

**Sandwell Park Colliery Coal
Chutes, Sandwell, West Midlands**

Historic Building Recording 2006

Checked by

Supervisor..... date.....

Project Manager..... date.....

Project No. 1447
June 2006

Sandwell Park Colliery Coal Chutes, Sandwell, West Midlands
Historic Building Recording 2006

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**SANDWELL PARK COLLIERY COAL CHUTES, SMETHWICK, WEST
MIDLANDS**

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING, 2006 (SMCC06)

SUMMARY

Historic building recording was undertaken of the Sandwell Park Colliery coal chutes, which are located on a former wharf on the north eastern bank of the Birmingham Canal Wolverhampton Level, Sandwell, West Midlands, at NGR SP 014 896. The work was commissioned by British Waterways in relation to a condition attached to planning permission to demolish the structure.

The Sandwell Park Colliery was opened in 1870, and was located to be able to take advantage of both the railway and canal networks. The coal chutes were built in 1937/8 on an existing wharf for the purpose of loading coal from the colliery onto barges. Prior to demolition the coal chutes were in a derelict and dangerous condition.

The unsound condition, the late date, and the absence of group value with any other building(s) of comparable character, mean that despite having significant local connection with the now abandoned Sandwell Park Colliery, and all the industrial and social relevance that coal mining and canals have in the West Midlands, the structure was not given statutory protection and was deemed to be beyond economic repair. Therefore this report and the building recording work it describes will form the 'preservation by record' archive of this interesting and now rare industrial building.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In May 2006 Birmingham Archaeology undertook historic building recording of the Sandwell Park Colliery coal chutes, Birmingham Canal Wolverhampton Level in Sandwell, West Midlands (hereafter referred to as the study area). The work was commissioned by British Waterways to comply with a condition attached to planning permission to demolish the structure (application D C/06/45703). The work conformed to a written scheme of investigation prepared by Birmingham Archaeology (2006), which was itself based on a brief provided by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Historic Environment Team. This report outlines the results of the historical research and the building recording work and was prepared in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' standards and guidance (IFA 2001A and 2001B).

2.0 LOCATION, GEOLOGY AND PRESENT CHARACTER (Fig. 1)

The Sandwell Park Colliery coal chutes are located on a former wharf on the northeast bank of the Birmingham Canal Wolverhampton Level, Sandwell, West Midlands, at NGR SP 014 896. Sandwell Park Colliery mined the famous South Staffordshire Coalfield, which is described in *Kelly's Directory* (1896, 20): "Here the productive coal measures about 600 feet thick and contains the famous 10 yard seam." As a result of coal and iron extraction, the past character of the study area (as in so many other locations in the West Midlands) has been largely industrial. Owing to the decline of mining and manufacturing industries in this area during the 20th century, some of the study area is now suburban in character. The area immediately surrounding the former Sandwell Park Colliery site (the banks of the Wolverhampton and Birmingham canal, around the Great Western Railway line, and now also served by the M5 motorway) remains industrial. Most of the old colliery site is currently a road haulage transport depot.

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principle aims of the project were to establish the origins, chronology, technical history and significance of the coal chutes. As the structure was to be demolished as a matter of some urgency a detailed building recording scheme was carried out (RCHME/English Heritage level 3) of which the aim was to consider historical development, typology, spatial layout, technology and function of the chutes. Results of the work undertaken are assembled into a detailed site archive to be deposited with the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library, which will serve as 'preservation by record' for this structure.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

Historical and Background Research

A search was made of all readily available primary and secondary documentary sources, including historic maps and illustrations, in Smethwick Library Community History and Archives Service, Birmingham Central Library Local Studies, the libraries of the University of Birmingham, Staffordshire County Archive, Warwickshire County Archive, University of Glasgow Archive and the Waterways

Trust Archive. Searches were also made of the National Sites and Monuments Record Centre, Swindon, and Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record.

In addition, the advice of interested and informed parties was sought, these included Ron Moss (Black Country Society), Laurence Hogg (waterways film-maker, author and historian), Ray Shill (Historian and author), Vaughan Welch (Inland Waterways Association), Caroline Jones (Waterways Trust Archive), and Phil Clayton (chairman of Birmingham Canal Navigations Society).

Written Record

The written account (this report) includes the historical background, a description of the coal chute building and its setting including information about date(s), materials, plan, elevations, function, context and significance.

Measured Survey

The dangerous condition of the building and the difficulty of access meant that for health and safety reasons the survey was carried out from vantage points on the opposite side of the canal using a Leica 3000 series high resolution laser scanner. The elevation drawings and the ground-plan were compiled from this electronic data in AutoCAD.

Photographic Survey

A high-resolution digital camera (Nikon D50) mounted on a tripod was used to take both general and detailed shots of the building. Again, owing to safety considerations, it was not possible to get close enough to the structure to use a photographic scale. A register details the location, direction, photographer, and date of each photograph.

5.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The mining of coal and the building of canals went hand in hand in 18th century Europe. In Britain the building of the first canal (the Bridgwater Canal begun in 1759) connected the Duke of Bridgwater's coal mine in Worseley first with Manchester and later with the Mersey estuary. Pioneering engineer James Brindley was fundamental in the construction of Bridgwater canal, as well as in planning the 'Grand Cross' of British waterways, the canal system that would eventually link the Mersey with the Humber, the Severn, the Avon and the Thames. This was achieved 18 years after Brindley's death in 1790.

Brindley also played a key role in canal building in the Midlands, the Birmingham Main Line which connects Birmingham with Wolverhampton opened from Wednesbury to the City in 1762 and to Aldersley near Wolverhampton in 1772. To reduce water loss, which was a frequent problem in early canals, the level of the canal was lowered in the 1780s.

A more radical overhaul of the Birmingham Main Line was carried out by Thomas Telford in the 1870s. Advances in engineering enabled Telford to straighten the meandering path of the Old Main Line (over 22 miles) so that the distance between

Wolverhampton and Birmingham was cut by one third. The New and Old Main Lines criss-cross each other forming islands in-between in a pattern quite unique to this part of the canal network (see illustration of the study area). It is in this context that the coal wharf of the Sandwell Park Colliery is located on the Old Main Line with access to the New Main Line available near-by through a series of locks.

The era of canals as the most important means of heavy goods transport was however, relatively short lived, as in the 1830s the rise of the railway began to make canal transport slow and expensive in comparison.

Attempting to place the Sandwell Park Colliery coal chutes in their historical context a search of both the *National Monuments Record* (for 1000m radius) and the Sandwell MBC *Historic Buildings Sites and Monuments Record* for a 100m radius around the study area was carried out. The results of these searches confirm the industrial nature of the Smethwick area. The NMR entries included the Old and New Main Lines of the canal (NMR no: LINEAR 723), Stourbridge Railway (LINEAR 1173), Galton Railway Bridge (SP 08 NW 10), Spon Lane Bridge (SO 99 NE 45, Galton Road Bridge (SP 08 NW 25), Spon Lane Road Bridge (SP 08 NW 27), and several listed buildings relating to Chance's Glassworks. There were also two Scheduled Ancient Monuments: the Chances's Glassworks Complex (35143) and Smeaton's Summit Bridge (WM12), both recorded on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map.

6.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY AREA

When the Sandwell Park Colliery Company was formed in 1870, one of the prime considerations when siting the new pit was the availability of good transport links (Dilworth, 1973). Sandwell Park Colliery fortunately had excellent access to both, as the main line of the Great Western Railway from Birmingham to Wolverhampton ran along the northern border of the site, and the Stourbridge extension of the Great Western Railway ran north-east to south-west along the side of the colliery. The Stourbridge extension railway crosses the Old and New Main Lines of the Birmingham Canal to the south of the colliery. The Old Line of the Birmingham Canal became to form the third boundary of the roughly triangle-shaped Sandwell Park Colliery site. The Colliery had a railway siding on the Birmingham to Wolverhampton line and a wharf was constructed on the north-western bank of the canal for water transport of coal.

