

**Brock Keep, Reading
Heritage Statement**



A roof with a view

**Heritage Lottery Fund
OHOS, OpenHand OpenSpace Ltd**

HLF Phase I

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Summary

The Keep in Reading was built in 1877 as part of Brock Barracks following Sir Edward Cardwell’s Army reforms. Designed at the War Office by architect Major H C Seddon of the Royal Engineers, a number of these keeps were built throughout the UK to inspire local pride and promote recruitment to county regiments. They acted as gatehouses, armouries and secure regimental stores. Reading’s Keep is one of the surviving few that remain in nearly original condition. It is Grade II listed building and is particularly special because of its setting next to its original Army Depot.

This document is to support any future application for funding from public funds, needed for conservation of the building and its setting, as well as to improve use to the local community. The Keep has had a range of links to Reading in the past, from originally being a military building to being a cultural centre providing a base for artists’ studios and gallery.

The current occupier Open Hand Open Space LTD (OHOS) is trying to extend its outreach and learning opportunities of heritage and culture.

The social and cultural aspects of military architecture are briefly explored, with a view to a clearer understanding of the significance of Brock Keep.

Overall the condition of the building is good, with certain conservation aspects needing attention and further investigation as a basis for future conservation plan. This report is about the steps required to ensure the survival of Brock Keep in Reading.

Introduction



Figure 1

Brock Keep and Cenotaph

For 80 years the Royal Berkshire Regiment used Brock Keep. For a few years in the early 1980s it was a refuge for homeless people and for the last 35 years it has provided studios and exhibition space for artists. Many local people have memories of the Keep from these different times and are keen to tell their stories. The Barracks are still occupied by Army Reserve and other units.

Cenotaph was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, in a similar style to one in Whitehall, and recently fully restored and listed to Grade II*

The building has great significance of historic and social aspects of the period following Sir Edward Cardwell's Army reforms in 1880's and it is a good example of military architectural code, designed to impress, attract and recruit more people.

Aims and Objectives of the project

The aim of the project is to secure the long-term use of all parts of Brook Keep as a West Reading Arts and Heritage Centre, strongly supported by the Local Authority.

Objective of this report is to support applications to save Brock Keep for the benefit of all stakeholders:

- Reading Borough Council (RBC), owner of the building
- Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) providing funding for restoration of the building and public engagement relating to Brock Keep's heritage activities
- Open Hand Open Space Ltd (OHOS) an artist-led, non-profit community benefit society established in 1995, accepted by the HM Revenue and Customs as a charity for tax purposes and regulated by the FSA.
All members are part of project and decisions are made on regular meetings
- People of Reading (population about 230,000)

Project team

Lucy Robinson, HLF Grants Officer and Bob Tranter, HLF Mentor

Ingrid Jensen OHOS Chair of Trustees, the main supervisor, responsible for all HLF documentation on volunteer basis

Ksenija Krotin OHOS Trustee, assistant supervisor, responsible for all Planning and Listed Building Consent Applications on a volunteer basis

Julian Bullen, Clarkson Alliance, Project Manager

John M Staves and Oliver R Goodyear, Michael Aubrey Partnership Ltd, Civil Engineers and Leading Designers

Hannah Dix, Heritage Advisor

History of Brock Keep, 571 Oxford Road, Reading

1875: April: start of building work

1878: 19 January: new barracks inspected. They were constructed to hold 250-300 soldiers. The 60ft high Keep had attached gatehouse, guardroom, cells & fire-engine house on ground floor, three arms stores above, water tanks and magazine on the roof.

1878: 25 January: The first troops moved into the new barracks on its 20 acre site in Tilehurst Parish, just outside the Reading Borough boundary. One block, for the 49th Regiment of Foot, was named "Isaac Brock."

