

**An Archaeological Watching Brief on Trial Pits (CA215)
Station Hotel, 78-80 Guild Street, Aberdeen, AB11 6GN**



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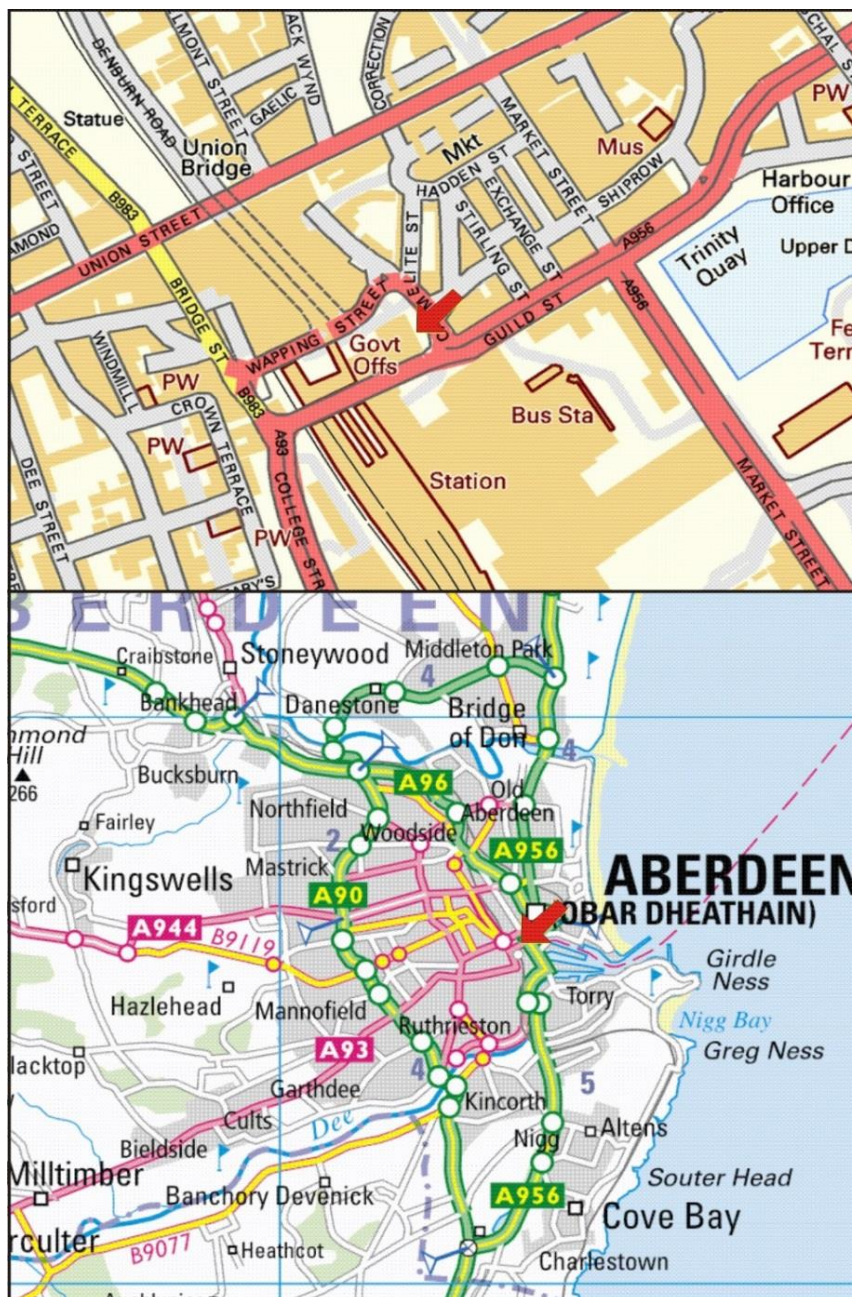
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SUMMARY

