

Skellig Michael: Monitoring of miscellaneous minor works in the Lower Lighthouse and Monastery 2022.

Alan R. Hayden
Archaeological Projects Ltd.
November 2022

A number of minor works were monitored in the lower lighthouse and monastery in 2022.

These consisted of:

- 1- Removal of bund walls Lower Lighthouse Station
- 2- Removal of part of east side of gateway, north of Lower Lighthouse,
- 3- Original porch of house Lower Lighthouse Station
- 4- Monitoring of excavation of nest boxes above monastery.

(1) The concrete block, bund walls, which surrounded the green plastic oil tanks that were removed last year from the northeast side of the lower lighthouse station, were demolished to facilitate the transport of materials for the construction of Crash Decks 2 and 3 and for a proposed composting toilet.

The bund walls were built in the 1980s when the plastic oil tanks were lowered into place by helicopter (R. Foran *pers. comm.*). That west of the entrance to the lighthouse was entirely of modern construction and replaced an original store which had been for paint and later housed a generator but which was demolished in the 1980s. However, that east of the entrance rested on the chamfered masonry plinth of the original 1820s general store, the rest of which had been demolished in the 1980s. The plinth was composed of sandstone rubble masonry with the upper stone chamfered on its top outer edge. The concrete block walling was carefully removed and the plinth was retained *in situ*. The ground level outside the bund areas was raised with stone rubble and clay to the level of the top of the plinth to facilitate transit of the tractor and trailer bringing materials up to the sites of the crash decks. The clay and rubble remains in place as further materials will have to be brought up for the crash deck construction next year.



Fig. 1 The bund walls removed are those surrounding the green plastic oil tanks (removed last year) at the top right of the photograph.



Fig. 2. After removal of bund walls.

(2) After approval from the NMS the east side of the gateway north of the lower lighthouse was cut back to facilitate the transport of materials for the construction of Crash Decks 2 and 3. This gateway was built in 1987 when the lighthouse was automated. Unlike the gateway south of the lighthouse, which measures nearly 2m in width, the gateway north of the lighthouse measured only 1m in width. Removal of the pier on the west side of the gateway would not have added sufficient width to the gateway and so part of the east pier was removed. It proved to have been composed of sandstone rubble holding a heavy core of concrete containing vertical rebars. An approximate width of 800mm was removed. It is proposed to rebuild the pier in 2023 but leaving the gateway significant wider than its original form which would be too narrow to allow transport of materials up the Upper Lighthouse Road.



Fig. 3. The north gateway of the lighthouse before and after removal of part of its east side.

(3) Two rusted iron panels lie on the cliffs outside the northwest side of the lower lighthouse station. Examination of them using a long photo lens showed that these are part of the original 1820s iron porch removed from the western of the two dwellings. These should be retrieved before they disappear.



Fig. 4. Part of original porch of house below lower lighthouse

(4) The excavation of a number of 300mm by 600mm by 300mm deep pits for the installation of shearwater nest boxes was monitored in the relatively flat area above the high nineteenth-century drystone wall that delimits the north side of the monastery. The top of this wall was

likely heightened or rebuilt in the 1980s and modern material was deposited to raise the ground level behind it. The excavation of the holes yielded a number of 1980's objects- tins and wine carafe caps- but also a sherd of nineteenth-century stoneware. The soil removed was all topsoil composed of campion rooted organic soil overlying stony clay. Nothing of archaeological interest or significance was encountered.



Fig. 5. Location and size of holes excavated for nest boxes above the monastery.