

**20 Pine Trees Avenue,  
Mildenhall,  
Suffolk  
MNL 621**

## **Historic Building Record**

Suffolkc1-64646



**Leigh Alston MA (Oxon), Architectural Historian**  
*on behalf of*  
**Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service**

**The Archaeological Service  
(Field Projects Team)  
Suffolk County Council, Shire Hall  
Bury St Edmunds IP33 2AR  
Tel. (01284) 352446**

**July 2009**

**20 Pine Trees Avenue,  
Mildenhall,  
Suffolk,**

**(TL 7202 7461)**

## **Historic Building Record**

*This report provides a written and photographic record at English Heritage (2006) Level 2 of an historic railway carriage converted into a bungalow. It has been prepared to a brief written by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service (Dr Jess Tipper, dated 7 April 2009, Ref. /20PineTreesAvenue-Mildenhall2008) and is intended to fulfil a condition of planning permission for demolition (Forest Heath District Council application F/2008/0431/OUT).*

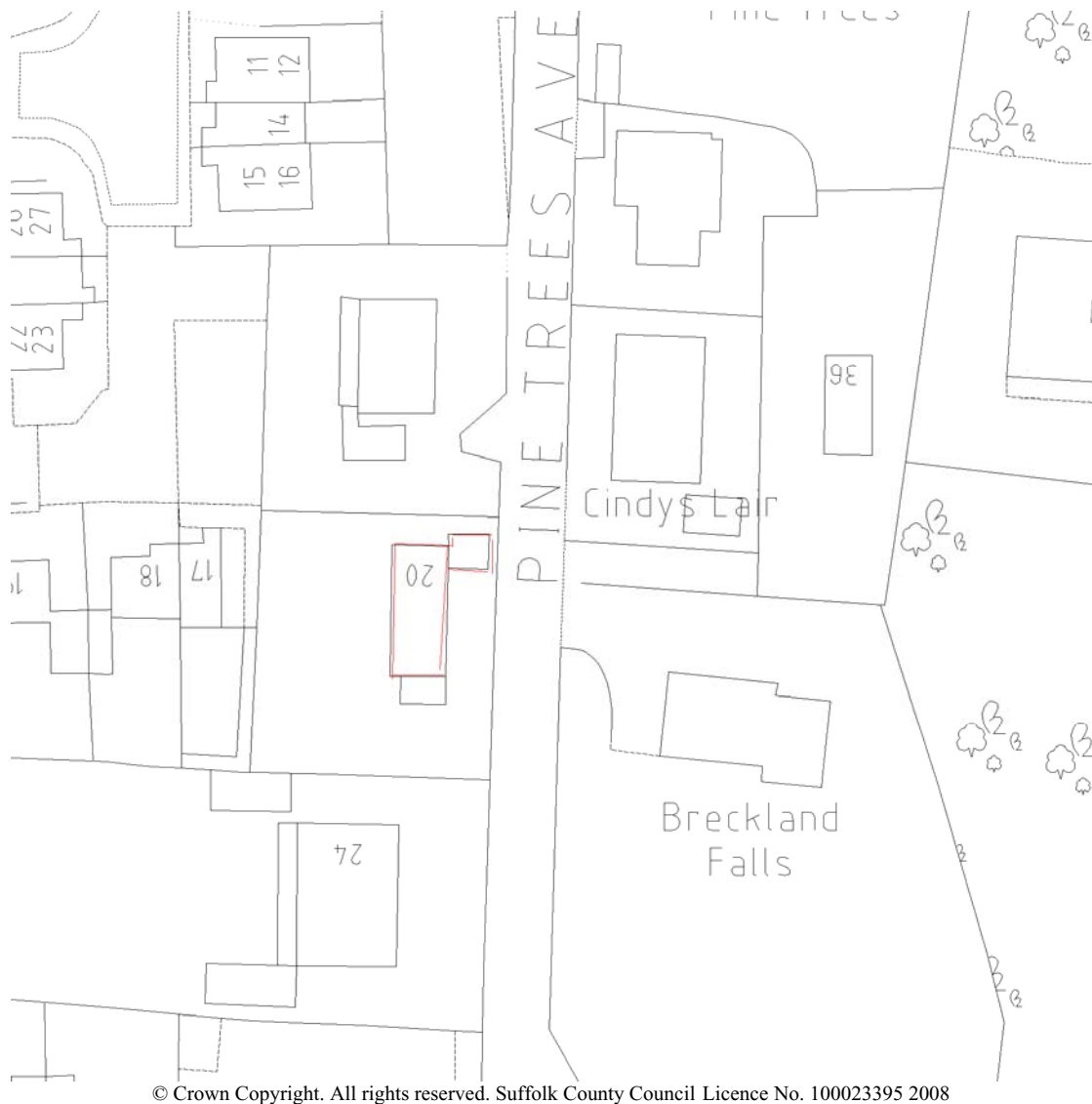
### **Introduction**

The report is accompanied by a CD containing a photographic record in the form of 64 digital images (Appendix 1) but also includes printed photographs of key features to illustrate the text (Appendix 2). Each image is described in a separate schedule and wherever possible includes a scale rod with half-metre divisions in red and white. Two historic photographs were provided by the current owner. The site was inspected on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2009.

