Brief on the Progress of the Archaeological Watching Brief at the To Kwa Wan Station of the Shatin to Central Link – Tai Wai to Hung Hom Section

BACKGROUND

Further to the brief dated 12 June 2014 on the progress of the archaeological watching brief (AWB) at the To Kwa Wan Station of the Shatin to Central Link (SCL), an update is provided below for Members' information.

PROTECTIVE MEASURES FOR THE FINDINGS IN THE T1 AREA

2. In response to Members' comments on the sheet-piling proposal at the special meeting of the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) on 29 May 2014, MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) prepared an information paper to compare various options and presented the details at the AAB briefing on 24 June 2014. Installation of sheet piles then commenced on 26 June 2014 after the square-shaped well J1 had been surveyed and backfilled; and other archaeological features had been stabilised by sand bags. Vibration detection devices have been mounted to closely monitor the stability of the archaeological features. The whole installation process is also being monitored by the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) (Photo 1).

3. As of 11 July 2014, the sheet-piling works is about 70% completed. The average vibration level recorded is 2.7 mm/sec, and the recorded vibration levels ranged from 1 to 6 mm/sec. When one of the sheet piles closest to the well was being installed, the vibration once reached the action level of 6 mm/sec. (The maximum tolerable limit is 7.5 mm/sec.) Installation was stopped immediately. After checking the monitoring data, MTRCL confirmed that no irregularity in respect of settlement and inclination was found. The related sheet pile was cut short by about 2 meters (17% of the designed pile length) and Highways Department advised that this would not compromise the stability of the retaining structure and re-design is not necessary.

PROGRESS OF THE EXPANDED AWB

a) Water channel system

4. The discovery of a water channel system to the east of the Launching Shaft Area was reported in the last brief (Photo 2). The feature is now confirmed to be a well and coded J2 by the licensed archaeologist. As illustrated in the sketch drawing (Figure 1), it is believed that J2 is divided into three parts. Both the upper and middle parts of the well are in circular shape. The upper part is connected to a water channel built in 1920s–1940s. The middle part consists of two layers of granite blocks. The lower part is in a square shape formed by four granite slabs with four layers. J2 is believed to serve as a well for the provision of underground water and a container to collect surface water caught by the water channel. To better understand the date, function and construction method of J2 as well as to provide a comprehensive assessment of its archaeological significance, the licensed archaeologist proposes to first excavate the upper part of the structure, and the follow-up field strategy will be worked out according to the findings and assessment.

5. Dr Jiao Tianlong (焦天龍), an archaeologist with a doctoral degree from Harvard University and the Chief Curator of the Hong Kong Maritime Museum, visited the site on 19 June 2014 (Photo 3). He shared the views that the well J2 should be further excavated to facilitate assessment.

b) Former Sacred Hill and the Nullah built during Japanese Occupation

6. The archaeological work to the west of the well J2 focuses on the identification of the sound rocks and decomposed granite so as to delineate the extent of the former Sacred Hill. Sound rocks were revealed (Photo 4). The alignment of the nullah built during the Japanese Occupation was also confirmed (Photo 5). Since this area was of no archaeological potential, further archaeological work is not required (Figure 2). AMO agrees that MTRCL can resume construction works within the areas colored red in Figure 2.

c) Ventilation Area and Adit C

7. Regarding the archaeological work at the ventilation area, the archaeologist reported that some granite slabs were found (Photo 6). The archaeologist opined that these slabs were dated to Sung-Yuan Period, but it might be a bit later than the building features in T1 area. Further excavation in the area will be conducted so as to assess the relationship of the granite slabs

with the features found in the T1 area. The excavation work in Adit C is in progress (Photo 7).

8. AMO will continue to closely monitor the sheet-piling works as well as the progress to the AWB and report to the AAB when necessary.

Antiquities and Monuments Office
15 July 2014

Photo1: Sheet-piling works is being conducted.

