

**NORTHERN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATES LTD**  
**RIVER TORNE, ROSSINGTON, ROSSINGTON, SOUTH YORKSHIRE**  
**Negative Watching Brief Report**

**Site name:** River Torne, Rossington      **Grid reference:** SK612 963

**County:** South Yorkshire Council

**Administrative authority:** Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

**Development:** Water main renewal

**Client:** on behalf of Yorkshire Water Services Ltd

**Contractor:** Ken Rodney Construction Ltd

**Site supervisor:** Holly Drinkwater      **Project manager:** Matt Town

**Fieldwork Date(s):** July & Sept 2020      **NAA project number:** 1498      **Site code:** RTR20

**NAA report number:** 20-77      **Report date:** 07 December 2020

### **Reasons for watching brief**

This report presents the results of archaeological monitoring of groundworks associated with the renewal of a faulty stretch of water main, crossing the River Torne and farmland to the north of Stancil Farm, Stancil, Doncaster (SK612 963; Fig. 1). Contractor compounds were established on both banks of the river, a temporary bridge was installed and two reception pits and two launch pits for Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) beneath the river were excavated. A 40m long trench was also dug on the western bank to tie the new pipeline into the existing main.

The area of works was situated approximately 600m to the north-east of the Scheduled Monument of Stancil Roman Villa (SM 1004789). Cropmarks identified in the surrounding fields indicated the potential for field systems of probable late Iron Age to Roman date to be encountered along with regimens of ridge and furrow that could relate to the shrunken medieval settlements of Stancil and Hesley.

Previous monitoring by NAA at Stancil Farm recorded the formalisation of the existing farm track in advance of the current scheme of works. The access track lay within the Scheduled Area of Stancil Roman Villa, however no archaeological remains were recorded in situ (NAA report 19-80).

## Results (Fig.2)

The first phase of groundworks related to the installation of a temporary bridge over the river to enable plant crossing. This involved the excavation of a 12m by 7m trench to assess the underlying geology and create a stable footing for the bridge structure. The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.8m and demonstrated a 0.5m thick topsoil horizon (01) overlying a 0.1m subsoil horizon of mid-yellowish-brown sandy clay (02). Below the subsoil horizon, the ground was heavily disturbed, relating the installation of a flood bank when the land was drained, and the course of the River Torne formalised in the late 17th century. Cutting through the subsoil was a 2.5m wide ditch (04) infilled with a mixed deposit of reddish-brown, black, and greyish-yellow sandy clay (05) that contained modern refuse including three expended, plastic shotgun cartridges. No archaeological remains were encountered.



*Plate 1: Modern ditch 04 in the bridge footing trench, looking north.*

The second phase involved machine stripping of the topsoil within the western compound, a trapezoidal area extending some 50m south of the modern footbridge and 50m in width. The

topsoil was thickest towards the river at up to 0.4m, decreasing to 0.1m to the west. Very few finds were encountered, all of which were post-medieval with no evidence relating to archaeological activity in the underlying soils.

Following the installation of the temporary bridge, the eastern compound was stripped of topsoil over an area measuring 80m by 50m. The eastern bank of the River Torne is approximately 1.5m lower than the western bank and included the original course of the River Torne, which ran on a meandering north to south alignment through the compound. The topsoil on the eastern bank was 0.5m thick and when removed revealed a series of natural riverine deposits. The upper layer comprised a black organic-rich deposit (**08**), 0.2m in thickness, that had accumulated across the entire area, likely resulting from continual flooding. There were frequent inclusions of wood and small twigs, but all appeared to be natural and unworked. The removal of this material revealed a horizon of very soft light bluish-grey and light yellowish-grey clay (**09**) that contained twigs, small pebbles, and lenses of sand. A sondage excavated through this clay revealed a lower horizon of soft, dark-reddish-brown clay (**10**) that also contained small stones and organic material. The original course of the River Torne was identified in a targeted strip at the south-eastern corner of the compound, but no further excavation was conducted as it was below impact depth for the scheduled works (Plate 2).



*Plate 2: Strip revealing the original course of the River Torne, looking south-west.*

The stripping of the eastern compound revealed a single potential linear feature extending north-east from the southern edge of the excavation (**11**). It measured up to 0.95m wide, 0.25m in depth and was identified over a span of approximately 10m. The interpretation of this as an archaeological feature is however suspect. The fill comprised the same black organic material as that overlying the entire area (**08**) and its alignment was sinuous. The boggy nature of the ground on the eastern bank of the River Torne means that it could equally represent a track of heavy farm machinery, compressing the soft deposits below (Plate 3).



