

**FORMER PUBLIC CONVENIENCES, MILLFIELDS ROAD,  
LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY**

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD  
(ENGLISH HERITAGE LEVEL 2-3)**

**NGR: 535004 185908**



**Commissioned by  
Northill Properties Ltd**

**Prepared by Christopher Curtis BA**

**December 2015**



**Former Public Conveniences, Millfields Road,  
London Borough of Hackney**

**Historic Building Record  
(Historic England Level 2-3)**

**NGR: 535004 185908**

**Commissioned by  
Northhill Properties Ltd**

**Project No. 8487  
Site Code: MIF15  
Report No. 2015450  
OASIS ID: archaeol6-233287**

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<b>Date of Issue:</b>	December 2015		
<b>Revision:</b>			

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## **SUMMARY**

*In November 2015 Archaeology South-East (a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, University College London) carried out a programme of historic building recording in connection in relation to the proposed demolition of the former public conveniences and redevelopment of the site (planning ref. 2015/2277).*

*The building was constructed in the late 1930s as a public convenience by Hackney Borough Council and designed by their resident architect and engineer, Percival Holt. The building has changed little in layout or appearance; however most of the internal fixtures and fittings have been stripped out.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In November 2015 Archaeology South-East (a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, University College London) carried out a programme of historic building recording of the former public conveniences on Millfields Road, London Borough of Hackney (NGR: 535004 185908; Figures 1 & 2) in relation to their proposed demolition and the subsequent redevelopment of the site (planning ref. 2015/2277).
- 1.2 Hackney Borough Council attached the following condition to the planning permission, requiring a programme of archaeological works to be carried out prior to redevelopment of the site:

SCL10 – Archaeological investigation

*No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme approved pursuant to this condition. The archaeological works shall be carried out by a suitably qualified investigating body acceptable to the Local Planning Authority.*

*REASON: To safeguard the archaeological interest of the site, which is within an Area of Archaeological Priority.*

- 1.3 The Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS), as advisor to Hackney Borough Council, recommended that the building be recorded at Historic England Level 2-3. The groundworks associated with the ensuing redevelopment of the site are to be subject to an archaeological watching-brief, the results of which will be presented as a separate subsequent report.
- 1.4 The building is not statutorily listed but is designated locally as a building of township merit. It lies within the Clapton Pond Conservation Area and the Clapton Archaeological Priority Area.

## **2.0 SCOPE & METHODOLOGY**

- 2.1 The scope of work and methodology for the building recording is detailed in a written scheme of investigation produced for the work by Archaeology South-East (ASE 2015a). The work was also carried out in accordance with the relevant ClfA standards and guidance (ClfA 2014a & b).
- 2.2 The building was recorded at Historic England Level 2-3 (English Heritage 2006a). A Level 2 record is principally a descriptive survey of the exterior and interior of the building, whilst a Level 3 record places additional emphasis on the analysis of the building.
- 2.3 The site was visited by Katya Harrow and Christopher Curtis on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2015 in order to carry out the recording work. This entailed the
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compilation of written notes and the production of a photographic record. The written record includes a basic description of the building's location, form, function (historically and at present), date, and sequence of development.

- 2.4 The drawn record comprises a floor plan of the building as existing, to illustrate its form and layout. The plan was produced by Archaeology South-East based on a measured survey carried out during the visit. The resulting scaled drawing is included within the report as Figure 14.
- 2.5 The photographic record was produced using high-quality digital photography and includes images of both the exterior and interior of the structure, to give an overall impression of its size, shape and appearance. Within the report selected digital images have been reproduced as plates to supplement the descriptive text. A full index of the photography is included as Appendix 2 and location plots are shown on the accompanying floor plan.
- 2.6 Historic background research was undertaken at the Hackney Archives and relevant cartographic sources were also consulted to place the building within its historical context. All sources consulted are listed in Section 7.

### **3.0 SITE LOCATION**

- 3.1 The site lies in the Clapton Pond area of Hackney in Greater London, centred at NGR 535004 185908 (Figures 1 & 2). It comprises a former WC building, which occupies a roughly-triangular area of land lying at the junction of Millfields Road and Mildenhall Road, which enclose the site to the south and north respectively and meet at Lower Clapton Road, which lies immediately west of the site. The WC block is located close to the eastern boundary of the site and is aligned approximately north – south. East of the site is a single storey building occupied by St. John's Ambulance, beyond which is residential development lining the southern side of Mildenhall Road. A small park around Clapton Pond is located west-north-west of the site, and effectively forms an 'island' bisecting Lower Clapton Road. The site lies at street level and is flat.

### **4.0 HISTORIC BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Hackney developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries as a fashionable suburb of London and is where many wealthy London merchants settled. Rocque's map of 1745 (Figure 3) shows the presence of Lower Clapton Road with development alongside, however the area remained rural in character. Millfields Road can be seen with some development at its western end, including within the development site.
  - 4.2 By the Ordnance Survey (OS) map of 1870-73 (Figure 4) the area had expanded to become a centre for the middle classes. Despite this the area east of Lower Clapton Road lay essentially undeveloped. By this point the site was occupied by the southern part of St James's Terrace, part of which survives to the north of the site.
  - 4.3 By 1896 (Figure 5) the area to the east of the site had been developed, while to the north the central portion of St. James's Terrace had been demolished
-



to make way for Mildenhall Road. By this point the street layout had crystallised into today's pattern.

- 4.4 The site remained unchanged until 1929 when the southernmost pair of houses of St James's Terrace were sold to the Metropolitan Borough of Hackney for the purpose of building a public convenience. Drawings survive from 1931 showing the toilets almost as they were built (Figures 10-12). The building was designed by Percival Holt, the borough engineer and architect. He was also responsible for the public baths on Gainsborough Road.
- 4.5 It is likely that the houses were demolished soon after purchase; the site is clear by the OS edition of 1936 (Figure 6). Building on the site was delayed by the vendors (the Powell family) who had placed a covenant on the site preventing its use as a public convenience (ASE 2015b). The building does not appear clearly on the cartographic record until the 1951-52 edition OS map (Figure 7). It is likely that construction took place in December 1937 or soon after, as this is the date at which a later set of drainage plans were submitted and approved.
- 4.6 The 1966-70 OS map (Figure 8) shows little change to the site, other than the building of the St. John's Ambulance station to the east. The public conveniences were closed in the late 1990s and sold to private developers.

## **5.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING**

### *Overview (Figure 14)*

- 5.1 The building has a flattened hexagonal footprint, and comprises a single-storey three-bay brick range constructed in Flemish bond. The central bay is flanked by two canted wings with the building sitting under a steeply pitched and sprocket tiled roof. The principal elevation faces west towards Clapton pond and contains a former seating area while entrances to the WCs were originally to the east. A louvred ventilator sits centrally on top of the roof (Plate 1).
- 5.2 Original plans of the building (Figures 9-13) show that the front of the building was designed as an ornamental garden and seating area, while access to the WCs was from a separate path to the rear of the building, entered from the street.

### *Exterior*

- 5.3 The principal elevation faces west towards Clapton pond and into a small garden area contained within the site. The paved areas have an original crazy paving surface and the garden is surrounded by a low brick wall, contemporaneous with the building.
- 5.4 The building is symmetrical and fronted with a simple classical portico comprised of two pairs of square brick columns and two pairs of brick pilasters, all of which rest upon a brick pedestal. The columns and pilasters are constructed from darker, contrasting bricks and have courses made up of tiles. The portico supports a flat concrete roof and parapet covering what was a seating area, created in the space made by the building's canted wings.
-

The parapet rises above the level of the surrounding eaves which project forward at either side. Evidence for former bench seating can be seen on the brickwork on the exterior wall (Plate 2). The inner part of the roof over the seating area slopes abruptly towards the building allowing light into a set of high level windows above it.

- 5.5 On the north wall of the front elevation, in the seating area, there is a three-light mullion window. The corresponding window on the south wall has been removed and replaced with a doorway. Evidence that the door was inserted can be seen in the brickwork; the queen closers on the jambs only reach as far down as the window would have reached (Plate 3).
- 5.6 The two side elevations are identical and repeat some of the detail of the front (Plate 4). The walls are largely plain but retain the brick pedestal and are framed by two pilasters at either end of the walls. At this point roof comes down to a deep overhanging eaves, broken by a high central window in each wall. The eaves continue around the rest of the rear of the building.
- 5.7 The canted rear elevations are also identical and are more austere, as they lack the embellishment of pilasters or a pedestal (Plate 5). Each wall is punctuated by two small low windows, flanking a higher one breaking the eaves. Towards the centre of the building each wall contains a doorway blocked with breeze blocks. The doorways still have signs to their sides indicating that the door to the south was the men's entrance and the door the north was the women's entrance.
- 5.8 The rear (east) elevation is similarly plain and contains three large windows piercing the eaves (Plate 6). The historic plans indicate that the building's roof was served by ornamental green gutters, which partially survive around the rear and side elevations.

