

Historic Building Record
Middlebridge Sawmill
Old Bridge of Tilt
PERTH & KINROSS

BO01



Alder Archaeology Ltd
55 SOUTH METHVEN STREET
PERTH PH1 5NX
Tel: 01738 622393
Director@AlderArchaeology.co.uk

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD
MIDDLEBRIDGE SAWMILL
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BO01

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Illustration 1: Site location plan

Illustration 2: Key features

Author Chris Fyles, MA, FSA Scot
Illustrator Chris Fyles, MA, FSA Scot
Editor David Bowler, BA, MPhil, FSA Scot, MCifA

ABSTRACT

Mr Brian Scrimgeour commissioned Alder Archaeology to compile an historic building record of a ruinous disused sawmill at NGR NN 8782 6656 in advance of partial demolition. The roofless ruin comprised a stone-walled cellar, standing S wall of the ground floor and adjacent wheel pit alongside a steeply descending lade. Local records indicate a waulk mill on the site in 1700, which was converted into a sawmill in the 19th C and depicted on the 1860 OS map. The fabric and construction of the extant building remains were certainly not incompatible with this sequence. The survey (site code BO01) was conducted on 22nd May 2018 in clear weather conditions.

1 Background

1.1 Introduction

Mr Brian Scrimgeour commissioned Alder Archaeology to undertake an historic building survey of a former sawmill at Middlebridge, Old Bridge of Tilt, near Blair Atholl, in advance of partial demolition and the construction of a new build dwelling house. The proposed development area is a small plateau on a steeply sloping hillside, centred on NGR NN 8782 6656. The work (site code BO01) was undertaken on 22nd May 2018 in clear weather conditions. The requirement was to conduct a basic historic building survey in the form of a photographic and narrative record with annotated base plans.

The work was designed to satisfy the archaeological condition on development application reference 18/00011/FLL.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the survey was create a permanent record of the former sawmill, in line with ALGAO Scotland's Historic Building Recording Guidance (HBRG). The survey comprised the creation of annotated ground and location plans; a narrative account considering the form, function, fabric, location, type and any details of phasing of the building; photographs of the building in its current setting with all principal elevations, internal and external, together with details of interest.

1.3 Reporting

The present document has been prepared as the final report on this survey. Copies will be sent to the client, The National Record of the Historic Environment at Historic Environment Scotland, and Perth & Kinross Historic Environment Record.

1.4 Planning and Curatorial Issues

This historic building record is designed to satisfy the outstanding archaeological condition on the planning consent for this development.

1.5 Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Mr Brian Scrimgeour for his assistance and guidance throughout this project. Mr Scrimgeour funded this survey.

2 Details of Work

2.1 The Site (Illus 1)

The former mill, in ruinous condition, occupied part of a small plateau on a steep, W-facing slope above the road NE out of Old Bridge of Tilt, to the E of the River Tilt which runs generally N-S on the E edge of Blair Atholl. The ground in the immediate vicinity of the mill ruin was rough pasture, with piles of recently cleared brushwood. A watercourse, the former lade of the mill, curved from NE-SW above the mill to run E-W as it passed the ruin, descending towards the road where it was culverted en route to the river.

2.2 Archaeological Potential

The mill is recorded in Perth & Kinross Historic Environment Record (MPK15718). It is depicted as a working building on the 1860 1st Edition OS map of the area. Local records refer to five water-powered sawmills operating in Atholl by 1900, of which two were in Bridge of Tilt: one, now Atholl Bank Cottage, was further down the lade than the second, the subject of this survey.

“The wauk mill was situated further up the lade in a small wood. There are records of the mill in 1700 and by 1792 the ‘walker’, George Anderson was paying £34.3.0 rent and an additional 10/- for two acres of land. As part of his rent he delivered four hens to the laird in lieu of a cash payment of 2/-. During the last [19th] century, the wauk mill was converted into a sawmill which can still be seen beside the road to Glen Fender. The pit for the water wheel is still intact and although roofless the substantial remains of the walls of the mill are visible.”

Extract from *Water Mills of Atholl*, by John Kerr (1990)

As Kerr clearly refers to the present site, it appears that the building was originally a wauk mill dating from as early as 1700 and later converted for use as a sawmill.

