

The Landmark Trust

BRINKBURN MILL

History Album



Researched and written by Clayre Percy

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Re-presented in 2015

The Landmark Trust Shottesbrooke Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 3SW
Charity registered in England & Wales 243312 and Scotland SC039205

Bookings 01628 825925 Office 01628 825920 Facsimile 01628 825417
Website www.landmarktrust.org.uk

BASIC DETAILS

Mill building late 18th-century, probably on site of Priory Mill

Altered and enlarged mid-19th century, when cottage added

Bought by Landmark 1990

Architect: Stewart Tod & Partners, Edinburgh

Contractors: J.& W.Lowry, Newcastle

Archaeological consultant: Peter Ryder

Work completed 1992

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**Brinkburn Mill probably stands on the site of a medieval mill,
within the ancient precinct walls of Brinkburn Priory.**

Summary

Brinkburn Mill stands within the ancient precincts of Brinkburn Priory. On the south side, part of the medieval Priory wall, now only a few feet high, runs between the mill and the river. The main gateway to the Priory, of which remains were discovered while the restoration of the mill was in progress, lies buried just to the east. The Augustinian canons of Brinkburn were endlessly pestered by Scottish raiders, and needed a stout wall and a strong gatehouse.

The present building dates mainly from around 1800, but probably stands on the site of a medieval mill. Monastic communities were supported by farming and, like any landowner, usually had a mill in which to grind their own and their tenants' corn. An inventory drawn up in 1536, when Brinkburn Priory was dissolved by Henry VIII, mentions both a 'water corn mill' and a tannery.

The arrangement of the Priory at Brinkburn was unusual, however. While most monasteries had an outer court containing farm buildings, this was usually to the west of the main dwelling next to the church; and also upstream of it, with the drain for the sewage and kitchen waste running downstream. At Brinkburn, it is now clear that the outer, farm court was both to the east and downstream. This must partly be because of the small amount of level ground available, and in this case, the western end of the site was also more secluded as the main approach to the Priory was from the east, along the track used by visitors to the Mill today. This ran off an old Roman road; just downstream are the foundations of a medieval or Roman bridge.

From soon after the Dissolution until 1792, Brinkburn Priory belonged mostly to the Fenwicks. By 1700, the family's main house was Wallington, but the Priory was lived in by cousins, while growing increasingly derelict. The mill was mentioned in documents from time to time, and 18th century maps show a group of buildings where the present mill is, one of them with a water-wheel. In 1792, Brinkburn was sold to Joseph Hetherington. He left it to his niece, Mary, who married Major Richard Hodgson in 1809. They rebuilt Brinkburn House in 1810. At about the same time, or possibly a little earlier, the mill was rebuilt, as a low building running north-south. The mill building itself contained no accommodation, but there was a cottage near it.

One of the great millstones was renewed in 1825. Soon afterwards, the mill was painted by J.M.W. Turner, standing in the foreground of a view of the Priory painted about 1830-1 as one of a series of Picturesque Views of England and Wales. Turner may have exercised some artistic licence, but he showed the mill as a humble, rather tumbledown, building, with a thatched roof.

Around 1850-60, the Mill was enlarged. The older mill building was re-roofed at the same time, and given a new south gable and new windows. The addition, at the north end, consisted of two rooms, each with its own front door, and with no door between them and the mill proper. With their cornices and tall windows, and imposing porch reached by a tunnel from the main garden, it is thought that they were built as a summerhouse or fishing lodge. The smaller room seems always to have had a cooking range, and so must have been used to prepare food for the assembled company in the larger room. Curiously, this room had no fireplace to begin with.

The owner at this time was Cadogan Hodgson Cadogan, who in 1858-9 employed Thomas Austen, a Newcastle architect, to rebuild the Priory church and perhaps also remodel the

Mill to act as an eye-catcher at the end of the garden. The west side, visible from the house, is more decorative than the east, with diamond-latticed windows and stone dormers. In 1896, Eleanor Fenwick inherited Brinkburn from her brother, Arthur Hodgson Cadogan. Eleanor was married to Hugh Fenwick, a distant cousin of the earlier owners, who had sold the Priory just over a hundred years before. By now, the north end of the Mill had been turned into a cottage. A new chimney and grate were added in today's sitting room and the outside door into it was blocked and a new door made in the dividing wall. The cottage was lived in by Mr Shell, the coachman. He and his wife brought up a large family in the two rooms.

By the 1920s, if not before, the mill had fallen out of use. In the 1930s, a generator was installed there, standing on concrete blocks that were removed in the recent restoration. This provided electricity for the house for ten years. The accumulator jars were kept in the present kitchen. In 1965 the Priory church and Brinkburn House were made over to the then Ministry of Public Buildings and Works (they are now in English Heritage's care), but the Mill remained part of the Fenwick estate. In 1989, to prevent it becoming a ruin, Mr Fenwick offered the Mill and its outbuildings to the Landmark Trust. The sale was completed a year later.

RESTORATION

When the Landmark Trust bought Brinkburn Mill in 1990, it had been empty for over fifty years. Extensive repairs were needed as well as alterations to make the building habitable. Before work began on the Mill, the overgrown track leading to it had to be repaired. Then the roof had to be stripped and relaid, using the existing slates, rotten window lintels were replaced, copings to gables and dormers were rebbed or renewed. Fortunately some of the stones were found lying near the building, including one of the stone acorn finials.

In 1990, the lower, mill building was a single undivided space, although there had once been a room partitioned off at its northern end. The millstones and machinery were still there, on a platform at the southern end, where it can still be seen in the larder bedroom. There is no longer any connection between the stones and the cast iron undershot wheel outside, however. There was then no connection either between the mill and the two grander rooms at the north end. It was clear that a new door would have to be made to link the two parts of the building, but the floors in each were at completely different levels. The answer was to put a new floor inside the mill, a metre higher than the original, stone-paved, one. Although the new bedrooms and bathroom would be on this upper level, the outside door was still at the lower. A lobby and stair were inserted to link the two, and a new window inserted beside the door, to provide better light.

The little window in the smaller bedroom dates from the time when the mill was built, about 1800. It was blocked when the window above it was inserted, about 1850. The lower window was opened up again to give a view towards the Priory. The upper window still had fragments a diamond-latticed window. This turned out to be made of wood, not lead, and so the new casements were made to match. The smaller of the two north rooms had always been a kitchen, and this is how it is used again, with the larger room also continuing in its original function as a sitting room. The decoration of this room is what you might expect to find in a fishing lodge, one of its possible former uses. Electricity and running water also had to be introduced for the first time. The last job was to put the outbuildings and walls into good order. Finally, the Mill was furnished, and received its first visitors at the end of 1992. Instead of hiding in undergrowth, the building can now stand out proudly, as an ornament to the Priory garden. The architects who supervised the restoration were Stewart Tod & Partners of Edinburgh, and the work was carried out by J. & W. Lowry of Newcastle.

A local archaeologist, Peter Ryder, kept a watch while the restoration was in progress, gathering new information about the history of the site, and the Priory itself.

History

Brinkburn Mill stands on the river Coquet, within the ancient precincts of Brinkburn Priory. Part of the medieval Priory wall, now only a few feet high, runs between the Mill and the river, on the south side. The river is famous for its salmon and sea trout.

The Priory was founded about 1135, during the reign of Henry I, by William Bertram, whose castle was at Mitford on the river Wansbeck, a few miles to the south. It was not a big, nor a rich foundation and the Augustinian canons who lived there were endlessly pestered by Scottish raiders. Sometimes they were saved by the remoteness of the Priory. There is a story that one night the raiders missed the way to Brinkburn, and, thinking the danger was over, an over-enthusiastic monk rang the bell for matins. The raiders heard it, returned, and sacked the place. The monks, in a rage, threw the bell into the Coquet, and the pool where it landed, just up-stream of the Priory, is still called the Bell Pool. In 1419 the Priory was robbed of its charters, books and much of its church furniture.

In 1536 the Priory was dissolved and Brinkburn Mill is mentioned for the first time in the inventory of possessions made by Henry VIII's commissioners. Whether the present Mill is on the site of the monastic one is not certain. It is unusual for the mill of a religious foundation to be situated downstream of the buildings. Usually it was placed upstream, and the main drain for the sewage and kitchen waste was downstream. But there is no sign of a mill-stream further up the river, and we have recently discovered that the Mill is near the main gateway to the Priory, a normal and convenient place for it to be. This new information tips the balance towards the Mill's being on its original, medieval, site.

The discovery of the gateway was made in 1992 when excavating a pit for the Mill's septic tank. The threshold of the pedestrian's entrance was uncovered in the courtyard east of the Mill; the main gate for vehicles would have been beside it, on



Brinkburn Priory, Northumberland, by Turner (1830-31). Graves Art Gallery, Sheffield. This was painted before the mill was repaired and enlarged in the mid-19th century.

the river side. The threshold was photographed and then reburied (see p.36). The septic tank was put elsewhere.

After the dissolution, the Priory first went to Cuthbert Carnaby, then in 1546 to George Fenwick. He, however, was attainted for taking part in the Rising in the North and was stripped of his land. The Water Mill is next listed with the property given by Queen Elizabeth to the seventh earl of Northumberland in 1557; but the Earl of Northumberland was beheaded for treason in 1572, and Brinkburn was sold to the Earl of Warwick who sold it on to Sir John Forster, Warden of the Eastern Marches. Sir John Forster's grandson sold Brinkburn to George Fenwick in 1626.

A descendant of the earlier George Fenwick, this George Fenwick of Brinkburn was a Member of Parliament, a colonel in Cromwell's army, and, in 1649, Governor of Berwick. The Fenwick's principal house at that time was Wallington, twelve miles to the south west, now owned by the National Trust, but a branch of the family lived at Brinkburn until the end of the eighteenth century. In 1747 the house and the Mill were let to cousins. The Priory, by this time, was becoming a ruin.

In 1792 the Fenwicks sold Brinkburn to Joseph Hetherington. His niece, Mary, who inherited Brinkburn, married Major Richard Hodgson in 1809, and they rebuilt Brinkburn House in 1810.

In 1825 Major Richard Hodgson sold Brinkburn to Ward Cadogan, of the island of Barbados where the Cadogan family had lived since 1679. Ward Cadogan bought Brinkburn because his only child, Sarah, was marrying Major Richard Hodgson's son, William. Ward Cadogan died in 1830, and the family name was changed to Hodgson Cadogan. In 1834 the Hodgson Cadogans employed the well know Northumbrian architect, John Dobson, to make extensive alterations to the west side of the house.

Their son, Cadogan Hodgson Cadogan, rebuilt the church in the 1850's, employing Thomas Austen, a good Newcastle architect. Even in those days, it was a hugely expensive enterprise and it rocked the family fortunes. The garden was probably laid out at the same time.