#### *Interior*

- 5.9 The interior of the building is divided into three main rooms, with several subsidiary rooms off the main spaces in the side wings. The rooms currently communicate with each other but originally the north wing, which was the women's WC, was separate from the central section and southern wing which together formed the men's WC.
- 5.10 Many of the rooms have awkward shapes and angles, resulting from the outward appearance of the building: its elegant geometry taking precedence over layout and utility.
- 5.11 Almost all of the fixtures and fittings have been removed from the building, however from the original plans and surviving fabric there is sufficient evidence to piece together the original layout and function of the building. The most detailed set of drawings are those from 1931, and they broadly correspond with findings of the site visit. However, the plans are not completely representative of what was eventually built and some details differ with the less detailed 1936 drainage plans and with the building as it was built.
- 5.12 The decorative scheme is consistent throughout the building. The floor is paved with a type of granolithic screed and the walls are plastered and
-

painted green. Where the paint has come away it is possible to see the original finish which appears to be a polished plaster with coarse aggregate similar in appearance to the floor. On the 1931 cross section (Figure 10) the plaster is identified as Astroplox plaster. The plaster has a band at the top of the wall of a slightly different shade (Plates 7 & 8). The original doorways have plain hardwood architraves and the main spaces have high coved ceilings. Where there is no surviving plasterwork it is possible to see that the inner leaf of brickwork is constructed from Fletton bricks.

#### *Room 1*

- 5.13 The only entrance into the building now goes into Room 1 within the south wing, however the doorway is a later insertion and the room is described in the 1931 plan as an attendant's room. A further doorway leads from this room into Room 2, however its door is missing. A list of electrical circuits found in the building names the room as the male office.
- 5.14 The floor in the angle of the room is made of concrete and slightly raised; the surviving plans indicate this housed a cupboard. The south wall shows evidence that two basins were attached. A waste water pipe can be seen underneath (Plate 9).
- 5.15 The entrance door comprises a set of heavy hardwood double doors framed in a traditional manner (Plate 10). The outer face of the doors is covered in sheet metal to prevent break-ins. The style and construction of the doors is consistent with a date from the 1930s or 40s, around the time that the WC was built and the style is almost identical to another surviving door in the building. It is likely that the doors are reused; there is not another double doorway in the building but it is possible that two single doors were reused.

#### *Room 2*

- 5.16 Room 2 forms one of the main parts of the men's toilets (Plate 11). It is now accessed from Room 1 but originally would have been entered from a doorway to the rear of the building, separated from the rest of the room by a partition acting as a baffle.
- 5.17 The room's original function was to house the urinals, the scars of which can be seen along the south and east walls. There is no plaster below the level of the urinals, indicating that they were arranged continuously along the lower part of the wall, covering it completely. The urinals would have been fairly decorative, as the outline of their ogee-shaped heads can still be seen in the plaster. The appearance of individual heads indicates that there were individual urinals rather than troughs. They were probably floor-standing porcelain units with dividers. Scars from the urinal's common cisterns can be seen on the walls above. The evidence in the plaster work corresponds with the original plans.
- 5.18 It seems likely that the west wall, and possibly Room 1 would have been used for handwashing, although little evidence of this remains.
- 5.19 The room is lit from a high level half-dormer window on each external wall, as well as two lower, smaller windows on the east wall. All of the windows are of timber construction with mullions, transoms and small panes held by glazing
-

bars (Plate 12). The room is ventilated with a vent in the ceiling leading to the central louvre outside.

#### *Room 3*

- 5.20 Room 3 is a cupboard leading off Room 2 (Plate 13). It retains its original three panelled door, similar to that of the main entrance (Plate 14). Like all the door cases it has a plain hardwood architrave. It contains shelves and antiquated electrical fuse boxes.

#### *Room 4*

- 5.21 Occupying the central bay of the building, Room 4 is accessed from an arched opening into Room 2. The room was also part of the men's WC and was used for both urinals and cubicles (Plate 15). Evidence for the position of the urinals can be seen on the west wall, while scars left by cubicle partitions, cisterns and waste pipes can be seen on the east wall. The layout of the cubicles is also reflected in markings on the floor and is consistent with the early plans. A doorway leads from Room 4 to 5, this is an insertion of poor quality.

- 5.22 The room is very well lit, with a continuous clerestory window on the west wall (Plate 16), and three large half-dormers on the east wall. As in Room 2, the room is served by a vent and air-duct leading to the central ventilator (Plate 17).

#### *Room 5*

- 5.23 Room 5 occupies most of the north wing and makes up the women's WC (Plate 18). The room has a similar layout to room 2, with identical windows and a baffled entrance lobby in the south-east corner from which the room was originally accessed. The external entrance is now blocked.

- 5.24 The layout of the former cubicles can be seen in the floor and walls. Scars from cubicle partitions, cisterns and waste pipes can be seen along the east wall. The position of the wash basins is more clearly discernible in this room with the scars from a wash basin, soap dispenser and mirror left on the west wall (Plate 19).

- 5.25 Similar to Rooms 2 and 4, Room 5 is served by a vent and duct leading to the central ventilator in the roof.

#### *Room 6*

- 5.26 The original function of Room 6 seems to be identical to Room 1 (Plate 20). It is accessed from a door into room 5 and lit by a window to the west. The angled space to the south of the room has a raised concrete floor and is marked on original plans as a cupboard. The room itself is marked as an attendant's room on the plans and lavatory and bears the scars of two basins. The wall above the basins has what appears to be the remains of a large mirror.
-

*Room 7*

- 5.27 Room 7 is a store cupboard, mirroring that of Room 3. It retains nothing of interest.

**6.0 DISCUSSION**

- 6.1 Built around 1937, the public conveniences building on Millfields Road represents an eclectic but unmistakably municipal style of architecture. It was designed by Percival Holt, a capable architect employed by the borough who also built the Gainsborough Road Baths. The building's elegant appearance disguises a somewhat awkward layout. Due to the building's shape, many of the rooms have odd angular corners with which it is hard to make any use. The design of the building was in some ways very modern, with ample provision for light and ventilation. It is perhaps a reflection of the age in which it was built that the space provided for the women's toilets was only half of that for the men's.
- 6.2 Externally the appearance of the building has changed very little, the only changes being the insertion of a door on the west side of the building and the blocking of the original entrances. Internally the building retains the same layout but has been stripped of most of its fixtures and fittings, however evidence survives showing the original use and functions of each room.
-

## **7.0 REFERENCES**

Archaeology South-East. 2015a. *Former Public Conveniences, Millfields Road, London Borough of Hackney: Historic Building Recording & Archaeological Watching Brief. Written Scheme of Investigation*

Archaeology South-East. 2015b. *Former Public Conveniences, Millfields Road, London Borough of Hackney: Heritage Statement.*

ClfA. 2014a. *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures.*

ClfA. 2014b. *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*

English Heritage. 2006a. *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice.* Swindon.

English Heritage. 2006b. *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment.* Swindon.

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## **8.0 DEPOSITION OF THE ARCHIVE**

A full archive intended for deposition with the London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre (LAARC) has been prepared. The archive has been assigned the site code MIF15. The full site archive will be prepared in accordance with the principals of *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment* (MoRPHE) (English Heritage 2006b). The archive will comprise a hard copy of the full report, a pdf version of the report on CD, the full photographic record with registers, field notes and drawings.

## **9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Archaeology South-East would like to thank Northill Properties for commissioning this Historic Building Record.

PLATES



Plate 1: West elevation (69)



Plate 2: Seating area, looking north (18)





Plate 3: Inserted entrance to Room 1, looking east (16)



Plate 4: South elevation (9)



Plate 5: North-east elevation (12)



Plate 6: East elevation (11)



Plate 7: Room 5, looking east at former cubicle partitions and patches of original plasterwork (52)

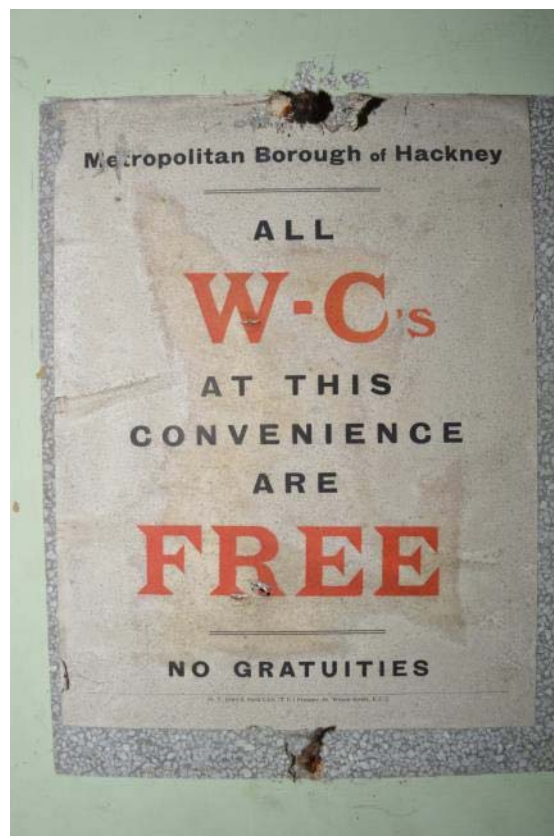


Plate 8: Room 7, looking north at original plaster finish under poster (46)





