

The Ancient Cwmbran Society , working in partnership with The Monmouth and Brecon Canal Trust, and Neighbourhood Services Torfaen Borough Council were contracted to undertake an archaeological investigation on the canal at Ty Coch Cwmbran on the 13th 14th and 15th of June 2013 .

We were investigating the foundations of a presumed workshop on the side of the canal in an attempt to discover what it was used for in the past. Map research revealed that the building as well as the cottage foundation next to it were probably built at the same time as the canal in the 1700's . Our aims were to find out what the workshop was used for, and if it could have been used to repair canal barges.

By 11 am on day 1 we had uncovered a substantial foundation approximately 11 metres square , possibly for a building but with some very large wrought iron bolts and hand made nuts set into the foundations . Lots of artefacts were being uncovered, mostly ceramics and Iron work







After a rather wet day of digging on the canal site, we were starting to think that instead of a boat repair workshop, we may have a building where lock gates were either manufactured or repaired. We had been unearthing what appeared to be a large pit type structure, filled with general demolition rubble. We were still unsure about this theory, and hoping that the followings day's dig would provide more information.



The sun shone in between the showers



This is a strange object we unearthed , it looks like a spiral wound length of leather , possibly a drive flange of some description



Short wooden "rails" across a substantial stone base



One of the large iron bolts and hand made nuts , but what were they for? We have found several of these embedded in the foundations



A view of the work being done by the canal restoration team on one of the locks

Day 2 at 10:30 am

The hole was getting much deeper by now !





This was an inlet off the main canal at the rear of our digging area



It flowed into a very well preserved culvert



Via this spillway



Some of the iron work recovered from the area



11 am . Excavation of the hole was done by machine – far too much work to do with hand tools





An alcove in the side of the pit , there were four of these . Possibly for lamps to be placed on , or tools or even the workers sandwiches ?

As the hole got deeper we realised that the large timbers which make up the lock gates were possibly cut over this pit . It would have been a two man operation, with one on the end of a very large saw down in the pit , and the other topside , and together they would cut the timbers .Initially hand sawn , but possibly in later years it could have been steam powered.



The sun was very low in the sky .



Day 3 at 9 am

We arrived on day 3 to find a rather unhappy looking moorhen chick sitting in the bottom of the 8 foot deep pit. We climbed down into the pit to rescue the poor little bird , but , showing a remarkable turn of speed, it dashed into a previously unnoticed drain pipe in the bottom of the pit , and refused to come out.



Unable to reach the chick , and afraid of scaring it to death , we placed some dark material over the pipe so the chick would feel safe , while we continued our recording of the pit



Rodger ,our Archaeologist and official moorhen tamer rescued the chick during dinner time as planned.



If you look carefully in the photo you may be able to see it waiting for its mum in the rushes



Pit area all cleaned up now , we think it was used for sawing 5 meter long tree trunks into logs for making lock gates.



This image from the web site english.fju.edu.tw may be very similar to the process that was taking place at Ty-Coch ,



The rest of the site was still being cleaned up by our volunteers

The Investigation of the workshop at Ty-Coch finished as scheduled on day 3 , with some fantastic discoveries . The area will not be filled in , it will be fenced off and interpretation panels erected to show visitors what was going on in this area.

We have had a great time despite the weather being somewhat inclement .Many thanks to all of you who have followed our progress over the past few days.

Rodger , our lead Archaeologist will be putting together a preliminary report for us about what we have discovered , which will be far more academic than the contributions you have just read . .

Finally a few notes for the canal and archaeology experts that may be reading these contributions , please note that these posts have been written for the general public as a social media exercise by a volunteer member of the Ancient Cwmbran Society and should not be considered as an accurate or true record of this investigation.

