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Trust for Welsh Archaeology

Bro Tathan East (former RAF St Athan, East Camp), Vale of Glamorgan

Historic Building Recording. Barrack Block Addendum



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2025/045



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Bro Tathan East (former RAF St Athan, East Camp), Vale of Glamorgan

Historic Building Recording

ADDENDUM

Barrack block recording - Barrack 439

Project Details:

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Client Welsh Government
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Author Tuck M (MCIfA)
HER Search No. 9086 (13/11/2024)
Grid Reference ST 01330 68834 (barrack blocks centre)
ST 01387 68895 (centre barrack 439)

Addendum to be read in conjunction with

Heneb Report No. 2024/033

Bro Tathan (former RAF St Athan, East Camp) Vale of Glamorgan Parts A and B

Historic Building Recording

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Region	Author	Illustrations	Review	Date
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Front Cover: Barrack 439 (Vampire block) front entrance

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SUMMARY

Heneb was commissioned by Welsh Government to carry out a series of building surveys within the former East Camp of RAF St Athan (Bro Tathan) prior to proposed demolition and redevelopment. The surveys were carried out intermittently from April 2024 to September 2025 as areas became available.

The September 2025 survey was undertaken to record one of the barrack blocks, Number 439, one of six (Nos. 437-442) similar buildings to fulfil the remaining part of Condition No. 4 of Planning Consent 2023/00949/FUL. This report therefore is an addendum to the main report and should be read in conjunction with the main report (Heneb Report 2024/033, *Bro Tathan (former RAF St Athan, East Camp) Vale of Glamorgan Parts A and B Historic Building Recording*, dated 11/03/2025).

RAF St Athan, divided into East and West Camps was built in the later 1930s. Home to No. 4 School of Technical Training, the Station functioned as a School of Technical Training and as an Aircraft Storage Unit. Training facilities continued, in the intervening years, until closure in 2024. Alongside the teaching and maintenance buildings extensive barracks were provided for personnel. In the early years these were wooden huts which continued to be used into the 1950s/early 1960s until replaced by brick barrack blocks.

Barrack 439 (Vampire Block) was constructed in brick in the early 1960s on the site of the earlier wooden huts. The original layout of the two-storey cruciform shaped structure reflected typical barrack accommodation of the period with an emphasis on large dormitories in the wings and centrally shared facilities for ablutions and common rooms to the rear.

The survey and report were carried out by Heneb Field Services to the requirements of Historic England's *Understanding Historic Buildings: A guide to good recording practice* (2016) and to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation of standing buildings or structures* (2014, updated 2020).

CRYNODEB

Comisiynwyd Heneb gan Lywodraeth Cymru i gynnal cyfres o arolygon adeiladau yn Nhŷ'r Camp Dwyrain blaenorol o RAF St Athan (Bro Tathan) cyn y lladd a'r adnewyddu a gynigir. Cynhaliwyd yr arolygon yn anghyson o Ebrill 2024 tan Medi 2025 wrth i'r ardaloedd ddod yn argaeledig.

Cynhaliwyd arolygon Medi 2025 i gofnodi un o flocciau'r castell, Rhif 439, un o chwe adeilad tebyg (Rhifau 437-442) i gyflawni'r rhan weddilliol o Amod Rhif 4 o Ganiatâd Cynllunio 2023/00949/FUL. Felly, mae'r adroddiad hwn yn atodiad i'r adroddiad prif ac dylid ei ddarllen ynghyd â'r adroddiad prif (Adroddiad Heneb 2024/033, Bro Tathan (cyn RAF St Athan, Camp Dwyrain) Cofnodi Adeiladau Hanesyddol Rhannau A a B, wedi dyddio 11/03/2025).

Adeiladwyd RAF St Athan, wedi'i rannu'n Gwersylloedd Dwyrain a Gorllewin, yn ddiweddar yn y 1930au. Cartref i Ysgol Hyfforddi Technegol Rhif 4, gweithiodd y Gorsaf fel Ysgol Hyfforddi Technegol ac fel Uned Storio Awyrennau. Parhaodd cyfleusterau hyfforddi, yn ystod y blynyddoedd canol, tan gau yn 2024. Ochr yn ochr â'r adeiladau dysgu a chynnal a chadw, darparwyd barics helaeth ar gyfer y staff. Yn y blynyddoedd cynnar roedd y rhain yn gathiau pren a barhaodd yn cael eu defnyddio hyd yn y 1950au/cynnar 1960au tan eu bod yn cael eu disodli gan flocciau barics brics.

Adeiladwyd Barics 439 (Bloc Vampire) o brics yn gynnar yn y 1960au ar safle'r gathiau pren cynnar. Roedd cynllun gwreiddiol y strwythur crwm dwy lawr yn adlewyrchu lletyadau barics nodweddiadol o'r cyfnod gyda phwyslais ar gysguogi mawr yn y coesau a chyfleusterau cyffredin canolig ar gyfer ystafelloedd golchi a ystafelloedd cyffredin i'r cefn.

Cynhaliwyd yr arolygiad a'r adroddiad gan Wasanaethau Maes Heneb yn unol ag anghenion Deall Adeiladau Hanesyddol Cymru: Canllaw i arfer da o gofnodi (2016) gan Historic England ac i Safon a Chanllawiau'r Sefydliad Siartredig ar gyfer Archaeolegwyr ar gyfer ymchwil archaeolegol o adeiladau neu strwythurau sefyll (2014, wedi'i ddiweddarau 2020).

AUTHORSHIP AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was managed by Martin Tuck MCIfA (Heneb Head of GGA Archaeological Services). The survey, survey drawings in CAD and report were undertaken by Martin Tuck with Sophie Lewis-Jones BA ACIfA (Project Officer) assisting with illustration digitisation.

The author is grateful to Burroughs (Robert Stokes, Richard Clement and Rhys Meredith) and Tetra Tech acting as agents for Welsh Government (the client) with on-site and background assistance.

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ABBREVIATIONS

APM:	Archaeological Planning Management
HER:	Historic Environment Record (curated by The Trust for Welsh Archaeology (Heneb))
LB:	Listed Buildings Grade I, II and II* (Cadw)
LPA:	Local Planning Authority
NGR:	National Grid Reference
NMR	National Monuments Record (curated by the RCAHMW)
NPRN:	National Primary Record Number (in NMR)
PRN:	Primary Record Number (in HER)
RCAHMW:	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales
SM:	Scheduled Monument (Cadw)
SMC:	Scheduled Monument Consent
TWA:	Trust for Welsh Archaeology (Heneb)
WSI:	Written Scheme of Investigation

1| Introduction

Works Proposal and Planning Background

Planning permission with conditions was granted at the former RAF St Athan East camp, known now as Bro Tathan, under Pl. App. 2023/00949/FUL for 'Demolition of buildings including the removal of hazardous materials, foundations and associated utility disconnections, reprofiling of land and erection of bat house mitigation and associated landscaping. Land to the East of Aston Martin Lagonda and West of Cowbridge Road, Bro Tathan, St. Athan'.

Two of the attached Conditions, numbers 3 and 4, were related to the Historic Environment; Condition 3 required a Written Scheme of Historic Environment Mitigation (WSHEM) for demolition work and Condition 4, a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for historic building recording.

Condition 3 stated.

No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured agreement for a written scheme of historic environment mitigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the programme of work will be fully carried out in accordance with the requirements and standards of the written scheme.

Reason:

In order that archaeological operations are undertaken to an acceptable standard and that legitimate archaeological interest in the site is satisfied and to ensure compliance with Policies SP1 (Delivering the Strategy), SP10 (Built and Natural Environment) and MD8 (Historic Environment) of the Local Development Plan.

Condition 4 stated.

No demolition works shall be undertaken to the buildings numbered 354, 309, 348, 354b, 377, 361, 375, 361a, 361b, 371, 438, 439, 440, 441, and 442 as identified on plan no. 784-B027635 6 (Figure 6 in Appendix E of the Archaeological and Heritage DBA) until an appropriate programme of historic building recording and analysis for the building(s) in question has been secured and implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The final report on such recording shall be deposited with the Local Planning Authority prior to first beneficial use of the development hereby approved.

Reason:

As the building is of significance the specified records are necessary in order that records are kept of any features of archaeological and/or cultural interest and the report forwarded to the Historic Environment Record, operated by Heneb, and to ensure compliance with Policies SP1(Delivering the Strategy), SP10 (Built and Natural Environment) and MD8 (Historic Environment) of the Local Development Plan.

Prior to the Decision, correspondence between the Vale of Glamorgan (VOG) Council archaeological advisors GGAT APM (Dunning 2023, now Heneb APM) in respect of the application recommended building surveys as set out in *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (Historic England 2016), and to include a scale and a directional plan for the photographs, and the scope of the survey to be set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation.

In addition to the archaeological advisor's letter, correspondence (Email Ref 2023/00094/Ful. 2 January 2024) between VOG Council and Cadw regarding demolition stated.

'RAF St Athan was one of the RAFs most important wartime maintenance bases in the UK and functioned as an Aircraft Storage Unit and School of Technical Training. It was built during the Expansion Scheme period in anticipation of a future conflict with Nazi Germany and the designs and materials are better quality than those temporary buildings subsequently built from utility materials to austerity designs during the Second World War. The function of the airfield dictated the design types and numbers of buildings constructed on it. There has been significant erosion of the inter-war and wartime period RAF building resource in Wales since the Second World War.

'It would be premature to approve the demolition of these inter-war buildings until sufficient research has been undertaken to determine whether the buildings proposed for demolition are rare, unique, or special in a Welsh context. This study should be undertaken by a specialist airfield archaeologist and compare the surviving examples within the proposed development area with the original provision and existing survival of these building types at similar airfields in Wales. The results should be presented to Cadw for assessment before the determination of the application as the buildings may meet the criteria for statutory designation as listed buildings.'

Paul Francis (ACIfA) and Graham Crisp of the Airfield Research Group were commissioned to undertake the specialist report (Workshop Buildings and Barrack Blocks on East Camp at the former RAF St Athan, 2024) requested by Cadw. The assessment considered Architectural, Historical, Close Historical Association, Group Value, Aesthetic Merits, Age and Rarity and Aircraft Safety.

The conclusions and recommendations for the barrack blocks were.

Barrack Blocks (437 to 442)

The six barrack blocks by type are unique in Wales (1960s era 'T'-shaped planform erected on RAF technical training schools). But seventeen are still present on a small number of former RAF technical training stations in England.

Recommendation

This report has been compiled without access to original drawings but to have a better-informed understanding of the workshops (361 and 377) and the barracks (437 to 442) from an architectural and structural aspect, it is important to locate them (drawings 6331/37 and 6335/37 refer to the workshops). Architectural drawings of the Bellman hangar (371) can be found at the RAF Museum, Hendon. The workshop and barrack drawings (numbers are unknown) will be in the form of sets of 1/8, 1/4 and 1/2-inch scale linen or paper drawings (or copied onto 35mm aperture card) with typical details covering the following:

- *Architects and or structural engineers*
- *Date of design*
- *Plans, general arrangement, structural, detail, and deviation drawings (such as conversion from workshop to gymnasium), foundation drawings.*

The full report can be found in the VOG planning portal under reference 2023/00949/Ful.

A review of the report by Cadw determined that the buildings despite their strong historical associations, were deemed to have lost much of their early detailing and materials, and accumulated

too many recent alterations, to remain of national interest, and the recommendation was therefore not to List (Thomas 2024).

Following on from the Airfield Research Group survey and the Cadw decision not to List the buildings, Tetra Tech also acting as consultants for Welsh Government confirmed the number of buildings subject to different levels of survey (354, 309, 348, 354b, 377, 361, 375, 361a, 361b, 371, 438, 439, 440, 441, and 442) and as listed in Condition 4 of the planning consent and for the barracks as per the following table (Table1).

Building Number and grid ref (centre).	Asset Name	Function/ Name	Year built	Recording Level
438 NGR ST 01311 68883	Victor Barrack Block	Junior Ranks Accommodation	1960	Level 3 (Only the one barracks that is in the best condition)
439 NGR ST 01388 68895	Vampire Barrack Block	Accommodation	1960	As above
440 NGR ST 01271 68766	Mosquito Barrack Block	Junior Ranks Accommodation	1960	As above
441 NGR ST 01352 68778	Spitfire Barrack Block	Junior Ranks Accommodation	1960	As above
442 NGR ST 01416 68824	Auster Barrack Block	Junior Ranks Accommodation	1960	As above

Table 1. Table of Building numbers, local name, date and function, grid references and Recording level

Heneb - The Trust for Welsh Archaeology was commissioned by Welsh Government through their agents Burroughs and Tetra Tech to prepare the written schemes (Condition 3, Written Scheme of Historic Environment Mitigation for demolition work and Condition 4, Written Scheme of Investigation for historic building recording. Tuck 2024), which set out the framework for recording works to be undertaken, and to undertake the building surveys.

