

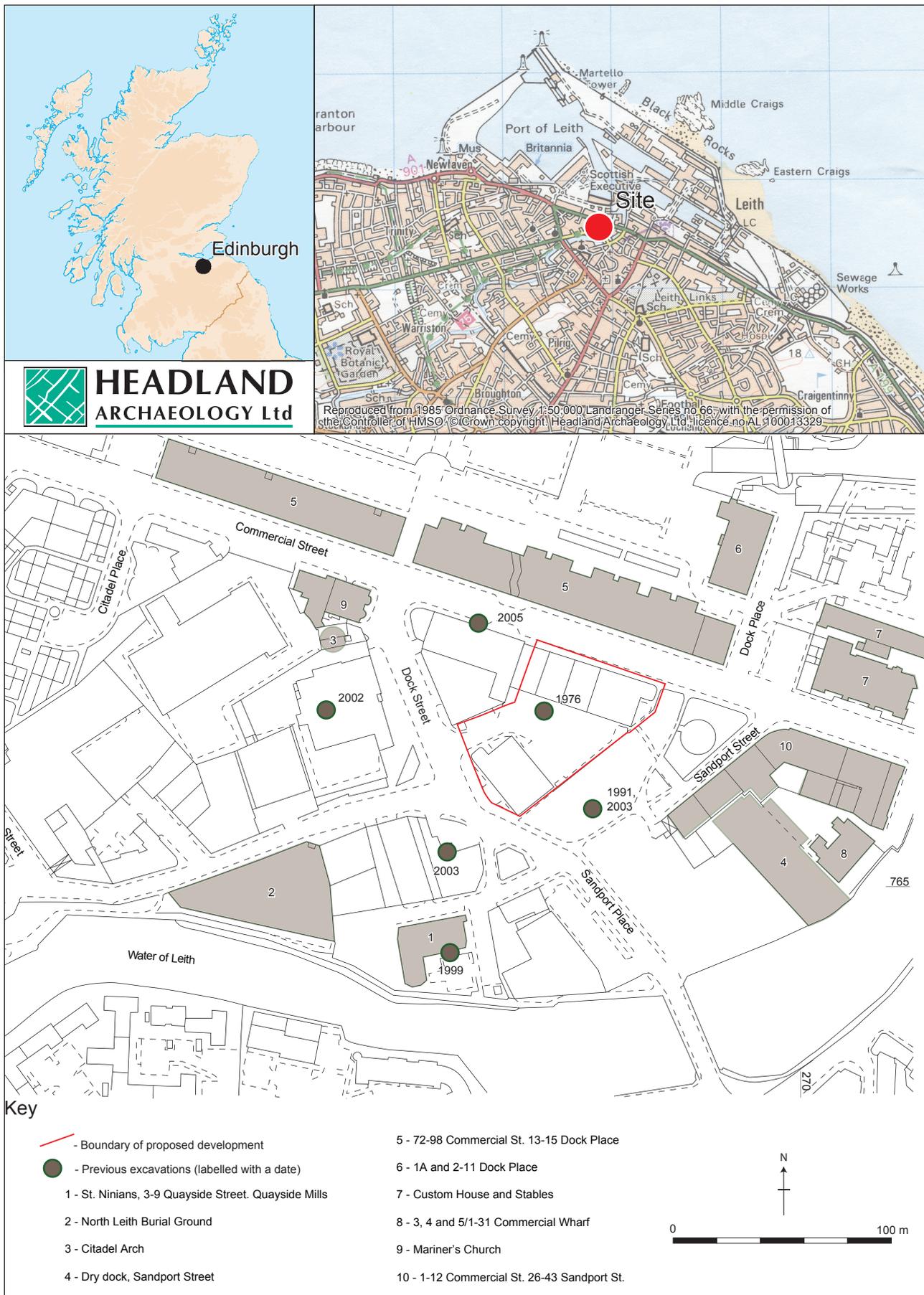
Project Code: SPLH08
Date: 22 August 2008
Client: Aldi Stores (Bathgate) Ltd.

