

FEDERAL HERITAGE BUILDINGS REVIEW OFFICE

BENCHMARK BUILDING REPORT 00-03 (Part 3 of 3)

TITLE: Building 38 (Guardhouse) and 602 (old "Dugout" tavern)
CFB Esquimalt
Colwood, British Columbia

SOURCE: Joan Mattie
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INTRODUCTION

This report examines two buildings at Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt: Building 38, the Guardhouse (ca. 1935; Figures 1-4), which is at the entrance to the Naval Supply Depot at Colwood (Figure 5); and Building 602 (formerly Building 37, Royal Roads; built ca. 1940; Figures 6-13), popularly known as "The Dugout" from its early days as a tavern/restaurant. Most recently used as a Degaussing workshop and monitoring station (degaussing being the process by which the polarity of a ship's hull is changed so as not to attract mines), it is located on the Coburg Spit (Figure 14). This narrow strip of land is between the Esquimalt Lagoon, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Adjacent is Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site and across the lagoon is the former Royal Roads military college. Both subject buildings are owned by the Department of National Defence, which has no immediate plans for changes to them.

HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

Thematic

The buildings under review are minor evidences of the strengthening of the Canadian military on the West Coast just before, and during the Second World War. Following a period of doldrums and neglect at Esquimalt from the end of the First World War through the Great Depression, there was a quiet but steady build-up of its defences after 1935, under the newly elected MacKenzie King government, which recognized the seriousness of the deteriorating international situation at that time.¹

Part of the new allocation of resources was the establishment of the Colwood Joint Services Magazine. It was this compound that the Guardhouse served, providing secure land access to the area that housed stores of ammunition. During the war, these stores were used by both the Canadian and British navies operating out of Esquimalt, by the army's coastal defence artillery,

¹ Ronald Lovatt, "A History of the Defence of Victoria and Esquimalt, 1918-1956," (Parks Canada) 1988, p. 46.

and by the Royal Canadian Air Force.² In 1957, the magazine function moved to Rocky Point, and the site became the Colwood Supply Depot. In 1965, it also became home to the Fleet Diving Unit, which provides diving support to Canadian forces on the Pacific Coast as well as to other government departments and research projects. The Guardhouse still serves as a security checkpoint for this facility, now manned by a Commissionaire. A motorcycle club comprised of CFB Esquimalt personnel also uses part of the building.

The "Dugout" has a lesser and quite different relevance to the Second World War activity at Esquimalt, having been built on privately owned land and intended by its civilian owner, Percy Buxton, as a recreation facility for off-duty military personnel. The current building dates from ca. 1940, replacing a similar structure that was destroyed or damaged by fire around that time. Probably it had been built in the late 1920s. Within walking distance from Fort Rodd Hill, the place was, in fact, very popular with the soldiers stationed there, but it was expropriated by DND in 1942.³ Coming first under the management of Royal Roads (established as a naval college in 1942;⁴ located across the lagoon to the northwest), it was later (1960s) converted into two housing units and listed with the Belmont Park PMQs. In 1993, it was refurbished for its present use.

Person/Event

No person or event of historical significance is known to be associated with the **Guardhouse**.

The "**Dugout**," on the other hand, is associated with a person that was well known in the community of Colwood and perhaps beyond: Percy H. Buxton.⁵ The builder and owner of the well-loved pub, he had been a sergeant at Fort Rodd Hill, where from 1919 until 1928, he lived in the Warrant Officers' Quarters, responsible for the outfort detachment of gunners and the maintenance of their equipment. This, however, was during a time of relative inaction at the base. In practice, Buxton spent most of his time tending his cattle, horses, pigs and poultry,

² See part 1 of 3 of this same FHBRO report (00-03). This previously submitted report also discusses the difficulty in dating the various buildings, as 1935 is given by the DND Properties Resource Office as the construction date for all of them, despite the DND Annual Report of 1938, which states that the land was acquired in 1937 and that construction continued until ca. 1940 (p. 90).

³ See "Preliminary Information Sheet" supplied by DND. It may be that the earlier version of the Dugout was built around 1928, when its owner, Percy Buxton, left military service and launched into his own civilian endeavours.

⁴ DND records state the 1942 date, though a deed is on file with a May 1943 date. DND "Preliminary Information Sheet."

⁵ The historian at CFB Esquimalt, Doug Nelson, confirms that Buxton was a well-known and well-liked local figure, especially by those who like to stop for a beer or two at his establishment when it was in operation.

which were allowed to graze the grass around the batteries and to shelter in former engineer sheds.⁶ Buxton had come to Canada in 1906 when he was 18, a recruit of the Imperial British Army. In 1909 he married locally and began a large family that eventually numbered 14 children. They were featured in at least one newspaper story.⁷ Upon retirement from the Canadian army, Buxton embarked on his very successful pub endeavour, ensuring a happy mix of hospitality and firmness in dealing with customers. In an English accent, his "Now Matey, you've had one too many," was a familiar but persuasive phrase.

Local Development

The **Guardhouse** conveniently illustrates the growth of the Canadian forces military base along the western shore of Esquimalt Harbour in the 1930s, within the town of Colwood. Prior to the federal acquisition of the 127 acres that would comprise Colwood Magazine, much of the land was in industrial use and at least part of it was occupied by a lumber yard. The new military development renewed and underscored the status of this region as an important centre of national defence, with implications for local employment and the growth of local service industries.