Condition 4 works will be undertaken to the guidelines set out in English Heritage's *Understanding Historic Buildings, A guide to good recording practice* (2016) to Level 3 guidelines as appropriate, and to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (2014, updated October 2020) and Condition 3, to the professional standards laid down by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Universal guidance for archaeological monitoring and recording* (2023), and in accord with Welsh Government planning policies (Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023, Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12, Chapter 6, (2024,) Planning Policy Wales, Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (2017).

This subject of this report is related to Condition 4, the building survey, and Barrack 439.

Site Description

The site within a broadly rural setting in the Vale of Glamorgan is located to the north-northwest of the village of St Athan. Cowbridge Road and the main entrance bound the east side of the Camp whilst

outside of the camp to the north is residential housing and to the west, off Eglwys Road, the Aston Martin car production site. The barracks subject to survey were sited within East Camp, a part of the former RAF base of West and East Camps. The six barracks were built on broadly flat ground at approximately 44m OD within a specific rectangular area demarked by the camp roads and centred on NGR 01330 68835 (Figure 1, Figure 18 (Plates 1-5)).

Geology

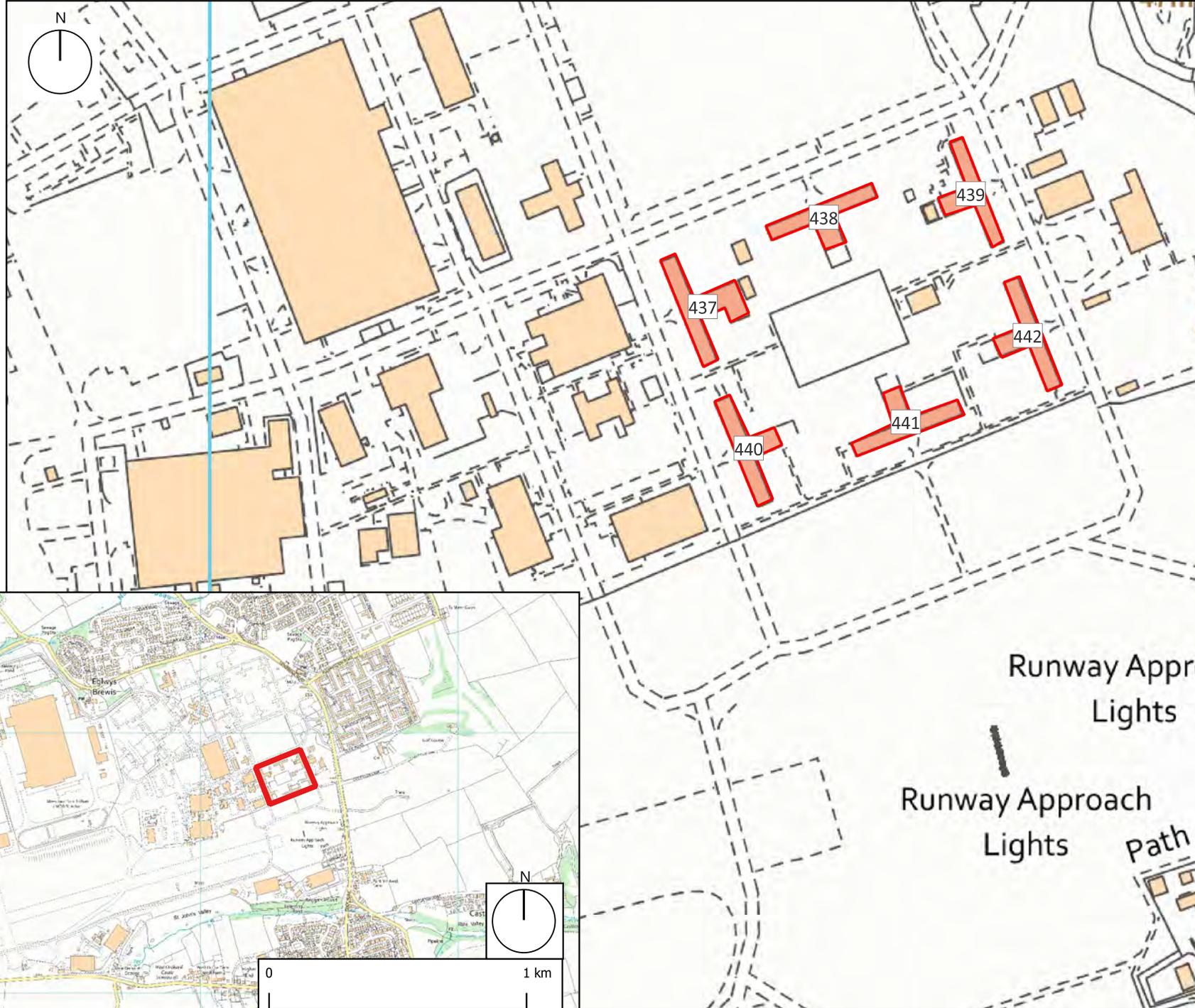
The solid geology of the Site is Porthkerry Member - Limestone and mudstone, interbedded. Sedimentary bedrock formed between 201.3 and 190.8 million years ago during the Jurassic period. No superficial deposits are recorded (BGS Geology of Britain Viewer 02/03/25).

HER

A search centred on ST 00976 68747, the East Camp of the Station, conducted by the HER (enquiry reference 9086. 13/11/2024) returned 111 Core results, 84 Events and 527 NMW results within the area. Given the context of the military buildings and that this report reflects building surveys, the greater number of Core records are not considered relevant. However, several records are indirectly related to the report and the RAF Station in general (which encompasses sites in Picketston and Flemingston) because of their military purposes and include shelters, taxiway, hangar, St Athan airfield battle HQ and pillboxes (GGAT02373s, GGAT03863s, GGAT03864s, GGAT04481s, GGAT05774s, GGAT06399s to GGAT06437s and GGAT08259s).

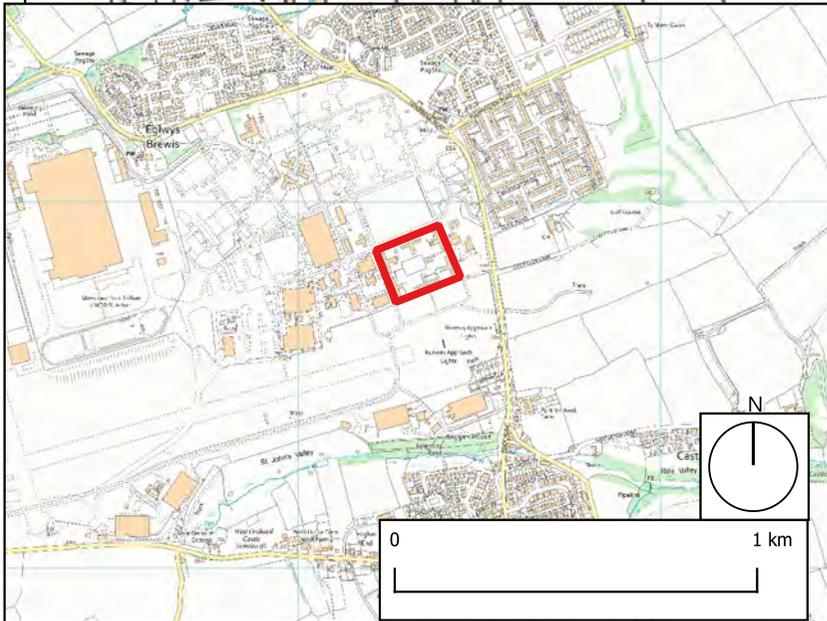
Similar criteria could be applied to the Events record which details desk-based assessments, geophysical survey and intrusive investigations but most again are indirectly associated with the current buildings. One record (GGATE008463) details recording of hangar Building 406 at Beggars Pound. NMW data reflects almost exclusively prehistoric and Roman remains in the area.

The barracks are not recorded within the HER.



Barrack Buildings

Figure 1. Location Map (inset) and map showing barracks in East Camp (Red)



Dwg Ref.	LD24-049_dwg01	Drawn by	SL-J
Date	25/11/2025	QA	MT

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0 50 100 m

Proposed Works

Several phases of demolition works have already taken place at the Bro Tathan site and to clear the site, further buildings, infrastructure, foundations and areas of hardstanding are to be removed (Rio Architects 2023). The proposed demolition area includes additional buildings to those subject to historic survey (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Barracks location (blue rectangle) in relation to the other buildings for demolition (Red).
Grey - previously demolished buildings.

2| Methodology

The methodology for the building recording followed that set out by the English Heritage's *Understanding Historic Buildings, A guide to good recording practice* (2016) to Level 3 specifications, and CIfA's *Standard and guidance for the archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (2014, updated October 2020) and the WSI.

Martin Tuck MCIfA (Head of Archaeological Services GGA Region) of Heneb - The Trust for Welsh Archaeology carried out the survey of Barrack 439 and review of the other barracks between the 10th and 15th September 2025.

The barracks, their last use to house refugees, had been vacated and portable fittings removed. Survey limitations included no clear photographic views to some elevations because of external foliage and tree branches, and no access was gained to the attic space.

Recording was by a combination of written notes, annotated plans, sketches and digital photography (Canon Eos 2000D (24.1 megapixels)). The photographic survey included digital images of elevations and detailed images of significant architectural features. Measurements were undertaken with traditional tapes, staff, and Leica Disto A2 laser measurement. Survey drawings (1/200 scale accuracy) were plotted with AutoCad LT and adapted into report Figures in Coreldraw.

Scales in photographs are in 0.5m divisions unless otherwise stated. Photo directions are shown in Figures 18 and 19. Plates 6 and 7, generic photographs not annotated on Figure 18.

Datum for all elevation drawings is DPC level. Electrical trunking and switches not recorded in detail unless significant. All rooms served by electricity. Room designations and circulation areas refer to detail surviving on doors.

Measurements were recorded in metric units during the survey although Imperial units were the standard during the construction period. In the report occasional rounded equivalents are given in feet for larger overall areas and other metric measurements rounded to one decimal place.

3| General Historic Background

The primary role of RAF St Athan was for technical training and vehicle maintenance and repairs, with East camp providing training and West camp vehicle storage. Heneb Report 2024/033, *Bro Tathan former RAF St Athan, East Camp Vale of Glamorgan Parts A and B Historic Building Recording*, (11/03/2025) has a comprehensive background and as such only an outline is given for this addendum.

The origins of St. Athan began in 1936 as part of the interwar expansion period (1934 onwards, when the RAF was mandated to increase its number of airfields because of the political instability of the 1930s, eventually leading to war in 1939) with consideration of the land required for constructing a new permanent RAF station to include a School of Technical Training (S of TT), Aircraft Repair Depot (ARD) and Aircraft Storage Unit (ASU); consideration of the Establishment then included temporary and permanent quarters and recreation facilities for an estimated minimum of 4,475 service personnel (Air2/2429). In their initial conception the ASU units were to be civilian manned and thus only in exceptional cases were domestic buildings provided apart from those for RAF officers and in canteens (Stationery Office 1997, p60). A contract for construction was given to the Demolition & Construction Co. in the autumn of 1937 (Jones 2007).



Figure 3. 1944 plan extract showing the earlier extensive wooden hatted barracks with the area of the 2025 surveyed barracks within blue outline

Station Headquarters opened on 1 September 1938; the Station being administered by No 24 Group Training Command with the first active unit No 4 School of Technical Training. A huge number of both military and civilian staff had been based at the airfield, in 1944 there was accommodation for 14,000 personnel, a large number for a wartime station (Airfields of Britain Conservation Trust

(<https://www.abct.org.uk/airfields/airfield-finder/st-athan/>). During wartime civilians always outnumbered service personnel.

After the end of the Second World War, St. Athan remained an important engineering training centre for the RAF. The airfield was the site of the Head Office of the Defence Aviation Repair Agency (DARA) and later the Defence Support Group which was responsible for the maintenance and repair of RAF, Royal Navy and Army aircraft (Airfields of Britain Conservation Trust (<https://www.abct.org.uk/airfields/airfield-finder/st-athan/>)).

