

at the
TROPICANA,
MARINE PARADE, WESTON-SUPER-MARE,
NORTH SOMERSET.
for
North Somerset Council



Report No. 2768/2012
OASIS No. bristola1-133213

By Simon Roper



Bristol and Region Archaeological Services



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Archaeological Building Recording
at the
TROPICANA,
MARINE PARADE, WESTON-SUPER-MARE,
NORTH SOMERSET.

Centred on
N.G.R. ST 3165 6065

Client: North Somerset Council
Agent: Alec French Architects

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<i>Date Issued:</i>	19 October 2012

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Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	Km	Kilometre
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	m	Metre
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	NGR	National Grid Reference
BC	Before Christ	NSHER	North Somerset Historic Environment Record
<i>c</i>	Circa		
EHA	English Heritage Archive	OS	Ordnance Survey

NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

October, 2012.

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SUMMARY

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) were commissioned by Alec French Architects on behalf of North Somerset Council to undertake a building survey of the buildings and structures of the outdoor swimming pool known as the Tropicana prior to their demolition taking place. The site is situated on the west side of Marine Parade in the Beach Lawns Conservation Area, approximately 700m south of the Grand Pier (centred on NGR ST 3165 6065). It is built out onto the main beach, just above the Mean High Water line. The frontage to Marine Parade occupies about 113m, and the seaward edge of the site is about 90m west from the current sea wall. The building recording was commissioned to comply with English Heritage Level 2 archaeological recording of the existing structures.

Most of the original external structure of the 1937 building is still present, constructed in Mendip limestone. Concrete blockwork additions probably date from the mid twentieth century, with the most significant changes taking place in 1982/3 when the site became the Tropicana and a new building constructed from brickwork and steel beams was added on the south side. Further changes occurred in the 1990s but largely to the internal layout. Very few original features survive inside or outside.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 It is proposed to demolish the swimming pool and associated leisure facilities at the Tropicana site on Marine Parade, Weston-super-Mare. This will result in the complete removal of the existing structure, with the study area being returned to beach and the sea wall rebuilt (Planning Application Nos. 12/P/0045/CA and 12/P/0712/13C). Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) were commissioned by Alec French Architects on behalf of North Somerset Council to undertake a building survey of the buildings and structures on the site prior to the demolition taking place.
- 1.2 The building recording was commissioned to comply with English Heritage Level 2 archaeological recording of the existing structures. This was in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS 2011) on the 3rd September 2012.
- 1.3 The fieldwork was undertaken on the 25th September 2012 under the supervision of Simon Roper who also compiled this report.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with the North Somerset Collections of the Somerset Heritage Centre under the Accession Number WESTM: 2012.13 and a copy of the report will be sent to the English Heritage Archive maintained by English Heritage. The OASIS number for this project is bristola1-133213.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The site is situated on the west side of Marine Parade in the Beach Lawns Conservation Area, approximately 700m south of the Grand Pier (centred on NGR ST 3165 6065). It is built out onto the main beach, just above the Mean High Water line. The frontage to Marine Parade occupies 113m, and the seaward edge of the site is 90m west from the current sea wall. Ground floor level is at *c* 8.2m aOD, approximately the same as pavement level. Fronting Marine Parade is a long elevation, mostly single-storey but with a higher, 2-storey, central block that faces across to the west end of Clevedon Road. The former pool lies behind the 2-storey block, with a large single-storey range occupying the full extent of the southern side of the site.
- 2.2 According to the British Geological Survey, the superficial geology of the site comprises Quaternary silts, sands and clays forming beach and tidal flat deposits, with blown sands immediately inland, all above Mercia Mudstone at depth (BGS 2012).
- 2.3 The site is situated in the Beach Lawns Conservation Area. Apart from the three sea front pavilions (listed Grade II), there are no Listed Buildings in the immediate area, including the Tropicana itself. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments on the site or nearby. No archaeological work has taken place on the site.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The site lay within the historic parish of Weston-super-Mare, with the village set on the lower slopes of Worle Hill, and the present site at the seaward end of Weston Moor. The border between the moor and the tidal flats is named The Strand on early 19th-century maps, and was probably occupied by sand dunes. Originally an agricultural and fishing village, Weston was developed as a seaside resort during the 19th century. By the late 1880s the seafront area had assumed its present form, with the sea wall and promenade backed by the Marine Parade, beyond which lay the Beach Lawns and then Beach Road, with suburban roads running off the latter at right angles. A shelter is depicted on the 1886 1:500 town plan, on the edge of the seaward promenade almost opposite the end of Clevedon Road.
- 3.2 In 1936-37 an open-air swimming pool was constructed on the site, to the designs of the municipal engineer and surveyor, Mr. H. A. Brown. The lido-style complex was known as *The Pool* and opened in the summer of 1937. It comprised a large rectangular pool with a set of art deco-style arc shaped reinforced concrete diving boards at the west end, with the pool sloping up towards the east end where there was an artificial beach, while on the north, south and west sides there were covered terraces providing seating. Along the east side was the entrance building with a café on the first floor and the changing rooms located in the wings either side. This was a major outdoor attraction in the resort.
- 3.3 The reinforced concrete diving boards were suffering from cracks in their structure by 1961 and were strengthened with the insertion of bolts. By 1978 however the top parts were closed to the public for safety reasons.
- 3.4 During 1982-83 there were major changes. The diving boards, though Grade II Listed, were removed, as they were believed to be a public hazard. The pool itself was completely redesigned as a smaller kidney shaped version with flumes and a wave machine, and a large flat-roofed range was erected along the south wall to provide a shelter, bar and restaurant. The pool was renamed the *Tropicana* from 1983, and finally closed at the end of the 2000 summer season. More recently, the site was used to store surplus spoil materials during major works on the seafront.

