

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
EXTENSIVE URBAN SURVEY

RUSHDEN

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Funded by English Heritage

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BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

This report is based on a survey conducted between June 1998 and December 1999. It is one of a series of reports compiled by Northamptonshire Heritage, as part of the Industrial period element, of the English Heritage funded Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) of Northamptonshire, which is intended to provide an effective information base and research framework to guide the management of the county's urban archaeological resource. The survey encompasses all urban settlements and others that may have had some urban attributes, from the Roman period to the 1930s. The only exception is Northampton, which is the subject of an Intensive Urban Survey in its own right.

Each report comprises three distinct sections: a detailed description of the town in each major period; an assessment of potential and definition of a research agenda; and a strategy for future management. A consistent approach has been taken in the presentation of the description in each report with detail being presented under each standard category even where this has no direct or obvious relevance to the urban aspects. This section has however been presented in the form of a gazetteer with standard headings so enabling the reader to identify those sections of particular interest. The Rushden report is presented in a single part covering the industrial period, from 1750 to the 1930s, by Jennifer Ballinger. The report has benefited from the specialist advice of Dr Barrie Trinder on the industrial period. Other contributions to the EUS on digital mapping, database input and related work have been made by various individuals including Christine Addison, Chris Jones, Paul Thompson, Rob Atkins, Phil Markham and especially Tracey Britnell and Abi Kennedy.

The vast quantity of documentation for the industrial period has meant that a comprehensive documentary assessment of each of the towns within the survey has been impossible, within the time period. A standard approach has been adopted with attention focussed on those sources that might contribute significantly to the reconstruction of the historical topography of the town and to the broader characterisation of the various monuments within the town. Trade directories of 1849, 1894, 1924 (and 1830 when in existence) have been assessed and all early maps (including Ordnance Survey maps of 1880s, 1900s and 1920s) were utilised. An index has been compiled of all records for the period in Northamptonshire Record Office and Northamptonshire Local Studies Library. Key secondary sources including books, journals and local pamphlets have been consulted and in a minority of cases original records have been used. The survey has relied heavily on a field visit to assess the physical growth and development of the settlement and the survival of monuments within the town. The reports have been produced in a standardised format to allow direct comparison between towns in the county.

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SUMMARY

This report focuses on the archaeological development of Rushden in the period following 1750. There has been no attempt made to discuss any earlier archaeology in the context of this report, but this does not mean that there are no significant archaeological remains in the area.

Rushden was one of the main settlements in Northamptonshire that underwent a dramatic process of industrialisation during the latter part of the 19th century. Rushden developed from an average sized agricultural village that was described as an ‘appendage’ of Higham Ferrers¹ into a large boot and shoe town. By the early 20th century the town was exceeded in population only by the ancient market towns of Northampton, Kettering and Wellingborough. Rushden is of importance in the county for its large boot and shoe industry, for which a large number of the buildings and some of the trade still exists, and as an archetypal late 19th century town complete with much of its topography of 19th century housing, factories, churches and chapels, schools and social clubs.

¹*Kelly's Trade Directory 1854*

I DESCRIPTION

1.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Rushden in the 18th and early 19th centuries was clearly operating as a large village rather than a town. In 1849 the settlement was described as ‘The village of Rushden, which is large, straggling and irregularly built, but rather handsome, stands on elevated ground’² and in 1854 the settlement was referred to as an ‘appendage’ to Higham Ferrers³. This latter statement must refer to perceptions about the function and role of the two settlements, as throughout the 19th century the population of Rushden is consistently higher than the neighbouring parish of Higham Ferrers. Analysis of the Militia Lists for 1777 indicate that the situation was similar for at least the late 18th century with a total of 79 men between the ages of 18 and 45 listed for Rushden compared to 51 men for Higham Ferrers.

Rushden clearly had a small boot and shoe trade in 1777, with 10 men being listed as shoemakers or cordwainers, this was perhaps due to the proximity of the settlement to Wellingborough, and a tanner and fellmonger were also listed indicating a supporting leather trade in the town. Other trades listed for the settlement include the usual high numbers of farmers (13), shepherds (5), labourers (19) and servants (14) and smaller numbers of the miscellaneous trades of butcher, baker, wheelwright, blacksmith, carpenter and a jersey comber. This indicates that the settlement had a primarily subsistence economy.

