



## Bembridge Inshore Lifeboat Station, Lane End Road, Bembridge, Isle of Wight

Historic Building Recording





**BEMBRIDGE INSHORE LIFEBOAT STATION  
LANE END ROAD  
BEMBRIDGE  
ISLE OF WIGHT**

**Historic Building Record**

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Report reference: 73880.01

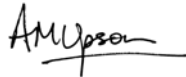
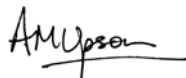
**June 2010**

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## QUALITY ASSURANCE

SITE CODE	<b>73880</b>	ACCESSION CODE		CLIENT CODE	
PLANNING APPLICATION REF.	<b>P/01295/09 – TCP/19359/H</b>	NGR		<b>465620 88069</b>	

VERSION	STATUS*	PREPARED BY	APPROVED BY	APPROVER'S SIGNATURE	DATE	FILE
1	I	MJR	AU		13/05/10	DOC 1 VERSION 1 19/05/10.DOC
2	E	MJR	AU		07/06/10	DOC 1 VERSION 2 07-06/10.DOC

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**BEMBRIDGE**  
**ISLE OF WIGHT**

**Historic Building Record**

**Contents**

	Summary .....	v
	Acknowledgements.....	vi
<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
	1.1 Project Background .....	1
	1.2 Site location.....	1
<b>2</b>	<b>METHODS.....</b>	<b>2</b>
	2.1 Introduction.....	2
	2.2 Documentary research .....	2
	2.3 Site visit .....	2
<b>3</b>	<b>HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....</b>	<b>2</b>
	3.1 Introduction.....	2
	3.2 19th century origins .....	3
	3.3 20th century.....	3
<b>4</b>	<b>BUILDING DESCRIPTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
	4.1 Introduction.....	4
	4.2 1867 Lifeboat Station.....	4
	4.3 Extension.....	7
<b>5</b>	<b>DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>8</b>
	6.1 Bibliography.....	8
	6.2 Cartographic Sources.....	8
	6.3 Online resources .....	8

**LIST OF FIGURES AND PLATES**

<i>Front Cover</i>	Bembridge Inshore Lifeboat Station viewed from the north-east
<i>Rear cover</i>	Detail of stained glass roundel within the Boathouse
<i>Figure 1</i>	Site location
<i>Figure 2</i>	Historic map regression
<i>Figure 3</i>	Ground floor plan
<i>Figure 4</i>	First floor plan
<i>Figure 5</i>	South-west and South-east elevations
<i>Figure 6</i>	North-west and North-east elevations
<i>Plate 1</i>	The Lifeboat Station c.1900
<i>Plate 2</i>	The Lifeboat Station converted into a café c.1955
<i>Plate 3</i>	North-east elevation of the Lifeboat Station
<i>Plate 4</i>	Curved track set within the floor of the Boathouse for former door
<i>Plate 5</i>	Top half of the north-east gable end featuring remnant iron hinges
<i>Plate 6</i>	North-west elevation of the Lifeboat Station
<i>Plate 7</i>	Window situated on the north-west wall of the Lifeboat Station
<i>Plate 8</i>	South-west gable ends of Lifeboat Station and adjoining Extension
<i>Plate 9</i>	Interior of the Boathouse with Drying room to the rear
<i>Plate 10</i>	North-west wall of the Boathouse
<i>Plate 11</i>	South-east wall of the Boathouse
<i>Plate 12</i>	Ladies public toilets viewed from the north-west
<i>Plate 13</i>	First floor – staircase with balustrade
<i>Plate 14</i>	Crew training area viewed from the north-west
<i>Plate 15</i>	LOM Office viewed from the north-west
<i>Plate 16</i>	Extension viewed from the east
<i>Plate 17</i>	Extension viewed from the south
<i>Plate 18</i>	Gents public toilets viewed from the south

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**BEMBRIDGE INSHORE LIFEBOAT STATION  
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BEMBRIDGE  
ISLE OF WIGHT**

**Historic Building Record**

**Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was appointed by Opus International Consultants (UK) to carry out a programme of historic building recording at Bembridge Inshore Lifeboat Station, Bembridge, Isle of Wight centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 465620 088069.

The development proposals for the Site, for which planning consent (application ref. P/01295/09 – TCP/19359/H) has been granted, include the demolition of the existing lifeboat station, the construction of a new two-storey facility including visitor centre, and the construction of a new toilet block.

A detailed history of the Site had previously been compiled by Maritime Archaeology Ltd in August 2009. The report made recommendations, which included securing a programme of archaeological recording in the form of a Historic Building Survey prior to demolition.

The work entailed an examination of the fabric of the building combined with a detailed photographic survey. Measured plans and elevations of the building were supplied in advance by the client and these drawings were annotated on Site. In addition the survey identified and recorded the location of architectural features that should be retained and considered for re-use or display within the new structure. This work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2010), which was submitted to and approved by the Isle of Wight Council.

The Lifeboat Station was first constructed in 1867 following the wreck of the *Egbert*, when local fishermen saved everyone aboard. This act of bravery prompted the people of Worcester, where the crew originated, to pay for a lifeboat station to be built at a cost £165. The building originally had the appearance of a simple one-storey rectangular plan structure with a high steeply pitched roof with distinctive overhanging timber eaves.

A flat roofed extension was added in 1887 to provide a small watch room and shelter for those that had been rescued. Following the construction of the offshore all-weather lifeboat station (ALB) in 1922, the lifeboat station at Lane End was sold and re-opened for business as a waterside café. In 1964 the RNLi bought the building back and it went back into active service as an inshore lifeboat (ILB) station where a 5m long 'D' class lifeboat was kept in the boathouse.