4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork complied with the methodology contained within the Written Scheme of Investigation (BaRAS 2012) approved by North Somerset Council on the 11th September 2012. The survey was conducted to English Heritage level 2 standard, outlined in their 2006 publication “*Understanding Historic Buildings, A guide To Good Recording Practice*”.
- 4.2 The survey comprised comprehensive photographic recording of the historic core of the building with notes and annotated floor plans. The photographic record was created using a conventional SLR camera with monochrome film, supplemented by colour images produced with a digital camera with a resolution of 5 mega-pixels or above. All details of the photographs taken were recorded on a standard BaRAS photographic record sheet.
- 4.3 The drawn record comprised a series of annotations to existing floor plans, produced on site, of the internal layout of each area of the site. The written record comprised detailed notes on the form, construction, probable function of the buildings as a whole and elements within it.
- 4.4 The aim of the survey was to create a visual record of the building prior to the demolition. The survey sought to provide information that will help understand the development history of the buildings, and where possible phase structural changes.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 The principle purpose of the recording was to provide information that would aid in the phasing of the building and provide a comprehensive photographic record prior to the demolition of the building. Original plans from the 1930s were provided by Alec French Architects, which assisted in the interpretation of the building (**Figs. 6, 7 & 8**).
- 5.2 The original parts of the pavilion building are constructed in Mendip limestone (**Plates 1 & 2**), with the later 20th-century additions and infilling using concrete blockwork (**Plate 3**). The rest of the structure was enclosed with a grey limestone-faced sea wall on the north, south and west sides (**Plates 4, 5 & 6**). On the south side the structure added in the 1980s was constructed from brickwork and steel beams (**Plate 7**).
- 5.3 The different areas of the building have been altered to varying degrees, with relatively few of the original features surviving. The first floor of the central pavilion building demonstrates this with the main room (**Plate 8**) (originally the café) still retaining the original floor, metal windows (**Plate 9**), and vents (**Plate 10**). However the north-west corner of the room has been substantially altered with the addition of a number of partition walls creating an office and corridor within the main room (**Fig. 5**). Originally the kitchen for the café was located in the room to the south (**Fig. 8**), which has now been subdivided into toilets, a corridor leading to the flat roof of the southern side wing, a windowless plant room and a storeroom. To the north of the large main room were originally four smaller rooms, with the two western rooms still in place and accessed via the inserted corridor, one leading to the roof of the northern side wing, and the other originally a toilet and now empty. The staff room and the stock room located in the eastern half have been replaced in the 1980s with a modern stairwell and small office.
- 5.4 Apart from two examples the roof lights (**Plate 11**) located in the flat roofs of the north and south wings have all been covered over, and the south wing houses large ducting related to ventilation. The railings around the edge of both wings have been replaced with concrete blockwork (**Plate 12**).
- 5.5 The ground floor of the central pavilion houses a café on the east side (**Plate 16**), with a dividing wall running along the line of the supporting pillars, and a ticket office structure within the west side (**Plate 17**). The rooms to the south comprised a small kitchen, a storeroom and another room that housed another smaller structure, possibly a refrigeration unit. The rooms to the north contained the base of the modern stairwell, with a plant room and electrical sub station also housed here (**Fig. 4**).
- 5.6 The north side wing originally housed the male changing rooms (**Fig. 7**), these had subsequently been divided in two to provide separate changing areas for men and women. A few of the original cubicles still remain (**Plate 18 & 19**) but most have been removed to create open changing areas with various smaller rooms converted to showers or toilets. A shop space, accessed from the front of the building was originally the cloakroom for the changing rooms. To the west of the changing rooms a small block was originally the male toilets and attendants rooms, now converted to male and female toilets. At the far end of the north side wing were two sets of rooms, a small office/storeroom, and a men's public toilets, with a concrete block addition forming part of the toilets to the west of the original structure. An open fronted shelter was originally at this end of the building.
- 5.7 The south side wing originally housed the female changing rooms, however these were completely removed, probably when the site was converted to the Tropicana in the 1980s. The building was converted to house two bars (**Plate 20**), with a kitchen and multiple toilet blocks (**Fig. 4**). The larger bar (**Plate 21**) extends into a new building to the west, part of the building added to the south side of the pool area in the 1980s. This modern range, built from brick and steel beams (**Plate 22**), extends the length the pool area and includes another two rooms

(**Plates 23 & 24**), the middle one being very large (**Fig. 3**). The far end of the south side wing again has a concrete block addition built on to the west side of the original structure, which is a ladies public toilet (**Plate 3**).

- 5.8 The pool area has been altered substantially from the original layout. As detailed in paragraph 3.4 the diving boards were removed, the pool reduced in size and the modern range added on the south side. In addition the terracing along the north side was removed, as was the small pavilion building / pump house in the centre of the west terracing (**Plate 25**). The sea wall is largely intact, although a section in the north-east corner had been removed (**Plate 26**) to allow access for vehicles when the pool was filled with surplus building materials. Some original features are still present, such as the fountain (**Plate 27**) (somewhat damaged) and the north side external staircase and railings (**Plate 28**).

