

# NOTRE DAME SCHOOL, RANMOOR, SHEFFIELD: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF



**On behalf of  
Vinci Construction UK Ltd**

CS Archaeology  
June 2011

**On behalf of:** Vinci Construction UK Ltd.  
VINCI CONSTRUCTION UK LIMITED  
Omnia One  
125 Queen Street  
Sheffield  
S1 2DG

**National Grid Reference (NGR):** SK 32087 86254

**Project Number:** 81

**Oasis Reference:** csarchae1-103491

**Report and illustrations:** Mr C Scurfield

**Timing:** Fieldwork June 2011  
Report June 2011

**Enquiries to:** **CS Archaeology**  
Manor Farm House  
Manor Occupation Road  
Royston  
Barnsley  
South Yorkshire  
S71 4SG  
M: 07963 586767  
E: [chrisscurfield@yahoo.com](mailto:chrisscurfield@yahoo.com)

Frontispiece: view of the excavations

## CONTENTS

1.	SUMMARY .....	2
2.	INTRODUCTION.....	3
3.	ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....	4
4.	AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.....	8
5.	METHODOLOGY.....	8
6.	RESULTS .....	9
7.	CONCLUSIONS .....	10
8.	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	11
9.	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	11

### List of Figures

- Figure 1: location Map
- Figure 2: plan of the Proposed Development Area (PDA)
- Figure 3: the PDA
- Figure 4: detailed Historic Maps of Oakbrook c 1893
- Figure 5: the PDA with Historic Map Overlay c 1893
- Figure 6: results

### List of Plates

- 1, 2: view during removal of overburden, looking northwest
- 2, 4: structural detail, the northeast wall of the former glass house truncated by modern concrete strip foundation for the 2004 faith garden, featuring a grey ash mortar, looking northwest
- 3, 14: general view of the rectangular base, looking southeast
- 5, 13: detail of the sandstone walling [005], looking northwest
- 4, 19: detailed view of the architectural fragments [1&2].

### Appendices

- Appendix 1: photographic register

## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the construction of a new school building at Notre Dame School, Ranmoor, Sheffield. Vinci Construction UK Ltd. commissioned this work in order to be able to mitigate potential archaeology which was felt could be present within the Proposed Development Area following recommendations in a desk-based assessment of the school (CS Archaeology 2010).
- 1.2 The potential for 19<sup>th</sup> century archaeology was felt to exist below the school's faith garden, which in part reflected the plan of the former Victorian glasshouse, in 2004.
- 1.3 Evidence in the form of a rectangular consolidated stone base was revealed which closely correlates to the estimated position which was established cartographically. The glass house walls were no longer extant and had been removed or replaced by modern concrete footings. Two architectural masonry fragments were recovered and recorded; each featured a well-defined chamfer, and they probably represented the stone plinth of the Victorian glasshouse.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report has been commissioned by Vinci Construction UK Ltd. as part of Sheffield's Building Schools for the Future scheme and will provide an archaeological/historical background to the forthcoming development works within the former grounds of Notre Dame School; a former high status Victorian house on the Fulwood Road, Ranmoor, Sheffield, South Yorkshire.
- 2.2 Notre Dame School lies 3.34kms west of Sheffield's city centre and within the Sheffield Metropolitan District ([Figure 1](#)).
- 2.3 Notre Dame School (Oakbrook) is a Grade II Listed Building (No. 458220) and the house and its associated curtilage enjoy statutory protection. It is described by Pevsner (2003) as an Italianate house with tower building and a *portecochère*, a large porch.
- 2.4 The PDA extends over 0.157 hectares (0.38 acres) and is centred on SK 32087 86254. ([Figures 2-3](#)).
- 2.5 Historically, *Rand Moor* (Ranmoor) was part of the township of Upper Hallam within the parish of Sheffield which was in the upper division of Strafforth and Tickhill. Upper Hallam consisted of a scatter of farmsteads and hamlets and formed part of the chapelry of Ecclesall.

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### 3.1 The Post Medieval Period

- 3.1.1 Following the Reformation, during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Francis, Earl of Shewsbury acquired Beauchief Abbey's former interests across the forest of Fulwood, including the Upper Hallam township. Manufacturing increased in Upper Hallam and grinding wheels were established along the Porter and Rivelin Valleys and in small sheds attached to dwelling houses. In 1790 a small non-conformist chapel was built on 'Ran Moor' and was linked to John Wesley (Hunter 1859, 380).
- 3.1.2 The enclosure act for Upper Hallam was passed in 1791, and the land was then surveyed mainly by William Fairbank. During the subsequent 19<sup>th</sup> century the settlement pattern across the township of Upper Hallam changed significantly. A dramatic influx of people and investment in the area led to the township becoming a suburb of Sheffield. The 1851 census notes that in Ranmoor there were 97 households with 440 people. By 1891 there were 309 households with 1,397 occupants (Warr 2009, 43).
- 3.1.3 Not only did Ranmoor's local population grow but the nature of the population changed, with a shift away from the cutlery and file-making trades to jobs in local service or white collar or managerial jobs in Sheffield. The area sees a rise of the '*merchant and manufacturers*' who enjoyed greater profits by selling their products overseas. Trade in Sheffield was prosperous between 1845 and 1875 before the agricultural depression of the late 1870s. Between 1879 and 1894 an agricultural economic slump took hold. The slump was triggered by disastrous harvests and the importation of cheaper basic commodities such as corn and bacon (Girouard 1979).
- 3.1.4 A well known local steel company, Thomas Firth and Sons manufactured steel tools and implements. The company was actually set up by Thomas's sons, Charles Henry, Edward and Mark Firth. Mark Firth (1819-80) set up his own company on Charlotte Street and after being joined by his father opened the Norfolk works on Saville Street. The company eventually had three factories including the Norfolk Works on Saville Street. The Norfolk Works used the new crucible furnaces and was at the time, the largest rolling mill in Sheffield (Warr 2009). The Firth family was a public benefactor and Mark Firth donated £30,000 for a series of almshouses at Nethergreen. These were opened by the Earl of Shaftsbury on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1869 (White 1876). Mark Firth also donated to what became Firth College which became the basis for Sheffield University College in 1897 (Warr 2009, 48). Firth's wealth and generosity is also noted in Hunter's Hallamshire (1859).

