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PICKHILL BECK IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

AT

PICKHILL VILLAGE GREEN AND MONEY HILL

FOR

LOWER SWALE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

ALISON CLARKE

MARCH 1994

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT PICKHILL VILLAGE GREEN AND MONEY HILL FOR LOWER SWALE INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD

INTRODUCTION

In 1993-4 the Lower Swale Internal Drainage Board undertook extensive improvement works along Pickhill Beck. These included enclosing the beck underground where it ran across the village green at Pickhill, and deepening and clearing the bed of the beck alongside the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Money Hill in Pickhill village (plan 1). Scheduled Monument Consent was granted for the work which involved bringing machinery over the area of the Monument, though not encroaching upon it, provided that a watching brief was carried out during the work. A watching brief was also required by North Yorkshire County Planning Department where the work crossed the village green, to observe any archaeological remains including possible rigg and furrow.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

The work was carried out over the autumn of 1993 and the early part of 1994, eventually moving out of the area of concern by the end of February 1994.

Work started on culverting the beck to the south of the green, in the grounds of the school (plate 1), and moved northwards across the green. The machine cut trench was 2.8m. to 3m. deep, and 2m. wide. The topsoil was approximately 10 cm. deep, and overlay 30 to 40 cm. of brown loam which became paler towards the bottom (plate 2). In the school grounds there were some signs of modern disturbance in this layer, including the base of a brick wall, tile fragments and pottery.

There was a generally clear interface between the brown loam and the underlying black peat (plate 3) which formed a band up to 2m. thick at the southern end of the trench (plate 4), narrowing to 50 cm. by 5m. north of the school grounds. The thickness of the peat varied from here northwards right across the green between 50 cm. and 1m., beginning at between 40 and 50 cm. below the surface (plate 5). There was no evidence visible of medieval rigg and furrow. The peat itself contained large pieces of wood and was very wet and unstable. No finds of archaeological material were recovered.

The peat overlay variable silts and clays. In the school grounds these were very gravelly silts, pinky grey in colour, changing to stony blue-grey or pink-brown clays and silts in the south of the village green. In the central part of the green, yellow silty clay beneath the peat gave way to blue and grey-pink clay (plate 6). To the north, near to the road, the clay was brown-red with patches of pale grey coarse gravel immediately below the peat.

