

**Guildhall Feoffment Primary School
(HORSA Huts),
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk BSE 494
ESF23314**

Historic Building Record

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on behalf of
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Guildhall Feoffment Primary School (HORSA Huts), Bridewell Street, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

(TL 8552 6386)

Historic Building Record

This report provides a record and analysis at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of a school building in advance of demolition. It has been prepared to a specification issued on 26th October 2015 by Kate Batt of Suffolk County Council's Archaeological Service.

Introduction

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a full photographic record in the form of 76 Canon 5D digital images of 21 megapixels (Appendix 1), but also includes 16 printed photographs of key features to illustrate the text. Each image is described in a separate schedule and wherever possible includes a scale rod with half-metre divisions in red and white. The site was inspected on 21st December 2015.

Summary

The kitchen and dining hall at the Guildhall Feoffment School is a detached structure in the north-eastern corner of the yard and consists of two HORSA huts adjoining at right-angles. HORSA huts were designed in 1944 as an efficient and inexpensive means of expanding Britain's school buildings to accommodate the sudden increase in pupil numbers in the wake of Rab Butler's 1944 Education Act, which raised the leaving age from 14 to 15. Suspended due to the war, this was finally implemented in April 1947, and coincided with a national programme of construction known as the 'Hutting Operation for Raising the School Leaving Age' (HORSA). The pre-fabricated cement and asbestos structures were intended to be temporary but often survived for many decades, although they were notoriously difficult to insulate and unaltered examples are now rare. The precise date of their arrival in Bridewell Lane alongside Henry Kendall's Mock Gothic buildings of 1842 is uncertain, but they are likely to have been built between 1947 and 1950.

The easternmost hut adjoining the Lane has been considerably altered, with new internal ceilings and PVC windows, but its western counterpart is an exceptionally well preserved example of an increasingly rare building type. It retains most of its original fixtures and fittings, including a full complement of Crittall windows and two impressive sets of shelving consisting of concrete slabs supported by brick piers. These features offer a vivid insight into the utilitarian but durable nature of post-war school buildings, and into the simple but elegant architectural design of the period. The huts are accordingly of considerable historic interest despite the practical difficulties created for modern school managers by their thin walls and lack of roof insulation.

