



JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

**HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AND WATCHING
BRIEF**

ON

SCHEDULED MONUMENT NO: SM OX 182, HE 1006329

THE BULLCROFT, HIGH STREET,

WALLINGFORD, OXFORDSHIRE

NGR SU 60576 89533

MARCH 2021

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CONTENTS

	Page
<i>SUMMARY</i>	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Origins of the Report	1
1.2 Location and Description	1
1.3 Geology and Topography	1
2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION	1
3 STRATEGY	3
4 BACKGROUND	3
4.1 Designation	3
4.2 History of Development	3
5 DESCRIPTION OF THE FORMER RECREATION ROOMS	3
5.1 External elevations	5
5.2 Interior	9
6 ASSESSMENT	19
6.1 Phases	19
6.2 Historic and Architectural Assessment	19
7 CONCLUSIONS	20
8 BIBLIOGRAPHY	20
APPENDIX 1: OASIS Form	21

FIGURES AND PLATES

	Page
Figure 1: Site location	2
Figure 2: Elevations of The Recreation Rooms	4
Figure 3: Plan of The Recreation Rooms	10
Plate 1: The recreation rooms as viewed from the entrance to The Bullcroft. Looking north east.	5
Plate 2: The central entrance into the building. Looking north.	6
Plate 3: The eastern elevation of the east block. Looking north west.	6
Plate 4: The northern elevation. Looking south-south west.	7
Plate 5: The southern end of the western block, showing later extension. Looking south east.	7
Plate 6: The northern end of the western block, showing buttresses. Looking north east.	8
Plate 7: Mid-demolition, showing brick pad and supporting beam under eastern block. Looking east.	8
Plate 8: Post-demolition, showing cut for brick foundation and extant turf.	9
Plate 9: Room 1, central corridor. Looking north.	9
Plate 10: Toilet cubicle within Room 3. Looking south.	12
Plate 11: Rooms 6 and 8, showing partition of external window. Looking east.	12
Plate 12: Room 9, showing window. Looking east.	13
Plate 13: Room 10, showing blocked windows and roof structure. Looking north.	13
Plate 14: Fireplace in room 10. Looking south east.	14
Plate 15: Room 13, showing Toilet 14 and Kitchen 15. Looking south.	14
Plate 16: Storage larder within Room 15. Looking North.	15
Plate 17: Room 17, showing altered eastern wall. Looking north-north west.	16
Plate 18: Room 17, showing windows and leaning wall. Looking south west.	16
Plate 19: Room 18, showing door and blocked windows. Looking north.	17
Plate 20: Room 18, showing access door and blocked doorway. Looking south.	17
Plate 21: Room 18, showing roof structure and metal tie beam. Looking north east.	18
Plate 22: The site as seen from the entrance to The Bullcroft, post-demolition. Looking north.	18
Plate 23: The site, post-demolition. Looking north.	19

SUMMARY

This report is a brief account of the former Recreation Rooms in The Bullcroft, Wallingford (NGR SU 60576 89533). The building was built in 1941 with funding from J.R. Upson, a local businessman, to be used by the armed forces for the duration of the Second World War. The structure is a prefabricated timber framed building, with three blocks arranged in an H-plan. The blocks contained recreational and dining facilities, as demonstrated by extant features that include a brick fireplace and a kitchen and larder. After the war the building was given to the community of Wallingford, being used as a nursery in the post-war period. During this period the building was subject to subdivision and alteration, including the insertion of external doors and internal partitions and ceilings.

.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origins of the Report

The report was requested by LAPD Architects on behalf of Wallingford Town Council.

The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport had granted scheduled monument consent (S00234636) for **Demolition of the 'rec' rooms building and associated playground and fencing (as amplified by Bat and Bird Scoping Survey received on 14/03/20)** for which South Oxfordshire District Council has granted planning permission. Condition of the scheduled monument consent included:

(b) Photographs shall be prepared of the monument before the start of and after completion of the works and a set of the photographs in digital format shall be sent to Historic England (David Wilkinson, Inspector of Ancient Monuments) within 1 month of the completion of the works (or such other period as may be mutually agreed).

(d) No works shall commence until written confirmation of arrangements for archaeological recording above- and below-ground (if required), before and during the works, have been submitted for the approval of the Secretary of State advised by Historic England.