*Plate 3: Sinuous alignment of potential feature/track mark 11, looking north-east.*

Following the stripping of both the eastern and western compounds pits were excavated for HDD drilling beneath the river, two on each bank. The launch pits on the eastern bank were located 10m east of the river and situated 5m apart (Plate 4). Each pit measured approximately 2m by 4m and demonstrated the accumulation of riverine deposits described above, 0.2m of organic material (**08**), 0.2m of light yellowish-grey clay (**09**) and a lower mid-reddish-brown clay (**10**).



*Plate 4: Launch Pit 1 showing organic material and riverine deposits, looking west towards the river.*

The reception pits on the western bank were situated 10m west of the river and 5m apart, aligned with the launch pits on the eastern bank. The reception pits were then linked to the path of the existing water main by a connector trench, which was 1.5m wide and ran southwards for a distance of 38m. The excavations were conducted to a depth of 1.3m, into the natural boulder clay. Above the natural clay was a mixed, dark organic deposit (**13**) that measured up to 0.4m thickness and likely represented the original ground surface of the western riverbank, prior to the draining of the River Torne floodplain in the late 17th century. Above organic deposit **13** was a 0.6m thick horizon of mixed clay and gravel (**14**) that included a number of large natural limestone blocks (Plate 5). It is likely that deposit **14** represents upcast material from the excavation of the formalised river channel, which was subsequently utilised to raise the level of the western embankment and offset the natural slope of the ground towards the river. No archaeological features were recorded, and no finds were recovered during excavation of the reception pits or connector trench.



