

Archaeological Investigations at South Quay, Hayle



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Chapter 1

Introduction

Between 2010 and May 2014 Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA), formerly Northamptonshire Archaeology, carried out a series of archaeological works at South Quay, Hayle Harbour, Cornwall (NGR SW 5570 7400, Fig 1.1). This work took place as part of the redevelopment of South Quay, which had become run down, especially from the 1960s and 1970s, and later largely abandoned in the 1980s due to the demise of the shipping industry. The development proposals were to regenerate the quay area through a mixture of commercial and residential use.

Archaeological building surveys of former structures, evaluations and watching briefs within and around South Quay took place before and during redevelopment. This archaeological work has provided a permanent record. This publication concentrates on South Quay, although other related archaeological work undertaken at nearby Foundry Square by MOLA in 2017 (Reid 2017) has been referred to but is not directly part of this report. The Cornwall Archaeological Unit has recorded historic buildings at Foundry Square, but little other archaeological work has taken place in the town.

Designations

In 2006 the former port of Hayle, including South Quay, gained World Heritage status as part of the *Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape* (UNESCO Ref 1215). The reasons for Hayle's inclusion included its historic role as a significant specialist industrial harbour. This, for example, can be seen through its strong links to the mining industry, exporting its supplies, ore, and, later, mine engines. The connections from South Quay were later expanded by the construction of the Hayle railway network, which replaced the mule train, and this provided an extended direct link for the first time to other locations such as the town of Redruth. The importance of South Quay (and Hayle Harbour) increased in 1799 by the establishment of Harvey's iron foundry, which was located adjacent to the south of what later became South Quay (Fig 1.1). It was one of the three largest foundries in Cornwall and was regarded as the foremost engine foundry in the world during the 19th century. The role Hayle Harbour played in facilitating trade and exportation in this period had a notable impact on the engineering and social history of this important industrial region (Gamble 2006).

South Quay (HER: 139023; MCO33226) is Grade II listed (List Entry Number: 1143686; Legacy: 70205). This quay was constructed in c1819 for Harvey and Company.

It was constructed in granite, Killas rubble, granite ashlar, copper slag blocks and granite dressings. It is a peninsular wharf, orientated north to south, with scalloped walls, possibly designed to allow boats to lie alongside. The west wall forms one side of Carnsew Dock.

Carnsew Quay (quay walls – HER 139025; MCO33228 and dock walls - HER 140925; MCO35083) is Grade II listed (List Entry Number: 1160051; Legacy:70206). Architecturally it is mid-18th century (1758), regionally distinctive, and built with Cornish granite and Elvan stone. It was adapted in the 19th century with extant mooring post and loading bays dating to this period. Historically it is significant because of the role it played in the early industrial development of Hayle into a significant modern exporting port. In 1834 Carnsew Pool (HER 139024, 139026) was created through the construction of banks of rubble and slag, and sluice gates (south - HER 139026; MCO33227) and (north HER 139026; MCO33229) were installed.

The development area lies in the Hayle Conservation Area (DCO181).

Background

The establishment and later expansion of South Quay from the later 18th century and into the 19th century took place when the growing British Empire was starting to become a notable trading and military institution of world importance, even dominance. In this period, Britain used local raw resources such as from quarries and mines, innovative machinery and work practices, and new river, canal and, later, rail networks, to establish and later control economic interests at home and abroad. Cheap labour, available due to population increase, was exploited to pursue this growth. The army and navy, as well as commerce and diplomacy, were used to expand Britain's influence, both through direct empire expansion and informal trade agreements. The presence of long-established international trading networks and companies, such as the East India Company, gave Britain a strong foothold in the international scene. This dominant position was further secured through the establishment of banks such as Barings, and other companies, such as Lloyds, providing funding and security to both newly established and long-standing firms and individuals.

