



North Rotunda, Glasgow

Design & Access Statement

February 2024

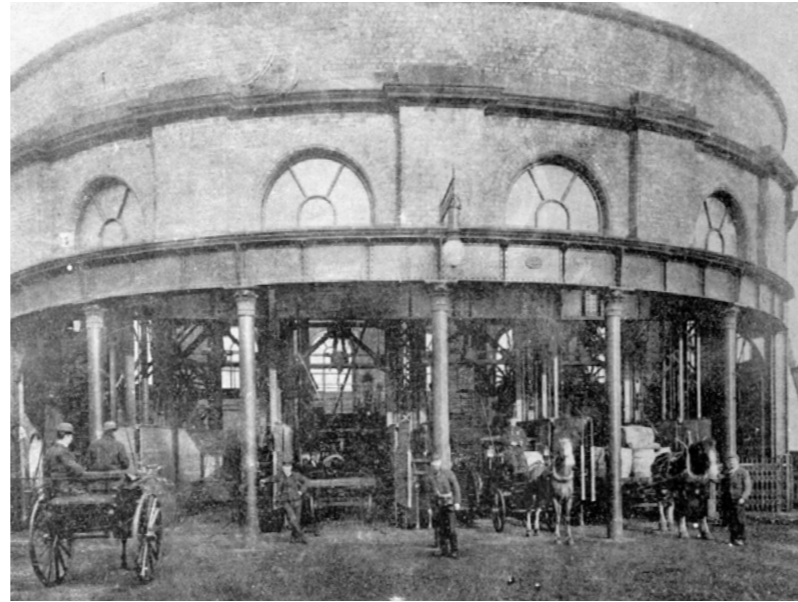
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The Rotunda is an icon of Glasgow's rich industrial heritage...



Document Introduction

This document outlines the proposals for a planning application and listed building consent application for the North Rotunda at 28 Tunnel Street, Glasgow.

It is proposed to re-imagine the rotunda as a multi-function entertainment building with a new ground floor bar/restaurant /venue as well a newly formed function space below the iconic domed roof. The proposals also include a single storey extension at ground level and a new access stair tower.

These works are proposed along with significant fabric repairs to the brickwork and stone external walls of the Grade B listed building as well as new roof covering, roof light, feature cupola and lead flashings.

Context



Development Site

Location

Located to the west of Glasgow city centre the Scottish Events Campus (SEC) has been successfully providing a home for performances, expositions and exhibitions since 1985.

The North Rotunda sits on the Eastern edge of the SEC campus on the corner of Finnieston Quay and Tunnel Street. It is located within a cluster of five separate branded hotels as well as being close-by to the site is the iconic Finnieston Crane (1931) and Clyde Arc bridge (2006)

Access

The site itself benefits from public pedestrian access on its two primary streets, with the remainder of the development site given over to an existing carpark which serves both the Rotunda and the nearby Campanile Hotel. The vehicular access to the carpark is from Tunnel Street.



Images:
Aerial Views of
Glasgow
(SEC Campus)



North Rotunda

Existing Building

The Category B listed (listed in 1986) North Rotunda is a twin of the South Rotunda located across the Clyde. The Rotunda's were built to facilitate access to three parallel tunnels which ran below the Clyde (historically two vehicle and one pedestrian).

The 16-bay rotunda was built over an 80' diameter shaft, with the rotunda itself made predominantly from brick with stone cornices and cills. 16 arched windows are divided by brick pilasters carrying a stone cornice and brick parapet with stone cope. Internally these corbels carry the cast-iron frame of the dome.

The cast-iron framed dome completes the rotunda, and is finished with slate and partial glazing (not original) as well as a lantern (not original) and weathervane.

The North Rotunda's former vehicle entrance (accessed off Tunnel Street) is made from 5 cast-iron Corinthian columns which carry a large curved cast-iron beam. On the Finnieston Quay side are two arched doorways which formerly gave access to the pedestrian tunnel via a set of timber stairs on steel girders (none of which is extant). The pedestrian tunnel is no longer accessible from the North Rotunda.

