

Corbridge Old Pottery

Corbridge, Northumberland

Post-Conservation Photographic Review

March 2016



Prepared for Tyne and Wear Building Preservation Trust by:

TYNE & WEAR
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SUMMARY

Conservation works on the scheduled and listed bottle kilns and attached structures at Corbridge Old Pottery, Corbridge, Northumberland were carried out by Stone Technical Services Ltd. for Tyne and Wear Buildings Preservation Trust (TWBPT), leaseholders of the kilns, over the winter and early spring of 2016. A schedule of works had previously been prepared by Doonan Architects for the preservation of the Bottle Kilns and ruins that lie between them. The conservation works received grant funding from Historic England.

Works on the brick-built kilns were mostly superficial, involving clearance of external vegetation, raking out and repointing of joints and piecing in of bricks where losses had occurred. Work on the remnants of adjacent buildings involved clearance, repointing and limited rebuilding to consolidate fallen areas. Although the drying floor between the kilns was cleared in 2015, no consolidation of this structure was carried out.

The following report, commissioned by TWBPT and prepared by Alan Williams Archaeology (AWA), provides a photographic review of the works carried out at the site indicating the pre and post consolidation position.

An archaeological assessment and buildings record of Corbridge Old Pottery was previously prepared as part of the project in early 2015 by AWA.

1. CONSERVATION PROJECT

Tyne and Wear Buildings Preservation Trust (TWBPT), leaseholders of the scheduled bottle kilns at Corbridge Old Pottery, Corbridge, Northumberland, developed a Schedule of Works alongside Doonan Architects, for the preservation of the bottle kilns and ruins that lie between them. The conservation works received grant funding from Historic England and were carried out over the winter and early spring of 2015-2016.

1.1 This Report

The following report, prepared by Alan Williams Archaeology (AWA), provides a photographic record of the site following the conservation and consolidation works. OASIS ID alanwill1-246671.

1.2 Previous Reporting

Previously, a desk-based assessment and level 3 analysis of the former pottery works, concentrating on the scheduled bottle kilns and the remains of buildings between them, was prepared by AWA. This also included a review of historic and structural information for the whole complex as well as a photographic survey of the site and a statement of significance.

