

Archaeological Building Recording

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at

**THE OLD SORTING OFFICE,
LANGFORD ROAD, WESTON-SUPER-MARE.**

for

Haskins Builders Ltd.



Report No. 2421 /2010

By Simon Roper



Bristol and Region Archaeological Services



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 at
**THE OLD SORTING OFFICE,
 LANGFORD ROAD, WESTON-SUPER-MARE.**

Centred on
 N.G.R. ST 33225 61055

Client: Haskins Builders Ltd.
 Agent: N. Gittens Architecture Ltd.

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<i>Date Issued:</i>	20 December 2010

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Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	m	Metre
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	NGR	National Grid Reference
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	NMR	National Monuments Record
BC	Before Christ	NSSHER	North Som. Historic Env. Record
c.	Circa	OS	Ordnance Survey
Km	Kilometre		

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.

December, 2010.

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SUMMARY

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) were commissioned by N. Gittens Architecture Limited on behalf of Haskins Builders limited to undertake a programme of archaeological building recording prior to the demolition of the Home Guard building at Langford Road. The site lies on the eastern side of Langford Road, immediately south of the railway line that serves Weston-super-Mare town, centred on NGR ST 33225 61055. The site does not lie within a conservation area, nor are any buildings on the site listed. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments on or near the site.

The survey of the former Home Guard Battle HQ building at Langford Road revealed a probable sequence of construction, with most of the building as it is now constructed by 1954. The only significant addition to the building after this date is an extension on the east side relating to the use as a postal sorting office. Both internally and externally the majority of the building is utilitarian in form, the exceptions to this are the ornate porch and the elaborate roof structure of the central block.

The Air Raid shelters (HER 45885) were not located on site, it seems probable they have been demolished and may never have been within the boundary of the current study area.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 It is proposed to redevelop a site at Langford Road, Weston-super-Mare. This will result in removal of a number of buildings including the former Battle HQ for the Home Guard. Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) were commissioned by N. Gittens Architecture Limited on behalf of Haskins Builders Limited to undertake a programme of archaeological building recording prior to the demolition of the Home Guard building on the site.
- 1.2 The building recording was commissioned to comply with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS 2009) and Submitted to Mr Vince Russet, Archaeology Officer, North Somerset Council.
- 1.3 The fieldwork was undertaken between the 7th and 8th December 2010, under the supervision of Simon Roper who also compiled this report.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with North Somerset HER and a copy of the report will be sent to the National Monuments Record maintained by English Heritage. The OASIS number for this project is bristola1-89720.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The site lies on the eastern side of Langford Road, immediately south of the railway line that serves Weston-super-Mare town, centred on NGR ST 33225 61055 (**Fig. 1**). Immediately south of the former Home Guard building is a current Cadet Centre.
- 2.2 According to the British Geological Survey, the site lies on marine and estuarine alluvium of the Pleistocene or recent period. The site is level and sits at about 5m aOD. Close by to the south-east is a 'worked out area', presumably an old clay pit.
- 2.3 The site does not lie within a conservation area, nor are any buildings on the site listed. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments on or near the site.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The study area is situated in the old rural parish of Weston-super-Mare, which historically was part of the Winterstoke Hundred, in the county of Somerset. There is considerable evidence for prehistoric, Roman and medieval activities in the area around Weston-super-Mare (Townsend 2004, 3).
- 3.2 Up until the 19th century Weston-super-Mare was a village comprising mainly of fishermen's cottages, with surrounding fields used for the grazing of sheep and cattle. In the late 18th century Weston became a popular spot for the wealthy to visit the coast, which began the transformation of Weston from fishing village to resort. The growth into a sizable town principally took place in the 19th century. The arrival of the railway in the 1840s increased the volume of visitors to the town, and a subsequent expansion of the same.
- 3.3 The Ordnance Survey drawing of 1809 shows the study area to be at the west end of a field to the south of a lane which is now Locking Road, and the unenclosed Weston Moor located to the west. By the time of the Ordnance Survey 1887 1:2500 plan the railway line connecting Worle Junction with the town railway station is in place and forms the northern boundary of the study area, which is depicted as part of a small parcel of marshland surrounded by ditches or rhines. Langford Road exists with housing located at the southern end of it.
- 3.4 The site changed little in the early twentieth century according to the Ordnance Survey 1903 1:2500 plan, with additional housing along Langford Road. By the time the 1931 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan is published the site appears to have been drained and a rectangular and L shaped building have been constructed on the site, together forming a square block. The 1954 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan (**Fig. 4**) depicts the existing building, which together with four other buildings is labelled as a 'TA Centre'.
- 3.5 According to the North Somerset HER entry 41491 the site first began existence as a TA training site in 1937 and subsequently became a Battle HQ for the Home Guard during the Second World War. HER entry 45885 indicates that air raid shelters also formed part of this complex of buildings.

