

ESSF12-002

EAST SANDS, ST ANDREWS, FIFE

Archaeological Evaluation

for Alumno Developments (St Andrews) Ltd

13/03039/FULL

April 2014

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HA Job no.: ESSF12/002
NGR: NO 5180 1595
Parish: St Andrews
Council: Fife Council

OASIS ref.: headland1-177366

Archive will be deposited with: RCHAMS

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EAST SANDS, ST ANDREWS, FIFE

Archaeological Evaluation

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd was commissioned by Alumno Developments (St Andrews) Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation at the site of Wonder Years Nursery, East Sands, St Andrews, Fife. The site lies within the area covered by the former complex of St Nicholas Farm Leper Hospital, a medieval institution known to have existed between the 12th and 16th centuries AD. Although much of the site has previously been developed and lies on the south-western perimeter of the medieval hospital, away from the main buildings complex, it was deemed that there was still the potential for archaeological remains to survive in those parts of the site though not to have been previously developed. In total seven trial trenches and 19 test pits were excavated equating to 400m² or approximately 10% of the area of previously un-investigated site.

The trial trenching and test pitting revealed that contrary to expectation the entire site has been largely disturbed by modern development, with made ground deposits of up to 1.50m in depth present in all of the seven trenches, overlying the geological sands. This is consistent with the site having been levelled and landscaped during the construction of the current nursery buildings in the 1990s.

1 INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd was commissioned by Alumno Developments (St Andrew) Ltd to undertake a programme of archaeological works in connection with the construction of student accommodation and associated access, parking, landscaping and enhanced open space at the current site of the 'Wonder Years' nursery, East Sands, St Andrews, Fife.

An application for development (13/03039/FULL), was submitted to Fife Council and is subject to a number of conditions, including one relating to archaeological works:

BEFORE ANY WORKS START ON SITE, the developer shall secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a detailed written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the developer and approved in writing by this Planning Authority.

In order to fulfil this condition a Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by Headland Archaeology (2014) setting out the proposed strategy for archaeological mitigation.

The WSI was submitted to and agreed with the Fife Council Archaeologist (the curator) who advises the Local Planning Authority on archaeological matters. This report details the results of the work.

2 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The site is located here (NGR: NO 5180 1595; see Illus 1). It is occupied by the current Wonder Years Nursery with associated access, outdoor play area, car park and some surrounding open grassed areas. It is bounded by East Sands Leisure Centre to the north, a beach-front promenade to the east, a steep natural incline to the south (Kinkell Braes) and some modern housing to the west.

The site lies around 5-10m OD and is underlain by clean geological deposits of sand of Flandrian Age in origin (British Geological Survey website; <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>).

A desk based assessment relating to the site was produced by Headland Archaeology (Stronach 2012) summarizing the archaeological background and potential. The full results will not be repeated here. The archaeological potential was assessed as moderate to high in particular its potential to

contain remains relating to the medieval period.

The development area is situated at the southern extent of the 12th century St Nicholas hospital, burial ground, and leper colony, remains of which have been recorded immediately to the north of the site during the development of the East Sands Leisure Centre. A watching brief on the construction of the current nursery building and car park (Hall 1999) concluded that the development area lay within the outer perimeter of the precinct in an area used for agriculture and away from the main buildings complex further to the north-west.

As detailed records of the construction of the nursery were not available it was deemed possible that the impact of the previous development was confined to the footprint of the current buildings. It was concluded that there was potential for further medieval remains relating to the hospital to survive within the possibly undisturbed areas of the development area, namely the grass field to the east of the buildings and the grass verges to the south.

3 AIMS & OBJECTIVES

In line with the WSI the main objectives of archaeological works were:

- 1.1 To provide sufficient evidence for confident prediction of the archaeological significance and potential of the proposed development site.
- 1.2 More specific aims of the evaluation were:
 - To establish the location, extent, nature and date of archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the accessible areas targeted for trenching.
 - To establish the integrity and state of preservation of archaeological features or deposits that may be present within the accessible areas.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Trial Trenching

The works were undertaken as specified in the WSI.