Plate 9: Room 1, looking south (64)



Plate 10: Room 1, looking west (21)



Plate 11: Room 2, looking south (22)



Plate 12: Room 2, looking south (29)



Plate 13: Room 3, looking west (31)



Plate 14: Room 2, looking west (30)





Plate 15: Room 4, looking north (34)



Plate 16: Room 4, looking south (35)



Plate 17: Room 4 looking up (40)



Plate 18: Room 5, looking north (47)





Plate 19: Room 5, looking west (53)



Plate 20: Room 6, looking south (56)



Plate 21: Room 7, looking west (54)

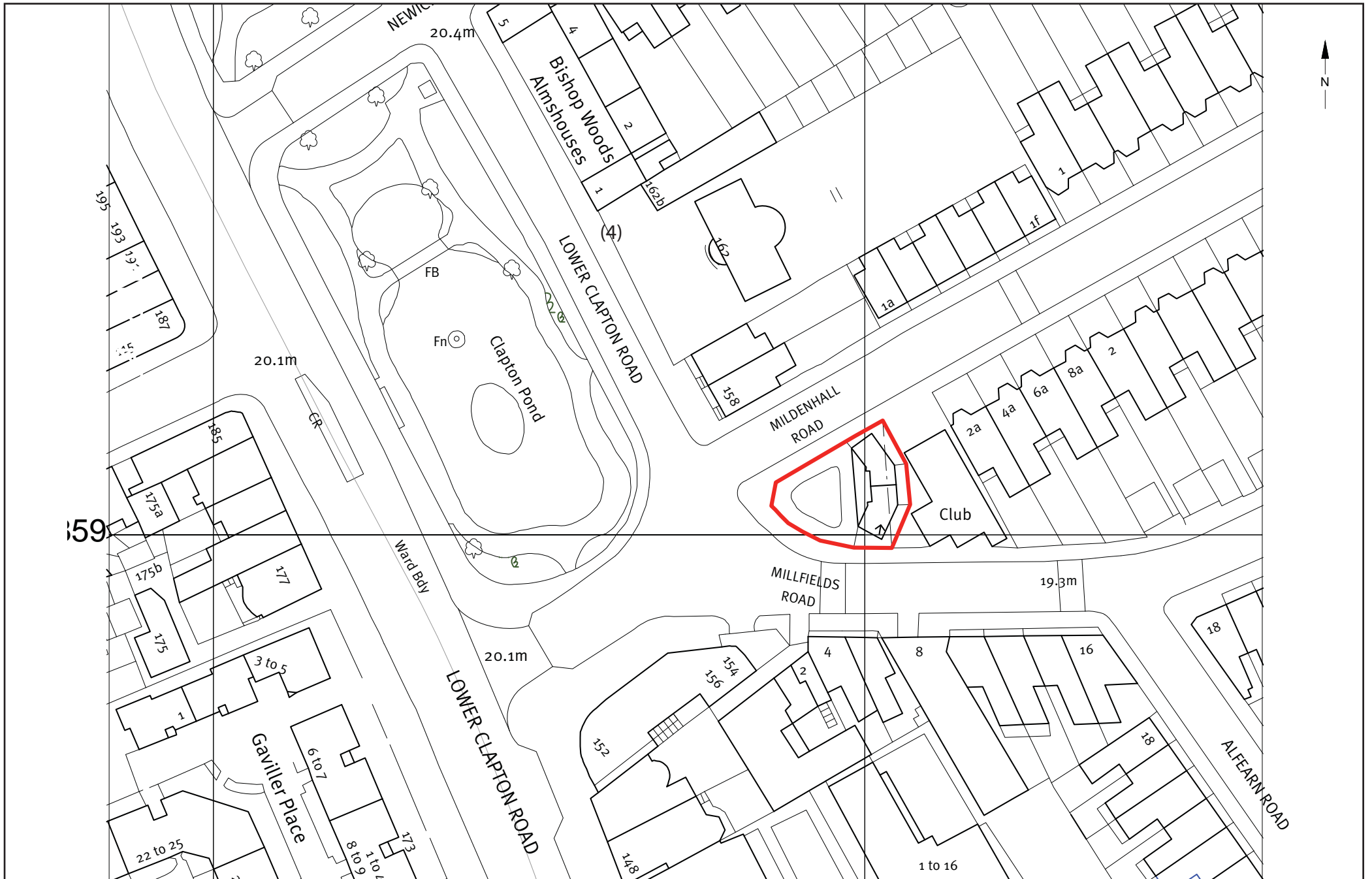




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© Archaeology South-East		Former Public Conveniences, Millfields Road, Hackney		Fig. 1
Project Ref: 8487	Jun 2015	Site location		
Report Ref: 2015450	Drawn by: KRH			





© Archaeology South-East		Former public conveniences, Millfields Road, Hackney		Fig. 2
Project Ref: 8487	Dec 2015	Site plan		
Report Ref: 2015450	Drawn by: CPC			



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Former public conveniences, Millfields Road, Hackney