The airfield part of the site was transferred from military to civilian licencing on 1 April 2019. It is wholly owned by the Welsh Government, operated by Cardiff Wales Airport and known as St Athan Aerodrome, situated within the Bro Tathan Business Park (<https://www.brotathan.wales/egsyoverview>)

The RAF farewell parade took place in August 2023, and the greater part of the site vacated by April 2024 however, these barracks were vacated in 2025.

There are several informative books regarding the Station and its history with Jones (2007) and Phillips (2006) the most informative, but for overall airfield construction and development The Royal Airforce Builds for War (HMSO 1955 reprinted 1997) was invaluable as was the Francis and Crisp 2024 report, and their chapter on the Barracks is repeated as follows with selected photographs (Figures 4-8).

Barrack Blocks Overview (Francis and Crisp 2024)

Location & Facilities

Since the early to mid-1960s in East Camp two groups (south and north) of brick-built two storey barrack blocks occupied an area that previously was a pre-war wooden hutted camp (Figure 3).

The two new barrack groups were separated by a tarmac parade square. The southern group of eight were located within a square made up by the road network of Phantom Avenue, Adour Street, Canberra Avenue and Pegasus Avenue. They were demolished in January 2020. The northern group of six (437 – 442) are located within a square made up of the roads Phantom Avenue, Avon Street, Canberra Avenue and Spey Street. Socially and apart from Bldg.354, personnel were supported by the following buildings:

Bldgs. 436 The Black Buck Club and 460 Stephens Bar (between Jaguar Avenue and Phantom Avenue)

Bldg. 440 Cooper Block (classrooms, plans and records and finance office etc)

Bldg. 2900 No.4 School of Technical Training HQ (between Jaguar Avenue and Phantom Avenue)

Bldg. 2901 mess facilities (on Jaguar Avenue)

Note, none of these structures are included in this report

An Overview of Post-War RAF Barrack Blocks

The first post Second World War RAF barrack block design (Not including steel-framed 'Z'-form barracks) is dated 1950 (1784B/50), it was the first to be planned with a rectangular-shaped planform. In contrast pre-war permanent barracks were either 'T' or 'H'-shaped in plan with the ablutions located in a rear annexe leaving the pair of wings free to form open plan barrack rooms. The design of the 'T'-shaped planning goes back to the War Office designs of the early twentieth century. The idea was that

the main entrance hall, staircase, and ablution annexe forms a constant central unit and the barrack rooms on either side could be built to any length to suit station requirements.

The 1950 version was arranged with a central hall and rear staircase, but ablutions were split between the wings with WCs on one side and lavatories and showers on the other. The wings were further subdivided into four-man dorms served by a corridor. The central dorm at the front on the first floor had five beds making a total of 81 NCOs and central aircraftsmen per barrack block. In 1955, the design was changed slightly from having external inner leaf walls of in-situ concrete to concrete block, the outer leaf remained the same in 4.5-inch facing bricks. The flat concrete slab roofs were retained until 1980s / 1990s when a pitched roof was added to the existing one. They were built to supplement existing accommodation on operational RAF stations as well as technical training schools such as No.1 Radio School at Locking and five were erected at RAF Hereford.



Figure 4. A 1950 style barrack block at Upwood – the original flat roof has been over clad with a hipped one. Photo: 2008

In September 1964, RAF Hereford became the Administrative and Craft Apprentices training centre. Fourteen modern style barrack blocks were erected, and these appear similar in architectural style to those on St Athan East Camp. The former RAF training schools at Innsworth still has three extant examples and Locking had ten but all have been demolished. As far as I can ascertain, the seventeen are the only other examples in England and Wales.

No.4 School of Technical Training, St Athan

On East Camp, the original pre-war barracks were in the form of four self-contained groups (or wings) of timber hutted lines separated by a parade ground with the southern group being made up of 'E' to 'L' lines. Half a line consisted of two rows of six huts arranged back-to-back and connected by covered ways having six small latrine blocks.

A full line (groups of huts on the north side and east side of the parade ground) had double the number of rows. Each half was connected by the covered way but separated by a shared bath house. Half a line had a half-length bath house. Separate dining room and an NAAFI institute was also provided to the four wings.

At the end of 1960 (?), it was decided to replace the hutted Lines, and the first phase of demolition took place north of the parade ground to be replaced by brick barracks with pitched roofs. Instead of using the existing 1950/55 design, a new one was chosen that appears to be based on the tried and

tested 'T'- shape plan. There is one key difference between the pre-war RAF brick barracks and the St Athan version, which is that the rear annexe has ablution facilities on one side only. The opposite side has a study, kitchen and a drying room. The planning was based on four open-plan barrack rooms, each 16-feet wide and 67-feet long, which in modern times slept fourteen personnel plus two in separate bedrooms.



Figure 5. One of the barrack blocks at the former RAF Hereford – all now feature pitched roofs above the original concrete slab. Note the original windows. Photo: 1999



Figure 6. An equivalent building (Bldg.440) on East Camp – note the red hazard light (far right). Photo: 12-02-2024

The design authority was probably the Ministry of Works which in 1962 became the Ministry of Public Works and Buildings. As no drawings have been found, it is unknown who the architect was, and it is quite possible that it was contracted out as was often the case.

One factor that may have set in motion the complete removal of the hutted camps and modernisation of East Camp was the impending 25th Anniversary of No.4 Technical Training School as well as the School of Physical Training. The anniversary was celebrated at the St Athan At Home Day on 14 September 1968. It is assumed that the construction and occupying of the northern six barrack blocks was completed first before the removal of the southern timber lines of hutments. It is possible therefore

that construction of the southern brick barracks is c.1964. The barracks by type appear to be only constructed on technical training establishments and not operational RAF stations.



Figure 7. Demolition of the eight St Athan (northern) barrack blocks in January 2020. This shows the ablation annexe with central 9-inch brick corridor, the 11-inch cavity brick exterior walls (stretcher bond) and a simple roof structure of timber purlins. Photo: Hugh Turner on Flickr

Royal Air Force Museum (Hendon) Archive Collection

No information with reference to the barracks is held by the RAF Archive Collection. If drawings exist, then their location at present is unknown.

Central Register of Aerial photography Wales (CRAPW)

The earliest aerial photograph, a Luftwaffe photograph from January 1941 shows the extensive original (1938) wooden hatted accommodation to the east of the workshop buildings and taken together they appear to occupy a similar land area to that of the workshops and hangars (Figure 8 shows the huts unchanged in 1942, and Figure 3 a 1944 plan of the huts). Here hatted accommodation remained as the standard until well into the 1950s when a programme of modernisation took place with barrack blocks constructed in brick. The Francis and Crisp report (2024) include an image from 1962 (RAF58 /5098 frame 0381, Date 02-05-1962) showing near completion of the north group of new build barracks, with to the south and east original wooden huts. That work in the north appears to be completed by 1963 where another image (Figure 9) appears to show work taking place on the south group of new build barracks. Thereafter until the present, there appears to be little change visible in the photographs except for by 2001 (Figure 11) reroofing on two of the barrack blocks (440 and 442). Although there was no change to the barrack buildings a 2018 photograph shows provision of a sports pitch, demountable building and an earth mound (similar in shape to an air raid shelter mound) in the area between the six buildings (Figure 12).

Regarding the barracks, from the aerial photographs there was just one significant change, construction of new barracks in the 1950/60s, in the eighty plus years life of the Station.



Figure 8. Extract from 1942 (4221 RAF Medmenham 2267 042) showing the extensive wooden hutted accommodation. North to bottom of frame

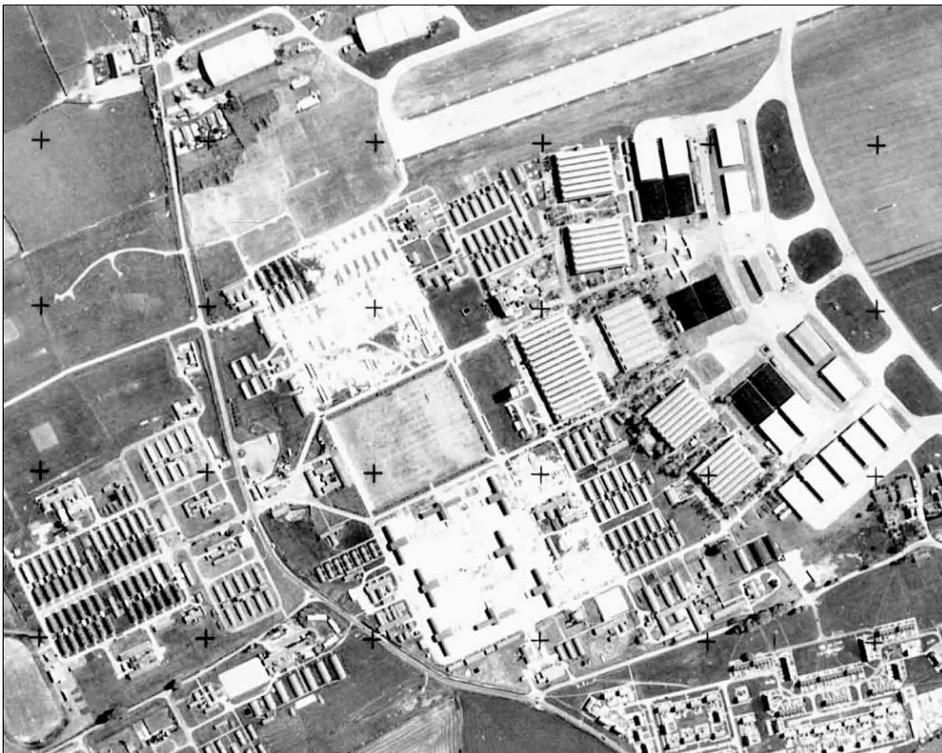


Figure 9. Extract 1963 (OS63 -54 074) showing the new north barracks and work underway on the south barracks. North to bottom of frame



Figure 10. 1969 view of north and south new barrack groups on either side of the parade square (6935 OS69_153 230). Note - 8 barrack blocks in the north but only 6 to the south. To left of frame are surviving wooden huts. North to bottom of frame



Figure 11. The south barrack grouping in 2001 (2001_11 OS01_1018 1485) showing barracks 442 (left) and 440 (right) with replacement roofing. North to bottom of frame



Figure 12. 2018 Google Earth Pro photograph (supplied by CRAPW) showing the sports pitch and demountable building and adjacent earth mound. North to bottom of frame

4 | The Building Survey

Of the five similar barracks listed in Consent (Nos 438 to 442) Building 439 was deemed to be the most representative example for survey. This report details that building.

Barrack 439 (Vampire block)

The two-storey building of similar layout on both floors comprised living quarters on both floors in both dormitory and single room capacity in the wings, and general utility rooms (baggage, cleaning and drying rooms) alongside ablutions (separate shower room, WCs and washing rooms) and kitchen and study room to the rear, each accessed from a lobby or landing and vestibule to central corridors following the layout of the building. In addition to the main structure and at the rear, a walled enclosure enclosed a double garage, and a small single storey boiler house abutted the south half of the gable end (Figures 13-17). All rooms had been emptied apart from fittings. Figures 18 and 19 show photograph numbers and directions.

External appearance

The accommodation block of cruciform shape was in stretcher bond polychrome standard size brick (mainly light brown but with random dark brown brick), with light brown/yellow mortar (Plate 6); beige coloured brick in the rear elevations is considered later repair work because of its apparent in many cases horizontal distribution and clear different mortar (see conclusion). The coursing below DPC had a greater number of the darker coloured brick sufficient to suggest different batches and/or different building phases, (the base course followed later by the main walls) under a pitched roof was with overall dimensions of 58.4m long between the dormitory wings and 24.73m along the short axis from the entrance to rear. The open gable roof was in two heights with the height above the entrance (short axis) the higher at 7.7m including the ridge board, and at a transverse pitch 7.07m over the dormitories, again to ridge board height. The choice of roofing was copper sheeting in 0.53m (21 inch) wide panels with a thin 20mm high rib dividing each sheet (Plate 7, Figure 15). Soffits were generally 0.5m wide except for over the gables where they were 0.2m.

Cavity walling at ground floor varied in width with the front elevation measured at 0.56m thick and the width measured at the fire escape in the dormitories 0.41m wide. At first floor level the walls appeared to be slightly thinner, measuring 0.32m wide at the rear fire escape and 0.28m in the dormitory fire escapes; The latter measurements accord with a cross-sectional photograph of external cavity walling and internal corridor walling in a rear block taken during demolition of the northern barracks (Figure 7).

