REPORT ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING OF THE GREEN TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE, ABERDEEN CITY CENTRE

NGR NJ 9417 0605







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SUMMARY

Between August 2009 and November 2010, representatives of Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit undertook a programme of archaeological monitoring of groundworks associated with The Green Townscape Heritage Initiative, centred on The Green, Aberdeen (NGR NJ 9417 0605). The area is rich in archaeological potential, due to the historical nature of the area, which once formed a medieval religious hub for Aberdeen, a potential which has since been proven by archaeological discoveries in the area since the 1970s.

The watching brief monitored all excavation undertaken across ten streets within the Green area, in line with guidance, professional standards approved by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, and upon advice and overall management of the Curator of Local History and Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council.

The watching brief monitoring encountered a total of 26 features during the resurfacing works in The Green area. Despite the fact that the area formed one of the four medieval complexes of Aberdeen, no features relating to this period or earlier were recovered. The majority of the areas investigated showed high levels of disturbance by services and cables relating to the area's dense habitation throughout the Victorian and Modern periods. The earliest features encountered were those found on Rennie's Wynd and on Exchange Street and it is intriguing that it is these two streets whose alignment has changed most since 1867. The majority of other finds probably date to the mid and late 19th century and are good indicators of Victorian habitation of the area.

As the maximum depth reached across much of the area affected by the works did not extend beyond 0.6m, or below the level of existing services, it is worth remembering that earlier deposits could survive in the area at lower levels. As such, it is likely that any future excavation work in the area will require further archaeological supervision, upon advice from the Lead Curator of Local History and Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit would like to thank The Green Townscape Heritage Initiative for commissioning the project. In addition, further thanks are extended to the Keeper of Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council for all advice relating to the project, and to all the Aberdeen City Council and Leith Contractors' on-site staff for all their help and information.

The archaeological watching brief monitoring was undertaken by Ali Cameron and Cat Peters. The report was prepared by Cat Peters, and the project was managed by Ali Cameron and Judith Stones, Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 The Green Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) is a conservation-led programme, set up to tackle the problems of run-down historic buildings and streetscape where long-standing economic and structural decline has undermined the character of this historic and architecturally rich area. The Green THI is a partnership between Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeen City Heritage Trust, The Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Scotland and Scottish Enterprise. Part of the initiative has involved the resurfacing of many of the access routes forming the area of the city, collectively known as 'The Green' (Figure 1).
- 1.1.2 The Keeper of Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council has advised that any excavations occurring as part of these resurfacing works in The Green area (centred on NGR NJ 9417 0605) should be subjected to archaeological monitoring. This is due to the rich historical nature of the area, which once formed a religious hub for the area, a potential which has since been proven by archaeological discoveries in the area since the 1970s. This scheme of works is in-line with government advice as set out in the National Planning Policy Guideline No. 5, Archaeology and Planning. All stages of the archaeological work were undertaken following approved statutory guidelines (IFA 2002).
- 1.1.3 This report comprises the results of the archaeological monitoring of the relevant groundworks associated with the development, occurring across a total of 10 access routes in the area between 11th August 2009 and 9th November 2010.
- 1.1.4 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with best practice and professional standards, and with current UKIC guidelines (1990). The archive will be deposited at Aberdeen City Council in the first instance, and a copy of the report given to Aberdeen City Council Sites and Monuments Record, where viewing will be available on request. The project is also registered with the Online AccesS to the Index of archaeological investigationS (OASIS).

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

2.1.1 The site is centred upon National Grid Reference NJ 9417 0605, at The Green, in the centre of the city of Aberdeen lying between the main shopping thoroughfare of Union Street to the north, the harbour to the east, and the railway station to the south. The site lies within an urban townscape setting, between approximately 18 and 27m AOD, covering an area of approximately 300m² (Figure 1).

2.2 GENERAL HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.2.1 A large number of known archaeological features have encountered from The Green area, including prehistoric remains in the form of worked flints, flint implements and waste flakes. During the medieval period The Green was one of Aberdeen's four administrative hubs, and was the religious centre for the town, situated neatly between the churchyard of St Nicholas immediately to the north, incorporating the Carmelite Friary at the south, and located just to the west of the Trinitarians. This would have been a centre of learning and healing, and would have served an important service to the local population in looking over their souls after death. The Carmelite friary came to an end with the Reformation in 1560, their lands eventually passing into the hands of Marischal College. Archaeological evidence for the location of the church and west range which incorporated the kitchens, and small finds relating to daily lie at the friary was encountered during excavations by Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit in 1981 and 1994, as well as numerous human remains. The structural remains related to buildings of the 14th and 15th centuries.
- 2.2.2 The Trinitarians were not technically friars, but existed to collect money to pay ransoms of Christians taken hostage in the Holy Lands. After the Reformation part of the Trinitarians' buildings were purchased by Dr William Guild who donated them to the Incorporated Trades. This was the first Trades Trinity Hall. The area had been long-established as a centre for trade too, as in the medieval period many of the landowners had names such as 'Litster', a name for a dyer, and the first plot of land granted to the Carmelites in 1273 was called the 'madder yard', which may denote an area used for dyeing cloth. By the turn of the 19th century, two major employers in the linen industry were established on The Green. Many of the extant streets on The Green were laid out in the late 18th century, when pavements were laid and street lighting was installed, replacing any earlier buildings, and no medieval buildings now survive in this area of the city. In the 1840s a large New Market building was erected, an early covered mall, designed by Archibald Simpson, and a lively market was established in the streets. It was ravaged by a fire though, and eventually demolished in 1971, replaced by the present market building which serves a similar function. The Green itself was pedestrianised in 1995 and the area immediately to the south, previously empty, was redeveloped for flats.

The Green Permissape Heritage IIII

3. RESULTS

3.1 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

3.1.1 The watching brief was carried out between 11th August 2009 and 9th November 2010. It monitored all excavations relating to the resurfacing of the access routes and pavements in the Green THI area (Figure 1). A total of 10 streets were subjected to archaeological supervision; Rennie's Wynd, Trinity Street, Exchange Street, Stirling Street, Carmelite Street, Imperial Place, Hadden Street, Wapping Street, The Green and Carmelite Lane. The results of the monitoring are outlined below. All archaeological features located during the works are summarised in Appendix 1.

3.2 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

3.2.1 Rennie's Wynd: a maximum depth of 0.6m of road surface was removed on Rennie's Wynd. In the north-western part of the road, at a depth of between 0.2m and 0.3m, a number of archaeological features were encountered (Figure 2). These included an area of laid fieldstone cobbles (Feature AA) ranging from between 0.1 and 0.2m in diameter, covering an area of 5.2m north-west to south-east and 4.5m north-east to south-west. They were covered in a thin black loam with inclusions of fragments of brick and charcoal. This was thought to be the remains of a cobbled courtyard. A further rectangular area of adjoining cobbles (AB), 1m north-east to south-west and 1.2m north-west to south-east was interpreted as a threshold leading from cobbled courtyard (AA) (Plate 1).