### **Summary**

20 Pine Trees Avenue is a suburban bungalow on the eastern edge of Mildenhall, approximately 800 m from the town centre. The core of the building is a largely intact railway carriage that was transported to its present site in or shortly after 1921 and converted for domestic use by adding a pitched roof and a small kitchen extension. The roof extended beyond the sides of the carriage to form an internal corridor on one side and a garden veranda on the other, with a bedroom, sitting room and bathroom within. The new conversion is reputed to have been designed for a matron at Mildenhall hospital. The kitchen chimney was moved and a second extension of corrugated iron was added in the 1940s or 50s when the property was acquired by a married couple, but the original conversion is still recognisable.

The carriage is a Great Eastern Railways luggage composite of the early 1890s, and is one of 309 built to a similar pattern between 1886 and 1895. It appears to contain 16 windows and 6 doors on each side, including a central pair of double-doors, but much of the fabric is hidden behind boarding. A number of ventilation slats and doors remain in use, and one window is marked 'SMOKING', but no other fixtures or fittings survive. Such carriages were intended to be hired by affluent family groups in the late Victorian and Edwardian heyday of railway travel, and to accommodate both passengers and their luggage. They quickly became redundant as demand for the most expensive modes of railway transport declined with the privations of the Great War and the increasing availability of motor vehicles. The carriage is not a rare type as many were converted for domestic use and large numbers have since been recovered by railway museums. The chief historic interest of the property lies in its survival as a domestic conversion, reflecting a little-known but common practise of the 1920s for which very little evidence now survives. Such dwellings were erected as part of the national 'Homes for Heroes' movement after the war but, like the 'prefabs' of WWII, very few escaped later reconstruction. If the property is to be demolished in future, it may be possible to re-erect it in its original form at a museum of vernacular housing such as the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket.



**Figure 1**  
**Current Ordnance Survey Site Plan**  
**Outlining the bungalow in red**

## **Historic Context: Documentary & Cartographic Record**

The bungalow known as 20 Pine Trees Avenue adjoins the western side of a narrow lane of suburban 20<sup>th</sup> century houses on the eastern edge of Mildenhall, approximately 150 m south of the Bury Road and 800 m from the town centre. The lane is shown as an isolated field access in open countryside on the Ordnance Survey of 1882, linking the Bury Road to meadowland north of the River Lark, and the triangular area of ground to the east is marked as allotment gardens on the Survey of 1902. The Bury Record Office does not possess a copy of the third edition Ordnance Survey of the 1920s, by which time development of the area had begun.

The earliest document in the possession of the present owner is a plan of 5<sup>th</sup> November 1921 which outlines the plot of land on which the bungalow stands but does not show the bungalow itself. A sale document of April 1924 refers to this plan and to the conveyance for which it was drawn, but gives no further details of the 1921 property. The 1924 sale is more specific, referring to the purchase for £160 by Emma Daine of Tuddenham from Herbert Turner of