Commercial Street, Edinburgh

Archaeological Desk Based Assessment

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BA (Hons) MPhil

<i>Client</i>	<i>Aldi Stores (Bathgate) Ltd.</i>
<i>National Grid Reference</i>	<i>NT 2687 7658</i>
<i>Address</i>	<i>Commercial Street</i>
<i>Parish</i>	<i>Edinburgh</i>
<i>Council</i>	<i>City of Edinburgh</i>
<i>Planning Application No</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>NMRS No</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>OASIS No</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>SMR No</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>HB/SAM No</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Listing Category</i>	<i>N/A</i>
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<i>Fieldwork</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Specialists</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Schedule:</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Fieldwork</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>Report</i>	<i>22nd Aug 2008</i>



Illus 1: Location and boundary of the proposed development showing previous excavations in the immediate vicinity

COMMERCIAL STREET, EDINBURGH

Archaeological desk based assessment

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SUMMARY

This report presents the results of an archaeological desk-based assessment of a proposed development site at Commercial Street, Edinburgh.

The coastal location of the site beside the mouth of the Water of Leith and the recovery of artefacts in the vicinity suggest a general potential for prehistoric remains. More specifically settlement during the medieval period is known to have been concentrated along present-day Sandport Street and there is a high potential for remains from this period to extend into the development site. This occupation continued into the post-medieval period and there is also a high potential for related sub-surface remains.

The preservation of any remains that extended into the area depends on the modern history of the site. In particular remains may have been destroyed during building construction and demolition throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Excavated areas in the immediate vicinity show a great deal of variation in the survival of archaeological remains. The presence or otherwise of archaeological remains can only be confirmed through intrusive evaluation (trial trenching).

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an archaeological desk-based assessment of a proposed development site at Commercial Street, Edinburgh (Illustration 1). This assessment has been carried out at the request of The City of Edinburgh Council Archaeologist, John Lawson, in support of a planning application by Aldi Stores (Bathgate) Ltd. to redevelop land at Commercial Street as a new supermarket, car park and housing. It will be used to provide background to agree a mitigation strategy for any adverse affects the development may have on the archaeological resource.

The assessment covers the potential for archaeological remains within the boundary of the proposed development. Wider cultural heritage issues relating to the setting of listed buildings, conservation areas and any other components of the 'built heritage' are not within the scope of this report and have not been considered.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study area for the assessment comprises the application area and a 100 m wide buffer around it. The purpose of the buffer is to ensure that features immediately adjacent to the application area are identified. A systematic search of background information was carried out, comprising:

Historic maps held by the National Library of Scotland
Archive plans held by the National Archives of Scotland
Archaeological information held in the National Monuments Record
Images held on the SCRAN database
Readily available published sources

The site was also visited on 20th May 2008 in order to assess topographic factors and existing conditions.

3. RESULTS

North Leith is located in an area of former sand dunes and has expanded considerably during the post-medieval period onto reclaimed land. The proposed development is situated within an area of former dunes which was part of the historic medieval core of the settlement. It is thought that Commercial Street, which forms the northern edge of the proposed development, reflects the line of the medieval foreshore. After streets were established their names were subject to frequent change and modern names have been applied in each case for the sake of clarity. Sites with statutory protection referred to in the text are listed in Appendix 1 and locations of previous excavations in the area are shown in Illustration 1.

Prehistoric period

There are no archaeological records from the study area that relate to the prehistoric period.

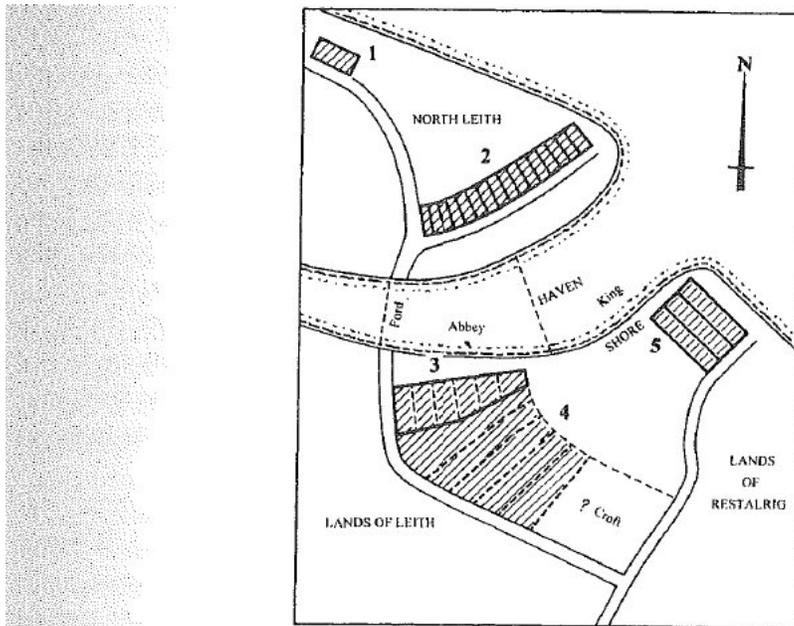
There is some evidence for prehistoric activity in the general vicinity. Middens have been discovered in the area which could date as far back as the Mesolithic period (Mowat 2003, 4). Outside the study area three late Bronze Age socketed axes have been recovered from within the Cromwellian citadel to the west (NMRS NT27NE 16). In general the Lothians were well settled by the later prehistoric period and there are comparatively high concentrations of crop marks on arable land in the region. Pre-Iron Age settlement sites are rarely found in this part of Scotland and isolated finds and burials form the majority of the archaeological record. In the Iron Age there is more

