

WARDELL ARMSTRONG LLP

TOWER BANK PRIMARY SCHOOL FIGGATE BANK PORTOBELLO EDINBURGH

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

July 2016



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**DATE ISSUED:** July 2016

JOB NUMBER: CP11702

SITE CODE: TBP-A

**GRID REFERENCE:** NT 30642 74099

OASIS REFERENCE: wardella2-256610

PLANNING APPLICATION REF: 15/05234/FUL

**REPORT VERSION NUMBER:** 001

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July 2016

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DESK BASED ASSESSMENTS
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION
GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY
TOPOGRAPHIC AND LANDSCAPE SURVEY
HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



# **CONTENTS**

| SUN | MMARY   | 1  |
|-----|---|----|
| ACk | KNOWLEDGEMENTS                                | 2  |
| 1   | INTRODUCTION                                  | 3  |
| 1.1 | Project Circumstances and Planning Background | 3  |
| 1.2 | Project Documentation                         | 3  |
| 2   | METHODOLOGY                                   | 5  |
| 2.1 | Standards and Guidance                        | 5  |
| 2.2 | Documentary Research                          | 5  |
| 2.3 | The Watching Brief                            | 5  |
| 3   | BACKGROUND                                    | 7  |
| 3.1 | Location and Geological Context               | 7  |
| 3.2 | Historical and Archaeological Background      | 7  |
| 3.3 | Previous Archaeological Investigations        | 10 |
| 4   | WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS                        | 11 |
| 4.1 | Introduction                                  | 11 |
| 4.2 | Results                                       | 11 |
| 5   | CONCLUSIONS                                   | 13 |
| 5.1 | Interpretation                                | 13 |
| 5.2 | Development Impact                            | 13 |
| APF | APPENDIX 1: PLATES                            |    |
| ΔРΕ | PPENDIX 2: FIGURES                            |    |



### **PLATES (APPENDIX 2)**

- Plate 1: Google Earth Imagery, 31st July 2012
- Plate 2: Services encountered during groundworks, facing north
- Plate 3: Example of deposits revealed in test trenches
- Plate 4: Former sandstone wall

## **FIGURES (APPENDIX 3)**

- Figure 1: Site location
- Figure 2: Detailed site location showing area monitored during watching brief
- Figure 3: Extract from John Wood's Plan of Portobello, 1824
- Figure 4: Extract from the Great Reform Act Plan, 1832
- Figure 5: First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1854 (6inch to 1 mile scale)
- Figure 6: Extract from Johnston's Plan of 1888
- Figure 7: 10ft Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1894, (10ft to 1 mile scale)
- Figure 8: Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1896 (25inch to 1 mile scale)
- Figure 9: Third Edtiion Ordnance Survey Map, 1905 (25inch to 1 mile scale)
- Figure 10: Fourth Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1914 (25inch to 1 mile scale)
- Figure 11: 1949 Ordnance Survey Map (25 inch to 1 mile scale)



#### **SUMMARY**

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (WAA) was commissioned by Wardell Armstrong LLP, to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Towerbank Primary School, Figgate Bank, Portobello, Edinburgh (NGR NT 30642 74099). The watching brief was required as a fulfilment of a condition of planning consent for the construction of a single-storey dining room extension at Tower Bank Primary School. The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI; Railton 2016) produced as a result of consultation with John Lawson, Archaeology Officer at The City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service.

The archaeological watching brief monitored all excavations associated with the new development. The only possible feature of archaeological interest were traces of a former sandstone wall likely to be the north-western wall of a building likely to have dated to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century at least, and demolished between 1905 and 1914. Unstratified finds noted from the vicinity also dated to the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. No finds or features of earlier origin were encountered, though the natural was observed in the area, at a depth of 0.6m below the ground surface.



### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (WAA) thanks Wardell Armstrong LLP for commissioning the project, and for all their assistance throughout the groundwork stage of the project. Also, WAA thank John Lawson of the City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service for all assistance.

The watching brief was undertaken by Dagmar Richardson. Cat Peters undertook the archaeological research and wrote the report. The figures were produced by Helen Phillips. The project was managed by Frank Giecco and the report edited by Richard Newman.



### 1 INTRODUCTION

# 1.1 Project Circumstances and Planning Background

- 1.1.1 In June 2016, Wardell Armstrong Archaeology (WAA) undertook an archaeological watching brief at Tower Bank Primary School, Figgate Bank, Portobello (NGR NT 30642 74099). The archaeological watching brief was required as part of a planning condition for the construction of a single-storey dining room extension for the school.
- 1.1.2 The condition, attached to the planning permission, stated that, "no development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work, in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority, having first been agreed by the City Archaeologist" (15/05234/FUL).
- 1.1.3 The written scheme of investigation, approved by John Lawson, the City Archaeologist stated that "given the uncertain archaeological potential at the site, archaeological monitoring is required during all ground reduction and excavation of foundations and service trenches for the proposed new building" (Railton 2016, 1).
- 1.1.4 A previous watching brief, undertaken in advance of the construction of a three-storey classroom extension, single-storey nursery with associated new play area and new flagpole in existing play area (Karsgaard and Lewis 2012), encountered a number of archaeological remains, resulting in an open area of excavation. An earlier archaeological evaluation, relating to a new access road for the school, to the southwest, opened three trenches but found no archaeological finds or features (Johnson 2011, 6).
- 1.1.5 A watching brief is defined as a programme of 'monitoring and investigation carried out during a non-archaeological activity within a specified area of land or development where construction operations may disturb or destroy archaeological remains' (CIFA 2014a).

