

The Boat House, Bitterne Park Triangle, Cobden Avenue, Southampton

Historic Building Record





Wessex Archaeology

**THE BOAT HOUSE
BITTERNE PARK TRIANGLE
COBDEN AVENUE
SOUTHAMPTON**

Historic Building Record

Prepared for:

CgMs Consulting
Morley House
26 Holborn Viaduct
London
EC1A 2AT

On behalf of

McCarthy & Stone Retirement Lifestyles Ltd
26-32 Oxford Road,
Bournemouth,
Dorset,
BH8 8EZ

By

Wessex Archaeology
Portway House
Old Sarum Park
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP4 6EB

SOU1608

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SUMMARY

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs on behalf of McCarthy & Stone to carry out a programme of historic building recording in advance of redevelopment works at the Boat House, Bitterne Park Triangle, Cobden Avenue, Southampton. The Site is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) 443900 114030.

The Site is to be redeveloped comprising the demolition of the existing buildings followed by the construction of a block of flats for the elderly with associated car parking and access. In addition, the proposed development will include the construction of a public River Footway.

Historic building recording was required as a condition of the planning permission granted by Southampton City Council (Planning Reference 10/01041/FUL). A record of the building was made commensurate with an enhanced *Level 1* as defined by the English Heritage guidance document *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006). The building recording was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which was agreed in advance by the Planning Archaeologist of Southampton City Council.

Cartographic evidence has established that the Site lay undeveloped on the east bank of the River Itchen until the late 1930s, when the land was reclaimed and a Boat House and two terraced properties (numbers 1 and 2 Whitworth Road) were constructed on the Site. Proposed plans of the Boat House survive dating to April 1937, indicating that the property was constructed shortly after this date, although there are slight differences between the plans and the present building with regard to window openings and the layout of the Loft floor.

Around the same time as the Boat House was constructed there appears to have been an expansion in the boat building industry in the vicinity of Cobden Bridge with a larger boat house depicted to the south of the Site in the 1933-1946 map. This was followed by two more boat houses on the west side of the river along with numerous landing stages and slipways by the time of the 1948-1949 map.

An examination of the Boat House has indicated that the building was constructed in two phases with the main Boat House built during the late 1930s with a small extension over an existing open yard situated at the eastern end of the building occurring by 1954.

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The building recording, photography and reporting was carried out by Matt Rous AlfA. The illustrations were prepared by Elizabeth James. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Richard Greatorex MlfA.

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Historic Building Record

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by CgMs consulting on behalf of McCarthy & Stone Retirement Lifestyles Ltd to carry out a programme of historic building recording in advance of redevelopment works at The Boat House, Bitterne Park Triangle, Cobden Avenue, Southampton (hereafter 'the Site'), centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) 443900 114030 (**Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The Site is to be redeveloped comprising the demolition of the existing buildings followed by the construction of a block of flats for the elderly with associated car parking and access. In addition, the proposed development will include the construction of a public River Footway. The building recording was required as a condition of the planning permission granted by Southampton City Council (Planning Reference 10/01041/FUL).
- 1.1.3 The Planning Archaeologist of Southampton City Council has identified that the building should be recorded to a level of detail commensurate with an enhanced *Level 1* standard as defined by the English Heritage guidance document *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006).
- 1.1.4 The building recording was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which was agreed in advance by the Planning Archaeologist of Southampton City Council (Wessex Archaeology 2010).

1.2 Site Location

- 1.2.1 The Site is situated within the Bitterne Park area of north central Southampton, Hampshire. It occupies c. 0.4ha in extent and is bounded to the south by Riverdene Place, to the west by mud flats of the River Itchen, to the north by Cobden Bridge and to the east by Whitworth Crescent (**Figure 1**). The Site comprises a bridge embankment, a Boat House, two terraced properties, a slipway and a car park.

2 METHODS

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The purpose of the building record was to provide a better understanding of the early form and function of the Boat House, and to provide a long-term archive record of the building as it currently survives, which will be deposited

in a publicly-accessible archive where it will be available for consultation by future researchers. This was to be achieved by a single Site visit where photography was principally used to make a record of the building.