Works commenced on site on the 15th of April 2014 and were concluded on the 16th of the same month.

Trenches were opened with a JCB 3CX mechanical excavator, suitably equipped with a toothless ditching bucket of 1.6m width. All trenches were excavated by machine under direct archaeological supervision to remove topsoil and deposits of modern make-up and were excavated in controlled spits.

Machine excavation terminated at the top of the natural geology or the first significant archaeological horizon. Due to the depth of modern disturbance across the site trenches were excavated to a depth of 0.50m in order to observe the extent of these deposits in plan. Test pits were excavated to investigate these deep depositional sequences, of greater than 1.00m, encountered in all of the trenches; such test pits were located within blank areas of the existing trenches, and were not entered by site staff. Test pits were backfilled immediately after excavation for safety reasons. Spoil was stored beside the trench with topsoil and turf separated from underlying deposits.

4.2 Recording

All aspects of the work were undertaken in accordance with the current relevant Standards and Guidance for conducting archaeological evaluations of the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008)

All contexts were given unique numbers. All recording was undertaken on *pro forma* record cards. Digital images with a minimum of 5 megapixels were taken with a graduated metric scale clearly visible.

A site plan including all areas of excavation and other pertinent information was recorded by manually measuring from fixed points on known locations.

4.3 Reporting and Archives

The results of the works are presented below. (A summary report has been prepared for submission

to *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland* (Appendix 2) and the OASIS database (headland1-177366).

The complete project archive will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) within six months of the completion of the project. The records (paper and digital) will be archived according to best practice guidelines set out by the Archaeological Archiving Forum.

5 RESULTS

A total of seven trenches were excavated varying in length from 20m to 50m. A further 19 Test Pits were excavated within these seven trenches (Illus 1). The geological deposits encountered across the site consisted of mottled yellow brown sands with occasional sand stone boulders.

Trench TR01

Geological deposits of clean sands were observed between 1.10m and 1.50m below the current ground surface in test pits 01A and 01B. These sands were sealed by between 0.70m and 0.80m of sandy silt colluvium. Overlying this colluvium in test pit 01A was 0.50m of modern made ground consisting of construction debris such as bricks and concrete crush as well as clay, asphalt and redeposited sands. This made ground deposit was observed across the first 20m of the trench from the eastern end but was not present in the west where the ground was lower. Sealing both the made ground to the east and the colluvium to the west was a thin layer of loam topsoil topped with turf between 0.10 and 0.30m thick.

Trench TR02

Geological deposits of clean sands with occasional sand stone boulders were observed between 1.20m and 1.50m below the current surface level in test pits 02A, 02B and 02C. These sands were overlain by between 0.80m and 1.00m of sandy silt colluvium. Loam topsoil topped with turf sealed these colluvial deposits.

Trench TR03

Geological deposits of clean sands were observed at a depth of 2.00m below the current ground surface in test pit 03A. These sands were sealed by 1.10m of sandy silt colluvium which was also observed in test pits 03B and 03C which were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.50m.

Overlying this colluvium in all test pits was between 0.20m and 0.40m of buried modern topsoil containing plastics, rubble and other waste material. Modern made ground consisting of construction debris such as bricks and concrete crush as well as clay, asphalt and redeposited sands were observed overlaying this buried soil to a thickness of between 0.30m in test pit 03A in the east and 1.30m test pit 03C in the west. Sealing both the made ground was a thin layer of loam topsoil topped with turf up to 0.30m thick.

Trenches TR04 to TR07

All trenches to the north of TR04 displayed the same sequence of deposits and will be discussed collectively here. Geological deposits of sand were observed between 0.90m and 1.50m below the current ground level. These deposits were overlain by a buried dark brown loam topsoil deposit containing modern refuse, such as plastics, metal and wood, between 0.20m and 0.40m thick. Onto this soil had been placed between 0.70m and 1.00m of modern made ground consisting of demolition rubble, bricks, crushed concrete and redeposited sands and gravels. Topsoil of loam and turf was present across this area of site between 0.10m and 0.30m thick.