Plate 1: Features AA and AB (foreground) facing south-east

3.2.2 A semi-circular brick-built feature consisting of one brick's width of brick, and measuring 1.2m in diameter (AC) was encountered to the north-west of the courtyard (AA) and associated threshold (AB). This was interpreted as part of the remains of a circular chimney base structure (Plate 2). To the immediate north-west of this feature was a brick wall foundation aligned north-west to south-east (AD), and to the north west of this the remains of a further wall foundation, this time of stone construct, surviving in two places (AE) (Plate 2), the westernmost indicating 90 degree angle, and the eastern one in-line with the façade of an existing building to the east (Nos. 67-71 Green).



Plate 2: Features AD (bottom) and AC

3.2.3 Two areas of granite setts or cassies, each cassie ranging from between 0.15 and 0.18m length and of between 0.8m and 0.11m width were located to the south-east, outside Nos. 2-18 Rennie's Court (AF and AG). The largest area was 0.8m width and 9.5m in length (AG), and both were north-west south-east aligned (Plate 3).



Plate 3: Features AF and AG facing south-east

- 3.2.4 Comparison with the 1867 Ordnance Survey Map (Figure 3) of the area indicated that it is likely that Walls AD and AE formed respectively, part of the south-east, and north-west and south-west walls of a building depicted in this location, with the chimney base AC and the cobbled surface AA and threshold AB forming an external space associated with the building. The granite cassie features (AF and AG) align with the north-eastern edge of Rennie's Wynd as it appeared in 1867, before Rennie's Wynd was widened, which is why the building indicated by walls AD and AE was demolished, and the other features made obsolete and buried beneath the new widened road area. The archaeological features were not removed by the development, but survive beneath the new road surface. The final depth of 0.6m was not necessary where these archaeological features were encountered.
- 3.2.5 **Trinity Street:** a maximum depth of 0.4m was removed across the width of the pavements and 0.6m across the road. These excavations encountered backfill deposits consisting of sand and gravel and located numerous services indicative of heavy disturbance across the area in the pavements. Towards the centre of the road, 6.4m to the north of the southern buildings along Trinity Street, a brick-built north-east south-west feature (AH) was located at 0.2m depth beneath the road surface (Figure 4). It was thought that this was the top of a Victorian era sewer. Works were suspended while new engineering plans were initiated; eventually the sewer was left in place, with no further excavations required.



Plate 4: Feature AH facing south-west

3.2.6 **Exchange Street:** a maximum depth of 0.6m of road deposit was removed from Exchange Street in order to create a new stable sub-base for the new surface. Several archaeological features were encountered at the south-eastern end of Exchange Street (Figure 5). A granite stone wall bonded with an off-white mortar with occasional blocks of pink sandstone was revealed on a north-west south-east alignment running for a length of 21.2m, and a width of 0.55m (Feature AY) (Plates 5 and 6). The wall took a ninety degree turn to

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the north-east at its northernmost extent (AZ) (Plate 6). Three internal boundary walls headed north-east (AV, AT and AX) from the main wall (AY) and these were all 0.55m wide (Plates 5 and 6). The internal walls were all of granite stones with an off-white mortar. Adjacent to wall AY, was an additional wall AU which was 0.3m in width, of granite fieldstone construct with a yellow-brown mortar (Plate 5).



Plate 5: Features AY (left), AU (right, foreground), AV and AT facing north-west



Plate 6: Features AY (right), AZ and AX facing south-east

- 3.2.7 It is probable that wall AY was the earliest surviving wall, and the use of sandstone in its make-up is suggestive of the incorporation of building material from a recently demolished earlier, medieval building in the vicinity. Ordnance Survey Mapping of 1867 shows what appears to be a boundary wall at this location, associated with Trinity Church, and this relates neatly with walls AY and AZ (Figure 6). The Ordnance Survey map of 1901 shows changes in the area after the demolition of the church with buildings abutting the boundary wall AY, thus explaining the walls AX, AV and widened wall AU (depicted in Figure 6). AT must relate to a short-lived structure, or less formal division of external space within what must have been demolished by 1901, and the area incorporated into a yard. In both of these early maps, Exchange Street was narrower at the southern end where the features were located. By 1925 these buildings and walls had been removed, and the street widened to its present format. The features encountered are the only surviving practical evidence for the earlier street alignment, and have been preserved beneath the new road surface.
- 3.2.8 Stirling Street: a maximum depth of 0.6m beneath the pavement level was excavated across the width and length of Stirling Street as part of the resurfacing works. Wooden cassies (AI) survived in-situ beneath tarmac. They were encountered across much of the northern part of Stirling Street, except where more recent excavations for services had disturbed them (Figure 7). Each cassie measured between 0.035m to 0.04m wide by 0.08m length and was 0.08m thick. They sat in rows straddling two thin linear timbers, giving their profile a tumbled E-shaped appearance (Figure 8). All of the cassies were aligned north to south, i.e. their longest sides laid north to south, except at the very edges of the road, where four rows were laid east to west, perhaps to facilitate water drainage. A small area was cleaned by hand using hammer and chisel, but this was a very slow process, and black staining from the tarmac remained, obscuring any changes in pattern. This area was recorded, and the rest of the removal of cassies by machine was monitored closely (Plate 7). These were the remains of an earlier street surface.



Plate 7: Recording of cleaned sample area of Feature AI facing north-east

3.2.9 In addition, three sandstone squared c-shaped walls were observed in the north-eastern pavement of Stirling Street, close to its junction with Imperial Place (Features AJ, AR and AS). They protruded 0.6m from the building and extended for a length of 2.3m north-west to south-east (Figure 7; Plate 8).



Plate 8: Features AJ, AR and AS, facing north

3.2.10 It is likely that these structures represented window lights for a pre-existing cellar beneath pavement level, and that these would have been left open to allow natural light into the basement. They corresponded with lintels observed in the building's make-up (Plate 9) where breezeblock was also observed in the wall. They were also located directly beneath windows in the building at ground level. These window lights must have been shut up within the last thirty years, and were not on modern plans of the street.



Plate 9: Feature AJ facing north-east

3.2.11 Carmelite Street: excavations occurred in Carmelite Street across the length and width of the street in three stages to allow vehicular access to the buildings on the eastern side of the street. The maximum depth reached was 0.6m for the road, except in areas where deeper excavations were required for new tree planters, where the maximum depth was 0.75m. A nearby electricity sub-station may explain the high level of services encountered on this street, explaining the mixed backfill deposits and east-west aligned pipes that were recorded across the area. No archaeological features were encountered on Carmelite Street.