2.2 Documentary Research

- 2.2.1 The documentary research for the report relies solely upon a previous map regression exercise and historical research, which is included in the Desk-based Assessment *The Boat House, Cobden Avenue, Southampton, Archaeological Desk-based Assessment* (CgMs 2009).
- 2.2.2 A list of relevant maps and plans consulted in this report is provided in the **References** section.

2.3 Site Visit

- 2.3.1 The Site was visited out on 3rd November 2010. The building was recorded to an enhanced *Level 1* standard, as set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage 2006).

Photography

- 2.3.2 A photographic record of the building (comprising 35mm black and white film and digital formats), was made using a Canon EOS 600 film camera and Canon 5D digital camera (with 12 megapixel capability).
- 2.3.3 During the Site visit, some 105 high-quality digital images were taken in addition to 36 black and white photographs. These mainly concentrated on the principal external and internal elevations areas but also included all relevant details. The building was also photographed within its setting to achieve a general impression of the Site at the time of recording.
- 2.3.4 A selection of photographs from the full photographic archive has been reproduced in this report (**Plates 1 - 15**). **Figures 4-5** show the location and direction of many of these plates.

Drawn record

- 2.3.5 No measured survey of the building was proposed. Surviving architects drawings for the building dating from April 1937 have been supplied by the client and are presented in **Figures 3-5**. The drawings include plans of the Upper Ground floor and Loft floor although no floor plan exists of the Lower Ground floor. Although mostly correct, the proposed drawings differ slightly from the existing building and do not show the later extension of the eastern part of the building which took place sometime before 1950.

3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 A study of the available historic mapping shows no structures in the vicinity of the Site until 1897 when the adjacent Whitworth Road (later Whitworth Crescent) and Cobden Bridge had been constructed. The 1897 Ordnance Survey map (not reproduced) shows the embankment for the bridge (marked as hashers) within the northern part of the Site. Prior to this the Site

was unoccupied, and is denoted as *Liable to Floods* in the 1897 Ordnance Survey map.

- 3.1.2 The 1909 Ordnance Survey map shows that a landing stage had been constructed along the alignment of the southern boundary of the Site. The trees situated within the eastern part of the Site had been removed and an access route from Whitworth Crescent to the landing stage had been constructed.
- 3.1.3 Ordnance Survey mapping dating from 1933-1944 shows that the Site had been reclaimed and the Boat House constructed at the northern extent of the Site. A smaller rectangular building is situated at the eastern end of the Site with two small terraced houses (numbers 1 and 2 Whitworth Crescent) constructed to the north (**Figure 2**).
- 3.1.4 Proposed plans of the Boat House survive dating to April 1937, indicating that the property was constructed shortly after this date (**Figures 3-5**). The drawings differ slightly from the present building with regard to the number of window openings and in addition do not show the Lower Ground floor workshop.
- 3.1.5 Around the same time as the Boat House was being constructed there appears to have been an expansion in the boat building industry in the vicinity of Cobden Bridge with a larger boat house depicted to the south of the Site in the 1933-1946 map (**Figure 2**). This was followed by two more boat houses on the west side of the river along with numerous landing stages and slipways by the time of the 1950 map (**Figure 2**).
- 3.1.6 The 1950 Ordnance Survey map shows that the eastern end of the building has been slightly extended by this time so that it now occupied the whole footprint of the building (**Figure 2**). Subsequent historic mapping reveals no apparent change to the building.

4 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 At the time of survey the property had lain empty for a number of years and the windows and doors had been removed following the soft-stripping of the interior with little evidence remaining of the original fixtures and fittings or decorative scheme. The property appeared to be in a state of advanced dereliction.

4.2 Exterior

- 4.2.1 The Boat House comprises a large roughly rectilinear structure orientated east-west along its long axis (**Figure 3**). The building consists of three floors, although due to the steeply sloping nature of the embankment upon which the building sits, the building is divided into an Upper and Lower Ground floor with Loft floor above. The Upper Ground floor roughly corresponds with street level and is occupied by former offices (**Plate 1**). A large open workshop is situated at Lower Ground floor level (**Plate 2**).