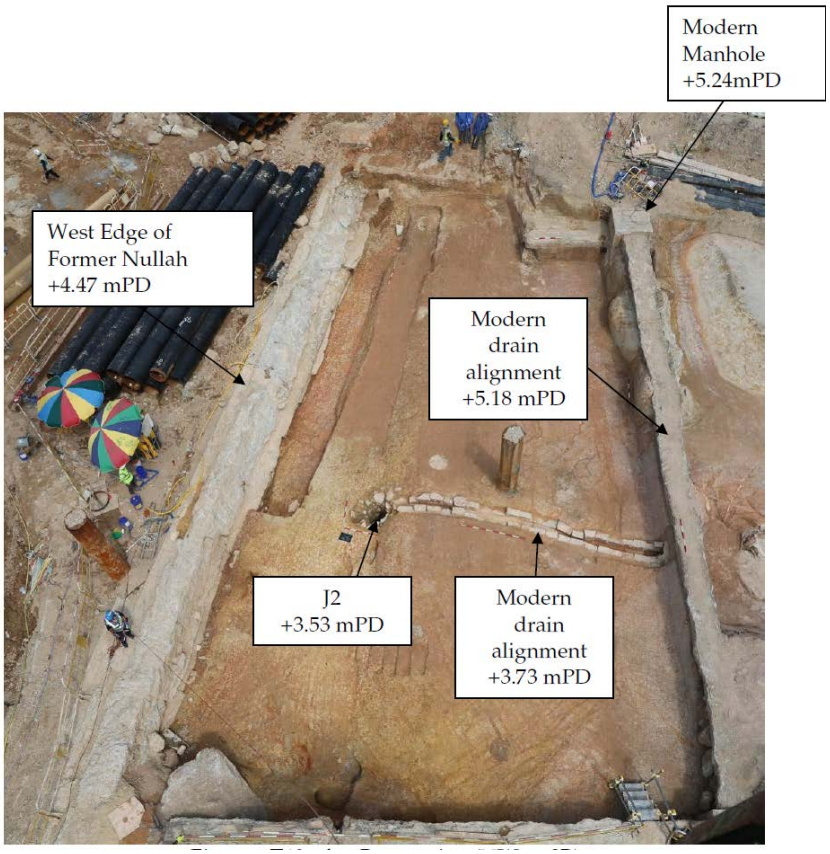

Photo 2: Archaeological remains of the water channel system.

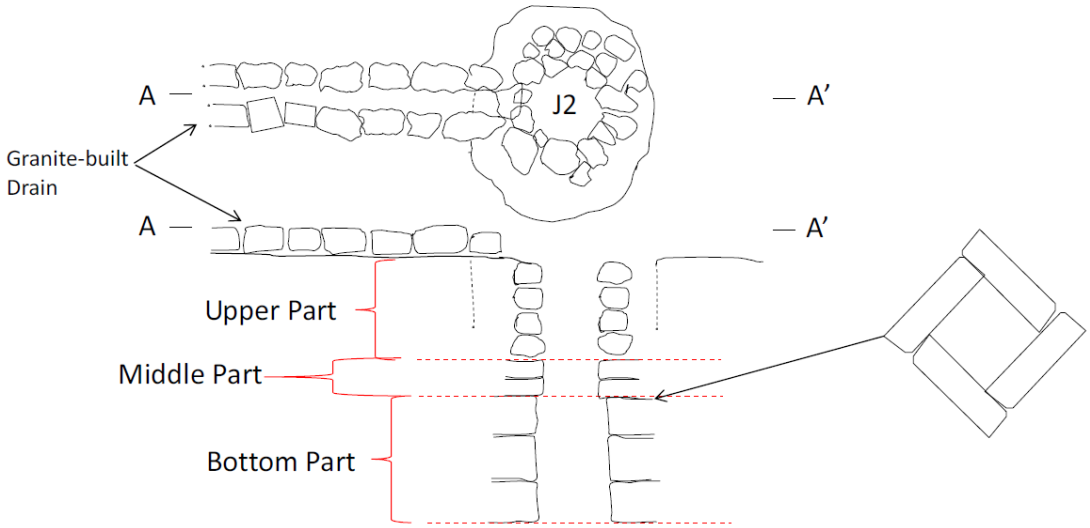

Figure 1: Sketch drawing of the well J2.

Photo 3: Dr Jiao Tianlong (on the right) examining the well J2.

