

Nautical Catering College, Liverpool Fabric Survey - Interim Report

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Oxford Archaeology North



GROSVENOR

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The survey and investigation was undertaken by Chris Wild with assistance from Jason Clarke, Caroline Raynor, Vix Hughes and Andy Lane. The report was compiled by Chris Wild and Vix Hughes, with the drawings done by Christina Clarke. The project was managed by Alan Lupton and Jamie Quartermaine, who also edited the report.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECT

- 1.1.1 An investigation of the Nautical Catering College (SJ 3450 9001) was undertaken by Oxford Archaeology North (OA North) at the request of Grosvenor. The work was required to provide a mitigative record of the building in advanced of its demolition as part of the Paradise Street Development Area (PSDA).
- 1.1.2 The Maritime Mercantile City of Liverpool was granted World Heritage Site status (WHS) in July 2004. The PSDA includes two of the areas defined in the WHS proposal and management plan. These are Areas 2 and 6, Area 2 being the Albert Dock Conservation Area; and Area 6 being the Lower Duke Street Area. The PSDA is highlighted as a current development with archaeological issues. The site of the Nautical Catering College building lies in close proximity to the extents of the Maritime Mercantile City of Liverpool WHS and within the designated Conservation Area. The survey work was undertaken in December 2004 through to January 2005.
- 1.1.3 This interim report sets out the results of the investigation in the form of a short document. A desk-based assessment is not included, but will be completed and incorporated into the full report in due course.

1.2 GENERAL BACKGROUND

- 1.2.1 The Nautical Catering College was constructed as part of a wave of new building across the Canning Place area. This was both prompted and enabled by the bombing of the area during the Second World War which destroyed many of the buildings in the area, including the Customs House. The Nautical College had previously occupied rooms within the Customs House, so when it was destroyed there was a need for a new build to continue the education of sea cooks and stewards (NCC 1965).
- 1.2.2 The building was completed in 1965 and officially opened on the 2nd November 1965. The building was designed by Herbert Thearle and partners (architects) and was constructed by Mears Brothers Ltd of Bromborough (*ibid*).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 AIMS

2.1.1 The approach that has been applied to the 1960s Nautical Catering College emphasised the cross sections in order to establish the methods of construction of the concrete structures. A more traditional approach such as an elevation drawing of the glass fronted Nautical College, was deemed to be less informative than a cross section. However, the cross sections will be presented as part of the final report and are not incorporated within the present report. The aims of the archaeological work to be carried out were as follows:

- A rapid desk-based assessment to identify plans of the building
- Subject to health and safety restrictions to provide a drawn and textural record of the buildings to RCHM(E) Level II-type survey in advance of its demolition.
- To produce a report and archive in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (1991)

2.2 BUILDING INVESTIGATION

2.2.1 **Photographic Archive:** a photographic archive was produced utilising 35mm cameras to produce both black and white contact prints and colour slides. Digital photographs were also taken and a selection are presented within this report. The archive comprises general shots of the site and its surroundings and detailed coverage of architectural features. Semi-rectified photographs were taken of the external elevations, using a medium format camera with black and white, archivaly stable, film.

2.2.2 **Instrument Survey:** an instrument survey was undertaken to create a ground plan of the building. Data was captured with a conventional Leica total station, with an additional reflectorless measuring device, for hard to reach locations. The data from the total station was downloaded into an industry-standard CAD package (AutoCad 14) for the production of drawings. These were enhanced on site by hand-measurement.

2.2.3 **Site Drawings:** the digital instrument survey data, in conjunction with detail extracted from the rectified photographic prints, were manipulated in AutoCad 14 for the production of the final drawings.

2.2.4 A visual inspection of the building was undertaken. A description was maintained to RCHM(E) Level 2 standards type survey, and was input directly into a portable computer. This is a descriptive survey, allowing for a basic analysis of the fabric and would result in a textual assessment of the development and form of the building.

- Plans of the main floors were annotated to show the form and location of any structural features of historic significance and recorded the form and location of any significant structural details. Plans above ground floor were based upon the outlines of the ground survey and available architects plans.
- One surveyed and annotated cross-section was produced through the building showing the design form.
- Drawings recording the form and location of significant structural details were produced

2.3 ARCHIVE

- 2.3.1 A full professional archive has been compiled in accordance with the project design (*Appendix 2*), and in accordance with current IFA and English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage 1991). The paper and digital archive will be deposited in the Merseyside Cumbria Record Office, Liverpool, on completion of the project.

3. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1.1 The Nautical Catering College was a purpose built technical college constructed in the early 1960s, prior to this the courses had been held in a number of different locations. Its general form is essentially rectangular in plan which was then subdivided into numerous rooms. It had four levels with a flat roof and was constructed of a reinforced concrete frame and slabs with a mixture of red brick and glass facings (Pates 1, 2 and 3). The rear elevation faces onto Paradise Street, and the front faces the eastern side of what was Canning Place; the building is orientated roughly east/west. As an interim statement the following is a basic description of the structure, based on site observation. A full report will be submitted in due course and will incorporate a basic historical study and provide for a phased assessment of the building. It will incorporate site plans and a full photographic record.
- 3.1.2 The building was in an abandoned condition and there are considerable areas where there was limited safe access; in particular no safe access could be obtained to the basement area.

3.2 EXTERNAL DESCRIPTION

- 3.2.1 The building had several main components but was essentially a five storey, ten bay, brick structure with a projecting lift tower above the flat roof. The east wall had an adjoining fire escape tower of brick and concrete construction (Plate 2). The western side of the building was wider with an additional three bay, L-shape component, which was of similar height to the rest of the building. The north and west elevations at the corner had smaller continuous windows (Plate 3), as did the second floor of the west elevation of the main projection. The south and north elevations comprised large steel windows with concrete mullions.
- 3.2.2 The bottom part of the ground floor, in the L-shaped area, had white langley tiles. On the western elevation, beneath the overhang there was a commemorative plaque which recognised the former existence of the Old Dock:
- In 1715, facing this site, Thomas Steers, engineer, built the first enclosed commercial dock in Britain. This plaque was placed here in 1965 to record this bold venture from which Liverpool has grown to a port of international importance.*
- 3.2.3 The first and second floor projection, from the western face, was supported on black concrete columns which continued through into the interior of the building as far as the concrete ring beam around the roof (Plate 1). The first and second floors were fully glazed within the steel frames, which were large rectangular lights with square pivot windows

(horizontal). Many of the windows had been replaced with plywood boarding at the time of survey. The third floor of the west elevation had a corrugated external face with steel framed windows to the level above. The flat roof of the main part was supported on cantilevered steel trusses. The original intention of the flat roof was to enable the construction of a further storey if required at a later stage (NCC 1965), but in the event was never constructed.

- 3.2.4 The main door, which was mostly of glass and within roller shuttering, was located in the re-entrant and positioned in the north-west corner of the building. There was a second entrance in the south-east corner that was raised above the Paradise Street level and was reached by a flight of concrete steps; this consisted of double timber doors. The external area around the footprint of the structure was paved with concrete four foot paving slabs (Plate 4) and at the north-west corner a large metal anchor was embedded into the ground surface.

3.3 INTERNAL DESCRIPTION

- 3.3.1 **Ground Floor (Fig 3):** a total of twenty rooms were observed and described for this level. The extant fixtures and fittings related entirely to the primary use of the building as a catering college specifically for nautical environments. Most of the rooms did not retain any soft furnishings or furniture and were in various states of disarray. The rooms varied in size and use although the overall nature of the ground floor was as a teaching facility, with storage and a communal entranceway. The lobby area, which contained the lift (Room 01), and entrance hall (Room 14) had a glass partition subdividing the two areas. The original plans indicated that there was to be a 'pool', within this area however, there was no evidence of this structure ever having been built. For consistency and ease of use the toilets were positioned adjacent to the main entranceway, on this floor.
- 3.3.2 The main rooms could, in general, be reached from the main entrance and lobby areas. Only a few of the smaller rooms were accessed from other rooms and in particular were the toilets and changing rooms. The rooms were generally built of concrete and glass, and some had false ceilings. Although the rooms were notionally on the ground floor, there were several variations in actual floor levels with short flights of steps between some rooms, for example from the bakery (Room 12) to the sales room (Room 13). The overall spatial distribution of room revealed that there were distinct areas of use. The principal's office (Room 17, Plate 6), which would have been in continual use and required easy access as well as a prominent location, was reached directly from both the lobby (Room 01) and the entrance hall (Room 14). The stores were all contained in the south-eastern quarter of the ground floor and included the vegetable store (Room 11), dry goods

(Room 10), general cold goods (Room 07, Plate 5) and equipment (Room 09). An essential element in the catering industry is to store goods correctly for health and safety reasons and as part of good general practice. This can be seen by the separation of the different types of goods and was exemplified by different fish, meat and dairy stores (as per the original plans). In the south-western quarter of the ground floor, were the main teaching facilities, including the lecture theatre which still retained tiered seating (Room 15, Plate 10), and the exam kitchen (Room 16). On the south side, in between the storage and the teaching area was a kitchen specifically in use as a bakery (Room 12).

