

Archaeological Watching Brief  
at  
**ST. NICHOLAS OF TOLENTINO,  
LAWFORDS GATE, EASTON, BRISTOL.**  
for  
PG Enterprises



Report No. 1901b/2010  
BHER No. 24954

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**ST. NICHOLAS OF TOLENTINO,  
LAWFORDS GATE, EASTON, BRISTOL.**

Centred on  
N.G.R. ST 59936 73507

Client: PG Enterprises  
Agent: Construction Total Solutions

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<i>Date Issued:</i>	10 December 2010

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### Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	Km	Kilometre
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	m	Metre
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	NGR	National Grid Reference
BC	Before Christ	NMR	National Monuments Record
c.	Circa	OS	Ordnance Survey
HER	Historic Environment Record		

### NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

December, 2010.

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## **SUMMARY**

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks prior to construction of a block containing 19 flats and 7 town houses on land adjacent to St Nicholas of Tolentino RC Church, Lawfords Gate, Bristol (local authority planning reference 07/01476/M).

The groundworks revealed deposits of made ground, including mortar lenses, sealing either buried topsoil and subsoil or directly overlaying archaeologically sterile deposits of sandy clay and sandstone. A few sections of wall of 19th century date, probably the remains of demolished school buildings, were also recorded.

No earlier features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed during the intrusive groundworks.

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- Plate 3              Adjoining ground beam-slots as excavated in the south-west part of site (Flat 3 & cycle store) looking north, 0.5m scale
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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) were commissioned by Ben Withey of Construction Total Solutions on behalf of PG Enterprises to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with the construction of residential properties on ground adjoining the church of St. Nicholas of Tolentino at Lawfords Gate, Easton, Bristol.
- 1.2 The watching brief was commissioned to comply with the condition of planning consent (local authority planning consent reference 07/01476/M) and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS 2007, updated 2010).
- 1.3 The fieldwork was undertaken between 27th of July and November 30th 2010 under the supervision of Raymond K Ducker whom also compiled this report.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with Bristol City Museum & Art Gallery under the Accession Number 2008/51 and a copy of the report will be made available to the National Monuments Record maintained by English Heritage. The project has been entered in the Bristol Historic Environment Record as: BHER 24954 and in the OASIS Online Access to the Index of Archaeological Investigations as: bristola1-84731.

## **2. THE SITE**

- 2.1 The development site (centred on ST 59936 73507) is situated on the west side of St Nicholas Of Tolentino RC Church, on the east side of the junction of Lawfords Gate and Pennywell Road. Two buildings which had formerly occupied the site; St Nicholas House and Tolentino House, as well as an area of tarmac hard-standing used for car parking had been demolished and much of the tarmac hard-standing removed by the time of this study.
- 2.2 The site covers an area of approximately 2762 square metres. The underlying geology comprises Redcliffe Sandstone of the Triassic period.

### **3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORIC BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 A full archaeological and historic background for the site can be found in the desk-based assessment prepared by Cotswold Archaeology (Young 2005). A general summary of the historic and archaeological background follows.

#### **Prehistoric**

- 3.2 There is no evidence for human activity in the immediate vicinity of the site during the prehistoric period.

#### **Romano-British**

- 3.3 There is no direct evidence of Romano-British occupation in the immediate vicinity of the site, however two lead ingots of Roman date were recovered during works associated with Wade Street Bridge in 1865. The bridge crosses the River Frome and a theory has been adopted in the past that this may have been the location of a sizable Roman road crossing, though this remains conjectural.

#### **Medieval**

- 3.4 There is limited activity of medieval date close to the site. The main thoroughfare east from the centre of Bristol during the medieval period was situated further south and is currently known as West Street. A watching brief in Lamb Street recorded walls of possible late medieval date (BUAD 91) and an archaeological evaluation of a site in Wade Street recovered a small assemblage of medieval pottery (BUAD 3609).

#### **Post-Medieval**

- 3.5 The site is represented on Millerd's map of 1673, depicted as open land. It marks Lawfords Gate as 'Glocster Road' and does not show Pennywell Road. By 1742, Rocque's plan shows Pennywell Lane, it also shows a small rectangular building in the south-western corner of the site. Ashmead's plan of 1828, shows the site boundary in its current form.

