

Archaeological Building Appraisal at Birchover Quarry, Derbyshire.



East elevation of redundant shed at Birchover Quarry

ARS Ltd Report 2009/36

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Executive Summary

In June 2009 Archaeological Research Services Ltd were commissioned by Birchover Stone Ltd to undertake an archaeological building appraisal of a redundant gritstone building at Birchover Quarry, Derbyshire. It is proposed to demolish the building to allow mineral extraction within such an area. The historic building appraisal sought to determine the archaeological interest of the referred building in order for the Peak District National Park Planning Officer to prepare an archaeological mitigation strategy, if required, and help to inform the future development of the site.

The building is a single-storey gritstone-built range with a shallow single pitch roof made of corrugated metal sheeting with gritstone coping at gables and the east elevation. It dates to the 1930s or 1940s and is presently in moderate to poor condition. The building is of little or no architectural and historical merit and significance.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In advance of the proposed re-development of the Birchover Quarry, Birchover Stone Ltd requested a historic building appraisal of a redundant gritstone building. Birchover Quarry is located approximately six miles from Matlock, immediately south of Stanton Moor (Fig. 1). Stanton Moor is situated on an outcrop of sandstone. The solid geology of the site consists of sandstone that makes up part of the Millstone Grit Group (Aitkinhead 2002).
- 1.2 The redundant building is located in the south-east corner of the Birchover Quarry site (Fig. 2) (NGR: SK424400 362510). The building is proposed to be demolished to allow mineral extraction within the area. The historic building appraisal sought to determine the archaeological interest of the referred building in order for the Peak District National Park Planning Officer to prepare an archaeological mitigation strategy, if required, and help to inform the future development of the site.

