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A DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT, ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT

Old High School, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh

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HEADLAND
ARCHAEOLOGY Ltd

PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET

<i>Client</i>	UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH
<i>National Grid Reference</i>	NT 26190 73470
<i>Address</i>	OLD HIGH SCHOOL, INFIRMARY STREET, EDINBURGH
<i>Parish</i>	EDINBURGH
<i>Council</i>	CITY OF EDINBURGH
<i>Planning Application No</i>	N/A
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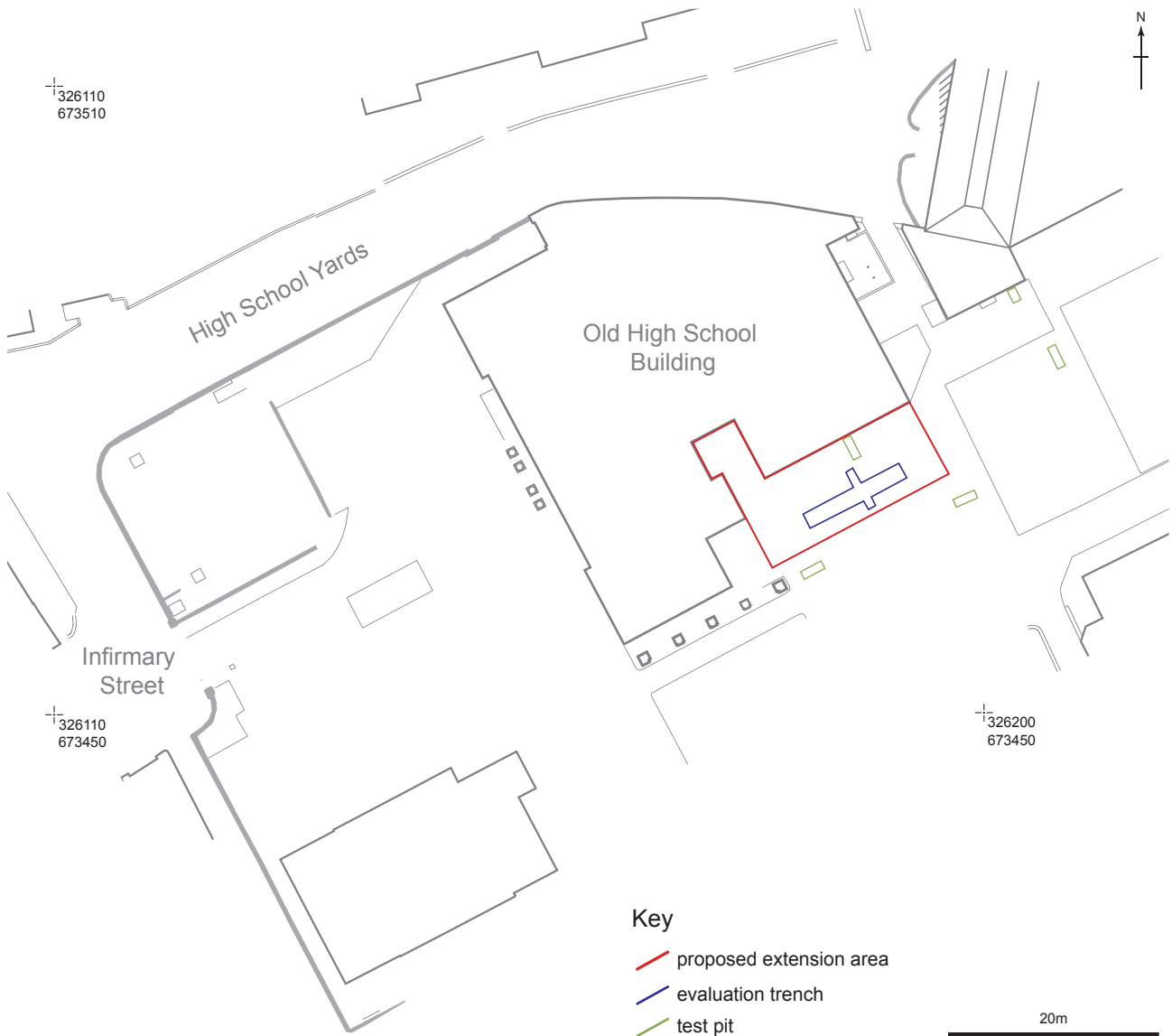
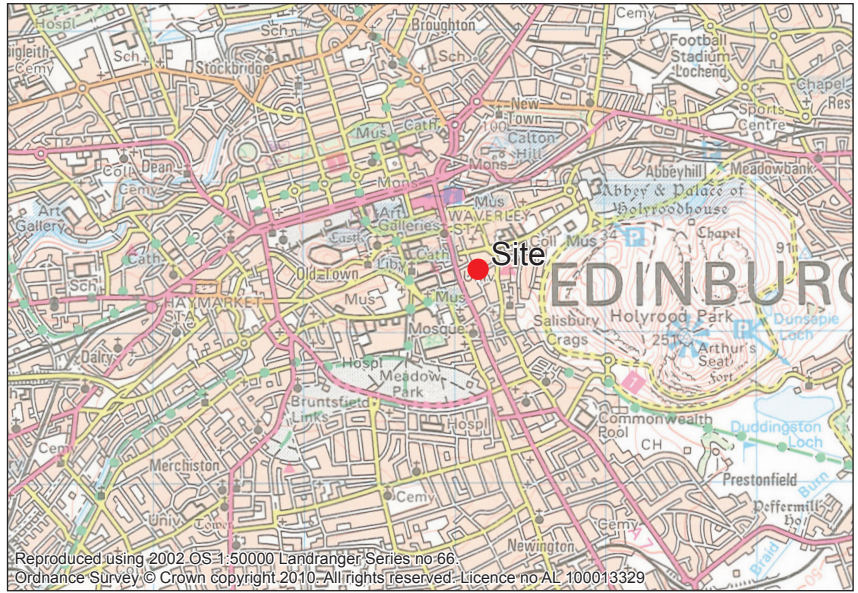
Signed off by:

