

Date: March 2007
Client: City of Edinburgh Council
Project Code: PPE06

Harbour Place, Portobello, City of Edinburgh

Results of an Archaeological Evaluation and Harbour Survey

Candy Hatherley and Dan Atkinson

PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET (MFD06)

Client	City of Edinburgh Council
National Grid Reference	NT 3045 7435
Project Manager	Russel Coleman
Text	Candy Hatherley and Dan Atkinson
Illustrations	Craig Williams
Fieldwork	Candy Hatherley Sophie Nicol Dan Atkinson Colin Hewit
Schedule	
Fieldwork	December 2006
Report	March 2007

Summary

Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by The City of Edinburgh Council to undertake an archaeological evaluation on a grassed verge at Harbour Place, Portobello, City of Edinburgh to identify any surviving elements of the former Thistle Pottery factory previously located there.

This work consisted of three test pits within the grassed verge. No archaeological features were identified associated with the pottery works. However, the topsoil of each trench contained numerous saggars and pottery sherds and an 18th century water pipe.

A survey was commissioned by Edinburgh City Council on the remains of the masonry pier head located on the beach at the former site of Portobello Harbour recently uncovered during storms. The results of the survey work are incorporated within this report.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
2. METHOD
3. RESULTS
4. FINDS REPORT - George Haggerty
5. DISCUSSION
6. PORTOBELLO HARBOUR SURVEY

APPENDIX A: Test-Pit Register

APPENDIX B: Photo Register

APPENDIX C: Context Register

Figure 1: Location of Evaluation trenches

Figure 2: Site location showing exposed pier

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The City of Edinburgh Council commissioned Headland Archaeology Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation at Harbour Place, Portobello, City of Edinburgh, to determine whether any features associated with the former Thistle Pottery factory survived. This programme consisted of an on-site evaluation by test pitting of a parcel of open ground on Harbour Place.
- 1.2 The land lies within an area formerly occupied by the Buchan's Pottery Factory founded in c. 1879. Prior to this the area was the site of a large stoneware pottery constructed by Thomas Tough in 1840. A soap works and possibly an 18th century pottery constructed by William Jameson as early as the 1770s may also have stood on the area in the 18th and early 19th century.
- 1.3 The Buchan pottery was a complex of 1- and 2-storey brick and rubble buildings which were almost entirely demolished in the late 1970's. Two bottle kilns (dated 1906 and 1909) and a section of boundary wall have survived.
- 1.4 The land owned by the former Pottery was extensive. The small parcel of land available for this investigation lies immediately to the south of the seafront at Portobello. It is bordered to the north and west by the former boundary wall of the Pottery, to the east by Harbour Place and to the south-west by a carpark.

2. METHOD

- 2.1 Three test pits were excavated within the area using a JCB mechanical excavator equipped with a 1.60 m wide toothless ditching bucket, under direct archaeological supervision. Machining in the area was restricted by the boundary wall to the north and west and the public footpath on Harbour Place to the east. Additionally, gas and water services were uncovered, further restricting the available ground for evaluation.
- 2.2 Colour transparencies and negative photographs were taken and unique numbers given to each trench and feature identified. Overall site plans were created using a Total Station linked to a *Penmap* digital mapping system. All surveying was linked to the National Grid and relative to Ordnance Datum.

3. RESULTS

- 3.1 A full description of each trench is given in Appendix A and a list of photographs is given in appendix B. All context numbers assigned are listed in Appendix C.
- 3.2 Test Pit 1 was excavated to 2.70 m in depth. Beneath 0.4 m of turf and topsoil was a thick (1.4 m in depth) make up deposit of mixed material including bricks, saggars, pottery and general demolition debris (001). This overlay a mixed clay and sand deposit, also containing frequent pottery sherds (002). Natural sands were encountered at 2.30 m and a further 0.50 m was removed to confirm it was not a wind blown sand deposit.