The population of Rushden rose steadily throughout the early 19th century, in line with many other settlements of a similar nature including Raunds, Finedon, Irthlingborough and Burton Latimer and indeed some of the smaller market towns including Brackley, Higham Ferrers and Thrapston. It was in the latter decades of the 19th century - the 1880's and 1890's - that Rushden experienced a phenomenal development with a four-fold rise in population between 1881 and 1901. The actual population increase for this period was 8,796 compared to 4,618 for the much larger neighbouring town of Wellingborough. The only other town outside of Northampton to undergo such a large expansion was the market town of Kettering, which in sheer numbers clearly exceeded the growth of Rushden with an expansion of 17,558, but proportionately only experienced a two and a half fold increase. Jenny Burt in her dissertation on Rushden for the period 1881-1901 compared Rushden to a ‘Gold Rush Town’.⁴ The actual physical process of expansion will be discussed below in a consideration of the development of the Urban Topography. Contemporary accounts about the rapid growth of the settlement indicate a sense of bewilderment ‘It is not a little surprising the strides that Rushden as a village has made, considering its many drawbacks, for instance no railway facilities. Why!’⁵ and displeasure ‘Rushden has progressed too rapidly for the capacity of those who control it. It has outgrown its clothes and has altogether been too busy to get measure for new ones’⁶

A number of factors have been attributed to the phenomenal development of Rushden in the last decades of the 19th century. The boot and shoe industry was clearly of considerable importance in the development of the town, as in many other settlements in Northamptonshire. Rushden had a small boot and shoe trade consisting of 10 men in 1777 and this no doubt expanded following the

² Whellan⇒ *Trade Directory 1849*

³ Kelly⇒ *Trade Directory 1854*

⁴ Burt J, 1985, *The relationship between the growth of the boot and shoe industry and non-conformity in Rushden 1881-1901*

⁵ NRO, ROP 2686, *Walter Green, 1892*

⁶ *Rushden Argus, August 2nd 1901.*

enclosure of the parish in 1778-9. The settlement became a focus for in migration from surrounding villages in Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire⁷ throughout the late 18th and 19th centuries, although this process would appear likely to have expanded during the last decades of the 19th century when a large number of factories were established. The firms of Messrs Darnell of London⁸ and John Cave and Son⁹ were both regarded as having had a specific impact on the development of the town. The fire of 1901 at John Cave and Son Shoe Factory was perceived as being disastrous for the town. 'Messrs Cave's factory has gone and the loss, even if it should be only temporary (that is to say if the firm decide to rebuild in Rushden) will be keenly felt by the inhabitants'.¹⁰ To a certain extent this may have occurred as, although the town continued to expand after 1901, the greatest period of prosperity and building activity ceased after this date; however there was a general slow down in development in many of the towns in Northamptonshire in the early 20th century. John Cave eventually opened a new factory in College Street and the number of businesses involved in the boot and shoe trade expanded considerably in the 20th century. The John White Shoe Company was another substantial company with factories in both Rushden and Higham Ferrers. The John White Shoe Factory in Lime Street was built by the architect Sir Albert Richardson and is one of only three listed shoe factories in Northamptonshire. Leather trade directory for 1893 indicated that there were 34 boot and shoe wholesalers, 2 makers and 2 boot upper manufacturers by 1920 this had risen to 63 manufacturers, 13 makers, a shoe closer, 3 boot upper manufacturers. There were also a large number of associated trades including accountants to the shoe and leather trades (2), a blacking manufacturer (1), boot factors (2), heel makers (5), machinery manufacturers (6), a knife manufacturer (1), a wax, heelball and polish maker (1), a buckle, binding and looping, button, lace and lining manufacturer (1) and cardboard box manufacturers (2). The industry clearly dominated the topography of the town with at least one factory associated with the trade in the vast majority of streets throughout the town, including High Street. Rushden also clearly had a strong outworking tradition with a large number of garden workshops located behind terraced houses throughout the town.

It is clear that the boot and shoe industry was particularly large in Rushden and that this contributed to the large-scale development of the town, but it is importance to consider why Rushden became the focus for such substantial development. Communication links would not appear to have been a major contributing factor. In the 18th and early 19th century Rushden was well placed in terms of communications as it was located on the main coaching road between London and the north of England, however coaching declined long before the great expansion of the town. There was no canal passing through Rushden, the River Nene was made navigable during the 1760's, but this ran far closer to Higham Ferrers than to Rushden. The Higham Ferrers branch line of the Midland Railway with a station in Rushden opened in 1893. This accounts for some of the population expansion of the later 1890's, but it is clear that the impetus behind the large-scale development of the town had begun before this was opened.

Land tenure has been cited as a possible reason for the development of the town. Hall and Harding discuss the large scale growth of Rushden compared to the much more limited development of Higham Ferrers - the adjacent settlement which was also owned by the Duchy of Lancaster. They

⁷ *Analysis of a sample of 218 census returns for the 1881 census indicate that the majority of in migration being from a 20 mile radius with half of these being from a 5 mile radius.:* Burt J, 1985, *The relationship between the growth of the boot and shoe industry and non-conformity in Rushden 1881-1901*

⁸ Hall D, Harding R, *Rushden: A Duchy of Lancaster Village*, 1985

⁹ Hatley V.A. *Shoemakers in Northamptonshire 1762-1911*

¹⁰ *Rushden Argus*, August 2nd 1901

conclude that the system of copyhold rent (which was kept very low) at Rushden allowed for land to be sold off for development purposes whereas the practice of leasehold land (which attracted high rents) at Higham Ferrers ensured that farmers were reluctant to sell off land and lose rent, land and livelihood.¹¹ Jenny Burt cited the enclosure award of 1778 which listed 50 individuals with landholding in the town with no large tracts of land being held by one person - allowing for the piecemeal development of the settlement, with no large landholders to prevent development.¹² This would certainly account for substantial development in the town, but does not explain the scale of the development compared to other settlements in a similar position elsewhere in the county.