Project Ref: 8487

Dec 2015

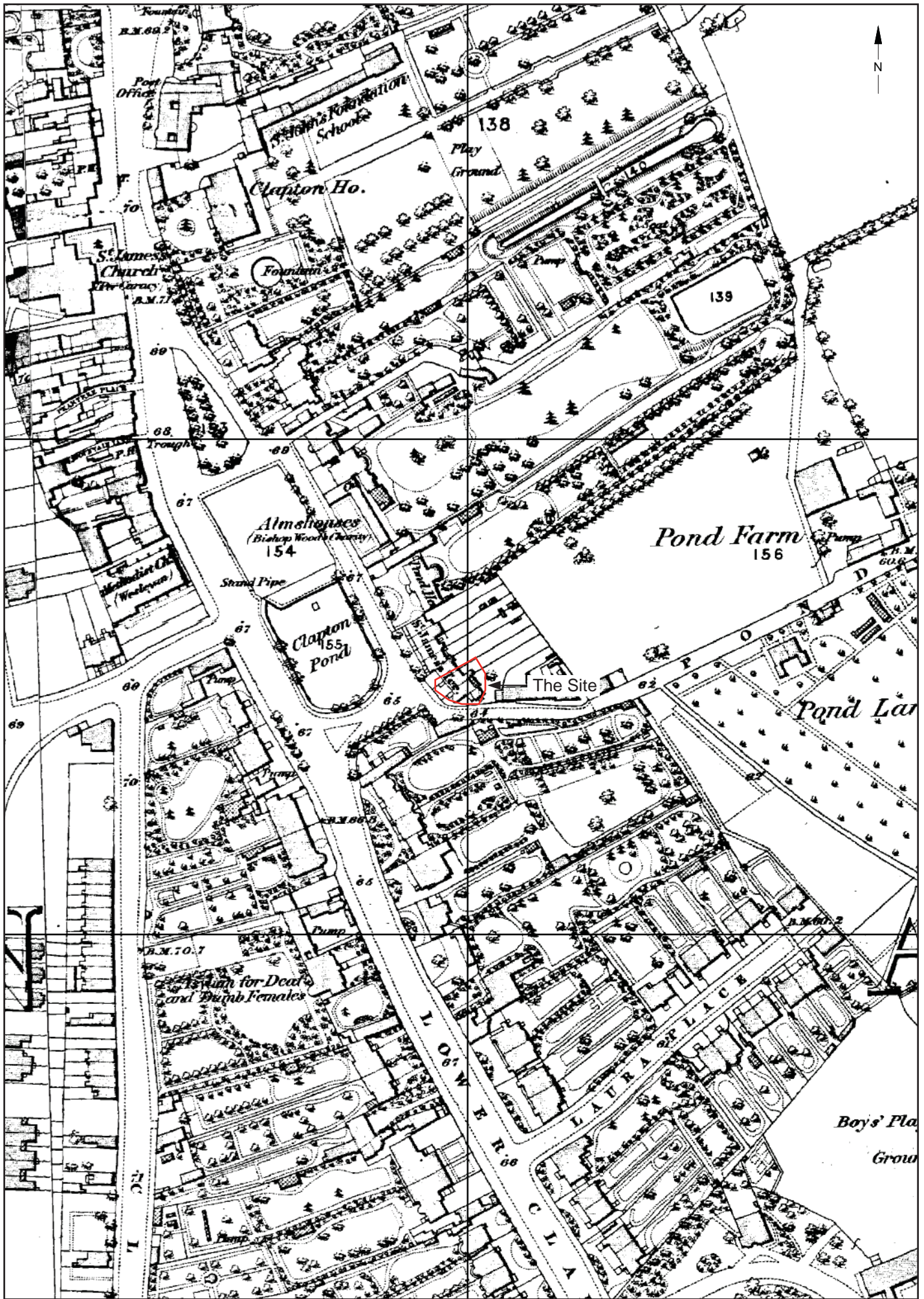
Report Ref: 2015450

Drawn by: CPC

Rocque's map of 1745

Fig. 3





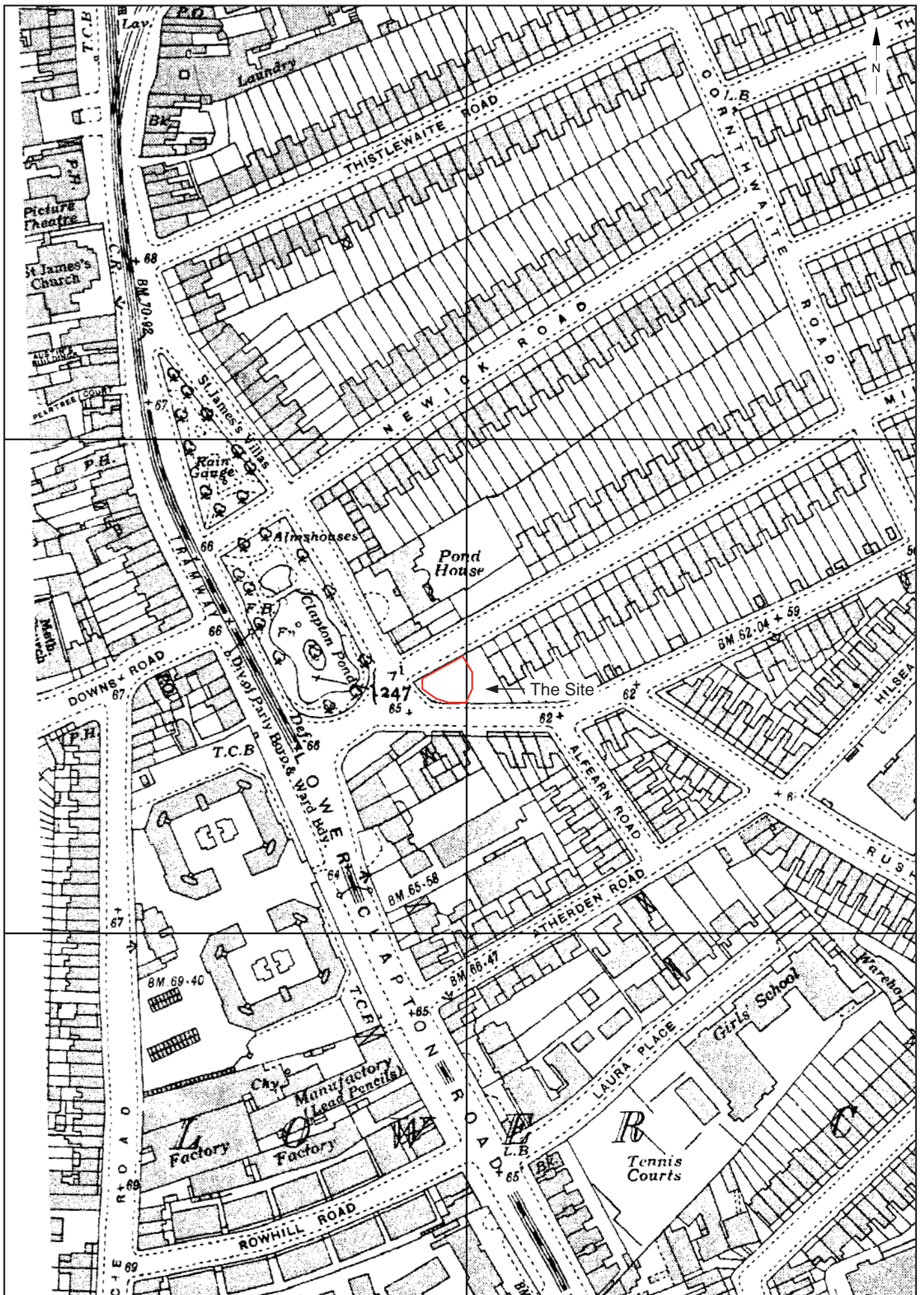
© Archaeology South-East		Former public conveniences, Millfields Road, Hackney	
Project Ref: 8487	Jun 2015	Ordnance Survey, 1870-1873	
Report Ref: 2015450	Drawn by: KRH	Fig. 4	





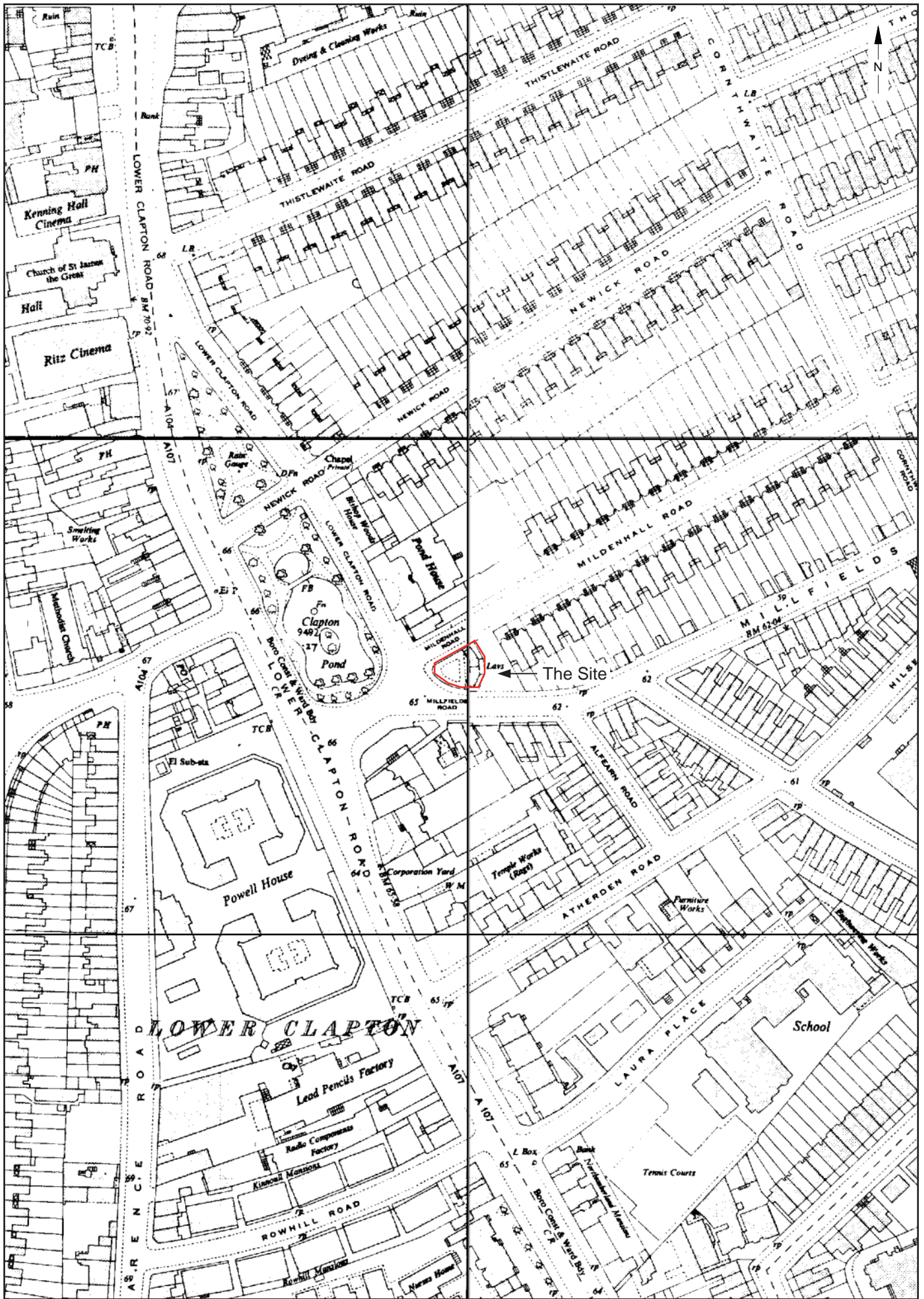
© Archaeology South-East		Former public conveniences, Millfields Road, Hackney		Fig. 5
Project Ref: 8487	Jun 2015	Ordnance Survey, 1896		
Report Ref: 2015450	Drawn by: KRH			





© Archaeology South-East		Former public conveniences, Millfields Road, Hackney		Fig. 6
Project Ref: 8487	Jun 2015	Ordnance Survey, 1936		
Report Ref: 2015450	Drawn by: KRH			





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Project Ref: 8487	Jun 2015	Ordnance Survey, 1951-1952	
Report Ref: 2015450	Drawn by: KRH		