Public toilets were added to the rear of the building, after 1964, which reduced the size of the boat housing area. In 1995-6 the interior was divided up by a mezzanine floor which created an office space and crew training area on the first floor. The present extension to the south-east of the ILB is an entirely modern structure constructed in the late 1990s. The building houses a visitor information centre and gift shop to the north-east with pumping station and switch room and Gents public toilets to the rear.

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BEMBRIDGE  
ISLE OF WIGHT**

**Historic Building Record**

**Acknowledgements**

This project was commissioned by Opus International Consultants (UK) Ltd and Wessex Archaeology is grateful to Brian Hillman and Nick Gallin in this regard. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Owen Cambridge, Planning Archaeologist of Isle of Wight Council and Graham Hall, Lifeboat Operations Manager for Bembridge Inshore Lifeboat Facility for their assistance.

The report was written by Matt Rous MfA. The drawings were produced by Elizabeth James and Matt Rous. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Anne Upson MfA.

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Project Background**

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was appointed by Opus International Consultants (UK) Ltd to carry out a programme of historic building recording at the Inshore Lifeboat Station, Bembridge, Isle of Wight, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 465620 88069.
- 1.1.2 Although not statutorily listed nor situated within a conservation area, the building is included on the *Local List of Historic Properties* maintained by the Isle of Wight County Council's Design and Conservation Department. It was considered for inclusion on the statutory *List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest* by English Heritage's Heritage Protection Department in August 2008, but was considered to have been too significantly altered to merit national designation.
- 1.1.3 The development proposals for the Site, for which planning consent (application ref. P/01295/09 – TCP/19359/H) has been granted, include the demolition of the existing lifeboat station, the construction of a new two-storey facility including visitor centre, and the construction of a new toilet block.
- 1.1.4 The development was subject to recommendations, which were originally set out in section 8 of the *Heritage Statement: Bembridge Inshore Lifeboat Station* (Maritime Archaeology Ltd 2009). These recommendations state:
- *Where partial or full demolition of the stations structure is unavoidable...archaeological recording in the form of a Historic Building Survey should be undertaken*
- 1.1.5 The work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Wessex Archaeology 2010), which was submitted to and approved by the Isle of Wight Council.

### **1.2 Site location**

- 1.2.1 The Site is located in the village of Bembridge, which is situated at the most easterly point of the Isle of Wight, approximately 8km to the south-east of Ryde and 7km to the north-east of Sandown. The building is located at the north-eastern end of Lane End Road (B3395) and enclosed by Fishermans Walk to the south-west, Lane End Road leading down to a slipway to the north-west, a sloping area of tarmac which adjoins the slipway to the north-east and a public car park to the south-east (**Figure 1**).



## **2 METHODS**

### **2.1 Introduction**

- 2.1.1 The aim of the project was to produce a record of the Inshore Lifeboat Station prior to its demolition. This will provide the Isle of Wight Council with a lasting record of a historically important structure.
- 2.1.2 The survey also identified and recorded the location of artefactual or architectural features that should be retained and considered for re-use or display within the new structure.
- 2.1.3 Measured plans and elevations of the building were supplied in advance by the client in AutoCAD format. Hard copies of these drawings were annotated on site and then enhanced in accordance with English Heritage drawing conventions to produce the finished record drawings which, in addition, show the location and direction of shot for the photographs reproduced within the report (**Figures 3 - 6**).

### **2.2 Documentary research**

- 2.2.1 The documentary research for the report relies solely upon existing research which is included in the Heritage Statement *Bembridge Offshore Lifeboat Station*. This was carried out by Maritime Archaeology Ltd in August 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 A single site visit was carried out on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2010 by a specialist buildings archaeologist from Wessex Archaeology where the building was subject to investigation, analysis and photography.
- 2.3.2 The building was recorded to level 3, as described in *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practice* (English Heritage, 2006) and carried out in accordance with guidance given in the document by the Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings and structures* (IFA 1996, revised 2001 and 2008).

#### Photography

- 2.3.3 During the site visit, some 99 high quality digital images were taken using a Canon 40D digital camera (with 12 megapixel capability). These mainly concentrated on the principal external and internal elevations 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 - 18**).

## **3 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **3.1 Introduction**

- 3.1.1 The history of the site is recorded in detail in the Maritime Archaeology Ltd report (MA Ltd 2009). A summary of this report with regard to the historic background of the Bembridge Lifeboat Station is presented here.

### 3.2 19th century origins

- 3.2.1 Although a 'Coastguard Boat' is mentioned in operation out of Bembridge in 1822 the present lifeboat station was not constructed until 1867. The 1862 Ordnance Survey map shows the Bembridge area before the construction of the lifeboat station revealing a group of small hamlets with a development around the Lane End area. A slipway is present on the foreshore stretching towards Ethel Point (**Figure 2**).
- 3.2.2 In 1867, *Egbert*, a Norwegian boat carrying barley ran aground on the ledge in a storm and began to break up. After spotting the vessel, an open boat of local fishermen responded and saved everyone aboard. This act of bravery prompted the people of Worcester, where the crew originated, to pay for a lifeboat station to be built to house the *City of Worcester* lifeboat. Hence the first Bembridge Lifeboat Station was constructed at Lane End in 1867 at a cost of £165. Initial construction of the ILB station at Lane End involved using locally sourced limestone from the beach. When finished, the building had the appearance of a simple one-storey rectangular plan structure with a high steeply pitched roof with distinctive overhanging timber eaves, as shown in a photograph taken around 1900 (**Plate 1**).
- 3.2.3 The lifeboat station appears for the first time on the 1897 Ordnance Survey map with a small adjoining building situated to the south-east (**Figure 2**). This building comprised a flat roofed extension which was added in 1887 to provide a small watch room and shelter for those that had been rescued. During this time advances in vessel technology required changes to the lifeboat facilities at Lane End.

