

**JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES**

**RYCOTE WOOD COLLEGE,**

**THAME,**

**OXFORDSHIRE**

**(SU 701 064)**

**HISTORIC BUILDING ASSESSMENT**

**MAY 2005**

**REPORT FOR** Berkeley Homes (Oxford & Chiltern) Ltd  
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## **1 PLANNING BACKGROUND**

The proposed development at Rycotewood College, the former Thame Union Workhouse (NGR SU 701 064) involves the conversion to residential accommodation. In advance of assessing an application for the development of the site, a requirement for a Level 3 recording action (RCHME 1996) was issued by the South Oxfordshire District Council Conservation Team. This report deals with the remaining workhouse buildings and their modifications but does not include other buildings built since the workhouse went out of use.

The Government, through the Department of Culture Media and Sport is responsible for protecting the historic environment. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest. The Department monitors the effectiveness of the controls.

The Secretary of State has a duty under the Act to compile lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. There are three grades of listing:

- Grade II are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them
- Grade II\* are particularly important buildings of more than special interest
- Grade I buildings are those of exceptional interest

The former Thame Union Workhouse is Grade II (NBR number 248578).

## **2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

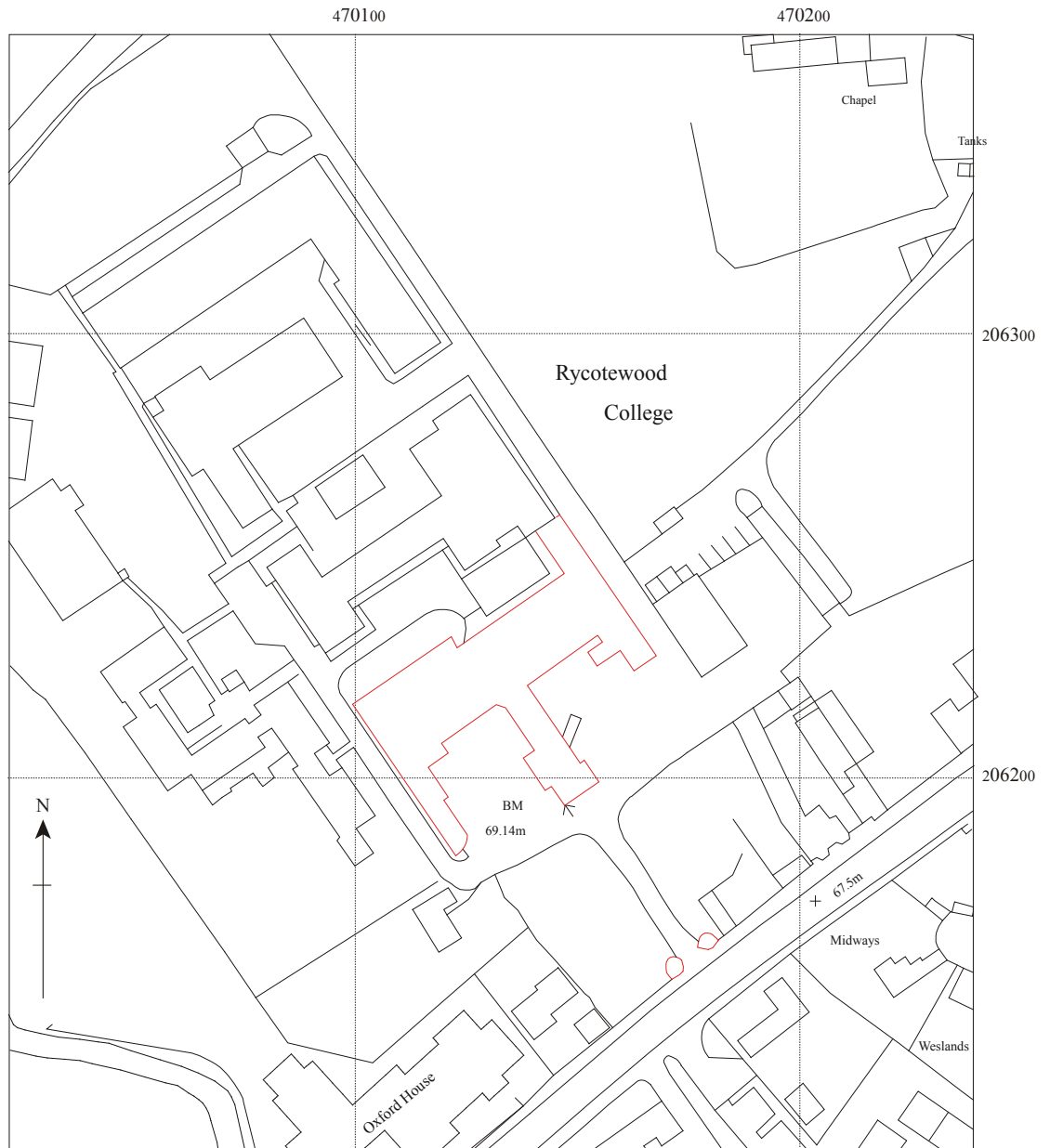
An analysis of the building has been requested to assess the significance of the fabric and layout to be altered in order to provide sufficient information to allow Planning Services at South Oxfordshire District Council to assess the likely impact of the proposals on the special character of the building.

## **3 STRATEGY**

A Historic Building assessment was carried out by Oxford Archaeology (June 2004) involving study of all available historic maps and plans, together with a documentary search. This was supplemented by further research undertaken at the Sites and Monument Record, Bodleian Library and the Public Records Office.

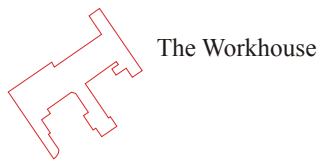
An on-site investigation was undertaken to examine the standing building fabric, to assess the development of the site over time, to determine the uses and circulation of the buildings, in order to determine age and function.

In addition to this a full photographic record was made of the building as it stands to assist in the understanding of the significance of the buildings and the development of the site over time. This included:



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0 m 50 m  
1:1250



**Figure 1: Site Location**

- A room by room photographic survey with the photographic locations shown on the floor plans to be included in the site archive.
- Internal and external general and detail photography, including a record of surviving period detail.

A drawn record has been made involving the production of scaled plans showing the location of features significant to the buildings original function and subsequent development.

The project archive, including photographs, photographic negatives, slides, plans, elevations and site notes, will be deposited with the County Museums Service or other agreed body.

#### **4 BACKGROUND AND CARTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE**

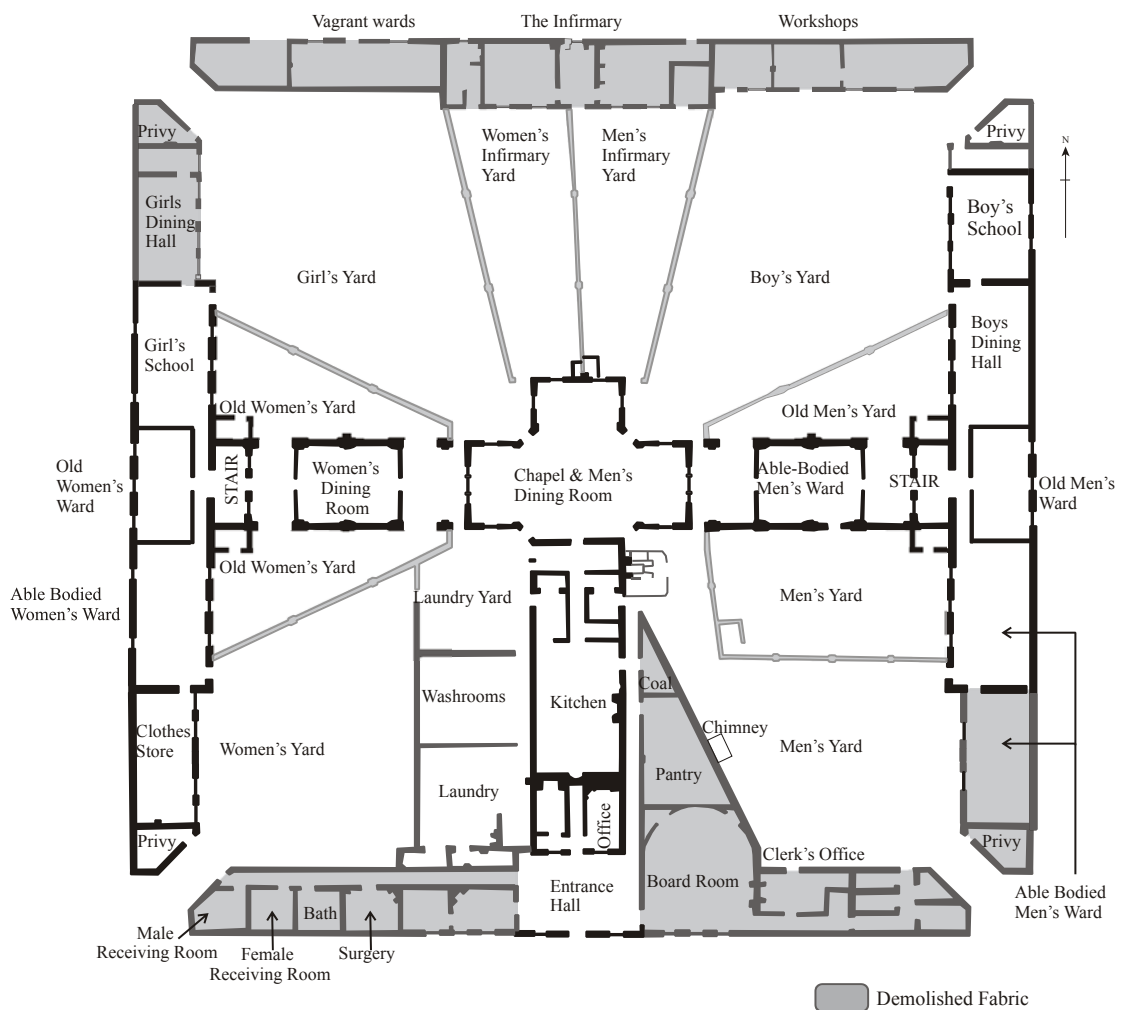
The Poor Law Amendment Act (1834) was adopted by Thame in 1835. The Thame district was made up of Thame, Tetsworth, Emmington, Aston Rowant, Kingston Blount, Sydenham and Towersey (Victoria County History). A board of Guardians were formed and meetings scheduled to take place weekly from 31<sup>st</sup> of August of that year. The meetings were initially held in the Market Hall and then in the Workhouse Boardroom after building work was completed.

By the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 1835 a site had been chosen and an offer of £120 made. The site, at Priest End had comprised a 'cottage, close and homestead' held by a John Jemmett (the asking price had been £130, but the offer of £120 accepted). The board then went on to approve an architect: George Wilkinson and his appointment was confirmed by December that year. Wilkinson, an Oxford architect built at least 18 workhouses in England, including Chipping Norton, Woodstock and Witney in Oxfordshire and in 1839 the national Poor Law Commissioners reported that of all workhouse architects Wilkinson had 'given the greatest satisfaction as regards arrangement and economy'. Following the passage of the Irish Poor Act in 1838 he was employed to design 130 workhouses, all of which had been built by 1843 (Morrison, 1999). Building work must be assumed to have been completed by November the following year as the first meeting of the Guardians was held in the Boardroom on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 1836. The total cost of the endeavour was £8 871 and the number of inhabitants catered for was 350 although the workhouse was originally to have been furnished for 235 (VCH, 196). However, the economic climate of the day, affecting agricultural workers deeply, meant that numbers within the workhouse had gone beyond the original estimated capacity. By 1839, there were 398 inmates with more to be expected. This critical situation called for alternative measures for the relief of the poor and by the 1849 the numbers had fallen to 260, many of which were children. The *Victoria County History* also reports that a number of improvements were made between 1840 and 1881. Among the mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century improvements was the separation of the male and female infirmary



wards and the conversion of one wing into a chapel. The Thame Workhouse closed in 1935, 100 years after its inception because of the abolition of the union in the light of changes in the administration of poor relief. The property then lay empty for a number of years before being used as a school for the sons of deprived families from the north-east of England. In the late 1950s it was given to Oxfordshire County Council to be used as a residential college specialising in agricultural engineering and it subsequently became Rycotewood College, which runs a variety of courses including furniture design and engineering (OA, 2004).

