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NORTH WEST MILLS GROUP RECORDS SERIES 2/27A, 1995

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DOUBLE MILLS, COCKERMOUTH, CUMBRIA : PRELIMINARY SURVEY 1989

by Don Paterson

Site

Double mills is situated on the northern bank of the River Cocker at NGR : NY [35] 119 299 about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile south of Cockermouth in Cumbria. It formerly consisted of a mill with attached kiln and a separate mill house.

Survey

This rapid survey was done with a foot rule and a 3 ft knotted string whilst staying overnight at the Hostel and so is only a preliminary examination of the site. Acknowledgement is also made to the published work of J.B. Bradbury and the Simmons Collection of notes in the Science Museum.

Watercourses

The mill was powered by water via a weir, now broken, lying up-stream and a short wide stone-banked leat/mill dam, channelled into a stone launder 5 ft deep by 8 ft wide and 31 ft long preceded by an overflow sluice and spillway 5 ft 6 inches wide. The stone launder divides into two unequal stone launders [the inner 28 inches wide and the outer 53 inches wide] with angled sluices each containing its own wheel; the common tail race is culverted back to the river, where it entered just above the weir for former Wood Mill. The wider channel has stone breast work and an angled sluice to increase the efficiency of the wheel.

Materials and Construction

Externally the mill is stone built with a split/angled gable on the river side where the two water wheels are sited. It is reversed L-shaped in plan with overall measurements of 32 ft 6 inches by 30 ft; the walls vary between 2 ft and 2 ft 5 inches thick. The water courses and wheels are on the south facing split-gable wall. The attached former kiln is on the east side and is also stone built and slated and measures approximately 25 ft by 15 ft 6 inches.

Internally the upper storey and roof space are now stripped and no mill features were observed. The mill wall has been breached in two places by internal doors into the former drying kiln floor. No recognisable features are present, and the drying floor has been separated into a dormitory and the Warden's accommodation, the latter with its own external door and staircase. It was not determined if the staircase was the original entrance to the drying floor or if it had been added in conversion.

The Ground floor of the mill contains two wheel pits, the western one 5 ft wide by 12 ft 5 inches long is spanned by part of the wooden Hurst Frame which is 7 ft long and 5 ft 8 inches wide. The wall sockets for the frame are 8½ by 8½ inches square, and one bridge tree still exists [5½" x 9" deep having a 3" tenon]. The eastern wheel pit, [not measured] is spanned by a 7 inch diameter wheel shaft with 4 flanges, and is filled with three millstones [two are Lazonby sandstone 54 inches diameter and the other a French Buhr 58 inches diameter. The 19 ft mill wall, which is 2 ft thick, has been breached into the ground or fire floor and tunnels of the kiln. The tunnels and central firebox are complete. The original entrance to the fire floor was opposite the mouth of the fire box but has now been filled in. The firebox is 3 ft 10 inches square and built of brick, with a stoke hole 1 ft 10 inches wide by 3 ft 7 inches high with an arch of 7 inches. The internal measurements of the kiln firebox floor are 13 ft 8 inches by 22 ft [?] and the two wider tunnels have four pillars with 4 arches or vaults to the centre and there are also four vaults to the corners

#### Waterwheels

The inner hybrid wheel was 9 feet diameter and has a cast iron hub holding 6 wooden arms supporting a single rim 3 inches deep by 6 inches wide with holes 3 by 1½/1½ inches and sockets projecting 4 inches deep below the rim formerly holding 30 starts each of which held a wooden paddle. Thirty wooden sole boards were fixed directly to the rim. The cast iron wheel-shaft is 7 inches diameter with four flanges. This wheel was in a stone launder channel 28 inches wide.

The outer hybrid wheel was 10 feet diameter and 34 inches wide and had double 30 inch diameter hubs supporting six arms and double rims. The rims held 30 starts 2½ by 2 inches in section. The rim shrouds were 6 inches deep, extending to 9 inches deep at the arm flanges.

#### Millstones

Five millstones are still on site. Two of red Lazonby sandstone are 54 inches diameter and were shelling stones for oats. The runner is 7½ inches thick and has holes for a fixed rind and a dress of 12 harps of two furrows. The bedstone is 14 inches thick and has an 11 inch diameter eye and a hole for Lewis Keys on the outer edge. A single runner French Buhr is also in the pitwheel pit, 58 inches diameter and 14 inches eye diameter. This stone is 11 inches thick at the edge and 13 inches thick at the eye. It possesses four circular weight boxes with 5 inch diameters.

Two French Buhr stones are outside the mill on a rockery bank, and have a diameter of 52 inches and are 7 inches thick. One of the bedstones is constructed of four central blocks with 12 outer segment blocks and a three furrow dress with a central eye of 10 inches square. The other also has a square eye and no

Double Mills, Cockermouth, Cumbria, Preliminary Survey 1989

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balance boxes so is also a bedstone. A plate from the stone records Kay & Hilton, Fleet Street, Liverpool, 1859.

Owners and Millers

In 1741 the Duke of Somerset leased the mill to John Fearon for 21 years at an annual rent of £16.00. There followed a succession of lessees who usually held it for 21 years. George Hodgson took it in 1814 and purchased a pair of French Buhrs. A second pair seems to have been added after 1859. In 1900 the mill was marked as disused by the Ordnance Survey map. The Cockermouth UDC bought it in 1902 for £1000 to use as an isolation hospital. These plans did not materialize and since 1933 it has been let to the Youth Hostel Association. It was opened as a hostel on 13th April 1933 in the presence of E. J. Catchpole the National Secretary YHA.

Directories [entries as Dubb or Double Mills, Cockermouth]

1829 George Hodgson, corn miller, Dubb Mills, Cockermouth.  
1834 George Hodgson, corn miller, Dubb Mills, Cockermouth.  
1848 William Barnes, corn miller, Dubb Mills, Cockermouth.  
1855 William Barnes, corn miller, Dubble Mills, Cockermouth.  
1858 William Barnes, corn miller, Double Mills, Cockermouth.  
1879 Margaret Wilson, corn miller, Double Mills, Cockermouth  
1883 Edward Ernest Bowley, Double Mills, Cockermouth

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