



University of Leicester

Archaeological Services

**A Schedule of Internal Historic Features
at the former
Towers Hospital,
Gypsy Lane,
Leicester.**

NGR: SK 618 060

Andrew Hyam



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For: Hazelton Homes Ltd and K R T Associates

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A Schedule of Historic Features at the former Towers Hospital, Gypsy Lane, Leicester.

Andrew Hyam

Introduction

This report represents a Schedule of surviving historic features present at the former Towers Hospital on Gypsy Lane, Leicester. In order to fulfil Planning Condition 6 of the listed building consent for the refurbishment of the Towers Hospital KRT Associates, on behalf of Hazelton Homes Ltd, have requested that the University of Leicester Archaeological Services produce a schedule of any remaining fixtures and fittings and other features that may remain within the building which is to be refurbished and converted into dwellings.

Condition 6 states that:

Prior to commencement of the internal conversion works a schedule of historic internal features and details of their retention/reuse within the building shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the City Council as local planning authority. No works shall be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details. (In the interests of satisfactory development of a listed building and in accordance with Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy.)

Background

A Heritage Assessment and Planning Support Statement was produced in December 2013 (Burton-Pye 2013) which studied some of the history of the site and undertook a cursory survey of the building. This was followed by a Historic Building Survey carried out by ULAS in 2014 (Hyam 2014). The Historic Building Survey entailed a Level 3 Survey of the parts of the hospital which were to be demolished as part of the proposed development scheme. The remaining parts of the former hospital were surveyed at the lower Level 2. Levels 2 and 3 historic building surveys are defined in the English Heritage (now Historic England) guidance document – *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (2006).

The parts of the hospital which were retained form a series of two-storey echelons facing southwards across Leicester. The proposed refurbishment program has divided the building into four zones from east to west (Fig. 1). At present only Zone 1 (the easternmost) is about to be redeveloped. Zone 4, which includes the former entertainments hall, has been sold for community uses.

At the time of this survey (26th November 2015) most of the modern suspended ceilings had been removed along with a number of other clearly modern features and plasterboard partitions.