- 4.2.2 Although principally rectangular in plan the eastern end of the building is slightly irregular. A covered north-south orientated passageway leading from the north connects the eastern end of the building with Whitworth Crescent at Upper Ground floor level.

Lower Ground floor

- 4.2.3 The Lower Ground floor of the building is constructed from a simple rectangular steel frame of I-profile posts and girders comprising eight bays with reinforced concrete walls and concrete roof deck. The steel frame extends up through the upper floors. The floor is illuminated by large multi-light steel-framed windows situated on the north, south and west elevations (**Plate 3**). Access into the building is via a large open doorway situated on the south side of the west elevation (**Plate 2**) originally occupied by a slipway sloping down into the river. In recent years the slipway has been blocked with earth and demolition debris.

Upper Ground floor

- 4.2.4 Above the level of the boat shed, the Upper Ground floor is constructed from red brick in stretcher bond comprising a 13" cavity wall pierced by numerous rectangular window openings with moulded concrete sills and lintels on the north, south and west elevations (**Plate 4**). The offices are surrounded on the north, south and west sides by a wide concrete walkway comprising the roof deck of the workshop below, which is protected by reinforced concrete walls (**Plate 5**). Access out onto the walkway is via an entrance on the north elevation.

Loft floor

- 4.2.5 The Loft floor occupies most of the area above the Upper Ground floor although it extends outwards over the walkway to the north and south supported by steel stanchions encased in concrete. The pitched roof above is clad in plain red tile and gabled on the east and west elevations with hung tile clad walls. The Loft floor is illuminated by timber framed windows situated on the east and west gable walls and from gabled dormer windows situated within the north and south roof slopes.

4.3 Interior

Lower Ground floor

- 4.3.1 The Lower Ground floor essentially consists of a large open space of eight bays constructed from a simple rectangular steel frame of I-profile posts and girders supporting a concrete roof deck with concrete floor below (**Plate 6**). Evidence for former boat building activity can be seen from the steel running rails embedded within the floor on the southern side of the workshop with the south-western corner of the building sloping down towards the former slipway (**Plate 7**). In addition, two remnant 'MORRIS' hand chain hoists are still *in situ* fastened to existing girders (**Plate 8**).
- 4.3.2 Two rectangular stores are situated at the eastern end of the Lower Ground floor running under the adjacent terraced properties of numbers 1 and 2 Whitworth Crescent and connected via a central passageway. The rooms

are plain comprising painted brickwork and concrete floors (**Plate 9**). In addition, a single brick toilet cubicle is situated at the eastern end of the workshop adjacent to the remains of a straight flight staircase on the northern wall which formerly provided access to the Upper Ground floor.

Upper Ground floor

- 4.3.3 The interior of the Upper Ground floor is simple with the main part of the building divided up into offices situated either side of a central east-west orientated corridor with small northern spur leading to a doorway situated on the north elevation (**Plate 10**). Little can be said of the decoration within the Upper Ground floor as the building has been soft-stripped some time ago (**Plate 11**). Low brick sleeper walls topped with slate damp-proofing are set on the concrete deck which would have originally supported timber floor joists. Where the building has been derelict for some time, water penetration has caused the gypsum board ceilings to come down revealing softwood timber joists, boxed in steel girders and the floorboards of the Loft above.
- 4.3.4 The individual rooms are almost identically plain and uninteresting with the exception of the Toilets which feature two-tone enamel tiled walls to 1.4m in height (**Plate 12**).
- 4.3.5 At the eastern end of the building is the mid-20th century extension, which extended the Upper Ground floor over an area which is shown as 'Open Yard' in the 1937 proposed plans for the building (**Figure 4**). Initially this yard comprised the concrete roof deck of the Lower Ground floor workshop. This extension comprises a large open space with walls constructed from concrete blockwork (**Plate 13**). Here also low brick sleeper walls are present topped with a damp-proof membrane set on the concrete deck. The flat roof above is supported by boxed-in lightweight steel girders. To the north of the extension is the main entrance vestibule accessed via the covered way on Whitworth Crescent with double-door entrance situated on the north wall (**Plate 14**). Adjacent to the entrance is a straight flight staircase which provides access to the Loft floor replacing the original staircase shown in the 1937 proposed Loft floor plan (**Figure 5**).