Our only early picture of Brinkburn Mill is a watercolour of Brinkburn Priory by Turner of about 1830-31. Turner may have exercised some artistic licence, but the Mill as he depicted it is a humble building. It was probably Cadogan Hodgson Cadogan who added to it and almost re-built it, treating it as an eye-catcher, and making the west front, which is visible from the house, more decorative than the east.

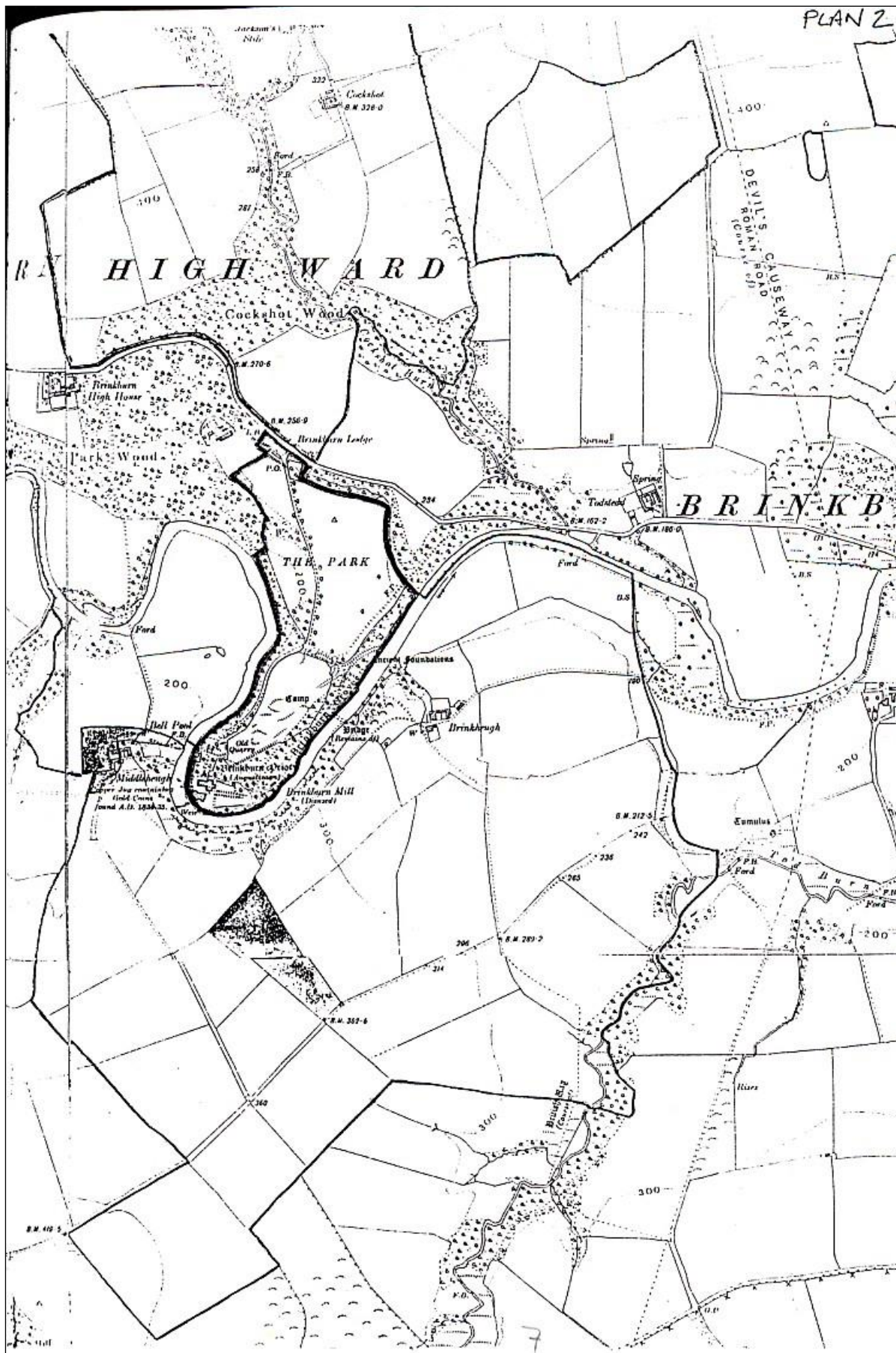
Cadogan was succeeded by his son, Arthur. When Arthur died, unmarried, in 1896, he left Brinkburn to one of his sisters, Eleanor Margaret, who was married to Hugh Fenwick, a distant cousin of the earlier owners, who had sold Brinkburn just over a hundred years before.

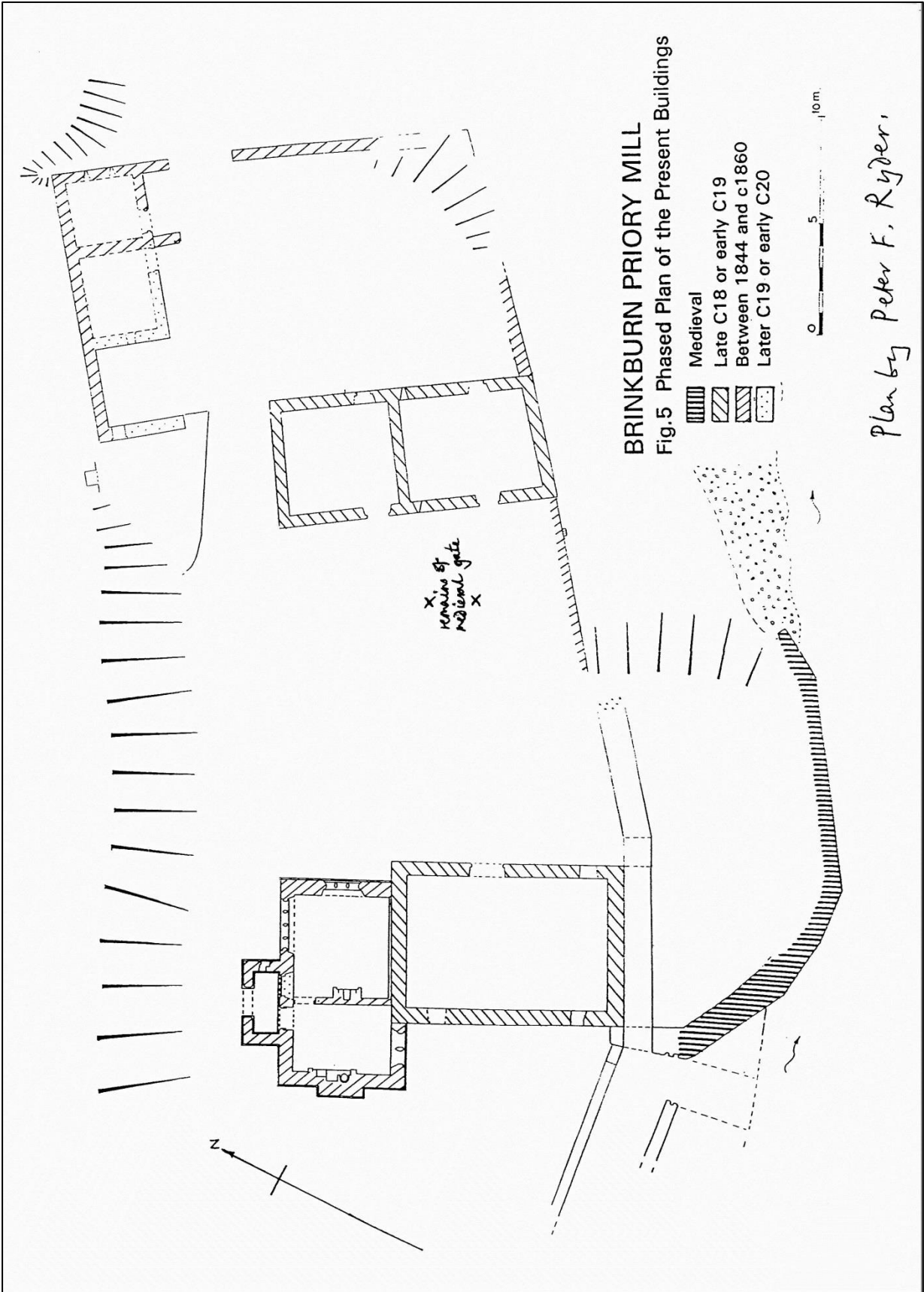
At that time the coachman, Mr Shell, was living in the Mill, with a large family. The last person to be born there was his youngest daughter, in about 1900.

In the 1930s a generator was installed in the Mill, and provided electricity for the house for the next ten years. It stood on the concrete blocks, removed during restoration. The accumulator jars were kept in the present kitchen.

Mrs Fenwick's grandchildren spent much of their time at Brinkburn House. They played tennis on the lawn between the House and the Mill, and kept a fishing net handy to rescue their tennis balls from the mill race. They used the present sitting room of the Mill as a playroom, and cooked on the stove. During the 1939 war, officers were billeted in Brinkburn House.

In 1965 the Priory and the house were made over to the then Ministry of Public Buildings and Works by Mr H.A.Cadogan Fenwick, but the Mill remained part of the Fenwick estate. The Landmark Trust bought Brinkburn Mill in 1990.





Plan by Peter F. Ryder,

The Building

The humble building that appears in Turner's picture was probably built towards the end of the 18th century. It was purely a mill, with no living quarters. The miller would have lived in a cottage nearby. Turner shows the door on the visible, east side, where it is now, but no windows are shown; there is smoke coming from the chimney and we know that there was a fireplace on the north wall - then the outside wall - of what is now the small bedroom. It looks as though perhaps the roof was thatched.

Sometime in the middle of the nineteenth century the Mill was enlarged and the whole building was reroofed. The Mill was given a new gable end and new windows. The windows on the west side that could be seen from the house were more decorative than those on the east side. The new windows had diamond panes set, not in lead, but in wood. The gables were surmounted by carved stone acorns.

Two more rooms were built onto the north side: the present kitchen and sitting room, but what they were used for is not certain. Perhaps they were estate offices, or perhaps, more likely, they were somewhere to have picnics in the summer. This use would explain the two front doors in the north porch, one for the picnic-ers, the other for servants preparing the meal. The two north rooms were always separate from the Mill, on a different level and with no communicating door; indeed, there is a solid brick wall between the now and the old part, intended, perhaps, as a buffer against the noise of the mill machinery.

Both the sitting room and the kitchen have cornices, but while in the kitchen the cornice runs round the chimney breast where the stove is, in the sitting room it did not, indicating that the chimney breast post-dates the rest of the room. It would seem that originally the sitting room had no fire, and a stove was put in later, perhaps for Mr Shell the coachman. The small window in the wall of the porch was

probably made then, to give Mrs Shell some sort of a larder, and one front door was blocked up.

