



# Historic building recording of the Boathouse at Wicksteed Park, Kettering Northamptonshire

Report No. 17/58

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**OASIS REPORT FORM**

<b>PROJECT DETAILS</b>		OASIS molanort1-285807
Project title	Historic building recording of the Boathouse at Wicksteed Park, Kettering, Northamptonshire	
Short description	<i>MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) carried out historic building recording of the Boathouse at Wicksteed Park. This pre-fabricated concrete building dated to the earliest years of the park in the 1920s and was a simple, practical structure, built to accommodate boats for use on the adjacent lake. Unfortunately the building was damaged by a fire in November 2016 and it was determined that it should be demolished and replaced. This survey provides a record of the structure prior to demolition.</i>	
Project type	Historic England Level 2, Historic Building Recording	
Previous work	None	
Future work	Unknown	
Monument type and period	1920s Pre-fabricated concrete boathouse	
<b>PROJECT LOCATION</b>		
County	Northamptonshire	
Site address	Wicksteed Park, Kettering	
NGR	SP 88311 76982	
Area	192 sq m	
Height	60m aOD	
<b>PROJECT CREATORS</b>		
Organisation	MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology)	
Project brief originator	David Smith Associates	
Project Design originator	MOLA	
Director/Supervisor	Amir Bassir	
Project Manager	Amir Bassir	
Sponsor or funding body	David Smith Associates	
<b>PROJECT DATE</b>		
Start date	March 2017	
End date	May 2017	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>		
Title	Historic building recording of the Boathouse at Wicksteed Park, Kettering, Northamptonshire	
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# Historic building recording of the Boathouse at Wicksteed Park Kettering, Northamptonshire

## ABSTRACT

*MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) carried out historic building recording of the Boathouse at Wicksteed Park. This pre-fabricated concrete building dated to the earliest years of the park in the 1920s and was a simple, practical structure, built to accommodate boats for use on the adjacent lake. Unfortunately the building was damaged by a fire in November 2016 and it was determined that it should be demolished and replaced. This survey provides a record of the structure prior to demolition.*

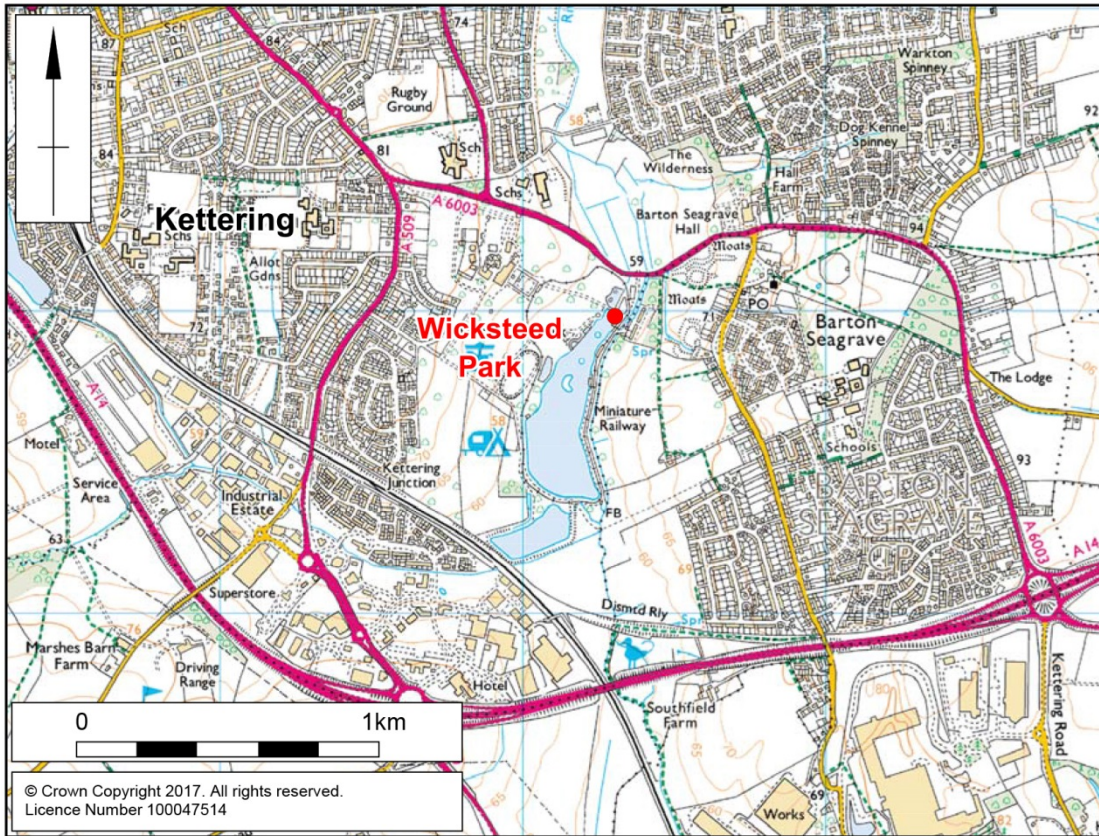
## 1 INTRODUCTION

MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) was commissioned by David Smith Associates to undertake a programme of historic building recording of the boathouse at Wicksteed Park, Kettering, Northamptonshire (NGR SP 88311 76982, Figs 1 and 2).