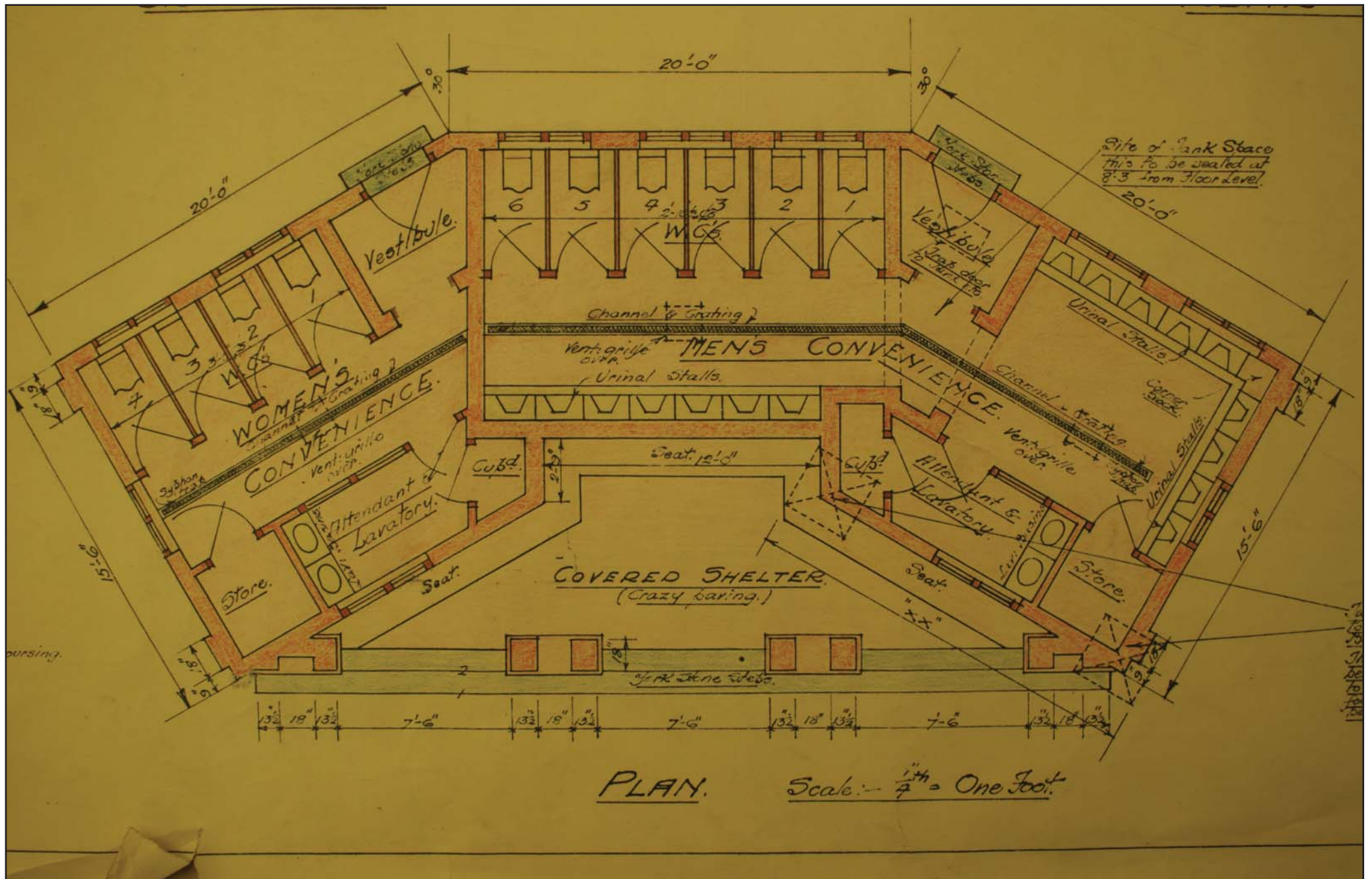
Fig. 7





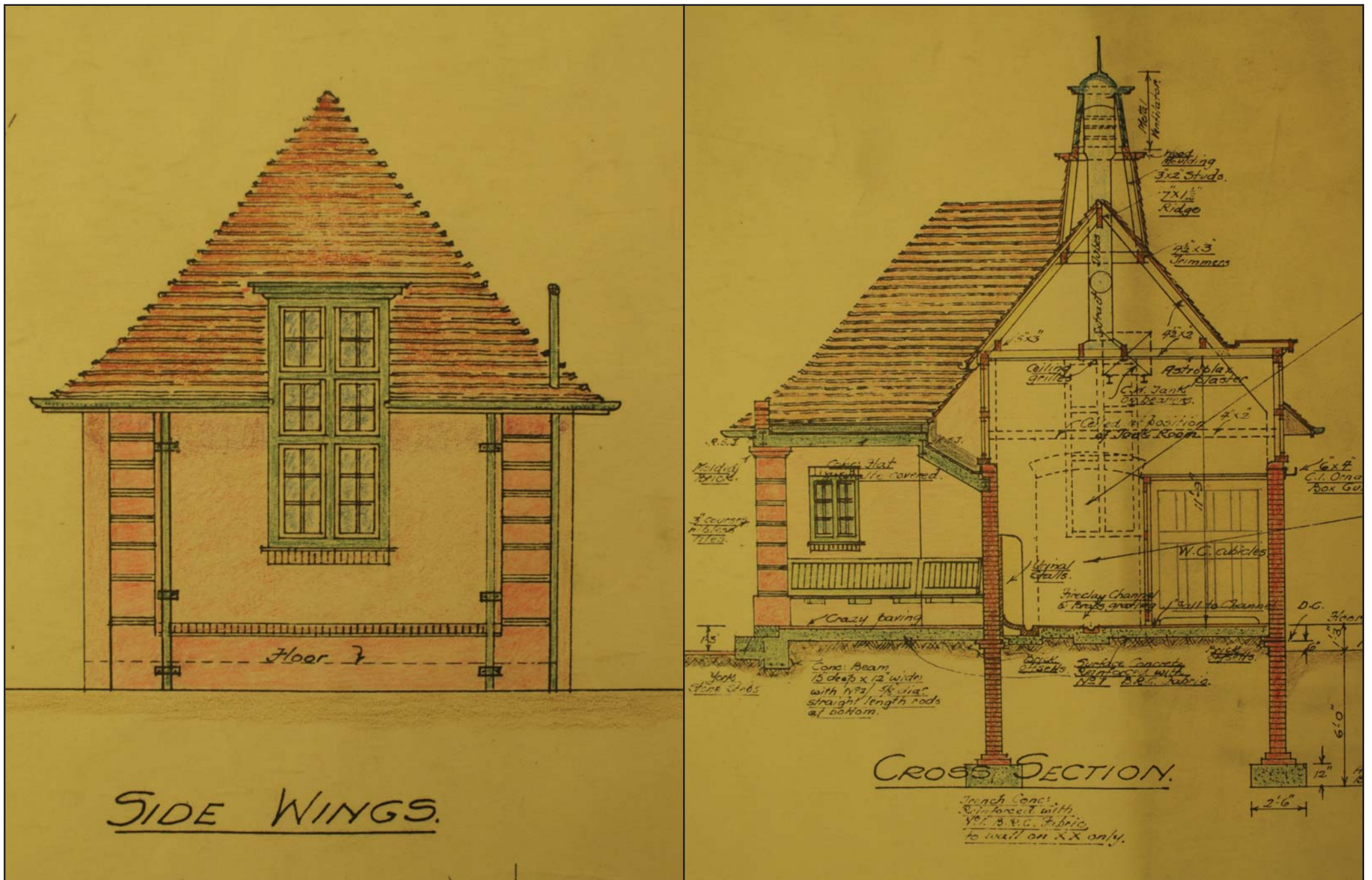
© Archaeology South-East		Former public conveniences, Millfields Road, Hackney	
Project Ref: 8487	Jun 2015	Ordnance Survey, 1966-1970	
Report Ref: 2015450	Drawn by: KRH	Fig. 8	