- 3.3.3 **First Floor (Fig 4):** the first floor had a larger floor space than the ground floor, the additional space was on the eastern side where the level was supported by reinforced concrete pillars and overhung the yard below. This level was accessed by both the lift in the central part of the building and two sets of stairs located in the main entrance hall and on the northern edge of the building. This floor also had an external terrace in the south-eastern corner, which could be reached from this level or from the external steps. Despite this floor having a larger area than the ground floor it had a total of only ten main rooms, and reflected the substantial size of these rooms.
- 3.3.4 The main function of this floor appeared to be for teaching, and included two large kitchens suitable for taking classes (Room 108 (kitchen No. 2) and Room 109 (kitchen No. 3)). There was also a small 'cabin lounge' (Room 101, Plate 7), which functioned as an area in which to practise serving passengers. The kitchens were located in the central and western part of the building, and between the two kitchens were washing up facilities, which were positioned for maximum efficiency.
- 3.3.5 Adjacent to these two main kitchens, along the western edge of the building, was the main dining salon (Room 110, Plates 8 and 9), which was where the food was served en masse to the public as part of the catering training. This area was light and spacious, and was achieved by having a large open area with a glass fronted western wall, that used large panels within steel frames. The room also had a small bar in the south-east corner and a tiled servery at the north end of the east wall, from where the food was dispensed in addition to any brought in through the swing doors from the kitchens. There was an open spiral staircase in the south-west corner of the room, which led down to a fire escape exit on the ground floor, and also up to the second floor. The room contained a long monochrome mural around the north, east and south walls, positioned above head height (Plates 11-13). The mural, which had a nautical theme throughout, was present at the time of survey and was carefully removed and retained for future use.

- 3.3.6 For consistency and ease of use the toilets were positioned next to the lift in the central part of the main access area on this floor. This floor also had a large food preparation / larder room (Room 104) and had two freezers in its eastern side of the room, and a large sink on the south side.
- 3.3.7 The eastern part of this floor was originally given over to changing rooms and locker rooms for the students and were capable of accommodating reasonably large numbers, as would be expected at a teaching facility (NCC1965). However, later alterations meant that the locker room in the north-east corner of the building became a conference room (Room 102), while those to the south-east were made into two small offices (Room 103).
- 3.3.8 **Second Floor (Fig 5):** a total of twelve main rooms were identified on this floor. The floor was accessible from the same lift and stairs as existed between the ground floor and the first floor. In addition to this there was also access via the spiral staircase in the south-western corner of the main dining salon (Room 110 below). The main lobby and access area on this floor were considerably smaller than the two lower floors and was essentially a corridor that ran east/west, off which smaller rooms led in the eastern part of the building.
- 3.3.9 The western part of the building, above the main dining salon, was a balcony used for the refectory of the catering college (Room 210, Plates 15 and 16). Along the eastern wall were numerous glass windows into the adjoining room kitchen No. 4 (Room 209, Plate 14). This kitchen had its own internal partitioned storage, so that it was more self contained than those on other floors. There was also a hatchway, probably a later modification, in the north wall to allow food to be served. The layout of this floor has similarities with the floor below so that kitchen No. 4 (Room 209) is above kitchen No. 2 (Room 108), and to the north, kitchen No. 5 (Room 212) lay above kitchen No. 3 (Room 109). There were distinct advantages to such a layout in terms of the building design logistics, including, ventilation, wiring and power distribution and probably also for the users of the built structure in terms of their spatial familiarity.
- 3.3.10 The southern and eastern part of this floor was fitted out as general rooms, reception rooms and offices, although elements, such as the mains supply for a 14kv stove and 'salamanda' (brand of grill) seen in Room 202, indicate that the rooms may have had different origins, in this case a small kitchen. Room 205 may have also been used, as a demonstration kitchen, as evidenced by the heavy duty fuse box.
- 3.3.11 **Third Floor:** a total of seven main rooms were observed on this floor. This floor was accessible from the main stairs and lift and also from the flight of stairs leading up in the south-west corner of the building, but not connected to the spiral staircase. The stairs lead directly into the sports hall (Room

305, Plate 19), which was situated above the kitchens and occupied most of the western part of this floor. The sports hall actually projected, vertically, into the fourth floor, the additional height allowing for more freedom of movement, and was an essential requirement for the function of the room. The room still retained various aspects, such as the timber floor and its markings and some equipment, when surveyed.

