

# THE KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM AT LADYSMITH INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL, EXETER

(NGR SX 9353 9301)

Results of historic building recording

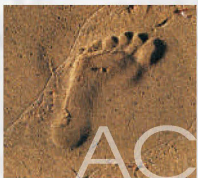
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On behalf of:  
NPS South West Ltd

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archaeology

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## Summary

*An historic building record of a group of horsa huts forming the kitchen and dining room at Ladysmith Infant and Nursery School, Exeter (SX 9353 9301) was prepared by AC archaeology on 19 November 2013 prior to their demolition.*

*Horsa Huts came into use in the late 1940s following the raising of the school leaving age in 1947 and the associated requirement for further accommodation. At Ladysmith School the building may have replaced earlier bomb-damaged structures. It comprised four attached huts that were originally used as a kitchen and two dining rooms. The use of the northern range is not known, and may not have been an dining room. Soon after construction ancillary welfare facilities were provided, and more recently the kitchen was expanded into the northern range, with also housed an office, stores and a dining room. One of the other huts was converted into a pre-school facility.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This document represents the results of historic building recording of the kitchen and dining room at Ladysmith Infant and Nursery School, Exeter (SX 9353 9301; Fig. 1). The kitchen and dining room are located in 'temporary' horsa huts. The work was commissioned by NPS South West Ltd prior to the demolition of the huts, and was undertaken by AC archaeology on 19 November 2013. Guidance on the scope of works has been set out in a brief provided by the DCHET (Reed 2013).
- 1.2 Ladysmith Infant and Nursery School is located in Heavitree on the west side of Ladysmith Road. It is situated at a height of approximately 50m aOD.

### 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Ladysmith Road Schools were constructed in 1907 on a plot of former farmland between Ladysmith Road and Pretoria Road. The infants' school building was destroyed by a bomb in 1942 and was later partially rebuilt (Parker 2004, 38, 41).
- 2.2 The kitchen and dining room are housed within Horsa huts. Horsa is an acronym for 'Hutting Operation for the Raising of the School-leaving Age'. In 1947, following the Education Act of 1944, the school leaving age was raised from 14 to 15, and horsa huts were constructed to provide extra accommodation. They were also used to replace bomb-damaged schools (as is likely to be the case at Ladysmith), and were usually constructed with concrete walls, asbestos roofs and metal-framed windows. It is estimated that 7,000 such huts were constructed, although the due to their temporary nature and associated poor condition many have been demolished and they are a dwindling resource.

### 3. AIM OF THE WORK

- 3.1 The aim of the investigations was to make a record of the historic building prior to its demolition.

## **4. METHODOLOGY (Appendix 1)**

**4.1** The recording was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC archaeology (Passmore 2013) and the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and Guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (revised 2008).

**4.2** The survey was prepared in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2*, and was taken to level 2 as set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice*. The survey comprised:

- A written description of the building, including local context and relationship between the various elements, construction techniques and materials, original use, and evidence for later alterations; and
- A photographic record including the overall character of the building, as well as detailed views of the external elevations, general views of the interior, and more-detailed photographs of any fixtures, fittings and architectural features. It comprised colour digital format only (minimum 10 megapixels), and where appropriate, all photographs included a photographic scale. Details of photographs taken were made on *pro forma* record sheets. A list of photographs is included as Appendix 1.

## **5. THE KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM (Plates 1-14)**

### **5.1 Location and general description**

The kitchen and dining room are situated towards the rear of the school on raised ground above the main school buildings. They are formed from four attached horsa buildings – a long north range with a boiler room at its north end connected by a corridor to 3 shorter rooms at its south end (Plates 1-3). The latter comprise two medium length buildings flanking a shorter central room at the end of the corridor. The ground slopes down to the south and they are terraced into the hillside and constructed onto concrete raft foundations that are partially exposed above the adjacent ground level. A possible contemporary building was situated to the east of the northern range, but it has been demolished and its position is currently utilised as kitchen gardens. On its east and south side the kitchen and dining room are surrounded by hardstanding, whilst on the other sides are gardens.