### 1.2 **Project Documentation**

- 1.2.1 The project conforms to the WSI (Railton 2016) which was produced to provide a specific methodology for the programme of archaeological mitigation implemented via a watching brief. This was approved by John Lawson, Archaeology Officer at The City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service prior to groundworks taking place.
- 1.2.2 This report outlines the work undertaken on site, the subsequent programme of post-



fieldwork analysis, and the results of this watching brief.



#### 2 METHODOLOGY

#### 2.1 Standards and Guidance

- 2.1.1 The archaeological watching brief was undertaken following the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (2014a), and in accordance with the WAA fieldwork manual (2015).
- 2.1.2 The fieldwork programme was followed by an assessment of the data as set out in the Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief (CIfA 2014a) and the Standard and Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials (CIfA 2014b).

### 2.2 **Documentary Research**

2.2.1 Part of the scope of this work included an element of documentary research, to set out the archaeological and historical background of the site.

### 2.3 The Watching Brief

- 2.3.1 The watching brief comprised the monitoring of all intrusive works associated with the current development, comprising the excavation of an area of *c.* 200m<sup>2</sup>.
- 2.3.2 The general aims of these investigations were:
  - allow the monitoring archaeologist to signal that an archaeological find has been made before it is destroyed
  - to provide the opportunity for appropriate resource allocation if the archaeological find cannot be dealt with under the watching brief remit
  - to determine the presence or absence of buried archaeological remains within the proposed development site
  - to determine the character, date, extent and distribution of any archaeological deposits and their potential significance
  - determine levels of disturbance to any archaeological deposits from past land use)
  - investigate and record all deposits and features of archaeological interest within the areas to be disturbed by the current development
  - to determine the likely impact on archaeological deposits from the proposed development
  - to disseminate the results of the fieldwork through an appropriate level of reporting.



- 2.3.3 Deposits considered not to be significant were removed by a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket to maximise the chance for identification of archaeological remains should they be present. All intrusive groundworks were monitored under close supervision by a suitably trained archaeologist. Where potential archaeological remains were present the groundworks were subsequently cleaned by hand. All possible features were inspected and all features were recorded according to the WAA standard procedure as set out in the Excavation Manual (WAA 2015).
- 2.3.4 Only unstratified finds of 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century date were encountered and these were not retained with the site archive. No environmental samples were taken.
- 2.3.5 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project specification, and the Archaeological Archives Forum recommendations (Brown 2011). The archive (paper-only, no finds) will be deposited with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland in Edinburgh, with a digital copy of the report sent to the relevant HER, available upon request. The project archive can be accessed under the unique project identifier: TBP-A.
- 2.3.6 Wardell Armstrong Archaeology supports the Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS (OASIS) project. This project aims to provide an on-line index and access to the extensive and expanding body of grey literature, created as a result of developer-funded archaeological work. As a result, details of the results of this project will be made available by WAA as a part of this national project. The OASIS reference for the project is: wardella2-256610.



### 3 BACKGROUND

## 3.1 Location and Geological Context

- 3.1.1 The site is located within the north-eastern part of Portobello, an eastern coastal suburb of Edinburgh (centred on NGR NT 30642 74099). The lies within the grounds of a 19<sup>th</sup> century school, within a wider residential area close to the coast (Figure 1).
- 3.1.2 The area monitored by the watching brief covered an area approximately 200m<sup>2</sup>, immediately to the south-east of the main school building, and north-west of the earlier three-storey classroom extension (Figure 2). This area was part of the former playground associated with the school, though since the 2012 extensions to the southeast and north-west, had become more marginalised.
- 3.1.3 The underlying solid geology within the area of investigation is mapped as sedimentary rock cycles of the Gullane Formation, part of the Strathclyde Group Type deposited during the Carboniferous Period, 335 to 352 million years ago. This is overlain by superficial deposits of raised marine deposits of the Flandrian Age, deposited up to 2 million years ago during the Quaternary Period (BGS 2016 website). The natural substrate was not reached during groundwork excavations monitored by the watching brief.

## 3.2 Historical and Archaeological Background

- 3.2.1 The name of Portobello stems "from a house built around 1750 on the desolate Figgate Whins between Leith and Musselburgh" (Portobello online website 2016) and named after the 1739 capture of Porto Bello, Panama. The area was originally known as Figgate Muir, meaning 'cow's road or ditch', and the land was used as pasture for cattle by the monks of Kelso Abbey. It "comprised a stretch of uninhabited moorland crossed by the road from Edinburgh to Musselburgh...popular with smugglers, but otherwise little of note had happened here since the moor was crossed by the armies of William Wallace and Oliver Cromwell three and a half centuries apart" (Undiscovered Scotland website 2016).
- 3.2.2 The original Portobello Hut seems to have been utilised as a cobblers and harness-makers, profiting from its position approximately half way between Edinburgh and Musselburgh on the main road (Baird 1898, 286-7). In 1755, through newspaper article evidence, it seems "Portobello House was the only house in the locality of the Figgate Whins in 1755, and that while he [George Hamilton] carried on the occupation of



