Historic building recording at the former British Legion Headquarters, Bardwell, Suffolk

Historic Building Recording

February 2014

Client: Jamie Cowper

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Prepared by: James Fairbairn
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Historic building recording at the former British Legion Headquarters Bardwell, Suffolk

By James Fairbairn

Editor: Richard Mortimer MIfA

Illustrator: David Brown BA

Report Date: February 2014
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Summary

On the 21st Oxford Archaeology East conducted an historical building survey and archaeological evaluation at the former British Legion Headquarters at Bardwell, Suffolk. The site is under development with plans for the erection of nine houses with associated parking spaces.

The building survey work was carried out in response to a brief issued by Suffolk County Council Conservation Team. The brief required that a historic building survey was carried out on the existing build to meet the requirements of English Heritages building survey at level 1.

The building consisted of a pre-fabricated corrugated iron structure that was originally used as an isolation hospital at Fornham, West Suffolk. It was purchased and moved to its present location in 1935. To the present day the building has seen minimal exterior alterations. Internally the building has been altered to suit its latter use as a social club and meeting room.
1 Introduction

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 An historic building survey was conducted at the former British Legion Headquarters off
Quaker Lane, in the Suffolk village of Bardwell (Figure 1). The work was carried out in
advance of the demolition of the structure and the erection of new residential dwellings.

1.1.2 This historic building survey was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Dr
Matt Brudenell of Suffolk County Council dated 20th December 2013 (Brudenell 2013;
Planning Application SE/12/0330/FUL & Pre-application), supplemented by a
Specification prepared by OA East dated 8th January 2014 (Moan and Mortimer 2014).

1.1.3 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with Suffolk County
Council's Archaeology Service in due course.

1.2 Location and topography

1.2.1 Bardwell is located about ten miles north-east of Bury St Edmunds between the villages
of Ixworth and Stanton. The elongated village is relatively small with a population of
around 720 centred to the north of the site. The building itself is set back on the south
side of Quaker Lane and occupies a slightly elevated position within the development
area. Houses exist to the east and the west of the plot occupied by the building.

1.3 Acknowledgements

1.3.1 The author would like to thank Jamie Cowper for commissioning the work and Rob
Atkins and the site workers for help with access. Thank also to Richard Mortimer for
editing the text and to David Brown for producing the illustrations. The author carried
out all on site building recording, photography and background research.
2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims of the investigation were:

To carry an historic building survey equivalent to English Heritage Level 1 (English Heritage 2006)

To collate information about the building in order to compile a record of the structure, with analysis and interpretation of the structure in conjunction with an associated documentary survey.

To make a permanent record of the structures, as they are, in order to preserve by record the character, state, preservation and architectural and historical significance of the building.

To assess the archaeological value and research and potential of known or possible structures to be measured against appropriate local, regional and national research agendas.

To produce a high quality, fully integrated archive suitable for long term deposition in order to preserve by record the building in its current form.

2.2 Site Conditions

2.2.1 Conditions within the building were not conducive to recording. All windows had been boarded and covered with corrugated iron sheeting and there was no internal light source. The flooring within the building had in places collapsed leaving holes some of which were covered by carpet. Digital photography was possible using an external flash and this was attempted in all rooms. Internal features were also recorded where possible and an internal plan was drawn (Figure 2). No access was available to the roof space.

2.2.2 Externally all sides of the building were accessible except part of the eastern elevation which was obscured by trees and close to the site boundary. A vehicle used for dumping was parked against the southern elevation. The vehicle was unable to start and could not be moved.

Methodology

2.2.3 The building survey was carried out using basic equipment including a Leica distometer, 30m tapes, hand tapes and scaled rulers.

2.2.4 A photographic survey (equivalent to English Heritage Level 1) was carried out by the author using 35mm monochrome and colour with additional photographs using a high resolution Nikon D90 digital SLR.

2.2.5 All building recording work carried out complied with standards and guidance set out by the IfA (2001) and was undertaken by an experienced building archaeologist.

2.2.6 Full descriptions of external elevations were made in note form including structural techniques and construction methods. Internally where access was possible rooms and features were described in note form supplemented by digital photographs.

