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**An Archaeological Assessment of
The Walsall Ring Road and Inner Relief Road Scheme**

by
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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE WALSALL RING ROAD AND INNER RELIEF ROAD SCHEME

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1: SUMMARY

1.1 The impact of the proposed road schemes on the archaeological resource will be most significant in the Lower Rushall Street and Ablewell Street/Upper Rushall Street areas. The widening of the present carriageway on the east side of Lower Rushall Street will affect the former medieval and early post-medieval street frontage. The Lower Rushall Street area has previously been identified as an area of outstanding archaeological significance. The street represents one of Walsall's growing edges in the late medieval and early post-medieval periods and its archaeology is potentially of great regional importance. Excavations in the area and surviving/recorded limestone-walled and timber-framed buildings suggest that prospects for the survival of the archaeological resource in this area are good.

1.2 It is therefore recommended that test-pits scheduled to take place in Lower Rushall Street and Upper Rushall Street be closely monitored by an archaeologist. If the test pits reveal well-preserved stratified archaeological deposits or structures, then groundworks for the new carriageway should be preceded by controlled archaeological excavation along the narrow corridor affected. If the results of the test pits suggest that archaeological deposits/structures are of a more fragmentary character, then groundworks should be monitored archaeologically by an intensive watching-brief. If the results are ambiguous, the option of a further archaeologically-dug test-trench should be considered.

1.3 It is recommended that all buildings scheduled for demolition be recorded at various levels of detail depending on their date and significance. The most important are the early/mid 19th-century workshop and residential buildings in the Blue Lane West/Green Lane/Margaret Street block. These should be recorded in detail and a more rapid approach adopted for the remainder.

1.4 It is also recommended that some other sections of the road scheme are monitored archaeologically during test-pit investigations and, if ground conditions justify it, during the road construction process. Road widening on the west side of Pleck Road may encounter boundary features of the medieval manorial park.

2: INTRODUCTION

2.1 The aim of this report is to identify and assess the potential archaeological resource affected by the proposed road schemes. It was commissioned in September 1994 by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council through Johnson, Poole and Bloomer (Engineers) and has been undertaken by the writer on behalf of Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit. The brief for this work is reproduced as Appendix One.

2.2 The report is based on a search of documentary and cartographic sources and on-site inspection of the road corridor (Sept. 1994). Sources of information are referenced in Appendix Two.

2.3 Format. Given the linear character of the redevelopment the affected area is broken down into separate sections for description and discussion. Following a general introduction, these are presented (clockwise) from west to east, from Pleck Road to Vicarage Place.

2.4 Figures. The report is designed to be read in conjunction with the WMBC scheme plans, drawings IH/WRR-IRR/0.001 - 0.007. Additional figures (1 and 2) and photographs to illustrate aspects of the archaeological implications of the road scheme are included here.

2.5 The presentation of each section in this report follows a standard format: proposed works; present character; local historical/archaeological profile; below-ground information; assessment of the archaeological implications of the proposed work, and recommendations for an archaeological response.

2.6 In accordance with the brief, part 4 of this report discusses some of the research implications arising from this assessment and the sources used in it.

2.7 Part 5 comprises a summary of recommendations.

3: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE ROAD SCHEME

3.1 General appreciation: the road corridor and the historic landscape.

3.1.1 The road scheme describes three-quarters of an elliptical course around the modern town centre, mostly about 0.5 - 0.8 km out, measured from the Bridge. The pre-Industrial built-up area of Walsall was based on the north-west/south-east Park Street - Digbeth - High Street axis lying across the valley of the Ford Brook and Holbrook, with extensions northwards and southwards from the east end represented by Upper and Lower Rushall Street, Ablewell Street, and Dudley Street. Regional routeways (to Wolverhampton and Stafford) fanned out from Townend, the end of the medieval planned development of Park Street (Fig. 1).

3.1.2 The extent of the built-up area changed little between the late Middle Ages and the 18th century. With the Industrial Revolution the town began to grow rapidly, particularly along the streets radiating from Townend, towards the coal mining and metal working area of Birchills (Fig.1). The opening of the canal in 1799, approaching the town from the south-west, encouraged the development of an industrial zone whose location was not directly determined by extractive industries. The poorly-drained valley bottom formed a natural corridor for the railway in 1847; the railway and the watercourses attracted further industrial development while residential areas continued to spread on the higher ground to the west and east.

3.1.3 The road corridor samples each of these areas. Pleck Road, south-west of the town centre, divides the area of the medieval park (significantly built up only in this century) from the canalside industrial zone. The Blue Lane West and Stafford Street sections cut across the fan of streets from Townend developing rapidly with housing and artisan workshops in the early 19th century. Littleton Street, north of the town centre, traverses the stream valley, with industrial sites sandwiched between residential developments of the mid-19th century. The Arboretum Roundabout marks the point at which the road scheme swings southwards into the medieval built-up area, down the Rushall Street axis, to the central focus of the medieval town represented by the site of the High Cross at the top end of the High Street. Continuing south-westwards along Peal Street and Dudley Street, the scheme passes out of the pre-Industrial town and terminates at the junction with Bradford Street, developed in the 1830s.

3.1.4 While this account (and Fig.1) expresses the relationship between the road scheme and the known historical settlement pattern of the last millennium, it has not been possible to define such a relationship for the prehistoric and Roman periods. No prehistoric or Roman sites have been identified in the road corridor but the geography of these periods in the Walsall area is little known and the possibility of unrecorded sites being encountered during redevelopment cannot be ruled out.

DETAILED ASSESSMENT

3.2 The Pleck Road/Rollingmill Street/Ida Road junction.

3.2.1 Proposed works. Road widening on all four corners; demolition of 19th-century structure at S.E. corner (Orton's, 209 Pleck Rd.). (Figs: WMBC Scheme plans 0.001 and 0.002)

3.2.2 Present character. The east side of Pleck Road north of the junction is occupied by modern light industrial structures with some surviving 19th-century buildings intermixed away from the frontage. Ida Road was built up in the early 1890s (2) and retains its primary building cover, including the Manor Post Office on the corner set back from Pleck Road. The other corners of the junction are open ground, those on the east side representing the sites of cleared buildings, and a pub car-park on the S.W. corner. Orton's, 209 Pleck Road, is a mid-late 19th-century building surviving from a demolished terrace.

3.2.3 Historical/archaeological profile. Pleck Road, formerly Park Lane, probably formed the east boundary of the medieval manorial deer-park, first recorded in the early 13th century; the park survived into the mid-16th century but had been split-up by 1617. The presence of a deer herd in the park suggests that it was enclosed; part of it was certainly enclosed in 1385-6 to protect timber growing within (3). Boundary features, possibly a ditch and bank or pale, may be archaeologically recoverable. This part of the park was not built up until the end of the 19th century. The east side of Pleck Road was developed in the 1850s as a series of large heavy industrial plots backing onto the canal. The Rollingmill Street-Pleck Road corner site was developed in 1852 as a terrace of six houses with a common yard behind (4); these (Nos.185-195) survived into the 1960s.

3.2.4 Below-ground information. Ground level on the east side of Pleck Road appears to have been lowered to c.0.5m below present road level behind the front wall of the cleared buildings.

3.2.5 Archaeological implications. Groundworks on the corners on the west side of Pleck Road may encounter medieval park boundary features. Coal and ironstone mining activity from the late Middle Ages onwards is an unpredictable but recurrent feature of this area (see below).

