

# Historic Building Recording at Harlow Town Park, Essex

June 2014



report prepared by  
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commissioned by  
**Mr Andrew Allocca**  
on behalf of  
**Harlow District Council**

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**CAT Report 781**  
July 2014

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## 1 Summary

*A programme of building recording was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on several structures at Harlow Town Park, Essex in June 2014. The work was commissioned by Mr Andrew Allocca, Regeneration Project Delivery Manager for Harlow District Council. The structures recorded included 20th-century alterations to the 19th-century Spurrier's House, a petting zoo, bandstand, nursery and the Greyhound public toilets, all dating to the 20th century. These structures form part of Harlow Town Park, one of twelve parks with significant post-World War II elements cited on the English Heritage Register of Parks.*

## 2 Introduction (Fig 1)

This is the archive report on the historic building recording at Harlow Town Park, Essex, prior to a programme of regeneration and restoration. The work was carried out on behalf of Harlow District Council (HDC) by Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) in June 2014. The park covers 164 acres in the centre of Harlow New Town, whilst the structures comprising the survey are grouped around the 19th-century Spurrier's House in an area known as Spurrier's Core. These structures include single-storey extensions to Spurrier's House for a café and a toilet block, Pets Corner (a petting zoo partially occupying the former Spurrier's House stable blocks), the Bandstand and the remains of the nursery in the former walled garden of Spurrier's House, located at NGR TL 4492 1101(c). The Greyhound toilets 280m south-east of Spurrier's Core were also surveyed.

A planning application (HW/PL/13/00427) for the regeneration of the park was submitted to Harlow District Council in November 2013. A condition for historic building recording was placed on the consent based on the advice given in the National Planning Policy Framework.

A brief detailing the required work (historic building recording) was issued by Harlow District Council (Andrew Allocca, HDC 2014). All work was carried out in accordance with a WSI (Written Scheme of Investigation) produced by CAT in response to the brief and agreed with the Historic Environment Adviser for Essex County Council's Place Services (CAT 2014).

All work was carried out according to standards and practices contained in the Institute for Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings or structures* (2008) and *Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (2008a). The documents *Management of research projects in the historic environment* (MoRPHE), and *Standards for field archaeology in the East of England* (EAA 14) were also followed.

## 3 Aims and methods

The aim of the building recording was to provide a photographic record of the structures conforming to English Heritage Level 1, combined with a brief description of the interiors and exteriors.

The following report includes:

- A brief summary history of the structures.
- A large-scale block plan of the site based on pre-existing architect's drawings.
- A full photographic record, comprising digital photographs of the exterior and interior of the buildings, including historic fixtures and fittings. The photographic record is accompanied by a photographic register detailing location and direction of shot (Appendix 1). Selected examples of the photographic record are clearly tied into the drawn record and reproduced as fully annotated photographic plates

supporting the text. These are referenced on the plans as P1, P2 etc with an arrow denoting the direction of the shot.

- A brief description accompanying the photographic record, which will seek to explore the form and function of the buildings, structural details and surviving fixtures and fittings.

## 4 Historical background

Harlow New Town was built after World War II to ease overcrowding in London and the surrounding areas along with other new towns including Basildon, Stevenage and Hemel Hempstead, following the New Towns Act of 1946. The master plan for Harlow was drawn up in 1947 by Sir Frederick Gibberd, incorporating the existing market town of Harlow and the villages of Great Parndon, Latton, Tye Green, Potter Street, Churchgate Street, Little Parndon and Netteswell. In the early 1950s initial schemes for a Town Park were proposed and in 1953 a Town Park master plan was put forward. This was largely based upon the designs of Dame Sylvia Crowe. In 1957 Harlow Town Park officially opened (although development continued until 1975). The 164 acre park was located in the former village of Netteswell and, unlike earlier Victorian parks, incorporated private dwellings within its boundaries.

One of these was Spurrier's House, built in the 1860s for William Cox, comprising a large dwelling, two stable blocks, a lodge and eight acres of grounds, including a walled garden. This small estate was purchased by Harlow District Council in 1965 and formed the nucleus of an area intended for civic entertainment, later known as Spurrier's Core. The stable blocks were incorporated into Pets Corner, which opened in 1966. A single-storey toilet block was constructed on the west side of Spurrier's House, probably for the convenience of visitors to the petting zoo.

