

Fig. 3. 1859 plans of Bishop's Palace showing layout of ground floor (NRO: [DN/ADR 10/4](#)).



Fig. 4. 1859 plans of Bishop's Palace showing layout of first floor (NRO: [DN/ADR 10/4](#)).

From Ecclesiastical Residence to Recreational Club

The Service Club was operational by February 1943, but the official opening did not take place until 10 July 1943. The Eastern Evening News reported on 12 July 1943 that, after speeches of welcome and gratitude delivered by the Lord Mayor of Norwich and Mr. Robert Bondie (chief administrator of American Red Cross Services to American Armed Forces), Bishop Herbert formally handed over the key to the Palace to representatives of the USAAF. Bishop Herbert remarked that “his 67 predecessors...would be astonished at seeing

their private residence and the centre of the establishment that marked their high dignity, used for these strange purposes”, but thought “these walls had never been put to better use.” A photograph held by the Norfolk Record Office captures attendees enjoying some entertainment during the opening ceremony (fig. 5 – NRO: [MC 371/703, USF 18/3](#)).



Fig. 5. Photograph of a performance at the opening of the ARC Service Club at the Bishop's Palace, Norwich, July 1943 (NRO: [MC 371/703, USF 18/3](#)).

Staff

Mr. W. B. Covington served as Club Director. He was assisted by programme director, Miss Peggy Green, who can be seen alongside Mary Harbage, Polly Poulsen, and Mrs Johnson in a photograph of the ARC ladies from the Bishop's Palace Club (fig. 6 – NRO: [MC 376/330, USF 17/1](#)).



Fig. 6. Photograph of ARC women from the Bishop's Palace (left to right: Mary Harbage, Peggy Green, Mrs Johnson, and Polly Poulsen) (NRO: [MC 376/330, USF 17/1](#)).

Facilities

The running of the Club was helped by some much needed facility upgrades that succeeded in transforming the 800-year-old large, chilly residence of the Bishop into a warm, welcoming hostel. An official photographic survey of the Club conducted in 1943 provides extraordinary visual documentation of the operational and recreational facilities in the Club following the interior transformation of the building. The pantry was now filled with boxes, jars, and tins that only hints at the logistical problems of storing and itemising the masses of food needed to feed the men (fig. 7). In the kitchen the British cook, Mrs Babstock, was pictured hard at work making vast numbers of tasty looking doughnuts and pastries for American troops (fig.8).



Fig. 7. Pantry in the ARC Club, Bishop's Palace.



Fig. 8. Kitchen facilities in the ARC Club, Bishop's Palace.

The entrance hall had a clothes-mending point (fig. 9). A dormitory was set up in the deconsecrated Bishop's chapel. Here, a tired serviceman was snapped catching some rest in 'Elizabeth's bed', named after the grave of the daughter of a former Bishop located beneath (fig. 10).



Fig. 9. British women mending US servicemen's shirts in the entrance hall of the ARC Service Club at the Bishop's Palace.



Fig. 10. Dormitories at the ARC Service Club, Bishop's Palace.

The grand dining room was transformed into a cafeteria with the counter buffet service and tables where the men could enjoy a meal and conversation beneath portraits of former Bishops (fig. 11).



Fig. 11. Servicemen enjoying a meal in the cafeteria.

The oak-panelled drawing-room was now a comfortable common lounge where servicemen could enjoy a spot of table tennis, read a newspaper, or write letters to loved-ones back home (figs. 12 & 13).



Fig. 12. Servicemen relaxing in the common room of the ARC Service Club, Bishop's Palace.



Fig. 13. Writing facilities in the common room, Bishop's Palace.

A Social Club

The photographs show American servicemen enjoying the quiet tranquillity of the ancient house and its grounds. Yet there were more lively aspects of the Service Club. The sign over the mantelpiece in the lounge reads "Welcome to North and South Dakota, Iowa – Missouri" and refers to a jamboree to be held by men from these states. These 'State nights' were hosted every week at the Bishop's Palace. Other events hosted included garden parties,

weekday concerts and theatrical productions, and dance evenings. The Club also produced pamphlets for visiting servicemen which gave a brief history of the Bishop's Palace, a map of Norwich, and places of interest in the city (figs. 14 & 15 – [NRO: MC 371/220, USF 4/6](#)).