3.2.6 Recommendations. Test pits in this area should be inspected by an archaeologist. If ground conditions warrant, groundworks on the west side of Pleck Road should be monitored archaeologically (by watching brief). No. 209 on the east side of Pleck Road should be recorded as the last survivor of a terrace; a rapid approach incorporating floor-plans and photographic coverage is suggested.

3.3 The Pleck Road/Bridgeman Street/Moat Road junction.

3.3.1 Proposed works. Road widening on each side of Pleck Road south of junction; demolition and part demolition of standing buildings on the east side; doubling of Pleck Road carriageway on west side north of junction; widening at north-east corner with demolition of standing building (No.87 Pleck Road). (Figs: WMBC scheme plans 0.001 and 0.003)

3.3.2 Present character. The junction is dominated by a group of Victorian buildings in an otherwise open landscape. On the west side, south of the junction, is the Manor Hospital; on the east side is the walled yard containing the 19th-century Bridgeman House, now in commercial use (plates 1 and 2). North of the junction,

the west side of Pleck Road is open cleared ground in use as a car-park while on the north-east corner is No.87, a dutch-gabled shop of mid-late 19th-century origin, in use as a pub in the 1960s (plate 3).

3.3.3 Historical/archaeological profile. The former medieval deer park west of Pleck Road has already been referred to (above). The ground remained open until widespread building began in the second half of the 19th century. The first edition O.S. plans of 1886 show coal pits in the fields immediately west of Pleck Road; coal-mining in the park is first recorded in 1490-1 (5). Ironstone mining is also recorded in this area, west of Pleck Road in the park from 1577-8, and east of Pleck Road on the Rough Waste from 1576-82 (6); the precise location of pre-19th-century mining activity is unknown. The Manor Hospital occupies the surviving ranges of the Walsall poor-law union Workhouse of 1838. The main range lies roughly north-south, parallel to Pleck Road, with five out of eight cross-wings surviving (plate 4). On the Pleck Road side only one cross-wing at the south end survives; one at the north end has been demolished since the 1960s while two central wings had already gone by 1886. The workhouse chapel, a detached building, formerly stood on the Moat Road-Pleck Road corner. On the east side of Pleck Road is the walled yard containing Bridgeman House, a mid-19th-century neoclassical residence well-known locally as the home of Frank James, a prominent figure in Walsall political life in the later 19th and early 20th century. The house and yard have long been in commercial use, until recently as a depot for the South Staffs. Water Company. Bridgeman Street was laid out c.1836; Moat Road was extant by c.1860. Housing on the west side of Pleck Road north of the junction dated from the later 1850s (7).

3.3.4 Below-ground information. None available at time of writing.

3.3.5 Archaeological implications. Foundations for new carriageways on the west side of Pleck Road may encounter medieval park boundary features; they are also likely to encounter the footings of three former wings of the union workhouse and its detached chapel. The internal arrangements of the workhouse buildings are well recorded from 1899 onwards (8); though some new ground-plan information may be gained from the footings of the wings demolished before 1886 this is not seen as a priority. The new carriageway on the west side of Pleck Road north of the junction will be likely to contact the footings of mid-19th-century terraced housing, but the general disposition of this housing is cartographically recorded at a large scale, both in the 19th century and prior to clearance in 1956 (9); given its post-1850 date and the likelihood of surviving parallels elsewhere, further archaeological recording here is not seen as a priority. Mining activity may be encountered but is not predictable.

3.3.6 Recommendations. Test pits in this area should be inspected by an archaeologist. If ground conditions warrant, groundworks on the west side of Pleck Road should be monitored archaeologically (by watching brief) for evidence of medieval park boundary features, with recording of the early workhouse wings as a secondary target. It is recommended that the standing buildings (Bridgeman House and No. 87 on the north-east corner) are rapidly recorded prior to partial-demolition or demolition: specifications to be prepared with specialist guidance but a rapid photographic approach is suggested.

3.4 Pleck Road/Wolverhampton Road junction.

3.4.1 Proposed works. Large-scale widening of existing Pleck Road on west side to create new carriageway/slip road. Probable deck strengthening to canal bridge. (Figs: WMBC scheme plans 0.001 and 0.003)

3.4.2 Present character. Open cleared ground on the west side of Pleck Road in use as a car-park (unsurfaced). Open ground also on east side. North side of Wolverhampton Road built up with prominent 19th-century industrial buildings, notably the Albion Flour Mills of 1849/1898 (10). Immediately west of the mill, Wolverhampton Road crosses over the canal branch of 1841 on a bridge that appears to date from the c.1930s and 1960s-70s.

3.4.3 Historical/archaeological profile. The medieval park west of Pleck Road has been described above. The Wolverhampton Road frontage in this area was beginning to be built up by 1845 (11) and was fully occupied by industrial and residential premises by the time of the first edition O.S. plans of 1886. The Wolverhampton Road/Pleck Road corner, the area most affected by the proposed works, remained open until the development of terrace housing around Checketts Street in 1891-3 (12).

3.4.4 Below-ground information. None available at time of writing.

3.4.5 Archaeological implications. Possible contact with medieval park boundary features on west side of Pleck Road. Contact with footings of cleared late 19th-century buildings on west side of Pleck Road. The scheme carries no implications for canal structures aside from possible deck strengthening to the bridge.

3.4.6 Recommendations. Test pits in this area should be inspected by an archaeologist. If ground conditions warrant, groundworks on the west side of Pleck Road should be monitored archaeologically (a watching brief). No investigation of the footings of mid and late 19th-century housing is proposed. No further archaeological response to the scheme in this area is suggested.

3.5 Wolverhampton Road/Blue Lane West junction.

3.5.1 Proposed works. Widening to create new carriageway on north side of Blue Lane West. Demolition of existing Co-op superstore building in angle of Blue Lane/Wolverhampton Street and construction of new road across the angle. (Figs: WMBC scheme plans 0.001 and 0.003)

3.5.2 Present character. Open cleared ground on north side of Blue Lane West. Modern large commercial structures on south side.

3.5.3 Historical/archaeological profile. The south side of Blue Lane at the Wolverhampton Street corner began to be developed from c.1830 and was lightly developed as far as the present Shaw Street by 1845. The north side of Blue Lane was slower to develop: plots with buildings are recorded in 1845 on the Wolverhampton Road/Adams Street and Birchills Street corners (13). Limestone mining is known on both sides of Blue Lane West at about this date: mining rights were granted in Shaw's Leasowes (north of Blue Lane) in 1826 and there had been mining operations on both sides of Wolverhampton Street since at least 1823 (14).

3.5.4 Below-ground information. None available at time of writing, though extensive records are said to have been generated by mine-working reclamation (not seen at time of writing).

3.5.5 Archaeological implications. Foundations for the widening of the north side of Blue Lane are likely to encounter footings of buildings built between 1832-1845 on the Adams Street and Birchills Street corners and between 1845 and 1886 in the section between. The buildings on the Adams Street corner had been cleared

by 1914-17 and coherent survival seems unlikely. Unrecorded mine-workings of early 19th-century and later date are an unpredictable possibility.

3.5.6 Recommendations. Modern buildings to be demolished on the south side of Blue Lane should be recorded at a superficial level, i.e. photographically. A copy of records of mine-workings collected or generated by reclamation and consolidation programmes should be deposited with the West Midlands Sites & Monuments Record. No other archaeological response is envisaged for this section of the scheme.

