



*Highland Archaeology Services Ltd*

Bringing the Past and Future Together

## Aberdeen Harbour



### Archaeological Evaluation and Recording Area 1: Interim Report

in association with Cameron Archaeology Ltd



**7 Duke Street Cromarty Ross-shire IV11 8YH Tel / Fax: 01381 600491**  
**Mobile: 07834 693378 Email: [info@hi-arch.co.uk](mailto:info@hi-arch.co.uk) Web: [www.hi-arch.co.uk](http://www.hi-arch.co.uk)**

VAT No. 838 7358 80 Registered in Scotland no. 262144  
Registered Office: 10 Knockbreck Street, Tain, Ross-shire IV19 1BJ

# Aberdeen Harbour

## Archaeological Evaluation and Recording Area 1: Interim Report

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<b>Client</b>	Aberdeen Harbour Board
<b>OS Grid Ref</b>	NJ 949 054
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<b>Authors</b>	Alison Cameron and John Wood

### Summary

*Archaeological evaluation and recording of standing structures are being undertaken in advance of works to Aberdeen harbour. This interim report sets out the results of investigations in Area 1, the foreshore to the west of Torry quay. For reference, it also includes the archaeological background and work proposed for Areas 2 and 3. No archaeologically significant features or artefacts were discovered within Area 1.*

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## Acknowledgements

Fieldwork in Area 1 was undertaken by Alison Cameron, Pete Higgins, Aidan Mulkerrin, David I Harding. Photography was by Alison Cameron who also co-authored this report. The report was edited by John Wood. Background mapping has been reproduced by permission of the Ordnance Survey under Licence 100043217. Thanks to Patrick Jordan of Aberdeen Harbour Board for much information of the development of the harbour, and to Chris Croly and Judith Stones for their comments on the project design.

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## Location

The site is centred approximately at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference NJ 949 054



Figure 1 Site Location

## Introduction

A programme of archaeological work is currently being carried out by Highland Archaeology Services Ltd in association with Cameron Archaeology Ltd in response to a planning requirement at Aberdeen Harbour. The purpose of the work is to identify and record the nature and extent of any archaeological features revealed or affected by the intended development. This report summarises the results of the work carried out to date and proposed further work to be done. For the full project design see Wood J, 2010 *Aberdeen Harbour: Written Scheme of Investigation* (Highland Archaeology Services Ltd). (v2: February 2010)



## Aims and objectives

- To minimise any possible delay or cost to the development by anticipating archaeological requirements as far as possible, timetabling and integrating archaeological recording work with the project, and dealing with any issues arising quickly and efficiently.
- To determine as far as possible the character, extent, condition, date and significance of any archaeologically significant remains; and to preserve these where possible and record where necessary in line with national and local policies and standards.
- To ensure that any features, artefacts, human or other remains are analysed, conserved and reported in accordance with current planning and other legal requirements, Historic Scotland policy and IfA guidance.

## Archaeology background

The following account has been taken from the Project design and is included here for reference.

An archaeological evaluation was requested by Aberdeen City Council in this case because a walk-over survey and desk-based assessment carried out in 2007-8 identified potential for finds or features of cultural heritage interest to be affected by site works<sup>1</sup>. This identified 14 previously recorded, and 16 previously unrecorded features or structures of possible importance.

The Aberdeen area has been exploited by people since the end of the last Ice Age about 8000 years ago. Evidence for the earliest settlers is surprisingly plentiful, with many flint implements discovered throughout the town, and a Mesolithic flint-knapping site on the banks of the River Dee<sup>2</sup>. Remarkable Bronze Age (c. 4,400 – 2,500 years ago) cairn fields and field systems can be seen on Tullos Hill and at Cults, and several cist burials, probably Bronze Age in date, have been found in the surrounding area. Little archaeological evidence survives of Iron Age occupation apart from a souterrain discovered in Nether Kirkgate in the 1960s but this does not necessarily imply a lack of activity.

The earliest archaeological evidence of Aberdeen itself seems to date from the 12<sup>th</sup> c. Two separate medieval settlements seem to have existed: Old Aberdeen, which developed around St Machar's Cathedral to the south of the River Don and was created a free burgh of barony by James IV in 1498; and New Aberdeen, probably founded by David I in about 1136, which was a Royal Burgh from at least 1179. New Aberdeen has formed the main nucleus around which the modern city has grown, absorbing the separate burgh of Old Aberdeen in 1891.

