

2. INTRODUCTION

A formalised, raised walkway, known as ‘The Rampart’ (NGR NT 65041 20492), is located to the east of the current boundary of Jedburgh Abbey (SM1326, NRHE No. NT62SE 15, Canmore ID [57020](#)); it is a flat, gravel topped walkway, standing at some parts over two metres above the adjacent Abbey Place, and runs from the Sheriff Court at the north to the war memorial at its southern end (Illus 1). The ‘rampart’ does not fall within the modern bounds of the site of Jedburgh Abbey, but is classified as part of the Jedburgh Abbey Scheduled Monument, falling under the guardianship of Historic Environment Scotland (HES). The ‘rampart’ retaining wall is constructed from cut and dressed sandstone blocks and is accessible from steps leading up from the war memorial, through the back of the Sheriff Court building, or from access stairs built into its eastern side. Local failures of masonry had been identified with patch repairs carried out in the past; however, a more comprehensive scheme of repairs was required for long-term preservation, with some sections needing a complete rebuild in order to stabilise and maintain the ‘rampart’ for future generations.

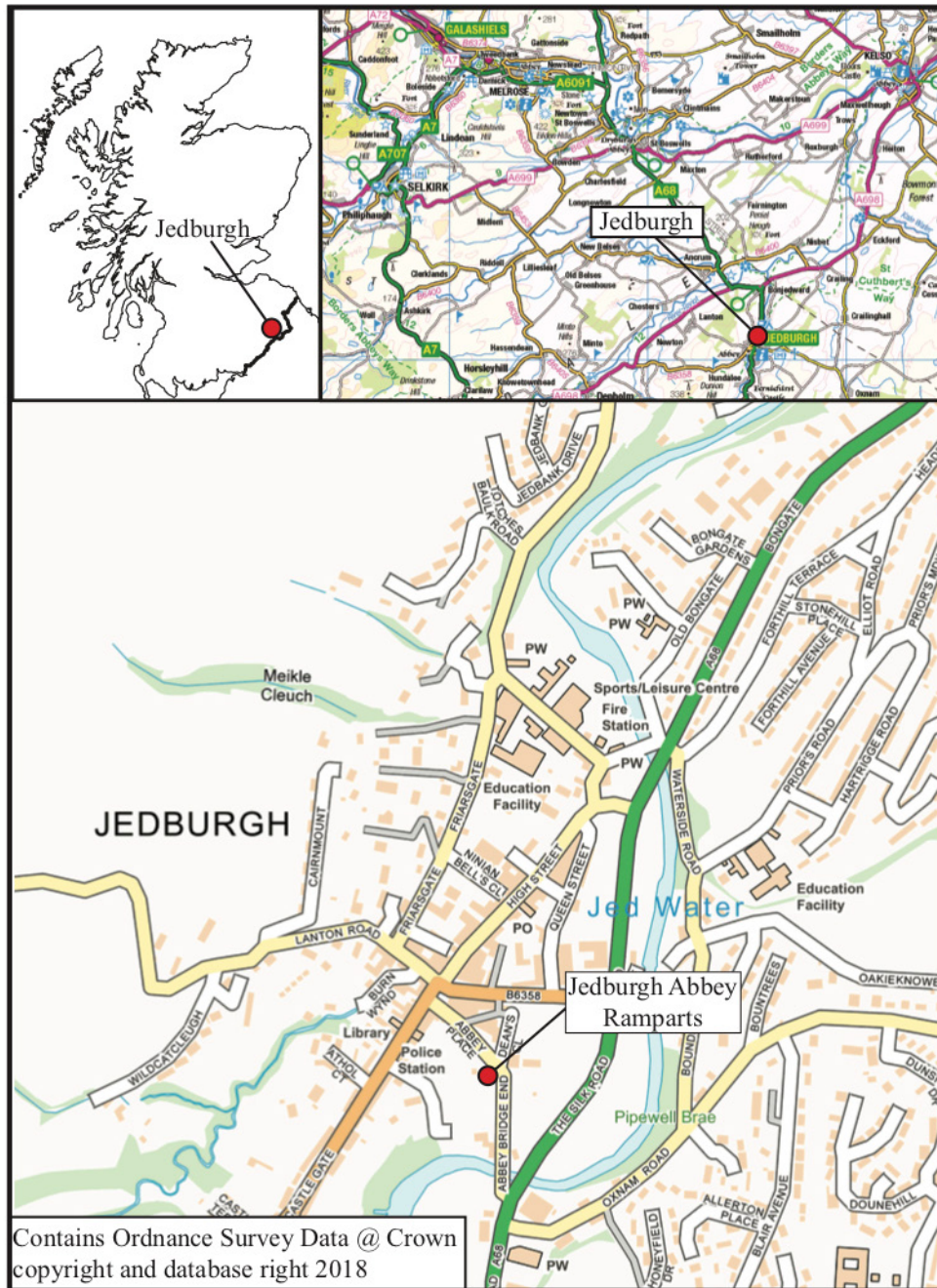
2.1 Background to the project

Heritage and Archaeological Research Practice Limited (HARP) was commissioned by Scottish Borders Council (SBC) and the Jedburgh Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) to carry out a programme of archaeological works at the location of the Jedburgh Abbey Rampart (Illus 2 and 3), to complete works associated with Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) Case ID 300042234, and Case ID 300046433. The works followed on from a series of investigatory works at the abbey ‘rampart’ that were conducted to determine the structural nature, and history of the ‘rampart’ and its retaining wall, including an assessment of historical records relating to them. Investigatory coring of the ‘rampart’ in 2018 suggested a rubble core backed by a sandstone inner wall that may have been an earlier construction. The excavation of four trial pits in 2019 (Hill 2019) formed the second stage of investigatory works, and was used to inform future conservation works to repair the ‘rampart’ wall.

The works consisted of Standing Building Recording (SBR) of the retaining wall, prior to an archaeological watching brief during repair works to the retaining wall and access stairs. Due to the location of the ‘rampart’, adjacent to the east of Jedburgh Abbey graveyard, there was a high potential to uncover archaeological remains, including both in situ and ex situ human skeletal material. The excavation of the test pits in 2019 indicated that the ‘rampart’ wall might have been constructed in two phases, with the rear part of the wall constructed in drystone, with visible voids throughout. Each test pit revealed an amount of dumped or in-filled material present directly behind the retaining wall, with deeper in-filled deposits present further to the south along the ‘rampart’. These deposits were all sealed with more modern bedding deposits for gravels and tarmac. The nature of the deposits identified behind the wall suggested a deliberate ground-raising event, in order to either create the ‘rampart’, or to at least formalise it. The excavations uncovered fragmentary, re-deposited skeletal remains, of both humans and animals, indicating that the bones were in a secondary burial location, highly disturbed and deposited from elsewhere.