Formerly a cast-iron girder crosspiece spanned the open shaft with the two 16' diameter vehicle tunnels at its base (now believed to be either partially or fully filled). In the 1990's a substantial refurbishment took place which saw the introduction of five new floors and the infilling of the vertical shaft.



Image top: View from Finnieston Quay
Image left: View from Congress Road
Image right: View from Tunnel Street



North Rotunda

Building Condition

The existing building is comprised of the historic Rotunda (clyde tunnel) fabric - of which the brick/stone drum and cast iron elements appear to be the only remaining features. The remainder of the existing building dates from a substantial refurbishment in the 1980's

The 1990's refurbishment created four levels of above ground accommodation and one level below ground. Sources suggest the shaft is filled at this time although no desk-top evidence of this can be found.

Internally the structure above the filled shaft is a series of concrete slabs with 4 primary concrete supporting columns. This structure appears to be tied back into the drum of the rotunda - although further investigation is required.

It also appears that the roof finishes, rooflight cupola, weather vane and windows (including the infill screen to the former vehicle entrance) also date from the 1990's refurbishment. Also introduced at this time are a series of decorative street furniture (bollards and lamp-posts) and building mounted lighting.

Refer to 'Fabric Repair & Downtaking' for the proposed works to the existing building.

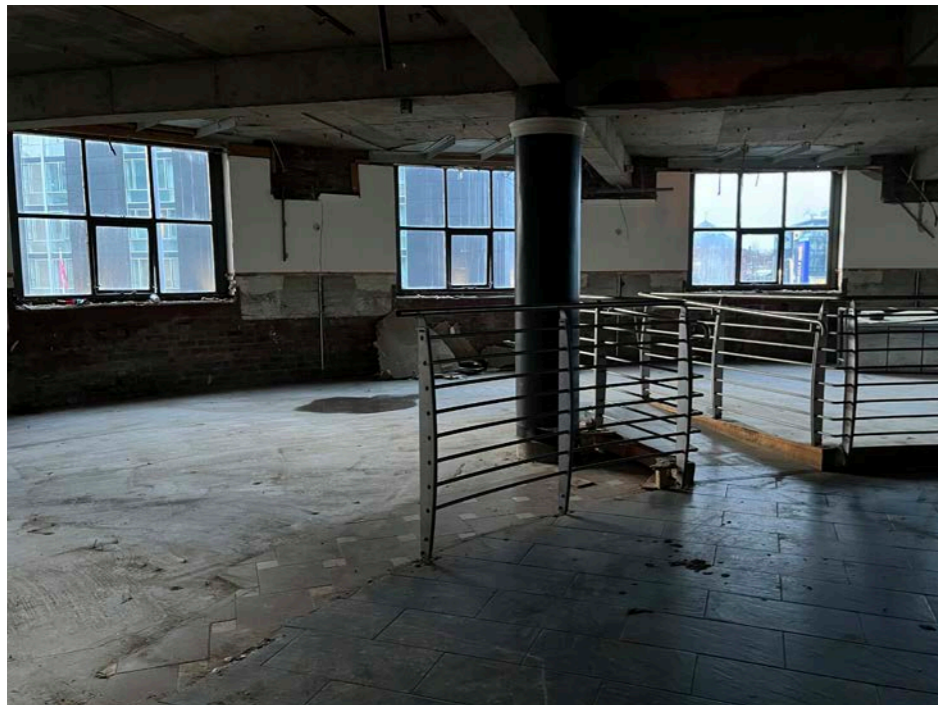


Image top: Existing First Floor
Image left: Existing Second Floor
Image right: Existing Second Floor BoH

North Rotunda History

Timeline

1888

The Glasgow Harbour Tunnel Co first draw up plans for a potential crossing below the River Clyde from Finnieston Quay to Plantation Quay/Mavisbank Quay. It was designed primarily to allow horse-drawn lorries (serving the docks) to cross the Clyde without going upstream to Jamaica Bridge.

1893-95

The tunnels are built to designs by Simpson and Wilson Engineers (who at the same time were designing the Glasgow Subway system - which opened in 1896). The Rotunda's are attributed to Alex Finlay and Co structural engineering contractors (whose name can be seen on the roundel above the vehicle entrances).