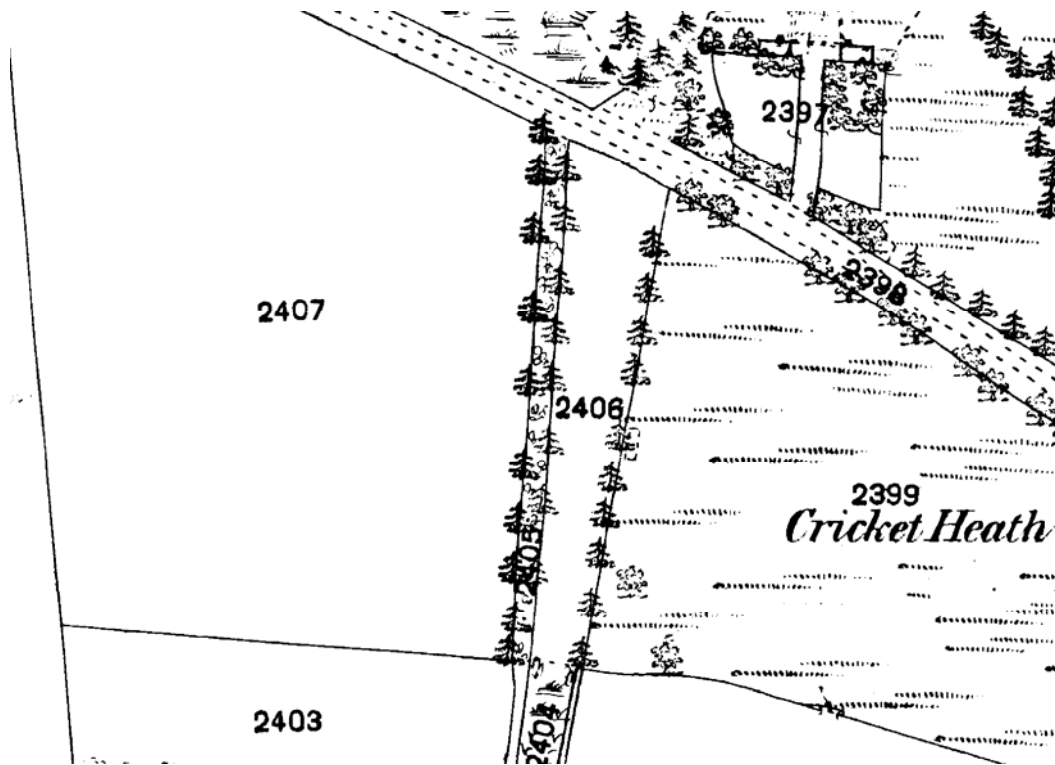


Figure 2  
 First edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1882 showing the site of Pine Trees Avenue as a field access lined with conifers and adjoining open heath on the east. No buildings existed at this date.

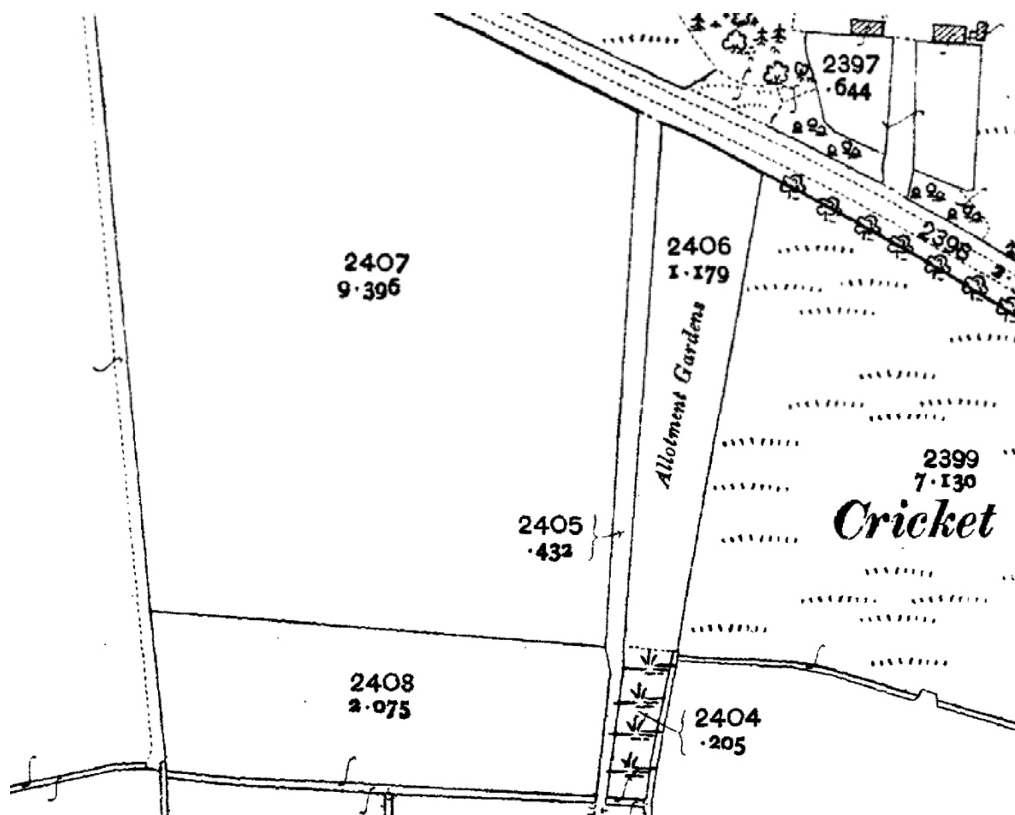


Figure 3  
 Second Edition 25 inch Ordnance Survey of 1902 showing the site as allotment gardens