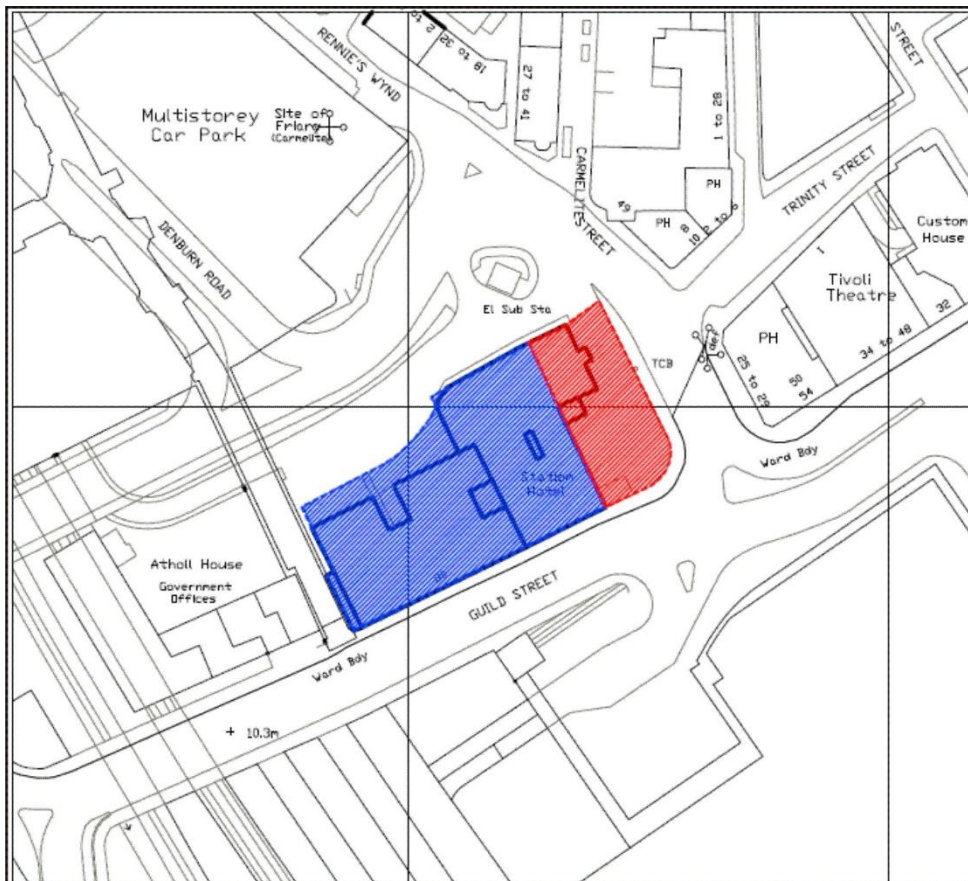
An archaeological watching brief was performed on January 19th and 21st, 2015 by Robert Lenfert on behalf of Cameron Archaeology. The evaluation consisted of six hand-dug test pits approximately 50cm x 25cm (l x w) and three machine excavated trenches approximately 65cm x 150cm, reaching 3.5m in depth. Three bore-holes were also placed, but were not included in this report due to limited archaeological visibility. One hand-dug pit revealed clay flooring tiles, most likely late 19th/early 20th century in date, while the other six did not reveal archaeological material. However, all three machine trenches revealed artefacts in all layers down to the maximum respective depth (c.3.5m), including dressed building stone, animal bone, horn, brick, glass and pottery sherds. It is recommended that an evaluation now takes place to determine the quality and quantity of archaeological deposits hinted at by this watching brief.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The site (Illus 1) is located on the NE side of the Station Hotel which is located on the north side of Guild Street, Aberdeen at NJ94183 06044 and at 5-10m OD.
- 1.2 The work was commissioned by Glenn Swann for and on behalf of Street Design partnership for client The Station Hotel (Newcastle) Ltd, 31-40 West Parade, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE4 7LB. Aberdeen City Council Planning Applications P131682 is for eight-storey extension including demolition of previous 5-storey bedroom extension with a standard archaeology condition (condition 1). Aberdeen City Council required a 7-10% archaeological evaluation of the area of the proposed development and the watching brief of these trial pits was to be considered as the first part of the 7-10% evaluation.
- 1.3 The archaeological work was carried out in the context of Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) Planning Advice Note (PAN 2/2011) and Scottish Historic Environment Policy (SHEP), which states that archaeological remains should be regarded as part of the environment to be protected and managed.