- shoemaker, he kept an hostelry or public-house, and adopted the method of drawing customers to his house by offering prizes for horse races" (Baird 1898, 288).
- 3.2.3 After the discovery of clay deposits in the area, brickworks were developed. Hugo Amot, writing in 1779, stated that "the making of bricks in the vicinity of the city had begun about the year 1764 on a small scale, the number made annually not then exceeding 400,000" (Amot, cited in Baird 1898, 294). By 1779 there were three brickfields in the area, "the principle being at Brickfield or Portobello" (Amot, cited in Baird 1898, 294). This necessitated the construction of workers' housing, with the older parts of the town established near Pipe Street and the High Street, c. 300m to the west of the development site. About 1786, two potteries were established for the manufacture of earthenware and porcelain. With wealth accumulated from the industrial works, grander houses were also built towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, including The Tower (Canmore ref: 145560), built in around 1787, with extensive grounds that included what is now Figgate Street and Lane (Baird 1898, 299).
- 3.2.4 In 1806, one authority states "at an equal distance from Edinburgh, Leith and Musselburgh, has risen a beautiful village called Portobello. The grounds called Figgate, consisting of about sixty acres, on which the village is built, are upon the sea shore. The beach has a gentle descent to the sea, the waters of which are pure and clean. For several years past, Portobello has been much resorted to in the summer season by the citizens of Edinburgh and others for sea bathing; and a number of elegant houses have been there lately erected and gardens laid out" (cited in Baird 1898, 308-9). Baths were constructed in 1806. This was clearly the beginnings of Portobello as a coastal resort. Various distinguished local families had associations with the increasingly popular town, a Mr Wilson, giving his name to Wilson's Park, to the immediate south-east of Towerbank School, and "Maryfield, adjoining, being probably named after his wife" (Baird 1898, 317). Maryfield was the road formerly to the south-west of the school, but recently subsumed into the school grounds.
- 3.2.5 By 1824 and the publication of John Wood's Plan (Figure 3), Maryfield to the southwest, Tower Lane (later Ramsay Lane) to the north-west, Flower Bank (perhaps a mistake for Tower Bank) to the north-east and an unnamed road to the south-east (later Wilson's Park) had all been laid out. Buildings occupy some of the plots to the south-east (remains of which were encountered during archaeological works in 2012 (Karsgaard and Lewis 2012), south-west and north-west of the development site, including 'Hot Baths' to the east (Figure 3). 'Portobello Soapworks' are shown in the



wider area, to the north-west of the development site, with a 'Pottery' to the south-east. The only school shown on the plan is to the west, accessible from a small lane from Pipe Street. The only building likely to have been established within the present development site by this date is a rectangular structure to the south-east, which appears to have been encountered during archaeological works in 2012. This building was extended to the east later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when it clearly fall within the development area. The same layout is shown on the Great Reform Act of 1832 (Figure 4). Between 1832 (Figure 4) and 1854 (Figure 5), very little had changed in the immediate vicinity of development site, with the development site itself depicted as gardens in 1854 (Figure 5). There are 112 Canmore heritage assets within the 250m radius, all of which are non-designated standing buildings of the post medieval period (Canmore online 2016). These will not be directly impacted upon by the development.

- 3.2.6 The original school building on the Towerbank Primary site dates to 1884 (Towerbank Primary School website 2016). It is shown on Johnston's Plan of 1888 (Figure 6), labelled 'Board Sch', which is also the first to label the road to the north-west as 'Ramsay Lane'. The map is a large scale, but appears to show the same layout for the school as the 1894 10ft to 1 mile scale Ordnance Survey map (Figure 7). This shows two distinct halves, the south-eastern labelled 'Girls' and the north-western labelled 'Boys' with separate yards and outbuildings, and presumably, separate entrances. The immediate vicinity is shown as much the same as earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century mapping (confer Figures 3-6), although outhouses are shown behind the buildings to the south-west fronting Maryfield. The development site at this time lay to the south-eastern side of the 'Girls' area, in the yard (Figure 7). The same layout is shown on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1896 (Figure 8).
- 3.2.7 At some time between 1896 (Figure 8) and 1905 (Figure 9), the school had been adapted, no longer segregating the sexes, but extending the former 'Boys' part to the south-west and removing some of the outbuildings formerly associated with the 'Girls' half. In the wider area, the pier is depicted to the north-east. Between 1905 (Figure 9) and 1914 (Figure 10) the majority of the buildings once fronting Maryfield to the south-west of the development site, with later outbuildings to the rear, had been demolished presumably to provide grounds for the school, which had been extended considerably, south-westwards. The development site itself remained in the yard area to the south-east of the main school building. Between 1914 (Figure 10) and 1949 (Figure 11) the majority of buildings not relating to the school had been demolished



within the square formed by Ramsay Lane, Tower Bank, Wilson's Park and Maryfield.

The development site itself appears to have remained within the yard area.

#### 3.3 Previous Archaeological Investigations

- 3.3.1 Two previous archaeological interventions have occurred associated with recent developments at Towerbank Primary School. The first, an archaeological evaluation in 2011, related to the new access road for the school, to the south-west of the present development site. This excavated three trenches along the line of the new route, but found no archaeological finds or features (Johnson 2011, 6).
- 3.3.2 A watching brief, undertaken in advance of the construction of a three-storey classroom extension, single-storey nursery with associated new play area and new flagpole in existing play area (Karsgaard and Lewis 2012), encountered a number of archaeological remains, resulting in an open area excavation. This encountered two wells, thought to be associated with the former dwellings fronting Maryfield Street (Kaarsgaard and Lewis 2012, 11), remains of four domestic structures running alongside Wilson's Park, thought to relate to structures shown on the 1894 Ordnance Survey map, including an outhouse complex which included a toilet in a wider courtyard area and a further structure with brick surface, fireplace, concrete paving and even a boot-scraper (Kaarsgaard and Lewis 2012, 12).