An official report will be formally published via the recognised channels once the investigation has been completed. Thank you , hope you enjoyed it



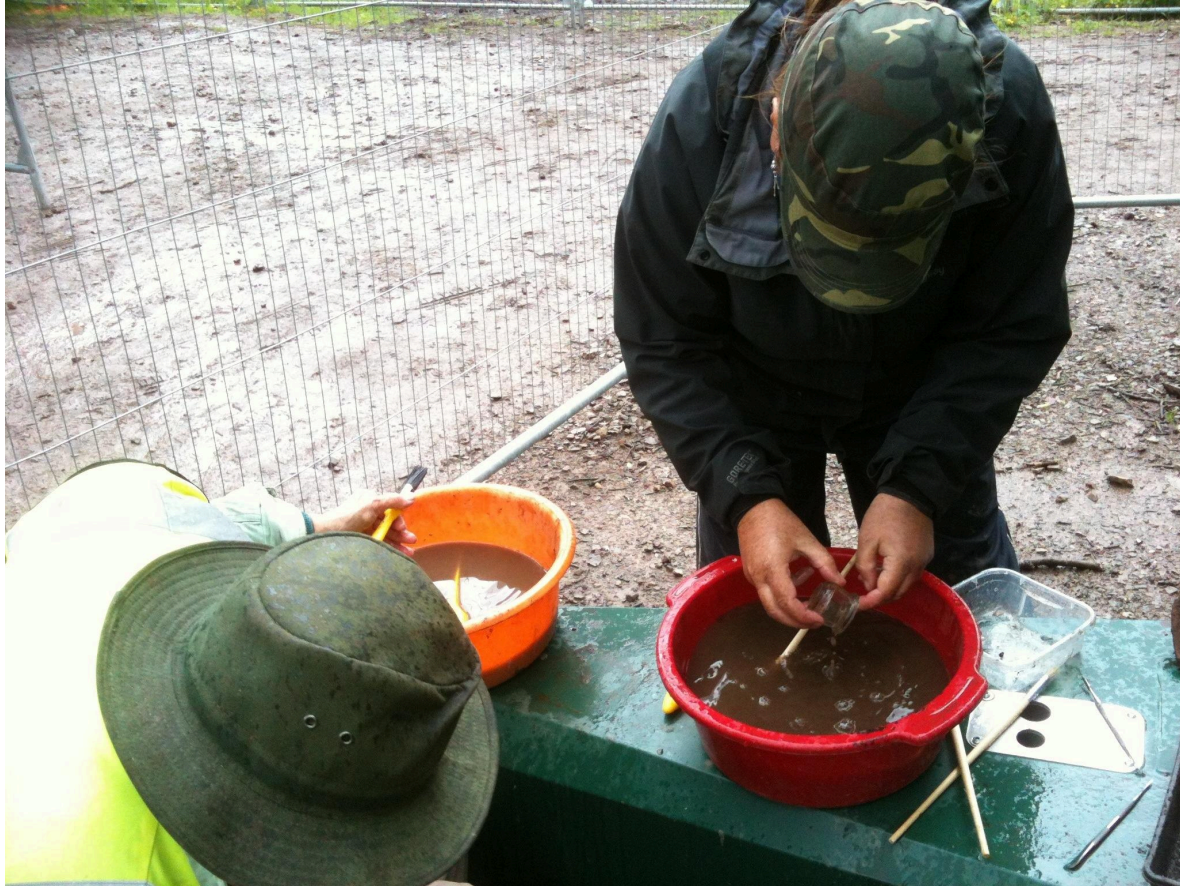
One of our Lead Archaeologists and a volunteer sorting and cataloguing the finds



A selection of the ceramics found



A bottle of rheumatism ointment



Washing the finds



A selection of old bricks found



A lot of metal has been recovered from the site , this is being transported off site for sorting .



Your's Truly !

We have had an enquiry from one of our friends regarding one of the bricks found during the canal excavation . The gentleman concerned would like more information about the brick , but unfortunately we do not have any .

The brick we are interested in is the top RHS lighter coloured brick in Godfrey's excellent photograph.

The writing on this particular brick was rather indistinct , we could make out the letters B & P and below was an R . We were unable to make out any other writing because it was too indistinct .

If anybody can help identify where this brick was manufactured , could you please contact Nigel at acs.memsec@gmail.com