In 1971 a single-storey extension was constructed on the south-east corner of the House, providing additional space for the Town Museum and a drinks dispensary. In 1973 the Museum was moved and a further extension constructed against the east stable block, creating a much larger café. At the same time as these alterations, the Bandstand was constructed, 60m to the east of Spurrier's Core, nestled into the side of a shallow slope.

The Greyhound toilets, named for the nearby Greyhound Inn which dates to at least 1810, are located 280m to the south-east of Spurrier's Core on the south side of a car park for visitors to the park. These toilets are roughly contemporary to the Bandstand.

## 5 The photographic survey (Figs 1-4)

The photographic survey comprises five areas of the park:

- Spurrier's House, including those parts that will be affected by the regeneration and the 20th-century extensions to the House itself.
- Pets Corner, including the stable blocks formerly part of Spurrier's House.
- The Bandstand.
- The Nursery and the walled garden.
- The Greyhound toilets.

### Spurrier's House (Fig 2)

Spurrier's House is located at the north-west end of Spurrier's Core, a linear arrangement of buildings aligned north-west to south-east (Figs 1 & 2). Constructed in the early 1860s from yellow stock brick laid in Flemish bond, the building comprises a main two-storey rectangular range with a hipped slate roof and a smaller two-storey range to the south, also with a hipped slate roof. On the south side of this there is a single-storey service wing with a hipped slate roof. On the north elevation is a blue plaque (Plate 1) commemorating the work of Dame Sylvia Crowe, principal designer of Harlow Town Park.



**Plate 1 Commemorative blue plaque on north wall of Spurrier's House - view south-east**

In keeping with the strong tradition of public art in Harlow, the security bars installed by Harlow District Council on the ground floor windows and doors have aesthetic qualities, wrought in the shape of plants with flowering seed pods (Plate 2).



**Plate 2 Detail of wrought iron security bars in the shape of seed pods - view south-east**

The security bars covering the windows on the service wing at the rear of the building are also more than merely functional, although not as ornate as those on the

public sides of the house (Plate 3). They are, however, more ornate than the gates over the rear entrances and it may be concluded that this represents a chronology for the security features of the building which became progressively plainer over time.



**Plate 3 Detail of wrought iron security bars on extension to Spurrier's House  
- view north-west**

As part of the regeneration programme, the ground floor of Spurrier's House is to be renovated, retaining original features such as the plaster moulding and removing later alterations which detract from the historic integrity of the building (Plates 4 & 5). Included in these works will be the conversion of the basement.



**Plate 4 Detail of decorative plaster moulding in Spurrier's House**



**Plate 5 Original French doors of Spurrier's House truncated by inserted stud wall - view north-west**

The basement of Spurrier's House has two entrances, one external (Plate 6) and one internal (Plate 7). The external entrance is down a flight of steps beside the single-storey service extension and has a door surround formed of white-glazed brick.



**Plate 6 Basement entrance to Spurrier's House - view south-east**



**Plate 7 Internal staircase to basement of Spurrier's House - view north-west**

Although the basement has been used as a storage area since the building was acquired by HDC it retains several original features. These include a brick arch (the purpose of which is uncertain, but which may have been an area for keeping wine; Plate 8), a recess lined with white-glazed tiles/bricks and with an iron and glass light grill above it, probably fulfilling a scullery function (Plate 9) and the carcass of a wooden sideboard, probably original to Spurrier's House and relocated from the dining room upstairs (Plate 10).



**Plate 8 Original brick alcove in basement of Spurrier's House – view south-east**



**Plate 9 Tiled recess in basement of Spurrier's House, possibly a scullery area - view south-west**



**Plate 10 ?Original sideboard, possibly from the dining room of Spurrier's House - view north**

The original stables to Spurrier's House were incorporated into Pets Corner in 1966 and it is probable that this was when the toilet block was constructed against the west side of Spurrier's House. The toilet block is a single-storey, flat-roofed structure of yellow stock brick laid in stretcher bond (Plate 11), although the north elevation containing the entrance to the Ladies' toilets is formed from vertical plank cladding. The flat roof has a continuous range of narrow windows just below the eaves, providing additional illumination to the interior of the toilets.



**Plate 11 Spurrier's House with 1960s toilet block attached - view south-east**

Both the Ladies' and Gentlemen's toilets have the original signage, executed in a typical 1960s font (Plate 12).