The **Dugout** conveniently illustrates the interaction of military personnel and civilians at Colwood, and the beginnings of a trend toward greater public access to the beautiful beach and lagoon that borders the structure on its front and back sides. The narrow spit on which it sits had been a rifle range for the navy as late as 1896, with access to Fort Rodd Hill by way of some primitive military bridging over the narrow tidal inlet that separates the two bodies of land. Personnel from the fort were apparently using this route to get to the pub in the late 1920s, and presumably, civilians were able to come in from the west. Both routes were improved by a new road along the spit in 1930, and a new wooden bridge to replace the old military one.⁸ Soon, the short stretch of road from the bridge to the old Belmont Road (bordering Fort Rodd Hill) was complete, and the beach, lagoon and Dugout pub became easily accessible, as they remain today. Further concessions to public use in this area were the establishment of Fort Rodd Hill as a Parks Canada-run national historic site in 1962 and the handing over of Royal Roads military college for use as a public university in 1995.

ARCHITECTURE

Aesthetic Design

Guardhouse

This is a well-proportioned, single storey, 46'x24' structure (Figure 1). It has a 3-part massing, including rectangular end units and a recessed centre block that projects 7' in the rear (Figure 2).

⁶ Lovatt, p. 46.

⁷ A copy of a newspaper article was submitted with the FHBRO package, entitled "Percy Buxton's Production Line," by Bill Kersey [n.d. or publication name]. The title refers to Buxton's 14 children, with additional information on his pub and early career.

⁸ Lovatt, p. 48.

The front recess is spanned by a porch with 3 arches, the middle one leading to the front door of the main guard room. Contained between a hipped roof and a concrete plinth at the base, the walls are perhaps the most striking feature. They are of tan brick set in stretcher bond. On the facade, every fifth row is recessed, while on the sides and rear, they project. This creates horizontal lines, which on the front, somewhat simulate ashlar stonework. Other details include a row of vertical bricks under a slightly projecting cornice, a suggestion of capitals in the columns that support the arches, and concrete (or stone) sills at the windows.

add to course
Arch-fronted guardhouses were a popular design at Canadian military installations, some a legacy from the French period, as in the case of the Place d'Armes guardhouse, Fortress of Louisbourg NHS (ca. 1740), or the period of the British naval presence, as at Work Point Barracks, CFB Esquimalt (ca. 1900; see appended Benchmark Score Sheet). The latter is a wooden building, whose once-intricately detailed supporting columns and moulded arches with simulated keystones have been greatly simplified with new cladding. While the original design may have been "excellent" in aesthetics, the present modified version was rated "very good" in the FHBRO evaluation. The 1930s Colwood Depot guardhouse is at least its equal, considering its pleasing proportions, its variety and logic of massing, its 3-arch porch, its near-original state, and above all, its distinctive brickwork.

Dugout

In its present state, this building is only loosely associated with the Tudor Revival style, with minimal references: small areas of fake half-timbering in the gable ends and Tudor arches over the side doorways (Figures 6, 8, 9). As such, it is a "fair" example, at best. A much better example is the Horticulture Building, Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa, which has the characteristic contrasts of texture (brick, stone, stucco, wood), overhanging second storey, and extensive half-timbering (see appended Benchmark Score Sheet). If it had also included irregular massing and more medieval detailing, it might have been considered an "excellent" example, as would the Dugout. Despite these deficiencies, the Dugout has some other pleasing qualities, such as the broad gabled roof punctuated by a cross gable and projecting centre section on the Strait side, and an overhanging dormer on the lagoon side. These features are similar, but not identical to those of the original building (Figure 7), in which the cross gable and centre section appear to have been wider and capable of accommodating more windows. That structure had a more rustic appearance, with widely overhanging eaves and perhaps a simulated log siding. In addition, the broad ocean-side verandah, and the generous expanses of windows would have taken good advantage of the scenic view, unlike the current building. In rebuilding, Buxton may have opted for the Tudor Revival details to imitate the many cosy pubs in that style in his native England. Or perhaps he was simply following the popular fashion elsewhere in the Victoria vicinity, where the style also abounds.

Functional Design

The **Guardhouse** is an attractive, brick-faced building that has survived in relatively good condition. Despite this, its current functional suitability is described as "poor" by its owner, perhaps because of the incorporation of wood in the roof (and possibly in the framing system), which places it in the "non-fireproof" category. The layout, which originally had rooms specifically meant for guards and an overseeing sergeant (Figure 4), now serves more general

uses, and the spaces are designated as "office," "lounge," "multi-purpose room," and "general storage."

The **Dugout**, originally constructed as a pub/restaurant, has been radically modified at least twice: for married housing in the 1960s (PMQs; Figures 11, 12), and for a degaussing workshop in the 1990s. In the more recent renovation, a "viewing room" was installed where two bedrooms had been (on first floor; see Figure 11), and an overhead door was put in to permit clear sight lines from monitoring instruments to ships out in the Strait. The basic structural system is house-like, and of no special interest, yet its basic amenities of roof, walls, and three levels of useable space (including basement), have been considered sufficient to warrant the changes.