Documentary and Cartographic Evidence

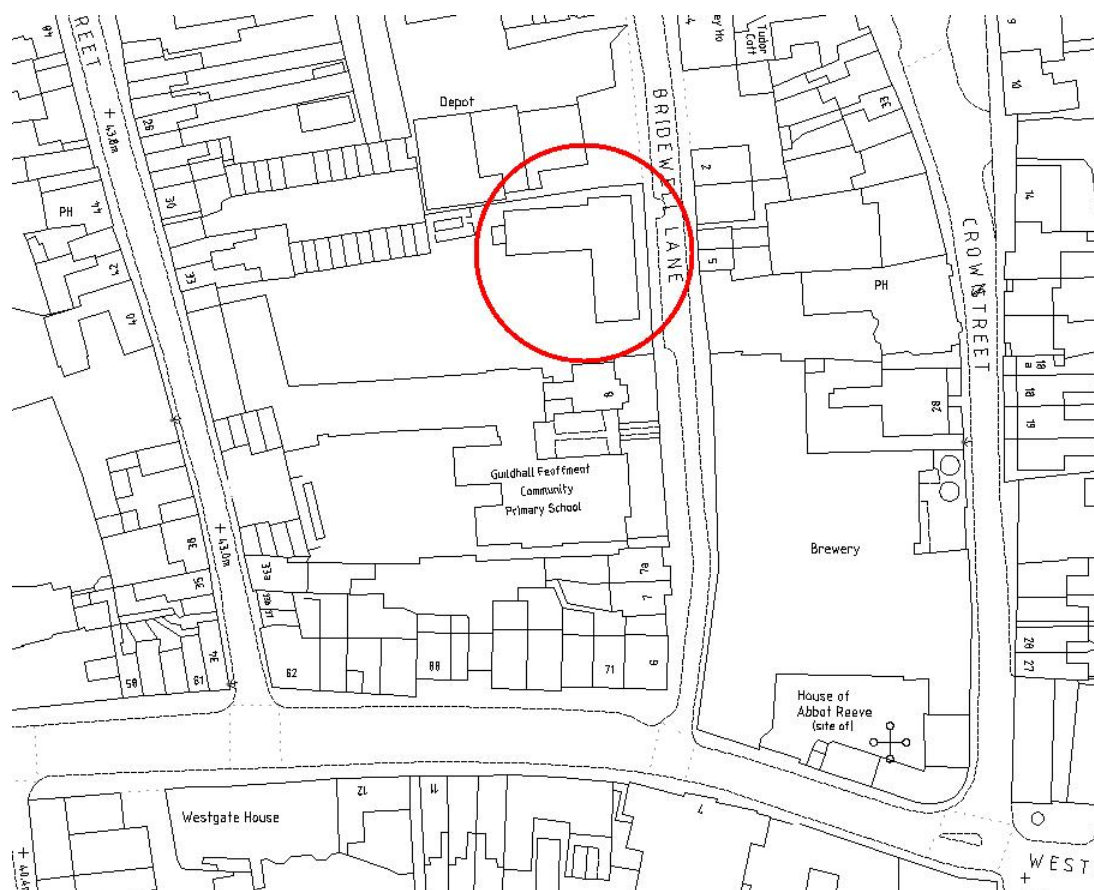


Figure 1
Current site plan showing the L-shaped range of HORSA huts in a red circle with the Victorian school buildings to the south and Bridewell Lane to the east.

HORSA huts were designed in 1944 as an efficient and inexpensive means of expanding Britain's school buildings to accommodate the sudden increase in pupil numbers in the wake of Rab Butler's 1944 Education Act, which raised the leaving age from 14 to 15 (Ministry of Works, *Standard Construction for Schools*, HMSO 1944). Suspended due to the war, this was finally implemented in April 1947, and coincided with a national programme of construction known as the 'Hutting Operation for Raising the School Leaving Age' (HORSA). The pre-fabricated cement and asbestos structures were intended to be temporary but often survived for many decades, although they were notoriously difficult to insulate and unaltered examples are now rare. Contemporary commentators described them as 'aesthetically revolting and a blot on the countryside', and there was much opposition to their sudden appearance in large numbers across the country (A.R. Maxwell-Hyslop, note, September 10 1945, Ministry of Education Paper, NA ED 150/23). The precise date of their arrival alongside Henry Kendall's Mock Gothic buildings of 1842 at the Guildhall Feoffment School is uncertain as the school records are not readily accessible in the Suffolk Record Office and the printed catalogue makes no reference to building accounts during the relevant period (SRO GB500 includes 'plans and papers re buildings c.1840-1938'). They are likely to have been built between 1947 and 1950, but may be slightly later, and currently operate as a dining hall, kitchen and a classroom for the 'Skylarks' breakfast, after-school and holiday club. The current headmistress of the school has no knowledge of any earlier purpose, but the kitchen may represent a later conversion.

