

Project Code: RWMC08
Date: February 2008
Client: Scottish Borders Council



Data Structure Report: Melrose Cauld River Wall Repairs

Archaeological Watching Brief

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PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET (RWMC08)

Client	Scottish Borders Council
National Grid Reference	NT 5443 3444
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Schedule	
Excavation	22 nd February 2008
Report	February 2008

SUMMARY

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Scottish Borders Council to undertake a watching brief on excavations carried out to effect repairs to a river wall within a Scheduled Ancient Monument adjacent to Melrose Cauld. The excavations uncovered the remains of an older river wall running parallel, and to the rear of, the existing wall. No further archaeological features or finds were encountered.

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INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Scottish Borders Council to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundbreaking work required for the reparation of the riverside wall at Melrose Cauld. The site is located within the Scheduled Ancient Monument; Melrose Abbey and Precinct (90214) and therefore an application was submitted by the Council to Historic Scotland for Scheduled Monument Consent. Consent was granted and an archaeological watching brief was required as a condition of that consent. It was possible that features associated with the Abbey or the nearby weir would be encountered during the works and the watching brief was designed to record any such remains.

The watching brief was undertaken on the 22nd of February in cold, showery weather conditions.

SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

The site is located to the north of the town of Melrose on the southern bank of the River Tweed, 100 m west of the Gattonside Footbridge (Figure 1, Plate 1) in the Parish of Melrose and County of Roxburgh. It is bounded on the northern side by the River Tweed and the Southern Upland way path is located directly to the south. The underlying geology in the area consists of recent riverine and lacustrine alluvial deposits overlain by alluvial soils.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site is located within the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Melrose Abbey and Precinct, which comprises the remains of a Cistercian monastery dating to 1136. Although the scheduled area is mainly centred on the Abbey buildings, a 10 m strip of land, centred on the mill lade, running WNW of the orchard on St Mary's Road and incorporating the area of the sluices by the River Tweed is also included. The Cauld lies directly to the west of the site and was built to direct water into the mill lade. The water was used to power a corn mill and for the abbey wash house and sewage system.

AIMS

The main aim of the watching brief was to ensure that any archaeologically significant deposits or artefacts exposed by excavation work would be identified and appropriately recorded.

METHODS

An area measuring 46.2 m² was excavated systematically, under continuous archaeological supervision, using a mini digger equipped with a 2 m wide flat bladed ditching bucket. The coping above the hole in the wall was removed and the soil directly to the south of the wall was removed to provide a safe working area behind the wall with associated access ramp.

The recording conformed to Headland Archaeology Ltd standard method. All contexts were given unique numbers. Colour transparencies and colour photographs were taken. Recording was by means of pre-printed pro forma record sheets and scale drawings were executed by hand at scales of 1:20 and 1:50 respectively.

RESULTS (Figure 2; Plates 1 & 2)

The excavated area ranged from 0.10 to 2.20 m in depth. Stratigraphy consisted of a 0.05 m thick deposit of topsoil (001) overlying a layer of redeposited alluvial material (002) containing river rounded cobbles and clay lenses. A 1 m wide, randomly coursed whinstone wall bonded with clay [003] was located 0.60 m below the present ground level (Figure 2). It was aligned east to west and ran parallel with, and 0.30 m to the south of, the existing river wall. The wall was bonded to an underlying wall, also constructed from randomly coursed whinstone blocks [004], with a yellowish white lime mortar (Plates 2 & 3).

DISCUSSION

It is likely that walls [003] and [004] are the remains of the same earlier river wall, the difference in bonding can perhaps be explained by repair to the wall. There was no distinguishable difference in the sands and river gravels surrounding the earlier wall. There are two hypotheses that can be advanced to explain this observation. Either the wall once abutted an earlier riverbank, but the line of this bank cannot be distinguished from redeposited sand and gravel dumped when the existing wall was built. Alternatively, the recorded section of earlier wall was freestanding and was covered intact when the riverbank was raised during the building of the existing river wall. Given the rough construction of the wall the former explanation seems most likely.

No datable material was recovered during the works.

APPENDIX 1: SITE REGISTERS

1.1 Context Register

Context No.	Description
001	Topsoil, 0.03 -0.05m thick
002	Yellowish brown, loose sandy gravel deposit containing clay lenses and river cobbles. Redeposited alluvial sands and gravel, 0.60 – 1.40 m thick.
003	Rough whinstone boulders, randomly coursed and bonded with a yellowish brown sandy clay. Runs parallel to the existing river wall [004] and directly overlies wall [005]. Located 0.60 m below current ground level.
004	River wall composed of rough, un-shaped whinstone boulders bonded with a yellowish white lime mortar containing small gravel fragments. Remains of a mill lade are located on the east facing section of the wall. 32 m long, 0.70 m wide and 2.40 m high.
005	Wall constructed from large, randomly coursed, rough whinstone boulders aligned E-W and bonded with a coarse yellowish white lime mortar. It directly underlies [003].