Rushden was quick to develop urban functions once its substantial development had begun. In 1879 the Medical Officer for the Wellingborough area made a report on villages which would benefit from urban powers and Rushden was included. A Local Board of Health was created in 1891 and in 1894 an Urban District Council was established. During the course of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Rushden acquired a new gasworks on Shirley Road (the former gasworks having been located on Duck Street), a large waterworks and reservoir at Sywell, an electricity works, a fire station, police station and ambulance station, two hospitals (or sanatoriums), a free library and an elaborate building for council offices in addition to large numbers of houses, chapels, schools and social clubs. The legacy of this frantic age of development can be seen in the 'present townscape of rows of well built, unpretentious Victorian houses, intimately mixed with small factories'¹³

2.0 TOPOGRAPHICAL DEVELOPMENT

The core of the settlement shown on the Open Fields map of 1635¹⁴ was centred around High Street and High Street South, Duck Street, College Street, Church Street, Newton Road, Park Road and Manning Road. The reconstruction of the enclosure map (taken from the enclosure award of 1778)¹⁵ indicates the addition of Higham Lane, Little Lane and Wellingborough Road by this date. The census for 1851 only refers to High Street, Duck Street and Little Street, but it would appear likely that a number of subsidiary streets were included in this. The early settlement was described by Rev WF Harris in *A Romance of a Northamptonshire Baptist Church* 'Originally the village consisted of one long, winding, straggling street with narrow lanes branching off on either side and through it in the good old coaching days the coaches used to run..... Rushden must have been a primitive, neglected, old worked place'¹⁶ Walter Green, writing in the 1890's provided a retrospective description of Rushden in the 1860's which described 'a long and straggling village' with low stone built houses with tiled or thatched roofs and a brook 'which found its way through the village and in several places formed the roadway for vehicular traffic and in wet seasons the water ran several feet deep.....'¹⁷

By the 1880's the town had largely filled out with buildings lining the original roads in the settlement. New roads such as Crabb Street, Alfred Street and Rectory Road had been inserted into the original street layout and buildings had begun to be erected on Wellingborough Road, Higham Road and to the north of town on High Street. By 1901 the town had expanded considerably with

¹¹ Hall D & Harding R, *Rushden: A Duchy of Lancaster Village*, 1985

¹² Burt J, 1985, *The relationship between the growth of the boot and shoe industry and non-conformity in Rushden 1881-1901*

¹³ Hall D & Harding R, *Rushden: A Duchy of Lancaster Village*, 1985

¹⁴ Hall D & Harding R, *Rushden: A Duchy of Lancaster Village*, 1985 p88-89

¹⁵ Hall D & Harding R, *Rushden: a Duchy of Lancaster Village*, 1985 p170-1

¹⁶ Quoted in Bays GE, *These years have told: the story of Park Road Baptist Church, Rushden, 1951*

¹⁷ NRO, ROP 2686, 1892

large number of new streets to the west and south east of the settlement having been laid out and to a large extent filled with buildings. Hall and Harding surveyed 68 Victorian and Edwardian streets in the town and managed to date 65 of them - of these 22 were shown on the map of 1884 (of which 14 had medieval / post medieval origins), 40 were established in the 1890's and three in the early 1900's.¹⁸ The map of 1926 indicates that there was some expansion after this period, with new streets being laid out and existing streets infilled with additional buildings, although development in the early 20th century was more limited than in the latter decades of the 19th century.

The town was virtually rebuilt during the 19th century, as the vast majority of the architecture of the town is Victorian. St Mary=s Church, Rushden Hall and Manor Farm are the only pre 17th century buildings surviving in the town and there are a small number of 17th-19th century buildings - primarily to the south of the town on High Street South. High Street was clearly the focus for the central business district in the town, although this was not its only function as chapels, social facilities and factories were also located along the street. The physical layout of the town today suggests that the majority of this commercial area would have been to the north end of the street - as opposed to the area now known as High Street South. The northern part of the high street was completely re-developed in the Victorian period. The remainder of the town was constructed as an entirely mixed urban environment with numerous streets of red brick houses interspersed with factories, social clubs, public houses, chapels and schools. A resident of the village claimed ‘The geography of Rushden might well have been laid out by some shoemaking dictator who had insisted that for every hundred yards of dwelling house there should be thirty or forty of factory sandwiched between them and had then added the humanitarian proviso that a bakehouse and a chapel or two should somehow be tucked among them’¹⁹