### 3.3 20th century

- 3.3.1 In 1922 an offshore all-weather lifeboat station (ALB) was built 210m to the north-east to include an elevated walkway on concrete supports with a boathouse and slipway at the seaward end of it. The new station first features on the 1946 Ordnance Survey map (**Figure 2**).
- 3.3.2 Sometime after the ALB facility came into operation, the ILB station at Lane End was sold and re-opened for business as a waterside café, shown in a 1955 photograph (**Plate 2**) Its change of use to a café would explain the omission of the title 'Lifeboat House' on the 1946 OS map. According to local residents, the café was in business for c.40 years until in 1964 the RNLI bought the building back and it went back into active service as an inshore lifeboat (ILB) station where a 5m long 'D' class lifeboat was kept in the boathouse.
- 3.3.3 The 1955 photograph of the ILB in use as a café shows significant changes to the exterior fabric of the original 1867 structure. The 1887 extension shown in the 1900 photograph appears to have been replaced with a more substantial structure that has a pitched roof and chimney. The wide wooden doors have been infilled with what appears to be a wooden wall structure with an inset door and two long rectangular windows on either side. The small window above the original front entrance has also been enlarged. Although little is known about the interior of the structure in this period, it is possible that kitchen and seating areas were installed to make it fit for purpose as an eatery.
- 3.3.4 Public toilets were added to the rear of the original building, after 1964, which reduced the size of the boat housing area. Consequently, the lifeboat housed there was much smaller than the one in the 1900 photograph. In

1995-6 the interior was divided up by a mezzanine floor which created an office space and crew training area on the first floor. Stairs were installed to reach the new upper level. In addition Velux roof windows were installed to increase light levels. The present extension to the south-east of the ILB is an entirely modern structure constructed in the late 1990s. The building houses a visitor information centre and gift shop to the north-east with pumping station and switch room and Gents public toilets to the rear.

## **4 BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

4.1.1 Bembridge Inshore Lifeboat Station is a rectilinear structure orientated north-east – south-west along its long axis and made up of two parallel rectangular buildings forming a double-pitch roof with gables on the north-east and south-west elevations. The building comprises the 1867 Lifeboat Station to the north-west and an adjoining late 1990s Extension to the south-east. The Extension extends slightly further to the north-east than the Lifeboat Station (**Figure 1, Figure 3, Front cover**).

4.1.2 Although designated as the Inshore Lifeboat Facility the building is composed of several distinct elements under different ownership. The Lifeboat Station is divided between the RNLI's boathouse to the north-east and the Ladies public toilets to the south-west, which are operated by Isle of Wight Council. The extension is divided between the RNLI shop and store to the north-east, with a Scottish & Southern electricity sub-station and Southern Water switch room to the south-west. At the south-western end of the building are the Gents public toilets, which are operated by Isle of Wight Council.

### **4.2 1867 Lifeboat Station**

#### Exterior

4.2.1 The Inshore Lifeboat Station comprises a rectangular building orientated north-east – south-west along its long axis and measuring 12.4m x 5.3m with a steeply pitched roof, which is gabled on the north-east and south-east elevations (**Figure 3, Plate 3**). The building is divided into four bays with the Inshore Lifeboat Facility (ILB facility) occupying three bays to the north-east and the Ladies public toilets occupying one bay at the south-western end of the building.

4.2.2 The exterior walls of the Lifeboat Station comprise stone rubble rendered in smooth cementitious stucco, which has been keyed to give the impression of ashlar face work and then painted cream above a black plinth. Numerous coats of masonry paint are in evidence. Confirmation of a rubble internal core comes from construction works to insert supporting beams for the mezzanine floor which took place in 1995-6. This revealed random rubble limestone which was bonded with coarse lime mortar (Graham Hall pers. comm.). The stone was apparently gathered from the adjacent beach, and this was confirmed from strands of surviving seaweed which were discovered attached to some of the rubble stone during the mid 1990s construction work (Graham Hall pers. comm.).

4.2.3 The north-east gable end has a large opening on the ground floor to accommodate the ingress and egress of the inshore lifeboat. At present the doorway is enclosed with a modern insulated aluminium-slatted roller door. This door is the third type of door to be fitted and replaces earlier sectional

sliding doors mounted upon wheels, which would have been pulled together to close. Evidence for this earlier door is indicated by the surviving curved track situated within the floor on both sides of the Boathouse (**Plate 4**). A photograph taken c.1900 reveals that the north-east gable end originally had a pair of large timber folding doors of ledged and braced construction, which opened outwards (**Plate 1**). Two surviving iron pintles, which once supported these original doors, can still be seen at the top of the door posts (**Plate 5**). At present a modern uPVC double-glazed casement window is situated below the apex of the roof and above the door lintel. This window is likely to date from the insertion of a mezzanine floor within the building in 1995-6 (MA Ltd 2009). The photograph dating to c.1900 (**Plate 1**) shows that originally a small rectangular window was situated in this position. A similarly sized window opening survives in the south-west gable end enclosing a small uPVC casement window.