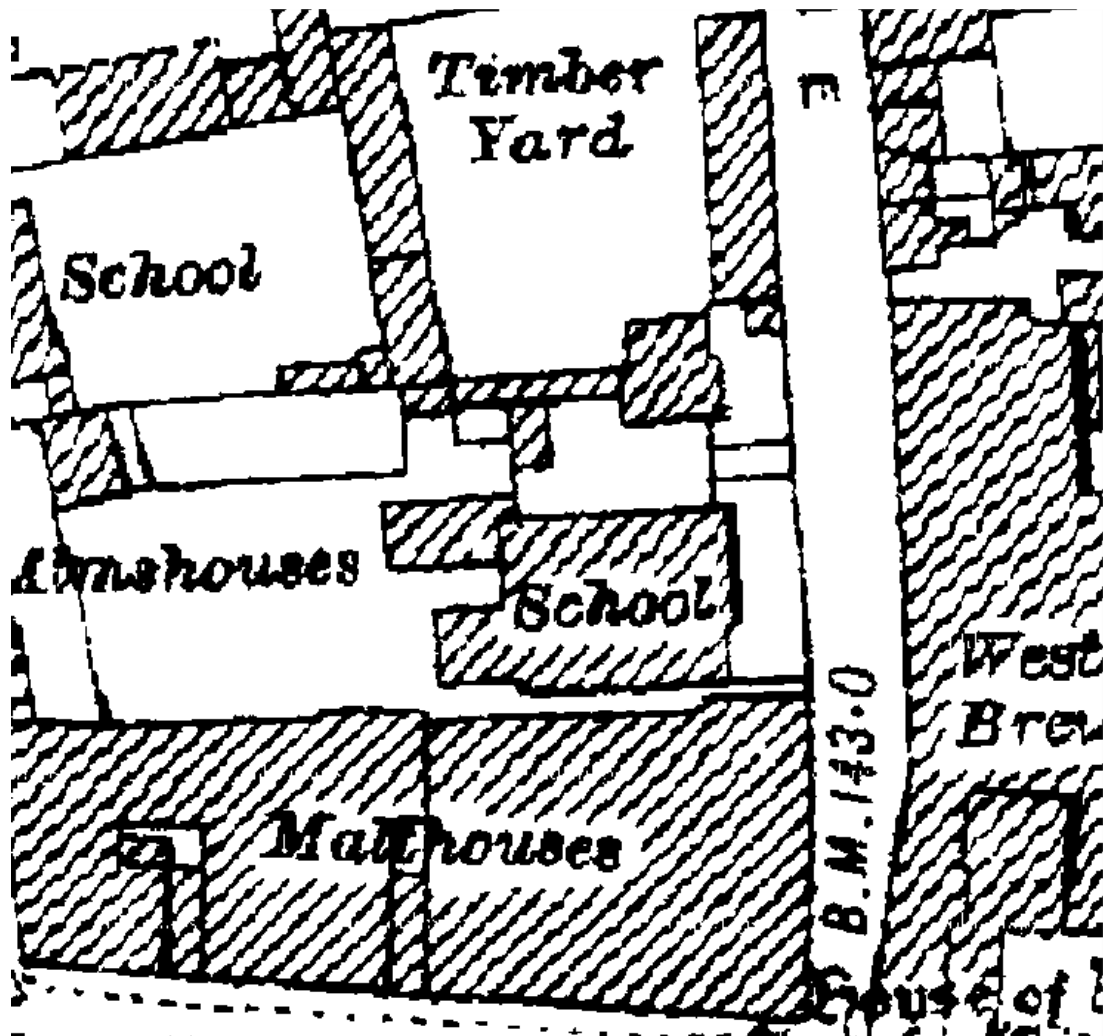


Figure 2
 The 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1926.
 The site of the HORSAs huts is occupied by a timber yard with a long range adjoining
 Bridewell Lane on the east from which the existing flint-rubble perimeter wall
 presumably survives.