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The survey of the Tropicana recorded the layout of the buildings on plan and produced a comprehensive photographic survey of the site. It also revealed a number of forms of construction relating to the development sequence of the building. These in conjunction with the early plans of the site have allowed a very basic phasing to be produced (**Fig. 2**).
- 6.2 Most of the original external structure of the 1937 building is still present, constructed in Mendip limestone. Concrete blockwork additions probably date from the mid twentieth century, with the most significant changes taking place in 1982/3 when the site became the Tropicana and a new building constructed from brickwork and steel beams was added on the south side. Further changes occurred in the 1990s but largely to the internal layout. Very few original features survive inside or outside, most of the railings being replaced for example. Those original features that do survive are often in a very poor state, such as the pool fountain, for example.

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Maps and Plans

1886 *Weston-super-Mare Town Plan* Ordnance Survey (1:500)

1935 Proposed Open Air Bathing Pool, Weston-super-Mare UDC

1936 Proposed Open Air Bathing Pool, Administrative Buildings, Weston-super-Mare UDC

1954 Ordnance Survey plan (1:2500)

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8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services wish to thank the following for their help and advice: Nigel Dyke of Alec French Architects, John Bird of the Property and Asset Management Division of North Somerset Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Roper & Ann Linge, with Simon Roper also producing this report. The illustrations were prepared and the report compiled by Ann Linge. The archive was compiled and prepared for deposition by Simon Roper. The project was managed by John Bryant.

APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY (ENGLAND)

The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) for England published by the UK Government in March 2012 states that the historic environment, which includes designated and non-designated heritage assets, is an irreplaceable resource and, as such, should be taken into account by Local Planning Authorities when considering and determining planning applications. This is taken to form part of a positive strategy set out in the respective Local Plan to ensure the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The assigned significance of heritage assets will be key factor in terms of their conservation.

Given their irreplaceable nature, any harm to, or loss of, a heritage asset, or heritage assets, should be clearly and convincingly justified as part of a planning application. As part of this, applicants are required to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting. Where a heritage asset, or assets, are to be harmed or lost as the result of a proposal, the applicant will be required to record and advance the understanding of the significance of that asset or assets, to include making the evidence arising publicly accessible, but this will be in proportion to the significance of the asset/assets in question.

While the NPPF takes into account the historic environment as a whole, additional protection is afforded to designated heritage assets under current English Law. Any proposal that would result in harm or loss of a designated heritage asset is also required to be justified by the applicant in meeting strict criteria set out in the NPPF.

LOCAL POLICY

CS5: Landscape and the historic environment

The council will conserve the historic environment of North Somerset, having regard to the significance of heritage assets such as conservation areas, listed buildings, buildings of local significance, scheduled monuments, other archaeological sites, registered and other historic parks and gardens.

Particular attention will be given to aspects of the historic environment which contribute to the distinctive character of North Somerset, such as the Victorian townscapes and seafronts in Weston and Clevedon.

Historic environment

3.84 Buildings need not be listed to be of importance to the historic environment. The council is proposing to introduce a scheme by which buildings of local or regional importance are identified, using specific criteria. It is envisaged that this status would be a material consideration in assessing planning applications affecting such buildings.