Plate 10: Excavations on Carmelite Street facing north

3.2.12 *Imperial Place:* excavations were undertaken to a maximum depth of 0.3m in the pavements and 0.55m depth in the road area. Concrete to a depth of 0.3m was encountered across the extent of the road. Beneath this, and within the pavements, only mixed backfill deposits, sand and services were encountered, with no archaeological features surviving (Plate 11).



Plate 11: Excavations on Imperial Place facing north-east

3.2.13 *Hadden Street:* excavations in the far western part of Hadden Street, to the west of Stirling Street revealed a modern sub-base deposit at a depth of 0.25m (Plate 12). This could date to the pedestrianisation of the Green in 1995. A test pit revealed this to be 0.2m in thickness. No deeper excavations were required in this area.



Plate 12: Modern sub-base encountered on Hadden Street, facing east

3.2.14 To the south of this area, and within the northern part of Stirling Street a possible pre-existing wall feature was indicated by a diagonal line of sandstone building rubble observed at a depth of 0.6m beneath modern services (Feature AK). It survived to a total length of 0.6m and was 0.35m, though it had been cut in places by services (Figure 9; Plate 13). Brick and pottery fragments were observed nearby. No features in this location are known from the First Edition Ordnance Survey Mapping (Figure 10), so it is likely that it post-dates this.



Plate 13: Feature AK facing south

3.2.15 The rest of Hadden Street, to the east of the Stirling Street junction, was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.6m. Between the junctions with Stirling Street, and with Exchange Street, numerous services were encountered, revealing a mixed mid brown deposit with sand around the services. Some

disturbed bricks were observed within these backfills, one complete one was photographed (Plate 14). A red-brick built feature (Feature AM) was also observed *in-situ* nearby (Figure 9) which probably relates to an earlier footing for a doorstep.



Plate 14: Feature AL

3.2.16 Excavations towards the eastern, wider, end of Hadden Street proved more fruitful archaeologically from the junction with Exchange Street onwards. Here, three wall features were encountered. One was aligned north-west to southeast and was at the junction with Exchange Street (Feature AO; Plate 15; Figure 9), the others were north-east to south-west aligned and 4m apart from each other (Features AP and AQ; Plates 16 and 17; Figure 9). Although no evidence for a wall at this location comes from the First Edition Ordnance Survey Mapping (Figure 10), it is likely that they belong to an earlier street alignment, perhaps late 19th or early 20th century in origin.



Plate 15: Feature AO facing south-east



Plate 16: Feature AP facing south-east



Plate 17: Feature AP and AQ facing north-east

3.2.17 **The Green:** excavations on the Green itself were limited to a 2.75m width strip across the far eastern extent of the Green to incorporate new uplighters and bollards to restrict access. The maximum depth reached here was 0.35m, and excavations revealed a mid orange-brown gravel sub-base and exposed modern purple plastic ducts (Plate 18). No archaeology was encountered.



Plate 18: Excavations on the Green facing south

3.2.18 **Wapping Street**: minor excavations occurred on Wapping Street in the pavement (Plate 19). The maximum depth reached was 0.6m, although some tarmac with yellow paint on it was encountered at a depth of 0.4m (Feature AN; Figure 11) measuring 0.8m in width and 6m in length. The street is clearly shown as narrower on First Edition Ordnance Survey mapping (Figure 12), although Feature AN is obviously a modern road surface, so the road must have been narrowed very recently. The area was heavily disturbed with modern cabling and no other features were observed.



Plate19: Excavations in the pavement on Wapping Street, facing south-west

3.2.19 **Carmelite Lane:** the last street to be affected by the resurfacing works, though outside the original Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme, was Carmelite Lane in October and November 2010. The pavements and road were excavated to a maximum depth of 0.6m revealing a mixed grey-brown loam heavily disturbed by sewers and services with sand deposits. No features apart from some fragments of brick, pottery and bottle fragments were encountered, including a whole ceramic jar (Feature AW; Plate 20). This was 0.13m tall and 0.06m diameter at its base, 0.048m at its top. Ordnance Survey Mapping of 1867 suggests that the area in which this was found was once within buildings, although no structures survived (Figure 14).



Plate 20: Feature AW

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

4.1.1 The watching brief monitoring encountered a total of 26 features during the resurfacing works in The Green area. Despite the fact that the area formed one of the four medieval complexes of Aberdeen, no features relating to this period or earlier were recovered. The majority of the areas investigated showed high levels of disturbance by services and cables relating to the area's dense habitation throughout the Victorian and Modern periods. The earliest features encountered were those found on Rennie's Wynd (Features AA, AB, AC, AD, AE, AF and AG) and on Exchange Street (Features AY and AZ) and it is intriguing that it is these two streets whose alignment has changed most since 1867. These early features are depicted on the 1867 Ordnance Survey Mapping of the area, so must predate its publication. It is interesting that the other streets did not recover evidence of this earlier period. and this could be explained by the fact that the street alignments have stayed the same for a long time. The majority of other finds probably date to the mid and late 19th century and are good indicators of Victorian habitation of the area. As the maximum depth reached across much of the area affected by the works did not extend beyond 0.6m, or below the level of existing services, it is worth remembering that earlier deposits could survive in the area at lower levels.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.2.1 This watching brief has formed the final stage of archaeological works required on site in relation to the present development. It is likely that any future excavation work in the area will require further archaeological supervision, upon advice from the Lead Curator of Local History and Archaeology at Aberdeen City Council.

5. REFERENCES

IFA (2002), Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs
 MCG (1992), Standards in the Museum Care of Archaeological Collections
 UKIC (1990), Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage

APPENDIX 1: FEATURE INDEX

The table below summarises the archaeological features located during the monitoring of the groundworks associated with the Green Townscape Heritage Initiative.