- 3.3.12 The rest of the third floor consisted mainly of three large rooms, three smaller rooms and appeared to have a similar function, in that it provided recreational facilities. This included Room 300 which was a senior common room, and was located adjacent to the main stairs and lift. Again, the function of each of these rooms may have changed over time, as the multiple sockets in Rooms 301 and 302 (Plate 17) were indicative of cookers or other appliances having been once installed.
- 3.3.13 **Fourth Floor:** there were three main rooms seen on this floor. The floor had only a relatively small floor area because the western side was the open, upper part of the sports hall (Room 305), and the eastern side was the external roof surface. It was reached only via the main staircase on the northern side of the building.
- 3.3.14 The main room on this floor (Room 400, Plate 21) was an apparent office, or possibly common room adjacent to the toilets. There was also a landing that overlooked the sports hall, along its eastern side and from this landing the boiler flues and headgear for the lift were accessed.

3.4 GENERAL BUILDING DISCUSSION

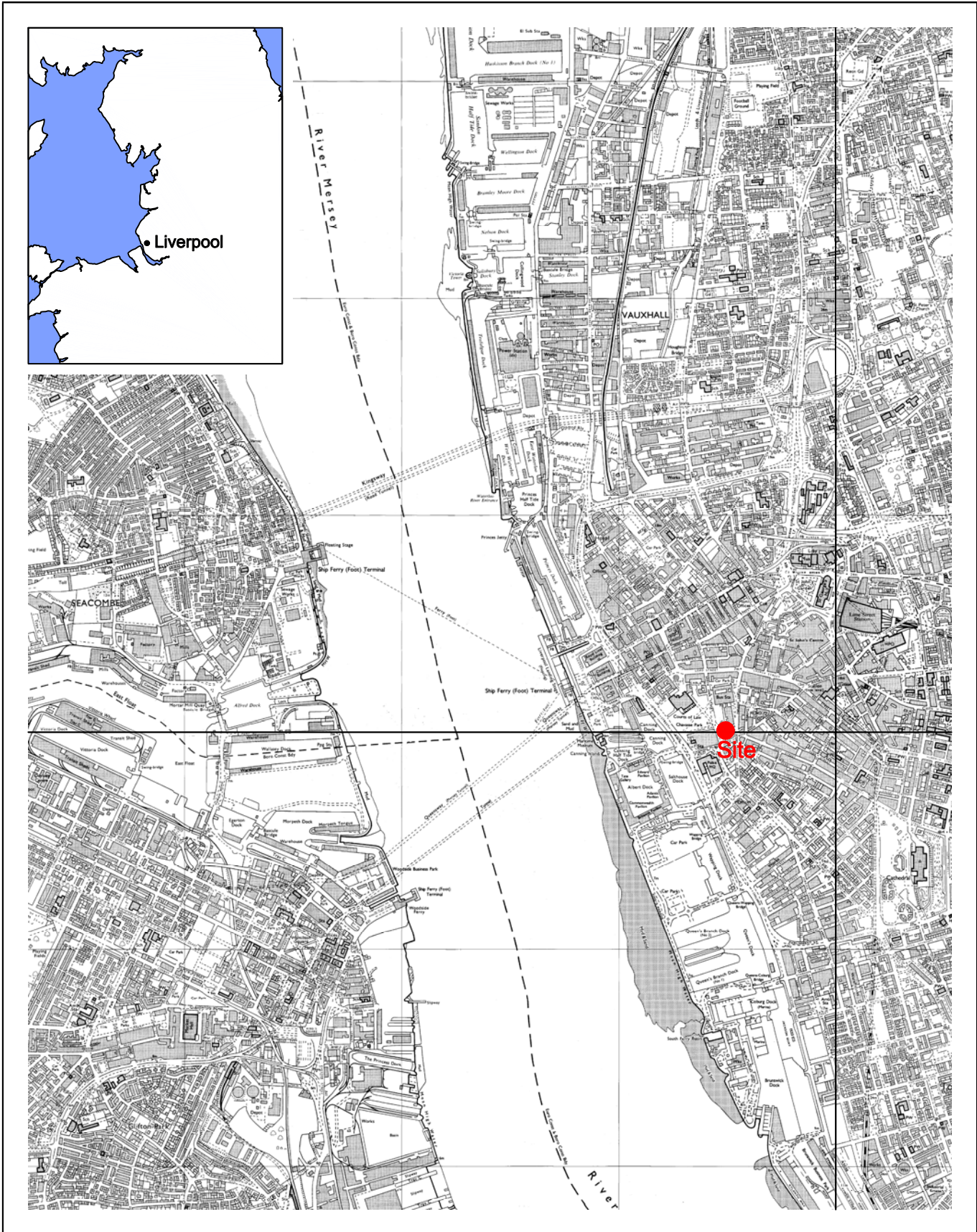
- 3.4.1 The overall form of the building was basically functional as was specifically designed as a teaching facility. The outline of the building was reminiscent of a ship's bridge profile (Plate 3) and as such is similar to other buildings that have been specifically designed to evoke ship shapes which include The Lowry, Salford Quays, Manchester (1988); Keele University Students Union, the Chile Haus, Hamburg (architect Fritz Höger) and the Ballroom at the Pontins Camp, Heysham. A common feature for the exterior of twentieth century buildings designed to resemble ships are the staggered balconies / mezzanine floors to look like ship decks and bow. Within the Nautical Catering College the internal flourishes also served to reinforce the ship theme, most noticeably in the monochrome mural, but also in elements such as the circular air vents within larger windows, that are similar to port holes (Plate 20).
- 3.4.2 The fact that the building was purpose built for use in training nautical caterers and stewards was clearly visible from the layout and the amenities which the building displayed. In terms of general construction techniques much of the wiring,