The Horsa frame is constructed of vertical chamfered concrete trusses, infilled with 'panels' of standard deep red bricks laid in header bond with cement and set onto a concrete sill. These are capped by concrete wall plates incorporating central shallow chamfers above potential window openings – at Ladysmith School not every panel incorporated windows. These were generally present in every second panel, although the fenestration varied depending on other requirements such as the provision of doorways (Plates 1 and 4). The truss spacing is equidistant on side elevations, but the arrangement incorporates 2 narrower bays on the gable elevations (Plate 5). The walls are painted white externally, with internal surfaces finished variously in render, tiles and painted brickwork.

The original windows in the side elevations are 3 over 3 panes in metal frames with the upper two rows top opening (Plate 4), whilst those in the gable elevations are 4 over 2 panes with the upper row again top opening (Plate 5). The latter were clearly a 'localised' design since they are set within panels with chamfered wall plates designed to take the wider windows. Under several of the windows are groups of 6 vents – there is no pattern to their locations.



The pitched gables are clad in asbestos sheets and incorporate two vents. The end corners of each building are formed from curved concrete posts. Where the three southern buildings join each other, pairs of these posts are joined together (Plate 6).

Most windows in the north range have been replaced with aluminium frames, whilst some of those in the south range also modern replacements.

## **5.2 The north range**

The north range has 2 entrance porches on its east elevation facing the main school building. The internal doors are four panelled, with the upper two panels glazed; the external doors have been removed.

The range is currently used as a dining room and kitchen, with a service partition dividing these areas. At the north end is a boiler room that contains a modern gas boiler. In the dining room, the floor is covered in linoleum whilst the roof structure is obscured by a false ceiling (Plate 7). The room has heaters placed on concrete plinths. In addition to the modern gas pipes there is some of the original pipework and other fittings associated with the heat source from the boiler room survive.

The kitchen has been fitted out (in the late 20th century) with industrial kitchen equipment and worktops, and gas supplies to the ovens (Plate 8). The walls are mostly painted brickwork with ceramic tiles used above the worktops. This material is also used for the floor covering. The room has a suspended ceiling that incorporates a large central extractor unit. The roof structure above must have been altered here, although there is no sign of this externally. In the west elevation there is a group of four high-level vents.

The south end of the kitchen has been divided into a central corridor (that continues beyond to the central hut of the south range) flanked by rooms on either side. There are two stores on the west side and an office and cloakroom on east side. This arrangement postdates the original building, and the work utilises bricks and concrete blocks. The rooms have 4-panel doors set within frames with ovolo moulding on the inside face (Plate 9). This decoration and its reversed application may indicate that the doors and frames have been reused

Further accommodation has been provided in extensions either side of the connecting corridor. They house a further store on the east side and a lavatory on the west side entered from the cloakroom. The former is clad in corrugated sheeting and has a flat roof, whilst the latter is constructed of painted brick laid in stretcher bond, under a flat roof. It has two 4-pane windows in the south elevation.

## **5.3 South range central room**

This room is a kitchen/food storage and preparation area (Plate 10). The partition walls with east and west rooms incorporate large serving hatches set between the trusses. In the east wall two primary wooden sliding hatches survive, whereas in the west wall they have been replaced by roller blinds (Plates 11 and 12). To the north of these hatches there are doorways into the adjacent rooms, retaining their original 4-panel doors. Below the hatches, and the windows in the south elevation, there are brick bench piers that now support laminated wooden shelves and worktops (Plate 12). Some have been removed to allow the fitting of modern storage facilities, such as fridges.

The room is open to the ceiling where the roof structure is exposed. The inside face of vertical trusses (visible on the outside of the building) are angled internally, in part reflecting the pitch of the roof. Bolted to these are rafters (Plates 10 and 11). The internal edges of both these elements are chamfered. The ceiling is set between these rafters, and comprises (?asbestos) boards. In the centre of the ceiling there is a pair of blocked openings within the boards. The outer covering is ceramic tiles that are almost certainly of late 20th-century date. This material has also been used to cover the other huts. The original cast-iron downpipes survive, although the gutters have been replaced in plastic.

The floor is tiled.