1896

The 'Harbour Tunnel' was completed in 1896. Hydraulic lifts were provided at each end, with separate tunnels for vehicles travelling in each direction, and a separate tunnel for pedestrians. The vehicle lifts were entered from Tunnel Street.

1907

The tunnels closes for the first time due to financial losses which arise thanks for the increased use of motorcars.

1912

The tunnels re-open under the control of the Glasgow Corporation.

1926

The Glasgow Corporation purchase the tunnels

1938

A 36" water-main is installed through the pedestrian tunnel.

1943

All lift metalwork was removed for the war effort from both rotundas which effectively ended the use of the two vehicular tunnels. The pedestrian tunnel is also closed at this time.

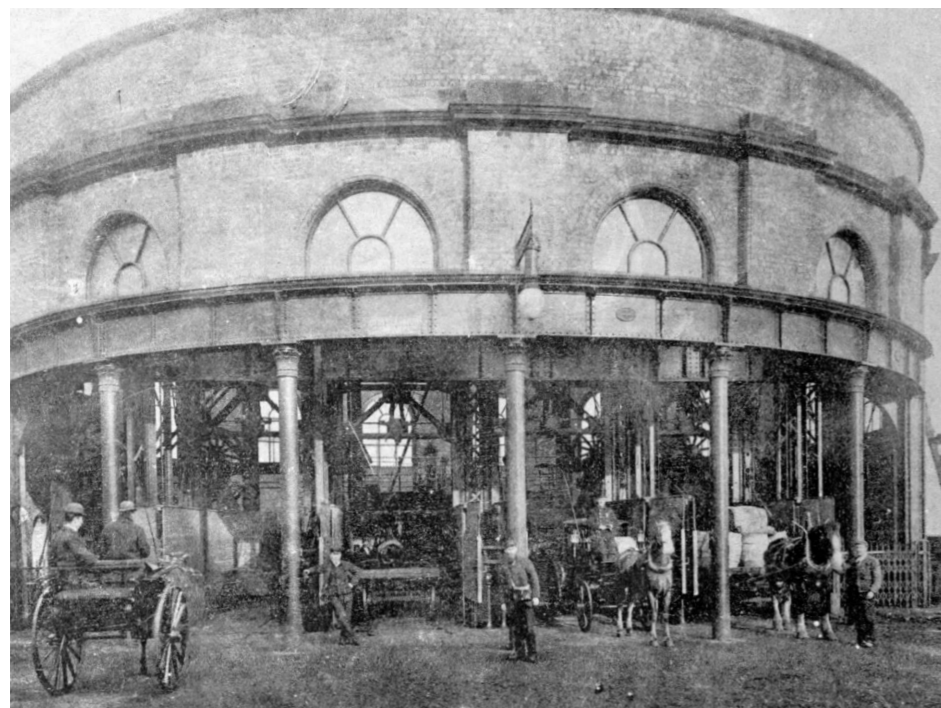
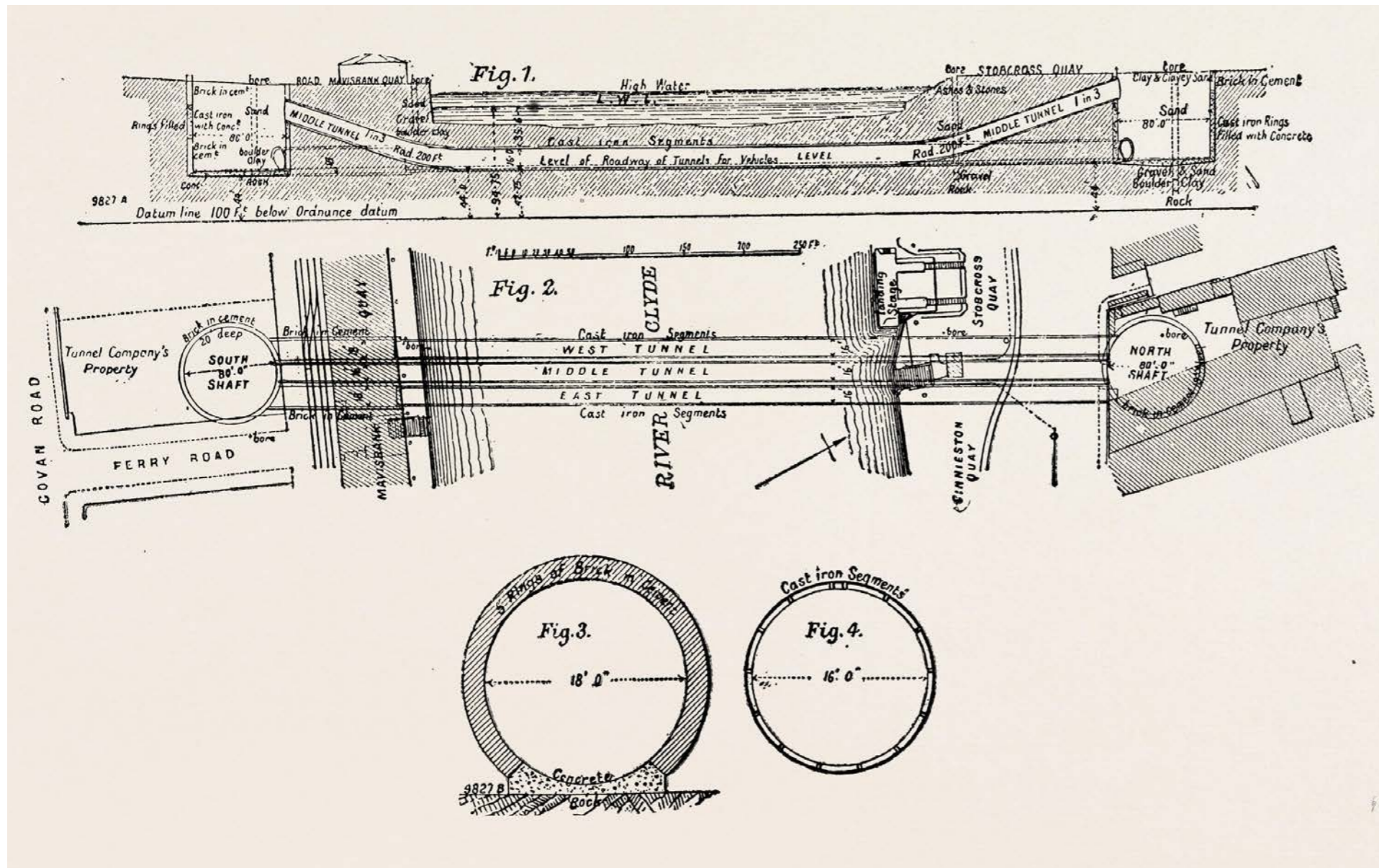