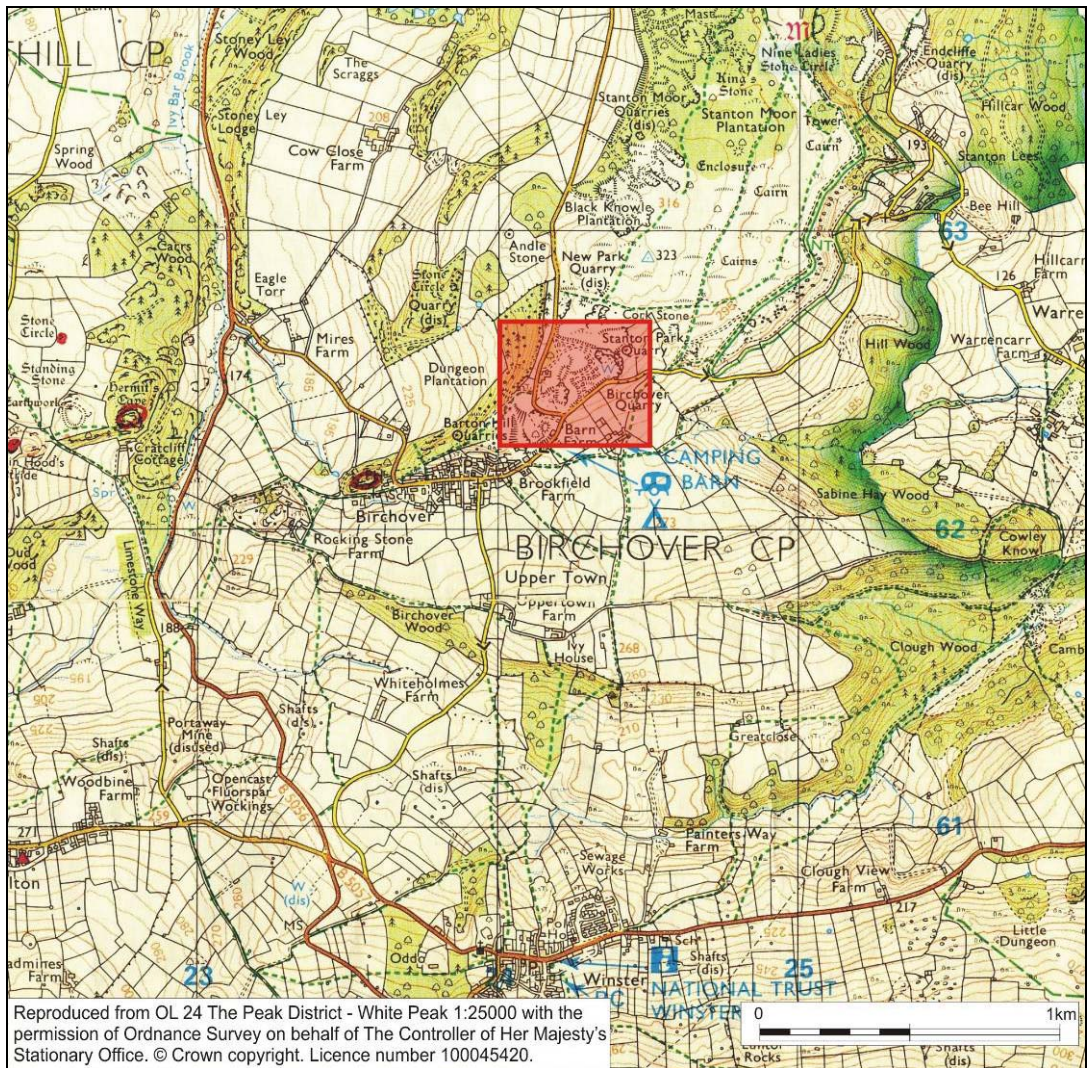


Figure 1: Site location

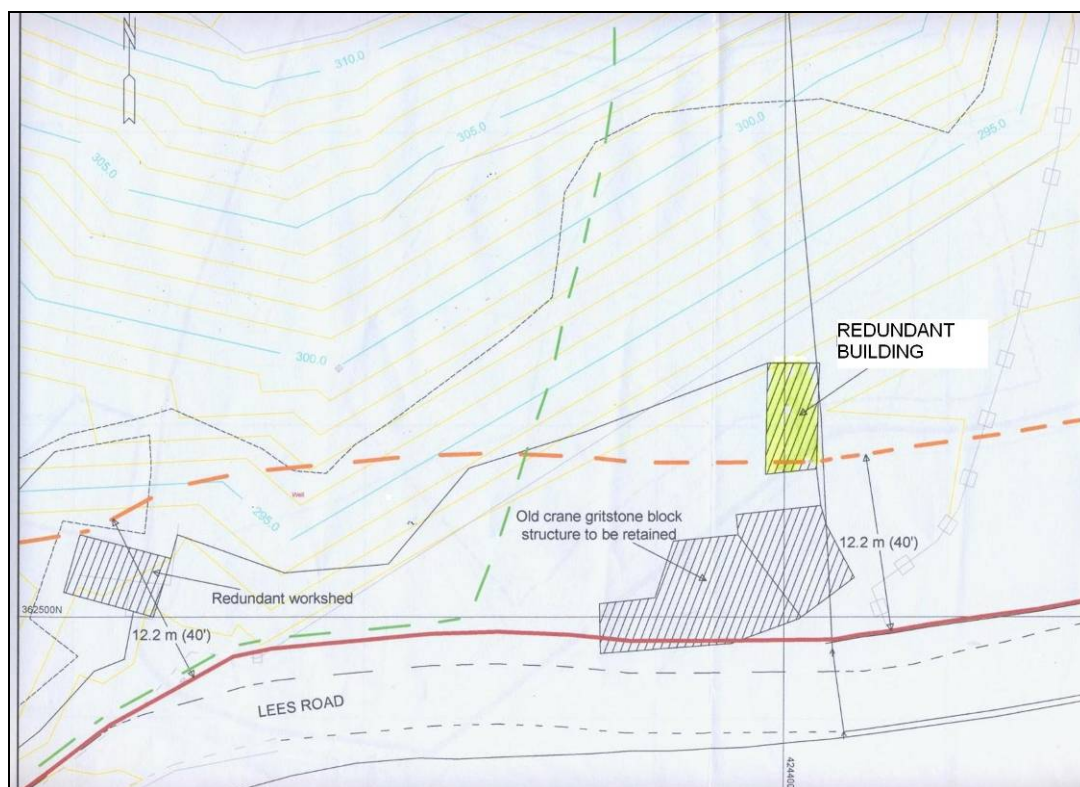


Figure 2: Location plan of the redundant building at Birchover Quarry (courtesy of Birchover Stone Ltd)

2. Aims & Methodology

- 2.1 The aim of the building appraisal was to determine the archaeological importance of the building and allow a decision to be taken as to what mitigation measures may be required. The building appraisal involved an inspection of the building and photographic recording to identify the following factors: the building's period and design, its state of preservation, any substantial additions and alterations to the building, its relationship to the surrounding buildings and the building's original function.
- 2.2 All aspects of the Building Recording were conducted according to the guidelines in 'Recording Historic Buildings' published by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (1996) and 'A Guide to Good Recording Practice' by English Heritage (2006).

3. Results

3.1 Building description

The building is a single-storey gritstone-built range with an overall dimension of c. 7.8 metres in length (north/south), 4.7 metres in width (east/west), and its height varies from 2 (west elevation) to 3.5 metres (east elevation). The external walls are 450mm

thick, built of large fairly hewn mid brown gritstone blocks, bonded with recessed pinkish coarse lime mortar and laid mostly to regular bond. It has a shallow single pitch roof sloping to the west side. The roof is made of corrugated metal sheeting with gritstone coping at gables and the east elevation.

3.1.1 Exterior

The west elevation has a central doorway (1.9 m height x 1 m wide) with a stone lintel and flanked by two iron braces attached to the wall and two projecting timber purlins which would have supported a canopy (Fig. 3). There is no sign of guttering.