Cream coloured wooden fascia boards with gutters, leading to downpipes as appropriate along the longer elevations, completed the roof detail; the fascia box end was finished with simple decorative opposing arcs.

The main access for entry and exit was the double doorway in the northeast facing elevation; there were seven doorways in total. The six original doorways in the dormitory wings and at the rear (all in line vertically) were fire exits and not intended for regular usage. Subsequent adaptations to the north wing doorways resulted in replacement of the first-floor doorway with a window and adaptation of a window opening to replace the door it in the west facing elevation. Each first-floor doorway was accessed by fitted external steel staircases.

All dormitory windows under a 70mm thick concrete lintel flush with the window surround (10 each side, 5 each on each floor comprising four double and one triple window in line vertically) were on a

common horizontal horizon with their sills at 0.92m above DPC; dormitory window openings were 3.25m apart, 1.59m high and spaced 3.03m from sill to sill. That common horizon extended to the south facing elevation to the rear with the windows of the kitchen and study rooms, however sill level of the lower fenestration of the rear north facing elevation (providing light to the ablutions) was higher at 1.54m above DPC. The lintels of all first-floor windows were on a common horizontal alignment 0.3m below eaves level. All external windows and upper storey doorways were in modern UPVC and the frame set back 0.1m from the elevation face. The lower floor external dormitory doors (fire doors and not intended for regular use) and the rear door were wooden.

As viewed from the front (northeast facing) the elevation was symmetrical to either side of the 10m wide entrance, except for the double windows in which their openings were handed, opening to the left or right respectively and in essence as built, that similar symmetry existed as viewed from the rear but subsequent adaptations have slightly altered the symmetry mainly with the adaptation of two windows (one blocked in and the other converted to a doorway) to provide a fire escape stairway to the north dormitory.

The External elevations (Figures 13 and 14)

This section describes the elevations under four headings based on the building's cruciform shape - the front, the wings and the rear elevations. Each heading is sub divided by their three aspects.

Front elevations

At ground level the front elevation (10m wide) comprised a central UPVC double doorway (1.64m wide by 2.1m high) under a 2.88m high porch supported by two brick pillars (0.44m wide) extending outward 1.04m from the main elevation. The pillars were not keyed to the main elevation and could be a later addition as the brickwork of the pillars and indeed the entrance under the porch was brighter in colour and without the darker brick used in the other elevations; the porch roof was finished in synthetic slate. A large window (4.2m wide by 1.6m high divided into three 3 pane window sections. 1.68m to the soffit apex) central to the elevation completed the upper part of the gable above the porch roof. Attached to the walling between the north pillar and corner an electrical box masked an enamel plaque annotated with 439, the building number (Plates 8 and 9).

On the south side of the entrance the wall returned west for 4.28m with the only feature being a large high level 6 pane window (2.7m high, 1.9m wide. 2.84m up from DPC) allowing light to the entrance lobby stairwell (Plate 10).

At first floor level its partner wall on the north side comprised a double window toward the east and a single window (0.68m wide) set closer to the corner with the wing. Directly above the single window (3.63m sill to sill) was small (0.91m high) window. These windows provided light for a single room at the ground floor and a small (box) room on the first floor. Fitted between and below the single window a radon gas extraction pipe vented to the air above gutter level (Plate 11).

North wing elevations

The east facing elevation (24.18m long) was characterised by two rows of equally spaced windows (in line vertically, four double size, 1.28m wide by 1.59m high, and one triple measuring 2.23m wide by 1.59m high, on each floor, 10 windows overall) providing natural light to the dormitories including its adapted single room, the division marked internally by the larger window being divided into a double and single window. Two louvered vents at ground floor and a downpipe were the only other features (Plates 12, 13).

The elements of the 6.28m wide north facing gable comprised a ground floor single wooden doorway (1.32m wide overall by 2.52m high) with glazed panels over and to the side, and a window at first floor level, both central to the span. The window (2.14m high) was a replacement for an original doorway (1.36m wide (slightly wider than the lower doorway and common to the other similar elevations) by 2.4m high) with cement infilling below the base of the window frame to fill the difference in height and probably to make good a removed fire escape staircase; This may have been a spiral staircase as observed elsewhere (barrack 442, 438), however a replacement staircase was transferred to the west facing elevation (Plate 14).

The west facing dormitory elevation originally matched that of the east with a similar number of windows directly opposite each other. The major change occurred in the second window positions (6.6m south of the northwest corner) where the ground floor window was blocked in with brick below the lintel and the first-floor window replaced by a single UPVC door with side and over glazing and panelling. The doorway opened to a rectangular fire escape staircase comprised of two parallel flights of steps and a halfway height landing demarking the change in steps direction. Other features included a vent, two security lights, downpipes and an external electrical box toward the south corner between the windows (Plate 15).

South wing elevations

This wing's dormitory elevations were similar to that of the north wing. The east, front facing elevation (24.19m long) was exactly similar to that of the north with 10 windows overall, and the only difference was that the openings of the double windows were mirror images of those in the north. Two downpipes and a radon gas extraction pipe completed the external features. The west facing rear elevation matched that of its opposite side. A small vent was present near the southwest corner as well as security lights and two downpipes (Plates 16 and 17).

The south facing elevation, which was not too dissimilar to that at the north, comprised two doorways one vertically above the other in the centre of the gable elevation serving as fire escape doors. As with the north, there were no handles on the outside. The ground floor wooden doorway was an exact match to that of the north whilst the UPVC first floor single doorway was flanked by glazed side panels over solid panels. A rectangular staircase of similar dimensions to the north side led from a concrete platform to first-floor level. The platform (approximately 0.75m high accessed via steps from the west) overcame a trend in general ground levels that sloped gently down from north to south over the length of the building (Plate 18).

All the fire escape stairways which were not original features were mounted on raised plinths or pathways and that was suggestive of a fixed manufactured design which on site was made to fit the building rather than bespoke taken from the prevailing local ground level.

A structural feature not noted anywhere else was a concrete canopy below the staircase deck and above the ground floor lintel that extended for 0.2m on each side of the first-floor doorway. Its underside was tapered and thicker (0.15m) against the wall reducing to 70mm thick over its length of 0.79m out from the wall.

Rear elevations including the boiler house and garage walling

At 14.2m long (east-west) by 10m (north south) these elevations were dissimilar with the north facing elevation comprising generally smaller windows providing light to the ablutions, and along the south

facing side, double windows as used for the dormitories, and the west facing elevation was abutted by a boiler house.

The fenestration of the north facing elevation was not symmetrical along its centre line as the windows started at 2.26m from the west corner and finished at 1.1m from the corner with the dormitory elevation. However, it was symmetrical based on a centre line between, at first floor level double windows under a shared lintel (the lintel at 3.4m long extended beyond the upright window sides and this was the only window opening where this was observed), then 0.57m from it a small single window (0.34m wide by 1.02m high) and a small double window (1.3m wide by 1.02m high), 1.96m further out from that. That symmetry repeated itself at ground level but here it was based on six small single windows lining up between the single and double windows at first floor level and the two small double windows were directly below those at higher level. There were 14 windows overall. A distinguishing feature of the lower windows was that sill level was higher at 1.54m (to top of sill) above DPC and everywhere else, excepting the large window to the lobby, at 0.92m high. Downpipes were present and also small vents both in the wall and in two of the small windows (Plate 19).

The rear west facing gable comprised two doorways in its centre and four small windows (0.69m wide by 1.03m high) to the north of centre, two at ground floor and two directly above them. The south side was plain brick above the roof of a boiler house. These windows provided light for the shower rooms on each floor (Plate 20).

The ground floor doorway (wooden (0.92m wide, 2.01m high) with a glazed upper panel) accessed by two steps was recessed 0.91m from the face of the elevation and its canopy roof (2.89m high), an extension of the boiler house roof. On the south side of the doorway a short right-angled return (0.115m) to the south marked the start of the boiler house frontage (Plate 21).

At first floor level the UPVC door was similar to that in the north wing (west facing elevation) with side and over glazing and panelling.

The greatest visual impact on the elevation was the addition of the first-floor fire escape staircase that ran parallel to its northern half 0.3m off the face and which partially obscured the ground floor windows. Other features included a downpipe collecting water from the shower rooms fitted between the ground floor windows and a small vent (Plate 20).

The contemporary single storey flat roofed brick boiler house (rectangular, 3m by 4.075m (north-south) by 3.15m high) abutted the south side of the rear elevation. The roof (0.275m below the staircase deck) was finished in copper strips similar to the main roofing. Its solid wooden double door opening (1.48m wide by 2.1m high under a lintel) under the canopy, faced north (Plate 22). Internally, the room measured 2.71m by 3.48m (north-south) by 2.71m high. Internal fittings included a 1.0m diameter, 2.33m high, vertical cylindrical boiler (Rother Boiler Co. Ltd., Rotherham. 1981 dated with a test date in August 1982) on a 0.085m high plinth (2.74m 1.53m) toward the southwest corner, and numerous lagged pipes, electrical wiring and associated boxes, gauges and valves along the walls to ceiling height, and along the south wall three pipes that entered the floor. The south wall was fitted with a large 1.28m wide by 1.9m high louvred vent; this may once have been a window as its dimensions were similar to that of the adjacent windows (Plates 23 and 24). The floor of the boiler house was painted red (heavy duty floor paint).

The main south facing elevation comprised 10 double windows (1.15m apart), five each on each floor in line vertically. The windows were the same as those used for the dormitories. A RWG downpipe

was fitted close to the west corner and shorter pipes and vents toward the east corner collected water from the internal kitchens and provided ventilation to the drying rooms respectively (Plate 25).

To the west of the main elevation the south facing wall of the boiler house with its large louvred opening stepped back 0.115m from the elevation. On its west side and stepped back 0.1m the single skin brick wall (1.82m above DPC) surrounding the double garage extended for 8.3m before turning north. A low small brick structure (2.46m long by 1.05m wide) with a felt roof and of unknown purpose only 0.05m from the boiler house wall, was built to abut the exterior of the garage wall (Plate 26).

This contemporary single skin stretcher bond brick wall with supporting piers (0.215m wide) and 0.3m wide coping enclosed a modern double garage. Externally the south wall measured 8.28m, the west 9.7m, and the north wall 7.5m, which was shorter than the south side with the difference the access width (Plate 26, 27, 28).

Internal Details (Figures 16 and 17)

The internal layout and detail on both floors were almost identical and particularly that of the ablutions, the kitchen, study rooms, most single rooms and dormitories, however the entrance lobby and landing although similar necessarily had differences because of the design to enable access to the first floor. There were 16 rooms on the ground floor and 17 on the first floor. Ceiling height on both floors was similar with the ground floor at 2.86m high and on the first floor 2.82m (5.88m overall height ground floor to first floor ceiling). Corridor widths varied with those leading to the dormitories 1.22m wide, whilst that to the ablutions and kitchen and study rooms were wider at 1.5m. In keeping with an RAF station, the dormitories were labelled as Wings (Wings 1 and 3 related to the south dormitories and Wings 2 and 4 the north dormitories on the ground floor and first floor respectively).

The lobby, landing and vestibule areas were terrazzo tiled (0.65m by 0.64m tiles) in light grey/white tiles with darker flecks, edged by a black flecked light green 0.14m wide terrazzo border that extended unbroken into a skirting of similar height, and to all the steps of the staircase. The rooms for personnel including the study room were carpeted with square blue coloured tiles and the remaining rooms were generally covered with wet room safety vinyl including the corridors to the rear. Ceilings (plaster except for the ablutions rooms which were suspended panels) were white, walls cream and the doors blue. Strip lighting provided artificial illumination and radiators convection heating. An attic space was indicated by rectangular panels in the ceiling however these were not accessed. All rooms fitted with electrical sockets and associated trunking and central heating pipework as appropriate.