#### 3.2 A History of the PDA

- 3.2.1 By the 1850s Sheffield had created so much wealth that a succession of mansions was built on the eastern edge of Ranmoor. First was Tapton Hall on Shore Lane and was built in 1855, then came Oakbrook, to the south of Fulwood Road in 1860. Then following Oakbrook came Tapton Edge<sup>1</sup> (1864) and Riverdale (1865). The new Endcliffe Hall, Thornbury and Moordale all date to 1865, and in 1866 Tapton Park and Tapton Grange were added to the list (Warr 2009, 44).

---

<sup>1</sup> Tapton Edge was designed by Flockton and Abbott and was commissioned by Mark Firth's brother, Edward in 1864 (Warr 2009)

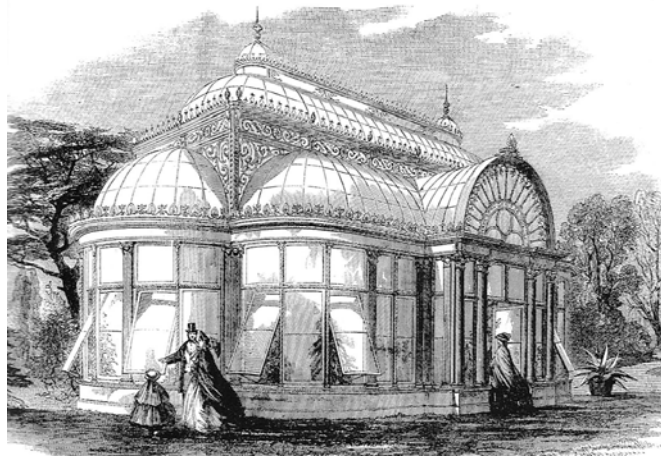
- 3.2.2 In 1859 Mark Firth bought 26 acres of farm land to the south of Fulwood Road, including Oakbrook Farm. He employed William Flockton and Son to design the house in the Italianate style<sup>2</sup> was very fashionable and today still largely survives in its original form. Oakbrook's design a similar design can be seen in Victorian pattern books. Oakbrook farm was refurbished and continued to work the estate lands, today it has been demolished and an Infant's School built on the site. Within the grounds of Oakbrook, were the two entrance lodges, a 'gardener's lodge' and nearer to the house were a series of conservatories, heated green houses, vineries, coal houses, farm buildings, dog kennels, pigsties and a cow house (Warr 2009, 47).
- 3.2.3 The grounds were landscaped to include formal gardens and a pleasure ground which incorporated extensive walks across the grounds which slope to the southeast. In 1874-5 the house was extended by the provision of additional rooms and a large porch to the north east elevation. These extensions, by Flockton and Abbot (Harman and Minnis 2004, 270) date to when Mark Firth was Lord Mayor of Sheffield in 1874/5, a date which was also linked to the visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales, later King Edward the Seventh and Queen Alexandra, in order to open Firth Park, which Firth had laid for public use in the grounds of the former Page Hall. In 1879 Prince Leopold and John Ruskin were guests at Oakbrook (Hey 2005, 188).
- 3.2.4 Information from the 1861 census, confirms that the Firth family was recorded as residing at Oakbrook at this time the house was occupied by Mark Firth (41) a 'Manufacturer of steel and hardware', his wife Caroline G Firth (28) and two sons John (1) and Mark (3 months). In addition they had a direct labour force of 4 servants, including Betsey Clark (26) the cook. A Coachman, John Dewhurst is also noted with no direct house location other than 'Ranmoor' but it can probably be assumed that he lived in the coach-house to the rear of Oakbrook.
- 3.2.5 In the census of 1871 the Firths are recorded, again at Oakbrook, with a further 5 children: Alfred (8) Caroline (7) Bernard (5), Charles Henry (3) and Rachel (6 months), together with 6 servants comprising of a lady's maid, a house maid, under maid, parlor maid, and cook.
- 3.2.6 Mark Firth died in 1880. His wife Caroline continued to live at Oakbrook 'by her own means' with their son John Bradley Firth until her death in 1893. In 1891 in addition to Caroline, 6 servants: a cook, lady's maid, two house maids, a kitchen maid and a footman, are recorded in the house. Oakbrook's gardener's lodge is also noted as being inhabited by with its gardener, wife and 2 children. The coachman's lodge is listed but was not occupied at the time of the 1891 survey.
- 3.2.7 William Samuel Laycock was the next owner of Oakbrook. He had developed his father's business involving railway transport and the promotion of passenger safety (Warr 2009, 49). In 1898 the trade directories record W S Laycock, a government contractor and W Harrow a nurseryman occupying Oakbrook. The 1901 census listed Laycock as being a brush manufacturer who lived at Oakbrook with his wife Catherine and their daughter together with seven servants. In 1902 -1910, Laycock and Harrow are noted in the trade directories, together with G Wilson, a coachman at the lodge. In 1916 Mrs W S Laycock and Herbert Trickett, chauffer are noted in the trade directories but by 1922 the house was run by the Convent of the Notre Dame with M A Rachett as sister superior.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Italianate was a distinct 19th-century phase in the history of Classical architecture and was first employed by John Nash, in 1802 with the construction of Cronkhill in Shropshire and then expounded by Charles Barry.*

3.2.8 After a period in World War I as a convalescent hospital, Oakbrook was bought in 1919 for use as a convent by the Sisters of Notre Dame of Namur, a Catholic teaching group established in Sheffield in since 1855. The convent already had a school on Cavendish Street and in 1935 they opened a second school in Oakbrook House. The schools eventually amalgamated in 1948. After 1976 the school became a comprehensive for boys and girls.

