

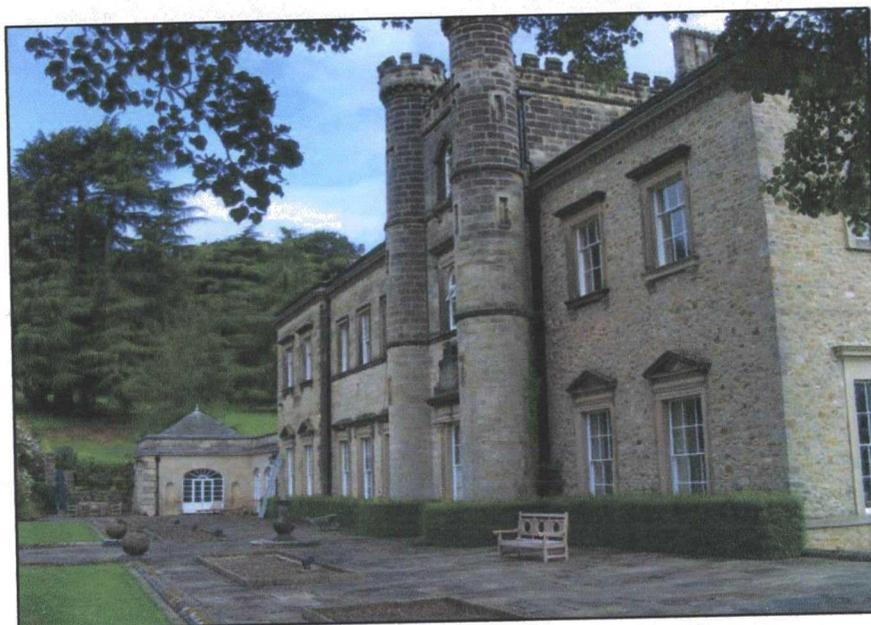
THE BRIGANTIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICE



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SNY	12748
ENY	4585
CNY	5614
Parish	1010
Rec'd	08/07/09

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF at ASKE HALL, RICHMOND, NORTH YORKSHIRE

A report to Zetland Estates



5th July 2009

Rec'd 8/7/2009

1010 parish

C5614

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***ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF at
ASKE HALL, RICHMOND, NORTH YORKSHIRE***

**In connection with planning consent
(Richmondshire District Council) 1/10/6Q/LBC**

A report to Zetland Estates

Fieldwork & report: Percival Turnbull

5th July 2009

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF at
ASKE HALL, RICHMOND, NORTH YORKSHIRE**

INTRODUCTION

On instructions from Zetland Estates an archaeological watching brief was maintained during building works at Aske Hall, near Richmond. This archaeological monitoring was required in connection with works carried out under planning consent (Richmondshire District Council) 1/10/6Q/LBC, concerning internal alterations and refitting. Specifically, the works involved breaking into the interior of a turret on the west side of the Hall in order to provide a new lavatory (see Figs 1 and 2).

BACKGROUND: THE DEVELOPMENT of ASKE HALL

The earliest part of the house at Aske is the mediaeval tower-house (visible in Fig. 3), arguably as early as the 12th century, but much more probably somewhat later. To this was added a Hall block; what survives is largely representative of the Elizabethan Hall commissioned by Walter and Eleanor Bowes (who acquired the sequestered estate after Robert Aske paid the price of his involvement in the 'Rising in the North'); it is difficult to be sure that this is not itself a remodelling of a mediaeval Hall block.

Aske remained a relatively modest, traditional northern Manor house until it was purchased by Sir Conyers D'Arcy who carried out a campaign of improvements both to house and to grounds between 1727 and 1758; *inter alia*, he demolished a pair of wings which had projected from the Hall block. It is clear that the western tower, which effectively balances the greater mediaeval tower when the house is seen from the south, existed at this time; quite when it was added is less clear. It does not appear to be mediaeval; it lacks the size, the monumentality, and any positive trace of such early date.

Major improvements and modifications were carried out under the ownership of Sir Lawrence Dundas, between 1761 and 1781. On his behalf the architect John Carr demolished the old service blocks at the rear (north) of the house and created the courtyard which now exists. More work, largely of a cosmetic nature, was carried out for Thomas Dundas (2nd Earl of Zetland) in the early 19th century: this included 'On the west front the Jacobean tower was remodelled, its square turrets being replaced by round ones, while the three bays immediately to its left may also have been replaced. The architect for the alterations was probably Ignatius Bonomi' (Giles Worsley, *Country Life*, March 1990). No reason is given for a Jacobean date for the west tower, which seems generally unlikely; if it is correct it must have been built during the period of ownership by the Wharton family (1611-1727). The attribution of the alterations to Bonomi is interesting: though he did sometimes work in the Gothic style, he favoured usually a rather austere Classicism. Aske does not appear in a published list of his commissions (J.H. Crosby [1987], *Ignatius Bonomi of Durham, Architect*), though he did several times carry out work elsewhere for Lord Zetland and a lodge at Aske strongly resembles his style.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