Ground floor (Figure 16)

The rectangular entrance lobby measured 4m long (east-west) to wood glazed vestibule doors by 6.42m overall including the first-floor staircase on the south side of the entrance. The walls were plain. The staircase (0.165m risers, 0.23m treads) rose in three flights - initially four steps (1.22m wide, rising 0.825m) then turning through a right angle and rising 1.38m over seven steps (1.35m wide) and finally rising 1.14m over another four steps (1.26m wide) to the first-floor landing; a decorative finishing touch to the first step (1.35m length) included a semi-circle terminus. Handrails (0.94m high) were present on both sides and the outer edge of the staircase was protected with plain 25mm square metal balusters with angled intermediate rails and uprights. A large 6-pane window over the central part of the staircase provided natural light and below the central flight of steps in the spandrel (1.34m deep by 1.79m high to the east and sloping down to 0.64m high at the west) a radiator was fitted to the east wall (Plates 29, 30, 31 and 32)

The wooden glazed partition (3.42m wide by 2.1m high) between the lobby and vestibule comprised double doors (1.5m wide with 10 clear panes (310mm by 240mm) in each) opening in both directions (180 degrees) in its centre, flanked by 0.95m wide panels with 15 clear panes (310mm by 265mm) in each supported by 45mm thick glazing bars between top and bottom rails. The floor cover plate was stamped The Monarch, with Patent No 390627 over another set of numbers 37712/57 of which the last digits could be a date reference – 1957 (Plates 33, 34)

The vestibule of cruciform shape gave access to the ground floor corridors, with the rear corridor doorway being directly in line with the partition doors but set back 0.9m beyond the line of the north (2.9m long) and south (2.86m long) corridors to the living quarters and utility rooms (Plates 35, 36).

Seven rooms were accessed from the north vestibule corridor. The first room on the west opened to a Cleaning Cupboard (3.59m by 1.89m) that contained a low basin (Armitage Shanks, Plate 37) toward the northwest corner and a small cupboard (1.05m by 0.42m deep) with wooden shelving in the southwest corner (Plate 38). At ceiling level in the partition wall with the Washing Facilities room and between the sink and cupboard, an internal window with four glazed safety panes in a wooden frame (2.5m long by 0.62m high) provided the only natural light to the room, which came from the Washing Facilities external window (Plate 39); this similar provision was also made in the Drying Rooms on both floors but not the cleaning cupboard on the first floor.

On the east side there were two doorways (Plate 40), the first doorway opposite the cupboard room opened to a small windowless alcove (2.66m by 1.34m) which led to a single accommodation room (4m by 2.5m) with two windows, one double and one single facing north (Plate 41). The second doorway accessed a small electrical cupboard (1.5m by 0.59m).

Entry from the corridor through a single door from these rooms gave access to another short section of corridor 3.37m long and to opposing single accommodation rooms (3.38m by 2.04m) each with a double window formed by a plasterboard partition across the triple windows as recorded in the exterior elevations (Plates 42, 43).

Of note in these rooms and the dormitories was that the ceiling was not flat across its entire span. Clearly seen in the dormitories, only the central 4.07m of the 5.48m width was flat; it then decreased vertically by 0.1m before angling downward over 0.7m toward the windows to a height of 2.53m, an overall drop of 0.33m from the 2.8m ceiling height (Plate 44). The plasterboard division across the windows and the sloping part of the ceiling common to the rooms and dormitories provided evidence that the dormitory had originally been longer (23.9m (approximately 78.5 feet)) and subsequently partitioned to provide the two single rooms.

A doorway in the partition wall opened to the large single space dormitory (20.45m long by 5.48m wide). Originally with four opposing double windows and a single window (formed from the triple window) against the partition wall on each side, the second window position from the north on the west side had been bricked in and plastered over; the alteration made to accommodate an exterior fire escape stairway. Central to the north end of the room was fire escape doorway. Radiators where present were generally placed below the windows and reading lights affixed to the walling on each side of the window opening (Plates 45, 46).

Five rooms were accessed from the south vestibule corridor. The first room on the west, a Drying Room (3.6m long by 2.73m wide) was fitted with air vents and a clothesline. Natural illumination was again afforded by an internal window with four glass panes at ceiling level and of similar pattern to that of the Cleaning Cupboard in the north corridor. These windows were part of the partition wall

with the kitchen space (Plate 47). On the opposite side of the corridor to the Drying Room, was small windowless Baggage room (2.64m by 2m) with its doorway diagonally opposite the Drying room.

Leaving that part of the corridor through a single doorway led to a short section of corridor (3.34m long) with opposing single accommodation rooms on each side of similar size and pattern to that of the north side (Plates 48, 49). Beyond the corridor a single doorway led to the south dormitory which was of similar pattern to that at the north (20.51m long by 5.48m wide) in nearly all respects, the exceptions being that all opposing windows were present on both sides of the room (Plates 50, 51) whereas one window in the north had been bricked in and there was difference in the number and size of radiators.

The corridor (14.46m long by 1.5m wide) leading to the rear fire escape door served five rooms, two on the south side and three on the north side. The side walls were generally 0.255m wide but slightly wider at 0.27m on the north side toward the end of the corridor. None of the room doors were arranged to be opposite each other.

The first room on the south side was a kitchen/laundry room (5.36m long by 3.6m wide) fitted with a worktop along the east side (probably over washing machines now removed) which joined to a kitchen worktop under the windows with cabinets underneath, glazed tiles on the wall and a small sink unit. A ceiling level four pane window provided light in the partition wall with the Drying Room (Plates 52, 53).

The second room on the south labelled a Study Room measured 7.78m long by 3.6m. Natural light was provided by three windows, and the room was plain other than a high-level box (1.28m long by 0.57m wide) in the northwest corner whose base was at 1.9m up from the floor (Plates 54, 55).

The rooms on the north side were associated with ablutions. The first doorway at 2.5m along the corridor led to a Washing Room (3.34m by 3.58m) fitted with opposing basins, six on the east wall and four on the west and each with a mirror above. The walls were tiled (white glazed) to just over 2m height with plaster to ceiling level at 2.78m. A single window provided natural light (Plate 56).

A single doorway in the corner of the partition wall that supported the four basins opened into the WCs room the walls of which, were again glazed with white tiles to just over 2m height. This was the only room with a shared doorway between rooms; its other entrance was just over halfway along the corridor (Plate 57).

The WCs (5.52m long by 3.56m. Suspended ceiling, height 2.49m) comprised 5 toilet cubicles (1.63m long by 0.85m wide) arranged along the west end of the external wall each illuminated by a small window. The partition wall with the Washing Room supported three urinals and that space was illuminated by the other small window of which there were six altogether. On the opposite side to the cubicles near the southwest corner of the room was the main door from the corridor and at the other end of the cubicles starting where the door opened inward were two hand basins with mirrors above (Plates 58, 59. 60).

The remaining room (4.78m long) at the northwest accessed from a doorway broadly central to the room was a shower room with four individual shower units, two on each side of a central divide 1.29m wide. All walls and dividing partitions were clad with white waterproof panels. The ceiling was suspended at 2.53m high. Three windows provided natural light (Plates 61, 62).

Of note was that thresholds to the ablutions and kitchen/laundry room, all rooms connected with increased water usage, were fitted with a strip of raised red coloured tiles (20mm high, 0.15m wide) across the width of the doorway, presumably as a control measure in case of water leakage.

First floor (Figure 17)

The layout of the first-floor wings, vestibule and rear rooms closely matched that of the ground floor; however, the main difference occurred with the landing and rooms adjacent to it.

The landing was not dissimilar to the lobby. The top of the staircase opened to a rectangular area approximately 3m long in line with staircase by 4.2m to the west and a wooden glazed partition with double doors leading to the vestibule; Shorter (2.55m) in overall length to the lobby partition, the difference being just one glazed side panel of 15 panes and the doorway positioned on the north side adjacent to the wall; this was as with the lobby in line with the rear corridor doorway. The edge of the landing, 0.65m to the south of the partition was demarked by a handrail providing protection from a fall into the stairwell. Natural light was provided by two of the three double windows in the east wall (front elevation) and the large window in the south wall. Ceiling height above the terrazzo tiled floor was 2.83m, and generally common to the first-floor rooms (Plates 63, 64, 65).

The partition doors opened to the cruciform shaped vestibule that led to the wings and rear rooms (Plate 66). On the north side and in line with the partition doors, a single doorway (Plate 67) opening to the east (front elevation) led, via a short length (1.48m) of corridor (Plate 68), to a narrow rectangular room (1.42m by 2.35m) with a small single window with the sill at 1.5m high (Plate 69) and another larger (3.98m by 2.54m) single accommodation room with a double window (1.29m wide by 1.5m high and sill level 0.89m), the third of three conjoined double windows visible from the front elevation (Plate 70).

The six rooms accessed from the north wing vestibule corridor matched those in function and broad dimensions to those on the ground floor although there were slight differences.

The Cleaning Cupboard room on the west side (3.68m by 2m) was not fitted with an internal secondary cupboard nor were there windows in the partition wall with the ablutions (Plates 71, 72), and the room opposite it next to the electrical cupboard, a single L-shaped room (2.58m wide maximum by 2m deep) without any natural light; on the ground floor this room led to another single room. The opposing single accommodation rooms were the same as was the dormitory except for where the window on the west side had been replaced by a fire escape doorway, with a shallow ramp leading to it, and where the original doorway at the north end had been replaced with a window (Plates 73, 74).

The south wing corridor gave access to five rooms that matched the design of the ground floor. To the west and east before the first doorway were the Drying Room with the high-level glazed panels in the partition wall with the kitchen, and Baggage Room respectively (Plates 75, 76). The next section of corridor between doorways led to opposing single accommodation rooms and then the dormitory. The doorway in the centre of the south wall led via a shallow ramp to the fire escape staircase. Not structural but the position of some radiators differed between the dormitories (Plate 77).

As with the south wing, the five rooms (Plate 78) at the rear also matched that of the ground floor but again with slight differences. There was no difference in the kitchen layout (Plate 79). The Shower Room and WCs room were essentially unchanged except that neither had the raised threshold step and fewer tiles in places, and the Common Room/Study was without a high-level boxed in area in its corner (Plate 80). The main difference however was in the ablutions Washing Room which did not

have windows in the partition wall with the Cleaning Cupboard (Plate 81), nor did it have the raised threshold tiles.

General circulation and occupancy

Given the size of the building and number of personnel there was just the one main access point (for entry and exit) in the front elevation. This was similar for all barrack blocks. All other doorways originally in the wing and rear gables, although some adaptation had taken place to provide different locations, were fire doors opening outward from the inside only and clearly not intended for casual use; there was little choice for general circulation other than along the corridors. Circulation was similar on either floor.

On entering the lobby, a staircase on the left led to the first floor, and straight on, through a partition door, led to the vestibule from where, depending on one's billet, short lengths of corridor to the left and right separated by doors and passing utility rooms, led to the single accommodation rooms and dormitories (Wings 1- 4).

The dormitories, evidenced by the ceiling detail and plasterboard walling in the single rooms, were originally longer encompassing the single rooms which would have directly abutted the utility rooms. Partitioning to provide single rooms may have been for accommodating junior NCOs with responsibility for the other airmen on their Wing and these were probably as an addition to the existing single rooms on both floors directly accessed from the vestibule on the right side of the lobby and first floor landing within the front elevation. These were likely original junior NCOs quarters and that arrangement was common to nearly all military barracks and training establishments of the period; another and relatively recent possibility was that female personnel occupied single rooms but that seemed very unlikely from recording of the ablutions, all of which had urinals and therefore suggested no female occupancy.

Estimation of dormitory occupancy was not certain as beds (and lockers if any) had been removed. From that existing, and with comparison to Building 438, where there were 10 in each wing including the single rooms, a minimum of 8 personnel to the dormitory space seems likely with each bedspace separated by a double window. When built in the 1960s that ratio could have been different notwithstanding the addition of the single rooms, with increased occupancy and possibly, although unlikely, even fitted with bunk beds.

Shared rooms used by the personnel included the utility rooms (Cleaning Cupboard, Baggage and Drying Rooms) located just before the accommodation, and the rooms to the rear (Ablutions, Kitchen and Study/Common room) accessed through the rear doorway located centrally between the Wings.

All general internal movement effectively had to pass through the vestibule and entry/exit was through the front doors.

Phasing

As far as could be determined the greater part of the barrack was of a single-phase build. Secondary works however included replacement windows, likely a result of the original frames probably in wood rotting, and the fitting of fire escape doors and associated external fire escape staircases to address safety issues; the fire escape in the north wing does not appear to be present on 1981 aerial photographs however a tighter date bracket for that change could not be gained as the photographic resolution was too poor. Fire escapes in the gables were probably always original features and perhaps whether spiral or rectangular staircase was dependent on local ground slope and the necessity or not

for a supporting concrete pad. Bespoke concrete pads were present to support metal staircase columns.

Internally, most noticeable was the addition of single rooms, evidenced by a continuation of ceiling detail, built into the original dormitory space thus reducing the dormitory length. Otherwise, the ablutions were unchanged except for modernising the fixtures and fittings. The shower rooms are probably original although updated and may once have been communal rather than separate cubicles.