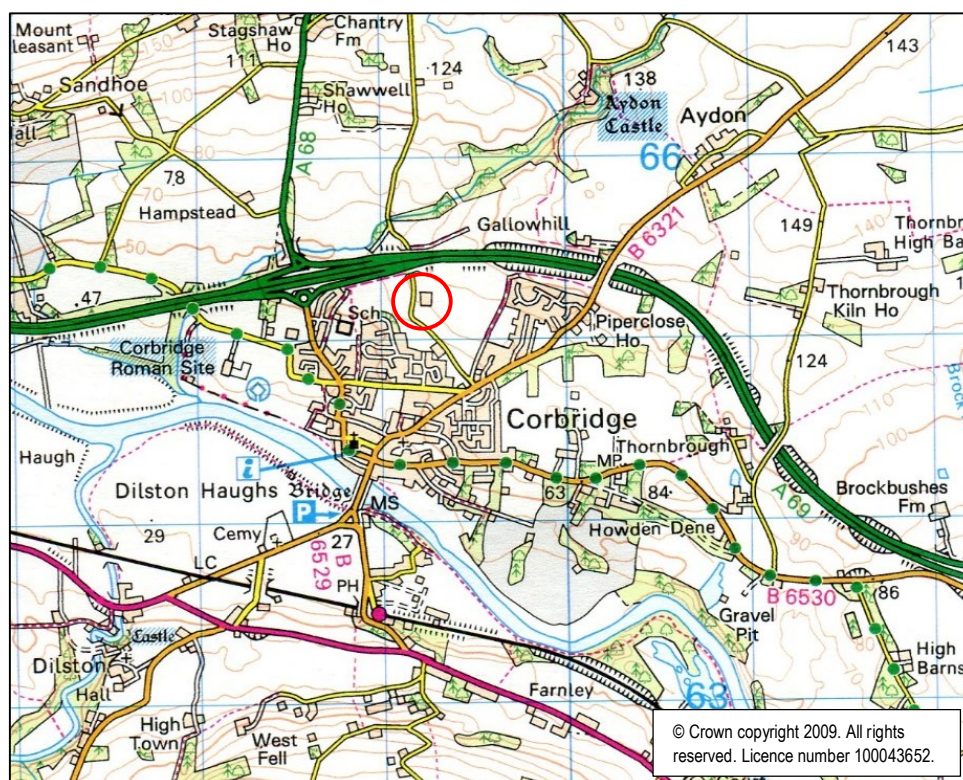


Figure 1: Location of Corbridge Old Pottery within red circle to south of the A69.

2. THE POTTERY

Corbridge Old Pottery, a former family-owned fireclay works - Walker's Pottery - and named on an invoice as Corbridge Fire Brick and Sanitary Tube Works, is located in the Tyne valley five kilometres to the east of Hexham and 35 kilometres west of Newcastle. It lies between the encroaching northern outskirts of the village of Corbridge and south of (and visible from) the A69 trunk road at NY 9922 6522. The site is roughly square in plan and covers an area of just

over half a hectare on ground rising to the north. It is accessed from Milkwell Lane which runs north-south to the west of the site. Surrounding land is under a mixed agricultural regime, mostly under the plough.

The Pottery produced a wide range of goods including gas retorts, sanitary, building and industrial and agricultural materials including firebricks, pipes and tiles. It is also possible that at some point domestic wares were produced. It was in production from the 1840s to the 1930s.

2.1 Status of the Pottery Buildings

Standing or partially demolished, the works' buildings remain within a coherent property. Standing buildings include two bottle kilns, designated as Scheduled Monuments (ND575; NHLE 1006441) and as Grade II* listed buildings (NHLE 1155212 and 1370576). The western kiln is also entered on the Heritage at Risk Register. Two further Grade II listed structures stand on the site: a downdraught kiln with adjacent chimney (NHLE 1044755) and Newcastle kilns with attached buildings (NHLE 1155244); the TWBPT has no legal interest in these listed structures. Other buildings, including workshops, drying sheds, a largely-demolished downdraught kiln and processing areas are dispersed across the site.

