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SUMMARY

This report outlines the results of an archaeological watching brief, which was carried out at The Dye House, Hallthwaites, Millom, Cumbria (SD 1820 8539). The Dye House is thought to be one of the earliest woollen manufacturing sites in the area dating to between 1771 and 1829. The building is to be redeveloped for residential purposes, and Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service (CCCHES) specified that a watching brief should be undertaken during clearance of building debris from within and around the property. This follows a building investigation undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) in 2005.

Clearance of the building debris revealed that two of the rooms (Rooms 4 and 6) were laid down to local cobbles (probably taken from the adjacent Black Beck) with no internal features visible. Two further rooms (Rooms 5 and 7) were laid down to flagstones of varying sizes, together with areas of brick and cobble patching and repair. It was clear that these rooms contained the most evidence for industrial processes within the complex. Two large sandstone blocks were buried into the floor within Room 5, which may have supported either a large item of equipment or a tank. Room 7 contained a semi-circular pit or tank, with a flagstone lid which may have been used for soaking or washing wool. A possible padstone was also recorded, which possibly supported a column relating to a roof truss.

In total, 68 finds were retrieved from the building debris, the majority of which was pottery dating the late nineteenth century. The most significant find was an oval stamped sheet label for an early washing machine 'Taylor and Wilsons Homewasher. Improved Patent. By Royal Letters Patent Dated 26 Feb 1868' which was found in Room 6.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) would like to express its thanks to Mr P Metcalf for commissioning the project and to Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service (CCCHES) for providing the brief. Additional thanks are also due to the staff of Ross Building Contractors of Millom who removed large amounts of collapsed material.

Karl Taylor carried out the watching brief and compiled this report, and Mark Tidmarsh provided the illustrations. Christine Howard-Davis assessed the finds. Alison Plummer managed the project and edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 The remains of the Dye House are due to be restored, and it was considered likely that the scheme would affect the building, which is considered to be of historic interest. As a result, a brief was issued by Cumbria County Council Historic Environment Service (CCCHES) and a Level III-type building survey (RCHME 1996) and archaeological desk-based assessment was carried out (OA North 2005) in order to analyse the plan, form, function, age, and development of the Dye House. This comprised a drawn, textual and photographic record of the interior and exterior of the complex.
- 1.1.2 Following the building survey recommendations for further work were submitted due to the floors within the ground floor rooms being obscured by collapsed wall material. This made the identification of any internal structures impossible during the building survey. It was recommended therefore, that a watching brief be carried out during the clearance of debris from the floors. Monitoring of the excavation of new services or foundation trenches also falls within the remit of the watching brief.
- 1.1.3 The watching brief was carried out in February 2007, during the removal of collapse and overburden from Rooms 4, 5, 6, and 7. Features/structures exposed were recorded to Level III-type standard (English Heritage 2006).
- 1.1.4 This report sets out the results of the watching brief, together with drawings illustrating amendments to the plan and form of the Dye House recorded during the initial building investigation. This report should be read in conjunction with the earlier report on the building investigation (OA North 2005).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 **PROJECT BRIEF**

2.1.1 A brief issued by CCCHES (Appendix 1) was adhered to in full. The watching brief was consistent with the relevant standards and procedures of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA) and generally accepted best practice.

2.2 WATCHING BRIEF

- 2.2.1 **Descriptive Record**: written records using OA North *pro-forma* record sheets were made of uncovered building elements, both internal and external, in addition to any features of historical, archaeological or architectural significance. Particular attention was paid to the relationship between building elements that could allude to its development and/or industrial processes.
- 2.2.2 **Plans**: the plans were produced from manually drawn additions to the plans produced during the OA North 2005 building investigation. Features of historical, structural and archaeological significance were annotated on to the drawings. An industry standard CAD package was used to produce the final drawings.
- 2.2.3 *Photographic Survey*: photographs were taken using 35mm back and white print and colour slide formats. This part of the photographic archive consists of detailed photographs of features of particular interest, which were obscured during the building survey.