1.2 Location and Description

The study building is situated at the south end of Bullcroft Park, an open grassed area located to the north west of Wallingford town centre (SU 60576 89533).

1.3 Geology and Topography

The bedrock geology of the area is the Glauconitic Marl Member, a sandstone; this is overlain by superficial deposits of the Northmoor Sand and Gravel Member, Upper Facet (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

2 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

The aims of the investigation, as laid out in the WSI, were:

- To prepare photographs and a brief narrative of the building before demolition commences and to prepare photographs of the monument after the completion of the works. Some detail may be revealed during demolition which will be recorded.
- To make a record of any significant archaeological remains revealed during the course of any operations that may disturb or destroy archaeological remains.

In particular:

- To record any evidence relating to the known Saxon and medieval remains.

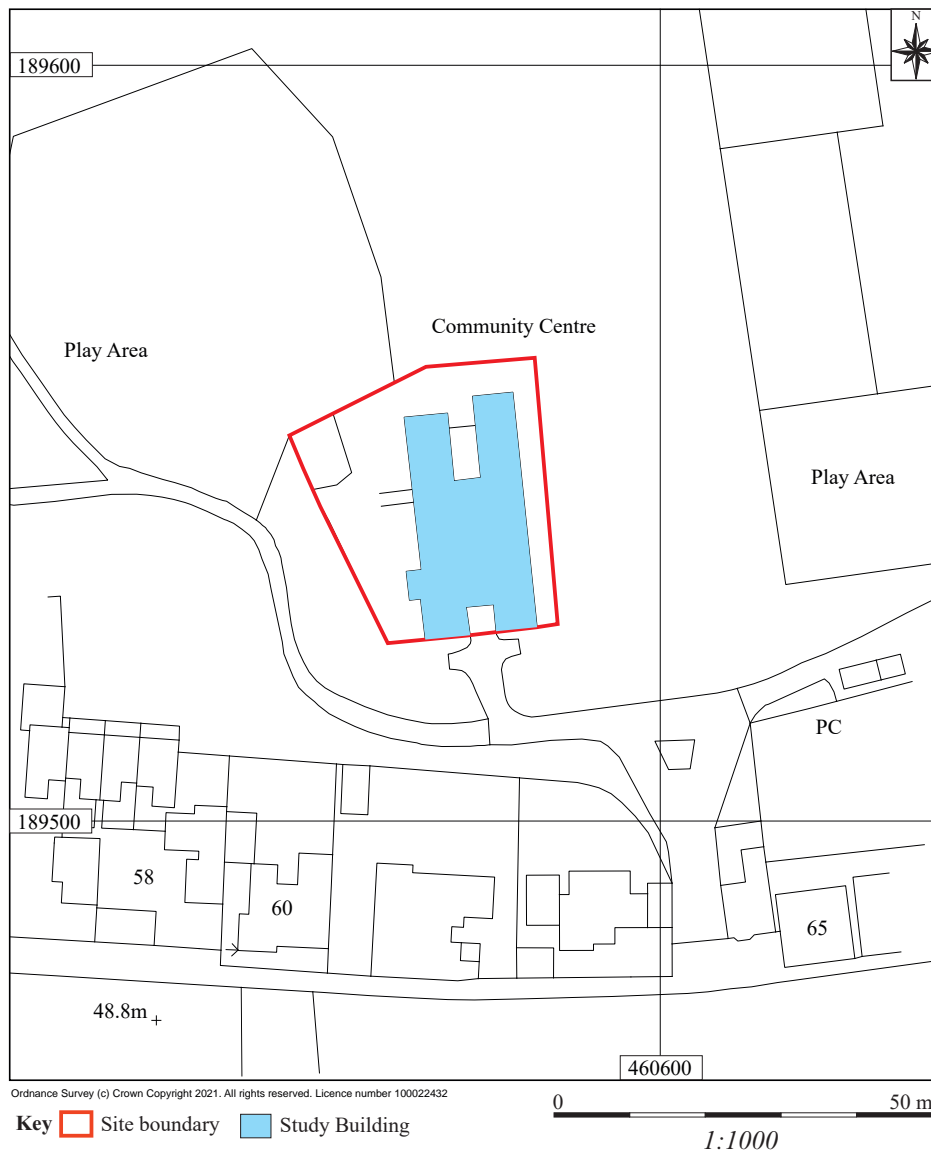
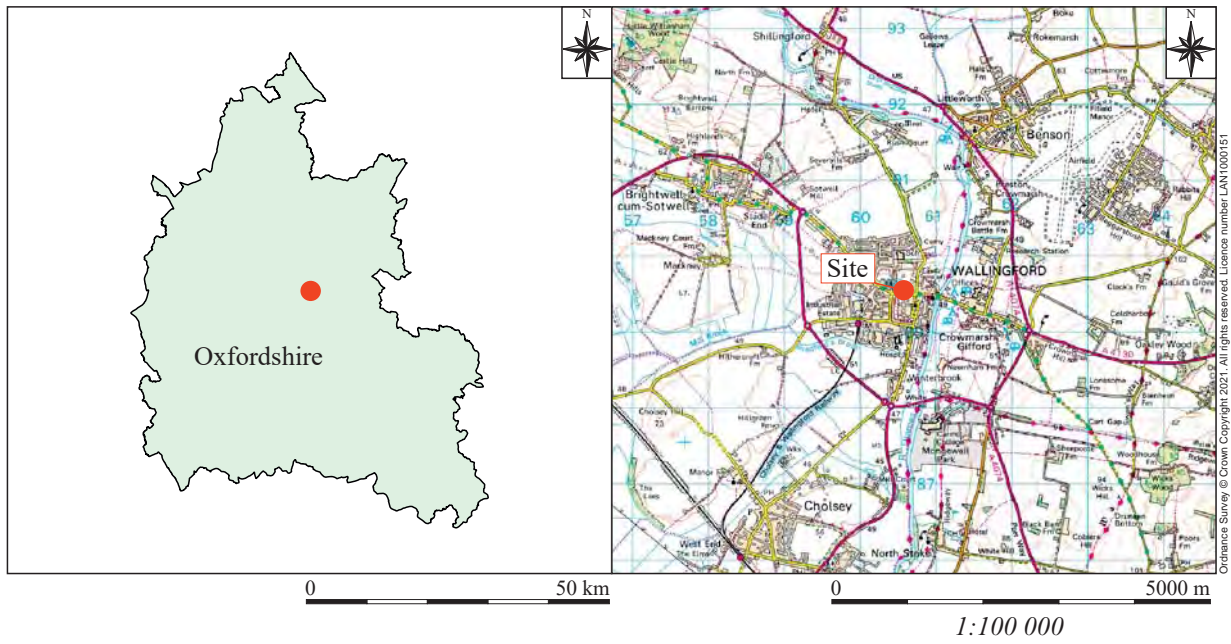