Central government wanted a uniformity in workhouse design and several model plans were issued by the Poor Law commission. The majority of the new workhouses erected between 1835 and 1840 were based on one of these plans. The model plans were not obligatory and architects tended to take them as a starting point from which they evolved more individual designs. The guardians of the poor were concerned with economy and decorum, and generally commissioned local architects to produce cheap, unpretentious buildings with no superfluous ornamentation (Morrison, 1999). Wilkinson combined elements of the courtyard plan with the square plan (Figs. 2 & 3).



**Figure 2: The 1850 Plan redrawn (not to scale)**



The model plan for the courtyard type was designed by Sir Francis Head and was based on the inhabitants being housed in small dormitories in two-storied ranges around three sides of a large quadrangle. These dormitories measured 15 ft by 10 ft and slept eight. The first floor dormitories were entered from a narrow, iron gallery, reached by external stairs. The fourth range contained offices and services. The square plan was based on a design of Sampson Kempthorne; 'Square Plan of a Workhouse to Contain 300 Paupers'. This plan was the most commonly adopted after 1835 and was capable of endless variation and was adapted for buildings to hold as few as 150 and as many as 500. Four three-storied ranges emanated from an octagonal hub, set within a rectangle defined by a three-storied entrance block and single-storey outbuildings. The four yards enclosed by these buildings were assigned to boys, girls, men and women, but greater segregation could be achieved within the house. Unlike Head, who did not build windows in any of the outside wall, Kempthorne did not totally deprive inmates of a view of the outside world. Although again there were no outward-looking windows in the outbuildings, or in the gable ends of the main ranges, the upper-floor windows of the main ranges potentially had views over the roofs of the single-storied outbuildings which formed the perimeter of the workhouse (Morrison, 1999). See also *The Spokes: First Floor* below.

The evidence in the fabric of the workhouse buildings shows adaptations, additions and modifications that would have directly resulted from the increase in numbers expected to be accommodated on the site.

The first available plan of Thame Workhouse dates from 1850 and was kindly provided by the Estate Manager, Mr David Hicks at Rycote Wood College. The Plan (Fig. 2) shows the layout of the ground floor of the site and the function of each of the buildings. Although we know that alterations were undertaken to the building before 1850 (see above) and that this plan does not show exactly the 1836 form of the building, it is safe to assume that the 1850 plan shows the original intended design (OA, 2004). The plan has four ranges around a square rectangle with three further ranges within the quadrangle meeting at a raised central block (the hub). The inner ranges, together with a yard wall forming a fourth 'spoke' divide the quadrangle into four main yards each of which would have been visible from the hub. The plan is particularly useful as, although it is only the ground floor, it shows the function of each part of the building. The basic form of the Thame workhouse is very similar to that used in the Luton Union workhouse, which is described in the English heritage study of workhouses as being 'unique' (Morrison, 1999, 58). Morrison further ascribes the design of Thame as 'not standard', as she does the workhouses of Wilkinson at Malmesbury and Woodstock. However, these last two are not similar to the Thame design.

Of Wilkinson's workhouse designs, Morrison describes those at Malmesbury, Woodstock and Thame as 'not standard', they do not follow typical plans and as a result are all unique in layout.

The yards are rigidly divided with males to the east and females to the west but with further subdivisions for *Old Women's Yard*, *Girl's Yard*, *Women's*

*Infirmiry Yard, Women's Yard, and a similar arrangement to the male side.* The internal ranges are also clearly defined with separate wards in the east half for *Able Bodied Men (Class 1A), Able Bodied Men (Class 1B) and Old Men* as well as a *Boys Dining Hall and Boys School*. The west (female) side is similarly defined with the addition of a *Clothes Store and Women's Dining Hall*. The north range comprised the *Infirmiry, Workshops, and Vagrants Wards* while the south range housed the *Entrance Hall, Offices, Board Room Receiving Rooms*, associated *Bath*, and the *Surgery*. The *Kitchen* was in the south spoke and the central hub housed the *Men's Dining Hall and Chapel*.

Additional plans, also held by Mr Hicks dating from the 1950s allow a picture of some of the different phases of construction to be created illustrating a number of modifications to the site over time. Some of the plans, reproduced here, shed light in the layout of the now demolished Infirmiry buildings that were situated to the rear of the site.

The later plans illustrate the buildings prior to conversion for use as a technical college in the 1950s. As is often the case with workhouse sites that have long since been converted to serve a different function, the layout of the dormitory accommodation, women's lying-in rooms and nursery, that would have occupied the upper floors of the buildings have been lost. It is rare for early plans relating to the function of the upper floors of workhouse buildings to survive. In Thame's case, some plans are available, made at the time of conversion to the college but with indications of how the site may have originally functioned.

Although the college was originally based in the former workhouse, apparently initially with very few purpose built structure, the college has expanded greatly since the 1960s with many new buildings to the north and west of the former workhouse. A map in the *VCH* showing Thame in 1959 indicates the layout of the former workhouse substantially intact, with only the western half of the south range having been lost by that date. The major expansion since this date has seen the north range of the former workhouse courtyard demolished and replace by new buildings, and further new buildings added to the north side of the former central block.

## 5 DISCUSSION

It should be noted that the current finish and fittings within the building create problems in the assessment of the survival of original features and fabric. It is only with the stripping out of the finish that a true inspection of the construction and character of the building could be made. The results of this analysis must be considered in the light of these limitations.

The dating evidence provided by the available maps and plans allow some of the features and development of the buildings to be allocated date ranges. This is particularly the case for the ground floor features due to the existence of the plan from 1850. The first and second floors are 'phased' rather than dated and

the resulting figures (Figs. 8 & 9) show original, inserted and modern symbols rather than dates.

## 5.1 Building Fabric

The surviving elements of the workhouse are made up of the three-storey central hub with two-storied 'spokes' extending out to the east and west culminating in a junction at either end with the three-storey north-south orientated east and west wings. There is also a central single-storey north-south orientated 'spoke' extending from the south face of the hub, terminating in what was originally the single-storey Entrance Hall. There are two smaller wings: one situated abutting the northern end of the east wing, the other abutting the southern end of the west wing. The final surviving features are the twin gatehouses and the perimeter wall.

The fabric that has been lost comprised the front range to either side of the entrance hall and the infirmary range that would have made up the rear of the workhouse complex (Figs.2 & 3). Those parts that no longer survive were largely single storey in height. There are imprints from former single storey blocks on the north face of the west range and the south face of the east range showing that these blocks would have been similar to the surviving single-storey block at the south end of the west range. The 1850 ground floor plan shows no staircase in the south range, which confirms that this block must also have been single storey, but there are two staircases shown in the north range showing that this block was at least partially two storeys in height.

The remaining workhouse buildings are built of red brick laid in Flemish Bond. The Roofs are of slate and there are five main types of window all situated under brick segmental arches, in addition to very modern types under concrete lintels. The original window openings all have vitrified headers incorporated in the arches in a regular pattern (Plates 1 and 2).

## 5.2 The Main Window Types

Type 1: The six-over-six sash (Plate 3)

This type of window measures c. 0.88 m wide by 1.40 m in height and comprises six panes over six.

Type 2: The 16 light casement (Plate 1)

This comprises two sets of eight lights separated by a central wooden mullion. Generally one side is fixed. This type of window was much smaller and more widely used than the six-over-six sash. The measurements were: 0.78 m wide by 1.04 m in height.

Type 3: The Large windows on the spokes (Plate 4)

These windows are very distinctive and are composed of two rows of panes, the top row shaped to match the shallow 'basket arch' (OA 2004) under which they are set. The central four panes over four can be opened for ventilation. Below this section of the window are four case hung windows comprising five rows of two panes in each. These case hung panes are hinged to open.

Measurements are 2.50 m wide by 2.40 m from the centre of the arch to the base.

Type 4: Eight panes over 16 light casements (Plate 5)

These windows are composed of three sections: the upper part is two rows of four panes hinged at the top. The lower part is made up of components identical to the type 2 window: two sets of 8 lights arranged in four rows of two, case hung and separated by a wooden mullion.

Type 5: Eight lights over eight.

These windows have a hinged upper section of eight lights: arranged in two rows of four. The upper section is hinged at its base to allow for opening.

### ***Variations***

The main types as described above appear throughout the workhouse buildings, in some cases the windows have been inserted but still follow the same styles. Where measurements differ from the norm they are given in the descriptions below.

### ***Doors***

Doors within the current buildings are non-original, replaced, inserted or blocked as the changing function and needs of a college environment required over time.

### ***Chimneys***

Those that survive are on the western range and the college requirements has resulted in the blocking of the majority of the fireplaces, the insertion of window(s) within the stack and in some cases the total removal of the chimney above roof height. All stacks are integral to the fabric resulting in a clean line to the external elevations. The Kitchen range has a large, robust stack situated within the building just south of centre. A final non-original chimney is located in the eastern spoke. This chimney has been inserted as is evinced by the stack blocking the side of one of the arches (Plate 6).



Plate 1: Type 2 Window with Vitrified Headers



Plate 2: Detail of Vitrified Headers



Plate 3: Type 1 Window with Gauged Brick Arch



Plate 4: Type 3 Window with Gauged Brick Basket Arch



Plate 5: Type 4 Window



Plate 6: Inserted Chimney in East Spoke  
(Truncates original arch)

### **Roofs**

Roof space was accessed and photographed in the eastern range and the central hub. The central hub has a king post truss (Plates 7 and 8) reinforced with iron straps.

The Eastern range has a common rafter roof construction attached to the single purlins by use of a birdsmouth joint (Plate 9). Vertical posts are attached at intervals to one side of the spine beam extending up and fixed to rafters adjacent to where they meet the ridge (Plate 10). The Western range roof is similarly constructed without the additional vertical support posts.



Plate 7: Base Detail of King-post  
in hub roof



Plate 8: Apex Detail of King-post  
in hub roof



Plate 9: Birdsmouth detail in West Wing  
Roof Construction



Plate 10: Vertical supports in  
West Wing roof construction



### 5.3 The Entrance Hall

#### *External Arrangements*

The southern range of buildings as originally designed by Wilkinson have all but been demolished. The only element of the original range to survive is the centrally positioned entrance hall. The western end of the range had been demolished by 1959 (VCH) and the eastern side removed at a later date.

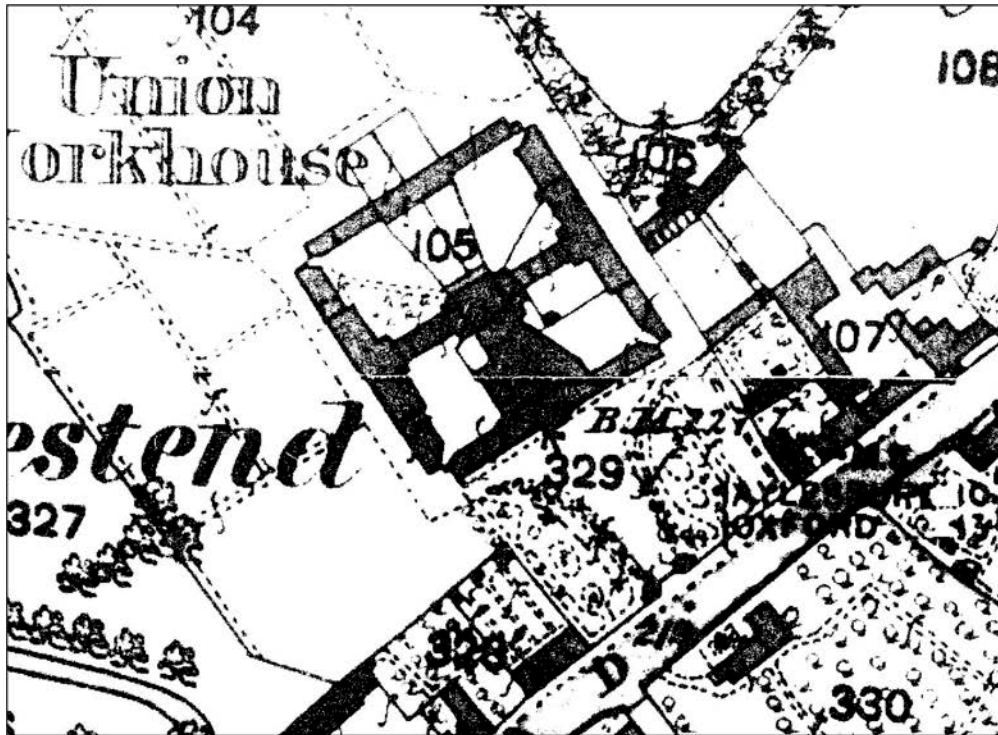
The original single storey entrance hall comprised a door flanked by sash windows, as is currently the case. However, the sides of the hall originally had doors to the boardroom on the eastern side, and to a passage and rooms on the western side. As stands, the hall currently has two matching sash windows on either side elevations

The east and west elevations do not show traces of the locations of these doors as indicated on the 1850 plan. The paired sash windows at either side appear to be of historic origin (with the exception of the northern window on the eastern elevation). The arches under which the windows are set are of the same fine-gauged brick construction as the large windows on the spokes. The only difference to the standard Type 1 sash windows here is that they are slightly larger than the standard sash windows: measurements are 0.88 m wide by 1.54 m in height, slightly taller than the norm. That no windows are indicated in these locations on the 1850 plan, and that they are *in situ* now with no traces of earlier blocking or actual insertion remains unresolved but suggests a rebuild of the side walls.