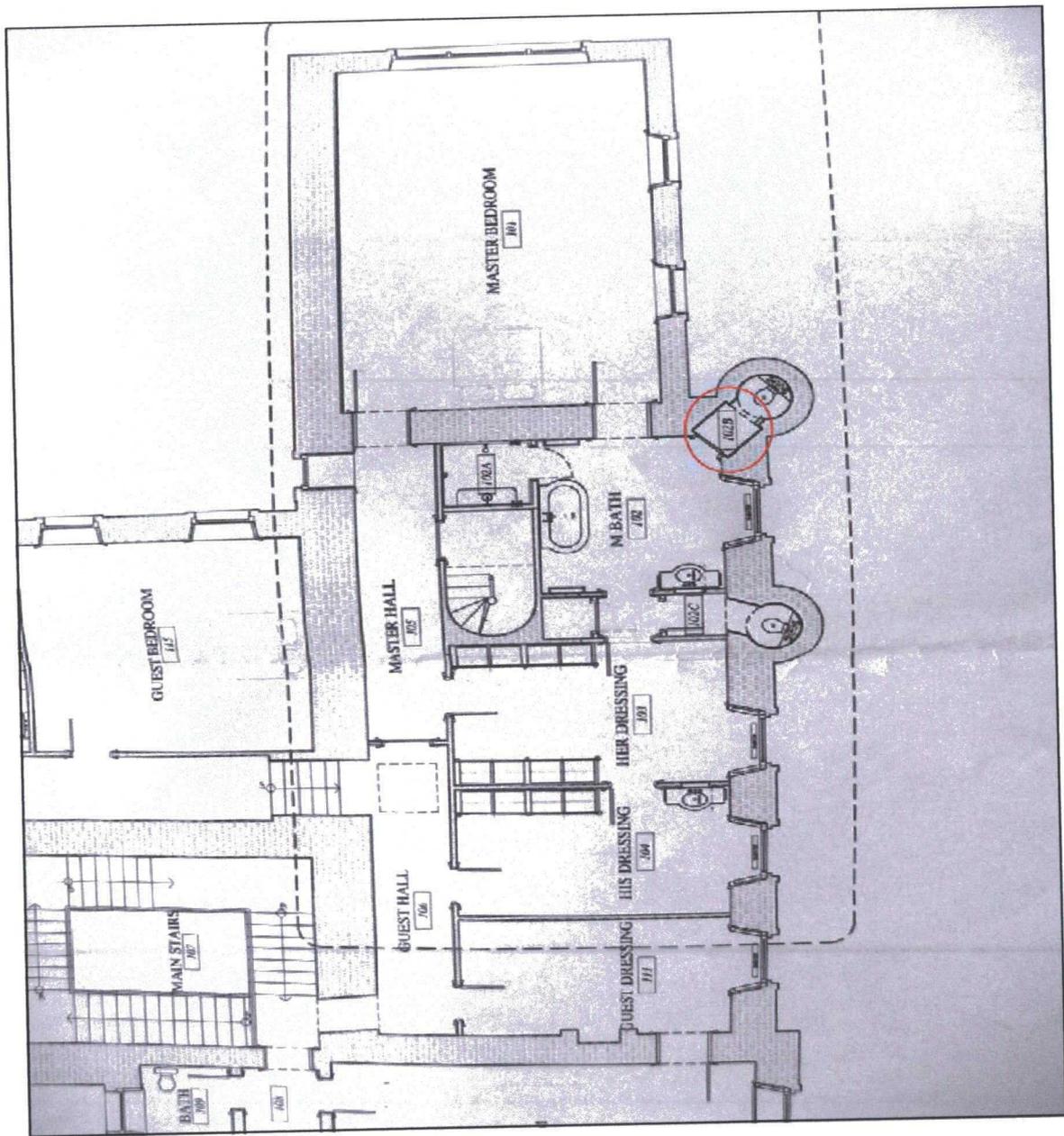
Archaeological monitoring was confined to watching the breaking-through of a large hole at first floor level from the inside of the southern of the two semi-round turrets in the west face of the Hall; these turrets are those described by Worsley as having been altered by Bonomi, and are attached to the façade of the 'Jacobean' west tower.

The first floor of the tower is now subdivided into various bedchambers and bathrooms; it was at once evident that most of the internal divisions are of modern block work, and that the modern suspended ceilings conceal loftier ceilings of the late 18th or early 19th centuries, the stucco cornices of which survive (Fig. 4). No early wall seems to have been removed during the present works.

The hole was broken through using only hand tools (Fig. 5). The inner face of the west front proved to be of large, hand-made bricks of late 18th/early 19th century type. Supported by this was a skin of lathe and plaster, which may well have been later. Behind the bricks, the rest of the construction consisted of mortared sandstone rubble: that is to say, the turret was not hollow, but solidly built.

Incorporated into the rubble construction of the turret was a large piece of moulded sandstone, shown in situ in Fig. 6. This proved to be a large lump of a moulded entablature, the bottom portion broken off but with a cyma and an ovolo. On the surface which would originally have been uppermost (it was upside-down when found) was a clear line dividing a clean white area from a sooty black area; this obviously represented the position of a former parapet which had stood on top of the stone.