No wonder then that the *Victoria County History of Staffordshire* (p.21) describes Sandwell Park Colliery as the most notable coal-mining venture of the area in the latter half of the 19th century. The history of the Sandwell Park Colliery Company (later Warwickshire Coal Company Ltd.), and the coal mining industry in general, are amply discussed for example by Chapman (1997 and 2005), and it is beyond the scope of this report to delve into this in too much detail.

The following however, is a brief outline of the development of the Sandwell Park Colliery as it relates to the study building. The first mine shafts sunk in the 1870s were located about one third of a mile north-east of the canal. The Sandwell Park Colliery Coal Wharf was constructed on land leased from Birmingham Canal Navigations in 1875 (Fig. 2), and the lease was extended in 1934.

In 1901 the company opened another pit a short distance away in the Sandwell Valley called Jubilee Colliery and the coal was transported to the original colliery site for processing and transportation by the means of a tramway.

Originally, once brought to the surface, washed and graded, the coal was transported from the colliery to the wharf on an endless rope tramway. This tramway passed through a short tunnel before dividing into two inclines to either side of the wharf. The tracks then ran across the wharf where the tubs were tipped up and the coal shovelled into waiting boats by hand by workmen called loaders. The wharf was lengthy and could accommodate a number of boats at a time. The original layout of the coal wharf is illustrated, for example, by Collins (2000, 38). By 1912 the north facing incline had become disused and the tubs were being taken up and down the incline at the Smethwick end (Fig. 3, Plate 1).

Production at the original Sandwell Park Colliery was wound down during the 1930s, and the majority of the investment made by the Warwickshire Coal Company dealt with maximising the coal production at the Jubilee Colliery. The colliery was nationalised in 1947 and ceased production in September 1960 (SMLS).

7.0 BUILDING ASSESSMENT

7.1 Description

According to Chapman (1997), Sandwell Park Colliery had seen very little new investment in the sixty or so years following the sinking of the first pit in the 1870s, so when the Warwickshire Coal Company Ltd. took over the colliery in 1936 a major programme of modernisation ensued. It was during the 1937-38 building works that the coal wharf was rebuilt, and the present study building constructed.

Chapman (1997, 80) describes the new system of transporting coal to the canal side:

For canal loading a set of conveyors had replaced endless rope tramway to the wharf. Coal destined for the boats passed onto a 30 inch troughed belt conveyor, 750 feet long; special care was necessary to keep this belt in tension. To effect this requirement troughing idlers at 10 feet centres aided by dead weight were installed. Because of the long distance travelled by this belt it was necessary at the driving end to pass the belt over two geared driving drums and stub pulleys to obtain the tension. Coal from this conveyor was transferred to a second troughed belt of similar design that discharged into bunkers at the canal wharf by means of a shuttle conveyor.

On the canal side were three storage bunkers, each of 35 tons capacity. These were constructed of reinforced concrete with a sloping floor to permit the quick loading of the canal boats. From the openings in the front of each bunker a canal boat could be loaded in 4 minutes with coal that ranged in size from three quarter inch slack to four inch cube coal.

This arrangement meant that on the new wharf a single barge was being loaded at a time. The design of the modernised plant at the Sandwell Park Colliery wasn't limited to making the canal transport more efficient, but took into consideration the three forms of coal transport systems available, namely canal, landsale and railway. A

further important consideration in the design of the plant was to use the minimum amount of labour. The Norton Harty Engineering Company of Tipton, Staffordshire, was one of the leading preparation plant builders of the time, and, in collaboration with the colliery management, designed and built the plant. According to the trade publications of the period it gave every satisfaction.

Sandwell Park Colliery closed in 1960 and majority of the above ground buildings relating to its operation disappeared very quickly. The wooden storey on top of the coal chutes no longer features in the 1970s photographs of the chute, and it is possible that it was purposefully dismantled either during the closure of the mine or sometime later by others scavenging for usable building material (Laurence Hogg, pers. comm.). The removal of the roof from above the reinforced concrete structure has ultimately spelt its demise – water ingress to the inside of the structure is responsible for the rusting and buckling of the reinforcing metal, resulting in the structure becoming dangerously unsound.

According to the ample number of photographs still surviving from the time of construction, the Sandwell Park Colliery coal chute building was a utilitarian reinforced concrete structure with a smaller wooden storey above three concrete silos (Plate 2). The concrete part of the chute was divided into three bays, and the three windows of the upper storey corresponded with these three bays. Each bay had two loading troughs the angle of which was changed with pulley wheels. The concrete surface was left untreated, and is of the characteristic, weathered grey / brown in colour.

The pitched roof and the short brick storey were removed some time ago, so that the chute is currently covered by a flat slab of concrete which has a lengthy slot like opening running parallel to the façade of the structure (Plate 3). The coal has dropped through this opening into the three equal sized vertical compartments inside. The building stands on eight piers and has a sloping floor (slopes towards the canal) allowing for fast discharge of coal through the loading hatches.

The reinforcing steel structure inside the concrete panel was partially exposed prior to the Arup inspection in the autumn 2004. More of the spalling surface concrete was removed during their sub-contractor's tactile survey. The layout of the reinforcing steel rods indicates that the structure was cast *in situ*, and is not made of pre-cast concrete panels.

This description is supported by the laser-scan survey carried out Birmingham Archaeology on the 16th of May 2006, and the *Summary Inspection Report* (2004) by Arup structural engineers and dimensioned drawings prepared by Total Access (UK) Ltd.

7.2 Significance

The Sandwell Park Colliery Coal Chute is a slight oddity in as much as it is a very late example of a building type that had by and large become obsolete in almost all other parts of the country before the beginning of the 20th century. Down and Warrington (1971, 34), when discussing the Somerset coal-mining industry, report that by 1880s the Somerset Coal Canal was considered inadequate and that for a mine to survive and

continue in production a railway connection was necessary. Likewise, in Nottinghamshire, Wollaton Colliery around 1900 was the last colliery in the county to regularly send coal to market by canal (Griffin, 1982, 30). It is possible that it was only the high-density of canals, combined with an exceptionally high-density of businesses and industries requiring coal on the canals, which was a characteristic of the Birmingham area, that made building a new coal wharf on the canal viable as late as the 1930s. These vital customers would include the famous local firms of Chance's Glassworks in Smethwick and Noah Hindley's Ironworks nr. Dudley.

A further tribute to the excellent transport links that benefited the Sandwell Park Colliery is that when the main pit closed, the coal from Jubilee Pit was still transported to the old colliery site for transport.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

Generally the whole Sandwell Park Colliery Coal Wharf can be seen as a very late incarnation of a facility or a group of structures that was common in the late 18th and early 19th centuries when most coal mines utilized canals for the transportation of coal. Alternatively, the coal chutes can be seen as a fairly early example of using steel reinforced concrete in an industrial, canal-side building.

The coal chutes are protected neither by statutory nor local listing, nor are they within a conservation area. Materials and constructional methods utilized in their construction are archetypal of industrial buildings of the mid-20th century. This, however, is not to say that the structure is unimportant. If attempts to prolong its lifespan had been made, for example, at the time of the closure of the Sandwell Park Colliery in the 1960s, it is unlikely that it would require demolition after only 60 years of existence.