ventilation and piping was concealed within vertical boxes and overhead areas above false ceilings. The building had a heating system which was intrinsic to the building fabric except where the radiators and heaters interfaced with the rooms (Plate 23). There was also an internal waste system for rubbish, which was highly expedient (Plate 22).

- 3.4.3 The materials used in the building structure were entirely manmade and consisted of steel, concrete, glass, brick and vitrolite. Within the building the materials were again, mostly manmade and chosen to suite the function of the rooms, which meant they were essentially heat resistant and easily cleaned. Such materials were much favoured in the buildings of the 1950s and 1960s, partly due to the need to rebuild cheaply and effectively after the Second World War but also because there an aspect of breaking with tradition and producing more modern structures.

4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Nautical Catering College (NCC) 1965 *Nautical College Official Opening*, Liverpool



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Figure 1: Location Map



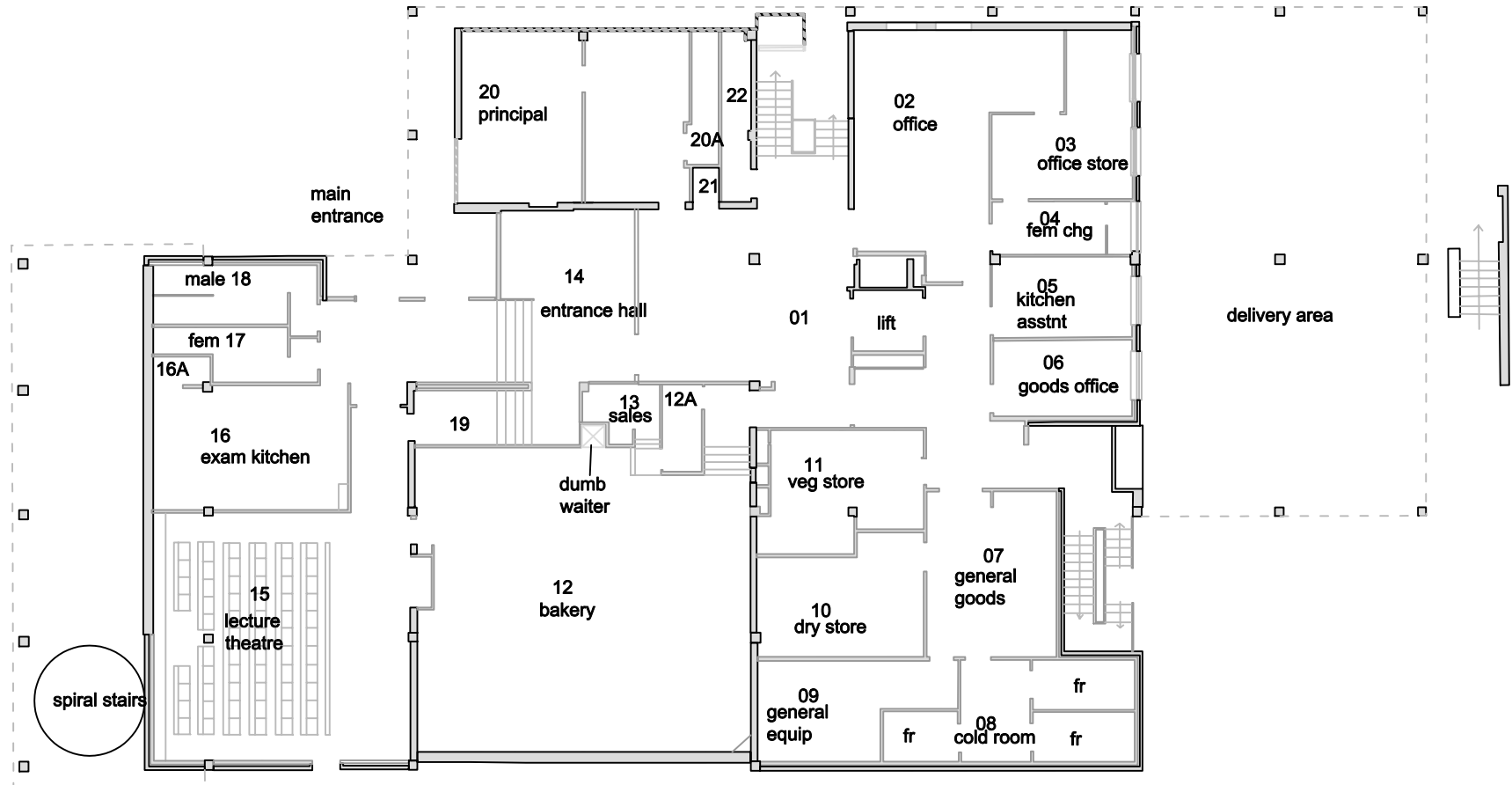
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Scale 1:750 at A4