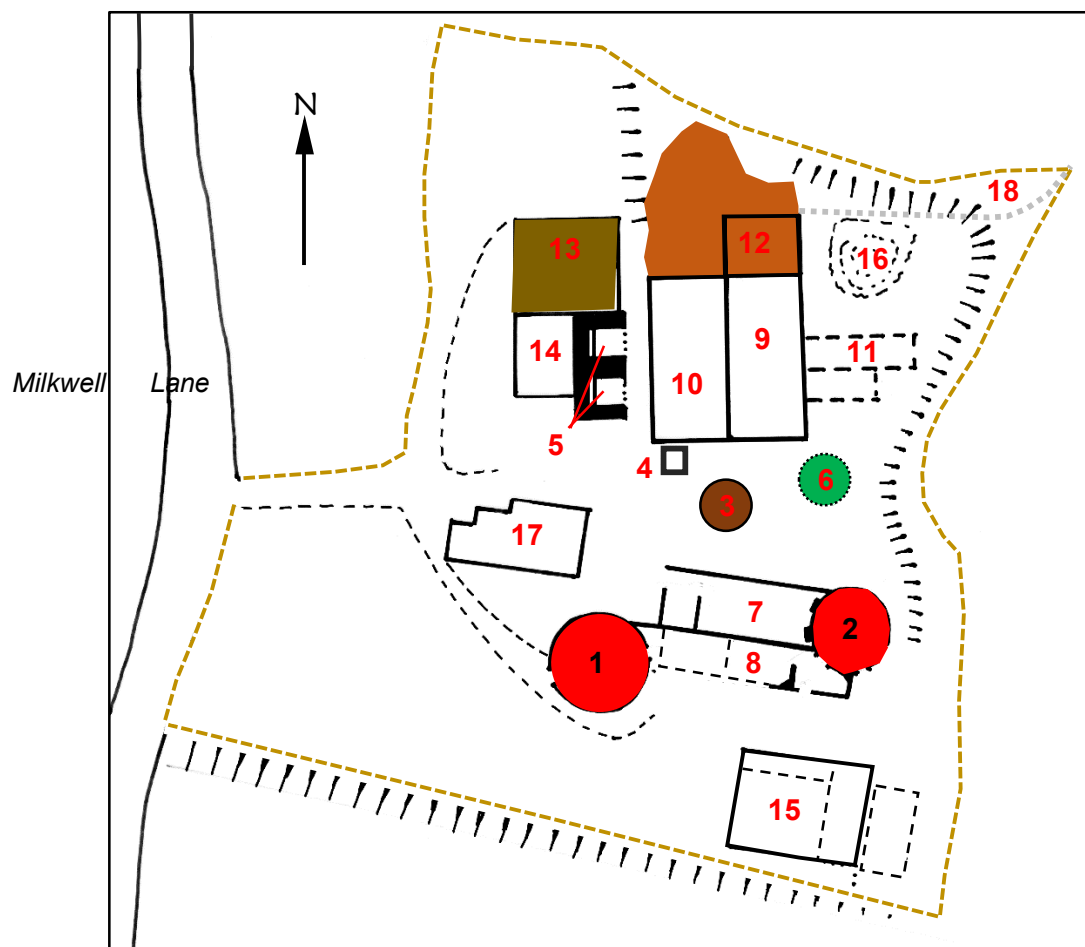


Figure 2: Schematic plan view of the pottery site. Numbered structural remains are briefly described in section 2.2, below.

2.2 Structural Summary (keyed to Figure 2)

The two bottle kilns (1 and 2) are the most impressive features on the site. Free-standing and spaced 20m apart. Before 1979, they were obscured by a range of attached structures now largely demolished: a former drying shed between the kilns (7) survives as low, reduced walls and as a substantial raised slab floor. Remnants also survive of buildings (8) south of the drying shed and attached to the east kiln.

To the north of the bottle kilns, structures on the site are derelict and badly tumbled apart from two attached drying sheds (13) at the north-west end of the site. These have been renovated as storage space by the owner of the property. A circular downdraught kiln (3) with an adjacent brick chimney (4) and a block of two Newcastle kilns (5) are listed grade II. A second circular kiln (6) lay to the east of the listed structure. It is now only visible as exposures through vegetation and a few upstanding remnants. A linked workshop and drying shed (10) lay to the east of the Newcastle kilns. They are in a process of rapid decay and almost entirely roofless. Workshops to the east of these (9 and 11) were reduced to dwarf walls in the early 1980s. To the north of the workshop and drying shed was a clay-processing area (12). Again, this is entirely roofless and with badly tumbled walls. A number of engine and machinery beds can be seen as well as a number of very large millstones which would have formed part of a grinding mill. A pond to the east of these (16) would have also been used to process clay, brought in to the site along a tramway from the east (18). Domestic and farm buildings on the site include the main house (17) which is still occupied, a cottage next to the Newcastle Kilns (14) which is now derelict and tumbled, and former barns and stables at the south east end of the property, now only marked by a walled garden.

3. CONSERVATION WORKS

3.1 Tristan Spicer of Doonan Architects prepared a detailed Condition Report of the bottle kilns and attached structures incorporating an itemised specification of necessary conservation and consolidation input. These works were carried out on the site by Stone Technical Services Ltd. Works were targeted on the two scheduled bottle kilns and on the remains of building (8) to the south of the eastern kiln. Although drying floor (7) had been cleared as a preparatory part of the project, no conservation of this building was carried out.