2.2.7 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's pro-forma sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
3 Historical Background

3.1 General Historical Background

3.1.1 Bardwell Village is recorded in the Domesday survey as Berduella, and was land held at that time by the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds. The site is situated within the historic core of the village (BAR 082), with the northern boundary of site leading onto Quaker Lane; a road with known medieval origins. Furthermore there are numerous listed buildings dating to the medieval and early post-medieval period within the area, such as Booty Hall 100m to the east of site, and a 16th century farmhouse directly to the north. Similarly, the 14th to 15th century Church of St. Peter and St. Paul is 150m to the west and earthworks relating to a medieval moat and fish ponds are 200m to the west. Later post-medieval buildings are numerous, including a mid 19th century Windmill 250m north-west of site.

3.1.2 Bardwell has a number of historic buildings many of which are listed, a full list is available online at www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk locally to the site buildings that are notable include:

3.1.3 Church of Ss Peter and Paul EHB 283985

3.1.4 Parish church. C15 west tower: rubble flint, on a checkerwork base of stone and knapped flint. 4 ashlar-faced buttresses, 2 diagonal. External stair turret on the south side. The string-courses differ on each face: 4 on north, 3 on south, 5 on west. One 2-light window with cusped traceryed head over west doorway, and similar windows on all 4 faces of the top stage. Clock on the south face. Small lead-covered spire. 6 bells. Early C15 south porch in knapped flint on a chequerwork base. Diagonal buttresses: battlements with panels of flushwork. South face has flushwork panels, and 3 canopied niches with mid-C19 statues.

3.1.5 In the spandrels of the arch over the doorway are the arms of Sir William de Bardewell (d.1434) and his wife. 2 2-light windows with cusped traceryed heads. The open timber roof, restored as a memorial in 1852, has miniature hammer-beams with shields. Early C19 gault bricks on floor. Nave in random flint, with remains of external stucco. Battlemented slate roof. Range of 5 tall 2-light C14 windows with reticulated tracery. Fine single hammer-beam roof in 12 short bays: the arched braces to the hammers alternately long and short to fit over the windows. A carved pendant hangs from the apex of each truss. Extensive remains of painting: trailing floral designs, diagonal stripes, and simulated tracery in the spandrels of the arched braces. Angel figures remain on only 4 hammer-beams, one carrying an open book with the date 1421. On north and south walls, traces of wall-paintings uncovered during restoration in 1850's (see Procs. Suff. Inst. Arch. Vol.II, for detailed, illustrated account). Mid C19 poppy-head benches: low Jacobean panelling along walls. Plain octagonal C19 font: older font lying on floor nearby. War memorial in blocked north doorway: arms of George II above. On north wall, memorial to Bardwell men killed in Crimean War. Standing in north-east corner, 4 finely tracered panels from C15 rood screen. The two windows at the north-east end have medieval stained glass, including a portrait figure of Sir William de Berdewell. Mid C19 timber pulpit. Narrow chancel arch, with a squint on each side. In south east corner, a piscina, and door to rood stair, with opening above. Chancel extensively restored in 1850's. Faced in kidney flints: knapped flint and ashlar to buttresses. 3-light memorial east
window, 1863: stained glass by O’Connor. Archbraced roof: high collars, capitals with winged angels carrying a scroll, crown, musical instrument, etc. Whitewashed stone reredos in Victorian Early English style. Various memorials: on north wall to members of the Crofts and Reade families: on south wall, to Thomas Read, 1658, and a large monument to John Read and his wife, with their kneeling figures flanked by those of their 7 children, 1651/2. Listing NGR TL9410673620

3.1.6 Church House EHB 283987

3.1.7 House. Late C16. 2 storeys, 2-cell plan. Timber-framed and plastered, Roman tiled roof. Internal chimney-stack with 2 square, diagonally-set attached shafts with corbelled heads: later stack at north end. C19 2-light casements, plank door.

3.1.8 The Old Guildhall EHB 284013

3.1.9 Hall of the Guild of S.Peter, converted into 12 almshouses in C16, restored as 2 houses in early 1960’s. Late C15. Timber-framed and plastered, with plaintiled roofs. The east-west range is gabled at the east end, hipped with a small gablet on the west. 2 storeys: L-shaped form. An internal chimney-stack to each range. Mid C20 casement windows with square-leaded panes, and C20 doors. 2 small late C17 plaster panels with floral designs reset in the outer wall of the east-west range above the door. The brickwork at the south side of the chimney-stack was left exposed following restoration. The interior of the north-south range has very heavy studding and 2 plain crown-post trusses with arched braces, and seems to have been built as a 3-bay open hall (cf. the hall arrangement at Church House, Hawstead, another late C15 guildhall). On a later cross-wall inside at the south end, a large plaster panel in high relief of c.1600, showing Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac, set into a surround of strapwork and scrolls. Listing NGR TL9416073622