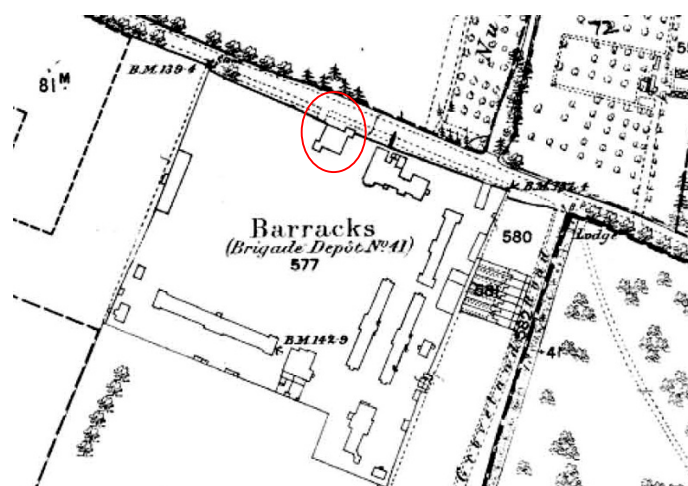


Figure 2

The Keep of the Brock Barracks, Reading

Ordnance Survey;
County Series Berkshire Sheet
XXXVII.2

Original scale 1:2500 (OS-1879)

1921: Unveiling of the Cenotaph, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in a similar style to that in Whitehall but on a smaller scale.

1932: Regimental Museum started in Officers' Mess

1934: Depot named Brock Barracks.

1959: May 20: The Royal Berks' regimental colours were trooped for the last time, before being laid up at Windsor Castle.

1972: August: the Regimental Pay Office of the Royal Corps of Signals moves out after being located at Brock Barracks since 1960. There were about 100 staff who will be leaving, but it is likely that the Territorial Army would continue to use the barracks.

1973: Plans for sale of parts of barracks not required for Territorial & Army Volunteer Reserve. Reading Corporation interested in part of the site as playing fields for Wilson School. Some parts vacated in 1972 by Pay Corps. War Memorial may be moved.

1975: Date first listed 22-Dec-1975 as Oxford Road Brock Gardens: Keep and attached gatehouse. Grade II

1977: February: Royal Berkshire Regimental Museum artefacts are packed up and taken from the room in the Keep where they have been displayed for the last 30 years. They will be stored in Devizes until a new museum is opened in Salisbury for the Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment (Berkshire and Wiltshire).

1980: Used briefly as a shelter for homeless people,

1982: Provision of artists' studios and exhibition space. OHOS had occupied the Keep as a less formal group of artists' studios

1986: Brock Gardens development partly completed

1988: Brock Gardens & August End development completed

1995: Open Hand Open Space OHOS was incorporated as an Industrial and Provident Society with charitable status (community benefit society) IP28256R. It is registered with the Financial Services Authority on its Mutual Public Register.

2012: Reading Borough Council has carried out a major fire safety upgrade to the interior, but there is still much structural work needed, especially to the exterior, which is now partly covered by scaffolding.

2015: Listed Building Consent for the conversion of existing cell to provide new kitchenette and unisex wheelchair friendly WC had been granted by the Secretary of State in April 2014, funded and built by OHOS

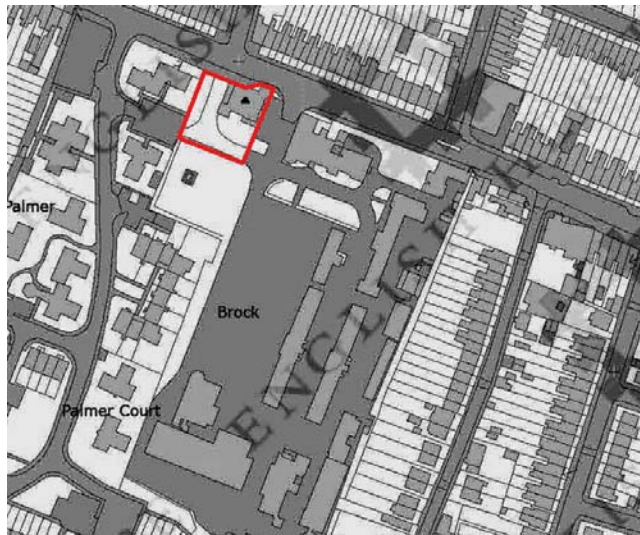


Figure 3

List Entry NGR
SU 69293 73761

Original map scale 1:2500

List entry summary

The building is listed under Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural and historic interest.