3.2.9 Oakbrook featured an impressive array of five glass houses. These no doubt had different functions, from greenhouses growing vegetables to conservatories entertaining society at civic functions. Glasshouses and conservatories were very popular during the Victorian period. They provided important 'notches' in terms of acquiring wealth and improving ones social standing. As can be seen below conservatories of this period were elaborate affairs and came in an array of styles and sizes developed to cater for the increasingly affluent middle classes.



*A conservatory designed by Ormson and exhibited in 1862 features curved swiveling windows (Woods and Warren 1988)*

3.2.10 The largest glass house (No. 1) had an impressive footprint of 750 m<sup>2</sup>. It faced southeast and featured a very high (>5m) northwest wall. The conservatory was demolished for the construction of additional accommodation and the chapel (c. 1970s). The conservatory wall is still fully extant and features high rectangular heating ducts. It follows an 'M' shaped plan with projecting wings, a central canted bay, three southern access points and 2 side entrances (Figure 4). This substantial heated conservatory was clearly designed to impress. Oakbrook's No. 1 glass house had the potential to dwarf Ormson's exhibition model. Warr (2009) includes a vinery in his list of buildings within the Oakbrook Estate. No reference has been found for its use as an orangery but the plan, size and evidence for a heating system indicates it had that potential.

3.2.11 The second green house was a more modest affair with a footprint of 46m<sup>2</sup>. It was positioned next to the conservatory (Glass house No.1), and both structures (Nos. 1 & 2) featured a shared rear wall. Today glass house No 2. is still largely extant. There is no glazing but the high rear brick wall is still extant and still has lime-wash adhering, from the interior of the glass house. In addition the front ashlar sandstone wall also survives suggesting a lean-to type construction.

3.2.12 No trace remains of the two long rectangular glass houses (Nos. 3 and 4) which were probably built around the kitchen garden and measure 95 and 64m<sup>2</sup> respectively and



probably served as unheated green houses. These appear to have been removed during historic site reduction for the present reception building, north of the PDA.

- 3.2.13 The site of the fifth glass house (No.5) lies within the PDA and had a floor plan of just under 50m<sup>2</sup>. The site of glass house No. 5 lies across the site of the proposed new school building. The architectural merits of the southern glass house may not be as significant as the two historic green houses close to the house. Certainly there is no evidence for a heating system. The formal gardens, to the southwest of the former Oakbrook house, incorporated a visual cut off between the glass house (No. 5) and the house.

#### 4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 To record archaeological deposits down to the final formation level. The archaeological record will establish the presence/absence, character, extent, state of preservation and date of any archaeological deposits within the PDA and if suitable, samples will be collected for palaeoenvironmental/artefact/building material research.

#### 5. METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 This project has been undertaken in a manner consistent with the guidance of MAP2 (English Heritage 1991) and professional standards and guidance (IFA, 2001). The survival of archaeology within the PDA was of limited significance and no samples were retained.
- 5.2 General digital shots of the site were taken; these were used to illustrate the report and are listed in Appendix 1. The photographs form a running sequence of activity on the site over two days (7-8 June 2011).
- 5.3 A summary of the background information was assembled together with a scaled plan of the PDA with the results, was prepared (**Figure 6**).
- 5.4 A mechanical excavator with a ditching bucket was employed and allowed good visibility of the overburden and archaeological deposits.

## 6. RESULTS

- 6.1 The PDA consisted of a modern garden with concrete and brick revetment walls. This was gradually removed and a general overburden of introduced material [001], consisting of: topsoil, a dump of 'Moorend' moulded bricks (1880-1920), slate and glass (Plate 1). Beneath the overburden a distinct layer of bonded sandstone [003] was revealed, and this contrasted with the surrounding natural clay [002]. The cut [004] for the base extended up to 0.3m in depth. Down the northeast facing side of the deposit, the grey mortar formed an apparent edge which had either been abutted by the modern (c.2004) concrete wall (Plate 2) or truncated by it. In plan the deposit formed a rectangle (Plate 3) and was approximately 3.5 x 9m.
- 6.2 The layer of sandstone [003] was characterised by angular sandstone fragments up to 0.35m in length, with a grey mortar bond which stabilised the layer and would have acted as a foundation.
- 6.3 Map evidence suggests a correlation with the site of the demolished Victorian glass house (Figure 3).
- 6.4 As the foundation [003] was removed towards the north of the PDA further related structures were recorded, in the form of surrounding tabular sandstone ([004]: Plate 4), which may have acted as a revetment wall. In addition evidence for the original superstructure was also recovered in the form of two ashlar sandstone fragments (Plate 5). The location of these two fragments on top of the sandstone base [003] suggests the presence of an ashlar stone chamfered plinth, which was probably associated with the Victorian glass house. One of the fragments featured a curved and chamfered face and is indicative of an elaborate plinth. Unfortunately none of the ashlar stone survived in situ.
- 6.5 During the creation of the faith garden in 2004 truncation of the glass house probably occurred and the stone footings were disturbed. This resulted in a truncated foundation layer [003] but significantly no heating ducts or any evidence for them was found, indicating that originally the Greenhouse was not heated certainly by any underfloor system, and therefore it is unlikely that the site of this glass house was heated glass house (orangery/vinery).

## 7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 This results of this watching brief has confirmed the probable location of a Victorian glass house which formed part of the original garden layout.
- 7.2 No further archaeological mitigation is recommended.

