

**BLACKHILLS
RORA
MINTLAW
ABERDEENSHIRE**



Standing Building Survey

Carried out 12th November 2015

by

Murray Archaeological Services Ltd



Report No: MAS 2015-38

by

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- Standing Building Survey -

1. Background
 - 1.1 A standing building survey was required for a small mill building at Blackhills, Rora, Mintlaw, Aberdeenshire, prior to its demolition and the erection of a dwelling house,
 - 1.2 The archaeological condition was applied in the context of planning legislation (PAN 2/2011, SPP, SHEP), which states that it is necessary for developers to arrange for archaeological work to take place prior to development, in appropriate circumstances. Planning Application Numbers: APP/2015/2362
 - 1.3 A Level 1 Standing Building Survey was required which includes measured plans and elevations, a written account of the building's plan, form, function, age and development sequence in addition to a photographic survey of the interior and exterior of the building.
 - 1.4 Murray Archaeological Services Ltd was commissioned to undertake the work by Baxter Design Company. The site element of the survey was completed on the 12th November 2015.
2. Desk-top survey
 - 2.1 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 and Pastmap.

2.2 The 1st and 2nd edition Ordnance Survey maps were consulted.

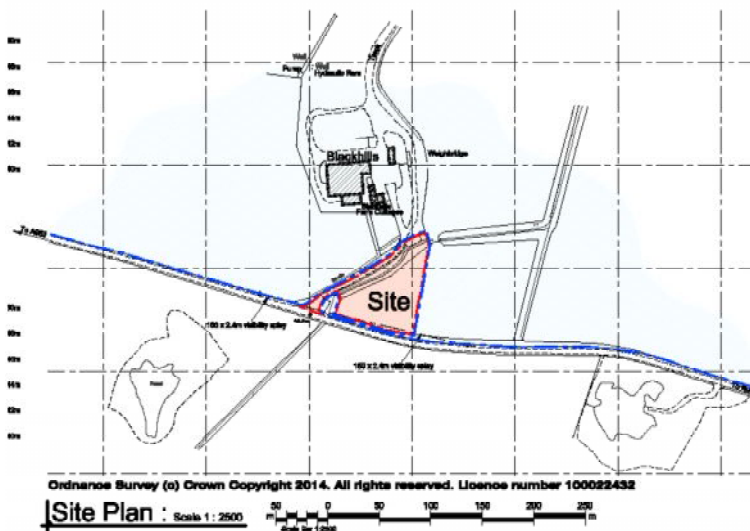
2.3 Plans and elevations were drawn by MAS Ltd.

3. The Site

3.1 The site lies to the N of a minor road which runs between the A952 (Mintlaw to Fraserburgh) and the village of St Fergus. It is c.4km W of St Fergus. It is on low lying ground between St Fergus Moss to the N and Rora Moss to the S. The main steading of Blackhills (formerly Blackhill) lies just N of the mill but was not part of the present recording project.