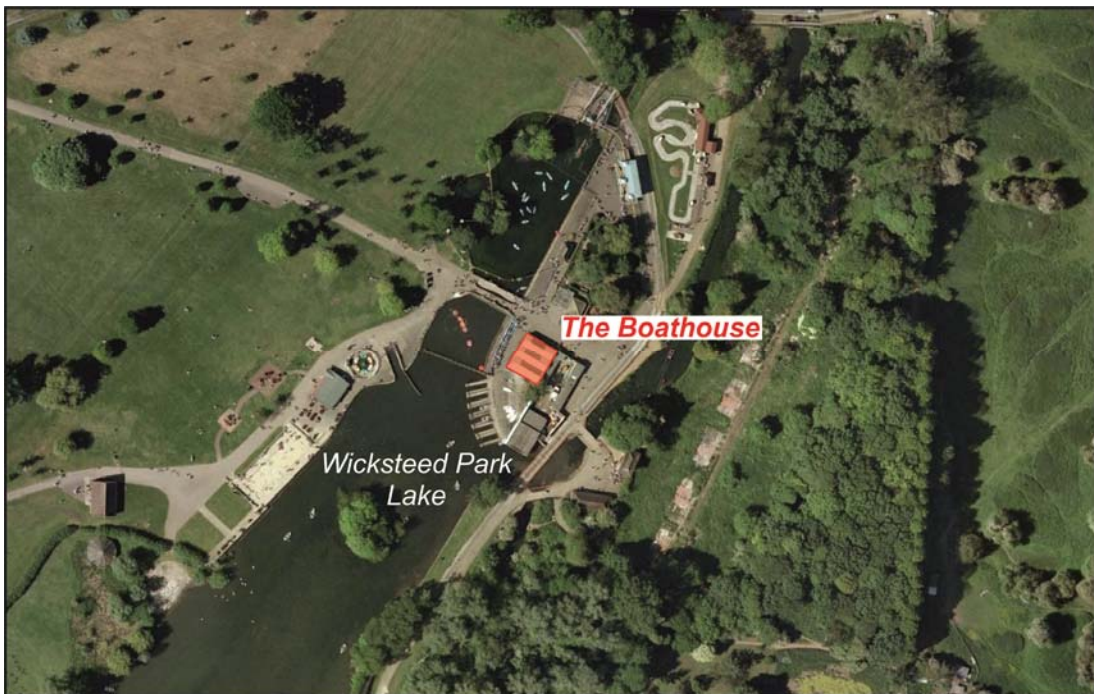
The boathouse was subject to fire damage in November 2016, following which it was determined that the building be demolished and a new boathouse constructed on the same site. This document represents a record of the boathouse prior to its demolition. The survey was carried out in accordance with Historic England Level 3 guidelines as set out in the document *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (HE 2016). All works were undertaken in accordance with current guidelines (ClfA 2014a and 2014b) and Historic England (MORPHE) (HE 2015).

The boathouse was a simple single-storey structure located adjacent to the Wicksteed Park lake and was used for storing of small boats as well as providing a small office and maintenance room. It dated to the 1920s when the park was first opened and developed. Like other park structures of this period, such as the nearby bungalows, it was a pre-fabricated structure designed for economy and ease of construction.

WICKSTEED PARK, BOATHOUSE



Site location Fig 1



The recording area, image © Google Earth Fig 2



## 2 OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The primary objective of this work was to provide as comprehensive a record as possible prior to its demolition. This recording was carried out in line with Historic England (HE) Level 3 building recording strategy, the aim of which is to provide a descriptive and analytical record of an extant structure in accordance with the HE document *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (HE 2016). It provides an account of a building's origins, development and use.

