

**STABLE BLOCK B, LE CATEAU BARRACKS  
COLCHESTER GARRISON  
ESSEX**

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD**



**Essex County Council  
Field Archaeology Unit**

**April 2007**

*Cover depicts The Royal Artillery Barracks from Abbey Field in the 1870s, with stable blocks  
either side of the officer's quarters (<http://www.camulos.com/postcardshtm>)*

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.

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# CONTENTS

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Location and description

### 2.2 Planning background

### 2.3 Historical background

## 3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

## 4.0 METHODS

## 5.0 THE STABLE BLOCK

### 5.1 General description

### 5.2 External descriptions

### 5.3 Internal descriptions

#### 5.3.1 *Ground floor (stables)*

#### 5.3.2 *First floor (barrack rooms)*

## 6.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Appendices

Appendix 1: Contents of Archive

Appendix 2: EHER summary

## Figures

Figure 1. Location and block plan

Figure 2. General plan of Royal Artillery Barracks, 1875

Figure 3. Architect's floor plans of stable block B, 1875

Figure 4. Existing elevations

Figure 5. Existing ground and first floor plans

Figure 6. Section A-A1 through stable block

## **Photographic plates**

- Plate 1 Stables viewed from north
- Plate 2 Stables viewed from east
- Plate 3 Stable blocks viewed from south-west
- Plate 4 Stable blocks viewed from north
- Plate 5 Rear elevation
- Plate 6 Façade detail
- Plate 7 Blocked rear stable doorway and fittings for litter sheds
- Plate 8 South-west elevation
- Plate 9 South-west elevation of stable block A
- Plate 10 View along walkway from south-western entrance
- Plate 11 South-east stalls, south-west end of stable
- Plate 12 North-west stalls, south-west end of stable
- Plate 13 View along south-west central walkway
- Plate 14 Original stalls in stable block A
- Plate 15 North-east end of stables
- Plate 16 Stall flooring
- Plate 17 Tethering point
- Plate 18 Original stable window
- Plate 19 Stable vent
- Plate 20 Battery store beside blocked stable doorway
- Plate 21 North-east stable doors
- Plate 22 Interior of bread store
- Plate 23 Harness room 1
- Plate 24 Harness room 2
- Plate 25 Tailor's shop
- Plate 26 Stalls in officer's stable
- Plate 27 Officer's stable
- Plate 28 Harness holders in officer's stable
- Plate 29 Stall flooring in officer's stable
- Plate 30 Bottom flight of stairs, south-west side
- Plate 31 Top landing and stairway
- Plate 32 Barrack room on north-east end
- Plate 33 Sergeant's quarters
- Plate 34 First floor skylight
- Plate 35 Removed cloakroom fixtures in corridor A1 NU
- Plate 36 Modern extension on north-east side of balcony

**STABLE BLOCK B, LE CATEAU BARRACKS  
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**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD**

**Client:** Lexden Restoration & Development

**FAU Project No:** 1750

**NGR:** TL 9929 2451

**Planning Application:** LB/COL/06/1280

**OASIS Record:** essexcou1-25973

**Dates of Fieldwork:** 1st & 2nd February 2007

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) undertook a programme of building recording works on a stable/barrack block at the former Le Cateau Cavalry Barracks, prior to office/residential conversion. The subject of the report is part of a group of several Grade II listed structures identified as of national importance in a historic building assessment (HBA) carried out by the Ingram Consultancy (2000) in advance of the regeneration of the whole garrison area. For full appreciation of the subject therefore, this report should therefore be read in conjunction with the earlier HBA. The project was funded by the developer, Lexden Restoration & Development, and carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the ECC Historic Buildings Advisor on behalf of Colchester Borough Council (CBC).

Copies of the report will be issued to CBC and deposited with the Essex Historic Environment Record (EHER). A digital copy will be uploaded to the OASIS database (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/oasis/index.cfm>). The site archive will be deposited at Colchester Museum.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Location and description (fig.1)**

Colchester Barracks were constructed from the mid 19th- to early 20th-century and comprise a considerable area of land to the southern side of Colchester town centre. Le Cateau Barracks were one of the first permanent barracks to be built in the country and stand on the

eastern side of Butt Road, bordered to the north by the Barracks Folly (fig.1), a walkway from Butt Road eastward to Military Road that divides civilian and army land.

Several important buildings are included in the group, all of which are Grade II listed. However, the list description confuses Le Cateau with the earlier Cavalry Barracks next door by giving a construction date of 1863 rather than 1875. In recent years, horses have continued to be kept in the stables, and the barracks above have been used as lecture/training rooms for the army. Their recent titles are given below in brackets along with their original functions. All are redundant since the barracks shifted to a new purpose-built complex outside the town. The listed structures are outlined below, all of which are to be retained in subsequent development schemes:

- Stables/barracks block B (Lec. 07) - the subject of this report
- Stables/barracks block A (Lec. 06)
- Officer's Quarters (Lec. 03)
- Adult School (IC1)
- Canteen (IC2), including Sergeant's Mess
- Riding School (Lec. 11), built with the earlier Cavalry Barracks to the south-west

Stable block B (LBS 469541) originally formed the central element of three identical blocks on the south-west side of the parade ground and Officer's Quarters. Only this and block A remain (fig.1). Another group of three formerly stood to the north-east, flanking the other side of the parade ground (fig.2). This area and much of the former parade ground are now part of a council-run car park (fig.1). The area to the rear/north-west of stable block B has recently been stripped and reconsolidated as part of initial groundworks for the overall development of the site. At the front, the building group provides an interesting aspect from Circular Road North to the south-east.

## **2.2 Planning background**

Colchester Borough Council received a planning application (LB/COL/06/1280) for change of use and conversion of stable/barrack block B to mixed office/residential use. The submitted plans were to convert the ground floor stables to offices and to provide nine one- and two-bedroom flats on the first floor. Mindful of its listed status and the importance given to it in the historic building assessment, the Colchester Borough Council Conservation Officer recommended that a full record be made of the structure in its present form.

## **2.3 Historical background**

### ***Colchester Garrison and Le Cateau Barracks***

Colchester has been a military town since the Roman Invasion. The first garrison was established in AD43 as Legio XX Valeria Victrix. From the late 17th-century troops were billeted in the town. A military camp was established on Lexden Heath in 1741 for troops on their way to the continent. The camp continued in use alongside billeting until a permanent garrison was built in 1794, when wooden infantry and cavalry barracks were erected on four acres of land to the south-east of Lexden Heath. Additional barracks were built on a 21-acre site bordering on Magdalene Street in 1797 and 1799. Four brigades of infantry were camped at Lexden Heath by 1803, which by 1805 could accommodate 7,000 men and 400 horses. Because of its location close to the continent, Colchester became an important military barracks in the Napoleonic Wars.

Land was steadily acquired by the army during the 19th-century. Colchester Camp was built in 1855-6, containing temporary wooden huts for 5,000 infantrymen. The wooden Garrison Church was built at the same time in Military Road, and as one of the most important surviving structures, is the only building to have grade II\* listed status.

In 1857, at the close of the Crimean War, a Royal Commission was set up to look at sickness and mortality rates in barracks. The Commission for Improving and Hospitals was chaired by Sydney Herbert, a supporter of Florence Nightingale, and recommended improved heating, ventilation and sanitary arrangements. These were incorporated into the new stable block design at Aldershot, the first permanent cavalry barracks, built between 1856 and 1859, but unfortunately demolished in 1964. The provision of permanent married quarters and gymnasia were also recommended.

The Cavalry Barracks, built beside Butt Road between 1862 and 1864, were the first to benefit from the Commission's recommendations. They were the first permanent, brick-built barracks in the town and effectively doubled the size of the garrison (Ingram 2000). The Cavalry Barracks stand on land to the south-west, adjacent to Le Cateau (fig.1). According to Ingram (2000), the design, planning and construction of the barracks were innovative at the time, reflecting "post-Crimean thinking," based on the training camp concept pioneered at Aldershot. According to James Douet in 'British Barracks 1600-1914, Their Architecture and Role in Society' (1998), the new plan form, "while still ordered and symmetrical, abandoned the enclosed hierarchical parade-centred layout in favour of a more open configuration".



Regardless of the innovations introduced by the Royal Commission, an Army Sanitary Commission decided in 1864 that quartering men over stables was no longer acceptable. Despite these recommendations, The Royal Artillery Barracks (later renamed as Le Cateau) were built ten years later, in 1875, to the same advanced design of cavalry barracks and layout of cavalry blocks developed at Aldershot in the 1850s, but since dispensed with. As such, it is the last remaining example of the traditional barrack rooms above stables plan form (listed buildings online).

The stable blocks had a central officer's range with parallel blocks of stables/barracks behind. Stalls for 31 horses ran the length of the ground floor, off a central gullied passage, with stock and service areas built into the corners, representing 'wings'. The stables incorporated advanced fireproof construction in 'Dennett's patent arch and fire-proof floor system' of brick jack-arched floors supported by iron columns and beams. An advanced ventilation systems placed grills above the stable windows and within the jack-arching above.

The soldiers continued to live above their horses in the traditional way, either side of a central stair. The size and layout of the barrack rooms represents one of the earliest of the larger Victorian dormitories, "a considerable improvement on earlier cavalry barracks" (Douet 1998). 23 Men were quartered each side rather than the more normal 14-16 of the typical Georgian barracks. The building was fitted with gas lighting from the outset, and heated by open fires in the dormitories and sergeant's rooms. The block in between had rooms for NCO's and night urinals, rather than the noxious urine tubs of old (Ingram 2000). The roof of the wider ground floor formed an asphalt-covered balcony along one side of the barrack rooms.