2.3 ARCHIVE

2.3.1 The results of the archaeological watching brief will form the basis for a full archive to professional standards, in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (*Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition, 1991). This archive, including a copy of the final report, will be provided in the English Heritage Centre for Archaeology format and a synthesis will be submitted to the CCCHES Historic Environment Record the index to the archive and a copy of the final report. In this instance the archive will be submitted to the County Record Office in Barrow in Furness.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

- 3.1.1 The Dye House (SD 1820 8539) is situated on the east side of the village of Hallthwaites which is approximately 5km north of Millom, Cumbria. The site lies on a level adjacent to the Black Beck and is approximately 40m OD.
- 3.1.2 The solid geology of the area comprises Palaeozoic undifferentiated andesitic lavas and tuffs. The drift deposits are predominately boulder clay (British Geological Survey 1979).
- 3.1.3 It forms part of a group of buildings relating to the woollen industry positioned throughout Hallthwaites, including a woollen mill and walk mill. These buildings are not in close proximity to each other, presumably because they have been positioned close to suitable water supplies.

3.2 HISTORY OF THE DYE HOUSE

- 3.2.1 A detailed account of the history of the Dye House and Hallthwaites, is given in the report of the initial building investigation (OA North 2005). A short summary of the history of the Dye House will be outlined below.
- 3.2.2 Hallthwaites is an outlying hamlet of Millom in what was formerly south Cumberland. The earliest reference to Hallthwaites is from 1449, and it is thought that the name derives from the prefix 'hall' attached to the earlier (Norse) 'thwaites' meaning clearing (Armstrong *et al* 1950, 417). The area merits little mention although by the post-medieval period it was clearly becoming a local centre of industry with slate pencil making and a blacking mill being active in the area (Warriner 1932, 48), besides the woollen mill with its associated walk mill and Dye House.
- 3.2.3 Dye houses formed an integral part of the woollen industry, and it is clear that from an early date cloth was given a variety of colours. Sites at which woollen cloth was produced would tend to contain many of the necessary stages of processing in order to maintain efficiency, particularly by the nineteenth century (Satchell 1984, 56). This could include weaving and fulling mills, tenter frames and drying grounds and even areas where the dye was produced (*op cit*, 56-7).
- 3.2.4 Examples of Dye Houses in Cumbria are extremely scarce and where examples are known, these are often part of larger complexes or different branches of the textile industry, such as Langthwaite Cotton Mill at Carlisle (Mawson 1976). Early records are known elsewhere in the country; in East Anglia, for example, there are numerous references to Dye Houses (known as 'Woadhouses') in the sixteenth century, many of which may have been housed in shops that formed part of larger domestic dwellings (Alston 2004, 39).

- 3.2.5 Records of a complex at Beckfoot, also in Millom parish, in 1771 refer to it as comprising 'All that mess and tenement or dwelling house, called the old house the new cowhouse, and loft over it the peathouse, Dyehouse, fulling mill, Indigo mill and carding mill, and the two lower pairs of Tenters' (BD HJ/Precendent Book 1/p20-22 1771), perhaps suggesting that blue or green cloths were produced. A second Dye House was apparently also to be built at the end of the existing Dye House 'on or before Christmas the next' (ibid). This potentially shows that a complex of buildings, such as that at Hallthwaites, could easily have its origins in the eighteenth century.
- 3.2.6 The origins of the Dye House at Hallthwaites are obscure, but it is evident that it was part of a complex of buildings making and finishing woollen cloth. Dyeing associated with blanket manufacture was possibly carried out at Hallthwaites from at least 1829. There are a few specific references to the buildings making up the complex, such as one which states that between the 5th and 6th of December 1879 the cold weather stopped the walk mill wheel from turning (DH 322/2).
- 3.2.7 During the late nineteenth century at least, the Dye House was evidently operated by a small number of people, probably only a single family, with Mr John Moore doing much of the work, including maintenance, deliveries and collecting bills, himself. The business evidently supplied a large area, however, as mention is made of trips as far north as Whitehaven, as far south as Barrow-in-Furness and Ulverston, all along the Cumberland coast, and even east into Yorkshire.
- 3.2.8 The complex, including the Dye House is known to have ceased production in 1935, with many of the original fittings still intact (Marshall and Davies-Shiel 1971, 16). Many of the buildings within the complex were subsequently used by a poultry farmer (*ibid*), who appears to have purchased much of the estate, including the Dye House in 1939 (BD/HJ/131/16/6 1939; BD/HJ/131/16/7 1939). Even at this date the Dye House came with its own tenter ground and the right to erect tenter frames upon it (BD/HJ/131/16/7 1939).

4. WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.1.1 Rooms 1, 2 and the upper floor Room 3, were not subject to the watching brief, having been thoroughly recorded as part of the earlier building investigation. During the watching brief the building was in an advanced state of decay and dereliction. Scaffolding had been erected around those rooms in the worst condition (Rooms 4, 5, 6 and 7) and some of the most unstable parts of walls had been removed. Collapsed material obscuring the floors of the above rooms was removed during the course of the watching brief. Otherwise, the layout and features of the building had not altered since the initial building survey.

4.2 FLOOR DETAILS

- 4.2.1 **Room 4:** approximately 0.25m of overburden was removed to reveal a flooring material comprising river cobbles and local stone (Plates 1 and 2), the largest of which measured some 0.3m by 0.1m. The floor sloped slightly towards the door in the south-west corner of the room, where a stone threshold was observed. No archaeological features were seen within the cobbled floor surface.
- 4.2.2 **Room 5:** Plate 3 illustrates the amount of overburden removed from this room, which at its greatest depth amounted to approximately 0.5m. Following the removal of the overburden the floor was found to comprise mainly slate slabs of various sizes (Plate 4), with some brick and cobble infilling. The largest of the slabs measured 0.75m (2 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet) by 0.6m (2 feet). A number of the slabs exhibited signs of wear.
- 4.2.3 Near the doorway into Room **6** (in the east wall) an area of brick floor was exposed (Plate 5). The floor sloped away from the doorway into the room. The bricks were all handmade and most were broken, although a number of complete examples measured approximately 0.2m (8 inches) by 0.1m (4 inches). Located in the floor near to the doorway and below the remains of a chamfered beam were two iron 'eyes' (Fig 2). These possibly relate to the securing of a lifting mechanism, which may have been attached to a beam above.
- 4.2.4 Two large sandstone blocks (Plate 6) were set into the floor (Fig 2) in front of the fireplace in the south wall of Room 5. The left block measures 0.66m (26 inches) by 0.51m (20 inches) the right 0.66m (26 inches) by 0.48m (19 inches). Both blocks were buried into the ground to a depth of at least 0.5m (a small area was excavated adjacent to one of the blocks, the base of which was not found at this depth). Both blocks exhibited rock cut faces and the upperfaces have tooling marks. It is possible that these functioned as beds of some description, possibly for supporting hot containers from the fire.