Craftsmanship and Materials

The **Guardhouse** exhibits very good brickwork. Inside, there are a few touches of good, original workmanship, such as in a hanging cupboard in the kitchen area of the main guard room (Figure 3). The **Dugout** must have been reasonably well built to have been considered worthy of all its renovations. The exterior stucco finish appears to replicate the original surface, but the steel roof is likely a replacement. Inside, remnants of original craftsmanship remain, such as portions of the old fireplace mantle and hearth (now jutting into a hallway), cornice mouldings and pilasters in one room, a newel post and stairway railing, and a shelf and some moulding in the ground floor kitchen (Figure 10).

Designer

The designers of these buildings are not known. The Guardhouse likely was designed within the Department of National Defence, while the Dugout would have been designed by a civilian architect or builder, if not Buxton himself.

ENVIRONMENT

Site

The **Guardhouse** site has seen minimal changes in its immediate landscape (grass and trees at the back; paving in front), as well as the addition of some neighbouring buildings (garage, transport office, storage tanks). It remains much as it was when built -- still commanding the entrance to the Colwood Supply Depot (formerly the Colwood Magazine).

The **Dugout** has suffered more change, namely: the placement of boulders along its front (the Strait side; Figure 6); probably the loss of a verandah on this side, as on the original building; and the introduction of a chain link fence in close proximity to the rear (Lagoon side; Figure 6). Likely the road was widened on this side also, some time after it was graded in 1930. Otherwise, the building still sits in isolation on the beach, much as it has always done.

Setting

The **Guardhouse** reinforces the character of the Colwood Supply Depot as a military installation

that needs a secure checkpoint (see location in Figure 5), due to its prominence and distinctive design.

The **Dugout** is somewhat more problematic. If it were restored to its original use and/or appearance, it would reinforce the current public use of land in this area, and it would enhance people's enjoyment of the beach. The present military use detracts from this enjoyment, and the chain link fence and tightly shuttered windows on the front are uninviting.

Landmark

The **Guardhouse** is known to people accessing the Colwood Supply Depot, but otherwise, it is a building that the general public would rarely see or notice. The **Dugout**, on the other hand, is well known to the many who come here to enjoy the beach and the magnificent views in this area, or the bird sanctuary in the lagoon; to students at the university across the lagoon (the old Royal Roads); and to visitors of Fort Rodd Hill (Figure 14). The building has been placed on the local heritage list of the City of Colwood. Recently, the city's Rotary Club inquired of DND about the possibility of turning it into a tea room, but DND is still finding it useful and is not about to give it up, at least in the near future.⁹

⁹ Information conveyed in telephone conversation with Don Beamish, Base Properties Officer, 21 June 2001.

**GUARDHOUSE (Building 38) AND "DUGOUT" TAVERN (Building 602)
CFB ESQUIMALT, COLWOOD, BRITISH COLUMBIA**



- 1 Building 38 (Guard House), Naval Supply Depot, Colwood British Columbia; constructed ca. 1935. (CFB Esquimalt, March 2000)