extensive evidence for settlement focused on hilltops, a pattern which continues up to the medieval period.

There are antiquarian claims to have discovered part of the suspected Roman coastal-road linking the Antonine period Roman forts at Cramond and Inveresk near to one of Leith's bridges and also a structure from the Roman period near the

Citadel (Stevenson et al 1981, 80). The case for some form of Roman military occupation at Leith cannot be discounted, due to its importance as an historic ford/crossing point and its location midway between the two forts. However modern excavations in the area have yet to produce direct evidence for any Roman activity.

Early Medieval



Plan of Leith in the twelfth century

1=St Nicholas' Chapel
2=North Leith tofts
3=St Leonard's lands

4=Tofts which seem to be contemporary with St Leonard's lands
5=The King's new harbour

Illus 2: Conjectural reconstruction of Leith in the twelfth century (Mowat 2003, 5)

Documentary information for North Leith in the early medieval period is scarce due to the later destruction of the Abbey of Holyrood's records. Prior to the establishment of the burgh of Leith in 1128 AD, a settlement at Leith was already present. The burghal charter established the burghs of North Leith, under the control of Holyrood Abbey, and South Leith which was to be controlled by the Crown (Mowat 2003, 4).

Excavations at Ronaldson's Wharf by CECAS between 1997 & 2003 and adjacent to the site produced evidence for pre-burghal settlement (Reed and Lawson 1999). This early settlement would appear to have included timber structures and enclosures, built within the dunes and with a probable focus on the line of later Sandport Street (Lawson pers. comm.).

Mowat (ibid.) has used later maps and early written sources to reconstruct a map of North Leith during the twelfth century. At this time a row of around sixteen tofts or properties stood along present day Sandport Street and it is possible that the rear of these properties extended into the proposed development. The Ronaldson's Wharf excavations uncovered evidence for these properties. The Sandport Street frontage was occupied with timber buildings that began to be replaced by stone structures by the end of the thirteenth century (Reed and Lawson 1999). In 1329 Robert the Bruce granted the harbour of Leith to Edinburgh but North Leith was not included in this and operated independently. The Ronaldson Wharf excavations recorded a large sea-wall constructed during the fourteenth century parallel to the line of later Commercial Street.

Late Medieval

Although it is unclear when the Chapel of St. Nicholas was built, somewhere to the west of the proposed development, it was in existence by 1488 (Harris 2002, 506).

Documentary sources from 1483 to 1515 offer a clear picture of development on reclaimed land along the shore with the original tofts along Sandport Street intact.

Mowat's research (2003, 65), based solely on surviving written sources, has not uncovered evidence for settlement spreading north-west into the limits of the proposed development and she suggests that this area may have been part of a common grazing ground known as 'The Green'. The Ronaldson's Wharf excavations supported this interpretation in part with evidence for agriculture extending towards the development site. The excavations also demonstrated that settlement expanded northwards toward present Commercial Street during the 16th century.

St. Ninian's Chapel (site 1) to the south-west of the proposed development, was founded in 1493 and parts of the original structure still survive within later buildings along with the remains of an early 15th century stone bridge across the Water of Leith (Henderson 1999).

Leith was walled in the 1540's when the Regent Mary of Guise moved the seat of government to the town. The walls encompassed North Leith with the northern edge of the defences running on the northern side of present Commercial Street. Much of the enclosed area remained empty as late as 1560 (Mowat 2003, 126). The walls were dismantled after the siege of Leith in 1560.

