

SNY 9549

ENY 2854

CNY 3056

Parish 1092

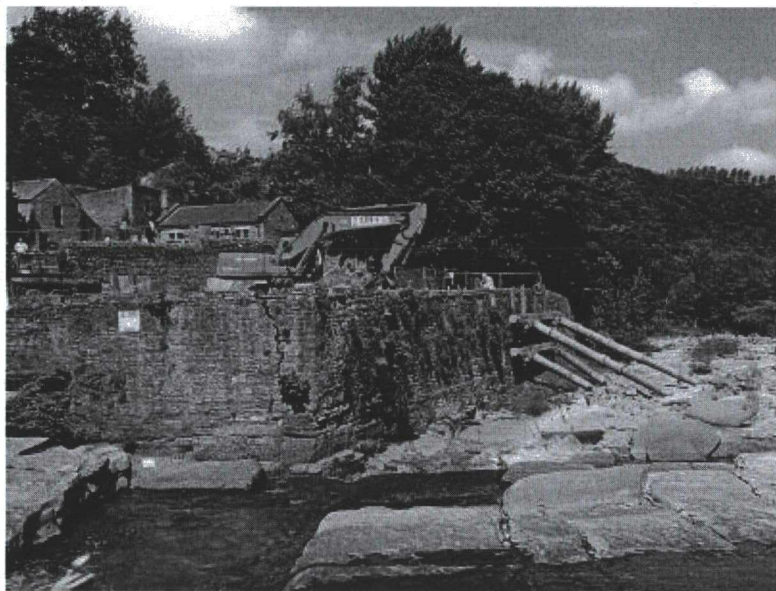
Rec'd 11/08/2004

The brigantia archaeological practice



ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF at the FOSSE, RICHMOND

A report to Richmondshire District Council



10th June 2004

THE BRIGANTIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRACTICE

**BRITANNIA CHAMBERS
18a HORSEMARKET
BARNARD CASTLE
Co DURHAM DL12 8LZ**



Tel./fax: 01833 630125 Email: enquiries@brigantiaarchaeology.co.uk

***ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF at
the FOSSE, RICHMOND
(RICHMONDSHIRE DISTRICT)***

NZ 17350 0062⁶⁴6

Planning application no 1/92W/1600/FULL

A report to Richmondshire District Council

Percival Turnbull

10th June 2004

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF at
the FOSSE, RICHMOND**

1. On instructions from Richmondshire District Council, an archaeological watching brief was maintained during the first two weeks of June 2004 at The Fosse, Richmond, North Yorkshire. Fieldwork was carried out by Percival Turnbull of this Practice, according to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with the County Archaeologist on 24th May, 2004. This work was required as part of remedial works to the river retaining wall on the edge of the site (Planning Application no 1/92W/1600/FULL).

THE SITE

2. The site lies immediately adjacent to the north bank of the River Swale (Fig. 1), at the point at which it falls in a series of low cataracts (the name comes from the Norse/ Old English *fors*: a waterfall, rather from the Latin *fossa*: a ditch). The site is covered with asphalt, and has been used (and will be used again) as an open area for public recreation. It is centred on (National Grid Reference) NZ 47350 00626). The 1734900644 works involved the excavation in stages of a trench, *circa* 2.5 metres wide, along the northern (landward) side of the river retaining wall, to allow the pouring of a concrete support.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3. The site was formerly occupied by part of the Richmond Municipal Gasworks, begun on a small scale in 1821 and historically important as one of the first public supplies of 'town gas' in Europe. The works were closed in 1955, and most of the structures, including two great gasometers, were demolished in 1972; considerable remains of some buildings survive however immediately to the north of the site.

4. A hoard of Roman coins was found at the base of the Castle hill, a little to the west of the site, in 1722.

5. The river wall appears on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey map, dated 1857 (Fig. 2). Some buildings appear on the site at this date, and that in the north-western part of the site may be associated with walls and blocked openings which are still visible at this point.

6. The Ordnance Survey sheet of 1913 shows an 'Old Paper Mill' on the site (Fig. 1): the description implies that it had been both built and abandoned between 1857 and 1913. The mill is not mentioned on the sheet of 1928, but its outline is accurately preserved, apparently as an open space.