5.1 Discussion

Trenches TR04 to TR07 are characterised by the fact that all deposits overlying the natural gravel appear to be modern made ground or levelling deposits. The buried soil in these trenches contained modern plastics, confectionary wrappers and other inclusions consistent with topsoil being bought in to raise the ground level. In turn these were then overlain with rubble and refuse filled made ground deposits. This suggests that this whole area directly to the east of the current development was stripped to the geological sands during the construction of the nursery in the 1990s and then built back up and landscaped.

Trenches TR01, TR02 and to a lesser extent TR03 show the least direct impact from modern development on the site. Although modern made ground deposits were observed in TR01 and especially in TR03 it does not appear that this southern strip of the site was entirely levelled to the geological sands. This is most likely due to the extreme depths of colluvial deposits located in this area at the foot of the Kinkell Braes. Trench TR02

showed the least evidence of impact from previous development. However no archaeological features were observed cut into the top of the colluvium or into the underlying sands some 1.50m beneath. It is likely that this area of site has always been agricultural land, lying well without the area of activity associated with the medieval leper hospital of St. Nicholas Farm.

5.2 Conclusion

The trial trench evaluation has revealed that, with the exception of a narrow strip of land running to the south of the site at the foot of Kinkell Braes, this site has been truncated by modern development related to the construction of the current nursery site which has removed any archaeology that may have been present.

The potential for unknown archaeological remains within the narrow area of undeveloped land to the immediate south of the nursery buildings is considered very low. No further works are recommended in relation to the proposed development.

6 REFERENCES

6.1 Bibliographic sources

Hall, D W 1999 *'St Nicholas Farm, St Andrews (St Andrews & St Leonards parish), watching brief in precinct of leper hospital'*, *Discovery Excav Scot*, 48.

Headland Archaeology 2014 *Written Scheme of investigation for archaeological evaluation, East Sands, St Andrews, Fife.*

IfA 2008 *Standards and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (revised October 2008).

Stronach S 2012 *Wonder Years Nursery Site, East Sands St Andrews Fife desk based assessment.* Unpublished Headland Archaeology client report

7 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix 1 – Site registers

Photographic register

Frame no.	Digital no.	Direction	Description
001		SE	Setting shot of field to east of nursery complex
002		NE	Test Pit 05A
003		SW	Test Pit 05B
004		S	Test Pit 05C
005		SW	Test Pit 05C
006		S	Test Pit 05D
007		SW	Test Pit 05D
008		SE	Test Pit 05D
009		S	Test Pit 05E
010		SW	Trench TR05 Post excavation shot
011		SW	Trench TR06 Post excavation shot
012		S	Test Pit 06A
013		S	Test Pit 06A
014		S	Test Pit 06B
015		S	Test Pit 06B
016		W	Trench TR06 Post excavation shot
017		E	Test Pit 07A
018		NE	Test Pit 07B
019		W	Trench TR07 Post excavation shot
020		S	Setting shot of TR01
021		E	Setting shot for TR02 and TR03 location
022		S	Test pit 03A
023		SE	Test Pit 03A
024		SW	Test Pit 03A
025		S	Test Pit 03A
026		SE	Working shot TR03
027		SE	Working shot TR03
028		S	Sample section of made ground TR03
029		SE	Test Pit 03B
030		S	Test Pit 03B
031		SW	Test Pit 03B