2.2 Historical background

The Augustinian Jedburgh Abbey dates to the 12th century and is located at the historic heart of Jedburgh, striking an imposing sight when approaching the town from the south. The abbey is one of four great abbeys located in the Scottish Borders and was subject to damage and destruction in the 15th and 16th centuries due to its position on an important north-south route in the Borders, forming a strategically defensive position (Lewis & Ewart 1995: 2–3) that was fought over by English and Scottish armies. Its demise was complete by the time of the Reformation in 1560, but the abbey was the main church of the town until the early 19th century, and remains a significant feature of Jedburgh as a draw to tourists over the centuries, with sketches and artistic impressions of the abbey dating back to the late 1700s. Military activity and defensive developments at the abbey, in particular the occupation of the town by a French garrison in 1548 (de Beagué 1708: 92) have led to the ‘rampart’



Illus 1 Location Plan (Image by Heritage and Archaeological Research Practice)

being attributed to earthworks constructed to the east of the abbey in the 16th century (Lewis & Ewart 1995: 2, 10; Brooke 2000: 207–8).

A boundary line potentially representing the ‘rampart’ is indicated on an untitled plan of Jedburgh from 1775, separating the ‘High Kirk Yard’ from the ‘Low Kirk Yard’, but by the time of John Ainslie’s plan of 1780 the ‘Low Kirk Yard’ was no longer evident, with a ‘Cattle Market’ noted in its place. The ‘Rampart’ however, is not

named until 1823 on John Wood’s Town Plan of Jedburgh.

At a similar time to these early maps, particularly the untitled plan of 1775, George Hutton completed at least six drawings of Jedburgh Abbey in the late 1770s. Two sketches of the northern side of the abbey depict the building in its setting, with naturally sloping topography in the foreground, and no visible ‘rampart’ wall in either image (Hutton 1775; 1776). A third drawing, again completed



Illus 2 Excavation Areas Section 1 to 4 (Image by Heritage and Archaeological Research Practice)



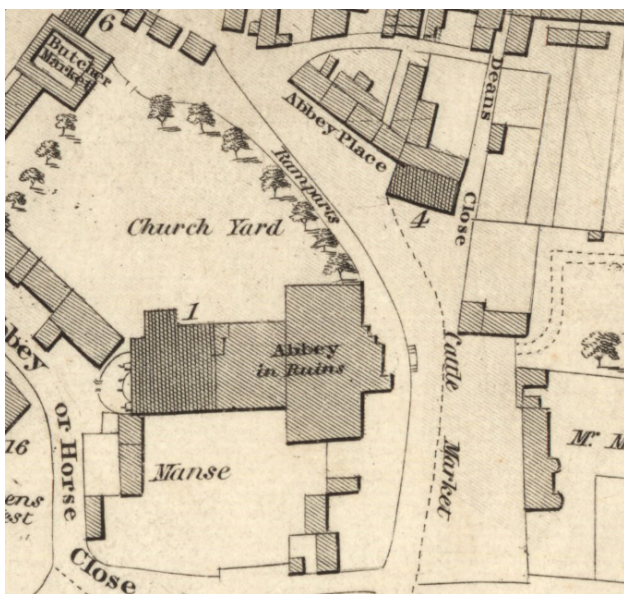
Illus 3 Excavation Areas Section 5 to 6 (Image by Heritage and Archaeological Research Practice)

by Hutton (1777), shows the northern side of the abbey in its setting of a graveyard, with a flatter looking landscape, and what appears to be a wall to the east of the eastern end of the abbey, which would be in the location of the ‘rampart’ wall, however it is difficult to be certain whether this represents the actual ‘rampart’.

