

A walkover survey of the Barbrook Mill site



The residents of Barbrook Mill today

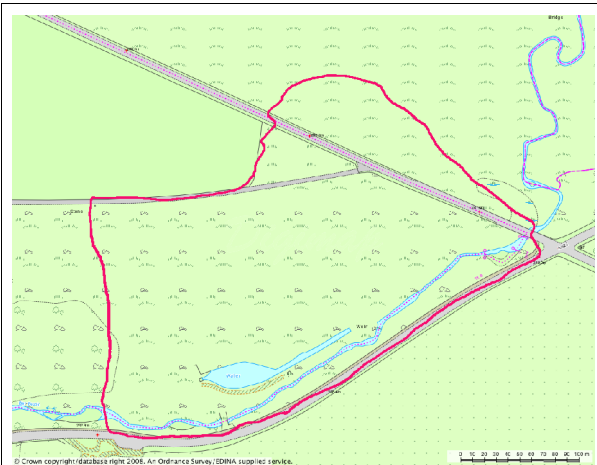
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Introduction

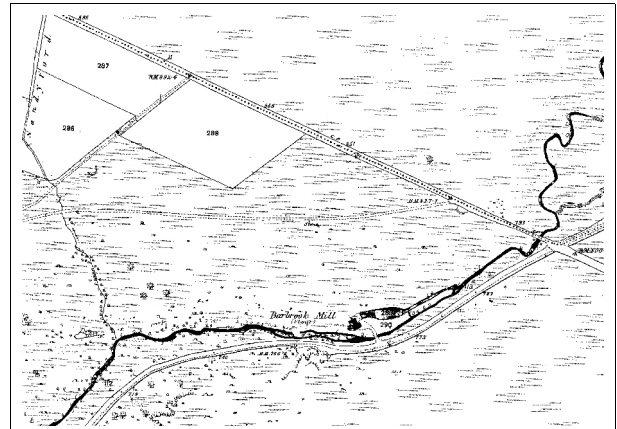
Barbrook Mill was situated beside the A621 Baslow-Sheffield road, 300m south-west of its junction with the minor road to Curbar (referred to as Curbar Lane), at OSGB ref SK 276739. There are no standing buildings, but foundations, waterways and other ground features are easily seen. The walkover survey was conducted on 1-2 May 2009, in sunny weather following recent rain, and included the land bounded by the A621, Curbar Lane, the farm track leading to Wellington's Monument (referred to locally as Bar Lane) and the woodland to the west of the mill site. A small triangle of land to the north of Bar Lane and an area to the north of Curbar Lane were also included, as some man-made features there appeared relevant. The whole area is shown in the location map, produced via Edina Digimap (2009a). Vegetation is kept short by a herd of highland cattle, who have roamed this area for at least 10 years.

Context

The main feature is described as 'Barbrook Mill (Flour)' on the OS 1st Edition map of 1879 (Edina 2009a), and Gifford (1999) states it is 'probably on the site of an old lead mill' (p35). Burdett (1791) shows a 'smelting mill' in the NE corner of the site, by the crossroads.



Location map – the Barbrook Mill site today
– survey area outlined in red (Edina 2009b)



Location map – the Barbrook Mill site in
1878-79 (Edina 2009a)



Aerial photo – the Barbrook Mill site
(Google Earth 2009)

The Google Earth (2009) picture shows the various tracks (Ref 6/15) particularly well, and some of the other features more faintly.

The main survey plan is based on a Digimap download (Edina 2009b). Selected photos are included in the appendix.

Dalrymple-Smith (2004) gives the names of some of those who operated the flour mill in the 19th C.

Catalogue of features (Ref to numbers on survey plan)