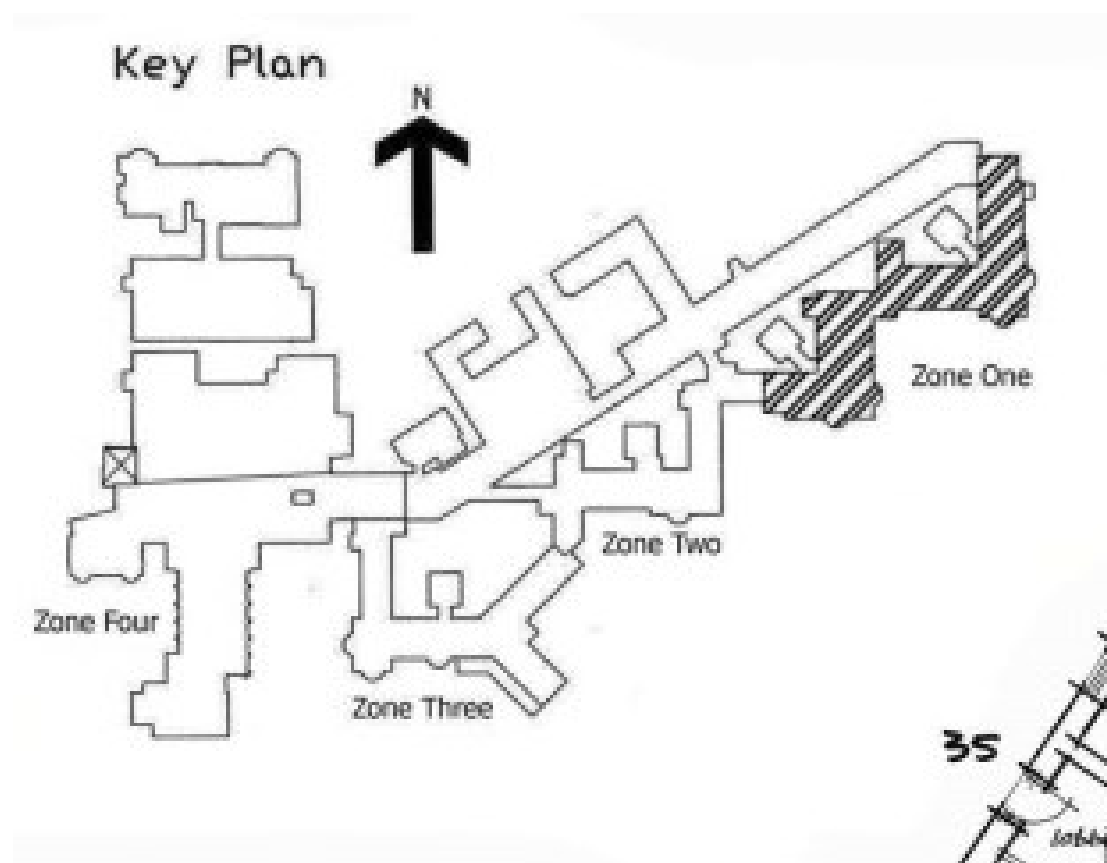


Figure 1 Towers Hospital, Redevelopment Zones
Only Zones 1 to 4 remain standing. Plan supplied by client

Results

The Historic Building Survey in 2014 demonstrated that because the building had been in constant and changing usage for over 100 years very few fittings survived and that only a few remaining fixtures remained in place.

For the purposes of this report a series of photographs were taken of each historic feature and shown on a location map of each zone. In general very little has survived from the original construction date with the exception of some sash windows, window surrounds and skirting boards, glazed wall bricks, some panelled doors and wooden wall panelling. Most of the panelling is confined to the day rooms which are located at the southern ends of each echelon. Much of the woodwork is painted but all of the woodwork inspected during this visit appears to be made from red pine. The glazed wall bricks have also been painted to cover their original institutional brown colour. Many of the sash windows are in a bad state of repair and many have severe problems of rot.

Zone 1

Ground floor

- At the north-eastern end of the Zone is a set of stairs with an original panelled door and moulded pine hand rail (Figs 2, 3 and 4).
- Supporting ceiling joists in the former wards have beading and decorative bolts along their length. This feature is seen throughout all ground floor zones (Fig. 5).
- Most external windows still have their moulded surrounds and wooden sills in place even where a replacement a window has been fitted (Fig. 6). Many sash windows also survive but most are in a poor state of repair and are unlikely to be suitable for restoration (Fig. 7).
- One of the wider wards has cast iron columns concealed behind plasterboard (Figs. 8 and 9). The heads appear to have flared circular decoration.
- The westernmost day room of Zone 1 has most of its wall panelling intact up to dado rail height (Figs. 10 to 13). This has been papered over and painted but appears to be relatively intact despite the room being subdivided in more recent times.
- In places individual isolation cells remain which have their sash windows, glazed wall bricks and moulded tiles which have been overpainted (Fig. 14).
- An outside door remains which has had a hardboard cover nailed to each side to mask the original panelled door (Fig. 15).

First floor

- As with the ground floor the eastern day room has half-height pine panelled walls. Again the panelling has suffered from later attachments and partial truncation (Figs. 16 and 17).
- In a few places the high skirting boards with moulded tops remain as do some moulded door jambs (Fig. 18).
- The cast iron columns seen on the ground floor continue up to the first floor and have also been boxed in (Fig. 19).
- The western day room of Zone 1 has panelling but nothing else of historic importance (Figs 20 to 21). The room also has large multi-pane sash windows (Fig. 22).

Zone 2

Zone 2 follows the trend of Zone 1 with very little surviving with the exception of panelling, panelled doors, sash windows and glazed bricks.

