

Site Code: BPD05
Client: Bowmer & Kirkland Ltd

Results of an evaluation undertaken on the site of BP's proposed North Sea Operations Centre at Stoneywood, Aberdeen.

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12/01/2006

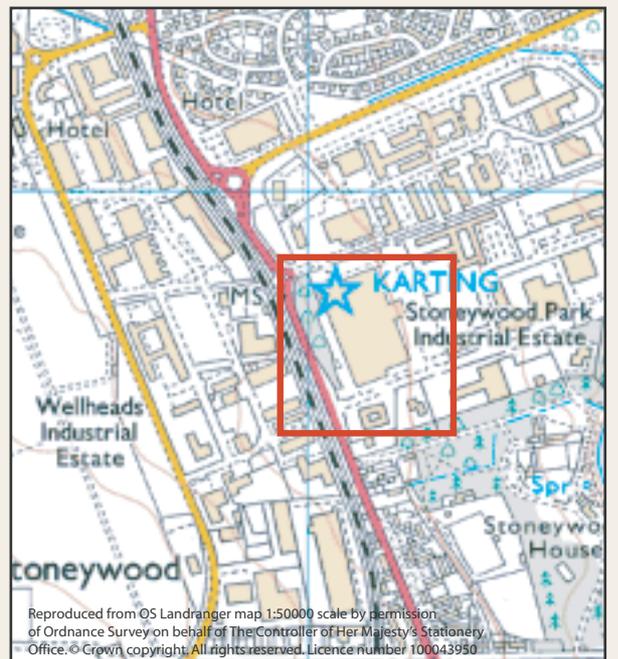
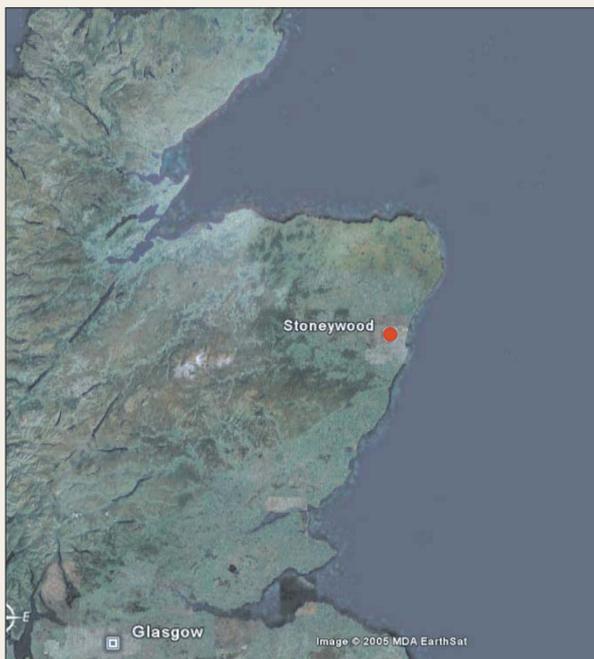
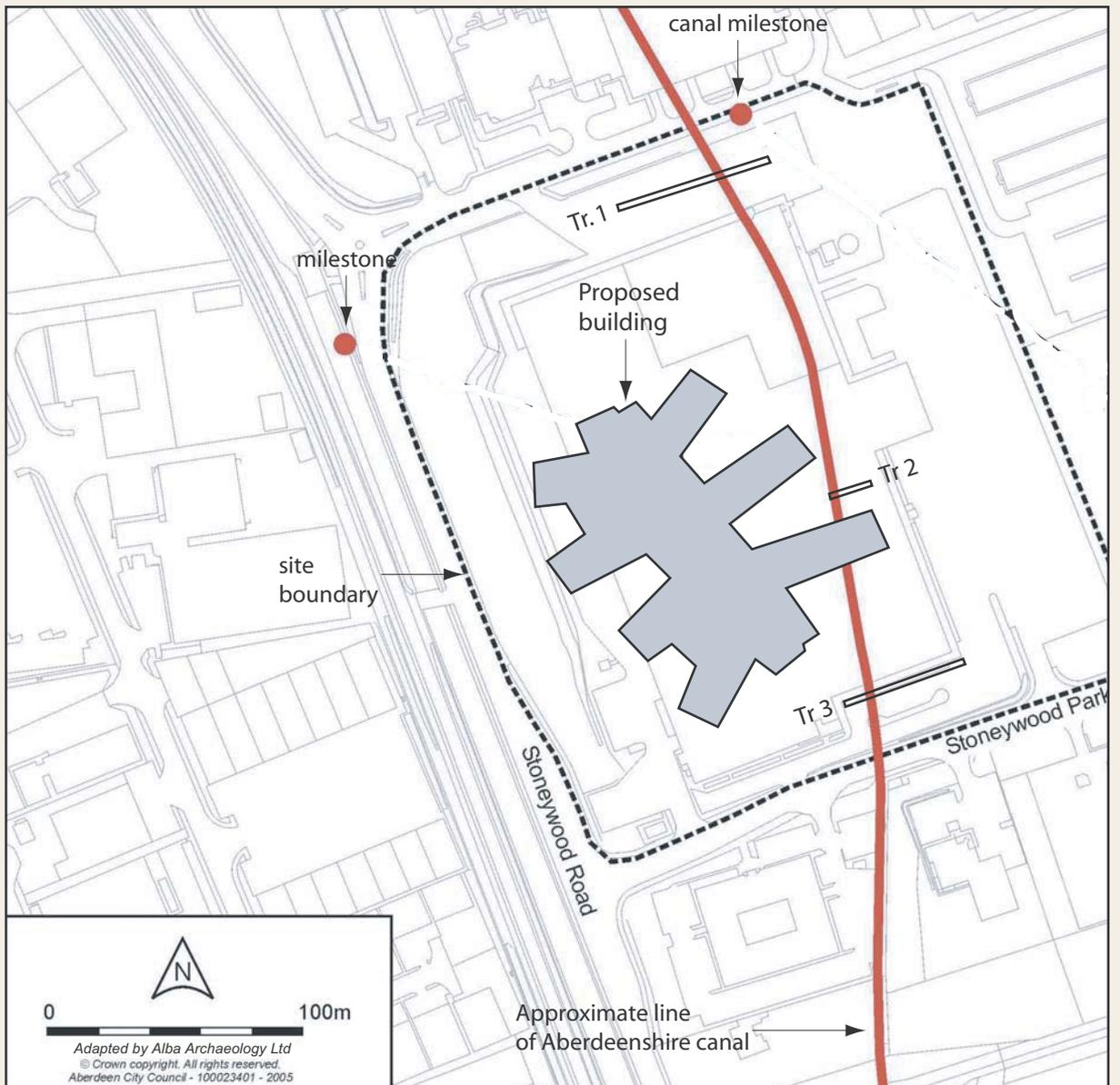