The Surroundings

The present road up to Brinkburn Mill is on the line of the original, medieval road, which entered the Priory precincts by the newly discovered gateway. The road to the Priory branched off an old Roman road, the Devils Causeway. Not far down-river of the mill are the foundations of an old medieval or perhaps Roman bridge over the Coquet.

As you arrive at the Mill the first building that you come to on your right is a cartshed with a stable and perhaps a bothy attached to it. It has been altered and rebuilt several times. Next, on the left, is what we thought was a barn, but which, when the floor was cleared, turned out to be a stable, with stalls. It seems to be on the site of the thatched building that appears in Turner's watercolour. In the courtyard, paving was discovered in front of the east wall of the Mill, and in front of the stable building.

The garden design of the mid-19th century included a romantic underground passage running from the east edge to the lawn towards the Mill. Emerging from the tunnel, a path continued in an easterly direction, and in 1992 stairs were discovered beneath roots and leaf-mould, where the path descended to the Mill's front door. The trees surrounding the Mill must have been planted then, too; none appear in Turner's picture.

Restoration by the Landmark Trust

In 1990 the Landmark Trust bought Brinkburn Mill from Mr Fenwick. The building had been standing empty for more than fifty years and needed extensive repairs. There was also a problem, in that the two north rooms were on a higher level than the working part of the Mill by one metre this was solved by putting a new floor into the lower part, a metre higher than the original floor.

How the restoration was done is described in the photographs.

Much of this short description of Brinkburn Mill is based on Peter Ryder's more detailed description at the end of this album. Information on the restoration was kindly given by Vivienne Tod.

Other references

John Crawford Hodgson, *A History of Northumberland*, Vol VII, Edlingham, Felton, Brinkburn. 1904.

Pevsner and Richmond, *Northumberland*, Buildings of England, Penguin.

S.J.Watts, *From Border to Middle Shire, Northumberland 1586-1625*,
Leicester University Press. 1975.

The photographs are by Peter Ryder, Stewart Tod and Partners, and Clayre Percy.

Photographs of the restoration



The west front



The east front. The paving was earthed up.



West front cleared, but ground level still high.



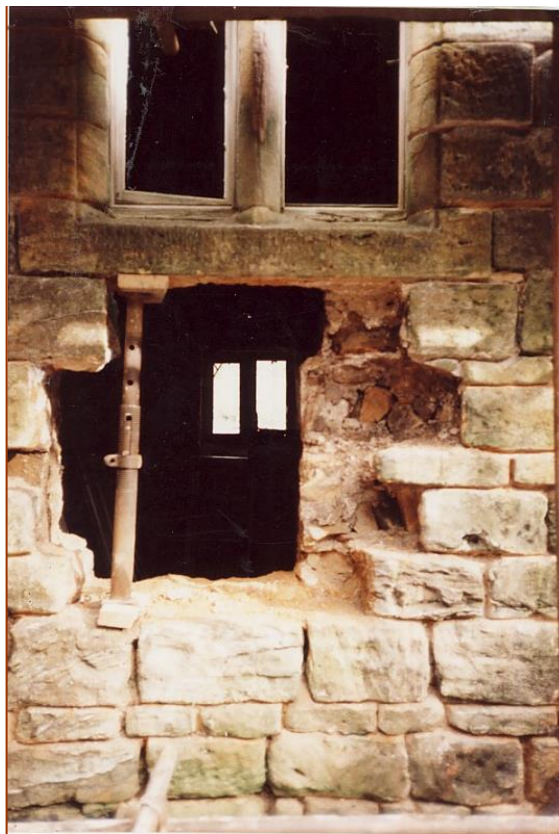
West front, ground being lowered.



The window at the south end of the west front. Part of the cope had gone. It was found on the ground and replaced.



The window at the north end of the west front. The diamond panes had wooden astrigals, not lead, and they have been replaced as they were, in wood. In the top photograph traces of the old 18th- century window can be seen, blocked up when the dormer window was put in. In the bottom photograph it is being





The east front cleared in 1991, and showing the paving, but before the new window was made and without an acorn on the gable.



The new window being made.



The sitting room chimney was frail and had to be rebuilt. The 19th-century truss is the same as the truss visible at the south end of the Mill, showing that in the 19th century the whole building was re-roofed at the same time.



The sitting room chimney rebuilt. The acorn was found on the ground and was replaced on the gable.



The north front in 1989. All three acorns are missing.



The small larder window is still there.



The north front in September 1991.



The south front. A blocked up slit window, under the ivy has been opened up.



In the sitting room the cornice did not go round the chimney breast: perhaps the chimney breast was added later.



The kitchen stove as it was.



The sitting room, showing a rotten lintel above the north window.



The lintel removed and about to be replaced.



The kitchen looking south. The 19th-century cottage walls are not keyed into the old mill walls.



**The flags were not bedded down, but laid on strips of stone walling,
to improve ventilation.**



The small bedroom showing the original level of the floor. On the right the bricks show the line of the old flue, leading to the chimney in Turner's picture. The window below the dormer is still blocked up.





The old mill door.



Looking west from the Mill door. The concrete blocks on the right, where the generator stood, have been removed.



The beam in the south west corner in 1989. It had rotted below the damaged dormer window.



1992. The beam has been repaired.



1989. The platform with mill wheel, looking west.



1992. The new floor in place, looking west.



The south end before the new floor was laid.



**Working on the new staircase.
The new floor is in place.**



**Looking east
towards the old
farm buildings in
1989.**



September 1991



**July 1992. The
stone paving has
emerged.**



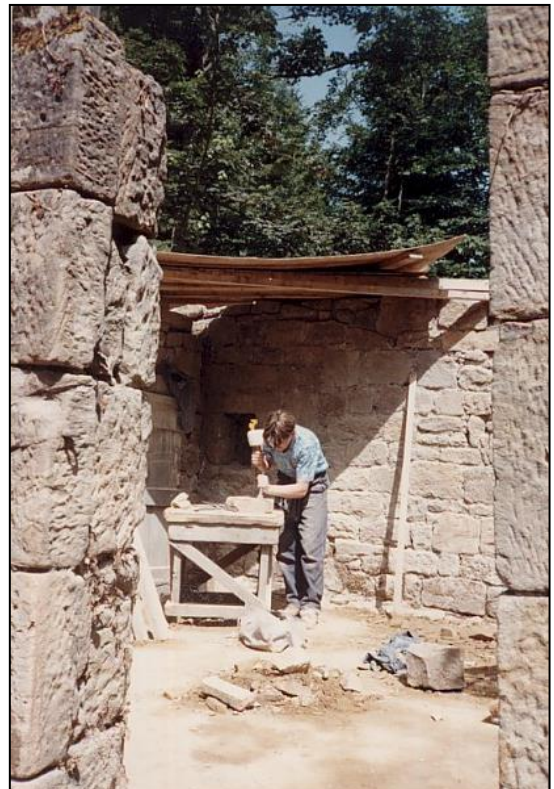
The east end of the cart shed. The light above the left hand door suggests it may have been used as a bothy which provided basic shelter.



July 1992



Discovering the garden steps north of the Mill.



Working in the old stables.



Architects in conference on the medieval wall. From left, Vivienne Tod, John Bucknall and Stewart Tod.



May 1992. The medieval threshold stone of the gatehouse to the Priory was uncovered in the courtyard when a hole was being dug for the Mill's septic tank. It was the threshold to the pedestrians' entrance. The main gate would have been to the left (south), alongside it.



The septic tank was re-sited to avoid disturbing the threshold stone to the ancient priory.

The long-lost Roman bridge at Brinkburn – an account by Raymond Selkirk

The Ordnance Survey map marks the River Coquet crossing of the Roman road, The Devil's Causeway, at Todstead Ford (NZ 130 986) but historians in the early 19th century mentioned that 'The Devil's Causeway crossed the Coquet in the vicinity of Brinkburn Priory.' Some historians of that period referred to a Roman road branching off the Devil's Causeway to the south of the Coquet and heading for Brinkburn Priory.

E. Mackenzie, writing in 1825 says this:

'The branch of Walting Street, or Devil's Causeway, that takes an easterly direction from Protgate, crosses the River Coquet a little below Brinkburn Priory. The remains of the piers of the Roman bridge are perfectly distinct when the river is low, particularly the ashlar work on the north side, covered with elm trees, and on the hill above the priory are evident traces of a Roman villa a few yards from the military way. The rampart and ditch across the neck of land being very apparent; likewise the foundations of houses and lines of the street, but undoubtedly the stones had all been used for building the priory: though have never heard of any Roman antiquities being found amongst the ruins.'¹

Tony Dickens mentions the Roman bridge in his book published in 1981, entitled

'My original visit to Brinkburn was to see the ancient Priory and after finding the footbridge, I delved more deeply into its history and came up with some quite interesting information in connection with the bridges at this point on the Coquet. For example, on a hill just above Brinkburn Priory, quite near to the existing public car park, are the remains of a Roman camp which was linked to a Roman bridge across the Coquet. In this connection, Sir David Smith, writing in the 1820's makes the following interesting mention of the remains of a Roman bridge across the River Coquet:

[The Devil's Causeway also leads down to the river (where the old Roman bridge stood) in order to maintain its general direction, and one of the abutments is yet to be seen on the northern side of the River Coquet, below the large roots of an elm tree which projects over it into the water, and it requires somebody who knows the spot to point it out. When the water is low, the foundations of the spot, or rock, upon which the two arches were thrown, is to

¹ E. Mackenzie, *View of the County of Northumberland*, sec.ed. 1825, vol.1, p.494

be seen. This place is between the mill and the first hedge, at some distance below it.']

In the late autumn of 1978, when the River Coquet was quite low, I attempted to find the remains of this old Roman bridge but I must confess that I was beaten back by the dense and tangled undergrowth. From all the evidence I have read, I'm convinced the remains of this old Roman bridge still exist.²

Tony Dickens was absolutely right when he said that he was sure that the remains of the Roman bridge still existed. During the dry weather in mid-June 1988, I managed to locate these elusive ruins. I had a fair idea of where to look because as an air survey pilot, I had flown up and down the Devil's Causeway on many occasions. Only one Roman site had been verified on the whole length of the Devil's Causeway and that is at Learchild just to the south of the River Aln crossing. Research shows that Roman military sites are invariably located near river crossings and my aerial searches were concentrated on these areas. At Todstead Ford, I could not see any traces of the Roman road, let alone an unknown fort or fortlet and I wondered if the surveyors in the early 19th century had got the line right. The historian McLaughlan traced most of the Devil's Causeway and most of the time he got it right. On occasion though, as proven by Mr R.P.Wright's excavations in the Edlingham area in 1938, MacLaughlan's line followed 18th-century carriage roads. The Todstead Ford crossing may be such an error but much fieldwork remains to be done before we have the answer.