#### **Early Modern**

- 3.6 The mission of St. Nicholas of Tolentino was founded in 1848 by Bishop Ullathorne. He purchased the land occupied by the development site and began to construct the church. The church in its current form was extended during the late 19th century. At this time, work began on a number of school buildings, the last of which opened in 1911. The school buildings were used until 1985 when the school was moved to its current site, north-east of the church. By the time of the watching brief all of the school buildings have been demolished and a new presbytery built in the south-east corner of the footprint of the former St. Nicholas House.
- 3.7 A watching brief (BaRAS 2009) carried out during construction of a new Presbytery for St. Nicholas Church recorded remains of the former St. Nicholas House School building as well as deposits of natural, red-brown sand and two possible cut features of modern date. Nothing of archaeological significance was recorded during this project.



## **4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 The fieldwork complied with the methodology contained within the Written Scheme of Investigation (BaRAS 2007 & updated 2010). The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (1999). The aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of intrusive groundworks.
- 4.2 The watching brief involved the monitoring of the mechanical excavation of ground beams between piles as well as site service trenches.

## **5. RESULTS**

- 5.1 All groundworks were carried out using a 360° mechanical excavator using both toothed and toothless grading buckets.

### **Reduced Level Excavation (Plate 2)**

- 5.2 Initially a shallow reduced level excavation was carried out across a large part of the site, principally the area to be occupied by the new residential properties. The depth of excavation varied from between 400mm and 600mm all within made ground deposits (102).

### **Site Services (Fig 2, Plate 1)**

- 5.3 Trenches for site services were excavated as required and the excavation of a number of these was monitored archaeologically. Two separate stretches of service trench were monitored.

#### *Trench 1*

- 5.4 This comprised a foul/storm water drainage trench orientated SW to NE, to the north of St Nicholas Church. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.03 m through a simple sequence of tarmac (116) up to 40mm thick, gravel bedding material (117) up to 260mm thick, an earlier tarmac surface (118) 40 mm thick and finally a thick, 680mm deep, made-ground horizon (119). A further, shallower, 9m of adjoining trench was excavated later with similar results.

#### *Trench 2 (Plate 3)*

- 5.5 This comprised a service trench to the west of St Nicholas Church, to the east of the former St. Nicholas House. Excavation of the trench involved removal of part of the surviving fragments of the east wall of St. Nicholas House (Wall 103) and subsequently excavation through a soft black clay with occasional inclusions of ceramic pipe fragments to a depth of 1.2m further fragments of the above building remained in-situ.

### **Ground Beams (Fig 2, Plates 3 to 6)**

- 5.6 Excavation of ground beam slots between piles was undertaken to a depth of between 400 mm and 950 mm.
- 5.7 The deeper excavation (950mm) was limited to the footings for Blocks of Flats 1 – 3 in the southern corner of the site and these appeared to have been excavated through deposits of made ground (102) into archaeologically sterile sand and sandstone deposits (101).

- 5.8 Footings for the houses were excavated to 450mm depth and were excavated either wholly into made ground (102, Houses 6/7) or into made ground (102) over buried topsoil (105, Houses 1–6). During excavation of House 1 & 2 footings the upper surface of a possible subsoil deposit (115) was also recorded below the topsoil.
- 5.9 A small number of walls were observed during the monitoring works and these were interpreted to be remains of a number of buildings suggested to have existed on the site in the desk-based-assessment. Elements of three walls possibly forming three sides of a single structure were located. A section of masonry (Wall 110) formed the Pennywell Road street frontage and a length of wall recorded in section in 10 separate foundation trenches (Wall 112) formed the opposite elevation. A length of wall (a return to Wall 112) in the section of the internal dividing wall foundation trench of House 2 formed the east-facing elevation of the suggested building.
- 5.10 A further small section of Wall (111) is thought to have formed part of another post 1854 school building – probably a toilet block but possibly a large rectangular building to the south-west of this.
- 5.11 Other than the walls of 19th-century date, which were probably walls of the former school buildings, no features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed and no artefacts predating the modern period were recovered during intrusive groundworks at the site. In the area of the seven houses, the excavation remained wholly within deposits of topsoil and/or subsoil and therefore the potential for surviving deposits or structures of archaeological significance below the level of works remains untested.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 During the monitoring a simple sequence of made-ground deposits overlying either buried topsoil and subsoil or archaeologically sterile deposits of silty sand and sandstone was identified. In the area occupied by Houses 1 – 7 the depth of excavation did not exceed the thickness of the buried topsoil horizon (deposits 105, 113 & 114) except where Deposit 115 was exposed and the potential for deposits of an earlier date, sealed below this therefore, has not been tested.
- 6.2 No features or deposits of prehistoric or Romano-British date, particularly a possible Romano-British crossing of the River Frome were identified and similarly no features or artefacts related to the low level medieval activity identified in the vicinity was recorded.
- 6.3 A small number of sections of wall of 19th century date were located during the works. The walls probably represent elements of the former school and church buildings known to have occupied the site from the historic record, principally a rectangular building located between St. Nicholas House and Tolentino House on the Pennywell Road frontage. A further fragment of masonry may represent part of a toilet block, which appears on a post 1854 – pre 1883 map of the study area.