3.6 The Green Lane roundabout.

3.6.1 Proposed works. Construction of roundabout centred on Green Lane to the south of the present Blue Lane West junction, over land at present partly built up in the street block defined by Margaret Street on the west and south, Green Lane on the east, and Blue Lane to the north; demolition of 19th- and 20th-century structures in this block; construction of new carriageways over open ground on the east side of Green Lane through to Stafford Street. (Figs: WMBC scheme plans 0.001 and 0.004)

3.6.2 Present character. The north side of Blue Lane West is currently open ground (gardens); these will be extended southwards as the carriageway is to be diverted to the new roundabout centred to the south. The Margaret Street block south of Blue Lane is largely open ground, part in use as a scrapyards, part in use as crane hire premises, part derelict. Mid-19th-century and later workshop buildings remain in the interior of the street block, with derelict houses partly concealed behind advertisement hoardings on the Green Lane frontage (plates 5-8). The east side of Green Lane affected by the proposals is currently an unsurfaced car-park; the area further to the east, approaching Stafford Street, is grassed.

3.6.3 Historical/archaeological profile. The west side of Green Lane at the Blue Lane corner is first shown (schematically) built up on the one inch to one mile map of c.1775, but is then shown vacant on maps of c.1800 and 1832 (15). This may reflect conventionalised or inaccurate drafting on the earliest map, or it may truly reflect transitory occupation that had ceased by 1800. Green Lane, known earlier as Birchills Lane, is first recorded in 1559 and there was a cottage beside it (somewhere) in 1587. Birchills itself was a centre of coal mining with a small population by the mid-17th century; the area between it and Townend had a scattered population by the mid-18th century (16). The tithe map of 1845 (17) shows the area in a state of rapid transition with blocks of building appearing at apparently random intervals along the streets in the Blue Lane - Green Lane area. All four corners of the Blue Lane/Green Lane junction were built up with properties described in the apportionments as 'houses and gardens'. There is an evident contrast with the typical description of properties on Stafford Street nearby as 'houses and premises' which seems to imply that the Green Lane properties were largely domestic in function, at least away from the main frontage, and that the post-1845 workshop buildings that survive on site were part of a change of use, possibly dating from around the time that Margaret Street was built in the early 1870s (18). Buildings extant by 1845 on the east side of Green Lane at the Blue Lane junction lie just outside the area of the proposed roundabout under the police station, its car-park, and the present road to the south of it.

3.6.4 Below-ground information. None available at time of writing. An unidentified circular feature recorded on J.Curtis Jnr's map of c.1800, at estimated grid reference 400852/298937 (alongside path to New Inns pub) lies in the course of

the proposed new carriageway on the north side of Blue Lane and may represent an isolated lime pit.

3.6.5 Archaeological implications. The proposed works will affect standing buildings and the sites of demolished buildings of pre- and post-1845 date on the Margaret Street site, and the site of housing developed after 1845 on the east side of Green Lane.

3.6.6 Recommendations. The standing buildings on the Margaret Street site should be recorded. Specifications should be prepared with specialist advice but it is suggested that floor-plans and elevations and full photographic coverage should be included for all 19th-century structures; they are representative of increasingly-rare, small-scale mid Victorian workshops, in a semi-derelict but relatively unaltered state, with associated housing on the frontage. The site of housing on the east side of Green Lane is recorded to an extent by the cartographic records associated with their clearance in 1936 (19) and by pre-demolition photographs of this part of the street frontage. No further archaeological response is suggested for this section of the scheme.

3.7 Stafford Street.

3.7.1 Proposed works. New dual carriageway to break through from the Green lane roundabout to the west, replacing the existing street. To connect with new carriageway to the north of Littleton Street West. Demolition of minor 19th- and 20th-century ancillary buildings to the north of 31.5 Stafford Street. (Figs: WMBC scheme plans 0.001 and 0.004)

3.7.2 Present character. Open cleared ground (grassed) on proposed route west of Stafford Street. Open cleared ground (car-parks) on north side of Littleton Street.

3.7.3 Historical/archaeological profile. The section of the east side of Stafford Street affected by the road scheme may have been built up for the first time at the very end of the 18th century: the small-scale map of 1775 (20) shows the area as open ground between an isolated block of building(s) to the north on the Green Lane East corner and the scattered cottages colonising the waste around Townend; however, the Curtis map of c.1800 (21) shades the frontage in the area under discussion to indicate that it was then built up. The small-scale 1832 map by Dawson based on the Ordnance Survey (22) also shows buildings here, and although drawn schematically or conventionally, gives an indication of occasional long back ranges projecting at right-angles from the frontage that can be recognised on the much more detailed 1845 tithe map and later O.S. plans. These are the 'houses and premises' of the tithe apportionments; land-use here in the mid-19th century seems to have differed from that of the adjacent frontage of (the less important) Green Lane, and this is reflected in the different building pattern with rear workshop ranges (greatly increased in number and density between 1845 and 1886) and three-storey rather than two-storey frontage buildings. The east frontage of this part of Stafford Street was developed between 1845 and 1886. Littleton Street West was laid out between c.1832 and 1836 but not built up until after 1845.

3.7.4 Below-ground information. None available at time of writing.

3.7.5 Archaeological implications. The road scheme will contact the buried remains of early 19th-century buildings on the west side of Stafford Street.

However, it is felt that the recovery of partial plan-information left after intensive later 19th-century development and recent demolition and clearance may not offer a significant advance on information already available from pre-clearance large-scale mapping, photographic evidence for the frontage buildings, and the evidence of adjacent standing buildings.

3.7.6 Recommendations. Rapid (photographic) recording of minor ancillary buildings north of No.31.5 Stafford Street prior to demolition. No further archaeological response is suggested for this section of the road scheme.

3.8. Littleton Street.

3.8.1 Proposed works. Widening of Littleton Street West and East on north side to create extra carriageway. Demolition of standing buildings Nos.47-9 and 51-3 Littleton Street. Widening of railway bridge. Road widening at Hatherton Street junction and demolition of former timber yard; demolition of public house and adjacent commercial range. (Figs: WMBC scheme plans 0.001, 0.004, 0.005)

3.8.2 Present character. The north side of the western stretch of Littleton Street West between Stafford Street and Wisemore is open cleared ground in use for car-parking. East of Wisemore are gardens for the Walsall Leather Centre. Nos.47-53 are two pairs of semi-detached terrace-type cottages of mid-late 19th-century (pre-1886) date (plate 9). The railway bridge is a 20th-century brick and steel structure. The industrial premises (formerly Brookes and Orton) on the north-west corner of the Hatherton Street junction have been a saw mill since their first appearance on the O.S. first edition plan of 1886; the buildings within appear to be of various dates but inspection of the site has been limited to the street frontage. The yard paving incorporates narrow-gauge tramway tracks (plate 10). The north-east corner of the Hatherton Street junction is occupied by the Littleton Arms (No.40), a well-preserved Victorian public house in its present configuration by 1886; it has an associated two-storey commercial range adjoining to the east with a three-storey block over an entry. Further buildings (No.38) were added to the east by 1902-3 (plate 11).