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<sup>1</sup> Aberdeen Harbour Environmental Assessment: Cultural heritage 2008 (Highland Archaeology Services Ltd for Envirocentre)

<sup>2</sup> Cameron A S and Stones, J 2001 *Aberdeen: an in-depth view of the city's past*, 301

New Aberdeen centred on the Aberdeen market area, just to the north-west of the present docks, which have been created out of a very extensive natural tidal harbour which occupied the north side of the River Dee. The extent of this area can be seen on early maps, including that of James Gordon (1661)<sup>3</sup>. From the beginning it was a trading port making use of the River Dee, and it grew into one of the most important medieval ports in Scotland. Although the present development lies on the south side of the river, the harbour as a whole has great cultural significance.

The Dee formed the southern boundary of Aberdeenshire until 1891. Facing it on the south bank was Kincardineshire, and another riverside barony, Torry. This received a charter in 1495 as a burgh of barony held by the bishop of Arbroath. However it failed to thrive, no doubt greatly overshadowed by its already established, prosperous neighbour, although a pier was constructed in 1611 – 1612. By the 18<sup>th</sup> c., one of the two principal landowners was the burgh of Aberdeen. The first edition Ordnance Survey 1:10560 map of 1868 shows Torry as a fishing village. However, developments were already beginning: the map shows a brickworks south-west of the village.

The Victorian period saw great changes, including the diversion of the River Dee itself in the 1870s, which destroyed most of the old settlement of Torry, and in 1891 the City of Aberdeen absorbed its southern neighbour as well as its northern one. The East and West Leading Lights date from 1842.

Urbanisation was progressing by 1902, with a new harbour and quay, new streets, and a new school and church to serve the growing population. 25 years later, the River Dee Dock and Maitlands Quay had been established, together with a marine laboratory, shipbuilding yards and saw mills. These almost completely destroyed the remains of the old Torry village. However the biggest change occurred after the Second World War, with large municipal housing schemes filling the previously open area south of Victoria Road.

Today, Torry is very much part of the larger city with a modern urban industrial and residential landscape. Apart from late 19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> century industrial and military archaeology, there is little visible surface evidence of the area's history apart from St Fittick's, the former parish church, founded between 1189 and 1199, and abandoned in 1829. This lies to the east of modern Torry. Most of the fabric is 18<sup>th</sup> c. or later date but parts of the walls are believed to be 13<sup>th</sup> century. A geophysical survey and excavation in September 2004 found evidence of a manse and other buildings. To the south of Torry, an area of open land remains at Tullos, where despite recent use as a landfill site, Bronze Age archaeology survives<sup>4</sup>.

The origins of the modern Torry Quay date from the construction of the Timber Quay in 1895. The River Dee Dock was constructed between 1909 and 1915. A further timber quay was added in 1923. The 20<sup>th</sup> c. oil boom brought the Texaco Quay complex in 1965 and 1972; and in 1984 the timber quay was extended further into the River Dee Dock area.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon J 1661 *Description of new and of old Aberdeens, with the places nearest adjacent*.  
<http://www.nls.uk/maps/early/towns.cfm?id=209> (See cover)

<sup>4</sup> St Fittick's: NMRS NJ90SE 1; Bronze Age archaeology: NMRS NJ90SE 2,4,6,19