Ground floor

- Most timber window surrounds survive as do the remaining toilet windows. All have moulded edging although many have indications of rot (Figs. 24 and 25).
- The day room in this zone has had shaped hardboard sheeting nailed over the original wooden panelling (Figs 26 and 27). The later covering has been removed in places to reveal the panelling which survives in places although much appears to have been truncated or damaged.
- The original high skirting board with moulded tops can be seen in some of the cell corridors (Fig. 28).
- As with Zone 1 the connecting corridors and cells retain their glazed brick walls which have been painted over with white emulsion (Figs 29 and 30).

First floor

- As elsewhere many doors have their original moulded surrounds and, in places, the high skirting survives (Fig. 31). Where the woodwork has been hidden it can be seen that the wood was varnished and polished rather than painted.
- The day room and gallery have panelling which appears to survive in a fairly reasonable state. The cell doors also have their original panelled doors although all, with one exception, have had modern sheeting nailed to each face (Figs. 32 to 37).
- A small corridor which housed individual cells has a cast iron vent grille at floor level (Fig. 38). Only one grille remains in place whereas all were present at the time of the 2014 survey.

Zone 3

Zone 3 appears to have been extensively modernised and only has a small amount of glazed bricks and some window surrounds.

Ground floor

- The staircases still retain their wooden hand rails and glazed brick walls (Fig. 40).
- The open wards have beaded and bolted joists as seen in Zone 1.

First floor

No historic fixtures or fittings survive on the first floor of Zone 3.

Discussion and recommendations

Very few historic fixtures and fittings have survived in the former Towers Hospital. The most readily identifiable feature is the wooden panelling in the day rooms. The panelling is one of the more surprising aspects of our perceived attitudes to late Victorian mental health care. It shows that the City Corporation was willing to spend a considerable amount of money and effort to improve the surroundings and accommodation of their patients. This aspect should be recognised in the proposed redevelopment. Over time much of the panelling has been damaged or truncated but a large proportion appears still to be in a reasonable state of repair. Some panelling also survives beneath later coverings which will need to be removed in order to assess the state of preservation. It is likely that during the redevelopment work the panelling will need to be removed to install modern wall insulation and services but should be replaced wherever possible.

Many of the former cell doors appear to be the original panelled doors. Although the full details of the redevelopment are not known it seems unlikely that the small cells will remain and the doors will therefore need to be removed. The doors are substantial and from cursory inspection seem to be in a relatively good state of repair and may be suitable for re-use elsewhere in the building.

Although the existing sash windows are unlikely to be suitable for modern domestic dwellings the moulded surrounds should be retained wherever possible. The mouldings around the windows and the surviving skirting boards are typical of the style of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and as such perfectly reflect the style of the building.

The wooden hand rails at each set of stairs are original and could be retained in-situ if the proposed design permits. If this is not the case it may be possible to install them in any new stair cases.

The glazed bricks are an integral part of the design and history of the building but their institutional brown colouring may not be suitable for a residential redevelopment. If they do not form part of the final décor it would be desirable at the very least to leave them in place wherever possible behind more suitable and contemporary wall coverings.

The cast iron supporting pillars seen on both floors in Zone 1 should be left exposed if at all possible rather than being boxed-in or removed. These again reflect the institutional nature of the former hospital.

The beaded joists with decorative bolts should be left in-situ wherever possible unless they need to be replaced for structural reasons. It is appreciated however that false ceilings may be installed which will hide them from view.

The few surviving ventilation grilles are unlikely to be suitable for retention in-situ but should be considered for re-use elsewhere if at all possible.

Of the features that have survived many are likely to be quite difficult to preserve in-situ but may be suitable for re-use elsewhere in order to reflect the history and heritage of the building.

Outside, the building has managed to keep a relatively unchanged appearance which is a theme which should continue in the redevelopment wherever possible. This should include the careful selection of replacement windows to match the style and form of the original sash windows.