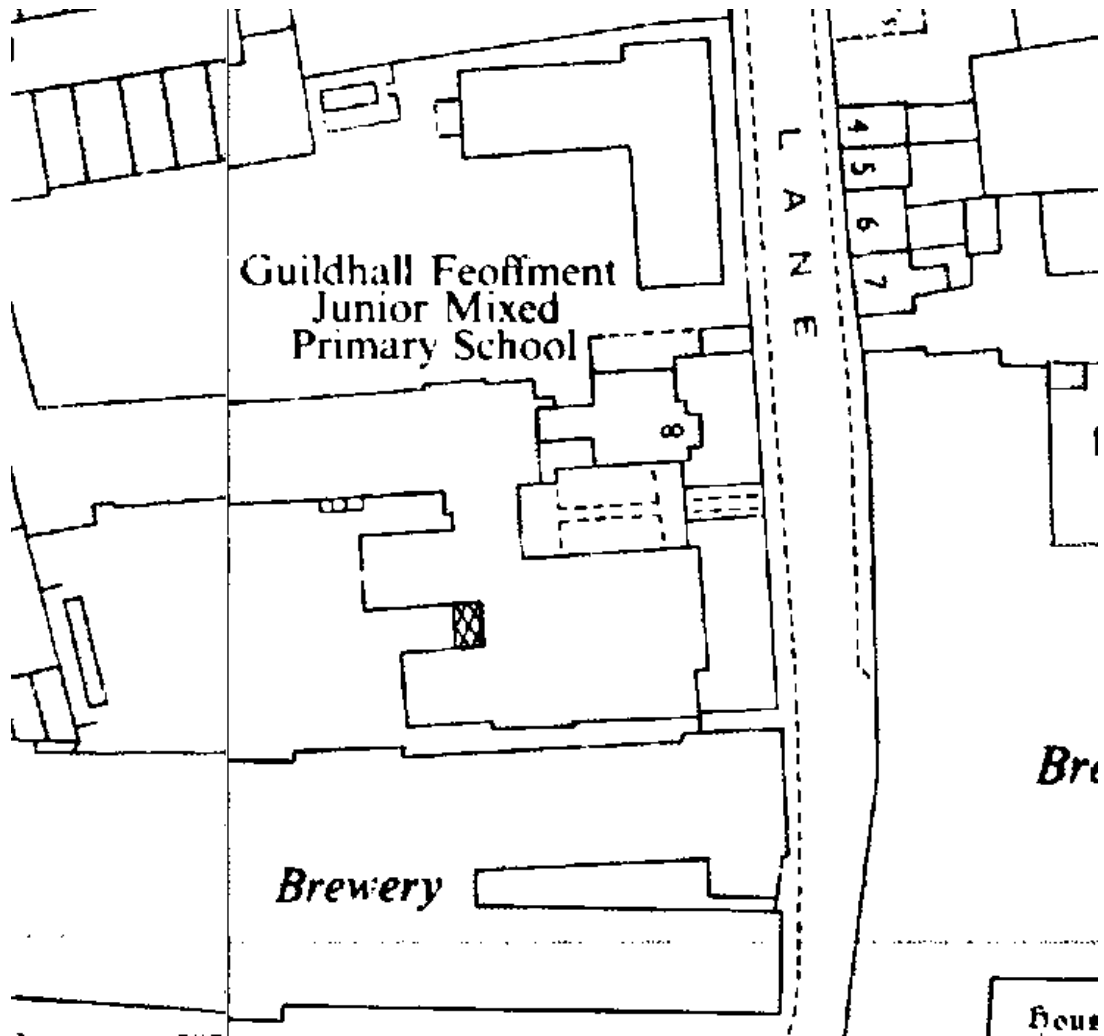


Figure 3
The 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1964.
The L-shaped range of huts is depicted precisely as it remains today in the north-eastern corner of the enlarged school yard.

