

Report on the First Six Months of the Port Adelaide Historical Archaeology Project.



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(Cover Page Photo: Susan Briggs)

Introduction/Executive Summary

The PAHA project has finally started and has made great inroads in the first six months, the biggest achievement being the organization of the first archaeological excavation that will be held in September/October this year. The main aim of the project, however in this first six months has been to develop links within the community. This has had varying success and it is recommended that more effort be put into this area in the next half of the year. This will be greatly aided by the excavation, which will provide a visible and public front for the project to attract and interest the public and media alike. The majority of time has been spent collecting historical information and examples similar archaeological sites for comparison. This will continue to be a strong focus of the project well into the next six months.

As part of the general planning of the project a budget has been formulated and can be viewed in Appendix 1.



Figure 1: 15 Quebec Street, Port Adelaide. The site of the first excavation (Photo: Susan Briggs)

Excavation

The first excavation will take place at 15 Quebec Street. The site was recently bought by Sandra Morton, history librarian to the Port Adelaide Enfield Library, who is currently in the process of restoring the c1900 cottage that occupies the front of the block. When Sandra heard of the PAHA project she mentioned that there was an artefact scatter across the rear yard and that she would like an archaeologist to have a look. Susan Briggs was interested by the scatter that included bottle glass, ceramics, bones and clay pipes and did a little historical research to find out what the site had been used for. Rate Assessment Records revealed that from 1867 the original allotment 108, of which Sandra now owns approximately a third, had four wooden cottages that were rented out by the owner John R. McDonald. These cottages were small, being listed variously as of two or three rooms and were rented to people like lumpers, labourers, laundresses and woodmen, people who did not earn very much and fit into a description of working class. Having established the working class, the people of particular interest to the project, used the site Sandra was approached to see if she would be willing to allow an excavation in the backyard. With her consent the excavation will take place between the 24th September to 7th October.

The planning for the excavation is in progress. No council permissions are required although it is necessary to notify the owners of surrounding buildings and ensure the excavations will not undermine their foundations if the excavation exceeds a certain depth. This has yet to be done but no problems are expected. Telstra, ETSA, Origin Energy and SA Water have all been contacted and no lines or pipes run through the property, however this does not include privately laid pipes and lines. Due to the age of the house it is doubtful whether plans still exist, or even if they were made of where lines were run to connect an outside water closet on the back fence. This will have to be considered during the excavation.

Research of the site has also continued so that the best possible understanding of the site can be taken into the excavation. Documentary records of the Port are thin in areas and no map has yet been found showing the configuration of the four cottages on the allotment and hopefully the excavation will be able to determine this. In the mean time research has continued into the lives of those who rented the cottages. While there were some tenants who only stayed a year or so there were a great many more that lived there for a number of years. A laundress Jane Wynes, for example, occupied one of the cottages between 1874 and at least 1880 and probably longer as a Chas Wynes, fireman, is in one of the

cottages until 1884. A second example is William Williamson, a lumper who occupied a cottage for six years between 1877 and 1882. These four early cottages seem to have been pulled down around 1900 to make way for two new galvanised iron houses, one of which still stands on Sandra's property.



Figure 2: A view of the rear of 15 Quebec Street, Port Adelaide (Photo: Susan Briggs)

Community Involvement

The excavation in Quebec Street will, for the most part, be undertaken by a group of third year archaeology students from Flinders University as part of their study, however the site will be open to the public. Around October interested third year students begin to look for honours topics for the following year and it is possible that one or two students will become interested in the Port and undertake projects on Port Adelaide. This will be a wonderful opportunity for the development of the South Australian Maritime Museum as a centre for such studies. Further more it will raise the profile of the Port within the academic community with flow-ons to the general public.

At this stage it is unclear whether members of the general public will have an opportunity to dig due to the confined space but it is hoped that at least industry partners employees will be able to have a dig. One week of the excavation overlaps with school holidays and it is hoped to make the most of this by developing a holiday program for school children in conjunction with the South Australian Maritime Museum.

