

Hackney Ambulance Station – Historic Building Record BHL Consultants Ltd



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Executive Summary

Ecus Ltd was commissioned by BHL Consultants Ltd to undertake Historic Building Recording of the former Hackney Ambulance Station, Paragon Road, London, E9 6NR (hereafter the 'site'), located at 534980 184627. The building research and survey was undertaken between 14/04/14 and 25/04/14. The programme of work was required to discharge Planning Condition 10 placed on planning permission 2012/3660 by Hackney Council. Due to the limited survival of the structure and following subsequent discussions with the Archaeological Advisor for Hackney at the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Survey (GLAAS) it was agreed that a detailed WSI was not required and the report should focus upon documentary sources to understand the social history of the building. The proposed development is for the demolition of the remaining structure of the old ambulance station and the construction of new flats.

The extant remains form two phases. The Hackney Ambulance Station is recorded as having opened in 1929 for the London County Council Ambulance Service. It was constructed in the stark vernacular typical of the post-First World War period, and erected for the London County Council ambulance service shortly before they took over the provision of ambulance and accident response for the whole city in 1930. The building comprised a relatively small facility with accommodation for a single ambulance and crew. The range of buildings, largely demolished at time of survey, retain limited evidence of the development and form of the building, which in comparison with historic records provides sufficient information to determine its organisation and development. A review of documentary sources has not revealed any specific references to its involvement during the Second World War.

Photographs taken in 1929 record the appearance of the station illustrating it comprised a single storey building with gabled vehicular garage to the west and adjacent bay with pitched slate roof. A chimney visible in the eastern wall of the east bay indicates there had been a fire or stove in that area of the building. In front of the eastern bay there was a low wall which surrounded a small yard and separated the building from Paragon Road. The garage had folding timber doors to the north and south, allowing covered storage of the ambulance and access to the yard where it could be serviced and cleaned. The photographs illustrate the station accommodated one motorised ambulance. Abutting the eastern boundary of the site was a single storey flat roofed range, which the photograph indicates included an open-sided sluice room.

The eastern bay of the northern range was subsequently extended northwards to the pavements edge, replacing the former front yard wall and incorporated a new pedestrian entrance on the western side of the extension and a wide window in the northern elevation. This structure was flat roofed with a low parapet. It is likely this modification relates to the 1957 improvements to staff accommodation recorded in the County Medical Officer of Heath 1958 report. The interior of this bay has been demolished although it had likely expanded on the earlier bays existing facilities.

Whilst little remains of the structure of the Hackney Ambulance Station, there is sufficient historic evidence to form a broad understanding of the building's function and development. Aesthetically the remnant structure is of low value, although the remaining sign is of potential historical and communal value and could be repaired and reused in future developments or offered to a relevant museum.



Contents

1.	Introduction	1
1.1 1.2	Project Background	
2.	Building Recording Programme	1
2.1	Aims	1
2.2	Standards	
2.3		
2.4	Site Visit	2
3.	Historic Background	3
3.1	Historic Mapping	
3.1 3.2		
0.2	Origins and Development of the Faragon Road Ambulance Station	¬
4.	Building Assessment	7
4.1	Introduction	7
4.2		
	First Phase: 1929 Construction	
4.4	Second Phase: Post-war Modification	9
5.	Conclusion	. 10
5.1	Summary	. 10
6.	Archive	10
6.1	Location and Deposition	. 10
7.	References	.11
7.1	Bibliography	. 11
7.2		
7.3	Other sources	. 11
Арр	endix 1: OASIS Form	. 13
Q	Illustrations	15
U.	แเนอน สมบเเอ	IJ

Hackney Ambulance Station – Historic Building Record



Plates

Plate 1:	Northern elevation of Hackney Ambulance Station in September 1929	6
Plate 2:	Rear elevation of Hackney Ambulance Station in September 1929	6
Plate 3:	View of the northern elevation of the former Hackney Ambulance Station	8
Plate 4:	View along the eastern elevation of the ambulance station noting straight joint in fabric (left)	
Plate 5:	General view across overgrown yard towards eastern range (right)	

Figures

Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: 1848 Property of St Thomas's Hospital, with approximate location of the site shown

