

Report on archaeological monitoring of sewer renewal works in
advance of construction of new RNLII station, Wharf Street,
Montrose



View of harbour wall, West Quay, Wharf Street, Montrose looking North East,
site works and old pier in background

Introduction (Illus 1)

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) proposes to construct a new lifeboat station on the West Quay, Wharf Street, Montrose. As part of this programme of works the existing sewer line had to be diverted and renewed, the planning consent for this development (09/00115/FUL) included a condition specifying the need for a watching brief on all groundworks associated with the development. The author monitored the sewer renewal works on the 17th April and 1st and 4th May 2012 (Site Code MON01), weather conditions varied very heavy rain and bright sunshine.

Historical Background (Illus 2, 3, 4 and 5)

In the 15th century the harbour at Montrose was reputedly called the port of Stromnay. Evidence suggests that in the late 17th century the harbour was constructed from wood and was subsequently rebuilt with stone in the 18th century. In 1843, engineer James Leslie built a rectangular dock with coursed-rubble quay walls and iron lock gates, manually operated by capstan. At the north end was a cast- and wrought-iron, hand-operated post crane. The dock was infilled before 1984. The old pier, projecting south at the east end of the west quay, is built upon the site of previous piers, first recorded in 1493, rebuilt in stone in 1631. The present pier was built upon the same site in 1882. It is constructed of squared and coursed stone over a rubble core.

Previous archaeological work by Headland Archaeology in 2000-1 as part of a series of watching briefs connected to the upgrading of the Montrose and Ferryden waste water network located archaeological remains in Wharf Street and vicinity. These included the probable remains of part of the harbour works, a 17-18th century pier, a stone structure replacing the original timber structure; a wooden pile and a possible working surface with 18th century pottery were discovered. The ashlar stone structure possibly relates to the West Quay and the wooden to the East Quay. The ashlar wall survived to a height of c. 1m and was 3 courses high and was visible for 1.2m. To its east was a sand deposit interpreted as the possible original pier infill. A large pit was also discovered, this was dug into the foreshore and contained mainly 17th century material, but with some residual medieval material including a possible Scarborough Ware sherd and other pottery.

Watching Brief (Illus 6, 7)

Background to works

Two new sewer trenches were to be dug one for a 900mm pipe and the other for a 650mm pipe, the 900mm pipe was to be inserted into a trench 2.5m deep, the 650mm pipe into a trench 1.8m deep. In illustration 6 the deeper trench line is coloured red the shallower one is coloured blue. The new lifeboat station was to be built on piles with a new solum level 1m above current ground level

17th April 2012 (Illus 8)

The first site visit by the author recorded the excavation of the Western end of the deeper of the two new sewer lines and observed a clean sterile dump of sand and occasional small stones to a maximum depth of 2.50 m below modern ground level.

1st May 2012 (Illus 9 and 10)

The second visit observed the digging of a section of the second of the two new sewer lines and again observed a clean sterile dump of sand and small stones to a maximum depth of 1.80 m below modern ground level. The course of the existing sewer line was located towards the Wharf Street frontage.

4th May 2012 (Illus 11 and 12)

The final site visit observed the digging of a new manhole at the eastern end of the shallower of the two sewer lines a clean sterile dump of sand and stones was recorded to a depth of 1.80 m below modern ground level. At this point the sand dump was sealed by a layer of stone setts (10cm thick) which were in turn covered with tarmac (10cm thick).

Discussion and Conclusions (Illus 2, 3, 4 and 5)

The entire area behind the harbour wall on the West Quay appears to be made up of a large dump of clean sand and stones which may have been dredged out of the river. This material would appear to have been dumped in a single episode and although no dating evidence was recovered may be associated with changes to the area following the construction of the bridge across the River South Esk in the late 18th century. No finds were recovered.