Name: Keep and attached walls and gateway, Brock Barracks

List entry number: 1156392

Grade II

Date first listed: 22-Dec-1975

Details: SU67 SE Reading Oxford Road (south side) 934/16/621 Keep and attached walls and gateway, Brock Barracks (Formerly listed as: 22.12.75 Oxford Road Brock Barracks: Keep and attached gatehouse)

List entry description

Armoury, guardhouse and store, disused. Dated 1877, designed at the War Office by Major HC Seddon, RE, supervising engineer Major Flint RE.

Red brick with terracotta bands and stone dressings, lateral stacks and asphalt roof Fortress Tudor Gothic Revival style.

Plan: Square, with ground-floor guard room and detention cells, corner stairs, stores on upper floors.

Exterior: 4 storeys, 5 window range. A regular, square block with opposite square stair towers rising above the roof, other two corners chamfered with raised parapets, with terracotta sill and lintel bands, dentil eaves and crenellated parapet. Battered ground floor to a weathered band, narrow metal-framed windows with stone lintels, stepped in threes to the stair tower. A glazed iron verandah to the guard house beside the entrance.

Interior: not inspected but noted as having a fire-proof construction of iron columns to jack arches and stone open well stairs, and a standard plan with guard house, cells and various stores.

Subsidiary Features: attached dwarf walls with iron railings extend 15m to the SE and SW of the front tower, and the former main entrance gate attached to the NW corner has a stepped parapet to a segmental arch, wickets other side.

History: the keep was a secure armoury, store, guard house and lock up, and the characteristic building of the Localisation depots. They were part of the Cardwell reforms, which redistributed barracks around the country to encourage local connections and assist recruitment. As such, the keep raised the local profile of the barracks and provided an emblematic focus for the regiment. Only ten examples survive, that at Brock also part, with Bodmin, of one of the two most complete surviving depots (Watson Colonel Sir HM: History of the Corps of Royal Engineers: Chatham 1954)

The setting of the “keep” or armoury within Cardwell’s building programme

The Keep in Reading is a striking landmark on the Oxford Road: a grade II listed Victorian armoury, stores and gatehouse built in 1877 as part of Brock Barracks following Sir Edward Cardwell’s Army reforms. A number of new armouries were built to safeguard the arms for the regular troops, militia and volunteers. These armouries were usually called the “keep” in reference to their commanding and impenetrable aspect. Situated beside or over the gateways and dominating the whole site of the depot, they were built with several local variations in different English counties. Reading’s Keep is built of bricks most likely from the potteries by Norcot Road and is one of the surviving few that have not been demolished or converted.



Figure 4: Brock Keep, Oxford Road, Reading

Surviving keeps of Cardwell barracks:

Reading (Brock Barracks)* well preserved
Guildford (Stoughton Barracks)* flats conversion
Devizes (Le Marchant Barracks)* flats conversion
Lincoln (Sobraon Barracks)*

Lost keeps: Oxford (depot at Cowley)*

Gloucester
Worcester (Norton Barracks) flanked by offices and officers’ quarters

Keeps of the similar design with incorporated gateway

Dorchester, The Keep Museum, built of Portland stone with complete Victorian dumb Waiter

*Keeps of the similar design with the separate keep and gateway

“These “keeps” became the most memorable physical expression of the Cardwell era and the hopes of the localization reforms for the future of the army. They were the only part of the depots to have an overtly military flavour to their architecture.”

As a key part of the home of the Royal Berkshire Regiment, The Keep in Reading has a significant national importance, because soldiers were recruited not only from Reading but also from areas around Bracknell, Newbury, Maidenhead, Windsor, Wokingham, and parts of what is now Oxfordshire.