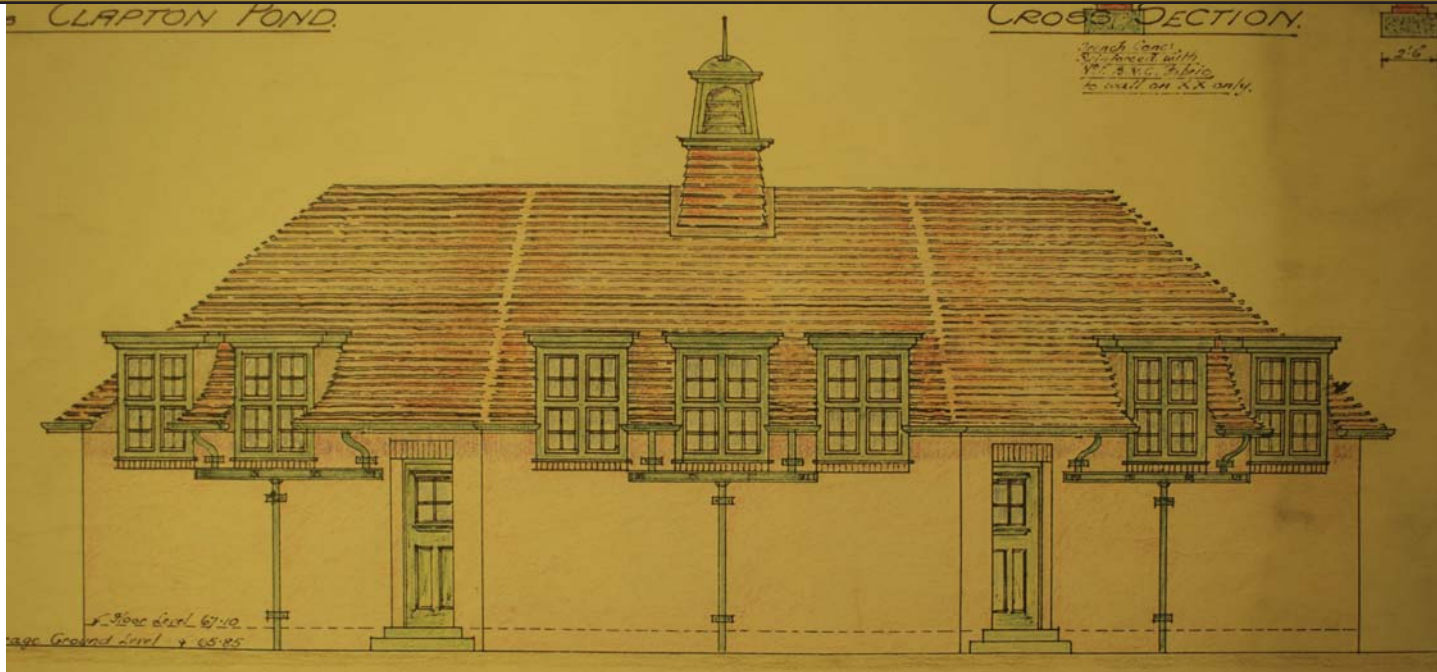
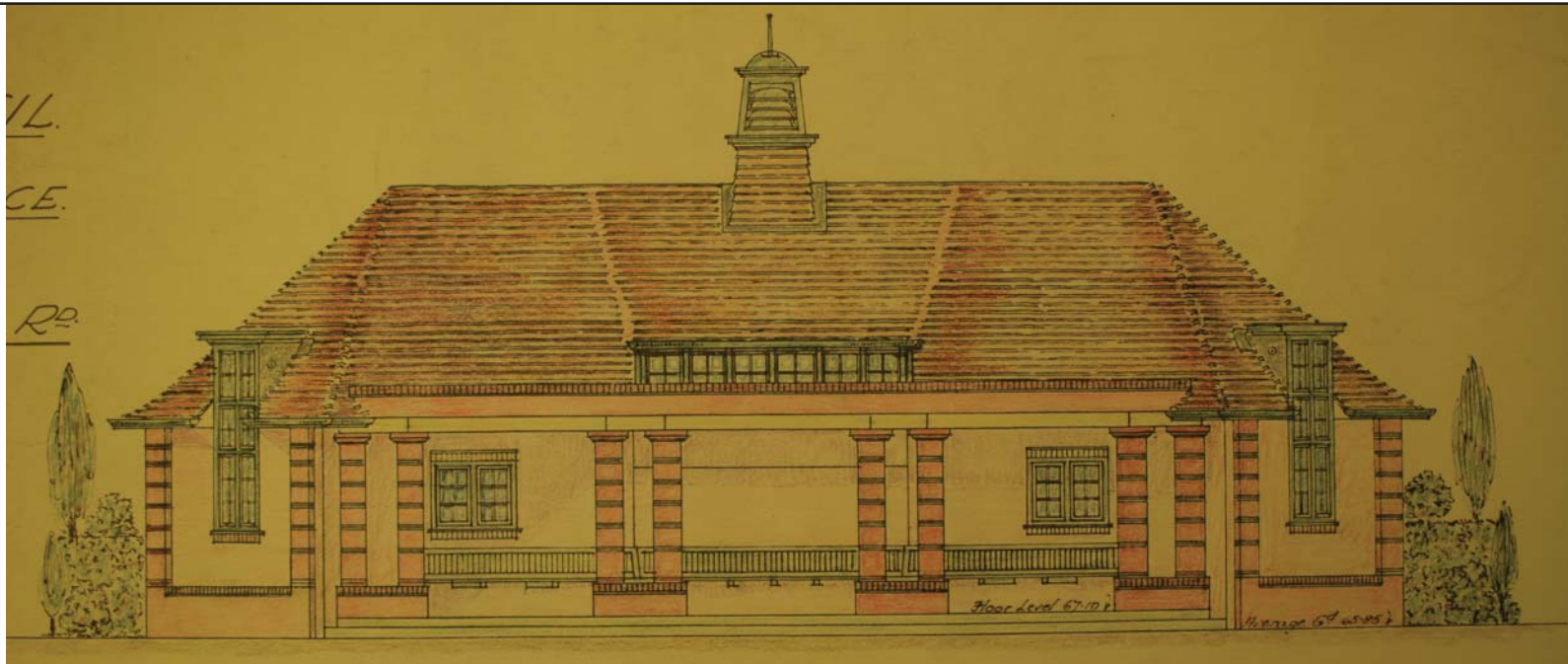




© Archaeology South-East		Former public conveniences, Millfields Road, Hackney	Fig. 9
Project Ref: 8487	Dec 2015	Proposed plan 1931 (Hackney Archive H/EP/29)	
Report Ref: 2015450	Drawn by: CPC		







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Former public conveniences, Millfields Road, Hackney