Plate 12 The original 1960s signage on the toilet block at Spurrier's House

It was not possible to access the Ladies' toilets but examination of the Gentlemen's facilities showed the interior to be relatively basic in layout and design with plain, utilitarian WCs and urinals, a stark contrast to the ornate fixtures and fittings that would be encountered in a Victorian or Edwardian example. One interesting feature was the original 'Teal' electric hand-drier (Plate 13).



Plate 13 The original 1960s 'Teal' hand-drier in the toilet block at Spurrier's House

An additional extension was built in 1971 at the south-east corner of the main range to house the Town Museum and a drinks dispensary (Plate 14). This was a flat-roofed structure, constructed from yellow stock brick in an attempt to blend in with Spurrier's House.



**Plate 14 Spurrier's Core with Spurrier's House to the right and the cafe extensions - view south**

The construction of Spurrier's Core removed a large section of the ground floor wall of Spurrier's House (Plate 15). The drinks dispensary was fitted out with exposed roof beams in an unsuccessful attempt to make the building appear older than it is.



**Plate 15 The interior of the 1971 extension to Spurrier's House showing the width of the Victorian brickwork - view east**

In 1973 the size of the drinks dispensary was deemed inadequate and a long, single-storey extension was built against the exterior of the east stable block to house a much larger café (Plate 16), whilst the Town Museum was moved to Passmore House. The whole of this new development became known as Spurrier's Core.



**Plate 16 Spurrier's Core with Spurrier's House to the right and the cafe extensions - view south**

### **Pets Corner (Fig 2)**

As mentioned above, Pets Corner was opened in 1966. This is commemorated in two anniversary plaques, a simple horseshoe attached to the Aquarium block, recording the 30th anniversary and a more ornate version consisting of representations of the animals in the zoo, commemorating the 40th anniversary, located above the main entrance (Plates 17 & 18).



**Plate 17 Plaque commemorating 30th Anniversary of the opening of Pets Corner**



**Plate 18** Plaque commemorating 40 years of Pets Corner

A blue plaque in the animal enclosure honours the memory of Rodney Wood, manager of Pets Corner from its opening in 1966 until 1992.

Pets Corner comprises two distinct areas, arranged in a linear pattern aligned north-west to south-east, along with a collection of paddocks to the west of the zoo. The northernmost of these areas comprises the original stable blocks for Spurrier's House (Plate 19) separated from the rear of Spurrier's House by the original Victorian stable yard gates (Plate 20).



**Plate 19** Pets Corner stable blocks with Spurrier's House in the background – view north



**Plate 20** Original stable yard gates of Spurrier's House, now the rear access to Pets Corner - view south-west

The stables have been extensively modernised, either in 1966 but probably more recently as the current stables have high roofs and double-glazed windows. Despite these alterations many original features have survived, including a drainage gully formed by Staffordshire blue bricks (probably original – but possibly later), tethering rings and stall divisions (Plate 21).



**Plate 21** Original stall dividers in the stable block - view north-east

In addition to these features the internal drainage gullies and floor surfaces of the original stables have survived (Plate 22).



**Plate 22 Original drainage gullies and floor surface in the former Spurrier's House stable block**

Although horses are still housed in the stables (as can be seen in Plate 22), some of the stalls have been given over to animals of a different temperament and much smaller size (Plate 23).



**Plate 23 Original stable block stall now home to a small colony of rabbits**

The southern part of Pets Corner dates to 1966 and consists of open-fronted shelter sheds/pens arranged around a green with a brick Aquarium at the south end (Plate 24).



**Plate 24 Pets Corner with the open stables and Aquarium block in the background - view south-east**

To the south of the green is a low S-shaped structure, built from river cobbles capped with concrete slabs. The south end of this forms a duck pond (Plate 25) whilst the north end is embedded into the green, forming a small plaza filled with bird cages.



**Plate 25 The interior of Pets Corner with the duck pond in the foreground and open-fronted shelter sheds to the right - view north**

The pens and shelter sheds around the periphery house large animals, including rare breed pigs, reindeer, llamas, pygmy goats and Shetland ponies (Plate 26).



**Plate 26** Some of the larger inhabitants of Pets Corner: (clockwise from top left - a rare-breed Tamworth sow and piglets; a llama; ; a Shetland pony; a pair of pygmy goats)

However, the inhabitants of Pets Corner are not all confined to pens: wildfowl and domesticated birds roam freely around the green (Plates 27 & 28).