**GUARDHOUSE (Building 38) AND "DUGOUT" TAVERN (Building 602)
CFB ESQUIMALT, COLWOOD, BRITISH COLUMBIA**

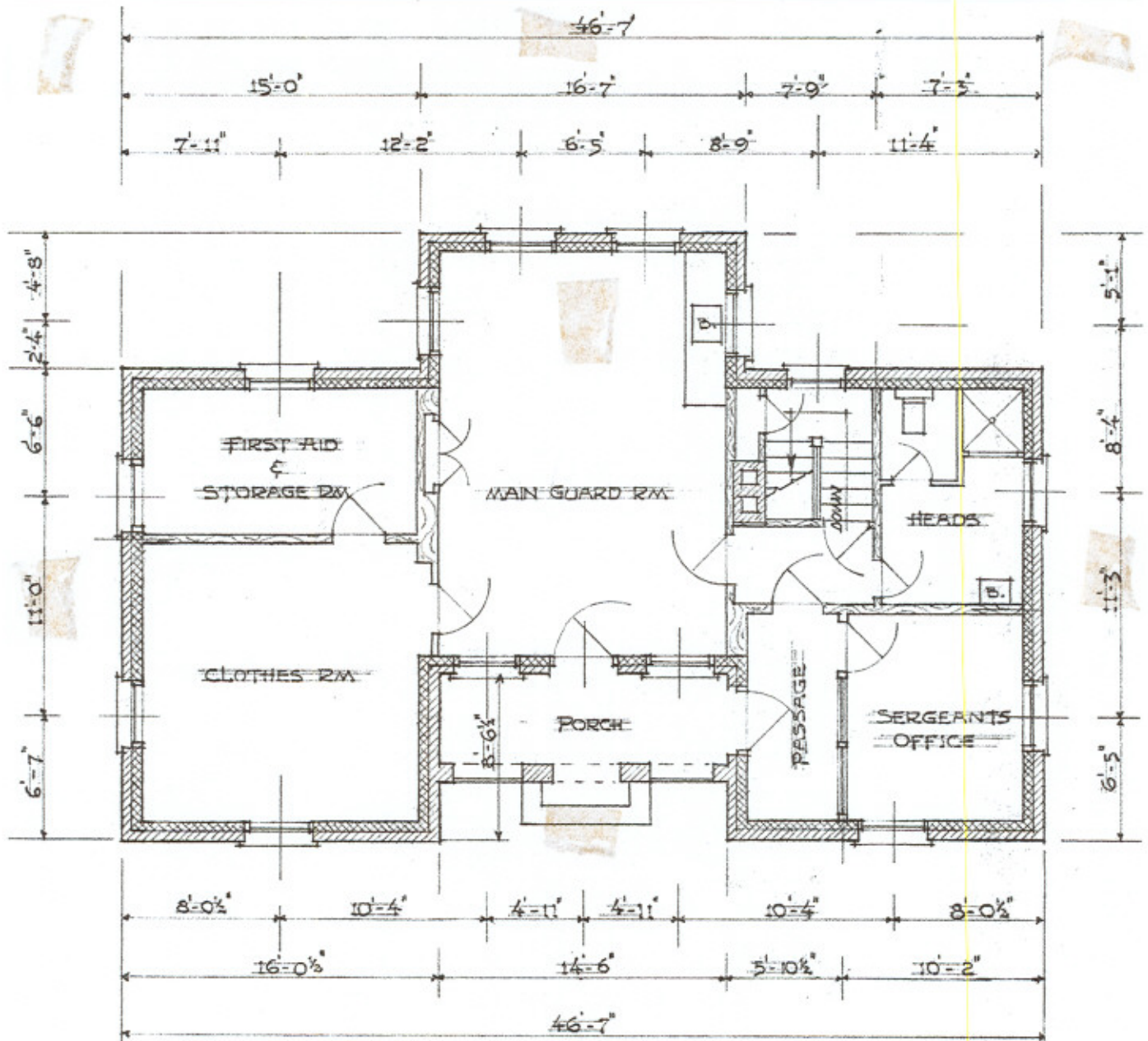


2 Building 38, Colwood; rear view (CFB Esquimalt, March 2000.)



3 Building 38, Colwood; kitchen cupboard.
(CFB Esquimalt, March 2000)

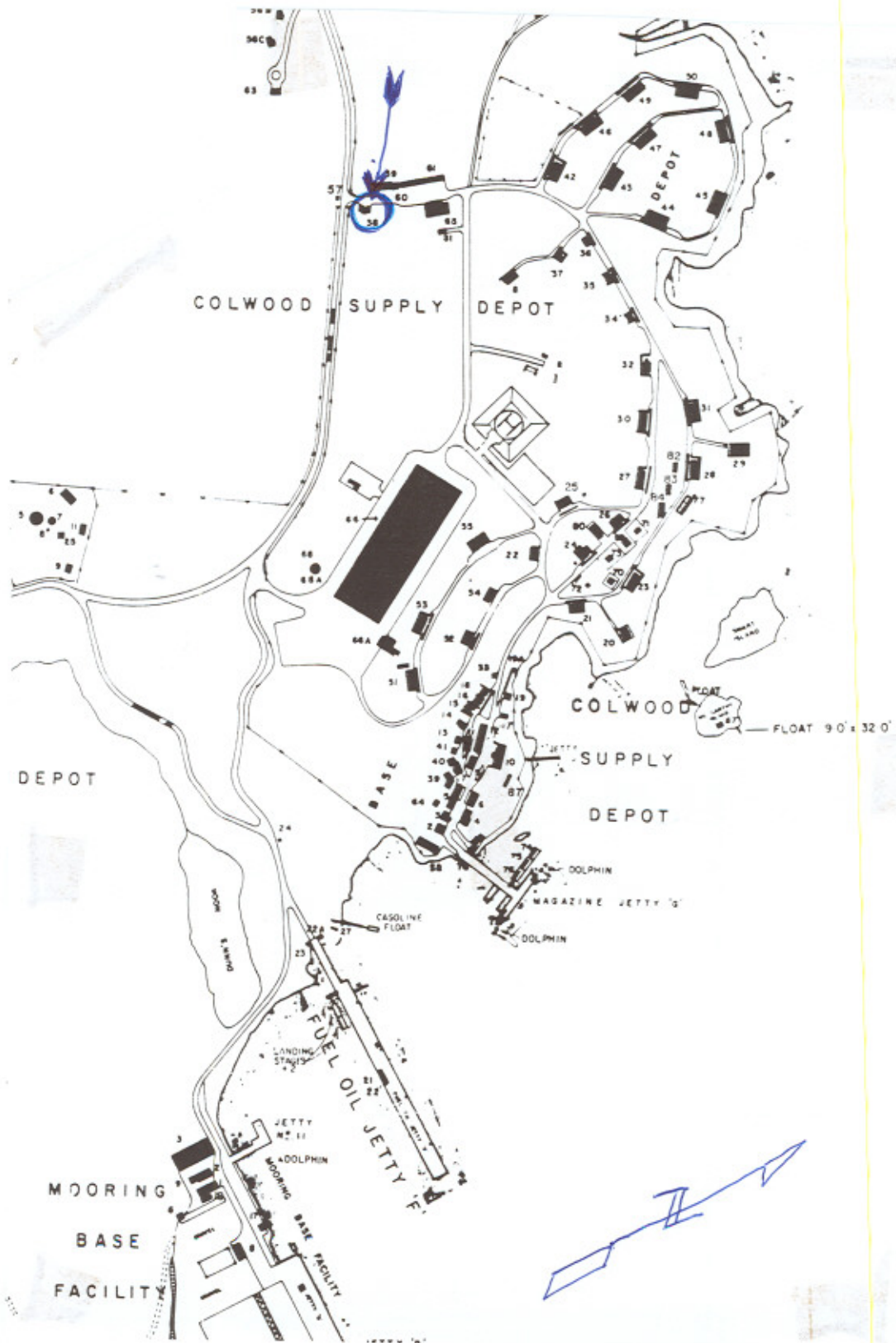
GUARDHOUSE (Building 38) AND "DUGOUT" TAVERN (Building 602)
CFB ESQUIMALT, COLWOOD, BRITISH COLUMBIA



