

37 Park Avenue, Seaburn, Sunderland

Photographic Recording of WWII Air Raid Shelter in rear garden



Introduction

Photographic recording of a World War II domestic air raid shelter to the rear (west) of 37 Park Avenue, Seaburn, Sunderland was undertaken by Chris Scott MClfA of Solstice Heritage on 17th February 2016. The air raid shelter was located at the north-west corner of the plot, within the rear garden at NZ 40421 59518 (see site plan below). A detailed photographic recording of the structure was undertaken in digital format, alongside a drawn survey comprising all accessible elevations, a floor plan and a cross-section through the structure.

The air raid shelter structure was a partly sunken construction with brick walls of two leaves in 2³/₄" x 9" red engineering brick, laid in three course English Garden Wall bond. Over these was a reinforced concrete roof, cast in-situ, with clear impressions of the formwork timber used in its construction. The flat roof was approximately 9" thick. Latterly, the roof had been re-used as the base of a greenhouse, recently removed by the commissioning client. The greenhouse had been constructed on a brick dwarf wall, which was still in place at the time of survey. The whole rectangular construction measured approximately 3m x 2m at its external extents.

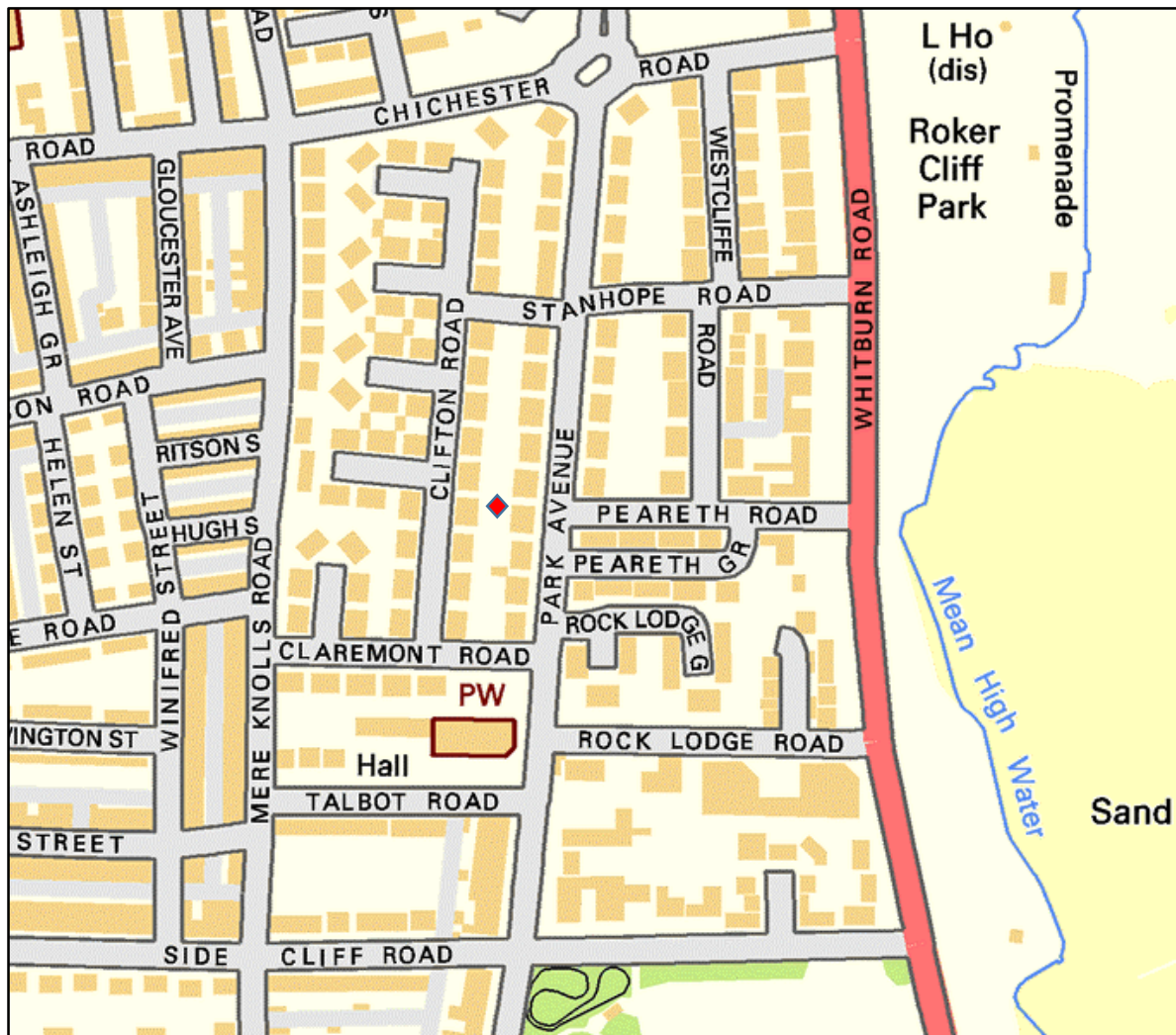
The air raid shelter was accessed by a straight flight of eight pre-cast concrete steps at its south-east corner. This stairway had retaining brickwork walls, which themselves had been used as the base for overlying, later, decorative stonework forming the edge of flower beds at this corner of the garden. The stairway gave access to a single rectangular space with a doorway at the south-east corner. No remains of an original door were present. The space had a concrete floor, bare brick walls and a flat concrete ceiling. Within the concrete ceiling a screw fitting for a lightbulb had been set-in, presumably during construction, and this most likely represented the only lighting within the space. A modern replacement switch and fitting were located on the east wall by the door opening. Later wooden single shelves were present on the north and west walls, presumably reflecting the space's latter usage as an external store. At the north-east corner of the space was an infilled square opening in the floor, most likely a drain to prevent the shelter from flooding.

To the south-west corner of the air raid shelter a concrete lintel supported a low, narrow opening within the brickwork of the west wall, giving access to a secondary 'emergency' escape exit. This brick box-construction shaft had metal hand-holds located within its western wall to allow egress from the main shelter space, presumably in the event of the main entrance becoming blocked by debris. The surface opening of this original exit was blocked at the time of survey by later, overlying, flagstones and concrete forming the path to the now removed greenhouse. It was, however, possible to inspect the interior of this exit space. No significant phasing or alteration of the structure was noted, indicating it remained practically unchanged since its construction during the Second World War.

Photo Register

Shot Number	Direction of View	Scale	Description	Taken by:
1	W	2x1m	East Elevation	CS
2	NW	2x1m	South and East Elevation	CS
3	N	1x1m	South Elevation	CS
4	N	2x1m	Stairway	CS
5	S	1x1m	Stairway	CS
6	NW	1x1m	North Wall	CS
7	NE	1x1m	East Wall	CS
8	SW	1x1m	South Wall	CS
9	W	1x1m	West Wall	CS
10	W	1x1m	Detail of Escape	CS
11	W	none	Detail of Escape	CS
12	NE	1x1m	Detail of Drain	CS
13	E	none	Detail of Light Fitting	CS
14	NW	none	General View	CS

Site Plan



Site Plan. Position of Air Raid Shelter indicated by red diamond. (© OS Opendata)