Fig.1 Site location plan, scale 1:5000

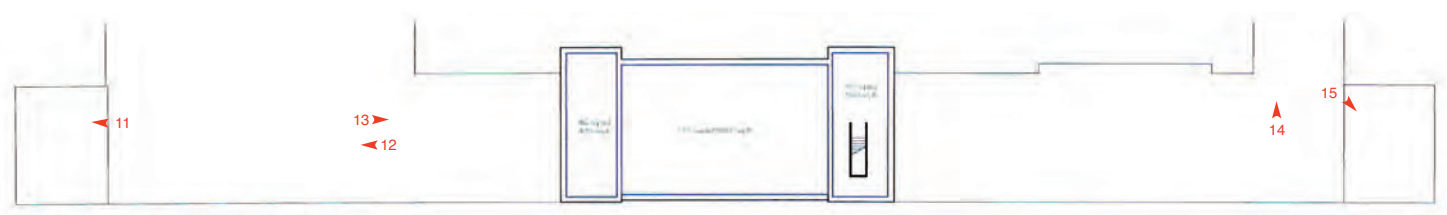
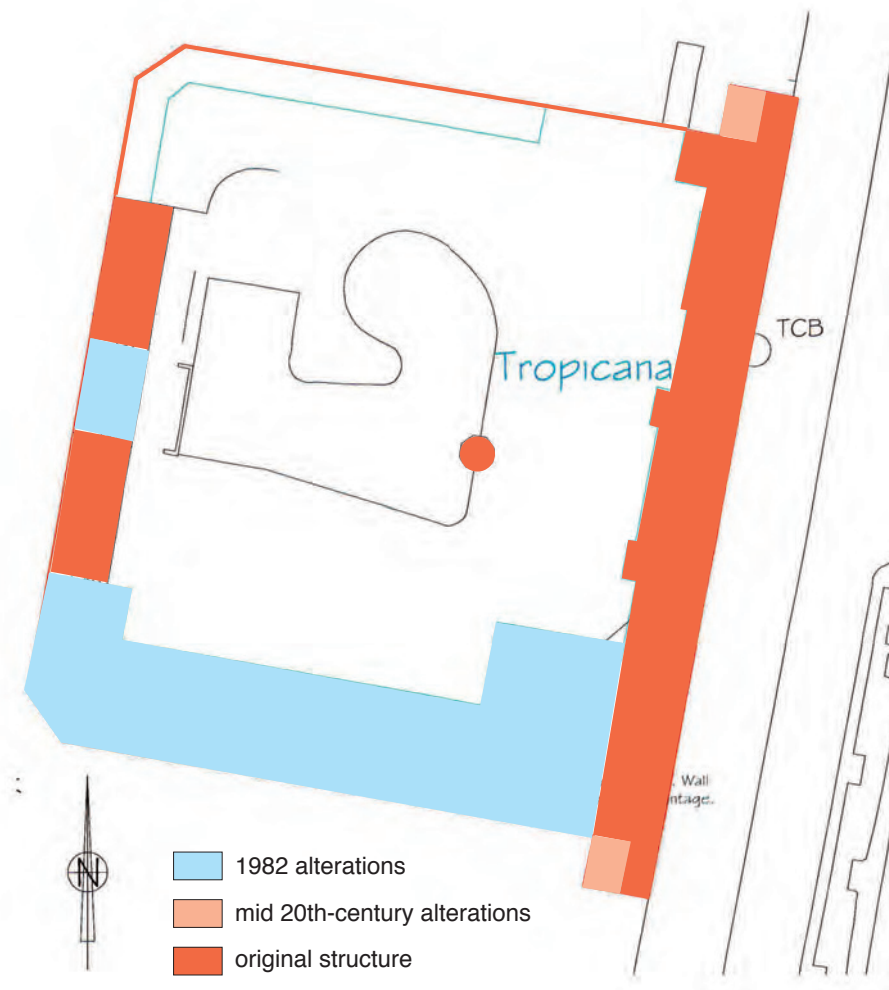