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

4 Building 38, Colwood; plan of first floor. (DND, 1963.)

**GUARDHOUSE (Building 38) AND "DUGOUT" TAVERN (Building 602)
CFB ESQUIMALT, COLWOOD, BRITISH COLUMBIA**




5 Map of the Colwood Supply Depot; arrow points to Guardhouse (Building 38) (upper portion of map). (CFB Esquimalt, 1991.)

GUARDHOUSE (Building 38) AND "DUGOUT" TAVERN (Building 602)
CFB ESQUIMALT, COLWOOD, BRITISH COLUMBIA



- 6 Building 602 (Degaussing Hut Site; formerly "The Dugout" tavern, privately owned), 2901 Ocean Blvd., Colwood, B.C.; constructed ca. 1940. Top photo: Strait of Juan de Fuca side; lower photo: Esquimalt Lagoon side, facing mainland (north). (CFB Esquimalt, February 2000.)



**DUGOUT
HOTEL**

Fred G. Buxton and
Staff wish The
Majesties Long Lives
and Happiness.

Esquimalt Lagoon
Phone Belmont 48

Where Tourists are
given a hearty welcome.
Fresh Crabs daily.

- 7 Photo of an advertisement for The Dugout in Esquimalt's "Jubilee" book (n.d.), with reference to the Royal Visit in 1939. This appears to be the "pre-fire" structure, which shows a broader centre gable and a more rustic style, with perhaps a simulated log siding. (Courtesy of CFB Esquimalt.)

**GUARDHOUSE (Building 38) AND "DUGOUT" TAVERN (Building 602)
CFB ESQUIMALT, COLWOOD, BRITISH COLUMBIA**



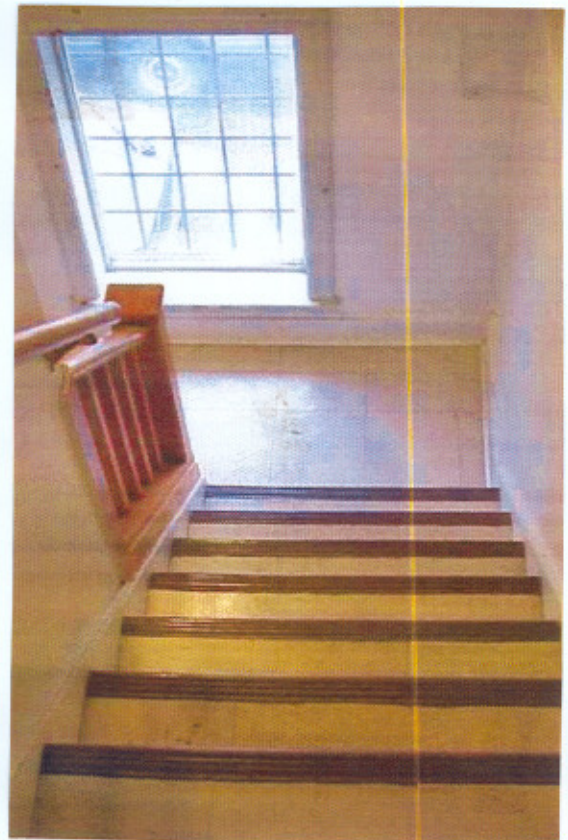
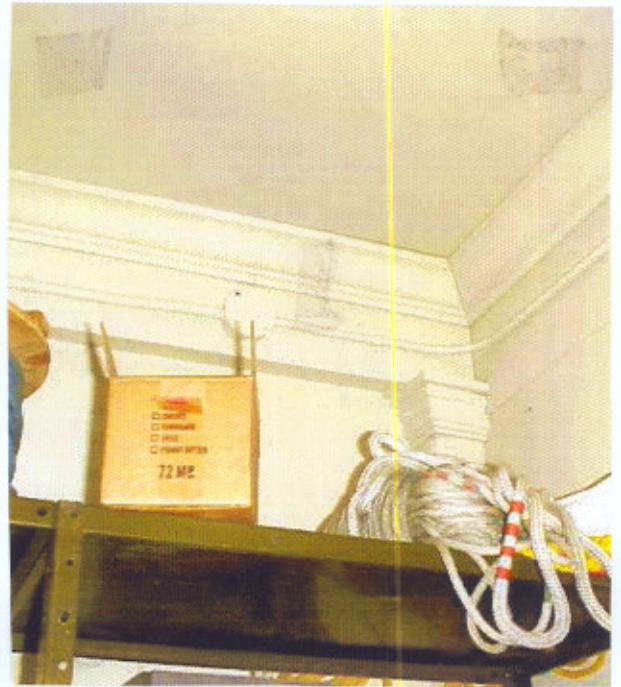
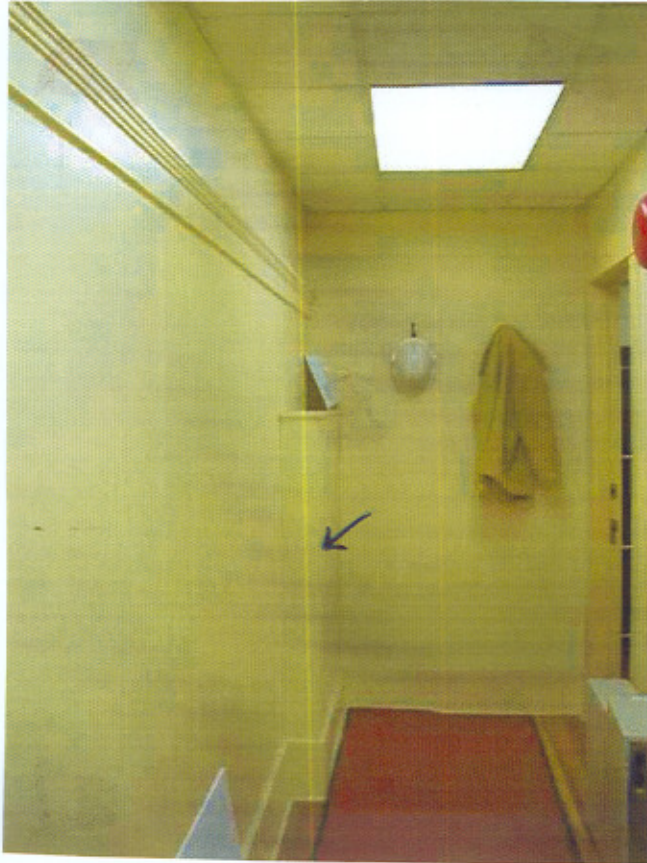
8 Building 602, south and east sides (CFB Esquimalt, Feb. 2000)