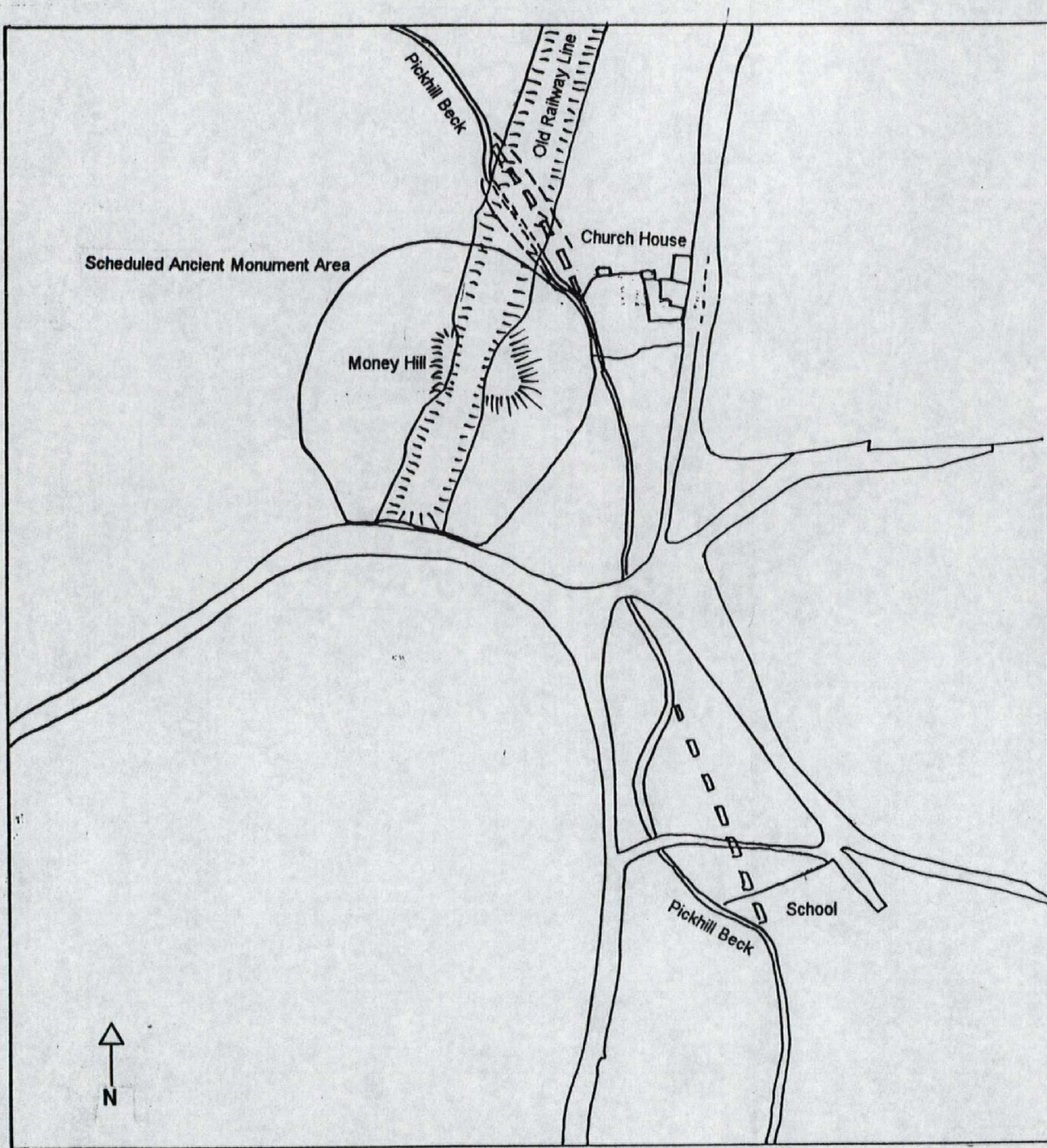
To the north of the road crossing, the work returned to the original stream bed, and involved cleaning out the bed and driving piles in either side to stabilise the edges. As far as possible this was done

avoiding the Scheduled area. Immediately opposite Church House where the Scheduled area abuts the beck, the dredging machine and the pile driving machine had to run over the Monument in order to avoid the garden of Church House. Mats were not used as the ground was comparatively dry, and the sloping nature of the ground made them potentially hazardous. The extent of damage from the tracks of the machines was carefully monitored and observed to be less than a maximum of 10 cm. This was less than the depth of topsoil and turf, and only occurred in a very limited area. The sides of the beck adjoining the monument were cleared of accumulated silt, but the underlying bank was not touched.

To the north of the Monument, a new line for the beck was cut to the east of a culvert under the disused railway line which bisects Money Hill. The edge of the cutting for this new line is extremely close to the limit of the Monument, but the ground here is made-up ground for the railway embankment and there is no damage to the Monument itself assuming that the new cutting bank is stabilised.

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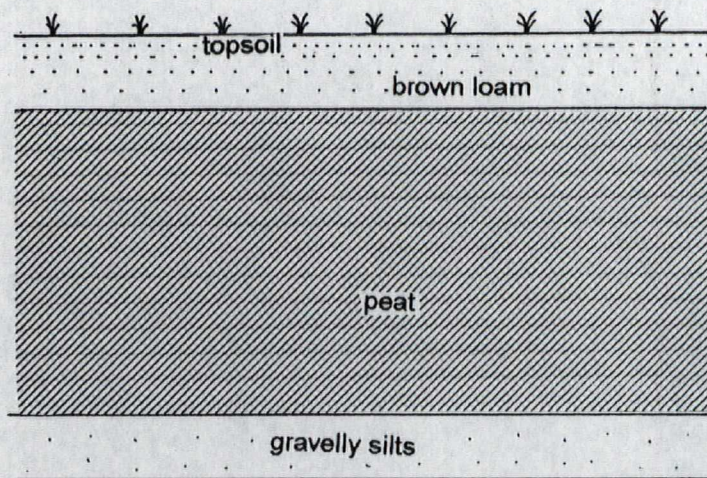
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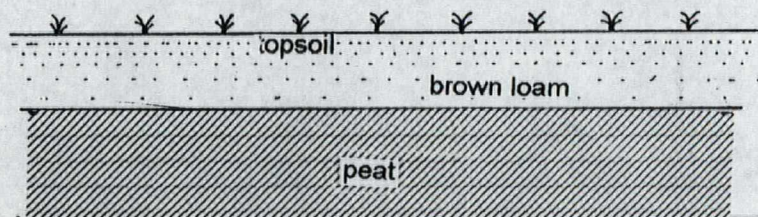
SCALE 1:2500