Image top: Technical Drawing of the Tunnel Under the River Clyde (1890)
Image left: Rotunda Carriage Entrance (1896)
Image right: Inside Rotunda Shaft (date unknown)



North Rotunda History

1947

The tunnel reopens to pedestrians.

1960(s)

The hydraulic 'lifting tower' is demolished (exact date unknown).

1980(s)

The tunnel closes for the final time to pedestrians.

1985

Scottish Water take over responsibility for the pedestrian tunnel.

1988

The South rotunda is used as part of the Glasgow Garden Festival. The North Rotunda is left vacant.

1989 (by)

The vehicular tunnels are sealed by Strathclyde Regional Council with some sources suggesting that the tunnels were filled with sand. Access to the Pedestrian tunnel is maintained by Scottish Water thanks to a maintenance access from the South Rotunda - with no access possible from the North Rotunda.

1990(s)

The north Rotunda undergoes a significant conversion - creating four levels of above ground accommodation and one level below ground. Some sources suggest the shaft is filled at this time although no desk-top evidence of this can be found.

1999

The building again underwent some significant internal alterations (including the addition of a spiral stair from ground to first floor).

2000-2023

During this period the Rotunda has hosted a number of entertainment functions (casino, comedy club, restaurant, bar etc.) The building is currently vacant.