**Plate 27** Ducks, geese and the kings of the green, a Cochin cockerel and a peacock – view north-west



**Plate 28 An exotic-looking Silkie chicken**

Arranged throughout Pets Corner are aviaries containing exotic birds and flanking the entrance are hutches with all manner of rodent species. The aquarium block at the south end of Pets Corner houses not only fish but also reptiles, lizards and small mammals (Plate 29).



**Plate 29 Some of the animals found in the Aquarium block at Pets Corner:  
(clockwise from top left - a giant gourami; a yellow-bellied terrapin;  
bearded lizards; a miniature hairless pig)**

### **The Bandstand (Fig 3)**

The Bandstand was built in 1973 and is a concrete and brick structure more akin to a theatre than a traditional bandstand. Like the other buildings of Spurrier's core it has been constructed of yellow stock brick in an attempt to blend in with the Victorian Spurrier's House. The Bandstand takes the form of a raised stage with funnelled sides and an overhead canopy (Plate 30).



**Plate 30 The Bandstand with its raised stage and angled walls – view north**

There is a single-storey, flat-roofed ancillary structure to the rear and the north, which housed the green room and dressing rooms (Plate 31).



**Plate 31 The ancillary structure at the side and rear of the Bandstand, housing the green room and dressing rooms – view south-east**

**The Nursery** (Figs 1 & 2)

The nursery is located in the former walled garden of Spurrier's House and has been neglected for many years. The result is a wilderness (Plate 32) with some dilapidated structures that are all that remains of the gardener's office and potting sheds (Plate 33).



**Plate 32** The Nursery, formerly the walled garden of Spurrier's House - view south-east



**Plate 33** Remains of the gardener's office and an open-fronted shed in the Nursery - view north-west

### **The Greyhound toilets (Fig 4)**

The proximity of the Greyhound toilets to the Bandstand suggests they were constructed to accommodate the increase in visitor numbers attending concerts in the park, either in 1973 at the same time as the Bandstand was built or shortly after. The toilets (named for the nearby public house which dates to at least 1810) occupy a low ridge on the south side of the car park (Plate 34).



**Plate 34 The Greyhound toilets - view south**

The toilets are constructed from brick and concrete and have an inverted roof designed to funnel rainwater to an integrated rainwater pipe at the east end of the building (Plate 35).



**Plate 35 The Greyhound toilets with the integrated roof drainage - view west**

The west end of the structure has a projecting canopy supported on two different sized concrete piers, between which is a concrete bench (Plate 36).



**Plate 36** The west end of the Greyhound toilets with the canopy over the bench held by the roof piers - view east

An area of hard-standing in front of the toilets has a tactile surface formed from granite setts and rounded cobbles, possibly an intentional reflection of the Pets Corner duck pond (Plate 37).



**Plate 37** Tactile surface outside the Greyhound toilets, possibly recalling the duck pond of Pets Corner - view east

## 6 Acknowledgments

Colchester Archaeological Trust would like to thank Mr Andrew Allocca for commissioning the building recording.

The building recording was carried out by Chris Lister and Mark Baister.

Plans were adapted from drawings by Allen Scott (Landscape Architects), supplied to CAT by the client.

The project was monitored by Maria Medlycott on behalf of Essex County Council Historic Environment Branch.

## 7 References

Note: all CAT reports, except for DBAs, are available online in .pdf format at <http://cat.essex.ac.uk>

Allocca, A	2014	<i>Brief for Historic Building Recording, Harlow Town Park</i>
CAT	2014	<i>Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording at Harlow Town Park, Essex</i>
DoE	2010	<i>Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment</i>
EAA 14	2003	<i>Standards for field archaeology in the East of England, East Anglian Archaeology, Occasional Papers, 14</i> , ed by D Gurney
IfA	2008	<i>Standard and guidance for archaeological investigation and recording of standing buildings and structures</i>
IfA	2008a	<i>Standard and guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials</i>
MoRPHE	2006	<i>Management of research projects in the historic environment</i> (English Heritage)

## 8 Abbreviations and glossary

CAT	Colchester Archaeological Trust
ECC	Essex County Council
EHHER	Essex Historic Environment Record, held by the ECC
feature	an identifiable thing like a pit, a wall, a floor; can contain 'contexts'
HDC	Harlow District Council
HE	Historic Environment
IfA	Institute for Archaeologists
modern	period from the 19th century onwards to the present
NGR	National Grid Reference

## 9 Archive deposition

The paper and digital archive is currently held by the Colchester Archaeological Trust at Roman Circus House, Circular Road North, Colchester, Essex CO2 7GZ, but it will be permanently deposited with Harlow Museum (accession code requested).