Figure 1: Site location

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Summary

In December 2005, Alba Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Mr. Ian Gowdie of Bowmer & Kirkland Ltd, to undertake an archaeological evaluation on the site of BP's proposed North Sea Operations Centre at Stoneywood, Aberdeen.

One of the evaluation trenches contained archaeological evidence to suggest the survival of a section of the dismantled Aberdeenshire Canal. This report recommends that an archaeological watching brief be carried out on any sub-surface excavations during the development that might reasonably be considered to lie along the approximate route of the Aberdeenshire Canal.

1. Introduction and Background

In December 2005, Alba Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Mr. Ian Gowdie of Bowmer & Kirkland Ltd (Doxford International), to undertake an archaeological evaluation on the site of BP's proposed North Sea Operations Centre at Stoneywood, Aberdeen (NJ 891117).

The archaeological evaluation was commissioned by the developer in direct response to a Specification for Archaeological Evaluation (A5/1608), written by Judith Stone, Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council. This recognized that the route of the former Aberdeenshire canal appeared to run N-S through the middle of the proposed development. The curator proposed the commissioning of an archaeological evaluation in light of recommendations made in National Planning Policy (Guideline no 5), Archaeology and Planning.

The Aberdeenshire canal was opened for traffic in 1805, and ran between Aberdeen and Port Elphinstone (near Inverurie) for 40 years before it was superseded by the Great North of Scotland Railway in 1845. The railway company bought the canal and proceeded to construct the railway track along much of the former route of the canal. This inevitably led to the demolition of a substantial percentage of the old canal. However, the railway line was constructed along a more direct alignment than the canal which ensured that several of the more meandering sections of the canal survived primary demolition. Research carried out by Aberdeen City Council archaeologists suggested that the route of the canal took it through the centre of the proposed development (See Fig1.).

No previous archaeological work has taken place within the area defined by the proposed development. Possible evidence for the canal was encountered during an excavation on a site adjacent to Great Northern Road in 2001 (*Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, Vol 2, 2001, p7).

A similar set of circumstances to those prevalent in the current evaluation occurred in 2005 when an archaeological evaluation was commissioned at the former McIntosh of Dyce factory, in Victoria Road, Dyce. Cartographic evidence suggested that the canal ran approximately E – W across the south of site. The evaluation encountered possible structural evidence for a towpath, as well as what appeared to be the canal cut, and the probable structural remains of a canal tunnel in a location that correlated with the map evidence. (*Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, 2005, forthcoming: unpublished report by Alison Cameron available from Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit).

2. Objectives and Methodology

The objectives of the evaluation are:

- To identify the location, nature and extent of any features or objects of archaeological importance that would be damaged or destroyed by this development, specifically in this instance to identify sub-surface evidence for the existence of the Aberdeenshire canal.
- To record archaeological features located *in situ* to the highest professional standards.
- To propose arrangements for the safeguarding where possible, of any archaeological features or finds identified. These will need to be agreed with the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council.
- To make sure that the needs for archaeological conservation and recording are met without causing any unnecessary delay or disturbance to the development project.

To this end:-

- Three trenches will be placed perpendicular to the estimated alignment of the canal, these trenches should be long enough to satisfy the archaeologist that every reasonable effort has been taken to locate the canal on the horizontal plane. The depth of the trenches will be no deeper than the lowest foundation levels for the proposed development; this will be 50.5m O/D for trenches 1 and 2 and 47.7m O/D for trench 3.
- All archaeological features and deposits encountered will be fully excavated by hand and recorded by using *pro forma* recording sheets and a continuous unique numbering system. All plans, sections, profiles and elevations will be drawn at 1:10, 1:20 and 1:50 as appropriate. Drawings will be made in pencil on permanent drafting film. The depth of all principal features and levels will be calculated in meters relative to Ordnance Datum. Plans, sections and elevations will be annotated with depths as appropriate. All features and sections will have photographs taken to produce a photographic record consisting of monochrome prints and colour slides (The latter will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland, Edinburgh).
- All archaeological work will be undertaken following guidelines recommended by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 1999).

Monitoring

It will be necessary for City Development Services – Planning, to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the evaluation in order to ensure the proper execution of the specification and therefore conformity to the brief. Stages at which monitoring is appropriate will be agreed between the archaeological contractor and the Keeper, Archaeology. The possibility of random inspections should not be excluded.

Finds & Samples

Finds of objects will be subject to the Scots Laws of Treasure Trove and Bona Vacantia and reported by the archaeological contractor to the Secretariat of the Treasure Trove Panel (Dr Alan Saville, National Museums of Scotland, Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1JD) for disposal to an appropriate museum.

The post-excavation of finds will be processed by an approved archaeological contractor employing a recognized specialist.

Specialists in relevant subjects will be employed as appropriate to deal with archaeological artifacts recovered during work.

A bulk sample of deposits to be made where there is likelihood of organic or dateable remains, on-site factors to determine size of sample. All bulk samples to be submitted to an approved contractor who will submit relevant material reports on the results.

Any human remains which are encountered must initially be left *in situ*. Their removal will be a matter of discussion with the Keeper, Archaeology (who must be notified within 12 hours of their Discovery) and will comply with the provisions of Scots Law.

Reporting

A report on the findings of the work will be compiled following guidelines stipulated in the Aberdeen City Council's Specification for Archaeological Evaluation (A5/1608).

Copies of the evaluation should be sent to the Keeper of Archaeology, the applicant and the City of Aberdeen City Development Services - Planning. A summary of the work undertaken will be

submitted to the Council for Scottish Archaeology's publication *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*.