Enfield, the representative of Florence May Turner, of a quarter of an acre of freehold land with a bungalow and including ‘the stove, dresser, linen and dress cupboards, sink, soft water tank pump and other such fixtures as belong to the said bungalow’. Title is said to commence with a mortgage dated 20<sup>th</sup> January 1904, but this is probably in error for Emma Daine’s mortgage of 1924. The bungalow, then known as 20 Bury Road, was eventually sold by Emma Daine in September 1944 to William Wallis, an engineer at RAF Mildenhall, for £275. A newspaper article in the Newmarket Journal of October 9<sup>th</sup> 1975 shows ‘Bill’ Wallis leaning out of a window in the bungalow, and notes that it had occupied the site for at least 50 years having been put there by a matron at the former Mildenhall hospital (figure 5). This length of time is in accord with the date of 1921 suggested by the plan of that year, but it is unclear whether Florence Turner or Emma Daine was the matron in question. Mr Wallis is said (inaccurately) to have bought the bungalow ‘about 1930’ and to have made his home there with his new wife Lily, who had already spent three years living in another converted railway carriage at nearby Red Lodge – suggesting the practise of converting carriages was a common one in the Mildenhall area. The fact that Mildenhall station was the terminus of a branch line from Cambridge (built in 1885 and closed in 1962) would have made it a convenient repository for unwanted rolling stock. A similar article in the Bury Free Press of September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1988 quotes Lily Wallis, who credited her late husband with the construction of an attractive veranda around the carriage and the addition of a bathroom. The property is shortly to be sold by Mrs Wallis’s family after her recent passing.

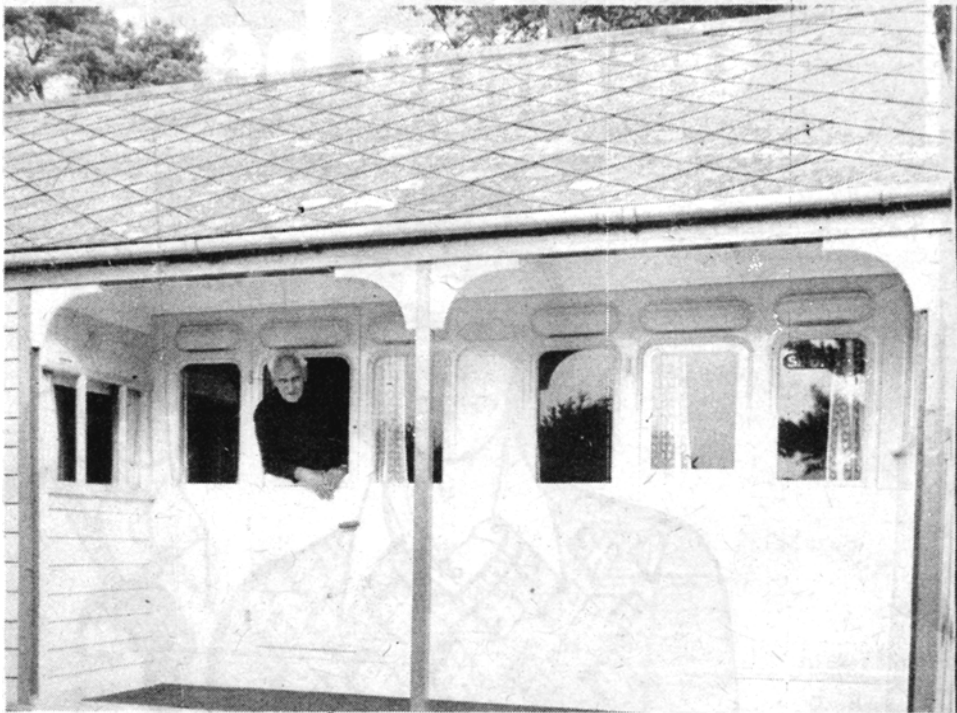
Mr Mike Stanbury, Chairman of the East Anglian Railway Museum at Chappel Station, Essex, has identified the carriage as a Great Eastern Railways six-wheeled luggage composite of 1890-95. Carriages of this kind contained both passenger seating and a luggage section, and were designed for affluent families and private parties who occupied the entire unit. This expensive mode of travel was popular during the late-Victorian and Edwardian heyday of railway transport among the upper classes, but demand declined sharply with the privations of the Great War and the advent of the motor car, and many luggage composites were made redundant. They were well appointed, and ideally suited for domestic conversion. In consequence, they are not rare and Mr Stanbury suggests that while a museum might be interested in breaking 20 Pine Trees Avenue for parts, the expense of transporting the entire carriage for restoration and display would not be worthwhile. It may be worth contacting the Vintage Carriage Trust for further advice.



**Figure 4**

**A similar six-wheeled luggage composite built in 1887 now at the Bressingham Railway Museum (GER 379). One of 309 built to this design between 1886 and 1895, and withdrawn in 1928. It too was subsequently lived in. ([www.vintagecarriagetrust.org](http://www.vintagecarriagetrust.org))**

## The house now standing at platform...



### Firm wins £¼m car contract

A Mildenhall firm has won a major £¼m-a-year contract to make car seats for Fords.