Loft floor

- 4.3.6 Due to health and safety concerns access to the Loft floor was not possible during the Site visit. The poor condition of the building meant that the structural integrity of the floor joists could not be assured.
- 4.3.7 Despite this, a brief examination of the floor was possible from the top of the straight flight staircase leading up from the Upper Ground floor. This showed a single large open space made up of series of regularly spaced trusses comprising bolted steel frames to collar height with a softwood timber roof frame above (**Plate 15**).

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Development of the Boat House

- 5.1.1 Cartographic evidence has established that the Site lay undeveloped on the east bank of the River Itchen until the late 1930s, when the land was reclaimed and a Boat House and two terraced properties (numbers 1 and 2 Whitworth Road) were constructed on the Site. Proposed plans of the Boat House survive dating to April 1937, indicating that the property was constructed shortly after this date, although there are slight differences between the plans and the present building with regard to window openings and the layout of the Loft floor.
- 5.1.2 An examination of the Boat House has indicated that the building was constructed in two phases with the main Boat House constructed during the late 1930s followed by a small extension at the eastern end of the building over an existing open yard, which occurred by 1950.
- 5.1.3 The Boat House appears to have been constructed during a time of expansion in the boat building industry in the vicinity of Cobden Bridge with a larger boat house depicted to the south of the Site in the 1933-1946 map. This was followed by two more boat houses on the west side of the river along with numerous landing stages and slipways by the time of the 1950 map. The relative increase in these small boat houses during the late 1930s-1940s might suggest that they were associated with the production of small patrol craft or landing craft during WWII.

6 REFERENCES

Secondary sources

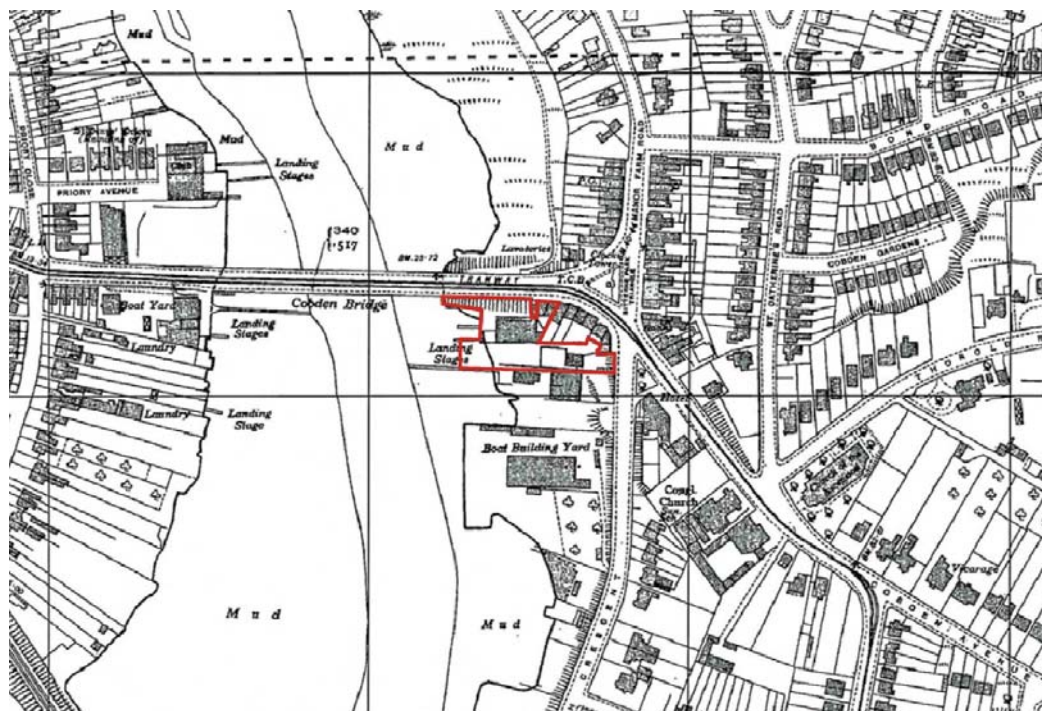
CgMs Consulting, 2009: *The Boat House, Cobden Avenue, Southampton, Archaeological Desk Based Assessment*, CgMs Ref: no RB/SD/8519