<sup>5</sup> Information from the Aberdeen Harbour Board

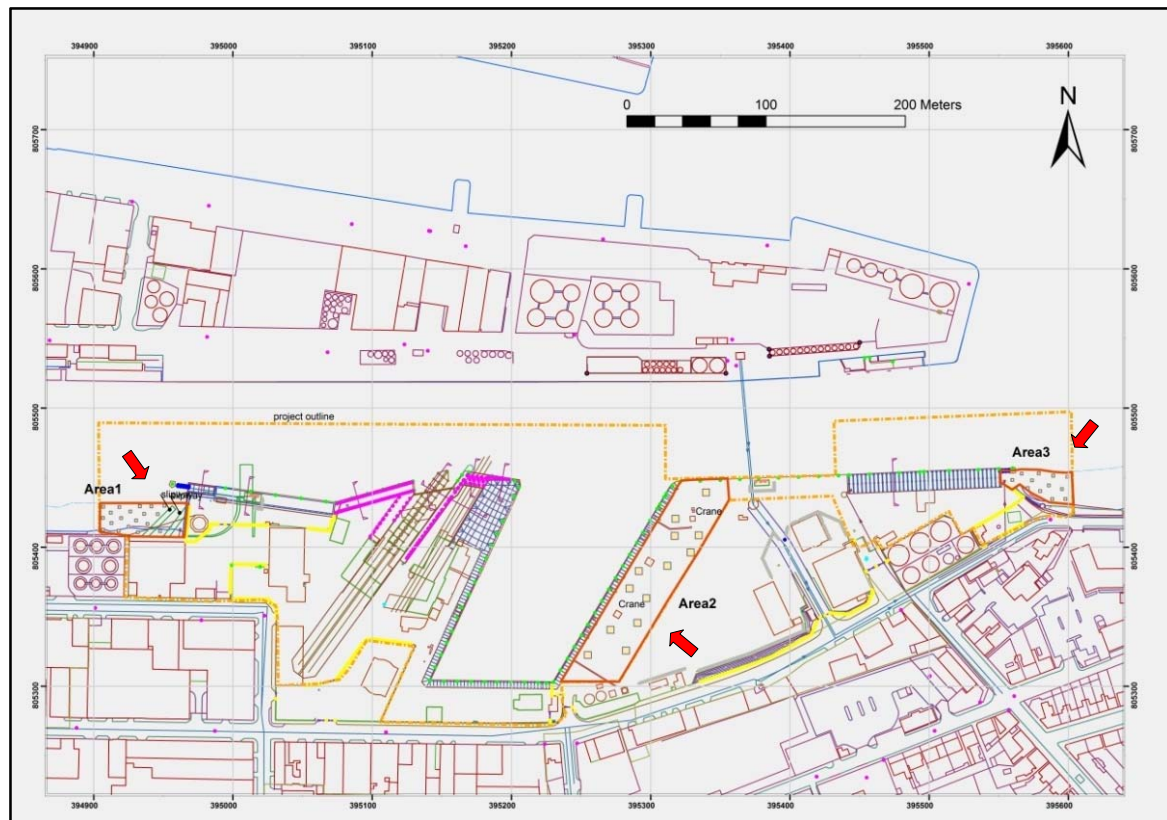


Figure 2 Areas to be evaluated

*Orange outline indicates the development area. Indicative trial pit layouts as proposed in February 2010<sup>6</sup>*

## Programme

### 1. Standing Buildings and Structures

An initial photographic survey of the Torry Quay development area as existing was undertaken by Cait McCullagh in 2008<sup>7</sup>. This has been checked and supplemented where necessary as part of the present programme to provide a comprehensive basic record of the structures on the site.

<sup>6</sup> Wood J 2010 Aberdeen Harbour Written Scheme of Investigation (Highland Archaeology Services Ltd., Cromarty)

<sup>7</sup> McCullagh, C 2008 ABH08 Photo Catalogue (unpublished)

## 2. Archaeological Evaluation (*Buried evidence*)

### Trial trenching

Three areas are to be evaluated (See Fig 2 above), based on the project boundary and the existing water edge. In each case, trial excavation was proposed to assess the nature and extent of any visible archaeology.

#### Area 1

Area 1 is within the present beach and accessible only between tides. 19 hand-dug box trenches, each 2m square, were proposed here to assess the potential for prehistoric archaeology. Trenches would not be dug deeper than 1.2m maximum for safety reasons and in all cases would be opened, recorded, and completed within the space of a tide. This Area has now been completed and the results are reported below.