#### 4 WATCHING BRIEF RESULTS

#### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The watching brief was undertaken between Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June and Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016. It monitored all groundworks undertaken as part of the new development; the construction of a single-storey dining room extension for Towerbank Primary School. This occurred within a former playground area between the main historic part of the school building to the north-west, the 2012 three-storey classroom extension to the south-west and the 2012 single-storey nursery to the south-east (Figure 2).

#### 4.2 Results

- 4.2.1 The tarmac was stripped across the entirety of the watching brief area, and an existing access ramp and porch in the northern corner was removed. Beneath the concrete ramp was a red hardcore stone deposit overlying a mixed silty soil containing broken brick, occasional small stones, plastic and other rubbish. The tarmac stripping revealed a mixed silty soil heavily truncated by modern services. Google Earth imagery dating to the 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012, during the earlier extensions for the three-storey classroom extension to the south-west and single-storey nursery to the south-east of the present development site, shows five possible manhole covers within the area monitored by the present watching brief, partly accounting for the heavily truncated nature of the area by services (Plates 1 and 2).
- 4.2.2 Three test trenches were excavated in areas least affected by services, to assess the survival of archaeological features within the development site (Figure 2). These were located towards the north-western corner of the development site (Trench 1), the northern corner beneath the former concrete access ramp (Trench 2) and towards the south-eastern corner, close to the 2012 nursery extension to the primary school (Trench 3). These revealed a grey-red hardcore make-up deposit overlying a mixed soil which overlay a natural sand (Plate 3).
- 4.2.3 The only possible feature of archaeological interest were traces of a former sandstone wall core revealed at a depth of 0.3m at the base of Trench 3, though this had been disturbed (Plate 4). It consisted of rounded stones of between 0.25m and 0.35m diameter, and the width of the spread was up to 0.8m. The location of this possible former wall (Figure 2) appears to match the alignment of a building shown on late 19<sup>th</sup> century maps, some walls of which were found during the evaluation by CFA Archaeology in 2012, walls 011 and 013 which were aligned north-east to south-west



and constructed from irregular sandstone blocks bonded with yellow sandy mortar (Kaarsgard and Lewis 2012, 7). These aligned with the north-eastern wall and south-western walls of a building clearly identifiable on the 1894 10ft to 1 mile scale Ordnance Survey map (Figure 7) and also probably shown on Wood's Plan of Portobello of 1824 (Figure 3). This building was demolished at some point between 1905 (Figure 9) and 1914 (Figure 10).



### 5 CONCLUSIONS

#### 5.1 **Interpretation**

- 5.1.1 The only possible feature of archaeological interest were traces of a former sandstone wall likely to be the north-western wall of a building considered to have dated to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century at least, and to have been demolished between 1905 and 1914. Unstratified finds noted from the vicinity also dated to the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. No finds or features of earlier origin were encountered, though the natural was observed in the area, at a depth of 0.6m below the ground surface.
- 5.1.2 The archaeological watching brief monitored all groundworks undertaken as part of the new development; the construction of a single-storey dining room extension for Towerbank Primary School. The traces of a former sandstone wall were encountered in the south-eastern part of the development site, and appeared to represent remains of a wall associated with a former building shown on 19<sup>th</sup> century maps, walls for which had also been encountered during earlier archaeological work at the school in 2012 (Kaarsgard and Lewis 2012, 7).

## 5.2 **Development Impact**

5.2.1 The watching brief has ensured that all remains disturbed by the development have been preserved by record.



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# **APPENDIX 1: PLATES**



Plate 1: Google Earth Imagery, 31st July 2012



Plate 2: Services encountered during groundworks, facing north





Plate 3: Example of deposits revealed in test trenches



Plate 4: Former sandstone wall



# **APPENDIX 2: FIGURES**



Figure 1: Site location.