4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork complied with the methodology contained within the Written Scheme of Investigation (BaRAS 2010) submitted to North Somerset Council's Archaeology Officer Mr Vince Russett.
- 4.2 The survey comprised comprehensive photographic recording of the whole 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 the production of floor plans, of the internal layout of each floor of the building, which were then annotated to indicate the locations of photographs. 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 its demolition resulting from the proposed development. The survey sought to provide information that will help understand the development history of the buildings, and where possible phase structural changes according to date.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 The former Home Guard Battle HQ and TA centre building is composed of three elements, a central block, a western two storey block, and on the north and east sides of the building single-storey flat roofed blocks. All are constructed from red bricks, with the central and western blocks sharing a single hipped roof. Linking the central and western blocks on the north elevation is an ornate brick built porch with the date 1937 displayed prominently on the front (**Fig. 3 & Plate 1**). The porch has two pilasters either side of the entrance, which is surmounted by a round arch. A blind arch is present on the west facing elevation of the porch.
- 5.2 Only the south external elevation of the central block is visible, constructed from red bricks in stretcher bond with six buttresses (**Plate 2**). In between the buttresses were five blocked windows and a modern inserted shutter door. Each of the windows had brick sills and voussoirs.
- 5.3 The two-storey western block appears to be of the same construction as the south elevation of the central block, red brick in stretcher bond with brick sills and voussoirs. The south elevation has twelve windows, six on each floor, with those on the first floor directly above the ground floor windows (**Plate 3**). A fire escape is located on the west elevation with a staircase running from a first floor doorway on the south side of the elevation and a window is present on the north side (**Plate 4**). Only the first floor of the north elevation is visible externally and has six windows mirroring those on the south elevation.
- 5.4 There are four single-storey flat roofed blocks forming the north and east sides of the building. The western most of these is of the same construction as the two larger blocks (**Plate 5**). Immediately north of the central block is a single-storey block constructed in a variation of English garden wall bond (**Plate 6**), with five stretcher courses between the header courses. To the north of this is another block constructed in English garden wall bond (**Plate 7**) (three stretcher courses between the header courses). Finally on the east side of the building is a modern single storey flat roofed block (**Plate 8**), probably added when the building was in use as a sorting office, constructed in red brick in stretcher bond.
- 5.5 Each of these elements is present on the 1954 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan (**Fig. 4**) with the exception of the eastern block. A smaller block than currently exists is depicted on the east side of the building, and a remnant of older brickwork in the south elevation of the current eastern block indicates its former extent. The different brick bonds may indicate a sequence of construction, however the east and west internal elevations of the central block are constructed in the English garden wall variation bond, which suggests this and the stretcher bond elements at least are contemporary with each other. The northernmost block may have been added later but within seventeen years of the original building being constructed.
- 5.6 Internally the building comprised of thirty rooms the majority of which contain few if any original features, many of them being used as storage space (**Plates 18, 21 & 26**). Exceptions include Room 21 where the ‘shadow’ of a former parquet floor is present (**Plate 24**) and the hallway accessed via the porch contains the original staircase (**Plates 30 & 31**). Three of the ten rooms on the ground floor of the western side of the building were used as toilets (**Plates 20, 23 & 27**). The first floor of the building has a large meeting room and a smaller room linked by a corridor, while the roof of the two-storey west block is supported by timber king post trusses. The most striking of the internal features is the roof structure of the central block, which is a single large open space internally (**Plates 12, 13, & 14**). This large open space was probably originally used a drill hall for the TA and Home Guard. The roof is composed of five steel trusses whose locations correspond to the external buttresses of this building on which they rest, each truss linked together by steel struts. On the north side of the room the trusses rest on steel stanchions (**Plate 40**), allowing the space to extend and include the first of the flat-roofed blocks to the north. The central block and many of the rooms immediately to its

north and east were until recently used as a garage. The most northern flat-roofed block was formerly the boiler room, now used as storage space (**Plate 39**).