3.8.3 Historical/archaeological profile. Hatherton Street had been laid out by 1836, built northwards from Hatherton Road. Littleton Street West was also laid out in the early 1830s and extended eastwards to Lichfield Street within a decade. The Littleton Street area was described in the 1850s as one where 'streets and habitations are daily springing up on every side'. Littleton Street lies diagonally across the route of a short-lived mineral tramway built in 1823 to link limestone workings in the Arboretum area with the Walsall canal (23); this crossed the street at the junction of the present Little Albert Street, continuing north-east across what is now the car-park in front of Lime House. The railway of 1847 followed the valley bottom; it, and the Ford Brook alongside, attracted a north-south band of industrial development serviced from Hatherton Street, principally tanneries and sawmills. Extensive deep limestone workings were developed in the area west of Hatherton Street in the 19th century, commencing with the Hatherton Limeworks in 1843-5; they continued in production until 1903 and have in recent years been the subject of extensive consolidation programmes.

3.8.4 Below-ground information. The limestone mine consolidation programmes have generated extensive documentation as workings have gradually been infilled (not seen at time of writing). Boreholes in the Littleton Street East/Forster Street area have recorded natural sand immediately under the surface. Boreholes in the vicinity of the Ford Brook downstream, in the Hatherton Road area, have recorded

dark clay and organic fills to depths of 2-3 metres, but such material is unlikely to contain ancient cultural debris in the area under discussion (24).

3.8.5 Archaeological implications. The construction of a new carriageway to the north of Littleton Street will contact the footings of cleared housing of c.1850 and later, particularly at the west end. The 19th-century limestone workings are at a depth of 50-70 metres and road construction is unlikely to impinge on them (or vice-versa).

3.8.6 Recommendations. Buildings scheduled for demolition should be recorded; specifications for this work should be subject to specialist advice but it is suggested that approaches should favour the rapid/photographic on all structures, with a possibly more intensive strategy adopted for the well-preserved Littleton Arms public house and its associated ranges, facades, and fittings. No prediction can be made as to the character or survivability of remains of the 1823 tramway, but it is suggested that groundworks in front of Lime House are monitored. No other below-ground work is envisaged for this section of the scheme. A copy of the documentation generated by the mine workings consolidation programme should be deposited with the West Midlands Sites & Monuments Record.

3.9 The Arboretum Roundabout.

3.9.1 Proposed works. Minor modifications to existing roundabout and approaches. (Figs: WMBC scheme plans 0.001, 0.005)

3.9.2 Present character. The roundabout occupies a cleared area adjacent to the Arboretum and residential districts of various dates.

3.9.3 Historical/archaeological profile. The Arboretum was opened as a public park in 1874, its principal feature being flooded limestone quarries worked from the late 18th century to the 1840s. Lichfield Street was planned in 1830 as a new route northwards to Lichfield, and developed gradually with fashionable middle-class housing over the following twenty years (25). The roundabout area is adjacent at its south-east corner to the much older (late medieval - early post-medieval) built-up area of Lower Rushall Street, long plots on the west side of which stretched down to the Holbrook. This area was extensively colonised by tanneries in the 19th and early 20th centuries (26).

3.9.4 Below-ground information. Boreholes in this area have yielded mixed results. Fills of varied character but generally with ash, brick or tarmac components indicative of recent deposition have been recorded at depths of up to 1.7 to 2.4 metres (27).

3.9.5 Archaeological implications. Probably none.

3.9.6 Recommendations. No archaeological response is suggested for this part of the scheme.

3.10. Lower Rushall Street - Ablewell Street junction.

3.10.1 Proposed works. Widening of the existing carriageway on the east side of Lower Rushall Street and on the east side of Upper Rushall Street at the Ablewell

Street junction; demolition of a standing building, the Borough Arms public house, at the Ablewell Street junction. (Figs: WMBC scheme plans 0.001, 0.007, Fig.2)

3.10.2 Present character. The east side of Lower Rushall Street affected by the scheme is open ground, cleared of buildings in the 1930s; to the north of Holtshill Lane it is grassed, serving as gardens to flats set back from the frontage; to the south it is tarmac-surfaced car-parking. The Borough Arms public house is the only building now standing on the Ablewell Street corner of Upper Rushall Street; it is a terracotta-faced building of 1903-6 built in what has been described as an 'eclectic Edwardian manner' (28) (plate 12). The site of recently-cleared buildings to its south is now a tarmac-surfaced car-park.

3.10.3 Historical/archaeological profile. Upper Rushall Street and Lower Rushall Street were part of the medieval built-up area (29) though the extent, density, and character of occupation along them has yet to be determined. An excavation on the west side of Lower Rushall Street in the 1970s found remains of two 16th-century buildings, one a partly-standing timber-framed building, the other of limestone rubble construction. Both had been built over quarry pits backfilled in the later Middle Ages, possibly as part of a concerted reclamation programme over a wider area (30). There is little doubt that Lower Rushall Street was one of the 'growing edges' of the late medieval town, and it seems that large, perhaps lightly-developed plots of that period were subjected to intensive sub-division during a period of rebuilding in the 16th and 17th centuries. Photographic evidence from the period before and during the clearance programmes of the 1930s suggest that many timber-framed and limestone-walled buildings survived the Industrial Revolution in this area.

3.10.4 Below-ground information. The most informative single source is the 1975 excavation on the west side of the street, near the Intown Row junction. This demonstrated the survival of archaeological deposits in the form of quarry-pit fills of 13th-14th-century date, an overlying levelling-up layer and structural remains. An archaeological evaluation on the Carter's Foundry site (now Safeway), further north along the west side of the street, found that any early deposits that may once have existed on the frontage had been destroyed by industrial development. The picture behind the frontage was different, with indications of earlier deposits deeply-sealed and protected on the slope down to the Holbrook (31). These sightings all refer to the west side of Lower Rushall Street, on the slope down from the street towards the Holbrook. It is not clear how relevant these observations may be to the slope up from the street on the east side, affected by the road scheme. It may be speculated that the slope up would favour the accumulation of deposits in the frontage area, but no further evidence is available until test-pits are dug. Pre-clearance photographs of the rear of properties on the east side in 1936 do however suggest a fair degree of structural survival from the 16th or 17th century and an absence of the intensive 19th-century industrial development that was characteristic of some of the west side properties. Predicting ground conditions and deposit survival at the Ablewell Street corner is also difficult. Of the 19th-century commercial buildings that formerly occupied the site immediately south of the Borough Arms, No.35 is known to have been cellared (33) and its neighbours probably were too; deposit survival on the frontage is therefore not a high probability. Conditions behind the frontage are unpredictable but this area is unaffected by the scheme.

3.10.5 Archaeological implications. The impact of the road scheme on the archaeological resource will be, potentially, greater in this area than any other. Lower Rushall Street was identified in 1988 as an area of outstanding archaeological significance for two principal reasons. First, it is one of very few areas of the town where the survival of pre-Industrial archaeological deposits has been demonstrated; secondly, as an area growing in the later Middle Ages and being redeveloped in the 16th-17th centuries it has a role to play in the wider study of the changing,

expanding, and industrialising economy of the West Midlands that set the scene for the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century and determined the character of the modern town and its hinterland. This is an area of research that, while well-advanced in (for example) the Ironbridge area, has not until recently received attention in the West Midlands, though it is now the subject of several research initiatives (32).