## 8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

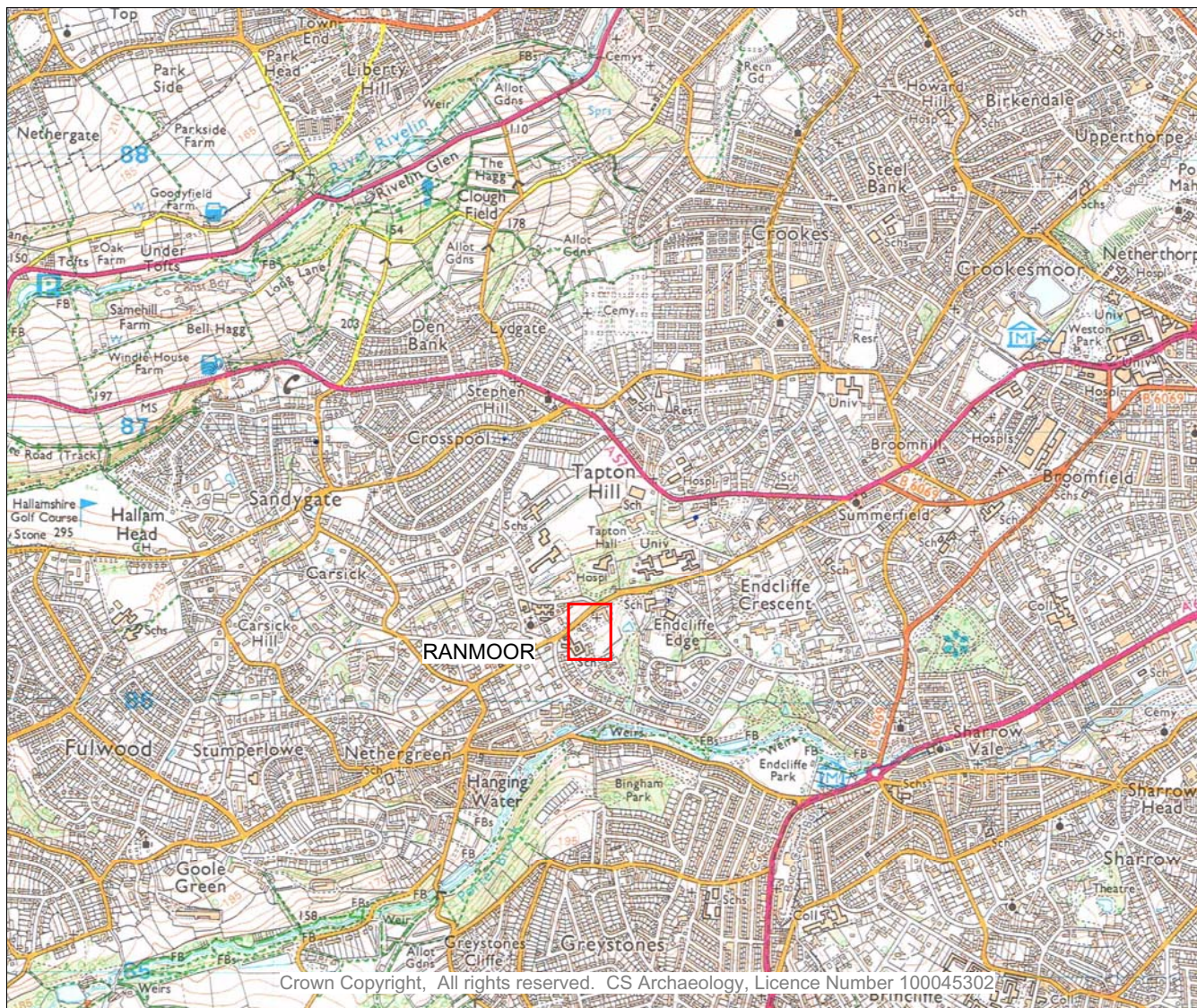
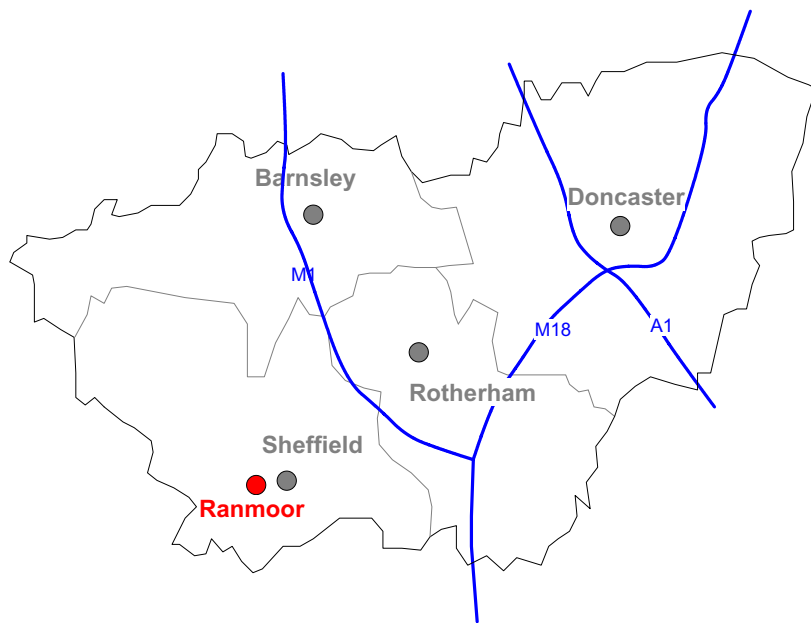
- CS Archaeology, 2010, Notre Dame School, Ranmoor, Sheffield: A Desk-based Assessment, unpublished client report.
- English Heritage, 1991, *Management of Archaeological Projects* (MAP2)
- English Heritage, 2002, *Scheduled Monument Description* ([www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk))
- Girouard M. 1979, *The Victorian Country House*, Yale University Press
- Harman R, and J. Minnis, 2004, *Pevsner Architectural Guides: Sheffield*, London
- Hunter J. 1859, (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed) *Hallamshire*
- Hey D. 2005, *A History of Sheffield*, Cambridge University Press
- Institute of Archaeologists, 2001, *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations* Reading
- Jones M. 2004, *The Making of Sheffield*, Barnsley
- Pevsner, N. 2003, *Yorkshire: The West Riding*, Yale University Press
- Warr P. 2009, *The Growth of Ranmoor, Hangingwater and Nethergreen*, Sheffield
- Whites Trade Directory of Sheffield: 1862, 1864, 1876, 1883, 1893, 1898, 1902, 1910, 1916, 1919-20, 1922.
- Woods M. and A. S. Warren 1988 (reprinted 1990), *Glasshouses*, Aurum Press, London