- 5.7 No evidence of the air raid shelters (HER 45885) was found on site. Two small outbuildings located close to the main building were examined, however one was of very modern brick construction (**Plate 41**) similar in date to the sorting office extension of the main building and the other was a wooden temporary structure (**Plate 51**). Examination of the 1954 Ordnance Survey 1:2500 plan (**Fig. 4**) appears to show two possibilities for the location of the air raid shelters, an L shaped building located to the north-east of the main building, and a pair of rectangular buildings facing each other and located further to the east behind what is now a joinery workshop. The first of these has been demolished and in its place are the two small buildings described above. The second appears the more likely in terms of its form as depicted on the 1954 plan to be the air raid shelters recorded in the HER. These have also been demolished and are located outside the current study area.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The survey of the former Home Guard Battle HQ building at Langford Road revealed a probable sequence of construction. The main parts of the building built in stretcher bond and the English garden wall variation bond sections appear to be contemporary with each other, with the northernmost section possibly added later, but with most of the building as it is now constructed by 1954. The only significant addition to the building after this date is an extension on the east side relating to the use as a postal sorting office.
- 6.2 Both internally and externally the majority of the building is utilitarian in form and appearance with few if any distinctive features. The exceptions to this are the ornate porch, which links the two main parts of the building, and the central block that has a quite elaborate roof structure supported by buttressing on the front elevation of the building.
- 6.3 The air raid shelters (HER 45885) were not located on site, it seems probable they have been demolished and may never have been within the boundary of the current study area.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

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accessed on 14/12/10

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accessed on 14/12/10 and 15/12/10

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement

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

NATIONAL POLICIES

Statutory protection for archaeology is enshrined in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979), amended by the National Heritage Act, 1983. Nationally important sites are listed in the Schedule of Ancient Monuments (SAM). Scheduled Monument consent is required for any work that would affect a SAM.

GOVERNMENT POLICY GUIDANCE

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment (1994) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (1990) have been replaced (23 March 2010) by Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (2010) which sets out the Government's national policies on conservation of the historic environment. Those parts of the historic environment that have significance because of their historic, archaeological, architectural or artistic interest are called heritage assets.

Of particular relevance within the Planning Policy Statement are:

Policy HE6: Information Requirements for Applications for Consent Affecting Heritage Assets

HE6.1 Local planning authorities should require an applicant to provide a description of the significance of the heritage assets affected and the contribution of their setting to that significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the importance of the heritage asset and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on the significance of the heritage asset. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets themselves should have been assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary given the application's impact. Where an application site includes, or is considered to have the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where desk-based research is insufficient to properly assess the interest, a field evaluation.

Policy HE9: Additional Policy Principles Guiding the Consideration of Applications for Consent Relating to Designated Heritage Assets

HE9.1 There should be a presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets and the more significant the designated heritage asset, the greater the presumption in favour of its conservation should be. Once lost, heritage assets cannot be replaced and their loss has a cultural, environmental, economic and social impact. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. Loss affecting any designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, including scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, battlefields, grade I or II* listed buildings and grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

Policy HE12: Policy Principles Guiding the Recording of Information Related to Heritage Assets

HE12.3 Where the loss of the whole or a material part of a heritage asset's significance is justified, local planning authorities should require the developer to record and advance understanding of the significance of the heritage asset before it is lost, using planning conditions or obligations as appropriate. The extent of the requirement should be proportionate to the nature and level of the asset's significance. Developers should publish this evidence and deposit copies of the reports with the relevant historic environment record. Local planning authorities should require any archive generated to be deposited with a local museum or other public depository willing to receive it. Local planning authorities should impose planning conditions or obligations to ensure such work is carried out in a timely manner and that the completion of the exercise is properly secured.