Fig.2 Phase plan of the site, plan of roof and plate directions

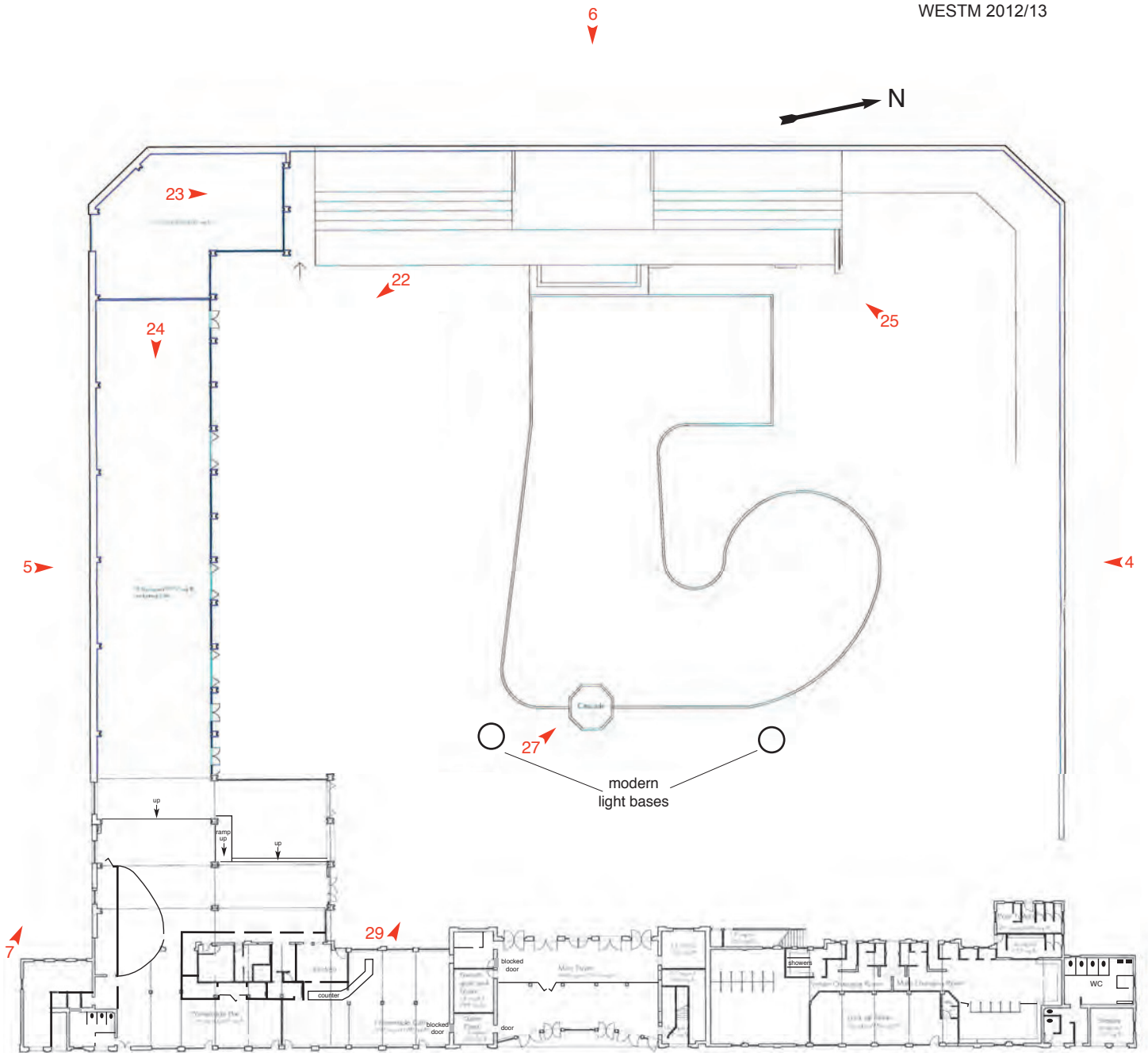


Fig.3 Plan of the Tropicana structure, with plate directions

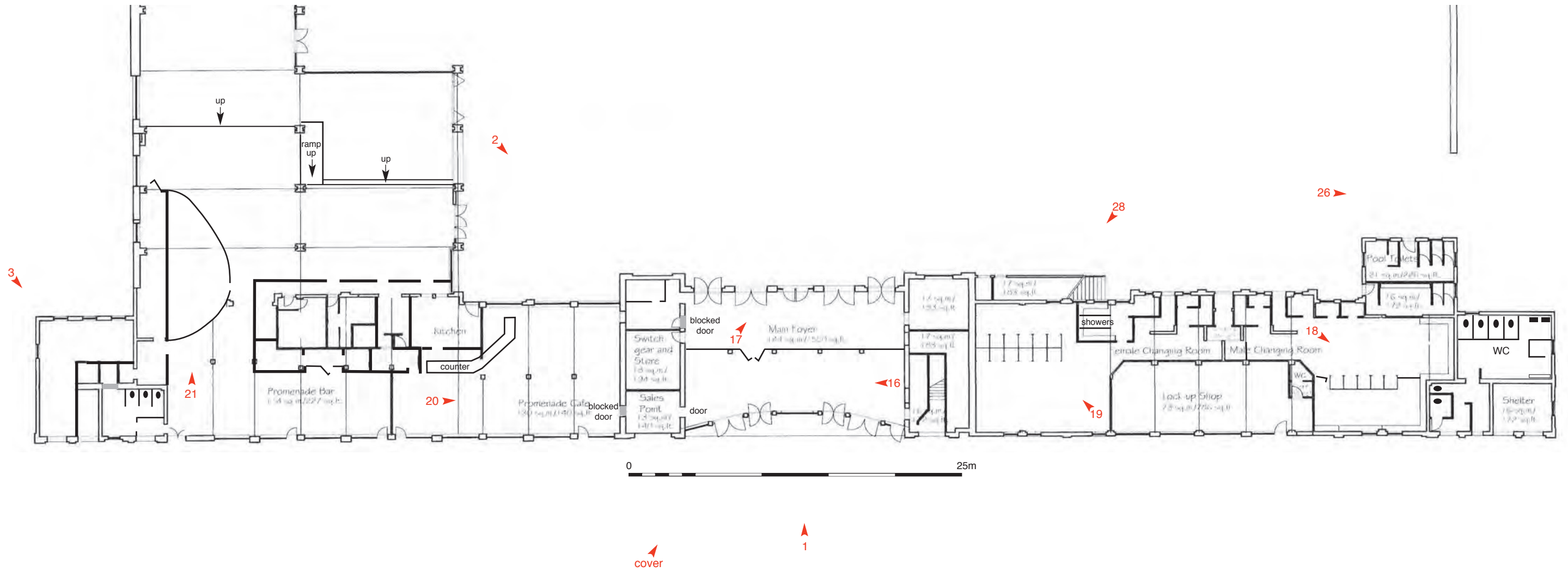