Image top: Aerial View of North Rotunda (date unknown)

Image left: North Rotunda (1967)

Image right: North Rotunda (1967)



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Context History

Finnieston

At the time when the tunnels are first proposed in 1890 the two sites on either side of the Clyde are intensively used as part of the shipping, engineering and manufacturing industries which dominated the Clyde-side..

Historic maps show that the 'Tunnel Company' purchased a series of plots (smaller than the current ownership boundary) - where existing structures were all fully or partially removed to facilitate the construction and operation of the tunnels.

Throughout the time of the tunnels operation the Stobcross ferry and the Finnieston Vehicular Ferry still ran services along the almost exact path.

The substantial decline in the shipping industry and the move away from engineering resulted in the complete redevelopment of the wider area - it was not until the SEC campus was established in the late 1980's that the area started in its current trajectory towards being one of Europe's leading entertainment hubs.

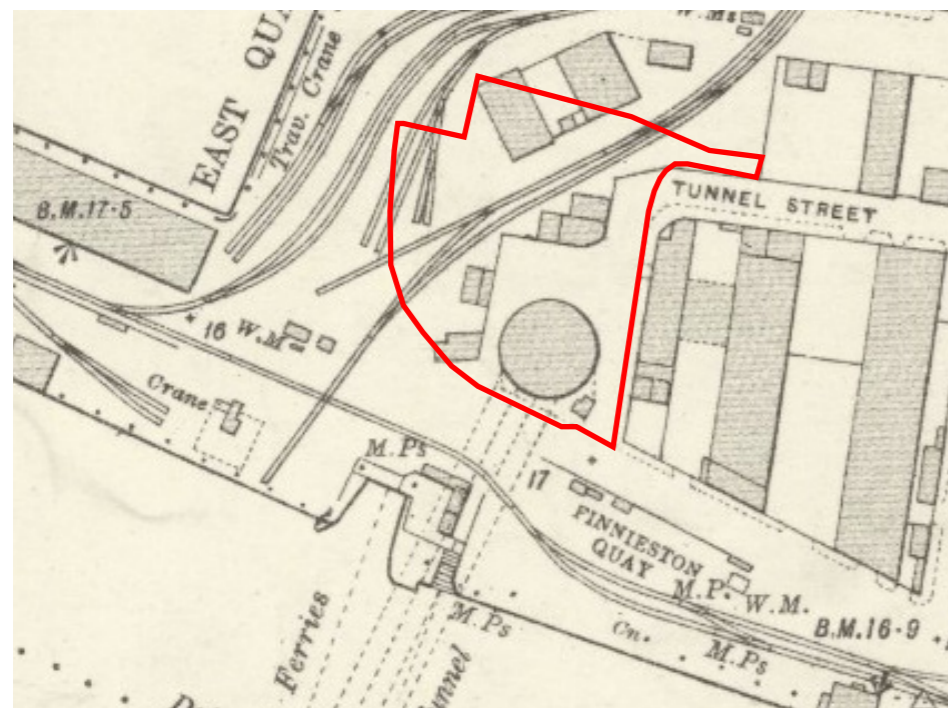
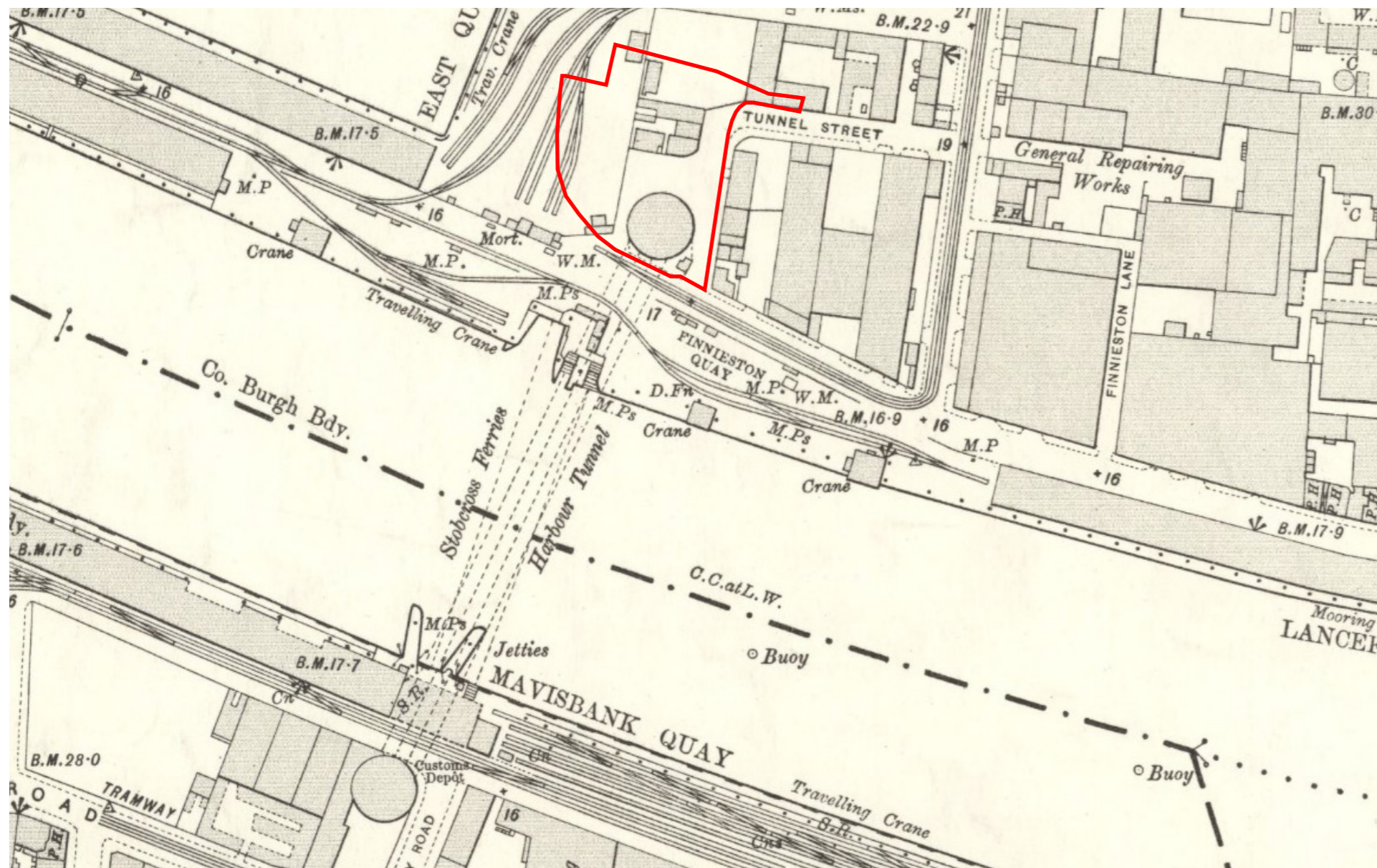