Feature ID.	Location	Description	Interpretation	Date	Associated Illustration
AA	Rennie's Wynd	Cobbled area	Courtyard	Pre 1867	Figs 2,3
AB	Rennie's Wynd	Cobbled area	Threshold	Pre 1867	Figs 2,3
AC	Rennie's Wynd	Semi-circular brick feature	Chimney base	Pre 1867	Figs 2,3
AD	Rennie's Wynd	Brick wall foundation	Building	Pre 1867	Figs 2,3
AE	Rennie's Wynd	Stone wall foundation	Building	Pre 1867	Figs 2,3
AF	Rennie's Wynd	Narrow cobbled area	Cobbled Street	Pre 1867	Figs 2,3
AG	Rennie's Wynd	Narrow cobbled area	Cobbled Street	Pre 1867	Figs 2,3
AH	Trinity Street	Sewer	Sewer	Victorian	Fig 4
Al	Stirling Street	Wooden cassies	Road surface	Victorian	Fig 7, 8
AJ	Stirling Street	Granite structure	Window light (south)	Post 1867	Fig 7
AK	Hadden Street	Rubble line	Possible wall	Post 1867	Figs 9,10
AL	Hadden Street	Inscribed brick	Seaton brickworks brick	19 th century	Figs 9,10
AM	Hadden Street	Stone structure	Doorstep, threshold	19 th , 20 th century	Figs 9,10
AN	Wapping Street	Old tarmac fragments with paint	Previous road surface	Modern	Figs 11,12
AO	Hadden Street	Wall	Wall	Post 1867	Figs 9,10
AP	Hadden Street	Wall	Wall	Post 1867	Figs 9,10
AQ	Hadden Street	Wall	Wall	Post 1867	Figs 9,10
AR	Stirling Street	Granite structure	Window light (centre)	Post 1867	Fig 7
AS	Stirling Street	Granite structure	Window light (north)	Post 1867	
AT	Exchange Street	Granite wall adjoining AY	Wall of temporary building	Between 1867 and 1901	Figs 5, 6
AU	Exchange Street	Granite wall abutting AY	Internal widening of AY	Between 1867 and 1901	Figs 5, 6
AV	Exchange Street	Granite wall adjoining AY	Wall of building adjacent to AY	Between 1867 and 1901	Figs 5, 6
AW	Carmelite Lane	Ceramic Jar	Brunswick Black container	Late 19 th century	Figs 13,14
AX	Exchange Street	Granite wall adjoining AY	Wall of building adjacent to AY	Between 1867 and 1901	Figs 5, 6
AY	Exchange Street	Granite and sandstone wall	Boundary wall	Pre 1867	Figs 5, 6
AZ	Exchange Street	North-eastern corner of AY	Boundary wall	Pre 1867	Figs 5, 6

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APPENDIX 2: FIGURES

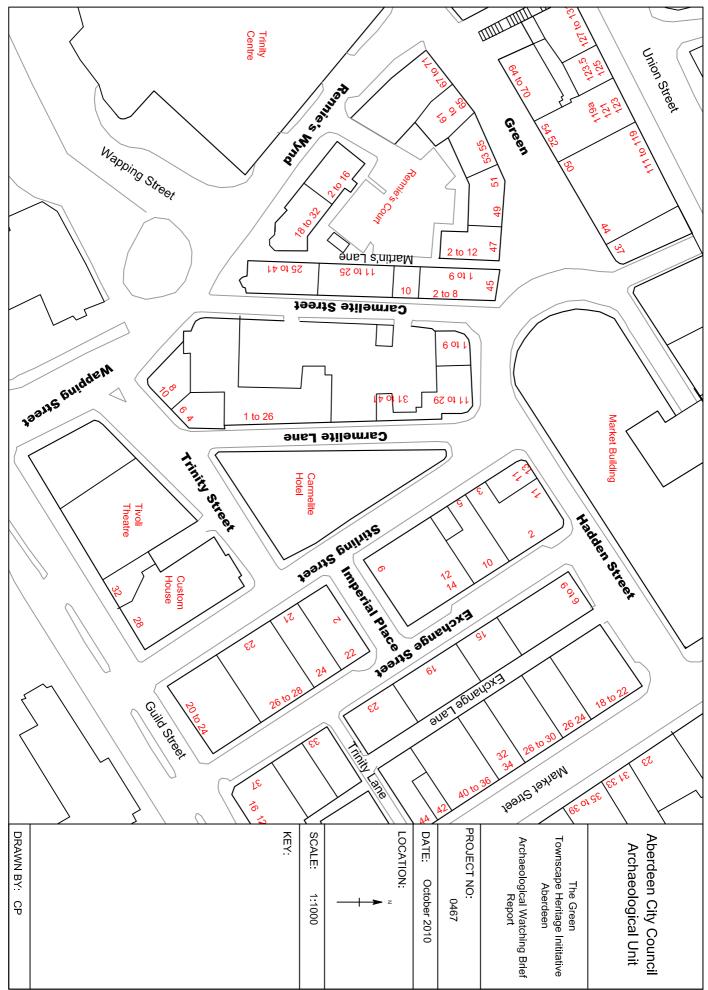


Figure 1: The Green Townscape Heritage Initiative Area showing the Streets Covered by this Scheme

Figure 2: Archaeological Features Encountered on Rennie's Wynd

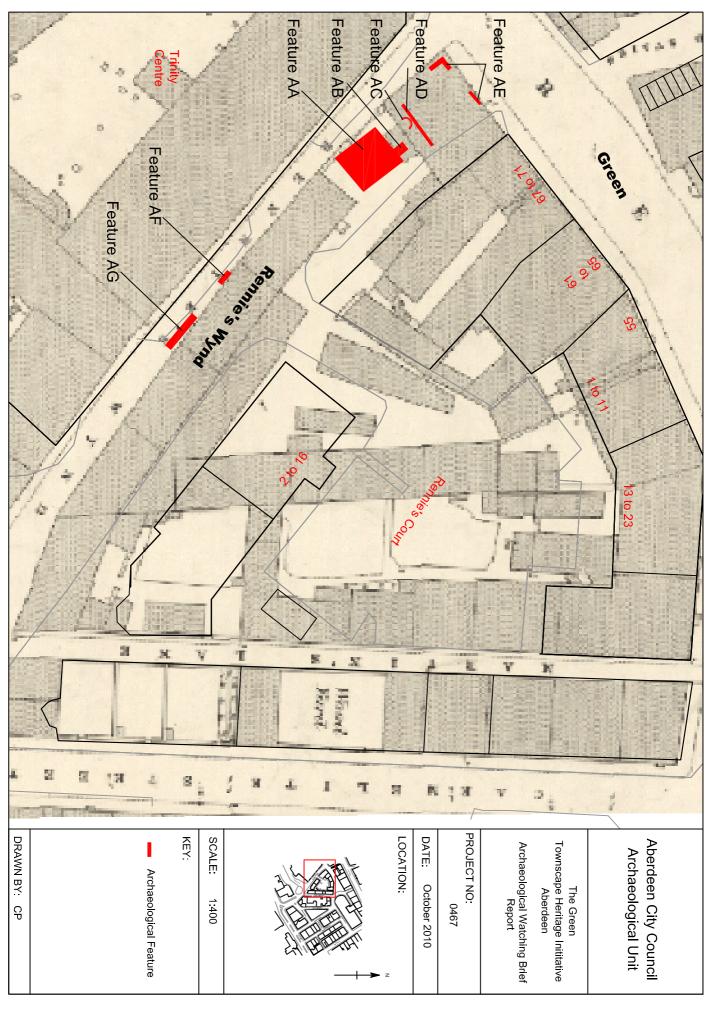


Figure 3: Archaeological Features Encountered on Rennie's Wynd in Relation to 1867 Ordnance Survey Mapping