17th century



Illus 3: Circa. 1682 Adair, J Map of Midlothian. This map shows mainly narrow gardens plots to the rear of Sandport Street and immediate east of the 'cytydale'

Although Edinburgh acquired superiority over most of Leith in 1567 this did not include North Leith until 1639 (Mowat 2003, 212). In the 17th century the population of Leith expanded to twice its former size leading to more development.

In 1655 Cromwell's army constructed a citadel to strengthen the town's defences. The eastern edge of the citadel (site 3) lay close to the western edge of the site and its easternmost entrance survives intact. The

construction of the citadel destroyed the original graveyard of North Leith and a new one was granted to them in 1664 to the south-west of the proposed development (site 2).

Adair's map of c. 1682 appears to show buildings flanking both sides of Sandport Street. The area to their north appears to have been occupied by the gardens of these buildings.

18th century

Illus 4: 1747-55 Roy, W. A Military Survey of Scotland

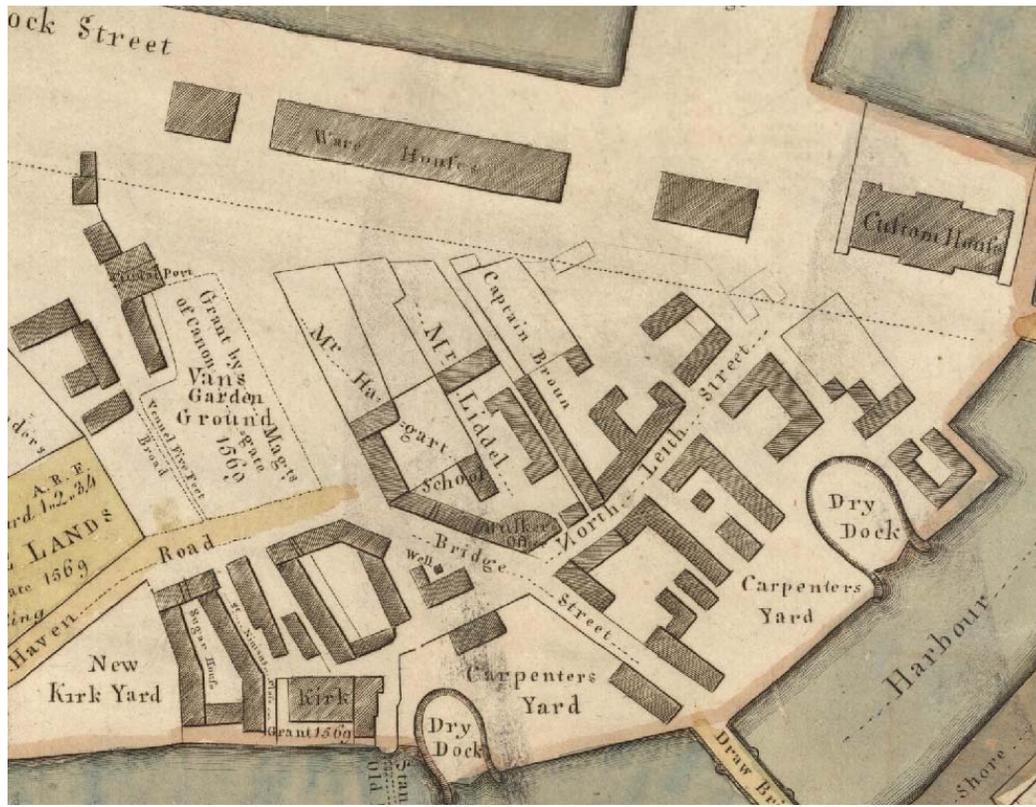
Roy's map of 1747-55 appears to show a large area of undeveloped land in the approximate area of the proposed development, although the scale of the map means details are unclear. By the end of the eighteenth century much of the Citadel had been demolished. There is map evidence for structures within the area bounded by Commercial Street, Sandport Street and Dock Street from this date onwards (Laurie 1763; Laurie 1766; Armstrong 1773) but the quality of mapping is too poor to locate them with any accuracy.

Wood's plan of Leith in 1777 shows that although most of the proposed development was occupied by gardens

there were also a number of apparently residential buildings. In the south-west structures at the rear of Sandport Place extend onto part of the development area. Several buildings along Dock Place would have been entirely within the development area as well as a single structure in the north-western corner.