Recording was carried out between March and May 2017 and included the following elements:

- Establishing an accurate archaeological record of the building to Historic England Level 3 (HE 2016, section 5.3);
- An overall photographic survey of the exterior and interior of the building in its present condition, comprising general and detailed shots. Photography was carried out using a Nikon D7200 DSLR equipped with Sigma 35-17mm and Nikon 18-70mm lenses. Files are in RAW with high quality JPEG duplicates. Where possible and appropriate 1m scales or smaller were included in all photographs;
- A photogrammatic model of the building, utilising both ground-based photos and an aerial survey conducted with a drone. The resulting 3d model is fully scaled and geo-rectified. This file is included as an Adobe Acrobat PDF in an appendix to this report;
- A measured drawn survey of the building, comprising a plan and all elevations.
- Written notes on the building's construction, present and former use and, where appropriate, the building's past and present relationship to its setting in the wider landscape;

Recording was limited by health and safety considerations including the stability of the roof and the necessity to clear burned debris from within the building prior to the survey.

### 3 LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

Wicksteed Park lies at the south-east edge of Kettering, on the west edge of Barton Seagrave village. The c45ha site is bounded to the north by the A6003 Barton Road, to the west, by C20 housing, including the 1920s Paradise Lane, and to the south by land laid out as a miniature golf course and agricultural land. The southern part of the east boundary is marked by the River Ise, beyond which lies open agricultural land. The northern part of the east boundary is marked by a track, beyond which lies Castle Field, containing the earthwork remains of moats, fishponds, and a shrunken medieval village. The land is elevated in the western section of the site, with a gentle slope running south-east from the Pavilion and Rose Garden down towards the lake in the Ise valley below.

The setting is partly urban, with the remains of Barton Seagrave Hall's landscape park and gardens adjacent to the north-east. The landscape of the Hall was laid out in the late C18 and early C19 with advice from Humphry Repton (1752-1818). A Red Book dated April 1794 details his suggestions for the site (British Library). The land which Wicksteed Park occupies was until 1913 part of the Barton Seagrave Hall estate (HE 2017).

The boathouse was located towards the northern end of the lake, on its north-eastern shore. The building was constructed on a concreted platform adjacent to a small humpback bridge, with footpaths leading around the north and east.

### 4 HISTORIC BACKGROUND

Wicksteed Park is a registered park and garden (List entry number: 1001524) and is described by Historic England as "An early C20 public amusement or leisure park laid out for Charles Wicksteed and opened in 1921, with formal elements set in an informal amusement park dominated by a large lake. It was the first such park in the United Kingdom, in which Wicksteed installed substantial amounts of play equipment supplied from his own factory" (HE 2017).

Historic England's listing description and historic development of the park is as follows:

In 1876 Charles Wicksteed (1847-1931) founded an engineering company in Kettering, Charles Wicksteed and Company, which prospered such that Wicksteed became a wealthy businessman. In 1913 he bought a parcel of agricultural land south-east of Kettering and formed the Wicksteed Village Trust. His intention was to provide a model village for the working classes at below-average rents, offering generous gardens and a large open public space for recreation. A 1914 plan exists of the proposed Barton Seagrave Garden Suburb Estate, prepared by the local architects Gotch and Saunders, showing a substantial lake flanked by housing and a park and playing fields. Following the First World War public housing became the responsibility of local authorities, so Wicksteed chose instead to concentrate on the creation of the park for public use. The park was to provide a free playground and sports facilities for family enjoyment, funded by other facilities within the park, such as refreshments and outdoor features, for which a small charge was made.

In 1917 the first playground equipment was installed, designed and built by Wicksteed's engineering company. A 12ha lake, fed by the Ise Brook, was constructed by 1921, the year that the park was officially opened. In 1922 work began on a Pavilion and Theatre building towards the centre of the park, these being completed in 1923, followed by the adjacent Rose Garden, laid out in 1924. A water chute, bandstand, and fountain were built in 1926. In 1928 Wicksteed bought Barton Seagrave Hall for £6000...A model railway track was

built around the edge of the lake in 1931. Following Wicksteed's death that year the park continued in the hands of the Trustees, and further features were added, particularly play equipment and facilities for recreational activities. After the Second World War the park was used as an example by Professor Holford during the planning of the New Towns, to show that a town could create parks and playgrounds which, after the initial outlay, could be run at no cost to the rate payers (The Wicksteed Story).

The park continues in public use, owned by Wicksteed Village Trust (2001).