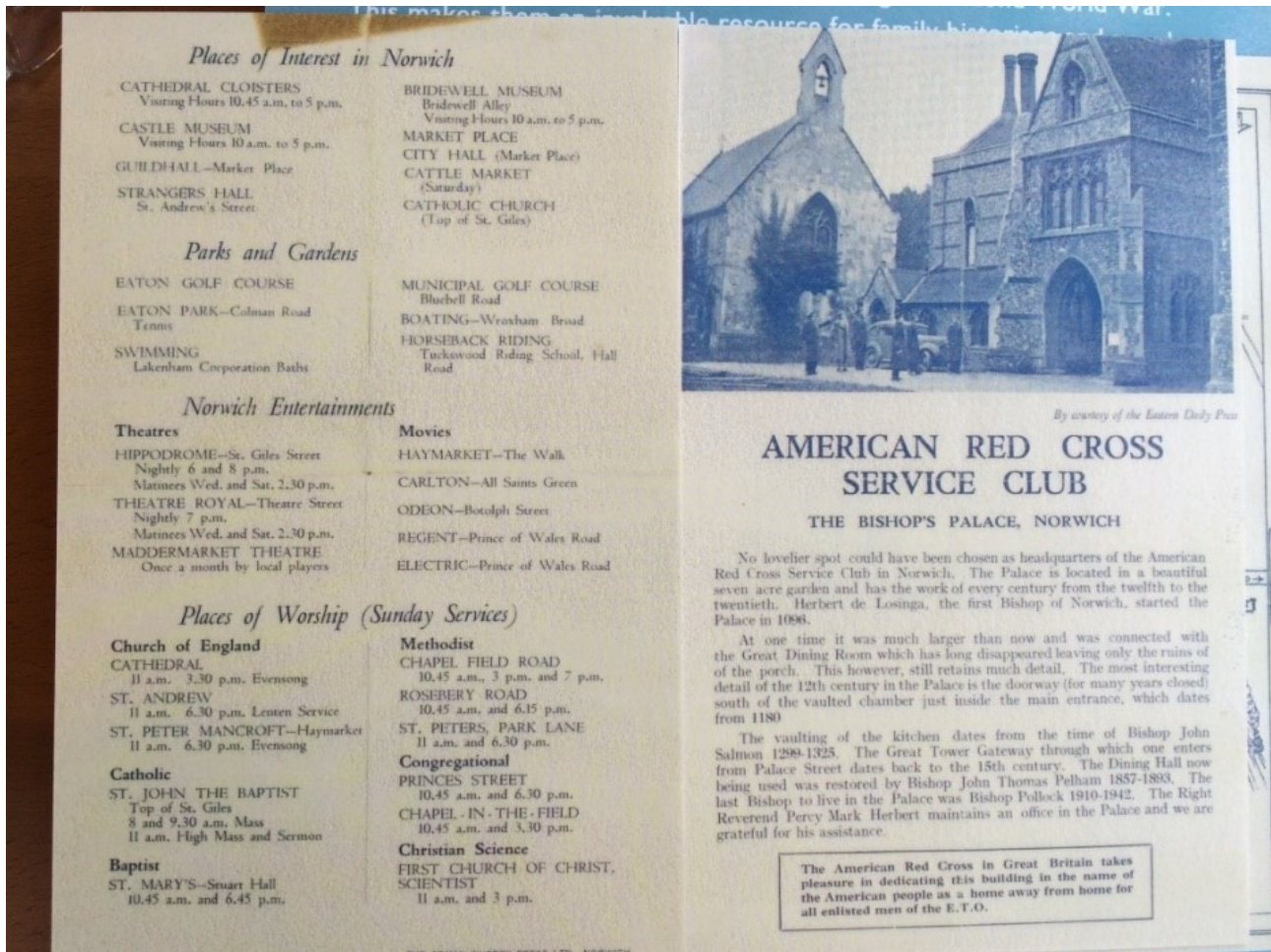


Fig. 14. Pamphlet for the American Red Cross Service Club, Norwich (obverse) (NRO: [MC 371/220, USF 4/6](#)).



Fig. 15. Pamphlet for the American Red Cross Service Club, Norwich (reverse)
(NRO: [MC 371/220, USF 4/6](#)).

The State Registers

The American Red Cross's objective to provide social engagement and welfare is preserved in the men's own words via a set of four registers once used at the Club and now held at the Norfolk Record Office ([MC 371/917-920](#)). Known as the State Registers because entries were filled (more or less) chronologically under pre-inserted tabs labelled and arranged (more or less) alphabetically by US state name, the registers remain the most comprehensive, self-contained list of American servicemen in East Anglia during World War II. The registers were like a written version of the 'State nights' in that they encouraged contact between men from the same or neighbouring American states. Along with date, name, and hometown, servicemen regularly added their Army Post Office (APO) number to aid correspondence (fig. 16 – NRO: [MC 371/918](#),

[USF OVR/8](#)). Many also included their bomb or squadron group numbers, airfield station numbers, Army Service Numbers, and rank.

