

Monitoring SI Works

1. As an element of the proposed Site Investigation works at Clydebank Business Park two trenches were excavated across the abandoned line of the Forth-Clyde Canal. The location of these trenches was agreed with James Barr on behalf of Northern Marine Management and approved by West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS). The trenches were located on site by the URS engineer, William Warnock. BACTEC bomb disposal were also present on site.
2. The Forth-Clyde Canal exists immediately to the south of the development area and is a scheduled monument protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. WoSAS identified the abandoned line of the canal as potentially of archaeological interest and requested an archaeological watching brief on all ground breaking work on site. The excavation of these trenches provides an opportunity to assess the archaeological potential of the development area and locate the remains of the abandoned line of the canal. The monitoring work was carried out on the 24th of October 2013 by Rathmell Archaeology Ltd.

Trench Locations

3. Trench 1 (NGR: 49040 70903 to 49010 70884) was excavated to an approximate south-west to north-east orientation for a total length of 32m. Its location was chosen in order to give the best possible chance of encountering remains of the original canal. The approximate location of the original canal was based on interpretation of the 1st edition Ordnance Survey mapping and so we can be confident of accuracy to an error of at most a few meters. Trench 2 (NGR: 49004 70936 to 49000 70906) was excavated to the north-west of Trench 1 and to an angle closer to north/south. Trench 2 was 28m long. Coordinates of the trenches were recorded using a hand held GPS showing an accuracy of about 3m.
4. Excavation was carried out using a JCB 3CX with an 800mm toothed bucket. A toothed bucket was necessary because of the number of large stones which had to be removed from the excavated trench and also to permit safe excavation at depths of more than 2m. The trenches were prone to collapse due to the unconsolidated and variable nature of the deposits. Neither of the trenches was safe to enter. In order to permit safe observation of Trench 2, the top 1m of the trench was stepped back by about 1m.

Observations

5. Where possible both trenches were excavated to a depth of at least 2.5m. Trench 1 reached a maximum depth of 2.8m, Trench 2 to a maximum of 2.7m. Both trenches were excavated entirely through made ground. The base of each trench was light brown silty-clay. Examination of bucketfuls of this clay brought up by the machine confirmed that it contained modern rubbish, including, late 20th century glass, brick rubble and industrial waste. This suggests that the disturbed ground continues to a minimum depth of approximately 3m below current ground surface.
6. The fills of each trench, as was observable in both sections, comprised multiple overlapping layers and deposits of made ground mostly containing material which was obviously late 20th or 21st century in date. These layers included wood, plastic, glass, brick, fabrics metal and general trash. In neither trench was there any sight of intact structural remains either in the form of a wall or in the form of packed clay which would suggest a canal. In neither trench was there a large vertical cut which would suggest excavation for a canal. In neither trench was there a large single or consistent backfill which would suggest filling a large cut in a single event. In neither trench was material that could be interpreted as natural, undisturbed subsoil observed. It is reasonable to interpret that there is no sign of the canal in either trench and therefore if it does survive in this area, it is at a depth of more than 3m.

Test Pit

7. In addition to the two trenches a single test pit was excavated in the north-west corner of the site. This test pit was one of eight which are planned to be completely excavated

on the 25th October 2013. The test pits are being excavated as an element of the Site Investigation works. The test pit excavated reached a depth of 2.4m. The remainder of the test pits are expected to be excavated to a depth of less than 3m. Most of these test pits are to be located well outside the possible abandoned line of the canal. It is unlikely that these test pits would disturb the material remains of the canal if it survives and so it was agreed, after consultation with WoSAS, that there was no need to monitor their excavation.

Conclusion

8. After consultation with WoSAS it was agreed that the evidence collected from the two trenches suggests that if the remains of the abandoned line survive they do so at a depth greater than 3m. It is therefore unlikely that the placement of building services and foundations would disturb the remains unless they exceed this depth.

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Figure 1: Trench 1 from the north-east



Figure 2: Trench 2 from the south



Figure 3: Test Pit 1 from the south

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