Figure 1: Site location

3 STRATEGY

John Moore Heritage Services carried out the work to a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with Historic England.

4 BACKGROUND

4.1 Designation

The study building is situated within the scheduled monument of the Anglo Saxon Town of Wallingford, which is summarised as:

Two large open spaces inside the N and NW, and S and SW ramparts of Saxon Wallingford. Early Med deposits presumed intact from later occupation. Preserved at present as public open space. Any Saxon or other early medieval material will not have been disturbed by later occupation.

4.2 History of Development

This section concerns the development of the Recreation Rooms, as opposed to the early medieval settlement.

The Recreation Rooms were constructed in 1941 with funding from R. J. Upson of Wallingford for use as recreation facilities for soldiers billeted nearby (JP Heritage 2019).

Letters dated to the 31st October 1940 indicate that permission was being sought from the Military Authorities for construction of the proposed recreation hut. Following correspondence of the 6th November states that the proposed building was to be temporary, and that the Wallingford Corporation had granted R. J. Upson use of a site within The Bullcroft for the duration of the war. By January 1941 consent for the building had been granted by Berkshire County Council; a letter dated to 1945 noted that in 1941 consent was granted for a period of 12 months, with the stipulation that after this period the building should be removed at the expense of the owner.

Construction was undertaken in early 1941 by Cyril Brasher and the building was outfitted for approximately £2,000. Following the war the building was given over to the people of Wallingford, as demonstrated by a plaque installed in 1945 which stated:

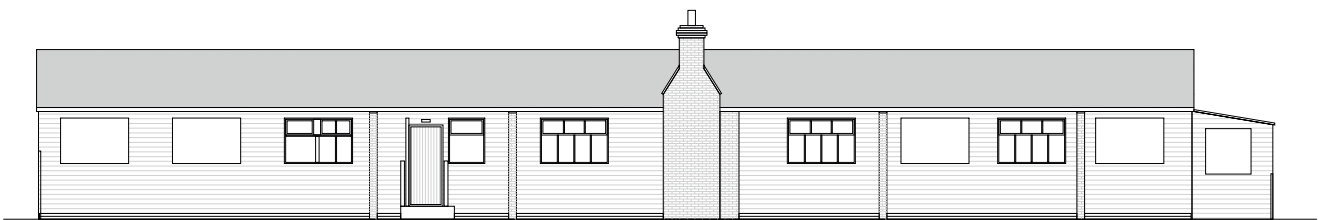
This Building was presented by J. R. Upson Esquire to be used as a canteen for H.M. Forces during the War and afterwards for the use of the people of Wallingford.

5 DESCRIPTION OF THE FORMER RECREATION ROOMS

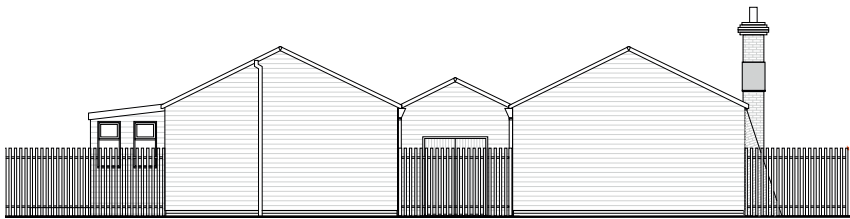
A brief description of the building is given below, with special note given to any surviving historic features and fittings.



Western elevation



Eastern elevation



Southern elevation



Northern elevation

Figure 2: The Recreation Rooms: Elevations



5.1 External Description (Figure 2)

The recreation rooms are arranged in an H-plan with a central block and two larger flanking blocks to the east and west, aligned N-S. The structure is timber framed and clad in shiplap weatherboard; the roofs of each block are gabled and clad in felt. The northern gables of the eastern and western blocks are clad in render, with wooden framing. A number of brick buttresses are distributed along the eastern and western elevations, in particular present towards the northern end of the building. A brick chimney breast and stack is present half way along the eastern elevation and two modern lean-to extensions are present, at the northern end of the eastern wing and at the southern end of the western wing.

The superstructure of the building rests on a brick plinth, while internally the floor structure rests on a series of brick pads, spaced at *c.* 1.5m intervals throughout (Plate 7). These are cut into the underlying topsoil to a depth of 0.1m. During demolition it was noted that the original (pre-1941) ground surface had been preserved under the building (Plate 8).



Plate 1: The recreation rooms as viewed from the entrance to The Bullcroft. Looking north east



Plate 2: The central entrance into the building. Looking north



Plate 3: The eastern elevation of the east block. Looking north west



Plate 4: The northern elevation. Looking south-south west



Plate 5: The southern end of the western block, showing later extension. Looking south east.



Plate 6: The northern end of the western block, showing buttresses. Looking north east.



Plate 7: Mid-demolition, showing brick pad and supporting beam under eastern block. Looking east.



Plate 8: Post-demolition, showing cut for brick foundation and extant turf.

5.2 Internal Description (Figure 3)

Internally the three blocks are divided into a series of separate rooms. The central block, which contains the main entrance to the building at its southern end, forms a central corridor from which the eastern and western blocks are accessed (Plate 9). The corridor, Room 1, provides access to Rooms 2, 5 and 10 in the eastern block and Rooms 13 and 18 in the western block. The ceiling in the central block (Room 1) is a later suspended plasterboard ceiling while the walls are plasterboard.



Plate 9: Room 1, central corridor. Looking north.