Fig.4 Ground floor plan of the pavilion building, with plate directions

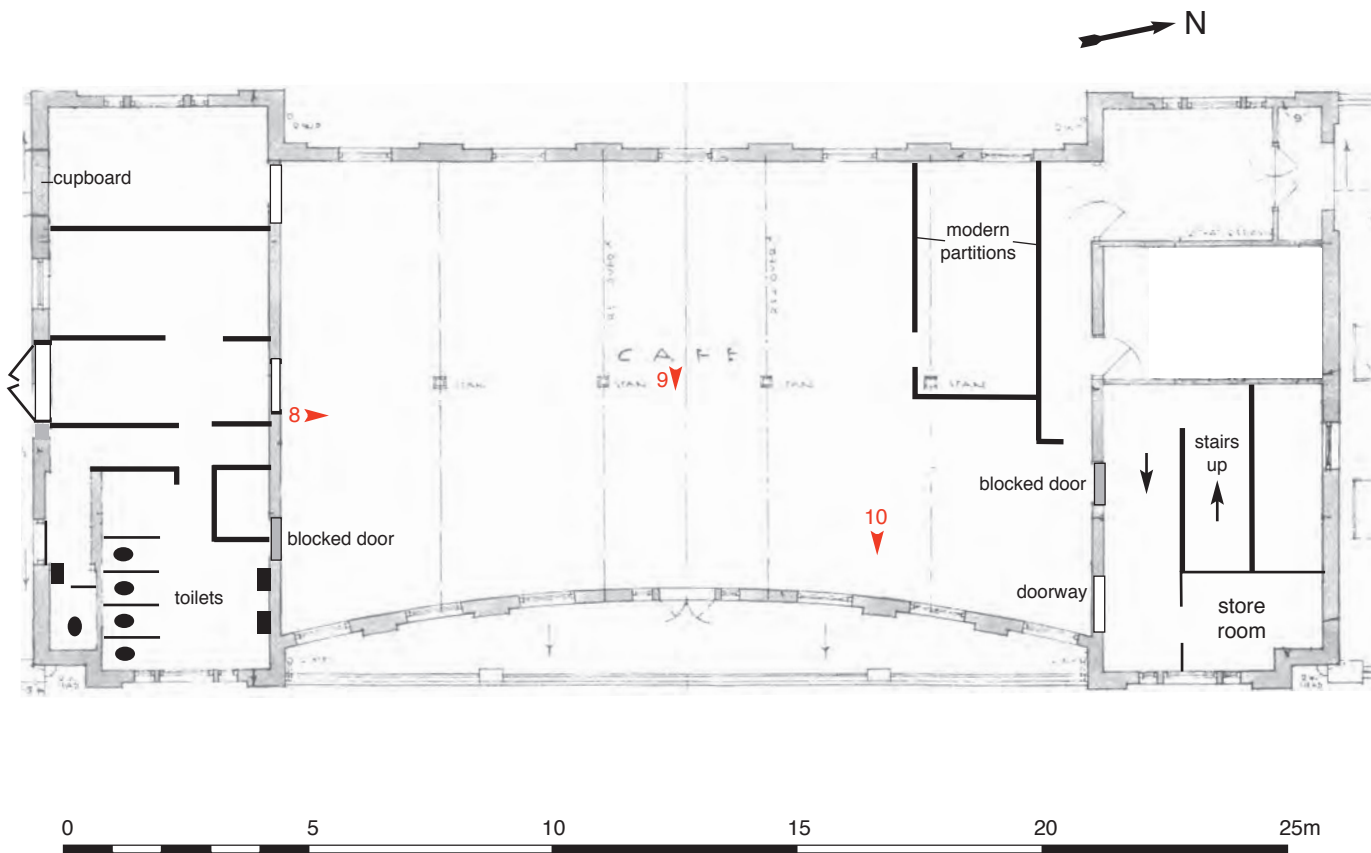


Fig.5 First floor plan of the pavilion building, with plate directions

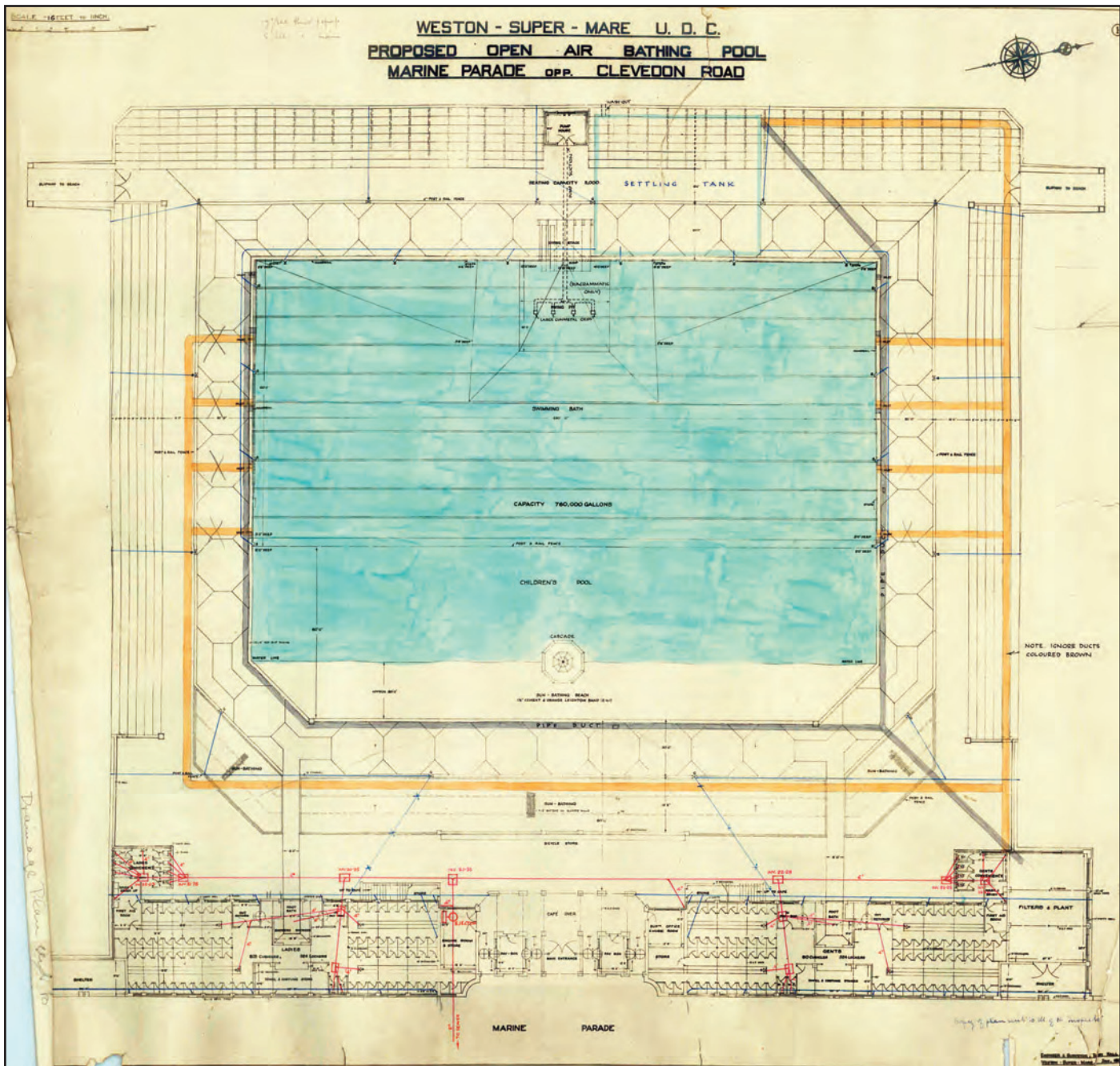


