

**An Archaeological Watching Brief on Land at
Duke's Dock, Liverpool.
NGR SJ 342 895**

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Non-Technical Summary

This report describes the results of a watching brief conducted during construction of a new footbridge at the former Duke's Dock site on Liverpool's waterfront. Duke's Dock was constructed in the late 18th century as Liverpool's trade expanded and forms part of Liverpool's historic waterfront. The dock was heavily modified in the early 20th century and partly filled in during the late 20th century and extensive remains were not expected to survive. The dock walls are listed buildings.

The watching brief found layers of sands and gravels probably deposited during the construction of Duke's Dock. On the south side of the dock a wall, probably the remains of brick warehouse buildings constructed in the 19th century, was also found.

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An Archaeological Watching Brief on Land at Duke's Dock, Liverpool

1. Introduction

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief conducted at the Duke's Dock, Liverpool, Merseyside on 20 and 21 April 2007. The site is situated in Liverpool's docks at NGR SJ 342 895 (Figure 1). The project was conducted during the construction of a new bridge across the dock.

No previous work on the archaeology of the site had been conducted, though the project forms part of the wider redevelopment of the King's Dock area considered in an earlier desk-study (ENTEC 2004).

Duke's Dock was built for the Duke of Bridgewater by 1773 (Figure 2). It was extended with a half-tide dock in 1841-5, but was not incorporated into the Liverpool Dock Estate until 1899. Although it seems to have been regarded as a 'strategic' site, no investment was made there and it remained largely unused except for its warehousing. By 1960 virtually all activity on the site had ceased, the buildings were demolished piecemeal between then and 1984, and the river entrance was closed.

The retaining walls of the original sections of Duke's Dock are constructed of large blocks of coursed sandstone, but they have been repaired in parts with brick and concrete. The later half-tide dock is faced in granite. At only six metres or so wide, Duke's Dock is relatively narrow compared to all of the other remaining docks and appears more like a canal than a dock. However, it has the most complete 18th century dock retaining walls in Liverpool.

Other watching brief watching briefs in the area (e.g. Pevely & Adams, in prep) have found buried structures relating to warehouses associated with Duke's Dock to the south of the present site.

2. Methodology

The project was undertaken at very short notice, consequently no formal project design was prepared. However the project was undertaken following consultation with Sarah-Jane Farr and Mark Hart of the Merseyside Archaeology Service.

The following summarises the key elements.

On site monitoring was undertaken by S. Pevely.

The project consisted of monitoring test-holes excavated in advance of piling operations. Because of the depth of the excavation and the unstable nature of the deposits recording was limited to photographs of exposed sections, sketches and notes.

All excavation was undertaken with a mechanical excavator operated under archaeological supervision.

The report was written by M. Adams from S. Pevely's notes and photographs.

3. Results

3.1 Trench 1

This trench was situated on the northern quayside and measured c. 4 m east-west and 1.2 m north-south. A layer of tarmac over hardcore c. 0.5-0.6 m thick (Context 1) was excavated to a deposit of sand, sandstone rubble and occasional hand-made brick fragments c. 2 m thick (Context 2). Context 2 overlay Context 3, a moist black silty sandy gravel. Excavation was terminated when ground water was encountered at a depth of c. 3.3 m.

3.2 Trench II

This trench was situated on the southern quayside and measured c. 5 m east-west and 2 m north-south. Following removal of the surface tarmac, Context 4, a north-south aligned brick wall (Context 5) was noted. This was c. 1m in width, 1.7 m deep and constructed in machine made Ruabon or St Helens brick laid in English Garden Wall bond using a hard Portland cement mortar. No floor surfaces were associated with this feature which was flanked to east and west by deposits of reddish brown sand containing brick and slate fragments (Contexts 6 & 7). These overlay a layer of dark brown sandstone rubble and sand (Context 8) which was c. 0.4 m thick. Below Context 8 was a 0.25-0.30 m thick layer of very fine beige sand (Context 9), which in turn sealed a layer of dark grey sandy silty clay which was 0.6 m thick (Context 10). Sandstone bedrock was encountered at a depth of c. 3 m.

4. Finds

No finds were recovered from any of the excavated deposits.