3.10.6 Recommendations. The Lower Rushall Street section of the scheme should be given the highest priority for a below-ground archaeological response. Test-pits scheduled to take place in the area should be monitored during excavation by archaeological personnel. If it is the case that in-situ preservation of the archaeological resource by adopting a mitigation strategy for the road foundations (e.g. rafting) is not feasible, options for the recovery of archaeological data must be considered. If test pits reveal a high degree of coherent archaeological deposit or structural survival, the narrow band of the Lower Rushall Street east frontage would merit controlled archaeological excavation in advance of groundworks (Fig.2). If archaeological deposits or structures survive only in a very fragmentary or incoherent state, then an intensive archaeological watching brief on groundworks may be the most appropriate option. If the test pits are uninformative consideration should be given to additional archaeologically-excavated test-trenches. Test pits in the Ablewell Street/Upper Rushall Street junction area should be similarly monitored by archaeological personnel; were intact strata or structures to be revealed then this section too would merit excavation in the narrow corridor affected, though it is predicted that 19th-century cellaring will suggest that a watching brief is the appropriate response. The Borough Arms should be recorded rapidly/photographically before demolition.

3.11 Dudley Street.

3.11.1 Proposed works. Widening on the east side and at the Bath Street, George Street, and Caldmore Road junctions. (Figs: WMBC scheme plans 0.001, 0.006)

3.11.2 Present character. Open cleared ground on the south side (car-park); Sainsbury's car-park on the north side east of George Street; open ground on the affected corners of Caldmore Road junction (S.E. corner cleared/derelict, N.W. corner flowerbeds).

3.11.3 Historical/archaeological profile. Dudley Street, as its name suggests, was the principal access to the town from the south-west before the insertion of Bradford Street in the 1830s; it was built up by the time the sketch map of Walsall was drawn in 1679 and was probably part of the medieval occupied area, known with Peal Street under the name of Hole End (34).

3.11.4 Below-ground information. As part of the 1987-88 evaluation a number of test pits were excavated in the affected area, on the sites of 63-7 Dudley Street. These encountered natural clay under 0.5 metres of 19th-century fill.

3.11.5 Archaeological implications. Although part of the early town, the 1987-88 evaluation results show that no archaeological deposits survive in this area.

3.11.6 Recommendations. No archaeological response is envisaged for this section of the scheme.

3.12 Vicarage Place/Wednesbury Road junction.

3.12.1 Proposed works. Widening of Vicarage Road on the north side at the approach to Wednesbury Road; demolition of standing building No.14 Mountrath Street; possible demolition or part-demolition of corner building ex-V.K.Jain on Bradford Street/Vicarage Place corner. (Figs: WMBC scheme plans 0.001 and 0.006)

3.12.2 Present character. The north-east end of Vicarage Place is built up with largely 19th-century buildings. To the west the area around Mountrath Street is generally open cleared ground in use for car-parking. No.14 Mountrath Street, scheduled for demolition, is the last survivor of a three-storey terrace 'of some pretension' (i.e. for the middle classes) of c.1830 (35). The building on the Bradford Street corner is a rendered hipped-roofed building possibly of the 1830s-40s though now possessing few original external features, at least on its main Bradford Street elevation (plate 13).

3.12.3 Historical/archaeological profile. Vicarage Place is part of the Peal Street - Dudley Street - Wednesbury Road regional routeway carrying traffic from Walsall to the south-west. Bradford Street was laid out in 1831, Mountrath Street probably a year or so later. The new streets were described in 1834 as 'a handsome and commodious approach to the town' (36).

3.12.4 Below-ground information. None available at time of writing.

3.12.5 Archaeological implications. The sole archaeological implications of the road scheme in this area lie in the demolition of the standing buildings described above. No.14 Mountrath Street is the last surviving example of a particular episode of early 19th-century speculative development; it appears relatively well-preserved (outside inspection only) and deserves recording prior to demolition. The state of preservation of the building on the Vicarage Place/Bradford Street corner is perhaps more uncertain, as its frontage and ground floor at least have obviously undergone considerable modification for commercial use.

3.12.6 Recommendations. Both buildings should be recorded. Specifications for the work will be subject to decisions regarding the fate of the Bradford St. building, and should be prepared with specialist advice following internal inspection; however, a more intensive approach with floor-plans may be suggested for the apparently better-preserved No.14 Mountrath Street.

4: THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS ASSESSMENT FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

4.1 The origins of the Industrial Revolution in the West Midlands.

As expressed in the section on Lower Rushall Street (3.10.1-6, above), arguably the greatest contribution that the archaeological resource in Walsall - and work taking place in the context of the Ring Road-Inner Relief Road - can make to the development of historical research in the West Midlands is in the study of the industrialising economy at the end of the Middle Ages and through into the 17th century. In part, this will be studied from the remains of extractive industries and primary production sites, but the examination of ordinary urban and suburban domestic workshop sites and their organisation, development and scale, remains essential. No new sources for this research have been identified in this assessment though the importance of cartographic and particularly photographic evidence stressed by the 1988 Walsall evaluation bears repetition here. Lower Rushall Street has been identified as an area of great potential in this respect.

4.2 The development of working-class/artisan housing.

Throughout the road corridor contact will be made with the remains of working-class and artisan housing. No recommendations have been made here for its recovery, other than by the recording of standing structures. This approach has been adopted on the basis that ground-plan information that could be recovered by the excavation of houses cleared in the 1930s or 1960s would not represent a significant advance on information available from standing buildings surviving elsewhere, from the block-plans of the 1:500 Ordnance Survey sheets of 1886 and later, from the documentation accompanying the clearance orders, and from, for example, the house-to-house inspection books of 19th-century Sanitary Inspectors. However, if it had been possible to identify areas in the road corridor where the floor plans of housing pre-dating *c.* 1845 could be expected to have survived later development and eventual clearance, then these would have been recommended for recovery by, at least, controlled mechanical stripping. A recent Royal Commission report on the Black Country noted 'the slum clearance programmes of the last forty years have effectively removed virtually all representative working-class housing of before *c.* 1880' (37). For the Walsall area, the research possible in the context of this rapid evaluation suggests that only a few, scattered, buildings of this type survive from the period before *c.* 1850, and that little systematic work on the development of plan-forms has taken place (38). Court housing in particular may be less well recorded in early photographs than housing on the street frontages. This subject area has undoubted importance for the social and economic (and popular) history of the region, and its undeveloped state is a serious barrier to the formulation of archaeological research strategies objectives concerned with the understanding of the making of the modern landscape.

5: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS.

RING ROAD

Pleck Road/Rollingmill Street/Ida Road junction:
Inspection of test pits. Possible watching-brief. Rapid building recording x 1.

Pleck Road/ Bridgeman Street/Moat Road junction:
Inspection of test pits. Possible watching-brief. Building recording x 2.

Pleck Road/Wolverhampton Road junction:
Inspection of test pits. Possible watching-brief.

Wolverhampton Road/Blue Lane West junction:
Rapid building recording x 1. Archive deposition of mine records.

Green Lane Roundabout:
Detailed building recording x 3. Rapid building recording x ?2.

Stafford Street junction:
Rapid building recording x 1.

Littleton Street West/East:
Rapid building recording x 3. Building recording x 1. Limited watching brief.
Archive deposition of mine records.

Arboretum Roundabout:
No archaeological response.