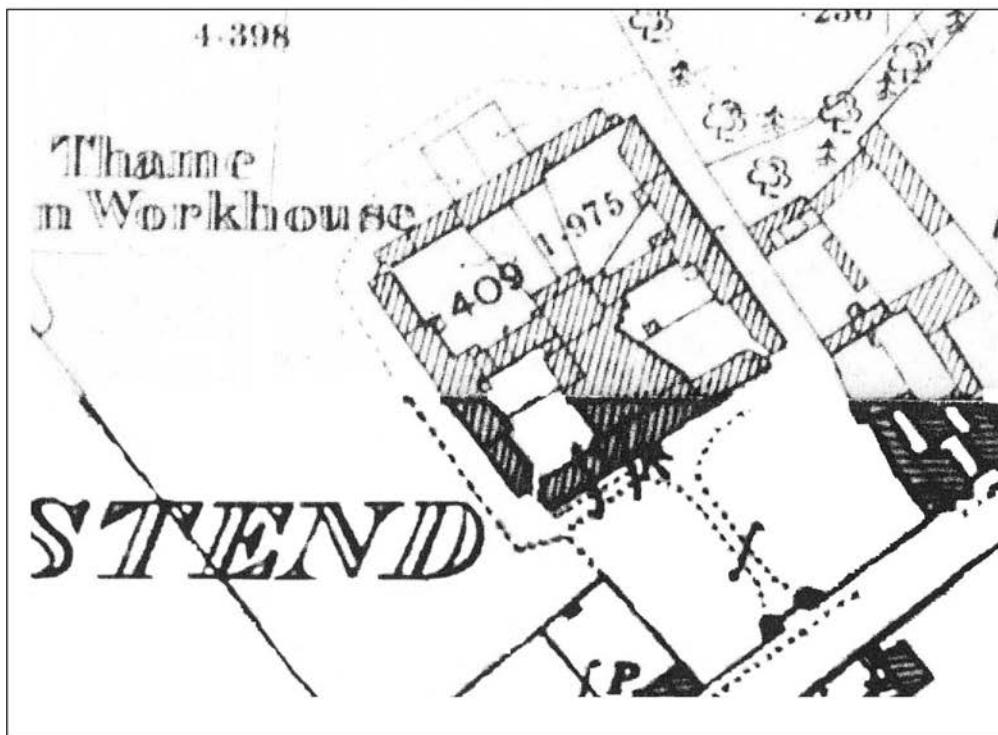
Further changes to the plan can be seen by the blocking of windows in the walls at the rear of the hall and by the insertion of partitions to create smaller rooms in keeping with the requirements of college accommodation. Access, now blocked was situated in the northeast corner of the room: this would have been to a passage running alongside the rooms to the rear of the hall and in turn to the kitchens (*in situ*), pantry and coal-house (demolished). The passage culminated in the boiler and yard access (Figure 2). It is assumed that this passage also gave access to the basements.

#### *The Basements*

The basements are vaulted, brick built and in deteriorating condition. Some of the original extent of the basements has been sealed off and presumably backfilled, probably with the building debris accumulated during demolition of the overlying structures. At the rear of the current extent of the basement passage there is a staircase originally into the kitchen range. This stairway has been capped, blocking access to the near derelict basements, which contain many defunct elements of heating apparatus relating to the development of the workhouse over time. The basement complex is of interest due to the construction details and craftsmanship visible in the vaulting and in that only a small area of the original extent survives.



First Edition (1881)

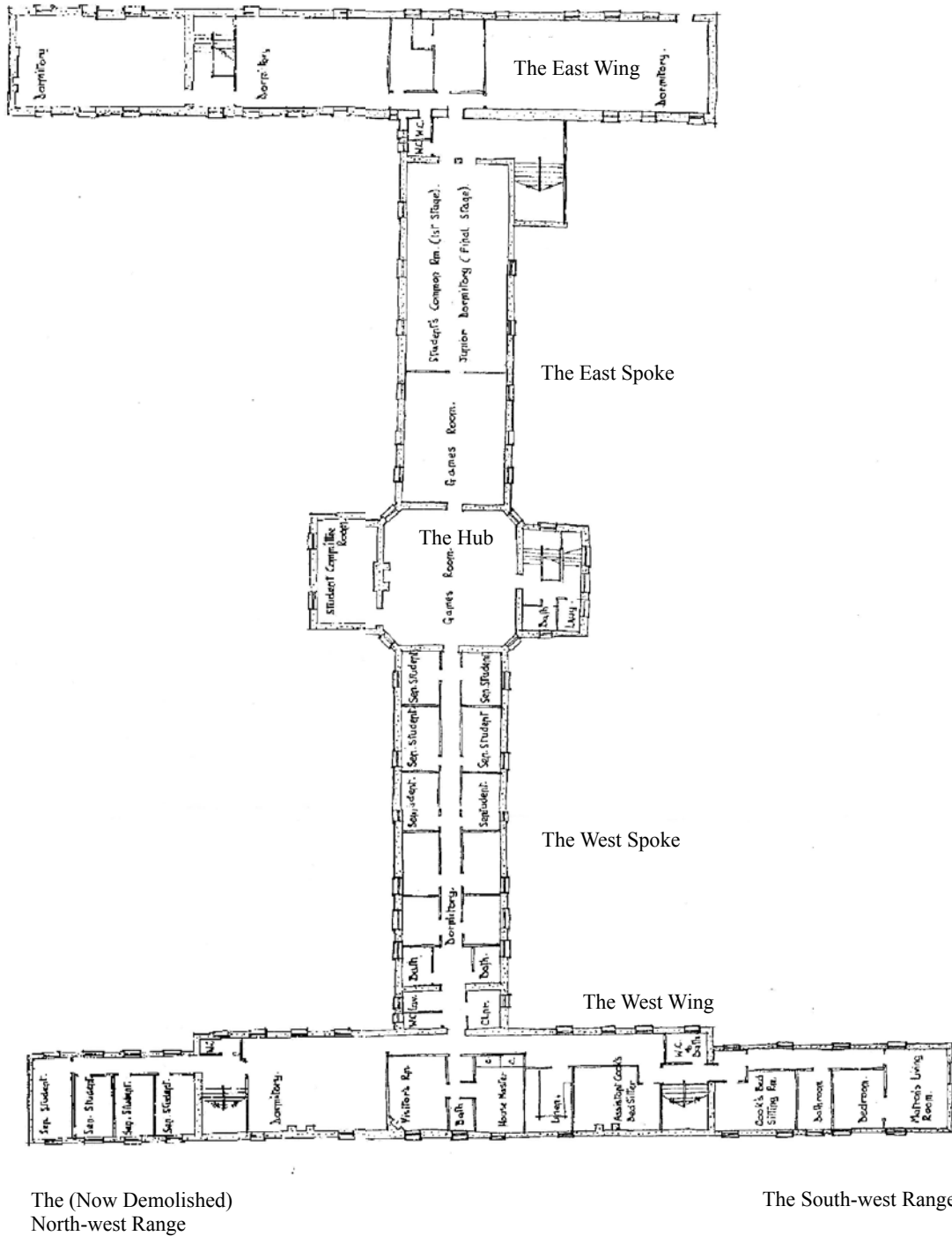


Second Edition (1897)

Figure 4: The First and Second Edition Ordnance Survey Maps



The North-east  
Range



The (Now Demolished)  
North-west Range

The South-west Range

Figure 6: The 1957 First Floor Plan (not to scale)

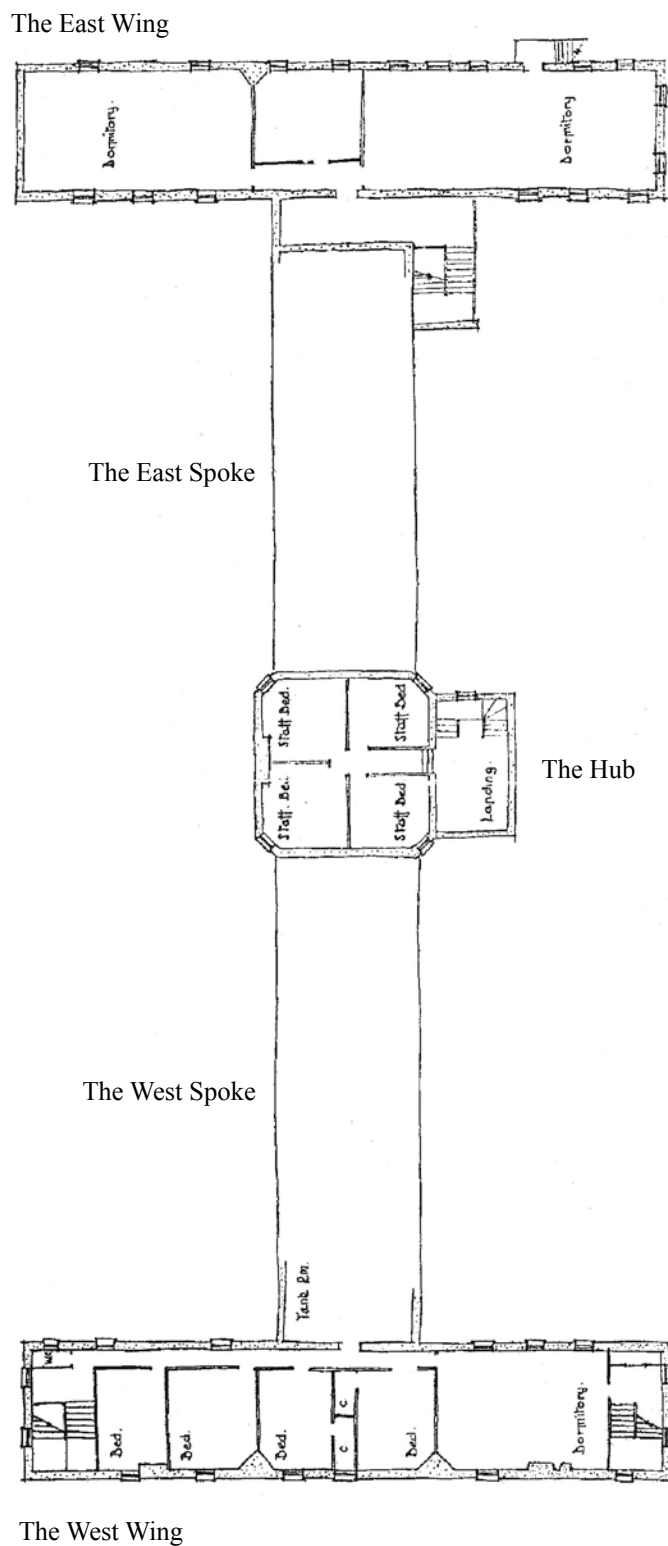


Figure 7: The 1957 Second Floor Plan (not to scale)

## 5.4 Rooms to the rear of the hall

### *Description*

These rooms, housed at the southern end of the kitchen range are single storey and originally comprised an office, store, passage/foyer and a further room possibly for further storage. No through access was originally had from this suite of rooms to the kitchen range. The current layout is somewhat different in that access to the kitchens has been made and the layout of the western rooms has been altered with the addition of partitions to create modern toilet facilities. These changes were in place by 1957 (or intended) as can be seen from the building plans of that date (Fig. 5). The original office, situated on the eastern side of the building, is largely unaltered, with the exception of blocking the fireplace and the window onto the hall in the southern wall.

