

Alliance Boots Campus, Beeston, Nottingham

Historic Building Record of the Boots Rail Sidings Network

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The rail sidings of Sixth Avenue extending towards D1

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SUMMARY

- Trent & Peak Archaeology was commissioned by Blackwell to undertake a Level 2 building record of the remaining elements of the disused rail sidings network at Boots Alliance Campus, Beeston, Nottingham. Two areas retained tracks, one to the west of buildings D1 and D10 within the current car park centred at Ordnance Grid Reference SK 54265 36451 and one within Sixth Avenue to the north of buildings D13 and D113, centred at Ordnance Grid Reference SK 54469 36455. The work was undertaken prior to the redevelopment of the site (Planning Application No. 14/00515/OUT).
- Boots UK, formerly Boots Pure Drug Co, was founded by John Boot in 1849. By 1900 his son, Jesse had overseen the expansion of the business which had begun to create their own patented drugs. In order to develop the company further Jesse Boot took the decision to construct a model factory in the 1920s to the south of Beeston. The purpose-built factory made direct reference to American corporate working models aimed at creating a modern industrial environment. The site was served by sidings which connected with the south-east side of the LSMR Nottingham to Beeston line. The standard gauge lines were located to the west of the works next to an effluent treatment plant with a single entry/exit line. There were separate sidings extending down a number of the avenues that provided road access to the buildings within the site. Two lines ran directly through building D10. Rail traffic to Boots ceased in 1981 and the track was donated to the Midland Railway Trust, Butterley Derbyshire with the majority lifted during 1990 leaving behind that which forms the basis for this current study.
- The fragmentary remains of the Boots rail sidings network represent various phases of development from the 1930s through to the latter half of the 20th century. They formed an integral part of the Boots complex allowing raw materials to be transported directly from the national rail network to the factory which revolutionised the industrial manufacturing process.

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY	3
CONTENTS	4
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	6
1. INTRODUCTION	7
1.1 Background	7
1.2 Recording Methodology	7
1.3 The Report	7
2. SITE BACKGROUND	7
3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	8
4. RAIL NETWORK DESCRIPTION	9
5. DISCUSSION	9
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY	9

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Site map of Alliance Boots Campus, Beeston, Nottingham with Area 01 and Area 02 indicated by the red arrow. Scale 1:25,000 at A4.

Figure 2: Site map of the Alliance Boots Campus with Area 01 and Area 02 outlined in red. Scale 1:25,00 at A4.

Figure 3: The Boots rail sidings network depicted on the 25 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1955.

Figure 4: The Boots rail sidings network depicted on the 25 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1967.

Figure 5: The Boots rail sidings network depicted on the 25 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1973.

Figure 6: The Boots rail sidings network depicted on the 25 inch Ordnance Survey map of 1984.

Figure 7: Plan of the remaining elements of the Boots rail sidings network. Scale at A3 1:1000.

Figure 8: Plan of the remaining Boots rail sidings network and the photographic viewpoints of the plates within the report. Scale at A3 1:1000.

LIST OF PLATES

Plate 1: The rail sidings of Sixth Avenue with D13 in the background viewed looking south-east in 1938.

Plate 2: Area 01. The west siding, formerly part of the entry/exit line, and the principal line, viewed looking south.

Plate 3: Area 01. The west siding, formerly the exit/entry line, and the principal line from the west of D1 with D10 in the background, viewed looking north-east.

Plate 4: Area 01. The junction between the principal line and the north siding branching from it that formerly extended down Fifth Avenue, viewed looking north.

Plate 5: Area 01. The junction between the principal line and the south siding branching from it that formerly extended down Fifth Avenue, viewed looking north.

Plate 6: Area 02. The southern siding extending down Sixth Avenue taken north-east of D13, viewed looking west.

Plate 7: Area 02. The southern siding extending down Sixth Avenue taken from the south-east corner of D1, viewed looking east.

Plate 8: Area 02. The small piece of rail that originally formed part of the track that extended from the southernmost siding in Sixth Avenue, viewed looking west.

Plate 9: Area 02. The track connecting the northern and southern sidings of Sixth Avenue, viewed looking south-west.

Plate 10: Area 02. The junction between the track connecting the northern and southern sidings of Sixth Avenue with D1 in the background, viewed looking north-west.

7. ARCHIVAL REPORT

List of the photographs taken of the Boots rail network sidings

Figure 9: Plan of the remaining Boots rail sidings network and the photographic viewpoints. Scale at A3 1:1000.