Building Analysis

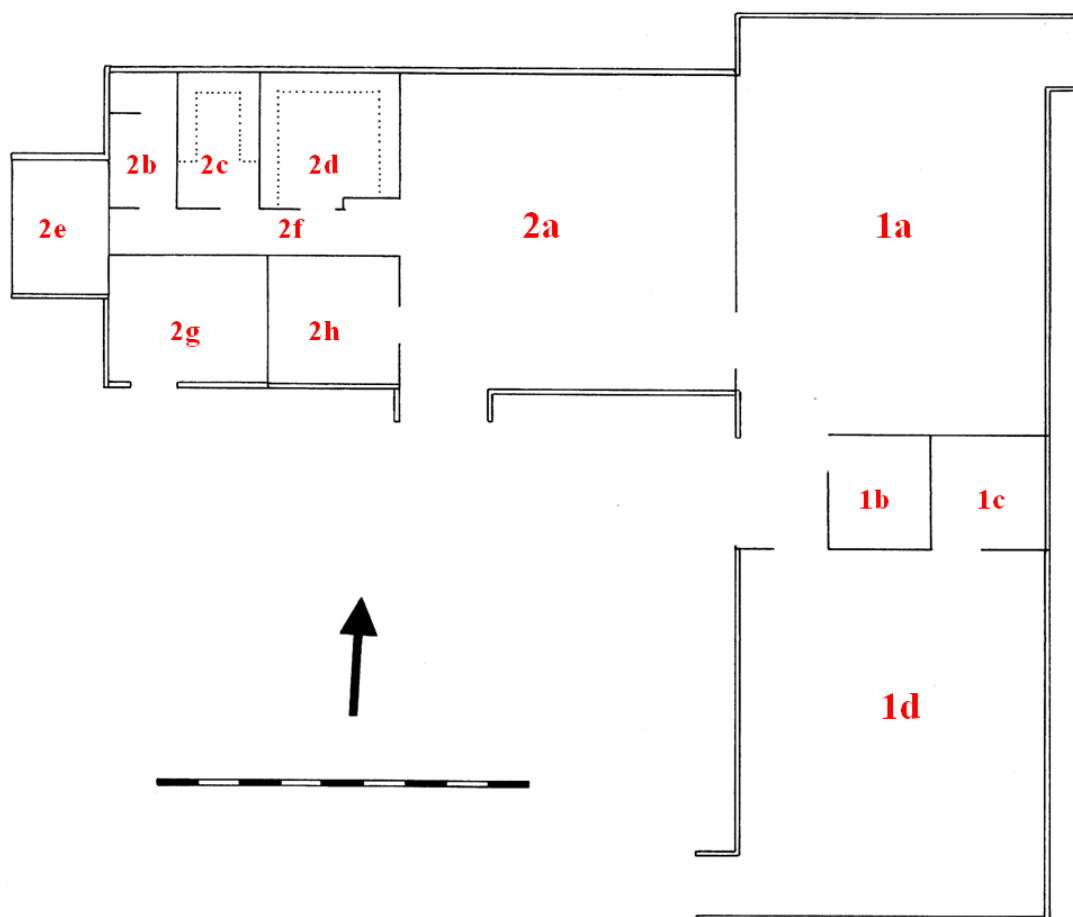


Figure 4
Ground plan of the hut complex identifying each compartment with a number for ease of reference in the text and photographic record. Scale in metres.

The complex consists of two HORSAs adjoining at right-angles as shown above, with the eastern range extending to 22 m on an approximately north-south axis and the western range to 15 m (72 ft and 49.5 ft respectively). The total span of each hut is 7.6 m (25 ft), with eaves of 2.3 m (7.5 ft) and an internal roof apex of 4 m (13 ft). The walls are of pre-cast concrete piers infilled with single bricks, and the roof of corrugated asbestos consists of chamfered concrete rafters linked to the wall piers by bolted concrete knee-braces. The well-preserved western range retains its original Crittall windows (illus. A2.4), but those of the eastern range are modern PVC replacements.

The eastern hut is now divided by late-20th century boarded partitions into a dining hall on the north (1a) and a classroom on the south (1d) with a small staff office (1b) and children's WC (1c) between the two. Both rooms contain inserted suspended ceilings but the original boarded ceiling survives above (A2.8). A pair of original entrance doors and a flat-roofed open porch survive at the northern end of the western elevation but the other doors of the eastern range are later replacements. The position of the entrance at the southern end of the western elevation is respected by an identical brick porch and appears to be original.