5. Conclusions

The deposits excavated in Trench 1 probably represent material deposited during construction of the dock wall in the 1770s, though it is common for dock walls of this date to have a band of puddled clay deposited to the landward side to act as a water seal. The lower deposits in Trench II are probably of an identical origin and date. However, the wall (Context 5) is late 19th century in date and probably relates to the warehouses shown on late 19th century mapping of the site. These first appear on the edition of 1850 (Figure 3) but had been remodelled by the production of the 1893 edition (Figure 4) and it is likely that Context 5 relates to this later remodelling.

6. Bibliography

Pevely S. & Adams M.H. (In prep) *An Archaeological Watching Brief on Land at Former King's Dock and Duke's Dock, Liverpool.*

ENTEC 2004 *King's Waterfront Development Environmental Statement.*
Adams, M.H., 2006 *An Archaeological Watching Brief on land at Former King's Dock, Liverpool.*

7. Figures



Figure 1. Location of Site

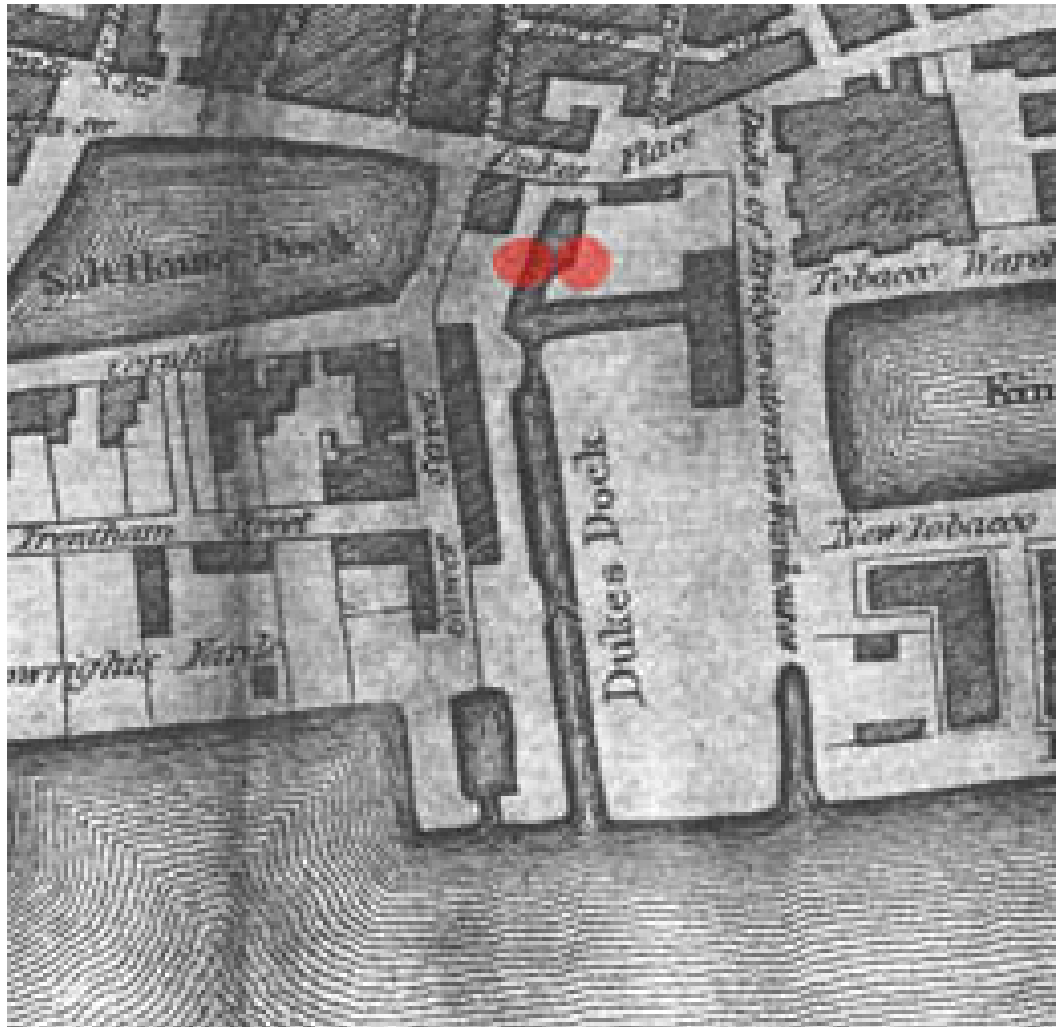


Figure 2. Part of Thomas Kaye's Map of Liverpool 1813 showing Duke's Dock prior to its extension in the 1840s. The approximate location of the site is highlighted in red.