Figure 10: Thumbnails of the 38 digital images.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The project was managed, and the fieldwork undertaken, by Matt Hurford. Thanks are extended to Blackwell for commissioning the work. The project was monitored by Michael Bruce the Senior Planning Officer at Broxtowe Borough Council.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Trent & Peak Archaeology was commissioned by Blackwell to undertake a Level 2 building record of the remaining elements of the disused rail sidings network at Boots Alliance Campus, Beeston, Nottingham. Two areas retained tracks, Area 01, located to the west of buildings D1 and D10 within the current car park centred at Ordnance Grid Reference SK 54265 36451 and Area 02, located within Sixth Avenue to the north of buildings D13 and D113, centred at Ordnance Grid Reference SK 54469 36455. The work was undertaken prior to the removal of the track as part of a scheme to develop the former Alliance Boots Campus into a mixed-use site of residential, retail, storage, industrial and office units (Planning Application No. 14/00515/OUT).

1.1.2 The railway sidings network is not listed though is of significance as it formed an integral part of the Boots factory, a complex of national importance that includes buildings designed by the celebrated civil engineer Sir Evan Owen Williams including the Grade I Listed building D10 which part of the sidings network originally ran through.

1.1.3 The fieldwork recording was undertaken on 11th November 2015 by Matt Hurford.

1.2 Recording Methodology

1.2.1 Broxtowe Borough Council requested a survey of the remaining elements of the disused rail sidings network prior to their removal based on classifications as outlined in English Heritage's guide *Understanding Historic Buildings* (2006). In this instance a Level 2 survey was required comprising a measured drawing of the existing track and a photographic record. The methodology employed also follows advice from the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' (CIfA) *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings and Structures* (2014) and adheres to the Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Trent & Peak Archaeology (Hurford 2015) and approved by Michael Bruce, the Senior Planning Officer at Broxtowe Borough Council.

1.2.2 Where an existing structure is not protected by listing and permission is sought or granted for destruction or major alteration, the local authority may require that a full archival record be made first, in order to 'preserve by record'. Similarly, where a structure is subject to national designation, such a survey will be required prior to the commencement of improvement works or development of the structure.

1.3 The Report

1.3.1 The building recording has involved an examination of the remaining elements of the disused rail sidings network. This has allowed for a brief written description of the sidings and its background with 10 figures and 10 plates as illustrations. A second part of the report (Section 7: Archival Record) comprises a list of illustrations to support the archival record. The latter consists primarily of 39 digital images and black and white negatives and prints from part of 2 films, comprising 41 negatives with 41 prints held in archival quality sleeves. The report includes copies of the digital images together with plans showing their viewpoints. All 39 digital images are included in a separate CD affixed to the back of the report.

1.3.2 The Boots complex is laid out on a grid orientated north-west to the south-east though for ease of reference this report refers to the orientation as north to south.

2. SITE BACKGROUND

2.1.1 Blackwell propose to remove the former rail sidings network as part of a wider scheme to develop the former Alliance Boots Campus into a mixed-use site of residential, retail, storage, industrial and office units (Planning Application No. 14/00515/OUT).

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1.1 Boots UK, formerly Boots Pure Drug Co, was founded by John Boot in 1849. By 1900 his son, Jesse had overseen the expansion of the business which had begun to create their own patented drugs. In order to develop the company further Jesse Boot took the decision to construct a model factory in the 1920s and acquired 156 acres of land to the south of Beeston. The purpose-built factory made direct reference to American corporate working models aimed at creating a modern industrial environment comprising an agreeable environment for workers alongside the introduction of efficient, process-driven design (<http://www.trentstation.com/boots---beeston-nottingham.html>). Sir Evan Owen Williams, one of the most influential and innovative engineering architects of the 20th century, was commissioned to design a number of the Boots Pure Drug Co buildings comprising D10, the wet process factory that was constructed 1930-32 (Historic England Site List Entry Number 1247927), D6, the dry process factory that was constructed 1937-38 (Historic England Site List Entry Number 1278028), D34, the fire station that was constructed 1938 (Historic England Site List Entry Number 1247933) and D13, the fine chemicals factory that was constructed 1938. Eight avenues extended across the site giving road access to all the buildings within the complex.

3.1.2 The site was served by sidings which connected with the south-east side of the LSMR Nottingham to Beeston line 700 yards east of Beeston station. The standard gauge lines were located to the west of the works next to an effluent treatment plant with a single entry/exit line connecting to a principal line that had numerous sidings branching from it. Photographic evidence indicates that the railway sidings were incorporated into the design of the factory from an early stage with one picture depicting elements of the network of Sixth Avenue in 1938 (Plate 1).