Figure 2: Location Plan of the Nautical College




- Key:**
- walls
 - partition walls
 - glass tiles
 - glass partition
 - fr. fridge

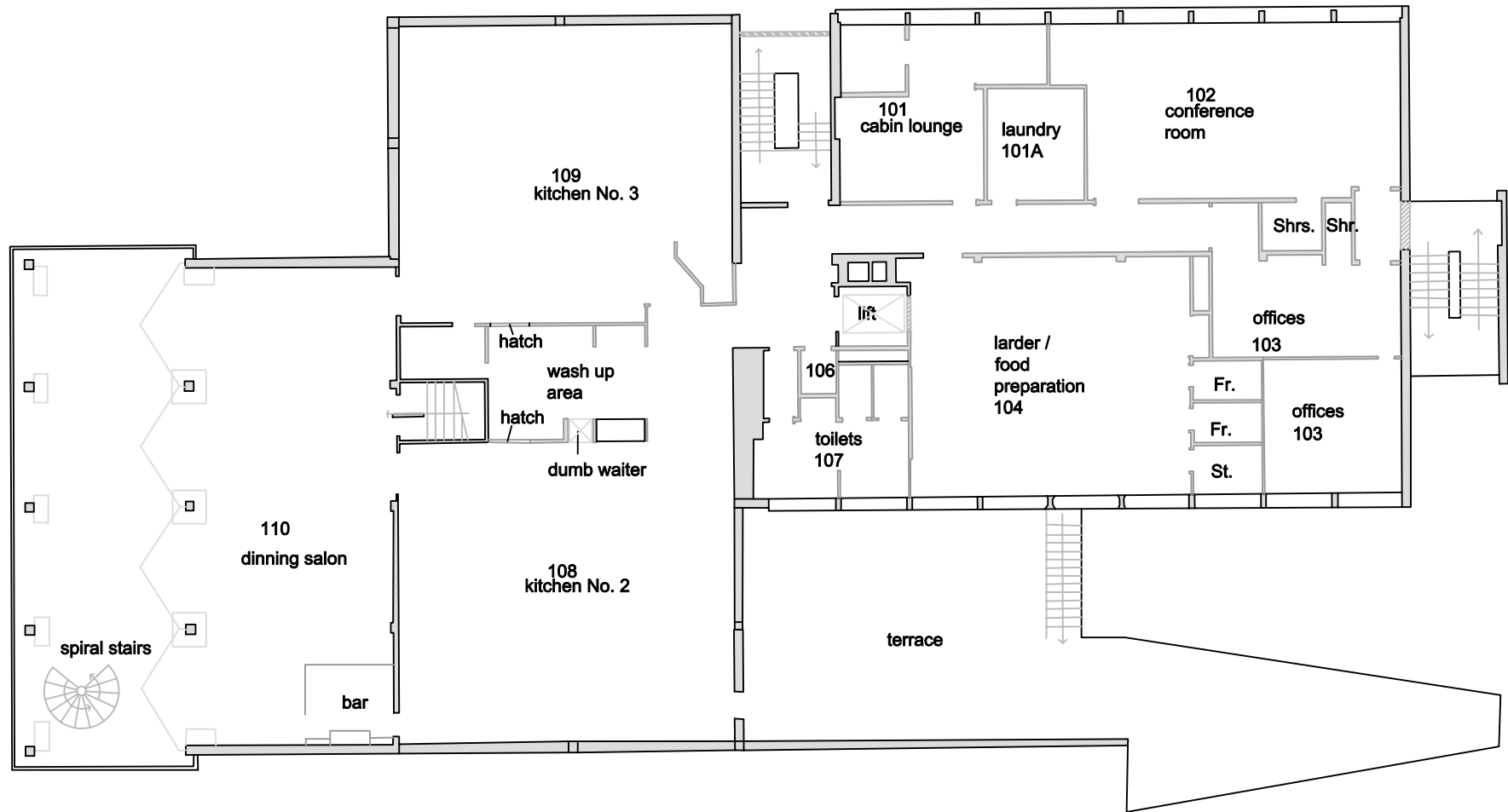


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Figure 3: Ground Floor Plan of the Nautical College

- Key:**
-  walls
 -  partition walls
 -  glass tiles
 - fr. fridge
 - st. store
 - shr./shrs showers



Scale 1:200 at A4