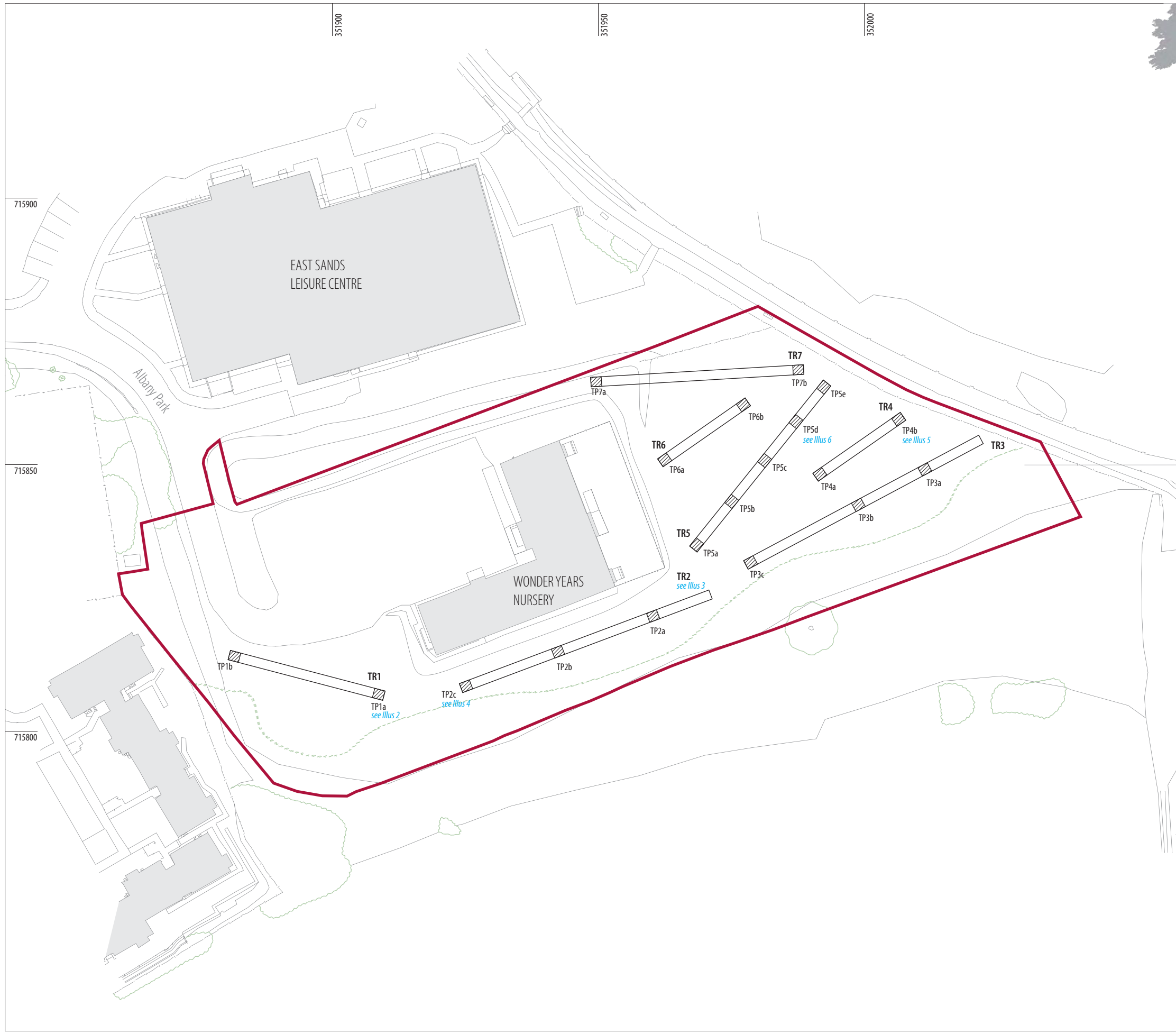
Frame no.	Digital no.	Direction	Description
032		S	Test Pit 03B
033		SE	Test Pit 03C
034		SW	Test Pit 03C
035		S	Test Pit 03C
036		SE	Test Pit 03C
037		E	TR03 Post excavation shot
038		S	Test Pit 04A
039		SE	Test Pit 04A
040		SW	Test Pit 04A
041		SE	Test Pit 04B
042		S	Test Pit 04B
043		SW	Test Pit 04B
044		N	Trenches TR04-TR07 Backfilled
045		S	Trenches TR04-TR07 Backfilled
046		SE	Trenches TR04-TR07 Backfilled
047		W	Trench TR07 Backfilled
048		W	Trench TR07 Backfilled
049		S	Test Pit 02A
050		SE	Test Pit 02A
051		SW	Test Pit 02A
052		S	Test Pit 02A
053		SE	Test Pit 02B
054		SW	Test Pit 02B
055		S	Test Pit 02B
056		S	Test Pit 02B
057		SE	Test Pit 02C
058		S	Test Pit 02C
059		SW	Test Pit 02C
060		W	TR02 Post Excavation Shot
061		SW	Test Pit 01A
062		S	Test Pit 01A
063		SE	Test Pit 01A
064		SW	Test Pit 01B
065		S	Test Pit 01B
066		SE	Test Pit 01B
067		SE	Trench TR01 Post Excavation shot