After the First World War, the Field Artillery Barracks were renamed Le Cateau after the British victory over the Germans during the retreat from the Battle of Mons in 1914 (<http://www.1914-18.net/bat2.htm>).

Stable blocks C-F, the married quarters and gun sheds at the back of the parade ground (fig.2) were probably demolished in the 1960s to make way for the Butt Road car park. More recently, the surviving stable blocks were used as a teaching/training facility by the 49th (East) Brigade Specialist Training Team. This may have coincided with repair works to the roofs and gables, resulting in loss of architectural and technical detail. It is believed that the horses, which fulfil a ceremonial rather than military role these days, remained at the stables until recently, looked after and exercised in part by youngsters of the garrison families.

***The Royal Artillery Regiment:*** (from <http://www.army.mod.uk.royalartillery/history.htm>)

Before the 18th-century artillery 'traynes' were raised by Royal Warrant for specific campaigns, then disbanded. In 1716 two regular companies of field artillery were formed at Woolwich, each comprising 100 men. In 1722 these companies were augmented with others to form the Royal Regiment of Artillery. By 1757 there were 24 companies within two battalions and 32 companies in four battalions by 1771.

In the early days, progress on the battlefield was slow because the men had to walk beside their guns. Often the officers, who were mounted, had to manhandle the guns into action before the men arrived. This was far from ideal, so in 1793 two troops of the (mounted) Royal Horse Artillery were raised to provide fire support, thus establishing the role of horses within the artillery provision.

In 1899 The Royal Artillery was divided into two groups: the Royal Horse Artillery and Royal Field Artillery, and the Royal Garrison Artillery, comprising coastal defence, mountain, siege and heavy batteries. The three sections effectively functioned as different corps, until 1924 when they amalgamated once more.

The Royal Artillery have fought in all major fields of combat, from the Napoleonic Wars, Waterloo, Crimea, India and the colonies as well as both World Wars. The Royal Horse Artillery has its own traditions, uniforms and insignia and retains its own identity within the regiment. Its performance of ceremonial duties and commemorations (Royal Legion Poppy Fund, etc.) has led it to be regarded by some as an elite force (MOD 2007).

### **3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

According to the WSI (ECC FAU 2007), the main aim of the project was to investigate and record the stable block to English Heritage level 3 standard (2006) prior to conversion. In so doing this would consider its construction, plan form, spatial layout, significance and importance on a local and national level and provide a permanent record of the building in its present condition.

## **4.0 METHODS**

Existing plans and elevations supplied by the client were used during the survey, forming the basis for illustrations shown in this report. Architectural descriptions were made and photographs taken in digital and 35mm black & white print formats. The photographs were taken internally and externally, though the close proximity of stable block A and the north-east site boundary, slightly limited the scope of photography. Elevation drawings (fig.4) are provided for greater clarity. The stable interiors were recorded and photographed under artificial lighting. Some areas were difficult to photograph internally due to lack of space.

All areas were clear and accessible except for the tailor's shop on the north-east wing, the door to which could not be unlocked. However, a photograph taken during an earlier visit by the clients is included within the report.

A representative selection of photographs is reproduced at the back of the report as plates 1-36. The remainder can be found in the archive.

The Garrison HBA (Ingram 2000) was used as primary background research. Copies of the 1875 floor plans were obtained from the National Monuments Record (NMR) in Swindon and provided details on original construction and function, which are indicated in the illustrations at the back of the report.

## **5.0 THE STABLE BLOCK**

### **5.1 General description**

The stables were built to the same design and plan form in two columns of three blocks flanking the parade ground and Officer's Quarters, the most prominent building of the Royal Artillery Barracks. The most obvious architectural style of the stables with their pedimented gables, low ranges and wings, is the neo-Georgian which fit into the overall theme. All the main structures were built on a north-east to south-west alignment. The configuration of stable blocks A - F is shown in the 1875 plan of the barracks (fig.2). Each block of three was designed to sustain itself, containing necessary functional areas such as a forge, cook house and tailor's shop within its wings. The Officer's Quarters faced onto Abbey Field, with a circular driveway in front of the central building. To the rear of the Officer's Quarters was the parade ground, enclosed either side by the stables, with the Gun Sheds and Butt Road beyond, where the main entrance was located (now the entrance to the CDC car park). Le Cateau Road is not shown on the original plan and may have been imposed later to link the

main road to Circular Road North, which forms a spinal road beside the army grounds between Butt Road and Mersea Road.

As part of the group, stable block B faces the south-east and Abbey Field/Circular Road North. It has a long rectangular, broadly symmetrical, single-depth plan form with projecting wings to front and back, containing officer's stables and stores. The shorter wings on the rear side originally had litter sheds extending to the central gable (fig.3) that have since been removed. The main stable doors were located at the ends and rear elevation (since blocked).

The structure is built in 9" red brick in Flemish bond stood on a low chamfered plinth. There is yellow brick banding on the first floor and codestone and Yorkstone dressings. Ground floor windows have all been boarded-up and the balcony fire escape ladder sawn-off to prevent unwelcome entry. The surrounding ground has been stripped to the north-west and reinstated. During the survey, groundworks contractors were laying groundworks/drainage on the reinstated Le Cateau Road.

There are two storeys, providing stabling on the ground floor and barrack rooms for the soldiers above. The two 23-man dormitories were open plan either side of the central gable that provided stairs, ablutions and accommodation for two sergeants, as well as a balcony (fig.3). Recently, partitions were added upstairs to create separate teaching and training rooms, but it is still easy to define the original layout. The stables below remain virtually intact, but with wider modern two-horse stalls, standing either side of the central corridor, with auxiliary rooms in the short side wings.

Drainage channels exit from all the main access points either end and at the rear of the stables. The ones either side linked to communal drains either side that surrounded the stables and former married quarters (fig.2). Two ménages and a lunging circle were included in the design to the north-east of barrack block D (fig.2), but no longer exist.

## **5.2 External descriptions (fig.4)**

The two long elevations are of similar construction, with central pedimented gables and gabled ground floor wings in the corners (plates 1-5). The main end gables are effectively hipped, their tops built square to accommodate the yellow brick chimney stacks coming out of the ends (plates 8 & 9). The eaves are decorated with a coggled yellow brick banding that continues into the side wings. Roofs are slate clad with a shallow pitch of 30° and have been replaced either partly or wholly. Certainly, the main south-west gable, both central gables and the two north-west wing gables were repaired in the modern period. This led to the loss

of the original Yorkstone kneelers and coggled yellow brick corbelling to these areas, which may still be seen on the south-west elevation of block A and the south-east facing wings of block B (plates 1, 2 & 9), which were not affected. Surprisingly, the north-east gables of both stables were never decorated, perhaps because these were less prominent elevations. All the projecting gables were constructed with attractive yellow brick-dressed oculus louvered windows set within the apex, although the main central gable, rebuilt entirely above eaves level (fig.4 & plates 1 & 2), has had its one removed.

Ground floor fenestration consists of the wooden-framed square six-light central tilting stable windows in the stable areas. Approximately two-thirds have been replaced with modern single pane ones, whose positions may not be seen on the external plates, included within the report, but can be identified on the elevations in fig.4. Those on the first floor are long 4 x 4 top hung sashes with thin frames and angled profiles. All sills and heads are painted white and cast in codestone. Original battened doors have vented fanlights over, boarded-up against vandals. Only a few doors have seemingly been replaced. Projecting yellow brick bands run around the building at ground floor sill, first floor and upper floor sill level. Single parallel bands, flush with the walls; join the window heads on the first floor, including the central gable and wing gables on both sides.

Stable ventilation is facilitated by the tiling windows and row of cast iron ventilation grills above the stable window lintels (with the exception of the area between the central gable and north-east wing on the main façade) and more randomly-positioned single vents above the plinth and in the central gables. The more innovative aspect comes from individual vents shown as 'LV' in fig.3, that exited above the double brick banding on top of the codestone stable window heads (fig.4). First floor ventilation was provided by vents between the windows that may be associated with stainless steel pipes (fig.4 & plates 1 & 2) in both cases.

The chimneys have had their top stacks removed down to the plain yellow brickwork that is now capped. They have been removed on the accompanying stable block too (plates 3 & 9), but can be seen in the cover plate and appear on the contemporary buildings nearby, i.e. plain square-shafted and red brick built, with tall chimney pots.

### ***South-east elevation***

The main façade has a central gable and projecting gable wings either end of the long stable ranges (fig.4 & plates 1 & 2). A decorous double 'I' brick banding is provided below the windows on this side only (plate 6). On the ground floor, the windows are set seven apiece

either side of the central gable. Those in the central gable have two 2 x 6 hung sash windows positioned between three doorways. In the central gable, the two outer doors lead to the stairs while the middle one leads into the central part of the stables (labelled as battery stable 1 in fig.3). The middle doorway and windows either side have segmental arched brick heads, like the main stable doors, while the others have the same codestone heads as all other windows and doorways. The right hand doorway is a modern replacement. The wings have doors set within the gables and pairs of tie rods terminating inside the apex (plates 1 & 2). Each has moulded Yorkstone corbels that were removed on all other gables during a modern rebuilding/reproofing phase. Of the two wings, the former cook house, to the south, has a modern door and in-filled fanlight, contemporary with the revamped kitchen inside, and 6 x 6 pane sashes, wider than those above. A small food store is attached to the cook house with its own entry point (fig.5). The north-east wing, which housed the officer's horses, has a boarded 15-pane stable window facing inwards and an original battened door beneath an 8-pane fanlight. Original plans (fig.3) show there was once a skylight above the officer's stables.