#### **5.4 South range east room**

This part of the building is currently used as a 'fish' pre-school room, and originally had an open plan layout (Plate 13). There is a doorway in the north elevation leading to a short corridor. The east side of the corridor is formed from the wall of an inserted block of lavatories. At the north end is a fire exit with an external porch. Either side of the door is a pair of inserted storage cupboards. The interior has flooring of carpet and linoleum, and a suspended ceiling. The walls are mostly painted brickwork, partially covered in noticeboards. The only other fixtures are heaters placed on concrete plinths.

#### **5.5 South range west room**

This part of the building is used as an open-plan dining room (Plate 14). There is an entrance, with an external porch, for children in the south elevation and an inserted fire door in the north elevation. The room has a linoleum floor, suspended ceiling and painted brick walls. The only fixtures are heaters placed on concrete plinths and their associated pipework.

### **6. COMMENTS**

**6.1** Horsa huts were a temporary form of school building designed to alleviate short-term accommodation shortages caused by the 1944 Education Act. It is also clear that many were used in infants' schools. In Devon, at such schools they are known to have been used as toilets as well as kitchens and dining rooms. At Ladysmith School, they may have been provided to supplement the surviving buildings, which were bomb damaged in 1942. The design of the Horsa hut follows on from temporary prefabricated buildings designed and constructed during the Second World War. They were designed to be utilitarian, but incorporated subtle architectural features such as the chamfering on the trusses and window lintels, whilst remaining robust (the trusses are similar to vernacular cruck trusses found in Devon buildings) and easy to construct.

**6.2** The current use as a kitchen and dining room was also its original use. The layout of the rooms and the design of the central room in the south range (e.g. the provision of shutters and the worktops) indicate that the latter was originally a kitchen, flanked by two dining rooms. These semi-prefabricated buildings were ideal for such a use, requiring little need for alteration and few specific fittings. Surviving historic fittings include the shelving and shutters in the kitchen and elements of the pipework.

**6.4** The building has been updated, and has a replaced roof, whilst the lighting and heating have also been upgraded during the 20th century. The present kitchen in the north range (incorporating stores, an office and welfare facilities) is also a later

20th-century expansion of the original kitchen facilities, perhaps in part reflecting a need for expanded catering requirements. It is unclear whether this north range was originally used as a dining room, or whether it was a classroom, with (at least from an early date) limited storage and welfare at its southern end.

## **7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY**

- 7.1** A digital archive, consisting of all relevant born-digital data, and a copy of the report will be deposited with the archaeology data service. An Online Access to the Index of Archaeological investigationS (OASIS) entry has been completed under the unique identification number 173454.