The western hut contains a kitchen which remains open to the original ceiling (2a) and is linked to the dining room by an internal door and three serving hatches. As these hatches respect the concrete wall piers and brackets it is unclear whether they are original features or later insertions. The double doors at the western end of the kitchen's southern wall are original, as are the doors of the various internal compartments at the western end of this hut (2b-2h). These compartments are divided by a narrow axial passage lit by a window in the western gable (2f), although the south-eastern store room (2h) is entered from the kitchen and the boiler room (2g) from the exterior. The north-western compartment forms a washroom and WC with its original cast iron cistern (2b), while the adjoining store rooms retain their original shelves of concrete slabs supported by utilitarian brick piers with exposed frogs (A2.13-15). An ostensibly original water tower abuts the western gable and consists of a tank supported by brick piers that have been enclosed by secondary wooden gates (A2.5).

Historic Significance

The HORSAs at the Guildhall Feoffment School are exceptionally well preserved examples of an increasingly rare building type that was never intended to survive. The western hut in particular retains most of its original fixtures and fittings, including two impressive sets of shelving consisting of concrete slabs supported by brick piers. These features offer a vivid insight into the utilitarian but durable nature of post-war school buildings, and into the simple but elegant architectural design of the period. The huts are accordingly of considerable historic interest despite the practical difficulties created by their thin walls and lack of roof insulation.

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Leigh Alston is a building archaeologist and architectural historian who lectures in the Department of Archaeology at Cambridge University but also undertakes commissions on a freelance basis for the National Trust and various county archaeological units. Publications include 'Late Medieval Workshops in East Anglia' in 'The Vernacular Workshop' edited by Paul Barnwell & Malcolm Airs (Council for British Archaeology and English Heritage, 2004) and the National Trust guidebook to Lavenham Guildhall (National Trust 2004).

Photographic Schedule and Appendix follows on pp. 7-19

Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record

Descriptions of Photographs in Appendix 1

Photograph no.

1. A general view from the south-west showing the HORSAs huts on the left and the entrance from Bridewell Street on the right.
2. A general view from the west showing the water tower (2e) adjoining the western hut (2) with the main school building to right.
3. A general view from Bridewell St to the south-east showing the eastern hut (1) behind the perimeter wall.
4. A general view from Bridewell Lane to the east showing the HORSAs hut on the right & Henry Kendall's building of 1842 to left.
5. A general view from Bridewell Lane to the north-east showing the corrugated asbestos roof & northern site entrance.
6. A general view from the west showing the proximity of the water tower (2e) on the right to the main school on the left.
7. The exterior from the south showing the modern veranda adjoining the eastern range (1) on the right.
8. The southern external gable of the eastern range (1) showing the outline of a blocked window in the roof gable.
9. The eastern exterior of the eastern hut (1) from the north showing its replaced PVC windows.
10. The flat-roofed open porch at the northern end of the eastern exterior of the eastern hut (1).
11. A detail of the original doors at the northern end of the eastern exterior of the eastern hut (1).
12. A detail of the northern gable of the eastern hut (1) showing the outline of a blocked window in the roof gable.
13. The northern end of the eastern range (1) from the west, showing its junction with the western range (2) on the right.
14. The northern exterior of the western range (2) showing its original Crittall windows and brick infill between concrete piers.
15. A detail of the original Crittall windows in the northern exterior of the western range (2).
16. The western gable of the western range showing the brick piers supporting a water tank (2e) with later wooden doors.