9 Building 602, west and north sides. (CFB Esquimalt, Feb. 2000)

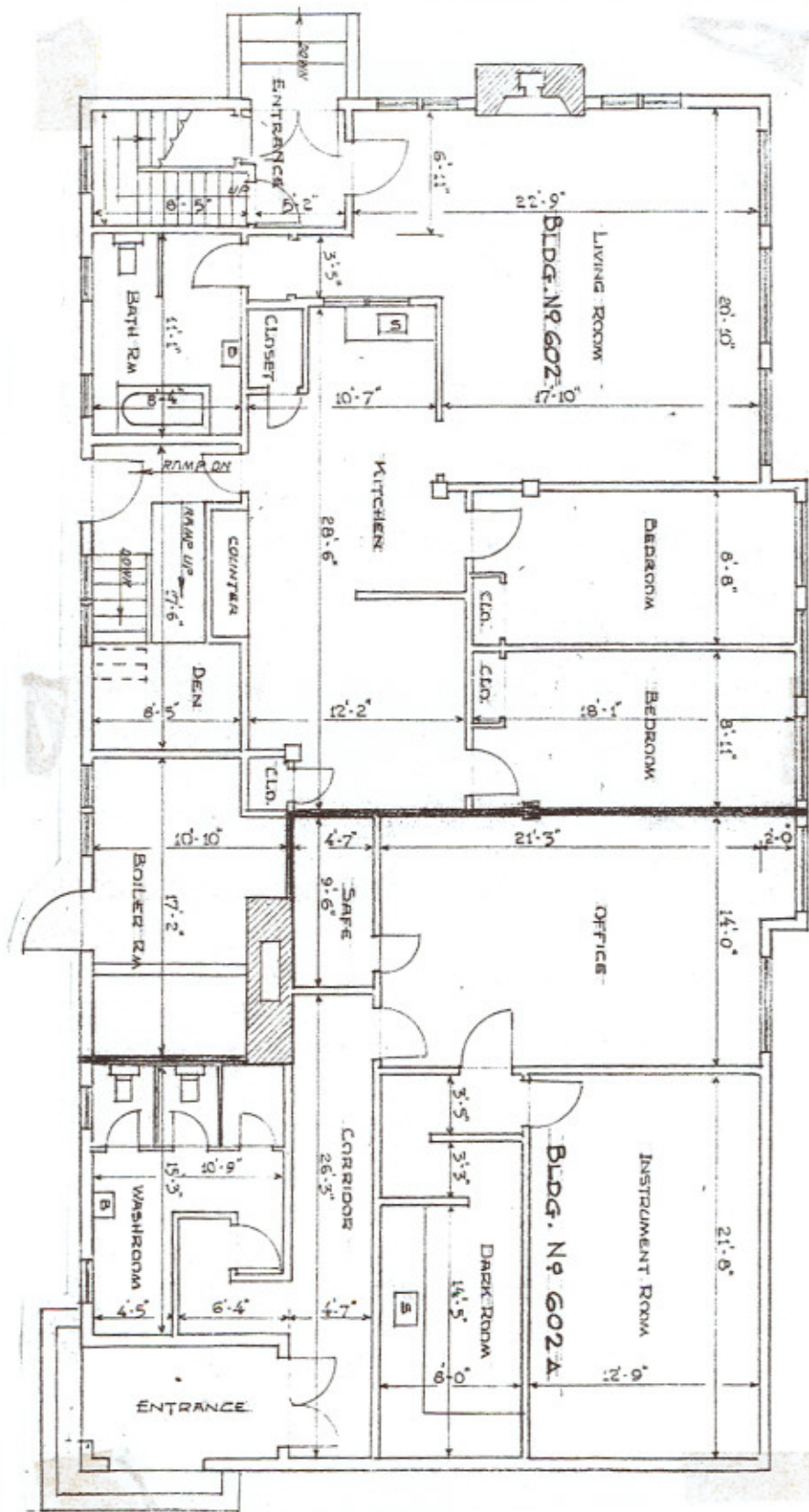


**GUARDHOUSE (Building 38) AND "DUGOUT" TAVERN (Building 602)
CFB ESQUIMALT, COLWOOD, BRITISH COLUMBIA**



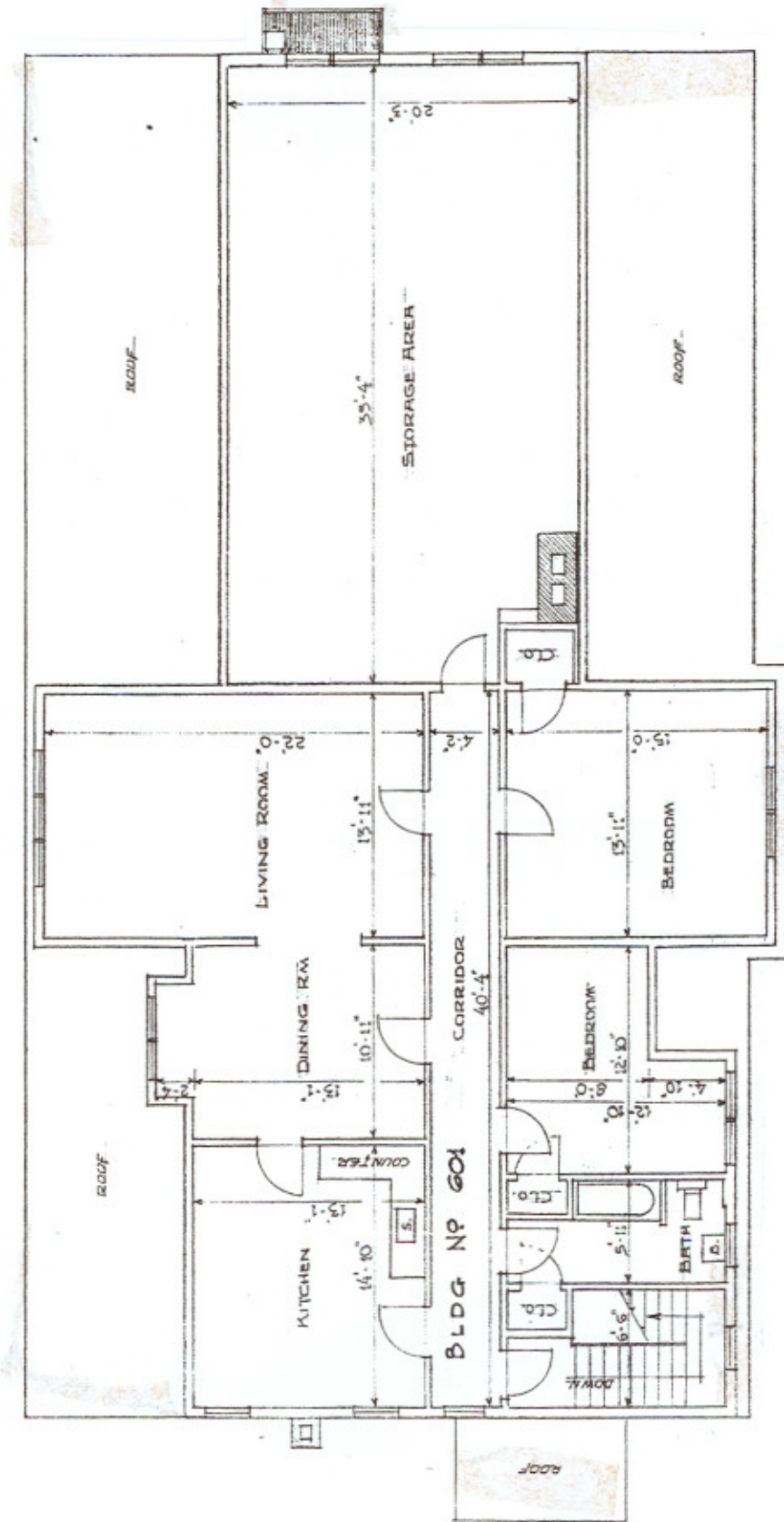
- 10 Building 602; interior views showing original detailing. Clockwise from top left: portion of old fireplace jutting into hallway; cornice moulding and pilaster in corner of room; newel post and railing in stairway to second floor; moulding and old shelf in kitchen. (CFB Esquimalt, Feb. 2000.)