## **8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

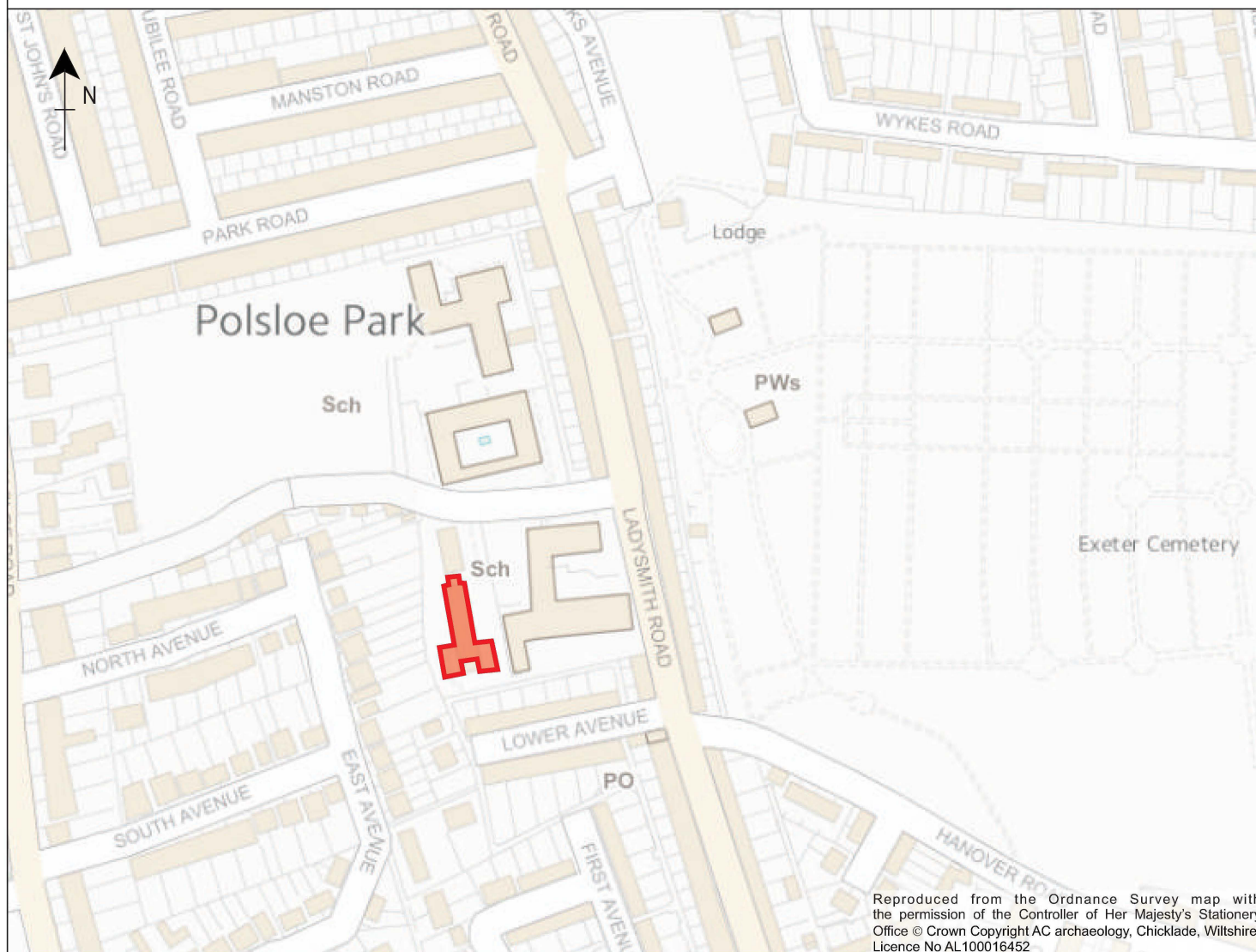
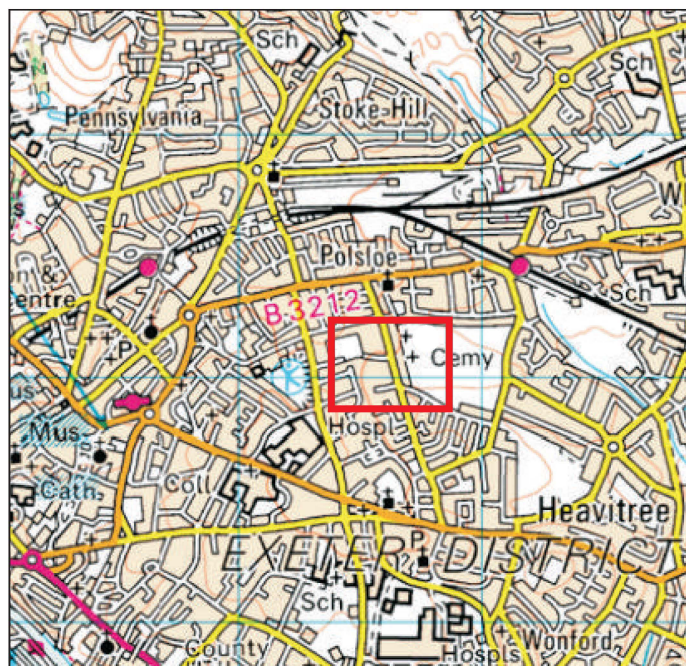
The recording was commissioned by NPS South West Ltd, and managed for them by Mark Quadling. The survey was carried out and report written by Andrew Passmore, with the illustrations prepared by Elisabeth Patkai. Thanks are due to the staff of Ladysmith School for facilitating unhindered access to the building.