Context register

Context no.	Area	Description
1001	TR01	Topsoil of loam and turf
1002	TR01	Modern made ground and refuse deposit
1003	TR01	Buried colluvium/ hill wash
1004	TR01	Clean geological sands
2001	TR02	Topsoil of loam and turf
2002	TR02	Buried colluvium/ hill wash
2003	TR02	Clean geological sands
3001	TR03	Topsoil of loam and turf
3002	TR03	Modern made ground and refuse deposit
3003	TR03	Buried loam topsoil
3004	TR03	Buried colluvium/hill wash
3005	TR03	Clean geological sands
4001	TR04	Topsoil of loam and turf
4002	TR04	Modern made ground and refuse deposit
4003	TR04	Buried loam topsoil
4004	TR04	Clean geological sands
5001	TR05	Topsoil of loam and turf
5002	TR05	Modern made ground and refuse deposit
5003	TR05	Buried loam topsoil
5004	TR05	Clean geological sands
6001	TR06	Topsoil of loam and turf
6002	TR06	Modern made ground and refuse deposit
6003	TR06	Buried loam topsoil
6004	TR06	Clean geological sands
7001	TR07	Topsoil of loam and turf
7002	TR07	Modern made ground and refuse deposit
7003	TR07	Buried loam topsoil
7004	TR07	Clean geological sands

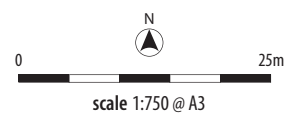
7.2 Appendix 2 – Discovery and Excavation in Scotland entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Fife Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Wonder Years Nursery, East Sands, St Andrews, Fife.
PROJECT CODE:	ESSF12
PARISH:	St Andrews and St Leonards
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	M Ginnever
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Headland Archaeology
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological Evaluation
NMRS NO(S):	
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	
NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)	NO 5180 1595
START DATE (this season)	15-04-2014
END DATE (this season)	16-04-2014
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>Headland Archaeology were commissioned by Alunmo Developments (St Andrews) Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation at the site of Wonder Years Nursery, East Sands, St Andrews, Fife. The site lies within the area covered by the former complex of St Nicholas Farm Leper Hospital, a medieval institution known to have existed between the 12th and 16th centuries AD. Although much of the proposed development has previously been developed and lay on the south-western perimeter of the medieval hospital, away from the main buildings complex, it was deemed that there was still the potential for archaeological remains to survive in those parts of the site though not to have been previously developed. In total seven trial trenches and 19 test pits were excavated equating to 400m² or approximately 10% of the area of previously un-investigated site.</p> <p>The trial trenching and test pitting revealed that contrary to expectation the entire site has been largely disturbed by modern development, with made ground deposits of up to 1.50m in depth present in all of the seven trenches, overlying the geological sands. This is consistent with the site having been levelled and landscaped during the construction of the current nursery buildings in the 1990s.</p>
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Alunmo Developments (St Andrews) Ltd
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Headland Archaeology (UK) Ltd, 13 Jane St, Edinburgh EH6 5HE
EMAIL ADDRESS:	office@headlandarchaeology.com
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	RCHAMS



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100013329

- application boundary
- trenches
- test pits



Illus 1
Site location

Illus 2

North facing section of Test Pit 1a showing modern made ground and colluvium



Illus 3

Post excavation shot of TR2 showing undisturbed colluvial deposit overlying geological sands



Illus 4

Northeast facing section of Test Pit 2c showing colluvial deposits over geological sands



Illus 5

North facing section of Test Pit 4b showing made ground deposits over natural sands



Illus 6

North facing section of Test Pit 5d showing made ground deposits over natural sands