The first floor sash windows are spaced further apart. Those in the centre were blocked when the terraced balcony was partly in-filled with modern offices/staff rooms either side of the gable. Unfortunately this also resulted in the loss of most of the cast iron diagonal railings (plates 1 & 2) and the exit grills above the stable windows. Architectural detailing in the gable was removed when it was rebuilt in an unsympathetic manner above the eaves and its row of five sashes (plate 6)

There are random iron ventilation grills above the plinth and a row along the tops of the window heads, but only to the south of the gable. They carry over the north wing where the officer's horses were stabled.

### ***North-west elevation***

The rear elevation originally faced the front of stable block C (fig.2). Its main characteristics have already been mentioned under the general description. Historically, the main features on this side were the litter shed and central stable doors in the gable. Both have been removed in a period of repair, possibly carried out when the barrack rooms were refurbished for training purposes. Access points on all sides meant the stables could be cleared rapidly and efficiently. Fig.4 and plates 5 and 7 show the blocked stable doorway. A boarded-over fanlight over the door was recorded internally. A cambered hardstanding area of 'granite pitcher paving' (fig.3) in front of the stable doors remains, but the two drainage gullies either side have been filled-in with cement. A row of in-filled sockets beneath the stable windows

relate to the two open-sided litter sheds either side and a line of unfilled areas either side of the blocked entrance shows where the walls were keyed in (see original plan fig.3).

The north-west corner room (harness room 2 and tailor's shop in figs.3 & 5) of the north-east wing retains its original door but the adjacent sash window into the harness room is blocked. The tailor's shop was inaccessible during the survey, but photographs provided by the client show the interior, which like the others is bereft of fixtures and fittings and in a poorer condition than many others, with paint peeling off the walls from damp.

The corner rooms (meat store and bread stores and harness room, fig.3 & 5) of the south-west wing feature two sash windows, one of which has been boarded-up. The other has iron grills in front. There are no rows of ventilation grills. Yorkstone and yellow brick dressings to the main and both wing gables were removed when the top sections were rebuilt, the extent of which is shown in fig.4 and plates 4 & 5.

### **Gable ends**

The gabled south-west elevation (plate 8) has had its top rebuilt but would originally have yellow brick cogged or dog-tooth corbelling and Yorkstone kneelers like its equivalent in block A (plate 9). The opposite north-east gable, in both cases, appear to have been built without these embellishments. Both end stable doorways are boarded-up. Only the north-eastern doors remain *in situ*. All stable doors have segmental arches over, dressed in yellow brick rather than the codestone lintels seen in all other areas.

Both short elevations contain a single 2 x 3 hung sash window at first floor level, above the fireplace inside. Below, on the more prominent south-west elevation, are two original doors with opening fanlights and codestone lintels. The cook house wing on the south-east side has an attached brick-built pantry that, although not included on the original plans, is of the same style and was probably built soon after. The pantry windows on this elevation are smaller than the others; 2 x 1 pane sashes, lightly grilled and boarded (plate 8).

The south-east elevation contains boarded stable doors and window (historic boarding) under dressed segmental arched heads. The latter is likely to be the same as that of the block A south-west elevation; with a fairly attractive three-light, six pane wooden-framed window (plate 9). There are boarded stable windows in the officer's wing this side.



### **5.3 Internal descriptions**

#### **5.3.1 Ground floor**

The ground floor has three functional areas: horse stalls, central lobby/stairs and stores/service rooms, the latter located mainly in the four corner wings (figs. 3 & 5). Horses were taken in by the three stable doors (battery stables 2-4) and half-heck doors into the officer's stables. In the central gable, where the stairs were located, a single doorway (battery stable 1, fig.3) and the two lobby doors provided an access route for the soldiers from the first floor barrack rooms.

The four oblong corner buildings contained harness/tack rooms either end, closest to the stalls, and an officer's stable. Other rooms had clearly assigned individual functions essential to the efficient working of the whole block. Those functions assigned to block B were the meat/bread stores, cook house and tailor's shop (fig.3). Other functions carried out in the other two blocks included a forge (block A) and adult school (block C). An infant's school was located in block F (NMR MD95/1445 no.5).

#### *Construction (fig.5 & 6)*

The ground floor has a largely symmetrical layout. The stables are open plan with a central walkway through the middle, leading out through double stable doors either ends. Another access originally led out the rear, but is now blocked with brickwork (fig.5). Either side of the walkway are a row of cast iron columns with stall boxes fitted between.

Stable bays are defined by tall 6" columns with angular fluted ends, which, along with the tall jack-arch ceiling, are the main features seen on entry (plate 10). They were designed with the requirements of the stables in mind, to create an open plan high ceilinged building where air was free to circulate, assisted by ventilation grills. The middle and corner rooms are solely brick-built with girders spanning from north-west to the end walls and on the south-east side, single king post strut trusses dividing the two into two bays. Construction is the same either end, the only differences being that the columns running along the south-east side, a load-bearing wall, are bolted to longitudinal cast iron I-section joists (plates 11 & 13) and those on the north-west side are bolted to the axial ceiling joists (plates 12 & 13). The ceiling comprises iron I-section joists with rolled iron ties and brick jack-arches, designed as 'Dennett's patent arch and fire-proof flooring system' (Ingram 2000), an important safety feature.



The roof space was not entered during the survey, but photographs provided by the client show that it is a king post strut type, the same as recorded in the downstairs south-east projections. Fig.6 shows the truss with clarity.

#### *Layout/stalls*

Rows of columns are set either side of the lobby area representing bays. Stalls are arranged in rows of two-bay double stalls, many have had their doors removed (fig.5). The double stalls are a later modification and do not reflect the original plan form, which survives in its contemporary, block A. Originally the horses were kept singly one stall each side of the bay, providing accommodation for 17 horses on the north-west side, and 14 on the other side, giving a total stabling of 31 horses. On the north-west side a battery store occupies the space beside the middle entrance instead of a stall (fig.3). There is more room on this side because the double stairwells take up room on the other side. Each stall has a modern chipboard or plywood partition and diagonal-effect pine door. Some of the single stall doors have a bare two-bar wooden framework and longer hinge straps similar to those in block A (plate 11, extreme right) and it is clear there are others beneath the modern boarding. Those in the officer's stable are completely exposed and as a result are badly-gnawed by the horses. Plate 14, taken inside block A, shows the original stalls had battened surrounds and doors and were painted blue, the same colour as the columns.

Each bay or stall is 1.65m-wide (5' 6"). The floors are uniform throughout the stalls, but different in the corridor, beside the blocked central access point and in the officer's stable. Each is indicated in fig.5 as F1-F3. The stable floors are made from 9 x 4½" rivuletted Staffordshire blue stable blocks (F2 in fig.5) set diagonally and sloped towards a central gully formed a single row of the same (plate 16), which run off into drainage gullies either side of the corridor. Iron tethering rings are located on the rear walls to each bay (plate 17). The bare brickwork of the walls behind is painted half black to 7½' and the rest is white, common to both sets of stalls. The windows are set high up the walls and are cord activated. Original ones, with glazing bars, are easily-recognisable (plate 18) though the later ones work on the same tilting principle. A row of iron ventilation grills are positioned immediately above the windows (partly-seen in plate 18), the same as those recorded on the exterior. Larger square vents are embedded within the jack-arching of the load-bearing walls and labelled LV in fig. 3, set within the sandstone blocking between girder and jack arch (plate 19). They exit through apertures at the base of the balcony, as discussed earlier.

The two-tone colour scheme to the walls (black and white) is unlikely to be original but is a recurrent theme downstairs and likely to be traditional. The columns are painted royal blue

up to 6'. The stables are exactly the same both ends except that the column heads are painted a burnt umber colour in the north-eastern part to differentiate the two; the same colour as the jack arching joists and ribs (plate 15).

#### *Aisle/central walkway*

Easy access was afforded to the stalls from a wide central walkway, which was floored in granite pitcher paving (fig.3, and labelled F1 in fig.5) of varying sizes between 20 to 40cm long, laid in 8cm-wide courses (plates 15 & 19). Their upsides have worn diagonal score-marks for grip. Square granite gullies line the edges of the walkway that drained urine from the stalls in either direction and out the central rear entrance, beneath the doors (fig.5) and out of the stable. Outside, the gullies linked to pipes that carried the urine from the three range block and married quarters on the north-west side (fig.2)

Flooring in the former central stable doorway is different to that in the stalls and corridor and consists of 8½x 4" plain Staffordshire blue bricks (F3, fig.5), like those forming the cambered paved area outside (plate 7). One of the drainage gullies has been filled-in in concrete and a dwarf wall has been added at the front (plate 20), though it is not clear why. The blocking of the doorway appears to have been done some time ago. The interior of the adjacent battery store has had shelving at the back removed and a secondary coat rail inserted (plate 20).

An arched window over the blocked central stable door is original and contained three lights with twelve panes each (plate 20). The lights were vented pull-down types. The central one was replaced in the modern period with a single pane, probably when the stable windows were replaced. These contrast with the window above the north-east end stable doors, which are set lower and squatter with only six panes per light (plate 21). These ledge and battened double doors are the only stable doors in Block B to remain *in situ*.

#### *Side wings*

The original plan (fig.3) shows design and function of the 1875 wings either side of the central walkway, in the four corners of the stable block. Each block had the same plan form and some common room functions. Harness/tack rooms were situated either to serve each stable and one wing always contained officer's stables. Other functions were shared between the group of three blocks, such as the cook house and forge.