North Somerset Council Replacement Local Plan 2nd Draft (2004) states (Policy ECH/6 Archaeology):

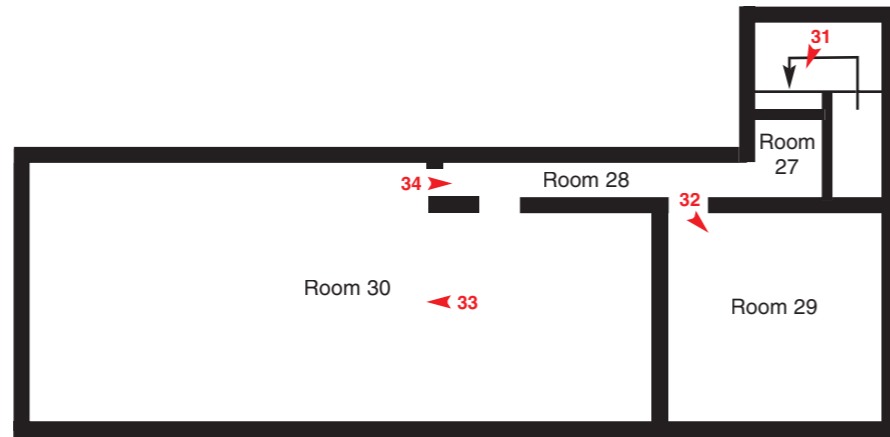
Development will not be permitted where it would involve significant alteration or cause damage to nationally-important archaeological remains (whether Scheduled or not), or would have a significant impact on the setting of such remains.

Where there is good reason to believe that development proposals could affect locally-important archaeological remains, the Council will seek a field evaluation and assessment, or may formally require the submission of further information, to establish the extent and importance of the remains before the planning application is determined. Where such assessment indicates the development would affect locally-important archaeological remains and the Council considers preservation in-situ is not justified it will seek before permission is granted a formal voluntary agreement by the developer to excavate and record the remains and to publish the results, or may grant permission subject to conditions requiring an approved programme of archaeological work to be undertaken before development commences.



Fig.1 Site location and extent of study area, 10m squares

First Floor



Ground Floor

cover

Fig.2 Floor plan of the main building showing the location of the plates (not to scale)