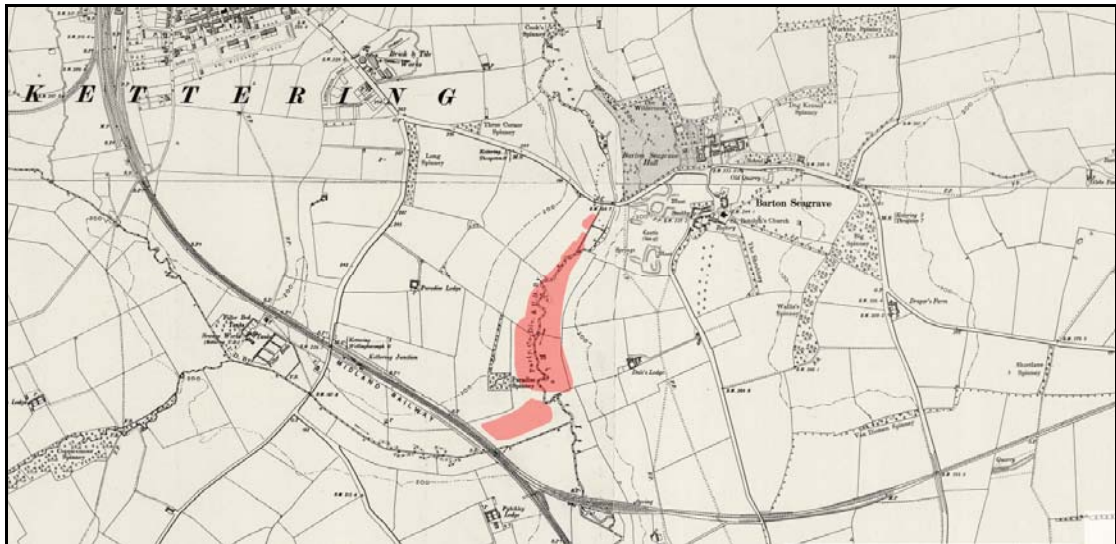
**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** Wicksteed Park was laid out as a landscaped public park in which amusements were provided for visitors. It is dominated by two major features: the formal Rose Garden to the south-east of the Pavilion, and the large informal lake adjacent to the east boundary, these being set within informal parkland containing recreation and amusement facilities.

The path on the north-east side of the Rose Garden continues south-east to the north end of the lake, being carried over the lake by a hump-backed bridge. From here it continues eastwards, giving access to features on the east side of the lake and the line of prefabricated, semi-detached Lakeside Bungalows. To the north and east the Bungalows are enclosed by woodland. An early C20, two-storey brick water chute building stands close by, between the lake and the Bungalows. The northern tip of the lake contains two islands and is used for boating. The remainder of the lake, also used for boating, contains several islands and is largely enclosed by the model railway (1931), and bounded to the east by a narrow strip of trees. The River Ise enters the site from Barton Seagrave park at the north-east corner of the Wicksteed Park, feeding the lake, alongside the east edge of which it runs before leaving at the south-east corner of the park. (HE 2017)

"Following an initial purchase of land in 1913, a plan was drawn up by Gotch and Saunders. Work began in 1918-21 when a lodge to Gotch's design was built at the ten entrance to the park, at the junction of Barton Road and Pytchley Road, where it still stands... In 1921 Gotch designed a pavilion with a wing added 1927-35, largely by Gotch, Saunders and Surrige" (Bailey et al, 2013).

An electrical fire on 15th November 2016 caused severe damage to the building, gutting the interior and destroying most of the roof structure. The walls, being constructed of concrete, interspersed by steel beams, remained largely intact.

WICKSTEED PARK, BOATHOUSE



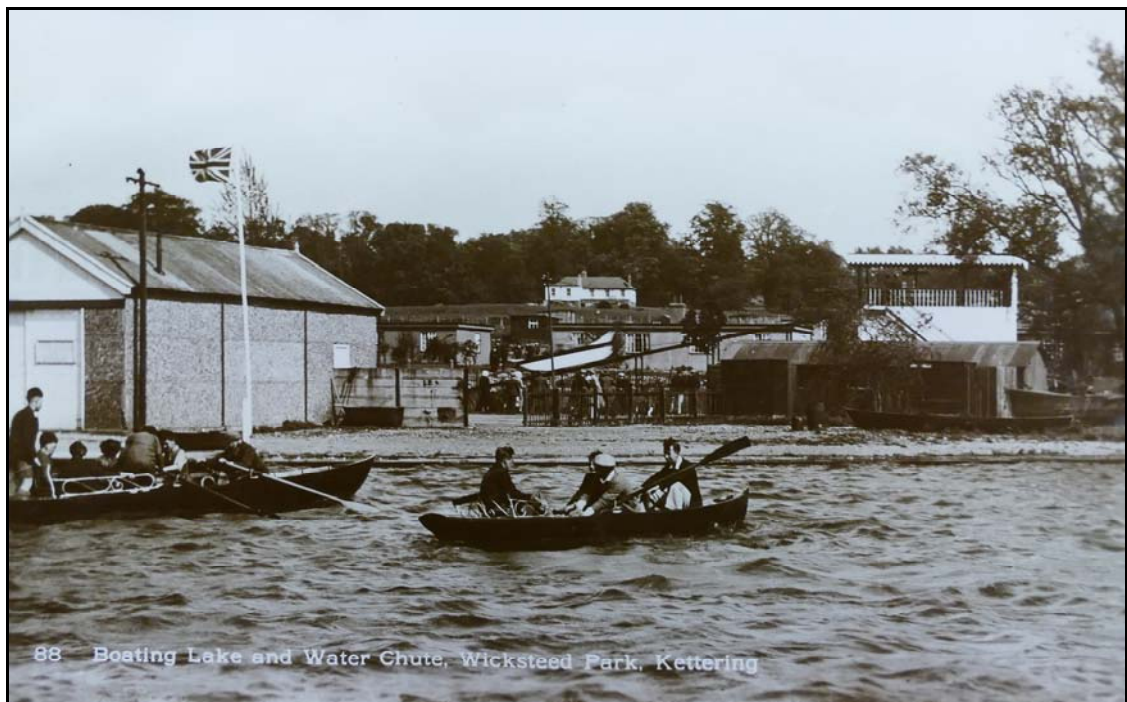
Ordnance Survey map of 1900, prior to the creation of the park, showing the future location of the lakes Fig 3