A drawing completed by a French prisoner of war, and dating to 1812, shows the abbey as viewed from the north-east (Forbes 1912). The churchyard is visible in the immediate foreground of the abbey, and enclosed by iron railings, much as is the case today. Immediately in front of the railings sits an elevated walkway, which follows a similar line to that of the present ‘rampart’.

The Cattle Market depicted on Ainslie’s map remains indicated in Wood’s Town Plan of 1823 (Illus 4), however, the land to the west of the ‘rampart’ is now merely indicated as the ‘Church Yard’. Wood’s map denotes the ‘rampart’, and indicates a set of stairs located on the outside of the wall, directly to the east of the eastern end of the abbey. These stairs are not represented on the drawing of the ‘rampart’ dating to 1812.

By the time of the first Ordnance Survey Large Scale Town Plan of 1858, three sets of stairs are now indicated on the eastern side of the ‘rampart’, but all are located within the line of the wall, not externally as previously noted. The northernmost set of stairs



Illus 4 Extract from John Wood’s Town Plan of 1823 (Image by Heritage and Archaeological Research Practice)

provides access to the top of the ‘rampart’ at the ‘museum’, whilst the central set of stairs indicates one set of steps located opposite the school. The southern stairs consist of two sets of steps, and are located further to the north than those noted on Wood’s map, to the north-east of the eastern end of the abbey, rather than directly to the east. The cattle market is still indicated to the east of the ‘rampart’ wall. The Ordnance Survey Name Book for Roxburghshire (1858–60: 75) indicates that at this time the area known as ‘The Ramparts’ consisted of a narrow strip of ground running parallel with Abbey Place, forming a promenade of the burgh and sitting approximately seven or eight feet high; no information on the origin of the ‘rampart’ is noted however.

Public toilets were added into the ‘rampart’ at the location of the northern set of steps, with the first mapped evidence of these indicated on the Ordnance Survey 25 inch to the mile of 1921, and are clearly located on the inside of the retaining wall. A second toilet was located between the northern and central sets of stairs, however these are not indicated on any of the Ordnance Survey maps up to 1964. At the time of the works, both sets of toilets had been closed and inaccessible for some time. The southern end of the ‘rampart’ was altered in 1921 with the erection of the Jedburgh War Memorial, designed by James B Dunn and first indicated in detail on the 1964 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map series.

The mapping evidence and images suggest a possible change to the ‘rampart’ wall in either the late 18th or early 19th century. Early maps indicate a wall to the east of the abbey, but the walls in these maps are only partly on the alignment of the current ‘rampart’, with the wall represented as more angular and straight than its current guise. By the time of Wood’s Town Plan of 1823, the wall appears to follow a route more representative of its current form, suggesting an alteration or change to the wall between 1780 and 1823. Drawings of the late 18th and early 19th century also help to support this possibility, with Hutton’s drawings suggesting a natural topography surrounding the abbey, with no clearly visible ‘rampart’. Whilst these images may have been stylised to imply a more rural idyll for the setting of the abbey, the drawing by a French prisoner of war in 1812 indicates a much more formalised ‘rampart’ wall, pertaining to the current route and style. It is

possible that the 'rampart' wall was originally lower, and less significant in the past, acting as a drystone boundary wall, as opposed to a retaining wall, with either a rebuild, or modifications made to the existing wall with an addition of a mortared face and capping stones. This would have created a more stable wall able to retain material dumped behind it used to raise and level the 'rampart'.

Further additions and alterations were also made once the retaining wall had been formalised, with Wood's plan indicating a set of access stairs to the 'rampart' located on the exterior of the retaining wall, and directly to the east of the eastern end of the abbey (altar). By the time of the Ordnance Survey Town Plan, three access stairs were visible, but all are located within the bounds of the 'rampart' wall,

whilst the southern access stairs are located slightly further north than on Wood's plan, being located to the east of the North Transept, as opposed to east of the altar. Whilst it is possible that Wood's plan may not have been as accurate as the Ordnance Survey plan, and the stairs represented on both plans were the same, the mapping indicates a further period of alterations to the 'rampart' between 1823 and 1858 with the insertion of the sets of stairs on the interior of the retaining wall. Further changes occurred with the insertion of toilet blocks after the publication of the Ordnance Survey Large Scale Town Plan in 1858 and the construction of the war memorial in 1921, with a small cellar also inserted towards the north-western end of the 'rampart', possibly at the same time as the toilet blocks.