A study of the available cartographic evidence for this part of Montrose indicates a much narrower harbour frontage along Wharf Street in both 1703 and 1747-55 (Illus 2 and 3), once the bridge crossing has been built in the late 18th century Wharf Street is shown as being much wider (Illus 4 and 5). When coupled with the observations that were carried out on this site this would suggest that any early harbour frontage is liable to be along the Southern edge of Wharf Street close to the modern pavement line and also suggests that prior to the infilling of this area the early pier adjacent to the site on the east was once much longer.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Martin Knowles of Drummond Construction for his help and interest during this monitoring exercise.

Illustration List

Illus 1 Location of site of new lifeboat station and associated sewer renewal Wharf Street, Montrose (based on Ordnance Survey map Crown Copyright 2012. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 100049628)

Illus 2 John Adair's map of 'Montross' dated to 1703 showing pier (red circle) (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

Illus 3 'Montrosse' as shown on General Roy's Military Survey of 1747-55 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

Illus 4 West Quay and Harbour on Wood's map of 1822 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

Illus 5 Site area and West Quay as shown on 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1862 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)

Illus 6 Site plan showing line of new sewers (red and black), foot print of new RNLI station and monitored excavations (green line). Letters indication location of photos in Illus 8 to 12.

Illus 7 General view of site location looking East (left of white shed on Old Pier)

Illus 8 General view of excavation for deep sewer line showing dump of clean sand (A on Illus 6)

Illus 9 Excavation for course of shallower sewer line showing dump of clean sand (B on Illus 6)

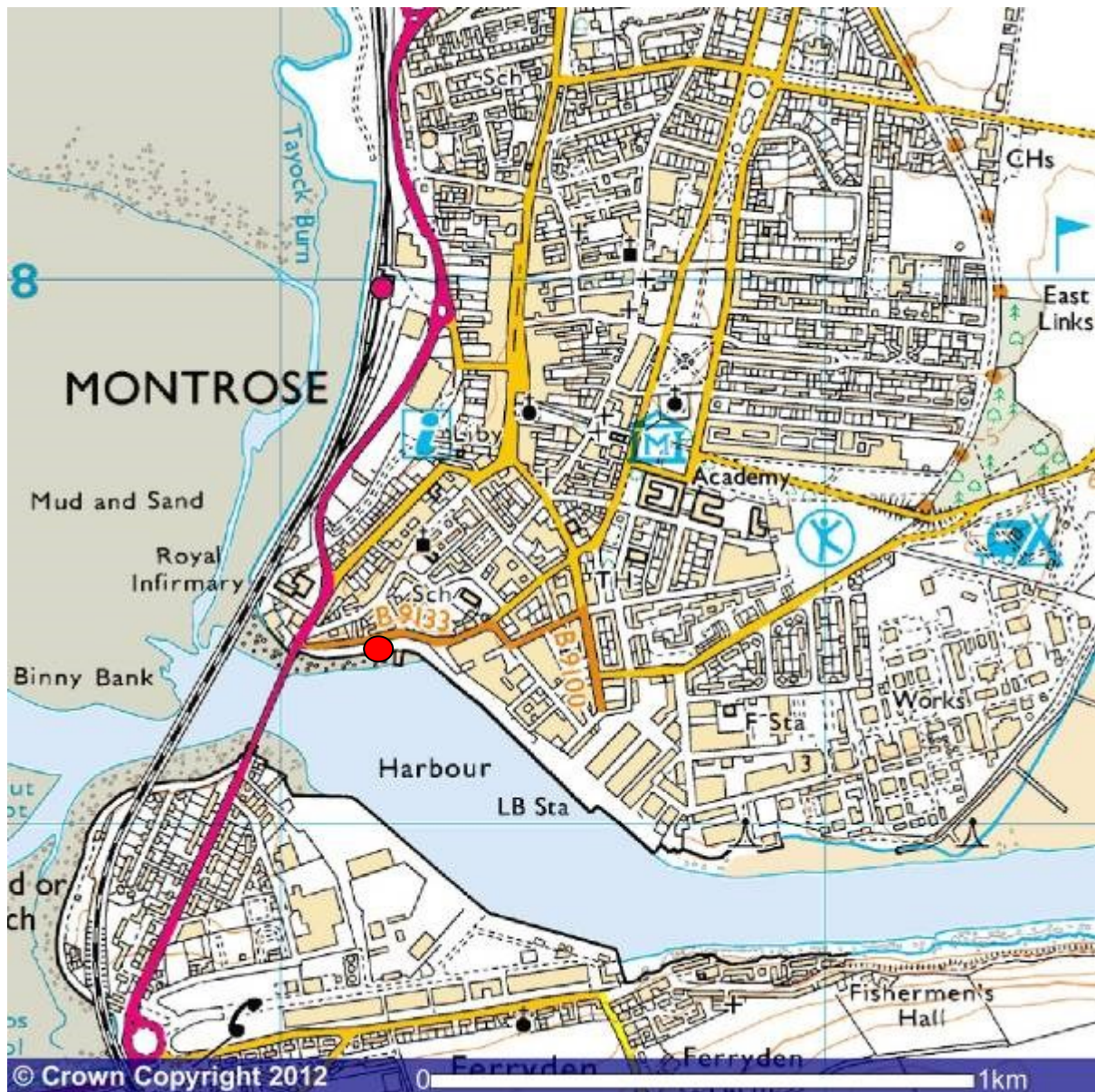
Illus 10 Excavation for shallower sewer line showing fill of original sewer trench in section (red arrow) (C on Illus 6)