Ordnance Survey map of 1927, showing the lake and boathouse Fig 4



Undated photograph of the boathouse, showing sliding doors and adjacent shed (Ebay 2017) Fig 5



Undated view of the boathouse, showing a former door in the south elevation Fig 6

## 5 THE BOATHOUSE

The boathouse was a single-storey structure of three bays, positioned parallel to the lake's edge. It was a relatively simple and practical structure, well-suited to its original function. A number of smaller buildings were built against the rear of the boathouse. These were extant from the 1960s but are not depicted on Ordnance Survey mapping of the 1990s. A modern, single-storey, breeze-block shop extension was built against the north-east corner of the boathouse, with serving window and door facing to the north (Figs 12 & 13). A small shed was formerly located adjacent to the north-west corner of the boathouse and is visible on a historic photograph (Fig 5). This building is not shown on 1920s Ordnance Survey mapping (Fig 4). The Ordnance Survey map of 1968 (not reproduced) depicts an extension to the boathouse on its north-western corner; however it is depicted as being part of the building rather than a disconnected adjacent building. It is likely that the small shed seen on the historic photograph was replaced prior to 1968 with an extension which was demolished by the time of this survey. The external elevation in this area of the boathouse has a rough render which is different to the smoother render seen elsewhere (Fig 13).

The boathouse had a rectangular plan, measuring 15m x 12.8m, and was constructed primarily of precast concrete panels separated by steel I-section RSJs (Rolled Steel Joist) that supported the roof (Fig 29). The concrete panels were generally of an equal size, each measuring 2.5m x 1m (Fig 27). The boathouse walls were painted blue at the time of this survey, however it appears from historic photographs that the walls were initially unpainted and left their natural grey colour.

The boathouse had three large doorways, equally spaced across its west elevation, each with a roller door fully enclosing the openings (Figs 8 & 16). The doorways were square, each measuring 3m x 3m, with 100mm wooden jambs. The roller mechanisms were installed internally within the building and were manually operated by means of chains and cogwheels (Fig 17). The mechanisms were fixed to L-section beams attached to the jambs. The boathouse doorways were originally enclosed by wooden sliding doors which can be seen on a historic photograph of the building (Fig 5). These doors were in pairs, sliding outwards from the openings. It appears that the central door was mounted externally and the flanking doors were installed internally, in order to accommodate the openings of all three pairs.

Two blocked door openings were noted on the south elevation (Fig 29). One of these doors, blocked in brick, is visible on a historic photograph of the boathouse and formerly opened into an enclosure of the children's zoo area. It is unclear when this door ceased to be used and was blocked but it is likely to have been an original feature of the building. The second doorway in the same elevation is blocked with breeze blocks, with a short panel of brickwork adjacent (Fig 28). It is unknown when this door was functional. In the same elevation was an existing doorway, still open at the time of survey. A sliding door was located on the north elevation.

The roof, at the time of survey, was of corrugated metal sheets with large roof light panels on the northern side of each ridge. Metal sheets were installed in the roof valleys and at the ridges and gable edges. The gables were formed of wood cladding, painted in blue and white stripes. Decorative wood finials were located at each gable apex, at both the east and west ends of the roof.

The roof structure was comprised of king-post and braced trusses carried over timber plates supported at eaves level over the steel posts (Figs 24 & 25). These posts, I-section RSJs, are embedded in the walls and are free standing within the building, with steel beams spanning between them supporting the roof valleys and trusses (Fig 26).

Surviving timbers within the building suggest that there was formerly a loft platform spanning part of the building.

A brick chimney survived in the north-east corner of the boathouse and its tall flue is visible on a historic photograph of the building (Figs 5 & 18). No fire opening or fireplace was visible. The chimney stack had a rectangular section measuring 0.7m x 0.6m and was wider at the base. The floor of the north-eastern corner of the boathouse, a space measuring 3.5m x 4m, is raised 1" above the surrounding floor level (Fig 29).