3.0 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

3.1 INDUSTRY

3.1.1 Boot and Shoe industry

The size of the boot and shoe industry in Rushden, in comparison to the other ‘19th century’ towns in Northamptonshire, was considerable. As indicated above, by 1920 there were 63 boot and shoe manufacturers operating in the town, in addition to a large number of supporting industries. 34 boot and shoe factories were positively identified through analysis of early Ordnance Survey mapping and the field visit. 25 of these survived as buildings during the field visit in winter 1998-1999 (5 of these were partially demolished). Five of these buildings are still in operation as boot and shoe factories, the remainder have either been utilised by other businesses or been converted for use as flats. The listed John White Shoe Factory in Lime Street is currently out of use and vulnerable to re-development. A number of other factories in the town are currently advertised for re-development. The vast majority of factories in the town were of relatively small scale and functional design, the John Cave factories were clearly of much larger, and probably more elaborate construction and the Co-operative Wholesale Factory, Portland Road / Rectory Road was larger and of greater architectural distinction - all the former have been demolished and the only the front block of the latter survives and this has been converted to flats. One or two of the larger factories have been demolished and it is possible that the remainder are unrepresentative of the whole. Eight factories for the supporting industries for the boot and shoe factory were identified and four (a cardboard box

¹⁸ Hall D & Harding R, *Rushden: A Duchy of Lancaster Village*, 1985

¹⁹ HE Bates, *The Vanished World*,; Burt J, 1985, *The relationship between the growth of the boot and shoe industry and non-conformity in Rushden 1881-1901*

manufacturers, a boot and shoe engineering business, a wax factory and a leather dressing works) survive as standing buildings - two of these are up for re-development. In addition twenty one additional factories were identified which it has not been possible to identify to an industry - it is highly likely that the majority of these were associated with the boot and shoe industry in some form, as this was the overriding industrial concern in the town. Small industrial buildings and garden workshops were located throughout the 19th development of the town and many of these survive. The survival of the physical remains of the boot and shoe industry is particularly good in Rushden.

3.1.2 Other industries

A number of other industries have been documented for Rushden including a stocking knitter, agricultural implement maker, cycle maker and manufacturer, coachbuilder²⁰ and a soap factory. None of these have been positively identified during map analysis and fieldwork. A large brick and tile works was located on Wellingborough Road which no doubt supplied the majority of materials for the expansion of Rushden at the turn of the century. This has now entirely disappeared and part of an industrial estate stands on the site. One of the few surviving buildings remaining from additional industries in Rushden is the Whipple Engineering factory on Sartoris Street - this has now been converted for use by 'Elite Specialists in printed and embroidered leisure wear'.

3.2 AGRICULTURE

Agriculture was clearly a major source of employment in the parish in the early part of the period. In 1777 13 farmers and 5 shepherds were listed in the militia lists compared to 15 farmers and 2 shepherds for the much larger neighbouring town of Wellingborough. The parish was enclosed at a relatively early date and the impetus behind the movement was the resident yeoman farmers as opposed to the Duchy of Lancaster. Numbers clearly declined over the 19th century with 14 farmers listed in Whellan=s trade directory of 1849 which was reduced to 9 by 1894. A number of farm complexes were identified through map analysis and 'Hilly Farm' is still in use as a working farm. The base of Wymington Windmill to the south end of the town is also still in existence, having been converted to residential use in 1920. Two small cottages 'The Old Mill Stables'²¹ also remain on the site in addition to a large square red brick house further down the road which local knowledge informs used to be the millers house, this now appears to be out of use.

3.3 HOUSING

The houses remaining in Rushden are remarkably uniform and primarily date to the major period of building in the 1880's and 1890's. The vast majority of houses are late 19th century red brick terraced houses of differing styles and designs, with and without gardens (front and back), garden workshops and features such as bay windows and architectural embellishment. The houses were built by a number of different investors including private individuals GCW Fitzwilliam (Station Road, Wentworth Road), Thomas Lilley (Victoria Estate); companies Messrs C Bays and Son (Fletcher Street) and Real Estate and Amendment Company (Glassbrook Road, Windmill Road) and co-operative ventures - Rock Freehold Land Society (Pratt Road, Cromwell Road and Queen Street)²². They appear to all be of a similar size and quality. Some streets in the town have very mixed building styles - Pightles Terrace, Hayway, Grove Road and Higham Road have a wide range of buildings including large villa style houses, terraces and semi-detached styles. A number of much smaller terraces are shown on early Ordnance Survey maps, but the majority of these have

²⁰ *Trade Directories for Rushden*

²¹ *This appears to be an unlikely function given the small size of the cottages.*

²² *Hall D & Harding R, Rushden: A Duchy of Lancaster Village, 1985*

subsequently been demolished - examples include houses on land between High Street and Rectory Road, Duck Street, Albion Place, Park Place, South Terrace and land between Newton Road and Dell Place. The houses which remain on Crabb Street are much smaller in size than those elsewhere in the town. There are very few surviving stone buildings in Rushden and excluding the church, Manor Farm and Rushden Hall the only examples are on Duck Street, High Street South and Little Street.

A number of larger, higher status houses were erected in Rushden - the larger examples of which were Rushden Hall, Rectory House, Rushden cottage and Rushden House. The more ordinary villa style houses tended to be located on the routes out of town with examples at the extremities of Irchester Road, Wellingborough Road and Higham Road. Within the core of the town Griffith Road and Park Road both have examples of larger, more individualistic houses.