INNER RELIEF ROAD

Lower Rushall Street:
Intensive monitoring of test pits. Possible controlled excavation of narrow strip on east frontage. Possible intensive watching brief.

Ablewell Street junction:
Intensive monitoring of test pits. Probable watching brief. Building recording x 1.

Dudley Street:
No archaeological response.

Vicarage Place/Wednesbury Road junction:
Building recording x 2.

APPENDIX ONE: THE EVALUATION BRIEF

Our Ref: DEB/MH/94043-ar.rpt

3 August 1994

BRIEF FOR A RAPID ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT: RING ROAD AND INNER RELIEF ROAD SCHEME, WALSALL, WEST MIDLANDS

Introduction

The above scheme has been planned to enhance traffic movement in the Walsall area, through a number of improvements to the road system, as shown on JPB Drawing E2/94043-02A.

A rapid archaeological assessment is required as part of the works by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council (the Client), through Johnson, Poole and Bloomer (the Engineer) so that the archaeological implications of the proposed works can be considered. This brief has been prepared by the borough's archaeological advisers at the West Midlands Sites and Monuments Record, and amended as necessary by Johnson, Poole and Bloomer.

The site is located within the town of Walsall (JPB Drawing E2/94043-01 refers). There has previously been little archaeological fieldwork or systematic assessment of the archaeological resource in this area.

Aims of the Assessment

The aim of the assessment is to identify and assess the potential archaeological resource (which is largely deemed to be of the industrial period) that may be affected by the proposed development, using desk based research and field visits. A report is required, consisting of a collation of fieldwork results, existing written and graphic information. This should identify the likely character, extent, quality and worth of the known and potential archaeological resource in a local, regional and national context as appropriate.

General Requirements

The following requirements are necessary to fulfil the aims of the evaluation and achieve best practice.

- 1) The work will be undertaken by suitably qualified/experienced archaeological staff.
- 2) The code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists will be followed.

- 3) Before the project commences a specification/project design should be presented by the archaeological contractor detailing approaches. This should be agreed with the Engineer, Walsall MBC and the West Midlands SMR before work commences.
- 4) Any variation in specification/project design must be agreed in writing with the Engineer and all relevant parties.
- 5) The desirability of preservation of archaeological remains should be borne in mind at all times.
- 6) Primary and secondary sources (including the county Sites and Monuments Record) relating to the area should be consulted and assessed.
- 7) A written report will be prepared as part of the assessment, which will detail (for more specific requirements see below):
 - location, aims and methods of the assessment
 - discussion of the building stock
 - discussion of the likely state of deposit preservation
 - discussion of the results of the assessment
- 8) In any recommendations the practability of preservation of important archaeological deposits insitu will be discussed.
- 9) Six copies of the report should be submitted to the Engineer. Further copies should be supplied to the Engineer and planning authority as may subsequently be requested.
- 10) A period of three weeks will be allowed from the date of commission to submission of the final report.

Specific Requirements

The report will be prepared following fieldwork and desk based research.

Fieldwork will be used to identify and map all pre 1939 buildings that survive. The report will identify their age, function, status and significance.

Desk based assessment will be used to identify the historic nature of the areas affected and to assess the likelihood and location of significant below ground archaeological deposits.

All sources (documentary, photographic and cartographic) checked will be referenced in the report.

Recommendations will be made towards a strategy for further investigation where the character and value of the resource is not sufficiently defined to permit a mitigation strategy or other response to be defined.

Notes for Guidance

The IFA "Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Desk-based Assessments" can be used as a guide to good practice for the desk based research.

It is recommended that the West Midlands Sites and Monuments Officer is consulted prior to the submission of the specification/project design and before the start of work.

An appropriate assessment strategy shall be used and the method and justification for this be stated in both the submission and the report.

In assessing the significance of a site or area, consideration should be given to its immediate setting and associated monuments and also to its place within its locality, county and region.

APPENDIX TWO: REFERENCES AND SOURCES

1. 'The Archaeology of Walsall' Baker N J, Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit, 1988.
2. Victoria County History of Staffordshire, 17, 1976, eds. Currie C R J, Greenslade M W and Johnson D A., p.159.
3. VCH Staffs 17, 184-5.
4. Walsall Local Studies Centre 35/22/14.
5. VCH Staffs 17, 189.
6. VCH Staffs 17, 189-90.
7. VCH Staffs 17, 159.
8. WLSC 322/19-26.
9. WLSC 322/38,39.
10. 'Buildings of Interest in the Borough of Walsall'. Walsall MBC 1985, Wa1.
11. Tithe map of 1845 (cert. copy) WLSC Acc 321.
12. VCH Staffs 17, 159.
13. Dawson's map of 1832 WLSC M253; Tithe map 1845 WLSC Acc.321.
14. VCH Staffs 17, 190-1.
15. VCH Staffs 17, 144; Map by J. Curtis Jnr. WLSC 143/24; Dawson's map of 1832 WLSC M253.
16. VCH Staffs 17, 159.
17. WLSC Acc. 321
18. VCH Staffs 17, 161.
19. WLSC 470/34 (clearance orders of 1936)
20. VCH Staffs 17, 144.
21. Curtis' map WLSC 143/24.
22. Dawson's map WLSC M253
23. VCH Staffs 17, 151,191.
24. Arch. of Walsall, 25,28 and Fig.11. WMBC files 35 and 111.
25. VCH Staffs 17, 151-2.
26. Arch. of Walsall, 35-8.
27. Arch. of Walsall, 25, 28 and Fig.11. WMBC file 111.
28. Buildings of Interest, Wa71.
29. VCH Staffs 17, 147.
30. Wrathmell S and Wrathmell S 'Excavations in Lower Rushall Street, Walsall, 1975' *Transactions of the South Staffs. Archaeological and Historical Society* 23, 1981-2, 100-108.
31. Arch. of Walsall, Appendix 1A by J. Cane.
32. Litherland S. 1993 'Origins of Industry' project design. BUFAU.
33. Arch. of Walsall, Appendix 1B by J. Cane
34. VCH Staffs 17, 146-7; Arch. of Walsall, 18.
35. Liddle P 'Victorian Walsall: an economic and social study'. PhD London University 1988, 274-5.
36. VCH Staffs 17, 149.
37. Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) 'The Black Country: an architectural survey of UDC areas' 1991, 24.
38. Though see Liddle 1988, 268-274.



Plate 1: Bridgeman House, Pleck Road.