- 3.3 Test Pit 2 was excavated to 1.60 m in depth. Beneath 0.3 m of turf and topsoil was a similar deposit to Test Pit 1 (001), (003) which also contained plastic sheeting, crisp packets and iron nails. Within this deposit, at approximately 0.6 m in depth, were the remnants of a brick surface. Approximately 10 bricks, marked with a 'Bonnybridge' stamp, were set into (003) with a rough sandstone boulder edging the western edge. Due to the location within the demolition deposit (003) it appears that the surface may have been redeposited or built to level the ground surface above during the removal of the pottery works in the 1970's.
- 3.4 In the southern edge of the trench was a section of red brick wall three courses high running east-west. Constructed from modern bricks it was interpreted as a possible service wall built circa 1970's.
- 3.5 In the north-east corner of Test Pit 2 a rectangular concrete structure was encountered 0.6 m below the surface of the test pit. This was excavated to a depth of 1.70 m where the structure's foundations stepped out. This structure was interpreted as a storm drain constructed in the late 20th century.
- 3.6 Test Pit 3 was excavated to 0.90 m in depth. Below approximately 0.30 m of turf and topsoil was dark brown compacted silt containing bricks, saggar fragments and rubble (007). Beneath this was a concrete floor which covered the entire base of the trench. Due to the restrictions in space it was not possible to trace the limits of the floor beyond the test pit, however due to the close proximity of Test Pits 1 and 3 the floor can not have continued north-east for more than 1 m. The concrete floor may be associated with the former pottery factory, as a warehouse floor or, due to the depth, a clay storage tank floor.

4. FINDS REPORT

George Haggerty

4.1 Test Pit 1

The topsoil (001) contained small fragments of 18th century hand made redware bricks, 19th and 20th century saggars and a number of shards of 20th century pottery (all discarded except for one shard **(A)** from a 19th century redware, white slipped, bowl).

From the dirty clay and sand deposit (002) just above the natural there were recovered eight bisque shards three undecorated from a bowl, cup **(B & C)** and a saucer **(D)**. The five decorated shards come from two dipped bowls, one light brown **(E)** and one pale blue one with black banding, shards **(F to I)**. There is also one very interesting pearlware glazed decorated with cobalt blue hand painting on both surfaces **(J)**. These shards will be published in full on the forthcoming CD Rom on the Portobello potteries and could be either late 18th or early 19th century in date.

4.3 Test Pit 2:

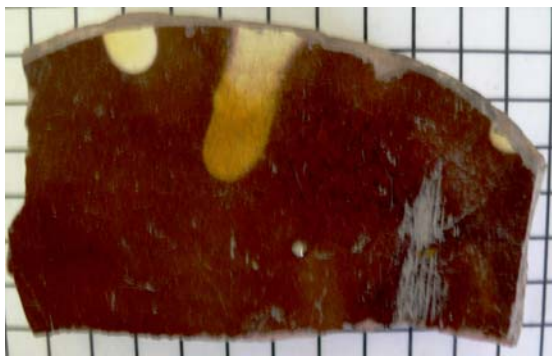
Alongside the modern material, (discarded), shards of a flow blue decorated stoneware jug, probably dating to the middle of the 20th century, were recovered from both demolition levels (003) and the lower material excavated down the side of what has been suggested was a storm drain. These jug shards which conjoin to form a substantial fragment **(K)**, might suggest that all the material from test pit 2 had been

deposited over a very short period. This jug will be published in full on the forthcoming Portobello CD Rom.

4.4 **Test Pit 3:**

The few shards of pottery from the deposit above the concrete floor in this test pit were of mixed late 19th and 20th century date and of no real value in dating (discarded).

Recovered from the spoil heap and probably from test pit 1, was a substantial fragment of a hand made 18th century redware water pipe with a tapered body (**L**). This important item will be published in full in the forthcoming Portobello CD Rom.