The wings on the north-west elevation have two rooms a piece and ceilings held up by I-section iron beams on the line of the north-west load bearing wall. All have high ceilings, concrete floors and continue the two-tone theme of the ground floor areas, sometimes quite

vividly. All the rear (north-west) rooms have fireplaces. The inner two are harness rooms. The other wings, on the south-east elevation, are large single rooms, divided into two bays by king post strut roof trusses, also seen in the roof of the main block. One is the officer's (NCO's) stable (which originally, according to the plans, had a roof vent) and the other is the cookhouse, now completely modernised as the kitchen. The latter had a louvered lantern in the centre of the roof. According to the original drawings (fig.3) the food was cooked on two stoves entitled 'Warrers Cooking Apparatus'.

#### *South-west wing/corner rooms*

The main area of interest in terms of décor and surviving fixtures and fittings is the former meat and bread stores (fig.5). Each were independent storage areas, with separate entrances on the south-west elevation and vented fanlights above typical battened-type doors. The dividing wall between the meat and bread store was knocked through to form an archway in the modern period (plate 22). Both rooms have the same décor, a mustard yellow/white colour scheme, 6" plain skirting and a concrete floor. The old meat store contains no fixtures and fittings apart from some wall brackets for shelving. The bread store, closest to the walkway, but not linking with it, contains a blocked fireplace, wall-mounted shelving and a colourful red and white-painted cupboard set within the alcove and shelf above (plate 22).

The adjacent harness room 1 leads onto the central walkway for ease of use. The doorway has been repositioned recently (fig. 5). Much of the original 7 foot high beaded matchboarding remains, except for the area around the fireplace that was removed when the surround was taken off. It is painted a vivid yellow (plate 23).

On the main elevation, the re-vamped kitchen is a modern installation removing all of the cookhouse fixtures and fittings. All the interiors are modern, dating from the training days here. The adjoined pantry/storeroom is linked to it and, if not contemporary with the 1875 build, is not far off, and had access to the cookhouse and outside, so that foodstuffs could be brought in directly (fig.5). Modern fitted cupboards have replaced any earlier features.

#### *North-east wing/corner rooms*

Harness room 2 is panelled on three sides, the third side removed with the fireplace. The walls are painted black and white and the only window has a modern blocking in breezeblock (plate 24). Modern bridle hangers are located on the north-east side, in use up until quite recently.

The adjacent tailor's shop (fig.3) was locked during the survey, but a photograph of the interior was obtained from the client. It shows peeling white-painted walls, an alcove and a large north-eastern window (plate 25) identical to the segmental arch window seen on the south-western end of block A (plate 9). It is a top hung sash window of six lights of six panes, separated by two thick wooden mullions. The size of window was important in bringing plenty of natural light into the room for the tailor to work by. Also there is a double door entry on the north-west elevation that could help in the warmer months. As the tailor performed a service function unrelated to the upkeep of the horses (like the cook house and food stores in this block) there is no entry into the stable interior.

Each block had two sergeants sleeping on the first floor in their own quarters with their horses downstairs in the officer's stables, on the other side of the walkway (fig.5). Stalls were originally provided for three horses (fig.3), but were latterly adapted as two larger stalls. The décor is similar yet slightly grander than in the main stables and there are some interesting surviving fixtures and fittings. The stalls are located on the north-east end with entrance and stable doors opposite each other (fig.5). Again the overwhelming colour scheme is blue and white, but the walls are painted with blue curves either side of the stalls (plate 26) to the height of the tethering rings. There are three wall-mounted wooden bridle holders opposite, set on quite elegant curved iron brackets (fig.5 and plate 28). Along this side, away from the stalls, the décor changes to brown and white, possibly to denote rank.

A row of three replaced stable windows are set in the north-east elevation and there is a fixed fifteen pane window covered on the main façade (fig.4). Above the door is another top-opening vent and an oculus window in the gable (plate 27). The stalls are wider than those in the main part of the stables and the partition shows only a bare frame. The outer stall walls have been re-clad with plywood casing. The gates are original, in so far as they feature the two-bar wooden frame and longer strap hinges similar to those in block A and the single stalls in block B, but have been repositioned.

The floor in the officer's stable is made from granite pitcher paving setts like those in the central walkway through the stables (F1, fig.5, plate 29), but in a more uniform size. Like the stalls in the main part, they are angled diagonally towards the drainage gullies (here two courses wide) that link under the wall to one of the main gullies. The pattern of gullies proves there were originally three stalls here, a third for a spare horse; a gully for the central stall runs along where the current partition is located.

### *Stair lobbies*

The stairs are located on the south-east side within the main gable and entered by the two doors either side, one of which is a modern fire door replacement (fig.5). A central imperial stair with curving balustrades rises from either side to the barrack rooms (plate 30). There are echoes of Art Nouveau in its sinuous style, overall quite grand and attractive, despite its utilitarian materials. The stair is made from cast concrete with hexagonal shafted newel post and tapering 4" cast iron columns to hold the landing (plate 31). Vinyl treads and angular steel edging are modern additions, alongside a vinyl-coated safety rail to the balustrade that covers the once-protruding rail ends that prevented soldiers sliding down them. The inner rail is not an original feature and was likely inserted at the same time, perhaps when the barrack rooms were adapted.

### **5.3.3 First floor**

From the stair, the first floor is entered through a pair of modern fire doors and into a short corridor (plate 31). Either side are modern WCs and washrooms (fig.5). At the end, the corridor branches off to the two sides leading to the barrack rooms either side, NCO rooms to the rear and cloak (uniform) rooms ( NU A1 and A2) to the front (fig.3 & 5). These are historic divisions defining definite functional elements.

Modern partitions and doors were added when the barracks ceased to hold soldiers in the modern period. Judging by the look of the place, this was within the last 30 years or so. The barrack rooms were divided into three classroom/lecture rooms each side and carpets laid. Male and female toilets were fitted into the former ablution block. In addition, new offices/staff rooms were built onto the balcony.

Barrack room décor is limited and simple, suiting the practicability of its function. A low, rolled skirting, that features throughout, is the only embellishment afforded. Twin-light four pane hung sash windows are located at regular intervals. Fixtures and fittings (fire places) had been stripped out and blocked prior to the survey. As such, the following descriptions are brief.

### *Barrack rooms*

Each dormitory was built identically for 23 men, with beds arranged against the opposing long walls (fig.3). Heating was provided by fire places set at each end and centrally on the back wall. All have been stripped-out. Decoration is austere and non-distracting in a neutral cream colour (plate 32). The two large barrack rooms have been sub-divided into lecture/training rooms and large information boards fitted to the walls.

### *Sergeant's quarters (NCO fig.5)*

The NCO's quarters were positioned centrally so that the sergeants could keep an eye on the soldiers. These rooms have retained their original layout. There are original brown-painted ledge and batten doors and inserted art-deco style fire places and gas fires. Paint is peeling from some of the walls. The original observation windows into the barrack rooms either side (fig. 3) have been blocked and reutilised as shelving (plate 33). Dark green paint was recorded beneath the current yellow and cream walls.

### *Corridors*

A skylight is one of the few retained fixtures, high up in the ceiling in the centre of the building (plate 34). Wooden brackets, probably holding pegs for uniforms, have been removed from the outer walls of corridors A1 and A2 NU, either side of the WCs (plate 35).

### *Office/staff rooms*

Modern offices were built onto the balcony either side of the front central gable, probably as part of the first floor conversion to training centre. Detracting strongly from the view at the front, they are to be removed as part of the development to properly expose the main façade again. The walls are thin, probably one brick or breezeblock deep and painted the same neutral colour as the barrack rooms (plate 36). Wide modern wooden casement windows overlook the rear of block A. The original barrack room windows and one of the doors onto the balcony were blocked when the extension was added. Windows on the projecting sides of the gable have been opened-up to form doorways into the extension (fig.5). Most of the iron railings were removed in the conversion.

## **6.0 DISCUSSION**

Stable block B was built as part of the Royal Artillery Barracks at Colchester in 1875. The stables were laid out in rows of three either side of the parade ground and officer's quarters. A canteen/sergeant's mess and married quarters were other buildings included in the layout, as well as other less prominent structures. Of the original structures, only two of the stable blocks, A and B, the officer's mess and the canteen survive. All are grade II listed and intended for conversion as part of the broader redevelopment of Colchester Garrison.

The layout of the barracks was based on a less hierarchical plan form of the training camp principle, pioneered at the Aldershot barracks in the 1850s. The design of the Calvary Barracks next door, built in the mid-1860s, was the first of the two barracks in Colchester to adopt this plan form. The design of the Le Cateau was however an improvement in terms of

design, architecture and the level of innovation regarding ventilation and fire safety. Despite the Sanitary Commissions recommendations on soldier's health in 1864, the blocks were built with living accommodation for soldiers over stabling. Perhaps, as a compromise, the ventilation systems incorporated above the stable windows and in the jack arched ceiling were to a higher specification than earlier examples. Also, the fire-proof ceiling was not only an important inclusion, bearing in mind the use of gas lights and open fires, but also formed an effective barrier against stable emissions from the horses.