Illus 1 Location plan (Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2015)



Illus 2 Site plan showing proposed development site (copyright Street Design Partnership)

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

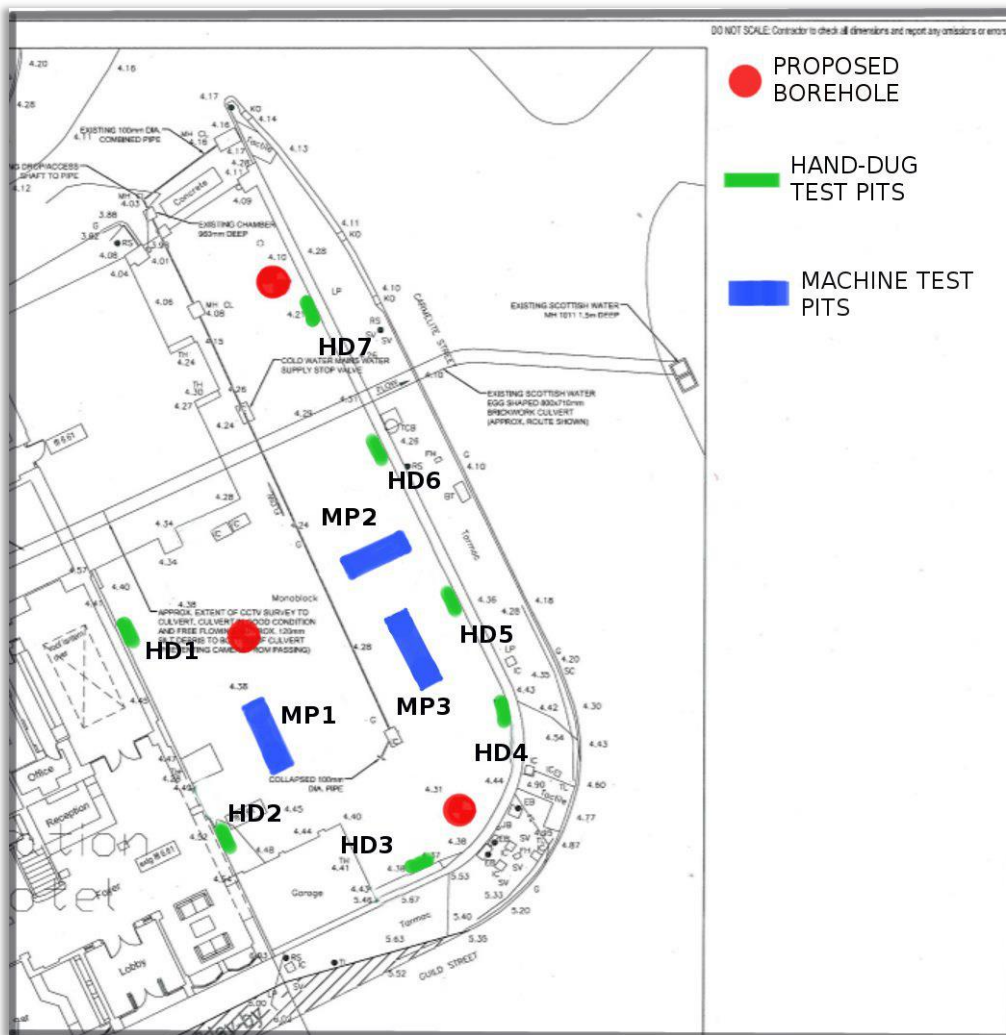
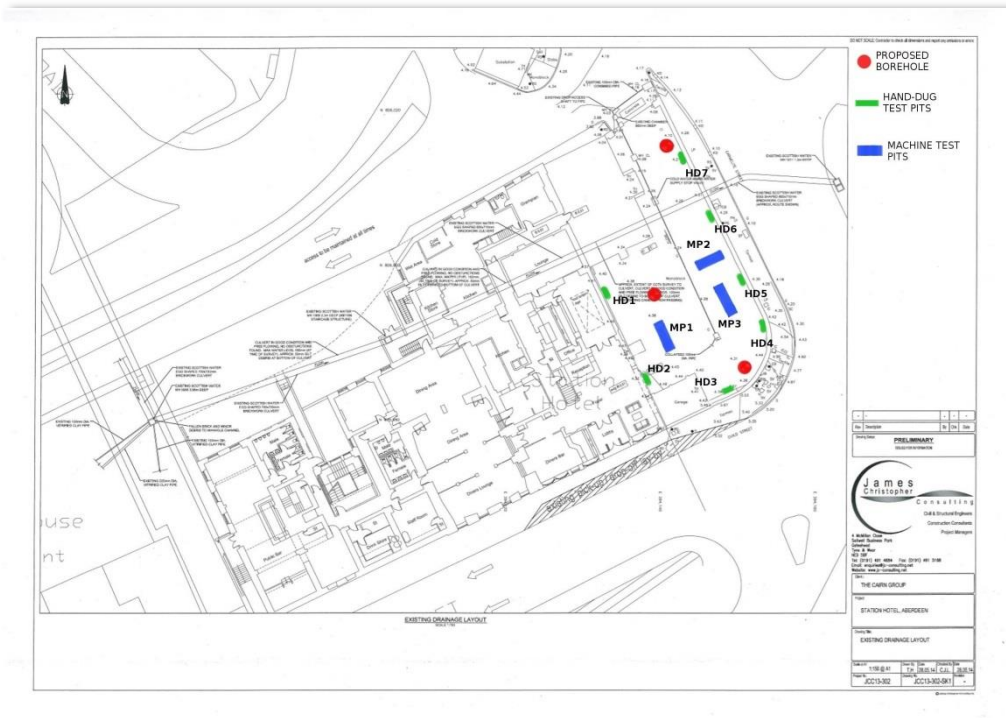
2.1 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within 1km of the proposed development. There are 52 listed buildings within 200m, mainly representing the 19th-century street scape of this area of the city. The Station Hotel was Listed category B in 1977. It is by Ellis & Wilson, built in 1894 (No 80 Guild St) and R G Wilson 1900 (No 78 Guild St). The hotel comprises two internally linked buildings; to right, 4-storey, 2-attic and basement, double gabled Baroque hotel and to left, slightly recessed, 3-storey and basement, 13-bay Classical former Railway Headquarters with distinctive entrance doorway. Toolled and ashlar granite. 1st storey cornice, cill and string courses. It is situated opposite Aberdeen Railway Station, this hotel comprises two stylistically different buildings, built by local architects which makes a distinctive addition to the streetscape. No 80 has a particularly intricately decorated entrance doorway and an interior of some quality, including a timber panelled boardroom and a deep open well staircase. The variety of window types, the unusual capping at the gables and the central decorative panel at No 78 are particularly noteworthy, especially in their departure from the more usual Classical style of the surrounding buildings. The Great North of Scotland Railway Company built and moved into their headquarters at No 80 Guild Street in 1894. They acquired the adjoining no 78 Guild Street in 1910 and both passed to LNER in 1923. The two buildings are linked internally and now operate as a hotel. Alexander Ellis and Robert Wilson were Aberdeen architects who were in practice together from 1869-1906. They worked extensively in and around Aberdeen and their output included, in the main, houses, churches and other large office buildings (Brogden 1998, 82; Jones 2000, 21).

