

## Mill of Benholm, Kincardineshire, Aberdeenshire



**Gazetteer: Part 1: Mill Buildings**

# Version 2 November 2023

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## Introduction

This Gazetteer forms part of a series for the assets at the Mill of Benholm including:

Part 1: Mill Buildings

Part 2: Meal Mill Lower Floor

Part 3: Meal Mill Upper Floor & External Items

Part 4: Water Mill Infrastructure

The Gazetteer should also be read in conjunction with the Mill of Benholm Conservation Plan.

The gazetteer lists items of interest recorded during site visits in May to September 2023. The items are listed with a short description and images. Comments on their authenticity, significance and other observations are made. Terminology for mill infrastructure and parts of the milling operations has been taken from *The Mill of Benholm, The Story of a Scottish Meal Mill*, by Lesley Miller, published by Kincardine & Deeside District Council in 1996 when the mill was reopened as a visitor centre; additional information presumed from the same source is available on interpretation panels on site. Information recorded in the Scottish Industrial Archaeology Survey in 1983 (Canmore, MS/500/35/83) has been included where relevant as a comparison to the current position.

Aberdeenshire Council has consented to the use of the hand drawn images in Miller (1996) in this document formerly copyright of the K&D DC.

## Mill of Benholm, mill complex after 1995



Mill of Benholm site drawing from Miller (1996) indicating the main buildings and features; note the later miller's cottage by the car park which is no longer part of the mill ownership. © Aberdeenshire Council.

Mill buildings including the meal mill (1), former miller's house (2), former byre (3) and former grain store (4). For the purposes of this document these original buildings terms will be used rather than their adapted uses.

Mill water infrastructure including mill pond (5; also referred to as the mill dam in other resources), weirs, lade (7), sluices, and waterwheel.

Open space and woodlands both on the mill lands and former croft (8) and the neighbouring Mill Brae Wood, now commonly referred to as the Mill Brae 'woods' (6).

## Historic mill complex development in cartographic evidence



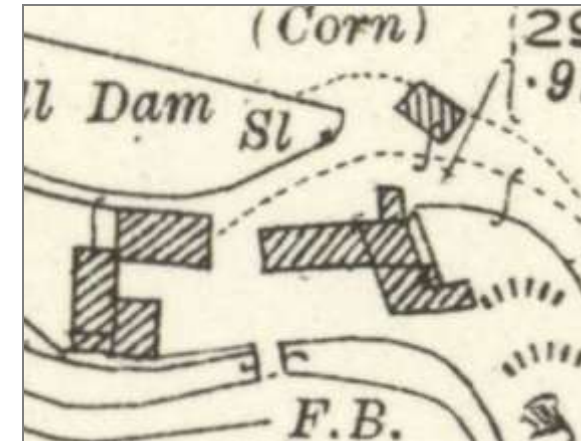
1864: L-plan meal mill with partial southern extension; miller's house; grain store; small square plan byre or other outbuilding coloured in grey suggesting a more temporary structure of wood or iron, the pink indicating masonry constructions.

© NLS [View map: Ordnance Survey, Kincardineshire XXV.9 \(Benholm\) - Ordnance Survey 25 inch 1st edition, Scotland, 1855-1882 \(nls.uk\)](#)



1901: L-plan meal mill has been extended further to the south and an eastern extension built over the waterwheel pit; a small outbuilding has been added south-east of the mill; former miller's house possibly extended or lean-to added (no longer residential); grain store no change; small square plan byre extended partly to the west.

© NLS [View map: Ordnance Survey, Kincardineshire XXVIII.6 \(Benholm; Bervie\) - Ordnance Survey 25 inch 2nd and later editions, Scotland, 1892-1949 \(nls.uk\)](#)



1923: L-plan meal mill with full southern extension but eastern extension over the waterwheel pit has reduced slightly, and an extension added to the north side; the small outbuilding to the south-east of the mill has been removed; former miller's house has an extension to the east; grain store no change; byre extended further to form rectangular plan building.

© NLS [View map: Ordnance Survey, Kincardineshire XXVIII.6 \(Benholm; Bervie\) - Ordnance Survey 25 inch 2nd and later editions, Scotland, 1892-1949 \(nls.uk\)](#)

### Possible meal mill development

Single storey in pale grey, 2-storey in black.