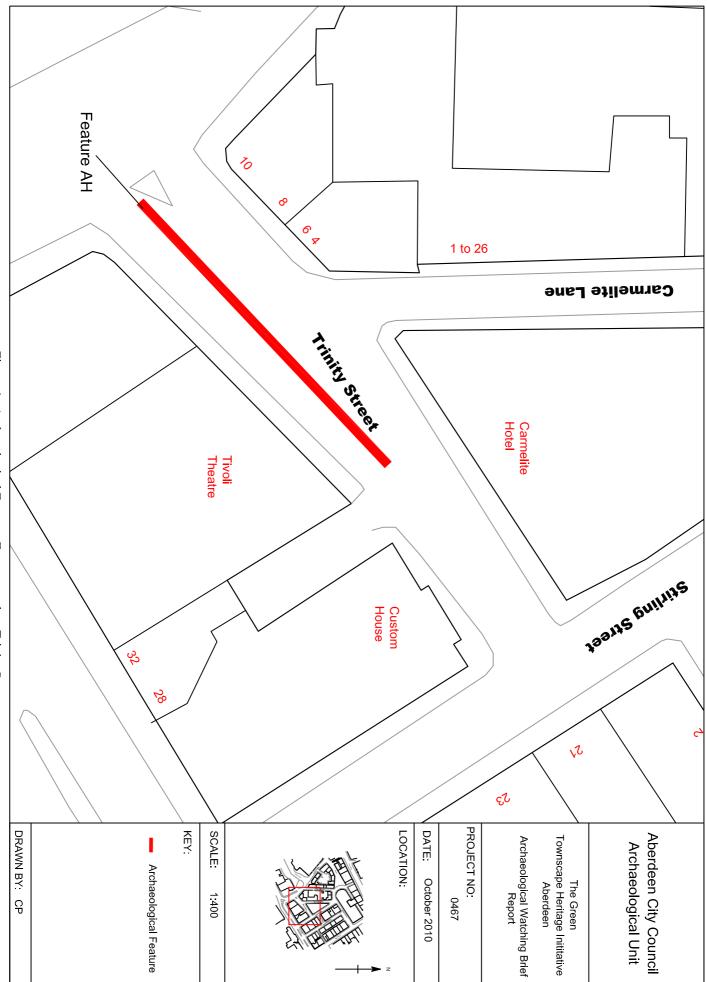


Figure 4: Archaeological Features Encountered on Trinity Street

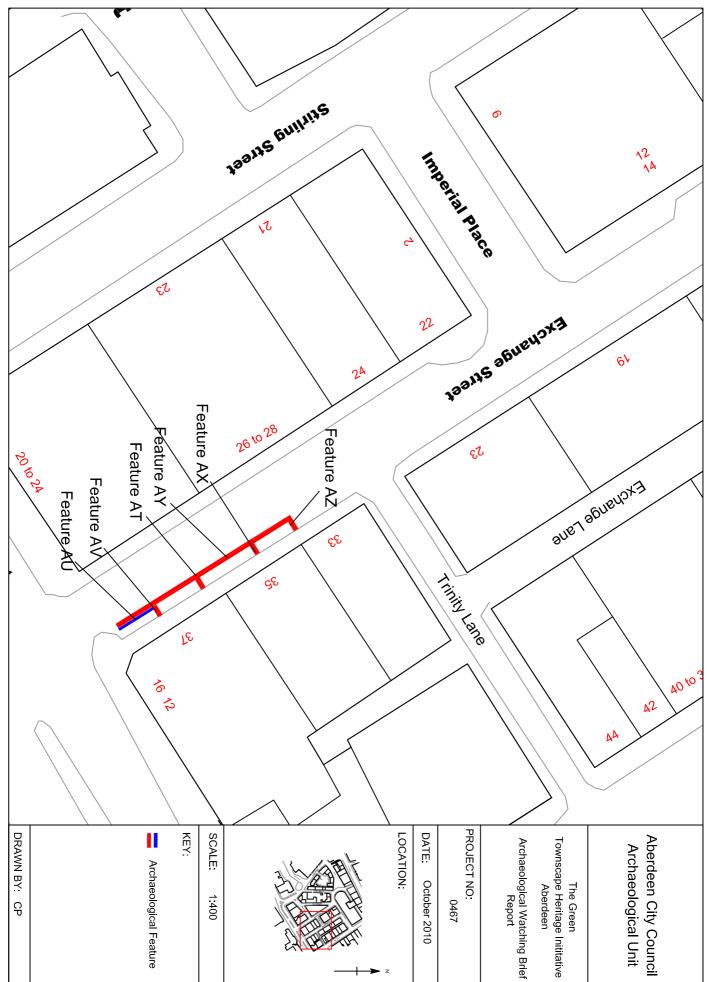


Figure 5 : Archaeological Features Encountered on Exchange Street

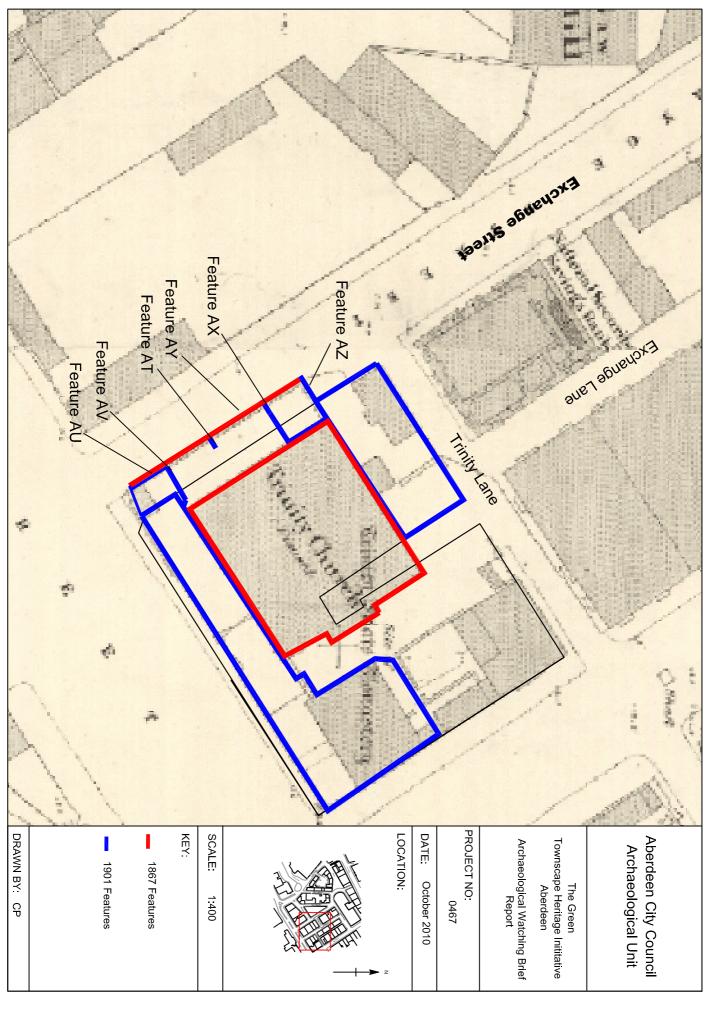


Figure 6: Archaeological Features Encountered on Exchange Street Overlain onto 1867 Ordnance Survey Mapping with 1901 Additions Drawn in Blue