A source for this fragment was not hard to find; it is a portion of the existing Ionic entablature which still runs around the building (Fig 7). The piece found in the turret has lost the dentate lower part. This is a useful piece of dating evidence; in order to build up the turret above the general height of the eaves it would have been necessary to cut out a piece of the entablature; the turret may therefore be taken as later in date than the rest of the block which is probably, in its present form, of the time of Sir Lawrence Dundas.



Aske Hall

Fig. 1

Location of investigation (circled in red)



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Aske Hall

Fig. 2

West face of the Hall, showing location of investigation (X)



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Aske Hall

Fig. 3

**Southface of the Hall, to show the original
mediaeval tower-house (centre).**



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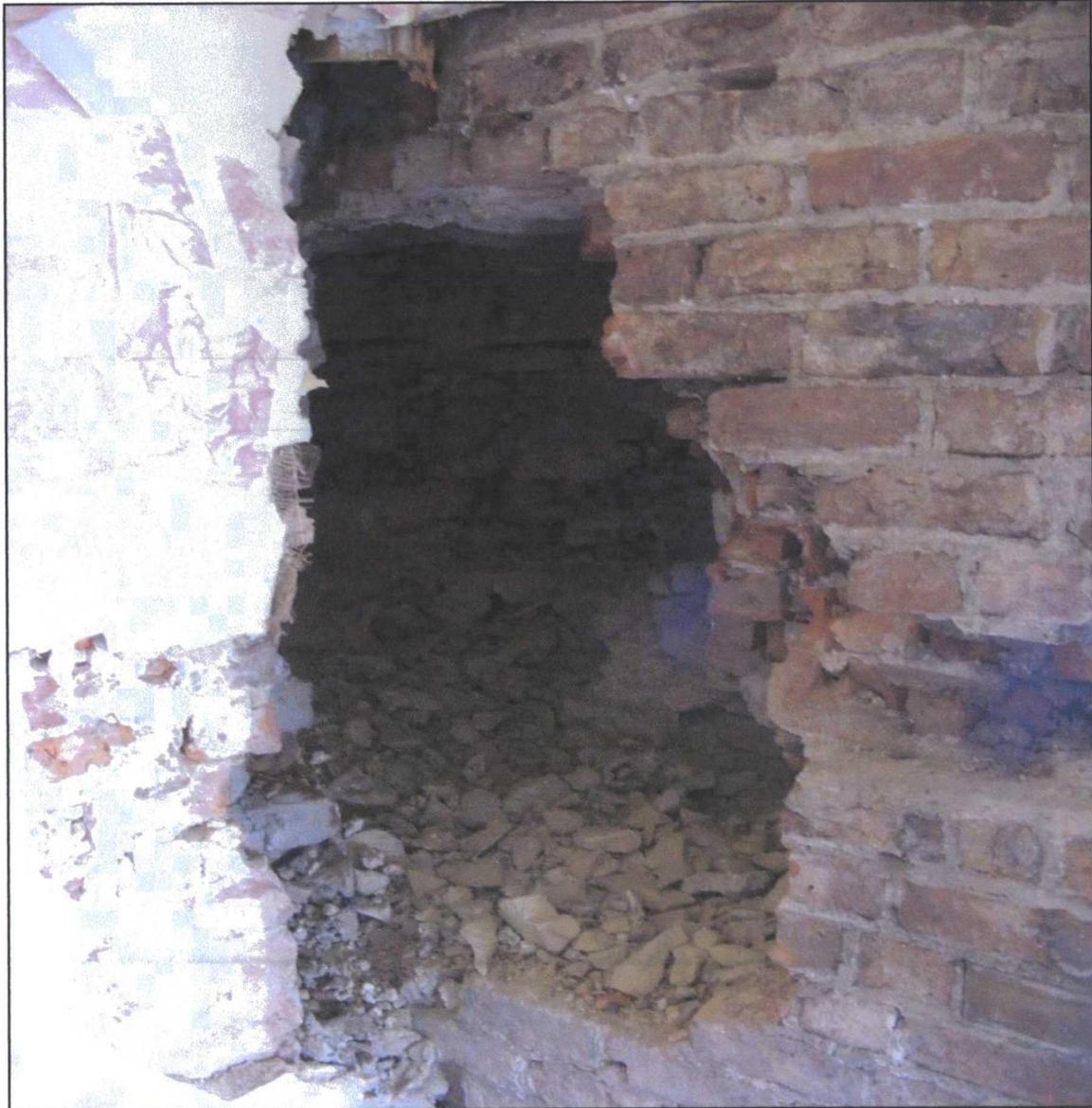
Aske Hall

Fig. 4

18th century ceiling



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Aske Hall

Fig. 5

Excavated hole



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Aske Hall

Fig. 6

Reused fragment of entablature *in situ*



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Aske Hall

Fig. 7

Entablature on SW corner of Hall



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