References:

Douet, J; British Barracks 1600-1914. Their architecture and role in society.
Pp167-194. (TSO – 1998)
Watson-Smythe, E (ed); Deserted bastions. Historic Naval and Military architecture
(SAVE – 1993)

Significance of The Keep, 571 Oxford Road, Reading

The Keep of Reading is a characteristic building of the time when Sir Edward Cardwell’s Army reforms remained a major political issue for late Victorian and Edwardian Governments, intensified by the Boer War and the unification of Germany, between 1864 and 1871, leading to the First World War.

The keep raised the local profile of the barracks and provided an emblematic focus for the regiment, using a powerful architectural code of medieval fortifications, attracting more people to sign up at the time of a chronic gap between the growing manpower needs of the army and the number of men coming forward to volunteer.

Under Cardwell’s reforms it was planned that a regiment consisted of two regular battalions, one in service, the other at the depot providing training. This would be supported by militia battalion(s) which were part-time and needed space for equipment storage rather than accommodation for personnel. The Keep in Reading was a vital part at the entrance of the Brock Barracks. It was also a component of much larger national building programme of a redistribution of the home forces to depots, centred in an area populous enough to sustain a brigade.

Understanding the social and cultural setting of military architecture

As an ever increasing proportion of the population have never served in the uniformed services, it becomes increasingly difficult to understand the context of much military architecture, its design and particularly its use.

The armed forces are a very hierarchical and highly influenced by historical precedent and tradition. This will be reflected in their use of their environment, and although younger members may not realise this, their training and leadership will carry on an oral tradition.

The Keep houses several functions that have significant roles in the functioning of any military unit. The guardroom and its veranda are an important focal point, both visually and ritually, at the entrance to a unit, be it Army, Navy or Air Force. The guard room whether part of another building, or a separate building is the one location that is manned continually. Its overt function is security of the site, it is also the first point of contact with the unit. For visitors of sufficient rank there would be a formal presentation of the guard, "Turning out the Guard", where the guard would parade on the veranda (possibly in full regalia) and be inspected by the visitor. The security element will be the "guard", a collection of personnel whose role is to secure the site. The guard is mounted each evening, normally with formal drill on the veranda, where the Orderly Officer inspects the new guard and gives them their orders for their period of duty.

As part of the guardroom, there are the cells. These are for personnel who have in some way infringed military (or civil) law. Prisoners are also paraded and inspected (what isn't in the military). The guardroom cells are only intended for short term use; for those awaiting to go before the Commanding Officer on Orders (most basic form of military tribunal), and those who have been sentenced to short terms of imprisonment, rarely much more than seven days when they would be sent to either the cells in Aldershot, or a Military Corrective Training Centre such as Colchester (or when the Keep was in use, Shepton Mallet). During the day prisoners would normally be "usefully employed" round the units doing such things as gardening under escort by the guard.

The other component of the ground floor of the Keep, is the fire engine house. In earlier days this would be a hand-operated and hand drawn pump. Latterly it would have been a motor-driven pump which could be vehicle-drawn but it did not happen very often.

Figure 5: Veranda 1914



The setting of the keep within Reading

The Keep in Reading also has great significance for the town and a link to the many overseas campaigns from Victorian times through to World War I and World War II. Even now the TA next door are engaged in campaigns, such as Afghanistan, that resonate with historical ones such as the Battle of Maiwand, commemorated by Reading's enormous lion statue in the Forbury Gardens, adjacent to Reading Abbey Ruins.



Figure 6: The Lion records the names and commemorates the valour and devotion of officers and men of the 66th Berkshire Regiment who gave lives for their country at Girishk Maiwand and Kandahar and during the Afghan Campaign 1879-80

Figure 7: The Bugle pub's name & sign in Friar Street commemorates the 66th Royal Berkshire Regiment



Figure 8: St Mary's Church
The window commemorates the soldiers who fought at Maiwand.