Simon Stronach BSc(Hons) MIFA, Project Manager

Date:.....

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- Key**
- proposed extension area
 - evaluation trench
 - test pit

20m
1:650 @ A4

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Illus 1
Site location

A DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT, ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION AND HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT

Old High School, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh

by Ross Murray & Allison H. Borden

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by the University of Edinburgh to undertake a programme of archaeological works in advance of a planning application to the City of Edinburgh Council on the proposed development of a Climate Change Centre at the Old High School, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh. These works consisted of a rapid desk based assessment, excavation of an archaeological test trench, monitoring the excavation of geo-technical test pits and a historic building assessment.

The site lies within the presumed location of a Dominican Friary constructed in 1260 and historic maps consulted during the desk based assessment showed that the proposed development area had been in an area of gardens until the 19th Century when the Royal Medical Society's Hall had been constructed. This had been demolished by 1876. The evaluation uncovered the remains of a crude wall, likely to have been a garden wall, which had been truncated by the construction cut for the Hall. The wall was set into a shallow garden soil that had also been heavily truncated. No archaeological remains associated with the friary were encountered.

1. INTRODUCTION

Headland Archaeology was commissioned by Malcolm Fraser Architects on behalf of the University of Edinburgh to conduct archaeological works in connection with a planning application to the City of Edinburgh Council on the proposed development of a Climate Change Centre at the Old High School, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh (Illus 1). The works comprised a rapid desk based assessment, historic building assessment, monitoring excavation of geo-technical test pits and excavation of an archaeological trial trench in part of the proposed development area.

The affected areas were irregular in plan and occupied areas around two standing structures: a former air-raid bunker and the Old High School building. Both these structures were assessed as part of this programme of work.

An accessible area that is proposed to be occupied by an extension was evaluated by means of a single trial trench. The program of works was agreed by City of Edinburgh Archaeological Service (CECAS).

The site has a high archaeological potential and has been identified as within the former boundaries of a Dominican friary established in 1230. It also lies within the limits of late medieval Edinburgh as defined by the Flodden Wall in the early 16th century.