Figure 4: First Floor Plan of the Nautical College

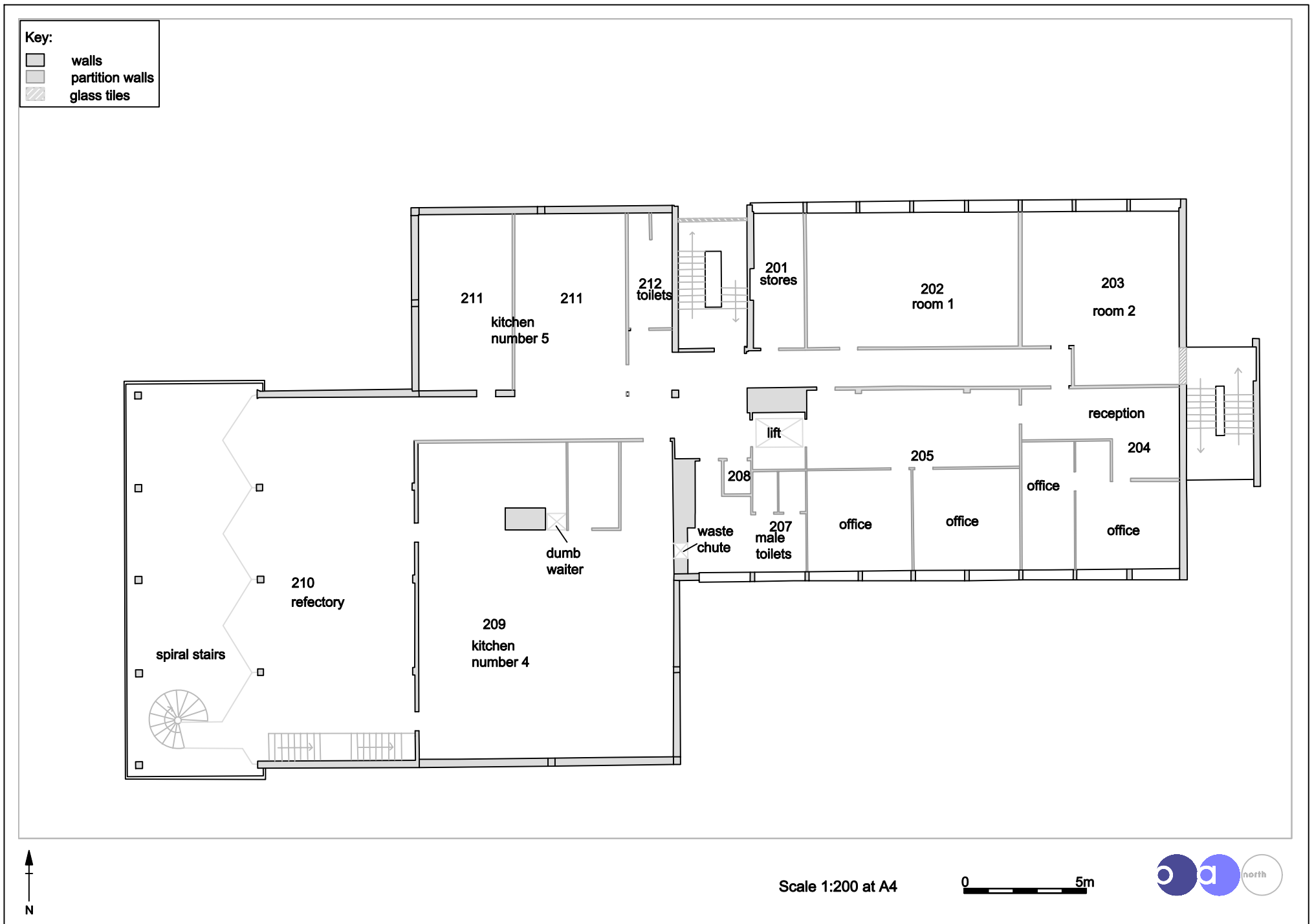


Figure 5: Second Floor Plan of the Nautical College



Plate 1: West external elevation of the Nautical Catering College



Plate 2: East external elevation of the Nautical Catering College



Plate 3: The exterior of the Nautical Catering College, looking south, showing the profile reminiscent of a ship's bridge