Comparison buildings

All barracks were of similar external appearance with the main difference in the use of spiral or straight flights fire-escape staircases (Plates 82, 83, 84), and that roofs on Buildings 440 and 442 although in apparent similar sheets did not have the raised ridge board and were not copper sheeted. It is assumed that these were replacement roofs.

As an example of a different internal layout, building 438 (Victor block), slight structural design differences aside, had been adapted (and modernised) whilst retaining the ablutions, drying rooms, cupboard and kitchen rooms unchanged, to provide single accommodation rooms throughout.

It would not have been unusual for some rooms in one of the barrack blocks in the grouping to have been used for central admin purposes, serving the six barracks for bedding exchange, kit stores or local admin.

The structural changes included no spandrel in the lobby (Plate 85), and at first floor level changes to the rooms on the right-hand side of the vestibule. Here the area had been opened out to provide a recess (Plate 86) whereas in 439 there was an enclosed small 'box' room without any natural light. Not seen elsewhere the room in the front elevation adjacent to that recess was fitted with a bath and WC (Plate 87). The major internal difference and similar on both floors was division of the accommodation areas into single rooms, each divided by plasterboard walling, on each side of a central corridor (Plate 88).

Each room (4.72m long by 2.0m wide) was fitted with wardrobes and sink unit (Plates 89, 90). On the ground floor rooms 1-10 were to the left, rooms 11-20 to the right and rooms 21-23 in place of the Common/Study room in 439. First floor rooms were numbered 24-33 on the left, 34-43 right and 44-46 to the rear; taken together these rooms account for 23 personnel accommodated on each floor however additional rooms in the front elevation would add another 2 personnel to the total for the block- 48 total personnel.

The only other notable difference was a doorway from the kitchen to the Drying room (Plate 91) which was not present in 439, and although still four individual shower units, a slightly different layout to the shower room cubicles (Plate 92).

5| Conclusion

The 1960s barracks were all built to the same pattern with minor internal changes and their function as accommodation for personnel was clear in the form of long dormitories, and that layout was essentially typical of all training barracks whether wooden huts or brick built; the single rooms again typical of post war training barracks usually housed junior NCOs. A difference between the earlier wooden huts and these, as then considered modern barracks, was that provision had been made internally for utility rooms for baggage, barrack cleaning materials, clothing washing and drying rooms and internal ablutions; prior to construction of these buildings many of these facilities would have been in other nearby buildings. An insightful publication into the early military huts is that by Draper (2017) submitted as a PHD dissertation.

Architectural decoration was not particularly distinctive and only the terrazzo tiled lobby and vestibule flooring with the glazed partition doors was considered visually attractive. Wooden doors were probably original, but all windows had been replaced with UPVC as were the first-floor exterior doorways. It was not certain but the WCs and basins in the ablutions were probably replacements too as they appeared unblemished by 60 years of continuous use if original.

There was no real comparison with the buildings surveyed previously which were mainly wartime buildings and buildings from the 1980s and later, and those buildings served different functions. However, the choice of brick pattern used in the barracks was not dissimilar to that of the wartime buildings in the use of light and dark bricks in a random pattern. Not noted in the neighbouring barracks but the brick pattern in the rear elevations was markedly different with the use of light beige brick with lighter coloured mortar contrasting with the original. The pattern was not entirely random but in places more horizontally aligned and as such would suggest replacement brickwork possibly because of a structural defect, and similarly the west facing south wing has patches of orange coloured brick mainly around the lower windows but also two large patches in the centre, again suggesting repairs and particularly in the case of possibly making good the walls following window replacement (see Plates 17, 19 and 20).

That said however and because the buildings are of the same vintage, a question arises as to why the other buildings do not have that appearance too if a structural weakness. It is unresolved (erring toward repairs) but if original brickwork, could it be possible that the pattern for Building 439 was a 'test' pattern and not taken forward thereafter.

The survey has not determined a different assessment for the barracks as that concluded by Francis and Crisp. The architects remain unknown and no original drawings if they exist have been found. The survey however, backed by photographs and the archive, has provided a detailed record of the building.

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https://vogonline.planning-register.co.uk/Document/Download?module=PLA&recordNumber=77029&planId=1037704&imageId=96&isPlan=False&fileName=Cadw%20-%202023_00949_FUL%20-%202024-01-26%20-%20Demolition%20%26%20reprofiling%20of%20land%2C%20Land%20East%20of%20Aston%20Martin%20Lagonda%20%26%20West%20of%20Cowbridge%20Road%2C%20Bro%20Tathan%2C%20St.%20Athan%20-%20%20Response.pdf
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Aerial photographs

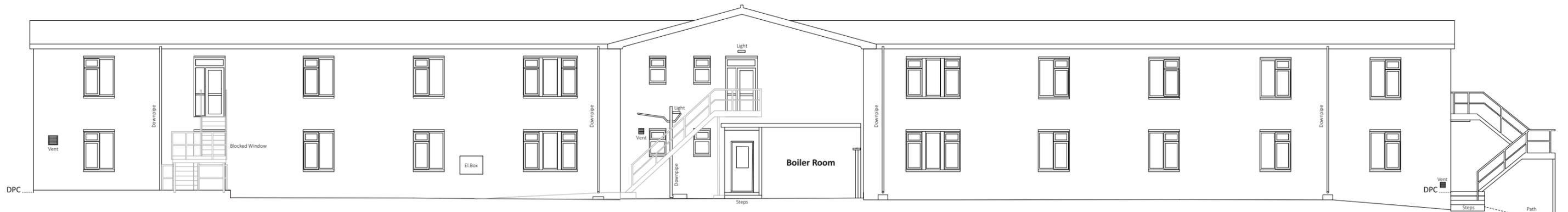
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1941. Luftwaffe NCAP_NARA_GX-11946. (10 th January)	Black and White
1942. 4221 RAF Medmenham 2267	Black and White
1944. 4405 RAF Medmenham 1281	Black and White
1945. 4540 RAF 106GUK_844	Black and White
1962 15_9_62 Bob display	Black and White
1963 OS63-54	Black and White
1969 6935 OS 69_153	Black and White
1979 OS 79-130	Black and White
1981 8101 JAS 2181 231	Black and White
1981 8101 JAS 2281 034	Black and White
1981 8101 JAS 2281 035	Black and White
1991 Geonex 134_91 045	Colour
1991 Geonex 134_91 100	Colour
2001_11 OS01_1018 1485	Colour
Additional Google earth and WDA photos 2002- 2023	Colour

Table 2. Table of aerial photographs examined

Barrack Block 439 East & West Facing Elevations



Front (East) Facing Elevation



Rear (West) Facing Elevation



Project Title Barrack 439, East Camp, St Athan
Vale of Glamorgan
Historic Building Recording

Project Number LD24_049

Report Number 2025/045

Survey & CAD MT

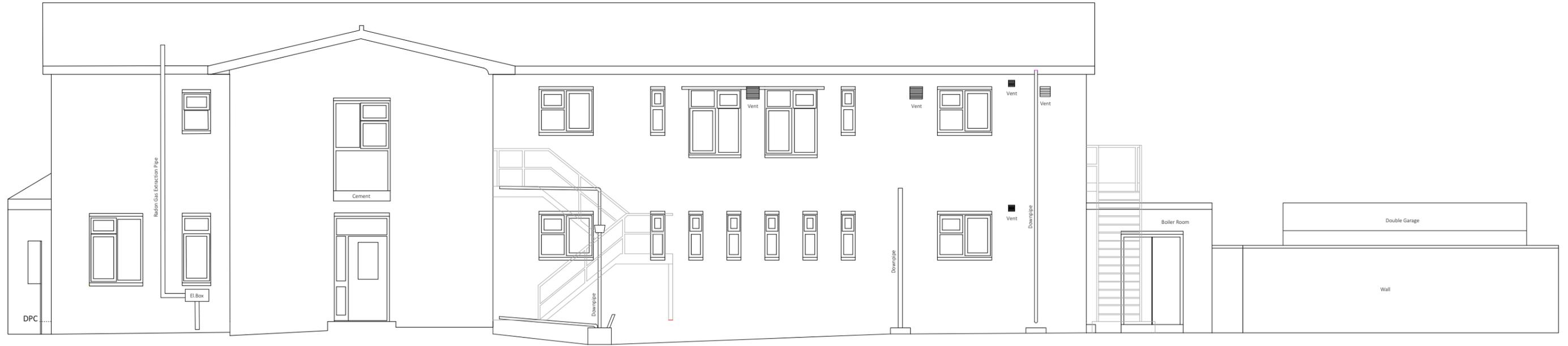
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Figure Number
Figure 13. Barrack 439 Front & Rear Facing Elevations

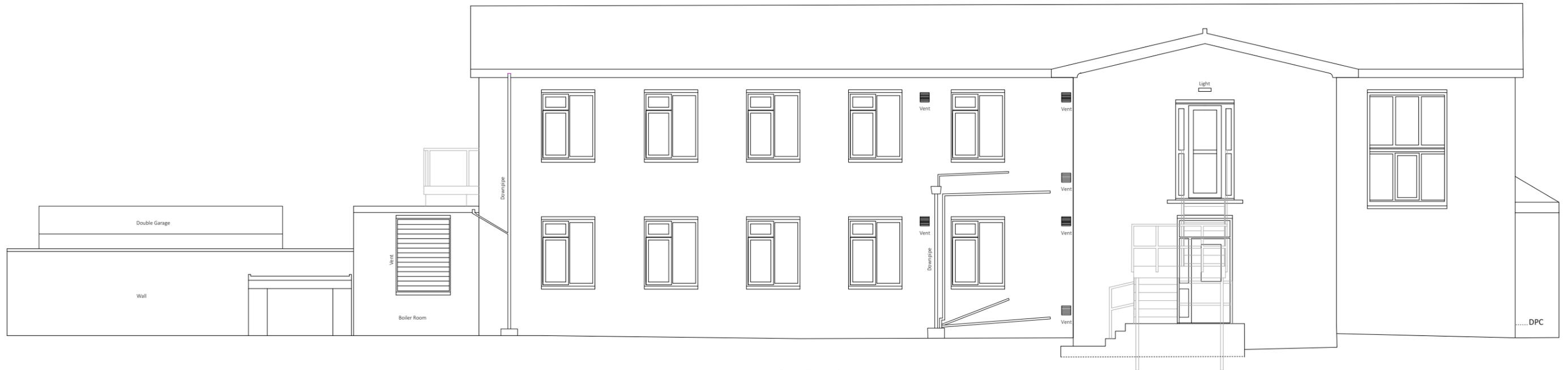
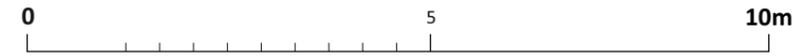
Surveyed to 1:200 scale

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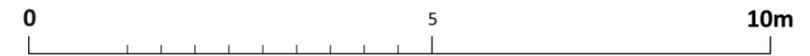
Barrack Block 439 North & South Facing Elevations