Figure 9 :

St George's Church
A framed embroidery of the regimental colours of the 49th and 66th Royal Berkshire Regiment

OHOS Conservation Management Plan will develop conservation strategies appropriate to local needs and add new dimension to the public arts events programme that will enable visitors to learn about heritage and to participate in its conservation and presentation. With the help of expert guidance from museums such as the Wardrobe Museum, Salisbury and the Museum of Reading, we plan to involve new partner organisations and volunteers in developing a new local military history resource within the Keep. This will open a new 21st century chapter for the Keep that conserves the building for future generations and celebrates all the strands in its history.

Condition of the building

Mark Lovell Design Engineers (MLDE), were commissioned by OHOS Ltd to carry out a visual structural survey of The Keep and was done in dry conditions in November 2013, funded by Architectural Heritage Fund. The overall condition is quite good when considering the age and the limited maintenance.

Michael Aubrey Partnership Ltd (MA), were commissioned and funded by OHOS Ltd as a leading designer for this HLF Phase I in November 2018. Key extracts were taken from the MLDE report and commented on accordingly, based on the new visual survey.
(see Structural Report by MA)

The content of the visual surveys of The Keep should be considered as an initial guide to assist in the formulation of a Budget Cost Plan for any refurbishment of the building. The most important is to establish the outline policy to ensure that the significance of the building is protected and enhanced, not damaged or diminished.

The change of use from armoury to artist's studios is very friendly to the building and while OHOS plans to continue as an arts centre, this project gives a new opportunity to engage our visitors with heritage as well as art. There is a real need at present for better access to military history in Reading, for gallery rental, for more community events, but the minimum requirements for public use has to be secured. It was built to be relatively fireproof, eg the breeze concrete floors/ceilings designed and tested by Seddon, as detailed in the appendix to his book Builder's Work and The Building Trades.

Summary of construction and condition of elements from MLDE report

Level/location	Element	Material	Condition
all floors	walls	red brick & yellow string course	GG, RN
	windows and doors	metal and wood	RN
	dressings	Bath stone	GG RN
ground floor	floor	hardwood	GG,RN
		flint corbels in fire-engine room	GG,RN
	internal walls	red brick	GG RN
	external West wall	low level cement render	R
	veranda	Iron	GG, RN
		glass	Missing, R
	gate	red brick	GG, RN
		iron	GG, RN
	railings on front North wall	red brick	GG, RN
		iron	GG, RN
first floor	standard pattern of floor/ ceiling construction	insitu concrete slabs	GG
		on wrought iron beams	GG
		on cast iron columns	GG
		on stone columns	GG, RN
second floor	standard pattern of floor/ ceiling construction	insitu concrete slabs	GG
		on wrought iron beams	GG
		on cast iron columns	GG
third floor	standard pattern of floor/ ceiling construction	insitu concrete slabs	GG,RN
		on wrought iron beams	GG, RN
		on cast iron columns	GG
roof	parapet wall	460 mm red brick	GG, RN,R
	copings	Bath stone	GG, RN, R
	waterproof membrane	asphalt	R
towers	cantilever tread staircases	sand stone	GG, RN
	dumb waiter lift	iron and wood	RN
	exposed parapet wall	328 mm red brick, Bath stone	RN,
	water tanks	segmental cast iron	Removal
GG Generally Good		RN Repairing Needed	R replacement

HLF Phase I

Current HLF Phase I project “A roof with a view” will bring alive the worlds associated with Brock Keep over 140 years of history, providing heritage education, participation and enjoyment for all ages as they learn about the activities of soldiers, homeless people and artists.

According to structural reports, the main cause of deterioration and damage is rain water infiltration, intensified by the insertion of numerous eye bolt fixings installed through the waterproof membrane into the concrete roof slab to secure the scaffolding as a protection from falling parts of the elevations around the tops of the two towers and the roof parapets.

Repairing the roof structures will protect the building, making it safe, weathertight and more energy efficient to enable a future phased conservation and development plan.