- 4.2.4 The north-west elevation is relatively plain (**Plate 6**) with the exception of a large decorative window containing a pair of single-hung sashes with small, square leaded lights and marginalised stained glass (**Plate 7**). The top two lights contain a central roundel of stained glass featuring separately a dolphin and a sailing boat motif (**Rear cover**). The window is of unknown provenance and it is possible that it may not have been part of the original 1867 boat house, which comprised a relatively simple and unsophisticated structure. Stylistically it is more likely to date to the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Further to the south-west, a single recessed deadlight window with frosted glass illuminates the Ladies public toilets. Access into the toilets is via an inserted doorway situated at the south-western end of the north-west elevation. A concrete disabled ramp with stainless steel hand rail date to the late 20<sup>th</sup> - early 21<sup>st</sup> century (Graham Hall pers. comm.).
- 4.2.5 The south-west gable end is plain with the exception of a recessed horizontal four-light window for the public toilets containing awning casements and deadlights and featuring frosted glass. The window dates from the 1960-70s. As mentioned previously, a small rectangular window is situated towards the apex of the gable (**Plate 8**).
- 4.2.6 The roof of the building is clad in a mixture of white asbestos cement tiles with later slate replacements which match the slates of the adjacent late 1990s Extension. The internal roof structure has been obscured by boarding out and modern finishes following the creation of the mezzanine floor in 1995-6. However, an examination of the present structure combined with the exposed areas of overhanging eaves suggest that the roof consists of regular machine-cut softwood timbers comprising five simple A-frame trusses with purlins and rafters supporting sarking boards to give added insulation and protection from wind penetration.

#### Interior - ILB facility

- 4.2.7 The north-eastern three bays of the Lifeboat Station are occupied by the ILB facility which comprises a simple open space on the ground floor subdivided into the Boathouse to the north-east and the Drying room to the south-west (**Plate 9**).
- 4.2.8 The Boathouse comprises a simple open space for the housing of the inshore lifeboat. As observed on the exterior, the interior walls comprise smooth painted plaster which has been incised to resemble ashlar face work. The room is illuminated by a large window on the north-west wall containing a pair of single-hung sashes (**Plate 10**). On the other side of the

room, the lower half of the wall was partially obscured by a temporary bench with storage beneath (**Plate 11**). Above this bench the top half of a narrow blocked doorway (**Figure 3**) was visible which originally led into one of the former side extensions.

- 4.2.9 The south-western end of the ILB facility was subdivided from the Boathouse by a lightweight hanging door (now removed) to provide a Drying room and small storage area with single toilet cubicle situated in the southern corner. The area is decorated with modern finishes and the toilet cubicle appears to date to the 1995-6 renovation of the building.
- 4.2.10 The floor of the ILB facility comprises irregular timber boards which have been heavily painted with marine-grey non-slip paint. Several of the boards have been replaced in recent years due to rot revealing an approximate depth of 0.6m down onto the original ground surface below (Graham Hall pers. comm.).

#### Interior - Ladies toilets

- 4.2.11 The Ladies public toilets are situated at the south-western end of the Lifeboat Building separated by a concrete blockwork wall from the ILB facility. The toilets are operated by Isle of Wight Council and were created some time after 1964 (MA Ltd 2009, 30).
- 4.2.12 The toilets comprise a small single room with three cubicles arranged against the south-western wall. The room is simply decorated in utilitarian style with cream coloured ceramic tiles covering the walls and a brown quarry tile floor (**Plate 12**). A stainless steel automatic hand washer dryer unit is situated on the north-east wall. The room is illuminated by a horizontal four-light frosted window situated centrally within the south-west wall and a small window situated on the north-west wall adjacent to the doorway. Both windows likely date to the 1960-70s.

#### Interior - First floor

- 4.2.13 The building contains a mezzanine floor which was inserted in 1995-6 (*ibid*). Access to the first floor is via a partially enclosed dog-leg staircase situated along the north-west wall of the Boathouse and behind a timber and safety-glass fire door (**Figure 4**). The staircase is utilitarian comprising linoleum covered treads with protective aluminium nosings and a moulded softwood handrail fixed to the wall. A protective balustrade is situated on the first floor comprising plain softwood posts and stick balusters with a moulded hand rail (**Plate 13**).
- 4.2.14 The first floor is divided into two rooms with a Crew training area occupying three bays to the north-east (**Plate 14**) and a small LOM (Lifeboat Operations Manager) Office situated to the south-west over the Ladies public toilets (**Plate 15**). The Crew training area incorporates a small Galley comprising a number of modern fitted kitchen units and a sink situated to the south-east of the stairwell. The Crew training area is decorated with modern finishes throughout including carpet and painted walls. Little evidence can be seen of the original roof structure due to the boxing-in of the frame with plasterboard. Light enters the room from a modern uPVC double-glazed casement window located on the north-east wall in addition to three Velux roof windows situated on the south-eastern slope of the roof. The LOM Office is similarly decorated to the Crew training area with light provided by a single Velux roof window in addition to a small rectangular uPVC window situated high up on the south-west wall.

## 4.3 Extension

### Exterior

- 4.3.1 The late 1990s Extension comprises a parallel adjoining building to the south-east of the 1867 Lifeboat Station, although extending further to the north-east (**Figure 1, Figure 3, Plate 16**). The building is gabled onto the north-east and south-west elevations with two slate-clad steeply pitched roofs consisting of a lower roof (situated above the Gents public toilets) to the south-west and higher roof to the north-east (covering the rest of the building). Within the higher roof large louvered ventilation grilles are situated at the apex of each gable end in order to vent foul air from the pumping station (**Front cover**). The Extension is finished in a smooth painted stucco surface which obscures the original building fabric, however, the recent date of construction suggests that it is most likely to be of concrete blockwork.

