

Archaeological finds

Victoria Park Tunnel INFORMATION

Tunnel excavations

A hessian sack filled with bark was recovered from the tunnel excavation in September 2010. The sack was located on what appears to be the former sea bed of Freemans Bay. While the sack was damaged on removal, a large portion of it survived as it is made of thick hessian material which is in good condition. The bark within the sack is also in good condition, due mainly to the anaerobic conditions (without oxygen) of the clay in which it was buried.

The bark was most likely destined for a tannery in Auckland, to be used to tan leather. Bark was commonly ground up in order to provide tannic acid which is an important element in the tanning process. This process sometimes took place at former flour mills.

The sack and bark most likely came into the harbour by ship in the late 19th century and fell overboard, ending up on the sea bed. The bark will be identified by a wood specialist at Auckland University in order to help establish its origin.



Tunnel excavations

Over 35 timber piles found under Victoria Park are the remains of a north to south oriented wharf that was present before the reclamation of Victoria Park in the early 1900's. Part of the structure was still in reasonable condition with crossbeams present for approximately 20 metres. From the piles it is clear that they once had coppersheaths around the upper ends. Rope, sawdust and timber fragments were also found along part of the structure.

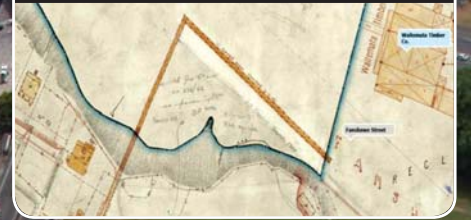


Old League club site, Victoria Park

Walls for earlier 20th Century plot divisions, bottles and ceramics.

Fanshawe on ramp trenching

During excavations of a trench along the Fanshawe Street on ramp an old seawall and part of a staircase descending to the sea were uncovered. Until the early 1960's, when the area was reclaimed for the harbour bridge approach, this location formed part of the harbour edge. A footbridge was present in the area for many years (shown in a 1908 map and in a 1931 photograph) and was probably made of timber. It is likely that a more substantial walkway was formed around the early 1950s to provide better access to the HMNZS Ngapona naval base which was located in the vicinity.



Victoria Street West trenches

Tram way infrastructure cables were located along with industrial remains (brick and molten glass), and personal items like shoes, glass and ceramic plate fragments.

Eastern stormwater diversion

A basalt stone sea wall was recorded in the excavations below the motorway viaduct and matched those seen in the 1873 plans. This wall would have marked the original shore line along Freemans Bay before the area was reclaimed for what is now Victoria Park.

Other finds in the area included two timber retaining walls identified in the reclamation fill on the north side of Victoria Street. These structures are thought to have been built to assist in the reclamation process.

Birdcage

Numerous historic artefacts were found at the Birdcage hotel including various bottles, and ceramics. The most interesting pieces found are a French coin and a bone pendant.

The French 10 Centime bronze coin, dated 1910, was recovered from the floor in the coal cellar. Text on the face of the coin reads: 'Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite'. The depiction is of Liberty seated on the right, cuirassed Liberty seated on the left, and Cupid or Eros seated to her right. On the reverse of the coin is a bust and the words: 'Francaise Republique'. The origin of the coin and the means by which it came to be in the coal cellar are unclear. It might have come from a guest visiting from France or French Polynesia who spent time at the Rob Roy Hotel in the early 20th century.

The partial remains of a bone pendant were recovered after it fell from the basement ceiling. The pendant is 49mm long and has been severely damaged by rat gnawing making its original form indistinguishable. However, two indents are still present, the first located below the hole for the string, and the second approximately half way down the pendant. Remnant yellow twine is threaded through the pendant which suggests it might not have had particular aesthetic value and may have served as a rune and/or talisman.



Remains of a bone pendant.

1910 French Centime bronze coin.

Pistol

A dual trigger pistol was discovered at the base of an old well near the southern part of the project. The pistol is believed to date to the late 19th Century. (Please see the display next to the pistol itself for further information.)