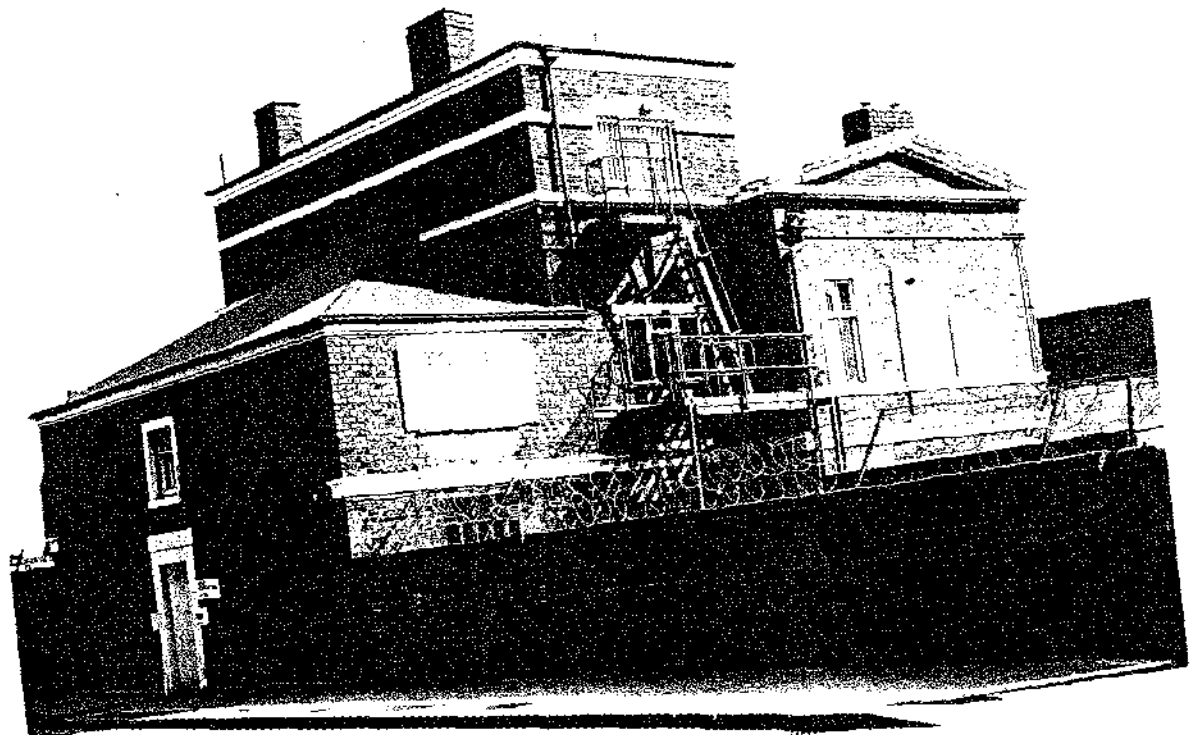


Plate 2: Bridgeman House, Pleck Road. Wing scheduled for demolition on left.



Plate 3: No. 87, Pleck Road.



Plate 4: The Manor Hospital, formerly the Union Workhouse. The gables represent truncated wings.



Plate 5: 19th-century housing on Green Lane.

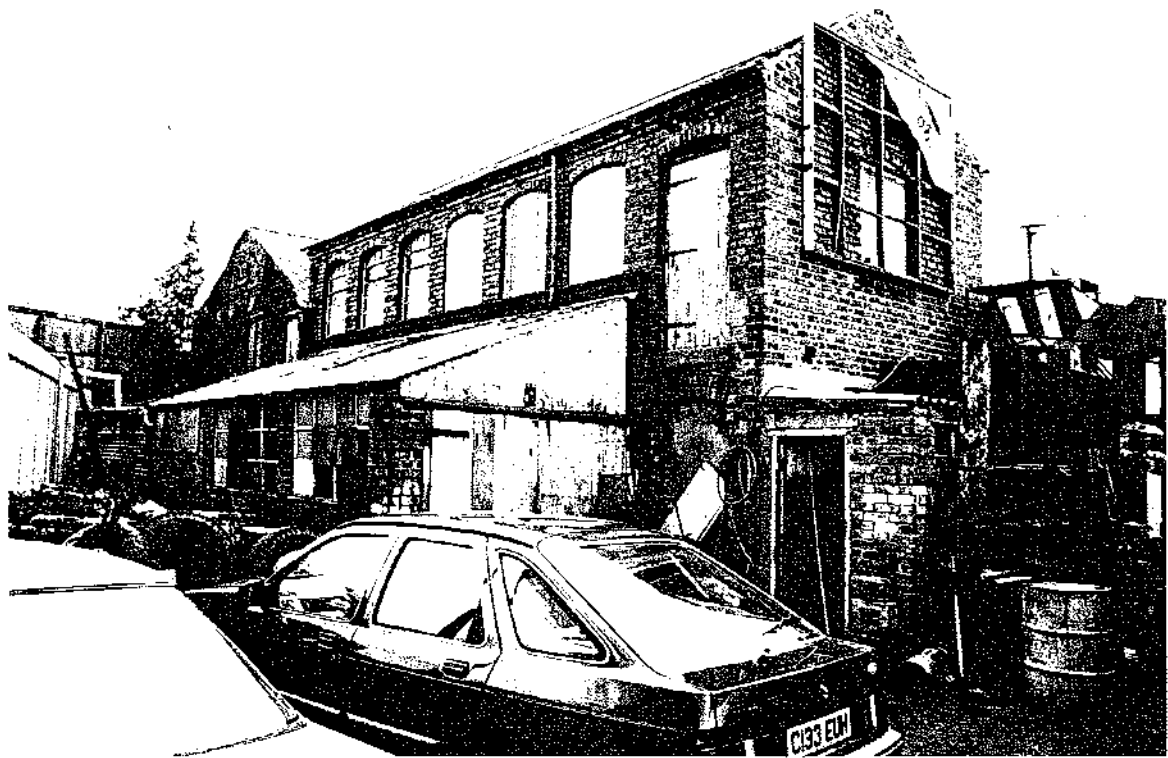


Plate 6: 19th-century workshop behind Green Lane.

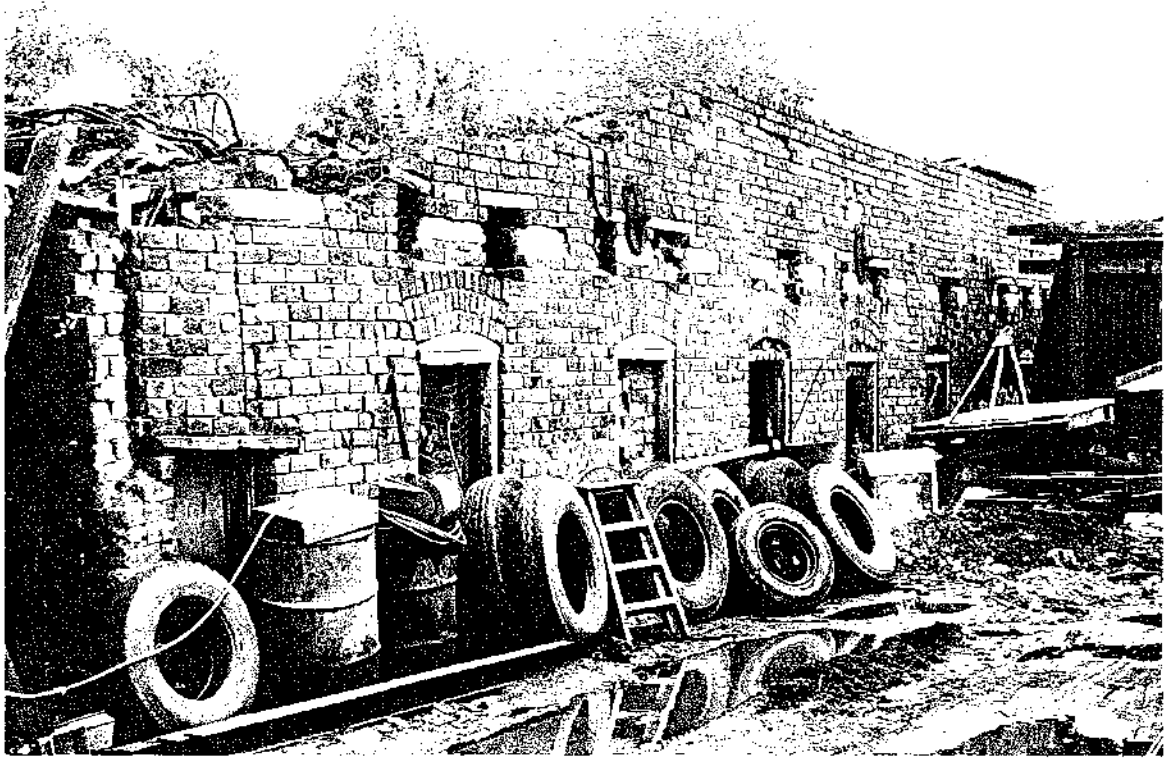


Plate 7: 19th-century workshop behind Green Lane frontage.