A.R.O.	DATE	NAME	HOME TOWN
558	10/1/44	L. R. Haggard	Helena, T.P.
558	14/6/44	O.F. Taylor	Paragould, Ark.
558	26-6-44	R.C. Thurekill	Eldorado, Ark.
558	7-7-44	Nale J. Sarrett	Camden, Ark.
558	7-21-44	B. Dale Ford	Conway, Ark.
558	7-24-44	John D Ford	Little Rock
598	7-30-44	Pat Phelps	Fort Smith
559	8-31-44	J.C. Vance	Brinkley
559	8-26-44	Johnnie W. Brooks	Fayetteville
558	8-27-44	Sam Whitmore	Marionville
559	8-29-44	Robert Shaw	Hot Springs, Ark.
558	9-14-44	Seaton T. Douglass	Hot Springs, Ark.
558	9-16-44	James W. Davis, 1st Lt.	Newport, Ark.
558	10-1-44	Robert M. Williams	Fort Smith, Ark.
558	10-1-44	Ralph H. Elliott, 1st Lt.	Fort Smith, Ark.
558	10-8-44	James W. Lacey, 1st Lt.	Eureka Springs, Ark.
558	10-14-44	Thomas R. Williams, Jr., 2nd Lt.	Little Rock, Arkansas
559	10-22-44	Delbert T. Beem, 1st Lt. (HW)	Fort Smith, ARK.
558	10-27-44	Joe W. Clement, Jr.	Pine Bluff, Ark.
558	10-27-44	Earl "Red" Hatten	Benton, Arkansas
558	11/30/44	R. E. Pitts, 2nd Lt.	FAYETTEVILLE

Fig. 16. A page from State Register (NRO: [MC 371/918, USF OVR/8](#)).

There were often also more informal, even whimsical, notes, such as nicknames, preferred names, names of high schools, and even musical talents and athletic achievements (including Joe A. Walery, the holder of the 100-yard dash record at North Dakota State) (figs. 17 & 18 – NRO: [MC 371/917, USF OVR/7](#)). Major life events were given occasionally. Here, Louis Ferrone supplemented his entry

with a note about his marriage to Willena Norman, along with a note that they were 'getting along nicely' (fig. 19 – NRO: [MC 371/917, USF OVR/7](#)).

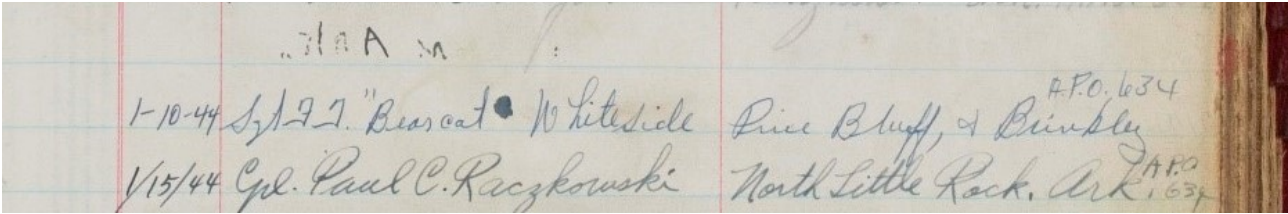


Fig. 17. Nickname 'Bearcat' in the registers (NRO: [MC 371/917, USF OVR/7](#)).

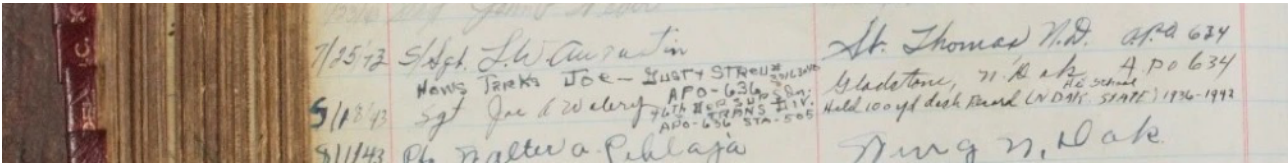


Fig. 18. Athletic achievements included in the State Registers (NRO: [MC 371/917, USF OVR/7](#)).