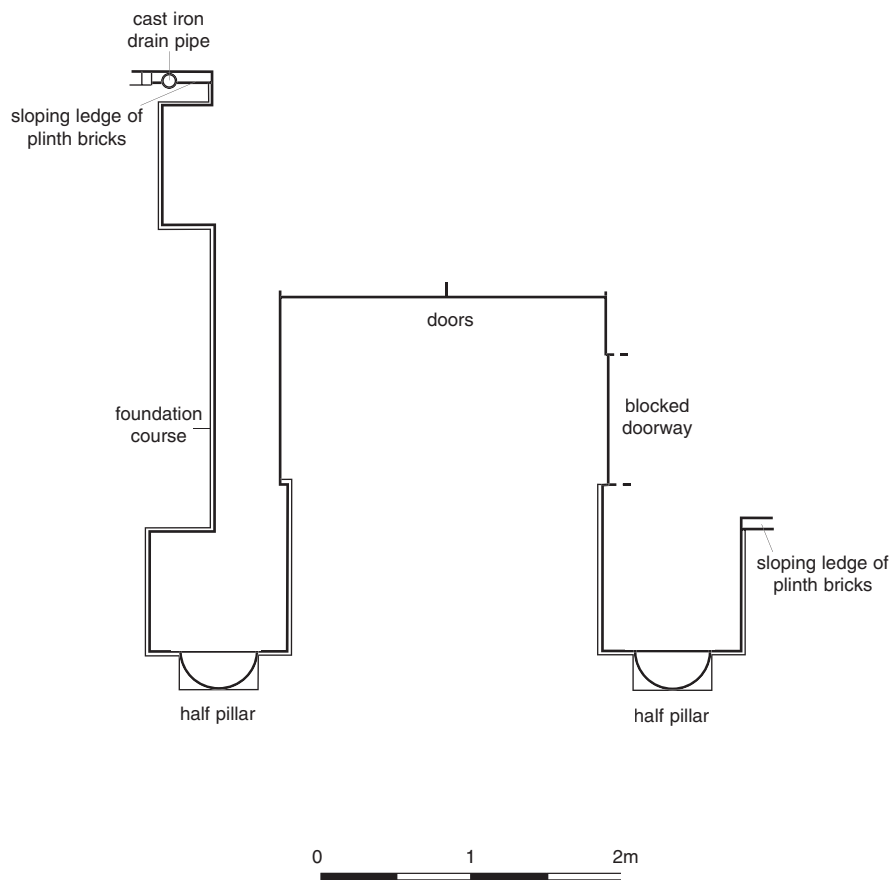


Fig.3 Plan of the ornate front porch, scale 1:50

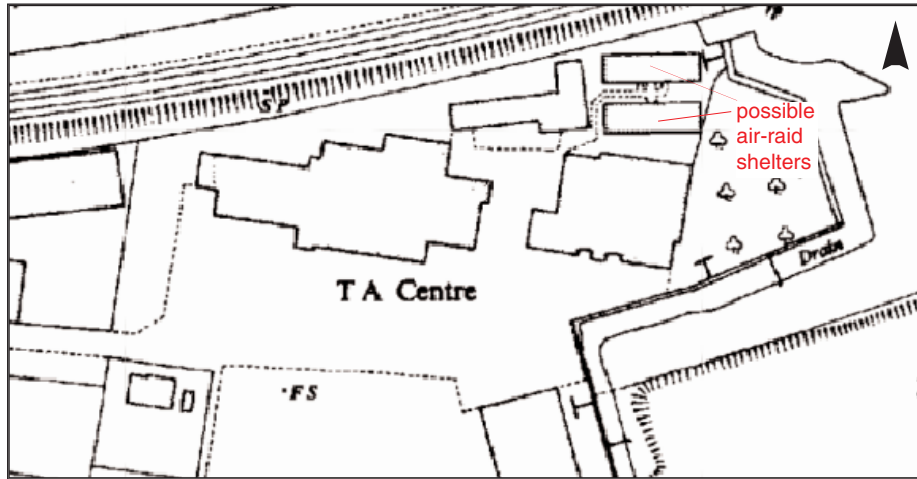


Fig.4 Extract from the 1954 O. S. (1:2500)



Plate 1 Front view of the brick porch, looking north



Plate 2 South elevation of the central block, looking north-east



Plate 3 South elevation of the two storey block, looking north



Plate 4 Western end of the building, looking east



Plate 5 North (rear) elevation of west end of the building, looking south-west



Plate 6 North and east elevations of the English garden wall bond variation block, looking south-west



Plate 7 North and east elevations of the English garden wall bond block, looking south-west



Plate 8 South and east elevations of the east end of the building, looking north-west