Plans and photographs

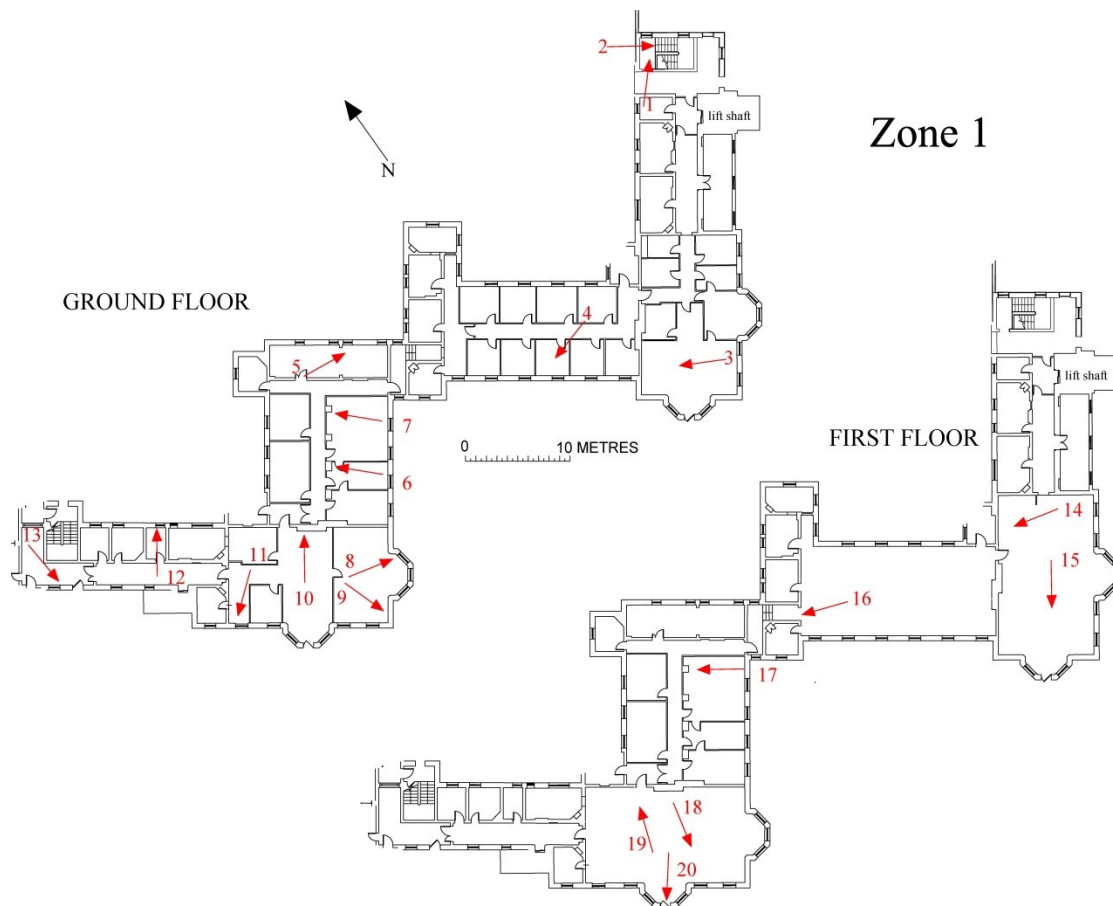


Figure 2 Zone 1, plan of historic features
The numbers in red refer to the photographs shown below