The stables are well-built and aesthetically pleasing in a neo-Georgian-style of pedimented blocks and wings. Their architectural detailing has been lost to some extent in the gables and roofs through rebuilding, probably when the top floor was converted in the modern period for teaching purposes. Nevertheless they are more decorous than the slightly earlier cavalry barracks next door. In terms of form and function, the well-planned layout provided individual stalls linked to internal drainage channels and an external network around the blocks. An innovative ventilation system in the high ceiling channelled air out through grills above the stable windows a second set of grills within the jack-arch ceiling and out onto the balcony. A second set of grills provided fresh air into the barrack rooms above, for it was not only the horses that could spread infection, but large numbers of men co-habiting too.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

Both the Cavalry Barracks and Le Cateau are well-documented and their significance assessed in the Historic Building Assessment carried out by the Ingram Consultancy in 2000, who recognised "their innovative design, construction and grouping" (Ingram 2000 7). The existence of original plans allows a high degree of interpretation of form and function. As such, stable block B has a high group value alongside the only significant survivors of the original 1875 plan form: block A, the officer's quarters and canteen. Alongside, the Cavalry Barracks retain stable blocks and a riding school from the earlier, 1862-64, period. Both were important in the development of the new post-Crimea barrack plan form, based on the cavalry barracks at Aldershot. Since the Aldershot barracks were demolished in the 1960s, Le Cateau and the Cavalry Barracks remains the last of this form of development (Douet 1998 in Ingram 2000), thus assuming more importance through their rarity value (Ingram 2000). Their national importance has already been recognised by their grade II listed status. There is also much local significance to the military history of Colchester, the regimental history of The Royal Artillery and the development of the town in the 19th- and 20th-centuries.



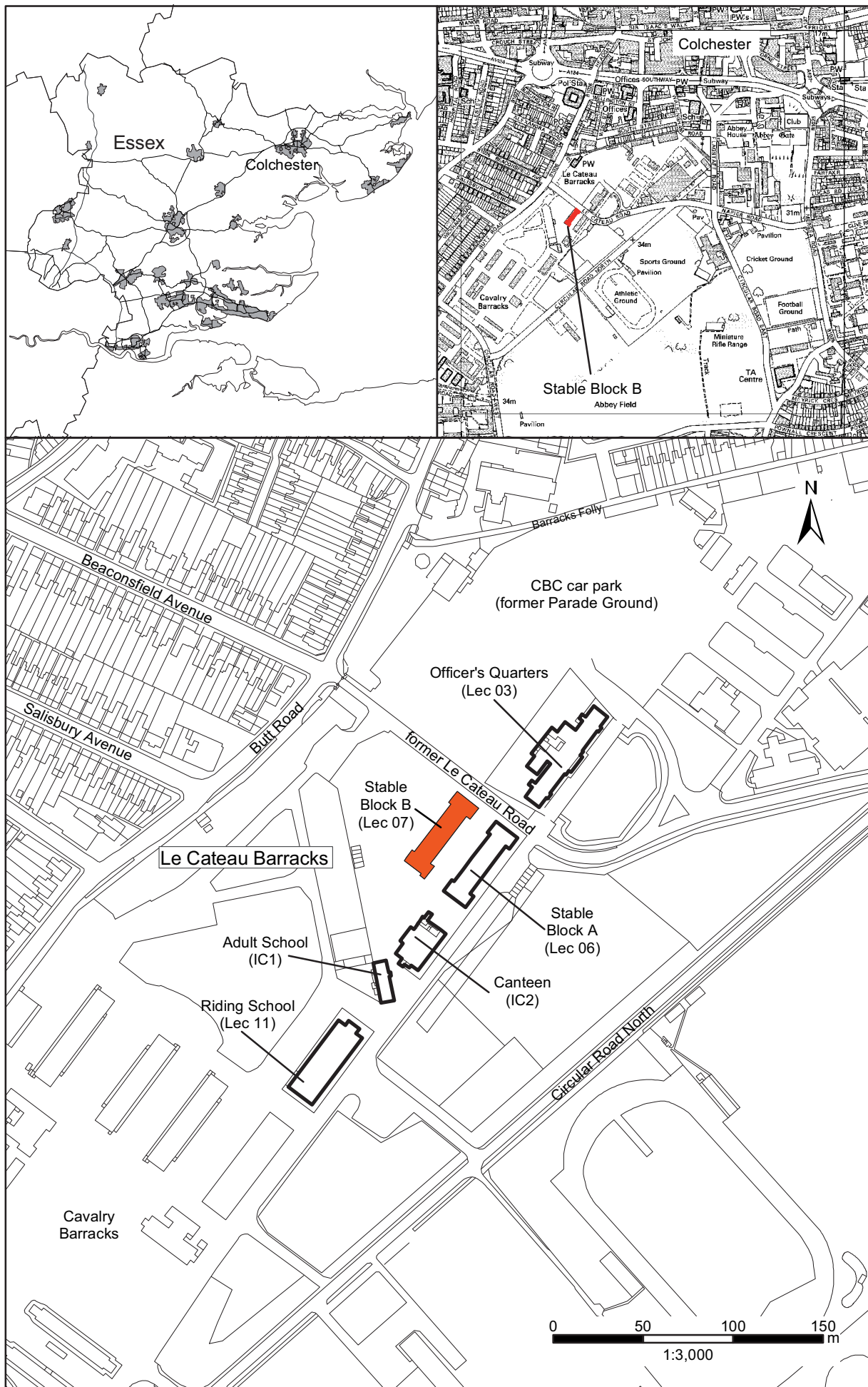
## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This work was commissioned by Mr. David Balcombe on behalf of Lexden Restoration and Developments. Thanks to David and Jonathan Franks of Lexden Restorations who provided access and lighting, plus drawings and photographs of the building. Jess Jephcott provided copies of old postcards. The survey was carried out by Andrew Letch and Andrew Lewsey prepared the illustrations. Adam Garwood, Historic Buildings Advisor for ECC HEM monitored the work on behalf of Colchester Borough Council.

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Fig.1. Location and block plan

# COLCHESTER

## GENERAL PLAN OF R.A. BARRAGKS.

Nº 1

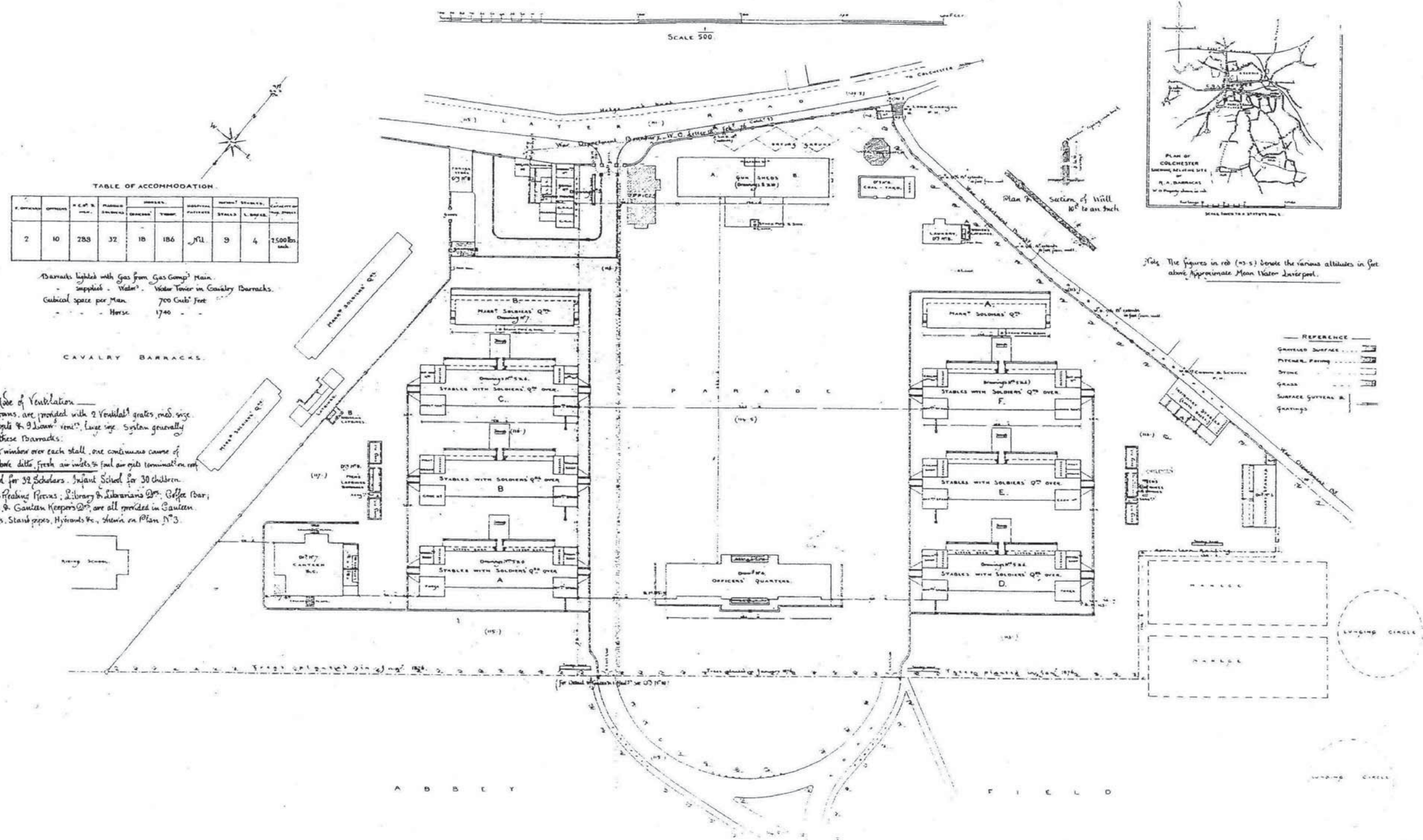


Fig.2. General plan of Royal Artillery Barracks, 1875 (NMR MD95/1431)