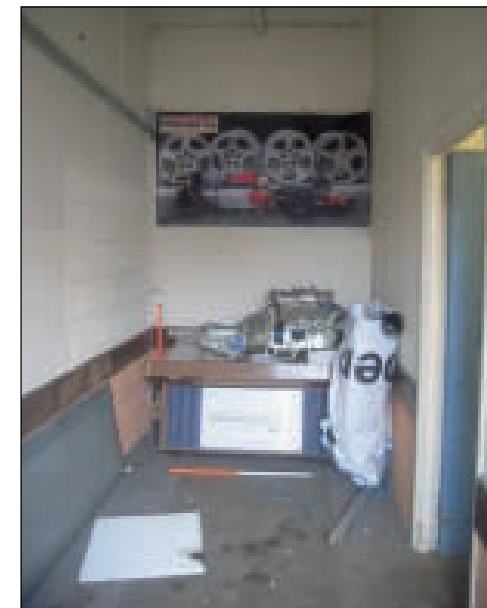


Plate 9
Room 1, looking
north

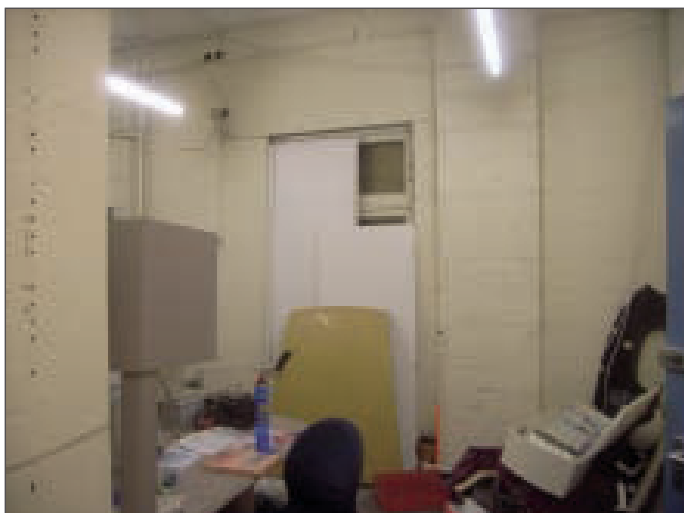


Plate 10 Room 2, looking south-west



Plate 11 Room 3, looking east



Plate 12 Internal space of the central block, Room 9, looking west



Plate 13 Internal space of the central block, Room 9, looking north

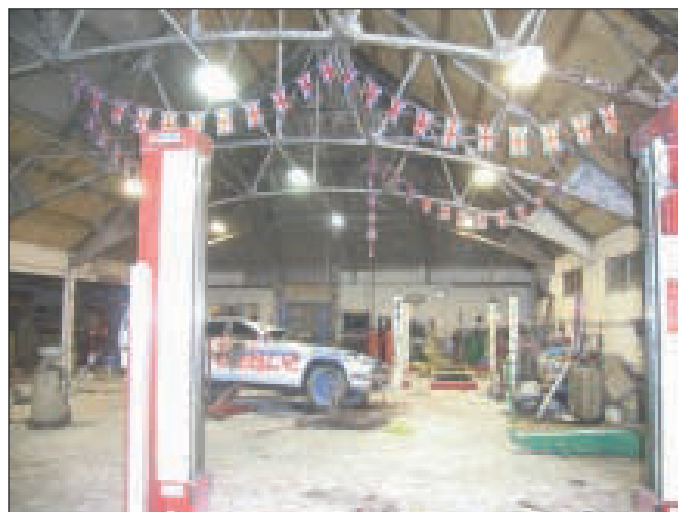


Plate 14 Internal space of the central block, Room 9, looking east



Plate 15 Room 10, looking north



Plate 16 Room 13, looking west



Plate 17 Room 11, looking north



Plate 18 Room 15, looking west



Plate 19
Ground floor
corridor, Room
16, looking west



Plate 20 Room 17, looking south



Plate 21 Room 18 used for storage of kitchen equipment and old radiators, looking south



Plate 22 Room 19, looking south



Plate 23 Room 20, looking south



Plate 24 Room 21 with the 'shadow' of a parquet floor visible, looking south-west



Plate 25 Room 22, looking south



Plate 26 Room 23, looking north-west

Plate 27
Room 24,
looking north



Plate 28 Room 25, looking north-west



Plate 29 Room 26, hallway leading to the porch,
looking south



Plate 30 Room 26, staircase in the hallway lead
ing to the porch, looking north-east



Plate 31
Room 27,
looking south



Plate 32 Room 29, looking south-east



Plate 33 Room 30, looking east



Plate 34
First floor corridor,
Room 28, looking
west



Plate 35 Room 4, looking north



Plate 36 Room 5, looking north-west



Plate 37 Room 6, looking north



Plate 38 Room 7, looking west



Plate 39 Room 8, looking west



Plate 40 North end of a roof truss of the central block, Room 9, looking north-east



Plate 41 Brick built outbuilding, looking north-east



Plate 42 Temporary construction outbuilding, looking north-east