3.1.10 Bell Cottage EHB 283984

3.1.11 Cottage C16, with early C19 Gothic exterior. Timber-framed, rendered on front, the remainder mainly faced in rubble flint. Pantiled roof. 1½ storeys: 2-cell end chimney plan. One 3-light and one 2-light casement window with ornate wooden ogee heads: one plain 2-light casement to upper storey. On south gable, a 2-light ogee-headed casement with a similar one-light window above. 2 inserted gabled dormers on east side. Plank door, with triangular head to door-frame. The cottage is built against the churchyard wall. Listing NGR TL9409273579

3.1.12 The Old Post Office EHB 283983

3.1.13 House and shop. C16, with various C19 and early C20 extensions. Timber-framed, encased in red brick, with plaintiled roof. 2 storeys. The basic building is very narrow, sideways-on to the street, with an end chimney-stack set within the frame. The frame is complete inside. In the gable end, a small canted bow window and a 2-light C19 casement window to upper storey, both off-centre. Along the north side, a 1½ storey lean-to extension in red brick with slate roof: casement windows with arched heads to surrounds. At the north-east end a 1½ storey cross-wing, rendered, with pantiled roof. In the angle between these 2, a single-storey lean-to extension in red brick with
pantiled roof. On the south, a single-storey double fronted shop: roughcast and plaintiles. 2 canted bay windows and a central door. Listing NGR TL9413173554

3.2 Historical background of the Bardwell British Legion Building
3.2.1 The background to the building has been in greater part taken from the official Bardwell village website (www.bardwellvillage.info).

3.2.2 The Hall and Headquarters of the Bardwell and District Branch of the British Legion, was officially opened by Mrs Alexander Heilgers of Wyken Hall, Bardwell, on September 21st 1935. The building had previously been the Isolation Hospital at Fornham, where in 30 years it had only admitted one patient. Mrs Heilgers’ son Capt. F.F. A. Heilgers, M.P., also of Wyken Hall had purchased it from West Suffolk County Council so that the flourishing Bardwell Branch could have its own headquarters which Legionnaires and honorary members could use for reading, billiards and other indoor games.

3.2.3 A contemporary description of the newly erected building appeared in the bury free press and described it as follows:

There is a main hall 75ft long by 18ft wide, a kitchen, a committee room with bay window and the usual conveniences. The walls are of corrugated iron lined with matchboarding, while the roof is also of corrugated iron. The hall is lighted and heated by electricity supplied by the East Anglian Electric Supply Company. The ground on which the hall stands is about one acre in extent and was presented to the Bardwell Branch by Mr Henry J (Bob) Middleditch who is at present acting as treasurer of the Club. There is a large open space in front of the hall, which can be used as a parking place for cars or buses when such functions as dances or whist drives are in progress, and at the rear is a large plot which is to be laid out as a bowling green.

3.2.4 This documentary evidence puts the manufacture and first erection at Fornham sometime around 1905.

3.3 Pre fabricated iron buildings
3.3.1 The type of building at Bardwell is often known as a tin tabernacle. This stems from the use of these prefabricated iron buildings as temporary churches and places of worship. These were mostly paid for by public subscription or by wealthy benefactors. The use of these buildings were not confined to religious houses. There were many and varied uses such as schools, meeting rooms and as in the case at Bardwell it was originally constructed as a Isolation hospital and erected at Fornham before being dismantled and re-erected in Quaker Lane. The need for these buildings in the Victorian era stemmed from a growing population and a need for cheap easily erected temporary buildings and with the technique of galvanising the corrugated iron sheets becoming economically more sustainable there was a rise in manufacturing and manufacturers from the last quarter of the 19th century. Pattern books and set prices were produced with an option to alter any design for a cost. One such manufacturer Humphrys Ltd of Knightsbridge produced an advert around the turn of the twentieth century shows an illustration remarkably like the building at Bardwell, and advertised as an Isolation Hospital. (Figure 3).

3.3.2 Externally the building has altered little from its erection in 1935 with the only discernible addition being a men’s toilet adjacent to the entrance at the south of the
building. Windows have been covered externally by corrugated iron sheeting probably in or around 2007 but although dimensions were hard to establish the sighting of the window openings were obvious due to the newer corrugated sheets.

