to be submitted to an approved contractor who will submit relevant material reports on the results.

Any human remains which are encountered must initially be left in situ. Their removal will be a matter of discussion with the Keeper, Archaeology (who must be notified within 12 hours of their Discovery) and will comply with the provisions of Scots Law.

Reporting

A report on the findings of the work will be compiled following guidelines stipulated in the Aberdeen City Council's Specification for Archaeological Evaluation (A5/1608).

Copies of the evaluation should be sent to the Keeper of Archaeology, the applicant and the City of Aberdeen City Development Services - Planning. A summary of the work undertaken will be submitted to the Council for Scottish Archaeology's publication Discovery & Excavation in Scotland.

Archive Deposition

The project archive, including written, drawn and photographic elements (together with a summary of the contents of the archive) will be deposited with the National Monuments Record Scotland (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland). The archive will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the RCAHMS.

Timetable

The fieldwork was carried out by Stewart Buchanan during the second half of July 2007.

Operational Factors

The archaeological contractor will at all times follow and confirm to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and other various regulations and the Codes of Conduct and Approved Practice and Standards of the Institute of Field Archaeologists of 1999. All plant will be provided by the client.

3. Results

One discreet archaeological feature (001) (see plate 2) was encountered 2m to the S/W of the smaller of the two watching brief areas at 11.80 O/D (see fig 1.). (001) was revealed during the digging of the foundation footpads for the new development (see plate 3).



Plate 1. East facing shot of feature (001).
Scale at 0.50m intervals.



Plate 2. N/E facing shot of foundation
Trench containing feature (001).

Feature (001) has been heavily truncated by later groundworks, and survives (in one section of the foundation trench only) as one side and the base of a roughly constructed drystone structure. The side of the feature is made of a machine cut (on the inside face) limestone slab approx 0.45m square, packed to the outside (south) with smaller uncut stones, and abutted to its north side by a slate base. The remnants of a fill are evident and are comprised of a dark organic compost (and fragments of red brick) with constituent elements such as Leaves and twigs clearly identifiable.

The combination of a deep trench and a high water table conspired to make the recording of (001) problematic and only a brief investigation was possible before the trench walls started to collapse. It was therefore not possible to record the full extent of the feature.

The angle of the face of the limestone slab and the slate base, suggests that if (001) were a linear feature then it would be orientated WNW – ENE (towards the yellow can of linemarkers in plate 3), if this were the case then one would expect to see evidence of (001) in the adjacent foundation trenches, or in the other (west) side of the foundation trench containing (001), this did not transpire, suggesting (001) possessed limited lateral dimensions. In view of this (and the extremely waterlogged conditions), a decision was made by the archaeologist not to go chasing the lateral extent of (001) as the limited potential for extracting further information could be offset by the not inconsiderable damage further excavations would have caused to the foundation works and construction timetable.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The organic nature of the fill from feature (001) and the slate base would seem to lend credence to the idea that this feature was associated with some form of water management. However, the limited lateral dimensions, rough drystone construction (no clay or lime bonding) and the relatively small scale dimensions of the stonework, suggest that it is unlikely to be associated with the primary function of the Mill proper. More probable is that (001) are the truncated remains of a feature that was built vertically as well as horizontally, and would have functioned as a soakaway/sump/culvert to one of the Mills subsidiary buildings. The machine cut on the limestone, and the brick at the base of the fill suggest a relatively late date (possibly 19th century).

The interim report recommended that the archaeological finds to date did not justify a full archaeological investigation. All sub-surface excavations have since been completed at Crombie Mills with no further excavations occurring within the watching brief area. There are no archaeological reasons for the recommendations made in the interim report to be altered; ***this report recommends that further archaeological investigations are unnecessary.***

5. References

Aberdeen City Council 2006 *Site at Grandholm Crescent, Aberdeen, Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief*

Headland Archaeology 2000 *Desk Based Assessment and Archaeological Survey at Crombie Mills, Grandholm, Bridge of Don, Aberdeen*

Scott Wilson Ltd 2006 *Crombie Mill, Aberdeen. Specification for Archaeological Watching Brief*

IFA (1999) *By-laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. Reading.*

6. Acknowledgements

Jan Dunbar (Illustrations, fig 1.), Alison Cameron and Judith Stones of Aberdeen City Council Archaeology Department.

Jimmy Thomson of Business Homes Ltd.

David Aspden of Scott Wilson Ltd.