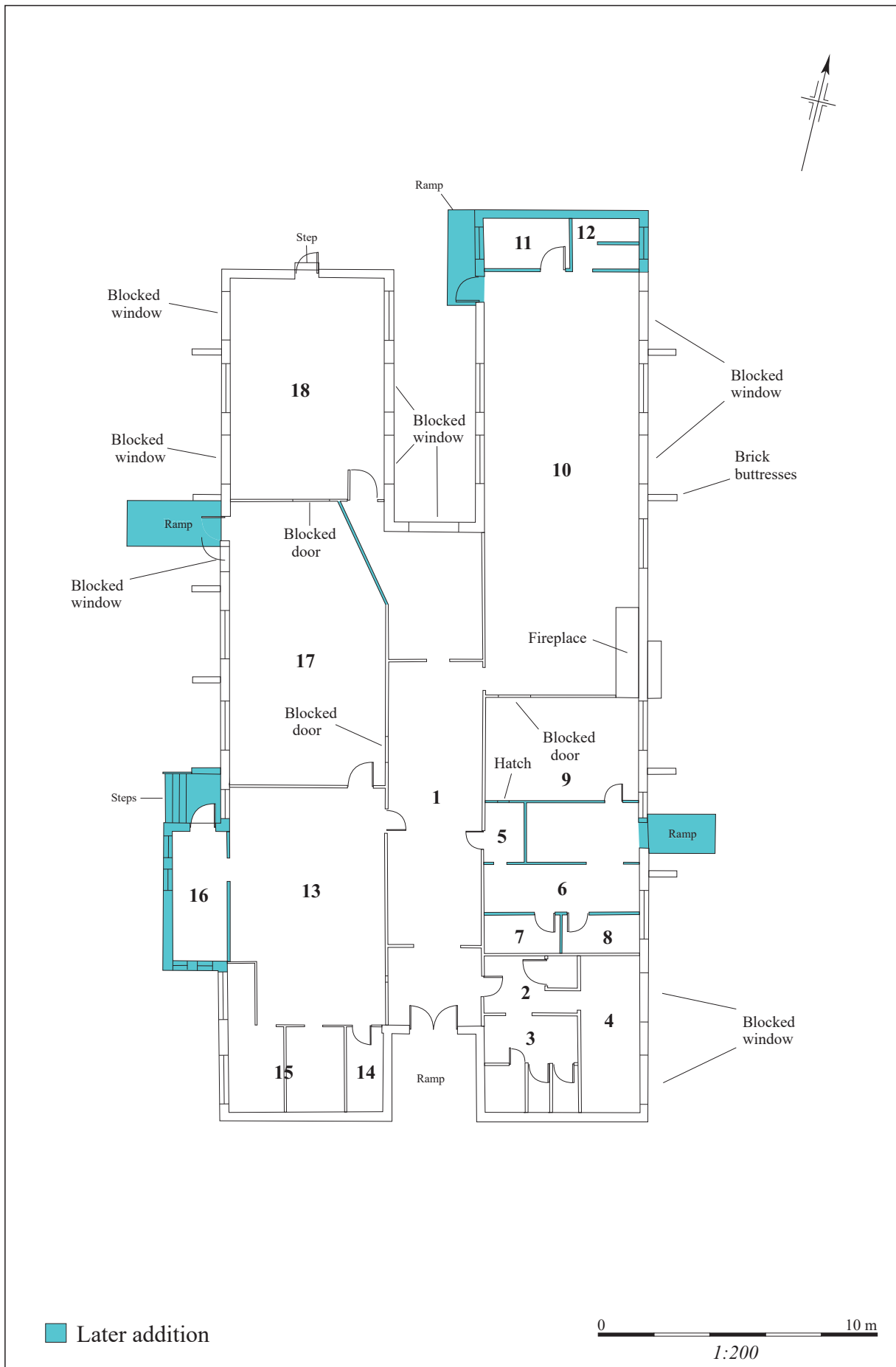


Figure 3: Plan of The Recreation Rooms

Eastern Wing

Room 2, accessed from corridor 1, is an ante-chamber which provides access to a toilet Room 3, containing three cubicles and storage room 4. Room 2 contains a small cupboard with a hot water tank and is open to the roof, which is underlined with shiplap timber.

The roof structure is visible here and comprises truss, tie beam and metal king rod, each component secured with metal strapping. Back purlins are present near the apex of the roof and at intervals down each slope. Wooden cladding is present underlining the roof. Rooms 3 and 4 have later plasterboard ceilings; however each cubicle in Room 3 is accessed through six panelled doors that appear to be original features (Plate 10). Two blocked windows are present on the eastern wall of Room 4. The northern wall of Room 2 is a partition that extends the full height of the room, perhaps indicating that it is an original feature, pre-dating the later inserted ceilings of Rooms 3 and 4.