Image top: Historic OS Map (1913)
 Image left: Historic OS Map (1935)
 Image right: Goad Fire Plan (1901)



South Rotunda

An Almost Exact Copy

Located on the South bank of the Clyde, the South Rotunda is a twin of the North Rotunda in almost every way - with a only few minor differences. The South Rotunda provided access to the tunnels from the busy Mavisbank/Plantation Quays.

The almost identical 16-bay rotunda differs primarily due to its site topography which results in an internal split level, with the former vehicular entrance, marked by the Corinthian columns, sits a half storey above the pedestrian access doors which face the Clyde. One of these pedestrian doors still provides maintenance access into the pedestrian tunnel which is now used by Scottish Water.

The South Rotunda has a similar storey to that of the North Rotunda, up until the Glasgow Garden Festival in 1988. During the Garden Festival the South Rotunda was used as an ice cream parlour and cafe. It was subsequently used as a 'Dome of Discovery' - an early precursor of the Glasgow Science Centre. In the following years it played home to theatre groups and art exhibitions - all of which kept the building in sporadic use and reasonable state of repair.

In 2015 the Malin Group acquired the South Rotunda, working for over 3 years to bring it back into use as their head quarters - designed by GD Lodge Architects.



Image top: Internal view of refurbished dome (2019)
Image left: South Rotunda (1968)
Image right: South Rotunda Elevation