- 4.2.5 *Room 6*: two steps lead up from Room 5 into Room 6 (Plate 5). The lower step had a rotten timber tread, whilst the second (the floor level in Room 6) was formed by a large slate slab. Room 5 is approximately 0.4m lower than Room 6. The remainder of the floor in Room 6 comprises cobbles and is very similar in nature to the floor in Room 4.
- 4.2.6 **Room** 7: this is the largest room in the complex and it is on the same ground level as Room 6. Access from Room 5 is via two wide slate steps (Plate 7). The depth of overburden was approximately 0.3m 0.5m (Plate 8). Following the clearance it was revealed that most of the room was laid down to slate slabs with areas of brick infilling and patching (Plates 9 and 10). The largest of the slabs measured some 0.8m (2 ½ feet) by 0.6m (2 feet). Two areas of the floor, to the north and the west had no slabs, and it is possible that a tank was once housed in the north-rwest corner of the floor, adjacent to the flues in the north wall. The north-west corner of the room contained a small area of hand-made brick flooring together with some stonework, which may have served as a working platform or base (Fig 2, Plate 11).
- 4.2.7 A square plinth (Plate 12), approximately 0.35m high was located centrally along the north/south axis of the room (Fig 2), toward the western end. This would appear to be the remains of a pad-stone, which might have housed a post supporting the roof structure. A semi-circular stone-lined tank (Plate 13) was recorded against the east wall (Fig 2). It measured 0.70m in depth and had a large slate 'lid' with wrought iron tie-bar support. The pit was not lined and its function is unclear.
- 4.2.8 **Tenter Bases:** nine slate tenter bases were present approximately 43m to the north of the Dye House (Fig 3). They comprised local slate slabs of varying sizes, the largest being 0.70m (2 feet 3 ½ inches) by 0.5m (1 feet 7 ½ inches), and the smallest 0.5m (1 feet 7 ½ inches) by 0.4m (1 feet 3 ¾ inches). All of the slabs measured 4 inches in thickness, and were aligned approximately 1.8m (6 feet) apart from each other on an east/west orientation, presumably to maximise drying times. A rectangular slot (0.1m, (4 inches) by 0.03m, (1 ¼ inches)) in each of the bases would have originally housed the upright members of the tenter frames (Plate 14).
- 4.2.9 In addition to the nine visible bases, ground probing revealed a further ten buried bases extending to the west (Fig 3). All of these appear to be of similarly random dimensions and are they are all 1.8m (6 feet) apart. A further possible slab was located 27m (90 feet) to the east of the buried slabs. No other bases were located.

4.3 FINDS

4.3.1 In all, 68 fragments of artefacts were recovered during the investigation, from Rooms 5-7 of the structure investigated (*Appendix 2*). None of the finds were technically stratified, being recovered from collapse material within the rooms of the standing building.

Room	Pottery	Glass	Metalwork	Totals
5	14	2	1	17
6	31	5	1	37
7	12		2	14
Totals	57	7	4	68

- The majority of the material recovered was pottery. All were medium or large-4.3.2 sized fragments, many of which joined to form a considerably smaller number of vessels. All were in relatively good condition, although glazes were poorly preserved on several vessels of different fabrics, the glazed surfaces partdissolved or flaking, and it is possible that there had been some chemical or environmental erosion. None of the vessels examined are likely to be earlier than the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Most of the vessels identified were storage vessels in stoneware, or (presumably) locally made redwares, with either a black, or a colourless (self) glaze, giving the vessel a brown colour. Forms noted included 11b jam-jars in grey stoneware; one stamped 'Hartley's' of Liverpool and London. Other stoneware jars and bottles were noted, as well as straight-sided and slightly bulbous storage jars in redware. One of these, with fragments from Rooms 5 and 7, could be reconstructed to provide a full profile. Only a few fragments of tablewares were recovered, again, none earlier than the late nineteenth century and all blue and white underglaze transfer-printed white earthenwares.
- 4.3.3 Glass comprised fragments of storage vessels: a large Kilner jar, a mineral water bottle embossed with the trade name of an Ulverston beer and spirits dealer, and a ground-glass stopper. There were, in addition, from Rooms 5 and 6, fragments of (probably) a single colourless glass machine press-moulded vessel imitating cut glass. It appears to have been a heavy, low-walled rectangular fruit bowl or other display dish.
- 4.3.4 Only four fragments of metalwork were recovered. A large, probably stamped bowl came from Room 7 and was clearly intended for suspension, perhaps as the liner in a plant-holder, a small and much deformed fragment of an oil lamp or paraffin burner came from the same room. The label from an early clothes (?) washer came from Room 6, and could point to the kind of activity which took place there. The date of the patent (1868) gives a date similar to that of the pottery, for activity associated with the rooms. A plain copper-plated desert spoon came from Room 5, although stamped with the maker's name, this is now illegible.