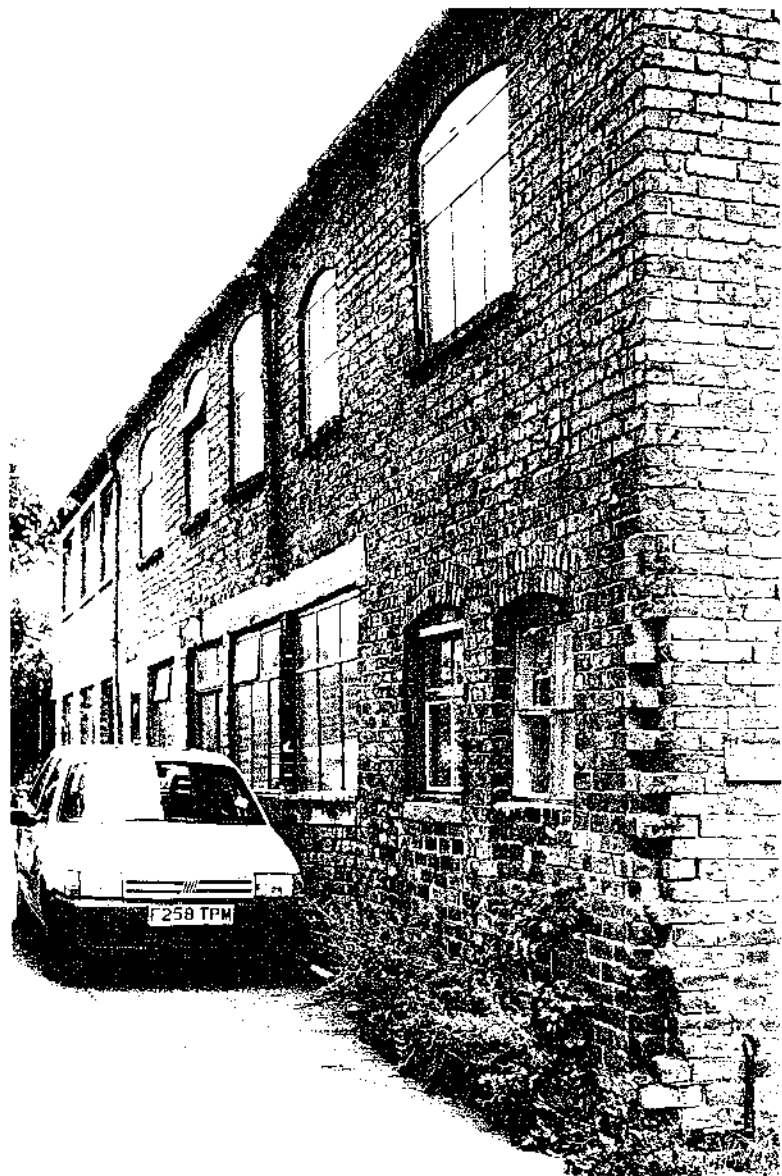


Plate 8: 19th-century and later workshop on Margaret Street.



Plate 9: 47-53 Littleton Street West.



Plate 10: The Littleton Street - Hatherton Street junction.



Plate 11: The Littleton Arms. Littleton Street East.



Plate 12: The Borough Arms Ablewell Street/Upper Rushall Street.

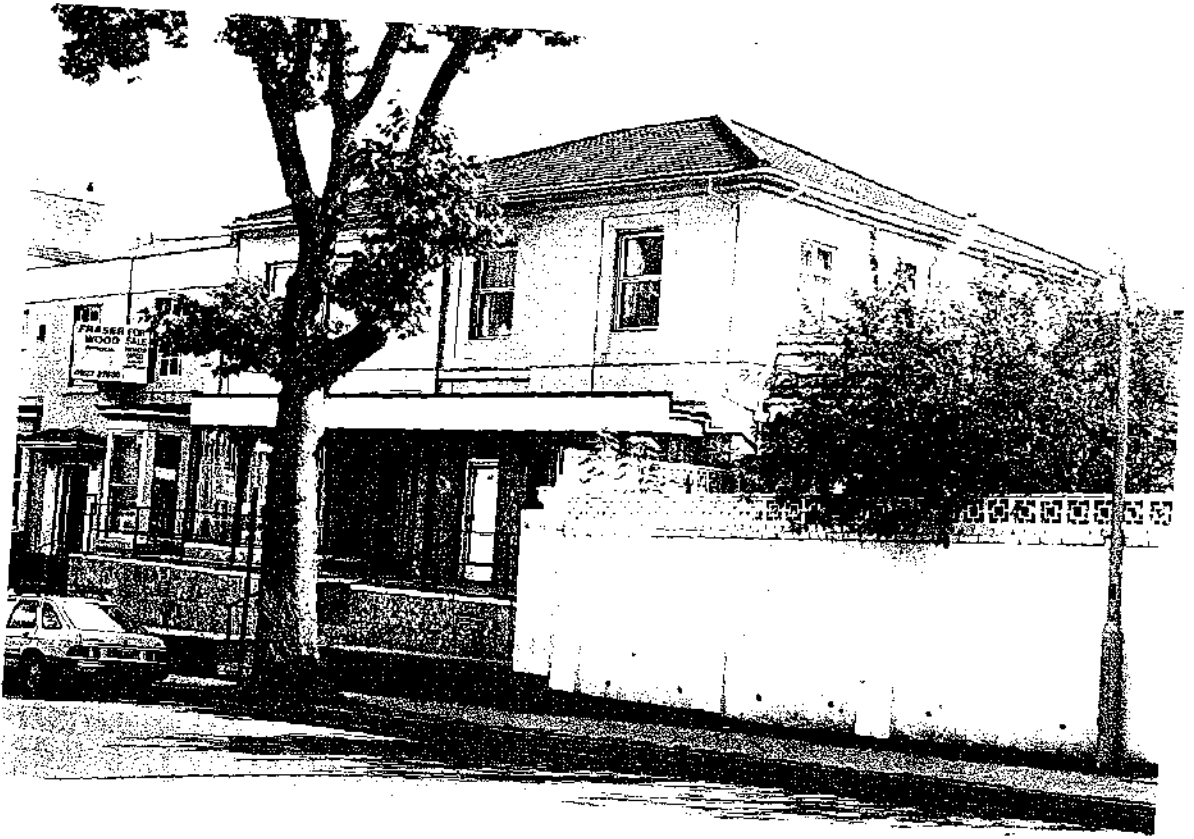


Plate 13: The Bradford Street - Vicarage Place corner.