### Interior - RNLI Shop and Store

- 4.3.2 At the north-eastern end of the building is the volunteer-run RNLI souvenir shop and Store. The north-west and north-east exterior walls of the shop comprise a multi-light glass and powder-coated aluminium shopfront. Unfortunately, the shop was not manned at the time of the site visit and access was not possible. However, an inspection through the shop window confirmed that the interior was decorated with modern finishes throughout including souvenir tables and boards. A small store adjoins the shop to the south-east, which is accessed via two pairs of louvered ventilation doors situated on the south-east elevation. No access into the store was possible during the site visit.

### Interior - Central rooms

- 4.3.3 The central two rooms of the extension comprise the Scottish & Southern Electricity Sub-Station and the SWA Switch Room (**Figure 3**) which are responsible for pumping sewage ashore from the ALB facility. Access into both of these rooms is via locked louvered ventilation doors situated on the south-east elevation (**Plate 17**), however, no access was possible during the site survey. Both of these rooms are not due for demolition and will be incorporated into a replacement building.

### Interior - Gents toilets

- 4.3.4 The Gents public toilets are situated at the south-western end of the Extension and are operated by Isle of Wight Council. The toilets were created during the late 1990s along with the rest of the extension (MA Ltd 2009, 30). Access into the toilets is via a doorway situated on the south-east elevation which is shielded behind a baffle wall. The toilets consist of a single square room with two cubicles situated in the northern corner. The room is simply decorated in utilitarian style with white and navy coloured ceramic tiles covering the walls and a red quarry tile floor (**Plate 18**). Horizontal four-light and two-light windows with casement awnings and frosted glass are situated within the south-west and south-east walls respectively.

## 5 DISCUSSION

- 5.1.1 Throughout the history of the Lifeboat station there have been extensive internal and external adaptations and alterations from its original design and appearance. The building has changed from a simple boat house in the 1860s to a café in the early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century before retuning to an Inshore

Lifeboat Facility in the 1960s. Sub-division occurred during the 1960s and a mezzanine floor with associated modern finishes was inserted during the 1990s. The extension to the south-east dates to the late 1990s.

- 5.1.2 The only surviving feature of merit appears to be the late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century window situated on the north-west elevation which illuminates the Boathouse (**Plate 7, Rear cover**). Although stylistically it is considered to be a later insertion rather than an original window, it is worthy of salvage and an appropriate relocation would be to include it in the fabric of the new lifeboat station. The window clearly features nautical themes and further detailed documentary research might be able to provide a date for its insertion and information on the circumstances regarding its donation.

## 6 REFERENCES

### 6.1 Bibliography

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

Maritime Archaeology Ltd, 2009: *Heritage Statement Report: 1796: Bembridge Inshore Lifeboat Station (ILB)*, unpublished client report

Wessex Archaeology, 2010: *Bembridge Inshore Lifeboat Station, Bembridge, Isle of Wight, Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording*, March 2010, Reference: 73880