Room 5, accessed from corridor 1 through a four panel door, is a small ante-chamber or reception room that leads into Room 6, a corridor that in turn provides access to Rooms 7 and 8 (Plate 11). Rooms 5 to 8 have a later suspended plasterboard ceiling while the northern wall of Rooms 7 and 8 is a later partition, as evidenced by the bisection of an external window in Room 8. This window comprises two lights; a top hung casement of three panes over a fixed window of four panes. The glazing bars are wooden. This is the dominant window form throughout the building. An external doorway is present on the eastern wall of Room 6, containing a modern plank door; this appears to have originated as a window, the left side of which is still extant.

Room 9, accessed from 6 through a modern single panel door, has a higher ceiling, though this is still a later addition (Plate 12). A blocked doorway is present in the northern wall of the room while a window is present on the eastern wall. It appears evident that Rooms 5-9 have been created through the partitioning of a larger room, bounded by Rooms 2 and 4 to the south and Room 14 to the north.

Room 10, accessed through a six panel door from corridor 1, occupies the northern half of the eastern wing. The room contains a suspended ceiling clad in plasterboard and four roof trusses are partly visible; each having a raked support brace (Plate 13). Angle iron purlins are present, secured to each truss with a metal fixing, while the most northerly truss also has a steel tie beam. This may be a later addition to counter the spreading of the roof structure, which is particularly evident in this room. In addition to the doorway the western wall contains an exterior door at its northern end, situated in the location of a former window, and two further extant windows. Two extant and two blocked windows are present along the eastern external wall, in addition to a brick built fireplace. The fireplace contains a central segmented arch, brick hearth and a tile mantle (Plate 14). Two doors on the northern wall lead to a modern extension containing cloakroom 11 and toilets 12.



Plate 10: Toilet cubicle within Room 3. Looking south.



Plate 11: Rooms 6 and 8, showing partition of external window. Looking east.



Plate 12: Room 9, showing window. Looking east.



Plate 13: Room 10, showing blocked windows and roof structure. Looking north.



Plate 14: Fireplace in room 10. Looking south east.

Western Wing

The most southerly room of the western wing, 13, is accessed through a three panel door from corridor 1; this room occupies the southern third of the western wing (Plate 15). The room has a plasterboard ceiling and the floor is vinyl. Located at the southern end of the room is a toilet room, 14 and a partitioned kitchen area, 15. The western wall contains a door leading to modern extension 16, a toilet block, while the northern wall contains a door leading to Room 17.



Plate 15: Room 13, showing Toilet 14 and Kitchen 15. Looking south.



Plate 16: Storage larder within Room 15. Looking North.

A series of coat hooks are present along the walls, associated with the building's former use as a nursery school. Toilet 14 is accessed through an original six panel door, though the sanitary ware is a later addition. Kitchen 15 contains a range of modern fittings; however, the partition from Room 13 and a small larder located against the western wall are likely to be extant original features (Plate 16).

Room 17 is accessed from 13 through a six panelled door. The room has a plasterboard ceiling and the floor is vinyl, laid over the original floorboards. Two blocked doorways are present on the eastern and northern walls of the room and the north eastern corner of the room has been modified in order to create a passage into Room 18 from corridor 1 (Plate 17); the western wall contains two windows and a doorway containing a modern plank door, again inserted into the former location of a window (Plate 18).

Room 18 is accessed from corridor 1 through a six panelled door. The room has a plasterboard ceiling; two trusses are partially visible and the most southerly has a metal tie beam (Plate 19, 21). The southern wall contains two doorways; one providing access to the room and the other blocked, though still containing an original six panel door (Plate 20). The eastern wall contains one extant window at its northern end and two blocked windows; the northern wall, the gable end of the block, contains a centrally located doorway, within which is a plank door. The western wall contains an extant window, situated between two blocked windows.



Plate 17: Room 17, showing altered eastern wall. Looking north-north west.



Plate 18: Room 17, showing windows and leaning wall. Looking south west.



Plate 19: Room 18, showing door and blocked windows. Looking north.



Plate 20: Room 18, showing access door and blocked doorway. Looking south.



Plate 21: Room 18, showing roof structure and metal tie beam. Looking north east.



Plate 22: The site as seen from the entrance to The Bullcroft, post-demolition.
Looking north.



Plate 23: The site, post-demolition. Looking north.