Parish: St Fergus

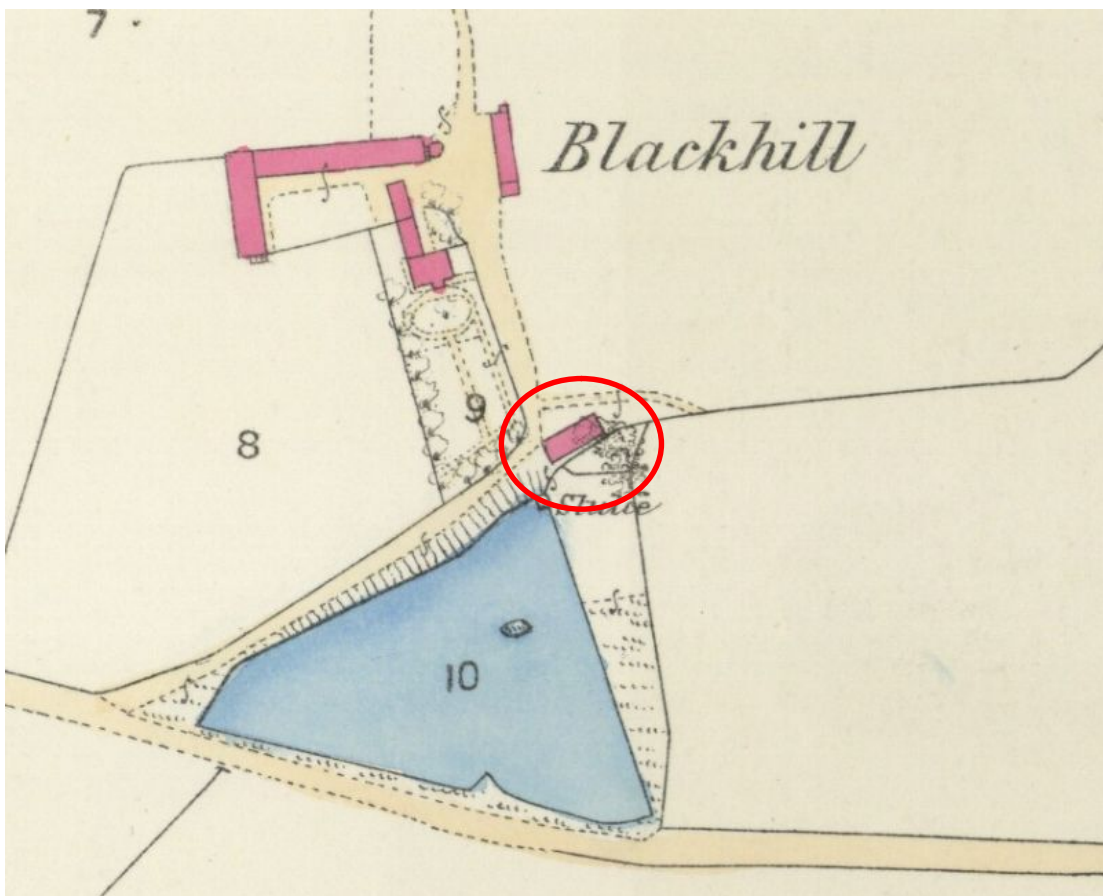
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Illus 1 Location plan by Baxter Design Company

4. Documentary evidence

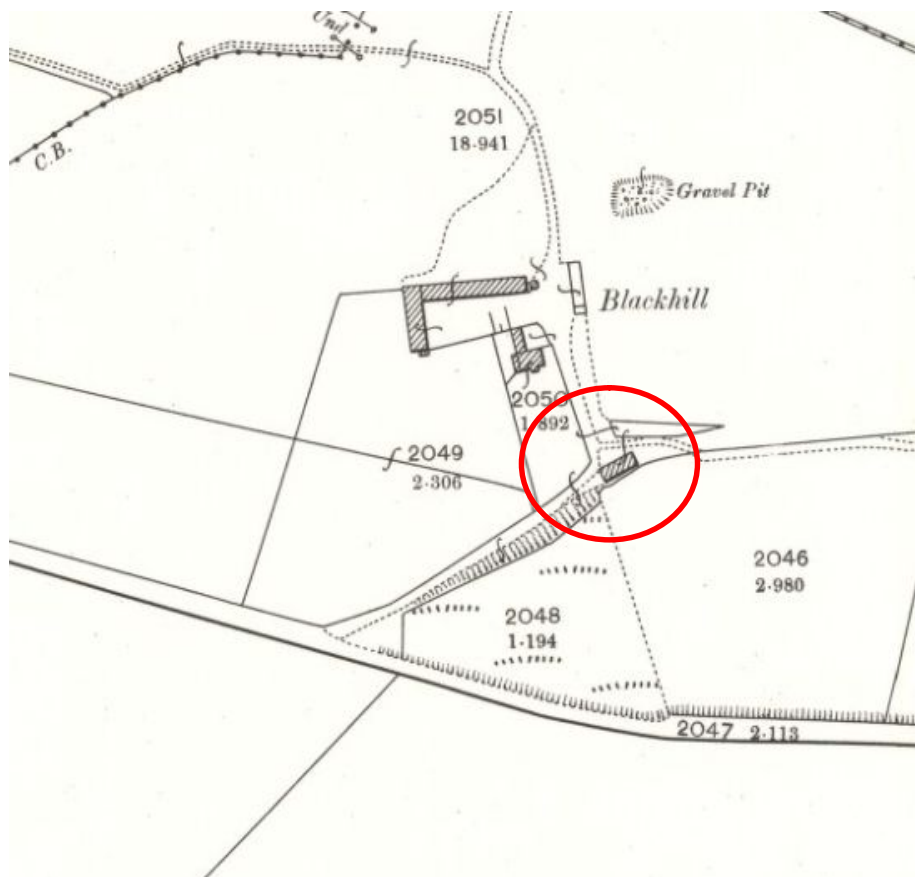
4.1 **Aberdeen Sheet XIV.7 (Longside) 1869 (pub 1872)** shows the mill as a small rectangular building to the SE of the farmhouse and steading. A mill pond covers the triangular field between the farm track and the road, with a sluice letting water into a lade running along the S side of the building.