## 5.5 The kitchen range

### *Description*

The single storey Kitchen range is still in use as kitchen facilities. Changes to the fabric can be seen, particularly in the western fenestration where windows have been inserted and doors re-sited. A modern addition abuts this western elevation and access had been created from the kitchen range through to this additional space. Three windows have been inserted in the western fabric, to the north of the late extension (Fig. 8). The 1850 layout shows a door at the northern end adjacent to the hub with what appears to be a window to the south of the door (Figure 2). There was a further doorway to the south into the Laundry Yard. The eastern elevation of the kitchen range has had a doorway to the passage described above infilled, and one created, to the northern end of the building providing access to the refuse storage bins for current kitchen staff.

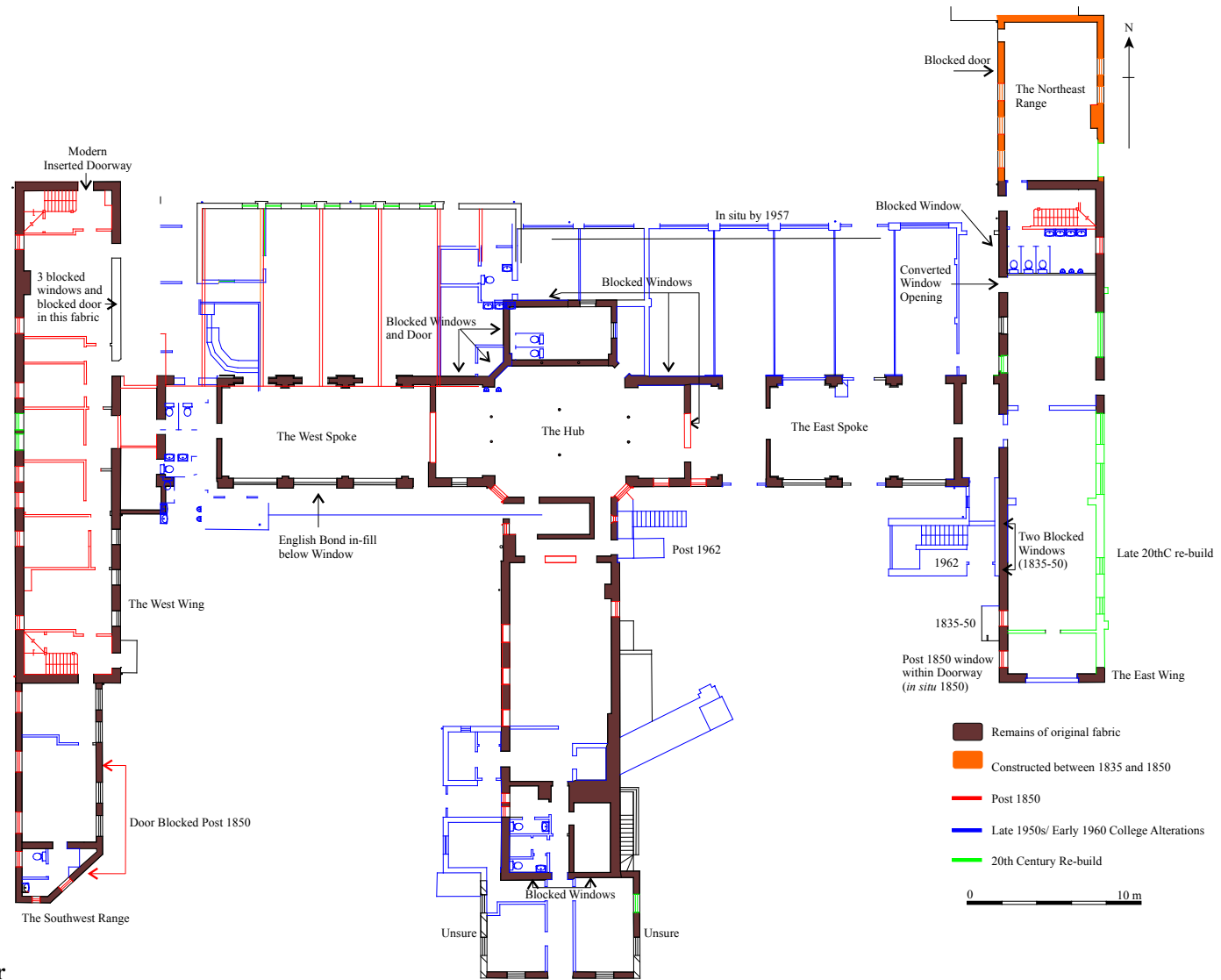


Plate 11: Kitchen Range roof lantern and chimney

### *The Internal Layout*

The internal layout of the kitchen range has been altered in line with modern requirements and the demands of a college as opposed to a workhouse. However, some original features remain: the roof lantern (Plate 11) and some early ceiling panelling are still *in situ*.

The northern end of the kitchen range had originally housed a staircase providing access to rooms within the central 'hub'. This staircase was still *in situ* in the 1930s when the college provided accommodation for refugees during the Spanish Civil War (David Hicks Pers. Comm.). Elements of the early staircase remain but access has been removed from ground to first floor.



**Figure 8: Current Ground Floor**

### ***Ancillary Buildings***

The workhouse layout had a suite of rooms incorporating laundry and washroom abutting the western side of the kitchen range as can be seen on the 1850 plan and early edition Ordnance Survey maps (Figs. 2 & 3). The northern end of these additional laundry facilities housed a laundry yard, which appears to have been roofed by the issue of the 1897 edition OS map. No elements of these early ancillary structures survive.

## **5.6 The Hub**

### ***The Ground Floor***

The central ‘hub’ of the workhouse held the men’s dining hall and chapel according to the 1850 plan. Access appears to have originally been located where each of the spokes met the kitchen range and in corresponding locations on the northern side of the building (Figure 2). The current southern doorways are now windows, fitted with sashes to match the rest of the floors of the hub. Of the corresponding northern openings, the western doorway has been blocked and the eastern still houses a doorway, to what is now a small office in the late 1950’s/early 1960’s extension. The Hub is currently the refectory for the college and has been fitted out as such. The western ‘arm’ of the hub had originally contained windows in the western wall adjacent to what is now the continuous western Spoke. This layout was mirrored in the eastern wall of the eastern arm of the hub as can be seen in figure 2. The fabric in each of these walls has been altered since the 1850 plan was created. The early window openings had been blocked in their entirety in the west wall of the west arm and partially in the east wall of the east arm, where a single door has been let into the southernmost window opening. Demolition of a larger portion of the fabric has occurred on the northern arm of the hub. An original window had been blocked in the western wall and the original fabric of the northern wall had been breach to create access between the early and modern builds.

Of significance within the hub on the ground floor is the survival of six cast iron columns. These add interest and structural stability to this three-storey building and allow the ground floor of the hub to be open plan while supporting the upper floors (Plate 12).



Plate 12: Cast Iron Columns in Central Hub  
(shows the beams they are supporting)

### ***The First Floor***

The first floor of the hub is a single room with windows (Type 1 sash) at each corner situated within a chamfer to what would have essentially been a room square in plan. This central room is the most intact of the workhouse. The original features still *in situ* comprise: fireplace, mantelpiece (although the marble has been painted over: Plate 13), picture rail, door architraves, skirting and one of the windows.



Only a single window appears to be original, this window in the southeast corner has its sash box recessed into the brickwork to provide a smooth continuous finish. The windowsill has been replaced, but in this case is laid over the original: the original can clearly be seen below the current ledge and the corners are swept round in tune with the angle of the wall (Plate 14). The overlaid sill does not have this swept round continuity and just rests on the earlier feature. The glazing bars on this six-over-six sash are lamb's tongue and original to the construction. The three other windows have ovolo glazing bars, with the southeastern window having very broad examples in comparison to the others. This window also has horns, which provide a *terminus post quem* of 1840 for its insertion. The box for this sash sits proud of the brickwork, suggesting a total replacement. A further feature of interest within this room is the use of built-up beams, finished with beading to create a period look.

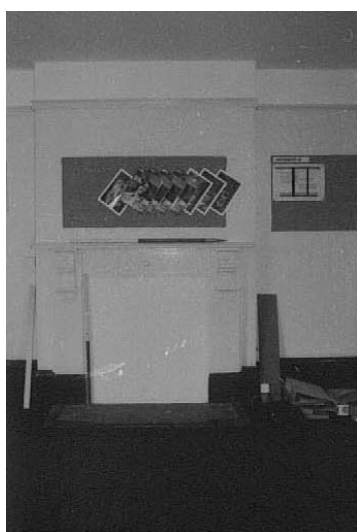


Plate 13: The marble fireplace in the first floor of the hub



Plate 14: The 'swept round' original windowsill under the later replacement

Access from the hub to the small rectangular room at the north is through a doorway to the west of the fireplace. This doorway is a modern replacement housed within the original architrave. The door replacements throughout the building were probably a result of fire regulations relating to the college conversion. The northern room has a projecting chimneybreast; it is unknown whether this room held a fireplace to the rear of that in the central hub. Only stripping out during conversion could resolve this query (none is shown on 1957 plan (Fig. 6), although it should be noted that most other chimney breasts in the workhouse are double-sided). The two windows in the northern wall are the standard Type 1 sashes of original or early origin.

The southern room is also accessed through a late door housed within an original architrave. The rectangular room houses a staircase to the second floor, the access between ground and first had been removed and replaced with an external fire-escape staircase. The external stair is connected to this room by a doorway let into a previous window opening. The rest of the space within this southern room is taken up by toilet and kitchen facilities. There are three windows let into this southern wall, a centrally situated small window of 6-

panes (three over three) flanked on either side by the standard six-over-six sashes of original or historic origin (Plate 15). The small window is a result of being situated at the apex of the kitchen roof where it abuts this southern room.



Plate 15: General View of Kitchen Range and junction with hub (arrow points to small window at apex of kitchen roof where it meets the hub)

The central room was probably the Master's parlour with the northern room a possible bedroom. The four windows in the corners of the central room together with the two in the northern room allowed undisturbed views into all of the yards shown on the 1850 plan: a feature that appears to be a requirement for most, if not all, workhouses.

### ***The Second Floor***

The original layout of the second floor of the hub is unknown. Partition walls had divided the hub by 1957 to create staff accommodation (Fig. 5). The divisions created four small bedrooms each with their own windows. That at least one of the partition walls is a later addition is in no doubt: the partition bisects the original fireplace in the north wall, which had been blocked for this purpose. The windows are the standard sash type, but the northeastern is a modern replacement and the northwestern has had its lower sash replaced, this has resulted in lambs tongue glazing bars to the top sash, and ovolo to the bottom. The southwestern and southeastern windows are replacements.

Abutting the southern wall of the hub is the second floor of the stairway located within the roof space of the northern end of the kitchen range and continuing from the rectangular first floor room. Alterations have been made in this location; the floor in the southwestern corner incorporates ventilation for the toilet facilities below. The window at the eastern side, lighting the stair access, has been truncated by an inserted floor and the window replaced in an altered location. The exterior of the northern wall of the hub is under render and the interior plastered prohibiting investigation of any earlier features. Although it is probable that none were situated within the wall as it is the rear of the property and not visible to guardians or benefactors.

The second floor probably housed further bedroom(s) for the Master. Toilet facilities must also have been present either on the first or second floor for the Master and his family. These may have been situated in the southern room(s).

## 5.7 The Central ‘Spokes’

These ‘spokes’ extend out from the hub creating two east-west aligned ranges. Both spokes share features creating symmetry in the design of the workhouse. The western spoke was for female inmates, the east for male.

### *The Western Spoke*

The Western Spoke houses the reception for the college, in the western corner adjacent to a small projecting extension which had housed a pump as shown on the 1850 plan. The current access to the reception area is through a modern ‘porch’. Access was originally within one of the large arched openings but the current porch roofline obscures the view of the arch in this location. Within the foyer, a door has been let into a probable earlier window opening to access toilet facilities; further facilities abut these to the north and are accessed through an original doorway opening. The toilets are situated within the ground floor of the original stairwell, which had an equivalent at the eastern end of the east spoke. The staircase had been removed leaving no trace of the original stair at ground floor level.