Two rooms survived within the boathouse, both within the southern bay (Figs 19-23). A small room occupied the eastern end of the bay and possibly functioned as an office. The remainder of the bay comprised a single room, separated by the smaller room by a narrow passage which contained lockers. This room was perhaps used for boat maintenance and contained work benches, tools and paint tins. The internal walls were formed by timber beams between the RSJs, clad with wood planks. A historic photograph of building shows a chimney projecting from the roof of this room (Fig 6). Two rows of closely spaced supports, likely former oar-racks, projected from the north face of the interior wall of the larger room (Fig 19).

Due to the amount of internal damage, no other room partitions were evident during this survey.

## 6 DISCUSSION

The boathouse was a utilitarian structure, constructed of economical materials, and designed for practicality. This approach to construction was also noted in the Park's pre-fabricated bungalows which were commissioned by Wicksteed Park in the 1930s and which were subject to archaeological recording in 2005 (Upson-Smith 2005). The exterior walls of the bungalows were found to be of cement stucco on wire mesh, within a timber frame, in contrast to the boathouse where more solid, fully concrete panels were needed.

Much of the interior was gutted by fire; however enough of the layout and structure remained to generally reconstruct the interior space. The southern bay contained a small office and a larger maintenance room and workshop while the remainder of the building was utilised for storage. It is unclear if the north-eastern corner of the room was enclosed from this space. No original fixtures and fittings remained by the time of this survey, however the building may have been modernised internally prior to the fire. The most obvious modification to the building was the replacement of the original timber sliding doors with hand-operated steel roller doors.

While Gotch and Saunders, and Gotch, Saunders and Surrige were involved in the early planning of the park at the time of initial purchase of land, and designed a lodge and pavilion, it is unclear if the boathouse was built to their design. A rowing club house was designed in 1937 by Gotch, Saunders and Surrige for Wicksteed Park and was in some respects a similar design to the boathouse, though only one bay, with double sliding door in the gable elevation and wooden cladding to the walls (NRO Map 5528). No drawings for the boathouse could be located during the course of research for this project, however further research may yield more information on the building's origins.