2. METHOD

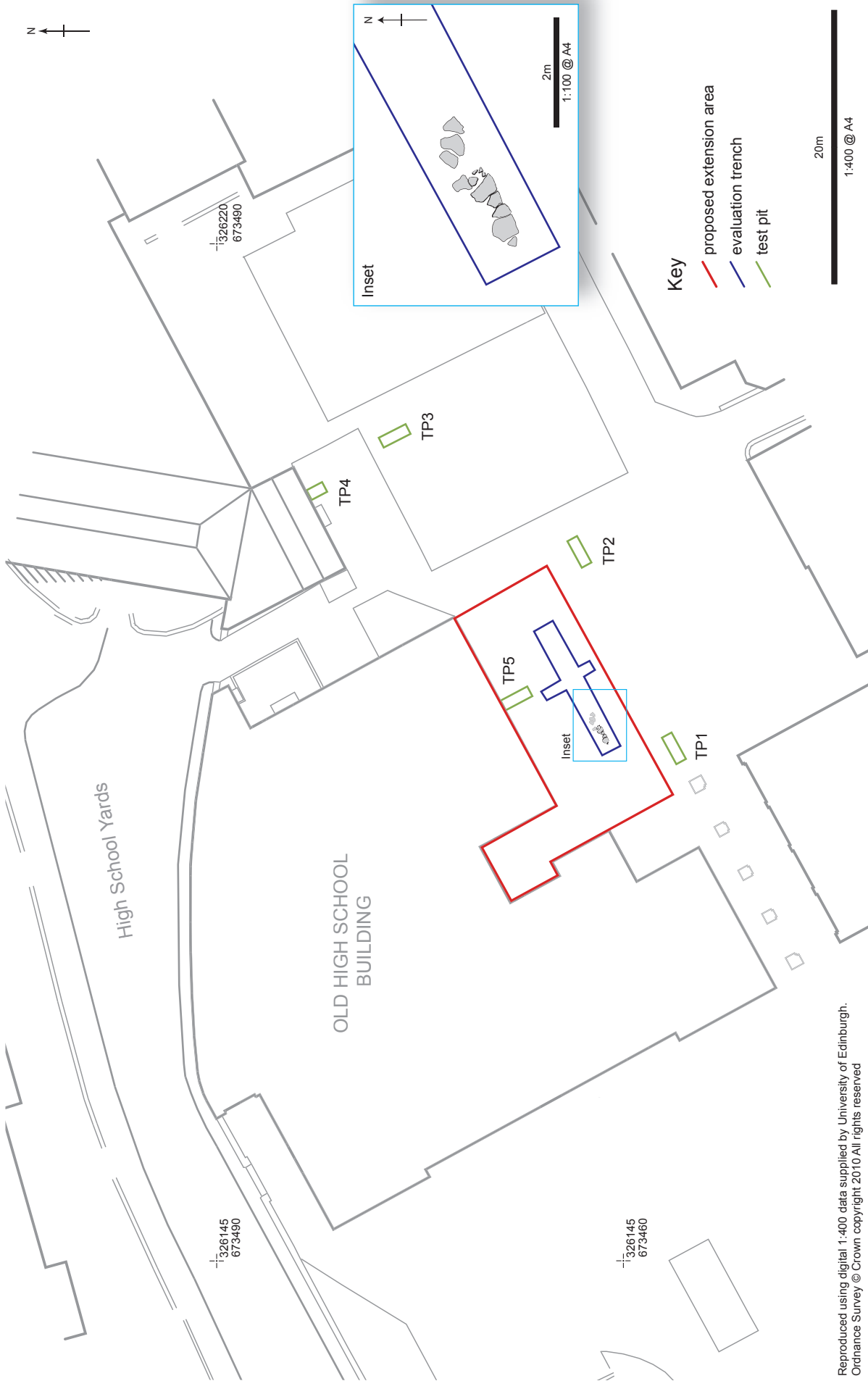
2.1 Desk-based Assessment

A rapid desk based assessment was undertaken prior to the commencement of site works. This included consultation of the following sources:

- Historic maps held by NLS
- Archaeological records held by NMRS
- Readily available published sources
- Historic records collated by Malcolm Fraser Architects

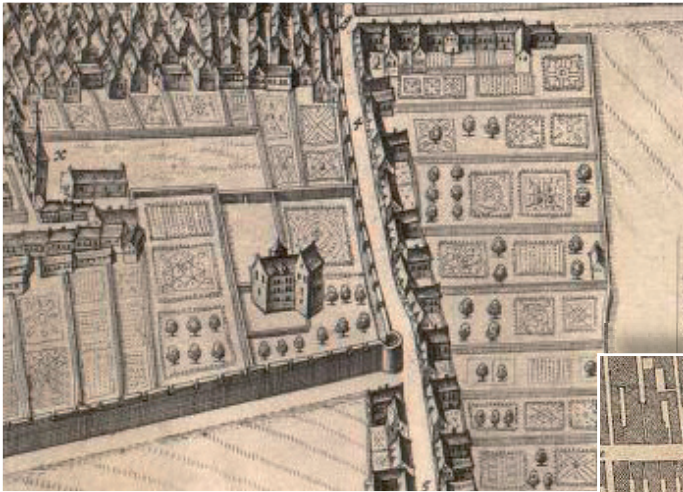
2.2 Archaeological Trial Trench

As was proposed in the project design, a single linear 10 x 1.5m archaeological trial trench was machine-excavated. A mechanical excavator was used to remove modern surfaces and overburden under archaeological control. Excavation continued until either clean geological sediments, significant archaeological deposits or structures were encountered. The trench was excavated no deeper than 1.2m due to health and safety concerns. The resulting surfaces were hand cleaned where necessary and archaeologically investigated. The stratigraphy of the trench was recorded in full.