### 6.2 Cartographic Sources

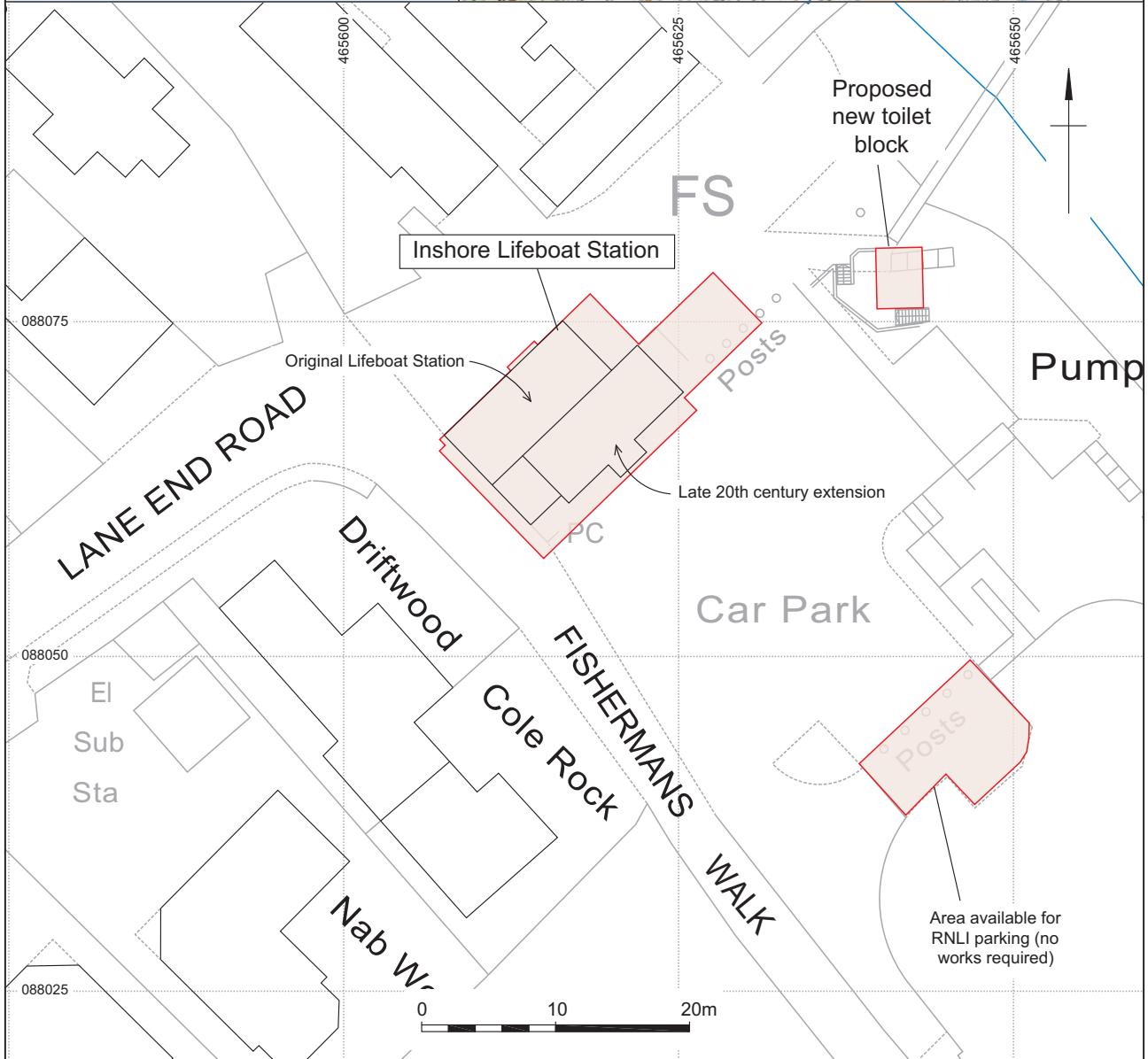
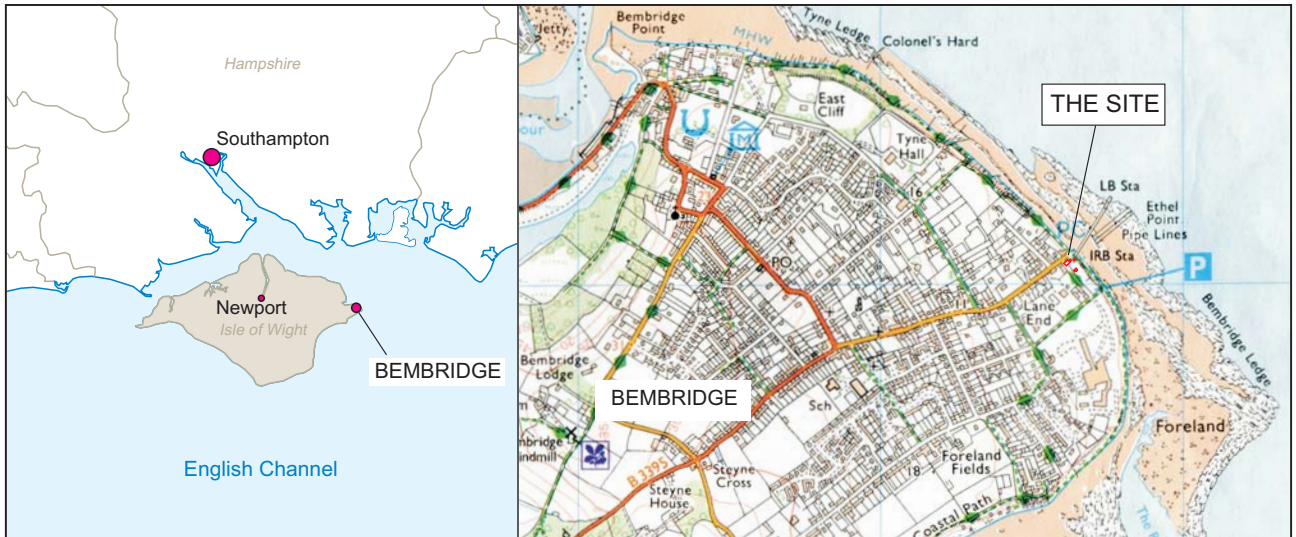
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1862	Ordnance Survey Hants & Isle of Wight	25" : 1 mile	Yes	Yes
1897	Ordnance Survey Hants & Isle of Wight	25" : 1 mile	Yes	Yes
1908	Ordnance Survey Hants & Isle of Wight	25" : 1 mile	Yes	No
1946	Ordnance Survey Hants & Isle of Wight	25" : 1 mile	Yes	Yes



### 6.3 Online resources

Multi-Agency Geographic Initiative for the Countryside

<http://www.magic.gov.uk>

Date accessed: May 2010



 Area of proposed new works  	Reproduced from the 2002 Ordnance Survey 1:25000 Explorer® map with the permission of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright, Wessex Archaeology, Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire. SP4 6EB. Licence Number: 100028190. Digital data reproduced from Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright 2010. All rights reserved. Reference Number: 100020449. This material is for client report only © Wessex Archaeology. No unauthorised reproduction.			
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Site location