6 ASSESSMENT

6.1 Phasing

Phase 1: Building constructed in 1941 to serve as a canteen and recreation room for soldiers billeted nearby.

Phase 2: Post-war the building was modified in order to accommodate a range of different community uses.

6.2 Historic and Architectural Assessment

The recreation rooms is a timber framed structure with external weatherboarding, divided internally with stud walling clad in plasterboard. The building was built on brick pads, with a brick plinth supporting the external walls. Both plinth and pads were cut into the underlying topsoil to a depth of *c.* 0.1m, inadvertently ensuring that any underlying archaeological remains associated with the early medieval burh remain intact.

The structure shares similarities with prefabricated military huts of the period despite being constructed by a civilian benefactor; the similarities include the sectional timber construction, timber cladding, and a raised timber floor. The internal division of space is typical of a building such as a mess, as far as can be interpreted by the survival of original internal partitions and features: It is apparent that the western wing served as the kitchen, larder and perhaps dining room, while the eastern wing was for recreation, the two being linked by the central block. Extant features in the western wing include the kitchen partition, with extant larder, while the eastern wing contains a brick fireplace. Throughout the building are several original panelled doors with extant fittings and surrounds.

The building contains a series of later alterations. Internal divisions have been inserted within the eastern block in order to create a series of smaller office rooms. It is also apparent that the majority of the external doors are later additions, typically added in the location of a pre-existing window. The two lean-to structures, both containing toilets, are also later additions. These additions testify to the internal division of the building into separate, self-contained units.

The clear outward lean of the eastern wall of the east block and western wall of the west block perhaps indicate that the external brick buttresses present around the structure are a later addition, constructed to counter this.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This report is a brief account of the former Recreation Rooms in The Bullcroft, Wallingford. The building was built in 1941 with funding from J.R. Upson, a local businessman, to be used by the armed forces for the duration of the Second World War. The structure is a prefabricated timber framed building, with three blocks arranged in a H-plan. The blocks contained recreational and dining facilities, as demonstrated by extant features that include a brick fireplace and a kitchen and larder. After the war the building was given to the community of Wallingford, being used as a nursery in the post-war period. During this period the building was subject to subdivision and alteration, including the insertion of external doors and internal partitions and ceilings.

NB

Further photos will be provided upon removal of the fence and restoration of the site to grass, anticipated to be completed in summer 2022.

8 ARCHIVE

A copy of the report will be deposited with the Oxfordshire History Centre and will also be available to access on OASIS under OASIS ID: johnmoor1-417563

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Francis, P 1996 *British Military Airfield Architecture* Patrick Stephens Ltd

JP Heritage 2019 *Bull Croft Park, Wallingford, Oxfordshire. Recreation Rooms – Heritage Assessment*

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Project details

Project name	THE BULLCROFT, HIGH ST, WALLINGFORD
Short description of the project	This report is a brief account of the former Recreation Rooms in The Bullcroft, Wallingford (NGR SU 60576 89533). The building was built in 1941, to be used by the armed forces for the duration of the Second World War. The structure is a prefabricated timber framed building, with three blocks arranged in a H-plan. The blocks contained recreational and dining facilities, as demonstrated by extant features that include a brick fireplace and a kitchen and larder. After the war the building was given to the community of Wallingford, being used as a nursery in the post-war period. During this period the building was subject to subdivision and alteration, including the insertion of external doors and internal partitions and ceilings. The building was constructed on a brick plinth and brick pads, resulting in no damage to any underlying archaeological deposits.
Project dates	Start: 17-11-2020 End: 11-03-2021
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Any associated project reference codes	4379 - Contracting Unit No.
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Any associated project reference codes	1006329 - SM No.
Any associated project reference codes	johnmoor1-417563 - OASIS form ID
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Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	PREFABRICATED BUILDING Modern
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""

Prompt Scheduled Monument Consent

Project location

Country England
 Site location OXFORDSHIRE SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE WALLINGFORD The Bullcroft, High Street, Wallingford
 Postcode OX100BX
 Study area 520 Square metres
 Site coordinates SU 60576 89533 51.600904181779 -1.125282644198 51 36 03 N 001 07 31 W Point

Project creators

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 Project design originator JMHS
 Project director/manager John Moore
 Project supervisor Tom Rose-Jones
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 Digital Archive ID 4379
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 Digital Media available "Images raster / digital photography", "Images vector", "Text"
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