From my aircraft I thought that I could see a Roman road closer to Brinkburn Priory and this became a prominent angled terraceway down the steep slope to the river below Brinkheugh Farm. I decided that if there was a branch road to Brinkburn, or if the main Roman road had routed via Brinkburn, then this must be it.

My ground survey soon located the angled terraceway in the wood beside Brinkheugh Farm. The road displays all the Roman characteristics - it has a steep

² Tony Dickens, *The River Bridges of Northumberland Vol III, The Coquet*. p.32.

gradient (far too steep for medieval wagons and carriages), it also has a typical Roman *agger* (a marked camber) and it is double-ditched with the occasional kerbstone peeping out from the thick grass covering. I followed the *agger* for two thirds of the slope down to the river and then lost it in heavy undergrowth and fallen trees. I continued my descent at the same angle, though, and when I arrived at the river's edge I could see ashlar stonework in the opposite river bank and in the centre of the river was the base of a pier. I then realised that the fern covered mound I was standing on was filled with stonework.

The river bed is small gravel on top of solid bedrock and the base of the pier is constructed with random rubble (crazy paving). The cement between the stones of the pier-base is typically Roman with shards of pottery and glass as well as the normal ingredients. The stonework of the northern abutment has the normal Roman feathered tool marks and lead has been run between the stones. The fern-covered mound of the southern abutment will need a skilled excavation to reveal its construction.

The approach road down the northern river bank is a 'mirror image' of the southern angled terraceway but it is in present day used as a forestry track. It provides easy route down to the bridge site from the public car park for the priory.

The 'Roman' camp referred to by Mackenzie and Sir David Smith is, in fact, a typical Iron Age (pre-Roman) promontory fort with a large earthwork across the narrow neck of the peninsula. Such Iron Age forts however had circular huts inside them, whereas both MacLauchlan's plan and aerial survey show that the marks in the ground are rectangular. It is therefore extremely likely that the Romans made use of an old Iron Age fort.

My next task was to attempt to find the line of a Roman road to the north and south of Brinkburn. 1300 metres due south of Brinkheugh Farm, at map ref. NZ 123 973, a Roman road has crossed the Tod Burn. A well preserved section can be seen

climbing the northern bank from a glade. In this glade the road passes several artificial mounds and these may well turn out to be roadside burials. This crossing of the Tod Burn seems to indicate that the straight stretch of Roman road due north from the bend at Whinney Hill had gone direct to Brinkheugh Farm and not made a deviation to the east to Todstead Ford.

Indeed the Devil's Causeway may not be one Roman road; it may be two with a crossroads and not a bend at Whinney Hill (NZ 122 923) and the north easterly and southerly arms missed by the old historians. Due south of Whinney Hill a Roman road has been struck by a farmer at Meldon, and north-north-east of Whinney Hill a line drawn straight on, on a heading of 031 degrees, ignoring the bend, heads towards the Alnmouth area and passes fields with the following names:

Coolgate Head	NZ 151 974
The Streets	NZ 165 998
High Camp	NU 189 039
Low Camp	NU 192 040
Low South Camp	NU 191 038
Nell's Walls	NU 191 042
Chester's Flatt	NU 210 085

This line also traverses three deserted medieval villages which may be hiding older settlements. They are: Old Felton (NU 180 023), Hazon (NU 193 045), and Hartlaw (NU 202 061). There have been Roman finds at Howick Haven and the present church at Lesbury stands on the site of a Saxon church which was close to Steppey Lane, an ancient road along which the monks were supposed to have carried St. Cuthbert's body.

Now to return to the Devil's Causeway north of Brinkburn: the Ordnance Survey map shows the Roman road merging with the modern A697 road just north of the Besom Barn Inn, two kilometres north-north-west of Longframlington. I think that the Devil's Causeway may have been to the west of the postulated line, passing to the west of Framlington Gate farm. About 150 meters to the north of Framlington Gate Farm and a few yards to the west of the gate to the public footpath, a forestry drainage ditch has cut through an old road. If this is the Roman road, then it is further west than

previously thought. I think that a search of the fields to the south west of Framlington Gate Farm may reveal evidence of the Devil's Causeway, or a branch of it, heading towards Brinkburn.

Finally, I would like to thank the landowner of both sides of the river at Brinkburn, Mr Hugh Fenwick, for giving me permission to search his land and also for his active assistance during the fieldwork.

Raymond Selkirk

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MacLauchlan H, 1852 *Survey of the Watling Street*

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of Aln in *Archaeologia Aeliana*, Vol XVII, 1940.

BRINKBURN MILL

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING, MARCH & APRIL 1992

The Paved Hardstanding in the Mill Yard

When the site was visited on 16 March, a section of a neatly-paved hardstanding area in front of the east wall of the Mill had been cleared (having been buried under a few cm of soil and a rather greater depth of recently laid red shale), and an east-west line of setts had been removed (area A-B-C-D on plan), with the intention of laying a drain to a proposed septic tank in the yard. The removal of these setts had exposed larger stones beneath.

These larger stones, lying c 0.20 m beneath the setts, are large unworked slabs of local sandstone; there seems little doubt that they were placed to provide a foundation for the hardstanding. The foundation slabs were cleaned and photographed, and a sketch plan and section drawn. The hardstanding area was edged by a line of well-squared blocks 3.00 m in advance of the mill wall (just outside which ran a field drain); the workmen had cleared this line northwards, to find what was apparently the north-east corner of the paved area c 0.50 m south of the north-east angle of the mill building; north of this a trial pit (E on plan) had been dug to 0.35 m below the top of the setts, and showed no evidence of any further structures. Similarly, a pit immediately north of the north-east angle of the mill (F on plan) had been sunk to 0.60 m deep, and showed no evidence of any structures; the underlying stratum throughout is dark brown silt.

The area of hardstanding appears to be a well-engineered feature, in good condition, and seems likely to extend over almost all the frontage of the mill; it certainly merits exposure and repair. The feature seems likely to be associated with the 19th century reconstruction of the mill, although no artefacts were found by which any actual date could be ascribed to it.

It was decided to route the new drain a short distance further north, clearing the hardstanding.

No evidence of any earlier structures was seen beneath the hardstanding, although the trial trench only allowed a very limited 'keyhole' in the deposits. Any excavation for a septic tank will require monitoring.

The Mill Machinery

In view of the fact that the machinery loft at the south end of the Mill had become unstable, due to the decay of some of its timbers, some shoring and repair have become necessary. It was agreed that measured drawings of the loft should be prepared.

Plans were drawn of this end of the building, and of the surviving mill machinery (with the exception of the late drive shaft alongside the west wall, and its timber supports), at four different levels, and a section drawn looking north, through the central millstone and its surviving gearing. The lower ends of

the two principal uprights carrying the gearing for the stone were cut off and encased in concrete before these drawings were completed, but it seems unlikely that any detail of significance was lost.

These drawings constitute a record of the structure of the loft, and the surviving mill stones; they do not form a complete record of the surviving machinery, which should be made if any further alterations or repairs are considered.