1

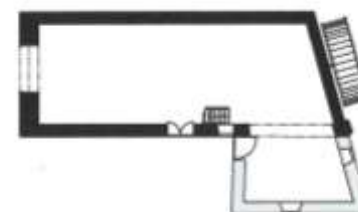


Earliest form as single storey mill with west entrance (poss. 1711)

2



Meal mill is raised to form a two storey building with single storey lean-to southern extension (before 1817)

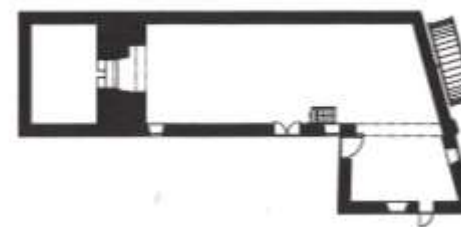


Alternatively meal mill is raised to form a two storey building with single storey lean-to southern extension including the new southern door openings (1817)

3



The kiln is added to the meal mill, either in 1817 which necessitates the new southern doorway, or sometime between 1817 and 1864.



An upper storey is added to the southern extension.

**Mill Buildings**





Mill complex set alongside the Burn of Benholm including the 2-storey L-plan meal mill with single storey byre (adapted as toilets) to its west. The miller's house (adapted as a café) sits at right angles to the byre forming a loose courtyard with the house frontage facing east towards the meal mill. The grain store (adapted as an office) sits slightly apart and above the other buildings on the track descending into the courtyard.







General view of the mill complex with meal mill in the foreground, 2023.



General view in 1983 shortly after closure of the mill. Note the additional timber & metal sheet extensions removed during the adaption to a visitor centre. © Mills Archive Trust: JWN collection image 10742: <https://catalogue.millsarchive.org/benholm>  
An image from 1974 can be viewed online at: <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/444641>

Building / elevation	Description & Images		Authenticity, Significance and Observations
<p><b>Meal Mill</b></p>	 <p>2-storey L-plan stone built meal mill. The sloping site creates single storey north elevation with 2–storey south elevation on the riverside. Waterwheel on east elevation. Kiln abutted to west side forming extension to earlier building. Welsh slate roof with concrete ridges. Cast iron rainwater goods. Cat-slide roof over entrance doors at upper level with lead flashing and slate haffits.</p>	 <p>Timber louvered ventilator over kiln with flat roof. Masonry construction indicates further building phases / historic development (described below). Timber fixed pane glazing in a number of fenestration patterns. Timber braced and vertically boarded doors.</p>	<p>As an example of a traditional water-powered meal mill, Benholm is of high significance, being one of only seven grain mills known to be operable or with the potential to demonstrate the milling process in Scotland. Refer conservation plan section 8.3.</p> <p>Evidence of possibly 4 building phases.</p>
<p><b>Meal Mill (north elevation)</b></p>	 <p>North elevation of the mill building in 2023.</p>	 <p>Similar view in 1983 prior to adaptation. Note the heavy stone slate roof with mitred hip junction and skylights. © Mills Archive Trust: JWN collection image 10751: <a href="https://millsarchive.org/Benholm2-Images-and-documents">Benholm2 - Images and documents (millsarchive.org)</a></p>	<p>The current roof form appears from records to be as the original (notwithstanding extension of the building), however the Welsh slate finish and ridges are not.</p>



<p><b>Meal Mill (north elevation)</b></p>	 <p>Roughly coursed masonry with large irregular blocks of mixed sandstone with smaller pinning stones. This differentiates the building from the adjoining kiln (see below).</p>	 <p>Detail of the small pinning stones in lime mortar, sometimes referred to a 'cherry caulking'. This is a distinctive feature of the meal mill on the masonry which likely dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century rebuild and extension.</p>	<p>The cherry caulking and original lime mortars are of high significance.</p>
<p><b>Meal Mill (south elevation)</b></p>	 <p>The lowest masonry (c.1m high) of the meal mill's south elevation represents the earliest construction using uncoursed rubble comprising field stones. This suggests that the current building has been constructed on the remains of an earlier mill building or structure either before or in 1817 (see door lintel below).</p>	 <p>South elevation in 1982 prior to adaptation. © HES under license, image B68973: <a href="https://canmore.org.uk/collection/2550726">https://canmore.org.uk/collection/2550726</a></p>	<p>The early masonry is of high significance.</p>

**Meal Mill  
(south elevation)**



Small 4-pane fixed glass window with lintel formed by iron bar suggesting the window is a later alteration.