### *Western Spoke: The Early Layout (Figure 2)*

The layout of the spokes was changed initially in 1957 and once more in the 1990s. The original layout comprised the stairways adjacent to a passage the width of the *in situ* arched opening. The archway provided access from the yard at the front through to a further yard at the rear of the workhouse (in situ in 1850 as shown on Figure 2). From this through-way, doors in the western wall led onto the stair and in the eastern wall to the women’s dining area.

The women’s dining area as depicted on the 1850 plan comprises a rectangular room with what appears to be solid walls in the location of the current arched openings. This is based on the lack of window symbol or opening in these locations on the plan. However, the integrated column-type construction corresponds with those *in situ* today. The bays now house windows and doors.

Of the four arched openings on the southern elevation, the first has been altered to accommodate the current entrance to reception; the three adjacent arched openings now hold windows of the type discussed above (Type 3). That these windows are inserted (at least the casement portion) is indicated by the brick bond upon which the windows are situated: this bond is English rather than the Flemish bond that is the norm for the rest of the workhouse fabric (Plate 16).



Plate 16: The Inserted Type 3 window in the West Spoke showing English bond in the in-fill

The early dining hall layout as illustrated on the 1850 plan had a door on the eastern wall, centrally located, matching that on the western wall. This

doorway provided access to a further through-way again housed within arched openings on the north and south walls. Additional access was provided to the laundry yard, associated suite of rooms and kitchens, in addition to the girls yard and infirmary situated at the northern limit of the workhouse site. The eastern end of this spoke was formed by the western extreme of the hub as described previously. From the plan it appears that no direct access could be had between the spoke and the hub, although a series of quite elaborate windows were situated on the wall between the two areas by 1850 (if not original).

#### ***Western Spoke: The College Alterations***

By 1957, this dining area had been modified by the removal of the eastern wall, a window inserted into the southern arch of the eastern through-way, access in the western wall of the dining area had been blocked off and access from the spoke to the hub created within the early elaborate window arrangement. The symbols on the 1957 plan show windows *in situ* in all of the southern arched openings although the date these were inserted originally is unknown.

#### ***Western Spoke: The Current Arrangement***

The current arrangement is not unlike the 1957 plan. One difference is a doorway replacing the window set into the southern opening at the eastern end adjacent to the hub. In addition, all arches on the northern wall have been opened up to create access to the modern extension to the rear (completed in 1991). The doorway between spoke and hub has been infilled.

#### ***The East Spoke***

A similar situation can be seen in the male side of the spoke, to the east of the hub. Here, the wall between the hub suite and eastern spoke had the same three windows set in; by 1957 the central window had been filled, and at present, all windows have been filled and a door let into the southernmost opening (Fig. 8). The arrangement then mirrors the western spoke in that there is a narrow entrance north and south adjacent to the hub, and east of this, in the northern wall is open access similar to that in the western range. However, the southern equivalent is not open and access to the southern yard is had from what was in 1850, the able bodied men's ward (Fig. 2).

#### ***East Spoke: The Early Layout (Fig. 2)***

The ward was laid out the same as for the women's dining room, with the exception of access set centrally within the eastern arch on the southern wall to provide entrance to the men's yard. Doors were let into the eastern and western walls of the ward, again situated centrally. What was a through way for the women's range was laid out the same for the men's range with the exception that there was no access in the southern wall. The opening in the northern wall gave onto the old men's yard. The end of the eastern spoke terminated in an identical arrangement to the west: with a stair tower and pump room to the south into the yard (privy to the north).

***East Spoke: The College Alterations***

By 1957 the stairway had been removed, as had the wall at the eastern end of the ward. Windows are shown in all three openings on the northern wall. The southern wall is depicted differently on the 1957 plan, showing the intended location of a new stair tower. These alterations were not carried out as shown on the plan but in the current stretcher bond constructed stair tower abutting the east wing. The current stair tower was in place by 1962.

Finally, the eastern wall between the original/early stair tower and the east range had a centrally positioned entrance to facilitate movement between the various parts of the building situation mirrored in the same location in at the end of the western spoke.

***East Spoke: The Current Arrangement***

The present layout shows open access under the arches in the northern wall, an additional chimneybreast is situated in front of one of these arches, with a slight overlap to the opening and is an obvious later addition (Plate 6). The chimney was inserted as part of the first phase of conversion to college premises. The southern wall adjacent to the hub has a doorway within the first arch, a window within the second arch followed by a doorway in the third and a final window in the fourth. The modern stair tower blocks light to this final archway. Where the Type 3 windows are situated within this range, the brick plinth upon which they are set is of Flemish bond, matching the general fabric of the building. This suggests that the windows here are an early feature (although may post-date 1850 as no window symbols are shown in these location on the plan of that date).

***The Spokes: First Floor***

The first floor of both spokes is currently accessed by the modern stair tower at the eastern end of the range, and by the external fire-escape stair attached to the hub. There is no access from the ground floor of the western spoke. Both ranges, to either side of the hub are now predominantly open plan. However, there is a partitioned off room at the western end of the west spoke. No readily identifiable internal features pertaining to the layout of the workhouse were located within these ranges. The single chimney just east of centre on the northern wall of the eastern spoke was inserted as part of the college conversion (as described above, Plate 6) Some protruding vertical elements attached to the walls in these ranges are ducts and in no way related to the original workhouse layout. That no fireplaces or indeed chimneystacks exist in these ranges may suggest a function other than dormitory accommodation, although in Kempthorne's design only the sick and infirm wards were equipped with fireplaces while other rooms were heated by hot-water pipes as may have been the case here. No plans or details concerning the true function appear to have survived. Kempthorne's model plan shows large rooms for first and second class male and female able-bodied, and the sick and infirm, and smaller rooms for boys, girls, lying-in rooms and a nursery. The beds were on either side of the room and rooms were accessed by centrally placed doorways in the end walls. Sleeping arrangements throughout the workhouse varied according to gender and state of health. Men and boys slept in single beds in two tiers, presumably bunks, while women and girls shared double beds. Only

the sick and infirm enjoyed single beds in one tier and these wards were generally less crowded than the others, housing twelve in Kempthorpe's design, while equivalent ordinary wards accommodated twenty-one or more. The sleeping rooms had access to water-closets. This general design was probably adapted by Wilkinson.

### ***The West Spoke: First Floor College Layout***

Although no clues pertaining to the layout of the workhouse were evident, some 'ghosts' were visible of the college accommodation c.1960. This includes faint traces in the walls where partitions had been inserted to separate bedroom space. Divisions were arranged so that each bedroom had a window. Heating arrangements during use as college dormitories are not visible in this range, but the inserted chimney on the eastern spoke heated a larger, more open plan dormitory arrangement. A corridor, in the centre of this western range provided access to the bedrooms which were arranged as shown on Fig. 6.

### ***The West Spoke: First Floor Current (Fig. 9)***

The small room at the western end of this spoke houses a modern boiler. Adjacent, to the east is a corridor formed by a partition inserted to create a separate office space. Beyond this office the remains of the range is open plan.

The windows in the northern wall are a mixture of original and inserted as required by change in function to college premises. The small first window on the northern wall is inserted, to create a WC facility: the brick soffit is end set but slightly cambered and not at all in tune with the original window features. The two adjacent windows appear to be of original or historic origin (standard Type 2). The next two are of undoubted modern origin, and are shown on the 1962 building plan. The remaining three windows on this elevation up to the central hub are also Type 2.

The southern wall houses six Type 2 windows of original workhouse origin. A wide expanse of uninterrupted fabric separates the two eastern end windows. Some discolouration is indicated on the face of the fabric and a fire escape was initially attached at this point. The aerial photograph from the 1950s (Plate 17) clearly shows this discolouration on the first floor together with the inserted doorway and window at ground floor level.



Plate 17: Aerial Photograph of the workhouse in the late 1950s  
(Courtesy of D. Hicks)

***The East Spoke: First Floor College Layout***

The eastern spoke held a further open plan common room adjacent to the hub followed by the open plan dormitory with a continuation of the inserted 1957 chimneybreast still in situ in front of an archway on the ground floor of the spoke. The chimney is not shown on the first floor plan of 1957 but its presence must be inferred from its depiction on the ground floor plan and presence in the photograph of a similar date (Plate 17). The final rooms at the end of the range housed bathroom and toilet facilities. Traces of a late, inserted corridor within this range (post 1957 in origin) could be seen on the ceiling and down the eastern end wall of the room. Two doors were inserted in the eastern end wall between the dorm and the WCs. The outline and infill of these doors are clearly visible within the fabric of the wall (Plate 18) and probably provided separate access to the corridor and the dormitory.

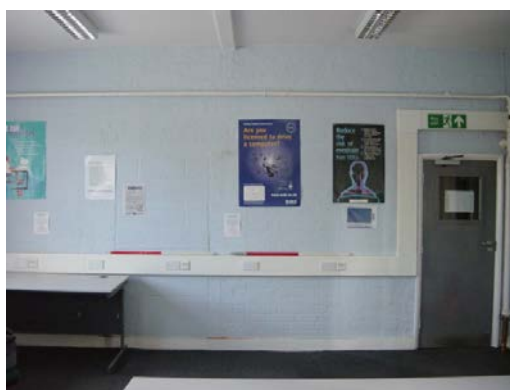


Plate 18: Blocked doors in East Spoke  
(Scales mark locations)

***The East Spoke: Current Features***

The windows appear to comprise a mixture of original/historic and modern types. The first window adjacent to the hub in the northern wall is original and is case hung with a central thick wooden mullion on the external face (Type 2). The adjacent window appears later but made to broadly match the original: the window is larger as are the glazing bars and mullions. The brick arch over does not match the original: there is an irregular use of burnt bricks and larger bricks quoins. The next window to the east may be original or historic in origin. The remaining three large windows are clearly modern: all are inserted and under end-set brick arches. The final windows are late but appear to be under earlier arches, possibly to light the earlier staircase in this location. The windows on the southern wall are all of original or historic origin. There are six windows in total all of which are Type 2.

***The Original Staircases***

The original layout had twin staircases at each end of the spokes, and it is on the second floor of the east and west ranges (discussed below) that elements of the remains of the earlier staircases can be seen within the roof space of the spokes.

Both stair towers at either end of the central ranges retain the original stone flagged floors. These large flags are sealed with lead and traces of the banister locations can still be seen (Plate 19). At the western end (of the eastern range),

the space has been converted to hold sinks that are still *in situ*. However the eastern end (west range), now in use for storage, has traces of the paint finish on one of the internal walls (Plate 20). This tower abutting the west wing also has lath and plaster ceiling construction visible for the room below.



Plate 19: The slab of original stair landing showing locations of removed banisters (arrow) and boarded over access



Plate 20: The remains of paint finish at the top of removed original stairway in the East Wing

## 5.8 The East Wing (*Figure 11*)

### ***East Wing: The Early Layout***

This three-storey wing is north-south orientated and comprised a large room divided into three separate units by the creation of a rectangular internal room (Old Men's ward of 1850 plan), centrally positioned and abutting the east wall. The central room was constructed of partition walls and access was had through a doorway in the centre of the eastern wall. A corridor thus formed between the eastern wall of the ward and the original eastern wall of the range allowed access to the boy's dining room at the northern end and the able bodied men's ward at the southern end (Figures 2 and 3).

The windows on the eastern elevation at ground floor level are all modern in origin: the majority of this floor on the eastern side has been rebuilt post-demolition of a modern college extension (can be seen *in situ* in Plate 17). On the 1850 plan no windows are shown on the eastern elevation for the able bodied men's ward, three are shown in the old men's ward and none are shown for the dining hall

### ***East Wing: The College Layout***

By 1957 the early openings on the eastern elevation had been removed to create open access to an extension running almost the full length of the building. The southern wall of this wing has a large doorway inserted for vehicle access. This is again part of the conversion to fulfil college requirements. The range that had abutted the southern end of this building was demolished as part of the programme of works; a scar is still visible on the fabric of the wing showing its location (Plate 21).