3.2 Work on the bottle kilns was largely superficial, involving clearance of vegetation from the outer faces, removal and repointing of areas of impoverished mortar and consolidation and replacement of defective brickwork where necessary. The earth-floor in the eastern bottle kiln was cleared and animal burrows filled and levelled to provide a sloping but regular surface. No work was carried out within the western kiln which is in use as a studio and storage space by the owner.

3.3 The remains of building (8) were cleared of vegetation and surviving stub walls (including two fireplaces) capped and edged with new brickwork.

4. PLATES (Pre and Post Consolidation) AND NOTES



Plates 1 and 2: Western bottle kiln from the east. Pre (left) and post conservation. 2m scale.



Plates 3 and 4: Western bottle kiln from the south-west. Pre (left) and post conservation.



Plates 5 and 6: Western bottle kiln. The eastern entrance. Pre (left) and post conservation. 2m scale.



Plates 7 and 8: Western bottle kiln. The western entrance pre (left) and post conservation. 2m scale.

West Bottle Kiln (1)

(SAM ND575, NHLE 1370576 (Grade II*), HER 15486)

The larger of the two bottle kilns at the pottery and of rather more conical form than the eastern kiln. It is c.10.5m diameter at the base and just over 14m high with an opening at the top of around 2m across. In red brick English garden-wall bond with a yellow brick band of seven courses running around the kiln above the lintels of the original entrances and with a mixed yellow and red brick collar. The kiln wall is one and a half bricks thick (0.38m) up to c.3m from ground level and then one brick thick (0.25m). Internally, the walls are corbelled, externally they are smooth. The kiln has a number of large yellow bricks set in the wall face internally, their function is not certain. The two original opposing entrances to south-west and north-east have vertical brick jambs, framed with projecting piers to either side. Both entrances are 1.2m wide and have flat timber lintels topped with a row of bricks set below a yellow-brick segmental arch. The north-east door has been blocked with yellow and glazed bricks. A later opening in the south-east face of the kiln has been blocked and can be seen as a rough, round-headed scar. Three small rectangular openings have been made through the brick shell of the kiln at around mid-height and on the east and north-east faces. One of the openings has a lintel set above it. Internally, a pottery workshop was constructed within the kiln in the late 1970s. This is a free-standing structure which still survives and does not physically impact on the kiln.

The kiln was used as a cattle byre with a water supply by the tenant farmer following closure of the pottery.

East Bottle Kiln (2)

(SAM ND575, NHLE 1155212 (Grade II*), HER 15487)

The smaller of the two bottle kilns at the pottery and of a more bulbous form than the west kiln. Red brick with infrequent yellow brick in English garden-wall bond with a number of patches and areas of repointing. The collar at the top is in yellow brick headers. The shell of the kiln is one and a half bricks thick (0.38m) up to c.3m from ground level and then one brick thick (0.25m). Base diameter is c.10m, height just under 13m. Opening at top is c.2m diameter. Brickwork is corbelled internally but smooth externally. Internally, there is a number of large yellow bricks set horizontally, their function not certain.

There are original entrances in the south-east and south-west faces of the kiln with vertical jambs set between projecting brick piers internally and externally. Both entrances have flat timber lintels topped with a row of bricks set below a yellow-brick segmental arch. There is a large, later opening in the east wall which has now been partially infilled. Ground level within the kiln slopes markedly from north to south. There are no internal features. Externally, there are two rectangular and tapering flues attached to the west face of the kiln in yellow and glazed brick. The flues served the now demolished drying-shed (7) which extended from and abutted the western face of the kiln which bears the marks of the roof of this structure. Between the flues is a rectangular pattern of holes in the brickwork, possibly for holding racking for the drying products within. A further range (8), running along the south face of the drying shed, abutted the kiln on its south face. Within the area of this building there is an oblique fireplace with shallow flue above which runs up the south face of the kiln adjacent to its south-east entrance; this is of red and yellow brick. The rectangular pattern of holes seen in the west face of the kiln also appears within the footprint of this building.