Figure 3: 1870 OS map with approximate location of the site shown

Figure 4: Extract of revised 1922 OS map showing the site



Abbreviations and Conventions used in the text

ADS Archaeological Data Service BGS British Geological Survey

c. circa

EH English Heritage

ha hectares

HA Heritage Asset referenceHER Historic Environment Record

km kilometres m metres

NHLE National Heritage List for England NPPF National Planning Policy Framework

OS Ordnance Survey

Periods referred to in the text

Palaeolithic 500,000 to 10,000 BC Mesolithic 10,000 to 4,000 BC Neolithic 4,000 to 2,200 BC Bronze Age 2,200 to 700 BC 800 BC to AD 43 Iron Age Romano-British AD 43 to 410 Early medieval 410 to 1066 Medieval 1066 to 1540 Post-medieval 1540 to 1901 Industrial 1750 to 1914 19th Century 1800 to 1899 First World War 1914 to 1918 Second World War 1939 to 1945 20th Century 1901 to present

Assumptions and Limitations

This report is compiled using secondary information derived from a variety of sources, only some have been directly examined. The assumption is made that this data, as well as that derived from other secondary sources, is reasonably accurate.

In addition, the records held by HERs represent a record of a wide range of information derived from historical sources and previous archaeological discoveries and does not preclude the subsequent discovery of further elements of the historic environment that are, at present, unknown.



1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Ecus Ltd was commissioned by BHL Consultants Ltd to undertake Historic Building Recording of the former Hackney Ambulance Station, Paragon Road, London, E9 6NR (hereafter the 'site'), located at 534980 184627. The building research and survey was undertaken between 14/04/14 and 25/04/14.
- 1.1.2 The programme of work was required to discharge Planning Condition 10 placed on the planning permission 2012/3660 by Hackney Council. The condition required the preparation of a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) and for the building recording. However due to the limited survival of the structure and following subsequent discussions with the Archaeological Advisor for Hackney at the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Survey (GLAAS) it was agreed that a detailed WSI was not required and the report should focus upon documentary sources to understand its social history.
- 1.1.3 The proposed development is for the demolition of the remaining structure of the old ambulance station and the construction of new flats.

1.2 Site Location

1.2.1 The former Hackney Ambulance Station is located at the western end of Paragon Road near to the junction of Mare Street (Figure 1). The area of the site approximately 210 sq m. The surrounding streetscape is dominated by late 19th century municipal buildings and mid to late 20th century residential properties and a school. The structure fronts onto the street and comprises of a partial surviving elevation with a concertina door and the remains of a ancillary side room.

2. Building Recording Programme

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The aims of the historic building recording programme were:
 - to make a permanent record of the building on site;
 - to record the structure by means of a photographic record with appropriate interpretation; and
 - to identify any documentary or oral sources relating to the social history of the ambulance station.

2.2 Standards

2.2.1 The building recording was undertaken in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologist's Standards and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures (2008), and English Heritage Understanding Historic Buildings – a guide to good recording practice (2008).



2.3 Methodology

- 2.3.1 A basic record was undertaken in line with English Heritage's Level 1 Survey (2008) but was enhanced by detailed documentary archive research.
- 2.3.2 The historic background of the building was established through review of existing sources of publically accessible primary and synthesised information. This was conducted via visits to a number of archives and libraries within the City of London, comprising:
 - The City of London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) for Historical photographs and maps including Ordnance Survey, Hospital Estates, Bomb Damage and the Municipal maps of London. Further to this, any publications held relevant to the history of the site were also viewed.
 - The City of London Guildhall Library for published sources relating to the London Ambulance Service and stations under their command.
 - The National Archives, Kew.
 - The Wellcome Trust Library for London County Council Heath Officer reports.
 - Hackney Council Archives and Hackney Council Museum for local history information.
- 2.3.3 In addition local groups and history societies were approached for information including the London Ambulance Service History Society and the Hackney Society. Newspaper archives were also consulted including the British Newspaper Archive, The Times Archive and The London Gazette Archive.
- 2.3.4 The LMA yielded several maps showing the development of the site over the years and held a number of black and white images of the site dating to the late 1920s. There was a general paucity of information relating to the general history of the site in the form of published articles, with only information leaflets of the London Ambulance Service (LAS) seemingly being available.
- 2.3.5 The Guildhall Library held a very limited number of publications relating to the history of the London Ambulance Service and did not hold any site specific material.
- 2.3.6 The Hackney Archives and Library did not have any site specific information, nor did they have any publications relating to the site. The Victoria County History series for Hackney was consulted, however provided no information on the ambulance station on Paragon Road.
- 2.3.7 The Hackney Museum, which is located immediately opposite the site, had no information in their exhibitions relating to the site, however a personal communication with a member of staff proved useful in determining some minor details about the site.
- 2.3.8 A bibliography of documentary, internet, archive and cartographic sources consulted is included in the References section of this report.