17. The western gable of the western range (2) showing the water tower (2e) with the eastern range (1) to the right.
18. The southern exterior of the western range (2) showing the original doors and porch to the kitchen (2a).
19. The southern junction of the two ranges showing the later classroom doors to right & original kitchen doors (2a) to left.
20. The interior from the south of the modern veranda showing the replaced PVC windows of the eastern range (1) on the right.
21. The western exterior of the eastern range (1) showing the open porch to the southern classroom (1d) on the right.
22. The southern classroom (1d) from the north showing the bolted pre-cast concrete knee-braces beneath the later ceiling.
23. The southern classroom (1d) from the south showing the bolted pre-cast concrete knee-braces beneath the later ceiling.
24. The original ceiling of the southern classroom (1d) from the north, showing the blocked window in the southern gable.
25. Interior from south of the inserted WC dividing the two classrooms (1c).
26. Interior from the west of the inserted office dividing the two classrooms (1b).
27. Western interior of the southern classroom (1d) showing external entrance with modern doors to left.
28. Detail from south of concrete bolted knee-brace in southern classroom (1d) partly hidden by later ceiling.
29. Eastern interior of the southern classroom (1d) showing door in secondary partition to WC (1c) on left.
30. Western interior of the dining hall (1a) showing external entrance to left and hatches adjoining kitchen (2a).
31. Detail of modern sign listing rules for life attached to western interior of dining hall (1a).
32. Eastern interior of the dining hall (1a) showing original northern doors to left and inserted ventilation grills.
33. Detail of secondary ventilation grill with sliding cover in eastern interior of dining hall (1a).
34. Detail from south of concrete bolted knee-brace in dining hall (1a) partly hidden by later ceiling.
35. The dining hall (1a) from the south showing the later ceiling and original concrete bolted knee-braces.

36. Western interior of the dining hall (1a) showing the serving hatches adjoining the kitchen (2a).
37. The dining hall (1a) from the north showing the later ceiling and original concrete bolted knee-braces.
38. The kitchen (2a) from the north showing the original height of the ceiling with the hatches adjoining the dining room (1a).
39. The kitchen (2a) from the east showing the bolted knee-braces of the original ceiling with the axial passage (2f) in the rear.
40. The kitchen (2a) from the west showing the hatches and door adjoining the dining room (1a).
41. The southern interior of the kitchen (2a) showing its original Crittall windows and doors.
42. The northern interior of the kitchen (2a) showing its original Crittall windows.
43. A detail from the east of an original pre-cast concrete bolted knee-brace in the dining hall (2a).
44. The well preserved northern interior of the kitchen (2a) showing its original windows and knee-braces.
45. A detail from the east of the ceiling structure in the kitchen (2a) showing its chamfered concrete rafters.
46. South-western corner of kitchen (2a) showing axial passage (2f) on right, door to store room (2h) in centre & entrance left.
47. Interior of original entrance doors in southern elevation of kitchen (2a).
48. Interior from west of store room (2h) showing original door to kitchen (2a).
49. Interior from east of store room (2h) showing original Crittall windows.
50. Detail of original door from store room (2h) to kitchen (2a).
51. Detail of original handle of door from store room (2h) to kitchen (2a).
52. Detail of original light switch to south of door from store room (2h) to kitchen (2a).
53. Interior from east of axial corridor showing doors to store rooms (2b-2d) on right.
54. Entrance to western wash room and WC (2b) from axial passage (2f) to south.
55. Original cistern of WC (2b) showing Crittall window of northern elevation to right.
56. Interior of western wash room and WC (2b) from north showing door to axial passage (2f).

57. Interior from south of central store room (2c) showing original brick shelving.
58. Western interior of central store room (2c) showing original brick shelving and northern Crittall window.
59. Eastern interior of central store room (2c) showing original brick shelving and northern Crittall window.
60. Northern interior of central store room (2c) showing original brick shelving and Crittall window.
61. Southern interior of central store room (2c) showing original brick shelving and door to axial passage (2f).
62. Northern interior of eastern store room (2d) showing original brick shelving and Crittall windows.
63. Eastern interior of eastern store room (2d) showing original brick shelving and northern Crittall window.
64. Western interior of eastern store room (2d) showing original brick shelving and door to axial passage (2f).
65. Southern interior of eastern store room (2d) showing original brick shelving and door to axial passage (2f).
66. Detail of original shelving of concrete slabs supported by brick piers to western interior of eastern store room (2d).
67. Detail of exposed frogs to brick piers supporting concrete slab shelving to western interior of eastern store room (2d).
68. Interior from south of boiler room (2g) showing brick wall of axial passage.
69. Interior from west of boiler room (2g) showing brick wall of adjoining store room (2h).
70. Interior from east of boiler room (2g) showing lagged tank with boiler and southern entrance door on left.
71. Southern interior of store room (2g) showing entrance door & exposed roof structure with corrugated asbestos.
72. Exposed original roof structure of store room (2g) from east, showing concrete rafter and softwood battens.
73. Interior from south of water tower (2e) showing window lighting axial passage (2f).
74. Boarded ceiling of water tower (2e) showing boarded ceiling, pipes descending from tank above & grill above axial passage (2f).
75. Interior from north of water tower (2e) showing recent wooden doors to right.