Figure 1





1862 Ordnance Survey 25 inch map



1897 Ordnance Survey 25 inch map

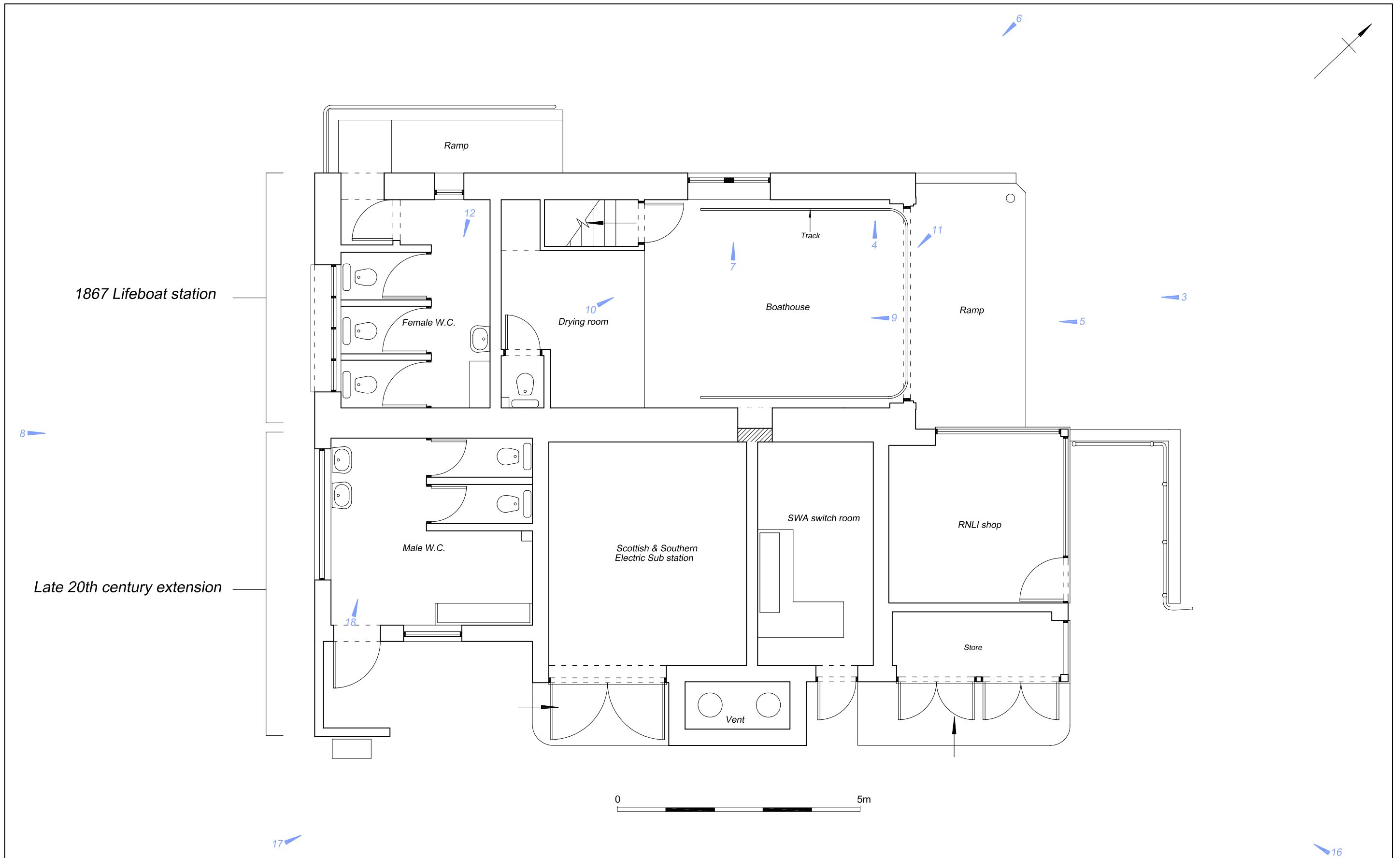


1946 Ordnance Survey 25 inch map



 The Site

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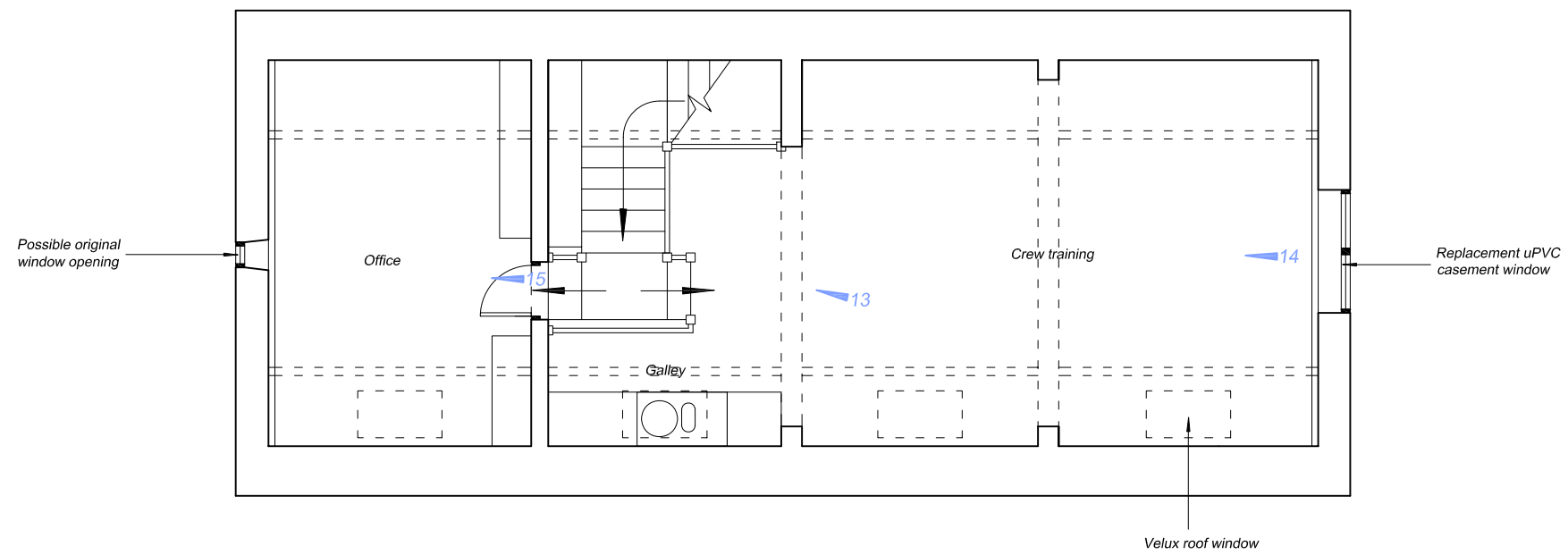