The trial trench and exposed hardstanding, looking west

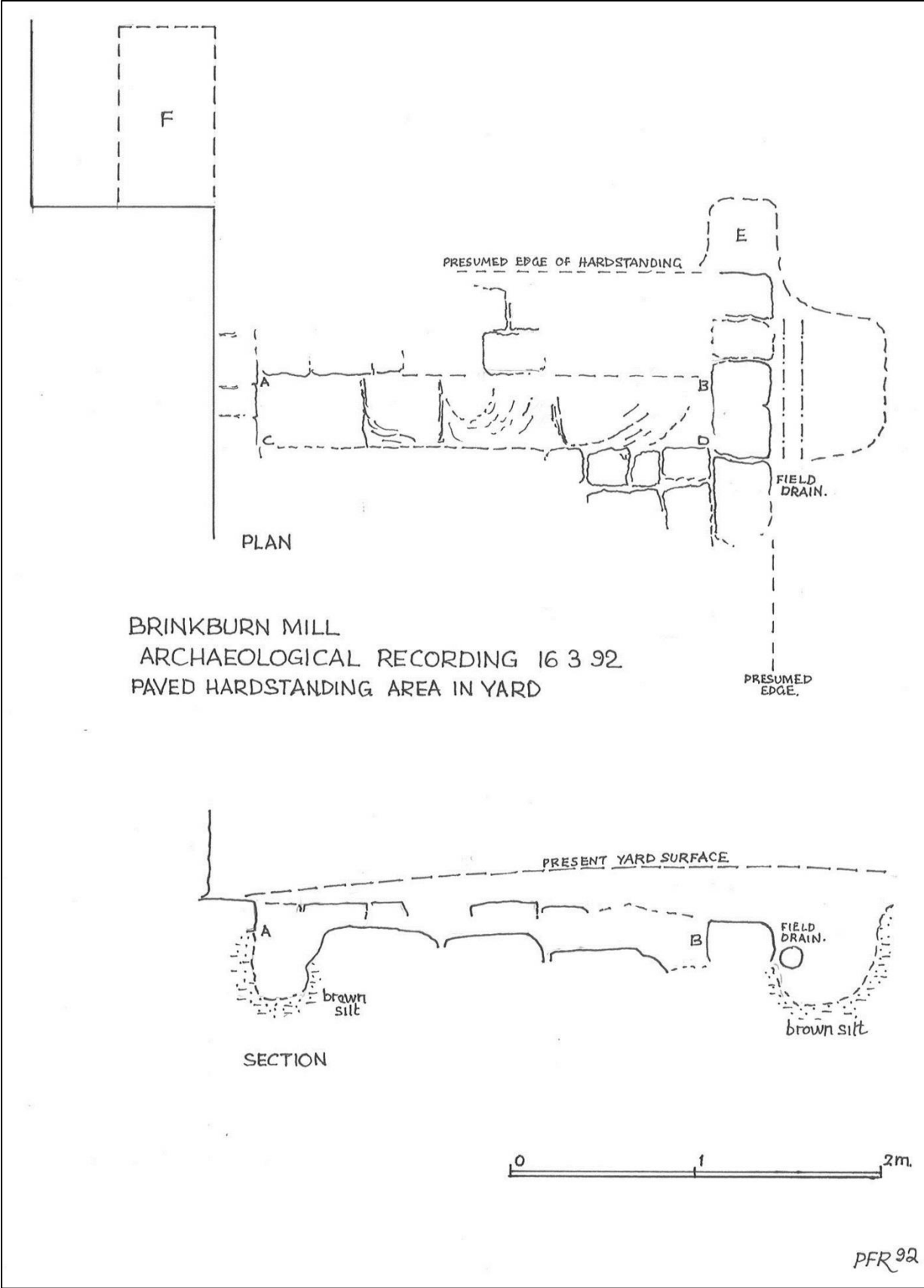


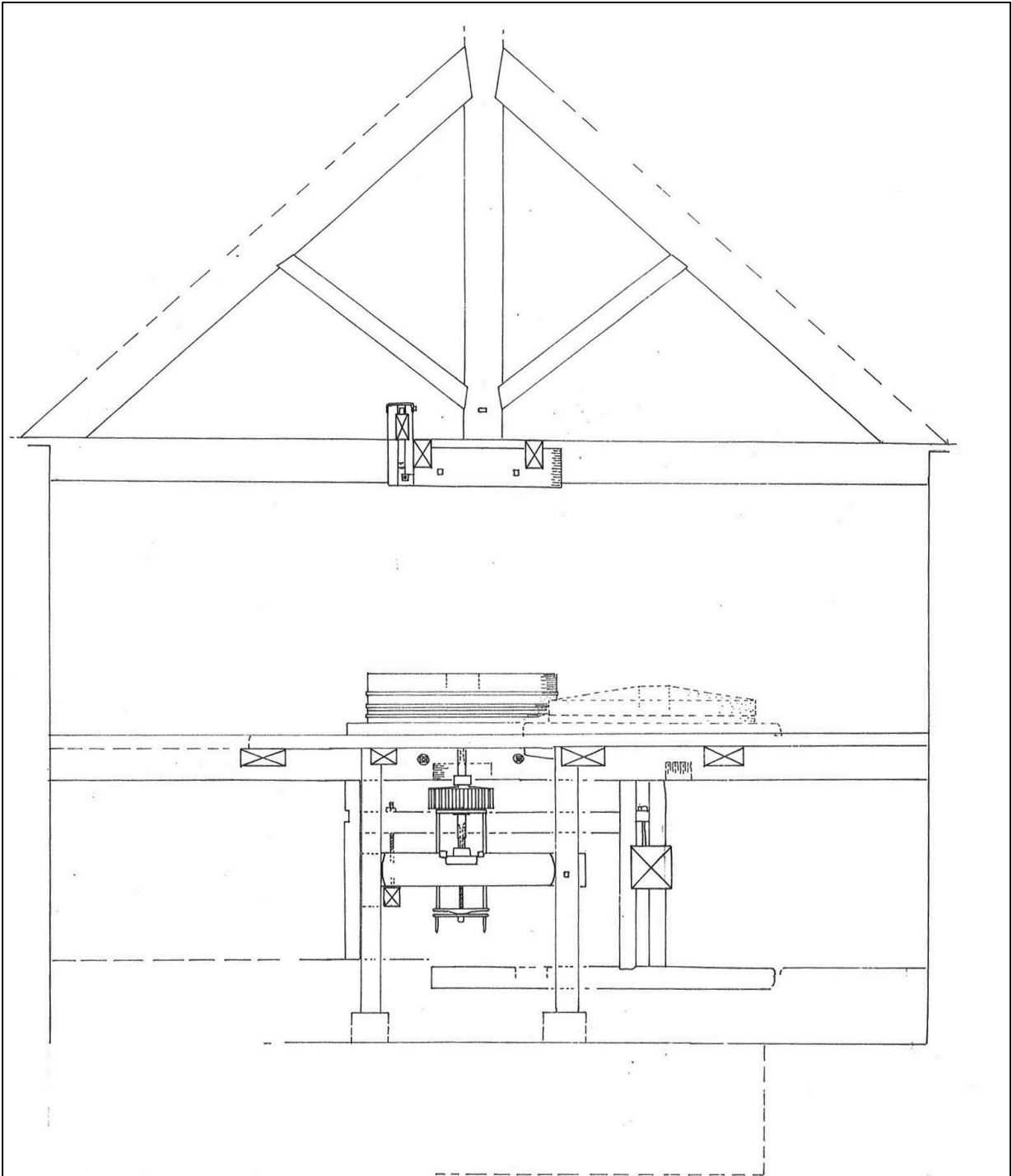
The trial trench and exposed hardstanding looking south-west



The trial trench and exposed hardstanding looking north-west

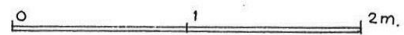
Peter F Ryder
Historic Buildings Consultant
April 1992



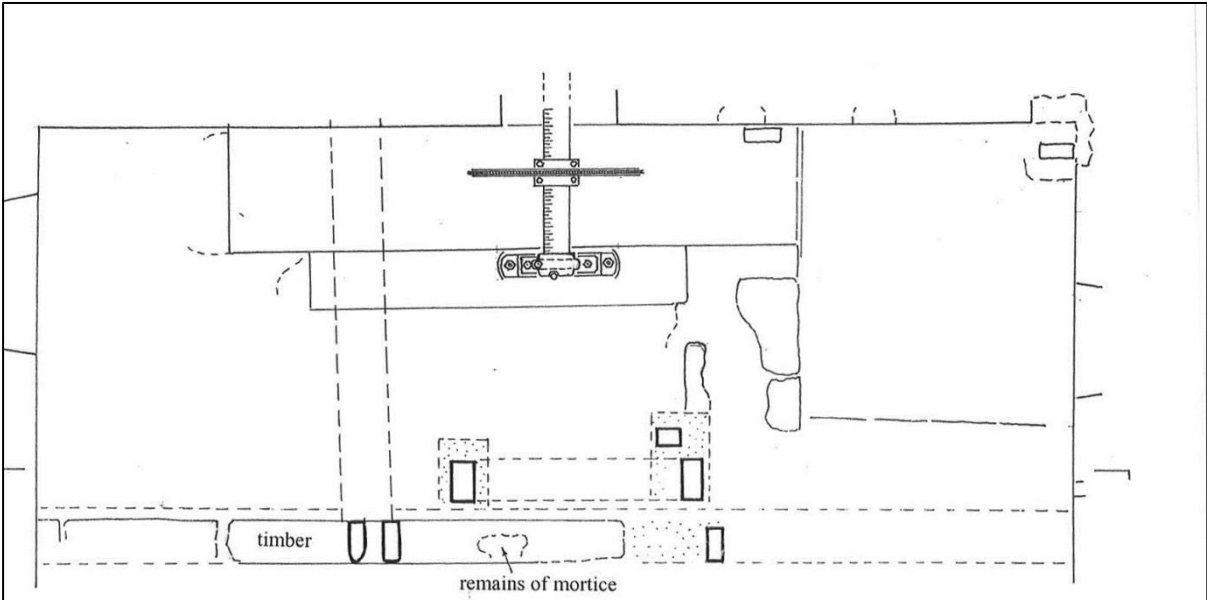


BRINKBURN MILL. Survey of Machinery

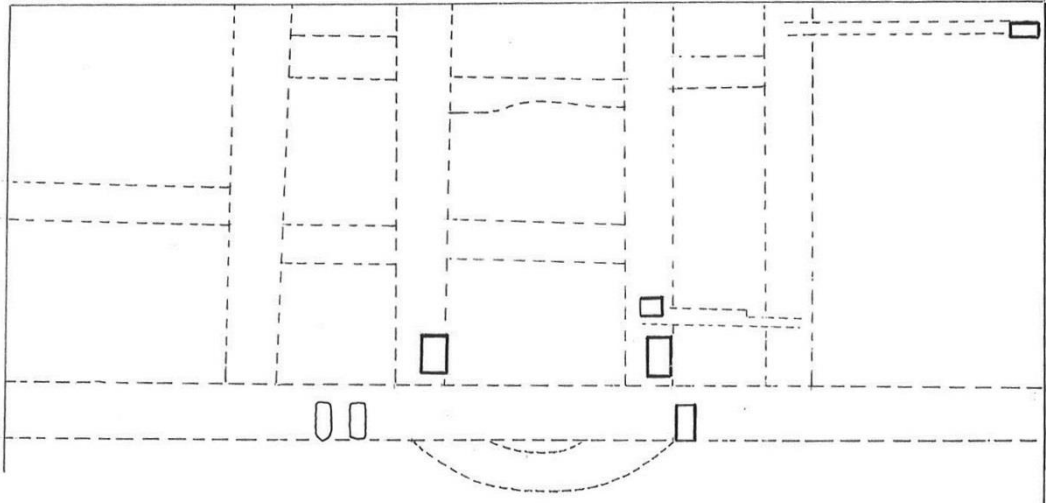
Section looking north



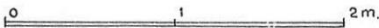
Drawing from survey by P F Ryder April 1992