Plate 4: South-west aspect of the Delivery Area



Plate 5: South aspect of Store Room (Room 7), Ground Floor

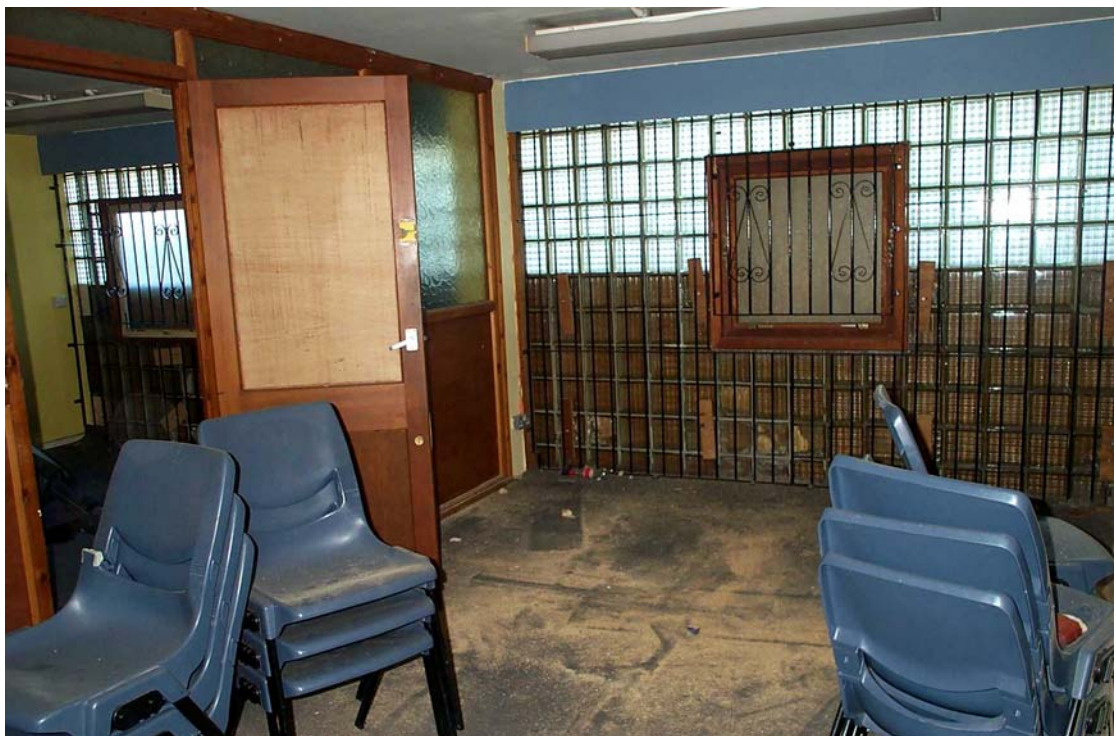


Plate 6: North-west aspect of the Principal's Room (Room 17), Ground Floor



Plate 7: Partitioned area within the cabin lounge (Room 101), First Floor



Plate 8: East aspect of the main dining salon (Room 110), and spiral staircase, First Floor



Plate 9: North-west aspect of the main dining salon (Room 110), First Floor



Plate 10: South-west aspect of the Lecture Room (Room 15), Ground Floor



Plates 11 to 13: Mural on the east wall of Room 110, First Floor



Plate 14: North-west aspect of Kitchen No.4, Room 209, Second Floor



Plate 15: North-west aspect of the Refectory (Room 210), Second Floor



Plate 16: South aspect of the Refectory (Room 210), Second Floor



Plate 17: North-east aspect of Room 302, Third Floor



Plate 18: South-west aspect of Room 303, Third Floor



Plate 19: The sports hall, Room 305, Third Floor



Plate 20: North-west aspect of Room 306 (Third Floor) showing the detail of external wall construction



Plate 21: North-west aspect of Room 400, Fourth Floor



Plate 22: Example of a waste chute



Plate 23: Thermostat, located on Ground Floor