Fig.6 Plan of Proposed Open Air Swimming Pool, January 1935

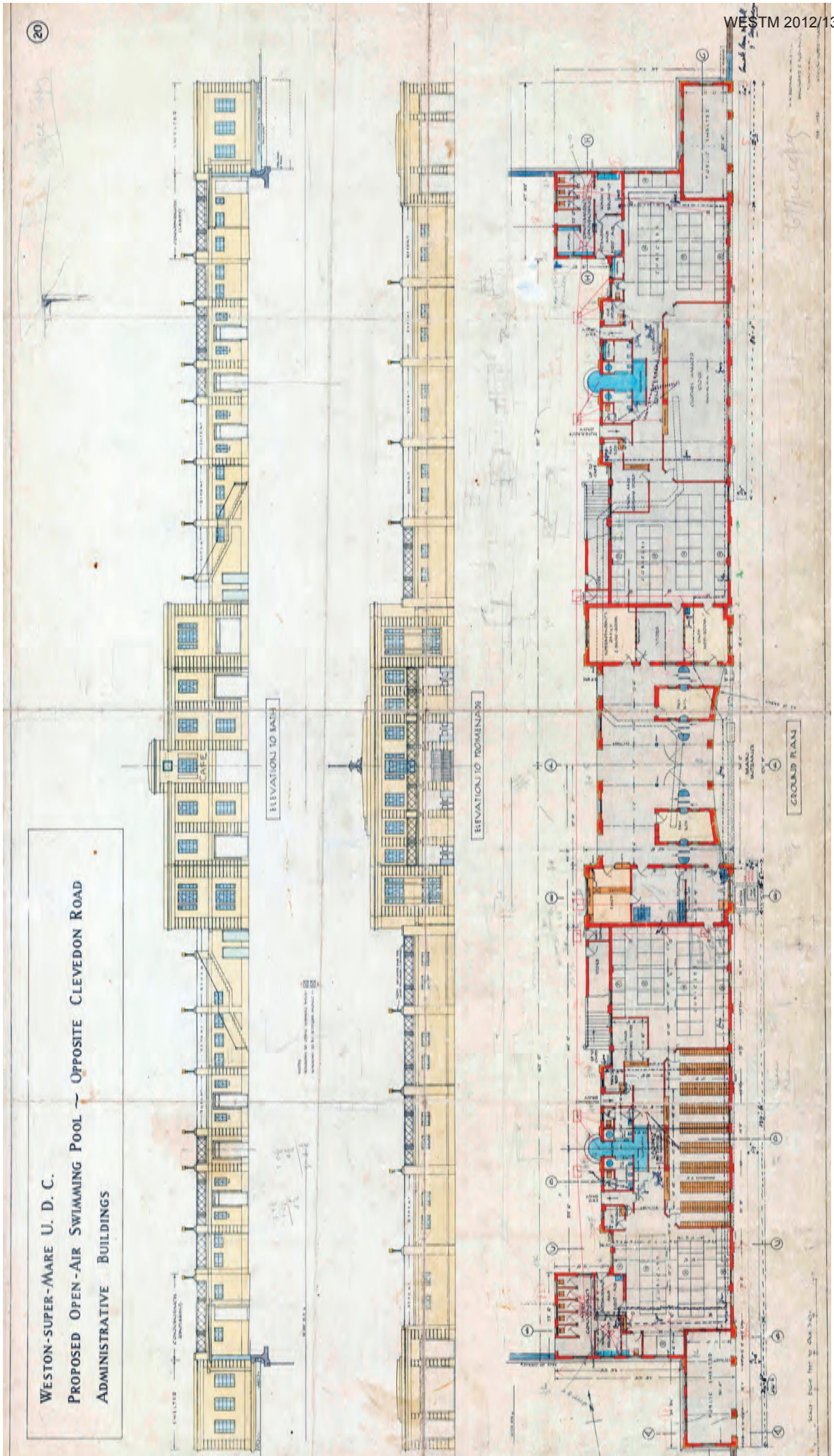


Fig.7 Plan of Proposed Open Air Swimming Pool Administrative Buildings, February 1936