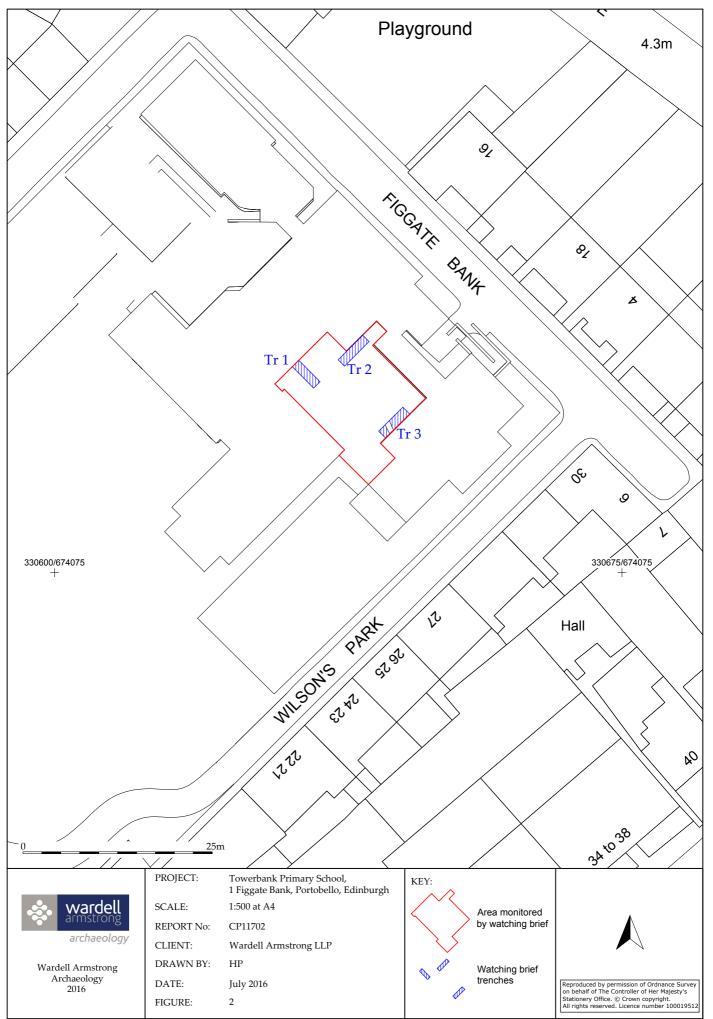


Figure 2: Detailed site location showing area monitored during watching brief.

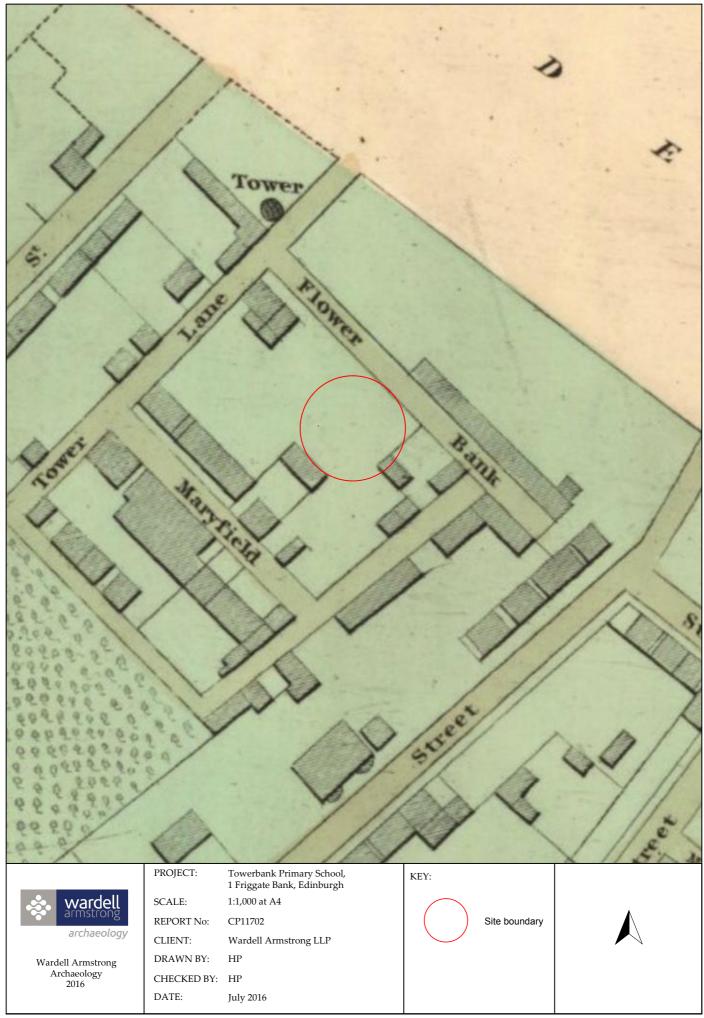


Figure 3: Extract from John Wood's Plan of Portobello, 1824.