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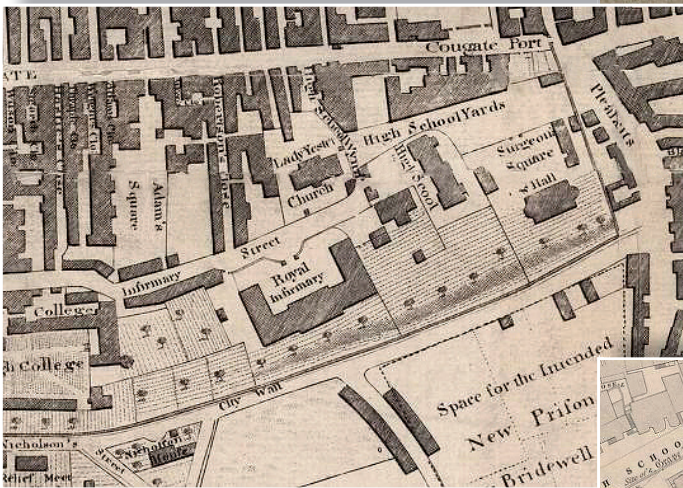
Illus 2
Plan of test trench, geotechnical test pits and wall 001



Illus 5
Edgar 1765



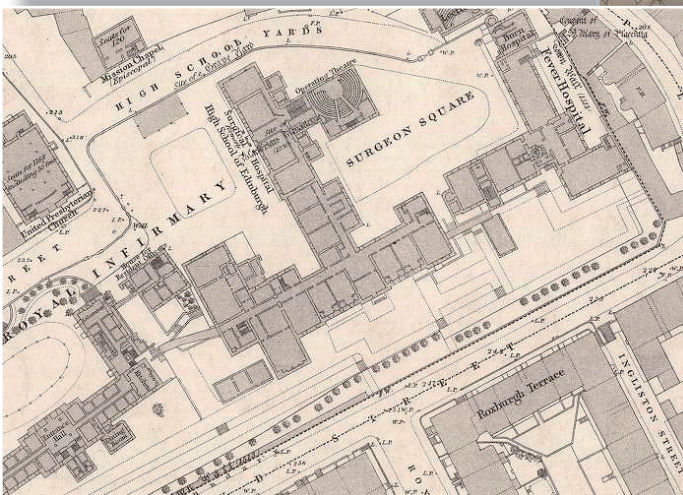
Illus 4
Gordon 1647



Illus 7
Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1849



Illus 8
Ordnance Survey 2nd Edition 1876





Illus 9
Wall 001

to a depth of 1.7m. Though it is claimed the test pit was excavated in the area once occupied by the friary, no evidence of it was encountered.

3.2 Archaeological Trial Trench

A full list of the deposits encountered in the trial trench and test pits can be found in Appendix 1. Results are summarised below.

A single trench, measuring 10 x 1.5m, was excavated within the proposed development area (Illus 2). Beneath a 0.2m deep layer of tarmac and hardcore was a layer of made ground consisting of grey-brown silty clay containing stone rubble and mortar. This was up to 0.5m deep.

Beneath this, at the west end of the trench, were the remains of a crudely built unbonded wall (Illus 2). This was oriented east to west, had a length of 2.9, was 0.5m wide and was contained wholly within the trench. The west end was the best preserved and a face was present on the south side (Illus 9). A small slot excavated against this face revealed a single course set into a 0.17m deep compact reddish-brown clay containing oyster shell, charcoal and animal bone. This deposit lay over compact clay glacial till and was interpreted as garden soil that had been severely truncated. No construction cut for the wall was visible. No negative features were found beneath the garden soil.

At a distance of 3.6m from the west end, the wall and garden soil had been truncated by a cut, most likely a construction cut, running perpendicular to the trench

axis. This had been backfilled with what appeared to be demolition rubble consisting predominately of lime mortar with small pieces of sandstone. This deposit was still present at a depth of 1.2m below ground surface. Excavation ceased at this depth due to safety concerns.

3.3 Geo-technical Test Pits

A total of five test pits, out of an originally proposed eight, were excavated in Surgeons' Square. Full details of the test pits can be found in Appendix 1. No archaeological features were encountered in any of the test pits. Test Pits 1-3 were excavated to red-brown clay glacial till. This was encountered at 0.8m in Test Pit 1, 1.6m in Test Pit 2 and 2.3m in Test Pit 3. In Test Pits 1 and 3 there was a made ground deposit between the till and the tarmac/hardcore at the surface. In Test pit 2 the mortar and rubble deposit present in the evaluation trench was encountered beneath a 0.5m layer of made ground; this was 0.7m deep. Beneath the mortar and rubble was a 0.1m band of red-brown clay that visually resembled the garden soil encountered in the evaluation trench, though this was impossible to confirm, as the test pit was too deep to enter safely.