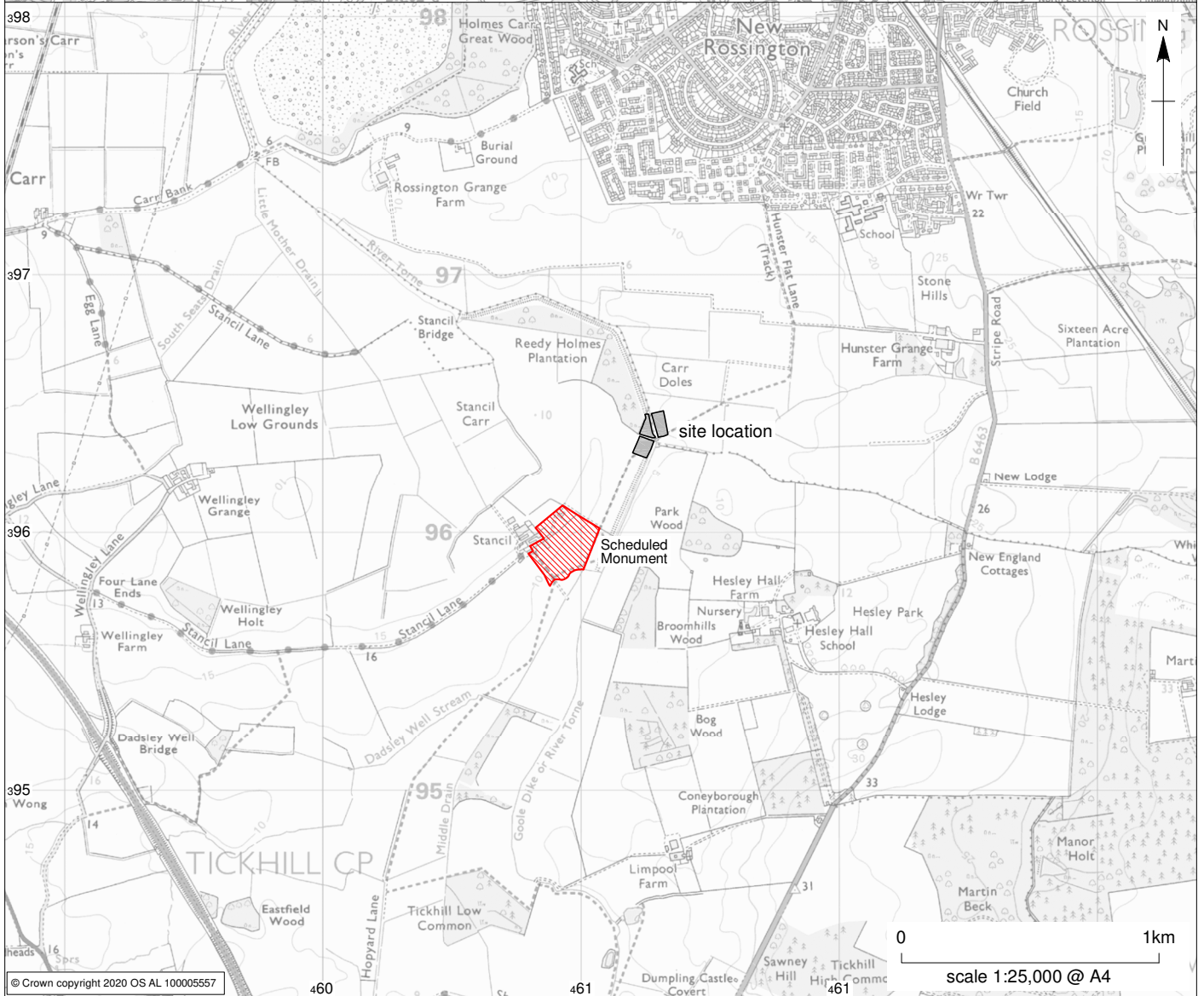
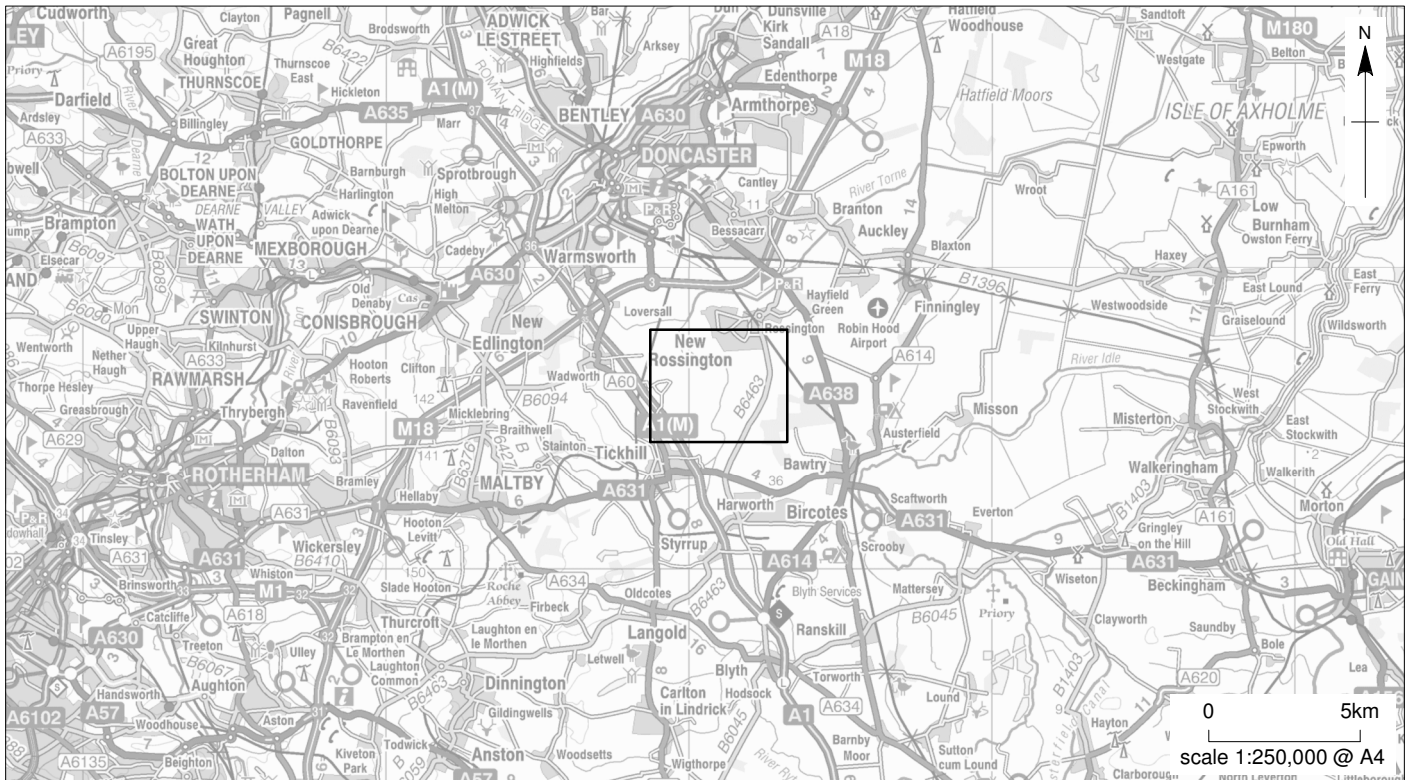
*Plate 5: North-east facing section of the connector trench showing substantial levelling deposit 14 overlying organic horizon and previous ground surface 13.*