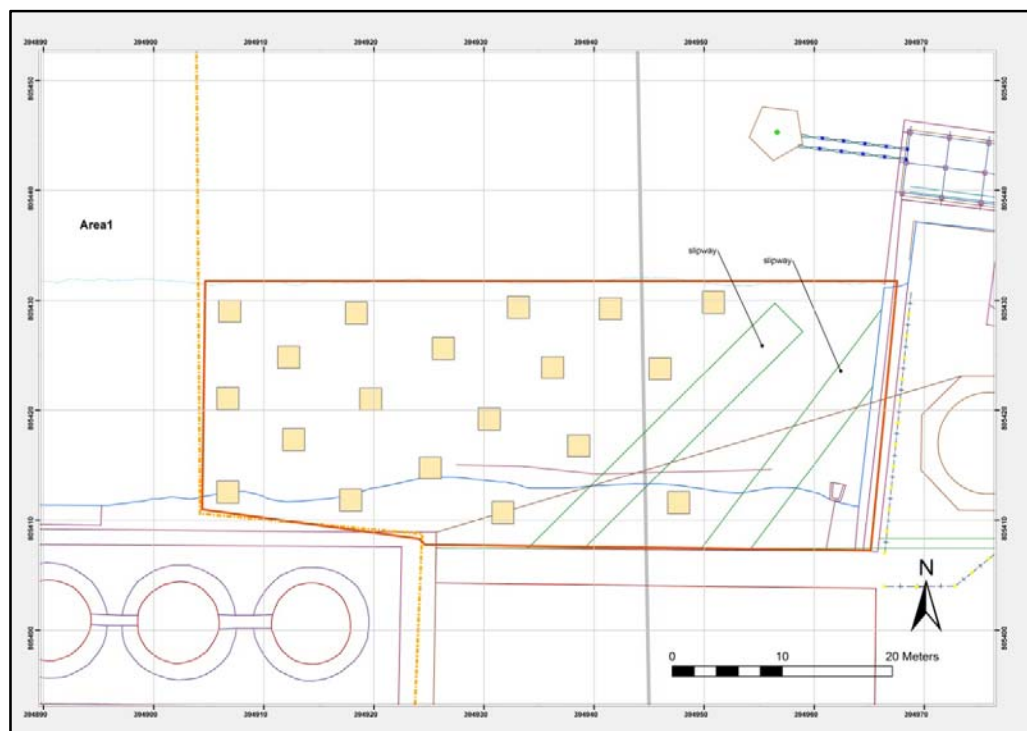


Figure 3 Area 1 - indicative trench plan as proposed February 2010

#### Area 2

Area 2 is designed to clarify the extent of any surviving evidence for Old Torry. As far as can be established, much of the settlement seems to have lain within the area of the present dock and is therefore likely to have been destroyed. Even within the evaluation area, ground disturbance has been significant, and the evidence is expected to be fragmentary, so the potential here is considered to be limited.



### Area 3

Area 3 is within the present beach and accessible only between tides. 12 hand-dug box trenches, each 2m square, are to be opened here to assess the potential for prehistoric archaeology. As in Area 1, trenches are not to be dug deeper than 1.2m maximum for safety reasons and in all cases will be opened, recorded, and completed within the space of a tide.

## Results (Area 1)

This site is now on the foreshore of the river Dee between the low and high tide lines (NJ 949 054). To the south of the excavation area, a stone embankment for Maitland's Quay survives as do several slipways and wooden post alignments which are to be buried during this redevelopment (Patrick Jordan, Aberdeen Harbour Board, pers com).