Ref	Description	Photo
1b	Boundary walls – along A621 and Curbar Lane. Built dry of regular gritstone slabs and blocks, in generally good condition and recently maintained. At the point where the wall crosses the former entrance to the Barbrook Mill site, there are no discontinuities, indicating the wall was built or rebuilt after closure of the mill.	
1a	Gates giving access from Curbar Lane to Bar Lane. Modern steel vehicle gate hung on old massive gritstone gateposts (30 cm square, 160cm tall). Bar Lane eventually connects with Bar Road in Baslow, and is probably older than the A621 (Barnett & Smith, 2004). The pedestrian access gate is modern, of wood. Just to the south of the modern gate can be seen older concrete lined post holes, where a wider gate may once have been situated.	
2	Several shallow ditches, approx. 30cm deep x 60cm wide, running parallel to Curbar Lane, about 1m from the wall, and parallel to Bar Lane, about 2.5m from it. There is also a small bank about 20cm high on the track side of the ditch, possibly composed of spoil from digging it. These features appear to be relatively modern drainage ditches. There are a number of small mounds, 20-30cm high x 50-100cm diameter located on the strip of land between Bar Lane and this bank/ditch, which may only be small boulders covered in vegetation.	
3	Most of the vegetation in this area is rough grass, sedge and heather, with lots of hummocks like those at Ref 2.	
4	A low straight bank, 20-30cm high, crosses the northern end of the triangle of land to the north of Bar Lane, and the area north of the bank resembles more the field to the west of this triangle of land, which is improved grassland with no hummocks. It may be that this bank was a former field boundary, before walls were realigned to accommodate mechanised farming.	
5	Large oval depression, approx. 10m x 18m x 2m deep. Evidence of a small spoil heap on the SE side. Exposed gritstone outcrops within the depression indicates this was a quarry, possibly the source of material for the walls 1b. The lightly weathered appearance implies this is not very old (<100 years). The land falls away more steeply on the eastern side, down to the Bar Brook.	1
6/15	A clear track runs for about 300m, firstly S from the gate, then veering SW, diagonally across the slope towards the mill pond. Approx. 2m wide, with evidence of ruts about 1.5m apart, in places within banks as if built to provide a consistent moderate slope for carts. A similar but fainter track branches from it, and runs SE to the quarry spoil heap. Barnett & Smith (2004) show these as hollow ways, running parallel to, but south of the 1759 Turnpike, which is now Curbar Lane (Fig 56, page 105)	11

Ref	Description	Photo
7	A small pool of water, approx. 2.5m in diameter, with no obvious outflow. No real evidence of human activity, assumed to be a natural feature.	
8	Between the pool and the wall are two small depressions, one 2m diameter x 50cm deep, the other 5m x 2m x 1m deep. These look like small quarries, but are much more weathered than 5, and hence are probably much older. Faint tracks connect them, but these may be cattle paths.	
9	Flat grassy area beside the wall, here over 2m high, with a marshy area between it and the pool by the bridge. Some evidence that the area was built up and levelled, perhaps as a base for ephemeral buildings such as sheds. The bridge itself is arched, of gritstone block construction. As such, it is 19thC or earlier, as more recent road bridges are usually concrete.	
10/12	The pool by the bridge is created by a dam of rocks across the Brook (marked as a pink dumb-bell on the OS map). While these could be natural, a number of indicators suggest not. On the north bank, an 'L' shaped feature looks like a blocked-off outflow (mill leat). On both banks, by the rock dam, there are square hollows opposite each other that could have supported timbers to create a higher dam. The marshy area mentioned at 9 could be the remnant of the larger pool a higher dam would have created. Just downstream of the dam, there was evidence of a narrow (15cm wide) channel, approx 50cm deep, almost obscured by vegetation.	2
11	A flat area on the south side of the small pool, with a small mound beside it possibly a spoil heap. Similar to 9, could have been a base for sheds.	
13	Another faint track, but could be a cattle path.	
14	The slope is dotted with several large boulders, presumed natural features (solifluction deposits)	
16	Small round hollow, 1.5m dia. x 50cm deep, possibly natural.	
17	This area has many small humps and depressions, possibly more soliflucted boulders.	
18	Another clear trackway, approx 1.5m wide, with banks in places up to 1m high (hollow way) runs down from Bar Lane to join track 6/15 by the mill buildings (32). A number of fainter tracks branch off from it and spread across the hillside.	
19	A flat area beside the pond, bounded by a low wall at the waterside. Some faint signs of building foundations on it.	

Ref	Description	Photo
20/21	The former mill race is bounded on the SE by a straight wall, and on the NW by a wall which curves in the middle. The SE wall, above the Bar Brook, is more substantial, and is 1m wide at the top, rising to almost 2.5m above the surface of the Bar Brook where it adjoins the pond.	
22	The upstream end of the mill race has been filled in and walled across. At this point, the race has no open water, just bog.	
23	A number of quarried gritstone slabs have been placed beside the mill race, on the SE facing bank. These could once have formed part of a larger weir across the brook (see 24), or possibly came from the filled-in section of mill-race.	3
24	Weir (marked on OS map). Dressed stone slabs, now only 30-40cm high. Just above it can be seen the cut-off channel that once connected to the mill-race (20/21)	
25	Mill pond, approx 50m x 20m, depth unknown. The south side of the pond is an embankment, as marked on the OS map. The north-east side is reinforced by a continuation of wall mentioned at 19. The water surface is approx. 3.5m above the water level of the brook at the old bridge (27).	
26	Small masonry structure, with a channel running under the SE wall of the mill-race. Evidently an overflow to prevent water overtopping the wall. The surface of the mill-race is shown by this to have been about 2m above the Bar Brook at this point.	
27	Old arched bridge and former access to mill site from A621. Of gritstone construction, the arch is 2.2m high, and the roadway on top is 2.5 - 3m wide. The style and condition of the masonry indicates 18th-19th C construction. The roadway curves to the left (NW) of the pond (25) and passes between the depression (31) and the building (32), leading to a track (33).	4
28	The land to the west of the bridge and track (27), on the north bank of the brook has been terraced. The lower terrace is ~1m above the brook, and the upper terrace is ~1.5m above that. Both terraces extend westwards ~50m, almost to the trees. There are a number of hollows and bumps on the terracing, probably indicating building foundations. About half way along the upper terrace, there is a gap or depression in the bank, possibly the site of a connecting stairway.	9
29	A small dip in the southern bank of the pond, with a boggy area below it leading down to the brook. Apparently the location of the pond overflow, probably where a sluice gate would have controlled the level of the pond.	
30	The main outflow from the pond leads to a small, square (1.8m x 1.8m) gritstone chamber, marked on the OS map. Possibly the location of a sluice to control the flow to the mill wheel. The water then flowed beneath the roadway (27) to the large depression (31).	5