Billover Ltd, which specialises in making car seats for the enthusiast and specialist side of the motor accessory market, has been chosen by Fords in Britain and West Germany to supply seats for their Escort RS1800 and Rallye Sport models.

The company, set up less than two years ago, got the contract after winning a design competition.

Explaining that it was their biggest contract so far, Billover director Mr Norman Perkins said they hoped to be able to produce the 700 extra seats a month without increasing their work-force of 26.

The house now standing at 20 Bury Road, Mildenhall, was the 10.38 from Liverpool Street.

Or at least it might well have been, because 20 Bury Road is a converted Great Eastern Railway carriage.

It has been on a ¼-acre plot in Pine Trees Lane, off Bury Road, for at least 50 years and is now a very comfortable six-roomed bungalow.

It was put there by a matron at the former Mildenhall hospital. About 1930, Bill Wallis, whose family lived nearby, bought it for £275.

He met his wife, Lily, in the NAAFI at Mildenhall base, where he worked as an engineer for 33 years.

#### CONVERTED

When he eventually popped the question and offered her a converted turn of the century railway carriage for a home she didn't bat an eyelid. She had already spent

three years living in another converted carriage at Red Lodge.

Now the Wallis's home has a bedroom, a bathroom and a sitting room in what used to be two passenger compartments and a luggage compartment.

#### SMOKING

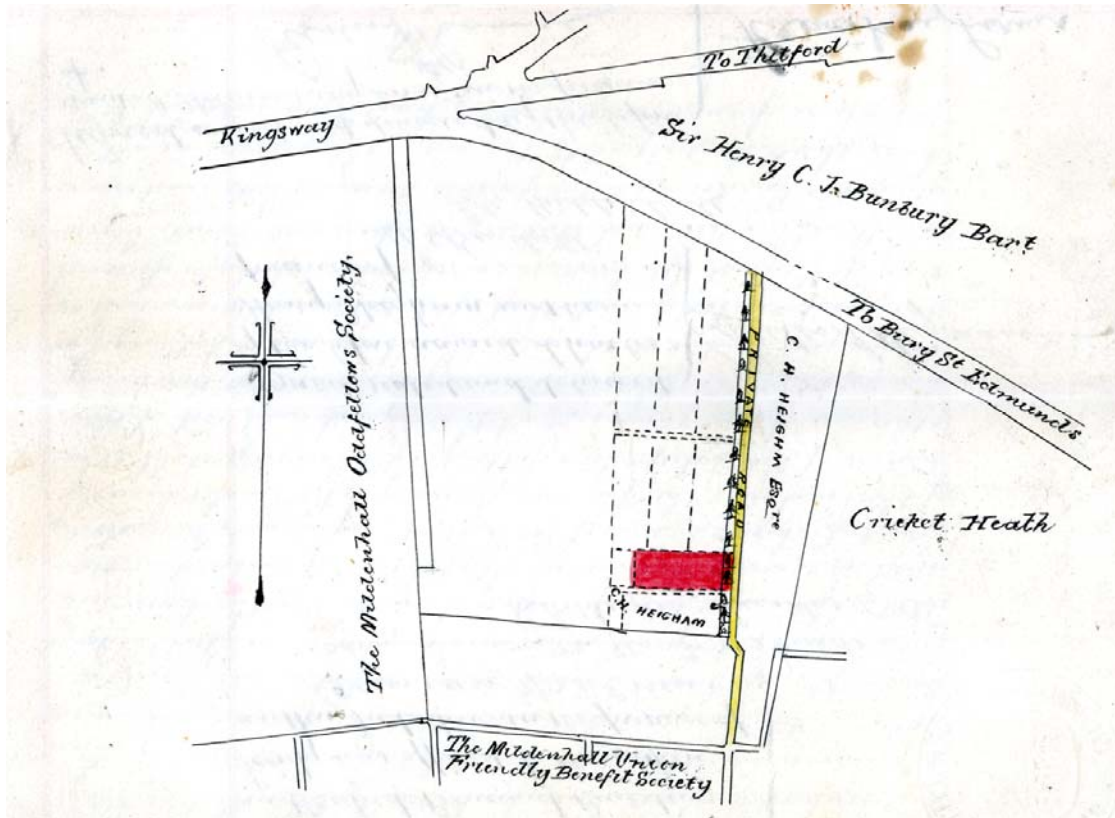
The rooms still have rounded ceilings and from their hall the Wallis's have to open one of the original carriage doors — complete with sliding windows and ventilators — and step over a brass doorstep, to get into the rooms.