## 9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Mr Adrian Leigh and Mr Tim Atkinson of Vinci Construction UK Ltd. for commissioning this report and facilitating access to the site.

# FIGURES



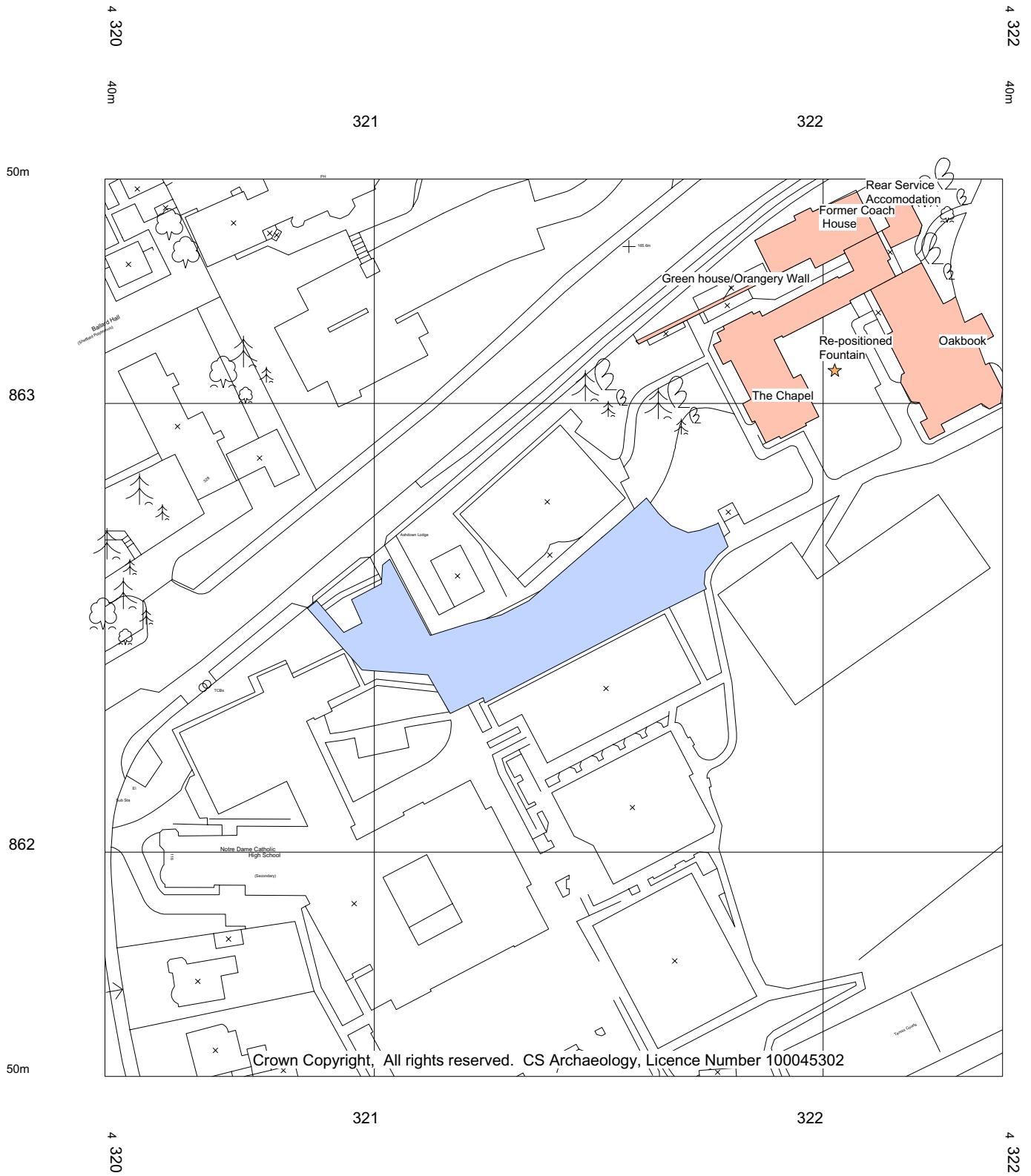


 for inset see Figure 2

Notre Dame School, Ranmoor,  
Sheffield, South Yorkshire:  
An Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 1: Location Map  
scale 1:25000