Illus 2 Detail of the 1st edition Ordnance Survey 25" map, surveyed in 1869 (published 1872) Aberdeen sheet XIV.7 www.nls.ac.uk

4.2 By the 2nd edition 25"/mile Ordnance Survey of 1900 (published 1902.

Aberdeenshire Sheet 014.07) the building remains but appears to no longer be in use as a mill; the sluice is not marked and the mill pond appears to have been drained as it is shown as boggy ground.

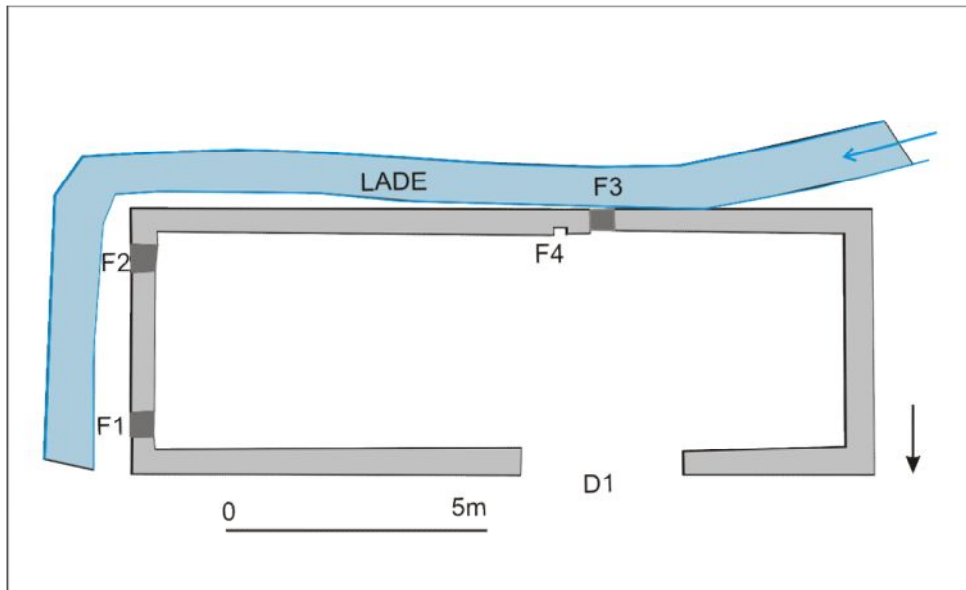


Illus 3 Detail of the 2nd edition 25"/mile Ordnance Survey of 1900 (published 1902. Aberdeenshire Sheet 014.07) www.nls.ac.uk

5 Methodology

- 5.1 The ground plan (illus 4) and elevations (illus 10) have been annotated to show details which may help in understanding the development and history of the building.
- 5.2 The areas recorded were photographed. The full set of photographs will be supplied for the archive and an annotated plan in the present report (illus 11) indicates the position of each.

6 The Mill



Illus 4 Plan

Dimensions 14.25m E/W x 5.1m N/S externally

Present/recent use Derelict, some storage

Original use Mill

Walls Rubble stone. 500mm thick.

Roof Corrugated iron over A-couples. Skylight on N and S sides.



Illus 5 N wall and door D1

Doors and windows

N wall

D1 W: 3.1m H: 2.25m Projects into roof line. This height appears to have been raised as there is concrete on either side (blue on elevation).

E wall

F1 Blocking, probably small window. Stone lintel. Concrete blocked.

W: 400mm H: 400-500mm

F2 Blocking, probably small window. Stone lintel. Concrete blocked.