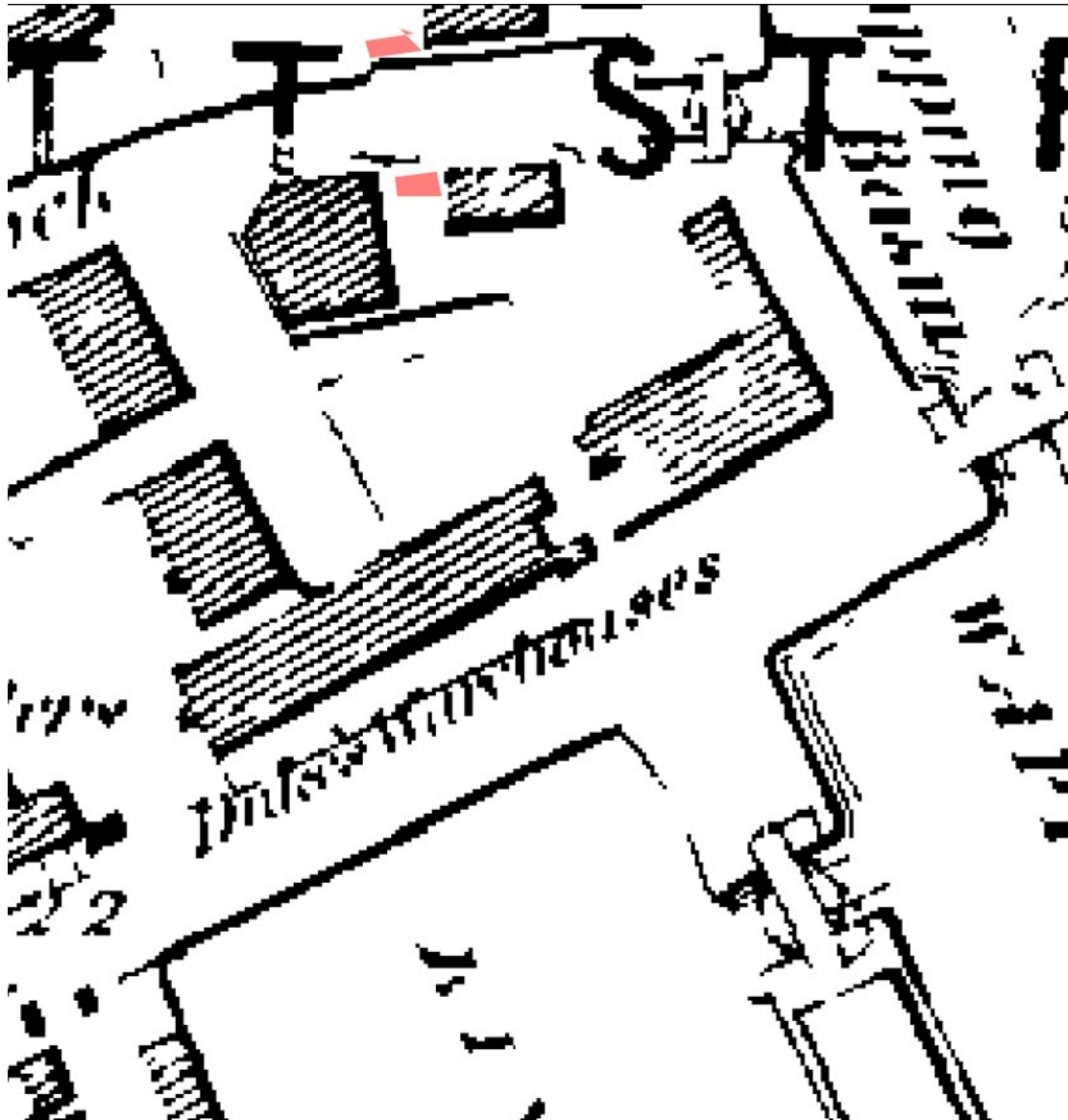


Figure 3. Part of the 1850 6in to 1 Mile Ordnance Survey map of Liverpool. The approximate locations of the trenches are picked out in red. Not to scale.