Plate 1 Foreshore area, facing East

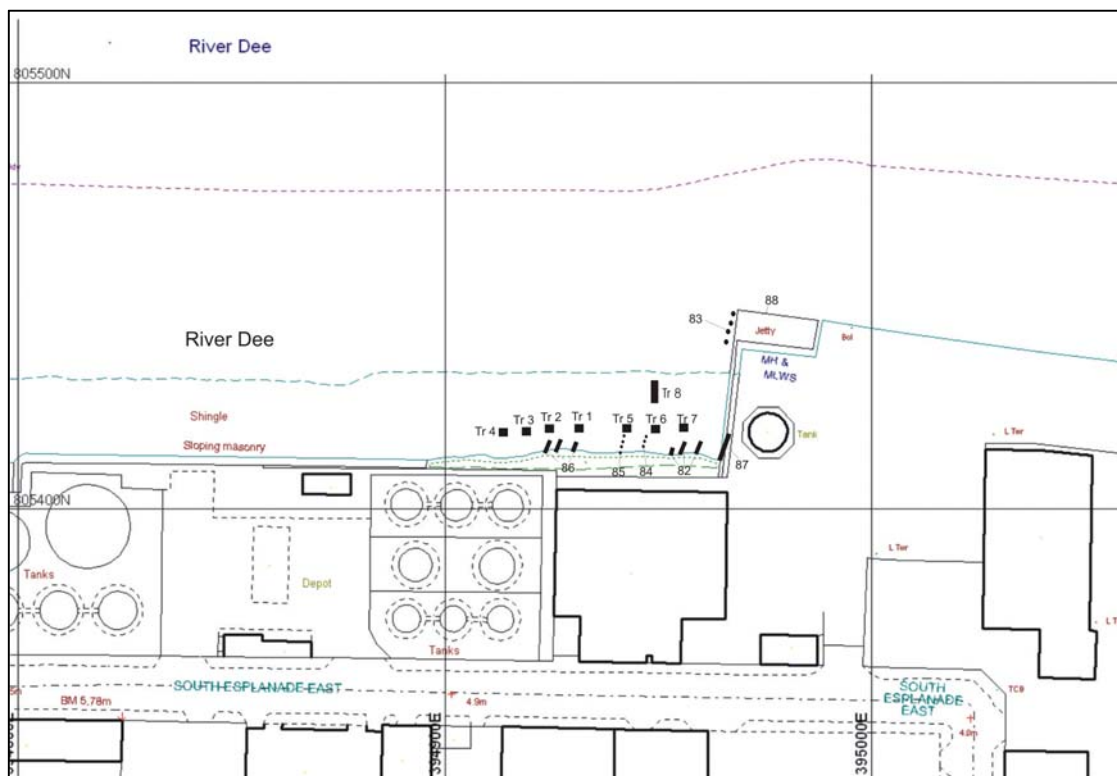


Figure 4 Site and trench locations, as excavated

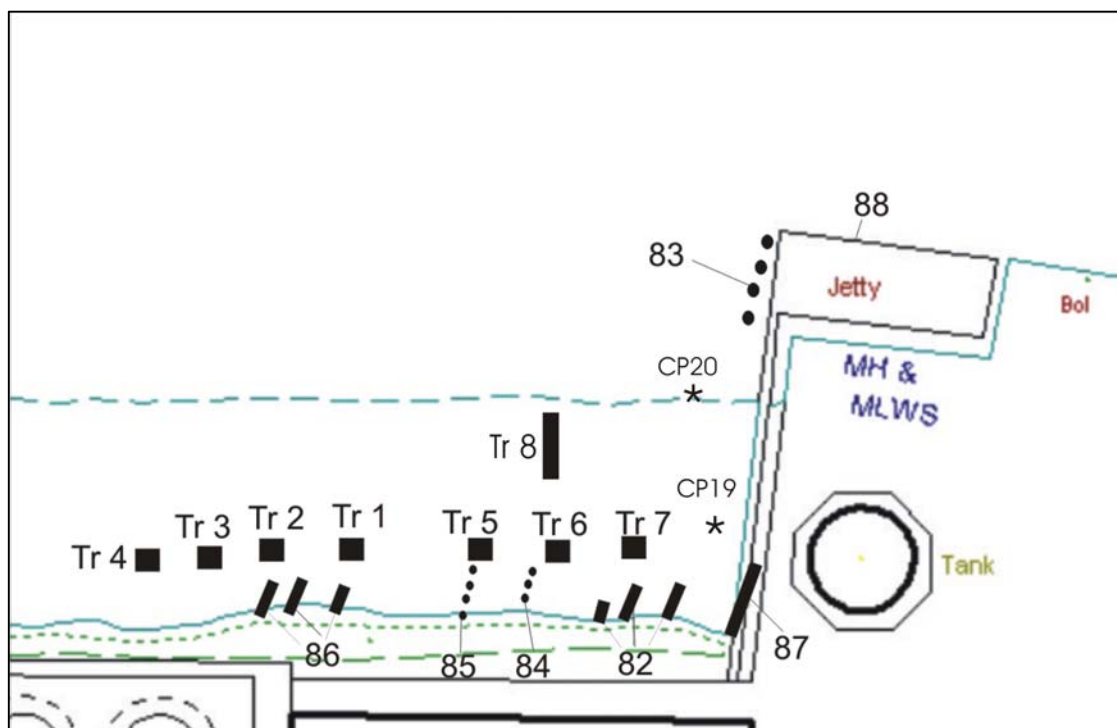


Figure 5 Site details and camera points

*Note groups of slipways 82, 86*



Plate 2 Trench 1: natural clay deposits

### ***The excavation***

Eight trenches were excavated on 6-7 April 2010 to a maximum depth of 1.2m. A layer of sand, shingle and silt covered the whole foreshore (contexts 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80).

Under the sand and shingle layer Trenches 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 contained only natural clay beds laminated with lenses of sand and silt.

