

Site Code: STA07 E88
Client: Bancon Developments Ltd

Results of an archaeological evaluation undertaken at Stoneywood Terrace, Aberdeen

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Contents

1. Introduction and Background
2. Objectives and Methodology
3. Results
4. Conclusions and Recommendations
5. References
6. Acknowledgements

Illustrations

Figure 1. Site location and plan of trenches

Plates

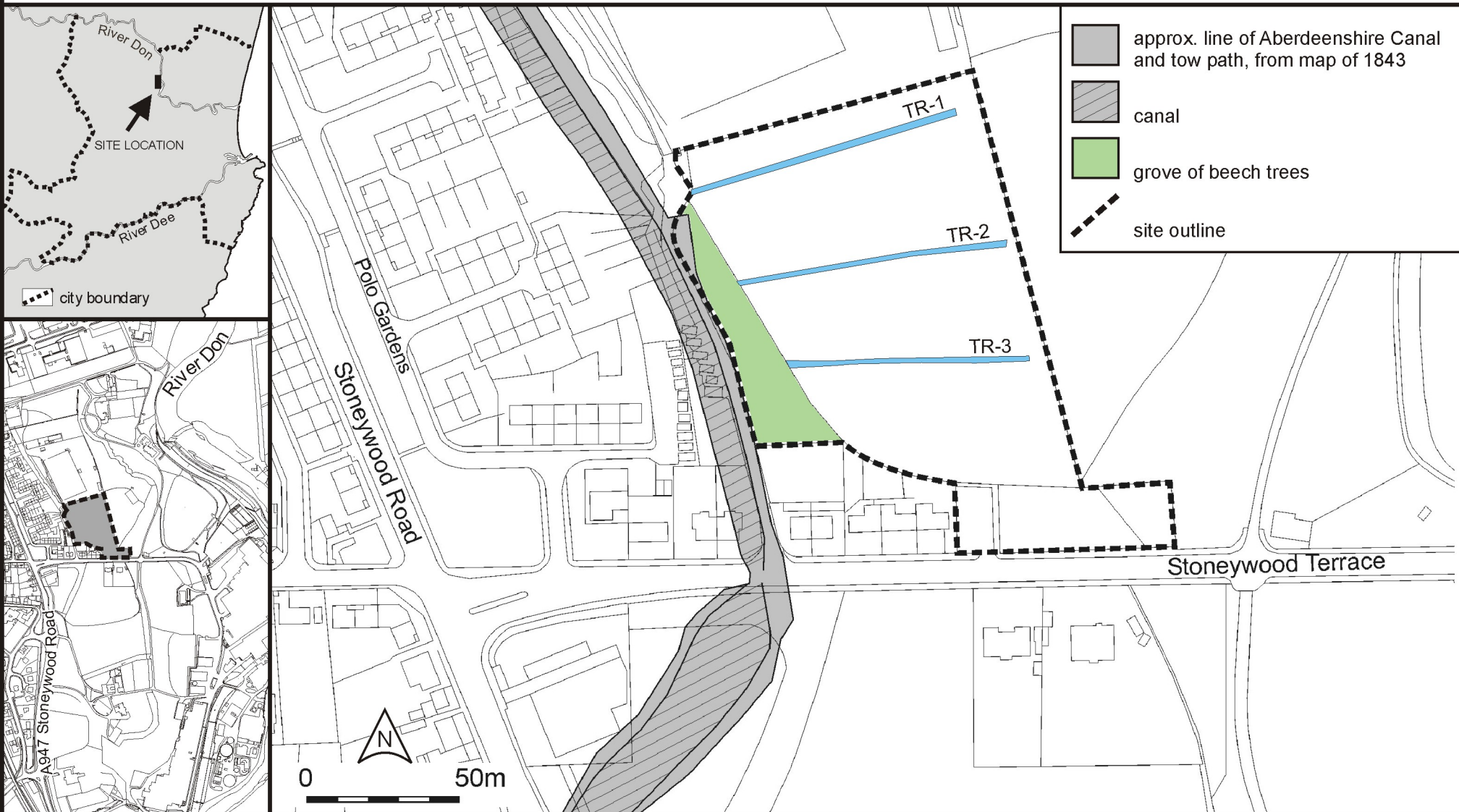
1. Grove of beech trees
2. TR-1, Showing modern field drain
3. & 4. Showing continuation of tree avenue and similar boundary walls.