The east elevation has two window openings with flush stone lintel and sill (Fig. 4). The roof coping is also flush with the wall. There is a later small opening from which an iron rail projects out slightly. There are several fractures in the stonework on this elevation.

The south elevation is composed of smaller and fairly irregular rubble with quoins on the east and west edges (Fig. 5). The corrugated sheeting roof and two supporting timber purlins project out slightly from the wall. The stone coping is laid over the metal sheeting.

The north elevation is similar to the south wall but a large area on the western side of the wall has been knocked down, creating a substantial opening (Fig. 6). There is a well-preserved chimney stack which projects upright from the roof on the eastern side of the wall (Fig. 7).



Figure 3: West elevation



Figure 4: East elevation



Figure 5: South elevation



Figure 6: North elevation



Figure 7: View of the chimney stack and roof (looking north-east)

3.1.2 Interior

The interior of the redundant building consists presently of two rooms with a wide central hallway. The internal height varies from 2.8 (eastern end) to 2.2 metres (western end). The corrugated metal sheeting roof is attached to three longitudinal timber rafters which are supported by three purlins resting over wall plates on the side walls. A later iron rail has also been added to the supporting roof structure which projects slightly out to the east elevation. The floor is made of concrete.

In the central hallway there is an iron pipe at ground level which runs across the entire building and projects out to the eastern side of the building. The doorway has the remnants of a timber door frame. The original wooden door lies on the floor next to the entrance (Fig. 8).

The northern room is a small sub-division made of breeze blocks which measures c. 1.3 metres high and thus does not extend to the ceiling height (Fig. 9). The northern end is built against the main wall which would have involved dismantling the internal masonry structure of the chimney.

The southern room has a partition wall made of gritstone with a doorway on the eastern end. The interior walls are partially coated with lime wash (Fig. 10). The room has a central concrete platform and above it and there is a small circular hole on the roof. The platform might have been the base for a burner and the hole would have allowed a smoke pipe to project beyond the roof. This room has a great deal of debris including decayed car seats, blankets, cans, etc. These remains may suggest that the building was occupied by squatters in fairly recent times.



Figure 8: Central hallway (looking west)



Figure 9: Northern room (looking north-east)



Figure 10: Inside the southern room (looking west)

3.1.3 Outbuilding

There is a small structure situated 5.1 metres east of the north-east corner of the redundant building which seems to be a toilet block (Fig. 11). Access was restricted due to a large amount of vegetation within the outbuilding, however it was possible to record basic elements. The structure is made of the same fabric and architectural style as the main building. The roof and door no longer exist. It measures 1.9 metres long (north/south), 1.4 metres wide (east/west) and the interior is 1.8 metres high.



Figure 11: Toilet block beyond the north-east corner of the main building

4. Discussion

- 4.1 A Desk- Based Assessment undertaken by Trent and Peak Archaeological Unit (Guilbert 2007) included a regression map analysis of the site which indicates that the redundant building did not exist in 1922 but it is shown on the 1968 OS map. The building may date to the 1930s or 1940s. It might have originally been a workshop associated with quarry work and more specifically with the adjacent old crane gantry next to Lees Road. The building is in a moderate to poor state of preservation as the roof and main walls have serious damage, making the building fairly unsafe. The partition wall which makes up the southern room appears to be a later addition. Moreover the breeze block structure is even later in date which resulted in dismantling the original fireplace on the northern end.
- 4.2 The redundant building is of little or no architectural and historical merit and significance. There are numerous surviving examples of similar buildings within the

vicinity, including an almost equivalent specimen situated adjacent to the Birchover Stone Ltd office. Thus, the proposal of demolishing the redundant building, to allow mineral extraction within such an area, may proceed providing that a medium level record of the building exists. The record should comply with English Heritage Level 2, which consists mainly of a description and a photographic survey.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The redundant gritstone building proposed to be demolished to allow mineral extraction within the Birchover Quarry was appraised in June 2000 by Archaeological Research Services Ltd in order to determine the archaeological interest of the referred building. The appraisal was conducted in order for the Peak District National Park Planning Officer to prepare an archaeological mitigation strategy, if required, and help to inform the future development of the site.
- 5.2 The building is a single-storey gritstone-built range with a shallow single pitch roof made of corrugated metal sheeting with gritstone coping at gables and the east elevation. It dates to the 1930s or 1940s and is presently in moderate to poor condition. The building is of little or no architectural and historical merit and significance.

6. Publicity, Confidentiality and Copyright

- 6.1 Any publicity will be handled by the client.
- 6.2 Archaeological Research Services Ltd will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

7. Statement of Indemnity

- 7.1 All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author/s of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report(s), howsoever such facts and opinions may have been derived.

8. Acknowledgements

- 8.1 Archaeological Research Services Ltd would like to thank all those involved with the archaeological fieldwork including James Cuthbert of Glentoal Associates and Birchover Stone Ltd.

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