

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit
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**Early Gasworks
Gas Street, Birmingham
Architectural Recording and Analysis**

An addition to Report No. 550

by
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Early Gasworks, Gas Street, Birmingham

Addition to B.U.F.A.U. Report No. 550

Introduction

In February 1999 an archaeological evaluation was commissioned by Crosby Homes (Midlands) Ltd., based on a brief prepared by Birmingham City Council Department of Planning and Architecture in relation to the proposed development of the early - nineteenth century gasworks on Gas Street, Birmingham. This follows on from the Architectural Recording and Analysis of the Early Gasworks, Gas Street, Birmingham, carried out in 1998 (S.J. Linnane, B.U.F.A.U. Report No. 550). The purpose of this evaluation was to locate any evidence for original entrances or openings in the wall fronting onto Gas Street, which could be affected by proposed development, and to find evidence of any original external surface treatment of this wall. The details contained in the original report will not be repeated here.

Method

A sample area of the east-facing external wall of the Retort House (Building A) and the 1857 building (Building B) was examined to establish the existence of an original entrance or openings onto Gas Street (see Figure 1). Modern render was removed in a c.0.2m wide strip along the length of the external face of the wall, c0.4m above the current street level, using stone-cutting equipment and chisels (Plate 1). A test pit was excavated on the external side of the modern entrance to the building from Gas Street, at the south-east corner, in order to establish whether an original entrance existed here to provide access to the Retort House from Gas Street (Plate 2). The exposed areas of brickwork on the wall, and the test pit, were photographed using black and white film. Features in the exposed brickwork were drawn at a scale of 1:20 (Figure 1).

Results

The excavated test pit revealed a continuation of the original Retort House wall running parallel with Gas Street (Plate 2), and no evidence of a sill stone which might be expected to be associated with an original entrance was found. The removal of render from the external face of the wall in the area of the Retort House (Building A) revealed a discontinuity in the brickwork which suggested a blocked-in window, with the blocking having been keyed into the brickwork of the main body of the wall (see Figure 1 and Plate 3). The base of this blocked-in feature was c. 0.35m from the current ground level, suggesting that this opening was not an entrance. A difference in the size and shape of the brickwork above the lower courses exposed in the wall could suggest that the majority of the wall fronting onto Gas Street has been rebuilt since the original Retort House (see Figure 1, Plate 3 and S.J.Linnane 1998). The exposed areas of brickwork to the north of this feature and external to Building B revealed no evidence of any former openings or entrances in this wall. No evidence of an earlier

layer of rendering on the face of this wall was found, with the modern render appearing to have been applied directly to the brickwork.

Conclusion

The evaluation provided no evidence of the existence of a former entrance from the Retort House (Building A) or the 1857 building (Building B) onto Gas Street. An opening was discovered in the eastern wall of Building A, and has been interpreted as a possible blocked-in window. No evidence of any original surface treatment of the external faces of Buildings A or B was found.

Acknowledgements

The recording and analysis was undertaken by J.Halsted and M.Breedon for Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit with Dr.P.Collins of The Ironbridge Institute. The text was written by J. Halsted and edited by I.Ferris and the drawings prepared by M.Breedon.