5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 **DISCUSSION**

- 5.1.1 The removal of collapsed material from Rooms 4, 5, 6, and 7 has revealed the nature of the floor surfaces within the rooms. This has added to the interpretation of the function of the rooms.
- 5.1.2 It is apparent that the floors in Rooms 4 and 6 contain no internal features and are similar in appearance to the floor in Room 1, which was simply flagged (OA North 2007). This suggests that Rooms 5 and 7 were the core areas for the dying process. The floors within Rooms 4 and 6 were obviously constructed of local materials, most of which probably originated in the Black Beck.
- 5.1.3 The floor in Room **5** is of higher quality and obviously reflects a greater investment of both time and materials, although some cobbles have been used for minor repairs. The two large sandstone blocks set into the floor next to the fireplace may have been used as a base for a tank or machine, or other heavy equipment. Certainly, there is evidence for a winch/lift mechanism within this room suggesting heavy items were handled here.
- 5.1.4 The fireplace situated behind the sandstone blocks was found to be partially blocked from within Room 7, and so it may have serviced both rooms. Similarly, a second aperture located to the north of this also may have served both rooms.
- 5.1.5 Room 7, the largest within the building, exhibits a number of industrial features. The floor is mainly flagged in a similar fashion to Room 5, although extensive repairs have been carried out. The most notable feature is the semicircular tank located at the south end of the room, which is of unknown use. This is unlined at present but could have been so in the past. The brick surface in the north-west corner is suggestive of a working platform. The area with no flag-stones adjacent to the north wall may represent the position of a tank or pit, as soft material to a depth of approximately 0.75m needed to be excavated to provide firm footings for the scaffolding.
- 5.1.6 The tenter bases investigated reveal that there are nine visible and eleven (including the outlying base) buried bases, all of fairly uniform size. It is possible that there were originally 34 bases if it is assumed that bases were once present in the gap (Fig 3). No further evidence of the tenter frames survives.
- 5.1.7 All of the finds located within the building were unstratified and most were pottery fragments dating to around the late nineteenth century. The most significant find was the oval stamped sheet label for an early washing machine 'Taylor and Wilsons Homewasher. Improved Patent. By Royal Letters Patent Dated 26 Feb 1868' which was found in Room 6. This could point to the kind of activity which took place there.

5.2 **Recommendations**

- 5.2.1 A particular recommendation for further work is the area of the possible tank/pit within Room 7 where scaffolding is now located. This area should be investigated under archaeological supervision if further ground disturbance is to take place.
- 5.2.2 The finds contribute to the interpretation and dating of the site, but none warrant further analysis.

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7. ILLUSTRATIONS

7.1 LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Site location

Figure 2: Ground floor plan

Figure 3: Plan showing tenter bases

7.2 LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1: The floor in Room 4

Plate 2: Detail of the floor in Room 4

Plate 3: View of overburden in Room **5**

Plate 4: View of Room 5 following removal of overburden

Plate 5: The doorway from Room 5 into Room 6

Plate 6: The two large blocks near to the fireplace in Room 5

Plate 7: The doorway from Room 5 to Room 7

Plate 8: General view of Room 7 during clearance (facing east)

Plate 9: General view of Room 7 following clearance (facing west

Plate 10: General view of Room 7 following clearance (facing east)