2.4 Site Visit

2.4.1 A site visit was undertaken on 16th April 2014 in order to assess the general character of the site, gather a photographic record and undertake a visual building assessment. The



photographic record of the site was undertaken using a digital SLR camera of 12 megapixel resolution. A selection of the photographic record is reproduced in this report as **Plates 1-5**.

3. Historic Background

3.1 Historic Mapping

3.1.1 The site was owned by St Thomas's Hospital in 1848 and was labelled plot number 152. It appears to show the site to comprise of a building (**Figure 2**). In 1848 Paragon Road was named Pleasant Place but by the 1st edition Ordnance Survey in 1870 it was called Paragon Road.



Figure 2- 1848 Property of St Thomas's Hospital, with approximate location of the site shown

- 3.1.2 On the 1870 OS map the building shown in the site on the earlier map appears to have been demolished and the site forms the rear garden to a property that fronts onto Mare Street (Figure 3). An infant school is recorded adjacent to the east of the site.
- 3.1.3 The relevant part of Charles Booth's 1889 Poverty Map of London shows that site was unoccupied but located in an area classified as the 'Middle Class and well-to-do'. The 1913 Municipal Map of London, the site was sandwiched between a Post Office on Mare Street and the Infant School on Paragon Road with a possible extension from the Mare Street property within the site.
- 3.1.4 An Ordnance Survey map that was originally surveyed in 1922 but with later revisions by London County Council shows the outline of a building that reflects the former configuration of the old ambulance station (**Figure 4**). It comprises of a staggered frontage onto Paragon Road with a narrow range of buildings along its eastern edge. The site is marked on the 1930 Municipal Map of London by the letters AS which can only be assumed to demarcate the Ambulance Station.



3.1.5 The Ambulance Station continued to be demarcated on OS maps throughout the 20th century.

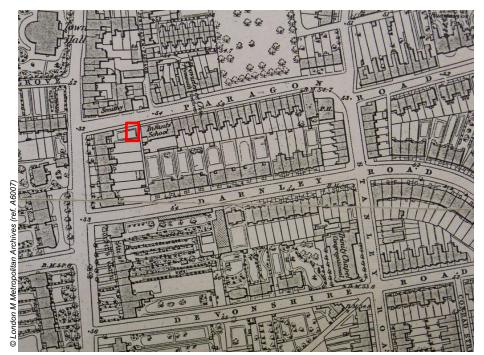


Figure 3- 1870 OS map with approximate location of the site shown

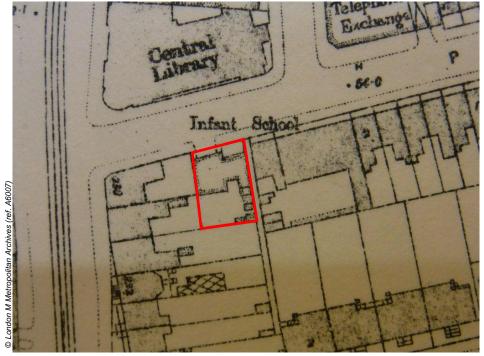


Figure 4- Extract of revised 1922 OS map showing the site

3.2 Origins and Development of the Paragon Road Ambulance Station

3.2.1 After failing to secure a Parliamentary Bill for the provision of a unified ambulance service within the City of London between 1906 and 1914 the London County Council (LCC) decided to form an entirely independent ambulance service of its own (LCC, 1949, 2). The London Ambulance Service (LAS) was established in 1915 for the conveyance of persons suffering or