2.3 Results of Investigations

The extant remains of the mill comprised a roofless ruin against the N bank of the lade, with a rectangular cellar cut into the hillside and only one wall of the main building surviving above this level. Hard against the stream, attached to the S wall of the building, was a rectangular pit representing the remains of the wheelhouse, with a curvilinear revetment wall extending further downstream.

The building fabric was generally of lime-bonded grey stone rubble, with the butt ends of the standing S wall featuring regular coursing of masonry blocks (this was more evident at the E end, which may have indicated an entrance; the W end featured a trace of such construction on the lowest 1.00m above the present ground surface). The S elevation measured 0.60m thick, with the surviving wallhead extending up to 2.50m above the top of the cellar, where a row of beam slots extended across the interior surface of the elevation and represented the remains of a wooden floor.

Above the beam slots, a single window measuring 0.50m square opened into the wheelhouse on the exterior of the wall, while 2.00m to the E of this window, a vertical column of slots indicated the former position of wheel and gear fittings. In the upper wallhead, 1.40m from the E end of the elevation, a large window measuring 1.30m high x 1.15m wide was set in an embrasure with a stone lintel and shaped masonry side casings; this may have represented a loading aperture or was simply for illumination. A horizontal beam or cill slot extended from below the window to the W, with a hole to the E (the hole was sub-circular on the interior, nearly square on the exterior, with Portland cement render applied indicating relatively recent insertion or repair).

A slight difference in wall fabric was noted between the S elevation and the remainder of the cellar, with the former including a regular block course 0.50m above the base of the wall with the remainder random rubble. This regular course was absent from the other three elevations, which, however, exhibited rather less randomness in their main fabric. These differences might perhaps have been due to the removal and replacement

of part or all of the S elevation during conversion of the building from waulk mill to sawmill.

The W end of the S elevation adjoined a stub wall which ran downstream from the W end of the wheelhouse for 4.50m, rising to 1.10m above the bank before merging with the revetment of the lade. This may have represented the remains of an enclosure adjacent to the mill or an extension to the mill building.

The mill measured 10.00m E-W x 9.40m N-S. The cellar pit (which could not be accessed directly) was 1.90m – 2.00m deep, making the full extant height of the S elevation 4.50m from the base of the cellar. The wallhead lacked any roof beams or other indications of structure; however, small fragments of grey slate scattered around the site may have indicated the covering material (although it could not be guaranteed that these had not been imported or otherwise intruded from elsewhere, perhaps during recent scarping work on the lade embankment).

The adjoining wheelhouse pit was framed by a step extending the lower part of the main S wall outwards by 0.30m and an outer wall measuring 0.70m thick which ran for 11.00m downhill from the E end of the mill. The outer wall included a curvilinear section at its W end which represented the outflow from the wheelhouse; this was, however, blocked with rubble and spoil. The wall featured a crenellated shaped block and boulder coping. The wheelhouse pit measured 1.60m wide and 2.30m deep from the top of the step. An axle slot in a sub-rectangular mounting projected above the pit on the main building wall, exterior to the vertical slots noted on the interior elevation (see above). The exterior of the S wall above the pit featured traces of relatively recent re-pointing, in addition to the cement applied to the square slot next to the window (see above).

3 Interpretation

The fabric and construction of the mill were certainly not incompatible with an eighteenth century date. Very little of the mill now remains above cellar level, making an understanding of its phasing and use difficult to establish. However, slight differences between the S wall and the remainder may relate to what is known of the mill from local historical records, that it was converted into a sawmill during the nineteenth century. Although it appears to have continued in use until at least 1900, the date at which it became disused is unknown. Local anecdotal evidence suggests that the diversion of the lade for use by the railway may have led to the mill's demise.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Recommendations for Further Work

Alder Archaeology consider that the survey conformed to Terms of Reference for this site and do not recommend further work in connection with the present development. However, the final decision ultimately rests with Perth & Kinross Heritage Trust.