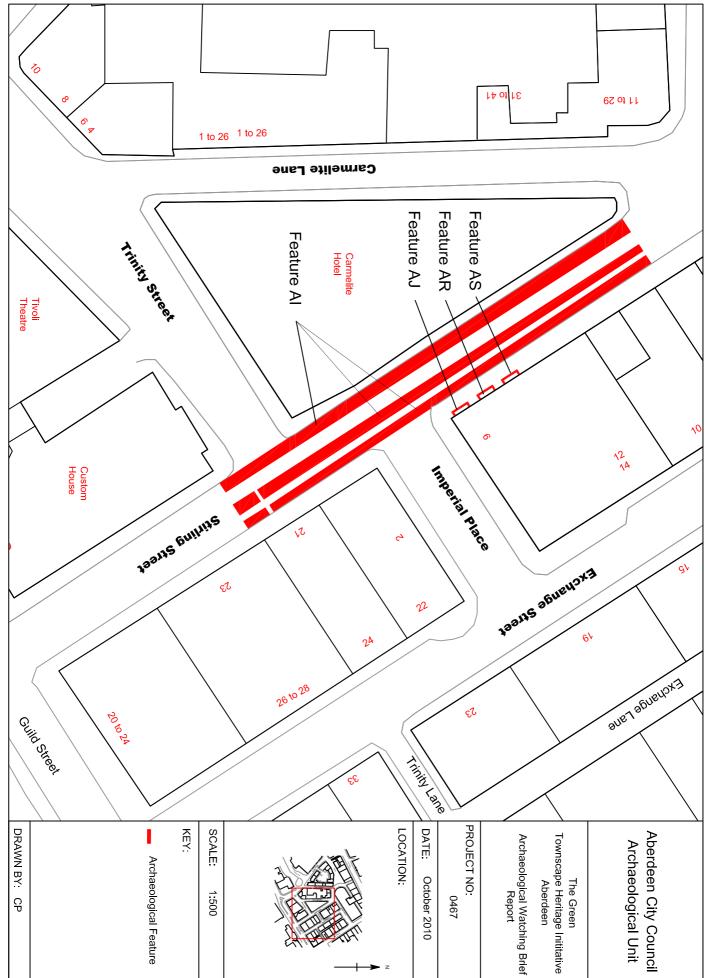


Figure 7: Archaeological Features Encountered on Stirling Street

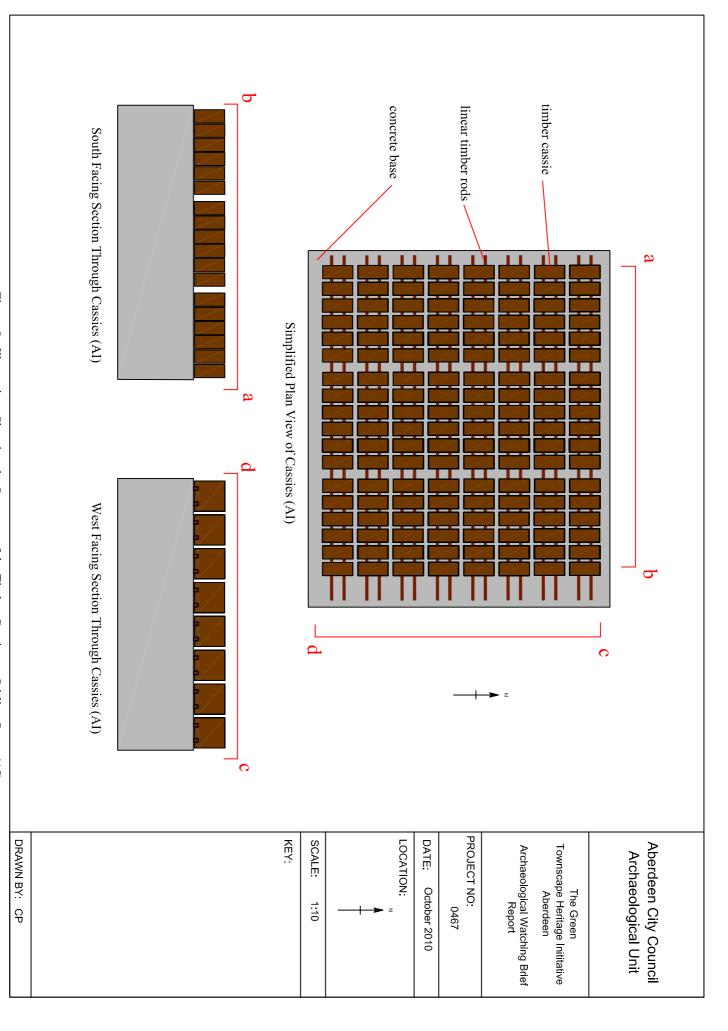


Figure 8: Illustrations Showing the Structure of the Timber Cassies on Stirling Street (AI)