As things stand now, the coal chutes are completely out of their mining context and as such perhaps uninformative and of little interest or aesthetic value to an ordinary passer-by. On the other hand, the coal chutes are the last standing reminder in Smethwick of the connection between the mining and the canal transportation of coal.

Perhaps it has been the general demise of mining that led to apathy in relation to preservation of some of the industrial heritage relating to this important British industry. On the other hand, industrial archaeology of earlier mining is preserved in several locations and publications have been made ranging from process recording and many other aspects of mining.

Combination of site specific circumstances, relatively late date of construction, and the choice of construction material have led to the study building first becoming a forgotten relic that the world passed by and then a dangerously neglected structure that is now beyond repair.

9.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The laser scanning was carried out by Paul Burrows, photography by Malcolm Hislop prior to demolition, and by Shane Kelleher during demolition. Historical research was undertaken by Elli-Maaret Suntioinen who produced the written report, which was illustrated by Nigel Dodds, and edited by Malcolm Hislop who also managed the project for Birmingham Archaeology. Thanks are due to Simon Railton and Simon Turner of British Waterways for their assistance, to Sandwell MBC for supplying the HBSMR material, and to Ron Moss, Laurence Hogg, Ray Shill, Vaughan Welch of the Inland Waterways Association, Caroline Jones of the Waterways Trust and Phil Clayton of the Birmingham Canal Navigations Society for their various contributions to the project.

10.0 SOURCES

10.1 Primary Sources

Kelly's Trade Directory of Worcestershire 1896

Records of Sandwell Park Colliery, SMLS, Ref: BS/S

Victoria County History of Staffordshire, vol. 17 – consulted on: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=36161>

10.2 Secondary Sources

Arup (2004) *Sandwell Colliery Chutes, Summary Inspection Report* (un-published).

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Chapman, N (1997) *History of Sandwell Park Collieries*, Heartland Press.

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English Heritage (2006) *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Recording Practice*.

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IFA (2001B) *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings and Structures*.

RCHME 1996, *Recording Historic Buildings: A Descriptive Specification 3rd Edition*.

Sandwell MBC 2006 *Historic Building Record: Sandwell Park Colliery Coal Chutes*.

Shill, R (2002) *The Birmingham Canal Navigations: at the Heart of the British Canal System*, Tempus, Stroud.

10.3 Cartographic and Pictorial Sources

SMLS, Ref: 626 SME (a database of historic photographs held by the archive): search word 'Smethwick canals'; 12 photographs; 3 directly of the Sandwell Park Colliery Coal Wharf

Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (1889)

Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (1904)

Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (1917)

Ordnance Survey 1:2500 map (1937)

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SANDWELL MBC SMR SUMMARY SHEET

Site name/Address: The Sandwell Park Colliery Coal Chutes, Smethwick	
Borough: Sandwell	NGR: SP 014 896
Type of Work: Historic Building Record	Site Code: SMC 006
Contractor: Birmingham Archaeology	Date of Work: May 2006
Location of Finds/Curating Museum: Community History & Archives Service Smethwick Library	
Title of Report: Sandwell Park Colliery Coal Chutes, Sandwell, West Midlands: Historic Building Record 2006.	

SUMMARY OF FIELDWORK RESULTS:

The fieldwork achieved an English Heritage level 3 record of the Coal chutes through documentary research, laser scanning, digital photography and written notes prior to demolition. A watching brief observed during demolition added to the photographic archive and revealed the interest in the building to confirm its minor workings. The laser scan means that a 3-D digital image of the coal chutes now exists so that further deliverables in respect of the drawn record are now possible.

Author of Summary: M. H. H. H. H.

Date of Summary: 4.7.06

Sandwell MBC

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD
SANDWELL PARK COLLIERY COAL CHUTES

SANDWELL MBC

APRIL 2006



- National Monuments Record Centre, Swindon
- Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record (Fay de Souza 0121 569 4216)
- Pertinent County Record Offices
- Ron Moss, the Black Country Society (01384 567411)

5.2 The completion of 5.1 will inform the ground survey of the study area. Based on any existing survey plan each building/structure/area within the site shall be numbered, described and photographed. Based on the RCHME conventions (1996) the metric survey (RCHME Level 3 typically consists of The core monument record; The written account; Survey drawings; including accurate location of the monument; Site plan; Ground photography) should incorporate all structural elements, truss positions, doors, windows and stairs, original and subsequent historical partitions, any significant changes in constructional material, changes in floor material, architectural/technological furniture and evidence of phasing. Architects plans can be used where they exist, but it is the responsibility of the Contractor to check the accuracy of these drawings and to make any necessary adjustments or corrections. Dimensional accuracy should accord with the normal requirements of the English Heritage Architecture and Survey Branch (at 1:20, measurements should be accurate to at least 10mm; at 1:50, to at least 20mm; at 1:100, to at least 50mm).

N.B. Any structures that have recently been demolished and are important in the understanding/interpretation of the site must be included within the description.

5.3 The descriptive and interpretive analysis of the fabric shall be undertaken in accordance with the research objectives set out above. This should include the date, function, dimensions, materials, methods of construction, external fenestration, internal plan form, fixtures/fittings and phasing; the level of detail being based on the perceived significance of each numbered item.

5.4 The photographic record will consist of colour and black and white prints, negatives and digital copy on disc. This should include both general shots and details of individual features (external and internal). The former will be taken using a medium format camera with perspective control, whereas a 35mm camera can be used for all other photographs; all detailed shots shall include a photographic scale. A photographic register detailing as a

Site: Sandwell Park Colliery Coal Chutes, Birmingham Canal Wolverhampton Level, Sandwell

Planning Officer: Mr Dean Leadon (0121 569 4044)

Agent: British Waterways, Quay Place, 92-93 Edward Street, Birmingham, B1 2RA (0121 2007 442)

Borough Archaeologist: Graham Eyre-Morgan, Sandwell MBC (0121 569 4025)

Assistant Archaeologist: Charlotte Lewis, Sandwell MBC (0121 569 4217)

Conservation Officer: Nigel Haynes, Sandwell MBC (0121 569 4022)

This Brief is only valid for six months. After this period the Borough Archaeologist should be contacted. Any Written Scheme of Investigation resulting from this Brief shall only be considered for the same period. The Contractor is strongly advised to visit the site before completing their Written Scheme of Investigation, as there may be implications for accurately costing the project.

1.0 Introduction

The Assistant Archaeologist for Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council has prepared this outline Brief for a Historic Building Record. Planning application DC/06/45703 was approved on the 08/03/06 for demolition of the chutes due to their instability. The site is within a conservation area as defined in the Councils Unitary Development Plan and is identified on the Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record. Given the history of the area, a requirement of the planning consent is for the developer to undertake a Historic Building Record of the site in advance of its demolition. This Brief and any resulting Contractors' Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) will ensure that the requirements of the Condition can be adequately discharged.

2.0 Site Location and Description

The case for demolition is made in British Waterways letter and Ove Arup's report. The findings are a great disappointment as the report was commissioned as part of

the HLF scheme on the canals under which they would be repaired, enhanced and interpreted.

The Loading Chutes (or Staithes) are the largest surviving feature of the site, which was a wharf for the Sandwell Park Colliery Company and were built in 1937/8. However the wharf site has a much longer history going back to 1875. As the site is on the side of the canal with no towpath this area of the canal is in cutting the wharf therefore includes substantial retaining walls. The wharf was isolated by its commercial use and has subsequently survived due to its lack of access and has been subjected only to natural regeneration.

The site in Galton Valley in the Smethwick Summit Conservation Area is on Brindleys Old Main Line Canal of 1768-9. In 1790 the canal summit was lowered by 20' under the scheme proposed by Smeaton and carried out by the canal company (BCN). The bridge carrying Roebuck Lane over the canal (Smeatons Summit Bridge) is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). This site just along to the East of the wharf which terminates at the rail bridge of 1852 which is Grade 11 Listed Building (LB).