From the late 16th century North Leith was the region's main ship-building centre (Mowat 2003. 154). One of Britain's earliest dry docks was constructed here in 1771, to the east of the proposed development (site 4) and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

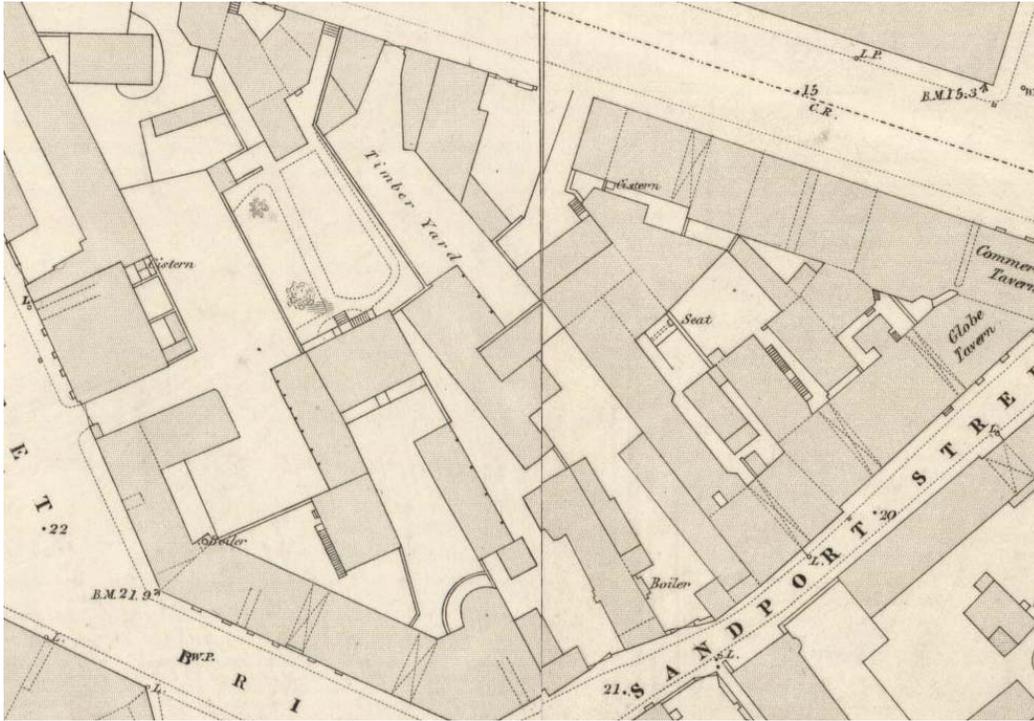
19th century



Illus 5: 1813 Bell, W Plan of the Regality of Canongate

Reclamation of land to the north of Commercial Street began at the turn of the 19th Century with the laying out of a series of large wet docks and associated warehouses which are still upstanding (site 5). Around the same time the bridge connecting Commercial Street and Junction Street and a new Custom House and stables were built (site 8). Also belonging to this period are a B-listed early 19th century warehouse (site 9), the C-listed Mariner's Church of 1839 (site 10) and a B-listed pub, tenements and hotel at 1-12 Commercial Street and 26-43 Sandport Street, all dating to 1870-75 (site 11).

Bell's map of 1813 (Illustration 5) shows further construction within the proposed development area. The buildings standing in 1777 remained and at least two more had been built, on the land of a Mr. Liddell and Captain Brown. Between 1813 and 1853 (Ordnance Survey, 1:1056) more buildings were constructed to the south of Commercial Street along the northern edge of the proposed development area. These were small with irregular plans and are likely to have been industrial sites; one was labelled a timber yard.

20th century

Illus 6: 1853 Ordnance Survey Town Plan of Edinburgh

The first half of the 20th century saw almost no change in the layout of the buildings within the proposed development area. Most of those which appeared on the 1895 Ordnance Survey map survived until the early 1950s. From 1953 on clearance of the structures began along the southern edge of the block and eventually all the structures in the area bound by Commercial Street, Sandport Street and Dock Street were cleared. The structures currently occupying the site were mostly built between 1976 and 1984.

Excavations within the study area.