Trenches 3 and 5 contained mixed clays, 19th-20th century finds including bottle glass, china and metal (including insulated wire) suggesting that they were located within trenches cut into the foreshore, probably for the berthing of boats in the 20th century.

On the basis of these results and the site conditions, and after consultation with the Aberdeen City Archaeologist, it was decided not to proceed with further trenches in this area



Plate 3 Current jetty structure 88 with posts 83 (right foreground); facing NNE





Plate 4 : Jetty 82, facing south



Plate 5 Post alignments 84 (left) and 85 (right); facing SSE



## Conclusions

No prehistoric or medieval evidence was found at this location and it is likely that the prehistoric ground surface had been at a higher level; the river Dee was substantially north of this area in the post-medieval period and so it is unlikely that this was a riverine area in the medieval or prehistoric periods.

Clay beds at this location are interesting given the location of brick and tile works and potteries along the east coast in the Aberdeen area from the 13th century. The Torry Brick Works appear on the 1867 OS map in the area of the current work and the Seaton Brick and Tiles Works opened a business at Torry in 1883 (200m to the south of this site) to exploit the clay beds in the area<sup>8</sup>

The slipways and jetties recorded on the foreshore date to the recent period; the shuttered concrete structures are probably mid 20th century in date, and associated with the salmon fishing which took place on this shore of the river Dee until the late 1980s.

This area shows in several images including the painting New Victoria Bridge by James Watt (Plate 6 below).



Plate 6 New Victoria Bridge, James Watt, 1884 (from Edwards 2004, 45) showing the excavated foreshore.

<sup>8</sup> (Aberdeen City Council SMR online [http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/xsm\\_SmrDetail.asp?id=1672](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/xsm_SmrDetail.asp?id=1672)).

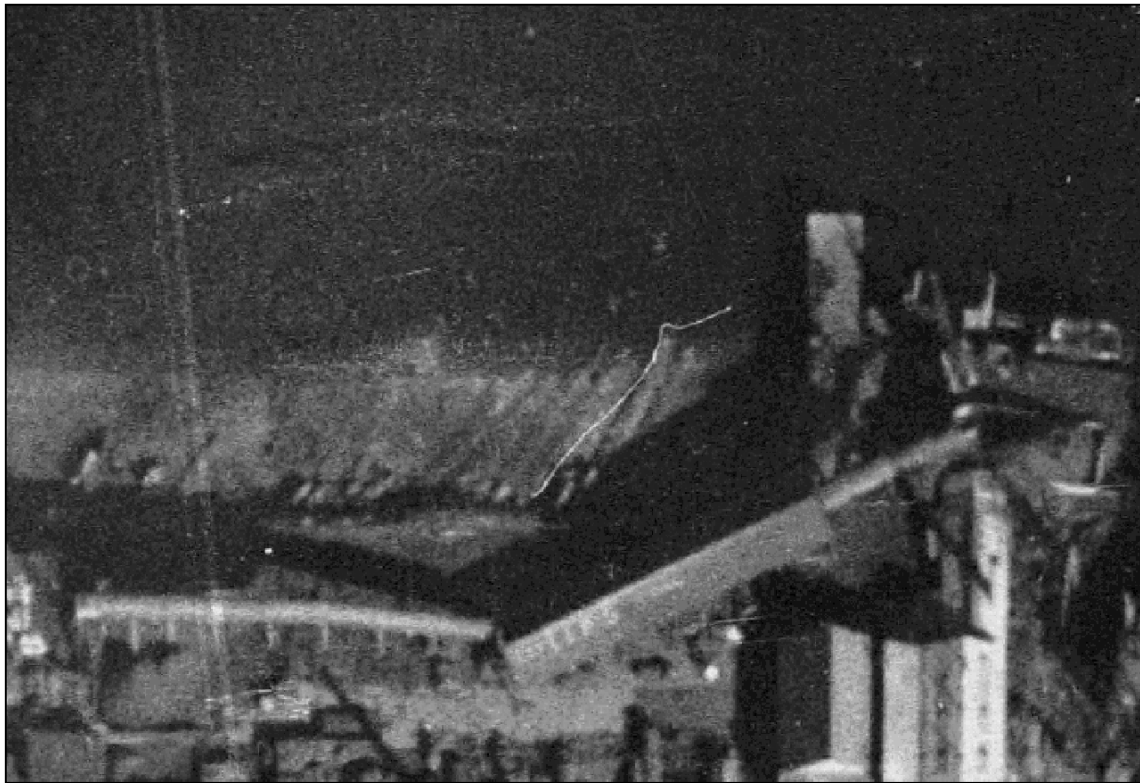


Plate 7 1946 Aerial photograph showing possible trenches gouged into the foreshore.