PICKHILL BECK IMPROVEMENT SCHEME PLAN 1

- ▣ ▣ ▣ New course of Pickhill Beck
- Old culvert under railway
- New cutting



a)



b)

silty clay

SCALE 1:50

PLAN 2 SCHEMATIC SECTIONS THROUGH TRENCH

a) IN SCHOOL GROUNDS

b) ON VILLAGE GREEN

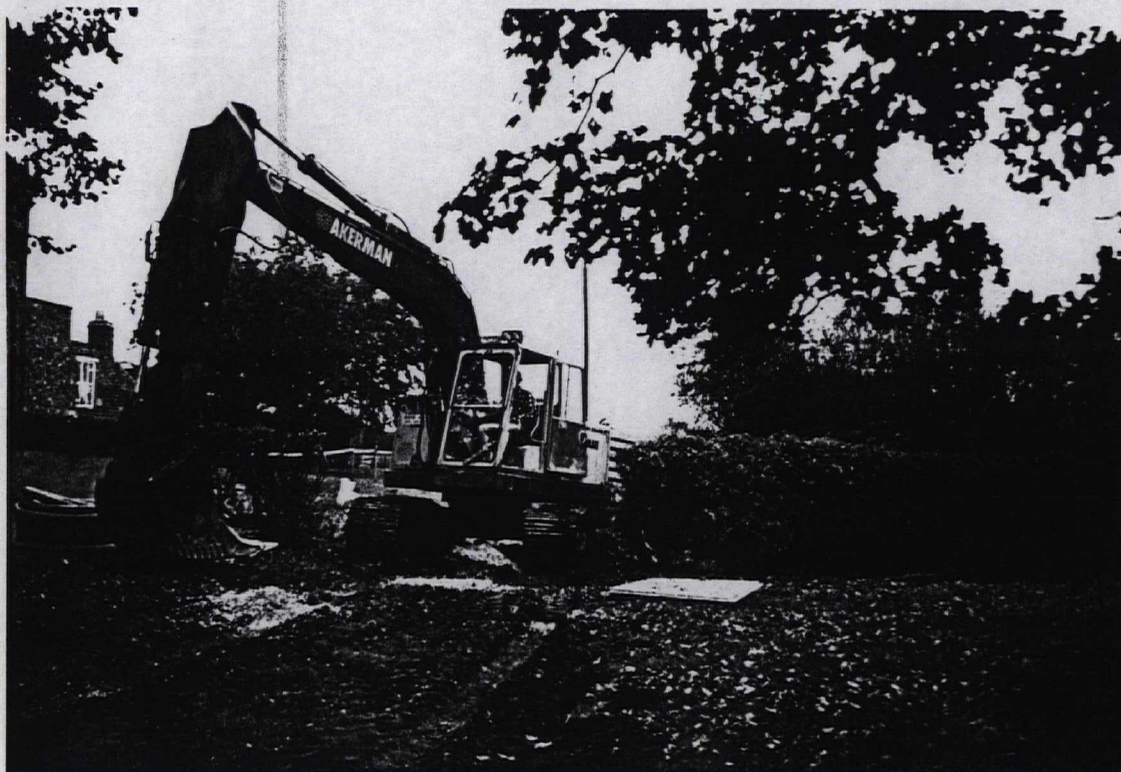


PLATE 1 SCHOOL GROUNDS LOOKING NORTH



PLATE 2
SECTION SHOWING
TOPSOIL AND PEAT



PLATE 3 SECTION SHOWING TOPSOIL/PEAT INTERFACE



PLATE 4 SECTION SHOWING PEAT BAND



PLATE 5 SECTION IN CENTRE OF VILLAGE GREEN



PLATE 6 SECTION SHOWING PEAT/CLAY INTERFACE