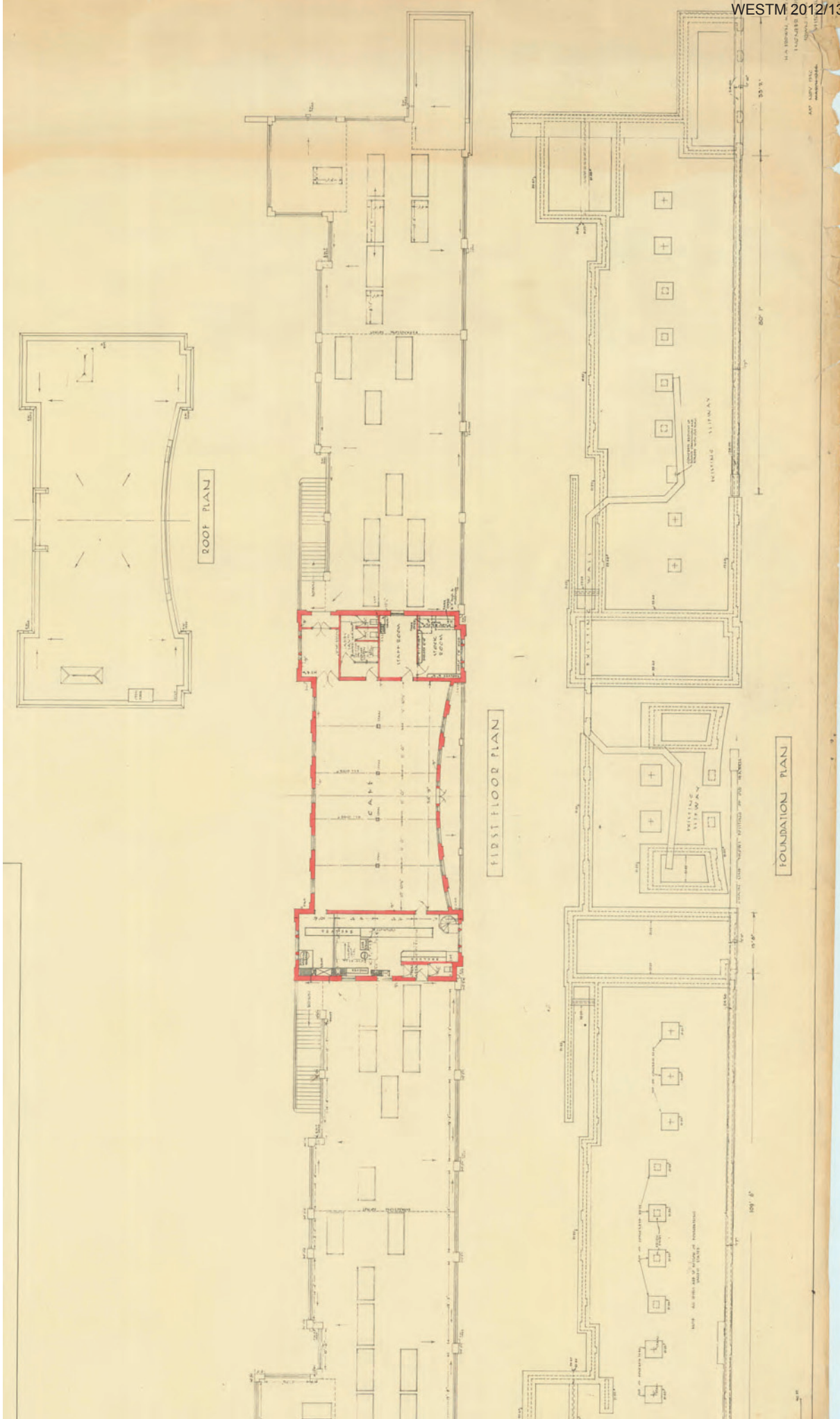


Fig.8 Plan of Proposed Open Air Swimming Pool Administrative Buildings, Roof and First Floor Plan, November 1936



Plate 1 Front elevation of the central pavillion building, looking west



Plate 2 Rear elevation of the central pavillion building, looking north-east



Plate 3 South end of the pavillion building with a later addition, looking north-east



Plate 4 North-facing external elevation of the sea wall structure, looking south



Plate 5 South-facing external elevation of the sea wall structure, looking north



Plate 6 West-facing external elevation of the sea wall structure, looking east



Plate 7 Modern building along the south side of the site, looking north-west



Plate 8 Main room of the first floor central pavilion building, looking north



Plate 9 Glazed doors leading to the first floor balcony of the central pavilion building, looking east



Plate 10 Original vent and skirting board of the central pavilion building, looking east



Plate 11 Roof light in the roof of the south side wing, looking south



Plate 12 Roof of the south side wing, looking south



Plate 13 South-facing elevation of the central pavilion building first floor viewed from the south side wing roof, looking north



Plate 14 Roof of the north side wing, looking west



Plate 15 Pediment around the original edge of the roof, now within the flat roof space of the north side wing following a mid 20th-century addition, looking north-east



Plate 16 Shop space in the east side of the ground floor of the central pavilion building, looking south



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Plate 22 North-facing elevation of the south range modern structure, looking south-east



Plate 23 West room of the south range modern building, looking north



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Plate 25 West terrace seating of the pool area, looking south-west



Plate 26 New entrance knocked through the north sea wall, looking north



Plate 27 Original fountain of the swimming pool, looking north-west



Plate 28 Staircase to the flat roof of the north side wing with original railings, looking south-east



Plate 29 General view of the pool area, looking north-west