Plan 1, at floor level beneath loft

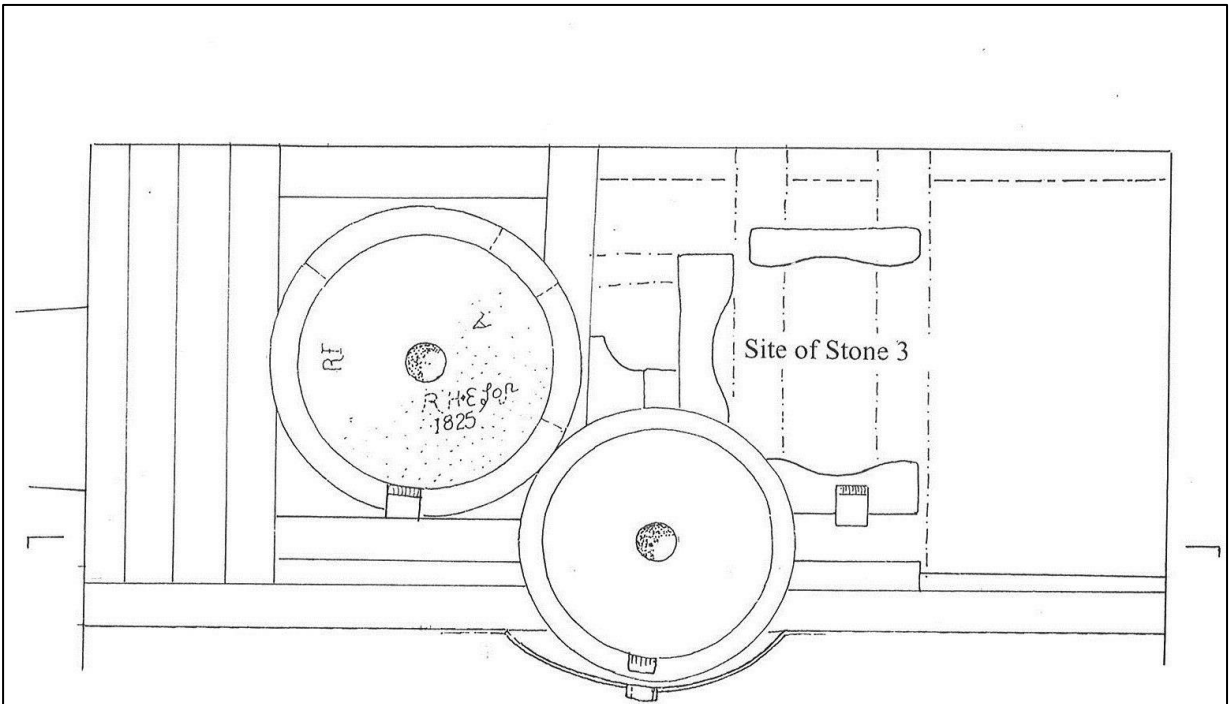


Plan 2, showing beams carrying loft

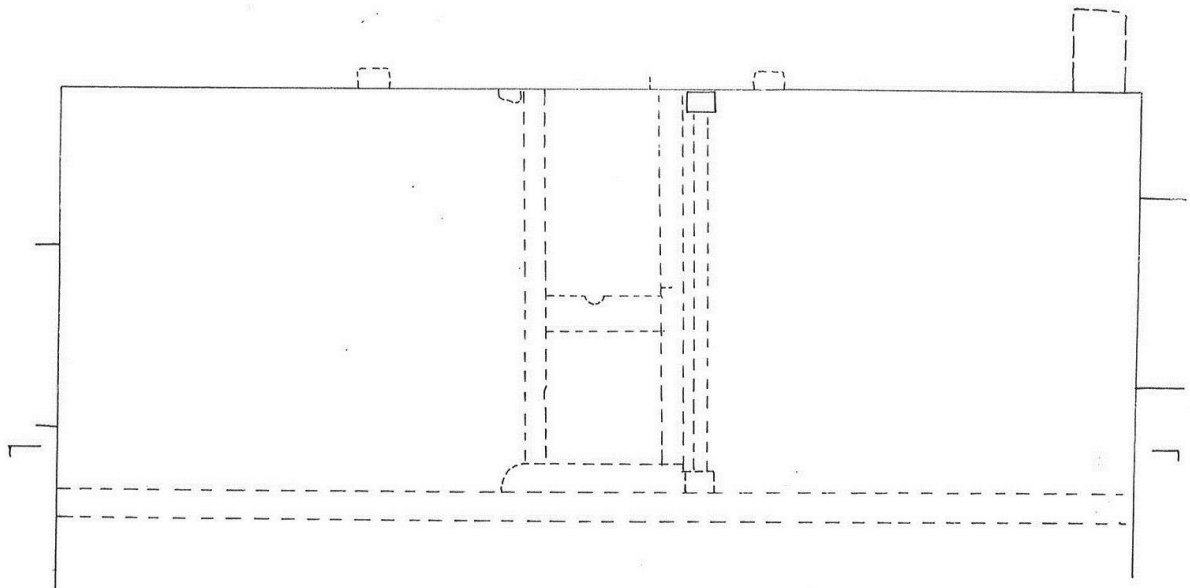


Drawings from survey by P F Ryder April 1992

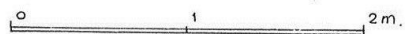
Brinkburn Mill. Survey of Machinery



Plan 3, showing loft with stones



Plan 4, showing timbers at tie-beam level of truss



BRINKBURN PRIORY MILL

DISCOVERY OF THE PRIORY GATEHOUSE, MAY 1992

Background

The disused Brinkburn Priory Mill, which had stood empty and derelict for some years, is currently being converted to domestic accommodation on behalf of the Landmark Trust. Although a section of thick walling alongside the river would appear to be of medieval date, the buildings now on site (all Grade II listed) are all of late 18th or 19th century date. Although the Mill lies outside that part of the Priory which is currently scheduled as an Ancient Monument, watching brief is being kept on all works, in particular those which involve disturbance of sub-surface deposits.

There are documentary references to both a corn mill and a fulling mill at Brinkburn, and also a tannery, implying that at one period there was quite a complex of agricultural/industrial buildings, probably in the vicinity of the Mill. 18th century maps show a cluster of buildings on the site of and immediately to the west of the present Mill. Whilst there is little doubt that the medieval priory would have had such a suite of buildings somewhere within its precinct, doubts have been expressed about the medieval origins of the present Mill site, which lies to the east of the Priory. This is because the present mill race would appear to be an adaptation of the medieval rere-dorter drain; one might expect mills, barns, etc to have been located in and around an outer court, which is usually placed to the west of the priory.

A recent examination of the site (Brinkburn Priory Mill; Archaeological Record & Structural Interpretation, report prepared for the Landmark Trust by P.F., Ryder, September 1991) concluded that the present Mill probably did occupy the site of its medieval predecessor, and that there may have been other buildings such as barn, tannery, and perhaps a gatehouse, in its vicinity.

Conversion work proceeded in early 1992, affording two opportunities for a limited investigation of sub-surface deposits; one, inside the Mill, showed rough stone structures and a layer of burnt debris, that seemed likely to be of post-medieval date (report PFR February 1992), the other examined the 19th-century paved hardstanding outside the Mill, and its foundations (report PFR March 1992). In addition the early-19th century mill machinery was recorded in April 1992.

In early May 1992 a pit was dug on the east side of the yard in front of the Mill, to install a septic tank. Although none of the map sources had shown any buildings in this area (prior to the construction of the present Barn (now ruined) in the late 18th or 19th century, the pit exposed substantial structural remains of an earlier structure, which was clearly a gatehouse to the Priory; work halted to allow archaeological investigation.

The Structures Exposed

The Gateway

The original pit exposed what was clearly the threshold of a gateway (A), the inner (western) section of which was formed by a sandstone slab 1.7 m long and 0.4 m wide, with a raised door-check, the central section of which had been worn down by the passage of many feet. An adjacent course of stones at the same level on the east (external) side showed similar wear; the threshold was carried on a heavy foundation at least three courses (0.8 m) deep, obviously necessitated by the very wet alluvium on which it was laid.

At the south end of the threshold the foundations continued (C) but no superstructure survived; beyond the former position of the south jamb of the gateway some rough foundations (E) abutted the west face of the wall containing the gate, perhaps representing a wall (of later date?) running westwards.

On the north side of the gateway its jamb (B) survived to a height of two courses, and consisted of an inner order made up of clustered round shafts, and an outer order chamfered internally but with triple rounded steps externally. All these mouldings continued to ground level, without any bases. Immediately beyond the respond a wall returned westwards, with its south face consisting of two courses of good-quality ashlar. The north face of the wall was of three or four courses of much rougher masonry. A substantial wall continued north from the gate jamb, angling slightly to the east. Only the outer face of this was exposed, up to a distance of 4.4 m from the jamb, where a large roughly-shaped boulder set outside the line of the wall face may have indicated either a return or an off-set eastward. The face of this northward-trending wall was of relatively rough masonry, and may represent sub-surface footings; post-medieval works would appear to have cut a platform into the valley-side at this point.

The East-West Wall

The wall extending westwards from the north jamb of the gateway was also intersected by a drain trench cut diagonally across the yard. A further trench was cut to follow the south face of this wall (D) further west, with the intention of finding its end (and possibly the inner arch of the gatehouse) so that the septic tank drain could be re-routed without disturbing the medieval masonry. The wall face, or at least its upper course (there is only a single course at the west end) extends 8.6 m from the gateway; the ashlar course terminates but its footings, of reddened roughly-shaped sandstone slabs, appear to return southwards at this point (F). This area is overlapped by the hardstanding platform (G) in front of the early-19th century mill.

Interpretation

There seems little reason to doubt that the structures exposed, both gateway and east-west wall, are of medieval date; the 'continuous' mouldings of the gateway jamb would suggest a 14th or 15th century date. There can now be little doubt that this is part of the main gateway of the Priory; the medieval access would appear to have been by means of a track on the line of the present access road, leading from a bridge over the Coquet (the abutments and base of the central pier of which remain visible c 200m downstream of the Mill). To the north-west of the Priory church a post-medieval gateway to the late 18th or early 19th century stables incorporates the moulded jambs of a medieval gateway, which may or may not be in situ; these may indicate that there was a second gatehouse in this area, perhaps giving access to another bridge over the river to a haugh on the south side of the river, where the monastic fishponds may have been situated.

It is not yet possibly to reconstruct the original form of the gatehouse. Bearing in mind both the troubled nature of Northumberland in the later medieval period - in 1322 the canons of Brinkburn petitioned the king for relief from losses sustained at the hands of the Scots, and there was a further raid as late as 1419 - and the evidence provided by other monastic sites in the county (eg Alnwick and Hulne) one would expect Brinkburn to have been provided with a substantial precinct or boundary wall and gatehouses.

The traditional pattern for a monastic gatehouse (eg Easby, North Yorkshire) is to have a large arch for wheeled traffic set side-by-side with a smaller one for pedestrians. The arch evidenced by the remains so far uncovered at Brinkburn, around 1.8 m wide, could hardly have been large enough to admit wheeled traffic; if there was an accompanying larger arch, this would seem likely to have been on the south. A moulded voussoir (see appendix) found re-used as wall-core in the Mill would appear to have come from an arch of c 1.8 m radius, and so may have originated in a portal. If the southward return at the west end of the east-west wall has been correctly identified, this would suggest a gatehouse of some size.

The absence of ashlar on the northern face of the east-west wall, the disappearance of its lower course midway along its length, and the rough nature of the surviving footings of the wall (presumably the precinct wall) running north from the gatehouse, all suggest that the medieval ground surface sloped uphill to both west and north more steeply than the present yard, which has clearly been cut back into the hillside when the present mill buildings were built.

The quality of both the moulded jamb of the gateway, and the ashlar face of the east-west wall, shows that the medieval structures are of high status, more so than one might have expected in the case of a relatively small and poverty-struck priory.

Archaeological Deposits

As already mentioned, the foundations of the gateway are laid on a brown alluvial sand or loam, which is very wet in parts. The section exposed in the north face of the septic tank pit, immediately east of the gateway, shows a layer of lighter sand, with some sandstone fragments, resting on this 'clean' alluvium; this layer grades eastward into a grey sand with ferruginous patches; above this is a much darker soil with much sandstone rubble. Rather surprisingly there is no clear evidence of any made-up roadway or path approaching the gatehouse; clearly such an approach must have existed, but may have been totally removed by flooding, which may have affected the stratigraphy of the whole site.

The only artifacts so far found have been two horseshoes and an object which may be part of a horse brass (which await examination) and a scarp of green-glazed medieval pottery; all these have been recovered from a non-stratified context.

Summary and Conclusions

The structural remains exposed in the drain trench and septic tank pit have now been recorded and photographed. The septic tank has been re-located a metre or so the east of its originally planned position, clear of the medieval structures.