Shard (A)



Shards (B) to (I)



Shard (J)



Water Pipe (L)

5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1 The archaeological evaluation at Harbour Place, Portobello has shown that the majority of the area available for investigation has been subjected to disturbance in the late 20th century. The evaluation area is positioned within a workshop shown on a 1979 plan of the pottery works and the concrete floor identified in Test Pit 2 may therefore represent a surviving element of the pottery works at Portobello.

6. Portobello Harbour Survey

- 6.1 The remains of the masonry pier head located on the beach at the former site of Portobello Harbour was recently uncovered during storms. The structure is deemed of archaeological significance and consequently a survey was commissioned by Edinburgh City Council. The survey aimed to inform upon the nature of the existing structure and the projected line of the now slighted remains of the harbour which are currently buried beneath a buildings complex, planned for re-development.

The survey was carried out using an EDM linked to penmap software. A photographic record was also compiled to augment the survey results.

- 6.2 The results of the survey succeeded in recording the visible remains of the lower courses of a dry stone masonry structure. The shape of the structure in plan is essentially linear with a curved return on the south face terminating in a bluff pier head. Although the structure is largely robbed of its construction material, it was possible to identify the nature of the double skinned construction and the vestiges of rubble coring used to infill the interior of the structure. In addition it was also clear that a number of the stone blocks used in the construction were re-used.
- 6.3 The remains of the harbour structure at Portobello comprise the vestiges of a significant local and regional relict maritime installation. This is further corroborated by the location of the site and its close connection with the Pottery, once located to the south and west of the in-filled harbour basin (visible on 19th century maps). Although it is difficult to appreciate the nature of the structure as to how it once looked, a watercolour shows the north side of the pier structure circa 1830. It is clear from the cartographic and pictorial evidence that the remains relate to the southern quay and pier of the harbour.

