

**An Archaeological Watching Brief
of land for the proposed
Pier Head Canal Link, Liverpool.
Site Code 91.**

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Produced for British Waterways.

January 2006

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Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief of the Pier Head Canal Link, Liverpool (Site 91)

1. Introduction

This watching brief was undertaken during the manual excavation of inspection pits excavated for seven boreholes (Fig.1) located along the line of the new Liverpool Canal Link which will connect the Leeds Liverpool Canal with the South Docks on Liverpool's waterfront. The study area extended from the Pier Head Ferry Terminal to the GWR Building at Mann Island. The boreholes were drilled to test the ground for contamination in preparation for excavation of the new canal.

The project was undertaken on behalf of British Waterways, to a brief supplied by the client (Appendix A). This contains full details of the project history, summary of the archaeological and historical background and a detailed methods statement.

2. Methodology

Full details of the recording methodology are given in Appendix A. The following details are for supplementary purposes only.

All of the inspection pits were opened using a pneumatic drill and prising bar as required. The pits were hand dug to a depth of 1m and measured approximately 0.40m wide. Because of the potential presence of unexploded ordnance remaining from the World War II bombing of the docks area, a magnetometer was used to scan the area prior to and during excavation. A rig was then set up over the borehole and it was drilled mechanically using a cable percussion drill to a further depth. This element of the project was not observed archaeologically.

The project involved observing the continued use of the pneumatic drill in order to record any archaeological deposits or artefacts present, although it was not necessary to observe the mechanical drilling. In view of the nature of the project and of the deposits present, recording was limited to sketch drawings and photographs supplemented by written notes were used to record each inspection pit.

The archive for this project is retained at National Museums Liverpool Field Archaeology Unit.

3. Results

Boreholes are described in the order in which they were excavated.

3.1 Borehole 7A and 7B

Borehole 7A was located opposite the Vehicle Ferry Terminal and was the furthest North of the boreholes. Situated in the car park of Princes Dock (Fig. 1), the first attempt (Borehole 7A) was contained the following deposits. Beneath the tarmac surface there was a layer of concrete (Context 1) 0.15m thick which sealed a mixture of concrete and sandstone boulders, again approximately 0.15m thick (Context 2). Excavation was abandoned at a depth of 0.30 m when a flat concrete surface was encountered, possibly a concrete drain cover (Context 3).

Borehole 7B was located approximately 1.5m to the North West of 7A. The same layers were excavated to an identical flat concrete surface to that encountered in Borehole 7A, suggesting that it was not in fact a drain and the concrete was then excavated to a depth a 0.67 m from the base of the tarmac.

The final layer excavated was a heterogeneous mixture of sand, brick and sub-angular and rounded stones (Context 4). Finds included four fragments of 19th century china and one piece of black glaze ware pottery (also 19th century) were found at the top of this layer (J. Speakman, pers. comm.). The very base of this layer was much sandier and became a very light brown sand. The maximum depth of the borehole before mechanical drilling commenced was 0.96 m.

3.2 Borehole 2A

Borehole 2A was located in the car park of the GWR Building at Mann Island (Fig 1.). This was the most Southerly of the boreholes and lies within the former Manchester Dock (in-filled c. 1927-30). The borehole was situated at the eastern end of the car park on the Northern side of the GWR Building and measuring 0.40m maximum width and 1m deep. Following removal of tarmac a layer of brick and sandstone rubble was excavated (Context 5). This was made up of approximately 25% brick rubble and the rest was sand and sandstone. This is most probably dock fill from the infilling of Manchester Dock in the 1920's. One brick fragment with a green glaze was found in the rubble fill and a flat piece of iron was recovered but no other significant archaeological deposits were encountered.

3.3 Borehole 3A

Borehole 3A was situated in the car park of the former 'Road Range Garage' on Mann Island (Fig. 1). The area is surfaced with stone setts. The cobbled surface was removed using a pry bar and pneumatic breaker drill. The borehole measured 0.40m x 0.45m and reached a maximum depth of 1m. After the removal of the setts, a very dark brown and black soil was excavated (Context 6), which had few inclusions of small angular and sub angular stones less than 5cm in length. The soils were banded with the browner soil nearer the surface of the section and gradually blending into a darker black soil. The junction between the different soils was indistinguishable. This layer was 0.40m deep in section. The rest of the inspection pit was excavated through a layer of red sandstone rubble down to a depth of 1m (Context 7). No significant archaeological deposits or finds were encountered.

3.4 Borehole 5A

Borehole 5A was located immediately South of the Edward VII statue between the passenger ferry terminal and the Cunard Building (Fig. 1). The area was surfaced with concrete paving slabs and cobbles. One of the paving slabs was lifted to reveal a packed dry concrete surface. The concrete surface was pecked with a pneumatic drill to a depth of approximately 0.10m. This borehole was different to the others as it only needed to be a short depth to begin the cable percussion drilling. As this hole was not excavated to the same extent as the others no archaeological deposits or finds were encountered.

3.5 Borehole 1A

This borehole was not monitored.

3.6 Borehole 6A

Following removal of tarmac a layer of very well compacted brick, soil and sandstone rubble was excavated. No datable finds were recovered.

3.7 Borehole 4A

Following removal of tarmac a layer of very well compacted brick, soil and sandstone rubble was excavated. No datable finds were recovered.

4. Conclusions

No significant archaeological finds or deposits were encountered in any of the inspection pits. Boreholes 1A, 2A and 3A were excavated through sandstone rubble used to fill the Manchester Dock. Boreholes 4A and 6A were excavated through the fills of George's Half Tide and Chester Basins respectively, both filled in the early 20th century. No archaeological deposits were present in Borehole 5A. The concrete surface in Borehole 7A probably related to one of the buildings or yard shown on late 19th and 20th century mapping of the area. The origin of Context 4 is unclear though it may relate to 19th century quayside construction. No deposits were found in borehole 5A.

5. Figures



Figure 1. Borehole Locations (Data from client).

6. Plates



Fig 1. Borehole 7B



Fig. 2. Borehole 2A



Fig 3. Borehole 7B with 7A in foreground