76. Interior from south of water tower (2e) showing window and ventilation grille of axial passage (2f) to right.

Photographic Appendix 2 follows on pp. 12-19

Appendix 2 (pp. 12-19): Selected Printed Photographs



Illus. 1. A general view of the site from Bridewell Lane to the north-east showing the corrugated asbestos roof of the eastern range (1) behind the flint-rubble perimeter wall. The original Mock Gothic school buildings designed by Henry Kendall in 1842 are visible in the rear to the left.



Illus. 2. The two adjoining huts from the south showing the modern veranda adjoining the eastern range (1) on the right and the water tower against the gable of the western range (2) on the left. The outline of a blocked original window is visible in the southern roof gable on the extreme right. The windows of the eastern range are modern PVC replacements but the original Crittall windows survive in the western hut.



Illus. 3. The eastern exterior of the eastern hut (1) seen from the north with the perimeter wall adjoining Bridewell Lane on the left. The wall fabric of pre-cast concrete piers infilled with brick is original but the PVC windows are recent replacements.



Illus. 4. The northern exterior of the western range (2) showing its largely unaltered appearance with a full complement of original Crittall windows. Its junction with the eastern range is visible on the left.



Illus. 5. The brick piers supporting a water tank adjoining the western gable (2e) with the main school building visible to the right. The wooden doors are recent insertions and the piers were formerly open to the yard.



Illus. 6. The southern junction of the two ranges showing the later doors to the dining hall (1a) on the right and the original doors to the kitchen (2a) on the left.



Illus. 7. The southern classroom (1d) from the north showing the original bolted pre-cast concrete knee-braces beneath the later ceiling.



Illus. 8. The original ceiling of the southern classroom (1d) above the present suspended ceiling seen from the north, showing the blocked window in the southern gable. The chamfered principal rafters are of pre-cast concrete and the corrugated asbestos is hidden above nailed boarding.



Illus. 9. The dining hall (1a) from the north showing the later ceiling and original concrete bolted knee-braces. The serving hatches adjoining the kitchen (2a) on the right are divided by the original concrete piers.



Illus. 10. The kitchen (2a) from the east, showing the original height of the ceiling with concrete principal rafters and bolted knee-braces. The axial passage (2f) is visible in the rear.



Illus. 11. The kitchen (2a) from the west showing the serving hatches and the original door adjoining the dining room (1a).



Illus. 12. The south-western corner of the kitchen (2a) showing the axial passage (2f) on the right, the door to the store room (2h) in the centre and the original entrance doors on the left.



Illus. 13. The interior from the axial passage to the south of the narrow central store room (2c) showing its original door and brick shelving.



Illus. 14. The eastern store room (2d) from the north showing its original brick shelving and the door to the axial passage (2f).



Illus. 15. A detail of the exposed frogs in the brick piers supporting the original shelves of concrete slabs against the western wall of the eastern store room (2d).



Illus. 16. The southern internal wall of the boiler room (2g) showing its external entrance door and exposed roof structure. The softwood battens supporting the corrugated asbestos are attached to concrete rafters which are linked to the wall piers by bolted knee-braces of pre-cast concrete.

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