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Ground floor plan

Figure 3



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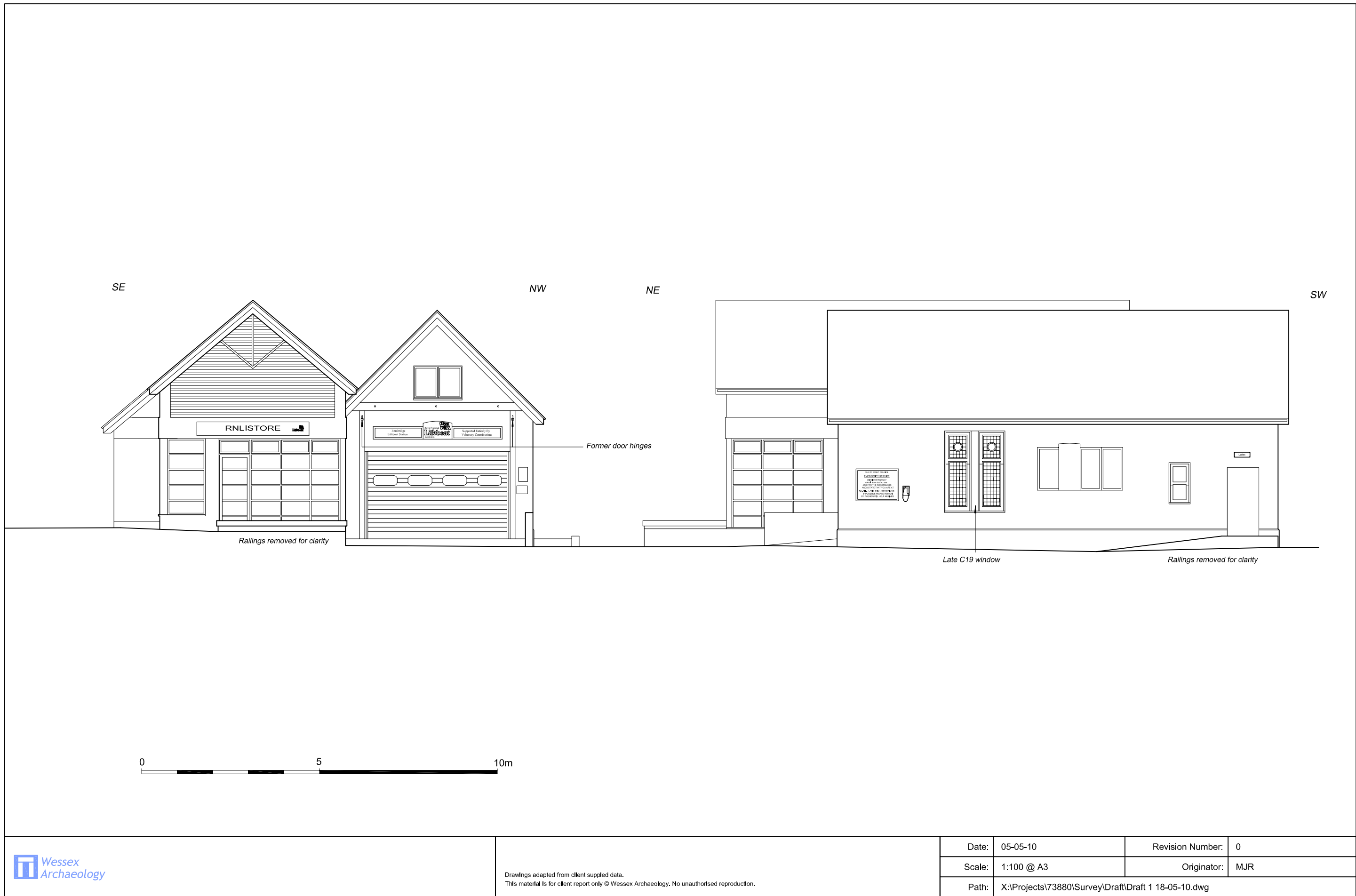


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South-west and South-east elevations

Figure 5



North-west and North-east elevations

Figure 6



Plate 1: The Lifeboat station c. 1900



Plate 2: The Lifeboat Station converted to a café c. 1955

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Plate 3: North-east elevation of the Lifeboat Station



Plate 4: Curved track for former door set within the floor of the Boathouse


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Plate 5: Top half of the north-east gable end featuring remnant iron hinges



Plate 6: North-west elevation of the Lifeboat Station

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Plate 7: Window situated in the north-west wall of the Lifeboat Station



Plate 8: South-west gable ends of the Lifeboat Station and adjoining Extension

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Plate 9: Interior of the Boathouse with Drying room to the rear



Plate 10: North-west wall of the Boathouse

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Plate 11: South-east wall of the Boathouse



Plate 12: Ladies public toilets viewed from the north-west

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Plate 13: First floor - staircase with balustrade



Plate 14: Crew training area viewed from the north-west

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Plate 15: LOM office viewed from the north-west



Plate 16: Extension viewed from the east

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Plate 17: Extension viewed from the south



Plate 18: Gents public toilets viewed from the south

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