## **9. SOURCES CONSULTED**

Parker, R.W., 2004, 'School buildings in Exeter 1800-1939', *Devon Buildings Group Newsletter* **22**, 3-50

Passmore, A.J., 2013, *Ladysmith Infant and Nursery School, Exeter, (NGR SX 9353 9301), Written Scheme of Investigation for historic building recording*, AC archaeology document no. **ACD800/1/0**

Reed, S., 2013, *Brief for Historic Building Recording, Ladysmith Infants School, Exeter*, DCHET ref. **ARCH/DM/EX/20492**



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0 100m

Scale 1:3500@A4



Location of site

PROJECT

Kitchen and dining room, Ladysmith School, Exeter

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location



AC archaeology





Plate 1: The kitchen and dining room, viewed from the northwest. 1m scale.



Plate 2: The kitchen and dining room viewed from the northwest showing the boiler room in the foreground.



Plate 3: The south end of the kitchen and dining room, viewed from the south. 1m scale.



Plate 4: A bay in the east elevation of the south range, east room showing typical details and a window, viewed from the east. 1m scale.



Plate 5: The north gable elevation of the south range, east room, showing window types, viewed from the north. 1m scale.



Plate 6: Detail of the join between two huts, viewed from the northeast. 1m scale.



Plate 7: The interior of the dining room in the north range showing inserted partition, viewed from the north. 1m scale.



Plate 8: The kitchen in the north range showing the inserted walls at the south end, viewed from the northwest. 1m scale.



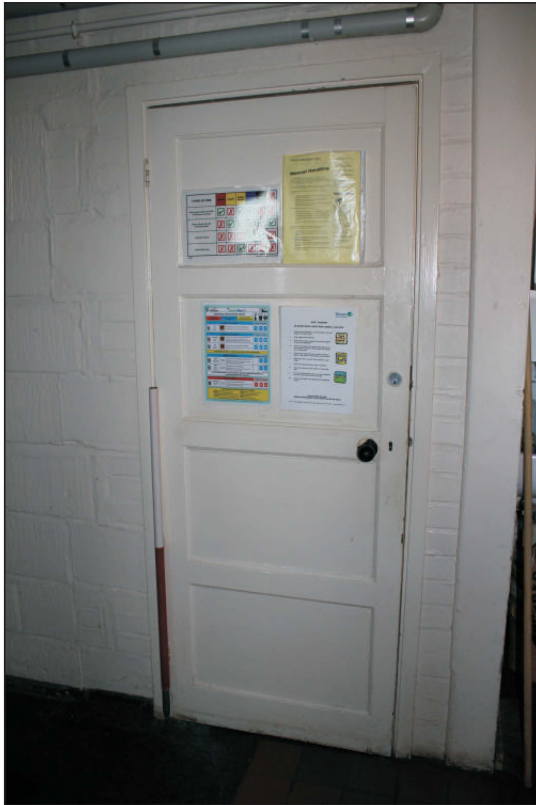


Plate 9: A 4-panel door in the north range, viewed from the northeast. 1m scale.



Plate 10: The kitchen in the south range, central room, viewed from the south. 1m scale.



Plate 11: The shutters in the west wall of the south range, central room showing work top below, viewed from the northeast.





Plate 12: The serving hatches in the east wall of the south range, central room, viewed from the west.



Plate 13: The south range, east room showing the interior, viewed from the south. 1m scale.



Plate 14: The south range, west room showing the interior, viewed from the north. 1m scale.