3.4 COMMERCE

The central business district was clearly focused upon High Street throughout the 19th century. The northern part of this street was completely re-developed in the late 19th century with a number of large commercial buildings, although there were other buildings (including a factory and a chapel) also located in the street. There were no major commercial buildings - such as corn exchange or market hall as Rushden only developed into a town in the late 19th century. Individual shops and other commercial services were also located throughout the town.

3.4.1 Banks and post offices

There were three banks in the centre of Rushden in the late 19th and early 20th centuries - Northamptonshire Union Bank Limited, Capital and Counties Bank Limited and London, City and Midland Bank. The latter is now the Midland Bank and the structure is an elaborate classical design erected in 1905. The building was originally divided for use as a bank and post office; changes were made to the exterior when the structure became solely used as a bank. The building which is now in use by National Westminster Bank was clearly constructed for use as a bank with its elaborate classical architecture of red and white stone. The structure has 'Established 1836' above the doorway. The interior of the building has been substantially modernised. It has not been possible to find the third bank in the town.

The main post office for the town was constructed in 1905 in the building which is now in use by the Midland Bank - the structure has been substantially altered. A number of small post offices were located elsewhere in the town, most of these appear to have been in converted houses - one is still in use as a post office today, but has been modernised.

3.4.2 Shops

There are a large number of surviving shops and commercial buildings from the 19th and early 20th century in Rushden. These are primarily centred on High Street and include buildings of many different styles and designs. There are other buildings constructed for commercial purposes, some with surviving early shop frontages located throughout the town - many of these are corner shop buildings. Some of these are still in use as shops, but have clearly changed hands, but others are now being utilised for other purposes including a nursery school and flats. On Station Road there is a small shop which has housed a shoe repair business ('Leeding' Footwear Repairs) on the same premises since 1914. The early shop front remains and there are two doors on the frontage - one leading into the shop and the other to the house above.

3.4.3 Inns

Compared to many other towns in the county, the number of public houses and inns in Rushden is very small. Rev Harris, one of the former ministers of the Baptist Church claimed 'it has a smaller proportion of public houses than almost any place in the kingdom'. This may be due to Rushden's original status as a village or to the considerable influence of the Temperance and Non-conformist movement in the settlement. Of the nine public houses identified as part of the survey eight remain in existence and seven of these are still in use as public houses, the Coach and Horses Inn (which was the original coaching inn for the town) was demolished in the 1930's.

In addition to the public houses there were two hotels in the town - the Temperance Hotel on High Street and the very large Queen Victoria Hotel on Higham Road. Both are still in existence - the latter is still used as a hotel, but has changed its name to 'Rilton Hotel and Restaurant' and the building of the former is now used by two shops. There was also a Coffee House Tavern; the building was demolished in the 1960s.

3.4.4 Co-operative Society

Co-operative stores have been documented on High Street South (1894), Queen Street (1896), Wellingborough Road (1896), Park Road (1898), High Street (1903), Podington (1910), Hove Road (1924), Higham Road (1927) and Birchall Road (1932) and in addition Riseley and Wellingborough Road Fish and Chip shop (1922) was located in Rushden. It has not been possible to locate these buildings as part of the map analysis and field visit.

3.5 TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

The road network was important to Rushden during the coaching era, the alignment of the Barton Seagrave to Westwood Turnpike - which is now the A6 - has survived, but the toll gate and house are no longer in existence. Of the later period of road transport the 1930's garage on the corner of Higham Road and Shirley Road is a particularly distinctive 'art deco' or 'Odeon' style building, it has been recommended for listing as part of the RCHME's thematic survey of road transport buildings, but is currently in use by a shop and Chinese take-away.

The Higham Ferrers branch line of the Midland Railway with a station in Rushden was a relatively late arrival to the town in 1893, but remained in use from this date until 1959. A number of sidings were created which led to the boot and shoe factories, gasworks and brick and tile works in the parish. The line of the railway is still in existence today and the railway station and goods shed are still standing. The station is utilised as a museum by Rushden Historical Transport Society and the goods shed is used by Northamptonshire County Council as a highway maintenance depot. The Rushden Historical Transport Society has plans to re-open the line through to both Wellingborough and Higham Ferrers.

3.6 UTILITIES

There were a large number of utilities in the town of Rushden - many of them constructed during the peak of the development of the settlement in the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century. The original gasworks for the town was erected in 1864 on land between Duck Street and Church Street - these were replaced by new works on Shirley Road in 1892. The area of the former is now a car park whilst the latter is out of use, but some of the buildings associated with the site are still in existence. A large sewage works was established to the north west of the town, the majority of the site is now utilised for other purposes including the location for a factory, allotment gardens and playing field, but a pumping station remains. The large reservoir which opened at Sywell in 1906 (and is still in use today) serviced Rushden, although two smaller reservoirs were

also located in the parish itself, but these were not studied during the survey. Rushden and District Electric Supply Co was established in 1911 - the depot building is still standing, but is out of use and 'to let'.