3.4 External Description

3.4.1 The building is a single storey roughly crossed shaped building orientated on NNW-SSE axis. The building had a length of 28.5m and a width of 5m. Additional opposing wings to the east and west gave a width here of 15.2m. It was constructed on a small brick and concrete plinth which would have been newly built in 1935. All external surfaces were covered with galvanised corrugated iron sheeting painted blue. Fascias located below the guttering were constructed of wood and painted black. Each wing had an apex roof covered in galvanised corrugated iron, which rose to an approximate height of 4.20m. Window openings existed but were covered in corrugated Iron.

Northern Aspect (Plate1)

3.4.2 The north facing elevation consisted of an entrance porch measuring 3.2m x 3m and had a single door accessed by concrete steps leading to an entrance lobby and male and female toilets. Wooden fascia boards met at the apex and were finished with a simple wooden pointed finial. A modern sign, light and intruder alarm were located above and right of the entrance.

Western Aspect (Plate 6)

3.4.3 The western aspect comprised of the main body of the building with what was originally an office wing and now a kitchen located centrally. This office/kitchen area measured 4m x 3.2m. Again window openings had been blocked but it was possible to see that the office had three bay windows that each measured 1m x 0.95m. A sloped roof existed above the windows and the same simple wooden boards and finial were present at the roof apex. Two further windows existed either side of the office extension, these were located at equal distances between the end of the main building and the office structure. Internally window measurements were 1.49m x 1.5m. A single door located on the northern aspect gave external access to the office. This door had been removed and blocked with a modern wooden board.

3.4.4 At the southern end of the main building another small extension existed that was most probably a storage room. Two small windows were located on the eastern and western sides. Again these had been covered and measurements were impossible to take externally or internally due to light and access issues. A door had been added to the southern aspect at a later date and was located off centre. Similar facing boards rising to a wooden pointed finial at the apex of the roof were noted here as on all the other ends of the building. The probable use in the original building for this extension was as a storage area which did not require external access.

Southern Aspect (Plate 5)

3.4.5 The southern aspect of the building consisted of the small storage extension measuring 3m x 3.2m and is described above.
**Eastern Aspect** (Plate 4)

3.4.6 Access to the eastern side of the building was hampered due to the close proximity of the plot boundary and to plant machinery. It was noted that the eastern side of the building mirrored that of the western aspect other than the fact that the wing located on this side of the building was larger than that of the opposing office wing and measured 6.5m in length and had a width of 3.75m. Six blocked windows were noted on the wing with two on the northern side, two on the southern side and two smaller windows high on the east of the extension. The four larger windows measured 1.36m x 0.95 and the smaller windows 1.07m x 0.80m. External access was obtained by a single doorway located on and to the rear of the northern side of the wing. Internal observation suggest this wing was used as a storage area.

3.5 **Internal descriptions**

Due to lack of light and safety issues it was hard to access parts of the building. Brief description and uses of rooms are mentioned below.

**Room 1** (Fig 2)

3.5.1 This was a later addition to the building and is presently used as a male wash room. The room measured 2m x 1.2m.

**Room 2** (Fig 2)

3.5.2 This was used as an entrance lobby with access to rooms 1, 3 and 4. It is unclear if this was the original entrance to the building when used as an isolation hospital as a double width doorway would have most likely existed. The internal measurements were 3.5 x 1.8m.

**Room 3** (Fig 2)

3.5.3 Room 3 was used as a female wash room accessed from room 2. This room retained some original tongue and grooved pine panelling to the walls and roof. The room measured 3.5m x 1.2m.

**Room 4** (Fig 2)

3.5.4 This would have been the main body of the building when used as an isolation hospital. When used as such it would have measured approximately 22.5m x 5m. The addition of a partition to create a snooker room has reduced the measurements to 15m x 5m. This area would have most probably been used as the hospital ward and had access to rooms 8 (an office) as well as rooms 7 and 10 (storage areas). A modern suspended ceiling obscured the roof structure which most probably would have been open to the rafters.

**Room 5** (Fig 2)

3.5.5 This area would have originally been used as a storage area an had internal measurements of 6.5m x 3.75m. Some original features remained in the shape of two shelves and internal tongue and grooved panelling. Latterly the room had been subdivided into a further storage area (room 6) and bar area (room 7)
Room 6 (Fig 2)

3.5.6  This room is an internal division of room 5 and would have been constructed after its relocation to its present site. It measured 3m x 3.75m and was most recently used for storage.

Room 7 (Fig 2)

3.5.7  This area is located in the footprint of room 5 and served as the bar for the British legion club. It measured 2.2m x 3.75m.