Archive Deposition

The project archive, including written, drawn and photographic elements (together with a summary of the contents of the archive) will be deposited with the National Monuments Record Scotland (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland). The archive will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the RCAHMS.

Timetable

The fieldwork was carried out by Stewart Buchanan of Alba Archaeology Ltd, and Alison Cameron, Assistant Archaeologist, Aberdeen City Council on the 14th and 15th of December 2005.

Operational Factors

The archaeological contractor will at all times follow and confirm to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and other various regulations and the Codes of Conduct and Approved Practice and Standards of the Institute of Field Archaeologists of 1999. All plant will be provided by the client.

References

IFA (1999) By-laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. Reading.

Operational Factors

The archaeological contractor will at all times follow and confirm to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and other various regulations and the Codes of Conduct and Approved Practice and Standards of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999, By-laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. Reading).

3. Results

Trench 1

Surface at O/D 51.9m. Thin layer of tarmac onto imported, rubble hardcore for 0.45m. Hard packed orange/brown silty clay beneath. All made up ground, no natural soil matrix. Tr-1 average depth of 1.40m.



Plate 1. TR – 1. Looking west.



Plate 2. TR – 2. Possible surface (towpath?). Evidence for bank/revetment.

Trench 2

Surface at O/D 51.9m. 30cm reinforced concrete floor (layer 1) on top of an upfill (layer 2) varying in depth 10-40cm from west to east. Large cut feature AB (see Sections 1 and 2) was recorded in both faces of this trench and presumably leveling prior to laying of floor 1. The fill of large ditch AB was large water-washed boulders in brown sand, 3, and a hard dark grey clay loam 4. Within 4 a number of water-washed boulders had been pressed, possibly forming a revetment. It would appear that the stones had been roughly pressed into the top of layer 4 rather than it being a built stone feature. Under 4, layer 5 was a compact grey-clay with patches of iron-pan and sand. It appeared to form a bank and may be the platform forming the area of the towpath of the canal. Cut into layer 5 on the east side of AB, a small ditch AC may have been a drain on the east side of the towpath.

A ceramic land drain had been sunk through layer 5 and it was difficult to see a cut or trench for this. It is likely that plough activity into the top of layer 5 had blurred the trench for insertion of the field drain.

Trench 3

Surface at O/D 47.7m. This trench contained 1m (west end) and 1.5m (east end) of modern upfill equivalent to layer 2 in Trench 2 on top of natural grey clay with patches of sand, iron pan and gravel. No archaeological features were recorded. The trench was not extended further in either direction as there were piles of demolition material in the way.

Trench 1 excavated, recorded and backfilled by Stewart Buchanan 14 December 2005. Trench 2 excavated and then cleaned and recorded by Alison Cameron 15 December. Trench 3 excavated, recorded and backfilled by Alison Cameron 15 December 2005.



Plate 3. TR – 2. Showing possible towpath with dark cut to east (Canal?).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The structural remains in TR – 2 are remarkably similar to those encountered by the author and Ms Cameron in the evaluation trenches they dug at McIntosh of Dyce sausage and pie factory in Dyce (see introduction above). Both features possess a hard-packed bank (possibly reveted), and what appears to be a rudimentary surface (towpath), with a dark, soft, organic layer adjacent to the bank. These attributes are perhaps diagnostic of what one would expect to find on a small, predominantly rural canal at the beginning of the 19th Century; the fact that these features are found exactly where they were predicted to be certainly lends credence to the argument that they are indeed the remnants of the Aberdeenshire canal.

This report recommends that an archaeological watching brief be carried out on any sub-surface excavations during the development that might reasonably be considered to lie along the approximate route of the Aberdeenshire Canal.

Sources

An excavation at 364 Great Northern Road. *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, Vol 2, 2001, p7

Archaeological evaluation at McIntosh of Dyce sausage and pie factory (unpublished report by Alison Cameron available from Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit).

Acknowledgements

Judith Stone and Alison Cameron of Aberdeen City Council.

Ian Gowdie and Keith Hazel of Bowmer & Kirkland Ltd.

Aberdeen City Council for permission to adapt their map of proposed development (See Fig 1.).