3.7 HEALTH AND WELFARE

The early ambulance station and police station have been demolished in modern times, but the elaborate red brick fire station constructed on Newton Road in 1902-3 is still in existence and in use by a number of small businesses. The distinctive corner tower may have been used as a fireman's pole. Two hospitals were established in Rushden in the late 19th century - the Infectious Disease Hospital on Bedford Road, which by 1897 was under-utilised and has since been demolished and Rushden House Tuberculosis Sanatorium which is still in use as a hospital by the Rockingham Forest NHS Trust. A large number of the original buildings survive, many of which would appear to have related to the private house before it was converted into a sanatorium. The elaborate buildings for Rushden Urban District Council and the Carnegie Free Library and Reading Room are still standing and in use for their original purposes.

3.8 RELIGION

There are a large number of religious buildings in Rushden, the majority of them having been erected in the town in the late 19th and early 20th century to service the growing population of the settlement in this period. By 1909 there were two Church of England churches, three Baptist chapels, four Methodist churches, a Congregational church, a Salvation Army barracks, a Roman Catholic Church and congregations of Seventh Day Adventist and the Plymouth Brethren.²³ Jenny Burt in her dissertation on the town has fully discussed the predominance of non-conformity in Rushden. Of the 15 churches and chapels identified during map analysis and the field visit five have been demolished, two are still standing but in use for alternative purposes and eight are still in religious usage. A number of these have associated 19th and early 20th century Sunday Schools. Although a variety of styles of architecture are used on the churches and chapels, there was a distinctive turn of the century style used on religious buildings of all denominations, which was based on the use of large elaborate structures of red brick with stone detailing.

3.9 EDUCATION

Eight schools were located as part of the survey in Rushden - of these six are still in use as schools and the remaining two have been converted for use as Social Services offices and a Youth Centre. All were constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. There are a number of detailed architectural plans of these buildings in the Records Office. In addition there was a school of Boot and Shoe Manufacture which was presumably the 'Adult Schools' shown on the corner of Duck Street and Wellingborough Road on the Ordnance Survey map of 1926 - one building may remain, but has been substantially altered and is now in use as a domestic residence, but the remainder have been demolished and replaced with modern flats. The adult school movement was important as it formed a forerunner to extra-mural university departments. There was also an 'institute' on the corner of Wellingborough Road and Church Green. This was presumably for the Temperance Movement (as a plaque commemorating their services is located nearby). The building has now been converted into part of the premises used by Peter Crisp Department Store.

3.10 RECREATION

There were a large number of recreational facilities provided in the town in the 19th and early 20th

²³Burt J, 1985, *The relationship between the growth of the boot and shoe industry and non-conformity in Rushden 1881-1901*

century. Social clubs, many of which were associated with the Working Men=s Club Movement, were one of the mainstays of the recreational facilities of the town. Jenny Burt in her dissertation claims that the working men=s clubs and nonconformist chapels were mutually exclusive organisations and provided the two main alternatives for social life in Rushden.²⁴ Seventeen clubs and public halls were identified as part of the survey - of which four could not be physically located. Of the remaining twelve five had been demolished, but the remaining eight are still in existence, with four of these still in use as social clubs. Rushden Town Band Club, Manton Road, the Working Men=s Club on Griffith Street and the West End Club on High Street were all very plain functional buildings - the former two are still in use as social clubs, but the latter has been converted for use as a DIY store. By comparison the two phases of the Windmill Club and the Trade Union Club and Institute were very architecturally distinctive buildings and clearly designed to make a statement. The Assembly Room on Park Road has a very distinctive church architecture as the building was previously used by the Baptist Church.

By the early 20th century the town was large enough to support at least one theatre and a cinema. The Palace Cinema, owned by the Brown Brothers of Wellingborough, opened in High Street in 1911. This structure remained in operation until 1956 and was later converted into a car show room, but it has not been possible to locate it as part of the survey. The Ritz Cinema opened on land between College Street and Alfred Street in 1924 - although there is a cinema building on this precise plot of land it does not show on a map of 1926 and appears to be very large and imposing for a building of this date²⁵. There is a building marked as ‘theatre’ on land off Alfred Street and it is possible that this is one of the two structures (as it backs on to High Street) referred to - the building is very plain and undistinguished. The Royal Variety Theatre on Higham Road was erected in 1913. The structure is still in existence and in use by a number of small shops and businesses. Further research needs to be undertaken on the cinemas and theatres of Rushden to determine which structures are which.

There were also a number of sporting facilities in Rushden - the Rushden Athletic Club and Institute on Newton Road is a large, imposing building and is still in the same usage, but the Rushden Billiard Saloon which was located on Duck Street was demolished in 1937. There were proposals for a swimming pool in one of the buildings now utilised by the Peter Crisp shopping complex - the project never came to fruition and the structure was instead used by Lilley and Skinner leather merchants. A swimming pool eventually opened in Rushden on Station Road in 1929 - there is a pool in that location now, but it would appear to have been substantially modernised or replaced with a modern building. There were a number of cricket grounds and tennis courts located throughout the town, but many of these have subsequently been built over. Spencer Park which opened in 1913 remains in existence although some of the land has been re-landscaped.