## 10 Contents of archive

One A4 document wallet containing:

### 1 Introduction

1.1 Copy of HDC brief

1.2 Copy of WSI produced by CAT

1.3 Risk assessment

## 2 Site archive

- 2.1 Digital photographic record.
- 2.2 Digital photographic contact sheet.
- 2.3 Attendance register
- 2.4 Site photographic record on CD

## 3 Research archive

- 3.1 Client report

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checked by: Philip Crummy  
date: 22/07/14

## Appendix 1

### Full list of digital photographic record (images on accompanying CD)

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020.jpg Basement of Spurrier's House - view north-east.  
021.jpg Basement of Spurrier's House showing original brick alcove - view south-east.  
022.jpg Original brick alcove in basement of Spurrier's House - view south-east.  
023.jpg ?Original sideboard, possibly from dining room of Spurrier's House - view north.  
024.jpg Tiled recess in basement of Spurrier's House, possibly a scullery area - view south-west.  
025.jpg Detail of cast iron and glass light grill above possible scullery.  
026.jpg Spurrier's toilets - view south-east.  
027.jpg Spurrier's toilets - view east.  
028.jpg Original 1960s sign on Spurrier's toilets.  
029.jpg Original 1960s sign on Spurrier's toilets.  
030.jpg Interior of Gentlemen's WC in Spurrier's toilets - view south-west.  
031.jpg Original urinal in Spurrier's toilets - view south-east.  
032.jpg Interior of the Gentlemen's toilets - view south-east.  
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043.jpg Original stable yard gates of Spurrier's House, now the rear access to Pets Corner - view south-west.  
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045.jpg Pets Corner stable blocks with Spurrier's House in the background - view north.

- 046.jpg Gully formed from Staffordshire blue bricks, possibly originally but probably part of the refurbishment programme in the 1960s.
- 047.jpg Interior of one of the stalls with the original stable flooring - view north.
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- 049.jpg Refurbished roof of the stable block, showing the increased height of the facade - view south-west.
- 050.jpg Original stall dividers in the stable block - view north-east.
- 051.jpg Original drainage gully in floor of stable block - view north-west.
- 052.jpg ?Original fitting in stable block - view north.
- 053.jpg Original tethering rings in stable block - view north-east.
- 054.jpg Original stable block re-used to house rabbits - view south-east.
- 055.jpg Pets Corner with the open stables and Aquarium block in the background - view south-east.
- 056.jpg The duck pond at Pets Corner - view south-east.
- 057.jpg Avian enclosures next to the duck pond - view south-west.
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- 059.jpg The pig pens at Pets Corner - view north-east.
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- 061.jpg Open-fronted stables on the eastern side of Pets Corner - view north-east.
- 062.jpg Chicken runs and aviary in front of the Aquarium block - view south-east.
- 063.jpg Small bird aviary - view south-east.
- 064.jpg Tamworth sow and piglets.
- 065.jpg Cochin cockerel.
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- 067.jpg A llama.
- 068.jpg Shetland pony.
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- 084.jpg Hexagonal podium in front of the Bandstand.
- 085.jpg Open-fronted shed in the Nursery - view north-west.
- 086.jpg Remains of gardener's office in the nursery - view north-west.
- 087.jpg The nursery - view south-east.
- 088.jpg The original gates to the nursery - view south-east.
- 089.jpg The Greyhound toilets - view south.
- 090.jpg The Greyhound toilets - view east.
- 091.jpg The east elevation of the Greyhound toilets showing the rainwater system integrated into the roof - view west.
- 092.jpg The west elevation of the Greyhound toilets showing the covered area with seating incorporated into the wall - view east.
- 093.jpg Detail of the bench incorporated into the supporting wall - view south-east.
- 094.jpg ?Disabled WC at the rear of the Greyhound toilets - view north.
- 095.jpg Tactile surface formed from granite setts and river cobbles in front of the Greyhound toilets.