The principal parts of the structure so far uncovered, ie the gateway threshold and moulded north jamb, and the ashlar-faced east-west wall, are complete enough for their function to be immediately recognised, and of some architectural interest; they lies at relatively shallow depth beneath the yard, and could be exposed (the stonework would obviously need some treatment and consolidation) as a 'feature'.

Without further excavation the overall form of the gatehouse must remain conjectural; nevertheless the discovery is an important one, and adds significantly to our knowledge of the Priory site.

Peter F Ryder
May 1992

Previous Reports on Brinkburn Priory Mill, prepared by PFR for Landmark Trust

Brinkburn Priory Mill, Northumberland: Archaeological Record and Structural Interpretation September 1991

Brinkburn Mill - Archaeological Recording, February 1992 - Structures and Deposits beneath the Floor of the Mill

Brinkburn Mill. Archaeological Recording March & April 1992 (Paved Hardstanding in Mill Yard, Mill Machinery)

Brinkburn Priory Mill. The Priory Gatehouse. Interim Report May 8 1992

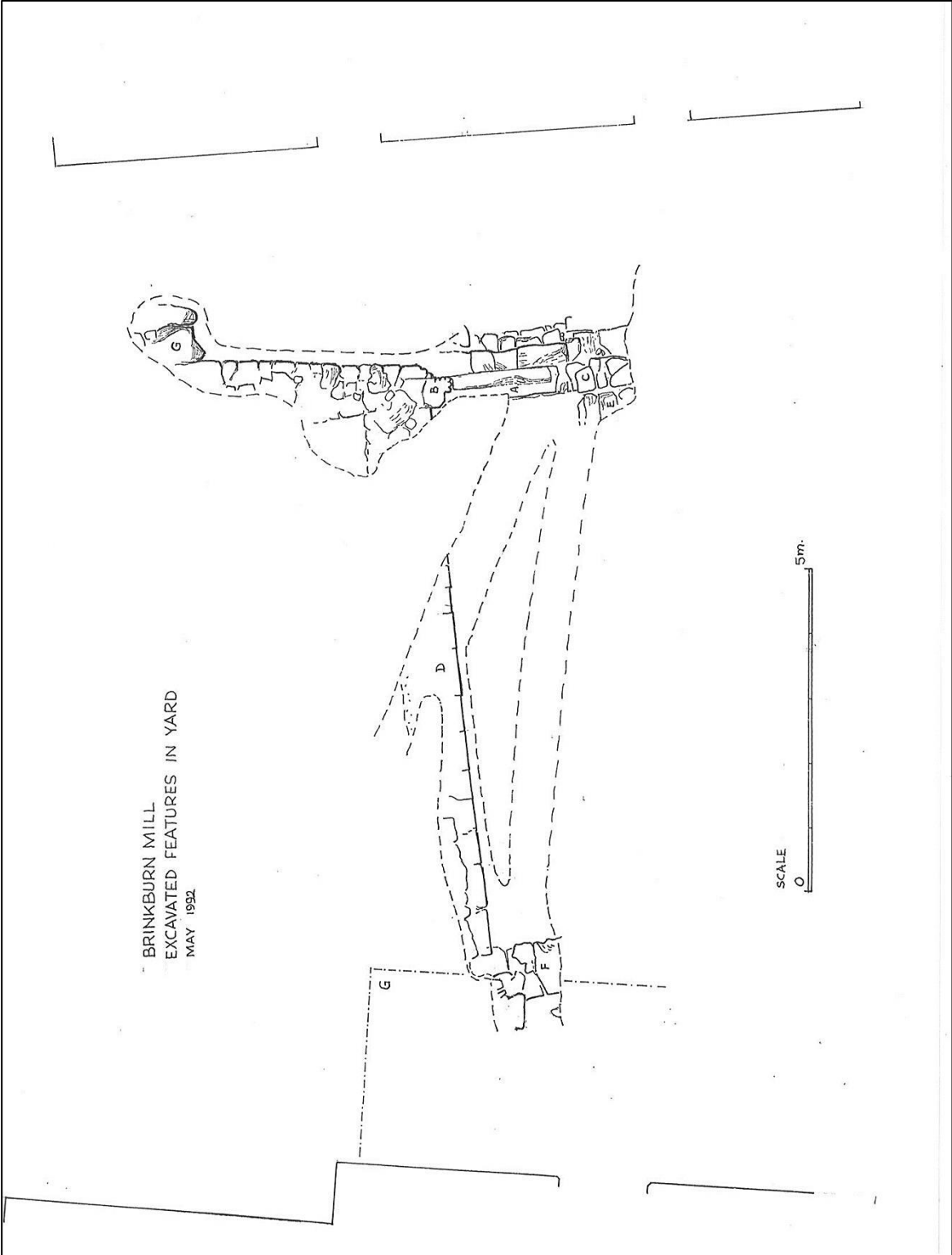
APPENDIX

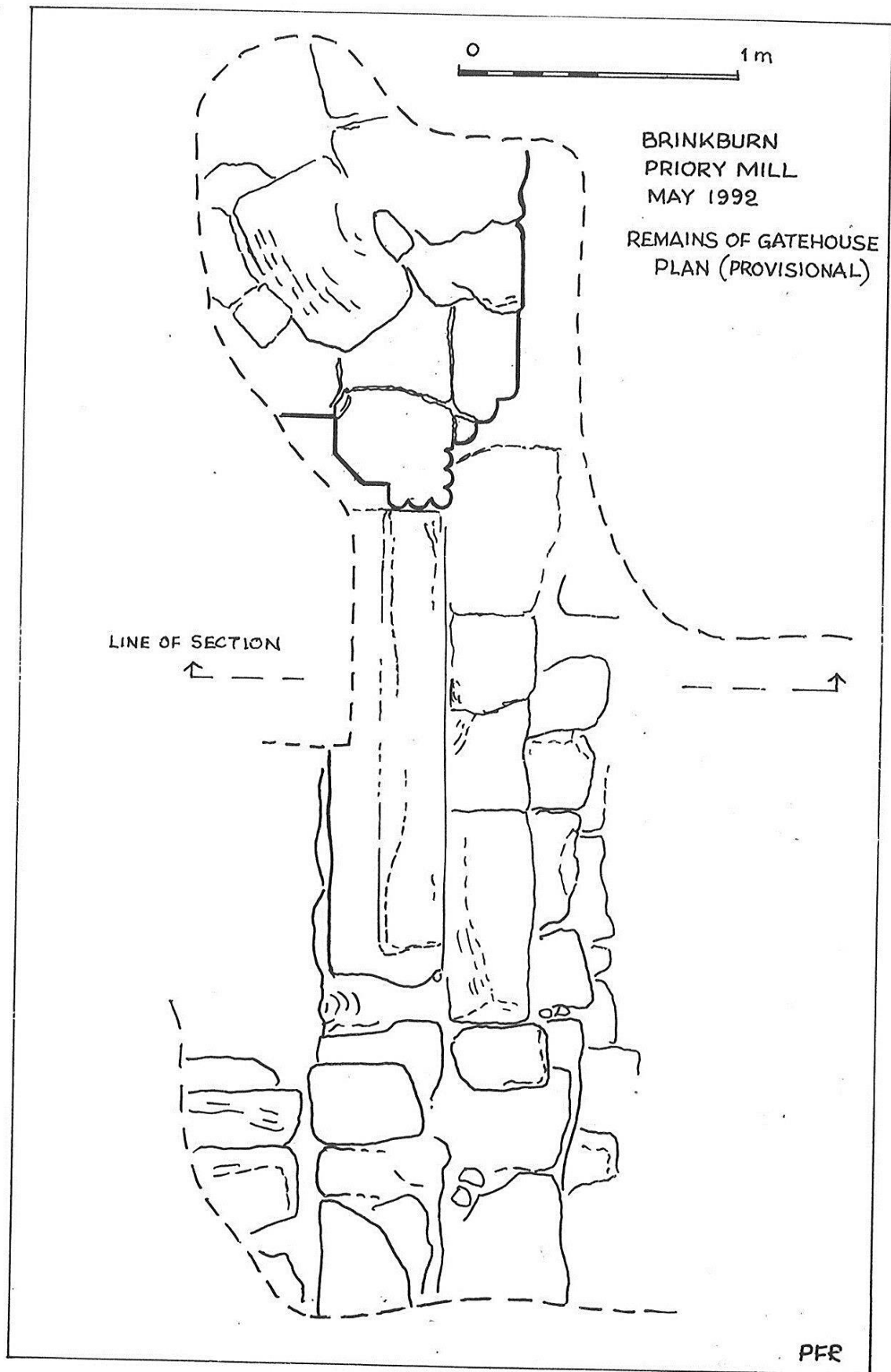
Two Architectural Fragments from Brinkburn Priory Mill, May 1992