English Heritage, 2006: *Understanding Historic Buildings, A guide to good recording practice*, 1st Edition, English Heritage

Wessex Archaeology, 2010: *The Boat House, Cobden Avenue, Southampton, Written Scheme of Investigation for a Bore Hole Survey and Level 1 Historic Building Survey*, WA Ref: no.T14177.01

Cartographic sources


Year	Name	Scale	Seen	Reproduced
1897	Ordnance Survey	25" : 1 mile	Yes	No
1909	Ordnance Survey	25" : 1 mile	Yes	No
1933-46	Ordnance Survey	25" : 1 mile	Yes	Yes
1950	Ordnance Survey	1:2500	Yes	Yes



1933-46 Ordnance Survey map 25" : 1 mile



1950 Ordnance Survey map 25" : 1 mile

 Site boundary

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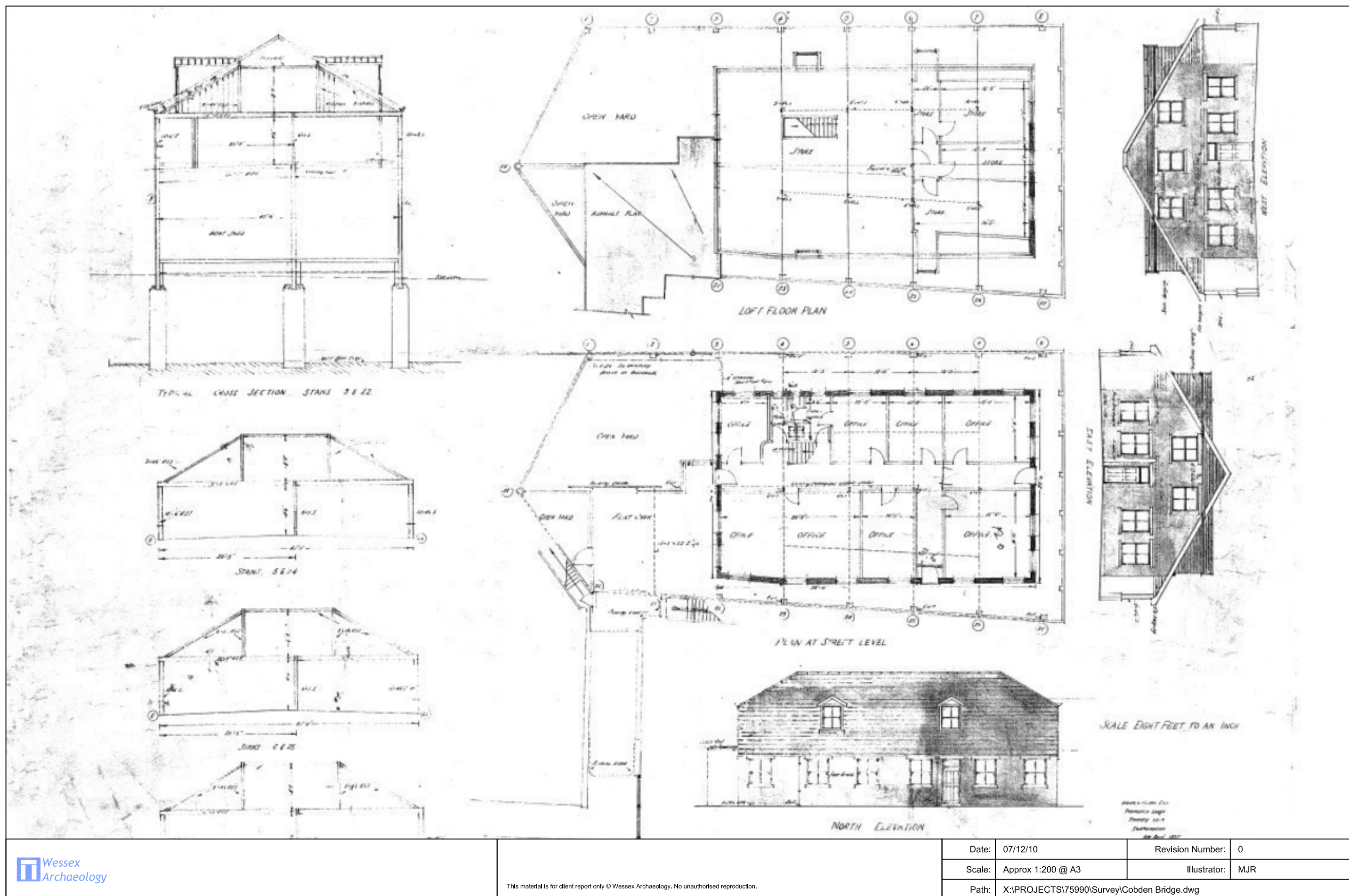
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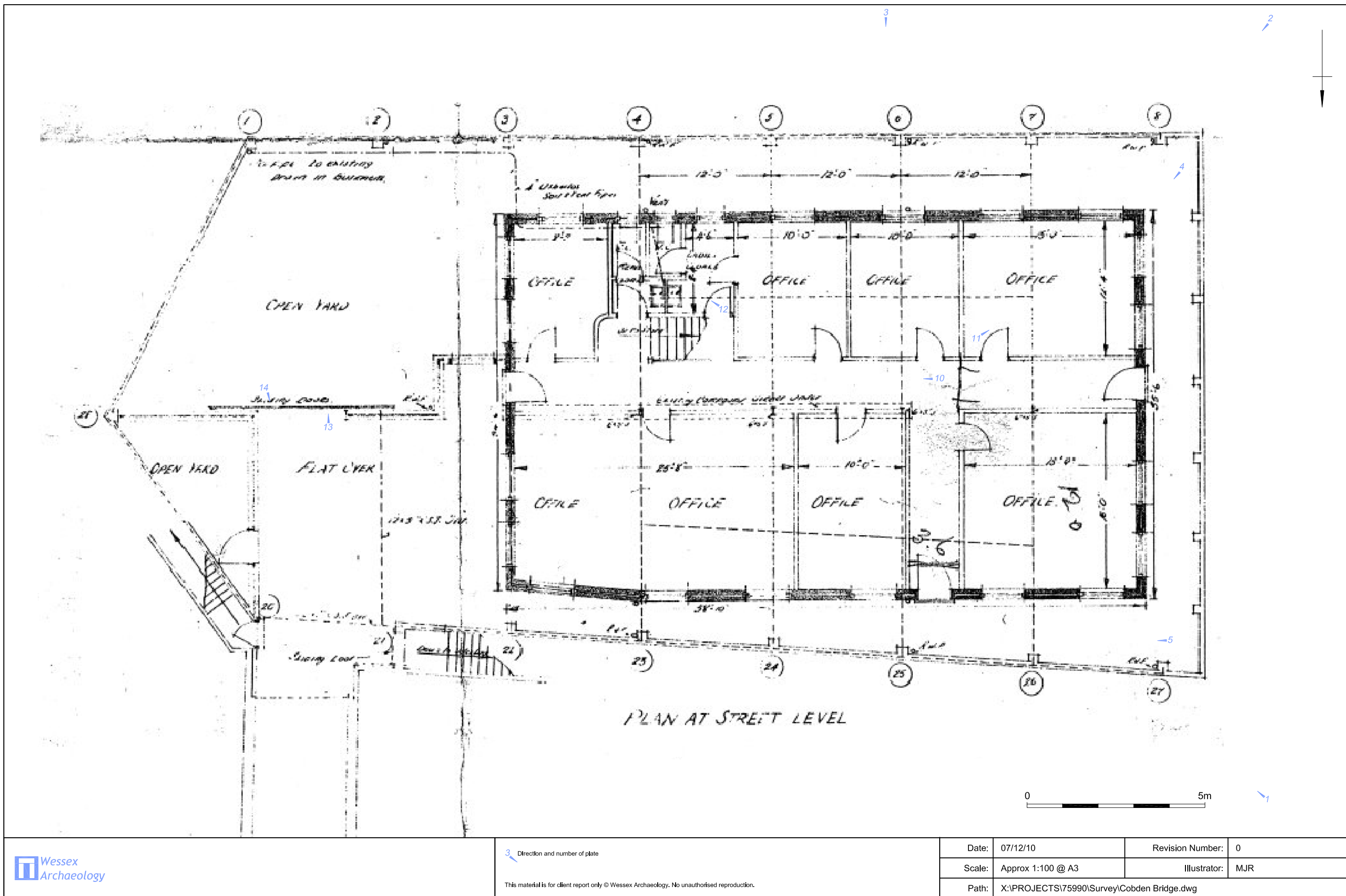
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Proposed drawings for Offices and Stores dating from April 1937