- 2.2 Two major excavations of the Carmelite friary precincts immediately to the north of the current site took place in 1981-2 and 1994 (Stones 1989, Cameron and Stones forthcoming). The west half of the Carmelite church (NJ90NW 49) was excavated with nearly 300 burials as well as a large portion of the west range, external graveyard and traces of the south range. The friary was founded in 1273 and destroyed at the Reformation. It is conceivable that the precinct of the Carmelites extends to the south and into the area of this proposed development.
- 2.3 Prehistoric material was found during the excavation at the Carmelite friary (Cameron and Stones forthcoming) at 45-59 Green (Murray 1982, 85-90), 67-71 Green (ibid, 91-95) and during the conversion of the Carmelite Hotel in Stirling Street (Cameron 2005, 10).
- 2.4 Prior to the widening of Wapping Street an electricity sub-station was moved. Archaeological monitoring was undertaken. Wall foundations of the post medieval Hadden's Woollen Manufactory was recorded but no earlier deposits were found. Several trenches dug to relocate electricity cables were also monitored but no significant archaeological deposits were recorded (Cameron 2008, 13).
- 2.5 The site of a house of Trinitarian friars (NJ90NW 41) lay to the east of the proposed development. The alleged foundation date of which varies from 1181 to 1214, but which was certainly in existence by 1274. William the Lion is said to have bestowed his palace (NJ90NW 72) on the friars in 1211. Trinity Church is probably on the site of the monastic church to the west of which was a large walled garden. The monastery was sacked by Reformers in 1560 but the buildings were saved, the church continuing in use until its demolition in 1794. The rest of the property was acquired in 1633 by the Incorporated Trades who built Trinity Hall on the site. Nothing now remains of the monastic buildings and the area is built upon (Easson 1957).

3 THE WATCHING BRIEF

The evaluation was carried out on the 19th and 21st of January 2015, with the aim of opening seven hand-dug pits to assess foundational integrity, and three machine-excavated pits down to approximately 3.2 to 3.5m to examine deeper strata and deposits. Day one consisted of opening six hand-dug pits, approximately 50cm x 25cm (l x w). Out of the six, the first hand-dug pit revealed tiles (photo 1) at a relatively shallow depth of approximately 20cm. This tile was covered with a layer of clean sand immediately below the modern surface of the car park which is comprised of hand-set paving stones. It would appear that this feature was likely exposed in the 1990s during the course of laying the current paving as the sand appears to be a levelling agent for the current paving. The pit is located adjacent to the west wall of the original station hotel (Illus. 3), and may represent the original walkway around the premises. The tile was not present or visible in any of the other test pits. Hand dug pits two through seven did not produce any archaeological material, and most encountered concrete or stone footers for either the building or car-park walls.

Three machine excavated trenches approximately 65cm x 150cm, reaching up to 3.5m in depth. Three bore-holes were also placed, but were not included in this report due to limited archaeological visibility. One hand-dug pit revealed clay tiles, most likely late 19th/early 20th Century in date while the other six did not reveal any archaeological materials. However, all three machine trenches revealed artefacts, including animal bone, horn, brick, glass and pottery sherds.



Illus 3 Test pit locations at Station Hotel – general view, top, detail – bottom (copyright Street Design Partnership).



Illus 4 Hand-dug Test Pit 2 (HD2)



Illus 5 Hand-dug Test Pit 1 (HD1). South-west-facing view of flooring tiles unearthed in HD2 (photo: author). Note layer of clean sand on top imported to site for modern paving slabs and shallow buried depth (>20cm) of tiles.



Illus 6 Hand-dug Test Pit 3 (HD3)



Illus 7 Hand-dug Test Pit 4 (HD4)



Illus 8 Hand-dug Test Pit 5 (HD5)



Illus 9 Hand-dug Test Pit 6 (HD6)



Illus 10 Hand-dug Test Pit 7 (HD7)



Illus 11 Machine Test Pit 1 (MP1)



Illus 12 Machine Test Pit 2 (MP2)



Illus 13 Machine Test Pit 3 (MP3)

3.1 Results of Hand-dug Test Pits

The test pits, both hand- and machine dug, are located in the car park at Station Hotel which is currently

surfaced with paving stones pit in place sometime around 1990. Overall, work reveals that these lie on a shallow layer of sand which most likely was imported at this time specifically for the levelling process.