The kiln was used as a store for agricultural implements by the tenant farmer subsequent to closure of the pottery.



Plates 9 and 10: Eastern bottle kiln from the south. Remains of building (8) in front. Pre (left) and post conservation. 2m scale.



Plates 11 and 12: Eastern bottle kiln from the west. Remains of drying floor (7) and building (8) in front. Pre (left) and post conservation. 2m scale.



Plates 13 and 14: Eastern bottle kiln from the east. Original south-east entrance at left and late entrance at centre. Pre (left) and post conservation. 2m scale.

Building 8

The central block of the range is the earliest part of this east-west row and was free-standing. Drawings and photographs from the 1970s show that it was of yellow brick and of two storeys with loft space above. Coped gables sat to north and south with a short ridgeline between. It was then abutted by a building to the east which was also attached to the bottle kiln. This too had gables to north and south, that to the north partial and attached to the kiln wall. It was of mixed red and yellow brick construction with a pantile roof. There were two southern entrances into the building. These were superimposed, the upper doorway accessed via a flight of steps.

Drying Shed 7

This building, now reduced to low outer walls, abutted the two bottle kilns (centrally against the west face of (2) and at a tangent to the north face of (1)) and a contiguous east-west range to the south (8). Aerial photographs and drawings by the Adult Education Department of Newcastle University (AEDNU), prior to its demolition in the early 1980s, show it had a longitudinal east-west ridge line with a separate block to the west roofed as a lean-to. The main block had five kingpost trusses with struts and pantile covering.

The building served as a drying shed for wares prior to firing and presumably recovered waste heat from the eastern kiln via its underfloor 'hypocaust' arrangement. This was formed of longitudinal brick walls c.0.5m high supporting 10 rows of substantial clay slabs or quarls. Two flues attached to the west face of the east bottle kiln would have helped to draw warm air through the floor. This underfloor arrangement did not continue into the western lean-to block which may have been the location of a separate heating source for the shed.

A range of truncated features in the surviving portions of the south faces of the north and south walls of the building can be compared with the drawings of the still-standing structures by

AEDNU. Most interesting is the surviving evidence as recorded in these drawings for what would seem to be an earlier building, possibly a kiln, running transversely across the present footprint of the drying shed. This includes the threshold and part of the jambs of a wicket or 'clammin' door for a kiln set in the south wall.



Plates 15 and 16: Fireplace in the south-east corner of the middle room of building 8 to the south of the eastern bottle kiln. Pre (top) and post conservation. 2m scale.



Plates 17 and 18: Looking north-west across remains of building 8 to the south of the eastern bottle kiln. Pre (top) and post conservation. 2m scale.



Plates 19 and 20: Looking west (left) and north across the conserved remains of building 8 south of the eastern bottle kiln. 2m scale.



Plates 21 and 22: Post-conservation views of fireplace in north-east angle of building 8 against eastern bottle kiln (left) and from same point west across building 8. 2m scale.



Plates 23 and 24: Pre (top) and post-clearance views of the drying floor (building 7) between the bottle kilns. Looking west.



Plates 25 and 26: Pre (left) and post-clearance views of the drying floor (building 7) between the bottle kilns. Looking north. 2m scale.



Plate 27: Drying floor (building 7) post clearance. Looking east towards the east bottle kiln.



Plates 28, 29 and 30: Vents on the west face of the eastern bottle kiln. Views pre (top) and post-consolidation and rebuilding. 2m scale.



Plates 31 and 32: Pre (left) and post-clearance views of the interior of the eastern bottle kiln. Looking south. 2m scale.



Plate 33: Post clearance view of the eastern bottle kiln. Looking north. 2m scale.