***East Wing: West Elevation***

The arrangement south of the junction with the spoke is highly modified. The ground floor as shown on the 1850 plan comprises a door at the southern end of the elevation and three windows situated between the door and the junction. Of these features, it is clear that although the openings are original, the current windows are historic insertions: the windows that are in situ today are Type 4, and of these, one is fitted within the earlier doorway that is shown as such on the 1850 plan. The surviving window and the traces of an adjacent one clearly truncate the underlying relieving arches indicating enlargements of the original openings (Plate 23).



Plate 21: Inserted door and scar indicating location of original southern extension to the East Wing



Plate 22: Blocked door in west elevation of East Wing



Plate 23: Relieving arch in west elevation of East Wing truncated by inserted Type 4 window

North of the windows is the location of the removed stair. Access from this passage to the east wing is through a modern doorway placed within an infilled arch, there is also a corresponding arrangement at the western end of the west spoke (Plates 24 a and b). No internal partitioning associated with the workhouse survives in the ground floor of this wing.



Plate 24a: Partially blocked arch access from East Wing to Spoke



Plate 24b: Blocked arch access from West Wing to Spoke

The Ground floor north of the junction with the west spoke, now mostly obscured by a modern extension comprises a door at the northern end, it is probable that this doorway is in its original location (although the actual door is of modern origin). Within the extension a doorway that has been inserted into an original window opening, two further windows are still *in situ* in their original locations at this end of the elevation. It appears that the northern end of the west elevation originally comprised three windows to the ground and second floor and four windows to the first floor

### ***East Wing: First floor***

This floor is currently one single open-plan room. The earliest plans available are the 1957 proposals. Windows and door openings have been subject to a high degree of modification over time on this floor including the addition of fire-escape access and the modern stair tower. The original window arrangements however, suggest a similar layout to that of the first floor, with three rooms, the north and south lit by windows in the west elevation while the central room was lit by windows in the east elevation (discussed in detail below).

### ***East Wing: First Floor Eastern Elevation***

The current arrangement broadly correlates to the 1957 plan: there is a door (to fire escape – now blocked) as the first opening at the southern end of the eastern fenestration; next are a group of three evenly spaced windows (type 2), a very modern insertion adjacent to these and then a central group of three further type 2 windows. The northern end of the range comprises two six over six sashes separated by a wide expanse of undisturbed fabric (Figure 11).

Of these windows, it is certain that the central group of three are *in situ* originals. Both sash windows at the northern end are historic insertions. The southern end is a little more complex with the first two comprising insertions, probably historic in origin (the southernmost window is a very modern replacement in an apparently historic cut opening with cement rendered sides). The third window from the southern end also appears to be a later

modification as the opening is slightly wider than those adjacent; this window does not have cement rendered sides and looks to have been built in rather than cut in the manner that the two adjacent northern ones were.

The layout of the windows suggests that this floor would have originally comprised a central group of three windows (as would the ground and second floors). The remaining windows comprise historic insertions in arrangements similar to that visible on the west wings western elevation shown on the 1850 plan. That these openings are not shown on the 1850 plan for the west wing suggests that works may have been carried out in phases as funds allowed, or indeed only as required in response to increases in inmate numbers following changes in legislation.

#### ***East Wing: First Floor Western Elevation***

The western elevation of the wing has a modern window set within an earlier (although not original) opening at the southern end of the elevation. The central window has been replaced with a door to a fire escape, and the third window on this elevation has been blocked due to the placement of the modern stair tower extension.

A number of openings had been inserted during the conversion and the addition of the modern stair tower. These openings, comprised a window and door, now infilled but clearly visible within the existing interior elevation. The current door is a later insertion to provide access to the eastern spoke.

The western elevation is bisected by the junction with the east spoke. To the north of the spoke five windows are situated, the southernmost of modern origin, the final central three are original, the northernmost comprising a replacement six over six horned sash, the other three windows are Type 1.

#### ***East Wing: Second Floor Western Elevation***

The second floor is similarly set out: the southern window is of historic (Type 2) rather than original origin, the adjacent original window opening also has a modern doorway to a fire escape situated within and the third window adjacent to the stair tower is clearly a modern insertion. North of the stair tower at second floor level is a further window of historic rather than original origin (Type 2).

The junction of the east spoke with this wing comprises an opening into the roof space of the spoke: what was originally the top landing of the stair tower that had been *in situ* in 1850. This space houses the flagstone landing of the original staircase, with its lead seals and traces of the original banister locations (as discussed above). The area where the stairs would have carried up had been boarded over when the staircase was removed.

#### ***East Wing: South Elevation***

The southern elevation at first floor level houses two Type 2 windows, evenly spaced and original in origin (Plate 21). At Second Floor Level, the southern elevation houses two windows, identical to those in the first floor, and in line with them, suggesting contemporaneity.

***East Wing: North Elevation***

The northern elevation of this range houses two windows located similarly to those in the south elevation. These windows had been blocked prior to the addition of the second storey of the northeastern range (Plate 25).

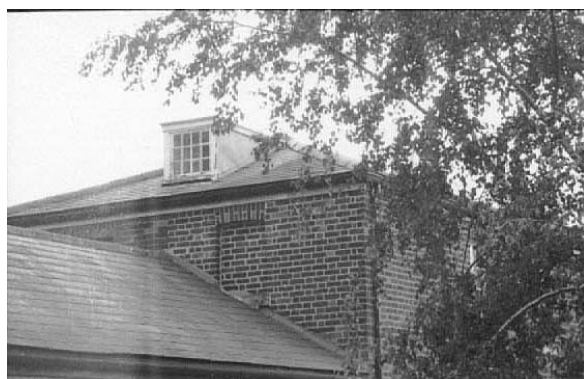


Plate 25: Blocked window at north end of East Wing  
Showing later Northeast range abutting (the reason for blocking the window)

**5.9 The Northeastern Range**

The northeastern Range, or block is a later modification with a visible straight line join between it and the eastern wing (Plate 26). The range is two-storeys in height, in marked contrast to the corresponding northeastern range. The ground floor is labelled the Boy's School on the 1850 plan, although there are additional notes suggesting a change of function to *sick room*. The plan also shows the building as corresponding in width to the east wing; this is not the case for the Northeastern range and this lack of symmetry suggests that the building was widened as well as given an additional storey rather than comprising a totally new block of a later date.

The lower storey western fenestration has three evenly spaced sash windows, all standard Type 1. There is a blocked doorway north of the windows and an inserted doorway at the end of the elevation: the inserted door clearly occupies the site of an earlier window opening (Plate 27). The northern elevation of this block is obscured by the modern extension. The eastern elevation comprises two windows (Type 1) adjacent to a large modern doorway. The space between the door and window originally housed a chimneystack, the remains of which can be seen within the room.



Plate 26: Straight Line Join (SLJ) between East Wing and later Northeastern range



Plate 27: Blocked doorway and later inserted door in window opening of Northeastern Range

### ***Northeastern Range: The First Floor***

The upper storey, almost certainly of a later date comprises three evenly spaced windows (of Type 1 design but slightly smaller - Plate 28) on the western elevation that are not in line with any of the features found on the ground floor. The plan from 1957 (Fig. 5) show these windows as *in situ*.



Plate 28: The western elevation of the Northeastern Range

The eastern elevation has three windows, again evenly spaced. The window at the northern end is smaller than the other two and is a two pane over two sash of modern origin. The remaining windows are Type 1 sashes but again of slightly smaller dimensions.

### ***Northeastern Range: First Floor Internal Arrangement***

There are no internal partitions on this floor that had contained a single dormitory in the late 1950s, before conversion to a small dormitory and two storage rooms. The rooms were accessed from a north-south aligned corridor running the length of the block and continuing into the eastern range. Two chimneybreasts once stood within this block, one on the northern wall and the other in the eastern wall. These have been removed and at the northern end, a staircase has been inserted in the same location. This stair is post-1960 in

origin and effectively truncates the eastern window of this end wall. A dormer within the roofline indicates a converted loft space that was accessed from the stair and as a result is also post 1960 in origin.

## 5.10 The Southwestern Range

### ***Southwestern Range: Eastern Elevation***

This block is single storey in height and is keyed into the western range indicating a contemporary build. The eastern fenestration houses two Type 2 style windows to either side of a central door. The door has been blocked and the windows are replacements but the openings are in their original locations (Plate 29).



Plate 29: Southwest Range, eastern elevation



Plate 30: Southwest Range, southern elevation

### ***Southwestern Range: Southern Elevation***

The southern fenestration is chamfered to the east: a blocked door and a small modern window are housed within the chamfered elevation (Plate 30). The southern un-chamfered part of this fenestration contains an additional small window: both of these windows are not shown on the 1850 plan. This chamfered element of the block originally housed the privy.

### ***Southwestern Range: Western Elevation***

The western elevation of this range now houses four windows: All are inserted and post-date the 1850 plan but were *in situ* on the 1957 plan of existing and proposed alterations to the workhouse (Plates 31 and 32).



Plate 31: Inserted window in west elevation of Southwest Range



Plate 32: Replaced window in original opening on eastern elevation of Southwest Range

## 5.11 The Western Wing (*Figure 11*)

### ***West Wing: College Features***

This range was almost exactly laid out as the eastern range. At the time of conversion to the college, both wings at ground floor level had a single large room to the south, followed by a partitioned-off ward adjacent to a passage accessing the stair tower. There was a final large room situated at the northern end of the range which had access to a small single storey block the same in plan as the surviving southwestern range.

### ***West Wing: Ground Floor Western Elevation***

The block is shown on the 1850 plan as incorporating seven windows to the western elevation. The windows on the western elevation were arranged from north to south as follows: one pair of windows separated by a wide undisturbed expanse of fabric incorporating a chimneystack, a further chimney stack either side of the group of three centrally situated windows and a corresponding pair of windows separated by a further chimneystack at the southern end (*Figure 11*).

The pair of windows at the northern end of the elevation corresponds to the pair at the southern end. These windows are Type 1 sashes and are historic in origin. Doubts are cast as to their being original to the workhouse construction in that the internal vertical faces of the openings have been cement rendered rather than the high quality of brick finish that can be seen elsewhere housing original windows. In addition, the closers that are to be seen in the window brickwork throughout the building are unevenly situated and odd sizes of brick remain in the fabric – suggesting that the opening was cut rather than built-in (*Plate 33*). It appears that these windows were *in situ* by 1850, but it is likely that they were inserted after the original construction as the lack of any windows in corresponding positions on the eastern elevation of the east wing suggests that no original windows were intended for these locations.

Two of the central group of three windows, one on either side of the modern example (*Plate 34*) are situated so that they truncate the relieving arches below. This truncation and the same window types (Type 4) were also observed on the western elevation of the East Range. These arches had also been cut into in order to insert or increase the size of the windows. The windows are also shown on the plan of 1850, with one of similar proportions between. The central window appears to have been converted to a door at some stage prior to being bricked up. The current window in this location is of modern origin. The wide spaces between the northern pair and the southern pair were to accommodate chimneystacks; the southern stacks are still *in situ*.