All the brass in their once mobile home is stamped "GER" and on the bedroom window is the original etched sign saying "Smoking".

• Bill Wallis leaning out of his carriage window — or rather his sitting room window. The original "Smoking" sign is just visible on the right-hand window. (Photo: Peter Faulkes).

Figure 5

Article in Newmarket Journal, October 9<sup>th</sup> 1975



**Figure 6**

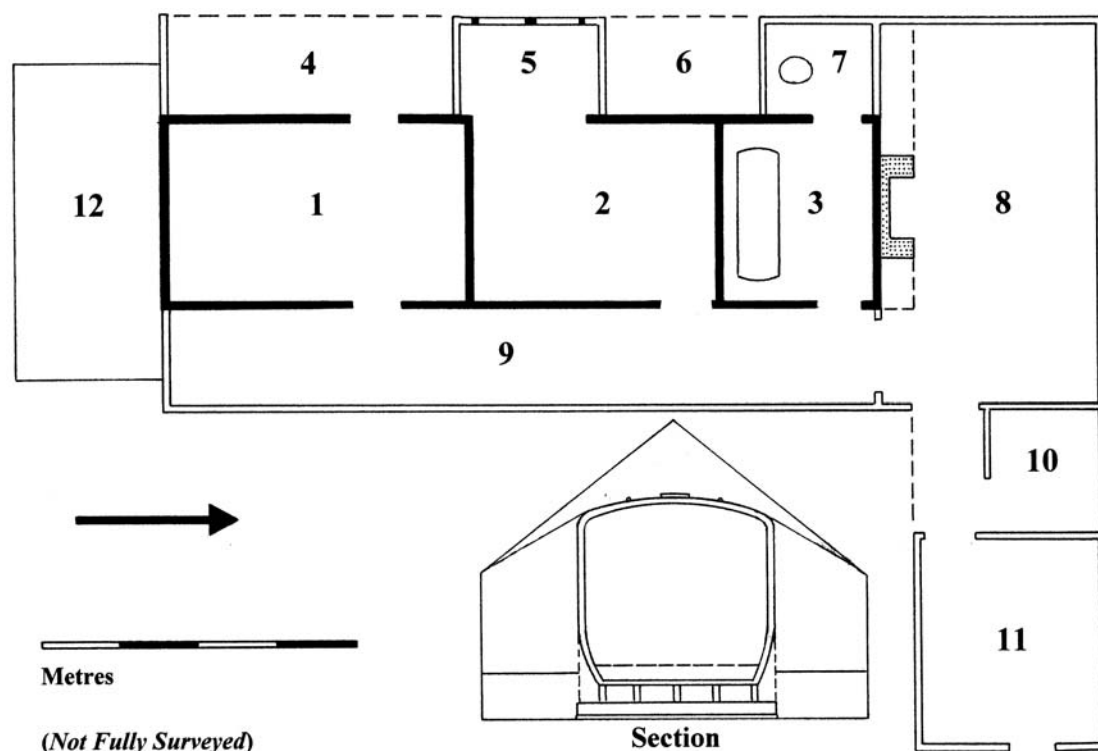
Plan of site dated 5<sup>th</sup> November 1921. This probably relates to the acquisition of the site by Florence Turner shortly before the carriage was installed.



**Figure 7**

Mr and Mrs Wallis on the veranda (area 4 in figure 8), circa 1950

## Building Analysis



**Figure 8**

Schematic block plan of the bungalow, outlining the fabric of the railway carriage in black (the internal partitions possibly secondary) and numbering the various compartments for ease of reference in the text and photographic record.

### Key

1. **Bedroom.** Formerly a smoking compartment. The southernmost window of the western elevation etched SMOKING.
2. **Living Room.**
3. **Bathroom.**
4. **Veranda.**
5. **Extension to Living Room** created by pushing out a section of carriage wall containing twin doors. These doors now open onto the rear (western) garden in the manner of French Doors.
6. **Veranda** with access traps to roof void and underside of carriage.
7. **WC.**
8. **Kitchen extension** containing front door (the brick chimney apparently intruding into the carriage)
9. **Corridor.**
10. **Corrugated iron utility shed and entrance porch.**
11. **Corrugated iron utility shed** with two external doors.
12. **Corrugated iron lean-to open shelter-shed.**

### Original Railway Carriage: Proportions and Layout

The original railway carriage extends to 9.1 m in overall length by 2.5 m in width at its widest point (30 ft by 8 ft) and rises to approximately 2.2 m (7 ft) in height excluding its underframe. Its wheels were presumably removed prior to its transportation to the present site in *circa*