South Quay and Carnsew Quay were constructed to pursue these opportunities. Industries were established

around Hayle and South Quay to send products to markets across the trading world. From the early 19th century trains linked industries to the quay so exports could be efficiently transported. The South Quay area was influenced by local entrepreneurial families like the Harvey family. The Harveys were iron founders specialising in the manufacture of train parts and thereby helping the development of a global trade of steam engines. Richard Trevithick, in the Hayle area, for example, designed his 'fire-carriage' in 1801. He married into the Harvey family and the foundry supplied parts for his fire-carriage. Harvey's were also involved in the transport of copper, coal and other supplies for their industry. The company later expanded into shipbuilding and in 1832 launched their first vessel, *The John Harvey*. The largest ship to have been constructed at the Quay was the *Ramleh*, which shipped in 1891. Shipbuilding ceased in 1893 but restarted after WWI. During World War II the South Quay, along with Carnsew Quay, fulfilled a vital role with the assemblage of the 'Rhino ferries' that were used during D-day.

Planning

The various stages of archaeological work at South Quay fulfilled planning conditions issued by Cornwall County Council when they gave permission (Ref PA10/08142) for the construction of a supermarket, shop and/or restaurant units, a quayside promenade and open space, raised development platform, flood prevention measures, new highway junction and highway improvements, and associated access and car parking, for the residential development.

Detailed requirements to meet the planning conditions were provided in a brief (CCC 2012) prepared by the Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer (HEPAO), Cornwall County Council. Prospect Archaeology produced an overarching Written Scheme of Investigation to fulfil these requirements (WSI, Rosenberg 2013), supplemented by individual specifications produced by MOLA and appropriate procedural documents relevant at the time the work was carried out.

Location and topography

Hayle is a town located in West Cornwall on the northern coast and is part of St Ives Bay (Fig 1.1). Hayle lies 5km east of St Ives and 15km south-west of Redruth. Hayle is one of the most southerly ports in Britain, with 'easy' access to America and Europe. South Quay was originally part of Phillack Parish until 1888 when Hayle Parish was extended across the Penpol River into the area. Hayle parish was further extended in the 1930s by

the incorporation part of St Erth. The modern parish shares boundaries with St Ives to the west, St Erth to the south, Gwinear and Gwinthian in the east, and is bounded to the north by the sea.

This publication encompasses South Quay (Fig 1.1; NGR SW 55680 37467), which lies on the western side of Hayle in Hayle Estuary. The estuary is created by Hayle River ('The Salty One') and Penpol River, before flowing through a narrow gap into St Ives Bay where it forms the western boundary to parish of Lelant. The estuary divides into two sides, the larger western side with Carnsew Pool to South Quay and the eastern side comprising Copperhouse Pool to Copperhouse Dock (Vale 1966).

The South Quay development area is c3.4ha in extent and is outlined in Figure 1.1 in red. South Quay itself measures 448m long by 163m wide at its southern end tapering at its northern end. The quay has a unique scalloped eastern edge where the Penpol River flows past and where it still provides mooring for the Hayle's small fleet of private fishing boats and leisure craft. On its western side South Quay is separated from Carnsew Quay by Carnsew Channel (Fig 1.2). The Accommodation Bridge connected Carnsew Quay and the Weir with the channel's flow regulated by sluice gates. Carnsew Pool lies to the west of Carnsew Quay, providing a storage reservoir for the sluicing of Carnsew Channel.

The geology is recorded as Middle Devonian (undifferentiated) mudstone, siltstone and sandstone overlain by clay, silt and sand alluvium (www.bgs.ac.uk/GeoIndex). The ground surface lies at c4-5m aOD.

Neglect

At Hayle, shipping and associated industry slowly declined further from the mid-20th century, contemporary with wider changes to Britain's economy following World War II and the end of the British Empire. At the start of the archaeological work in 2010 some of the development area consisted of a makeshift car park for harbour users whilst other parts were covered by mounds of fly-tipped building debris and abandoned to natural vegetation which was very overgrown. The channels themselves had silted up and the sluice gates had become unusable. Sluicing of the harbour ceased in 1972 leading to the effective end of commercial traffic in 1977. The current development was completed in 2014 and comprises the supermarket, car park and the quayside. Photographs of the site have provided a record of how it appeared before and after the 2014 development, with the same view matched as best as possible (Figs 1.3 to 1.10).