In the coming six months an aim is to contact the Port Adelaide Enfield Council, the developers of new waterfront development and the Department of Transport in relation to Third River Crossing to discuss with them the impact of these developments on the heritage of Port Adelaide. This is a difficult task as officials are often cautious when approached by archaeologists because they think archaeologists are only interested in blocking and slowing down development. In this PAHA, however, is not aiming to be obstructionist instead offering easy ways in which the heritage can be respected and attempting to break down those stereotypes.

Research

To limit the scope of the project three blocks have been chosen for intensive research. Each of these blocks will have an excavation within them over the three years. The first of these, of course, contains 15 Quebec Street. The second block is bounded by St Vincent, Divett and Lipson Streets and Commercial Road (Figure 3). The third block will be chosen at a later date in response to an opportunity to excavate. For each block rate assessment information will be gathered and the tenants and owners occupations determined from street directories. As far as possible additional information will be gathered about the people from genealogical records. Information like how many children they had and when they were born will be useful in determining how many people were living in the houses, whether there was crowding and if the sanitary provisions were adequate.

Research has been focused on primary references held at State Records of South Australia and collections of the Port Adelaide Enfield Library. Documents like the Local Board of Health Minute Books and the Full Minutes of Corporation Meetings are providing fascinating details about what it was like to live in Port Adelaide. For example the Inspector of health “reported that when he visited the premises of Mr Christie in Nile Street for the purpose of requesting [him to have] some cesspits belonging to him cleaned he had assaulted him and turned him off the premises and using violence in so doing.” Mr Christie, of course, strongly denied this saying the Inspector had been drunk at the time. What this tells us is that even in 1879 the residents of Port Adelaide were already developing that dislike of authority for which they became so well known. The minutes of the Corporations meetings note that there were numerous and frequent complaints about the number of stray goats in the streets and the speed of the rail trucks as they came through the town. All this information builds up to provide a picture of a Port Adelaide long gone.

Accessing reports of archaeological work undertaken in New South Wales and Victoria for comparative purposes is difficult from within South Australia. In late July/August a study trip is planned to Melbourne and Sydney to collect the relevant reports. This also provides an opportunity to discuss the project with people interstate and build up support and knowledge of the project that will aid in the dissemination of the results.



Figure 3: Street Plan of Port Adelaide showing the two study blocks. (Map reference GRS 638/1) Adapted by Chris Lewczak

Summary

The PAHA project is progressing slowly but momentum is expected to build up around the excavation and bring in a range of opportunities. The focus in this first six months has been to begin building a solid historical base for the project that can be added to for the duration of the project. This has been achieved and will be solidified yearly in the next six month period with a study trip to Melbourne and Sydney. Community involvement has not progressed as quickly as was hoped, but again the excavation will raise public awareness. The excavation its self will provide an exciting opportunity to uncover the lives of early working class Portonians and see what kind of objects they had in their homes.

Appendix 1

Budget Application for Expenditure of APA(I) Money.

Each APA(I) project receives \$5000 a year to support the project. This document outlines the proposed allocation of this money for the Port Adelaide Historical Archaeology Project (PAHA) for the year 2002 along with justification of the allocation.

In the first year of PAHA the focus is twofold: to establish a library of relevant material; and undertake excavations.

1. Establishment of a Library of Relevant Material. \$2500

Item	Units Required	Unit Price	Quote	Total Cost
Aerial Photos	5	\$132.00	Mapland	\$660.00
Airfares & insurance	3	Various	Qantas	\$407.00
Accommodation	7	\$27.00	The Nunnary	\$189.00
Photocopying, Books, Historical Photos etc.	Various	Various	Various	\$1244.00
			Total	\$2500.00

In archaeology, as in any field, it is important to develop an understanding of previous work in the field so as not to answer the same old questions and to enable comparison between sites to gain a greater understanding of the sites. It is also important that new research is added to the body of knowledge. This can only be done by a close reading of historical sources, such as those held by State Records and the Mortlock Library of South Australia. This library will not only contain books and reports but also maps, historical photographs and sketches, which can often provide just as much information.