Figure 3 Zone 1 ground floor photo 1. Panelled door

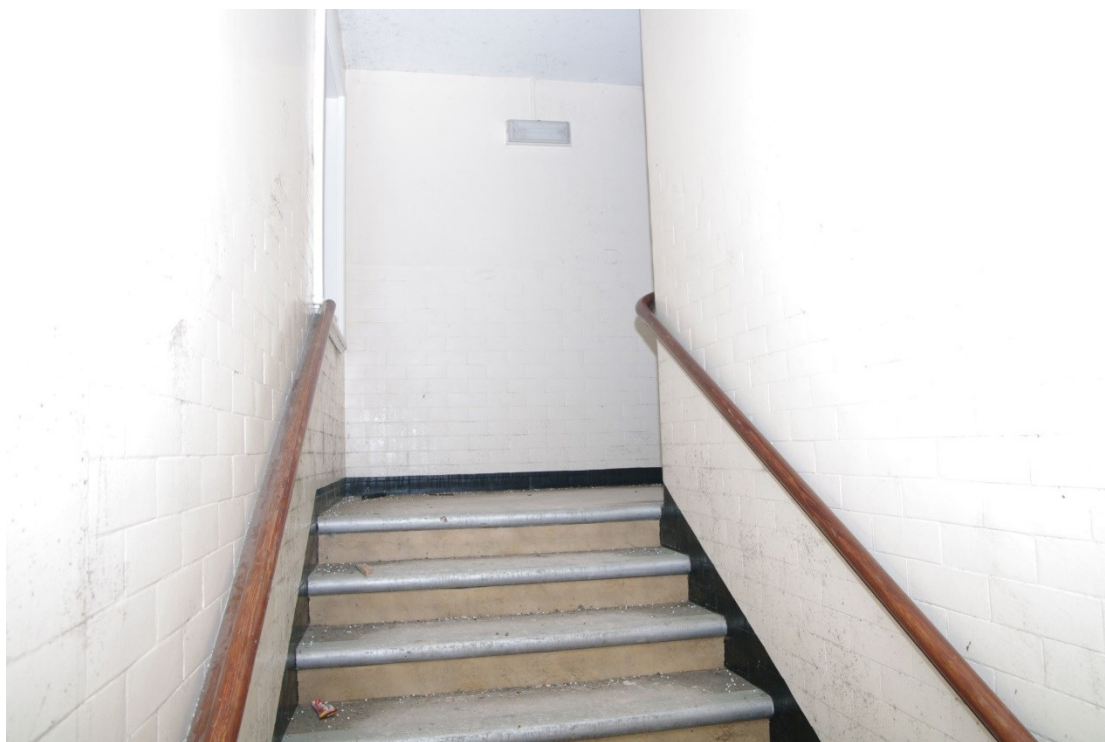


Figure 4 Zone 1 ground floor photo 2. Stairs with pine hand rails
Note also painted over glazed wall bricks



Figure 5 Zone 1 ground floor photo 3 ceiling joists
Note decorative bolts (arrowed)



Figure 6 Zone 1 ground floor photo 4 moulded window surrounds



Figure 7 Zone 1 ground floor photo 5 sash windows



Figure 8 Zone 1 ground floor photo 6 cast iron column



Figure 9 Zone 1 ground floor photo 7 head of cast iron column



Figure 10 Zone 1 ground floor photo 8 day room panelling



Figure 11 Zone 1 ground floor photo 9 day room panelling



Figure 12 Zone 1 ground floor photo 10 day room panelling



Figure 13 Zone 1 ground floor photo 11 day room panelling



Figure 14 Zone 1 ground floor photo 12 sash window and glazed bricks of an individual cell