Room 8 (Fig 2)

3.5.8  This was recently used as the kitchen area but originally would have been an office. Three windows were located on a bay to the east and an external door to the north. Original panelling here survived on walls and ceiling, (plate10). Room 8 measured 3.2m x 4m.

Room 9 (Fig 2)

3.5.9  Room 9 was originally part of the main ward are of the isolation hospital but was most recently used as a snooker room. This was created using a modern wooden partition giving the room dimensions of 7.5m x 5m.

Room 10 (Fig 2)

3.5.10 This area is another store room measuring 3.5m x 3m. Originally it would have been accessed directly from the ward area but now is accessed from the snooker room (room 9).

4  DISCUSSION: SUGGESTED PHASING

4.1.1  The use of the building at Bardwell as a headquarters for the Royal British Legion was not its reason for original construction. The original use was that as an Isolation hospital at Fornham. When it was brought to the site in Quaker Lane around 1935 it would have been re-constructed pretty much in its original form mainly due to the fact that this type of building came in a pre constructed kit and was designed to be built in a pre-set way.

4.1.2  The second phase of building happened after the re-erection at Bardwell and most of the alterations would have been internal: the addition of a wash room (room 1), the alteration and partitioning of a snooker room (room 9) and the construction of a bar area (room 7). Other internal alterations included the fitting of a kitchen in room 8. Walls and ceilings have been covered in tiles and Formica in all areas except rooms 8 and 5.

5  CONCLUSION

5.1.1  The Historic building recording at the Former headquarters of the Royal British Legion building at Bardwell has added further to what is known and recorded about this type of fast-disappearing Victorian pre-fabricated building in the form of a written and photographic record. It has also given insight into uses and re-uses of pre-fabricated structures beyond there envisaged original use.
## APPENDIX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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<td>2001</td>
<td>Standards and Guidance for archaeological investigations and Standing Buildings</td>
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### Websites Consulted

- [http://www.bardwellvillage.info](http://www.bardwellvillage.info)
- [http://www.tinabernacles.com](http://www.tinabernacles.com)
- [http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/](http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/)
### APPENDIX B. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

#### Project Details

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#### Type of Project/Techniques Used

- **Prompt**: Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS 5
- **Development Type**: Housing Estate

#### Please select all techniques used:

- Aerial Photography - interpretation
- Aerial Photography - new
- Annotated Sketch
- Augering
- Dendrochronological Survey
- Documentary Search
- Environmental Sampling
- Fieldwalking
- Geophysical Survey
- Grab-Sampling
- Gravity-Core
- Laser Scanning
- Measured Survey
- Metal Detectors
- Phosphate Survey
- Photogrammetric Survey
- Photographic Survey
- Rectified Photography
- Remote Operated Vehicle Survey
- Sample Trenches
- Survey/Recording Of Fabric/Structure
- Targeted Trenches
- Test Pits
- Topographic Survey
- Vibro-core
- Visual Inspection (Initial Site Visit)

#### Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the **NMR Monument Type Thesaurus** and significant finds using the **MDA Object type Thesaurus** together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

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#### Project Location

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**Project Originators**

- Organisation: OA EAST
- Project Brief Originator:  
- Project Design Originator: Richard Mortimer, OA East
- Project Manager: Richard Mortimer
- Supervisor: James Fairbairn

**Project Archives**

- Physical Archive: Bury St Edmunds, SCC store
- Digital Archive: OA East
- Paper Archive: Bury St Edmunds

**Archive Contents/Media**

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**Digital Media**

- Database
- GIS
- Geophysics
- Images
- Illustrations
- Moving Image
- Spreadsheets
- Survey
- Text
- Virtual Reality

**Paper Media**

- Aerial Photos
- Context Sheet
- Correspondence
- Diary
- Drawing
- Manuscript
- Map
- Matrices
- Microfilm
- Misc.
- Research/Notes
- Photos
- Plans
- Report
- Sections
- Survey
Figure 1: Site location (red) also showing nearby historic buildings
Figure 2: Floor plan and direction of report plates
Figure 3: Humphreys’ advertisement
Plate 1: Northern elevations

Plate 2: Eastern wing from the north
Plate 3: Eastern wing from the south

Plate 4: Eastern elevation
Plate 7: Western office wing

Plate 8: Western office wing showing doorway
Plate 9: Entrance lobby from the west

Plate 10: Kitchen area showing tongue and groove panelling