The boathouse, looking south-east Fig 7



The west elevation Fig 8





The south elevation Fig 9



General view of the building, looking north Fig 10



The east elevation, showing scars of former lean-to buildings Fig 11



The small shop extension at the north-east corner of the boathouse Fig 12



The north elevation, looking south-east Fig 13



The interior, prior to clearing and making safe Fig 14



The interior, following clearing, looking north-west Fig 15



The north roller door Fig 16



Detail of door roller mechanism Fig 17



The north-east area of the boathouse, with chimney stack in the corner Fig 18



The north wall of the maintenance room, showing projecting supports Fig 19



The maintenance room, looking west Fig 20



The maintenance room, looking east Fig 21



The small office in the south-east corner of the boathouse Fig 22



The interior of the small office room Fig 23



Detail of the roof trusses Fig 24





Detail of RSJ supporting truss and wall plate Fig 25



RSJs and beams supporting the roof valleys Fig 26

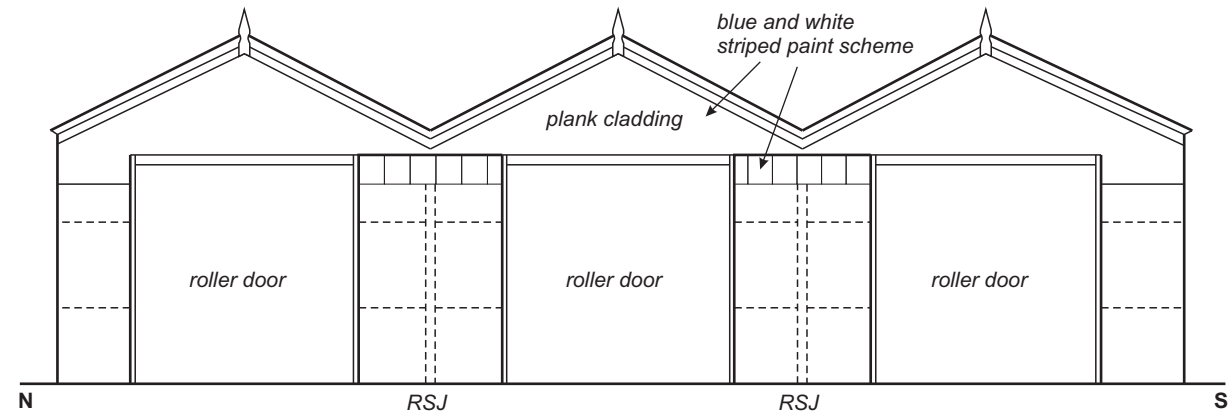


Detail of the concrete panel and steel beam construction Fig 27

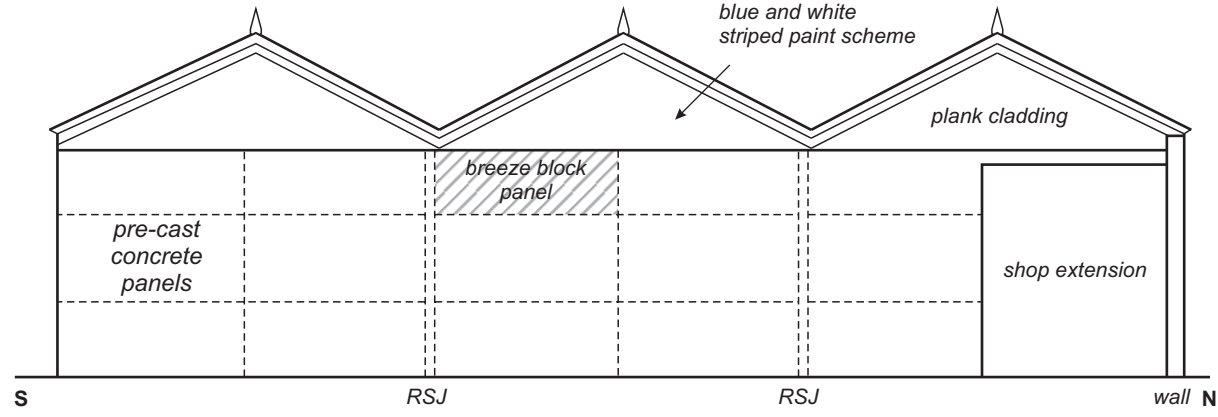


Breeze block and brick blocking of former door in the south elevation Fig 28

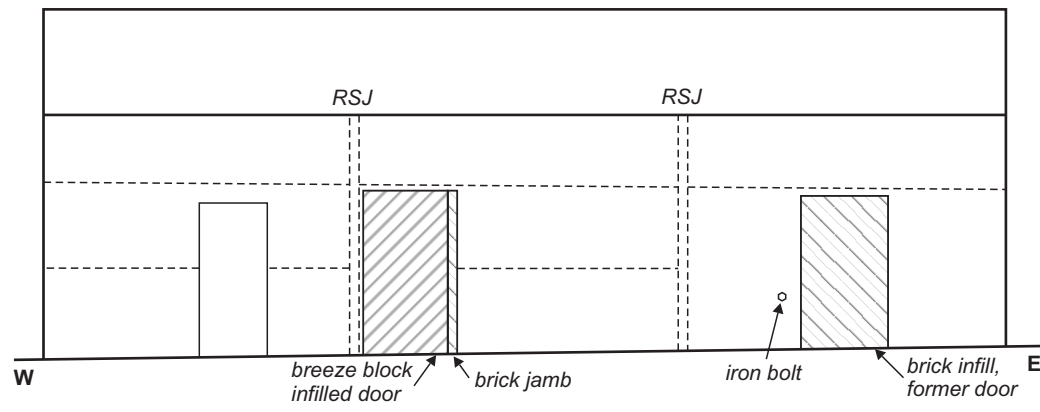
West elevation



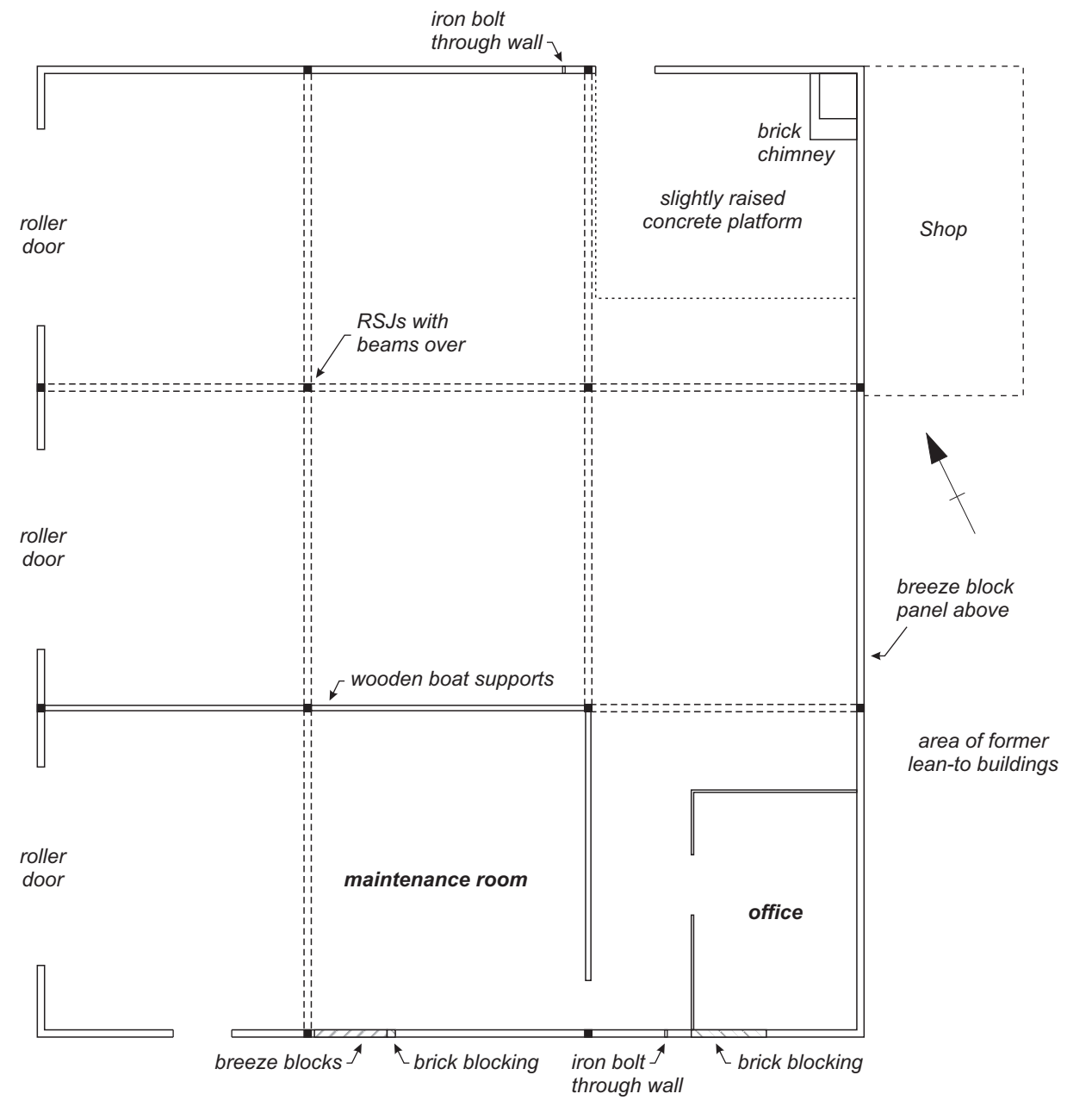
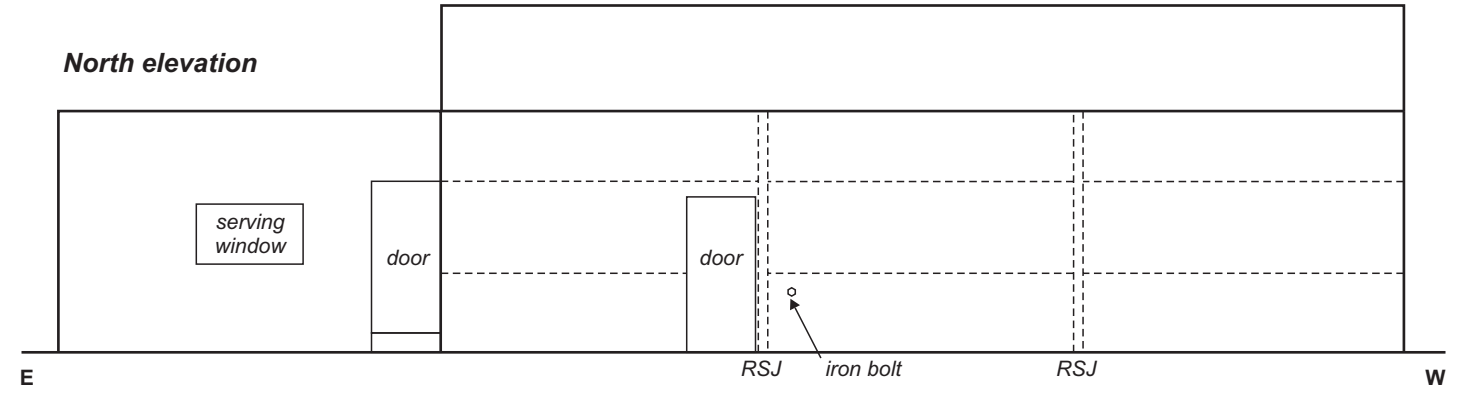
East elevation



South elevation



North elevation



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[accessed 12/5/17]

HE 2017 <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001524> [accessed 15/3/17]

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