Plates 34 and 35: Pre (top) and post-clearance views of the Interior of the eastern bottle kiln. Looking west. 2m scale.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

5.1 Useful Publications

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- Grundy, J, McCombie, G, Ryder, P, Welfare, H and Pevsner, N, 1992. *Northumberland: the buildings of England*
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5.2 Site Assessment

- Alan Williams Archaeology, 2015. *Corbridge Old Pottery: Archaeological Assessment and Building Recording*

5.3 Websites

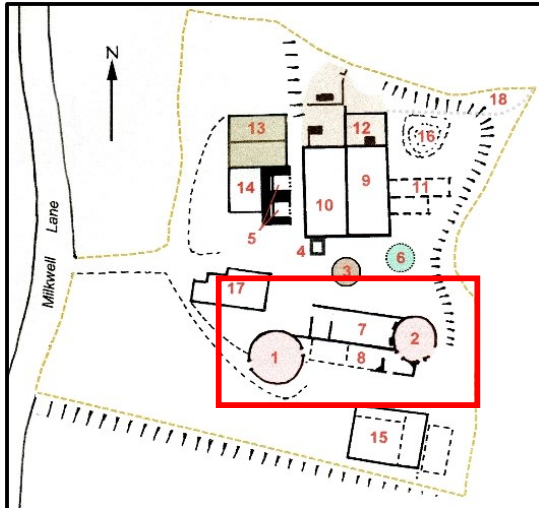
- National Heritage List for England: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/protection/process/national-heritage-list-for-england/> (accessed 5th March 2015)

APPENDIX 1: Photographic Catalogue (March 14th 2016)

1	West bottle kiln looking west
2	West bottle kiln looking west
3	West bottle kiln east entrance
4	West bottle kiln east entrance
5	West bottle kiln looking north
6	West bottle kiln west entrance
7	East bottle kiln looking east
8	East bottle kiln North vent on west face
9	East bottle kiln North vent on west face
10	West bottle kiln looking south west
11	East bottle kiln south vent on west face
12	East bottle kiln looking north
13	East bottle kiln looking north east across building 8
14	East bottle kiln looking north east across building 8
15	East bottle kiln looking north across building 8
16	Looking west inside building 8
17	Looking south west across building 8
18	Fireplace in north east corner of building 8
19	Fireplace in middle room of building 8
20	Door in middle room of building 8 looking north
21	Looking north east at remnants of buildings 7 and 8
22	South east entrance into East bottle kiln
23	Interior of East bottle kiln looking south
24	Interior of East bottle kiln looking south
25	Interior of East bottle kiln looking west
26	Interior of East bottle kiln looking north east
27	Interior of East bottle kiln looking north east
28	Eye at top of East bottle kiln
29	Interior of East bottle kiln looking west
30	Interior of East bottle kiln looking south west
31	East bottle kiln south entrance
32	East bottle kiln looking north west
33	Looking along building 8 towards West bottle kiln
34	East bottle kiln looking north west
35	East bottle kiln looking north west
36	East bottle kiln looking south west at late entrance
37	East bottle kiln looking south west
38	East bottle kiln looking south west
39	East bottle kiln looking south west
40	East bottle kiln looking south at vent on west face
41	East bottle kiln looking north at south entrance
42	Looking north west across building 8 East bottle kiln to rear
43	East bottle kiln looking north across building 8
44	East bottle kiln looking north across building 8
45	Looking north east across building 8 towards East bottle kiln
46	Looking north at remains of north wall of building 8 with blocked door
47	Looking south east at blocked door in north wall of building 8
48	West bottle kiln looking north west

49	Looking north east towards East bottle kiln
50	Looking east towards West bottle kiln
51	Looking north east towards West bottle kiln
52	Looking north east towards West bottle kiln
53	Corbridge Old Pottery from the south
54	Walkers Brick
55	Walkers Brick 2
56	Dodd Brick

Location Plans (keyed to photo numbers)



Red frame shows extent of plans below