The Sandwell Park Colliery was a late and large coal-mining scheme begun in 1870 to mine the concealed Thick Coal at 418 yards deep. The Colliery was located in the triangle where the GWR railway from Snow Hill divided into the main line to Wolverhampton and the branch over Galton Valley to Stourbridge. The Colliery had direct connection to both rail and canal to handle its outputs (e.g. 310,000 tons in 1897), which is much greater than the average Black Country Colliery of the early-mid 19th century. Colliery and wharf were linked by a continuous rope tramway and the wharf could handle up to 30 boats per day.

In 1897 a second mine was begun in the Sandwell Valley by what is now Swan Pool known as Jubilee Colliery and the tramway extended through Sandwell Valley (where its line can still be traced).

The two collieries operated in tandem for many years but eventually only Jubilee colliery continued with the original site used only for washing and transshipment.

The loading chutes were built in 1937-8 and continued in use until Jubilee closed in 1960.

Ref. History of the Sandwell Park Collieries. Nigel A. Chapman. Heartland Press. 1997.

The Loading Chutes are a significant major historic survivor of mining and canal structures in a significant conservation area and potential visitor area. Until their condition was noticed English Heritage considered them worth scheduling as a SAM. The policies for conservation in the UDP Review, for the conservation area and policies of Government (PPG15) and EH would all urge that every effort be made to retain them, secure their repair restoration and positive use.

The deterioration has been quite sudden and rapid. While the site was only accessible by boat and could not normally be visited, it is unlikely that the decay was preventable given the original construction faults in the reinforcements and concrete mix. The situation often occurs that to save something built, as a standard cheap structure for a mundane job requires disproportionate effort and cost. This is very sad but the benefit of restoring something which cannot be visited and only viewed, is likely to be out of proportion to trying to save it at all or any cost.

Regrettably I see no alternative to demolition. This may be a departure from one or more UDP Review policies. This needs to be considered with care. The demolition must not begin until it has been recorded fully. It is also essential to consider what is to replace it and how the whole wharf site is to be treated.

3.0 Research Strategy

The objectives of the Historic Building Record are as follows:

- To establish the origins, chronology, technical history and significance of the Coal Chutes.

- To make a detailed record (RCHME Level 3) of the site in accordance with current best practice. The record will need to consider its historical development, typology, spatial layout, technology, and function.
- To create a detailed site archive that is to be deposited with the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 All survey work shall be undertaken by a Historic Buildings Analyst with proven expertise and qualifications in the recording/investigation of industrial buildings. Details including the name, qualifications, and experience of the Historic Buildings Analyst together with a proposed timetable shall be included within the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI). CV's, previous examples of work and references from heritage curators may be requested prior to approving any resulting WSI.

4.2 The Contractor will operate with due regard for Health and Safety regulations. Those who wish to undertake the work should ensure they are adequately insured, to cover all eventualities, including risks to third parties. Sandwell MBC and its officers cannot be held responsible for any accidents which may occur to Contractors engaged to undertake this survey while attempting to conform to this Brief.

4.3 The Contractor is expected to follow the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists.

4.4 A site code must be obtained from the Borough Archaeologist.

5.0 Site-Specific Methodology

5.1 All the appropriate secondary sources that are likely to be pertinent to the study area should be consulted (Victoria County History, etc.). Historic maps, Post Office Directories and collections of old photographs/postcards where available from the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library (M Waldron 0121 558 2561). The following repositories/organisations should be also be consulted:

minimum the location and direction of each shot must accompany the record. Where possible, the position and direction of each photograph should be tied to the drawn record.

6.0 Results

6.1 Based on 5.1 and 5.2, above a time depth spatial narrative will be produced of the study area. Historic and interpretative maps together with historical photographs should be used to support the text.

6.2 For each phase of the sites use, the Contractor should aim to establish key dates, patterns of ownership, spatial layout, power supply, the technologies involved and resulting products.

6.3 The discussion should also incorporate the results of the historic building record (5.3 above). Each numbered feature must be described and identified on a block plan of the site. The analysis should also consider plan form, the use of machinery, motive power, process flow, phasing and working conditions; photographs (both black & white, and colour) and a process flow diagram being used to illustrate the text. The report should conclude by placing the Coal Chutes, within the broader typological, technological, regional and national context.

6.4 The report should contain the following illustrations/appendices:

- Location plan

- Copies of historical maps/photographs

- Map regression analysis

- Block plan

- Photographs (both black & white, and colour)

- Completed summary sheet (copy attached to brief)

- Archaeological brief

- Contractors' Written Scheme of Investigation

- The completed pro-forma and site location plan to be submitted as part of the planning application

6.5 **Six** copies of the report and a copy on CD-Rom shall be submitted to the Borough Archaeologist. The Contractor must initially provide a draft copy to the Borough Archaeologist for comment/approval within four weeks from the end of the fieldwork.

6.6 The Contractor's WSI must provide further details on the content of the report.

7.0 Archive

7.1 Before commencing any fieldwork, the Contractor must contact the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library (Smethwick Library, High Street, Smethwick, West Midlands B661AB. [M. Waldron. Tel. 0121 5582561] to determine the requirements for the deposition of the paper archive. The archive should be deposited two months after the written report has been approved.

7.2 The paper archive should include the photographs, negatives, colour slides, film register and plan together with a copy of the report. Photographic prints should be reproduced at a minimum of five by four inches and labelled on the back using indelible ink with the film and frame number, date, photographers name together with the site code, name and grid reference; the photographs being mounted in archival quality sleeves. The archive should also contain any copies of the key historical documents/photographs that maybe in the possession of the site owners.

7.3 It is the responsibility of the Contractor to meet the Community History and Archives Service requirements with regard to the preparation of material for deposition.

7.4 Written notification of the commencement of fieldwork shall be given to Community History and Archives Service at the same time as the Borough Archaeologist.

7.5 A summary of the contents of the paper archive shall be supplied to Borough Archaeologist at the time of deposition.

8.0 Monitoring

8.1 The Borough Archaeologist will be responsible for monitoring progress and standards throughout the project and should be kept regularly informed during fieldwork, interpretation and reporting stages.

9.0 Contractors Written Scheme of Investigation

9.1 Any variations to the WSI shall be agreed in writing with the Borough Archaeologist before being implemented.

9.2 This brief has been written following a cursory examination of the site and potential contractors are therefore strongly advised to carry out their own inspection before submitting a costed tender. If on first visiting the site or at any time during the recording exercise, it appears that:

- i) a part or the whole of the site is not amenable to the recording programme outlined above, and/or
- ii) an alternative approach may be more appropriate or likely to produce more informative results, and/or
- iii) any features that should be recorded as having a bearing on the interpretation of the site have been omitted, then it is expected that the Contractor will contact the Borough Archaeologist as a matter of urgency.

Sandwell Park Colliery Coal Chutes: Written Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording

Planning Application DC/06/45703

1.0 Introduction

The Sandwell Park Colliery was opened in 1870, and so located to be able to take advantage of both the railway and canal networks. The coal chutes were built in 1937/8 on an existing wharf on the Birmingham Canal Wolverhampton Level for the purpose of loading coal from the colliery onto barges. The coal chutes are now in a derelict and dangerous condition, and planning consent has been granted for demolition on the condition that a programme of historic building recording is carried out. This written scheme of investigation describes the work to be undertaken.