Summary

In August 2007, Mr Harry McNab of Bancon Developments Ltd, commissioned Alison Cameron of Aberdeen City Council Archaeology Unit to conduct an archaeological evaluation on the site of a proposed development at Stoneywood Terrace, Aberdeen.

No archaeological features were discovered during the evaluation; however, it was not possible to evaluate the western edge of site (the area of greatest archaeological potential) due to the presence of a grove of mature beech trees. This report recommends that the clients notify Aberdeen City Council Archaeology Unit prior to any future groundworks within this area, to allow an evaluation trench to be dug (if appropriate) to determine the possible location of the Aberdeenshire canal..

Stonewood Terrace, Aberdeen: site location and plan of trenches *fig. 1*



1. Introduction and Background

In August 2007, Mr Harry McNab of Bancon Developments Ltd, commissioned Alison Cameron of Aberdeen City Council Archaeology Unit, to conduct an archaeological evaluation on the site of a proposed development at Stoneywood Terrace, Aberdeen.

The work was commissioned in direct response to a Specification for Archaeological evaluation set out by the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council (August 2007), which outlines the archaeological value of the site and indicates the work required to determine whether any archaeological deposits survive.

Stewart Buchanan was sub-contracted by the Council Archaeological Unit to carry out the Watching Brief on their behalf.

Historical and Archaeological context

The following is an appraisal by the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council (as set down in a Specification for Archaeological Evaluation (August 2007)) of the archaeological and historical factors that determined the rationale behind the current work.

The historical interest of this site lies principally in its location on the line of the Aberdeenshire canal, the approximate position of which is marked on the attached plan. The canal was constructed by virtue of Acts of Parliament obtained in 1796 and 1801 and was opened for traffic in 1805. It ran between Aberdeen and Port Elphinstone, near Inverurie and was intended to assist in the provision of cheaper imported fuel, to promote land improvement by reducing peat-cutting and to encourage the exploitation of quarries and timber. The canal operated for just over 40 years until the arrival of the railway. In 1845, the Great North of Scotland Railway bought the canal and began to construct the railway from Aberdeen to Inverness on broadly the same line, although in certain areas the new railway took a slightly divergent route. For that reason, there are a number of places where archaeological remains of the canal survive, either visible on the ground or undisturbed below ground. In this particular location, cartographic evidence, from the Plan of Aberdeenshire Canal, 1843 and the Ordnance Survey map of 1867, suggests that the canal ran immediately at the western boundary of the site.

There are a number of published articles about the history of the Aberdeenshire canal: details of these and of other sources of information can be obtained from Aberdeen City Council Sites and Monuments Record (01224) 523658.

The area of the current development has not been subject to previous archaeological investigation. However, a portion of a linear cut feature filled with sand and silt excavated at the north end of a site at 476 Great Northern Road in 2001, adjacent to Canal Street, some 100 metres west of the present site, was identified as part of the south side of the canal (*Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, Vol 2, 2001, p7). In 2005, an archaeological evaluation took place at the former McIntosh of Dyce factory, in Victoria Road, Dyce, also on the line of the canal, and some traces of its structure were found there (*Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, 2005, 11; unpublished reports by Alison Cameron, available from Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit). Also in 2005 an evaluation of a site at Stoneywood Road uncovered evidence of the canal and its towpath (report by Alba Archaeology, available from Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit). Finally, in 2006, evidence of possible wooden canalside revetment was recorded during evaluation work at 281-287 King Street (*Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, 2006, forthcoming; unpublished report by JC and HK Murray available from Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit).

In August 2007, archaeological evaluation work at a site in Canal Street, in the Woodside area of Aberdeen, revealed the line of the canal more or less as indicated on the 1867 Ordnance Survey map and found it to have been lined with distinctive blue clay (unpublished report by JC and HK Murray, available from Aberdeen City Council Archaeological Unit).

2. Objectives and Methodology

The objectives of the evaluation are:

- To identify the location, nature and extent of any features or objects of archaeological importance that would be damaged or destroyed by the proposed development.
- To record archaeological features located in situ to the highest professional standards.
- To propose arrangements for the safeguarding where possible, of any archaeological features or finds identified. These will need to be agreed with the Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council.
- To make sure that the needs for archaeological conservation and recording are met without causing any unnecessary delay or disturbance to the development project.