The new roof will become a café, meeting place and information station with amazing views over Thames Valley from 60ft above Reading.



Figure 10:
Roof in 2005

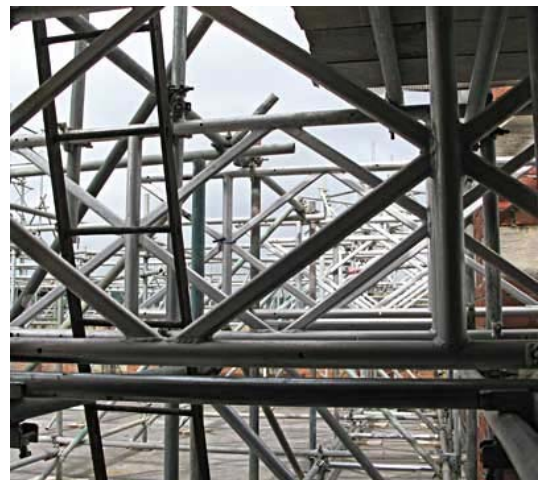


Figure 11:
Roof in 2017



Figure 12: Victorian lift mechanism in the NE stairwell,

The issue of appropriateness of preserving the lift mechanism has to be explicitly addressed after additional expert advice

The remaining part of a dumb waiter originally had its rails, gears, weights and a car, like the Keep in Dorchester still in military use as a museum, which is a good source for our interpretation of uses, for instance the description of using one of the roof stores as a place to isolate and disinfect scabies mite sufferers.

Figure 13: Veranda

Conservation of the original veranda is the only part of the ground floor incorporated in HLF Phase I



The water tanks – removal and conservation

Each of the two turrets on the Keep's roof contains a Victorian segmental cast iron water tank within 1400 mm high brick parapet wall, as a part of the original fire-fighting system, each with a capacity of 22 400 l of water that could be delivered to floors 1, 2 and 3 via the riser pipes in the stairwells. The tanks are accessible by ladders and were most probably covered by a wooden cover.

Structural survey and report by MLDE suggested removal of the water tanks to allow deep re-pointing of parapet masonry and copings. It was considered as a first stage and the base for further specialist investigations.



Figure 14: Interior of the cast iron tank

The MA report suggested the same. Whilst it is appreciated that the tanks are a part of the building's heritage, it is also likely that corrosion to the tanks is causing significant damage to the supporting load-bearing structures and will potentially add further maintenance issues. Therefore, removing the tanks appears more appropriate for the structural and financial reasons, which will create an additional 16 sqm on each turret.

NE turret will be used as a view point and additional space for public enjoyment. Assisted public access will be via a new spiral staircase and the opened section of the turret parapet wall. A walk-on glass panel in the new floor/ceiling would illuminate NE stairwell and its Victorian structures, providing a semi-permanent exhibition space for historic images from the history of the Royal Berkshire Regiment. (see HLF DWG P18)

SW turret will be covered and preserved for the installation of the lift, as a part of a future project.

All water tank details have to be recorded and kept in OHOS archive for future references.

Segments of the water tank with a water supply detail will be preserved

- a) a record and display in the car park area with information panels describing Brock Keep's fire fighting system, original location and value as a heritage object.
- b) a water feature/sculpture recycling rainwater from roof, creatively and ultimately watering plants in long narrow free-standing planting boxes along lower part of the east car park wall. This would improve roof drainage and reduce damp on the walls. Planters may have red plants to represent the flames from the original Douglas Gordon's artwork event.



Figure 15: Water supply detail

The wall around the car park has a text installation by Turner Prize winning artist Douglas Gordon. The restoration is in progress with the help of a volunteer from Reading University Fine Art Department.



Figure 16:
Douglas
Gordon event

Figure 17:
Douglas Gordon
artwork 2018



Fire exit pathway from NE stairwell must not be obstructed, and also this might be an alternative assisted public access to the roof and lift mechanism, especially if this stairwell also becomes an unusual gallery space for historic photos,

For Phase II see HLF Phase I Master Plan