## **7. PROJECT TEAM**

- 7.1 The fieldwork was undertaken by David Fallon, Timothy Longman and Raymond K Ducker who also produced this report. The illustrations were prepared and the report compiled by Ann Linge. The archive was compiled and prepared for deposition by the author. The project was managed initially by Bruce Williams and later John Bryant.

## **8. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED**

### **Published Works**

DoE, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning* (Planning Policy Guidance Note 16)

BCC, 1994, *Archaeology and Development* (Bristol Local Plan, Policy Advice Note 4)

### **Unpublished Material**

BaRAS 2008 *Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief during Development* St Nicholas of Tolentino RC Church, Lawfords Gate, Bristol (unpublished client report by Heaton, R, updated by Ducker, R.)

BaRAS 2009 Archaeological Watching Brief at St. Nicholas of Tolentino, Lawfords Gate, Bristol (unpublished client report number 1901/2010 by Bryant, J.).

Young, R 2005 *Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment of St Nicholas of Tolentino RC Church, Lawfords Gate, Bristol*. Client Report: 1915, Cotswold Archaeology.

## **9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

BaRAS would like to thank Mr Mike James of Total Construction Solutions for his assistance and co-operation. The author would also like to thank Timothy Longman and David Fallon for their assistance during the watching brief project.

## **APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement**

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

### **NATIONAL POLICIES**

Statutory protection for archaeology is enshrined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), amended by the National Heritage Act, 1983. Nationally important sites are listed in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments (SAM). Scheduled Monument consent is required for any work that would affect a SAM.

### **GOVERNMENT POLICY GUIDANCE**

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (1990) have been replaced (23 March 2010) by Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (2010) which sets out the Government's national policies on conservation of the historic environment. Those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are called heritage assets.

Of particular relevance within the Planning Policy Statement are:

#### **Policy HE6: Information Requirements for Applications for Consent Affecting Heritage Assets**

HE6.1 Local planning authorities should require an applicant to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets themselves should have been assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary given the application's impact. Where an application site includes, or is considered to have the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where desk-based research is insufficient to properly assess the interest, a field evaluation.

#### **Policy HE9: Additional Policy Principles Guiding the Consideration of Applications for Consent Relating to Designated Heritage Assets**

HE9.1 There should be a presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets and the more significant the designated heritage asset, the greater the presumption in favour of its conservation should be. Once lost, heritage assets cannot be replaced and their loss has a cultural, environmental, economic and social impact. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. Loss affecting any designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, including scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I or II\* listed buildings and grade I and II\* registered parks and gardens, World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

#### **Policy HE12: Policy Principles Guiding the Recording of Information Related to Heritage Assets**

HE12.3 Where the loss of the whole or a material part of a heritage asset's significance is justified, local planning authorities should require the developer to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset before it is lost, using planning conditions or obligations as appropriate. The extent of the requirement should be proportionate to the nature and level of the asset's significance. Developers should publish this evidence and deposit copies of the reports with the relevant historic environment record. Local planning authorities should require any archive generated to be deposited with a local museum or other public depository willing to receive it. Local planning authorities should impose planning conditions or obligations to ensure such work is carried out in a timely manner and that the completion of the exercise is properly secured.