3.1.3 The earliest map depicting the network is the 1955 edition Ordnance Survey map (Figure 3). It shows a principal line extending west down First Avenue and then south almost to Beeston Canal. The principal line is connected to the entry/exit line to the west of D1. A siding is present to the west of the entry/exit line. There is a siding that enters or terminates at the south west corner of D6 on Second Avenue and one to the south that runs to the end of the avenue. Two sidings enter D10, the southernmost exiting the building to the east and running down Fourth Avenue. Fifth Avenue has a single siding extending down its entire length and one that terminates at the south-west corner of D10. There are two sidings running down Sixth Avenue with additional track joining the southernmost one. A siding also runs down the Eighth Avenue with a parallel one to the south. Where multiple sidings extend down an avenue, or enter a building, they originate from a single track which branches from the principal line.

3.1.4 The sidings network had expanded by the publication of the 1967 edition Ordnance Survey map (Figure 4). An additional siding had been sited to the west of the entry/exit line and a further siding extends down First Avenue. The siding that previously terminated at the corner of D6 now runs down the length of Second Avenue and a new siding placed down Third Avenue. An additional siding enters or terminates at the north-west corner of D10 and both earlier lines that entered D10 now exit the building to the east and extend down Fourth Avenue. The siding terminating at the south-west corner of D10 and that extending down Fifth Avenue no longer originate from a single track which branches from the principal line but now each come directly from the principal line. The two sidings extending down Sixth Avenue have been linked by an additional length of track to the south-east of D1 and have also been connected at the eastern end. The northern and southern siding now both branch separately from the principal line. The siding on Eighth Avenue and the parallel track to the south have also been joined by an additional length of track.

3.1.5 By the publication of the 1973 Ordnance Survey map the sidings network had contracted considerably (Figure 5). The principal line is now connected to the entry/exit line to west of D6 with the now redundant and shortened former entry/exit track joined to the principal line to the west of D10 creating the only remaining siding to the west of the principal line. The northern siding of First Avenue has been shortened and the sidings of Second

Avenue, Third Avenue, Fourth Avenue and Eighth Avenue are no longer connected to the principal line. Only two sidings are now depicting reaching D10.

3.1.6 The track extending down First Avenue, Second Avenue, Third Avenue, Eighth Avenue and that running parallel to Eighth Avenue has been removed by the publication of the 1984 edition Ordnance Survey map (Figure 6). The northern siding of Sixth Avenue has been modified so that it only extends between D1 and the building replaced by D20 and the track extending from the southern siding has been lifted.

3.1.7 Rail traffic to Boots ceased in 1981 and the track was donated to the Midland Railway Trust, Butterley Derbyshire with the majority lifted during 1990 leaving behind that which forms the basis for this current study (<http://www.trentstation.com/boots---beeston-nottingham.html>).

4. RAIL NETWORK DESCRIPTION

4.1 Area 01 (Figures 7-8. Plates 2-5)

4.1.2 The surviving elements of the rail network within Area 01 comprise two lengths of track to the west of D1 and D10. The westernmost 129m of track originally formed part of the entry/exit line that is likely to date to the early 1930s. At the northern end of Area 01 it sweeps to the east, joining the principal line, an alteration dating to between 1967 and 1973 when this part of the entry/exit line became a siding. The principal line extends for 131m and is also likely to belong to the earliest phase of the network. Branching from the southern part of the principal line are the remnants of the sidings for Fifth Avenue, map evidence suggesting that though the avenue had sidings from at least 1955 the present tracks may date to between 1955 and 1967.

4.2 Area 02 (Figures 7-8. Plates 6-10)

4.2.1 Little remains of the sidings network that formerly extended down Sixth Avenue. A 74m length to the north of D13 and D113 of the southern siding is intact that probably dates to the 1930s. A single piece of rail from the track extending from the southern siding also survives. It may be contemporaneous with the southern siding and was certainly present by the publication of the 1955 edition Ordnance Survey map. The majority of the track linking the northern and southern sidings of Sixth Avenue installed between 1955 and 1967 has been retained though the northern siding is no longer extant.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The fragmentary remains of the Boots rail sidings network are confined to the west of D1 and D10 and to the north of D13 and D113. They represent various phases of development from the beginning of the network in the 1930s through to the latter half of the 20th century. They formed an integral part of the Boots complex allowing raw materials to be transported directly from the national rail network to the factory which revolutionised the industrial manufacturing process (<http://www.trentstation.com/boots---beeston-nottingham.html>).

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Historic England Building D6 at Boots Factory Site List Entry Number 1278028

Historic England Building D10 at Boots Factory Site List Entry Number 1247927

Historic England Building D34 at Boots Factory Site List Entry Number 1247933

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