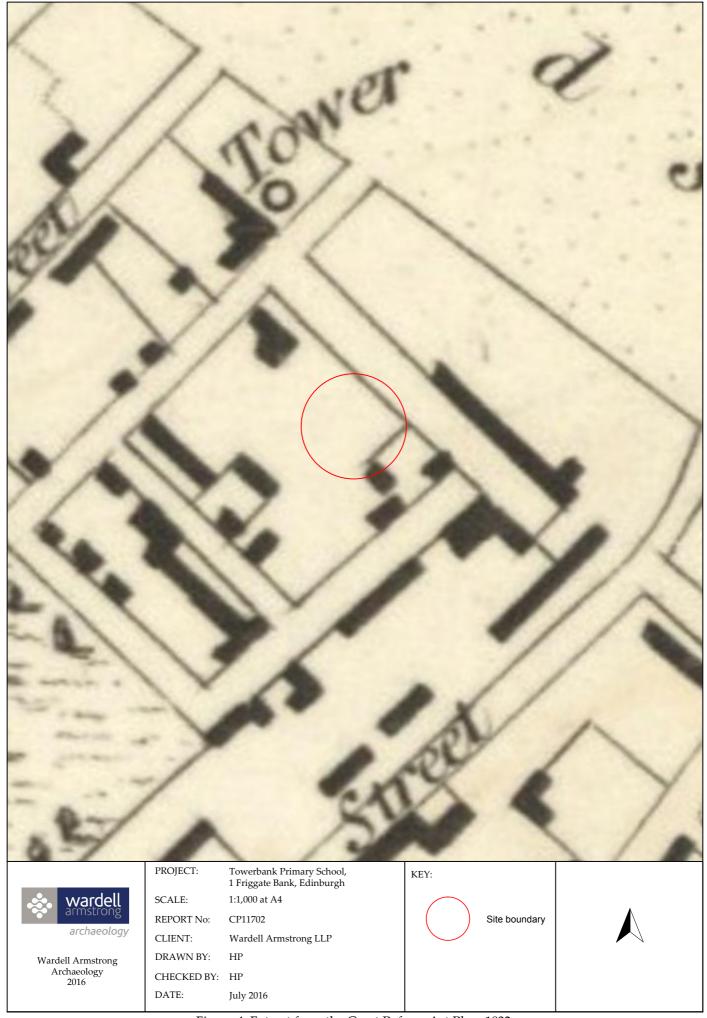


Figure 4: Extract from the Great Reform Act Plan, 1832.

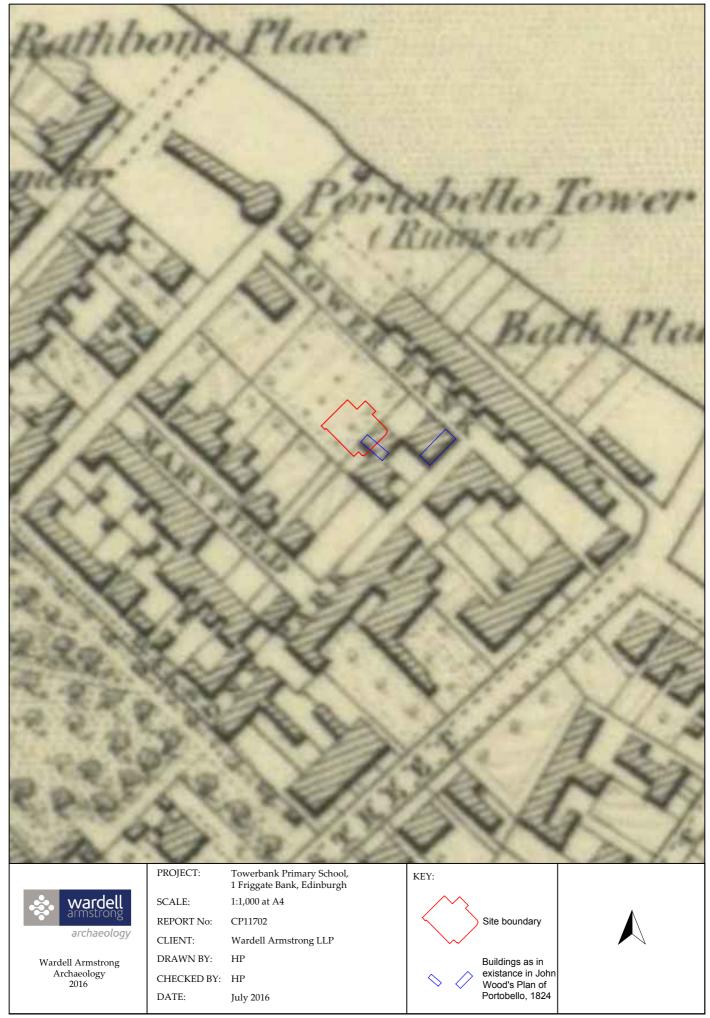


Figure 5: First Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1854 (6 inches to 1 mile scale).

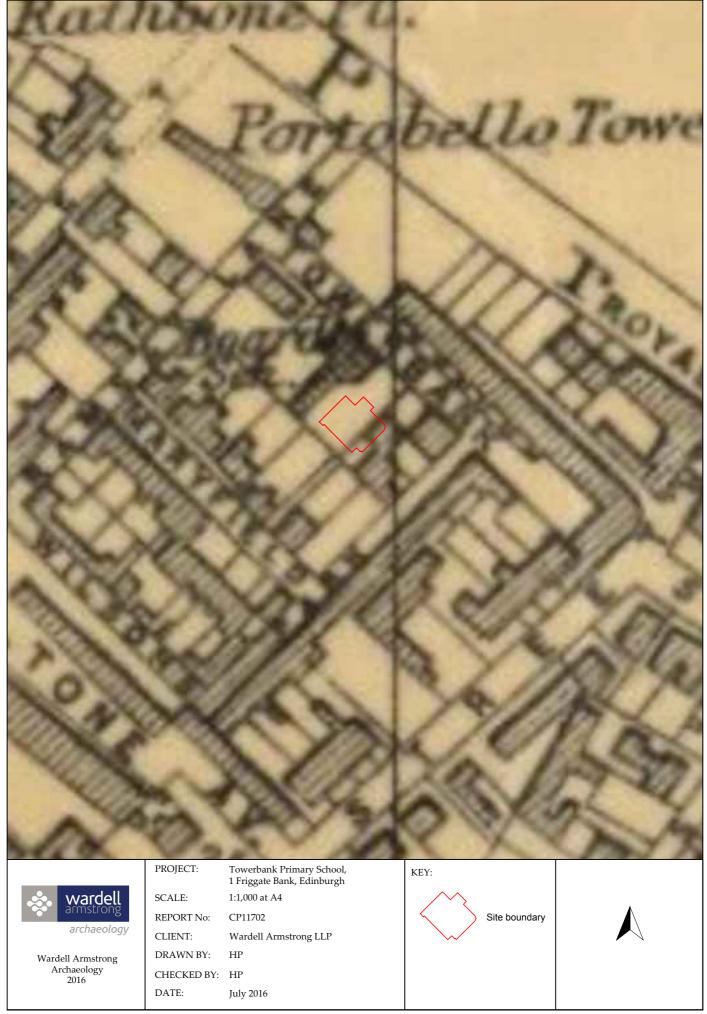


Figure 6: Extract from Johnston's Plan of 1888.