Test pits 4 and 5 were excavated in order to expose wall foundations and excavation ceased once this had occurred.

3.4 Historic Building Recording

The Old High School and bunker in their urban environment

The Old High School is a building in the Classical design idiom popular in Edinburgh in the eighteenth century. It replaced an earlier 16th century Scots Baronial style building on this site that had become too small for its growing student population. The school has a forecourt with a stone entrance gateway off Infirmary Street. It is part of a complex of University of Edinburgh buildings in the area. The school sits atop a retained area on the side of a hill sloping down to the north. The north boundary of the site is High School Yards, where a stone rubble boundary wall serves as a retaining wall for the site. The site lies within late medieval Edinburgh as defined by the Flodden Wall and is within the Old Town Conservation Area. The Old High School is Listed Category B and is also included in the NMRS.

The school was built in 1777 to the design of Alexander Liang (d.1823). It is a two-storey building on a symmetrical plan in ashlar with a piended roof finished in slates and a square plan tower to the rear. The 11-bay façade has a single-storey Doric entrance portico. In 1829, the high school moved to Calton Hill and this building was made redundant. The Old High School was converted to a surgical hospital (Old Surgical Hospital, part of the Royal Infirmary) in 1832 and was joined to the New Surgical Hospital (now the University Geography Dept.) when that was built in 1853. A central block containing an operating theatre was added to the rear of the building at this time



Illus 10
View of the Old High School looking east

and the interior of the high school was drastically altered.

The Infirmary moved to a new site on the Meadows in 1879. From 1879-1903 the Old High School building was used as part of the City Hospital for Infectious Diseases. In 1904, the building was purchased by Edinburgh University and refurbished to the designs of R. Rowand Anderson & Balfour Paul to accommodate the Engineering and Science Departments. At this time, all interior walls were knocked out of the front block of the building and its tower was heightened and given an ogee roof. A brick-built Engineering laboratory was also added to the rear of the building between High School Yards and the north wall of the rear operating theatre.

The Old High School was occupied by the Department of Geography from 1932 to 1984, was refurbished for use by the dental school in 1984, when 'most of original internal features [were] removed or covered up' (Gitting and Morrison 1995), and has been occupied by the Archaeology Department since 1995.

The Old High School is entered through a portico. Inside the entrance, there is a lobby area with a spine hallway running north to south (with offices off it to the west and larger rooms off it to the east). A main stairwell at the rear of the lobby connects the main block of the building and the central block at the rear and leads to the upper floor.

At the top of the stair sits a north-south hall atop that at the ground floor. This hall links the Old High School with the Geography building (the New Surgical Hospital) to the south. Although many of the interior finishes appear to date from the 1905 renovation, some are obviously later, particularly in the lower levels of the rear block.

There is an air-raid bunker located under an approx 15 metre square landscaped area of the forecourt in the northwest corner of the site (at the junction of Infirmary Street and High School Yards). It is accessed through a doorway in its north wall about a storey below grade, which is reached by a stair built against the interior of the wall retaining the site above High School Yards. This bunker is unlisted and is not included in the NMRS. It was used by the City Morgue at the time the Old High School was in use as a surgical hospital. It has more recently been used as a carpentry workshop by the University of Edinburgh.

The significance of the area affected by the proposal

Statutory designations provide an important reference point to the building's significance, as a site will only be granted statutory protection if it meets certain criteria (i.e. achieves a minimum level of significance). The Old High School is Listed Category B (HB No. 27999), indicating that it is of regional or more than local importance.



Illus 11

View of the roof of the bunker looking north

Although it has been altered, it is a major example of the Classical style. The NMRS also defines the site as of some local and regional significance.

The building's local importance is as a part of the complex of educational buildings in the area, and for its links with the development of medicine, particularly surgery, in the 18th and 19th centuries. Although interior alterations and an addition/alterations to the rear block date from the 20th century, the façade and entrance portico are largely unaltered.

The building has strong historical associations with former students (Sir Walter Scott and Henry Cockburn both attended the high school), the invention of the blackboard and coloured chalk in the building by James Pillans, and well-known surgeons including Syme and Lister. However, all of these associations pre-date the 1905 alterations to the building. The Old High School and the bunker, although of individual value, have no group value.

The proposal is to create a new two-storey addition between the main block of the building and the rear central block that will wrap around the rear block in an L shape. The levels of the bunker site will be retained (with possible added topsoil). To the east side of the bunker, toward the School building, the boundary wall will be opened with more generous steps/ landscaping (to the east).