Accessing the reports of archaeological work undertaken in New South Wales and Victoria is difficult from within South Australia. It is therefore proposed that \$1000 be allocated for a study visit to Melbourne and Sydney. While there these records will be easy to access and it is proposed around half the allocation for photocopying etc. be provided for purchasing books and photocopying relevant material. The rest of the allocation is divided between airfares (\$407) and Accommodation (\$189). The Accommodation cost is for seven days in Melbourne as Briggs has relatives to stay with in Sydney. As well as accessing records Briggs will also have an opportunity to meet with those working and researching in the field of urban archaeology. This will provide a network of interested parties who are currently leading the field in the study of working class living conditions. This will widen Briggs' understanding of the field, raising her level of knowledge and will aid in the interpretation of working class people across Australian, not just Port Adelaide. These people will also be able to aid Briggs in accessing and locating relevant material.

When searching historical documents it is often difficult to locate or access the documents more than once, especially as the Mortlock Library of South Australia is currently undergoing renovations. It is therefore easier to copy the documents. This year a lot of time will be devoted to researching Port Adelaide and the conditions reported in contemporary records that will be compared with the archaeological reality during excavations to be held throughout the project. There is also a small body of research completed on Port Adelaide including historical surveys and written histories. Having ready access to these sources would greatly aid this project and around half of the photocopying etc budget is expected to this end.

2. Excavations

\$2500

Item	Units Required	Unit Price	Quote	Total Cost
Archive Boxes	3 x 10 pack	\$17.48	Officeworks	\$52.44
Film (colour) – Box 3	15 x 24 exposure	\$12.50	Picture This	\$187.50
Film (B&W)	7 x 24 exposure	\$7.95	Picture This	\$55.65
Film Processing	52	\$10.95	Picture This	\$569.40
Zip-Lock Bags	4000	Various	Poly Products	\$225.50
Drawing Film	28	\$1.00	Dept. Archaeology	\$28.00
Photo Albums	5	\$28.30	Albox	\$141.50
Incidentals	Various	Various		\$540.01
Conservation	n/a	n/a	n/a	\$700.00
			Total	\$2500.00

The main purpose and foundation of PAHA is to investigate the archaeology of the working classes in Port Adelaide. It is therefore essential to the Project that archaeological work be undertaken. Excavations, by their very nature, are difficult to second guess. If lots of material is found the costs are high but if relatively little is found the costs come down. The breakdown below has tried for somewhere in between. The items included are necessary to adequately record the site during excavation and store the recovered artefacts. During excavation the artefacts will be put into plastic zip-lock bags that will be stored in cardboard archive boxes. It is vital to record what the site looked like during the excavation as the context in which artefacts are found and their relationships to one another can impact on the interpretation of the site. Traditionally this is achieved through photography and drawing. To this end it is proposed that \$812.55 be spent on film and developing and \$28 on drawing film. This allows for around two rolls of colour film and one of black and white a day with processing also allowing for artefact photography and two drawings a day. Included in the budget is Photo Albums to adequately store the photos after developing. If photos are not stored correctly they can deteriorate over time.

What will be uncovered during the excavation is an unknown and it is possible that delicate artefacts will be recovered. In anticipation of such an occurrence \$700 has been allocated to conservation for specialists to carry out work if necessary. In terms

of conservation this is not a lot of money, however, it is difficult to determine just what will be required. Archaeologists need to be flexible during and excavation to respond as the need arises and create contingency plans to best protect the archaeological resource. To be able to do this some financial leeway is needed. It is for this reason also \$540.01 has been allowed for incidentals. Incidentals money will also cover small purchases such as field notebooks, the necessary pens and pencils and any other cost during the excavation or in the post excavation processing of the artefacts that is not anticipated.