1921, and it now rests on lateral timbers which lift the underframe approximately 15 cm above the loose soil beneath. Much of the original fabric is hidden by later boarding and it is not clear whether the present internal partitions shown in figure 8 reflect those of the original carriage. A number of original doors and windows continue in operation while others are blocked and disguised (particularly to the east), but the carriage appears to have possessed a total of 16 windows and 6 doors in a symmetrical arrangement on each side. The central doors formed a pair which probably opened onto the luggage compartment, and have been moved outward on the western side to serve as French doors onto the garden. A number of sliding wooden ventilators remain intact and operational above the windows, but it is reported that a series of leather window lifting straps were removed in recent years. The remaining brass door handles are stamped 'GER', and the locks 'CHEAPSIDE HART & SON'. The curved roof retains its original oil cloth, and painted livery may well survive beneath the boarding, but the interior has otherwise been stripped of fixtures and fittings. The southernmost window on the western side is engraved with the letters 'SMOKING'.

### **Bungalow Conversion**

The carriage was converted into a bungalow by adding an asbestos-covered pitched roof of machine-sawn softwood which projects by 1.2 m (4 ft) on each side to form an enclosed corridor on the east and open verandas on the west. A kitchen extension of 2.75 m in length (9 ft) was added to the north. The new external walls were weatherboarded, and the veranda framed by timber posts with small curved corner brackets. The appearance of the resulting building is shown in photo A2.13 below, and is entirely consistent with a date in the early 1920s. It is unlikely, in my view, that the roof is an addition of the 1940s as suggested by the 1988 newspaper article.

### **Later Alterations**

A number of alterations and additions have been made to the original conversion, including the present corrugated iron entrance porch and adjoining sheds which probably date from the 1940s or 1950s. The corrugated iron may have been sourced from Mildenhall RAF base, where the then owner, Mr Wallis, worked as an engineer. Subsequent additions include an open shed of corrugated iron against the southern gable, and a WC which now projects into the northern end of the veranda shown in A2.13. The kitchen chimney was also moved from its original position in the north-western corner of the bungalow (A2.13) to its present location between the bathroom and kitchen, and the verandas were enclosed with boarding.

### **Historic Significance**

The luggage composite railway carriage of the 1890s is not a rare type, according to specialists in the field, as many were converted for domestic use when they became redundant after WWI and large numbers have since been recovered by railway museums. The chief historic interest of the property lies in its survival as a domestic conversion, reflecting a little-known but common practise of the 1920s for which very little evidence now survives. While such dwellings were once widespread, with others in the immediate vicinity, their size was considered increasingly inadequate as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed and most were rebuilt. The small prefabricated houses of the 1940s and 1950s have suffered a similar fate, but examples are preserved on several museum sites. 20 Pine Trees Avenue represents a rare and historically important example of a bungalow built as part of the earlier 'Homes for Heroes' movement of the 1920s, designed to secure modest but sanitary houses for the working classes in the aftermath of the Great War, and merits preservation in a similar manner. If the property is to be demolished in future, it may be possible to re-erect it in its original form at a location such as the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket

## **Appendix 1 (on accompanying CD): Full Photographic Record**

### **Description of Photographs in Appendix 1**

#### **Photograph no.**

1. General view of Pine Trees Avenue from south showing entrance to site on left.
2. Entrance to site from Pine Trees Avenue to south-east, showing garage to left & bungalow to right.
3. External western elevation from garden to rear, showing kitchen addition (8) to left.
4. External eastern elevation from south-east, showing lean-to shed (12) to left.
5. External western elevation from north-west, showing northern kitchen gable to left.
6. Detail of northern external gable from north-west, showing kitchen window.
7. Northern end of western external elevation showing glazed veranda (6) to right.
8. Central section of western external elevation showing extruded carriage doors (5) to right.
9. Detail of extruded double carriage doors (5) in western external elevation.
10. Southern end of western external elevation showing glazed veranda (4).
11. Detail of external eastern elevation showing front door with shed (10) to right.
12. External elevation of corrugated iron shed (11) from south-east, showing front door to left.
13. External elevation of corrugated iron shed (11) from south-west, showing door to shed (10) to left.
14. External elevation from south of entrance porch in corrugated iron shed (10).
15. Internal eastern elevation of kitchen (8) showing front door with corridor (9) entrance to right.
16. Internal western elevation of kitchen (8) showing fireplace to left & northern gable to right.
17. Entrance to western corridor (9) from kitchen (8) to north showing front door to left.
18. Western corridor (9) from north showing door to bathroom (3) to right.
19. Western corridor from south showing entrance to bedroom (1) to left.