THE WATCHING BRIEF

7. Contractors' works were carried out under difficult circumstances: a great depth of material had to be excavated, and the trench sides were very prone to collapse; this necessitated the constant interruption of excavation to insert piled shoring. This involved the excavation of the trench in individual lengths of no more

than 10 metres: those observed accounted for the greater part of the river wall apart from the westernmost end. Because of evident chemical poisoning of the soil (as a result of waste products from the former gasworks) all spoil was treated as contaminated waste.

8. Deposits within the trench were consistent wherever observed, and were as follow (vertical measurements are taken from the modern asphalt surface):

[101] 0-40 cms Modern asphalt and make-up

[102] 40cms- 1m. Old asphalt and make-up, apparently heavily contaminated with tar

[103] 2m.-3m. Loose backfill of rubble in clay matrix: contained modern material (brick, undecomposed wood, *etc.*), heavily contaminated by tar and other chemical materials

[104] 3m.-4.8m. Clay backfill with abundant cobbles and boulders, some obvious chemical contamination and small quantities of brick. This deposit, a relatively modern backfill, was nevertheless quite distinct from [103] and clearly represented a separate episode of backfilling.

[105] Below [103] there appeared to be a cut along the south side of the trench, parallel to the river wall and *circa* 1 metre from it: it was filled with material which appeared to be indistinguishable from [103]. Because of the similarity of the deposits, and the constant collapse of the unshored sides, it was not possible to record this in detail, but it appeared to represent a construction cut for the insertion (or more probably the maintenance) of the river wall at a date after the deposition of [103] and approximately contemporary with [104].

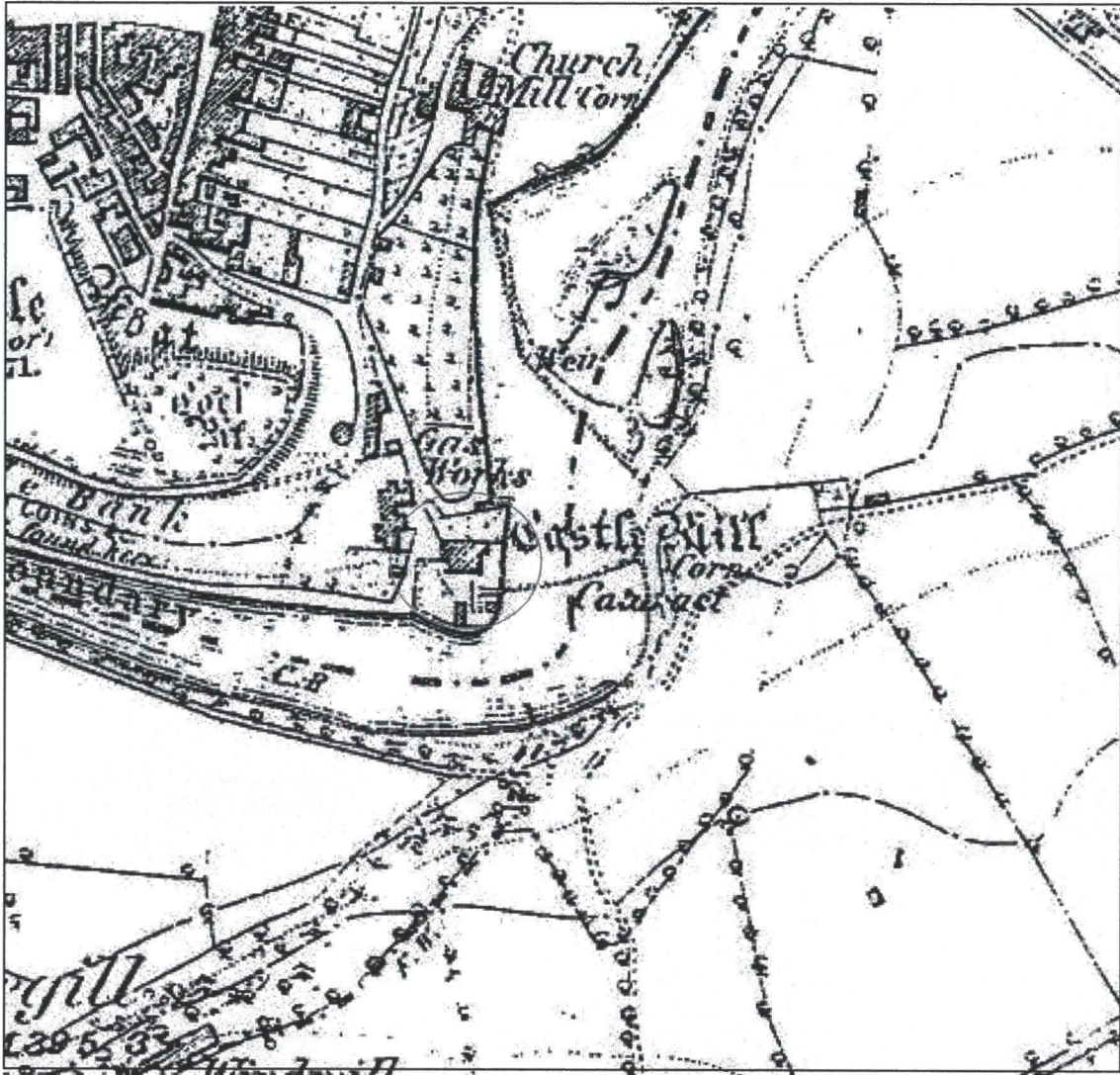
Below this level lay the natural rockhead, of flat water-worn slabs identical to those on the river side of the wall.