## References

Aberdeen Harbour Environmental Assessment: Cultural Heritage 2008 (Highland Archaeology Services Ltd for Envirocentre)

Cameron A S and Stones, J 2001 *Aberdeen: an in-depth view of the city's past*

Edwards, J 2004 *Maritime Aberdeen*. Tempus, Stroud.

Gordon J 1661 *Description of new and of old Aberdeens, with the places nearest adjacent*.

Wood J 2010 *Aberdeen Harbour Written Scheme of Investigation* (Highland Archaeology Services Ltd., Cromarty)

## Tables

### CONTEXTS

Context	Trench	Description	Interpretation
10	1	Shingle and sandy clay	Cover of foreshore
11	1	Reddish brown clay	Natural
12	1	V-shaped cut	Modern cut
13	1	Shingle and clay fill of 12	Fill of 12
14	1	Thin band of light greyish brown sandy clay	Natural
15	1	Pink clay	Natural
16	1	Thin band of light greyish brown silty clay	Natural
17	1	Cut	Sewer trench
18	1	Shingle and clay	Fill of 17
20	2	Shingle and sandy clay	Cover of foreshore
21	2	Red silty clay	Natural
22	2	Grey brown clay	Natural
23	2	Fine red clay	Natural
24	2	Greyish green clay	Natural
31	3	Shingle and sandy clay	Cover of foreshore
32	3	Red gritty clay	Fill of cut
33	3	Sticky dark grey clays	Fill of cut
34	3	Dark grey clay	Fill of cut
41	4	Shingle and sandy clay	Cover of foreshore
42	4	Pink clay	Natural
43	4	Pinky grey silt band	Natural
44	4	Pink clay	Natural
50	5	Shingle and sandy clay	Cover of foreshore
51	5	Reddish brown clay, modern finds	Fill of cut
60	6	Shingle and sandy clay	Cover of foreshore
61	6	Wooden post, horizontal	Fallen post. Part of feature 84?
62	6	Pink clay	Natural
70	7	Shingle and sandy clay	Cover of foreshore
71	7	Grey clay with grey silt and sand lenses	Natural

Context	Trench	Description	Interpretation
80	8	Shingle and sandy clay	Cover of foreshore
81	8	Pink clay	Natural
82	Foreshore	Three shuttered concrete platforms	Slipway/jetty
83	Foreshore	Four wooden posts	Slipway/jetty
84	Foreshore	Three wooden posts	Slipway/jetty
85	Foreshore	Four wooden posts	Slipway/jetty
86	Foreshore	Three shuttered concrete platforms	Slipway/jetty
87	Foreshore	Shuttered concrete platform; one concrete platform survives; cut/covered by modern dock	Slipway/jetty
88	Foreshore	Wooden dock to be removed during current development	Jetty

## PHOTOGRAPHIC LOG

Photo no.	Location	Details	Direction
DSC-006	Tr 1	Location with shuttered slipway debris S of Tr 1	S
DSC-007	Tr 1	East face	W
DSC-008	Tr 1	NW corner	NE
DSC-009	Tr 1	East face	W
DSC-010	Tr 1	Trench 1 (left) with Tr 2, 3, 4 background	W
DSC-011		Drill-marks in granite blocks	
DSC-012	Tr 4	Tr 4 Ali	SW
DSC-013	Tr 3	Tr 3 Dave	S
DSC-014	Tr 2	Tr 2 Aidan	SE
DSC-015	Tr 4	Tr 4 W face	W
DSC-016	Tr 4	Tr 4 W face	
DSC-017	Tr 4	Tr 4 S face	
DSC-018	Tr 4	Tr 4 S face	
DSC-019	Tr 1, 2, 3	Tr 3,2,1 facing E	E
DSC-020	Tr 1, 2, 3	Tr 3,2,1 facing E	E
DSC-021	Tr 1, 2, 3	Tr 3,2,1 facing E	E
DSC-022	Tr 4	Location	S