1.2 Photo Register

Colour Print and Colour Slide, Film 1

Shot No.	Direction facing	Description
01		ID shot.
02	W	General shot following topsoil removal
03	NE	General shot following topsoil strip
04	W	General shot of wall [004] following topsoil strip
05	NW	General shot of wall [003]
06	NW	General shot of wall [003]
07	N	General shot of walls [003] and [004]
08	E	General shot of walls [003] and [004]
09 -10	S	General shot of excavated area from north side of river.
11	N	General shot of excavated area
12	N	General site shot
13	E	Gattonside footbrige
14	W	Shot of upstanding structure possibly associated with mill lade
15	E	General site shot

1.3 Drawing Register

Drawing No.	Scale	Description
01	1:20	E- facing section of wall [003]
02	1:50	General site plan

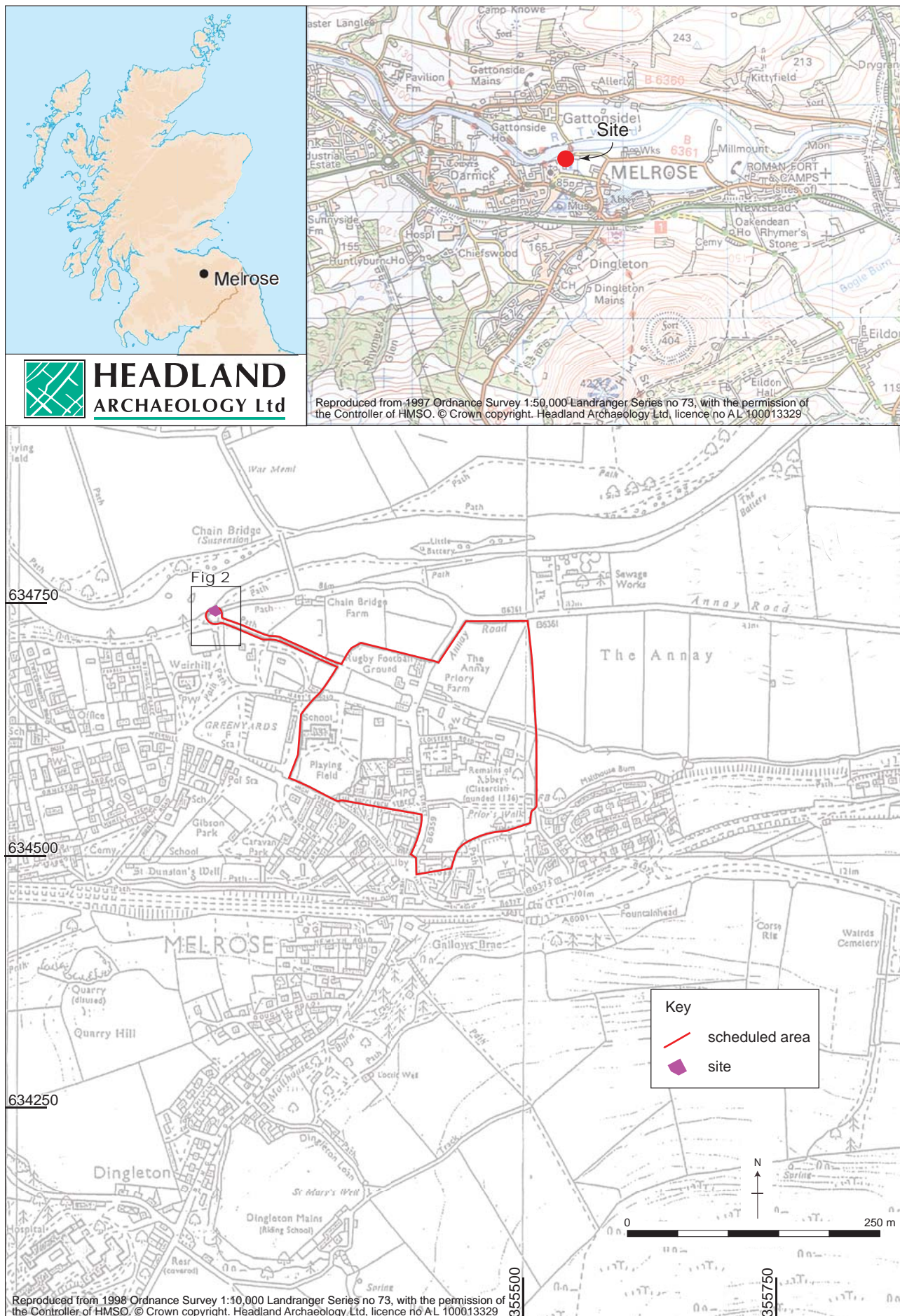
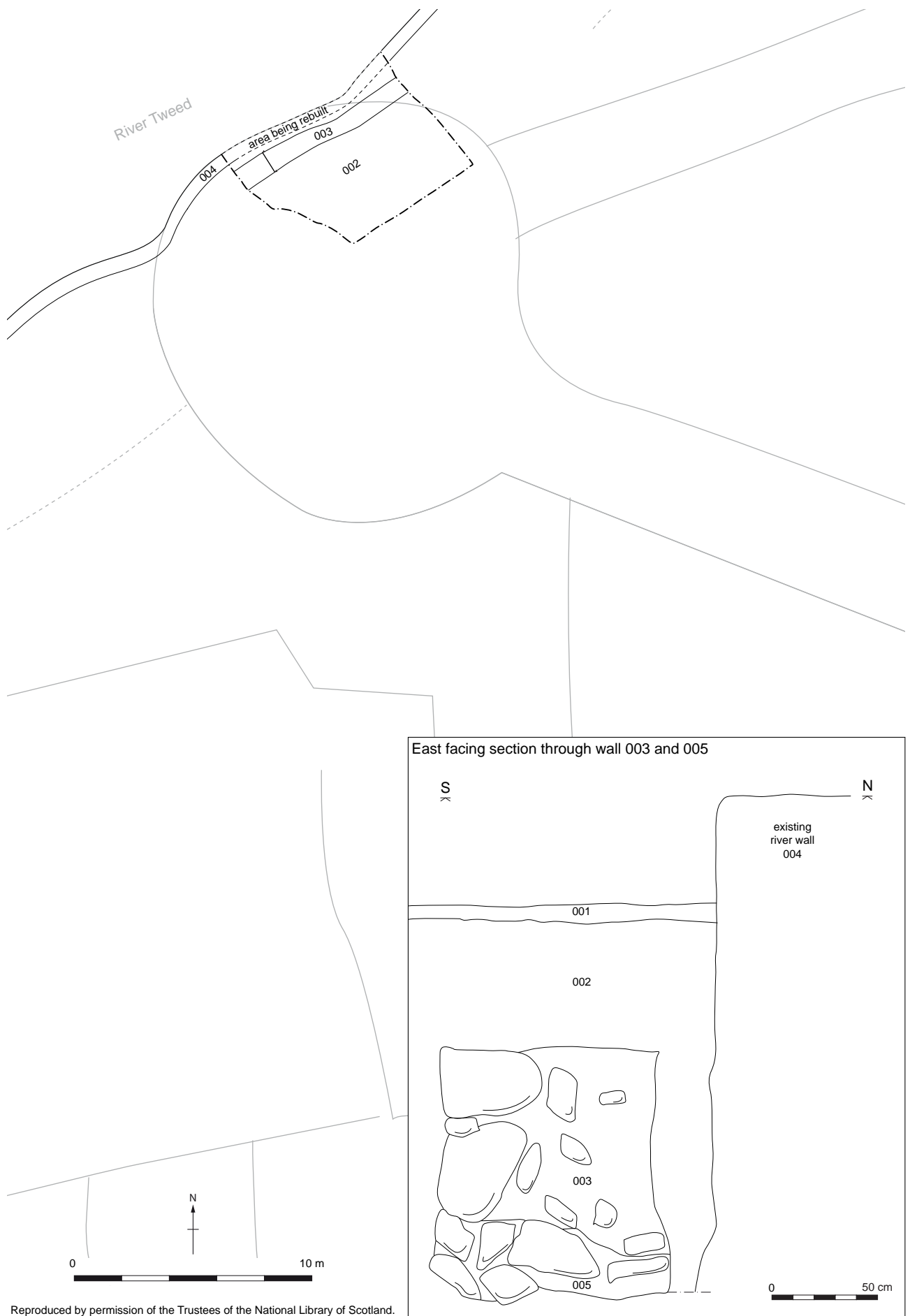


Figure 1: Site location



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Figure 2: General site plan showing wall 003



Plate 1
Site shot from N side of river



Plate 2
General shot of walls 003 & 004



Plate 3
Detail of wall 003