Figure 3



Proposed plans for Upper Ground floor

Figure 4

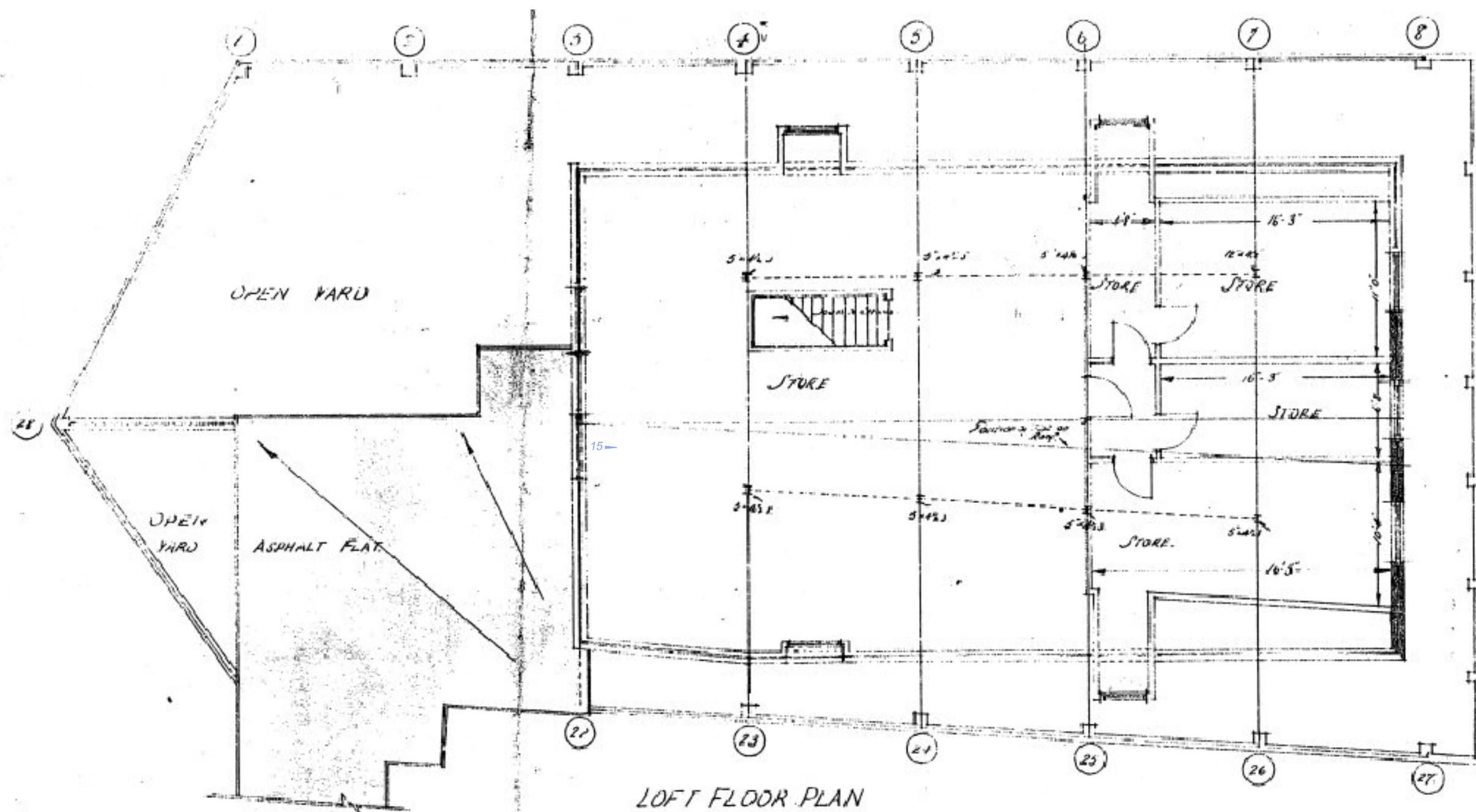




Plate 1: The Boat House viewed from the north-west



Plate 2: The Boat House viewed from the south-west



Plate 3: The Boat House viewed from the south



Plate 4: Exterior of the Upper Ground Floor



Plate 5: Exterior walkway on the Upper Ground Floor



Plate 6: Lower Ground Floor workshop



Plate 7: Steel running rails leading down towards the former slipway



Plate 8: Remnant hand chain hoist



Plate 9: Subterranean store situated at the eastern end of the workshop



Plate 10: Central corridor viewed from the west



Plate 11: Typical office viewed from the south-west