Illus 11 Excavation for new manhole at connection to old sewer line showing dump of clean sand (Wharf Street in background) (D on illus 6)

Illus 12 Detail view of clean sand dump below tarmac and setts looking North (D on illus 6)

Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Angus Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Wharf Street, Montrose
PROJECT CODE:	MON01
PARISH:	Dalmeny
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR(S):	Derek Hall
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Derek Hall, archaeologist and ceramic specialist
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief on sewer renewal for lifeboat station
NMRS NO(S):	None
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Pier and Harbour frontage
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	None
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NO7113 5732
START DATE	17th April 2012
END DATE	4th May 2012
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. <i>DES</i> ref.)	None
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	A watching brief was carried out on the groundworks associated with the renewal of sewer lines to the new lifeboat station. The site area proved to be made up of a large dump of clean sand and small stones to a maximum observed depth of 2.3m below modern ground level. No finds were recovered.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	RNLI
CAPTIONS FOR ILLUSTRS	N/A
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	34 Glenfarg Terrace, Perth, PH2 0AP
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended)	NMRS
EMAIL ADDRESS:	Derek.hall1@blueyonder.co.uk



Illus 1 Location of site of new lifeboat station and associated sewer renewal Wharf Street, Montrose (based on Ordnance Survey map Crown Copyright 2012. All Rights Reserved. Licence number 100049628)