Figure 15 Zone 1 ground floor photo 13 boarded panelled door and sash window



Figure 16 Zone 1 first floor photo 14 day room panelling



Figure 17 Zone 1 first floor photo 15 truncated panelling



Figure 18 Zone 1 first floor photo 16 moulded door jambs and skirting



Figure 19 Zone 1 first floor photo 17 cast iron column



Figure 20 Zone 1 first floor photo 18 day room panelling



Figure 21 Zone 1 first floor photo 19 day room panelling



Figure 22 Zone 1 first floor photo 20 sash window
Note panelling below windows

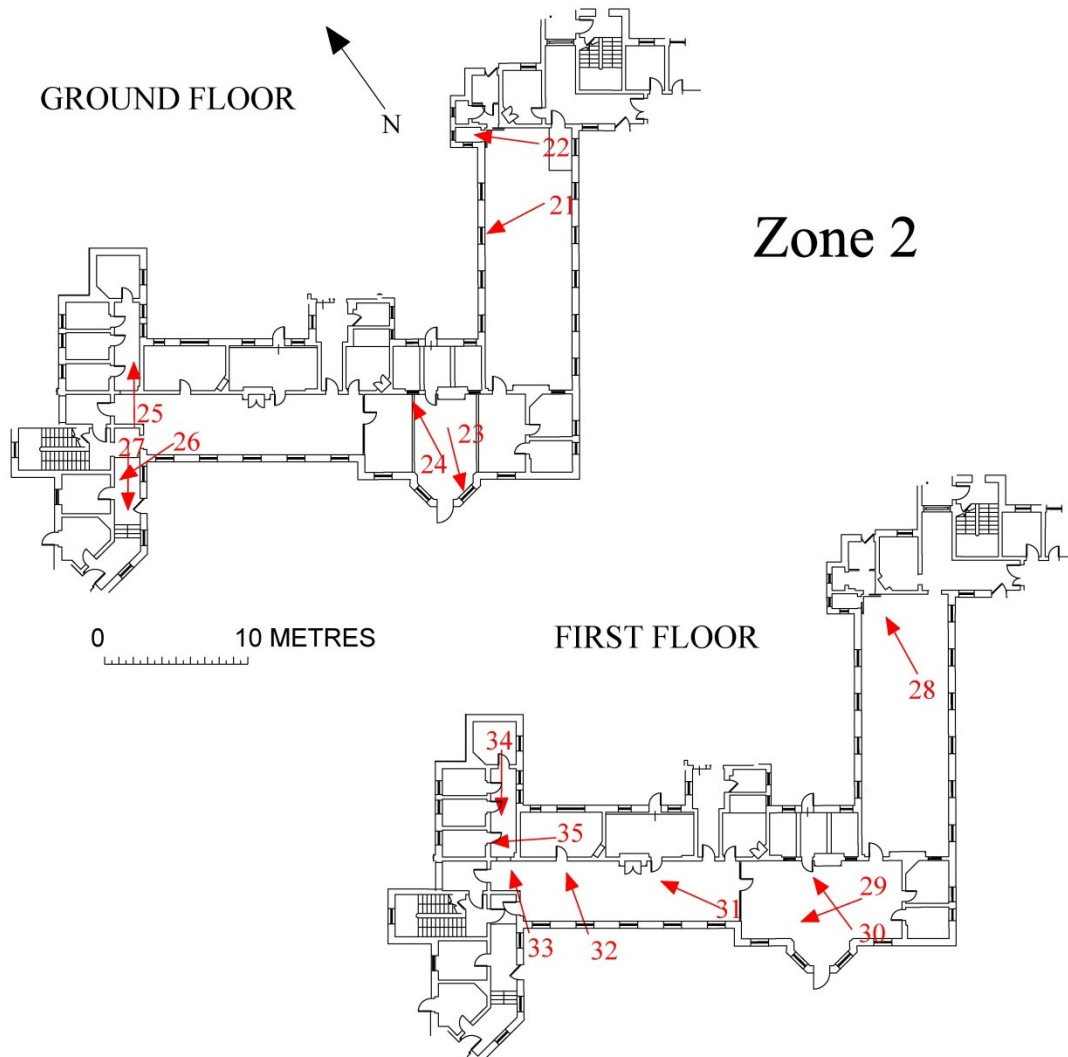


Figure 23 Zone 2, plan of historic features
Red numbers indicate photograph locations



Figure 24 Zone 2 ground floor photo 21 typical window surround



Figure 25 Zone 2 ground floor photo 22 toilet block windows



Figure 26 Zone 2 ground floor photo 23 day room panelling behind later sheeting



Figure 27 Zone 2 ground floor photo 24 day room possible panelling behind later sheeting