North Facing Elevation

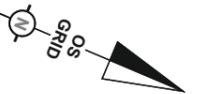
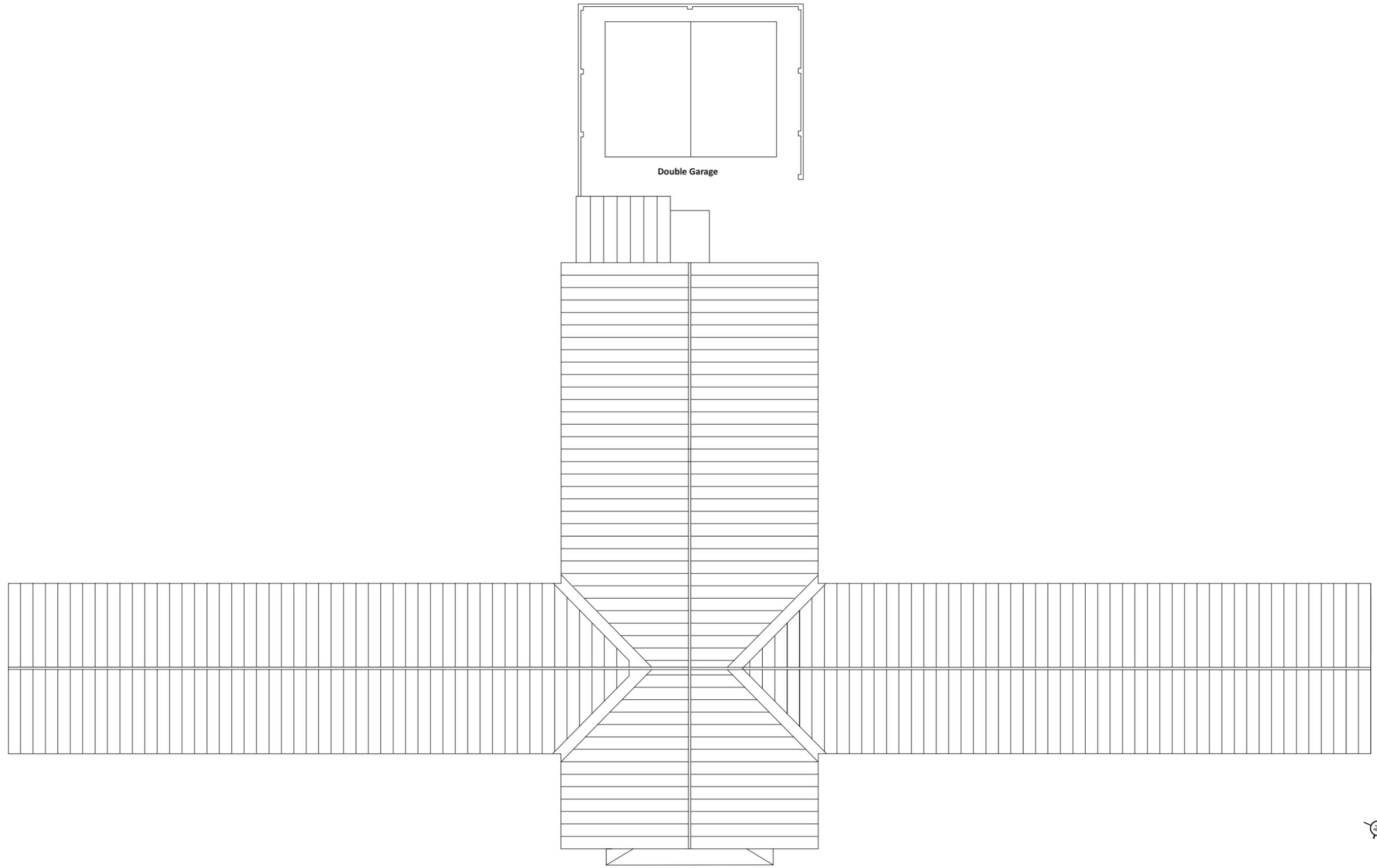


South Facing Elevation



Project Title	Barrack 439, East Camp, St Athan Vale of Glamorgan Historic Building Recording		Figure Number Figure 14. Barrack 439 North & South Facing Elevations	© Copyright The Trust for Welsh Archaeology (HENEb)
	Project Number	LD24_049		
	Report Number	2025/045		
	Survey & CAD	MT		
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Barrack Block 439 Roof Plan



Project Title Barrack 439, East Camp, St Athan Vale of Glamorgan Historic Building Recording	Project Number LD24_049	Figure Number Figure 15. Barrack 439 Roof Plan Surveyed to 1:200 scale	© Copyright The Trust for Welsh Archaeology (HENEb)
	Report Number 2025/045		
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Barrack Block 439 Ground Floor Plan



Project Title	Barrack 439, East Camp, St Athan Vale of Glamorgan Historic Building Recording	
	Project Number	LD24_049
	Report Number	2025/045
	Survey & CAD	MT
Digitised	SL-J	

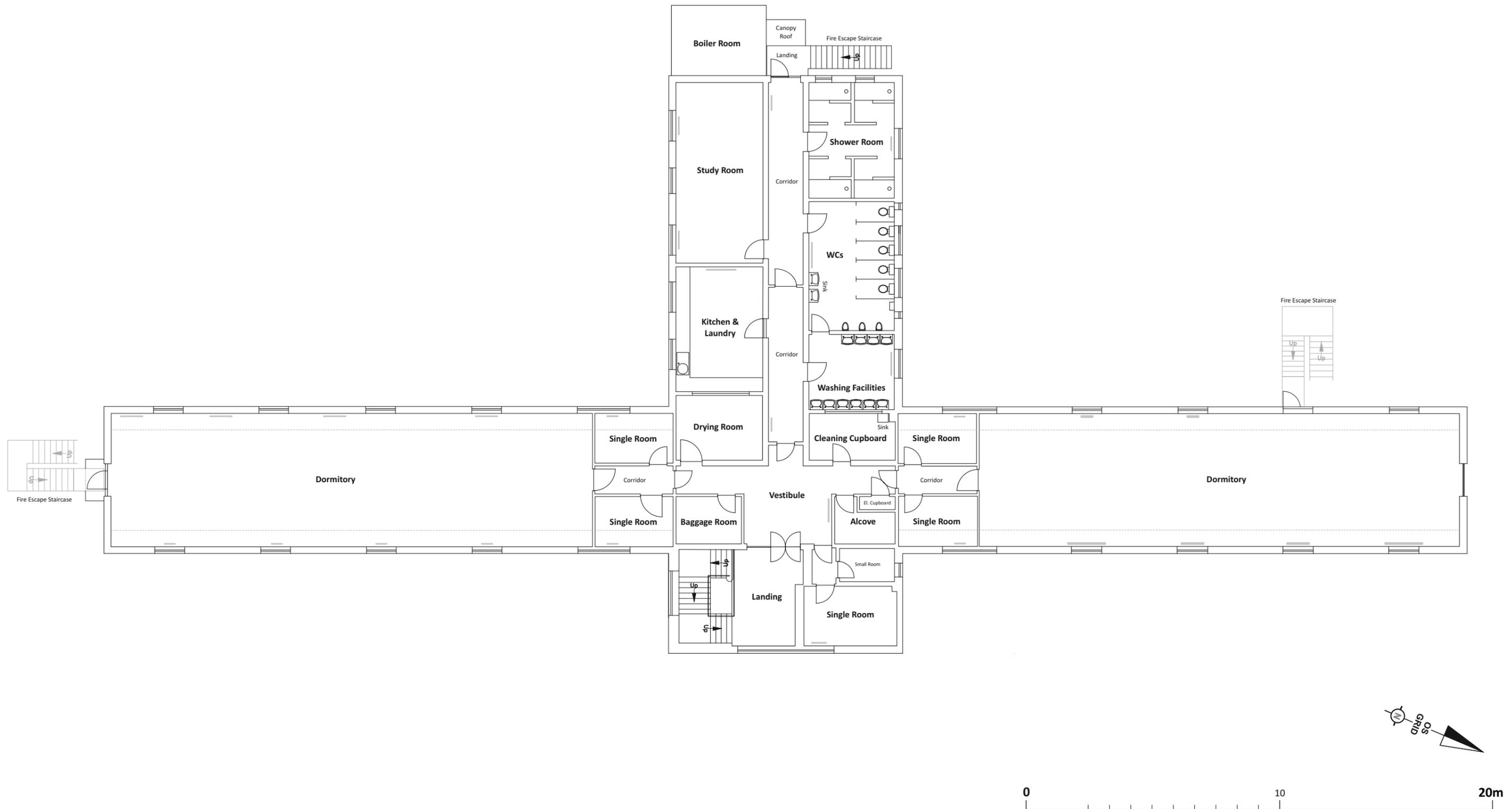
Figure Number	Figure 16. Barrack 439 Ground Floor Plan
Surveyed to 1:200 scale	

Key	— Radiator
	- - - Ceiling Slope

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Barrack Block 439 First Floor Plan

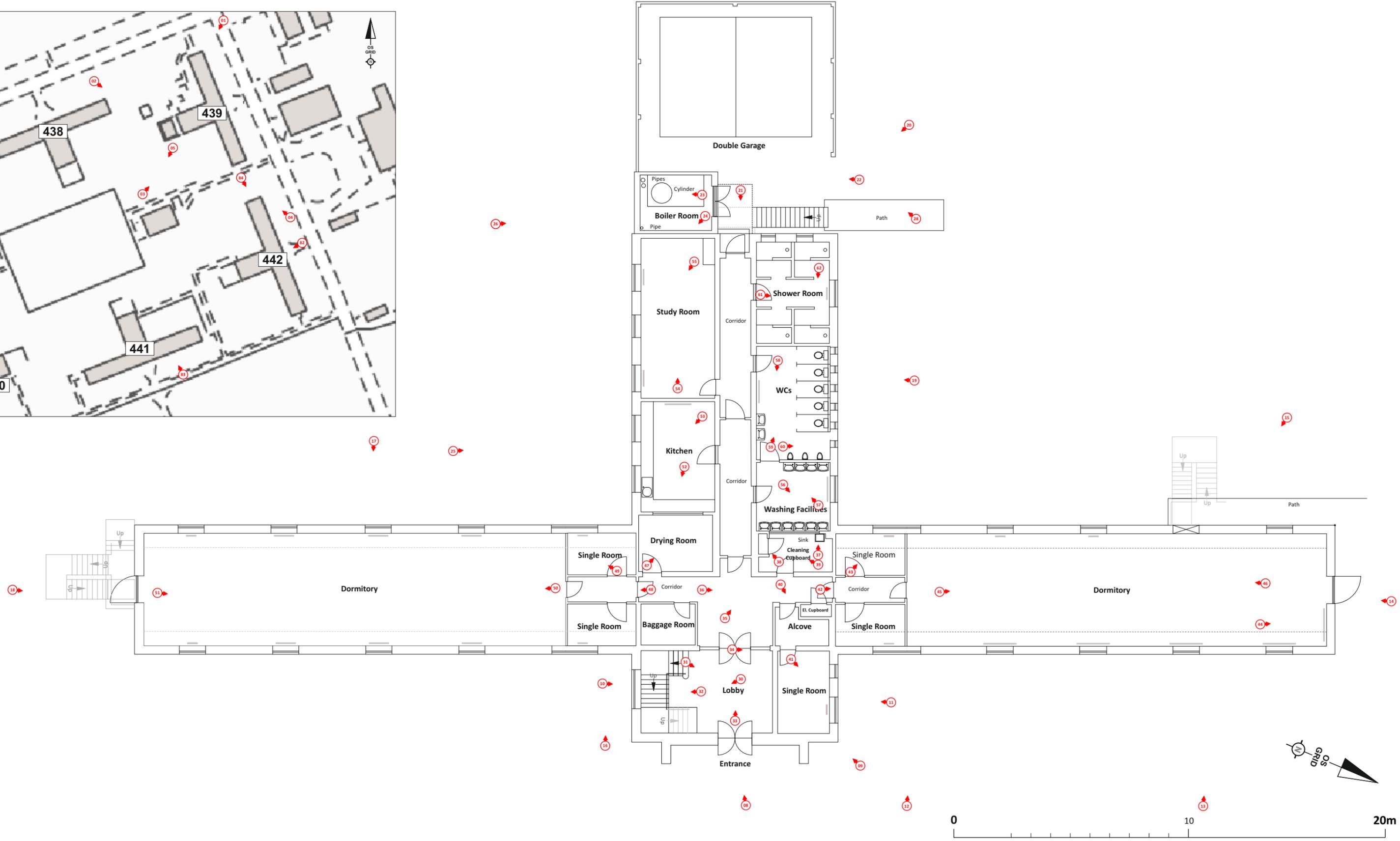
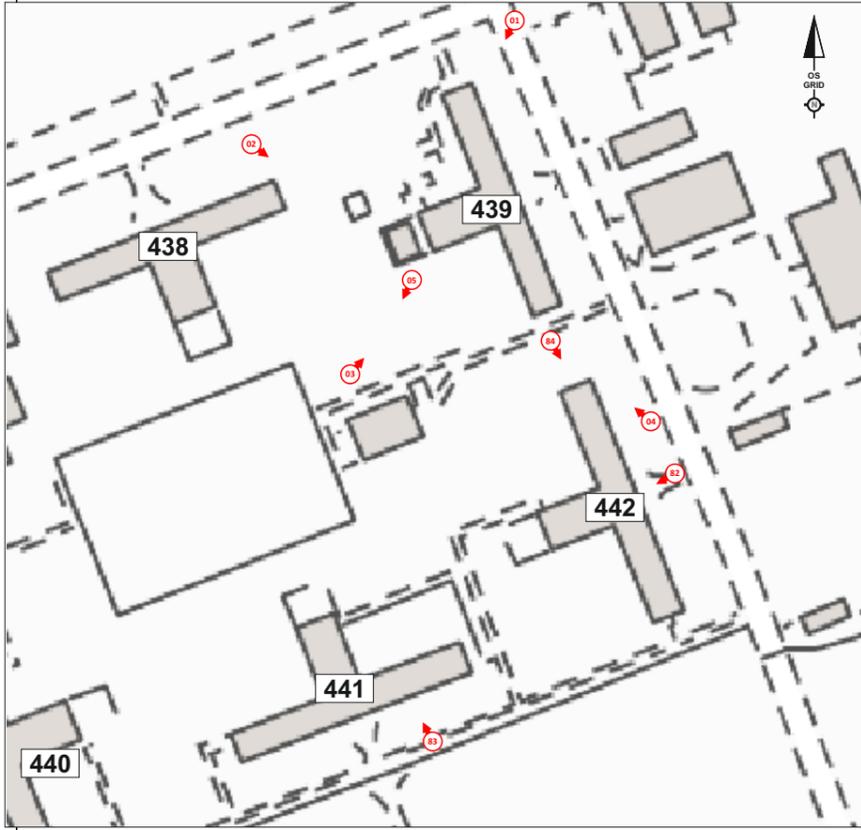