2.0 Location

The loading chutes are located on a former wharf on the northeast bank of the Birmingham Canal Wolverhampton level, Sandwell, West Midlands, at NGR SP 014 896.

3.0 Objectives

- To establish the origins, chronology, technical history and significance of the Coal Chutes.
- To make a detailed record (RCHME/English Heritage Level 3) in accordance with current best practice considering historical development, typology, spatial layout, technology and function.
- To create a detailed site archive to be deposited with the Community History and Archives Service, Smethwick Library.

4.0 Methods

Historical Research

A search will be made of all readily available primary and secondary documentary sources, including historic maps and illustrations, in Smethwick Library Community History and Archives Service, Birmingham Central Library Local Studies, the libraries of the University of Birmingham, and other relevant record offices if necessary (e.g. Worcestershire). In addition, searches will be made of the National Sites and Monuments Record Centre, Swindon and Sandwell Sites and Monuments Record.

In addition, the advice of interested and informed parties will be sought, including Ron Moss (Black Country Society), Ray Shill (Historian and author), Vaughan Welch (Inland Waterways Association), Ron Cousens (Birmingham Canal Navigation Society), Caroline Jones (Waterways Trust Archive).

Written Account

The written account will include the historical background, a description of the coal chute building and its setting including information about date(s), materials, plan, elevations, function, context and significance.

Measured Survey

The dangerous condition of the building and the difficulty of access means that for health and safety reasons the survey will be carried out from vantage points on the opposite side of the canal using a Leica 3000 series high resolution laser scanner. Elevation drawings will be compiled from the electronic data in AutoCAD. A ground plan, elevations will be produced from this data

Photographic Survey

Both general and detail shots will be taken with a high resolution digital camera mounted on a tripod. Owing to safety considerations, it will not be possible to use a photographic scale. A photographic register will detail the location, direction, photographer, and date of each photo.

5.0 Staffing and Standards

The project will be managed for Birmingham Archaeology by Malcolm Hislop BA, PhD, MIFA, a specialist in buildings archaeology. The historical research and written account will be undertaken by Elli Maaret Suntinoinen, BSc, MA (The Archaeology of Buildings), and the laser scanning by Paul Burrows (IT Project Officer).

All project staff will adhere to the Code of Conduct of the Institute of Field Archaeologists. The project will follow the requirements set down in the *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings and Structures* (Institute of Field Archaeologists 1996, revised 2001).

6.0 Reporting

The results of the project will be presented in a report including the following items

- Non-technical summary
- Introduction
- Site location
- Objectives
- Methods
- Historical context
- Building description and function
- Significance
- Acknowledgements
- Sources
- Illustrations including historic maps, scaled drawings and photographs
- Appendices as detailed in the Sandwell MBC brief (2006)