Figure 7: 10ft Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1894 (10ft to 1 mile scale).

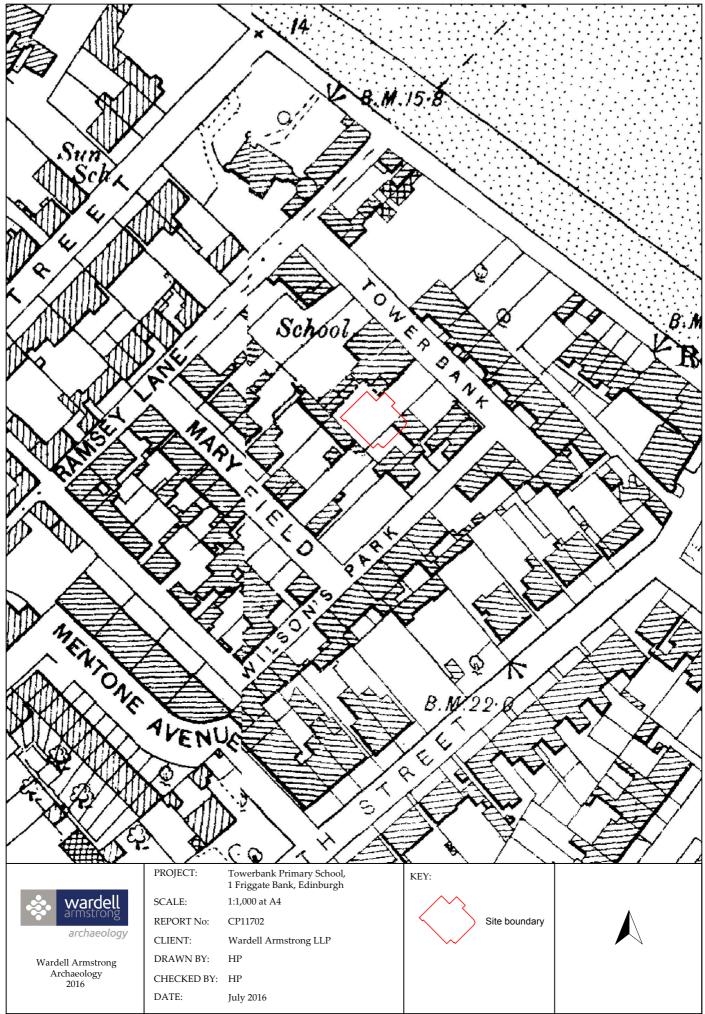


Figure 8: Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1896 (25 inches to 1 mile scale).

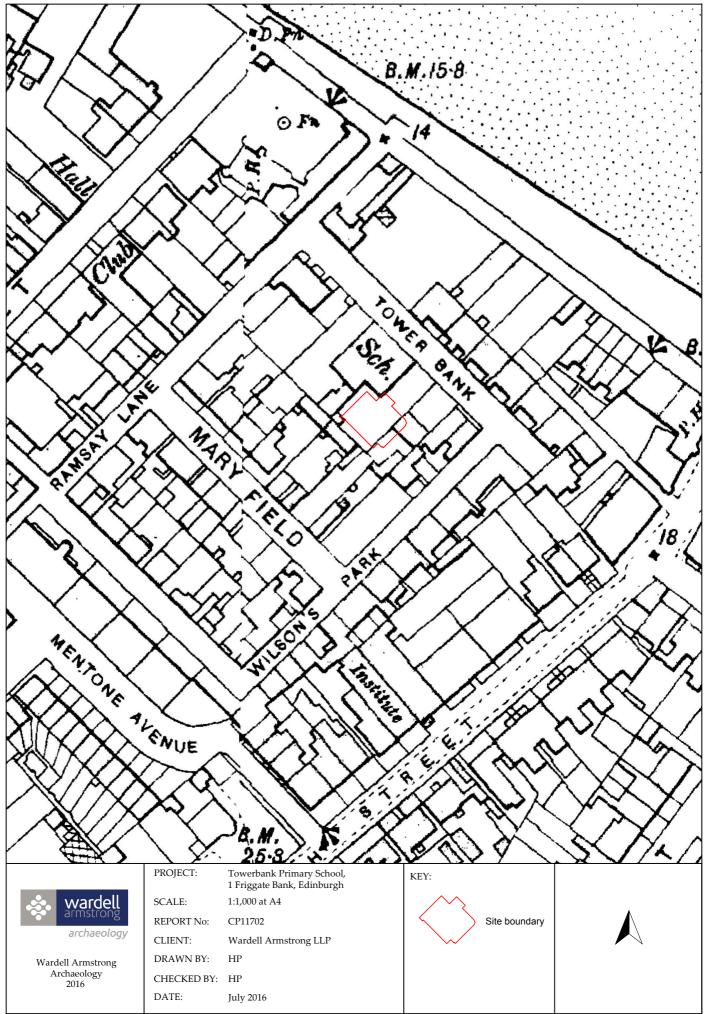


Figure 9: Third Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1905 (25 inches to 1 mile scale).