W: 400mm H: 400-500mm



Illus 6 E wall with blockings F1 and F2 (marked by arrows)

S wall

F3 Externally stone lintel with rectangular, stone-blocked, opening 400mm high and 600mm wide over a wooden batten. Below the batten there was a narrower blocked opening c.400mm wide. Internally access to the blocking was difficult but they appeared to be splayed internally. The lower blocking was 330mm high from base of wooden batten and splayed from c.300mm wide at

blocking to 570mm wide at internal wall face. There was a large stone at the base which projected out from the inner wall face.

F4 Oblique slot on inside of wall only. 700mm between F3 and F4.

W: 200mm H: 180-250mm. Depth into wall:120mm. Wooden batten across top.

Small rectangular slot below it W: 300mm H: 120mm. Depth into wall; 80mm.

W wall No blockings

Interior No surviving details.



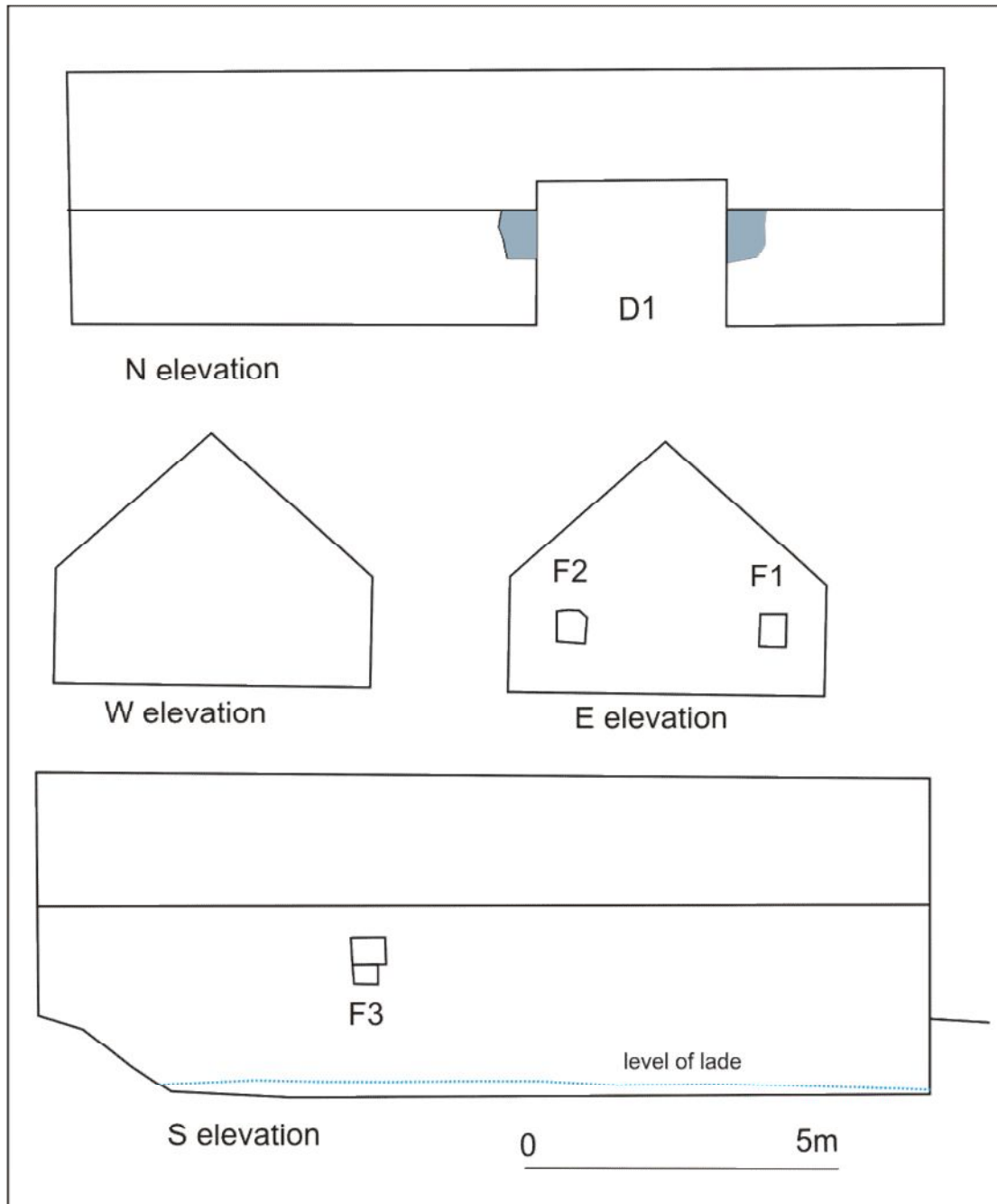
Illus 7 S wall. The rod marks the position of blocking F3



Illus 8 S wall. Blocking F3. The lade runs along the base of the wall.