²⁴ Burt J, 1985, *The relationship between the growth of the boot and shoe industry and non-conformity in Rushden 1881-1901*

²⁵ *This building is now in use as a bingo and social club.*

II ASSESSMENT

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE & SURVIVAL

Rushden is the settlement in Northamptonshire which was most effected by the industrialisation of the boot and shoe industry in the late 19th century. Rushden underwent a large-scale process of urbanisation involving the almost complete re-development of the settlement. The expansion of a substantial number of towns and industrialised villages can be attributed to the boot and shoe industry, but none of the others were so radically transformed. The town is of county importance in this context.

The survival of the urban topography and individual buildings is exceptionally good. There are a good range of buildings types remaining including boot and shoe factories, chapels, schools, shops and housing. The documentation is more limited with no early maps and few documents relating to the urban nature of the settlement. There are, however, a substantial number of surviving photographs and architectural plans and drawings.

1.0 DOCUMENTARY

1.1 Documents

Documentary evidence for the settlement of Rushden in the period 1750-1939 is of a fairly limited nature for the town as a whole. Non of the standard ‘urban’ documentation exists as Rushden did not become a town until late in the period. There is no record of any papers for the Rushden Urban District Council surviving - these may not exist or may have been destroyed in the fire at the Record Office store in 1996. J Enos Smith=s notes on the history of Rushden and Walter Green=s notebook of the town (dealing with the period 1860's-1890's) provide good information about Rushden in the 19th century. There are isolated sources which are useful for considering particular elements within the town - for example there are a large number of records relating to bankruptcies in the town, however this may give a distorted view of business in the town. There are also a number of records deposited with the Record Office by individual companies such as Electric Supply Co Ltd, the Palace Company (Wellingborough), W Smart and Son Ltd, manufacturers of Shoe Repair Components and various engineering works.

1.2 Maps

There are no surviving early maps for the settlement of Rushden available in the county. There are however a number of reconstructed maps based on documentary evidence for 1635 (open fields) and 1778 (enclosure award).²⁶ The earliest original maps of the town are the standard Ordnance Survey maps of 1884 onwards. There are however a number of maps in the record office relating to particular streets and ‘building lots’ for the late 19th century - these may provide additional information about the development of the town and land-ownership of particular areas of the settlement.

1.3 Photographs

There are a large number of photographs for the town of Rushden in the 19th and early 20th centuries and many of them have been reproduced in the various pictorial histories of the settlement. There are also a number of other pictorial views including large numbers of architectural plans and drawings

²⁶ *Hall D & Harding R, Rushden: A Duchy of Lancaster Village, 1985*

which are particularly numerous for schools and other public buildings in the town.

2.0 STANDING BUILDINGS

Of the thirteen listed buildings for Rushden five are of post 1750 date - these are the war memorial, three early 19th century terraced houses (1826), the Rectory (1870) on Rectory Road, a farmhouse on Little Street and the 1938 John White Shoe Factory designed by Sir Albert Richardson on Lime Street.

Rushden has a large number of buildings relating to the boot and shoe industry including large and small factories, garden workshops and buildings for the supporting industries including a wax factory, a cardboard box manufacturing factory and a boot and shoe engineering firm. These should be subject to survey and further work should be done to identify further buildings (from uncertain factories / industrial buildings) which may relate to the trade.

There are a number of additional buildings which may not be of particular significance in their own right, but are indicative of the development and expansion of the town in the late 19th and early 20th centuries these include the non-conformist chapels erected at the turn of the century, the Bank and Post Office on High Street, Rushden Athletic Club and Institute on Newton Road and the 1902 fire station. The 1930's garage on Higham Road has been recommended for listing as part of the survey into road transport structures. Further work should be carried out to determine the locations of the co-operative buildings in the town.

3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL

There would appear to be little potential for below ground archaeological investigation for the industrial period in Rushden as much of the land of former structures has been re-developed and most of the buildings and monuments which have gone have upstanding examples elsewhere in the county. The possible exception is the sewage works to the north of Rushden which appears to lie partially within under developed land and may provide a good example of an early sewage works which has not developed. This would need to be assessed as part of the Monuments Protection Programme survey of the industry.

4.0 TOPOGRAPHY

The 19th and early 20th century urban topography of Rushden has survived remarkably well with the vast majority of buildings shown on the map of 1926 still standing today. The major building types to have been demolished are some of the larger factories and clusters of small industrial buildings and terraces, which were presumably destroyed as part of slum clearances. Duck Street and the land between High Street and Rectory Road are areas of most limited survival. Although it should be noted that there has been modern infill in many of the previously under developed areas of the town.

A full range of building types survive in the town and the boot and shoe industry is particularly well represented in Rushden. Rushden is perhaps the best surviving complete 19th century townscape in Northamptonshire - due to its massive re-development in the period. In some areas the complete topography of housing, factories, churches and chapels, schools and social clubs survives.