- taken ill in the street or public places. A leaflet produced by LAS in 1923 provided detail of the coverage provided and informed the public on how to summon an ambulance (LCC, 1923).
- 3.2.2 This leaflet records seven operational stations in 1922 with a further four under construction or authorised to be constructed. The Hackney ambulance station is not listed at that time.
- 3.2.3 The Hackney ambulance station was built in 1929 to cope with the ever increasing amount of work the London Ambulance Service had to deal with (2,405 emergency calls in 1915 compared to 41,189 calls in 1928: LCC, 1930, 1949). By the 1929 Local Government Act which transferred to LCC the powers of the former Metropolitan Asylum Board and 25 Board of Guardians and the Act including the transfer of responsibilities for the ambulance service to the county councils the LAS had 14 commissioned stations, 20 ambulances and 165 staff (LCC, 1949, 3).
- 3.2.4 A similar LAS leaflet was published in 1930 and this does record the Paragon Road ambulance station as being operational. It was one of 19 stations located across London. The Paragon Road station was one of two ambulance stations located in Hackney with the other known as the Eastern station located on Brooksby Walk, E9. Promotional photos were taken in September 1929 of the new Paragon Road Station (Plates 1 and 2) and show that the ambulances at Paragon Road in 1929 comprised of the new addition to the service of low loading type vehicle (LCC, 1949).
- 3.2.5 When the Local Government Act came into force in 1930 the service grew substantially, and by the outbreak of War in 1939 it stood at 6 General ambulance stations, 16 Accident ambulance stations, 200 vehicles (including 20 ambulance buses) and 422 operative staff. The LAS formed the nucleus of the London Auxiliary Ambulance Service (LAAS) which was created to deal with air raid casualties and 112 Auxiliary stations were created to supplement the other overwhelmed stations. In Hackney this included the Auxiliary Ambulance Station located on the corner of Bodney Road and which comprised of ambulances donated by America. At its peak, the LAAS had 900 ambulances, 700 motor cars and 8,500 staff with stations such as the one at Paragon Road being heavily utilised to store and maintain vehicles in constant use.
- 3.2.6 During the war years, the ambulance service conveyed 48,709 casualties to hospitals and first aid posts across London. The bomb damage maps for the city record that the site only suffered minor blast damage during the Blitz, but the majority (75%) of Paragon Road was damaged beyond repair or totally levelled. An article in the Times dated October 15th, 1943 ("Ambulance Parade in Hyde Park") notes that six women who received decorations for bravery on duty including individual/s from Hackney were presented to the Health Minister. No further details on names could be gathered.
- 3.2.7 Post-war reorganisation led to the National Health Service Act of 1948. As part of this, for the first time, there was a requirement for ambulances to be available for all those who needed them. The 1952 report of the Medical Officer of Heath for Hackney (LCC, 1953) records an ambulance services operating from Paragon Road and Homerton Grove.
- 3.2.8 The 1957 annual report by the LCC County Medical Officer of Heath records building works to the Eastern Ambulance Station and the Dalston Ambulance Station, Hackney. It is presumed the reference to the Dalston Ambulance Station refers the Paragon Road station, which is located just east of Dalston. The building works comprised improvements to staff accommodation.





Plate 1: Northern elevation of Hackney Ambulance Station in September 1929



Plate 2: Rear elevation of Hackney Ambulance Station in September 1929

3.2.9 In the 1950s the London County Council's ambulance service moved to Headquarters at Waterloo Road, but it was already clear this wouldn't be large enough. By the early 1960s it was agreed a new headquarters would be built further up Waterloo Road. 'Londam', the Service's newsletter, described it as 'the promised land' (LAS History website). A London-wide



service was created in 1965 when one ambulance service was formed in London from parts of nine existing services.

- 3.2.10 The 1965 Report of the Medical Officer of Heath for Hackney notes that due to changes under the NHS legislation the provision of ambulances are no longer a concern of the local council but the Greater London Council (GLC). It is at this point that there are no more documentary references to the Paragon Road station. In 1972-73 the LAS was transferred from the GLC to the NHS. At the beginning of the 1970s new larger ambulances were being introduced and these innovations along with the limited space of the site meant the Paragon Road station was not developed to the same degree as the Brooksby Walk station.
- 3.2.11 Local oral history notes the station could house two emergency ambulances but the station declined in use from the 1970s and was ultimately closed in 2002 along with the station in Brooksby Walk when a new station opened in Homerton High Street.