Plate 33: Inserted Type 1 window  
in west elevation of West Wing



Plate 34: Inserted modern window in west elevation  
of West Wing also shows inserted (or extended)  
Type 4 windows

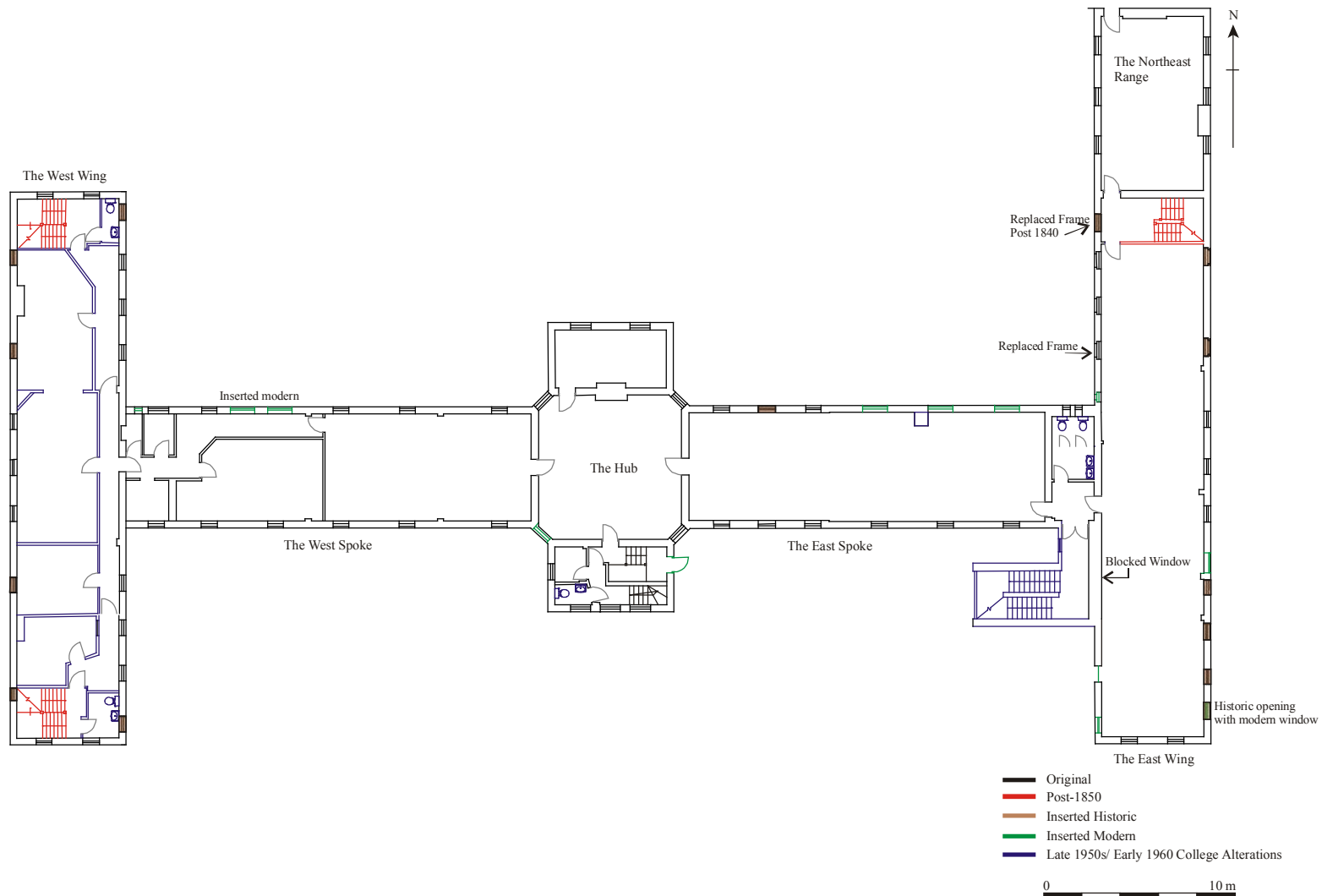
### ***West Wing: Ground Floor Eastern Elevation***

The ground floor east elevation comprises a door at the southern end. This doorway is in its original location although now holds a door of modern origin. Adjacent to the door are three windows each of type 2 style and *in situ* originals. Below the three windows are intact relieving arches. This elevation at the southern end of the wing is almost intact: the corresponding elevation of the east wing shows traces of the original layout in the fabric and as discussed above it is clear that the windows were lengthened and the door blocked up. The northern end of this elevation is seen on the 1850 plan as identical to the southern end with three windows followed by a door. The modernisation of the wing for college requirements has resulted in the blocking of these original features.

### ***West Wing: The First Floor Eastern Elevation***

On the eastern elevation at first floor level there is an inserted window of historic origin (Fig. 9). The window is on an odd alignment above the doorway (Plate 35) and has been inserted into an opening cut through the brick building fabric: there are cement rendered sides and odd sized bricks where regular closers are usually found. The three remaining windows on this elevation are original and *in situ* Type 2 windows.





**Figure 9: Current First Floor Layout Showing Construction Phases**

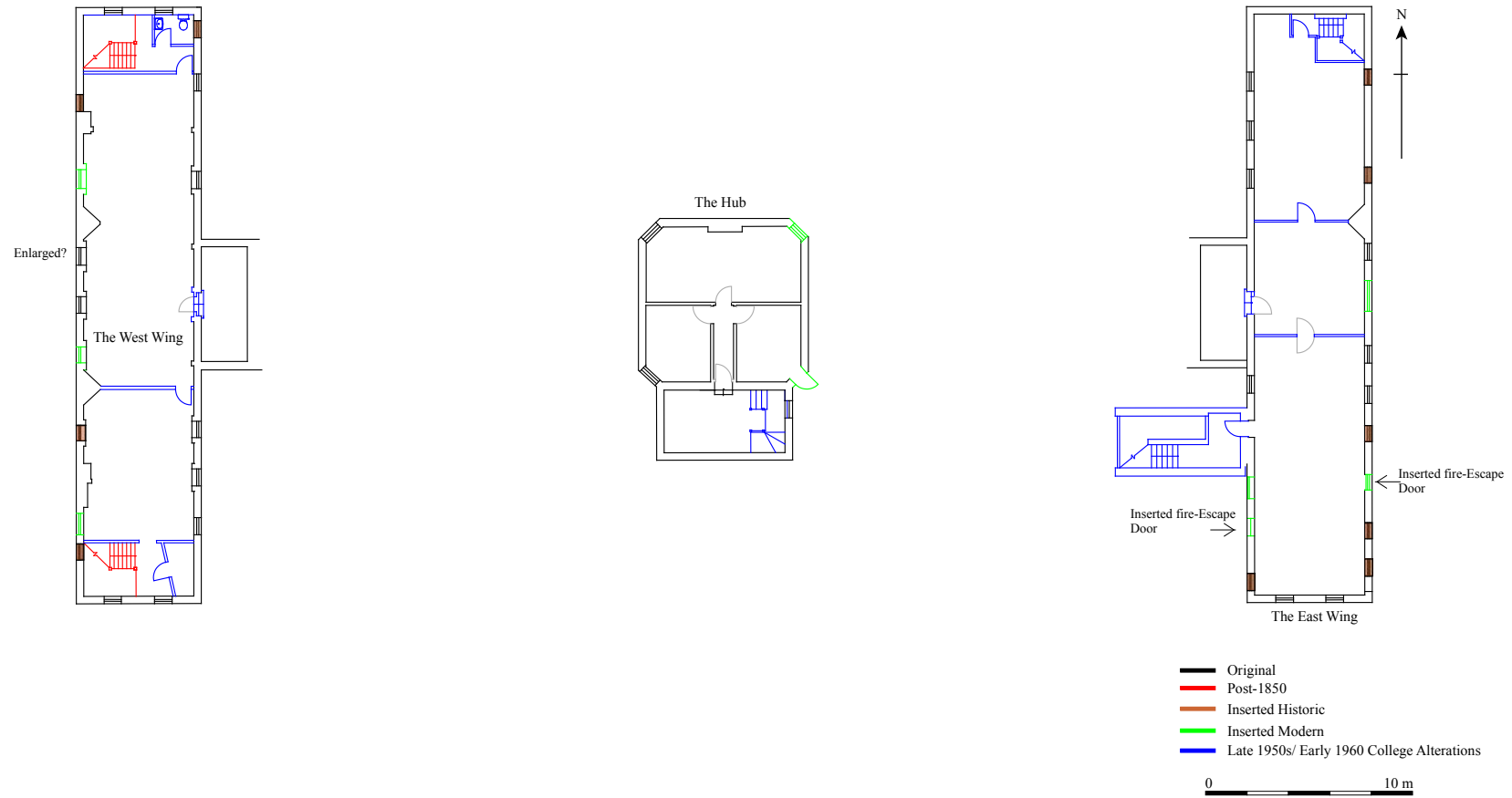


Figure 10: Current Second Floor Layout Showing Construction Phases

North of the junction between the west range and spoke, are four further windows (Plate 36). The first three are also *in situ* originals, but the final one at the northernmost end has again been inserted: there are cement rendered sides where the fabric has been cut through, and the usual small fragments of brick in varying sizes left behind when the full bricks had been cut to take the new window. The inserted window (also Type 2) is historic in origin and matches the originals; this suggests an insertion not long after original construction.



Plate 35: Inserted window at first floor level



Plate 36: In situ original windows and largely un-altered fenestration (east elevation of West Wing)

### ***West Wing: The First Floor Northern and Western Elevations***

The northern elevation has two windows to this floor, both original. The western elevation has seven windows on this floor: two pairs of Type 5 windows, one at the northern and the other at the southern end, widely spaced to accommodate a chimney stack integral to the fabric. The chimneystacks are no longer *in situ* at the northern end but can still be seen at the southern end. Between the pairs, and centrally situated within the elevation is a group of three Type 2 windows: these windows are set at a slightly lower level to the end pairs and are likely to be originals. The central frame however, has been replaced with a modern equivalent. Three central windows for each floor of both wings on the external elevations appears to have been the original format as indicated on the ground floor plan of 1850. This suggests an original layout of three rooms as discussed for the first floor of the east wing: a central room lit by three windows on the east elevation and the two rooms either side lit by windows on the west elevation. The ends of the building may once again have held storage rooms or washrooms and light would have been provided by the two windows situated in the end elevations.

Close examination of the west elevation revealed the two northern and the southernmost windows to be inserted, but historic in origin. Once again the odd sized bricks resulting from cutting into the established fabric and sealed with a brick render were visible.

***West Wing: The First Floor Internal Arrangements***

The internal arrangements represent dormitories and staff accommodation after the College conversion. No traces of earlier arrangements were discernable. It is clear that the northern and southern staircases were not original to the workhouse, they are not shown on the 1850 plan at ground floor level (Figure 2), but they do appear by the time the college took over the site and are subsequently shown on all plans from 1957 onwards (Fig. 5).

***West Wing: The Second Floor Eastern Elevation***

The eastern elevation at this level shows only original *in situ* case hung (Type 2) windows in an evenly spaced group of three. The remainder of the elevation, beyond the junction with the western spoke, houses four windows, a group of three, with the central one now blocked, and an additional, inserted (also Type 2) window at the northern end. Like the other early inserted windows in this range, there are cement rendered sides over cut brick fabric. Once again this window was probably inserted when the internal space was divided up into smaller units and the staircase inserted.

***West Wing: The Second Floor Western Elevation***

The western elevation is slightly more complex: the first window at the northern end is inserted and out of alignment with the floors below, the next window is a modern replacement within an opening inserted into the building fabric. The group of three centrally situated windows comprise a Type 2 window at the northern end of the group within an original but slightly enlarged opening which may be a replacement window as the fit is not exact, leaving a gap at the top below the arch. The central window is also Type 2 and appears original. The third of the group is a replacement two-over two horned sash window within an original opening. Once again, it is the central three windows that remain of the original layout to the workhouse.

The remaining three windows on this floor at the southern end of the elevation comprise an inserted window adjacent to the central group displaying the typical cut brick and cement render finish. The window is eight panes over eight with hinges between to allow the upper section to fold inwards (Type 5). The remainder of the windows are also insertions, the first clearly modern and the southernmost another example of the Type 5 window.

***West Wing: The Second Floor Internal Arrangements***

The inserted staircases at either end of the range continue up to this floor. The chimneybreasts are still *in situ*, including two triangular ones that would have provided fireplaces at either side, heating two separate rooms. This number of fireplaces suggests that they would have housed staff or indeed functioned as lying in rooms and associated nurseries. Of the internal arrangements, a partition wall bisecting one of the triangular chimneybreasts at the southern end of the range may be historic in origin, if not original. The other significant feature within this range is the door connecting with the central spoke. This, as discussed above, was the original access to the stair tower, long since removed. It is within this room that the traces of paint finish can be seen, the well-worn stairs and the inserted lath and plaster ceiling. No other period detail survives on this floor.

## 5.12 The Gate Houses

Two identical octagonal gatehouses are situated at the foot of the drive onto Priest End (Plates 37 and 38). These structures, like the main body of the workhouse are constructed in Flemish Bond. Each have a door with a window to either side, the window onto the actual gate is more elaborate: set within a recessed panel effect. The door on the eastern tower has been enlarged and is wider than the brick arch. Both buildings have chimneystacks visible emerging from the room. The roof itself comprises eight wedge shaped panels rising to meet a centrally located carved stone feature. The buildings are now used as storage but were occupied earlier in the life of the college: the blocked chimneybreast in the eastern house is visible, but the inserted shelving in the western house obscures any features. On the exterior of both gatehouses, built into the fabric, can be seen part of the gate structure relating to the early college conversion. The gate remains were built by students and have had an impact on the structure of the houses.