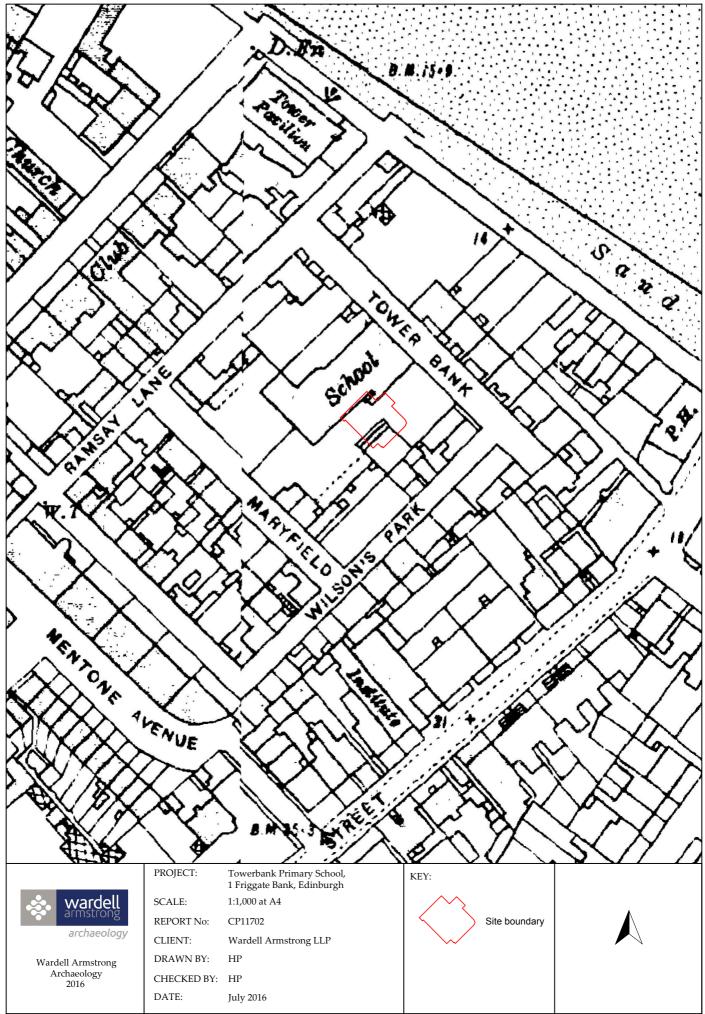


Figure 10: Fourth Edition Ordnance Survey Map, 1914 (25 inches to 1 mile scale).

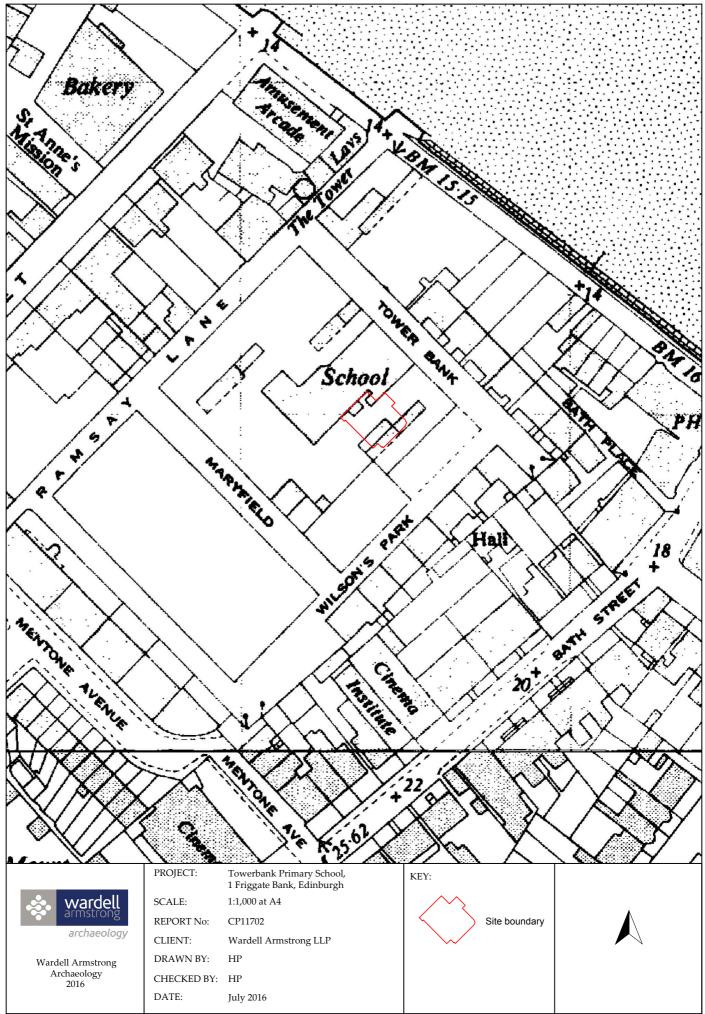


Figure 11: Ordnance Survey Map, 1949 (25 inches to 1 mile scale).

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