To this end:

- All archaeological features and deposits encountered will be fully excavated by hand and recorded by using pro forma recording sheets and a continuous unique numbering system.
- All plans, sections, profiles and elevations will be drawn at 1:10, 1:20 and 1:50 as appropriate.
- Drawings will be made in pencil on permanent drafting film. The depth of all principal features and levels will be calculated in meters relative to Ordnance Datum. Plans, sections and elevations will be annotated with depths as appropriate. All features and sections will have photographs taken to produce a photographic record consisting of monochrome prints and colour slides (The latter will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland, Edinburgh).
- All archaeological work will be undertaken following guidelines recommended by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 1999).

Monitoring

It will be necessary for City Development Services – Planning, to monitor the progress and effectiveness of the evaluation in order to ensure the proper execution of the specification and therefore conformity to the brief. Stages at which monitoring is appropriate will be agreed between the archaeological contractor and the Keeper, Archaeology. The possibility of random inspections should not be excluded.

Finds & Samples

Finds of objects will be subject to the Scots Laws of Treasure Trove and Bona Vacantia and reported by the archaeological contractor to the Secretariat of the Treasure Trove Panel (Dr Alan Saville, National Museums of Scotland, Queen Street, Edinburgh EH2 1JD) for disposal to an appropriate museum.

The post-excavation of finds will be processed by an approved archaeological contractor employing a recognized specialist.

Specialists in relevant subjects will be employed as appropriate to deal with archaeological artifacts recovered during work.

A bulk sample of deposits to be made where there is likelihood of organic or dateable remains, on-site factors to determine size of sample. All bulk samples to be submitted to an approved contractor who will submit relevant material reports on the results.

Any human remains which are encountered must initially be left in situ. Their removal will be a matter of discussion with the Keeper, Archaeology (who must be notified within 12 hours of their Discovery) and will comply with the provisions of Scots Law.

Reporting

A report on the findings of the work will be compiled following guidelines stipulated in the Aberdeen City Council's Specification for Archaeological Evaluation (A5/1608).

Copies of the evaluation should be sent to the Keeper of Archaeology, the applicant and the City of Aberdeen City Development Services - Planning. A summary of the work undertaken will be submitted to the Council for Scottish Archaeology's publication Discovery & Excavation in Scotland.

Archive Deposition

The project archive, including written, drawn and photographic elements (together with a summary of the contents of the archive) will be deposited with the National Monuments Record Scotland (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland). The archive will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the RCAHMS.

Timetable

The fieldwork was carried out by Stewart Buchanan between the 6th and 7th of September 2007.

Operational Factors

The archaeological contractor will at all times follow and confirm to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and other various regulations and the Codes of Conduct and Approved Practice and Standards of the Institute of Field Archaeologists of 1999. All plant will be provided by the client.

Trenching

In order to locate the Aberdeenshire canal a number of evaluation trenches will be placed perpendicular to, and as close as possible to the estimated route of the canal and towpath.

3. Results

The main body of the site is a gently sloping (from west to east) field of rough pasture located at (NJ 8938 1121). A grove of beech trees is situated along the western edge of the site (see Fig 1& Plate 1).



Plate 1. Grove of beech trees.

Three evaluation trenches were excavated (aligned approx W-E) across the open field. TR-1 = 91m in length: TR-2 = 89.5m: TR-3 = 81m; to an average depth of approximately 0.35m, to the orange sand/gravel natural.



Plate 2. TR-1, Showing modern field drain.

No archaeological features (other than modern field drains) were encountered during the evaluation.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

A negative result was not surprising considering the distance of the evaluation trenches from the estimated route of the canal and towpath. Clearly, any evidence for the canal is more likely to be found within the beech grove which stands adjacent to the estimated route.

A tentative argument could be made to suggest that the land on which the beech grove is planted could actually be part of the canal (or associated features) as it is part of a longer avenue of trees (that run north) that share a similar (sunken) land morphology as well as what appears to be the same containment wall (see plates 3&4).



Plates 3 & 4. Showing continuation of tree avenue and similar boundary walls.

This report recommends that Aberdeen City Council Archaeology Unit be informed if the client intends to clear, or carry out groundworks (services/access roads) in any part of the beech grove. This would allow an archaeologist to excavate an evaluation trench within the beech grove (with the aim of locating the Aberdeenshire canal) prior to any sub-surface development.

5. References

Aberdeen City Council (August 2007). *The Specification for Archaeological Evaluation*, Keeper of Archaeology, Aberdeen City Council.

IFA (1999) *By-laws, Standards and Policy Statements of the Institute of Field Archaeologists*. Reading.

6. Acknowledgements

Jan Dunbar (Illustrations, fig 1.), Alison Cameron and Judith Stones of Aberdeen City Council Archaeology Unit.