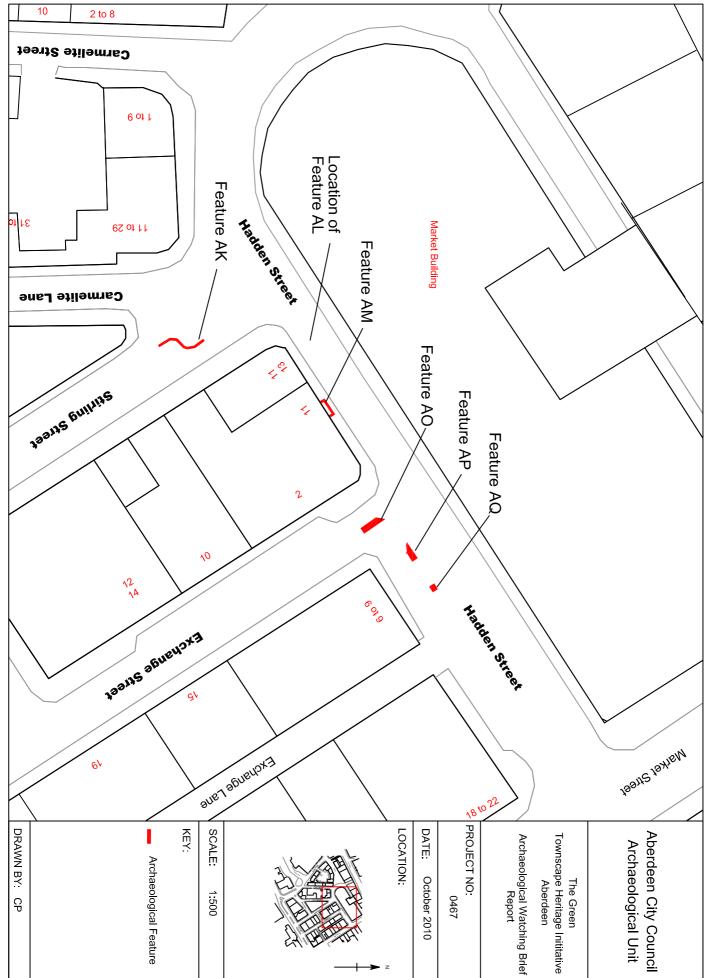


Figure 9: Archaeological Features Encountered on Hadden Street

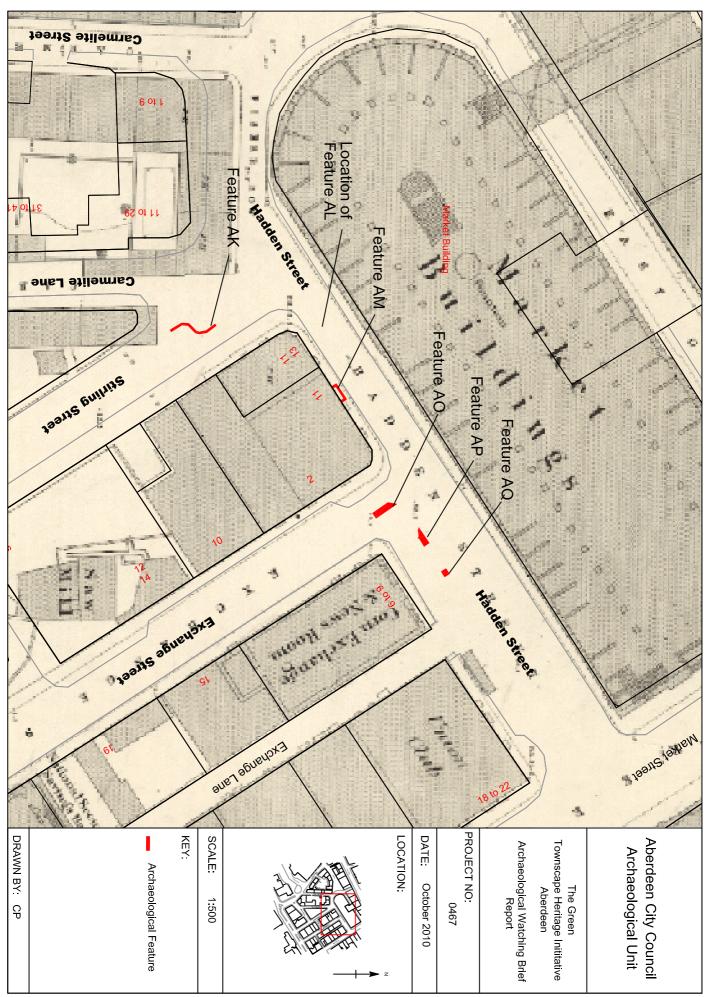


Figure 10: Archaeological Features Encountered on Hadden Street in Realtion to 1867 Ordnance Survey Mapping