Ref	Description	Photo
31	Large depression, ~10m diameter, cutting across the upper terrace (28). It is 4m deeper than the roadway, and ~1.5m deeper than the lower terrace, so the bottom is at or just above the level of the brook. This is most likely the location of the millhouse and mill wheel, which Gifford (1999) states was an undershot type, in 1869. The water exit channel is not visible at this point, but would have run from the downstream side of this depression, beneath the lower terrace to the brook, some 50m downstream (see also 35)	12
32	Clear set of gritstone building foundations, see sketch plan. The walls are 40-50 cm wide, and stand 10-30 cm high. The sketch also shows the road/trackway, the square tank (30), the deep depression (32), the pond overflow (29) and part of the terracing (28). The slab has two bolts set in it, indicating it was a machine base.	6
33	Track leading from mill site, diagonally up the hillside and running through the trees to Bar Lane. Built up in places, the lower part is clearly an extension of the mill roadway (27), but the upper part through the trees is probably just a cattle path.	
34	Large (1.3m x 1.5m x 30cm thick) flat stone in brook, with 2 shallow channels in its upper surface. Looks like an artefact intended to channel water flow as an aid to washing (minerals, clothing ?). Could be natural.	
35	Linear V-shaped depression below lower terrace, ~20m long, 50cm wide x 50cm deep. Possibly the end of the mill outfall channel (see 31)	
36	Large (20m x 10m x 2.5m deep) oval depression just to north of Curbar Lane, near the gates (1a). It extends westwards as a V shaped cutting or ditch, becoming shallower (1m deep) further from the depression, ending at Curbar Lane. At least two more semi-parallel ditches (1-2m deep) could be discerned to the north of this ditch, with mounds (spoil heaps ?) between them ~4m wide. The northernmost ditch widens out into a circular pit ~4m in diameter, by Curbar Lane. These features are not heavily weathered, and so do not appear to be very old. A few gritstone outcrops can be seen within these features, so this may be evidence of quarrying. Given the poor quality of the land (boggy/moorland), it is unlikely that these were dug to improve drainage. They resemble military trenches, and Barnatt & Smith mention that the adjacent Big Moor was used for military training during World War 2, and is 'littered with slit trenches' (p131)	
37	On the south side of the brook, an alignment of ~10 gritstone blocks, each 30-50 cm long, ~20cm wide, projecting 20-40 cm above the land surface. The whole assembly is 9-10m long, almost straight, but curving slightly at the eastern end, where it adjoins a large natural boulder.	7
38	A small semicircle of stones edging a raised (~1m above brook), flat platform, adjacent to the pool (10/12), and about 3m from the brook. The platform is about 5m x 6m in extent,, enough for a small building or a shed. No signs of foundations.	8

Ref	Description	Photo
39	The 'Stone' marked on the OS map is of gritstone, 1.7m high, 25cm x 30 cm in section, with an inscription on one side stating "CHESTE / RFEILD / 10ADE". In shape and inscription, it resembles the Guide Stoops described by Smith (2009), and is thus probably early 18thC. The "10ADE" part is very worn, and may have said "1710AD", or may be the mason's initials. At that time, Bar Lane was the main road from Baslow to Chesterfield. Barnatt & Smith (2004) show it as a hollow way, and refer to this guide stoop in Figure 56 (page 105)	10

Brief Discussion

The area around the mill pond (25) is clearly the site of the 19th C flour mill. The smaller, older features to the east, nearer to the crossroads (10-12), are probably the site of the earlier lead smelting mill as this would have required less power to drive the smelter bellows than the millstones did. The quarries almost certainly provided the building stone for the mill and later, the walls around the site. The features to the north of Curbar Lane may also have been quarries, but look more like military training trenches. Further investigation is needed to confirm the analysis, but Geophysics may be difficult due to the waterlogged nature of the land near the crossroads, and the likely presence of shrapnel around the military area, if that is what it is.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix - Selected Photos of the site. The figure in brackets is the catalogue reference