Project Title	Barrack 439, East Camp, St Athan Vale of Glamorgan Historic Building Recording	
	Project Number	LD24_049
	Report Number	2025/045
	Survey & CAD	MT
Digitised	SL-J	

Figure Number	Figure 17. Barrack 439 First Floor Plan
	Surveyed to 1:200 scale

Key	— Radiator
	- - - Ceiling Slope

Barrack Block 439 Ground Floor Plan

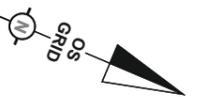
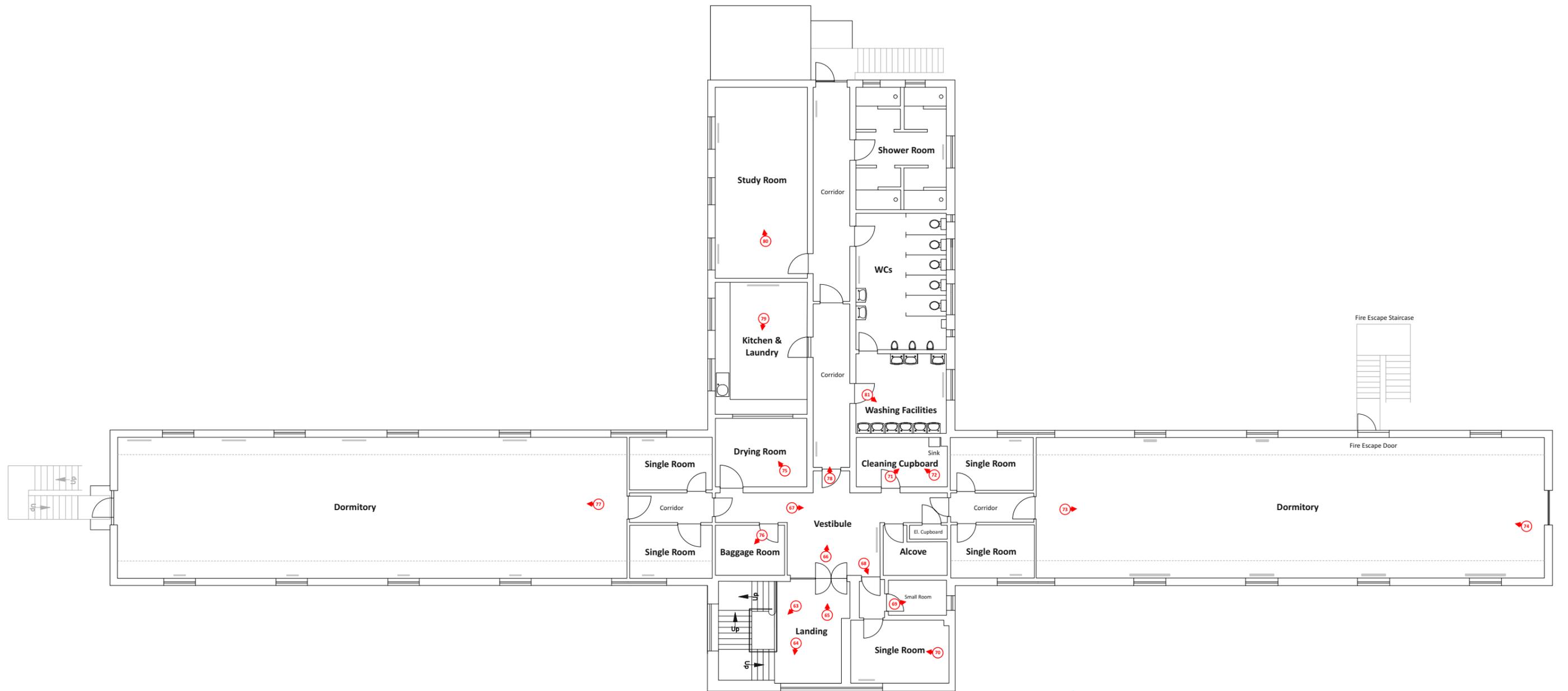


Project Title	Barrack 439, East Camp, St Athan Vale of Glamorgan Historic Building Recording	
	Project Number	LD24_049
	Report Number	2025/045
	Survey & CAD	MT
Digitised	SL-J	

Figure Number	Figure 18. Barrack 439 Ground Floor Plan Photo Direction
Surveyed to 1:200 scale	

Key	— Radiator
	- - - Ceiling Slope
	➔ Photo Direction

Barrack Block 439 First Floor Photographic Directions



Project Title Barrack 439, East Camp, St Athan Vale of Glamorgan Historic Building Recording	Project Number LD24_049	Figure Number Figure 19. Barrack 439 First Floor Photographic Directions Surveyed to 1:200 scale	Key — Radiator - - - Ceiling Slope ↗(70) Photo Direction and Number	© Copyright The Trust for Welsh Archaeology (HENEb)
	Report Number 2025/045			
	Survey & CAD MT			
	Digitised SL-J			

8 | Plates



Plate 1. General view to south of Barrack 439 front elevation (left) and camp roads in its wider setting. Barrack 438 to right



Plate 2. General view to southeast of Barrack 439 rear (left) in its wider setting. Barrack 438 to right



Plate 3. General view to north of Barrack 439 rear elevations (centre) in its wider setting. Barrack 442 to right



Plate 4. General view to northwest of Barrack 439 south wing in its wider setting. Barrack 438 behind to left



Plate 5. View to southwest from upper floor of showing comparable barracks 441 left, 440 centre and 437 right with a sports pitch and air raid shelter in the centre foreground

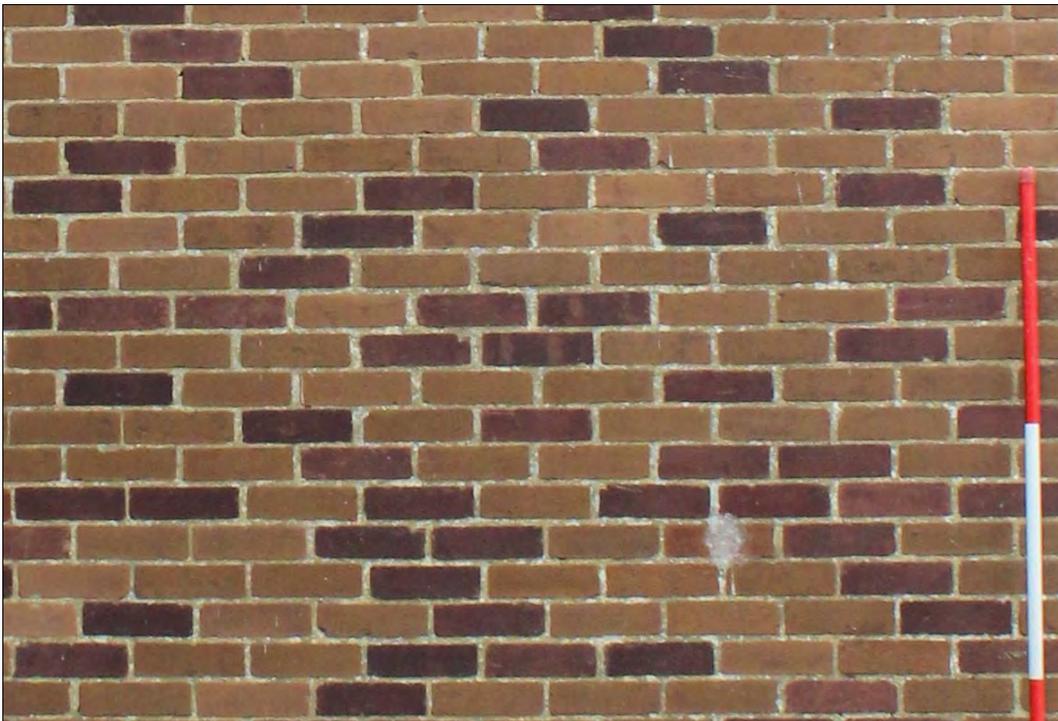


Plate 6. Typical brickwork pattern used in barracks. Scale 0.5m divisions

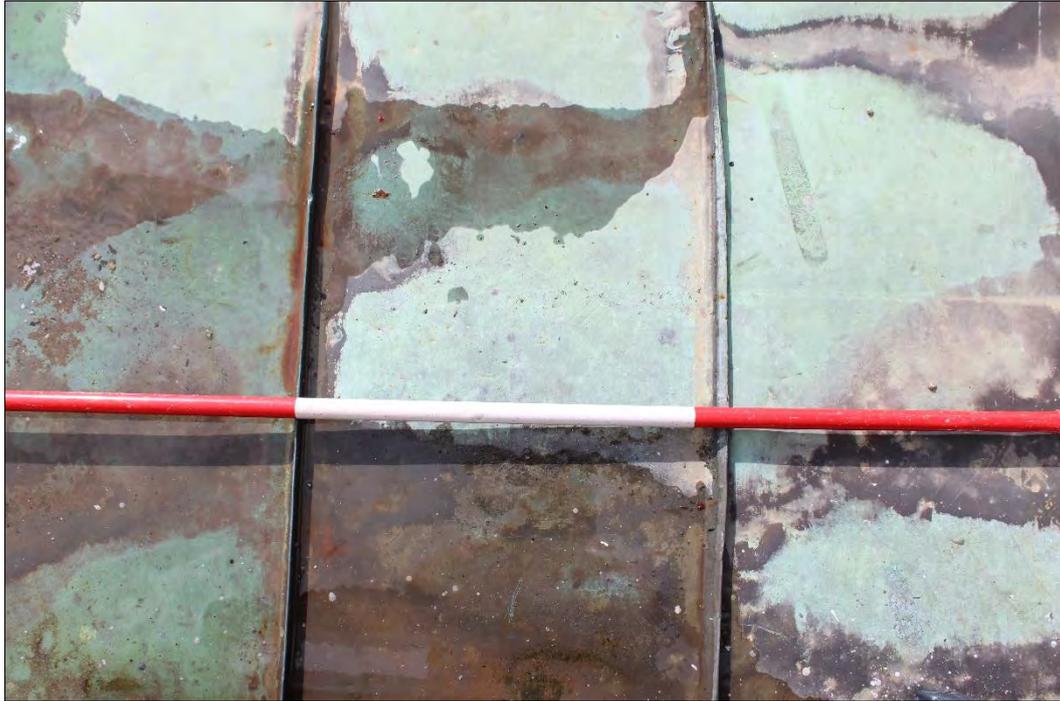


Plate 7. Copper sheeting used for the roof covering. Scale in 0.5m divisions



Plate 8. Barrack 439 front elevation. View to southwest. Scale in 0.5m divisions



Plate 9. Barrack 439 original enamel building number on front elevation



Plate 10. Barrack 439 south side of front elevation. View to northwest. Scale in 0.5m divisions



Plate 11. Barrack 439 north side of front elevation. View to southeast. Scale in 0.5m divisions



Plate 12. Barrack 439 front elevation north wing south half . View to southwest. Scale in 0.5m divisions



Plate 13. Barrack 439 front elevation north wing north half. View to southwest. Scale in 0.5m divisions



Plate 14. Barrack 439 north wing gable. View to southeast. Scale in 0.5m divisions



Plate 15. Barrack 439 north wing rear elevation. View to southeast. Scale in 0.5m divisions



Plate 16. Barrack 439 front elevation south wing north half. View to southwest. Scale in 0.5m divisions



Plate 17. Barrack 439 rear elevation south wing. View to southeast. Scale in 0.5m divisions



Plate 18. Barrack 439 south wing gable. View to northwest. Scale in 0.5m divisions