In recent years there have been a number of archaeological excavations within the study area. In 1976 a series of trenches were dug to establish the extent of the medieval town boundaries. One of these is believed to have been near, or possibly within, the proposed development area but cannot be precisely located (Holmes 1976, 32; *ibid.* 1980, 78-9). Midden deposits were found above natural dunes,

along with pottery dating from the 12th to 17th century. A series of excavations between 1991 and 2003 around Ronaldson's Wharf, to the immediate east of the proposed development, uncovered evidence of timber buildings and rubbish pits dating to the eleventh and twelfth century. In some places up to 2 metres of medieval deposits were found to survive above natural dunes. Elsewhere medieval deposits had been significantly truncated by the construction of later structures dating from the 17th century or later (Collard 1992; Reed 1999; Reed and Lawson 1999, Stronach 2002; Lawson 2003).

To the south-west of the proposed development area relatively recent disturbance, including construction of a series of air raid shelters, had removed medieval deposits (Jones 2003). To the immediate west of the proposed development area on the opposite side of Dock Street a series of trenches dug in 2002 uncovered the ditch of the

Cromwellian citadel, remains of which extended 3.8 metres below the modern road surface. This excavation suggested that the ditch runs underneath modern Dock Street (Brown 2002) and associated remains may extend into the western edge of the proposed development site.

More recently a small watching brief to the north of the site on Commercial Street failed to uncover features of archaeological significance (Suddaby 2005).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The presence of prehistoric finds in the vicinity and the topography of the area suggest a general, background, potential for remains of prehistoric age. There is a high potential for remains dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods.

The proximity of the proposed development area to the foreshore and the pre-burghal remains recorded in previous excavations immediately to the south-west suggests a potential for remains dating from as early as the eleventh century.

From the 12th century Sandport Street was established with medieval properties extending back toward the proposed development area. There is a high potential for medieval remains associated with the periphery of this settlement to survive within the proposed development area where not disturbed by later construction. Unpleasant or hazardous small-scale industrial activities such as fish processing and metal-working were often

undertaken at the edge of medieval settlements.

Sites of post-medieval date are known to have existed at the southern edge of the proposed development area and appear to have been domestic in nature. Discovery of remains from this period would be viewed as archaeologically significant.

Previous excavations have shown that survival of archaeological deposits in the vicinity is very variable. Survival depends on two factors. Firstly it will be affected by the naturally undulating topography of the natural sand dunes that underlie North Leith. Higher parts of dunes, and remains associated with them, are more likely to have been disturbed. Secondly survival of archaeological deposits will be affected by the modern history of the proposed development area; in particular how much clearance work preceded modern building.

The potential for the survival of significant archaeological remains within the proposed development area must be considered high. The presence or otherwise of such remains can only be confirmed through intrusive evaluation (trial trenching).

A programme of works agreed with the planning authority will need to accompany proposed development to mitigate any impacts on the archaeological resource. This programme of works will be detailed in a Written Scheme of Investigation that will accompany a planning application.

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6. APPENDIX 1

Sites with formal designations within 100 metres of the proposed development

HA No.	Site name	Site type	Year of construction	Formal Designations
1	St. Ninians, 3-9 Quayside Street. Quayside Mills	Manse/Church/Tenement/Granary/Mill/ Office buildings	15 th -19 th century	HB Number 27395, A-listed
2	North Leith Burial Ground	Graveyard	17 th century	HB Number 26735, B-listed
3	Citadel Arch	Part of Cromwellian defences.	1656-7	Scheduled Ancient Monument 2993, HB Number 26902, B-listed
4	Dry dock, Sandport Street	Dry dock	1771	Scheduled Ancient Monument 5683
5	72-98 Commercial St. 13-15 Dock Place	Warehouses/ Offices	1800-1817	A-listed, HB Number 26825
6	1A and 2-11 Dock Place	Offices and warehouses	c. 1810	B-listed, HB Number 26890
7	67 Commercial St	Custom House and Stable	1810-1825	A-listed, HB Number 26787
8	3, 4 and 5/1-31 Commercial Wharf	Wharf / Warehouse/Apartments	Early 19 th century	B-listed, HB Number 26878
9	Mariner's Church	Church, chapel-of-ease	1839	HB Number 26800, C-listed
10	1-12 Commercial St. 26-43 Sandport St.	Public house/ tenement/ hotel	1870-5	B-listed, HB Number 26812