HD1 – Soon after excavation began adjacent to the NE facing wall of the hotel, dark red clay flooring tiles with a distinct raised motif moulded on top were revealed at a depth of c.20cm (Illus 5). The tiles are 6x6 inches each, with a simple symmetrical four-petal flower motif and straight lines radiating from each corner to produce an x-shaped join between flowers. It is thought that the tiles would have been revealed during re-surfacing (c.1990), as a clean layer of sand lies directly on top. The tiles may be tentatively dated to the late-19th or early 20th C, or perhaps more specifically to the construction of the hotel, completed in 1894 (Brogden 1998). An attempt to remove one intact was unsuccessful due to the grout used underneath and the small dimensions of the test pit. No other archaeological remains were present, but one may safely assume that tiles remain intact at least in the immediate surrounding area.

HD2 – (Illus 4) An orange-brown fine sand overlies a dark, sooty layer of gritty soil with a slight organic component which extends to the bottom of the test-pit. No archaeological remains were encountered. It is reasonable to suggest this darker, lower context represents infill associated with civil works, or alluvial deposits washed in from the nearby coast or former watercourse of the River Dee itself.

HD3 – (Illus 6) Excavation immediately revealed a concrete foundational layer associated with the walling which surrounds the car park. The engineer and drillers made a decision to halt at this point as the roto-hammer could not break through. No archaeological remains were found.

HD4 – (Illus 7) Similar to HD2, though slightly lighter in colour, perhaps a reflection of relative soil dampness No archaeological remains were encountered.

HD5 – (Illus 8) Similar to HD2 and 4, this pit did not reveal any archaeological material, though the brickwork for the car park walling was seen to extend for several courses.

HD6 – (Illus 9) Again, a sandy-layer overlies a dark, gritty layer of soil with a slight organic component. The edges of the footer for the car park wall were also exposed. No archaeological material was noted.

HD7 – As this pit was immediately adjacent to a granite buttress along the car park wall (as opposed to brick for the remainder), robust granite footers were encountered which brought excavation to a halt. No archaeological material was noted.

3.2 Results of Machine-dug Test Pits

An 8-ton excavator with a c.60cm bucket was used to reach a maximum depth of c3.5m below the current surface, creating a relatively narrow, yet deep inspection window. As the sides were prone to collapse and small slumps occurred several times, photos were taken at arm's length from a safe distance, while close visual inspection of the deeper strata was impossible for safety reasons (Illus 14). However, photos captured general detail in the lower reaches, albeit at sharp oblique angles.

MP1 – (Illus 11,14,17, 18) The first machine trench produced the most artefacts, including a number of animal bones, later identified as sheep, in addition to a number of locally-produced Seaton ceramic sherds (production 1868-1964) including bases, in addition to white porcelain sherds found from 2m onwards. The bone and Seaton ceramic artefacts appeared from the mid- to lower reaches of the pit, 2.0m to 3.0m/deep, but it was difficult to ascertain if these artefacts represented infill from civil engineering works, or indeed intact archaeological deposits. A banded layer of what appeared to be reddish sandstone rubble was also visible in the lowest reaches of MP1 and MP2, suggesting the possible presence of earlier post-Medieval building materials. One rare surviving example is

found at Saint Machar Cathedral to the north of Old Aberdeen, founded c.580, which uses red sandstone for one of the surviving Medieval or early post-Medieval arches.