5 Bibliography

Kerr, J. (1990) *Water Mills of Atholl*, Atholl Experience, Atholl

Appendix 1 Photographic Register

<i>Image No</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>View</i>
001-2	Location shots, mill from road	NE
003-4	Location shots, mill from plateau	S
005-6	Location shots, mill with hills behind	S, SW
007-8	S elevation (internal), upper storey	S
009-11	S elevation (internal), with cellar	S
012	W elevation (internal)	W
013	N elevation (internal), oblique	NW
014	E elevation (internal), oblique	SE
015-16	Wheelhouse pit	W
017-18	Wheelhouse exterior wall, oblique	NW
019	Detail, axle slot over wheelhouse pit, oblique	NW
020	E end, S elevation (external)	N
021-22	W end, S elevation (external), oblique	NW
023	Lade, oblique	NW
024	S elevation (external), oblique	NW

Appendix 2 Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

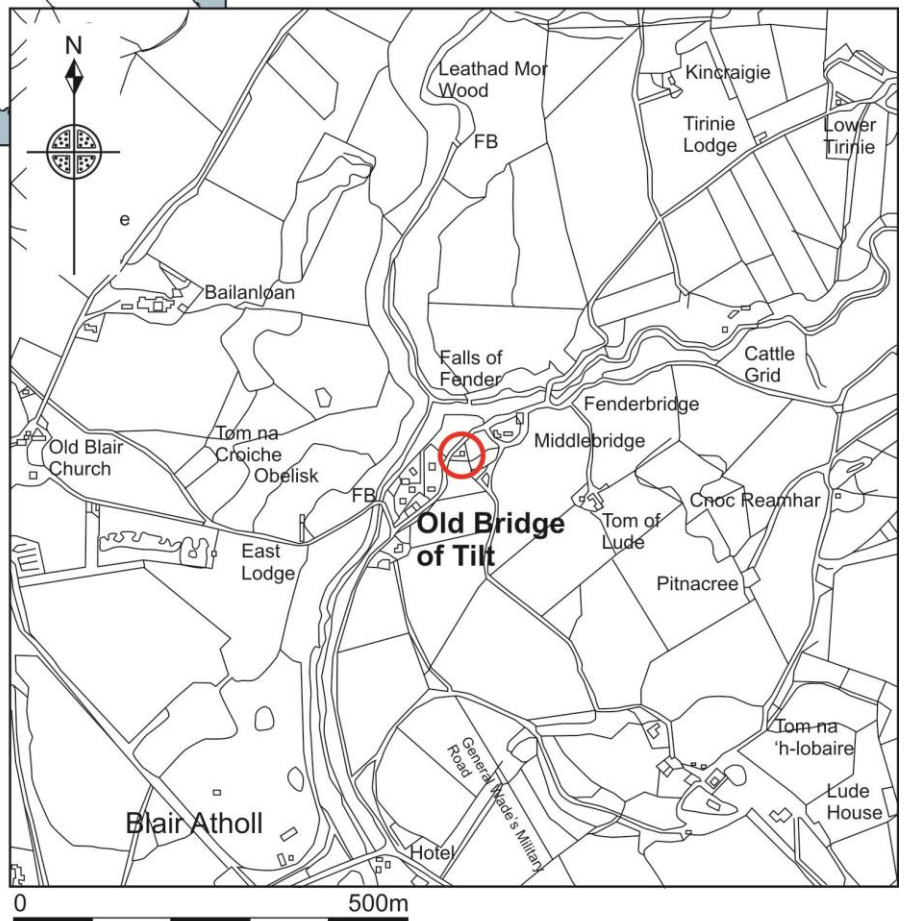
LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Perth & Kinross
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Middlebridge Sawmill, Old Bridge of Tilt
PROJECT CODE:	BO01
PARISH:	Blair Atholl
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	C Fyles
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Alder Archaeology Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	HBR
NMRS NO(S):	-
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Mill
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NN 8782 6656
START DATE (this season)	22/05/2018
END DATE (this season)	22/05/2018
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	An historic building record was compiled of a ruinous disused sawmill in advance of partial demolition. The roofless ruin comprised a stone-walled cellar, standing S wall of the ground floor and adjacent wheel pit alongside a steeply descending lade. Local records indicate a waulk mill on the site in 1700, which was converted into a sawmill in the 19 th C and depicted on the 1860 OS map. The fabric and construction of the extant building remains were certainly not incompatible with this sequence.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	-
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Mr Brian Scrimgeour
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Alder Archaeology Ltd, 55 South Methven Street, Perth PH1 5NX
EMAIL ADDRESS:	director@alderarchaeology.co.uk
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	HES (intended)

Illus 1



Middlebridge Sawmill
Old Bridge of Tilt
Site Location

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