# Appendix 1

Digital photograph register

Photographic Register  
ACD800 Ladysmith Infant and Primary School

Archive No	Site Code	Description	Scale	View from	Photo by	Date
1	ACD800	North range, east elevation.	1m	NE	AJP	19/11/2013
2	ACD800	North range, east elevation.	1m	E	AJP	19/11/2013
3	ACD800	North range, east elevation, north porch	1m	E	AJP	19/11/2013
4	ACD800	North range, boiler room	1m	SE	AJP	19/11/2013
5	ACD800	North range, east elevation, south porch	1m	E	AJP	19/11/2013
6	ACD800	Corridor and extension, east side	1m	E	AJP	19/11/2013
7	ACD800	Extension, steel windows	1m	SE	AJP	19/11/2013
8	ACD800	South range, detail of joint of huts	1m	NE	AJP	19/11/2013
9	ACD800	North range, east elevation, corner detail	1m	S	AJP	19/11/2013
10	ACD800	South range, east room, north elevation	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
11	ACD800	South range, east room, north elevation windows	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
12	ACD800	South range, east room, east elevation	1m	NE	AJP	19/11/2013
13	ACD800	South range, east room, east elevation, window detail	1m	E	AJP	19/11/2013
14	ACD800	South range, east room, east elevation, vent	0.20m	E	AJP	19/11/2013
15	ACD800	South range, east room, south elevation	1m	SE	AJP	19/11/2013
16	ACD800	South range, east room, west elevation	1m	SW	AJP	19/11/2013
17	ACD800	South range, general view	1m	S	AJP	19/11/2013
18	ACD800	South range, west room, east elevation showing blocked vent	1m	SE	AJP	19/11/2013
19	ACD800	South range, west room, south elevation	1m	S	AJP	19/11/2013
20	ACD800	North range, boiler room, east elevation	1m	E	AJP	19/11/2013
21	ACD800	North range, boiler room, north elevation	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
22	ACD800	North range, boiler room, west elevation	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
23	ACD800	General view		N	AJP	19/11/2013
24	ACD800	North range, west elevation		NW	AJP	19/11/2013
25	ACD800	North range, west elevation showing vents and drainpipe		W	AJP	19/11/2013
26	ACD800	South range, north elevation		N	AJP	19/11/2013
27	ACD800	Corridor and extension, west side	1m	W	AJP	19/11/2013
28	ACD800	South range, west room, west elevation	1m	NW	AJP	19/11/2013
29	ACD800	North range, dining room interior	1m	S	AJP	19/11/2013
30	ACD800	North range, dining room interior	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
31	ACD800	North range, roof truss detail		SE	AJP	19/11/2013
32	ACD800	North range, roof truss detail		NW	AJP	19/11/2013
33	ACD800	North range, kitchen interior	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
34	ACD800	North range, kitchen interior, vent in west wall		E	AJP	19/11/2013
35	ACD800	North range, kitchen interior	1m	S	AJP	19/11/2013
36	ACD800	North range, kitchen interior, inserted partition	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
37	ACD800	North range, kitchen interior and corridor	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
38	ACD800	North range, kitchen interior, corridor and door	1m	E	AJP	19/11/2013
39	ACD800	North range, corridor	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
40	ACD800	North range, cloakroom and lavatory	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
41	ACD800	North range, secondary lavatory		NW	AJP	19/11/2013
42	ACD800	North range, corridor	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
43	ACD800	South range, central room, interior	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
44	ACD800	South range, central room, interior	1m	S	AJP	19/11/2013

Photographic Register  
ACD800 Ladysmith Infant and Primary School

45	ACD800	South range, central room, interior, shelving	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
46	ACD800	South range, central room, interior, truss detail and shutters		N	AJP	19/11/2013
47	ACD800	South range, central room, interior, vent		N	AJP	19/11/2013
48	ACD800	South range, central room, interior, roof detail		S	AJP	19/11/2013
49	ACD800	South range, central room, interior, shutters		NE	AJP	19/11/2013
50	ACD800	South range, central room, interior, shutters		W	AJP	19/11/2013
51	ACD800	South range, west room, interior	1m	S	AJP	19/11/2013
52	ACD800	South range, west room, interior	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
53	ACD800	South range, west room, interior and wall top detail		N	AJP	19/11/2013
54	ACD800	South range, west room, interior showing window and heater	1m	E	AJP	19/11/2013
55	ACD800	South range, east room, interior	1m	S	AJP	19/11/2013
56	ACD800	South range, east room, interior	1m	N	AJP	19/11/2013
57	ACD800	South range, east room, interior, shutters and brick wall	1m	E	AJP	19/11/2013
58	ACD800	South range, east room, interior, modern lavatories	1m	S	AJP	19/11/2013
59	ACD800	South range, east room, interior, roof detail		N	AJP	19/11/2013



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