### **DISTRICT POLICY**

Bristol City Council Supplementary Planning Document (2006) states (policy SPD No.7, p4):

- (i) There will be a presumption in favour of preserving any archaeological features or sites of national importance, whether scheduled or not.
- (ii) Development which could adversely affect sites, structures, landscapes or buildings of archaeological interest and their settings will require an assessment of the archaeological resource through a desktop study, and where appropriate a field evaluation. Where there is evidence of archaeological remains, development will not be permitted except where it can be demonstrated that the archaeological features of the site will be satisfactorily preserved in situ, or a suitable strategy has been put forward to mitigate the impact of development proposals upon important archaeological remains and their settings; or, if this is not possible and the sites are not scheduled or of national importance, provision for adequately recording the site prior to destruction is made, preferably by negotiating a planning agreement to ensure that access, time and financial resources are available to allow essential recording and publication to take place.

## APPENDIX 2: Context Descriptions

Context No.	Description
100	Unstratified finds
101	Archaeologically sterile red/reddish-brown silty sand and sandstone deposit
102	Made-ground deposit of greyish-brown sandy silt with frequent inclusions of sandstone and brick rubble and lenses of re-deposited sand
103	Cellar wall of the later St. Nicholas House, recorded during previous building recording work.
104	Backfill of cellar rubble, redeposited topsoil and natural sand
105	Dark – very dark greyish brown sandy silt – quite free of inclusions- may have been a garden soil before being covered with made-ground
106	Modern tarmac deposit - footpath
107	Gravel bedding for (106)
108	Similar to Deposit (105) but with frequent mortar inclusions
109	Deposit of predominately grey lime mortar with occasional small rubble inclusions
110	Fragment of the north wall of a former school building fronting Pennywell Road
111	Fragment of the north wall of a former school building fronting Pennywell Road – possibly the toilet block
112	Fragment of the south wall of former building fronting Pennywell Road
113	Probably the same deposit as (105) & (114) but adjacent Wall (111)
114	Probably the same deposit as (105) & (113) but in area of Houses 3 & 4
115	Mid-brown silty clay with occasional charcoal and mortar flecking – probably a subsoil deposit
116	Modern tarmac surface recorded during excavation of Service Trench 1
117	Bedding for surface (116)
118	Earlier 20 <sup>th</sup> century tarmac surface below (117)
119	Made-ground deposit of dark reddish brown, slightly stony, clayey silt below (118)
120	Soft, black silt/clay soil removed during excavation of Service Trench 2