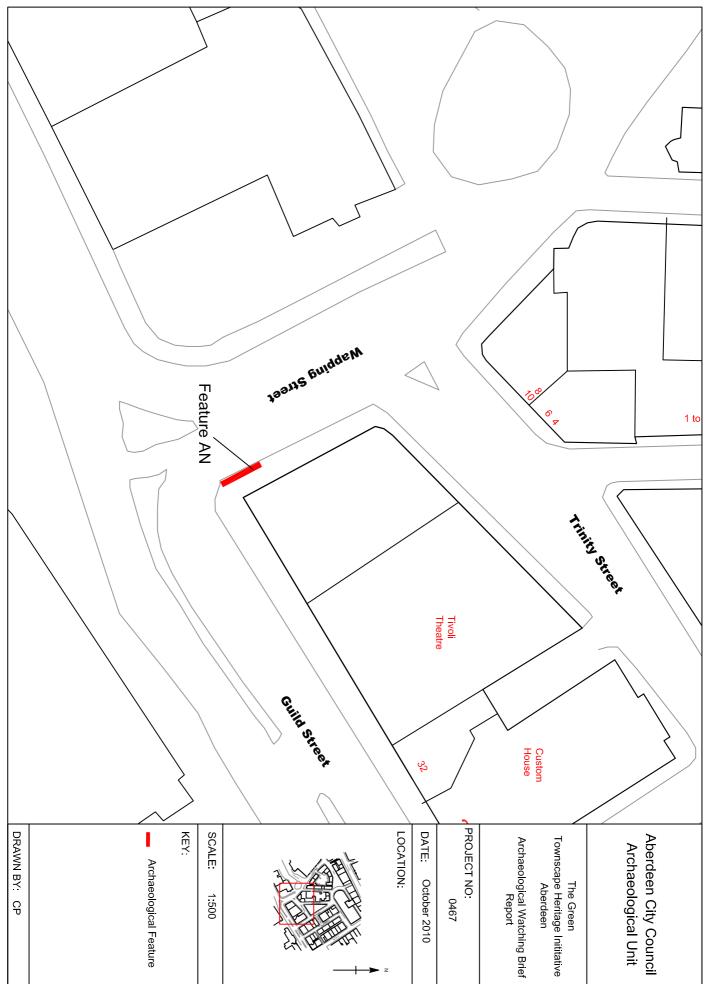


Figure 11: Archaeological Features Encountered on Wapping Street

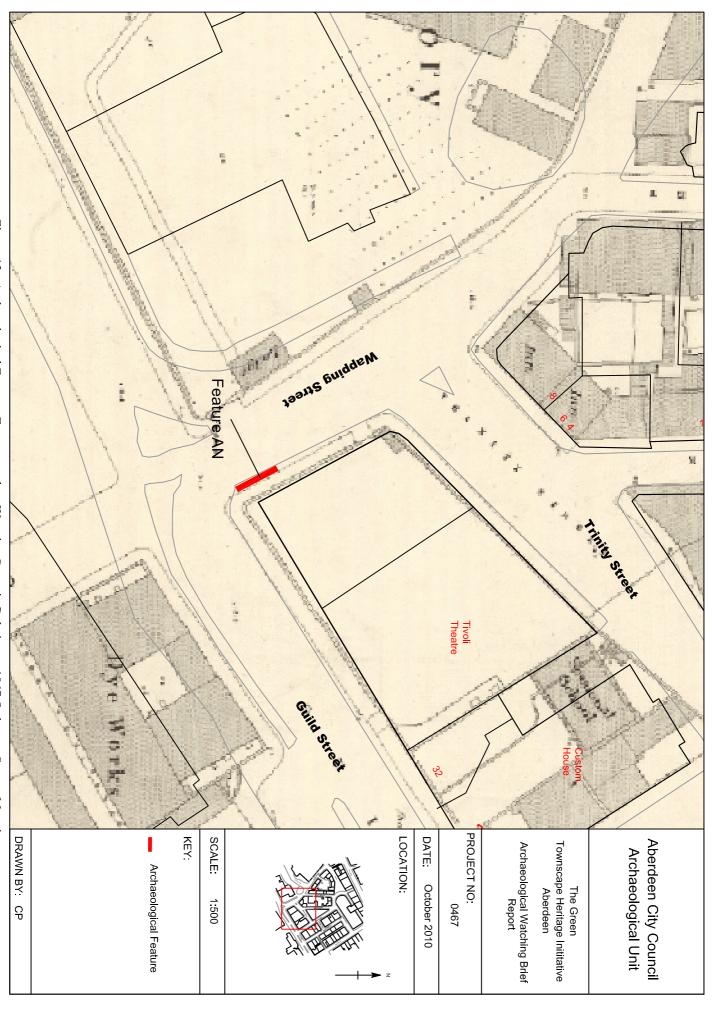
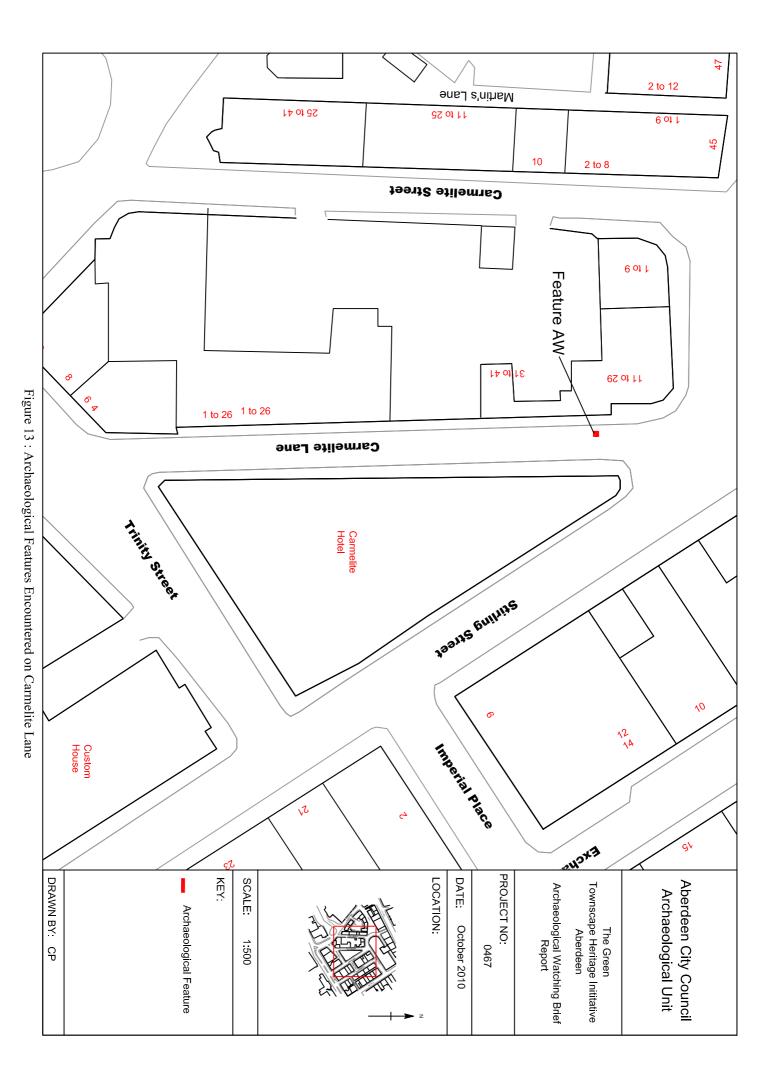


Figure 12: Archaeological Features Encountered on Wapping Street in Relation to 1867 Ordnance Survey Mapping



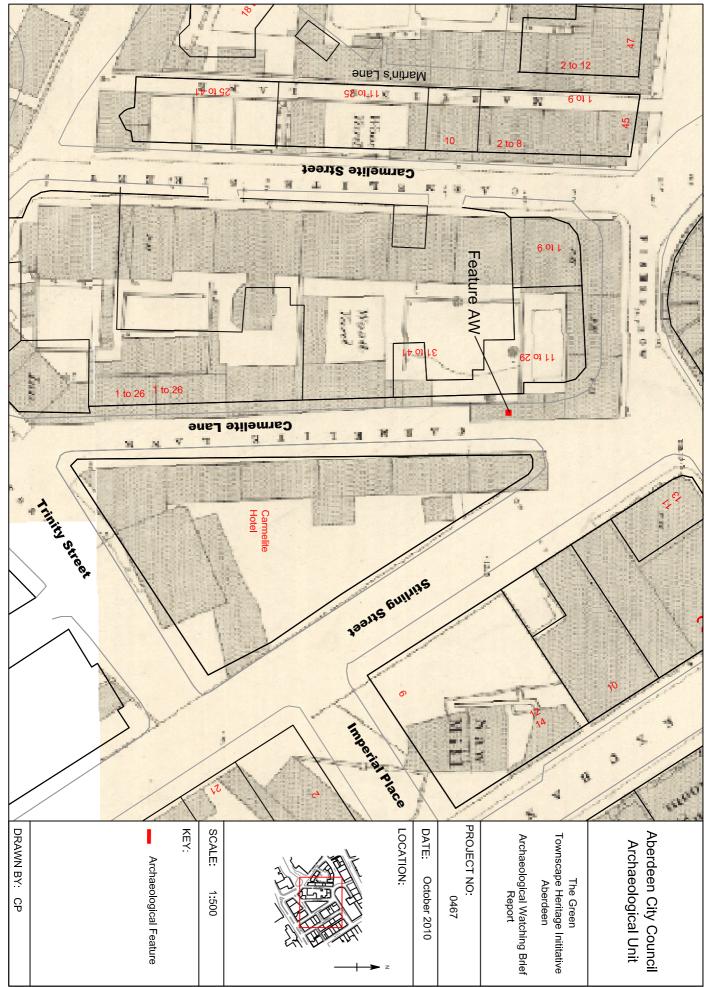


Figure 14: Archaeological Features Encountered on Carmelite Lane in Relation to 1867 Ordnance Survey Mapping