4. Building Assessment

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The former Hackney Ambulance Station was semi-derelict at time of survey, comprising a street frontage (**Plate 3**) and truncated east range running along a passage perpendicular to Paragon Road (**Plate 4**). The remaining area within the plot formed a yard which is largely overgrown (**Plate 5**).
- 4.1.2 The extant remains form two phases. The first phase structure is set back from the pavements edge to the north and is constructed of London yellow stock brick laid in English Garden Wall bond within the northern wall and Flemish bond along the eastern boundary. The second phase extended the eastern half of the northern range to the pavement edge and is constructed from London yellow stock brick laid in stretcher bond. The bottom 1 m on either side of the front edge of the entrance to the garage has been historically damaged and repaired by red bricks inserted into the London yellow stock (Front cover and Plate 3).

4.2 Historical Summary

- 4.2.1 Hackney Ambulance Station is recorded as having opened in 1929 for the London County Council Ambulance Service (LCC 1949, 2). Photographs taken in 1929 record the appearance of the station (Plates 1-2) illustrating it comprised a single storey building with gabled vehicular garage bay to the west and adjacent bay with pitched slate roof. A chimney visible in the eastern wall of the east bay indicates there had been a fire or stove in that area of the building. In front of the eastern bay there was a low wall which surrounded a small yard and separated the building from Paragon Road.
- 4.2.2 The garage had folding timber doors to the north and south, allowing covered storage of the ambulance and access to the yard where it could be serviced and cleaned. The photographs illustrate the station accommodated one motorised ambulance (horse drawn ambulances having been phased out in 1915). Abutting the eastern boundary of the site was a single storey flat roofed range, which the photograph indicates included an open-sided sluice room (**Plate 2**).



4.3 First Phase: 1929 Construction

- 4.3.1 The western bay of the northern elevation fronting Paragon Road contains the original ambulance entrance fitted with a later concertina folding steel sliding door. Above the entrance there is a rolled steel joist within which is set a wooden sign carved with the words "HACKNEY AMBULANCE STATION". This wooden carved sign is the original sign visible in the 1929 photograph of the station (Plate 1). In several places along the sign tie plates have been inserted to support the sliding door mechanism on the southern side of the wall. Scars indicate a new sign had been fitted across the original following the installation of the new door.
- 4.3.2 Beyond this entrance there would have been a garage for parking the ambulance, with a remnant of the walling indicating it had been constructed with a glazed brick dado. Whilst the extant remains of this bay stand to the single storey height of the original building, the upper gable of the façade evident in the 1929 photograph of the station had been demolished and comprised of an air vent and a single electric lamp to illuminate the external front of the garage bay (Plate 1). This vehicle bay, or the yard behind, may have had a pump and petrol tank for refuelling the ambulance although there was no indication for this during the site visit.
- 4.3.3 The eastern bay of the northern range originally stepped back further from the street, with its original line evident as a straight joint in the eastern boundary wall. Nothing of the interior of this range survives, although it had likely contained offices, kitchen and crew/bunk room.
- 4.3.4 The eastern range comprised a narrow single storey flat roofed structure divided into four rooms. At its southern end the range continued a short distance along the southern boundary potentially containing one or two rooms. Towards the north there is a winding staircase down to a low cellar. The remaining rooms to the south likely comprised stores, toilets, ablution facilities for personnel and sluice room for equipment (Plate 2). An oxygen tank store may have formed part of this range or a separate structure.



Plate 3: View of the northern elevation of the former Hackney Ambulance Station



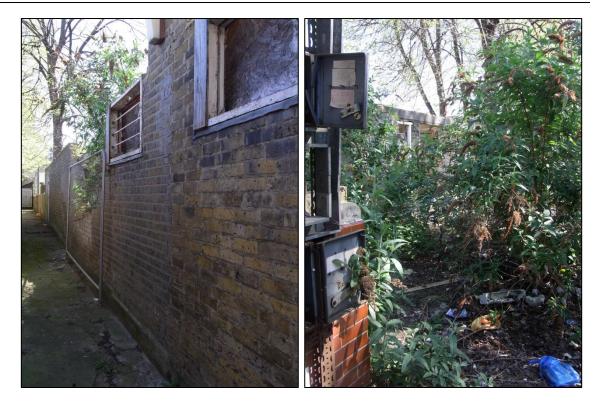


Plate 4: View along the eastern elevation of the ambulance station noting straight joint in fabric (left)

Plate 5: General view across overgrown yard towards eastern range (right).