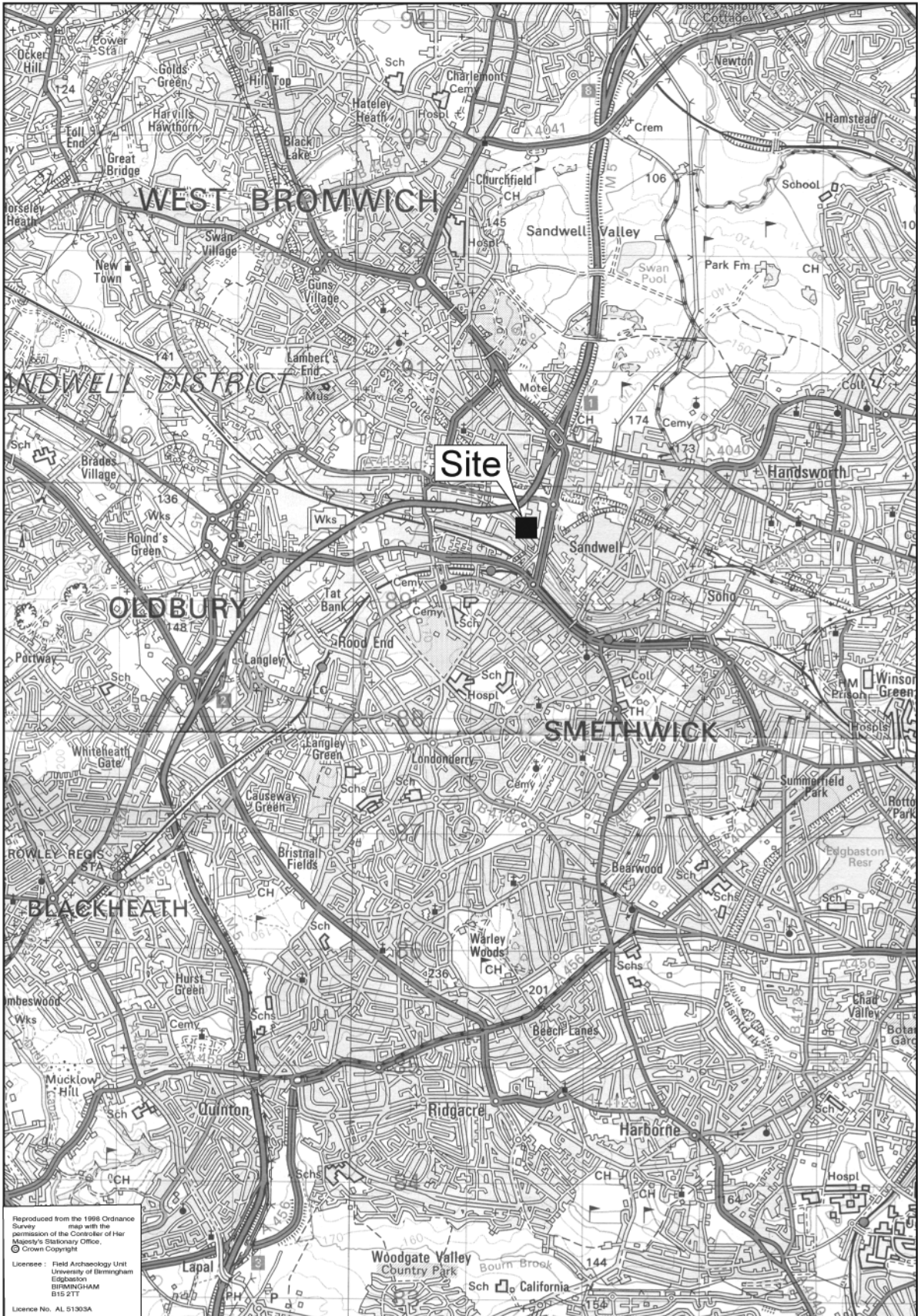


Fig.1

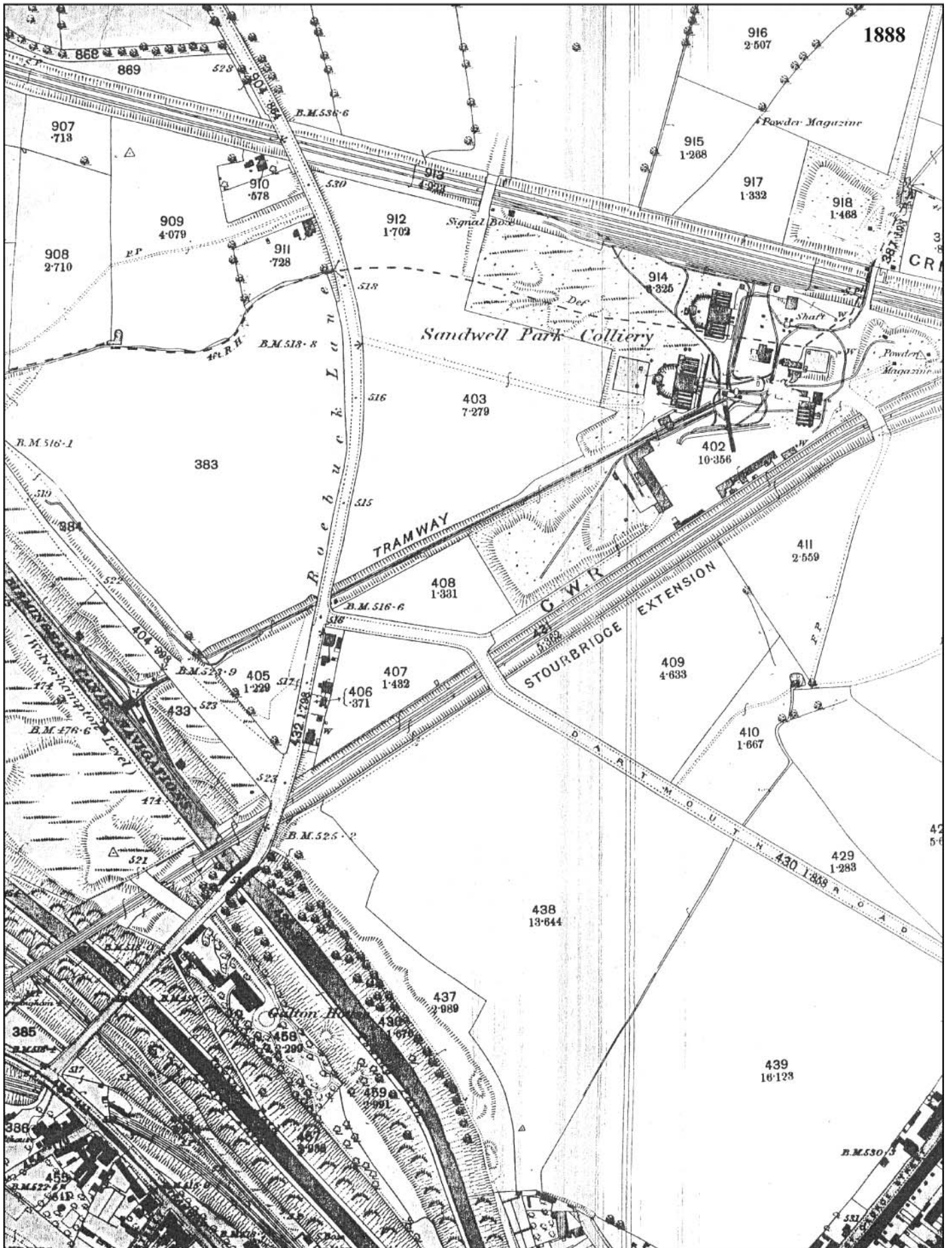


Fig.2

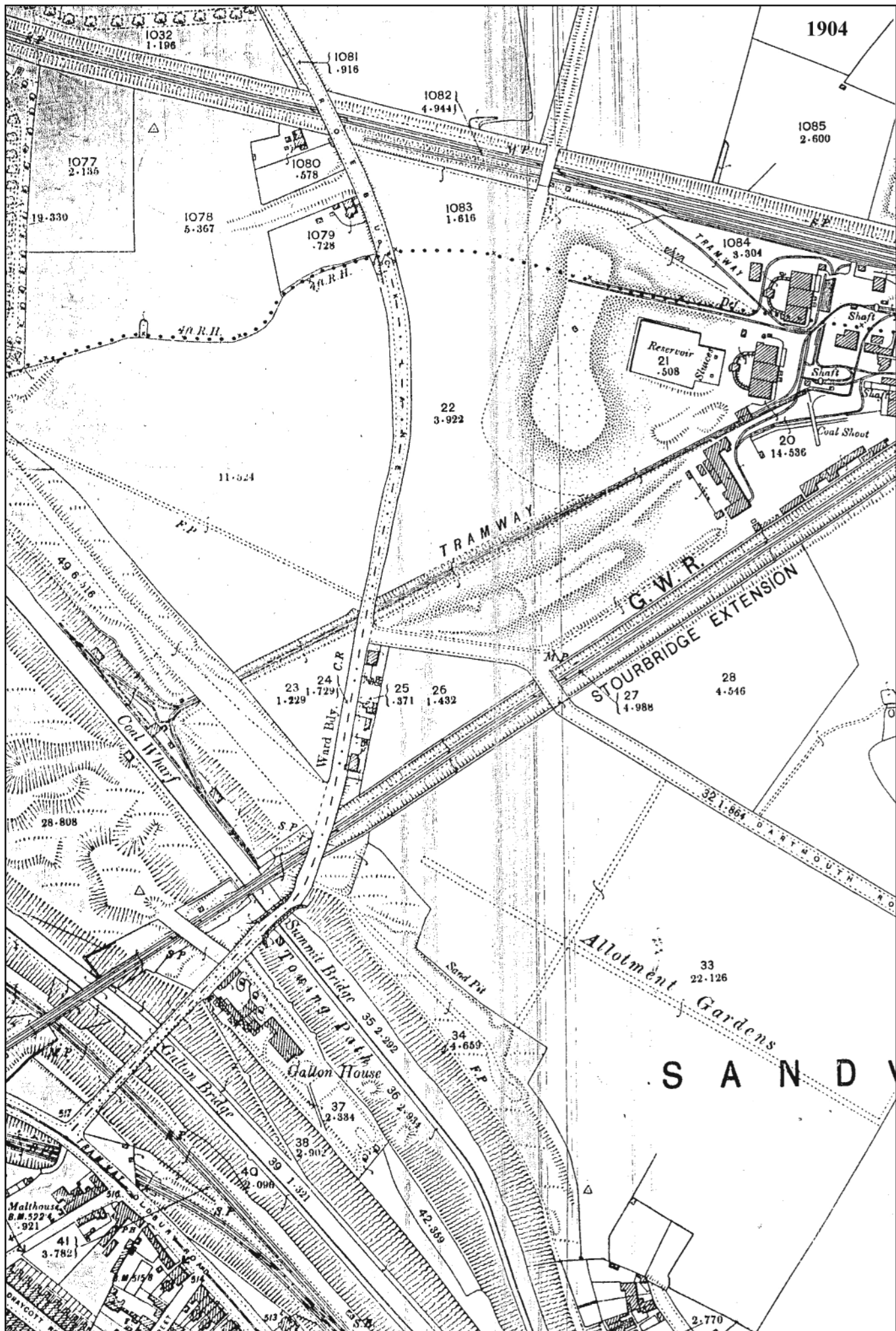


Fig.3