Plate 12: Toilets viewed from the north

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Plate 13: Mid 20th century extension

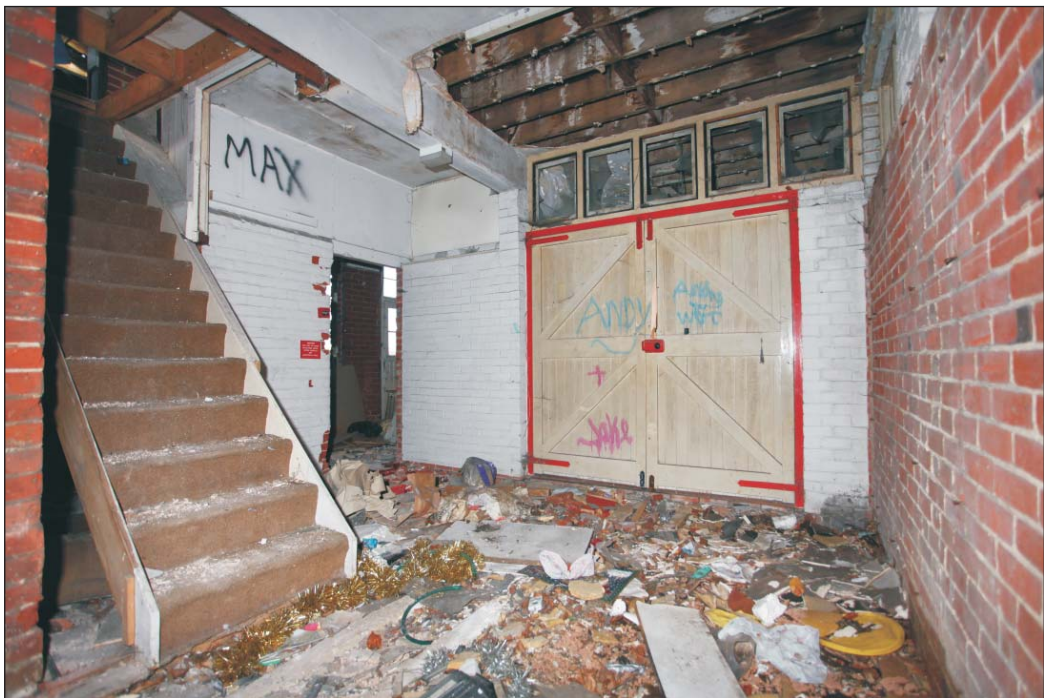


Plate 14: Main entrance vestibule viewed from the north

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Plate 15: Loft floor viewed from the west

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WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED.

Registered Head Office: Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk

Regional offices in **Edinburgh, Rochester and Sheffield**

For more information visit www.wessexarch.co.uk



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