Photo no.	Location	Details	Direction
DSC-023	Tr 3, 2, 1	Location	SE
DSC-024	Tr 3,2 , 1	Foreshore	E
DSC-025	Tr 3,2 , 1	Foreshore	E
DSC-026	Tr 3,2 , 1	Foreshore	E
DSC-027		Foreshore (see ABH08 IMPG9262-3)	SW
DSC-028		Foreshore (see ABH08 IMPG9262-3)	W
DSC-029	Tr 3	Location	S
DSC-030	Tr 3	Location	S
DSC-031	Tr 3	S face	S
DSC-032	Tr 3	E face	E
DSC-033	Tr 3	S face	S
DSC-034	Tr 2	W face	W
DSC-035	Tr 2	W face	W
DSC-036	Tr 2	W face	W
DSC-037	Tr 2	Refilling Tr 2	N
DSC-038	Tr 2	Refilling Tr 2	N
DSC-039	Tr 2	Refilling Tr 2	N
DSC-045	Camera point 19	Water tank cladding being removed prior to demolition (see ABH08 IMPG9268)	E
DSC-046	Camera point 19	Water tank cladding being removed prior to demolition	E
DSC-047	Camera point 19	Water tank cladding being removed prior to demolition	E
DSC-048	Camera point 19	Water tank cladding being removed prior to demolition	E
DSC-049	Camera point 19	Water tank cladding being removed prior to demolition	E
DSC-050	Tr 5 and 6	Foreshore	W
DSC-051	Camera point 19	Water tank from CP19	E
DSC-052	Camera point 19	Structure 88 background, 83 foreground	NE
DSC-053	Camera point 19	Structure 88	NE
DSC-054	Camera point 19	Structure 88	N
DSC-055	Camera point 19	Structure 88	NE
DSC-056	Camera point 20	Stone revetment (left) supporting harbour to be redeveloped	SE

Photo no.	Location	Details	Direction
DSC-057	Camera point 20	Stone revetment (left) supporting harbour to be redeveloped	SSE
DSC-058	Camera point 20	Tr 7, 6, 5; structure 82 (left)	SW
DSC-059	82	Remains of slipway 82	S
DSC-060	82	Remains of slipway 82	S
DSC-061	Tr 6 (left) Tr 5 (right)	with post alignments 84 (left of centre), 85 (right of centre)	S
DSC-062	84, 85	Post alignments 84 (left), 85 (right)	S
DSC-063	CP19	Water tower	E
DSC-064	Tr 6	Wood in pink clay natural	E
DSC-065	Tr 6	Wood in pink clay natural	S
DSC-066	Tr 6	South section	S
DSC-067	Tr 6	South section	S
DSC-068	Tr 7	Grey clay natural	E
DSC-069	Tr 7	East section	E
DSC-070	Tr 7	South section	S
DSC-071	Tr 7	South section	S
DSC-072	Tr 7	Foreshore showing Tr 7 (left)	W/SW
DSC-073	Camera point 20	Stone revetment (right) wharf 88 (background), post alignment 83 (foreground)	NE
DSC-074	Camera point 20	Stone revetment (right) wharf 88 (background), post alignment 83 (foreground)	NE
DSC-076	Camera point 20	Stone revetment (right) wharf 88 (background), post alignment 83 (foreground)	NE
DSC-077	Camera point 20	Stone revetment (right) wharf 88 (background), post alignment 83 (foreground)	NE
DSC-078	Camera point 20	Stone revetment (right) wharf 88 (background), post alignment 83 (foreground)	NE
DSC-079	Camera point 20	Post alignment 83 (foreground) showing stones of stone revetment below low tide line	NE
DSC-080	Camera point 20	Stone revetment (right) wharf 88 (background), post alignment 83 (foreground)	NE
DSC-081	Tr 5	South section	S

Photo no.	Location	Details	Direction
DSC-082	Tr 5	Tr 5 location	ESE
DSC-097	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	SE
DSC-098	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	SE
DSC-099	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	SE
DSC-100	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	SE
DSC-101	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	SE
DSC-102	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	SE
DSC-103	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	SE
DSC-104	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	SE
DSC-105	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	S
DSC-106	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	S
DSC-107	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East	S
DSC-108	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	S
DSC-109	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	SE
DSC-110	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	SE

Photo no.	Location	Details	Direction
DSC-111	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	SE
DSC-112	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East; sheet piling for new development being delivered by sea and offloaded by crane	SE
DSC-113	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East	S
DSC-114	Site and adjacent dock	From North Esplanade East	S