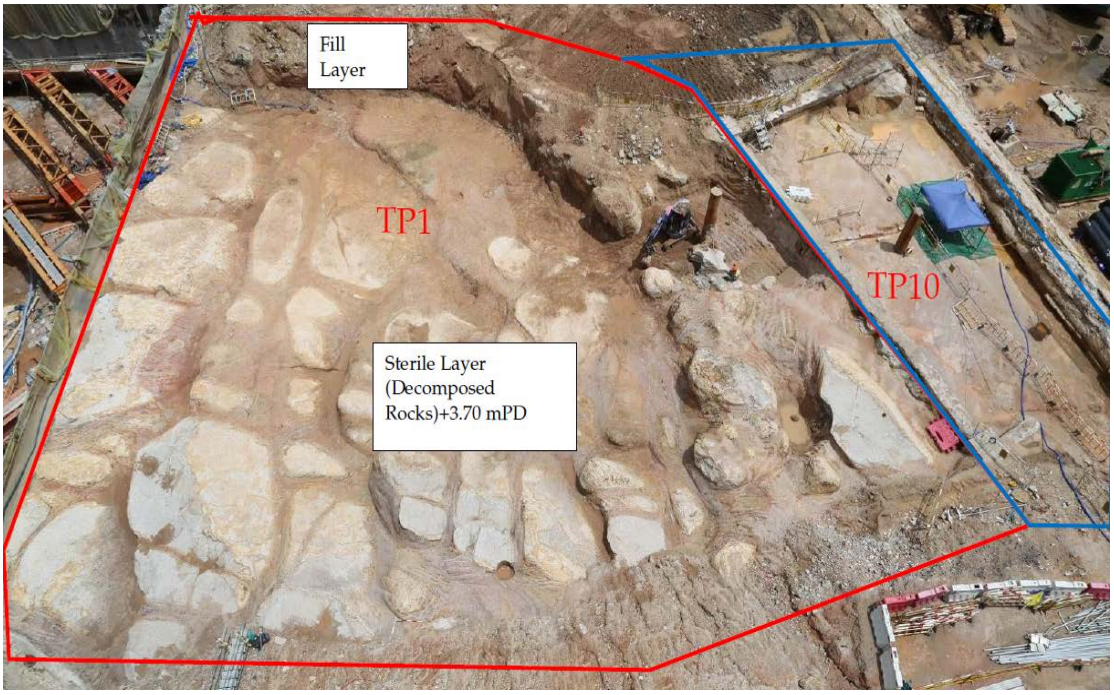

Photo 4: Sound rocks of the former Sacred Hill was revealed.


Photo 5: Alignment of the nullah built during the Japanese Occupation.

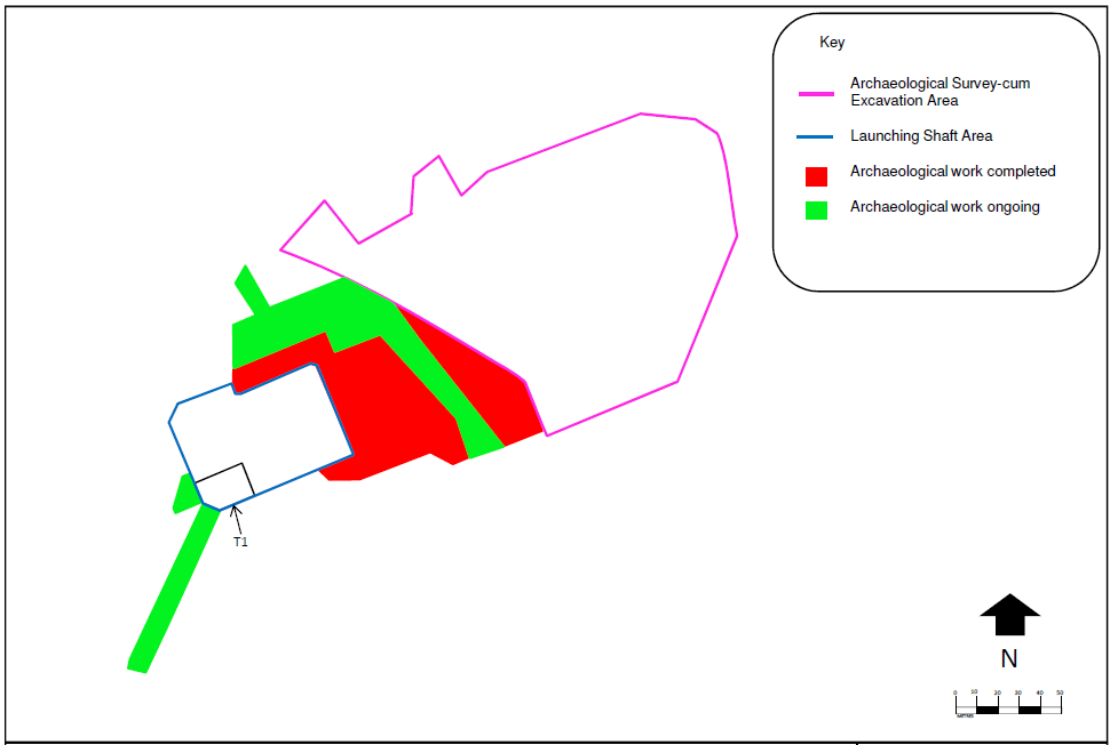

Figure 2: The expanded AWB area.


Photo 6: Granite slabs unearthed during AWB at the ventilation area.

Photo 7: Excavation in Adit C in progress.