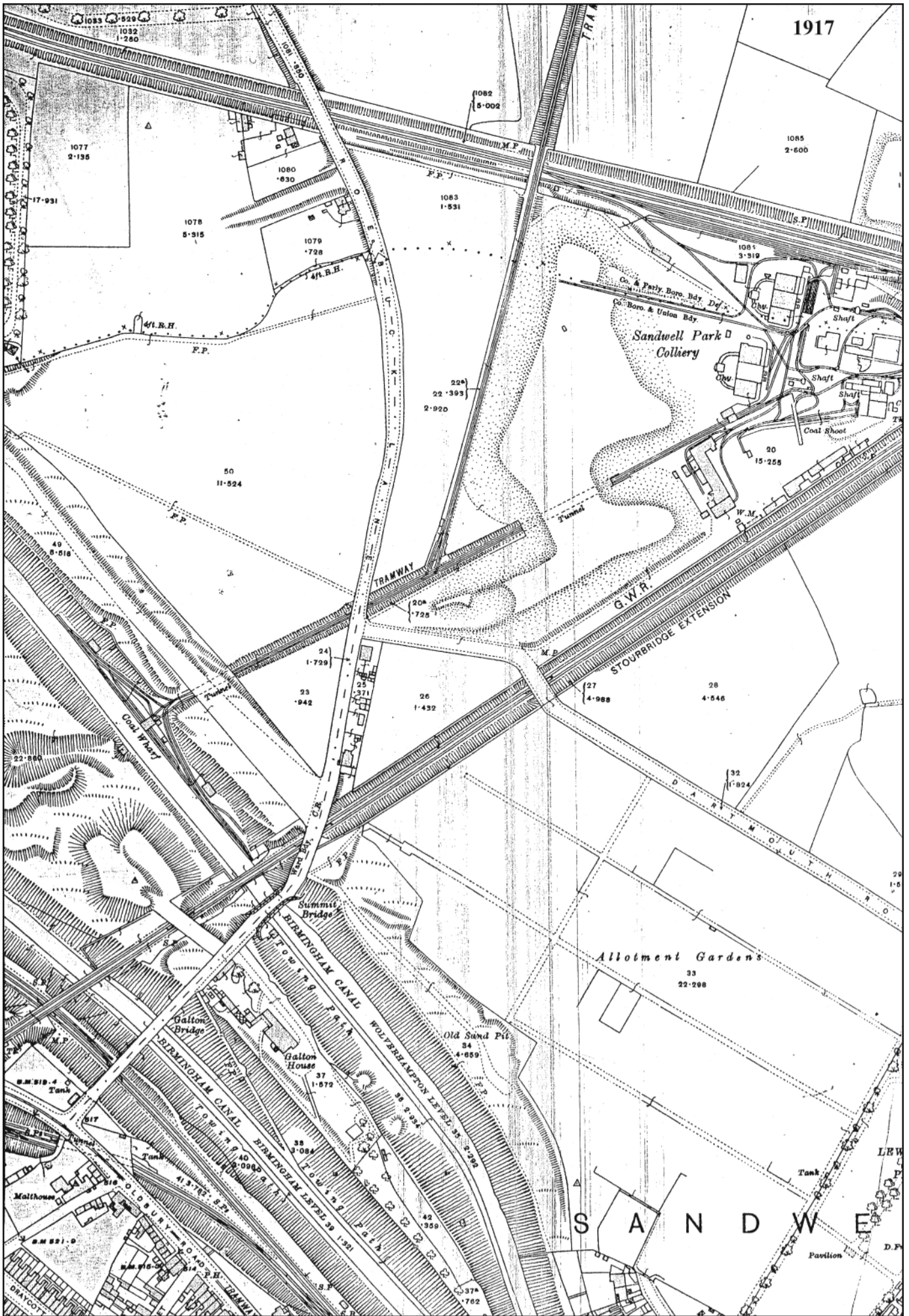


Fig.4

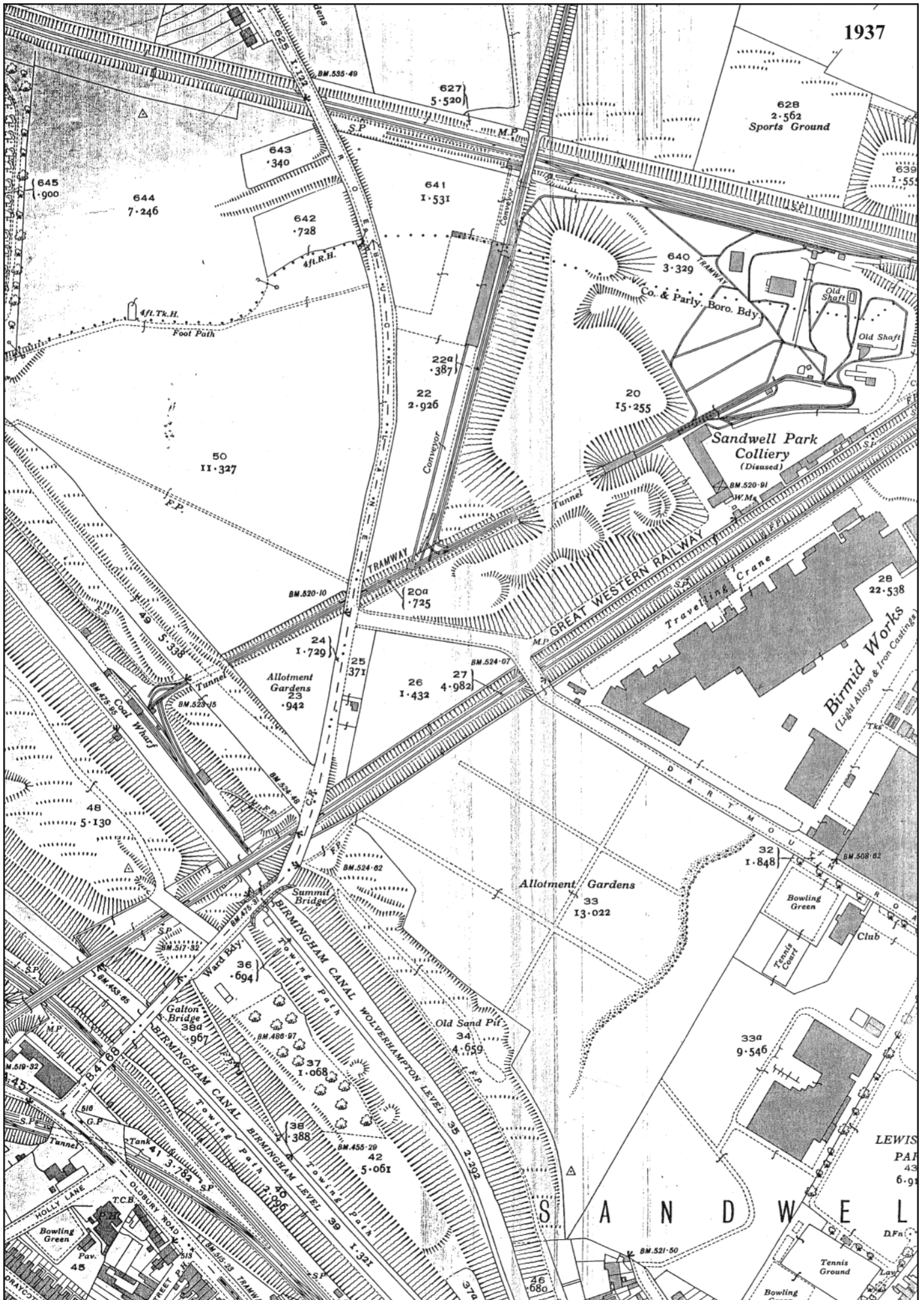


Fig.5

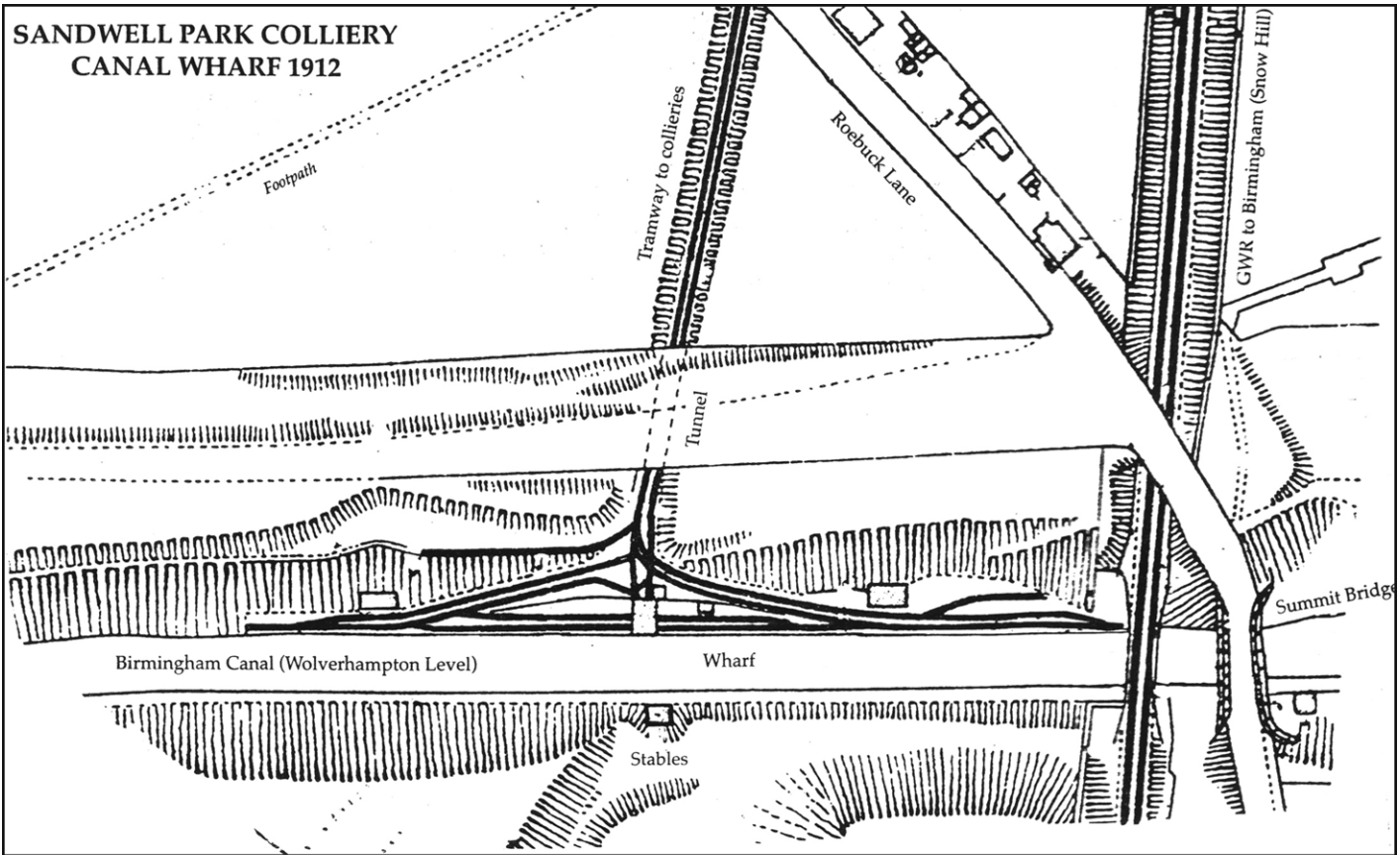


Plate 1