GUARDHOUSE (Building 38) AND "DUGOUT" TAVERN (Building 602)
 CFB ESQUIMALT, COLWOOD, BRITISH COLUMBIA



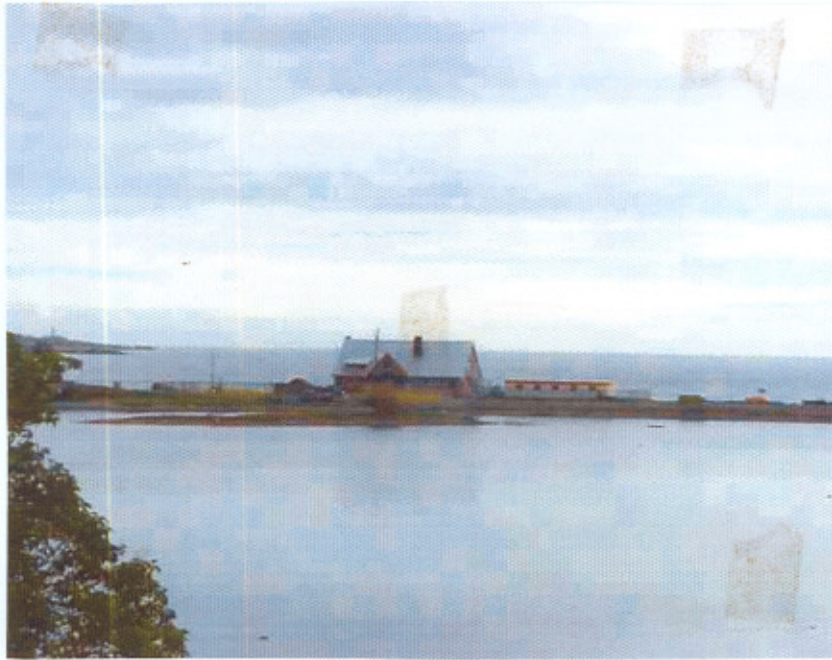
11 Building 602; first floor plan. (CFB Esquimalt, n.d.)

GUARDHOUSE (Building 38) AND "DUGOUT" TAVERN (Building 602)
CFB ESQUIMALT, COLWOOD, BRITISH COLUMBIA

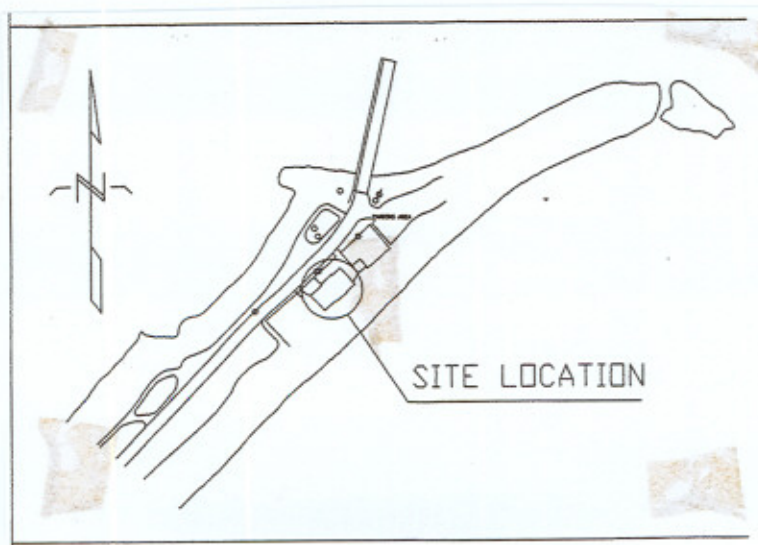


12 Building 602; second floor plan. (CFB Esquimalt, n.d.)

**GUARDHOUSE (Building 38) AND "DUGOUT" TAVERN (Building 602)
CFB ESQUIMALT, COLWOOD, BRITISH COLUMBIA**



- 13 Building 602, on Coburg Spit between Esquimalt Lagoon (foreground) and Strait of Juan de Fuca (background). (CFB Esquimalt, 2000)



- 14 Map of northeast end of Coburg Spit, showing location of Building 602, and also bridge over to mainland near Fort Rodd Hill (upper middle). (CFB Esquimalt 1991.)

Benchmarks

FEDERAL HERITAGE BUILDINGS REVIEW OFFICE

BENCHMARK SCORE

Comparative for: FHBRO Report No. 00-03

Building Name/No. Guard House, CFB Esquimalt
(Building 38) Colwood, British Columbia



FHBRO Report no. 89-205

Building: Building 1001, Guard House, Work Point Barracks, CFB Esquimalt
(ca. 1900)

Score: Thematic.....	5
Person/Event.....	0
Local Development.....	6
Aesthetic Design.....	13
Functional Design.....	5
Craftsmanship and Materials.....	4
Designer.....	2
Site.....	6
Setting.....	11
Landmark.....	8
Total.....	<u>60</u>

FEDERAL HERITAGE BUILDINGS REVIEW OFFICE

BENCHMARK SCORE

Comparative for: FHBRO Report No. 00-03

Building Name/No. CFB Esquimalt, Colwood, B.C. (2 buildings, including "The Dugout," formerly a tavern)



FHBRO Report no. 96-134

Building: Building No. 55 (Horticulture Building), Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa

Score: Thematic.....	5
Person/Event.....	10
Local Development.....	4
Aesthetic Design.....	13
Functional Design.....	5
Craftsmanship and Materials.....	4
Designer.....	2
Site.....	6
Setting.....	11
Landmark.....	5
Total.....	<u>65</u>