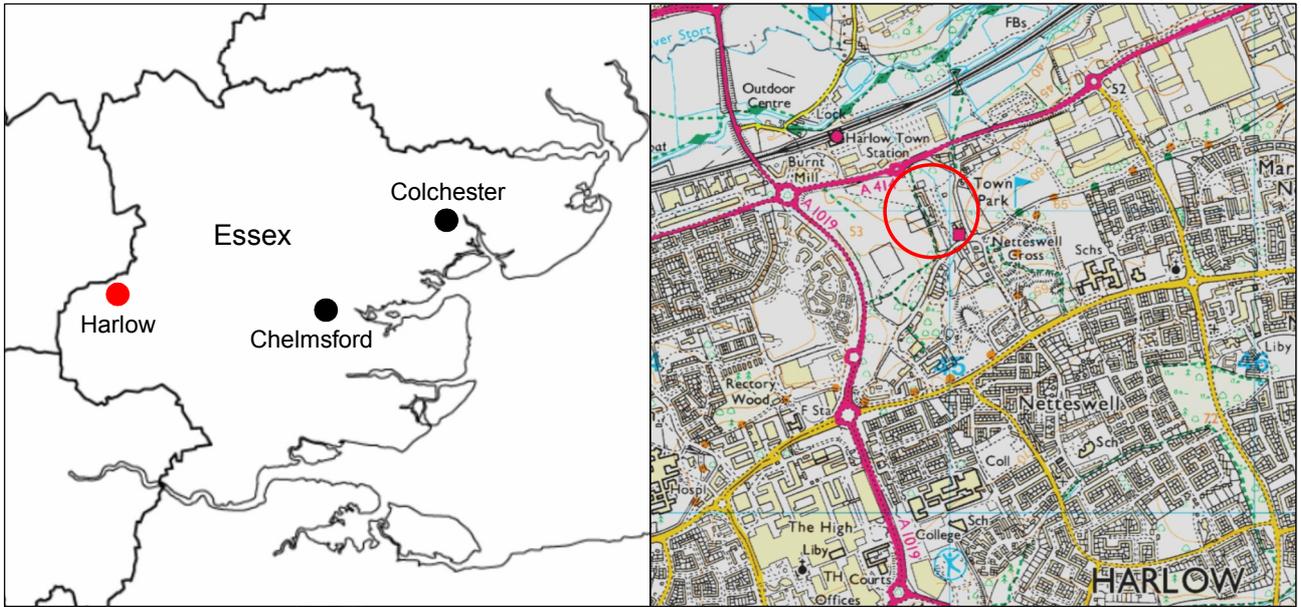


Fig 1 Site location.