4.4 Second Phase: Post-war Modification

- 4.4.1 The eastern bay of the northern range was subsequently extended northwards to the pavements edge, replacing the former front yard wall and incorporated a new pedestrian entrance on the western side of the extension and a wide window in the northern elevation. This structure was flat roofed with a low parapet. It is likely this modification relates to the 1957 improvements to staff accommodation recorded in the County Medical Officer of Heath report (LCC 1958). The interior of this bay has been demolished although it had likely expanded on the earlier bays existing facilities.
- 4.4.2 There is a key-switch which has been added to the frontage of the building (still visible, situated below the white 'no smoking' sign to the left of the concertina door) which is believed to have controlled the traffic lights at the junction of Paragon Road with Mare Street and turned the traffic lights in favour of the ambulances needing to get out in an emergency.



5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary

- 5.1.1 The Hackney Ambulance Station, which is dated to the late 1920s, was constructed in the stark vernacular typical of the post-First World War period, and erected for the London County Council ambulance service shortly before they took over the provision of ambulance and accident response for the whole city in 1930. The building comprised a relatively small facility with accommodation for a single ambulance and crew. The range of buildings, largely demolished at time of survey, retain limited evidence of the development and form of the building, which in comparison with historic records provides sufficient information to determine its organisation and development. A review of documentary sources has not revealed any specific references to its involvement during the Second World War.
- 5.1.2 Whilst little remains of the structure of the Hackney Ambulance Station, there is sufficient historic evidence to form a broad understanding of the building's function and development. Aesthetically the remnant structure is of low value, although the remaining sign is of potential historical and communal value and could be repaired and reused in future developments or offered to a relevant museum.

6. Archive

6.1 Location and Deposition

- 6.1.1 Due to the reduced scale of the fieldwork no physical archive has been created by this project. This report represents the total digital archive for the project, and will be deposited with the GLAAS HER.
- 6.1.2 In line with best practice, a copy of this report will also be made available through the Online Access to Index of Archaeological Investigations (OASIS) Project (http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/project/oasis/), reference no. ecusltd1-177792. A copy of the OASIS form is reproduced in Appendix 1.



7. References

7.1 Bibliography

English Heritage, 2006. *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice*.

Institute for Archaeologists, 2008. *Standards and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures.*

London County Council (LCC) 1923. London Ambulance Service. Facilities afforded by the London Ambulance Service with instructions for obtaining the help of the service. London County Hall

London County Council (LCC) 1930. London Ambulance Service. Facilities afforded by the London Ambulance Service with instructions for obtaining the help of the service. London County Hall

London County Council (LCC) 1939. London Ambulance Service. Facilities afforded by the London Ambulance Service with instructions for obtaining the help of the service. London County Hall

London County Council (LCC) 1949. London Ambulance Service: Historical Sketch of the Origins, Development and Present Organisation.

London County Council (LCC) 1958. Report of the County Medical Officer of Heath & Principal School Medical Officer for the year 1957. London County Hall

London County Council (LCC) 1953. Report of the Medical Officer of heath for Hackney. Annual report on the health of the Borough for the year 1952. London County Hall

London County Council (LCC) 1965. Report of the Medical Officer of heath for Hackney. Annual report on the health of the Borough. London County Hall