Photo 1 - Probable quarry (5)



Photo 2 - L shaped feature (10/12)



Photo 3- Quarried slabs (23)



Photo 4 - Old bridge (27)



Photo 5 - Small square tank (30)



Photo 6 - Foundation walls and machine slab (32)



Photo 7 - Alignment of stones (37)



Photo 8 - Stone semicircle/platform (38)



Photo 9 - Terracing (28)



Photo 10 - Guide Stoop (39)

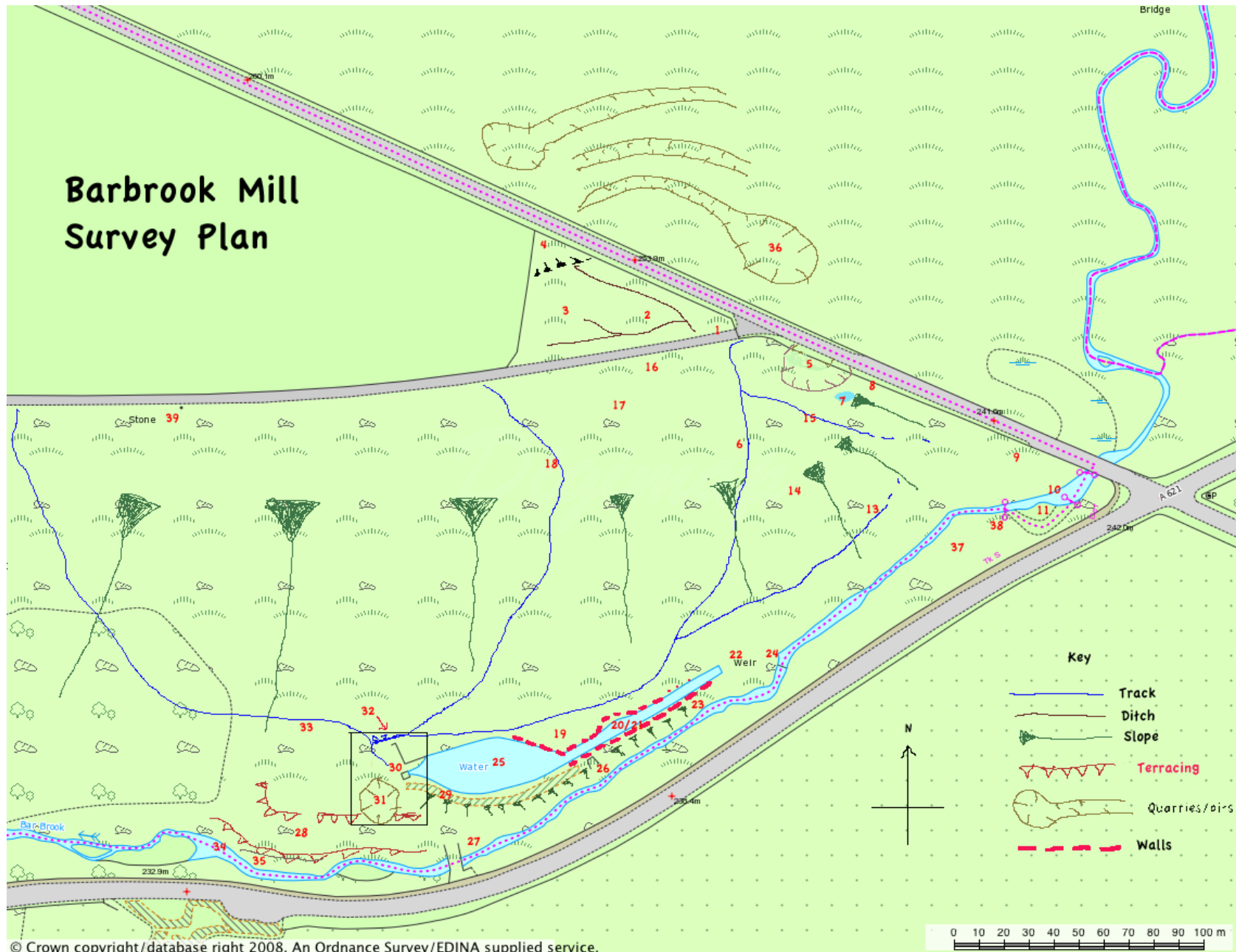


Photo 11 - Track/Hollow way (6)



Photo 12 - Large depression (31)

Barbrook Mill Survey Plan



Ref32 - Sketch of building foundations etc (not to scale)