Plate 11: Possible platform in the north-west corner of Room 7

Plate 12: Possible pad stone within Room 7

Plate 13: Stone-lined pit at the east end of Room 7

Plate 14: Example of Tenter Base

APPENDIX 1: PROJECT BRIEF

Room	OR	Material	Category	Description	Date
5	6	Copper alloy	Spoon	Complete silver-plated or EPNS desert spoon.	Late nineteenth century or later
5	8	Ceramic	Vessel	Joining rim fragments of grey stoneware jar with brown-dipped top.	Late nineteenth century or later
5	8	Ceramic	Vessel	Base to rim profile, slightly bulbous, thin-walled, black-glazed redware storage vessel. See Room 7 OR1 for joining fragments	Late nineteenth century or later
5	8	Glass	Vessel	Two joining fragments of a rectangular machine pressed colourless glass dish, in imitation of 'cut glass'.	Late nineteenth century or later
6	2	Glass	Vessel	Large polygonal Kilner Jar, in slightly bluish, poor- quality metal.	Late nineteenth century or later
6	2	Glass	Vessel	Mould-blown embossed mineral water bottle in bluish natural metal. Inscription incomplete but appears to read] SMITH [beer and] spirit merchant][ULVE] RSTO [N].	Late nineteenth century or later
6	2	Glass	Vessel	Bluish cast and ground stopper for narrow-necked bottle.	Late nineteenth century or later
6	2	Glass	Vessel	Machine pressed colourless glass fragment, in imitation of 'cut glass'.	Late nineteenth century or later
6	3	Ceramic	Vessel	Cream-yellowish stoneware bottle. Surfaces badly damaged and blackened. See also OR4	Late nineteenth century or later
6	3	Ceramic	Vessel	Black-glazed redware storage vessel. Surfaces badly	Late nineteenth
6	3	Ceramic	Vessel	damaged especially glaze eroded. See also OR9 Pale grey stoneware 11b jam jar.	century or later Late nineteenth
6	3	Ceramic	Vessel	Dark grey stoneware jar or bottle.	century or later Late nineteenth
6	3	Ceramic	Vessel	Self-glazed redware straight-sided storage vessel.	century or later Late nineteenth
6	4	Ceramic	Vessel	Glaze very badly damaged and eroded. Brown-glazed stoneware bottle.	century or later Late nineteenth
6	4	Ceramic	Vessel	Deep whiteware bowl with blue lines at rim.	century or later Late nineteenth
6	4	Ceramic	Vessel	Pale grey stoneware 11b jam jar. Stamped on base	century or later Late nineteenth
6	4	Ceramic	Vessel	'Hartley of Liverpool and London. Trademark regd.'.Cream-yellowish stoneware bottle. Surfaces badly	century or later Late nineteenth
6	4	Ceramic	Vessel	damaged and blackened. See also OR3 Large plain whiteware vessel – possibly lower wall of	century or later Late nineteenth
6	4	Ceramic	Vessel	chamber pot. Body fragments blue and white under-glaze transfer- printed bowl with pastoral scene. Glaze has a slight bluish tint, but is probably not Pearlware.	century or later Late nineteenth century or later
6	5	Copper alloy	Label	Oval stamped sheet label for early washing machine. 'Taylor and Wilsons Homewasher. Improved Patent. By Royal Letters Patent Dated 26 Feb 1868'	Late nineteenth century or later
6	9	Ceramic	Vessel	Black-glazed redware storage vessel. Surfaces badly damaged especially glaze eroded. See also OR3	Late nineteenth century or later
7	1	Ceramic	Vessel	Grey unglazed reduced fabric, hard enough to be stoneware. Probably a jug (base and large strap handle).	Not closely dated
7	1	Ceramic	Vessel	Redware base fragment. Unglazed.	Late nineteenth century or later
7	1	Ceramic	Vessel	Base and rim fragment slightly bulbous black-glazed redware storage vessel. See Room 5 OR 8 for joining fragments	Late nineteenth century or later
7	1	Ceramic	Vessel	Rim fragments blue and white under-glaze transfer- printed dish.	Late nineteenth- early twentieth century
7	1	Ceramic	Vessel	Rim fragments blue and white under-glaze transfer- printed platter. Glaze in poor condition	Late nineteenth- early twentieth century
7	1	Ceramic	Vessel	Dark grey stoneware jar or bottle.	Late nineteenth century or later
7	1	Ceramic	Vessel	Pale grey stoneware 11b jam jar.	Late nineteenth century or later
7	10	Copper alloy	Bowl	Plain deep bowl probably stamped rather than raised.	Nineteenth

APPENDIX 2: FINDS SUMMARY

				Three evenly spaced suspension holes around the rim suggest that it might have been intended as a liner for a more decorative object.	century?
7	10	Copper alloy	Object	Small, originally circular object with a row of perforations above the surviving original edge. Now much distorted but probably part of an oil or paraffin lamp.	Nineteenth century or later?
7	10	Copper alloy	Bowl	Plain deep bowl probably stamped rather than raised. Three evenly spaced suspension holes around the rim suggest that it might have been intended as a liner for a more decorative object.	Nineteenth century?

Record Group	Contents	Comments	Box/File Number
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APPENDIX 3: ARCHIVE CONTENTS