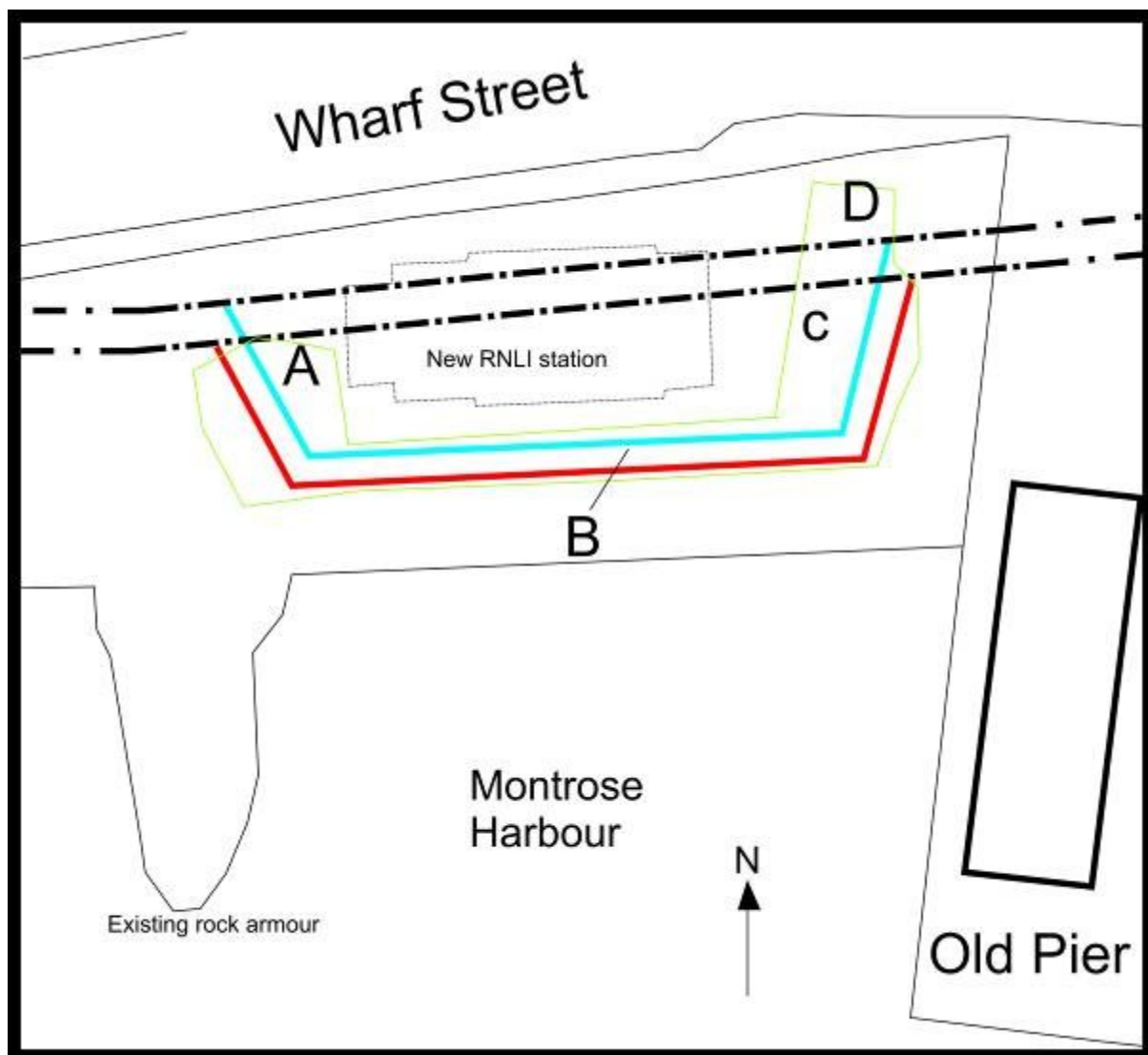
Illus 2 John Adair's map of 'Montross' dated to 1703 showing pier (red circle) (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)



Illus 3 'Montrosse' as shown on General Roy's Military Survey of 1747-55 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)



Illus 5 Site area and West Quay as shown on 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1862 (© Trustees of National Library of Scotland)



Illus 6 Site plan showing foot print of new RNLI station, line of new sewer pipes (red and blue), existing sewer line (shown by dotted line) and monitored excavations (green line). Letters indicate the location of photos in Illus 8 to 12. Scale 1:600



Illus 7 General view of site location looking East (left of white shed on Old Pier)



Illus 8 General view of excavation for deep sewer line showing dump of clean sand (A on Illus 6)



Illus 9 Excavation for course of shallower sewer line showing dump of clean sand (B on Illus 6)



Illus 10 Excavation for shallower sewer line showing fill of original sewer trench in section (red arrow) (C on Illus 6)



Illus 11 Excavation for new manhole at connection to old sewer line showing dump of clean sand (Wharf Street in background) (D on illus 6)



Illus 12 Detail view of clean sand dump below tarmac and setts looking North