Project Ref: 8487

Dec 2015

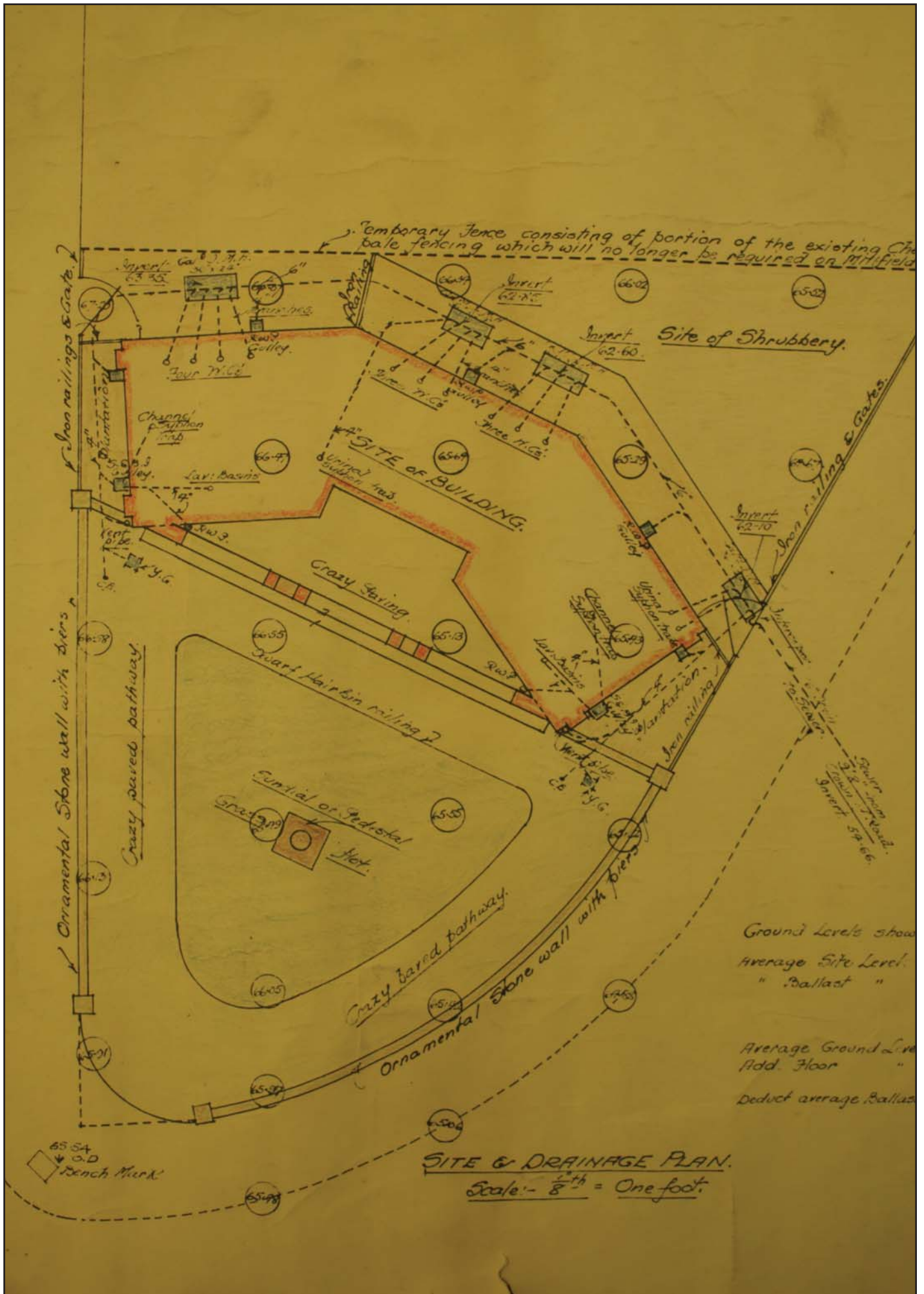
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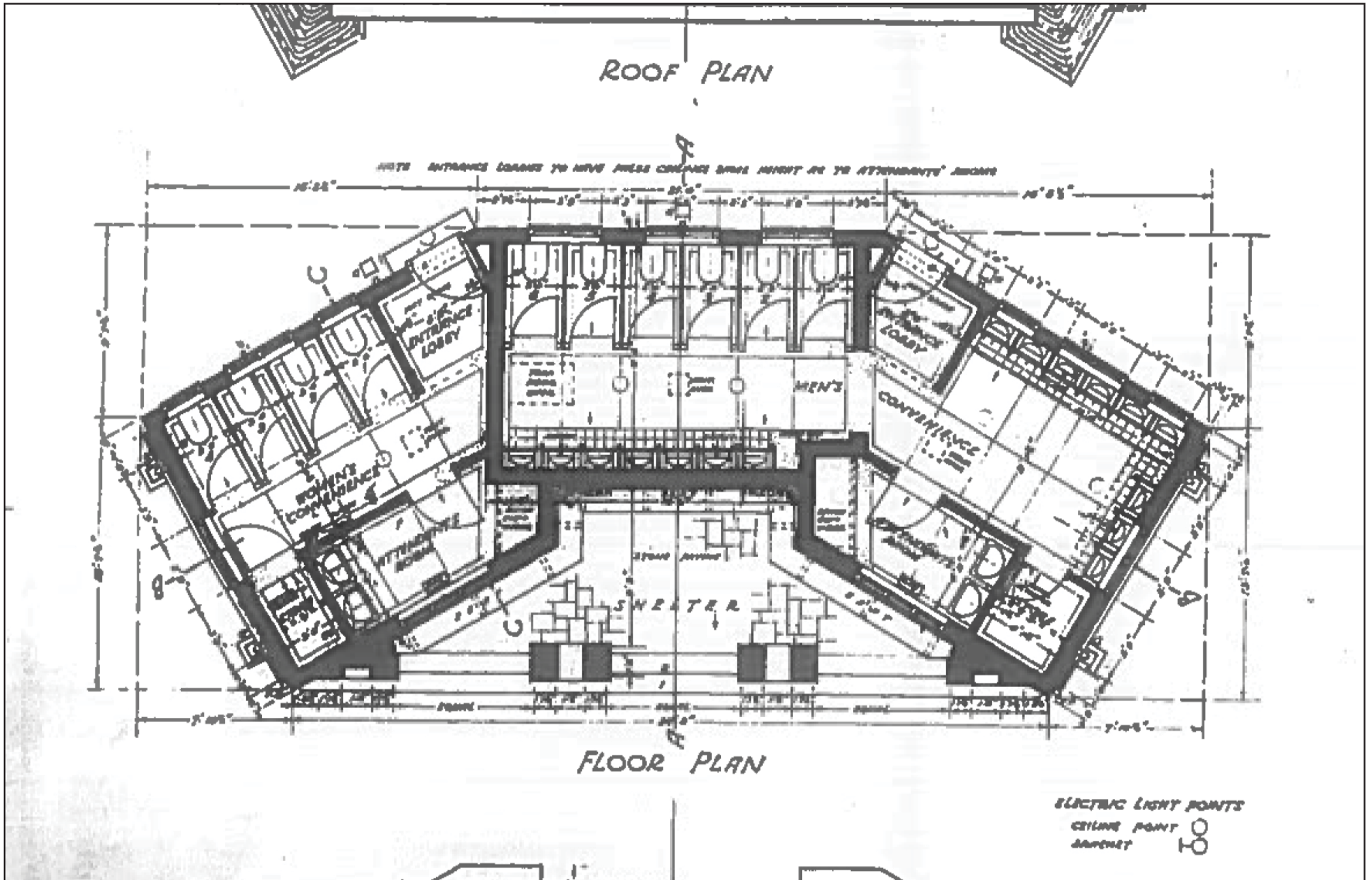
Proposed Front and rear elevations 1931 (Hackney Archive H/EP/29)

Fig. 11





© Archaeology South-East		Former public conveniences, Millfields Road, Hackney	Fig. 12
Project Ref: 8487	Dec 2015	Proposed block plan 1931 (Hackney Archives H/EP/29)	
Report Ref: 2015450	Drawn by: CPC		



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Former public conveniences, Millfields Road, Hackney

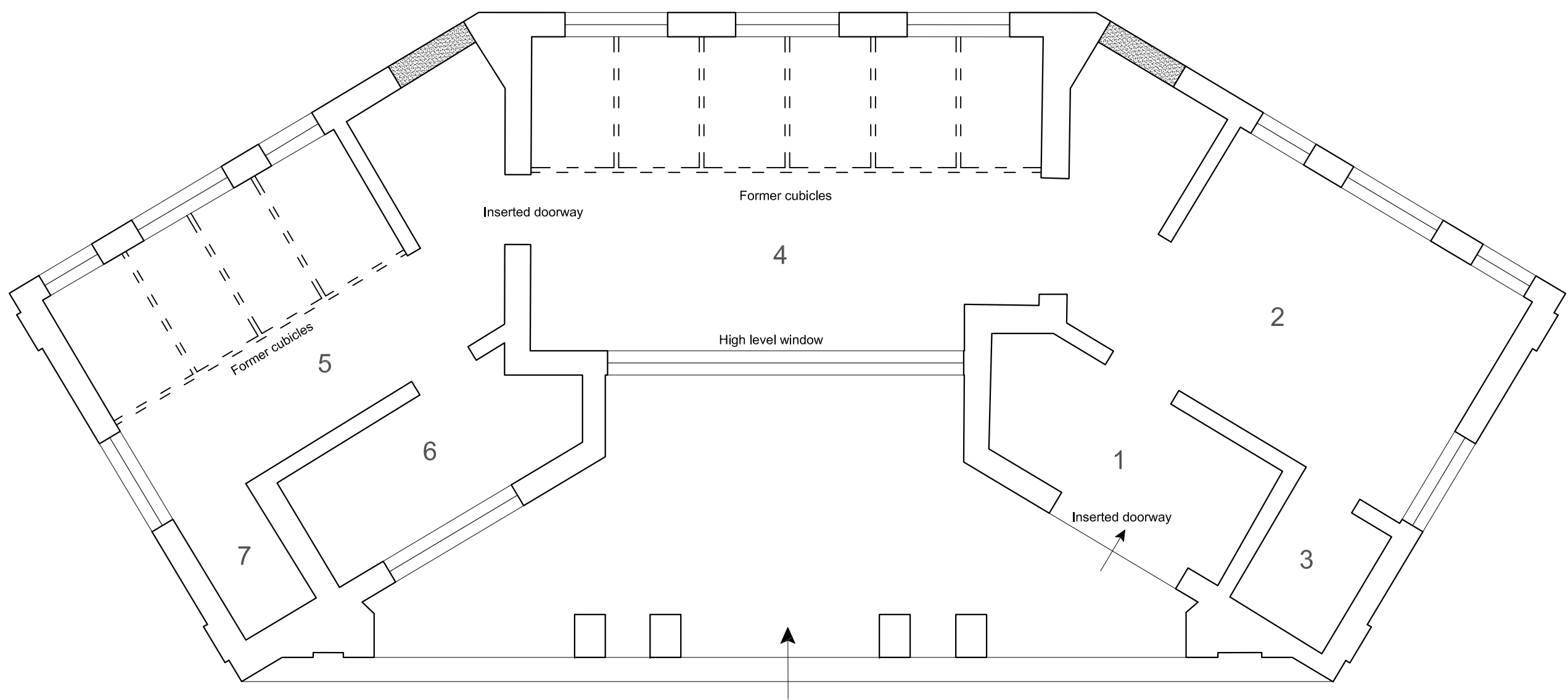
Project Ref: 8487  
 Report Ref: 2015450

Dec 2015  
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Drainage plans. Drawn 1936, approved Dec 1937 (Hackney Archive LBH 7/5/146/174)