#### **References**

Historic England (2019) *Pastscape: Monument No. 320822, Stancil Villa*. [Online] Available at: [https://www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob\\_id=320822](https://www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=320822) (accessed 24/07/2020)

Northern Archaeological Associates (2019) *River Torne, Rossington, South Yorkshire: Rapid Desk-Based Appraisal*. Unpublished client report 19/29

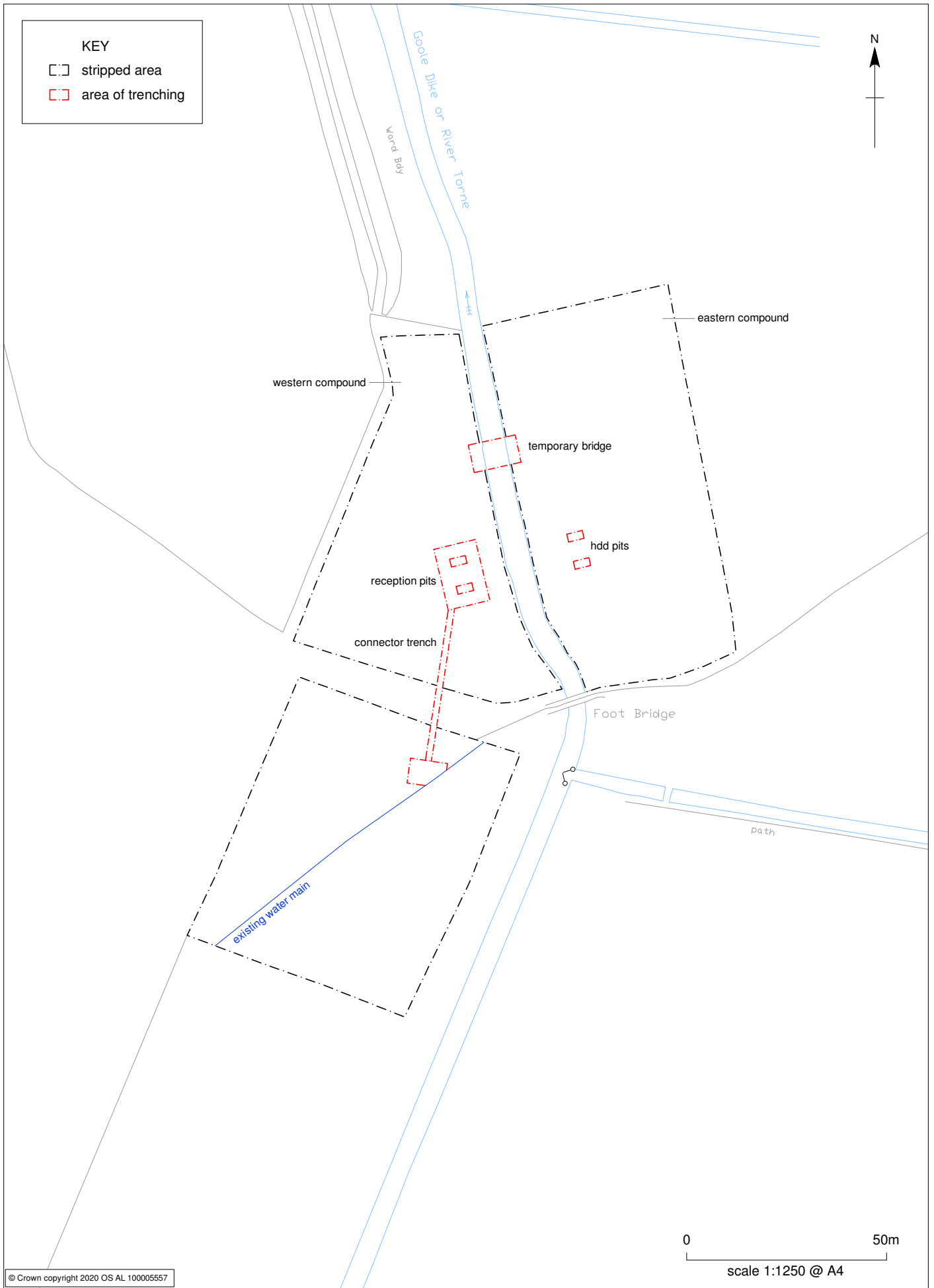
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River Torne, Rossington: site location

Figure 1



River Torne, Rossington: areas of archaeological monitoring

Figure 2