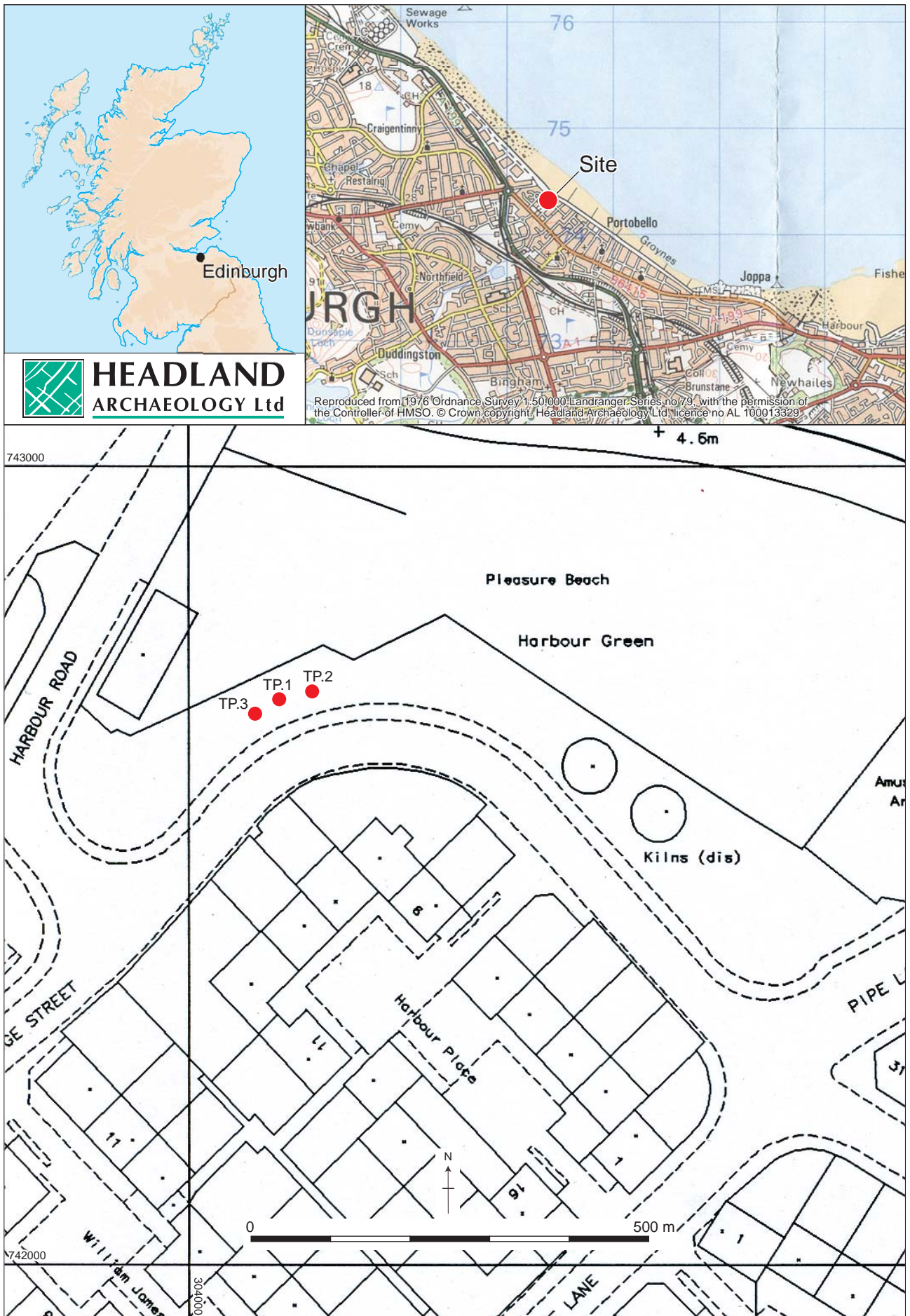


Figure 1 - PPE06: Harbour Place, Portobello: Location of test pits

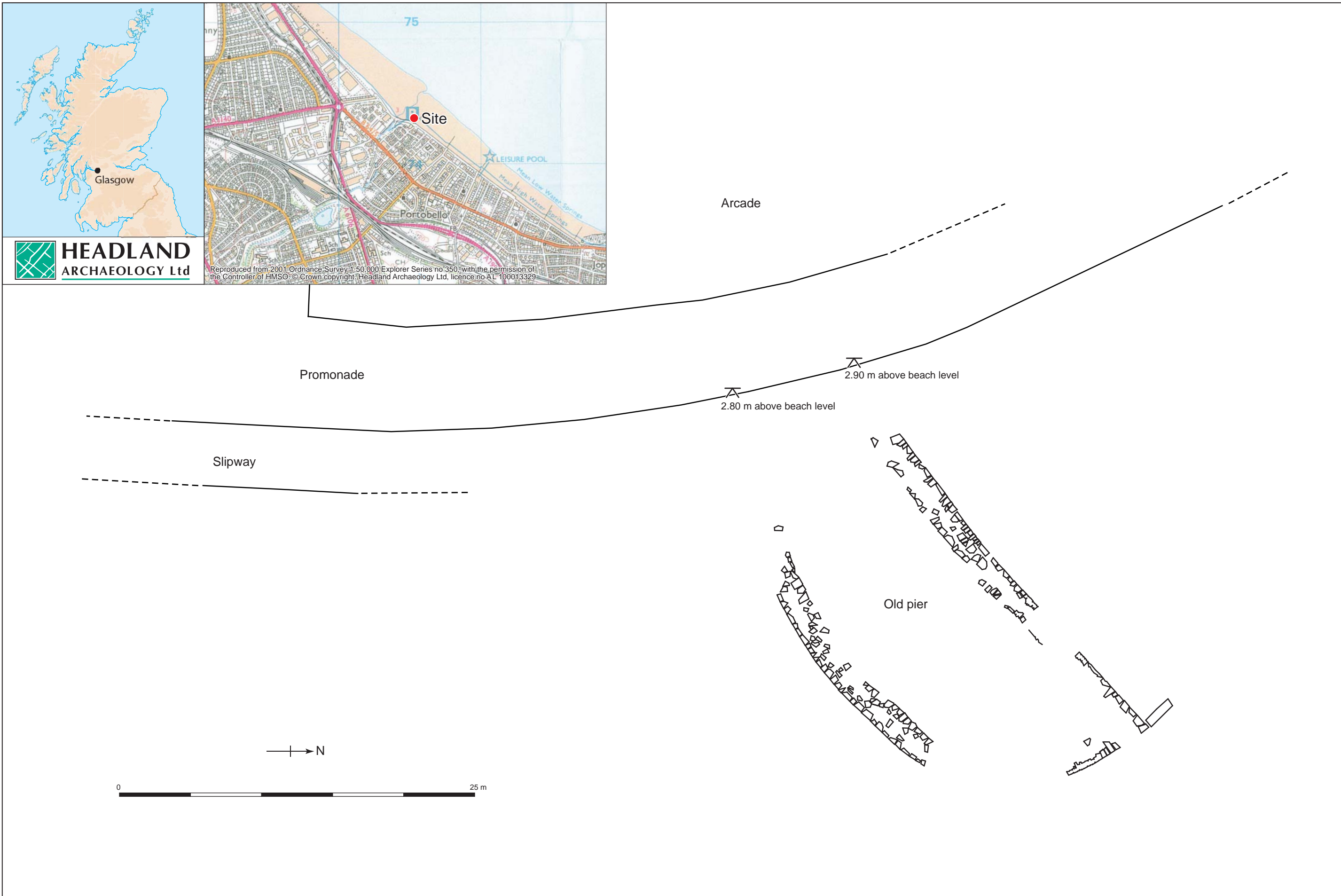


Figure 1 - PBH06: Site location showing exposed pier.

APPENDIX A
Test Pit Register

Test Pit	Description	Dimensions
1	Topsoil 0.4 m in depth overlay (001), a make up/demolition layer 1.4 m in depth. Beneath (001) was a mixed clay and sand deposit (002) which was approximately 2.3 m in depth and overlay natural sand.	Length: 3.1 m Width: 2.3 m Maximum depth: 2.7 m
2	Topsoil 0.3 m in depth overlay (003), a similar deposit to (001). Within (003) was a brick surface (004), a length of brick wall (005) and a concrete storm drain (006) all dating to the late 20 th century. The test pit was excavated to a depth of 1.70 m.	Length: 2.3 m Width: 1.67 m Maximum depth: 1.70 m
3	Topsoil 0.30 m in depth overlay (007), a demolition layer. Beneath this, at 0.90 m below the ground surface, a concrete floor (008) was encountered.	Length: 4.20 m Width: 2.20 m Maximum depth: 0.90 m

APPENDIX B
Photo Register
Colour Slide and Print

SHOT NO	FACING	DESCRIPTION
1		ID Shot
2	South	Test Pit 1 North facing section
3	South-west	Test Pit 1 North-east facing section
4	South-east	Test Pit 2 Brick surface (005)
5	West	Test Pit 2 General shot showing wall (006)
6	North	Test Pit 2 Concrete storm drain (007)
7	North	Test Pit 3 Concrete floor (009)

APPENDIX C
Context Register

CONTEXT NO	Test Pit	TYPE	INTERPRETATION
001	1	DEPOSIT	Demolition/make up layer
002	1	DEPOSIT	Mixed clay and sand
003	2	DEPOSIT	=001
004	2	DEPOSIT	Brick surface

CONTEXT NO	Test Pit	TYPE	INTERPRETATION
005	2	DEPOSIT	Brick wall
006	2	DEPOSIT	Concrete storm drain
007	2	DEPOSIT	Demolition/make up
008	3	DEPOSIT	Concrete floor