MP2 – This pit (Illus 15, 19, 20) was capped under the modern paving by a robust concrete pad (though lacking metal rebar) which soon tore one of the teeth off of the excavator bucket. The concrete was then broken up by a hydraulic jackhammer attachment before progress could resume. Below the concrete, the strata was more homogenous than MP1, revealing a dark, organic layer interspersed with grit and small water-rounded pebbles. Indications of brick or red sandstone rubble were visible below the sandy layer immediately underneath the concrete, but due to trench instability, close visual inspection or sampling was not possible. Towards the lower reaches, c.2.5m, a discreet deposit of building material - either red sandstone or brick - appears. It was not possible to visually determine if this reached the absolute bottom of MP2.

MP3 – The final machine pit produced the fewest artefacts (Illus 16, 21), but still yielded one bone fragment and coarse clay ceramics which are possibly fragments of building material or drainage pipes, and finally small timber offcuts which remain preserved in waterlogged conditions near the bottom (c.3.5m). The stratigraphy reveals (from the surface) a mottled gritty deposit of brown silts with dark coal-like inclusions, below which a discreet rubble layer c.1.5m deep with brick fragments.



Illus 14 Machine test pit MP1



Illus 15 Machine test pit MP2



Illus 16 Machine test pit MP3



Illus 17 Sheep bone from MP1



Illus 18 Seaton Pottery from MP1



Illus 19 Sheep horn and bone fragment from MP2



Illus 20 Ceramic and glass (dark green, lower left) recovered from MP2



Illus 21 Course ceramic finds, small timber offcuts (below label, L) and small bone fragment (lower right) from MP3.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the established presence of relatively extensive Medieval and Post-Medieval archaeological deposits in a 200m radius around Station Hotel (see Cameron 2014 for complete list), it remained somewhat surprising to see the depth and frequency at which finds were revealed at Station Hotel - a reminder of how much activity has taken place in this area, part of a 'New Aberdeen' constructed near the old Carmelite Friary prior to 1693, and certainly bustling by 1789 (Illus 22 & 23).

The question is how much of the deposits remain *in-situ*, and how much were imported as in-fill for the expansion of New Aberdeen over the ensuing centuries, or brought in by periodic flood episodes. Another aspect to consider is the former expanse of foreshore, which would have certainly been a frequent focus for human activity from the prehistoric to the early modern period, ranging from subsistence to recreational activities. Given the rather unstable nature of the machine test pits, it was difficult to closely examine and conclusively determine the intactness of the deeper deposits, but photos and finds, along with artefacts in the excavator bucket from the deeper reaches, revealed a complex stratigraphy of human activity down to 3.5m, largely of a Victorian nature, though the hand-blown green glass (Illus 18) with bubbled inclusions from MP2, along with the devitrified nature of the glass itself, suggests an earlier date.

It is recommended that an evaluation now takes place to determine the quality and quantity of archaeological deposits hinted at by this watching brief.



Illus 22 Detail from John Slezer's 1693 'New Aberdene from the Block house' from *Theatrum Scotiae* (copyright National Library of Scotland)



Illus 23 Detail from 'A plan of the City of Aberdeen with all the inclosures (sic) surrounding the town to the adjacent country, from a survey taken 1789' by Alexander Milne (copyright National Library of Scotland)

5 REFERENCES

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6 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX 1 PHOTOGRAPHS