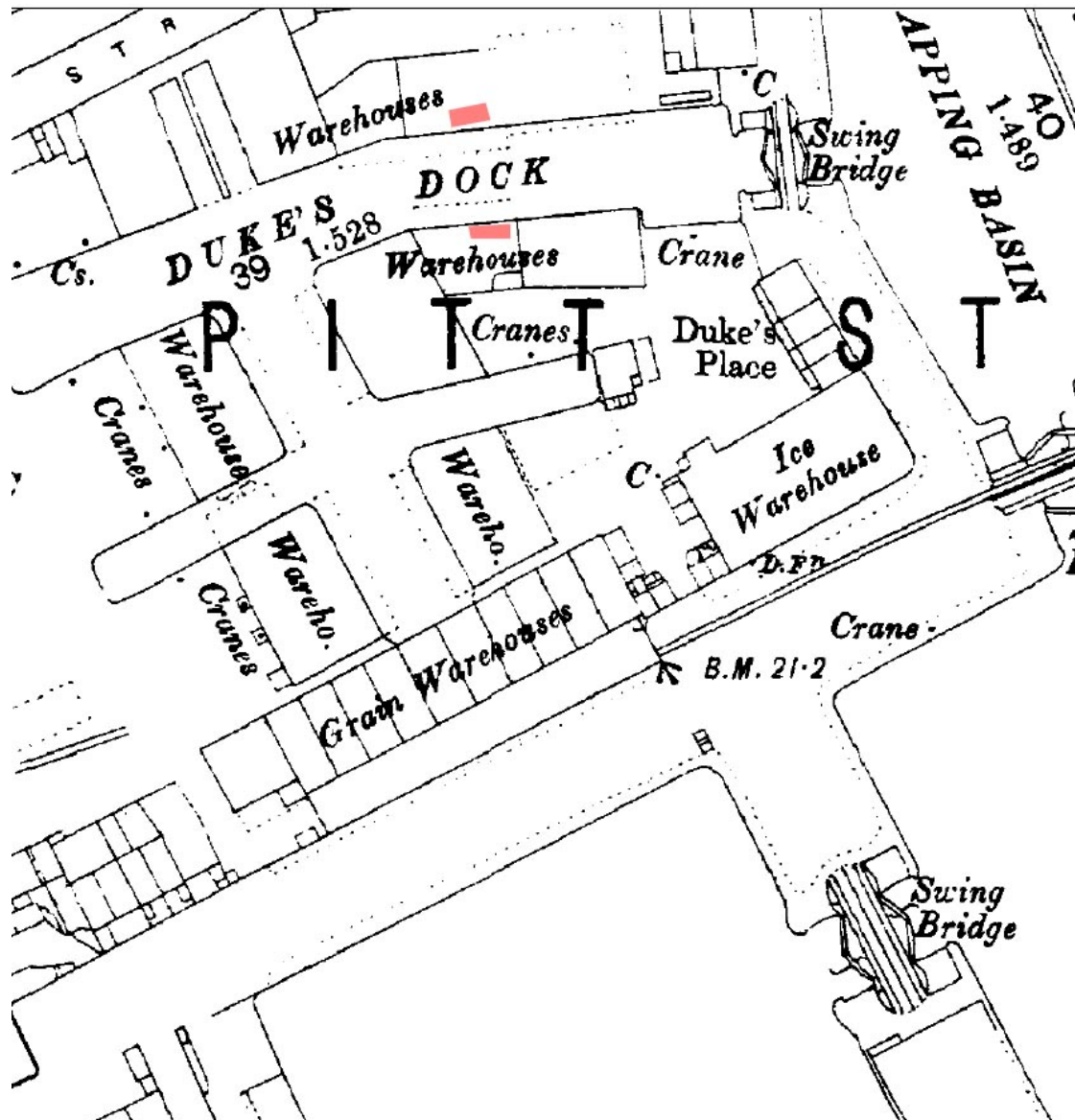


Figure 4. Part of the 1893 25in to 1 Mile Ordnance Survey map of Liverpool. The approximate locations of the trenches are picked out in red. Not to scale.