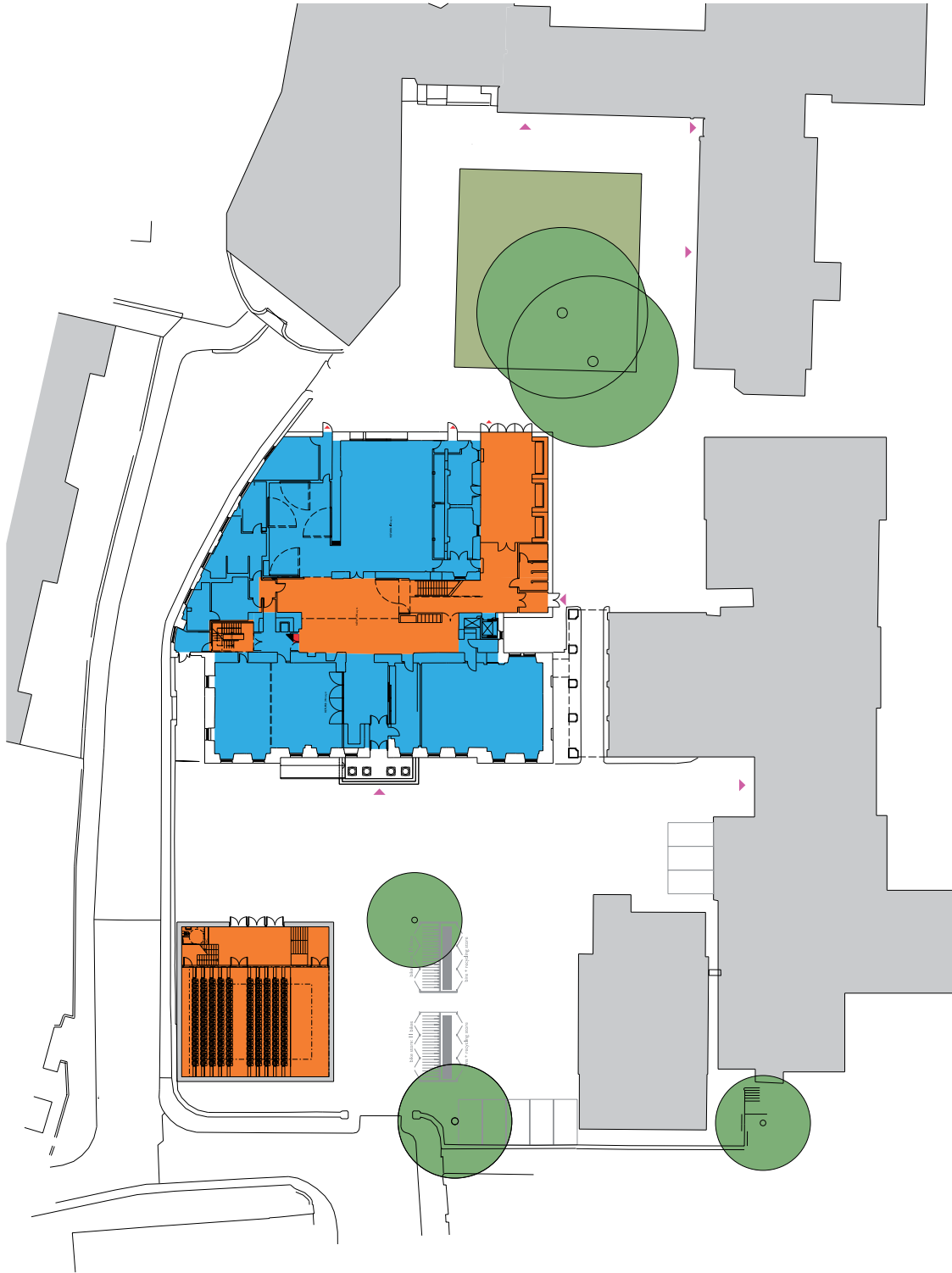
The addition will allow the interior of the Old High School to be modernised, particularly toward the rear of the main block by eliminating the spine hall at the first floor. Although this will interrupt the building's connection with the Geography Dept. (the New Surgical Hospital) to the south, these buildings were separate prior to 1853 and were again in 1906-7. They were only connected later for ease of access. The south wall of the rear central block will be built against; however, this wall was modified from its original configuration c. 1882 and again in 1905, when the direction and rake of the theatre seating was changed and the windows blocked. In the 1980s, the two-storey theatre was broken up into a lecture hall on the lower level and a lab space on a mezzanine level. The top floor remains in basically the same configuration as 1905.