Photo No. (19-01)	Description	Facing
DSC_0013	Work commencing HD2, day one	SW
DSC_0014	General view of car park	S
DSC_0015	General view of car park	N
DSC_0016	HD2 in progress	SW
DSC_0017	HD2 completed	SW
DSC_0019	HD2 completed	SW
DSC_0020	HD2 completed, general view	SW
DSC_0021	Floor tiles in HD1	SW
DSC_0023	Detail of tiles in HD1	SW
DSC_0024	HD3 – halted by concrete foundation	down
DSC_0025	Another detail shot of tiles in HD2	down
DSC_0026	HD3 underway using roto-hammer	SW
DSC_0029	Difficult foundations in HD3	down
DSC_0031	Completed HD3	down
DSC_0032	Commencing HD4	SE
DSC_0033	HD4 Completed I	down
DSC_0035	HD4 Completed II	down
DAY TWO 21-01		
DSC_0001	MP1 Commencing	NW
DSC_0002	MP1 Commencing	W
DSC_0003	MP1 in progress	W
DSC_0004	MP1 Near Completion	NW
DSC_0005	MP1 Completed	NW
DSC_0007	Detail of MP1	W
DSC_0008	Detail of MP1	W
DSC_0009	Detail of MP1	W
DSC_0010	Detail of MP1	W
DSC_0011	Detail of MP1	N
DSC_0012	Detail of MP1	N
DSC_0013	MP1 after backfilling	SW
DSC_0014	MP2 prior to excavation	N
DSC_0015	MP2 Commencing	NW
DSC_0016	MP2 Commencing	NW
DSC_0018	Broken bucket from concrete foundations	
DSC_0019	MP2 Temporarily Halted	W
DSC_0020	Broken tooth on bucket	
DSC_0021	HD6 Completed	NE
DSC_0022	HD6 Completed	NE
DSC_0023	HD6 Completed	NE
DSC_0024	MP2 restart with hyd. jackhammer	S
DSC_0025	MP2 in Progress	
DSC_0027	MP2 in Progress	NW
DSC_0028	MP2 in Progress	NW
DSC_0029	MP2 in Progress	NW
DSC_0030	MP2 in Progress	NW
DSC_0031	MP2 in Progress	NW
DSC_0032	MP2 completed	N
DSC_0033	MP2 Completed	N

DSC_0034	MP2 Completed	N
DSC_0035	MP2 Completed	N
DSC_0036	MP2 Completed	N
DSC_0037	MP2 Completed	N
DSC_0038	MP2 Completed	N
DSC_0040	Detail of MP2	N
DSC_0041	Detail of MP2	NE
DSC_0042	Detail of MP2	NE
DSC_0043	Detail of MP2	NE
DSC_0044	MP3 Commencing	N
DSC_0045	MP3 in Progress	N
DSC_0047	MP3 Nearing Completion	NE
DSC_0048	MP3 Completed	NW
DSC_0049	MP3 Completed	NW
DSC_0050	Detail of MP3	N
DSC_0051	Detail of MP3	NW
DSC_0052	Detail of MP3	NW
DSC_0053	Detail of MP3	NW
DSC_0054	Detail of MP3	N
DSC_0055	Detail of MP3	NW
DSC_0056	HD1 Commencing	NE
DSC_0057	Backfilling MP2	NE
DSC_0058	Backfilling MP2	NE
DSC_0059	General site view	N
DSC_0060	General site view	S
DSC_0061	Backfilling MP2	E
DSC_0062	General shot of HD1	S
DSC_0063	HD1 Completed	SW
DSC_0064	HD7 Completed	NE
DSC_0065	HD7 Completed	NE



DSC_0001.JPG



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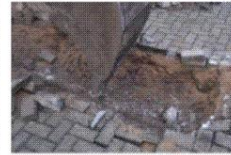
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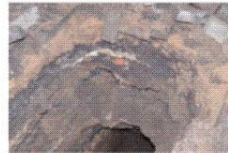
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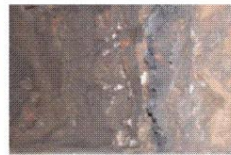
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DSC_0050.JPG



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DSC_0055.JPG



DSC_0056.JPG



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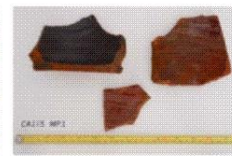
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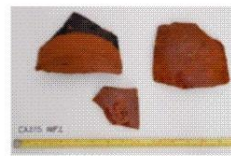
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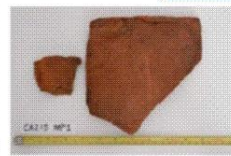
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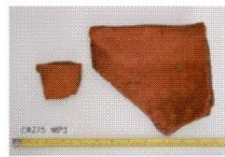
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DSC_0015.jpg



DSC_0016.jpg



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