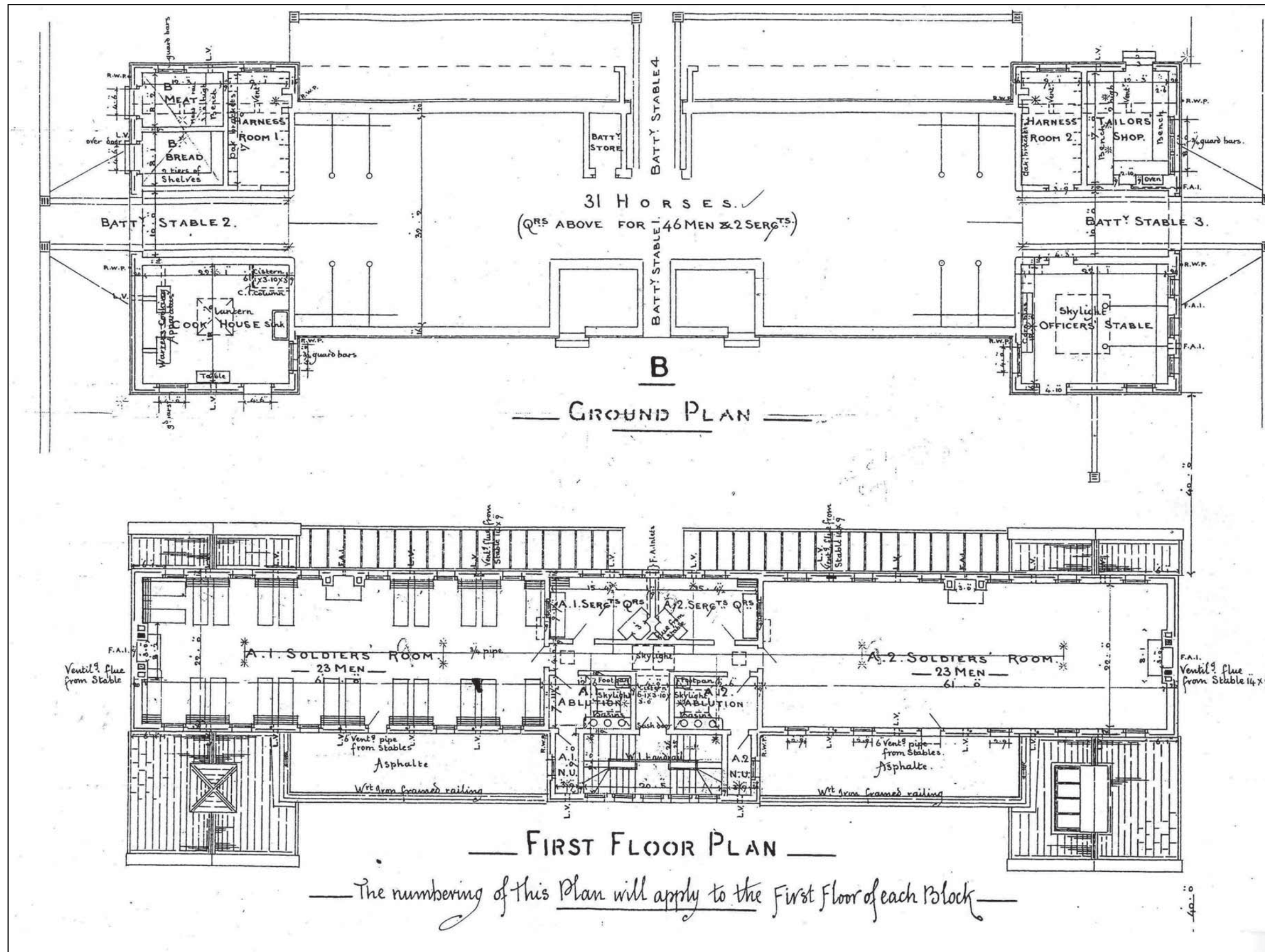


Fig.3. Historic floor plans of stable block B (NMR MD95/1445 no.5)