7.2 Mapping

1848 Property belonging to Governors of St. Thomas's Hospital

1870 OS map 25" to 1mile Sheet XIX London

1889 Descriptive map of London Poverty

1922 OS map 25" to 1mile Sheet XIX London

1930 LCC Municipal Map of London

1939-45 LCC Bomb Damage Maps

n/d Hackney Hospital Estate

7.3 Other sources

The Times Archive

The British Newspaper Archive



London Gazette Archive

BBC WWII stories Archive

London Ambulance Service website



Appendix 1: OASIS Form

OASIS ID: ecusltd1-177792

Project details

Project name Hackney Ambulance Station

Short description of the project

Ecus Ltd was commissioned by BHL Consultants Ltd to undertake Historic Building Recording of the former Hackney Ambulance Station, Paragon Road, London, E9 6NR), located at 534980 184627. The building research and survey was undertaken between 14/04/14 and 25/04/14. The extant remains form two phases; the principal structure erected in in 1929 for the London County Council Ambulance Service, and a subsequent extension made post-1950. The ambulance station was constructed in the stark vernacular typical of the post-First World War period, and comprised a relatively small facility with accommodation for a single ambulance and crew. Photographs taken in 1929 record the original appearance of the station and depict a low-loading ambulance that was a relatively new innovation at the time. Whilst little remains of the structure of the Hackney Ambulance Station, there is sufficient historic evidence to form a broad understanding of the building's function and development. A review of documentary sources has not revealed any specific references to its involvement during the Second World War. Aesthetically the remnant structure is of low value, although the remaining sign is of potential historical and communal value and could be repaired and reused in future developments or offered to a relevant museum.

Project dates Start: 14-04-2014 End: 25-04-2014

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference

codes

4931 - Contracting Unit No.

Type of project Building Recording

Monument type AMBULANCE STATION Modern

Significant Finds NONE None

Methods & techniques "Photographic Survey", "Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure"

Prompt Planning condition

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON HACKNEY HACKNEY Hackney Ambulance Station

Study area 210.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 34980 84627 51.5438794271 -0.0532577594865 51 32 37 N 000 03 11

W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation ECUS ltd

Project brief originator Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator ECUS ltd

Project director/manager Paul White

Project supervisor Richard Gilmore

Type of sponsor/funding body Developer



Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No
Digital Archive Exists? No
Paper Archive Exists? No

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title Hackney Ambulance Station: Historic Building Recording

Author(s)/Editor(s) Gilmore, R.

Other bibliographic details 4931

Date 2014

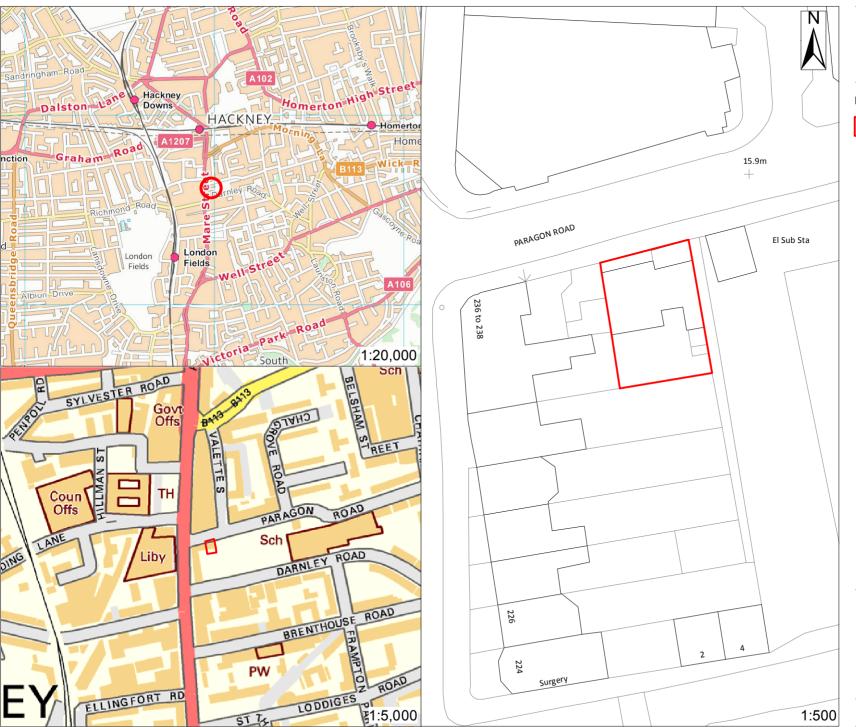
Issuer or publisher Ecus Ltd

Place of issue or publication Sheffield

Description A4 colour PDF



8. Illustrations





Key

Site Boundary

BHL Cost Consultants Ltd

Hackney Ambulance Station

Figure 1 Site Location

Brook Holt 3 Blackburn Road Sheffield S61 2DW T: 0114 2669292 www.ecusltd.co.uk