9. The north face of the river wall itself was exposed during the excavation of the trench: it was not, however, possible to enter the unshored trench to record it in detail. It was a coursed rubble wall, fairly regular in construction, and became decidedly rougher and more irregular in construction below the base of [103]. No trace was seen of any sluice or other feature which might have been associated with the downstream parts of the paper mill.

DISCUSSION

10. No structural trace was found of the former gasworks or of the paper-mill recorded by the Ordnance Survey (though the latter was situated rather to the south-east of the site under investigation). It seems probable that [102] was associated with the laying-out of the site as a public amenity area in 1972, and [103] seems likely to derive from the decommissioning of the gasworks in 1955 (this would certainly account for the very evident hydrocarbon contamination). The nature of the river wall seems to have been purely as a retaining wall, and the original construction of the gasworks (presumably contemporary with [104]) seems to have been the most

appropriate occasion for its having been built: a subsequent rebuilding or repair would account for [105].



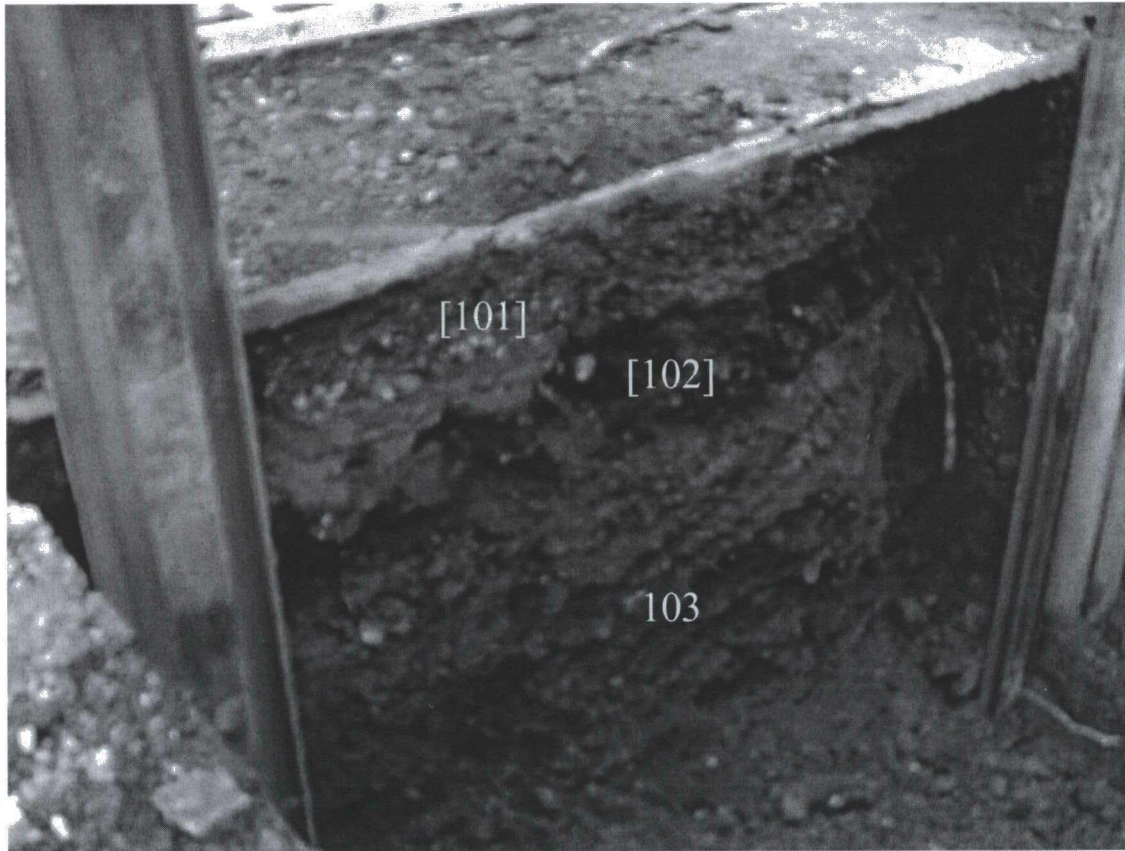
The Fosse, Richmond

Fig. 2

First Edition O.S.



**The brigantia
Archaeological
practice**



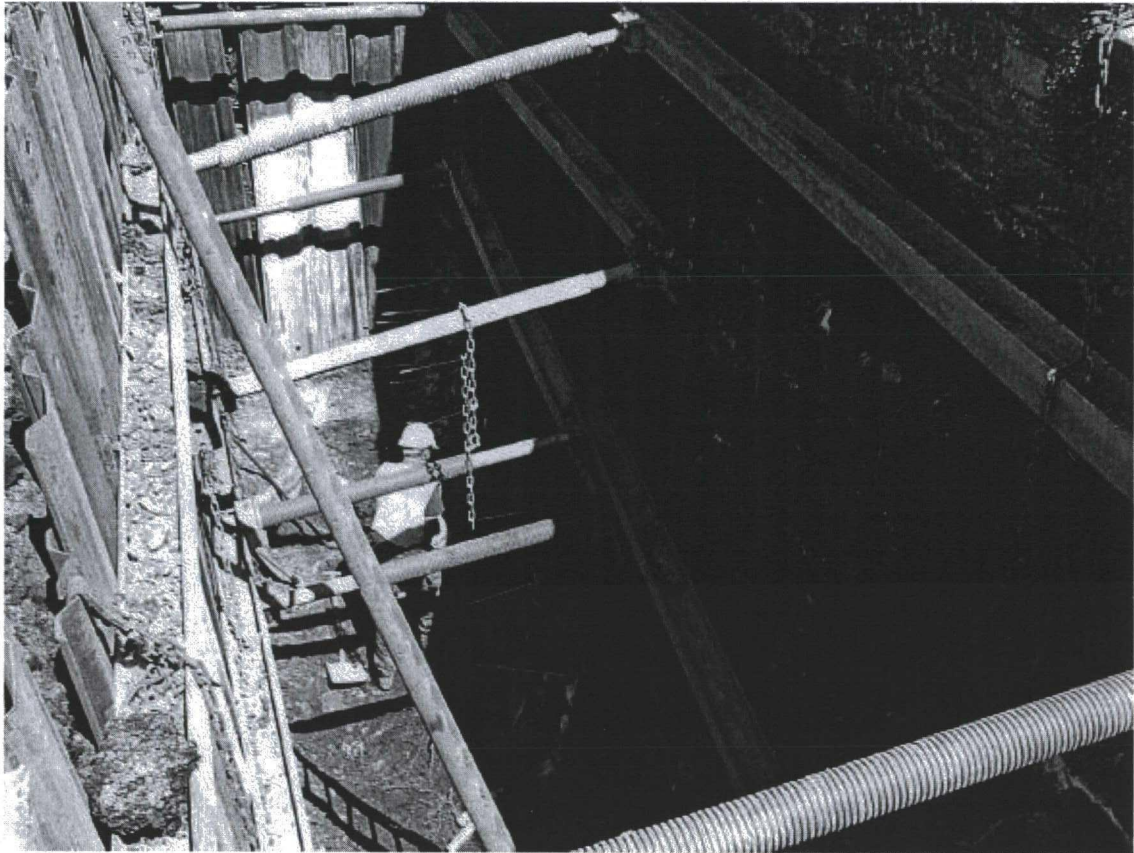
The Fosse, Richmond

Fig. 3

Upper deposits



**The brigantia
Archaeological
practice**



**The brigantia
Archaeological
practice**

The Fosse, Richmond

Fig. 4

Full depth of excavation



The Fosse, Richmond

Fig. 5

River retaining wall



**The brigantia
Archaeological
practice**