Figure 28 Zone 2 ground floor photo 25 skirting boards



Figure 29 Zone 2 ground floor photo 26 corridor with glazed brick walling



Figure 30 Zone 2 ground floor photo 27 glazed bricks with paint removed



Figure 31 Zone 2 first floor photo 28 skirting boards and door surrounds



Figure 32 Zone 2 first floor photo 29 day room panelling



Figure 33 Zone 2 first floor photo 30 day room panelling and probable panelled doors to cells



Figure 34 Zone 2 first floor photo 31 corridor attached to day room with panelled cell doors and walls



Figure 35 Zone 2 first floor photo 32 panelled cell door



Figure 36 Zone 2 first floor photo 33 panelled door with modern covering removed



Figure 37 Zone 2 first floor photo 34 cell corridor with panelled doors, surrounds and skirting



Figure 38 Zone 2 first floor photo 35 cell corridor vent

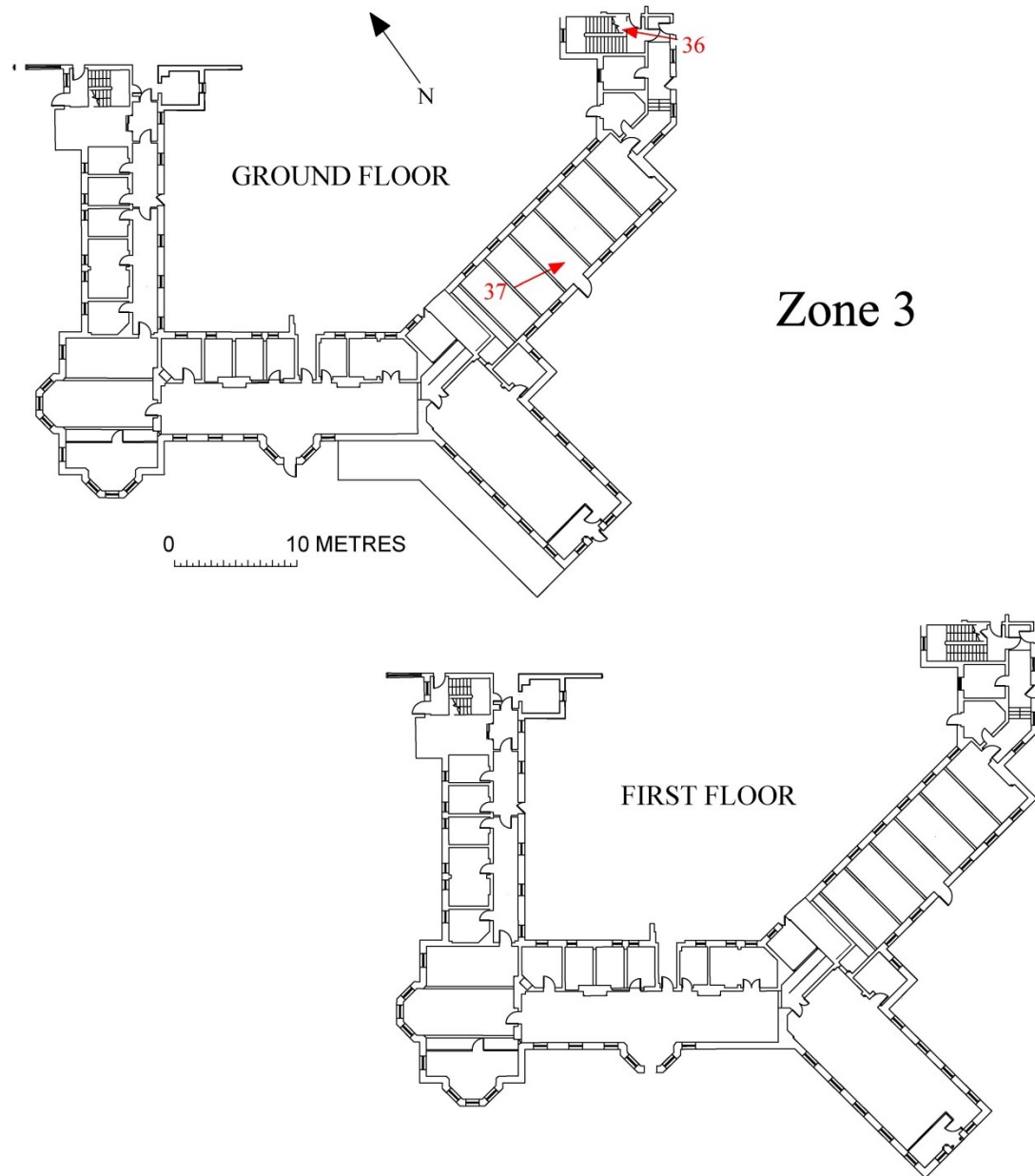


Figure 39 Zone 3, plan of historic features
Red numbers indicate photograph locations (none taken on first floor)

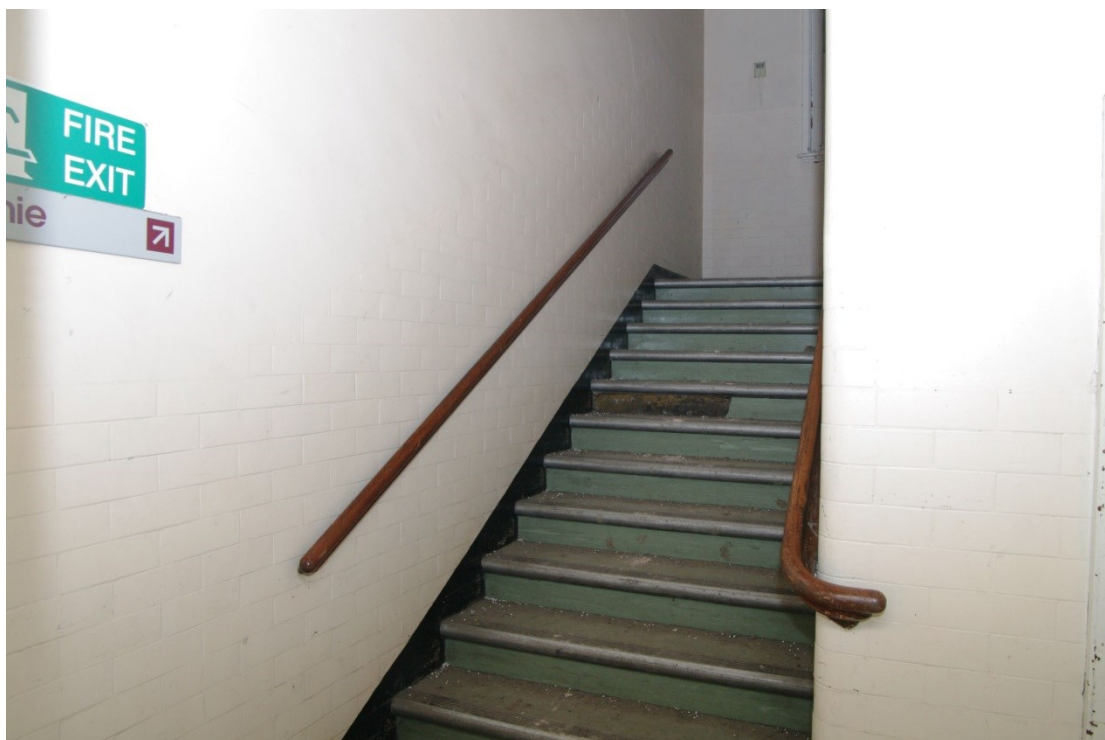


Figure 40 Zone 3 ground floor photo 36 stairs and hand rails



Figure 41 Zone 3 ground floor photo 37 ceiling joists

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