The upper section of the south elevation is coursed rubble of generally pale pink-grey sandstone using roughly squared blocks with the same small pinning stone detail found on the north elevation.  
Large 12-pane fixed glass window with timber lintels and brick jambs, again indicating this is a later alteration.

Small window previously had 6 panes with horizontal emphasis; the large window was previously a hoist opening for sacks with boarded shutter / door (refer Canmore image B68973 above).  
The openings are of medium significance reflecting development of the functions of the mill.  
The glazed timber windows date to the visitor centre adaptation and are not significant.



Principal entrance on the south elevation with double vertically boarded doors; the lintel is inscribed "William Davidson 1817" with inscribed initials on the adjoining stones. Small 4-pane fixed glass window to RHS with stone lintel.



Carved graffiti on timber double doors "JC 6/2/1917 LW" and "JG "(or JC?)

The stone entrance surround and inscribed lintel are of high significance as is the timber door. Whilst the connection with William Davidson and the identities of the carved initials has not yet been made, conservation of these details is very important.

The window opening is of medium significance reflecting development of the functions of the mill, possibly on or before 1817.

The glazed timber window dates to the visitor centre adaptation and is not significant.

<p><b>Meal Mill (south elevation)</b></p>			<p>James Davidson was miller at Benholm from 1811 – 1836 however a William Davidson has not been found in his immediate family.</p>
			

The inscribed lintel “William Davidson 1817” and further initials and names visible on the uppermost margin stones to either side of the doorway (below).

**Kiln extension  
(all elevations)**



Coursed rubble of mixed sandstone (pale pink-grey /purple-grey/red) using roughly squared blocks with larger pinning stones. Some stugged texture still evident on paler coloured stones (reused possibly from the former circular kiln). Dressed and squared quoins, those on lower NW corner appear damaged / lost probably due to mechanical damage.



Opening in west elevation from kiln drying room; vertically boarded timber shutter. Possibly an original hoist opening.



View in 1982 prior to adaptation. © HES under license, image B68973:

<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/2550726>

The corrugated sheet over the kiln roof with kiln ventilator of a different design were the result of a fire in 1971 after which the original slate and hipped end roof was replaced as above with a gable end and roof in asbestos sheeting.



This image taken in 1974 shows that the opening was reduced during the adaptation with a new lintel inserted at a lower height to accommodate the new hipped roof construction. © HES under license, image SC444642:

<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/444642>

The kiln is of high significance reflecting the development of local agriculture and the need for improved grain drying capacity. The masonry has undergone some repair and replacement but remains of high significance in the chronology of the meal mill's historic development.

The current roof form appears from records to be as the original, however the Welsh slate finish and ridges are not. The ventilator is of an inappropriate design and is discussed further in section 7.3.1 of the conservation plan.

<p><b>Meal Mill Southern Extension</b></p>	 <p>Masonry suggests that a single storey lean-to construction was built against an earlier mill creating an L-plan. This was later extended upward to create a space on the upper floor, and may also have been lengthen or rebuilt slightly at this time. The poorly positioned door opening abuts the earlier wall close to a small 4-pane fixed glass timber window.</p>	 <p>The different build of the upper extension can also be seen on the south elevation of the extended L-plan. Small 4-pane fixed glass timber window with stone lintel. The door has a timber lintel with movement cracking above which suggests the door is a later addition, the timber braced and boarded door also appears to be 'back-to-front' suggesting it was an internal door when the building had further extension recorded in old images which formed an Engine House.</p>	 <p>View of the abutting door from the interior. Note a section of earlier external wall now enclosed. The south extension is of high significance reflecting the development of the mill. The masonry has undergone some repair but remains of high significance in the chronology of the meal mill's historic development.</p>
<p><b>Meal Mill (west elevation)</b></p>	 <p>West elevation with 6-pane fixed glass timber window at low level and change in masonry at junction to the earlier building.</p>	 <p>Area of smooth ashlar masonry next to the water wheel. It was usual to use the best masonry next the wheel to minimise water penetration.</p>	 <p>Axle and drive wheel through the external wall for power from an engine or tractor.</p>

**Miller's House**



General view of east frontage facing the mill courtyard. The asymmetric frontage suggests the building may have differed in the past, possibly including a byre.