Plate 37: The east gatehouse



Plate 38: The west gatehouse

## 5.13 The Chimney

Situated adjacent to the Kitchen block in the eastern car park is the large chimney. The chimney is connected to the Kitchen Range by a building of modern origin, constructed of stretcher bond identical to that of the stair tower abutting the East Range. This additional build was not *in situ* at the time the 1957 plan was created (Fig. 5). A structure believed to be a chimney can be seen on the 1850 plan (Figure 2), but is not in the same location as the current chimney. The current stack looks to be a modern rebuild, the top of the chimney, incorporating bricks arranged in diaper pattern may be re-use of the earlier material. Built into the rear (northern face) of the chimney are the remains of a kiln built by the students of the college (Plates 39 and 40).



Plate 39: The Chimneystack



Plate 40: The Kiln

### 5.14 The Perimeter Wall

The final surviving feature belonging to the workhouse complex is the perimeter wall: of Flemish bond like the buildings themselves, the wall is punctuated with buttress-type features to strengthen the long stretches of wall.

## 6 SUMMARY

Two main factors concerning Workhouse sites in general should be taken into consideration: the first is that early plans, where they exist at all, are often for the ground floor arrangements. This is the case for the Thame Union Workhouse. No plans have been discovered yet that relate directly to the layout of the upper floors of the buildings. The second factor is that continuous use of workhouse buildings result in the loss of internal features that would have directly related to their original functions. Again this is the case for Thame.

Here, the remaining buildings belonging to the workhouse tell a complex story of adaptation and modification over the years, from first build through to conversion for college property. Traces of internal modification relate predominantly to the early college years and subsequent 20<sup>th</sup> century modernisation.

Of the remains, there are a few key areas where survival of early fabric and fittings occur: the first floor of the central hub, where many period features survive; the columns in the ground floor of the hub and the very visible blocked doorways and windows. Attention should also be drawn to the surviving elements of the basements, where much of the original layout has already been lost.

Further original elements can be seen in the Kitchen range (roof lantern, ceilings). Within the West and East Wings chimneybreasts are still *in situ* although the fireplaces have long since been blocked. These chimneybreasts give clues to the internal arrangements in that they were devised to provide

heat to two separate rooms, hence the triangular shape. A possible early partition, *in situ* at the apex of such a fireplace can be seen in the west wing (Second Floor).

Mention should be made of the preservation *in situ* of the staircase remains in the roof space where the central spokes abut the east and west wings. Here traces of paint finish and remnants of original staircases can be seen as illustrated above.

The availability of the plans such as the 1850 plan and those relating to the first phases of college conversion have helped to build up a picture of changes to the original workhouse buildings. Evidence from the plans has been supplemented by evidence from the building fabric itself. Some features can be pinned down to original construction; some can be allocated as occurring within the first 15 years of the workhouse's life. For the remainder of the features, phasing can be carried out, effectively grouping features by style and by location, particularly where original fabric has been cut to make room for new features.

Where scarce internal elements survive, the changes in the fenestration can give important clues to development and indeed function through the years. The legislation led segregation of the sexes can be clearly seen in workhouse layout: a division along the north south axis of the workhouse occurred as can be seen on the 1850 plan (female to the east and male to the west). Additional factors such as catering for the sick during outbreaks of TB or cholera had to be taken into consideration.

A further mention should be made regarding different window types. It is possible that the Type 1 sash windows related to staff offices and accommodation and Type 2 casements were for dormitory and inmate workspaces. It should be noted that finances were of fundamental importance to the running and development of a workhouse, so it should not be ruled out that the availability of certain windows for good price may have influenced the types used in the developments over time. Particularly fine window styles were usually located to the front of the buildings where guardians and potential benefactors could appreciate them. The particularly fine gauged brickwork in the arches over the large window in the spokes and additional features such as the relieving arches (both aesthetic and functional) remind the viewer that the buildings were architect designed and that competitions were carried out to select suitable architects that could marry functionality with design.

The significance of the original layout of the windows in the wings of the workhouse was that a layout comprising three large rooms can be inferred for each floor and not just the ground floor where the 1850 plan depicts this arrangement. The window layout suggests one centrally located lit by the three windows on the outside elevation of each wing, and one further room to each side of the centre lit by the corresponding arrangements of three windows on the internal elevations (facing towards the yards and hub) either side of the spokes. The northern and southern ends of the building with two windows

apiece in each of the elevations may have held additional smaller storage rooms.

The insertion of windows outwith the original layout indicates a change in function for the rooms. Notes made on the 1850 plan show the words ‘*day room*’ written by hand in the room originally noted as containing the Girl’s dining room; further notes are made in the room marked as girl’s school but are difficult to decipher (Figure 3), and may read *sick room*, indicating a move towards housing some categories of ill inmate within the wing.

That further changes were necessary can be seen as a response to the number and type of inmate inhabiting the workhouse, in addition to a reflection of the changing legislation between 1840 and 1881 (Morrison, 1999): the removal of outdoor relief resulting in increased numbers of inmates and a further increase in the segregation of different classes of poor. A particular result of increased segregation and categorisation was to separate inmates by character in addition to the usual categories of sex, age and health.

This is perhaps indicated on the 1850 plan where class notes have been made: the Able Bodied Men’s ward at the south end of the east wing was categorised as *Class 1A*, the same type of ward housed in the centre of the east spoke is categorised as *Class 1B* yet they are both marked as intended for able bodied male inmates. The roughly rectangular yard formation accessed from the central ward on the east spoke (*class 1B*) cannot be accessed by the *class 1A* inmates. That the rectangular yard is a later adaptation is further suggested by the wedge shaped nature and general symmetry throughout the site of all other yards. The fact that the Able Bodied Men’s ward in the centre of the spoke does not have a corresponding function on the west spoke (it is the Women’s Dining Room) further supports the changes to the original layout to the workhouse in response to changes in the law within the first 15 years of operation. That change was ongoing in the life of the workhouse is evident on the building fabric and is clearly illustrated on the 1850 plan.

Contemporary insertions and modifications were made on both wings as can be seen by the addition of the same types of window (Type 4 within the relieving arches) suggesting a series of phases of workhouse-wide modification.

The first floor of the spokes has original windows *in situ* on the southern fenestration. Modifications, predominantly modern in origin cause disruption to the original design and symmetry to the rear, northern elevations. However, that no chimneys are *in situ* or traces of such remain, other than a late insertion on the eastern spoke, suggests a function other than dormitory accommodation as pertaining to the original workhouse layout. Heat could however be provided by the installation of hot water pipes, common in workhouses of this era.



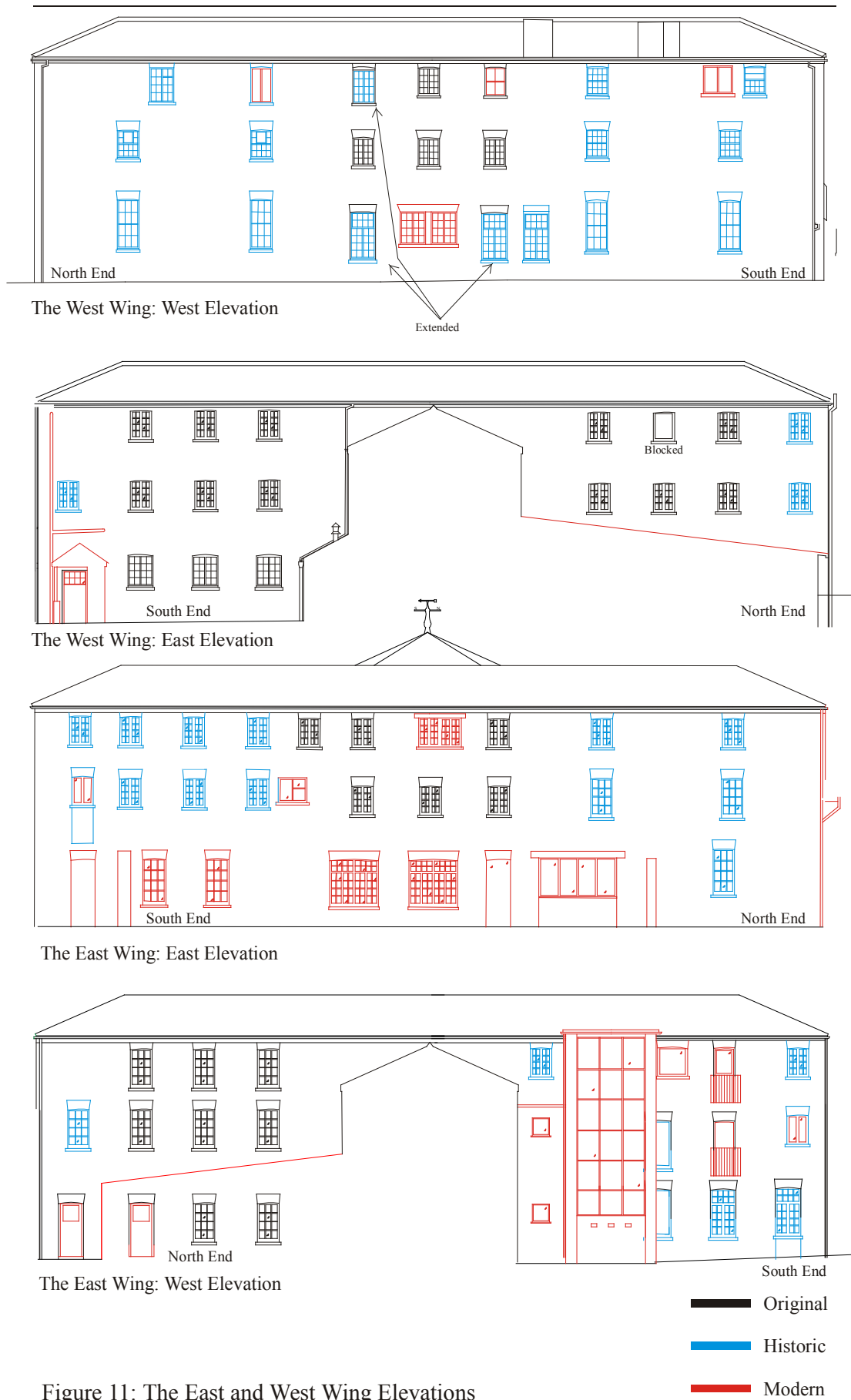


Figure 11: The East and West Wing Elevations

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the majority of the clues to the development of the workhouse from construction to closure in the 1930s are to be seen in the external building fabric, with supplementary evidence drawn from the available plans. The original internal arrangements of the upper floors of the buildings can only be inferred. However, the information evident in the elevations of the east and west wings in addition to the 1850 plan does suggest an actual layout for all three floors of the wings. It is almost certain that each floor comprised three main rooms with additional storage or toilet facilities at either end.

The high degree of alterations and modernisation over time, first to convert the complex to college buildings, then to bring them in line with modern requirements has resulted in a substantial loss of original buildings and internal information. The early plans (to be deposited at the Oxford Records Office) in addition to this report and a photographic record made by the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies in May this year (Gibbons 2004) goes some way to preserve by record this interesting range of buildings significant as part of the social developments in the era within which its construction occurred. The Thame Union Workhouse is also significant in its rarity: of the eighteen known workhouses designed in England by Wilkinson, only three, of which Thame is one, were designed to a non-standard plan.

## 8 Bibliography

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RCHME, 1996, *Recording Historic Buildings A Descriptive Specification*

*Thame Union Minute Books 1835-1893* (later volumes are not accessible until 100 years after authorship) Held at the Oxford Record Office PLU5/G/1A1/1-17

VCH M. D. Lobel, (ed.), 1962 *The Victoria County History of the Counties of England: A history of Oxfordshire* Volume VII

In addition a collection of 2500 workhouse drawings by George Wilkinson are held at the Irish Architectural Archive:  
73 Merrion Square Dublin 2

### Ireland

Tel: 353 1 676 3430

Email: [info@iarc.ie](mailto:info@iarc.ie)

This collection is focused on the Irish workhouses designed by Wilkinson but may shed some light on the layout of Thame Union Workhouse. However, workhouses there were much larger than their English counterparts. They were erected for one-third of the cost and provided a lower standard of accommodation (Morrison, 1999). The Readers Room was closed to the public for refurbishment during the period of this study and the drawings could not be consulted.