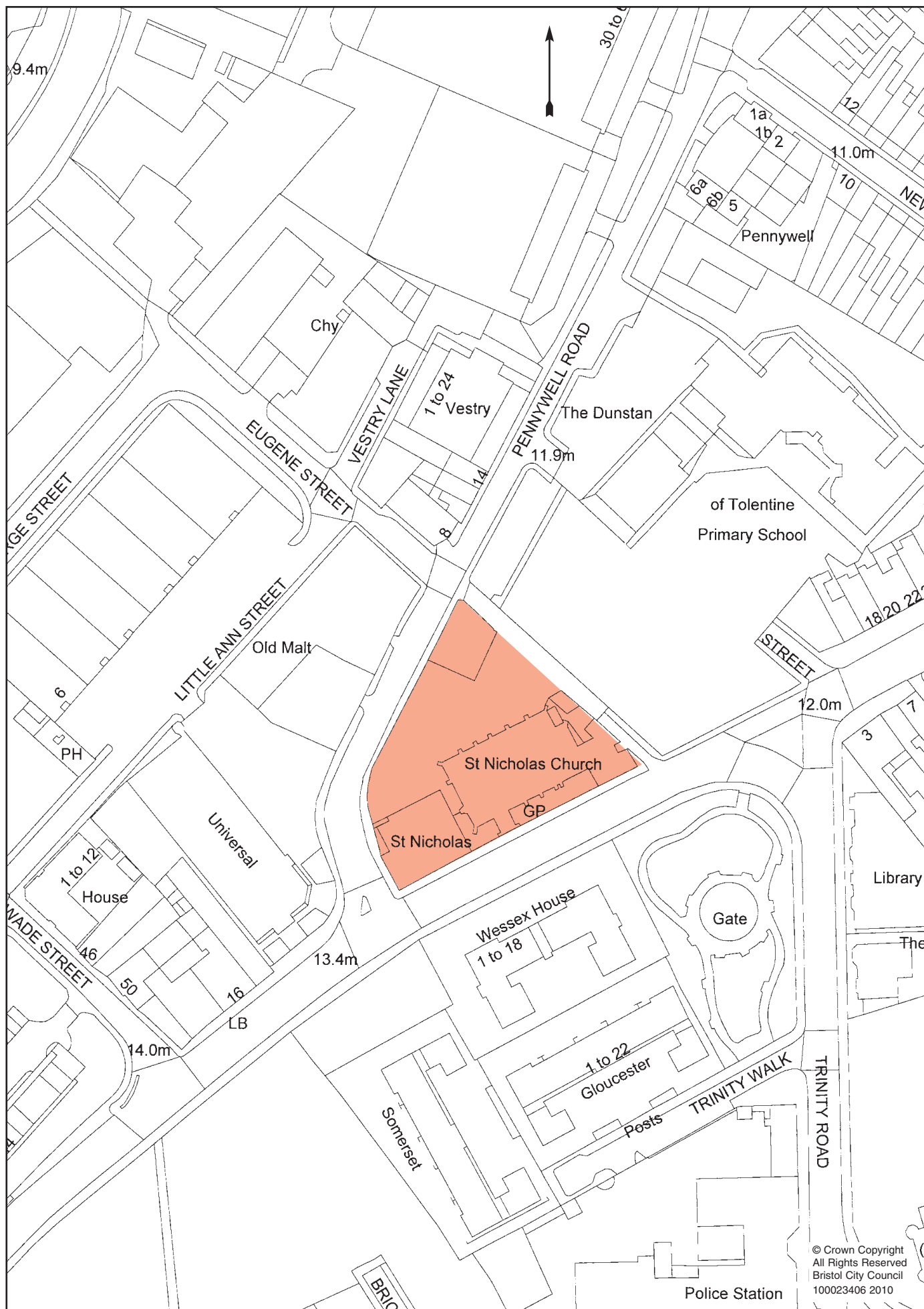


Fig.1 Site location plan, scale 1:1250



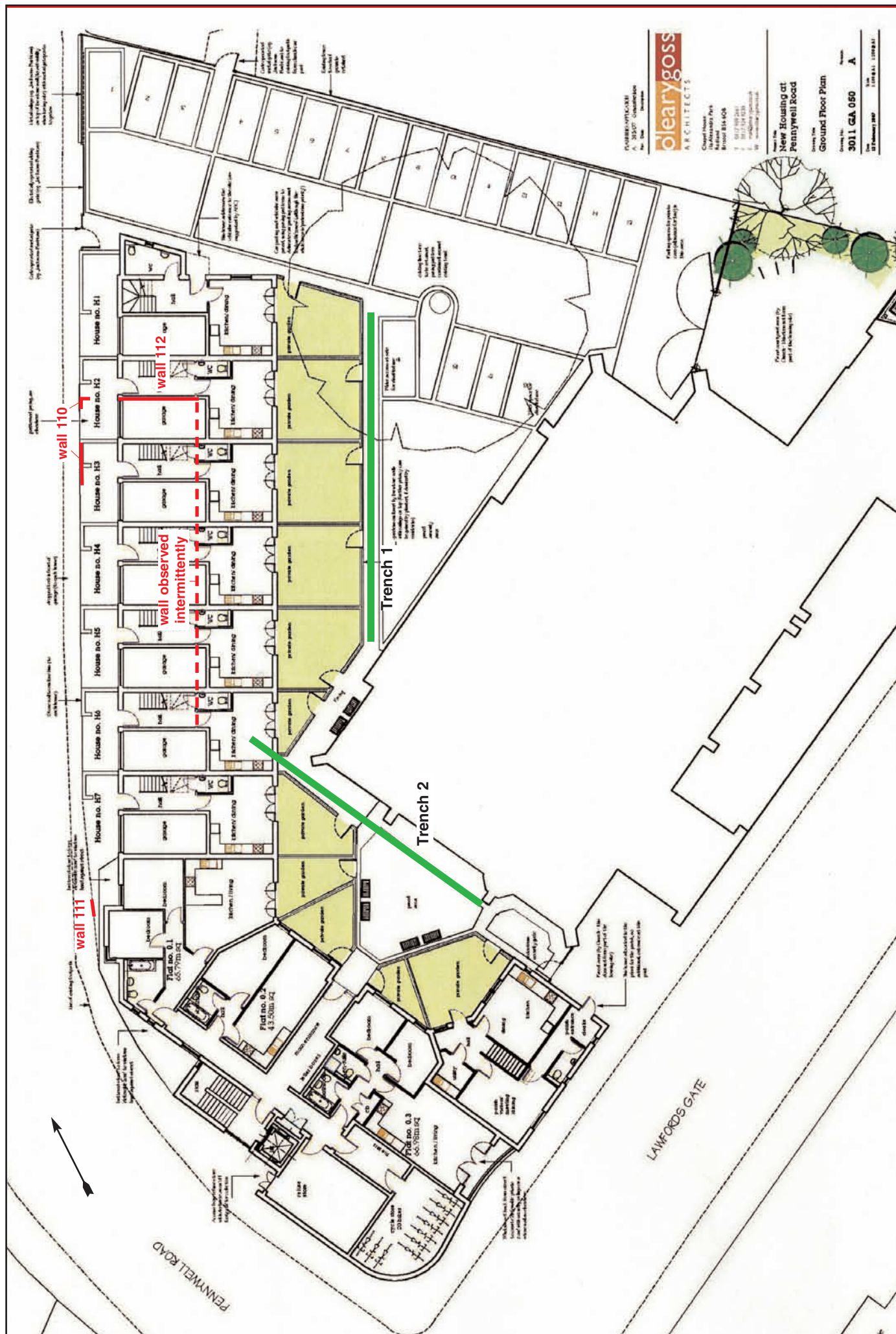


Fig.2 Location of recorded features and service trench excavation



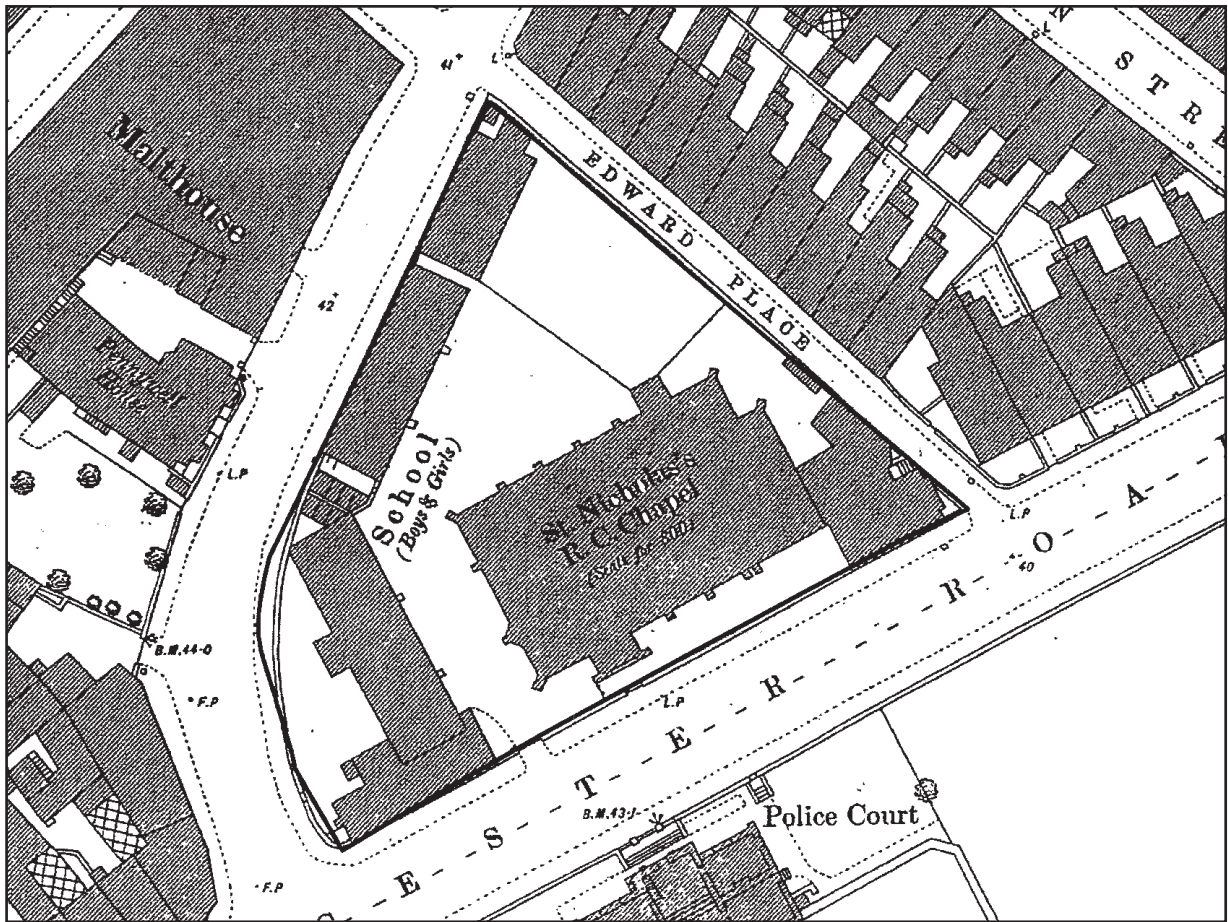


Fig.3 The 1880 Ordnance Survey 1:500 plan showing the building located during the archaeological monitoring

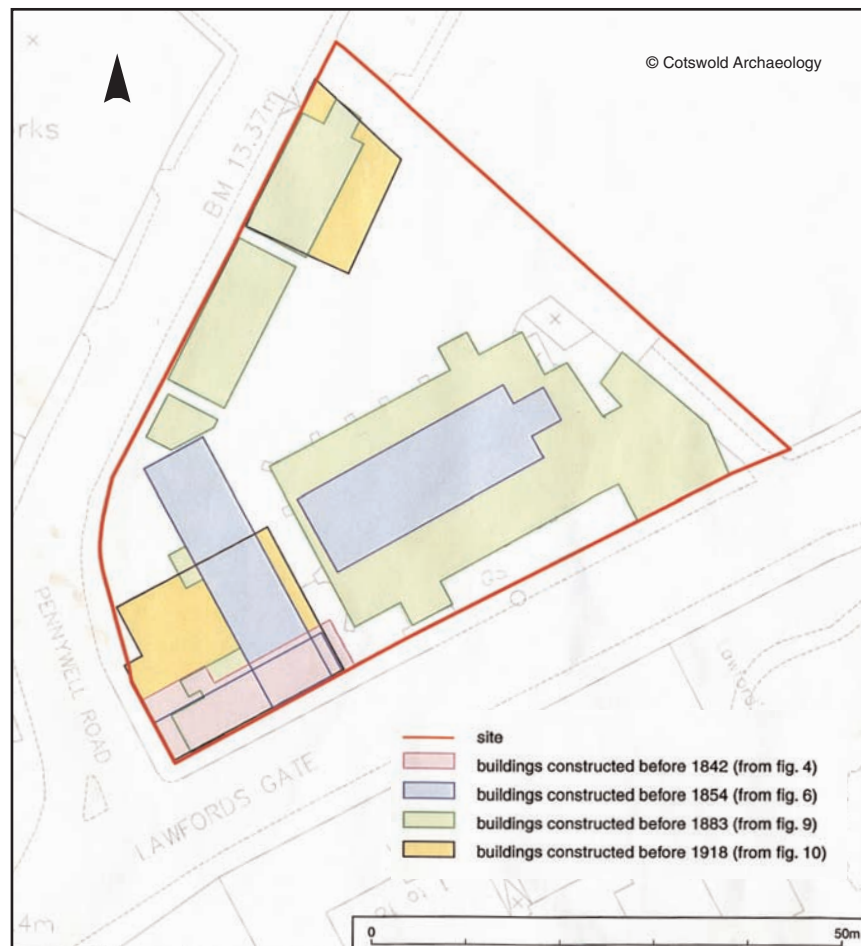


Fig.4 Suggested phasing of 19th-century school buildings





Plate 1  
Southern end of service  
trench (Trench 1) with  
wall of St. Nicholas  
House in section, looking  
north-east



Plate 2  
General view of the  
reduction of the pile-mat  
in the area west of St.  
Nicholas Church, looking  
west, 2 x 0.5m scales



Plate 3  
Adjoining ground beam  
slots as excavated in the  
south-west part of site  
(Flat 3 & cycle store)  
looking north, 0.5m scale





Plate 4  
General view of completed  
section of ground beams  
(Flat Block 02) looking  
south-east, 2 x 0.5m scales



Plate 5  
Recorded fragment of  
Wall 110, looking north-  
west, 2 x 0.5m scales



Plate 6  
Wall 112 as exposed in  
west-facing section of  
garage wall of House  
No.3, looking north-east,  
2 x 0.5m scales