CS Archaeology  
June 2011

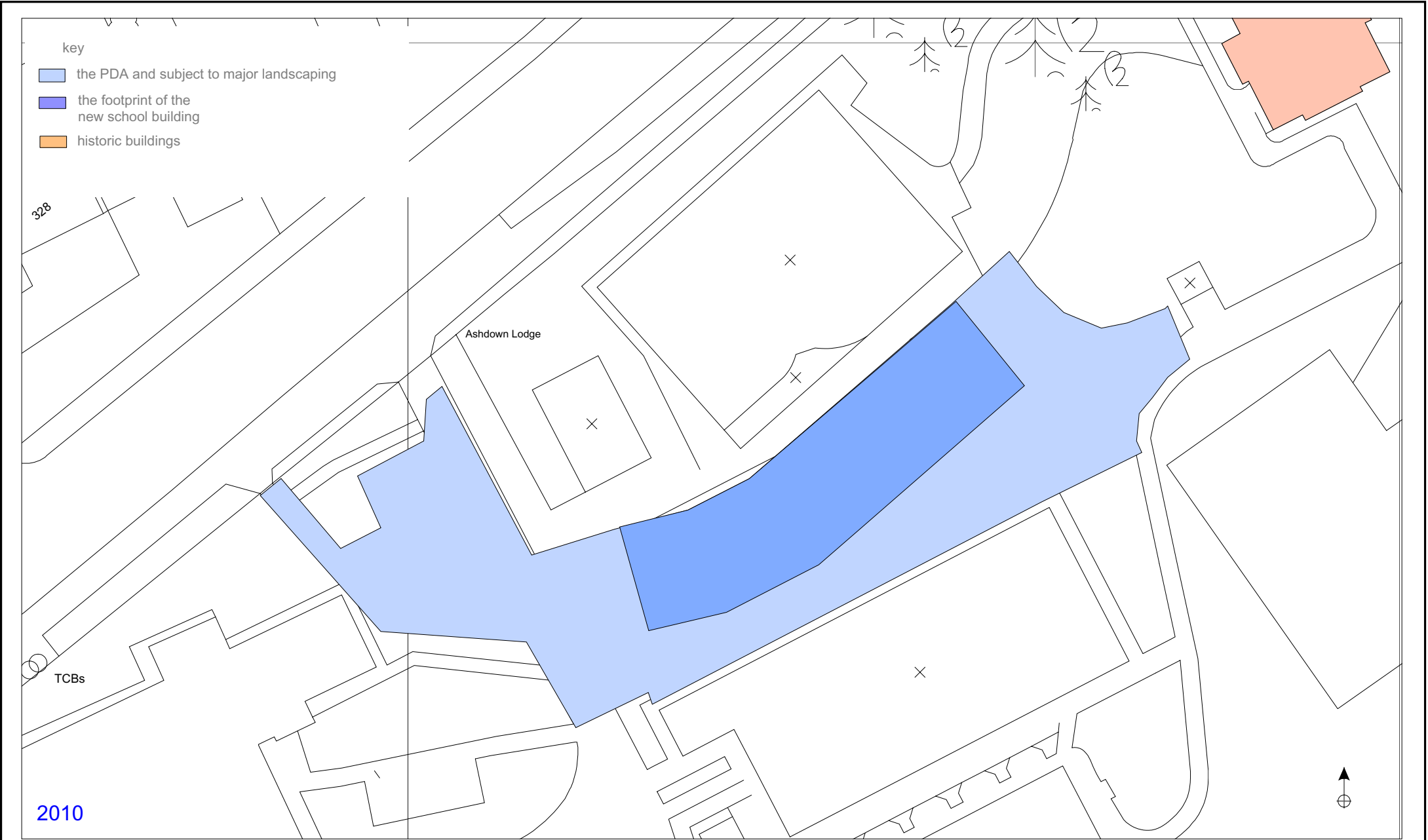


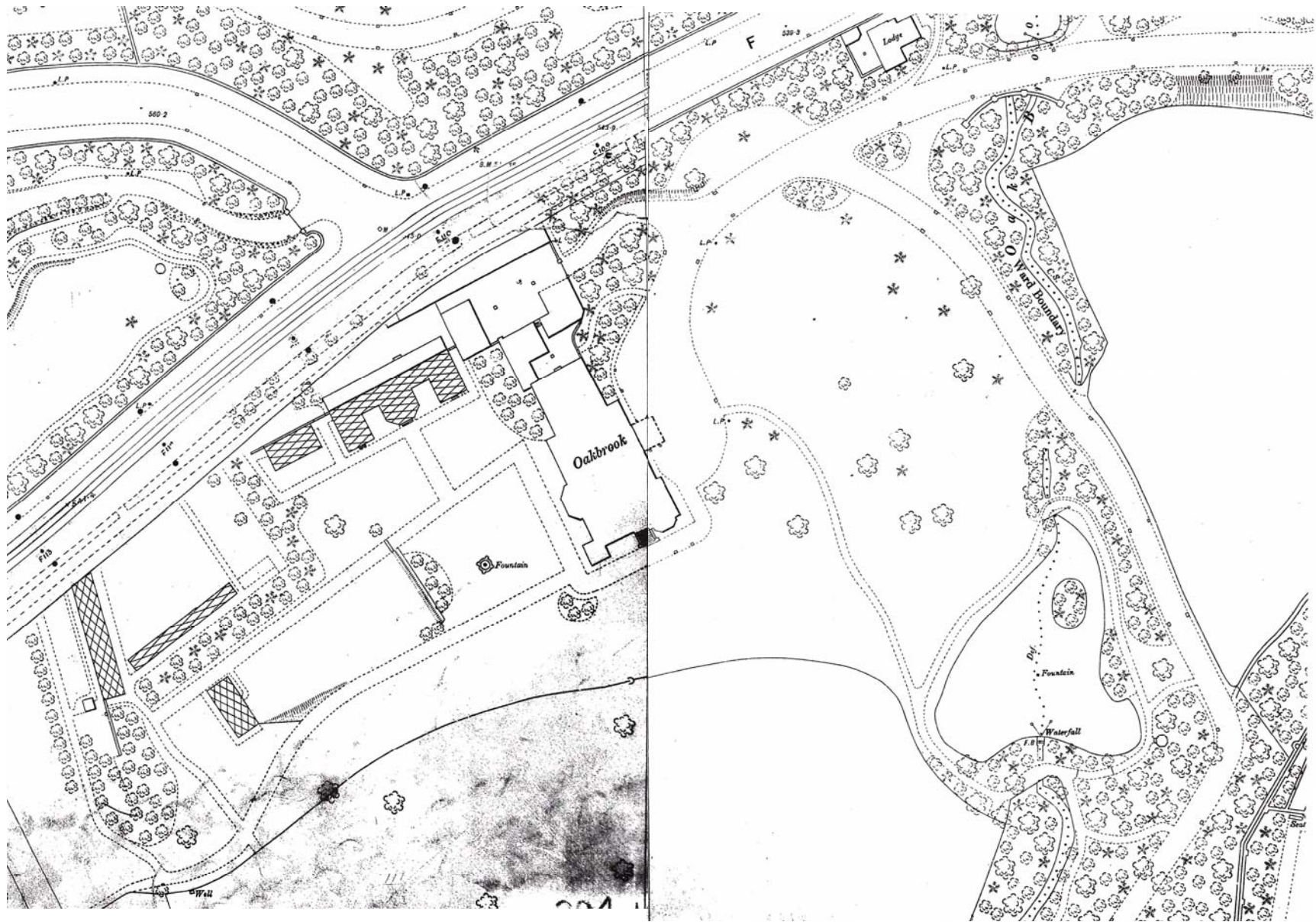
Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. CS Archaeology, Licence Number 100045302