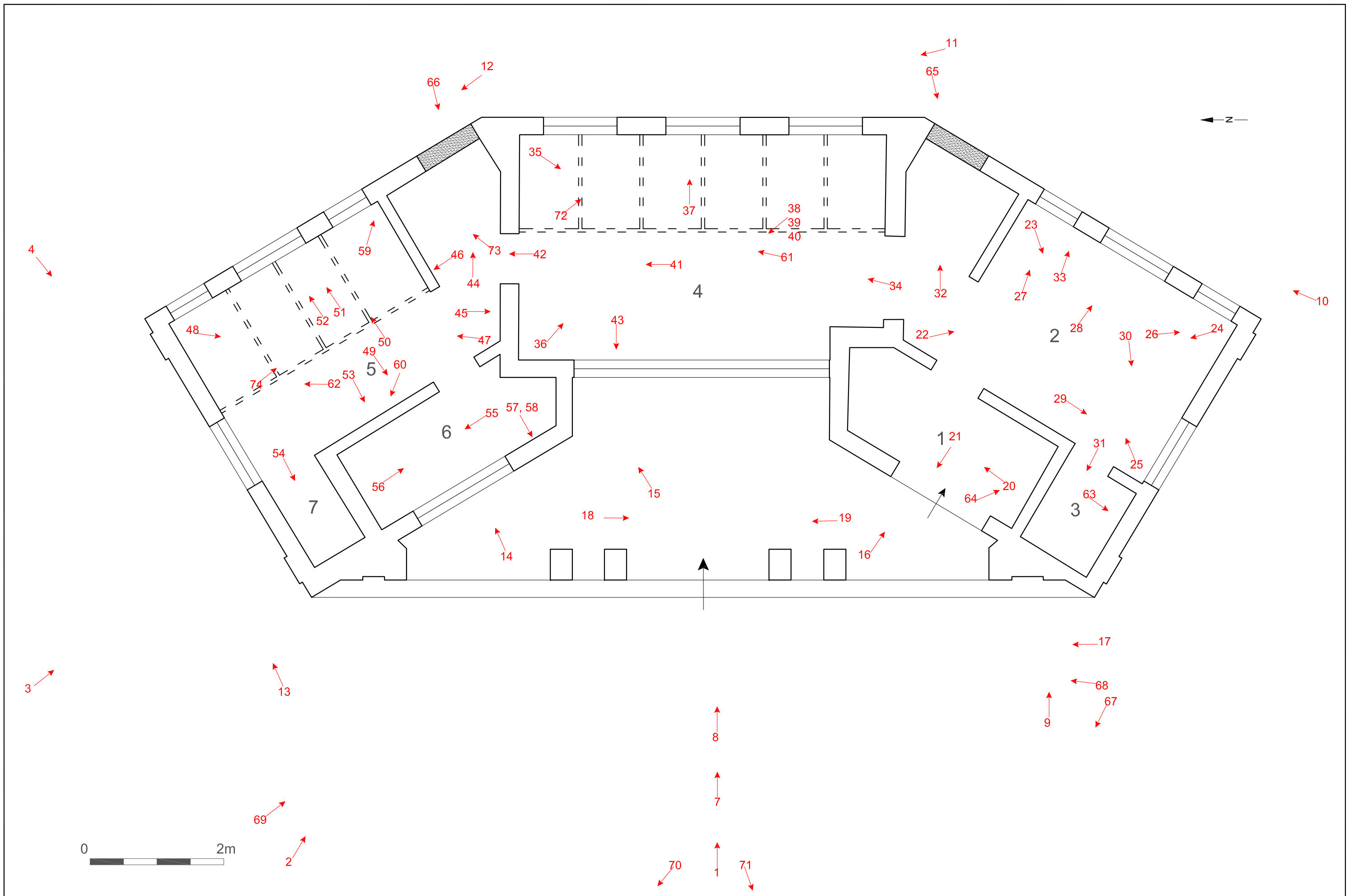
Fig. 13

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© Archaeology South-East		Former Public Conveniences, Millfields Road, London Borough of Hackney	Fig. 15
Project Ref: 8487	December 2015	Photo location plan	
Report Ref: 2015450	Drawn by: CPC		

## Appendix 1 OASIS Data Collection Form

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-233287**

### Project details

Project name	Former Public Conveniences, Millfields Road, London Borough of Hackney: Historic Building Record
Short description of the project	In November 2015 Archaeology South-East (a division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology, University College London) carried out a programme of historic building recording in connection in relation to the proposed demolition of the former public conveniences and redevelopment of the site (planning ref. 2015/2277). The building was constructed in the late 1930s as a public convenience by Hackney Borough Council and designed by their resident architect and engineer, Percival Holt. The building has changed little in layout or appearance; however most of the internal fixtures and fittings have been stripped out.
Project dates	Start: 23-11-2015 End: 07-12-2015
Previous/future work	Yes / Yes
Type of project	Recording project
Monument type	TOILET Modern
Significant Finds	NONE None
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON HACKNEY HACKNEY Juntion of Millfields Road and Mildenhall Road
Study area	0 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 35004 85908 51.555386296664 -0.052420133529 51 33 19 N 000 03 08 W Point
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Private Client
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Ron Humphrey
Project supervisor	Christopher Curtis
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Project archives	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London
Digital Archive ID	MIF15
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London
Paper Archive ID	MIF15

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Paper Media available	"Notebook - Excavation', ' Research', ' General Notes", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report"
Entered by	Chris Curtis (christopher.curtis@ucl.ac.uk)
Entered on	4 December 2015



8487 (1).JPG



8487 (2).JPG



8487 (3).JPG



8487 (4).JPG



8487 (5).JPG



8487 (6).JPG



8487 (7).JPG



8487 (8).JPG



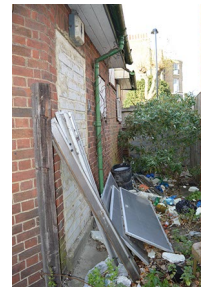
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8487 (10).JPG



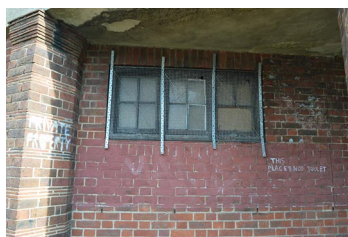
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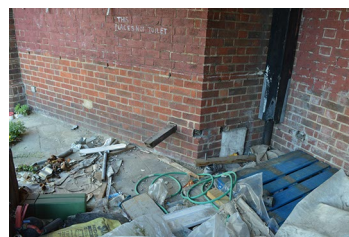
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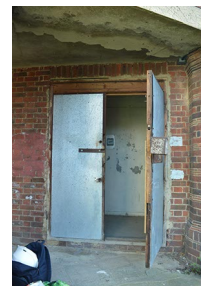
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8487 (14).JPG



8487 (15).JPG



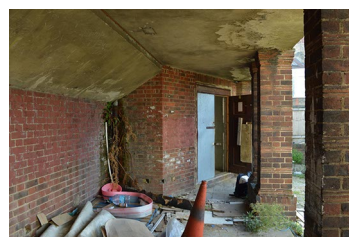
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8487 (17).JPG



8487 (18).JPG



8487 (19).JPG



8487 (20).JPG





8487 (21).JPG



8487 (22).JPG



8487 (23).JPG



8487 (24).JPG



8487 (25).JPG



8487 (26).JPG



8487 (27).JPG



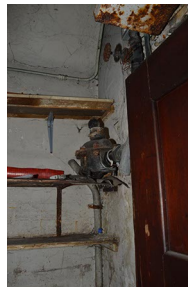
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8487 (29).JPG



8487 (30).JPG



8487 (31).JPG



8487 (32).JPG



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8487 (51).JPG



8487 (53).JPG



8487 (54).JPG



8487 (55).JPG



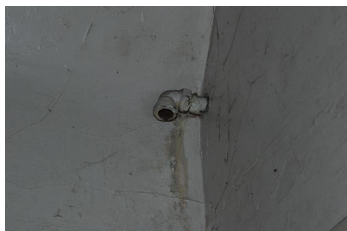
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8487 (57).JPG



8487 (58).JPG



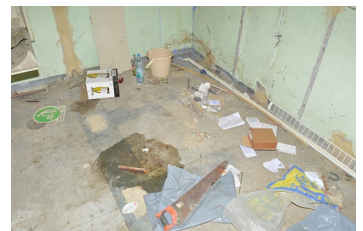
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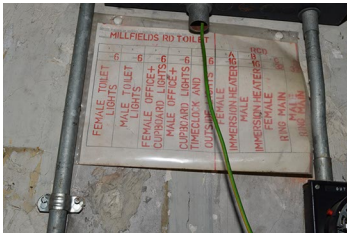


8487 (61).JPG



8487 (62).JPG





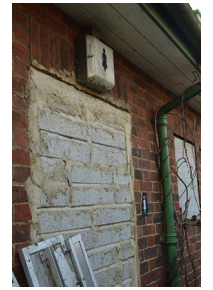
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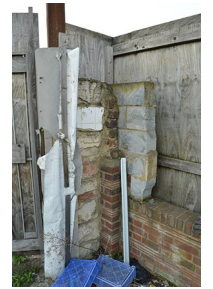
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8487 (68).JPG



8487 (69).JPG



8487 (70).JPG



8487 (71).JPG



8487 (72).JPG



8487 (73).JPG



8487 (74).JPG

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