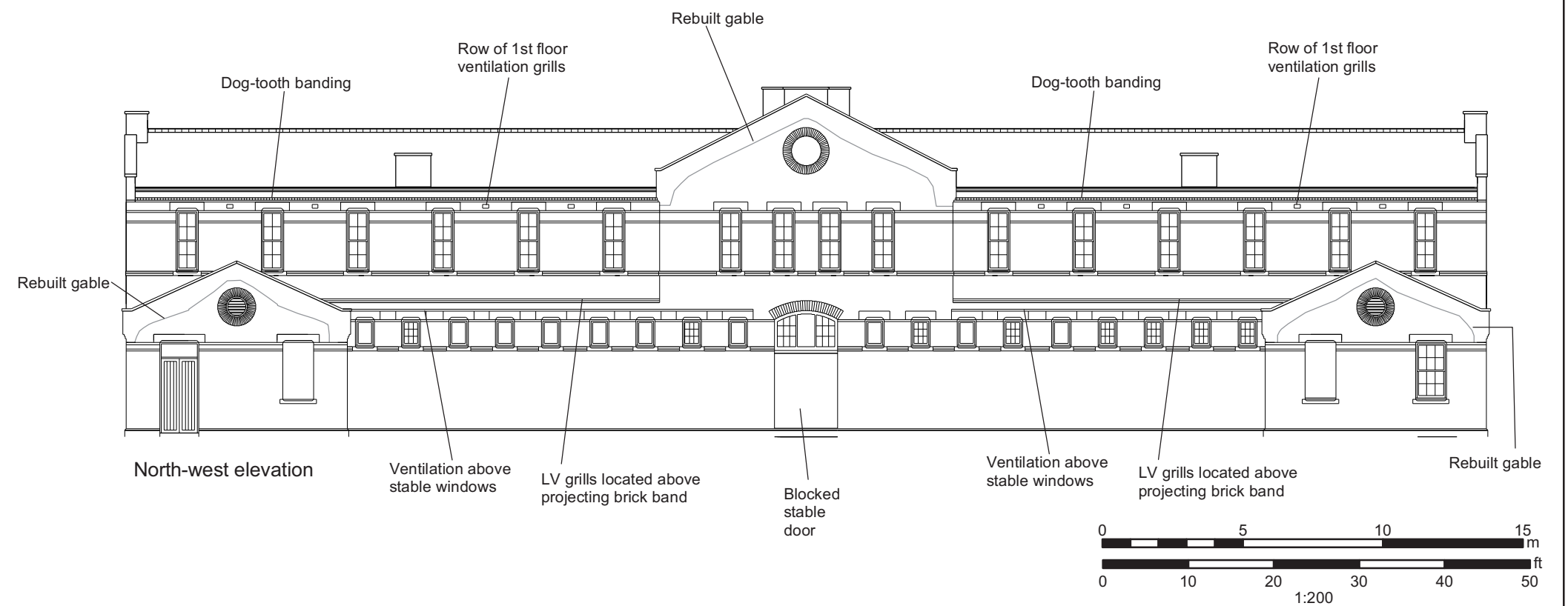
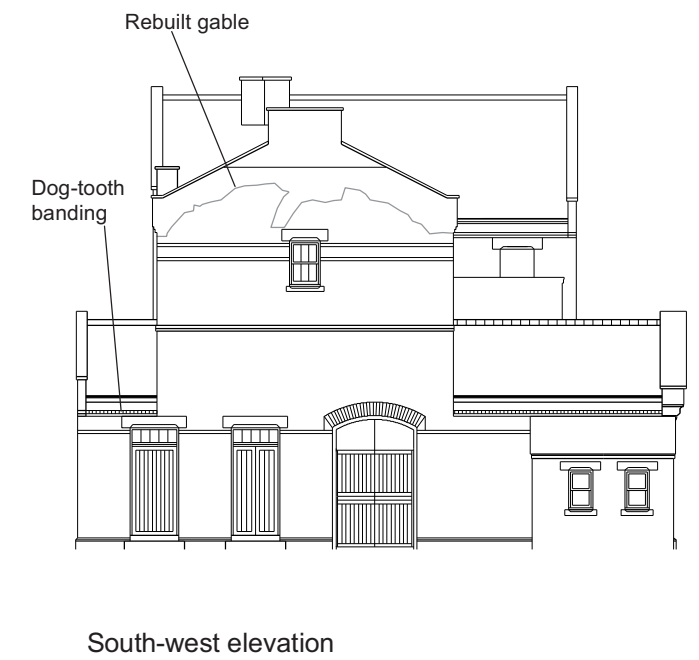
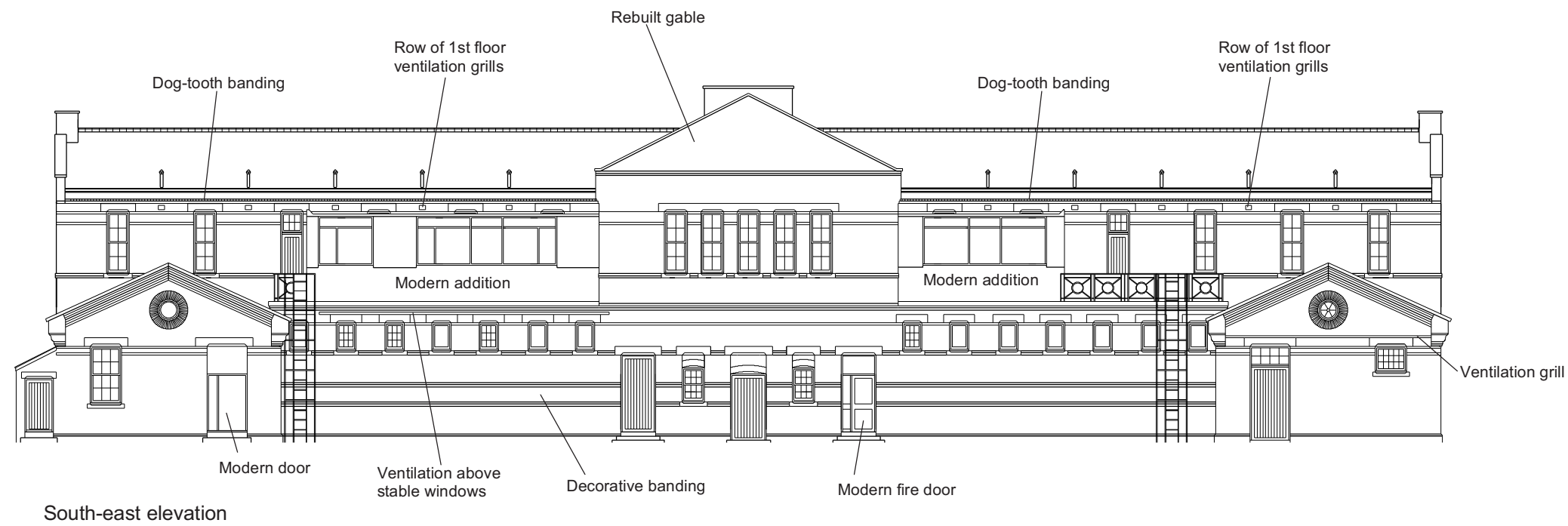
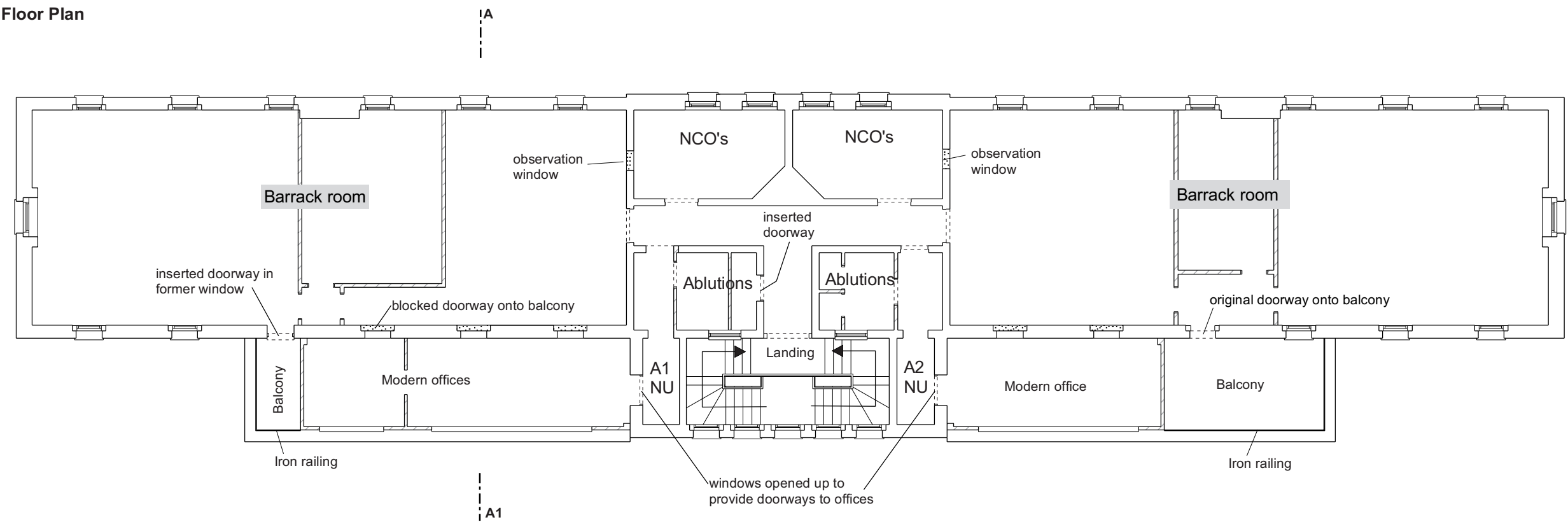
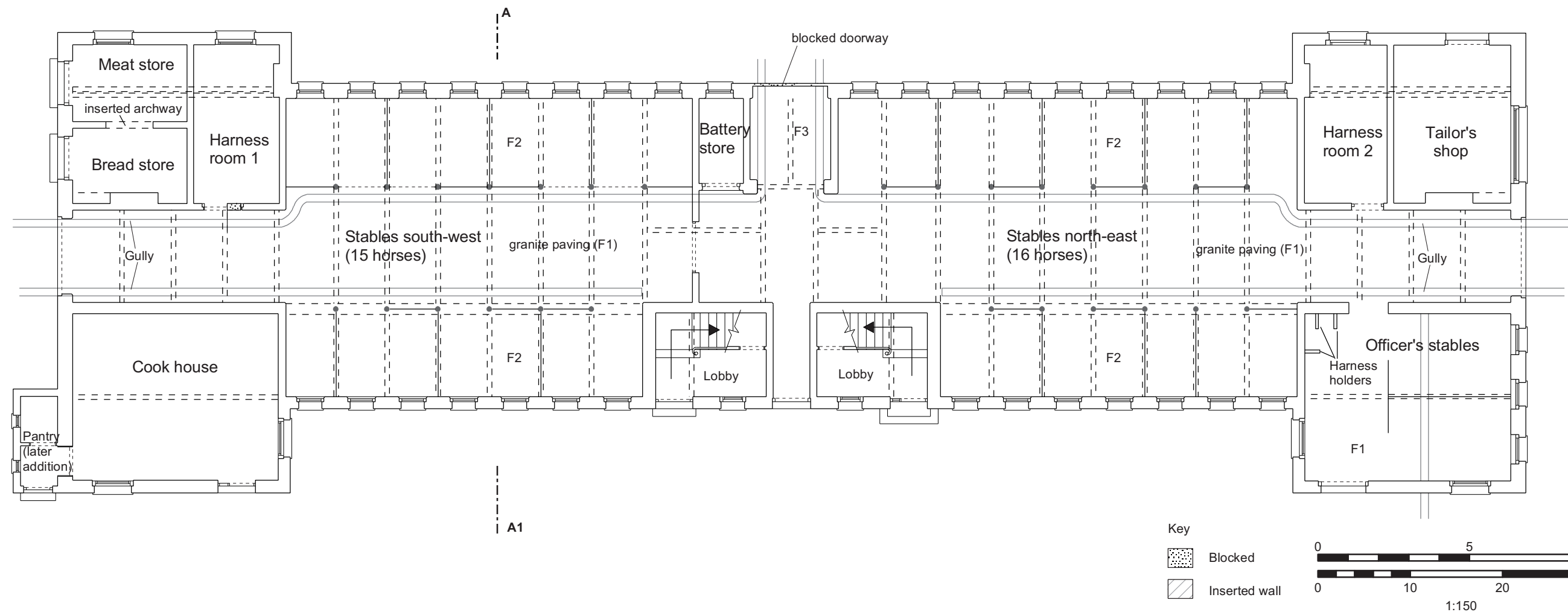