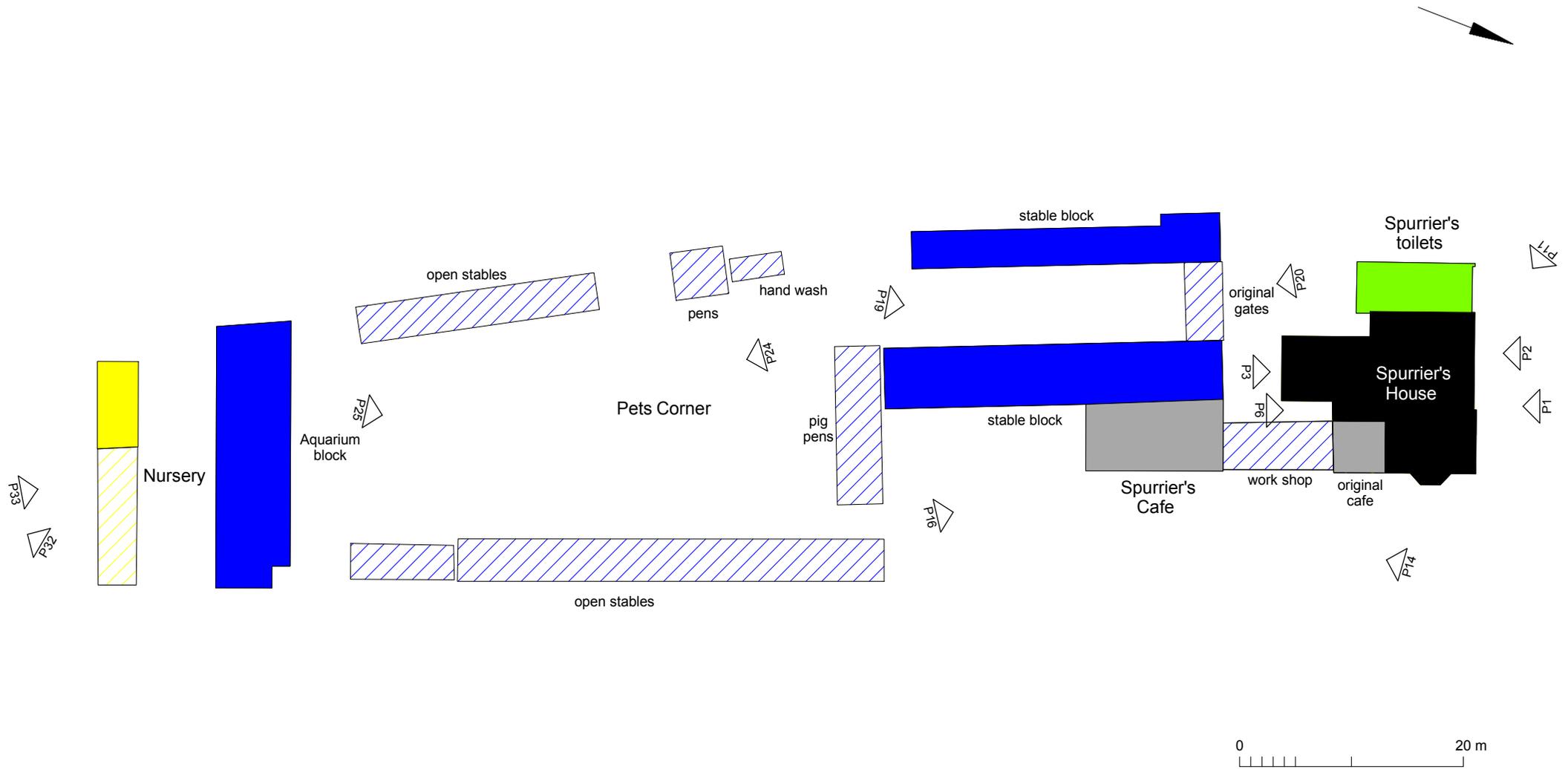


Fig 2 Spurrier's Core, showing the location and orientation of photographs included in this report.