III RESEARCH AGENDA

Urbanisation

Rushden is one of the best settlements in the county for studying the process of urbanisation. The settlement grew from a village into the 4th largest town in the county in a very short period of time. The questions that need to be addressed are what effect did this have upon the nature of the settlement? Did living conditions in the town improve / worsen as a result of urbanisation? Who was driving the process of urbanisation and did this have an effect on the physical development of the town?

Boot and Shoe industry

The boot and shoe industry in Rushden was extensive and included some large manufacturers such as John Cave, William Green and John White, smaller individual factories and specialist and supporting works such as heel factories, leather dressing works, wax factory etc. The town would provide a very good case study for the late 19th century boot and shoe industry in the town, as a substantial number and range of buildings for the industry survive.

Link between Rushden and Higham Ferrers

Further detailed research is required on the relationship between Higham Ferrers and Rushden. To what extent did Rushden take over from Higham Ferrers as the regional centre for the area? Was the development of Rushden as a centre for services related to the decline in the commercial significance of Higham Ferrers? How were the economic, social and physical development of the two settlements interlinked? To what extent was the boot and shoe industry in the two towns linked?

A methodology needs to be established for assessing the precise relationship between the two towns in archaeological terms. One approach would be to use a combination of documentary research and standing building analysis to determine whether periods of development and stagnation in Rushden and Higham Ferrers coincided.

19th century non-conformity

There are a substantial number of 19th and early 20th century non-conformist chapels in the town, many of which have similar architectural features. Rushden would provide a good model for comparison of these buildings to determine what effect religious doctrine has upon the structure and layout of the building and to consider what other elements may be important. A key issue that needs to be investigated is whether the layout of the buildings were designed to reflect the needs of individual denominations

IV STRATEGY

The assessment of the management and conservation priorities within the Extensive Urban Survey have been based around an assessment of levels of importance previously applied elsewhere in the county for management purposes. The grading falls into six categories:

Scheduled: nationally important remains that have statutory protection.

Unscheduled national importance: in some cases statutory protection is suggested while in others recording action may prove to be the appropriate response to threats.

County importance: Where significant archaeology is known or where it is likely but confirmation is required. Normally recording rather than preservation would be the appropriate mitigation strategy.

Historic buildings: Buildings known or which have the potential to contain significant pre 19th century structural remains.

Local importance: where archaeology may survive but where, on present evidence investigation does not appear appropriate.

Destroyed: where the archaeology has been wholly destroyed.

In addition in some cases recommendations have been made for the designation of new or the extension of existing Conservation Areas and for the listing of specific buildings.

This approach has not been possible for the industrial period, as further work on the period is needed at a county, regional and national level before a definitive assessment can be made. The town has been divided up into zones and priorities for additional research, recording and conservation measures have been assigned to each individual area.

1.0 EXISTING DESIGNATIONS

1.1 Scheduled Ancient Monuments

There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the immediate vicinity of Rushden.

1.2 Listed Buildings

There are 12 listed buildings in the town of Rushden.

1.3 Conservation Area

There are no conservation areas in the town of Rushden.

2.0 MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

2.1.1 Zone 1 - Commercial zone

The central business district for the area was clearly focused on High Street (but not High Street South). The area is essentially a 19th century street with a large number of commercial structures, although some of these have been demolished. The area retains a distinctive 19th century character, despite the addition of modern structures, and should be considered for designation as a conservation area.

2.1.2 Zone 2 - Core area of the town

The core area of the town is very approximate given the late date of the earliest map (1885). It is based on the map of 1885 with key areas of 19th century outward expansion taken off. This area is the location of the original pre-19th century village settlement. This has largely been re-developed in the 19th century, although there are some earlier surviving buildings on High Street South and Little Street – where part of the character of the village settlement has been retained. It is unlikely that there would be below-ground recording issues in this area due to the level of re-development in both the 19th and 20th centuries. This area has suffered the greatest from modern development with the insertion of supermarkets, car parks etc into the topography of the town. There are, however, some pockets of very good survival which would be worthy of consideration for designation as a conservation area.

2.1.3 Zone 3 - Mixed zone

Development of the town to the east in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Combination of factories, shops, houses, social clubs, chapels and schools. This area has survived particularly well with the vast majority of 19th century buildings still standing, although there has been some modern infill. Parts of the area should be considered for designation as a conservation area. Factories relating to the boot and shoe industry and supporting trades should be considered for recording if they are to be subject to demolition or substantial alteration.

2.1.4 Zone 4 - Mixed zone.

Development of the town to the west in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Combination of factories, shops, houses, social clubs, chapels and schools. This area has survived particularly well with the vast majority of 19th century buildings still standing, although there has been some modern infill. Parts of the area should be considered for designation as a conservation area. Factories relating to the boot and shoe industry and supporting trades should be considered for recording if they are to be subject to demolition or substantial alteration.

ABBREVIATIONS

NRO Northamptonshire Record Office
RCHME Royal Commission for the Historical Monuments of England

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