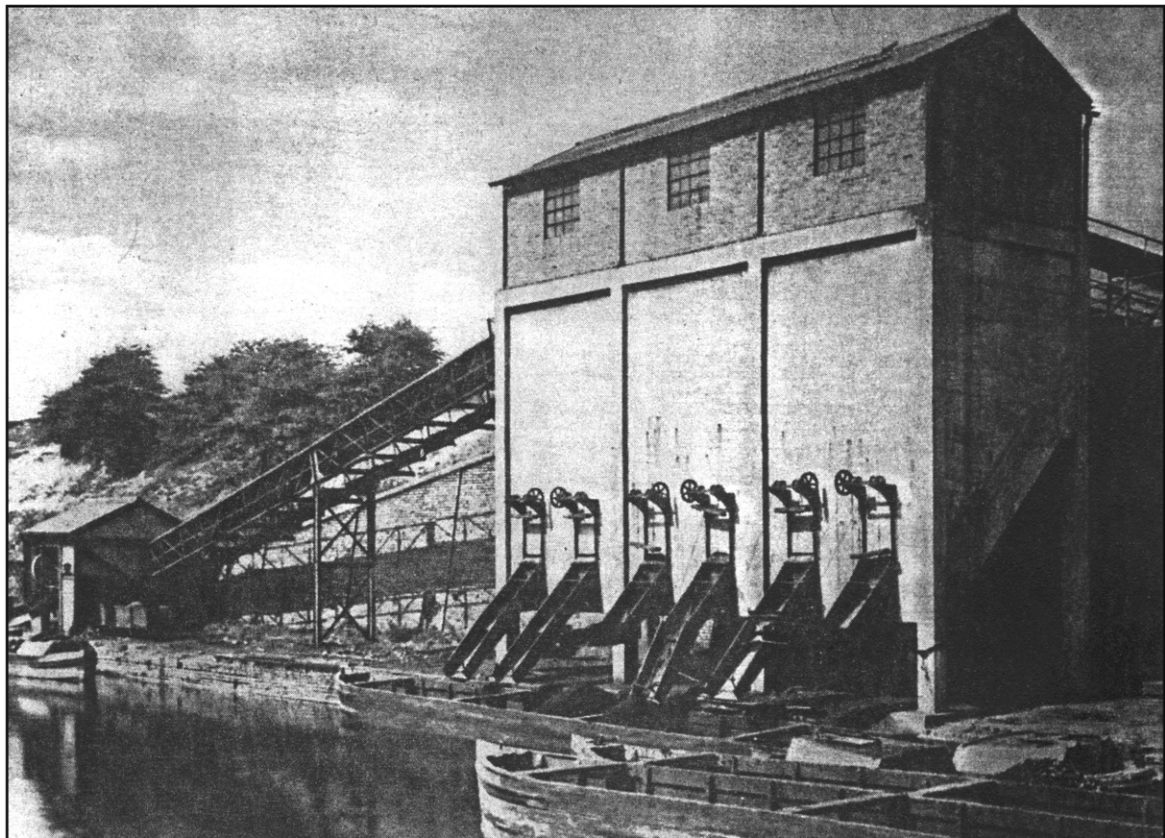


Plate 2



Plate 3

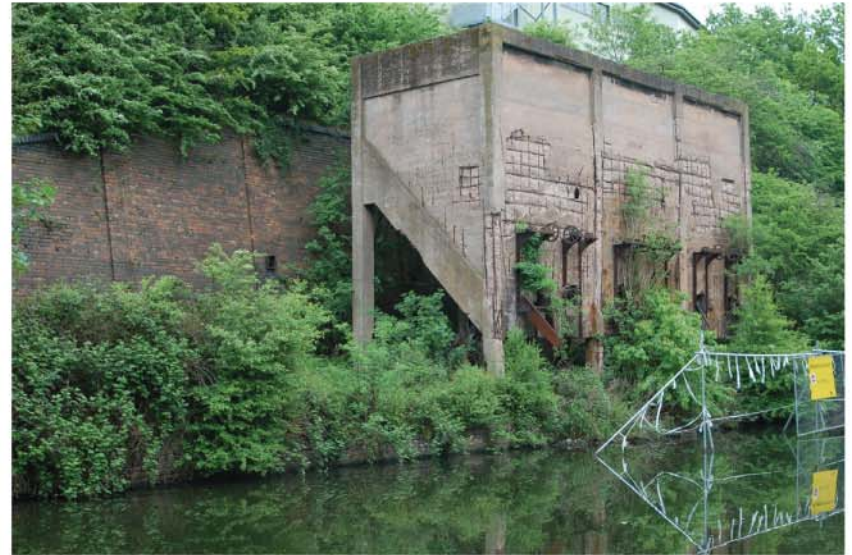


Plate 4



Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8