- the PDA and subject to major landscaping
- historic buildings









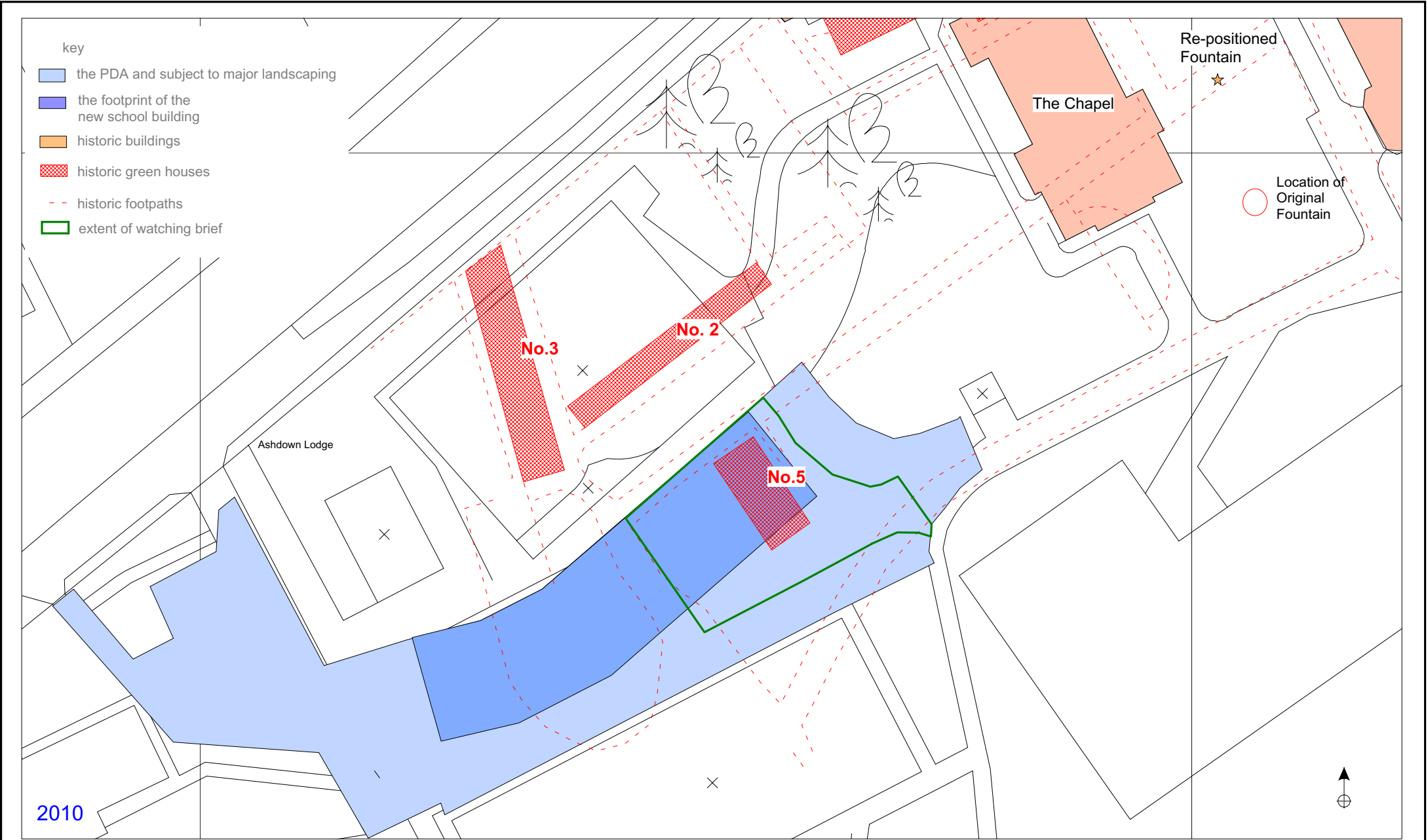
1892-3

Notre Dame School, Ranmoor, Sheffield,  
South Yorkshire: An Archaeological Watching Brief