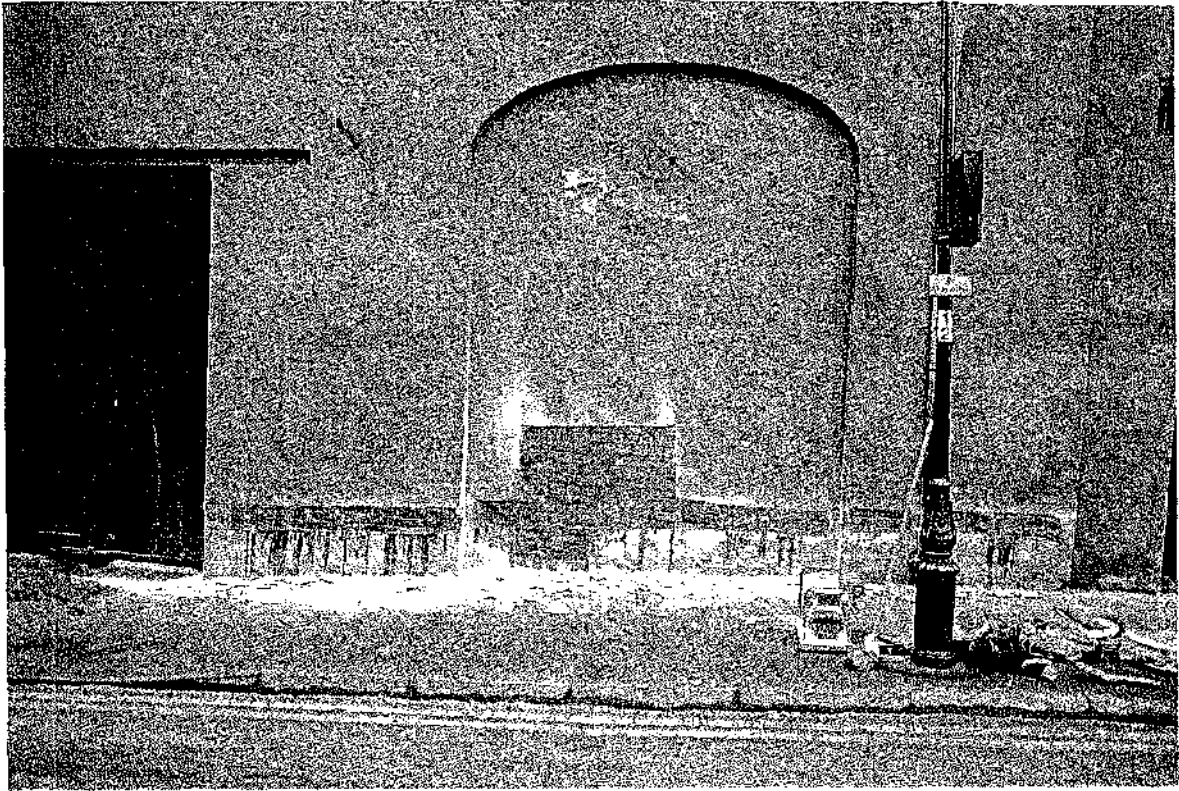


PLATE.1



PLATE.2

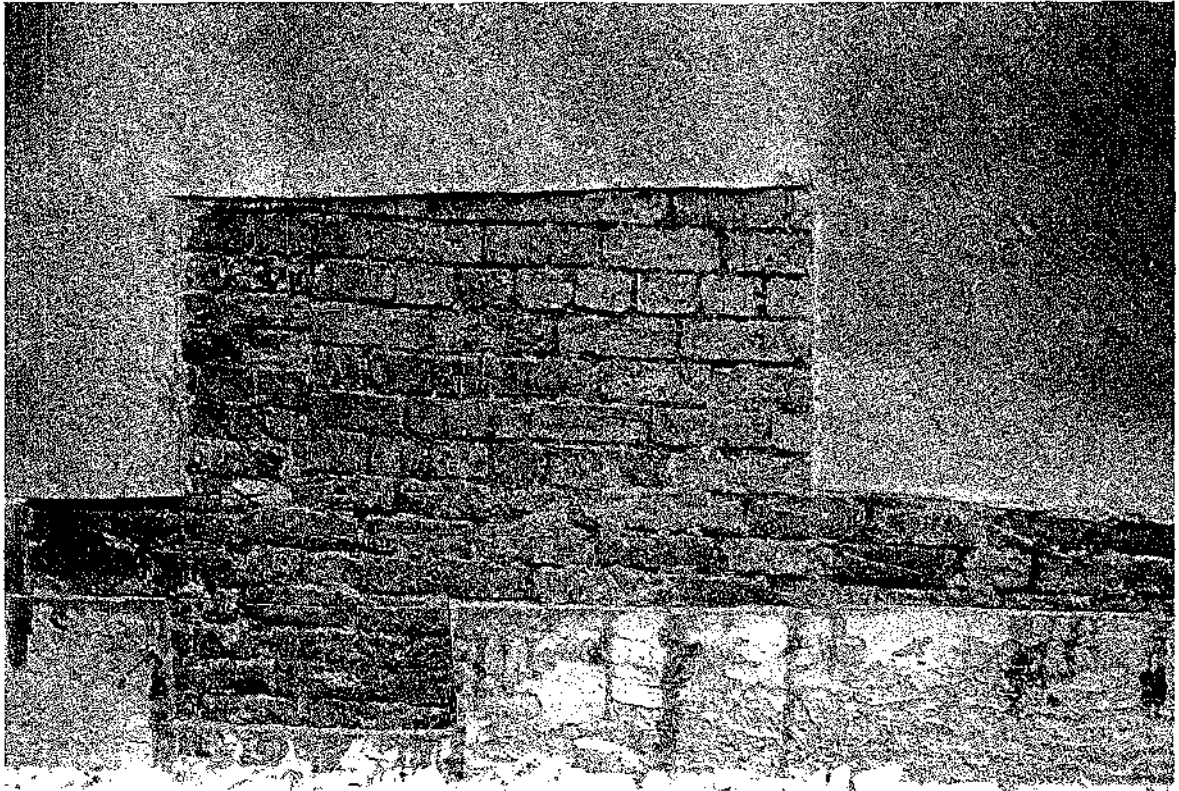


PLATE 3