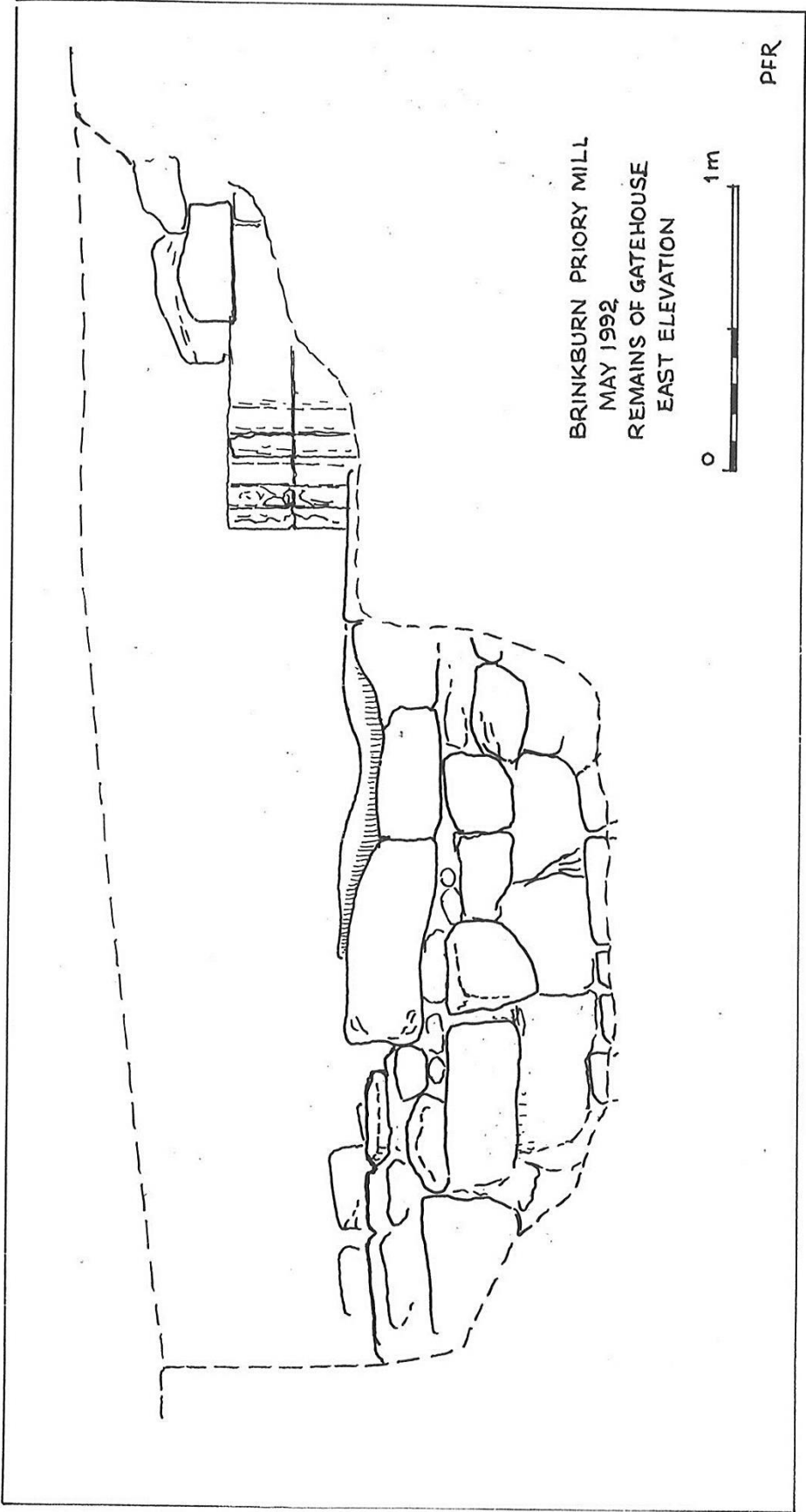
- (1) A fragment of a gate jamb, of coarse-grained buff sandstone with some ferruginous staining, 0.21 m high, 0.225 m wide and 0.17 m deep. The stone bears a triple roll moulding on the front face, and a second roll on one side; it is clearly part of the inner order of one of the jambs of the gateway exposed, and was found in the angle of the precinct wall and the north wall of the gatehouse.
- (ii) An arch voussoir of rather more orange coarse-grained sandstone, 0.25 by 0.21 m in section, and c 0.27 m along its extrados. The mouldings are somewhat damaged; there are two rolls (of smaller diameter than those on the gate jamb), at right angles to each other, with a third member between which has been largely broken away. The stone is only moulded on two faces, suggesting that it may have formed part of the outer order of an arch with a radius of around 1.8m.

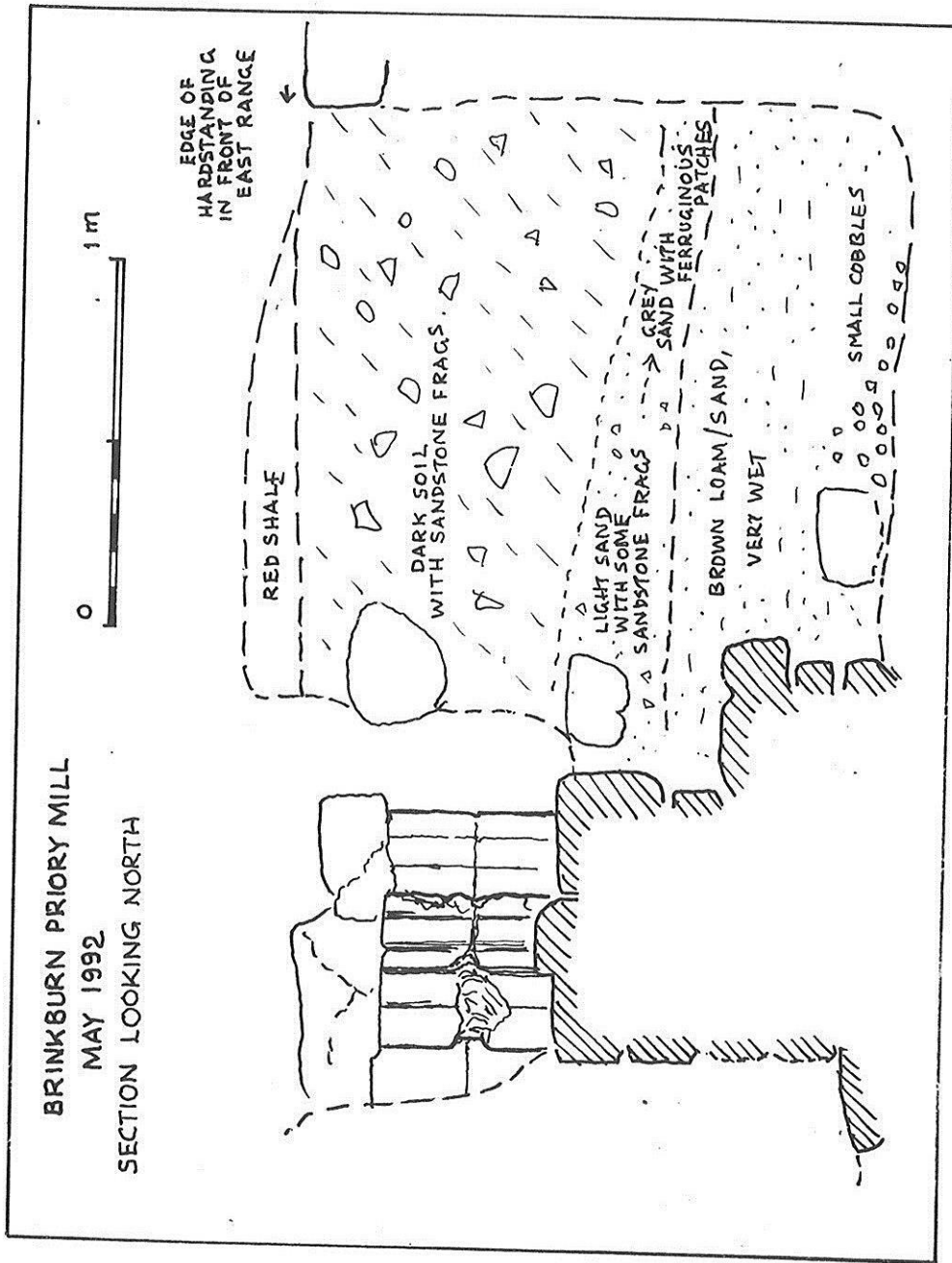
Recording & survey by P.F.Ryder & R.Sermon May 1992

Peter F Ryder
May 21 1992

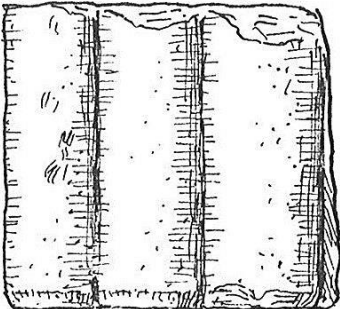
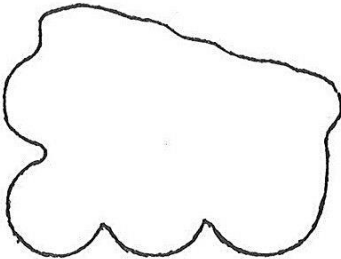




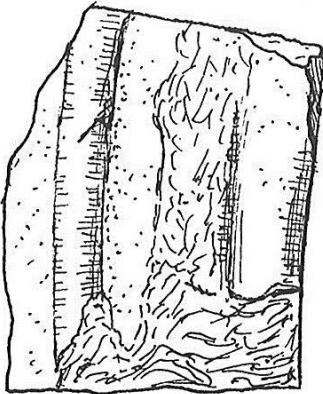
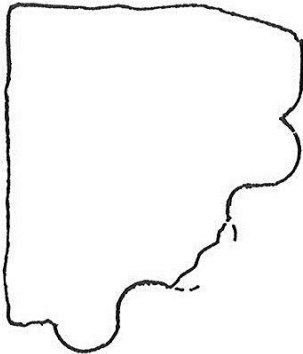
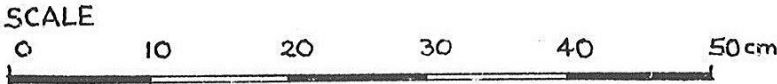




ARCHITECTURAL FRAGMENTS
FROM BRINKBURN MILL MAY 1992



1.



2.

Landmark and the Culture Recovery Fund 2020-21



Landmarks that benefitted from the Cultural Recovery Fund 2020-21

2020-21 was the year when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the UK, and for nine months out of twelve, Landmark had to close all its buildings, with a resulting cessation of the holiday income that funds our buildings' maintenance. Vital projects across Britain were put on hold because of the pandemic, because of uncertainty about when contracts could be agreed or when specialist builders and craftspeople would be allowed to work onsite again. The closure of Landmarks for holiday bookings from March to October 2020 and again from December to April 2021 was a devastating blow to our finances and directly impacted Landmark's maintenance budget.

However, in autumn 2020 we were delighted to receive a grant of £1.2million from the government's Culture Recovery Fund, allowing us to reignite our planned maintenance programme and ensure that none of our buildings fell into disrepair.

Under the auspices of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Culture Recovery Fund was designed to secure the future of Britain's museums, galleries, theatres, independent cinemas, heritage sites and music venues with emergency grants and loans. One strand of the Fund was the Heritage Stimulus Fund administered by Historic England, which included the Major Works Programme, source of the grant to Landmark. This transformative grant allowed a group of 15 critical maintenance projects at 17 Landmarks across England to go ahead.

The projects directly provided employment and training for more than 130 craftspeople, including many multi-generation family-run businesses local to our buildings. Masons, carpenters, architects, engineers and many more skilled specialists were involved across these sites, fuelling the recovery of the heritage sector and contributing to local economies on a national scale. Several sites hosted students and apprentices, providing vital opportunities at a time of great uncertainty.

When the first pandemic lockdown was imposed in March 2020, consolidation of historic ruins beside Brinkburn Mill already underway was initially brought to a sudden halt. Thanks to the CRF grant, Alnwick-based Brendon Teasdale of Teasdale Masonry was able to resume the specialist work, which used hot lime mortars. Students from New Durham College also visited for several training days on site, covering a range of topics including the lime cycle and the difference between hydraulic and non-hydraulic binders, plus the mixing and preparation of hot limes, and also gauged mortar (which contains cement as well as lime and sand for durability as well as plasticity) and non-gauged mortars. Students were also able to gain experience in hands-on pointing work.