There are also proposed changes to the brick-built Engineering lab that sits in the angle between the rear of the Old High School, the north of the rear block and High School Yards. It is supposed that the roof on this portion of the building would need to come off; however, the level of modifications to it will be dependant upon a structural report.

The proposal will have some visual and spatial impact, but this can be minimised by careful design and the use of quality materials. The proposal will not impact the building's façade.

NOTES

1. This drawing is to be read in conjunction with all technical and services engineering drawings, and with references to architects and engineers specification.
2. All dimensions to be checked on site; notify the architect immediately if any discrepancies from dimensions noted on the drawings.
3. Do not scale drawings.
4. This drawing is the copyright of Malcolm Fraser Architects. No part of this drawing may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written permission of Malcolm Fraser Architects.
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project	Edinburgh Climate Change Centre	
drawing title	LECTURE HALL SITE PLAN	
scale/drawing	1:200/0/0/1	
drawing no.	470 L (SK) 25	Rev. -
status	SKETCH	

Illus 12
Site/Ground Floor Plan, Edinburgh Climate Change Centre- Affected Areas in Orange
(Image courtesy of Malcolm Fraser Architects)

There are full sets of building plans dating from the 1882 and 1905 alterations on file with the RCAHMS, which clearly show that the impact of the current proposal will be on previously altered parts of the interior of the building, most dating from 1905 and later. Therefore, archaeological mitigation can be restricted to a rapid photographic record and limited monitoring while finishes are being stripped and removed.

4. DISCUSSION

The archaeological works revealed no evidence of the Dominican friary formerly located in or close to the proposed development area. The desk based assessment showed that following the destruction of the friary in 1559 the area was in use as gardens until the construction of the Royal Medical Society's Hall, which had been demolished by 1876.

The large construction cut filled with rubble and mortar in the evaluation trench is likely to relate to the construction and demolition of the Royal Medical Society's Hall. As the majority of the rubble was lime mortar it is likely that any large stones had been removed to be reused.

The wall present in the western end of the evaluation trench was unlikely to belong to a building. Though only a single course remained, the crude construction and modest dimensions suggest that it was small garden wall. The shallow depth of garden soil, less than 0.2m, upon which the wall sat suggests the area had been subjected to severe truncation. One would expect a deeper sequence of garden soil in an area close to the centre of medieval Edinburgh. This truncation most likely occurred initially during the construction of the Old High School and its various extensions culminating in the construction of the Royal Medical Societies Hall in the 19th Century.

Though no evidence of the Dominican friary or other medieval remains were encountered, there is potential for archaeological remains to survive in the proposed development area to the west of the construction cut of the Royal Medical Society's Hall. These are likely to be features relating to the use of the area as gardens in the post-medieval period, similar to the small garden wall, that have been truncated by changes in land use since the construction of the Old High School.

5. REFERENCES

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- University of Edinburgh 1991 *Walking Tours of University Buildings 2: High School Yards*. Edinburgh: University Info Office.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Site registers

Trench register

Trench No.	Description
1	Orientation: E-W Dimensions (L x W): 10m x 1.5m Depth: 0.5m – 1.2m Located to the rear of the Old High School in Surgeon Square. Beneath tarmac and hardcore (0.2m) was made ground up to 0.4m deep. Beneath this was a crude wall (001) set into garden soil (002). The wall had been truncated by a deep construction cut (003) that had been backfilled by lime mortar and sandstone rubble.

Test Pit register

Test Pit No.	Description
1	Orientation: SW-NE Dimensions (L x W): 2.2m x 0.8m Depth: 0.8m Tar and hardcore (0.2m) over made ground (0.5m). Natural = red-brown clay
2	Orientation: SW-NE Dimensions (L x W): 2.2m x 0.8m Depth: 1.6m Tar and hardcore (0.2m) over made ground (0.5m) over mortar and rubble (0.7m) over Possible garden soil (0.1m). Natural = red-brown clay.
3	Orientation: NW-SE Dimensions (L x W): 2.2m x 0.8m Depth: 2.2m Topsoil (0.7m) over made ground (1.6m). Natural = red-brown clay and fracturing bedrock
4	Orientation: NW-SE Dimensions (L x W): 1.3m x 0.8m Depth: 0.4m Concrete and hardcore (0.2 m) over made ground (0.2m). Natural not encountered
5	Orientation: NW-SE Dimensions (L x W): 2.2m x 0.8m Depth: 0.8m Tar and hardcore (0.2m) over made ground (0.5m). Natural not encountered