20. Northern end of western corridor (9) showing curvature of carriage and kitchen door in rear.
21. Detail of door lock stamped (...) CHEAPSIDE HART & SON & brass handle stamped GER to rear.
22. Interior of bedroom (1) from north showing southern gable and SMOKING window to right.
23. Bedroom (1) interior from south showing opposing doors to corridor (9) right & veranda (4) left.
24. Veranda (4) from north showing SMOKING window to left.
25. SMOKING window at southern end of bedroom (1) seen from veranda to north-west.
26. Detail of etched SMOKING label to southern window of bedroom (1) from veranda (4) to west.
27. Detail of ventilator to exterior of bedroom (1) seen from veranda (4) to west.
28. Veranda (4) from south showing external profile of bedroom (1) to right.
29. Detail of painted board cladding to exterior of bedroom (1) from veranda (4) to south-west.
30. Detail of door to bedroom (1) from veranda (4) to south-west.
31. Door to bedroom (1) from veranda (4) to south.
32. Detail of lock to door between bedroom (1) and veranda (4) to south.
33. Detail of wooden internal ventilator slat to door between bedroom (1) and veranda (4).
34. Interior of SMOKING window in south-western corner of bedroom (1) with ventilator slat right.
35. Internal detail of SMOKING etched window from bedroom (1).
36. External detail of blocked central door and windows to living room (2) from veranda (6) to west.
37. Interior of central living room (2) from south, showing entrance from corridor (9) to right.
38. Detail of front south of ceiling ribs to central living room (2).
39. Internal western elevation of central living room (2) showing extruded section (5) to left.
40. Interior of extruded section of western internal elevation (5) from living room (2).
41. Entrance door to central living room (2) from corridor (9) to north.

42. Exterior of door to bathroom (3) from corridor (9) to south.
43. Interior of door to bathroom (3) from corridor (9) to north.
44. Detail of internal tiles to door of bathroom (5) from corridor (9) to north.
45. Internal eastern elevation of bathroom (3) showing door to corridor (9) left & bath right.
46. Internal western elevation of bathroom (3) showing bath to left and door to WC (7) to right.
47. Interior of WC (7) from bathroom (3) to east showing tiled entrance door.
48. Interior of WC (7) from north-west showing external window to bathroom (3).
49. Access to roof void in ceiling of veranda (6).
50. Curved roof of carriage beneath later pitched rood seen from north.
51. Northern end of roof void showing brick kitchen chimney rising through later pitched roof.
52. Detail of carriage roof from west, showing ribs and eyelet.
53. Detail of eyelet projecting from carriage roof.
54. Detail of circular hatch cover in carriage roof.
55. Detail of oilcloth external cladding to carriage roof.
56. Carriage roof from north within roof void showing ceiling of veranda to right.
57. Access to underside of carriage in floor of veranda (6).
58. Underside of carriage from west, showing low ground clearance.
59. Underside of carriage from west showing original floor structure resting on lateral sleepers.
60. Detail of underside of carriage floorboards and cross-joist structure.
61. Detail from south of carriage floor joists, showing western edge to left.
62. Underside of carriage from south-west showing drain pipe from bathroom.
63. Historic internal view of Living Room (2) showing extension (5) in *circa* 2000 while still furnished
64. Historic external views of *circa* 1950 and 2000 from south-west

**Appendix 2 (pp. 13-19): Selected Printed Photographs**



A2.1 External western elevation from garden to rear, showing verandas flanking 'French' double doors extruded from railway carriage and kitchen extension beyond chimney to left



A2.2 External eastern elevation from south-east, showing lean-to shed (12) to left



A2.3 Detail of extruded double carriage doors (5) in western external elevation



A2.4 Veranda (4) from south showing the external profile of the carriage to right. The original fabric appears to be concealed behind painted boarding



A2.5 Detail of carriage door and windows within southern veranda (4) – the door now opening into the bedroom (1).



A2.6 Detail of etched SMOKING label to southern window of bedroom (1) seen from veranda (4)



A2.7 Detail of wooden internal ventilator slat to door between bedroom (1) and veranda (4)



A2.8 Detail of door lock stamped (...) CHEAPSIDE HART & SON & brass handle stamped GER to rear





A2.9 Western corridor from south showing entrance to bedroom (1) to left with doors to central living room and bathroom in rear.



A2.10 Interior of bedroom (1) from north showing profile of carriage at southern gable and SMOKING window to right



A2.11 Roof void from north showing curved oilcloth-covered carriage roof beneath later pitched roof



A2.12 Underside of carriage from west showing original floor structure resting on lateral sleepers



A2.13 Western external elevation in *circa* 1950, before the construction of the WC (7) and the containment of the verandas (6 & 4). Note the outline of the carriage in the southern gable to the right and the position of the original chimney. Photograph provided by current owners.



A2.14 Historic interior of *circa* 2000 showing still furnished living room from north-east