Fig.4. Elevation drawings

# First Floor Plan



# Ground Floor Plan



Key

- Blocked
- Inserted wall

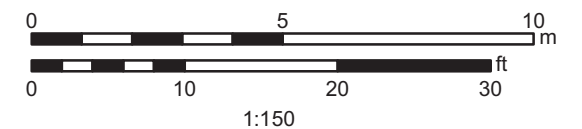


Fig.5. Ground floor and first floor plans

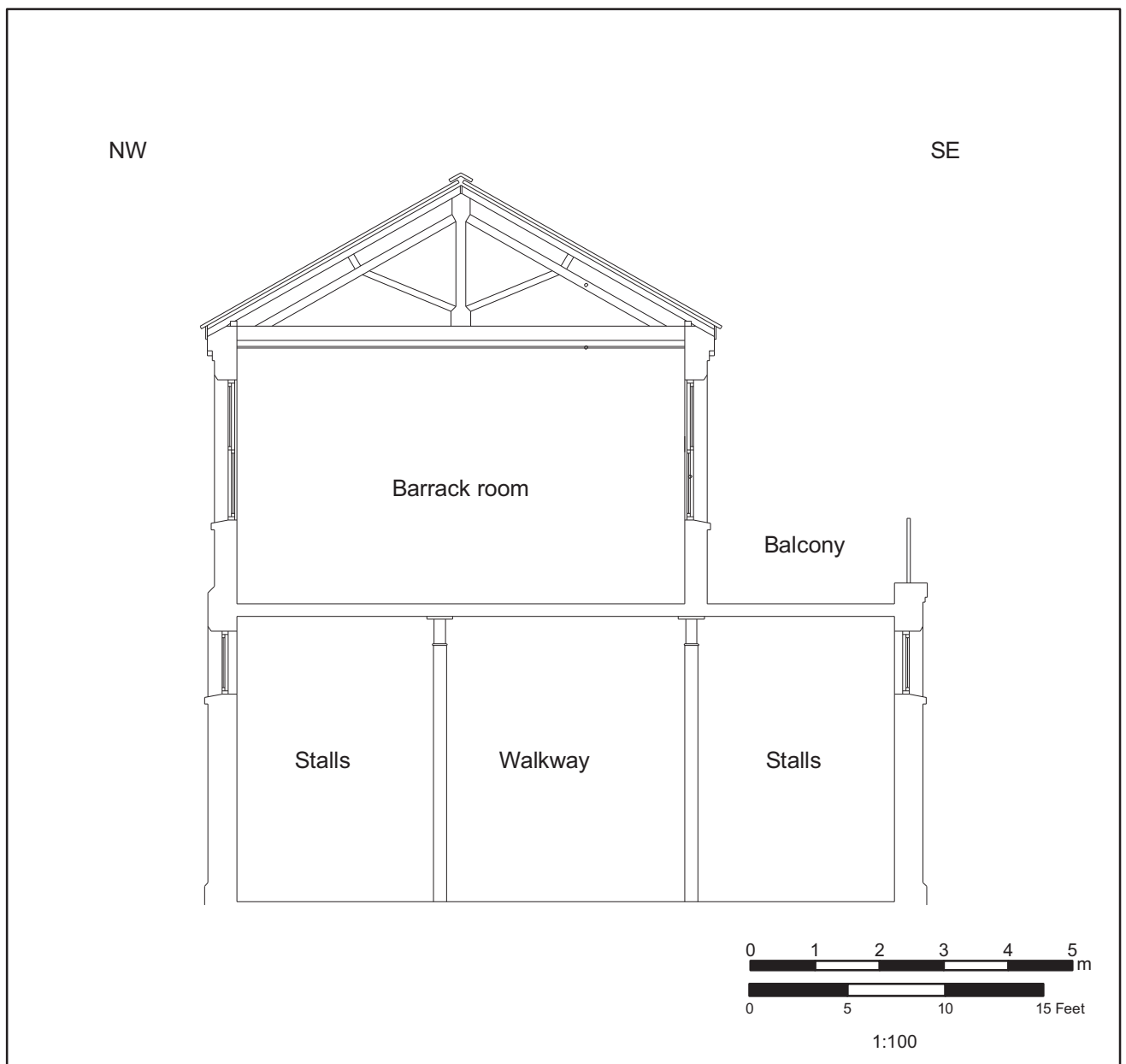


Fig.6. Section A-A1 through stable block B





Plate 1 Stables viewed from north



Plate 2 Stables viewed from east





Plate 3 Stable blocks viewed from south-west



Plate 4 Stable blocks viewed from north





Plate 5 Rear elevation



Plate 6 Façade detail





Plate 7 Blocked rear stable doorway and fittings for litter sheds



Plate 8 South-west elevation



Plate 9 South-west elevation of stable block A



Plate 10 View along walkway from south-western entrance





Plate 11 South-east stalls, south-west end of stable



Plate 12 North-west stalls, south-west end of stable





Plate 13 View along south-west central walkway



Plate 14 Original stalls in stable block A





Plate 15 North-east end of stables



Plate 16 Stall flooring





Plate 17 Tethering point



Plate 18 Original stable window





Plate 19 Stable vent



Plate 20 Battery store beside blocked stable doorway





Plate 21 North-east stable doors



Plate 22 Interior of bread store



Plate 23 Harness room 1



Plate 24 Harness room 2





Plate 25 Tailor's shop



Plate 26 Stalls in officer's stable



Plate 27 Officer's stable



Plate 28 Harness holders in officer's stable





Plate 29 Stall flooring in officer's stable



Plate 30 Bottom flight of stairs, south-west side



Plate 31 Top landing and stairway



Plate 32 North-eastern barrack room





Plate 33 Sergeant's quarters

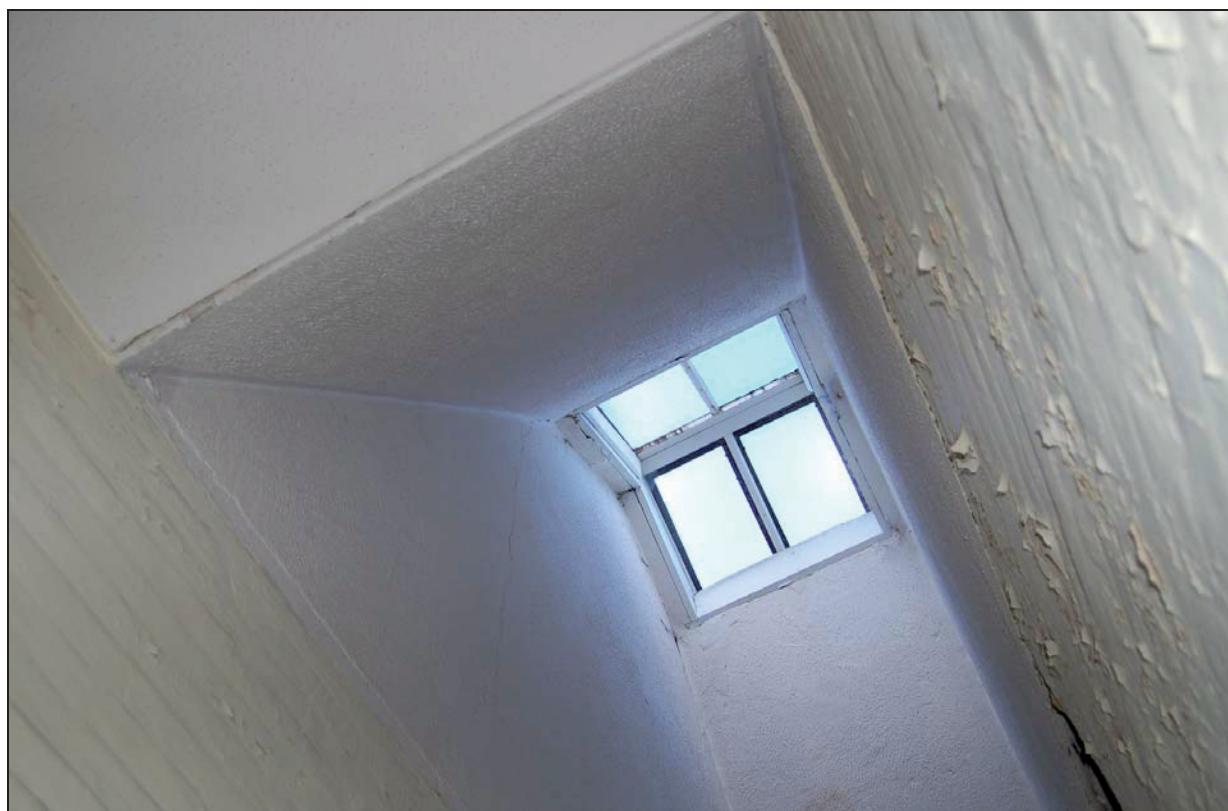


Plate 34 First floor skylight





Plate 35 Removed cloakroom fixtures in A1 NU



Plate 36 Modern extension on north-east side of balcony

## **Appendix 1: Archive index**

**Site name: Stable block B, Le Cateau Barracks, Colchester, Essex**

**Project no. 1750**

### **Index to the Archive**

Document wallet containing:

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 FAU written scheme of investigation
- 1.2 Client/archive report
- 1.3 CD rom containing copy of report, pdf-formatted

#### **2. Site Archive**

- 2.1 Photographic record (digital images & prints, monochrome 35mm prints)
- 2.2 Site notes & annotated survey drawings
- 2.3 Architect's drawings
- 2.4 Copy of original 1875 plan

## Appendix 2: EHER Summary sheet

<b>Site Name/Address:</b> Stable block B, Le Cateau Barracks, Colchester, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Colchester	<b>District:</b> Colchester
<b>NGR:</b> TL 9929 2451	<b>Site Code:</b> N/A
<b>Type of Work:</b> Historic building recording	<b>Site Director/Group:</b> A. Letch, ECC FAU
<b>Date of Work:</b> February 2007	<b>Size of Area Investigated:</b> N/A
<b>Location of Finds/Curating Museum:</b> Colchester	<b>Funding Source:</b> Lexden Restoration & Development
<b>Further Work Anticipated?</b> No	<b>Listed Building No.:</b> 469541
<b>Final Report:</b> N/A	
<b>Periods Represented:</b> Late 19th c. (1875), modern	
<p><b>SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:</b></p> <p><i>Le Cateau Barracks, originally the Royal Artillery Barracks, were built in 1875 as the second permanent cavalry barracks in Colchester. Each twin block of three was designed to sustain itself, containing necessary functional areas such as a forge, cook house and others. The layout was based on the less-hierarchical training camp form pioneered at Aldershot cavalry barracks in the 1850s. The stable design included a jack-arched fire-proof ceiling and advanced ventilation system following recommendations on stable/barrack block hygiene by a Royal Commission. Only two of the 1870s stable blocks survive (Blocks A and B), both of which are grade II listed.</i></p> <p><i>The structure is brick-built in a predominantly neo-Georgian architectural style of linear plan form with a central pedimented gable and projecting corner wings. Long litter sheds were built between the rear wings (since removed). There are two storeys. The ground floor contained stalls for 31 horses, with officer's stables, harness rooms, a cook house, food stores and tailors shop in the four wings. Tall iron columns support a fire-proof jack-arched pierced by ventilation grills. The stalls were linked by drainage channels that ran under the large stable doors located at the two ends and on the rear elevation, facing the parade ground. The first floor contained two large barrack rooms for 23 soldiers each, either side of two sergeant's rooms, an ablutions area and balcony over the front part of the stables.</i></p> <p><i>Block B retains much of its spatial layout and historic detail, although ongoing use and conversion to an army training centre in the modern period, have inevitably resulted in changes to the historic fabric. Internally, new stalls have been inserted into the stable area and its large barrack rooms have been divided into lecture rooms. Externally, a modern extension has been added onto the balcony, ruining the main façade. Most of the brick gables have been rebuilt, partly robbing the building of important architectural detail.</i></p> <p><i>Block B (along with Block A) is significant as the last surviving example of barrack rooms above stables design and of innovations employed in hygiene standards through improved ventilation and construction techniques. The Aldershot cavalry barracks were demolished in the 1960s, leaving Le Cateau and the Cavalry Barracks as the only survivors of this plan form. They are therefore of national importance.</i></p>	
<p><b>Previous Summaries/Reports:</b></p> <p>Colchester Garrison: Historic Building Assessment, Ingram Consultancy 2000</p>	
<b>Author of Summary:</b> A. Letch (ECC FAU)	<b>Date of Summary:</b> 20th April 2007