Figure 4: Detailed Historic Maps of Oakbrook

*not to scale*

CS Archaeology  
June 2011



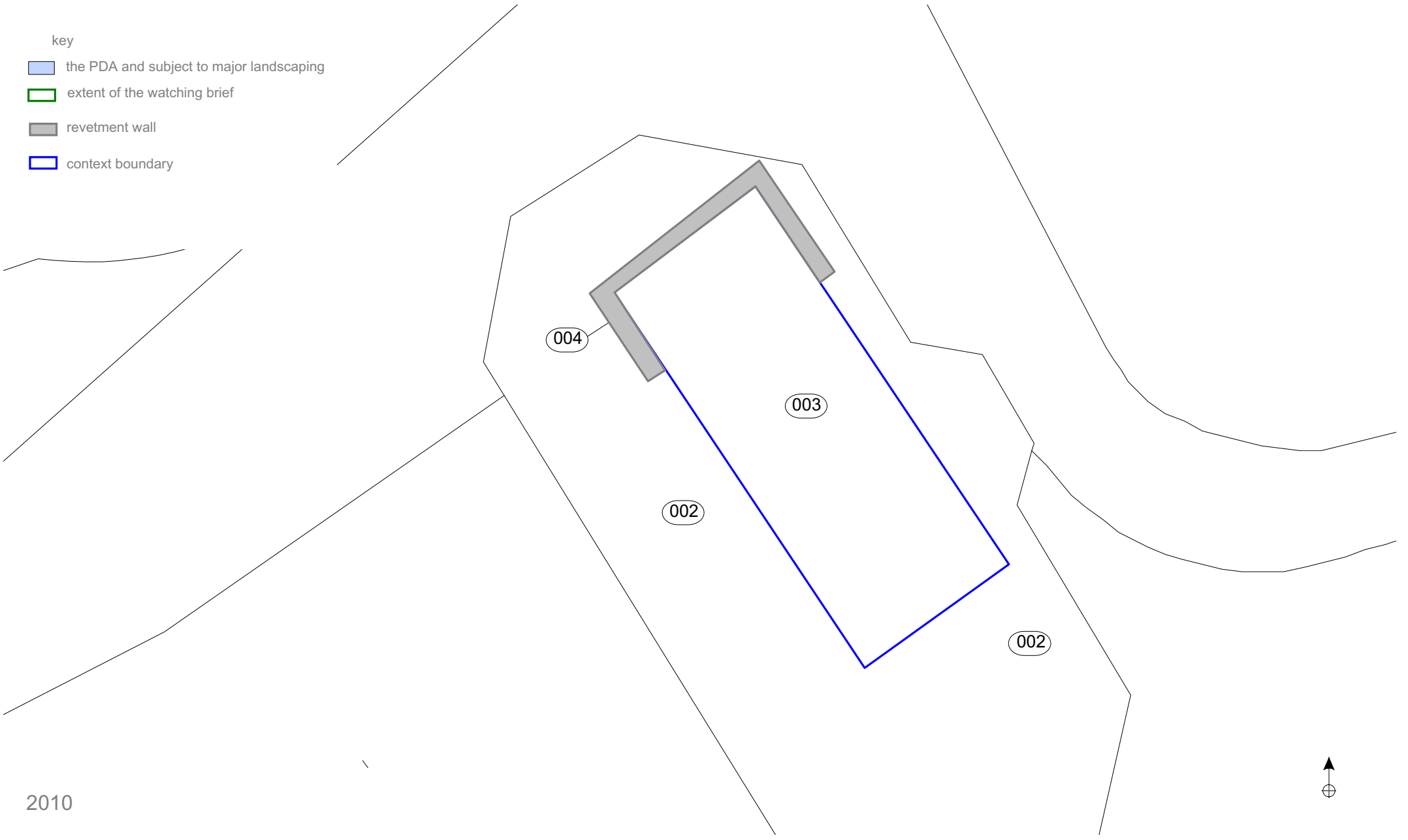
key

 the PDA and subject to major landscaping

 extent of the watching brief

 revetment wall

 context boundary



2010



# PLATES





**Plate 1, 2:** View during removal of overburden, looking northwest



**Plate 2, 4:** structural detail, the northeast wall of the former glass house truncated by modern concrete strip foundation for the 2004 faith garden, featuring a grey ash mortar, looking northwest





**Plate 3, 14:** general view of the rectangular base, looking southeast



**Plate 4, 13:** detail of the sandstone walling [005], looking northwest



**Plate 5, 19:** detailed view of the architectural fragments [1 & 2].



## Appendix 1: Photographic Register

### PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER A

*Digital colour at 12 mega-pixel resolution*

No.	Plate	Description	Looking
1		Pre-excavation view of the PDA	SE
2	<b>1</b>	View during removal of overburden	NW
3	<b>2</b>	Structural detail, the northeast wall of the former glass house truncated by modern concrete strip foundation[006] for the 2004 faith garden, featuring a grey ash mortar,	NW
4		Oblique view of the above with adjacent concrete foundation [006].	W
5		General view of the PDA	NW NW
6		View of the PDA with natural clays starting to be revealed and defining a rectangular area base featuring ash bonded sandstone	NW
7		Removal of the base deposit [003].	NW
8		View of the dedication plaque of the faith garden c. 2004	SE
9		View of the rectangular base [003]being revealed	SE
10		General view	SW
11		General view	NW
12		Detailed cross- section of the base structure[005] in the SE facing section	NW
13	<b>4</b>	Detail of the sandstone walling [005]	NW
14	<b>3</b>	General view of the rectangular base [003]	SE
15		Ashlared sandstone architectural fragment [1] revealed during the removal of the base deposit	SSE
16		Oblique view of the architectural fragment [1]	NW
17- 18		Detailed view of the architectural fragment [1]	SW
19- 21	<b>5</b>	Detailed view of architectural fragments [1&2]	-
22		General post-excavation view	NW
23		Detailed plan view of architectural fragments [1&2], with the curved face of fragment [2]	-

NB No artefacts have been retained as part of the archive