General view of the rear (west) elevation

The miller's house displays similar build characteristics to the meal mill and could have early fabric remaining. It is possible it started as a traditional cottage and byre under one lower roof with later the roof raised to provide accommodation at attic level evident from the small gable windows.

This could provide evidence of earlier forms of the miller's house and add to the social and historic significance of the mill complex.



The miller's house in around 1986 note the timber and corrugated sheet extension probably added sometime from 1901 - 1923 (W&D DC postcard, © Aberdeenshire Council).



The miller's house in around 1992 just prior to repair and adaptation to a café. (HES file image, c.1992).

As with the meal mill, the nature of the stone masonry is significant in providing the chronology of the building development. Materially the external stone masonry underwent some repair during the adaptation (and repairs are clearly identified).

**Miller's House**



Probable raising of the wallhead seen on the rear elevation and also north facing gable where there is a protruding outline of an earlier lower and steeper gable slope.






The height of the earlier gable may have been reduced whilst rebuilding to accommodate the large wallhead stones now evident.



An image during adaptation shows the interior stripped back and the attic floor removed. The interior shows evidence of a possibly lower roof line showing as an unpainted part of the gable (HES file image, c. 1992).







Photograph prior to the adaptation suggests the rear door was present prior to that, possibly roughly formed when the building was used as a byre (HES file image, c.1992)

<p><b>Miller's House</b></p>			
<p>Limewash on a stone above the entrance. This may date from when the wall was enclosed, or earlier external finish protected in the hollows of the stone texture.</p>	<p>What may be the remains of a very small low window are located to the south of the current door.</p>	<p>Very little interior features appear to remain excepting the openings and fireplace. The roof structure is believed to be new (not seen).</p> <p>Further information on earlier forms of the building may be gleaned during any future works to remove modern paint finishes and if the concrete floor were replaced.</p>	
 <p>General view of the café interior looking south.</p>	 <p>General view looking north to the kitchen area</p>		



<p><b>Miller's House</b></p>			
<p><b>Kitchen extension</b></p>			<p>The kitchen extension has no heritage significance and is detrimental to the appearance and fabric of the earlier buildings.</p>

<p><b>Byre (shop/store)</b></p>	 <p>A small space created behind the large sliding external barn door at the west end of the byre.</p>	 <p>Internal view of the wall shared with the kitchen extension which is very damp from a defect in the extension roof.</p>	<p><i>The interior space could not be inspected due to stored items and levels of mould.</i></p> <p>The barn door and mechanism are of medium significance as a traditional farm building element and should be retained.</p>
<p><b>Byre (toilets)</b></p>	 <p>View in 1982 of the byre prior to adaptation, note the original rooflight positions. © HES under license, image B68973: <a href="https://canmore.org.uk/collection/2550726">https://canmore.org.uk/collection/2550726</a> ).</p>	 <p>Byre prior to adaptation, note the original cast iron door hinges which were retained (HES file image, c.1992).</p>	<p>The byre has most significance as part of the mill grouping and its position forming a loose courtyard with the miller's house. Its design significance is in the agricultural character of its frontage with a large sliding boarded timber door and the large door to the east with original cast iron hinges. It also reflects the crofting use of the mill lands by the miller and his family.</p>

**Byre  
(toilets)**



General view of the south elevation facing the courtyard.



General view of showing the large boarded door. Iron handing bracket on LHS of door.



Original side entrance doorway within the byre now infilled with painted timber lintel.



Two recessed openings on either side of the byre door may have been former openings but don't appear in the stonework externally.

The remainder of the space is lined out and no other items of interest are visible in the interior in its current form.

**Grain Store**



Mill of Benholm in 1970. Note the corrugated sheet roof over the grain store and no windows in the front elevation. Image ©Aberdeen Press & Journal, courtesy of MoBE.



The grain store was one of the first buildings to be completed during the adaptation. It appears there was considerable reconstruction of the façade to introduce two windows and a central door. (HES file image, c.1992)



General view of the front (south) elevation.



General view of the side (east) elevation where cement mortar pointing from its adaptation is visible.

As with the byre, the grain store's significance is as a traditional building forming part of the mill grouping and its historic function, marking agricultural development and increased grain processing. Its design significance is in its modest character.

<p><b>Grain Store</b></p>			
	<p>The interior has been lined out in insulated plasterboard with crudely detailed window openings.</p>	<p>The interior space is lined out and no items of interest are visible in the interior in its current form.</p>	