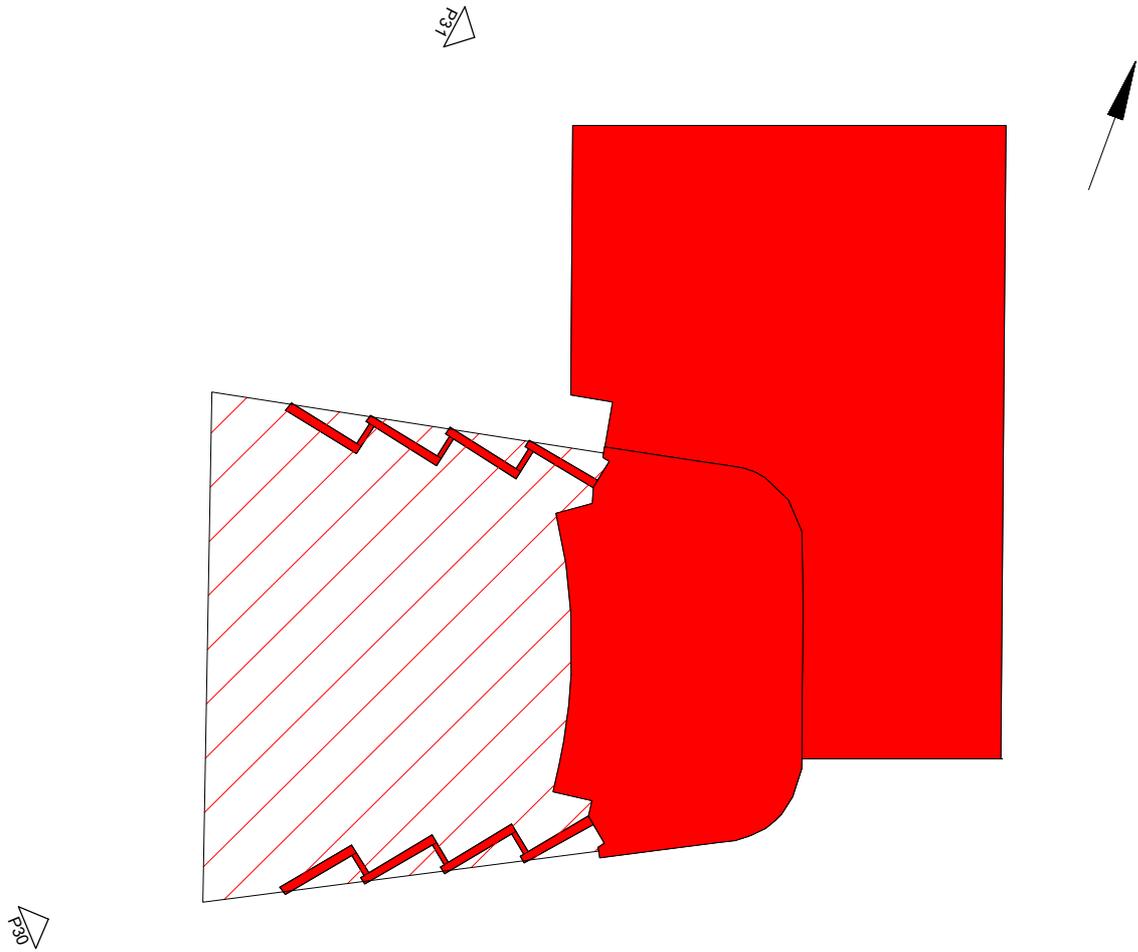


Fig 3 The Bandstand, showing the location and orientation of photographs included in this report.

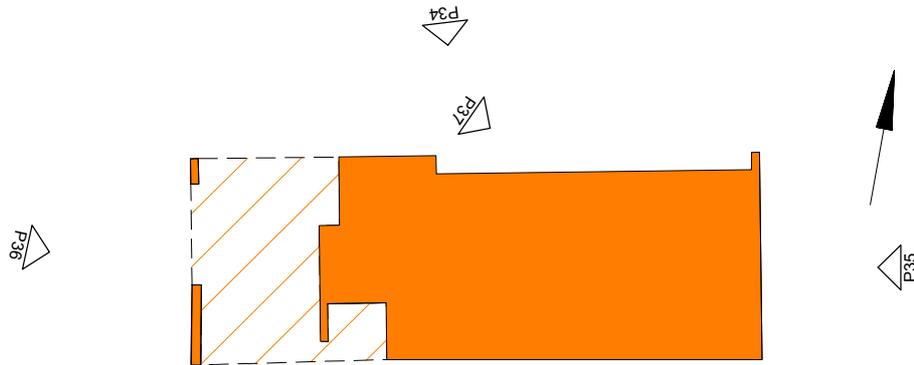


Fig 4 The Greyhound toilets, showing the location and orientation of photographs included in this report.



## Essex Historic Environment Record/ Essex Archaeology and History

### Summary sheet

<b>Address:</b> Harlow Town Park, Harlow, Essex	
<b>Parish:</b> Netteswell	<b>District:</b> Harlow
<b>NGR:</b> TL 4492 1101 (c)	<b>Site codes:</b> CAT project – 14/06e ECC HE code – HATP14 Harlow Museum accession – requested
<b>Type of work:</b> Building recording	<b>Site director/group:</b> Colchester Archaeological Trust
<b>Date of work:</b> June 2013	<b>Size of area investigated:</b> n/a
<b>Location of curating museum:</b> Harlow Museum	<b>Funding source:</b> Client
<b>Monitored by:</b> Maria Medlycott of Essex Historic Environment	
<b>Further seasons anticipated?</b> No	<b>Related EHER numbers:</b> -
<b>Final report:</b>	CAT Report 781
<b>Periods represented:</b>	19th/20th century
<b>Summary:</b> <i>A programme of building recording was carried out by the Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) on several structures at Harlow Town Park, Essex in June 2014. The work was commissioned by Mr Andrew Allocca, Regeneration Project Delivery Manager for Harlow District Council. The structures recorded included 20th-century alterations to the 19th-century Spurrier's House, a petting zoo, bandstand, nursery and the Greyhound public toilets, all dating to the 20th century. These structures form part of Harlow Town Park, one of twelve parks with significant post-World War II elements cited on the English Heritage Register of Parks.</i>	
<b>Previous summaries/reports:</b> none	
<b>Keywords:</b> park, bandstand, public toilets	<b>Significance:</b> *
<b>Author of summary:</b> Chris Lister	<b>Date of summary:</b> July 2014