Illus 9 Blocking F3 and slot F4 on inner face of S wall.



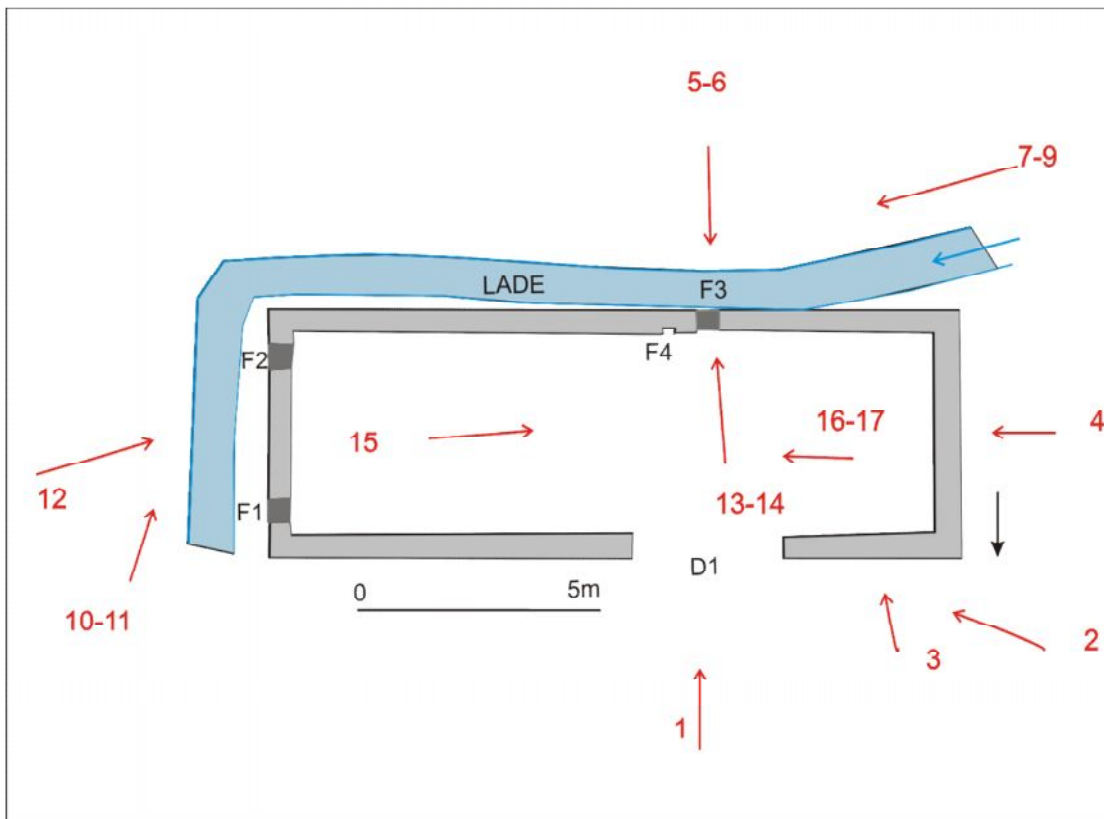
Illus 10 Elevations

7 Discussion

The building had been a small mill. The function of the mill is unclear. The mill pond and sluice shown on the 1st OS map of 1869 indicate it was water-powered and Blocking F3 on the S wall above the mill lade may have held a wheel axle- however this seemed high in the wall in relation to the level of the lade and line of the roof. Internal blocking F4 may have held the end of a beam/ metal beam to support machinery. The building seems to have fallen out of use as a water-powered mill by the 2nd OS map of 1900.

8 Archive

A full set of photographs with the photo location plan (Illus 11) will be supplied to the Aberdeenshire SMR in Aberdeen and to the NMRS.



Illus 11 Photo reference plan