Context register

Context No	Trench	Description	Dimensions (m)
1	1	Wall. Aligned E-W. Single course. Unbonded. Formed by nine angular sandstone slabs. Four stones form a face on the south side. Less well preserved to the east. Truncated by cut 003.	Length: 2.9m Width: 0.5m Height: 0.12m
2	1	Garden soil. Red-brown compact clay with occasional oyster shell and animal bone.	Depth: 0.17m
3	1	Construction cut. Linear. Filled with 004.	Unknown
4	1	Mortar and sandstone rubble. Occasional brick.	Unknown
5	1	Made ground. Overlies wall 001.	Depth: 0.5m

Photographic register

Photo No.	Slides	Digital file name	Direction facing	Description
1	1	OHSE10-001 041.jpg	E	View of wall 001
2	1	OHSE10-001 042.jpg	W	View of wall 001
3	1	OHSE10-001 043.jpg	N	View of mortar and rubble 004
4	1	OHSE10-001 044.jpg	N	View of construction cut 003
5	1	OHSE10-001 045.jpg	E	Post-ex view of trench 1 after removal of garden soil 002
6	1	OHSE10-001 046.jpg	W	Test Pit 1
7	1	OHSE10-001 047.jpg	NW	Test Pit 2
8	1	OHSE10-001 048.jpg	W	Test Pit 3
9	1	OHSE10-001 049.jpg	E	Test Pit 4

Photo No.	Slides	Digital file name	Direction facing	Description
10	1	OHSE10-001 050.jpg	N	Test Pit 5
11	N	OHSE10-001 001.jpg	NE	central rear block
12	N	OHSE10-001 002.jpg	NE	rear extension and central block beyond
13	N	OHSE10-001 003.jpg	SE	main stair rear block
14	N	OHSE10-001 004.jpg	S	main stair rear block
15	N	OHSE10-001 005.jpg	E	top floor rear block
16	N	OHSE10-001 006.jpg	W	main stair rear block looking toward main entrance
17	N	OHSE10-001 007.jpg	E	lecture theatre rear block
18	N	OHSE10-001 008.jpg	S	hallway
19	N	OHSE10-001 009.jpg	E	mezzanine in rear block
20	N	OHSE10-001 010.jpg	S	exhibit in ground floor main block entryway
21	N	OHSE10-001 011.jpg	E	Old High School and Geography building
22	N	OHSE10-001 012.jpg	NW	rear old high school
23	N	OHSE10-001 013.jpg	NW	rear old high school
24	N	OHSE10-001 014.jpg	N	central rear block
25	N	OHSE10-001 015.jpg	N	central rear block
26	N	OHSE10-001 016.jpg	N	central rear block
27	N	OHSE10-001 017.jpg	NW	rear - central rear block
28	N	OHSE10-001 018.jpg	W	rear old high school, central rear block in foreground
29	N	OHSE10-001 019.jpg	W	rear old high school
30	N	OHSE10-001 020.jpg	W	rear Geography building
31	N	OHSE10-001 021.jpg	S	Old Surgeon's Hall
32	N	OHSE10-001 022.jpg	S	Old Surgeon's Hall
33	N	OHSE10-001 023.jpg	E	old high school
34	N	OHSE10-001 024.jpg	E	old high school
35	N	OHSE10-001 025.jpg	W	entrance to bunker (along interior of n boundary wall)
36	N	OHSE10-001 026.jpg	SE	forecourt (Old High School and Geography building to left)
37	N	OHSE10-001 027.jpg	SE	forecourt (Old High School and Geography building to left)
38	N	OHSE10-001 028.jpg	SE	forecourt (Old High School to left)
39	N	OHSE10-001 029.jpg	N	bunker
40	N	OHSE10-001 030.jpg	N	bunker
41	N	OHSE10-001 031.jpg	E	Old High School
42	N	OHSE10-001 032.jpg	S	boundary wall, High School Yards
43	N	OHSE10-001 033.jpg	S	boundary wall, High School Yards
44	N	OHSE10-001 034.jpg	SE	boundary wall, High School Yards
45	N	OHSE10-001 035.jpg	SE	boundary wall, High School Yards
46	N	OHSE10-001 036.jpg	SE	boundary wall, High School Yards
47	N	OHSE10-001 037.jpg	SW	Engineering lab, Old High School beyond
48	N	OHSE10-001 038.jpg	SW	Engineering lab, Old High School beyond
49	N	OHSE10-001 039.jpg	SW	Old High School rear extension

Photo No.	Slides	Digital file name	Direction facing	Description
50	N	OHSE10-001 040.jpg	E	Old High School

Drawing register

Drawing No.	Scale		Description
	Section	Plan	
1	-	1:20	Plan of Wall 001
